

# Groton Daily Independent

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## Coming up on GDILIVE.COM

A graphic with a dark blue background. On the left is an illustration of a pair of white ice skates with blue laces. To the right of the skates, the words "Faith Hope Love" are written in a white, cursive font. Below the skates, the text "Sponsored by the Carnival of Silver Skates" is written in a light blue font. To the right of the skates, the text "82nd Annual Carnival of Silver Skates" is written in red, "Sunday, Jan. 31, 2021" in yellow, "2:30 p.m." in yellow, and "Skating Rink" in yellow.

**82nd Annual  
Carnival of  
Silver Skates**  
**Sunday,  
Jan. 31, 2021**  
**2:30 p.m.**  
**Skating Rink**

**Sponsored by  
the Carnival of  
Silver Skates**

**Saturday**  
We will have 2 streams going for the wrestling tournament. Go to GDILIVE.COM for those links.



**OPEN:** Recycling Trailer in Groton  
The recycling trailer is located west of the city shop. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.

## You're Invited

Date: Saturday, Jan. 30th

Time: 9:00am-1:00pm

Location:

Aberdeen Civic Arena  
203 S. Washington St.

COVID protocols apply;  
face covering required

**Onsite  
OFFERS**

# 3M

# HIRING EVENT

- ✓ Production Operators
- ✓ Maintenance Technicians
- ✓ Electrical System Technicians

**3M** is an equal opportunity employer

# Groton Daily Independent

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## Upcoming Schedule

### Saturday, Jan. 30

Groton Area Wrestling Tournament, 10 a.m.

Boys Basketball at DAK12-NEC Clash in Madison (No. 2 seeds Groton Area vs. Sioux Falls Christian - - Livestream Link through Madison: [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCJ3qcUvSNwh1QG\\_6hIe\\_WKA](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCJ3qcUvSNwh1QG_6hIe_WKA))

### Sunday, Jan. 31

Carnival of Silver Skates: 2 p.m. and 6:30 p.m.

### Monday, Feb. 1

Junior High Basketball at Redfield (7th at 5 p.m., 8th at 6 p.m.)

### Tuesday, Feb. 2

Boys Basketball at Langford (7th at 4 p.m., 8th at 5 p.m., JV at 6 p.m. followed by varsity game)

Girls Basketball hosting Aberdeen Roncalli with JV at 6 p.m. followed by varsity.

### Thursday, Feb. 4

Doubleheader Basketball hosting Faulkton. Girls JV at 4 p.m., Boys JV at 5 p.m., Girls Varsity at 6:30 p.m. followed by Boys Varsity.

### Friday, Feb. 5

Wrestling at Lyman High School, 5 p.m.

### Saturday, Feb. 6

Girls Basketball at DAK12-NEC Clash in Madison.

Boys Basketball at Tiospa Zina (C game at 1 p.m., JV at 2:30 p.m. followed by varsity.

### Monday, Feb. 8

Junior High Basketball hosts Webster. 5:30 p.m.  
School Board Meeting, 7 p.m.

### Tuesday, Feb. 9

Girls Basketball hosts Tiospa Zina. JV game at 6 p.m. followed by varsity.

### Wednesday, Feb. 10

LifeTouch Pictures in GHS Gym, 8:30 a.m. to 11 a.m.

### Thursday, Feb. 11

Parent-Teacher Conference, 1:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Basketball Doubleheader with Milbank in Groton. JV girls at 4 p.m. followed by JV boys, Varsity Girls and Varsity Boys.

### Saturday, Feb. 12

Basketball Doubleheader at Mobridge. JV girls at 1 p.m., JV boys at 2 p.m., Varsity Girls at 3 p.m. followed by Varsity Boys.

### Monday, Feb. 15

Junior High Basketball at Aberdeen Roncalli Elementary School (7th at 4 p.m., 8th at 5 p.m.)

Boys Basketball at Aberdeen Roncalli (C game at 5 p.m., JV at 6:15 and Varsity at 7:30).

### Thursday, Feb. 18

Junior High Basketball hosts Mobridge-Pollock in the Arena. 7th at 6 p.m., 8th at 7 p.m.

### Friday, Feb. 19

Basketball Doubleheader with Deuel in Groton. JV girls at 4 p.m., JV boys at 5 p.m. followed by Varsity Girls and Varsity Boys.

### Saturday, Feb. 20

Regional Wrestling Tournament in Groton, 10 a.m.

### Tuesday, Feb. 23: GBB Region

### Thursday, Feb. 25: GBB Region

### Friday, Feb. 26

Boys Basketball hosts Aberdeen Christian. JV at 6 p.m. followed by Varsity.

### Tuesday, March 2: BBB Region

### Thursday, March 4: GBB SoDAK 16

### Friday, March 5: BBB Region

### Tuesday, March 9: BBB SoDAK 16

March 11-13: State Girls Basketball Tournament in Watertown

March 18-20: State Boys Basketball Tournament in Sioux Falls

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Reply by:

April 15, 2021

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DF-CD-NP-Q121



**82nd Annual  
Carnival of Silver Skates  
"Faith, Hope, Love"  
Nearly 100 Skaters Performing!  
Sunday, Jan. 31,  
2021**

**Performances at  
2 p.m. and 6:30 p.m.  
Groton Ice Rink  
(West side of Groton)**

**Admission is \$3 for those 13 years  
and older for the afternoon session.  
The evening session is free.**

**The Carnival of Silver Skates Queen  
will be crowned during the  
2 p.m. performance.**

**THERE WILL BE NO PARKING  
ON THE ICE THIS YEAR!**

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## Dragr, Ehresmann are NEC Champions

The Northeast Conference wrestling tournament was held Thursday in Redfield with Dragr Monson and Christian Ehresmann each taking first place in the tournament. Also placing were Cole Bisbee in third place, and in fourth place were Korbin Kucker, Lane Krueger and Adrian Knutsn.

### **113: Dragr Monson (26-0) placed 1st and scored 21.5 team points.**

Quarterfinal - Dragr Monson (Groton Area) 26-0 won by fall over Trey Atkinson (Britton/Hecla) 6-8 (Fall 1:42)

Semifinal - Dragr Monson (Groton Area) 26-0 won by tech fall over Jacob Johnson (Milbank) 9-7 (TF-1.5 2:42 (16-1))

1st Place Match - Dragr Monson (Groton Area) 26-0 won by decision over Mason Whitley (Redfield Area) 29-4 (Dec 9-2)

### **126: Christian Ehresmann (19-3) placed 1st and scored 21.0 team points.**

Quarterfinal - Christian Ehresmann (Groton Area) 19-3 received a bye ( ) (Bye)

Semifinal - Christian Ehresmann (Groton Area) 19-3 won by fall over Elliot Bratland (Clark/Willow Lake) 11-9 (Fall 1:29)

1st Place Match - Christian Ehresmann (Groton Area) 19-3 won by major decision over Keaton Rohlf (Redfield Area) 25-8 (MD 15-4)

### **132: Easten Ekern (7-8)**

Quarterfinal - Caleb Clark (Kingsbury County) 11-7 won by fall over Easten Ekern (Groton Area) 7-8 (Fall 0:17)

Cons. Round 1 - Easten Ekern (Groton Area) 7-8 received a bye ( ) (Bye)

Cons. Semi - Brock Gisselbeck (Hamlin) 10-7 won by fall over Easten Ekern (Groton Area) 7-8 (Fall 3:41)

### **138: Korbin Kucker (13-11) placed 4th and scored 10.0 team points.**

Quarterfinal - Bradyn Robbins (Redfield Area) 29-1 won by fall over Korbin Kucker (Groton Area) 13-11 (Fall 0:49)

Cons. Round 1 - Korbin Kucker (Groton Area) 13-11 won by fall over Josh Long (Sisseton) 7-7 (Fall 3:31)

Cons. Semi - Korbin Kucker (Groton Area) 13-11 won by fall over Luke Steffensen (Kingsbury County) 8-9 (Fall 2:02)

3rd Place Match - Kaden Krause (Milbank) 7-2 won by major decision over Korbin Kucker (Groton Area) 13-11 (MD 15-2)

### **152: Cole Bisbee (12-12) placed 3rd and scored 15.0 team points.**

Quarterfinal - Cole Bisbee (Groton Area) 12-12 won by fall over Brian Blachford (Deuel) 0-16 (Fall 1:08)

Semifinal - Chase McGillivary (Redfield Area) 11-17 won by decision over Cole Bisbee (Groton Area) 12-12 (Dec 12-6)

Cons. Semi - Cole Bisbee (Groton Area) 12-12 won by fall over Braeden Johnson (Clark/Willow Lake) 1-12 (Fall 2:45)

3rd Place Match - Cole Bisbee (Groton Area) 12-12 won by major decision over Kaden St.Pierre (Hamlin) 11-7 (MD 9-1)

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**195: Lane Krueger (15-5) placed 4th and scored 10.0 team points.**

Quarterfinal - Lane Krueger (Groton Area) 15-5 won by fall over Mason Gray (Sisseton) 2-10 (Fall 1:51)

Semifinal - Sean Domke (Redfield Area) 12-4 won by fall over Lane Krueger (Groton Area) 15-5 (Fall 1:50)

Cons. Semi - Lane Krueger (Groton Area) 15-5 won by major decision over Kasey michalski (Clark/Willow Lake) 5-11 (MD 10-0)

3rd Place Match - Michael Stevenson (Hamlin) 13-5 won by decision over Lane Krueger (Groton Area) 15-5 (Dec 7-2)

**285: Adrian Knutson (10-14) placed 4th and scored 8.0 team points.**

Quarterfinal - Adrian Knutson (Groton Area) 10-14 won by fall over Ethan Skarnagel (Sisseton) 3-8 (Fall 3:57)

Semifinal - Gavin Nichols (Redfield Area) 21-7 won by fall over Adrian Knutson (Groton Area) 10-14 (Fall 1:33)

Cons. Semi - Adrian Knutson (Groton Area) 10-14 received a bye ( ) (Bye)

3rd Place Match - Ethan Skarnagel (Sisseton) 3-8 won in sudden victory - 1 over Adrian Knutson (Groton Area) 10-14 (SV-1 2-0)

1	Redfield Area	243.0
2	Clark/Willow Lake	116.0
3	Milbank	113.5
4	Kingsbury County	93.0
5	Groton Area	85.5
6	Sisseton	73.5
7	Webster Area	45.0
8	Hamlin	32.0
9	Britton/Hecla	14.0
10	Deuel	9.0
11	Tiospa Zina	0.0

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**#341 in a series**

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

Today looks a lot like yesterday, no worse for sure. We are now up to 25,957,400, which is 0.7% more than yesterday and makes it certain we'll be well over 26 million early in the day tomorrow. There were 168,600 new cases reported in the US today. Hospitalizations continue to fall. They're down to 104,303 and declined today for the nineteenth consecutive day. There were 3590 deaths reported today. We have now lost 436,404 Americans to the virus, which is 0.8% more than yesterday's total.

We're still not getting it: In a poll conducted from January 22 to January 25, 25 percent of adults in the US said they're planning to attend Super Bowl parties with people outside of their households. Among avid sports fans, 40 percent say they will gather at parties. I'm just going to drop here that the Super Bowl is not some sort of get-out-of-jail-free card; people can transmit while watching football as well as they can at any other gathering, particularly since I'm going to guess you won't be wearing a mask as you graze at the buffet and tip up your favorite beverage. If you're going to a party, then you want freedom, you want your favorite restaurant to be safe, you want the kids back at school, you want life to return to normal, but you are completely unwilling to do one single damned thing to help that happen. That makes you a huge part of the problem. When your dear one dies, don't call us; we'll call you.

We are now receiving guidance that says simple cloth masks may not be enough against these new highly-transmissible variants; so what do we do now? Supplies of N95s, the gold standard in masking, remain relatively unavailable—and if they are, maybe you shouldn't be using them since they're still in short supply for health care workers who are at greatest risk of infection. What we know is that cloth masks capture around 50 percent of respiratory particles; if everyone wore them, that would lead to a great decrease in risk, but of course, not everyone's wearing them. A tightly-woven cloth mask brings the protection up to 60 or 70 percent. A blue surgical mask brings the protection up to 70 or 80 percent. That's pretty good.

Now an N95 (officially called a respirator) can bring protection, when both parties are wearing them, to 99 percent, which is remarkable. But you're probably not going to be in that both-parties range very often in the near future. Not only are N95s hard to find, when you do find them they're as often as not going to be counterfeits. Beware counterfeiters are copying the 3M and other company logos and all of the proper labeling for NIOSH (National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health) certification right onto their counterfeit masks. I've been given to understand it's hard even for the producers to spot fakes, so I don't figure we ordinary mortals stand much chance. You can look for the KF94, the mask certified in South Korea which is the functional equivalent of the N95. An alternative is the KN95, but beware these are largely produced in China and might not meet standards unless the manufacturer has the NIOSH certificate—and again, this can be faked. The last thing you need is to think you're protected when you're not.. So what next?

This really is the Wild West. So if you can't find a mask you're sure actually meets standards, next best—and pretty good at that—is to layer two masks, a surgical mask and a cloth mask. It is thought that together these can get you to over 90 percent filtration, which is darned close to the N95—and honestly, probably equivalent since your N95 isn't going to actually achieve 95% filtration because it has not been fit-tested as they are for health care professionals. The idea is that the surgical mask provides better filtration, and the cloth mask provides better fit, and the CDC is running tests right now to confirm that the combination works as well as we think it does. You only need this highly efficient protection indoors or in crowds outdoors or if you're an essential worker; if you're out for your daily run or meeting a friend for a socially-distanced outdoor get-together, a simple cloth mask should be perfectly sufficient.

Here's some excellent news: Janssen (Johnson & Johnson) issued a news release this morning with results from the phase 3 clinical trial for its vaccine candidate. This is a DNA vaccine which uses a nonreplicating viral vector (an adenovirus) to carry the DNA into host cells. (If you need a refresher on the various kinds of vaccines as more and more of them come online, check out my Update #124 posted June 26 at <https://www.facebook.com/marie.schwabmiller/posts/3717649208251458>.) Importantly, it is a single-dose vaccine which can be held under refrigeration for up to three months and at normal freezer temperatures for as

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long as two years, so the logistics of shipping, storage, and administration are far less complicated than for other vaccines in use or nearing authorization. The announcement mentioned the company has "product available to ship immediately following authorization." No significant safety concerns were reported; the announcement said, "A review of adverse events indicated that a single-dose of Janssen's COVID-19 vaccine candidate was generally well-tolerated."

There were 43,783 participants in the trial which was conducted in the US, Latin America, and South Africa, eight countries in all. The announcement detailed the racial/ethnic breakdown of these participants, noting also that 41 percent of them had comorbidities associated with increased risk for severe disease, including obesity, type 2 diabetes, hypertension, HIV, and other immunocompromising conditions. There were 458 symptomatic cases noted in these participants.

The vaccine was 66 percent effective overall in preventing moderate to severe disease with onset of protection 14 days after administration. By region—and this is important—it was 72 percent effective in the US, 66 percent in Latin America, and 57 percent effective in South Africa at 28 days post-vaccination—and yes, the announcement specified this is against "Multiple Virus Variants, including the SARS-CoV-2 Variant from the B.1.351 Lineage Observed in South Africa." Now, I can hear you groaning: "But that's not really excellent news, Marie—only 66 percent." To which I say (in the style of the best infomercials), but wait; there's more! The vaccine showed 85 percent effectiveness in preventing severe disease across all regions and "Demonstrated Complete Protection Against COVID-19 related Hospitalization and Death as of Day 28." (Yes, the company capitalized all these words, I think because this was in a bullet-pointed header for the news release.) There was no hospitalization, ICU admission, mechanical ventilation or ECMO needed by any participant after Day 28. This is extremely important. Further, "Efficacy against severe disease increased over time with no cases in vaccinated participants reported after day 49."

Please understand that this vaccine was tested in South Africa where most cases seen nowadays are with the variant which appears more able to evade our immune responses—and sure enough, there were more cases among vaccinated participants in South Africa than in the other countries. But once we're 14 days post-vaccination (giving the immune system time to fully develop a response), no one's getting sick enough to be hospitalized; and once we're seven weeks post-vaccination, no one's getting sick at all. This is our first hint that, as Dr. Fauci mentioned last week or so, it is quite possible our response to a vaccine may be so overwhelming that, even when the response is diminished, it's still going to be enough. Now, we don't know that the same will be true for the other vaccines which have been tested, but as I understand it, every vaccine authorized or in the pipeline so far targets the same spike (S) protein, so it isn't wildly out of line to expect similarity of effect in this respect. You may recall that just last night I was saying I wished I knew how sick the folks in the Novavax trial got. This is why.

Dr. Michael Osterholm, director of the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy at the University of Minnesota and a member of the administration's Covid-19 Advisory Board, told CNN, talking about the Janssen candidate and the two authorized vaccines, "These are really, in my mind, three almost equivalent vaccines."

Janssen has said it intends to make application for emergency use authorization (EUA) by the middle or end of next week. The process from there is one we observed twice in December, so it's familiar ground: The FDA's experts will comb through the data and provide their analysis. Then the whole thing goes to the FDA's Vaccines and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee which will schedule an open meeting to discuss and vote. Once that happens, I would expect the decision about the EUA to come as quickly as it did for the two candidates in December, that is, within days. After that the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices will weigh in on labeling and any precautions, and then I'd expect to see the vaccine shipping within days. Once the requests for EUA were submitted in December, the whole thing took between two and three weeks; I would expect a similar timeline here. The company has contracted to provide 100 million doses in the US, and they expect to meet that commitment by June.

FEMA has requested assistance from the Pentagon in providing as many as 100 large mass vaccination sites across the country. State governments would have to approve the deployment of military personnel for this purpose in their states; but a move like this would greatly increase our capacity to get vaccine

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into people. One of the things the military has figured out is this sort of logistics; thirty-eight states are using National Guard personnel already. This seems like a large step in a good direction; a higher degree of federal coordination should prove most helpful. Once a reasonable supply is held out to assure the availability of second doses, our goal should be to run out of vaccine as fast as it is shipped; that would mean we're putting into arms most expeditiously. Vaccine still in the vial helps no one.

Robert Waldner is 17 and looks like your average high school student. This average Canadian kid plays hockey, is interested in biology, and enjoys outdoor outings with his family. Apparently he enjoys them even when things go terribly wrong, the way they did a couple of weeks ago when he was out snowmobiling on Mica Mountain in British Columbia with his dad and brother.

While riding, he was in the lead. His brother had snowmobile trouble, so Dad stopped to help him. Robert, unaware, I guess, kept on going until he realized (a) he was alone and (b) he didn't know where he was. He tried to backtrack, but he was on a steep slope and so that wasn't working. So here he is on the side of a mountain with an elevation of 7200 feet in January in a place where temperatures can drop as low as minus 58 degrees Fahrenheit. For supplies, he had a snow shovel, half a ham sandwich, and a dying cell phone without a signal. This is not what is generally thought of as a good situation. This is also when it became clear this is no average high school student.

Waldner made his way down to a meadow and moved to a line of trees, looking for shelter, whereupon he hit on the idea to dig a snow cave in which to shelter. So he left his snowmobile in the meadow where it would be easily visible and then spent the next couple of hours using his shovel to dig a seven by three foot cave seven feet down into the snow. He built a door with his hands and shelves to put his supplies on. Then he settled in to wait. He told the New York Times, "I was shivering, so I couldn't sleep. But I was confident that my structure would allow me to survive. I also thought I would be rescued and was more bored than scared." Which makes him a better man than I. Pretty sure I'd have been terrified.

Meanwhile, the family searched, then called search-and-rescue who found him, safe and sound, if cold, close to 11:00 pm that night. Waldner said, "I was quite joyful." I'll bet he wasn't the only one. His mom told the Times that the next time he's out snowmobiling, "he will have a tarp, a fire-starter and a lot more food." Also betting that is accurate.

So I guess all's well that ends well. A smart, resourceful young man who found himself in a bad spot kept his head about him, went to work to secure his situation as well as he could, and kept himself safe. Val Severin, volunteer rescue manager at South Cariboo Search and Rescue, the group which went out and found Waldner, said his cave was impressive looking and well designed to protect him, adding, "With all this pandemic bad news, we all need a happy ending right now." We really, really do.

Stay safe too. I'll be back.



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# Groton Daily Independent

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Groton Area School District

Active COVID-19 Cases

Updated January 28, 2021; 3:49 PM

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

Updated January 29, 2021; 11:29 AM

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

# Groton Daily Independent

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County	Positive Cases	Recovered Cases	Negative Persons	Deceased Among Cases	Community Spread	% RT-PCR Test Positivity Rate (Weekly)
Aurora	451	418	816	16	Moderate	10.00%
Beadle	2606	2503	5491	39	Substantial	8.89%
Bennett	376	361	1123	9	Minimal	4.30%
Bon Homme	1500	1468	1981	25	Minimal	0.00%
Brookings	3412	3224	10885	34	Substantial	7.00%
Brown	4915	4671	11840	79	Substantial	9.01%
Brule	679	656	1775	8	Substantial	5.88%
Buffalo	418	402	860	13	Minimal	0.00%
Butte	955	915	3018	20	Substantial	7.07%
Campbell	126	114	239	4	Minimal	22.73%
Charles Mix	1223	1147	3729	18	Substantial	4.69%
Clark	336	325	908	4	Moderate	7.69%
Clay	1752	1703	4888	16	Substantial	8.82%
Codington	3730	3560	9106	74	Substantial	8.09%
Corson	461	443	965	11	Minimal	9.09%
Custer	725	698	2556	11	Substantial	13.33%
Davison	2892	2782	6098	59	Substantial	7.28%
Day	606	549	1635	27	Substantial	6.82%
Deuel	457	434	1056	8	Moderate	0.00%
Dewey	1389	1350	3668	20	Substantial	11.11%
Douglas	413	391	855	9	Moderate	8.82%
Edmunds	457	428	959	9	Substantial	6.38%
Fall River	504	476	2456	14	Substantial	7.32%
Faulk	336	313	650	13	Moderate	7.69%
Grant	915	829	2070	37	Substantial	27.18%
Gregory	498	463	1163	27	Moderate	17.07%
Haakon	240	230	504	9	Minimal	10.00%
Hamlin	665	609	1643	38	Substantial	9.09%
Hand	320	309	746	5	Minimal	3.85%
Hanson	333	323	660	4	Minimal	4.35%
Harding	90	89	170	1	None	0.00%
Hughes	2205	2094	6095	33	Substantial	7.79%
Hutchinson	755	702	2187	23	Substantial	6.45%

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Hyde	134	133	386	1	None	0.00%
Jackson	268	252	883	13	Minimal	0.00%
Jerauld	266	246	530	16	None	0.00%
Jones	82	75	206	0	Moderate	14.29%
Kingsbury	605	567	1515	13	Substantial	16.07%
Lake	1138	1071	3024	18	Substantial	7.37%
Lawrence	2745	2659	8054	41	Substantial	6.82%
Lincoln	7435	7154	18728	74	Substantial	13.52%
Lyman	588	560	1807	10	Substantial	7.37%
Marshall	286	269	1091	5	Moderate	7.14%
McCook	716	687	1505	23	Moderate	11.36%
McPherson	234	207	530	4	Substantial	3.28%
Meade	2465	2367	7165	28	Substantial	12.25%
Mellette	238	232	701	2	Moderate	19.23%
Miner	264	234	529	7	Moderate	22.22%
Minnehaha	26926	25881	72520	310	Substantial	10.99%
Moody	602	562	1649	16	Substantial	16.67%
Oglala Lakota	2038	1943	6406	42	Substantial	13.16%
Pennington	12335	11819	36754	168	Substantial	12.43%
Perkins	338	298	736	11	Substantial	28.21%
Potter	344	328	780	3	Moderate	5.56%
Roberts	1106	1044	3913	34	Substantial	13.27%
Sanborn	325	310	643	3	Moderate	0.00%
Spink	761	703	1996	25	Substantial	8.33%
Stanley	316	303	856	2	Moderate	3.03%
Sully	135	123	280	3	Moderate	14.29%
Todd	1211	1164	4009	25	Moderate	6.12%
Tripp	654	633	1407	15	Moderate	8.89%
Turner	1042	966	2520	50	Substantial	11.11%
Union	1852	1728	5784	38	Substantial	15.57%
Walworth	700	663	1735	14	Substantial	16.46%
Yankton	2732	2649	8692	28	Substantial	5.57%
Ziebach	334	318	832	9	Moderate	8.33%
Unassigned	0	0	1908	0		

# Groton Daily Independent

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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	4169	0
10-19 years	12028	0
20-29 years	19440	4
30-39 years	17759	15
40-49 years	15385	35
50-59 years	15215	96
60-69 years	12344	229
70-79 years	6598	402
80+ years	5017	987

### SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Sex	# of Cases	# of Deaths Among Cases
Female	56336	835
Male	51619	933



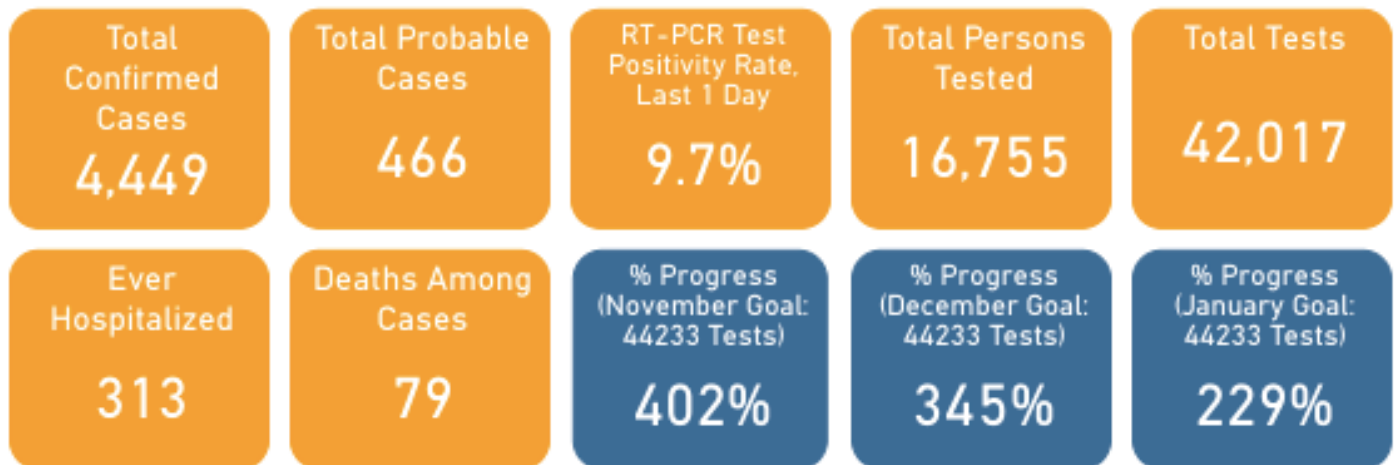
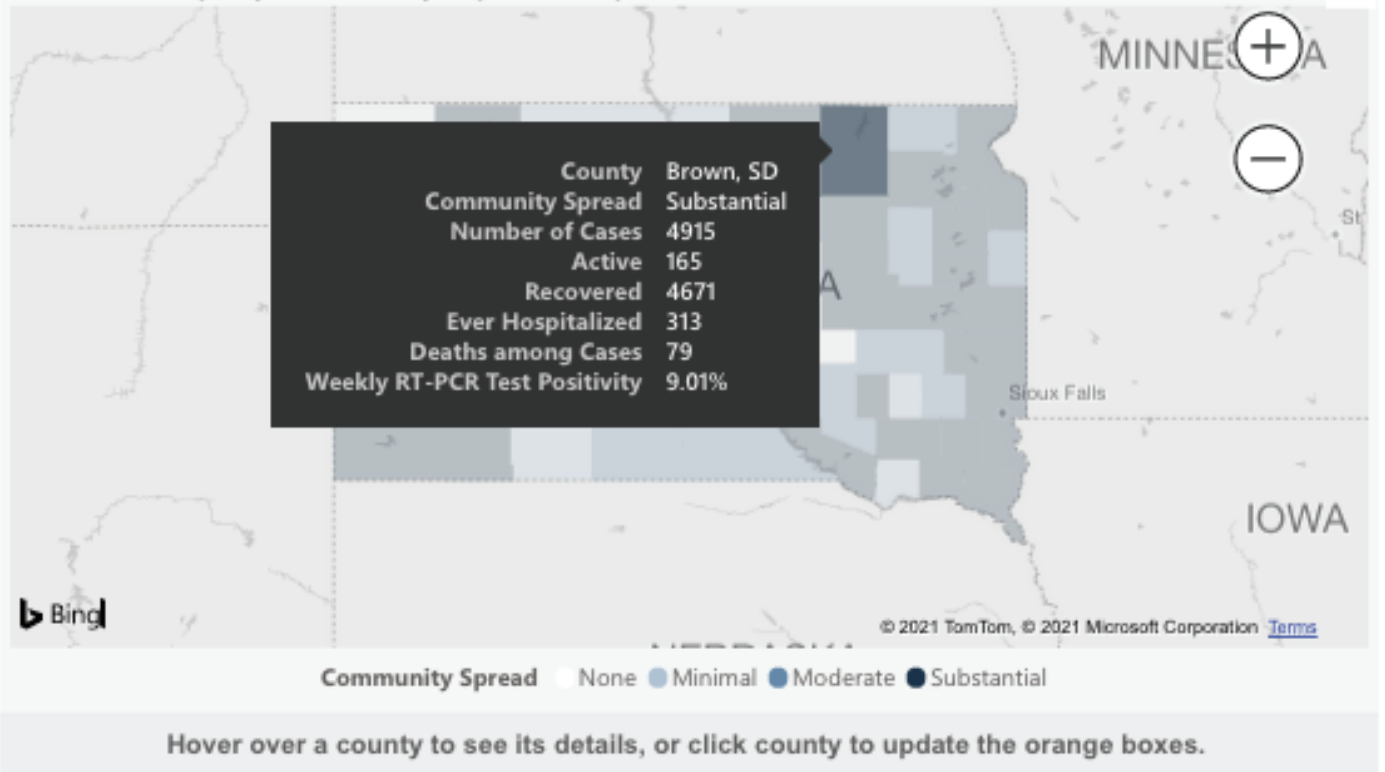
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## Brown County



### Community Spread Map by County of Residence



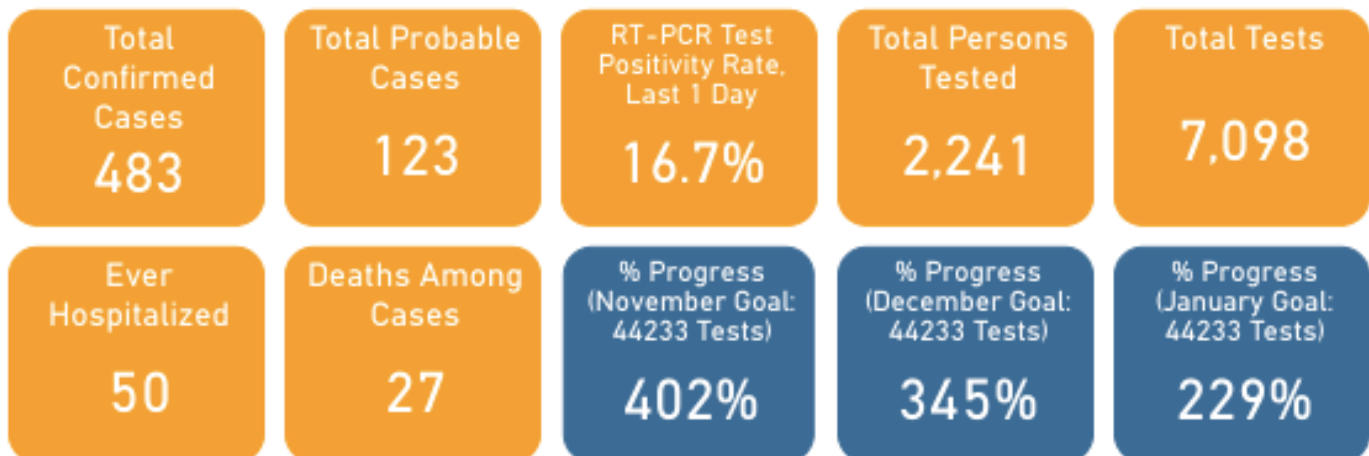
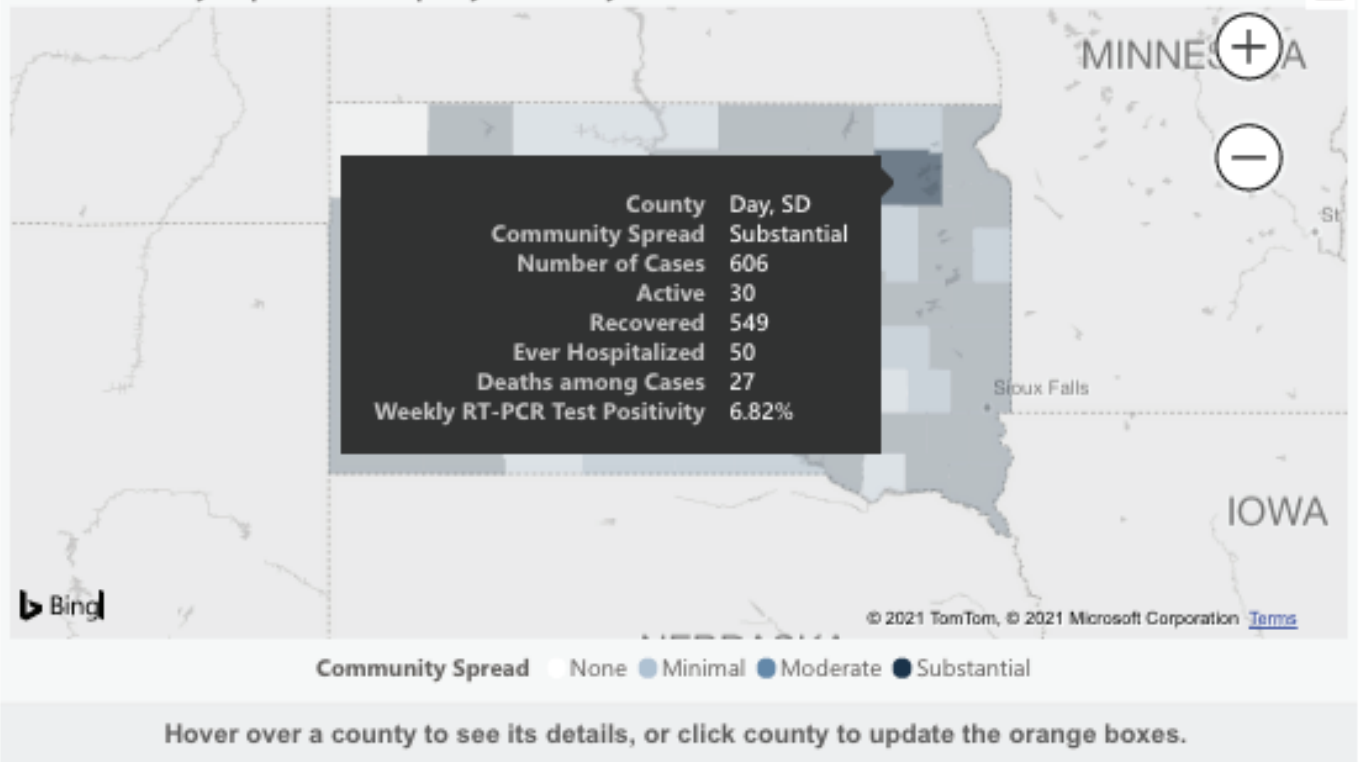
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## Day County



Community Spread Map by County of Residence



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## Vaccinations

Total Doses Administered

92,896

Total Persons Administered a Vaccine

66,448

Manufacturer	Number of Doses
Moderna	49,983
Pfizer	42,913

Doses	Number of Recipients
Moderna - 1 dose	25,873
Moderna - Series Complete	12,055
Pfizer - 1 dose	14,127
Pfizer - Series Complete	14,393

County	# Doses	# Persons (1 dose)	# Persons (2 doses)	Total # Persons
Aurora	153	65	44	109
Beadle	1844	682	581	1,263
Bennett*	166	124	21	145
Bon Homme*	832	266	283	549
Brookings	2524	992	766	1,758
Brown	4508	1,792	1,358	3,150
Brule*	529	347	91	438
Buffalo*	29	25	2	27
Butte	402	344	29	373
Campbell	392	86	153	239
Charles Mix*	742	240	251	491
Clark	343	211	66	277
Clay	1438	812	313	1,125
Codington*	3214	1,486	864	2,350
Corson*	59	45	7	52
Custer*	645	413	116	529
Davison	2372	730	821	1,551
Day*	687	315	186	501
Deuel	465	209	128	337
Dewey*	135	109	13	122
Douglas*	367	169	99	268
Edmunds	346	146	100	246
Fall River*	712	546	83	629
Faulk	224	178	23	201
Grant*	676	280	198	478
Gregory*	520	178	171	349
Haakon*	198	80	59	139

# Groton Daily Independent

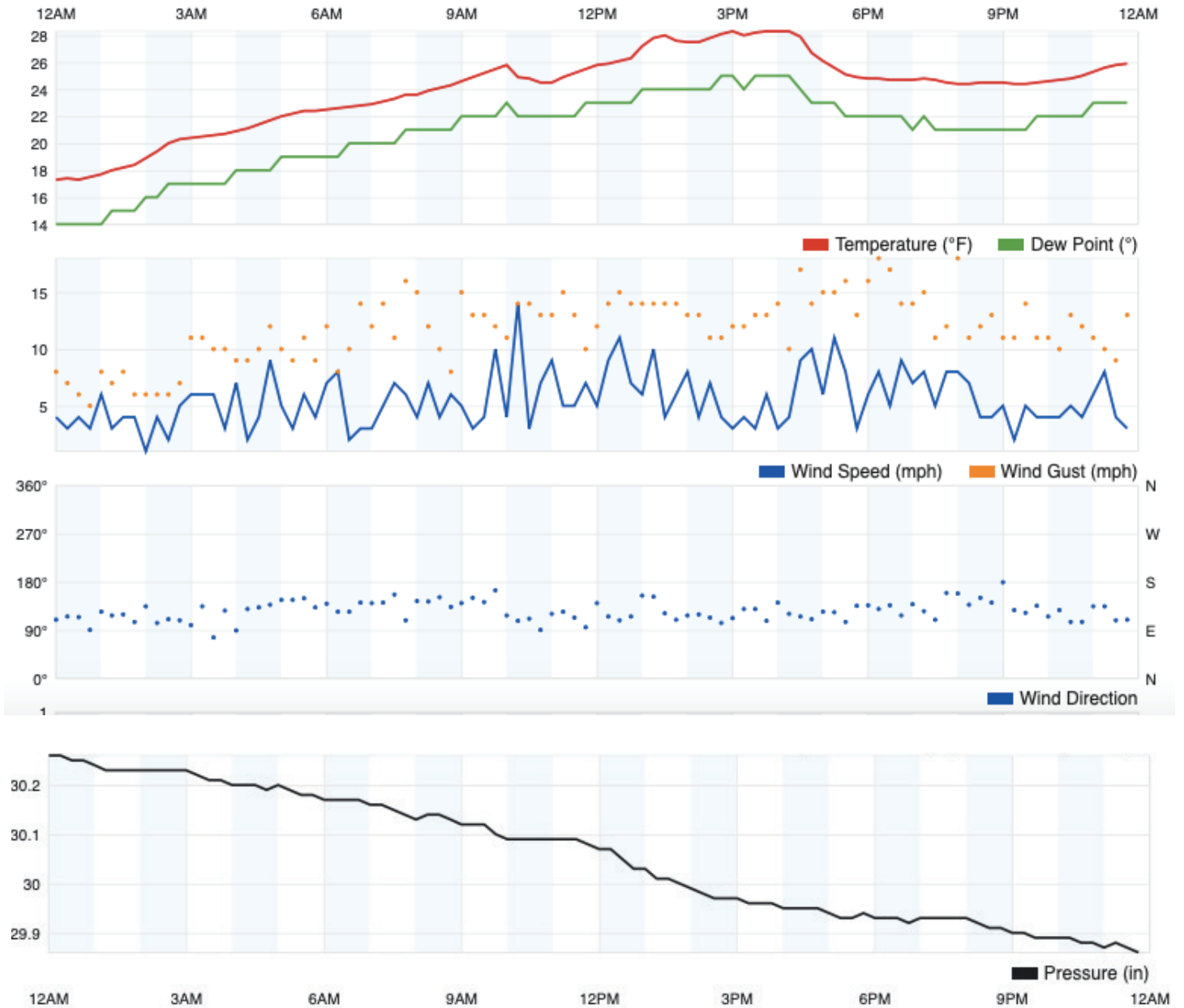
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Hamlin	499	223	138	361
Hand	410	154	128	282
Hanson	130	24	53	77
Harding	6	6	0	6
Hughes*	2152	1,044	554	1,598
Hutchinson*	1088	326	381	707
Hyde*	120	96	12	108
Jackson*	126	78	24	102
Jerauld	187	55	66	121
Jones*	162	110	26	136
Kingsbury	617	195	211	406
Lake	1154	442	356	798
Lawrence	1776	1,498	139	1,637
Lincoln	9451	2,937	3,257	6,194
Lyman*	191	129	31	160
Marshall*	398	176	111	287
McCook	713	349	182	531
McPherson	58	20	19	39
Meade*	1382	866	258	1,124
Mellette*	13	7	3	10
Miner	279	139	70	209
Minnehaha	25887	8,679	8,604	17,283
Moody*	444	170	137	307
Oglala Lakota*	37	27	5	32
Pennington*	9652	6,136	1,758	7,894
Perkins*	108	64	22	86
Potter	209	67	71	138
Roberts*	923	749	87	836
Sanborn	281	131	75	206
Spink	884	400	242	642
Stanley*	302	138	82	220
Sully	69	35	17	52
Todd*	42	32	5	37
Tripp*	629	395	117	512
Turner	1269	569	350	919
Union	509	273	118	391
Walworth*	644	350	147	497
Yankton	3113	1,067	1,023	2,090
Ziebach*	19	19	0	19
Other	2441	955	743	1,698

# Groton Daily Independent

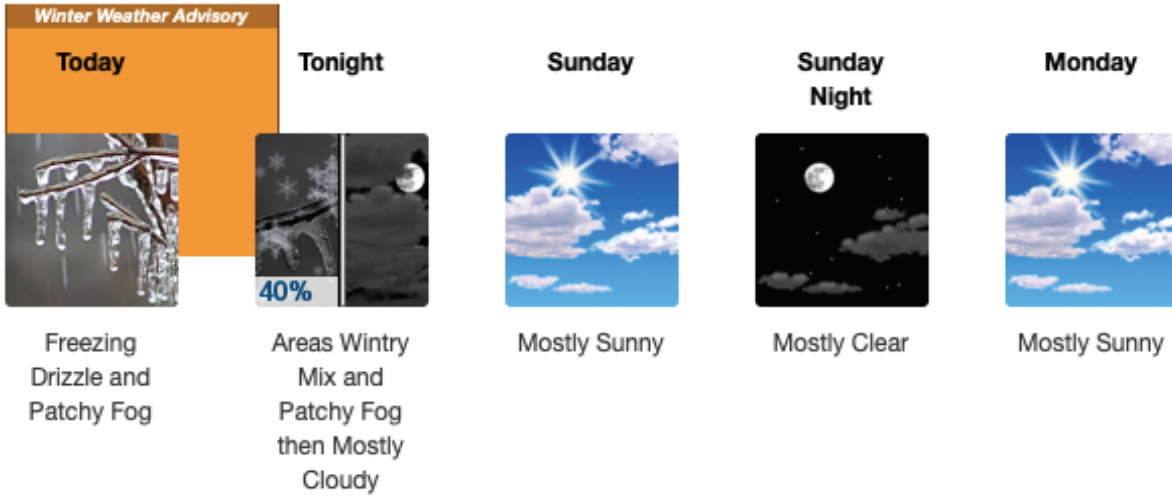
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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



# Broton Daily Independent

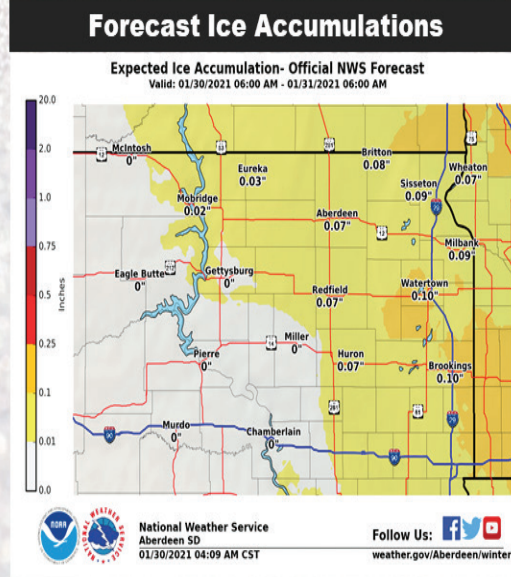
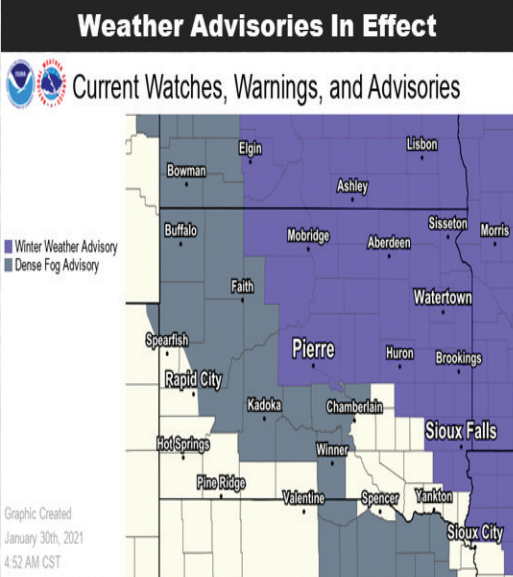
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## Dense Fog/Freezing Drizzle Today Into This Evening

- Hazardous travel possible due to icy roads and low visibility
- Slowly improving conditions from west to east this evening

Fog



Visit [www.weather.gov/abr](http://www.weather.gov/abr) for a detailed local forecast

Updated: 1/30/2021 4:59 AM CT

NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE  
OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

Fog and freezing drizzle will be the story today. The fog will be dense at times this morning, especially over central South Dakota and into portions of the Glacial Lakes region. Surfaces are likely to become slippery with a thin layer of ice through the morning as freezing drizzle continues. Travel may become hazardous over portions of the region due to icy roads. Gradual improvements are expected from west to east this evening. Warmer temperatures are in store tomorrow through mid-week!

# Groton Daily Independent

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## Today in Weather History

January 30, 2001: Widespread freezing rain, accumulating from 1/8 to 1/2 inch, changed over to snow late in the evening of the 29th. The snow accumulated from 6 to 12 inches over much of central and northeast South Dakota as well as west central Minnesota. The combination of ice and snow caused significant travel problems, school and flight cancellations and delays, business closings, and numerous vehicle accidents. Several highways were closed along with large portions of Interstates 29 and 90. Some snowfall amounts included, 6 inches at Murdo, 14 SSW Hayes, and 8 E of Eden, 7 inches at Castlewood and 5 NE of Peever, 8 inches at Miller, Gann Valley, Iona, Watertown, Ortonville, and 2 NW Stephan. Nine inches of snowfall accumulated 18 S of Harrold with 10 inches at Tulare and Kennebec, 11 inches at Clark, Clear Lake, and Wheaton, 12 inches at Carpenter, Willow Lake, Milbank, and Browns Valley, and 13 inches at Wilmot.

January 30, 2011: Heavy snow of 6 to 9 inches fell across part of northeast South Dakota from the afternoon of the 30th to the afternoon of the 31st. Travel was disrupted especially along Interstate-90. Some snowfall amounts included, 6 inches at Webster, Summit, and Clear Lake; 7 inches at Watertown and Milbank; 8 inches at Wilmot and Sisseton and 9 inches at Bryant, Waubay, and Andover.

1607: The Bristol Channel floods in England, resulted in the drowning of a large number of people and the destruction of a large amount of farmland and livestock. Recent research has suggested that the cause may have been a tsunami. Cardiff was one of the most badly affected towns, with the foundations of St. Mary's Church destroyed.

1954: A tornado touched down near White Point Beach, Nova Scotia. A great deal of hail and lightning was reported along the coast near Liverpool, Nova Scotia.

1966: The Blizzard of 1966 temporarily isolated Buffalo, New York and paralyzed the region. Train service was disrupted. Numerous highways, the New York State Thruway from Albany to the Pennsylvania state line, and the Buffalo Airport as well as other airports throughout western and central New York were closed. Hardest hit was the Syracuse-Oswego area. 100 inches of snow was reported at Oswego, NY. Some schools in Orleans County were closed for the entire week following the blizzard. Economic loss from the storm was estimated at \$35 million dollars. Winds gusting to 60 mph and temperatures in the teens along with heavy and blowing snow created severe blizzard conditions.

2002: What had been one of the driest Januarys on record in Iowa was broken up by a winter storm that produced snowfall across the state from January 30-31. The snow was heaviest across southern and southeastern Iowa where storm total accumulations ranged between 11 and 13 inches along and south of a line from Chariton through Ottumwa to Wapello and Burlington. The highest reported totals were 13.2 inches at Leon and 13.0 inches at Bloomfield and Fairfield.

# Groton Daily Independent

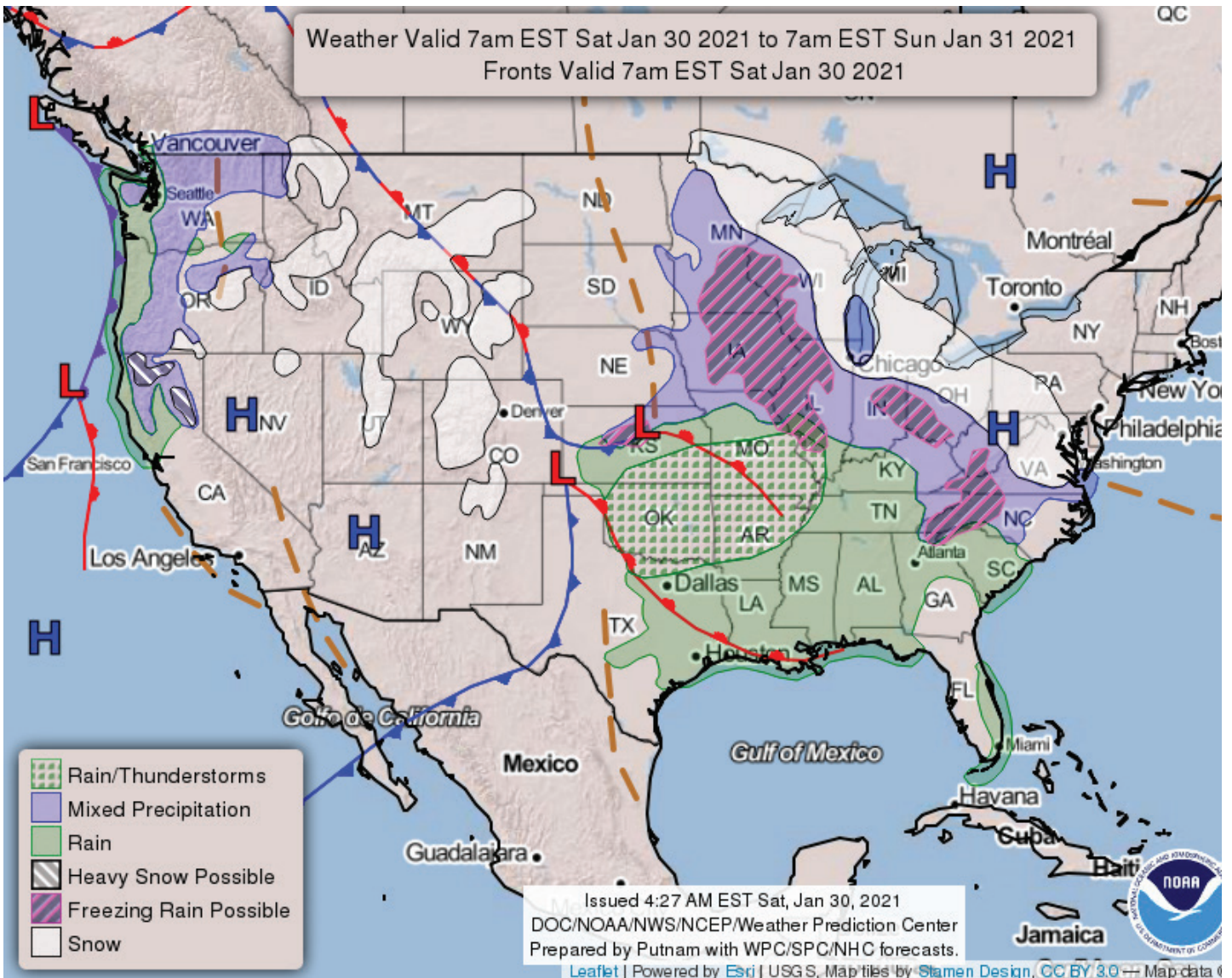
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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 28 °F at 3:38 PM**  
**Low Temp: 17 °F at 12:00 AM**  
**Wind: 18 mph at 6:09 PM**  
**Precip:**

## Today's Info

**Record High: 55° in 1931**  
**Record Low: -37° in 2019**  
**Average High: 24°F**  
**Average Low: 2°F**  
**Average Precip in Jan.: 0.44**  
**Precip to date in Jan.: 0.14**  
**Average Precip to date: 0.44**  
**Precip Year to Date: 0.14**  
**Sunset Tonight: 5:38 p.m.**  
**Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:55 a.m.**





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## FLAWLESS

Flawless: Having no faults, flaws, or defects; having no imperfections; something that has nothing that can in any way diminish its value. Seeing something flawless or holding an object that is flawless, or knowing of something that is flawless, is rare. Yet, most of us own or have access to something that is flawless.

David said, "The words of the Lord are flawless." Why so? If we are to depend on them and believe in them and live by them, they must be flawless.

His promises must be flawless. They are not like the records of athletes that are made only to be broken by someone who is faster, stronger, or wiser. If the words of God could be replaced by someone else's words, we would not be able to trust Him or have faith and confidence in Him.

His promises must not only be flawless; they must be fruitful. Someone has counted more than 30,000 promises in the Bible. That number is far beyond what anyone can ever claim or need. As long as we live, we will never come to the end of them because He has promised to meet our every need, every day as long we live.

His promises must not only be flawless and fruitful; they must be forceful. If God makes a promise, He will be able to bring it to completion. Always remember that He has all of the power that brought the universe into existence at His disposal. If He said it, it is as good as done.

His promises must not only be flawless, fruitful, and forceful - they must be fulfilling. Because He created us, He knows what we need before we need it.

Prayer: How grateful we are Father, to know that we can depend on Your flawless, fruitful, forceful, and fulfilling Word to meet our every need. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: May the Lord cut off all flattering lips, And the tongue that speaks proud things, Psalm 12:3

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## News from the Associated Press

### Regional airline travel takes big hit from COVID-19 in 2020

By TREVOR J. MITCHELL Sioux Falls Argus Leader

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — For the first two months of 2020, passenger numbers at the Sioux Falls Regional Airport looked great. The airport served just over 100,000 total passengers in February, an 11.6% increase from the same month in 2019.

Then, of course, came COVID-19.

The change in people's behavior was immediately apparent — March passengers were down over 38% from 2019 — but the worst of it came in April, when only 4,341 passengers got on or off a plane at the airport, a 95% decrease.

Since then, passenger numbers have slowly crept upwards, but the airport still ended up with a total passenger count of 588,188 in 2020, down nearly 50% from 2019.

"It's better," said Dan Letellier, the airport's executive director, in an interview. "People have gotten a little more comfortable."

The holiday season was relatively busy, Letellier said, and they've recently had some of their strongest days since the middle of March, before things really changed, the Sioux Falls Argus Leader reported.

Now things will slow down a bit, he said, before vacations and spring break start to see an increase — for those who still go, at least.

Letellier pointed to a recent policy from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention requiring that travelers entering the United States from out of the country to show a negative coronavirus test before getting on their flight.

"It's going to hamper a lot of travel to the Caribbean, Mexico for people who had trips planned," he said.

Lorie Buus, a travel consultant with Sioux Falls' All About Travel, agreed. Emphatically.

"It was devastating," Buus said of the new policy. "We finally had some hope for our industry and they really kind of pulled the rug out from under us."

Buus said she'd seen similar results to the airport in April, when businesses "went down to pretty much zero."

Things started to get better near the end of the year, she said, and January had been good until the announcement was made.

Like many other industries, Letellier said airlines and airports are hoping for a downturn in COVID-19 cases as the vaccine continues to be rolled out, adding that they continue to go "above and beyond" with cleaning, disinfecting and safety protocols.

"I think in general, people that have flown are not as concerned about traveling itself," Letellier said, adding that it was more about how things were in their destination — and that those still on flights didn't seem to be altering their travel plans.

"The places that were popular before," he said, "are still popular."

Buus agreed, saying that she's still getting a lot of phone calls and pricing requests from people who want to travel, even if they can't quite yet.

"We're just counting on numbers going down and the vaccine to get out to everybody," she said. "Hopefully things will stabilize."

### Friday's Scores

By The Associated Press

BOYS BASKETBALL=

Aberdeen Christian 61, Wilmot 27

Brandon Valley 57, Aberdeen Central 44

Burke 80, Tripp-Delmont/Armour 55

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Canton 76, Freeman Academy 36  
Chamberlain 62, Mobridge-Pollock 58  
Corsica/Stickney 92, Menno 45  
Edgemont 45, Hay Springs, Neb. 36  
Faith 74, Newell 34  
Florence/Henry 62, Great Plains Lutheran 26  
Gregory 68, Gayville-Volin 39  
Hanson 45, Bridgewater-Emery 41  
Harrisburg 73, Watertown 41  
Highmore-Harrold 56, Iroquois 32  
Howard 60, Ethan 47  
Ipswich 61, Herreid/Selby Area 43  
Lakota Tech 66, Marty Indian 63  
Langford 66, Northwestern 42  
Lyman 63, New Underwood 46  
Platte-Geddes 61, Colome 40  
Rapid City Christian 84, Timber Lake 63  
Wagner 42, Scotland 38  
Waubay/Summit 51, Warner 48  
Winner 70, Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 56  
Wolsey-Wessington 79, Kimball/White Lake 44  
GIRLS BASKETBALL=  
Aberdeen Central 50, Brandon Valley 45  
Aberdeen Christian 42, Wilmot 27  
Aberdeen Roncalli 62, Sisseton 34  
Baltic 58, Chester 39  
Bison 49, Kadoka Area 44  
Bowman County, N.D. 57, Lemmon 22  
Colman-Egan 35, DeSmet 26  
Corsica/Stickney 55, Menno 51  
Deubrook 64, Dell Rapids St. Mary 51  
Edgemont 43, Hay Springs, Neb. 33  
Elkton-Lake Benton 47, Oldham-Ramona/Rutland 31  
Estelline/Hendricks 43, Arlington 35  
Ethan 48, Howard 29  
Flandreau 62, Garretson 34  
Florence/Henry 58, Great Plains Lutheran 21  
Gayville-Volin 53, Gregory 48  
Hamlin 72, Webster 37  
Hanson 45, Bridgewater-Emery 42  
Harrisburg 53, Watertown 38  
Herreid/Selby Area 46, Ipswich 38  
Highmore-Harrold 63, Iroquois 28  
Lakota Tech 67, Marty Indian 41  
McCook Central/Montrose 73, Sioux Valley 35  
Mobridge-Pollock 44, Chamberlain 31  
New Underwood 51, Lyman 28  
Newell 46, Faith 34  
Northwestern 36, Langford 29  
O Gorman 63, Sioux Falls Lincoln 26

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Pierre 51, Yankton 22  
Redfield 46, Milbank 27  
Scotland 57, Wagner 51  
Tea Area 78, Madison 41  
Tripp-Delmont/Armour 59, Burke 54  
Wall 67, Timber Lake 52  
Waubay/Summit 54, Warner 41  
Winner 55, Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 28  
Wyndmere-Lidgerwood, N.D. 53, Britton-Hecla 36  
POSTPONEMENTS AND CANCELLATIONS=  
Canton vs. Freeman Academy, ppd.  
Potter County vs. Sunshine Bible Academy, ppd.

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

## SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined  
PIERRE, S.D. (AP) \_ These South Dakota lotteries were drawn Friday:  
Mega Millions  
04-44-58-59-70, Mega Ball: 3, Megaplier: 3  
(four, forty-four, fifty-eight, fifty-nine, seventy; Mega Ball: three; Megaplier: three)  
Estimated jackpot: \$25 million  
Powerball  
Estimated jackpot: \$30 million

## Umude scores 32 to lift South Dakota over Omaha 91-59

VERMILLION, S.D. (AP) — Stanley Umude had 32 points as South Dakota extended its winning streak to eight games, rolling past Nebraska Omaha 91-59 on Friday night.

Kruz Perrott-Hunt had 16 points for South Dakota (9-6, 8-2 Summit League). Tasos Kamateros added 13 points and nine rebounds. A.J. Plitzuweit had six rebounds.

South Dakota dominated the first half and led 54-20 at the break. The Mavericks' 20 first-half points marked a season low for the team.

La'Mel Robinson had 11 points for the Mavericks (2-13, 0-5), whose losing streak stretched to nine games. Ayo Akinwole added 10 points and six rebounds.

For more AP college basketball coverage: <https://apnews.com/Collegebasketball> and [http://twitter.com/AP\\_Top25](http://twitter.com/AP_Top25)

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## Health officials seek volunteers to help with vaccinations

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The South Dakota Department of Health is looking for volunteers to help administer the coronavirus vaccines.

Health officials have set up a website where potential volunteers from across the state can register to assist with COVID-19 vaccination efforts. And, volunteers who are willing to help in medical settings may qualify to receive their vaccine early, the Rapid City Journal reported.

"An effective and streamlined volunteer pool that is willing and able to assist will be key as vaccination

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efforts are expanded," the DOH said, adding that the federal vaccine allocation is expected to increase in the weeks and months ahead.

Volunteers who register on the portal can select what type of volunteer work they are seeking. The DOH said you don't necessarily have to have a medical background. Applicants will be vetted by DOH before any volunteer opportunities are offered.

"Since the beginning of the pandemic there is not a week that goes by in which we are not asked, 'how can I help?'" health secretary Kim Malsam-Rysdon said. "This is part of what makes South Dakota such a great place to call home. We work with what we have, while helping as many as we can."

On Friday, state health officials reported five new COVID-19-related deaths and 160 new confirmed cases of the virus. The state's death toll is now 1,768 since the pandemic began.

According to the Department of Health, a total of 92,896 doses of the vaccine have been administered to 66,448 people, the Argus Leader reported. Out of all who have been given the vaccine, 26,448 have received both doses.

## Russia warn Navalny supporters not to attend Sunday protests

By JIM HEINTZ Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — Russian police have issued a strong warning against participating in protests planned for Sunday to call for the release of jailed opposition leader Alexei Navalny, the Kremlin's most prominent foe.

The warning comes amid detentions of Navalny associates and opposition journalists and a police plan to restrict movement in the center of Moscow on Sunday.

Navalny was arrested on Jan. 17 after flying back to Russia from Germany, where he had spent five months recovering from nerve-agent poisoning. His detention sparked nationwide protests one week ago in about 100 cities; nearly 4,000 people were reported arrested.

The next demonstration in Moscow is planned for Lubyanka Square. The Federal Security Service, which Navalny claims arranged to have him poisoned with a Soviet-era nerve agent on behalf of the Kremlin, is headquartered in the square. The Russian government has denied a role in the 44-year-old's poisoning.

The city police department said much of central Moscow from Red Square to Lubyanka would have pedestrian restrictions and that seven subway stations in the vicinity would be closed on Sunday. Restaurants in the area also are to be closed, and the iconic GUM department store on Red Square said it would open only in the evening.

Russian Interior Ministry spokeswoman Irina Volk cited the coronavirus pandemic in a Saturday warning against protests. She said participants found in violation of epidemiological regulations could face criminal charges.

The Jan. 23 protests in support of Navalny were the largest and most widespread seen in Russia in many years, and authorities sought to prevent a repeat. Police conducted a series of raids this week at apartments and offices of Navalny's family, associates and anti-corruption organization.

His brother Oleg, top aide Lyubov Sobol and three other people were put under two-month house arrest on Friday, as part of a criminal probe into alleged violations of coronavirus regulations during last weekend's protests.

Sergei Smirnov, editor of the Mediazona news site that was founded by members of the Pussy Riot punk collective, was detained by police upon leaving his home on Saturday. No charges against him were announced.

Navalny fell into a coma on Aug. 20 while on a domestic flight from Siberia to Moscow. He was transferred to a Berlin hospital two days later. Labs in Germany, France and Sweden, and tests by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, established that he was exposed to the Novichok nerve agent.

Russian authorities have refused to open a full-fledged criminal inquiry, citing a lack of evidence that he was poisoned.

Navalny was arrested when he returned to Russia on the grounds that his months recovering in Germany violated terms of a suspended sentence he received in a 2014 conviction for fraud and money-laundering,

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a case that he says was political revenge.

Just after the arrest, Navalny's team released a two-hour video on his YouTube channel about a lavish Black Sea residence purportedly built for Russian President Vladimir Putin. The property features amenities like an "aqua-discotheque," a hookah lounge equipped for watching pole dances and a casino. The video has been viewed over 100 million times and inspired a stream of sarcastic jokes on the internet.

Putin has said that neither he nor any of his close relatives own the property, and the Kremlin has insisted it has no relation to the president even though it's protected by the federal bodyguard agency FSO, which provides security for top government officials.

Russian state television later aired a report from the compound that showed it under construction and included an interview with an engineer who claimed the building would be a luxury hotel.

On Saturday, construction magnate Arkady Rotenberg, a close Putin associate and his occasional judo sparring partner, claimed he owned the property.

## Census delay helps GOP in one statehouse, Dems in another

By MATTHEW BARAKAT and MIKE CATALINI Associated Press

FALLS CHURCH, Va. (AP) — The Census Bureau's missed deadlines could be a boon for Virginia Republicans but a bust for the New Jersey GOP — and the reverse for Democrats — as the only two states with legislative elections this year do so without the data they need to draw new boundaries.

The 2021 election cycle, the first since Democrats took control of the White House and Congress, is also supposed to be the first conducted after redistricting based on changes captured in the once-a-decade census required under the Constitution.

The delay in census figures means Virginia and New Jersey will continue to use decade-old maps that don't reflect growth in areas such as northern Virginia and may undercount people of color, factors that could contribute to shifts in their statehouses.

The two are the only states with statewide elections in 2021; the unusual election cycle often provides an early window into the electorate's view on a new presidential administration.

In past decades, the Census Bureau has given Virginia and New Jersey priority in receiving their redistricting data so they can complete the process in time to run their elections. This year, the entire census has been delayed by a combination of factors, and a top Census Bureau official said Wednesday that states won't receive the necessary redistricting data for legislative boundaries until July.

That's too late to accommodate Virginia and New Jersey, so they will have little choice but to conduct elections this year under the existing boundaries.

In New Jersey, voters approved a constitutional amendment to leave the existing lines in place for 2021 if the state didn't receive the requisite census data by February, so its path forward is clear.

But that doesn't mean everyone is pleased with how things turned out.

Republicans gripe that the amendment will lock in a Democratic advantage for another year, and apart from political party considerations, there are worries that people of color — particularly Hispanics and Asian Americans — whose population has grown an estimated 20% over the past decade won't be fairly represented.

Democrats hold a 25-15 edge in the state Senate and a 52-28 advantage in the Assembly.

Jon Bramnick, the Republican Assembly minority leader, put the amendment that carries forward the current map in stark terms: "It's bad."

"It has kept Republicans in the minority for 20 years. Why would we want to keep a map that has kept Democrats in the majority?" he said.

The nonpartisan Princeton Gerrymandering Project raised concerns that the amendment could put people of color at a disadvantage.

"It would ... dilute the voting power of these communities immediately, in 2021," said the project's director, Sam Wang, during a legislative hearing. "A two-year delay in redistricting would likely harm communities of color, who have grown in population in areas across the state."

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Democratic Assemblyman John McKeon sponsored the amendment. He said if legislative redistricting were rushed in time for the 2021 election, it would likely be with incomplete census data.

"We either have a whole eight years of good numbers or 10 years of bad," he said in an interview. "Why deal with partial numbers and then have a district that's not representative?"

In Virginia, on the other hand, the status quo gives an advantage to Republicans, said Mark Rozell, political scientist at George Mason University.

"This buys one additional election cycle for Republicans before the redistricting process reflects the changes that benefit a more progressive side of the political spectrum," Rozell said.

The expectation in Virginia is that the new data will continue the ongoing population growth in northern Virginia — a Democratic stronghold— at the expense of more rural areas that lean Republican.

The House of Delegates lines that were created in 2011 were drawn by a Republican-controlled chamber to benefit the GOP. In fact, when those boundaries were challenged on the basis of racial gerrymandering, Republicans defended themselves in court by arguing that they were motivated by partisan bias, not racial bias, when they drew the lines.

Democratic Del. Marcus Simon of Fairfax, a member of Virginia's newly created bipartisan redistricting commission that will draw the new lines once the census data is received, said the GOP's advantage under the old lines has been blunted to an extent by a 2019 court-ordered redistricting that unpacked racial minorities who had been crammed into 11 House districts. The redrawn lines made Democrats more competitive in a higher number of districts. That in turn fueled a Democratic gain of six seats in the 2019 House elections, flipping the chamber to Democratic control.

Less certain in Virginia is when candidates who win in 2021 will have to run again. A court could order elections to be held in 2022 to get the new lines in place as quickly as possible, and again in 2023. Or the 2021 winners could be allowed to keep their seats until 2023.

As much as Democrats might want the run under the new lines, Simon said the expenses and toll of running elections in three consecutive years might be excessive. And from a partisan perspective, he acknowledged that giving Republicans an opportunity in three consecutive years to flip the House of Delegates would not be ideal for Democrats.

"There's no chance (for Republicans) to claim the majority in 2022 if there's no election," he said.

Catalini reported from Trenton, N.J.

## **Ethiopia says Tigray back to 'normalcy;' witnesses disagree.**

By CARA ANNA Associated Press

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) — Ethiopia's government has privately told Biden administration staffers its embattled Tigray region has "returned to normalcy," but new witness accounts describe terrified Tigray residents hiding in bullet-marked homes and a vast rural area where effects of the fighting and food shortages are yet unknown.

The conflict that began in November between Ethiopian forces and those of the Tigray region who dominated the government for nearly three decades continues largely in shadow. Some communications links are severed, residents are scared to give details by phone and almost all journalists are blocked. Thousands of people have died.

Ethiopia's deputy prime minister, Demeke Mekonnen, and colleagues briefed a private gathering hosted by the Atlantic Council think tank on Friday. They said nearly 1.5 million people in Tigray have been reached with humanitarian aid, and they expressed unease at "false and politically motivated allegations" of mistreatment of refugees from neighboring Eritrea, the state-affiliated Fana Broadcasting Corporate reported. It said Biden administration staffers attended the meeting.

The refugees have been targeted by soldiers from Eritrea, who are fighting alongside Ethiopian troops against the Tigray forces. The Biden administration has pressed Eritrea to "immediately" withdraw them, citing credible accounts of looting, sexual assault and other abuses.

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Despite Ethiopia's latest assertions, its recently appointed administrators in Tigray have estimated that more than 4.5 million people, or close to the region's entire population, need emergency food aid and some people have begun dying of starvation. That's according to leaked documents from a crisis meeting of government and aid workers in early January.

And a new account by a Doctors Without Borders emergency coordinator in Tigray, Albert Vinas, says "we are very concerned about what may be happening in rural areas," with many places inaccessible because of fighting or difficulties in obtaining permission.

"But we know, because community elders and traditional authorities have told us, that the situation in these places is very bad," he said in the account posted online Friday.

He described Tigray residents handing his colleagues pieces of paper with phone numbers and asking for help in reaching their families, whom they hadn't heard from for weeks.

"We saw a population locked in their homes and living in great fear," he wrote after visiting the city of Adigrat and the towns of Axum and Adwa starting in late December.

In Adigrat, one of Tigray's largest cities, "the situation was very tense and its hospital was in a terrible condition," Vinas added, with "no food, no water and no money. Some patients who had been admitted with traumatic injuries were malnourished." One woman had been in labor for a week.

Beyond hospitals, up to 90% of health centers between the Tigray capital, Mekele, and Axum to the north toward Eritrea were not functioning, he said. "There is a large population suffering, surely with fatal consequences. ... There have been no vaccinations in almost three months, so we fear there will be epidemics soon."

In a separate account posted by the World Peace Foundation on Friday, former senior Ethiopian official Mulugeta Gebrehiwot Berhe in a phone interview from rural Tigray told director Alex de Waal that "hunger among peasantry is crippling" in areas bordering Eritrea after Eritrean forces burned or looted crops just before the harvest.

"Soon, we might see a massive humanitarian crisis," Mulugeta said.

Eritrean officials have not responded to questions nor confirmed their soldiers' involvement, and Ethiopia has denied their presence despite witness accounts.

The food situation in Tigray was already "extremely bad" before the fighting began because of a locust outbreak and the COVID-19 pandemic, the Oxfam country director in Ethiopia, Gezahegn Kebede Gebrehanan, has told The Associated Press.

"When the fighting took place, a lot of people fled into the bush. But when they came back, most found their houses destroyed or all belongings looted," he said after an assessment in southern Tigray, by some accounts the most accessible part of the region. "Food is a very, very prominent necessity, from what we saw."

International pressure continues on Ethiopia to allow unrestricted humanitarian access to Tigray, now a complicated patchwork of local authorities, but Gezahegn warned against suspending aid to the government as the European Union recently did.

"The donor community might think they will push the Ethiopian government, but the Ethiopian government will never surrender," he said. He acknowledged the "good intentions" but said "it's the people who suffer."

## AP Analysis: Racial disparity seen in US vaccination drive

By CARLA K. JOHNSON, ANGELIKI KASTANIS and KAT STAFFORD Associated Press

A racial gap has opened up in the nation's COVID-19 vaccination drive, with Black Americans in many places lagging behind whites in receiving shots, an Associated Press analysis shows.

An early look at the 17 states and two cities that have released racial breakdowns through Jan. 25 found that Black people in all places are getting inoculated at levels below their share of the general population, in some cases significantly below.

That is true even though they constitute an oversize percentage of the nation's health care workers, who were put at the front of the line for shots when the campaign began in mid-December.



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For example, in North Carolina, Black people make up 22% of the population and 26% of the health care workforce but only 11% of the vaccine recipients so far. White people, a category in which the state includes both Hispanic and non-Hispanic whites, are 68% of the population and 82% of those vaccinated.

The gap is deeply troubling to some, given that the coronavirus has taken a disproportionate toll in severe sickness and death on Black people in the U.S., where the scourge has killed over 430,000 Americans. Black, Hispanic and Native American people are dying from COVID-19 at almost three times the rate of white people, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"We're going to see a widening and exacerbation of the racial health inequities that were here before the pandemic and worsened during the pandemic if our communities cannot access the vaccine," said Dr. Uché Blackstock, a New York emergency physician and CEO of Advancing Health Equity, an advocacy group that addresses bias and inequality.

Experts say several factors could be driving the emerging disparity, including deep distrust of the medical establishment among Black Americans because of a history of discriminatory treatment; inadequate access to the vaccine in Black neighborhoods; and a digital divide that can make it difficult to get crucial information. Vaccination sign-ups are being done to a large degree online.

"It's frustrating and challenging," said Dr. Michelle Fiscus, who runs Tennessee's vaccination program, which is doubling the doses sent to some hard-hit rural counties but is meeting with deep-rooted mistrust among some Black Tennesseans.

"We have to be working very hard to rebuild that trust and get these folks vaccinated," Fiscus said. "They're dying. They're being hospitalized."

Hispanic people also lagged behind in vaccinations, but their levels were somewhat closer to expectations in most places studied. Hispanics on average are younger than other Americans, and vaccinations have yet to be thrown open to young people.

However, several states where Hispanic communities were hit particularly hard by COVID-19 have yet to report data, notably California and New York.

President Joe Biden is trying to bring more equity to the vaccine rollout he inherited from the Trump administration. The Biden administration is encouraging states to map and target vulnerable neighborhoods using such tools as the CDC's social vulnerability index, which incorporates data on race, poverty, crowded housing and other factors.

"We are going to take extra steps to get to the people hardest to reach, and that work is happening right now," said Dr. Marcella Nunez-Smith, the chair of Biden's COVID-19 equity task force.

Most states have yet to release any racial data on who has been vaccinated. Even in the states that provided breakdowns, the data is often incomplete, with many records missing details on race. However, the missing information would not be enough to change the general picture in most cases.

The data came from Alaska, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Indiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Nebraska, New Jersey, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, Virginia and West Virginia, plus two cities, Philadelphia and Chicago.

The AP analysis found that whites are getting vaccinated at closer to or higher than expected levels in most of the states examined.

At the outset, health care workers and nursing home residents generally were given priority for shots in the U.S.

In the past couple of weeks, many states opened eligibility to a wider group of older people and more front-line workers, which could be further depressing the relative share of Black people getting vaccinated. The nation's over-65 population is more heavily white than other age groups.

Among the findings:

— In Maryland, Black people make up 30% of the population and 40% of the health care industry yet account for just 16% of the people vaccinated so far. White people, which in the state's data includes both Hispanic and non-Hispanic whites, constitute 55% of the population and 67% of those who have gotten shots. Hispanics of any race are 11% of the population and 5% of the vaccine recipients.

— In Philadelphia, Black people are 40% of the population but just 14% of the people vaccinated in the

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city so far. Hispanics are 15% of the population and 4% of the vaccine recipients.

— In Chicago, Black people make up 30% of the population but only 15% of those vaccinated. With Hispanics, the numbers are 29% versus 17%.

The vaccine drive has been slower and more problem-plagued than expected. Many Americans of all races have had trouble getting shots because the supply is limited. Overall, about 7% of Americans have received at least one dose. But there are other problems slowing vaccination among Black Americans and other groups, experts said.

Some Black neighborhoods have nobody signed up to give shots.

"What we've heard over and over again: A lot of Black folks want to get it from their doctor or from their local clinic because that's where the trust is," said Dr. Thomas Dobbs, Mississippi's health officer.

Louisiana is using the CDC tool to locate vulnerable neighborhoods without vaccination sites, then recruiting new vaccinators in those neighborhoods, said Dr. Joseph Kanter, state health officer.

Other strategies under way in some states: providing transportation so people can get to their appointments and reaching homebound people via mobile vaccination units.

To address mistrust, Thomas LaVeist, dean of the School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine at Tulane University in New Orleans, is recruiting notable Black Americans to help promote vaccination. The campaign, called "The Skin You're In," has produced a video of New Orleans hip-hop artist Big Freedia playfully demonstrating how to wear a mask.

Although LaVeist gives credit to the Trump administration for supporting vaccine development, he said naming the project Operation Warp Speed was a "disastrous" choice because it seemed to emphasize speed, not careful scientific review.

"I completely understand the mistrust," said LaVeist, who had his first shot Monday. "But you have to consider the risk of COVID versus the risk of the vaccine. This is a devastating disease and it has disproportionately impacted Black Americans. That is what we do know."

Because of deportation fears, there is also mistrust among Latinos that is undercutting the vaccination drive, as well as a language barrier in many cases, according to activists.

Many Black Americans and other people of color are taking steps to make sure their communities receive the vaccine, including Detroit health care worker Sameerah Singletary, who is set to get a shot soon.

More than 1,700 residents of the nation's largest Black-majority city have died of the virus, including some of Singletary's friends and her godmother. Yet she knows many who are refusing the vaccine.

"I think there is such a collective trauma in Black people, even in Detroit, that many people don't have nothing left," Singletary said. "They've been traumatized so much that they don't care because the virus was just another layer on top."

But she added: "I feel like we have to participate in our healing."

## Journalists sought for personal help by the COVID-19 curious

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Calling a hospital to see if a bed was available for a COVID-19 patient isn't part of Houston television news anchor Chauncy Glover's job description. Neither is guiding a viewer online to find a place to be vaccinated.

He's done both, and isn't alone. Listeners and readers across the country are reaching out directly to journalists for help during the coronavirus pandemic, and many are responding.

"We are now doing more than we bargained for," Glover said. "We have to be smarter on these topics. We have to know more. For so many people, it may be life or death."

It began for Glover last spring, when he came down with COVID-19 and told his story to KTRK-TV viewers. By phone, email and text, he was peppered with questions after getting back to work: What did it feel like? Should I be worried if I have this symptom? What did you do during quarantine to keep from going crazy?

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One viewer described symptoms that made Glover suggest he go to the hospital, and the news anchor followed up with calls to find space for him.

During the past month, inquiries about how to get vaccinated have become most common. Southern California Public Radio, which has an aggressive community outreach program, had 275 questions about that in a two-day period last week, said Ashley Alvarado, director of community engagement.

Listeners have also asked Alvarado's team about unemployment benefits, about whether or not they should cancel a family wedding or if it was illegal to hold a graveside service for a relative who died.

A former journalist, Alvarado frequently tips reporters to potential stories based on what her department hears. Similarly, questions that science and medical reporter Lisa Krieger gets are fodder for features and consumer tips published in the Mercury News of San Jose, California, and partner newspapers in the Bay Area News Group.

CC Davidson-Hiers, a reporter for the Tallahassee Democrat in Florida, has lost track of how many requests she's gotten, many from elderly readers who can't navigate online vaccination sign-ups.

It's an abrupt turnaround from last year, when her inbox was filled with vitriol from people who called her an alarmist or worthless human being trying to scare people, just because she was writing about COVID-19.

Now, she emails links and suggestions to readers who contact her. When she gets calls, she will stay on the line and walk people through the process when they're struggling with the internet.

"I absolutely love doing it," Davidson-Hiers said. "I have to keep an eye on how sustainable it is. It's something we're all facing — the pressure of the pandemic and the stress of it all."

Alvarado has staggered the work hours of people answering calls and similarly guards the mental health of colleagues who hear stories of trauma over and over again.

Several of the people Krieger speaks to are simply grateful to hear another human being, instead of speaking to machines and getting calls dropped, or directed to an alienating online experience.

Krieger has spent nights and weekends answering messages. She speaks to church groups and her newspaper has set up online seminars. She realizes that her first responsibility is to report and write stories, but said management has supported her efforts to help readers.

"This is payback time for us," she said. "These are readers who are very loyal and they need us. The least we can do is return their calls and emails."

Glover has spent considerable time trying to convince people in Houston's Black community that the vaccines are safe. He's met with hardened skepticism, including people who disparage "Trump's vaccine." He and colleague Mayra Moreno host televised town hall meetings aimed particularly at Black and Latino residents.

Alvarado similarly tries to break down cultural barriers, and sends out a regular text message of coronavirus news to listeners who don't have Internet access.

"For me, it's rewarding," Glover said. "You work so hard to become that voice that people turn to and they trust what you're saying. To me, that's the ultimate goal of a journalist — to be trusted."

Davidson-Hiers generally guides people to help themselves. But on two occasions — once for a person who had no internet and another for someone at a loss for how to use it — she has set up vaccination appointments for readers.

In retrospect, she was queasy for ethical reasons. Journalists are trained to observe and report, not to get involved in their stories.

There's nothing wrong with doing your best to help people with information, said Kathleen Culver, director of the Center for Journalism Ethics at the University of Wisconsin. But it's best to avoid situations where you learn someone's medical records, or make a specific medical appointment or recommendation, she said.

What if something goes wrong?

"I make sure I stay within my boundaries," Glover said. "I don't think there's anything wrong with helping people navigate a website. I'm not picking people up and taking them to doctors' appointments or driving them to the hospital."

Despite the extra work involved, San Jose's Krieger and many of her colleagues are happy to find another way of connecting their news organizations to the communities they serve.

"Over recent years we've been told that journalism is dying and is becoming obsolete," she said. "It's gratifying to be a comfort to readers and provide them with information the literally can't get anywhere else. It's so rewarding and it's why we're in this business."

## Fighting climate change in America means changes to America

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

Climate isn't the only thing changing.

What comes next in the nation's struggle to combat global warming will probably transform how Americans drive, where they get their power and other bits of day-to-day life, both quietly and obviously, experts say. So far the greening of America has been subtle, driven by market forces, technology and voluntary actions.

The Biden administration is about to change that.

In a flurry of executive actions in his first eight days in office, the president is trying to steer the U.S. economy from one fueled by fossils to one that no longer puts additional heat-trapping gases into the air by 2050.

The United States is rejoining the international Paris climate accord and is also joining many other nations in setting an ambitious goal that once seemed unattainable: net-zero carbon emissions by midcentury. That means lots of changes designed to fight increasingly costly climate disasters such as wildfires, floods, droughts, storms and heat waves.

Think of the journey to a carbon-less economy as a road trip from Washington, D.C., to California that started about 15 years ago. "We've made it through Ohio and up to the Indiana border. But the road has been pretty smooth so far. It gets rougher ahead," said climate scientist Zeke Hausfather, climate and energy director at the Breakthrough Institute.

"The Biden administration is both stepping on the gas and working to upgrade our vehicle," Hausfather said.

The end results of some of Biden's new efforts may still not be noticeable, such as your power eventually coming from ever-cheaper wind and solar energy instead of coal and natural gas that now provides 59% of American power. But when it comes to going from here to there, that you'll notice.

General Motors announced Thursday that as of 2035 it hopes to go all-electric for its light-duty vehicles, no longer selling gas cars. Experts expect most new cars sold in 2030 to be electric. The Biden administration promised 550,000 charging stations to help with the transition to electric cars.

"You will no longer be going to a gas station, but you will need to charge your vehicle whether at home or on the road," said Kate Larsen, director of international climate policy research at the Rhodium Group. "It may be a whole new way of thinking about transportation for the average person."

But it will still be your car, which is why most of the big climate action over the next 10 years won't be too noticeable, said Princeton University ecologist Stephen Pacala.

"The single biggest difference is that because wind and solar is distributed you will see a lot more of it on the landscape," said Pacala, who leads a decarbonizing America study by the National Academy of Sciences that comes out next week.

Other recent detailed scientific studies show that because of dropping wind, solar and battery prices, Biden's net-zero carbon goal can be accomplished far cheaper than feared in the past and with health benefits "many, many times" outweighing the costs, said Pacala, who was part of one study at Princeton. Those studies agree on what needs to be done for decarbonization, and what Biden has come out with "is doing the things that everyone now is concluding that we should do," Pacala said.

These are the type of shifts that don't cost much — about \$1 day per person — and won't require people to abandon their current cars and furnaces, but replace them with cleaner electric vehicles and heat pumps when it comes time for a new one, said Margaret Torn, a senior science at the Department's of Energy's Lawrence Berkeley National Lab, who co-authored a peer-reviewed study Wednesday.

Part of the problem, said study co-author Ryan Jones, co-founder of Evolved Energy Research, is that for years people have wrongly portrayed the battle against climate change as a "personal morality problem"

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where individuals have to sacrifice by driving and flying less, turning down the heat and eating less meat. "Actually, climate change is an industry economy issue where most of the big solutions are happening under the hood or upstream of people's homes," Jones said. "It's a big change in how we produce energy and consume energy. It's not a change in people's day-to-day lives or it doesn't need to be."

One Biden interim goal — "a carbon pollution-free power sector by 2035" — may not be doable that quickly, but can be done by 2050, said study co-author Jim Williams of the University of San Francisco.

Biden's executive orders featured plans for an all-electric federal fleet of vehicles, conserving 30% of the country's land and waters, doubling the nation's offshore wind energy and funding to help communities become more resilient to climate disasters. Republicans and fossil fuel interests objected, calling the actions job-killers.

"Using the incredible leverage of federal government purchases in green electricity, zero-emission cars and new infrastructure will rapidly increase demand for home-grown climate-friendly technologies," said Rosina Bierbaum, a University of Michigan environmental policy professor.

The next big thing for the administration is to come up with a Paris climate accord goal — called Nationally Determined Contribution — for how much the United States hopes to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. It has to be ambitious for the president to reach his ultimate goal of net zero carbon emissions by 2050, but it also has to be doable.

His administration promises to reveal the goal, required by the climate agreement but nonbinding, before its Earth Day climate summit, April 22.

That new number "is actually the centrally important activity of the next year," said University of Maryland environment professor Nate Hultman, who worked on the Obama administration's Paris goal.

Getting to net zero carbon emissions midcentury means about a 43% cut from 2005 levels — the baseline the U.S. government uses — by 2030, said the Rhodium Group's Larsen. The U.S. can realistically reach a 40% cut by 2030, which is about one-third reduction from what 2020 U.S. carbon emissions would have been without a pandemic, said Williams, the San Francisco professor.

All this work on power and vehicles, that's easy compared with decarbonizing agriculture with high methane emissions from livestock and high-heat industrial processes such as steel-making, Breakthrough's Hausfather said.

"There's no silver bullet for agriculture," Hausfather said. "There's no solar panels for cows so to speak, apart from meat alternatives, but even there you have challenges around consumer acceptance."

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Read stories on climate issues by The Associated Press at <https://apnews.com/hub/climate>

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Follow Seth Borenstein on Twitter at @borenbears.

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The Associated Press Health and Science Department receives support from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute's Department of Science Education. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

## **Biden faces calls to secure release of US man in Afghanistan**

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — As the Biden administration considers whether it should pull remaining U.S. troops out of Afghanistan in the coming months, some fear for the fate of an American who could be left behind: an abducted contractor believed held by a Taliban-linked militant group.

On the one-year anniversary of Mark Frerichs' abduction, family members and other supporters are urging the Biden administration not to withdraw additional troops without the Navy veteran being released from captivity. Frerichs was abducted one year ago Sunday while working in the country on engineering projects. U.S. officials believe he is in the custody of the Haqqani network, though the Taliban have not publicly acknowledged holding him.

"We are confident that he's still alive and well," his sister, Charlene Cakora, said in an interview with The

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Associated Press. "We don't have any thinking that he's dead or that he's injured."

For U.S. diplomats, Frerichs' captivity is a piece of a much larger geopolitical puzzle that aims to balance bringing troops home, after a two-decade conflict, with ensuring regional peace and stability. Biden administration officials have made clear that they are reviewing a February 2020 peace deal between the United States and the Taliban, concerned by whether the Taliban are meeting its commitment to reduce violence in Afghanistan.

The Trump administration, which had made the release of hostages and detainees a priority, ended without having brought home Frerichs, who is from Lombard, Illinois. He is one of several Americans the Biden administration is inheriting responsibility for, including journalist Austin Tice, who went missing in Syria in 2012, as well as U.S. Marine Trevor Reed and Michigan corporate executive Paul Whelan, both of whom are imprisoned in Russia.

It is unclear to what extent, if at all, Frerichs' fate will be complicated by the declining American military presence in Afghanistan committed to by the Trump administration. Days before President Joe Biden took office, the Trump administration announced that it had met its goal of reducing the number of troops in Afghanistan to about 2,500, part of a broader plan to remove all forces by May.

The Biden administration must determine how to handle that commitment.

New Secretary of State Antony Blinken held his first call Thursday with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and told him the administration was reviewing the peace deal. A State Department description of the conversation did not mention Frerichs. Separately, the Pentagon said the Taliban's refusal to meet commitments to reduce violence in Afghanistan is raising questions about whether all U.S. troops will be able to leave by May.

Frerichs' supporters are concerned that a drawdown of military personnel from Afghanistan leaves the U.S. without the leverage it needs to demand his release.

"Further troop withdrawals that are not conditioned upon the release of American hostages will likely make it harder to subsequently secure their release," the two Democratic senators from Illinois, Tammy Duckworth and Dick Durbin, wrote Biden in a letter provided to the AP.

In an interview, Duckworth said she wrote Biden and Blinken to stress "that this needs to be a priority, that we need to bring him home." She said Lloyd Austin, the new defense secretary, had given assurances that any negotiations about military presence would include discussion about detainees "as opposed to us just unilaterally pulling out of there."

Representatives of the James W. Foley Legacy Foundation, which advocates for hostages, told new national security adviser Jake Sullivan in a conversation during the presidential transition period about concerns that Frerichs and Paul Overby, an American writer who disappeared in Afghanistan in 2014, weren't adequately prioritized during discussions with the Taliban, according to the organization's executive director, Margaux Ewen.

The State Department is offering \$5 million for information leading to Frerichs' return.

"American citizen Mark Frerichs has spent a year in captivity. We will not stop working until we secure his safe return home," said State Department spokesman Ned Price.

Frerichs remains in Afghanistan despite a year of steady diplomatic negotiations, including peace talks in November with then-Secretary of State Pompeo and Taliban and Afghan negotiators. The U.S. and Taliban signed a peace deal last February, but much to the family's frustration, Frerichs' return was not made a predicate for the agreement even though he had been abducted weeks earlier.

"I don't want any troops to start packing up and heading out until Mark gets home safely, because I don't think we really have a leg to stand on once they're all out of there," Cakora said. "You don't leave Americans behind, and I just really want to make sure that he's home safe."

Blinken told reporters Wednesday that the Biden administration wanted to take a detailed look at that deal, saying. "We need to understand exactly what is in the agreement" before deciding how to proceed. He said the administration had asked Trump's special envoy for Afghanistan, Zalmay Khalilzad, to remain on the job for continuity's sake.

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In his call with Ghani the following day, according to the State Department, Blinken expressed “robust diplomatic support” for the peace process but said the U.S. was reviewing the peace deal to assess whether the Taliban were living up to their commitment to “cut ties with terrorist groups.”

There were other internal government discussions in the Trump administration.

The Taliban had asked for the release of a combatant imprisoned on drug charges in the U.S. as part a broader effort to resolve issues with Afghanistan. The request prompted dialogue between the State Department and the Justice Department about whether such a release could happen, though it ultimately did not, according to a person familiar with the matter who was not authorized to discuss the private discussions and spoke on condition of anonymity.

It is unclear whether those conversations will pick up in the new administration.

A Justice Department spokeswoman declined to comment.

Follow Eric Tucker at <http://www.twitter.com/etuckerAP>

## The Latest: CDC: Must wear masks on public transportation

By The Associated Press undefined

ATLANTA — The CDC has issued an order requiring travelers to wear a mask on public transportation in the U.S., echoing an executive order by President Joe Biden shortly after he took office.

The CDC order takes effect Monday. It states passengers on airplanes, trains, buses, subways, ships, ferries, taxis and ride-shares must wear a mask that covers their nose and mouth while getting on such vehicles, during the ride and while getting off.

Additionally, people must wear masks on the premises of transportation hubs such as airports, train and subway stations, bus and ferry terminals, seaports and ports of entry. Masks must stay on while people await, board, travel and disembark public transportation.

Biden’s executive order issued Jan. 21 already mandated masks on certain modes of public transportation such as commercial aircraft, trains and ferries. The president also mandated masks on federal property.

The CDC order prompts drivers, conductors and crew members to only transport people who are wearing masks.

### THE VIRUS OUTBREAK:

WHO team visits second Wuhan hospital in virus investigation. Germany expects 5M vaccine doses in next 3 weeks. Novavax COVID-19 vaccine news welcomed in South Africa. Vaccine rollout faces challenges in France’s poorest region. Brazil neighbors limit travel to halt spread of virus strain.

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:

WUHAN, China — Members of a World Health Organization team investigating the origins of the coronavirus pandemic have visited another Wuhan hospital that treated early coronavirus patients.

The facility was one of the city’s first to deal with patients suffering from a then-unknown virus and is a key part of the epidemiological history of the disease. The team’s first face-to-face meetings with Chinese scientists took place on Friday, before the experts visited another early site of the outbreak, the Hubei Integrated Chinese and Western Medicine Hospital.

WHO says all hypotheses are on the table as the team visits hospitals, markets and labs. It’s a politically charged mission as China seeks to avoid blame for alleged early missteps.

BERLIN — Germany says drugmakers will deliver at least 5 million doses of coronavirus vaccines to the country in the next three weeks.

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The Health Ministry says on Twitter that Germany has already received 3.5 million doses in the past five weeks and administered 2.2 million shots.

Health Minister Jens Spahn says the new figures for deliveries from Pfizer, Moderna and AstraZeneca were "good news after a difficult start." Germany has given the first shot to about 2.2% of its 83 million population. Nearly half a million people had received both shots by Saturday. It's recommended the second shot be given 21 to 28 days after the first.

Chancellor Angela Merkel has summoned the governors of Germany's 16 states, which are responsible for organizing the vaccine drive, to discuss the slow rollout on Monday.

In her weekly video address Saturday, she acknowledged families have had a particular burden in the current lockdown but indicated it's still too early for Germany to reopen schools and daycare centers.

**BOSTON** — A Massachusetts congressman who has received both doses of the Pfizer coronavirus vaccine has tested positive for the virus.

The office of U.S. Rep. Stephen Lynch says the lawmaker had a negative test result before attending President Joe Biden's inauguration. The office says Lynch's positive test result came after a staff member in his Boston office tested positive earlier this week.

A statement says Lynch isn't displaying any symptoms of COVID-19. Lynch will self-quarantine and vote by proxy in Congress in the coming week.

Lynch is the second member of the state's congressional delegation to test positive in as many days. On Thursday, U.S. Rep. Lori Trahan announced she had tested positive after repeatedly testing negative.

**PHOENIX** — Arizona has surpassed 13,000 deaths related to COVID-19, just a week after rising above the 12,000 mark.

The Department of Health Services on Friday reported 203 additional deaths. The state also reported 5,028 additional confirmed coronavirus cases, increasing the state's totals to 748,260 cases and 13,022 deaths.

The COVID-19 related hospitalizations and the state's seven-day rolling averages of new known daily cases and daily deaths have slowed recently. But hospital officials this week urged Arizonans against becoming complacent about mask wearing and social distancing.

Also, a new coronavirus variant first identified in England has been found in Arizona. The state's Department of Health Services reported Friday the U.K. strain was confirmed in COVID-19 tests from three people.

**FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla.** — The predominantly Black farming communities on the shore of Florida's Lake Okeechobee will get a coronavirus vaccine station.

That announcement Friday came after a public outcry over a decision to give the Publix supermarket chain sole local distribution rights, a move that left lower-income families isolated and facing drives of 25 miles to reach the nearest store.

State Emergency Management Director Jared Moskowitz told The Associated Press the state will set up a vaccine station in Belle Glade to serve it and its neighboring towns of Pahokee and South Bay. The station will get 5,000 doses, which is about how many people 65 and older live in the area.

**RALEIGH, N.C.** -- Most North Carolina prisoners can get five days knocked off their sentences if they receive coronavirus vaccinations.

State prison officials said Friday that the package of incentives such as extra visitations and a free 10-minute phone call is aimed at motivating inmates to obtain the two necessary doses.

Commissioner of Prisons Todd Ishee says about 21,000 of the 29,000 offenders behind bars are eligible for sentence reductions. Those who aren't would receive \$5 prison canteen credits for undergoing vaccination.

Vaccinations are voluntary for prisoners and staff. Officials say 850 inmates have received their first dose so far and about 2,800 prison workers have done so.



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About 530 prisoners have active COVID-19 cases, and eight are hospitalized. Forty-two prisoners have suffered COVID-related deaths.

**SEATTLE** — The schools chief in Washington state is pushing for teachers to get vaccinated for the coronavirus when it's their turn but also insisting they get back to classrooms immediately, shot or not.

"The bottom line is a vaccine is a tremendous safety net but it is never the thing that is going to create the perfect scenario," said Chris Reykdal, the state's superintendent of public instruction.

Reykdal on Friday announced a partnership with Kaiser Permanente to offer vaccinations to the state's 143,000 public school employees and 12,000 private school employees.

The health care company and medical provider is pledging to open its doors to all educators and school employees in the state when they become individually eligible under the state's vaccine rollout.

Currently, that includes people who are at least 65 — or 50 and older in a multigenerational household.

The latest announcement is in line with Gov. Jay Inslee's decision not to put teachers ahead of the general population as an entire workforce category.

**DENVER** -- Colorado Gov. Jared Polis says the state will expand COVID-19 vaccine eligibility to people ages 65 to 69 and school personnel on Feb. 8.

The announcement came Friday as the state updated its distribution plan to include these groups in "Phase 1b 2." In addition to preschool through 12th grade teachers, childcare providers, bus drivers, safety workers and paraprofessionals will be eligible to receive the vaccine.

State officials say there are 408,000 people in this group, and the goal is to vaccinate 55% of them by March 5.

Adults 65 to 69 can schedule appointments through providers, and educators will get vaccines through their employers.

**PRAGUE** — The Czech Republic is banning foreigners from entering the country for non-essential reasons in an effort to contain the coronavirus pandemic.

The Foreign Ministry says the ban, which becomes effective on Saturday, applies for all countries.

The exceptions to the ban includes those who work or study in the country. Trips to the country to visit relatives and nursing homes, receive medical care and attend weddings and funerals also are allowed.

The ban is part of a series of new restrictive measures that are tightening the country's lockdown. They have been approved with a goal to further limit people's contacts and movement.

Earlier in January, the day-to-day increase in coronavirus cases in the country was gradually declining since hitting a record high of nearly 18,000 on Jan 6. But the numbers didn't drop enough and started to rise again this week.

The government is also worried about the potential impact of the more contagious British variant on the health system, which has been under serious pressure for months.

**PARIS** — France is closing its borders to people arriving from outside the European Union starting Sunday to try to stop the spread of new variants of the coronavirus.

French Prime Minister Jean Castex announced the measure Friday night after an emergency government health security meeting at the presidential palace, warning of a "great risk" from the new variants.

All those arriving from other EU countries will be required to produce a negative virus test, he says. France will close all large shopping centers starting Sunday and limit travel to and from its overseas territories.

Castex ordered stepped up police checks of those who violate France's 12-hour-a-day curfew, hold secret parties or reopen restaurants in defiance of a closure order in place since October.

Virus infections, hospitalizations and deaths have been rising steadily but not sharply in recent weeks. Many doctors have been urging a new nationwide shutdown like those imposed in several other European countries.

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Castex says the measures are an attempt to avoid the economic cost of a third lockdown. Currently, more than 60% of intensive care beds are occupied by coronavirus patients. France has reported more than 75,000 deaths, seventh highest in the world.

JACKSON, Miss. — Mississippi residents scrambled to book appointments for COVID-19 vaccinations after Republican Gov. Tate Reeves announced Friday that 15,000 new openings were available for the first of two doses.

"I'm sure they will be booked quickly!" Reeves wrote on Twitter. "Stay safe and God bless!"

In just over two hours, all of the appointments were filled.

Laurie Bertram Roberts, who splits time between her home in Jackson and a job in Alabama, told The Associated Press she and one of her daughters went online Friday and booked vaccination appointments for themselves and six other family members.

Roberts said they managed to get appointments for five people in Jackson, where they live. But, they had to book one appointment in Vicksburg, which is about an hour's drive one way, and two in Natchez, which is about a two-hour drive in one direction.

Coronavirus vaccinations in Mississippi are currently available for people 65 and older, health care workers and those who are at least 16 and have health conditions that might make them more vulnerable to the virus.

Inoculations are being done at hospitals, community health centers, private clinics and at 19 state-run drive-thru sites.

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — California Gov. Gavin Newsom has signed a law that extends eviction protections through the end of June.

Newsom signed the law on Friday, one day after it was approved by the state Legislature.

Last year, Newsom signed a law that banned evictions for unpaid rent for tenants who paid at least 25% of their rent owed after Sept. 1. The law Newsom signed Friday extends those protections through June 30.

The law will also use federal stimulus dollars to pay off 80% of some tenants' unpaid rent, but only if landlords agree to forgive the remaining 20%.

People who earn more than 80% of the area median income are not eligible for the money.

ALBANY, N.Y. — New York City restaurants can reopen for indoor dining at a quarter of capacity by Valentine's Day, and big weddings can return statewide in March if infection rates continue to drop.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo's announcements are part of a gradual loosening of economic restrictions in New York state as a post-holiday bump in infections slows down. Statewide COVID-19 hospitalizations have dropped by 916 since Jan. 19 to 8,357.

Cuomo says the indoor dining ban at city restaurants that went into effect Dec. 14 is on track to be partly lifted on Feb. 14. The 50-person limit on wedding receptions may increase to 150 on March 15, as long as the venue remains at 50% capacity or under.

MADISON, Wis. — Democratic Gov. Tony Evers lashed out at rival Republicans who tried to repeal his statewide mask mandate.

Evers says Republicans were trying to throw out one of the only tools he has left to limit the spread of the coronavirus. GOP lawmakers and conservative groups last year convinced the state Supreme Court to kill Evers' stay-at-home order and the limits he placed on the size of indoor gatherings.

"It is important for people to remember that masks save lives," the governor said. "It is not about individual liberty, as others would say." He added people aren't at liberty to go 100 mph on highways.

Senate Republicans voted Tuesday to end the governor's health emergency declaration, which would kill the mask mandate. Assembly Republicans were expected to follow suit Thursday but delayed a vote after learning that ending the emergency declaration would cost the state \$49 million in federal food assistance.

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ANKARA, Turkey — Turkey says it has detected the possibly more infectious coronavirus variant first found in southeast England.

Health Minister Fahrettin Koca says on Twitter that 128 people have been diagnosed with the new coronavirus variant in 17 cities across the country.

“We have to be vigilant about the threat of mutations,” tweeted Koca, adding that new mutations could pose a threat to the country’s vaccination drive.

The country has reported 2.4 million coronavirus cases and nearly 26,000 confirmed deaths.

ALGIERS, Algeria — Algeria received its first coronavirus vaccines Friday, a shipment of Russia’s Sputnik V, according to the health minister.

Minister Amar Belhimeur didn’t indicate how many arrived, although the government has said it had ordered a first batch of 500,000 doses. The government also is negotiating acquisition of the AstraZeneca vaccine, according to the communications minister.

Algeria will start vaccinations Saturday at a hospital in the town of Blida, where the first cases of the coronavirus were confirmed in March.

The campaign will start with health care workers, the elderly and other vulnerable populations.

Algeria has registered more than 106,000 coronavirus cases and 2,881 confirmed deaths.

WASHINGTON — Dr. Anthony Fauci says the emergence and increasing spread of coronavirus mutations means vaccine makers must be ready to make new shots to stay ahead of the public health crisis.

The government’s top infectious disease expert spoke Friday during a White House coronavirus briefing. “This is a wake-up call to all of us,” says Fauci, noting government scientists will be working to keep pace with virus mutations.

The nature of viruses is to change in ways that promote their spread, Fauci says. The evolution of mutant versions means scientists need to be “nimble” and ready to make tweaks to vaccines. So far, the mutants haven’t overwhelmed the protective power of vaccines.

Fauci says it is important to vaccinate people as quickly as possible to keep new mutations from developing.

## Time running out on Somalia’s troubled vote as citizens sigh

By HASSAN BARISE Associated Press

MOGADISHU, Somalia (AP) — As Somalia marks three decades since a dictator fell and chaos engulfed the country, the government is set to hold a troubled national election. Or is it?

Two regional states refuse to take part, and time is running out before the Feb. 8 date when mandates expire. A parliament resolution allows President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed and lawmakers to remain in office, but going beyond Feb. 8 brings “an unpredictable political situation in a country where we certainly don’t need any more of that,” United Nations special representative James Swan said this week.

Amid the campaign billboards and speeches in the capital, Mogadishu, is a sense of frustration as people are urged to support candidates but once again cannot directly take part.

“Nobody has ever asked us what we want or whom we would choose as president,” said Asha Abdulle, who runs a small teashop.

“Every president wants to extend his tenure and at least add one more year, so why can’t they make it official and hold elections every five years instead of four?” wondered Abdirisak Ali Mohamed as he watched TV at a hotel.

The uncertainty is ripe for exploitation by the Somalia-based al-Shabab extremist group, which has threatened to attack the polls. Meanwhile, the country is adjusting to the withdrawal of some 700 U.S. military personnel, a process completed in mid-January.

A successful election means Somalia’s government can move on to address urgent issues like the COVID-19 pandemic, a locust outbreak and hundreds of thousands of people displaced by climate crises like drought.

Despite its insecurity, the Horn of Africa nation has had peaceful changes of leadership every four years

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since 2000, and it has the distinction of having Africa's first democratically elected president to peacefully step down, Aden Abdulle Osman in 1967.

But the goal of a direct, one-person-one-vote election in Somalia remains elusive. It was meant to take place this time. Instead, the federal government and states agreed on another "indirect election," with senators and members of parliament elected by community leaders — delegates of powerful clans — in each member state.

Members of parliament and senators then elect Somalia's president.

An alliance of opposition leaders, along with civil society groups, have objected, arguing it leaves them no say in the politics of their own country.

Now the regional states of Jubbaland and Puntland have refused to take part, objecting to issues including how electoral management bodies should be appointed and delegates selected. That includes delegates from the breakaway region of Somaliland, which considers itself an independent country though not internationally recognized.

Jubbaland and Puntland finally appointed electoral commissioners late this week, a sign of progress. "No partial elections or parallel processes," the U.S. Embassy said as it encouraged political leaders to meet on remaining issues. On Saturday, Somalia said the president assured the international community he was willing to "fulfill free, fair and transparent elections."

An outburst of deadly fighting in Jubbaland this week has highlighted the tensions. Somalia blamed it on rebels backed by neighboring Kenya, with which Somalia severed diplomatic ties in December. Kenya denied it. Critics of the president say he is trying to rally support as he seeks a second term — a goal no Somali leader has achieved over the past two decades.

The opposition alliance, which includes two former presidents and former Prime Minister Hassan Ali Khayre, has urged the president to return to his senses and let all stakeholders play their rightful role in the election.

"You promised that once president you will be a good Somali elder. You were given to lead a united people in a peaceful way," said one former president, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud. He himself benefited from an extra year in office when elections were not ready.

He also warned that Jubbaland and Puntland could go the way of Somaliland, with Somalia's unity at stake.

"There's no way that Somalia will go back to the 1990s," Mohamud said of an era in which local warlords ran rampant in Mogadishu and an attempt by the U.S. military to intervene collapsed when the bodies of its soldiers were dragged through the streets.

The objecting states have been given plenty of time to take part in the election, said Ibrahim Hassan Haji, an electoral commission member from Southwest state. "Otherwise, we will be forced to go ahead without them and select their quotas of (delegates) from here in Mogadishu."

But the head of the local Hiraal Institute think tank, Hussein Sheikh Ali, said holding a partial election will not be tolerated in a country where clans are still "armed to the teeth."

Instead, "it is always the 'sixth clan' (the international community) that intervenes" in such crises and a road map is usually agreed upon, added political analyst Liban Abdullahi.

The U.N. special representative, however, said any resolution must come from Somali leaders, whom he urged to "be imaginative." He would not say how the international community might respond to a vote that goes ahead without all states involved.

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Cara Anna in Nairobi, Kenya contributed.

## **Biden warns of growing cost of delay on economic aid plan**

By JOSH BOAK, LISA MASCARO and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden is warning of a steep and growing "cost of inaction" on his \$1.9 trillion COVID-19 relief plan as the White House searched for "creative" ways to win public support for a package that is getting a cold shoulder from Senate Republicans.

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In the age of the coronavirus, it's not as simple as jumping on a plane to travel the country and try to gin up a groundswell. And at a time of deep polarization, Biden may struggle to convince Republican voters of the urgency when Congress already has approved \$4 trillion in aid, including \$900 billion last month.

Biden signaled on Friday for the first time that he's willing to move ahead without Republicans.

"I support passing COVID relief with support from Republicans if we can get it," he told reporters. "But the COVID relief has to pass. No ifs, ands or buts."

His message so far has been that a fresh \$1.9 trillion in aid would be a bargain compared to the potential damage to the world's largest economy if it doesn't pass. An aggressive push for vaccinations and generous aid to individuals would help put parents back to work and let children return to school and improve their lifetime earnings, Biden said at a Friday meeting with Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen in the Oval Office.

"We have learned from past crises that the risk is not doing too much," he said. "The risk is not doing enough."

Only a week into his presidency, Biden is confronting the challenge of selling his first major piece of legislation to a country he has pledged to unite. Private calls with Republican lawmakers have yet to produce any progress on reaching a deal, while Senate Democrats are now preparing to pass the measure strictly on partisan lines as soon as next week.

Some Biden allies have expressed frustration that the administration has not more clearly defined what the massive legislation would actually accomplish. The new president instead has largely focused his first nine days in office on signing executive orders rolling back his predecessor's policies.

In particular, Biden, for whom the widespread distribution of coronavirus vaccines will be a defining test, has not explained what the increased money for testing and vaccination would achieve -- including how much quicker the White House believes it would help bring about an end to the pandemic.

Biden's outreach to senators has largely brought criticism that the plan should be more targeted and that the country can afford to wait to see the effects of the stimulus dollars that were approved in December.

Republican lawmakers see a need for speeding vaccinations, but one Senate aide said their offices are not being bombarded with calls for an additional aid package. Constituents are more focused on the looming impeachment trial, said the aide, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss private conversations.

This has left the Biden team trying to expand its outreach beyond Capitol Hill.

White House press secretary Jen Psaki said Biden recognizes the importance of speaking directly to the American people about his plan for vaccinations and supporting the economy, but the pandemic has limited his ability to safely travel to drum up support. The administration is relying on TV interviews by White House officials and allies with local media and national shows like "The View," as well as calls with governors, local officials and progressive and civic groups.

"We're taking a number of creative steps, a little outside of the box," Psaki said. "Certainly, his preference would be to get on a plane and fly around the country."

Part of the challenge is that Biden must convince the public how different components of his proposal would work together. His plan allots \$400 billion to spearhead a national vaccination program and the reopening of schools. It also includes \$1,400 in direct payments to individuals, which critics say should be more targeted. And it includes a raise in the the minimum wage to \$15 and aid for state and local governments, a nonstarter for most Republicans.

Many Republicans are under more political pressure from donors and activists back home to rein in spending than to approve more. Some Republicans particularly object to what are still seen by many as bailouts for cash-strapped state and local governments.

Some do support a deal, just not what Biden is offering. Sen. Rob Portman, R-Ohio, a member of a bipartisan group of legislators contacted by the administration, said he supports funds for vaccine distribution and even potentially extra jobless benefits, but he wants a full accounting of what funding remains from previous aid packages.

"Unemployment insurance, they think it's an emergency, well we have unemployment insurance in place

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until mid March. Where's the emergency?" Portman said. "Am I against extending it, no I'm not. I think we should, based on some economic factors. But it just doesn't make sense."

Recent economic reports show the economy is still under severe strain, yet there is also the potential for the strongest growth in more than two decades once the coronavirus is contained.

The Commerce Department said Thursday the U.S. economy shrank 3.5% last year, and on Friday it reported that consumer spending — the main driver of growth — had slumped 0.2% in December. But the consumer spending report also suggested that the expanded unemployment benefits from the \$900 billion aid package passed that same month had managed to boost incomes.

Gregory Daco, an economist at Oxford Economics, said, "The COVID relief bill of December essentially addressed the past, the dwindling aid at the end of 2020." Now the administration must sell the public on what lies ahead.

He said, "The American Rescue Plan — it's a plan geared toward the future, bridging the gap between January and September, when people will be able to spend more freely."

## No income, 2,000 mouths to feed: Lockdown squeezes Greek zoo

By NICHOLAS PAPHITIS Associated Press

ATHENS, Greece (AP) — It's feeding time at Greece's only zoo, and a capuchin monkey grabs as many mandarins as it can — even tucking one into his long, supple tail. It might be wise to stock up.

After being closed for almost three months due to COVID-19, the zoo on the fringes of Athens could be on the road to extinction: With no paying visitors or — unlike other European zoos — enough government aid to cover its very particular needs, the Attica Zoological Park faces huge bills to keep 2,000 animals well-fed and healthy.

"As things are ... we still can go on for at least one month," zoo founder and CEO Jean Jacques Lesueur said. "After that, we don't know."

Unlike some businesses forced to temporarily close due to virus-control restrictions, the zoo continues to have sizeable operating expenses. Between food, salaries, utilities, medical care and other expenses, the cost of caring for the animals currently exceeds 200,000 euros (\$243,000) per month.

"That's the difference between us and other companies: When they close they close. We close, but we don't close," Lesueur told The Associated Press.

Founded in 2000 and located in the town of Spata, the zoo occupies 20 hectares (50 acres) and is home to 290 species, from elephants to prairie dogs. It's involved in education, conservation and breeding, and belongs to the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria, which has about 400 members.

Having to close again on Nov. 7 after Greece's two-month spring lockdown came at a bad time for Attica Zoological Park. The zoo normally operates year-round but does a lot of its business during cooler weather "because in Greece people go to the beaches, to the islands, they don't visit zoos" in the summer, the French-born Lesueur said.

Visitors account for more than 99% of its revenue, from tickets, food and beverages and gift shop sales. So every month's revenue counts, and the loss of December, usually busy due to the Christmas holidays, was particularly heavy.

So far, suppliers have shown understanding and are accepting credit. Two-thirds of the zoo's staff is on state-supported furlough, and an expected installment of state aid will take care of this month's pay for the rest, the CEO said.

The zoo also has sold 5,000 advance tickets at reduced prices for when the lockdown ends, and Lesueur says that helped pay December's salaries.

Lockdown also affects the zoo's residents, accustomed as they are to crowds of humans. For nearly three months, they've only been seeing their keepers. So the tables were turned when an AP journalist visited last week: Several curious animals and birds came close for a good look.

"Animals miss visitors, because it's part of their life," Lesueur said. "All the animals you see (here) are born in other zoos. So they are used to people."

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Greece has registered about 150,000 confirmed COVID-19 infections so far and some 5,800 deaths in the pandemic. After peaking above 3,300 in November, the number of new daily cases is holding in the triple digits.

Nevertheless, the greater Athens region remains the country's worst-hit area and authorities said Friday they will reimpose tougher lockdown restrictions there after a January decline in infection rates was reversed this week.

Overall, Lesueur says he's optimistic that the zoo will get clearance to reopen in coming weeks.

"Except if the COVID (situation) gets worse. That's another story," he said. "Now if we are closed for another two months or three months, I really don't know what is going to happen."

Follow AP coverage of the coronavirus pandemic at:

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

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

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## NFL scrambles to keep charitable Super Bowl events in Tampa

By BARRY WILNER AP Pro Football Writer

Befitting the championship game of the nation's most popular sport, the Super Bowl is about more than football.

Yes, who wins the NFL championship is what fans remember most. For hundreds, maybe thousands of others, the legacy of the Super Bowl stretches far beyond the field.

During the pandemic, staging the league's annual charitable and community efforts before and during its final game has called for some scrambling. The NFL is determined that those initiatives remain impactful in the Tampa Bay area.

"Due to the pandemic this year we definitely had to pivot our thinking behind community events, which are usually a great way to engage with the NFL in a Super Bowl city," says Melissa Schiller, the league's director of community relations. "We had to transition them to virtual events and also make sure those that are taking place (in the Tampa area) are COVID-19 compliant."

One of Super Bowl week's biggest events is the NFL PLAY 60 kids day of youth health and wellness, held in partnership with the American Heart Association. Usually, about 2,000 youngsters are involved locally for basically a football festival of learning, participating and, well, fun. Due to the pandemic, the event has gone virtual and been opened up nationally. More than 100,000 youngsters have signed up for the event on Wednesday.

"We're creating a one-hour experience with kids whether they are in the classroom or at home for which they can really tune in and engage," Schiller says.

On Wednesday, through the NFL's Inspire Change initiative, Jefferson High School students will participate in EVERFI's 306 African-American history program. They will be discussing Black trailblazers in business with a panel that will include NFL players. Funded by the league, the EVERFI 306 program provides schools nationwide that otherwise might not have the resources with a digital African-American history curriculum.

Some students will be on site, while others will view the conversation virtually. Guest panelists will join the class remotely. As part of efforts to help address the digital divide, the NFL, in collaboration with the Hillsborough Education Foundation, will make a contribution to assist students throughout Tampa Bay. NFL partner Bose is also donating noise cancelling headphones to Jefferson High School to assist with their technological needs as part of this event.

"The way (Super Bowl week) has changed things on the social justice front, some events are virtual and some in person," says Clare Graff, the NFL's senior director of social responsibility and community affairs. "And also the topic that the pandemic has brought to light is the digital divide, and the ways kids are having trouble connecting in communities of need. We pivoted our focus."

The Super Bowl Legacy Grant Program in which the NFL Foundation makes a \$1 million contribution

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to improve local communities — the Super Bowl host committee matches it — will have an on site news conference two days before the game. The grants will support Forever 55, the host committee's primary social legacy initiative, and will focus on early childhood education; food insecurity; at-risk, unsheltered and veteran families; health and wellness; sustainability; and systemic justice.

"On the NFL Foundation side, it's definitely the case that we have ramped up our funding support," explains Alexia Gallagher, the foundation's vice president of philanthropy and executive director. "It is important, more so than ever. We're not seeing other donors not being able to do so as well."

As part of the Huddle to Tackle Hunger program, the foundation committed \$250,000 to Feeding Tampa Bay to combat food insecurity in the region. The grant will assist in supporting local restaurants that have been significantly affected by COVID-19, and provide meals to those in need. The program will run for 44 weeks following the Super Bowl.

Two volunteer events will encourage local residents to sign up to volunteer with Feeding Tampa Bay to help fight hunger within their community, handling such tasks as food packing and distribution.

"Knowing how the pandemic hit communities so hard, and what we do in relation to the Super Bowl is providing this giveback to this community," Gallagher says, "it was important we do something a little different to really help support the community and the population that is struggling in terms of hunger relief and supporting the restaurants."

In Raymond James Stadium on game day, a "Fans In The Stands" cutout program will raise funds. For \$100, fans can upload a photo of themselves or someone they consider a hero, and the cutout will feature that person. Cutouts will be installed throughout the stadium between pods of ticketed fans.

With the purchase of a cutout, fans will be entered to win two tickets to the 2022 Super Bowl in Los Angeles.

The proceeds will be donated to Feeding Tampa Bay on behalf of the Buccaneers, and to City Year on behalf of the Chiefs.

"I think the pandemic, for better or worse, made all of us as employees and parents and teachers be creative and do things differently," Graf says. "There's been plenty of downsizing due to COVID, but that caused all of us to be more creative."

More AP NFL: <https://apnews.com/NFL> and [https://twitter.com/AP\\_NFL](https://twitter.com/AP_NFL)

## Vaccine rollout faces challenges in France's poorest region

by ELAINE GANLEY Associated Press

SAINT-DENIS, France (AP) — Samia Dridi, who was born, raised and works as a nurse in Saint-Denis, fears for her impoverished town, recalling how the coronavirus cut an especially deadly path through the diverse area north of Paris, a burial place for French kings entombed in a majestic basilica.

Dridi and her sister accompanied their frail 92-year-old Algerian-born mother to a vaccination center for the first of two shots to protect against COVID-19 days after it opened last week for people over the age of 75.

While red tape, consent requirements and supply issues have slowed France's vaccination rollout nationwide, the Seine-Saint-Denis region faces special challenges in warding off the virus, and getting people vaccinated when their turn comes.

It is the poorest region in mainland France and had the highest rise in mortality in the country last spring, largely due to COVID-19. Up to 75 percent of the population are immigrants or have immigrant roots, and its residents speak some 130 different languages. Health care is below par, with two to three times fewer hospital beds than other regions and a higher rate of chronic illnesses. Many are essential workers in supermarkets, public sanitation and health care.

The coronavirus was initially widely seen as the great equalizer, infecting rich and poor. But studies have since shown that some people are more vulnerable than others, notably the elderly, those with other long-term illnesses and the poor, often living on the edges of mainstream society, like immigrants who



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don't speak French.

Dridi, 56, a nurse for more than three decades, feels relieved there is currently "no significant evolution" of the virus in her town. But she doesn't forget what happened when the pandemic first hit.

"We had entire families with COVID," she said. Many have multiple generations living together in small apartments, something experts say is an aggravating factor common in the region.

Despite those grim memories, local officials grapple with special challenges getting out word about vaccines to a population where many don't speak French, lack access to regular medical care and, like in much of France, distrust the vaccine's safety.

Next month, a bus will travel through the region, notably visiting street markets, to provide vaccination information. In addition, about 40 "vaccination ambassadors" who speak several languages are to be trained to reach out, starting in March, about vaccinations as well as "fake news" surrounding them.

A case in point is Youssef Zaoui, 32, an Algerian living in Saint-Denis.

"I heard the vaccination is very dangerous, more than the virus," said Zaoui, sitting in the shadow of the basilica. His proof that he need not worry about the virus: the butcher down the road and the man selling cigarettes nearby. They were there at the beginning of March "and they're still here. ... Me, I'm still here," he said.

Is there a chance the vaccine could turn the tide on the inequality reflected in death statistics for the region?

"Before the vaccine becomes a great equalizer, everyone must be vaccinated," said Patrick Simon, who co-authored a study last June on the vulnerability of minorities in Seine-Saint-Denis to COVID-19. But he said the challenges for marginalized communities to access health care continues, "so these inequalities will also be reproduced for the vaccine."

While the French health care system is meant to provide accessible medical treatment for all, the bureaucratic demands and co-payments often scare away new immigrants or the very poor. Government health guidance doesn't always reach those outside the system.

As a nurse at a municipal health center, Dridi sees up front the poverty that translates into vulnerability to the coronavirus.

"I'm giving an injection, a shot, putting on a bandage ... and some say, 'I live in a car, I'm in the street,'" she said.

That misery was not apparent at the vaccination center where Dridi's mother got her shot — among 17 opened across the region last week and where Saint-Denis' more fortunate, who live in private homes, were seen on a recent visit. Some made their way into the center on canes or held by an arm. One couple showed up on a scooter. All were eager to be vaccinated.

They were among the lucky ones. Appointments were cut back after allotments of doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine were diminished, like elsewhere in France and Europe.

"I'm lucky to get vaccinated today," said one woman, who then broke down in tears. She was infected with COVID-19 during treatment at a private clinic in April and lost her mother in October to the virus after she contracted it in a hospital where she was treated after a fall.

The woman, who declined to give her name, told Dridi and her sister to take care of their mother because "she is your treasure."

For Dridi, seeing people die of COVID-19 can be a game changer.

"Some people say no (to getting vaccinated) because they have no contact with death," said Dridi. But death, "that's what makes you react."

## As Wisconsin's Johnson weighs future, Trump ties take a toll

By SCOTT BAUER Associated Press

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — After President Donald Trump lost his reelection bid, most Senate Republicans, his Justice Department and the courts dismissed or disputed his baseless claims about a "stolen election." Not Wisconsin Sen. Ron Johnson.

The GOP senator used his chairmanship of the Senate Homeland Security Committee to highlight Trump's

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allegations, claiming millions of Americans "have real, legitimate suspicions that this election was stolen" and worrying about "so many irregularities here."

That sort of fealty to Trump has endeared Johnson to the far-right base in his state, but it could prove costly if he decides to seek a third term in 2022. As Johnson weighs whether to run again, his embrace of Trump's anti-democratic campaign to overturn the election results already has angered some mainstream Republican allies, and is poised to motivate Democrats who have ridden opposition to Trump to new strength in the state.

Observers note that Johnson, who rose out of the tea party movement more than a decade ago, has often behaved like a senator from a solidly red state. But November's election demonstrated that Wisconsin, which Democrat Joe Biden won by fewer than 21,000 votes, is anything but. The fight for his seat will be among the most competitive races next year.

"I think if the election were a week from now he would be in a world of hurt," said Fond du Lac County Republican Party Chair Rohn Bishop. Bishop criticized fellow Republicans like Johnson who parroted claims of illegal election activity, even as he remains a Johnson backer. But he notes that Johnson is at risk of losing moderate voters critical to winning.

"It may hurt him with the suburban voters. ... The election wasn't stolen, and it's hard to convince people they should vote for you when you try to throw away their legally cast ballots."

Johnson has long been aligned with Trump's hard-line policies and politics. He led the push to investigate Biden's son Hunter and rarely broke with the White House. Still, some Republicans were surprised to see the senator lend credence to Trump's post-election schemes, which included an attempt to throw out the ballots of 238,000 voters in the majority-Democratic areas of Milwaukee and Madison.

Johnson's hearing on Dec. 16 to look into unfounded election fraud complaints largely perpetuated Trump's baseless claims. And on Jan. 6, just before the U.S. Capitol was stormed, Johnson objected to counting the Electoral College votes from Arizona.

The editor of the conservative website Right Wisconsin published a scathing column hours before the riot, saying that Johnson was on a "reckless path" by questioning the integrity of the election and that he should retire and would lose if he ran again.

After the riot, Johnson did not vote to object. Still, the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, Wisconsin's largest newspaper, called for Johnson to resign for "stoking an insurrection."

Johnson responded with a column in the newspaper calling the editorial "unhinged and uninformed." The Journal Sentinel took the rare step of annotating his response, providing 19 footnotes with additional context, fact checking and corrections.

The Wisconsin State Journal, the state's second largest newspaper, has also called for Johnson's resignation, and the anti-Trump Republicans behind the The Lincoln Project have targeted Johnson for defeat, citing his support for election conspiracy theories and comparing him with disgraced former Wisconsin U.S. Sen. Joe McCarthy.

Johnson remains popular with the GOP grassroots, a key factor as he mulls whether to run again, said GOP strategist Brian Reisinger, who worked on Johnson's 2016 campaign. He noted that Johnson has been able to overcome naysayers who didn't give him much of a chance of winning, first against then-incumbent U.S. Sen. Russ Feingold in 2010 and again in a 2016 rematch.

"There's a lot of people who look at Ron Johnson, and they see the political durability that he's had over the years despite being a dead man walking twice before," Reisinger said.

Johnson in 2016 pledged not to seek a third term, but backed off three years later, saying he wanted to see how the 2020 election turned out. He has also said he's considering running for governor in 2022.

Johnson, 65, has said in recent weeks that he has not yet made a decision.

"My bias has always been (to serve) two terms and go home," Johnson told the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel last month before Democrats won a pair of Georgia runoff elections to take majority control of the Senate. "That continues to be my preference, but at the same time, the Senate is kind of a firewall against total control by Democrats, which would be, I think, a very bad thing for this country."

Johnson and his spokesperson Ben Voelkel declined to comment on his plans.

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Republicans already have three Senate vacancies to defend. Richard Burr of North Carolina, Pat Toomey of Pennsylvania and Rob Portman of Ohio have said they will not run again in 2022. GOP Sen. Chuck Grassley of Iowa, who turns 89 in 2022, is also on the ballot, and two-term Missouri Republican Roy Blunt has not said whether he'll seek a third.

If Johnson retires, it likely would be a free-for-all on both sides.

A number of Republicans are eyeing a run for either Senate or governor, depending on what Johnson does. Potential Republican Senate candidates include U.S. Rep. Mike Gallagher, former U.S. Rep. Sean Duffy and Kevin Nicholson, who lost a 2018 Republican Senate primary.

The list of Democratic hopefuls includes Lt. Gov. Mandela Barnes, the state's first Black lieutenant governor, state Treasurer Sarah Godlewski and state Sen. Chris Larson of Milwaukee.

Alex Lasry, the senior vice president to the Milwaukee Bucks who helped spearhead the successful effort to get the 2020 Democratic National Convention in Milwaukee before the coronavirus sent the event nearly entirely online, is also considering a run. Lasry is the son of billionaire hedge fund manager and Democratic bundler Marc Lasry and could potentially self-finance his run.

Another potential candidate is Steven Olikara, founder and chief executive of the nonprofit Millennial Action Project. Outagamie County Executive Tom Nelson has already declared his candidacy.

## **Biden, Democrats hit gas on push for \$15 minimum wage**

By KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Democratic push to raise the federal minimum wage to \$15 an hour has emerged as an early flashpoint in the fight for a \$1.9 trillion COVID-19 relief package, testing President Joe Biden's ability to bridge Washington's partisan divides as he pursues his first major legislative victory.

Biden called for a \$15 hourly minimum wage during his campaign and has followed through by hitching it to a measure that, among other things, calls for \$1,400 stimulus checks and \$130 billion to help schools reopen. Biden argues that anyone who holds a full-time job shouldn't live in poverty, echoing progressives in the Democratic Party who are fully on board with the effort.

"With the economic divide, I mean, I want to see a \$15 minimum wage. It should actually be \$20," said Rep. Rashida Tlaib, D-Mich.

Some Republicans support exploring an increase but are uneasy with \$15 an hour. They warn that such an increase could lead to job losses in an economy that has nearly 10 million fewer jobs than it did before the pandemic began. Moderates such as Sen. Lisa Murkowski of Alaska and Rep. Tom Reed of New York are urging Biden to split off the minimum wage hike from COVID-19 talks and deal with it separately.

"The more you throw into this bucket of COVID relief that's not really related to the crisis, the more you risk the credibility with the American people that you're really sincere about the crisis," Reed said. Including the wage increase, Murkowski said, "complicates politically an initiative that we should all be working together to address."

The resistance from moderates has left Democrats with a stark choice: Wait and build bipartisan support for an increase or move ahead with little to no GOP backing, potentially as part of a package that can pass the Senate with Vice President Kamala Harris' tiebreaking vote. Democratic leaders appear to be moving toward the latter option, with no guarantee of success. Even if raising the wage can get past procedural challenges, passage will require the support from every Democrat in the 50-50 Senate, which could be a tall order.

Leading the charge is Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., who unveiled \$15 wage legislation this week with the backing of 37 Senate Democrats. His bill would gradually raise the wage to \$15 over a period of five years. The federal minimum is \$7.25 and has not been raised since 2009.

Sanders, the incoming chair of the Senate Budget Committee, said it was fine with him if Republicans were not prepared to "come on board." He said the government needed to pump money into the economy to make sure "people are not working on starvation wages."

Democrats are moving toward using a tool that allows certain budget-related items to bypass the Sen-

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ate filibuster — a hurdle requiring 60 votes — and pass with a simple majority. Sanders is confident that a minimum wage increase fits within the allowed criteria for what is referred to in Washington lingo as budget reconciliation, though the Senate parliamentarian has final say on what qualifies.

“As you will recall, my Republican colleagues used reconciliation to give almost \$2 trillion in tax breaks to the rich and large corporations in the midst of massive income inequality. They used reconciliation to try to repeal the Affordable Care Act and throw 32 million people off the health care they had. They used reconciliation to allow for drilling in the Arctic wilderness,” Sanders said. “You know what? I think we can use reconciliation to protect the needs of working families.”

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., said the Senate as early as next week will begin taking the first steps toward getting the COVID-19 relief bill passed through the budget reconciliation process. The goal would be passage by March.

The latest sign that a \$15 minimum wage is popular with voters came in November, when more than 60% of voters in conservative-leaning Florida approved an amendment to the state’s Constitution that will raise the minimum wage there from \$8.56 an hour to \$15 an hour by 2026.

The House passed legislation to gradually increase the minimum wage in the last Congress, but it went nowhere in the GOP-controlled Senate. Opponents argue that a large increase in the minimum wage would lead many employers to cut the number of workers they have on their payrolls.

A 2019 study from the Congressional Budget Office projected that an increase to \$15 an hour would boost the wages of 17 million Americans. An additional 10 million workers making more than \$15 an hour would see a boost as well. However, about 1.3 million workers would lose their jobs.

“There’s no question that raising the minimum wage, especially to \$15, will put some small businesses out of business and will cost a lot of low-wage workers their jobs,” said Neil Bradley, the chief policy officer at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

Bradley said there should be a separate debate on the minimum wage, and while the U.S. Chamber of Commerce opposes \$15 an hour, “we’re open to a reasonable increase in the minimum wage and that ought to be a topic of discussion. But, you know, including that in the COVID package just imperils the whole thing.”

Mary Kay Henry, international president of the Service Employees International Union, said that increasing the minimum wage would benefit many of the people who have been working on the front lines of the pandemic. That’s why she supports including it in the COVID-19 relief package.

“They’ve been called essential, but they all believe they’ve been treated as expendable or sacrificial because they don’t earn enough to be able to put food on the table and keep themselves and their families safe and healthy,” Henry said.

Henry says nursing home workers, janitors, security guards and home health workers are among the union’s 2 million members.

“The real way to appreciate this work is to raise the minimum wage to \$15,” she said.

Most states also have minimum wage laws. Employees generally are entitled to the higher of the two minimum wages. Currently, 29 states and Washington, D.C., have minimum wages above the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour.

## Capitol fences highlight delicate dance over safety, access

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The terrace on the west side of the Capitol used to be a popular place for tourists and Washingtonians alike to watch the sun dip behind the Lincoln Memorial at the far end of the National Mall.

Then came the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

The terrace has been closed to the public ever since.

It’s a sad fact of life in the nation’s capital that security measures are seldom temporary.

So when the Capitol police force’s acting chief said permanent fences around the Capitol complex should

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be part of the “vast improvements” in security needed to protect the building and the lawmakers who work inside, the reaction from members of Congress, local lawmakers and neighborhood residents was swift and emphatically negative.

“DC does not support it,” said Councilmember Charles Allen, whose district includes the Capitol Hill neighborhood.

Rep. Jennifer Wexton, D-Va., said on Twitter, “I believe we can keep Members, press, staff, my constituents, and all those who work here safe without walling off the symbol of our democracy. It’s the People’s House—let’s keep it that way.”

A petition being circulated online at change.org against making permanent the temporary fences that were erected after a mob loyal to President Donald Trump stormed the Capitol on Jan. 6 had roughly 1,500 signatures by mid-afternoon Friday. “Visitors and residents of DC would be punished by a permanent fence, a permanent scar on our beautiful city, and would lose access to this beautiful beacon of democracy,” the petition reads.

The grounds of the Capitol attract crowds for public events, daily exercise, even intimate moments.

Allison Cunningham, the petition’s drafter, remembers going to the Capitol grounds to watch the Discovery space shuttle on its final flight atop a 747 in 2012.

“It’s a beautiful and unique place where people love to walk their dogs, take family photos or photos to announce their engagement,” said Cunningham, a former Hill staffer who lives in the area and works in government affairs.

Security doesn’t have to be unsightly, said Susan Piedmont-Palladino, an architecture professor and coordinator of urban design at Virginia Tech.

She pointed to the creation of a pedestrian plaza in front of the White House that grew out of the decision to close Pennsylvania Avenue to vehicular traffic following the bombing of the federal building in Oklahoma City in 1995.

“We have gotten some beautiful improvements to the city out of fear,” Piedmont-Palladino said.

Of course, the plaza and the adjacent Lafayette Park also have been closed since the summer, blocked by fences similar to those at the Capitol.

Asked Friday whether the president would consider taking down that new fencing at the White House, press secretary Jen Psaki said while “we’d all like” for it to be removed, she had nothing further to share on the issue.

The Supreme Court also is blocked off from the public by temporary fences.

When the court invoked security concerns to close its front doors to the public in 2010, Justice Stephen Breyer lamented what would be lost with people no longer able to enter the building by climbing 44 steps beneath the iconic phrase “Equal Justice Under Law” etched in the pediment above.

“To many members of the public, this Court’s main entrance and front steps are not only a means to, but also a metaphor for, access to the Court itself,” Breyer wrote, adding that “potential security threats will exist regardless of which entrance we use.”

To Piedmont-Palladino, the real challenge in what she called an ongoing minuet between security and access “doesn’t involve keeping people away. It involves making that space more welcoming to civic behavior,” she said.

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Associated Press writer Alexandra Jaffe in Washington contributed to this report.

## Venezuela hired Democratic Party donor for \$6 million

By JOSHUA GOODMAN Associated Press Writer

MIAMI (AP) — Newly filed lobbying records show Venezuela’s socialist government previously hired a longtime Democratic Party donor for \$6 million at the same time it was lobbying to discourage the U.S. from imposing sanctions on the oil-rich nation.

The documents, which were disclosed Thursday, show a U.S. subsidiary of Venezuela’s state oil giant

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PDVSA agreed to hire Marcia Wiss' Washington law firm in March 2017. That's the same month it signed a consulting deal for \$50 million with scandal-tainted former Congressman David Rivera.

Wiss, an international trade lawyer with a history of donations to the Democratic Party, including a \$1,500 contribution to Joe Biden last year, denies she did any lobbying work.

Her former client — now under new management — said it was unaware of the full extent of her work to determine if it constituted political activities benefitting Nicolás Maduro's government. The PDVSA subsidiary also took the unusual step of registering retroactively as a foreign agent, disclosing the contracts with Rivera, Wiss and a third vendor.

The contracts have come to light as allies of opposition leader Juan Guaidó work with the Justice Department to uncover any corrupt dealings at another wholly owned PDVSA subsidiary, Houston-based Citgo, which for years operated as a cash cow for Venezuela's ruling party. A Guaidó-appointed board wrested control of Citgo, the sixth-largest independent U.S. refiner, after the Trump administration recognized him as Venezuela's rightful leader in 2019.

The same Guaidó-appointed officials behind the new foreign lobby filings last year sued Rivera for allegedly breaking his consulting contract. Federal prosecutors in Miami are also investigating whether the Republican broke foreign lobbying rules.

At the time both Wiss and Rivera were retained, Maduro was trying to curry favor with the Trump administration, avoiding outright criticism of the new U.S. president while funneling \$500,000 to his inaugural committee through Citgo.

The contracts with Rivera and Wiss were part of an effort to discourage the then-new Trump administration and other governments from imposing sanctions on Venezuela, according to three people familiar with the deals who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the politically sensitive matter. Payments came from a little-known, Delaware-registered subsidiary, PDV USA, which provided shareholder services to PDVSA independent of Citgo's oil operations.

The three people said the holding company was regularly used by Maduro's government for political activities in the U.S.

The charm offensive failed. Backed by exiles in Miami, Trump in the early days of his presidency hosted the wife of a prominent jailed Venezuelan activist and in August 2017 imposed the first of gradually more restrictive sanctions on PDVSA. Democrats cheered the hardline stance and the European Union began targeting Maduro allies with restrictions of its own.

But in a similarly tactful approach now being tried again with the Biden administration, Maduro for a while sought to ease hostilities with the U.S., which had been Venezuela's biggest trading partner for decades before sanctions drove him closer to U.S. adversaries like Russia, China and Iran. Also in the mix was U.S. Rep. Pete Sessions, who PDVSA tried to recruit to set up a meeting with the head of Exxon at the same time the oil giant's former CEO, Rex Tillerson, was serving as Trump's secretary of state.

Wiss collected around half of the \$6 million in monthly installments of \$250,000 before being instructed, like Rivera, to bill PDVSA back in Caracas in April 2018, according to the filings. On one occasion, she traveled to Caracas to meet with then Foreign Minister Delcy Rodríguez, who was a PDVSA board member in charge of international relations, according to two of the three people familiar with the deal. Rodríguez is now Venezuela's vice president.

Wiss said her law firm does not and never has provided lobbying services. She added that the firm never invoiced or ever received payment from PDVSA or any non-U.S. related party — suggesting that half of the contract went unpaid.

"Wiss was engaged to provide PDV USA and its affiliates with legal services only," she wrote in an e-mailed response to questions.

But the Guaido-appointed board of PDV USA deemed that the hiring of Wiss, Rivera and a third company, Caribbean Style Inc., required it to register under foreign lobbying rules. The Texas-based Caribbean Style was paid \$625,000 to place four full-page advertisements in the New York Times and Washington Post.

"The pro-Venezuelan and anti-U.S. sanctions content of these advertisements suggests they were in-

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tended to influence the U.S. government or the U.S. public's perspective of the U.S. sanctions regime rating to Venezuela," PDV USA said in its filing, which is dated Dec. 31.

In total, PDVSA sent \$89 million to PDV USA between 2015 and March 2017 to pay U.S.-based vendors, according to the filing, which was first reported by Foreign Lobby Report, an online news service that tracks the influence industry.

PDV USA said Wiss provided updates on disputes involving PDVSA and advice on immigration, insurance, and cryptocurrency.

But it added that "PDV USA is unaware of the full extent of the legal work that Wiss may have been performing under the retainer," suggesting that what Guaidó-appointed officials consider a high fee may have covered additional services for which it has no record. The AP could find no record of Wiss appearing on behalf of PDV USA or PDVSA in federal court or in the large number of commercial claims against Venezuela before a World Bank arbitration panel.

Wiss wouldn't say what legal services she performed, or whether she had traveled to Caracas as part of her work, citing lawyer-client privilege. "Your information is false and you are being again misled," she added.

Lawyers for Citgo's new board sued a consulting firm owned by Rivera last year for allegedly not fulfilling its obligations under the contract. According to the lawsuit, Rivera, the former roommate of fellow Republican Sen. Marco Rubio, failed to describe any work that his firm, Interamerican Consulting, had actually performed, preparing just two of seven promised bi-weekly progress reports while collecting the first \$15 million of the agreed-to \$50 million.

The goal of the contract was to improve PDVSA's "long-term reputation" and "standing" among "targeted stakeholders" in the U.S., according to a copy seen by the AP.

Rivera's political career unraveled amid several election-related controversies, including orchestrating the stealth funding of an unknown Democratic candidate to take on his main rival in a South Florida congressional race and a state investigation into whether he hid a \$1 million contract with a gambling company. He has never been charged with a crime.

Rivera's business deal is also under federal criminal investigation in Miami because Rivera never registered with the Justice Department, which would be required when lobbying U.S. officials on behalf of a foreign government.

Wiss also never registered as a foreign agent and there is no indication that she herself is under investigation.

Wiss was a longtime lawyer at Hogan Lovells, where PDVSA was a client, before starting her own boutique firm, Wiss & Partners, in 2016.

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Associated Press investigative researcher Randy Herschaft in New York contributed to this report.

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Joshua Goodman on Twitter: @APJoshGoodman

## More interviews didn't equal more minority hirings in NFL

By ROB MAADDI AP Pro Football Writer

The NFL expanded the Rooney Rule to give more minority candidates opportunities to become a head coach and reward teams who develop them.

More interviews didn't equal more hirings this offseason.

According to an analysis of candidates known to have interviewed for seven head coach openings this month, 11 were minorities and 16 were white. Only two of the seven jobs went to minorities.

Some consider it progress but most agree there's a long way to go.

"There's still work to be done in this area, no question about it," Pittsburgh Steelers team president Art Rooney II said Thursday.

The Houston Texans hired David Culley this week, making the 65-year-old longtime assistant the league's

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third Black head coach hired. The New York Jets previously hired Robert Saleh, the son of Lebanese immigrants and the first NFL head coach who is known to be Muslim.

Culley and Saleh join Pittsburgh's Mike Tomlin, Miami's Brian Flores and Washington's Ron Rivera as the league's only minority head coaches. In a sport where about 70% of the players are minorities, the lack of diversity among the head coaching ranks sticks out.

Rooney said the league will take another look at the rule named after his father, Dan Rooney, who was chairman of the NFL's diversity committee.

"We didn't make as much progress on the head coaching side as we would have liked," Rooney said. "But I would say we did make some progress on the general manager side, which is encouraging. And then we'll have to look on the coordinator side to see how much progress we make on that front.

"There are a lot of pieces to it that we're going to have to sit down when it's all said and done and really analyze what happened, and are there things we can do to strengthen the opportunities for minority coaches. I think last year we did take a number of steps that I think over time are going to pay dividends, but that's not to say we can't do more, and we'll take another strong look at it this offseason."

Two of the seven vacancies for general manager were filled by minorities when the Atlanta Falcons hired Terry Fontenot and the Detroit Lions tabbed Brad Holmes. They join Cleveland's Andrew Berry and Miami's Chris Grier as the only Black GMs in the league.

Perhaps an increase in minority executives will lead to more minority head coaches. Ultimately, the owners are the ones making the decision and 31 of the 32 are white. They have to be convinced.

"I got this job simply because I was the best football coach that they wanted in this situation, and I happen to be African American," Culley said Friday. "I'm proud of that. I'm happy for that. And I hope if me getting this job because of that reason allows other teams in this league to see that ... so be it. I'm part of it and I'm for that."

In November, the NFL implemented a resolution that rewards organizations with draft picks for developing minority coaches and front office executives who become head coaches, general managers or team presidents for other clubs.

That was part of a seven-point mobility plan designed to enhance opportunities.

Last May, the NFL amended the Rooney Rule to stipulate teams must interview at least two minority candidates not associated with their own team for a head coaching vacancy. Also, one minority candidate has to be interviewed for coordinator positions as well as high-ranking positions in the front office, including the general manager role.

Kansas City Chiefs offensive coordinator Eric Bieniemy had six interviews but was passed over again. Coach Andy Reid, quarterback Patrick Mahomes and other Chiefs expressed disappointment that Bieniemy didn't get an opportunity.

"It's very shocking that he didn't get a job," wide receiver Tyreek Hill said. "I know deep down inside he's going to look at himself in the mirror and say, 'What can I do better so I can get that job?' He's that kind of dude. He wants to get better and he wants to become a head coach. His time will come."

The list of Black candidates who interviewed for head coaching positions included five guys who previously held the position: Marvin Lewis, Jim Caldwell, Todd Bowles, Leslie Frazier and Raheem Morris.

The Eagles interviewed their assistant head coach/running backs coach Duce Staley, who left for Detroit after Nick Sirianni was hired to replace Doug Pederson. They also interviewed Patriots inside linebackers coach Jerod Mayo, Bowles and Saleh among a total of 10 candidates.

"I was blown away by the quality of these candidates," Eagles owner Jeffrey Lurie said. "The NFL is lacking in slots, not in candidates. . . . They'll be the hot candidates in a year, two or three, no question about it. That's what we learned in the process."

The Jets interviewed then-Saints secondary coach Aaron Glenn. He later joined Dan Campbell's staff in Detroit.

Many players, and their union leader, have voiced their concern about the lack of diversity in the coaching ranks.



"A rule or any modifications to a rule that has very little transparency and very little accountability, none of us should be surprised when it fails, right?" NFL Players Association Executive Director DeMaurice Smith said this month. "So, I think to the league's credit they've asked the NFLPA and us to help them improve diversity across the NFL, not only coaches or head coaches but entire coaching ranks, NFL team front offices, the league office, and ultimately ownership. Those are conversations that I know we're going to start to have with the league after the Super Bowl.

"But, to me, it has to start with those two things. Without a level of transparency and accountability, none of us should be surprised when there are only incremental steps of change or times where we've gone backward. There are concrete ways of addressing this. A lot of them mirror what people have been doing in corporate America for years. But increasing transparency, giving someone the responsibility of increasing diversity and then making it accountable, I think if you have those three things as the core of how you want to make the league look like its membership and its community. I think those are the only ways to go about it."

AP Sports Writer Will Graves contributed

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## Warden out after new allegations at embattled federal jail

By MICHAEL R. SISAK, JIM MUSTIAN and MICHAEL BALSAMO Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The warden brought in to clean up the federal jail where Jeffrey Epstein killed himself has abruptly stepped down after a yearlong tenure marred by the rampant spread of the coronavirus, inmates' complaints about squalid conditions, a smuggled gun and an inmate's death.

Marti Licon-Vitale, 54, quit the Metropolitan Correctional Center this week. Her abrupt departure came about a week after staff at the jail left an inmate — whose lawyer says he has the mental capacity of an 8-year-old child — in a holding cell for 24 hours while awaiting a competency evaluation, a violation of prison system regulations.

And in the last few weeks, a correctional officer at the facility had also reported sexual misconduct by a superior, which officials at the jail delayed reporting to senior Bureau of Prisons officials, according to three people familiar with the matter.

The people could not discuss the matter publicly and spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity.

The man who was left in the holding cell, Richard Quinn, 26, "made friends with mice" during the agonizing wait, his attorney Peter Brill said. He said the top officials at the jail had failed to report the violation to their superiors at the Bureau of Prisons.

The Bureau of Prisons would not directly address the allegations. But in a statement, the agency said it was "committed to ensuring the safety and humane treatment of all inmates in our population, our staff and the public," adding that "allegations of staff misconduct are thoroughly investigated and appropriate action is taken if such allegations are proven true, including the possibility of referral for criminal prosecution when appropriate."

The agency said its employees are required to refrain from harassing conduct and that employees "receive training to detect and prevent inappropriate behavior not only with other staff but also with inmates."

In a statement, the Bureau of Prisons said Licon-Vitale "has announced her retirement and an interim warden has been assigned until a new warden is appointed." That interim leader is listed in court papers as Eric Williams. He will be the fourth warden at the New York City lockup in 18 months, and the third person put in charge since a shakeup following Epstein's August 2019 death.

Messages seeking comment were sent to Licon-Vitale.

Licon-Vitale, the former head of the federal prison in Danbury, Connecticut, was appointed warden of the Metropolitan Correctional Center — which had been billed as one of the most secure jails in America — in

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January 2020. She took over from an interim warden who replaced Lamine N'Diaye, the warden in charge at the time of Epstein's suicide, who was transferred to another job in the agency.

Epstein's death a month after his arrest on child sex trafficking charges has been a lingering shadow over the 600-inmate facility in lower Manhattan.

The Justice Department's inspector general has yet to complete an investigation into lapses that allowed the disgraced financier to end his life. Two correctional officers responsible for monitoring him that night are awaiting trial on charges they lied on prison records because they were sleeping and browsing the internet instead of doing their jobs.

Licon-Vitale faced an immense challenge in trying to turn the facility around, hampered by issues such as the coronavirus pandemic and contraband smuggling, as well as staffing shortages and dwindling supplies early in the pandemic.

In March, just before the pandemic prompted federal prisons to halt visitation, the jail went on a week-long lockdown after officials got a tip that a gun may have been smuggled inside. Investigators found a handgun and turned up other banned items, such as cellphones, narcotics and homemade weapons, sparking an ongoing criminal probe into guard misconduct.

After the gun was discovered, then-Attorney General William Barr also launched a Justice Department task force to address criminal misconduct by officers at several correctional facilities.

As the coronavirus took hold, Metropolitan Correctional Center employees weren't able to get masks, while staff restrooms ran out of soap. Workers in charge of refilling the dispensers were pressed into duty as correctional officers because of staffing shortages. Early in the crisis, more than 25% of staff positions were vacant.

In May, a court-authorized inspection found that inmates with coronavirus symptoms were neglected and ignored and social distancing was almost nonexistent, with some inmates sleeping on bunks within arm's reach of each other.

In a deposition, Licon-Vitale said isolating ill inmates in the jail's special housing unit took priority, even as she agreed that conditions in that part of the jail were worse than in regular cells. Lawyers complained that sick inmates were being made to lie on concrete beds and weren't given sheets, blankets or pillows.

Complaints about conditions haven't abated. Defense lawyer Sabrina Shroff wrote to a judge last week about a client being kept in "barbaric and inhumane" conditions in solitary confinement at the jail.

Shroff said her client, former CIA software engineer Joshua Schulte, was made to live in a cell the size of a parking space that is "infested with rodents, rodent droppings, cockroaches and mold" and lacks heating, air conditioning or functioning plumbing as he awaits trial on charges he leaked government secrets to WikiLeaks.

As of Thursday, there was just one inmate and 13 employees sick with the virus at the Metropolitan Correctional Center, according to the Bureau of Prisons. No deaths have been reported at the jail as a result of the disease.

The death of inmate Tony McClam in September was not related to the coronavirus, the Bureau of Prisons said, though what happened to him remains unexplained.

McClam, who was facing drug charges, was found unresponsive just two days after arriving at the facility and could not be saved, the bureau said. A lawyer for his family said they were still awaiting the results of his autopsy, but that he had complained of medical issues and didn't receive the appropriate medical attention before his death.

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Balsamo reported from Washington.

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On Twitter, follow Michael Sisak at [twitter.com/mikesisak](https://twitter.com/mikesisak), Jim Mustian at [twitter.com/jimmustian](https://twitter.com/jimmustian) and Michael Balsamo at [twitter.com/mikebalsamo1](https://twitter.com/mikebalsamo1).

**EU tightens vaccine export rules, creates post-Brexit outcry**

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By SAMUEL PETREQUIN, RAF CASERT and LORNE COOK Associated Press  
BRUSSELS (AP) — The European Union introduced tighter rules Friday on exports of COVID-19 vaccines that could hit shipments to nations like the United Kingdom, deepening a dispute with London over scarce supplies of potentially lifesaving shots.

But amid an outcry in Northern Ireland and the UK, the European Commission made clear the new measure will not trigger controls on vaccines shipments produced in the 27-nation bloc to the small territory that is part of United Kingdom bordering EU member Ireland.

Under the post-Brexit deal, EU products should still be able to travel unhindered from the bloc to Northern Ireland.

"In the process of finalization of this measure, the Commission will ensure that the Ireland/Northern Ireland Protocol is unaffected," the EU's executive arm said in a statement late Friday.

Amid a dispute with Anglo-Swedish drugmaker AstraZeneca, EU Commission president Ursula von der Leyen and British leader Boris Johnson had an unexpected phone call, during which the UK prime minister "expressed his grave concerns about the potential impact which the steps the EU has taken today on vaccine exports could have," a statement from the British government read.

The EU unveiled its plans to tighten rules on exports of coronavirus vaccines produced inside the bloc amid fears some of the doses it secured from AstraZeneca could be diverted elsewhere. The measure could be used to block shipments to many non-EU countries and ensure that any exporting company based in the EU will first have to submit their plans to national authorities.

The UK and Northern Ireland governments immediately lashed out at the move, saying the bloc invoked an emergency clause in its divorce deal with Britain to introducing controls on exports to Northern Ireland. Goods are supposed to flow freely between the EU and Northern Ireland under special arrangements for the U.K. region designed to protect the peace process on the island of Ireland.

But the EU later said it was not invoking Article 16 of the Northern Ireland Protocol allowing either side to override parts of their deal.

"The Commission is not triggering the safeguard clause," it said in its statement, adding that the restricting regulations have yet to be finalized and won't be adopted before Saturday.

The phone call between von der Leyen and Johnson somewhat eased what was quickly becoming a diplomatic flashpoint.

"We agreed on the principle that there should not be restrictions on the export of vaccines by companies where they are fulfilling contractual responsibilities," von der Leyen said in a statement.

The EU hit out at AstraZeneca this week after the company said it would only supply 31 million doses of vaccine in initial shipments, instead of the 80 million doses it had hoped to deliver. Brussels claimed AstraZeneca would supply even less than that, just one-quarter of the doses due between January and March — and member countries began to complain.

The European Commission is concerned that doses meant for Europe might have been diverted from an AstraZeneca plant on the continent to the U.K., where two other company sites are located. The EU also wants doses at two sites in Britain to be made available to European citizens.

"The UK has legally-binding agreements with vaccine suppliers and it would not expect the EU, as a friend and ally, to do anything to disrupt the fulfilment of these contracts," the UK said.

AstraZeneca CEO Pascal Soriot told Germany's Die Welt newspaper this week that the U.K. government helped create the vaccine developed with Oxford University and signed its contract three months before the EU did. Soriot said that under the British contract, vaccines produced at U.K. sites must go to the U.K. first.

To head off similar disputes and allay fears that vaccines might be diverted, the Commission introduced the measures to tighten rules on the exports of shots produced in EU countries. The "vaccine export transparency mechanism" will be used at least until the end of March to control shipments to non-EU countries.

The EU insisted that's not an export ban, although it could be used to block shipments to the UK or many other non-EU countries. Many poorer nations and close neighbors are exempt.

Officials said it is intended to ensure EU member nations get the shots they bought from producers. The World Health Organization criticized the new EU export rules as "not helpful."

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Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus and other WHO officials warned of supply-chain disruptions that could ripple through the world and potentially stall the fight against COVID-19.

The "advanced purchasing agreement" with the EU was signed in August, before the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine had been properly tested. The European Medicines Agency approved the vaccine on Friday, making it the third authorized for use by EU nations.

Earlier, the 27-nation bloc and AstraZeneca made public a heavily redacted version of their vaccine deal that's at the heart of a dispute over the delivery schedule.

The contract, agreed to last year by the European Commission and the drugmaker, allows the EU's member countries to buy 300 million doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine, with an option for a further 100 million doses. It's one of several contracts the EU's executive branch has with vaccine makers to secure a total of more than 2 billion shots.

As part of an "advanced purchase agreement" with companies, the EU said it has invested 2.7 billion euros (\$3.8 billion), including 336 million (\$408 million) to finance the production of AstraZeneca's serum at four factories.

Much of the 41-page document made public was blacked out, making it very difficult to establish which side is in the right. Details about the price of the vaccine were notably redacted. The U.K. is thought to be paying far more for the vaccine than EU countries.

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Associated Press writers Danica Kirka in London, Nicole Winfield in Rome, Jamey Keaten in Geneva and Thomas Adamson in Paris contributed to this report.

## **John Chaney, commanding Temple basketball coach, dies at 89**

By DAN GELSTON AP Sports Writer

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — John Chaney's raspy, booming voice drowned out the gym when he scolded Temple players over a turnover — at the top of his basketball sins — or inferior effort. His voice was loudest when it came to picking unpopular fights, lashing out at NCAA policies he said discriminated against Black athletes. And it could be profane when Chaney let his own sense of justice get the better of him with fiery confrontations that threatened to undermine his role as father figure to scores of his underprivileged players.

Complicated, cranky, quick with a quip, Chaney was an imposing presence on the court and a court jester off it, all while building the Owls perched in rugged North Philadelphia into one of the toughest teams in the nation.

"He wrapped his arms around you and made you a part of his family," said Chaney's successor, Fran Dunphy.

Chaney died Friday, just eight days after his 89th birthday, after a short, unspecified illness.

Chaney led Temple to 17 NCAA Tournament appearances over 24 seasons, including five NCAA regional finals. Chaney had 741 wins as a college coach. He was twice named national coach of the year and his teams at Temple won six Atlantic 10 conference titles. He led Cheyney, in suburban Philadelphia, to the 1978 Division II national championship.

When Chaney retired in 2006, the scowl was gone, the dark, deep-set eyes concealed behind sunglasses, and the over-the-top personality turned subdued: "Excuse me while I disappear," he said.

He became a de facto father to dozens of his players, many coming to Temple from broken homes, violent upbringings and bad schools. He often said his biggest goal was simply to give poor kids a chance to get an education. He said the SAT was culturally biased and he joined Georgetown's John Thompson -- another giant in the Black coaching community, who died in August -- in denouncing NCAA academic requirements that seemed to single out "the youngster who is from a poor, disadvantaged background.

Eddie Jones and Aaron McKie, perhaps Chaney's two best players, were Prop 48 recruits who parlayed their Temple years into successful NBA careers. McKie is now Temple's coach and leaned on his mentor when he had to shape the program.

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"Coach Chaney was like a father to me," McKie said. "He taught not just me, but all of his players more than just how to succeed in basketball. He taught us life lessons to make us better individuals off the court. I owe so much to him. He made me the man I am today."

When Chaney joined Temple in 1982, he took over a program that had only two NCAA tournament bids in the previous decade and wasn't widely known outside Philadelphia. Often, as he exhorted his team, he put himself in situations he later regretted. He was known for a fiery temper -- sending a player he called a "goon" into a 2005 game to commit hard fouls. Chaney served a suspension and apologized.

In 1994, he had a heated exchange following a game against UMass in which he threatened to kill coach John Calipari. Chaney apologized and was suspended for a game. The two later became friends.

"Coach Chaney and I fought every game we competed -- as everyone knows, sometimes literally -- but in the end he was my friend," Calipari tweeted. "Throughout my career, we would talk about basketball and life. I will miss those talks and I will my friend."

In 1984, Chaney grabbed George Washington coach Gerry Gimelstob by the shoulders at halftime during a game.

Chaney, whose deep, dark eyes seemed fitting for a school whose mascot is the Owl, was intense on the sidelines. His loud, booming voice could be heard across an arena, and his near-perfect designer clothes were in shambles after most games. After an especially bad call, he would stare down referees. He once gazed at a referee for an entire timeout with a look he dubbed the "One-Eyed Jack."

Though he seemed permanently cranky, especially during games, Chaney was often tender and funny. He loved telling stories. His postgame news conferences were sometimes more entertaining than the games that preceded them. His retirement news conference in March 2006 wasn't about hoops but about education's role in helping the poor and disadvantaged. They included amusing anecdotes, pokes at the school administration and playful threats to slap the mayor.

After losing to Michigan State in his last trip to the NCAA regional finals, in 2001, he was the same old John Chaney -- with water-filled eyes, wearing a tie torn open at the collar and waxing poetic about another missed chance at the Final Four.

"It is something we all dream about, but very often dreams come up short," he said. "Very often you don't realize everything. But you have to realize that the growth you see in youngsters like these is probably the highest accomplishment you can reach."

Temple's style of play under Chaney's guidance was never as pretty as that of Duke or North Carolina. Slow, patient and disciplined, his best teams rarely made errors, rarely turned the ball over and always played tough defense. Chaney was simply fearless in all aspects of his work.

He refused to load his schedules with easy teams, and instead traveled to hostile courts to play teams supposedly brimming with talent. He was outspoken about the NCAA's recruiting rules, which he said hurt players trying to improve their standing in life.

"John Chaney was more than just a Hall of Fame Basketball coach. He was a Hall of Fame in life," Dunphy said. "He touched countless lives, including my own."

Chaney arrived at Temple before the 1982-83 season. sitting in one of Philadelphia's toughest neighborhoods, Temple was the perfect match for a coach who prided himself on helping players turn their basketball skills into college degrees.

He was 50 and already had success at Cheyney State University, where he had a record of 225-59 in 10 seasons.

Chaney was born on Jan. 21, 1932, in Jacksonville, Florida. He lived in a neighborhood there called Black Bottom, where, he said, flooding rains would bring in rats. When he was in the ninth grade, his family moved to Philadelphia, where his stepfather got a job at a shipyard.

Though known as a Hall of Fame coach, he also was one of the best players ever to come out of Philadelphia. He was the Philadelphia Public League player of the year in 1951 at Benjamin Franklin High School.

A graduate of Bethune-Cookman College, he was an NAIA All-American and an NAIA tournament MVP before going pro in 1955 to play with the Harlem Globetrotters. With black players still being discriminated against in the NBA, he spent 1955 to 1966 in the Eastern Pro League with Sunbury and Williamsport, where

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he was a two-time league MVP.

"He knew what I needed when I started coaching. He just fostered that and allowed me to grow and allowed me to make mistakes and was there to pick me up when things weren't working out as I thought they should," said South Carolina coach and former Owls coach Dawn Staley. "Everybody in their lives, whether they're in coaching, outside of coaching, or whatever profession, needs a person like coach Chaney in their life."

Associated Press writer Jonathan Poet contributed to this report.

## GameStop soars again; Wall Street bends under the pressure

By STAN CHOE, DAMIAN J. TROISE and ALEX VEIGA AP Business Writers

Another bout of selling gripped the U.S. stock market Friday, as anxiety mounts over whether the frenzy behind a swift, meteoric rise in GameStop and a handful of other stocks will damage Wall Street overall.

The S&P 500 dropped 1.9%, giving the benchmark index its biggest weekly loss since October. The Dow Jones Industrial Average and Nasdaq each fell 2%.

GameStop shot up nearly 70%, clawing back much of its steep loss from the day before, after Robinhood said it will allow customers to start buying some of the stock again. GameStop has been on a stupefying 1,600% run over the last three weeks and has become the battleground where swarms of smaller investors see themselves making an epic stand against the 1%.

The assault is directed squarely at hedge funds and other Wall Street titans that had bet the struggling video game retailer's stock would fall. Those firms are taking sharp losses, and other investors say that's pushing them to sell other stocks they own to raise cash. That, in turn, helps pull down parts of the market completely unrelated to the revolt underway by the cadre of smaller and novice investors.

The maniacal moves for GameStop and a few other formerly beaten-down stocks has drowned out many of the other issues weighing on markets, including the virus, vaccine rollouts and potential aid for the economy.

"Our consideration is whether this is something that is a long-term influence or contained within a handful of companies," said Tom Hainlin, national investment strategist at U.S. Bank Wealth Management.

Meanwhile, calls for regulators to step in are growing louder on Capitol Hill, and the Securities and Exchange Commission says it's carefully monitoring the situation.

"You've seen a lot of volatility this week, so when you have some unknowns like what you're seeing in the retail trading world, people are a little concerned at record highs here and taking some money off the table," said Megan Horneman, director of portfolio strategy at Verdence Capital Advisors.

The S&P 500 fell 73.14 points to 3,714.24. It ended the week with a 3.2% loss, its worst week in three months. It ended January with a 1.1% loss, its first monthly decline since October. The S&P 500 is still up 13.6% since the end of October.

Some of the heaviest weights on the index were Apple, Microsoft and other Big Tech stocks that have been big winners for professional and other investors over the last year.

The Dow lost 620.74 points to 29,982.62, while the tech-heavy Nasdaq composite slid 266.46 points to 13,070.69. The Russell 2000 index of smaller companies gave up 32.97 points, or 1.6%, to 2,073.64.

Other forces also weighed on the market. Johnson & Johnson fell 3.6% after it said its vaccine appears to protect against COVID-19, though not as powerfully as rivals. Analysts said the results, which would require just one shot instead of the two required by other vaccine makers, were below expectations.

Elsewhere, investors watched virus infection spikes in Europe and Asia, renewed travel curbs and negotiations in Washington over President Joe Biden's proposed \$1.9 trillion economic aid package. Hopes for such stimulus for the economy have carried the S&P 500 and other major indexes back to record highs recently, along with enthusiasm about COVID-19 vaccines and the Federal Reserve's pledge to keep the accelerator floored on its help for the economy. Low interest rates from the Fed can act like steroids for stocks and other investments.

"We are still moving towards a recovery from the pandemic, just a heck of a lot bumpier than anyone

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had expected," said Stephen Innes of Axi in a report.

Wall Street's focus remains squarely on GameStop and other moonshot stocks. AMC Entertainment jumped 53.7%, and headphone company Koss vaulted 52.5%. After their success with GameStop, traders have been looking for other downtrodden stocks in the market where hedge funds and other Wall Street firms are betting on price drops.

By rallying together into these stocks, they are triggering something called a "short squeeze." In that, a stock's price can explode higher as investors who had bet on price declines scramble to get out of their trades.

The smaller investors, meanwhile, have been crowing about their empowerment and saying the financial elite are simply getting their comeuppance after years of pulling away from the rest of America.

"We've had their boot on our necks for so (expletive) long that the sudden rush of blood to our brains when we have just a (asterisk)chance(asterisk) of getting free has made me feel ... well, it's made me feel," one user wrote on a Reddit discussion about GameStop stock.

"I've been isolated throughout this entire pandemic and live in a state far from home or any sense of community," another user replied. "I'd kind of just... given up. These last few weeks I've started caring again; feeling impassioned again; wanting more again."

Most of Wall Street and other market watchers say they expect the smaller-pocketed investors who are pushing up GameStop to eventually get burned. The struggling retailer is expected to still lose money in its next fiscal year, and many analysts say its stock should be closer to \$15 than \$330.

In response, many users on Reddit have said they can keep up the pressure longer than hedge funds can stay solvent, although they often use more colorful language to say that.

This week, Robinhood and other online trading platforms restricted trading in GameStop and other stocks that have soared recently, prompting outrage from individual investors on Twitter and other social media sites. After easing up on some of the restrictions early Friday, Robinhood tightened them again throughout the day, limiting the number of GameStop shares that customers could buy. By 3:03 p.m. Eastern time, they could not purchase any more if they already had at least one share.

The SEC said Friday that it is evaluating "the extreme price volatility of certain stocks' trading prices," warning that such volatility can expose investors to "rapid and severe losses and undermine market confidence."

Jacob Frenkel, a former SEC enforcement attorney and federal prosecutor, suggested it may have made sense for the market watchdog agency to suspend trading for up to 10 days in GameStop stock, under its legal authority.

Merely monitoring the situation, without SEC action, "is like putting safety experts in a permanent front-row seat in front of a runaway roller coaster," Frenkel said.

An enforcement investigation by the agency would need to determine whether there were violations of the securities laws, said Frenkel, who heads the government investigations practice at law firm Dickinson Wright.

Both the Senate Banking Committee and the House Financial Services Committee plan to hold hearings on the GameStop controversy.

"The capital markets need to be less of a casino and more of a place where people ... can invest in companies that are leading the new economy," said Rep. Brad Sherman, D-Calif., who heads the Financial Services subcommittee on investor protection.

AP Business Writers Joe McDonald and Marcy Gordon contributed.

## 'Simple is beautiful': One-shot vaccine proves effective

By LAURAN NEERGAARD and LINDA A. JOHNSON Associated Press

The first one-shot COVID-19 vaccine provides good protection against the illness, Johnson & Johnson reported in a key study released Friday, offering the world a potentially important new tool as it races to

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stay ahead of the rapidly mutating virus.

The pharmaceutical giant's preliminary findings suggest the single-dose option may not be as strong as Pfizer's or Moderna's two-dose formula, and was markedly weaker against a worrisome mutated version of the virus in South Africa.

But amid a rocky start to vaccinations worldwide, that may be an acceptable trade-off to get more people inoculated faster with an easier-to-handle shot that, unlike rival vaccines that must be kept frozen, can last months in the refrigerator.

"Frankly, simple is beautiful," said Dr. Matt Hepburn, the U.S. government's COVID-19 vaccine response leader.

J&J plans to seek emergency use authorization in the U.S. within a week. It expects to supply 100 million doses to the U.S. by June — and a billion doses globally by year's end — but declined to say how much could be ready if the Food and Drug Administration gives the green light.

Defeating the scourge that has killed more than 2 million people worldwide will require vaccinating billions. The shots being rolled out in different countries so far all require two doses a few weeks apart for full protection. Nearly 23 million Americans have received a first dose of Pfizer or Moderna shots since vaccinations began last month, but fewer than 5 million have gotten their second dose.

Also Friday, regulators cleared a third option, AstraZeneca's vaccine, for use throughout the European Union. The decision came amid criticism that the 27-nation bloc is not moving fast enough, as well as concern that there's not enough data to tell how well the vaccine works in older people.

J&J studied its one-dose option in 44,000 people in the U.S., Latin America and South Africa. Interim results found the shot 66% effective overall at preventing moderate to severe COVID-19, and much more protective — 85% — against the most serious symptoms. There were no serious side effects.

"Gambling on one dose was certainly worthwhile," Dr. Mathai Mammen, global research chief for J&J's Janssen Pharmaceutical unit, told The Associated Press.

The vaccine worked better in the U.S. — 72% effective against moderate to severe COVID-19 — compared with 66% in Latin America and 57% in South Africa, where a more contagious mutant virus is spreading.

The reduced protection against that mutation is "really a wake-up call," said Dr. Anthony Fauci, the top U.S. infectious-disease expert.

The more the virus is allowed to spread, the more opportunities it has to mutate. Vaccine makers are looking into how to alter their shots if necessary.

For now, the findings are an incentive "to vaccinate as many people as we possibly can," Fauci stressed.

Data is mixed on how well other vaccines being used around the world work, but the Pfizer and Moderna shots were 95% protective in large U.S. studies.

It's not fair to compare studies done before the record surges of recent months and discovery of new mutants — they might not turn out the same today, cautioned Dr. Jesse Goodman of Georgetown University, a former FDA vaccine chief.

The J&J protection is "good enough to help attack a pandemic," Goodman said. "The advantage of having more vaccine, in a single shot, would be significant."

Researchers tracked illnesses starting 28 days after vaccination — about the time when, if participants were getting a two-dose variety instead, they would have needed another shot.

After Day 28, no one who got vaccinated needed hospitalization or died, regardless of whether they were exposed to the original virus or "these particularly nasty variants," Mammen said. When the vaccinated did become infected, they had a milder illness.

All COVID-19 vaccines train the body to recognize the new coronavirus, usually by spotting the spikey protein that coats it. But they're made in very different ways.

J&J's shot uses a cold virus like a Trojan horse to carry the spike gene into the body, where cells make harmless copies of the protein to prime the immune system in case the real virus comes along. It's the same technology the company used in making a successful Ebola vaccine.

That's similar to how AstraZeneca's two-dose vaccine is made, although it's not clearly exactly how well



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that one works. Tests in Britain, South Africa and Brazil suggested two doses are about 70% effective. An ongoing U.S. study may provide more information.

Still another vaccine is in final testing: Novavax reported this week that its vaccine appears 89% effective in a British study and that it also seems to work — though not as well — against new mutated versions of the virus circulating in Britain and South Africa. A larger study in the U.S. and Mexico is still enrolling volunteers.

Wall Street appeared dissatisfied with J&J's results, with shares dropping 4.2% in early trading, a rare big drop for the world's biggest maker of health care products. Its stock was down \$4.07, or 2.4%, at \$165.09 in mid-morning trading.

In contrast, tiny Novavax saw shares skyrocket, jumping 71% to \$229.72 in mid-morning trading.

The Associated Press Health and Science Department receives support from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute's Department of Science Education. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

## Fauci sees vaccination for kids by late spring or the summer

By RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR and DARLENE SUPERVILLE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON (AP) — The government's top infectious disease expert said Friday he hopes to see some kids starting to get vaccinated for COVID-19 in the next few months. It's a needed step to securing widespread immunity to the virus.

Vaccines are not yet approved for children, but testing already is underway for those as young as 12.

If those trials are successful, Dr. Anthony Fauci said they would be followed by another round of testing down to those 9 years old.

"Hopefully by the time we get to the late spring and early summer we will have children being able to be vaccinated," Fauci said at a White House coronavirus briefing.

Fauci was looking ahead to a time vaccines will be plentiful. Even older adults are having difficulty getting shots at the moment. As of Thursday, only about 1.3% of Americans had been fully vaccinated with the required two doses of the currently available vaccines.

Children represent about one-fourth of the population, and for the U.S. to reach "herd immunity," or widespread resistance, about 70% to 85% of the population must be vaccinated.

"Children tend to not become as severely ill as adults but they can still become ill and some have tragically died," said Dr. Leana Wen, a public health expert and emergency room physician, who supports Fauci's goal. "Children can also be vectors of transmission, and getting children vaccinated is important as we strive for herd immunity."

The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine has emergency approval for use in people 16 and older. Moderna's vaccine is for those 18 and older.

Pfizer's clinical trial for children 12 to 15 is fully enrolled, and the drugmaker could seek emergency authorization from the Food and Drug Administration for children 12 and up sometime in the first half of this year. Moderna's trial for ages 12-17 is still recruiting.

Since the initial tests to validate the safety and effectiveness of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines involved tens of thousands of people, the age-related testing on children can be done using smaller groups.

"You don't want to have to ... go through an efficacy trial, where you're involving tens of thousands of children," Fauci explained. "What you can do, is in a much smaller trial, measured in hundreds to a couple of thousands ... what we call safety and ... immunogenicity." That's a term for whether the vaccine successfully triggers an immune system response.

After a frustratingly slow start, the U.S. is now administering about 1 million shots a day to adults, although that pace is still seen as insufficient. President Joe Biden has talked about 1.5 million shots a day, if it can be done. His administration has set a goal of 100 million shots in its first 100 days.

Two more vaccines from American companies are nearing the stage where the FDA can evaluate them for approval. One from Johnson & Johnson requires only a single shot.

Biden has also set a goal of reopening most schools by the summer, and directed government agencies to work with communities to advance it.

His American Rescue Plan legislation in Congress calls for \$50 billion to finance a major expansion of testing, which is seen as necessary for the safe reopening of schools and businesses. That's because robust testing can detect early outbreaks before they spread through a community and trigger shutdowns. Testing in the U.S. had a chaotic start, and experts say in many parts of the country it's still subpar.

## Cicely Tyson paved way for Black actors to follow footsteps

By JONATHAN LANDRUM Jr. AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Cicely Tyson was a Black actor who knocked down doors so other women of color could walk through them.

Tyson strategically selected powerful roles with an intent to elevate how Black actors were perceived. With dignified grace, she starred in films such as "Sounder" and on TV with "The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman." She strived to shatter stereotypes and inspired many Black actresses along the way to follow her footsteps. A younger generation of Black actors — Viola Davis, Kerry Washington and Zendaya among them — all paid homage to Tyson after learning of her death at age 96 on Thursday.

Davis said Tyson made her feel "valued in a world where there is still a cloak of invisibility for us dark chocolate girls." Washington felt Tyson was a "foretaste of glory," while Zendaya, who made Emmy history last year as the youngest lead drama actress winner, called the actor "one of the greatest to ever do it."

"Thank you for kicking doors down for girls like me," actor Tika Sumpter said.

Tyson's death was announced by her family, via her manager Larry Thompson, who did not immediately provide additional details. The actor's passing comes just a few days after the release of her memoir "Just As I Am."

A onetime model, Tyson began her screen career with bit parts but gained fame in the early 1970s when Black women were finally starting to get starring roles. Tyson refused to take parts simply for the paycheck, remaining choosy.

Tyson desired to get away from the negative portrayals of Black women with the hopes of highlighting them with powerful prestige.

"Cicely decided early on that her work as an actor would be more than a job," Oprah Winfrey said in a statement. "She used her career to illuminate the humanity in Black people. The roles she played reflected her values; she never compromised. Her life so fully lived is a testimony to Greatness."

Gayle King, who interviewed Tyson last week, said the actor was still full of life. She said Tyson expressed that she had more to offer with a desire to direct a project in the future.

"This was not a doddering old lady that I've heard many older people say, 'You know what? I'm just tired. I'm just tired. I'm ready to go. I'm done. I'm just tired,'" King said. "That was not Cicely Tyson. She was talking about her desire to direct. She said, 'I may have something to share later on.'"

Tyson earned an Oscar nomination for her role in "Sounder," where she played a Depression-era loving wife of a sharecropper who is confined in jail for stealing a piece of meat for his family. She is forced to care for their children and attend to the crops.

In the 1974 television drama "The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman," based on a novel by Ernest J. Gaines, Tyson is seen aging from a young woman in slavery to a 110-year-old who campaigned for the civil rights movement of the 1960s. In the touching climax, she laboriously walks up to a "whites only" water fountain and takes a drink as white officers look on.

That role in "Pittman" earned Tyson two Emmys. She also won a supporting actress Emmy in 1994 for her character in the "Oldest Living Confederate Widow Tells All."

At the age of 88, Tyson won the Tony for best leading actress in a play for the revival of Horton Foote's "The Trip to Bountiful." The revival was the actor's first time back on Broadway in three decades. She refused to turn meekly away when the teleprompter told her to wrap up her acceptance speech.

A new generation of moviegoers saw her in the 2011 hit "The Help." More recently, she was seen on

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TV in a recurring role on "How to Get Away with Murder," which starred Davis. And in roles in Tyler Perry films — "Diary of a Mad Black Woman" and "Madea's Family Reunion" — her character gave sage advice on forgiveness and living with integrity.

"Often times the talent and success of Black girls and women are treated as gold in the pan —temporary and fleeting," inauguration poet Amanda Gorman, 22, said in a written statement. "Tyson showed the world that the Black woman is more than a moment. We are legends, myths in our own right."

Gil Robertson, the co-founder and president of the African American Film Critics Association, said Tyson was a pillar for the African American community.

"More than just an actor, she reframed the identity of what it meant to be Black and human on the screen, with special attention devoted to Black women," Robertson said. He went on to say that Tyson "became a vessel through which all the dignity of who she was as a Black person, a Black woman, could flow."

Tyson's fame transcended all media. Prominent figures from two former presidents, Barack Obama and Bill Clinton, and those from across the worlds of Hollywood, Broadway and professional sports showed their appreciation of Tyson, with many of them praising her careful approach to her career and activism. Obama awarded Tyson the Medal of Freedom in 2016.

Whenever Tyson made an appearance, she drew praise — even in the most common places.

"While shooting a doc on her in Spanish Harlem, people kept stopping their cars! In the street! To hop out and say hi!" recalled Soledad O'Brien on Twitter. "Old people. Teenagers. Middle aged fans. 'Ciss-el-lee' they'd chant as she'd walk by!"

Actor-comedian-writer Robin Thede hoped Tyson was one of those legends that the world would have forever. She called it a "silly dream but you dreamt it anyway."

Like many, former First Lady Michelle Obama acknowledged that she will miss Tyson's presence, but she will smile "knowing how many people she inspired, just like me, to walk a little taller, speak a little more freely, and live a little bit more like God intended."

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Associated Press Writer Brooke Lefferts contributed to this report.

## Seattle hospitals rush out vaccines after freezer failure

SEATTLE (AP) — Seattle hospitals rushed out COVID-19 vaccines to hundreds of people in the middle of the night after a freezer they were being stored in failed.

It's not clear what caused the freezer failure Thursday night, but the UW Medical Center's Northwest and Montlake campuses and Swedish Medical Center received more than 1,300 doses that needed to be used before they expired at 5:30 a.m. Friday, The Seattle Times reported.

Word of the unexpected doses spread on social media, and a line of hopeful vaccine recipients snaked out the clinic door and through a parking lot at UW Medical Center-Northwest. A hundred people lined up at Swedish Medical Center's clinic at Seattle University. The hospital tweeted at 11:59 p.m. that it had 588 doses to give out, and by 12:30 a.m., all the appointment slots had been taken.

At the UW Medical Center-Northwest, assistant administrator Jenny Brackett walked along the crowd calling out and asking if anyone was over 65. Many of those who showed up were too young and healthy to qualify under Washington state's current prioritization categories for vaccine distribution. Brackett said the hospital was doing its best to vaccinate those eligible, but that the main objective was to get it into arms and avoid waste.

Anyone who received a first shot Thursday night will also receive the second shot in the two-dose regimen, regardless of age, said Cassie Sauer, president of the Washington State Hospital Association.

One woman plucked from the crowd at UW Medical Center-Northwest, Tyson Greer, 77, said she had been waking up at 1 a.m. or 3 a.m. for more than a week to search online for coveted vaccination appointments. She finally received a shot at 1 a.m. Friday from associate chief nursing officer Keri Nasenbeny.

Many of the staffers working the vaccination clinic had been at work since 7 a.m. Thursday, Nasenbeny said.

When she received word about the freezer failure, she called several nurses, who in turn recruited pharmacists and other volunteers. A Seattle firefighter seemed to show up out of nowhere to help, and a hospital staffer's boyfriend helped manage the queue.

Those who scored the vaccine were appreciative. Sarah Leyden, 57, got word the shots were available from her wife, a hairdresser, who heard from a client who is a nurse.

"I just got lucky," Leyden said.

## Moving on from QAnon? Experts say these tips could help

By The Associated Press undefined

Donald Trump's departure from the White House shattered the hopes of some QAnon conspiracy theorists who said they believed he would expose a worldwide cabal of devil-worshipping pedophiles. While some have clung to the faith even after the reality of Trump's election loss set in, others have abandoned the movement.

Experts and former QAnon believers interviewed by The Associated Press offer several tips for individuals looking to move on from the conspiracy theory, or for those wondering how to talk to a loved one consumed by it.

**LISTEN, DON'T PREACH:** Believers in conspiracy theories aren't likely to be swayed by people who mock their views. Instead of lecturing, listen and ask questions about why they got into the conspiracy theory, or where they get their information. Whenever possible, have the conversation offline.

**CHANGE THE SUBJECT:** Bring up shared experiences and interests to help the person focus on personal, offline connections. If someone dwells on the conspiracy theory, politely say you'd rather talk about something else.

**UNPLUG:** Social media has allowed conspiracy theories and misinformation to spread farther and faster than ever before. Taking occasional breaks from social media can help people refresh, whether they believe in QAnon or not, especially during a pandemic that has only led to more screen time.

**EXERCISE:** It's not just good for physical health but can also help former believers deal with the anxiety that comes from leaving QAnon behind. One former believer told the AP that yoga helped her move on.

**VOLUNTEER:** Mental health experts and former QAnon believers say finding local volunteer opportunities can help current and former adherents redirect their energy and concern in a positive way. Did QAnon open your eyes to the problem of child sex trafficking? Experts say helping out with local nonprofits that serve children or combat poverty is far a more effective solution than posting on social media.

**EXPAND YOUR SOURCES:** Checking a variety of sources and relying on legitimate news is one way to avoid falling for misinformation and conspiracy theories in the first place. If loved ones are curious about QAnon and growing more interested, encourage them to check out fact-based resources that might help them understand the truth.

**REACH OUT:** Conspiracy theories create online communities, and renouncing them can leave people feeling alone, humiliated or confused. Former believers looking to move on from QAnon say talking about their feelings helps. Some turned to therapy while others joined online forums for ex-believers on platforms like Reddit and Telegram.

## Biden warns of growing cost of delay on \$1.9T econ aid plan

By JOSH BOAK, LISA MASCARO and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden warned Friday of a steep and growing "cost of inaction" on his \$1.9 trillion COVID relief plan as the White House searched for "creative" ways to win public support for a package that is getting a cold shoulder from Senate Republicans.

In the age of COVID, it's not as simple as jumping on a plane to travel the country and try to gin up a groundswell. And at a time of deep polarization, Biden may struggle to convince Republican voters of the urgency when Congress already has approved \$4 trillion in aid, including \$900 billion last month.

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Biden signaled on Friday for the first time that he's willing to move ahead without Republicans.

"I support passing COVID relief with support from Republicans if we can get it," he told reporters. "But the COVID relief has to pass. No ifs, ands or buts."

His message so far has been that a fresh \$1.9 trillion in aid would be a bargain compared to the potential damage to the world's largest economy if it doesn't pass. An aggressive push for vaccinations and generous aid to individuals would help put parents back to work and let children return to school and improve their lifetime earnings, Biden said at a Friday meeting with Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen. They met in the Oval Office, where the fireplace was lit to protect against the chill in Washington.

"We have learned from past crises that the risk is not doing too much," he said. "The risk is not doing enough."

Only a week into his presidency, Biden is confronting the challenge of selling his first major piece of legislation to a country he has pledged to unite. Private calls with Republican lawmakers have yet to produce any progress on reaching a deal, while Senate Democrats are now preparing to pass the measure strictly on partisan lines as soon as next week.

Some Biden allies have expressed frustration that the administration has not more clearly defined what the massive legislation would actually accomplish. The new president instead has largely focused his first nine days in office on signing executive orders rolling back his predecessor's policies.

In particular, Biden, for whom the widespread distribution of coronavirus vaccines will be a defining test, has not explained what the increased money for testing and vaccination would achieve -- including how much quicker the White House believes it would help bring about an end to the pandemic.

Biden's outreach to senators has largely brought criticism that the plan should be more targeted and that the country can afford to wait to see the effects of the stimulus dollars that were approved in December.

Republican lawmakers see a need for speeding vaccinations, but one Senate aide said their offices are not being bombarded with calls for an additional aid package. Constituents are more focused on the looming impeachment trial, said the aide, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss private conversations.

This has left the Biden team trying to expand its outreach beyond Capitol Hill.

White House press secretary Jen Psaki said Biden recognizes the importance of speaking directly to the American people about his plan for vaccinations and supporting the economy, but the pandemic has limited his ability to safely travel to drum up support. The administration is relying on TV interviews by White House officials and allies with local media and national shows like "The View," as well as calls with governors, local officials and progressive and civic groups.

"We're taking a number of creative steps, a little outside of the box," Psaki said. "Certainly, his preference would be to get on a plane and fly around the country."

Part of the challenge is that Biden must convince the public how different components of his proposal would work together. His plan allots \$400 billion to spearhead a national vaccination program and the reopening of schools. It also includes \$1,400 in direct payments to individuals, which critics say should be more targeted. And it includes a raise in the the minimum wage to \$15 and aid for state and local governments, a nonstarter for most Republicans.

Many Republicans are under more political pressure from donors and activists back home to rein in spending than to approve more. Some Republicans particularly object to what are still seen by many as bailouts for cash-strapped state and local governments.

Some do support a deal, just not what Biden is offering. Sen. Rob Portman, R-Ohio, a member of a bipartisan group of legislators contacted by the administration, said he supports funds for vaccine distribution and even potentially extra jobless benefits, but he wants a full accounting of what funding remains from previous aid packages.

"Unemployment insurance, they think it's an emergency, well we have unemployment insurance in place until mid March. Where's the emergency?" Portman said. "Am I against extending it, no I'm not. I think we should, based on some economic factors. But it just doesn't make sense."

Recent economic reports show the economy is still under severe strain, yet there is also the potential for the strongest growth in more than two decades once the coronavirus is contained.

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The Commerce Department said Thursday the U.S. economy shrank 3.5% last year, and on Friday it reported that consumer spending — the main driver of growth — had slumped 0.2% in December. But the consumer spending report also suggested that the expanded unemployment benefits from the \$900 billion aid package passed that same month had managed to boost incomes.

Gregory Daco, an economist at Oxford Economics, said, "The COVID relief bill of December essentially addressed the past, the dwindling aid at the end of 2020," Now the administration must sell the public on what lies ahead.

He said, "The American Rescue Plan — it's a plan geared toward the future, bridging the gap between January and September, when people will be able to spend more freely."

## **NOT REAL NEWS: A look at what didn't happen this week**

The Associated Press undefined

A roundup of some of the most popular but completely untrue stories and visuals of the week. None of these are legit, even though they were shared widely on social media. The Associated Press checked them out. Here are the facts:

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False claims target Bible used for Biden's presidential inauguration

CLAIM: President Joe Biden swore on a "Masonic/Illuminati" Bible during his inauguration last week.

THE FACTS: Following Biden's inauguration, false social media posts spread about the Bible he used to take his oath of office. Some social media users falsely suggested that the several-inches thick Bible, a Biden family heirloom, was "Masonic" or associated with an Illuminati conspiracy. Conspiracy theorists suggest the Illuminati, a purported secret society, wants world domination. Freemasons, a fraternal organization, have been the subject of conspiracy theories since the group was founded over 300 years ago. Some founding fathers were even part of the group. "Sooo has anyone else realized this yet or???? Masonic/Illuminati Bible that Biden swore on yesterday..." wrote one Facebook user along with a photo of Biden's hand on the Bible. The false post had 19,000 shares. But in fact, Biden was sworn in on a Douay-Rheims Bible, an English translation of a Latin Bible. The Bible has been in the Biden family since the 1890s. He used the same Bible when he was sworn in twice as vice president and seven times as a senator from Delaware, The Associated Press reported. "Nothing even vaguely Masonic would have been anywhere near these Bibles," Robert Miller, professor of biblical studies at The Catholic University of America, told the AP in an email. "Same thing for the 'Illuminati,' to the extent that such a thing existed: repeatedly condemned by the Popes and certainly coming nowhere into contact with Catholic Bibles." Rev. Brent A. Strawn, a professor of Old Testament and law at Duke University, told the AP in an email that there's "no conspiracy" behind the Bible. He explained that the Douay-Rheims Bible is a translation of the Vulgate, a Latin translation of the Hebrew Old Testament and Greek New Testament. "Douay-Rheims is simply an English translation of the Latin Bible so popular in Catholic piety and worship," he said.

— Associated Press writer Arijeta Lajka in New York contributed this report.

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No, Biden did not instruct ICE to release all detained immigrants

CLAIM: A new order from the Biden administration directed Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents to release all detained immigrants immediately.

THE FACTS: The Biden administration did not order all immigrants to be released from ICE custody. The false claim is based on an email issued by a local ICE officer in Houston to agents that was leaked to Fox News and taken out of context. The email begins "I am just the messenger..." and instructs agents in that office to "stop all removals." One line reads, "Release them all, immediately. No sponsor available is not acceptable any longer." The email signature shows the author of the email holds the rank of assistant officer in charge for the Houston ICE field office. Social media users and conservative websites cited the leaked email to spread the false claim that the Biden administration's various immigration reforms had included immediate, mass releases of detained immigrants. "Joe Biden Orders ICE Agents to Release All Illegal Aliens in Custody," read the headline of one article that was widely shared on Facebook. Biden's

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Department of Homeland Security did issue a memo on Jan. 20 that established enforcement priorities and paused deportations of certain noncitizens who already had a final order of removal. But that directive, which was temporarily blocked by a federal judge in Texas on Tuesday, did not include an order to release all immigrants from detention. A statement issued by ICE that was shared with the AP on Tuesday confirms the agency is not under orders to free everyone in its custody. "U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) continues to make custody determinations on a case by case basis, in accordance with U.S. law and Department of Homeland Security (DHS) policy," reads the statement. "During the course of routine operations, individuals can be released from custody based on the facts and circumstances of their cases." Furthermore, a review of the email thread from the Houston ICE office revealed that the email in question was retracted a day later, only applied to a certain cohort of detainees and was issued in response to a federal court order — not a directive from Biden's administration. The emails became available to the public as part of a lawsuit the state of Texas filed against the Biden administration over its deportation moratorium. The email thread, which redacts email addresses and names, shows that after the first email was sent late Thursday morning, it was reversed Friday afternoon by an email that read, "Retract this directive immediately." That second email was signed "FOD," which is likely a reference to the field office director, the highest ranking position in the Houston office. Another email in the chain clarifies the initial email was not instructing agents to release all immigrants, but rather "High risk detainees" with health issues who had to be evaluated for release under an ongoing federal lawsuit. In that legal case, a federal judge in California had previously ordered ICE to individually review detainees and identify those who were at high risk of serious illness or death from COVID-19 and prioritize their release. "ICE does have the obligation to affirmatively review anyone in their custody with risk factors," said Elizabeth Jordan, an attorney with Civil Rights Education and Enforcement Center, which represents immigrant detainees in that lawsuit.

— Associated Press writer Jude Joffe-Block in Phoenix contributed this report.

WHO did not say COVID-19 test led to case numbers being overstated

CLAIM: The World Health Organization admits that PCR tests to diagnose COVID-19 gave massive false positives, overinflating COVID-19 case numbers.

THE FACTS: A WHO press release is being misrepresented online to say it shows that polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests for COVID-19 caused large scale false positives. Since the outset of the pandemic, some social media users have been falsely suggesting that false positive test results are the real reason behind the millions of reported COVID-19 cases. The latest posts are misrepresenting a WHO information notice. In widely shared posts on Facebook and Twitter, social media users claim the WHO admitted that PCR tests were causing false positives. Kelly Wroblewski, director of infectious disease at the Association of Public Health Laboratories, said that people are confusing infectiousness with what they think are false positives. The PCR test can determine when someone is at the beginning of the virus or at the tail end of it. "The PCR test doesn't find something that is not there, the virus is there," she said. The PCR test is generally a more sensitive test compared to rapid antigen tests, which identify proteins from the virus. The WHO released an informational notice to lab technicians on Dec. 14 clarifying instructions about analyzing PCR tests for COVID-19. WHO then updated the news release and published it on Jan. 20. The January release spread online with claims it revealed a failure by the WHO. "Wait. So there were too many false positives because the PCR tests were set at too high a threshold?" one Facebook post said. "Man, I hadn't heard that anywhere — except about 5 million times from reputable doctors who were conveniently silenced by the media for the past 10 months." But the WHO made no such admission, nor did the health agency see a large scale number of false positives. The supposedly "massive" false positives being mentioned in the post were in fact much rarer. WHO told The Associated Press that it has received 10 reports of problems related to PCR tests for the detection of SARS-CoV-2. "The reports were for misdiagnosis, both false positive and false negative results," according to WHO. "After thorough investigation, WHO confirmed that tests were not always being used appropriately and in accordance with the instructions provided by the manufacturer." The release emphasized the importance of knowing the details about the patient, the

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number of cycles of testing done when analyzing the specimen provided as well as the patient's clinical history. PCR tests work by analyzing the viral load in cycles. Dr. Wafaa El-Sadr, a professor of epidemiology and medicine at the Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health, said the higher the viral load in a patient the easier it is for a PCR test to become positive. More cycles of the test are needed to detect infections with a lower viral load, such as at the start or end of having the virus.

—Associated Press writer Beatrice Dupuy in New York contributed this report.

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The National Guard received no offer to stay at Trump Hotel in Washington

CLAIM: Donald Trump invited National Guard members to stay at the Trump Hotel in Washington so they didn't have to sleep in a cold parking garage.

THE FACTS: A spokesperson with the National Guard Bureau told The Associated Press they received no offers to stay at Trump International Hotel Washington, D.C., the former president's hotel. After National Guard troops came to Washington to secure President Joe Biden's the inauguration, they were temporarily assigned to take rest breaks in a parking garage. Images of the guard members camping on the garage floor on Jan. 21 sparked widespread outrage as well as misinformation online. "President Trump said he is opening his entire Trump Hotel in Washington, DC to the National Guard troops whom President Biden and the Democrats literally kicked to the curb, having sent them to bed down in the unheated Capitol parking garage with no food and only one toilet for 1,000s of men. God bless President Trump!!!" read one popular Facebook post. "Most media won't tell you that TRUMP HAS OFFERED THE NATIONAL GUARD STILL REMAINING IN D.C. to stay at his hotel, rather than sleep on the garage cold floor," another Facebook post stated. But guard officials say the troops already had hotel rooms and no such offer from Trump was ever communicated. "We have not received any offers at the National Guard Bureau," Maj. Matt Murphy, media relations officer at the bureau, told the AP in an email. A spokesperson at Trump International Hotel in Washington declined to comment when contacted by the AP. Captain Chelsi Johnson, a spokesperson for the D.C. National Guard, said all troops participating in the mission had hotel rooms to go back to at the end of their shifts. Some photos circulated online that appeared to show some troops inside the Trump Hotel, though the photos were first posted before claims that Trump had offered his hotel to them. "For this mission we are not lodging any National Guard troops at the Trump Hotel," Johnson said. "National Guard troops can rest in between their shifts at a location of their choosing." In a briefing on Monday, Army Maj. Gen. William J. Walker said guard members photographed in the garage on Jan. 21 were taking rest breaks. "Nobody slept there. Nobody spent the night there," Walker said. At the same briefing he said, "You stand 12 hours on your feet, you want to take a break." The AP reported the National Guard said it originally moved troops out of the Capitol Rotunda and other spaces to rest in garages at the behest of the Capitol Police. The National Guard and Capitol Police issued a joint statement on Jan. 22 saying they coordinated to establish "appropriate spaces" within congressional buildings for on-duty breaks, according to AP reporting.

— Jude Joffe-Block and Arijeta Lajka

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Bill Gates did not say '3 billion people need to die'

CLAIM: Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates wants to eliminate at least 3 billion people in the world, starting in Africa, in a plot involving vaccines.

THE FACTS: A 2019 video falsely claiming Gates wants to depopulate the globe is circulating online anew this month as COVID-19 vaccines become more widely available in the United States and elsewhere. Instagram and Twitter posts containing the video made the further unsubstantiated claim that Gates wanted to use mandatory vaccines as part of his plan to eliminate billions of people. The video shows naturopath Robert O. Young, who uses natural remedies in healing, speaking on a panel for the International Tribunal for Natural Justice, an independent, U.K.-based group that holds "hearings" and "trials" and whose members have promoted baseless conspiracy theories about 5G technology and the coronavirus. Young, who has previously been convicted for practicing medicine without a license and was ordered to pay \$105 million to a woman who said he advised her against traditional cancer treatment, claimed without evidence



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that Gates planned to kill billions of people, starting in Africa. "In the words of Bill Gates, at least 3 billion people need to die," Young said. "So we'll just start off in Africa, we'll start doing our research there, and we'll eliminate most of the Africans because they're deplorable. They're worthless. They're not part of this world economy." A review of public statements by Gates found nothing matching these claims. Young's statement appeared to misrepresent comments Gates made during a TED Talk in 2010, when he said vaccines and improved health care could help reduce the rate of global population growth and, as a result, lower carbon emissions. "The world today has 6.8 billion people," Gates said during the talk. "That's headed up to about 9 billion. Now, if we do a really great job on new vaccines, health care, reproductive health services, we lower that by perhaps 10 or 15%." Gates was talking about reducing the rate of population growth, not the population, by 10 or 15%. In past interviews, Gates has argued that improving vaccines and health care can paradoxically slow the rate of population growth in poor countries, because it lowers the child mortality rate. With more children making it to adulthood, Gates has said, parents may choose to have a smaller family size. "Amazingly, as children survive, parents feel like they'll have enough kids to support them in their old age, so they choose to have less children," Gates said in a 2012 interview. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the International Tribunal for Natural Justice did not respond to requests for comment.

— Associated Press writer Ali Swenson in Semora, North Carolina, contributed this report.

Biden cancellation of Keystone XL pipeline was not a favor to Warren Buffett

CLAIM: Billionaire Warren Buffett donated \$58 million to President Joe Biden's campaign, so Biden canceled the Keystone XL pipeline as a favor to Buffett.

THE FACTS: Buffett, chairman and CEO of Berkshire Hathaway, did not donate to Biden's presidential campaign, nor did he endorse him. Buffett previously has voiced public support for the Keystone XL pipeline. On Biden's first day in office, he canceled the permit for construction of the Keystone XL pipeline saying it was not consistent with the administration's "economic and climate imperatives." The 1,700-mile pipeline was planned to carry roughly 800,000 barrels of oil a day from Alberta to the Texas Gulf Coast. A Facebook post that has been shared more than 60,000 times suggests Biden halted the pipeline not for environmental reasons, but as a favor to Buffett. But the post's main thesis, that the billionaire investor was a major donor to Biden's campaign, is not true. "Warren Buffet owns the railroad that is now transporting all that oil. Warren Buffet donated 58 million to Biden campaign. Warren Buffet would lose billions in transport fees if the pipeline is completed. See how politics works? It is not an environmental issue, it is a money issue..." the Facebook post reads. In fact, there is no record Buffett gave any money to Biden's 2020 presidential bid, and Buffett's assistant, Debbie Bosanek, confirmed to The Associated Press that he did not. Federal Election Commission records show that Buffett made no individual contributions in 2020. In 2019, he gave \$248,500 to the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, which supports Democratic House candidates, and \$5,800 to Democratic Arizona Sen. Mark Kelly's campaign. In 2018, he gave \$33,900 to the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, \$33,900 to the Democratic Senate Campaign Committee, and \$2,700 each to the campaigns of Democrats Donna Shalala and Rufus Gifford. Bosanek told the AP that the 90-year-old billionaire did not make other donations through a political action committee in the 2020 campaign cycle. Nor did Buffett campaign in favor of the current president. "Mr. Buffett did not endorse Mr. Biden, but both he and his wife voted for Mr. Biden," Bosanek told the AP in an email. It is true that Buffett's company, Berkshire Hathaway, owns BNSF Railway, a freight railroad network that transports crude oil. While analysts over the years have suggested that the Keystone XL pipeline would take business from BNSF, Buffett voiced his support for the project in a CNBC television appearance in 2014. "It's not that big of a competitor," Buffett said at the time. "I think probably the Keystone pipeline is a good idea for the country." Bosanek told the AP that Buffett had not offered any opinions about the project more recently that he can remember, nor did he have a stance on how it would impact his business. "Mr. Buffett has never seen any report by BNSF projecting whether the Keystone Pipeline would increase or decrease the revenue of the railroad," Bosanek wrote.

—Jude Joffe-Block

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## **Biden visits wounded soldiers at Walter Reed, where son died**

By ALEXANDRA JAFFE and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden made his first major foray outside the White House on Friday with a visit to Walter Reed National Military Medical Center to meet with wounded soldiers.

Biden met with both active duty and retired service members receiving treatment at the facility, before touring the vaccine distribution center there.

"These kids are amazing, and thank God there's not as many people to visit," he said, calling those at the hospital "real heroes."

Biden has a long and personal history with the hospital, which treats thousands of military service members, veterans and their families. His son Beau, who served as a major in the Delaware Army National Guard, died at Walter Reed in 2015 of brain cancer. Biden said Friday that the hospital took care of Beau "in his final days with great grace and dignity."

Even before Beau's treatment at the hospital in Bethesda, Maryland, just outside Washington, Joe Biden and his wife, Jill, were frequent visitors during his time as vice president, making multiple Christmas Day stops to meet with soldiers there. Jill Biden focused in part on promoting awareness of issues affecting military families during that time, and on Friday, she participated in a virtual event with military-connected students.

At the White House, the first lady tried to encourage military high school students who told her they want people to know that they serve the country, too. The students participate in a peer support program in which they help other military students settle into a new school.

Jill Biden told the students during the virtual roundtable that both she and the president appreciate the sacrifices they make.

"I don't want you to feel like we don't see you," she said. "We see you and we appreciate every single day all that you're doing and, you know, especially during this pandemic, when acts of kindness are especially so important to other people, other students."

Walter Reed also features a specially outfitted suite for presidents to receive treatment, and President Donald Trump was admitted there for a few days last October to receive treatment for the coronavirus. It was one of just a few trips to the hospital made by Trump, who broke with predecessor President Barack Obama in terms of visiting troops there. Obama made nearly two dozen trips to the hospital to meet with wounded soldiers.

Biden's early visit to Walter Reed marks one of his first departures from the gated White House campus. Throughout the transition and even during the campaign, Biden has pared back his travel and in-person meetings, doing as much work as possible virtually to minimize the risk of spreading the coronavirus.

In the 10 days since he was inaugurated president, Biden's only other ventures beyond the White House complex included a visit to the Lincoln Memorial for a celebration on Inauguration Day evening and a visit to church last Sunday.

## **Judge blocks Trump rule to limit health studies in EPA regs**

By MATTHEW DALY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A federal judge has blocked a last-minute rule issued by the Trump administration to limit what evidence the Environmental Protection Agency may consider as it regulates pollutants to protect public health.

Former EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler said the Jan. 6 rule was aimed at ending what he and other Republicans call "secret science." Some industry and conservative groups had long pushed for the

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change, saying public health studies that hold confidential and potentially identifying data about test subjects should be made public so the underlying data can be scrutinized before the EPA issues rules aimed at protecting public health.

Wheeler called the rule an attempt to boost transparency about government decision-making, but critics said it was hastily imposed and would threaten patient confidentiality and the privacy of individuals in public health studies that underlie federal regulations.

U.S. District Judge Brian Morris in Montana ruled late Wednesday that the EPA had unlawfully rushed the regulation, saying its decision to make it final just two weeks before then-President Donald Trump left office was "arbitrary" and "capricious." Morris delayed the rule until at least Feb. 5, giving the new Biden administration time to assess whether to go forward with it or make changes.

An EPA spokesman said Friday the agency is "committed to making evidence-based decisions and developing policies and programs that are guided by the best science."

EPA "will follow the science and law in accordance with the Biden-Harris administration's executive orders and other directives in reviewing all of the agency's actions issued under the previous administration," including the so-called Strengthening Transparency in Pivotal Science rule, spokesman Ken Labbe said in a statement.

Wheeler defended the rule, which was finalized in early January after years of debate.

"If the American people are to be regulated by interpretation of these scientific studies, they deserve to scrutinize the data as part of the scientific process and American self-government," he wrote in a Jan. 4 op-ed in the Wall Street Journal. "Transparency is a defense of, not an attack on, the important work done by career scientists at the EPA, along with their colleagues at research institutions around the country."

But the change was so broadly written that it could limit not only future public health protections, but also "force the agency to revoke decades of clean air protections," said Chris Zarba, former head of the EPA's Science Advisory Board.

He and other critics said the rule jeopardized use of public health studies, such as Harvard's 1990s Six Cities study, which drew on anonymized, confidential health data from thousands of people to better establish links between air pollution and higher mortality. The studies have been instrumental in crafting health and environmental rules for decades. The Six Cities study led to new limits on air pollutants under the Clean Air Act.

Ben Levitan, an attorney for the Environmental Defense Fund, which challenged the Trump rule in court, said the rule's purpose was not to promote transparency, as Wheeler and other officials argued.

"Its purpose and effect is to disregard and devalue the harm pollutants and toxics cause, and therefore deprive the public of needed protection based on those studies," Levitan said Friday.

The Trump rule would restrict regulators' consideration of findings from public health studies unless the underlying data from them are made public. The rule deals with so-called dose response findings, which look at harm suffered at varying exposures to a pollutant or other toxic agent.

The change, which was made final without a required 30-day notice, came after hundreds of thousands of earlier objections from scientists, public-health experts, regulators, academics, environmental advocates and others in public hearings and written remarks, in some of the strongest protests of a proposed EPA rule change.

The new limits on considering scientific findings were among scores of Trump changes to roll back environmental regulations or hinder the ability of the Biden administration to impose new regulations. Other late-term rollbacks gutted protections for birds from unintentional killings by industry and aimed to open up formerly protected areas of the Arctic wilderness for oil and gas leasing. Both have been blocked by executive orders issued by President Joe Biden.

Many of the changes imposed by Trump face court challenges and can be reversed by executive action or by lengthier bureaucratic process. But undoing them will take time and effort by the Biden administration, which has set ambitious goals to fight climate-damaging fossil fuel emissions and lessen the impact of pollutants on lower-income and minority communities.

## Questlove uncovers 'Black Woodstock' in his hit Sundance doc

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Questlove responded with incredulous disbelief when he was first told about the footage.

A landmark 1969 Harlem concert series that he hadn't heard of? With Stevie Wonder? With Nina Simone? With Sly and the Family Stone, B.B. King and the Staples Singers?

"I was like, 'Yeah, right.' I know everything that musically happened during that time period and I've never heard of this in my life. 'Get out of here,'" Ahmir "Questlove" Thompson recalled in an interview. "Then they came back and showed me the footage and I was just jaw-dropped."

That was the beginning of what would become "Summer of Soul (...or When the Revolution Could Not Be Televised)," a concert-film time-capsule of a historic but largely forgotten festival. Known as "Black Woodstock," the festival occurred during the same summer as Woodstock — and just 100 miles away — but received far less attention.

"Summer of Soul," Questlove's directorial debut, finally unearths a little-seen landmark musical event. It debuted Thursday night at the Sundance Film Festival where it spawned immediate acclaim and countless at-home dance parties for virtual festivalgoers — a party Questlove extended with a live-streamed after-party DJ set.

As the Roots drummer, the "Tonight" show bandleader, an in-demand producer and a self-declared "music nerd," Questlove's ubiquitous presence in music has often bled into film projects. But "Summer of Soul" is his first time directing — his first "jawn," as he labels it, using Philadelphia slang — even if he never sought it out.

"You're asking if this was on my bucket-list bingo card?" says Questlove smiling over Zoom.

"I was thinking in a more seasoned director's hands, this could change someone's life," he says. "I knew I was watching something special. But I got over my fear. I often will go through impostor syndrome. I realized now it's my chance to change someone's life and tell a story that was almost erased."

Over six Sundays in 1969, more than 300,000 gathered in Harlem's Mt. Morris Park for a celebration of soul, gospel, funk and, most of all, of Black identity at a pivotal point in African American culture. The Harlem Cultural Festival — "like a rose coming through the concrete" one attendee remembers — came a year after Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination. Rev. Jesse Jackson is seen speaking passionately from the stage: "When we're more concerned about the moon than men, somebody better wake up."

The concerts were filmed by the television veteran Hal Tulchin, but he found that no networks or Hollywood producers were interested in his 40 hours of footage. Tulchin kept trying to find the footage a home until his death in 2017.

"Literally, had we let a few months more go by, a lot of this footage would have been discarded in the trash," says Questlove. "Hal Tulchin had been trying to sell this footage for years and years and decades and decades. Nobody would take the bait. His wife was like: I know some of his stuff is in the basement but I'm about to clear the basement and get rid of it. Who knew that you could get Stevie Wonder for so cheap, or Sly and the Family Stone?"

The material is indeed jaw-dropping. Simone, perhaps for the first time, performs "To Be Young, Gifted and Black." Sly and the Family Stone, the only act to play both Woodstock and Harlem in 1969, plays "I Want to Take You Higher." Hugh Masekela does "Grazing in the Grass." Mahalia Jackson and Mavis Staples sing an astonishing gospel duet.

"The more I watched it, especially with the gospel performances, that's just some of the prime, documented, raw gospel performances I've ever seen in my lifetime," says Questlove. "I was just like: Yo, is it that easy just to erase our history? Is it that easy, in a snap? Could it just be lost? That one scene, alone, with Mahalia Jackson and Mavis Staples, that almost was in the trash. That was the number one thing in my mind: How easy is it for history to be erased? And why does this mainly always happen to Black people?"

Questlove had set out initially to focus purely on the music. His first cut was 3 hours and 25 minutes. "Amateur hour," jokes Questlove, whose final cut — up for sale at Sundance — runs 117 minutes. But as he

worked on the film through Black Lives Matter protests, through the pandemic and through the reckoning that followed the death of George Floyd, the scope of "Summer of Soul" kept enlarging.

"The purpose of this festival was to keep people's minds occupied and give them something to look forward to in the summer of 1969. To see that happening in real-time in 2019, I realized that we had to dig deeper into the role of the artist," says Questlove. "As time went on, I started seeing this movie in a whole other way. Had the events of 2020 not occurred, this film wouldn't be the film that it is now. The parallels were too much to ignore."

Follow AP Film Writer Jake Coyle on Twitter at: <http://twitter.com/jakecoyleAP>

## EU regulator authorizes AstraZeneca vaccine for all adults

By FRANK JORDANS and MARIA CHENG Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — Regulators authorized AstraZeneca's coronavirus vaccine for use in adults throughout the European Union on Friday, amid criticism the bloc is not moving fast enough to vaccinate its population.

The European Medicines Agency's expert committee unanimously recommended the vaccine to be used in people 18 and over, although concerns had been raised this week that not enough data exist to prove it works in older people, and some countries indicated they may not give it to the elderly.

The shot is the third COVID-19 vaccine given the green light by the European Medicines Agency after ones by Pfizer and Moderna. The EMA's decision requires final approval from the European Commission, a process that occurred swiftly with the other vaccines.

Hours later, the EU gave its backing for the vaccine's use throughout its 27 nations.

"I expect the company to deliver the 400 million doses as agreed. We will keep on doing all we can to secure vaccines for Europeans, our neighbours & partners worldwide," tweeted EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen.

With trials showing about 60% efficacy, the vaccine appears to offer less protection than ones already authorized, but experts have said any vaccine with an efficacy rate of over 50% could help stop outbreaks.

The agency recommended the vaccine's use by older people, despite limited data regarding its efficacy in people over 55, citing the immune responses seen and experience with other vaccines.

"At least some protection is expected," Bruno Sepodes, of the EMA's expert committee, said Friday at a briefing. He acknowledged that "the exact level of protection cannot be estimated for the time being."

Many countries on the continent have been struggling to vaccinate people as quickly as Britain, Israel, the U.S. and elsewhere, and it was long hoped that the AstraZeneca shot would help speed things up at a time when countries face surging cases in a pandemic that has taken the lives of more than 400,000 people in the bloc.

The EU bet heavily on the shot, which is cheaper and easier to handle than some other vaccines, with orders for 300 million doses to be delivered after authorization and options for another 100 million doses.

"None of them is a magic wand on its own, but together they provide tools and options to prevent different aspects of the disease," said Emer Cooke, the head of the EMA.

The AstraZeneca vaccine has been authorized for use in all adults in other countries, even though only 12% of the participants in its research were over 55 and they were enrolled later, so there hasn't been enough time to get results.

EMA's decision authorizes AstraZeneca's vaccine to be used across the bloc, but individual countries can still decide how and to whom they will give the doses they receive.

Lithuania, for instance, will not use the vaccine in older people, the country's deputy Health Minister Zivile Simonaityte said, according to the Baltic News Service. It was not clear, however, what age groups would be given the shot, but Simonaityte noted that trials in people 55 and over were not "comprehensive."

Germany may follow a similar path. The country's independent vaccine advisory committee recommended Friday that the shot only be given to people under 65. The final decision rests with the government, but it is likely to follow this advice.

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Thomas Mertens, the head of the German advisory committee, said the general approval by EMA was "confusing" in light of the data provided by AstraZeneca but that he and his colleagues would gladly update their recommendation if further data comes in.

Mertens stressed that the German experts were mainly concerned about the clinical data provided by the company so far.

"The AstraZeneca study was a little more messy overall," he said.

Julian Tang, a virologist at the University of Leicester, said the German decision to restrict the vaccine's use to younger people meant more older people would be vulnerable to COVID-19 and that some would die unnecessarily.

"There's a tremendous cost to this," he said. "It means you have an extra vaccine that could be used to protect people that is going unused and more people will be at risk."

Tang described the EMA's authorization Friday as "the best decision in the current situation, where the EU is in desperate need of a usable vaccine."

The agency assessed four trials in the U.K., Brazil and South Africa and said the research showed the vaccine proved to be about 60% effective by reducing the number of people who got sick. The trials have not yet shown whether the vaccine can stop disease transmission.

A separate study testing the AstraZeneca vaccine in the U.S. is still underway.

As the EU has struggled to roll out the vaccine, politicians have blamed supply problems, but other factors, like onerous paperwork and poor planning, have also played a role. The EU has particularly lashed out at AstraZeneca after the drugmaker said it would initially supply less vaccine than originally anticipated. Exacerbating concerns about supplies to the bloc, which is home to some 450 million people, Moderna told countries including Italy and Denmark the company would be delivering fewer vaccines than originally expected.

Spahn, the German health minister, said he understood many were waiting impatiently for the vaccine, but cautioned that "several hard weeks of vaccine shortage still lie before us."

Two more vaccine makers also recently announced results, with Novavax saying this week that its shot appears 89% effective based on early findings and Johnson & Johnson saying its long-awaited single-shot vaccine was 66% effective at preventing moderate to severe illness. If those vaccines are eventually licensed, that could help alleviate the pressure on the world's huge demand for the limited shots currently available.

The authorization of the AstraZeneca vaccine comes amid a bitter dispute between the drugmaker and the bloc after the company said it would sharply reduce initial deliveries from 80 million doses to 31 million. The EU also introduced tighter rules on exports of COVID-19 vaccines that could hit shipments to nations like the United Kingdom.

The AstraZeneca vaccine has already been authorized in more than 40 countries, including Britain, India, Argentina and Mexico. The World Health Organization is also reviewing it; a recommendation from the U.N. health agency would allow its purchase and distribution to developing countries from a global program known as COVAX.

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Cheng reported from Toronto. Associated Press writers Samuel Petrequin and Raf Casert in Brussels, Nicole Winfield in Rome, Danica Kirka in London, Angela Charlton and Alex Turnbull in Paris, and Jan M. Olsen in Copenhagen, Denmark, contributed.

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The Associated Press Health and Science Department receives support from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute's Department of Science Education. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

## **FBI: Pipe bombs at RNC, DNC were planted night before riot**

By MICHAEL BALSAMO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Two pipe bombs left at the offices of the Republican and Democratic national committees, discovered just before thousands of pro-Trump rioters stormed the U.S. Capitol, were actually placed the night before, federal officials said Friday.

The FBI said the investigation had revealed new information, including that the explosive devices were placed outside the two buildings between 7:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. on Jan. 5, the night before the riot. The devices were not located by law enforcement until the next day.

It is not clear whether that means the pipe bombs were unrelated to the next day's riot or were part of the riot planning. Both buildings are within a few blocks of the Capitol.

The incident has been particularly concerning for law enforcement as officials step up security preparations ahead of the Senate's impeachment trial of former President Donald Trump. For weeks, investigators have been worried about the potential for attacks on soft targets in the nation's capital.

U.S. Capitol Police and agents from the FBI and Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives were called to the Republican National Committee's office around 12:45 p.m. on Jan. 6. About 30 minutes later, as the agents and bomb technicians were still investigating at the RNC, another call came in for a second, similar explosive device found at the Democratic National Committee headquarters nearby.

The two explosive devices were very similar, and both were about a foot long with end caps and wiring that appeared to be attached to a timer, two law enforcement officials familiar with the matter have told The Associated Press. Investigators are still examining the devices and their components to determine the specific compounds inside the pipe bombs, but they both appeared to contain an unknown powder and some metal, the officials said.

The officials could not discuss an ongoing investigation publicly and spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity.

The FBI released additional photos of the explosive devices on Friday, including a photograph that showed one of the devices placed underneath a bush. Officials have also increased the reward in the case to \$100,000.

Steven D'Antuono, the assistant director in charge of the FBI's office in Washington, said earlier this week that locating the person who planted the pipe bombs was a top priority for federal agents, though officials have only released grainy surveillance camera images of a potential suspect.

On Friday, the FBI said the person wore a gray hooded sweatshirt, a face mask and Nike Air Max Speed Turf sneakers in yellow, black and gray, and had been carrying a backpack.

## **Putin signs extension of last Russia-US nuclear arms treaty**

By VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV Associated Press

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Friday signed a bill extending the last remaining nuclear arms control treaty between Russia and the United States a week before the pact was due to expire.

Both houses of the Russian parliament voted unanimously Wednesday to extend the New START treaty for five years. Putin and U.S. President Joe Biden had discussed the nuclear accord a day earlier, and the Kremlin said they agreed to complete the necessary extension procedures in the next few days.

New START expires Feb. 5. The pact's extension doesn't require congressional approval in the U.S., but Russian lawmakers had to ratify the move. Russian diplomats said the extension will be validated by exchanging diplomatic notes once all the procedures are completed.

The treaty, signed in 2010 by President Barack Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, limits each country to no more than 1,550 deployed nuclear warheads and 700 deployed missiles and bombers, and envisages sweeping on-site inspections to verify compliance.

Biden indicated during the U.S. presidential campaign that he favored the preservation of New START, which was negotiated during his tenure as vice president under Obama.

Russia had long proposed prolonging the pact without any conditions or changes, but the administration

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of former President Donald Trump waited until last year to start talks and made the extension contingent on a set of demands. The talks stalled, and months of bargaining failed to narrow differences.

After both Moscow and Washington withdrew from the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty in 2019, New START is the only remaining nuclear arms control deal between the two countries.

Earlier this month, Russia announced that it would follow the U.S. in pulling out of the Open Skies Treaty, which allowed surveillance flights over military facilities to help build trust and transparency between Russia and the West.

Arms control advocates hailed New START's extension as a boost to global security and urged Russia and the U.S. to start negotiating follow-up agreements.

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov, the country's lead negotiator on New START, said earlier this week that Russia was ready to sit down for talks on prospective arms cuts that he indicated should also involve non-nuclear precision weapons with strategic range.

Russia had offered before Biden took office to extend New START for five years — a possibility that was envisaged by the pact at the time it was signed.

Trump argued that the treaty put the U.S. at a disadvantage, and he initially insisted on adding China as a party to pact. Beijing bluntly rejected the idea. The Trump administration then proposed extending New START for one year and sought to expand it to include limits on battlefield nuclear weapons and other changes, and the talks stalled.

## In fight over GOP, state parties stand as firewall for Trump

By THOMAS BEAUMONT and NICHOLAS RICCARDI Associated Press

Donald Trump has mused about forming a third party. But it's unclear why he needs one.

As he faces an impeachment trial for inciting insurrection, state and county Republican Party committees have rushed to Trump's defense — highlighting the former president's firm control of the GOP machinery.

In swing states and GOP bastions, state and local Republican committees are stocked with Trump supporters who remain loyal. Trump critics have been pushed out or marginalized. Party committees from Washington state to South Carolina have moved to punish many of the 10 House Republicans who supported Trump's impeachment for egging on the deadly Jan. 6 raid of the U.S. Capitol.

Trump's lock on the party apparatus is the result of a yearslong takeover of an institution he only loosely affiliated with before taking office. The effect amounts to a firewall protecting him and his far-right, nationalist politics from Republicans who argue the party needs a new direction if it wants to win elections.

"It's come to the point where you have to be with him 100 percent of the time, or you're the enemy," said Dave Millage, a former Iowa lawmaker who was pushed out as Scott County GOP chairman after calling for Trump's impeachment.

On Saturday, the South Carolina GOP will decide whether to censure Republican Rep. Tom Rice for his vote to impeach the former president. It's a move meant to scar the five-term congressman for what many of his constituents considered a betrayal, said GOP chairwoman Dreama Perdue in Rice's home Horry County.

In some cases, the state parties' defense of Trump has exposed the extent to which disinformation, conspiracy theories and views once considered fringe have been normalized in the GOP.

In Oregon, the state party last week released a resolution passed by its executive committee that in part falsely alleged the Capitol attack was a "false flag" designed to embarrass Trump supporters. State parties in Hawaii and Texas have recently tweeted references to the QAnon conspiracy theory, which claims Trump is waging a secret battle against the "deep state" and a sect of powerful devil-worshipping pedophiles including top Democrats.

In other states, the rapid defense of Trump is notable for Republicans' willingness to double down on Trumpism even after voters rejected it.

The Arizona state party Saturday reelected its controversial Trump loyalist chairwoman, Kelli Ward and censured Trump critics Cindy McCain, former Sen. Jeff Flake and even Gov. Doug Ducey, a Republican Trump supporter who offended the party leadership by certifying Trump's loss in the state.



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In Washington state, several county party committees have called for the removal of the two House members who voted for Trump's impeachment. Primary challengers have begun lining up to take on all 10 Republican House members who voted to impeach Trump.

Trump's hold on state parties reflects the ex-president's continued popularity with the base and the work his political operation has done to plant loyalists in the typically obscure local GOP apparatus. His re-election campaign focused heavily on packing state and county committees with devotees to avoid the spectacle of 2016, when many in the party's machinery fought Trump's nomination.

Chuck Coughlin, a Republican strategist in Arizona, said he is troubled by what Ward's victory says about the party's inability to shake Trump, the first Republican presidential candidate to lose the state since 1996.

Ward pushed for Trump to "cross the Rubicon" in challenging the results election, he said, a reference to Julius Caesar's military push toward Rome that sparked a civil war and dictatorship.

"The party as it's currently defined today, as the party of Trump, cannot win statewide elections in Arizona," he said. "A smart party would try to figure out how to be more inclusive and not exclusive."

"Literally, this is idol worship."

But Trump brought in millions of new voters to the party with his populist approach. And Republicans should welcome those voters decision to stay involved, even when Trump is not on the ballot, argued Constantin Querard, a conservative Republican strategist in Arizona.

"Without Trump, some of them will go home, but some of them will stick around forever," he said.

Republicans' worry, however, is that the newcomers drive away other potential Republican voters.

Nearly 5,000 Arizona voters dropped their GOP voter registration in nine days after the Capitol attack, state figures show. In Pennsylvania, another state Trump lost, nearly 10,000 voters registered as Republicans had dropped their GOP affiliation as of Monday, according to state data.

On Wednesday, the Oregon state house Republican caucus distanced itself from the "false flag" claim in a statement and tried to shift attention to economic issues. "The election is over. It is time to govern," said the statement, signed by 23 representatives.

"That's the challenge in this period, can the state-level people rein it in?" said Christopher Nichols, director for the Center for Humanities at Oregon State University.

Trump's hold on the party structure isn't likely to ease soon. In many cases, supporters are elected to posts with multi-year terms and positioned to keep rising.

In Michigan, an establishment Republican fundraiser Ron Weiser is favored to become the next state party chairman. But to bolster his bid for the post, he picked a No. 2 with Trump credentials.

He chose Meshawn Maddock, a conservative activist who organized Michigan's 19-bus delegation to the Jan. 6 "Stop the Steal" rally and has posted images of Michigan's Democratic Gov. Gretchen Whitmer altered to resemble Adolf Hitler.

If Weiser wins, Maddock will be next line for chairwoman in the battleground state.

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Meg Kinnard in Columbia, S.C., contributed to this report.

## US consumer spending fell 0.2% in December in face of virus

By MARTIN CRUTSINGER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. consumers slowed their spending by 0.2% in December, cutting back for a second straight month in a worrisome sign for an economy struggling under the weight of a still out-of-control pandemic.

The decline reported Friday by the Commerce Department followed a seasonally adjusted 0.7% drop in November. It was the latest sign that consumers, whose spending is the primary driver of the U.S. economy, are hunkered down and avoiding traveling, shopping and dining out. Since making a brief bounce-back from the viral pandemic last spring, consumer spending has barely grown. Sales at retailers have declined for three straight months.

Friday's report from the government also showed that personal incomes, which provide the fuel for

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spending, rose a modest 0.6% after two months of declines. Yet Americans who have been fortunate enough to keep their jobs have been largely stockpiling savings rather than spending. That could bode well for the economy later this year, once consumers feel more willing and are more able to spend.

The latest figures reflect a shaky economy. On Thursday, the government estimated that the economy grew at a 4% annual rate in the final three months of 2020 but shrank last year by the largest amount in 74 years. At the same time, the job market is faltering, with nearly 10 million jobs still lost to the pandemic, which erupted 10 months ago. Hiring has slowed for six straight months, and employers shed jobs in December for the first time since April.

The outlook for 2021 remains uncertain. Economists warn that a sustained recovery won't likely take hold until vaccines are successfully distributed and administered nationwide and government-enacted rescue aid spreads through the economy, which could take months. In the meantime, millions of individuals and businesses continue to struggle.

Last week, for instance, 847,000 laid-off Americans applied for unemployment benefits, an elevated figure that showed that many companies keep cutting jobs as the pandemic continues to rage. Before the virus erupted in the United States in March, weekly applications for jobless aid had never topped 700,000, even during the Great Recession.

In the coming months, as vaccines become widely distributed and administered, growth is expected to revive. After an initial slowdown in the current quarter, many analysts believe growth will achieve stronger gains for the rest of the year, allowing GDP to expand roughly 5% for 2021 as a whole.

Yet that forecast hinges on the widespread use of vaccines and the gradual reopening of businesses and the rehiring of millions of laid-off workers. The prospect of increased support from Congress' approval of at least part of President Joe Biden's \$1.9 trillion relief plan and pent-up spending from the savings buildup of higher-income households has also raised hopes. A \$900 billion rescue aid package that the government enacted late last year is providing some help, too.

On Wednesday, the Federal Reserve kept its benchmark short-term interest rate near zero and stressed that it would keep pursuing its low-rate policies until a recovery is well underway. The Fed acknowledged that the economy has faltered in recent months, with hiring weakening especially in industries affected by the raging pandemic, notably restaurants, bars, hotels and others involved in face-to-face public contact.

Friday's government report on consumer spending showed that inflation by a measure preferred by the Fed rose 0.4% in December after no change in October and November. That left prices up 1.3% over the past 12 months, well below the Fed's 2% target.

Most analysts think inflation will creep higher in coming months as the economy recovers. But Fed Chair Jerome Powell has made clear that the central bank sees no signs that inflation may grow undesirably high.

The savings rate remained at an elevated 13.7% of after-tax income in December, up from 12.9% in November. Americans' savings have reached high levels since the pandemic hit nearly a year ago, reflecting business restrictions and the reluctance of many to leave home. Economists estimate that households have accumulated about \$1.6 trillion in savings since the onset of the pandemic.

In the final three months of 2020, consumer spending, which accounts for about 70% of the economy, grew at a 2.5% annual rate. Many analysts say that figure should grow as federal aid spreads through the economy.

Andrew Hunter, senior U.S. economist at Capital Economics, said he expects spending growth to reach a 7% annual rate in the current first quarter and then rise further "as the vaccine rollout reaches critical mass."

Gregory Daco, chief U.S. economist at Oxford Economics, said he thinks consumer spending will rise 6.4% for the entire year after having fallen 3.9% in 2020.

"We believe increased vaccinations, stable household finances and rebounding confidence will lift consumer spending growth" this year, Daco said.

**'Just shocked': A town reckons with charges in Capitol riot**

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By FARNOUSH AMIRI and DAN SEWELL Associated Press  
WOODSTOCK, Ohio (AP) — In this don't blink-or-you'll-miss-it, one-stoplight town, dozens of residents still fly "Trump 2020" and "Make America Great Again" flags.

But it's a now-shuttered bar that brought the FBI and other investigators to Woodstock, Ohio, around 40 miles (65 kilometers) northwest of Columbus, this month. Bedsheets and drapes cover the windows of The Jolly Roger Bar and Grill, except for a sliver where an "OPEN" sign flickers in red, white and blue.

It is here, federal authorities allege, that Army veteran Jessica Watkins tended bar and recruited members for a local militia group she has said in social media posts she founded in 2019. She affiliated it with the Oath Keepers, an extremist, militaristic group believed to have thousands of members nationally, authorities say.

In a criminal complaint filed Jan. 19 and a federal indictment Wednesday, Watkins and a member of her militia, ex-Marine Donovan Ray Crowl, are charged, along with a Virginia man, with helping to plan and coordinate the Jan. 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol.

While many of the initial images from the Capitol assault included colorful characters such as the horns-wearing self-proclaimed "QAnon Shaman," other, more disturbing images emerged, showing military-like formations of rioters dressed in olive drab, wearing helmets, goggles and items ready for an assault.

"We have a good group," federal authorities say Watkins transmitted that day. "We have about 30-40 of us. We are sticking together and sticking to the plan."

A couple blocks from the Jolly Roger, congregants at the Free Will Baptist Church have been trying to wrap their heads around it, said Keith Pack, a church deacon.

"Just shocked that it would be in the small town of Woodstock," said Pack, who lives near the town of fewer than 300 people.

Freddy Cruz, a Southern Poverty Law Center research analyst, agreed "it's shocking" that people from a place such as Woodstock would emerge into the spotlight through a bold insurrection that claimed five lives while hoping to overturn Republican Donald Trump's election loss.

While shocking, Cruz added, it shouldn't have been.

"It's quite concerning. I think the general media and the federal institutions have dropped the ball in taking these groups seriously," Cruz said. He said many anti-government groups have been very active for years, carrying out military-like training for a second Civil War in apocalyptic fantasies fueled by conspiracy narratives that Trump did little to discourage.

In November, Watkins sent a text message to several people interested in joining her local militia group, encouraging them to participate in "a week-long basic Basic Training class," in early January, according to court records. The classes were to be held an hour north of Columbus, Watkins said, presumably in Woodstock, or a nearby town.

"I need you fighting fit by inauguration," the 38-year-old told another interested member. "It's a military style basic, here in Ohio, with a Marine Drill Sergeant running it."

In the indictment Wednesday that includes charges of conspiracy and obstructing Congress that carry up to 20 years in prison with conviction, federal authorities cite social media comments and photos allegedly from Watkins that crowed about the "Historical Events we created today."

Another voice is heard exhorting her: "Get it, Jess ... everything we (expletive) trained for."

Records show Watkins served honorably in the Army under a different name, including duty in Afghanistan from 2001 to 2003. Court records in Rochester, New York, showed she changed her name to Jessica Marie Watkins in 2004. She also lived in Fayetteville, North Carolina, serving as a first responder with emergency medical training, before settling in Woodstock about three years ago.

She and her boyfriend Montana Siniff owned the two-story building where they lived and started the Jolly Roger. A Facebook page for the Jerry Morgan & Certified Outlaw Band indicates they played the Jolly Roger in 2019. The Jolly Roger's own Facebook page has been suspended.

Phil Garland, president of Woodstock's village council and a resident for some 20 years, was blindsided by the news.

"It's a small town, but if you weren't necessarily born and raised there, there is a lot going on and you're not going to know about it," Garland said.

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The Champaign County village, settled by New Englanders in the early 19th century and named after Woodstock, Vermont, used to be dominated by mostly retired, lifelong residents. But around 10 years ago, things began to change as elders died off and younger people moved in for affordability and convenience to Columbus and Dayton. Census figures show it's nearly 98% white, and a solidly conservative town where putting out a lawn sign for a Democratic candidate could result in it being stolen or destroyed.

But Garland said the village is friendly "for the most part."

Pack, the church deacon, said there is a lot of speculation about Watkins and Crowl, but to him, it's mainly rumors and he didn't want repeat rumors.

Watkins' boyfriend didn't return a call for comment this week.

Her militia group is believed to be small. At least three members peacefully protested the presidential election outside Ohio's Statehouse in November.

"While we were made aware of this group, we are unaware of any criminal allegations or investigations regarding their activity while at the Ohio Statehouse," said Kristen Castle, a spokesperson for the Ohio Department of Public Safety. She said she couldn't comment about any ongoing investigation or intelligence gathering.

Rick Campbell, who served in the Vietnam War, has had a hard time processing what took place some 15 miles (24 kilometers) away from their Marysville, Ohio, Veterans of Foreign Wars post.

"This isn't patriotism, what they did," Campbell, 73, said. "Those radicals don't represent what I represented in the military."

The FBI said a search of Watkins' home found personal protection equipment and communication devices, homemade weapons and instructions for making plastic explosives.

U.S. Magistrate Sharon Ovington in Dayton denied bail for Crowl, 50, citing information that he wanted to go to a home with nine firearms and said she didn't see a way to ensure public safety with him at large. Crowl's court-appointed attorney didn't respond to two messages for comment.

Both remain jailed in Dayton. No attorney for Watkins was listed in court filings.

The Dayton Daily News reported that when asked in her initial court appearance whether she understood the charges against her, Watkins replied: "I understand them but I don't understand how I got them."

Just five days before the Capitol riot, Watkins posted on social media photos of herself in the Jolly Roger, complaining it was empty on a Saturday and, referring to Ohio Republican Gov. Mike DeWine's anti-pandemic restrictions on bars, said "Thanks for nothing DeWine."

She added: "Guess I am going to pack for DC. See you there."

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Sewell reported from Cincinnati. Follow Dan Sewell at <https://www.twitter.com/dansewell> and Farnoush Amiri at <https://twitter.com/FarnoushAmiri>.

Farnoush Amiri is a corps member for the Associated Press/Report for America Statehouse News Initiative. Report for America is a nonprofit national service program that places journalists in local newsrooms to report on undercovered issues.

AP News Researchers Rhonda Shafner and Jennifer Farrar in New York contributed to this report, along with Freddy Brewster, a student at the University of California, Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism, through a partnership with The Associated Press.

## **VIRUS DIARY: In face of tragedy, a faith in science endures**

By BRIAN P. D. HANNON Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — As I read about the 35th anniversary of the 1986 Challenger shuttle disaster this week, I was transported back to Fifth Street Middle School in Bangor, Maine.

I was in eighth grade. Our teacher wheeled in a television so we could watch the launch of the NASA mission that would lift another educator from neighboring New Hampshire into the sky and beyond.

We were in a modular classroom — basically a converted trailer home — attached to the main building by a walkway, leaving us attached but also isolated from the rest of the school. When the shuttle exploded,

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I sat among my classmates, stunned and unable to process the cataclysm on the screen. Like her pupils, our teacher was frozen and silent.

Reading through remembrances of that shocking day, I realized the COVID-19 pandemic has returned me to a similar condition.

I have spent 11 months in my apartment in Phoenix writing news stories about the western United States with only a laptop and Wi-Fi. In terms of information, I am extremely well connected.

Yet like everyone else, I have been stunned into submission. I missed family milestones both happy and mournful, and saw highly anticipated events canceled by the virus (we will meet again someday, Rage Against The Machine). My lifelong asthma also has heightened my fear of infection and kept me mostly inside, avoiding others.

I break up living room workdays with short night walks. I enjoy the cactus and stone front yards of my neighbors, so different than the pine and birch trees I saw on my commute to school in Maine. I am connected geographically, attached to my home and the city, but still isolated.

I have adapted to my shrunken circumstances in various ways, including taking the added — extreme, some might say — precaution of purchasing all my groceries through a certain online retailer.

Freeze-dried broccoli and mushrooms, packets of soup and powdered coconut milk give me a sense of safety and have helped shed a healthy number of pounds, but my palate yearns to break free from quarantine.

I have taken one pandemic trip: a vacation to Tombstone, Arizona, where I rented a small cabin on a haunting piece of desert land. But the excursion only reinforced a sense of isolation.

In Tombstone's largely empty streets, I photographed historic buildings and watched the reenacted O.K. Corral shootout. I dutifully wore my mask and avoided those who did not.

Sitting next to a campfire outside my cabin, I looked to an intensely clear night sky filled with a dazzling array of stars — the same frontier toward which the Challenger ascended on its final journey — and felt connected to the cosmos but removed from society.

While enjoying the open terrain and absence of crowds, my perennial mask and alcohol wipes never allowed me to forget the threat and forced separation under which we all live. I was moving and free, but disconnected.

As we recall one of America's worst technological failures in the Challenger disaster, we also look to the latest scientific marvel of vaccines for a return to some version of normalcy.

The great minds who built the doomed shuttle, which etched a dark notch in all of us old enough to remember, did not surrender. In September 2019, Jessica Meir became the first woman from Maine to travel into space, a beacon to myself and my former classmates who will never forget the tragedy that preceded her.

Cloistered in my home office, I remain comforted by a belief that the pandemic is another terrible misfortune from which we will eventually rise, recover and reconnect.

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Virus Diary, an occasional feature, showcases the coronavirus pandemic through the eyes of Associated Press journalists around the world. Follow Phoenix-based AP journalist Brian P. D. Hannon on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/bpdhannon>

## Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Saturday, Jan. 30, the 30th day of 2021. There are 335 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Jan. 30, 1948, Indian political and spiritual leader Mohandas K. Gandhi, 78, was shot and killed in New Delhi by Nathuram Godse (neh-too-RAHM' gahd-SAY'), a Hindu extremist. (Godse and a co-conspirator were later executed.)

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On this date:

In 1649, England's King Charles I was executed for high treason.

In 1862, the ironclad USS Monitor was launched from the Continental Iron Works in Greenpoint, New York, during the Civil War.

In 1933, Adolf Hitler became chancellor of Germany.

In 1945, during World War II, a Soviet submarine torpedoed the German ship MV Wilhelm Gustloff in the Baltic Sea with the loss of more than 9,000 lives, most of them war refugees; roughly 1,000 people survived. Adolf Hitler marked the 12th anniversary of his appointment as Germany's chancellor with his last public speech in which he called on Germans to keep resisting until victory.

In 1948, aviation pioneer Orville Wright, 76, died in Dayton, Ohio.

In 1968, the Tet Offensive began during the Vietnam War as Communist forces launched surprise attacks against South Vietnamese towns and cities; although the Communists were beaten back, the offensive was seen as a major setback for the U.S. and its allies.

In 1972, 13 Roman Catholic civil rights marchers were shot to death by British soldiers in Northern Ireland on what became known as "Bloody Sunday."

In 1974, President Richard Nixon delivered what would be his last State of the Union address; Nixon pledged to rein in rising prices without the "harsh medicine of recession" and establish a national health care plan that every American could afford.

In 1981, an estimated 2 million New Yorkers turned out for a ticker-tape parade honoring the American hostages freed from Iran.

In 1993, Los Angeles inaugurated its Metro Red Line, the city's first modern subway.

In 2005, Iraqis voted in their country's first free election in a half-century; President George W. Bush called the balloting a resounding success.

In 2006, Coretta Scott King, widow of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., died in Rosarito Beach, Mexico, at age 78.

Ten years ago: Egypt's most prominent democracy advocate, Mohamed ElBaradei (ehl-BEHR'-uh-day), called for President Hosni Mubarak to resign during an address to thousands of protesters in Cairo who were defying a curfew for a third night. Rachid Ghanouchi (gah-NOO'-shee), leader of the long-outlawed Tunisian Islamist party, returned home after two decades in exile. Novak Djokovic (NOH'-vak JOH'-kuh-vich) won his second Australian Open title, breezing past Andy Murray 6-4, 6-2, 6-3.

Five years ago: A boat carrying Syrians attempting the short sea journey from Turkey to Greece capsized, causing at least 37 people to drown, among them several babies and young children. Germany's Angelique Kerber won her first major title, upsetting Serena Williams 6-4, 3-6, 6-4 to win the Australian Open.

One year ago: Health officials reported the first known case in which the new coronavirus was spread from one person to another in the United States. The World Health Organization declared the virus outbreak, which had reached more than a dozen countries, to be a global emergency. Russia ordered the closure of its 2,600-mile-long land border with China in an effort to limit the spread of the virus. President Donald Trump described the handful of U.S. cases of the virus as a "very little problem" and said those people were "recuperating successfully." The State Department advised U.S. citizens against traveling to China. Tennessee Republican Sen. Lamar Alexander said he would oppose calling witnesses at Trump's Senate impeachment trial, all but dashing Democratic efforts to hear more testimony.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Gene Hackman is 91. Actor Vanessa Redgrave is 84. Country singer Jeanne Pruett is 84. Chess grandmaster Boris Spassky is 84. Country singer Norma Jean is 83. Former Vice President Dick Cheney is 80. R&B musician William King (The Commodores) is 72. Singer Phil Collins is 70. Actor Charles S. Dutton is 70. World Golf Hall of Famer Curtis Strange is 66. Actor Ann Dowd is 65. Actor-comedian Brett Butler is 63. Singer Jody Watley is 62. Actor-filmmaker Dexter Scott King is 60. The King of Jordan, Abdullah II, is 59. Actor Wayne Wilderson (TV: "Veep") is 55. Actor Norbert Leo Butz is 54. The King of Spain, Felipe VI, is 53. Country singer Tammy Cochran is 49. Actor Christian Bale is 47. Rock musician Carl Broemel (My Morning Jacket) is 47. Actor Olivia Colman is 47. Actor-singer Lena Hall is 41. Pop-country

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singer-songwriter Josh Kelley is 41. Actor Wilmer Valderrama is 41. Actor Mary Hollis Inboden is 35. Actor Kylie Bunbury is 32. Actor Jake Thomas is 31. Actor Danielle Campbell is 26.