

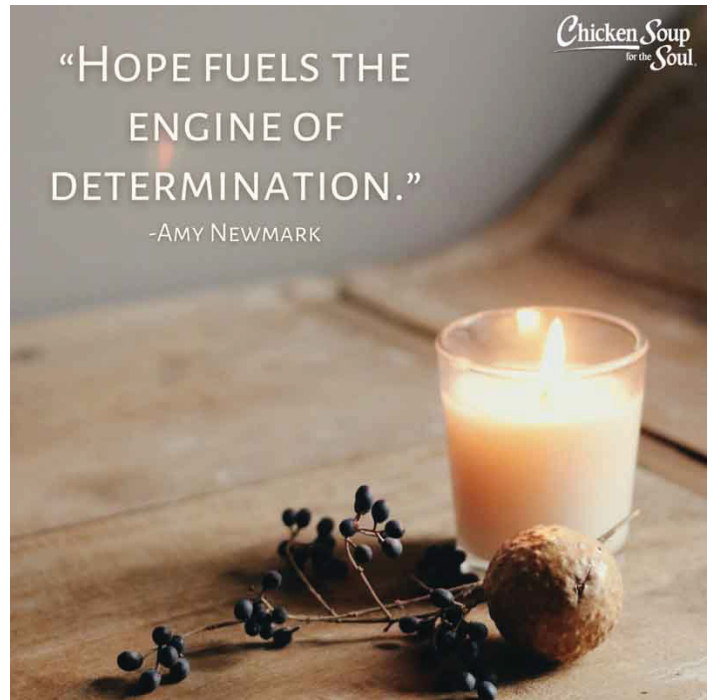
Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 1 of 93

- [1- Upcoming Schedule](#)
- [2- No. 7 Wolves Slide Past Bemidji State](#)
- [2- Service Notice: Sandra Mayou](#)
- [3- SDDP Responds to Gov. Noem's speech to RNC](#)
- [4- Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller](#)
- [6- Groton Area COVID-19 Report](#)
- [7- Jan. 8 COVID-19 UPDATE](#)
- [15- Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs](#)
- [16- Weather Pages](#)
- [19- Daily Devotional](#)
- [20- News from the Associated Press](#)

Yesterday's Girls Games:

Varsity: Sisseton 56, Groton Area 45
Junior Varsity: Sisseton 46, Groton Area 28
C Game: Sisseton 33, Groton Area 20



Upcoming Schedule

Saturday, Jan. 9

10 a.m.: Wrestling Quad at Wolsey-Wessington

Monday, Jan. 11

4 p.m.: Basketball Doubleheader at Webster with Girls JV at 4 p.m. followed by Boys JV, Girls Varsity and Boys Varsity

7 p.m.: School Board Meeting

Tuesday, Jan. 12

6 p.m.: Girls Basketball vs. Aberdeen Christian at Aberdeen Civic Arena with JV followed by varsity.

Thursday, Jan. 14

5 p.m.: Boys Basketball hosts Aberdeen Roncalli with C game at 5 p.m. followed by JV and then varsity

Friday, Jan. 15

6 p.m.: Girls Basketball at Roncalli with JV game followed by varsity



OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 2 of 93

No. 7 Wolves Slide Past Bemidji State

Bemidji, Minn. – Holding a lead for a majority of the game, the No. 7 Northern State University men's basketball team defeated Bemidji State. The Wolves shot a season high 46.7% from beyond the arc, knocking down seven made threes.

THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 71, BSU 57

Records: NSU 3-0 (1-0 NSIC), BSU 1-2 (0-1 NSIC)

Attendance: 69

HOW IT HAPPENED

- Northern tallied 37 points in the first and 34 in the second, out-scoring the Beavers by 14 in the win
- The Wolves shot 41.7% from the floor, 46.7% from the 3-point line, and 73.7% from the foul line
- They tallied 30 points in the paint, 34 rebounds, 13 assists, nine steals, and four blocks
- NSU notched a season high 16 fast break points and held the Beavers to shooting percentages of 33.9 from the floor and 28.6 from beyond the arc
- Three Wolves scored in double figures, led by Mason Stark with a season high 27
- Parker Fox tallied his second double-double of the season, matching his season high with 11 rebounds
- Tommy Chatman, Andrew Kallman, and Fox shared the wealth dishing four, three, and three assists

NORTHERN STATE STATISTICAL STANDOUTS

- Mason Stark: 27 points, 60.0 FG%, 4 rebounds
- Parker Fox: 17 points, 11 rebounds, 3 blocks, 3 steals, 3 assists
- Jordan Belka: 12 points, 57.1 FG%, 100.0% 3-pt FG%, 6 rebounds, 3 steals

UP NEXT

Northern continues action against the Beavers this afternoon, with tip-off set for 3:30 p.m. Live video, stat, and audio links are available on the men's basketball schedule on nsuwolves.com.

Service Notice: Sandra Mayou

Private services for Sandra "Sandi" Mayou, 56, of Groton will be 11:00 a.m., Tuesday, January 12th at Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Groton. Pastor Kari Foss will officiate. Burial will follow in Pleasant Valley Cemetery, rural Britton under the direction of Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel, Groton. Services will be live streamed at GDILIVE.COM

Visitation will be held for one hour prior to services.

Sandi passed away January 7, 2021 at Avera St. Lukes Hospital, Aberdeen.



The service of
Sandra Mayou
Tuesday, Jan. 12th, 11 a.m.
Emmanuel Lutheran Church

GDILIVE.COM
GDIRADIO Locally 89.3FM

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 3 of 93

SDDP Responds to Gov. Noem's speech to RNC

Sioux Falls, SD (January 9, 2021) – “There are consequences for the words we use to talk to each other in this country,” tweeted Gov. Kristi Noem in response to the deadly insurrection that threatened our nation's capital. Then, she followed up the same week by delivering a divisive and dehumanizing speech targeting Democrats. A speech to the RNC that was right out of the President's playbook.

“The idea that Georgia, of all places, could elect two communists to the United States Senate was ridiculous.” – Gov. Kristi Noem

“There's no better example of her emulating President Trump's rhetoric. She tweets a sham message to try to appear considerate, but in the next breath berates her own Republican Party for allowing 'communists' to be elected in Georgia. Kristi Noem is complicit in spreading Trump's dangerous form of governing. Her play for a cabinet position, future Presidential run or whatever she's chasing is all modeled after Trump. And that man just inspired an attack on Congress. She needs to stop the nonsense.” – Pam Cole, Executive Director

During Noem's speech she stated a message of hope that anyone, from any background could make it in America, boasting about her own ability to become governor. But, earlier in the same speech she attacked Georgia's Jon Ossoff for being, “A 33-year-old with no accomplishments.”

“The irony is not lost on us. In that same speech she also claims Americans aren't governed by 'aristocrats, elites' but she just campaigned for Loeffler who Forbes estimates is America's richest person on Capitol Hill. Like the President, she has figured out what plays well, whether it's accurate or not.” – Nikki Gronli, Vice Chair

“She also claimed to be concerned about the deficit, but her family's ag operation has taken over \$4 million in subsidies since the 90s and her husband's business sells government-subsidized crop insurance. Government assistance is only ok if her family benefits. These are just a few more examples of her trying to pull the wool over the eyes of voters.” - Gronli

Noem's speech also called on Republicans to “respect people as individuals,” and “understand that each person is different.”

“We couldn't agree more at the Democratic Party. Respect people as individuals. Each person is different. Stop trying to regulate South Dakotans personal lives through hateful legislation. We'll be watching to see if she practices what she preaches.” – Gronli

#320 in a series

Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

Worse and worse. Going to be a lot of that this month, I'm afraid. Here we go.

We're up to 21,971,600 cases since this pandemic began, 1.5% more than yesterday. We need to slow this down; our doubling time is plummeting, and that's not a good thing. If we get a sustained period at this rate of increase, I'll update that number and you won't like what you see at all. We'll hit 22 million tomorrow. There were 315,000 new cases reported today, second consecutive day over 300,000, second-worst day ever, second only to yesterday's mind-boggling report. Florida had a record number of new cases today. At least 40 states have upward trends in new cases this week, and 34 have test positivity rates above 10 percent, which means more trouble ahead.

There are 132,370 people hospitalized with Covid-19 in the US today. This is a record—fourth day running for that. We've now reached the point in Los Angeles County that officials are preparing to implement what they're calling "crisis mode care." This means triage officers at the public hospitals in the county will decide which patients receive which resources based on who is most likely to benefit; the guidelines specify that this, "in some circumstances, may involve decisions to take scarce resources from one patient and give them to another who is more likely to benefit from them." Think about what that means. And think about what it means to the health care workers involved. The Covid Tracking Project reports that every southern state is experiencing significant increases in hospitalizations with 13 of them setting records this week.

We lost a record number of people today, breaking yesterday's first-over-4000 record by more than 150 with 4219 deaths. We are now up to 369,243 Americans lost to this virus, 1.2% more than yesterday.

We need to talk about health care workers. They are bearing a huge burden from this pandemic, and there's no end in sight. They are laboring under workloads that just don't quit—for months, terrific stress, and fear for their own health and that of their families. A study of these folks during the spring peak in New York City found half of them suffering acute stress and depressive symptoms with nurses hardest hit. Several health care workers committed suicide during this period. A survey conducted in California in September before things got ugly found two-thirds of them exhausted, frustrated, overworked, and burned out. Now we add to that "crisis care mode;" there's a thing called moral injury, and this sort of situation puts these workers at great risk.

Factors that contributed to these feelings include the overwhelming number of patients. In various locations as the outbreaks swept the nation, hospitals and ICUs in particular were at over-100 percent occupancy, which means a whole lot more work over longer hours. The patients coming in with Covid-19 are more acute and require more care than the usual run of patients. Those on ventilators or requiring dialysis who need multiple drugs administered and positioning changes require a great deal of attention and monitoring, all the while ICU nurses are being assigned three or four patients each when the usual in ICUs is one or two. This small patient load isn't because nurses are lazy or accustomed to sitting around; it is because ICU patients require an exceptionally high level of care. Many hospitals are short of staff even under normal circumstances; when you expand capacity, adding beds in other units, office areas, corridors, and parking garages without adding staff, you create a situation where there is no way the staff can deliver the kind of care they are accustomed or expected to deliver. For workers to do this in the face of a virus which has a high probability of making them sick, maybe sick enough to die, is daunting. In the early days of this pandemic when the case surges were limited to a few states, workers from other regions volunteered to come in and give a hand; now that the entire country is experiencing these surges, there is simply no one available to come in. Add to this that an exceptionally large number of patients is dying, and you have set the stage for real trauma for these workers. Workers not caring for Covid-19 patients are more likely to experience reductions in hours and furloughs as hospitals, hard-hit by expensive and high-acuity patients along with a reduction in the elective procedures that pay the bills, try to balance their books. And we've talked about the great difficulty experienced by small, rural hospitals in staying open at all. Lots of suffering to go around.

Here's some good news, something I suspect we're going to be a bit short on in upcoming weeks:

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 5 of 93

Preliminary studies from the University of Texas Medical Branch currently in pre-print (which means they have not yet been peer-reviewed) indicate the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine appears to be as effective against a key mutation in these new highly-transmissible variants as it is against the old boring ones. The particular mutation, termed N501Y isn't just in the coding for the spike (S) protein; it is in the viral receptor binding site for cell entry and increases binding to the ACE2 receptor. Testing was done by using serum from immunized patients and discovering whether this serum is capable of neutralizing virus containing the relevant mutation. This finding of efficacy is pretty much what's been expected because, as we've discussed before, a vaccine results in immune responses to many segments of the viral spike (S) protein, and the mutations are affecting just one small portion of those proteins. That means that neutralizing antibodies will still bind to the protein in a protective way. Studies of these other mutations seen in these variants and against the other vaccines already approved or in clinical trials are ongoing; but results are not expected to differ.

The Moderna vaccine is entering testing against the new variants as well; we should hear something about this relatively soon, I expect. Also, having looked at the rate of antibody decay, Moderna's CEO Stephane Bancel said today that indications are the protection provided by the vaccine is likely to last up to two years. More work remains to be done, but this is exceptionally good news. We are almost certainly past those early worries that it might last only a few months.

We now have a third at-home test for this virus; it is from a company named Lucira Health. This is another one that requires a prescription for purchase, but can be done in minutes at home using a nasal swab.

Keith Walker has had a hard life. He's homeless, he and his dog, Bravo; he's been homeless since he was a child. But he has Bravo to take care of now, so he struck a deal with an animal shelter so that they take in his dog for him overnight; that keeps Bravo safe while he is sleeping. He told the AP, "My dog is my best friend, and I wouldn't be here without him."

On the night of December 18, Walker went to the shelter to pick up the dog and take him for a walk, and he realized the place was on fire, the kitchen completely overtaken by flames. His first thought was for the animals caged in the place; surely they would not survive the fire. So he rushed in to rescue them. He told the AP, "I was nervous as hell, I'm not going to lie. I was really scared to go in there with all that smoke. . . . [but] I knew I had to save all those other dogs." And so he did—six dogs and 10 cats, bringing them out when even the firefighters weren't too excited about the prospect. Every animal in the place was saved. A guy with absolutely nothing went far out of his way—risked his life—for a bunch of animals who were, like him, homeless. Those of us with more than nothing can probably do something for others too.

Stay healthy. We'll talk again.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 6 of 93

Groton Area School District

Active COVID-19 Cases

Updated January 4, 2021; 4:10 PM

JK	KG	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Staff	Total
0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2

Updated January 5, 2021; 3:07 PM

JK	KG	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Staff	Total
0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	4

Updated January 6, 2021; 4:45 PM

JK	KG	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Staff	Total
0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	4

Updated January 7, 2021; 3:28 PM

JK	KG	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Staff	Total
0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	4

Updated January 8, 2021; 2:09 PM

JK	KG	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Staff	Total
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 7 of 93

Jan. 8 COVID-19 UPDATE

Groton Daily Independent from State Health Lab Reports

South Dakota: Community Spread for week of Jan. 4:

Moderate: Aurora, Gregory, Haakon, Marshall downgraded from Substantial to Moderate; Sully upgraded from Minimal to Moderate.

Minimal: Faulk, Hand, Jackson downgraded from Moderate to Minimal.

Positive: +448 (102,580 total) Positivity Rate: 7.9%

Total Tests: 5675 (797,245 total)

Total Persons Tested: 1558 (381,792 total)

Hospitalized: +22 (5851 total) 247 currently hospitalized (-17)

Avera St. Luke's: 8 (-4) COVID-19 Occupied beds, 0 (-0) COVID-19 ICU Beds, 0 (-0) COVID-19 ventilators.

Sanford Aberdeen: 4 (-0) COVID-19 Occupied beds, 0 (-1) COVID-19 ICU Beds, 0 (-0) COVID-19 ventilators.

Deaths: +12 (1556 total)

Females: 5, Males: 7

Age Group: 60s=3, 70s=4, 80+=5

Counties: Brown-1, Corson-1, Day-1, Haakon-1, Jackson-1, Minnehaha-5, Oglala Lakota-1, Pennington-2.

Recovered: +1270 (95,783 total)

Active Cases: -834 (5241)

Percent Recovered: 93.4%

Vaccinations: +4138 (35611)

Vaccinations Completed: +1125 (1967)

Brown County Vaccinations: +58 (1656)

Beadle (38) +3 positive, +15 recovered (67 active cases)

Brookings (31) +25 positive, +57 recovered (252 active cases)

Brown (66): +20 positive, +40 recovered (284 active cases)

Clark (2): +0 positive, +4 recovered (11 active cases)

Clay (12): +8 positive, +26 recovered (71 active cases)

Codington (71): +8 positive, +54 recovered (218 active cases)

Davison (53): +14 positive, +26 recovered (91 active cases)

Day (21): +5 positive, +8 recovered (27 active cases)

Edmunds (4): +3 positive, +9 recovered (58 active cases)

Faulk (12): +0 positive, +1 recovered (5 active cases)

Grant (35): +4 positive, +4 recovered (29 active cases)

Hanson (3): +0 positive, +7 recovered (12 active cases)

Hughes (28): +7 positive, +30 recovered (93 active cases)

Lawrence (29): +9 positive, +28 recovered (103 active cases)

Lincoln (68): +37 positive, +94 recovered (380 active cases)

Marshall (4): +2 positive, +5 recovered (15 active cases)

McCook (22): +2 positive, +5 recovered (30 active cases)

McPherson (2): +4 positive, +4 recovery (13 active case)

Minnehaha (281): +102 positive, +319 recovered (1239 active cases)

Pennington (142): +45 positive, +183 recovered (688 active cases)

Potter (3): +3 positive, +0 recovered (27 active cases)

Roberts (32): +7 positive, +14 recovered (97 active cases)

Spink (24): +2 positive, +6 recovered (31 active cases)

Walworth (14): +4 positive, +2 recovered (51 active cases)

NORTH DAKOTA

COVID-19 Daily Report, Jan. 8:

- 4.7% rolling 14-day positivity
- 303 new positives
- 7,189 susceptible test encounters
- 85 currently hospitalized (+2)
- 2,122 active cases (+34)
- 1,352 total deaths (+11)

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 8 of 93

County	Positive Cases	Recovered Cases	Negative Persons	Deceased Among Cases	Community Spread	% RT-PCR Test Positivity Rate (Weekly)
Aurora	418	391	788	10	Moderate	17.24%
Beadle	2539	2434	5297	38	Substantial	10.66%
Bennett	363	348	1091	8	Moderate	5.49%
Bon Homme	1489	1437	1905	23	Substantial	14.04%
Brookings	3156	2873	10272	31	Substantial	13.28%
Brown	4613	4263	11266	66	Substantial	22.44%
Brule	650	616	1705	7	Moderate	26.09%
Buffalo	415	402	854	10	Minimal	19.05%
Butte	917	865	2871	18	Substantial	15.96%
Campbell	115	108	211	4	Minimal	25.00%
Charles Mix	1153	1083	3575	12	Substantial	10.84%
Clark	320	307	869	2	Moderate	2.22%
Clay	1673	1590	4597	12	Substantial	17.89%
Codington	3574	3285	8646	71	Substantial	19.61%
Corson	453	435	903	11	Moderate	24.24%
Custer	695	663	2448	9	Substantial	12.79%
Davison	2776	2632	5811	53	Substantial	16.12%
Day	558	510	1572	21	Substantial	19.12%
Deuel	429	391	1016	7	Substantial	11.76%
Dewey	1328	1196	3548	12	Substantial	19.23%
Douglas	391	365	836	9	Substantial	27.78%
Edmunds	405	342	895	5	Substantial	9.09%
Fall River	466	435	2320	13	Substantial	10.59%
Faulk	316	299	614	12	Minimal	14.29%
Grant	846	782	1968	35	Substantial	22.08%
Gregory	491	456	1101	26	Moderate	0.00%
Haakon	237	219	475	9	Moderate	10.00%
Hamlin	627	560	1549	36	Substantial	9.78%
Hand	315	305	709	3	Minimal	0.00%
Hanson	319	304	619	3	Moderate	23.81%
Harding	89	88	160	1	Minimal	0.00%
Hughes	2073	1952	5767	28	Substantial	4.76%
Hutchinson	711	667	2082	18	Substantial	13.21%

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 9 of 93

Hyde	133	130	371	1	Minimal	0.00%
Jackson	267	247	859	11	Minimal	27.27%
Jerauld	265	242	504	15	Minimal	15.79%
Jones	70	65	187	0	Minimal	11.11%
Kingsbury	552	509	1456	13	Substantial	8.11%
Lake	1065	989	2829	16	Substantial	30.19%
Lawrence	2634	2502	7657	29	Substantial	11.54%
Lincoln	7030	6582	17841	68	Substantial	19.26%
Lyman	548	506	1725	9	Moderate	16.67%
Marshall	266	247	1029	4	Moderate	4.00%
McCook	699	647	1423	22	Substantial	29.31%
McPherson	195	180	503	2	Moderate	2.94%
Meade	2326	2186	6833	24	Substantial	20.97%
Mellette	225	216	665	2	Minimal	10.34%
Miner	235	207	506	7	Moderate	9.52%
Minnehaha	25774	24254	69235	281	Substantial	16.11%
Moody	552	512	1600	14	Substantial	24.44%
Oglala Lakota	1965	1845	6272	36	Substantial	16.17%
Pennington	11718	10888	34657	142	Substantial	20.97%
Perkins	298	260	689	11	Substantial	18.92%
Potter	324	294	732	3	Moderate	8.57%
Roberts	1050	921	3792	32	Substantial	19.55%
Sanborn	310	297	623	3	Minimal	40.00%
Spink	718	663	1889	24	Substantial	10.20%
Stanley	286	272	796	2	Substantial	6.52%
Sully	121	104	252	3	Moderate	10.00%
Todd	1183	1134	3885	19	Substantial	8.37%
Tripp	638	610	1346	13	Substantial	12.12%
Turner	994	900	2414	49	Substantial	22.00%
Union	1678	1535	5510	30	Substantial	14.33%
Walworth	656	591	1648	14	Substantial	23.76%
Yankton	2570	2387	8391	26	Substantial	12.66%
Ziebach	315	258	709	8	Moderate	14.29%
Unassigned	0	0	2044	0		

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 10 of 93

South Dakota



AGE GROUP OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Age Range with Years	# of Cases	# of Deaths Among Cases
0-9 years	3880	0
10-19 years	11329	0
20-29 years	18629	4
30-39 years	16959	14
40-49 years	14701	28
50-59 years	14541	80
60-69 years	11664	195
70-79 years	6169	339
80+ years	4708	896

SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Sex	# of Cases	# of Deaths Among Cases
Female	53651	746
Male	48929	810

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 11 of 93

Brown County

New Confirmed Cases

15

New Probable Cases

4

Active Cases

284

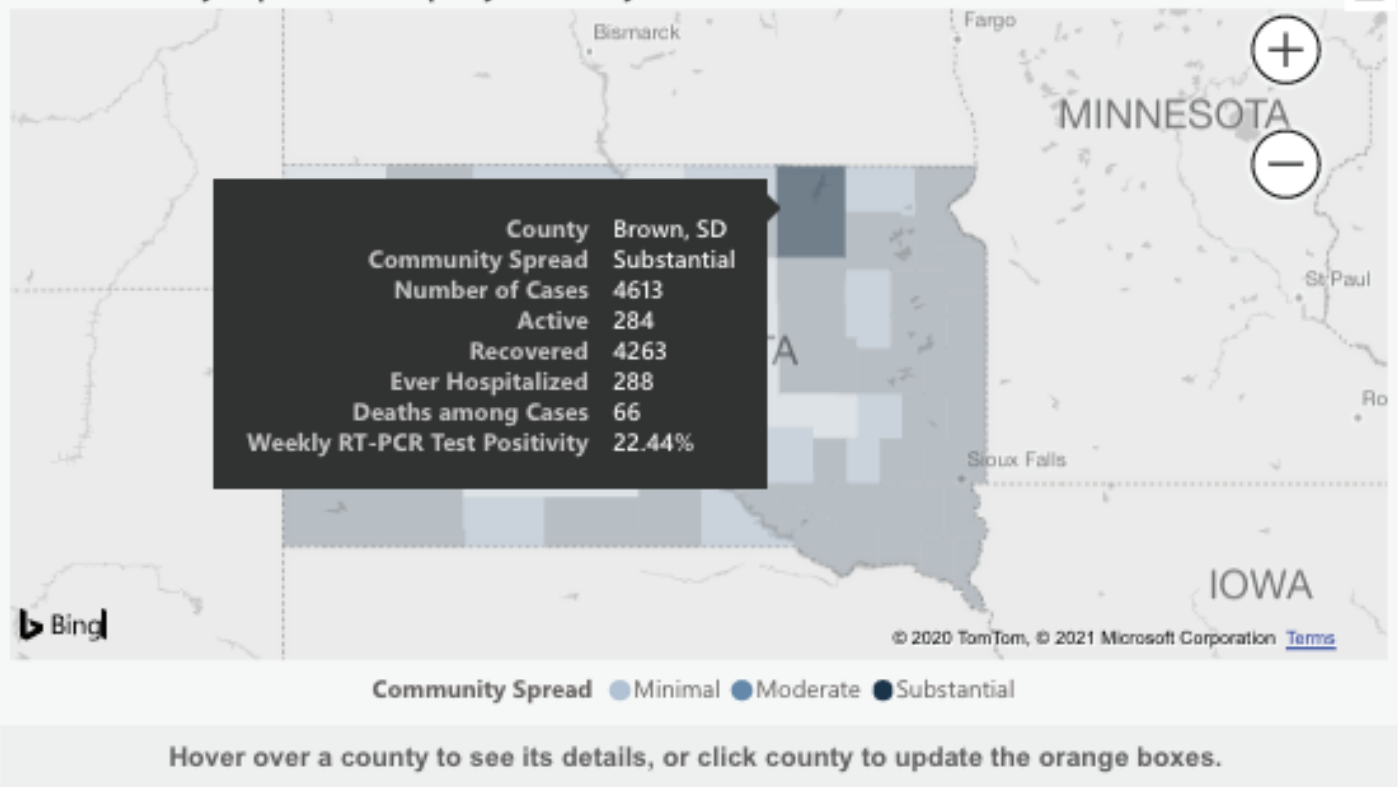
Recovered Cases

4,263

Currently Hospitalized

247

Community Spread Map by County of Residence



Total Confirmed Cases

4,264

Total Probable Cases

349

RT-PCR Test Positivity Rate, Last 1 Day

11.3%

Total Persons Tested

15,879

Total Tests

37,772

Ever Hospitalized

288

Deaths Among Cases

66

% Progress (November Goal: 44233 Tests)

402%

% Progress (December Goal: 44233 Tests)

346%

% Progress (January Goal: 44233 Tests)

60%

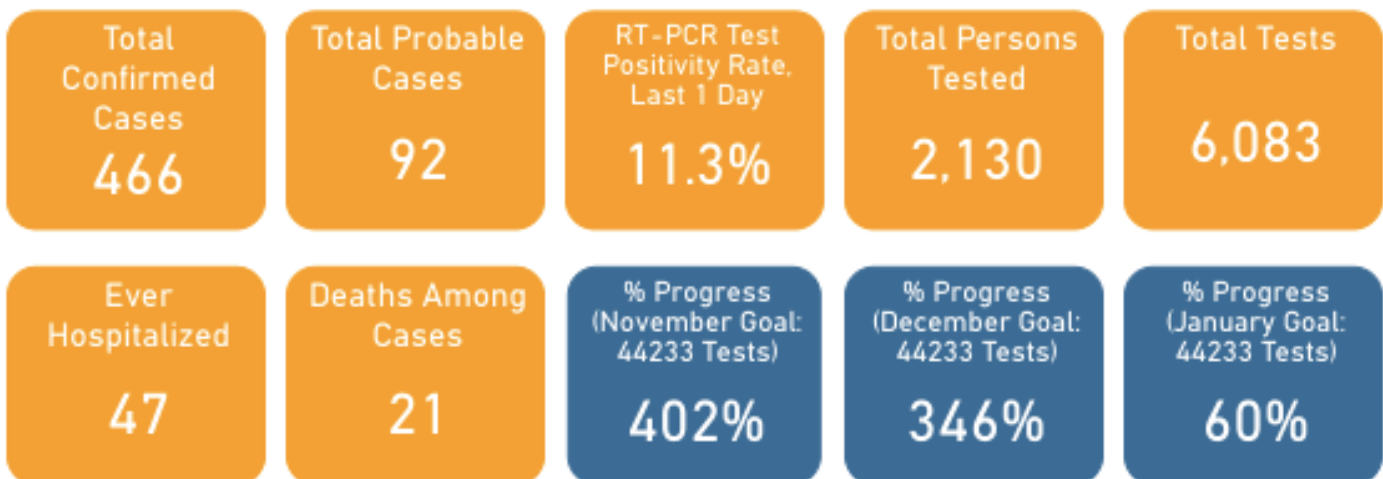
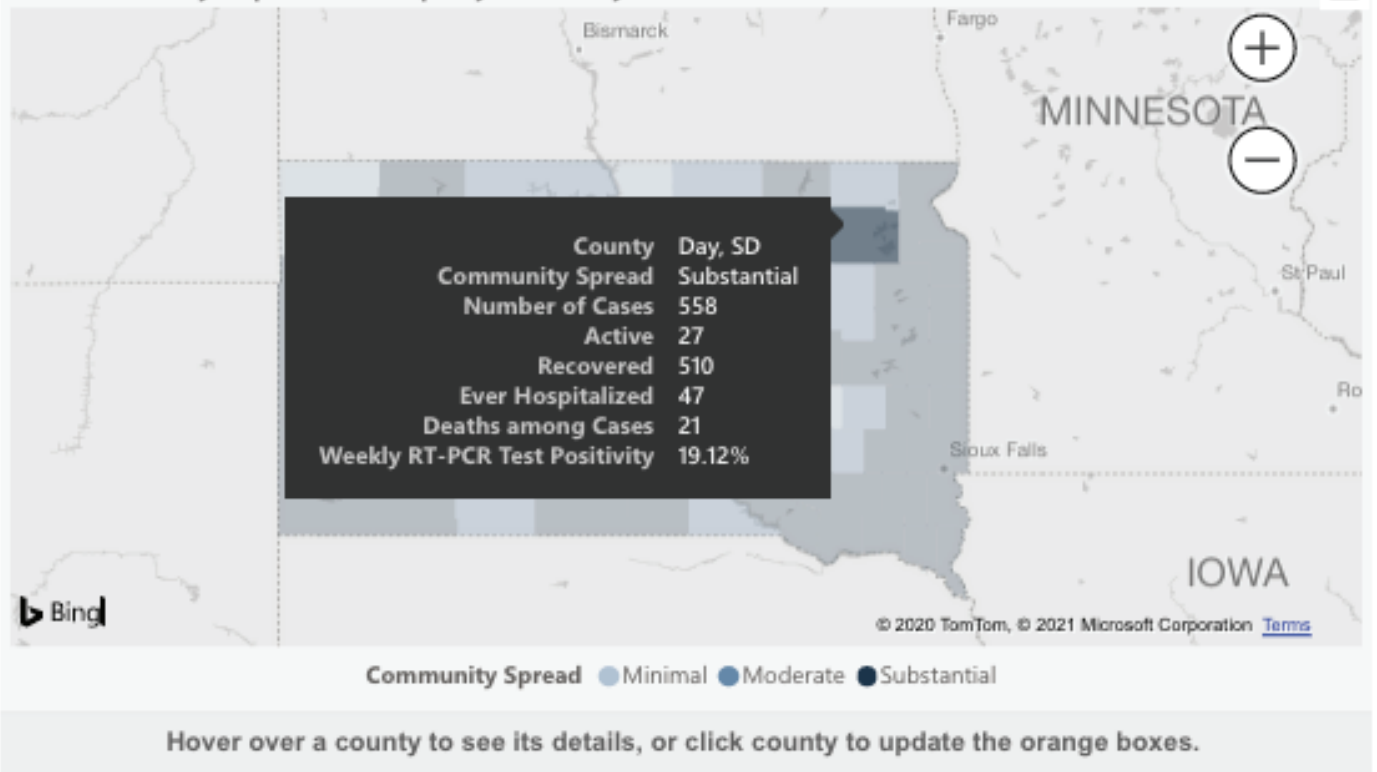
Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 12 of 93

Day County



Community Spread Map by County of Residence



Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 13 of 93

Vaccinations

Total Doses Administered

35,611

Total Persons Administered a Vaccine

33,644

Manufacturer	Number of Doses
Moderna	18,734
Pfizer	16,877

Doses	Number of Recipients
Moderna - 1 dose	18,734
Pfizer - 1 dose	12,943
Pfizer - 2 doses	1,067

County	# Doses	# Persons (1 dose)	# Persons (2 doses)	Total # Persons
Aurora	50	50	0	50
Beadle	771	469	151	620
Bennett*	44	42	1	43
Bon Homme*	293	289	2	291
Brookings	980	886	47	933
Brown	1656	1,650	3	1,653
Brule*	135	131	2	133
Buffalo*	3	3	0	3
Butte	63	61	1	62
Campbell	145	119	13	132
Charles Mix*	263	263	0	263
Clark	97	85	6	91
Clay	571	547	12	559
Codington*	1287	1,037	125	1,162
Corson*	10	8	1	9
Custer*	214	200	7	207
Davison	941	927	7	934
Day*	223	217	3	220
Deuel	156	138	9	147
Dewey*	56	54	1	55
Douglas*	125	125	0	125
Edmunds	113	113	0	113
Fall River*	157	155	1	156
Faulk	31	29	1	30
Grant*	321	315	3	318
Gregory*	198	196	1	197
Haakon*	80	80	0	80

Groton Daily Independent

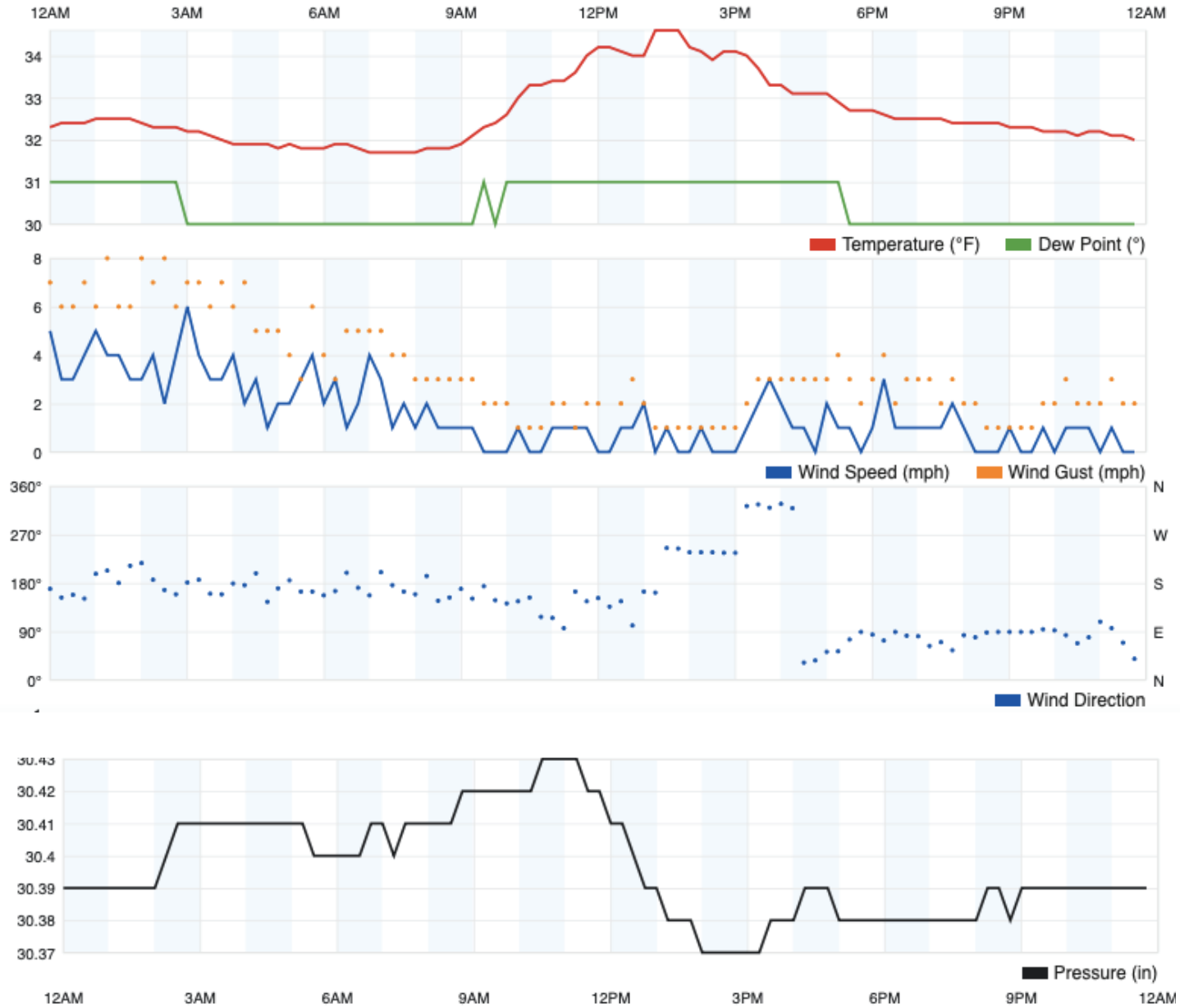
Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 14 of 93

Hamlin	176	152	12	164
Hand	135	119	8	127
Hanson	53	53	0	53
Harding	0	0	0	0
Hughes*	677	667	5	672
Hutchinson*	475	469	3	472
Hyde*	92	92	0	92
Jackson*	38	38	0	38
Jerauld	69	63	3	66
Jones*	34	34	0	34
Kingsbury	243	203	20	223
Lake	438	226	106	332
Lawrence	277	263	7	270
Lincoln	4226	3,770	228	3,998
Lyman*	51	51	0	51
Marshall*	121	119	1	120
McCook	218	198	10	208
McPherson	19	19	0	19
Meade*	458	354	52	406
Mellette*	4	4	0	4
Miner	80	68	6	74
Minnehaha	11060	10,078	491	10,569
Moody*	175	169	3	172
Oglala Lakota*	11	5	3	8
Pennington*	3361	2,421	470	2,891
Perkins*	30	30	0	30
Potter	75	73	1	74
Roberts*	201	193	4	197
Sanborn	81	77	2	79
Spink	398	388	5	393
Stanley*	95	91	2	93
Sully	25	19	3	22
Todd*	14	14	0	14
Tripp*	221	221	0	221
Turner	477	459	9	468
Union	164	156	4	160
Walworth*	274	152	61	213
Yankton	1053	1,047	3	1,050
Ziebach*	9	9	0	9
Other	1020	924	48	972

Groton Daily Independent






Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 15 of 93

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 16 of 93

Today	Tonight	Sunday	Sunday Night	Monday
				
Slight Chance Wintry Mix and Patchy Fog	Decreasing Clouds	Patchy Fog then Mostly Sunny	Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny
High: 33 °F	Low: 21 °F	High: 34 °F	Low: 20 °F	High: 36 °F

Today

January 9, 2021

Cloudy. Fog, light snow,
drizzle possible




H: 30-36°
L: 20-26°

Sunday

January 10, 2021

Sunshine to make an
appearance?

H: 30-42°
L: 18-24°

 NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE
OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION  

www.weather.gov/abr
1/9/2021 5:41 AM

The weekend begins like the work-week ended, with cloudy skies and potential light precipitation and/or fog. Continue to travel with caution in case of slick spots through tonight. By Sunday afternoon, clouds should begin to give way to at least some sunshine.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 17 of 93

Today in Weather History

January 9, 1982: Winds of 20 to 40 mph accompanied by 1 to 3 inches of snow created ground blizzard conditions and extreme wind chills from the 9th through mid-afternoon on the 12th. There were two deaths from the exposure that were attributed to the storm, including a 69-year old Scotland woman and a woman from Veblen in Marshall County. Both tried to walk after their vehicles stalled. Near zero visibilities and snowdrifts to 5 feet high forced closures of numerous highways. Also, minor power outages were reported.

January 9, 1997: A powerful Alberta Clipper and a deep Arctic High brought widespread and prolonged blizzard conditions, heavy drifting snow, and dangerous wind chills of 40 to 80 below to central and northeast South Dakota as well as west-central Minnesota. North winds were from 30 to 50 mph gusting to 60 mph. The clipper dropped from 2 to 7 inches of snowfall on top of an already solid 2 to 5-foot snowpack. As with previous storms, most roads again became blocked by huge snowdrifts. As a result of the blockage and the blizzard conditions, both Interstates 29 and 90 closed along with all state highways leaving hundreds of people stranded to wait out the storm. This winter has been the worst for road closings. Many people became stuck in snowdrifts or went off the road because of low visibility, and had to be rescued. One dramatic rescue near Webster, involving tens of rescue workers, occurred after a woman was stranded in her vehicle for nearly 40 hours. A couple with a one-year-old was rescued after spending a night in their car, and they were unharmed. A Wakpala woman died from carbon monoxide poisoning in her stalled pickup on Highway 1806 near Wakpala. Emergency personnel had a tough time responding to emergencies. Some emergencies took up to several hours to go short distances. A rural Leola man died when emergency workers could not get to him in time. In McLaughlin, seven people had to be taken by air ambulance, because there was no way out.

All area schools were closed the 9th and 10th with most schools at this point in the winter season missing over 7 days. A state record was set when Faulkton School had closed for its 13th day. Mail was delayed, and area airports had flight delays or were closed. Many businesses were also closed and were suffering from economic losses as a result of this storm and previous storms because customers could not get to them. Many grocery stores ran low or out of bread, milk, and other food necessities. There were some power outages across the area but were not widespread. The power was out at Isabel, Timber Lake, and Firesteel, for as much as 8 hours. The power outage in Isabel resulted in extensive water pipe breaks at the Isabel School. Willow Lake was without power for over 2 days. Some homes across the area were also without heat for several days in the bitter cold. The majority of ranchers were unable to access feed for cattle, sheep, and hogs. As a result of the extreme conditions and lack of food, over fifty thousand livestock died. Also, many livestock suffered frostbite and were significantly weakened. There were also a lot of wildlife and pheasants killed. As a result, the Emergency Feed Grain Donation Program was activated for the ranchers. One rancher said that he had been ranching in this area for 34 years and had never lost cattle before. Also, some dairy farmers had to dump their milk because trucks could not get them in time.

Some people were trapped in their homes up to several days as snowdrifts buried their homes and blocked the roads, with some people having to crawl out their windows. In Wilmot, a 12-foot drift covered the community home, where residents had to turn the lights on during the day. As a result of snow removal budget depletions and other storm damages, President Clinton declared all of the counties a disaster area. Snowplows from Iowa, Nebraska, and plows and manpower from the South Dakota National Guard helped to break through hundreds of roads. The snowdrifts in some places were packed so hard and were measured at 300 pounds per square inch. Some longtime residents said this has been the worst winter they had seen in their lifetimes. The total damage estimate for this January blizzard and for the previous January winter storm is 50 million dollars. This includes the added snow removal costs, livestock losses, building damages, and other economic losses.

1880: A rapidly deepening low-pressure system produced powerful winds along the Pacific Northwest coast. While wind measurements were limited, there were widespread reports of wind damage.

Groton Daily Independent

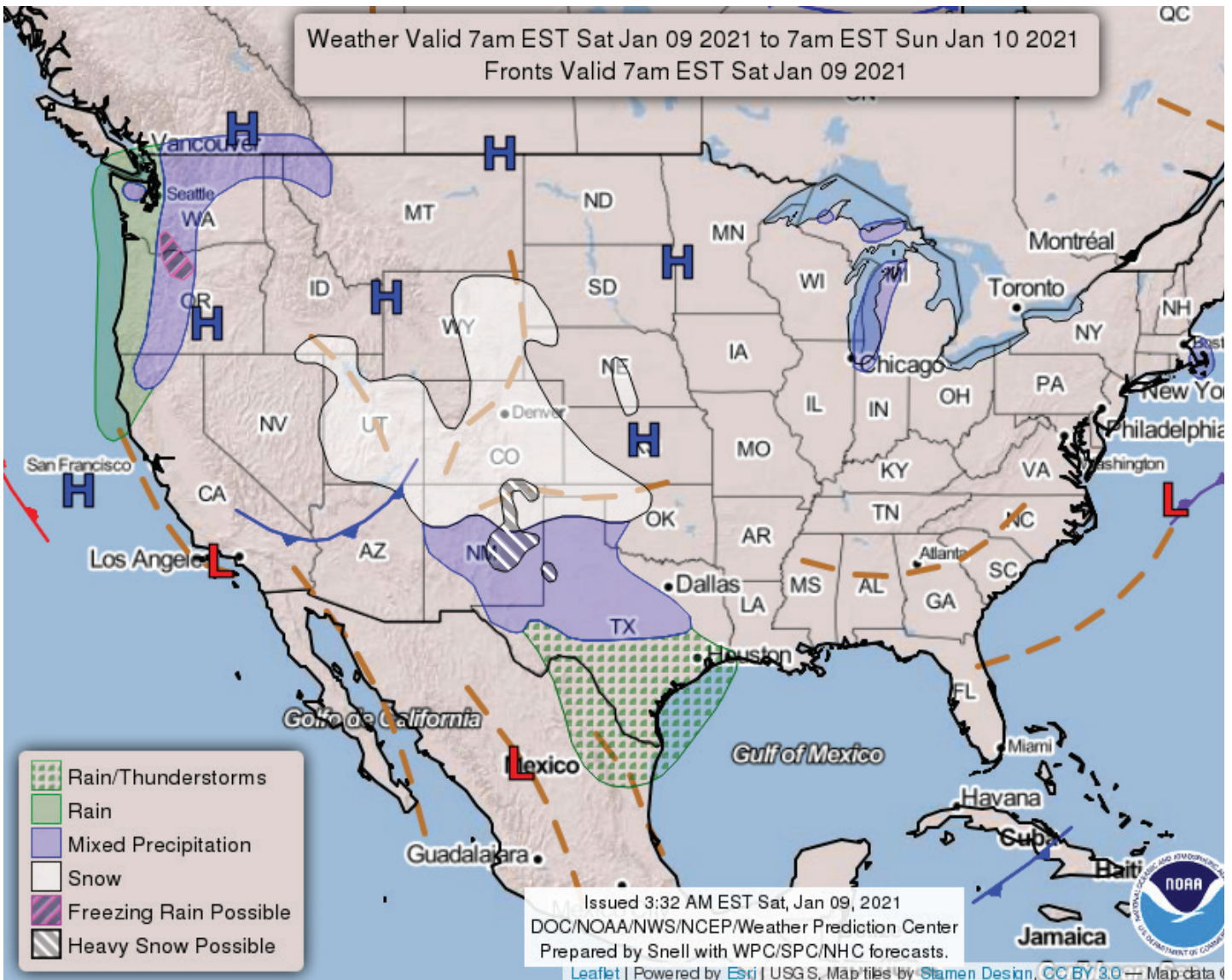
Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 18 of 93

Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 35 °F at 1:22 PM
Low Temp: 32 °F at 7:39 AM
Wind: 8 mph at 1:10 AM
Precip:

Today's Info

Record High: 53° in 2012
Record Low: -31 in 1977, 2010
Average High: 22°F
Average Low: 1°F
Average Precip in Jan.: 0.14
Precip to date in Jan.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 0.14
Precip Year to Date: 0.00
Sunset Tonight: 5:10 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:12 a.m.



Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 19 of 93



FIRST THINGS FIRST

"He who runs from God in the morning," said Paul Bunyan, the author of Pilgrims Progress, "will scarcely find Him the rest of the day." In other words, if we want to sense the presence of God, the guidance of God, and the strength of God throughout every minute of every hour of every day, we must begin each day with God.

Rarely do we begin any day without some idea of the things we intend to do or where we plan to go or what is expected of us. And although we may not go through a formal planning process when we establish priorities and allocate certain amounts of time for each of them, we have some idea of what we are going to face and do.

That is why David, in his infinite wisdom that came from God said, "Listen to my voice in the morning, Lord. Each morning I bring my requests to you and wait expectantly!"

How presumptuous of Christians who profess to depend on God to make plans without Him, set goals that exclude Him, or make decisions without His advice. Beginning each morning with God and presenting our "agenda" to Him for His guidance and blessing is the proper thing to do. When we offer our thoughts and plans to God and seek His direction, we are saying to Him: "Lord, what I face today may be beyond me, but it is not beyond You."

"Therefore, I need You to be with me in everything I do, to walk with me wherever I go, and to put Your words in my mouth before I speak. Oh – and also give me victory over temptations."

Prayer: Help us, Father, to realize how inadequate we are to face life without Your guidance. May we seek You before we need you and trust in You at all times. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Listen to my voice in the morning, Lord. Each morning I bring my requests to you and wait expectantly. Psalm 5:3

News from the Associated Press

COVID-19 subsidies could mean high income levels for farmers

By REBEKAH TUCHSCHERER Sioux Falls Argus Leader

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota farmers could have what many would consider a successful bottom line for 2020, a fact that's, ironically, thanks to COVID-19.

Net farm income is expected to reach just shy of \$120 billion in the U.S., its highest point since 2013 and a more than 43% increase from 2019, according to data from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). However, a substantial amount of that increase is attributed to subsidies.

Direct government payments for farmers more than doubled from 2019 to 2020, increasing from \$22.4 billion to a forecasted \$46.5 billion, according to the USDA.

All in all, that \$46.5 billion makes up nearly 40% of forecasted net farm income.

In 2019, about 39% of South Dakota farmers' net income was funded by direct payments. Farm income data is not yet available on a state-by-state basis for 2020, the Sioux Falls Argus Leader reported.

While direct farm payments were common from the late '90s until about 2009, federal institutions have largely switched to crop insurance programs to support farmers in a more sustainable fashion, Evert Van der Sluis, a professor of agricultural economics at South Dakota State University, said.

"There's a widespread expectation that these payments are not sustainable, either financially, economically or politically," Van der Sluis said. "It's highly likely they're not going to last. But, nobody can see into the future."

Where did the direct payments come from?

By far, the largest increase in these subsidies stems from supplemental and ad hoc disaster assistance, which includes payments from the first two rounds of Coronavirus Food Assistance Programs (CFAP 1 and CFAP 2) and loans from the Small Business Administration's Paycheck Protection Program (PPP).

CFAP was implemented to help offset COVID-19-related losses and included an estimated \$10 billion in round one and \$14 billion in round two. The most recent \$900 billion Coronavirus relief package includes \$13 billion for farmers that will be distributed in a third round.

So far, South Dakota has received about \$551 million in CFAP payments, according to data from the USDA. Cattle and corn producers received the majority of those funds, at a combined \$356 million, but soybean and pig farmers also received substantial amounts of direct payments.

Iowa farmers have received the highest amount of direct payments at total of about \$1.14 billion.

Why do farmers need these payments?

According to Van der Sluis, crop and livestock farmers were both facing financial difficulties, but for different reasons as COVID-19 spread through the U.S.

Crop producers were already facing a slump in grain prices, partially because of trade wars that began prior to COVID-19. Livestock farmers — particularly swine and poultry producers — were occasionally forced to euthanize their animals because of disruptions in the supply chain. This included both meat processing plants stalling production and people eating more often at home than at restaurants.

"Consumers were shifting their purchases," Van der Sluis said. "The supply system wasn't set up to make that instant switch."

Net income data for South Dakota farmers is currently being collected, according to Erik Gerlach, a state statistician with South Dakota's USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service field office.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 21 of 93

Friday's Scores

By The Associated Press

BOYS BASKETBALL=

Aberdeen Central 60, Rapid City Central 57

Alcester-Hudson 48, Menno 38

Brandon Valley 54, Brookings 30

Bridgewater-Emery 67, Freeman 42

Burke 50, Centerville 45

Chadron, Neb. 53, Belle Fourche 40

DeSmet 55, Arlington 16

Dell Rapids St. Mary 77, Estelline/Hendricks 52

Deubrook 57, Lake Preston 50

Ethan 49, Wessington Springs 38

Faulkton 51, Hitchcock-Tulare 43

Florence/Henry 72, Wilmot 30

Gayville-Volin 52, Irene-Wakonda 51

Hill City 69, Edgemont 62

Jones County 44, Philip 40

Langford 53, Herreid/Selby Area 32

Lennox 51, Sioux City, North, Iowa 33

New Underwood 48, Lead-Deadwood 42

Northwestern 50, Britton-Hecla 37

Oldham-Ramona/Rutland 49, Colman-Egan 40

Rapid City Christian 81, Shiloh Christian, N.D. 67

Rapid City Stevens 53, Pierre 40

Redfield 59, Deuel 50

Sioux Falls Christian 67, Watertown 56

Sioux Falls Washington 76, Sioux Falls Roosevelt 69

Tea Area 70, Madison 43

Vermillion 53, Parkston 20

Wagner 82, Bon Homme 56

Yankton 63, Sioux Falls Lincoln 45

Big East Conference Tournament=

Consolation Semifinal=

Beresford 59, Garretson 49

Flandreau 82, Baltic 61

Semifinal=

Chester 53, McCook Central/Montrose 50

Sioux Valley 63, Parker 39

GIRLS BASKETBALL=

Aberdeen Central 51, Rapid City Central 40

Belle Fourche 53, Chadron, Neb. 33

Brandon Valley 60, Brookings 46

Burke 53, Centerville 47

Ethan 54, Wessington Springs 26

Faith 54, Bowman County, N.D. 50

Herreid/Selby Area 60, Langford 16

Highmore-Harrold 47, Sully Buttes 37

Irene-Wakonda 45, Gayville-Volin 39

Iroquois 52, Sunshine Bible Academy 17

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 22 of 93

McCook Central/Montrose 57, Beresford 28
Menno 55, Alcester-Hudson 32
New Underwood 53, Lead-Deadwood 29
Rapid City Stevens 59, Pierre 40
Redfield 54, Deuel 18
Sisseton 56, Groton Area 45
St. Thomas More 65, Sioux Falls Washington 60
Vermillion 50, Parkston 43
Wagner 61, Bon Homme 55
Webster 53, Britton-Hecla 25

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 Friday:

Mega Millions

03-06-16-18-58, Mega Ball: 11, Megaplier: 2

(three, six, sixteen, eighteen, fifty-eight; Mega Ball: eleven; Megaplier: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$520 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$470 million

Wilson lifts S. Dakota St. over W. Illinois 83-77

BROOKINGS, S.D. (AP) — Douglas Wilson had 22 points as South Dakota State topped Western Illinois 83-77 on Friday night.

Luke Appel had 16 points for South Dakota State (7-3, 3-1 Summit League). Baylor Scheierman added 16 points and nine rebounds. Alex Arians had 10 points.

Adam Anhold had 16 points and nine rebounds for the Leathernecks (2-8, 0-3), whose losing streak reached four games. Ramean Hinton added 13 points. Justin Brookens had 12 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>

Umude carries South Dakota over UM Kansas City 66-64

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — Stanley Umude had 18 points and six rebounds as South Dakota held off UM Kansas City 66-64 on Friday night.

A.J. Plitzuweit had 14 points and seven rebounds for South Dakota (5-6, 4-2 Summit League), which won its fourth straight game.

South Dakota totaled 26 second-half points, a season low for the team.

Brandon McKissic had 19 points for the Roos (5-7, 1-2). Marvin Nesbitt Jr. added 13 points and 12 rebounds. Josiah Allick had 11 points.

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

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Noem issues order to direct lawsuit against recreational pot

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem issued an executive order Friday to officially direct a lawsuit challenging a voter-approved constitutional amendment to legalize recreational marijuana.

The order ensures that Highway Patrol Superintendent Col. Rick Miller has legal standing to sue in an effort to overturn the constitutional amendment because he was acting on behalf of the Republican governor. Lawyers defending the constitutional amendment had argued Miller did not have legal standing and asked a South Dakota judge to dismiss the case.

Noem had opposed measures to legalize marijuana, but voters in November passed a pair of measures legalizing recreational and medical pot. The constitutional amendment that legalized recreational pot passed with 54% of the vote. It also legalized medical marijuana and hemp.

But Miller, along with Pennington County Sheriff Kevin Thom, are arguing the amendment violates the state constitution by not following rules that constitutional amendments address a single subject. Broader revisions to the state constitution need to be approved through a constitutional convention.

Attorney General Jason Ravnsborg's office and a group of citizens who spearheaded the campaigns backed by pro-marijuana groups are defending the constitutional amendment that would go into effect on July 1. They argue the amendment deals with one subject: Cannabis.

Pot, virus and surplus mark South Dakota legislative session

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Determined to defy the coronavirus, the South Dakota Legislature will convene for its 96th session on Tuesday in Pierre, where lawmakers will settle a state budget flush with one-time money from federal coronavirus funds, as well as figure what to make of voter-initiated measures to legalize both medical and recreational marijuana. But the biggest challenge for lawmakers may be in carrying out their duties while trying to avoid virus infections.

Chamber floors will feature plexiglass dividers, mask-wearing rules and rapid testing for lawmakers with COVID-19 symptoms are in the works, and committee meetings are expected to use remote participation. But all 105 lawmakers, in addition to a cast of staff, lobbyists and visitors, are expected in the Capitol at some point.

Republicans, with supermajorities in both the House and Senate, were set on holding an as-close-to-normal session as possible amid the pandemic, though many lawmakers acknowledged the day-to-day business of formulating state laws would undoubtedly be changed by the pandemic. The legislature is trying to avoid crowded committee-meeting rooms, close-up conversations with lobbyists and members of the public, and ultimately, a virus outbreak that cripples the session.

That may be difficult. A handful of infections surfaced among lawmakers after they gathered for Gov. Kristi Noem's budget address last month and the Statehouse is already notorious for breeding what's known as the "Capitol crud," the hacking cough that seems to spread among lawmakers and lobbyists every year.

"We're just a regular petri dish of diseases in a good year," said Sen. Lee Schoenbeck, a Republican from Watertown who is the incoming Senate pro tem, responsible for overseeing the conduct of the Senate.

After Noem delivers her State of the State address Tuesday, one of the first orders of business for lawmakers will be to pass rules for the session. In the Senate, legislative leaders are proposing masks be required. In the House, the proposal is that masks are "encouraged, but not required." And rules may allow lawmakers to vote and attend remotely, but only under certain circumstances, such as a COVID-19 infection, exposure, or underlying health conditions.

Once the rules and precautions are settled, here are some of the most pressing issues lawmakers will tackle during the two-month session:

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 24 of 93

ONE-TIME FUNDS

Thanks to Noem's administration using federal aid to offset state expenses tied to the pandemic and a \$19 million budget surplus, legislators get to decide what to do with over \$200 million in a one-time surplus.

Incoming Senate Majority Leader Gary Cammack, a Union Center Republican, said the funds were likely "unprecedented in the history of South Dakota."

Noem would like to send the bulk of that to expanding broadband internet access in the state, with a \$100 million proposal. She would also like to see the Legislature match a \$50 million donation from First Premier Bank and T. Denny Sanford to create a needs-based scholarship endowment. But lawmakers said they are eyeing projects across the state, from improving road infrastructure to expanding slaughterhouses.

"Everybody's going to be there wanting a piece of the pie," Cammack said. "That's not a bad thing, that's just how it goes."

THE PANDEMIC

With the coronavirus still spreading, lawmakers will be keeping an eye on how vaccinations are proceeding and how the virus disrupts life and business. Republican lawmakers are formulating a bill to shield businesses from liability if an employee or customer believes they became infected at a business, as long as the business was not aware of the coronavirus infection.

Meanwhile, the state will likely have millions of dollars left from the \$1.25 billion it received from the federal government last year to address the pandemic. The state has spent about \$670 million of that so far, and a significant amount will also go out the door by the end of the month to grants for small businesses. But the Legislature will still get a say in spending the rest. Lawmakers have floated ideas including another round of grants for businesses and helping with funeral expenses for those who have died from COVID-19.

MARIJUANA

Voters passed a pair of measures in November that gave the conservative-dominated legislature an agenda item that would otherwise be of little interest in the Capitol: Pot.

Lawmakers must set regulations for a medical marijuana program. Recognizing that the proposal to legalize medical marijuana passed easily in November, Republican lawmakers have said they will not subvert the will of the people, though they want to make sure the program is only available for medical purposes.

Meanwhile, a lawsuit challenging a voter-passed constitutional amendment legalizing recreational marijuana will proceed through the courts during the session. Incoming House Majority Leader Kent Peterson, a Salem Republican, said this could complicate how lawmakers tackle the issue.

The closely watched recreational pot case is likely to eventually make its way to the state Supreme Court, though that would be unlikely until after the session, Cammack said.

MORE WOMEN, FEWER DEMOCRATS

The incoming class of lawmakers has the largest number of women to serve in the Legislature, with 30 women taking seats in the Capitol.

"Women bring a little bit of a different perspective to every issue," said Marli Wiese, a Madison Republican who will join legislative leadership as a whip. "I'm a mom and a grandmom first and foremost."

Peterson, the House majority leader, credited Noem, the state's first woman to serve as governor, for helping create a groundswell of women running for state office. The number of women will grow by four from the last legislature.

Meanwhile, Democrats saw their numbers shrink to the lowest in over 60 years, holding just 11 seats between both chambers. But House Minority Leader Jamie Smith said they will play an important role in the Legislature, speaking up for people who are "under-represented" in the state. They will also push for further pay raises for teachers, state employees, and health care providers at government-funded programs.

He also hoped the session would be marked with a return to respectful debate after tensions across the state have sometimes skyrocketed amid the pandemic and election.

"I don't know if I'm old-fashioned to believe that can be true," he said.

Broton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 25 of 93

South Dakota reports 12 virus deaths, vaccination progress

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota reported 12 deaths among people with COVID-19 on Friday, but the state continued to see declining hospitalizations from the virus and progress in administering vaccinations.

The number of hospitalizations declined to 247, the lowest level in recent months. Health officials also reported 448 more people had tested positive for the coronavirus. Over the last two weeks, the average number of daily cases has declined by 11%, according to Johns Hopkins researchers.

The Department of Health has also recorded one of the nation's highest percentages of people vaccinated against COVID-19, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. As of Friday, a total of 33,644 people had received at least their first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, representing nearly 4% of the population.

However, the state has also experienced the nation's seventh-highest rate of deaths per capita, according to Johns Hopkins. A total of 1,556 people have died after contracting COVID-19.

Hospitality owner receives \$309,000 grant, owes back taxes

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Records show a South Dakota motel and hotel owner has received a federal coronavirus small business relief grant of more than \$300,000 and still owes thousands of dollars in back taxes on his properties.

KELO-TV reports AG Dakota, owned by Alan Gross, of Covina, California, once owned 20 motels across the state, but now is down to two properties, the Wagner Lakeside Motel in Wagner and America's Best Value Inn & Suites hotel in Clear Lake.

About a year ago, AG Dakota owed at least \$72,000 in back taxes for at least eight motels in South Dakota. Gross says he has worked out payments with his vendors and that his property taxes are up to date.

Records show the company has just received a small business grant of roughly \$309,000 from the federal CARES Act.

Gross says he plans to use the grant money to remodel the Wagner Lakeside Motel and pay off his bills more quickly. He said that at one point last fall, business at that motel was down 70 percent.

Records show AG Dakota still owes \$14,590 in back taxes in Deuel County, where its Clear Lake hotel is located and about \$10,600 in Charles Mix County, where the Wagner motel is located.

AG Dakota also owns roughly \$17,000 in back taxes in Edmunds and McCook counties where he used to own properties, KELO-TV reported.

Gross did not immediately return a message from The Associated Press for further comment.

Landslide closes scenic road in Badlands National Park

WALL, S.D. (AP) — A scenic road in Badlands National Park has been closed because of a 300-foot long landslide, officials said.

The park's acting maintenance chief Ken Thompson says Sage Creek Rim Road is closed from Highway 240 south of Wall and west about 6.5 miles (10.46 kilometers).

The landslide was discovered on Jan. 5 by a maintenance crew conducting an assessment of the road, Thompson said.

Crews are planning to re-open the dirt road by moving its width further to the north, away from the landslide and onto more stable ground. The emergency solution is expected to be completed within two weeks, the Rapid City Journal reported.

Federal highway engineers will survey the area for road realignment as a more long-term solution.

Gates have been put up to prevent people from driving on the road, but cyclist and hikers are free to enter, Thompson said.

Indonesia jet carrying 62 goes missing on domestic flight

By NINIEK KARMINI and EDNA TARIGAN Associated Press

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP) — A Sriwijaya Air jet carrying 62 people lost contact with air traffic controllers minutes after taking off from Indonesia's capital on a domestic flight on Saturday, and debris found by fishermen was being examined to see if it was from the missing plane, officials said.

Transportation Minister Budi Karya Sumadi said Flight SJ182 was delayed for an hour before it took off at 2:36 p.m. The Boeing 737-500 disappeared from radar four minutes later, after the pilot contacted air traffic control to ascend to an altitude of 29,000 feet (8,839 meters), he said.

The airline said in a statement that the plane was on an estimated 90-minute flight from Jakarta to Pontianak, the capital of West Kalimantan province on Indonesia's Borneo island. The plane was carrying 50 passengers and 12 crew members, all Indonesian nationals, including six extra crew for another trip.

Sumadi said a dozen vessels, including four warships, were deployed in a search-and-rescue operation centered between Lancang island and Laki island, part of the Thousand Islands chain just north of Jakarta.

Bambang Suryo Aji, the National Search and Rescue Agency's deputy head of operations and preparedness, said rescuers collected plane debris and clothes that were found by fishermen. They handed the items over to the National Transportation Safety Committee for further investigation to determine whether they were from the missing plane.

A commander of one of the search-and-rescue ships who goes by a single name, Eko, said that fishermen found cables and pieces of metal in the water.

"The fishermen told us that they found them shortly after they heard an explosion like the sound of thunder," Eko was quoted by TVOne as saying, adding that aviation fuel was found in the location where the fishermen found the debris.

Aji said no radio beacon signal had been detected from the 26-year-old plane. He said his agency was investigating why the plane's emergency locator transmitter, or ELT, was not transmitting a signal that could confirm whether it had crashed.

"The satellite system owned by neighboring Australia also did not pick up on the ELT signal from the missing plane," Aji said.

Solihin, 22, a fisherman from Lancang Island, said he and two other fishermen heard an explosion around 30 meter from them.

"We thought it was a bomb or a tsunami since after that we saw the big splash from the water after the explosion. It was raining heavily and the weather was so bad. So it is difficult to see around clearly. But we can see the splash and a big wave after the sounds. We were very shocked and directly saw the plane debris and the fuel around our boat," he said.

Tracking service Flightradar24 said on its Twitter feed that Flight SJ182 lost more than 10,000 feet (3,048 meters) of altitude in less than a minute, about four minutes after takeoff.

Sriwijaya Air President Director Jefferson Irwin Jauwena said the plane was airworthy. He told reporters that the plane had previously flown to Pontianak and Pangkal Pinang city on the same day.

"Maintenance report said everything went well and airworthy," Jauwena told a news conference. He said the plane was delayed due to bad weather, not because of any damage.

It was raining at Jakarta's Soekarno-Hatta International Airport when the plane took off for Pontianak, around 740 kilometers (460 miles) away.

Television footage showed relatives and friends of people aboard the plane weeping, praying and hugging each other as they waited at airports in Jakarta and Pontianak.

Chicago-based Boeing said on its Twitter feed that it was aware of the incident. It said it was closely monitoring the situation and "working to gather more information."

The twin-engine, single aisle Boeing 737 is one of the world's most popular planes for short and medium-haul flights. The 737-500 is a shorter version of the widely used 737 model. Airlines began using this type of plane in the 1990s, with production ending two decades ago.

Sriwijaya began operations in 2003 and flies to more than 50 destinations in Indonesia and a handful of

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 27 of 93

nearby countries, according to its website. Its fleet includes a variety of 737 variants as well as the regional ATR 72 twin-engine turboprop plane.

The airline has had a solid safety record until now, with no onboard casualties in four incidents recorded on the Aviation Safety Network database, though a farmer was killed when a Boeing 737-200 left the runway in 2008 following a hydraulic problem.

Indonesia, the world's largest archipelago nation, with more than 260 million people, has been plagued by transportation accidents on land, sea and air because of overcrowding on ferries, aging infrastructure and poorly enforced safety standards.

In October 2018, a Boeing 737 MAX 8 jet operated by Lion Air plunged into the Java Sea just minutes after taking off from Jakarta, killing all 189 people on board. The plane involved in Saturday's incident did not have the automated flight-control system that played a role in the Lion Air crash and another crash of a 737 MAX 8 jet in Ethiopia five months later, leading to the grounding of the MAX 8 for 20 months.

The Lion Air crash was Indonesia's worst airline disaster since 1997, when 234 people were killed on a Garuda airlines flight near Medan on Sumatra island. In December 2014, an AirAsia flight from the Indonesian city of Surabaya to Singapore plunged into the sea, killing 162 people.

Indonesian airlines were previously banned from flying to the United States and European Union for not meeting international safety standards. Both have since lifted the ban, citing improvement in aviation safety and greater compliance with international standards.

California is desperate, but volunteer health corps dwindles

By DON THOMPSON Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — California desperately needs more medical workers at facilities swamped by coronavirus patients, but almost no help is coming from a volunteer program that Gov. Gavin Newsom created at the start of the pandemic. An army of 95,000 initially raised their hands, and just 14 are now working in the field.

Very few volunteers actually met qualifications for the California Health Corps, and only a tiny sliver have the high-level experience needed to help with the most serious virus cases that are stretching intensive care units to the limit.

"Unfortunately, it hasn't worked out, and the goal is laudable," said Stephanie Roberson, government relations director for the California Nurses Association.

Newsom formed the Health Corps in anticipation of the cascading crises that California and other states are now experiencing. COVID-19 infections, hospitalizations and intensive care needs are spiraling out of control in the most populous state just as the rest of the nation sees a surge, overwhelming the usual pool of traveling nurses.

Similarly, New York had more than 80,000 medical volunteers respond to a call for help early in the pandemic when it was a hot spot, and some were deployed. But hospitals more often turned to temporary workers to fill the gap, said Jean Moore, director of the Health Workforce Research Center at University at Albany.

Other states, including Illinois, Indiana and Pennsylvania, tried variations of recruiting volunteers with limited results.

"A volunteer corps assumes that it's pretty easy to slot people in," said Sean Clarke, executive vice dean and professor at New York University's Rory Meyers College of Nursing. "Figuring out how to do that still hasn't been fleshed out, I guess."

California officials say they need 3,000 temporary medical workers but had about one-third of those as of Thursday. As one result, hospitals are waiving the state's nurse-to-patient ratios, which can mean less care for critically ill patients.

Newsom had envisioned Health Corps volunteers helping fill in the gaps at health facilities. Those who qualified include retired or inactive doctors, nurses and respiratory care practitioners. Though they're volunteers, they're paid what the state calls competitive wages.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 28 of 93

Of the 95,000 who first expressed interest in the corps, only about a third had valid professional licenses and about 4,600 qualified. Only 850 actually then signed up, a number that has largely remained static despite the governor's repeated pleas to participate.

Some of the volunteers "don't have the training at the highest levels to be helpful right now," California Hospital Association spokesman David Simon said.

"It could just be that nurses know that this just might not be the safest place to work," Roberson said.

The state Emergency Medical Services Authority in June reported being overwhelmed with the initial crush of Health Corps applicants while employees were busy coordinating other urgent pandemic responses. The program itself proved confusing for local disaster coordinators, wrote Craig Johnson, chief of the authority's Disaster Medical Services Division.

Despite the shortfalls, the governor said the program "has been incredibly effective," with members having worked at more than 140 facilities statewide.

About 300 were sent to long-term care facilities early in the pandemic, 450 were used during the summer surge and 530 went to hospitals and skilled nursing facilities in the fall.

Corps spokesman Rodger Butler said some have worked in intensive care units and that the program will keep working "to fulfill unmet needs throughout the state."

The state has spent nearly \$2.1 million on the program, money it hopes to largely recoup from the federal government or private medical facilities that used corps members.

Dr. Charles Moore was one of those who first answered the call in April and May, preparing Sacramento's former Sleep Train Arena for what corps members were told there could be nearly 400 patients spilling over from hospitals.

Yet the arena's mission never seemed clearly defined, he said. It treated just nine patients over 10 weeks, and its staff of about 250 medical workers soon dwindled away.

Now, the state has reopened the arena and other facilities to help hospitals facing a tidal wave of coronavirus patients.

The retired internal physician has been in touch with a half-dozen fellow corps alumni and said none had been approached again other than through impersonal mass emails.

"If I got an email that said, 'Hey, we really have a need at such and such a location because of XYZ, could we convince you to become available?' I might consider that, but there hasn't been anything like that," Moore said.

Butler said the Health Corps' administrative employees "make direct appeals to individual staff via telephone and email on a daily basis." They conducted three large direct call campaigns in the last six months to gauge members' interest in continuing.

Emails, websites and social media also aim to recruit new members, and the state notifies health workers seeking work about the program.

Joanne Spetz, associate director of research at the Healthforce Center at the University of California, San Francisco, said the pool of available medical workers has shrunk since the pandemic's early days.

The initial flood of tens of thousands of applicants was spurred by "a sense of impending doom," she said.

But in the nine months since, medical students have resumed classes, health care workers at temporarily shuttered community clinics or outpatient facilities are mostly back at work, and retirees may have found less risky ways to contribute.

Traveling care providers who might have joined the volunteer effort are instead deployed in other hard-hit states that saw surges before California.

"You start adding up those demographic groups and your numbers dwindle down," Spetz said.

Many of the remaining Health Corps members might still be needed to help at facilities like Sleep Train Arena that are intended to handle an overflow of less critical patients, she said, "so having those individuals kind of on reserve is great."

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 29 of 93

Snow blizzard kills 4, brings much of Spain to a standstill

By ARITZ PARRA Associated Press

MADRID (AP) — A persistent blizzard has blanketed large parts of Spain with 50-year record levels of snow, killing at least four people and leaving thousands trapped in cars or in train stations and airports that had suspended all services as the snow kept falling on Saturday.

The bodies of a man and woman were recovered by the Andalucía region emergency service after their car was washed away by a flooded river near the town of Fuengirola. The Interior Ministry said a 54-year-old man was also found dead in Madrid under a big pile of snow. A homeless man died of hypothermia in the northern city of Zaragoza, the local police department reported.

More than half of Spain's provinces remained on alert Saturday afternoon, five of them on their highest level of warning, for Storm Filomena. In the capital, authorities activated the red alert for the first time since the system was adopted four decades ago and called in the military to rescue people from vehicles trapped on everything from small roads to the city's major thoroughfares.

More than 50 centimeters (20 inches) of snow fell in the capital. By 7 a.m. on Saturday, the AEMET national weather agency had recorded the highest 24-hour snowfall seen since 1971 in Madrid.

Sandra Morena, who became trapped late on Friday as she commuted to her night shift as a security guard in a shopping center, arrived home, on foot, after an army emergency unit helped her out on Saturday morning.

"It usually takes me 15 minutes but this time it has been 12 hours freezing, without food or water, crying with other people because we didn't know how we were going to get out of there," said Morena, 22.

"Snow can be very beautiful but spending the night trapped in a car because of it is no fun," she added.

AEMET had warned that some regions would be receiving more than 24 hours of continuous snowfall due to the odd combination of a cold air mass stagnant over the Iberian Peninsula and the arrival of the warmer Storm Filomena from the south.

The storm is expected to move northeast throughout Saturday but it is expected to be followed by a cold snap, the agency said.

Transport Minister José Luis Ábalos warned that "snow is going to turn into ice and we will enter a situation perhaps more dangerous than what we have at the moment."

He added that the priority was to assist those in need but also to ensure the supply chain for food and other basic goods.

"The storm has exceeded the most pessimistic forecasts we had," Ábalos added.

Carlos Novillo, head of the Madrid emergency agency, said that more than 1,000 vehicles had become trapped, mostly on the city's ring road and the main motorway that leads from the capital to the south, toward the Castilla La Mancha and Andalucía regions.

"The situation remains of high risk. This is a very complex phenomenon and a critical situation," Novillo said Saturday morning in a message posted on social media.

"We ask all those who remain trapped to be patient, we will get to you," he added.

Airport operator AENA said that the Adolfo Suárez Madrid-Barajas International Airport, the main gateway in and out of the country, would remain closed throughout the day after the blizzard bested machines and workers trying to keep the runways clear of snow.

All trains into and out of Madrid, both commuter routes and long-distance passenger trains, as well as railway lines between the south and the northeast of the country, were suspended, railway operator Renfe said.

The storm had caused serious disruptions or closed altogether over 650 roads by Saturday morning, according to Spain's transit authorities, which urged people to stay indoors and avoid all non-essential travel.

The wintry weather even halted the country's soccer league, with some of the La Liga top teams unable to travel for games. Saturday's match between Spanish league leader Atlético Madrid and Athletic Bilbao was postponed after the plane carrying Bilbao's team on Friday was unable to land in the capital and had to turn around.

The regions of Castilla La Mancha and Madrid, home to 8.6 million people altogether, announced that

schools would be closed at least on Monday and Tuesday.

Despite the numerous branches and even whole trees toppled by the weight of the snow, the blizzard also yielded surreal images that entertained many Madrileños, including a few brave skiers and a man on a dog sled that was seen on videos widely circulated on social media.

Lucía Vallés, a coach for a Madrid-based ski club who usually has to travel to faraway mountains with her clients, was thrilled to see the white layers of snow accumulating literally at her doorstep.

"I never imagined this, it has been a gift," the 23-year-old said. "But I've never had so many photographs taken of me," she added as she slid past the late 18th-century building that hosts the Prado Museum.

AP writer Joseph Wilson in Barcelona, Spain, contributed to this report.

Queen Elizabeth II and husband receive COVID-19 vaccinations

LONDON (AP) — Queen Elizabeth II and her husband, Prince Philip, have received their COVID-19 vaccinations, royal officials said Saturday.

Buckingham Palace officials said in a statement that the 94-year-old monarch and Philip, 99, received their jabs Saturday, joining some 1.5 million people in Britain who have been given a first dose of a vaccine.

The injections were administered at Windsor Castle, where the queen and her husband have been spending their time during the lockdown in England.

Royal officials said they took the rare step of commenting on the monarch's health in order to prevent inaccuracies and further speculation. The queen "decided that she would let it be known she has had the vaccination," the palace statement said.

On Dec. 8, Britain became the world's first country to begin a mass vaccination drive against the coronavirus. The government says it is aiming to deliver the first vaccine doses to some 15 million people in the top priority groups by the middle of February.

That includes everyone over age 70, as well as frontline health care workers, care home residents and anyone whose health makes them especially vulnerable to the virus.

'Brian did his job': Family remembers fallen Capitol officer

By MIKE CATALINI and NOMAAN MERCHANT Associated Press

SOUTH RIVER, N.J. (AP) — From his early days growing up in a New Jersey hamlet, Brian Sicknick wanted to be a police officer.

He enlisted in the National Guard six months after graduating high school in 1997, deploying to Saudi Arabia and then Kyrgyzstan. Joining the Guard was his means to joining law enforcement, his family said.

He would join the U.S. Capitol Police in 2008, serving until his death Thursday after being attacked as rioters seething over President Donald Trump's election loss stormed the U.S. Capitol, believing the president's false claims of a rigged election.

"His brother told me, 'Brian did his job,'" said John Krenzel, the mayor of Sicknick's hometown of South River, New Jersey.

Sicknick's death has shaken America as it grapples with how an armed mob could storm the halls of the U.S. Capitol as the presidential election results were being certified, sending hundreds of lawmakers, staff and journalists fleeing for safety. Videos published online show vastly outnumbered Capitol Police officers trying in vain to stop surging rioters, though other videos show officers not moving to stop rioters in the building.

Police leadership badly miscalculated the threat despite weeks of signals that Wednesday could get violent. And they refused Pentagon help three days before the riot, and again as the mob descended. Under withering criticism, the police chief resigned as have the chief security officers for both the U.S. House and Senate.

The Capitol Police said in a statement that Sicknick was injured "while physically engaging with protest-

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 31 of 93

ers." During the struggle, Sicknick, 42, was hit in the head with a fire extinguisher, two law enforcement officials said. The officials could not discuss the ongoing investigation publicly and spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity.

Sicknick was the youngest of three boys growing up in South River, a small borough of about 16,000 people in central New Jersey, 20 miles from Staten Island. He graduated from the Middlesex County Vocational and Technical School in East Brunswick, New Jersey, in June 1997.

Superintendent Dianne Veilleux said school records show Sicknick wanted to be in law enforcement. The school will honor him by planting an oak tree on campus to symbolize his strength.

He enlisted in the New Jersey Air National Guard that December, still a teenager, first deploying to Saudi Arabia in 1999. In 2003, he deployed to Kyrgyzstan, where the U.S. military operated a transit base supporting the war in Afghanistan. He was honorably discharged in December of that year.

After the U.S. invasion of Iraq in March 2003, Sicknick became a vocal critic of the war, writing several letters to the editor of the local newspaper that sharply criticized former President George W. Bush for his management of the effort. In one July 2003 letter, published five months before his formal discharge, he said that "our troops are stretched very thin, and morale is dangerously low among them."

In a statement issued Friday, Sicknick's family said he "wanted to be a police officer his entire life" and had joined the Guard "as a means to that end."

A biography issued by his family says Sicknick cared for rescued Dachshunds in his spare time and rooted for the New Jersey Devils hockey team. He is survived by his parents, Charles and Gladys Sicknick, his brothers Ken and Craig, and his longtime girlfriend, Sandra Garza.

The family asked the public to respect its wishes "in not making Brian's passing a political issue."

"Brian is a hero and that is what we would like people to remember," the family said.

On Saturday, New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy ordered that the U.S. and New Jersey flags be flown at half-staff at all state buildings and facilities in honor of Sicknick, saying he "embodied the selfless spirit of his native state."

"Officer Sicknick gave his life protecting the United States Capitol, and by extension, our very democracy, from violent insurrection," Murphy said. "His needless murder at the hands of a mob bent on overthrowing the Constitution he had dedicated his life to upholding is shocking. It is my fervent hope that the rioters whose actions directly contributed to his death are quickly identified and brought to justice."

Merchant reported from Houston. Associated Press writers Michael Balsamo and Colleen Long in Washington contributed to this report.

Democrats plan lightning Trump impeachment, want him out now

By LISA MASCARO, MARY CLARE JALONICK and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Warnings flashing, Democrats in Congress laid plans for swift impeachment of President Donald Trump, demanding decisive, immediate action to ensure an "unhinged" commander in chief can't add to the damage they say he's inflicted or even ignite nuclear war in his final days in office.

As the country comes to terms with the violent siege of the U.S. Capitol by Trump supporters that left five dead, the crisis that appears to be among the final acts of his presidency is deepening like few others in the nation's history. With less than two weeks until he's gone, Democrats want him out — now — and he has few defenders speaking up for him in his own Republican Party.

"We must take action," House Speaker Nancy Pelosi declared Friday on a private conference call with Democrats.

And one prominent Republican, Sen. Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, told the Anchorage Daily News that Trump simply "needs to get out."

The final days of Trump's presidency are spinning toward a chaotic end as he holes up at the White House, abandoned by many aides, top Republicans and Cabinet members. After refusing to concede defeat in the November election, he has now promised a smooth transfer of power when Democratic President-

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 32 of 93

elect Joe Biden is sworn in on Jan. 20. But even so, he says he will not attend the inauguration — the first such presidential snub since just after the Civil War.

In Congress, where many have watched and reeled as the president spent four years breaking norms and testing the nation's guardrails of democracy, Democrats are unwilling to take further chances. The mayhem that erupted Wednesday at the Capitol stunned the world and threatened the traditional peaceful transfer of power.

Pelosi said she had spoken to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Mark Milley "to discuss available precautions for preventing an unstable president from initiating military hostilities or accessing the launch codes" for nuclear war. She said Milley assured her longstanding safeguards are in place.

The president has sole authority to order the launch of a nuclear weapon, but a military commander could refuse the order if it were determined to be illegal. Trump has not publicly made such threats, but officials warn of grave danger if the president is left unchecked.

"This unhinged president could not be more dangerous," Pelosi said of the current situation.

Biden, meanwhile, said he is focused on his job as he prepares to take office. Asked about impeachment, he said, "That's a decision for the Congress to make."

The Democrats are considering lightning-quick action. A draft of their Articles of Impeachment accuses Trump of abuse of power, saying he "willfully made statements that encouraged — and foreseeably resulted in — imminent lawless action at the Capitol," according to a person familiar with the details who was granted anonymity to discuss them.

The articles are expected to be introduced on Monday, with a House vote as soon as Wednesday.

If Trump were to be impeached by the House and convicted by the Senate, he might also be prevented from running again for the presidency in 2024 or ever holding public office again. He would be the only president twice impeached. A person on the call said Pelosi also discussed other ways Trump might be forced to resign.

Senators from a bipartisan group convened their own call to consider options for congressional action, according to an aide granted anonymity to reveal the private discussions.

Not helpful, the White House argued. Trump spokesman Judd Deere said, "A politically motivated impeachment against a President with 12 days remaining in his term will only serve to further divide our great country."

Trump was tweeting again Friday, his Twitter account reinstated after a brief ban, and he reverted to an aggressive statement that his supporters must not be "disrespected" after he had sent out a calmer Thursday video decrying the violence. Toward evening, Twitter said it was permanently suspending him from its platform, citing "risk of further incitement of violence."

The soonest the Senate could begin an impeachment trial under the current calendar would be Jan. 20, Inauguration Day.

Conviction in the Republican Senate at this late date would seem unlikely, though in a sign of Trump's shattering of the party many Republicans were silent on the issue.

One Trump ally, Republican Minority Leader Rep. Kevin McCarthy of California, did speak up, saying as the White House did that "impeaching the President with just 12 days left in his term will only divide our country more."

McCarthy said he has reached out to Biden and plans to speak with the Democratic president-elect about working together to "lower the temperature."

But Murkowski said she wants Trump to resign now, not wait for Biden's swearing in on Jan. 20.

"I want him out," she said in a telephone interview with the Anchorage newspaper.

Another leading Republican critic of Trump, Sen. Ben Sasse of Nebraska, said he would "definitely consider" impeachment.

Strong criticism of Trump, who urged the mob to march to the Capitol, continued unabated.

"Every day that he remains in office, he is a danger to the Republic," said Rep. Adam Schiff, D-Calif.

Schiff, who led Trump's impeachment in 2019, said in a statement that Trump "lit the fuse which exploded

on Wednesday at the Capitol.”

Sen. Bernie Sanders, the independent from Vermont, tweeted that some people ask, why impeach a president who has only a few days left in office?

“The answer: Precedent. It must be made clear that no president, now or in the future, can lead an insurrection against the U.S. government,” Sanders said.

Pelosi and Democratic Senate leader Chuck Schumer both had private calls with Biden late Friday.

They have called on Vice President Mike Pence and the Cabinet to invoke the 25th Amendment to force Trump from office. It’s a process for removing the president and installing the vice president to take over.

Pelosi said later that option remains on the table. But action by Pence or the Cabinet now appears unlikely, especially after two top officials, Education Secretary Betsy DeVos and Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao, suddenly resigned in the aftermath of the violence and would no longer be in the Cabinet to make such a case.

Trump had encouraged loyalists at a rally Wednesday at the White House to march on the Capitol where Congress was certifying the Electoral College tally of Biden’s election.

The House impeached Trump in 2019, but the Republican-led Senate acquitted him in early 2020.

Associated Press writers Alan Fram and Alexandra Jaffe contributed to this report.

Once again, job losses fall unequally across the US economy

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER and ALEXANDRA OLSON AP Business Writers

WASHINGTON (AP) — Ten months into America’s viral outbreak, low-income workers are still bearing the brunt of job losses — an unusual and harsh feature of the pandemic recession that flattened the economy last spring.

In December, the nation shed jobs for the first time since April. Once again, the layoffs were heavily concentrated in the industries that have suffered most because they involve the kind of face-to-face contact that is now nearly impossible: Restaurants, bars and hotels, theaters, sports arenas and concert halls.

With the virus transforming consumer spending habits, economists believe some portion of these service jobs won’t return even after the economy has regained its footing. That trend will likely further widen the economic inequalities that have left millions of families unable to buy food or pay rent.

Typically in a recession, layoffs strike a broad array of industries — both those that employ higher- and middle-income workers and those with lower-paid staff — as anxious consumers slash spending. Economists had worried that the same trend would emerge this time.

Instead, much of the rest of the economy is healing, if slowly and fitfully. Factories, while not fully recovered, are cranking out goods and have added jobs every month since May. Home sales have soared 26% from a year ago, fueled by affluent people able to work from home who are looking for more space. That trend has, in turn, bolstered higher-paying jobs in banking, insurance and real estate.

“Such differences in ... employment loss between the highest- and lowest-wage workers are almost certainly unprecedented among U.S. recessions over the past 100-plus years,” Brad Hershbein, an economist at the Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, and Harry Holzer, an economist at Georgetown University, concluded in a new research paper.

On the surface, the December jobs report the government issued Friday was dismal: The economy lost 140,000 jobs. It was the sixth straight month in which hiring has slumped from the previous month. Unemployment remained stuck at a still-high 6.7%.

But the negative number stemmed entirely from a brutal loss — nearly 500,000 jobs — in a category that includes restaurants, bars, hotels, casinos and entertainment.

State and local governments also cut workers. So did hair salons and other personal services. There were layoffs, too, in education.

Nearly every other industry added jobs. Construction gained 51,000, financial services 12,000. Transportation and warehousing companies, beneficiaries of a surge in e-commerce and delivery services amid

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 34 of 93

the pandemic, gained nearly 47,000.

Job losses have “definitely been very heavily concentrated in certain industries — much more so than prior recessions,” Hershbein said in an interview.

Once the coronavirus vaccines become distributed more widely, and the latest government aid package is pumped into the economy, most analysts expect a solid recovery to kick in this summer. The incoming Biden administration, along with a now fully Democratic-led House and Senate, will also likely push additional rescue aid and spending measures that could accelerate growth.

Economists note that the \$2 trillion aid package the government enacted in March, which included generous unemployment benefits and aid to small companies, did more to prevent layoffs from spreading than many analysts had expected.

But a big unknown overhangs the 2021 economy: Will the economic recovery come fast enough, and be robust enough, to absorb many of the Americans who lost jobs in the hospitality industries into more resilient sectors of the job market?

For now, the resurgent pandemic has made consumers reluctant to shop, travel, dine out and congregate in crowds and led states and cities to reimpose stricter limits on restaurants and bars.

The trend has upended the lives of people like Brad Pierce of West Warwick, Rhode Island. Pierce had gradually built a career as a stand-up comedian, only to see it derailed by the pandemic and restrictions on the bars he performed in.

Now, he wonders if that life will ever return. Even when the bars where Pierce worked had reopened, they couldn’t offer live entertainment because of coronavirus restrictions. Some of these venues, he fears, won’t survive.

Pierce receives about \$500 a week in unemployment aid, and his wife still works as a health care technician — busier than ever because she administers COVID-19 tests. Though he feels fortunate financially, the contrast sometimes depresses him.

“She’s working all the time, while I can’t work, and it’s a terrible feeling as a husband and a spouse,” said Pierce, 40.

In the meantime, there have been odd gigs for him here and there. The weirdest was a stand-up routine he did via Zoom for a company’s holiday party. He asked the employees to unmute so he could hear them laughing, only to be hit by a cacophony of dogs barking, kids yelling and TVs blaring.

He spent the rest of the gig watching his audience’s silently moving lips to see if they might be laughing. “I have days where I think it will come back, and days where I think, ‘Well, I guess I’ll never work again,’” Pierce said.

Hershbein and Holzer’s research found that job losses have been deeper among Black and Hispanic workers than among whites and also more pronounced for those in lower-paying jobs. Employment among the lowest-paid one quarter of Americans has sunk nearly 12% since February of this year, Hershbein found. Among the highest-paid quarter, it’s declined much less — 3.5%.

The proportion of white Americans with jobs has fallen 6% since the pandemic; among Black and Hispanic Americans, it’s down 10%, Hershbein said. This means that as some portion of the pandemic job losses become permanent, nonwhite workers will be hurt the most.

Michelle Holder, an economist at John Jay College, noted that the two biggest sources of job losses among Black women have been cashiers at stores and restaurants, including fast-food, and in child care. She said she fears that many of those jobs likely won’t return even as the pandemic fades as some shifts in the economy become permanent.

Business travel won’t likely return to its previous levels as more meetings are conducted remotely. Many health care appointments are now held online, thereby reducing the need for some staffers in doctor’s offices. That may end a decade-long narrowing of the Black-white unemployment gap, given that many lower-paid jobs are disproportionately held by Black workers.

“There are significant changes coming in terms of where we work, what jobs will be available,” Holder said. “All this will hit women, low-wage workers and people of color.”

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 35 of 93

As the pandemic recession rages on, more small businesses have been forced to close. This trend threatens to become a long-term drag on the job market, because new companies will have to be created to absorb many laid-off workers.

David Gilbertson, vice president at UKG, a company that makes employee time-management software, said that among his firm's clients with fewer than 100 employees in March, 13% have now closed — more than double the figure in a typical year. Another round of small-business loans, included in the \$900 billion aid package approved last month, will be crucial to help prevent another wave of closings.

"They've made it this far," he said, "and now they're on the brink of having to close down."

In the meantime, the struggling jobless include people who had forged independent careers — people like Bryan Blew, who quit his job as an equipment repairman in Kansas City a year ago to become a full-time musician in Las Vegas. Before the pandemic, Blew typically played bass guitar in bands at casinos, bars and other venues several nights a week. He isn't sure the Vegas music scene will ever return to what it was.

Blew, who hasn't played a gig since March, is now wrestling with whether to give up hope of rebuilding his music career. For now, he's working as a delivery driver for a sandwich shop, earning \$9 an hour before tips. He receives unemployment benefits, depending on how much he earns with his job in a given week.

"Time will tell I guess," said Blew, 46. "It's been a difficult pill to swallow."

Olson reported from New York.

Biden calls Trump 'unfit' but doesn't endorse impeachment

By WILL WEISSERT and DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

WILMINGTON, Del. (AP) — President-elect Joe Biden says that President Donald Trump isn't "fit for the job," but he repeatedly refused to endorse growing Democratic calls to impeach him a second time.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said in a letter to members of her chamber that lawmakers could move as early as next week to impeach Trump for inciting a violent mob that overran the U.S. Capitol if the president didn't "immediately" resign. Pelosi and Democratic Senate leader Chuck Schumer also have called on Vice President Mike Pence and the Cabinet to invoke the 25th Amendment to force Trump from office — a process for stripping the president of his post and installing the vice president to take over.

Addressing reporters in his home state of Delaware after an event Friday introducing some of his Cabinet choices, Biden noted that a key reason he ran for president was because he'd "thought for a long, long time that President Trump wasn't fit for the job."

"I've been saying for now, well, over a year, he's not fit to serve," Biden said. "He's one of the most incompetent presidents in the history of the United States of America."

But he refused to back efforts to remove Trump from the White House and insisted that impeachment was up to Congress. Instead, Biden said he was focused on the start of his own administration on Jan. 20, and he said his top three priorities are beating back the coronavirus, distributing vaccines fairly and equitably, and reviving the struggling economy.

His comments laid bare the political balance Biden has worked to strike in the months since winning the presidential election. He has continued to sharply criticize Trump and nearly every facet of his administration but also worked to keep the public's attention focused on what the new administration will do rather than indulging recriminations against the last one.

Biden nonetheless conceded that Trump "exceeded my worst notions about him. He's been an embarrassment" and likened the "damage done to our reputation around the world" to "tin horn dictatorships." The president-elect also suggested that a key hurdle to removing Trump was that he has less than two weeks remaining in his term.

"If we were six months out, we should be doing everything to get him out of office. Impeaching him again, trying to evoke the 25th Amendment, whatever it took," Biden said. "But I am focused now on us taking control as president and vice president on the 20th and to get our agenda moving as quickly as we can."

Trump would be the only president to be impeached twice. The House impeached him in late 2019, but

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 36 of 93

the Republican-led Senate acquitted him. Removal from office could also prevent Trump from running for president in 2024, or ever holding the presidency again.

Most Democrats, and many Republicans, put the blame squarely on Trump after hundreds of rioters broke into the Capitol on Wednesday and caused destruction and mass evacuations. The president had urged his supporters to protest as Congress was counting the electoral votes that confirmed Biden's win. Five people died, including a Capitol Police officer.

Biden called what happened a "god-awful debacle" and said it had "the active encouragement of the president of the United States."

The president-elect's comments came hours after Trump tweeted that he planned to skip Biden's inauguration, becoming the first president in more than 150 years — and just the fourth in U.S. history — to do so. Biden said he'd be "honored" to have Pence at the swearing-in, but didn't feel the same way about Trump.

That's "one of the few things he and I have ever agreed on," Biden said. "It's a good thing, him not showing up."

Also Friday, Biden called on the Senate — which will be under narrow Democratic control thanks to a pair of runoff election victories in Georgia — to confirm his Cabinet choices "promptly and fairly."

"Given what our country's been through the last few days," Biden said, "they should be confirmed as close to Jan 20 as possible."

Weissert reported from Washington.

No surprise: Trump left many clues he wouldn't go quietly

By CALVIN WOODWARD and DEB RIECHMANN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump left plenty of clues he'd try to burn the place down on his way out the door.

The clues spread over a lifetime of refusing to acknowledge defeat. They spanned a presidency marked by raw, angry rhetoric, puffed-up conspiracy theories and a kind of fellowship with "patriots" drawn from the seething ranks of right-wing extremists. The clues piled on at light speed when Trump lost the election and wouldn't admit it.

The culmination of all that came Wednesday when Trump supporters, exhorted by the president to go to the Capitol and "fight like hell" against a "stolen" election, overran and occupied the building in an explosive confrontation that left a Capitol Police officer and four others dead.

The mob went there so emboldened by Trump's send-off at a rally that his partisans live-streamed themselves trashing the place. Trump, they figured, had their back.

This was, after all, the president who had responded to a right-wing plot to kidnap Michigan's Democratic governor last year with the comment: "Maybe it was a problem. Maybe it wasn't."

Over the arc of his presidency and his life, by his own words and actions, Trump hated losing and wouldn't own up to it when it happened. He spun bankruptcies into successes, setbacks in office into glowing achievements, the stain of impeachment into martyrdom.

Then came the ultimate loss, the election, and desperate machinations that politicians likened to the practices of "banana republics" or the "Third World" but were wholly America in the twilight of the Trump presidency.

Often with a wink and a nod over the past four years, sometimes more directly — "We love you," he told the Capitol Hill mob as he gently suggested well into the clashes that they go home now — Trump made common cause with fringe elements eager to give him affirmation in return for his respect.

That made for a combustible mix when the stakes were highest. The elements had been coming together in plain sight, often in missives delivered by tweet. (On Friday, Twitter banned Trump's account, denying him his megaphone of choice, "due to the risk of further incitement of violence.")

"I wish we could say we couldn't see it coming," President-elect Joe Biden said of the Capitol melee. "But

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 37 of 93

that isn't true. We could see it coming."

Mary Trump saw it coming from her unique vantage point as a clinical psychologist and Trump niece.

"It's just a very old emotion that he's never been able to process from when he was a little kid — terrified of the consequences of being in a losing position, terrified of being held accountable for his actions for the first time in his life," she told PBS a week after the election.

"He is in a position of being a loser, which in my family, certainly ... was the worst possible thing you could be," she said. "So he's feeling trapped, he's feeling desperate ... increasingly enraged."

Post-election trouble was predictable because Trump all but said it would happen if he lost.

Months before a vote was cast, he claimed the system was rigged and plans for mail-in voting fraudulent, assailing the process so relentlessly that he may have hurt his chances by discouraging his supporters from voting by mail. He pointedly declined to assure the country in advance that he would respect the result, something most presidents don't have to be asked to do.

There was no evidence before the election that it would be tainted and no evidence after of the massive fraud or gross error that he and his team alleged in scores of lawsuits that judges, whether appointed by Republicans, Democrats or Trump himself, systematically dismissed, often as nonsense. The Supreme Court, with three justices placed by Trump, brushed him off.

That didn't stop him.

"I hate defeat," he said in a 2011 video. "I cannot stand defeat."

But the election aftermath ultimately left him with no fallback except his foot soldiers, who couldn't countenance his losing, either.

Trump's history of advancing false and sometimes racist conspiracies rooted in right-wing extremism is long.

He's praised supporters of QAnon, a convoluted pro-Trump conspiracy theory, saying he didn't know much about the movement "other than I understand they like me very much" and "it is gaining in popularity."

QAnon centers on an alleged anonymous, high-ranking government official known as "Q" who shares information about an anti-Trump "deep state." The FBI has warned that conspiracy theory-driven extremists, such as QAnon, are domestic terrorist threats.

In 2017, Trump said there was "blame on both sides" for deadly violence in Charlottesville, Virginia, the site of a standoff between white supremacist groups and those protesting them. He said there were "fine people" on both sides.

And during a debate with Biden, Trump wouldn't criticize the neo-fascist Proud Boys. Instead, Trump said the group should "Stand back and stand by." The remark drew a firestorm and a day later he tried to walk it back.

Trump didn't condemn the actions of an Illinois teen accused of fatally shooting two people and wounding a third during summer protests on the streets of Kenosha, Wisconsin. Kyle Rittenhouse pleaded not guilty to charges.

In October he chose not to denounce people who plotted the kidnapping of Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, a Democrat. "When our leaders meet, encourage or fraternize with domestic terrorists, they legitimize their actions and they are complicit," she said. "When they stoke and contribute to hate speech, they are complicit."

To Mary Trump, the manner of her uncle's defeat helped to set the stage for the toxicity she presciently said in November would happen.

Republicans in the Senate and House races outperformed him, enlarging their minority in the House and holding their Senate majority until Georgia's two elections this month tipped the Senate balance to Democrats.

His defeat Nov. 3 was on him, not the party. "So he also doesn't have anybody else to blame," his niece said. "So I think that he is probably in a position that nobody can help him out of emotionally and psychologically, which is going to make it worse for the rest of us."

Worse came.

Oren Segal, vice president of the Anti-Defamation League's Center on Extremism, called the attack

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 38 of 93

Wednesday the “logical conclusion to extremism and hate going unchecked” during Trump’s presidency. “If you’re surprised, you haven’t been paying attention,” said Amy Spitalnick of Integrity First, a civil rights group engaged in lawsuits over the 2017 Charlottesville violence.

Thursday night, Trump took a stab at a unifying message, after months of provocation, saying in a video “this moment calls for healing and reconciliation.”

But Friday he was back to tending “his great American Patriots” and demanding they be treated fairly, and he said he won’t go to Biden’s inauguration.

He acknowledged his presidency was ending, but did not — could not, may never — acknowledge defeat. For all of the insulting nicknames he’s tagged on his political foes — sleepy, shifty, cryin’, corrupt, crazy, little, brain-dead, wacky, pencil neck, low-IQ, watermelon head, dummy, deranged, sick puppy, low energy — none was meant to sting more than “loser.” And nothing, it seems, stung more than when the loser was him.

Deadly siege focuses attention on Capitol Police

By MATTHEW DALY and MICHAEL BALSAMO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The police were badly outnumbered.

Only a few dozen guarded the West front of the U.S. Capitol when they were rushed by thousands of pro-Trump rioters bent on breaking into the building.

Armed with metal pipes, pepper spray and other weapons, the mob pushed past the thin police line, and one rioter hurled a fire extinguisher at a officer, according to video widely circulated on YouTube.

“They’re getting into the Capitol tonight! They’re getting in,” the man filming shouts in delight.

They breached the line moments later, and rioters soon broke into the building, taking over the House and Senate chambers and running wild in Statuary Hall and other hallowed symbols of democracy. The mob ransacked the place, smashing windows and waving Trump, American and Confederate flags. The lawmakers who were voting to affirm President-elect Joe Biden’s victory were forced into hiding for hours.

Throughout the melee, police officers were injured, mocked, ridiculed and threatened. One Capitol Police officer, Brian Sicknick, died Thursday night from injuries suffered during the riot. The melee was instigated by a mob of supporters of President Donald Trump who have professed their love of law enforcement and derided the mass police reform protests that shook the nation last year following the police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis.

“We backed you guys in the summer,” one person screamed at three officers backed against a door by dozens of men screaming for them to get out of their way. “When the whole country hated you, we had your back!”

The rampage shocked the world and left the country on edge, forcing the resignations of three top Capitol security officials over the failure to stop the breach. Lawmakers have demanded a review of operations and an FBI briefing over what they called a “terrorist attack.”

Sicknick was the fifth person to die because of the Capitol violence.

A woman from California was shot to death by Capitol Police, and three other people died after “medical emergencies” related to the breach, including at least who died of an apparent heart attack.

Sicknick, 42, was hit in the head with a fire extinguisher during a struggle, two law enforcement officials said, although it was not clear if he was the officer shown in the video. The officials could not discuss the ongoing investigation publicly and spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity.

Another disturbing video shows a bloodied police officer screaming for help as he’s crushed by rioters inside the Capitol building. The young officer is pinned between a riot shield and metal door. Bleeding from the mouth, he cries out in pain and screams, “Help!”

Other images show police completely overwhelmed by rioters who shoved, kicked and punched their way into the building. In one stunning video, a lone police officer tries to hold off a mob of demonstrators from cracking into the lobby. He fails.

People attacked police with pipes, sprayed irritants and even planted live bombs found in the area.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 39 of 93

Sicknick's family said Friday that he had wanted to be a police officer his entire life. He served in the New Jersey Air National Guard before joining the Capitol Police in 2008. Many details regarding the incident remain unknown, and Sicknick's family urged the public and news media not to make his death a political issue.

Still, the riot — and Sicknick's death — focused renewed attention on Capitol Police, a force of more than 2,300 officers and civilian employees that protects the Capitol, lawmakers, staff and visitors. The agency has an annual budget of about \$515 million.

Three days before the riot, the Pentagon offered National Guard manpower. And as the mob descended on the building Wednesday, Justice Department leaders reached out to offer up FBI agents. Capitol Police turned them down both times, according to senior defense officials and two people familiar with the matter.

Despite plenty of warnings of a possible insurrection and ample resources and time to prepare, police planned only for a free speech demonstration.

Like many other agencies, the Capitol Police have been hit hard by COVID-19, with frequent schedule changes for officers and many forced to work overtime to fill out rosters. The pandemic has put the police under strain going into the new session of Congress and the Jan. 20 inauguration of President-elect Joe Biden.

Capitol Police Chief Steven Sund, who resigned Thursday under pressure from House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and other congressional leaders, defended his department's response, saying officers "acted valiantly when faced with thousands of individuals involved in violent riotous actions." Two other top security officials, Senate Sergeant at Arms Michael Stenger and House Sergeant at Arms Paul Irving, also resigned.

By Friday, prosecutors had filed 14 cases in federal district court and 40 others in the District of Columbia Superior Court for a variety of offenses ranging from assaulting police officers to entering restricted areas of the U.S. Capitol, stealing federal property and threatening lawmakers. Prosecutors said additional cases remained under seal, dozens of other people were being sought by federal agents and the U.S. attorney in Washington vowed that "all options were on the table" for charges, including possibly sedition.

Among those charged was Richard Barnett, an Arkansas man who was shown in a widely seen photo sitting in Pelosi's office with his boots on the desk. He also wrote a disparaging note to Pelosi. Acting Attorney General Jeffrey Rosen called the photo of Barnett a "shocking image" and "repulsive."

"Those who are proven to have committed criminal acts during the storming of the Capitol will face justice," Rosen said.

Also charged was a West Virginia state lawmaker who posted videos online showing himself pushing his way inside the Capitol, fist bumping with a police officer and then milling around the Rotunda as he shouted "Our house!" The lawmaker, Derrick Evans, was arrested by the FBI at his home on Friday and charged with entering restricted federal property.

Gus Papathanasiou, chairman of the Capitol Police Officers' Union, said he was "incredibly proud of the individual officers whose actions protected the lives of hundreds of members of Congress and their staff."

Once the breach of the Capitol building was inevitable, officers prioritized lives over property, leading people to safety, he said. "Not one member of Congress or their staff was injured. Our officers did their jobs. Our leadership did not. Our law enforcement partners that assisted us were remarkable."

Rep. Tim Ryan, D-Ohio, who leads a subcommittee that oversees the Capitol Police budget, said Friday that rank-and-file officers "were put in a incredibly dangerous situation. And that's really where my frustration comes in."

Sund and other leaders are charged with protecting lawmakers, "but also making sure that the rank-and-file members are put in situations where they're as safe as possible and they have the support that they need. And that clearly isn't the case," Ryan said.

Pelosi ordered flags at the Capitol lowered to half-staff in Sicknick's honor.

Associated Press writers Lisa Mascaro in Washington, Nomaan Merchant in Houston and Derek Karikari in New York contributed to this report.

Georgia's GOP governor under fire after US Senate losses

By JEFF AMY and RUSS BYNUM Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Even though he wasn't on the ballot, Republican Gov. Brian Kemp has been painfully bruised by the 2020 elections.

In a state long dominated by Republicans, Democrats won Georgia's electoral votes for president in November and two U.S. Senate seats in runoff elections Tuesday, defeating Kemp's hand-picked Senate appointee. President Donald Trump, furious at Kemp for resisting efforts to overturn Trump's election loss, vowed to oppose the governor's reelection next year.

Trump loyalists are already working to recruit a primary challenger. Meanwhile, Democrats who have gained strength in Georgia since Stacey Abrams' narrow 2018 loss to Kemp are spoiling for revenge.

"Gov. Kemp, you're next. See you in 2022," the Democratic Governors Association tweeted Wednesday as the upset victories of Democrats Raphael Warnock and Jon Ossoff in the Georgia Senate races came to light.

The governor's political capital took a serious hit with the loss of Republican Sen. Kelly Loeffler. A year ago, he chose the wealthy businesswoman and political novice to fill the seat vacated by retiring Sen. Johnny Isakson, in part to help Republicans win back support among suburban women. In doing so, he passed over more experienced contenders — including Trump's personal choice, former GOP Rep. Doug Collins.

The gamble failed. And the defeats of both Loeffler and fellow Republican David Perdue handed control of the U.S. Senate to Democrats.

"Brian Kemp is the governor of the Titanic," said Debbie Dooley, president of the Atlanta tea party and a Republican activist. "His governorship hit a big iceberg and it's going down."

Dooley said she and other Trump supporters are recruiting candidates to challenge Kemp and other Republican officials deemed disloyal to Trump. Among them: Lt. Gov. Geoff Duncan, who repeatedly refused to back baseless claims that Trump won the election, and Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger, who rejected the president's pleas to "find" more Trump votes in a recorded phone call that became public.

Some Republicans blame Trump and his false claims of election fraud for hurting GOP turnout in the the Senate runoffs. A crowd attending a Trump rally on the eve of the Senate runoffs erupted in cheers when the president promised to see Kemp defeated in 2022.

"I'll be here in about a year and a half, campaigning against your governor," Trump said. "I guarantee it."

The strain on Kemp was on display Tuesday when the governor attended an election-night event for the GOP Senate candidates before their defeats were sealed.

"This has been a tough time for our family for a lot of reasons," Kemp told the crowd, which applauded his appearance. He said it wasn't just the Senate race, but also the coronavirus pandemic, volatile protests over racial injustice and a personal tragedy that hit during the runoff campaigns.

Harrison Deal, a Loeffler campaign worker who had dated one of Kemp's daughters and grown close to his family, died in a highway crash in December. Kemp's wife and daughters dabbed at tears as he recalled "the tragic loss of a young life way too soon."

While Trump and others have named Collins as a potential GOP challenger for Kemp, the former congressman could also run for the Senate seat that Loeffler lost. Warnock will be back on the ballot in 2022 after finishing the final year of Isakson's term.

Among Democrats, Abrams is being closely watched to see if she will make a second run for governor after losing to Kemp by fewer than 55,000 votes in 2018. She spent the past two years working to register new voters and advocating for expanded access to the ballot in a state that Republicans have controlled for roughly two decades. Abrams has been credited with paving the way for the Democrats' victories in November and on Tuesday.

Democrats eyeing 2022 campaigns are expected to start making announcements later this year.

"You've got to give yourself an 18-month window," said state Rep. Calvin Smyre of Columbus, the legislature's longest-serving Democrat.

State Sen. Jen Jordan, a Democrat who represents parts of Atlanta and suburbs that have swung rapidly to her party, said the internal Republican jousting has obscured Kemp's other problems. Democrats are

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 41 of 93

determined to make Kemp pay a political price for COVID-19's impact on Georgia, seeing as reckless his unwillingness to impose a statewide mask mandate and refusal to impose stronger restrictions as hospitalizations and deaths have escalated this winter.

"I'm sure it has not been fun being governor during a pandemic, and the economy is not great," Jordan said. "He's getting killed on the GOP side. But he'll have to answer for all the other stuff, too."

Kemp will take center stage next week as the Georgia legislature opens, likely highlighting a relatively low unemployment rate, a string of industrial announcements, opposition to gangs and sex trafficking and his plan for a partial expansion of Medicaid. Ryan Mahoney, a political consultant who has worked for Kemp, said the governor's agenda is popular and he will be able to seize the spotlight.

"The session couldn't come at a better time," Mahoney said. "For the next three months, he gets to remind people he's governor."

Mahoney said he believes Democratic control of the White House and Congress will help bring Republicans back to Kemp, giving him a chance to reunite a fractured party by spearheading conservative opposition to Biden.

"It's going to be a pretty binary choice," Mahoney said. "At some point, are you with us or are you with them?"

Bynum reported from Savannah, Georgia. Associated Press writer Bill Barrow contributed to this report.

Democratic wins could strengthen Biden's legislative push

By WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President-elect Joe Biden's victory in November was tempered by concerns that he would face Republican opposition in the Senate that could stymie him at every turn.

Those worries eased this past week when Democrats swept two Senate special elections in Georgia, giving the party control of Congress and the White House for the first time since 2011. And the bipartisan outrage over the violent insurrection at the Capitol by pro-Donald Trump supporters could, at least for a moment, ease the partisan tensions that have paralyzed the legislative process for years.

"I think it makes my job easier, quite frankly," Biden said Friday. He said "a number" of Senate Republicans had called him to say they "are as outraged and disappointed and embarrassed and mortified by the president's conduct as I am and Democrats are."

Biden ran for office pledging to enact the boldest legislative agenda since the Great Depression, passing everything from a massive stimulus to combat the pandemic to trillions of new spending to address climate change, expand health coverage and tackle economic inequality. To accomplish even a slice of his plans, he will have to expertly navigate a Congress that, while in Democratic hands, is closely divided.

The Senate will be split evenly, with Vice President-elect Kamala Harris casting the tiebreaking vote when needed. The 222-211 Democratic majority in the House is the party's narrowest in decades.

That means major legislation probably will not advance without at least some Republican support. GOP Sen. Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, the current majority leader, has shown skill in keeping his party united against Democratic priorities.

Passing major legislation is "still a challenge in a 50-50 Senate," said Illinois Sen. Dick Durbin, the second-ranking Democrat.

"We can win simple majorities, but you have to face those 60-vote margins," he said, referring to the number of votes needed to overcome a filibuster.

Biden will also have to cope with higher expectations after Georgia's results than if he had faced a Republican-controlled Senate. That could lead to battles with progressive Democrats who want to push the new administration further left than it likes.

"Georgia, but obviously the election in November and really the last year, have been the American people saying, 'We need more. We need more and we want more,'" said Adrienne Shropshire, executive director of BlackPAC, which advocates for economic, justice and political reform. She acknowledged, however, that

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 42 of 93

she does not think major change is "going to be a cakewalk" for Biden.

Adam Green, co-founder of the Progressive Change Campaign Committee, which is closely aligned to leading voices on the left, including Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren, said that while activists will not get everything they want right away, "the ceiling has just been raised on the possibility of every progressive issue."

Biden, who represented Delaware in the Senate for 36 years, said he was aware of the challenges. In introducing Boston Mayor Marty Walsh as his choice for labor secretary, Biden noted that he gave "serious consideration" to progressive Sen. Bernie Sanders of Vermont.

But the president-elect added that he and Sanders decided against that, lest it cost Democrats a vital vote in a 50-50 Senate, even temporarily.

Democratic Sen. Chris Coons of Delaware, a Biden confidant and someone the new administration is counting on to help coordinate its legislative strategy, said an evenly divided Senate makes some policy goals championed by the party's most progressive wing "very hard to do."

"I think the message that was just sent to the people of Georgia and to the Senate and to the people of the United States by these elections" was "folks wanted to stop the division" and "work together" in Congress, Coons told CNBC this past week.

Even when Democrats had larger congressional majorities after President Barack Obama took office in 2009, they usually needed some Republican support in the Senate for legislation. Even then, they failed to get major initiatives approved on other issues Obama campaigned on, including climate change, immigration and scores of tougher limits on corporate influence in government.

Progressives also have clamored for Democrats to scrap the Senate filibuster rule, which would make things even easier for Biden's legislative agenda. But Biden has opposed doing that, and Democratic Sen. Chuck Schumer of New York, poised to become the new majority leader, was noncommittal this past week.

That probably means his caucus will have to compromise with Republicans.

Others, though, say now is the time to put major policy initiatives above bipartisanship, especially in an era of such deep political divisions.

Alicia Garza, head of the Black to the Future Action Fund, said the scene of Trump supporters storming the Capitol, "blows out of the water this idea of any kind of 'Kumbaya'-ing between parties."

"Just a week ago, we were hearing a lot of conversation about moderation and working across the aisle," Garza said. "I think what we actually need to be really clear about is that we're not dealing with the parties of the 1990s and we're not even dealing with the parties of the 2000s."

Associated Press writer Andrew Taylor contributed to this report.

French vaccine rollout slowed by red tape, focus on elderly

By JOHN LEICESTER Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — The few hours it took to give the first coronavirus vaccine shots to 14 residents of the John XXIII nursing home — named after a pope and not far from the birthplace in eastern France of vaccine pioneer Louis Pasteur — took weeks of preparation.

The home's director, Samuel Robbe, first had to chew his way through a dense 61-page vaccination protocol, one of several hefty guides from the French government that exhaustively detail how to proceed, down to the number of times (10) that each flask of vaccine should be turned upside down to mix its contents.

"Delicately," the booklet stipulates. "Do not shake."

As France tries to figure out why its vaccination campaign launched so slowly, the answer lies partly in forests of red tape and the decision to prioritize vulnerable older people in nursing homes. They are perhaps the toughest group to start with, because of the need for informed consent and difficulties explaining the complex science of fast-tracked vaccines.

Claude Fouet, still full of vim and good humor at age 89 but with memory problems, was among the

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 43 of 93

first in his Paris care home to agree to a vaccination. But in conversation, it quickly becomes apparent that his understanding of the pandemic is spotty. Eve Guillaume, the home's director, had to remind Fouet that in April he survived his own brush with the virus that has killed more than 66,000 people in France.

"I was in hospital," Fouet slowly recalled, "with a dead person next to me."

Guillaume says that getting consent from her 64 residents — or their guardians and families when they are not fit enough to agree themselves — is proving to be the most labor-intensive part of her preparations to start inoculations later this month. Some families have said no, and some want to wait a few months to see how vaccinations unfold before deciding.

"You can't count on medicalized care homes to go quickly," she says. "It means, each time, starting a conversation with families, talking with guardians, taking collegial steps to reach the right decision. And that takes time."

At the John XXIII home, between the fortified town of Besancon and Pasteur's birthplace in Dole, Robbe has had a similar experience.

After the European Union green-lighted use of the BioNTech-Pfizer vaccine in December, Robbe says it took two weeks to put together all the pieces to this week vaccinate 14 residents, just a fraction of his total of more than 100.

Getting consent was the biggest hurdle for a doctor and a psychologist who went from room to room to discuss vaccinations, he says. The families of residents were given a week over the December holidays to approve or refuse, a decision that had to be unanimous from immediate family members.

When one woman's daughter said yes but her son said no, a shot wasn't given because "they can turn against us and say, 'I never agreed to that,'" Robbe explained. "No consensus, we don't vaccinate."

Only by cutting corners and perfunctorily getting residents to agree could the process go quicker, he says.

"My friends are saying, 'What is this circus? The Germans have already vaccinated 80,000 people and we've vaccinated no one,'" he says. "But we don't share the same histories. When you propose a vaccine to Germans, they all want to get inoculated. In France, there is a lot of reticence about the history of vaccinations. People are more skeptical. They need to understand. They need explications and to be reassured."

France prioritized nursing homes because they have seen nearly one-third of its deaths. But its first vaccination on Dec. 27, of a 78-year-old woman in a long-term care facility, quickly proved to have been only the symbolic launch of a rollout that the government never intended to get properly underway before this week.

Only on Monday, as scheduled, did authorities launch an online platform where health workers must log all vaccinations and show that those inoculated got an obligatory consultation with a doctor, adding to the red tape.

In some countries that are moving faster than France, the bureaucracy is leaner. In Britain, where nearly 1.5 million have been inoculated and plans are to offer jabs to all nursing home residents by the end of January, those capable of consenting need only sign a one-page form that gives basic information about the benefits and possible side effects.

No doctor interviews are needed in Spain. It started vaccinating the same day as France but administered 82,000 doses in the first nine days, whereas France managed just a couple of thousand.

Germany, like France, also mandates a meeting with a doctor and is prioritizing shots for care home residents, but it is getting to them quicker, using mobile teams. At its current rate of nearly 30,000 vaccinations per day, Germany would need at least six years to inoculate its 69 million adults. But while the German government is facing criticism for the perceived slow rollout, France made an even more leisurely start, at least in numerical terms, but has pledged to reach 1 million people by the end of January.

Other countries have racked up bigger numbers by offering shots to broader cross-sections of people who are easier to reach and can get themselves to appointments. The large majority of the more than 400,000 doses administered in Italy have gone to health-care workers.

Lucile Grillon, who manages three nursing homes in eastern France, says the many hours invested to prepare vaccinations for 50 residents and staff who got jabs on Friday was time well spent. She worked through the holidays to get ready.

"We can't wait until we have the doses in our fridge to realize that we're not ready to vaccinate and then have to throw doses away and say, 'Rats! I didn't think of that,'" she adds. "The doses are too precious."

"It takes us two months to prepare for flu shots. Here, we have been asked to set records, to vaccinate against COVID in under 15 days," she says. "I don't see how we could have gone any quicker."

Associated Press writers Pan Pylas in London, Nicole Winfield in Rome, Ciaran Giles in Madrid and Kirsten Grieshaber in Berlin contributed.

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Cohen seeks to dismantle Trump legacy, one podcast at a time

By JIM MUSTIAN Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The rehabilitation of Michael Cohen has reached a surreal new stage: Quizzing the actor Ben Stiller about his approach to impersonating him on "Saturday Night Live."

Since September, President Donald Trump's former lawyer and fixer has been producing a podcast from the Park Avenue apartment where he is serving the remainder of his prison sentence for lying to Congress, evading taxes and facilitating campaign finance crimes.

The show, "Mea Culpa," has been downloaded nearly 3 million times and is available in 37 countries, Cohen said. Before Stiller, featured in an episode released Friday, guests have included Rosie O'Donnell, the magician and former "Celebrity Apprentice" star Penn Jillette, political journalists, and current and former operatives from both parties, including James Carville and Anthony Scaramucci.

The topic of every show so far? Blistering criticism of the president's every move.

Cohen, who once famously claimed he would take a bullet for Trump, said he has made it part of his penance to dismantle Trump's legacy and "return this nation to a place of sanity," though he categorizes his show as "a news commentary program" instead of an "anti-Trump program."

He said he plans to continue his podcast throughout the Biden administration.

"We cannot fool ourselves into believing that Trump will just disappear," he told The Associated Press. "Accordingly, he will continue to remain a topic of discussion."

The launch of the podcast followed Cohen's publication over the summer of a tell-all memoir about his conversion from Trump acolyte to avowed enemy.

In his interview with Stiller, Cohen likened Trump's signature scowl to the visage of Derek Zoolander, Stiller's pouty male model persona. Stiller, for his part, said he recognized in Cohen the "dichotomy" of fear and a killer instinct.

"I felt like there was a humanity in there that I was trying to connect with," Stiller said, adding he didn't want his SNL impression "to be this scathing, mean thing."

Cohen, on the other hand, seems to be going for the jugular, while satisfying his own addiction to the limelight.

He rails breathlessly in every show against the "idiot in chief." In one recent episode of "Mea Culpa," he complained that the presidential pardon process had "devolved into a corrupt and transactional circus, with Trump as its ringmaster."

Trump cutting short his recent Florida vacation and returning to Washington to double down on his challenge to the election results "sent my blood pressure through the roof!" Cohen told listeners in his Long Island cadence.

Cohen, despite years of introspection, has remained at a loss to explain his unswerving allegiance to a businessman he feels abandoned him at the most vulnerable point in his life. He has likened his fealty to Trump to a mental illness and said he thought of himself as acting like a drug user in need of an intervention.

The "most important victory" of the podcast, Cohen said, is that he believed some people who once

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 45 of 93

supported Trump changed their minds after listening.

"I have learned that there are tens of thousands of people who are exhausted and anxious and in need of some type of outlet to channel their frustration about our current political climate," Cohen told the AP. "If I can help them deal with their fears or feel somewhat better about the darkness that is enveloping all of us, I feel like we've accomplished something extraordinary."

Cohen, 54, had been scheduled to remain in prison until November 2021 but was released in May to serve the remainder of his sentence at home as part of an attempt to slow the spread of the coronavirus in federal prisons.

He was further emboldened to speak out after briefly returning to prison last year in what a federal judge ruled was government retaliation for Cohen balking at a proposed provision of home confinement that would have severely restricted his public communications.

Reception to the show, like to Cohen himself, has been across the board. So far, Cohen said, "the show is profitable" for its production company, the Los Angeles-based startup AudioUp.

The success or failure of "Mea Culpa" could serve as a litmus test for the viability of the disbarred attorney and other erstwhile Trump loyalists after the president leaves office.

"It's probably going to wane and be relegated into some dark, niche corner of the culture, where Cohen himself belongs," said Nick Quah, the founder of Hot Pod, a well-read newsletter about podcasts.

In the foreword to his bestselling memoir, "Disloyal," Cohen acknowledged critics consider him "the least reliable narrator on the planet."

The White House, for its part, has dismissed Cohen's criticism as "fan fiction" and said it's "unfortunate that the media is exploiting this sad and desperate man to attack President Trump."

Asked whether he thought Trump has tuned in, Cohen said: "I don't believe he has, as his attention span is limited to under 3 minutes and my episodes last longer than an hour."

"Rest assured though," he added, "Trump has others listening to 'Mea Culpa' and reporting back to him on the content."

A farewell to @realDonaldTrump, gone after 57,000 tweets

By AAMER MADHANI and JILL COLVIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — @realDonaldTrump, the Twitter feed that grew from the random musings of a reality TV star into the cudgel of an American president, has died. It was not quite 12 years old.

The provocative handle was given birth by a New York real estate tycoon who used it to help him become the 45th U.S. president. It began with a May 4, 2009, tweet promoting Donald Trump's upcoming appearance on David Letterman's show.

It died more than 57,000 tweets later, with Trump using some of his final postings on the powerful platform to commiserate with a pro-Trump mob that besieged the halls of Congress in a deadly assault as lawmakers were set to certify his defeat.

The account met its demise when Twitter announced Friday it was pulling the plug permanently on @realDonaldTrump, citing concern that Trump would use it for "further incitement of violence." Trump retorted that he'd be "building out our own platform in the near future. We will not be SILENCED!"

Trump, a novice politician but seasoned salesman, realized the power of social media in ways that few other politicians did. And he wielded it with never-before-seen power to diminish his opponents, shape elections and mold reality — at least in the eyes of his supporters.

Early on, @realDonaldTrump seemed innocent enough. Its owner, who had prolific experience in marketing casinos, real estate and even Oreos, used the platform mostly to promote his books, media appearances and give friendly plugs to friends.

But as Trump began seriously toying with a White House run, it became a tool to scorch opponents and give shape to his nationalist, "America First" philosophy.

He deployed its venom equally, whether insulting celebrity enemies (Rosie O'Donnell was "crude, rude, obnoxious and dumb") or using xenophobia to malign a country (Britain is "trying hard to disguise their

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 46 of 93

massive Muslim problem”).

Peter Costanzo, then an online marketing director for the publishing company putting out Trump’s book, “Think Like a Champion,” helped bring Trump to the platform.

Twitter was still in its infancy at the time. But Costanzo, who later came to work for The Associated Press, saw the then-140-character-per-message platform as a new tool that the real estate mogul could use to boost sales and reach a broader audience.

Costanzo was given seven minutes to make his pitch to Trump — “Not five minutes, not 10,” he recalled in a 2016 interview.

Trump liked what he heard.

“I said, ‘Let’s call you @realDonaldTrump — you’re the real Donald Trump,’” recalled Costanzo. “He thought about it for a minute and said: ‘I like it. Let’s do it.’”

Other than Trump’s family, no one seemed off limits from his Twitter wrath. Trump attacked Senate Republicans, Senate Democrats, 2016 political rivals, current administration staffers, former administration staffers, the Republican Party and cable networks.

@realDonaldTrump was prolific: On days when its owner was particularly agitated, such as in the midst of impeachment proceedings, it pushed out more than 100 tweets.

In its most popular tweet, on Oct. 2, 2020, @realDonaldTrump announced that Trump and first lady Melania Trump had contracted the coronavirus. The post got 1.8 million likes and nearly 400,000 retweets, according to Factba.se., which tracks the president’s social media habits and commentary.

The account was used to announce firings. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson learned of his ouster in a tweet.

The account threatened adversaries in the most colorful terms. Before Trump “fell in love” with North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un through secretly exchanged letters, Trump used Twitter to dub him “rocket man” and vowed to respond with “fire and fury” if the authoritarian dared attack the United States.

@realDonaldTrump frequently spread misleading, false and malicious assertions, such as the baseless ideas that protesters at Justice Brett Kavanaugh’s confirmation hearings were paid by the liberal philanthropist George Soros and that November’s election was beset by voter fraud.

Trump often tweeted well past midnight and before dawn, a cathartic outlet for grievances (Witch hunt! Crooked Hillary, Russia, Russia, Russia, FAKE NEWS, and so on.) For the most part, @realDonaldTrump and its 280-character posts effectively allowed Trump to work around the Washington media establishment and amplify the message of allies.

Sometimes @realDonaldTrump stumbled. Trump deleted 1,166 tweets and, in his final months on the platform, had 471 tweets flagged by Twitter for misinformation, according to Factba.se.

In one of his most memorable Twitter stumbles, Trump in May 2017 sent (and later deleted) a cryptic post-midnight tweet that read “Despite the constant negative press covfefe.”

The gibberish set the Twitterverse afire with speculation. Theories included that the tweeter-in-chief had fallen asleep mid-message and that the man who once bragged of having “the best words” was adding a new word to the lexicon to properly describe collusion between Democrats and the press.

The mystery was never solved.

Sam Nunberg, a longtime — and now former — Trump adviser, said that in the summer of 2011, after Trump announced he wasn’t running in 2012 but wanted to remain relevant, his team decided to start using social media to boost his profile.

They chose to focus on Twitter, where he already had an account and several hundred thousand followers. Nunberg remembers sending Trump daily reports on his follower growth. Trump would sometimes hand it back with hand-written notes — “Why not more?” “Why so slow?”

They celebrated when they hit the million mark.

“Twitter definitely played a pivotal role in building Donald Trump as a political figure within Republican politics and he also greatly enjoyed it,” said Nunberg. “Remember he used to say: ‘I wanted to own a newspaper. This is great, it’s like a newspaper without the losses.’”

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 47 of 93

Trump's eldest son, Donald Trump Jr., took to Twitter shortly after the platform banned @realDonaldTrump to note that it continues to allow Iran's supreme leader "and numerous other dictatorial regimes" to use the platform, but cannot abide his father.

"Mao would be proud," Trump Jr. scoffed.

In the end, @realDonaldTrump offered an in-the-moment peek into Trump's state of mind over more than a decade, a period in which the "Apprentice" TV star transformed into the 45th American president.

Down the road, when historians look for a glimpse into Trump thoughts on the issues of his time -- anything from actress Kristen Stewart's treatment of co-star Robert Pattinson to the president's views on Russian meddling in the 2016 election — the first stop may inevitably be one of the many digital archives that have preserved the tweets of @realDonaldTrump.

With Trump, whatever the topic, there's always a tweet for that.

Associated Press writers Julie Pace, Nancy Benac and Zeke Miller contributed reporting.

Virus collides with politics as German election year starts

By GEIR MOULSON Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — The coronavirus pandemic is colliding with politics as Germany embarks on its vaccination drive and one of the most unpredictable election years in the country's post-World War II history.

After months of relatively harmonious pandemic management, fingers are being pointed as the center-left junior partner in Chancellor Angela Merkel's coalition government takes aim at what it says has been a chaotic start to vaccinating the population.

The discord is likely a sign of the times to come. An electoral marathon in Germany starts in mid-March, when two of six state elections scheduled this year will be held, and culminates on Sept. 26, when voters choose a new national parliament. Germany's choices will help set the tone for Europe in the coming years.

Merkel, who has led Germany since 2005, plans to step down at the September election. It's the first election since post-war West Germany's inaugural vote in 1949 in which there is no incumbent chancellor seeking another term.

Surveys have shown high approval ratings for the 66-year-old Merkel during the pandemic. She has taken a science-led, safety-first approach that has helped her center-right party into a strong poll lead, although Germany has struggled since the fall to get the coronavirus under control.

"We can be glad in Germany and Europe to have such an experienced chancellor as Angela Merkel in this pandemic," Health Minister Jens Spahn said Wednesday.

But with the new year, the end of the Merkel era is looming closer. This week, the center-left Social Democratic Party, which only reluctantly entered a coalition with the longtime leader after Germany's last election, latched onto frustration with the slow start of vaccinations to open political hostilities.

"It was always clear that the start of vaccinations would be the point at which we would see the end of the tunnel," the party's general secretary, Lars Klingbeil, said. "And now we see that we are in a much worse position than other countries. We ordered too little vaccine. There is barely a prepared strategy."

The responsibility for that, he said, lies with Spahn, a rising star in Merkel's Christian Democratic Union. Finance Minister Olaf Scholz, who is Merkel's vice chancellor and the Social Democrats' candidate for chancellor in this year's federal election, reportedly sent Spahn a list of questions about vaccine-related issues.

Spahn rejected the criticism, saying politicians must learn from mistakes but that Germany's vaccination campaign is going according to expectations.

"It has been clear for weeks and months ... that we would have too little vaccine in the beginning" because production capacities are still limited, he said, not because too little was ordered.

The health minister also noted that a deliberate decision was made to vaccinate the most vulnerable people in nursing homes first, and that process is relatively time-consuming.

Germany had vaccinated nearly 477,000 people by Friday, a week-and-a-half after it started giving shots against the coronavirus. That's a better showing than in several European countries, but critics point to

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 48 of 93

faster progress in the U.K., the United States and Israel.

Some in the governing coalition and elsewhere have accused the European Union of bungling the ordering of vaccines. But Merkel insists that having the EU take the lead in ordering doses was and is the right thing to do.

Germany's management of the public health emergency was a relative bright spot in Europe during the early phase of the pandemic. However, virus-related deaths increased significantly in the past two months, and the government this week extended and tightened the country's second lockdown.

Spahn is a tempting target for political opponents not just as health minister, but because it's still unclear which center-right candidate will seek Merkel's job — and he is a possible contender.

Her party is choosing a new leader on Jan. 16. That person likely will have the best chances of running for chancellor. It's unclear whether any of the three main candidates for CDU party leader — conservative-leaning Friedrich Merz, a one-time rival of Merkel; Armin Laschet, a more liberal state governor; and prominent lawmaker Norbert Roettgen — will be able to match Merkel's broad appeal. Spahn is bidding to be Laschet's deputy.

At some point after that, the center-right bloc of Merkel's CDU and its Bavaria-only sister party, the Christian Social Union, will choose a candidate for chancellor.

Bavarian governor Markus Soeder, the Christian Social Union's leader, has gained stature during the pandemic as a strong advocate of tough shutdown measures, and is viewed as another possible contender to succeed Merkel. Or the two parties could turn to someone other than their leaders.

The parties currently in Germany's government are traditionally the country's biggest. But the Social Democrats, who provided three of Germany's eight post-war chancellors, are very weak in polls after serving as Merkel's junior governing partners for all but four years of her tenure.

The party has lower support in polls than the environmentalist Greens, who are likely to make their first run for the chancellery this year but have yet to nominate a candidate.

The co-leader of the Greens, Robert Habeck, described the squabbling in the governing coalition as "pathetic."

"The (vaccination) strategy is OK, but its implementation is miserable," he told German television channel n-tv.

It remains to be seen how polls will develop as the political battleground takes shape in 2021.

While that happens, Merkel's coalition risks regaining its lackluster pre-pandemic image, a result of persistent squabbling. Government spokeswoman Ulrike Demmer assured reporters Wednesday that "of course the government is fully functional" — the kind of statement that had become scarce in recent months.

UK to vaccinate out of pandemic by looking to local GPs

By DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — British Health Secretary Matt Hancock turned up at a doctor's office in London this week to highlight the start of coronavirus vaccinations by local general practitioners.

There was only one problem: There was no vaccine. It didn't arrive in time for Hancock's press event.

It was an embarrassing moment for the U.K.'s top health official and a reminder of the challenges Britain faces as it races to vaccinate some 15 million people by mid-February.

GPs like Dr. Ammara Hughes are crucial to the National Health Service's plan to expand vaccinations from hospitals and clinics to doctors' offices around the country.

"It's just more frustrating than a concern," Dr. Hughes told Sky News. "If we had a regular supply, we do have the capacity to vaccinate 3,000-4,000 patients a week ... which would ease the pressure on the health service and we could get more and more people vaccinated quickly, and hopefully get out of the pandemic."

To ensure vaccines get to the right place at the right time, along with the syringes, alcohol swabs and protective equipment needed to administer them, the government has called in the army.

Brigadier Phil Prosser is leading the army's response. He is commander of 101 Logistics Brigade, which

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 49 of 93

normally delivers supplies to British forces in war zones.

"My team are used to complexity and building supply chains at speed in the most arduous and challenging conditions," Prosser said during a briefing Thursday. "In this case, the mission is to support the NHS in delivering the maximum amount of vaccine to minimize the number of infections and deaths as quickly and as safely as possible."

The stakes couldn't be higher for Prime Minister Boris Johnson's government as it battles a new, more contagious variant of coronavirus that has swept across Britain, forcing it into a third national lockdown.

The number of COVID-19 patients in U.K. hospitals is already 50% higher than during the first peak of infections, and deaths reported on Friday reached 1,325 — the highest number since the beginning of the pandemic.

The infection surge threatens to overwhelm hospitals, putting more strain on doctors and nurses who are already tired after almost a year of the pandemic.

"We are hearing about people being treated in ambulances and car parks outside the hospital because there's no room inside to bring people in," said Dr. Tom Dolphin, a hospital anaesthetist and spokesman for the British Medical Association council. "It's getting to the point where we are struggling to maintain basic standards in some hospitals."

The government's goal is to deliver the first doses of vaccine to everyone aged over 70, as well as front-line health care workers, care home residents and anyone whose health makes them especially vulnerable to the virus, by the middle of next month. That's more than 15 million people.

Since Britain became the first country to start a mass vaccination program on Dec. 8, the NHS has put shots in nearly 1.5 million arms.

It plans to offer vaccinations at hundreds of GP offices and community pharmacies. There will also be seven mass vaccination centers at convention centers and sports stadiums, as well as 223 hospital sites.

"This is a national challenge on a scale like nothing we've seen before and it will require an unprecedented national effort," Johnson said.

But can the NHS deliver an average of more than 2 million shots a week for the next six weeks?

"My view is that the vaccine timetable is realistic, but not easy," Chris Whitty, England's chief medical officer, said Tuesday.

The U.K. has recorded nearly 80,000 deaths linked to COVID-19, the deadliest outbreak in Europe and the fifth-highest in the world. The pandemic has prevented families from meeting, put 819,000 people out of work and devastated businesses forced to shut by restrictions designed to control the spread.

While the government has agreed to purchase vaccines from seven different producers, U.K. regulators have so far only authorized use of those made by Pfizer, AstraZeneca and Moderna.

Britain has the right to buy up to 140 million doses of the Pfizer and AstraZeneca shots, barely enough to give its 67 million residents the required two doses. Moderna's 17 million doses won't arrive until spring.

But supplies aren't assured because of worldwide demand as well as the challenges of producing, testing and delivering the vaccines.

To stretch limited supplies, Britain has already taken the controversial step of delaying the second dose of vaccine for up to three months so it can give the first dose to as many people as possible.

While ramping up the vaccination program will be complicated, the structure of the NHS is likely to help it succeed, said Siva Anandaciva, chief policy analyst for the King's Fund, a think tank focused on improving medical care in England.

"Primary care are the cavalry for helping to deliver the vaccine," Anandaciva said. "The primary care workforce are key to this next phase of going through."

But those forces have already been stretched by the pandemic and everyone in the NHS is tired. Even so, GPs will be asked to work more.

"They're extending the hours to make sure as many people can get the vaccine as possible," Anandaciva said. "So it is going to be a long slog for the next few months."

But it is a bright spot at a dark time. David Halley, 83, was overjoyed to get his vaccine at his local GP

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 50 of 93

this week.

"I don't want to get sick and I've got family and grandchildren and so on, so it's important," he said. "I did think ... Is it fair for me to go? And then I thought, well, if I don't, then I will occupy a bed in the intensive care unit that somebody else could be using and that would be a waste of time and oxygen. So best to do it."

Follow AP coverage of the coronavirus pandemic at:

<https://apnews.com/hub/coronavirus-pandemic>

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'He's on his own': Some Republicans begin to flee from Trump

By STEVE PEOPLES and JONATHAN LEMIRE Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — President Donald Trump's steadfast grip on Republicans in Washington is beginning to crumble, leaving him more politically isolated than at any other point in his turbulent administration.

After riling up a crowd that later staged a violent siege of the U.S. Capitol, Trump appears to have lost some of his strongest allies, including South Carolina Sen. Lindsey Graham. Two Cabinet members and at least a half dozen aides have resigned. A handful of congressional Republicans are openly considering whether to join a renewed push for impeachment.

One GOP senator who has split with Trump in the past called on him to resign and questioned whether she would stay in the party.

"I want him out," Sen. Lisa Murkowski of Alaska told The Anchorage Daily News. "He has caused enough damage."

The insurrection on the heels of a bruising election loss in Georgia accomplished what other low points in Trump's presidency did not: force Republicans to fundamentally reassess their relationship with a leader who has long abandoned tradition and decorum. The result could reshape the party, threatening the influence that Trump craves while creating a divide between those in Washington and activists in swaths of the country where the president is especially popular.

"At this point, I won't defend him anymore," said Ari Fleischer, a former White House press secretary for George W. Bush and a GOP strategist who voted for Trump. "I won't defend him for stirring the pot that incited the mob. He's on his own."

When the week began, Trump was without question the most dominant political force in Republican politics and a 2024 kingmaker, if not the GOP's next presidential nominee himself. On Friday, there was a growing sense that he was forever tarnished — and may be forced from office before his term expires in 12 days.

Absent a resignation, calls for a second impeachment on Capitol Hill grew louder on Friday. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said Congress would proceed with impeachment proceedings unless Trump leaves office "imminently and willingly."

President-elect Joe Biden isn't putting his weight behind the effort yet, suggesting there's not enough time between now and his Jan. 20 inauguration to pursue impeachment or any other constitutional remedy.

"I am focused now, on us taking control as president and vice president, on the 20th and getting our agenda moving as quickly as we can," Biden told reporters.

Trump still has supporters, especially among the many rank-and-file Republican voters and conservative activists beyond Washington.

On Thursday morning, there was loud applause and shouts of "We love you!" when Trump phoned into a breakfast meeting of the Republican National Committee in Florida.

"The vast majority of the committee is in full denial," said Republican National Committee member Bill Palatucci, of New Jersey, who attended the breakfast. "They're willing to condemn the violence, but without any reference to the president's role in any of it."

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 51 of 93

The president insists he did nothing wrong. He continues to tell aides, privately at least, that the election was stolen from him. Republican officials in critical battleground states, his recently departed attorney general and a series of judges — including those appointed by Trump — have rejected those claims as meritless.

Trump had to be convinced to record the video released Thursday night in which he finally condemned the rioters and acknowledged his November defeat for the first time, while initially pushing back at the prospect of speaking negatively of “my people.”

He ultimately agreed to record the video after White House counsel Pat Cipollone warned that he could face legal jeopardy for inciting the riot. Others, including chief of staff Mark Meadows and his daughter Ivanka Trump, urged Trump to send out a message that may quell the talk of his forcible ouster from office, either by impeachment or constitutional procedures outlined in the 25th Amendment.

And while Trump acknowledged in the video that a new administration would take over on Jan. 20, he also said Friday that he would not attend Biden’s inauguration. That makes Trump the first outgoing president since Andrew Johnson 152 years ago to skip the swearing-in of his successor.

Trump has no plans to disappear from the political debate once he leaves office, according to aides who believe he remains wildly popular among the Republican rank-and-file.

Lest there be any doubt, Trump’s false claims about voter fraud in his November loss resonated with hundreds of thousands of Republican voters in Georgia’s Senate runoff elections this week. About 7 in 10 agreed with his false assertion that Biden was not the legitimately elected president, according to AP VoteCast, a survey of more than 3,700 voters.

Leading Republican pollster Frank Luntz has had extensive conversations with grassroots voters and Republican officials about Trump’s standing since the siege.

“The professionals are running away from a sinking ship, but his own supporters have not abandoned him, and they actually want him to fight on,” Luntz said. “He’s become the voice of God for tens of millions of people, and they will follow him to the ends of the earth and off the cliff.”

And because of the voters’ continued loyalty, elected officials in deep red areas must remain loyal to the outgoing president as well, even if his own Cabinet does not. In the hours after this week’s riot, 147 Republicans in Congress still voted to reject Biden’s victory, including eight senators.

The dramatic split in the party is reflected within the divergent paths adopted by the early slate of 2024 Republican presidential prospects.

Sens. Josh Hawley, of Missouri, and Ted Cruz, of Texas, embraced Trump’s calls to reject Biden’s victory before and after the mob attack. Arkansas Sen. Tom Cotton resisted Trump’s wishes, drawing an angry tweet from the president earlier in the week.

Such attacks didn’t carry as much weight at the end of the week as they once did given Trump’s weakened political state. On Thursday, Cotton chastised Republican colleagues like Hawley and Cruz, who had given voters “false hope” that Trump’s November loss could be overturned.

Nikki Haley, who served as the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations under Trump, tried to toe the line as she condemned Trump’s actions this week during a closed-door meeting with the Republican National Committee.

She lauded some of Trump’s accomplishments but predicted that, “His actions since Election Day will be judged harshly by history.”

Meanwhile, there is no clear path for the Republican Party without Trump. Speaking to reporters on Friday, even Biden raised concerns about the health of the GOP.

“We need a Republican Party,” Biden said, noting that he spoke with Republican Sen. Mitt Romney, a leading Trump critic. “We need an opposition that’s principled and strong.”

Meanwhile, Trump has been plotting ways to retain his political clout once he moves from the White House to his Florida estate, Mar-a-Lago, later in the month.

Believing his supporters will stick with him no matter what, he has continued to discuss encouraging primary challenges against Republicans who haven’t been sufficiently loyal to him. And he has hinted pub-

licly and privately that he will likely challenge Biden in a 2024 rematch, though losing his powerful Twitter account — which was or using xenophobia to malign a country permanently shut down by the company on Friday — could complicate his efforts to rule the Republican party by fear.

Doug Deason, a Texas-based donor who served on the Trump campaign's finance committee, said this week's events have done nothing to shake his confidence in the Republican president.

"He has been the best President in my lifetime, including Reagan," Deason said.

Associated Press writers Meg Kinnard in Columbia, South Carolina, and Darlene Superville in Wilmington, Delaware contributed to this report.

Pelosi's talk of limits on Trump nuke power raises old worry

By ROBERT BURNS AP National Security Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's concern about President Donald Trump potentially ordering the launch of a nuclear weapon in his final days in office highlights a little-known fact: Launch authority rests with the president alone.

It also resurfaces a question with no certain answer: What would happen if a military commander determined, based on legal judgment, that a president's nuclear launch order was illegal? The commander might refuse such an order, but then what?

Trump has given no indication he is considering using nuclear weapons, but Pelosi expressed worry that an "unhinged" president might start a war. She said she spoke Friday to Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, about "available precautions" to prevent Trump from initiating military action or ordering a nuclear launch, and she told colleagues she was given unspecified assurances that there are longstanding safeguards in place.

A spokesman for Milley, Col. Dave Butler, confirmed that Pelosi called Milley. "He answered her questions regarding the process of nuclear command authority," Butler said, declining to reveal details.

Pelosi's concerns highlight the fact, dating to the dawn of the nuclear age in the 1940s, that the president has the sole authority to order a U.S. nuclear attack. None since Harry Truman has done so. The president is not required to gain the consent of anyone else — not within his administration, not in the military, not in the Congress. There are, however, some safeguards that could come into play.

Although it would be unprecedented, a military officer could refuse to obey a president's order to launch a nuclear weapon if a legal assessment concluded that it constituted an illegal act under the internationally recognized laws of armed conflict. This is a murky area, given that the circumstance has never arisen.

"If the military gets an illegitimate order from the president of the United States, the military can and should refuse that order in a situation where it is widely seen that the president is unfit and incapable of making a rational decision," said Tom Z. Collina, co-author with former Defense Secretary William J. Perry of a book, "The Button," about nuclear dangers and presidential command authority.

Under existing procedures, a president who was considering the need to use nuclear weapons would be expected to consult with advisers, most likely to include the secretary of defense, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the commander of U.S. Strategic Command, which has operational control over the nuclear arsenal. Various assessments would be made, including the legal aspects of strike options.

The current arrangement in which sole authority to order a nuclear launch rests with the president is not written in law. It was created by Truman as a means to keep decisions about use of the world's most dangerous weapons in civilian rather than military hands. The authority is considered inherent in a president's constitutional role as commander in chief.

During the Cold War, the prospect of nuclear war meant having to respond within minutes to a wave of Soviet missiles zeroing in on the United States. Time would be of the essence. Thus it seemed to make sense to leave the decision to one person, without the need for time-consuming consultations with Congress.

But times have changed. Some argue that the traditional "sole-authority" approach must change, too.

"Once in office, a president gains the absolute authority to start a nuclear war," Collina and Perry wrote in

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 53 of 93

a Politico opinion article published Friday. "Within minutes, Trump can unleash hundreds of atomic bombs, or just one. He does not need a second opinion."

Collina, Perry and others have been pushing for Congress to alter the nuclear command authority so that it is shared between the president and the Congress.

The issue has been raised repeatedly during Trump's presidency. In November 2017 the Senate Foreign Relations Committee held a public hearing on the subject — the first hearing of its kind in several decades.

Testifying at that hearing, a former commander of U.S. nuclear forces, retired Air Force Gen. Robert Kehler, was asked what would happen if a president ordered a nuclear strike, for whatever reason, and the four-star general at Strategic Command balked or refused, believing it to be illegal.

"You'd be in a very interesting constitutional situation," Kehler replied.

Also in November 2017, the Air Force general who was commanding Strategic Command at the time raised the possibility of having to refuse an illegal launch order. That officer, Gen. John Hyten, who is now the vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, stressed that in any circumstance the military is obliged to only follow legal orders.

"I provide advice to the president," Hyten said. "He'll tell me what to do, and if it's illegal, guess what's going to happen? I'm gonna say, 'Mr. President, that's illegal.' Guess what he's going to do? He's going to say, 'What would be legal?' And we'll come up with options of a mix of capabilities to respond to whatever the situation is, and that's the way it works. It's not that complicated."

N. Korea threatens to build more nukes, cites US hostility

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un threatened to expand his nuclear arsenal as he disclosed a list of high-tech weapons systems under development, saying the fate of relations with the United States depends on whether it abandons its hostile policy, state media reported Saturday.

Kim's comments during a key meeting of the ruling party this week were seen as applying pressure on the incoming administration of President-elect Joe Biden, who has called Kim a "thug" and has criticized his summits with President Donald Trump.

The Korean Central News Agency quoted Kim as saying the "key to establishing new relations between (North Korea) and the United States is whether the United States withdraws its hostile policy."

Kim said he won't use his nuclear weapons first unless threatened. He also suggested he is open to dialogue if Washington is too, but stressed North Korea must further strengthen its military and nuclear capability to cope with intensifying U.S. hostility.

He again called the U.S. his country's "main enemy."

"Whoever takes office in the U.S., its basic nature and hostile policy will never change," he said.

Biden, who will take office on Jan. 20, is unlikely to hold direct meetings with Kim unless the North Korean leader takes significant denuclearization steps.

Cheong Seong-Chang, a fellow at the Wilson Center's Asia Program, said Kim's speech showed he has no interests in denuclearization talks with Biden if he insists that working-level negotiations must sort out contentious issues first.

Kim didn't cite any specific provocative U.S. actions. North Korea has previously called regular U.S. military drills with South Korea an invasion rehearsal, though the allies have repeatedly denied that.

The North Korean leader listed sophisticated weapons systems that he said were under development. They include a multi-warhead missile, underwater-launched nuclear missiles, solid-fueled long-range missiles and spy satellites. He said North Korea must also advance the precision attack capability on targets in the 15,000 kilometer (9,320 mile)-striking range, an apparent reference to the U.S. mainland, and develop technology to manufacture smaller nuclear warheads to be mounted on long-range missiles more easily.

"The reality is that we can achieve peace and prosperity on the Korean Peninsula when we constantly build up our national defense and suppress U.S. military threats," Kim said.

It's unclear if North Korea is capable of developing such systems. It's one of the world's most cloistered

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 54 of 93

countries, and estimates on the exact status of its nuclear and missile programs vary widely. In 2018, the South Korean government said North Korea was estimated to have up to 60 nuclear weapons.

"What they want to tell the U.S. is we're developing the new strategic weapons that you can see as the most intimidating. Do you want to come to the negotiating table?" Choi Kang, vice president of Seoul's Asan Institute for Policy Studies, said.

KCNA said Kim's comments were made during the ruling Workers' Party congress, the first in five years, from Tuesday to Thursday. He spoke for nine hours, the agency said.

The congress, the party's top decision-making body, is being held as Kim faces what appears to be the toughest moment of his nine-year rule due to blows to his already-fragile economy — pandemic-related border closings that have sharply reduced the North's external trade, a spate of natural disasters last summer and U.S.-led sanctions.

During his opening-day speech, Kim called the difficulties the "worst-ever" and admitted his previous economic plans had failed. In his other comments reported Saturday, he called for building a stronger self-supporting economy and reducing reliance on imports under a new five-year development plan.

Since taking power in late 2011, Kim, who turned 37 on Friday, has pushed the so-called "byungjin" policy of simultaneously seeking economic growth and the expansion of his nuclear deterrent. After claiming to have achieved the ability to strike the U.S. mainland with nuclear weapons, Kim launched high-stakes summits Trump in 2018, but their diplomacy later fell apart due to wrangling over the sanctions the following year.

During this week's speeches, Kim said North Korea will further boost ties with China, its biggest ally and economic lifeline but slammed South Korea for continuing the drills with the U.S. and introducing modern weapons.

South Korea's Unification Ministry responded that it hopes for the early resumption of North Korea-U.S. talks, saying the inauguration of a new president in Washington can serve as a good chance to improve their ties.

"Kim's speech foreshows the North Korean-U.S. relations won't be smooth in the next four years with Biden in office," said Nam Sung-wook, an expert on North Korea at Korea University in South Korea. "We won't likely see big events and spectacles (like the Kim-Trump summits) for the time being."

Family: Trump supporter who died followed QAnon conspiracy

By SUDHIN THANAWALA, STEFANIE DAZIO and JEFF MARTIN Associated Press

KENNESAW, Ga. (AP) — Before she died in Wednesday's siege at the U.S. Capitol, Rosanne Boyland was a recovering drug addict who wanted to become a sobriety counselor. But she also believed, wrongly, that President Donald Trump won the November election, and she'd begun following a dark conspiracy theory that has circulated online, her family said.

"It just spiraled," her sister, Lonna Cave, said Friday outside her home in suburban Atlanta.

Boyland, 34, was one of three people who died of medical emergencies when a pro-Trump mob, egged on by the president, stormed the Capitol as Congress was certifying President-elect Joe Biden's victory. A fourth person was fatally shot by police and an officer was also killed.

Capitol police have not released details about how Boyland, a Kennesaw resident, died.

Cave said the family has heard conflicting accounts. A friend who was with her said Boyland was pinned to the ground and trampled during a violent clash between rioters and police. But her sister said a police detective told the family Boyland had collapsed while standing off to the side in the Capitol Rotunda.

Cave said her sister had no intention of committing violence when she traveled to Washington. The family had begged her not to go.

"She promised me, 'I'm going to stand on the sidelines. I'm just going to show my support,'" Cave told The Associated Press.

Boyland was arrested multiple times on drug offenses, but had been sober for several years and found new purpose in politics, Nicholas Stamathis, a friend of hers from Kennesaw, told AP.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 55 of 93

"She got clean and sober and stopped blaming other people for her problems and got real conservative," Stamathis said of his friend, whom he called "Rosie."

She attended meetings of an addiction group in Atlanta and picked up her young nieces every day from school, her sister said.

The deadly insurrection led Boyland's brother-in-law, Justin Cave, to call for Trump's removal from office.

"My own personal belief is that I believe that the president's words and rhetoric incited a riot (Wednesday) that killed four of his biggest fans," said Cave, a former host of the HGTV show "Ground Breakers."

The sisters also clashed over Boyland's political views and the QAnon myth, which includes wild allegations of a child sex ring. Boyland had begun following the conspiracy theory over the past six months, Lonna Cave said.

Boyland explored its baseless accusations that online furniture retailer Wayfair was part of the fictional ring, her sister said, and her faith in conspiracies spiraled from there.

"She would text me some things, and I would be like, 'Let me fact-check that.' And I'd sit there and I'd be like, 'Well, I don't think that's actually right,'" Lonna Cave, 39, said. "We got in fights about it, arguments."

Boyland's Facebook page featured photos and videos praising Trump and promoting fantasies, including one theory that a shadowy group was using the coronavirus to steal elections.

While they hadn't seen each other in years, Stamathis said they chatted over Facebook Messenger regularly. A week or two ago, they had traded memes "of liberals losing their mind" online.

"Making fun of liberals together, we bonded over that a lot," he said.

Boyland's friend, Justin Winchell, said Boyland was pinned to the ground when bodies of police and protesters pushed against each other. People began falling and then trampling one another, Winchell told WGCL-TV in Atlanta.

"I put my arm underneath her and was pulling her out and then another guy fell on top of her, and another guy was just walking (on top of her)," Winchell said. "There were people stacked two- to three-deep ... people just crushed."

The two others who died of medical emergencies are Kevin Greeson, 55, of Athens, Alabama and Benjamin Philips, 50, of Ringtown, Pennsylvania. Ashli Babbitt, 35, of San Diego, was fatally shot by police as she tried to climb through the broken window of a barricaded doorway inside the Capitol.

Capitol Police Officer Brian D. Sicknick was hit in the head with a fire extinguisher, according to law enforcement officials who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the ongoing investigation publicly. He died at a hospital.

Boyland's final post on Twitter — a retweet of a post from Dan Scavino, the White House social media director — was a picture of thousands of people surrounding the Washington Monument on Wednesday. The photo was taken before Trump, in a speech there, repeated his unfounded claims of election fraud and incited demonstrators to go to the Capitol as lawmakers debated the electoral votes.

Boyland's family has received multiple threats since her death. They blame Trump for the violence, believing she got caught up in the president's lies about the election.

"It cost her her life," Lonna Cave said.

Dazio reported from Los Angeles and Martin from Marietta, Georgia.

Trump finally faces reality — amid talk of early ouster

By JONATHAN LEMIRE and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — With 13 days left in his term, President Donald Trump finally bent to reality Thursday amid growing talk of trying to force him out early, acknowledging he'll peacefully leave after Congress affirmed his defeat.

Trump led off a video from the White House by condemning the violence carried out in his name a day earlier at the Capitol. Then, for the first time on camera, he admitted his presidency would soon end — though he declined to mention President-elect Joe Biden by name or explicitly state he had lost.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 56 of 93

"A new administration will be inaugurated on Jan. 20," Trump said in the video. "My focus now turns to ensuring a smooth, orderly and seamless transition of power. This moment calls for healing and reconciliation."

The address, which appeared designed to stave off talk of a forced early eviction, came at the end of a day when the cornered president stayed out of sight in the White House. Silenced on some of his favorite internet lines of communication, he watched the resignations of several top aides, including two Cabinet secretaries.

And as officials sifted through the aftermath of the pro-Trump mob's siege of the U.S. Capitol, there was growing discussion of impeaching him a second time or invoking the 25th Amendment to oust him from the Oval Office.

The invasion of the Capitol building, a powerful symbol of the nation's democracy, rattled Republicans and Democrats alike. They struggled with how best to contain the impulses of a president deemed too dangerous to control his own social media accounts but who remains commander in chief of the world's greatest military.

"I'm not worried about the next election, I'm worried about getting through the next 14 days," said Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina, one of Trump's staunchest allies. He condemned the president's role in Wednesday's riots and said, "If something else happens, all options would be on the table."

Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi declared that "the president of the United States incited an armed insurrection against America." She called him "a very dangerous person who should not continue in office. This is urgent, an emergency of the highest magnitude."

Neither option to remove Trump seemed likely, with little time left in his term to draft the Cabinet members needed to invoke the amendment or to organize the hearings and trial mandated for an impeachment. But the fact that the dramatic options were even the subject of discussion in Washington's corridors of power served as a warning to Trump.

Fears of what a desperate president could do in his final days spread in the nation's capital and beyond, including speculation Trump could incite more violence, make rash appointments, issue ill-conceived pardons — including for himself and his family — or even trigger a destabilizing international incident.

The president's video Thursday — which was released upon his return to Twitter after his account was restored — was a complete reversal from the one he put out just 24 hours earlier in which he said to the violent mob: "We love you. You're very special." His refusal to condemn the violence sparked a firestorm of criticism and, in the new video, he at last denounced the demonstrators' "lawlessness and mayhem."

As for his feelings on leaving office, he told the nation that "serving as your president has been the honor of my lifetime" while hinting at a return to the public arena. He told supporters "our incredible journey is only just beginning."

Just a day earlier, Trump unleashed the destructive forces at the Capitol with his baseless claims of election fraud at a rally that prompted supporters to disrupt the congressional certification of Biden's victory. After the storming of the Capitol and the eventual wee-hours certification of Biden's win by members of Congress, Trump released a statement that acknowledged he would abide by a peaceful transfer of power on Jan. 20.

The statement was posted by an aide and did not originate from the president's own Twitter account, which has 88 million followers and for four years has been wielded as a political weapon that dictates policy and sows division and conspiracy.

Trump couldn't tweet it himself because, for the first time, the social media platform suspended his account, stating that the president had violated its rules of service by inciting violence. Facebook adopted a broader ban, saying Trump's account would be offline until after Biden's inauguration.

Deprived of that social media lifeblood, Trump remained silent and ensconced in the executive mansion until Thursday evening. But around him, loyalists headed for the exits, their departures — which were coming in two weeks anyway — moved up to protest the president's handling of the riot.

Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao became the first Cabinet member to resign. Chao, married to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, one of the lawmakers trapped at the Capitol on Wednesday, said

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 57 of 93

in a message to staff that the attack “has deeply troubled me in a way that I simply cannot set aside.”

Education Secretary Betsy DeVos followed. In her resignation letter Thursday, DeVos blamed Trump for inflaming tensions in the violent assault on the seat of the nation’s democracy. “There is no mistaking the impact your rhetoric had on the situation, and it is the inflection point for me,” she wrote.

Others who resigned in the wake of the riot: Deputy National Security Advisor Matthew Pottinger; Ryan Tully, senior director for European and Russian affairs at the National Security Council; and first lady Melania Trump’s chief of staff Stephanie Grisham, a former White House press secretary.

Mick Mulvaney, Trump’s former chief of staff-turned-special envoy to Northern Ireland, told CNBC that he had called Secretary of State Mike Pompeo “to let him know I was resigning. ... I can’t do it. I can’t stay.”

Mulvaney said others who work for Trump had decided to remain in their posts in an effort to provide some sort of guardrails for the president during his final days in office.

“Those who choose to stay, and I have talked with some of them, are choosing to stay because they’re worried the president might put someone worse in,” Mulvaney said.

Mulvaney’s predecessor in the chief of staff job, retired U.S. Marine Corps general John Kelly, told CNN that “I think the Cabinet should meet and have a discussion” about Section 4 of the 25th Amendment — allowing the forceful removal of Trump by his own Cabinet.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer joined Pelosi in declaring that Trump “should not hold office one day longer” and urged Vice President Mike Pence and the Cabinet to act. But Chao’s departure may stall nascent efforts to invoke the amendment.

Staff-level discussions on the matter took place across multiple departments and even in parts of the White House, according to two people briefed on the talks. But no member of the Cabinet has publicly expressed support for the move — which would make Pence the acting president — though several were believed to be sympathetic to the notion, believing Trump is too volatile in his waning days in office.

In the West Wing, shell-shocked aides were packing up, acting on a delayed directive to begin offboarding their posts ahead of the Biden team’s arrival. The slowdown before now was due to Trump’s single-minded focus on his defeat since Election Day at the expense of the other responsibilities of his office.

Most glaringly, that included the fight against the raging coronavirus that is killing record numbers of Americans each day.

Few aides had any sense of the president’s plans, with some wondering if Trump would largely remain out of sight until he left the White House. White House press secretary Kayleigh McEnany read a brief statement in which she declared that the Capitol siege was “appalling, reprehensible and antithetical to the American way.”

But her words carried little weight. Trump has long made clear that only he speaks for his presidency.

— Lemire reported from New York. Associated Press writer Jill Colvin contributed reporting from Washington.

Twitter bans Trump, citing risk of violent incitement

By TALI ARBEL AP Technology Writer

Twitter banned President Donald Trump’s account Friday, citing “the risk of further incitement of violence” following the deadly insurrection at the U.S. Capitol on Wednesday.

Twitter has long given Trump and other world leaders broad exemptions from its rules against personal attacks, hate speech and other behaviors. But in a detailed explanation posted on its blog Friday, the company said recent Trump tweets amounted to glorification of violence when read in the context of the Capitol riot and plans circulating online for future armed protests around the inauguration of President-elect Joe Biden.

The social platform has been under growing pressure to take further action against Trump following the Wednesday violence. On Thursday, Facebook suspended Trump’s account through Jan. 20 and possibly indefinitely. Twitter merely suspended Trump’s account for 12 hours after he posted a video that repeated false claims about election fraud and praised the rioters who stormed the Capitol.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 58 of 93

Trump's Twitter persona has long functioned as a mix of policy announcements, often out of the blue; complaints about the media; disparagement of women, minorities and his perceived enemies; and praise for his supporters, replete with exclamation marks, all-caps, and one-word declarations such as "Sad!"

He has fired numerous officials on Twitter and his posts, like his speeches at rallies, are a torrent of misinformation.

The White House did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Twitter declined to make CEO Jack Dorsey available and had no further comment.

The official account for the President of the United States, @POTUS, remains live. In fact, Trump, who issued a statement Friday evening that denounced Twitter as an enemy of free speech and floated the idea that he might build his own "platform," also posted it on the @POTUS account, where it was quickly deleted.

Twitter says using another account to evade a suspension is against its rules, and that while it won't ban government accounts like @POTUS or @WhiteHouse, it will "take action to limit their use."

Shannon McGregor, an assistant professor of journalism and media at the University of North Carolina, said the move lets Twitter try to curry favor with the incoming Biden administration. Trump "only has two weeks left in power, and that certainly makes it easier to deplatform the president," she said.

Others saw a more ominous portent in Twitter's action. "Big Tech is not going to stop with the president of the United States," Kay James, president of the conservative think tank The Heritage Foundation, wrote in a tweet. "They can ban you next and everyone reading this."

In the Trump tweets cited by Twitter, Trump stated that he will not be attending the inauguration and referred to his supporters as "American Patriots," saying they will have "a GIANT VOICE long into the future." Twitter said these statements "are likely to inspire others to replicate the violent acts that took place on January 6, 2021, and that there are multiple indicators that they are being received and understood as encouragement to do so."

Twitter said its policy enables world leaders to speak to the public, but that these accounts "are not above our rules entirely" and can't use Twitter to incite violence. Trump had roughly 89 million followers. Twitter shares fell roughly 4% in after-hours trading, reflecting concerns that the Trump ban might reduce usage and advertising sales.

Jonathan Greenblatt, who heads the Anti-Defamation League, said Friday that banning Trump was an "excellent step" and "a fitting end to a legacy of spewing hate and vitriol." The ADL was part of a coalition of civil rights and advocacy groups on Friday calling for Twitter to ban Trump's account.

Twitter, long accused of treating the president with kid gloves, began policing Trump more aggressively starting in the early days of the general presidential campaign, when the company began aggressively labeling his false tweets about supposedly widespread election fraud as disputed. An actual permanent suspension had been all but unimaginable -- at least until he lost his bid for re-election.

In May, after Trump tweeted the phrase "when the looting starts, the shooting starts" in response to protests in Minneapolis, Twitter added a warning label to his post for the first time. Tensions between Trump and Twitter only escalated from there.

Banning Trump entirely was a big step for the company — if one that it avoided taking until the president was a lame duck and its larger rival, Facebook, already banned him indefinitely.

Now that Trump has been knocked off one of his favorite pulpits, he may resort to other online channels such as Parler, a 2-year-old, more freewheeling alternative to Twitter that has become increasingly popular among the president's most ardent supporters. Many have used the forum to spread falsehoods and hateful comments.

But Parler, which was already tiny compared to Twitter, has bigger problems that could threaten its future. Google suspended Parler from its app store on Friday over continued postings that seek "to incite ongoing violence in the U.S." The company cited an "ongoing and urgent public safety threat" and said Parler won't be reinstated until the issues are addressed.

Apple has issued Parler a similar warning and given it 24 hours to fix things. Parler CEO John Matze said

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 59 of 93

in a post that the company “won’t cave to politically motivated companies and those authoritarians who hate free speech.”

While Trump could migrate to Parler, Gab or some other alternative site, doing so will greatly limit his influence, McGregor said. Trump has always craved legitimacy and standing in the mainstream media despite his complaints about normal reporting he has long referred to as “fake news.” He won’t get that on other platforms, she said.

Democratic Rep. Bennie Thompson, chairman of the Committee on Homeland Security said in a statement Friday that Facebook and YouTube should also ban Trump.

On Friday, Twitter also permanently banned two Trump loyalists — former national security adviser Michael Flynn and attorney Sidney Powell — as part of a broader purge of accounts promoting the QAnon conspiracy theory. Twitter said it will take action on behavior that has the potential to lead to offline harm.

“Given the renewed potential for violence surrounding this type of behavior in the coming days, we will permanently suspend accounts that are solely dedicated to sharing QAnon content,” Twitter said in an emailed statement. The company also said Trump attorney Lin Wood was permanently suspended Tuesday for violating its rules, but provided no additional details.

Dozens of QAnon social media accounts were hyping up Trump’s Jan. 6 rally in the heart of Washington, expressing hope that it could lead to the overturn of the election results.

AP technology writers Michael Liedtke, Barbara Ortutay and Frank Bajak contributed to this article.

With virus surging, Biden to speed release of COVID vaccines

By RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — With COVID-19 surging and vaccinations off to a slow start, President-elect Joe Biden will rapidly release most available vaccine doses to protect more people, his office said Friday, a reversal of Trump administration policies.

“The president-elect believes we must accelerate distribution of the vaccine while continuing to ensure the Americans who need it most get it as soon as possible,” spokesman T.J. Ducklo said in a statement. Biden “supports releasing available doses immediately, and believes the government should stop holding back vaccine supply so we can get more shots in Americans’ arms now.”

Biden’s plan is not about cutting two-dose vaccines in half, a strategy that top government scientists recommend against. Instead, it would accelerate shipment of first doses and use the levers of government power to provide required second doses in a timely manner.

The Trump administration has been holding back millions of doses of vaccine to guarantee that people can get a second shot, which provides maximum protection against COVID-19. It’s seen as a prudent approach, since both the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines require a second shot after the first vaccination.

Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar raised questions about Biden’s plan, telling a hospital forum on Friday that “we’re pushing the system as much as I as secretary believe is ethically and legally appropriate.”

But a recent scientific analysis in the journal *Annals of Internal Medicine* estimated that a “flexible” approach roughly analogous to what Biden is talking about could avert an additional 23% to 29% of COVID-19 cases when compared to the “fixed” strategy the Trump administration is following. That’s assuming a steady supply of vaccine.

After a glow of hope when the first vaccines were approved last month, the nation’s inoculation campaign has gotten off to a slow start. Of 21.4 million doses distributed, about 5.9 million have been administered, or just under 28%, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Biden has indicated his displeasure with the progress of vaccinations.

“I think the way it’s being done now has been very, very sad,” he said at his news conference Friday.

The Trump administration’s “Operation Warp Speed” has delivered vaccines to the states, he said, “but did not get them from those vials into people’s arms,” he continued. “And so it is a gigantic logistical

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 60 of 93

concern of how we do that.”

Biden says he intends to speed up vaccinations by having the federal government deliver more vaccines and take a stronger role ensuring that they are being administered.

The American Hospital Association estimates that the nation would need to vaccinate 1.8 million people a day, every day, from Jan. 1 to May 31, to reach the goal of having widespread immunity by the summer. That’s also called “herd immunity” and would involve vaccinating at least 75% of the population.

Biden has set a goal of administering 100 million shots in the first 100 days of his administration. He’s previously said that he and Vice-President elect Kamala Harris have been talking with state and local leaders about meshing the efforts of governments at all levels. Among the specifics: opening up vaccination centers and sending mobile vaccine units to hard-to-reach communities.

The Biden transition office said its experts believe that pushing out available vaccine as fast as possible will not create problems for people needing their second dose. Biden will make broader use of a Cold War-era law to direct private industry to supply materials for vaccine production, should that become necessary, his office said. One-shot vaccines are moving through development.

Former Food and Drug Administration head Mark McClellan said he agrees with Biden’s decision, but the increased supply of vaccines has to be coupled with steps to get shots actually administered.

“We’re holding back more doses than we really need to,” McClellan said in an interview. But “this needs to be combined with steps to increase the administration of vaccines, or it won’t make much difference.” McClellan, who served under former Republican President George W. Bush, now leads a health policy center at Duke University.

But Azar, President Donald Trump’s health secretary, said if vaccine production doesn’t increase Biden’s approach could lead to “fits and starts” in vaccination. “What we’ve set up is a system that manages the flow, to maximize the number of first doses, but knowing there will be a second dose available,” Azar said, defending the Trump administration’s decision.

Biden announced his plan after eight Democratic governors wrote the Trump administration on Friday urging it to do as much.

“The federal government currently has upwards of 50% of currently produced vaccines held back,” the governors wrote. “While some of these life-saving vaccines are sitting in Pfizer freezers, our nation is losing 2,661 Americans each day, according to the latest seven-day average. The failure to distribute these doses to states who request them is unconscionable and unacceptable. We demand that the federal government begin distributing these reserved doses to states immediately.”

The letter was signed by Govs. Gretchen Whitmer of Michigan, Gavin Newsom of California, Laura Kelly of Kansas, J.B. Pritzker of Illinois, Tim Walz of Minnesota, Andrew Cuomo of New York, Jay Inslee of Washington, and Tony Evers of Wisconsin.

With the winter wave of the pandemic pushing deaths to record levels, and hospitals overwhelmed in cities large and small, some have called on the government to authorize using just one dose of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines. That would indeed confer a boost of immunity.

However, government scientists including Dr. Anthony Fauci have said the vaccines should continue to be used as prescribed under their emergency approval by the FDA. The two-shot regimen provides around 95% protection.

More than 365,000 Americans have died as a result of the pandemic, according to data from Johns Hopkins University. The seven-day average positivity rate for the nation has continued to rise since Christmas, and stood at 13.6% on Thursday, according to the COVID Tracking Project. That’s well above the 10% rate considered a marker of widespread contagion.

Biden spokesman Ducklo said the president-elect will share additional details next week.

Biden’s plan to change the vaccine distribution plan was first reported by CNN.

___ This story has been corrected to show that 21.4 million doses of vaccine have been distributed, not 29.4 million.

___ AP reporter Michelle R. Smith in Providence, R.I., contributed to this report.

US judge blocks Trump administration's sweeping asylum rules

By SUMAN NAISHADHAM Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — A U.S. judge on Friday blocked the Trump administration's most sweeping set of asylum restrictions less than two weeks before President-elect Joe Biden takes office.

The rules had been set to take effect Monday. The court order has limited immediate impact because the government has largely suspended asylum at the U.S.-Mexico border during the coronavirus pandemic, citing public health concerns.

Still, letting the rules take effect would have been felt by some who can still claim asylum and make it significantly more difficult for all asylum-seekers once pandemic-related measures are lifted.

President Donald Trump's administration argued that the measures were an appropriate response to a system rife with abuse and overwhelmed with unworthy claims.

They sought to redefine how people qualify for asylum and similar forms of humanitarian protection if they face persecution at home. The restrictions would have broadened the grounds for a judge to deem asylum applications "frivolous" and prohibit applicants from ever winning protections in the U.S.

U.S. District Judge James Donato in San Francisco sided with advocacy groups who sued, saying acting Homeland Security secretary Chad Wolf lacked authority to impose the sweeping rules.

Donato, who was appointed to the bench in 2013 by President Barack Obama, wrote that Wolf's appointment violated an established order of succession. He said it was the fifth time a court has ruled against Homeland Security on the same grounds.

"The government has recycled exactly the same legal and factual claims made in the prior cases, as if they had not been soundly rejected in well-reasoned opinions by several courts," Donato wrote. "This is a troubling litigation strategy. In effect, the government keeps crashing the same car into a gate, hoping that someday it might break through."

Donato said his ruling applies nationwide because limiting its reach "would result in a fragmented and disjointed patchwork of immigration policy."

It was not immediately clear if the Trump administration would make an emergency appeal. The Justice Department did not immediately respond to a request for comment late Friday.

Aaron Frankel, an attorney for plaintiffs, has called the rules "nothing less than an attempt to end the asylum system."

Asylum is a legal protection designed for people fleeing persecution based on their race, religion, nationality, political beliefs or membership to a social group. Any foreigner who steps on U.S. soil has a legal right to apply for asylum, according to U.S. asylum law and international treaty obligations.

The rules would narrow the types of persecution and severity of threats for which asylum is granted. Applicants seeking protections on the basis of gender or those who claim they were targeted by gangs, "rogue" government officials or "non-state organizations" would likely not be eligible for asylum.

Immigration judges would be directed to be more selective about granting asylum claims and allow them to deny most applications without a court hearing.

They also would have weighed several new factors against an applicant's ability to win protections, among them failure to pay taxes. Criminal records would still count against an asylum-seeker even if their convictions were expunged.

Under pandemic-related measures in effect since March, about nine in every 10 people stopped at the border are immediately expelled on public health grounds. The rest are processed under immigration laws, which include the right to seek asylum.

Donato took issue with how people came to lead the Department of Homeland Security. Wolf became acting secretary in November 2019, replacing Kevin McAleenan, who was also in an acting role. Courts have ruled that Wolf improperly leapfrogged to the top job from his position as undersecretary for strategy, policy and plans.

Donato, like other judges, said McAleenan, who had been Customs and Border Protection commissioner, also was promoted to the top Homeland Security job out of order, making his handover to Wolf have "no

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 62 of 93

legal effect whatsoever.”

Homeland Security has been without a Senate-confirmed secretary since Kirstjen Nielsen resigned in April 2019.

While the Trump administration faced a legal setback, it's already instituted a raft of policies restricting asylum, including making asylum-seekers wait in Mexico while their claims are heard in U.S. court.

Biden is expected to reverse some of Trump's restrictive asylum measures, including the "Remain in Mexico" policy, but recently said his administration would need "probably the next six months" to re-create a system that can process asylum-seekers to prevent a flood of migrants arriving at the southern border.

Also Friday, the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Richmond, Virginia, ruled against the administration's policy that gave state and local governments the right to refuse to resettle refugees.

The three-judge panel said Trump's executive order that required both state and local entities to give their consent before allowing refugees to be placed in their areas would undermine the 1980 Refugee Act. That law set by Congress was designed to allow resettlement agencies to find the best place for a person to thrive while working with local and state officials.

Associated Press writer Julie Watson in San Diego contributed to this report.

Rioters who stormed US Capitol now face backlash at work

By JOSEPH PISANI and CATHY BUSSEWITZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A printing company in Maryland saw the photo on Twitter Wednesday night: an employee roaming the halls of the U.S. Capitol with a company badge around his neck. He was fired the next day.

Others are facing similar repercussions at work for their participation in Wednesday's riot at the U.S. Capitol. Some business owners are being trashed on social media and their establishments boycotted, while rank-and-file employees at other businesses have been fired.

The printing company, Navistar Direct Marketing, declined to name the worker but said it can't offer employment to people "demonstrating dangerous conduct that endangers the health and safety of others."

More than 90 people have been arrested since Wednesday when loyalists to outgoing President Donald Trump disrupted lawmakers as they met to confirm the Electoral College results and President-elect Joe Biden's victory. People on social media have been trying to identify rioters photographed or filmed at the Capitol Wednesday, pressuring companies that employ them to fire them.

At a data analytics firm in suburban Chicago, the employee in question was the top boss. Cogensia fired CEO Bradley Rukstales Friday night for his participation in the riot.

"This decision was made because Rukstales' actions were inconsistent with the core values of Cogensia," said newly-named acting CEO Joel Schiltz in a statement. "Cogensia condemns what occurred at the U.S. Capitol on Wednesday, and we intend to continue to embrace the values of integrity, diversity and transparency in our business operations, and expect all employees to embrace those values as well."

Rukstales, who was arrested for unlawful entry, told a local CBS news channel that he had entered the Capitol and apologized for his role in the events. Calls and emails to Rukstales weren't returned.

A Cleveland school occupational therapist resigned from the district after her alleged involvement in the riot. A spokeswoman for a fire department near Orlando, Florida said one of its firefighters was being investigated for his participation. Sanford Fire Department firefighter Andy Williams has been placed on paid administrative leave pending the outcome, said spokeswoman Bianca Gillett.

Most private employers can fire workers for attending protests, since First Amendment rights only prohibit people from being punished by the government for their speech, not by a private employer, said Susan Kline, an Indianapolis-based labor and employment attorney at law firm Faegre Drinker.

There are some exceptions: Those who work for the government may be more legally protected, and so too are many unionized workers, who typically have a contract listing the reasons for which they could be fired. And some states may have laws that protect workers' free speech.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 63 of 93

But "what people did at the Capitol Wednesday was rioting, not protesting," said Aaron Holt, a labor and employment attorney with law firm Cozen O'Connor. "When someone violates the law, that's almost never going to be protected, and a private employer is going to be within their rights to discipline or take some kind of action in response to that that might go against their fundamental core values."

Small businesses are also facing backlash on online review sites such as Yelp, which flagged at least 20 businesses for unusual review activity related to Wednesday's rioting.

One business, Becky's Flowers in Midland, Texas, is owned by Jenny Cudd, a former mayoral candidate who posted a video on Facebook bragging about breaking into House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's office. By Friday, Cudd's flower shop was flooded with dozens of one-star reviews in which she was called a traitor and domestic terrorist, along with photos of her inside the Capitol.

Cudd later said in a video message to The Associated Press that she didn't personally go into Pelosi's office or see people break down the door, and that when she said "we," she meant all of the people who were at the Capitol. She said she didn't do anything violent or destroy any property.

"I walked through an open door into the Capitol along with several hundred other people," Cudd said.

She added that she had "received several death threats along with thousands of one-star reviews from across the country of people who have never frequented my business."

Yelp has flagged businesses for unusual review activity following less egregious but still controversial events. Reviewers raged on the Yelp page of Virginia restaurant The Red Hen after it booted former White House press secretary Sarah Sanders from its establishment a few years ago. And commenters from the left and right bombarded Big Apple Pizza's Yelp page with political beliefs after former President Barack Obama was enthusiastically hugged by a customer there.

Social media has outed people for their involvement in activities outside of the workplace, landing them in trouble with their employers. In 2017 after a white supremacist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, many posted photos on social media of those who participated, leading in some cases to their firing.

In Louisiana, customers said they would boycott supermarket chain Rouses Market after retired owner Donald Rouse was shown in a photo at Wednesday's riot. Rouse said in an email statement that he attended the rally as a supporter of the president but left before the violence began.

"I'm horrified by the violence and destruction we saw yesterday and the pain it has caused so many," Rouse said. "Our country desperately needs to come together to heal, and I will do everything I can to be a part of that process."

The Krewe of Red Beans, a group which organizes parades, posted on Instagram that it would return \$20,000 in donations it received from the market.

Associated Press Writers Don Babwin in Chicago and Jake Bleiberg in Dallas and investigative researcher Randy Herschaft in New York contributed to this report.

State capitols reassess safety after violence at US Capitol

By DAVID A. LIEB Associated Press

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (AP) — The insurrection by supporters of President Donald Trump at the U.S. Capitol this week has prompted governors and lawmakers in several states to heighten security at their own capitol buildings as they gather amid a pandemic for legislative sessions and inaugural ceremonies.

Like the U.S. Capitol, statehouses are regular targets for demonstrations. Many already have armed security personnel and metal detectors that screen visitors.

But if the U.S. Capitol — a shining symbol of democracy with a dedicated police force— can be overrun by a violent mob, could state capitols be next?

This week's events were "a wakeup call for everybody, both in D.C. and in state capitals all across the country," said Washington state Rep. J.T. Wilcox, the chamber's Republican leader.

A series of smaller-scale flare-ups occurred last year at state capitols. Last spring, armed protesters entered the Michigan Capitol to object to pandemic-related lockdowns. Some were blocked by police while

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 64 of 93

demanding entry onto the House floor, while others shouted down from the Senate gallery.

In Ohio, people upset about the death of George Floyd in Minnesota smashed 28 windows at the statehouse.

Protesters in Idaho temporarily derailed a special legislative session last August. And just a few weeks ago, crowds in Oregon forced their way into the Capitol to protest its closure to the public during a special legislative session on coronavirus measures.

On Friday, Washington Gov. Jay Inslee announced he was activating up to 750 National Guard troops to join state police in patrolling the capitol in Olympia on Monday, when lawmakers return to session. He said an area will be set aside for demonstrators to hold rallies.

"But in light of the most recent insurrection activity, the state cannot tolerate any actions that could result in harm, mayhem or interruption of function of democratic institutions," he said in a statement. "Any illegal intrusion of the Capitol, state buildings or restricted areas will not be tolerated and strictly enforced."

A right-wing militia had encouraged its members to occupy the Capitol when lawmakers meet, and that intention was echoed by several people who broke down a gate outside the governor's mansion on Wednesday, the day Trump supporters stormed the U.S. Capitol.

An organizer of the planned occupation said in a later Facebook post that the event was canceled, although it's not clear whether others who share right-wing views plan to show up, anyway.

In neighboring Idaho, where lawmakers also are scheduled to meet Monday, State Police Col. Kedrick Wills said there will be an increased presence of uniformed state troopers at the statehouse. Anxieties are high for some lawmakers.

"We are being forced into one of the most dangerous workplaces in the state," said Democratic House Minority Leader Ilana Rubel, noting a lack of COVID-19 protection efforts. "Now, layered onto that, we're at a point where emotions are at their absolute peak and armed conspiracy theorists are ready to burn it all down."

The vast majority of state legislatures are convening this month. Though some are allowing remote participation because of coronavirus precautions, others are proceeding with regular in-person committee hearings and floor debates.

Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan, a Republican, said security has been increased around the statehouse in advance of the legislative session that begins next Wednesday. In Massachusetts, which started its legislative session this week, Republican Gov. Charlie Baker and Democratic legislative leaders issued a joint statement saying they were assessing the Capitol's security in light of events in Washington, D.C., and elsewhere.

In Oregon, where Trump supporters burned a life-size puppet of Democratic Gov. Kate Brown on Wednesday, lawmakers have pledged to review Capitol safety rules and potentially increase security for the session that begins Jan. 19.

State police that oversee the New Mexico statehouse have taken steps to coordinate security with local law enforcement agencies in case "gatherings become other than peaceful," said state police spokesman Lt. Mark Soriano.

Some state officials are rethinking their Capitol gun policies. In Michigan, Republican Senate Majority Leader Mike Shirkey said Thursday that he would support a ban on the open carrying of firearms in the Capitol. Minority party Democratic lawmakers want to prohibit all guns in the building.

By contrast, some Texas lawmakers are talking of bringing more guns into the Capitol to protect themselves. Licensed handgun owners already can carry firearms into the Capitol, and some lawmakers have been known to wear guns in the chamber.

"Pretty sure more #txlege members are going to start carrying inside the Capitol," Republican state Rep. Briscoe Cain tweeted Thursday, a day after the Capitol grounds were abruptly shuttered as hundreds of Trump supporters demonstrated outside without any reported incidents.

The Republican Party of Texas was to hold another long-planned rally at the Capitol on Saturday to draw attention to legislative priorities.

Missouri Gov. Mike Parson is planning for more than a thousand guests to gather Monday on the lawn

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 65 of 93

of the state Capitol for his inaugural ceremony. Department of Public Safety spokesman Mike O'Connell said plans have been in the works for months to provide "extensive security and crowd-control."

As a mob stormed the nation's capitol Wednesday, supporters and opponents of Trump also clashed outside the Ohio statehouse. Video footage showed multiple people in a street fight. Another violent altercation involving several people broke out later on the statehouse grounds, until law enforcement officers moved to separate the groups.

Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine, a Republican, said he could not promise that the statehouse wouldn't be breached like the U.S. Capitol.

"No one can say they're confident," DeWine said, adding: "We're certainly aware that something could happen."

Some states already had stepped up security before the violence in the nation's capital.

A fence remains at the Minnesota Capitol after being erected last summer amid the unrest over Floyd's killing. It was in place Wednesday when around 500 Trump supporters held what was billed as a "Storm the Capitol" rally — a noisy but peaceful gathering with no arrests. State Public Safety Commissioner John Harrington said increased security staffing will continue for the immediate future.

Colorado's Capitol also remains encircled by fencing, with concrete barriers to block vehicles and its ground floor windows boarded up after vandals damaged it following Floyd's death. Officials already planned to install stronger fencing, more security cameras and bullet-resistant glass for windows. Legislative leaders are focusing on any needed additional measures after the events in Washington, said Bella Combest, spokeswoman for the Senate Democratic leadership.

Police at the Mississippi Capitol are moving forward with a previously planned purchase of more security cameras and new machines to scan bags. The New Jersey statehouse is in the midst of a multi-year, \$300 million renovation, with security listed as a top reason.

After the U.S. Capitol siege, New Jersey state Assemblyman Jon Bramnick, leader of the chamber's minority Republicans, raised concerns about security in public buildings.

"It is very difficult to understand how protestors were able to gain access to the Chamber in the Capitol," Bramnick said in a tweet. "This is a very dangerous scenario that may encourage others to violate the law."

Associated Press writers James Anderson in Denver; Michael Catalini in Trenton, New Jersey; Sara Cline in Salem, Oregon; Steve Karnowski in Minneapolis; Rachel La Corte in Olympia, Washington; Steve LeBlanc in Boston; Morgan Lee in Santa Fe, New Mexico; Anna Nichols in Lansing, Michigan; Keith Ridler in Boise, Idaho; Emily Wagster Pettus in Jackson, Mississippi; Paul Weber in Austin, Texas; Andrew Welsh-Huggins in Columbus, Ohio; and Brian Witte in Annapolis, Maryland, contributed to this report.

Sentimental video tribute closes Trebek's final "Jeopardy!"

By ANDREW DALTON AP Entertainment Writer

More than two months after Alex Trebek's death, fans of "Jeopardy!" finally got the chance to say goodbye.

A video tribute to the host closed Friday's episode of the quiz show, the final one that Trebek taped before pancreatic cancer claimed his life on Nov. 8.

The 90-second montage, set to Hugh Jackman singing the Peter Allen song "Once Before I Go," is a lighthearted and laughter-filled remembrance showing Trebek's changing look through his 36 years as host, with moustache and without, with black hair and with grey, with suits from several decades.

It celebrated the wackier moments of the usually strait-laced Trebek, showing him verbally sparring with contestants and arm-wrestling with one.

"You really make me feel inadequate," he tells a child contestant. "Sorry about that," she sassily answers.

Trebek is shown walking on the set pants-less in one clip, dressed as the Statue of Liberty in another, and wearing the costume of a Trojan soldier in another.

A clip of the host declaring "I don't dance" is shown amid scenes of him dancing through the years.

The tribute is still plenty sad and sentimental, though, as Jackman sings "it's so hard to say good-byes,

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 66 of 93

when there's so much that's left unspoken in your eyes," and "once before I go, I would like to let you know, that I would do it all again."

And in its final moments it shows Trebek through signing off through the decades, repeatedly saying, "So long, everybody."

Trebek died Nov. 8 at age 80 but had pre-taped several weeks of shows that have continued to air. He kept working for nearly two years after his diagnosis with pancreatic cancer, remaining in place at the podium where he had become an institution since starting in 1984.

The show will continue next week with a series of interim hosts, starting with veteran "Jeopardy!" champion Ken Jennings.

The week's final Trebek episodes began Monday with the host urging viewers to give to others who were suffering during the coronavirus pandemic.

"We're trying to build a gentler, kinder society, and if we all pitch in just a little bit, we're going to get there," Trebek said.

His final shows were originally scheduled to air Christmas week, but they were put off until this week to give the send-off more exposure.

The episode includes holiday elements, like the category, "Christmas Movies."

In one of the last of the more than 500,000 clues Trebek delivered to contestants in his more than 8,200 episodes, he says:

"Basically, this heartwarming Frank Capra classic is about a disgraced financier having an incredibly rough Christmas Eve."

The correct response: "What is 'It's a Wonderful Life'?"

Trebek apparently wasn't certain that Friday's episode would be his last when it was recorded.

The show's executive producer, Mike Richards, told NBC's "Today" show on Monday that Trebek was "an absolute warrior" in his last taping sessions, despite being in "enormous pain."

At the end of the episode, before the video tribute, Trebek says, "see you again next week."

This story has been corrected to say that the video tribute to Trebek played at the end, not the beginning of the episode.

___ Associated Press Writers David Bauder and Lynn Elber contributed.

Follow AP Entertainment Writer Andrew Dalton on Twitter: twitter.com/andyjamesdalton

Democrats plan lightning Trump impeachment, want him out now

By LISA MASCARO, MARY CLARE JALONICK and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Warnings flashing, Democrats in Congress laid plans Friday for swift impeachment of President Donald Trump, demanding decisive, immediate action to ensure an "unhinged" commander in chief can't add to the damage they say he's inflicted or even ignite nuclear war in his final days in office.

As the country comes to terms with the violent siege of the U.S. Capitol by Trump supporters that left five dead, the crisis that appears to be among the final acts of his presidency is deepening like few other periods in the nation's history. With less than two weeks until he's gone, Democrats want him out — now — and he has few defenders speaking up for him in his own Republican party.

"We must take action," House Speaker Nancy Pelosi declared on a private conference call with Democrats.

And one prominent Republican, Sen. Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, told the Anchorage Daily News that Trump simply "needs to get out."

The final days of Trump's presidency are spinning toward a chaotic end as he holes up at the White House, abandoned by many aides, top Republicans and Cabinet members. After refusing to concede defeat in the November election, he has now promised a smooth transfer of power when Democratic President-elect Joe Biden is sworn in on Jan. 20. But even so, he says he will not attend the inauguration — the first such presidential snub since just after the Civil War.

In Congress, where many have watched and reeled as the president spent four years breaking norms

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 67 of 93

and testing the nation's guardrails of democracy, Democrats are unwilling to take further chances with only a few days left in his term. The mayhem that erupted Wednesday at the Capitol stunned the world and threatened the traditional peaceful transfer of power.

Pelosi said she had spoken to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Mark Milley "to discuss available precautions for preventing an unstable president from initiating military hostilities or accessing the launch codes" for nuclear war. She said Milley assured her longstanding safeguards are in place.

The president has sole authority to order the launch of a nuclear weapon, but a military commander could refuse the order if it were determined to be illegal. Trump has not publicly made such threats, but officials warn of grave danger if the president is left unchecked.

"This unhinged president could not be more dangerous," Pelosi said of the current situation.

Biden, meanwhile, said he is focused on his job as he prepares to take office. Asked about impeachment, he said, "That's a decision for the Congress to make."

The Democrats are considering lightning-quick action. A draft of their Articles of Impeachment accuses Trump of abuse of power, saying he "willfully made statements that encouraged — and foreseeably resulted in — imminent lawless action at the Capitol," according to a person familiar with the details who was granted anonymity to discuss them.

The articles are expected to be introduced on Monday, with a House vote as soon as Wednesday.

If Trump were to be impeached by the House and convicted by the Senate, he might also be prevented from running again for the presidency in 2024 or ever holding public office again. He would be only the president twice impeached. A person on the call said Pelosi also discussed other ways Trump might be forced to resign.

Senators from a bipartisan group convened their own call to consider options for congressional action, according to an aide granted anonymity to reveal the private discussions.

Not helpful, the White House argued. Trump spokesman Judd Deere said, "A politically motivated impeachment against a President with 12 days remaining in his term will only serve to further divide our great country."

Trump was tweeting again Friday, his Twitter account reinstated after a brief ban, and he reverted to an aggressive statement that his supporters must not be "disrespected" after he had sent out a calmer Thursday video decrying the violence. Toward evening, Twitter said it was permanently suspending him from its platform, citing "risk of further incitement of violence."

The soonest the Senate could begin an impeachment trial under the current calendar would be Jan. 20, Inauguration Day.

Conviction in the Republican Senate at this late date would seem unlikely, though in a sign of Trump's shattering of the party many Republicans were silent on the issue.

One Trump ally, Republican Minority Leader Rep. Kevin McCarthy of California, did speak up, saying as the White House did that "impeaching the President with just 12 days left in his term will only divide our country more."

McCarthy said he has reached out to Biden and plans to speak with the Democratic president-elect about working together to "lower the temperature."

But Murkowski said she wants Trump to resign now, not wait for Biden's swearing in on Jan. 20.

"I want him out," she said in a telephone interview with the Anchorage newspaper.

Another leading Republican critic of Trump, Sen. Ben Sasse of Nebraska, said he would "definitely consider" impeachment.

Strong criticism of Trump, who urged the protesters to march to the Capitol, continued unabated.

"Every day that he remains in office, he is a danger to the Republic," said Rep. Adam Schiff, D-Calif.

Schiff, who led Trump's impeachment in 2019, said in a statement that Trump "lit the fuse which exploded on Wednesday at the Capitol."

Sen. Bernie Sanders, the independent from Vermont, tweeted that some people ask, why impeach a president who has only a few days left in office?

"The answer: Precedent. It must be made clear that no president, now or in the future, can lead an

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 68 of 93

insurrection against the U.S. government," Sanders said.

Pelosi and Democratic Senate leader Chuck Schumer both had private calls with Biden late Friday.

They have called on Vice President Mike Pence and the Cabinet to invoke the 25th Amendment to force Trump from office. It's a process for removing the president and installing the vice president to take over.

Pelosi said later that option remains on the table. But action by Pence or the Cabinet now appears unlikely, especially after two top officials, Education Secretary Betsy DeVos and Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao suddenly resigned in the aftermath of the violence and would no longer be in the Cabinet to make such a case.

Trump had encouraged loyalists at a rally Wednesday at the White House to march on the Capitol where Congress was certifying the Electoral College tally of Biden's election.

The House impeached Trump in 2019, but the Republican-led Senate acquitted him in early 2020.

Associated Press writers Alan Fram and Alexandra Jaffe contributed to this report.

'He's on his own': Some Republicans begin to flee from Trump

By STEVE PEOPLES and JONATHAN LEMIRE Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — President Donald Trump's steadfast grip on Republicans in Washington is beginning to crumble, leaving him more politically isolated than at any other point in his turbulent administration.

After riling up a crowd that later staged a violent siege of the U.S. Capitol, Trump appears to have lost some of his strongest allies, including South Carolina Sen. Lindsey Graham. Two Cabinet members and at least a half dozen aides have resigned. A handful of congressional Republicans are openly considering whether to join a renewed push for impeachment.

One GOP senator who has split with Trump in the past called on him to resign and questioned whether she would stay in the party.

"I want him out," Sen. Lisa Murkowski of Alaska told The Anchorage Daily News. "He has caused enough damage."

The insurrection on the heels of a bruising election loss in Georgia accomplished what other low points in Trump's presidency did not: force Republicans to fundamentally reassess their relationship with a leader who has long abandoned tradition and decorum. The result could reshape the party, threatening the influence that Trump craves while creating a divide between those in Washington and activists in swaths of the country where the president is especially popular.

"At this point, I won't defend him anymore," said Ari Fleischer, a former White House press secretary for George W. Bush and a GOP strategist who voted for Trump. "I won't defend him for stirring the pot that incited the mob. He's on his own."

When the week began, Trump was without question the most dominant political force in Republican politics and a 2024 kingmaker, if not the GOP's next presidential nominee himself. On Friday, there was a growing sense that he was forever tarnished — and may be forced from office before his term expires in 12 days.

Absent a resignation, calls for a second impeachment on Capitol Hill grew louder on Friday. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said Congress would proceed with impeachment proceedings unless Trump leaves office "imminently and willingly."

President-elect Joe Biden isn't putting his weight behind the effort yet, suggesting there's not enough time between now and his Jan. 20 inauguration to pursue impeachment or any other constitutional remedy.

"I am focused now, on us taking control as president and vice president, on the 20th and getting our agenda moving as quickly as we can," Biden told reporters.

Trump still has supporters, especially among the many rank-and-file Republican voters and conservative activists beyond Washington.

On Thursday morning, there was loud applause and shouts of "We love you!" when Trump phoned into a breakfast meeting of the Republican National Committee in Florida.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 69 of 93

"The vast majority of the committee is in full denial," said Republican National Committee member Bill Palatucci, of New Jersey, who attended the breakfast. "They're willing to condemn the violence, but without any reference to the president's role in any of it."

The president insists he did nothing wrong. He continues to tell aides, privately at least, that the election was stolen from him. Republican officials in critical battleground states, his recently departed attorney general and a series of judges — including those appointed by Trump — have rejected those claims as meritless.

Trump had to be convinced to record the video released Thursday night in which he finally condemned the rioters and acknowledged his November defeat for the first time, while initially pushing back at the prospect of speaking negatively of "my people."

He ultimately agreed to record the video after White House counsel Pat Cipollone warned that he could face legal jeopardy for inciting the riot. Others, including chief of staff Mark Meadows and his daughter Ivanka Trump, urged Trump to send out a message that may quell the talk of his forcible ouster from office, either by impeachment or constitutional procedures outlined in the 25th Amendment.

And while Trump acknowledged in the video that a new administration would take over on Jan. 20, he also said Friday that he would not attend Biden's inauguration. That makes Trump the first outgoing president since Andrew Johnson 152 years ago to skip the swearing-in of his successor.

Trump has no plans to disappear from the political debate once he leaves office, according to aides who believe he remains wildly popular among the Republican rank-and-file.

Lest there be any doubt, Trump's false claims about voter fraud in his November loss resonated with hundreds of thousands of Republican voters in Georgia's Senate runoff elections this week. About 7 in 10 agreed with his false assertion that Biden was not the legitimately elected president, according to AP VoteCast, a survey of more than 3,700 voters.

Leading Republican pollster Frank Luntz has had extensive conversations with grassroots voters and Republican officials about Trump's standing since the siege.

"The professionals are running away from a sinking ship, but his own supporters have not abandoned him, and they actually want him to fight on," Luntz said. "He's become the voice of God for tens of millions of people, and they will follow him to the ends of the earth and off the cliff."

And because of the voters' continued loyalty, elected officials in deep red areas must remain loyal to the outgoing president as well, even if his own Cabinet does not. In the hours after this week's riot, 147 Republicans in Congress still voted to reject Biden's victory, including eight senators.

The dramatic split in the party is reflected within the divergent paths adopted by the early slate of 2024 Republican presidential prospects.

Sens. Josh Hawley, of Missouri, and Ted Cruz, of Texas, embraced Trump's calls to reject Biden's victory before and after the mob attack. Arkansas Sen. Tom Cotton resisted Trump's wishes, drawing an angry tweet from the president earlier in the week.

Such attacks didn't carry as much weight at the end of the week as they once did given Trump's weakened political state. On Thursday, Cotton chastised Republican colleagues like Hawley and Cruz, who had given voters "false hope" that Trump's November loss could be overturned.

Nikki Haley, who served as the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations under Trump, tried to toe the line as she condemned Trump's actions this week during a closed-door meeting with the Republican National Committee.

She lauded some of Trump's accomplishments but predicted that, "His actions since Election Day will be judged harshly by history."

Meanwhile, there is no clear path for the Republican Party without Trump. Speaking to reporters on Friday, even Biden raised concerns about the health of the GOP.

"We need a Republican Party," Biden said, noting that he spoke with Republican Sen. Mitt Romney, a leading Trump critic. "We need an opposition that's principled and strong."

Meanwhile, Trump has been plotting ways to retain his political clout once he moves from the White House to his Florida estate, Mar-a-Lago, later in the month.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 70 of 93

Believing his supporters will stick with him no matter what, he has continued to discuss encouraging primary challenges against Republicans who haven't been sufficiently loyal to him. And he has hinted publicly and privately that he will likely challenge Biden in a 2024 rematch, though losing his powerful Twitter account — which was suspended by the company on Friday — could complicate his efforts to rule the Republican party by fear.

Doug Deason, a Texas-based donor who served on the Trump campaign's finance committee, said this week's events have done nothing to shake his confidence in the Republican president.

"He has been the best President in my lifetime, including Reagan," Deason said.

Associated Press writers Meg Kinnard in Columbia, South Carolina, and Darlene Superville in Wilmington, Delaware contributed to this report.

State lawmaker charged after entering Capitol with rioters

By CUNEYT DIL Associated Press

CHARLESTON, W.Va. (AP) — A Republican West Virginia state lawmaker has been federally charged for entering a restricted area of the U.S. Capitol after he livestreamed himself rushing into the building with a mob of President Donald Trump's supporters.

Ken Kohl, a top deputy federal prosecutor in Washington, announced the case against state Del. Derrick Evans on a call in which he presented dozens of new charges against members of the crowd that violently stormed the Capitol on Wednesday.

Evans, 35, appeared before a federal judge in Huntington, West Virginia, on Friday afternoon after being arrested. If convicted, he faces up to a year and a half in federal prison for two misdemeanors: entering a restricted area and disorderly conduct.

Federal Magistrate Judge Cheryl Eifert released him on his own recognizance. Wearing a hoodie and a face mask to protect against the coronavirus, Evans did not answer reporters' questions as he left the courthouse and quickly got into a vehicle.

A growing number of Republicans and Democrats said they want to expel Evans from the legislature if he does not resign. His lawyer, John Bryan, said late Thursday that the lawmaker was acting as an amateur journalist recording the day's events and that he was not involved in violence. He said Evans didn't commit a crime and doesn't plan to step down. Bryan didn't comment on the charges Friday.

Video from television station WSAZ showed FBI agents escorting the handcuffed lawmaker from a home.

"He's a fine man. And thank you, Mr. Trump, for inviting a riot at the White House," a woman identifying herself as Evans' grandmother told station reporters as her grandson was being taken into custody.

Legislators from at least seven other states traveled to Washington, D.C., to back Trump and demonstrate against the counting of electoral votes confirming Democrat Joe Biden's victory.

It's unknown if any other elected official joined the attack on the Capitol.

In Tennessee, legislation was introduced Friday that would require state authorities to investigate any resident who participated in Wednesday's events. The proposal from Democratic state Rep. London Lamar also states that any "seditious and treasonous acts" at the U.S. Capitol by an elected official would constitute grounds for immediate removal.

The legislation comes days after Republican Tennessee state Rep. Terri Lynn Weaver attended the demonstrations, which she described as "epic." It's unclear if Weaver entered the Capitol.

Evans joined and encouraged a crowd unlawfully entering the Capitol after days of telling his 30,000 Facebook followers to "Fight For Trump" in D.C. on Wednesday, FBI agent David DiMarco wrote in a criminal complaint.

Before the rush to the Capitol, Evans posted a video in which he said, "They're making an announcement right now: If Pence betrays us you better get your mind right because we're storming that building," the charging documents state. He then laughs and adds, "I'm just the messenger, so don't be hating on me."

In a now-deleted video that was widely shared online, Evans is seen clamoring inside a jam-packed Capitol

building doorway, trying with others to push his way inside. He hollers along with other Trump loyalists and fist-bumps a law enforcement officer who let them in.

After pushing into the building, video shows Evans milling around the Capitol Rotunda, where historic paintings depict the republic's founding, and imploring others to not vandalize artwork and busts. Some of the pieces were later vandalized.

"Our house!" Evans yells inside Capitol halls. "I don't know where we're going. I'm following the crowd."

Associated Press journalists Michael Balsamo in Washington, D.C., and Kimberlee Kruesi in Nashville, Tennessee, contributed to this report.

Deadly siege focuses attention on Capitol Police

By MATTHEW DALY and MICHAEL BALSAMO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The police were badly outnumbered.

Only a few dozen guarded the West front of the U.S. Capitol when they were rushed by thousands of pro-Trump demonstrators bent on breaking into the building.

Armed with metal pipes, pepper spray and other weapons, the mob pushed past the thin police line, and one protester hurled a fire extinguisher at a officer, according to video widely circulated on YouTube.

"They're getting into the Capitol tonight! They're getting in," the man filming shouts in delight.

They breached the line moments later, and rioters soon broke into the building, taking over the House and Senate chambers and running wild in Statuary Hall and other hallowed symbols of democracy. The mob ransacked the place, smashing windows and waving Trump, American and Confederate flags. The lawmakers who were voting to affirm President-elect Joe Biden's victory were forced into hiding for hours.

Throughout the melee, police officers were injured, mocked, ridiculed and threatened. One Capitol Police officer, Brian Sicknick, died Thursday night from injuries suffered during the riot. The melee was instigated by a mob of supporters of President Donald Trump who have professed their love of law enforcement and derided the mass police reform protests that shook the nation last year following the police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis.

"We backed you guys in the summer," one protester screamed at three officers backed against a door by dozens of men screaming for them to get out of their way. "When the whole country hated you, we had your back!"

The rampage shocked the world and left the country on edge, forcing the resignations of three top Capitol security officials over the failure to stop the breach. Lawmakers have demanded a review of operations and an FBI briefing over what they called a "terrorist attack."

Sicknick was the fifth person to die because of the Capitol protest violence.

One protester, a woman from California, was shot to death by Capitol Police, and three other people died after "medical emergencies" related to the breach, including at least who died of an apparent heart attack.

Sicknick, 42, was hit in the head with a fire extinguisher during a struggle, two law enforcement officials said, although it was not clear if he was the officer shown in the video. The officials could not discuss the ongoing investigation publicly and spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity.

Another disturbing video shows a bloodied police officer screaming for help as he's crushed by protesters inside the Capitol building. The young officer is pinned between a riot shield and metal door. Bleeding from the mouth, he cries out in pain and screams, "Help!"

Other images show police completely overwhelmed by protesters who shoved, kicked and punched their way into the building. In one stunning video, a lone police officer tries to hold off a mob of demonstrators from cracking into the lobby. He fails.

Protesters attacked police with pipes, sprayed irritants and even planted live bombs found in the area.

Sicknick's family said Friday that he had wanted to be a police officer his entire life. He served in the New Jersey Air National Guard before joining the Capitol Police in 2008. Many details regarding the incident remain unknown, and Sicknick's family urged the public and news media not to make his death a

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 72 of 93

political issue.

Still, the riot — and Sicknick's death — focused renewed attention on Capitol Police, a force of more than 2,300 officers and civilian employees that protects the Capitol, lawmakers, staff and visitors. The agency has an annual budget of about \$515 million.

Three days before the riot, the Pentagon offered National Guard manpower. And as the mob descended on the building Wednesday, Justice Department leaders reached out to offer up FBI agents. Capitol Police turned them down both times, according to senior defense officials and two people familiar with the matter.

Despite plenty of warnings of a possible insurrection and ample resources and time to prepare, police planned only for a free speech demonstration.

Like many other agencies, the Capitol Police have been hit hard by COVID-19, with frequent schedule changes for officers and many forced to work overtime to fill out rosters. The pandemic has put the police under strain going into the new session of Congress and the Jan. 20 inauguration of President-elect Joe Biden.

Capitol Police Chief Steven Sund, who resigned Thursday under pressure from House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and other congressional leaders, defended his department's response, saying officers "acted valiantly when faced with thousands of individuals involved in violent riotous actions." Two other top security officials, Senate Sergeant at Arms Michael Stenger and House Sergeant at Arms Paul Irving, also resigned.

By Friday, prosecutors had filed 14 cases in federal district court and 40 others in the District of Columbia Superior Court for a variety of offenses ranging from assaulting police officers to entering restricted areas of the U.S. Capitol, stealing federal property and threatening lawmakers. Prosecutors said additional cases remained under seal, dozens of other people were being sought by federal agents and the U.S. attorney in Washington vowed that "all options were on the table" for charges, including possibly sedition.

Among those charged was Richard Barnett, an Arkansas man who was shown in a widely seen photo sitting in Pelosi's office with his boots on the desk. He also wrote a disparaging note to Pelosi. Acting Attorney General Jeffrey Rosen called the photo of Barnett a "shocking image" and "repulsive."

"Those who are proven to have committed criminal acts during the storming of the Capitol will face justice," Rosen said.

Also charged was a West Virginia state lawmaker who posted videos online showing himself pushing his way inside the Capitol, fist bumping with a police officer and then milling around the Rotunda as he shouted "Our house!" The lawmaker, Derrick Evans, was arrested by the FBI at his home on Friday and charged with entering restricted federal property.

Gus Papathanasiou, chairman of the Capitol Police Officers' Union, said he was "incredibly proud of the individual officers whose actions protected the lives of hundreds of members of Congress and their staff."

Once the breach of the Capitol building was inevitable, officers prioritized lives over property, leading people to safety, he said. "Not one member of Congress or their staff was injured. Our officers did their jobs. Our leadership did not. Our law enforcement partners that assisted us were remarkable."

Rep. Tim Ryan, D-Ohio, who leads a subcommittee that oversees the Capitol Police budget, said Friday that rank-and-file officers "were put in a incredibly dangerous situation. And that's really where my frustration comes in."

Sund and other leaders are charged with protecting lawmakers, "but also making sure that the rank-and-file members are put in situations where they're as safe as possible and they have the support that they need. And that clearly isn't the case," Ryan said.

Pelosi ordered flags at the Capitol lowered to half-staff in Sicknick's honor.

Associated Press writers Lisa Mascaro in Washington, Nomaan Merchant in Houston and Derek Karikari in New York contributed to this report.

Colorado officers won't be charged for detaining Black girls

By COLLEEN SLEVIN and PATTY NIEBERG Associated Press

DENVER (AP) — Suburban Denver police officers won't be charged after detaining four Black girls by gunpoint this summer and handcuffing two of them after wrongly suspecting they were riding in a stolen car, prosecutors said Friday.

The same day, the Colorado attorney general opened a grand jury investigation into the death of Elijah McClain, a 23-year-old Black man who was stopped as he walked down the street, placed in a neck hold and injected with a sedative in 2019.

Both involved officers from the Aurora Police Department and drew national attention during America's reckoning over racism and police brutality.

Months after video of the girls laying face down in a parking lot — some in tears — spread on social media, a review by the district attorney's office found no evidence beyond a reasonable doubt that the officers acted unlawfully during the Aug. 2 traffic stop.

However, Chief Deputy District Attorney Clinton McKinzie called it "disturbing" and urged the Police Department to review its policies to ensure something similar doesn't happen again.

"What happened to the innocent occupants is unacceptable and preventable," McKinzie wrote.

Police eventually determined the car carrying the girls, who ranged from 6 to 17, had the same license plate number as a motorcycle they were seeking from another state.

One officer, Madisen Moen, had graduated from the police academy two days before and the other, Darian Dasko, was her field training officer, McKinzie said. The prosecutor also said it was difficult for the officers to see who was inside the vehicle partly because of its tinted windows.

David Lane, a lawyer for the driver and the girls, said he wasn't surprised by decision, which he said fits a pattern in Aurora and the U.S.

"When white cops point guns at small Black children, there are no consequences in America," he said.

Lane plans to sue the city and the officers as early as next week under a new police accountability law passed in Colorado during protests over racial injustice. He thinks a local jury familiar with the city and includes more people of color would be more likely to grant justice than a federal jury from a wider area.

Aurora police apologized after video taken by a bystander showed the girls lying on their stomachs, with the 17-year-old and 12-year-old handcuffed behind their backs. The 14-year-old and 6-year-old were lying next to the car.

They can be heard crying and screaming. A woman is seen being led away in handcuffs.

Driver Brittney Gilliam, who had taken her nieces, sister and daughter to a nail salon, has characterized the officers' actions as police brutality.

"There's no excuse why you didn't handle it a different type of way," Gilliam previously told KUSA-TV. "You could have even told them, 'Step off to the side, let me ask your mom or your auntie a few questions so we can get this cleared up.' There was different ways to handle it."

Police are instructed to draw their guns and put people on the ground when dealing with a suspected stolen car, but Police Chief Vanessa Wilson has said they should have changed course after Gilliam said the car was not stolen and that she had children inside. Wilson also ordered an internal investigation.

Meanwhile, Colorado Attorney General Phil Weiser opened a grand jury investigation into McClain's death as part of his probe of the case that started last summer.

"The grand jury is an investigative tool that has the power to compel testimony from witnesses and require production of documents and other relevant information that would otherwise be unavailable," Weiser said in a statement.

Police stopped McClain as he walked home on Aug. 29, 2019, after a 911 caller reported someone wearing a ski mask and waving his hands. His family said McClain wore the mask because he had a blood condition that caused him to get cold easily.

Body-camera video shows an officer telling McClain to stop because he was "being suspicious." The officer tells him to relax, and McClain asks police to let go, saying, "You guys started to arrest me, and I

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 74 of 93

was stopping my music to listen.”

Police say McClain fought back when officers tried to take him into custody. In the video, McClain can be heard saying he couldn't breathe and sometimes crying out or sobbing.

Officers used a neck hold on McClain that's been banned in several places. Paramedics arrived and injected him with ketamine to calm him. McClain suffered cardiac arrest and later was taken off life support.

Gov. Jared Polis ordered Weiser to investigate as protests over the police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis brought new attention to McClain's death. It's one of several reviews by police, city and federal governments.

Lawyer Mari Newman said the McClain family was hopeful Weiser was committed to an impartial investigation but the use of the secretive grand jury process made them to wonder whether law enforcement was being held to a different standard. She noted that sometimes prosecutors steer grand juries away from charges by limiting the evidence they present.

“If the grand jury in Elijah McClain's case doesn't indict the officers and medics responsible for killing him, it will be because the attorney general's office did not want charges to be brought,” she said. “That would be a grave injustice.”

Nieberg is a corps member for the Associated Press/Report for America Statehouse News Initiative. Report for America is a nonprofit national service program that places journalists in local newsrooms to report on undercovered issues.

Republicans recoil from Missouri Sen. Hawley after siege

By THOMAS BEAUMONT and JIM SALTER Associated Press

O'FALLON, Mo. (AP) — A Republican colleague rebuked him on the Senate floor. A home-state newspaper editorial board declared he has “blood on his hands.” But for Josh Hawley, the Missouri senator who staged an Electoral College challenge that became the focus of a violent siege of the U.S. Capitol, the words of his political mentor were the most personal.

“Supporting Josh Hawley ... was the worst decision I've ever made in my life,” former Missouri Sen. John Danforth told The Associated Press on Thursday. “He has consciously appealed to the worst. He has attempted to drive us apart and he has undermined public belief in our democracy. And that's great damage.”

Aside from President Donald Trump, who roiled up supporters just before they stormed the Capitol, no politician has been more publicly blamed for Wednesday's unprecedented assault on American democracy than Hawley. The 41-year-old first-term senator, a second-tier player through much of the Trump era, has rapidly emerged as a strident Trump ally, and may be among the most tarnished by the events of Jan. 6 for years to come.

“There will be political fallout for his actions,” said Alice Stewart, a Republican strategist and former adviser to the 2016 presidential campaign of Texas Sen. Ted Cruz, who like Hawley, drew significant criticism for pushing ahead with the Electoral College challenge.

“The initial decision to oppose the will of the people was downright wrong,” Stewart said. “The post-insurrection calculation to continue the charade is fallacious and dangerous.”

The Kansas City Star went a step further, saying in an editorial posted late Wednesday that no one other than Trump was more responsible than Hawley.

“Assault on democracy: Sen. Josh Hawley has blood on his hands in Capitol coup attempt,” read the headline of the editorial.

Hawley, who defeated Democratic Sen. Claire McCaskill in 2018, was once celebrated by the Republican establishment as a rising star. The Stanford- and Yale- educated lawyer was young, ambitious and savvy. It surprised some when he was first to announce he would endorse false claims of fraud and take up Trump's cause, forcing House and Senate votes that would inevitably fail and in no way alter the election's outcome.

Support of the challenge to the electoral vote count was seen as keeping in good stead with Trump's supporters, who dominate the Republican base. The move instantly raised his national profile. Soon Hawley

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 75 of 93

and Cruz were leading about 10 other senators in the effort — notably not winning over Sens. Ben Sasse of Nebraska or Tom Cotton of Arkansas, two other young Republicans viewed as having presidential ambitions.

As he walked into the Capitol on Wednesday, Hawley cheered on pro-Trump protesters gathering outside the building with a thumbs up and fist pump.

But Hawley's scheme fell apart almost before it got going. As the Senate began debate, pro-Trump mobs barreled into the Capitol and interrupted proceedings. By the time the Senate reconvened, after one woman was shot and killed by police and parts of the Capitol ransacked, support in the Senate for challenging the results had all but evaporated.

Dozens of courts, state elections officials and even Trump's former attorney general have said there was no evidence of widespread election fraud. Still, Hawley asked his Senate colleagues "to address the concerns of so many millions of Americans" by investigating the 2020 vote.

He faced instant rebuke from his own party. Seated near Hawley, Utah Sen. Mitt Romney blasted those who objected to finalizing President-elect Joe Biden's election.

Accusing Trump of inciting insurrection, Romney said "those who choose to continue to support his dangerous gambit by objecting to the results of a legitimate democratic election will forever be seen as being complicit in an unprecedented attack against our democracy."

"That will be their legacy," he added.

President-elect Joe Biden echoed the sentiment, calling Hawley and Cruz "just as responsible" as Trump for Wednesday's violence, during a press conference Friday.

"I think the American public has a real good clear look at who they are. They are part of the big lie," Biden said, stopping short of suggesting they resign. "I think they should just be flat beaten the next time they run."

Hawley's responded with outrage after Biden likened the practice of repeating a falsehood to Nazi propaganda efforts during World War II.

"He is calling me a Nazi," Hawley said. "It is utterly shameful. He should act like a dignified adult and retract these sick comments. And every Democrat member of Congress should be asked to disavow these disgusting comments."

The reaction was similarly combative to Hawley's response after Simon and Schuster announced in a statement Thursday the cancellation of his upcoming book, "The Tyranny of Big Tech," after "his role in what became a dangerous threat to our democracy and freedom."

Hawley called the decision a "direct assault on the First Amendment," in a written statement. "I will fight this cancel culture with everything I have," he said. "We'll see you in court."

In the deeply divided GOP, Romney's and other outraged Republicans' may not be the prevailing view. In Missouri, where Trump won by 15 percentage points, some argued Hawley was blameless.

"For people to blame Sen. Hawley for the people that came up to the Capitol to break the windows — and came wearing helmets and trying to break in — that's absurd," said Republican state Rep. Justin Hill. Hill was the lead sponsor of a Missouri House resolution to reject some states' Electoral College votes and attended Trump's rally before the Capitol riot.

At least one major donor turned on Hawley, calling him a "political opportunist" and urging the Senate to censure him.

David Humphreys, president and CEO of Tamko Building Products in Joplin, Missouri, after contributing millions to Hawley and other GOP candidates, wrote "Hawley's irresponsible, inflammatory, and dangerous tactics have incited violence and further discord across America."

The pile-on continued. The student bar association at the University of Missouri law school, where Hawley taught, issued a statement calling for his resignation.

Danforth, known in the Senate for his cordiality during his three terms, saw "intellectual heft" in Hawley as he urged him to run.

Now Danforth wonders how Hawley will be able to work with his Senate colleagues, even Republicans, moving forward.

"How is he going to get along with his colleagues? How is he going to do anything?" Danforth said. "What's his political future?"

Beaumont reported from Des Moines, Iowa. Associated Press writer David Lieb in Jefferson City, Missouri contributed to this report.

Pelosi's talk of limits on Trump nuke power raises old worry

By ROBERT BURNS AP National Security Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's concern about President Donald Trump potentially ordering the launch of a nuclear weapon in his final days in office highlights a little-known fact: Launch authority rests with the president alone.

It also resurfaces a question with no certain answer: What would happen if a military commander determined, based on legal judgment, that a president's nuclear launch order was illegal? The commander might refuse such an order, but then what?

Trump has given no indication he is considering using nuclear weapons, but Pelosi expressed worry that an "unhinged" president might start a war. She said she spoke Friday to Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, about "available precautions" to prevent Trump from initiating military action or ordering a nuclear launch, and she told colleagues she was given unspecified assurances that there are longstanding safeguards in place.

A spokesman for Milley, Col. Dave Butler, confirmed that Pelosi called Milley. "He answered her questions regarding the process of nuclear command authority," Butler said, declining to reveal details.

Pelosi's concerns highlight the fact, dating to the dawn of the nuclear age in the 1940s, that the president has the sole authority to order a U.S. nuclear attack. None since Harry Truman has done so. The president is not required to gain the consent of anyone else — not within his administration, not in the military, not in the Congress. There are, however, some safeguards that could come into play.

Although it would be unprecedented, a military officer could refuse to obey a president's order to launch a nuclear weapon if a legal assessment concluded that it constituted an illegal act under the internationally recognized laws of armed conflict. This is a murky area, given that the circumstance has never arisen.

"If the military gets an illegitimate order from the president of the United States, the military can and should refuse that order in a situation where it is widely seen that the president is unfit and incapable of making a rational decision," said Tom Z. Collina, co-author with former Defense Secretary William J. Perry of a book, "The Button," about nuclear dangers and presidential command authority.

Under existing procedures, a president who was considering the need to use nuclear weapons would be expected to consult with advisers, most likely to include the secretary of defense, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the commander of U.S. Strategic Command, which has operational control over the nuclear arsenal. Various assessments would be made, including the legal aspects of strike options.

The current arrangement in which sole authority to order a nuclear launch rests with the president is not written in law. It was created by Truman as a means to keep decisions about use of the world's most dangerous weapons in civilian rather than military hands. The authority is considered inherent in a president's constitutional role as commander in chief.

During the Cold War, the prospect of nuclear war meant having to respond within minutes to a wave of Soviet missiles zeroing in on the United States. Time would be of the essence. Thus it seemed to make sense to leave the decision to one person, without the need for time-consuming consultations with Congress.

But times have changed. Some argue that the traditional "sole-authority" approach must change, too.

"Once in office, a president gains the absolute authority to start a nuclear war," Collina and Perry wrote in a Politico opinion article published Friday. "Within minutes, Trump can unleash hundreds of atomic bombs, or just one. He does not need a second opinion."

Collina, Perry and others have been pushing for Congress to alter the nuclear command authority so that it is shared between the president and the Congress.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 77 of 93

The issue has been raised repeatedly during Trump's presidency. In November 2017 the Senate Foreign Relations Committee held a public hearing on the subject — the first hearing of its kind in several decades.

Testifying at that hearing, a former commander of U.S. nuclear forces, retired Air Force Gen. Robert Kehler, was asked what would happen if a president ordered a nuclear strike, for whatever reason, and the four-star general at Strategic Command balked or refused, believing it to be illegal.

"You'd be in a very interesting constitutional situation," Kehler replied.

Also in November 2017, the Air Force general who was commanding Strategic Command at the time raised the possibility of having to refuse an illegal launch order. That officer, Gen. John Hyten, who is now the vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, stressed that in any circumstance the military is obliged to only follow legal orders.

"I provide advice to the president," Hyten said. "He'll tell me what to do, and if it's illegal, guess what's going to happen? I'm gonna say, 'Mr. President, that's illegal.' Guess what he's going to do? He's going to say, 'What would be legal?' And we'll come up with options of a mix of capabilities to respond to whatever the situation is, and that's the way it works. It's not that complicated."

Biden calls Trump 'unfit' but doesn't endorse impeachment

By WILL WEISSERT and DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

WILMINGTON, Del. (AP) — President-elect Joe Biden said Friday that President Donald Trump isn't "fit for the job," but he repeatedly refused to endorse growing Democratic calls to impeach him a second time.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said in a letter to members of her chamber that lawmakers could move as early as next week to impeach Trump for inciting a violent mob that overran the U.S. Capitol if the president didn't "immediately" resign. Pelosi and Democratic Senate leader Chuck Schumer also have called on Vice President Mike Pence and the Cabinet to invoke the 25th Amendment to force Trump from office — a process for stripping the president of his post and installing the vice president to take over.

Addressing reporters in his home state of Delaware after an event introducing some of his Cabinet choices, Biden noted that a key reason he ran for president was because he'd "thought for a long, long time that President Trump wasn't fit for the job."

"I've been saying for now, well, over a year, he's not fit to serve," Biden said. "He's one of the most incompetent presidents in the history of the United States of America."

But he refused to back efforts to remove Trump from the White House and insisted that impeachment was up to Congress. Instead, Biden said he was focused on the start of his own administration on Jan. 20, and he said his top three priorities are beating back the coronavirus, distributing vaccines fairly and equitably and reviving the struggling economy.

His comments laid bare the political balance Biden has worked to strike in the months since winning the presidential election. He has continued to sharply criticize Trump and nearly every facet of his administration but also worked to keep the public's attention focused on what the new administration will do rather than indulging recriminations against the last one.

Biden nonetheless conceded that Trump "exceeded my worst notions about him. He's been an embarrassment" and likened the "damage done to our reputation around the world" to "tin horn dictatorships." The president-elect also suggested that a key hurdle to removing Trump was that he has less than two weeks remaining in his term.

"If we were six months out, we should be doing everything to get him out of office. Impeaching him again, trying to evoke the 25th Amendment, whatever it took," Biden said. "But I am focused now on us taking control as president and vice president on the 20th and to get our agenda moving as quickly as we can."

Trump would be the only president to be impeached twice. The House impeached him in late 2019, but the Republican-led Senate acquitted him. Removal from office could also prevent Trump from running for president in 2024, or ever holding the presidency again.

Most Democrats, and many Republicans, put the blame squarely on Trump after hundreds of protesters broke into the Capitol on Wednesday and caused destruction and mass evacuations. The president had

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 78 of 93

urged his supporters to protest as Congress was counting the electoral votes that confirmed Biden's win. Five people died, including a Capitol Police officer.

Biden called what happened a "god-awful debacle" and said it had "the active encouragement of the president of the United States."

The president-elect's comments came hours after Trump tweeted that he planned to skip Biden's inauguration, becoming the first president in more than 150 years — and just the fourth in U.S. history — to do so. Biden said he'd be "honored" to have Pence at the swearing-in, but didn't feel the same way about Trump.

That's "one of the few things he and I have ever agreed on," Biden said. "It's a good thing, him not showing up."

Also Friday, Biden called on the Senate — which Democrats won narrow control of thanks to a pair of runoff election victories in Georgia earlier this week — to confirm his Cabinet choices "promptly and fairly."

"Given what our country's been through the last few days," Biden said, "they should be confirmed as close to Jan 20 as possible."

Weissert reported from Washington.

Trump joins a select few in skipping Biden's inauguration

By KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump's decision to skip President-elect Joe Biden's inauguration is not without precedent, though one must go back to Andrew Johnson in 1869 to find the most recent example.

John Adams and John Quincy Adams also opted not to participate in a tradition that began with George Washington.

The White House Historical Association points out that John Adams was never formally invited by his successor, Thomas Jefferson, to the event and perhaps didn't want to impose. The association also noted it was the first time the presidency was transferred to an opposing party and "he may have wanted to avoid provoking violence between Federalists and Democratic-Republicans."

Following in his father's footsteps, John Quincy Adams officially departed the White House on the evening of March 3, the day before the inauguration of President Andrew Jackson. Jackson has been in Washington for about three weeks. He did not call on Adams, nor did Adams invite Jackson to the White House.

Some four decades later, President-elect Ulysses S. Grant refused to ride with President Andrew Johnson from the White House to the Capitol for the ceremony. When it was suggested that two carriages carry them separately, Johnson said he would simply not attend the ceremonies, remaining instead at the White House with friends and colleagues and signing last-minute legislation.

"To me, he is much, much different from the two Adamases in that they truly were statesmen and they just had their reasons to be bitter. But they weren't bad men," said Barbara Perry, director of presidential studies at the University of Virginia. "Johnson was a bad man and a bad president."

Perry said she is "quite forgiving" of the first Adams because the tradition of attending a successor's inauguration was just beginning, but less so for his son.

She said that over time it has become important symbolically and substantively for outgoing presidents to attend the inauguration of their successor. It reinforces the concept of a peaceful transition of power, but it also tells potential adversaries to be wary of trying to take advantage of the change.

"We pride ourselves on this peaceful transition of power, but also don't fool with us, don't think that because we're transferring power from one man to another, one party to another, or because we've had a controversial election, that we're enfeebled and that we're weak and that you can attack us," Perry said.

Notwithstanding Johnson's decision to skip the inauguration of Grant, the tradition of an outgoing president attending the inaugural ceremonies took on greater importance after the Civil War, said presidential historian Douglas Brinkley.

"It's the ultimate healing gesture. It's the genius of American reconciliation," Brinkley said. "It's with sadness that Trump seems unable to admit defeat and be large enough to wish the new president good luck.

"But, on the other hand, given what has just happened at the Capitol, you know, the insurrection of the Capitol with Trump's culpability, the nation may be better off with him not being a part of the healing, because he may have been the cancer on the national ward."

In more modern times, Richard Nixon didn't attend Gerald Ford's swearing-in, but there was no pomp and circumstance on that occasion. Rather, Ford was administered the oath of office in the White House East Room shortly after Nixon had tendered his resignation to avoid impeachment.

Perry said she is not surprised by Trump's decision, but she also believes that many people on both sides of the political aisle are probably good with it.

Biden, in fact, said he was happy to have Trump stay away.

Perry added: "Because he is such a polarizing figure, the people who oppose him don't want to see him there. The people who support him don't want to see him there because they don't want him lending legitimacy to Joe Biden or the incoming administration. They want to keep fighting."

Study suggests Pfizer vaccine works against virus variant

By LAURAN NEERGAARD AP Medical Writer

New research suggests Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine can protect against a mutation found in the two more-contagious variants of the coronavirus that have erupted in Britain and South Africa.

The study was preliminary and did not look at the two other major vaccines being used in the West — Moderna's and AstraZeneca's. But it was reassuring, given questions of whether the virus could mutate to defeat the shots on which the world has pinned its hopes.

"There's no reason to think the vaccines won't work just as well on these strains," said Dr. Frederic Bushman of the University of Pennsylvania, who tracks how the virus mutates.

The mutated version circulating in Britain has also been detected in the U.S. and numerous other countries. That and the variant seen in South Africa are causing global concern because they appear to spread more easily — although how much more isn't yet known.

Bushman, who wasn't involved with the Pfizer study, cautioned that it tested just one vaccine against one worrisome mutation. But the Moderna and AstraZeneca vaccines are undergoing similar testing, and he said he expects similar findings.

That's because all the vaccines so far are prompting recipients' bodies to make antibodies against multiple spots on the spike protein that coats the virus.

"A mutation will change one little place, but it's not going to disrupt binding to all of them," Bushman explained.

While scientists did not expect that a single mutation would completely upend efforts to stop the pandemic, it is still an important area of study because the coronavirus, like all viruses, constantly evolves. This study marks just the beginning of continual monitoring to make sure that all the vaccines being rolled out around the world continue to work.

The study looked at one modification to the spike protein that both variants share, called N501Y, that is believed responsible for the easier transmission. Pfizer and researchers from the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston conducted laboratory tests to see if that mutation could thwart the vaccine.

They used blood samples from 20 people who received the vaccine, made by Pfizer and its German partner BioNTech, during a large trial of the shots. Antibodies from those recipients fended off the virus in lab dishes, according to the study, posted late Thursday on an online site for researchers.

The findings have not yet been reviewed by outside experts, a key step for medical research.

But "it was a very reassuring finding that at least this mutation, which was one of the ones people are most concerned about, does not seem to be a problem" for the vaccine, said Pfizer chief scientific officer Dr. Philip Dormitzer.

Viruses constantly undergo minor changes as they spread from person to person.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 80 of 93

Dr. Anthony Fauci, the top U.S. infectious disease expert, told The Associated Press this week that the coronavirus variants don't appear to block vaccine-induced antibodies but that testing to be sure of that is underway in the U.S. and elsewhere.

British scientists have likewise said the variant found in the U.K. — which has become the dominant type in parts of England — still seems to be susceptible to vaccines.

But the variant discovered in South Africa has an additional mutation that has scientists on edge, one named E484K. The Pfizer study found that the vaccine appeared to work against 15 additional possible mutations, but E484K wasn't among those tested. Dormitzer said it is next on the list.

South Africa has not started mass vaccinations.

If the virus eventually mutates enough that the vaccine needs adjusting — much like flu shots are adjusted most years — tweaking the recipe wouldn't be difficult for vaccines made with newer technologies. Both the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines are made with a piece of the virus genetic code that is simple to switch.

The coronavirus isn't changing as rapidly as other viruses such as flu or HIV, and its structure is more stable than the flu's, Bushman said, although that will need to be tracked.

"My guess is vaccination will stick longer and be more effective than it is for influenza," he said.

Meanwhile, U.S. health regulators said Friday they think there is a low risk that the new variants could hurt the accuracy of hundreds of COVID-19 tests on the market.

Food and Drug Administration chief Stephen Hahn said the agency has been monitoring the virus since the summer for any mutations that could skew testing results. So far, most tests that look for the virus's genetic code remain accurate, but the agency is also studying whether viral mutations could affect rapid tests that look for COVID-19 proteins, called antigens.

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GOP's David Perdue concedes to Jon Ossoff in Georgia runoff

By BEN NADLER Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Democratic control of the U.S. Senate came one step closer to fruition Friday after Georgia Republican David Perdue conceded his runoff loss to Democrat Jon Ossoff.

A day earlier, the GOP's Kelly Loeffler conceded to Democrat Raphael Warnock in Georgia's other Senate race.

Perdue thanked supporters in a statement before acknowledging his loss in Tuesday's election, saying "I want to congratulate the Democratic Party and my opponent for this runoff win."

After their contentious race marked by sharp personal attacks, Perdue's statement did not mention Ossoff by name.

A spokesperson for Ossoff's campaign said the Democrat had not received a call from Perdue and that they learned about his concession from media reports.

The victory means Ossoff, 33, will be the youngest sitting member of the U.S. Senate and the state's first Jewish senator.

Perdue, a close ally of President Donald Trump, was first elected to the Senate in 2014. He led Ossoff by about 88,000 votes in November's general election, but failed to top 50% required to avoid the runoff.

When Georgia's two Senate contests went into overtime, Ossoff was buoyed by the national implications of the race as well as Trump's continued false attacks on the election results.

The wins by Ossoff and Warnock mark a striking shift in Georgia's political landscape, which has been dominated by Republicans for years. President-elect Joe Biden became the first Democratic presidential candidate to carry the state since 1992 after his victory in November.

Ossoff and Warnock will be officially sworn in after the results of the election are certified. Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger has until Jan. 22 to certify results, though it could be done earlier.

The Democratic victories in Georgia will yield a 50-50 split in the Senate, giving the tie-breaking vote to Vice President-elect Kamala Harris.

Woman who wrongly accused Black teen is arrested, apologizes

NEW YORK (AP) — A woman who wrongly accused a Black teenager of stealing her phone and tackled him while being filmed at a New York City hotel apologized but defended her actions in a television interview conducted before she was arrested in California.

"I consider myself to be super sweet," Miya Ponsetto, 22, said in a "CBS This Morning" interview that aired Friday.

"I don't feel that that is who I am as a person. I don't feel like this one mistake does define me," she said. "But I do sincerely from the bottom of my heart apologize that if I made the son feel as if I assaulted him or if I hurt his feelings or the father's feelings."

The interview was conducted Thursday afternoon, hours before Ponsetto was jailed in Ventura County. A spokesperson for the sheriff's office there said it wasn't immediately clear what charges she faced. The office earlier said she might be charged with resisting arrest.

The New York Police Department flew detectives to California earlier Thursday with a warrant for Ponsetto's arrest. The trip followed days of intense media coverage of the fracas at the hotel and demands by the teen's family and activists that she face criminal charges.

Ponsetto's lawyer, Sharen Ghatan, said in an interview before the arrest that her client was "emotionally unwell" and remorseful for her Dec. 26 conflict with 14-year-old Keyon Harrold Jr. at Manhattan's Arlo Hotel. Ghatan said the encounter was not racially motivated.

The teen's father, jazz trumpeter Keyon Harrold, recorded the confrontation and put the video online.

In his video, an agitated woman demands the teenager's phone, claiming he stole it. A hotel manager tries to intervene. Keyon Harrold tells the woman to leave his son alone. Ghatan confirmed Ponsetto is the woman in the video.

Security video later released by the NYPD shows Ponsetto frantically grabbing at the teenager as he tried to get away from her through the hotel's front door. She clutches him from behind, and both tumble to the ground.

Ponsetto's missing phone had actually been left in an Uber and was returned by the driver shortly afterward, Keyon Harrold has said.

In the CBS interview, Ponsetto said she had been approaching people exiting the hotel, thinking she was doing her part as a hotel manager reviewed video footage.

"I admit, yes, I could have approached the situation differently," she said, recalling that she yelled at the teenager because the phone she lost had information she needed to return home after visiting family during the holidays.

She said she admitted yelling at him.

"OK. I apologize. Can we move on?" she told the morning program, insisting she saw no crime.

"How is one girl accusing a guy about a phone a crime?" she asked.

The altercation drew comparisons to cases like that of Amy Cooper, a white woman who was charged with filing a false report for calling 911 and saying she was being threatened by "an African American man" during a dispute in New York's Central Park in May.

Ventura County sheriff's deputies arrested Ponsetto after spotting her driving near her home in Piru, northwest of Los Angeles, said department Capt. Eric Buschow.

She drove two blocks before stopping her vehicle, then refused to get out of the car, Buschow said.

"She tried to slam the door on one of the deputies and that's when they just reached in and forcibly removed her," he said, adding that the sheriff's office would ask county prosecutors to charge her with resisting arrest.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 82 of 93

Donald, Kelce unanimous AP All-Pros; Rodgers, Henry chosen

By BARRY WILNER AP Pro Football Writer

Dynamic defensive star Aaron Donald and unstoppable tight end Travis Kelce were unanimous choices Friday for The Associated Press NFL All-Pro Team.

Green Bay quarterback Aaron Rodgers was selected for the third time, finishing ahead of Kansas City's Patrick Mahomes in voting from a nationwide panel of 50 media members who regularly cover the league. Last season's Super Bowl MVP shared second-team honors with Josh Allen of Buffalo.

Tennessee running back Derrick Henry, who ran for 2,027 yards to win his second consecutive rushing title, was named All-Pro for the first time after leading the AFC South champion Titans to their first division title in 12 years.

"Very consistent, very durable, very impressive," coach Mike Vrabel said of the NFL's first winner of back-to-back rushing titles since Hall of Famer LaDainian Tomlinson in 2006-07.

Donald, who has helped the Los Angeles Rams to the top-ranked defense in the NFL, earned his sixth All-Pro selection. It was the third for Kansas City's record-setting Kelce.

"I think the best display of greatness is making people around you better," Rams coach Sean McVay said of Donald. "And that's exactly what he does, by the way he influences them every single week."

Mahomes lauded Kelce for the way he approaches his job.

"For a guy to have that much talent, work that hard and be able to learn really every single day like that, that's what makes him so special on the field," Mahomes said.

Joining Donald and Kelce were 15 players returning to the squad, and 14 newcomers. Seattle linebacker Bobby Wagner also made his sixth squad.

"The marvelous durability that he's demonstrated for middle linebacker after all these years is just off the charts," Seahawks coach Pete Carroll said.

Kansas City receiver Tyreek Hill is now a three-time All-Pro along with Rodgers, among the favorites to win MVP after guiding the Packers (13-3) to the top seed in the NFC.

Joining Henry as first-time choices among skill players were Buffalo wideout Stefon Diggs, who led the NFL in catches and yards receiving, and Rodgers' favorite target, Davante Adams.

"For me, honestly, I think it's just been finding different small things that I can get better at," Adams says. "I feel like I'm a pretty complete receiver. ... It's just fine-tuning the things I do well and just figuring out a way to do them even better."

Diggs was traded by Minnesota to Buffalo in the offseason and made a huge impact as the Bills won their first AFC East title in 25 years.

"For me, it was just in whatever situation I was going to be put in or chosen in, I was just going to embrace," said Diggs, who finished the regular season with 127 catches for 1,535 yards and eight touchdowns.

The Packers and Colts led all teams with four All-Pros apiece. Green Bay left tackle David Bakhtiari, who is out for the playoffs after injuring a knee in practice during the final week of the regular season, made it for the second time. Center Corey Linsley was a first-time selection.

Indianapolis has interior lineman DeForest Buckner and linebacker Darius Leonard on the defense, left guard Quenton Nelson on offense, and George Odum as the special teamer. Nelson is a three-time All-Pro, Leonard a double selection, while Buckner and Odum made it for the first time.

Rounding out the offense were Cleveland right tackle Jack Conklin (second selection), and Washington right guard Brandon Scherff (first).

Also on defense were edge rushers T.J. Watt, the NFL's sacks leader for Pittsburgh who is on his second All-Pro Team, and newcomer Myles Garrett of Cleveland; San Francisco linebacker Fred Warner (first selection); cornerbacks Xavien Howard (first) of Miami, the league's interception leader, and Jalen Ramsey (second) of the Rams; and safeties Tyrann Mathieu (third) of Kansas City, Minkah Fitzpatrick of Pittsburgh and Budda Baker of Arizona, both for the second time. There was a tie between Fitzpatrick and Baker for the second safety spot.

The long snapper position is new to the All-Pro Team in 2020, and Baltimore's Morgan Cox was the

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 83 of 93

choice. Chicago kick returner Cordarrelle Patterson made it for the fourth time. The rest of the special teams positions were newcomers: Miami kicker Jason Sanders, New England punter Jake Bailey and punt returner Gunner Olszewski.

Repeaters from 2019 were Donald, Wagner, Nelson, Watt, Fitzpatrick, Mathieu and Patterson.

In all, 18 players represent the AFC, which is considered the stronger conference this season, and 11 for the NFC. Exactly half of the 32 clubs have a 2020 All-Pro.

AP Pro Football Writers Simmi Buttar, Josh Dubow and Teresa M. Walker, and Sports Writers Greg Beacham, Tim Booth, Steve Megargee, Dave Skretta and John Wawrow contributed.

More AP NFL: <https://apnews.com/NFL> and https://twitter.com/AP_NFL

VIRUS TODAY: Pfizer says vaccine can work against variants

By The Associated Press undefined

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

THREE THINGS TO KNOW TODAY

— New research suggests the COVID-19 vaccine made by Pfizer and BioNTech can still work against a mutated coronavirus. Two easier-to-spread new variants of the virus have the world on edge. One was discovered in Britain, the other in South Africa, but they share a common mutation. Pfizer researchers say lab tests show that mutation doesn't block the vaccine. But more tests are needed to see if an additional mutation is cause for concern. The preliminary study was posted on an online research site late Thursday and has not been reviewed by other experts.

— Facing a massive surge in cases, California has been issuing waivers allowing hospitals to temporarily bypass the nation's only strict nurse-to-patient ratios. Nurses say that being forced to take on more patients is pushing them to the brink of burnout and affecting patient care. At least 250 of about 400 hospitals in California have been granted 60-day waivers. They allow ICU nurses to care for three instead of two people and emergency room nurses to oversee six patients instead of three. Nurses in other states have demanded law-mandated ratios like those in California but so far have failed to get them.

— World Health Organization experts have issued recommendations saying that the interval between administration of two doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine can be extended to up to six weeks. WHO's Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on immunization formally published its advice, saying an interval of 21 to 28 days between the doses is recommended. But the U.N. health agency also noted some countries face "exceptional circumstances of vaccine supply constraints combined with a high disease burden," and some have been considering delaying the administration of a second dose as a way to broaden initial coverage.

THE NUMBERS: According to data through Jan. 7 from Johns Hopkins University, the seven-day rolling average for daily new deaths in the U.S. rose over the past two weeks from 2,595.1 on Dec. 24 to 2,764.1 on Jan. 7.

DEATH TOLL: The number of COVID-19-related deaths in the U.S. stands at 365,625.

QUOTABLE: "Just today we had two deaths on this unit. And that's pretty much the norm. I usually see one to two every shift. Super sad. They fight every day, and they struggle to breathe every day even with tons of oxygen. And then you just see them die. They just die." — Caroline Brandenburger, COVID-19 unit at St. Joseph Hospital in Orange, California

ICYMI: The nation's second-largest city said it will keep using a coronavirus test that federal regulators warned may produce false results while Congress, which has used the same test, is seeking an alternative. The different responses Thursday followed a Food and Drug Administration alert to patients and health care providers that Curative's test could particularly produce false negatives. Those faulty results pose the biggest risk from a health perspective because people who are erroneously told they don't have the virus can unknowingly spread it to those around them. The California-based company said it was working to address the FDA's concerns.

ON THE HORIZON: President-elect Joe Biden will be taking a new direction to speed release of coronavirus vaccines when he assumes office Jan. 20. His office said Friday Biden would curtail the current practice of holding back vaccine doses to guarantee that people who get their first shot can also get a required second inoculation three weeks later. Under the Trump administration's approach, the government has been holding back a supply to guarantee that people can get a second shot, which provides maximum protection against COVID-19. After an initial glow of hope when vaccines were approved last month, the nation's vaccination campaign has gotten off to a slow start.

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

Vaccine rollout hits snag as health workers balk at shots

By BERNARD CONDON, MATT SEDENSKY and CARLA K. JOHNSON Associated Press

The desperately awaited vaccination drive against the coronavirus in the U.S. is running into resistance from an unlikely quarter: Surprising numbers of health care workers who have seen firsthand the death and misery inflicted by COVID-19 are refusing shots.

It is happening in nursing homes and, to a lesser degree, in hospitals, with employees expressing what experts say are unfounded fears of side effects from vaccines that were developed at record speed. More than three weeks into the campaign, some places are seeing as much as 80% of the staff holding back.

"I don't think anyone wants to be a guinea pig," said Dr. Stephen Noble, a 42-year-old cardiothoracic surgeon in Portland, Oregon, who is postponing getting vaccinated. "At the end of the day, as a man of science, I just want to see what the data show. And give me the full data."

Alarmed by the phenomenon, some administrators have dangled everything from free breakfasts at Waffle House to a raffle for a car to get employees to roll up their sleeves. Some states have threatened to let other people cut ahead of health care workers in the line for shots.

"It's far too low. It's alarmingly low," said Neil Pruitt, CEO of PruittHealth, which runs about 100 long-term care homes in the South, where fewer than 3 in 10 workers offered the vaccine so far have accepted it.

Many medical facilities from Florida to Washington state have boasted of near-universal acceptance of the shots, and workers have proudly plastered pictures of themselves on social media receiving the vaccine. Elsewhere, though, the drive has stumbled.

While the federal government has released no data on how many people offered the vaccines have taken them, glimpses of resistance have emerged around the country.

In Illinois, a big divide has opened at state-run veterans homes between residents and staff. The discrepancy was worst at the veterans home in Manteno, where 90% of residents were vaccinated but only 18% of the staff members.

In rural Ashland, Alabama, about 90 of some 200 workers at Clay County Hospital have yet to agree to get vaccinated, even with the place so overrun with COVID-19 patients that oxygen is running low and beds have been added to the intensive care unit, divided by plastic sheeting.

The pushback comes amid the most lethal phase in the outbreak yet, with the death toll at more than 350,000, and it could hinder the government's effort to vaccinate somewhere between 70% and 85% of the U.S. population to achieve "herd immunity."

Administrators and public health officials have expressed hope that more health workers will opt to be vaccinated as they see their colleagues take the shots without problems.

Oregon doctor Noble said he will wait until April or May to get the shots. He said it is vital for public health authorities not to overstate what they know about the vaccines. That is particularly important, he said, for Black people like him who are distrustful of government medical guidance because of past failures and abuses, such as the infamous Tuskegee experiment.

Medical journals have published extensive data on the vaccines, and the Food and Drug Administration has made its analysis public. But misinformation about the shots has spread wildly online, including falsehoods that they cause fertility problems.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 85 of 93

Stormy Tatom, 30, a hospital ICU nurse in Beaumont, Texas, said she decided against getting vaccinated for now "because of the unknown long-term side effects."

"I would say at least half of my coworkers feel the same way," Tatom said.

There have been no signs of widespread severe side effects from the vaccines, and scientists say the drugs have been rigorously tested on tens of thousands and vetted by independent experts.

States have begun turning up the pressure. South Carolina's governor gave health care workers until Jan. 15 to get a shot or "move to the back of the line." Georgia's top health official has allowed some vaccines to be diverted to other front-line workers, including firefighters and police, out of frustration with the slow uptake.

"There's vaccine available but it's literally sitting in freezers," said Public Health Commissioner Dr. Kathleen Toomey. "That's unacceptable. We have lives to save."

Nursing homes were among the institutions given priority for the shots because the virus has cut a terrible swath through them. Long-term care residents and staff account for about 38% of the nation's COVID-19 fatalities.

In West Virginia, only about 55% of nursing home workers agreed to the shots when they were first offered last month, according to Martin Wright, who leads the West Virginia Health Care Association.

"It's a race against social media," Wright said of battling falsehoods about the vaccines.

Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine said only 40% of the state's nursing home workers have gotten shots. North Carolina's top public health official estimated more than half were refusing the vaccine there.

SavaSeniorCare has offered cash to the 169 long-term care homes in its 20-state network to pay for gift cards, socially distanced parties or other incentives. But so far, data from about a third of its homes shows that 55% of workers have refused the vaccine.

CVS and Walgreens, which have been contracted by a majority of U.S. nursing homes to administer COVID-19 vaccinations, have not released specifics on the acceptance rate. CVS said that residents have agreed to be immunized at an "encouragingly high" rate but that "initial uptake among staff is low," partly because of efforts to stagger when employees receive their shots.

Some facilities have vaccinated workers in stages so that the staff is not sidelined all at once if they suffer minor side effects, which can include fever and aches.

The hesitation isn't surprising, given the mixed message from political leaders and misinformation online, said Dr. Wilbur Chen, a professor at the University of Maryland who specializes in the science of vaccines.

He noted that health care workers represent a broad range of jobs and backgrounds and said they are not necessarily more informed than the general public.

"They don't know what to believe either," Chen said. But he said he expects the hesitancy to subside as more people are vaccinated and public health officials get their message across.

Some places have already seen turnarounds, such as Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

"The biggest thing that helped us to gain confidence in our staff was watching other staff members get vaccinated, be OK, walk out of the room, you know, not grow a third ear, and so that really is like an avalanche," said Dr. Catherine O'Neal, chief medical officer. "The first few hundred that we had created another 300 that wanted the vaccine."

Contributing to this report were Associated Press writers Jake Bleiberg in Dallas; Heather Hollingsworth in Mission, Kansas; Janet McConnaughey in New Orleans; Candice Choi in New York; Kelli Kennedy in Fort Lauderdale, Florida; Jay Reeves in Birmingham, Alabama; Brian Witte in Annapolis, Maryland; Jeffrey Collins in Columbia, South Carolina; John Seewer in Toledo, Ohio; Melinda Deslatte in Baton Rouge, Louisiana; and Bryan Anderson in Raleigh, North Carolina.

Pro-democracy activists heartened by US system's resilience

By ANDREW MELDRUM, ZEN SOO and JOHN LEICESTER Associated Press

JOHANNESBURG (AP) — Stunned and riveted by the riot that engulfed the U.S. Capitol, pro-democracy and human rights campaigners around the world also were reassured -- because, ultimately, democracy held. The system was tested but not toppled.

"The institutions came through and defended democracy. That inspires me," said Hopewell Chin'ono, an investigative journalist in Zimbabwe who is under pressure from authorities for calling for peaceful protests of corruption.

Out on bail from a maximum-security jail where he was held for six weeks last year, Chin'ono is due back in court Feb. 18 to face charges of inciting violence and obstructing justice. The 49-year-old spoke by phone to The Associated Press from his goat farm before tweeting Friday that was being taken into custody again. His lawyers later confirmed the arrest — his third in six months.

For outspoken activists fighting often-lonely battles against political bullies big and small, there were morale-boosting lessons in President Donald Trump's failure to cling to power by stirring up riotous supporters on U.S. lawmakers who were confirming President-elect Joe Biden as his successor.

"The only people enjoying that spectacle were the dictators. They wanted that chaos, they were hoping that Trump would win. But they were disappointed and, thankfully the institutions came through," Chin'ono told AP. "For someone like me, for other dissidents who are criticizing their government in African countries and other places in the world, there is still no place like America."

But the clampdown on dissidents elsewhere still went on.

Hong Kong police tightened their grip on the city's embattled democracy movement, making 53 arrests Wednesday. That carefully executed mass roundup, involving 1,000 officers, was rapidly overshadowed by the deadly rampage later that day in Washington.

Pro-democracy activist Lee Cheuk-yan worries that the Capitol rampage strengthens the hand of the Chinese territory's Communist rulers in Beijing, offering a propaganda opportunity to denigrate democracy that Chinese state-controlled media seized upon. Lee faces charges of unlawful assembly for organizing a banned pro-democracy rally in Hong Kong last year.

"So it's very disheartening in a way," Lee says. "But for me personally, I believe that the system is more important than a person."

"People still aspire to the U.S. model of democracy, because the system is there, the constitution guarantees the separation of powers," Lee adds.

Exiled in London, Hong Kong activist Nathan Law says the U.S. system demonstrated its resilience against mob violence.

"The checks and balances, these are the things that we recognize," he says.

Among autocratic leaders who sought to spin the Washington rampage to their advantage was Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko. Peaceful protesters have been demanding his resignation after an August election widely seen as rigged gave him a sixth term in office. Security forces have cracked down on the demonstrators, arresting and beating many of them.

Lukashenko said Thursday: "I warned you: It's bad when they walk down the street, it's even worse when they walk into the courtyards, it will be unbearable when they come to your apartments. We must not allow this."

But exiled Belarus opposition leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya saw the U.S. events as "a good reminder that democracy is not given for granted. Democracy is an ongoing process, and it is what we make of it."

In an email to the AP, she dismissed Lukashenko's comments as one of several "propaganda outbursts."

"They say: 'Look at America, same hooligans as here,'" wrote Tsikhanouskaya, who was Lukashenko's main opponent in the election. "No one trusts propaganda anymore. People understand that in such situations, dictators are trying to cover the ugliness and ineptitude of their systems of governance. ... The U.S. has had a serious wake-up call, and the American society and the government are responding to it."

In Poland, Judge Bartłomiej Przymusiński also felt that Wednesday was a bad day for autocrats.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 87 of 93

"If the U.S. democracy comes out victorious and shows its institutional perseverance, then, it will be easier to all those who are still far away from victory, to persevere and not give up," said Przymusinski, spokesman for Poland's largest association of judges, which is resisting efforts by the right-wing government to chip away at judicial independence.

"The alternative is a world in which force and lies would lead us into dark times without values, under the rule of dictators from Turkey, from Russia, or mini-dictators, like in Hungary," he said by email.

"This is why the events in the U.S. are not an internal matter but the matter of the future of the entire globe," he added. "A successful defense of democracy may prove to be the vaccine against authoritarian viruses in still healthy countries."

Alfredo Romero, a human rights lawyer in Venezuela, feared the U.S. violence would provide political cover for crackdowns elsewhere.

"Seeing these terrible images generates a lot of frustration," said Romero, who has been honored by the U.S. State Department for his pro bono work on behalf of political prisoners in Venezuela. "For me, the U.S. has always been a source of inspiration. The very word 'freedom,' which is at the origins of the American republic, is a basic pillar of our human rights work and efforts to strengthen the rule of law in Venezuela."

In the occupied West Bank, Palestinian activist Issa Amro wasn't so upbeat. Hours before the Capitol was stormed, an Israeli military court found him guilty on six charges related to his participation in demonstrations against Jewish settlements. The trial is part of what Palestinians say is a growing crackdown on peaceful protests that the U.S. has ignored or even actively encouraged.

Amro, now awaiting sentencing, warns that Trump's influence on global affairs will outlast him.

"I am very pessimistic about the right wing in the entire world, not just the United States, and the energy it has given to anarchists, racists and extremists," he said.

But in Morocco, human rights activist Abdellatif El Hamamouchi was excited by what he saw as a stunning failure for Trump. Hamamouchi, who says he is followed almost daily by plainclothes police, saw hope in the Biden administration.

"I said, 'This is the end of Trump!' Populists and 'neo-fascists' cannot control the most ancient democratic institutions, not only in America, but in the world," he says. "I firmly believed that this event would advance American democracy by reopening the debate about the danger of populism and the nationalist right."

Soo reported from Hong Kong; Leicester reported from Le Pecq, France. Associated Press writers Jim Heintz in Moscow; Joshua Goodman in Miami, Joseph Krauss in Jerusalem; Sylvia Hui in London; Monika Scislovska in Warsaw; and Tarik El Barakah in Rabat, Morocco, contributed.

London mayor seeks help as UK sees record new virus deaths

By DANICA KIRKA and JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — London's mayor declared the capital's COVID-19 situation to be critical Friday, reflecting deteriorating conditions for beleaguered hospitals, as the country recorded its highest daily death toll in the pandemic.

The grim news that another 1,325 people had died within 28 days of a positive test came hours after the U.K. regulator authorized a third vaccine for emergency use. The figure brings Britain's official death toll from the coronavirus to 79,833, the highest in Europe. Not all the deaths announced by the government on Friday occurred on the same day.

London Mayor Sadiq Khan declared a "major incident," as the rapid spread of the virus pushed hospitals to breaking point, with the number of hospitalized coronavirus patients up 27% in the week to Jan. 6. One in 30 people in Britain's capital was infected with the virus in the week to Jan. 2, according to the Office for National Statistics.

Other emergency services are also under strain, with hundreds of firefighters now driving ambulances, for example.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 88 of 93

"Our heroic doctors, nurses and NHS staff are doing an amazing job, but with cases rising so rapidly, our hospitals are at risk of being overwhelmed," Khan said. "The stark reality is that we will run out of beds for patients in the next couple of weeks unless the spread of the virus slows down drastically."

A major incident is defined as one in which there is a risk to life and welfare and is "beyond the scope of business-as-usual operations." It allows coordination between different emergency agencies and will let London ask for help from other areas.

Khan, a member of the opposition Labour Party, also wrote to Conservative Prime Minister Boris Johnson asking for more financial support for Londoners who need to self-isolate and are unable to work, and called for masks to be worn in crowded outdoor spaces as well as indoors.

The action comes as more good news on fighting the virus appeared with the approval of the Moderna vaccine as the country ramps up an inoculation program critical to lifting the U.K. out of the pandemic.

The Department of Health said Friday that the vaccine meets the British medicines regulator's "strict standards of safety, efficacy and quality." Britain has ordered 17 million doses set to be delivered by the spring.

"Vaccines are the key to releasing us all from the grip of this pandemic, and today's news is yet another important step towards ending lockdown and returning to normal life," Business Secretary Alok Sharma said.

So far, Britain has inoculated 1.5 million people with the Pfizer-BioNTech and Oxford University-AstraZeneca vaccines. It plans to vaccinate some 15 million people by mid-February.

The authorization comes as the need for such help grows ever greater.

NHS England Chief Executive Simon Stevens said Thursday that the pressures facing hospitals in London and the southeast of England are so acute that a temporary field hospital at the ExCel London conference center will be opened next week.

The hospital was one of several built in the spring to help during the pandemic, but was not heavily used.

"The entirety of the health service in London is mobilizing to do everything it possibly can, but the infections, the rate of growth in admissions, that is what collectively the country has got to get under control," Stevens said.

The NHS, short for National Health Service, announced Friday that its doctors and other medical personnel would soon be able to get vaccinated, a reflection of concern that absences caused by health workers needing to self-isolate were straining the system. Priority for the first shots previously was given to the most vulnerable in British society, such as those in care homes.

"For frontline staff who are risking their lives every day to keep patients safe, this announcement couldn't have come soon enough," said Dr Samantha Batt-Rawden, president of the Doctors' Association UK. "Tragically, we have lost too many healthcare workers to COVID in the U.K.. Frontline NHS and care workers absolutely must be protected as a matter of priority."

The U.K. is recording virus-related deaths at a level last seen during the worst days early in the pandemic. Friday's toll surpassed the previous high of 1,224 deaths in April.

According to figures compiled by Johns Hopkins University, the U.K. has the most COVID-related deaths in Europe and the fifth highest number in the world.

Follow AP coverage of the coronavirus pandemic at:

<https://apnews.com/hub/coronavirus-pandemic>

<https://apnews.com/hub/coronavirus-vaccine>

<https://apnews.com/UnderstandingtheOutbreak>

US loses 140,000 jobs, first monthly drop since spring

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. employers shed jobs last month for the first time since April, cutting 140,000 positions, clear evidence that the economy is faltering as the viral pandemic tightens its grip on consumers and businesses.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 89 of 93

At the same time, the unemployment rate stayed at 6.7%, the first time it hasn't fallen since April.

Friday's figures from the Labor Department depict a sharply uneven job market, with losses concentrated among restaurants, bars, hotels and entertainment venues, many of them affecting low-income employees, while most other sectors are still adding workers. Still, the nation has nearly 10 million fewer jobs than it did before the pandemic sent it into a deep recession nearly a year ago, having recovered just 56% of the jobs lost in the spring.

The pandemic will likely continue to weaken the economy through winter and perhaps early spring, and further job losses are possible in the coming months. But many economists say that once coronavirus vaccines are more widely distributed, a broader recovery should take hold in the second half of the year. The incoming Biden administration, along with a now fully Democratic-led House and Senate, is also expected to push more rescue aid and spending measures that could accelerate growth.

"Hopefully it is indeed darkest before the dawn," said Leslie Preston, senior economist at TD Bank. "We've got the vaccine and the stimulus, which are imminent, and which we do expect to turn things around."

For now, the renewed surge in virus cases, as well as cold weather, has caused millions of consumers to avoid eating out, shopping and traveling. Re-imposed business restrictions have shut down numerous restaurants, bars, and other venues. Economists at TD Securities estimate that more than half the states have restricted gatherings to 10 or fewer people, up from about a quarter in September. New York and California, among others, placed strict new limits on restaurants last month.

New viral cases continue to set daily records. And on Thursday, the nation registered more COVID-19 deaths in a single day than ever before, topping 4,000. The virus is surging in several states, with California, the largest state, hit particularly hard. Skyrocketing caseloads there are threatening to force hospitals to ration care.

Last month, restaurants, bars, hotels, casinos, movie theaters and other entertainment venues shed nearly 500,000 jobs, the most since April, when nationwide shutdowns triggered 7.6 million layoffs. While those employers will regain some jobs as the economy recovers, changing consumer habits will likely mean that a portion will be gone for good. Business travel, for example, may not return to pre-pandemic levels.

Most other industries added jobs in December, with manufacturers, construction companies, and higher-paying professional services such as architecture, engineering and accounting hiring more workers. The huge disparities among industries are sure to exacerbate economic inequality, given that most of the job losses are in lower-paid industries, while middle- and higher-paid workers have largely remained employed.

Andrew Walcott had to furlough four employees at his restaurant, Fusion East in Brooklyn, just before Christmas, after New York state stopped allowing indoor dining. He has shifted to takeout and delivery. Yet customers aren't even allowed into his restaurant to pick up their food; they have to wait for it outside.

"That's a hard sell when it's snowing outside and it's 25 degrees in New York City," Walcott said.

In September, his restaurant was allowed to seat diners up to 25% of capacity. With that, along with takeout and delivery and a food truck, his revenue reached 60% of pre-pandemic levels. He brought back half his 15-person staff.

But after last month's layoffs, only Walcott himself, plus a manager and a head chef, with occasional part-time help, are left.

"It's really horrible," he said. "You still got to pay rent, you still got to pay insurance, you still got to pay real estate taxes. You still have fixed bills every month."

Friday's data suggests that the pandemic economy is continuing to benefit some sectors, with transportation and warehousing adding nearly 47,000 jobs. E-commerce firms also ramped up hiring. Delivery jobs rose 37,000.

"We're seeing huge rotation here," said Brian Bethune, an economist at Tufts University. "The higher-paying goods-producing industries are doing well. Unfortunately, the leisure and hospitality industries are still getting whacked."

Under financial pressure, consumers as a whole spent less during the holiday shopping season than in previous years, based on debit and credit card data tracked by JPMorgan Chase. Such spending was 6%

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 90 of 93

lower in December compared with a year ago. That was worse than in October, when card spending was down just 2% from the previous year.

The \$900 billion financial aid package that Congress enacted last month should also help propel a recovery, economists say. It will provide a \$300-a-week federal jobless benefit on top of an average weekly state benefit of about \$320. In addition, millions of Americans stand to receive \$600 payments, and the Treasury Department said Thursday that 8 million of those payments were going out this week.

Goldman Sachs has upgraded its forecast for economic growth this year to a robust 6.4% from its previous estimate of 5.9%. Its upgrade was based in part on the expectation that the Biden administration will implement more stimulus.

Friday's monthly jobs report, the last of Donald Trump's presidency, shows that the nation has 3 million fewer jobs than it did four years earlier. That makes Trump the first president since Herbert Hoover (1929-1933), early in the Great Depression, to preside over a net loss of jobs.

All the job losses during the Trump administration occurred after the pandemic struck. Before then, the unemployment rate had reached a 50-year low of 3.5%. Still, Trump had pledged to create 25 million jobs in four years.

In Europe, a resurgence of the virus has also led to renewed lockdowns and possibly a sharp economic contraction in the final three months of the year. In the 19 countries that use the euro currency, government programs have helped prevent mass layoffs. Still, the unemployment rate in the eurozone was an elevated 8.3% in November.

Dominion sues Trump lawyer Sidney Powell for defamation

WASHINGTON (AP) — Dominion Voting Systems filed a defamation lawsuit against lawyer Sidney Powell on Friday, seeking at least \$1.3 billion for Powell's "wild accusations" that the company rigged the presidential election for Joe Biden.

"Dominion brings this action to set the record straight," the company said in the suit filed in federal court in Washington.

Powell has for weeks claimed without evidence that the election technology vendor, whose vote-counting equipment was used in several states, was part of a scheme to steal the election from President Donald Trump. Powell has been representing Trump in a series of unsuccessful lawsuits filed to contest the election outcome.

She has claimed that the company was created in Venezuela to rig elections for the late leader Hugo Chavez and that it has the ability to switch votes.

There was no widespread fraud in the election, which a range of election officials across the country including Trump's former attorney general, William Barr, have confirmed. Republican governors in Arizona and Georgia, key battleground states crucial to Biden's victory, also vouched for the integrity of the elections in their states. Nearly all the legal challenges from Trump and his allies have been dismissed by judges, including two tossed by the Supreme Court, which includes three Trump-nominated justices.

The company said there "there are mountains of direct evidence that conclusively disprove Powell's vote manipulation claims against Dominion — namely, the millions of paper ballots that were audited and recounted by bipartisan officials and volunteers in Georgia and other swing states, which confirmed that Dominion accurately counted votes on paper ballots."

Dominion said that when it formally told Powell her claims were false and asked her to retract them, she "doubled down," using her Twitter account with more than 1 million followers to amplify the claims.

Eric Coomer, Dominion's security director, already has sued Powell, Trump lawyer Rudy Giuliani and the president's campaign for defamation after he was driven into hiding by death threats. Conservative columnists and news outlets also were named in Coomer's lawsuit, filed in Colorado, where the company is based.

Powell did not immediately respond to a request for comment Friday.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 91 of 93

Stay or go? After Trump-fueled riot, aides debate early exit

By AAMER MADHANI, ZEKE MILLER and KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A steady stream of Trump administration officials are beating an early path to the exits as a protest against the deadly siege of the U.S. Capitol this week even as others wrestling with the stay-or-go question conclude that they owe it to the public to see things through to the end.

Some of Trump's critics don't give those in the early-exit caucus much credit for walking away from their jobs with less than two weeks left in the administration, seeing it as little more than a face-saving effort.

"Nobody is fooled by these last-second, come-to-Jesus conversions," said Rick Wilson, co-founder of the Lincoln Project, a group of Republicans fiercely critical of Trump.

Trump's education and transportation secretaries, his acting chairman of the White House Council of Economic Advisers and deputy national security adviser are among at least a dozen senior administration officials who have announced their resignations since Wednesday's attack by Trump supporters on the Capitol.

Serving under Trump has been a test for many aides who have abided some of the president's most provocative actions, including his embrace of authoritarians, a habit of coarsely belittling political adversaries and the ease and frequency with which he's deployed falsehoods for personal benefit.

But Trump's behavior in a few harrowing hours on Wednesday -- first by egging on his supporters to demand Congress subvert the election and later declining to condemn the day's violence -- was a line too far for several high-profile officials serving the president.

It wasn't until Thursday evening, more than 24 hours after the Capitol siege, that Trump in a video message condemned the actions of the rioters as "heinous" and acknowledged his election loss.

Several White House and agency officials still on the job Thursday said they were deeply conflicted about whether to resign, fearing what would transpire if Trump was left surrounded in his final days on the job only by those who encouraged his worse instincts. In at least one case, a person on the Biden transition requested that individuals remain on the job to help smooth the handoff.

The decisions on whether to stay or go are playing out at a moment when aides already have moving boxes at the ready and an eye on the door despite Trump's insistence over the last two months that the election results would be overturned and he'd serve a second term. Trump only acknowledged in a statement on Thursday that his presidency will end Jan. 20.

Education Secretary Betsy DeVos and Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao on Thursday became the highest-ranking administration officials to resign over the pro-Trump insurrection. In a statement, Chao, who is married to Senate GOP leader Mitch McConnell, said the violent attack on the Capitol "has deeply troubled me in a way that I simply cannot set aside."

DeVos, in her resignation letter, cast blame on the president for inciting the mob. "There is no mistaking the impact your rhetoric had on the situation, and it is the inflection point for me," she wrote.

Mick Mulvaney, the U.S. special envoy to Northern Ireland and a former White House chief of staff, said there was a lot of "soul searching" going on at the White House as he announced his own resignation from the administration.

"A lot of folks are wondering if I do resign today, who's going to take my place and will it make it better or will it make it worse," Mulvaney said in a CNBC interview.

Lawmakers on both sides of the aisle said they hoped Trump would be surrounded by capable advisers in the final days of his time in office.

Sen. Joe Manchin, a West Virginia Democrat, on Thursday urged "the good men and women honorably serving at all levels of the federal government to please stay at their post for the protection of our democracy."

"The actions of a rogue president will not and should not reflect on you," Manchin said. "Instead, your patriotism and commitment to the greater good of our country will be reaffirmed."

Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina, pleaded for those in the national security apparatus to stay in their positions. "We need you now more than ever," Graham said. He added, "To those who

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 92 of 93

believe you should leave your post now to make a statement, I would urge you not."

The two top Democrats in Congress, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, had a different strategy in mind. They said they would move forward with an impeachment effort if Vice President Mike Pence and the Cabinet failed to invoke the 25th Amendment to try to oust Trump from office early.

Neither impeachment nor ouster under the 25th Amendment was considered probable with less than two weeks left in Trump's presidency.

One Cabinet official, acting Homeland Security Secretary Chad Wolf, made clear he was digging in until the end "to ensure the administration's focus remains on the serious threats facing our country and an orderly transition to President-elect Biden's DHS team."

Yet many White House aides, both senior officials and lower-level staff, were struggling with whether or when to exit, according to two people familiar with internal deliberations at the White House. They spoke on condition anonymity to discuss private conversations.

One of the individuals said many who have already left or are still considering leaving are aware that their actions will be seen as a cynical attempt to separate themselves from Trump as they eye their own futures. The other, a senior administration official who has decided to stay on, said people have had thoughts about leaving, but felt a responsibility to keep working to ensure a smooth transition.

The Lincoln Project's Wilson said a last-minute denunciation of Trump won't help departing officials lose the taint of their connection to this presidency.

"They're all going to have their historic revisionism, they're all going to have their own imaginary heroism," Wilson said. "But America is going to know who these people are."

Madhani reported from Chicago. Associated Press writers Deb Riechmann in Washington and Meg Kinnard in Columbia, South Carolina contributed to this report.

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Saturday, Jan. 9, the ninth day of 2021. There are 356 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Jan. 9, 2020, Chinese state media said a preliminary investigation into recent cases of viral pneumonia had identified the probable cause as a new type of coronavirus.

On this date:

In 1788, Connecticut became the fifth state to ratify the U.S. Constitution.

In 1793, Frenchman Jean Pierre Blanchard, using a hot-air balloon, flew from Philadelphia to Woodbury, New Jersey.

In 1861, Mississippi became the second state to secede from the Union, the same day the Star of the West, a merchant vessel bringing reinforcements and supplies to Federal troops at Fort Sumter, South Carolina, retreated because of artillery fire.

In 1913, Richard Milhous Nixon, the 37th president of the United States, was born in Yorba Linda, California.

In 1916, the World War I Battle of Gallipoli ended after eight months with an Ottoman Empire victory as Allied forces withdrew.

In 1945, during World War II, American forces began landing on the shores of Lingayen Gulf in the Philippines as the Battle of Luzon got underway, resulting in an Allied victory over Imperial Japanese forces.

In 1951, the United Nations headquarters in New York officially opened.

In 1958, President Dwight D. Eisenhower, in his State of the Union address to Congress, warned of the threat of Communist imperialism.

In 1987, the White House released a January 1986 memorandum prepared for President Ronald Reagan by Lt. Col. Oliver L. North showing a link between U.S. arms sales to Iran and the release of American

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Jan. 09, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 189 ~ 93 of 93

hostages in Lebanon.

In 2003, U.N. weapons inspectors said there was no "smoking gun" to prove Iraq had nuclear, chemical or biological weapons but they demanded that Baghdad provide private access to scientists and fresh evidence to back its claim that it had destroyed its weapons of mass destruction.

In 2009, the Illinois House voted 114-1 to impeach Gov. Rod Blagojevich (blah-GOY'-uh-vich), who defiantly insisted again that he had committed no crime. (The Illinois Senate unanimously voted to remove Blagojevich from office 20 days later.)

In 2015, French security forces shot and killed two al-Qaida-linked brothers suspected of carrying the rampage at the satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo that had claimed 12 lives, the same day a gunman killed four people at a Paris kosher grocery store before being killed by police.

Ten years ago: Federal prosecutors brought charges against Jared Loughner, the man accused of attempting to assassinate Rep. Gabrielle Giffords, D-Ariz., and killing six people at a political event in Tucson the day before. British movie director Peter Yates, who sent actor Steve McQueen screeching through the streets of San Francisco in a Ford Mustang in "Bullitt," died in London at age 81.

Five years ago: French Jewish leaders and the nation's prime minister, Manuel Valls, held a memorial ceremony for four people killed in a kosher market a year earlier by an attacker claiming ties to the Islamic State group. Actor Angus Scrimm, 89, the "Tall Man" in the "Phantasm" horror films, died in Tarzana, California.

One year ago: The Democratic-controlled House approved a resolution asserting that President Donald Trump must seek approval from Congress before engaging in further military action against Iran. At his first campaign rally of 2020, Trump told an Ohio crowd that he had served up "American justice" by ordering a drone strike to take out Iran's top general.

Today's Birthdays: Actor K. Callan is 85. Folk singer Joan Baez is 80. Rock musician Jimmy Page (Led Zeppelin) is 77. Actor John Doman is 76. Singer David Johansen (aka Buster Poindexter) is 71. Singer Crystal Gayle is 70. Actor J.K. Simmons is 66. Actor Imelda Staunton is 65. Nobel Peace laureate Rigoberta Menchú is 62. Rock musician Eric Erlandson is 58. Actor Joely Richardson is 56. Rock musician Carl Bell (Fuel) is 54. Actor David Costabile is 54. Rock singer Steve Harwell (Smash Mouth) is 54. Rock singer-musician Dave Matthews is 54. Actor-director Joey Lauren Adams is 53. Comedian/actor Deon Cole is 50. Actor Angela Bettis is 48. Actor Omari Hardwick is 47. Roots singer-songwriter Hayes Carll is 45. Singer A.J. McLean (Backstreet Boys) is 43. Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge, is 39. Pop-rock musician Drew Brown (OneRepublic) is 37. Rock-soul singer Paolo Nutini is 34. Actor Nina Dobrev is 32. Actor Basil Eidenbenz is 28. Actor Kerris Dorsey is 23. Actor Tyree Brown is 17.