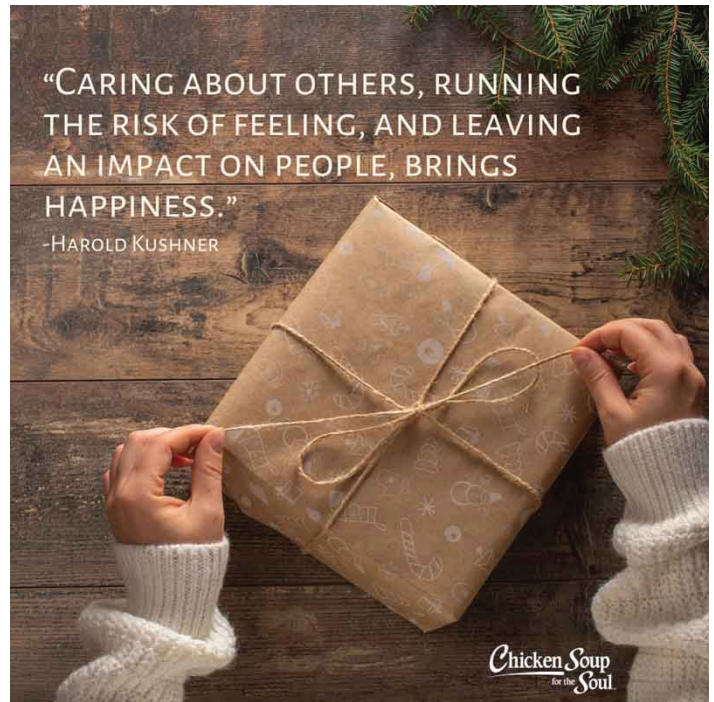


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Church Services

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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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THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE

*But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,
Though you are little among the
thousands of Judah,
Yet out of you shall come forth to Me
The One to be Ruler in Israel,
Whose goings forth are from of old,
From everlasting. - MICAH 5:2*

*"The Virgin Mary Cradling the Baby Jesus"
by Charles-François Hutin (1764)*



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SURVIVAL OF THE FATTEST

BIBLE

TRIVIA

by Wilson Casey

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

2. Which “Caesar” ordered all the world to be taxed, causing Mary to travel to Bethlehem while expecting the baby Jesus? *Julius, Tiberius, Claudius, Augustus*

3. Where in the Bible (KJV) does it inform of the Christ Child being born in a December? *Does not, John 1:14, Romans 6:23, Galatians 4:4*

4. With seemingly two different New Testament answers, who was the father of Joseph? *Jacob/Heli, Gideon/Ishmael, Solomon/Nahum, Samuel/Pilate*

5. Where did the angel Gabriel appear to Mary saying, “Blessed art thou among women”? *Nazareth, Tyre, Ninevah, Gazi*

6. For the journey to Bethlehem, how did Mary and Joseph travel? *Bible not specific, Cart, Rode donkey, Small raft*

ANSWERS: 1) Neither; 2) Augustus; 3) Does not; 4) Jacob/Heli; 5) Nazareth; 6) Bible not specific

“Test Your Bible Knowledge,” a book with 1,206 multiple-choice questions by columnist Wilson Casey, is available in stores and online.

Comfort foods

Made fast
and
healthy



by Healthy Exchanges

Holiday Rice Pudding

You can never get too much of a good thing. Take a taste of this luscious rum raisin rice pudding made with sour cream, and see if you don't agree.

- 1 (4-serving) package sugar-free instant vanilla pudding mix
- 2/3 cup nonfat dry milk powder
- 1 1/2 cups water
- 1/3 cup fat-free sour cream
- 1 teaspoon rum extract
- 1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 3/4 cup raisins
- 2 cups cold cooked rice
- 6 tablespoons reduced-calorie whipped topping

1. In large bowl, combine dry pudding mix, dry milk powder and water. Mix well using a wire whisk. Blend in sour cream, rum extract and nutmeg. Add raisins and rice. Mix well to combine.

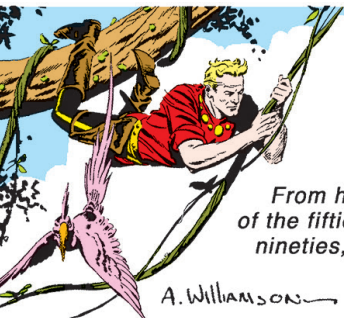
2. Evenly spoon rice mixture into 6 dessert dishes. Top each with 1 tablespoon whipped topping. Lightly sprinkle additional nutmeg over the top of each, if desired. Refrigerate at least 15 minutes. Makes 6 servings.

• Each serving equals: 168 calories, 0g fat, 5g protein, 37g carb., 282mg sodium, 1g fiber; Diabetic Exchanges: 1 1/2 Starch, 1 Fruit.

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Artist Spotlight:
AL WILLIAMSON



His drawings of men are the embodiment of heroism. His women, strong and sensuous. Couple this with an uncanny knack for capturing an environment (from urban metropolis to alien landscape) and you have the makings for the best in fantasy illustration.

From his work on the classic EC comics of the fifties to "Star Wars" in the eighties and nineties, Al Williamson's artwork continues to inspire and amaze.

A. Williamson



FLASH GORDON

By JIM KEEFE

11-29

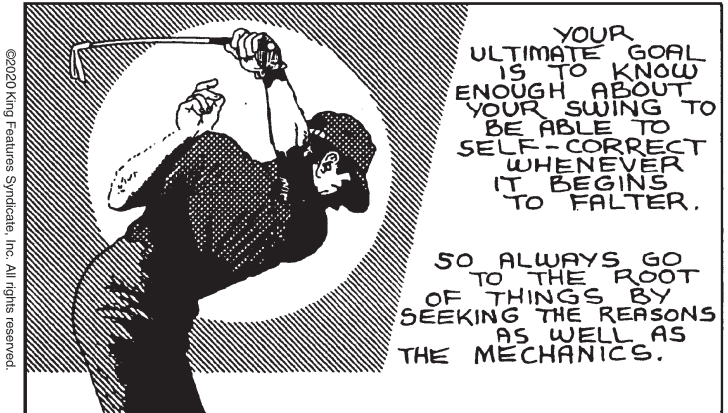
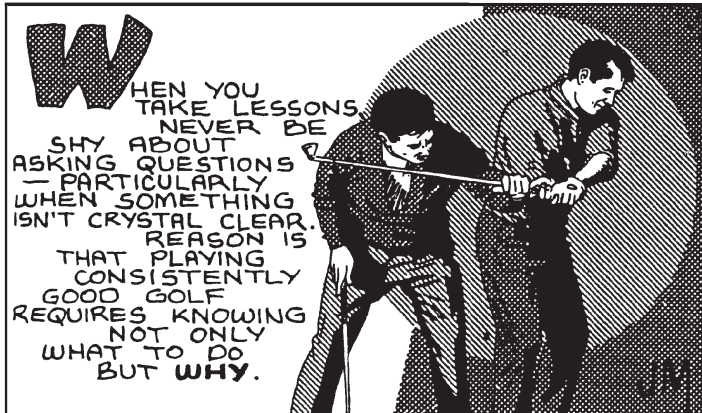
Artwork: AL WILLIAMSON

HOPING TO DISTANCE THEMSELVES FROM THE CREATURES BEHIND THEM, FLASH AND DALE RACE BLINDLY ONWARD THROUGH THE WILDS OF MONGO.

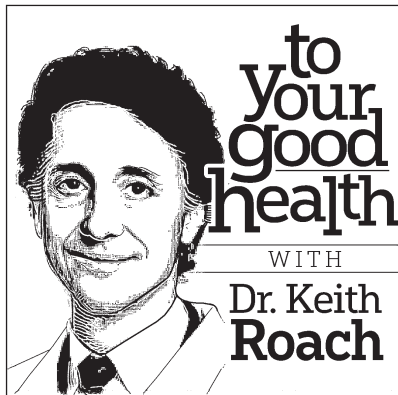


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Play Better Golf with JACK NICKLAUS



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Here's How to Reduce Risk of Heart Disease

DEAR DR. ROACH: I'm a 70-year-old female who had a stress test, echocardiogram and carotid study. I passed all tests. My cholesterol is 173, with my HDL 56, LDL 95.6 and triglycerides 108. My blood pressure is 110/64. The cardiologist put me on 5 mg of Crestor. He feels this will help my numbers. He also has me taking CoQ10 and vitamin D3 in case my legs start aching from the Crestor. I've been taking everything now for two weeks, and my legs are starting to ache. Is it really necessary to stay on Crestor? — J.S.

ANSWER: I put all your numbers into the standard risk calculator at www.cvriskcalculator.com, and your risk for heart disease or stroke in the next 10 years is 6.8%. That is in a range where medication therapy is not usually recommended.

Of course, I can't tell you to stop taking the medication your doctor has recommended. He may know something about you that I don't. It's possible you have a less-common risk factor your cardiologist may not have told you about.

Some people with very good cholesterol and blood pressure numbers have high levels of C-reactive protein, for example, which confers an increased risk for heart disease. That's true even in people with desirable cholesterol levels, and people in that situation would clearly benefit from taking Crestor or a similar medicine. All of these medicines have the risk of muscle aches, although the risk of serious muscle damage is very small.

Nearly everyone can reduce their heart disease risk by having a diet with very little meat but high in vegetables, legumes and nuts, along with whole grains and fruits. Regular moderate exercise is as important as diet. Keeping stress levels low, having good close relationships and sleeping 7-8 hours daily are underappreciated beneficial factors to reduce heart risk as well.

DEAR DR. ROACH: I am 76, female, healthy, do not take any meds and am scheduled for a total knee replacement. During the testing, they made an incidental discovery on the CT scan of "a possible right sided right Hutch diverticulum of the bladder" and "two prominent right external iliac lymph nodes, measuring up to 15 and 13 mm in short axis."

My surgical team did not respond, and my internist says "do not worry," with no explanation. I would greatly appreciate your opinion. — L.M.

ANSWER: A Hutch diverticulum is a congenital condition, a small pouch in the wall of the bladder. They are seldom diagnosed in adults. They can be associated with infection and stones, but if you have had no problem with either of those conditions, I would certainly advise against doing anything about it.

The external iliac lymph nodes are structures in the hip, and like all lymph nodes, may enlarge in the presence of infection or inflammation. Yours are definitely enlarged, with less than 8-10 mm considered normal. Although we worry about enlarged lymph nodes as a symptom or sign of cancer, it's thought to be cancer only about 1% of the time. After you recover from surgery, it may be worth taking another look to see if they have shrunk. If they are persistently enlarged, especially if they are growing, some physicians would recommend a biopsy to be sure it is nothing to worry about.

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

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1. What was the title of the Beatles' first movie?
2. Who was the Wrecking Crew?
3. Name the first rock 'n' roll group to play Carnegie Hall.
4. What was the phone number in the Marvelette's song in 1962?
5. Name the song that contains this lyric: "She didn't see me creep down the stairs to have a peep; She thought that I was tucked up in my bedroom fast asleep."

Answers

1. "A Hard Day's Night," released in 1964. The film received Oscar noms for Best Original Screenplay and Best Adaptation or Treatment Score, but no mention at all of the songs, not even Best Original Song.
2. The Crew was a group of studio musicians in Los Angeles who provided backup for thousands of songs. Their work made many mediocre songs into hits, and they were much in demand.
3. Bill Haley & His Comets, in 1955, in a variety concert. They were followed, although not soon, by the Beatles and Rolling Stones in 1964 and Chuck Berry in 1965.
4. Beechwood 4-5789.
5. "I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus," by Jimmy Boyd in 1952. Numerous others have covered the song, including the Ronettes (1963), the Four Seasons (1962) and John Cougar Mellencamp (1987).

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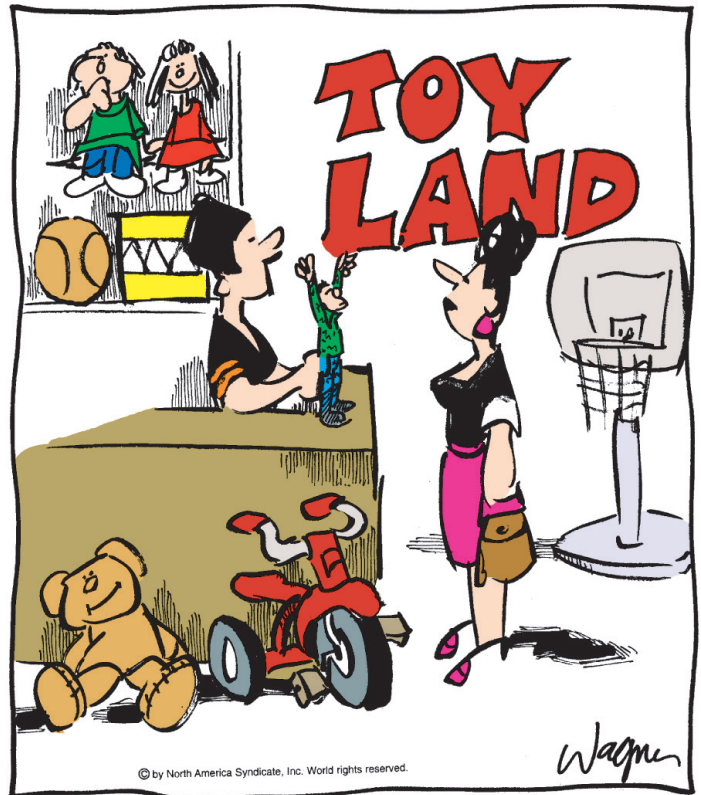
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Just Like Cats & Dogs by Dave T. Phipps



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GRIN and BEAR IT ^{by Wagner}

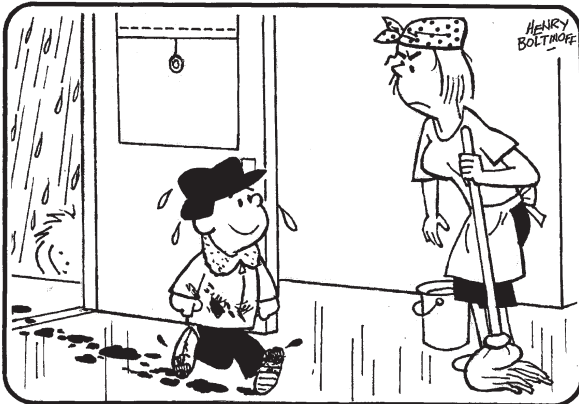


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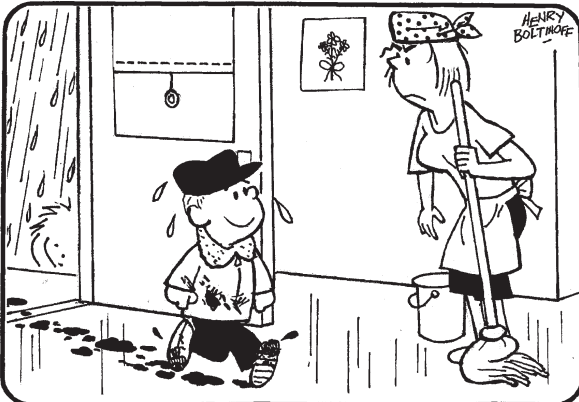
"This is the French GI Joe."

HOCUS-FOCUS

BY HENRY BOLTIHOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.



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Differences: 1. Bandanna is backward. 2. Picture has been added. 3. Shade is lower. 4. Bucket has no water. 5. Boy's hat is different. 6. Broom handle is taller.

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- Inexpensive gift idea: On the front of an empty photo album or scrapbook, print out and arrange color photos of your recipient in a collage. Glue the photos to the front of the album and cover with a decoupage glaze, like Mod Podge. Let dry and glaze again. You've just made a one-of-a-kind gift!

- If you are a re-gifter, always document from whom and in what year you received a gift. Then re-gift it to someone who will have little to no contact with that person. For example, if Aunt Emily from out of town sends you a lovely soap basket that you would never use, you could re-gift it for your office party.

- After-Christmas sales are a great time to buy not only gift wrap (look for solid colors that you can use all year long), holiday cards and decoration, but also next season's winter wear. Things like scarves and gloves can be great bargains. And even coats can go on sale. Take advantage — especially

if you have kids — and buy up.

- “Recycle in the new year by using wrapping supplies to help store your holiday decorations. The cardboard tube from gift wrap can be cut into smaller pieces, which you can wrap strands of tree or house lights around. Boxes can be put to use to hold ornaments or other decorations, and ribbon and bows that are still in good condition can be tucked away for re-use next year.” — *E.F. in Oregon*

- “Resolutions are a great idea, and, like a lot of people, last year I resolved to exercise more often. I keep a stationary bike in my living room, and I use it while I watch my favorite programs on television. It has helped me lose 8 pounds, and I feel much better. This year, I am going to resolve to volunteer to help others.” — *I.N. in Nebraska*

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

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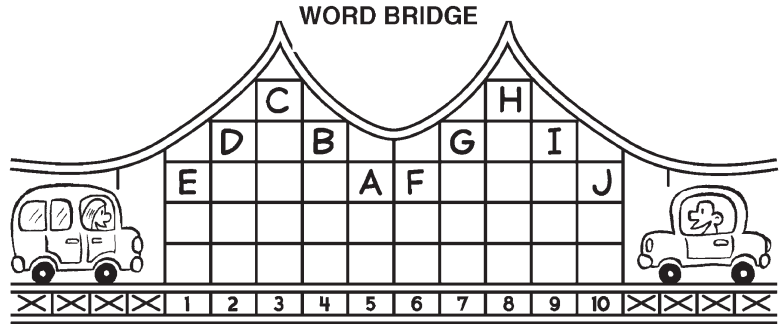
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Junior Whirl

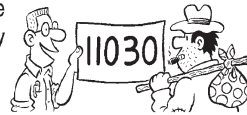
by Charles Barry Townsend



THE NEARSIGHTED NINJA! One out of four is pretty bad. Can you guess which throw hit the target?

Answer: Number one.

TIME TO HIT THE ROAD! Write the number "11030" on a piece of paper, hand it to a friend, and challenge him to change the number to a homeless man by adding two lines to it.



Answer: A line between the 1's and another in front of the 3 gives us the word "HOBO."

LINK-UPS! Here's a list of 12 one-syllable words, divided into two columns. Turn them into six longer words by linking them together. To do this, draw a line from one word in the left column to one word in the right.

- | | |
|---------|------|
| 1. CAR | NEST |
| 2. HERE | LED |
| 3. EAR | ROT |
| 4. DORM | TIC |
| 5. GAB | ART |
| 6. IMP | ANT |

Answers: Carrot, heretic, earnest, dormant, gabled, impart

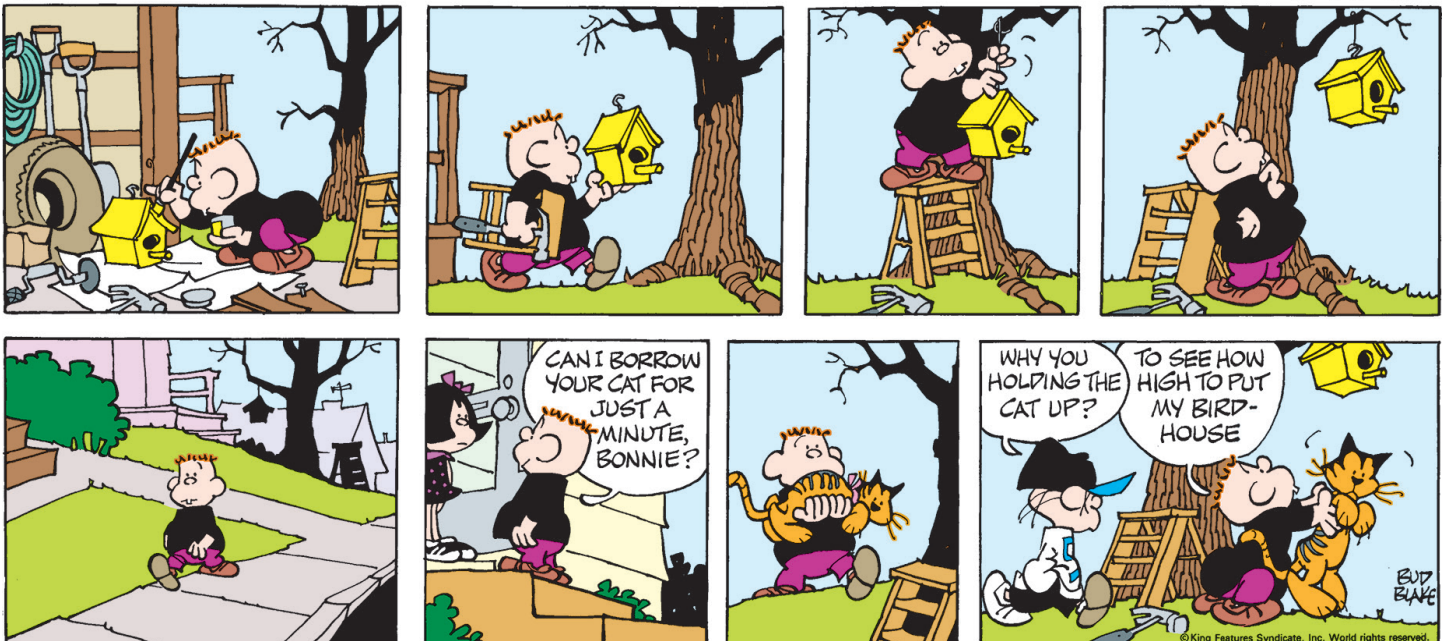
The bridge above contains 10 supporting words. We give you the first letter of each word, plus plenty of hints.

1. Great self-esteem.
2. Disagreeably humid.
3. Type of TV transmission.
4. Refuse to go on.
5. Expression of surprise.
6. A Mediterranean cap.
7. A valley
8. What ghosts do.
9. Where travelers stay.
10. Preserved fruit.

Answers: 1. Ego, 2. Dank, 3. Cable, 4. Balk, 5. Aha, 6. Fez, 7. Glen, 8. Haunt, 9. Inns, 10. Jam.

TIGER

by BUD BLAKE



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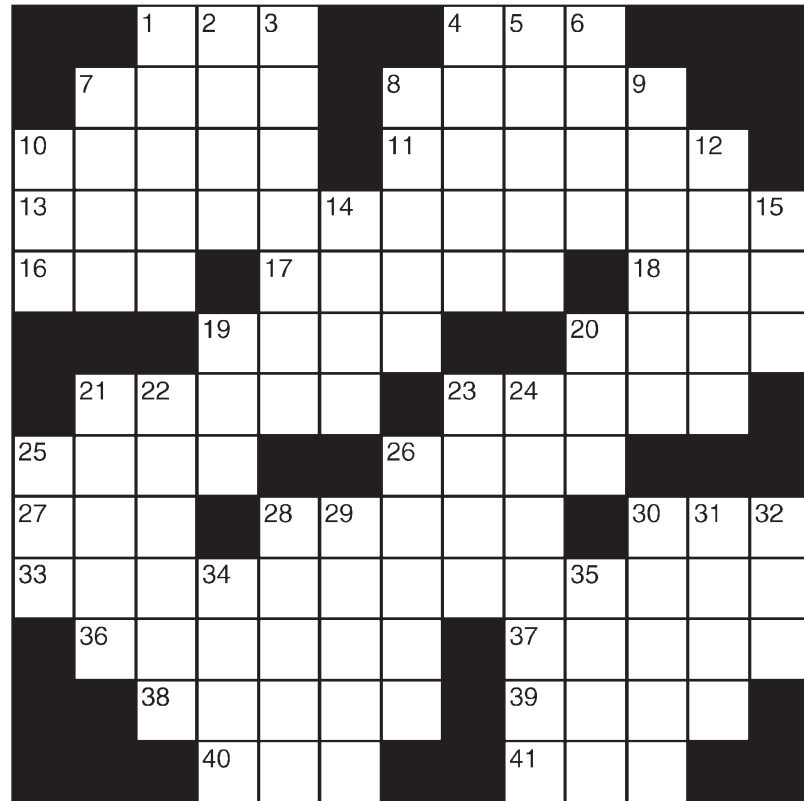
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King Crossword

ACROSS

- 1 Vagrant
- 4 Poke
- 7 Femur or fibula
- 8 Elaine's last name on "Seinfeld"
- 10 Cook by direct heat
- 11 Silvery
- 13 Smooth-coated pooch
- 16 1/20 ton (Abbr.)
- 17 Humdinger
- 18 Moving truck
- 19 Narnia's Aslan, e.g.
- 20 Antitoxins
- 21 Munchie
- 23 Enthusiasts' emotions



- 25 Roe provider
- 26 Group of quail
- 27 Debtor's letters
- 28 Muslim maiden
- 30 Thee
- 33 High-backed chairs
- 36 Earthling, in sci-fi
- 37 Flavor
- 38 Go over the books

- 39 Spud's buds
- 40 Always, in verse
- 41 Two, in Tijuana

DOWN

- 1 Give a leg up
- 2 One
- 3 Tuneful
- 4 Spanish wine town
- 5 Mad
- 6 Tavern offering
- 7 Forehead

- 8 Conductor's wand
- 9 Whine
- 10 English channel?
- 12 Signs of sorrow
- 14 Kindle competitor
- 15 Genetic stuff
- 19 Young fellow
- 20 Put into words
- 21 Try for a two-pointer
- 22 Queasiness

- 23 Nil
- 24 Ousted
- 25 Bro or sis
- 26 Beyond well-done
- 28 Throng
- 29 Where the elated walk
- 30 Affirmatives
- 31 Uneaten morsels
- 32 Work with
- 34 Verifiable
- 35 Boxer's successful blow

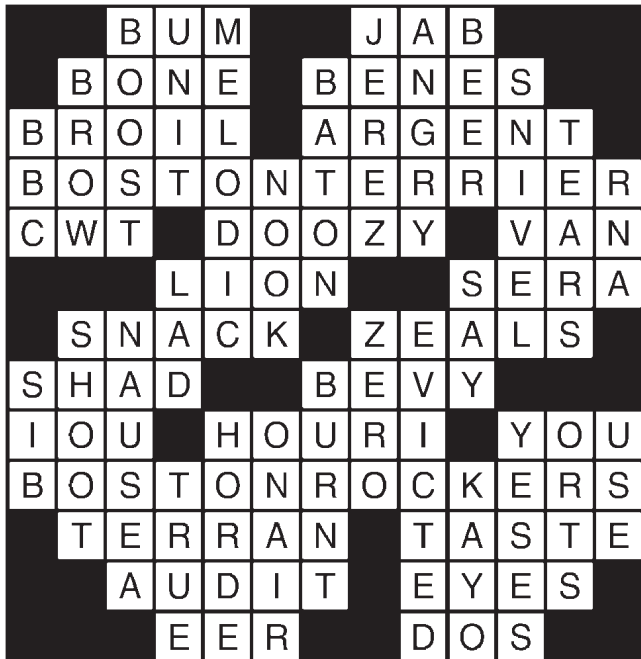
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— King Crossword —

Answers

Solution time: 25 mins.



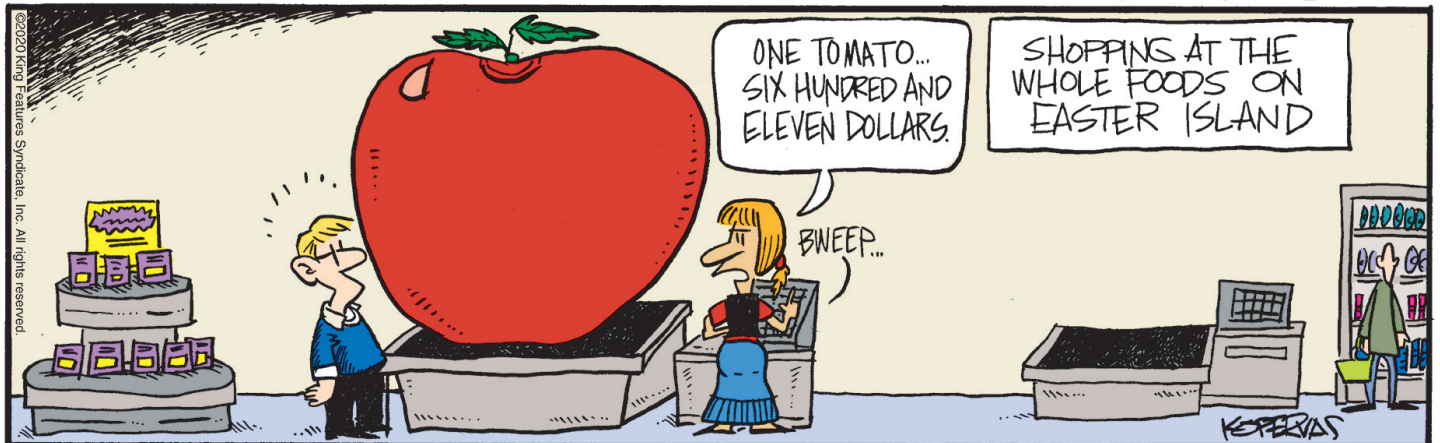
LAFF - A - DAY



"Take one of these pills as often as you can afford it!"

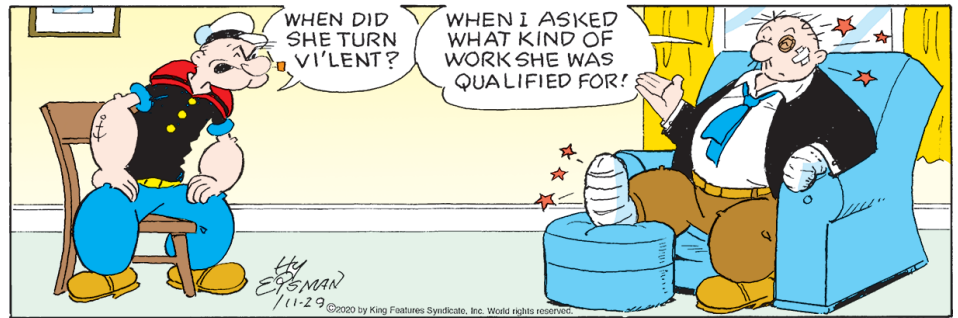
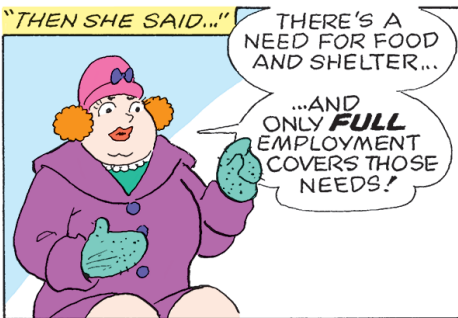
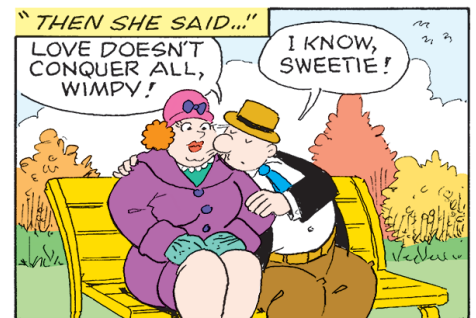
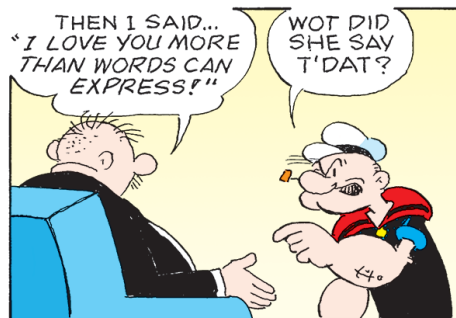
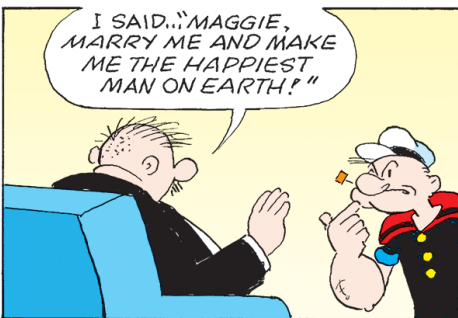
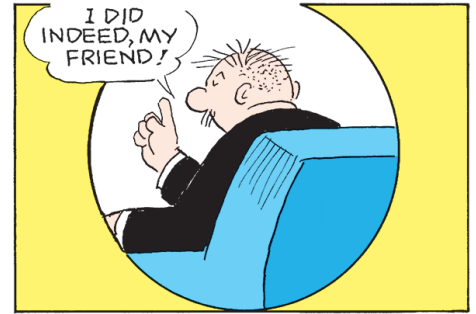
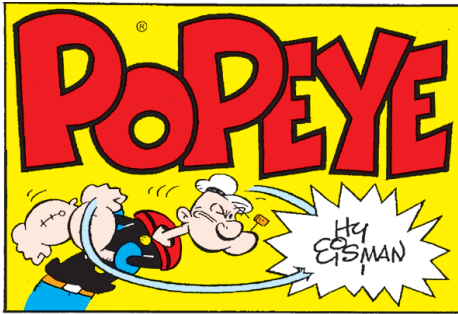
Out on a Limb

by Gary Kopervas



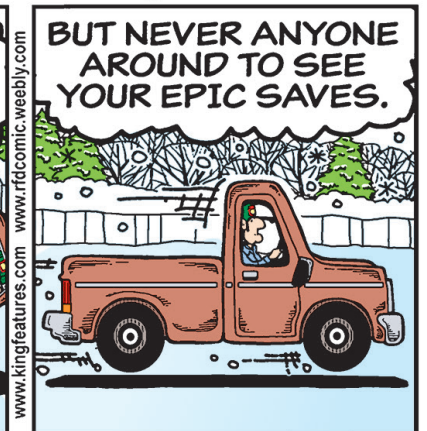
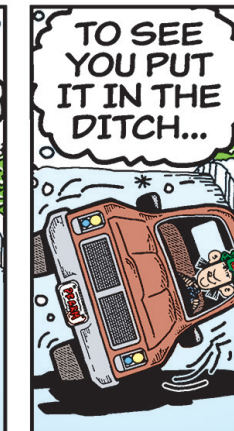
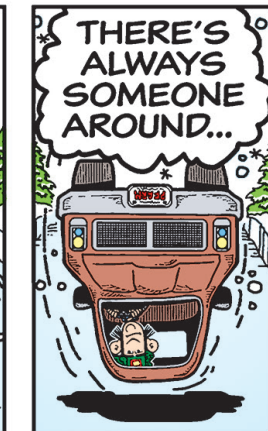
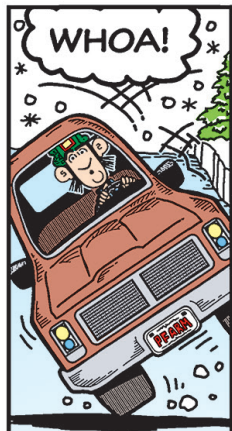
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R.F.D.

by Mike Marland



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Hal Foster's
Prince Valiant
BY GIANNI AND SCHULTZ

Our Story: ARTHUR HAS RENDERED CANNY PUNISHMENT ON THE ROYAL COUPLE — VAL SHALL BE STRIPPED OF HIS WEALTH, AND ALETA SHALL, PERFORCE, SUPPORT HIM.

WHILE THE PRINCE SULKES, THE QUEEN OF THE MISTY ISLES GAILY PICKS FLOWERS WITH COURT MAIDENS...

... AND PLOTS A RETURN TO HER HOMELAND, HUSBAND MEEKLY IN TOW. AT THIS PLEASANT MOMENT, ARTHUR'S SENTENCE SEEMS TO HER A BLESSING.

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ALAS, WHAT HAPPENS NEXT CHANGES EVERYTHING. VAL IS SNAPPED FROM HIS REVERIE BY THE ABSURDITY OF A VIOLENT TREMOR IN CAMELOT...

... AND IS SHOCKED BY THE IMAGE OF HIS WIFE AND HER RETAINERS BEING DRAGGED INTO THE FISSURING EARTH BY GNARLED, LOATHSOME CLAWS!

NEXT:
Devoured

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The Spats

by Jeff Pickering

I'M A SELF MADE MAN.

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THAT WOULD EXPLAIN WHY YOU KEEP FALLING APART.

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SENIOR NEWS LINE

by Matilda Charles

Pants on Fire!

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission has put out a timely warning about fire safety, especially for seniors. The main statistic is grim: We seniors make up about 16% of the population, but account for a whopping 77% of all clothing fires.

Cooking heads the list of dangers, with fires from the stovetop and oven. Closely following are fires from smoking and being outside burning trash and debris. Space heaters are on the list, of course.

The advice from the experts:

— Don't cook when you're wearing a bathrobe or anything with long, wide sleeves. Any loose clothing can catch fire if you're too close.

— If you burn debris and trash outside, stay back from the fire. A better idea, however, is not to do any outdoor burning yourself, especially if you have any health conditions such as heart or lung disease. We're at a much higher risk from the air pollutants caused by burning.

— Don't smoke in bed, ever, or when you feel tired.

— Keep an eye on your space heater. It's far too easy to be too close to a space heater and not notice that your pants or robe are about to catch fire. Don't run it if you're feeling sleepy, and read the instructions to be sure it's far enough away from you at all times.

— If the worst happens and your clothes catch fire, don't run! Drop to the floor and roll, and keep rolling until the fire is out. Grab a blanket if it's necessary to put the fire out. Call 911 and put cool water on your burns until help arrives.

— Do you have a fire extinguisher? Did you know that the chemicals inside can expire? They will typically last from five to 15 years, so be sure to check yours.

Remember that during this virus pandemic the EMTs might be delayed getting to you. Stay safe!

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1. Mosi Tatupu, a special-teams standout for the New England Patriots from 1978-90, played football for what college team?

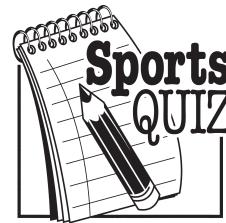
2. A state park in Wyoming's Laramie and Albany counties is named after what sportscaster?

3. What Pittsburgh Pirates legend was named NL MVP and World Series MVP in 1979?

4. What basketball Hall of Famer is the NCAA Division I all-time leading scorer with 3,667 points?

5. Name the silver medalist from Australia who stood on the podium with U.S. sprinters Tommie Smith and John Carlos at the 1968 Summer Olympics.

6. Throughout the 1960s, Los Angeles Rams defensive linemen Rosy Grier, Lamar Lundy, Merlin Olsen and Deacon Jones were collectively known by what nickname?



7. Parminder Nagra and Keira Knightley starred in what 2002 British sports romantic comedy film?

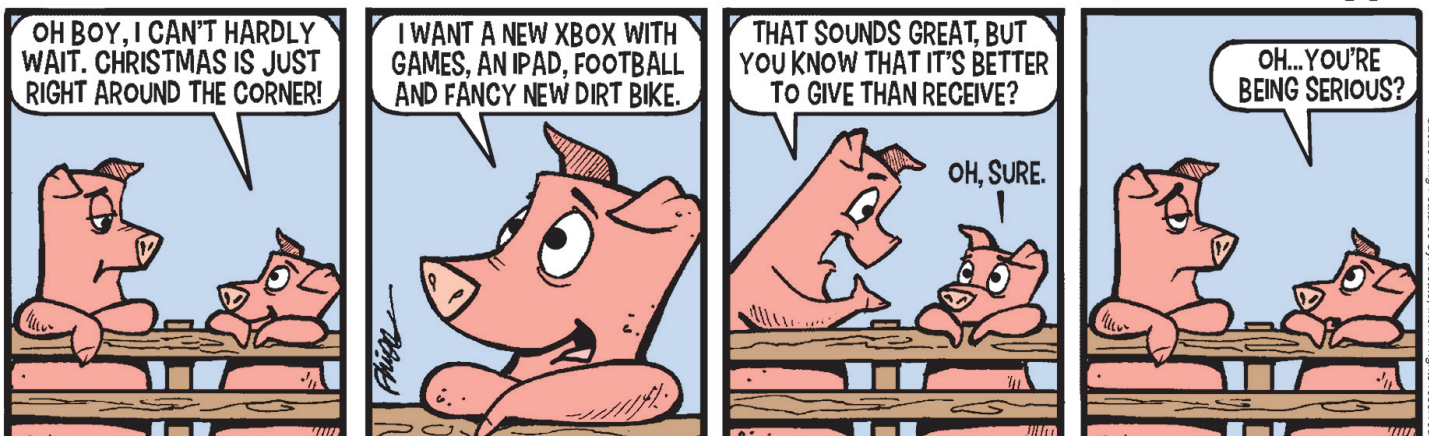
Answers

1. The USC Trojans.
2. Curt Gowdy.
3. Willie Stargell.
4. Pete Maravich.
5. Peter Norman.
6. The Fearsome Foursome.
7. "Bend It Like Beckham."

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Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps





Holiday Decorations Can be Dangerous

DEAR PAW'S CORNER: My aunt was admiring the wreath I made from natural materials, and during the conversation she mentioned that the berries might be poisonous to my cat, "Darwin." If this is true, should I remove them from the wreath? — *Katie V., Boise, Idaho*

DEAR KATIE: Unfortunately, yes. If the wreath is accessible to your pets and an ingredient on it may be toxic, you will need to remove that ingredient and replace it — either with a nontoxic alternative or a silk or plastic equivalent.

Dogs and cats alike can be at risk from certain plants, berries and leaves that are common during the holiday season. Holly, mistletoe, lilies and amaryllis all are toxic to pets. Cats are especially known for being attracted to lilies, and they can climb to just about

any point in a house, so it's important to avoid having these around at all.

Artificial decorations can also pose a danger. Tinsel is the biggest no-no in a pet household; cats that ingest the sparkly strings can suffer intestinal blockage. Plus, it's not great for the environment. Breakable ornaments, especially those thin glass bulbs that cats love to bat around, can shatter and cut their paws. And if a cat or dog ingests the broken material ... well, I don't want to think about that.

Candles can singe curious noses and wayward tails; use electric or battery-powered instead. Strings of lights pose a tangling and choking risk; place them up high, in a hard to access spot, and attach them securely using staples so a pet can't pull them down. Coil extra electrical cord and fasten with a twist tie so pets don't get tangled.

Keep your holidays safe for pets, and they'll stay merry, just like you.

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

Strange BUT TRUE

By Lucie Winborne

- Pine cones have genders. Male pine cones shed pollen and female pine cones make seeds. When the wind blows pollen into the female cones, the seeds become pollinated.
- Cats are believed to be the only mammals that don't taste sweetness.
- In 1978, DC put out a "Superman vs. Muhammad Ali" comic book. While the plot deals with hostile aliens, the book's main highlight is the whooping Superman gets in a sparring match with "The Greatest"!
- The first-ever fashion magazine was sold in Germany in 1586.
- Early cosmetic surgeons used a procedure known as paraffin wax rhinoplasty, in which they would inject hot liquid wax into a patient's nose and mold it into the desired shape. Not only was this dangerous, but, no surprise, it really didn't work.

- Canada eats more macaroni and cheese than any other nation in the world.
- A French general, the Marquis de Lafayette, gave John Quincy Adams a pet alligator. Our sixth president not only kept it in a White House bathtub, but enjoyed showing it off to visitors.
- There is a town in India called Santa Claus.
- Ever wonder how the tradition of leaving hand and footprints in front of Grauman's Chinese Theater in Hollywood got started? By accident — when silent film actress Norma Talmadge stepped on wet cement.
- Cellophane, invented in 1908, was originally intended to protect tablecloths from wine spills.
- Those old witch potions aren't quite as gross as you think: Eye of newt, toe of frog and wool of bat are actually archaic terms for mustard seed, buttercup and holly leaves.
- Selfies now cause more deaths than shark attacks.

Thought for the Day: "My father always said, 'Never trust anyone whose TV is bigger than their book-

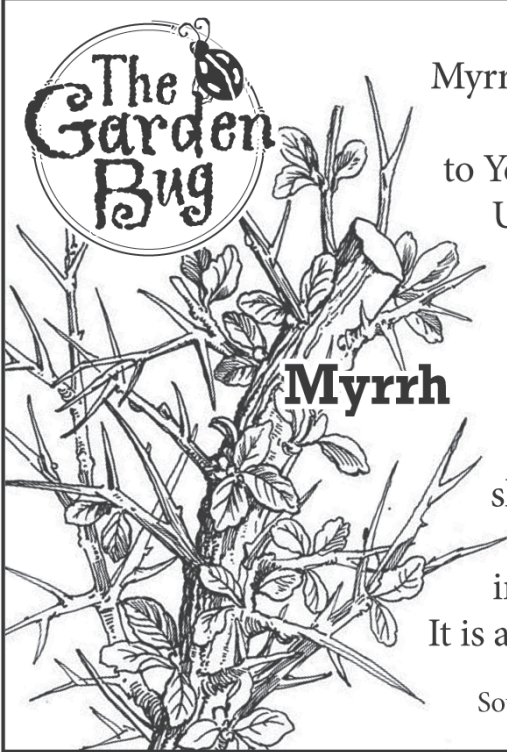
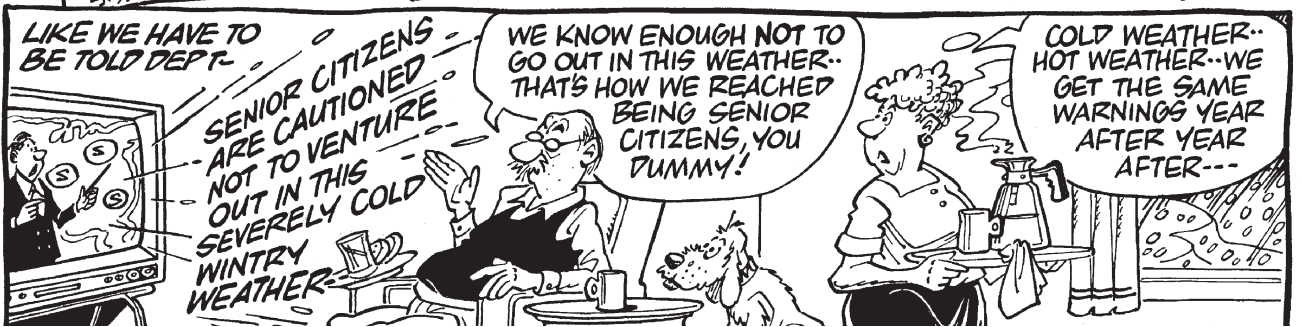
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THEY'LL DO IT EVERY TIME

BY AL SCADUTO

FAMOUS LAST WORDS



Myrrh resin is harvested from the species *commiphora myrrha*, which is native to Yemen, Somalia, Eritrea and Ethiopia. Used medicinally to treat indigestion, ulcers, colds, cough, asthma, lung congestion, cancer, spasms, arthritis pain, leprosy and syphilis, it can also be applied directly to the mouth for gum and tooth problems, and to the skin for wounds, abrasions, and boils, as it is considered effective against inflammation and bacterial infection. It is also used in embalming. - Brenda Weaver

Sources: 1000bibleimages, wikipedia.org, webmd.com

VETERANS ★ POST ★

by Freddy Groves

Where to Live After Leaving the Service?

A quarter of a million of us leave the service every year, and where do we go? If our last duty station was in a great place, we might just put down roots and stay. Some of us go home. And some of us have no idea where to go.

The Navy Federal Credit Union came out with another “best of” list recently, and this time it surveys the best place to live after transitioning to civilian life. While the focus of their survey was for newly transitioned veterans, it also applies to those of us who have been out for a while. Support is support.

They polled 1,000 veterans and civilians about the importance of crime rates, cost of living, housing costs, outdoor recreation and community diversity in any place they wanted to live, and then ranked over 400 cities.

Here are the top 10: 1) Charleston, South Carolina; 2) Fort Myers, Florida; 3) Savannah, Georgia; 4) Daphne, Alabama; 5) Norwich, Connecticut; 6) San Diego; 7) Norfolk, Virginia; 8) Duluth, Minnesota; 9) Gulfport, Mississippi; 10) Fort Worth, Texas.

To see the descriptions and highlights for each of those cities, go online to www.navyfederal.org/resources/articles/news/2020-best-cities-after-service.php

Personally, I think they should have made “good weather” as one of the criteria for a decent place to live.

On another note, if you have a few extra dollars, go online to Operation Homefront (operationhomefront.org) and scroll to the bottom. There you’ll find the Urgent Needs listing of both active duty and veterans who’ve run into a snag and need cash donations. Click on See All Needs to find the filter to select by state, program or military branch. Read a few of the stories of veterans in trouble and see if any touch your heart. If you can’t choose, click on Help Feed a Military Family. They’ll get gift certificates and vouchers, plus food boxes. Then, open your wallet and help as much as you can.

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



Fighting for Americans

One week. That's how much time remains before Congress heads home for Christmas.

While hundreds of thousands of Americans – schools, families, and small businesses – continue to struggle from COVID-19, both House and the Senate leadership have struggled to come together on another relief proposal. For months, members of the Problem Solvers Caucus have been finding common ground on proposals, and this week we unveiled another relief framework which has gained even more support than our first attempt in September.

On Tuesday, I joined several Republican and Democrat Senators and Representatives to announce the plan we have spent weeks working on behind the scenes. For this particular group, it's no longer about politics, it's about the people – and the people can't afford to wait on Congress wasting any more time.

Our bipartisan relief framework addresses key areas of need, including testing, small business support, liability protection, food security, state and local aid, and school funding. It's not perfect but it's progress.

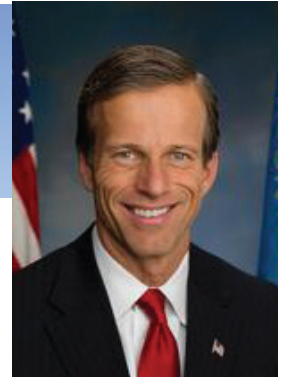
Our country's top economists all agree our country needs an additional stimulus package to dig our way out of this COVID-19 economic slump. I know there is a lot of concern about the price tag of relief packages, but this one is more responsible than other proposals. It repurposes unused funds Congress already allocated through the CARES Act and extends the deadline for use. Our nation's brightest minds have made it clear – if we don't pass something now, we will pay for it later.

South Dakota is in better shape financially than the majority of the country, but our governor has been very clear she needs the deadline extended to utilize much needed federal dollars. This proposal fulfills that request.

This week's announcement has brought congressional leadership and the White House back to the table. They are taking this proposal seriously, and I expect we will know if a relief package has a chance of becoming law in a matter of days. It's been supported by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the Business Roundtable, several congressional leaders, and even President Trump has expressed optimism towards our proposal.

I'm proud of the work our group of bipartisan members of Congress were able to achieve. Americans can't afford to wait any longer – let's get it done.

John Thune
U.S. SENATOR - SOUTH DAKOTA



Shopping Small Supports South Dakotans

Every year during the holiday season, I encourage South Dakotans to support the small businesses that make South Dakota great. This year, though, "shopping small" is one of the biggest ways we can help our neighbors and our communities through this challenging time.

While the pandemic has taken a toll on everybody in one form or another, it has presented a particular challenge for many small businesses throughout our state, even though our economy has been relatively resilient. Recognizing this hurdle, South Dakotans have already helped support their local communities over the last nine months by shopping small during these unprecedented times. They ordered more carryout, purchased more goods online, and visited more Main Street stores.

I'd also like to recognize the state's economic development effort and our local chamber organizations for their support in keeping our Main Streets open. As we continue to face these pandemic-related challenges in South Dakota and throughout our region, I hope everyone keeps this spirit alive.

When Congress first crafted the bipartisan CARES Act, the most comprehensive COVID relief bill to date, one of our main goals was to make sure small businesses across the country, including the self-employed, independent contractors, and farmers and ranchers, could pay their workers, keep them employed, and cover other expenses during this health crisis. While I was proud to support multiple COVID relief measures that continue to help Main Streets across America, one of the single most important initiatives to keep our small businesses open was the creation of the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP).

PPP was designed to keep as many people employed as possible throughout this crisis. More than 5 million small businesses – including more than 23,000 in South Dakota – have taken advantage of PPP's forgivable loans to help keep their businesses operating and their employees on the payroll. And more than two-thirds of these loans were for \$50,000 or less, which means the program has helped many of our nation's smallest businesses during these difficult times. I wish so many small businesses didn't need to rely on PPP as a lifeline, but I'm proud of our effort, and the demand for the program has certainly proven its value.

Senate Republicans believe there's need for additional support and have introduced new COVID relief legislation that's targeted and fiscally responsible. It would, among other things, allow the hardest-hit small businesses – those that are able to demonstrate a sizeable decline in revenue – to receive a second PPP loan. It would also help schools and colleges operate safely and provide additional resources so health care professionals can continue to fight the virus. Unfortunately, Senate Democrats have repeatedly blocked this COVID relief legislation for purely political reasons. I remain hopeful, though, that they'll work with us to find common ground to provide this much-needed relief.

I've said it before, but it's worth repeating: South Dakotans have always gone above and beyond when it comes to helping our communities through tough times. Whether it's a natural disaster or a global pandemic, they're always willing to help. So, when it comes to supporting hard-hit small businesses – the heartbeat of South Dakota and the backbone of our economy – I know that our state will continue to support these pillars of our communities.

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Thrill of Hope

It's hard to believe Christmas is here again. This season is usually a time of great celebration. There are large Christmas Eve services, visits with Santa, cities hosting lighted parades; and of course, family gatherings around the tree and dinner table. But 2020 isn't a normal year and we've all had to adjust our holiday traditions in some way. As I reflect on the Christmas season during this unique year, I cannot help but think of the words from the carol O Holy Night: "A thrill of hope, the weary world rejoices. For yonder breaks, a new and glorious morn."

It would be tough to find a more fitting adjective to describe the world today than weary. 2020 has simultaneously felt like the longest and shortest year of our lives. In one way or another, the global pandemic has taken a toll on all of us. We've attempted to keep our distance, temporarily closed our businesses and put on hold important celebrations like weddings and family reunions. But there is light at the end of this long dark tunnel. The hope for a miracle is coming in the form of a vaccine. The good Lord continues to shine his favor on this weary world.

When this pandemic began around March, we passed the CARES Act which provided targeted relief to those who needed it most. It also included resources to help accelerate the development of a COVID-19 vaccine. Operation Warp Speed was launched to create a partnership between the government and private sector to develop a safe and successful vaccine at a much quicker pace than the traditional vaccine approval process.

The goal of Operation Warp Speed is to produce and deliver millions of doses of safe and effective vaccines by January 2021. Two companies, Moderna and Pfizer, are in the final stages of developing their vaccines and it looks like they will hit that goal. While each state is responsible for creating their own distribution plans once a vaccine is deemed safe, we anticipate seeing the first vaccines administered to the public in the coming weeks.

The COVID-19 vaccine will be available for all Americans at no charge, because the American taxpayer will be picking up the bill. When vaccines are available, the first doses will likely go to those on the front lines fighting this virus—health care workers and essential employees – as well as those with vulnerable health conditions. Once distribution of vaccines opens up to the rest of us, I plan to get one. I have full faith in the scientists developing the vaccines that whatever gets approved will meet the normal standard, be safe and effective.

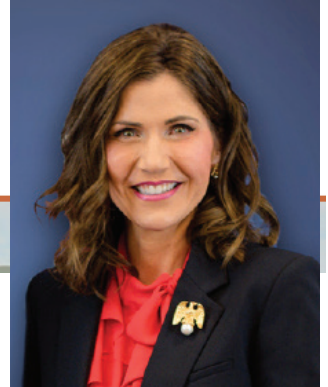
In the meantime as we await the vaccine, it's important we continue to use our common sense to fight this virus. Use hand sanitizer, wash your hands, keep your distance and wear your darn mask when it makes sense. We must remain hopeful during this holiday season - our "new and glorious morn" is almost here. Together, we will get through this.

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SOUTH DAKOTA GOVERNOR
KRISTI NOEM



Taking inspiration from the women who secured our right to vote

Today, December 4th, marks the 101st anniversary of the day South Dakota ratified the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution, which recognized that women have the right to vote. Though the date may not serve as a formal holiday, this particular Governor thinks it's worth remembering in a special way. South Dakota would be a very different state, and the country a very different place, without it.

A subtle point but one worth making: the Nineteenth Amendment didn't give the right to vote to women. Rather, the Amendment recognized a right that pre-existed the amendment, which the country had failed to recognize until that time.

It was the hard work of suffragettes like Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton nationally, and Mary Shields "Mamie" Pyle and Emma Smith Doe locally, that forced the men of the country to recognize the right. And it was indeed hard work, accomplished over decades, sometimes taking two steps forward and one step back. That is just as true here in South Dakota as it was across the country.

Pre-statehood, the Dakota Territory recognized the right of women to vote in school elections beginning in 1883. Two years later, legislation that would have recognized the right of women to vote was passed by the legislature but vetoed by the territorial governor, Gilbert Pierce.

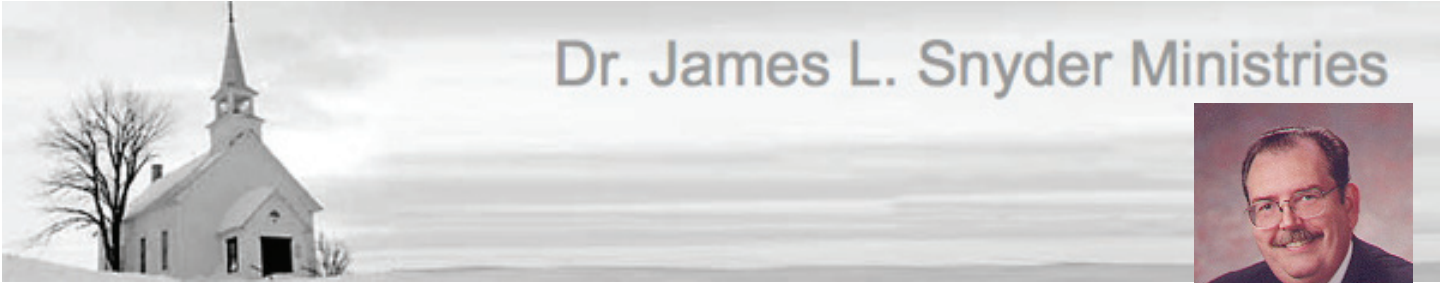
When South Dakota achieved statehood in 1889, it failed to recognize that women possessed the right to vote. When suffragettes subsequently campaigned for the right to vote in South Dakota, they often combined the state's new motto—Under God the People Rule—with the commonsense admonition that "women are people." The implication seems straightforward enough in hindsight, but it took six votes of the men—in 1890, 1898, 1910, 1914, 1916, and finally 1918—for the state to properly recognize this right.

Nearing the end of her life, Susan B. Anthony reflected on all she had accomplished but also all that was left to do. It was 1902 and her life's work was still nearly two decades away from coming to fruition, a success she would not live to see. But her comments should speak to us today. She said, "If I could live another century . . . there is so much yet to be done . . . but I must leave it for the younger generation... The young blood, fresh with enthusiasm and with all the enlightenment of the twentieth century, must carry on the work."

It is now up to our younger generation, all of us, to carry on their work here in the 21st Century and further improve our exceptional country, our shining city on a hill, to borrow John Winthrop's phrase. But today, let us pause from that work and remember the women leaders of the past, whose work to secure the right to vote has led directly to the opportunities women leaders have in the present—and will have in the future.

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It Was a Shoofly Pie Moment



During holiday seasons, I enjoy indulging in special food. My favorite during this time of year is the Shoofly Pie. Nothing hits the spot quite like this.

Although the Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage restricts this kind of culinary activity during the rest of the year, I tried to get a pass for it during the holidays. I don't care what holiday it is, a holiday is a holiday and deserves special food.

I don't remember when I had my first shoofly pie, I only focus on my next piece.

When I first brought it into the home, my wife asked me what in the world it was. I told her it was a Shoofly Pie..

Looking at me rather quizzically, she said, "What is a Shoofly Pie??"

Not even thinking about it, I smiled and replied, "It is a piece of heaven this side of heaven."

Then she wanted to know where in the world that name "Shoofly Pie" came from.

Not really knowing, I "baked up" a story I thought would please her.

The story went something like this. A lady in Pennsylvania was trying to make a special pie for her husband. It took her several days to figure out how she would make this special pie. Finally, she came up with something she had never seen before.

When presented to her husband, he was dumbfounded and said, "What is that pie?"

Before she could answer, a fly seemed to hover over the pie, and she swatted it and said, "shoofly." The husband looked at her and said, "That is marvelous. Whoever heard of a shoofly pie? You're a genius."

And thus, the Shoofly Pie adventure began. Whether that comes near the story or not, it sounded good to me at the time, and I presented it to my wife.

Where we live, it's tough to find any Shoofly Pie. Typically, I have to order it from someplace up north.

Once we were at a nearby restaurant, I talked to the waitress about the Shoofly Pie of which she had never heard. My wife had the recipe, so we shared it with her. She wanted to surprise us with a home-made Shoofly Pie.

When she gave it to us, it was nothing like a real Shoofly Pie. We joyfully took it, but it really wasn't the real thing.

As I was thinking about this shoofly pie mystery, I thought of how this concept would work in other aspects of life.

For example. I would like to develop a Shoo-Politician Pie. Perhaps this would be a great experience for us. Every time we see a politician, we present him with a Shoo-Politician Pie. How much greater our life would be if politicians would not be the center focus of our life.

When a politician gives a speech, he or she will be charged one dollar per word. After all, one dollar isn't much and neither is there speech. Of course, this would need to be paid upfront. As soon as the politician reaches the end of his word count, everybody would say, "Shoo-Politician."

I think this would bring a lot of sanity back to our country today.

Then I thought of another pie to develop. I'll call this the Shoo-Telemarketer Pie. This is second only to politicians.

To date, I have received over 1 million calls that said, "This is the last call you'll get to renew your car warranty."

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I have searched my dictionary to discover what the definition of "last call" is. I guess it has a different meaning to different people. Even my wife agrees with me on this. And you know, that's a monumental achievement.

I don't know why they call them telemarketers, but I sure would like to tell them a thing or two.

Another pie I would like to develop would be the Shoo-Grumpy Pie. I have found so many grumpy people lately. I'm not sure where they come from and I'm not quite sure where they're going, but I do have my guesses.

I cannot identify with grumpy people because I'm not quite sure why they're grumpy. The thing I have noticed lately is, grumpy is not a matter of age. There are grumpy people of all ages. I'm not quite sure how this began.

If anybody has the right to be grumpy, it's someone like me who has to listen to those people who are grumpy.

How much happier this world would be if there were no grumpy people in it? I know there are grumpy moments, but that shouldn't be forever. Nothing is more frustrating than standing in line at the cash register behind some old grumpy customer exhibiting grumpy-itis. I wonder if it's contagious?

Thinking about this, my list is getting longer and longer. There are so many things that I would like to Shoo from my life that I probably need to go into the "Shoo Pie Baking Business."

Thinking along this line I remembered a verse in the Bible. "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you" (2 Corinthians 6:17).

The older I get the more things I see that I need to "shoo" from my life. At times, it's difficult, but the end result is what really matters. One last pie would be the "Shoo-Sin Pie."

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#286 in a series

Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

Word of the day comes from the World Health Organization Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. Speaking to the UN yesterday, he said this: "Where science is drowned out by conspiracy theories, . . . where sacrifice is substituted with self-interest, the virus thrives." I have nothing to add to that, but I wanted you to see it because we're living it.

Here's today's Update:

We didn't set so many records today; of course, we are into a weekend, so that's not a great accomplishment. So far, we've been able to count on weekends for some breathing space between horrors. We're up to 14,645,500 cases reported in the US, 1.4% more than yesterday. We should be at 15 million early next week, maybe Monday, depending how depressed reporting is over the weekend. There were 203,800 new cases reported today. It's kind of horrifying to recognize that a number over 200,000 comes as a relief, but that's the world we're living in these days. This is our fourth-worst day to date. Hospitalizations did break a record again—for the seventh consecutive day. We're at 101,276. That number doesn't take weekends off.

There were 2274 deaths reported today, again a decrease from our record of 2952 just a couple of days ago. Still so, so many more than too much. This is 0.8% over yesterday's total, bringing us to 281,165. We're maybe ten days or less from 300,000.

I think it's really important to recognize how uneven the burden from this disease has been in our society.

(1) Nursing home deaths have been around 40% of our deaths since midsummer. Keep in mind that nursing home residents are around 0.4% of our population, so they're dying at 100 times the rate of anyone else in the country. This is despite policies that have kept out visitors and all the other precautions and even as the share of infections in these facilities fell. Fact is, these people are the most fragile among us and are dying at the highest rates; and I don't feel as though we've done much about that. I have a bad feeling there's a lot of "Well, they were going to die soon anyhow" going on in the body politic; and that is a reprehensible sentiment.

(2) Underlying conditions have played a key role in determining who survives infection. Those with conditions like diabetes, hypertension, and obesity are more vulnerable. This represents around 45% of the population. Once again, I think it's really easy to say, "Glad it's not me," and go on with our lives instead of looking for ways to mitigate these risks for others. "If you're so scared, why don't you just stay home?" isn't really a mitigation strategy, especially when these folks need groceries and income as much as the rest of us.

(3) People in low-income neighborhoods are much more at-risk than those with more money. Their exposure risk is miles higher because they tend to work in public-facing or other essential occupations which cannot be done remotely. They are also more dependent on mass transit, which increases the risk of exposure. And they are less able to stay home when they feel sick because they frequently do not have access to sick pay or paid vacation. It appears likely this is why Black and Latino communities are so much more at risk; this seems tied to social and environmental factors, not to some innate vulnerability.

If you, like me, are not in a nursing home, are able to avoid going to a work site, and can avoid the crowds on mass transit, then you're a great deal less likely to get sick or to die from this virus. That doesn't make us somehow superior to those folks who don't have those advantages; it makes us luckier. It's too easy to say, "Whew, not me," when you read about who's at risk, but I think it's time we started to feel more a part of the everyone in this nation and decide the problems of others are problems we share and bear some responsibility for addressing. A whole lot needs fixing here.

According to the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) at the University of Washington, Covid-19 was the leading cause of death in the US this week. What they did was take the average number of deaths per week for non-Covid causes and set them against this week's Covid-19 deaths, and here's what they got:

Covid-19: 11,820

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Ischemic heart disease: 10,724

Lung cancer: 3965

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease: 3765

Stroke: 3646

To be clear, on the year, Covid-19 comes in third to heart disease (#1) and cancers of all kinds (#2); so the claim here is that just for this week, Covid-19 is the leading cause of death, not that it overall kills more people. If, however, current projections hold and we don't mend our ways, that is certainly subject to change. I'm a little worried about that at the moment.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute for Allergy and Infectious Diseases, participated in a CNN Town Hall on the Covid-19 pandemic and vaccines yesterday and shared a lot of information in a wide-ranging discussion. Here's a summary of some high points:

(1) We don't know whether these vaccines protect you from getting infections with SARS-CoV-2. It looks like the data tell us they keep you from getting sick, but they don't tell us whether you can still get infected. So it is possible vaccination programs mean there will be a whole lot more asymptomatic virus shedders walking around—which could be a problem for all of the unvaccinated people in the population. I don't believe this is considered highly likely, but clearly we really need to understand this. We will learn more about this as studies of clinical trial participants continues.

(2) It will be a while before children can be vaccinated. After a vaccine is shown to be safe and effective in adults, then you run a smaller trial in children to assure it is safe and that it induces the same sort of response in children as it does in adults. This is followed by what's called a bridging study to apply the data from this trial to what is known from the larger adult trials to determine effectiveness in the younger age group. (These involve something called correlates of immunity, a topic I'm not tackling here because this is about what Dr. Fauci had to say, and he did not address this. There's more on this farther along—just keep reading.) Since trials have just begun in children for the Pfizer vaccine and are not yet underway in children for the Moderna vaccine, we won't have vaccine for children for a few months, I'd guess.

(3) It will likely be late March or early April before people not in one of the priority groups can receive a vaccine. He also made the point that is exceptionally important for folks to receive vaccine when it is available to them, that we're not really going to get this pandemic under control unless we get a sufficient number of Americans to sign on to be vaccinated.

(4) There are places in the US where the health care system is under so much strain that there may need to be quite strict restrictions placed on life in order to bring case numbers down. He said, "There are some situations where they will be doing temporary lockdowns because they cannot strain the health care system any more. The unimaginable thing, that no one wants to see happen, that when you have such a strain on the beds and on the personnel, the health care personnel, that you are going to deprive people from the kind of care they need." He's talking about rationing care, turning away some patients because there are no more resources available to care for them. He added that "in some places, they are thinking about that."

(5) If we don't serious up, we could lose another half-million Americans to this virus before April. He's not talking a total of a half-million; he's talking a half-million in addition to the more than a quarter-million already lost. He explained we haven't seen the effects of a Thanksgiving surge yet; he expects that to peak around Christmas and also expects another surge associated with Christmas. And he reminded us that masks, social distancing, and avoiding crowds can help to prevent that outcome.

(6) There is a plan to address vaccine hesitancy in communities of color with the help of the community groups that helped with clinical trial sign-ups and of community leaders. This hesitancy has deep historical roots, which means something more than a slick marketing campaign will be needed. Because these groups are so much at risk, significant efforts are being made to encourage vaccination.

(7) States will have the primary responsibility for getting vaccines out and into people. The federal government will provide vaccine and deliver it to states, but states will take over from there.

Yet another study of mask effectiveness was published a couple of days ago in the Proceedings of the

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National Academy of Science, this one from a German team. You will not be surprised by their findings; at least, by now you shouldn't be. They used public data to compare regions with and without mask usage last spring and discovered that mandatory mask policies were associated with approximately a 47% reduction in new case reports; in one city, the reduction was 75%. They also found the greatest reduction occurs in the 60-and-over age group, where 90% reduction occurred. Just one more nail in the coffin of the masks-don't-work-anyhow line of argument.

The National Vaccine Advisory Committee met yesterday and voted to recommend against issuing an emergency use authorization (EUA) for vaccine in children. Based on the fact that children generally have only mild disease, they did not think the additional risk of proceeding under an EUA was justified for them, so vaccinations for children should wait for full vaccine licensure. They also recommended phase 2 clinical trials begin to include pregnant women.

So this would be a good time to discuss those correlates of immunity mentioned above. Here's the thing: When we have a brand new vaccine where we didn't have one before, the standard practice—which we've all seen play out over the past several months—is to test that first one or two (or dozen) vaccine candidates against a saline placebo. That means we vaccinate half of our clinical trial participants with the actual vaccine candidate and inject the other half of participants with a sterile saline solution, harmless and useless. Then we count infections and do some statistical wizardry to conclude whether or not the vaccine prevents disease and how effective it is at doing so. But once we have a vaccine that works, it wouldn't really be ethical to test a new (and possibly much better) vaccine in the same way because it would mean exposing the placebo-receiving participants to unacceptable risk, given we already have something effective that would prevent them getting sick. So what we do instead is to give half the participants the already-approved vaccine and half the new one and compare them. The problem is that, because the old vaccine works and so very few people are going to get sick (unless your new vaccine candidate is truly a mess) but we still need some minimum number of sick people to do our statistical wizardry, we're going to need to inject a whole lot more than 30,000 people to figure out whether it's better—maybe hundreds of thousands. This gets incredibly expensive and, once an infection is somewhat under control in a population, can take years and years. There are vaccines in development that have never been able to be tested because there isn't enough of the disease around to get the required number of infections in your trial. It's not like we want people getting sick, but it certainly does make vaccine trials easier when they do.

Influenza vaccine is a good example of the problem. Because influenza virus mutates so much, we need new vaccine every year to cover the particular genetic variants emerging for the new flu season. And we can't really test them between flu seasons because not enough people are getting sick with flu in the off-season. And we have only a few months to get this one done before the new flu season arrives, so there would never be enough time, no matter how many people we enroll in our trials.

The solution to this problem is to find something called correlates of immunity. These are something measurable we can look for that tells us whether the vaccine works without doing the whole two-group comparison thing that is a controlled trial. Typically, correlates of immunity will be something we can measure in people's blood that tells us whether the vaccine is working; if you have that, you can focus just on vaccine safety because you have another way to tell it's effective. That's what we do for flu vaccine, so this is an established and accepted practice. The trick is to identify that correlate so that your assessment of efficacy is accurate.

The correlate of immunity (or correlate of protection) we're looking at for coronavirus vaccine is, according to a study conducted at Harvard's Center for Virology and Vaccine Research and published in the journal *Nature*, a kind of antibody called neutralizing antibodies. Now we've talked about neutralizing antibodies before.

You may recall that we produce a panoply of antibodies in response to any single pathogen like this virus; our immune systems respond to all kinds of proteins found on the virus. Some of these antibodies are very specific for the virus, but they attach fairly harmlessly to some part of the virus that isn't bothered a bit by having a spare antibody hanging on it. Those antibodies aren't protective. Other antibodies attach to some important-to-the-virus portion of the virion and interfere with their ability to bind to, enter, or take

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over our cells such that the antibody prevents the virus making us sick. Those are neutralizing antibodies.

So what these researchers at Harvard did was infect macaque monkeys with SARS-CoV-2. When the monkeys recovered from their infections, the scientists took blood from the animals, isolated and purified the neutralizing antibodies, then transferred those into naïve animals, that is, ones which had not yet been exposed to the virus. After that, they exposed these animals to the virus. Most of the macaques showed no signs of infection, and none of those receiving high doses of the antibodies showed signs of infection. Bingo! There's your correlate of protection. In macaques. Not necessarily in humans. Yet.

What don't we know yet? There were only a small number of monkeys in this study, so larger studies are needed to be sure we're not looking at some sort of quirk unique just to these few monkeys. Also, we do not yet know whether human neutralizing antibodies will work in humans just as well as monkey ones did in monkeys. But this is a good start, an important one. And if we can demonstrate the effect in a larger number of subjects and show it occurs in people too, we'll have the basis for those bridging studies Dr. Fauci talked about in that CNN Town Hall.

Vaccine maker Moderna said a couple of days ago they expect to have between 100 and 125 million doses of its vaccine available globally in the first quarter of next year. Most of those doses, 85-100 million, are already committed to the US market. Remembering that each person requires two doses, that's enough vaccine for up to 50 million people here. They also reaffirmed that they expect to deliver 20 million doses yet this year in the US, and their longer-term projections are that they'll have between a half-billion and one billion doses produced by the end of next year.

The Dublin Zoo is a major tourist attraction in Ireland—in fact, the third most visited attraction in the country, which is a good thing because their expenses to care for their animals run upwards of \$600,000 per month. While zoos have often been problematic in the past, nowadays they tend to hold animals who are unable to live in the wild and to sponsor breeding programs for critically endangered species; they also give the public exposure to species they might not otherwise give much attention, thus serving a conservation role. And this zoo gets 1.2 million visitors per year, which provides a lot of operating income.

Until this year.

The Dublin Zoo has been closed for more than five months in 2020, and without those entry fees, the future was uncertain. They put out an appeal on their Facebook page, asking for donations to pay the bills. Well, that appears to have worked: Donations poured in. People jumped at the opportunity to sponsor a baby elephant, share their childhood memories of visiting the zoo, and give lots and lots of money. In addition, the campaign triggered calls for the government to come up with long-term funding solutions for the zoo. Short-term funding seems to be on the table from a government ministry, and a longer-term solution may be in the offing. Animals need to eat too. You never know who or what is endangered in this pandemic besides the people at risk. I hope we can spare some compassion for more than just ourselves.

Be well. We'll talk again.

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Area COVID-19 Cases

	Dec. 3	Dec. 4	Dec. 5	Dec. 6
Minnesota	327,477	333,626	338,973	345,281
Nebraska	132,530	134,710	136,325	138,568
Montana	64,340	65,122	66,436	67,069
Colorado	241,172	247,209	252,222	257,347
Wyoming	29,966	30,518	31,047	31,250
North Dakota	80,135	81,105	81,949	82,504
South Dakota	82,203	83,348	84,398	85,304
United States	13,925,350	14,147,754	14,373,720	14,584,706
US Deaths	273,847	276,401	279,008	281,206

Minnesota	+5165	+6,149	+5,347	+ 6308
Nebraska	+2,336	+2,180	+1,615	+ 2243
Montana	+1135	+780	+1,314	+ 633
Colorado	+3862	+6,037	+5,013	+ 5125
Wyoming	+577	+552	+529	+ 203
North Dakota	+480	+970	+844	+ 555
South Dakota	+1291	+1,145	+1,050	+ 906
United States	+199,044	+222,404	+225,966	+ 210986
US Deaths	+3,156	+2,554	+2,607	+ 2198

	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 5th COVID-19 UPDATE

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from State Health Lab Reports

South Dakota:

Positive: +906 (85304 total) Positivity Rate: 14.7%

Total Tests: 6141 (639797 total)

Hospitalized: +45 (4793 total). 512 currently hospitalized -4)

Deaths: +27 (1091 total)

Age: 80+=15, 70s=7, 60s=3, 50s=1, 40s=1. Males=14, Females=13.

Counties: Brown-1, Buffalo-1, Codington-2, Deuel-1, Dewey-1, Hutchinson-2, Lake-1, McCook-2, Meade-1, Minnehaha-1, Oglala Lakota-1, Pennington-4, Roberts-1, Spink-3, Todd-1, Tripp-1, Yankton-3.

Recovered: +602 (68011 total)

Active Cases: +277 (16202)

Percent Recovered: 79.7%

Beadle (32) +16 positive, +10 recovered (426 active cases)

Brookings (18) +24 positive, +12 recovered (431 active cases)

Brown (30): +36 positive, +24 recovered (656 active cases)

Clark (1): +3 positive, +2 recovered (66 active cases)

Clay (11): +9 positive, +5 recovered (240 active cases)

Codington (57): +45 positive, +18 recovered (517 active cases)

Davison (40): +25 positive, +20 recovered (480 active cases)

Day (11): +10 positive, +3 recovered (124 active cases)

Edmunds (3): +3 positive, +3 recovered (55 active cases)

Faulk (10): +2 positive, +1 recovered (24 active cases)

Grant (15): +33 positive, +15 recovered (178 active cases)

Hanson (3): +2 positive, +3 recovered (79 active cases)

Hughes (21): +16 positive, +20 recovered (311 active cases)

Lawrence (23): +34 positive, +18 recovered (420 active cases)

Lincoln (55): +62 positive, +35 recovered (986 active cases)

Marshall (3): +2 positive, +8 recovered (63 active cases)

McCook (19): +5 positive, +1 recovered (115 active cases)

McPherson (1): +1 positive, +1 recovery (46 active case)

Minnehaha (203): +210 positive, +142 recovered (3692 active cases)

Pennington (84): +125 positive, +84 recovered (1876 active cases)

Potter (2): +1 positive, +4 recovered (70 active cases)

Roberts (21): +14 positive, +7 recovered (173 active cases)

Spink (16): +14 positive, +0 recovered (132 active cases)

Walworth (13): +8 positive, 1 recovered (146 active cases)

NORTH DAKOTA

COVID-19 Daily Report, Dec. 5:

- 10.3% rolling 14-day positivity
- 558 new positives
- 8,330 susceptible test encounters
- 298 currently hospitalized (-26)
- 5,021 active cases (-286)
- 1,007 total deaths (+18)

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2 days ago

Yesterday

Today

Global Cases
65,323,809
14,147,754 US
9,571,559 India
6,487,084 Brazil
2,382,012 Russia
2,310,271 France
1,678,419 United Kingdom
1,675,902 Spain
1,664,829 Italy
1,447,732 Argentina
1,343,322 Colombia
1,144,643 Mexico
1,143,664 Germany
1,041,846 Poland
1,003,494 Iran

Global Cases
66,045,464
14,373,720 US
9,608,211 India
6,533,968 Brazil
2,410,462 Russia
2,321,703 France
1,694,806 United Kingdom
1,688,939 Italy
1,684,647 Spain
1,454,631 Argentina
1,352,607 Colombia
1,159,257 Germany
1,156,770 Mexico
1,054,273 Poland
1,028,986 Iran

Global Cases
66,623,914
14,584,706 US
9,644,222 India
6,577,177 Brazil
2,439,163 Russia
2,334,626 France
1,710,379 United Kingdom
1,709,991 Italy
1,684,647 Spain
1,459,832 Argentina
1,362,249 Colombia
1,183,640 Germany
1,168,395 Mexico
1,063,449 Poland
1,028,986 Iran

Global Deaths
1,508,906

Global Deaths
1,521,598

Global Deaths
1,530,296

276,401 deaths US
175,270 deaths Brazil
139,188 deaths India
108,173 deaths Mexico
60,210 deaths United Kingdom
58,038 deaths Italy
54,231 deaths France
49,695 deaths Iran

279,008 deaths US
175,964 deaths Brazil
139,700 deaths India
108,863 deaths Mexico
60,714 deaths United Kingdom
58,852 deaths Italy
54,859 deaths France
50,016 deaths Iran

281,206 deaths US
176,628 deaths Brazil
140,182 deaths India
109,456 deaths Mexico
61,111 deaths United Kingdom
59,514 deaths Italy
55,073 deaths France
50,016 deaths Iran

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County	Positive Cases	Recovered Cases	Negative Persons	Deceased	Community Spread	% RT-PCR Test Positivity Rate (Weekly)
▲						
Aurora	377	293	735	5	Substantial	36.54%
Beadle	2367	1916	4761	32	Substantial	21.19%
Bennett	327	272	1039	5	Substantial	7.14%
Bon Homme	1398	1257	1763	20	Substantial	23.85%
Brookings	2570	2121	8909	18	Substantial	9.32%
Brown	3828	3142	10414	30	Substantial	25.91%
Brule	588	502	1610	5	Substantial	27.07%
Buffalo	390	349	827	10	Substantial	21.62%
Butte	759	629	2659	14	Substantial	16.44%
Campbell	107	94	194	1	Moderate	16.67%
Charles Mix	946	666	3371	6	Substantial	19.08%
Clark	271	204	794	1	Substantial	20.00%
Clay	1422	1171	4196	11	Substantial	16.12%
Codington	2872	2298	7641	57	Substantial	25.30%
Corson	411	353	853	5	Substantial	41.18%
Custer	585	454	2219	7	Substantial	13.17%
Davison	2493	1973	5344	40	Substantial	26.75%
Day	412	281	1434	11	Substantial	35.19%
Deuel	344	254	915	3	Substantial	36.36%
Dewey	1093	598	3273	6	Substantial	29.55%
Douglas	318	246	762	5	Substantial	17.46%
Edmunds	274	216	857	3	Substantial	11.88%
Fall River	376	309	2135	10	Substantial	9.04%
Faulk	287	253	565	10	Moderate	18.18%
Grant	699	506	1787	15	Substantial	30.32%
Gregory	450	366	1007	22	Substantial	23.76%
Haakon	167	130	455	3	Substantial	10.99%
Hamlin	518	376	1401	17	Substantial	22.67%
Hand	294	241	664	1	Substantial	30.00%
Hanson	281	199	537	3	Substantial	54.32%
Harding	83	63	135	0	Moderate	38.89%
Hughes	1737	1405	5061	21	Substantial	20.40%
Hutchinson	608	444	1876	13	Substantial	39.17%

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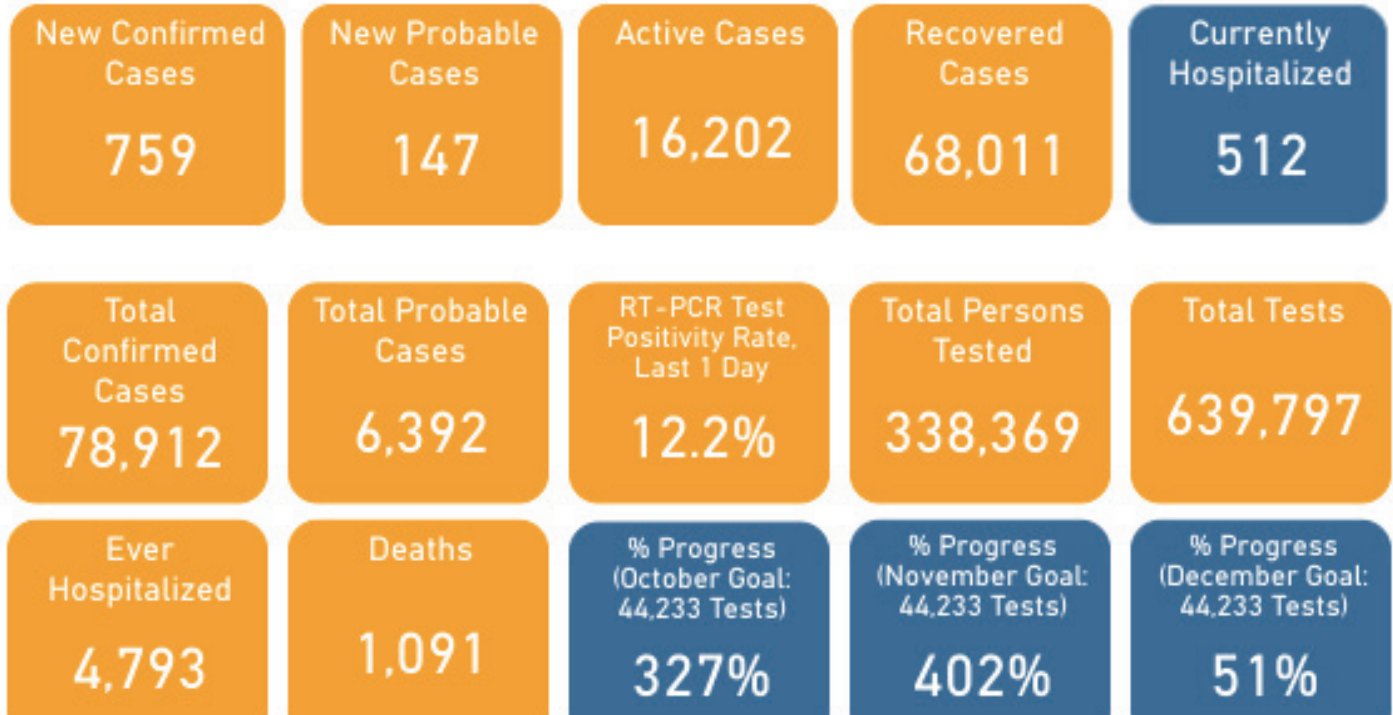
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Hyde	125	101	342	0	Substantial	50.00%
Jackson	216	174	833	8	Substantial	23.19%
Jerauld	244	201	457	13	Substantial	17.86%
Jones	63	54	160	0	Moderate	10.00%
Kingsbury	461	366	1294	12	Substantial	15.22%
Lake	898	725	2561	12	Substantial	16.60%
Lawrence	2186	1743	7140	23	Substantial	14.10%
Lincoln	5715	4674	15933	55	Substantial	23.82%
Lyman	476	394	1607	8	Substantial	24.76%
Marshall	207	141	916	3	Substantial	31.58%
McCook	611	477	1298	19	Substantial	28.18%
McPherson	156	109	472	1	Substantial	11.27%
Meade	1880	1473	6248	15	Substantial	15.08%
Mellette	192	156	620	1	Substantial	15.79%
Miner	203	163	463	5	Moderate	8.33%
Minnehaha	21579	17684	62237	203	Substantial	23.48%
Moody	444	343	1506	12	Substantial	25.22%
Oglala Lakota	1709	1372	5997	27	Substantial	22.18%
Pennington	9278	7318	31278	84	Substantial	15.67%
Perkins	215	140	575	2	Substantial	38.67%
Potter	284	215	671	2	Substantial	17.89%
Roberts	777	583	3622	21	Substantial	20.68%
Sanborn	287	201	562	2	Substantial	22.39%
Spink	601	450	1774	19	Substantial	25.32%
Stanley	239	197	693	1	Substantial	21.74%
Sully	96	80	210	3	Moderate	15.00%
Todd	1013	845	3631	15	Substantial	24.64%
Tripp	555	420	1259	9	Substantial	34.78%
Turner	842	670	2173	46	Substantial	15.09%
Union	1300	1059	4923	25	Substantial	19.27%
Walworth	535	376	1535	13	Substantial	28.26%
Yankton	2026	1395	7530	15	Substantial	18.19%
Ziebach	239	131	573	7	Substantial	42.31%
Unassigned	0	0	1779	0		

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South Dakota



AGE GROUP OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Age Range	# of Cases	# of Deaths
0-9 years	3000	0
10-19 years	9289	0
20-29 years	15986	3
30-39 years	14241	12
40-49 years	12210	20
50-59 years	12148	60
60-69 years	9576	144
70-79 years	4972	230
80+ years	3882	622

SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Sex	# of Cases	# of Deaths
Female	44547	537
Male	40757	554

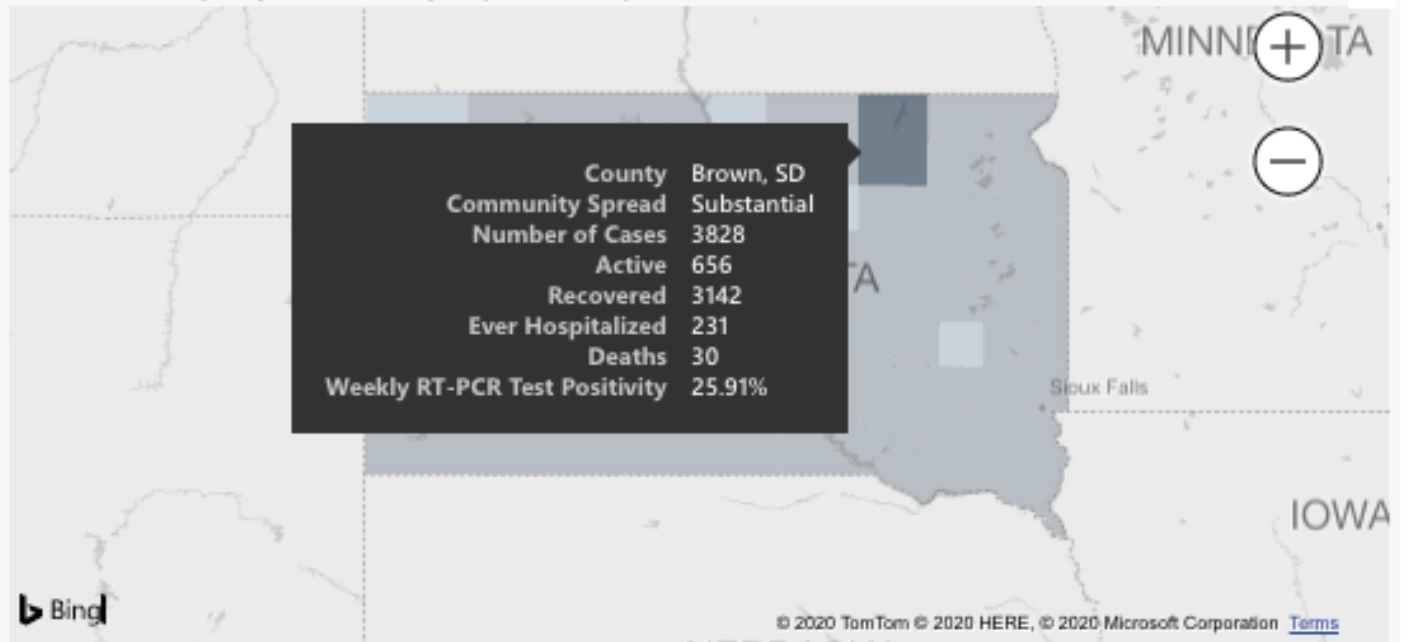
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Brown County

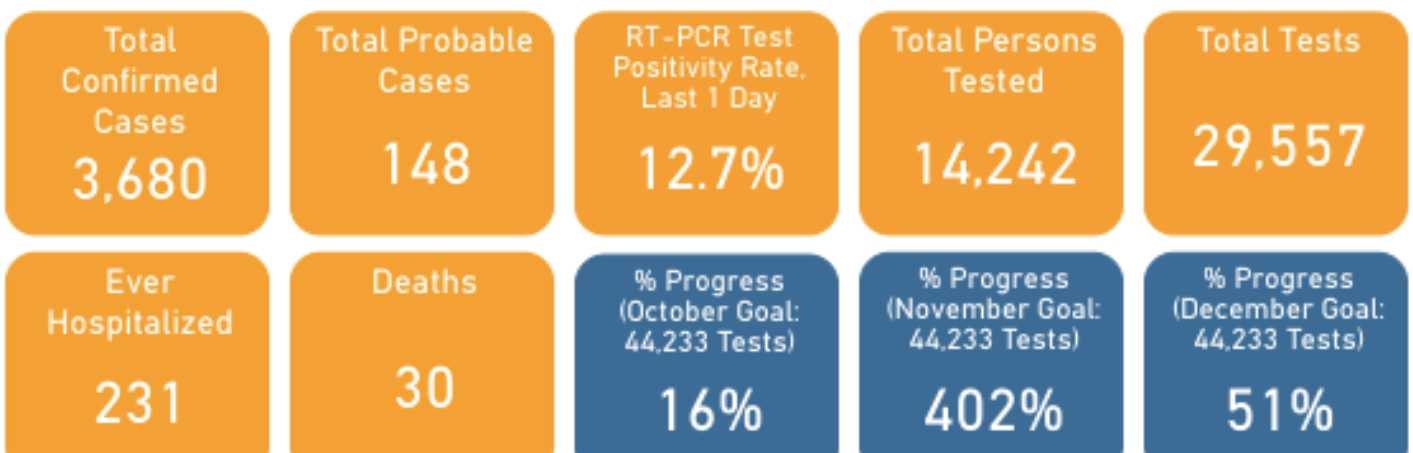


Community Spread Map by County of Residence



Community Spread ● Moderate ● Substantial

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



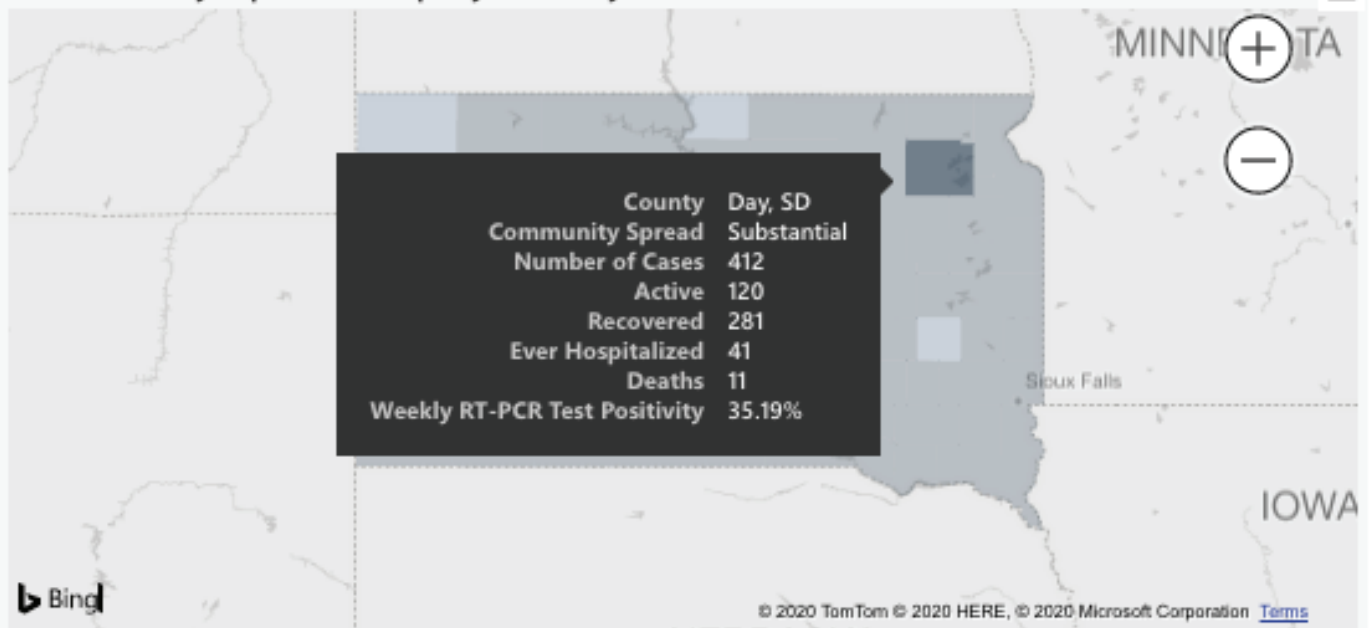
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Day County

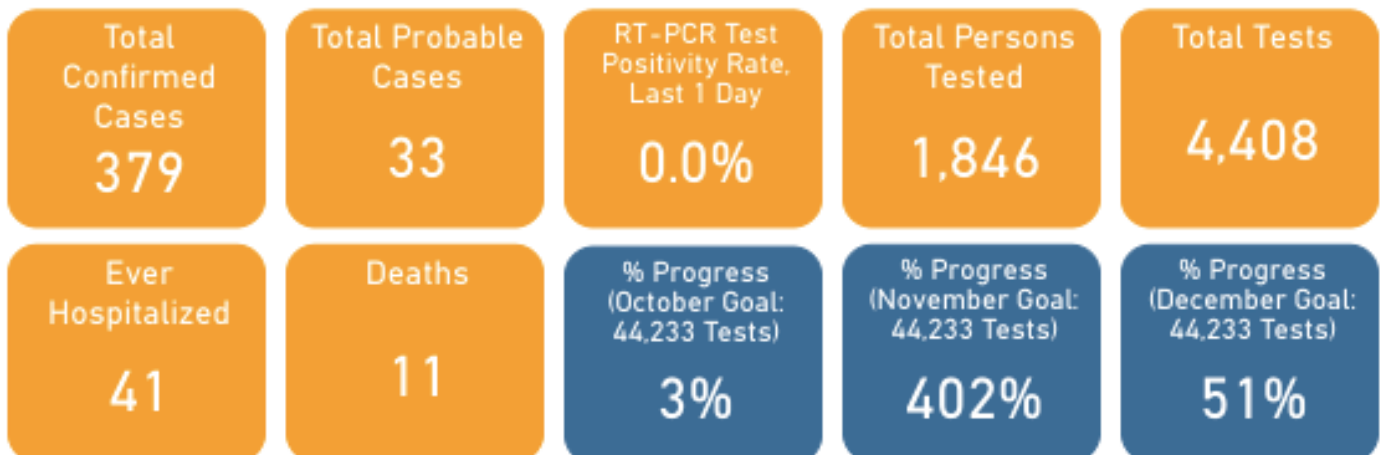


Community Spread Map by County of Residence



Community Spread ● Moderate ● Substantial

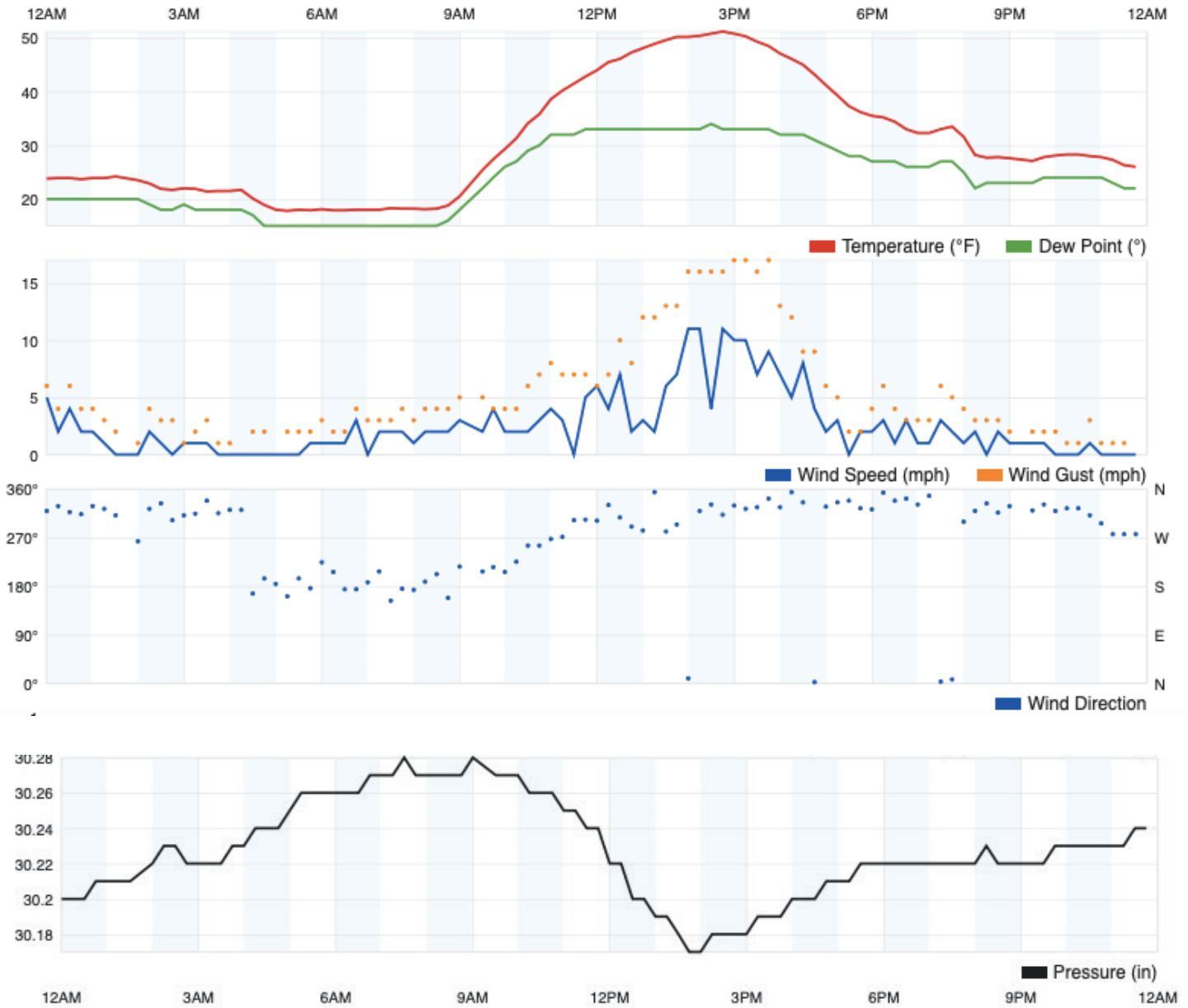
Hover over a county to see its details, or click county to update the orange boxes.



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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



Decreasing
Clouds

Tonight



Mostly Clear

Monday



Sunny

Monday
Night



Partly Cloudy

Tuesday



Partly Sunny

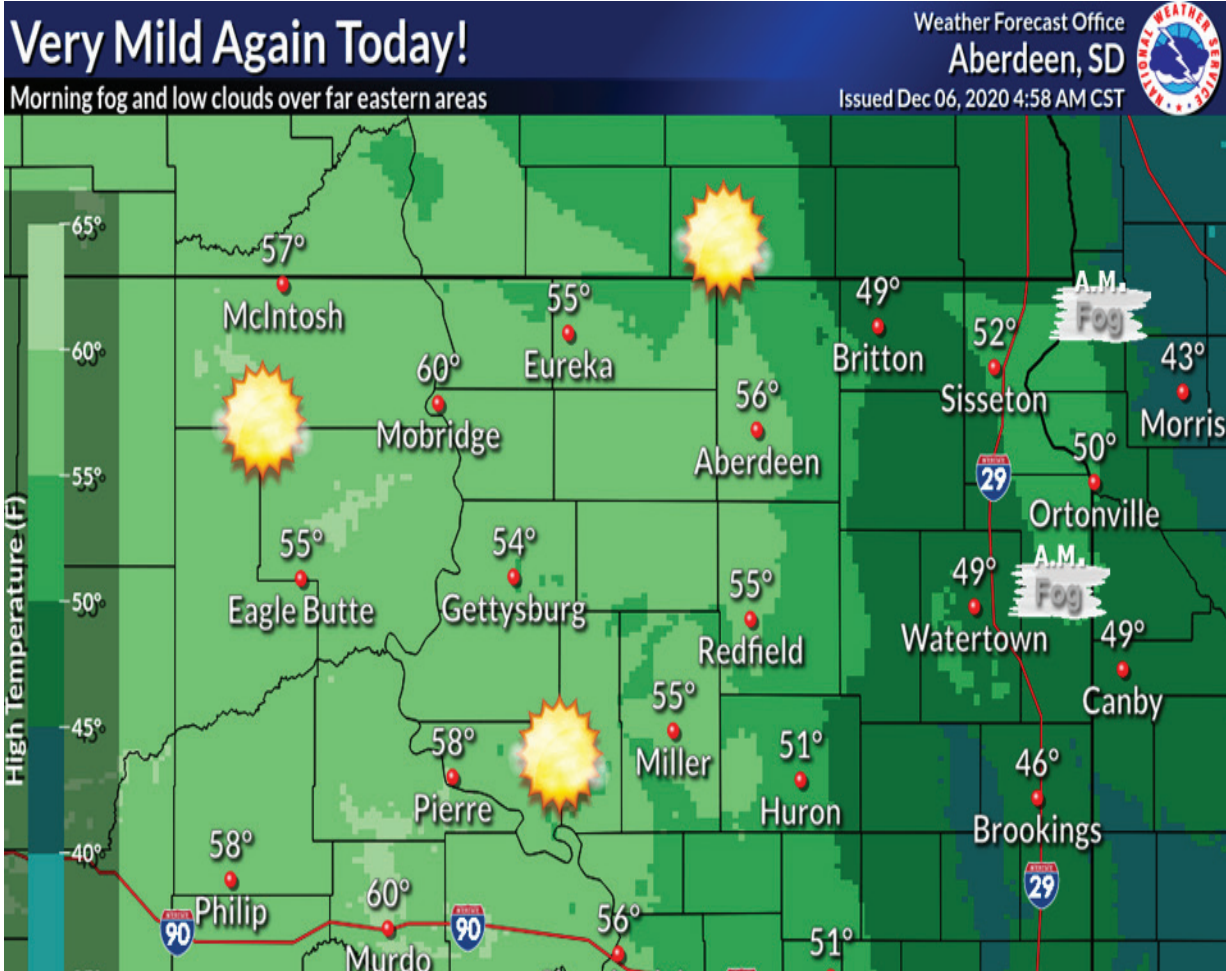
High: 56 °F

Low: 20 °F

High: 53 °F

Low: 26 °F

High: 52 °F



There is some morning fog and low clouds to contend with across far eastern portions of the forecast area, mainly affecting Big Stone and Traverse counties in west central Minnesota, and to a lesser extent, portions along I-29. Expect the fog and clouds to dissipate by mid to late morning. Otherwise, the region will see another very mild day as high temperatures rise into the 50s for most locations. Dry conditions and mild temperatures will persist through the middle of the upcoming week, before cooler temperature move in to end the week.

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Today in Weather History

December 6, 1969: An unusual period of almost continuous snow began in southern Minnesota and eastern South Dakota on the afternoon of the 5th and continued until late on the 10th. The Minneapolis-St. Paul Airport reported 88 $\frac{2}{3}$ consecutive hours of snowfall, which amounted to 14.2 inches total. The snowfall was 3-9 inches in the western half of Minnesota, with slightly lesser amounts in eastern South Dakota. Two inches snow fell at Summit and Sisseton; 2.5 inches at Watertown and Waubay; 3.0 inches at Clear Lake; 3.1 inches at Aberdeen; and 4.0 inches at Artichoke Lake, Webster, and Milbank.

December 6, 1913: A snowstorm from December 1st through the 6th dumps a record total of 45.7 inches in Denver, Colorado. This storm produced the most snow ever recorded in a single Denver snowstorm.

December 6, 1970: The National Christmas tree in 1970 was a 78 foot spruce from South Dakota. On the way to Washington, the train carrying the tree derailed twice in Nebraska. On the weekend before the lighting event, the tree toppled in gusty winds and required new branches to fill it out.

1886 - A great snowstorm hit the southern Appalachian Mountains. The three day storm produced 25 inches at Rome GA, 33 inches at Asheville NC, and 42 inches in the mountains. Montgomery AL received a record eleven inches of snow. Columbia SC received one to two inches of sleet. (4th-6th) (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1970 - A windstorm toppled the National Christmas Tree at the White House. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders - 1987)

1987 - Another in a series of storms brought high winds and heavy rain to the northwestern U.S., with heavy snow in some of the higher elevations. In northern California, Crescent City was drenched with 2.58 inches of rain, and winds gusted to 90 mph. Up to fourteen inches of snow blanketed the mountains of northern California, and snow and high winds created blizzard conditions around Lake Tahoe NV. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - The morning low at Bismarck, ND, was eleven degrees warmer than the record low of 25 degrees at Meridian MS, and during the afternoon half a dozen cities in the north central and northwestern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date, including Alpena MI with a reading of 57 degrees. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Heavy snow blanketed the Central Rocky Mountain Region. Totals in the southern foothills of Colorado ranged up to 17 inches at Rye. Arctic air invaded the north central U.S. Lincoln NE, which reported a record high of 69 degrees the previous afternoon, was 35 degrees colder. International Falls MN was the cold spot in the nation with a morning low of 9 degrees below zero, and temperatures in northern Minnesota hovered near zero through the daylight hours. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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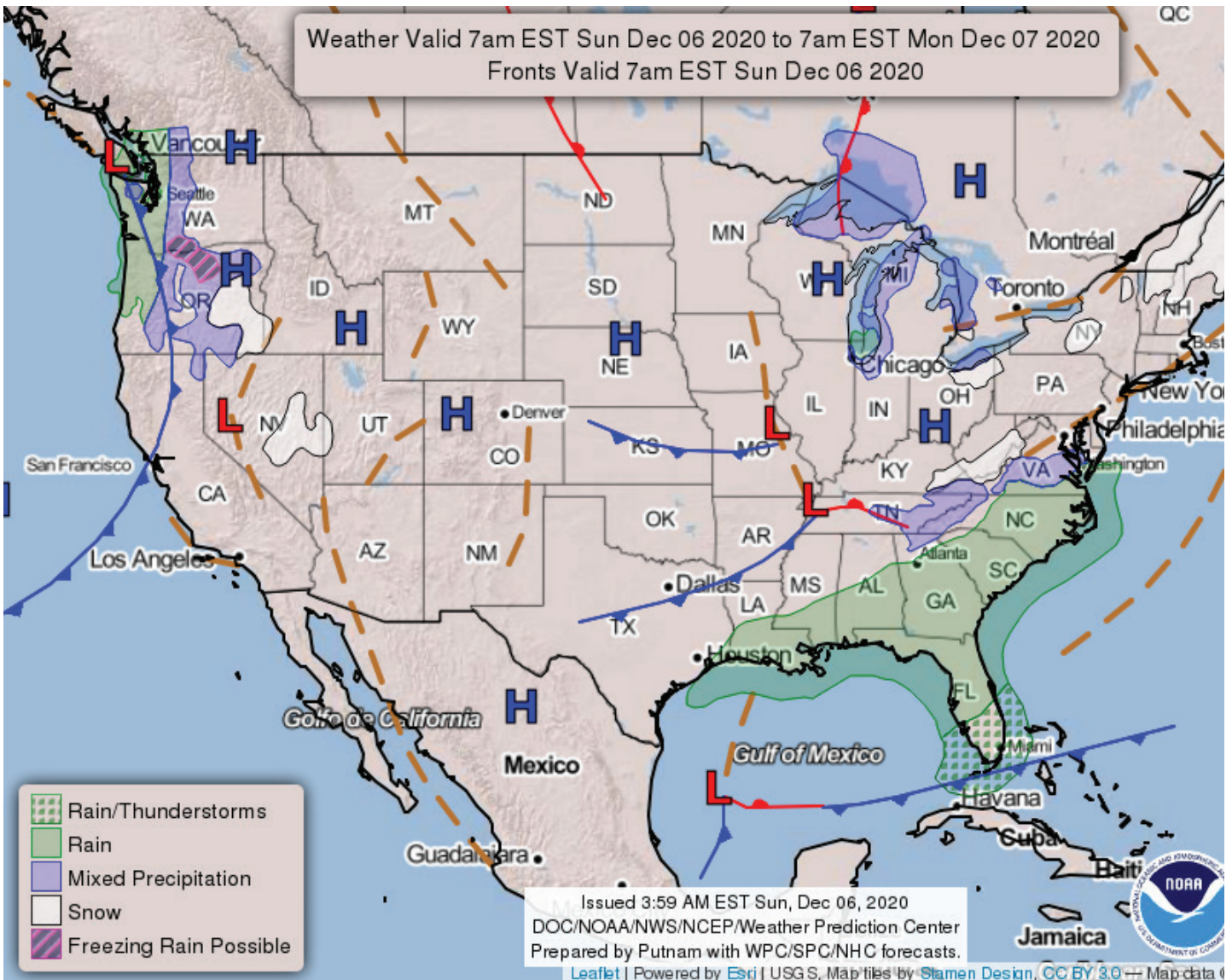
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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 51 °F at 2:40 PM
Low Temp: 18 °F at 5:22 AM
Wind: 18 mph at 2:04 PM
Precip: .00

Today's Info

Record High: 69° in 1939
Record Low: -30° in 1972
Average High: 28°F
Average Low: 9°F
Average Precip in Dec.: 0.09
Precip to date in Dec.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 21.29
Precip Year to Date: 16.52
Sunset Tonight: 4:51 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:00 a.m.



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NEVER MIND, SANTA...

Chris was sitting in Santa's lap and going over a long list of presents that he wanted for Christmas. "I want a bicycle," he said, "and I also want a wagon, a chemistry set, a telescope, an electric train, a football, a Kindle FIRE, and a pair of rollerblades."

"That's a long list," said Santa. "I'll have to check carefully to see if you were a good boy."

After thinking for a moment Chris said, "Don't bother, Santa, I'll just settle for the rollerblades." Not many of us would be able to "pass" a really thorough investigation to discover if we were worthy of receiving a long list of gifts. We'd probably be like Chris and settle very quickly for very little. Nor would many of us want to have someone investigate our lives and then decide if we deserved a gift or not. We would be quite anxious – if not completely frightened.

But God is so very different. He knows everything there is to know about us and still offers us the most precious gift He has: His Son.

"Now, no one is likely to die for a good person," said Paul, "though someone might be willing to die for someone who is especially good. But God showed His great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners." Christ: the source of eternal life.

There you have it. It is not about whether or not we are good or deserving of eternal life through Him. It is because of God's great love that we can have the gift of eternal life!

Prayer: May we realize during this season, our Father, the great Gift we have because of Your love. May Your Son be our main interest and attraction this year. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Romans 5:5-11 Now, most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially good. But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.

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News from the Associated Press

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Dakota Cash

08-16-17-19-33

(eight, sixteen, seventeen, nineteen, thirty-three)

Estimated jackpot: \$23,000

Lotto America

12-15-35-36-51, Star Ball: 9, ASB: 3

(twelve, fifteen, thirty-five, thirty-six, fifty-one; Star Ball: nine; ASB: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$3.5 million

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$264 million

Powerball

03-04-06-48-53, Powerball: 10, Power Play: 2

(three, four, six, forty-eight, fifty-three; Powerball: ten; Power Play: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$243 million

AG wants lawsuit against legal pot in South Dakota Dropped

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota's top law enforcement officer says a measure legalizing marijuana in the state is legal and a lawsuit challenging it should be tossed out.

The Argus Leader reports Attorney General Jason Ravnsborg's office asked a judge in court filings Thursday to dismiss the lawsuit by Pennington County Sheriff Kevin Thom and Highway Patrol Superintendent Rick Miller.

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

Thom and Miller are challenging the constitutionality of the amendment, which legalized the cultivation, transport, possession and sale of marijuana in the state.

The lawsuit argues that because the amendment inserts a new section into the constitution, it should be considered a revision to the constitution, which can only be done placed on the ballot through a state convention, something that hasn't been done since statehood.

The Latest: Daily Russian virus infections hit record

By The Associated Press undefined

MOSCOW -- Coronavirus infections in Russia hit a new record on Sunday, as the country's authorities registered 29,039 new confirmed cases, the highest daily spike in the pandemic.

Russia's total of over 2.4 million reported infections remains the fourth largest caseload in the world. Russia has also reported 43,141 virus-related deaths.

Russia has been swept by a resurgence of the virus this fall, with daily confirmed infections and deaths significantly exceeding those reported in the spring. Nevertheless, Russian authorities have rejected the idea of another nationwide lockdown or any widespread closures of businesses.

On Wednesday, President Vladimir Putin ordered a "large-scale" vaccination against COVID-19 to begin in Russia with the domestically developed Sputnik V vaccine that is still undergoing advanced studies needed to ensure its safety and effectiveness. Doctors and teachers will be first in line to get inoculated, Putin said.

Sputnik V has been offered to medical workers for several months even though the vaccine was still in

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the middle of advanced trials. Several top Russian officials said they had already gotten the required two jabs. The Russian military this week began vaccinating the crews of navy ships scheduled to depart on a mission.

Health Minister Mikhail Murashko said Wednesday that more than 100,000 people in Russia have already received the shots.

THE VIRUS OUTBREAK:

- Europe battles a surge in coronavirus deaths in nursing homes even as it gears up for a massive vaccination program that gives priority to the elderly
- Most of California to enter sweeping new virus lockdown
- China prepares large-scale rollout of coronavirus vaccines
- Ethiopia's conflict stokes humanitarian and virus crisis

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

HERE'S WHAT ELSE IS HAPPENING:

BEIJING — Eight people in the northern Chinese city of Manzhouli have coronavirus after everyone in the city was tested following the discovery of two locally acquired infections, the official Xinhua News Agency reported Sunday.

Authorities conducted nucleic acid tests on 203,378 people in the city on the border with Mongolia in two rounds starting Nov. 22 and Nov. 27.

The city had 24 locally acquired cases as of Sunday, Xinhua said. It said 1,239 people who had close contact with them were under medical observation.

SEOUL, South Korea — South Korea says it'll further toughen physical distancing rules as recent restrictions has failed to curb a viral resurgence that threatens the country's health care system.

Health Minister Park Neung-hoo said Sunday recently elevated distancing rules haven't showed much effect. Park says South Korea could face a shortage of intensive care unit beds if the current level continues for one to two weeks.

Under new restrictions effective Tuesday for three weeks, authorities will shut down karaoke rooms, fitness centers, indoor gyms and most of cram schools in the Seoul metropolitan area. Some high-risk facilities like nightclubs in the Seoul area have already been shut down.

Events must be under 50 people in the Seoul area and sports matches will be held without fans.

Park says South Korea has reported an average of 514 new virus cases each day in the past week, 375 of them in the Seoul area. South Korea reported 631 new cases Sunday, taking its total to 37,546 with 545 deaths.

SALEM, Ore. — The Oregon Medical Board has suspended the medical license of a doctor who said at a pro-Trump rally that he doesn't wear a mask at his Dallas, Oregon, clinic.

KGW-TV reported Friday that Dr. Steven LaTulippe also said at the November rally that he also encourages others not to wear masks.

A state order requires health care workers to wear a mask in health care settings. The medical board voted this week to suspend LaTulippe's license immediately due to concerns about patient safety.

ST. LOUIS — St. Louis children's hospitals have started treating adult patients as area hospitals struggle to keep up with rising coronavirus cases.

Dr. Marya Strand, chief medical officer for SSM Health Cardinal Glennon Children's Hospital, told the St. Louis Post-Dispatch that is treating adults who don't have COVID-19 to take some of the pressure off other hospitals. St. Louis Children's Hospital also has opened its doors to adults.

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About 1,054 people were hospitalized in the St. Louis area Wednesday for COVID-19, including 221 patients in intensive care units. St. Louis-area hospitals are at about 82% capacity for in-patient beds and 81% capacity for ICU beds.

Staff at SSM Health and BJC Healthcare children's hospitals have also started volunteering to work at other overwhelmed hospitals.

PHOENIX — Arizona health officials used a blunt tone Saturday as the state reported 6,799 coronavirus cases, the second-highest daily increase.

The Department of Health Services says on Twitter that people should wear masks "around anyone who isn't a member of your household, even those you know and trust."

Similarly, the department's director, Dr. Cara Christ, says "we must act as though anyone we are around may be infected."

The cases reported Saturday trailed only the record 10,322 cases reported Tuesday. Officials have said record high included data delayed by the Thanksgiving holiday weekend. There were four daily reports of more than 5,000 cases this week.

The hospitalizations for coronavirus rose to 2,931 on Friday, five times as many since early October. Republican Gov. Doug Ducey has not ordered a statewide mask mandate or curfews.

The state reported 40 deaths on Saturday. Arizona has 358,900 total cases and 6,935 confirmed deaths.

ROME — Italy had more than 21,000 daily coronavirus cases and added 662 deaths in the last 24 hours. The 21,052 new cases raised Italy's total to nearly 1.6 million. There's been 59,514 confirmed deaths, the second-highest toll in Europe behind Britain's toll.

This week, Italy's Premier Giuseppe Conte signed a decree limiting travel between regions Dec. 21 to Jan. 6, national Epiphany Day holiday. Conte hopes that will prevent holiday vacations that could fuel contagion.

RALEIGH, N.C. — North Carolina reported a record increase in cases of the coronavirus and hospitalizations on Saturday.

The state reported 6,018 cases since Friday and 2,171 people with coronavirus in the hospitals. That's up 14 from a day earlier.

"In less than a week, we went from exceeding 5,000 new cases reported in one day to exceeding 6,000," said Dr. Mandy Cohen, the state's health secretary. "This is very worrisome. This indicates we have even more viral spread across our state right now."

North Carolina has a record number of people in intensive care, Cohen says. Another 49 people have died, bringing the confirmed total to 5,516, the health department says.

OKLAHOMA CITY — There were 4,370 newly reported coronavirus cases Saturday in Oklahoma.

The rolling averages of cases rose from 2,843 per day on Nov. 20 to 3,044 on Friday. The daily average of deaths increased from 15 daily to 22 during the same period, according to data by Johns Hopkins University.

The increase is due largely to community spread, according to Dr. Dale Bratzler of the University of Oklahoma medical center. He says, "it's typically places like restaurants, bars, gyms, places of worship."

Oklahoma has 213,245 total confirmed cases. There were 14 more deaths reported Saturday, bringing the total to 1,874 confirmed deaths.

BOISE, Idaho — National Guard troops are directing people outside a Boise urgent-care clinic revamped into a facility for coronavirus patients.

Health officials say Idaho's attempt to hold the coronavirus in check is failing as infections and deaths surge. They've halted elective surgeries to save bed space.

Inside Primary Health Medical Group's clinic, physician assistant Nicole Thomas works extra 12-hour shifts. She dons protective gear to examine 36 patients a day with symptoms. Some days, she says, half

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test positive for coronavirus.

In a state where many citizens are resisting pandemic restrictions, overworked staff are getting sick or quitting to avoid the stress. It takes at least two days to get an appointment for a test. Primary Health officials say they'll turn three more facilities into COVID-19 clinics by Dec. 30.

More than 1,000 people have died from the coronavirus in Idaho. Confirmed infections have surpassed 100,000.

DETROIT — Michigan state health officials reported more than 8,600 daily confirmed cases on Friday and 81 deaths.

"When we look at the number of daily deaths, we have doubled in numbers of daily deaths, again nationally and regionally in the past couple of weeks," Dr. Adnan Munkarah, executive vice president and chief clinical officer for Henry Ford Health System in Detroit.

He's concerned about the possibility of travel and family gatherings at the holidays.

Munkarah says the health system currently has 576 employees out because they have tested positive, have pending tests or are quarantined because of close contact.

That number is up nearly 200 workers from a week ago, he says.

China prepares large-scale rollout of coronavirus vaccines

By HUIZHONG WU Associated Press

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP) — Provincial governments across China are placing orders for experimental, domestically made coronavirus vaccines, though health officials have yet to say how well they work or how they may reach the country's 1.4 billion people.

Developers are speeding up final testing, the Chinese foreign minister said during a U.N. meeting last week, as Britain approved emergency use of Pfizer Inc.'s vaccine candidate and providers scrambled to set up distribution.

Even without final approval, more than 1 million health care workers and others in China who are deemed at high risk of infection have received experimental vaccines under emergency use permission. There has been no word on possible side effects.

China's fledgling pharmaceutical industry has at least five vaccines from four producers being tested in more than a dozen countries including Russia, Egypt and Mexico. Health experts say even if they are successful, the certification process for the United States, Europe, Japan and other developed countries might be too complex for them to be used there. However, China said it will ensure the products are affordable for developing countries.

One developer, China National Pharmaceutical Group, known as Sinopharm, said in November it applied for final market approval for use of its vaccine in China. Others have been approved for emergency use on people deemed at high risk of infection.

"We must be prepared for large-scale production," said Vice Premier Sun Chunlan, who has overseen much of the country's response, during a visit Wednesday to developers, according to the official Xinhua News Agency.

Sun visited one of Sinopharm's Beijing subsidiary companies; another producer, Sinovac, and a research lab under the National Medical Products Administration, a regulatory agency that approves medical products for public use.

The government has yet to say how many people it plans to vaccinate. Sun said plans call for vaccinating border personnel and other high-risk populations this month.

The companies are using more traditional techniques than Western developers.

They say unlike Pfizer's vaccine, which must be kept frozen at temperatures as low as minus 70 degrees Celsius (minus 94 Fahrenheit), theirs can be stored at 2 to 8 C (36 to 46 F). The Chinese producers have yet to say how they might be distributed.

Health experts question why China is using experimental vaccines on such a vast scale now that the

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outbreak is largely under control within its borders.

Health officials previously said China will be able to manufacture 610 million doses by the end of this year and ramp up to 1 billion doses next year.

The government of Jiangsu province, where the major city of Nanjing is located, issued a procurement notice for vaccines from Sinovac and Sinopharm on Wednesday for emergency use vaccinations.

Authorities in Sichuan province in the west, which has about 85 million people, announced Monday they were already buying vaccines. An official newspaper in Anhui province, southeast of Beijing, said a local residential committee issued a notice asking whether residents want a vaccine.

The Sichuan and Anhui announcements said the vaccine, given in two shots, would cost a total of 400 yuan (\$60).

Vaccines from Sinovac and Sinopharm were approved for emergency use in July.

In October, Zhejiang province south of Shanghai offered the public vaccination under emergency use authorization. It said people considered high-risk would get priority.

In November, the Communist Party secretary for Sinopharm said almost 1 million people had received its vaccine.

In September, Sinovac's CEO said about 3,000 of its employees had taken their vaccine. He said the company provided tens of thousands of doses to the Beijing city government.

Developers have yet to disclose how effective their vaccines are and possible side effects.

Sinopharm has clinical trials under way in 10 countries including the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Jordan, Peru and Argentina with nearly 60,000 volunteers. It has built two facilities in China capable of producing 200 million doses per year.

Sinovac has trials in Brazil, Turkey and Indonesia. Its most recent publicized data, a study in the science journal the Lancet, showed its candidate produced lower levels of antibodies in people than those who had recovered from COVID-19. The company projects it will be able to produce a few hundred million doses of the vaccine by February or March of next year.

Another producer, CanSino, is testing in Russia, Pakistan and Mexico and pursuing partnerships in Latin American countries. Its vaccine, which has been used on an emergency basis with the Chinese military, uses a harmless adenovirus to carry genes into human cells to generate an immune response.

A fourth company, Anhui Zhifei Longcom Biologic Pharmacy Co., is conducting final stage trials across China.

Associated Press video producer Olivia Zhang contributed to this report.

US star soprano misses La Scala gala season-opener debut

By COLLEEN BARRY Associated Press

MILAN (AP) — Soprano Lisette Oropesa was to be the first American to sing a title role in the gala season opener at La Scala since Maria Callas in the 1950s. Then Italy's virus cases surged.

An outbreak in both La Scala's chorus and its orchestra forced the country's premier opera house to cancel for the first time one of the top events on Europe's cultural calendar.

Oropesa is now set to be one of more than 20 opera stars, among them Placido Domingo, Roberto Alagna and Piotr Beczala, recording arias and duets from the tiered theater for a broadcast gala event marking the traditional Dec. 7 opening. But there will be no glittering crowds, and no celebratory dinner. In fact, on Monday night the theater in Milan will be mostly empty.

By then, Oropesa will be in Barcelona, where she is performing next week. That comes after a whirlwind 2½ days in Milan that include a COVID-19 test, a gown fitting at Giorgio Armani for her part in the show, a dress rehearsal and, finally, performing for a TV camera an aria she had prepared for her opening night as "Lucia di Lammermoor."

Despite the disappointment of missing her La Scala season-opener debut, Oropesa, 37, still hopes to reprise the title role in Donizetti's opera in Milan once performances can return to Italy's theaters.

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"To sing a title in an Italian opera as an American soprano is a pretty big deal," Oropesa said in a phone interview from Barcelona, where she was rehearsing the role of Violetta in "La Traviata."

And doing on the La Scala stage for the coveted season-opener is even bigger. Here, Oropesa, a second-generation Cuban-American born in New Orleans, was set to follow in the footsteps of Callas — also a daughter of immigrants — who opened La Scala's 1955 season singing the title role in Bellini's "Norma."

"It is a rare thing to get that honor, and it is definitely important to me. It is more than that: To get to sing Lucia di Lammermoor in an Italian theater at all is beyond belief. I was really looking forward to that," she said.

"I hope it happens in the future. If it doesn't, it wasn't meant to be."

Oropesa was already in Milan and two weeks into rehearsals when the fall virus resurgence shut down theaters. Even before the partial lockdown in Lombardy, the theater had been hit by a virus outbreak that eventually infected 43 chorus singers and 18 musicians. That made staging the full opera — even to an empty theater as other theaters have done — too big a health risk. Management opted for a gala evening of star singers and ballet dancers, mostly recorded in segments in advance.

"By the time you get to the rehearsals as an opera singer, you have done 90% of the work," Oropesa said. "We were doing a version of the role I have never done before in different keys higher than I usually sing. To get there, and start digesting the staging, and the costumes and to stop it midway is like cooking the turkey for Thanksgiving, and someone turns it off halfway done."

Oropesa counts herself lucky she is working at all in a season of rolling theater shutdowns that has left many singers and musicians struggling to get by.

After about a decade at the Metropolitan Opera, where she was part of the young artists program and made her debut at age 22, she shifted her career toward Europe. Her knowledge of Spanish helped ease her into the Italian repertoire, and her New Orleans upbringing boosted her with the French. Oropesa's international breakthrough role was as Lucia di Lammermoor at the Royal Opera House in London in 2017, and since then she has performed in Madrid, the Paris Opera and La Scala, while keeping up ties at the Met.

In 2019, she was the recipient of two prestigious opera awards — the Beverly Sills Artist Award for rising young singers and the Richard Tucker Award.

But 2020 has been different for everyone. Oropesa was four performances into a six-date run as Violetta in "La Traviata" at the Met when it closed due to the virus last spring. And she sang at the Vienna Staatsoper in October just before Austria's lockdown put the season on hiatus.

Friends back in the United States, where theaters have been on a tight shutdown all year, have had it tougher, she said, generating income when they can with singing lessons and virtual concerts, but also as Uber drivers and construction workers.

Oropesa said her career was just established enough to help her find work more easily.

"I was fortunate enough to kind of be in the right place at the right time," she said. "I lost a lot of things, too. I lost Lucia in Milan. I have lost New Year's eve stuff."

"You lose one, you get another. If you are lucky you break even."

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Europe battles surge in coronavirus deaths in nursing homes

By ARITZ PARRA Associated Press

MADRID (AP) — As the two mortuary workers pushed a stretcher with a bagged corpse out of the room, the elderly man in the adjacent bed briefly awakened from his dementia. "Is he dead?" he muttered, extending his arm, trying to touch his roommate for the last time.

Reflecting on a scene repeated too many times, one of the workers, Manel Rivera, despaired at the growing number of elderly people dying as the coronavirus resurges.

"The sad thing is," he said of the surviving man in the Barcelona nursing home, "in a few days we'll

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probably come back for him.”

Mortuary workers are again busy around-the-clock in nursing homes and hospices across Europe, amid outbreaks that this time are causing havoc mostly in facilities spared during the spring. In the U.S., patients in nursing homes and long-term care facilities and those who care for them have accounted for a staggering 39% of the country’s 281,000 coronavirus deaths.

The surge in Europe is happening despite the retaining wall of measures erected since the spring, including facilities tailored only for residents with coronavirus. It’s also pitching authorities and elder care professionals into a race against the clock before mass vaccinations can begin.

In response, Portugal has deployed military units to train nursing home staff in disinfection. In France, where at least 5,000 institutionalized elderly have died in the past month, and in Germany and Italy, where the summer respite has been followed by an upward turn since September, visits by relatives to nursing homes are being restricted again or banned altogether.

Most countries are ramping up screening of workers and residents, trying to prevent spread by asymptomatic virus carriers. The strategy has helped Belgium reduce nursing homes deaths from 63% of all COVID-19 fatalities before mid-June to 39% at the end of November.

But in Spain, where the pandemic has ignited a polarized debate on the country’s ability to care for Europe’s fastest-aging society, nursing home coronavirus deaths have been climbing for two months. They now make up roughly half of all new daily fatalities, a similar share as in March and April. New daily infections are also disproportionate in the homes — 13 cases inside for every one outside.

There is reason for hope, however, as Britain became the first country in the world to authorize a rigorously tested COVID-19 vaccine last week, and could begin dispensing it within days, prioritizing nursing home residents and those who care for them, followed by other elderly and health care workers. Nursing homes are also at or near the top of the list for vaccines in the U.S., Spain and many other European countries.

“It’s a sensible, justified and logical measure” to prioritize nursing homes, said Miguel Vázquez, head of Madrid’s Pladigmare association of residents’ relatives. After a “shameful” death toll and a record of repeating mistakes, he said, “not doing so would be a deliberate death sentence.”

Some things have improved since the spring. Care workers have learned to make the best use of protective equipment and tests, which are no longer in such short supply. There’s a better grasp of what’s going on inside most facilities, and experts have learned how COVID-19 affects the elderly, with symptoms such as diarrhea and rashes that had been overlooked.

“It really is a chameleon disease that fools us all,” said Dr. José Augusto García Navarro, head of Spain’s Society for Geriatrics and Gerontology.

One of the gravest mistakes in the early days was to cloister the elderly in damaging isolation, García Navarro said, leading to loss of mobility, insomnia, malnourishment, depression and other ailments that affected and even killed many.

“It’s paramount to guarantee physio, occupational and psychological therapies for the infected,” he said. “That didn’t happen during the first wave and is not happening as it should during the second one.”

An initiative in Spain is trying to remedy that with facilities for recovering virus patients who, while remaining contagious, have nowhere to isolate or keep active. They come from their own homes or from the many small care facilities that have no way to separate residents.

At the Vitalia Canillejas Home in Madrid, Belkis Zoraida Cuevas, 83, is recovering from the virus, which has kept her away from her husband, 92-year-old Joaquín González, for the longest period in more than six decades of marriage.

“Oh my God! What a crisis of anxiety. How I’ve cried,” Cuevas said. “I’m doing better now, but this has been too much to handle. It’s like going to war without weapons.”

As he walked with the help of a therapist to recover lost mobility during a month-long hospitalization, 87-year-old Pedro Marcelo said: “I’m not afraid of dying, I just want to move a little bit better until the day for me to go arrives.”

A study of blood samples in all Madrid nursing homes showed that 53% of the 55,000 residents live in

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facilities where more than half of residents have developed antibodies.

"It's sad to put it this way," said Paz Membibre, who manages a dozen centers for the Vitalia Home group in or around the Spanish capital, "but the damage we suffered has protected us now." How long immunity might last, however, is a question scientists are still trying to answer.

Meanwhile, across the continent, infections often shoot up to dozens or even over 100 in just a matter of 48 hours.

In Spain, the biggest surges of cases and deaths are now in the southern Andalucía and central Castilla León regions that dodged the worst during the spring. In neighboring France, infections are now more spread out than during the spring, when they concentrated in hot spots.

In Berlin, where 14 people recently died of coronavirus in a nursing home of 90 residents, city officials said strict rules were not being applied.

García Navarro said most of the affected facilities in Spain are trying to control the virus with staff shortages as care workers fall sick. In a few cases, he said, "they are still not complying with safety protocols."

In a scathing report into how thousands were abandoned in nursing homes, many without medical treatment, in Madrid and Barcelona in the spring, Amnesty International said this week that some of the same problems still exist, including health protocols that recommend prioritizing the young over the elderly.

Bureaucracy and mismanagement have also played a role. An internal Spanish government analysis seen by The Associated Press lists 30 main errors that led to the deaths of over 20,000 elderly patients with COVID-19 before mid-May. But its recommendations are still being revised with regional officials, and some have not been implemented.

AP reporters across Europe contributed to this report.

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Ethiopia's conflict stokes humanitarian and virus crisis

By FAY ABUELGASIM and CARA ANNA Associated Press

HAMDAYET, Sudan (AP) — Ethiopia's month-long war in its northern Tigray region has severely hampered efforts to fight one of Africa's worst coronavirus outbreaks, as the fighting has displaced almost 1 million people and strained local humanitarian services to the breaking point.

Tens of thousands of those fleeing the conflict between Tigrayan and Ethiopian federal forces have crossed into neighboring Sudan, where countrywide virus numbers are also rising rapidly.

More than 45,000 refugees from the Tigray conflict are now living in remote parts of Sudan, where they have taken shelter in crowded camps that have no coronavirus testing or treatment capabilities.

"With COVID-19, it's not comfortable in these buses," said one refugee, Hailem, who said over 60 people were crammed onto the transport that took them from Hamdayet, on the Sudanese side of a main border crossing, to the camps.

Many staying in the camps are forced to share shelters and crowd together in lines for food, cash and registration with different aid agencies. There are few face masks to be seen — or available for distribution.

At the Umm Rakouba camp, Javanshir Hajiyev with aid group Mercy Corps told The Associated Press that the number of chest infections was high, but that humanitarian workers had no materials to test for the coronavirus.

Few of the refugees see the pandemic as their first concern, having witnessed deadly attacks as they fled Ethiopia, and now living in fear for family members left behind.

"I just escaped from war," said one, Gebre Meten. "I think the war is worse."

The virus outbreak is a threat, Gebre said, but the drastic conditions in the refugee camps make people forget its risks, as they face hunger, heat, and thirst.

But Sudan's growing virus cases has raised concerns that a new countrywide lockdown could be imposed

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— including measures that could stop further refugees from crossing the border.

"The people that are fleeing from conflict and violence are also fleeing for their lives," U.N. refugee chief Filippo Grandi said last weekend about the Tigray conflict. "So we have a difficult dilemma." He added that with the right health measures, "the policy of open borders" can be maintained.

Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed declared victory in the month-long conflict last weekend, but fighting between federal and regional forces has continued.

According to humanitarian officials, the crisis in the Tigray region of 6 million people remains critical, with medical supplies running low, including those needed to fight the coronavirus pandemic.

"The pandemic is still with us, despite the fighting and a new humanitarian crisis unfolding in its wake," the International Committee for the Red Cross said recently after visiting struggling health centers in the Tigray and neighboring Amhara regions.

The largest hospital in northern Ethiopia, in the Tigray capital of Mekele, "is running dangerously low on sutures, antibiotics, anticoagulants, painkillers, and even gloves," said the ICRC's Maria Soledad.

Ethiopia surpassed 100,000 confirmed infections last month shortly after the deadly conflict began.

All humanitarian aid to the Tigray region, from medical supplies to food, has been blocked since the fighting began, to the growing distress of the humanitarian community and health experts alike. On Wednesday, the U.N. said it had signed a deal with Ethiopia's government to allow aid access in Tigray — but only to those areas of it under the federal government's control.

That access will take time, as fighting continues.

Norwegian Refugee Council chief Jan Egeland said aid workers still "have a lot of concerns" as they prepare to return to the Tigray region, where there has been scant information on how the conflict has impacted local health facilities and infrastructure, or the outbreak's spread.

Ethiopia's health minister, Lia Tadesse, did not respond to a request for comment and details on whether the ministry has received any updates from the region on new infections over the past month.

"Clearly, an effective response to pandemic outbreaks is always challenged when there's instability," the director of the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, John Nkengasong, told reporters recently. The coronavirus situation in Ethiopia "will be very challenging to bring under control," he added.

As an example, Nkengasong said it took more than two years to end a recent Ebola outbreak in eastern Congo under the constant threat of attack by rebel groups despite having "the best tools we've ever had" against the disease, including new vaccines.

Ending a later outbreak in more peaceful western Congo, Nkengasong said, took less than three months.

Anna reported from Nairobi, Kenya.

Trump challenges vote results while urging turnout in Ga.

By AAMER MADHANI, BEN NADLER and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

VALDOSTA, Georgia (AP) — President Donald Trump is pressing his grievances over losing the presidential election, using a weekend rally to spread baseless allegations of misconduct in last month's voting in Georgia and beyond even as he pushed supporters to turn out for a pair of Republican Senate candidates in a runoff election in January.

"Let them steal Georgia again, you'll never be able to look yourself in the mirror," Trump told rallygoers.

Trump's 100-minute rally before thousands of largely maskless supporters came not long after he was rebuffed by Georgia's Republican governor in his astounding call for a special legislative session to give him the state's electoral votes, even though President-elect Joe Biden won the majority of the vote.

The Jan. 5 Senate runoffs in Georgia will determine the balance of power in Washington after Biden takes office. Republicans in the state are worried that Trump is stoking so much suspicion about Georgia elections that voters will think the system is rigged and decide to sit out the two races.

The latest futile attempt to subvert the presidential election results continued Trump's unprecedented

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campaign to undermine confidence in the democratic process, but overshadowed his stated purpose in traveling to Georgia — boosting Sens. David Perdue and Kelly Loeffler.

Republicans need one victory to maintain their Senate majority. Democrats need a Georgia sweep to force a 50-50 Senate and position Vice President-elect Kamala Harris as the tiebreaking vote. Party officials had hoped the president would dedicate his energy to imploring supporters to vote in the runoff, when Perdue and Loeffler try to hold off Democrats Jon Ossoff and Raphael Warnock, respectively.

Trump did echo Republican rhetoric that the races amounted to “the most important congressional runoff, probably in American history.” That is only true because he lost.

But after Air Force One landed, it quickly became apparent that Trump was intent on airing his own complaints and stoking baseless doubts about the conduct of last month’s vote, rather than boosting his party.

“I want to stay on presidential,” Trump said minutes into his speech. “But I got to get to these two.” He praised the GOP lawmakers, Perdue for his support for military spending and Loeffler for pushing for early coronavirus relief spending. But he quickly pivoted back to his own defeat.

Trump pulled out a piece of paper and read a list of his electoral achievements, including falsely asserting he won Georgia and the White House. Biden carried the state by 12,670 votes and won a record 81 million votes nationally. Trump continued to reiterate his unsubstantiated claims of fraud, despite his own administration assessing the election to have been conducted without any major issues.

Chants of “Fight for Trump” drowned out the two senators as they briefly spoke to the crowd.

Hours before the event, Trump asked Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp in a phone call to order the legislative session; the governor refused, according to a senior government official in Georgia with knowledge of the call who was not authorized to discuss the private conversation and spoke on the condition of anonymity. A person close to the White House who was briefed on the matter verified that account of the call.

Kemp, in a tweet, said Trump also asked him to order an audit of signatures on absentee ballot envelopes in his state, a step Kemp is not empowered to take because he has no authority to interfere in the electoral process on Trump’s behalf.

Trump, though, vented his frustrations with Kemp on Twitter and at the rally.

“Your people are refusing to do what you ask,” he complained in a tweet, as if speaking with Kemp. “What are they hiding? At least immediately ask for a Special Session of the Legislature. That you can easily, and immediately, do.”

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While the governor does not have the authority to order a signature audit, an audit was initiated by Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger and it triggered a full hand recount that confirmed Biden’s victory in Georgia. The race has been certified for Biden and affirmed by the state’s Republican election officials as a fairly conducted and counted vote, with none of the systemic errors Trump alleges.

But after two pro-Trump lawyers this past week questioned whether voting again is even worth it — in echoes of the president’s baseless accusations of widespread voter fraud — even Vice President Mike Pence betrayed concerns that the Republican coalition could crack under the force of Trump’s grievances.

“I know we’ve all got our doubts about the last election, and I hear some of you saying, ‘Just don’t vote,’” Pence said Friday while campaigning with Perdue in Savannah. “If you don’t vote, they win.”

Few Republicans in Washington or Georgia believe wide swaths of the electorate in this newfound battleground would opt out of voting because of Trump’s false claims or his denigration of the Georgia governor and secretary of state for certifying Biden’s victory in the state.

The risk for the GOP is that it wouldn’t take much of a drop-off to matter if the runoffs are as close as

the presidential contest: Biden won Georgia by about 12,500 votes out of 5 million cast. There's enough noise to explain why Pence felt the need to confront the matter head on after two Trump loyalists floated the idea of the president's supporters bailing on Perdue and Loeffler.

Trump's false claims have resonated with voters such as Barry Mann, a 61-year-old business owner who came to hear Pence in Savannah. Mann hasn't decided whether he'll vote for his senators a second time.

"I think there's some issues with our election and more investigation needs to be done," Mann said, adding that he doesn't think Perdue and Loeffler have done enough to support Trump's efforts to overturn the results. "I want to see what happens between now and January," Mann said.

Nadler reported from Atlanta and Miller from Wilmington, Delaware. Associated Press writers Bill Barrow in Atlanta and Russ Bynum in Savannah, Georgia, contributed to this report.

AP FACT CHECK: Trump floods rally with audacious falsehoods

By CALVIN WOODWARD Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump flooded his first postelection political rally with debunked conspiracy theories and audacious falsehoods Saturday as he claimed victory in an election he decisively lost.

A sampling from his remarks in Valdosta, Georgia:

TRUMP: "If I lost, I'd be a very gracious loser."

THE FACTS: There's no "if." He lost, refuses to concede, hasn't congratulated the winner and persists in allegations of election malfeasance that courts and officials across the breadth of battleground states and in Washington have found meritless.

TRUMP, trying to cast suspicion on the more than 80 million votes recorded for President-elect Joe Biden: "When he made a Thanksgiving Day speech on the internet, they say he had less than a thousand people. ... How do you have 80 million votes if you have less than a thousand people?"

THE FACTS: This is a grossly false tally and one example among many of Trump grasping at the thinnest of straws. Millions of people watched Biden's Thanksgiving remarks.

The bogus claim that fewer than 1,000 watched appears to have grown from a screenshot someone posted on Twitter showing the number of viewers at one point tuned into a single live stream of the speech. But Biden's Thanksgiving address a day before the holiday streamed live on multiple major media sites — each with its own viewer count — and netted more than 1 million online views over the first few days, as measured by just a sampling of sites.

A video of Biden's speech on his official Facebook page alone showed more than 540,000 views, and more than that watched on NBC's and ABC's YouTube channels combined.

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TRUMP, suggesting ballots were found in nefarious places: "When the numbers come out of ceilings and come out of leather bags you start to say what's going on.?"

THE FACTS: Nothing out of the ordinary was going on. This remark was the latest iteration of a false claim he has spread around about ballot-stuffed suitcases found under a cloth-covered table and tallied without supervision.

A video distributed on social media and shared by Trump featured surveillance footage of ballot processing on election night in Atlanta. It showed regular ballot containers on wheels — not suitcases — and both a state investigator and an independent monitor observed counting of those ballots until the job was done for the night, state and county officials said.

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TRUMP on the now-settled presidential contest: "We're winning this election."

THE FACTS: No, it's over and Biden defeated him.

When California certified its presidential election Friday, that put Biden over the top in the Electoral College, pushing his certified electoral-vote total past the threshold of 270 needed to become president. He reached 279 electoral votes and is on track to finish with 306 to Trump's 232 once more states certify their results.

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TRUMP: "We won Georgia, just so you understand."

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Associated Press writers Ben Nadler in Atlanta, Jude Joffe-Block in Phoenix and Ali Swenson in Seattle contributed to this report.

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

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Lights go out, roads dicey as wintry storm batters Northeast

By RODRIQUE NGOWI and WILSON RING Associated Press

WARREN, Mass. (AP) — The first big wintry storm of the season began dropping what forecasters say could be more than a foot of wet, heavy snow Saturday on parts of the Northeast, making travel treacherous and cutting off power to tens of thousands.

Morning rain gave over to snow in the afternoon in New England. Accidents littered the Massachusetts Turnpike, where speed limits were reduced to 40 mph (64 kph).

As of late Saturday night, about 200,000 customers were without power in Maine, according to the utility tracking poweroutage.us. Another 53,000 customers didn't have power in New Hampshire and about 22,000 were without power in Massachusetts.

Forecasters warned the windy nor'easter could result in near-blizzard conditions and could dump a foot (30 centimeters) of snow on suburban Boston. In Canada, southern Quebec and New Brunswick also expected a wallop.

Authorities in Connecticut urged drivers to be careful.

"Troopers are responding to accidents all over the state," state police tweeted. "We ask motorists, if they can stay home please do. And if you have to go out please drive slow and ditch all distractions."

Unitil Corp., an electric and gas utility in New England, reported that crews stood ready to respond to power outages.

"The chief hazards with the current forecast include hazardous driving conditions in the early hours, the volume of wet snow forecasted to fall and possible gusty winds in coastal areas," said spokesperson Alec O'Meara.

In some areas, snowfall of 3 inches (7.5 centimeters) per hour was possible, said National Weather Service meteorologist Michael Clair in Gray, Maine.

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"This is the first big one," Clair said of the beginning of the winter season. "There has been some snow up in the mountains, but this is the first one across where most people live."

Localized totals of more than 18 inches (46 cm) are possible in higher terrain, Clair said. But the more populated areas just inland are expected to get about a foot.

Areas south of New England, including the New York region, expected heavy rain and strong winds.

Ring reported from Stowe, Vermont.

Most of California to enter sweeping new virus lockdown

By JOCELYN GECKER Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — The vast region of Southern California, much of the San Francisco Bay area and a large swath of the Central Valley are about to be placed under a sweeping new lockdown in an urgent attempt to slow the rapid rise of coronavirus cases.

The California Department of Public Health said Saturday the intensive care unit capacity in Southern California and Central Valley hospitals had fallen below a 15% threshold that triggers the new measures, which include strict closures for businesses and a ban on gathering with anyone outside of your own household. The new measures will take effect Sunday evening and remain in place for at least three weeks, meaning the lockdown will cover the Christmas holiday.

Much of the state is on the brink of the same restrictions. Some counties have opted to impose them even before the mandate kicks in, including five San Francisco Bay Area counties where the measures also take effect starting Sunday.

With a new lockdown looming, many rushed out to supermarkets Saturday and lined up outside salons to squeeze in a haircut before the orders kicked in.

San Francisco resident Michael Duranceau rushed to a market to load up on supplies.

"I'm just stocking up before Sunday — the basics, bread, eggs," he told KGO-TV, clutching a heavy grocery bag and a baguette.

Gov. Gavin Newsom announced the new plan Thursday. It is the most restrictive order since he imposed the country's first statewide stay-at-home rule in March. But the situation is bleaker than in March.

"The risk of contracting COVID in the community now is higher now than it has ever been," Dr. Eric McDonald, the medical director for San Diego County, told reporters Saturday. He and other officials urged the public to bear down, heed the rules and help the state get through the latest and worst wave of cases the state has seen.

California has tallied a staggering total of 1.3 million COVID-19 cases since the pandemic started, setting a new daily record on Friday when 25,068 confirmed cases were recorded.

The new order divides the state into five regions and uses ICU capacity as the trigger for closures.

The measures bar all on-site restaurant dining and close hair and nail salons, movie theaters and many other businesses, as well as museums and playgrounds. It says people may not congregate with anyone outside their household and must always wear masks when they go outside.

Under the new order, schools that are currently open can continue to provide in-person instruction; retailers including supermarkets and shopping centers can operate with just 20% customer capacity.

The 11-county Southern California region, which includes the cities of Los Angeles and San Diego, had only 12.5% of its ICU beds available, the California Department of Public Health reported Saturday. The figure was 8.6% for the San Joaquin Valley region, composed of a dozen counties in the agricultural Central Valley and rural areas of the Sierra Nevada.

Together the two regions are home to more than half of California's population of 40 million.

"We are at a point where surging cases and hospitalizations are not letting up," said Dr. Salvador Sandoval, public health officer for the Central Valley city of Merced. "I can't emphasize this enough — everyone must take personal steps to protect themselves and protect others."

The other three regions — Greater Sacramento, Northern California and San Francisco Bay Area — were

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all around 21% capacity.

But health officers in five of the Bay Area's 11 counties didn't wait. On Friday, they adopted the state's stay-at-home order. The changes begin to take effect Sunday night in San Francisco, Santa Clara, Marin, Alameda and Contra Costa counties, as well as the city of Berkeley.

"We don't think we can wait for the state's new restrictions to go into effect. ... This is an emergency," Contra Costa Health Officer Chris Farnitano said.

"Our biggest fear all along — that we won't have a bed for you or your mother or your grandmother or grandfather when they get sick — is the reality we'll be facing unless we slow the spread," San Francisco Mayor London Breed said.

The Bay Area order will last at least through Jan. 4, a week longer than the state's timeline, and came as the state recorded another daily record number of new cases with 22,018. Hospitalizations topped 9,000 for first time, and ICU patients were at a record 2,152.

The new shutdowns were a gut-wrenching move for small businesses that have struggled to survive over nearly a year in which they were repeatedly ordered to close, then allowed to reopen but with complex safety precautions.

Michelle Saunders James was in tears Friday at the thought of closing down her Oakland nail salon just five weeks after reopening it.

"We wear (face) shields. We take temperatures. We do everything we are told to do so everyone feels safe, including our staff and team," she told KGO-TV. "So I don't understand why it's not enough, and I'm terribly sad and afraid."

Critics say the broad statewide order unfairly lumps too many disparate counties together into regions. "I feel like it's absurd. That's how I feel. It's a joke. I mean, first of all we are 220 miles away from Los Angeles. And we are geographically isolated and we have no problem ... with overfilled ICU beds," said Assemblyman Jordan Cunningham, a Republican who represents San Luis Obispo.

He asked why his county should be lumped in with Southern California counties like Los Angeles and Riverside when the San Luis Obispo hospital has just one COVID patient in the ICU. The effect on business has already been devastating, he said. "We've got small businesses that are losing everything, everything they have."

The explosive rise in COVID-19 infections that began in October is being blamed largely on people ignoring safety measures and socializing with others.

Berkeley Health Officer Lisa Hernandez said people should not meet in person with anyone they don't live with, "even in a small group, and even outdoors with precautions."

"If you have a social bubble, it is now popped," Hernandez said. "Do not let this be the last holiday with your family."

In the inland Central Valley, Fresno County had just 10 of its 150 ICU beds available. Health officials described a grim picture with hospitals struggling to stay staffed because of coronavirus infections and exposures. One hospital is holding ICU patients in the emergency department until beds open up, Emergency Medical Services Director Daniel Lynch said Friday.

The county has requested help from the state with staffing for a couple of weeks. But so far only one or two additional workers have shown up at three local hospitals as the whole state struggles with staffing.

Associated Press writers Olga R. Rodriguez and Juliet Williams in San Francisco, Robert Jablon and Brian Melley in Los Angeles and Adam Beam in Sacramento contributed.

Trump assails vote integrity while urging turnout in Ga.

By AAMER MADHANI, BEN NADLER and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

VALDOSTA, Georgia (AP) — President Donald Trump pressed his grievances over losing the presidential election Saturday, using a rally to spread baseless allegations of misconduct in last month's voting in Georgia and beyond even as he pushed supporters to turn out for a pair of Republican Senate candidates

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in a runoff election in January.

"Let them steal Georgia again, you'll never be able to look yourself in the mirror," Trump told rallygoers. Trump's 100-minute rally before thousands of largely maskless supporters came not long after he was rebuffed by Georgia's Republican governor in his astounding call for a special legislative session to give him the state's electoral votes, even though President-elect Joe Biden won the majority of the vote.

The Jan. 5 Senate runoffs in Georgia will determine the balance of power in Washington after Biden takes office. Republicans in the state are worried that Trump is stoking so much suspicion about Georgia elections that voters will think the system is rigged and decide to sit out the two races.

The latest futile attempt to subvert the presidential election results continued Trump's unprecedented campaign to undermine confidence in the democratic process, but overshadowed his stated purpose in traveling to Georgia — boosting Sens. David Perdue and Kelly Loeffler.

Republicans need one victory to maintain their Senate majority. Democrats need a Georgia sweep to force a 50-50 Senate and position Vice President-elect Kamala Harris as the tiebreaking vote. Party officials had hoped the president would dedicate his energy to imploring supporters to vote in the runoff, when Perdue and Loeffler try to hold off Democrats Jon Ossoff and Raphael Warnock, respectively.

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But after Air Force One landed, it quickly became apparent that Trump was intent on airing his own complaints and stoking baseless doubts about the conduct of last month's vote, rather than boosting his party.

"I want to stay on presidential," Trump said minutes into his speech. "But I got to get to these two." He praised the GOP lawmakers, Perdue for his support for military spending and Loeffler for pushing for early coronavirus relief spending. But he quickly pivoted back to his own defeat.

Trump pulled out a piece of paper and read a list of his electoral achievements, including falsely asserting he won Georgia and the White House. Biden carried the state by 12,670 votes and won a record 81 million votes nationally. Trump continued to reiterate his unsubstantiated claims of fraud, despite his own administration assessing the election to have been conducted without any major issues.

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Hours before the event, Trump asked Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp in a phone call to order the legislative session; the governor refused, according to a senior government official in Georgia with knowledge of the call who was not authorized to discuss the private conversation and spoke on the condition of anonymity. A person close to the White House who was briefed on the matter verified that account of the call.

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Southern California, San Joaquin Valley under restrictions

By JOCELYN GECKER Associated Press

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Angeles. And we are geographically isolated and we have no problem ... with overfilled ICU beds," said Assemblyman Jordan Cunningham, a Republican who represents San Luis Obispo.

He asked why his county should be lumped in with Southern California counties like Los Angeles and Riverside when the San Luis Obispo hospital has just one COVID patient in the ICU. The effect on business has already been devastating, he said. "We've got small businesses that are losing everything, everything they have."

The explosive rise in COVID-19 infections that began in October is being blamed largely on people ignoring safety measures and socializing with others.

Berkeley Health Officer Lisa Hernandez said people should not meet in person with anyone they don't live with, "even in a small group, and even outdoors with precautions."

"If you have a social bubble, it is now popped," Hernandez said. "Do not let this be the last holiday with your family."

In the inland Central Valley, Fresno County had just 10 of its 150 ICU beds available. Health officials described a grim picture with hospitals struggling to stay staffed because of coronavirus infections and exposures. One hospital is holding ICU patients in the emergency department until beds open up, Emergency Medical Services Director Daniel Lynch said Friday.

The county has requested help from the state with staffing for a couple of weeks. But so far only one or two additional workers have shown up at three local hospitals as the whole state struggles with staffing.

Associated Press writers Olga R. Rodriguez and Juliet Williams in San Francisco, Robert Jablon and Brian Melley in Los Angeles and Adam Beam in Sacramento contributed.

The Latest: Trump urges backers to 'take revenge' by voting

VALDOSTA, Ga. (AP) — The Latest on President Donald Trump (all times local):

8:55 p.m.

President Donald Trump urged supporters to head to the polls to take "revenge" for his loss in last month's election.

Trump continued to rehash unsubstantiated allegations of fraud during his Saturday evening rally in Valdosta, Georgia, but also warned voters it would be a mistake not to vote in the Jan. 5 Senate runoff election in Georgia for two seats which will determine which party controls the election.

"Let them steal Georgia again, you'll never be able to look yourself in the mirror," Trump told rallygoers.

Trump with his direct call for supporters to head to the polls come as some Republicans have worried that the president's post-Election Day attempt to cast doubt on the results would lead to many of his supporters sitting out the Georgia runoffs.

Sens. David Perdue and Kelly Loeffler are trying to defeat Democrats Jon Ossoff and Raphael Warnock, respectively, and keep the Senate under Republican control.

8:40 p.m.

President Donald Trump suggested at a big gathering on behalf of Republican senators Kelly Loeffler and David Perdue that he was reluctant to hold another campaign rally.

Trump, who perhaps felt most comfortable during his presidency holding forth at his signature big rallies, told the crowd Saturday night that he was looking to take a break from campaigning after holding dozens of rallies in battleground states in the final weeks of his losing presidential campaign.

"I don't like doing them for other people," Trump said in an odd moment of candor. "They are a lot of work."

At another point, Trump teed up a video for the crowd attacking the senators' Democratic opponents as extreme leftists. The president -- who noted minutes early that his campaign has raised more than \$200 million since Election Day -- joked about spending money to produce the slick attack video for the senators.

"I shouldn't do this for them," Trump said "It costs too much money."

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8:15 p.m.

President Donald Trump ripped Republican Gov. Brian Kemp at a rally for the state's two Republican senators, hours after the governor refused a direct entreaty from the president to intervene to overturn Trump's loss in the state.

As the large crowd chanted "Stop the Steal"--what's become a rallying cry for Republicans unwilling to accept Democrat Joe Biden's victory in last month's presidential election--Trump responded that "Your governor could stop it very easily if he knew what the hell he was doing."

Hours before the Valdosta rally, Trump asked Kemp in the phone call to order the legislative session to subvert the election results, but the governor refused, according to a senior government official in Georgia with knowledge of the call who was not authorized to discuss the private conversation. A person close to the White House who was briefed on the matter verified that account of the call.

According to a tweet from Kemp, Trump also asked him to order an audit of signatures on absentee ballot envelopes in his state, a step Kemp is not empowered to take because he has no authority to interfere in the electoral process on Trump's behalf.

By AP writer Aamer Madhani.

7:35 p.m.

President Donald Trump kicked off his Saturday night rally in Georgia for Republican Sens. Kelly Loeffler and David Perdue by recycling the falsehood that he won the state.

"You know we won Georgia, just so you understand," Trump told the large crowd gathered for the first post-election rally for the president.

In fact, President-elect Joe Biden won the state of Georgia by about 12,500 votes out of 5 million cast.

Trump said that he traveled to Georgia to help "ensure" the two Republicans win what are probably the most important Senate runoffs in U.S. history.

First Lady Melania Trump kicked off the rally by telling Georgians that it's more important than ever "that you exercise your rights as a citizen and vote."

4:05 p.m.

President Donald Trump has fruitlessly pressed Georgia's governor to call a special legislative session aimed at overturning the presidential election results in that state.

Trump made his request of Gov. Brian Kemp in a phone call on Saturday, and the governor refused. That is according to a senior government official in Georgia with knowledge of the call who was not authorized to discuss the private conversation and spoke on the condition of anonymity.

A person close to the White House who was briefed on the matter verified that account of the call.

Trump's request was first reported by The Washington Post.

Trump's fixation with his defeat is overshadowing his party's campaign to save its majority in the Senate. The call took place hours before Trump is to appear at a rally in Georgia, where Republicans hope he will dedicate his energy to imploring their supporters to vote in two runoff elections Jan. 5.

HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP

President Donald Trump's first political rally since losing his reelection bid is ostensibly to urge support for the Republican incumbents in Georgia's two runoffs that will decide which party controls the Senate at the start of Joe Biden's administration. But the question remains whether Trump will really try to help his party or use the Saturday night event in Valdosta to amplify his conspiratorial and debunked theories of electoral fraud.

Read more:

- Is Georgia a swing state? Groups spend millions to find out
- Trump loves to win but keeps losing election lawsuits

David Lander, 'Squiggy' on 'Laverne & Shirley,' dies at 73

The Associated Press undefined

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Actor David L. Lander, who played the character of Squiggy on the popular ABC comedy "Laverne & Shirley," has died after a decades-long battle with multiple sclerosis, his wife said. He was 73.

Lander died Friday in Los Angeles, surrounded by his wife, daughter and son-in-law, Kathy Fields Lander said in an email Saturday to the Associated Press.

"It was very peaceful," Lander said. "He had a tough battle with MS for 37 years and he persevered like no one I have ever seen, and it taught me a great deal about the important things of life."

Lander had a longtime comedic partnership with Michael McKean, whom he met at Carnegie Mellon University. Together they created the characters of Lenny and Squiggy that they would play on the show, which ran from 1976 to 1983. Lenny and Squiggy — or Lenny Kosnowski and Andrew "Squiggy" Squiggman — were friends and upstairs neighbors of Laverne DeFazio (Penny Marshall) and Shirley Feeney (Cindy Williams), bottle-cappers in 1950s Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

McKean tweeted a photo in tribute to Lander on Saturday of the two actors in the early days.

Lander is survived by his wife and a daughter, Natalie Lander.

'Welcome home': Premier League's soul is back as fans return

By ROB HARRIS AP Global Soccer Writer

LONDON (AP) — Chris Dixon's eyes welled up as he prepared to return to his seat.

From Upton Park to the Olympic Stadium, Dixon has been coming to West Ham games across seven decades. Nine months without being able to come to watch his beloved team has been agony.

"I never thought at my age I would get so excited about winning a ballot for a football match — it's been fantastic," the 71-year-old Dixon said. "All my supporter friends are gagging to get back. I'm quite emotional really. It gets in my throat. I really am so pleased to be back."

For the visit of Manchester United, Dixon was part of a landmark moment in English football. Never before had supporters been shut out of games for so long.

The east London stadium welcomed the first, very restricted crowd at a Premier League game since March when the coronavirus pandemic that has killed more than 61,000 in Britain forced unprecedented restrictions.

"Welcome home," read the message flashing on the stadium's exterior screen, although the players couldn't deliver on the field, losing 3-1 to United.

Only 2,000 fans were allowed into a stadium that can fit 60,000 on Saturday — after temperatures were checked and face coverings donned. Such is the lingering threat from COVID-19 which claimed another 397 lives in the 24 hours before the match.

But after months of matches in soulless empty stadiums, having a fan chorus once again for the Cockney club anthem "I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles" was a godsend.

"We are a tribe," Dixon said, "the team is a big thing for me."

Coming to football has long been a welcome distraction for many from everyday life, with fans often traveling the length of the country — however limited the prospect of glory.

The highest West Ham has finished in the league is third in 1986. The last major title was the 1980 FA Cup.

"I go home and away, every game, up and down the country," 31-year-old supporter Ben Harris said. "It's just huge."

Although Harris and the West Ham faithful could celebrate Tomas Soucek's goal — and see the bubble machine kick into action — they had to endure a second-half collapse as United scored three times.

Brighter days are returning for West Ham.

"My life's back," Harris said. "It's the one thing I've missed all through lockdown. I work hard during the week, my escape is to come here a couple of hours a week. It's what I do."

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But only half of the Premier League's 20 stadiums are allowed to have fans — mainly in London, where Chelsea also had a couple of thousand watching Saturday's 3-1 victory over Leeds.

"Their input was huge, the noise they made," Chelsea manager Frank Lampard. "And you could see how excited they are at the end that we are top of the league."

Ten teams, including Leeds and Manchester United, are in cities that remain subject to the toughest coronavirus restrictions, leaving supporters shut out for now.

In the other major leagues — France, Germany, Italy and Spain — the seats are empty.

But the walk to the West Ham stadium, through a packed indoor shopping mall, left fans perplexed at such restricted numbers in vast outdoor arenas.

"I feel very, very safe, absolutely," Dixon said. "Never had one doubt about coming back."

The turnstiles being closed for so long meant this was the first time fans were in attendance to see players take a knee, as they have done since June to show solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement.

While the moment was respected at the Olympic Stadium and Stamford Bridge, there was booing in the second division by some Millwall fans when the symbolic gesture was performed at kickoff against Derby.

"Absolute disgrace," said Derby forward Colin Kazim-Richards, who is Black.

Rob Harris is at <https://twitter.com/RobHarris>

More AP soccer: <https://apnews.com/Soccer> and https://twitter.com/AP_Sports

The Latest: Oregon doc's anti-mask comment draws suspension

By The Associated Press undefined

SALEM, Ore. -- The Oregon Medical Board has suspended the medical license of a doctor who said at a pro-Trump rally that he doesn't wear a mask at his Dallas, Oregon, clinic.

KGW-TV reported Friday that Dr. Steven LaTulippe also said at the November rally that he also encourages others not to wear masks.

A state order requires health care workers to wear a mask in health care settings.

The medical board voted this week to suspend LaTulippe's license immediately due to concerns about patient safety.

LaTulippe did not respond to a request for comment from KGW-TV and has previously declined to comment.

THE VIRUS OUTBREAK:

A coronavirus surge hitting much of the U.S. is threatening to overwhelm hospitals in California. Southern California, five San Francisco Bay Area counties and the San Joaquin Valley have imposed new, tighter restrictions that will take effect Sunday.

In Moscow, thousands of doctors, teachers and others in high-risk groups have signed up for COVID-19 vaccinations ahead of a Russia-wide immunization effort, though the Russian-designed vaccine has yet to complete the advanced studies needed to ensure its effectiveness and safety.

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

HERE'S WHAT ELSE IS HAPPENING:

ST. LOUIS — St. Louis children's hospitals have started treating adult patients as area hospitals struggle to keep up with rising coronavirus cases.

Dr. Marya Strand, chief medical officer for SSM Health Cardinal Glennon Children's Hospital, told the St. Louis Post-Dispatch that it is treating adults who don't have COVID-19 to take some of the pressure off other hospitals. St. Louis Children's Hospital also has opened its doors to adults.

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About 1,054 people were hospitalized in the St. Louis area Wednesday for COVID-19, including 221 patients in intensive care units. St. Louis-area hospitals are at about 82% capacity for in-patient beds and 81% capacity for ICU beds.

Staff at SSM Health and BJC Healthcare children's hospitals have also started volunteering to work at other overwhelmed hospitals.

PHOENIX — Arizona health officials used a blunt tone Saturday as the state reported 6,799 coronavirus cases, the second-highest daily increase since the start of the pandemic.

The Department of Health Services says on Twitter that people should wear masks "around anyone who isn't a member of your household, even those you know and trust."

Similarly, the department's director, Dr. Cara Christ, says individuals "must take precautions as if we may be infected. And we must act as though anyone we are around may be infected."

The cases reported Saturday trailed only the record 10,322 cases reported Tuesday. Officials have said record high included data delayed by the Thanksgiving holiday weekend. There were four daily reports of more than 5,000 cases this week.

The hospitalizations for coronavirus rose to 2,931 on Friday, five times as many since early October. Republican Gov. Doug Ducey has not ordered a statewide mask mandate or curfews.

The state reported 40 deaths on Saturday. Arizona has 358,900 total cases and 6,935 confirmed deaths.

ROME — Italy had more than 21,000 daily coronavirus cases and added 662 deaths in the last 24 hours. The 21,052 new cases raised Italy's total to nearly 1.6 million. There's been 59,514 confirmed deaths, the second-highest toll in Europe behind Britain's toll.

This week, Italy's Premier Giuseppe Conte signed a decree limiting travel between regions Dec. 21 to Jan. 6, national Epiphany Day holiday. Conte hopes that will prevent holiday vacations that could fuel contagion.

RALEIGH, N.C. — North Carolina reported a record increase in cases of the coronavirus and hospitalizations on Saturday.

The state reported 6,018 cases since Friday and 2,171 people with coronavirus in the hospitals. That's up 14 from a day earlier.

"In less than a week, we went from exceeding 5,000 new cases reported in one day to exceeding 6,000," said Dr. Mandy Cohen, the state's health secretary. "This is very worrisome. This indicates we have even more viral spread across our state right now."

North Carolina has a record number of people in intensive care, Cohen says. Another 49 people have died, bringing the confirmed total to 5,516, the health department says.

OKLAHOMA CITY — There were 4,370 newly reported coronavirus cases Saturday in Oklahoma.

The rolling averages of cases rose from 2,843 per day on Nov. 20 to 3,044 on Friday. The daily average of deaths increased from 15 daily to 22 during the same period, according to data by Johns Hopkins University.

The increase is due largely to community spread, according Dr. Dale Bratzler of the University Oklahoma medical center. He says, "it's typically places like restaurants, bars, gyms, places of worship."

Oklahoma has 213,245 total confirmed cases. There were 14 more deaths reported Saturday, bringing the total to 1,874 confirmed deaths.

BOISE, Idaho — National Guard troops are directing people outside a Boise urgent-care clinic revamped into a facility for coronavirus patients.

Health officials say Idaho's attempt to hold the coronavirus in check is failing as infections and deaths surge. They've halted elective surgeries to save bed space.

Inside Primary Health Medical Group's clinic, physician assistant Nicole Thomas works extra 12-hour shifts. She dons protective gear to examine 36 patients a day with symptoms. Some days, she says, half

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test positive for coronavirus.

In a state where many citizens are resisting pandemic restrictions, overworked staff are getting sick or quitting to avoid the stress. It takes at least two days to get an appointment for a test. Primary Health officials say they'll turn three more facilities into COVID-19 clinics by Dec. 30.

More than 1,000 people have died from the coronavirus in Idaho. Confirmed infections have surpassed 100,000.

DETROIT — Michigan state health officials reported more than 8,600 daily confirmed cases on Friday and 81 deaths.

"When we look at the number of daily deaths, we have doubled in numbers of daily deaths, again nationally and regionally in the past couple of weeks," Dr. Adnan Munkarah, executive vice president and chief clinical officer for Henry Ford Health System in Detroit.

He's concerned about the possibility of travel and family gatherings at the holidays.

Munkarah says the health system currently has 576 employees out because they have tested positive, have pending tests or are quarantined because of close contact.

That number is up nearly 200 workers from a week ago, he says.

LLONDON — The leader of Britain's main opposition party is in 14-day quarantine after a member of his office staff tested positive for the coronavirus.

A spokesman for Labour Party leader Keir Starmer says he hasn't shown symptoms but would work from home until Dec. 16.

It is the second time Starmer has self-isolated. In September, one of his children developed possible symptoms of the virus, but a test came back negative two days later.

Conservative Prime Minister Boris Johnson was hospitalized with COVID-19 in April. Last month, he also self-isolated for 14 days after contact with a lawmaker who tested positive.

LLISBON, Portugal — Portugal's prime minister says current restrictions against the coronavirus may be eased during the Christmas holidays if the coronavirus numbers continue a downward trend.

António Costa asked the country to take seriously the existing limitations, including partial curfews and a ban on driving from 1 p.m. during the next two weekends. He says the weeks up to Christmas will be key to make holiday gatherings possible.

The government will assess on Dec. 18 whether to give the final go-ahead to travel between different towns from Dec. 23-26, although there will be a 2 a.m. curfew for both Christmas Eve and Day, Costa says.

If cases grow again, he says the government will "apply the handbrake."

Portugal has 318,000 coronavirus cases and more than 4,800 confirmed deaths.

WASHINGTON — Coronavirus infections continue to spread at record levels in the United States, reaching a new daily high of nearly 228,000 cases on Friday.

The 227,885 cases eclipses the previous high of more than 217,000 on Thursday, according to data compiled by Johns Hopkins University.

The seven-day rolling average of COVID-19 attributable deaths in the U.S. has passed 2,000 for the first time since the spring. It reached 2,011 on Friday. Two weeks ago, the seven-day average was 1,448. There were 2,607 deaths reported in the U.S. on Friday.

Globally, Johns Hopkins reports more than 1.5 million people have died from the coronavirus pandemic, including more than 279,000 in the United States.

MMOSCOW — Thousands of doctors, teachers and others in high-risk groups signed up Saturday for coronavirus vaccinations in Moscow.

The vaccination effort comes three days after President Vladimir Putin ordered the launch of a "large-scale" immunization campaign even though a Russian-designed vaccine has yet to complete the advanced

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studies needed to ensure its effectiveness and safety in line with established scientific protocols.

The Russian leader said Wednesday that more than 2 million doses of the Sputnik V shot will be available in the next few days, allowing authorities to offer shots to medical workers and teachers across the country starting late next week.

On Saturday, Russia reported a record 28,782 daily cases, including 7,993 in Moscow. Russia's 2.4 million confirmed cases is the fourth-largest caseload in the world behind the United States, India and Brazil.

There's been 42,684 total confirmed deaths in Russia.

NEW DELHI — India has registered 36,652 confirmed coronavirus cases in the past 24 hours.

India's health ministry on Saturday also recorded 512 deaths in the past 24 hours, taking total deaths to nearly 140,000. The pace of new cases has seen a downward trend, with single-day cases remaining below the 50,000 mark for a month.

India has 9.6 million total cases, second behind the U.S. with 14.3 million. But globally it has one of the lowest deaths per million population, according to the Health Ministry.

India's home ministry has allowed states to impose local restrictions, such as night curfews. It has asked state officials to consult before imposing lockdowns at state, district or city levels.

HARTFORD, Conn. — Connecticut Gov. Ned Lamont has signed an order allowing the state Department of Labor to expand eligibility for a federal pandemic unemployment program to an estimated 38,000 people who were previously disqualified.

Under Friday's order, \$7.5 million from the state's unemployment trust fund will be used make sure residents who are unemployed due to the coronavirus outbreak and were previously disqualified from receiving the temporary, extra financial benefit receive at least \$100 a week in unemployment benefits.

That would then make them eligible retroactively for an additional \$300 under the federal Lost Wages Assistance Program.

More than 160,000 Connecticut residents already received the supplemental federal benefits, resulting in a total of \$370 million being allocated over six weeks, from July 26 to Sept. 5.

CASPER, Wyo. — An official in Wyoming's Department of Health involved in the state's response to the coronavirus is questioning the legitimacy of the pandemic and describes a forthcoming vaccine as a biological weapon.

The Casper Star-Tribune reports that Igor Shepherd called COVID-19 a "so-called pandemic" at a Nov. 10 event in Loveland, Colorado. It says Shepherd described efforts to develop a vaccine as a plot by Russia and China to spread communism worldwide.

Shepherd was introduced as a Wyoming Department of Health employee before his presentation.

Wyoming Gov. Mark Gordon and other top state officials have declined to comment.

VENTNOR, N.J. — The FBI is telling anyone who underwent a coronavirus test at a New Jersey laboratory to get retested and to contact the agency.

In a statement Friday on Twitter, the FBI's Newark office urges people who were recently tested for the virus at Infinity Diagnostic Laboratory in Ventnor "to be retested as soon as possible." It also asks that anyone who was administered a finger-prick blood test at the laboratory to contact a victim assistance unit at the FBI.

The announcement gave no further details, and a message left with the FBI seeking further information was not immediately returned.

Voicemail for the company's operations director Friday evening said it was closed and didn't offer the opportunity to leave a message.

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee has authorized medically trained National Guard soldiers to fill nursing roles, drive ambulances and perform coronavirus testing for hospitals that are overstretched

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with coronavirus patients.

The order Friday allows the adjutant general to send hospitals reinforcements from the Tennessee National Guard. The state is focusing on troops who are actively assigned, including those serving in coronavirus testing roles statewide, but not those currently serving in civilian jobs in health care.

State health officials decline to identify which hospitals have expressed interest, but say there is need statewide.

The state reports 2,485 people are currently hospitalized with COVID-19, with only 14% of floor beds and 8% of ICU beds available.

SAN FRANCISCO — The health officers in six San Francisco Bay Area regions issued a new stay-at-home order Friday as the number of virus cases surge and hospitals fill.

The changes will take effect for most of the area at 10 p.m. Sunday and last through Jan. 4. The counties have not yet reached Gov. Gavin Newsom's threshold announced a day earlier requiring such an order when 85% of ICU beds at regional hospitals are full, but officials said the hospital system will be overwhelmed before the end of December when Newsom's order would apply.

It comes the same day the state recorded another daily record number of cases, with 22,018, and hospitalizations topped 9,000 for first time.

It means restaurants will have to close to both indoor and outdoor dining, bars and wineries must close along with hair and nail salons and playgrounds. Retail stores and shopping centers can operate with just 20% customer capacity. Gatherings of any size with people outside of your household are banned.

St. Nicholas visits Czech children while adapting to virus

PRAGUE (AP) — The coronavirus pandemic has made life difficult for a lot of people in the Czech Republic, and that includes Saint Nicholas.

Every year on Dec. 5, Nicholas appears in costume on streets across the European country, joined by a winged angel and a masked devil rattling a metal chain.

The trio goes door-to-door visiting children and giving them candy and small gifts, if they have been well-behaved. If not, the devil threatens to put the girls and boys in his sack and take them directly to hell - unless the angel intervenes.

The Czech health minister insisted the traditional trio needed to follow the government's infection-control measures just like everyone else, which meant wearing masks and practicing social distancing.

A new circus company in Prague offered another option on Saturday. The troupe set up an imaginary heaven and hell and invited families to come in cars to watch devils jumping, angels flying and Saint Nicholas waving.

A long line of cars at the La Putyka Circus base in Prague formed an eager audience for the drive-thru performance. The kids still hoped to find a stocking filled with chocolates, oranges and nuts on a window, but with the angel, devil and Nicholas in town, they know it won't be long until Christmas.

Saint Nicholas was a Greek Christian bishop who lived at the turn of the 3rd and 4th centuries. Known for his goodness and generosity, he is said to have inspired the creation of Santa Claus.

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

Crunch UK-EU talks on post-Brexit ties to resume Sunday

By PAN PYLAS and RAF CASERT Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — The European Union and the United Kingdom decided Saturday to press on with negotiating a post-Brexit trade deal, with all three key issues still unresolved ahead of a year-end cutoff.

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European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said after a phone call that their negotiators will return to the table Sunday even though fundamental differences between the two sides remain over the rules for fair competition, legal oversight of the deal and fishing rights for EU trawlers in U.K. waters.

"Significant differences remain," the two leaders said in a joint statement after their tea-time call to assess the state of play over the future EU-U.K. relationship.

While the U.K. left the EU on Jan. 31, it remains within the bloc's tariff-free single market and customs union through Dec. 31. Reaching a trade deal by then would ensure there are no tariffs and trade quotas on goods exported or imported by the two sides, although there would still be technical costs, partly associated with customs checks and non-tariff barriers on services.

The talks would surely have collapsed by now, were the interests and economic costs at stake not so massive. But because the EU is an economic power of 450 million and Britain has major diplomatic and security interests beyond its own commercial might, the two sides want to explore every last chance to get a deal before they become acrimonious rivals.

"Whilst recognizing the seriousness of these differences, we agreed that a further effort should be undertaken by our negotiating teams to assess whether they can be resolved," Johnson and von der Leyen said after speaking by phone for about an hour.

"We are therefore instructing our chief negotiators to reconvene tomorrow in Brussels," the pair said in their statement, adding that they would reassess the chances of success on Monday night.

The two leaders noted that progress has been achieved in many areas but that divisions remain on fishing rights, the "level playing field" — the standards the U.K. must meet to export into the bloc — and how future disputes are resolved.

"Both sides underlined that no agreement is feasible if these issues are not resolved," von der Leyen and Johnson said Saturday.

An EU source, who spoke on condition of anonymity because the talks were still ongoing, said the fair competition rules that the U.K. should meet before it can export tariff-free into the 27-nation bloc, were still a major stumbling block.

The main problem at the heart of the negotiations is how to reconcile how Britain wrests itself free of EU rules and the bloc's insistence that no country, however important, should get easy access to its lucrative market by undercutting its high environmental and social standards.

The politically charged issue of fisheries also continue to play an outsized role. The EU has demanded widespread access to U.K. fishing grounds that historically have been open to foreign trawlers. But in Britain, gaining control of the fishing grounds was a main issue for the Brexiteers who pushed for the country to leave the EU.

With the U.K.'s post-Brexit transition period due to conclude at the end of the year, the discussions are clearly at a crunch point, not least because of the necessary approvals required on both sides after negotiators reach a deal. Without an agreement in place, tariffs will end up being imposed on traded goods at the start of 2021.

Both sides would suffer economically from a failure to secure a trade deal, but most economists think the British economy would take a greater hit, at least in the near-term, as it is relatively more reliant on trade with the EU than vice versa.

The EU's chief Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier, appears ready to go again.

"Work continues tomorrow," he said in a tweet.

Casert reported from Brussels.

Follow all AP stories about Brexit and British politics at <https://apnews.com/Brexit>

Fire guts historic church home to New York's Liberty Bell

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By LUIS ANDRES HENAO Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A historic church in lower Manhattan that houses New York's Liberty Bell and whose congregation dates to the city's earliest days was gutted by a massive fire early Saturday that sent flames shooting through the roof.

The Middle Collegiate Church in the East Village burned before dawn after a fire spread from a five-story vacant building adjacent to the church around 5 a.m. Flames shot from the roof and the church's stately front window glowed from the conflagration inside.

"We are devastated. We are gutted like our building is gutted; our hearts are crushed like our doors are crushed," said the Rev. Jacqueline J. Lewis. "But we know how to be the church, and we know that God is God, yesterday, today and tomorrow."

The fire department said in an Instagram post that there were four minor injuries to firefighters and that marshals were investigating the blaze.

Built in 1892, the church is home to the oldest congregation of the Collegiate Churches of New York, which date to the Dutch settlement of the island in the 1620s, according to the church's website.

The Middle Collegiate Church had been in two other locations in Manhattan since 1729.

The bell tower houses New York's Liberty Bell, which pealed to mark the birth of the nation in 1776 and has since been rung for the inaugurations and deaths of American presidents and events such as remembrance of the Sept. 11 attacks, according to the church.

Lewis believed the bell survived the fire but was not certain. Church minister Amanda Ashcraft told WABC that the Tiffany stained glass windows were gone.

Mayor Bill de Blasio tweeted that the fire was "heartbreaking" and pledged: "We'll do whatever we can to help Middle Collegiate rebuild."

The fate of the church building is unclear, Lewis said, but the ministry will continue.

"Our church has been worshipping digitally since March 15," Lewis said. "And that's what we'll be doing tomorrow."

Associated Press writer Michael Hill in Albany contributed to this report.

Christmas tree-lighting in Bethlehem a muted, virtual event

BETHLEHEM (AP) — Only a few dozen people attended the lighting of the Christmas tree in the biblical city of Bethlehem on Saturday night, as coronavirus restrictions scaled back the annual event that is normally attended by thousands.

A small group of residents and religious leaders participated in the tree-lighting ceremony at Manger Square near the Church of the Nativity, where Christians believe Jesus was born. Others watched it virtually due to restrictions prompted by the virus pandemic.

Some officials, including Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh, attended in person and addressed event participants watching online.

Shtayyeh said the Palestinian leadership is receiving the new year with determination to "confronting the (Israeli) occupation more firmly" and ending the internal political division with the rival militant Hamas group. He said the Palestinians would "defeat the settlement"-building in the occupied West Bank despite the pandemic.

Bethlehem Mayor Anton Salman said Christmas is being observed this year in ways like no time before.

"We resorted to modern technology and to the virtual world to celebrate the lighting of the Christmas tree, wishing hope and optimism would flutter upon Palestine and the world," Salman said.

Thousands of pilgrims and tourists typically visit Bethlehem, fill hotels and dine at restaurants during the Christmas season, bringing the area a much-needed injection of cash.

Religious right eyes Biden warily after Trump's good favor

By ELANA SCHOR Associated Press

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WASHINGTON (AP) — Conservative evangelical Christians have proven some of Donald Trump's staunchest allies during his presidency. As his administration draws to a close, some of those backers are approaching President-elect Joe Biden with skepticism, but not antagonism.

Christian conservatives who stood by Trump through moments of crisis and success are hardly comfortable with his loss, and several have yet to fully acknowledge Biden as the winner of the election amid ongoing, unfounded fraud claims by the president. But they're largely not echoing the harsh tone Trump directed toward his Democratic rival during the campaign, when he claimed baselessly that Biden is "against God."

Texas-based megachurch pastor Robert Jeffress, a stalwart evangelical booster of Trump, said Christians are obliged "to pray for what appears to be President-elect Biden. If he succeeds, all of America succeeds."

Jeffress described himself as "deeply disappointed" by the apparent loss of a president he considers "a friend," but added that he would respond to any outreach attempt by Biden, just as he did with Trump. The possibility that Biden could "be pulled away from extremist positions" held by other Democrats, Jeffress said, is "a plus not just for conservative Christians, but for all of America."

It's highly unlikely that Christian conservatives could develop a close relationship with Biden, whose support for abortion rights and stances on other issues stand in stark disagreement with the religious right. However, the lack of a combative tone from pro-Trump religious conservatives could create space for some common ground between the Catholic president-elect and other evangelicals who have not tied themselves as directly to Trump.

"If Joe Biden is the president, if that's what it turns out to be, then we need to do everything we can to support him, where we can," the Rev. Franklin Graham said in a recent interview.

Graham, who leads the Christian nonprofit founded by his late father, the Rev. Billy Graham, is a Trump supporter who offered prayers at his inauguration and this year's Republican National Convention. But while he underscored that his opposition to abortion is one of several fronts where there could be no compromise, Graham said "we certainly can work with" Biden on other issues.

During the Obama administration, Graham attended a conversation Biden convened among faith-based advocates about gun legislation. The pastor also visited the White House in 2014 to discuss the Ebola crisis after a doctor at his global relief charity, Samaritan's Purse, successfully fought the deadly disease.

Still, conservative Christians like Graham exerted scant influence over the Obama administration's agenda — and pro-Trump evangelicals are expecting a similar sideline role under Biden.

Family Research Council president Tony Perkins, a longtime Trump partner, said that during Obama's presidency, "I didn't go to that end of Pennsylvania Avenue, because I was never invited."

"If I were invited, certainly I would go, to have a conversation and represent the views our constituents have," Perkins added in an interview. "But I don't hold out hope that they're going to invite those who hold to traditional, biblical views on life, religious freedom and human sexuality."

Perkins said his socially conservative group would focus on working with the office of Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., whose party is poised to keep control of that chamber unless Democrats can win next month's two runoffs in Georgia.

Conservative Christians have no shortage of potential looming disputes with the incoming administration. Biden is likely to reverse Trump's ban on U.S. foreign aid for groups that support abortion, among other moves to shore up abortion rights, and he has pledged quick action on an LGBTQ rights measure that has drawn criticism from leading religious conservatives.

Marjorie Dannenfelser, president of the Susan B. Anthony List and a Catholic outreach adviser to the Trump reelection campaign, said she saw "almost zero hope" of moving Biden on abortion, her group's priority issue, and forecast "hand-to-hand combat until we take the presidency back."

However, some groups such as Perkins' may find occasional opportunities to work with the Biden administration even while remaining critical of it in their messaging to members and fundraising, according to evangelical writer and analyst Napp Nazworth.

"They're going to be able to say, 'Please support us because your religious freedom is in danger,'" said Nazworth, who left the Christian Post last year after it published a pro-Trump editorial.

Meanwhile, evangelicals outside those most closely associated with Trump already are identifying commonalities where they could partner with Biden.

One is his plan to raise the annual refugee admissions ceiling to 125,000, a vow he reiterated recently at an event hosted by Jesuit Refugee Services. The Trump administration had slashed the refugee target to historic lows.

Nathan Bult, a senior vice president at Bethany Christian Services, said he has engaged with Biden's transition team on child welfare policy.

Bult said his group worked with the Trump administration but "we were never shy about criticizing" moves it disagreed with, and "we'll treat the Biden administration the same way."

Galen Carey, vice president for government relations at the National Association of Evangelicals, pointed to several areas for collaboration with Biden's administration, including immigration, paid family leave and criminal justice reform.

"We have principles that we think should be appealing to all Americans," Carey said, "and we'd like to be a constructive force for the common good."

Associated Press religion coverage receives support from the Lilly Endowment through the Religion News Foundation. The AP is solely responsible for this content.

Gene-editing treatment shows promise for sickle cell disease

By MARION RENAULT Associated Press

Scientists are seeing promising early results from the first studies testing gene editing for painful, inherited blood disorders that plague millions worldwide, especially Black people.

Doctors hope the one-time treatment, which involves permanently altering DNA in blood cells with a tool called CRISPR, may treat and possibly cure sickle cell disease and beta thalassemia.

Partial results were presented Saturday at an American Society of Hematology conference and some were published by the New England Journal of Medicine.

Doctors described 10 patients who are at least several months removed from their treatment. All no longer need regular blood transfusions and are free from pain crises that plagued their lives before.

Victoria Gray, the first patient in the sickle cell study, had long suffered severe pain bouts that often sent her to the hospital.

"I had aching pains, sharp pains, burning pains, you name it. That's all I've known my entire life," said Gray, 35, who lives in Forest, Mississippi. "I was hurting everywhere my blood flowed."

Since her treatment a year ago, Gray has weaned herself from pain medications she depended on to manage her symptoms.

"It's something I prayed for my whole life," she said. "I pray everyone has the same results I did."

Sickle cell affects millions, mostly Black people. Beta thalassemia strikes about one in 100,000 people. The only cure now is a bone marrow transplant from a closely matched donor without the disease like a sibling, which most people don't have.

Both diseases involve mutations in a gene for hemoglobin, the substance in red blood cells that carries oxygen throughout the body.

In sickle cell, defective hemoglobin leads to deformed, crescent-shaped blood cells that don't carry oxygen well. They can stick together and clog small vessels, causing pain, organ damage and strokes.

Those with beta thalassemia don't have enough normal hemoglobin, and suffer anemia, fatigue, shortness of breath and other symptoms. Severe cases require transfusions every two to five weeks.

The treatment studied attacks the problem at its genetic roots.

In the womb, fetuses make a special type of hemoglobin. After birth, when babies breathe on their own, a gene is activated that instructs cells to switch and make an adult form of hemoglobin instead. The adult hemoglobin is what's defective in people with one of these diseases. The CRISPR editing aims to cut out the switching gene.

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“What we are doing is turning that switch back off and making the cells think they are back in utero, basically,” so they make fetal hemoglobin again, said one study leader, Dr. Haydar Frangoul of the Sarah Cannon Research Institute in Nashville.

The treatment involves removing stem cells from the patient’s blood, then using CRISPR in a lab to knock out the switching gene. Patients are given strong medicines to kill off their other, flawed blood-producing cells. Then they are given back their own lab-altered stem cells.

Saturday’s results were on the first 10 patients, seven with beta thalassemia and three with sickle cell. The two studies in Europe and the United States are ongoing and will enroll 45 patients each.

Tests so far suggest the gene editing is working as desired with no unintended effects, Frangoul said.

“The preliminary results are extremely encouraging,” he said.

The study was sponsored by the therapy’s makers — CRISPR Therapeutics, with headquarters in Zug, Switzerland, and Massachusetts-based Vertex Pharmaceuticals. Some study leaders consult for the companies.

Separately, Dr. David Williams of Harvard-affiliated Boston Children’s Hospital gave partial results from a study testing a novel type of gene therapy that also seeks to restore fetal hemoglobin production for those with sickle cell.

Six patients including one as young as 7 were given the treatment, in which some of their blood stem cells were removed and altered in the lab to muffle the hemoglobin switching gene. None have had pain crises, five of the six no longer need transfusions and all have near-normal hemoglobin, he reported at the conference and in the medical journal.

Government grants paid for the work. Williams is named on a patent for the therapy, which Boston Children’s has licensed to Bluebird Bio Inc. of Cambridge, Massachusetts. The company provided the therapy for the study, which will enroll 10 people in all to establish safety. A larger study to test effectiveness is planned.

Williams, who was not involved in Frangoul’s study, said it “validates this approach” of targeting the hemoglobin switching gene to tackle sickle cell.

Chief medical writer Marilyn Marchione contributed from Milwaukee.

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.

Moscow opens dozens of coronavirus vaccination centers

By VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — The city of Moscow opening 70 vaccination facilities where thousands of doctors, teachers and others in high-risk groups had signed up to receive COVID-19 vaccines starting Saturday, a precursor to a sweeping Russia-wide immunization effort.

The centers in the capital started giving shots to willing recipients three days after President Vladimir Putin ordered the launch of a “large-scale” COVID-19 immunization campaign even though a Russian-designed vaccine has yet to complete the advanced studies needed to ensure its effectiveness and safety in line with established scientific protocols.

The Russian leader said Wednesday that more than 2 million doses of Sputnik V will be available in the next few days, allowing authorities to offer jabs to medical workers and teachers across the country starting late next week.

Moscow, which currently accounts for about a quarter of the country’s new daily infections, moved ahead of the curve with the opening of the vaccination facilities on Saturday. Doctors, teachers and municipal workers were invited to book a time to receive a shot. Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyenin said that about 5,000 signed up in a few hours after the system began operating on Friday.

“Of course I had doubts, especially given that all the clinical trials haven’t ended,” said Tatyana Kirsanova,

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who received the vaccine Saturday at a Moscow clinic. "But I decided to go ahead and protect myself with all possible options."

Russia boasted that Sputnik V was the world's "first registered COVID-19 vaccine" after the government gave it regulatory approval in early August. The move drew criticism from international experts, who pointed out that the vaccine had only been tested on several dozen people at the time.

Putin has shrugged off doubts about it, saying in August that one of his daughters was among the early vaccine recipients.

Sputnik V has been offered to medical workers and teachers for several months even though the vaccine was still in the middle of advanced trials. Several top Russian officials said they had gotten the required two jabs, and the Russian military this week began vaccinating the crews of navy ships scheduled to depart on a mission.

Health Minister Mikhail Murashko said Wednesday that more than 100,000 people in Russia have received the shots.

Russia is offering the vaccine for free to people aged 18 to 60 who don't suffer from chronic illnesses and aren't pregnant or breastfeeding.

The two-shot Sputnik V was developed by the Moscow-based Gamaleya Institute. An advanced study among 40,000 volunteers was announced two weeks after the vaccine received government approval and that is still ongoing.

Kirill Dmitriyev, head of the Russian Direct Investment Fund that bankrolled Sputnik V's development, said last month that more than 1 billion doses of the vaccine were expected to be produced outside of Russia next year.

Last month, developers of the vaccine said interim analysis of trial data showed it was 91.4% effective. The conclusion was based on 39 infections among 18,794 study participants that received both doses of either the vaccine or a placebo, which is a much lower number of infections than Western drugmakers have looked at when assessing the effectiveness of their vaccines. Two other Russia-designed vaccines are also undergoing tests.

On Wednesday, Britain became the first country in the West to authorize the use of a vaccine against the coronavirus developed by U.S. drugmaker Pfizer and Germany's BioNTech.

Russia has been swept with a resurgence of the outbreak this fall, with numbers of new infections exceeding the levels recorded early in the pandemic, but the authorities so far have refrained from a tight lockdown imposed in the spring.

On Saturday, Russia reported a new record high of daily infections at 28,782, including 7,993 in Moscow. The government task force has recorded a total of 42,684 virus-related deaths since the start of the outbreak.

Russia's total of over 2.4 million confirmed cases is currently the fourth-largest caseload in the world behind the United States, India and Brazil.

Follow AP's pandemic coverage at <http://apnews.com/VirusOutbreak> and <https://apnews.com/UnderstandingtheOutbreak>

VIRUS TODAY: California faces closures; jobless cutoff looms

By The Associated Press undefined

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

THREE THINGS TO KNOW TODAY

— The coronavirus surge is threatening to overwhelm hospitals in California. Five San Francisco Bay Area counties have new stay-at-home orders that will take effect Sunday. The new shutdowns are a gut-wrenching move for small businesses that have struggled to survive.

— Jobless Americans face a bleak predicament if Congress fails to extend two unemployment programs that are set to expire the day after Christmas. While congressional negotiators continue to seek a deal on

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THE NUMBERS: The U.S. recorded 228,000 additional confirmed cases Friday, passing the previous high mark of more than 217,000 cases set one day earlier. The seven-day rolling average of COVID-19 attributable deaths in the U.S. has passed 2,000 for the first time since spring, rising to 2,011. There were 2,607 deaths reported in the U.S. on Friday.

QUOTABLE: ““You can’t give up, because it’s your kid.” — Ellie Rounds Bloom, a Boston-area parent on the challenges facing children with mental health crises during the pandemic.

ICYMI: In Boise, Idaho, an urgent-care clinic has been revamped into a facility for coronavirus patients as infections and deaths surge, showing how a crush of virus patients is straining intertwined health care systems.

ON THE HORIZON: Food and Drug Administration advisers will meet next week to debate if there’s enough evidence for emergency use of the Pfizer vaccine.

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

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A bleak outlook for millions facing cutoff of US jobless aid

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER and CASEY SMITH Associated Press Writers

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Tina Morton recently faced a choice: Pay bills — or buy a birthday gift for a child? Derrisa Green is falling further behind on rent. Sylvia Soliz has had her electricity cut off.

Unemployment has forced aching decisions on millions of Americans and their families in the face of a rampaging viral pandemic that has closed shops and restaurants, paralyzed travel and left millions jobless for months. Now, their predicaments stand to grow bleaker yet if Congress fails to extend two unemployment programs that are set to expire the day after Christmas.

If no agreement is reached in negotiations taking place on Capitol Hill, more than 9 million people will lose federal jobless aid that averages about \$320 a week and that typically serves as their only source of income.

Green, 39, and her husband are among them. An end to their unemployment benefits would force them to keep missing rent payments on their home in Dyer, Indiana, near Chicago. The couple have eight children. Green's husband is a self-employed truck driver whose business disappeared when the pandemic erupted in the spring. Only in October did he start to pick up occasional work.

He now receives about \$235 a week in unemployment aid. Even so, "all of our bills are late," Green said. They've received several shutoff notices from utilities before managing to pay just before service was to be cut off.

"That's really scary," Green said, "because what are we going to do when we lose the unemployment money?"

The end of jobless aid is approaching at an especially perilous time. Job growth slowed sharply in November, and the resurgence of viral cases appears to be out of control across the country.

Even with the prospect of an effective vaccine being widely distributed in coming months, economists say the picture will worsen before it improves. Many foresee a net loss of jobs in December for the first time since April.

On Friday, President-elect Joe Biden called on Congress to quickly approve a bipartisan \$908 billion package that would establish a \$300-a-week jobless benefit as well as send aid to states and localities, help schools and universities, revive subsidies for businesses and support transit systems and airlines. Details are still being worked out, but the outlines of a final bill could emerge soon.

More than 20 million people are now receiving unemployment benefits. More than half are beneficiaries of two programs that were part of rescue aid legislation Congress enacted in March. One program made self-employed and contract workers eligible for jobless aid for the first time and provided 39 weeks of support. The other program supplied 13 weeks of extended benefits to the 26 weeks that most states provide.

About 9.1 million who are receiving aid from those programs will be cut off Dec. 26, according to a report from the Century Foundation. An additional 4.4 million are expected to exhaust all 39 weeks by year's end. If Congress agrees to provide more weeks of aid and to revive both programs, those beneficiaries could keep receiving aid next year.

That would be a life-saver for Sylvia Soliz who lives in Corpus Christi, Texas. Soliz, 36, who still owes part of her rent for November and December, has received an eviction notice. She's also just had her electricity cut off.

Back in March, Soliz was laid off from her job as a nurse's assistant at a senior living facility. She's now receiving \$414 in jobless aid every two weeks. With four children, it doesn't go very far.

"The day I get it, it's already gone because my kids need so many things," Soliz said. "Of course, I have to pay a portion to whatever bill I have, so that way I can stretch it out. But every time another check comes in, it's another bill."

Soliz is applying for a new job, and she checks in with her old employer. So far, no luck. She also worries about contracting COVID-19. Soliz is hopeful that Congress will agree to provide more aid, but she feels "they are basically gambling with us."

A cutoff of jobless benefits now, with so many millions of Americans still receiving the aid, would be

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unusually early compared with previous recessions. In the aftermath of the Great Recession of 2008-2009, the government extended unemployment benefits to 99 weeks, and the additional aid lasted through 2013. When that program ended, about 1.3 million people lost benefits — a small fraction of the number who would lose jobless aid this time.

Other government protections will also expire at the end of this year, including a federal moratorium on evictions for renters. A suspension of payments on federal student loans will expire at the end of January.

"I am very afraid of people facing homelessness — that's our top concern," said Andrew Stettner, a senior fellow at the Century Foundation. "It's a terrible unforced policy error to make. It will slow the recovery that we're having by cutting off these benefits so early."

About one in six renters in the United States are behind on their rent, according to a survey from the Census Bureau. And 12% of adults say their families didn't have enough to eat at some point in the past week, the survey found. That's up from just 3.7% in 2019, according to the left-leaning Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

A wrenching set of choices has confronted Keli Paaske, who lives in the Kansas City area. Since being furloughed in the spring from her sales job at a company that makes fire doors, Paaske, 56, has cut back her grocery budget. She thought she'd be called back once the virus waned. But when her boss phoned in August, it was with a different message: Her job had been eliminated.

Paaske had hesitated to spend \$360 needed to euthanize her 15-year old dog, who had a brain tumor, before going through with it. Without unemployment aid, Paaske isn't sure how she would manage. She may seek financial help from her parents, who are in their 80s, something she has resisted doing. If she doesn't find a job by March, she said, she'll stop leasing her car.

Across the country, a cutoff of jobless aid would disproportionately affect Black Americans, according to data from the Century Foundation. About 18% of unemployment aid recipients are Black, the Foundation said, though Black Americans make up just 12% of the workforce. More than 57% of recipients are white. Nearly 13% are Latino. (There is no demographic data on about one-fifth of recipients.)

Tina Morton used to clean houses near where she lives in Winchester, Kentucky. But there's been little work since the pandemic struck. Like many other single mothers, she has struggled with the need to find another job while simultaneously caring for children — a son and two nephews she has custody of — who are attending school online at home.

"Single parents cannot go out here and ... just find any job," said Morton, 39. "We've got our kids here that are stuck at home."

Last week, Morton had to choose between paying a phone bill and buying one of her nephews a birthday present. (She got him a present). If her jobless aid ends, she expects to face painful decisions.

She's particularly worried about her two nephews.

"That's what hurts me the most," she said. "My job is to give them more — give them better than where they came from."

Rugaber reported from Washington. AP writers Acacia Coronado in Austin, Texas, Andrew Tsubasa Field in Topeka, Kansas, and Piper Hudspeth Blackburn in Louisville, Kentucky, contributed to this report.

Thai king leads thousands to remember late father's birthday

By JERRY HARMER Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — Thousands of yellow-clad supporters greeted Thailand's king on Saturday as he led a birthday commemoration for his revered late father, the latest in a series of public appearances at a time of unprecedented challenge to the monarchy from student-led protesters.

King Maha Vajiralongkorn, accompanied by Queen Suthida, waved as he arrived at Bangkok's Sanam Luang ceremonial ground. Supporters of the monarchy held Thai and yellow royal flags to welcome them, with some cheering "Long live the king." The crowd wore yellow shirts, the color associated with the royal institution.

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The king led the crowd in a candlelit tribute to his late father, whose giant image was at the center of the stage set up outside the ornate Grand Palace.

Although King Bhumibhol Adulyadej died four years ago, his birthday remains on the national calendar as Fathers' Day.

He reigned for 70 years, acquiring a reputation for selfless work in the service of his country, an image endlessly propagated by newspapers and state media. He was widely respected, a status reinforced by strict lese majeste laws that can bring jail terms of up to 15 years for any comment or action deemed defamatory toward the monarchy.

But since his death in 2016, and the accession of Vajiralongkorn, the monarchy's standing has been under threat, with dissent on the rise.

In August this year, pro-democracy students smashed the taboo on public criticism by unveiling a 10-point demand for sweeping reform to make the powerful and wealthy institution more transparent and accountable.

Support for the move has swelled, with thousands embracing the call at a series of mass rallies, alongside demands for a new constitution and the resignation of the prime minister.

In apparent response, Vajiralongkorn has undertaken a wave of public appearances that have served as rallying points for thousands of conservative Thais outraged at the challenge to traditional norms and determined to defend them.

In contrast to his usual stern demeanor, the king has been more relaxed at the events, presenting a softer persona, while also thanking and encouraging those who have stood up for him.

At one royal walkabout in November, he appeared to hint that there could be compromises with those demanding reform, but protest leaders have dismissed that as meaningless.

In recent days, at least 12 protest leaders have been charged with royal defamation under the lese majeste laws. The laws had been suspended for the past three years after Vajiralongkorn told the government he did not want to see them used.

Overtaxed Idaho health facilities on brink of rationing care

By KEITH RIDLER Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — Soldiers triaging patients in parking lots in a capital city is normally the stuff of science fiction.

Yet that's the reality in Boise, where troops direct people outside an urgent-care clinic revamped into a facility for coronavirus patients as infections and deaths surge in Idaho and nationwide.

Inside Primary Health Medical Group's clinic, physician assistant Nicole Thomas works extra 12-hour shifts to help out. She dons goggles, an N95 mask, a surgical mask over that, gloves and a body covering to examine 36 patients a day with symptoms. Some days, she says, half of them test positive for COVID-19.

"I've had patients crying in the car because they think they're going to die," Thomas said last week, resting against a desk between patients. "There are some people that it's just a mild cold, and there are some people in the ICU on life support. We don't know, medicine-wise, how it's going to affect them."

What was once a facility with family practice doctors and an urgent care that treated things like cuts and colds has become a COVID-19 clinic, showing how a crush of virus patients is straining intertwined health care systems. In a conservative state where many are resisting pandemic restrictions, overworked staff are getting sick themselves or quitting to avoid the stress.

Idaho's attempt to hold the coronavirus in check is failing, health officials say. Just over 1,000 people have died from COVID-19 so far, about four to five times the number of annual deaths from flu and pneumonia. Confirmed infections have surpassed 100,000.

Elective surgeries mostly have been halted to conserve bed space and staff. COVID-19 patients have been sent home with monitoring devices to care for themselves. After Thanksgiving gatherings, officials fear a surge of infections that could force difficult choices about what to do with patients when there's no more room or anyone available to treat them.

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"When would we reach absolute capacity? I just don't know. But we're nervous," said Barton Hill, vice president of St. Luke's Health System, which has hospitals in southwestern and central Idaho.

"I never dreamed that we would be challenged like this," Steve Judy, chief operating officer of Primary Health Medical Group, said as he visited the clinic where Thomas works.

He was interrupted by a young woman there for a COVID-19 test who wandered out of an exam area, looking confused. She had blood drawn and wasn't sure where she was supposed to be, she said through her mask, eyes glazed. Judy, after determining her checkup wasn't done, gently led her past a row of workers taking phone calls and back to the exam area.

The clinic bustled with workers, supporting Thomas and two other physician assistants who examine patients. Combined, they see nearly 110 people a day, ordering chest X-rays and blood tests to make a diagnosis. Seventy others without symptoms get drive-thru COVID-19 tests in the parking lot every day.

Primary Health's 20 clinics in southwestern Idaho normally have an urgent care on one side and family practice doctors on the other. Eight have been transformed into facilities that only see COVID-19 patients.

It's taking sick people at least two days to get an appointment for a test. Primary Health will turn three more facilities into COVID-19 clinics by Dec. 30 and has plans to change over more if needed.

"I'm not at the hospitals," said Dr. David Peterman, a pediatrician and CEO of Primary Health Medical Group. "But I'm telling you, we're at the maximum at Primary Health. We are so close to rationing care here. We are probably 10 to 15 days away."

About 20% of his staffers are out because they're isolating or have tested positive for the virus. Judy said he's trying to fill 50 openings after workers couldn't take the stress anymore and quit. He's increased front office pay by \$2.50, to \$14 an hour.

Calls to the clinics have increased from 30,000 a month before the pandemic to 80,000 now. The Boise clinic has a half-dozen workers taking calls. When they're not on the phone, they package test kits.

"We're working them hard," said Judy, who worries about his staff. "They're almost all pulling overtime."

At St. Luke's hospital system, increasing numbers of workers are out because of COVID-19, officials said. Besides canceling elective surgeries, the hospitals tried to save bed space by sending 160 patients — 140 with COVID-19 — home with devices to measure the oxygen in their blood.

Now, hospitals are planning what to do if there aren't enough workers or beds available in an entire region. Health care workers would have to choose who gets treatment and who doesn't.

"That's really when we're at risk for what's called the 'crisis standards,'" said Hill, noting that the state would decide when to institute them. "We're very concerned in the next two weeks."

Idaho's crisis plan divides the sick into categories, prioritizing those with life-threatening illnesses or injuries who are expected to survive and giving only comfort care to those who aren't.

Rural areas generally avoided large numbers of COVID-19 infections for months but now they're widespread. Recently, a surge of infections in southern Idaho filled hospital beds and forced some patients to be transferred to the Boise area.

When people started getting sick in March, Republican Gov. Brad Little issued a stay-at-home order that lasted just over a month and stopped the virus's spread. But unemployment skyrocketed from under 3% to nearly 12%.

Restrictions gradually were lifted, but as infections and deaths surged again, Little reinstated some rules last month, including limiting gatherings to 10 or fewer. He also activated 100 National Guard troops to free up medical workers, getting them trained on mobile testing support, facility decontamination and COVID-19 screenings.

Nickolas Orr was one of two soldiers meeting patients in their cars outside the Primary Health clinic.

"Some people do seem a little nervous," he said, directing them where to go depending on whether they were sick and had an appointment or felt fine but wanted a test.

While Little was among the first governors to publicly wear a mask last spring, he's declined to issue a statewide mandate, saying more people will wear them if it's a choice.

There's plenty of resistance. About 64% of Idaho voters supported President Donald Trump, who has been dismissive of mask-wearing and ridiculed President-elect Joe Biden for wearing one during the campaign.

Some sheriffs say they won't enforce mask requirements. A lawmaker has compared Little to Hitler for

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issuing pandemic restrictions. The Republican-dominated Legislature plans legislation next month limiting the governor's ability to declare emergencies.

And in Boise, which has a mask mandate, protesters recently went into stores and restaurants without face coverings to complain that their rights were being violated.

Meanwhile, inside the Primary Health clinic, Thomas, the physician assistant, put on sterilized protective equipment as workers sanitized an exam room before the next patient.

The clinic no longer has time to call everyone who tests positive for COVID-19. Most get a text. Only those in high-risk groups with the greatest chance of dying get a phone call, that human voice.

"Not infecting others is kind of the name of the game right now," Thomas said. But she doesn't have a lot of hope. "I think we are going to get busier and busier."

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Sunday, Dec. 6, the 341st day of 2020. There are 25 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Dec. 6, 1907, the worst mining disaster in U.S. history occurred as 362 men and boys died in a coal mine explosion in Monongah, West Virginia.

On this date:

In 1790, Congress moved to Philadelphia from New York.

In 1865, the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, abolishing slavery, was ratified as Georgia became the 27th state to endorse it.

In 1884, Army engineers completed construction of the Washington Monument by setting an aluminum capstone atop the obelisk.

In 1917, some 2,000 people were killed when an explosives-laden French cargo ship, the Mont Blanc, collided with the Norwegian vessel Imo at the harbor in Halifax, Nova Scotia, setting off a blast that devastated the Canadian city. Finland declared its independence from Russia.

In 1947, Everglades National Park in Florida was dedicated by President Harry S. Truman.

In 1957, America's first attempt at putting a satellite into orbit failed as Vanguard TV3 rose about four feet off a Cape Canaveral launch pad before crashing down and exploding.

In 1962, 37 coal miners were killed in an explosion at the Robena No. 3 Mine operated by U.S. Steel in Carmichaels, Pa.

In 1969, a free concert by The Rolling Stones at the Altamont Speedway in Alameda County, California, was marred by the deaths of four people, including one who was stabbed by a Hell's Angel.

In 1973, House minority leader Gerald R. Ford was sworn in as vice president, succeeding Spiro T. Agnew.

In 1989, 14 women were shot to death at the University of Montreal's school of engineering by a man who then took his own life.

In 1998, in Venezuela, former Lt. Col. Hugo Chavez (OO'-goh CHAH'-vez), who had staged a bloody coup attempt against the government six years earlier, was elected president.

In 2001, the House of Representatives, by a one-vote margin, gave President George W. Bush more power to negotiate global trade deals. President Bush dedicated the national Christmas tree to those who had died on Sept. 11 and to service members who had died in the line of duty.

Ten years ago: President Barack Obama announced a compromise with the GOP to extend Bush-era income tax cuts despite Democratic objections; the agreement included renewing unemployment benefits and reducing Social Security taxes for one year. Talks between Iran and six world powers recessed with no sign Tehran was ready to discuss U.N. Security Council calls to curb its nuclear activity. Pat Gillick, whose teams won three World Series titles in 27 years as a major league general manager, was elected to baseball's Hall of Fame by the Veterans Committee.

Five years ago: In an Oval Office address, President Barack Obama vowed the U.S. would overcome a

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new phase of the terror threat that sought to "poison the minds" of people around the world, as he tried to reassure Americans shaken by recent attacks in Paris and California. Former President Jimmy Carter said his most recent brain scan showed no sign of cancer, four months after he was diagnosed with melanoma. A U.S. shipment of much-needed supplies rocketed toward the International Space Station. Kennedy Center Honors recognized "Star Wars" creator George Lucas, singer-songwriter Carole King, actor-singer Rita Moreno, conductor Seiji Ozawa and actor Cicely Tyson.

One year ago: An aviation student from Saudi Arabia opened fire inside a classroom at the Naval Air Station Pensacola in Florida, killing three people and wounding two sheriff's deputies before one of the deputies killed him. (U.S. officials later said that Mohammed Saeed Alshamrani had communicated with al-Qaida operatives about planning and tactics in the months leading up to the attack.)

Today's Birthdays: Comedy performer David Ossman is 84. Actor Patrick Bauchau is 82. Country singer Helen Cornelius is 79. Actor James Naughton is 75. Former Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood is 75. Rhythm-and-blues singer Frankie Beverly (Maze) is 74. Former Sen. Don Nickles, R-Okla., is 72. Actor JoBeth Williams is 72. Actor Tom Hulce is 67. Actor Wil Shriner is 67. Actor Kin Shriner is 67. Actor Miles Chapin is 66. Rock musician Rick Buckler (The Jam) is 65. Comedian Steven Wright is 65. Country singer Bill Lloyd is 65. Singer Tish Hinojosa is 65. Rock musician Peter Buck (R.E.M.) is 64. Rock musician David Lovering (Pixies) is 59. Actor Janine Turner is 58. Rock musician Ben Watt (Everything But The Girl) is 58. Writer-director Judd Apatow is 53. Rock musician Ulf "Buddha" Ekberg (Ace of Base) is 50. Writer-director Craig Brewer is 49. Actor Colleen Haskell is 44. Actor Lindsay Price is 44. Actor Ashley Madekwe is 39. Actor Nora Kirkpatrick is 36. Christian rock musician Jacob Chesnut (Rush of Fools) is 31. Tennis player CoCo Vandeweghe is 29. NBA star Giannis Antetokounmpo is 26.