

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 199 ~ 1 of 71

- [1- Upcoming Schedule](#)
- [2- Coming up on GDILIVE.COM](#)
- [3- City Council Agenda](#)
- [4- Covid-19 Update by Marie Miller](#)
- [6- January 18th COVID-19 UPDATE](#)
- [15- Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs](#)
- [16- Weather Pages](#)
- [18- Daily Devotional](#)
- [19- News from the Associated Press](#)



**Girls Scores from Last Night**  
**Varsity: Groton 48, Langford 24**  
**JV: Groton 29, Langford 13**

## Upcoming Schedule

### Tuesday, Jan. 19

Doubleheader basketball at Ipswich with girls JV starting at 4 p.m. followed by boys JV, girls varsity and boys varsity.

Junior high boys basketball at Waubay with 7th grade at 4 p.m. and 8th grade at 8 p.m.

5 p.m.: Wrestling Quad at Groton (with Britton-Hecla, Clark/Willow Lake, Hamlin)

7 p.m.: City Council Meeting at Groton Community Center

### Thursday, January 21, 2021

Junior High Boys Basketball at Britton-Hecla (7th at 5 p.m., 8th at 6 p.m.)

Girls Basketball hosting Clark/Willow Lake. JV at 6 p.m. followed by varsity

### Friday, January 22, 2021

Boys Basketball at Clark. 7th grade at 4 p.m., 8th at 5 p.m., JV at 6 p.m. followed by varsity.

### Saturday, January 23, 2021

10:00am: Wrestling: Boys Varsity Invitational at Arlington



## **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

Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 199 ~ 2 of 71

## Coming up on GDILIVE.COM



**DoubleHeader**

4 p.m., Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2021  
Groton Area at Ipswich

JV Girls, JV Boys  
Varsity Girls, Varsity Boys

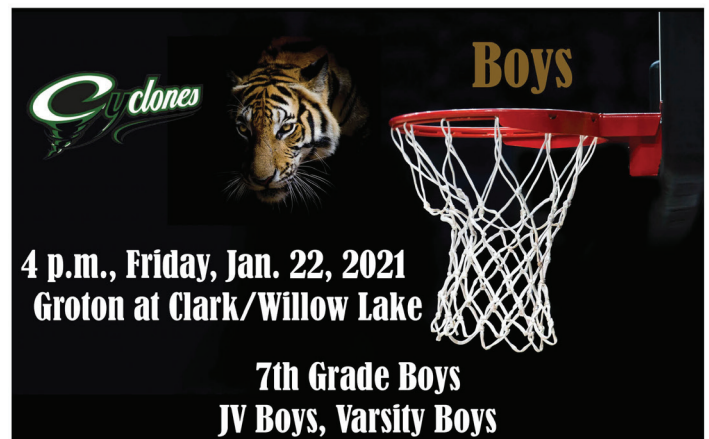


**Cyclones**

**Girls**

6 p.m., Thursday, Jan. 21, 2021  
Clark/Willow Lake at Groton

Junior Varsity Girls  
Varsity Girls



**Cyclones**

**Boys**

4 p.m., Friday, Jan. 22, 2021  
Groton at Clark/Willow Lake

7th Grade Boys  
JV Boys, Varsity Boys

# Groton Daily Independent

**Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 199 ~ 3 of 71**

Groton City Council Meeting Agenda  
January 19, 2021 – 7:00pm  
Groton Community Center

(IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO CALL IN TO THIS MEETING, PLEASE MAKE PRIOR  
ARRANGEMENTS TO DO SO BY CALLING CITY HALL 605-397-8422)

1. Public Comments - pursuant to SDCL 1-25-1  
(Public Comments will offer the opportunity for anyone not listed on the agenda to speak to the council. Speaking time will be limited to 3 minutes. No action will be taken on questions or items not on the agenda.)
2. Executive session legal contractual 1-25-2 (3)
3. Midco discussion
4. Minutes
5. Bills
6. December finance report
7. Submit bid on 120 N Main Street, Groton
8. Water Tower Replacement Schedule B Change Order 1
9. Water Tower Replacement – Schedule B – Maguire Iron Application for Payment  
Number 6 for \$20,349.00
10. Adjournment

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 199 ~ 4 of 71

**#330 in a series**

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

Very low numbers today. I'm really hoping this isn't a weekend effect, but I'm thinking it is—double whammy with a weekend and a long one at that. Testing tends to run down very low on long weekends. If it's due to the weekend, I'd guess tomorrow might stay low too.

There were just 127,000 new cases reported today. That does mean we crossed the 24-million-case line. We're now at 24,103,400, which is 0.5% more than yesterday's total. Here's the history:

April 28 – 1 million – 98 days  
June 11 – 2 million – 44 days  
July 8 – 3 million – 27 days  
July 23 – 4 million – 15 days  
August 9 – 5 million – 17 days  
August 31 – 6 million – 22 days  
September 24 – 7 million – 24 days  
October 15 – 8 million – 21 days  
October 29 – 9 million – 14 days  
November 8 – 10 million – 10 days  
November 15 – 11 million – 7 days  
November 21 – 12 million – 6 days  
November 27 – 13 million – 6 days  
December 3 – 14 million – 6 days  
December 7 – 15 million – 4 days  
December 12 – 16 million – 5 days  
December 17 – 17 million – 5 days  
December 21 – 18 million – 4 days  
December 26 – 19 million – 5 days  
December 31 – 20 million – 5 days  
January 5 – 21 million – 5 days  
January 9 – 22 million – 4 days  
January 13 – 23 million – 4 days  
January 18 – 24 million – 5 days

We're still seeing big surges in some states; for example, nearly one in ten Arizonans was diagnosed just in the last ten days. Los Angeles County, the only county in the country to exceed one million reported cases, seems to be tapering in new-case numbers; that would be a really big thing. Hospitalizations are down; we're 8000 off the record now and below it for the ninth consecutive day at 124,387. There have been 398,838 deaths in the US, 0.3% more than yesterday. Only 1272 deaths were reported today; it's been three weeks since there were fewer than 1500.

I had a conversation with someone lately who said, "What's the difference to anyone else if I don't get vaccinated? I'm not hurting anyone but myself." This is an inaccurate statement. Here's why:

There will be people whose vaccination doesn't work. Remember these vaccines, while remarkably effective at 94% or 95% efficacy, leave a small percentage of recipients with less than optimal protection. There will also be people whose immune systems are unable to mount a fully protective response to vaccination, particularly those with cancers or other immunocompromising conditions. And the folks who have an allergic reaction to the first dose will not be able to receive a second dose; those who know they're allergic to one of the vaccines' constituents won't be able to receive dose #1 either. All of these people can be hurt if we don't bring the virus under control by having everyone immunized who can be. So you could be hurting a great many people besides yourself if you choose not to be immunized.

Those same factors plus one more explain why you should continue to wear a mask and exercise precautions after you've been vaccinated. Remember first that protection is not immediate after vaccination; there is a three- or four-week waiting period between doses when you are not protected, and your protection

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 199 ~ 5 of 71

will not be at full effectiveness for a couple of weeks after dose #2. So you can't go in for a vaccination in the morning and hit the big party in the evening; it's going to take a few weeks before you're covered. And we do not have evidence that immunized people can't spread this virus, which means it is possible, even after your vaccine has taken full effect, that you could pose a danger to others at that party. The way we stop this virus is for so many of us to be vaccinated that the virus can't readily find susceptible hosts in which to sustain transmission. Until that happens, some precautions will be in order. The good news is that, as we approach that point, we can begin to return life to a more normal state; we just have to be smart as we do it.

There is a fairly infrequent new symptom being reported associated with Covid-19. It may not be a new occurrence, but it is only recently receiving attention. Clinicians are calling it "Covid tongue." What we're seeing is a coated tongue, that is, there is a whitish layer on the surface which is composed of dead cells, bacteria, and food particles which are not cleared away in the usual manner. We are also seeing ulcers on the tongue and in other locations inside the mouth. These do not appear to be long-term things, but they are cause to get tested when they occur in conjunction with other Covid-19 symptoms, commonly fever, fatigue, runny or stuffy nose, dry cough, sore throat, chest pain and shortness of breath, and loss of or changes in the sense of smell or taste.

There are some studies underway in identical twins attempting to determine whether and how much genetics influence the course of Covid-19 disease. Identical twins are useful subjects because each pair is genetically identical; interestingly though, the immune systems of the members of a pair can be very different, which underscores the importance of factors other than genetics. No one thinks this is going to explain everything, and indeed, there are sets of twins with vastly different experiences of the disease. Early work in several countries, however, done with the help of twin registries does seem to indicate a genetic influence on which symptoms people experience that may account for up to 50 percent of the differences seen.

Here's some depressing news from a team from Britain's Office for National Statistics and the University of Leicester who looked at five months of data from 48,000 people treated in hospitals through August. The study has not been peer-reviewed or published, but is out in preprint. I was unable to access a copy, so I'm working from a summary. Their finding was that almost one-third of people who were discharged from the hospital had to be readmitted and that ten percent of those readmits died. What they were seeing was multi-organ dysfunction, so the damage wasn't just respiratory. The most common complications seen in these people were diabetes and what the team referred to as "severe heart events" like heart attacks. These were seen more in people over 70 and in members of ethnic minorities. Considering what we know about injury to organs from the high rate of abnormal blood clotting seen in this disease and due to inflammatory damage, this shouldn't come as a surprise; but it certainly is cause for concern. Likewise, the disproportionate burden of this phenomenon on elderly and minority patients is no surprise, but is discouraging.

James Anderson is a plumber in Lancashire, England. He has years of experience, and so he was horrified when he discovered that a client, an elderly and disabled man, was charged 5500 pounds (almost \$7500) for a repair job he didn't even need, he was very distressed. As a result, in 2017, he founded a nonprofit to provide free emergency repair services to disabled and elderly people all around the UK. The company has helped 10,279 families all around the UK so far. They fund these projects through GoFundMe donations and from private jobs. He told CNN, "We basically deliver a lifeline to anybody who is elderly disabled and vulnerable of any age.

Then came the pandemic, and the elderly are once again the most vulnerable. Anderson has provided more than 2000 free repair projects during the pandemic. Additionally, seeing a need, he has expanded his nonprofit's operations to include PPE, a food bank, and paying electric and gas bills for those who don't have enough money. Anderson says he does it "because it makes me feel gooey inside." He hopes to expand his operations to cities all around the world, but he told CNN this can wait because there are three things we need to focus on right now and in the near future: "Community, family, and love. That's what we need now." I concur.

Take care. We'll talk again.



# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 199 ~ 6 of 71

## Jan. 18th COVID-19 UPDATE

### Groton Daily Independent from State Health Lab Reports

South Dakota: Community Spread for week of Jan. 18:

None: Harding downgraded from minimal to none.

Minimal: Corson, Faulk, Haakon downgraded from moderate to minimal.

Moderate: Hand, Mellette upgraded from minimal to moderate; Tripp downgraded from substantial to moderate.

Substantial: Aurora, Brule, Lyman, McPherson, Miner, Potter, Ziebach upgraded from moderate to substantial, .

Positive: +116 (105,661 total) Positivity Rate: 6.7%

Total Tests: 1730 (836,217 total)

Total Persons Tested: 442 (391,864 total)

Hospitalized: +19 (6082 total) 203 currently hospitalized (-10)

Avera St. Luke's: 7 (-0) COVID-19 Occupied beds, 0 (-0) COVID-19 ICU Beds, 0 (-0) COVID-19 ventilators.

Sanford Aberdeen: 3 (-1) COVID-19 Occupied beds, 0 (-1) COVID-19 ICU Beds, 0 (-1) COVID-19 ventilators.

Deaths: +11 (1667 total)

Ages: 50s=1, 60s=4, 70s=4, 80+=2

Female: 2, Male: 9

Counties: Dewey-1, Hanson-1, Lyman-1, Oglala Lakota-1, Pennington-3, Roberts-2, Union-2.

Recovered: +153 (99,379 total)

Active Cases: -49 (4613)

Percent Recovered: 94.1%

Vaccinations: +496 (57121)

Vaccinations Completed: +0 (9829)

Brown County Vaccinations: +2 (2312) 22 (+0) completed

Beadle (38) +1 positive, +2 recovered (79 active cases)

Brookings (32) +7 positive, +6 recovered (243 active cases)

Brown (75): +4 positive, +14 recovered (236 active cases)

Clark (4): +1 positive, +0 recovered (4 active cases)

Clay (13): +2 positive, +0 recovered (83 active cases)

Codington (73): +12 positive, +6 recovered (171 active cases)

Davison (55): +1 positive, +2 recovered (102) active cases)

Day (23): +1 positive, +1 recovered (28 active cases)

Edmunds (5): +2 positive, +10 recovered (40 active cases)

Faulk (13): +0 positive, +0 recovered (4 active cases)

Grant (35): +0 positive, +2 recovered (33 active cases)

Hanson (4): +2 positive, +1 recovered (13 active cases)

Hughes (30): +0 positive, +0 recovered (92 active cases)

Lawrence (35): +7 positive, +6 recovered (93 active cases)

Lincoln (70): +9 positive, +10 recovered (298 active cases)

Marshall (5): +0 positive, +0 recovered (13 active cases)

McCook (22): +0 positive, +0 recovered (18 active cases)

McPherson (4): +0 positive, +0 recovery (27 active case)

Minnehaha (296): +32 positive, +32 recovered (1061 active cases)

Pennington (161): +14 positive, +17 recovered (545 active cases)

Potter (3): +0 positive, +0 recovered (26 active cases)

Roberts (34): +2 positive, +7 recovered (55 active cases)

Spink (24): +1 positive, +0 recovered (33 active cases)

Walworth (14): +0 positive, +1 recovered (52 active cases)

#### NORTH DAKOTA

COVID-19 Daily Report, Jan. 18:

- 4.1% rolling 14-day positivity
- 69 new positives
- 1901 susceptible test encounters
- 91 currently hospitalized (+6)
- 1,377 active cases (-83)
- 1,384 total deaths (0)

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 199 ~ 7 of 71

County	Positive Cases	Recovered Cases	Negative Persons	Deceased Among Cases	Community Spread	% RT-PCR Test Positivity Rate (Weekly)
Aurora	436	404	805	11	Substantial	8.82%
Beadle	2577	2460	5385	38	Substantial	11.98%
Bennett	372	355	1097	8	Moderate	3.08%
Bon Homme	1501	1457	1932	23	Substantial	6.15%
Brookings	3306	3031	10585	32	Substantial	9.31%
Brown	4773	4462	11560	75	Substantial	9.03%
Brule	671	632	1735	7	Substantial	15.38%
Buffalo	415	403	856	12	Minimal	0.00%
Butte	941	888	2951	20	Substantial	8.79%
Campbell	116	109	230	4	Minimal	0.00%
Charles Mix	1184	1101	3640	14	Substantial	9.09%
Clark	325	317	893	4	Moderate	9.52%
Clay	1722	1626	4774	13	Substantial	8.08%
Codington	3673	3429	8897	73	Substantial	11.36%
Corson	457	440	951	11	Minimal	10.81%
Custer	712	680	2504	10	Substantial	14.85%
Davison	2848	2691	5949	55	Substantial	5.18%
Day	582	531	1593	23	Substantial	9.76%
Deuel	449	412	1034	7	Substantial	11.43%
Dewey	1369	1313	3596	18	Substantial	6.56%
Douglas	407	379	842	9	Substantial	13.16%
Edmunds	439	385	917	5	Substantial	4.94%
Fall River	485	451	2376	13	Substantial	14.13%
Faulk	321	304	629	13	Minimal	7.14%
Grant	864	796	2011	35	Substantial	20.93%
Gregory	493	460	1144	26	Moderate	2.44%
Haakon	240	227	493	9	Minimal	9.09%
Hamlin	650	573	1595	38	Substantial	12.05%
Hand	321	307	723	4	Moderate	10.00%
Hanson	327	310	640	4	Moderate	8.57%
Harding	89	88	162	1	None	0.00%
Hughes	2125	2003	5921	30	Substantial	3.96%
Hutchinson	735	684	2119	22	Substantial	17.86%

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 199 ~ 8 of 71

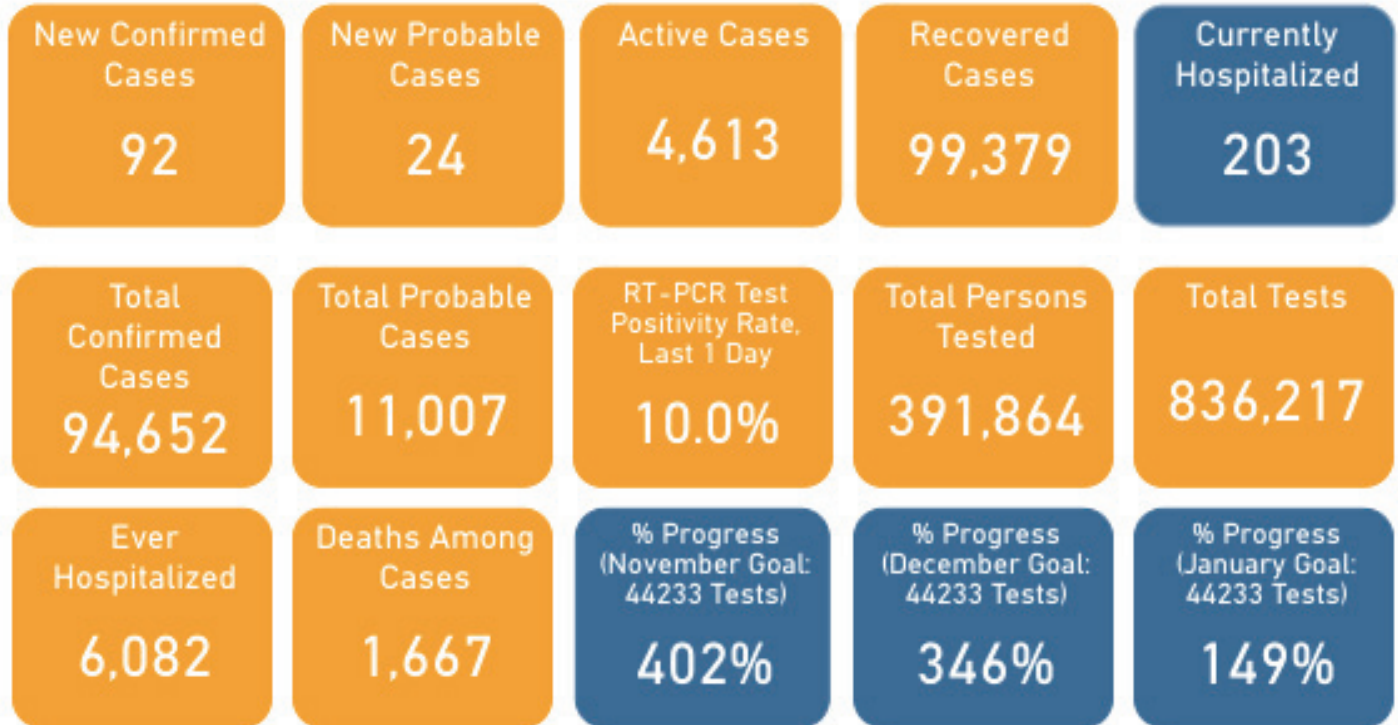
Hyde	134	130	378	1	Minimal	0.00%
Jackson	269	252	872	13	Minimal	8.33%
Jerauld	265	242	522	16	Minimal	0.00%
Jones	75	69	183	0	Minimal	16.67%
Kingsbury	586	540	1477	13	Substantial	21.05%
Lake	1099	1024	2911	16	Substantial	15.63%
Lawrence	2711	2583	7870	35	Substantial	10.32%
Lincoln	7240	6872	18284	70	Substantial	11.45%
Lyman	574	525	1778	10	Substantial	13.92%
Marshall	278	259	1056	5	Moderate	18.75%
McCook	709	669	1471	22	Substantial	4.55%
McPherson	221	190	518	4	Substantial	6.43%
Meade	2412	2263	7011	26	Substantial	14.89%
Mellette	232	225	679	2	Moderate	23.08%
Miner	253	217	523	7	Substantial	26.09%
Minnehaha	26425	25074	71022	296	Substantial	9.83%
Moody	582	529	1621	15	Substantial	18.82%
Oglala Lakota	2006	1889	6335	40	Substantial	13.39%
Pennington	12057	11351	35780	161	Substantial	12.38%
Perkins	315	282	714	11	Substantial	19.12%
Potter	338	309	755	3	Substantial	7.84%
Roberts	1081	992	3858	34	Substantial	12.33%
Sanborn	323	303	625	3	Moderate	9.52%
Spink	742	685	1935	24	Substantial	10.53%
Stanley	303	287	819	2	Substantial	5.26%
Sully	129	111	261	3	Moderate	16.67%
Todd	1191	1156	3950	20	Substantial	5.26%
Tripp	645	621	1375	14	Moderate	5.71%
Turner	1023	925	2455	49	Substantial	6.90%
Union	1809	1621	5673	36	Substantial	17.33%
Walworth	684	616	1692	14	Substantial	17.00%
Yankton	2689	2550	8476	27	Substantial	23.35%
Ziebach	334	310	807	8	Substantial	23.08%
Unassigned	0	0	1980	0		



# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 199 ~ 9 of 71

## South Dakota



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

Age Range with Years	# of Cases	# of Deaths Among Cases
0-9 years	4036	0
10-19 years	11698	0
20-29 years	19154	4
30-39 years	17407	14
40-49 years	15093	32
50-59 years	14913	89
60-69 years	12047	214
70-79 years	6409	373
80+ years	4902	941

### SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Sex	# of Cases	# of Deaths Among Cases
Female	55189	793
Male	50470	874

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 199 ~ 10 of 71

## Brown County

New Confirmed Cases

1

New Probable Cases

3

Active Cases

236

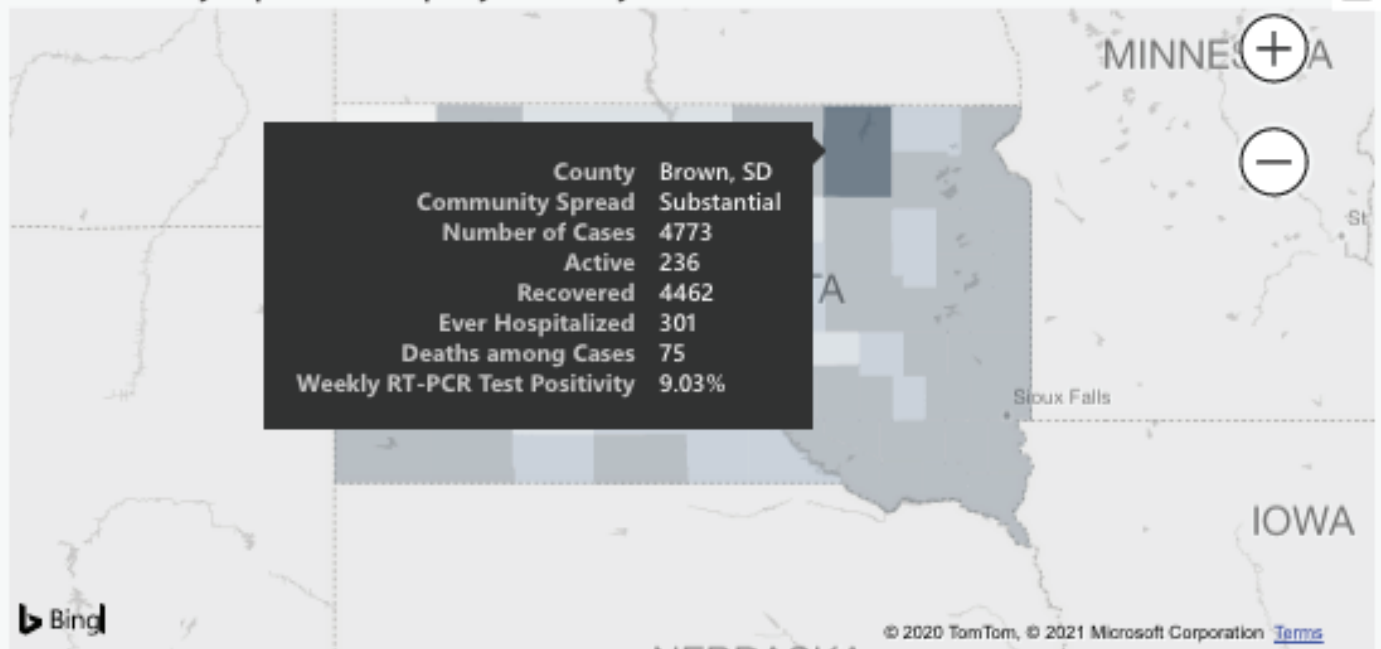
Recovered Cases

4,462

Currently Hospitalized

203

### Community Spread Map by County of Residence



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

Total Confirmed Cases

4,366

Total Probable Cases

407

RT-PCR Test Positivity Rate, Last 1 Day

4.4%

Total Persons Tested

16,333

Total Tests

39,971

Ever Hospitalized

301

Deaths Among Cases

75

% Progress (November Goal: 44233 Tests)

402%

% Progress (December Goal: 44233 Tests)

346%

% Progress (January Goal: 44233 Tests)

149%

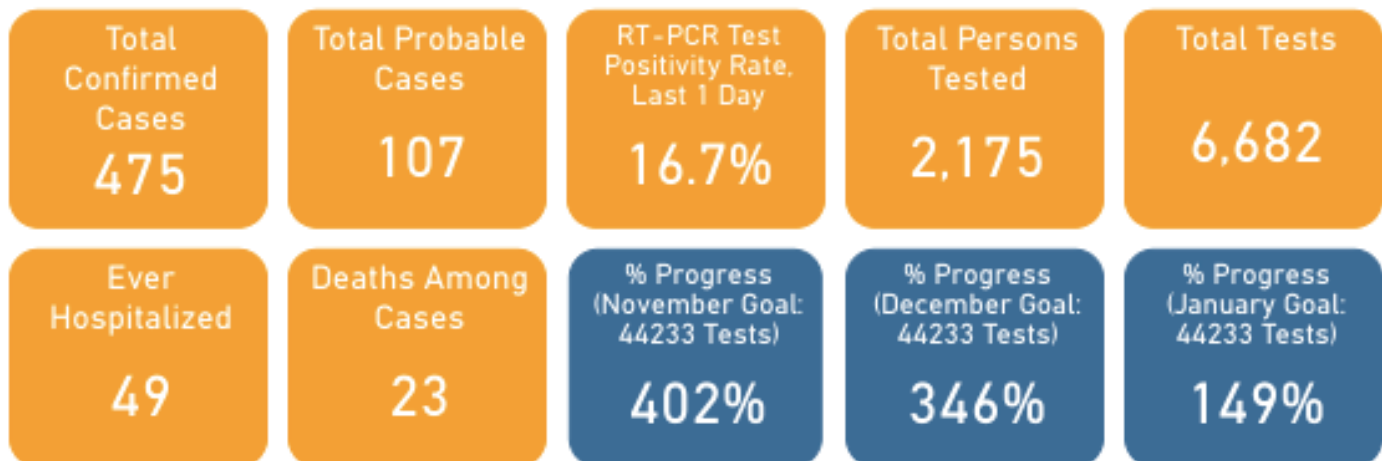
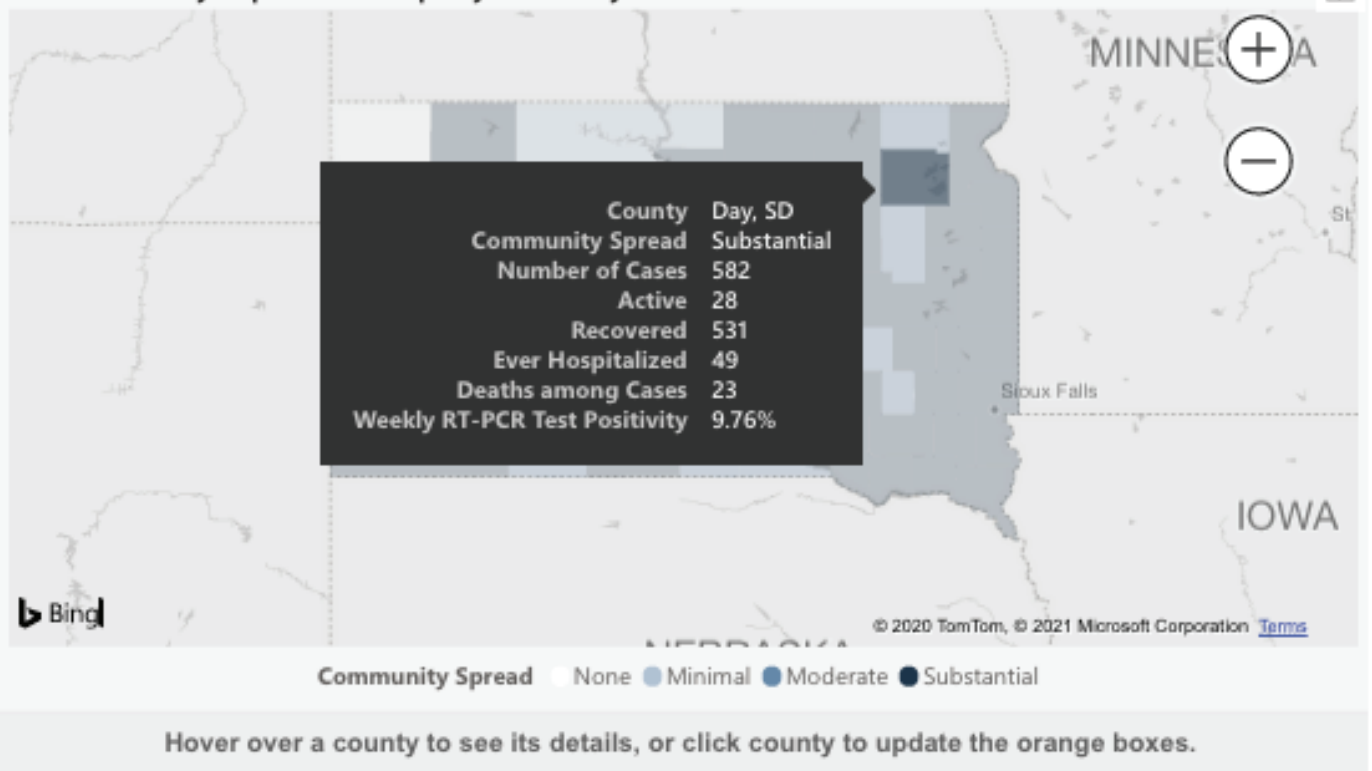
# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 199 ~ 11 of 71

## Day County



### Community Spread Map by County of Residence



# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 199 ~ 12 of 71

## Vaccinations

Total Doses Administered

57,121

Total Persons Administered a Vaccine

47,292

Manufacturer	Number of Doses
Moderna	27,784
Pfizer	29,337

Doses	Number of Recipients
Moderna - 1 dose	27,784
Pfizer - 1 dose	9,679
Pfizer - Series Complete	9,829

County	# Doses	# Persons (1 dose)	# Persons (2 doses)	Total # Persons
Aurora	87	87	0	87
Beadle	1053	667	193	860
Bennett*	71	67	2	69
Bon Homme*	445	429	8	437
Brookings	1551	1,115	218	1,333
Brown	2312	2,268	22	2,290
Brule*	236	232	2	234
Buffalo*	5	5	0	5
Butte	199	195	2	197
Campbell	202	176	13	189
Charles Mix*	322	316	3	319
Clark	169	157	6	163
Clay	824	752	36	788
Codington*	1594	1,218	188	1,406
Corson*	19	17	1	18
Custer*	351	321	15	336
Davison	1459	1,383	38	1,421
Day*	337	319	9	328
Deuel	187	159	14	173
Dewey*	89	87	1	88
Douglas*	213	209	2	211
Edmunds	167	163	2	165
Fall River*	417	411	3	414
Faulk	163	161	1	162
Grant*	438	422	8	430
Gregory*	240	232	4	236
Haakon*	90	90	0	90



# Groton Daily Independent

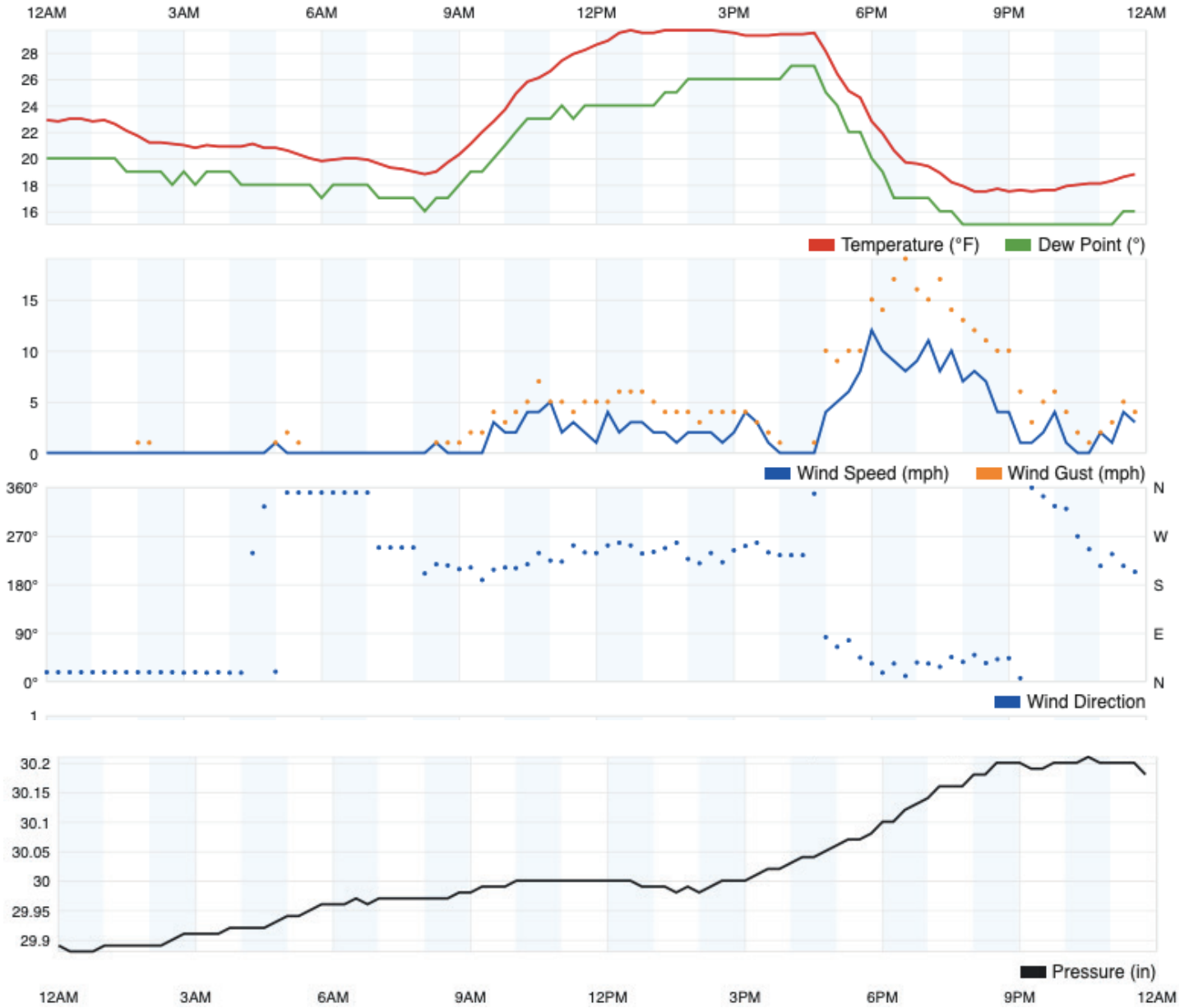
Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 199 ~ 13 of 71

Hamlin	237	187	25	212
Hand	209	189	10	199
Hanson	73	65	4	69
Harding	3	3	0	3
Hughes*	1057	1,025	16	1,041
Hutchinson*	580	530	25	555
Hyde*	99	99	0	99
Jackson*	58	58	0	58
Jerauld	77	63	7	70
Jones*	97	93	2	95
Kingsbury	354	276	39	315
Lake	684	370	157	527
Lawrence	799	771	14	785
Lincoln	7127	2,835	2,146	4,981
Lyman*	69	67	1	68
Marshall*	225	219	3	222
McCook	412	290	61	351
McPherson	24	24	0	24
Meade*	819	639	90	729
Mellette*	6	6	0	6
Miner	143	115	14	129
Minnehaha	17718	7,746	4,986	12,732
Moody*	277	229	24	253
Oglala Lakota*	24	16	4	20
Pennington*	5962	4,276	843	5,119
Perkins*	63	63	0	63
Potter	126	122	2	124
Roberts*	542	530	6	536
Sanborn	111	101	5	106
Spink	518	500	9	509
Stanley*	146	140	3	143
Sully	33	27	3	30
Todd*	30	26	2	28
Tripp*	274	272	1	273
Turner	684	496	94	590
Union	322	290	16	306
Walworth*	326	164	81	245
Yankton	1875	1,841	17	1,858
Ziebach*	15	15	0	15
Other	1683	1,027	328	1,355

# Groton Daily Independent






Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 199 ~ 14 of 71

## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



# Broton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 199 ~ 15 of 71

Today	Tonight	Wednesday	Wednesday Night	Thursday
				
Chance Snow and Patchy Blowing Snow then Mostly Cloudy	Partly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny	Mostly Clear	Sunny then Mostly Sunny and Breezy
<b>High: 30 °F</b> ↓	<b>Low: 18 °F</b> ↑	<b>High: 42 °F</b>	<b>Low: 24 °F</b>	<b>High: 34 °F</b>

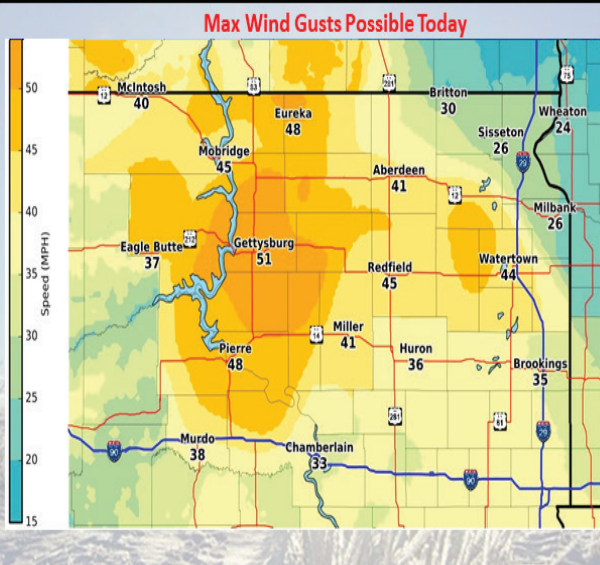
## Light Snow Ending This Morning - Gusty Winds Today

### Today

- Mostly cloudy, gusty winds 40-50mph, blowing snow possible.
- High temperatures 12-25°F over the coteau and western MN, 25-36°F over the James River Valley and west.

### Wednesday

- Warmer, with highs 38-50°F
- Partly Cloudy
- Breezy with winds gusting 25-35mph



 NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE  
OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

Updated: 1/19/2021 5:07 AM Central

Light snow pushes out of the region this morning and gusty winds up to 50 mph are possible today. Reduced visibility due to blowing snow is possible, so prepare accordingly if travelling! Wednesday expect a brief warmup before temps cool to near normal for this time of year.

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 199 ~ 16 of 71

## Today in Weather History

January 19, 1970: Extremely cold airmass was over the area on this day in weather history in 1970. After a frigid night, daytime high temperatures struggled to reach the single digits below zero. Overnight low temperatures across the area were from 25 below to 34 below zero with daytime highs from 3 above at Sisseton to 12 degrees below zero at Pierre. Record low temperatures were set at Wheaton, Watertown, Pierre, and Kennebec. The temperature fell to 32 degrees below zero at Pierre, 33 degrees below zero at Watertown and Wheaton, and to 34 degrees zero at Kennebec. Aberdeen fell to 35 degrees below zero, Sisseton dropped to 26 degrees below zero, Mobridge fell to 25 degrees below zero, Sisseton fell to 26 degrees below zero, and Timber Lake fell to 27 degrees below zero.

1883: The steamers of Cimbria and Sultan collided in the North Sea due to heavy fog. This collision resulted in the death of 357 people.

1961: Eight inches of snow fell and caused crippling traffic jams around the Washington D.C. area on the eve of John Kennedy's inauguration. The president-elect had to cancel dinner plans and, in a struggle to keep other commitments, is reported to have had only 4 hours of sleep. Former President Herbert Hoover was unable to fly into Washington National Airport due to the weather, and he had to miss the swearing-in ceremony.

1993: An unusual series of Pacific storm systems tracked across Arizona from January 6th through the 19th, producing heavy and prolonged precipitation across the state. These heavy rains caused the most widespread and severe flooding in Arizona since the turn of the century. The highest flows of record were observed at some streamflow-gaging stations in every major river basin in the state. The protracted rainfall over the 2-week period caused multiple flood peaks on most streams and rivers. A large garbage landfill and portions of the new Mill Avenue Bridge that was under construction were washed away by the raging Salt River. The Gillespie Dam west of Phoenix was damaged, as high water spread throughout low-lying areas. One man drowned while trying to cross the Agua Fria River.

1996: January 1996 is known as one of the worst snowmelt floods on record for the Mid-Atlantic. The region saw blizzard conditions on January 6 and 7th, which produced 15 to 24 inches east of I-95, and 2 to 3 feet of snow west of I-95. With a tremendous amount of snow on the ground, on January 19, temperatures soared into the 50s and 60s ahead of an approaching cold front. At 7 am in Washington D.C. was reporting a temperature of 60 degrees with a dewpoint of 60 degrees, both unusually high for a January morning. The warm temperatures combined with rain to melt much of the snowpack, which was released into the waterways.



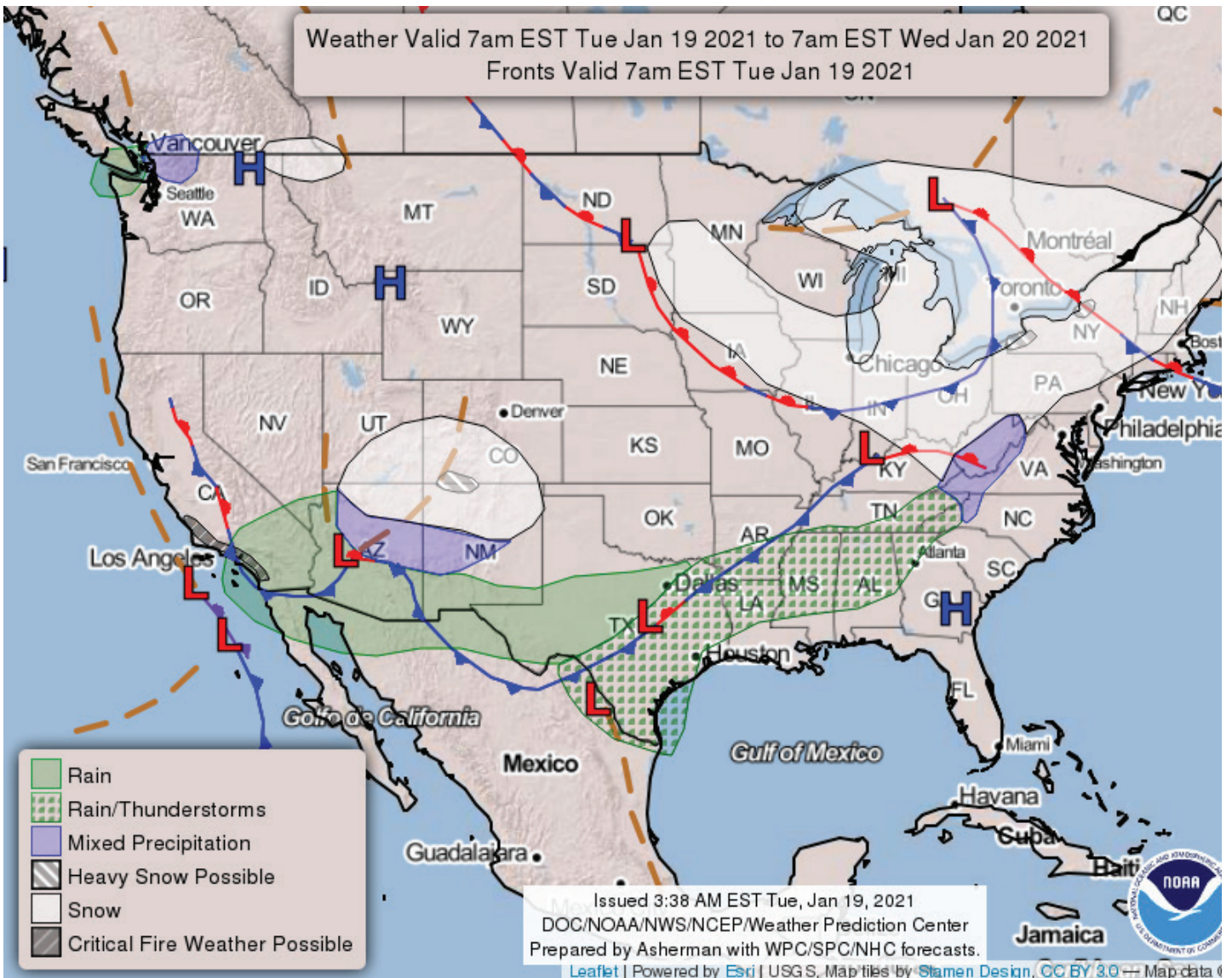
# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 199 ~ 17 of 71

## Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

**High Temp: 30 °F at 1:35 PM**  
**Low Temp: 17 °F at 8:22 PM**  
**Wind: 19 mph at 6:15 PM**  
**Precip:**

**Record High: 60° in 1921**  
**Record Low: -36° in 1943**  
**Average High: 22°F**  
**Average Low: 1°F**  
**Average Precip in Jan.: 0.30**  
**Precip to date in Jan.: 0.14**  
**Average Precip to date: 0.30**  
**Precip Year to Date: 0.14**  
**Sunset Tonight: 5:23 p.m.**  
**Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:06 a.m.**



# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 199 ~ 18 of 71



## INCONCEIVABLE

During the rule of the Roman Empire, each penny was stamped with the image of the Roman Emperor. Anyone who used that coin was expected to obey his laws.

When God created Adam, He implanted His image in and on him. God did not use a penny to remind people who they were to obey, but a Person. And beginning with Adam, each of us has had His image on us and in us. We are expected to enjoy Him and glorify Him and honor Him at all times and in all circumstances. A reasonable expectation for His children.

In Psalm 8:6 we are reminded of the power of that stamp. "You," wrote the Psalmist, "made him ruler over the works of Your hands; You put everything under his feet." The simplicity and majesty of that single, simple verse are staggering!

The word "ruler" means "lordship." As the "crown" of God's creation, we are the "lords" of His creation and are to use the gifts and talents He has given us to be masters of everything He created - everything that we see today or ever will be found in the universe.

But, unfortunately, Adam chose not to follow God's directions. As a result of Adam's choice, man and God's entire creation became corrupted by sin. Fortunately, the story does not end there!

When we repent of our sins and turn our lives over to the Lord, this "Lordship" returns. Once again, we become His subjects and are responsible "to bear" His image in our behavior and leave His "stamp" on everything we do. All things become new again.

Prayer: Help us, Father, to live as You planned for us to live - as lords of Your creation may we honor and glorify Your name in all we do. In Jesus's Name. AMEN!

Scripture For Today: You made him ruler over the works of Your hands; You put everything under his feet. Psalm 8:6

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 199 ~ 19 of 71

## News from the Associated Press

### Monday's Scores

By The Associated Press

#### BOYS PREP BASKETBALL=

Dakota Valley 92, West Sioux, Iowa 51  
Mobridge-Pollock 82, Standing Rock, N.D. 53  
Platte-Geddes 66, Gregory 35  
Tea Area 69, Garretson 37  
West Central 62, Baltic 40  
Wilmot/Waubay/Summit Co-op 49, Tri-State, N.D. 35  
Winner 59, Lower Brule 53

#### GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL=

Bridgewater-Emery 63, Bon Homme 54  
Clark/Willow Lake 59, Great Plains Lutheran 27  
Dakota Valley 59, West Sioux, Iowa 19  
Dell Rapids St. Mary 54, Estelline/Hendricks 48  
Groton Area 52, Langford 25  
Madison 46, Beresford 42  
Tri-State, N.D. 69, Wilmot 55  
Tripp-Delmont/Armour 62, Colome 55  
Wessington Springs 60, Doland 49  
West Central 58, Crofton, Neb. 53

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

### Girl's Basketball Polls

By The Associated Press \

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The South Dakota Sportswriters Association high school girl's poll, with first-place votes in parentheses, and total points.

#### Class AA

1. Harrisburg (17)	8-0	85	2	
2. Washington	5-2	65	1	
3. Aberdeen Central	7-0	42	5	
4. O'Gorman	7-2	41	3	
5. Brandon Valley	5-2	10	RV	
(tie) Mitchell	6-2	10	NR	

Others receiving votes: Roosevelt 2.

#### Class A

1. St. Thomas More (17)	10-0	85	1	
2. West Central	7-1	65	2	
3. Winner	10-1	54	3	
4. SF Christian	8-1	31	5	
5. Aberdeen Roncalli	10-0	13	RV	

Others receiving votes: Hamlin 7.

#### Class B

1. Corsica-Stickney(10)	8-2	73	1	
2. Castlewood (6)	6-0	69	2	

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 199 ~ 20 of 71

3. White River (1) 6-0 60 3
4. Ethan 7-1 31 4
5. Hanson 8-1 18 5

Others receiving votes: Waverly-South Shore 2, Viborg-Hurley 2.

## Boy's Basketball Polls

By The Associated Press \

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The South Dakota Sportswriters Association high school boy's poll, with first-place votes in parentheses, records, total points and last week's ranking.

Class AA

1. Washington (17) 7-0 85 1
2. Yankton 8-2 63 2
3. Harrisburg 6-0 54 3
4. Roosevelt 4-3 24 4
5. Mitchell 7-1 19 5

Others receiving votes: Brandon Valley 9, Rapid City Central 1.

Class A

1. Dakota Valley (17) 7-0 85 1
2. SF Christian 8-1 66 2
3. Sioux Valley 11-0 53 3
4. Vermillion 6-0 27 5
5. Dell Rapids 6-2 21 4

Others receiving votes: Tiospa Zina 2, St. Thomas More 1, Winner 1.

Class B

1. De Smet (15) 9-1 83 1
2. Platte-Geddes (2) 6-0 70 2
3. Howard 7-1 48 3
4. Canistota 6-1 23 5
5. Viborg-Hurley 6-2 13 RV

Others receiving votes: Elkton-Lake Benton 9, Dell Rapids St. Mary 8, Aberdeen Christian .

## State launches next phase of COVID-19 vaccinations

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota health officials say the state on Monday is launching the next phase of coronavirus vaccinations.

Phase 1D includes people 65 years and older, beginning with those who are 80 and older. 1D also includes high-risk patients, including those on dialysis and post-transplant recipients.

Avera Medical Group vice president Dr. David Basel calls it a "soft launch" of the next phase because there are some people in Phase 1C that still need to be vaccinated, KELO-TV reported.

Basel offers some numbers which put the effort into context.

"It's also important to keep in mind that overall, there's 250,000 individuals in 1D, and we're getting 11,000 doses a week. So it's going to take us a while even when we are fully into 1D to get everybody done," Basel said. "So we're asking a lot, lot of patience."

The vaccine rollout continues, balancing medicine with speed.

"I know we've had a lot of interested people calling in, saying when can I get on and stuff like that, and so even in the 80 and above group, it's going to take us several weeks to get through that group I suspect, and so we'll get there as fast as we can," Basel said.

South Dakota health officials on Monday confirmed 116 positive COVID-19 tests and 11 deaths due to the coronavirus in the last day, bringing the total number of cases to 94,652 and the cumulative fatalities to 1,667.



## Tourism businesses look forward with renewed hope for 2021

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Many thought one of South Dakota's top industries would take a huge hit in 2020 because of the coronavirus pandemic.

But, tourism officials it wasn't as bad as some other states because of South Dakota's many outdoor opportunities. From hiking in the Black Hills to driving through the Badlands, South Dakota's outdoor venues attracted tourists in 2020 and the state tourism board thinks 2021 will be the same.

"There's so many contingencies and we certainly hope that we'll be back to more of a sense of normalcy with this COVID things," said John Brockelsby, a member of the state tourism board. "But you know, people they really do want to travel and South Dakota, the whole state, and the Black Hills are certainly wonderful places because there's so much to do outside."

From the Mount Rushmore National Memorial in the Black Hills to the glacial lakes and prairies in the northeast, South Dakota has plenty of social distancing opportunities, tourism officials said.

Hospitality businesses and organizations across the state are looking forward to a new year and a vaccine for a fresh start in 2021, KOTA-TV reports.

Brockelsby, whose family started one of Rapid City's tourist attractions, Reptile Gardens, said he and the staff at the unique zoo are ready to bring back the things people know and love about the park — things missing in 2020. He says they are hoping to have their snake show again and have opportunities to pet a python and baby alligator.

South Dakota is fairing better than several other states, including states like Minnesota and Wisconsin where travel spending is down by nearly 50%. Officials credit that to marketing strategies to attract visitors to the "open state" during the pandemic, filled with national and state parks to explore.

## Asia Today: China sees virus outbreaks across its northeast

BEIJING (AP) — China was dealing with coronavirus outbreaks across its frigid northeast on Tuesday, prompting additional lockdowns and travel bans ahead of next month's Lunar New Year holiday.

The country reported another 118 cases on Tuesday, with 43 of those in the province of Jilin. Hebei province just outside Beijing saw another 35 cases, while Heilongjiang province bordering Russia reported 27 new cases.

Beijing, where some residential communities and outlying villages have been placed under lockdown, reported just one new case.

A fourth northern province, Liaoning, has also imposed quarantines and travel restrictions to prevent the virus from further spreading, part of measures being imposed across much of the country to prevent new outbreaks during during February's Lunar New Year holiday.

Authorities have called on citizens not to travel, ordered schools closed a week early and conducted testing on a massive scale.

Hebei's provincial capital, Shijiazhuang, has been building a complex of prefabricated housing units to allow the quarantine of more than 3,000 people as it struggles to control more infections.

China has reported a total of 88,454 cases and 4,635 deaths since coronavirus was first detected in the central Chinese city of Wuhan in late 2019. China does not include people who test positive but have no symptoms in its count.

A multinational team of investigators from the World Health Organization are currently in Wuhan undergoing two weeks of quarantine before beginning field visits in hopes of gaining clues into the origins of the pandemic that has now killed more than 2 million people.

In other developments in the Asia-Pacific region:

— India's homegrown coronavirus vaccine developer Bharat Biotech is warning people with weak immunity and other medical conditions including allergies, fever or a bleeding disorder to consult a doctor before getting the shot — and if possible avoid the vaccine. The vaccine ran into controversy after the Indian government allowed its use without concrete data showing its effectiveness in preventing COVID-19. Tens

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 199 ~ 22 of 71

of thousands of people have been given the vaccine in the past three days after India started inoculating health care workers last weekend in what is likely the world's largest coronavirus vaccination campaign. The vaccination drive began at a time when coronavirus infections have fallen sharply in the nation.

— Sri Lankan authorities say they will fully reopen the country for tourists from Thursday, in a bid to revive the island nation's lucrative tourism industry. Authorities say the country's two international airports too will also be fully operational from Thursday. The Indian ocean island nation closed the country for tourists in March when the pandemic picked up steam. Under the new program, tourists must be tested in their country 72 hours prior to their flight, when they arrive at their hotel and again seven days later. They will be allowed to travel in 14 tourism zones in a "travel bubble," without mixing with the local population. About 180 hotels have been earmarked to provide accommodation for the tourists. Tourism had accounted for about 5% of Sri Lanka's gross domestic product and employed 250,000 people directly and up to 3 million people indirectly.

— Travelers to New Zealand from most other nations will need to show negative pre-departure coronavirus tests from Jan. 25, officials announced Tuesday. New Zealand recently imposed the rule on travelers from the U.S. and the U.K. and is extending it to all other countries, with the exception of Australia and a handful of Pacific Island nations. Travelers returning from Antarctica are also exempt. COVID-19 Response Minister Chris Hipkins said New Zealand has some of the strictest border measures in the world, which it needs to maintain its strategy of eliminating the virus. There is currently no community spread of the virus in New Zealand, with all known infections among travelers who have been put into quarantine at the border. Most travelers are required to spend two weeks in quarantine upon arrival.

## South Africa's trailblazing Black food writer dies of virus

By MOGOMOTSI MAGOME Associated Press

JOHANNESBURG (AP) — South Africa's trailblazing Black food writer Dorah Sitole's latest cookbook was widely hailed in December as a moving chronicle of her journey from humble township cook to famous, well-traveled author.

The country's new Black celebrity chefs lined up to praise her as a mentor who encouraged them to succeed by highlighting what they knew best: tasty African food.

Now they are mourning Sitole's death this month from COVID-19. She was 65.

In "40 Years of Iconic Food," Sitole engagingly described how she quietly battled South Africa's racist apartheid system to find appreciation, and a market, for African cuisine. Her book became a holiday best-seller, purchased by Blacks and whites alike.

Sitole's career started in 1980 at the height of apartheid when she was hired by a canned foods company to promote sales of their products by giving cooking classes in Black townships. She found that she loved the work.

In 1987, Sitole became the country's first Black food writer when she was appointed food editor for True Love, one of the few publications for the country's Black majority.

The magazine, and its competitor Drum, were known for giving Black writers, photographers and editors the freedom to write about the Black condition and experience.

With stories that were about much more than food, Sitole described how traditional African dishes brought pleasure to families and communities in troubled times. She was known for her distinctive takes on well-known recipes and tips on how to make them on a budget. She won an avid readership and became a household name, even as South Africa's townships were roiled by anti-apartheid violence.

When apartheid ended and Nelson Mandela became president in 1994, Sitole found new opportunities. She trained as a Cordon Bleu chef and got a diploma in marketing. She traveled across Africa to learn about the continent's cuisine, producing the book "Cooking from Cape to Cairo."

In interviews, she pointed out her East African fish dish with basmati rice that she developed while traveling through that region, and the seafood sump recipe, which is basically a paella using chopped corn kernels instead of the traditional rice.

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 199 ~ 23 of 71

In 2008, Sitole's success was acknowledged when she was appointed True Love's editor-in-chief.

Sitole's warmth and generosity is credited with opening doors for many Black chefs, food writers and influencers who are thriving in South Africa today.

"Mam (mother) Dorah's approach to food was a mixture of things. First, it was something that was driven by her background, she was very true to who she was," said Siba Mtongana, one of South Africa's brightest new chefs, who started out as food editor for Drum magazine and now has a television series and cookbooks.

"She would take what we grew up eating and add a twist to them, and add flavors that we would not ordinarily have thought of putting together," said Mtongana who has opened a restaurant in Cape Town, featuring food from all over Africa.

She said Sitole imbued her with a passion for exposing the world to Africa's many cuisines saying she loved describing to her readers what others enjoy eating across Africa, and around the world.

Another chef who credits Sitole for assisting her is Khanya Mzongwana, a contributing editor for food retailer Woolworths' Taste magazine.

"Mam Dorah wore so many hats — she was a writer, a creator, a mother, a friend, a real artist. I remember just how awesome it was to see a Black woman blazing trails in food media. Nobody was doing that," said Mzongwana.

"What made Mam Dorah the best was definitely how she could fill a space with pleasantness," said Mzongwana.

"She was so generous with her resources and wanted to see all of us — her daughters — win. Paying it forward in meaningful ways is something I saw Mam Dorah do first," she said. "She loved and respected everybody and made what seemed like such a wild dream appear so reachable and normal. She was one of the most impactful Black women in the food world."

Sitole received numerous awards for her contribution to South African culture.

In one of her last interviews, Sitole said the highlight of her four-decade career was her trip across the continent.

"I had always wanted to travel through Africa and I had no clue what to expect," she said on Radio 702. "It was almost like you don't know what you are going into, and then you find it. I loved every moment and every country that I went to, I loved the food and the experience."

Sitole is survived by her children Nonhlanhla, Phumzile and Ayanda.

## **Biden's national security Cabinet nominees face Senate tests**

By ROBERT BURNS, LOLITA C. BALDOR and MATTHEW LEE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President-elect Joe Biden's national security Cabinet may be bare on Day One of his presidency, but an inauguration eve spurt of Senate confirmation hearings suggests that won't be the case for long.

While the nominees to head the State Department, the Pentagon, Homeland Security and the intelligence community are unlikely to be confirmed by the time Biden takes the oath of office at noon Wednesday, some could be in place within days.

The Senate typically confirms some nominees, particularly the secretaries of defense, on Inauguration Day, though raw feelings about President Donald Trump four years ago led to Democratic-caused delays, except for James Mattis at the Pentagon. This year, the tension is heightened by Trump's impeachment and an extraordinary military presence in Washington because of fears of extremist violence.

Putting his national security team in place quickly is a high priority for Biden, not only because of his hopes for reversing or modifying Trump administration policy shifts but also because of diplomatic, military and intelligence problems around the world that may create challenges early in his tenure.

The most controversial of the group may be Lloyd Austin, the recently retired Army general whom Biden selected to lead the Pentagon. Austin will need not only a favorable confirmation vote in the Senate but also a waiver by both the House and the Senate because he has been out of uniform only four years.

# Groton Daily Independent

**Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 199 ~ 24 of 71**

The last time a new president did not have his secretary of defense confirmed by Inauguration Day was in 1989. President George H.W. Bush's nominee, John Tower, had run into opposition and ended up rejected by the Senate several weeks later.

Also up for confirmation are Alejandro Mayorkas, Biden's nominee for secretary of the Department of Homeland Security; Biden confidant Antony Blinken to lead the State Department; Avril Haines to be the first woman to serve as director of national intelligence; and Janet Yellen as treasury secretary, another first for a woman.

Austin is testifying Tuesday before the Senate Armed Services Committee, but the panel will not be in position to vote until he gets the waiver. Republicans are expected to broadly support the Austin nomination, as are Democrats.

Biden's emerging Cabinet marks a return to a more traditional approach to governing, relying on veteran policymakers with deep expertise and strong relationships in Washington and global capitals. Austin is something of an exception in that only twice in history has a recently retired general served as defense secretary — most recently Mattis.

Austin, who would be the first Black secretary of defense, retired from the military as a four-star general in 2016. The law requires a minimum seven-year waiting period.

Doubts about the wisdom of having a recently retired officer running the Pentagon are rooted in an American tradition of protecting against excessive military influence by ensuring that civilians are in control. When he announced Austin as his pick in December, Biden insisted he is "uniquely suited" for the job.

Lindsay P. Cohn, an expert on civil-military relations and an associate professor at the U.S. Naval War College, said at a Senate hearing on the subject last week that an Austin waiver raises worrying risks.

"Choosing a recently retired general officer and arguing that he is uniquely qualified for the current challenges furthers the narrative that military officers are better at things and more reliable or trustworthy than civil servants or other civilians," she said. "This is hugely problematic at a time when one of the biggest challenges facing the country is the need to restore trust and faith in the political system. Implying that only a military officer can do this job at this time is counterproductive to that goal."

Some Democrats have already said they will oppose a waiver. They argue that granting it for two administrations in a row makes the exception more like a rule. Even so, a favorable vote seems likely.

The chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, Rep. Adam Smith, D-Wash., on Friday introduced waiver legislation for Austin.

Blinken, Biden's nominee to be America's top diplomat, said he is ready to confront challenges posed by China, Iran, North Korea and Russia and is committed to rebuilding the State Department after four years of atrophy under the Trump administration,

Blinken will tell the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on Tuesday that he sees a world of rising nationalism and receding democracy. In remarks prepared for his confirmation hearing, Blinken will say that mounting threats from authoritarian states are reshaping all aspects of human lives, particularly in cyberspace. He'll say that American global leadership still matters and without it rivals will either step in to fill the vacuum or there will be chaos — and neither is a palatable choice.

Blinken also promises to bring Congress in as a full foreign policy partner, a subtle jab at the Trump administration and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who routinely ignored or bypassed lawmakers in policy-making. He called the Jan. 6 insurrection on Capitol Hill "senseless and searing" and pledged to work with Congress.

Mayorkas, Biden's nominee for secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, would be the first Latino and first immigrant to lead the agency. That's notable because DHS oversees border enforcement and the immigration services agency in addition to missions that include overseeing cybersecurity for critical infrastructure and civilian federal agencies.

Haines, a former CIA deputy director and former deputy national security adviser in the Obama administration, was to have appeared Friday before the Senate intelligence committee, but the hearing for her confirmation to be director of national intelligence, or DNI, was postponed until Tuesday. She is expected to promise to keep politics out of the intelligence community, a departure from a Trump administration that



saw repeated pressure on intelligence officials to shape intelligence to the Republican president's liking.

"To be effective, the DNI must never shy away from speaking truth to power — even, especially, when doing so may be inconvenient or difficult," Haines will say, according to excerpts of her prepared remarks.

Yellen, the nominee for treasury secretary, is certain to be quizzed by the Senate Finance Committee about the details of Biden's proposed \$1.9 trillion emergency relief plan announced last week.

"Without further action, we risk a longer, more painful recession now — and long-term scarring of the economy later," Yellen says in prepared testimony. She adds that "right now, with interest rates at historic lows, the smartest thing we can do is act big," saying that in the long run "the benefits will far outweigh the costs."

Associated Press writers Ben Fox, Eric Tucker and Martin Crutsinger contributed to this report.

## 3 more COVID-19 cases linked to Australian Open arrivals

By DENNIS PASSA AP Sports Writer

Two players are among the three latest COVID-19 cases that have emerged from testing conducted on passengers who arrived on charter flights bringing people to Melbourne for the Australian Open.

Tournament director Craig Tiley said the players weren't considered to be contagious, though, and hadn't been taken out of the regular quarantine hotels.

The first six positive tests were reported over the weekend and connected to flights from Los Angeles, Abu Dhabi and Doha, Qatar.

All passengers on those flights, including 72 elite tennis players, were classified by local health authorities as close contacts of people infected with the coronavirus and forced into hard lockdown. That means they're not allowed to leave their hotel rooms for the mandatory 14-day quarantine period. The six infected people, including a member of the aircrew on one flight and two coaches on different flights, were transferred to a medical hotel.

The Victoria state government announced three new positive tests on Tuesday, the first to involve players.

The Australian Associated Press quoted Tiley as saying the health department "will need to confirm that they are viral shedding but I can tell you that they're not in the medical hotel."

Tennis Australia declined to provide The Associated Press with a list of the 72 affected players, but many have made their status known via posts on social media.

More than 1,200 players, coaches, staff, officials and media arrived on flights in a 36-hour period until Saturday morning to prepare for the Australian Open, which starts Feb. 8.

Victoria state Premier Daniel Andrews said some of the cases linked to the tournament will be reclassified as "non-infectious shedding."

But the state's chief medical officer, Brett Sutton, later said the reclassification was unlikely to mean any of the 72 players in lockdown — meaning they're not allowed to leave their rooms for daily practice sessions like the broader player group — could leave isolation early.

All people traveling to Australia for the tennis tournament had to return a negative test before boarding the charter flights, although there was at least one exemption in the case of the historic shedding.

Tennys Sandgren, a two-time quarterfinalist at Melbourne Park, originally tested positive for the coronavirus in November and the Victoria state health authorities determined after reviewing the American player's medical records that he was no longer contagious, although still shedding viral particles. So he was given approval to fly to Australia last week.

"My two tests were less than 8 weeks apart. I was sick in November, totally healthy now," Sandgren wrote on Twitter. "There's not a single documented case where I would be contagious at this point. Totally recovered!"

Some players have used social media to detail their perceived hardships of being in lockdown, some saying they weren't aware of the strict quarantine regulations.

"These are high performing athletes and it is hard to keep a high performing athlete in a room," Tiley



# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 199 ~ 26 of 71

said. "This is the contribution that they have to make in order to get the privilege of when they do come out to compete for \$80 million (\$62 million) in prize money."

Organizers had a zoom conference with players on Monday night and Tiley conceded he had faced criticism, saying some of the advance warnings of the risks may have been lost in translation.

"There was some big hits that we took but there were also some compliments. The most heartening thing at the end in the chat there was a scroll of thank yous from all the stars and players," Tiley said, according to AAP. "Sometimes the minority have the loudest voices."

Tiley, appearing on Nine Network television on Tuesday, rejected calls from some men's players to reduce Australian Open matches to best-of-three sets instead of best of five.

"We're a Grand Slam," Tiley said. "Right now, three out of five sets for the men and two out of three sets for the women is the position we plan on sticking to."

He also defended Novak Djokovic for appealing to Australian Open organizers to ease restrictions in a list reported on Monday, including a request to shift as many players as possible in Melbourne to private residences with tennis courts.

Djokovic's requests were quickly refused by Andrews.

"In the case of Novak, he wrote a note, these weren't demands, they were suggestions," Tiley said. "But he, too, is understanding what two weeks of lockdown means ... every player coming down knew that if they were going to be close contacts or test positive that these were going to be the conditions."

Djokovic is part of a smaller group of players who landed in the South Australia capital of Adelaide, along with Serena Williams, Naomi Osaka and Rafael Nadal, and are allowed outside for practice sessions under bio-secure protocols.

Australia's international borders are mostly closed, although there are exemptions in special circumstances. All arrivals must do mandatory quarantine. Each of Australia's states and territories has its own border and travel restrictions, and those can change on very short notice.

Victoria state, which has Melbourne as its capital, accounted for 810 of Australia's 909 deaths from COVID-19, most of those during a deadly second wave three months ago which resulted in curfews and lockdowns for the city.

More AP tennis: <https://apnews.com/apf-Tennis> and [https://twitter.com/AP\\_Sports](https://twitter.com/AP_Sports)

## Dubai, party haven amid pandemic, faces its biggest surge

By ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Masks off the minute you step inside. Bars packed and pulsing like it's 2019. Social media stars waving bottles of champagne. DJs spinning party tunes through multi-hour brunches.

Since becoming one of the world's first destinations to open up for tourism, Dubai, in the United Arab Emirates, has promoted itself as the ideal pandemic vacation spot. It cannot afford otherwise, analysts say, as the virus shakes the foundations of the city-state's economy.

With its cavernous malls, frenetic construction and legions of foreign workers, Dubai was built on the promise of globalization, drawing largely from the aviation, hospitality and retail sectors — all hard hit by the virus.

Now reality is catching up to the big-dreaming emirate. With peak tourism season in full swing, coronavirus infections are surging to unprecedented heights. Daily case counts have nearly tripled in the past month, forcing Britain to slam shut its travel corridor with Dubai last week. But in the face of a growing economic crisis, the city won't lock down.

"Dubai's economy is a house of cards," said Matthew Page, a nonresident scholar at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. "Its competitive advantage is being a place where rules don't apply."

While most countries banned tourists from the U.K. over fears of the fast-spreading virus variant found there, Dubai, home to some 240,000 British expats, kept its doors open for the holidays. Emirates flew

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 199 ~ 27 of 71

five daily flights to London's Heathrow Airport.

Within days, the new virus strain had arrived in the emirates, but that didn't stop reality TV and soccer stars from fleeing Britain's lockdown and wintry weather for Dubai's bars and beaches — without taking a coronavirus test before boarding. Scenes of pre-pandemic revelry were splattered across British tabloids. Facing backlash, Instagram influencers spotted at raucous yacht parties were quick to proclaim their travel "essential."

Dubai was glad of the influx. Hotel occupancy rates surged to 71% in December, according to data provider STR. The London-Dubai air route ranked busiest in the world over the first week of January, said OAG, an aviation data analysis firm.

"People have had enough of this pandemic already," said Iris Sabellano from Dubai's Al Arabi Travel Agency, adding that many of her clients have been forced to quarantine after testing positive for the virus on arrival or before departure. Travelers coming from a select list of countries don't need to get tests before their trips but all must at Dubai's airport.

"With vaccines coming out, they feel it's not the end of the world, they're not going to die," she said.

For those who do die of COVID-19, long-haul airline Emirates offers to pay \$1,800 to help cover funeral costs.

As the outbreak worsens, it seems the stampede will slow. Israeli tourists, who were coming in the tens of thousands following a normalization deal between the countries, have vanished due to new quarantine rules. A decision to suspend visa waivers for Israelis to the UAE until July took effect Monday. Britain's move to mandate a 10-day quarantine for those returning from Dubai threatens to clobber what's left of the tourism sector.

"Brits make up such an important proportion of tourists and investors in Dubai," said David Tarsh, spokesman for ForwardKeys, a travel data-analysis company. "Cutting that pipeline ... is a complete disaster for the city."

British Transport Secretary Grant Shapps tweeted that the government's decision was prompted by the UAE's latest virus data. Beyond daily infections, however, the data is scant. The UAE does not make public information about disease clusters or hospitalizations.

Amid an aggressive testing campaign, the country has reported more than 256,000 cases and 751 deaths.

On Tuesday, dozens of cars idled at a drive-in coronavirus clinic on Dubai's desert outskirts awaiting tests. At Dubai's American Hospital, where a makeshift tent administers virus tests in a parking lot, a guard said wait times stretched over two hours. At least 80 people lined up as the call to afternoon prayers echoed overhead.

Analysts speculate the UAE's unique demographics — 90% expatriate, comprising mostly healthy, young laborers — have prevented well-staffed hospitals from becoming overwhelmed and kept the death rate low, at 0.3%.

But that hasn't assuaged Abu Dhabi, Dubai's more conservative neighbor and the country's capital. Without explanation, Abu Dhabi has kept its border with freewheeling Dubai shut, despite promises to reopen by Christmas. Anyone crossing into Abu Dhabi must present a negative coronavirus test.

Relations between service-heavy Dubai and oil-rich Abu Dhabi can get tense. During the 2009 financial crisis, Abu Dhabi needed to rescue Dubai with a \$20 billion bailout. This time, it's unclear whether Dubai can count on another cash infusion, given the crash in global oil prices.

Even pre-pandemic, Dubai's economy was heading toward another downturn thanks to a shaky real estate market, which has plunged 30% in value since 2014 peaks. The emirate and its web of government-linked entities face billions of dollars in debt repayments. Already the government has stepped in to help carrier Emirates, which received \$2 billion in aid last year. Other indebted firms invested in hospitality and tourism may need help, especially with events like World Expo pushed back a year. S&P Global, a ratings agency, estimates Dubai's debt burden to be some 148% of gross domestic product if state-linked industries are included.

Under pressure, authorities have seized on vaccines as the only way to contain the outbreak. Plastered

across front pages of state-linked newspapers are stories touting the mass inoculation drive, which officials claim to be the world's second-fastest after Israel, with 19 doses distributed for every 100 people as of Tuesday.

The UAE is offering the Chinese coronavirus vaccine Sinopharm to everyone, even as its announcement about the shot's efficacy lacks data and details. Demand has overwhelmed supply for the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine in Dubai, where hotline operators say thousands of high-risk residents remain on a waiting list.

With the country shattering its infection record for seven consecutive days, Dubai's ruler, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, declared that widespread vaccination, not movement restrictions, would "accelerate the full recovery of our country."

But even if Dubai meets its goal of inoculating 70% of the population by the end of 2021, Moody's Investors Service expects the UAE's economy to take three years to bounce back.

"I don't think Dubai's days are numbered," said Page, the Carnegie scholar. "But if the city were more modest and responsible, it would be a more sustainable place."

Associated Press writer Jon Gambrell in Dubai contributed to this report.

## Tokyo Olympics Q&A: 6 months out and murmurs of cancellation

By STEPHEN WADE AP Sports Writer

TOKYO (AP) — The Tokyo Olympics are to open in six months on July 23 and organizers have no public program planned to mark the milestone.

There is too much uncertainty for that right now.

Tokyo and other parts of Japan are under an emergency order because of surging coronavirus cases with about 4,500 deaths attributed to COVID-19.

Instead of a countdown celebration, the focus is on the virus and speculation around the Olympics being canceled. Should they take place during a spreading pandemic — vaccine or no vaccine? Organizers say they will with exact details yet to be revealed.

It's been this way since the Olympics were postponed almost 10 months ago. There are always more questions than answers.

Q: When will a final decision be announced about holding the Olympics?

A: The International Olympic Committee and local organizers are adamant they will happen. Mark the date — March 25. That's when the torch relay, heavily sponsored by Coca-Cola and Toyota, begins from northern Japan, crisscrossing the country for four months with 10,000 runners headed to Tokyo. It's hard to imagine the relay going ahead, but the Olympics being canceled. Remember, it was in late March last year that the Olympics were postponed.

Q: Recent polls show 80% in Japan want the Olympics canceled or postponed. So why is Japan and the International Olympic Committee pushing ahead?

A: A key is the billions already "sunk" into the event, and the income Tokyo will generate for the IOC. The IOC gets almost three-quarters of its income from selling TV rights. Another 18% is from sponsors. Unlike other sports businesses like the NBA or English soccer, the IOC has only two major events — every four years — to rely on.

Only five Olympics have ever been canceled, all during wartime: the 1916, 1940 and 1944 Summer Olympics, and Winter Games in 1940 and 1944. But that was before big money was involved.

Japan must also save face. It has spent at least \$25 billion preparing for the Olympics. In addition, China will host the 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing. Japan would hate to cede the stage to China.

Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga is framing the Olympics as "a proof of human victory against the coronavirus."

Q: Will these Olympics look different?

A: Almost certainly. First, athletes will be told to arrive later than usual, and leave early. The idea is to keep the Athletes Village sparsely populated. It's hard to imagine much interaction between athletes, the

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 199 ~ 29 of 71

public and the media. Fewer athletes than usual are likely to appear in the opening ceremony. Japanese media are reporting only 6,000 Olympic athletes will take part. The Olympics involve 11,000 athletes.

However, from the perspective of the television viewer, everything may look similar to previous Olympics. The venues are basically TV stages, and they look the same from one Olympics to the next. Fans are now accustomed to viewing sports events in empty stadiums.

One caveat. Ticket sales account for \$800 million in income for local organizers. No fans means lost revenue and more costs. Those costs must be absorbed by Japanese government entities. Several Japanese government audits have estimated Olympic spending at \$25 billion or more. All but \$6.7 billion is public money. Local sponsors have also poured in \$3.5 billion. Will they get much "bang for their buck?"

Q: Why all the skeptical comments recently from several insiders — mainly senior IOC member Dick Pound and Japanese minister Taro Kono.

A: Pound and Kono both answered the questions they were asked.

Pound was asked about the Olympics taking place. "I can't be certain because the ongoing elephant in the room would be the surges in the virus." He also suggested athletes should be a high priority for a vaccine because they serve as "role models." That contradicted IOC President Thomas Bach, who has said athletes should not be a priority.

Kono, a member of Suga's cabinet, acknowledged in an interview that the Olympics are in doubt.

"I should say anything is possible," Kono said.

Kono is the former defense minister and is now the minister for administrative and regulatory reform. On Monday, he was put in charge of Japan's vaccine program.

"It could go either way," he added of the Olympics.

Keith Mills, who was deputy chair of the organizing committee for the 2012 London Olympics, said he is sure plans have been drawn up for a cancellation.

"But I think they'll leave it until absolutely the last minute in case the situation improves dramatically, in case the vaccinations roll out faster than we all hope," Mills told the BBC on Tuesday. "It's a tough call, I wouldn't like to be in their shoes."

Q: Will vaccinations be required?

A: Not clear. Bach has urged all "participants" to be vaccinated. But he's said athletes will not be required to. But that was the IOC speaking. The Japanese government could override this with different rules for entry and requirements for quarantines.

Q: I see the Australian Open is having problems. What can the IOC learn there?

A: About 1,200 players, staff and media have arrived for next month's Australian Open. All participants were required to return negative COVID-19 tests before boarding flights for Australia. As of Tuesday, nine on those on the flights tested positive when landing in Australia. That has forced 72 players into a 14-day lockdown — since they were exposed on flights — as well as all other passengers on those flights.

The Olympics and Paralympics will involve 15,400 athletes. And tens of thousands of staff, officials, judges, media and broadcasters. And dozen of venues. Athletes are sure to be affected, jeopardizing years of training and, for most, their only shot at a medal.

Australian Open tournament director Craig Tiley said his experiences can teach Japan and the IOC how to deal with problems and setbacks.

"I think there's a lot to be learned from this experience for the Olympic Games," Tiley said. "Every single day we become better at it because we've learned from what happened yesterday — the mistakes you make."

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## Spain's rising cases give pandemic hospital a second chance

By ARITZ PARRA Associated Press

MADRID (AP) — As soon as the lifeless body is silently pushed away on a stretcher, a cleaning battalion



# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 199 ~ 30 of 71

moves into the intensive care box. In a matter of minutes, the bed where the 72-year-old woman fought for over two weeks for another breath gets rubbed clean, the walls of glass isolating it disinfected with a squeegee.

There is little time to reflect on what has just happened, as death gives way to the possibility of saving another life.

"Our biggest source of joy is obviously emptying a bed, but because somebody is discharged and not because they have passed away," said Ignacio Pujol, the head of this Madrid ICU. "That's a little space there for somebody else to get another chance."

As a surge of infections is once again putting Spain's public health system against the ropes, the Nurse Isabel Zendal Hospital that employs Pujol, a project seen by many as an extravagant vanity enterprise, is getting a fresh opportunity to prove its usefulness.

Named after the 19th-century Spanish nurse who took smallpox vaccination across the Atlantic Ocean, the facility was built in 100 days at a cost of 130 million euros (\$157 million), more than twice the original budget. It boasts three pavilions and support buildings over an area the size of 10 soccer fields, looking somewhere between a small airport terminal and an industrial warehouse, with ventilation air ducts, medical beds and state-of-the-art equipment. The original project was for 1,000 beds, of which roughly half have been installed so far.

The Zendal opened to a roar of competing fanfare and criticism on Dec. 1, just as Spain seemed to dampen a post-summer surge of coronavirus infections. By mid-December, it had only received a handful of patients.

But Spain on Monday recorded over 84,000 new COVID-19 infections, the highest increase over a single weekend since the pandemic began. The country's overall tally is heading to 2.5 million cases with 53,000 confirmed virus deaths, although excess mortality statistics add over 30,000 deaths to that.

As the curve of contagion steepened after Christmas and New Year's, the Zendal has gotten busy. On Monday, 392 patients were being treated, more than in any other hospital in the region of 6.6 million.

Spain's surge follows similar infection increases in other European countries, most notably in the U.K. following the discovery of a new virus variant that experts say is more infectious. The London Nightingale, one of the temporary hospitals across Britain designed to ease pressure on the country's overwhelmed health care system, has also reopened for patients and as a vaccination center.

Spain's top health officials insist they have found no evidence that new variants wreaking havoc elsewhere are contributing in any way to its own rocketing infections. Some experts dispute that, claiming the country's limited ability to sequence coronavirus cases is distorting reality and that a new stay-at-home order is necessary.

On the ground, increasing hospitalizations for the virus already surpass the peak of the second resurgence. Nearly one out of every five hospital beds has a patient with COVID-19. The new illness is also taking up one-third of the country's ICU capacity and non-urgent surgeries are already being called off.

Joined by some medical experts, left-wing politicians and workers' unions accuse Madrid's conservative government of spending on vote-attracting hardware instead of reinforcing a public health system they have underfunded for years. Investing in contact tracing and primary care previously, they say, could have averted the need for a Zendal altogether.

"Rather than the success they boast, the filling up of this makeshift hospital represents a tremendous failure of those at the helm of the pandemic's response, and also a failure of all of us as a society that could have done better," said Ángela Hernández, a spokeswoman for Madrid's main medical workers' union, AMYTS.

The last straw for the unions, she said, has been the regional government laying off medical staff who refuse to abandon their positions in regular hospitals when they are reassigned to the Zendal.

"The project has been nonsense from beginning to end," Hernández said. "A few beds without adequate personnel don't make a hospital."

Fernando Prados, Zendal's manager, says he doesn't mind the debate but the 750 patients treated over



the last month and a half have already taken significant pressure off other hospitals.

"We have already contributed in one way or another," Prados said. "We know that we will continue to have COVID patients and once the pandemic is over this infrastructure will be here for any other emergency."

Past automatic glass doors, patients recover in modules of 8 beds, leaving little space for privacy but providing better monitoring of possible complications in their recovery, said Verónica Real, whose challenge as the head nurse has been to organize staff teams drawn from other hospitals.

"Some of the sanitary workers arrive with a degree of anger for all the noise out there about our hospital," Real said. "But once here, the attitude completely changes."

The Zendal's managers say a modern ventilation system renews the entire facility's air every 5 minutes, which contributes to a safer work environment. But they are most proud of the expansion of the intermediate respiratory care unit, where patients receive varying types of assisted respiration to overcome lung inflammation.

The unit's chief, Pedro Landete, says by admitting potentially worsening patients in one of its 50 highly-equipped beds, they are reducing the number of people who later require the more demanding intensive care.

José Andrés Armada arrived with mild symptoms at the facility after all his family was infected despite what he said was a very careful approach to the pandemic. But the 63-year-old's health quickly deteriorated and last week he was on the brink of being intubated in one of the Zendal's dozen ICU boxes.

"I know that the economy is something to safeguard, but health is more important. We should be in lockdown by now. You can't have bars and other places open," the former entrepreneur said.

"I never imagined it could attack you in such a way."

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AP reporter Jill Lawless in London contributed to this report.

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## **Panel: China, WHO should have acted quicker to stop pandemic**

By MARIA CHENG and JAMEY KEATEN Associated Press

GENEVA (AP) — A panel of experts commissioned by the World Health Organization has criticized China and other countries for not moving to stem the initial outbreak of the coronavirus earlier and questioned whether the U.N. health agency should have labeled it a pandemic sooner.

In a report issued to the media Monday, the panel led by former Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and former New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark said there were "lost opportunities" to set up basic public health measures as early as possible.

"What is clear to the panel is that public health measures could have been applied more forcefully by local and national health authorities in China in January," shortly after the coronavirus began sickening clusters of people, it said.

The panel also cited evidence of cases in other countries in late January, saying public health containment measures should have been put in place immediately in any country with a likely case, adding: "They were not."

"The reality is that only a minority of countries took full advantage of the information available to them to respond to the evidence of an emerging pandemic," the panel said.

The experts also wondered why WHO did not declare a global public health emergency — its highest warning for outbreaks — sooner. The U.N. health agency convened its emergency committee on Jan. 22, but did not characterize the emerging pandemic as an international emergency until a week later. At the time, WHO said its expert committee was divided on whether a global emergency should be declared.

"One more question is whether it would have helped if WHO used the word pandemic earlier than it did," the panel said.

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 199 ~ 32 of 71

WHO did not describe the COVID-19 outbreak as a pandemic until March 11, weeks after the virus had begun causing explosive outbreaks in numerous continents, meeting WHO's own definition for a flu pandemic.

As the coronavirus began spreading across the globe, WHO's top experts disputed how infectious the virus was, saying it was not as contagious as flu and that people without symptoms only rarely spread the virus. Scientists have since concluded that COVID-19 transmits even quicker than the flu and that a significant proportion of spread is from people who don't appear to be sick.

Over the past year, WHO has come under heavy criticism for its handling of the response to COVID-19. U.S. President Donald Trump slammed the U.N. health agency for "colluding" with China to cover up the extent of the initial outbreak before halting U.S. funding for WHO and pulling the country out of the organization.

The U.N. health agency bowed to the international pressure at the annual assembly of its member states last spring by creating the Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response, which produced its first report in November. The WHO chief asked Johnson Sirleaf and Clark — who both have previous ties to the U.N. agency — to lead the team.

An Associated Press investigation in June found WHO repeatedly lauded China in public while officials privately complained that Chinese officials stalled on sharing critical epidemic information with them.

Although the panel concluded that "many countries took minimal action to prevent the spread (of COVID-19) internally and internationally," it did not name specific countries. It also declined to call out WHO for its failure to more sharply criticize countries for their missteps instead of lauding countries for their response efforts.

Last month, the author of a withdrawn WHO report into Italy's pandemic response said he warned his bosses in May that people could die and the agency could suffer "catastrophic" reputational damage if it allowed political concerns to suppress the document, according to emails obtained by the AP.

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AP Medical Writer Maria Cheng reported from Toronto.

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

## Joe Biden to propose 8-year citizenship path for immigrants

By LISA MASCARO and BILL BARROW Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President-elect Joe Biden plans to unveil a sweeping immigration bill on Day One of his administration, hoping to provide an eight-year path to citizenship for an estimated 11 million people living in the U.S. without legal status, a massive reversal from the Trump administration's harsh immigration policies.

The legislation puts Biden on track to deliver on a major campaign promise important to Latino voters and other immigrant communities after four years of President Donald Trump's restrictive policies and mass deportations. It provides one of the fastest pathways to citizenship for those living without legal status of any measure in recent years, but it fails to include the traditional trade-off of enhanced border security favored by many Republicans, putting passage in a narrowly divided Congress in doubt.

Expected to run hundreds of pages, the bill is set to be introduced after Biden takes the oath of office Wednesday, according to a person familiar with the legislation and granted anonymity to discuss it.

As a candidate, Biden called Trump's actions on immigration an "unrelenting assault" on American values and said he would "undo the damage" while continuing to maintain border enforcement.

Under the legislation, those living in the U.S. as of Jan. 1, 2021, without legal status would have a five-year path to temporary legal status, or a green card, if they pass background checks, pay taxes and fulfill other basic requirements. From there, it's a three-year path to naturalization, if they decide to pursue citizenship.

For some immigrants, the process would be quicker. So-called Dreamers, the young people who arrived

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 199 ~ 33 of 71

in the U.S. illegally as children, as well as agricultural workers and people under temporary protective status could qualify more immediately for green cards if they are working, are in school or meet other requirements.

The bill is not as comprehensive as the last major immigration overhaul proposed when Biden was vice president during the Obama administration.

For example, it does not include a robust border security element, but rather calls for coming up with strategies. Nor does it create any new guest worker or other visa programs.

It does address some of the root causes of migration from Central America to the United States, and provides grants for workforce development and English language learning.

Biden is expected to take swift executive actions to reverse other Trump immigration actions, including an end to the prohibition on arrivals from several predominantly Muslim countries.

During the Democratic primary, Biden consistently named immigration action as one of his "day one" priorities, pointing to the range of executive powers he could invoke to reverse Trump's policies.

Biden allies and even some Republicans have identified immigration as a major issue where the new administration could find common ground with Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell and enough other GOP senators to avoid the stalemate that has vexed administrations of both parties for decades.

That kind of major win — even if it involves compromise — could be critical as Biden looks for legislative victories in a closely divided Congress, where Republicans are certain to oppose other Biden priorities that involve rolling back some of the GOP's 2017 tax cuts and increasing federal spending.

As a candidate, Biden went so far as to say the Obama administration went too far in its aggressive deportations.

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Barrow reported from Wilmington, Delaware. Associated Press writer Elliot Spagat in San Diego contributed to this report.

## **The Latest: Panel: China, WHO too slow in virus response**

By The Associated Press undefined

GENEVA — A panel of experts commissioned by the World Health Organization has criticized China and other countries for not moving to stem the initial outbreak of the coronavirus earlier and questioned whether the U.N. health agency should have labeled it a pandemic sooner.

In a report issued Monday, the panel led by former Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and former New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark said there were "lost opportunities to apply basic public health measures at the earliest opportunity" and that Chinese authorities could have applied their efforts "more forcefully" in January shortly after the coronavirus began sickening clusters of people.

"The reality is that only a minority of countries took full advantage of the information available to them to respond to the evidence of an emerging pandemic," the panel said.

The experts also wondered why WHO did not declare a global public health emergency sooner. The U.N. health agency convened its emergency committee on Jan. 22, but did not characterize the emerging pandemic as an international emergency until a week later. At the time, WHO said its expert committee was divided on whether a global emergency should be declared.

"One more question is whether it would have helped if WHO used the word pandemic earlier than it did," the panel said.

WHO did not describe the COVID-19 outbreak as a pandemic until March 11, weeks after the virus had begun causing explosive outbreaks in numerous continents.

### **THE VIRUS OUTBREAK:**

- Expert panel says both China and the WHO should have acted faster to prevent the pandemic
- Surging infections give Spain's new emergency hospital in Madrid a second chance to prove its worth
- Germany's Merkel meets with state leaders to ponder tougher virus restrictions
- High numbers of new infections are making the virus genetically diverse and each mutation threatens

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 199 ~ 34 of 71

to undo progress

- Dubai promotes itself as the ideal pandemic vacation spot but the virus is shaking its economy
- Hospital chaplains are on the front lines, helping patients unable to see families
- Follow all of AP's pandemic coverage at <https://apnews.com/hub/coronavirus-pandemic>, <https://apnews.com/hub/coronavirus-vaccine> and <https://apnews.com/UnderstandingtheOutbreak>

HERE'S WHAT ELSE IS HAPPENING:

PARIS — The head of France's state rail company has sounded the alarm over the future of the Eurostar train service, which connects the U.K. with continental Europe and has been hurt badly by the halt to travel during the pandemic as well as Brexit.

Jean-Pierre Farandou, the CEO of SNCF, which owns 55% of Eurostar, told France Inter radio on Tuesday that "the situation is very critical for Eurostar."

Passenger numbers on the cross-Channel train service - which reaches U.K., France, Belgium and Holland - have been down 95% since March and are currently believed to be less than 1% of pre-pandemic levels.

It comes days after U.K. business leaders called for a British government rescue of the Channel Tunnel rail operator as border closures designed to stop a contagious virus variant threatened to push the service toward the brink of collapse.

Farandou noted that "today, there is one round trip that runs between London and Paris, and one other that runs between London and Brussels-Amsterdam. And these trains are 10% full."

GERMANY — Chancellor Angela Merkel is holding a virtual meeting Tuesday with the governors of Germany's 16 states to discuss the country's pandemic measures amid concerns that new mutations of the coronavirus could trigger a fresh surge in cases.

The country's infection rate has stabilized in recent days, indicating that existing restrictions may have been effective in bringing down the numbers. On Tuesday, the country's disease control center reported 11,369 new virus infections and 891 new deaths, for an overall death toll of 47,622.

The government tightened the country's lockdown in early January until the end of this month. However, surging infections in Britain and Ireland, said to be caused by a more contagious virus variant, have experts worried that the mutation could also spread quickly in Germany if measures are not extended or even toughened.

While restaurants, most stores and schools have already been closed and those shutdowns are likely to be extended, there's also talk about possible nightly curfews, an obligation to wear the more effective FFP2 or KN95 masks on public transportation, and a push to get more people to work at home.

ANKARA, Turkey — Turkey has started vaccinating nursing home residents and their caregivers, a week after it rolled out its inoculation program.

People above the age of 90 are also expected to begin being vaccinated as of Tuesday, Health Minister Fahrettin Koca announced on Twitter.

Turkey rolled out its vaccination program on Jan. 14, a day after the country approved the vaccine developed by China's Sinovac Biotech company for emergency use. Close to 850,000 health care workers have received the first of two doses of the vaccine.

Turkey has so far received 3 million doses of the vaccine and it was not clear when more doses would arrive. Officials have said Turkey reached agreement to receive 50 million doses.

Meanwhile, Turkey lifted its decision to suspend leaves for health care workers as well as to temporarily ban resignations and early retirements which it had imposed in October amid a surge of COVID-19 cases which overwhelmed its health system.

The number of daily cases have been dropping steadily from record highs of around 30,000 in November to around 6,000 on Monday. Turkey has recorded nearly 25,000 COVID-19 deaths and 2.4 million infections.



# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 199 ~ 35 of 71

LONDON -- British Health Secretary Matt Hancock is quarantining himself after receiving an alert from the country's test and trace app saying that he has recently been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19.

In a video posted on Twitter, Hancock said he has been pinged by the National Health Service's coronavirus app and that he will be self-isolating at home until Sunday.

Hancock, who contracted the virus last spring, says self-isolation is "perhaps the most important part" of all the social distancing measures in place to break chains of transmission.

Britain is facing an acute resurgence of the coronavirus that has seen lockdown measures reimposed across the country. The Office for National Statistics said separately that one in eight people in England have had the virus, the highest rate among the four U.K. nations. Britain has seen over 90,000 confirmed deaths, the most in Europe.

MADRID — As a surge of infections is once again putting Spain's public health system against the ropes, the Nurse Isabel Zenda Hospital in Madrid, a project seen by many as an extravagant vanity enterprise, is getting a fresh opportunity to prove its usefulness.

Named after the 19th-century Spanish nurse who took smallpox vaccination across the Atlantic Ocean, the facility was built in 100 days at a cost of 130 million euros (\$157 million), more than twice the original budget. It boasts three pavilions and support buildings over an area the size of 10 soccer fields, with ventilation air ducts, medical beds and state-of-the-art equipment. The original project was for 1,000 beds, of which roughly half have been installed so far.

The Zenda opened to a roar of competing fanfare and criticism on Dec. 1, just as Spain seemed to dampen a post-summer surge of coronavirus infections. By mid-December, it had only received a handful of patients.

But Spain on Monday recorded over 84,000 new COVID-19 infections, the highest increase over a single weekend since the pandemic began. The country's overall tally is heading to 2.5 million cases with 53,000 confirmed virus deaths, although excess mortality statistics add over 30,000 deaths to that.

As the curve of contagion steepened after Christmas and New Year's, the Zenda has gotten busy. On Monday, 392 patients were being treated, more than in any other hospital in the region of 6.6 million.

NEW DELHI — India's homegrown vaccine developer Bharat Biotech has warned people with weaker immunity and other medical conditions that include allergies, fever, or a bleeding disorder to consult a doctor before getting the shot — and if possible avoid the vaccine.

The vaccine by Bharat Biotech ran into controversy after the Indian government allowed its use without concrete data that showed it was effective in preventing illness from COVID-19. Tens of thousands of people have been given the shot in the past three days after India started inoculating its health care workers last weekend in what is likely the world's largest COVID-19 vaccination campaign.

The company Tuesday said those receiving jabs should disclose their medical conditions, medicines they are taking and any history of allergies.

India on Jan. 4 approved the emergency use of two vaccines, one developed by Oxford University and U.K.-based drugmaker AstraZeneca, and another by Bharat Biotech. But the regulator took the step without publishing information about the Indian vaccine's efficacy.

Most hospitals in India are inoculating health care workers with the AstraZeneca vaccine. But hospitals in New Delhi that have been administering the Bharat Biotech vaccine have seen many doctors hesitate to take the shot.

India is second only to the U.S. with more than 10.5 million confirmed cases. It has seen over 152,000 confirmed virus deaths.

KIGALI, Rwanda — Rwanda is again locking down its capital, Kigali, for 15 days as coronavirus infections resume rising.

The prime minister's office noted a "recent unprecedented rise in cases, deaths and transmission rates."



# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 199 ~ 36 of 71

It said all movements other than for essential services will require a permit from police, and public transport and travel between the capital and other provinces are prohibited.

Schools, places of worship and stores are closed, and restaurants can only provide takeout. Tourism activities, however, can continue. Only 15 people can attend funerals.

An overnight curfew remains in effect in the rest of the East African country. Rwanda has had more than 11,000 confirmed virus cases, including 146 deaths.

BEIJING — China is now dealing with coronavirus outbreaks across its frigid northeast, prompting additional lockdowns and travel bans.

The country reported a total of 118 newly confirmed cases Tuesday — most of them in Jilin province, the Hebei region just outside Beijing and Heilongjiang province bordering Russia.

A fourth northern province, Liaoning, has also imposed quarantines and travel restrictions to prevent the virus from further spreading, part of measures being imposed across much of the country to prevent new outbreaks during February's Lunar New Year holiday.

Authorities have called on citizens not to travel, ordered schools closed a week early and conducted testing on a massive scale.

WELLINGTON, New Zealand — Travelers to New Zealand from most other nations will need to show negative coronavirus test results before boarding as of next Monday.

New Zealand recently imposed the test requirement for travelers from the U.S. and Britain, and authorities said Tuesday that it is being extended to all other countries, with the exception of Australia and a handful of Pacific Island nations. Travelers returning from Antarctica are also exempt.

COVID-19 Response Minister Chris Hipkins says New Zealand has some of the strictest border measures in the world.

There is currently no community spread of the virus in New Zealand, with all known infections among travelers who have been put into quarantine at the border. Most travelers are required to spend two weeks in quarantine upon arrival.

WASHINGTON — President-elect Joe Biden's incoming White House press secretary says his administration does not intend to lift coronavirus travel restrictions for Europe, the U.K., Ireland and Brazil.

The message from Jen Psaki came Monday evening after the White House said President Donald Trump had lifted the restrictions for those countries, effective Jan. 26.

Psaki then tweeted: "On the advice of our medical team, the administration does not intend to lift these restrictions on 1/26."

She added, "In fact, we plan to strengthen public health measures around international travel in order to further mitigate the spread of COVID-19."

Trump imposed the travel restrictions early in the pandemic to slow the spread of the coronavirus to the U.S. They prevented most people without American citizenship or residency from traveling to the U.S. from the affected regions.

## Exhausted hospital chaplains bring solace to lonely, dying

By JOHN ROGERS Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Inside hospital rooms across America, where the sick are alone without family to comfort them, the grim task of offering solace falls to overworked and emotionally drained hospital chaplains who are dealing with more death than they've ever seen.

Last week nearly a dozen died on a single day at the 377-bed Providence Holy Cross Medical Center, a gleaming, modern medical facility that is tucked into the northwest corner of Los Angeles' San Fernando Valley. Three more passed — within a span of 45 minutes — the next day.

As he has each day for the past 11 months, Chaplain Kevin Deegan sits with the sick and dying, clad in

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 199 ~ 37 of 71

a facemask, face shield, gloves and full body cover. He prays with them, holds their hands, gently brushes their foreheads and reassures them there is nothing to fear.

Grieving families, unable to enter the hospital because of the deadly virus, watch through the iPad he's carried into the room with him.

"All right, Miss Leticia, it's Chaplain Kevin. We're going to say some prayers now. Ok, my dear?"

"She can hear you," he tells her son, Jayson Lim, urging him to talk to her.

"Yo, Ma," Lim manages to say before breaking down in tears and burying his head in his hands. Later he'll pray with her.

Deegan, who ministered to people undergoing hospice and palliative care before joining Holy Cross two years ago, is no stranger to death. But still, he says, he and his fellow chaplains had seen nothing like this before COVID-19 struck last year and began to kill people by the hundreds of thousands. Close to 400,000 people have died in the U.S. alone.

Holy Cross is filled with so many COVID-19 patients that it has had to double up some people in intensive care rooms and put others in areas normally reserved for outpatient care and patient recovery. A makeshift area at the end of a hallway has even been turned into a hospital room.

Deegan and about a dozen other chaplains cover shifts that extend to 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

As Chaplain Anne Dauchy prays for a woman during her last moments, the patient's loved ones watching through Dauchy's iPad can be heard sobbing in the background and saying words like, "I love you so much, Mamma" and "Thank you for everything."

"We try to kind of reframe what a miracle is," an exhausted Dauchy says afterward. "Sometimes it's living another day, sometimes it's a patient opening their eyes.

"Perhaps that's the miracle, that she's at rest and at peace and not suffering anymore," she says of the woman who died.

When asked how he, Dauchy and the others manage to survive the turmoil emotionally, Deegan replies, "That's a good question. I have to be honest. I don't know."

What he does know is when he saw doctors, nurses and other hospital staff risking their own lives to do everything they could to save others he felt he had to be there, right in the room with them, to offer comfort and be a surrogate for their loved ones who couldn't be there.

He was sure he'd eventually be infected as COVID-19 patients began pouring into the hospital every day. So far he has not, and just last week he had his second dose of the vaccine.

"Who knew PPE really works," he said with a chuckle during a rare lighthearted moment as he discussed the personal protective equipment he dons each day before work.

On that Monday when 11 people died, including three he personally ministered to, Deegan went home and, after he tried to fall asleep, saw the faces and again heard the voices of the people who had sobbed and screamed at him, "Why? Why? Why?"

Some families lash out at the chaplains, looking for someone to blame, said Monica Pantoja, a clerk at the hospital's intensive care unit who has been isolating at home after becoming infected herself.

"They take a lot of heat and people don't understand that they're doing the best they can. I think their prayers mean more than anything to families," Pantoja said, speaking from first-hand experience.

When her 72-year-old mother was hospitalized for three months with COVID-19, including several weeks on a ventilator, a chaplain called every day to put her on the iPad with her. Her mother is now recovering at a rehabilitation center.

There are other occasional victories as well.

As Deegan prayed with another patient last week he encouraged her loved ones to talk to her through the iPad, and when one shouted, "Hi Mom," the woman, on oxygen, opened her eyes wider, raised her head slightly and tried to reply, although the words wouldn't come. "Who is that?", Deegan asked her. "Is that Marvin?" She nodded.

Later, when he stepped out of the hospital, he found Leticia Lim's son Jayson waiting by the door to thank him as his mother continued her fight to live.

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 199 ~ 38 of 71

"It was painful and at the same time it was heartwarming because I had the chance to pray with my mom, with the pastor," he said before turning to Deegan to tell him, "Thank you, God bless you."

"You're bringing tears to my eyes," Deegan said as he removed his glasses to wipe the tears away before pausing to remember once again why he shows up every day.

Associated Press photographer Jae Hong and Associated Press videographer Eugene Garcia contributed to this story.

## **A new COVID-19 challenge: Mutations rise along with cases**

By MARILYNN MARCHIONE AP Chief Medical Writer

The race against the virus that causes COVID-19 has taken a new turn: Mutations are rapidly popping up, and the longer it takes to vaccinate people, the more likely it is that a variant that can elude current tests, treatments and vaccines could emerge.

The coronavirus is becoming more genetically diverse, and health officials say the high rate of new cases is the main reason. Each new infection gives the virus a chance to mutate as it makes copies of itself, threatening to undo the progress made so far to control the pandemic.

On Friday, the World Health Organization urged more effort to detect new variants. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said a new version first identified in the United Kingdom may become dominant in the U.S. by March. Although it doesn't cause more severe illness, it will lead to more hospitalizations and deaths just because it spreads much more easily, said the CDC, warning of "a new phase of exponential growth."

"We're taking it really very seriously," Dr. Anthony Fauci, the U.S. government's top infectious disease expert, said Sunday on NBC's "Meet the Press."

"We need to do everything we can now ... to get transmission as low as we possibly can," said Harvard University's Dr. Michael Mina. "The best way to prevent mutant strains from emerging is to slow transmission."

So far, vaccines seem to remain effective, but there are signs that some of the new mutations may undermine tests for the virus and reduce the effectiveness of antibody drugs as treatments.

"We're in a race against time" because the virus "may stumble upon a mutation" that makes it more dangerous, said Dr. Pardis Sabeti, an evolutionary biologist at the Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard.

Younger people may be less willing to wear masks, shun crowds and take other steps to avoid infection because the current strain doesn't seem to make them very sick, but "in one mutational change, it might," she warned. Sabeti documented a change in the Ebola virus during the 2014 outbreak that made it much worse.

### MUTATIONS ON THE RISE

It's normal for viruses to acquire small changes or mutations in their genetic alphabet as they reproduce. Ones that help the virus flourish give it a competitive advantage and thus crowd out other versions.

In March, just a couple months after the coronavirus was discovered in China, a mutation called D614G emerged that made it more likely to spread. It soon became the dominant version in the world.

Now, after months of relative calm, "we've started to see some striking evolution" of the virus, biologist Trevor Bedford of the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in Seattle wrote on Twitter last week. "The fact that we've observed three variants of concern emerge since September suggests that there are likely more to come."

One was first identified in the United Kingdom and quickly became dominant in parts of England. It has now been reported in at least 30 countries, including the United States.

Soon afterward, South Africa and Brazil reported new variants, and the main mutation in the version identified in Britain turned up on a different version "that's been circulating in Ohio ... at least as far back as September," said Dr. Dan Jones, a molecular pathologist at Ohio State University who announced that finding last week.

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 199 ~ 39 of 71

"The important finding here is that this is unlikely to be travel-related" and instead may reflect the virus acquiring similar mutations independently as more infections occur, Jones said.

That also suggests that travel restrictions might be ineffective, Mina said. Because the United States has so many cases, "we can breed our own variants that are just as bad or worse" as those in other countries, he said.

## TREATMENT, VACCINE, REINFECTION RISKS

Some lab tests suggest the variants identified in South Africa and Brazil may be less susceptible to antibody drugs or convalescent plasma, antibody-rich blood from COVID-19 survivors — both of which help people fight off the virus.

Government scientists are "actively looking" into that possibility, Dr. Janet Woodcock of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration told reporters Thursday. The government is encouraging development of multi-antibody treatments rather than single-antibody drugs to have more ways to target the virus in case one proves ineffective, she said.

Current vaccines induce broad enough immune responses that they should remain effective, many scientists say. Enough genetic change eventually may require tweaking the vaccine formula, but "it's probably going to be on the order of years if we use the vaccine well rather than months," Dr. Andrew Pavia of the University of Utah said Thursday on a webcast hosted by the Infectious Diseases Society of America.

Health officials also worry that if the virus changes enough, people might get COVID-19 a second time. Reinfection currently is rare, but Brazil already confirmed a case in someone with a new variant who had been sickened with a previous version several months earlier.

## WHAT TO DO

"We're seeing a lot of variants, viral diversity, because there's a lot of virus out there," and reducing new infections is the best way to curb it, said Dr. Adam Luring, an infectious diseases expert at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor.

Loyce Pace, who heads the nonprofit Global Health Council and is a member of President-elect Joe Biden's COVID-19 advisory board, said the same precautions scientists have been advising all along "still work and they still matter."

"We still want people to be masking up," she said Thursday on a webcast hosted by the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

"We still need people to limit congregating with people outside their household. We still need people to be washing their hands and really being vigilant about those public health practices, especially as these variants emerge."

AP Medical Writer Carla K. Johnson in Seattle contributed reporting.

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## **Inaugural event to celebrate resiliency of Black Americans**

By KAT STAFFORD Associated Press

DETROIT (AP) — The resiliency, culture and heroism of Black Americans and the African diaspora will be the central theme of a virtual event that will celebrate the nation's diversity on the eve of President-elect Joe Biden's inauguration.

Vice President-elect Kamala Harris is slated to speak at Tuesday's event, "We Are One," which will also honor the historic nature of her being the first Black and South Asian woman to become U.S. vice president.

Black voters nationwide helped deliver Biden's presidency, overwhelmingly supporting him from the start of his White House bid. Black-led organizing work across the nation galvanized voters of color and



# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 199 ~ 40 of 71

contributed to historic turnout in key battleground states.

Tony Allen, CEO of the inaugural committee, said the programming will “honor acts of resilience, heroism, and commitment to unity” from Black, Latino, Asian American and Pacific Islander communities “as the coalitions that make up our nation come together to celebrate a new chapter in our history.”

Several of the nation’s top Black leaders will deliver remarks, including House Majority Whip Jim Clyburn, a close ally of Biden whose endorsement in South Carolina widened Biden’s winning margin and started his avalanche of March primary victories.

Among other speakers: Stacey Abrams, whose voter registration and education efforts helped flip Georgia blue for Biden; Rep. Cedric Richmond; Congressional Black Caucus Chair Rep. Joyce Beatty; Sen. Cory Booker; and the incoming senator from Georgia, Rev. Raphael Warnock.

The event will pay homage to the legacy of the nation’s historically Black colleges and universities, as well as Black sororities and fraternities. Harris is the first HBCU graduate and Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority member to be vice president.

The sorority’s international president and CEO, Dr. Glenda Glover, and Howard University President Dr. Wayne Frederick will deliver remarks.

The event will feature musical performances and appearances from activists and celebrities. It’ll be hosted by Terrence J and feature Leslie Jones, DJ D-Nice, and Black cultural icons such as Frankie Beverly, The O’Jays, and Rhapsody.

The celebration also includes a Battle of the Bands and features several HBCUs, including: Delaware State University, Howard University, the Texas Southern University Debate Team, Florida A&M University Marching 100, Grambling State University World Famed Marching Band, Jackson State University Sonic Boom of the South, Louisiana Leadership Institute All-Star Marching Band, South Carolina State University Marching 101, Southern University Human Jukebox Marching Band, and the Tennessee State University Aristocrat of Bands.

The event is part of five planned days of programming under the inaugural’s theme of “America United.” It will air Tuesday from 8 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. ET on social media and on select channels, including Urban One, Revolt TV and The Choice channel on Peacock, NBCUniversal’s streaming service.

Kat Stafford is an investigative reporter on The Associated Press’ Race and Ethnicity team. Follow her on Twitter at [https://twitter.com/kat\\_\\_stafford](https://twitter.com/kat__stafford).

## **Biden has set sky-high expectations. Can he meet them?**

By WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Back when the election was tightening and just a week away, Joe Biden went big. He flew to Warm Springs, the Georgia town whose thermal waters once brought Franklin Delano Roosevelt comfort from polio, and pledged a restitching of America’s economic and policy fabric unseen since FDR’s New Deal.

Evoking some of the nation’s loftiest reforms helped Biden unseat President Donald Trump but left him with towering promises to keep. And he’ll be trying to deliver against the backdrop of searing national division and a pandemic that has killed nearly 400,000 Americans and upended the economy.

Such change would be hard to imagine under any circumstances, much less now.

He’s setting out with Democrats clinging to razor-thin House and Senate control and after having won an election in which 74 million people voted for his opponent. And even if his administration accomplishes most of its top goals in legislation or executive action, those actions are subject to being struck down by a Supreme Court now controlled by a 6-3 conservative majority.

Even so, the effort is soon underway. Washington is bracing for dozens of consequential executive actions starting Wednesday and stretched over the first 10 days of Biden’s administration, as well as legislation that will begin working its way through Congress on pandemic relief, immigration and much more.

Has Biden promised more than he can deliver? Not in his estimation. He suggests he can accomplish



# Groton Daily Independent

**Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 199 ~ 41 of 71**

even more than he promised. He says he and his team will “do our best to beat all the expectations you have for the country and expectations we have for it.”

Some Democrats say Biden is right to set great expectations while realizing he'll have to compromise, rather than starting with smaller goals and having to scale them back further.

“You can't say to a nation that is hungry, uncertain, in some places afraid, whose economy has stalled out ... that you had to slim down the request of their government because you have a narrow governing margin,” said former Massachusetts Gov. Deval Patrick, Biden's onetime Democratic presidential primary rival.

New presidents generally enjoy a honeymoon period that helps them in Congress, and Biden's prospects for getting one were improved by Democratic victories this month in two Georgia special Senate elections. He may have been helped, too, by a public backlash against the deadly, armed insurrection at the U.S. Capitol by Trump supporters.

Biden's advisers have acknowledged they'll have bitter fights ahead. One approach they have in mind is a familiar one in Washington — consolidating some big ideas into what is known as omnibus legislation, so that lawmakers who want popular measures passed have to swallow more controversial measures as well.

Another approach is to pursue goals through executive orders. Doing so skirts Congress altogether but leaves the measures more easily challenged in court. Trump made hefty use of executive orders for some of his most contentious actions, on border enforcement, the environment and more, but federal courts often got in the way.

Biden's top priority is congressional approval of a \$1.9 trillion coronavirus plan to administer 100 million vaccines by his 100th day in office while also providing \$1,400 direct payments to Americans to stimulate the virus-hammered economy. That's no slam dunk, even though everyone likes to get money from the government.

Any such payment is likely to be paired with measures many in Congress oppose, perhaps his proposed mandate for a \$15 national minimum wage, for example. And Biden's relief package will have to clear a Senate consumed with approving his top Cabinet choices and with conducting Trump's potential impeachment trial.

Nevertheless, the deluge is coming.

On Day One alone, Biden has promised to extend the pause on federal student loan payments, move to have the U.S. rejoin the World Health Organization and Paris climate accord and ask Americans to commit to 100 days of mask-wearing. He plans to use executive actions to overturn the Trump administration's ban on immigrants from several majority-Muslim countries and wipe out corporate tax cuts where possible, while doubling the levies U.S. firms pay on foreign profits.

That same day, Biden has pledged to create task forces on homelessness and reuniting immigrant parents with children separated at the U.S.-Mexico border. He'll plan to send bills to Congress seeking to mandate stricter background checks for gun buyers, scrap firearm manufacturers' liability protections and provide a pathway to citizenship for 11 million immigrants who came to the U.S. illegally as children.

The new president further wants to relax limits immediately on federal workers unionizing, reverse Trump's rollback of about 100 public health and environmental rules that the Obama administration instituted and create rules to limit corporate influence on his administration and ensure the Justice Department's independence.

He also pledged to have 100 vaccination centers supported by federal emergency management personnel up and running during his first month in the White House.

Biden says he'll use the Defense Production Act to increase vaccine supplies and ensure the pandemic is under enough control after his first 100 days in office for most public schools to reopen nationwide. He's also pledged to have created a police oversight commission to combat institutional racism by then.

Among other major initiatives to be tackled quickly: rejoining the U.S.-Iran nuclear deal, a \$2 trillion climate package to get the U.S. to net-zero carbon emissions by 2050, a plan to spend \$700 billion boosting manufacturing and research and development and building on the Obama administration's health care

law to include a "public option."

Perhaps obscured in that parade of promises, though, is the fact that some of the 80 million-plus voters who backed Biden may have done so to oppose Trump, not because they're thrilled with an ambitious Democratic agenda. The president-elect's victory may not have been a mandate to pull a country that emerged from the last election essentially centrist so far to the left.

Republican strategist Matt Mackowiak predicted early Republican support for Biden's coronavirus relief and economic stimulus spending plans, but said that may evaporate quickly if "they issue a bunch of first-day, left-wing executive orders."

"You can't be bipartisan with one hand and left-wing with the other," Mackowiak said, "and hope that Republicans don't notice."

Biden had a front-row seat as vice president in 2009, when Barack Obama took office, with crowds jamming the National Mall, and promised to transcend partisan politics. His administration used larger congressional majorities to oversee slow economic growth after the 2008 financial crisis, and it passed the health law Biden now seeks to expand.

But Obama failed to get major legislation passed on climate change, ethics or immigration. He failed, too, to close the U.S. detention camp at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, which remains open to this day.

Falling short on promises then hasn't made Biden more chastened today. He acknowledges that doing even a small portion of what he wants will require running up huge deficits, but he argues the U.S. has an "economic imperative" and "moral obligation" to do so.

Kelly Dietrich, founder of the National Democratic Training Committee and former party fundraiser, said the divisions fomented by Trump could give Biden a unique opportunity to push ahead immediately and ignore conservative critics who "are going to complain and cry and make stuff up" and argue that socialists are "coming to kick your puppy."

Biden and his team would do well to brush off anyone who doesn't think he can aim high, he said.

"They should not be distracted by people who think it's disappointing or it can't happen," Dietrich said. "Overwhelm people with action. No administration, after it's over, says, 'We accomplished too much in the first hundred days.'"

## The Latest: China grapples with virus outbreaks in northeast

By The Associated Press undefined

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Authorities have called on citizens not to travel, ordered schools closed a week early and conducted testing on a massive scale.

### THE VIRUS OUTBREAK:

— Japan's prime minister vows to hold the already postponed Olympics this summer as proof of victory over virus

— Israel trades Pfizer vast troves of medical data for the continued flow of its hard-to-get vaccine

— Brazil approves two coronavirus vaccines, ones by Sinovac and Oxford-AstraZeneca

— China's economy grows in 2020 as it rebounds from virus, likely only major economy to expand

— Britain vows to give all adults 1st shot of the virus by September

— Tennis players find ways to keep fit even during hotel room quarantines in Australia

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

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 199 ~ 43 of 71

## HERE'S WHAT ELSE IS HAPPENING:

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Trump imposed the travel restrictions early in the pandemic to slow the spread of the coronavirus to the U.S. They prevented most people without American citizenship or residency from traveling to the U.S. from the affected regions.

OLYMPIA, Wash. — Washington Gov. Jay Inslee has announced a plan to set up coronavirus vaccination sites statewide with help from the National Guard and others as part of an overall goal to vaccinate 45,000 people a day.

Inslee said Monday that while the goal is currently higher than the current allotment of vaccine the state is receiving from the federal government, the state is working to get the infrastructure in place now for when the supply increases.

He says the state is now vaccinating between 13,000 and 15,000 people a day.

The governor also announced a public-private partnership with business, health care and labor entities on areas ranging from coordination of volunteer vaccinators to communications support.

JACKSON, Miss. — More than 100,000 people in Mississippi have received their first dose of the coronavirus vaccine, and officials are taking further steps to administer the state's supply of shots more efficiently, Gov. Tate Reeves said Monday.

Inoculation rates in Mississippi have lagged far behind most of the U.S., according to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. But Reeves insisted Monday that health officials are making changes to speed things along.

The state's website for making vaccine appointments has been upgraded to handle increased traffic, and more people are answering calls from those booking by phone, he said.

Meanwhile, state officials are working to free up more shots for the general population aged 65 and older by getting several thousand doses from nursing homes that received more than they need, Reeves said.

LOS ANGELES — California's state epidemiologist is urging a halt to more than 300,000 coronavirus vaccine doses by Moderna because some people who received it needed medical treatment for possible severe allergic reactions.

Dr. Erica S. Pan is recommending that vaccine providers stop using one lot of the Moderna vaccine

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 199 ~ 44 of 71

pending completion of an investigation. She says less than 10 people who were inoculated at a single vaccination site needed medical attention.

But she also said serious reactions to vaccinations are extremely rare.

The virus has claimed more than 33,000 lives in California.

**MINNEAPOLIS** -- Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz announced on Monday the state will open nine community sites this week to vaccinate adults over 65, pre-kindergarten through 12th grade educators, school staff and child care workers.

The program opens the state's vaccine rollout beyond the first high-priority group that includes health-care workers and long-term care residents and staff.

The nine sites will start inoculating people Thursday by appointment-only due to the small number of available doses.

The announcement comes after the Democratic governor accused the Trump administration of "lying" when he and six other governors asked for permission to receive their states' second doses from a national stockpile to ramp up vaccination efforts.

The governors were told by federal officials that the administration would release the federal reserve of doses, but later learned the stockpile had already been exhausted.

**BISMARCK, N.D.** — North Dakota reported on Monday zero coronavirus deaths for the fifth time this month, although the fatality rate by population continues to be among the worst in the country.

The state's death count, which stands at a total of 1,384, is the sixth highest per capita in the country at 185 deaths per 100,000 people, according to John Hopkins University researchers.

North Dakota's 14-day rolling average of daily new cases has decreased by more than 27%, according to The COVID Tracking Project data. The state has experienced a steady decline in daily new cases since the virus case count peaked in mid-November. It now ranks 48th per capita in the U.S. for new cases over the last two weeks.

A statewide mask mandate that was enacted in mid-November was allowed to expire Monday morning.

**ST. LOUIS** -- More than 172,000 people in St. Louis County have registered for the COVID-19 vaccine, but the the local health department so far has only received 975 doses, county Executive Sam Page said Monday.

The county expects more doses to arrive Tuesday but it was unclear how many, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported.

Page also urged residents to be honest about the information they use to register for vaccinations, saying some have falsely claimed to be health care workers or brought along family members who are ineligible at this time.

A new inoculation phase began Monday in Missouri that allows older people and those with certain pre-existing conditions to be vaccinated.

**PRAGUE** — The fast-spreading coronavirus variant first identified in the U.K. has been found in the Czech Republic, a health official said Monday.

The National Institute of Public Health confirmed its findings after it announced over the weekend it was testing suspected samples.

Health Minister Jan Blatny says the variant accounts for about 10% of all sequenced samples in in the country. No further details were provided.

The country of 10.7 million has reported 891,852 confirmed coronavirus cases and 14,449 deaths since the start of the pandemic.

The daily infection rate has been in decline since Jan 6., prompting the government to allow stores selling stationary and children's clothes and shoes to reopen. The country still remains under a tough lockdown



# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 199 ~ 45 of 71

with a nighttime curfew.

MADRID — Spain's Health Ministry has confirmed 84,287 new known coronavirus cases since Friday amid a post-Christmas virus surge. The ministry also reported 455 deaths over the weekend.

Monday's figures brought the total number of confirmed cases since the start of the pandemic to 2.34 million and known deaths to 53,769.

Spain's 14-day incidence rate for 100,000 inhabitants rose to 689, from 575 on Friday. Coronavirus patients currently occupy 33% of ICU beds, up from 30% on Friday.

Despite the substantial daily increases, Health Minister Salvador Illa on Monday insisted the measures taken by each of Spain's 17 regions are enough to quell the increase, ruling out a total lockdown.

Spain's health emergency chief Fernando Simon said that the country could be at the peak of the latest surge or getting close to it.

ROME — For the first time in three weeks, Italy's daily caseload of known coronavirus infections dropped below 10,000 on Monday.

Health Ministry figures reported 8,825 additional cases since Sunday, bringing the total number of confirmed infections to 2.4 million since the start of the pandemic.

Sicily has the nation's highest daily caseload. Italy registered 377 deaths for a second straight day.

The nation's known COVID-19 death toll of 82,554 is the second highest in Europe.

MADRID — The tiny British colony of Gibraltar says it has lost more people to the coronavirus since the start of the year than from any other single cause in the past century.

Gibraltar, with a population of some 34,000, has posted 38 deaths since Jan. 1.

"Even in war, we have never lost so many in such a short time," Gibraltar Chief Minister Fabian Picardo said on Monday.

He said 21 people had died from the virus in the past three days, bringing the colony's total virus deaths to 45 since the start of the pandemic.

Located on Spain's southern coast, Gibraltar has recorded some 4,000 cases. It has been under lockdown since the beginning of January.

BERLIN — Swiss authorities say they have placed two hotels under quarantine and ordered all guests and employees to be tested after a new variant of the coronavirus was detected among them in the up-scale skiing resort of St. Moritz.

Local authorities said Monday they have also closed down skiing schools, regular schools and kindergartens.

Officials did not reveal the names of the two affected facilities, but Swiss media said both were luxury hotels.

In addition to tests at the hotels, all residents of St. Moritz were being asked to be tested on Tuesday. Authorities ordered all residents to wear protective masks, and asked people to reduce their contacts to prevent the further spread of the virus.

"The health office is concerned," authorities of the Graubunden canton said in their statement. "The variant of the virus is clearly more contagious than the one that's currently predominant globally."

Swiss media reported that the variant of the virus detected in St. Moritz was the one first found in South Africa.

MOSCOW -- Backers of the Russian COVID-19 vaccine Sputnik V say it has been approved in Turkmenistan, an ex-Soviet nation in Central Asia that hasn't officially reported any infections so far.

The Russian Direct Investment Fund that bankrolled the development of the shot announced Monday that health officials in Turkmenistan approved Sputnik V "under the emergency use authorization proce-

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 199 ~ 46 of 71

ture." It wasn't immediately clear whether Russia would ship the vaccine to Turkmenistan any time soon.

The vaccine is still undergoing advanced studies among tens of thousands of people needed to ensure its safety and effectiveness. Nevertheless, the shot last month was rolled out in a large-scale vaccination campaign in Russia. It has also received regulatory approval in several other countries, and immunization with Sputnik V has started in Belarus and Argentina.

Turkmenistan, a gas-rich nation of 5.9 million, hasn't reported any coronavirus infections, but authorities have shut restaurants and non-food stores and recommended that the population wears masks to protect against dust and unspecified infectious agents. However, the British ambassador to the capital, Ashgabat, said last month that he had contracted the virus.

## **Biden to propose 8-year citizenship path for immigrants**

By LISA MASCARO and BILL BARROW Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President-elect Joe Biden plans to unveil a sweeping immigration bill on Day One of his administration, hoping to provide an eight-year path to citizenship for an estimated 11 million people living in the U.S. without legal status, a massive reversal from the Trump administration's harsh immigration policies.

The legislation puts Biden on track to deliver on a major campaign promise important to Latino voters and other immigrant communities after four years of President Donald Trump's restrictive policies and mass deportations. It provides one of the fastest pathways to citizenship for those living without legal status of any measure in recent years, but it fails to include the traditional trade-off of enhanced border security favored by many Republicans, making passage in a narrowly divided Congress in doubt.

Expected to run hundreds of pages, the bill is set to be introduced after Biden takes the oath of office Wednesday, according to a person familiar with the legislation and granted anonymity to discuss it.

As a candidate, Biden called Trump's actions on immigration an "unrelenting assault" on American values and said he would "undo the damage" while continuing to maintain border enforcement.

Under the legislation, those living in the U.S. as of Jan. 1, 2021, without legal status would have a five-year path to temporary legal status, or a green card, if they pass background checks, pay taxes and fulfill other basic requirements. From there, it's a three-year path to naturalization, if they decide to pursue citizenship.

For some immigrants, the process would be quicker. So-called Dreamers, the young people who arrived in the U.S. illegally as children, as well as agricultural workers and people under temporary protective status could qualify more immediately for green cards if they are working, are in school or meet other requirements.

The bill is not as comprehensive as the last major immigration overhaul proposed when Biden was vice president during the Obama administration.

For example, it does not include a robust border security element, but rather calls for coming up with strategies. Nor does it create any new guest worker or other visa programs.

It does address some of the root causes of migration from Central America to the United States, and provides grants for workforce development and English language learning.

Biden is expected to take swift executive actions to reverse other Trump immigration actions, including an end to the prohibition on arrivals from several predominantly Muslim countries.

During the Democratic primary, Biden consistently named immigration action as one of his "day one" priorities, pointing to the range of executive powers he could invoke to reverse Trump's policies.

Biden allies and even some Republicans have identified immigration as a major issue where the new administration could find common ground with Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell and enough other GOP senators to avoid the stalemate that has vexed administrations of both parties for decades.

That kind of major win — even if it involves compromise — could be critical as Biden looks for legislative victories in a closely divided Congress, where Republicans are certain to oppose other Biden priorities that involve rolling back some of the GOP's 2017 tax cuts and increasing federal spending.

As a candidate, Biden went so far as to say the Obama administration went too far in its aggressive

deportations.

Barrow reported from Wilmington, Del. Associated Press writer Elliot Spagat in San Diego contributed to this report.

## Garth Brooks joins lineup of entertainers at Biden inaugural

NEW YORK (AP) — Add Garth Brooks to the lineup of entertainers at the inauguration of President-elect Joe Biden.

"This is a great day in our household," the country music superstar said during a virtual press conference Monday, two days before Biden is to be sworn in. "This is not a political statement. This is a statement of unity."

Brooks, who joins Lady Gaga and Jennifer Lopez among others, performed during the inaugural celebration of President Barack Obama in 2009. He turned down a chance to play for President Donald Trump in 2017, citing a scheduling conflict.

Invited by incoming first lady Jill Biden, Brooks has known the Bidens for more than a decade, when Joe Biden was Obama's vice president.

Brooks said that for this week's inaugural, he will perform solo doing "broken down, bare-bones stuff," and hinted at covering material by songwriters from outside the U.S.

He does not plan to sing his socially conscious "We Shall Be Free," which he performed at the Obama inaugural.

Brooks praised the Bidens for being "hellbent on making things good" and said he welcomed the chance to help the country heal.

"I want to spend the next 10 years of my life not divided. I'm so tired of being divided," he said.

## Inauguration rehearsal evacuated after fire in homeless camp

By ANDREW TAYLOR, COLLEEN LONG and ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. Capitol complex temporarily locked down Monday during a rehearsal for President-elect Joe Biden's inauguration after a fire in a homeless encampment roughly a mile away sent a plume of smoke into the air and caused security concerns in an already jittery city.

The false alarm briefly interrupted the rehearsal for Wednesday's inauguration ceremony, a quadrennial exercise in which stand-ins take the roles of Biden and other VIPs and the U.S. Marine Corps Band goes through its paces, including practicing "The Star-Spangled Banner" for Wednesday's performance by Lady Gaga. Rehearsal resumed not long afterward, accompanied by frequent passes by a helicopter patrolling the skies over the Capitol.

Law enforcement officials said there was no threat to the public and the fire was not believed to be a threat to the inauguration. Local firefighters put out the blaze quickly. The evacuation of some participants and the lockdown were ordered by the acting chief of Capitol Police in an abundance of caution, officials said.

But the fast decision to lock down underscores the fear that has gripped Washington since the deadly Jan. 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol by pro-Trump rioters and prompted extraordinary measures ahead of the inauguration. Armed protests planned for this past weekend around the country were mostly a bust, but anxiety is still skyrocketing.

U.S. Secret Service tightened security in and around the Capitol a week early in preparation, and the city center is essentially on lockdown with streets blocked, high fencing installed and tens of thousands of National Guard and other law enforcement officers stationed around the area.

But U.S. defense officials, worried about a potential insider attack or other threat from service members involved in securing the event, pushed the FBI to vet all of the 25,000 National Guard troops coming into the area. Acting Defense Secretary Christopher Miller said in a statement Monday that vetting of National Guard troops continues and that the Pentagon has found no intelligence so far that would indicate an

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 199 ~ 48 of 71

insider threat.

Still, the Secret Service issued a bulletin over the weekend about what it sees as an "uptick" in National Guard troops posting pictures and details of their operations online.

The Associated Press obtained the "all concerned" message sent to all the National Guard troops coming to Washington. Without getting into specific postings, the bulletin said, "No service members should be posting locations, pictures or descriptions online regarding current operations or the sensitive sites they are protecting" and urged them to stop immediately.

Asked about the bulletin, a spokesperson for the Secret Service issued a statement saying it "does not comment on matters of protective intelligence."

President Donald Trump has refused to attend the inauguration, the first time a sitting president has not attended since Andrew Johnson, though Vice President Mike Pence will be there as well as other former presidents.

Capitol police spokeswoman Eva Malecki said there were currently no fires on or within the campus. "Members and staff were advised to shelter in place while the incident is being investigated," she said in a statement.

Firefighters were called to the homeless encampment shortly before 10:15 a.m., where a woman who lived there had a portable heater with a flammable gas tank, fire department spokesman Vito Maggiolo said. The woman, who was injured but declined medical treatment, told firefighters that the flames spread quickly and her possessions were burned. The fire was extinguished almost immediately after firefighters arrived.

Participants were ushered from the West Front of the Capitol. Those who had gathered for a walk-through, including a military band, were directed to head indoors and moved in the direction of a secure location inside the Capitol complex.

People involved in the rehearsal said security officials yelled "this is not a drill."

The lockdown was lifted about an hour later.

Five people died in the Jan. 6 riot, including a police officer.

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Associated Press writers Zeke Miller and Michael Balsamo in Washington and James LaPorta in Delray Beach, Florida, contributed to this report.

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This story corrects that Andrew Johnson, not Andrew Jackson, was the last sitting president to not attend his successor's inauguration.

## Coronavirus deaths rising in 30 US states amid winter surge

By DAVID CRARY AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Coronavirus deaths are rising in nearly two-thirds of American states as a winter surge pushes the overall toll toward 400,000 amid warnings that a new, highly contagious variant is taking hold.

As Americans observed a national holiday Monday, New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo pleaded with federal authorities to curtail travel from countries where new variants are spreading.

Referring to new versions detected in Britain, South Africa and Brazil, Cuomo said: "Stop those people from coming here.... Why are you allowing people to fly into this country and then it's too late?"

The U.S. government has already curbed travel from some of the places where the new variants are spreading — such as Britain and Brazil — and recently it announced that it would require proof of a negative COVID-19 test for anyone flying into the country.

But the new variant seen in Britain is already spreading in the U.S., and the Centers for Disease Control and Protection has warned that it will probably become the dominant version in the country by March. The CDC said the variant is about 50% more contagious than the virus that is causing the bulk of cases in the U.S.

While the variant does not cause more severe illness, it can cause more hospitalizations and deaths



# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 199 ~ 49 of 71

simply because it spreads more easily. In Britain, it has aggravated a severe outbreak that has swamped hospitals, and it has been blamed for sharp leaps in cases in some other European countries.

As things stand, many U.S. states are already under tremendous strain. The seven-day rolling average of daily deaths is rising in 30 states and the District of Columbia, and on Monday the U.S. death toll surpassed 398,000, according to data collected by Johns Hopkins University — by far the highest recorded death toll of any country in the world.

Ellie Murray, an assistant professor of epidemiology at the Boston University School of Public Health, said cases have proliferated in part because of gatherings for Christmas and New Year — and compounded previous surges from Thanksgiving and the return of students to schools and universities in the fall.

The pace of any further spread will depend on whether those who did gather with family and friends quarantined afterward or went back to school or work in person, she said.

One of the states hardest hit during the recent surge is Arizona, where the rolling average has risen over the past two weeks from about 90 deaths per day to about 160 per day on Jan. 17.

"It's kind of hard to imagine it getting a lot faster than it is right now, because it is transmitting really fast right now," said Dr. Joshua LaBaer, director of the Biodesign Institute research center at Arizona State University. "But there is some evidence that Thanksgiving didn't help things."

Rural Yuma County — known as the winter lettuce capital of the U.S. — is now one of the state's hot spots. Exhausted nurses there are now regularly sending COVID-19 patients on a long helicopter ride to hospitals in Phoenix when they don't have enough staff. The county has lagged on coronavirus testing in heavily Hispanic neighborhoods and just ran out of vaccines.

But some support is coming from military nurses and a new wave of free tests for farmworkers and the elderly in Yuma County.

Amid the rise in cases, a vast effort is underway to get Americans vaccinated — what Cuomo called "a footrace" between the vaccination rate and the infection rate. But the campaign is off to an uneven start. According to the latest federal data, about 31.2 million doses of vaccine have been distributed, but only about 10.6 million people have received at least one dose.

In some cases, vaccine supplies thus far do not meet demand. More than 172,000 people in Missouri's St. Louis County have registered for the vaccine, but the local health department so far has only received 975 doses, said County Executive Sam Page.

In California, the most populous state, counties are pleading for more vaccine as the state tries to reduce a high rate of infection that has led to record numbers of hospitalizations and deaths.

Although the state last week said anyone age 65 and older can start receiving the vaccine, Los Angeles County and some others have said they don't have enough to immunize so many people. They are concentrating on protecting health care workers and the most vulnerable elderly in care homes first.

On Monday, the superintendent of the Los Angeles Unified School District sent a letter asking for state and county authorization to provide vaccinations at schools for staff, local community members — and for students once a vaccine for children has been approved.

The death rate from COVID-19 in Los Angeles County — an epicenter of the U.S. pandemic — works out to about one person every six minutes. On Sunday, the South Coast Air Quality Management District suspended some pollution-control limits on the number of cremations for at least 10 days in order to deal with a backlog of bodies at hospitals and funeral homes.

In other areas of the country, officials are working to ensure that people take the vaccine once they're offered it amid concerns that many people are hesitant. Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan, in a livestreamed event on Martin Luther King Jr. Day, received a shot, and urged other Marylanders to do likewise.

"We're all looking forward to the day we can take off and throw away our masks," Hogan said. "The only way we are going to return to a sense of normalcy is by these COVID-19 vaccines."

But challenges to the vaccine campaign are surfacing worldwide.

The World Health Organization chief on Monday lambasted drugmakers' profits and vaccine inequalities, saying it's "not right" that younger, healthier adults in some wealthy countries get vaccinated against

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 199 ~ 50 of 71

COVID-19 before older people or health care workers in poorer countries.

Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus lamented that one country received a mere 25 doses while over 39 million doses have been administered in nearly 50 richer nations.

"Just 25 doses have been given in one lowest income country — not 25 million, not 25,000 — just 25. I need to be blunt: The world is on the brink of a catastrophic moral failure," Tedros said. He did not specify the country, but a WHO spokeswoman identified it as Guinea.

AP writers Suman Naishadham in Phoenix and Colleen Slevin in Denver contributed to this report.

## California becomes first state to top 3 million virus cases

By ROBERT JABLON Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — California on Monday became the first state to record more than 3 million known coronavirus infections.

The grim milestone, as tallied by Johns Hopkins University, wasn't entirely unexpected in a state with 40 million residents but its speed stunning. The state only reached 2 million reported cases on Dec. 24.

The first coronavirus case in California was confirmed last Jan. 25. It took 292 days to get to 1 million infections on Nov. 11 and 44 days to top 2 million.

California's caseload is also far ahead of other large states. Texas had more than 2 million and Florida topped 1.5 million.

The state has recorded more than 33,600 deaths related to COVID-19.

A caseload surge that began last fall has strained hospitals and especially intensive care units as a percentage of the infected — typically estimated to be around 12% by public health officials — become sick enough weeks later to need medical care.

On average, California has seen about 500 deaths and 40,000 new cases daily for the past two weeks.

Officials warn that a recent slight downward trend in hospitalizations could reverse when the full impact of New Year's Eve gathering transmissions is felt.

The state is placing its hopes on mass vaccinations to reduce the number of infections but there have been snags in the immunization drive. On Sunday, Dr. Erica S. Pan, the state epidemiologist, urged that providers stop using one lot of a Moderna vaccine because some people needed medical treatment for possible severe allergic reactions.

More than 330,000 doses from lot 41L20A arrived in California between Jan. 5 and Jan. 12 and were distributed to 287 providers, she said.

In Northern California, Stanislaus County health officials responded by announcing they wouldn't be holding vaccination clinics until further notice.

"Out of an extreme abundance of caution and also recognizing the extremely limited supply of vaccine, we are recommending that providers use other available vaccine inventory" pending completion of an investigation by state officials, Moderna, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and the federal Food and Drug Administration, Pan said in a statement.

Fewer than 10 people, who all received the vaccine at the same community site, needed medical attention over a 24-hour period, Pan said. No other similar clusters were found.

Pan did not specify the number of cases involved or where they occurred.

Six San Diego health care workers had allergic reactions to vaccines they received at a mass vaccination center on Jan. 14. The site was temporarily closed and is now using other vaccines, KTVB-TV reported.

Moderna in a statement said the company "is unaware of comparable adverse events from other vaccination centers which may have administered vaccines from the same lot."

The CDC has said COVID-19 vaccines can cause side effects for a few days that include fever, chills, headache, swelling or tiredness, "which are normal signs that your body is building protection."

However, severe reactions are extremely rare. Pan said in a vaccine similar to Moderna's, the rate of anaphylaxis — in which an immune system reaction can block breathing and cause blood pressure to

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 199 ~ 51 of 71

drop — was about 1 in 100,000.

The announcement came as California counties continue to plead for more COVID-19 vaccine as the state tries to tamp down its rate of infection, which has resulted in record numbers of hospitalizations and deaths.

California has shipped about about 3.2 million doses of the vaccine — which requires two doses for full immunization — to local health departments and health care systems, the state's Department of Public Health reported Monday.

Only about 1.4 million of those doses, or around 40%, have been administered.

So far, the state has vaccinated fewer than 2,500 people per 100,000 residents, a rate that falls well below the national average, according to federal data.

Although Gov. Gavin Newsom announced last week that anyone age 65 and older would be eligible to start receiving the vaccine, Los Angeles County and some others have said they do not have enough doses to vaccinate that many people and are first concentrating on inoculating health care workers and the most vulnerable elderly living in care homes.

The death rate from COVID-19 in Los Angeles County — the nation's most populous and an epicenter of the state pandemic — works out to about one person every six minutes.

On Sunday, the South Coast Air Quality Management District suspended some pollution-control limits on the number of cremations for at least 10 days in order to deal with a backlog of bodies at hospitals and funeral homes.

"The current rate of death is more than double that of pre-pandemic years," the agency said.

Adding to concerns, California is experiencing new, possibly more transmissible forms of COVID-19.

The state health department announced Sunday that an L452R variant of the virus is increasingly showing up in genetic sequencing of COVID-19 test samples from several counties.

The variant was first identified last year in California and in other states and countries but has been identified more frequently since November and in several large outbreaks in Northern California's Santa Clara County, the department said.

Overall, the variant has been found in at least a dozen counties. In some places, testing has found the variant in a quarter of the samples sequenced, said Dr. Charles Chiu, a virologist and professor of laboratory medicine at the University of California San Francisco.

However, not all test samples receive genetic sequencing to identify variants so its frequency wasn't immediately clear.

Health officials said it was linked to a Christmas-time outbreak at Kaiser Permanente San Jose that infected at least 89 staff members and patients, killing a receptionist. The outbreak has been blamed on an employee who visited the hospital emergency room wearing an air-powered inflatable Christmas tree costume.

The variant is different from another mutation, B117, that was first reported in the United Kingdom and appears to spread much more easily, although it doesn't appear to make people sicker.

That variant has already shown up in San Diego County and Los Angeles County announced over the weekend that it had detected its first case.

## Census Bureau director to resign amid criticism over data

By MIKE SCHNEIDER Associated Press

Facing criticism that he was acceding to President Donald Trump's demand to produce citizenship information at the expense of data quality, U.S. Census Bureau director Steven Dillingham said Monday that he planned to resign with the change in presidential administrations.

Dillingham said in a statement that he would resign on Wednesday, the day Trump leaves the White House and President-elect Joseph Biden takes office. Dillingham's term was supposed to be finished at the end of the year.

The Census Bureau director's departure comes as the statistical agency is crunching the numbers for the 2020 census, which will be used to determine how many congressional seats and Electoral College votes

# Groton Daily Independent

**Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 199 ~ 52 of 71**

each state gets, as well as the distribution of \$1.5 trillion in federal spending each year.

In his statement, Dillingham said he had been considering retiring earlier, but he had been persuaded at the time to stick around.

"But I must do now what I think is best," said Dillingham, 68. "Let me make it clear that under other circumstances I would be honored to serve President-Elect Biden just as I served the past five presidents."

A Census Bureau spokesman said the agency's chief operating officer, Ron Jarmin, will assume the director's duties. Jarmin served in the same role before Dillingham became director two years ago.

Last week, Democratic lawmakers called on Dillingham to resign after a watchdog agency said he had set a deadline that pressured statisticians to produce a report on the number of people in the U.S. illegally.

A report by the Office of Inspector General said bureau workers were under significant pressure from two Trump political appointees to figure out who is in the U.S. illegally using federal and state administrative records, and Dillingham had set a Friday deadline for bureau statisticians to provide him a technical report on the effort.

One whistleblower told the Office of Inspector General that the work was "statistically indefensible" and others said they worried its release would tarnish the Census Bureau's reputation. After the release of the inspector general's report, Dillingham ordered a halt to the efforts to produce data showing the citizenship status of every U.S. resident through administrative records.

In Monday's statement, Dillingham said whistleblower concerns stemmed from what appeared to be misunderstandings about how the data would be reviewed and posted.

"There has been no suggestion to me that the work described above posed any potential violation of laws, rules, or regulations," Dillingham said.

Leaders of several civil rights groups last week called for Dillingham's resignation, and several Democratic lawmakers followed suit.

"Rather than ensure an accurate count, Dr. Dillingham appears to have acceded repeatedly to the Trump Administration's brazen efforts to politicize the Census," U.S. Rep. Carolyn Maloney, chair of the House Committee on Oversight and Reform, said last Friday.

During Dillingham's tenure, the Trump administration unsuccessfully tried to put a citizenship question on the 2020 census questionnaire and named a handful of political appointees that statisticians and Democratic lawmakers worried would politicize the once-a-decade head count of every U.S. resident. The president also issued two directives that advocacy groups said were part of efforts to suppress the participation of minorities and immigrants in the 2020 census.

Trump's first directive, issued in 2019, instructed the Census Bureau to use administrative records to figure out who is in the country illegally after the Supreme Court blocked the citizenship question. In the second directive, Trump instructed the Census Bureau to provide data that would allow his administration to exclude people in the U.S. illegally from the numbers used for divvying up congressional seats among the states.

An influential GOP adviser had advocated excluding them from the apportionment process in order to favor Republicans and non-Hispanic whites, even though the Constitution spells out that every person in each state should be counted. Trump's unprecedented order on apportionment was challenged in more than a half-dozen lawsuits around the U.S., but the Supreme Court ruled last month that any challenge was premature.

Oftentimes, Dillingham appeared cut out of the loop on these census-related decisions made by the White House and Commerce Department, which oversees the Census Bureau. At a congressional hearing in July, Dillingham said he wasn't informed ahead of time before Trump issued his directive on the apportionment numbers.

The 2020 census which Dillingham oversaw experienced unprecedented obstacles because of the coronavirus pandemic, as well as wildfires in the West and hurricanes along the Gulf Coast. The pandemic and errors found in the data have forced the Census Bureau to delay releasing the numbers used to apportion congressional seats until early March.

Last week, the Department of Justice and municipalities and advocacy groups that had sued the Trump



administration over concerns about the quality of the 2020 census agreed to put their lawsuit on hold for 21 days so the Biden administration can take power and decide how to proceed.

"Director Dillingham's departure will coincide with the inauguration of President-elect Joe Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris, providing the new administration the opportunity to appoint competent, ethical leadership committed to the scientific integrity of the Census Bureau," Arturo Vargas, CEO of the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) Educational Fund, said Monday.

Follow Mike Schneider on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/MikeSchneiderAP>

## Prominent anti-abortion activist Joe Scheidler dies at 93

CHICAGO (AP) — Joe Scheidler, the founder of the Pro-Life Action League and prominent figure in the anti-abortion movement, died Monday, the organization announced. He was 93.

Scheidler died of pneumonia at his Chicago home, according to Thomas Ciesielka, a spokesman for the group.

His oldest son, Eric Scheidler, told the Chicago Sun-Times on Monday that his father "devoted five decades of his long life to proclaiming the value of human life at its most vulnerable stage, the child in the womb."

If people in Chicago, where his organization is based, didn't know his name they likely knew of him as the man who routinely stationed himself on downtown street corners carrying signs emblazoned with photographs of fetuses.

According to the organization's website, Scheidler and his wife, Ann, founded the Pro-Life Action League in 1980. Since then, he wrote a book about fighting abortion and produced videos on the subject.

Scheidler was at the center of a legal battle with the National Organization for Women that led the U.S. Supreme Court to decide that a federal law against extortion was improperly used to punish anti-abortion demonstrators, the website says.

"Now we can go on protesting and counseling at the clinics, doing the things that we do," Scheidler told the Associated Press in 2003 following the high court's decision. "We'll have much more freedom."

## Trouble at home may change Biden's hand in Iran nuke talks

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER Associated Press

A lot of the characters are the same for President-elect Joe Biden but the scene is far starker as he reassembles a team of veteran negotiators to get back into the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran.

President Donald Trump worked to blow up the multinational deal to contain Iran's nuclear program during his four years in office, gutting the diplomatic achievement of predecessor Barack Obama in favor of what Trump called a maximum pressure campaign against Iran.

Down to Trump's last days in office, accusations, threats and still more sanctions by Trump and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, and Iran's decision to spur uranium enrichment and seize a South Korean tanker, are helping to keep alive worries that regional conflict will erupt. Iran on Friday staged drills, hurling volleys of ballistic missiles and smashing drones into targets, further raising pressure on the incoming American president over a nuclear accord.

Even before the Capitol riot this month, upheaval at home threatened to weaken the U.S. hand internationally, including in the Middle East's nuclear standoff. Political divisions are fierce, thousands are dying in the pandemic and unemployment remains high.

Biden and his team will face allies and adversaries wondering how much attention and resolution the U.S. can bring to bear on the Iran nuclear issue or any other foreign concern, and whether any commitment by Biden will be reversed by his successor.

"His ability to move the needle is ... I think hampered by the doubt about America's capacity and by the skepticism and worry about what comes after Biden," said Vali Nasr, a professor at Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies. Nasr was an adviser on Afghanistan during the first Obama administration.

# Groton Daily Independent

**Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 199 ~ 54 of 71**

Biden's pick for deputy secretary of state, Wendy Sherman, acknowledged the difficulties in an interview with a Boston news show last month before her nomination.

"We're going to work hard at this, because we have lost credibility, we are seen as weaker" after Trump, said Sherman, who was Barack Obama's lead U.S. negotiator for the 2015 Iran nuclear agreement. She was speaking of U.S. foreign objectives overall, including the Iran deal.

Biden's first priority for renewed talks is getting both Iran and the United States back in compliance with the nuclear deal, which offered Iran relief from sanctions in exchange for Iran accepting limits on its nuclear material and gear.

"If Iran returns to compliance with the deal, we will do so as well," a person familiar with the Biden transition team's thinking said, speaking on condition of anonymity because the person was not authorized to speak on the record. "It would be a first step."

But Biden also faces pressure both from Democrats and Republican opponents of the Iran deal. They don't want the U.S. to throw away the leverage of sanctions until Iran is made to address other items objectionable to Israel, Sunni Arab neighbors, and the United States. That includes Iran's ballistic missiles and substantial and longstanding intervention in Syria, Yemen, Lebanon and Iraq. Biden promises to deal with all that too.

Getting back into the original deal "is the floor and not the ceiling" for the Biden administration on Iran, the person familiar with the incoming administration's thinking on it said. "It doesn't stop there."

"In an ideal world it would be great to have a comprehensive agreement" at the outset, said Rep. Gerry Connolly, a Virginia Democrat on the House Foreign Affairs Committee. "But that's not how these negotiations work."

Connolly said he thought there was broad support in Congress for getting back into the deal.

Richard Goldberg, a senior adviser for the Foundation for Defense of Democracies institute who worked as an Iran adviser for the Trump administration in 2019 and this year, questioned that.

Lawmakers in Congress will balk at lifting sanctions on Iran's Revolutionary Guard and other Iranian players the U.S. regards as supporters of terrorism, and balk, too, at giving up on financial pressure meant to block Iran from moving closer to nuclear weapons, Goldberg predicts.

"This is a real wedge inside the Democratic Party," Goldberg said.

Sanctions by Trump, who pulled the U.S. out of the accord in 2018, mean that Iran's leaders are under heavier economic and political pressure at home, just as Biden is. The United States' European allies will be eager to help Biden wrack up a win on the new Iran talks if possible, Nasr said. Even among many non-U.S. allies, "they don't want the return of Trump or Trumpism."

Biden served as Obama's main promoter of the 2015 accord with lawmakers once the deal was brokered. He talked for hours to skeptics in Congress and at a Jewish community center in Florida. Then, Biden hammered home Obama's pledge that America ultimately would do everything in its power to keep Iran from getting nuclear weapons, if diplomacy failed.

Besides tapping Sherman for his administration, Biden has called back William Burns, who led secret early talks with Iran in Oman, as his CIA director. He's selected Iran negotiators Anthony Blinken and Jake Sullivan as his intended secretary of state and national security adviser respectively, among other 2015 Iran players.

It's not yet clear if Biden will employ Sherman as his principal diplomatic manager with Iran, or someone else, or whether he will designate a main Iran envoy. Sherman has also been instrumental in U.S. negotiations with North Korea.

The Obama's administration's implicit threat of military action against Iran if it kept moving toward a weapons-capable nuclear program could look less convincing than it did five years ago, given the U.S. domestic crises.

A new Middle East conflict would only make it harder for Biden to find the time and money to deal with pressing problems, including his planned \$2 trillion effort to cut climate-damaging fossil fuel emissions.

"If war with Iran became inevitable it would upend everything else he's trying to do with his presidency," said Karim Sadjadpour, an expert on Iran and U.S. Middle East policy at the Carnegie Endowment for

International Peace. "Biden and his team are very mindful of this. Their priorities are domestic."

## Canada urges Biden not to cancel oil pipeline on first day

By ROB GILLIES Associated Press

TORONTO (AP) — Top officials in Canada want a chance to make the case for a long disputed oil pipeline to be built amid reports President-elect Joe Biden will cancel Keystone XL.

Alberta Premier Jason Kenney said Monday he will seek legal damages if reports are true that Biden plans to scrap the pipeline on his first day upon taking office. Biden's plan is outlined in transition documents seen by Canadian media outlets.

"We hope President-elect Biden will show respect for Canada and will sit down and at the very least talk to us," Kenney said.

Biden spokesman Andrew Bates said Monday the transition team had no comment on the pipeline. A person familiar with the pipeline matter said Monday that the document cited by Canadian news media was a draft slide that was a few weeks old. Despite the timing suggested in the draft slide, everything on it "may not happen on day one," the person said, speaking on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak on the record on the matter.

The 1,700-mile (2,735-kilometer) pipeline would carry roughly 800,000 barrels of oil a day from Alberta to the Texas Gulf Coast, passing through Montana, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas and Oklahoma.

First proposed in 2008, the pipeline has become emblematic of the tensions between economic development and curbing the fossil fuel emissions that are causing climate change. The Obama administration rejected it, but President Donald Trump revived it and has been a strong supporter. Construction already started.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau raised Keystone XL as a top priority when he spoke with President-elect Biden in a phone call in November. The project is meant to expand critical oil exports for Canada, which has the third-largest oil reserves in the world.

Trudeau and Biden are close and largely politically aligned, but the pipeline is expected to be an early irritant as Biden has said he would cancel it.

"Surely the relationship between Canada and the United States is worth at least having that discussion," said Kenney, whose province has a financial stake in the pipeline.

After reports surfaced that it would be canceled on the first day of Biden's term, Calgary, Alberta-based TC Energy Corp. announced late Sunday it would spend US\$1.7 billion on a solar, wind and battery-powered operating system for the pipeline to ensure it is zero-emission by 2030, and to rely exclusively on union labor.

Federal Natural Resource Minister Seamus O'Regan said in a statement his government continues to make the case for the pipeline to American colleagues.

"Canadian oil is produced under strong environmental and climate policy frameworks, and this project will not only strengthen the vital Canada-U.S energy relationship, but create thousands of good jobs for workers on both sides of the border," he said.

Roland Paris, a former foreign policy adviser to Trudeau, noted it has been Biden's position to cancel it for a long time.

"Still, he should recognize that peremptorily revoking the permit without first giving Canada a chance to make its case wouldn't exactly send a signal of renewed friendship that he has promised towards America's closest allies," Paris tweeted.

Robin Rorick, a vice president of the American Petroleum Institute, an oil and gas industry trade group, said Keystone XL has been through 10 years of extensive environmental reviews.

"Thousands of union workers are already a part of this responsible and sustainable project," the trade group official said in a statement. "We urge President Biden to stand up for the thousands of good-paying union jobs tied to Keystone XL and ensure local communities across the country have access to the affordable, reliable energy that's needed to power the nation's economic recovery."

Associated Press writer Ellen Knickmeyer contributed to this report.

## King Day service calls for nonviolence amid turbulent times

ATLANTA (AP) — Speakers at the annual Martin Luther King Jr. holiday celebration in Atlanta called Monday for a renewed dedication to nonviolence following a turbulent year in which a deadly pandemic, protests over systemic racism and a divisive election capped by an attack on the U.S. Capitol strained Americans' capacity for civility.

"This King holiday has not only come at a time of great peril and physical violence, it has also come during a time of violence in our speech — what we say and how we say it," said the Rev. Bernice King, the slain civil rights leader's daughter. "It is frankly out of control and we are causing too much harm to one another."

The coronavirus pandemic forced the annual King Day service at Atlanta's Ebenezer Baptist Church online during the 35th celebration of his birthday as a national holiday. His family was among a sparse group wearing masks and sitting far apart amid mostly empty pews as others delivered remarks remotely.

Bernice King said the toll of the pandemic, lingering outrage over killings of unarmed Black people and the deadly siege in Washington by supporters of President Donald Trump all underscore an urgent need to pursue what her father called "the beloved community" — a world in which conflict is solved nonviolently and compassion dictates policy.

She quoted her father's words from more than 50 years ago: "There is such a thing as being too late."

"We still have a choice today — nonviolent coexistence or violent co-annihilation," Bernice King said, again reciting the words of her father. "This may well be mankind's last chance to choose between chaos and community."

The ceremony included prerecorded remarks by President-elect Joe Biden, who recalled sensing the civil rights leader's "restless spirit" during a visit to the National Civil Rights Museum housed at the Tennessee motel where he was fatally shot outside his room.

"We must not rest. It's our responsibility to come together, all Americans, to bring peace to that restless spirit," Biden said. "... That's our charge in the days ahead. That's the charge in the years ahead."

U.S. Sen.-elect Raphael Warnock, Ebenezer's pastor, appealed for unity following his victory in a runoff election Jan. 5.

"Let us stand together, let us work together," Warnock said, calling the COVID-19 pandemic a reminder that all people are "tied together, as Dr. King said, in a single garment of destiny."

"Because we're dealing with a deadly airborne disease, my neighbor coughs and I'm imperiled by the cough of my neighbor," Warnock said. "That doesn't make my neighbor my enemy. That means that our destiny is tied together."

Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated on April 4, 1968, while supporting striking sanitation workers in Memphis, Tennessee. Had he lived, he would have turned 92 on his birthday last Friday.

## Kremlin foe Navalny jailed for 30 days; allies plan protests

By DARIA LITVINOVA Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — A Russian judge on Monday ordered opposition leader Alexei Navalny jailed for 30 days, after the leading Kremlin critic returned to Russia from Germany where he was recovering from nerve agent poisoning that he blames on President Vladimir Putin's government.

The ruling followed a hastily set up court hearing at a police precinct where Navalny was being held since his arrest at a Moscow airport on Sunday evening, which sparked sharp reactions both at home and around the world.

A crowd of Navalny supporters outside the precinct shouted "Shame!" as the judge announced the ruling and Navalny's allies immediately called for protests. His arrest had already prompted a wave of criticism from U.S. and European officials, adding to existing tensions between Russia and the West.



# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 199 ~ 57 of 71

His top strategist, Leonid Volkov, announced preparations for "large rallies" on Saturday "all across the country."

"Don't be afraid, take to the streets," Navalny said in a video statement released after the ruling was announced. "Don't come out for me, come out for yourselves and your future."

At least 13 protesters were detained Monday outside the police precinct where the court hearing was held, and at least 55 demonstrators were rounded up by police in St. Petersburg, Russia's second-largest city, according to activists.

The 44-year-old Navalny, Putin's most well-known critic, campaigned to challenge him in the 2018 presidential election but was barred from running. He has issued scores of damning reports over the years about corruption in Russia under Putin's regime. After recuperating for months in Berlin after his Aug. 20 poisoning, he returned to Russia on Sunday evening despite the warrant for his arrest.

As expected, Navalny was detained at passport control at Sheremetyevo Airport after the plane was diverted from landing at another Moscow airport in what was seen as an attempt to foil supporters who had gathered to cheer their hero's arrival.

Russia's prison service said Navalny had violated probation terms from a suspended sentence on a 2014 money-laundering conviction, which he says is contrived and politically motivated. The service said it would seek to have Navalny serve his 3½-year sentence behind bars.

Navalny described the move as an attempt by the Kremlin to deter him from coming back to Russia to continue his political activities.

A court hearing on the prison service's motion to have Navalny serve his suspended sentence in prison is scheduled for Feb. 2, according to his lawyers.

Amnesty International, which called Navalny a prisoner of conscience, denounced Monday's court hearing as a "mockery of justice."

Calls for Navalny's immediate release have come from European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, the office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights, British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab and top officials of other EU nations.

German government spokesman Steffen Seibert noted that "the Russian authorities have arrested the victim of an attempted assassination with a chemical weapon, not the perpetrator" and called for Navalny's release.

U.S. President-elect Joe Biden's pick for national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, also called on Russian authorities to free Navalny, and the outgoing U.S. secretary of state, Mike Pompeo, said the U.S. "strongly condemns" the decision to arrest the opposition leader.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said Monday that the stream of Western reactions to Navalny's arrest reflected an attempt "to divert attention from the deep crisis of the liberal model of development."

"Navalny's case has received a foreign policy dimension artificially and without any foundation," Lavrov said, arguing that the detention was a prerogative of Russian law enforcement agencies. "It's a matter of observing the law."

Navalny spent the night at the police precinct outside Moscow. In a highly unusual development, the court hearing on Monday was held right at the precinct, and his lawyers said they were notified only minutes before.

"It is impossible, what is happening over here," Navalny said in a video from the improvised courtroom that was posted on his page in the messaging app Telegram. "It is lawlessness of the highest degree."

The judge ordered that Navalny be remanded in custody until Feb. 15. Navalny's lawyers said they would appeal the ruling.

Navalny fell into a coma while aboard a domestic flight from Siberia to Moscow on Aug. 20. He was transferred from a hospital in Siberia to a Berlin hospital two days later. Labs in Germany, France and Sweden, and tests by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, established that he was exposed to a Soviet-era Novichok nerve agent.

Russian authorities, however, insisted that the doctors who treated Navalny in Siberia before he was

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 199 ~ 58 of 71

airlifted to Germany found no traces of poison. Russia refused to open a full-fledged criminal inquiry, citing a lack of evidence that Navalny was poisoned, and Russian officials have challenged Germany to provide proof of the poisoning.

Last month, Navalny released the recording of a phone call he said he made to a man he alleged was a member of a group of officers of Russia's Federal Security Service, or FSB, who purportedly poisoned him in August and then tried to cover it up. The FSB has dismissed the recording as fake.

Navalny has been a thorn in the Kremlin's side for a decade, unusually durable in an opposition movement often demoralized by repression. Russian authorities have launched multiple criminal investigations against him, and he has been tried and convicted in two separate criminal cases widely seen as politically motivated.

In December 2014, Navalny was convicted on charges of fraud and money-laundering and received a 3½-year suspended sentence, which he denounced as politically motivated and which the European Court of Human Rights found "arbitrary and manifestly unreasonable."

The sentence carried a probation period that was to expire in December 2020. Authorities said that Navalny was subject to regular in-person checks with law enforcement officers as a condition of his probation. In December, days before his probation period was supposed to end, Russia's prison service accused Navalny of not appearing for these checks, including when he was convalescing in Germany.

As he boarded a plane bound for Moscow on Sunday, he brushed off concerns about being detained again in Russia, saying: "It's impossible. I'm an innocent man."

Vladimir Isachenkov in Moscow, Geir Moulson and Frank Jordans in Berlin contributed to this report.

## **Inaugural event to celebrate resiliency of Black Americans**

By KAT STAFFORD Associated Press

DETROIT (AP) — The resiliency, culture and heroism of Black Americans and the African diaspora will be the central theme of a virtual event Tuesday that will celebrate the nation's diversity on the eve of President-elect Joe Biden's inauguration.

Vice President-elect Kamala Harris is slated to speak at the event, "We Are One," which will also honor the historic nature of her being the first Black and South Asian woman to become U.S. vice president.

Black voters nationwide helped deliver Biden's presidency, overwhelmingly supporting him from the start of his White House bid. Black-led organizing work across the nation galvanized voters of color and contributed to historic turnout in key battleground states.

Tony Allen, CEO of the inaugural committee, said the programming will "honor acts of resilience, heroism, and commitment to unity" from Black, Latino, Asian American and Pacific Islander communities "as the coalitions that make up our nation come together to celebrate a new chapter in our history."

Several of the nation's top Black leaders will deliver remarks, including House Majority Whip Jim Clyburn, a close ally of Biden whose endorsement in South Carolina widened Biden's winning margin and started his avalanche of March primary victories.

Among other speakers: Stacey Abrams, whose voter registration and education efforts helped flip Georgia blue for Biden; Rep. Cedric Richmond; Congressional Black Caucus Chair Rep. Joyce Beatty; Sen. Cory Booker; and the incoming senator from Georgia, Rev. Raphael Warnock.

The event will pay homage to the legacy of the nation's historically Black colleges and universities, as well as Black sororities and fraternities. Harris is the first HBCU graduate and Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority member to be vice president.

The sorority's international president and CEO, Dr. Glenda Glover, and Howard University President Dr. Wayne Frederick will deliver remarks.

The event will feature musical performances and appearances from activists and celebrities. It'll be hosted by Terrence J and feature Leslie Jones, DJ D-Nice, and Black cultural icons such as Frankie Beverly, The O'Jays, and Rhapsody.

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 199 ~ 59 of 71

The celebration also includes a Battle of the Bands and features several HBCUs, including: Delaware State University, Howard University, the Texas Southern University Debate Team, Florida A&M University Marching 100, Grambling State University World Famed Marching Band, Jackson State University Sonic Boom of the South, Louisiana Leadership Institute All-Star Marching Band, South Carolina State University Marching 101, Southern University Human Jukebox Marching Band, and the Tennessee State University Aristocrat of Bands.

The event is part of five planned days of programming under the inaugural's theme of "America United." It will air Tuesday from 8 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. ET on social media and on select channels, including Urban One, Revolt TV and The Choice channel on Peacock, NBCUniversal's streaming service.

Kat Stafford is an investigative reporter on The Associated Press' Race and Ethnicity team. Follow her on Twitter at [https://twitter.com/kat\\_\\_stafford](https://twitter.com/kat__stafford).

## **Biden's test: Engineering economic boom in a partisan divide**

By JOSH BOAK AP Economics Writer

BALTIMORE (AP) — When Joe Biden entered the White House as vice president, the economy was cratering. Job losses were mounting. Stocks were crashing. Millions of Americans were in the early stages of losing their homes to foreclosure as the housing bubble burst.

Biden returns to the White House as president a dozen years later with the economy battered and shaken by a pandemic. But this time is different — and it could reset the nation's politics if Biden and Democrats can count on a level of growth not seen in a generation.

Despite the 9.8 million jobs lost due to the coronavirus, there are signs the country is on the cusp of a kind of boom unseen in the Obama and Trump eras.

Checking account balances have surged by \$2.4 trillion since the outbreak began. Home prices are soaring because of hot demand. And each additional vaccination moves the world's largest economy closer to fully re-opening.

"If the economy is improving substantially by spring or early summer, that might actually help Biden get more of his agenda done ... because success can beget success," said Jason Furman, who was top economist for the Obama administration. He pointed to the possibility of growth easing the path for an infrastructure program and climate investments.

But hanging over any effort to boost the economy is an enduring partisan divide that contributed to the deadly assault on the U.S. Capitol this month as Biden's Electoral College victory was set to be certified. Politics is increasingly shaping how Americans feel about the economy, scrambling the political incentives for lawmakers to cooperate.

There also are concerns about whether the worsening pandemic and slow pace of vaccinations thus far could portend more serious problems on the coronavirus front that could hurt the economic recovery.

The potential for a boom reflects in large part the roughly \$4 trillion approved so far in federal aid, with Biden last week proposing \$1.9 trillion more, an unprecedented level of stimulus. The additional money, which must be approved by Congress, is intended to accelerate the vaccine rollout, reopen schools and reduce the child poverty rate to a historic low.

The investment bank Goldman Sachs estimates that growth this year could be 6.6% if part of Biden's stimulus plan passes. That would be the strongest gain since 1984, when a 7.2% increase in the gross domestic product helped carry Republican President Ronald Reagan to a second term in a landslide. Wells Fargo forecasts growth of 4.6% this year, which would be the best since 1999.

Still, there are plenty of economic risks facing Biden. The most bullish forecasts hinge on getting much of Biden's aid package through Congress. And any gains would probably depend on overcoming the pandemic. There is also the possibility that the added stimulus championed by Biden could be more than the economy needs, perhaps stirring inflation.

But the Great Recession taught Biden's team the benefit of going big with stimulus. Incoming White House

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 199 ~ 60 of 71

Chief of Staff Ron Klain says Biden's officials learned the hard way that the roughly \$800 billion approved in 2009 to fight the Great Recession was insufficient, a mistake they're unwilling to repeat this time.

"It wasn't large enough," Klain said Friday at a livestreamed Washington Post event. "Our recovery lagged as a result."

During the first nine months of the Obama presidency, the unemployment rate climbed to 10% and the swift recovery that was predicted never happened as the country took years to work through housing foreclosures and rebuild its financial system.

This left Obama administration officials having to argue that the economy would have been even worse without the stimulus. Republicans countered that the effort had flopped as they won control of the House in the 2010 midterm elections.

"There isn't much doubt that the economy did better in 2009 and 2010 because of the recovery act," said Douglas Elmendorf, who was director of the Congressional Budget Office at the time and now serves as dean of Harvard University's Kennedy School. "Too many people took the failure to hit (stronger growth) as a sign that the stimulus didn't work, when, in fact, the economy was worse off than widely understood."

Biden can count on backing from Wall Street investors this time to borrow. Helped by supportive Federal Reserve policies, low interest rates make it easier to keep financing a stimulus and repay added debt. The interest rate on a 10-year U.S. Treasury note is about 1.15%, compared with 11.67% in 1984 when growth prospects last looked this good and the size of the federal debt was significantly smaller.

Republican lawmakers still see the need for more aid to contain the pandemic, but some are voicing concerns about Biden's desire for another big spending package. They stress that any new spending should be directed toward increasing vaccinations and that his proposal for direct checks of \$1,400 per person could delay people from returning to work.

"Blasting out another \$2 trillion in borrowed or printed money — when the ink on December's \$1 trillion aid bill is barely dry and much of the money is not yet spent — would be a colossal waste and economically harmful," Republican Sen. Pat Toomey of Pennsylvania said in a statement.

Republican voters have already turned bearish on the economy after President Donald Trump lost. The University of Michigan reported Friday that its index of consumer expectations among Republicans plunged from a reading of 96 in October to 53 in January. That could dampen their willingness to spend and encourage Republican lawmakers to blame Democrats for any economic ills.

For now, the Biden team is hoping to push through its stimulus with Republican support in the Senate. But the political tensions might force him to pursue many of his initiatives — like a \$15 minimum wage and tax increases on corporations and the wealthy — with only Democratic support.

Should Republicans regain control in Congress, any policies passed exclusively with Democratic backing could be quickly reversed or allowed to expire. This seesawing between conflicting policies could erode the degree of certainty that businesses and consumers need to make investments that lead to growth, said Donald Schneider, a member of the policy research team at Cornerstone Macro and former chief economist of the House Ways and Means Committee.

"It is a big problem going forward if one side comes to power and makes changes and then the other side comes into power and reverses them and on and on it goes," Schneider said.

## 'Rooting hard for you': Will departure notes end with Trump?

By WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Presidential traditions are usually known for their solemnity and carry the weight of future historical significance. This one began with cartoon turkeys and a reference to lunch.

As he was preparing to leave the White House in January 1989, President Ronald Reagan wanted to leave a note for his successor, George H.W. Bush, and reached for a pad emblazoned with a cartoon by humorist Sandra Boynton under the phrase, "Don't Let the Turkeys Get You Down." It featured a collection of turkeys scaling a prone elephant, the symbol of both men's Republican Party.

"Dear George, You'll have moments when you'll want to use this particular stationery. Well, go to it,"



# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 199 ~ 61 of 71

Reagan scrawled. He noted treasuring "the memories we share" and said he'd be praying for the new president before concluding, "I'll miss our Thursday lunches. Ron."

Thus was born the tradition of departing presidents leaving a handwritten note in the Oval Office for their successors. The missives' contents start off as confidential, but are often eventually made public by archivists, references in presidential memoirs or via social media after journalists and others filed requests to obtain them.

The 32-year tradition is in peril this year. President Donald Trump has refused to accept the results of November's election and vowed not to attend Joe Biden's inauguration on Wednesday. That makes it doubtful Trump will leave behind any handwritten, friendly advice for Biden.

Presidents often write reflectively at the end of their time in office, including George Washington, who stated that he was "tired of public life" in recording why he wasn't seeking a third presidential term. But historians say Reagan's is likely the first instance of a personal letter being passed between presidents as they left and entered office.

"It was a sort of a revelation that a note like this was left," said Jim Bendat, author of "Democracy's Big Day: The Inauguration of Our President." "We've come to expect them. It's a great tradition. It's one of those new traditions. And the traditions for Inauguration Day are like that — they often evolve through the years."

The notes are striking in their simplicity given just how big the job of the presidency is. But they are also notable in their camaraderie and common purpose — especially since the handoff of power is often an unhappy one: Reagan to Bush was the last time the country had one president from the same party succeed another.

Despite losing to Bill Clinton in the bitter 1992 election, Bush followed Reagan's lead, this time on more stately, White House stationery. "I leave a note on the desk for Bill Clinton. It looks a little lonely sitting there," Bush recalled in his book "All the Best, George Bush: My Life in Letters and Other Writings."

"When I walked into this office just now I felt the same sense of wonder and respect that I felt four years ago. I know you will feel that, too," Bush wrote in the note, adding, "I wish you great happiness here. I never felt the loneliness some presidents have described."

He continued, "I'm not a very good one to give advice; but just don't let the critics discourage you or push you off course," before concluding, "Your success now is our country's success. I am rooting hard for you. Good luck — George."

Those words were so touching that the new president's wife, Hillary, later recalled they made her cry.

"It speaks not only to his grace, but ultimately what the presidency should be all about, which is thinking about your country first," said Mark K. Updegrove, a historian and CEO of the Lyndon Baines Johnson Foundation, who has written about the Bush family. "Though he had been soundly defeated by Bill Clinton, George H.W. Bush, as a good American, was wishing the new president well."

Writing to that president's son, incoming President George W. Bush in 2000, Clinton noted that the "burdens you now shoulder are great but often exaggerated" and that the "sheer joy of doing what you believe is right is inexpressible."

In his own letter to President Barack Obama eight years later, the younger Bush advised that "critics will rage. Your 'friends' will disappoint you," but "no matter what comes, you will be inspired by the character and compassion of the people you now lead."

Bush's twin daughters, Jenna and Barbara, were 27 at the time. They wrote a sort of kids' guide to the White House for Malia and Sasha Obama, then 10 and 7. It included such advice as "slide down the banister of the solarium" and "when your dad throws out the first pitch for the Yankees, go to the game."

In his letter to Trump in 2017, Obama wrote, "This is a unique office, without a clear blueprint for success, so I don't know that any advice from me will be particularly helpful."

But Obama did offer some words that now appear prophetic given Trump's impeachment for inciting the deadly mob violence at the U.S. Capitol. "We are just temporary occupants of this office," he wrote. "That makes us guardians of those democratic institutions and traditions — like rule of law, separation of

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 199 ~ 62 of 71

powers, equal protection and civil liberties — that our forebears fought and bled for.”

“It’s up to us to leave those instruments of our democracy at least as strong as we found them,” Obama continued.

Updegrave said even if the note tradition stops with Trump, it could easily start again when Biden leaves office. He has already been vice president and spent 36 years in the Senate, where tradition and bipartisan congeniality are strong.

“There’s no doubt in my mind that he would do it graciously,” Updegrave said.

## Man allegedly hid 3 months at Chicago airport due to virus

CHICAGO (AP) — A California man who told police that the coronavirus pandemic left him afraid to fly has been arrested on charges that he hid in a secured area at Chicago’s O’Hare International Airport for three months.

Aditya Singh, 36, is charged with felony criminal trespass to a restricted area of an airport and misdemeanor theft after he was arrested Saturday. At a court hearing on Sunday, a judge ruled that the Orange, California, man could be released if he paid \$1,000, but said that Singh was prohibited from setting foot in the airport.

As of Monday morning, Singh remained in the Cook County Jail.

Assistant Public Defender Courtney Smallwood said Singh does not have a criminal record. She also said it was unclear why Singh, who is unemployed, came to Chicago or if he has ties to the area.

During the hearing, Assistant States Attorney Kathleen Hagerty said that Singh was spotted by two United Airlines employees, who asked him for identification, the Chicago Tribune reported. Singh lowered his mask and showed a badge that actually belonged to an operations manager at the airport who had reported it missing in late October, Hagerty said.

The employees called police, who took Singh into custody. Singh was “scared to go home due to COVID,” Hagerty said, and told authorities that he’d found the badge and that other passengers at the airport had given him food.

Before she granted Singh bail, Cook County Judge Susana Ortiz was clearly troubled that someone could remain in a secured area for so long at the airport without anyone noticing.

“The court finds these facts and circumstances quite shocking for the alleged period of time that this occurred,” the judge said. “Being in a secured part of the airport under a fake ID badge allegedly, based upon the need for airports to be absolutely secure so that people feel safe to travel, I do find those alleged actions do make him a danger to the community.”

Singh is scheduled to return to court Jan. 27.

## Biden aims for unifying speech at daunting moment for US

By AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

President-elect Joe Biden will take the stage for his inaugural address at perhaps the most difficult starting point for a president since Franklin Roosevelt began his first term by assuring a nation scarred by the Great Depression that “we have nothing to fear but fear itself.”

But memorable turns of phrase like Roosevelt’s are more the exception than the rule when it comes to inaugural addresses.

Former President Barack Obama in his memoir noted that singer Aretha Franklin’s showy hat and a glitch in Chief Justice John Roberts’ administration of the oath of office got more attention than his speech in the days following the first Black president’s address, delivered as the nation was mired in recession and a growing malaise over two intractable wars.

Now, with the coronavirus raging, unemployment claims soaring and partisan divisions sharpening, Biden faces a fraught moment as he prepares to deliver a speech that aides say he wants to use to “call Americans to unity.”

“The situation he faces is absolutely brutal,” said Cody Keenan, who served as a chief speechwriter for

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 199 ~ 63 of 71

Obama and assisted with his two inaugural addresses. He added that Biden in many ways is “the perfect president for the moment, because he is not hyperbolic, he’s not a bomb thrower, he’s surrounded himself with policy wonks who already have all these plans. I think what we are going to hear him talk about is ‘Here’s where we are, here’s what we have to get done.’ I think that’s going to go a long way just to making people feel better.”

With the current mood of the country, Biden’s consistent focus on restoring “the soul of America” may be of greater value to the nation than any soaring oratory, in the view of some Democratic allies of the incoming president.

“It is entirely possible that this inaugural is one we remember for generations to come, because of the gravity of this moment” said David Litt, who served as an Obama speechwriter and wrote the comedic memoir, “Thanks, Obama: My Hokey Changey White House Years.” “But I also think it’s possible that the signature speeches of the Biden administration come at less expected moments and that would be par for the course.”

The inaugural address is as much a celebration of the peaceful handover of power as it is a set piece for a new or reelected president to lay out a vision for the nation. In recent memory, inaugural addresses have followed a predictable structure: The nation has challenges but there is hope to solve the problems if the president’s agenda is embraced.

One tradition dating back at least to Jimmy Carter’s 1977 inaugural is for the incoming president to offer the nation’s gratitude to the outgoing president — a moment of graciousness intended to put aside the strife of the political campaign and signal to Americans that it’s time to come together as a nation.

President Donald Trump won’t be there to hear it. He’s already said he won’t attend the inauguration — the first outgoing president to skip his successor’s swearing-in since Andrew Johnson did not attend Ulysses S. Grant’s inauguration in 1869.

Ari Fleischer, who served as press secretary for President George W. Bush, said there are still ways that Biden’s speechwriting team can continue the tradition of honoring the peaceful transition of power by simply giving a nod to the past presidents and Vice President Mike Pence, who are expected to be at the Capitol for the address.

Biden chief of staff Ron Klain said during a recent event hosted by The Washington Post that the president-elect has been chipping away on the address through the entire transition — taking time every few days to write and rewrite his thoughts. His speechwriting team is led by longtime Biden collaborator Vinay Reddy.

More important than flowery oratory is substantively demonstrating how Biden will take steps to begin unifying a country that remains emotionally raw because of the pandemic and a divisive election cycle that culminated with the violent insurrection at the Capitol, Fleischer said.

“Don’t dwell on today’s difficulties. Focus on tomorrow’s answers,” Fleischer advised. “Soaring oratory is just not Joe Biden. The effectiveness of his speech is going to be much more about what he says than how he says it.”

Edward Frantz, a presidential historian at the University of Indianapolis, said Biden’s daunting moment has parallels to what Roosevelt faced in 1933 as he sought to rally support for his agenda, as well as to Rutherford B. Hayes, who delivered his inaugural address in 1877 after winning by a single Electoral College vote in an election in which he and his allies alleged fraud in several states.

In addition to pushing a message of unity for Americans, Biden should signal to the world that the United States will recalibrate after four years of Trump, Frantz said. That may be easier said than done, though.

“How do you talk about returning to new normal while also not seeming arrogant about the United States’ position in the world — especially after what’s transpired over the last four years of the Trump administration and also with what foreign observers watched in horror as the riots transpired,” Frantz said. “There really is no parallel to what Biden faces.”

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Associated Press writer Alexandra Jaffe contributed reporting.

**WHO chief lambasts vaccine profits, demands elderly go first**

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 199 ~ 64 of 71

By JAMEY KEATEN Associated Press

GENEVA (AP) — The World Health Organization chief on Monday lambasted drugmakers' profits and vaccine inequalities, saying it's "not right" that younger, healthier adults in wealthy countries get vaccinated against COVID-19 before older people or health care workers in poorer countries and charging that most vaccine makers have targeted locations where "profits are highest."

Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus kicked off the WHO's week-long executive board meeting — virtually from its headquarters in Geneva — by lamenting that one poor country received a mere 25 vaccine doses while over 39 million doses have been administered in nearly 50 richer nations.

"Just 25 doses have been given in one lowest income country -- not 25 million, not 25,000 -- just 25. I need to be blunt: The world is on the brink of a catastrophic moral failure," Tedros said. He did not specify the country, but a WHO spokeswoman identified it as Guinea.

"It's right that all governments want to prioritize vaccinating their own health workers and older people first," he said. "But it's not right that younger, healthier adults in rich countries are vaccinated before health workers and older people in poorer countries. There will be enough vaccine for everyone."

Tedros, an Ethiopian who goes by his first name, nonetheless hailed the scientific achievement behind rolling out coronavirus vaccines less than a year after the pandemic erupted in China, where a WHO-backed team has now been deployed to look into origins of the coronavirus.

"Vaccines are the shot in the arm we all need, literally and figuratively," Tedros said. "But we now face the real danger that even as vaccines bring hope to some, they become another brick in the wall of inequality between the worlds of the world's haves and have-nots."

He noted the WHO-backed COVAX program, which aims to get vaccines out to all countries, rich or poor, based on need, has so far secured 2 billion vaccine doses from five producers and options on a billion doses more.

"We aim to start deliveries in February," he said. "COVAX is ready to deliver what it was created for."

That target date could be a tall order, because a key producer of vaccines for the developing world — the Serum Institute of India — has not confirmed a date and predicted that its rollout might not happen before March or April.

In his opening remarks, Tedros aired some of his toughest public words yet toward vaccine makers, criticizing "bilateral deals" between them and countries that the WHO says can deplete the effectiveness of the COVAX facility — and went further to raise the issue of profits.

"The situation is compounded by the fact that most manufacturers have prioritized regulatory approval in rich countries, where the profits are highest, rather than submitting full dossiers to WHO," he said.

That appeared to allude to a shortage of data the U.N. health agency says it has received from vaccine makers so that the WHO can approve their shots for wider emergency use.

Dr. Clement Martin Auer, a board member from Austria, had sharp words and questions for GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance, that also with the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations is leading the effort on COVAX.

While calling its principles of equal access to vaccines a "fantastic idea," Auer faulted COVAX as being "slow" and unable to close "crucial numbers" of contracts. He defended the European Union, which counts among its 27 members many of the world's richest countries, for getting vaccines for its 450 million citizens and being "the single largest donor" in supporting COVAX.

"We were, in the European Union, skeptical that GAVI-COVAX had the means and the capabilities to fulfill its tasks and negotiate the necessary contracts and to secure the needs of our citizens," Auer said, adding that COVAX management had "rejected" proposals negotiated by GAVI and the EU.

He said GAVI-COVAX early last year had not included mRNA vaccines like those developed by Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna in the COVAX portfolio.

"This was a major mistake, taking into account that the mRNAs are the early ones on the market and the gold standards when it comes to COVID vaccines," Auer said.

The WHO has approved Pfizer-BioNTech for emergency use against coronavirus and could approve Moderna this week.



Dr. Bruce Aylward, a special adviser to Tedros, said that the WHO was in "detailed discussions with Pfizer. We believe very soon we will have access to that product." He said the mRNA vaccines are "important" but are "extremely difficult" — alluding to cold-chain requirements, among other things, and are "extremely expensive."

"What we are gunning for is to get 20% of the world, at least, vaccinated this year, and more ideally," Aylward said. "We are in a strong position to move out with vaccines globally. We just need the assistance of our member states in particular to make sure that becomes the reality."

In related vaccine news, Israel has struck a deal with Pfizer, promising to share vast troves of medical data with the international drug giant in exchange for the continued flow of its hard-to-get vaccine.

Proponents say the deal could allow Israel to become the first country to vaccinate most of its population, while providing valuable research that could help the rest of the world. But critics say the deal raises major ethical concerns, including possible privacy violations and a deepening of the global divide in access to coronavirus vaccines.

Due to the ultra-cold storage needed for the Pfizer vaccine, it is more expensive and harder to use than some rivals, including the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine, but studies show it is very effective. Israeli media have reported that Israel paid at least 50% more than other countries for the Pfizer vaccine.

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Ashok Sharma in Delhi and Ilan Ben Zion in Jerusalem contributed to this report.

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

## Watchdog: Fossil fuel firms need to curb climate gas leaks

BERLIN (AP) — The International Energy Agency says oil and gas companies aren't doing enough to reduce the release of methane, a potent source of planet-heating emissions, that is seeping out of pipelines and production plants.

A report published Monday by the Paris-based organization found the estimated 10% drop in methane emissions from oil and gas companies last year was largely due to lower production amid a global decline in demand due to the coronavirus pandemic.

It warned that the amount of methane released into the atmosphere as part of the production process for fossil fuels could rebound again as economies recover, and called on countries and companies to do more to plug those leaks.

While carbon dioxide emissions from the burning of fossil fuels are the main source of greenhouse gases, methane contributes significantly to the problem as well because it is so much more effective than CO2 at trapping heat in the atmosphere.

The IEA said its Methane Tracker report suggests the oil and gas industry worldwide emitted more than 70 million metric tons of methane last year, equivalent to the total energy-related CO2 emissions from the 27-nation European Union.

"There is no good reason to allow these harmful leaks to continue, and there is every reason for responsible operators to ensure that they are addressed," the agency's executive director, Fatih Birol, was quoted as saying.

He added that governments could also help tackle the problem with more effective industry regulation. Satellite imaging has become an increasingly important tool in pinpointing the source of manmade methane emissions in recent years.

The report cited data by analytics firm Kayrros showing that methane emissions decreased in Iraq, Kuwait, Turkmenistan and the United States last year, while increasing in Algeria, Kazakhstan and Russia, which saw a 32% rise in 2020 compared with the previous year.

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Read all AP stories about climate change issues at <https://apnews.com/hub/Climate>

## Police command structure crumbled fast during Capitol riot

By NOMAAN MERCHANT and COLLEEN LONG Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — As the rioters stormed the U.S. Capitol, many of the police officers had to decide on their own how to fight them off. There was no direction. No plan. And no top leadership.

One cop ran from one side of the building to another, fighting hand-to-hand against rioters. Another decided to respond to any calls of officers in distress and spent three hours helping cops who had been immobilized by bear spray or other chemicals.

Three officers were able to handcuff one rioter. But a crowd swarmed the group and took the arrested man away with the handcuffs still on.

Interviews with four members of the U.S. Capitol Police who were overrun by rioters on Jan. 6 show just how quickly the command structure collapsed as throngs of people, egged on by President Donald Trump, set upon the Capitol. The officers spoke on condition of anonymity because the department has threatened to suspend anyone who speaks to the media.

"We were on our own," one of the officers told The Associated Press. "Totally on our own."

The officers who spoke to the AP said they were given next to no warning by leadership on the morning of Jan. 6 about what would become a growing force of thousands of rioters, many better armed than the officers themselves were. And once the riot began, they were given no instructions by the department's leaders on how to stop the mob or rescue lawmakers who had barricaded themselves inside. There were only enough officers for a routine day.

Three officers told the AP they did not hear Chief Steven Sund on the radio the entire afternoon. It turned out he was sheltering with Vice President Mike Pence in a secure location for some of the siege. Sund resigned the next day.

His assistant chief, Yogananda Pittman, who is now interim chief, was heard over the radio telling the force to "lock the building down," with no further instructions, two officers said.

One specific order came from Lt. Tarik Johnson, who told officers not to use deadly force outside the building as the rioters descended, the officers recounted. The order almost certainly prevented deaths and more chaos, but it meant officers didn't pull their weapons and were fighting back with fists and batons.

Johnson has been suspended after being captured on video wearing a "Make America Great Again" hat while moving through crowds of rioters. Johnson told colleagues he wore the hat as a tactic to gain the crowd's confidence as he tried to reach other officers who were pinned down by rioters, one of the officers said. A video of the incident obtained by the Wall Street Journal shows Johnson asking rioters for help in getting his colleagues.

Johnson, who could not be reached for comment, was heard by an officer on the radio repeatedly asking, "Does anybody have a plan?"

The Capitol Police has more than 2,300 staff and a budget that's grown rapidly over the last two decades to roughly \$500 million, making it larger than many major metro police departments. Minneapolis, for example, has 840 officers and a \$176 million budget.

Despite plenty of online warnings of a possible insurrection and ample resources and time to prepare, the Capitol Police planned only for a free speech demonstration on Jan. 6.

They rejected offers of support from the Pentagon three days before the siege, according to senior defense officials and two people familiar with the matter. And during the riot, they turned down an offer by the Justice Department to have FBI agents come in as reinforcements. The officials spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity to discuss the decision-making process.

The riot left five people dead, including Capitol Police Officer Brian Sicknick, who was hit in the head by a fire extinguisher. Another officer died in an apparent suicide after the attack.

The attack has forced a reckoning among law enforcement agencies. Federal watchdogs launched a sweeping review of how the FBI, the Pentagon and other agencies responded to the riot, including whether there were failures in information sharing and other preparations that left the historic symbol of democracy vulnerable to assault.

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 199 ~ 67 of 71

Top decision-makers have offered differing explanations for why they didn't have enough personnel. Sund told The Washington Post that he was worried about the possibility for violence and wanted to bring in the National Guard, but the House and Senate sergeants at arms refused his request. To bring in the Guard, the sergeants at arms would have had to ask congressional leaders.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's deputy chief of staff, Drew Hammill, said congressional leaders had not been informed of any request for the National Guard before the day of the riot. The office of Sen. Mitch McConnell, the Republican leader, declined to comment.

It's not clear why the threat was not taken more seriously.

John Donohue, a 32-year veteran of the New York Police Department who advises the Capitol Police on intelligence matters, sent a memo on Jan. 3 warning of the potential for an attack on Congress from the pro-Trump crowd, according to two law enforcement officials with knowledge of the memo first reported by The Washington Post. They spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the internal memo.

Donohue was well-versed in the extremist threat. At a congressional hearing in July, before he starting advising the Capitol Police, Donohue told lawmakers the federal government needed a system to better monitor social media for domestic extremists.

"America is at a crossroads," he said in his testimony. "The intersection of constitutional rights and legitimate law enforcement has never been more at risk by domestic actors as it is now as seditionists actively promote a revolution."

Tens of thousands of National Guard members have now been called to secure the Capitol in advance of the inauguration of President-elect Joe Biden on Wednesday.

A spokeswoman for Capitol Police did not respond to questions Friday.

For major events, the Capitol Police normally holds meetings to brief officers on their responsibilities and plans in case of an emergency. Three of the officers interviewed by the AP said there were no meetings on or before Jan. 6. It's also unclear whether the department held over its overnight shift or called in more officers early to help those who would be on duty that day.

"During the 4th of July concerts and the Memorial Day concerts, we don't have people come up and say, 'We're going to seize the Capitol,'" one officer said. "But yet, you bring everybody in, you meet before. That never happened for this event."

Another officer said he was only told that morning to pick up a riot helmet. He said he had training on dealing with large crowds, but not on how to handle a riot.

"We were under the impression it was just going to be a lot of yelling, cursing," he said.

As Trump called on his supporters to go to the Capitol, telling them to "fight like hell," members of the House and Senate were inside the building to certify Biden's victory over Trump in the Electoral College.

Crowds of Trump supporters, many of them linked to far-right or white supremacist groups, began gathering on both sides of the Capitol.

An officer working the western front of the building, which faces the White House and where risers were set up for the inauguration, quickly realized that the crowds were not peaceful. The rioters began breaking down short fences and systematically clipping off "Area Closed" signs, the officer said.

Videos from the event show the crowd climbing the walls on the western side and eventually breaching the building.

One officer listed the various weapons used to hit him and people near him: batons, flagpoles, sections of fencing, batteries, rubber bullets and canisters of bear spray that went further than the chemicals the officers themselves had. Some of the rioters showed their badges from other law enforcement agencies, claiming they were on the side of the Capitol Police, the officer said.

Most of the insurrectionists left without being arrested, which officers who spoke to the AP say was because it was next to impossible to arrest them given how badly the force was outnumbered. That was underscored by the rioters taking away a man who officers had tried to arrest inside the Capitol.

"The group came and snatched him and took him away in cuffs," one officer said. "Outside of shooting people, what are you supposed to do?"

Merchant reported from Houston.

## Military nurses, tests coming to help hard-hit Arizona city

By ANITA SNOW Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — Exhausted nurses in rural Yuma, Arizona, regularly send COVID-19 patients on a long helicopter ride to Phoenix when they don't have enough staff. The so-called winter lettuce capital of the U.S. also has lagged on coronavirus testing in heavily Hispanic neighborhoods and just ran out of vaccines.

But some support is coming from military nurses and a new wave of free tests for farmworkers and the elderly in Yuma County — the hardest-hit county in one of the hardest-hit states.

Almost everyone in Yuma County, near the borders of Mexico and California, seems to know somebody who has tested positive for COVID-19, with around 33,000 cases reported since last spring — a rate of about 14,000 per 100,000 people. Maricopa County, the largest in Arizona and home to Phoenix, has a rate of about 9,000 cases per 100,000 people.

Yuma County's soaring numbers come as Arizona's COVID-19 diagnosis rate ranked the worst in the U.S. over the past week, at one in every 120 people.

"It's had a significant impact on the community," said Dr. Robert Trenchel, president and CEO of Yuma Regional Medical Center, the area's only acute care hospital. "We're still likely to see another peak from New Year's celebrations."

Tests in Yuma County are 20% positive, compared with about 14% for Arizona. The Arizona State Department of Health Services reported Sunday that 633 people had died in the county with a population of about 215,000.

Of the 124 COVID-19 patients hospitalized as of Friday, 28 were in intensive care, according to local health statistics.

Officials at Yuma Regional Medical Center say it's been a struggle to maintain staffing of 900 to 1,000 nurses while competing for medical workers in an overwhelmed national health care system.

To ensure each nurse has no more than five or six patients at a time, the 406-bed Yuma hospital has transferred COVID-19 patients to other facilities, sometimes up to 10 a day, said Deb Anders, chief nursing officer. Transfers are usually by helicopter to Phoenix, which is 180 miles (290 kilometers) away and has the closest major hospitals, although a few have gone to Tucson in southern Arizona.

Forty Army Reserve nurses arrived this month to help at the Yuma hospital for at least a month through a Department of Defense COVID-19 support operation in hard-hit parts of the U.S. West and Midwest.

They are among several hundred military medical personnel dispatched since November to work alongside civilian health care providers treating COVID-19 patients on the Navajo Nation and in six states including Arizona and New Mexico, according to the U.S. Army North at Fort Sam Houston in Texas.

Yuma County's residents include seasonal laborers from California's Salinas Valley and Mexican migrant workers with U.S. agricultural visas.

The hot, dry region features vast agricultural fields of leafy greens, alfalfa and cotton in the middle of the desert, fed by the Colorado River that meanders near Yuma's historic downtown.

Top non-farm employers include the medical center, the Marine Corps Air Station Yuma and the U.S. Border Patrol. The county is also home to some 85,000 part-time retirees and thousands of inmates at the Yuma State Prison Complex.

At the U.S.-Mexico border, farmworkers headed to the fields Thursday were getting hundreds of free saliva tests engineered by the Arizona State University's Biodesign Institute through a \$4.7 million grant from the National Institutes of Health. The initiative aims to improve testing in places like Yuma County, which is 60% Hispanic and thus disproportionately affected by the virus because of conditions like diabetes and obesity.

Working with bilingual health advocates from the Yuma area, the Equality Health Foundation administered tests through the project Friday to older people and those with disabilities at their homes.



# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 199 ~ 69 of 71

"Yuma is a testing desert," said Tomas Leon, spokesman for Equality Health, which brings medical care to underserved communities. "We are taking these tests in a community-driven, culturally appropriate way to people where they are."

Flavio F. Marsiglia, director of ASU's Global Center for Applied Health Research, said he and others involved in the testing project are now exploring the possibility of returning to Yuma County with the vaccine later this year.

"We are trying to get to these hard-to-reach parts of society that are always left behind," Marsiglia said.

The Yuma County Public Health District reported in the middle of last week that its early supply of the vaccine had run out. Arizona officials say that some 6,200 doses have been administered in Yuma County.

"Vaccines are really what we need right now," said Trenchel, the medical center's CEO. Much of the hospital's staff has received the first of two recommended doses.

The vaccine rollout in Yuma has been slow, with the county saying over the weekend it was getting just 6,900 more doses Tuesday.

In Yuma County's small border city of San Luis, Mayor Gerardo Sanchez, who is also a physician's assistant, uses his Facebook page to advertise free testing like Equality Health's and encourage people to wear masks.

Yuma Mayor Douglas Nicholls, meanwhile, promotes a city program that collects donations for meals and other tokens of appreciation for front-line medical staff.

Children also send thank you cards to health care workers.

"The messages really warm my heart," said certified pharmacy technician Jenny Jimenez, who received a stack of cards as she worked one recent overnight shift.

"Dear healthcare workers," a little girl named Catherine wrote alongside a hand-drawn heart in a card for doctors in the COVID-19 unit. "Thank you for keeping us safe from COVID. We appreciate everything you do."

## Israel moves to rein in rights group over 'apartheid' use

By TIA GOLDENBERG Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — Israel's education minister says he is banning groups that call Israel an "apartheid state" from lecturing at schools — a move that targets one of the country's leading human rights groups after it began describing both Israel and its control of the Palestinian territories as a single apartheid system.

The explosive term, long seen as taboo and mostly used by the country's harshest critics, is vehemently rejected by Israel's leaders and many ordinary Israelis.

Education Minister Yoav Galant tweeted late on Sunday that he had instructed the ministry's director general to "prevent the entry of organizations calling Israel 'an apartheid state' or demeaning Israeli soldiers from lecturing at schools."

"The Education Ministry under my leadership raised the banner of advancing Jewish, democratic and Zionist values and it is acting accordingly," he said. It was not immediately clear whether he had the authority to ban speakers from schools.

In a report released last week, the rights group B'Tselem said that while Palestinians live under different forms of Israeli control in the occupied West Bank, blockaded Gaza, annexed east Jerusalem and within Israel itself, they have fewer rights than Jews in the entire area between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River.

B'Tselem said it would not be deterred by the minister's announcement and that despite it, the group gave a lecture on the subject via videocall to a school in the northern city of Haifa on Monday.

"B'Tselem is determined to keep with its mission of documenting reality, analyzing it, and making our findings publicly known to the Israeli public, and worldwide," it said in a statement.

Adalah, an Arab legal rights group, said it had appealed to the country's attorney general to cancel Galant's directive, saying it was made without the proper authority and that it was intended to "silence legitimate voices."

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 199 ~ 70 of 71

Israel passed a law in 2018 preventing lectures or activities in schools by groups that support legal action being taken against Israeli soldiers abroad. The law was apparently drafted in response to the work of Breaking the Silence, a whistleblower group for former Israeli soldiers who oppose policies in the occupied West Bank. It was not clear if Galant's decree was rooted in the 2018 law.

Israel has long presented itself as a thriving democracy. Its own Arab citizens, who make up about 20% of its population of 9.3 million, have citizenship rights, but they often suffer from discrimination in housing and other spheres. Arab citizens of Israel have representatives in parliament, serve in government bureaucracy and work in various fields alongside Jewish Israelis.

Israel seized east Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in the 1967 war — lands that are home to nearly 5 million Palestinians and which the Palestinians want for a future state.

B'Tselem and other rights groups argue that the boundaries separating Israel and the West Bank vanished long ago — at least for Israeli settlers, who can freely travel back and forth, while their Palestinian neighbors require permits to enter Israel.

Israel withdrew troops and settlers from Gaza in 2005 but imposed a blockade after the Palestinian militant Hamas group seized power there two years later. It considers the West Bank "disputed" territory whose fate should be determined in peace talks with the internationally recognized Palestinian Authority, the autonomy government for its Palestinian residents.

Israel annexed east Jerusalem in 1967 in a move not recognized internationally and considers the entire city its unified capital. Most Palestinians in east Jerusalem are Israeli "residents," but not citizens with voting rights.

Israel adamantly rejects the term apartheid, saying the restrictions it imposes in Gaza and the West Bank are temporary measures needed for security. Most Palestinians in the West Bank live in areas governed by the Palestinian Authority, but those areas are surrounded by Israeli checkpoints and Israeli soldiers can enter at any time. Israel has full control over 60% of the West Bank.

B'Tselem argues that by dividing up the territories and using different means of control, Israel masks an underlying reality that roughly 7 million Jews and 7 million Palestinians live under a single system with vastly unequal rights.

## Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, Jan. 19, the 19th day of 2021. There are 346 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Jan. 19, 1981, the United States and Iran signed an accord paving the way for the release of 52 Americans held hostage for more than 14 months.

On this date:

In 1809, author, poet and critic Edgar Allan Poe was born in Boston.

In 1861, Georgia became the fifth state to secede from the Union.

In 1915, Germany carried out its first air raid on Britain during World War I as a pair of Zeppelins dropped bombs onto Great Yarmouth and King's Lynn in England.

In 1937, millionaire Howard Hughes set a transcontinental air record by flying his monoplane from Los Angeles to Newark, New Jersey, in 7 hours, 28 minutes and 25 seconds.

In 1942, during World War II, Japanese forces captured the British protectorate of North Borneo. A German submarine sank the Canadian liner RMS Lady Hawkins off Cape Hatteras, North Carolina, killing 251 people; 71 survived.

In 1944, the federal government relinquished control of the nation's railroads to their owners following settlement of a wage dispute.

In 1955, a presidential news conference was filmed for television and newsreels for the first time, with the permission of President Dwight D. Eisenhower.

# Groton Daily Independent

**Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 199 ~ 71 of 71**

In 1980, retired Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas died in Washington, D.C., at age 81.

In 1987, Guy Hunt became Alabama's first Republican governor since 1874 as he was sworn into office, succeeding George C. Wallace.

In 2005, the American Cancer Society reported that cancer had passed heart disease as the top killer of Americans age 85 and younger.

In 2006, Osama bin Laden, in an audiotape that was his first in more than a year, said al-Qaida was preparing for attacks in the United States; at the same time, he offered a "long-term truce" without specifying the conditions. Vice President Dick Cheney defended the administration's domestic surveillance program, calling it an essential tool in monitoring al-Qaida and other terrorist organizations.

In 2009, Russia and Ukraine signed a deal restoring natural gas shipments to Ukraine and paving the way for an end to the nearly two-week cutoff of most Russian gas to a freezing Europe.

Ten years ago: Chinese President Hu Jintao, visiting the White House, declared "a lot still needs to be done" to improve his country's record on human rights; the exchange with President Barack Obama over human rights was balanced by U.S. delight over newly announced Chinese business deals expected to generate about \$45 billion in new export sales for the U.S.

Five years ago: Republican presidential front-runner Donald Trump received the endorsement of conservative firebrand Sarah Palin, giving the businessman a potential boost less than two weeks before Iowa's kick-off caucuses. Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder, in his State of the State address, again pledged to fix the crisis over Flint's lead-contaminated water. Italian movie director Ettore Scola, 84, died in Rome.

One year ago: Health officials in central China reported that 17 more people had been diagnosed with the new coronavirus, which had killed two patients and placed other countries on alert. The South Korean film "Parasite" became the first foreign language film to take top honors from the Screen Actors Guild, en route to an Academy Award as best picture. The San Francisco 49ers rolled past the Green Bay Packers, 37-20, to advance to the franchise's seventh Super Bowl; the Kansas City Chiefs reached their first Super Bowl in a half century by beating the Tennessee Titans 35-24 for the AFC championship.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Tippi Hedren is 91. Former PBS newsman Robert MacNeil is 90. Movie director Richard Lester is 89. Actor-singer Michael Crawford is 79. Actor Shelley Fabares (fab-RAY') is 77. Country singer Dolly Parton is 75. Former ABC newswoman Ann Compton is 74. TV chef Paula Deen is 74. Rock singer Martha Davis is 70. Singer Dewey Bunnell (America) is 69. Actor Desi Arnaz Jr. is 68. Actor Katey Sagal is 67. Comedian Paul Rodriguez is 66. Conductor Sir Simon Rattle is 66. Reggae musician Mickey Virtue (formerly with UB40) is 64. Rock musician Jeff Pilson (Foreigner) is 63. Actor Paul McCrane is 60. Actor William Ragsdale is 60. Basketball coach and commentator Jeff Van Gundy is 59. International Tennis Hall of Famer Stefan Edberg is 55. Rock singer Whitfield Crane (Ugly Kid Joe) is 53. Singer Trey Lorenz is 52. Actor Shawn Wayans is 50. Rock singer-musician John Wozniak (Marcy Playground) is 50. Actor Drea (DRAY-uh') de Matteo is 49. Comedian-impressionist Frank Caliendo is 47. Actor Drew Powell is 45. Actor Marsha Thomason is 45. Actor Bitsie Tulloch is 40. Actor Jodie Sweetin is 39. Movie director Damien Chazelle is 36. Actor Shaunette Renee Wilson is 31. Actor Briana Henry is 29. Actor Logan Lerman is 29. Olympic gold medal gymnast Shawn Johnson is 29. Rapper Taylor Bennett is 25. Actor Lidya Jewett is 14.