

Groton Daily Independent

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Boys Varsity: Groton Area 66, Britton-Hecla 45
Boys JV: Groton Area 53, Britton-Hecla 10
Girls JV: Groton Area 46, Britton-Hecla 16
Girls Varsity: Groton Area 45, Britton-Hecla 6



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 online only at 11 a.m. (<https://www.facebook.com/grotonsdumc>)

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

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

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



OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

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THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE

*Therefore the Lord Himself
will give you a sign:
Behold, the virgin shall conceive
and bear a Son, and
shall call His name Immanuel.*

- ISAIAH 7:14

"Heilige Nacht" (15th-century woodcut)



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BIBLE

TRIVIA

by Wilson Casey

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

2. Who visited Jesus on the night of His birth and found Mary, Joseph and the babe lying in a manger? *Innkeeper, Shepherds, Herod, Magi*

3. By biblical accounts, what animals were present and around the manger at Jesus' birth? *Lions and bears, Sheep and goats, Donkeys and chickens, No mention of animals*

4. When the wise men (Magi) arrived in the Holy Land, where did they go first? *Jerusalem, Beersheba, Haifa, Tel Aviv*

5. Which of these wasn't biblically stated as a gift from the Magi? *Silver, Myrrh, Gold, Frankincense*

6. Which Old Testament prophet said the most about the birth of Christ? *Isaiah, Daniel, Ezekiel, Jeremiah*

ANSWERS: 1) Neither; 2) Shepherds; 3) No mention of animals; 4) Jerusalem (Mat 2:1-2); 5) Silver; 6) Isaiah

Sharpen your understanding of scripture with Wilson's Casey's latest book, "Test Your Bible Knowledge," available in bookstores and online. It makes a great gift

Comfort foods

Made fast
and
healthy



by Healthy Exchanges

Chocolate Chip Peanut Butter Cookies

What's a holiday without a few holiday goodies — not too festive, that's what! This ultra-easy cookie should brighten things up.

1/2 cup cold water

1 1/2 cups nonfat dry milk powder

Granular sugar substitute to equal 1/2 cup sugar, suitable for baking

3/4 cup reduced-fat peanut butter

2 teaspoons vanilla extract

2 cups reduced-fat baking mix

1/4 cup mini-chocolate chips

1. Place cold water in a 2-cup glass measuring cup. Stir in dry milk powder until mixture makes a smooth paste. Cover and microwave on HIGH (100% power) for 45 to 60 seconds or until mixture is very hot but not to the boiling point. Add sugar substitute. Mix well to combine. Cover and refrigerate for at least 2 hours. (What you've just made is fat-free and sugar-free sweetened condensed milk!)

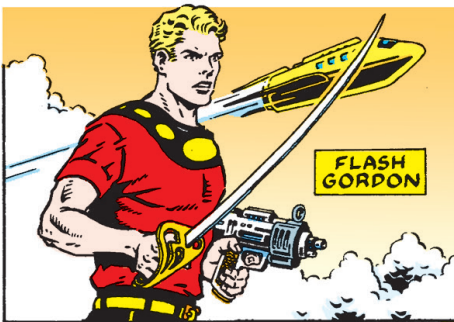
2. When ready to make cookies, preheat oven to 375 F. In a large bowl, combine cooled milk mixture, peanut butter and vanilla extract. Add baking mix. Mix well to combine. Stir in chocolate chips. Shape into 36 (1-inch) balls. Place balls on an ungreased baking sheet. Flatten each ball with a fork.

3. Bake for 6 to 8 minutes. Remove cookies from baking sheets and cool on wire racks. Makes 12 (3 cookies each) servings.

• Each serving equals: About 203 calories, 7g fat, 8g protein, 27g carb., 349mg sodium, 1g fiber; Diabetic Exchanges: 1 1/2 Starch, 1 Meat, 1 Fat.

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FLASH GORDON By JIM KEEFE

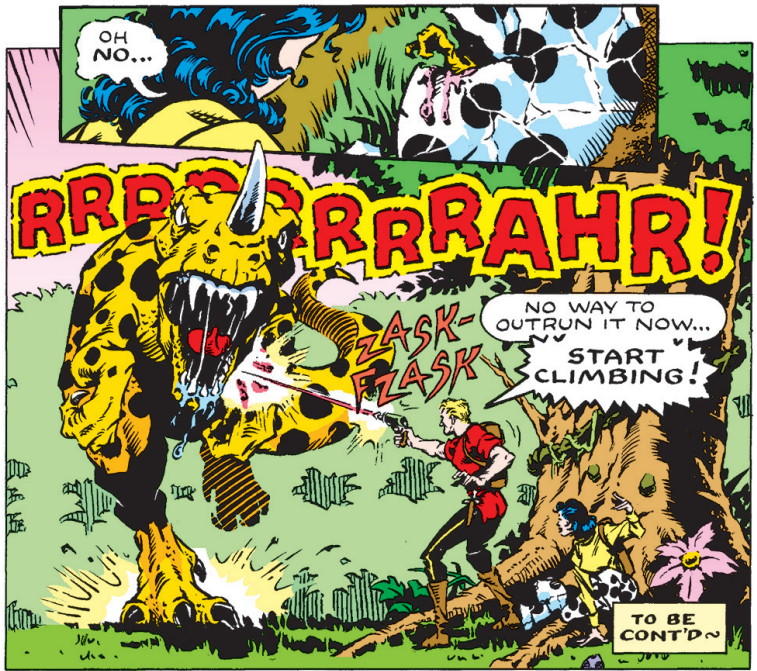
12-6

AS FLASH AND DALE MAKE THEIR RETREAT, THE MONSTER TRAILING THEM BECOMES MORE AND MORE AGITATED.

SOON AS WE HIT THE TREE LINE, MAKE A RUN FOR IT.

I'LL COVER YOU.

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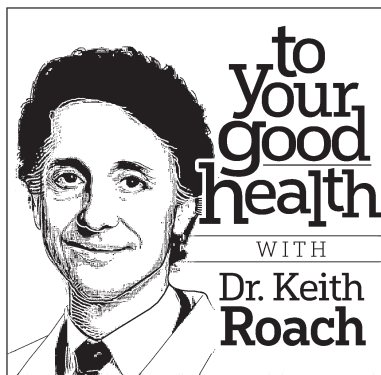
Play Better Golf with JACK NICKLAUS

ONCE YOU'VE RELEASED THE SPRING YOU'VE WOUND UP SWINGING BACK, THERE ISN'T TIME TO "THINK" YOUR WAY TO THE BALL. THAT'S WHY GOOD PLAYERS WANT THEIR DOWNSWINGS TO HAPPEN TOTALLY REFLEXIVELY.

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CORRECT DOWN-SWING MOVES OCCUR REFLEXIVELY ONLY AS PRODUCTS OF A CORRECT GRIP SETUP AND BACKSWING.

THUS, IF YOU SENSE A FAULTY DOWNSWING, LOOK FOR THE CAUSES IN WHAT GOES BEFORE.



Prostate-Shrinking Medicines and Cancer

DEAR DR. ROACH: I've had low-grade prostate cancer for several years and am presently on "active surveillance." My PSAs have been high but steady, running around 7.8 to 9.2. I have a greatly enlarged prostate, which I believe contributes to the high PSA numbers.

I would like your opinion regarding finasteride (Proscar), as I am considering taking it. I see one of its side effects is that it increases the risk of developing a very serious form of prostate cancer. Since I already have this cancer, am I at an increased risk of mine growing more aggressive? — *D.N.W.*

ANSWER: A 2013 study showed that although finasteride reduced the overall risk of prostate cancer from 15% to 10% in men followed up to 18 years on finasteride, there was a small increase in high-grade, aggressive prostate cancer, from 3% to 3.5%. However, there was no increased risk of prostate cancer death among treated men.

Several follow-up studies have suggested that the apparent small increase in aggressive prostate cancers reflected an easier ability to find these cancers, since finasteride shrinks prostate tissue, making it easier to both biopsy and read the results. My view is that the apparent increase in aggressive prostate cancer is unlikely to represent a real danger in taking finasteride. There is no evidence to suggest that finasteride would change the behavior of an existing tumor.

DEAR DR. ROACH: I have breast cancer and am being recommended anastrozole. Can you tell me the side effects, both short term and long term? — *Anon.*

ANSWER: Anastrozole is an inhibitor of the enzyme aromatase, which converts androgens made in the adrenal gland to estrogens. Anastrozole thus has the effect of dramatically reducing estrogen levels in the blood. For women with estrogen-sensitive tumors, this means less stimulus for the tumors to grow. Aromatase inhibitors like anastrozole have had a significant effect on improving cure rates and survival in women with estrogen receptor-positive breast cancer.

Aromatase inhibitors have been used for over 20 years; however, that's still not long enough for a comprehensive understanding of long-term effects. There are short-term effects, and these limit the ability of some women to tolerate their use for the five years they are usually prescribed. About a third of women do not complete the course.

The most common reason I see for women stopping anastrozole is the musculoskeletal pain that often accompanies it. Symptoms can be severe in up to a third of women, but regular exercise and anti-inflammatory drugs are effective in reducing these symptoms.

There are sexual side effects for many women. The loss of estrogen due to anastrozole can cause vaginal dryness, which may lead to painful intercourse. This can be treated with lubricants, and most data suggests that low-dose vaginal estrogen is both safe and effective, although I recommend an individualized discussion with her oncologist before a woman takes that.

Fatigue, forgetfulness and poor sleep are often reported by women on anastrozole. Bone loss (osteopenia and osteoporosis) is more common in women on anastrozole. Nonpharmacologic strategies include regular exercise, calcium and vitamin D, and smoking cessation. However, many women need medical therapy if the bone density becomes dangerously low despite this.

While there are certainly downsides to taking anastrozole, they need to be balanced against the improved survival rates in women who take them compared with other treatments.

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. "I'd Like to Teach the World to Sing (In Perfect Harmony)" was used to promote which product?
2. Which artist released the "Highway 61 Revisited" album?
3. Name the one Beatle not wearing shoes on the Abbey Road album cover.
4. Which group released "Shout" in 1959?
5. Name the song that contains this lyric: "I know you come a long way, baby, But you don't need that heart of stone."

Answers

1. Coca-Cola. The lyrics were changed to include "I'd like to buy the world a Coke." One commercial was shot with an international group on a hilltop in Italy. Other versions have followed over the years.
2. Bob Dylan, in 1965. He named it after a road that ran through his hometown, Duluth, Minnesota.
3. Paul McCartney. This "clue" led to a conspiracy theory that McCartney was dead after a car wreck in 1966, and it was his lookalike in the photo.
4. The Isley Brothers.
5. "The Second Time Around," by Shalamar in 1979. The song went to No. 1 on the soul charts and then months later hit No. 1 on the dance/disco charts. The group has reconfigured multiple times over the years, and they're touring the U.K. in 2021.

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Just Like Cats & Dogs by Dave T. Phipps



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GRIN and BEAR IT ^{by} Wagner



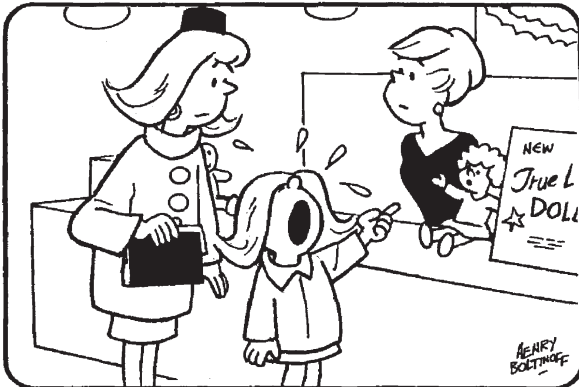
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Wagner

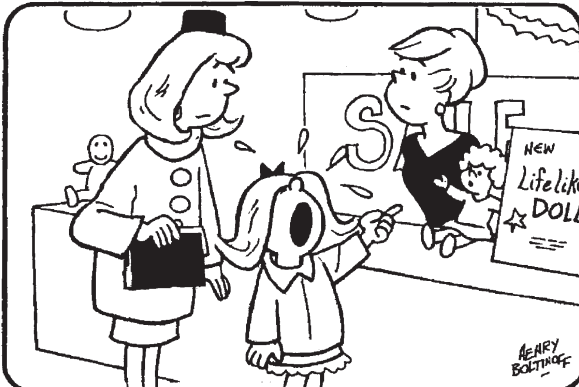
"HO HO HO!"

HOCUS-FOCUS

BY HENRY BOLTINOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.



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Differences: 1. Mom's hair is different. 2. Doll on left has ruffle. 3. "Sale" sign is added. 4. Girl's skirt has hair bow. 5. Doll is different. 6. Girl has hair bow.

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• B.B. in Massachusetts writes: “I have a rubber disc (used for taking covers off jars) that I keep in my shower. When showering, I put the disc over the drain so the water can accumulate, then I soak my feet at the same time.”

• To save yourself some time and aggravation, make a safety set of keys that match your current set exactly. You will never have to go looking for your keys when you are in a hurry, and you won't have to determine if the key you need is on the ring. It is!

• “Re: your recent tip about storing heirloom quilts in a cedar chest: No, no, a thousand times no! Nothing is worse for quilts — heirloom or otherwise — than storing them in cedar chests. Acids will not only stain them but break down the fabric over time.” — *B.R. in Washington.*

Thanks B.R. Although my grandmother did store quilts and other fabric items in her cedar chest, according

to sources at the National Quilters Circle, the best place for an heirloom quilt may be on a bed. You can stack them, but rotate so that no quilt gets too much sun. — *JoAnn*

• “For squeaky door hinges, forget about graphite, WD-40 or any of those other messy lubricants that may last for only a few months. Pull the hinge pins, wipe them clean with a dry rag, and then apply a thin coating of Vaseline with your finger. Properly done, your hinges should remain free of squeaks for at least a year.” — *F.B. in Colorado*

• “If you live in a cold area where you might experience icy sidewalks and you have a dog or cat, don't forget to protect your pet's feet from the salt and/or chemicals that are frequently used to melt ice. Be sure to wipe down your pet's feet after a walk outside.” — *F.F. in Alaska*

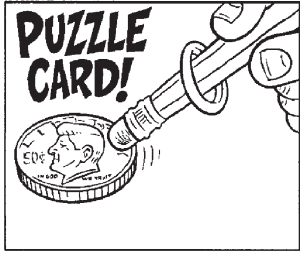
Send your tips to Now Here's a Tip, 628 Virginia Drive, Orlando, FL 32803.

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PUZZLE: Place a half-dollar and a finger ring on the table and bet your friends that they can't push the coin through the ring without bending the coin.

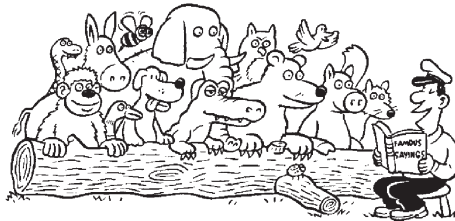


A TIGHT SQUEEZE! Hold the ring on edge and shove a pencil through it. Using the end of the pencil, you "push" on the coin and win another bet.

Illustrated by David Coulson

Junior Whirl

by Charles Barry Townsend



ZOO WHO? Fred, the local zookeeper, is telling his friends about the different "sayings" that they have inspired. Below is a list of 14 sayings that contain the names of various animals and insects. See if you can complete at least 12 of them before feeding time.

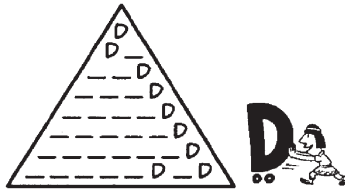
A POSTAL WORD RIDDLE! Where, and to whom, should our postman deliver this letter?



Answer: To John Underwood, Andover, Mass.

THE 'D' PYRAMID! Each word, as you go down the pyramid on the right, contains the same letters as the word above it, plus a new letter. We give you all of the D's. Here are some hints from the top down.

1. Lowest passing grade (given).
2. To perform.
3. Seed home.
4. To walk heavily.
5. Rode with an easy gait.
6. Slanted downward.
7. What a brat is.
8. Leaning to one side.



1. Snug as a _____ in a rug.
2. It's a _____ life.
3. See you later, _____.
4. In a _____ eye.
5. I'll be a _____ uncle.
6. Crazy as a _____.
7. A _____ for punishment.
8. Busy as a _____.
9. Crooked as a _____.
10. Sly as a _____.
11. Wise as an _____.
12. He's sitting in the _____ seat.
13. An _____ never forgets.
14. Stubborn as a _____.

The words are D, do, pod, plod, loped, sloped, spotted, lopsided.

Answers: 1. Bug 2. Dog's 3. Alligator 4. Pig's 5. Monkey's 6. Loon 7. Bear 8. Bee 9. Snake 10. Fox 11. Owl 12. Catbird 13. Elephant 14. Mule.

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TIGER

by BUD BLAKE



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King Crossword

ACROSS

- 1 Porter's burdens
- 5 Before
- 8 Dull sound of impact
- 12 Enticement
- 13 Blend
- 14 Abundant
- 15 Opera show-stopper
- 16 U.K. broadcaster
- 17 Black, in verse
- 18 Fight
- 20 Like a lot
- 22 Solid ground
- 26 Entire
- 29 Smack
- 30 Zilch
- 31 Bees' home
- 32 Parsons or Gaffigan
- 33 Slangy negative
- 34 — out a living
- 35 One of the Brady Bunch
- 36 Grown-up bug
- 37 Brownish orange
- 40 Warmonger
- 41 Barbershop tools
- 45 First victim
- 47 Luau bowlful
- 49 "American —"
- 50 Ring out

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

- 51 Barn bird
- 52 Alaskan metropolis
- 53 Vortex
- 54 — Aviv
- 55 Get larger
- 7 Cry out
- 8 Italian fountain site
- 9 Ireland
- 10 Venusian vessel?
- 11 Lair
- 19 Appomattox surrenderer
- 21 Frequently
- 23 Serengeti beast
- 24 Chinese dynasty
- 25 Choir member
- 26 Sharpen
- 27 Raise
- 28 Above
- 32 Lotto win
- 33 Incredible
- 35 Mandible
- 36 Call — day
- 38 Make a comeback
- 39 Warble
- 42 Bloodhound's clue
- 43 Quarterback Tony
- 44 Dispatched
- 45 Mimic
- 46 Foundation
- 48 Didn't pay yet

DOWN

- 1 Spill the beans
- 2 Emanation
- 3 Determination
- 4 Birthplace of Starbucks
- 5 Fireplace bit
- 6 Cage component

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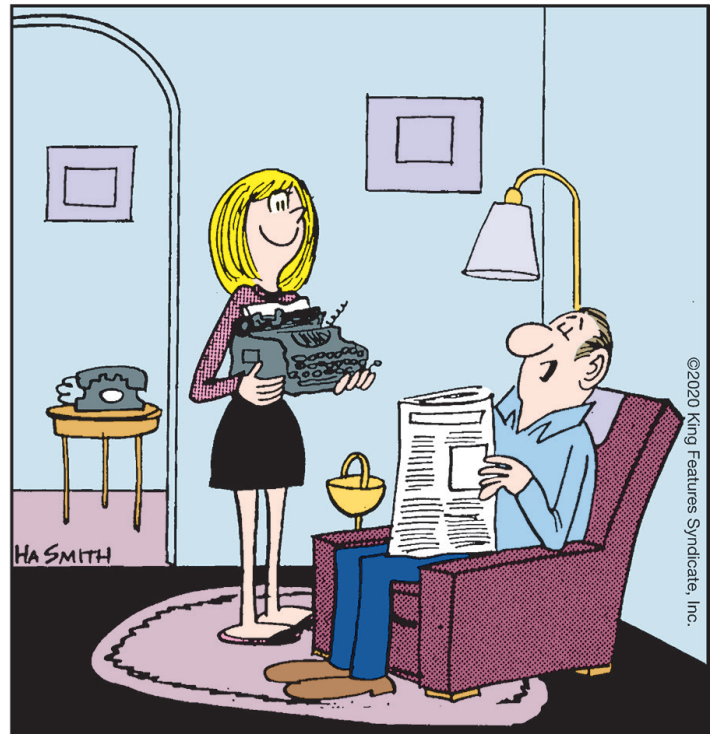
— King Crossword —

Answers

Solution time: 25 mins.

B	A	G	S		E	R	E		T	H	U	D
L	U	R	E		M	I	X		R	I	F	E
A	R	I	A		B	B	C		E	B	O	N
B	A	T	T	L	E		L	O	V	E		
		T	E	R	R	A	F	I	R	M	A	
W	H	O	L	E		H	I	T		N	I	L
H	I	V	E		J	I	M		A	I	N	T
E	K	E		J	A	N		I	M	A	G	O
T	E	R	R	A	C	O	T	T	A			
		H	A	W	K		R	A	Z	O	R	S
A	B	E	L		P	O	I		I	D	O	L
P	E	A	L		O	W	L		N	O	M	E
F	D	D	Y		T	F	I		G	R	O	W

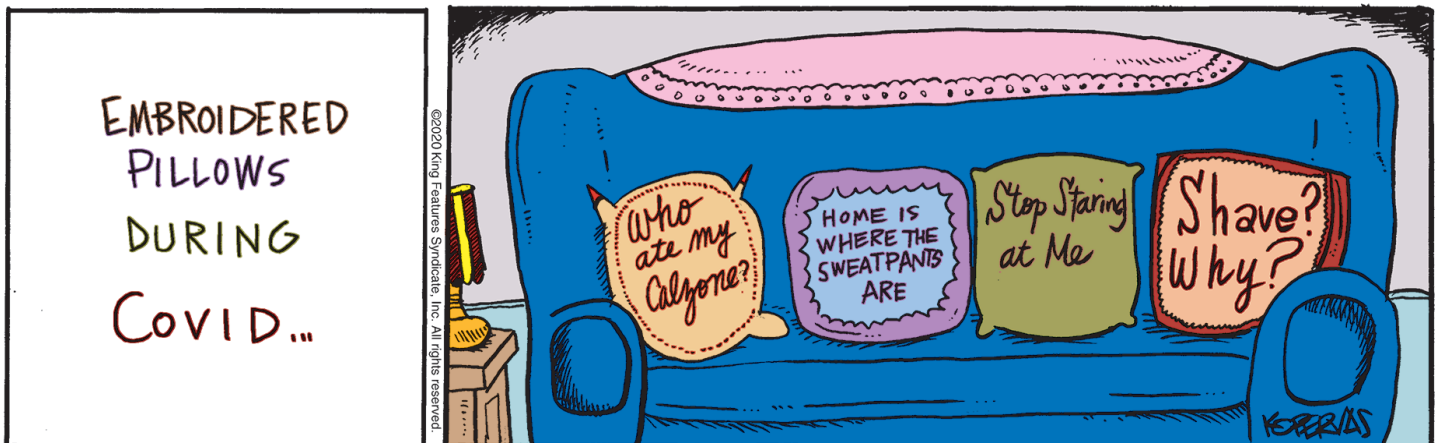
LAFF - A - DAY



"Okay, what other valuable antiques did you pick up besides William Shakespeare's typewriter?"

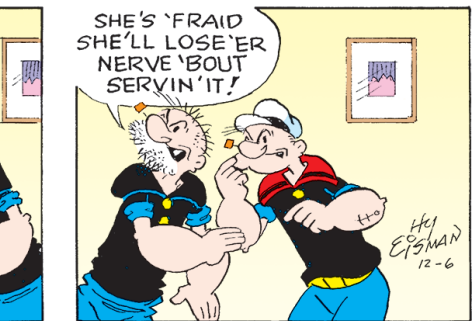
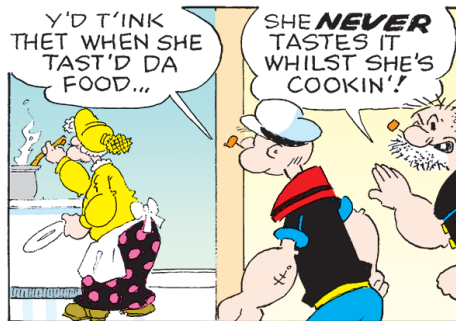
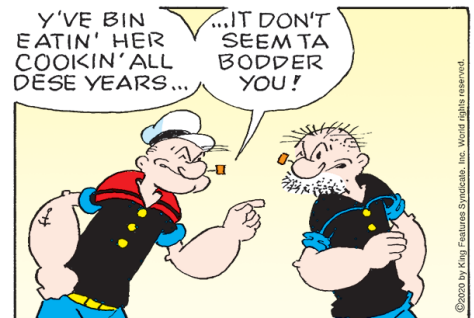
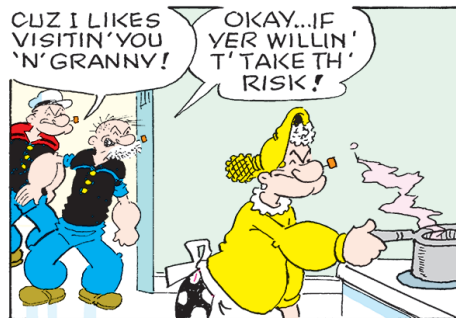
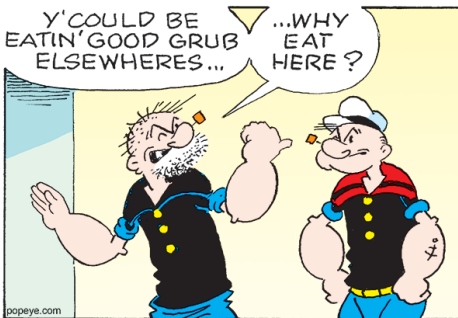
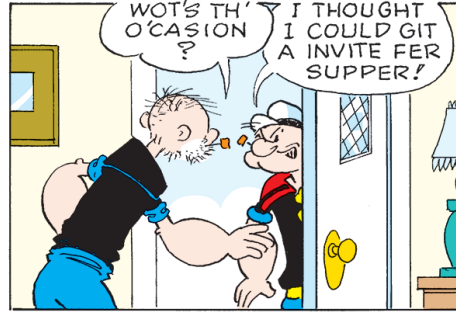
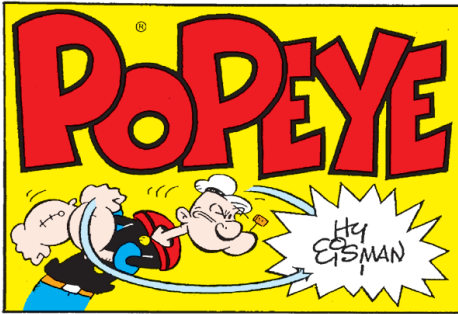
Out on a Limb

by Gary Kopervas



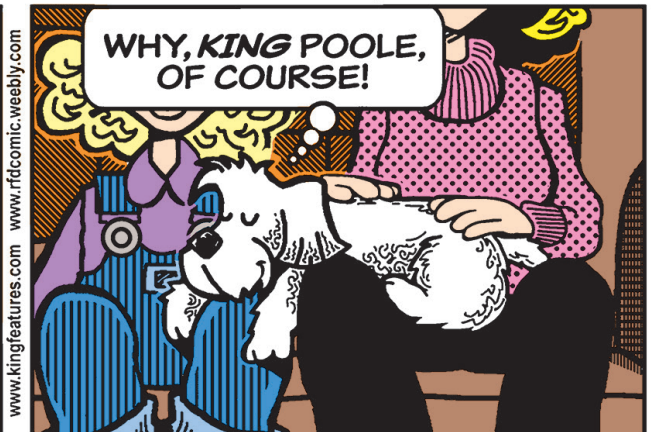
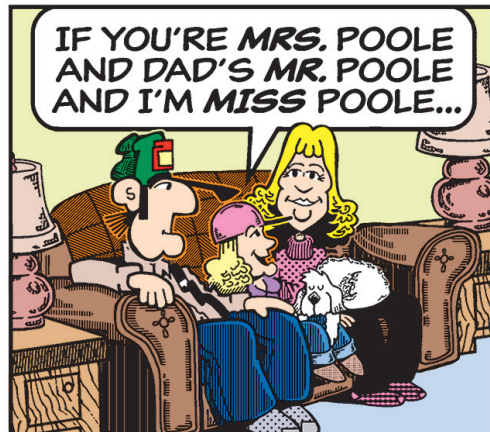
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R.F.D.

by Mike Marland



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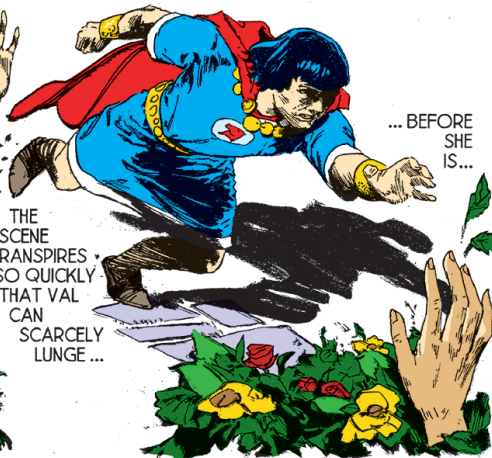
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Hal Foster's BY GIANNI AND SCHULTZ
Prince Valiant

Our Story: THE GROUND IS TORN ASUNDER AND ALETA IS PULLED DOWN BY GNARLED HANDS!



THE SCENE TRANSPIRES SO QUICKLY THAT VAL CAN SCARCELY LUNGE...



... BEFORE SHE IS...



... GONE.

GAWAIN AND OTHERS RUSH TO HIM, CALLED BY HIS WILD CRIES: "THEY TOOK HER! THEY TOOK ALETA! IT WAS THE LITTLE PEOPLE! THE HORRID LITTLE PEOPLE!"

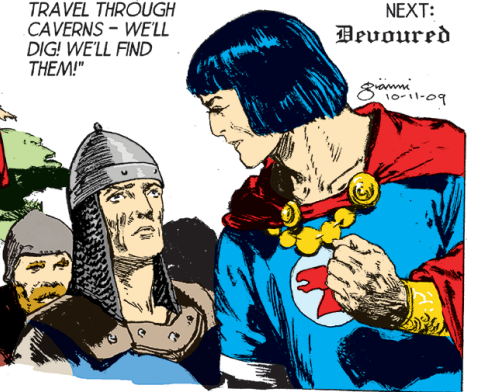


THE MEN ARE FRIGHTENED AND CONFUSED. "THE LITTLE PEOPLE HAUNT THE HOLLOW HILLS FAR TO THE WEST - WHY WOULD THEY ATTACK CAMELOT?"



"CAN'T YOU SEE?" VAL SPITS BACK. "THIS WAS A KIDNAPPING! THEY TRAVEL THROUGH CAVERNS - WE'LL DIG! WE'LL FIND THEM!"

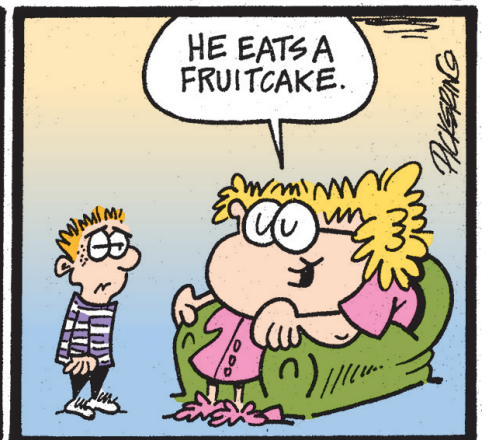
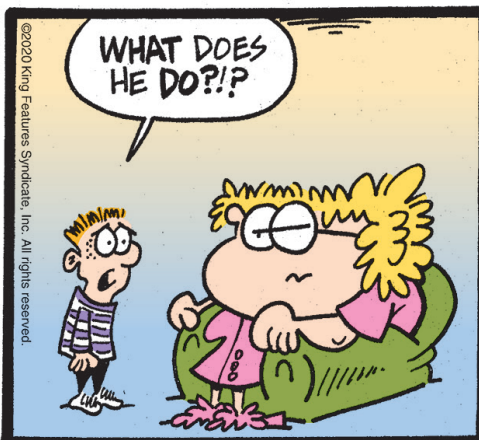
NEXT:
Devoured



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The Spats

by Jeff Pickering



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PICKERING

SENIOR NEWS LINE

by Matilda Charles

Getting Through Winter

Cold weather is here ... joining the coronavirus and the flu. Such a wonderful trio of events all at the same time.

The Old Farmer's Almanac says that temperatures this winter will be a bit warmer for much of the country, at least for the eastern portion. The other Farmer's Almanac divides the country in a different way, with the north half of the country seeing the cold.

We didn't want to go outside anyway, did we? This winter especially we need to do all we can to stay healthy.

If you live in an especially cold area that's likely to get a lot of snow and ice, find someone to take care of it and be sure you're on their storm list.

Arrange for prescriptions to be sent by mail from the pharmacy.

Stock up on batteries for flashlights, and consider getting a battery-operated radio. Remember to keep your cell-phone charged at all times. One of the best things I've purchased this year is a pair of battery-operated lamps; some even come with a remote control and motion detector.

Try to stock up on heavy or large items

from the grocery store, ideally from curbside pickup. A box of canned goods and extra toilet paper will keep you from having to scramble at the last minute.

Don't try to save money by keeping the temperatures in your house too low. Seniors especially can get into trouble with hypothermia before we even know it. Aim for indoor temperatures of 68 F to 70 F, and put on a sweater!

One of the biggest things you can do to stay safe this winter is sign up with the seniors daily check-in, a phone call you'll receive either from the town or senior center to make sure you're OK. Or create your own phone tree with friends to check in every day.

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1. What regulation-size piece of sports equipment is 1 inch thick, 3 inches in diameter and weighs 6 ounces?

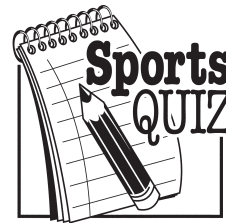
2. "How about that!?" was the signature on-air catchphrase of what legendary New York Yankees broadcaster?

3. Name the former NFL quarterback who served in the U.S. House of Representatives for North Carolina's 11th congressional district from 2007-13.

4. What St. Louis Cardinals outfielder was injured when Busch Stadium's automatic tarpaulin rolled over his leg before a 1985 NL Championship Series game?

5. Handsome Dan the bulldog is the mascot for what university's athletic teams?

6. What NC State center scored a tip-in dunk to seal the Wolfpack's win in the 1983 NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament championship game?



by Ryan A. Berenz

7. Of Ivan Lendl's eight career Grand Slam tennis tournament wins, how many were at Wimbledon?

Answers

1. An ice hockey puck.
2. Mel Allen.
3. Heath Shuler.
4. Vince Coleman.
5. Yale University.
6. Lorenzo Charles.
7. Zero.

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Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps



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Small Holiday Gathering Can Still Stress Pets

DEAR PAW'S CORNER: This year, we are only going to have a few family members over on Christmas Day. In past years, I've put our dog, cat and rabbit in the back of the house with plenty of water and beds to sleep in, so the noise and lights and strange people don't stress them out. I feel like we can safely keep the pets in their usual spots this year because there will only be eight people here for dinner and presents. What do you think? — *Cheryl in Lake City, Florida*

DEAR CHERYL: That's your call. You know your pets.

In addition to the size of the gathering, you should consider the personalities of your guests: Are any of them timid or afraid around pets, and would anyone be upset if your dog starts barking?

The big question here is how many strangers each of your pets can handle. Rabbits, for example, are very susceptible to stress and should be kept in a quiet spot and not handled too much by visitors. A calm, well-socialized dog may be able to handle the influx of people. Same with your cat, who will simply disappear to a hiding spot if things get a little overwhelming.

Even though it's a smaller crowd this year, make a plan and share it. How much time should the pets spend with visitors around? When should they be placed in a separate area? (During dinner or when presents are opened, for example.) If a pet shows signs of stress, such as barking, yelping, meowing, hissing or growling, who will grab them and take them to the quiet spot to calm down?

When everyone knows the strategy, they can act quickly to keep the party calm and pets healthy and safe.

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

Strange BUT TRUE

By Lucie Winborne

- Doc Martens come in all different colors and sizes now, but the first pair was created using old tires.
- There actually aren't "57 varieties" of Heinz ketchup, and never were. Company founder H.J. Heinz thought his product should have a number, and he just happened to like 57.
- March 3 is known as "What if Cats and Dogs Had Opposable Thumbs Day."
- The number of permutations within a deck of cards is mind-bogglingly large: an 8 with 67 zeroes after it. That means there are more card combinations than stars in the Milky Way, which amount to as many as 400 billion!
- Cataract surgery was possible as early as the 6th century B.C.
- Barbie's physical appearance was inspired by a German doll named Bild Lilli, created in 1952 and based on a

high-end call girl named Lilli who was featured in the comic strip "Bild-Zeitung." She was sold as an adult novelty in bars and tobacco shops — definitely not as a children's toy. Barbie inventor Ruth Handler saw the doll while vacationing in Europe and brought it home.

- Sunsets on Mars are blue.
- The Gate Tower Building in Osaka, Japan, has a highway that passes through the building, between the fifth and seventh floors.
- A Paris morgue needed help identifying bodies in the 1860s, so decided to open its doors to the public. They probably underestimated people's morbid curiosity, though, as soon 40,000 people a day were coming to look at corpses.
- Mob boss Vincent Gigante would wander around New York in his bathrobe to convince the police he was insane, and thus avoid capture.

Thought for the Day: "Life is mostly froth and bubble. Two things stand like stone. Kindness in another's trouble, courage in your own." — *Adam Lindsay Gordon*

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THEY'LL DO IT EVERY TIME

THINGS THAT OUGHTA BE SAID...

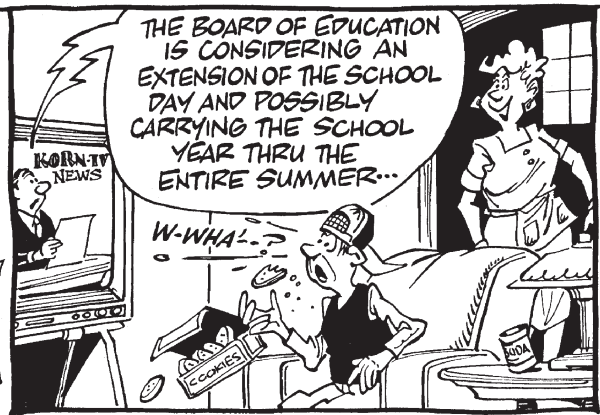


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BY AL SCADUTO

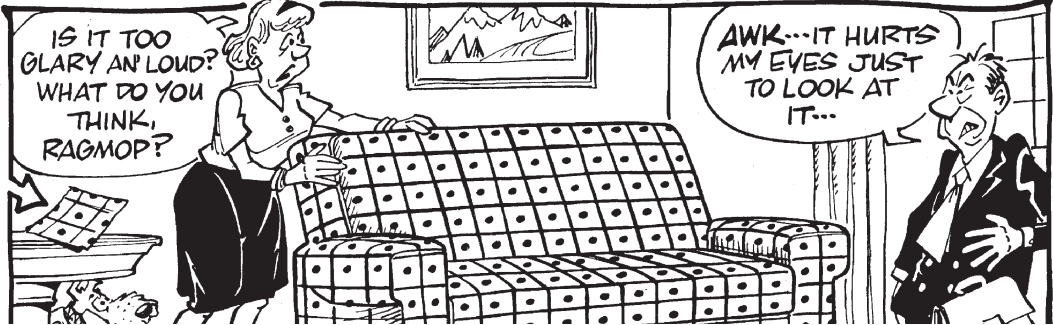
NEWS SPOT - FAMINE, PESTILENCE, EARTHQUAKES... AND NOW THE GOOD NEWS... FOR MOM, THAT IS.....



Thank to MARCY DOLAN, ORMOND BEACH, FL.

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EVER HAPPEN TO YOU? THE UPHOLSTERERS LITTLE SWATCH SAMPLE LOOKED SO VERY MILD... BUT ONCE THE FABRIC IS PUT ON THE SOFA... OH-H-H BOY! STAND BACK!



Thank A NUMBER OF

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These companies and others offer young trees and seedlings packaged and delivered as gifts:

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- www.treegivers.com
- www.seedsoflife.com
- www.arborday.org
- www.greenworldproject.net
- www.treesforachange.com
- www.nextgenmemorials.com
- thetreesremember.com

- Brenda Weaver

VETERANS ★ POST ★

by Freddy Groves

Sarge the EMT

The retired sergeant, the one with the 6-foot foldout measuring stick, wasn't there when I headed for the order window at the coffee shop. The rest of the veterans were uncharacteristically quiet, arrayed around the sidewalk in folding chairs and blankets against the cold, listening to an emergency scanner.

"Where is he?" I asked.

"There was an accident out on the highway. We suspect he was involved somehow," one said. A pause, then: "He was a career Army combat medic, E-6. Tried to sign up with the EMTs here. Wouldn't take him. Too old, they said. Policy."

It was an hour before Sarge pulled up in his truck and climbed slowly out, blood on his coat. He snapped open his lawn chair and dropped into it.

The story came out in a tired voice: He was three cars behind a nasty wreck, multiple crushed vehicles, one a pickup truck that had rolled, ejecting a toddler onto the pavement.

"I grabbed my medical bag," he said. "Injured baby, blood everywhere, but thank God, still strapped in her car seat."

One of the other vets pushed up out of his lawn chair. "You're a bit shock-y," he said and handed Sarge his blanket.

The story kept coming out: Sarge had wrapped the baby's leg that had the worst of the damage and kept pressure on it with one hand while washing the blood off her face with the other, singing to her for distraction, and managed not to kill on sight the drunk father who stumbled over and demanded to know what he was doing to his daughter. The EMTs eventually showed up, bouncing down the median.

His phone rang and he pulled it out, listened and grunted "I'll be there." He snapped the phone shut and slid it back into his pocket. "The baby will be fine eventually."

We saw a tiny smile, and then: "The EMTs want me. Said maybe I'm not too old after all."

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



A Champion for Indian Country

Congress gets a bad rap for never getting anything done. It's not completely undeserved, but every single day bills pass out of the U.S. House and the U.S. Senate.

This week was no exception. My legislation to honor former Congressman and Rosebud Sioux tribal member Ben Reifel passed the U.S. Senate and is headed to the president's desk to be signed into law.

Former Congressman Ben Reifel was a strong proponent of the Indian Civil Rights Act and fought to ensure that tribes received proper compensation for native land transfers. He was a leader in Congress on Indian Affairs and the first person of Lakota Sioux descent in Congress.

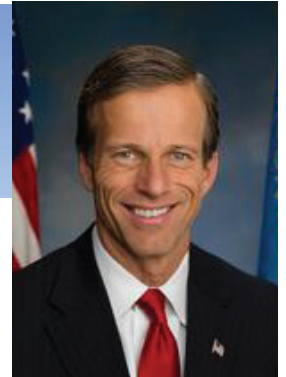
After the bill passed Congress, I received a letter from the granddaughter of Ben Reifel, Lisa Moss. She said, "Shortly before he passed in 1990, he attended a rally held for President George H. W. Bush, (41). President Bush publicly recognized my grandfather, who was in a wheelchair by then. My grandfather, when recounting the event to me, commented that that was quite something for someone whose life started in a log cabin with a dirt floor, living in poverty, on the reservation."

Ben Reifel was a champion for Indian Affairs policy, and he is more than deserving of this recognition. The bill officially designates the United States Postal Service building in Rosebud, South Dakota, just miles down the road from Reifel's birthplace, as the Ben Reifel Post Office Building.

Lisa Moss went on to say in her letter, "While many pieces of legislation loom large, maybe this one does not...But H.R. 2454 looms large and significant in our hearts. Knowing that Ben Reifel's legacy will carry on in South Dakota is precious to us."

It's not earth-shattering legislation, but Ben Reifel represented South Dakota well, and his legacy will live on. I'm grateful to play a small role in ensuring his name is displayed throughout our great state. Our tribal communities are full of tremendous leaders and Ben Reifel is proof of that.

John Thune
U.S. SENATOR - SOUTH DAKOTA



No One Wants a Surprise Tax Bill Under the Tree

The complicated tax situation facing mobile workers has been an issue in need of a solution for a while now, but the urgency to address it has grown exponentially during the pandemic. As everyone knows, medical professionals from around the country have traveled to hard-hit areas this year to help hospitals deal with the influx of COVID cases. But what many people don't realize is that these medical professionals – like other mobile workers – are likely to face a complicated tax situation as a result.

Like most Americans, mobile workers' income is subject to taxation in the state in which their permanent home is located, but any income they earned in a state other than their state of residence is also subject to taxation in the state in which they earned it. For example, a worker who lives and works in Minnesota gets taxed in Minnesota. In certain situations, she can also be taxed on the income she earns in Wisconsin and Iowa if she travels there for work.

Some states give up to a 60-day window before income earned by mobile workers in their state is subject to taxation. Other states start taxing mobile workers immediately. Navigating different states' requirements can make for a miserable tax season. It can also be a real burden for their employers. It's particularly challenging for smaller businesses, who frequently lack the in-house tax staff and tracking capabilities of larger organizations. The situation has long cried out for a solution.

For the past four Congresses, I've introduced legislation – the Mobile Workforce State Income Tax Simplification Act – to create a uniform standard for mobile workers. Under my bill, if you spent 30 days or fewer working in a different state, you would be taxed as normal by your home state. If you spent more than 30 days working in a different state, you would be subject to that other state's income tax in addition to income tax from your home state.

In June of this year, I introduced an updated version of my Mobile Workforce bill – the Remote and Mobile Worker Relief Act. My new bill goes further to address some of the particular challenges faced by mobile and remote workers as a result of the coronavirus by establishing a special 90-day standard for health care workers who travel to another state to help during the pandemic. This would ensure that these workers don't face an unexpected tax bill for the contributions they make fighting the coronavirus.

Relief for mobile workers is a bipartisan idea. A version of my original Mobile Workforce bill has passed the House of Representatives multiple times, and the only reason it hasn't advanced so far in the Senate is because of the opposition of a handful of states – like New York– that aggressively tax temporary workers.

New York, of course, was the epicenter of the pandemic in the United States early on, and medical professionals from across the country came to New York to work and help out. One would think that their presence would be an occasion for profound gratitude, but New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo apparently also regards them as an opportunity for a tax windfall. That's right. These workers provided indispensable help to New York in its worst period during the pandemic, but in May Gov. Cuomo announced that these workers would nevertheless be subjected to New York's substantial income tax for the time they spent working in the state.

Americans have been through enough over the past year. Dedicated health care workers have traveled the country to save lives, and many workers in our country have been forced to work remotely. We can save them from unexpected tax misery next April with my bipartisan Remote and Mobile Worker Relief Act.

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Why I'll Be Getting the COVID-19 Vaccine

The COVID-19 pandemic has rocked our planet and nothing has been the same since it began. We all want the world to go back to normal and with the emergence of successful COVID-19 vaccinations, we are one step closer to that becoming a reality. I'm not suggesting that government needs to mandate this vaccine. Whether you take it or not will be up to you - it comes down to personal responsibility.

Here's my decision: I will be getting the COVID-19 vaccine when it becomes available.

As many of you know, my wife Jean has been battling a cancer called sarcoma since 2019. If she were to get COVID-19, it would be difficult for her weakened immune system to fight off this disease. Keeping this virus away from her has been my priority. This vaccine will help keep Jean safe.

I have no concerns that the COVID-19 vaccine will be safe and effective. Tests show the Moderna vaccine is 94 percent effective and the Pfizer vaccine is 95 percent effective. These vaccines have gone through the same rigorous trials the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) uses to test all vaccines. Tens of thousands of people have received these vaccines while successfully participating in trials. By the time a vaccine reaches you, you can trust that it will have been put through numerous phases of clinical trials and be safe for you to take.

Despite this success, concerns still continue to float around on social media about the safety and effectiveness of the vaccine, and in the weeks to come, I anticipate there will be plenty more disinformation floating around online. It's important when we are making decisions that we take into account the validity of the source and only trust information that comes from reliable sources. The Centers for Disease Control and the FDA say this vaccine will be safe and efficient. I trust that information. Your doctor would also be a good source of information if you have uncertainties.

I've said this before but it's worth repeating: while we wait for the vaccine, it's important to continue using common sense to fight this virus. Use hand sanitizer, wash your hands, keep your distance and wear your darn mask when it makes sense. But using common sense can only get us so far. Our lives will only get back to normal after a vaccine is widely distributed.

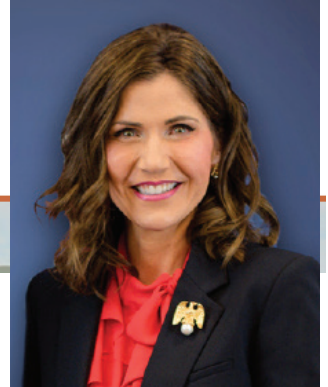
Here's the point – vaccines save lives. Vaccines eliminated smallpox worldwide. And they've eradicated polio and rubella from this country. Soon, we will be able to add COVID-19 to that list.

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SOUTH DAKOTA GOVERNOR
KRISTI NOEM



Investing in South Dakota's Future

After yet another incredible year, South Dakota is entering 2021 in one of the strongest financial positions in the country. This is largely due to our strong economy, our approach to COVID, and our respect for freedom and personal responsibility.

Other states are facing much tougher financial situations. They're planning to raise taxes. They're borrowing billions of dollars to cover budget shortfalls. They're looking to Congress to send them more money.

South Dakota is taking a different path. Our economy is strong. After peaking at 11% in April, South Dakota's unemployment rate is back down to 3.6% in October, the third lowest in the country. But we must remain prudent and conservative moving forward. We cannot spend every dollar that we have. When we do invest in our state, we must invest wisely and strategically.

South Dakota prides itself on fiscal responsibility. I'm recommending paying off \$21 million in 2010 debt that the state issued to our technical colleges. The tech colleges will be able to refocus their attention on educating students and preparing them to enter South Dakota's workforce.

When it comes to infrastructure, the most important investment we can make this year is to finish connecting South Dakota to broadband, and I am requesting a \$100 million investment. We must create an environment where people aren't forced to choose between the modern economy on the one hand, and life in their hometowns on the other.

South Dakotans take tough situations and turn them into great opportunities. On October 31st, our Open Class Beef Complex burned down at the State Fair. Now, we're building a world class facility in its place, which will bolster South Dakota agriculture for years to come. I'm requesting \$12 million for this project.

My budget funds 2.4% inflationary increases for medical providers, K-12 education, technical colleges, and state employees. We're also providing targeted increases for community-based healthcare providers. And we're recommending an additional \$11 million one-time investment for K-12 education to help provide a final bridge for schools past the pandemic.

We're helping to fund a new Liberty Center at Ellsworth to give the community a recreational center that will be a connection for our military, their families, and the surrounding community. Anyone in the armed forces will tell you that community and connection are critical for a family that is constantly on the move.

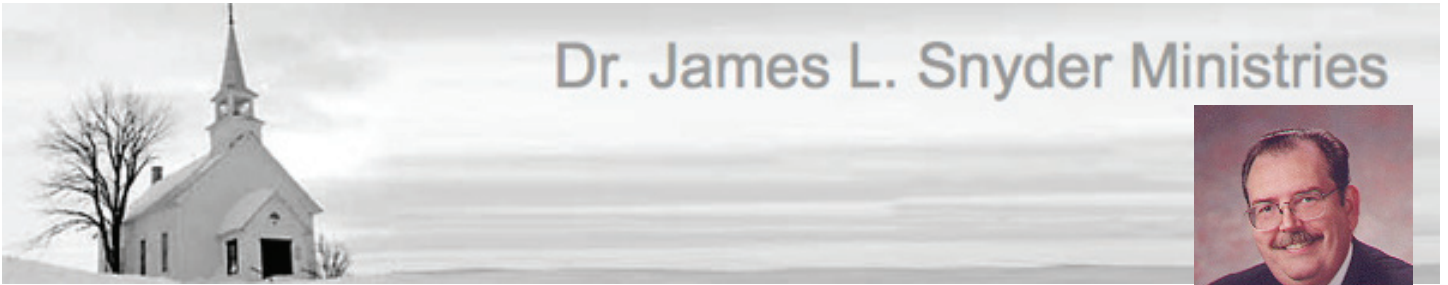
Finally, my budget recommends that we add 2% to our regular 10% budget reserves, and that we put \$50 million in a trust fund in order to protect ourselves against future economic hardships. South Dakota's future is very bright. But we've faced real challenges this year. And we will face more in the future. To safeguard against unforeseen economic setbacks, we must continue to take a prudent and conservative approach to state government.

I'll close with the wise words of President Calvin Coolidge: "I want the people of America to be able to work less for the government and more for themselves. I want them to have the rewards of their own industry. This is the chief meaning of freedom."

I cannot think of anything more descriptive of my administration's hope for the people of South Dakota. Under God, the people rule. All of us here are stewards of the people's hard-earned tax dollars. And the budget I have proposed sets up our children and grandchildren for decades of prosperity.

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Dr. James L. Snyder Ministries



Christmas Is More Than Jingle, Jingle

I have been trying lately to remember my first Christmas. I know my memory isn't perfect, but I thought maybe I could bring up some old memories of my first Christmas.

Unfortunately, I couldn't think of a thing about that first Christmas of mine. Of course, it might be that I was only five months old at the time. Still, I tried to remember some of those old Christmases in the past.

Down through the years, I have celebrated more Christmases than I want to let on. It's not that I'm old; I just haven't died yet.

The thing about Christmas was all the stuff I was getting. The first Christmas I remember, I got a bunch of presents under the tree. None of my siblings had shown up at the time, so I was the focus of several Christmases. That was the essence of real joy.

I thought Christmas was all about me and all I wanted for Christmas and all that would make me happy.

I remember my parents taking me downtown to sit on Santa's lap and tell what I wanted for Christmas. That's what I thought Christmas was all about.

I was a little disturbed when my siblings came on the scene, and Christmas was no longer all about "me." For some reason, they thought they were part of Christmas. Being the terrific brother that I am, I allowed them to have some of the Christmas time around the tree.

Then I was introduced to the fact that not only was I not the focus of Christmas but now I needed to purchase Christmas presents for my siblings. That was a hard thing to get over. What did they ever do to deserve my Christmas presents?

I finally processed that and discovered giving can also be fun.

Things went along nicely, and then another thing changed everything in my Christmas activity.

Going to a Bible school up in New York, I happened to meet a young lady. Before I could process everything, I found myself married. How that happens, men have no idea. I had to remind myself that weddings are for wives and not husbands. The husband that allows the wife to plan the wedding is a happy dude in the end.

When we got married, I did not realize how everything in my life was going to change.

Then came the first Christmas as a married man, for which I wasn't prepared.

That Christmas we spent with my wife's family. At first, I thought the whole neighborhood had come to

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celebrate Christmas with us. Then, much to my chagrin, I realized these were siblings to my wife. I don't remember how many there were; I couldn't count them; they were running around too fast.

I never experienced such a Christmas in all my life. The thing about it was we had to purchase gifts for all of the family. I was able to empty Wal-Mart with all of my purchases.

Opening up those gifts, I couldn't remember what I got and who I got it for. But it was the beginning of a different kind of Christmas season than I experienced up to this time.

Then other things began to happen. One by one, children came into our family. Fortunately, we only had three children, unlike my wife's parents, who had somewhere near 100, at least by my calculation.

I eventually discovered that Christmas was not about me at all. There was a major adjustment for me thinking about the Christmas season. Not being a qualified shopper, I had to rely upon my wife to do all the shopping, for which she is an expert.

It wasn't long before I realized that a Christmas song with the word "jingle" in it meant that I was supposed to spend a lot of my coin for Christmas.

Now, Christmas was not about me, or was it? It was about me paying for Christmas, and the recipients seem to be growing without stop.

I had my parents and my siblings to buy Christmas presents. I had my wife's parents and her siblings to buy Christmas presents. Then, I had my children to buy Christmas presents.

Why, oh, why is it all about "me?"

It took a while for me to come to the right conclusion that Christmas is more than "jingle, jingle." I came to that conclusion when one Christmas we were celebrating at our home, and our children and grandchildren were all around the Christmas tree opening up presents.

I sat back and just watched. Sure, I got a couple of Christmas presents. But that wasn't what Christmas was for me. I saw my family around that tree and realized that that's what Christmas was all about. Family coming together and enjoying one another.

The "jingle, jingle" was just the door that opens up the family celebration. Thinking about it, I have concluded that all the "jingle, jingle" in the world is worth every moment around that tree.

Then I thought about what the Bible said. "And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn" (Luke 2:6-7).

Christmas is all about family. God's family comes into the family through the Lord Jesus Christ.

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#293 in a series

Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

This is a weekend, and typically numbers come in slower on weekends. That didn't happen so much today. We set another single-day new-case record with 254,500 new case reports today. This week, California became the first state to add 30,000 cases in a day; much of that is a product of dire conditions in Los Angeles County which, just Thursday, added nearly 13,000 cases. Nineteen states set weekly case records this week. New Jersey had a record number of cases today. Our new-case average is around 195,000 which is 16% higher than it was before Thanksgiving which goosed the current fall surge even higher; those Thanksgiving cases could keep rolling in for another day or so. Next up are Hanukkah, Christmas, Kwanzaa, and New Year's Eve to juice transmission further. Our total is now 1.6% higher than yesterday's, and we did, indeed, break the 16 million mark with 16,182,900 cases just five days after hitting 15 million. I would prefer not to produce this chart quite so frequently, but here's the history:

April 28 – 1 million – 98 days
June 11 – 2 million – 44 days
July 8 – 3 million – 27 days
July 23 – 4 million – 15 days
August 9 – 5 million – 17 days
August 31 – 6 million – 22 days
September 24 – 7 million – 24 days
October 15 – 8 million – 21 days
October 29 – 9 million – 14 days
November 8 – 10 million – 10 days
November 15 – 11 million – 7 days
November 21 – 12 million – 6 days
November 27 – 13 million – 6 days
December 3 – 14 million – 6 days
December 7 – 15 million – 4 days
December 12 – 16 million – 5 days

Hospitalizations are at another record at 108,108. This is the sixth consecutive day and the thirtieth out of the last 32 which set a record. Contact tracers across the country are hearing from new patients that they socialized over Thanksgiving with people outside their households, even in the face of advice—and pleading—from public health experts not to do that. Those exposures and transmissions are coming to roost now. Those authorities are, once again—and I'm sure they're getting hoarse by now from repeating the same thing over and over—asking us to forego the big Christmas gatherings, office parties, neighborhood bashes, family dinners. I expect people who don't take that advice seriously are probably not reading this, but I'll repeat anyhow that it really, really is not a good idea to do the Christmas thing. Supposing we don't go all stupid, most of us will have another Christmas to celebrate, but you only die once. So does Grandpa.

We're at 297,946 total deaths in this pandemic, 0.8% higher than yesterday and it is possible we'll see the 300,000 mark tomorrow, depending how depressed Sunday reporting turns out to be. There were 2282 deaths today. The seven-day average of deaths is up to 2260 per day, which is really close to the record set in April.

I mentioned last night I had a bit more information on those allergic reactions to the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine in the UK. There were two individuals. While earlier reports characterized the reactions as anaphylactoid, now they are being called anaphylactic. This seems minor, but it is the difference between a non-allergic reaction involving histamine release and an actual allergy. In any event, the people both had a history of serious allergic reaction to food or medication and were both treated successfully with epinephrine. People with known allergy to vaccines were excluded from the clinical trial, and only one person out of the 18,801 who received vaccine had what might be an allergic reaction in the trial.

I am starting to get some detail on that EUA for the Pfizer vaccine. It appears the prescribing informa-

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tion warns the vaccine should not be given to individuals known to be severely allergic to any component of the vaccine. I know folks with severe allergies were concerned what this means to them in terms of being able to access the vaccine, and Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute for Allergy and Infectious Diseases, says the warning was expected and that it does not necessarily mean people with unrelated allergies can't be vaccinated. Rather it means those people will want to receive the vaccine in an appropriate medical setting where folks are prepared to treat such a reaction and should have their epinephrine auto-injectors available at the time of the vaccine administration; I'll have more on this in a moment when we talk about the CDC's advisory committee meeting today.

The fact sheet for patients says you should tell your vaccination provider if you are pregnant, breast-feeding, immunocompromised, have a bleeding disorder or are on a blood thinner, have a fever, have any allergies, or have received another Covid-19 vaccine.

You may recall that the vote on Thursday at the FDA's Vaccines and Related Biologics Advisory Committee meeting was 17-4 with one abstention to recommend authorization. It now appears those "no" votes were largely due to concerns with authorizing for people ages 16 and up; the dissenters wanted the age limit set to 18, not to kill the vaccine entirely. That's further evidence how strongly the Committee felt that this is a safe and efficacious vaccine.

And now the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices has also made its recommendation. No one is surprised that they, too, are in favor. Their three main points of discussion were whether to recommend vaccination of 16- and 17-year olds, what to recommend for pregnant and lactating people, and recommendations for those who have had anaphylactic reactions to other vaccines. They did recommend the vaccine for those who are 16 and 17; they suggest leaving decisions on vaccination to pregnant women and their doctors; and they are recommending against vaccination for those with severe reactions to any vaccine ingredient and that patients be monitored for 15 minutes after the vaccine is administered. More details will emerge when the labeling is published. They also recommend offering vaccine to those who have previously been diagnosed with Covid-19, but since supplies are so short, that those people wait to receive the vaccine until the 90 days has expired.

There is an infected snow leopard at the Kentucky Zoo in Louisville and two other being tested. This is the first snow leopard known to be infected in the US. It is believed the infection was transmitted from a asymptomatic worker despite precautions routinely taken. All three cats have mild symptoms, but as seems typical with cats, large and small, don't appear to be in any danger. There is considered to be minimal danger to humans, but the exhibit at the Zoo remains closed while the cats recover.

Brian and Dina Murphy got Covid-19 in the early days, way back in March. As was typical back then, it wasn't easy to pin down a diagnosis, but Diana was sicker sooner and got diagnosed. Apparently, neither was dangerously ill, and they both recovered; so now they're looking to share their good fortune. They've been donating their plasma for use in treating other patients; so far they've helped 68 people. Now they're embarked on a campaign to let other survivors know how easy it is to donate. Dina told ABC News, "It's a lot easier than believe it or not, donating blood," and Brian added, "It's a critical time for everybody to be providing because there are so many more people in the hospital right now that could use plasma donations." They're creating change in their corner of the world.

I appreciate someone willing to help, even to the point of donating their own blood, and yet they see donation as a way to make a difference. Big bravo to them. Now to figure out how to be that helpful in our own circumstances.

Be well. We'll talk again.

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December 12th COVID-19 UPDATE

Groton Daily Independent
from State Health Lab Reports

South Dakota:

Positive: +735 (90407 total) Positivity Rate: 11.9%

Total Tests: 6176 (679,457 total)

Hospitalized: +39 (5125 total). 452 currently hospitalized -15)

Deaths: +33 (1243 total)

Males: 19, Females: 14

Ages: 50s=2, 60s=1, 70s=11, 80+=19

Counties: Brookings-1, Brown-9, Codington-1, Davison-1, Day-1, Lawrence-1, Lincoln-1, McCook-1, Minnehaha-8, Oglala Lakota-2, Pennington-5, Todd-2.

Recovered: +3407 (76,247 total)

Active Cases: -2705 (12,917)

Percent Recovered: 84.3%

Beadle (32) +11 positive, +116 recovered (238 active cases)

Brookings (24) +16 positive, +85 recovered (331 active cases)

Brown (44): +34 positive, +126 recovered (542 active cases)

Clark (1): +4 positive, +6 recovered (58 active cases)

Clay (11): +11 positive, +52 recovered (204 active cases)

Codington (59): +25 positive, +74 recovered (486 active cases)

Davison (50): +14 positive, +133 recovered (282 active cases)

Day (14): +8 positive, +21 recovered (109 active cases)

Edmunds (3): +4 positive, +3 recovered (56 active cases)

Faulk (10): +1 positive, +6 recovered (23 active cases)

Grant (20): +7 positive, +38 recovered (150 active cases)

Hanson (3): +0 positive, +17 recovered (40 active cases)

Hughes (24): +14 positive, +83 recovered (240 active cases)

Lawrence (26): +17 positive, +77 recovered (349 active cases)

Lincoln (55): +54 positive, +231 recovered (796 active cases)

Marshall (3): +4 positive, +13 recovered (38 active cases)

McCook (21): +3 positive, +33 recovered (67 active cases)

McPherson (1): +0 positive, +12 recovery (30 active case)

Minnehaha (229): +187 positive, +807 recovered (3082 active cases)

Pennington (112): +126 positive, +346 recovered (1604 active cases)

Potter (2): +2 positive, +17 recovered (37 active cases)

Roberts (23): +12 positive, +27 recovered (160 active cases)

Spink (20): +8 positive, +25 recovered (120 active cases)

Walworth (13): +2 positive, +28 recovered (107 active cases)

NORTH DAKOTA

COVID-19 Daily Report, Dec. 12:

- 8.1% rolling 14-day positivity
- 385 new positives
- 5,955 susceptible test encounters
- 282 currently hospitalized (+5)
- 4,078 active cases (-328)
- 1,152 total deaths (+22)

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County	Positive Cases	Recovered Cases	Negative Persons	Deceased	Community Spread	% RT-PCR Test Positivity Rate (Weekly)
Aurora	389	338	743	7	Substantial	30.77%
Beadle	2421	2151	4902	32	Substantial	18.98%
Bennett	339	303	1059	5	Substantial	16.22%
Bon Homme	1420	1309	1802	21	Substantial	28.04%
Brookings	2701	2346	9287	24	Substantial	19.73%
Brown	4055	3469	10630	44	Substantial	19.87%
Brule	609	548	1631	5	Substantial	20.45%
Buffalo	401	369	837	10	Substantial	25.00%
Butte	805	690	2722	15	Substantial	17.73%
Campbell	108	102	201	1	Minimal	12.50%
Charles Mix	1022	830	3426	10	Substantial	24.12%
Clark	290	231	815	1	Substantial	12.12%
Clay	1506	1291	4312	11	Substantial	17.47%
Codington	3096	2552	7901	59	Substantial	31.98%
Corson	428	388	869	5	Substantial	38.46%
Custer	627	516	2281	8	Substantial	23.68%
Davison	2564	2232	5468	50	Substantial	23.42%
Day	460	337	1444	14	Substantial	24.55%
Deuel	371	291	929	5	Substantial	38.03%
Dewey	1159	827	3378	7	Substantial	23.81%
Douglas	336	285	794	6	Substantial	32.14%
Edmunds	298	239	873	3	Substantial	14.29%
Fall River	394	340	2183	10	Substantial	13.04%
Faulk	297	264	578	10	Moderate	13.64%
Grant	768	598	1827	20	Substantial	33.33%
Gregory	459	396	1039	23	Substantial	9.73%
Haakon	190	147	456	3	Substantial	4.94%
Hamlin	550	441	1439	27	Substantial	25.50%
Hand	299	278	679	1	Substantial	11.76%
Hanson	287	244	558	3	Substantial	39.13%
Harding	86	67	144	0	Moderate	63.64%
Hughes	1837	1573	5229	24	Substantial	8.29%
Hutchinson	642	520	1918	14	Substantial	29.13%

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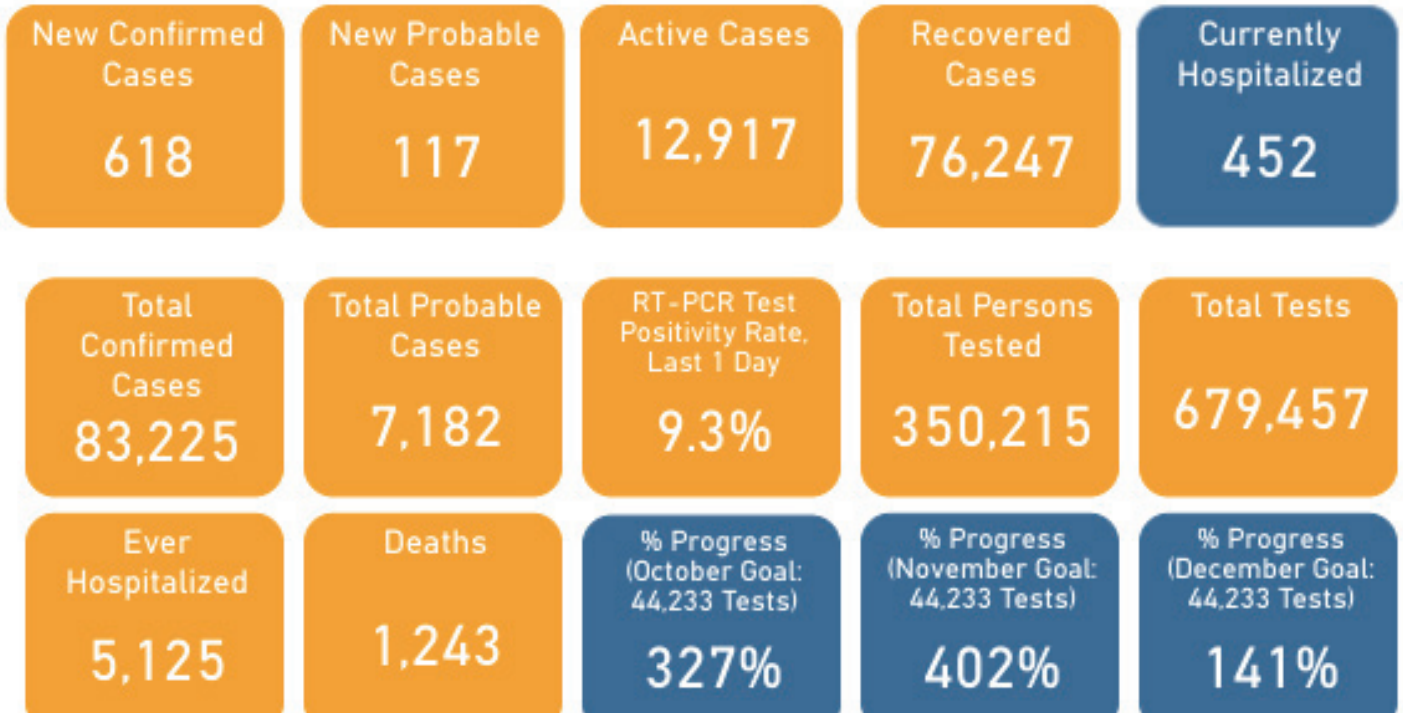
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Hyde	128	111	345	0	Moderate	8.33%
Jackson	240	190	839	8	Substantial	24.56%
Jerauld	249	218	470	15	Moderate	12.50%
Jones	63	59	175	0	Moderate	11.11%
Kingsbury	479	412	1338	13	Substantial	13.54%
Lake	932	814	2641	12	Substantial	29.01%
Lawrence	2318	1943	7288	26	Substantial	21.71%
Lincoln	6049	5189	16337	55	Substantial	25.35%
Lyman	495	439	1640	9	Substantial	18.39%
Marshall	224	183	950	3	Substantial	32.94%
McCook	630	542	1335	21	Substantial	26.58%
McPherson	161	130	482	1	Substantial	4.13%
Meade	2017	1655	6394	18	Substantial	19.60%
Mellette	205	173	636	1	Substantial	21.05%
Miner	212	180	479	6	Substantial	36.36%
Minnehaha	22930	19619	63986	229	Substantial	23.46%
Moody	481	394	1528	13	Substantial	30.30%
Oglala Lakota	1781	1524	6087	31	Substantial	20.18%
Pennington	9943	8227	32116	112	Substantial	22.91%
Perkins	237	176	610	3	Substantial	36.21%
Potter	291	255	682	2	Substantial	12.90%
Roberts	848	665	3655	23	Substantial	27.24%
Sanborn	296	248	576	3	Substantial	15.15%
Spink	649	509	1800	20	Substantial	17.18%
Stanley	247	220	718	2	Substantial	9.52%
Sully	101	86	229	3	Moderate	17.65%
Todd	1081	935	3689	17	Substantial	26.10%
Tripp	585	485	1281	10	Substantial	23.29%
Turner	883	740	2264	47	Substantial	25.66%
Union	1405	1176	5063	25	Substantial	21.75%
Walworth	566	446	1569	13	Substantial	24.90%
Yankton	2202	1622	7796	17	Substantial	27.84%
Ziebach	265	170	605	7	Substantial	36.84%
Unassigned	0	0	1851	0		

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South Dakota



AGE GROUP OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Age Range	# of Cases	# of Deaths
0-9 years	3259	0
10-19 years	9895	0
20-29 years	16802	3
30-39 years	15016	12
40-49 years	12893	20
50-59 years	12851	63
60-69 years	10158	160
70-79 years	5326	262
80+ years	4207	723

SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Sex	# of Cases	# of Deaths
Female	47274	611
Male	43133	632

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Brown County

New Confirmed Cases

31

New Probable Cases

3

Active Cases

542

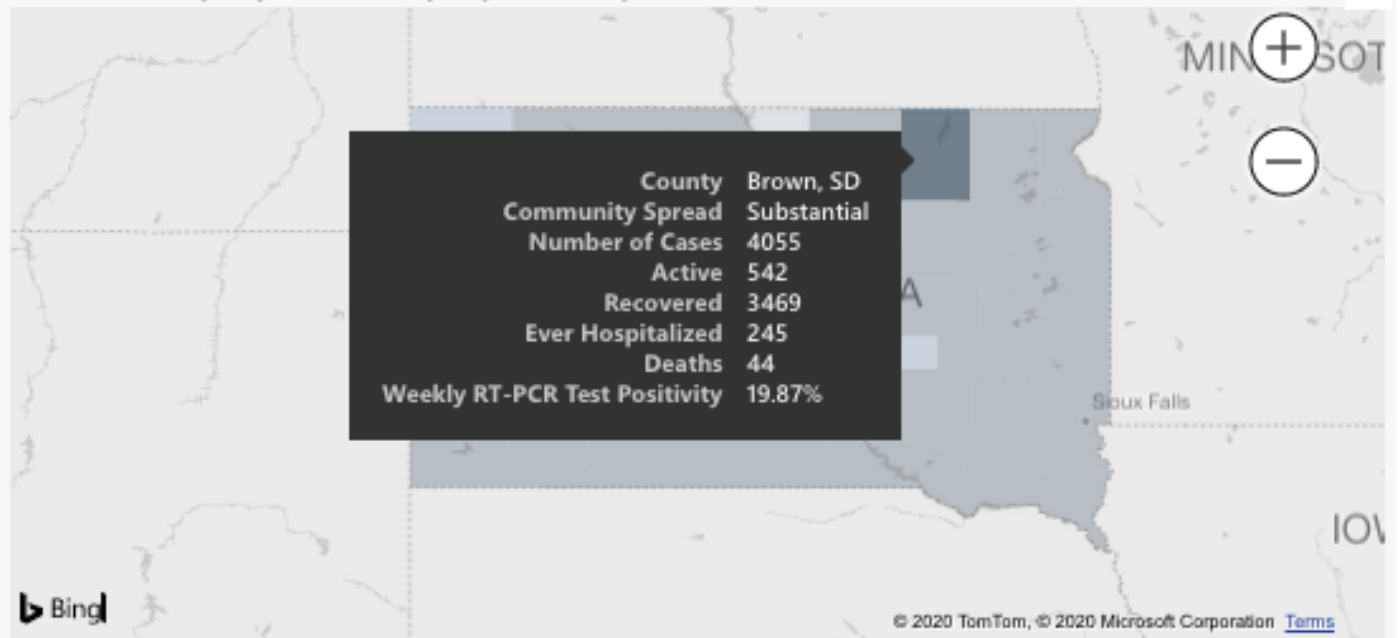
Recovered Cases

3,469

Currently Hospitalized

452

Community Spread Map by County of Residence



Community Spread ● Minimal ● Moderate ● Substantial

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

Total Confirmed Cases

3,878

Total Probable Cases

177

RT-PCR Test Positivity Rate, Last 1 Day

5.1%

Total Persons Tested

14,685

Total Tests

31,729

Ever Hospitalized

245

Deaths

44

% Progress (October Goal: 44,233 Tests)

327%

% Progress (November Goal: 44,233 Tests)

402%

% Progress (December Goal: 44,233 Tests)

141%

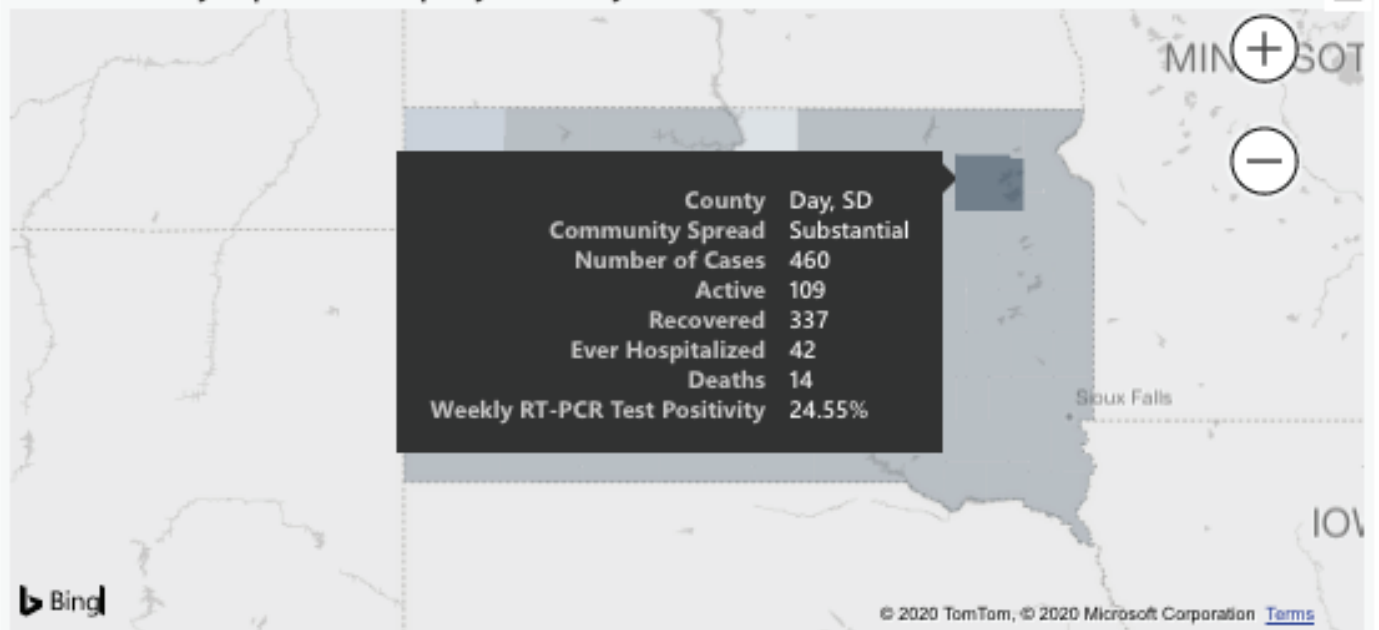
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Day County

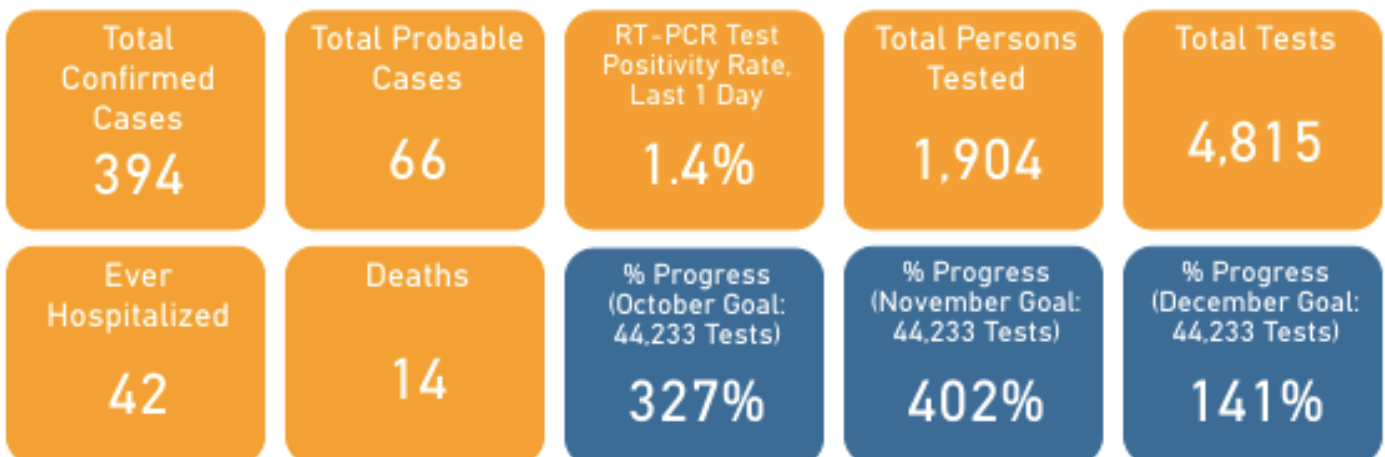


Community Spread Map by County of Residence



Community Spread ● Minimal ● Moderate ● Substantial

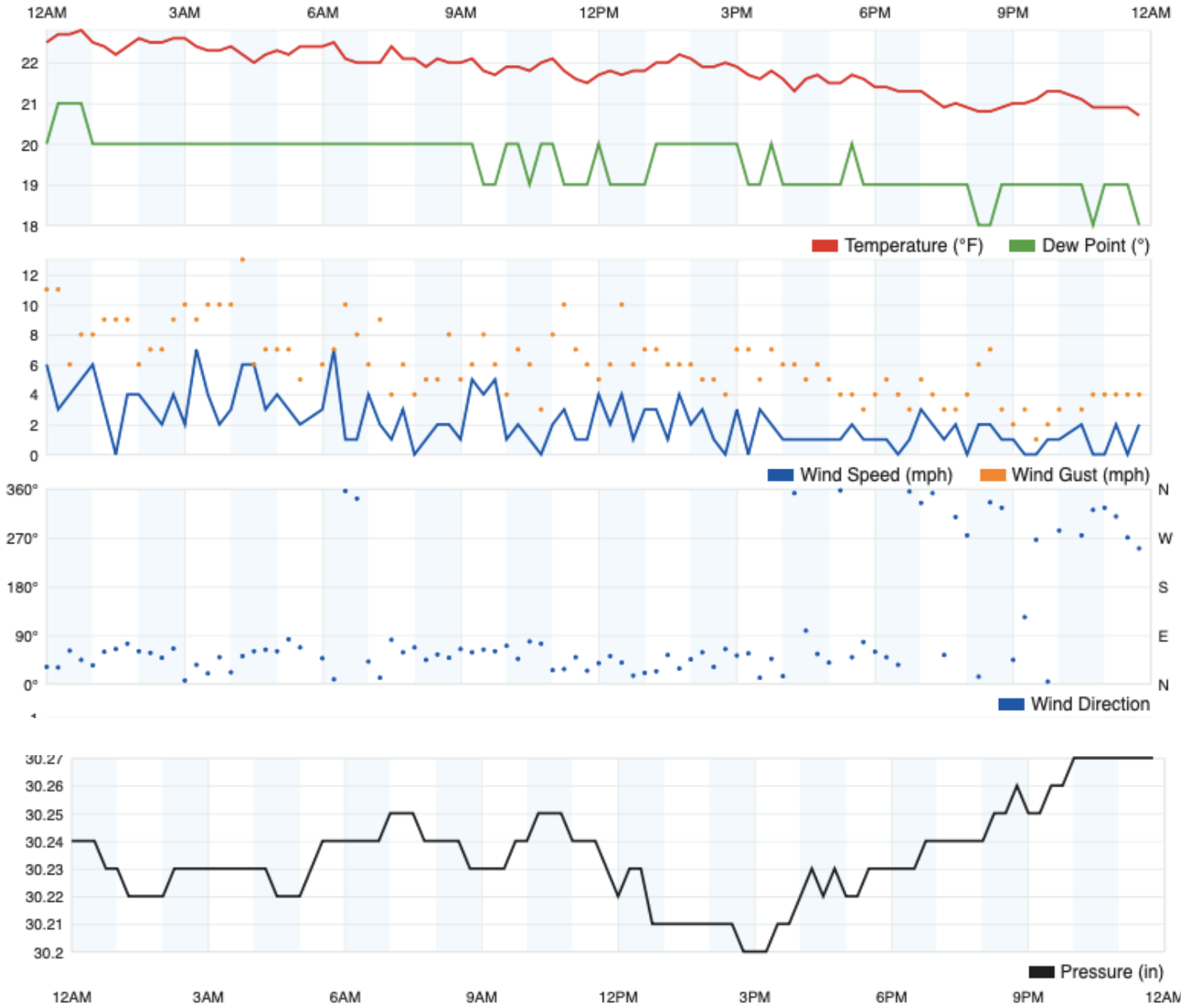
Hover over a county to see its details, or click county to update the orange boxes.



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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



Snow Likely
then Partly
Sunny

High: 32 °F

Tonight



Mostly Clear

Low: 3 °F

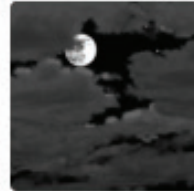
Monday



Partly Sunny

High: 21 °F

Monday
Night



Mostly Cloudy

Low: 11 °F

Tuesday



Partly Sunny

High: 29 °F

Dusting of Light Snow!

This Morning over portions of Northern SD
Ending Early this Afternoon over the Sisseton Hills

{ Highs 25 to 35^o warmest over southwestern SD }



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

While a dusting of light snow will be possible over northern portions of South Dakota this morning, and early this afternoon over the Sisseton Hills, it shouldn't be enough to build a snowman. Snowfall amounts are expected to be less than half an inch. Another dusting of snow, up to around half an inch, will be possible over south central South Dakota Monday night into Tuesday morning. Highs through Tuesday will mainly be in the 20s to low 30s.

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Today in Weather History

December 13, 2008: An intense low-pressure area moved out of the Rockies and across the Central Plains bringing widespread snow, blizzard conditions, and extreme winds chills to central and northeast South Dakota as well as west central Minnesota into the early morning hours of the 15th. Snowfall amounts of 1 to as much as 12 inches along with winds gusting to 50 mph caused widespread near zero visibilities and dangerous travel conditions. Winds chills fell into the 35 below to 45 below zero range. Many vehicles became stuck or stranded along several highways and along Interstates 29 and 90. Interstate 90 was closed from the Wyoming line to Murdo from late on the 13th until the morning of the 14th. Interstate 29 was also closed for much of the 14th. The Onida, Agar, and Gettysburg Volunteer Fire Department found it difficult to respond to a structure fire south of Gettysburg. Due to whiteout conditions, the structure was lost to the fire by the time the fire departments arrived. Most area schools were closed on Monday due to the road conditions along with the bitter cold wind chills. Some of the heaviest snowfall amounts included: 6 inches at Watertown, Browns Valley, Sisseton, Waubay, and Castlewood; 7 inches at Ortonville, Webster, Clear Lake, Faulkton, and Aberdeen; 8 inches at Milbank, 9 inches at Britton and Wheaton; 10 inches at Clear Lake, and 12 inches at Roscoe. Mobridge received 2 inches and Pierre received 4 inches of snowfall with this storm

December 13, 1997: A freak cold snap and snowstorm struck parts of northern Mexico left 12 people dead, and the area paralyzed. It snowed in the city of Guadalajara for the first time since 1881, leaving amazed residents to gawk at the white stuff and make snowmen. The temperature plunged to 5 degrees in Chihuahua.

1915 - A heavy snowstorm kicked off the snowiest winter in modern records for western New England. (The Weather Channel)

1962 - A severe Florida freeze occurred. Morning lows reached 35 degrees at Miami, 18 degrees at Tampa, and 12 degrees at Jacksonville. It was the coldest December weather of the 20th century and caused millions of dollars damage to crops and foliage. In Georgia, the morning low of 9 degrees below zero at Blairsville established a state record for the month of December. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A major winter storm produced high winds and heavy snow in the Southern Rockies and the Southern High Plains. Snowfall totals in New Mexico ranged up to 25 inches at Cedar Crest, with up to three feet of snow reported in the higher elevations. Winds of 75 mph, with gusts to 124 mph, were reported northeast of Albuquerque NM. El Paso TX was buried under 22.4 inches of snow, including a single storm record of 16.8 inches in 24 hours. The snowfall total surpassed their previous record for an entire winter season of 18.4 inches. Record cold was experienced the next three nights as readings dipped into the single numbers. High winds ushering unseasonably cold air into the southwestern U.S. gusted to 100 mph at Grapevine CA. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Low pressure off the Atlantic coast produced up to a foot of snow in eastern Nassau County and western Suffolk County of southeastern New York State. Mild weather prevailed across the western half of the country. Nine cities reported record high temperatures for the date, including Goodland KS with a reading of 74 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Strong northwesterly winds, ushering bitterly cold arctic air into the central U.S., produced squalls with heavy snow in the Great Lakes Region. Snowfall totals in Upper Michigan ranged up to 24 inches at Manistique. Nine cities in Arkansas and Texas reported record low temperatures for the date, including Calico Rock AR with a reading of 4 degrees above zero. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

2002 - A powerful Pacific storm system plowed into the western United States during the 13th-16th, producing high winds, heavy rains, significant mountain snowfall and causing 9 deaths (Associated Press). Rainfall amounts exceeding 10 inches occurred in parts of California, and wind gusts over 45 mph produced up to 1.9 million power outages during the period (Pacific Gas & Electric).

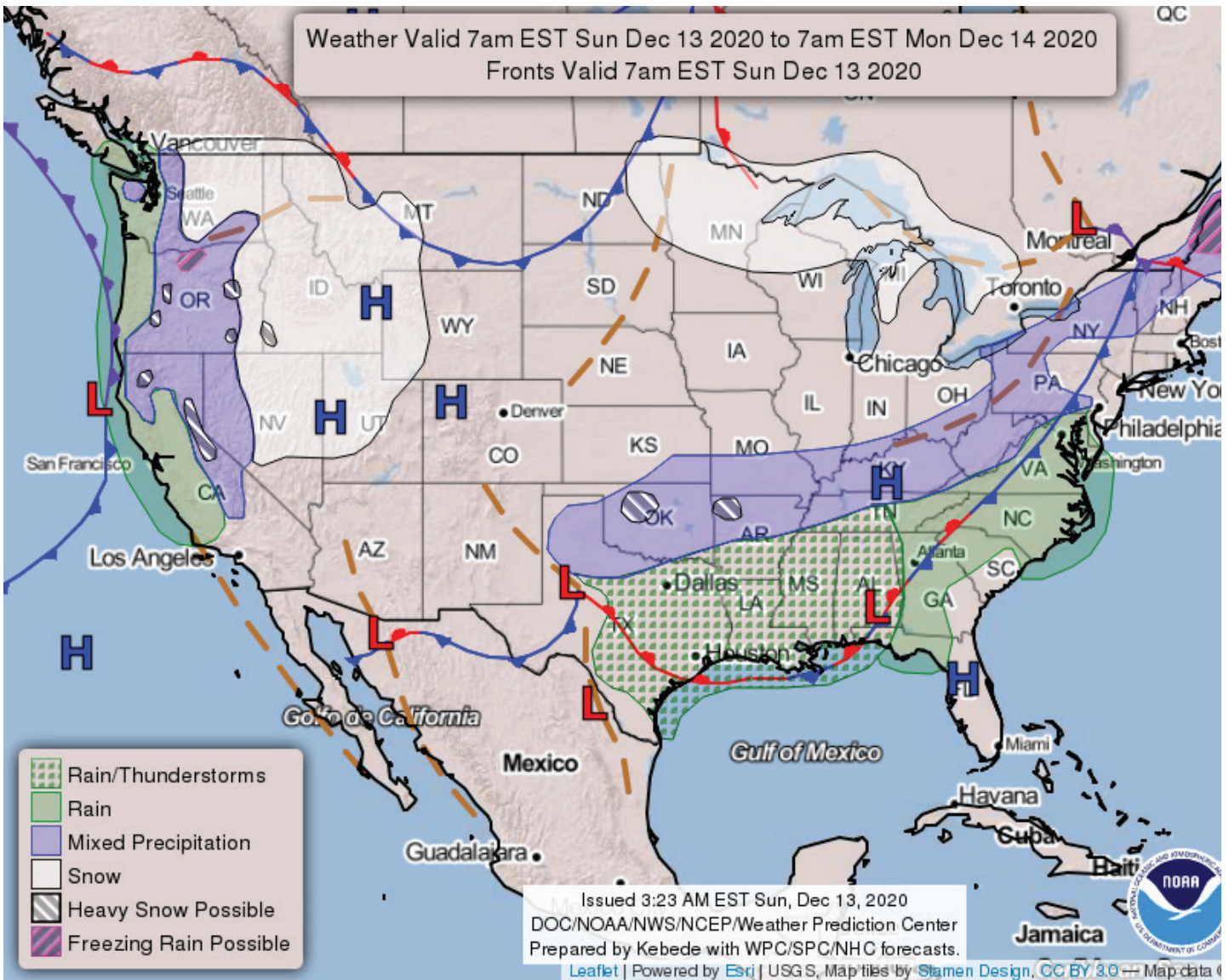
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

High Temp: 23 °F at 12:37 AM
Low Temp: 21 °F at 8:18 PM
Wind: 13 mph at 4:14 AM
Precip: .00

Record High: 57° in 1921
Record Low: -34° in 1917
Average High: 26°F
Average Low: 6°F
Average Precip in Dec.: 0.21
Precip to date in Dec.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 21.41
Precip Year to Date: 16.52
Sunset Tonight: 4:51 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:06 a.m.



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THE REAL THING!

It has always been difficult for missionary families to be together at special times for important occasions. Often hearts ache for the joy and happiness that bonds hearts and unites loved ones for special reasons and seasons.

The headmaster of a school for the children of missionaries knew that feeling very well. His parents were missionaries, and he spent many birthdays alone as well as many holidays apart from family members. He knew that one of his students, in particular, was having a difficult time one Christmas and decided to visit him in his room.

After talking for a few minutes he asked, "John, what would you like for Christmas this year?"

Looking at a picture of his father on the wall, he said, "I would like my father to step out of that frame."

That's what Jesus did. He "stepped out" of the Old Testament "frames" that prophesied His coming. He became the "real thing" when he walked among the people, laid His hands on the sick, and restored them to health, fed the hungry with bread that would last throughout eternity, and gave the water of life to those dying of thirst.

The Son of God willingly and voluntarily made Himself "nothing" when He assumed a human body and a human nature and became the "real thing." Jesus is God seeing us through human eyes, hearing us with human ears, touching lives with human hands, and loving us with a human heart. In Jesus, we see God with us – Immanuel!

Prayer: Thank You, Father, for sending us the "Real Thing." Through Your Son we know how much You love us, understand us, and know our every need. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Philippians 2:5-11 Who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.

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News from the  Associated Press

Saturday's Scores

By The Associated Press

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL=

Aberdeen Christian 68, James Valley Christian 23

Brandon Valley 84, Spearfish 40

Chester 51, Garretson 50

Dupree 54, New Underwood 51

Groton Area 66, Britton-Hecla 45

Huron 65, Mitchell 59

Ipswich 54, Waubay/Summit 53

Langford 53, Leola/Frederick 45

Lead-Deadwood 67, Harding County 54

Lennox 51, Milbank 32

Madison 50, Elk Point-Jefferson 49

Parker 64, McCook Central/Montrose 44

Parkston 64, Avon 31

Ponca, Neb. 66, Irene-Wakonda 43

Rapid City Central 61, Douglas 43

Rapid City Christian 89, Philip 26

Sanborn Central/Woonsocket 62, Sunshine Bible Academy 20

Sioux Falls Christian 79, West Central 39

Sioux Falls Roosevelt 80, Sioux Falls O'Gorman 73

Sioux Falls Washington 78, Brookings 39

Sioux Valley 60, Clark/Willow Lake 48

Sisseton 66, Tri-Valley 45

Tripp-Delmont/Armour 53, Menno 32

Wall 74, Edgemont 54

West Sioux, Iowa 76, Alcester-Hudson 40

Yankton 66, Rapid City Stevens 37

Gillette Tournament=

Thunder Basin, Wyo. 55, St. Thomas More 40

GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL=

Andes Central/Dakota Christian 41, Platte-Geddes 37

Brandon Valley 63, Spearfish 52

Bridgewater-Emery 61, Wessington Springs 16

Centerville 57, Estelline/Hendricks 34

Corsica/Stickney 71, Colome 36

Ethan 70, Hanson 56

Garretson 74, Chester 40

Harding County 37, Lead-Deadwood 36

Huron 65, Mitchell 59

Ipswich 51, Hitchcock-Tulare 30

Irene-Wakonda 69, Ponca, Neb. 41

James Valley Christian 33, Aberdeen Christian 30

Kadoka Area 46, Faith 39

Langford 41, Leola/Frederick 35

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Lennox 41, Milbank 17
Madison 53, Elk Point-Jefferson 40
McCook Central/Montrose 56, Parker 16
Menno 41, Tripp-Delmont/Armour 37
New Underwood 52, Dupree 16
Newell 56, Bison 43
Philip 66, Rapid City Christian 65
Potter County 51, Lyman 46
Rapid City Central 84, Douglas 30
Sanborn Central/Woonsocket 62, Sunshine Bible Academy 20
Sioux Valley 56, Clark/Willow Lake 52
Wall 56, Edgemont 38
Warner 52, Webster 46
West Sioux, Iowa 51, Alcester-Hudson 22
White River 68, Stanley County 27
Gillette Tournament=
St. Thomas More 61, Thunder Basin, Wyo. 51

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

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Dakota Cash

17-28-30-31-33

(seventeen, twenty-eight, thirty, thirty-one, thirty-three)

Estimated jackpot: \$32,000

Lotto America

10-29-36-38-46, Star Ball: 7, ASB: 3

(ten, twenty-nine, thirty-six, thirty-eight, forty-six; Star Ball: seven; ASB: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$2.05 million

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$291 million

Powerball

17-54-56-63-69, Powerball: 20, Power Play: 2

(seventeen, fifty-four, fifty-six, sixty-three, sixty-nine; Powerball: twenty; Power Play: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$277 million

Umude scores 41; South Dakota beats South Dakota State 91-78

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Stanley Umude had a career-high 41 points plus 11 rebounds as South Dakota defeated South Dakota State 91-78 on Saturday night.

A.J. Plitzuweit had 17 points and six assists for South Dakota (1-5, 1-2 Summit League), which snapped its season-opening five-game losing streak. Xavier Fuller added 12 points.

Alex Arians had 18 points for the Jackrabbits (5-3, 2-1), whose four-game winning streak came to an end. Baylor Scheierman added 15 points and eight rebounds. Noah Freidel had 13 points.

For more AP college basketball coverage: <https://apnews.com/Collegebasketball> and http://twitter.com/AP_Top25

This was generated by Automated Insights, <http://www.automatedinsights.com/ap>, using data from STATS LLC, <https://www.stats.com>

Woman accused of maiming people in scheme to obtain opioids

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Authorities say a woman on South Dakota's Pine Ridge Indian Reservation used a rock to assault and maim five people, including three who lost fingers, in a scheme to obtain painkillers for herself.

The Rapid City Journal reports 40-year-old Frenchone One Horn, also known as Frenchone Kills in Water, pleaded not guilty to assault and other charges on Dec. 2.

One Horn is charged with four counts of maiming for allegedly torturing three of the five victims who had fingers amputated. One of the victims had two fingers amputated on two different dates in October 2019, an indictment says. It's unclear if the victims lost their fingers during the assaults or if a doctor had to amputate them due to the damage.

She also is charged with health care fraud for allegedly making false statements about the five people's injuries in order to obtain opioids to treat pain.

The fraud charges allegedly occurred between September 2018 and January 2020.

The 14 assault-related charges each carry a maximum punishment of 10 years in prison while the four maiming charges each carry a maximum punishment of 20 years in prison. The health care fraud charge has a maximum punishment of five years in prison while the controlled substance one has a maximum punishment of four years in prison.

A trial is set for Feb. 9.

South Dakota records 33 deaths for 2nd consecutive day

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota health officials on Saturday reported 33 deaths related to COVID-19, and 618 new cases.

The number of deaths reported Saturday equaled Friday's tally, bringing the total since March to 1,243, including about 300 so far in December.

Hospitalizations from COVID-19 were down 15 on Saturday, to 452. That marks the lowest number of hospitalizations since early November, when the state began seeing a surge of new cases and hospitalizations.

There were 1,291 new cases per 100,000 people in South Dakota over the past two weeks, which ranks fifth in the country for new cases per capita, according to figures compiled by The COVID Tracking Project. One in every 167 people in South Dakota tested positive in the past week.

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

The Rapid City Journal reports the man was incarcerated at the Jameson Annex of the State Penitentiary in Sioux Falls. He's the fifth state inmate to die of the virus.

The nation's first COVID-19 vaccine will begin arriving in states Monday morning, U.S. officials said Saturday, after the government gave the final go-ahead to the shots needed to end the outbreak among Americans.

Health experts say that while vaccines are expected to be distributed soon, it will be challenging to distribute them in South Dakota, due to the state's rural nature, the difficulty in storing the shots, and concerns that some people may be reluctant to be inoculated.

Sioux Falls Fire Chief Brad Goodroad to retire in February

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The fire chief of South Dakota's largest city is retiring.

The Argus Leader reports Sioux Falls Fire Chief Brad Goodroad will retire from the department on Feb. 12. Goodroad has been with the department for 27 years and has been the fire chief since 2017.

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The city said in a statement that a new fire chief will be appointed by Mayor Paul TenHaken, and the search will begin immediately.

Goodroad began his career with Sioux Falls Fire Rescue in 1994. He served as a firefighter for about seven years before applying to be a fire apparatus operator. He progressed to captain, battalion chief, and eventually to division chief.

UK, EU say talks will continue on post-Brexit trade deal

By RAF CASERT and JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — Throwing overboard a self-imposed deadline, the European Union and Britain said Sunday they will “go the extra mile” to clinch a post-Brexit trade agreement that would avert New Year’s chaos and cost for cross-border commerce.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen had set Sunday as the decisive moment for a breakthrough or breakdown in deadlocked negotiations. But they stepped back from the brink, saying there was too much at stake not to make a final push.

“Despite the exhaustion after almost a year of negotiations and despite the fact that deadlines have been missed over and over, we both think it is responsible at this point in time to go the extra mile,” von der Leyen said.

Johnson said the two sides were “still very far apart on some key things.”

“But where there’s life, there’s hope we’re going to keep talking to see what we can do,” he said.

The two sides’ negotiators were continuing to talk in Sunday Brussels at EU headquarters, with less than three weeks until the U.K. leaves the economic embrace of the 27-nation bloc.

Johnson played down hopes of a breakthrough, saying the “most likely” outcome was that the two sides wouldn’t reach a deal and would trade on World Trade Organization terms, with the tariffs and barriers that would bring.

European Council President Charles Michel welcomed the extension of talks, saying “we should do everything to make a deal possible,” but warned there could be a deal “at any price, no. What we want is a good deal, a deal that respects these principles of economic fair play and, also, these principles of governance.”

Months of tense and often testy negotiations gradually whittled differences down to three key issues: fair-competition rules, mechanisms for resolving future disputes and fishing rights. They remain unresolved.

It has been four and a half years since Britons voted by 52%-48% to leave the EU and — in the words of the Brexiteers’ slogan — “take back control” of the U.K.’s borders and laws.

It took more than three years of wrangling before Britain left the bloc’s political structures on Jan. 31. Disentangling economies that have become closely entwined as part of the EU’s single market for goods and services took even longer.

The U.K. has remained part of the single market and customs union during an 11-month post-Brexit transition period. That means so far, many people will have noticed little impact from Brexit.

On Jan. 1, it will feel real. New Year’s Day will bring huge changes, even with a deal. No longer will goods and people be able to move between the U.K. and its continental neighbors.

Exporters and importers face customs declarations, goods checks and other obstacles. EU nationals will no longer be able to live and work in Britain without a visa — though that doesn’t apply to the more than 3 million already there -- and Britons can no longer automatically work or retire in the EU.

There are still unanswered questions about huge areas, including security cooperation between the U.K. and the bloc and access to the EU market for Britain’s huge financial services sector.

Without a deal, the disruption would be far greater. The U.K. government has acknowledged a chaotic exit is likely to bring gridlock at Britain’s ports, temporary shortages of some goods and price increases for staple foodstuff. Tariffs will be applied to many U.K. goods, including 10% on cars and more than 40% on lamb.

Still, Johnson says the U.K. will “prosper mightily” on those terms.

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But British businesses have been sounding the alarm with increasing urgency.

"The 11th hour has passed and every passing moment of uncertainty makes it harder for businesses to prepare effectively for January 1," said Helen Dickinson, chief executive of the British Retail Consortium. "Both sides must double down and do what is necessary to agree a zero-tariff agreement, or else it will be the public that pay the price of this failure."

While both sides want a deal on the terms of a new relationship, they have fundamentally different views of what it entails. The EU fears Britain will slash social and environmental standards and pump state money into U.K. industries, becoming a low-regulation economic rival on the bloc's doorstep, so is demanding strict "level playing field" guarantees in exchange for access to its markets.

The U.K. government claims the EU is trying to bind Britain to the bloc's rules and regulations indefinitely, rather than treating it as an independent nation.

Spanish Foreign Minister Arancha Gonzalez Laya said a no-deal Brexit would be a "double whammy" for economies already battered by the coronavirus pandemic.

Britain's belligerent tabloid press urged Johnson to stand firm, and floated the prospect of Royal Navy vessels patrolling U.K. waters against intruding European vessels.

But others, in Britain and across the EU, urged the two sides to keep talking.

Irish Prime Minister Micheal Martin, whose economy is more entwined with Britain's than any other EU state, said he "fervently" hoped the talks wouldn't end Sunday.

"Even at the 11th hour, the capacity in my view exists for the United Kingdom and the European Union to conclude a deal that is in all our interests," Martin told the BBC.

Jill Lawless reported from London. John Leicester contributed from Paris

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GOP voters ready for Georgia runoffs despite Trump's claims

By BEN NADLER and BILL BARROW Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Many Republican voters in Georgia are angry. They're convinced that widespread voter fraud — claims that are baseless — cost President Donald Trump the election to Democrat Joe Biden.

But will those concerns put them on the sidelines for runoff elections Jan. 5 that will determine party control of the U.S. Senate? No way, said Trump supporter Lori Davis.

"Everyone that I'm around, we're ready to vote now," said the 57-year-old businesswoman, as she awaited the arrival of Vice President Mike Pence at a rally for GOP Sens. David Perdue and Kelly Loeffler in Augusta on Thursday.

Trump has relentlessly promoted false claims that the election was rigged against him and he has savaged Republican elected officials he perceives as standing in the way of his quest to subvert the results. Some Trump allies have gone as far as calling for voters to skip the Georgia runoffs altogether — alarming words for the GOP campaigns banking on a strong turnout.

But interviews with voters and party activists in the state suggest there's little sign that Trump's voters are planning to stay home in protest. Most Republican voters interviewed said they were prepared to put their skepticism aside to vote for Perdue and Loeffler in their races against Democrats Jon Ossoff and Raphael Warnock, respectively.

"There are people who are discouraged about (Trump) losing Georgia or being behind. But I haven't talked to people who've said, 'Oh, the heck with this, it's all rigged anyway,'" said Tim Phillips, president of the conservative group Americans for Prosperity, which has done canvassing of GOP-leaning voters.

Phillips was among those who worried that the distrust could affect Republican enthusiasm. But he said his group's weeks in the field, combined with a recent visit from Trump, have eased his worries.

Trump's Dec. 5 campaign stop in Valdosta, Georgia, was his first since he lost the state to Biden by about 11,700 votes — a result that was confirmed by two recounts, including a hand tally of all ballots.

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But those recounts haven't stopped the president from blasting Republican Gov. Brian Kemp and Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger.

Kemp has rebuffed Trump's call for a special session of the legislature to subvert the election results, while Raffensperger has repeatedly said there is no evidence of systemic fraud or irregularities in the November election.

Trump's allies have continued to push false claims of fraud.

Sidney Powell, who was removed from Trump's legal team last month, has teamed up with Georgia attorney Lin Wood, who is known for his representation of several high-profile clients, particularly in defamation cases. The lawyers have repeatedly encouraged Georgia Republicans not to vote in the runoff election and questioned whether Perdue and Loeffler have sufficiently backed Trump's efforts.

"Why would you go back and vote in another rigged election?" Wood said during a recent rally in a suburb north of Atlanta.

Trump has asked his supporters to get out and vote. The "seats are the last line of defense to save America and protect all that we've accomplished," he said at the recent Georgia event. During the rally, Trump weaved back and forth between pressing his own grievances about the election and encouraging the crowd to turn out for Perdue and Loeffler.

"You know a lot of people, friends of mine, say 'Let's not vote. We're not going to vote because we're angry about the presidential election,'" Trump told the crowd.

"But if you do that, the radical left wins," he said.

Phillips said he believes that message is getting through to the conservative base much more so than any isolated calls for boycotts or even the president's broadsides against Kemp and Raffensperger.

"These aren't people taking their cues from CNN or conventional political media. They listen to the president directly. And they're open to his message and our message of not letting (Democratic Senate leader) Chuck Schumer finish the job," Phillips said.

Republicans are depending on voters such as Terry McCreary, a 65-year-old retiree in Cherokee County. McCreary calls himself a "conservative independent," but he's voted almost exclusively for Republicans since casting presidential ballots for Democrat Bill Clinton in the 1990s.

McCreary says he finds it "hard to believe" Biden won the election fair and square. McCreary cites several misleading and disproven theories that Trump and his allies have pushed in recent weeks.

"It just doesn't feel right," he said from his home in the Atlanta suburbs.

But none of that, McCreary said, will keep him from voting in the runoffs. "I'm concerned about the election on Jan. 5" being legitimate, he said. "But I always vote. Every time."

Perdue and Loeffler have tried to placate Trump and his supporters by backing a lawsuit from Texas that sought to overturn Biden's win but was rejected by the U.S. Supreme Court on Friday, and by calling for Raffensperger to resign, citing unspecified "mismanagement" in the election.

Nonetheless, they've faced pushback from hardcore Trump supporters. As the pair strained to speak at Trump's rally in Valdosta, cries of "Fight for Trump" filled the crowd, largely drowning out the senators.

Jeanne Seaver, a Republican activist in Georgia who worked on Trump's 2016 campaign, said she believes that Republican voters will still come out to support Perdue and Loeffler despite the anger on the ground.

"I think if Donald Trump says get out and vote for Kelly and David, then the Trump folks are loyal to Donald Trump and will get out and vote," Seaver said.

Associated Press writers Meg Kinnard in Augusta, Georgia and Kate Brumback in Atlanta contributed to this report.

DOJ probe of Catholic church abuse goes quiet 2 years later

By MARYCLAIRE DALE Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Two years ago, the U.S. attorney in Philadelphia joined the long line of ambitious prosecutors investigating the Roman Catholic Church's handling of priest-abuse complaints.

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The Justice Department had never brought a conspiracy case against the church, despite exhaustive reports that showed its long history of burying abuse complaints in secret archives, transferring problem priests to new parishes, silencing accusers and fighting laws to benefit child sex assault victims.

U.S. Attorney William McSwain sent subpoenas to bishops across Pennsylvania asking them to turn over their files and submit to grand jury testimony if asked. The FBI interviewed at least six accused priests, court files show.

But as McSwain's tenure likely nears its end with President-elect Joe Biden set to take office next month, there's no sign that any sweeping church indictment is afoot. So far, the case has yielded a single arrest: an 82-year-old defrocked priest, Robert Brennan, charged with lying to FBI agents who showed up at his door.

The filings in that case, though, are revealing. They show the FBI had reached a dead end in the broader church probe five months after McSwain set his sights on it.

"I can say with confidence that this team has been extraordinarily thorough and that this investigation is now on the wind-down," an FBI agent wrote in a March 22, 2019, memo to McSwain's office.

Victim advocates who have long sought a full reckoning over the alleged cover-up by church officials are disappointed, but perhaps not surprised.

McSwain is far from the first prosecutor to wonder if the Catholic Church's handling of sex assault complaints, especially before it adopted its "Dallas Charter" for the protection of children in 2002, was the work of a criminal enterprise.

"Everyone wants a RICO investigation," said victim advocate Zach Hiner, referring to the criminal Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act statute.

"There's no doubt that these kind of stories can get people's hopes up, and when they fizzle out, it leads to a 'People don't believe us,' 'The church is going to win' mentality," said Hiner, executive director of the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests. "But I think the mere fact that we're even talking about it is something that people should be hopeful about."

In Pennsylvania alone, at least four other state and local prosecutors spent years investigating the church and produced harrowing grand jury reports in 2005, 2011, 2016 and 2018, each time concluding they could not indict any bishops or the church itself because of the years that had passed.

The closest anyone came was the 2011 arrest of Monsignor William Lynn, an aide to the long-reigning Philadelphia Cardinal Anthony Bevilacqua. Lynn was convicted of child endangerment in 2012 and spent two years in prison, but twice had his conviction overturned. His third trial was getting under way in March when the city courthouse shut down because of the coronavirus pandemic.

McSwain's investigation came on the heels of Pennsylvania Attorney General Josh Shapiro's two-year probe, which culminated in an explosive report issued in August 2018. Shapiro detailed Catholic clergy abuse involving more than 1,000 victims over 70 years in Pennsylvania. Many of his peers around the country followed suit.

Just last month, New York Attorney General Letitia James sued the Buffalo diocese and two former bishops over an alleged cover-up.

And, nationwide, U.S. dioceses have tallied complaints from 17,000 people and paid out about \$4 billion to victims since the 1980s, a figure that could double given recent lookback laws that give them more time to sue. But few prosecutors have filed criminal charges against any church leaders or diocese, usually because of the age of the complaints.

McSwain may have run into the same problem. He declined to speak with The Associated Press about the case.

"Agents reviewed tens of thousands of documents from the archdiocese that local law enforcement had also reviewed in the previous investigations; those documents revealed no apparent prosecutable federal offenses, but suggested additional investigative steps were warranted," McSwain said in a motion filed in Brennan's case, explaining the need to interview him along with "numerous clergy, church personnel, victims, and other laypersons."

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David Gibson, director of Fordham University's Center on Religion and Culture, thinks some of the recent investigations may be politically motivated, now that it's popular to take on not just predator priests but those who enabled them.

"Fifteen years ago, you didn't want to offend the bishop, you wanted to work with the diocese. Now, the political calculus says go for it," Gibson said. "I'm all for taking dioceses to task, but ... when is it grandstanding?"

The FBI agents had told McSwain's office before interviewing Brennan that "none of the abuse allegations appear to have a federal nexus" needed to charge him. They nonetheless visited the home he shared with a retired priest in Perryville, Maryland, for more than an hour.

Public defenders Catherine Henry and Katrina Young in court papers called it "outrageous" that they spoke with Brennan and searched his computer without contacting his longtime lawyer. They want the charges thrown out. Brennan had been arrested by Philadelphia prosecutors in 2013, but the abuse charges were dropped when the accuser died weeks later. The same lawyer represented him in a related lawsuit for the next five years. Brennan gave the agents that lawyer's contact information.

The judge has not yet ruled on whether to dismiss the case. Brennan is charged with lying when he said he did not know the accuser despite a graduation photo showing them together. Brennan, who said the student was just one of many at the large school, is free on bail.

Gibson believes the church is now belatedly taking steps to address the abuse problem, and thinks public officials should turn some of their attention to child abuse happening elsewhere. He called Shapiro's report important, but "an excavation of the past."

However, lawyer Mitch Garabedian, who helped expose the church abuse scandal in the Boston archdiocese in 2002, still hopes to see a federal racketeering case.

"Many victims and survivors desperately want the federal government to prosecute the Catholic church for these crimes because it will help victims try to heal and make the world a safer place for children," he said Thursday. "The RICO action probably would be appropriate."

Follow Maryclaire Dale on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/Maryclairedale>

Biden's challenge: Building Cabinet that meets all his goals

By WILL WEISSERT and LISA MASCARO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Shortly after President-elect Joe Biden's victory last month, Cabinet hopeful Marcia Fudge pointedly noted that Black people are often typecast into positions such as housing secretary.

On Friday, Biden announced Fudge, a prominent Black congresswoman from Ohio, was his nominee for that very role. She was introduced alongside Biden's pick for the job she initially sought, head of the Agriculture Department. That went instead to Tom Vilsack, a 70-year-old white man who already spent eight years in the position during the Obama administration.

Those nominations highlight the competing priorities Biden is facing as he fills out the top ranks of his administration. He's pledged to nominate the most diverse Cabinet in history and restore experience at beleaguered federal agencies. He's seeking to reward loyalists who have stood with him throughout his lengthy career and give opportunities to new voices in the Democratic Party.

Each of his nominees has to win confirmation in a narrowly divided Senate that could be controlled by Republicans, depending on who wins two runoff races in Georgia next month. The GOP has barely acknowledged Biden's victory so the cooperation of its senators in the confirmation process is far from certain.

"There's a lot of pressure, and part of the reason you saw such big turnout is that people are eager for change from the Trump years," said Democratic strategist Karen Finney. "That creates a lot of high expectations."

The challenge won't get easier. Biden is facing a decision on attorney general that will come under intense scrutiny from Black leaders, who want someone with a background in civil rights advocacy, and Republicans who are demanding political independence as Biden's son, Hunter, faces a federal investiga-

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tion into his finances.

Some of those tensions emerged last week during a meeting between Biden and civil rights leaders who pressed the incoming president to diversify his Cabinet and warned about the Vilsack pick in particular. Vilsack has been criticized for the firing of department official Shirley Sherrod, who is Black, during his last stint at the USDA, a move he later apologized for.

NAACP President Derrick Johnson warned Biden that the Vilsack selection could hurt Black turnout in the critical Georgia contests.

"Vilsack could have a disastrous effect on voters in the state of Georgia," NAACP President Derrick Johnson told Biden during the meeting, which was private.

Audio was leaked to The Intercept, which released excerpts.

Biden bristled at such concern, saying, "Let's get something straight, you shouldn't be upset."

"What I've done so far is more than what anyone else has done this far," he added. "I mean what I say."

The president-elect has several more Cabinet posts to fill, and has made history with some of his early selections. He nominated retired Army Gen. Lloyd Austin to be the first Black person to lead the Pentagon, while picking California Attorney General Xavier Becerra to be the first Latino to lead the Health and Human Services Department. His nominee for U.S. trade envoy, Katherine Tai, was born in Connecticut to Taiwanese parents.

But those choices were announced after African Americans, Latinos and Asian Americans in Congress voiced concerns that their perspectives may not be fully represented in the new administration. Some nominees will face other hurdles, most notably Austin who needs a waiver to fill the civilian role leading the Pentagon. That's a step some Democrats have historically opposed.

Biden could further diversify his Cabinet by picking Rep. Deb Haaland of New Mexico as the first Native American interior secretary, giving her authority over a powerful agency that oversees the nation's tribes. But doing so would further erode the razor thin Democratic majority in the House, something Biden can ill afford considering the party's tenuous standing in the Senate.

There's particular frustration that, until Tai's nomination, there was no one of Asian descent in a Cabinet-level secretary position. California Rep. Judy Chu, the chair of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus, said she suggested senior roles for Asian Americans during the campaign and transition, only for action to come at the last minute.

"We tried to work collaboratively during the campaign," Chu said. "That's why we are worried."

One prominent feature of Biden's picks so far: deep ties to the Obama administration. That includes ex-White House chief of staff Denis McDonough as secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs and former U.N. ambassador and national security adviser Susan Rice as director of the White House Domestic Policy Council.

Biden's team has said long government experience is paramount at a time when the country is facing a historic pandemic and economic uncertainty. But other Democrats are urging him to blend those familiar faces with newer voices.

"We have some people who've been in the Cabinet before -- there's a role for those people, especially in a crisis like this, they have the knowledge -- but it's important to be adding voices and lifting up the next generation of leaders," said Rep. Katie Porter, D-Calif.

Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-N.Y., also voiced concern that there was no cohesive vision emerging from Biden's slate of advisers.

"We can wrestle about whether they are bold enough or ambitious enough, especially given the uncertainty and what kind of Senate we're going to have," Ocasio-Cortez said. "But aside from that, I think one of the things I'm looking for, when I see all of these picks together, is: What is the agenda? What is the overall vision going to be?"

After a largely centrist primary bid won him the Democratic presidential nomination, Biden sought to incorporate more progressive priorities into his general election campaign, promising to invest billions in new green jobs and make major improvements to infrastructure to battle climate change.

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But some progressive leaders, including Sens. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., and Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., seem unlikely to land in the Cabinet, given the transition team's concerns about poaching from Democrats' ranks in the Senate. That's left some activists worried that the administration won't live up to its campaign promises to the party's left flank.

"I think there are some red flags or, in this case, some discouraging blue flags," said Norman Solomon, national director of the progressive activist group RootsAction.

Solomon said progressive groups are prepared to organize to try and block the nomination of Biden's pick for director of the Office of Management and Budget, Indian-American Neera Tanden, because of her past antagonism toward Sanders. They also oppose many of Biden's picks from the Democratic establishment, including incoming senior adviser Cedric Richmond, a Louisiana congressman with close ties to oil and gas companies active in his energy-rich district.

Brent Colburn, a former Obama administration official who served in several agencies, encouraged Democrats to consider the bigger picture as they judge Biden's Cabinet.

"What will ultimately impact the success of the Biden presidency is his ability to build a team that is qualified, tested, and that he is comfortable taking advice and counsel from," Colburn said. "You have to assess these picks in context of the long game."

Associated Press writer Bill Barrow in Atlanta contributed to this report.

Trucks with first COVID-19 vaccine in US get ready to roll

By MATTHEW PERRONE, MIKE STOBBE and MARK SCOLFORO Associated Press

The first trucks carrying a COVID-19 vaccine for widespread use in the United States were set to pull out of a Michigan manufacturing plant Sunday, with the shots that are critical to stopping the nation's coronavirus outbreak destined to reach states a day later.

An assembly line of workers began in the early morning hours pulling doses out of a freezer, boxing the vaccine and loading the units onto pallets so they could be placed on trucks at a Pfizer plant in Michigan. Dry ice, shipping labels and packing tape were on hand as the workers — donning masks, face shields and gloves — put together the packages inside the warehouse.

One forklift driver transported the boxes to a loading area where a second forklift driver transferred the pallets from inside the facility onto a semitruck.

Shipments of the Pfizer vaccine will set in motion the biggest vaccination effort in American history at a critical juncture of the pandemic that has killed 1.6 million and sickened 71 million worldwide.

Initially, about 3 million doses were expected to be sent out, and the priority is health care workers and nursing home residents as infections, hospitalizations and deaths soar in the U.S. With numbers likely to get worse over the holidays, the vaccine is offering a bright spot in the fight against the pandemic that's killed nearly 300,000 Americans.

Federal officials say the first shipments of Pfizer's vaccine will be staggered, arriving in 145 distribution centers Monday, with an additional 425 sites getting shipments Tuesday, and the remaining 66 on Wednesday. The vaccine, co-developed by German partner BioNTech, is being doled out based on each state's adult population.

Pennsylvania health care giant UPMC has chosen staff who are critical to operating its facilities as among those getting the first round of vaccinations, said Dr. Graham Snyder, who led the center's vaccine task force.

"It's very exciting. I will be thrilled, that moment when we administer our first dose," Snyder said Saturday. "That will clearly be a watershed moment for us."

Snyder said the UPMC system estimates that half its employees are willing to get the vaccine as soon as it's offered to them.

The vaccine is heading to hospitals and other sites that can store it at extremely low temperatures — about 94 degrees below zero. Pfizer is using containers with dry ice and GPS-enabled sensors to ensure

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each shipment stays colder than the weather in Antarctica.

Doses should be delivered to all vaccination sites identified by states, such as local pharmacies, within three weeks, federal officials said.

The 40-hospital Oschner Health System in Louisiana and Mississippi expects to receive more than 9,000 doses in the coming days, said Dr. Sandra Kemmerly, medical director of hospital quality.

Employees approved for the first round are getting texts and emails directing them to schedule their initial injection, she said.

"I would say there's enthusiasm," Kemmerly said Saturday. "There's that thought that maybe they don't have to be so afraid to come to work if they can be vaccinated and be immune."

The rollout will ensure there is enough vaccine to give people the two doses needed for full protection against COVID-19. That means the government is holding back 3 million doses to give those vaccinated in the first round a second shot a few weeks later.

The Food and Drug Administration authorized emergency use of the vaccine Friday, saying it is highly protective and presents no major safety issues. While U.S. regulators worked for months to emphasize the rigor and independence of their review, they faced political pressure until the final stages.

Concerns that a shot was rushed out could undermine vaccination efforts in a country with deeply ingrained skepticism about vaccines. The head of the FDA said the agency's decision was based on science, not politics, despite a White House threat to fire him if the vaccine wasn't approved before Saturday.

While the vaccine was determined to be safe, regulators in the U.K. are investigating several severe allergic reactions. The FDA's instructions tell providers not give it to those with a known history of severe allergic reactions to any of its ingredients.

Another vaccine by Moderna will be reviewed by an expert panel this week and soon afterward could be allowed for public use.

Perrone reported from Washington, Stobbe from New York and Scolforo from Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Associated Press Medical Writer Luran Neergaard in Alexandria, Virginia, and Health Writer Candice Choi in New York contributed to this story.

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Trump appoints flurry of allies as presidency winds down

By KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — His time in the White House rapidly ending, President Donald Trump is rewarding some supporters and like-minded allies with the perks and prestige that come with serving on federal advisory boards and commissions.

On Thursday, Trump announced his intention to nominate two authors who wrote books that flattered him to a board that makes recommendations on education research. Another author who helped write a favorable book about the president was chosen for the same board a few days earlier.

On Wednesday, the Department of Defense announced that China hawk Michael Pillsbury would become the chair of a board that gives Pentagon leadership advice on how to enhance national security. Pillsbury has served as an outside adviser to the president on China.

And on Tuesday, Trump said he would appoint his former counselor and 2016 campaign manager, Kellyanne Conway, to serve on the board of visitors to the U.S. Air Force Academy. Going to the same board will be Heidi Stirrup, an ally of top Trump adviser Stephen Miller. She served as a White House liaison at the Justice Department and was told to vacate the building when top department officials learned of her efforts to collect inside information about ongoing cases and the department's work on election fraud.

Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao was among the appointees to the board of trustees at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. She's also married to Senator Majority Leader Mitch McCon-

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nell, R-Ky.

Matt Schlapp, chairman of the American Conservative Union and a perpetuator of Trump's false claims of election fraud, will become a member of the Library of Congress Trust Fund Board.

It's not unusual for outgoing presidents to make a flurry of appointments to boards and commissions before leaving office. With three days to go in his tenure, President Barack Obama named senior advisor Valerie Jarrett and national security advisor Susan Rice to the Kennedy Center board.

Paul Light, an expert on the federal bureaucracy and a professor at New York University, describes the practice as "unseemly" and said that every administration does it.

"But nobody does these things with more politicization than Trump," Light said.

The positions that Trump has filled in recent weeks are generally on advisory boards in which members go without a salary, though they get reimbursed for travel expenses. The positions have what Light describes as "gorgeous resume value."

The number of advisory board positions has ballooned over the years. Light said that he believes past administrations have put in sincere work to match up people with the kind of credentials and experience Congress envisioned when it created those boards. He doesn't see that same effort now.

"This is all favors repaid and favors earned," Light said of Trump's picks.

The White House did not respond to a request for comment about what the president is seeking to accomplish with the appointments and how he thinks they would enhance the work of the federal government.

Among the most consequential of the wave of appointments has been with advisory boards at the Pentagon.

There was Pillsbury's appointment to the Defense Policy Board. In addition, the Pentagon announced the previous week that Corey Lewandowski and David Bossie would serve on a separate entity, the Defense Business Board. That board provides the Pentagon's leadership with outside private sector perspectives. Lewandowski was the first of Trump's three campaign managers in 2016. Bossie was tasked with helping the campaign's legal challenges contesting this year's presidential election.

They serve at the pleasure of the administration, so President-elect Joe Biden could move to replace them quickly.

In another recent move, Trump picked global warming skeptic David Legates to serve on the President's Committee on the National Medal of Science. Legates co-wrote an article in April that stated: "Actual hurricane, tornado, sea level, flood, drought, and other historic records show no unprecedented trends or changes, no looming crisis, no evidence that humans have replaced the powerful natural forces that have always driven climate and weather in the real world outside the modelers' labs."

He'll be among 12 scientists and engineers appointed to award the medal given to those who make outstanding contributions in the physical, biological, mathematical, or engineering sciences.

In September, Trump told California leaders struggling with the worsening wildfires associated with global warming that the climate would "start getting cooler" again. "You just watch," he added.

Light said some of the picks struck him as Trump declaring: "I'm on my way out and I'm going to slap you one more time. ... You laughed at me on the way out, but I got the last decision."

Analysis: The election is over; Trump's attacks will linger

By JULIE PACE AP Washington Bureau Chief

WASHINGTON (AP) — The 2020 presidential election is over. But President Donald Trump's baseless efforts to undermine it, and the consequences of those undemocratic actions, will linger in America for far longer.

It is increasingly clear that there is no fact, no piece of evidence and no court ruling that will dissuade Trump from trying to mislead Americans about President-elect Joe Biden's victory. And Trump has hardly been alone in that effort; numerous Republicans have stood with him or stood by silently, including 126 GOP members of the House who backed a bid to get the Supreme Court to invalidate Biden's victory in

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four key states.

The court emphatically rejected the case Friday night.

Trump responded on Twitter late Friday, "The Supreme Court really let us down," but he vowed to "fight on!"

The actions of Trump and his allies have exposed a striking reality about America: Many lawmakers in one of the nation's two major political parties are either willing to back efforts to overturn a free and fair election or unwilling to speak out against such a campaign.

That lays the predicate for politicians to question the integrity of any election if the results don't go a party or a candidate's way, a dangerous notion that is likely to further erode Americans' trust in government and test the durability of the nation's democratic institutions.

With the sitting president leading the way and friendly media outlets standing by to amplify his claims, the result is that millions of Americans will likely remain convinced Biden's victory was illegitimate and the election was fraudulent. According to a Quinnipiac University poll out this week, 77% of Republicans believe there was widespread fraud in the November election and about 60% say they consider Biden's victory illegitimate.

In reality, Biden won 306 Electoral College votes, the same number Trump carried four years ago in a victory he deemed a landslide. Biden also outpaced Trump by more than 7 million votes nationwide.

"Since election night, a lot of people have been confusing voters by spinning Kenyan Birther-type, 'Chavez rigged the election from the grave' conspiracy theories," said Sen. Ben Sasse of Nebraska, one of the only Republican lawmakers to weigh in after Friday's high court ruling. "But every American who cares about the rule of law should take comfort that the Supreme Court — including all three of President Trump's picks — closed the book on that nonsense."

Yet Sasse's condemnation of the baseless conspiracies promulgated by Trump also hinted at their staying power.

Long before he became president, Trump was the chief proponent of the lie that President Barack Obama was born in Kenya, not the United States, and was ineligible to serve as president. There was ample evidence to the contrary, yet the lie lingered for years, fueling animosity toward Obama among some GOP voters and making it more difficult for Republican leaders to work with him.

In his waning days in the White House, Trump is now relying on a similar playbook against Biden, who will be sworn in Jan. 20. His election attacks have frozen many Republicans, leaving them unwilling to acknowledge Biden's victory and suggesting they may see little political incentive to work with him once he's sworn in, despite the historic pandemic and economic uncertainty gripping the country.

Even Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, who served alongside Biden in the Senate for decades and struck deals with him when the Democrat was serving as Obama's vice president, has refused to plainly state that Biden won and Trump lost.

"The election fraud hoax will go down as one of the most embarrassing and dishonorable episodes in American political history, and countless Republican officials went along with it and promoted it," said Rep. Justin Amash, a Republican-turned-independent from Michigan and a frequent critic of the president and his former party.

Some of Trump's key allies were unbowed after Friday's Supreme Court ruling. Rudy Giuliani, Trump's personal lawyer and a force behind many of his attempts to overturn Biden's victory in court, continued to insist without evidence that the election had been "stolen."

"I think this is going to be a terrible, terrible thing in American history," Giuliani said Friday night on Fox News.

Trump has lashed out at the election for weeks with little regard for reality. Judges across the country have swiftly rejected lawsuits filed by his campaign and other Republicans. Even Attorney General William Barr told The Associated Press in an interview that his department had seen no evidence of fraud that would change the outcome of the election.

Still, more Republicans rallied behind Trump's efforts this week in a brazen attempt to get the Supreme

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Court to cast aside the will of voters. More than 120 House Republicans, including Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy of California, added their support to a lawsuit that made false and disproven accusations about voting in Georgia, Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin — all states Biden won. The case was also backed by 19 Republican state attorneys general.

The brief order from the court rejecting the case signaled that the justices would not be drawn into a blatantly partisan effort to subvert the election results.

Attention now turns to Monday's formal voting of the Electoral College, a milestone some Republicans have suggested they are waiting on before recognizing Biden's victory. Others in the party appear to be trying to keep stoking anger among GOP voters ahead of a pair of runoffs in Georgia in early January that will determine control of the Senate.

Yet there are signs that the endgame for others could put the nation on an even more treacherous path. Shortly after the Supreme Court ruling on Friday, Allen West, the chairman of the Texas Republican Party, all but called for states to secede.

"Perhaps law-abiding states should bond together and form a Union of states that will abide by the constitution," West wrote.

Editor's Note: Julie Pace has covered the White House and politics for the AP since 2007. Follow her at <http://twitter.com/jpaceDC>

Silent nights: Germany tightens lockdown over festive period

By FRANK JORDANS Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — Most stores shut, tight limits on social contacts, no singing in church and a ban on fireworks sales: Germany is ratcheting up its pandemic restrictions in an effort to cut the stubbornly high rate of coronavirus infections.

Chancellor Angela Merkel said she and the governors of Germany's 16 states agreed Sunday to step up the country's lockdown measures from Dec. 16 to Jan. 10 to stop the exponential rise of COVID-19 cases.

"We are forced to act, and we're acting too," Merkel told reporters in Berlin, noting that existing restrictions imposed in November failed to significantly reduce the number of new infections.

The seven-day rolling average of daily new cases in Germany has risen over the past two weeks from 21.23 new cases per 100,000 people on Nov. 28 to 26 new cases per 100,000 people on Dec. 12.

Starting Wednesday, schools nationwide will be closed or switch to home schooling; most non-food stores will be shuttered, as will businesses such as hairdressers that have so far been allowed to remain open; restaurant takeout will remain permitted, but consumption on-site — including of alcoholic beverages — will be banned.

With the exception of Christmas, the number of people allowed to meet indoors will remain restricted to five, not including children under 14.

The sale of fireworks traditionally used to celebrate New Year's will also be banned, as will public outdoor gatherings on New Year's Eve.

Bavaria's governor, Markus Soeder, said the ban on fireworks followed appeals from hospitals that they wouldn't be able to treat the large number of serious injuries that result from mishandled explosives every year.

The overall measures were necessary to prevent the number of new cases and deaths rising further, he said, adding: "We need to be careful that Germany doesn't become the problem child of Europe."

Finance Minister Olaf Scholz said the government would provide further financial support for businesses affected by the lockdown. German news agency dpa reported that the additional sums set aside amounted to 11.2 billion euros (\$13.6 billion).

Employers will be asked to let staff work from home, where possible, for the next month.

Religious services will be permitted, provided minimum distancing rules are in place and masks are worn, though singing will be banned.

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Staff in nursing homes will be required to take COVID-19 tests several times a week, and visitors will also have to provide a negative test result before being able to see relatives in care.

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

Asia Today: Japan, S.Korea set new daily records, mull steps

TOKYO (AP) — Japan's daily coronavirus cases have exceeded 3,000 for the first time while the government delays stricter measures for fear of hurting the economy ahead of the holiday season.

The 3,030 new cases, including 621 in Tokyo, took Japan's national tally to 177,287 with 2,562 deaths, the Health Ministry said Sunday.

Experts say serious cases are on the rise around the country, putting an extra burden on hospitals and affecting the daily medical treatment for other patients. They urged authorities to take measures such as suspending out-of-town trips and requesting stores to close early.

Recent media surveys show support ratings for the government of Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga have dropped about 20 points from around 70% during his first three months in office amid public discontent over his coronavirus handling.

Japan issued a nonbinding state of emergency in the spring and has survived earlier infection peaks without a lockdown. Experts say the ongoing resurgence in the dry and cold season would be a bigger challenge.

In other developments in the Asia-Pacific region:

— South Korea has set another record for its daily coronavirus tally with 1,030, as authorities struggle to suppress the virus's spread. The Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency said Sunday the additional cases including two deaths raised the national caseload to 42,766 with 580 fatalities. About 80% of the new cases were found in the densely populated Seoul area, where authorities have shut nightclubs and other high-risk venues, banned late-night dining and taken other steps to slow the spread. But such measures have shown little effect. Prime Minister Chung Sye-kyun said Saturday his government may have to enforce its highest-level social distancing rules if the virus doesn't slow down. Such restrictions would ban a gathering of more than 10 people, shut down schools, theaters and department stores and suspend professional sports leagues.

— Chinese authorities have locked down an area of more than 250,000 people after half a dozen coronavirus cases were confirmed near the Russian border in the northeastern province of Heilongjiang. Checkpoints have been set up in Dongning and Suifenhe, and people were told not to leave unless necessary. Bus service has been suspended, schools closed and production halted at factories not making daily necessities. Restaurants were told to stop dine-in service and residential communities to control entry. Four cases have been confirmed since Thursday in Suifenhe and two in Dongning. China, where the coronavirus first emerged late last year, has moved swiftly to stamp out any reappearance of the virus. The National Health Commission reported 24 new cases nationwide, including four in Heilongjiang and another in Sichuan province in the southwest. The other 19 were imported from outside China.

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

Sarah Fuller 1st woman to score in Power Five football game

By TERESA M. WALKER AP Sports Writer

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Sarah Fuller became the first woman to score in a Power Five conference football game, cleanly kicking a pair of extra points for Vanderbilt in a 42-17 loss to Tennessee on Saturday.

The goalkeeper for Vanderbilt's Southeastern Conference women's soccer champs made both of her

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kicks, to the cheers of her teammates and family.

"This whole time has been if I can do it, if I'm good enough to do it," Fuller said after the game. "It wasn't if I was a girl or not. So that's something I've really appreciated. At the end of the day, they treated me like an athlete and that's the best I could ask for."

Fuller got her historic chance with 1:50 left in the first quarter.

Listed second out of three available kickers on the depth chart, Fuller came out to try the extra point. The 6-foot-2 senior put the ball through the uprights to tie the game at 7 and celebrated by pulling her fist in before slapping high-fives with teammates.

Fuller off the field with a big smile with her family in the stands all with their arms up in the air.

Center judge Chris Garner made sure to give Fuller the ball, the official bringing it to her at the sideline.

Vanderbilt gave Fuller another chance with 7:22 left in the game. Ken Seals hit Ben Bresnahan with a 16-yard TD pass, and Fuller went back out. She kicked the extra point through as the Commodores closed to 35-17.

Fuller made history as the first female to play in a Power Five conference game on Nov. 28 with a squib kickoff to open the second half at Missouri. She has remained on the roster even as Vanderbilt's other kickers came out of quarantine and rejoined the team.

Tennessee coach Jeremy Pruitt, who had a daughter earlier this year, said it was awesome.

"She's obviously a winner," Pruitt said about Fuller. "And she walked up there and kicked it right through. So I just think it says a whole lot about her and really, kind of her fortitude to be brave enough to go do this."

The Commodores fell to 0-9 this season.

No woman before Fuller had appeared in an SEC game or for any Power Five team. Liz Heaston became the first woman to score in college football with two extra points for Willamette of NAIA on Oct. 18, 1997.

Katie Hnida was the first woman to score at the Football Bowl Subdivision level with two extra points for New Mexico on Aug. 30, 2003.

April Goss was the second, with an extra point for Kent State in 2015. Tonya Butler was the first woman to kick a field goal in an NCAA game for Division II West Alabama on Sept. 13, 2003.

Follow Teresa M. Walker at <https://twitter.com/TeresaMWalker>

More AP college football: <https://apnews.com/Collegefootball> and https://twitter.com/AP_Top25

Hunter Biden subpoena seeks info on Burisma, other entities

By MICHAEL BALSAMO and ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A subpoena seeking documents from Hunter Biden asked for information related to more than two dozen entities, including Ukraine gas company Burisma, according to a person familiar with a Justice Department tax investigation of President-elect Joe Biden's son.

The breadth of the subpoena, issued Tuesday, underscores the wide-angle lens prosecutors are taking as they examine the younger Biden's finances and international business ventures.

Hunter Biden's ties to Burisma in particular have long dogged the policy work and political aspirations of his father, Joe Biden, now the president-elect of the United States. It's unclear whether Hunter Biden's work at the Ukrainian company is a central part of the federal investigation or whether prosecutors are simply seeking information about all his sources of income in recent years.

The person was not authorized to discuss an ongoing investigation publicly and spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity.

A lawyer for the younger Biden, George Mesires, did not immediately return a phone message seeking comment for this story and a spokesman for the Biden transition team declined to comment.

Hunter Biden confirmed Wednesday that his taxes are under federal investigation. The revelation comes at a delicate time for the president-elect, who is building out his Cabinet and will soon decide on his

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nominee to run the Justice Department, the same department overseeing the investigation into his son. In addition to the Burisma-related request, the subpoena issued last week also seeks information on Hunter Biden's Chinese business dealings and other financial transactions.

The probe was launched in 2018, the year before his father announced his candidacy for president. At one point in the investigation, federal prosecutors were also examining potential money laundering offenses, two people familiar with the matter told the AP.

Hunter Biden said he only learned of the investigation on Tuesday.

The younger Biden joined the board of Burisma in 2014, around the time his father, then vice president, was helping conduct the Obama administration's foreign policy with Ukraine. President Donald Trump and his allies have long argued, without evidence, that Hunter Biden's work in Ukraine influenced the Obama administration's policies toward the Eastern European nation.

Senate Republicans said in a report earlier this year that the appointment may have posed a conflict of interest but did not provide evidence that any policies were directly affected by Hunter Biden's work.

The president-elect is not believed to be a focus of the investigation. He has not weighed in on the merits of the investigation, saying only to reporters on Friday that he was "proud of my son."

For months, the U.S. attorney's office in Pittsburgh has also been collecting information from Trump's attorney, Rudy Giuliani, and others as part of the Justice Department's process to receive and analyze information related to Ukraine, including documents Giuliani wanted to present to prosecutors that he had been gathering in Ukraine about Joe and Hunter Biden.

In announcing that process in February, Barr cautioned that the department had to be careful about any information coming from Ukraine, saying: "There are a lot of agendas in the Ukraine, a lot of cross currents. And we can't take anything we received from Ukraine at face value."

The former New York City mayor was a main character when the House voted to impeach Trump. The impeachment inquiry centered on Trump's dealings with Ukraine's president and whether he abused his office by seeking the investigation into the Bidens. Giuliani pressured officials to do the investigations and has been pushing unsubstantiated corruption allegations against the Bidens.

Giuliani himself had also been under federal investigation, with federal prosecutors in Manhattan examining whether he failed to register as a foreign agent, according to people familiar with the matter. It was unclear whether that investigation remains active as Trump has discussed the possibility of preemptive pardons for some of his family members and close associates, including Giuliani.

Tempers flare as Trump supporters rally in Washington

By ASHRAF KHALIL Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Thousands of supporters of President Donald Trump returned to Washington for weekend rallies to back his desperate efforts to subvert the election that he lost to Joe Biden.

Sporadic fights broke out between pro-Trump and anti-Trump demonstrators after sundown Saturday. WRC-TV reported that four people were taken to a hospital with stab wounds, and the Metropolitan Police Department told the station that 23 people were arrested.

The gatherings of mostly unmasked Trump loyalists were intended as a show of force just two days before the Electoral College meets to formally elect Biden as the 46th president. Trump, whose term will end Jan. 20, refuses to concede, while clinging to baseless claims of fraud that have been rejected by state and federal courts, and Friday by the Supreme Court.

Trump tweeted his apparent surprise Saturday morning at the rallies, publicly known for weeks: "Wow! Thousands of people forming in Washington (D.C.) for Stop the Steal. Didn't know about this, but I'll be seeing them! #MAGA"

Trump left the White House around midday for the trip to the Army-Navy football game at the U.S. Military Academy in West Point, New York. As the Marine One helicopter passed over a rally on the National Mall, cheers went up.

Michael Flynn, the former national security adviser recently pardoned by Trump, was speaking from the

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stage at the time.

"That's pretty cool. Imagine just being able to jump in a helicopter and just go for a joy ride around Washington," said Flynn, whose pardon wiped away his conviction for lying to the FBI during the Russia investigation.

At a pro-Trump demonstration in Washington a month ago, Trump thrilled supporters when he passed by in his motorcade en route to his Virginia golf club.

That demonstration, which drew 10,000 to 15,000 people to the capital, ended late in the evening with scattered clashes between Trump's loyalists and local activists near Black Lives Matter Plaza near the White House.

On Saturday, police took more steps to keep the two sides apart, closing a wide swath of downtown to traffic and sealing off Black Lives Matter Plaza.

But while Saturday's rallies, including one on Freedom Plaza downtown, were smaller than on Nov. 14, they drew a larger contingent of the Proud Boys, a neo-fascist group known to incite street violence. Some wore bulletproof vests as they marched through town.

The group saw its profile raised after Trump in September famously told them to "stand back and stand by."

After the rallies ended, downtown Washington quickly devolved into crowds of hundreds of Proud Boys and combined forces of antifa and local Black activists — both sides seeking a confrontation in an area flooded with police officers. As dusk fell, they faced off on opposite sides of a street, with multiple lines of city police and federal Park Police, some in riot gear, keeping them separated.

One Proud Boy yelled out, "You cops can't be everywhere!" The Proud Boys later dispersed.

Antifa activists also were more organized this time, with their own bicycle corps to form bike walls to match those of the police.

Earlier in the day, a group of about 50 men in the Proud Boys' black and yellow circled the perimeter of Black Lives Matter Plaza, where about 200 anti-Trump demonstrators were rallying.

They chanted vulgar slogans and at one point started singing "Jingle Bells." They were apparently under orders not to engage with hecklers. One man who was talking back to people was yelled at and told "Don't interact!"

The assembly on the National Mall, called the "Jericho March," was described on its website as a "prayer rally" with speakers "praying for the walls of corruption and election fraud to fall down."

The rally on Freedom Plaza also featured a series of speakers pushing debunked claims of election fraud to a receptive audience.

Sylvia Huff, a demonstrator who came from Gloucester, Virginia, to show her support for Trump, said the legal defeats hadn't shaken her belief that he won the election.

"I believe the courts were on the take, too," she said. The Supreme Court, where three of the nine justices were appointed by Trump, "was just afraid of a political backlash," she said.

Among the speakers was Sebastian Gorka, a former Trump adviser, who urged demonstrators not to give up even after Friday's Supreme Court decision. He said he wanted to send Trump a video and held up his phone, cueing the flag-waving crowd to chant "Stop the Steal."

EXPLAINER: What's in store when the Electoral College meets

By JESSICA GRESKO and MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Voters cast their ballots for president more than a month ago, but the votes that officially matter will be cast Monday. That's when the Electoral College meets.

The Constitution gives the electors the power to choose the president, and when all the votes are counted Monday, President-elect Joe Biden is expected to have 306 electoral votes, more than the 270 needed to elect a president, to 232 votes for President Donald Trump.

The spotlight on the process is even greater this year because Trump has refused to concede the election and continued to make baseless allegations of fraud. That makes the meeting of the Electoral

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College another solid, undeniable step toward Inauguration Day on Jan. 20, when Biden will be sworn in as president.

Some questions and answers about the Electoral College:

WHAT EXACTLY IS THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE?

In drafting the Constitution, America's founders struggled with how the new nation should choose its leader and ultimately created the Electoral College system. It was a compromise between electing the president by popular vote and having Congress choose the president.

Under the Constitution, states get a number of electors equal to their total number of seats in Congress: two senators plus however many members the state has in the House of Representatives. With the exception of Maine and Nebraska, states award all of their electoral college votes to the winner of the popular vote in their state.

WHAT'S THE BEEF WITH THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE?

The Electoral College has been the subject of criticism for more than two centuries. One often-repeated gripe: the person who wins the popular vote can nonetheless lose the presidential election. That happened twice in the last two decades — in 2000 with the election of George W. Bush and in 2016 when Donald Trump lost the popular vote to Hillary Clinton by nearly 3 million votes.

Biden, for his part, won the popular vote and will end up with 306 electoral votes to Trump's 232. Trump was the fifth presidential candidate in American history to have lost the popular vote but won in the Electoral College.

WHO ARE THE ELECTORS?

Presidential electors typically are elected officials, political hopefuls or longtime party loyalists.

This year, they include South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem, a Trump elector who could be a 2024 Republican presidential candidate, and Georgia Democrat Stacey Abrams, her party's 2018 nominee for governor and a key player in Biden's win in the state.

Among others are 93-year-old Paul "Pete" McCloskey, a Biden elector who is a former Republican congressman who challenged Richard Nixon for the 1972 GOP presidential nomination on a platform opposing the Vietnam War; Floridian Maximo Alvarez, an immigrant from Cuba who worried in his Republican convention speech that anarchy and communism would overrun Biden's America, and Muhammad Abdurrahman, a Minnesotan who tried to cast his electoral vote for Sen. Bernie Sanders instead of Hillary Clinton in 2016.

WHERE DO THEY MEET AND WHAT DO THEY DO?

The Electoral College doesn't meet in one place. Instead, each state's electors and the electors for the District of Columbia meet in a place chosen by their legislature, usually the state capitol.

The election is low tech. Electors cast their votes by paper ballot: one ballot for president and one for vice president. The votes get counted and the electors sign six certificates with the results. Each certificate gets paired with a certificate from the governor detailing the state's vote totals.

Those six packets then get mailed to various people specified by law. The most important copy, though, gets sent to the president of the Senate, the current vice president. This is the copy that will be officially counted later.

DO ELECTORS HAVE TO VOTE FOR THE CANDIDATE WHO WON THEIR STATE?

In 32 states and the District of Columbia, laws require electors to vote for the popular-vote winner. The Supreme Court unanimously upheld this arrangement in July. Electors almost always vote for the state winner anyway, because they generally are devoted to their political party.

A bit of an exception happened in 2016 when 10 electors tried to vote for other candidates. Those included people pledged to support Clinton who decided not to back her in a futile bid to get Republican electors to abandon Trump and choose someone else as president.

Abdurrahman, the Minnesotan who wanted to vote for Sanders, was replaced as an elector. This year, he has said he will cast his vote for Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris, according to the Minneapolis Star-Tribune.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

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Once the electoral votes are cast, they are sent to Congress, where both houses will convene on Jan. 6 for a session presided over by Vice President Mike Pence. The envelopes from each state and the District of Columbia will be opened and the votes tallied.

If at least one member of each house objects in writing to some electoral votes, the House and Senate meet separately to debate the issue. Both houses must vote to sustain the objection for it to matter, and the Democratic-led House is unlikely to go along with any objections to votes for Biden. Otherwise, the votes get counted as intended by the states.

And then there's one more step: inauguration.

Analysis: Short work by high court of Trump's 'big one'

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — It didn't take the Supreme Court long to make short work of what President Donald Trump called "the big one."

And as the court on Friday rejected a Texas-based lawsuit to overturn the election results, not even Trump's three high court appointees were willing to rise to the defense of the president. Trump has been clinging to baseless claims of fraud in the hope of reversing election results that made Democrat Joe Biden the next president and deprived Trump of four more years in the White House.

For all Trump's predictions that the court and his justices would make things right, he and his supporters were lacking one basic element: a strong legal argument that might plausibly attract some sympathy on a court now dominated by conservative justices.

A Republican senator, Nebraska's Ben Sasse, delivered a stinging summary of the court's rebuke to Trump and his allies. Sasse said "every American who cares about the rule of law should take comfort that the Supreme Court — including all three of President Trump's picks — closed the book on the nonsense." Sasse, a potential 2024 presidential candidate, has been one of the few Republicans willing to criticize Trump.

Following a string of legal setbacks in battleground states he lost in November, Trump had pinned his hopes on a desperate Supreme Court lawsuit that no Republican lawyer with high-court experience would touch. The suit was filed by Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton and backed by 18 other Republican attorneys general and 126 GOP members of the House of Representatives. It asked the court to take the unprecedented, even outlandish, step of setting aside the 62 combined electoral votes for Biden in Georgia, Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin.

The justices, acting late Friday, ended the suit as quickly as it began, saying in a mundane, three-sentence order that Texas had no right to question how other states conduct their elections.

The justices appeared to be unanimous in concluding that they would not disturb the electoral votes, three days before presidential electors meet to formally choose Biden as president. The justices Trump nominated — Neil Gorsuch, Brett Kavanaugh and Amy Coney Barrett — said nothing to suggest they disagreed with the outcome, and they were likewise quiet when the court rejected an appeal from Pennsylvania Republicans earlier in the week.

The silence was in sharp contrast to what Trump forecast when he nominated Barrett in September, even before Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg had been buried, and urged the Senate to confirm Barrett before Election Day. Then, Trump said she would be needed to help settle disputes over the election that Trump had been saying for months would be fraudulent, without any basis.

The setback was clearly on his mind Saturday: He retweeted a story from a conservative commenter, with the president's three court appointees pictured, that said they were "missing in action" and he accused the court of having "ZERO interest" in the merits of the case while bemoaning that his pleadings were "NEVER even given our day in Court!"

As recently as Tuesday, he had retweeted a photo of Barrett from a follower who boasted that the Democrats had cheated, but that the "wheels are coming off" their scheme. "They got caught because we were leading by so much more than they ever thought possible. Late night ballot 'dumps' went crazy!"

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Trump tweeted, repeating one of his favorite claims that he had an insurmountable lead that was overcome only by fraud.

In fact, in Pennsylvania, Michigan and Wisconsin, ballots counted later on the night of the election and in the days following were overwhelmingly mailed-in votes that tended to favor Biden. The shift in the vote totals was completely expected — and widely discussed in advance of the election — because laws in those three states prohibited the early processing of mailed-in ballots.

Paxton's lawsuit — which the state's top Supreme Court lawyer, unusually, did not sign — cited the shift in the vote, the widespread use of mailed-in ballots because of the coronavirus pandemic and the roles played by state courts and governors, instead of legislatures, in changing rules to accommodate voters amid the pandemic. These and other arguments had been made and disposed of in state and federal courts since just after the Nov. 3 election.

The Supreme Court isn't always unwilling to step into political controversies. Twenty years ago, with a presidential election hanging in the balance, the court voted 5-4 to halt a state court-ordered recount in Florida and effectively decided the election in Republican George W. Bush's favor. That case split the court's majority conservatives and four liberals.

In 2000, only 537 votes separated Bush and Democrat Al Gore in Florida, and the winner of that state would become president.

Even so, the court was heavily criticized for its decision, especially the admonition that the opinion was "limited to the present circumstances" and not to be cited as precedent. It hasn't been since.

This year, the election did not turn on the outcome in one state, or even two. Trump would have had to reverse Biden wins in at least three of the six battleground states the president has complained about since the election. Arizona and Nevada are the others, though neither was included in the Texas lawsuit.

Two years ago, Chief Justice John Roberts derided Trump for derisively using the term "Obama judge" to complain about a court ruling he didn't like. Roberts said then that judges are not in the pocket of presidents who appoint them, even if they tend to share a judicial philosophy.

With such a weak argument and a big ask of the court, the Trump-backed lawsuit the court easily dismissed didn't come close to putting Roberts' assertion to the test.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Associated Press writer Mark Sherman has covered the Supreme Court since 2006.

Biden's Homeland Security pick faces questions on 2015 probe

By BEN FOX and MATTHEW DALY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The last time Alejandro Mayorkas faced Senate confirmation, not a single Republican voted for him because there was an open investigation into his management of the U.S. immigration agency under President Barack Obama.

Now, seven years later, Mayorkas is President-elect Joe Biden's groundbreaking nominee to lead the Department of Homeland Security, and that since-completed investigation has emerged as a potential stumbling block.

The Office of Inspector General's 2015 report criticized his handling of three politically connected applications to a program that grants U.S. visas to foreigners who make job-creating investments in the United States. Mayorkas has disputed the findings, and he never faced any sanctions, but Republican senators are bringing it up ahead of what could be a tight confirmation vote.

It's too soon to say whether the nomination of Mayorkas, who would be the first Latino and first immigrant to run DHS, is in jeopardy. But lawmakers such as Sen. Charles Grassley have expressed concern about the report, which concluded that Mayorkas created an appearance of favoritism and special access at Citizenship and Immigration Services when he was director from 2009 to 2013.

"That brand of leadership isn't good for agency culture or the security of our nation," the Iowa Republican told The Associated Press on Thursday.

It's an important moment for Homeland Security, the third-largest Cabinet agency. DHS became closely

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identified with President Donald Trump's political agenda, as it imposed new hurdles to restrict legal immigration, dispatched agents in tactical gear to protests over the summer without the consent of local authorities and employed controversial measures against illegal immigration, most notoriously the separation of children from their families at the southwest border as part of a zero-tolerance policy in 2018.

Under Biden, the Cuban-born Mayorkas is expected to direct a major reset of the agency's priorities, which he signaled in recent remarks to the American Business Immigration Coalition.

"We must bring to an immediate end the inhumane and unjust treatment of immigrants," he said. "There is no more powerful and heartbreaking example of that inhumanity than the separation of children from their parents."

Supporters say Mayorkas's experience, which includes serving as a federal prosecutor, is an asset not a liability.

"He is a man of great integrity and principle, with an incomparable work ethic, who understands the complexities of this critical agency and the threats facing our country at this crucial moment," said Sen. Tom Carper, D-Del., who chaired the Homeland Security Committee when Mayorkas was named deputy DHS chief in 2013.

Mayorkas may yet get some Republican support, which Biden may need if the Democrats don't win the two seats in the Georgia Senate runoff; Republicans only need to win one to maintain their control of the Senate.

John Rowe, a prominent GOP donor who co-chairs the business immigration coalition and favors a more welcoming attitude toward immigrants, said he planned to speak with several Republican senators to urge them to support Mayorkas.

"This is an easy vote," said Rowe, the former CEO of Exelon Corp. "Some of the other immigration votes are not that easy for Republicans who have to go home to primaries. No one is going to lose their seat because they vote to confirm Mayorkas."

A separate issue that could come up is his role in the 2001 pardon by President Bill Clinton of Carlos Vignali Jr., the son of a wealthy businessman and Democratic donor who was convicted of involvement in a cocaine trafficking ring. Mayorkas, then the U.S. attorney for Los Angeles, called the White House to ask about the status of the case at the request of the family. He explained later that the Justice Department had cleared the call but apologized for a "mistake." The issue did not block his confirmation to lead CIS in 2009 in a unanimous Senate vote.

The Biden transition team views neither issue as an impediment to confirmation. "While we fully expected disagreement with some members of the Senate, we're gratified by the overwhelmingly positive reaction and strong bipartisan acclaim that Alejandro has received," spokesman Sean Savett said.

Still, there is almost certainly to be more parsing of the inspector general's report, which was recently raised by Sen. Tom Cotton, R-Ark., in an appearance on "Fox & Friends."

The report deals with three applications under what's known as the EB-5 visa program, which was created in the 1990s under President George H.W. Bush to promote economic development. It enables foreign citizens to get U.S. residency for themselves, their spouses and minor children if they make an investment that creates at least 10 jobs.

Investments can be pooled to create what are known as regional centers, which were the subject of whistleblower complaints at the heart of the report.

The report said Mayorkas intervened in an administrative appeal for an investment in an application by Gulf Coast Funds, which was run by Hillary Rodham Clinton's brother, Anthony Rodham, and whose board chairman was Democratic fundraiser and former Virginia Gov. Terry McAuliffe.

It said he expedited the review of a Nevada casino project at the urging of former Senate Democratic leader Harry Reid, and directed CIS personnel to provide Reid's office with briefings on the status of the application.

Mayorkas also directed CIS to reverse the rejection of an application that would have funded Sony movie projects in the Los Angeles area after being contacted by former Democratic Pennsylvania Gov. Edward Rendell and others, the report said.

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The report noted that all these actions were "legitimately within his purview" as director of CIS and said "we take no position on the wisdom of these actions," only the appearance.

Mayorkas pushed back hard in an unusually detailed 33-page response to the report and in congressional testimony.

The EB-5 investor program had been the subject of complaints from Republicans and Democrats that long predated his tenure at CIS and he said he was working to address them, creating a new office to review the applications and ensure they met the economic requirements.

It was also not unusual for members of Congress to contact the agency about the EB-5 program. In fact, several prominent Republicans were in touch with Mayorkas on behalf of Gulf Coast Funds. He received many requests about other matters from both parties. As proof, he cited a letter from Grassley thanking him for his personal involvement helping a family from Iowa with an international adoption.

"I took a hands-on approach with the cases that warranted my personal involvement," he said in his rebuttal.

The report also noted that some of the people interviewed in the investigation described Mayorkas as "aggressive," with one saying that he would "cut them up, take them apart or put them in their place" if they disagreed with him. But Kenneth Palinkas, a senior official with the employee union at CIS, said he was widely liked by workers.

Mayorkas would invite him into his office and serve Cuban coffee as they discussed union issues, while previous directors wouldn't meet with him at all, Palinkas said.

"It's not a normal response that you get from a higher-up in management," he said. "This guy was hands-on, that's what I could tell you about Alejandro. Totally hands-on and totally congenial."

Tempers flare as Trump supporters rally in Washington

By ASHRAF KHALIL Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Thousands of supporters of President Donald Trump returned to Washington on Saturday for rallies to back his desperate efforts to subvert the election that he lost to Joe Biden.

Sporadic fights broke out between pro-Trump and anti-Trump demonstrators after sundown. WRC-TV reported that four people were taken to a hospital with stab wounds, and the Metropolitan Police Department told the station that 23 people were arrested.

The gatherings of mostly unmasked Trump loyalists were intended as a show of force just two days before the Electoral College meets to formally elect Biden as the 46th president. Trump, whose term will end Jan. 20, refuses to concede, while clinging to baseless claims of fraud that have been rejected by state and federal courts, and Friday by the Supreme Court.

Trump tweeted his apparent surprise Saturday morning at the rallies, publicly known for weeks: "Wow! Thousands of people forming in Washington (D.C.) for Stop the Steal. Didn't know about this, but I'll be seeing them! #MAGA"

Trump left the White House around midday for the trip to the Army-Navy football game at the U.S. Military Academy in West Point, New York. As the Marine One helicopter passed over a rally on the National Mall, cheers went up.

Michael Flynn, the former national security adviser recently pardoned by Trump, was speaking from the stage at the time.

"That's pretty cool. Imagine just being able to jump in a helicopter and just go for a joy ride around Washington," said Flynn, whose pardon wiped away his conviction for lying to the FBI during the Russia investigation.

At a pro-Trump demonstration in Washington a month ago, Trump thrilled supporters when he passed by in his motorcade en route to his Virginia golf club.

That demonstration, which drew 10,000 to 15,000 people to the capital, ended late in the evening with scattered clashes between Trump's loyalists and local activists near Black Lives Matter Plaza near the White House.

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On Saturday, police took more steps to keep the two sides apart, closing a wide swath of downtown to traffic and sealing off Black Lives Matter Plaza.

But while Saturday's rallies, including one on Freedom Plaza downtown, were smaller than on Nov. 14, they drew a larger contingent of the Proud Boys, a neo-fascist group known to incite street violence. Some wore bulletproof vests as they marched through town.

The group saw its profile raised after Trump in September famously told them to "stand back and stand by."

After the rallies ended, downtown Washington quickly devolved into crowds of hundreds of Proud Boys and combined forces of antifa and local Black activists — both sides seeking a confrontation in an area flooded with police officers. As dusk fell, they faced off on opposite sides of a street, with multiple lines of city police and federal Park Police, some in riot gear, keeping them separated.

One Proud Boy yelled out, "You cops can't be everywhere!" The Proud Boys later dispersed.

Antifa activists also were more organized this time, with their own bicycle corps to form bike walls to match those of the police.

Earlier in the day, a group of about 50 men in the Proud Boys' black and yellow circled the perimeter of Black Lives Matter Plaza, where about 200 anti-Trump demonstrators were rallying.

They chanted vulgar slogans and at one point started singing "Jingle Bells." They were apparently under orders not to engage with hecklers. One man who was talking back to people was yelled at and told "Don't interact!"

The assembly on the National Mall, called the "Jericho March," was described on its website as a "prayer rally" with speakers "praying for the walls of corruption and election fraud to fall down."

The rally on Freedom Plaza also featured a series of speakers pushing debunked claims of election fraud to a receptive audience.

Sylvia Huff, a demonstrator who came from Gloucester, Virginia, to show her support for Trump, said the legal defeats hadn't shaken her belief that he won the election.

"I believe the courts were on the take, too," she said. The Supreme Court, where three of the nine justices were appointed by Trump, "was just afraid of a political backlash," she said.

Among the speakers was Sebastian Gorka, a former Trump adviser, who urged demonstrators not to give up even after Friday's Supreme Court decision. He said he wanted to send Trump a video and held up his phone, cueing the flag-waving crowd to chant "Stop the Steal."

Charley Pride, a country music Black superstar, dies at 86

By MARK KENNEDY AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Charley Pride, one of country music's first Black superstar whose rich baritone on such hits as "Kiss an Angel Good Morning" helped sell millions of records and made him the first Black member of the Country Music Hall of Fame, has died. He was 86.

Pride died Saturday in Dallas of complications from Covid-19, according to Jeremy Westby of the public relations firm 2911 Media.

"I'm so heartbroken that one of my dearest and oldest friends, Charley Pride, has passed away. It's even worse to know that he passed away from COVID-19. What a horrible, horrible virus. Charley, we will always love you," Dolly Parton tweeted.

Pride released dozens of albums and sold more than 25 million records during a career that began in the mid-1960s. Hits besides "Kiss an Angel Good Morning" in 1971 included "Is Anybody Goin' to San Antone," "Burgers and Fries," "Mountain of Love," and "Someone Loves You Honey."

He had three Grammy Awards, more than 30 No. 1 hits between 1969 and 1984, won the Country Music Association's Top Male Vocalist and Entertainer of the Year awards in 1972 and was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame in 2000. He won the Willie Nelson Lifetime Achievement Award last month by the Country Music Association.

"He destroyed barriers and did things that no one had ever done," said Darius Rucker on Twitter. "Heaven just got one of the finest people I know." Tanya Tucker tweeted "I'm just so thankful I got to sing a song

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with him." Billy Ray Cyrus called him a "gentleman," "legend" and a "true trailblazer."

The Smithsonian in Washington acquired memorabilia from Pride, including a pair of boots and one of his guitars, for the the National Museum of African American History and Culture.

Ronnie Milsap called him a "pioneer" and said that without his encouragement, Milsap might never gone to Nashville. "To hear this news tears out a piece of my heart," he said in a statement.

Other Black country stars came before Pride, namely DeFord Bailey, who was an Grand Ole Opry member between 1927 and 1941. But until the early 1990s, when Cleve Francis came along, Pride was the only Black country singer signed to a major label. In 1993, he joined the Opry cast in Nashville.

"They used to ask me how it feels to be the 'first colored country singer,'" he told The Dallas Morning News in 1992. "Then it was 'first Negro country singer;' then 'first black country singer.' Now I'm the 'first African-American country singer.' That's about the only thing that's changed. This country is so race-conscious, so ate-up with colors and pigments. I call it 'skin hangups' — it's a disease."

Pride was raised in Sledge, Mississippi, the son of a sharecropper. He had seven brothers and three sisters.

In 2008 while accepting a Lifetime Achievement Award as part of the Mississippi Governor's Awards for Excellence in the Arts, Pride said he never focused on race.

"My older sister one time said, 'Why are you singing THEIR music?'" Pride said. "But we all understand what the y'all-and-us-syndrome has been. See, I never as an individual accepted that, and I truly believe that's why I am where I am today."

As a young man before launching his singing career, he was a pitcher and outfielder in the Negro American League with the Memphis Red Sox and in the Pioneer League in Montana.

After playing minor league baseball a couple of years, he ended up in Helena, Montana, where he worked in a zinc smelting plant by day and played country music in nightclubs at night.

Pride was part of the Texas Rangers' ownership group for the last 10 years and the team will fly the flags at half-staff at Globe Life Field and Globe Life Park on Sunday and Monday in his memory.

"The Texas Rangers join the country music world in mourning the loss of Charley Pride. While Mr. Pride was a legendary performer who entertained millions of fans in the United States and around the world, we will remember him as a true friend to this franchise," the team said in a statement.

After a tryout with the New York Mets, Pride visited Nashville and broke into country music when Chet Atkins, head of RCA Records, heard two of his demo tapes and signed him.

To ensure that Pride was judged on his music and not his race, his first few singles were sent to radio stations without a publicity photo. After his identity became known, a few country radio stations refused to play his music.

For the most part, though, Pride said he was well received. Early in his career, he would put white audiences at ease when he joked about his "permanent tan."

"Music is the greatest communicator on the planet Earth," he said in 1992. "Once people heard the sincerity in my voice and heard me project and watched my delivery, it just dissipated any apprehension or bad feeling they might have had."

Throughout his career, he sang positive songs instead of sad ones often associated with country music.

"Music is a beautiful way of expressing oneself and I truly believe music should not be taken as a protest," he told The Associated Press in 1985. "You can go too far in anything — singing, acting, whatever — and become politicized to the point you cease to be an entertainer."

In 1994, he wrote his autobiography, "Pride: The Charley Pride Story," in which he disclosed he was mildly manic depressive. He had surgery in 1997 to remove a tumor from his right vocal cord.

"Charley Pride was a trail blazer whose remarkable voice & generous spirit broke down barriers in country music just as his hero Jackie Robinson had in baseball," tweeted director and producer Ken Burns.

He received the Living Legend award from The Nashville Network/Music City News, recognizing 30 years of achievement, in 1997.

"I'd like to be remembered as a good person who tried to be a good entertainer and made people happy, was a good American who paid his taxes and made a good living," he said in 1985. "I tried to do

my best and contribute my part.”

He is survived by his wife, Rozene, whom he married in 1956; three children, Kraig, Dion and Angela; and several grandchildren.

Mark Kennedy is at <http://twitter.com/KennedyTwits>

Charley Pride overcame racial barriers as country music star

By KRISTIN M. HALL AP Entertainment Writer

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Charley Pride wasn't country music's first Black artist, but he reached heights that had not been available to early Black singers and musicians in the genre. And he did it by winning over millions of country music fans.

While Pride's career path was paved by artists like Opry pioneer DeFord Bailey, the Grammy-winner's success put him on par with his white peers, including Willie Nelson, Glen Campbell and Merle Haggard, in a way that had never been afforded to Black artists before.

Pride, whose hits include "Kiss an Angel Good Morning" and "Is Anybody Goin' to San Antone," died Saturday in Dallas of complications from COVID-19, according to his publicist. He was 86.

The pride of Sledge, Mississippi, was the son of a sharecropper who initially turned to sports as a way to a better life.

He was a pitcher and outfielder in the Negro American League with the Memphis Red Sox and in the Pioneer League in Montana.

After playing minor league baseball, he ended up in Helena, Montana, where he worked in a zinc smelting plant by day and played country music in nightclubs at night.

Baseball was Pride's first success, but it was the Grand Ole Opry that his father insisted everyone listen to on their home radio that would prove to be his lasting legacy.

"Everything we listened to was what he had tuned it to, so I got to listening to Grand Ole Opry and all when I was small and I got hooked on it and it just went from there," Pride told The Associated Press at the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville in 2017. "I had no idea that I was preparing myself for this, but I'm glad, especially since I didn't make it in baseball."

After a tryout with the New York Mets, Pride visited Nashville and broke into country music when Chet Atkins, head of RCA Records, heard two of his demo tapes and signed him.

His first few singles were sent to radio stations without a publicity photo. After his race became known, a few country radio stations refused to play his music, and some promoters were hesitant to book him.

Until the early 1990s, when Cleve Francis came along, Pride was the only Black country singer signed to a major label. During his career, other Black country artists such as Linda Martell, O.B. McClinton and Stoney Edwards were also charting country songs, as well as Ray Charles and the Pointer Sisters. In 1993, he joined the Grand Ole Opry cast in Nashville.

"They used to ask me how it feels to be the 'first colored country singer,' " he told The Dallas Morning News in 1992. "Then it was 'first Negro country singer;' then 'first Black country singer.' Now I'm the 'first African-American country singer.' That's about the only thing that's changed. This country is so race-conscious, so ate-up with colors and pigments. I call it 'skin hangups' — it's a disease."

Still, he remains the only Black country artist to achieve many of those heights, a sign that country music still has a long way to go to breaking down the racial walls, even decades later.

Throughout his career, he sang positive songs instead of sad ones often associated with country music.

"Music is a beautiful way of expressing oneself, and I truly believe music should not be taken as a protest," he told The Associated Press in 1985. "You can go too far in anything — singing, acting, whatever — and become politicized to the point you cease to be an entertainer."

He was the first Black artist to win the genre's highest prize, CMA Award entertainer of the year in 1971, over nominees Haggard, Loretta Lynn, Jerry Reed and Conway Twitty. He was the first Black co-host of the CMA Awards in 1975 with Campbell and earned a lifetime achievement award at the CMA Awards this

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year. He received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Recording Academy in 2017.

Pride released dozens of albums and sold more than 25 million records during a career that began in the mid-1960s. Hits besides "Kiss an Angel Good Morning" in 1971 included "Is Anybody Goin' to San Antone," "Burgers and Fries," "Mountain of Love," and "Someone Loves You Honey."

As a trailblazer, he inspired countless other Black country artists, including Darius Rucker, who moved from rock to country.

"My heart is so heavy," Rucker wrote on Twitter. "He destroyed barriers and did things that no one had ever done. But today I'm thinking of my friend. Heaven just got one of the finest people I know. I miss and love u CP!"

Pride joined up with country singer Jimmie Allen to perform "Kiss an Angel Good Morning" at the CMA Awards in November, his last performance.

"Thank you for unapologetically you and being the manifestation of our dreams. Our potential. The realization that WE can be anything we want to be. Even a country singer," said country singer Rissi Palmer on Twitter. "I'm so angry about this death. This was preventable."

"I'd like to be remembered as a good person who tried to be a good entertainer and made people happy, was a good American who paid his taxes and made a good living," Pride told The AP in 1985. "I tried to do my best and contribute my part."

He is survived by his wife, Rozene, whom he married in 1956; three children, Kraig, Dion and Angela; and several grandchildren.

Army beats Navy 15-0 at Michie Stadium

By JOHN KEKIS AP Sports Writer

WEST POINT, N.Y. (AP) — Singing the alma mater second never felt quite like this for Army.

These Black Knights accomplished something never before done in the history of their rivalry with Navy: Beating the Midshipmen at West Point.

Tyher Tyler scored on a 4-yard run early in the fourth quarter, the Army defense stoned Navy with a goal-line stand in the third, and the Black Knights beat their archrival 15-0 on Saturday at fog-shrouded Michie Stadium.

It was the first meeting between the teams at West Point since a 13-0 Navy shutout in 1943. The storied game is typically played at a neutral site like Philadelphia or Baltimore but the pandemic changed those plans.

The game was moved to Michie Stadium from Philadelphia because COVID-19 regulations in Pennsylvania would not have allowed the Corps of Cadets and Brigade of Midshipmen to attend.

"It's a pretty big event to shut somebody out in this game. This has such a great history to it," Army coach Jeff Monken said. "It was a slugfest, just back and forth. The fog rolled in. It almost seemed appropriate for the battle that was taking place out there. It's a lot of fun to be able to celebrate like this."

The last two times the game was played at West Point was during World War II and the first was 1890. Army didn't score a point in any of those games,

The Black Knights (8-2) posted their first shutout in the series since a 27-0 victory in 1969 and have won four of five against Navy (3-7). Navy still leads the series 61-53-7.

Navy sang second, as is tradition for the winner of the game, last year in Philadelphia after a 31-7 triumph.

"We were going to defend our house," Army linebacker Amadeo West said. "Very fortunate. Tonight we're going to enjoy this win cause it's a very special win."

No fans were allowed, so there wasn't much of a home field advantage for the Black Knights. When the game began the Mids and Cadets were seated in groups on different sides and behind both goalposts, and the stadium literally shook after President Donald Trump conducted the coin toss and the Mids won.

Army had three weeks off to prepare after its game Nov. 7 against Air Force was switched to next Saturday because of COVID-19 concerns in and around the Air Force Academy. Navy was coming in off four straight losses.

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Xavier Arline started for Navy, just the fifth freshman to start at quarterback for the Mids against Army. Tyler, who had played in four games prior to Saturday, made his second straight start.

The game turned in the third quarter with Army clinging to a 3-0 lead and on its heels after Arline ripped off a 52-yard run. He was poised to cross the goalline when Cedric Cunningham ran him down and pushed him out of bounds at the 2.

When two runs netted nothing, Navy coach Ken Niumatalolo called timeout. The Army defense then rose to the occasion again, with senior linebacker Jon Rhattigan stopping Arline inches of the goal and West stopping Nelson Smith on fourth down.

"It's huge," Niumatalolo said. "You don't get that, it's a defensive struggle. You've got to convert there. You have to convert."

Army went up 3-0 on Quinn Marezki's 37-yard field goal early in the second quarter, set up by Tyler's 28-yard completion to Tyrell Robinson, just the second completion of his career.

Tyler scored after a Navy turnover, the only one of the game, and Daryan McDonald tacked on a safety late in the fourth when he tackled Navy wide receiver Mark Walker in the end zone on a reverse.

Marezki added a 40-yard field goal.

Neither triple option offense got untracked as fog descended low over the field and the defenses played lights-out. The teams combined for 279 yards of offense and Navy had just four first downs, half as many as Army.

THE TAKEAWAY

Navy: The Midshipmen showed promise defensively late in the season and if Arline is the starter at quarterback next year he'll give them a better running threat. He finished with 109 yards rushing on 17 attempts.

Army: The Black Knights have overcome a schedule that had to be almost totally revamped to rebound after a subpar 2019. Their only losses before Saturday were on the road against unbeaten Cincinnati (24-10) and Tulane (38-12). Army has won nine straight at home.

NO. 68

Navy senior tri-captain Billy Honaker wore No. 68 in honor of former offensive lineman David Forney, who died of cardiac arrest in his dorm room at the Naval Academy in February.

Forney's number was not issued this season, but Honaker received permission from Forney's father and Niumatalolo to pay tribute to his fallen teammate. Navy has honored Forney throughout the season by wearing a sticker on the back of its helmets that pictures him running out of the tunnel at last year's Army-Navy game carrying the American flag with the word Brotherhood underneath.

PRESIDENTIAL TREK

Marine One was grounded by the weather, so President Donald Trump came by motorcade. He was greeted with cheers and chants of USA! USA! as he made his way onto the field for the national anthem and coin toss and was in the stands for the opening kickoff. He first took his place with cadets on the Army side of the stadium for much of the first quarter before joining Navy midshipmen in the second quarter. He wore a face mask at times while with both groups and was accompanied by acting Defense Secretary Chris Miller before departing just before halftime.

UP NEXT

Navy: Every team is bowl eligible this season, but the Midshipmen's season is likely over.

Army: Hosts Air Force next Saturday in the regular-season finale for the Commander-in-Chief's Trophy and is scheduled to play in the Independence Bowl the next week.

Associated Press writer Darlene Superville contributed to this report.

More AP college football: <https://apnews.com/tag/Collegefootball> and https://twitter.com/AP_Top25

States will start getting COVID-19 vaccine Monday, US says

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By MATTHEW PERRONE, MIKE STOBBE and MARK SCOLFORO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The nation's first COVID-19 vaccine will begin arriving in states Monday morning, U.S. officials said Saturday, after the government gave the final go-ahead to the shots needed to end an outbreak that has killed nearly 300,000 Americans.

Trucks will roll out Sunday morning as shipping companies UPS and FedEx begin delivering Pfizer's vaccine to nearly 150 distribution centers across the states, said Army Gen. Gustavo Perna of Operation Warp Speed, the Trump administration's vaccine development program. An additional 425 sites will get shipments Tuesday, and the remaining 66 on Wednesday.

Initially, about 3 million doses were expected to be shipped nationwide. It was unclear exactly who would receive the first shots, though health care workers and nursing home residents were the priority. Perna said health authorities would decide.

A similar number of shots will be held back for those recipients' second dose, which is needed for full protection from COVID-19.

The announcement Saturday kicks off a massive logistical operation involving the federal and state governments, private companies and health care workers to quickly distribute limited vaccine supplies throughout the U.S. It offers hope in a country grappling with surging COVID-19 infections and deaths, which are overwhelming hospitals and raising fears that things will only get worse as people gather over the holidays.

Perna compared the vaccine distribution effort to D-Day, the U.S.-led military offensive that turned the tide in World War II.

"D-Day was the beginning of the end and that's where we are today," Perna said a news conference. But he added that it would take months of work and "diligence, courage and strength to eventually achieve victory."

MaineHealth, a network of 12 hospitals based in Portland, plans to provide an expected first delivery of nearly 2,000 vaccines to doctors, nurses and others facing risk as they treat COVID-19 patients, said Dr. Dora Mills, chief health improvement officer.

"It's almost hard for me to talk about without tearing up," Mills said Saturday. "This vaccine gives us some glimmer of light at the end of the tunnel."

The first shipments will leave Pfizer's manufacturing plant in Kalamazoo, Michigan, by truck and then be flown to regional hubs around the country. Medical distributor McKesson and pharmacy chains, including CVS and Rite-Aid, also are involved in the initial rollout and vaccinations at nursing homes and assisted living centers.

In a key distribution challenge, the vaccine, co-developed with BioNTech, must be stored and shipped at ultra-low temperatures — about 94 degrees below zero. Pfizer has developed shipping containers that use dry ice, and GPS-enabled sensors will allow the company to track each shipment and ensure it stays cold.

Distribution sites are mainly large hospitals and other facilities able to meet those ultra-cold storage requirements. Within three weeks, vaccines should be delivered to all vaccination sites identified by states, such as local pharmacies, Perna said.

The vaccine was timed to arrive Monday so health workers could receive the shots and begin giving them, Perna said.

Workers at Mount Sinai Hospital System in New York did a dry run this week to prepare for their shipment. In a clean room, pharmacists practiced making separate doses of a training vaccine and ensuring the freezer was kept at temperatures colder than in Antarctica.

"Not a lot of people have vaccinated for a large pandemic like this," said Susan Mashni, vice president of pharmacy at Mount Sinai. "So we want to make certain that we get it right. There's a lot of different moving pieces and parts."

At a meeting where an expert panel advising the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on vaccines unanimously endorsed the Pfizer shot, some said local health officials were struggling to ensure the vaccine is distributed fairly and to those most in need and to ease people's concerns about getting the shot.

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But “the funding necessary for state and local health departments to carry out this program has been put in the deep freeze,” said Dr. Jeffrey Duchin, a Seattle physician representing the National Association of County and City Health Officials.

The Food and Drug Administration authorized emergency use of the vaccine late Friday. It capped an unprecedented global race to speed vaccines through testing and review, chopping years off the normal development process.

The FDA found the vaccine highly protective with no major safety issues. U.S. regulators worked for months to emphasize the rigor and independence of their review, but President Donald Trump’s administration pressured the agency until the final announcement. A top White House official even threatened to remove FDA chief Stephen Hahn if a ruling didn’t come before Saturday.

Concerns that a shot was rushed out could undermine vaccination efforts in a country with deeply ingrained skepticism about vaccines.

“Science and data guided the FDA’s decision,” Hahn said Saturday. “We worked quickly because of the urgency of this pandemic, not because of any other external pressure.”

While the vaccine was determined to be safe, regulators in the U.K. are investigating several severe allergic reactions. The FDA’s instructions tell providers not give it to those with a known history of severe allergic reactions to any of its ingredients.

The FDA’s vaccine director, Dr. Peter Marks, said the agency will carefully track any reports of allergic reactions in the U.S.

Next week, the FDA will review a vaccine from Moderna and the National Institutes of Health that appears about as protective as Pfizer’s shot. On Friday, the Trump administration said it had purchased 100 million more doses of that vaccine on top of 100 million it previously ordered.

The announcement came after revelations that the White House opted not to lock in an additional 100 million doses of Pfizer’s vaccine for delivery in the second quarter of 2021. The Trump administration contends the current orders plus those in the pipeline will be enough to accommodate any American who wants to be vaccinated by the end of the second quarter of 2021.

Stobbe reported from New York, and Scolforo from Harrisburg, Pa. Associated Press Medical Writer Lauran Neergaard in Alexandria, Virginia, video journalist Marshall Ritzel and Health Writer Candice Choi in New York contributed to this story.

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VIRUS TODAY: With vaccine coming, daily deaths set a record

The Associated Press undefined

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

THREE THINGS TO KNOW TODAY

— The nation’s first COVID-19 vaccine will begin arriving in states Monday morning, U.S. officials said. The government on Friday gave the final go-ahead to the shots needed to end an outbreak that has killed nearly 300,000 Americans.

— The U.S. hit another grim daily record Friday, recording 3,309 deaths related to COVID-19. That surpassed the previous one-day high of 3,124 deaths reported Wednesday, according to data compiled by Johns Hopkins University. Friday also saw a new high in daily confirmed infections, with more than 231,000. That’s nearly 4,000 above the previous record set on Dec. 4.

— Officials in California hope that a three-week stay-at-home order imposed this week on the agricultural San Joaquin Valley will slow transmission in a 12-county area where 97% of intensive care hospital beds are occupied.

THE NUMBERS: The seven-day rolling average of deaths per day in the U.S. rose to 2,360, up from

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1,477 at the end of November, according to the COVID Tracking Project. The seven-day rolling average of new confirmed cases also has jumped, to 210,765 from 166,123 on Nov. 27.

QUOTABLE: "We see the train coming down the track and we're telling people, and some people listen and get off the track and other people get on the track and start dancing." — Chuck Davis, CEO of data science company Bayesian, on trying to get people in California to take precautions to avoid transmission.

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT: Many snowbirds who typically live in warm U.S. climates part of the year to escape harsh winters in places as far away as Canada are staying put this year because of the pandemic, causing another hit to American tourism.

ON THE HORIZON: Trucks are expected to roll out Sunday morning with shipments of Pfizer's vaccine heading to nearly 150 distribution centers across the states. An additional 425 sites will get shipments Tuesday, and the remaining 66 on Wednesday.

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

Italy's staggering virus toll poses uncomfortable questions

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

ROME (AP) — Italy is reclaiming a record that nobody wants — the most coronavirus deaths in Europe — after the health care system again failed to protect the elderly and government authorities delayed imposing new restrictions.

This wasn't supposed to happen. Italy was the first country in the West to be slammed by COVID-19 and, after suffering a huge wave of death in spring, brought infections under control.

Italy then had the benefit of time and experience heading into the fall resurgence because it trailed Spain, France and Germany in recording big new clusters of infections. Yet the virus spread fast and wide, and Italy has added nearly 29,000 dead since Sept. 1.

"Obviously there needs to be some reflection," Guido Rasi, former executive director of the European Pharmaceutical Agency, told state TV after Italy reported a pandemic-high record of 993 deaths in one day. "This number of nearly 1,000 dead in 24 hours is much higher than the European average."

Italy added 649 more victims Saturday, bringing its official total to 64,036. According to the official British government total of 64,024, Italy did overtake Britain, though the Johns Hopkins University tally late Saturday still showed Britain leading Europe with 64,123 dead. Both numbers are believed to greatly underestimate the real toll, due to missed infections, limited testing and different counting criteria.

Italy is taking over the dishonorable ranking despite having 6 million people fewer than the U.K.'s 66 million, to trail only the much larger U.S., Brazil, India and Mexico. According to the Hopkins tally, Italy has the most deaths per 100,000 population among the most affected countries.

Public health officials argue that Italy has the world's second-oldest population after Japan, and the elderly are the most vulnerable to the virus.

The average age of Italian victims has hovered around 80. In addition, 65% of Italy's COVID-19 dead had three or more other health problems before they tested positive, such as hypertension or diabetes, according to Italy's Superior Institute of Health.

But that doesn't explain the whole picture. Germany has a similarly old demographic and yet its death toll is one-third of Italy's despite its larger population of 83 million. Germany recorded its highest daily number of coronavirus victims Friday — 598 — but has 21,500 dead overall.

Analysts point to Germany's long-term higher per-capita spending on health care, which has resulted in greater ICU capacity, better testing and tracing capabilities and higher ratios of doctors and nurses to the population. But Germany also imposed an earlier, lighter lockdown this fall and is now poised to tighten it.

"If you can act sooner, even a bit lighter in the measures, they work better than acting harshly a bit later or too late," said Matteo Villa, research fellow at the Institute for International Political Studies, a Milan-based think tank.

Italy, he said, waited too long after infections started ticking up in September and October to impose

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restrictions and didn't reinforce its medical system sufficiently during the summertime lull.

"If you look at France and the U.K., you can see Italy did fare much worse," he said. "And if you look at a comparable population with similar demographics, which is Germany, Italy did a lot worse."

With another wave of infections feared to be just around the corner with Christmas visits and the winter flu season, many are wondering how many more will die.

Doctors have blamed systemic problems with Italy's health care system, especially in hardest-hit Lombardy, for failing to respond adequately. They have cited the growth of private hospitals in Lombardy in recent years at the expense of public ones. Brain drain and bureaucratic obstacles have resulted in fewer doctors going into practice, while general practitioners have complained of a lack of support despite being the backbone of the system.

Nearly 80,000 Italian health care workers have been infected and 255 doctors have died.

"We asked for a lockdown at the start of November because the situation inside hospitals was already difficult," said Dr. Filippo Anelli, head of the country's doctors' association. "We saw that it worked in the spring and allowed us to get out from under COVID. If this had been done, probably today the numbers would be coming down."

But the Italian government resisted re-imposing a nationwide lockdown this fall, knowing the devastating impact on an economy that was just starting to come back to life after the springtime shutdown.

Instead, on Nov. 3 the government divided the country into three risk zones with varying restrictions. But by then infections had been doubling each week for nearly a month and hospitals were already overwhelmed in Milan and Naples.

Italy also went into the pandemic poorly prepared. It had fewer per capita ICU beds than the average of developed countries. And in recent weeks, investigative news reports have noted that Italy hadn't updated its influenza pandemic preparedness plan since 2006 — which could help explain its critical shortage of protective equipment early on and its chaotic initial response to the pandemic.

A World Health Organization report, which was posted and then immediately taken down from the WHO website, noted that Italy's 2006 plan was merely "reconfirmed in 2017" without being updated. The report said the plan was "more theoretical than practical" and that when COVID-19 hit, all hell broke loose.

"Unprepared for such a flood of severely ill patients, the initial reaction of the hospitals was improvised, chaotic and creative," said the report.

The U.N. health agency said it removed the report because it contained "inaccuracies and inconsistencies," and then decided not to republish it because it developed other ways to assess countries' responses.

Italy also ranked 31st — between Indonesia and Poland — in a 2019 survey of 195 countries compiled by the Global Health Security Index assessing abilities to respond to a pandemic or other health care crisis. Italy scored particularly poorly in emergency response, preparedness, and communications with health care workers during a crisis.

Government officials admit they were caught unprepared but have strongly defended their response to the resurgence as scientifically sound and proportional to prevent the economy from collapsing. Domenico Arcuri, the government's virus commissioner, said Thursday that the November restrictions were flattening Italy's infection curve.

"Daily infections are coming down, hospital admissions are coming down, the number of people who unfortunately are admitted to intensive care (is) coming down," Arcuri said.

That is small comfort to Marcella Polla, who announced the death of her 90-year-old aunt on Facebook Dec. 6, saying she caught the virus in a hospital in October after complications following an angioplasty.

"My aunt was tough, made of Trentino fiber," Polla wrote in explaining the extraordinary photo she posted of her aunt, holding herself up on a set of gymnastics rings this year. "I want to remember her like this, even though the thought of her and so many others dying alone and then being put in a body bag torments me."

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

com/UnderstandingtheOutbreak

Virus rages as new rules challenge California city's mettle

By ADAM BEAM Associated Press

LODI, Calif. (AP) — In San Joaquin County, part of California's vast Central Valley that produces most of the country's fruits and vegetables, the coronavirus is spreading like a weed and the hospitals are running out of beds for the sickest patients.

San Joaquin is part of a 12-county region that on Saturday had 100% of its intensive care unit beds filled, the highest rate anywhere in California. And with cases continuing at an unprecedented rate, the death toll inevitably will grow, too.

A new stay-at-home order was imposed this week but it's anybody's guess whether it will have the intended consequence of finally changing enough people's behavior to slow infections as a vaccine is rolled out.

"It's been frustrating," said Chuck Davis, CEO of data science company Bayesian that tracks virus numbers for the county. "It's like we see the train coming down the track and we're telling people, and some people listen and get off the track and other people get on the track and start dancing."

The virus has found a foothold in Lodi, a city of 68,000 on the county's northern rim. The birthplace of A&W Root Beer, Lodi is surrounded by vineyards that rely on Latino farmworkers.

On School Street, the city's picturesque retail and restaurant hub, sycamore leaves as big as your hand littered the sidewalk. In normal times, volunteers clear the leaves. But that stopped during the pandemic, and the leaves piled up, a subtle reminder of how things have changed.

More stark reminders are at the local hospital, where a second intensive care unit was created to handle patients. A team of 17 nurses arrives Monday so the hospital can begin accepting patients from some of the county's six other hospitals, all of which are at 100% capacity or more in ICU units.

Dr. Patricia Iris, medical officer for Adventist Health Lodi Memorial, said during the first surge of cases this year 75% of patients were Latino. The hospital interviewed 30 Latino families to find out why, discovering they didn't trust the hospital.

Things improved after Adventist partnered with Spanish-language TV and radio stations to educate people about wearing masks and social distancing.

But across the city, many residents still don't follow the rules, Iris said.

"People can't help themselves. They want to be near family," she said. "We don't have the same culture and the rigidity around following the guidance here than, for example, San Francisco. We need to educate, educate, as much as we can so we can get some relief."

Last week, Gov. Gavin Newsom imposed a three-week stay-at-home order for the San Joaquin Valley. The order forced restaurants to only offer takeout and delivery, shuttered hair and nail salons, movie theaters and other businesses, and limited retailers to 20% capacity.

Pat Patrick, president and CEO of the Lodi Chamber of Commerce, signed a letter to Newsom, urging him to let businesses stay open.

"There's just no rhyme or reason to some of these things and certainly no data," he said.

Lodi Junction, a sprawling thrift store, is following the rules, only allowing a maximum of 30 customers and requiring masks and distancing. More than a dozen people were sampling the wares on Wednesday — a box set of Anthony Robbins self-help books, a \$150 flat screen TV with no remote — as Bruce Hornsby sang "that's just the way it is" over the speakers.

Roman Winter was browsing some shirts while wearing a mask. He's a doctor of internal medicine at a Southern California hospital, but once worked in San Joaquin County and still has a house in Lodi. He was visiting for the first time in six months and thinks not much has changed.

"It's busier out there now than it was before the whole thing started," he said. "It doesn't seem that anybody cares."

But some things have changed on School Street, where most of the restaurants have closed their seating.

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Unable to eat inside, Ryan Breakfield and his girlfriend Erica Everett ate takeout in the bed of a pickup truck, calling it a "COVID date."

"It's just really weird. That's the best way to put it," he said.

Tucked between four restaurants is the Rocky Mountain Chocolate Factory, where owner Jeanne Bria's business model relies on diners walking past her temptations. But people aren't thinking about dessert now when they walk to their cars with Styrofoam takeout containers. Bria said her business is down 60%.

She wears a mask and only allows one person or party in her store at a time. She said most people follow the rules, but added: "I would say 95% of the people that come in want to complain about it."

"My problem is I don't know who to believe," she said. "You hear from different sources different information. And I almost think that the mental health and the frustration damage that's being done is almost worse."

Across town, Denis Xenos knows exactly who he believes — and it isn't Newsom. The owner of Denis' Country Kitchen has kept his restaurant open for dine-in customers despite the mandate, posting on Facebook that he has converted into a "private club." The membership fee is \$1 per family.

The stunt attracted the attention of the county public health department, which called Xenos and told him the district attorney has been notified. Xenos said nothing has happened yet, and he is "just trusting the Lord."

"I'm standing up for what our forefathers have died to give me," Xenos said, adding he is not requiring masks. "We're open, letting everybody choose what they want."

Others have accepted the rules as necessary. Tom Hoffman, owner of Heritage Oak Winery, canceled his wine tastings and other events for the next three weeks, even though the holiday season is when he makes the most money.

Hoffman said he expects to survive the shutdown. But his business won't be the same.

"I don't really look forward to standing in the tasting room with 14 people in there all breathing the same air. That doesn't appeal to me anymore," he said.

Trump loses Wisconsin case while arguing another one

By SCOTT BAUER Associated Press

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — President Donald Trump lost a federal lawsuit Saturday while his attorney was arguing his case before a skeptical Wisconsin Supreme Court in another lawsuit that liberal justices said "smacks of racism" and would disenfranchise hundreds of thousands of voters only in the state's most diverse counties.

U.S. District Judge Brett Ludwig, a Trump appointee, dismissed Trump's federal lawsuit asking the court to order the Republican-controlled Legislature to name Trump the winner over Democrat Joe Biden. The judge said Trump's arguments "fail as a matter of law and fact."

The ruling came as Trump attorney Jim Troupis faced a barrage of questions about his claims from both liberal and conservative justices on the Wisconsin Supreme Court. Troupis asked the court to toss more than 221,000 absentee ballots, including his own, saying they were cast fraudulently based on incorrect interpretations of the law by elections officials.

"What you want is for us to overturn this election so that your king can stay in power," said liberal Justice Jill Karofsky. "That is so un-American."

Conservative justices appeared to be sympathetic to some issues raised by Trump, but also questioned how they could fairly disqualify ballots only in the two counties where Trump sought a recount and not other counties where the same procedures were followed.

Biden attorney John Devaney said tossing any ballots in just those two counties would be a violation of the Constitution's equal protection clause.

Trump is challenging ballots only in Milwaukee and Dane counties, the state's most liberal counties with the largest non-white populations. He is not challenging any votes in more conservative counties where he won.

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"This lawsuit, Mr. Troupis, smacks of racism," Karofsky said. "I do not know how you can come before this court and possibly ask for a remedy that is unheard of in U.S. history. ... It is not normal."

Justice Rebecca Dallet, another liberal justice, questioned why Trump didn't raise his same concerns about the absentee ballot process in the 2016 election that he won in Wisconsin. Troupis said Trump was not an aggrieved party that year.

Chief Justice Patience Roggensack, a conservative, voiced concerns with ballots that the city of Madison collected over two weekends at parks, saying that appeared to be the same as early voting, which had not started yet.

Conservative Justice Rebecca Bradley also implied that the court must not allow for ballots to be counted if they were cast contrary to the law. But she questioned how the court could fairly disqualify more than 28,000 ballots cast by people who said they were indefinitely confined, given that some were.

The court in March said it was up to individual voters to determine whether they were "indefinitely confined," a designation that allowed voters to cast absentee ballots without showing a valid photo ID.

During Saturday's arguments, other conservative justices raised concerns with allowing election officials to fill in missing information on envelopes that contain absentee ballots. And Troupis, who voted that way, said that he believes his vote was cast illegally and should be discounted.

Biden won Wisconsin by about 20,600 votes, a margin of 0.6% that withstood a Trump-requested recount in Milwaukee and Dane counties.

Biden's attorney asked the court to rule before Monday, when Wisconsin's 10 Electoral College votes are scheduled to be cast for Biden. Trump asked for a ruling before Jan. 6, the day Congress counts the Electoral College votes.

Trump and his allies have suffered dozens of defeats in Wisconsin and across the country in lawsuits that rely on unsubstantiated claims of widespread fraud and election abuse. On Friday evening, the U.S. Supreme Court rejected a Texas lawsuit that sought to invalidate Biden's win by throwing out millions of votes in four battleground states, including Wisconsin.

Also Saturday, former Trump campaign attorney Sidney Powell asked the U.S. Supreme Court to hear a federal case she lost in Wisconsin seeking to order the GOP-controlled Legislature to declare Trump the winner. Powell has lost similar cases in Georgia and Arizona.

American Legion, Pelosi joining calls for VA chief's ouster

By HOPE YEN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The nation's largest veterans organization and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi on Saturday joined the growing calls for the ouster of President Donald Trump's Veterans Affairs chief, under fire after a government audit found he acted unprofessionally, if not unethically, in the handling of a congressional aide's allegation of sexual assault at a VA hospital.

"It is unfair to expect accountability from the nearly 400,000 VA employees and not demand the same from its top executive. It is clear that Secretary Robert Wilkie failed to meet the standard that the veteran who came forward with the complaint deserved," the American Legion's national commander, James W. "Bill" Oxford, said in a statement. He urged Wilkie and several other top VA officials cited in the report to resign because of their "violation of trust" of the agency's commitment to not "tolerate harassment of any kind."

Pelosi, D-Calif., said Wilkie "has lost the trust and confidence to serve, and he must immediately resign." She said Wilkie "has not only been derelict in his duty to combat sexual harassment, but has been complicit in the continuation of a VA culture that tolerates this epidemic."

On Saturday, the VA said Wilkie, who has denied wrongdoing, doesn't intend to resign. "He will continue to lead the department," said spokeswoman Christina Noel.

The demands for Wilkie's resignation came a day after numerous veterans groups expressed similar outrage and sought Wilkie's dismissal in the final weeks of the Trump administration. Those organizations include Veterans of Foreign Wars, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, Disabled American Veterans,

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AMVETS, Paralyzed Veterans of America and the Modern Military Association of America, and they said they had lost confidence that Wilkie could effectively lead the department, which is responsible for the care of 9 million veterans.

An investigation by the Veterans Affairs' inspector general on Thursday concluded that Wilkie repeatedly sought to discredit Andrea Goldstein, a senior policy adviser to Democratic Rep. Mark Takano, chairman of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, after she alleged in September 2019 that a man at the VA medical center in Washington, D.C., had physically assaulted her.

The inspector general found that Wilkie's disparaging comments about Goldstein, a Navy veteran, as a repeat complainer as well as the overall "tone" he set influenced his staff to spread negative information about her while ignoring known problems of harassment at the facility.

Wilkie and other senior officials had declined to fully cooperate with the investigation by VA Inspector General Michael Missal. For that reason, Missal said he could not conclude whether Wilkie had violated government policies or laws, allegedly by personally digging into the woman's past. Wilkie has denied that he improperly investigated Goldstein.

"We've had our concerns about Wilkie's leadership throughout the pandemic and this IG report really cements the fact that the VA is not being led with integrity," said Jeremy Butler, chief executive of Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America. "That calls for an immediate change."

The report on Thursday drew widespread concern from lawmakers from both parties about VA's leadership, with Takano the first to call for Wilkie's resignation. Concerned Veterans for America, a conservative group who supported Wilkie when he became VA secretary in 2018, chided Wilkie and his team, stressing that "VA leaders should always put the veteran and the integrity of the institution ahead of themselves."

AMVETS national commander Jan Brown said she found it unacceptable that VA would dismiss known problems facing women who receive care at its facilities.

"Women veterans already hesitate to use VA services for a number of reasons and we need a Secretary who will make our community feel welcomed," she said. "We strongly disapprove of any VA official that took part in the scheme to wreck the credibility of a victim."

The case of Goldstein, who agreed to be publicly identified, was ultimately closed by the inspector general's office and Justice Department earlier this year due to a lack of enough evidence to bring charges.

Wilkie is Trump's second VA secretary after David Shulkin was fired in 2018. A former Pentagon under-secretary, he presided over the nation's largest hospital system that has seen continuing improvement and veterans' satisfaction since a 2014 scandal involving lengthy waiting times for medical appointments.

President-elect Joe Biden has pledged to rebuild trust in the VA when he takes office on Jan. 20. He has selected Denis McDonough, who served as President Barack Obama's White House chief of staff, to be VA secretary.

Hunter Biden subpoena seeks info on Burisma, other entities

By MICHAEL BALSAMO and ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A subpoena seeking documents from Hunter Biden asked for information related to more than two dozen entities, including Ukraine gas company Burisma, according to a person familiar with a Justice Department tax investigation of President-elect Joe Biden's son.

The breadth of the subpoena, issued Tuesday, underscores the wide-angle lens prosecutors are taking as they examine the younger Biden's finances and international business ventures.

Hunter Biden's ties to Burisma in particular have long dogged the policy work and political aspirations of his father, Joe Biden, now the president-elect of the United States. It's unclear whether Hunter Biden's work at the Ukrainian company is a central part of the federal investigation or whether prosecutors are simply seeking information about all his sources of income in recent years.

The person was not authorized to discuss an ongoing investigation publicly and spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity.

A lawyer for the younger Biden, George Mesires, did not immediately return a phone message seeking

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comment for this story and a spokesman for the Biden transition team declined to comment.

Hunter Biden confirmed Wednesday that his taxes are under federal investigation. The revelation comes at a delicate time for the president-elect, who is building out his Cabinet and will soon decide on his nominee to run the Justice Department, the same department overseeing the investigation into his son.

In addition to the Burisma-related request, the subpoena issued last week also seeks information on Hunter Biden's Chinese business dealings and other financial transactions.

The probe was launched in 2018, the year before his father announced his candidacy for president. At one point in the investigation, federal prosecutors were also examining potential money laundering offenses, two people familiar with the matter told the AP.

Hunter Biden said he only learned of the investigation on Tuesday.

The younger Biden joined the board of Burisma in 2014, around the time his father, then vice president, was helping conduct the Obama administration's foreign policy with Ukraine. President Donald Trump and his allies have long argued, without evidence, that Hunter Biden's work in Ukraine influenced the Obama administration's policies toward the Eastern European nation.

Senate Republicans said in a report earlier this year that the appointment may have posed a conflict of interest but did not provide evidence that any policies were directly affected by Hunter Biden's work.

The president-elect is not believed to be a focus of the investigation. He has not weighed in on the merits of the investigation, saying only to reporters on Friday that he was "proud of my son."

For months, the U.S. attorney's office in Pittsburgh has also been collecting information from Trump's attorney, Rudy Giuliani, and others as part of the Justice Department's process to receive and analyze information related to Ukraine, including documents Giuliani wanted to present to prosecutors that he had been gathering in Ukraine about Joe and Hunter Biden.

In announcing that process in February, Barr cautioned that the department had to be careful about any information coming from Ukraine, saying: "There are a lot of agendas in the Ukraine, a lot of cross currents. And we can't take anything we received from Ukraine at face value."

The former New York City mayor was a main character when the House voted to impeach Trump. The impeachment inquiry centered on Trump's dealings with Ukraine's president and whether he abused his office by seeking the investigation into the Bidens. Giuliani pressured officials to do the investigations and has been pushing unsubstantiated corruption allegations against the Bidens.

Giuliani himself had also been under federal investigation, with federal prosecutors in Manhattan examining whether he failed to register as a foreign agent, according to people familiar with the matter. It was unclear whether that investigation remains active as Trump has discussed the possibility of preemptive pardons for some of his family members and close associates, including Giuliani.

Pandemic forces 'virtual' Virgin of Guadalupe day in Mexico

By MARIA VERZA Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — For the first time in decades, Mexico's Roman Catholics were forced on Saturday to abandon a religious pilgrimage in which millions visit Mexico City's Basilica of Guadalupe on Dec. 12.

The pilgrimage marks the day in 1531 when the Virgin of Guadalupe, patroness of Latin America's Catholics, is said to have appeared on the hillside behind the basilica. Millions come each year, many walking or biking for days from distant towns.

This year, church officials agreed to close the basilica to prevent the spread of COVID-19, and offered virtual services and candle-lighting to mark the day without gathering.

It was the first time the church has not welcomed huge throngs of the faithful since the modern basilica was being built in the 1970s, and since religious conflict in the 1920s shuttered an older basilica nearby.

Barricades and police blocked the entrance to the vast plaza in front of the basilica. Stores nearby were still selling religious images and candles, but there were few buyers.

Alejandro Castillo, 53, would normally be at the basilica on Dec. 12. But he was satisfied to be at home in his village of San Gregorio Azompa, about 75 miles (120 kilometers) east of Mexico City.

Castillo had managed to visit the basilica just before it closed Wednesday; authorities had encouraged

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people to come before the closure, to leave flowers or other offerings.

Castillo walked three days, carrying a huge portrait of the Virgin on his back; alongside walked his 11-year-old son.

"It had been years since I made it to the pews" in the vast building, he noted, "because there were always too many people."

"But this time they gave us permission," he said. "Thanks to the Virgin."

The faithful usually come carrying pictures of the Virgin, some advancing on their knees, many fulfilling promises they made in exchange for her help in difficult situations.

Pope Francis has granted an indulgence to Roman Catholics so that they do not have to physically visit the shrine.

Archbishop Carlos Aguiar Retes put it this way: "Let us allow the Virgin to visit us in our homes."

Instead, the church has set up video and internet links to watch the lighting of candles to the Virgin. The basilica is scheduled to reopen on Monday. But Mexico City is in the grips of what officials called a "coronavirus emergency," with rapidly rising infection rates and 78% of its hospitals full. About 18,600 people are confirmed to have died of COVID-19 in the city of nine million.

But people continue to approach the gates of the basilica.

Schoolteacher Jaqueline Castillo, who is not related to Alejandro Castillo, came to the basilica with a statue of the Virgin, hoping to get it blessed, but was unable to do so.

"We have to obey the instructions, it is sad but at the same time, it is right, what the authorities are doing," Castillo said. "They are looking out for our health, and that of everybody else."

For Alejandro Castillo and others, visiting the Virgin is more than a habit; it is an act of devotion. As a child, he said, he suffered abuse and beatings after he was separated from his family; when they were reunited, he promised the Virgin he would return each year. This year he did, even though it wasn't on Dec. 12.

"I am very content," he reflected.

AP journalists Diego Delgado and Marco Ugarte contributed to this report.

Armenians, Azerbaijan trade blame over breach of peace deal

By AVET DEMOURIAN Associated Press

YEREVAN, Armenia (AP) — Armenian officials and Azerbaijan on Saturday accused each other of breaching a peace deal that ended six weeks of fierce fighting over Nagorno-Karabakh, and Azerbaijan's leader threatened to crush Armenian forces with an "iron fist."

The new clashes mark the first significant breach of the peace deal brokered by Russia on Nov. 10 that saw Azerbaijan reclaim control over broad swathes of Nagorno-Karabakh and surrounding lands which were held by Armenian forces for more than a quarter-century.

Separatist officials in Nagorno-Karabakh said the Azerbaijani military launched an attack late Friday that left three local ethnic Armenian servicemen wounded.

Russian peacekeepers deployed to the region to monitor the peace deal reported a violation of the cease-fire in the Gadрут region on Friday. The report issued Saturday by the Russian Defense Ministry didn't assign blame.

Later in the day, the Armenian Defense Ministry also charged that the Azerbaijani army mounted an attack in the south of Nagorno-Karabakh on Saturday.

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev reacted on Saturday by blaming Armenia for the new clashes and threatened to "break its head with an iron fist."

"Armenia shouldn't try to start it all over again," Aliyev said during a meeting with top diplomats from the United States and France who have tried to mediate the decades-old conflict. "It must be very cautious and not plan any military action. This time, we will fully destroy them. It mustn't be a secret to anyone."

Azerbaijan's Defense Ministry said in a statement late Saturday that its forces thwarted Armenian

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“provocations” and restored the cease-fire.

Armenian officials said the fighting raged near the villages of Hin Tager and Khtsaber, the only settlements in the Gadрут region that are still controlled by Armenian forces. They noted that the two villages have been fully encircled by the Azerbaijani army, which controls the only road leading to them.

Nagorno-Karabakh lies within Azerbaijan but was under the control of ethnic Armenian forces backed by Armenia since a separatist war there ended in 1994. That war left Nagorno-Karabakh itself and substantial surrounding territory in Armenian hands.

In 44 days of fighting that began in late September and left more than 5,600 people killed on both sides, the Azerbaijani army pushed deep into Nagorno-Karabakh, forcing Armenia to accept last month's peace deal that saw Azerbaijan reclaim much of the separatist region along with surrounding areas. Russia deployed nearly 2,000 peacekeepers for at least five years to monitor the peace deal and to facilitate the return of refugees.

Azerbaijan marked its victory with a military parade on Thursday that was attended by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and involved more than 3,000 troops, dozens of military vehicles, and a flyby of combat aircraft.

The peace deal was a major shock for Armenians, triggering protests calling for the resignation of Prime Minister Nikola Pashinyan, who has refused to step down. He described the peace agreement as a bitter but necessary move that prevented Azerbaijan from taking over all of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Associated Press writers Vladimir Isachenkov in Moscow, and Aida Sultanova in London, contributed to this report.

Nearly 150 arrested at Paris protest over security bill

PARIS (AP) — Paris police took nearly 150 people into custody at what quickly became a tense and sometimes ill-tempered protest Saturday against proposed security laws, with officers wading into the crowds of several thousand to haul away suspected trouble-makers.

Police targeted protesters they suspected might coalesce together into violent groups like those who vandalized stores and vehicles and attacked officers at previous demonstrations.

The interior minister said police detained 142 people. Long lines of riot officers and police vehicles with blue lights flashing escorted Saturday's march through rain-slickened streets. They hemmed in protesters, seeking to prevent the flare-up of violence that marked many previous demonstrations.

A police water cannon doused demonstrators at the end of the march, as night fell.

Marchers were protesting against a proposed security law that has sparked successive weekends of demonstrations and against a draft law aimed at combating Islamist radicalism.

The security bill's most contested measure could make it more difficult to film police officers. It aims to outlaw the publication of images with intent to cause harm to police. Critics fear it could erode media freedom and make it more difficult to expose police brutality. The provision caused such an uproar that the government has decided to rewrite it.

Slogans on placards carried by marchers in Paris said “I will never stop filming” and “Camera equals mutilation?”

There were also protests in other cities. In Lyon, in the southeast, authorities reported five arrests among people they said attacked police and sought to loot shops.

Analysis: Short work by high court of Trump's 'big one'

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — It didn't take the Supreme Court long to make short work of what President Donald Trump called “the big one.”

And as the court on Friday rejected a Texas-based lawsuit to overturn the election results, not even

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Trump's three high court appointees were willing to rise to the defense of the president. Trump has been clinging to baseless claims of fraud in the hope of reversing election results that made Democrat Joe Biden the next president and deprived Trump of four more years in the White House.

For all Trump's predictions that the court and his justices would make things right, he and his supporters were lacking one basic element: a strong legal argument that might plausibly attract some sympathy on a court now dominated by conservative justices.

A Republican senator, Nebraska's Ben Sasse, delivered a stinging summary of the court's rebuke to Trump and his allies. Sasse said "every American who cares about the rule of law should take comfort that the Supreme Court — including all three of President Trump's picks — closed the book on the nonsense." Sasse, a potential 2024 presidential candidate, has been one of the few Republicans willing to criticize Trump.

Following a string of legal setbacks in battleground states he lost in November, Trump had pinned his hopes on a desperate Supreme Court lawsuit that no Republican lawyer with high-court experience would touch. The suit was filed by Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton and backed by 18 other Republican attorneys general and 126 GOP members of the House of Representatives. It asked the court to take the unprecedented, even outlandish, step of setting aside the 62 combined electoral votes for Biden in Georgia, Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin.

The justices, acting late Friday, ended the suit as quickly as it began, saying in a mundane, three-sentence order that Texas had no right to question how other states conduct their elections.

The justices appeared to be unanimous in concluding that they would not disturb the electoral votes, three days before presidential electors meet to formally choose Biden as president. The justices Trump nominated — Neil Gorsuch, Brett Kavanaugh and Amy Coney Barrett — said nothing to suggest they disagreed with the outcome, and they were likewise quiet when the court rejected an appeal from Pennsylvania Republicans earlier in the week.

The silence was in sharp contrast to what Trump forecast when he nominated Barrett in September, even before Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg had been buried, and urged the Senate to confirm Barrett before Election Day. Then, Trump said she would be needed to help settle disputes over the election that Trump had been saying for months would be fraudulent, without any basis.

The setback was clearly on his mind Saturday: He retweeted a story from a conservative commenter, with the president's three court appointees pictured, that said they were "missing in action" and he accused the court of having "ZERO interest" in the merits of the case while bemoaning that his pleadings were "NEVER even given our day in Court!"

As recently as Tuesday, he had retweeted a photo of Barrett from a follower who boasted that the Democrats had cheated, but that the "wheels are coming off" their scheme. "They got caught because we were leading by so much more than they ever thought possible. Late night ballot 'dumps' went crazy!" Trump tweeted, repeating one of his favorite claims that he had an insurmountable lead that was overcome only by fraud.

In fact, in Pennsylvania, Michigan and Wisconsin, ballots counted later on the night of the election and in the days following were overwhelmingly mailed-in votes that tended to favor Biden. The shift in the vote totals was completely expected — and widely discussed in advance of the election — because laws in those three states prohibited the early processing of mailed-in ballots.

Paxton's lawsuit — which the state's top Supreme Court lawyer, unusually, did not sign — cited the shift in the vote, the widespread use of mailed-in ballots because of the coronavirus pandemic and the roles played by state courts and governors, instead of legislatures, in changing rules to accommodate voters amid the pandemic. These and other arguments had been made and disposed of in state and federal courts since just after the Nov. 3 election.

The Supreme Court isn't always unwilling to step into political controversies. Twenty years ago, with a presidential election hanging in the balance, the court voted 5-4 to halt a state court-ordered recount in Florida and effectively decided the election in Republican George W. Bush's favor. That case split the court's majority conservatives and four liberals.

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In 2000, only 537 votes separated Bush and Democrat Al Gore in Florida, and the winner of that state would become president.

Even so, the court was heavily criticized for its decision, especially the admonition that the opinion was "limited to the present circumstances" and not to be cited as precedent. It hasn't been since.

This year, the election did not turn on the outcome in one state, or even two. Trump would have had to reverse Biden wins in at least three of the six battleground states the president has complained about since the election. Arizona and Nevada are the others, though neither was included in the Texas lawsuit.

Two years ago, Chief Justice John Roberts derided Trump for derisively using the term "Obama judge" to complain about a court ruling he didn't like. Roberts said then that judges are not in the pocket of presidents who appoint them, even if they tend to share a judicial philosophy.

With such a weak argument and a big ask of the court, the Trump-backed lawsuit the court easily dismissed didn't come close to putting Roberts' assertion to the test.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Associated Press writer Mark Sherman has covered the Supreme Court since 2006.

Loss of 'snowbirds' amid pandemic another hit to US tourism

By TERRY TANG and TERRY SPENCER Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — This is the first winter in five years that Steve Monk and his wife, Linda, haven't driven to Arizona from their home in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan.

They typically leave Canada to hunker down in warmer climates for six months. They could fly, skirting travel restrictions at the border, but they'd rather "freeze their buns off" than go to the U.S., where COVID-19 infections and deaths are surging.

"It's not worth taking a chance. It's not nearly as bad in this country as it is down there," said Monk, 69. "Pretty much every Canadian person we do know that goes down (to the U.S.) is not going. It's pretty widespread."

"Snowbirds" like the Monks, often retirees who live somewhere warm like Arizona or Florida part time to escape cold weather, won't be flocking south this winter. For Canadians who drive, nonessential border travel is banned until at least Dec. 21. For some, it's fear of the virus.

While their absence is being felt by vacation rentals, restaurants and shops, RV parks and campgrounds are seeing an increase in campers as people travel closer to home.

A huge chunk of the snowbird population is Canadian. Evan Rachkovsky of the Canadian Snowbird Association said most people he's spoken with are suspending trips to the U.S.

But some are still adamant about going.

"Some tell me just simply this is something they've been doing for 10, 20, 30 years, so it's habitual in that sense," Rachkovsky said. "It's a lifestyle as opposed to vacationing for two weeks."

For those who go, they may face recommendations to quarantine for up to two weeks, though states often don't enforce it. They're also going into communities where hospitals are normally busiest during the winter months, and COVID-19 could overwhelm them.

Health insurance hurdles are deterring retired Toronto accountant Mel Greenglass, who for almost a decade has spent four months in southwest Florida near Naples. Canadian snowbirds must buy a supplemental plan to their government-provided coverage for any emergencies during their stay. It would have been \$2,800 for him and his girlfriend this season, up from \$1,800 previously, and he feared they wouldn't be covered if they caught the virus.

Insurers "are not going to lay out a lot of money to cover everybody just by raising their premiums a little bit," said Greenglass, 78. He added that adapting to the Canadian winter won't be easy: "I don't even own a pair of boots."

It's easier for those who don't have international borders to cross. Kathy Scott, 73, and her 81-year-old husband intend to make their annual drive from Salt Lake City to Arizona after Christmas.

Scott said she plans to mask up and practice social distancing to avoid burdening the medical system,

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adding that she's "not having any problem asking people about having been tested, about quarantining, about where they've been."

Snowbirds' plans have a huge impact on tourism. In Florida, 3.6 million Canadians visited last year, making up a quarter of its foreign tourists, according to the state tourism office. Visit Florida estimates that only 15,000 Canadians arrived between April and September, the last month with available statistics. That's about an 99% decrease from the same period last year.

The Arizona Office of Tourism said an estimated 964,000 Canadian visitors were responsible for \$1 billion of the \$26.5 billion in tourism spending last year. In September, visitors overall spent \$752 million, down 60% from the \$1.9 billion expected in a normal year.

Becky Blaine, the office's deputy director, said it helps that many people are looking closer to home for vacation. But that will only go so far to offset the loss of international visitors. She's also not sure how much of a boost RV parks and campgrounds will get.

"Now that kids are back in school though, it would be more of that retiree population versus over the summer when everybody rented RVs, including myself," Blaine said.

Bobby Cornwell, executive director of the Florida and Alabama RV Parks & Campground Association, believes it's not "all doom and gloom" for his industry. Snowbirds make up 30% of the business for Florida's RV parks, he said. There have been cancellations, but park operators are seeing people of all ages road-tripping.

"I really wanna hammer this home: From the people we're getting feedback from, many of our parks throughout the whole state, for every cancellation, there's one or two campers who come in," Cornwell said. "I haven't heard of anything disastrous."

Bruce Hoban, co-founder of the 2,000-member Vacation Rental Owners and Neighbors of Palm Springs, said property managers who rent condos to snowbirds for two- to three-month stints in the desert resort city are having a hard time. But vacation rentals for stays under 30 days have been "through the roof."

Normally, rentals generate 25% of the \$25 million Palm Springs rakes in from an occupancy tax. They're now generating 50%. Between vacation rentals and hotels, the city did 5.5% more business between July and September compared with the same period last year.

"It's a big shift," Hoban said. "The amount of people coming on vacation rentals was like nothing we had ever seen. ... Yes, we lost two-and-a-half months of what is normally our most expensive, highest time of the year because of Coachella festivals and stuff. We lost all that. We have more than made up for it since then."

But shop owners like Julie Kathawa, 49, aren't expecting big business from younger vacationers. Julie's Hallmark sells cards and gifts in Bermuda Dunes, outside Palm Springs, and already feels the crunch of fewer snowbirds, who make up about 20% of her business from November to April. She's relying mostly on online mail orders.

"I'm grateful for it, but it's not the same. I think it's going to help me through December," Kathawa said. "Other than that, I don't think it's going to be as profitable or as exciting in January, February and March because we would still have all this tourism."

Spencer reported from in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Sunday, Dec. 13, the 348th day of 2020. There are 18 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Dec. 13, 2000, Republican George W. Bush claimed the presidency a day after the U.S. Supreme Court shut down further recounts of disputed ballots in Florida; Democrat Al Gore conceded, delivering a call for national unity.

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On this date:

In 1769, Dartmouth College in New Hampshire received its charter.

In 1918, President Woodrow Wilson arrived in France, becoming the first chief executive to visit Europe while in office.

In 1937, the Chinese city of Nanjing fell to Japanese forces during the Sino-Japanese War; what followed was a massacre of war prisoners, soldiers and citizens. (China maintains that up to 300,000 people were killed; Japanese nationalists say the death toll was far lower, and some maintain the massacre never happened.)

In 1977, Air Indiana Flight 216, a DC-3 carrying the University of Evansville basketball team on a flight to Nashville, crashed shortly after takeoff, killing all 29 people on board.

In 1978, the Philadelphia Mint began stamping the Susan B. Anthony dollar, which went into circulation the following July.

In 1981, authorities in Poland imposed martial law in a crackdown on the Solidarity labor movement. (Martial law formally ended in 1983.)

In 1993, the space shuttle Endeavour returned from its mission to repair the Hubble Space Telescope.

In 2001, the Pentagon publicly released a captured videotape of Osama bin Laden in which the al-Qaida leader said the deaths and destruction achieved by the September 11 attacks exceeded his "most optimistic" expectations.

In 2002, Cardinal Bernard Law resigned as Boston archbishop because of the priest sex abuse scandal.

In 2003, Saddam Hussein was captured by U.S. forces while hiding in a hole under a farmhouse in Adwar, Iraq, near his hometown of Tikrit.

In 2007, Major League Baseball's Mitchell Report was released, identifying 85 names to differing degrees in connection with the alleged use of performance-enhancing drugs.

In 2014, thousands of protesters marched in New York, Washington and other U.S. cities to call attention to the killing of unarmed Black men by white police officers who faced no criminal charges.

Ten years ago: President Barack Obama's historic health care overhaul hit its first major legal roadblock as a federal judge in Richmond, Virginia, declared that the law's central requirement that nearly all Americans carry insurance was unconstitutional. Veteran U.S. diplomat Richard Holbrooke, 69, died in Washington. A South Korean fishing boat sank near Antarctica, leaving 22 of the 42 crew members dead or missing.

Five years ago: Marine Le Pen's far-right National Front collapsed in French regional elections, failing to take a single region after dominating the first round of voting. A bomb in a market killed at least 22 Shiites in Pakistan's Kurram tribal region. Pope Francis called on humanity not to let sadness prevail because of the many forms of violence afflicting the world.

One year ago: The House Judiciary Committee approved two articles of impeachment accusing President Donald Trump of abuse of power in his dealings with Ukraine and obstruction of Congress in the investigation that followed.

Today's Birthdays: Former Secretary of State George P. Shultz is 100. Actor-comedian Dick Van Dyke is 95. Actor Christopher Plummer is 91. Country singer Buck White is 90. Music/film producer Lou Adler is 87. Singer John Davidson is 79. Actor Kathy Garver (TV: "Family Affair") is 75. Singer Ted Nugent is 72. Rock musician Jeff "Skunk" Baxter is 72. Actor Robert Lindsay is 71. Country singer-musician Randy Owen is 71. Actor Wendie Malick is 70. Former Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack is 70. Former Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke is 67. Country singer John Anderson is 66. Singer-songwriter Steve Forbert is 66. Singer-actor Morris Day is 64. Actor Steve Buscemi (boo-SEH'-mee) is 63. Actor Johnny Whitaker (TV: "Family Affair") is 61. Rock musician John Munson (Semisonic; Twilight Hours) is 58. Actor-reality TV star NeNe Leakes is 54. Actor-comedian Jamie Foxx is 53. Actor Lusia Strus is 53. Actor Bart Johnson is 50. Actor Jeffrey Pierce is 49. TV personality Debbie Matenopoulos is 46. Rock singer-musician Thomas Delonge is 45. Actor James Kyson Lee is 45. Actor Kimee Balmilero (TV: "Hawaii Five-0") is 41. Actor Chelsea Hertford is 39. Rock singer Amy Lee (Evanescence) is 39. Actor Michael Socha is 33. Actor Marcel Spears (TV: "The Mayor") is 32. Singer Taylor Swift is 31. Actor Maisey Stella is 17.