

Groton Daily Independent

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Upcoming Schedule

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

Updated: Boys Basketball at Clark. 7th grade at 4 p.m., No 8th grade game. C game at 4:30 p.m. followed by JV and Varsity.

Saturday, January 23, 2021

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



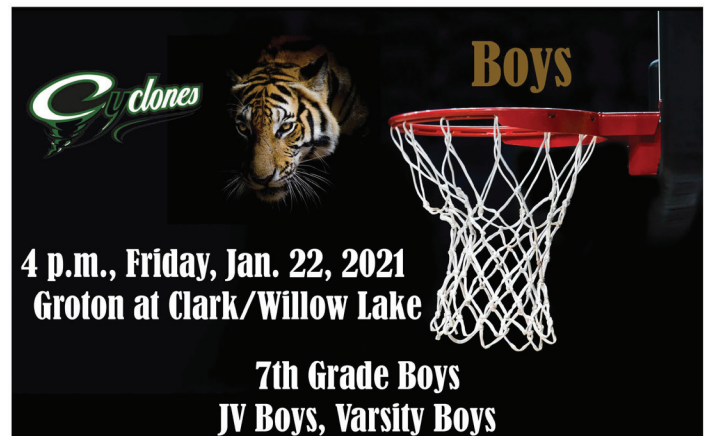
OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

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Coming up on GDILIVE.COM



Basketball Recaps

Girls JV: Groton 37, Ipswich 22

Groton Area's girls junior varsity team posted a 37-22 win over Ipswich on Tuesday at Ipswich. Groton Area led at the quarterstops, 12-9, 19-11 and 23-14. The game was broadcast on GDILIVE.COM, sponsored by Penning's cousins from Tea, Bentley and Beckham.

Sydney Leicht led the Tigers with seven points while Laila Roberts and Jaedyn Penning each had six, Brooklyn Hansen five, Jerica Locke four, Anna Fjeldheim three and Elizabeth Flihs and Emma Schinkel each had two points. Fjeldheim, Brooklyn Hansen and Leicht each made a three-pointer.

Quincy Olivier led Ipswich with 11 points followed by Ashlyn Weig and Emily Knoll with three each, Baylee Kulesa and Paige Mehlberg each had two and Rylee Kleffman added a free throw.

Boys JV: Ipswich 33, Groton 28

Ipswich won the boys junior varsity game, 33-28. Ipswich held a 12-4 first quarter lead, a 23-11 lead at half time and a 27-16 lead at the end of the third quarter. Cade and Tate Larson's grandparents from Woonsocket, Jim and Shirley VanDenHemel sponsored the game on GDILIVE.COM.

Logan Ringgenberg led the Tigers with 12 points followed by Wyatt Hearnen with 11, Favian Sanchez and Cade Larson each had two points and Colby Dunker had one. Ipswich was led by Tyler Hettich with eight while Carson Goal and Trevor Heinz each with six, Matt Jaenish five, and Zach Gedit and Colby Sylte each with four.

Varsity Girls: Ipswich 41, Groton 38

Ipswich's varsity girls team had an 11-point run in the fourth quarter to come from behind to win, 41-38. Groton Area led for most of the game at the quarter stops at 6-5, 18-10 and 26-21.

Gracie Traphagen had a double-double night with 14 points and 11 of the team's 32 rebounds. Alyssa Thaler also had 14 points while Allyssa Locke had five, Brooke Gengerke three and Aspen Johnson had two points.

Ipswich was led by Halle Heinz with 28 points followed by Halie Feldman with six, Katie Bierman had five and Lindsey Grabowska added two points.

Groton Area made 14 of 48 field goals for 29 percent while Ipswich was 12 of 39 for 31 percent. Groton Area was nine of 14 from the line for 64 percent off of Ipswich's 13 team fouls. Ipswich was 11 of 19

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from the line off of Groton Area's 18 team fouls. Both teams had 13 turnovers. Gengerke had three of the team's nine assists and Thayler had three of the team's nine steals.

Both varsity games were broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM, sponsored by Bierman Farm Service, Jark Real Estate, Harr Motors - Bary Keith, Bahr Spray Foam, Allied Climate Professionals- Kevin Nehls, S.D. Army National Guard - Brent Wienk, John Sieh Agency, Groton Vet Clinic, Blocker Construction, Thunder Seed with John Wheeting and Milbrandt Enterprises, Inc.

Varsity Boys: Groton 51, Ipswich 28

Groton Area never trailed in the boys varsity game and easily went on for a 51-28 win. The boys are 7-1 on the season and Ipswich falls to 6-3.

Groton Area led at the quarter stops at 8-6, 22-11 and 40-20. Lane Tietz led the Tigers with 13 points followed by Jayden Zak with 12, Tate Larson eight, Jacob Zak seven, Tristan Traphagen four, Wyatt Hearnen three and Cole Simon and Lucas Simon with two each. Jayden Zak had four three-pointers while Tietz had two and Hearnen and Jacob Zak each had one three-pointer.

Josh McQuarie led Ipswich with 11 points while Ty Kadlec and Matt Hettich each had five, Taylor Thorson and Jordan Nierman each had three and Eric Severson had one.

Groton Area made 19 of 39 field goals for 48 percent, was five of 12 from the line for 79 percent, had 14 turnovers, 23 rebounds with Jacob Zak having six and Traphagen five, 15 assists with Larson having four, nine steals with Jayden Zak and Tietz each having three and Traphagen had one block. Groton Area had 12 team fouls.

Ipswich was 11 of 32 in field goals for 34 percent, three of eight from the line for 38 percent, had 18 turnovers and 14 team fouls.

Girls JV: Groton 29, Langford 13

Groton Area won the junior varsity game, 29-13. The first quarter was low scoring as it was tied at two, but the Tigers took a 13-4 lead at the end of the second quarter and took a 24-6 lead at the end of the third quarter.

The game was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM, sponsored by Tom and Rachael Crank.

Anna Fjeldheim led the Tigers with five points which included a three-pointer. Laila Roberts, Jerica Locke and Jaedyn Penning each had four, Brooklyn Hansen, Mia Crank, Cadence Feist, Lydia Meier and Emma Schinkel each had two points and Kennedy Hansen and Sydney Leicht each added a free throw.

Emily Jensen led Langford Area with five points while Bryanna Peterson and Cali Vander Vorst each had a free throw.

Varsity Girls: Groton 52, Langford 25

The Lady Tigers defeated Langford Area in the varsity game, 52-25.

That game was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM, sponsored by Bierman Farm Service, Jark Real Estate, Harr Motors - Bary Keith, Bahr Spray Foam, Allied Climate Professionals- Kevin Nehls, S.D. Army National Guard - Brent Wienk, John Sieh Agency, Groton Vet Clinic, Grand Slam Computers, Thunder Seed with John Wheeting and Milbrandt Enterprises, Inc.

Groton Area led at the quarter stops at 13-7, 26-12 and 39-20.

Gracie Traphagen led the Tigers with 19 points which include a three-pointer and she was six of seven from the free throw line. Alyssa Thaler had 12 points which included a three-pointer, Kenzie McInerney had six points which include a three-pointer, Emma Schinkel had four points, Brooke Gengerke made a three-pointer, and adding two points each were Allyssa Locke, Anna Fjeldheim, Jerica Locke and Sydney Leicht.

The Lions were led by Katie Jensen with 11 followed by Olivia Dwight with five, Emily Jensen, Morgan Glines, Montana Marlow and Kylie Schock each had two points and Anne Jensen added one. Kaitie Jensen made one three-pointer.

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Groton Area was 15 of 37 in two-pointers for 41 percent, was four of 15 in three-pointers for 27 percent, made 10 of 16 free throws for 63 percent off of Langford Area's 17 team fouls, had 34 rebounds with Traphagen having nine and Penning five, 11 assists with Locke having four and Traphagen three, had 14 steals with Thaler having five and McInerney four, and the Tigers had 16 turnovers.

Langford Area made 10 of 38 in field goal shooting for 26 percent, and was four of 12 from the line for 33 percent off of Groton Area's 15 team fouls.

Girls C: Roncalli 23, Groton 15

Groton Area traveled to Aberdeen Roncalli where the Cavaliers had a three-game win.

Roncalli won the C game, 23-15. The game was tied at four at the end of the first quarter and Roncalli held a 10-7 lead at half time. Groton Area took the lead early in the third quarter, 11-10, but Roncalli scored seven straight points and ended up taking a 17-13 lead at the end of the third quarter.

The game was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM, sponsored by the White House Inn.

Kennedy Hansen and Brooklyn Hansen led the Tigers with four points apiece while Jerica Locke, Fatih Traphagen and Jaedyn Penning each had two and Laila Roberts had one free throw.

McKenna O'Keefe led the Cavaliers with six points while Rylee Voeller and Madisen Martin each had four, Morgan Helms three and Ava Daneilson, Claire Crawford and Katherine Olivier each had two points.

JV Girls: Roncalli 24, Groton 15

Roncalli won the junior varsity game, 24-15 with Agtegra sponsoring the broadcast on GDILIVE.COM. The Cavaliers took a 10-0 lead after the first quarter, a 14-3 lead at half time and a 20-13 lead at the end of the third quarter.

Mia Crank made two three-pointers lead the Tigers with six points while Sydney Leicht, Kennedy Hansen, Jerica Locke and Jaedyn Penning each had two points and Laila Roberts added a free throw.

Ella Hanson led Roncalli with 10 points, Olivia Ulmer, Madisen Martin and Maddie Huber each had four points and McKenna O'Keefe added two points.

Varsity Girls: Roncalli 43, Groton 16

Aberdeen Roncalli won the varsity game, 43-16.

That game was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM, sponsored by Bierman Farm Service, Jark Real Estate, Harr Motors - Bary Keith, Bahr Spray Foam, Allied Climate Professionals- Kevin Nehls, S.D. Army National Guard - Brent Wienk, John Sieh Agency, Groton Vet Clinic, Locke Electric, Thunder Seed with John Wheeting and Milbrandt Enterprises, Inc.

The Cavaliers held a 6-4 lead at the end of the first quarter, 23-7 at half time and 32-10 at the end of the third quarter. Roncalli scored 22 straight points to take a 30-7 lead.

Kenzie McInerney and Alyssa Thaler each had one three-pointer and led the Tigers with five points each, and Allyssa Locke, Aspen Johnson and Gracie Traphagen etc had two points.

The Cavaliers were led by Morgan Fiedler with 14 points followed by Madelyn Bragg with 12, Jeci Ewart and Olivia Hanson each had five points and Allie Morgan and Elissa Hammrich each had four points.

Groton Area made six of 44 field goals for 14 percent, was two of four from the line for 50 percent, had 11 turnovers and 15 team fouls. Roncalli made 18 of 41 shots for 43 percent, was five of 10 from the line for 50 percent, had nine turnovers and 12 team fouls.

Boys C: Groton 35, Roncalli 16

Groton Area boys basketball hosted Aberdeen Roncalli where the Tigers won the varsity and C game and lost the junior varsity game in overtime.

Bob and Vicki Walter sponsored the GDILIVE.COM broadcast of the C game.

It was a 14-point rally between the second and third quarters that helped to spark the win for the Tigers. Roncalli held a 7-6 lead at the end of the first quarter and Groton Area led, 15-10, at half time and 28-16

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at the end of the third quarter.

Colby Dunker led the Tigers with 10 points. Taylor Diegel had nine which included a three-pointer. Braxton Imrie made two three-pointers for six points. Logan Ringgenberg was five of six from the line for five points, Cade Larson had a three-pointer. Holden Sippel added two points.

Groton Area made 12 of 31 field goals for 31 percent while Roncalli was five of 33 for 15 percent. The Tigers had 14 turnovers and the Cavaliers had 22.

Boys JV: Roncalli 29, Groton 23 (OT)

The junior varsity game had eight lead changes and was tied five times before the Cavaliers pulled out a 29-23 overtime win over the Tigers.

Jerry and Marilyn Hearnen, grandparents of Wyatt Hearnen, sponsored the game on GDILIVE.COM.

Groton Area held a 3-2 lead after the first quarter and 5-4 at half time. Groton Area took a 12-8 lead at the end of the third quarter. Groton Area had to put in the tying basket at the end of regulation. The Cavaliers scored the last six points of the overtime for the win.

Wyatt Hearnen led Groton Area with seven points followed by Colby Dunker and Logan Ringgenberg with five each, Jackson Cogley had four and Cole Simon two.

Zane Backous led Roncalli with 10 points, Keegan Stewart nine, Darwin Gambler seven and Matthew Martinez three.

Varsity Boys: Groton 59, Roncalli 52

Groton had a 14-point rally in the second half to pull away from Aberdeen Roncalli in the varsity boys game, 59-52. The game was tied five times and the lead changed hands five times before the Tigers had their rally. Groton held a 17-16 lead at the end of the first quarter, trailed 29-27 at half time and led 46-37 at the end of the third quarter.

The game was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM, sponsored by Bierman Farm Service, Jark Real Estate, Harr Motors - Bary Keith, Bahr Spray Foam, Allied Climate Professionals- Kevin Nehls, S.D. Army National Guard - Brent Wienk, John Sieh Agency, Groton Vet Clinic, Blocker Construction, Thunder Seed with John Wheeting and Milbrandt Enterprises, Inc.

Tate Larson led the Tigers with 17 points followed by Jayden Zak, Lane Tietz and Tristan Traphagen with 10 apiece, Wyatt Hearnen had seven, Jacob Zak five and Cole Simon two.

Roncalli was led by Gray Imbery with 21 points, scoring 13 points in the first half and the final eight points in the fourth quarter. Micah Dohrer had 11 points, Brian Holmstrom nine and Maddox May three.

Groton Area made 23 of 40 field goals for 58 percent, was 11 of 16 from the line for 69 percent and had nine turnovers. Roncalli was 19 of 41 in shooting for 46 percent, was 10 of 15 from the line for 67 percent and had nine turnovers.

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#331 in a series

Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

We're showing numbers more in line with what I'd expect at this stage of the pandemic, but still well off our peaks. I'm hoping that means we're genuinely moving in a declining trend, but I'll wait to see what shows up the rest of the week.

There were 195,400 new cases reported today. This brings us to 24,298,800 total cases in the pandemic in the US, which is 0.8% more than we had yesterday. Hospitalizations stayed well off the peak again today as well—tenth consecutive day below—at 123,848 individuals hospitalized.

Here's a sobering number. I saw this statistic in an article from CNN and confirmed it with my own data: 60 percent of the total Covid-19 cases in the US have been reported since Election Day, just about two and a half months ago. Over the weekend, Virginia had its two worst new-case days yet in this pandemic; their seven-day new-case average is also at an all-time high, and cases are still rising. They made the point to CNN that this is not an artifact of reporting delays; it's a real thing they are attributing to holiday exposures, something I hope has pretty much worked its way through the system by the end of the week or so.

We broke the 400,000-death mark today, reporting 2769 deaths. That puts us at 401,607, which is 0.7% more than yesterday's number. I did some looking back at deaths, and the pattern here is a sad one. The first known death from Covid-19 in the US occurred close to a year ago. Back in February, it was believed the first such death was actually on February 28 in Washington, but later postmortem testing revealed two earlier deaths from the virus in California. So officially, the first death was February 6. Here's where it went from there:

May 27 – 100,000 deaths – 111 days

September 23 – 200,000 deaths – 119 days

December 14 – 300,000 deaths – 82 days

January 19 – 400,000 deaths – 36 days

We can put this into perspective by recognizing that on Sunday, the seven-day average was 3311 deaths per day. At that rate, we'll hit a half million on about February 18. If, as expected, this average continues to climb, then that half-million mark will come sooner. The reason we expect this rate to continue to rise is that, while we should soon be through the holiday surge in new cases, seven-day average deaths are still rising in 30 states and the District of Columbia. The average has increased by more than 40 percent in Arizona in just two weeks. One person is dying every six minutes in Los Angeles County. Authorities there have had to relax air pollution-control regulations in order to accommodate the huge number of cremations taking place; they can't let the bodies pile up forever.

We have more on immunity from natural infection, and this news is very good, indeed. A study published yesterday in the journal *Nature* from a team at the Laboratory of Molecular Immunology at The Rockefeller University and Howard Hughes Medical Institute took a look at a small cohort of 87 patients, assessing them at 1.3 and 6.2 months after infection. They took as their starting point the knowledge that antibody titers decrease over time and attempted to characterize more completely the "nature and quality" of humoral (antibody-based) immunologic memory in these individuals.

First, they did confirm that antibodies in two general antibody classes, IgG and IgM, produced in response to the receptor binding domain (RBD) of the viral spike (S) protein did, indeed, decrease rapidly, although antibodies of another class, IgA, did not decrease as much, confirming that patient plasma's neutralizing effect on virus plummeted. However, they also discovered that "the number of RBD-specific memory B cells [the ones that make more antibody on demand] is unchanged."

What's more, those memory B cells display clonal turnover after 6.2 months. This means essentially that a population, or clone, of RBD-specific memory B cells (cells that are sensitized to a particular virus) is replaced after 6.2 months with a new population, or clone, of memory B cells that produce slightly different antibodies.

In order to understand this next part, we need to talk for a moment about a phenomenon that can occur in B cells called somatic hypermutation. Hyper- means over (in the sense of a lot or excessive), and we've

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talked about mutation a lot over the course of our time together, so you know what that is. So what we're looking at here is a whole lot of mutation in the antibody genes in those B cells, specifically on just one small region of those genes, the RBD-determinant region, the one that codes for the antigen-binding site for the antibody. The binding site is the business end of the antibody; it's the part that ties up a virus so the virus can't infect cells. And what's happening is that the genes for this binding site on the antibody keep changing. Now that doesn't sound like a good thing in an antibody-producing cell which is supposed to key in on a specific RBD of a virus--it sounds like it might mean the antibodies will get less effective at targeting a virus; but it is, in fact, a very good thing because it means you keep producing a diverse constellation of slightly different antibodies, some of which will, by happenstance, be even better at binding the virus than the original ones. The promulgation of a diversity of antibodies means you're more likely to have some of them which are super-efficient at neutralizing virus. Somatic hypermutation generally leads to more effective antibodies; it's one of your immune system's secret powers.

And what we're seeing with the clonal turnover in these antibody-producing cells in people who've been infected with SARS-CoV-2 is that the new clones that develop are expressing antibodies with greater somatic hypermutation, and according to the researchers, "increased potency and resistance to RBD mutations." It looks like fragments of viral spike protein persist in the host after the infection is over which stimulate continued diversification of RBD genes in the B cells. Those proteins aren't causing trouble; on the contrary, they're continuing to stimulate an immune response, one result of which is reproduction in the memory B cells. The more cells reproduce, the greater the incidence of mutations; and in memory B cells, the greater the incidence of mutations the better because some of those mutated cells will produce better antibodies, which gives you improved protection from what you started out with and protection that is better able to deal with any mutations the virus might present next time you encounter it.

The upshot, in the research team's words: "The observation that memory B cell responses do not decay after 6.2 months, but instead continue to evolve, is strongly suggestive that individuals who are infected with SARS-CoV-2 could mount a rapid and effective response to the virus upon re-exposure." This is very, very good news.

Some not as exciting news is that it appears, at least in Florida, that a great many people are not getting in on schedule for their second dose of Covid-19 vaccine. The state's department of health reports some 40,000 people are overdue. That's about five percent of those who've received a first dose, and it's a concern. Now reporting could be delayed, and so perhaps the actual number of overdue individuals is somewhat less, but this is not great. We have no evidence to support a delay in second dose administration (although we have some evidence short delays are not deleterious). We knew this was a risk with a two-dose regimen, but I feel as though more should be done to track and remind and get folks in for that second dose.

I received a question this morning about autoimmune conditions and Covid-19. Autoimmunity is an abnormal condition whereby your immune system fails to fully distinguish your own tissues (self) from invading pathogens (nonself) and it begins to attack your own tissue. The prefix, auto-, means self, so autoimmunity is, quite literally, immunity to self—not a good thing. There are many autoimmune conditions which have been identified; they do varying kinds of damage depending on the tissue under attack and the magnitude of the autoimmune responses. There has been a lot of speculation about just how susceptible autoimmune individuals would be to this virus, either because their disordered immune systems might fail to adequately respond to the virus or because the overactive immune response that leads your system to damage your own tissue might somehow play into that whole inflammatory damage situation we know can occur in people with severe Covid-19. So a reader was wondering what we know about that.

The short answer is not much. We do not really understand where autoimmunity fits into the pathogenesis of Covid-19 or even what the risks are for sure. Here's what we have so far on that:

The CDC's list of conditions which place you at increased risk for severe illness and mortality with Covid-19 includes only one autoimmune disorder, type 1 diabetes, and it seems likely the risk here is created more by the vascular damage diabetes can do than to the autoimmune nature of the disease. There are some other autoimmune diseases which are sometimes associated with heart damage or other sequelae

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that create increased risk, and the immunosuppressive medications used by some people with autoimmune conditions, corticosteroids in particular, but maybe others as well, may create some risk too. For the record, it is not considered a good way to manage that risk to discontinue those medications and risk flare-ups of the autoimmune condition, so don't do that.

There are not a lot of data available, and what we have are pretty mixed. For example, people with system lupus erythematosus (SLE) often overexpress (place excessive amounts of) ACE2 on their cells, and you may recall that ACE2 receptors are the primary binding site the coronavirus uses for viral entry into your cells. There is some evidence that, in some SLE patients, this creates increased susceptibility, but that evidence may not be robust. A meta-study (review of a bunch of other studies to sort of compile their findings) indicated there is a slight (maybe statistically nonsignificant) association between autoimmune disease and increased risk for severe disease and mortality. It's pretty murky.

Complicating all of this is that different people with autoimmune conditions are different, even when they have the same autoimmune condition. In some, their overactive immune system may be sort of exhausted or overworked or distracted so that when it's faced with a new threat there isn't much in the way of reserves to devote to that threat; in others, the overactivity translates as hypervigilance and it just goes to town on each new threat, effectively destroying it. Hard telling which will be true in any individual person.

I have not so far seen any indication from any of the work I've read that the overactive immune responses that characterize these conditions are contributing in any meaningful way to the inflammatory damage we often see in Covid-19 patients. As a result, I'm guessing no one seriously thinks this is a thing; but I do not have any research to cite for you here. If someone reading this has something, I'd love to hear from you and would be pleased to make any correction that is warranted. I am aware we have some folks reading along some days who have considerably more medical knowledge than I (as in real doctors, not us phony Ph.D.s), and I will always welcome help sorting through the clinical stuff.

The only other thing I've seen in this regard is that there may be an increased chance for those with chronic diseases of any kind (including autoimmune ones) to suffer the lingering symptoms known popularly as long Covid and more recently in medical circles as post-acute Covid syndrome. This may or may not impinge on risk of mortality.

Marion Dawson was born in Scotland on January 19, 1913, which means she was just a little girl during the 1918-1919 influenza pandemic. While people were dying around her in unimaginable numbers, she was one of the fortunate ones who came through that just fine, going on to survive two world wars and a whole lot else. Thing is, she's still kicking, believed to be the third oldest person in Scotland. She was getting around just fine, getting out weekly for church ("kirk" in Scotland) and such until the lockdown; she hasn't been anywhere really since. But today, she celebrated her 108th birthday by going to her local kirk, the Houston and Killellan Kirk, not for services, but for her Covid-19 vaccination. That's a heck of a way to celebrate all of those years. Let's wish many happy returns to Ms. Dawson.

And on the subject of birthdays, let's wish a happy one to Dolly Parton, who turned 75 today and personally from her own bank account funded some of the early vaccine research in this pandemic. She is in part responsible for the hope we feel as we see vaccination programs getting underway across the country. For that alone, never mind her other humanitarian contributions, I'm pleased to wish her my best on the occasion of reaching the three-quarters-century mark. Remarkable woman, whether you like country music or not.

Be well. I'll be back tomorrow.

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Jan. 19th COVID-19 UPDATE

Groton Daily Independent from State Health Lab Reports

Two counties in South Dakota are currently free of COVID-19. They are Buffalo and Harding. Campbell County has just one case. Jones County is the only county to not record a death from COVID-19.

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: +127 (105,788 total) Positivity Rate: 6.7%

Total Tests: 1905 (838,122 total)

Total Persons Tested: 461 (392,325 total)

Hospitalized: +10 (6092 total) 200 currently hospitalized (-3)

Avera St. Luke's: 8 (+1) COVID-19 Occupied beds, 0 (-0) COVID-19 ICU Beds, 0 (-0) COVID-19 ventilators.

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

Deaths: +0 (1667 total)

Recovered: +508 (99,887 total)

Active Cases: -381 (4232)

Percent Recovered: 94.4%

Vaccinations: +355 (5746)

Vaccinations Completed: +202 (10031)

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

Beadle (38) +3 positive, +14 recovered (68 active cases)

Brookings (32) +3 positive, +15 recovered (231 active cases)

Brown (75): +12 positive, +33 recovered (215 active cases)

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

Clay (13): +0 positive, +14 recovered (69 active cases)

Codington (73): +9 positive, +18 recovered (162 active cases)

Davison (55): +6 positive, +9 recovered (99) active cases)

Day (23): +0 positive, +4 recovered (24 active cases)

Edmunds (5): +1 positive, +5 recovered (36 active cases)

Faulk (13): +3 positive, +2 recovered (5 active cases)

Grant (35): +1 positive, +4 recovered (30 active cases)

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

Hughes (30): +6 positive, +17 recovered (83 active cases)

Lawrence (35): +3 positive, +10 recovered (86 active cases)

Lincoln (70): +8 positive, +36 recovered (270 active cases)

Marshall (5): +1 positive, +1 recovered (13 active cases)

McCook (22): +1 positive, +1 recovered (18 active cases)

McPherson (4): +1 positive, +6 recovery (22 active case)

Minnehaha (296): +32 positive, +95 recovered (998 active cases)

Pennington (161): +11 positive, +49 recovered (507 active cases)

Potter (3): +1 positive, +3 recovered (24 active cases)

Roberts (34): +1 positive, +8 recovered (48 active cases)

Spink (24): +0 positive, +4 recovered (29 active cases)

Walworth (14): +3 positive, +7 recovered (48 active cases)

NORTH DAKOTA

COVID-19 Daily Report, Jan. 19:

- 3.7% rolling 14-day positivity
- 138 new positives
- 3,252 susceptible test encounters
- 88 currently hospitalized (-3)
- 1,234 active cases (-143)
- 1,386 total deaths (+2)

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County	Positive Cases	Recovered Cases	Negative Persons	Deceased Among Cases	Community Spread	% RT-PCR Test Positivity Rate (Weekly)
Aurora	437	407	804	11	Substantial	8.82%
Beadle	2580	2474	5394	38	Substantial	11.98%
Bennett	372	357	1099	8	Moderate	3.08%
Bon Homme	1502	1459	1934	23	Substantial	6.15%
Brookings	3309	3046	10612	32	Substantial	9.31%
Brown	4785	4495	11587	75	Substantial	9.03%
Brule	671	633	1737	7	Substantial	15.38%
Buffalo	415	403	856	12	Minimal	0.00%
Butte	941	895	2955	20	Substantial	8.79%
Campbell	116	111	230	4	Minimal	0.00%
Charles Mix	1185	1113	3646	14	Substantial	9.09%
Clark	325	317	895	4	Moderate	9.52%
Clay	1722	1640	4775	13	Substantial	8.08%
Codington	3682	3447	8928	73	Substantial	11.36%
Corson	456	440	953	11	Minimal	10.81%
Custer	714	680	2504	10	Substantial	14.85%
Davison	2854	2700	5960	55	Substantial	5.18%
Day	582	535	1595	23	Substantial	9.76%
Deuel	449	417	1038	7	Substantial	11.43%
Dewey	1370	1313	3597	18	Substantial	6.56%
Douglas	407	381	842	9	Substantial	13.16%
Edmunds	438	390	921	5	Substantial	4.94%
Fall River	486	456	2382	13	Substantial	14.13%
Faulk	324	306	629	13	Minimal	7.14%
Grant	865	800	2012	35	Substantial	20.93%
Gregory	493	460	1143	26	Moderate	2.44%
Haakon	240	227	493	9	Minimal	9.09%
Hamlin	652	577	1598	38	Substantial	12.05%
Hand	321	307	724	4	Moderate	10.00%
Hanson	328	311	643	4	Moderate	8.57%
Harding	89	88	162	1	None	0.00%
Hughes	2131	2020	5930	30	Substantial	3.96%
Hutchinson	736	688	2124	22	Substantial	17.86%

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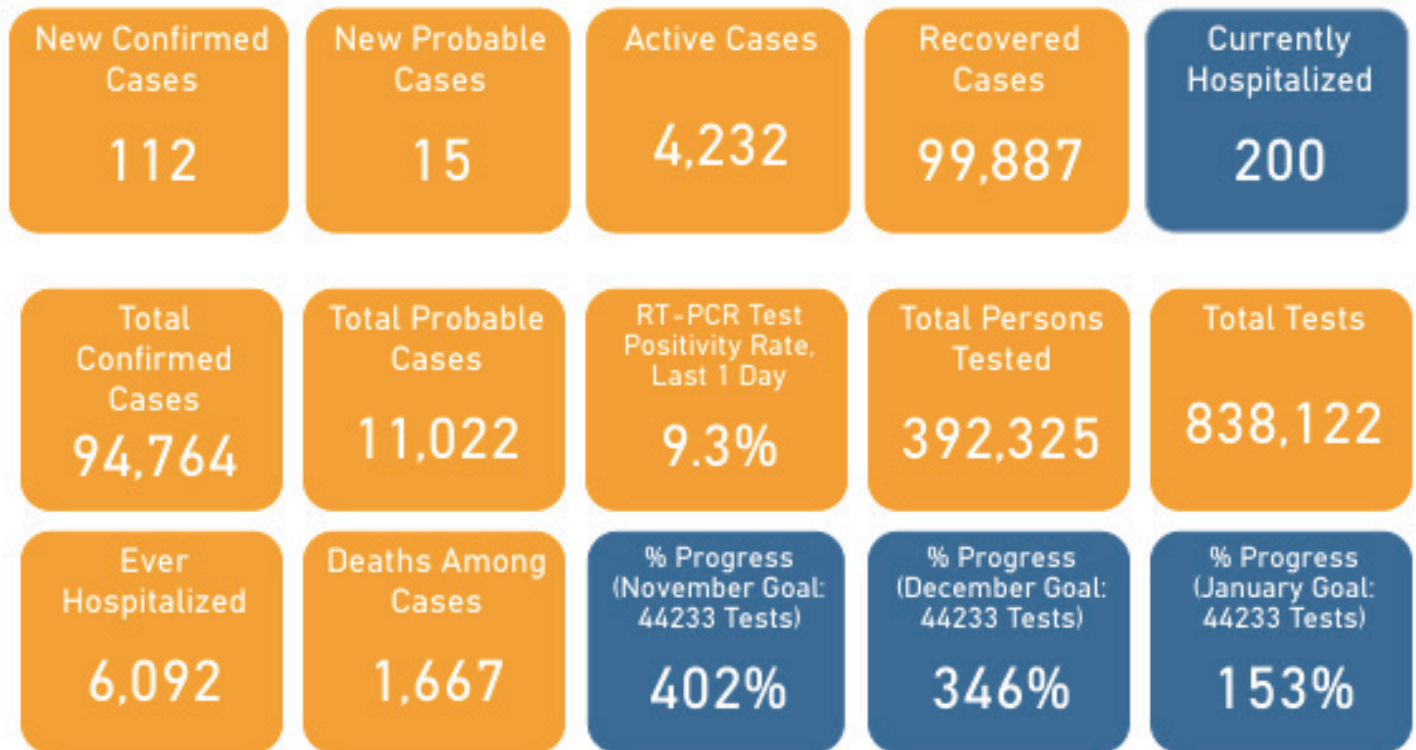
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Hyde	134	131	378	1	Minimal	0.00%
Jackson	269	252	874	13	Minimal	8.33%
Jerauld	265	242	523	16	Minimal	0.00%
Jones	76	69	184	0	Minimal	16.67%
Kingsbury	586	545	1480	13	Substantial	21.05%
Lake	1100	1032	2917	16	Substantial	15.63%
Lawrence	2714	2593	7882	35	Substantial	10.32%
Lincoln	7248	6908	18308	70	Substantial	11.45%
Lyman	574	530	1778	10	Substantial	13.92%
Marshall	279	260	1059	5	Moderate	18.75%
McCook	710	670	1472	22	Substantial	4.55%
McPherson	222	196	518	4	Substantial	6.43%
Meade	2413	2276	7017	26	Substantial	14.89%
Mellette	232	226	680	2	Moderate	23.08%
Miner	254	221	522	7	Substantial	26.09%
Minnehaha	26457	25169	71090	296	Substantial	9.83%
Moody	582	532	1621	15	Substantial	18.82%
Oglala Lakota	2006	1893	6342	40	Substantial	13.39%
Pennington	12068	11400	35810	161	Substantial	12.38%
Perkins	317	285	716	11	Substantial	19.12%
Potter	339	312	757	3	Substantial	7.84%
Roberts	1082	1000	3862	34	Substantial	12.33%
Sanborn	323	304	625	3	Moderate	9.52%
Spink	742	689	1936	24	Substantial	10.53%
Stanley	304	289	820	2	Substantial	5.26%
Sully	129	113	261	3	Moderate	16.67%
Todd	1192	1156	3950	20	Substantial	5.26%
Tripp	646	621	1375	14	Moderate	5.71%
Turner	1023	932	2460	49	Substantial	6.90%
Union	1810	1637	5672	36	Substantial	17.33%
Walworth	687	623	1690	14	Substantial	17.00%
Yankton	2692	2577	8480	27	Substantial	23.35%
Ziebach	334	311	807	8	Substantial	23.08%
Unassigned	0	0	1971	0		

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South Dakota



AGE GROUP OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Age Range with Years	# of Cases	# of Deaths Among Cases
0-9 years	4040	0
10-19 years	11703	0
20-29 years	19172	4
30-39 years	17428	14
40-49 years	15109	32
50-59 years	14926	89
60-69 years	12062	214
70-79 years	6430	373
80+ years	4916	941

SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Sex	# of Cases	# of Deaths Among Cases
Female	55249	793
Male	50537	874

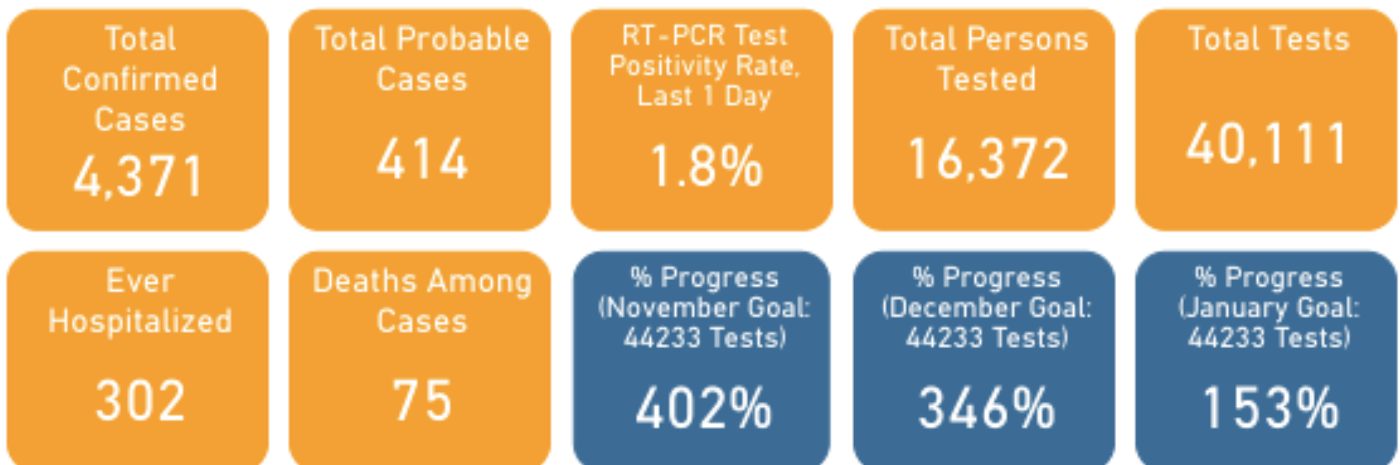
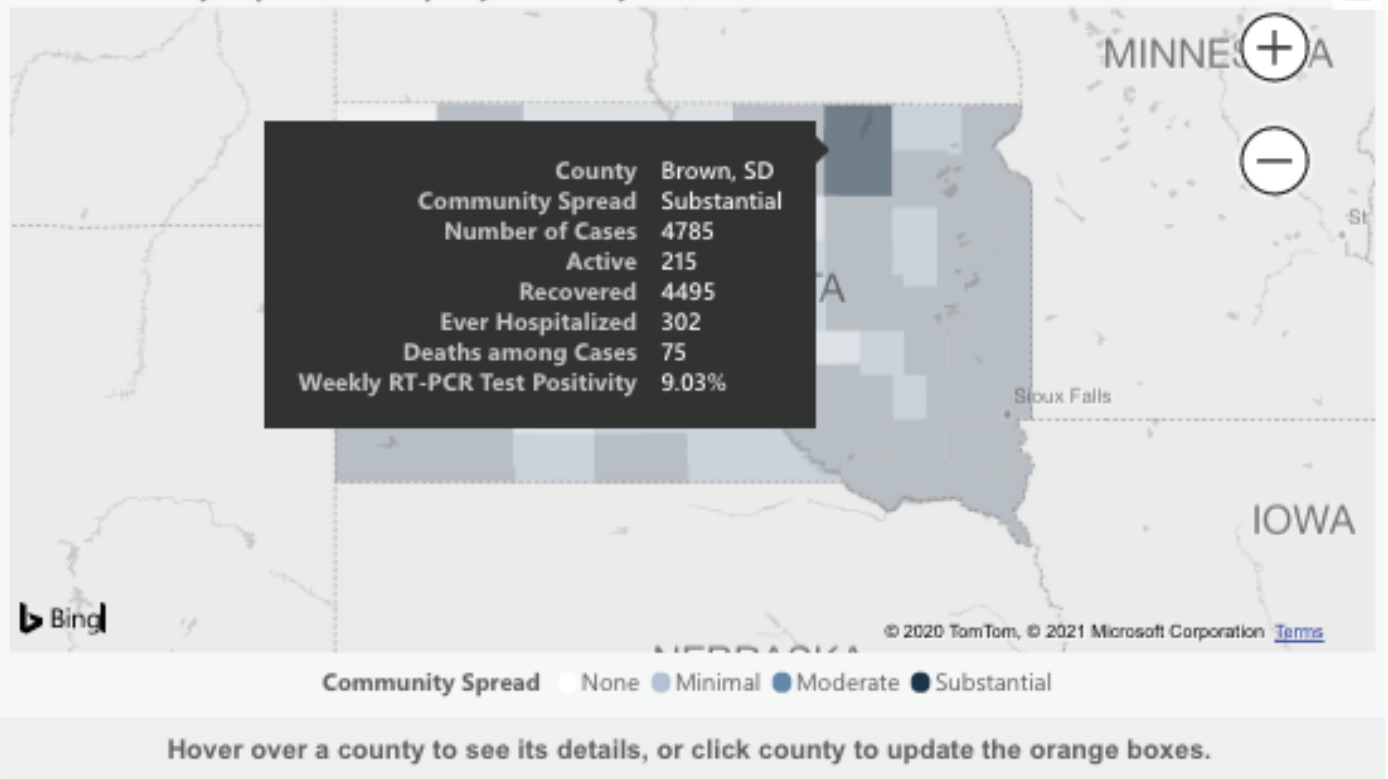
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Brown County



Community Spread Map by County of Residence



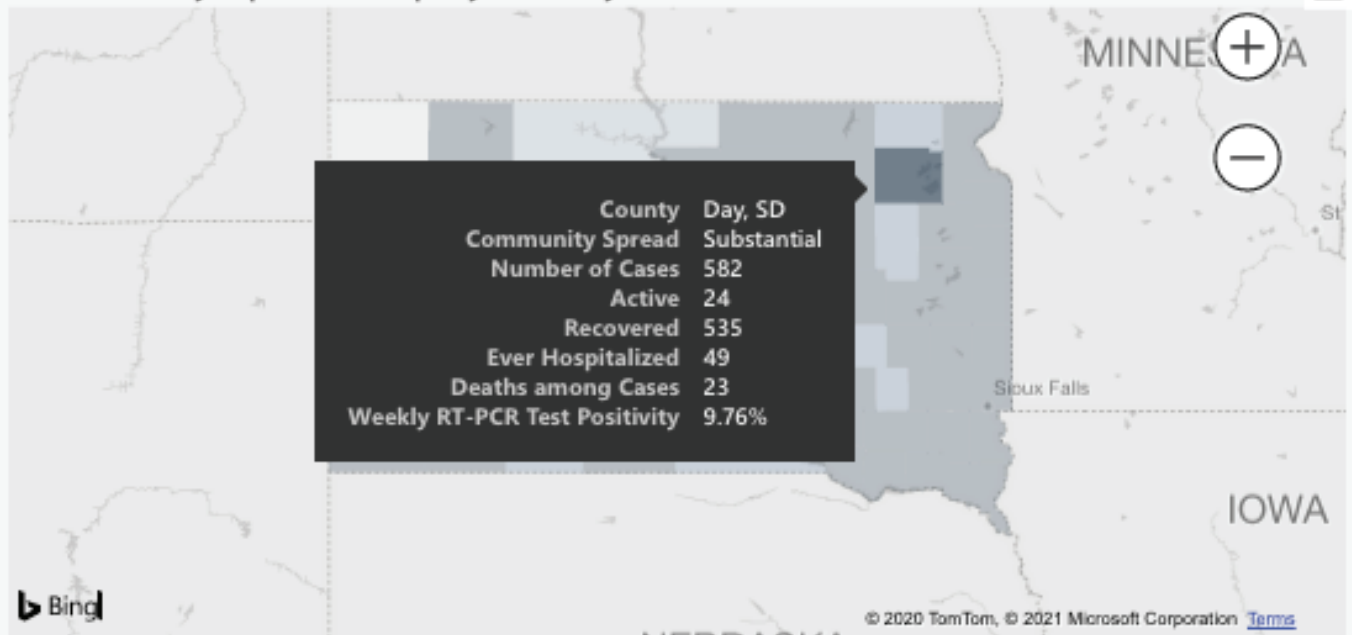
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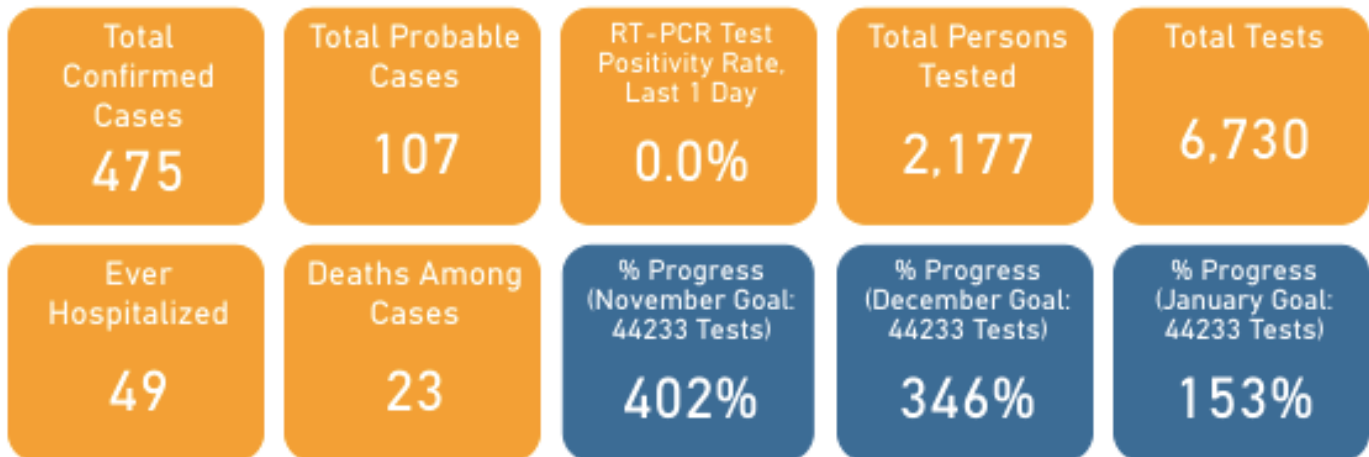
Day County



Community Spread Map by County of Residence



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



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Vaccinations

Total Doses Administered

57,476

Total Persons Administered a Vaccine

47,647

Manufacturer	Number of Doses
Moderna	27,787
Pfizer	29,689

Doses	Number of Recipients
Moderna - 1 dose	27,787
Pfizer - 1 dose	10,031
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*	1596	1,220	188	1,408
Corson*	19	17	1	18
Custer*	352	322	15	337
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

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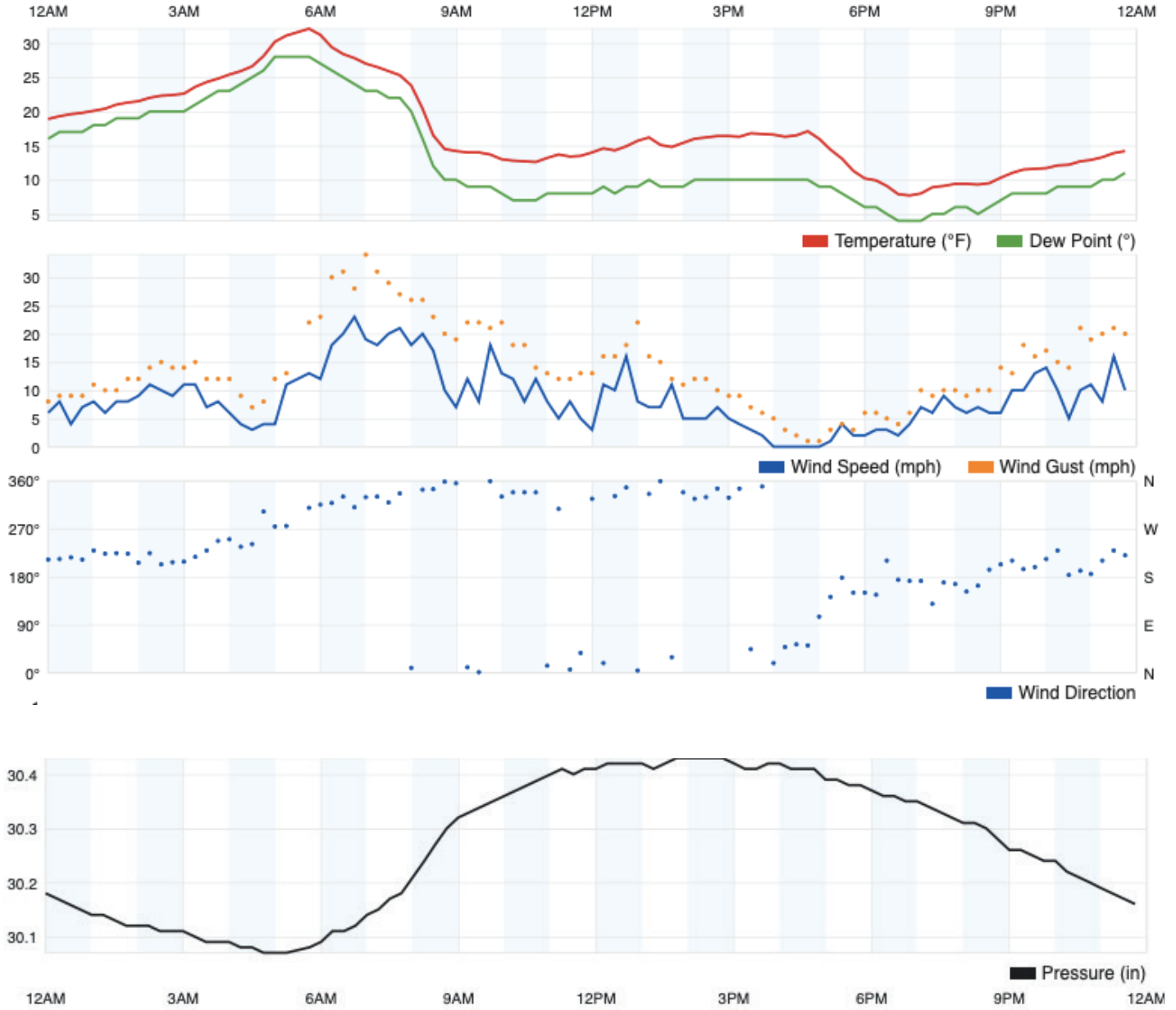
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Hamlin	237	187	25	212
Hand	209	189	10	199
Hanson	73	65	4	69
Harding	3	3	0	3
Hughes [^]	1057	1,025	16	1,041
Hutchinson [^]	580	530	25	555
Hyde [^]	99	99	0	99
Jackson [^]	58	58	0	58
Jerauld	77	63	7	70
Jones [^]	97	93	2	95
Kingsbury	354	276	39	315
Lake	684	370	157	527
Lawrence	802	774	14	788
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 [^]	823	643	90	733
Mellette [^]	6	6	0	6
Miner	143	115	14	129
Minnehaha	17751	7,779	4,986	12,765
Moody [^]	277	229	24	253
Oglala Lakota [^]	24	16	4	20
Pennington [^]	6259	4,573	843	5,416
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 [^]	277	275	1	276
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	1695	1,039	328	1,367

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

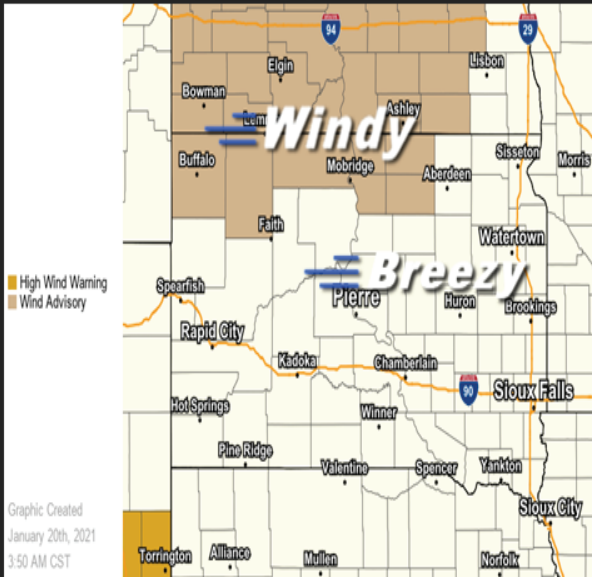


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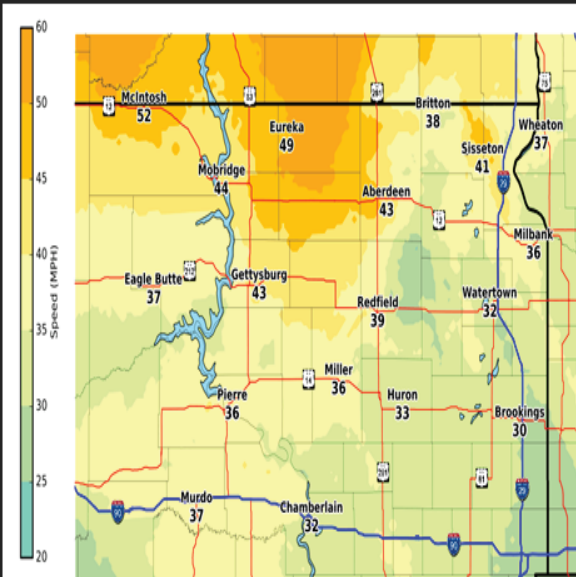
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Today	Tonight	Thursday	Thursday Night	Friday
				
Partly Sunny then Becoming Sunny and Breezy	Clear	Sunny then Mostly Cloudy and Blustery	Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny
High: 42 °F	Low: 24 °F	High: 31 °F	Low: 10 °F	High: 25 °F

Wind Advisory Coverage Today Includes Much Of North Central South Dakota



Highest Forecast Wind Gusts Today



 NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE
OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

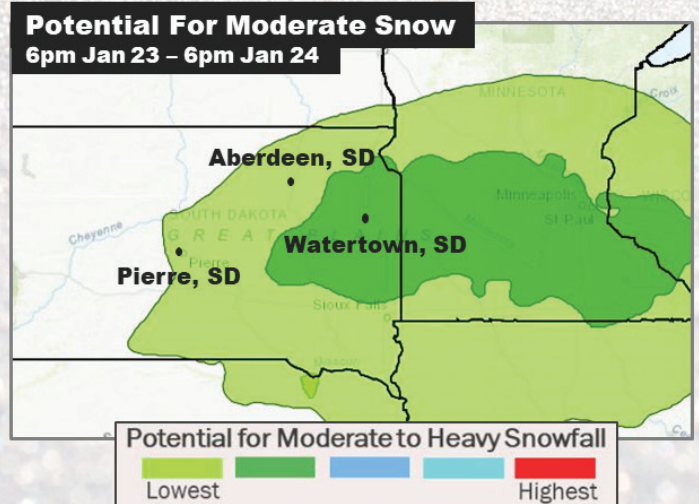
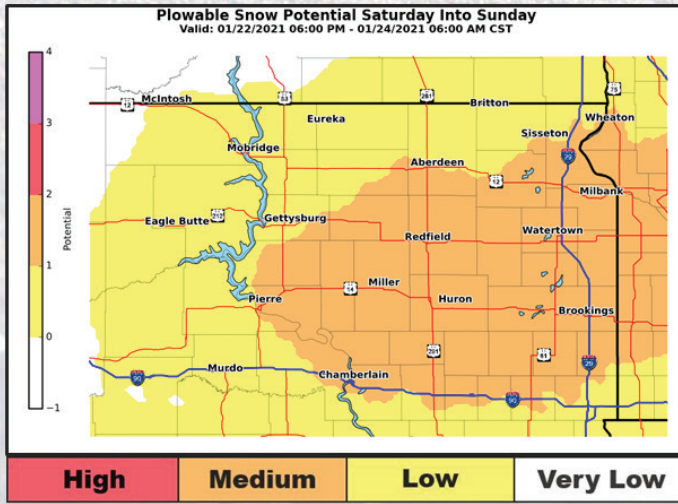
Updated: 1/20/2021 4:43 AM Central

Today is going to be the last much above normal warm day for a while. Beginning on Thursday, temperatures will descend into the ranks of near normal for late January. Today is also going to be breezy to windy across the region. In fact, the further north you go, the more windy it will become by early this afternoon.



Accumulating Snowfall Ahead

An area of low pressure looks to drop some light to moderate snow across the area this weekend. This could cause some travel headaches for some. Consider this to be a good time to start preparing for the snow!



Visit www.weather.gov/abr for a detailed local forecast

Updated: 1/20/2021 3:19 AM CT

NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE
OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

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Today in Weather History

January 20, 1944: A late January warm up occurred on this date in weather history in 1944. Temperatures rose into the upper 50s to the mid-60s across central and northeast South Dakota as well as west central Minnesota. Overnight lows in the 20s and lower 30s were above the normal highs for the year. Record highs were set at Aberdeen, Kennebec, Sisseton, and Watertown. Watertown rose to 56 degrees, Sisseton rose to 58 degrees, Aberdeen rose to 60 degrees, and Kennebec rose to 65 degrees. Also, Mobridge rose to 57 degrees, and Pierre rose to 61 degrees.

1883: Yuma, Arizona sets their all-time record low of 22 degrees. This record is tied in 1911 and again in 1937.

1933: Phoenix, Arizona receives 1 inch of snow. This sets the record for the most ever recorded in Phoenix.

1937: The wettest Inaugural Day of record with 1.77 inches of rain in 24 hours. Temperatures were only in the 30s as Franklin D. Roosevelt was sworn in for his second term.

1926 - A hurricane came inland near Daytona Beach, FL. The hurricane caused 2.5 million dollars damage in eastern Florida, including the Jacksonville area. (David Ludlum)

1939 - The temperature at Lewiston, ID, hit 117 degrees to establish an all-time record high for that location. (The Weather Channel)

1943 - On a whim, and flying a single engine AT-6, Lieutenant Ralph O'Hair and Colonel Duckworth were the first to fly into a hurricane. It started regular Air Force flights into hurricanes. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Thunderstorms in Minnesota spawned a tornado which moved in a southwesterly direction for a distance of thirty miles across Rice County and Goodhue County. Trees were uprooted and tossed about like toys, and a horse lifted by the tornado was observed sailing horizontally through the air. Thunderstorms drenched La Crosse, WI, with 5.26 inches of rain, their second highest 24 hour total of record. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Hot weather prevailed in the north central U.S. Williston, ND, reported a record high of 108 degrees. Thunderstorms produced severe weather in the eastern U.S., and in southeastern Texas. Richland County, SC, was soaked with up to 5.5 inches of rain. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Thunderstorms produced locally heavy rains in the southwestern U.S. Yuma, AZ, experienced their most severe thunderstorm of record. Strong thunderstorm winds, with unofficial gusts as high as 95 mph, reduced visibilities to near zero in blowing dust and sand. Yuma got nearly as much rain in one hour as is normally received in an entire year. The storm total of 2.55 inches of rain was a record 24 hour total for July. Property damage due to flash flooding and high winds was in the millions. (Storm Data)

1989 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather from Wisconsin and northern Illinois to New England, with 103 reports of large hail and damaging winds through the day. Thunderstorms in Wisconsin produced hail three inches in diameter near Oshkosh, and wind gusts to 65 mph at Germantown. (The National Weather Summary)

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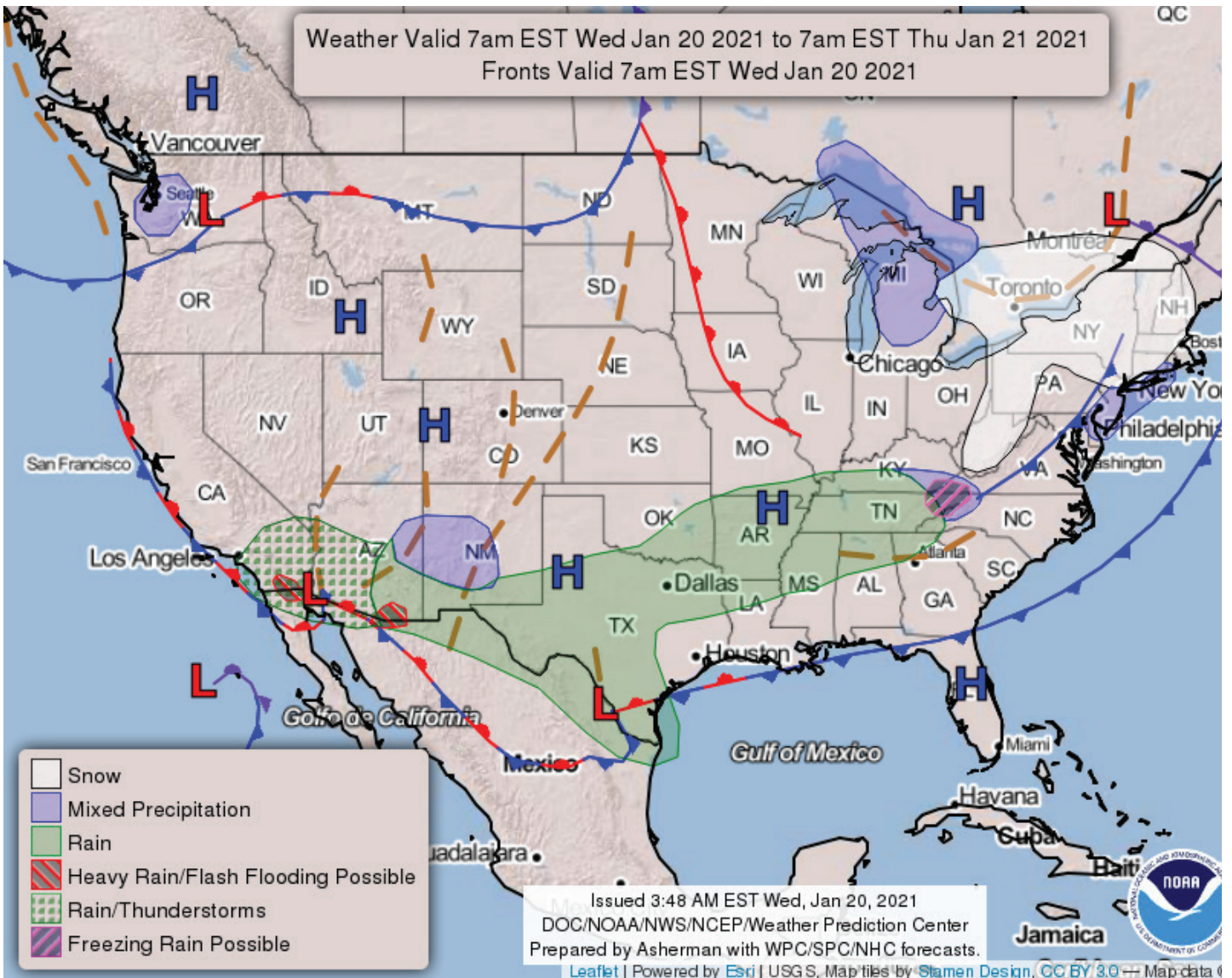
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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 32 °F at 5:40 AM
Low Temp: 8 °F at 7:07 PM
Wind: 34 mph at 6:56 AM
Precip:

Today's Info

Record High: 60° in 1944
Record Low: -29° in 1936
Average High: 22°F
Average Low: 1°F
Average Precip in Jan.: 0.31
Precip to date in Jan.: 0.14
Average Precip to date: 0.31
Precip Year to Date: 0.14
Sunset Tonight: 5:24 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:05 a.m.



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THE SIGNS OF A GRATEFUL HEART

An attitude of gratitude is always obvious to those around us. If we are grateful for what God has done for us and given to us, others will see our gratitude for His goodness and gifts in everything we do. David gave us a fourfold formula for gratitude to follow.

"I will thank You, Lord, with all my heart." The thanksgiving he describes is total and consumed all of his being – his entire self. The word he used for heart would include his awareness of God's presence, his memory of God's goodness, and his understanding of God's grace. He worshiped God with excitement, enthusiasm, and expectation.

"I will tell all of the marvelous things You have done." Marvelous comes from a word that means "extraordinary, not to be surpassed by anyone and always wonderful!" He is so overwhelmed by God's blessings on his life that he wants everyone to hear about it.

"I will be filled with joy!" Joy is the natural state of the one who trusts in the Lord. Knowing that "all things are working together for our good" should cause His joy to radiate from our hearts into our heads and out through our hands. Everything we do should be done with a smile on our face and gladness in our eyes.

"I will sing praises to Your Name, O Most High." Notice that there is only one letter different between the word "sin" and "sing" – the letter "g" – that stands for God. When we give up sin for the Savior, God gives us a new song to sing. It is a song about the Savior who loves us, gave Himself for us, is present in us, and cares deeply for us.

Prayer: Lord, we rejoice in the goodness and grace of Your salvation. May we always have a grateful heart and show it to others willingly. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: I will be filled with joy because of you. I will sing praises to your name, O Most High. Psalm 9:2

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News from the  Associated Press

Tuesday's Scores

By The Associated Press

BOYS BASKETBALL=

Aberdeen Central 61, Watertown 42

Aberdeen Christian 66, Faulkton 53

Bowman County, N.D. 62, Harding County 50

Canistota 67, Freeman Academy/Marion 43

Castlewood 74, Wilmot 51

Centerville 64, Freeman 33

Chamberlain 64, Lennox 50

Clark/Willow Lake 82, Webster 42

Corsica/Stickney 95, Andes Central/Dakota Christian 65

DeSmet 62, Hamlin 42

Dell Rapids St. Mary 83, Colman-Egan 25

Deubrook 63, Oldham-Ramona/Rutland 54

Elkton-Lake Benton 62, Lake Preston 52

Ethan 66, Menno 22

Flandreau 56, Deuel 50

Groton Area 51, Ipswich 28

Hot Springs 37, New Underwood 35

Howard 60, Hanson 44

Jones County 40, Colome 33

Langford 65, Britton-Hecla 43

Madison 67, Sisseton 50

Mitchell 70, Brandon Valley 47

North Central Co-Op 68, McIntosh 57

O'Neill, Neb. 62, Wagner 51

Rapid City Stevens 62, Douglas 51

Redfield 67, Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 65

Scotland 55, Irene-Wakonda 41

Sioux Falls Roosevelt 54, Harrisburg 40

Sioux Valley 67, Chester 45

Spearfish 69, Sturgis Brown 41

Sully Buttes 56, Timber Lake 54

Tripp-Delmont/Armour 56, Bon Homme 41

Vermillion 63, Elk Point-Jefferson 37

Viborg-Hurley 60, Gayville-Volin 39

Wall 69, Miller 67

Waubay/Summit 58, Milbank 49

Waverly-South Shore 65, Great Plains Lutheran 60

Winner 63, Parkston 46

Yankton 62, Brookings 42

281 Conference=

Consolation Semifinal=

Hitchcock-Tulare 62, Iroquois 36

Sanborn Central/Woonsocket 70, Sunshine Bible Academy 21

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Semifinal=

Wessington Springs 57, Highmore-Harrold 44

Wolsey-Wessington 83, James Valley Christian 35

GIRLS BASKETBALL=

Aberdeen Central 39, Watertown 18

Aberdeen Roncalli 61, Tiospa Zina Tribal 25

Brandon Valley 56, Harrisburg 48

Bridgewater-Emery 35, Kimball/White Lake 24

Britton-Hecla 65, Langford 52

Burke 52, Platte-Geddes 39

Castlewood 71, Wilmot 39

Chamberlain 57, Gregory 39

Cody-Kilgore, Neb. 65, Kadoka Area 63

Corsica/Stickney 64, Andes Central/Dakota Christian 36

Ethan 56, Menno 53

Faulkton 40, Aberdeen Christian 25

Flandreau 63, Deuel 37

Florence/Henry 72, Webster 50

Hanson 49, Howard 37

Ipswich 41, Groton Area 38

Irene-Wakonda 56, Scotland 55

Marty Indian 58, Bennett County 50

McCook Central/Montrose 58, Baltic 19

Mitchell 51, Sioux Falls Lincoln 31

Mott-Regent, N.D. 44, Bison 43

Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 59, Redfield 50

O'Neill, Neb. 66, Wagner 38

Philip 46, Lower Brule 44

Pierre 60, Douglas 29

Sioux Falls Christian 57, Garretson 43

Sioux Falls Washington 55, Sioux Falls Roosevelt 40

Spearfish 46, Sturgis Brown 33

St. Thomas More 49, Lead-Deadwood 1

Sully Buttes 62, Timber Lake 54

Tea Area 62, Beresford 47

Viborg-Hurley 70, Gayville-Volin 41

Wall 48, Miller 41

Waubay/Summit 69, Milbank 38

Waverly-South Shore 62, Great Plains Lutheran 29

West Central 55, Dell Rapids 19

White River 79, Lyman 23

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

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Mega Millions

10-19-26-28-50, Mega Ball: 16, Megaplier: 2

(ten, nineteen, twenty-six, twenty-eight, fifty; Mega Ball: sixteen; Megaplier: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$865 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$730 million

Noem orders agriculture, natural resource department merger

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem on Tuesday issued an executive order to merge two departments overseeing the state's agriculture industry and natural resources.

The Republican governor's order created the Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources that she billed as a "one-stop" shop for farmers and ranchers that would save the state about \$450,000 by eliminating five positions. While the influential South Dakota Farm Bureau praised the move, other farmers' groups focused on conservation opposed the merger, saying it impacted the protection of resources including water, oil and soil.

Hunter Roberts, the current Secretary of Environment and Natural Resources, will head the new department.

"With this merger, we are fostering sustainable agriculture and conservation that we can pass on to our kids and grandkids," Noem said in a statement.

Noem's move is a continuation of efforts she calls a "streamlining" of the government's oversight of the agriculture industry. She announced the merger in August, a move which caught farmers unaware. As the state's farm groups digested the repercussions of the merger, they split in supporting the idea.

"We think there are efficiencies to be gained," said Scott VanderWal, the Farm Bureau president.

He said the merger would help farmers from getting caught between two departments.

But other groups, including the South Dakota Farmers Union and Dakota Rural Action, a conservation group, came out in opposition.

"Being a jack of all trades is not always a good answer when it comes to protecting human health and natural resources," said Doug Sombke, the president of the Farmers Union.

He said Roberts, the current Secretary, would do well leading the department, but pointed out that the job of leading a department that both oversees the state's largest industry and regulates its natural resources was a mammoth task.

Rick Bell, a member of Dakota Rural Action, worried that the "checks and balances" created by having separate departments was being eliminated. With agriculture and environmental inspectors housed in one department, he also saw the potential for increasing workloads.

Dakota Rural Action is pressing lawmakers to sponsor a resolution to block the merger, but to pass it would require a significant number of Republicans, who hold super-majorities in both chambers, to defy the governor.

South Dakota COVID-19 report shows zero deaths in last day

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The South Dakota daily COVID-19 update Tuesday reported no new deaths due to the coronavirus, a day after data compiled by Johns Hopkins University researchers listed the state's fatality count as the fifth highest per capita in the nation.

Researchers have confirmed 189 deaths per 100,000 people since the start of the pandemic. The total number of fatalities stands at 1,667.

The update showed that 126 of the 461 COVID-19 tests processed in the last day came back positive, lifting the cumulative number of confirmed cases to 94,764. The state's dashboard listed an additional 11,022 probable cases.

Hospitalizations fell by three, to 200, with 35 patients being treated in intensive care units.

There were 355 COVID-19 vaccines administered Monday, officials said, noting that 47,647 people have received at least one dose of the vaccine and 9,829 residents have received both shots.

For most people, the new coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough that clear up in two to three weeks. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia and death.

Noem's tweet about student food pantry seen as dig at Haley

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem took a shot at a Texas school's food pantry in a move that political strategists said was really aimed at former United Nations Ambassador Nikki Haley, who is seen as a potential rival for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination.

Noem used her gubernatorial Twitter account on Sunday to respond to Haley's post praising a Texas high school that had set up a food pantry like a grocery store to give "dignity" to students. The food pantry is supported by a Christian ministry and allows students to purchase groceries with a point system based on family size, behavior and on-campus jobs.

Noem replied to Haley's tweet by posting a quote from economist Milton Friedman, saying, "There's no such thing as a free lunch." Her response doesn't mention Haley specifically.

"I just see this as a sign of 'let the games begin,'" said Alice Stewart, a GOP strategist and commentator.

A spokeswoman for Haley declined to comment on Noem's tweet.

Haley, a former governor of South Carolina, and Noem are thought to be eyeing presidential runs, although Noem has said she will not run. Both Noem and Haley were the first women to hold the top office in their states. In the aftermath of Trump's role in the Capitol insurrection, the two have staked out opposing views of where the GOP should go now.

At the Republican National Convention winter meetings held in the days after a mob of Trump supporters attacked the Capitol, Haley decried Trump for spurring the lie that the election was stolen, saying his actions will "be judged harshly by history." By contrast, Noem deflected blame from Trump.

The South Dakotan's approach may win her favor with Trump supporters within the Republican party, but it also imperils her self-described brand as a "family-first governor."

Stewart questioned Noem's move to target the school food pantry program, saying, "I happen to look at that and see God's grace at work."

The governor's office defended the dig at the food pantry on Tuesday, pointing to her emphasis on technical colleges as a long-term solution to poverty.

"We should absolutely help those who need it," her spokesman Ian Fury said. "The best way to do that is by finding innovative solutions to get families out of food pantries."

But Cathy Brechtelsbauer, the state coordinator for Bread for the World, a Christian organization that advocates for policies to end hunger, said that the need for food pantries in South Dakota is "tremendous," with parking lots at times filling with cars of people waiting for food.

"It's important that our food pantries can fill in the gaps and in this pandemic, the gaps have certainly grown wider," she said.

Noem recently said she is not running for president in 2024 and her focus is on her role as governor; she is up for reelection in 2022. But she has made moves to suggest otherwise, cultivating a nationwide following, weighing in on issues far outside South Dakota and traveling to campaign and raise money. She was in Arkansas over the weekend, duck hunting with U.S. Rep. Bruce Westerman.

While Haley has not directly addressed whether she will run in 2024, Stewart, the GOP strategist, expects the two politicians to continue to "butt heads" over both Trump and the party's recent Senate losses in Georgia.

"This is what we're going to see for the next few years," she said. "It's off to the races."

Thomas Beaumont contributed reporting from Des Moines, Iowa.

Pursuit that crossed state lines reaches speeds of 110 mph

CHANCELLOR, S.D. (AP) — An Iowa man is behind bars in South Dakota after a pursuit that crossed state lines and reached speeds of more than 100 mph.

The incident started when deputies with the Lyon County Sheriff's Office in Iowa started pursuing a stolen vehicle Monday. The pursuit entered Lincoln County when the South Dakota deputies there were asked to take over.

It lasted for several miles in Lincoln County with speeds reaching 110 mph, authorities said. The pursuit ended when a Highway Patrol trooper stopped the vehicle at an intersection west of Chancellor, South Dakota.

The 25-year-old from Spencer was arrested on tentative charges including possession of stolen property and drunken driving.

The Latest: Biden speech to look forward, not dwell on Trump

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Latest on Joe Biden's presidential inauguration (all times local):
7:45 a.m.

Two of the Biden administration's top communications officials are describing the incoming president's inaugural address as a forward-looking speech that will make little to no mention of his predecessor.

Communications director Kate Bedingfield told ABC's "Good Morning America" on Wednesday that President-elect Joe Biden's address would "speak to the moment that we are in, but it will also lay out a vision for the future."

Biden press secretary Jen Psaki tells CNN that Biden's inaugural address is "definitely not a speech about Donald Trump" and she "wouldn't expect" to hear about him in it.

Bedingfield says Biden had not had any contact with the outgoing president.

Asked why Biden had invited political opponents including House Republican Leader Kevin McCarthy to join him at a Mass on Wednesday morning, Psaki said it "felt important to him personally to have members of both parties ... and use that as an example to the American public."

Bedingfield says Biden will sign 15 executive orders in some of his first moves as president.

HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT JOE BIDEN'S INAUGURATION AS THE 46TH U.S. PRESIDENT:

Joe Biden swears the oath of office at noon Wednesday to become the 46th president of the United States, taking the helm of a deeply divided nation and inheriting a confluence of crises arguably greater than any faced by his predecessors.

Read more:

- On Day One, Biden to undo Trump policies on climate, virus
- Biden's first act: Orders on pandemic, climate, immigration
- Biden charts new US direction, promises many Trump reversals
- DC on lockdown and on edge before Biden's inauguration
- Vice President Harris: A new chapter opens in US politics
- Analysis: For Biden, chance to turn crisis into opportunity
- What to Watch: An inauguration unlike any other amid pandemic, unrest

HERE'S WHAT ELSE IS GOING ON:

7:35 a.m.

As the sun rose over Washington's Freedom Plaza between the U.S. Capitol and the White House ahead of Joe Biden's presidential inauguration, clusters of soldiers in full battle fatigues clustered inside metal barriers erected to restrict access to the procession route.

Some yellow placards on the barriers read "Biden-Harris 2021," while others carried the seal of the presidency or inaugural insignias. American and District of Columbia flags flapped in high winds.

Traffic has been blocked off nearby in all directions. Revelers have been told to stay home to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. Most offices in the surrounding buildings are closed, many boarded up with

plywood to prevent damage in case violence breaks out Wednesday.

But one tall office building in view of the procession route has been fitted with towering signs reading "Welcome, Mr. President" and "Welcome Madam Vice President," for Joe Biden and Kamala Harris.

After being sworn in, Biden is set to inspect the readiness of military troops in a traditional "pass in review."

Trump's exit: President leaves office with legacy of chaos

By JILL COLVIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Donald Trump will walk out of the White House and board Marine One for the last time as president Wednesday morning, leaving behind a legacy of chaos and tumult and a nation bitterly divided.

Four years after standing on stage at his own inauguration and painting a dire picture of "American carnage," Trump departs the office twice impeached, with millions more out of work and 400,000 dead from the coronavirus. Republicans under his watch lost the presidency and both chambers of Congress. He will be forever remembered for the final major act of his presidency: inciting an insurrection at the Capitol that left five dead, including a Capitol Police officer, and horrified the nation.

Trump will be the first president in modern history to boycott his successor's inauguration as he continues to stew about his loss and privately maintains the election that President-elect Joe Biden fairly won was stolen from him. Republican officials in several critical states, members of his own administration and a wide swath of judges, including those appointed by Trump, have rejected those arguments.

Still, Trump has refused to participate in any of the symbolic passing-of-the-torch traditions surrounding the peaceful transition of power, including inviting the Bidens over for a get-to-know-you visit.

By the time Biden is sworn in, Trump will already have landed at his private Mar-a-Lago club in Palm Beach, Florida, to face an uncertain future, but not before giving himself a grand sendoff — with a red carpet, a military band and even a 21-gun salute.

Guests have been invited, but it is unclear how many will attend. Even Vice President Mike Pence plans to skip the event, citing the logistical challenges of getting from the air base to the inauguration ceremonies. Washington has been transformed into a security fortress, with thousands of National Guard troops, fencing and checkpoints to try to stave off further violence.

Aides had urged Trump to spend his final days in office trying to salvage his legacy by highlighting his administration's achievements — passing tax cuts, scaling back federal regulations, normalizing relations in the Middle East. But Trump largely refused, taking a single trip to the Texas border and releasing a video in which he pledged to his supporters that "the movement we started is only just beginning."

Trump will retire to Florida with a small group of former White House aides as he charts a political future that looks very different now than just two weeks ago.

Before the Capitol riot, Trump had been expected to remain his party's de facto leader, wielding enormous power as he served as a kingmaker and mulled a 2024 presidential run. But now he appears more powerless than ever — shunned by so many in his party, impeached twice, denied the Twitter bullhorn he had intended to use as his weapon and even facing the prospect that, if he is convicted in his Senate trial, he could be barred from seeking a second term.

For now, Trump remains angry and embarrassed, consumed with rage and grievance. He spent the week after the election sinking deeper and deeper into a world of conspiracy, and those who have spoken with him say he continues to believe he won in November. He continues to lash out at Republicans for perceived disloyalty and has threatened, both publicly and privately, to spend the coming years backing primary challenges against those he feels betrayed him.

Some expect him to eventually turn completely on the Republican Party, perhaps by flirting with a run as a third-party candidate as an act of revenge.

For all the chaos and drama and bending the world to his will, Trump ended his term as he began it: largely alone. The Republican Party he co-opted finally appeared to have had enough after Trump's supporters violently stormed the Capitol, hunting for lawmakers who refused to go along with Trump's un-

constitutional efforts to overturn the results of a democratic election.

But although Washington may have had enough, Trump retains his grip on the Republican base, with the support of millions of loyal voters, along with allies still helming the Republican National Committee and many state party organizations.

The city he leaves will not miss him. Trump rarely left the confines of the White House, except to visit his own hotel. He and his wife never once ate dinner at any other local restaurant; never ventured out to shop in its stores or see the sites. When he did leave, it was almost always to one of his properties: his golf course in Virginia, his golf course in New Jersey, his private club and nearby golf course in Palm Beach, Florida.

The city overwhelmingly supported Biden, with 93% of the vote. Trump received just 5.4% of the vote — or fewer than 18,600 ballots — not enough to fill the Washington Capitals hockey arena.

Trump pardons ex-strategist Steve Bannon, dozens of others

By JONATHAN LEMIRE, ERIC TUCKER and JILL COLVIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump pardoned former chief strategist Steve Bannon as part of a flurry of clemency action in the final hours of his White House term that benefited more than 140 people, including rap performers, ex-members of Congress and other allies of him and his family.

The last-minute clemency, announced Wednesday morning, follows separate waves of pardons over the past month for Trump associates convicted in the FBI's Russia investigation as well as for the father of his son-in-law. Taken together, the actions underscore the president's willingness, all the way through his four years in the White House, to flex his constitutional powers in ways that defy convention and explicitly aid his friends and supporters.

To be sure, the latest list was heavily populated by more conventional candidates whose cases had been championed by criminal justice activists. One man who has spent nearly 24 years in prison on drug and weapons charges but had shown exemplary behavior behind bars had his sentence commuted, as did a former Marine sentenced in 2000 in connection with a cocaine conviction.

But the names of prominent Trump allies nonetheless stood out.

Besides Bannon, other pardon recipients included Elliott Broidy, a Republican fundraiser who pleaded guilty last fall in a scheme to lobby the Trump administration to drop an investigation into the looting of a Malaysian wealth fund, and Ken Kurson, a friend of Trump son-in-law Jared Kushner who was charged last October with cyberstalking during a heated divorce.

Bannon's pardon was especially notable given that the prosecution was still in its early stages and any trial was months away. Whereas pardon recipients are conventionally thought of as defendants who have faced justice, often by having served at least some prison time, the pardon nullifies the prosecution and effectively eliminates any prospect for punishment.

"Steve Bannon is getting a pardon from Trump after defrauding Trump's own supporters into paying for a wall that Trump promised Mexico would pay for," Democratic Rep. Adam Schiff said on Twitter. "And if that all sounds crazy, that's because it is. Thank God we have only 12 more hours of this den of thieves."

And while other presidents have issued controversial pardons at the ends of their administration, perhaps no commander in chief has so enjoyed using the clemency authority to benefit not only friends and acquaintances but also celebrity defendants and those championed by allies.

Wednesday's list includes its share of high-profile defendants. Among them were rappers Lil Wayne and Kodak Black, both convicted in Florida on weapons charges. Wayne, whose real name is Dwayne Michael Carter, has frequently expressed support for Trump and recently met with the president on criminal justice issues. Others on the list included Death Row Records co-founder Michael Harris and New York art dealer and collector Hillel Nahmad.

Other pardon recipients include former Rep. Rick Renzi, an Arizona Republican who served three years for corruption, money laundering and other charges, and former Rep. Duke Cunningham of California, who was convicted of accepting \$2.4 million in bribes from defense contractors. Cunningham, who was

released from prison in 2013, received a conditional pardon.

Trump also commuted the prison sentence of former Detroit Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick, who has served about seven years behind bars for a racketeering and bribery scheme.

Bannon has been charged with duping thousands of donors who believed their money would be used to fulfill Trump's chief campaign promise to build a wall along the southern border. Instead, he allegedly diverted over a million dollars, paying a salary to one campaign official and personal expenses for himself.

Bannon did not respond to questions Tuesday.

Trump has already pardoned a slew of longtime associates and supporters, including his former campaign chairman, Paul Manafort; Charles Kushner, the father of his son-in-law; his longtime friend and adviser Roger Stone; and his former national security adviser Michael Flynn.

A voice of nationalist, outsider conservatism, Bannon — who served in the Navy and worked at Goldman Sachs and as a Hollywood producer before turning to politics — led the conservative Breitbart News before being tapped to serve as chief executive officer of Trump's 2016 campaign in its critical final months.

He later served as chief strategist to the president during the turbulent early days of Trump's administration and was at the forefront of many of its most contentious policies, including its travel ban on several majority-Muslim countries.

But Bannon, who clashed with other top advisers, was pushed out after less than a year. And his split with Trump deepened after he was quoted in a 2018 book making critical remarks about some of Trump's adult children. Bannon apologized and soon stepped down as chairman of Breitbart. He and Trump have recently reconciled.

In August, he was pulled from a luxury yacht off the coast of Connecticut and brought before a judge in Manhattan, where he pleaded not guilty. When he emerged from the courthouse, Bannon tore off his mask, smiled and waved to news cameras. As he went to a waiting vehicle, he shouted, "This entire fiasco is to stop people who want to build the wall."

The organizers of the "We Build The Wall" group portrayed themselves as eager to help the president build a "big beautiful" barrier along the U.S.-Mexico border, as he promised during the 2016 campaign. They raised more than \$25 million from thousands of donors and pledged that 100% of the money would be used for the project.

But according to the criminal charges, much of the money never made it to the wall. Instead, it was used to line the pockets of group members, including Bannon.

Associated Press writer Zeke Miller contributed to this report.

The Latest: Italy ponders suing Pfizer for vaccine delays

By The Associated Press undefined

ROME — Italy's virus czar is pressing ahead with plans to take legal action against Pfizer after the U.S. pharmaceutical company announced delays in delivering pre-ordered COVID-19 vaccines to Europe.

Domenico Arcuri said he had secured unanimous backing from Italy's regional governors to take civil or criminal action, where possible. In a statement late Tuesday, he said: "It was unanimously decided that such action will be taken in the coming days."

Pfizer confirmed last week it would temporarily reduce deliveries to Europe and Canada while it upgrades production capacity to 2 billion doses per year at its Belgium plant. Arcuri said the delay would amount to a 29% reduction in upcoming deliveries to Italy.

In announcing the impending legal action, Arcuri said: "The health care of Italian citizens isn't negotiable."

As of Wednesday, Italy had administered more than 1.2 million vaccine shots, or 76% of the doses already delivered to Italian regions.

THE VIRUS OUTBREAK:

- Ontario's leader asks Biden for 1 million vaccine shots due to Pfizer shortfall for Canada
- India to start delivering Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccines to neighboring countries

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— 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
— 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:

TORONTO — Canada won't be getting any Pfizer-BioNTech coronavirus vaccines next week and 50% fewer than expected over the next month, officials said Tuesday, prompting the leader of Canada's most populous province to ask U.S. President-elect Joe Biden to share a million doses from Pfizer's Michigan plant.

Maj. Gen. Dany Fortin, who is leading Canada's logistical rollout and distribution of vaccines, called it a major reduction, but said Pfizer is still expected to meet its contractual obligation to ship four million doses to Canada by the end of March.

U.S. pharmaceutical company Pfizer confirmed last week it would temporarily reduce deliveries to Europe and Canada of its COVID-19 vaccine while it upgrades production capacity at its plant in Puurs, Belgium. Pfizer's Belgian plant supplies all shots delivered outside the U.S.

Doug Ford, the premier of Ontario, Canada's most populous province, said he's angry. He asked Biden to help Canada out, noting there's a Pfizer plant in Michigan.

"Our American friends, help us out," Ford said. "You have a new president, no more excuses. Help us out."

ROME — The Vatican has begun offering COVID-19 vaccines to homeless people and says it plans to expand the program in coming days.

A preliminary group of 25 people who live in residences run by the pope's chief alms-giver received the shots on Wednesday in the Vatican's auditorium. They joined Pope Francis, emeritus Pope Benedict XVI and other Vatican employees and their families who began receiving the vaccines last week.

The Vatican, as a sovereign city state, arranged for its own vaccine deliveries and said its first jabs were the Pfizer-BioNTech shots. Italy has its own vaccine campaign under way but to date the national health care system is prioritizing health care workers and the elderly.

Francis has called for universal availability of the shots, especially for the poor and most vulnerable. He has also said it was ethically necessary to take the vaccine, expressing incredulosity at vaccine and virus skeptics, because "you're playing not only with your health but the health of others."

NEW DELHI — India began supplying coronavirus vaccines to its neighboring countries on Wednesday, as the world's largest vaccine making nation strikes a balance between maintaining enough doses to inoculate its own people and helping developing countries without the capacity to produce their own shots.

India's Foreign Ministry said the country would send 150,000 shots of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine, manufactured locally by Serum Institute of India, to Bhutan and 100,000 shots to the Maldives on Wednesday.

Vaccines will also be sent to Bangladesh, Nepal, Myanmar and the Seychelles in coming weeks, the ministry said, without specifying an exact timeline. It added in a statement late Tuesday that regulatory clearances were still awaited from Sri Lanka, Afghanistan and Mauritius.

WARSAW, Poland — Poland's chief medical expert for fighting COVID-19 said Wednesday that the nation's high rate of deaths from the infection is mostly the result of people aged over 70, with other serious diseases, succumbing to the coronavirus.

According to Professor Andrzej Horban, the current high number of deaths among the elderly is the result of infections caught during large gatherings during Christmas and New Year's.

Wednesday's data showed almost 7,000 new infections and 443 deaths. Some 15,000 people remain hospitalized due to COVID-19. A nation of some 38 million, Poland has so far registered almost 1.5 million cases and over 34,000 deaths.

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COPENHAGEN, Denmark — Police in the Norwegian capital are doubling fines for violating coronavirus restrictions, saying not respecting the limit of 10 people for private gatherings can lead organizers being fined 20,000 kroner (\$2,326) while participants will be fined 10,000 kroner (\$1,163).

"This increase in fine rates underlines the seriousness of breaking the coronavirus rules. Everyone has a responsibility to take care of infection control," said Oslo chief prosecutor Beate Brinch Sand.

Earlier this month, Oslo imposed COVID-19 tests for all people entering the Scandinavian country from abroad to stop the spread of the coronavirus variant detected first in Britain.

Norway also has a nationwide ban on serving alcohol in restaurants and bars to prevent a virus resurgence and it raised fines for those violations too.

HONOLULU — Hawaii's leaders say limited supply is the main thing constraining distribution of the coronavirus vaccine in the state.

Hawaii received 59,000 doses of the vaccine last week, but expects to get only about 32,000 this week.

Still, Lt. Gov. Josh Green says the state expects to be able to vaccinate everyone in the top priority category by the end of February. That category includes health care workers, long-term care facility residents, people over 75, and teachers and other front-line essential workers.

The federal government is distributing vaccine to each state in accordance with their share of the U.S. population.

BEIJING — China's capital has recorded seven new coronavirus cases amid a lingering outbreak of infections in the country's north, where a total of 81 additional cases were reported in three provinces Wednesday.

China has now recorded a total of 88,557 cases since the new coronavirus was first detected in the central Chinese city of Wuhan in late 2019. It has reported 4,635 deaths related to COVID-19.

China is hoping to vaccinate 50 million people against the virus by the middle of next month. It is also releasing schools early and telling citizens to stay put during the Lunar New Year travel rush that begins in coming days.

Meanwhile, World Health Organization experts are undergoing quarantine in Wuhan ahead of beginning field visits seeking to shed light on the origins of the virus, which is thought to have jumped to humans from animals, possibly bats.

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — Vaccine scarcity is continuing to plague California even as other indicators seem to show a slowing in the holiday-driven surge that led the state to be the first to top 3 million confirmed coronavirus infections.

San Francisco's public health department is likely to run out of vaccine Thursday, in part because the state pulled back on administering a batch of Moderna vaccine.

Sacramento County is also running short.

Los Angeles County is starting to inoculate those 65 and older despite the scarcity.

But infection indicators are starting to show what the state's top health official on Tuesday called "rays of hope."

CHARLESTON, W.Va. — West Virginia's speedy coronavirus vaccination drive is facing a roadblock, with state leaders saying they didn't receive an expected increase in doses this week.

With 99.6% of first doses delivered already administered, officials are clamoring for the federal government to send more vaccine.

Noting that other states have doses unused, Gov. Jim Justice said Tuesday: "We've got them all in people's arms and we've done exactly what we should have done. ... I think performance ought to be rewarded."

He says the state hasn't received a promised 25,000 additional doses this week on top of its usual weekly allocation of about 23,000.

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West Virginia officials say 7.4% of the state's 1.78 million people have received at least one of two doses — the highest rate among the 50 states

OKLAHOMA CITY — Oklahoma on Tuesday surpassed 3,000 total deaths due to COVID-19 and the U.S. death toll topped 400,000 since the coronavirus pandemic began.

The Oklahoma State Department of Health reported an increase of 43 deaths in Oklahoma for a total of 3,037. The department reported 358,374 total cases.

A tally by Johns Hopkins University reports that Oklahoma had the fourth highest number of new cases per capita in the nation with 1,269.19 per 100,000 residents during the past two weeks.

Deputy state health commissioner Keith Reed said Oklahoma has administered 243,807 vaccinations thus far.

The Oklahoma City Council on Tuesday voted to extend a mask mandate in the state's most populous city to March 5. The Tulsa City Council last week extended that city's mask mandate until April 30.

WASHINGTON — The U.S. death toll from the coronavirus has eclipsed 400,000 in the waning hours in office for President Donald Trump, whose handling of the crisis has been judged by public health experts to be a singular failure.

The running total of lives lost reported Tuesday by Johns Hopkins University is nearly equal to the number of Americans killed in World II. It is about the population of Tulsa, Oklahoma; Tampa, Florida; or New Orleans. It is equivalent to the sea of humanity that was at Woodstock in 1969.

It is just short of the estimated 409,000 Americans who died in 2019 of strokes, Alzheimer's, diabetes, flu and pneumonia combined.

PORTLAND, Maine — Public health authorities in Maine said Tuesday that thousands of doses of coronavirus vaccine exceeded temperature requirements during their shipment to the state.

Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention Director Dr. Nirav Shah said Tuesday the 4,400 doses of Moderna's vaccine exceeded the required temperature during their journey to 35 sites in the state. He said the sites have set the vaccine doses aside and will receive replacement doses on Tuesday and Wednesday.

Shah said Operation Warp Speed and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are investigating how and why the error happened.

Maine has had more than 500 deaths from the virus since the start of the pandemic.

MADRID — Several Spanish regions are tightening restrictions against the steep increase of coronavirus infections, awaiting for a government decision to allow regional curfews as early as 8 p.m.

A meeting on Wednesday is expected to decide on whether to tweak a nationwide emergency state to allow regional governments a stricter response to the country's third resurgence of contagion. Roughly half of the regions have asked to bring forward the existing limit on a 10 p.m. curfew.

The health ministry recorded Tuesday 34,291 new COVID-19 cases in the past 24 hours and 404 new confirmed deaths, bringing the totals since the pandemic began to 2.37 million cases and at least 54,000 deaths.

Central Castilla La Mancha, eastern Valencia and northern Navarra are announcing new closures of bars and restaurants or restrictions to allow only food deliveries or outdoor dining. The western Extremadura region, currently with the country's highest rate of infection, is further delaying the reopening of schools for 2021 until Jan. 25.

JERUSALEM — Israel's Cabinet on Tuesday extended an existing nationwide lockdown through the end of January as the country contends with a runaway surge in coronavirus cases.

Most schools and nonessential businesses were closed earlier this month for two weeks, with outdoor gatherings restricted to 10 people. Those restrictions were extended until Feb. 1, and people landing in

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Israel must now present a negative coronavirus test result from at least 72 hours before their arrival.

Although Israel has administered the first dose of the coronavirus vaccine to more than 2 million people, the country of 9 million has seen an infection surge. Israel's health ministry has reported more than 562,000 COVID-19 confirmed cases and at least 4,049 deaths. The ministry recorded a record-high number of daily infections on Monday, with more than 10,000 new cases.

Israel's health ministry also announced it is preparing to ramp up its vaccination efforts to 250,000 people per day, including people as young as 40.

LONDON — The U.K. has recorded more than 90,000 coronavirus-related deaths, just ten days after it passed the 80,000 threshold.

Government figures Tuesday show that another 1,610 people were reported to have died in the 28 days after testing positive for COVID-19, taking the total to 91,470. The daily increase is the highest daily figure reported since the pandemic took root in the U.K.

Figures released Tuesday have invariably been higher throughout the pandemic because of weekend reporting lag effects.

Though the number of people dying is rising on a 7-day average, the number of people testing positive for the virus is clearly declining in the wake of the lockdown measures put in place across the U.K.

On Tuesday, the government recorded another 33,355 people were reported to have tested positive for the virus. That's the lowest since Dec. 27.

The U.K., which is Europe's worst-hit nation in terms of COVID-related deaths, recorded huge increases in cases around the turn of the year, with scientists blaming a new variant of the virus first identified around London and the southeast of England.

China labels Pompeo 'doomsday clown' over genocide claims

BEIJING (AP) — China's Foreign Ministry described outgoing U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Wednesday as a "doomsday clown" and said his designation of China as a perpetrator of genocide and crimes against humanity was merely "a piece of wastepaper."

The allegations of abuses against Muslim minority groups in China's Xinjiang region are "outright sensational pseudo-propositions and a malicious farce concocted by individual anti-China and anti-Communist forces represented by Pompeo," spokesperson Hua Chunying told reporters at a daily briefing.

"In our view, Pompeo's so-called designation is a piece of wastepaper. This American politician, who is notorious for lying and deceiving, is turning himself into a doomsday clown and joke of the century with his last madness and lies of the century," Hua said.

Pompeo's announcement Tuesday doesn't require any immediate actions, although the U.S. must take the designation into account in formulating policy toward China. China says its policies in Xinjiang aim only to promote economic growth and social stability.

The U.S. has previously spoken out and taken action on Xinjiang, implementing a range of sanctions against senior Chinese Communist Party leaders and state-run enterprises that fund repressive policies in the vast, resource-rich region. Last week, the Trump administration announced it would halt imports of cotton and tomatoes from Xinjiang, with Customs and Border Protection officials saying they would block products from there suspected of being produced with forced labor.

Many of the Chinese officials accused of having taken part in repression are already under U.S. sanctions. The "genocide" designation means new measures will be easier to impose.

Tuesday's move is the latest in a series of steps the outgoing Trump administration has taken to ramp up pressure on China over issues from human rights and the coronavirus pandemic to Taiwan, Tibet, Hong Kong and the South China Sea. China has responded with its own sanctions and tough rhetoric.

China has imprisoned more than 1 million people, including Uighurs and other mostly Muslim ethnic groups, in a vast network of prison-like political indoctrination camps, according to U.S. officials and human rights groups. People have been subjected to torture, sterilization and political indoctrination in addition to

forced labor as part of an assimilation campaign in a region whose inhabitants are ethnically and culturally distinct from the Han Chinese majority.

The Associated Press reported on widespread forced birth control among the Uighurs last year, including the mass sterilization of Muslim women, even while family planning restrictions are loosened on members of China's dominant Han ethnic group.

China has denied all the charges, but Uighur forced labor has been linked by reporting by the AP to various products imported to the U.S., including clothing and electronic goods such as cameras and computer monitors.

James Leibold, a specialist in Chinese ethnic policy at La Trobe in Melbourne, Australia, said international pressure appears to have had some effect on Chinese policies in Xinjiang, particularly in prompting the government to release information about the camps and possibly reducing mass detentions.

"So hopefully we'll see a continued continuity with regards to the new (Joe Biden) administration on holding China to account," Leibold said in an interview.

"And hopefully the Biden administration can bring its allies along to continue to put pressure on the Chinese government," he said.

Associated Press journalist Dake Kang contributed to this report.

EU sighs with relief as Biden readies to enter White House

By LORNE COOK Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — The European Union's top officials breathed a sigh of relief on Wednesday that Joe Biden will be taking over as president of the United States, but they warned that the world has changed after four years of Donald Trump and that trans-Atlantic ties will be different in the future.

"This new dawn in America is the moment we've been awaiting for so long," European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said, hailing Biden's arrival as "resounding proof that, once again after four long years, Europe has a friend in the White House."

"The United States are back, and Europe stands ready to reconnect with an old and trusted partner to breathe new life into our cherished alliance," she told EU lawmakers, hours before Biden was to be sworn in at his inauguration ceremony in Washington.

European Council President Charles Michel, who chairs summits between the EU's 27 heads of state and government, said that trans-Atlantic relations have "greatly suffered in the last four years. In these years, the world has grown more complex, less stable and less predictable."

"We have our differences and they will not magically disappear. America seems to have changed, and how it's perceived in Europe and the rest of the world has also changed," said Michel, whose open criticism of the Trump era contrasted starkly with the silence that mostly reigned in Europe while the Republican leader was in the White House.

This change, Michel said, means "that we Europeans (must) take our fate firmly into our own hands, to defend our interests and promote our values," and he underlined that "the EU chooses its course and does not wait for permission to take its own decisions."

The Europeans have invited Biden to a summit, quite probably in Brussels, in parallel with a top-level NATO meeting as soon as he's ready. Michel said the EU's priority is to tackle the coronavirus pandemic and climate change, rebuild the global economy and boost security ties with Washington.

In Germany, President Frank-Walter Steinmeier issued a video statement on his website as well as Instagram and Facebook before the inauguration, calling it a "good day for democracy."

He said that the U.S. had "faced tremendous challenges and endured."

"Despite the attempts to tear at America's institutional fabric, election workers and governors, the judiciary and Congress have proven strong," he said. "I am greatly relieved that, today, Joe Biden is being sworn in as president and will be moving into the White House. I know many people in Germany share this feeling."

With Biden and incoming Vice President Kamala Harris, Steinmeier said there was new hope that the

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U.S. would again be a "vital partner" internationally to tackle issues like the coronavirus pandemic, climate change, security issues including arms control and disarmament, and multiple conflicts.

"When our views do differ, such differences of opinion will not divide us, but should rather spur us on to find joint solutions," he said. "Despite all the joy we feel today, we must not forget that even the most powerful democracy in the world has been seduced by populism.

"We must work resolutely to counter polarization, protect and strengthen the public square in our democracies, and shape our policies on the basis of reason and facts."

David Rising in Berlin contributed to this report.

Analysis: For Biden, chance to turn crisis into opportunity

By JULIE PACE AP Washington Bureau Chief

WASHINGTON (AP) — In the 11 weeks since Election Day, the collision of crises confronting President-elect Joe Biden have gone from staggering to almost unimaginable.

More than 170,000 Americans have died from COVID-19 during that stretch alone, sending total U.S. deaths soaring past 400,000. The deep partisan divisions roiling the nation boiled over into violence during the insurrection on the U.S. Capitol, threatening America's long history of peaceful transitions of power and resulting in the second impeachment of the outgoing president. The economy has steadily weakened, with employers cutting 140,000 jobs just in the month of December.

It falls now to Biden, as he is sworn in on Wednesday, to both level with Americans about the deep trouble facing the nation and cast ahead to a brighter future. He will do so knowing that millions of Americans wrongly believe his election was illegitimate, fueled by the lie perpetuated by President Donald Trump.

Trump himself won't be there to witness Biden's swearing in, having decided to defy tradition and leave Washington on Wednesday morning ahead of the inauguration.

Taken together, it's as grim a moment as many Americans can remember and far from the celebration Biden, 78, likely imagined over the decades he has pined for the presidency. There will be no cheering crowd spread out before him on the National Mall when he takes the oath of office as a consequence of the pandemic, but there will be 25,000 National Guard troops securing the streets of Washington in response to the Capitol siege.

Historians have put the challenges Biden faces on par with, or even beyond, what confronted Abraham Lincoln when he was inaugurated in 1861 to lead a nation splintering into civil war or Franklin Delano Roosevelt as he was sworn in during the depths of the Great Depression in 1933.

But Lincoln and Roosevelt's presidencies are also a blueprint for the ways American leaders have turned crises into opportunities, pulling people past the partisan divisions or ideological forces that can halt progress.

"Crises present unique opportunities for large scale change in a way that an average moment might not," said Lindsay Chervinsky, a presidential historian and author of "The Cabinet: George Washington and the Creation of an American Institution." "The more intense the crisis, the more likely the country is to get behind someone to try to fix that — the concept of uniting in war or uniting against a common threat."

But by some measures, Roosevelt and Lincoln had advantages Biden does not. Roosevelt's Democratic Party had solid majorities in Congress, helping him power through his expansive agenda. Lincoln's Republican majorities were added by the secessionist push that dwindled his opponents' ranks in Congress.

Biden, meanwhile, will have the narrowest of Democratic majorities in Congress; in the 50-50 Senate, it will fall to soon-to-be Vice President Kamala Harris to break any ties. The Republican Party faces an existential crisis of its own making after the Trump era, and it's deeply uncertain how much cooperating with the new Democratic president fits into its leaders' plans for their future.

Still, Biden has signaled he will press Congress aggressively in his opening weeks, challenging lawmakers to pass a \$1.9 trillion pandemic relief package to address the public health and economic crisis — all but daring Republicans to block him at a moment when cases and deaths across the U.S. are soaring.

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Biden's ability to get that legislation passed will significantly shape both his administration's ability to tackle the pandemic and his overall standing in Washington. He's staked much of the promise of his presidency on his ability to court lawmakers from across the aisle, touting his long working relationship with Republican senators and the reputation he cultivated as a dealmaker while serving as President Barack Obama's No. 2.

But Washington has changed rapidly since then, a reality Biden's advisers insist he is clear-eyed about. Unlike Obama, he will quickly flex his executive powers on his first day in office, both to roll back Trump administration policies and to take action on the pandemic, including issuing a mask mandate on federal property. He's also pledged that his administration will vaccinate 100 million people against the coronavirus within his first 100 days in office, laying down a clear marker to judge his success or failure.

Laura Belmonte, the dean of the Virginia Tech College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences and a professor of history, said that while Biden would be "naive" to think Washington is the same as it was when he was a senator or even when he left it as vice president, the experience he brings to the job will be invaluable in this moment.

"We don't have time for a learning curve," Belmonte said. "I cannot think of a modern president that has faced a more daunting landscape."

On the eve of his inauguration, Biden took stock not only of the challenges ahead but the path the nation has taken to get to this moment. As the sun set on the National Mall, he stood before the imposing memorial to Lincoln and called on the nation to remember the 400,000 Americans who have died from the coronavirus.

"To heal we must remember," he said. "That's how we heal. It's important to do that as a nation."

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

This story has been corrected to show the dean's name is Laura, not Linda.

Facing crush of crises, Biden will take helm as president

By JONATHAN LEMIRE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Joe Biden swears the oath of office at noon Wednesday to become the 46th president of the United States, taking the helm of a deeply divided nation and inheriting a confluence of crises arguably greater than any faced by his predecessors.

The very ceremony in which presidential power is transferred, a hallowed American democratic tradition, will serve as a jarring reminder of the challenges Biden faces: The inauguration unfolds at a U.S. Capitol battered by an insurrectionist siege just two weeks ago, encircled by security forces evocative of those in a war zone, and devoid of crowds because of the threat of the coronavirus pandemic.

Stay home, Americans were exhorted, to prevent further spread of a surging virus that has claimed more than 400,000 lives in the United States. Biden will look out over a capital city dotted with empty storefronts that attest to the pandemic's deep economic toll and where summer protests laid bare the nation's renewed reckoning on racial injustice.

He will not be applauded — or likely even acknowledged — by his predecessor.

Flouting tradition, Donald Trump planned to depart Washington on Wednesday morning ahead of the inauguration rather than accompany his successor to the Capitol. Trump, awaiting his second impeachment trial, stoked grievance among his supporters with the lie that Biden's win was illegitimate.

Biden, in his third run for the presidency, staked his candidacy less on any distinctive political ideology than on galvanizing a broad coalition of voters around the notion that Trump posed an existential threat to American democracy. On his first day, Biden will take a series of executive actions — on the pandemic, climate, immigration and more — to undo the heart of Trump's agenda. The Democrat takes office with the bonds of the republic strained and the nation reeling from challenges that rival those faced by Abraham Lincoln and Franklin D. Roosevelt.

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"Biden will face a series of urgent, burning crises like we have not seen before, and they all have to be solved at once. It is very hard to find a parallel in history," said presidential historian Michael Beschloss. "I think we have been through a near-death experience as a democracy. Americans who will watch the new president be sworn in are now acutely aware of how fragile our democracy is and how much it needs to be protected."

Biden will come to office with a well of empathy and resolve born by personal tragedy as well as a depth of experience forged from more than four decades in Washington. At age 78, he will be the oldest president inaugurated.

More history will be made at his side, as Kamala Harris becomes the first woman to be vice president. The former U.S. senator from California is also the first Black person and the first person of South Asian descent elected to the vice presidency and will become the highest-ranking woman ever to serve in government.

The two will be sworn in during an inauguration ceremony with few parallels in history.

Tens of thousands of troops are on the streets to provide security precisely two weeks after a violent mob of Trump supporters, incited by the Republican president, stormed the Capitol in an attempt to prevent the certification of Biden's victory.

The tense atmosphere evoked the 1861 inauguration of Lincoln, who was secretly transported to Washington to avoid assassins on the eve of the Civil War, or Roosevelt's inaugural in 1945, when he opted for a small, secure ceremony at the White House in the waning months of World War II.

Despite security warnings, Biden declined to move the ceremony indoors and instead will address a small, socially distant crowd on the West Front of the Capitol. Some of the traditional trappings of the quadrennial ceremony will remain.

The day will begin with a reach across the aisle after four years of bitter partisan battles under Trump. Biden invited Mitch McConnell and Kevin McCarthy, the Republican leaders of the Senate and House, to join him at a morning Mass, along with Chuck Schumer and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, the Democratic leaders.

Once at the Capitol, Biden will be administered the oath by Chief Justice John Roberts; Harris will be sworn in by Justice Sonia Sotomayor. The theme of Biden's approximately 30-minute speech will be "America United," and aides said it would be a call to set aside differences during a moment of national trial.

Biden will then oversee a "Pass in Review," a military tradition that honors the peaceful transfer of power to a new commander in chief. Then, Biden, Harris and their spouses will be joined by a bipartisan trio of former presidents — Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Barack Obama — to lay a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery.

Later, Biden will join the end of a slimmed-down inaugural parade as he moves into the White House. Because of the pandemic, much of this year's parade will be a virtual affair featuring performances from around the nation.

In the evening, in lieu of the traditional glitzy balls that welcome a new president to Washington, Biden will take part in a televised concert that also marks the return of A-list celebrities to the White House orbit after they largely eschewed Trump. Among those in the lineup: Bruce Springsteen, Justin Timberlake and Lin-Manuel Miranda. Lady Gaga will sing the national anthem at the Capitol earlier in the day.

Trump will be the first president in more than a century to skip the inauguration of his successor. He planned his own farewell celebration at nearby Joint Base Andrews before boarding Air Force One for the final time as president for the flight to his Florida estate.

Trump will nonetheless shadow Biden's first days in office.

Trump's second impeachment trial could start as early as this week. That could test the ability of the Senate, poised to come under Democratic control, to balance impeachment proceedings with confirmation hearings and votes on Biden's Cabinet choices.

Biden was eager to go big early, with an ambitious first 100 days that includes a push to speed up the distribution of COVID-19 vaccinations to anxious Americans and pass a \$1.9 trillion virus relief package. On Day One, he'll also send an immigration proposal to Capitol Hill that would create an eight-year path

to citizenship for immigrants living in the country illegally.

He also planned a 10-day blitz of executive orders on matters that don't require congressional approval — a mix of substantive and symbolic steps to unwind the Trump years. Among the planned steps: rescinding travel restrictions on people from several predominantly Muslim countries; rejoining the Paris climate accord; issuing a mask mandate for those on federal property; and ordering agencies to figure out how to reunite children separated from their families after crossing the border.

The difficulties he faces are immense, to be mentioned in the same breath as Roosevelt taking office during the Great Depression or Obama, under whom Biden served eight years as vice president, during the economic collapse. And the solution may be similar.

"There is now, as there was in 1933, a vital need for leadership," said presidential historian Doris Kearns Goodwin, "for every national resource to be brought to bear to get the virus under control, to help produce and distribute the vaccines, to get vaccines into the arms of the people, to spur the economy to recover and get people back to work and to school."

Follow Lemire on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/@JonLemire>.

Indian village cheers for Harris before swearing-in as US VP

By RISHI LEKHI and AIJAZ RAHI Associated Press

THULASENDRAPURAM, India (AP) — People in a tiny Indian village surrounded by rice paddies flocked to a Hindu temple, burst crackers and uttered prayers Wednesday hours before its descendant, Kamala Harris, takes her oath of office to become the U.S. vice president.

Groups of women in bright saris and men wearing white dhotis thronged the temple with sweets and flowers, offering special prayers for Harris' success.

"We are feeling very proud that an Indian is being elected as the vice president of America," said Anukampa Madhavasimhan, a teacher.

The ceremony in Thulasendrapuram, where Harris' maternal grandfather was born about 350 kilometers (215 miles) from the southern coastal city of Chennai, saw the idol of Hindu deity Ayyanar, a form of Lord Shiva, washed with milk and decked with flowers by the priest. Shortly after, the village reverberated with a boom of firecrackers as people held up posters of Harris and clapped their hands.

Harris is set to make history as the first woman, first Black woman and first person of South Asian descent to hold the vice presidency. What makes her achievement special in this village is her Indian heritage.

Harris' grandfather was born in Thulasendrapuram more than 100 years ago. Many decades later, he moved to Chennai, the capital of Tamil Nadu state. Harris' late mother was also born in India, before moving to the U.S. to study at the University of California. She married a Jamaican man, and they named their daughter Kamala, a Sanskrit word for "lotus flower."

In several speeches, Harris has often spoken about her roots and how she was guided by the values of her Indian-born grandfather and mother.

So when Joe Biden and Harris triumphed in the U.S. election last November, Thulasendrapuram became the center of attention in entire India. Local politicians flocked to the village and young children carrying placards with photos of Harris ran along the dusty roads.

Then and now, villagers set off firecrackers and distributed sweets and flowers as a religious offering.

Posters and banners of Harris from November still adorn walls in the village and many hope she ascends to the presidency in 2024. Biden has skirted questions about whether he will seek reelection or retire.

"For the next four years, if she supports India, she will be the president," said G Manikandan, who has followed Harris politically and whose shop proudly displays a wall calendar with pictures of Biden and Harris.

On Tuesday, an organization that promotes vegetarianism sent food packets for the village children as gifts to celebrate Harris' success.

In the capital New Delhi, there has been both excitement — and some concern — over Harris' ascend to the vice presidency.

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi had invested in President Donald Trump, who visited India in February last year. Modi's many Hindu nationalist supporters also were upset with Harris when she expressed concern about Kashmir, the disputed Muslim-majority region whose statehood India's government revoked last year.

Music stars slam UK's 'shameful' failure on EU touring rules

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Dozens of U.K. music stars including Elton John, Ed Sheeran and conductor Simon Rattle say musicians have been "shamefully failed" by the British government, which has left them facing post-Brexit restrictions on touring in the European Union.

In a letter published Wednesday in the Times of London, more than 100 musicians including Sting, Pink Floyd's Roger Waters and Roger Daltrey of The Who, along with the heads of major arts institutions, said the new U.K.-EU trade deal that took effect Jan. 1 has "a gaping hole where the promised free movement for musicians should be."

Britain's departure from the EU means that U.K. citizens can no longer live and work freely in the 27-nation bloc. Tourists do not need visas for stays of up to 90 days, and some short business trips are also allowed. But artists and musicians have not been included in the deal.

Britain and the EU disagree about who is to blame for the omission, each accusing the other of rejecting a deal for touring artists.

The new rules mean U.K. performers have to comply with differing rules in the 27 EU nations, negotiating visas for musicians and permits for their equipment. Many say the costs and red tape will make it impossible for British artists to perform on the continent, endangering the country's status as a cultural powerhouse.

The musicians' letter said the new expense and bureaucracy will make "many tours unviable, especially for young emerging musicians who are already struggling to keep their heads above water owing to the COVID ban on live music."

Scottish National Party lawmaker Pete Wishart, a former member of rock band Runrig, said Tuesday in the House of Commons that musicians and artists were "mere collateral in this government's obsession in ending freedom of movement" and controlling immigration once it left the EU.

Culture Minister Caroline Dinenage acknowledged the situation was "incredibly disappointing," but said "the door is open" to talks with the EU on a deal for musicians. She resisted calls from the opposition to publish details of the proposals made by the U.K. during negotiations that the bloc allegedly rejected.

Follow all AP stories about Brexit developments at <https://apnews.com/Brexit>.

On Day One, Biden to undo Trump policies on climate, virus

By ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — In his first hours as president, Joe Biden will aim to strike at the heart of President Donald Trump's policy legacy, signing a series of executive actions that reverse his predecessor's orders on immigration, climate change and handling of the coronavirus pandemic.

Biden on Wednesday will end construction on Trump's U.S.-Mexico border wall, end the ban on travel from some Muslim-majority countries, rejoin the Paris Climate Accord and the World Health Organization and revoke the approval of the Keystone XL oil pipeline, aides said Tuesday. The new president will sign the orders almost immediately after taking the oath of office at the Capitol, pivoting quickly from his pared-down inauguration ceremony to enacting his agenda.

The 15 executive actions are an attempt to essentially rewind the last four years of federal policies with striking speed. Only two recent presidents signed executive actions on their first day in office — and each signed just one. But Biden, facing the debilitating coronavirus pandemic, is intent on demonstrating a sense of urgency and competence that he argues has been missing under his predecessor.

"I think the most important thing to say is that tomorrow starts a new day," said Jeff Zients, Biden's choice to lead a new White House office that will coordinate the federal government's revamped response

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to the pandemic.

The orders reach well beyond the pandemic. Biden intends to order a review of all Trump regulations and executive actions that are deemed damaging to the environment or public health. He will order federal agencies to prioritize racial equity and review policies that reenforce systemic racism. He will revoke a Trump order that sought to exclude noncitizens from the census and will order federal employees to take an ethics pledge that commits them to upholding the independence of the Justice Department.

Susan Rice, Biden's incoming domestic policy adviser, said the new president would also revoke the just-issued report of Trump's "1776 Commission" to promote "patriotic education."

These actions will be followed by dozens more in the next 10 days, aides said, as Biden looks to redirect the country without having to go through a Senate that Democrats control by the narrowest margin.

Notably, the opening actions did not include immediate steps to rejoin the Iran nuclear accord, which Trump abandoned and Biden has pledged to reimplement. Jen Psaki, the incoming White House press secretary, said that while they were not included in Biden's Day One orders, the new president will in the coming days revoke the Pentagon's ban on military service by transgender Americans as well as the so-called Mexico City policy, which bans U.S. funding for international organizations that perform or refer women for abortion services.

Psaki said the actions to be taken Wednesday were focused on providing "immediate relief" to Americans.

In another effort to signal a return to pre-Trump times, Psaki said she would hold a news briefing late Wednesday in a symbol of the administration's commitment to transparency. Trump's White House had all but abandoned the practice of briefing reporters daily.

Biden will sign the actions during his first visit to the Oval Office in four years. Since then, presidential order actions were often marked by clumsy announcements and confusion. In their first days in office, Trump's team was forced to rewrite executive orders by court order and aides took days to figure out how to use the White House intercom to alert press about events. The repeatedly canceled plans to hype new building programs — dubbed "Infrastructure week" — became a national punchline. Biden aides, by contrast, are aiming to demonstrate they are up for the job right out of the gate.

Biden senior aides, led by deputy chief of staff Bruce Reed and campaign policy chief Stef Feldman, began plotting out the executive action plans in November, just days after Biden won the presidency and drafting began in December. The final documents were reviewed by career staff at the Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel in recent weeks before Biden's swearing-in to ensure they would pass legal muster.

Biden's team was set begin assuming the reins of power even before the Marine Band finished its rendition of "Hail to the Chief" after the new president takes the oath of office.

Aides were due to begin entering the White House complex at the stroke of noon — when Biden officially assumes the office — to begin overseeing national security roles. The urgency was hasten by concerns about security around the Inauguration after the U.S. Capitol insurrection.

COVID-19 restrictions, along with tight security surrounding the Inauguration were severely curtailing the number of aides in Biden's West Wing. Aides, one official said, were told to pack snacks to eat in their offices because of pandemic protocols.

Netanyahu courts Arab voters in election-year turnabout

By JOSEPH KRAUSS Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who has spent much of his long career casting Israel's Arab minority as a potential fifth column led by terrorist sympathizers, is now openly courting their support as he seeks reelection in the country's fourth vote in less than two years.

Few Arabs are likely to heed his call, underscoring the desperation of Netanyahu's political somersault. But the relative absence of incitement against the community in this campaign and the potential breakup of an Arab party alliance could dampen turnout — to Netanyahu's advantage. He might even pick up just enough votes to swing a tight election.

Either way, Netanyahu's overtures have shaken up the Arab community. The Joint List, an alliance of

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Arab parties that secured a record 15 seats in the 120-member Knesset last March, is riven by a dispute over whether it should work with Netanyahu's right-wing Likud at a time when less objectionable center-left parties are in disarray.

Its demise would leave the community with even less representation as it confronts a terrifying crime wave, coronavirus-fueled unemployment and persistent inequality. But given the complexities of Israel's coalition system, a breakaway Arab party could gain outsized influence if it is willing to work with Netanyahu or other traditionally hostile leaders.

The struggle was on vivid display last week when Netanyahu traveled to Nazareth, the largest Arab-majority city in Israel, his third visit to an Arab district in less than two weeks. Outside the venue, dozens of people, including a number of Arab members of parliament, protested his visit and scuffled with police, even as the city's mayor welcomed and praised him.

"Netanyahu came like a thief to try to scrape together votes from the Arab street," said Aida Touma-Suleiman, a prominent lawmaker from the Joint List. "Your attempt to dismantle our community from within won't succeed."

Arabs make up around 20% of Israel's population. They have full citizenship, including the right to vote, and have a large and growing presence in universities, the health care sector and other professions. But they face widespread discrimination and blame lax Israeli law enforcement for a rising wave of violent crime in their communities.

They have close familial ties to Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and Gaza, and largely identify with their cause. That has led many Jews to view them as sympathetic to Israel's enemies, sentiments fanned by Netanyahu and other right-wing politicians.

On the eve of elections in 2015, Netanyahu warned his supporters that Arabs were voting in "droves." During back-to-back elections in 2019, his campaign sent poll observers to Arab districts and pushed for cameras in voting booths, in what critics said was a ploy to intimidate Arab voters and whip up false allegations of election fraud.

Those moves backfired spectacularly.

The Joint List, an unwieldy alliance of Islamists, communists and other leftists, boosted turnout and emerged as one of the largest blocs in parliament. At times, it looked like it might help deny Netanyahu a majority coalition or even emerge as the official opposition.

But last May, after three deadlocked elections in less than a year, Netanyahu formed a coalition with his main rival and the Joint List was left out in the cold. In the coming election, polls indicate a coalition of right-wing and centrist parties committed to ending Netanyahu's nearly 12-year rule would be able to oust him without the Arab bloc.

No Arab party has ever asked or been invited to join a ruling coalition.

In Nazareth, Netanyahu claimed his remarks in 2015 were misinterpreted — that he was merely warning Arab voters not to support the Joint List.

"All Israel's citizens, Jews and Arabs alike, must vote," he said. In other Arab towns, he has visited coronavirus vaccination centers, boasting about his success in securing millions of doses and encouraging residents to get inoculated.

Netanyahu's Arab outreach seems to have given a green light to centrist and left-leaning politicians to do the same, with less concern that their right-wing rivals will use it against them. Opposition leader Yair Lapid, Netanyahu's main center-left opponent, said over the weekend that he was open to forming a government with external support from the Joint List.

The Joint List is meanwhile showing signs of breaking up. Mansour Abbas, the head of an Islamist party, has expressed openness in recent months to working with Netanyahu to address issues like housing and law enforcement. An aide to Abbas declined requests for an interview.

A full-scale breakup of the Joint List could further reduce turnout and potentially leave one or more of its four parties with too little support to cross the electoral threshold.

Thabet Abu Rass, the co-director of the Abraham Initiatives, which works to promote equality among

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Jews and Arabs, says Netanyahu may attract a small number of Arab voters, but that far more of them would simply boycott the election.

"They are waiting to see if there is going to be a Joint List or not, and if you ask me, it's not going to happen," he said. "There are a lot of deep differences this time."

A poll carried out in December forecast Arab turnout at around 55%, far lower than the 65% seen last March.

Although Arab parties have historically performed worse on their own, some feel the parties might be more effective individually. In Israel's political system — which requires would-be prime ministers to assemble majority coalitions — small parties often wield outsized influence.

"When we speak about the Palestinian community in Israel, we don't speak about one bloc, we have different ideologies," said Nijmeh Ali, a policy analyst at Al-Shabaka, an international Palestinian think tank. "Sometimes you need to break up in order to gain power."

Netanyahu appears to be focused on the margins ahead of a tight race that could determine not only whether he remains in office, but whether he secures immunity from prosecution on multiple corruption charges. With only a few seats, a pragmatic politician like Abbas could determine Netanyahu's fate.

"This is the new thing in Arab politics," said Arik Rudnitzky, a research fellow at the Israel Democracy Institute. "They are ready to hold direct negotiations with Likud."

He said it doesn't mean they will be part of a governing coalition, but they could offer outside support to secure benefits for the Arab public. "It might be a win-win situation," he said.

Associated Press reporters Areej Hazboun in Jerusalem and Ami Bentov in Nazareth, Israel, contributed to this report.

Jack's back: Chinese e-tycoon ends silence with online video

By JOE McDONALD AP Business Writer

BEIJING (AP) — China's highest-profile entrepreneur, Jack Ma, appeared Wednesday in an online video, ending a 2 1/2-month absence from public view that prompted speculation about the future of the e-commerce billionaire and his Alibaba Group.

In the 50-second video, Ma congratulated teachers supported by his foundation and made no mention of his disappearance or official efforts to tighten control over Alibaba and other internet companies over the past six months. The video appeared on Chinese business news and other websites.

The normally voluble Ma disappeared from public view after he irked regulators by criticizing them in an Oct. 24 speech at a Shanghai conference. Days later, regulators suspended the planned multibillion-dollar stock market debut of Ant Group, a financial platform that grew out of Alibaba's payments service, Alipay.

That prompted speculation online about whether the 56-year-old Ma, China's biggest global business celebrity and a symbol of its tech boom, had been detained or might face legal trouble. Alibaba and the government haven't responded to questions about him.

The Jack Ma Foundation said in a statement Wednesday: "Jack Ma participated in the online ceremony of the annual Rural Teacher Initiative event on January 20." The foundation and Alibaba didn't respond to questions about Ma's status and when his next public event might be.

President Xi Jinping's government says anti-monopoly enforcement against internet companies will be a priority this year. Alibaba and other companies have been fined for violating anti-monopoly rules. Some social media services have been reprimanded for lapses in enforcing censorship.

In his October speech, Ma complained regulators had an antique "pawnshop mentality" and were hampering innovation, according to Chinese media. He appealed to them to make it easier for entrepreneurs and young people to borrow.

That clashed with the ruling party's marathon campaign to reduce surging debt in China's financial system that prompted fears about a possible bank crisis and led rating agencies to cut Beijing's credit rating for government borrowing.

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Some people suggested the ruling Communist Party was making an example of Ma to show entrepreneurs couldn't defy regulators. But finance experts said Xi's government was uneasy about Alibaba's dominance in retailing and Ant's potential financial risks.

Anti-monopoly regulators warned executives Alibaba and five other tech giants in December not to use their dominance to block new competitors from entering their markets. The central bank and other regulators have ordered Ant to overhaul its business before its market debut can go ahead.

Alibaba's share price in Hong Kong is down 10% since October but recovered some of its loss from its low point this month.

Ma, a ruling party member, stepped down as Alibaba chairman in 2019 but is a member of the Alibaba Partnership, a 36-member group with the right to nominate a majority of the company's board of directors. He played a leading role in developing Ant, which grew out of Alibaba's online payment service, Alipay.

In the video Wednesday, Ma, wearing a blue sweater over a white T shirt and gray trousers, smiled and waved to viewers. It included a scene the video said showed Ma visiting a school supported by his foundation on Jan. 10.

DC on lockdown and on edge before Biden's inauguration

By JAMES LAPORTA, LOLITA C. BALDOR and MICHAEL BALSAMO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The inauguration of President-elect Joe Biden will take place in a Washington on edge, after the deadly riot at the U.S. Capitol unleashed a wave of fear and unmatched security concerns. And law enforcement officials are contending not only with the potential for outside threats but also with rising concerns about an insider attack by troops with a duty to protect him.

There have been no specific threats made against Biden.

The nation's capital is essentially on lockdown. More than 25,000 troops and police have been called to duty. Tanks and concrete barriers block the streets. The National Mall is closed. Fencing lines the perimeter of the U.S. Capitol complex. Checkpoints sit at intersections. The U.S. Secret Service, which is in charge of the event, says it is prepared.

But law enforcement officials have been monitoring members of far-right extremist and militia groups. They have grown increasingly concerned about the possibility such groups could stream into Washington and spark violent confrontations, a law enforcement official said.

Even in the hours before the event, federal agents were monitoring "concerning online chatter," which included an array of threats against elected officials and discussions about ways to infiltrate the inauguration, the official said.

And 12 National Guard members were removed from the security operation after vetting by the FBI, including two who had made extremist statements in posts or texts about Wednesday's event. Pentagon officials wouldn't give details on the statements.

Two other U.S. officials told The Associated Press that all 12 were found to have ties with right-wing militia groups or to have posted extremist views online. The officials, a senior intelligence official and an Army official briefed on the matter, did not say which fringe groups the Guard members belonged to or what unit they served in. The officials told the AP they had all been removed because of "security liabilities."

The officials were not authorized to speak publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Gen. Daniel Hokanson, chief of the National Guard Bureau, confirmed that Guard members had been removed and sent home but said only two cases were related to inappropriate comments or texts related to the inauguration. He said the other 10 cases were for potential issues that may involve previous criminal behavior or activities but were not directly related to the inaugural event.

Their removal from the massive security presence at the nation's capital came amid worries from U.S. defense officials about a potential insider attack or other threat from service members following the deadly riot at the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6 by Trump supporters. The FBI has been working to vet all 25,000 National Guard in town. Officials have said the Pentagon has found no intelligence so far that would indicate an insider threat.

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But the FBI has also warned law enforcement officials about the possibility that right-wing fringe groups could pose as members of the National Guard, according to two law enforcement officials familiar with the matter. Over the summer, a man carrying a handgun and an assault rifle was arrested in Los Angeles and charged with impersonating a National Guard member during a protest. Actual Guardsmen confronted him when they noticed things out of place on his uniform.

Investigators in Washington are particularly worried that members of right-wing extremist groups and militias, like the Oath Keepers and Three Percenters, could descend on Washington to spark violence, the law enforcement officials said. Some of the extremist groups are known to recruit former military personnel and train extensively and have frequented anti-government and political protests.

That concern intensified significantly after investigators identified members of right-wing extremist groups participating in the Capitol riot.

The nation's capital has been on edge since the deadly insurrection. A fire in a homeless camp roughly a mile from the Capitol complex prompted an evacuation Monday during a rehearsal for the inauguration. The arrests of two people with guns who entered the checkpoints set off concerns, though the arrests had no apparent connection to the inauguration.

Federal law enforcement officials have also been wary of increased surveillance of military and law enforcement checkpoints and other positions. Some National Guard troops have reported people taking pictures and recording them, said the law enforcement officials, who spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity to discuss ongoing security matters.

In a related problem, 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 own operations online.

The AP obtained the message sent to all National Guard troops coming to Washington. The bulletin read, "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 said the agency "does not comment on matters of protective intelligence."

Neither Hokanson nor Pentagon spokesperson Jonathan Hoffman would provide details on the comments or texts made by the two Guard members. Speaking at a Pentagon news conference, Hokanson said one was identified by his chain of command and the other was identified through an anonymous tip.

"Much of the information," Hoffman said, "is unrelated to the events taking place at the Capitol or to the concerns that many people have noted on extremism. These are vetting efforts that identify any questionable behavior in the past or any potential link to questionable behavior, not just related to extremism."

Hoffman said officials aren't asking questions right now of those who were flagged.

But later, he said, "we will address them, whether it's through law enforcement, if necessary, or through their own chain of command."

LaPorta reported from Delray Beach, Florida.

Vice President Harris: A new chapter opens in US politics

By KATHLEEN RONAYNE AND ALEXANDRA JAFFE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — For more than two centuries, the top ranks of American power have been dominated by men — almost all of them white. That ends on Wednesday.

Kamala Harris will become the first female vice president — and the first Black woman and person of South Asian descent to hold the role.

Her rise is historic in any context, another moment when a stubborn boundary will fall away, expanding the idea of what's possible in American politics. But it's particularly meaningful because Harris will be taking office at a moment of deep consequence, with Americans grappling over the role of institutional racism and confronting a pandemic that has disproportionately devastated Black and brown communities.

Those close to Harris say she'll bring an important — and often missing — perspective in the debates

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on how to overcome the many hurdles facing the incoming administration.

"In many folks' lifetimes, we experienced a segregated United States," said Lateefah Simon, a civil rights advocate and longtime Harris friend and mentee. "You will now have a Black woman who will walk into the White House not as a guest but as a second in command of the free world."

Harris — the child of immigrants, a stepmother of two and the wife of a Jewish man — "carries an inter-sectional story of so many Americans who are never seen and heard."

Harris, 56, moves into the vice presidency just four years after she first went to Washington as a senator from California, where she'd previously served as attorney general and as San Francisco's district attorney. She had expected to work with a White House run by Hillary Clinton, but President Donald Trump's victory quickly scrambled the nation's capital and set the stage for the rise of a new class of Democratic stars.

Her swearing-in comes almost two years to the day after Harris launched her own presidential bid on Martin Luther King Jr. Day in 2019. Her campaign fizzled before primary voting began, but Harris' rise continued when Joe Biden chose her as his running mate last August. Harris had been a close friend of Beau Biden, the elder son of Joe Biden and a former Delaware attorney general who died in 2015 of cancer.

The inauguration activities will include nods to her history-making role and her personal story.

She'll be sworn in by Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor, the first woman of color to serve on the high court. She'll use two Bibles, one that belonged to Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall, the late civil rights icon whom Harris often cites as inspiration, and Regina Shelton, a longtime family friend who helped raise Harris during her childhood in the San Francisco Bay Area. The drumline from Harris' alma mater, Howard University, will join the presidential escort.

She'll address the nation late Wednesday in front of the Lincoln Memorial, a symbolic choice as the nation endures one of its most divided stretches since the Civil War and two weeks after a largely white mob stormed the U.S. Capitol in an effort to overturn the election results.

"We're turning the page off a really dark period in our history," said Long Beach, California, Mayor Robert Garcia, a Harris ally. As Democrats celebrate the end to Trump's presidency, Garcia said he hopes the significance of swearing in the nation's first female vice president isn't overlooked.

"That is a huge historical moment that should also be uplifted," he said.

Harris has often reflected on her rise through politics by recalling the lessons of her mother, who taught her to take on a larger cause and push through adversity.

"I was raised to not hear 'no.' Let me be clear about it. So it wasn't like, 'Oh, the possibilities are immense. Whatever you want to do, you can do,'" she recalled during a "CBS Sunday Morning" interview that aired Sunday. "No, I was raised to understand many people will tell you, 'It is impossible,' but don't listen."

While Biden is the main focus of Wednesday's inaugural events, Harris' swearing-in will hold more symbolic weight than that of any vice president in modern times.

She will expand the definition of who gets to hold power in American politics, said Martha S. Jones, a professor of history at Johns Hopkins University and the author of "Vanguard: How Black Women Broke Barriers, Won the Vote, and Insisted on Equality for All."

People who want to understand Harris and connect with her will have to learn about what it means to graduate from a historically Black college and university rather than an Ivy League school. They will have to understand Harris' traditions, like the Hindu celebration of Diwali, Jones said.

"Folks are going to have to adapt to her rather than her adapting to them," Jones said.

Her election to the vice presidency should be just the beginning of putting Black women in leadership positions, Jones said, particularly after the role Black women played in organizing and turning out voters in the November election.

"We will all learn what happens to the kind of capacities and insights of Black women in politics when those capacities and insights are permitted to lead," Jones said.

An inauguration unlike any other amid a pandemic, unrest

By KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Inauguration Day for President-elect Joe Biden will look unlike anything the nation

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has seen before as the scars of COVID-19 and the Jan. 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol turn the West Front into a virtual ghost town compared to years past.

Instead of a parade down Pennsylvania Avenue, there will be a memorial at Arlington National Cemetery. Instead of balls, there will be Zoom parties. Instead of hundreds of thousands congregating on the Capitol grounds and on the National Mall, there will be thousands of National Guard members.

What to watch for on Inauguration Day:

THE SWEARING-IN

Biden's oath of office is the only essential. The Constitution sets out a 35-word oath for the new president. Some presidents make it 39 by tacking on "so help me God." There are conflicting stories about when the ad lib started. Some say George Washington added the words when he took the oath at his 1789 inaugural. Others say the first eyewitness account of a president using those words came at Chester Arthur's inauguration in 1881. Regardless of who started the add-on, every president since 1933 has done it.

Chief Justice John Roberts will swear in Biden; Justice Sonya Sotomayor will swear in Kamala Harris as vice president.

Among the celebrities who will bring star power to Biden's inauguration are Lady Gaga, who will sing "The Star-Spangled Banner," and Jennifer Lopez, who will give a musical performance.

Youth Poet Laureate Amanda Gorman will read an original poem, "The Hill We Climb."

THE SPEECH

A president's inauguration speech is designed to set the tone and the policies the new administration will pursue. Biden's speech will focus on how he will seek to make good on the theme he has chosen for the inauguration, "America United"

As the Jan. 6 insurrection at the Capitol showed, the challenge before him is daunting.

WHO WON'T BE THERE

President Donald Trump has opted not to attend the inauguration, becoming the first president to do so since Andrew Johnson in 1869. The tradition of a president attending his successor's inauguration began with George Washington and projects to the country and the world that America is transitioning to new leadership freely and in peace.

Biden and Harris are urging supporters to stay home because of the coronavirus pandemic. The National Mall is closed and just a fraction of the tickets usually handed out for an inauguration will be distributed.

About 200,000 small U.S. state and territorial flags have been installed on the National Mall, representing those who can't attend.

A few lawmakers from both parties have indicated that they will not be attending out of safety concerns following the Jan. 6 attack on the Capitol.

WHO WILL BE THERE

Vice President Mike Pence and most members of Congress are expected to attend. The lawmakers can bring one guest. In previous inaugurations, lawmakers scored hundreds of tickets to distribute to friends, donors and constituents.

Former Presidents Barack Obama, George W. Bush and Bill Clinton and former first ladies Michelle Obama, Laura Bush and Hillary Clinton are expected to attend. Former President Jimmy Carter, 96, and former first lady Rosalynn Carter, 93, will not, though they have extended their "best wishes."

Security forces in and around the Capitol and the White House are expected to widely outnumber inauguration guests. After the insurrection at the Capitol by Trump followers as lawmakers confirmed Biden's victory, about 25,000 National Guard were being brought into the nation's capital.

AFTER THE OATH

The new president will make his way to the other side of the Capitol for the long-standing tradition of the new commander in chief inspecting the troops. The Pass in Review ceremony is designed to reflect the peaceful transfer of power. Every branch of the military will be presented, though this year's participants will socially distance to deter the spread of the virus.

The traditional congressional lunch won't occur because of COVID-19 concerns, but Biden is expected to take care of some business before leaving the Capitol.

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A NEW TRADITION?

After the Pass in Review ceremony, the Bidens and Harris and her husband, Doug Emhoff, will participate in a wreath-laying ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery's Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. The former presidents and first ladies will join them.

WHAT ABOUT THE PARADE?

The traditional inaugural parade down Pennsylvania Avenue has been dramatically scaled back. Instead, after visiting Arlington National Cemetery, Biden will receive a presidential escort — and a short one, at that. It will extend just a few hundred yards to the White House rather than the 1.6-mile route of previous inaugurations. The proceedings will provide the world with the images of Biden going to his new home without attracting large crowds. Again, every branch of the military will participate in the escort, and the marchers will socially distance.

Virtual parades will be televised and feature performances from around the country. The inaugural committee says the programming will include musical acts, local bands, poets and dance troupes. An emphasis will be placed on paying homage to Americans on the front lines of the pandemic.

INAUGURATION NIGHT PARTIES

In past inaugurations, participants would don their tuxedos and ball gowns and attend one of the many inaugural balls and galas taking place around town. This year, state Democratic Parties and advocacy groups will hold virtual balls.

Actor Tom Hanks will host a 90-minute prime-time TV special with performances by Justin Timberlake, Jon Bon Jovi, Demi Lovato and Ant Clemons.

According to producers, the program "will showcase the American people's resilience, heroism, and unified commitment to coming together as a nation to heal and rebuild."

Businesses reopen as searchers dig in Indonesia quake rubble

By NINIEK KARMINI and YUSUF WAHIL Associated Press

MAMUJU, Indonesia (AP) — Grocery stores, gas stations and other shops were reopening Wednesday in a quake-hit Indonesian city where debris still covered streets and searchers continued to dig in the rubble for more victims.

Immediate food and water needs have been met and the local government has started to function again in the hardest-hit city of Mamuju and the neighboring district of Majene on Sulawesi island, the National Disaster Mitigation Agency's spokesperson Raditya Jati said in a statement.

Thousands of people are sleeping outdoors, fearing aftershocks, and the streets of Mamuju were still covered in debris. Security officers toured the city in a patrol van with a loudspeaker, urging people to observe COVID-19 health protocols as reopened gas stations and markets attracted large crowds.

Disaster Task Force Commander Firman Dahlan said a navy hospital ship, a university floating hospital and field health centers were providing care to help overwhelmed hospitals.

A total of 79 people died in Mamuju and 11 in Majene from the magnitude 6.2 quake that struck early Friday. More than 30,000 people had to flee from their damaged houses, and nearly 700 others were injured, many with serious injuries, according to the agency's data.

Dahlan said at least 12,900 evacuees remained in shelters in Mamuju and Majene in West Sulawesi province as of Wednesday.

Friday's quake was one of a series of recent disasters to hit Indonesia.

The disaster agency recorded 169 minor- to major-scale disasters in the vast archipelago nation this month alone, including landslides, floods, tornadoes, tidal waves and earthquakes, that have left 160 people dead, 965 others injured and more than 802,000 displaced.

The crash of a Sriwijaya Air jet on Jan. 9 killed all 62 people on board. And Indonesia has confirmed more than 927,000 infections and 26,590 deaths from the pandemic, the most in Southeast Asia.

Indonesia, home to more than 260 million people, is lined with seismic faults and is frequently hit by earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and tsunamis. Annual monsoon flooding also causes problems, and its

transit infrastructure is weak and stretched beyond capacity.

Karmini reported from Jakarta, Indonesia.

McConnell: Trump 'provoked' Capitol siege, mob was fed lies

By LISA MASCARO and MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell on Tuesday explicitly blamed President Donald Trump for the deadly riot at the Capitol, saying the mob was “fed lies” and the president and others “provoked” those intent on overturning Democrat Joe Biden’s election.

Ahead of Trump’s historic second impeachment trial, McConnell’s remarks were his most severe and public rebuke of the outgoing president. The GOP leader is setting a tone as Republicans weigh whether to convict Trump on the impeachment charge that will soon be sent over from the House: “incitement of insurrection.”

“The mob was fed lies,” McConnell said. “They were provoked by the president and other powerful people, and they tried to use fear and violence to stop a specific proceeding of the first branch of the federal government which they did not like.”

The Republican leader vowed a “safe and successful” inauguration of Biden on Wednesday at the Capitol, where final preparations were underway amid heavy security.

Trump’s last full day in office Tuesday was also senators’ first day back since the deadly Capitol siege and the House vote to impeach him for his role in the riots — an unparalleled time of transition as the Senate prepares for the second impeachment trial in two years and presses ahead with the confirmation of Biden’s Cabinet.

Three new Democratic senators-elect are set to be sworn into office Wednesday shortly after Biden’s inauguration, giving the Democrats the barest majority, a 50-50 Senate chamber. The new vice president, Kamala Harris, will swear them in and serve as an eventual tie-breaking vote.

The Democrats, led by Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer, will take charge of the Senate as they launch a trial to hold the defeated president responsible for the siege, while also quickly confirming Biden’s Cabinet and being asked to consider passage of a sweeping new \$1.9 trillion COVID-19 relief bill.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has not yet sent the sole article of impeachment to the Senate, which will launch the trial, but said late Tuesday on MSNBC, “It will be soon.”

Making the case for Trump’s conviction, Schumer said the Senate needs to set a precedent that the “severest offense ever committed by a president would be met by the severest remedy provided by the Constitution — impeachment,” and disbarment from future office.

McConnell and Schumer conferred later Tuesday about how to balance the trial with other business and how to organize the evenly divided chamber, a process that could slow all of the Senate’s business and delay the impeachment proceedings.

There were signs of an early impasse. During their meeting McConnell told Schumer he wants “rules concerning the legislative filibuster remain intact, specifically during the power share for the next two years,” according to the Republican leader’s spokesman Doug Andres.

Eliminating the Senate filibuster, a procedural move that requires a higher bar for legislation to pass, has been a priority for Democrats who will now control the House, Senate and White House.

But a spokesman for Schumer, Justin Goodman, said the Democratic leader “expressed that the fairest, most reasonable and easiest path forward” was to adopt an agreement similar to a 2001 consensus between the parties, the last time the Senate was evenly divided, without “extraneous changes from either side.”

Five of Biden’s nominees had committee hearings Tuesday as the Senate prepared for swift confirmation of some as soon as the president-elect takes office, as is often done particularly for the White House’s national security team. Many noted the harrowing events at the Capitol on Jan. 6.

The nominee for Director of National Intelligence, Avril Haines, testified of her own “eerie” feeling coming to the Capitol complex after “how truly disturbing it was” to see the attack on the building unfold. Biden’s

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nominee for secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, Alejandro Mayorkas, vowed to get to the bottom of the "horrifying" siege.

Pelosi said that if evidence shows that members of Congress "aided and abetted" the rioters they could be prosecuted, just as "this President is an accessory to that crime because he instigated that insurrection."

The start of the new session of Congress was also forcing lawmakers to come to terms with the post-Trump era, a transfer of power that Trump's mob of supporters tried to prevent after he urged them to storm the Capitol as Congress was tallying the Electoral College vote confirming Biden's election.

Seven Republican senators led by Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, and Sen. Josh Hawley, R-Mo., tried to overturn Biden's election during the Electoral College tally. Cruz was presiding over the Senate Tuesday while McConnell delivered his blistering remarks.

Hawley continued to embrace his role in the opposition, saying Tuesday that he will block a quick confirmation of Mayorkas, the Homeland Security nominee, to protest Biden's immigration plan to provide a path to citizenship for 11 million people. Hawley said Mayorkas "has not adequately explained how he will enforce federal law and secure the southern border."

As they begin the year newly in the minority, Republican senators face a daunting choice of whether to convict Trump of inciting the insurrection, the first impeachment trial of a president no longer in office — but one who continues to hold great sway over the party's voters.

Some Republicans want to halt the impeachment trial. Texas GOP Sen. John Cornyn was among those Republicans casting doubt on the legal ability of the Senate to convict a president no longer in office, though legal scholars differ on the issue.

"It's never happened before and maybe that's for a good reason," he said.

The House impeached Trump last week on the sole charge, incitement of insurrection, making him the only president to be twice impeached. A rioter died during the siege and a police officer died later of injuries; three other people involved died of medical emergencies. Trump was first impeached in 2019 over relations with Ukraine and was acquitted in 2020 by the Senate.

The three new Democratic senators, Raphael Warnock and Jon Ossoff of Georgia and Alex Padilla of California, are to be sworn into office Wednesday, according to a person granted anonymity to discuss planning.

Warnock and Ossoff defeated Republican incumbents in this month's runoff elections. Georgia's secretary of state certified the election results Tuesday. Padilla was tapped by California's governor to fill the remainder of Harris' Senate term.

Associated Press writer Eric Tucker contributed to this report.

From Gaga to Garth, Miranda to Moreno: Celebs join inaugural

By JOCELYN NOVECK AP National Writer

Like so much this past year, the inaugural celebration will be like no other: pared down, distanced, much of it virtual. But for actor Christopher Jackson — the original George Washington in Broadway's "Hamilton" — performing in a virtual "ball" is a way of participating in an essential rite of American democracy.

"I'm glad to play a part in it," says Jackson, who will perform at the quadrennial ball for the Creative Coalition, a fundraiser for arts education and one of the more prominent unofficial events surrounding Joe Biden's inauguration. "It's a great honor, and I'm very grateful that we have allowed our system to continue to work in the way it was intended."

Jackson -- not to mention former co-star and "Hamilton" creator, Lin-Manuel Miranda -- joins a slew of celebrities descending on Washington, virtually or in person, for entertainment surrounding the inauguration of Biden and Kamala Harris. Although the festivities have been radically scaled down due to the raging coronavirus pandemic and security threats, a steady stream of A-list names have signed on, headlined by Lady Gaga singing the national anthem on the West Front of the Capitol, with Jennifer Lopez and Garth Brooks also performing.

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Other top-tier performers will be part of "Celebrating America," a 90-minute, multi-network evening broadcast hosted by Tom Hanks that officially takes the place of the usual multiple inaugural balls. Miranda will contribute a classical recitation, joining musicians like Bruce Springsteen, Katy Perry, John Legend, Demi Lovato, Foo Fighters, Justin Timberlake and Bon Jovi. Hosts Kerry Washington and Eva Longoria will be joined by basketball legend Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, chef Jose Andres, labor leader Dolores Huerta and Kim Ng, the first female general manager in MLB history.

The inaugural committee has made sure to blend this high-powered list with ordinary Americans and inspiring stories. Segments will include tributes to a UPS driver, a kindergarten teacher and Sandra Lindsay, the first in New York to receive the COVID-19 vaccine outside a clinical trial. The show will be carried by ABC, CBS, CNN, NBC, MSNBC and PBS as well as the committee's social media channels and streaming partners.

Beyond that event, there's also a virtual "Parade Across America" on inauguration afternoon, hosted by actor Tony Goldwyn with appearances by Jon Stewart, Earth Wind & Fire and the New Radicals — reuniting after more than two decades — among many others.

There's was also star power on display Tuesday evening at the virtual "Latino Inaugural 2021," hosted by Longoria and scheduled to include Broadway and screen star (and EGOT winner) Rita Moreno, Edward James Olmos, and Miranda again, saluting Puerto Rico with his father, Luis Miranda. The show honored members of Latino communities keeping the country running during the pandemic as front-line workers.

Also scheduled Tuesday was "We Are One," celebrating the Black community and African Diaspora with performances by Tobe Nwigwe, DJ D-Nice, The O'Jays, Rhapsody, Step Afrika!, the String Queens and others. And the "AAPI Inaugural Ball: Breaking Barriers" celebrated the Asian American and Pacific Islander communities with planned participants including actors Kal Penn, John Cho, Kumail Nanjiani and Chloe Bennet.

In a normal year, there would be a wealth of sideline events, parties and concerts around Washington. One of the higher-profile events is the Creative Coalition's ball, going all virtual this year, Along with Jackson, KT Tunstall will perform. Host Judy Gold will kick off with a comedy set, also featuring comedians Randy Rainbow, Michael Ian Black and Wendi McLendon-Covey. More than two dozen members of Congress are set to join celebrity guests like Ted Danson, Lea DeLaria, Jason Alexander, Yvette Nicole Brown, Ellen Burstyn, Alyssa Milano and others.

Jackson, who spoke in an interview late last week while planning his performance, said he would not be appearing as George Washington -- but history was on the actor's mind nonetheless, given the unique circumstances of this inauguration.

"We put ourselves in a perilous position," he said of recent events roiling the country. "So the idea that this inauguration is happening is testament to the resolute dedication that our public servants have to making this thing work." He said he was also eager to shine a spotlight on arts education, the coalition's core mission, noting that as a kid growing up in southern Illinois, he depended on resources like an early-morning band class at school, where he'd begin each day playing the trumpet.

"There was a time when I went through a lot of bad emotional passages as a kid," Jackson said. "Had it not been for the outlet the arts created for me, I don't know where I would be today." He noted that support for the arts is ever more urgent given how the pandemic has decimated the arts industry.

Actor Tim Daly, the coalition's president, said that despite optimism for the new administration's approach to arts funding, it's still an uphill battle in the United States.

"I feel there's going to have to be a really long and powerful effort by the Creative Coalition and other organizations to finally try and make federal, local and state governments understand the importance of the arts," he said, adding that the arts, besides being a driver of the economy, "is part of our spirit. It's how we teach empathy and kindness."

Daly said he has mixed feelings as he approaches this very unique inauguration.

"This is going to be the strangest (celebration) ever," he said. "It's virtual, and the celebration will in some ways be very muted. But in some ways, very meaningful. In a way this year is more important than any other, because our democracy has been under threat."

The coalition's ball will include breakout rooms where guests can mingle, and even simultaneous hand-delivered meals in multiple cities. But there's still no way to replace an in-person experience, Daly acknowledged.

"There's nothing that takes the place of human interaction," the actor said. "I'd be lying or dishonest if I said this was better. But we're doing the best we can — and it's better than nothing."

This story has been corrected to accurately spell the name of Sandra Lindsay.

Justice Dept. won't charge Sen. Burr over stock sales

By ERIC TUCKER and MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Sen. Richard Burr said Tuesday that the Justice Department has told him it will not prosecute him over stock sales made during the coronavirus pandemic, ending an insider trading investigation that led him to at least temporarily step aside from a powerful committee chairmanship last year.

Prosecutors had investigated for months whether the North Carolina Republican and former chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee had exploited advance information when he unloaded as much as \$1.7 million in stocks in the days before the coronavirus caused markets to plummet.

"The case is now closed," Burr said in a statement. "I'm glad to hear it. My focus has been and will continue to be working for the people of North Carolina during this difficult time for our nation."

His lawyer, Alice Fisher, described the investigation as a "thorough review" and said Burr, who has said he will not seek reelection when his term ends in 2022, would remain focused on "the safety and security of North Carolinians and the United States as a whole."

A Justice Department spokesman confirmed it would not bring charges but declined further comment. The New York Times was first to report on the decision to not bring charges.

The investigation escalated in May when the FBI obtained a search warrant to seize a cellphone from Burr. The day after that action became public, Burr said he would step aside as Intelligence Committee chairman while the FBI investigation was ongoing. It is unclear whether he will retake the role as the panel's top Republican now that he has been cleared.

Democrats are set to take control of the Senate on Wednesday, and Virginia Sen. Mark Warner will become the panel's chairman.

Burr said he was told Tuesday, the last night of President Donald Trump's term. He had occasionally angered Trump and his family as he investigated the president's ties to Russia, especially when he called Trump's son Donald Trump Jr. in to testify before the committee for a second time in 2019.

Burr, who was first elected to the Senate in 2004 and chaired the Senate Intelligence Committee as it conducted its own investigation into Russian election interference in the 2016 presidential election, has denied wrongdoing in the well-timed stock sales. His lawyer has said he had actively cooperated with the investigation. He had also called for a Senate Ethics Committee investigation into his actions.

Senate records show that Burr and his wife sold between roughly \$600,000 and \$1.7 million in more than 30 transactions in late January and mid-February, just before the market began to dive and government health officials began to sound alarms about the virus. Several of the stocks were in companies that own hotels.

Burr has acknowledged selling the stocks because of the coronavirus but said he relied "solely on public news reports," specifically CNBC's daily health and science reporting out of Asia, to make the financial decisions.

The Justice Department last year separately closed without charges investigations into stock trading by multiple other senators, including Dianne Feinstein of California, Kelly Loeffler of Georgia and Jim Inhofe of Oklahoma, according to people familiar with notifications sent to the senators. They, too, had come under scrutiny for transactions made in the weeks before the coronavirus sent markets downhill.

Associated Press writer Michael Balsamo in Washington contributed to this report.

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Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, Jan. 20, the 20th day of 2021. There are 345 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Jan. 20, 1986, the United States observed the first federal holiday in honor of slain civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr.

On this date:

In 1265, England's first representative Parliament met for the first time.

In 1801, Secretary of State John Marshall was nominated by President John Adams to be chief justice of the United States. (Marshall would be sworn in on Feb. 4, 1801.)

In 1887, the U.S. Senate approved an agreement to lease Pearl Harbor in Hawaii as a naval base.

In 1937, President Franklin D. Roosevelt became the first chief executive to be inaugurated on Jan. 20 instead of March 4.

In 1942, Nazi officials held the notorious Wannsee conference, during which they arrived at their "final solution" that called for exterminating Europe's Jews.

In 1961, John F. Kennedy was inaugurated as the 35th President of the United States.

In 1964, Capitol Records released the album "Meet the Beatles!"

In 1981, Iran released 52 Americans it had held hostage for 444 days, minutes after the presidency had passed from Jimmy Carter to Ronald Reagan.

In 1994, Shannon Faulkner became the first woman to attend classes at The Citadel in South Carolina. (Faulkner joined the cadet corps in Aug. 1995 under court order but soon dropped out, citing isolation and stress from the legal battle.)

In 2007, Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton, D-N.Y., launched her first campaign for the White House, saying in a videotaped message on her website: "I'm in, and I'm in to win."

In 2009, Barack Obama was sworn in as the nation's 44th, as well as first African-American, president.

In 2017, Donald Trump was sworn in as the 45th president of the United States, pledging emphatically to empower America's "forgotten men and women." Protesters registered their rage against the new president in a chaotic confrontation with police just blocks from the inaugural parade.

Ten years ago: In a luncheon speech to American business executives in Washington, Chinese President Hu Jintao denied his country was a military threat despite its arms buildup and pressed the U.S. for closer cooperation between the global powers. Federal authorities orchestrated one of the biggest Mafia takedowns in FBI history, charging 127 suspected mobsters and associates in the Northeast with murders, extortion and other crimes spanning decades.

Five years ago: President Barack Obama hailed the revival of the nation's auto industry during a visit to Detroit while acknowledging the water crisis in nearby Flint, Michigan. The National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration and NASA announced that 2015 was by far the hottest year in 136 years of record keeping. Kathryn Smith was promoted by the Buffalo Bills to take over as special teams quality control coach, making her the NFL's first full-time female coach.

One year ago: Chinese government experts confirmed human-to-human transmission of the new coronavirus, saying two people caught the virus from family members and that some health workers had tested positive. Tens of thousands of gun-rights activists rallied at the Virginia Capitol to protest plans by the state's Democratic leadership to pass gun-control legislation. (Lawmakers eventually approved seven of the eight measures in Gov. Ralph Northam's gun-control package.) Fifteen-year-old Coco Gauff moved into the second round at the Australian Open by beating Venus Williams in straight sets.

Today's Birthdays: Former astronaut Buzz Aldrin is 91. Olympic gold medal figure skater Carol Heiss is 81. Singer Eric Stewart is 76. Movie director David Lynch is 75. Country-rock musician George Grantham (Poco) is 74. Israeli activist Natan Sharansky is 73. Actor Daniel Benzali is 71. Rock musician Paul Stanley

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(KISS) is 69. Rock musician Ian Hill (Judas Priest) is 69. Comedian Bill Maher (MAR) is 65. Actor Lorenzo Lamas is 63. Actor James Denton is 58. Rock musician Greg K. (The Offspring) is 56. Country singer John Michael Montgomery is 56. Sophie, Countess of Wessex, is 56. Actor Rainn Wilson is 55. Actor Stacey Dash is 54. TV personality Melissa Rivers is 53. Actor Reno Wilson is 52. Singer Edwin McCain is 51. Actor Skeet Ulrich is 51. Rap musician ?uestlove (questlove) (The Roots) is 50. Former United Nations Ambassador Nikki Haley is 49. Rock musician Rob Bourdon (Linkin Park) is 42. Singer-songwriter Bonnie McKee is 37. Country singer Brantley Gilbert is 36. Rock singer Kevin Parker (Tame Impala) is 35. Actor Evan Peters is 34.