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Ron Anderson fastens the snowflakes to the new Silver Skates background. The Anderson family put in many hours cutting out the snowflakes and painting the background. Katie Anderson helped to spearhead the project. (Courtesy Photo)



OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

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Senior Alexis Hanten sang the National Anthem while seniors Tessa Erdmann, Grace Wiedrick, Hailey Monson and Erin Unzen presented the flags. (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM)

83rd Annual Carnival of Silver Skates

Alexis Hanten,
daughter of
Cody and Sarah
Hanten, was
chosen as this
year's Carnival
of Silver Skates
Queen.

(Photo by Sarah Hanten)



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The 2021 Silver Skates Queen Alexis Hanten. (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM)

The 2021 Silver Skates Queen Alexis Hanten is given a ride around the rink in the sleigh pulled by the Silver Skates Queen candidates.

(Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM)



Junior Snow Queen Lydia Meier and Senior Snow Queen Tiera DeHoet were recognized with Silver Skates 2020 Queen Nicole Marzahn. (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM)



2020 Silver Skates Queen Nicole Marzahn made her final trip around the skating rink.

(Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM)

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1. Snowflakes/Kindergarten

"We're All in this Together"

Kinzee Burro, Zoe Burro, Brielle Dunbar, Maci Dunbar, Kinsey Frost, Sophia Gilchrist, Ellie Lassle, Jorie Locken, Presley Olson, Ava Strom, Sunny Washenberger, and Nova Washenberger

Instructors: Ashlyn Sperry and Anna Fjeldheim (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM)



4th grade

"Falling for Ya"

Aubrey Craig, Sam Crank, Abby Fjeldheim, Tenley Frost, Luke Gauer, Tevan Hanson, Adeline Kotzer, Peyton Schuring, Aurora Washenberger, and Kyrie Yeigh. Instructor: Alexis Hanten (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM)

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We are excited to welcome Katherine Pfaff as our guest skater again this year.

Katherine Pfaff is 16 years old and a sophomore at Watertown High School. She is a member of the Watertown Figure skate club and has been skating for 12 years.

She recently tested and passed the Novice Moves in the Field and Intermediate Free Solo Dance levels. She is also Intermediate Free skate. Katherine's goals are to reach Senior level in all three disciplines before graduating high school.

In her spare time, she enjoys spending time with her friends and in the summer swimming and tubing at Lake Kampeska. She is on the golf team at school.

Katherine is the daughter of Scott and Ann Pfaff.

Specialty Act

"House of the Rising Sun"

Guest Skater, Katherine Pfaff, Watertown Figure Skate Club

She also performed at the second half in the photo below. (Photos lifted from GDILIVE.COM)



The afternoon performance of the Carnival of Silver Skates was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM, sponsored by the Silver Skates Committee.

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11th grade

Kennedy Anderson, Brooklyn Imrie, Julianna Kosel, and Tina Zoellner
Instructor: Aubray Harry (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM)

"Hold My Hand"

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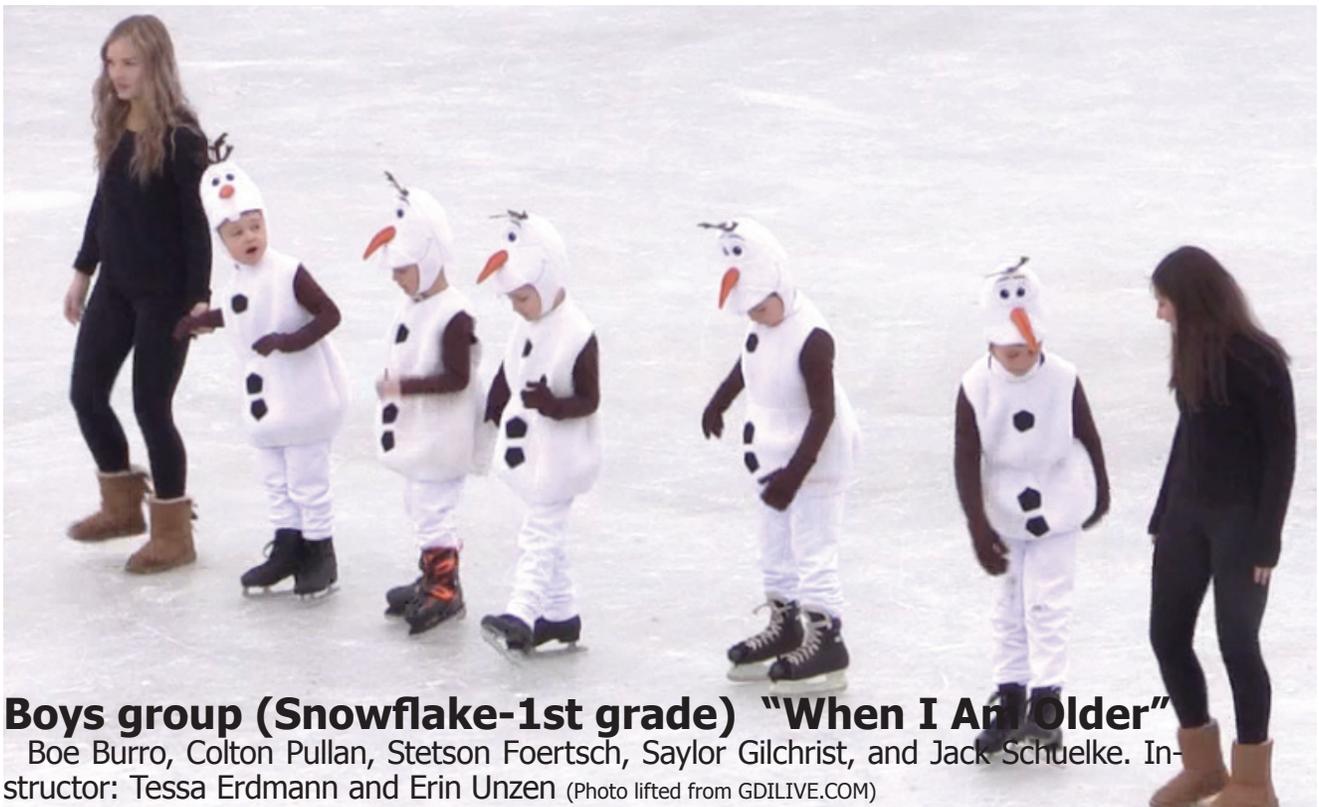


2nd grade

"Shake it Off"

Brynlee Dunker, Ambrielle Feist, Danielle Franken, Caelynn Pullan, Maycee Moody, Mya Moody, Zoe Olson, Victoria Schuster, and Taylynn Traphagen

Instructors: KayLynn Overacker and Marlee Tollifson (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM)



Boys group (Snowflake-1st grade) "When I Am Older"

Boe Burro, Colton Pullan, Stetson Foertsch, Saylor Gilchrist, and Jack Schuelke. Instructor: Tessa Erdmann and Erin Unzen (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM)

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Specialty Act "Rise Up"

Brenna Imrie and Claire
Schuelke (Photo lifted from GDIL-
IVE.COM)



3rd grade

Emilee Burro, Rachel Dobbins, Sophia Flihs, Andi Gauer, and Rowan Patterson
Instructor: Carter Barse and Hailey Monson (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM)

"Love Gets Me Every Time"

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10th grade

"I Will Follow Him"

Carter Barse, Brenna Carda, Shallyn Foertsch, KayLynn Overacker, and Marlee Tollifson

Instructors: Katie Anderson and Coralea Wolter (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM)

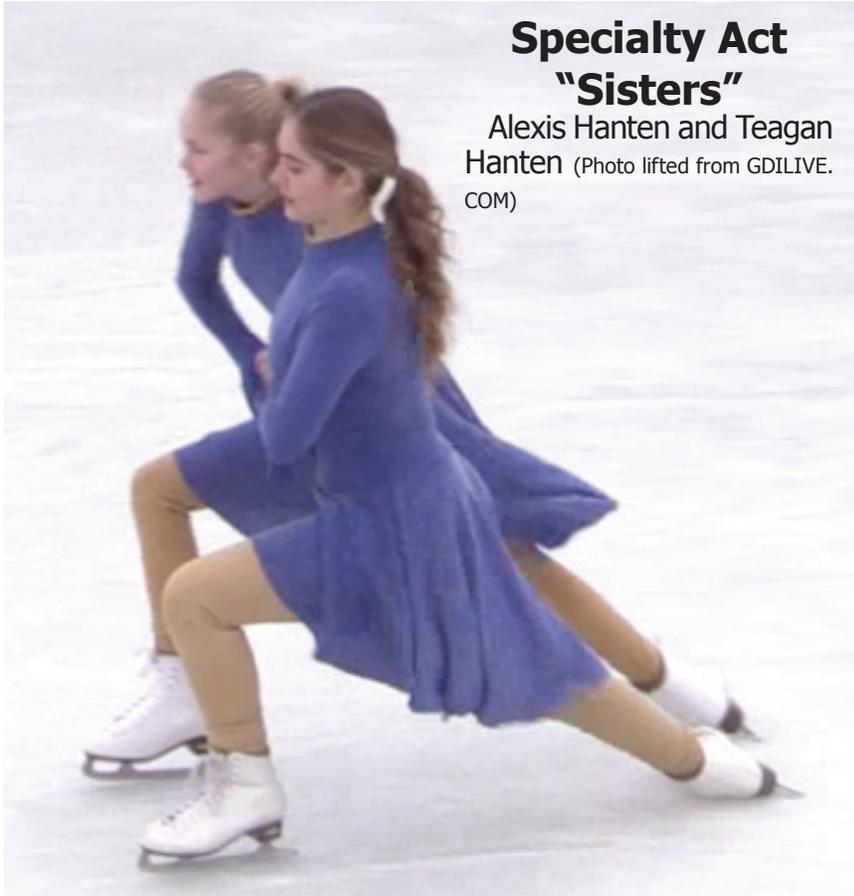


The Finale featuring 93 skaters.

(Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM)

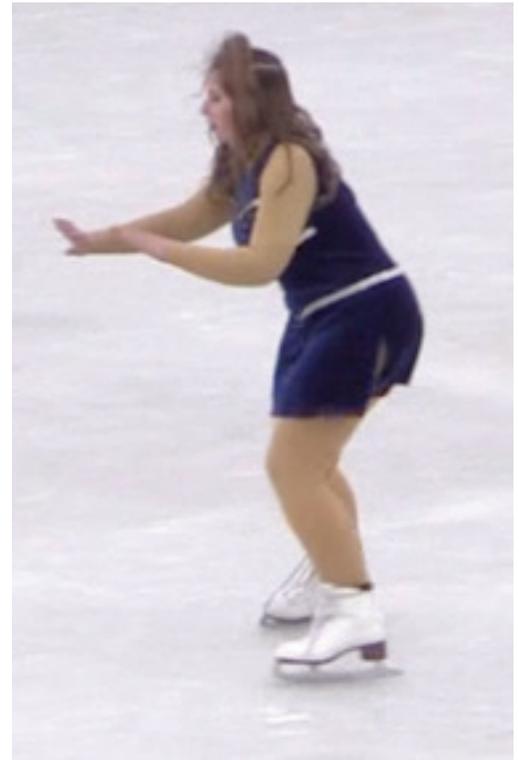
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Specialty Act "Sisters"

Alexis Hanten and Teagan Hanten (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM)



Specialty Act "The Night We Met"

Hailey Monson (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM)



1st grade

Shealee Gilchrist, Rowan Hanson, Ryan Hanson, Devan Locke, Avery Roettele, Harper Schuring, and Kaylee Sippel

Instructors: Brooklyn Imrie and Kennedy Anderson (Photo lifted from

GDILIVE.COM)

"Faith"

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9th grade

"Faithfully"

Cadence Feist, Anna Fjeldheim, Carly Guthmiller, Sara Menzia, Hannah Monson, Emma Schinkel, and Ashlyn Sperry.

Instructors: Jasmine Schinkel (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM)



7th and 8th grade

"I Want to Break Free"

Mia Crank, Emma Davies, Rylee Dunker, and Emily Overacker

Instructor: Shonna Harry (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM)

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6th grade

"Symphony"

Caroline Bahr, Avery Crank, Teagan Hanten, Addison Hoffman, Brenna Imrie, Emerlee Jones, Claire Schuelke, McKenna Tietz, and Taryn Traphagen

Instructor: Lindsey Tietz (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM)



12th grade

"Footloose"

Tessa Erdmann, Alexis Hanten, Hailey Monson, Erin Unzen, and Grace Wiedrick (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM)

Instructor: Julie Erdmann

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Upcoming Schedule

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 (8th at 5 p.m. (No 7th grade game), JV (Jim and Shirley VanDenHemel) 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 (Agtegra) at 4 p.m., Boys JV (Marilyn and Jerry Hearnen) 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 (Jim and Shirley VanDenHemel) 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 (Rich and Tami Zimney) 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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Normally I would be writing about the Pro Bowl this week, highlighting any plays that featured a Vikings player. Unfortunately, this year has been anything but normal. This season, the NFL decided they would cancel the Pro Bowl game and replace it with a virtual event in which six players (three representing each conference) and two celebrities play a game of "Madden NFL 21." So instead of recapping a video game, we'll take a look back at this past season to determine who was the Vikings' offensive and defensive MVPs.



By Jordan Wright

Offensive MVP

It should come as no surprise that this year's offensive MVP is Dalvin Cook. He finished second in the league in rushing yards (1,557), rushing touchdowns (16), yards per game (111.2), carries (312), and carries that gained a first down (91). Dalvin is one of the best running backs in the NFL and the Vikings' offense runs through him – whether it's handoffs, play-action passes, or screens. The front office gave Cook a five-year contract extension last offseason, locking him in through the 2025 season.

Biggest Surprise

Wide receiver is one of the most difficult positions to play in the NFL, which is why most receivers don't usually contribute much until they've been in the league for a year or two. Justin Jefferson isn't like most receivers. After sitting on the bench the first two games of the season, Jefferson was named a starter in week three. He finished the season with 88 receptions for 1400 yards (third in the NFL and a rookie record).

Defensive MVP

The Vikings didn't have a wonderful season, and the injuries on defense were the main culprit. Danielle Hunter, Anthony Barr, Michael Pierce, Eric Kendricks, Mike Hughes, Cameron Dantzler, and Holton Hill all missed significant time last season. With so many injuries, it was difficult picking a defensive MVP. However, after digging through the stats, it was clear Eric Wilson had the most impactful season. Wilson led the Vikings in tackles (122), tackles for a loss (8), and fumble recoveries (2). He was also the runner up in interceptions (3), pass deflections (8), and QB hits. Wilson had some issues in stopping the run, but his coverage skills were huge for a defense starting multiple rookies in the secondary.

Biggest Surprise

Cameron Dantzler was forced into action sooner than anyone anticipated because of the injury to Mike Hughes. The first half of the season was a roller coaster for the rookie cornerback, but he started to turn it on in the second half of the season and was looking like the best corner on the roster by the end. D.J. Wonnum was another candidate for the biggest surprise on defense. Like Dantzler, Wonnum turned it on in the second half of the season and was making big plays every game, looking like a true diamond in the rough.

Looking Ahead

This weekend is the Super Bowl, featuring Tom Brady and the Tampa Bay Buccaneers versus Patrick Mahomes and the Kansas City Chiefs. The Chiefs are three and a half point favorites, and ESPN agrees, giving them a 52% chance to win. The two teams are incredibly similar, with both teams featuring legendary quarterbacks on offenses that are overflowing with playmakers. Both teams average 30 points per game, while both defenses allow 366 yards per game. The two teams battled earlier this season, with the Chiefs coming out on top 27-24. I expect another close game on Sunday, and hopefully, the commercials don't disappoint. Skol!

Just Blow with the Flow

The feeling of pressure and pain in the front of the face around the eyes is all too familiar for millions of Americans. Our sinuses include four pairs of air-filled cavities above and below the eyes and behind the nose. They are helpful for humidifying the air we breathe, resonating our voices, and lightening the weight of our heads. However, the sinuses can be prone to inflammation and infection.



By Andrew Ellsworth, MD ~ Prairie Doc® Perspectives

The mucous lining of the sinuses serves as an antimicrobial barrier to infection, and little hairs called cilia help to sweep out unwanted bacteria and viruses. Disruptions to this system commonly come from allergies and viruses. If the passageways get blocked, then bacteria can grow and flourish in the moist, warm, mucous.

Sinusitis is inflammation of the sinuses which can cause the full feeling behind the eyes, pressure, and pain. If left untreated, it can cause fevers and a systemic response from the body. Chronic sinusitis, lasting more than three months, can be caused by allergies, nasal polyps, ongoing infection, a deviated nasal septum, pollutants, or other conditions.

One of the keys to treatment and prevention of sinusitis is keeping the sinuses open and draining. Nasal saline, a saltwater mixture, can be used to help rinse out and open the sinuses and can be just as effective as antibiotics. If allergies are at fault, a steroid nasal spray or steroid pills can be used to decrease inflammation and swelling. A nasal steroid spray can also help treat a nasal polyp, helping to shrink the polyp to aid in the circulation of air and mucous. For some people with chronic and recurring sinusitis, surgery is their best option and can provide welcome relief.

Try this. Hold one nostril shut as you breathe in and out of the other. Now switch to the other nostril and breathe in and out. Chances are you can breathe more freely on one side compared to the other. Wait a few hours, try it again and chances are the opposite side is more open. Congestion in our nose naturally changes sides every four to six hours. If you find that one side is always blocked, then you may want to see your primary doctor or an ear, nose, and throat specialist.

Our bodies are designed for flow. The flow of air, food, blood, waste, and even mucous keeps us healthy. Next time you blow your nose, remember you are helping the natural movement of mucous, so just "blow with the flow."

Andrew Ellsworth, M.D. is part of The Prairie Doc® team of physicians and currently practices family medicine in Brookings, South Dakota. For free and easy access to the entire Prairie Doc® library, visit www.prairedoc.org and follow Prairie Doc® on Facebook featuring On Call with the Prairie Doc® a medical Q&A show streaming on Facebook and broadcast on SDPB most Thursdays at 7 p.m. central.

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Glimpses From Greenfield 2021-Week 3

Through three weeks of Session, our Appropriations Committee has continued to be hard at work listening to the Governor's recommendations for funding of the various departments and bureaus of the state government. We also have had a number of subcommittee meetings to drill down on specific issues. There is a real desire to try to provide more resources for those who care for people who cannot care for themselves. This is not to suggest we do not have other key priorities, but I'm gaining a sense there will be a strong focus on long-term healthcare, adjustment training center, mental health institution, and chemical dependency counseling funding. I will keep you apprised of progress we make as we work through the process.

With the passage of IM 26 and Constitutional Amendment A, the voters placed the onus on the legislature to provide a regulatory structure for medicinal marijuana and recreational or adult-use marijuana. While I have not personally been an advocate for the marijuana industry, largely because the drug remains federally prohibited, I do believe we need to provide a legal framework given the public vote. Of course, with Constitutional Amendment A currently the subject of a legal challenge, the courts will weigh in on the legality of adult-use marijuana, but it is still important that we proceed as though that will be the law beginning on July 1. If we choose to wait until subsequent sessions to address these matters, we face the potential of having an entirely unregulated drug industry in South Dakota. As such, I spent several hours last week working with people on both sides of the issue to try to hammer out some language that would be specific to the recreational side of the equation. Also, a small contingent of Senators has been charged with looking at the medical side, and they will report back with their recommendations in the near future. I bring this up because of the MANY questions I have already fielded about what is going on regarding all-things-cannabis. In fact, it was the very first topic of discussion brought up by a constituent at our first cracker barrel of the year.

Most of the bills we have taken up on the Senate floor to-date have been "clean-up" in nature, thus there has not been a lot of controversy. This week on the Senate side, however, we will be starting to get into some bills that have been generating more buzz. One measure that we heard on the floor was SCR 601, which would urge the members of South Dakota's federal Congressional delegation to vote against any bill seeking to make Washington, D.C. a state. Senator Bolin pitched the bill and gave a very strong argument and historical perspective as to why D.C. should not be eligible for statehood, including relative size and why D.C. was established as a non-state in the first place. This was one of the rare measures that was decided on strict party lines with the 32 Republicans voting in favor of the resolution and 3 Democrats voting against it.

Looking ahead, I anticipate legislation addressing the bill that passed last year regarding driver's licenses for young drivers, a revision to the school funding formula as it relates to redistributing wind energy tax dollars that were "equalized" under the 2016 formula re-write, and a host of pro-life measures and pro-gun ownership bills. Also, I will continue working on a bill regarding ensuring the integrity of grain moisture- and protein-measuring devices. I brought a bill three years ago surrounding this issue, and I was told by lobbyists representing the industry that IF we allowed that bill to be killed, they would come back the following year with a proposal everybody could live with. They did not live up to their end of the bargain. Last year, once again, they told a House sponsor a similar message. Since they brought nothing forward, I have asked for a bill identical to last year's draft. I am hopeful that as the conversation evolves we will be able to come up with language that will ensure our producers can have the utmost confidence in the system. We ensure that gas pumps are properly metered and produce scales at the grocery stores are likewise properly calibrated. When it comes to hundreds of thousands bushels of crops, I would think we should be certain that those measuring devices are also tested and certified as accurate. I am also bring-

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ing a bill that will seek to clarify a matter relative to media coverage of high school activities. We passed a law several years ago that spoke to this, but the SD High School Activities Association feels they have found a loophole to get around the requirement that ALL media outlets have equal access to our publicly-funded schools' extracurricular activities. I will provide more narrative on this next week.

Until next time, be well, be blessed, and stay safe!

Brock

Lana's Annals-House of Representatives, Week 3

Greetings once again. This week went really quickly as there were more bills being drafted, passed in committee, and presented on the floor for debate.

Our education committee had a lengthy discussion on HB1044, in which the Legislative Tribal Relations Committee asked for Indian education to be moved to the Department of Education. A contentious issue, we discussed the topic for two hours. Tribal Secretary Flute has only been working with native education for two years, and one of these was during covid. As he has two programs in place for advancing learning in reservation schools, we decided to leave things as they currently are. The proponent side favoring the move offered no instructional methods that they would use to enhance the children's learning. Thus HB1044 was sent to the 41st day.

In local government we heard HB1058, which would enable voters to recall a county commissioner. The formula put to us was to have 15 per cent of the voters in the commissioner's district sign the petition for recall. If the members are at large, 5 per cent of the voters in the county could petition for recall. I expressed my opposition for this bill as

a group of people who promoted an area industry or project (Café or dairy, for example) could oppose a commissioner for voting against it, charging him with being "unfairly partial" or "oppressive" and get that person recalled. This bill was brought forth as a result of a dispute occurring in the southern part of the state and in one county. I do not think that as a legislature, we can take a broad brush, based on one local issue, and make a law. As the majority of our committee shared my views, we sent it to the 41st day, which killed the bill.

On the floor we debated HB1015, which opens up the opportunity for more appraisers in our state. As was explained, those who want to get into the profession begin by taking classes and then taking a national test. If they pass, they must find a seasoned appraiser under whom to apprentice. The problem is that many times no one is willing to take on the apprentice. Perhaps they just do not want to end up having more competition in this field.. The bill would open up an apprentice experience training program to combat the problem. Hopefully with the passage of HB1015, home and commercial buyers will be able to close on purchases in a quicker, more efficient manner instead of having to wait about seven weeks for property appraisals.

HB1011, which raises the rates for boiler inspections by 10 dollars, was passed on the House floor. Even though it was a reasonable increase, perhaps, no one said why it was completely necessary. I did not vote for this fee increase.

Also in the House was HB1037 which called for the biennial renewal of licenses for electrical contractors, journeymen, and those in a related profession. That means that they must pay for two years everytime they renew. The fees were not just double but extra cost was added as well. For example, a person who paid 40 dollars for his for one year now must pay 200 dollars total for two years. When asked why so much, the response was the new online software was expensive and the contractors actually wanted to use this online method. I found it hard to believe that people would want to pay that much more. I asked the question what would happen if the contractor only completed one of the two years and either quit or died. Would there then be a refund for the other year? When I found out that no provisions had been made for that, I voted "no." The bill did pass, however, and will go to the Senate commerce committee next.

I have received a lot of correspondence lately on HJR5001. Each year lobbyists come to Pierre to pro-

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mote this issue because that is what they get paid to do. A few of our legislators are COS (Convention of States) members; most are not. I can only tell you my thoughts. If we had enough states to support the idea, (we do not), we could all decide on one issue we would discuss and then decide on a meeting place. That does not mean that all states who decide on the topic would stand by their word. Once the Constitution is opened, anything is fair game. Those of you who have been involved in contract negotiations will easily perceive this problem. There is nothing in Article V or in any part of the Constitution that authorizes the limiting of the agenda of an Article V Convention. The Supreme Court will not be a part of the amending process. Then what?? On the surface while we look to solve a problem, we could end up with even worse ones such as eliminating of the electoral college (look at how many big states would like that), getting rid of term limits (i.e. Presidential), just to name two. I will listen to the arguments once again, but I am inclined to think a COS would not be beneficial. even though I wish it were.

This next week will even be more chaotic than last week. I will keep you updated as to what transpires! Stay tuned.

Rep. Lana Greenfield

lane.greenfield@sdlegislature.gov

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#343 in a series

Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

Still looking good. Every metric is declining, most by a fair margin. With no significant disruptive events (like a holiday weekend) on the immediate horizon, we're looking pretty good unless and until (and I'm just going to go ahead and say until because I think it's a sure thing) these new, highly-transmissible variants spread. We are at 26,210,700 cases reported in the US so far in the pandemic. There were 112,300 new cases reported today, just over one-third of our record, for a 0.4% increase in total cases. Last time we were this low was November 8, nearly three months ago. We've been over 90,000 cases for a solid thirteen weeks and over 70,000 for fourteen weeks. We added almost 6.2 million cases, 23.5% of the total US cases, in January; no month of the pandemic has been nearly this bad. Hospitalizations have been declining for three weeks and are about 35,000 below the record. There are 97,561 people hospitalized with this virus today. It has been 61 days since we were last below 100,000 people in the hospital with Covid-19.

We're down to 42 states and territories in the red zone, nine in orange, and three in yellow. One-week increase in total cases was 1,190,100 last week and is down to 1,044,200 this week. Two-week increase was 2,718,200 last week and is down to 2,234,300 this week; that's more than a million off where we were last Sunday. We've added over five million cases in January, which means we're still on track to add over six and a half million by the end of the month; I am hoping that, as new cases decline, this number will fall. I have us at a one-week daily average new-case number of 149,171.4; this is a decline of nearly 70,000 over the past two weeks. I do like our trends here.

I track 54 states and US territories, including the District of Columbia; and the number of these showing two-week rates of increase greater than 25% is down to just one. The only state above this rate of growth in cases over 14 days is Connecticut at 38.00%. We have 21 states and territories with growth rates above the US growth rate. Looks like most of the trouble is on the East Coast and in the Southwest, but almost everything seems to be getting Highest per capita rates of increase are in Arizona, South Carolina, Rhode Island, New York, Texas, Oklahoma, and Georgia; so it's pretty spotty across the country.

There were 2005 deaths reported today, a 0.5% increase to 441,257. Average daily deaths ticked back up this week after the first decline in weeks last Sunday. We're back up to 3168.6 this week, the third-worst week of the pandemic. This is the eleventh consecutive week since spring we've reported over 10,000 deaths. January was devastating in this regard: 21.6% of all the deaths of the pandemic occurred this month. States with the most per capita deaths over the past week are Alabama, Arizona, Tennessee, South Carolina, California, and Arkansas. The only states on this list which were there last week are Alabama and Arizona. These numbers are coming down across the country at the moment, but I still expect a flush of them from the early-January peak in new cases; so we're not out of the woods here yet at all.

Still under the waste-no-vaccine doctrine, I hear there was a situation early this month in Mendocino County, California. A routine safety inspection revealed some of their vaccine supply had reached too high a temperature. They had 830 doses and about two hours to use it—bigger challenge than the one in Seattle I described last night. On the other hand, this was not the middle of the night, so that made things considerably easier. They shipped 200 doses to county health and 70 to a skilled nursing home, then divvied up the rest among four clinics. The plan was to adhere to the state prioritization scheme as well as possible within the short time available and then simply unload what was left.

The thing is, it looks as though California officials are being realistic about what's possible in difficult circumstances like these. Clearly, they want providers to follow the vaccine priority guidelines that have been established, but they're also sharp enough to realize there are circumstances where all you want to do is get vaccine administered. The state's HHS Secretary spoke about this earlier, saying, "We just want to say that we should not waste vaccine. We know that our providers and those who are in charge of vaccinating are very thoughtful, innovative people, that they have access to individuals who are in those higher-risk tiers. And they should do all that they can to make sure that they're giving vaccine to those who have been deemed highest risk based on our priority groups and our phases and our tiers. But by all means, don't waste vaccine."

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And it looks like that's how things were done here. Medical officer, Dr. Bessant Parker, explained, "Given that this was an emergency, we focused on as many people as we could quickly mobilize within the tiers, and then the rest was to the general public on a first-come, first-served basis." That worked out: Not a dose was wasted. Good work.

I was a young microbiologist, not so long out of school myself and teaching the discipline to budding health care professionals, in the early '80s when the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) burst on the scene. I remember the pace of discovery in those years. Honestly, when you're teaching introductory sciences, the things you teach don't generally change very quickly: Even when research out on the cutting edge is proceeding apace, those findings are pretty esoteric and well beyond the very basic principles and concepts you're teaching to college freshmen. So you keep up yourself, but you don't find you're changing a lot of the science you're teaching from year to year. This was, however, not true for AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome, the disease caused by HIV). It was very difficult to watch that disaster unfold in the news alongside reading about the frantic research attempts to understand what the hell was going on in these sick people, what was causing it, and most importantly, what we could do about it. Meanwhile, every semester, I rewrote all of my teaching notes. Those were wild times in the field, much like what I expect my younger colleagues are facing in their classrooms at the present moment.

We still haven't beaten HIV, but now, some 40 years later, it's no longer a death sentence for most infected individuals. We have a constellation of antiviral drugs which can keep HIV-positive people healthy and alive for years and years. Still no vaccine: This one's been a very tough nut to crack because the virus is a shape-shifter; it has been most difficult to nail down antigens that will elicit a protective response.

You may wonder why we're taking this trip down memory lane tonight. Part of it is pure self-indulgence; after all, this is my Update, so I guess I can meander on about whatever I'd like, right? But also, it turns out all of those years of frustrating work on HIV have actually positioned scientists perfectly to deal with another novel RNA virus that makes its way into our population. We have learned so much about the fine points of immunological functioning by studying the ways in which HIV destroys it; we have learned so much about viral replication in our attempts to find antiviral drugs to interfere with that replication in HIV patients; and we have learned so much about eliciting and tailoring an immune response with vaccines in all of the failed attempts to develop one for HIV. It is no accident that much of the really ground-breaking work on this coronavirus was done by HIV researchers; much of what they have learned over the decades was applied to the strides we've made in dealing with this new virus.

A class of antivirals that today gives HIV-positive people full, healthy lives relies on a process called chain termination, a way to keep the viral RNA from being replicated in host cells. The same technique was used by Gilead to produce a drug called remdesivir, which is currently being used to shorten recovery time for Covid-19 patients. No one knew how to do that until the HIV researchers figured it out.

It was the discovery of powerful neutralizing antibodies in some HIV patients which led to the identification of similarly powerful antibodies produced in response to SARS-CoV-2 infection. Those are the antibodies produced in labs as monoclonal antibodies which ended up in Regeneron's and Eli Lilly's monoclonal antibody therapeutics we're now using in Covid-19 patients to prevent symptoms and shorten the course of infection.

Deploying techniques in electron microscopy and computer modeling first used to create detailed three-dimensional images of proteins on the surface of HIV, antigens were engineered a few years ago for inclusion in vaccines against several viruses, including MERS and SARS, but both of those died back in the population before these vaccines could be tested. This work did leave us, however, with all the tools needed to pull off the spike protein design for these Moderna and Pfizer/BioNTech mRNA vaccines going into arms all across the US today, as well as a bevy of other vaccines currently in clinical trials.

And a spectacular failure to develop an adenovirus-vectored vaccine against HIV left researchers with the basic adenovirus technology needed to engineer a chunk of DNA into a different adenovirus vector (actually two different ones—and counting). Today, those have been used by Oxford/AstraZeneca and Janssen/Johnson&Johnson to develop vaccines approved or nearing approval in a number of places. The Janssen vaccine candidate is likely the next one up for authorization in the US, probably next month. (For

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the record, Janssen has an Ebola vaccine and a Zika vaccine using the same vectored technology; the Ebola vaccine is in current use.)

The best part? It appears a lot of experts think all this frenetically-paced work on Covid-19 vaccines is about to inform a whole new round of HIV vaccine research. Sharon Lewin, director of the Peter Doherty Institute for Infection and Immunity in Melbourne, Australia, told the Wall Street Journal, "We're just going to learn so much about the immunology, about manufacturing, about delivery, about how to dose, how to boost. We will suddenly have a lot of observations and understanding of how these vaccines work in humans. I think it will be an incredible advance." Seems only fair that a body of research which owes so much to the HIV research community repays the debt with interest.

I read an essay this morning by a guy who, quite literally, wrote the book on vaccines: Stanley Plotkin, not a household name, but sort of a God among the vaccinology community. Now 88, he says, "I cut my teeth on polio and anthrax in the 1950s." He's worked on vaccines for at least five other diseases; the rubella vaccine still in current use across the world is his baby. He downplays his contributions in the current crisis, saying he no longer has a laboratory, but then listing the agencies and companies with whom he's been consulting, mentioning that his role has been "cheering from the sidelines and shouting out my suggestions." Plotkin addresses the way science grows out of what's come before: "Science is cumulative. It builds steadily toward progress, and that's been my answer to despair during this last year. I can look back over my life and see a degree of advancement that's staggering." Even in the throes of a pandemic, when people are still dying in terrible numbers, let's not lose sight of that.

Sarah and Jason McKinney met one another and their future business partner, Tyler Vorce, while working at a fancy restaurant in Napa Valley. From that experience, the three of them conceived the idea of opening a business to help chefs source one of the most expensive ingredients a fancy restaurant uses, truffles. The truffle is a fungus which grows in association with the roots of certain species of trees and has proven notoriously difficult to cultivate. While they do grow in North America (and Australia), the bulk of the world's harvest still comes from France and Italy. Complicating the picture is the fact that these guys grow underground, so you can't just go out and pick them because they're hidden. You need a dog or a pig trained to detect their scent to find them so you can dig them up, one by one. They're also very seasonal, so the hunting can't happen year round. The vast majority of the truffle crop is harvested by individual truffle hunters who go out under cover of night to carefully concealed locations with a truffle-sniffing animal. By the way, truffles are exquisitely delicious with an intoxicating aroma when used properly in a food; they are highly prized by folks who've experienced them. And all of that is why they're so expensive—from hundreds to over a thousand dollars a pound.

Fine restaurants these days pride themselves on sourcing ingredients responsibly, on knowing the purveyors of said ingredients, on personal relationships with these people; but the truffle trade can be sort of opaque, involving free-lancing truffle hunters from far-away parts of the world. So there are complications, and it is this breach into which these intrepid business partners stepped when they formed their company, Truffle Shuffle (and yes, I get the film reference). Situated in Oakland, they brokered truffles from the hunters to fine restaurants in the Bay Area and were quite successful; in fact, they'd doubled their staff from three (the co-owners) to six just about a year ago.

Of course, you know what's coming, right? Here goes: Then came the pandemic.

Truffle Shuffle got in a huge shipment of truffles, thousands of dollars worth, and then the shelter-in-place order came down and all the restaurants in their service area were forced to close. Which brings us to Fun Fact #5: Truffles are highly, highly perishable. You have a window of maybe five to seven days to use one or throw it away—only these folks didn't have one truffle; they had dozens of truffles. Dozens worth thousands of dollars. They told Kelly Clarkson, "If we didn't sell these truffles, we're going out of business." Just like that. One stroke of bad luck, and you're bankrupt.

This time, however, a piece of good luck and some entrepreneurial spirit saved them. They took a call from a private social club interested in a virtual cooking class since no one could go out to eat. And they came up with the concept of a virtual cooking class where they send you all of the ingredients for a truffle-centric class—including, of course, your very own truffle. They sold out of the truffles within days and

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held their class before the truffles went bad; and a new business concept was born. They now regularly do virtual cooking classes involving truffles with the two of the partners who are chefs leading the classes and the third partner doing wine pairings and mixology. (In case you were wondering, virtual cooking classes with wine pairings are a thing during this pandemic. The wineries involved do well through this, and so do the cooking folks. The classes are fun and educational—I know because I've done some—and so everyone wins.)

That's not all. Truffle Shuffle also has a company value of giving back to the community, and so for every person who enrolls in a class, they donate a meal to someone in need in their community. Additionally, since the business has grown, they have had to add staff, and they've hired from the pool of out-of-work restaurant employees in their community. Their staff has grown to 30 during the pandemic, providing employment to an economic sector hardest hit by this pandemic. I'm going to save up for a class myself because I do enjoy a good truffle and I'm a sucker for a business that reaches out into their community. I love it when people who do good also do well.

I want you to do well too, so take care. I'll be back tomorrow.

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| County | Positive Cases | Recovered Cases | Negative Persons | Deceased Among Cases | Community Spread | % RT-PCR Test Positivity Rate (Weekly) |
|-------------|----------------|-----------------|------------------|----------------------|------------------|--|
| Aurora | 451 | 421 | 819 | 16 | Moderate | 10.00% |
| Beadle | 2609 | 2511 | 5525 | 39 | Substantial | 8.89% |
| Bennett | 377 | 362 | 1126 | 9 | Minimal | 4.30% |
| Bon Homme | 1500 | 1470 | 1989 | 25 | Minimal | 0.00% |
| Brookings | 3422 | 3254 | 10948 | 34 | Substantial | 7.00% |
| Brown | 4937 | 4689 | 11911 | 80 | Substantial | 9.01% |
| Brule | 679 | 659 | 1789 | 8 | Substantial | 5.88% |
| Buffalo | 420 | 402 | 866 | 13 | Minimal | 0.00% |
| Butte | 956 | 916 | 3035 | 20 | Substantial | 7.07% |
| Campbell | 126 | 116 | 241 | 4 | Minimal | 22.73% |
| Charles Mix | 1229 | 1149 | 3735 | 18 | Substantial | 4.69% |
| Clark | 339 | 325 | 908 | 4 | Moderate | 7.69% |
| Clay | 1754 | 1712 | 4908 | 16 | Substantial | 8.82% |
| Codington | 3750 | 3576 | 9173 | 74 | Substantial | 8.09% |
| Corson | 461 | 443 | 965 | 11 | Minimal | 9.09% |
| Custer | 726 | 700 | 2568 | 11 | Substantial | 13.33% |
| Davison | 2899 | 2790 | 6132 | 59 | Substantial | 7.28% |
| Day | 609 | 553 | 1643 | 27 | Substantial | 6.82% |
| Deuel | 458 | 438 | 1066 | 8 | Moderate | 0.00% |
| Dewey | 1389 | 1356 | 3683 | 20 | Substantial | 11.11% |
| Douglas | 413 | 393 | 858 | 9 | Moderate | 8.82% |
| Edmunds | 460 | 432 | 966 | 9 | Substantial | 6.38% |
| Fall River | 505 | 478 | 2465 | 14 | Substantial | 7.32% |
| Faulk | 337 | 314 | 657 | 13 | Moderate | 7.69% |
| Grant | 920 | 835 | 2090 | 37 | Substantial | 27.18% |
| Gregory | 500 | 463 | 1168 | 27 | Moderate | 17.07% |
| Haakon | 240 | 230 | 505 | 9 | Minimal | 10.00% |
| Hamlin | 669 | 614 | 1653 | 38 | Substantial | 9.09% |
| Hand | 320 | 309 | 754 | 5 | Minimal | 3.85% |
| Hanson | 334 | 324 | 666 | 4 | Minimal | 4.35% |
| Harding | 90 | 89 | 173 | 1 | None | 0.00% |
| Hughes | 2209 | 2110 | 6131 | 33 | Substantial | 7.79% |
| Hutchinson | 758 | 709 | 2205 | 23 | Substantial | 6.45% |

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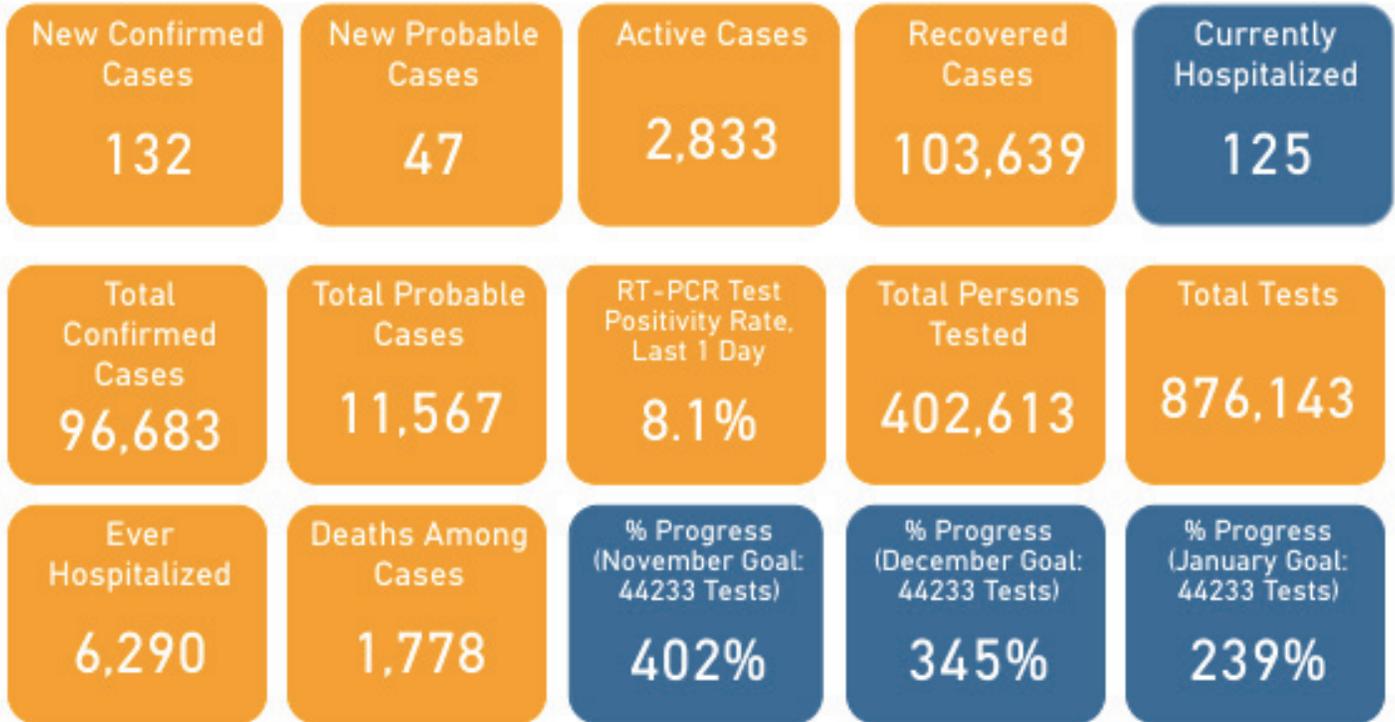
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| | | | | | | |
|---------------|-------|-------|-------|-----|-------------|--------|
| Hyde | 134 | 133 | 388 | 1 | None | 0.00% |
| Jackson | 268 | 252 | 885 | 13 | Minimal | 0.00% |
| Jerauld | 266 | 246 | 533 | 16 | None | 0.00% |
| Jones | 82 | 77 | 206 | 0 | Moderate | 14.29% |
| Kingsbury | 606 | 572 | 1526 | 13 | Substantial | 16.07% |
| Lake | 1141 | 1076 | 3045 | 17 | Substantial | 7.37% |
| Lawrence | 2751 | 2666 | 8084 | 41 | Substantial | 6.82% |
| Lincoln | 7457 | 7185 | 18836 | 74 | Substantial | 13.52% |
| Lyman | 590 | 566 | 1810 | 10 | Substantial | 7.37% |
| Marshall | 287 | 270 | 1097 | 5 | Moderate | 7.14% |
| McCook | 718 | 688 | 1513 | 23 | Moderate | 11.36% |
| McPherson | 234 | 209 | 531 | 4 | Substantial | 3.28% |
| Meade | 2476 | 2377 | 7198 | 30 | Substantial | 12.25% |
| Mellette | 239 | 233 | 705 | 2 | Moderate | 19.23% |
| Miner | 266 | 237 | 534 | 7 | Moderate | 22.22% |
| Minnehaha | 26993 | 26016 | 72861 | 311 | Substantial | 10.99% |
| Moody | 602 | 565 | 1660 | 16 | Substantial | 16.67% |
| Oglala Lakota | 2038 | 1948 | 6425 | 43 | Substantial | 13.16% |
| Pennington | 12370 | 11881 | 36945 | 171 | Substantial | 12.43% |
| Perkins | 338 | 302 | 739 | 12 | Substantial | 28.21% |
| Potter | 345 | 329 | 785 | 3 | Moderate | 5.56% |
| Roberts | 1109 | 1051 | 3919 | 35 | Substantial | 13.27% |
| Sanborn | 324 | 314 | 648 | 3 | Moderate | 0.00% |
| Spink | 762 | 713 | 2008 | 25 | Substantial | 8.33% |
| Stanley | 316 | 304 | 859 | 2 | Moderate | 3.03% |
| Sully | 135 | 126 | 282 | 3 | Moderate | 14.29% |
| Todd | 1212 | 1166 | 4021 | 25 | Moderate | 6.12% |
| Tripp | 655 | 633 | 1414 | 15 | Moderate | 8.89% |
| Turner | 1042 | 971 | 2538 | 50 | Substantial | 11.11% |
| Union | 1868 | 1746 | 5790 | 38 | Substantial | 15.57% |
| Walworth | 700 | 664 | 1746 | 15 | Substantial | 16.46% |
| Yankton | 2745 | 2658 | 8783 | 28 | Substantial | 5.57% |
| Ziebach | 335 | 323 | 840 | 9 | Moderate | 8.33% |
| Unassigned | 0 | 0 | 1888 | 0 | | |

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South Dakota



AGE GROUP OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

| Age Range with Years | # of Cases | # of Deaths Among Cases |
|----------------------|------------|-------------------------|
| 0-9 years | 4198 | 0 |
| 10-19 years | 12074 | 0 |
| 20-29 years | 19469 | 4 |
| 30-39 years | 17815 | 15 |
| 40-49 years | 15426 | 35 |
| 50-59 years | 15247 | 99 |
| 60-69 years | 12380 | 231 |
| 70-79 years | 6619 | 404 |
| 80+ years | 5022 | 990 |

SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

| Sex | # of Cases | # of Deaths Among Cases |
|--------|------------|-------------------------|
| Female | 56504 | 842 |
| Male | 51746 | 936 |

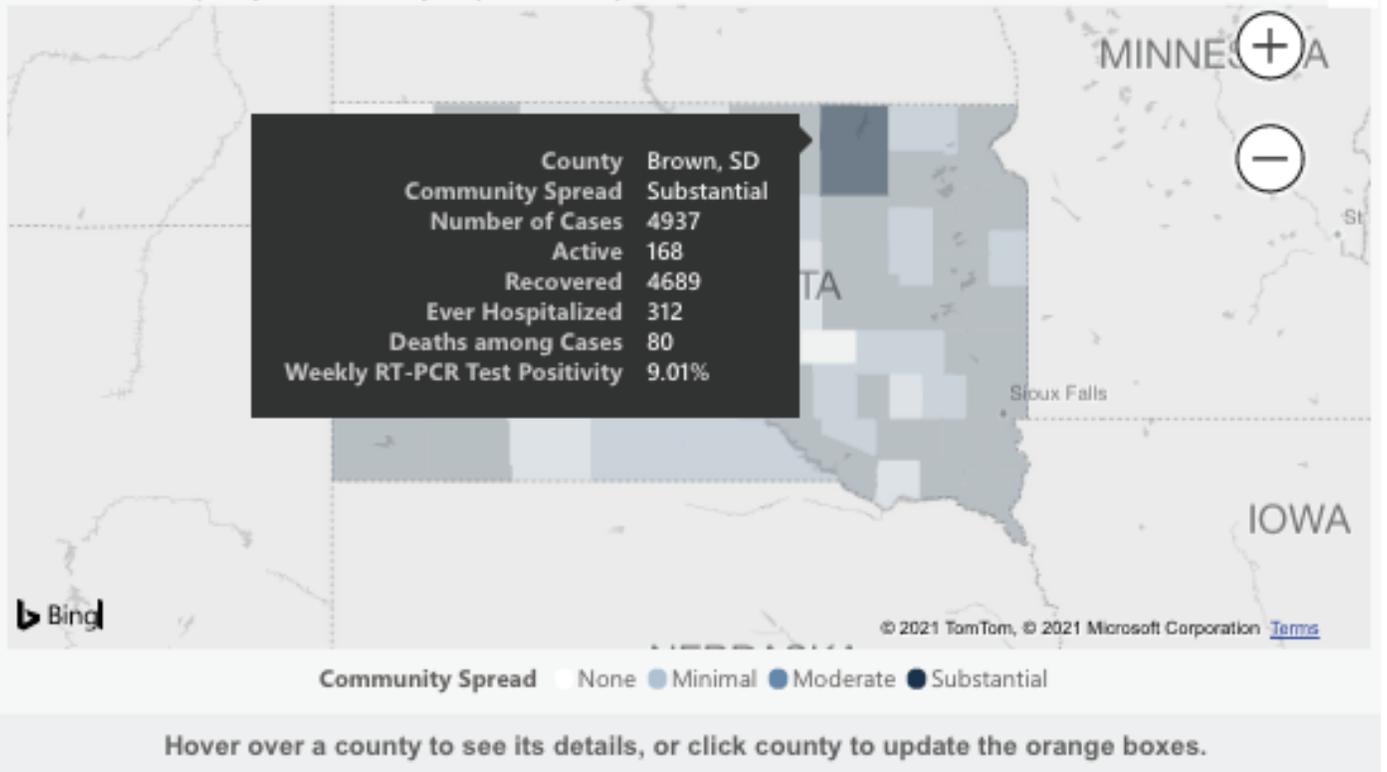
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Brown County



Community Spread Map by County of Residence



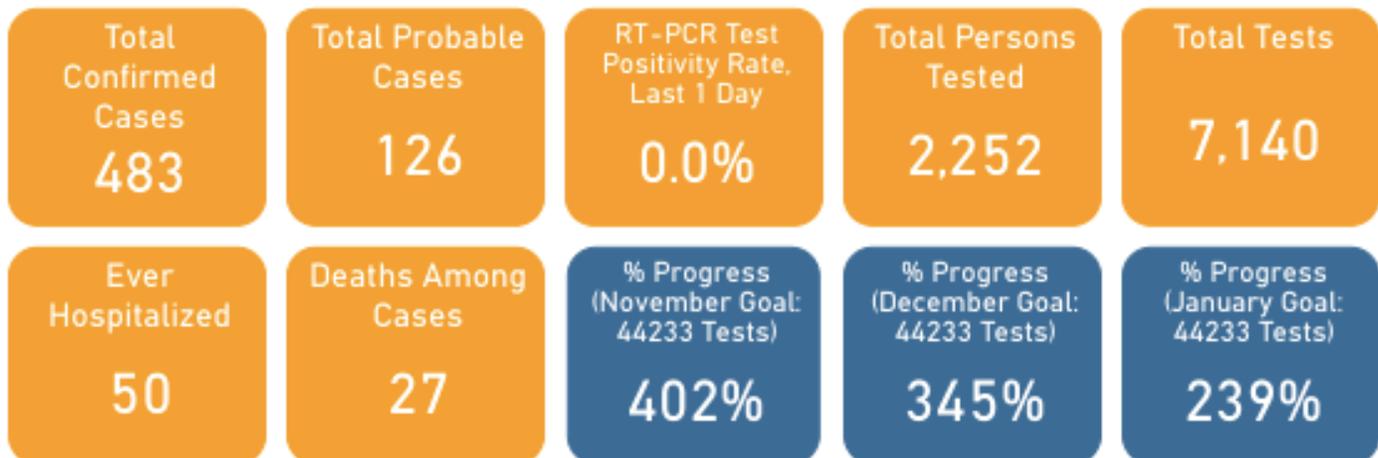
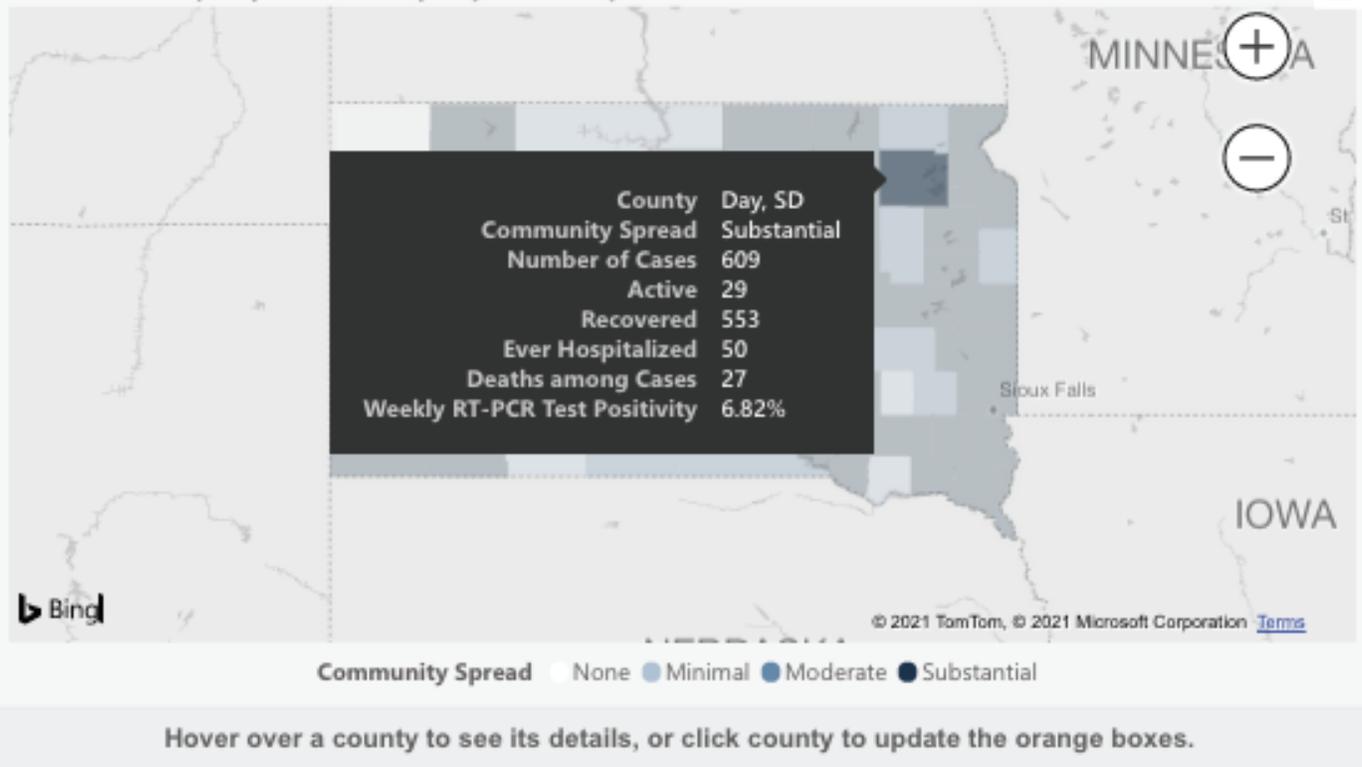
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Day County



Community Spread Map by County of Residence



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Vaccinations

Total Doses Administered

99,560

Total Persons Administered a Vaccine

71,025

| Manufacturer | Number of Doses |
|--------------|-----------------|
| Moderna | 53,302 |
| Pfizer | 46,258 |

| Doses | Number of Recipients |
|---------------------------|----------------------|
| Moderna - 1 dose | 26,856 |
| Moderna - Series Complete | 13,223 |
| Pfizer - 1 dose | 15,634 |
| Pfizer - Series Complete | 15,312 |

| County | # Doses | # Persons (1 dose) | # Persons (2 doses) | Total # Persons |
|--------------|---------|--------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| Aurora | 200 | 106 | 47 | 153 |
| Beadle | 2035 | 855 | 590 | 1,445 |
| Bennett* | 180 | 124 | 28 | 152 |
| Bon Homme* | 957 | 373 | 292 | 665 |
| Brookings | 2769 | 1,001 | 884 | 1,885 |
| Brown | 4834 | 1,956 | 1,439 | 3,395 |
| Brule* | 545 | 341 | 102 | 443 |
| Buffalo* | 41 | 37 | 2 | 39 |
| Butte | 477 | 359 | 59 | 418 |
| Campbell | 438 | 80 | 179 | 259 |
| Charles Mix* | 796 | 250 | 273 | 523 |
| Clark | 368 | 200 | 84 | 284 |
| Clay | 1642 | 876 | 383 | 1,259 |
| Codington* | 3488 | 1,588 | 950 | 2,538 |
| Corson* | 67 | 49 | 9 | 58 |
| Custer* | 732 | 480 | 126 | 606 |
| Davison | 2596 | 934 | 831 | 1,765 |
| Day* | 815 | 375 | 220 | 595 |
| Deuel | 481 | 225 | 128 | 353 |
| Dewey* | 157 | 99 | 29 | 128 |
| Douglas* | 407 | 169 | 119 | 288 |
| Edmunds | 379 | 173 | 103 | 276 |
| Fall River* | 772 | 516 | 128 | 644 |
| Faulk | 233 | 183 | 25 | 208 |
| Grant* | 736 | 238 | 249 | 487 |
| Gregory* | 536 | 194 | 171 | 365 |
| Haakon* | 199 | 81 | 59 | 140 |

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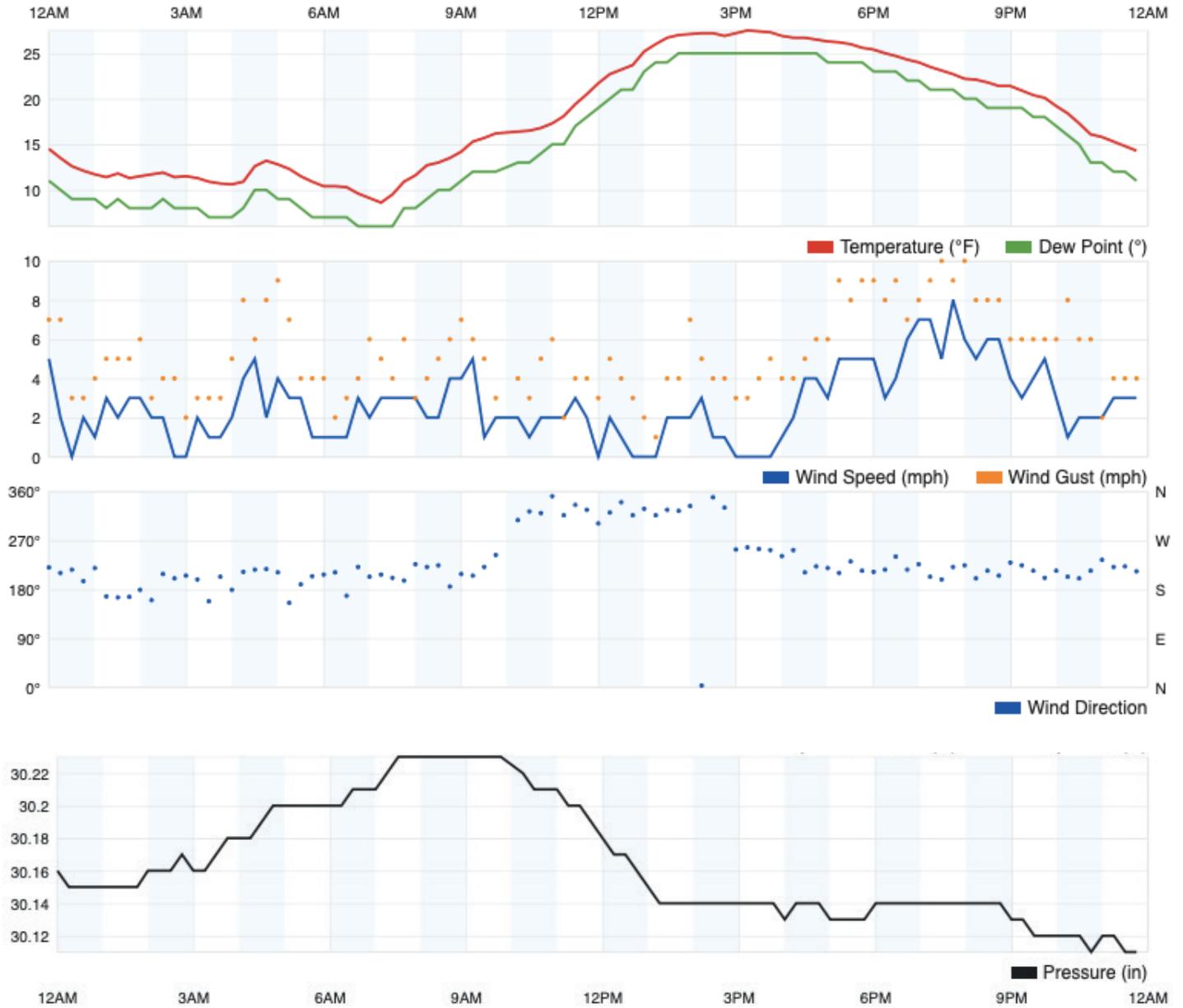
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| | | | | |
|----------------|-------|-------|-------|--------|
| Hamlin | 551 | 233 | 159 | 392 |
| Hand | 417 | 159 | 129 | 288 |
| Hanson | 145 | 37 | 54 | 91 |
| Harding | 11 | 9 | 1 | 10 |
| Hughes* | 2433 | 1,295 | 569 | 1,864 |
| Hutchinson* | 1194 | 300 | 447 | 747 |
| Hyde* | 127 | 103 | 12 | 115 |
| Jackson* | 130 | 80 | 25 | 105 |
| Jerauld | 193 | 61 | 66 | 127 |
| Jones* | 182 | 126 | 28 | 154 |
| Kingsbury | 671 | 215 | 228 | 443 |
| Lake | 1218 | 480 | 369 | 849 |
| Lawrence | 2061 | 1,561 | 250 | 1,811 |
| Lincoln | 9783 | 2,925 | 3,429 | 6,354 |
| Lyman* | 200 | 126 | 37 | 163 |
| Marshall* | 443 | 209 | 117 | 326 |
| McCook | 728 | 346 | 191 | 537 |
| McPherson | 65 | 27 | 19 | 46 |
| Meade* | 1487 | 931 | 278 | 1,209 |
| Mellette* | 13 | 7 | 3 | 10 |
| Miner | 289 | 145 | 72 | 217 |
| Minnehaha | 26905 | 8,819 | 9,043 | 17,862 |
| Moody* | 454 | 174 | 140 | 314 |
| Oglala Lakota* | 42 | 28 | 7 | 35 |
| Pennington* | 10389 | 6,433 | 1,978 | 8,411 |
| Perkins* | 139 | 95 | 22 | 117 |
| Potter | 210 | 68 | 71 | 139 |
| Roberts* | 1053 | 835 | 109 | 944 |
| Sanborn | 313 | 163 | 75 | 238 |
| Spink | 911 | 415 | 248 | 663 |
| Stanley* | 346 | 176 | 85 | 261 |
| Sully | 91 | 57 | 17 | 74 |
| Todd* | 50 | 36 | 7 | 43 |
| Tripp* | 635 | 393 | 121 | 514 |
| Turner | 1331 | 541 | 395 | 936 |
| Union | 602 | 310 | 146 | 456 |
| Walworth* | 717 | 337 | 190 | 527 |
| Yankton | 3561 | 1,387 | 1,087 | 2,474 |
| Ziebach* | 24 | 18 | 3 | 21 |
| Other | 2566 | 968 | 799 | 1,767 |

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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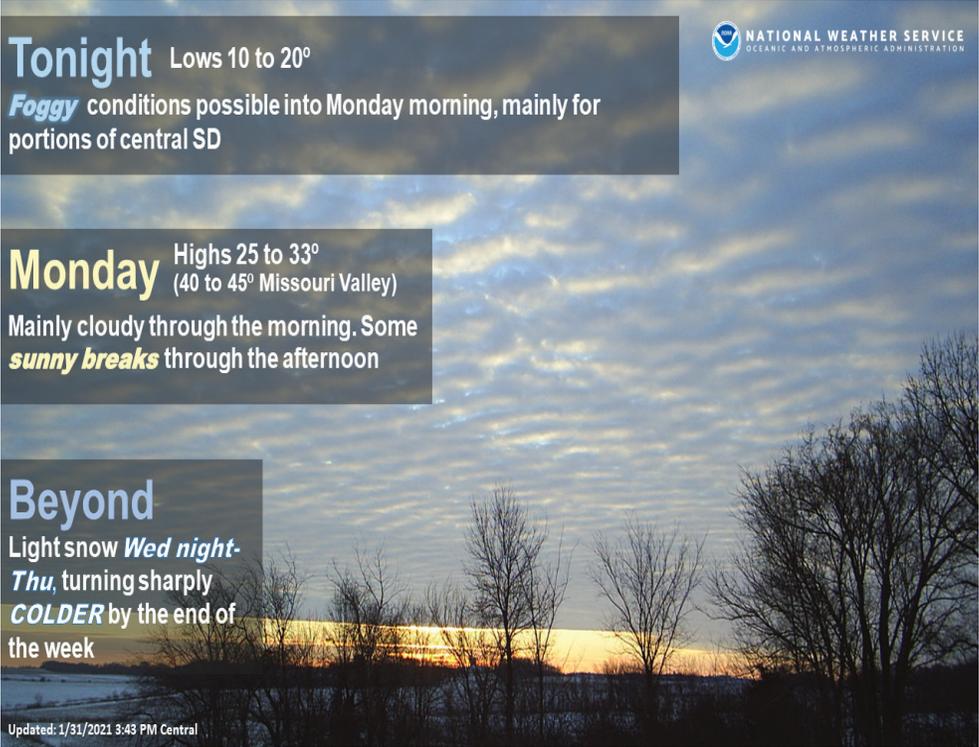
| Today | Tonight | Tuesday | Tuesday Night | Wednesday |
|---|---|---|--|---|
|  |  |  |  |  |
| Patchy Fog then Mostly Cloudy | Areas Fog | Areas Fog then Mostly Cloudy | Mostly Cloudy | Mostly Cloudy |
| High: 29 °F | Low: 20 °F | High: 31 °F | Low: 25 °F | High: 38 °F |

Tonight Lows 10 to 20°
Foggy conditions possible into Monday morning, mainly for portions of central SD

Monday Highs 25 to 33°
(40 to 45° Missouri Valley)
Mainly cloudy through the morning. Some *sunny breaks* through the afternoon

Beyond
Light snow *Wed night-Thu*, turning sharply **COLDER** by the end of the week

Updated: 1/31/2021 3:43 PM Central



Cloudy skies are expected to prevail overnight as temperatures fall into the teens to around 20 degrees. Some clearing farther west will set the stage for some foggy conditions across central portions of South Dakota into early Monday morning. More clouds than anything else will be the general rule on Monday. Some sunny breaks will be possible however through the afternoon hours. Mild temperatures are expected with highs above freezing from the James Valley and points west. The warmer air sticks around through midweek, before sharply colder, arctic air invades toward the end of the week.

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Today in Weather History

February 1, 1969: Across central and eastern South Dakota, February 1969 contained a variety of winter weather causing many difficulties. Glazing due to dense fog and drizzle periodically formed on utility lines creating numerous broken power lines. Strong winds caused widespread blowing and drifting snow resulting in many closed roads. Snowplows would open the streets, and often drifting snow would close the roads again. Frequent uses of pusher type snowplows piled banks of snow 20 to 30 feet along the roads, and it became impractical to open routes with this type of snowplow. Several rotary snowplows were flown in from military airbases outside of the state to open some of the roads in the eastern part of the state. Many school closings occurred during the month due to snow blocked roads.

February 1, 1989: Four to eight inches of snow fell across western and northern South Dakota. Winds of 25 mph and subzero temperature produced wind chills in the 50 to 80 below zero range. Several schools were closed across the area due to the dangerous wind chills. The storm continued into the 2nd.

1916: Seattle, Washington was buried under 21.5 inches of snow, their most significant 24-hour snowfall. A total of 32.5 inches of wet snow accumulated over three days. The Seattle cathedral dome collapsed under the snow's weight.

1947: January 30th through February 8th, a great blizzard occurred in Saskatchewan, Canada. All highways into Regina were blocked. Railway officials declared the worst conditions in Canadian rail history. One train was buried in a snowdrift over a half-mile long and 36.7 feet deep.

1955: Seen first as a "well defined cone-shaped funnel" over the Mississippi River, this F3 tornado cut a path from Commerce Landing to Clark in northeastern Mississippi. This tornado killed 20 and injured at least 141 individuals. Most of the deaths were in a plantation school. The following is from Thomas Grazulis, "Significant Tornadoes 1680-1991" book: "Despite the fact that a funnel was seen, that heavy objects were thrown long distances, and that the tornado was in a forecast box, the event was not officially called a tornado. A survey team state that since all debris was thrown in one direction, the event should not be listed as a tornado."

1893 - Thunder and lightning accompanied sleet and snow at Saint Louis MO during the evening hours, even though the temperature was just 13 degrees above zero. (The Weather Channel)

1951 - The greatest ice storm of record in the U.S. produced glaze up to four inches thick from Texas to Pennsylvania causing twenty-five deaths, 500 serious injuries, and 100 million dollars damage. Tennessee was hardest hit by the storm. Communications and utilities were interrupted for a week to ten days. (David Ludlum)

1951 - The temperature at Taylor Park Dam plunged to 60 degrees below zero, a record for the state of Colorado. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders - 1987)

1985 - Snow, sleet and ice glazed southern Tennessee and northern sections of Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama. The winter storm produced up to eleven inches of sleet and ice in Lauderdale County AL, one of the worst storms of record for the state. All streets in Florence AL were closed for the first time of record. (1st-2nd) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A storm in the Pacific Northwest produced wind gusts to 100 mph at Cape Blanco OR, and up to six inches of rain in the northern coastal mountain ranges. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Thirty cities in the eastern U.S. reported new record high temperatures for the date, including Richmond VA with a reading of 73 degrees. Thunderstorms in southern Louisiana deluged Basile with 12.34 inches of rain. Arctic cold gripped the north central U.S. Wolf Point MT reported a low of 32 degrees below zero. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - While arctic cold continued to invade the central U.S., fifty-four cities in the south central and eastern U.S. reported new record high temperatures for the date. Russell KS, the hot spot in the nation with a high of 84 degrees the previous day, reported a morning low of 12 above. Tioga ND reported a wind chill reading of 90 degrees below zero. (The National Weather Summary)

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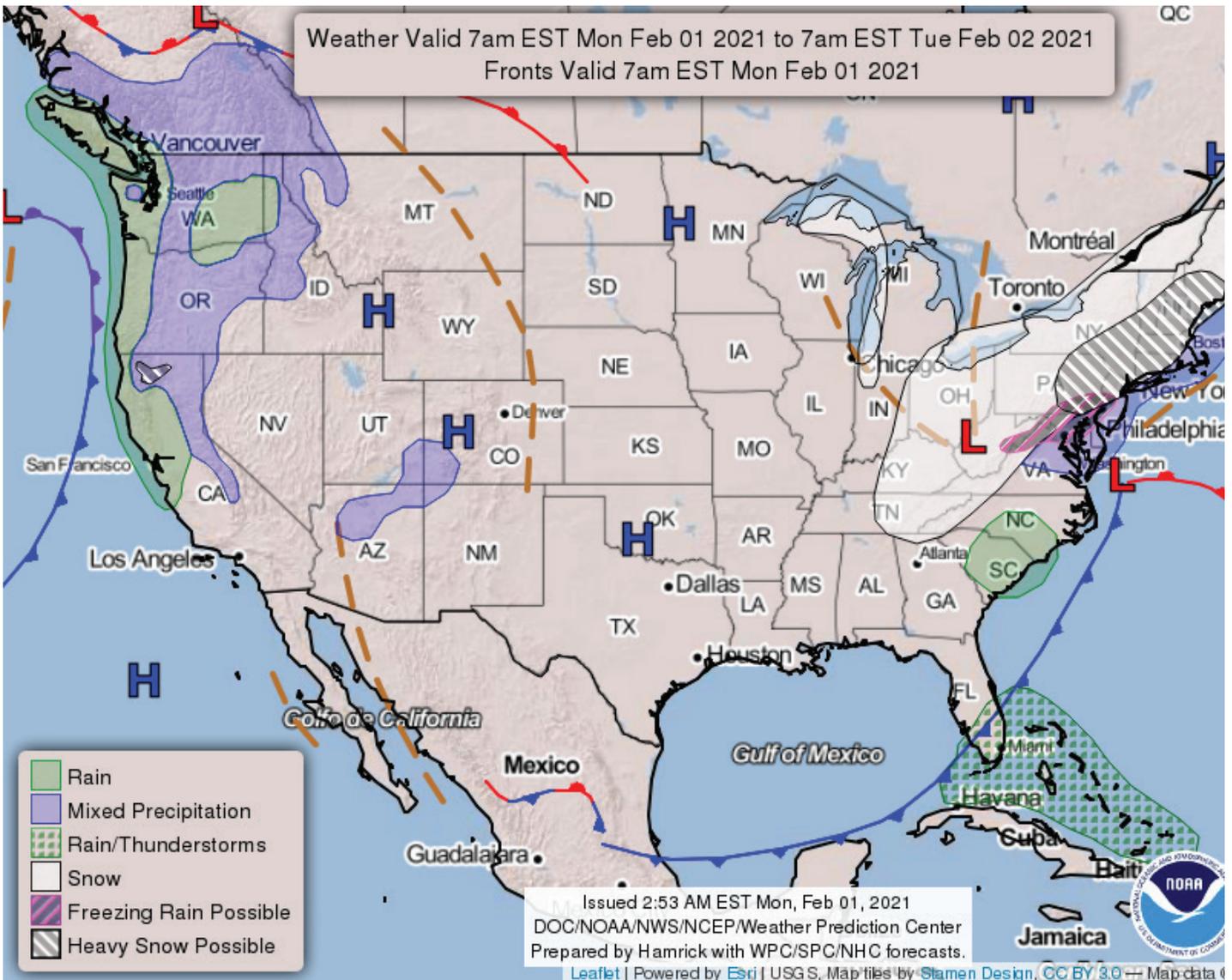
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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 27.5 °F
Low Temp: 8.6 °F
Wind: 10 mph
Precip:

Today's Info

Record High: 58° in 1931
Record Low: -42° in 1893
Average High: 24°F
Average Low: 4°F
Average Precip in Jan.: 0.47
Precip to date in Jan.: 0.14
Average Precip to date: 0.47
Precip Year to Date: 0.14
Sunset Tonight: 5:41 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:53 a.m.



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FALLING FOUNDATIONS

Roger Babson was a widely respected economist and entrepreneur who wrote numerous books and articles on financial issues. Once, while visiting the Argentine republic, he was asked, "Why is it that South America, with all of its natural resources, is so far behind North America, notwithstanding that South America was settled first?"

After a moment's thought, the financier replied with a question of his own. "What do you think is the reason?"

"South America was settled by the Spanish who came in search of gold," answered the president, "but North America was settled by the Pilgrim Fathers who went there in search of God."

Warned Babson, "May we never forget the foundation upon which our permanent prosperity is based."

Years ago David wrote, "The foundations of law and order have collapsed. What can the righteous do?" Have we as a nation forgotten those words of wisdom? We enjoy our heritage of greatness and free government because our forefathers had a deep faith in God. Our Bill of Rights came into being because they believed in the Word of God.

Where do we stand today? Is our very foundation collapsing around our feet? And if so, what are we to do?

"If my people – who are called by My Name - will humble themselves and pray, seek My face and turn from their wickedness, then and only then will I hear them!"

Prayer: Lord, it is our responsibility as Christians to do what we need to do to restore our nation – now! May we not fail in doing what is right! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: The foundations of law and order have collapsed. What can the righteous do? Psalm 11:3

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News from the Associated Press

South Dakotans show mixed reactions to halting oil pipeline

By ARIELLE ZIONTS Rapid City Journal

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Gov. Kristi Noem and South Dakota's congressional delegation are criticizing President Joe Biden's decision to cancel a permit needed to build the Keystone XL pipeline while a coalition of Indigenous people, environmental activists and some rural landowners are celebrating.

TC Energy and supporters of the pipeline are hoping Biden will change his mind by viewing the pipeline as progressive when it comes to labor and the environment.

"I'm very disappointed," Noem said. "I think it's the wrong policy on energy, it's the wrong policy on the environment, and it's the wrong policy on safety. Over the years we've debated this pipeline and vetted it on all of those elements."

Meanwhile, opponents say they will continue to fight for climate justice and possibly even against the KXL Pipeline since it's unclear whether TC Energy will pull the plug on the project, fight it in court, or wait four more years in the hopes of there being a new president who supports the pipeline.

"It is rare that a promise to our people is kept by the United States," Harold Frazier, chairman of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, said in a news release about Biden keeping his campaign process to shut down the pipeline.

Oscar High Elk, who is part of a small protest camp near Philip, said he now wants to see all infrastructure, including a nearby work camp and pump station, removed so the land can be restored.

"The camp will remain until we confirm all KXL construction sites have been shut down and the pipes removed," he told the Journal.

TC Energy is likely deciding whether to scrap the project or hope for a new president in the next four years since it's not likely to change Biden's mind or find success in the courts, according to two professors at the University of South Dakota.

"There's not going to be a political route" and "I don't see much of a chance at all" legally speaking, said Sean Kammer, who specializes in natural resources law.

The company needs to make "a judgment as to what the 2024 election would be and who might win versus the present value of pulling up the price of the pipes between now and then," said Michael Card, an expert in South Dakota politics. The price of oil is low right now and tar sands extraction is a more expensive method of obtaining oil, he said.

The battle over the \$8 billion pipeline began when the Canadian-owned TC Energy proposed the project in July 2008, according to a CTV news timeline.

Since then, the pipeline has been presented to three presidents and been subject to protests and lawsuits filed by TC Energy and opponents.

If built, the pipeline would run 1,200-miles from the Alberta tar sands in Canada to Nebraska, entering South Dakota at a spot 32 miles northwest of Buffalo. It would run southeast through Harding, Butte, Perkins, Pennington, Haakon, Jones, Lyman, Meade and Tripp counties before exiting about 20 miles southeast of Colome. The oil would be then be transferred to another TC Energy pipeline before being shipped to the Gulf of Mexico.

TC Energy made progress in obtaining the various approvals and studies it needed but President Barack Obama declined in January 2012 to sign the presidential permit required for projects that cross the border. He and his administration blocked the pipeline in other ways throughout his terms.

President Donald Trump promised to approve the pipeline during his campaign, signed an order in favor of the project in January 2017, and issued the presidential permit in March 2019.

Justin Trudeau, the Canadian prime minister, urged Biden to approve the pipeline when they spoke on the phone in November.

Jan. 17, three days before President Joe Biden's inauguration, TC Energy announced its commitment to

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using union labor, achieving net zero emissions, and being powered by renewable energy.

The company sent a newsletter arguing the project aligns with Biden's labor and environmental goals and asking supporters to contact their political leaders.

Two days later, South Dakota Rep. Dusty Johnson and Sens. John Thune and Mike Rounds sent a letter to Biden citing TC Energy's talking points and asking him to approve the pipeline.

"The Keystone XL pipeline of today is not the same project first reviewed by the Obama administration," they wrote.

Soon thereafter, TC Energy announced that it would be halting all construction in anticipation of Biden cancelling the permit, which he did on his first day in office.

Construction of the pipeline halted in April 2020 after a federal judge canceled its water-crossing permit but TC Energy has been building work camps, pump stations and other infrastructure. South Dakota passed legislation targeting violent or civil disobedience protests while the Department of Public Safety and sheriffs have been having regular meetings to prepare for illegal activity since 2017, according to DPS spokesman Tony Mangan.

Biden's decision overturned "an unprecedented, comprehensive regulatory process that lasted more than a decade and repeatedly concluded the pipeline would transport much needed energy in an environmentally responsible way while enhancing North American energy security," TC Energy said in a news release. Construction is being suspended and thousands of workers will be laid off, it added.

"TC Energy will review the decision, assess its implications, and consider its options," the release said.

The Journal asked TC Energy about its next steps, how the permit cancellation will impact profits, what kind of workers will be laid off and which will stay on the job, and whether security guards will remain at completed or in-the-works construction sites. Spokeswoman Sara Rabern declined to answer these questions, saying the company is not commenting beyond its news release.

"This pipeline is not only just creating jobs and helps us secure an affordable energy supply, it also is safer for our environment," Noem said. "History has proven over and over again that the way we are transporting our energy supply today is compromised in many ways and it would be safer through a pipeline" than on trucks and trains.

"We'll continue to have conversations with the (Biden) administration," she said. "I'm not certain if we have other options at this point. It still continues to remain a priority for me."

Thune said in his weekly column that he's disappointed Biden yielded to the "far-left" and "extreme environmental" wings of his party on his first day in office. Even Trudeau, "a staunch liberal," supports the project as part of Canada's clean energy roadmap, he said.

"The Biden administration is determined to transition away from oil and gasoline, but that is not something that can be done overnight," Thune said. "Cancelling this project ignores the reality of our nation's energy demands and denies a timely conversation about infrastructure modernization."

Thune agreed with Noem's arguments about transport safety and the project already going through many reviews. He said the pipeline would bring up to 4,000 good paying jobs to South Dakota and \$100 million in taxes each year that would be reinvested into the state.

Many Native American citizens and nations, environmentalists and some rural landowners are opposed to the pipeline because they want to move toward renewable energy sources and are concerned oil spills would impact land and drinking water.

There are concerns about an influx of mostly male workers bringing crime to nearby small towns and reservations, something that happened with the Bakken region of North Dakota and Montana. Some are also opposed to the pipeline since it's being built through land promised to the Oceti Sakowin in now-broken treaties.

The ACLU of South Dakota, Dakota Rural Action, the Lakota Law Project and NDN Collective all shared press releases praising Biden's decision. So did the Oglala, Cheyenne River and Standing Rock Sioux tribes.

"The cancellation of the Keystone XL pipeline permit sends a strong message to tribal nations, and symbolizes a willingness to build on government-to-government relationships established through our treaties," Oglala Sioux President Kevin Killer said in a news release.

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Many of the statements credited Indigenous leadership for putting pressure on Biden to cancel the permit while stressing there are still other pipeline and environmental battles to be fought.

"I want to honor decades of work led by Indigenous grassroots organizers," said Jade Begay of NDN Collective. "Because of them, KXL has been defeated not once but twice, and future generations will have a safer planet because of their determination."

"Let this be a warning to the fossil fuel industry that when you come into Oceti Sakowin lands, you will be met with resistance, organized power and a spirit of a people who will never be broken," said Nick Tilsen, CEO of NDN Collective.

Tilsen and High Elk said new priorities include shutting down the Dakota Access and Enbridge Line 3 pipelines.

Candi Brings Plenty, Indigenous Justice Organizer at the South Dakota ACLU, told the Journal that the movement will continue to follow the lead of grassroots climate activists while pushing tribes to adopt fossil free energy.

Kammer said he doesn't see any political solution for TC Energy while Card said the company could try to convince Biden to change his mind by arguing it's worker and eco-friendly.

TC Energy would need to "come to some form of compromise and suggest things they might be willing to do that would help the president out" Card said. "I don't know that it would sway him because of the impact that starting the project would have on his younger base who could say 'we told you so, we should have gone with Bernie'" and because he will be "perceived of being as a flip-flop."

Plus, the fact that Biden canceled the permit on his first day in office signals that this is a strong policy he believes in, Card said.

The company could wait and see if the House and Senate flip red in two years, Card said. Theoretically, a veto-proof Republican majority could create a law taking away the presidential permit power from the president and giving it to Congress, which would then vote to approve the permit.

Even though Keystone XL passes through South Dakota, there is little the state can do except try to convince Biden to change his mind, he said. The legislature could pass a resolution condemning Biden's decision but it would hold no real power.

TC Energy and opponents have filed "plenty of litigation" challenging administrative and procedural steps at the state and federal level, Kammer said. "It's the presidential permit that is kind of the unique animal, legally speaking."

He said most experts believe Biden can't be sued over his permit decision since the process isn't subject to administrative laws like state permitting or the federal water crossing permit.

Kammer said he even doubts that TC Energy could sue for property loss or economic damages since "the permit they had (under Trump) contained an expressed provision that it was revocable."

He said the only legal route might be through the United States–Mexico–Canada Agreement.

South Dakota confirms 179 new virus cases, 3 new deaths

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota has recorded 179 new cases of COVID-19 and three new deaths due the coronavirus, state health officials reported Sunday.

The update brings the number of positive tests to 108,250 and the number of deaths to 1,778 since the start of the pandemic. The death count is the 40th highest in the country overall and the sixth highest per capita at about 201 deaths per 100,000 people, Johns Hopkins University researchers said.

South Dakota ranks 45th in the country for new cases per capita over the past two weeks. One in every 797 people in South Dakota tested positive in the past week, researchers said.

The release shows that the number of hospitalizations dropped by 20 in the last day, to 125. Of those patients, 25 are being treated in intensive care units and 19 are requiring ventilators.

Officials said 99,540 doses of the COVID-19 vaccine have been administered and 28,535 people have received both required shots.

For most people, the new coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough that

clear up in two to three weeks. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia and death.

Trump loyalists in South Dakota turn on home state senator

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Longtime South Dakota Republican voter Jim Thompson is ready to leave the GOP, hoping that an exodus of Donald Trump supporters like him will punish the state's preeminent politician, Sen. John Thune, for defying Trump.

Thompson, a retired rodeo announcer and broadcaster, watched Trump's calls for supporters to come to Washington to stop Congress from certifying Joe Biden's election victory and he saw the ensuing assault on the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6. But as Congress tries to hold Trump accountable for his actions, Thompson sees an agenda to banish the former president from politics and return the party to establishment figures such as Thune, the second-ranking GOP leader in the Senate.

"We were tired of the way things were going, we were tired of political answers and spin," Thompson said.

Thune was among the Republicans who condemned the insurrection at the Capitol, calling it "horrific" and pledging to "hold those responsible to account." But like most of his GOP colleagues, the senator this past week signaled he was not speaking about Trump.

Thune and all the Republican senators except five voted against holding an impeachment trial. While their votes were not enough to stop the upcoming trial, the tally was a rapid climbdown from the talk of punishing Trump. It's easy to find the political incentives behind their decision in the small towns of South Dakota, where voters still loyal to Trump will decide whether to send Thune back to the Senate next year.

While Republican leaders in Washington flirted with punishing Trump, many of their constituents never dreamed of it. They believe the baseless claims by Trump and his right-wing allies that the election was stolen, and that the mob that stormed the Capitol was goaded by antifa activists. They view the attempt to blame Trump for the deadly siege as just another attack on a president establishment Republicans never accepted.

There was no widespread fraud in the election, which a range of election officials across the country including Trump's former attorney general, William Barr, confirmed. Republican governors in Arizona and Georgia, key battleground states crucial to Biden's victory, vouched for the integrity of the elections in their states. Nearly all the legal challenges from Trump and his allies were dismissed by judges, including two tossed by the Supreme Court, which includes three Trump-nominated justices.

"I think the whole impeachment thing is a joke," said David Buchanan, the president of a small Bible school in South Dakota who proudly displayed a Trump flag over his home. "They're trying just to destroy President Trump. They see him as a threat."

Buchanan is among those who would like to hear Republicans undertake a more robust defense of Trump. Instead, most have argued that an impeachment trial is unconstitutional, not that Trump is blameless for the riot.

Buchanan said he was frustrated to hear Thune on the radio countering Trump's allegations of widespread election fraud.

"What we're seeing is the destruction of the United States of America as it was founded," he said.

Embedded in these views is a deep skepticism about the mainstream media coverage and a belief in an alternative narrative — by now a defining characteristic of Trump's most ardent backers, even those who once trusted the news.

Brie Korkow, a 37-year-old from Pierre who runs a family rodeo business, used to love to research political issues while on a debate team in college. But recently, she has given up hope of trusting national media outlets and struggles to know what to believe. She trusts her local newspaper, but feels that even fact checks from national outlets are no longer reliable.

"It goes back to being able to find the truth about something," she said. "With social media, it's almost impossible."

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Although uncertain about what really happened at the Capitol, Korkow does believe Trump's election claims helped unleash the insurrection. But, echoing Republican senators, she believes an impeachment trial will only be more divisive. She hopes the Senate will "just let bygones be bygones."

Besides, by the end of Trump's four years in office, Korkow says she was no longer shocked by Trump. But Republican lawmakers can still feel his pointed jabs. When Thune disputed the baseless allegations of election fraud, Trump declared the senator's "political career over" and suggested GOP Gov. Kristi Noem, a Trump fan favorite, make a primary challenge in 2022. She quickly bowed out from challenging Thune next year.

Still, talk of a primary has not died.

A private Facebook group called "Primary John Thune in 2022" has attracted over 3,000 members. One of them, Bruce W. Whalen, said Thune's refusal to support Trump's claims of fraud has fueled interest.

"We can't understand as South Dakotans why Thune, (Sen. Mike) Rounds and (Rep. Dusty) Johnson can't see what we see," he said.

Whalen had contemplated traveling to Washington for Trump's protest, convinced that Thune, whom he called a "never-Trumper," was letting the election be stolen. As Whalen watched on television as a mob of Trump supporters attacked the Capitol, he remembers almost instantly being convinced they were actually antifa activists. Antifa is shorthand for anti-fascists and is a broad description for the far-left-leaning militant groups that resist neo-Nazis and white supremacists at demonstrations and other events.

Whalen, who in 2006 had enough GOP support to represent the party in a statewide race for Congress, now sees Trump's impeachment trial as "lofty accusations that they are trying to slime him with."

In the meantime, some longtime state Republican figures are frustrated with their senator's hesitation to convict Trump.

"He deserves to be convicted," said David Volk, a former state treasurer.

Volk has observed a steady rightward lurch in Republican politics over the years that has culminated in widespread support for Trump. Though he believes that Thune won't face much trouble being reelected, Volk feels Noem has ensured that Trump's brand of politics lives on in the state.

"There's a lot of people who would like to see this go away, Trump go away," he said. "But there's no way they're going to get him to go away."

Others, like Tom Barnett, a former director of the state's bar association, have given up on the Republican Party. Last year he changed his party affiliation after 50 years with the GOP, saying he could no longer support officials who would not stand up to Trump.

He said Trump "not only stole the party, he ruined the party."

Man charged with 6th DUI after combined crash gets 3 years

ABERDEEN, S.D. (AP) — A South Dakota man has been sentenced after pleading guilty to his sixth drunken driving offense, following an accident in which authorities say he rear-ended a combine.

Jerry A. Anderson, 55, of Claire City, was sentenced to three years in prison and ordered to pay back \$31,895 for damage to the combine.

Anderson had his driver's license revoked for three years, the Aberdeen American News reported.

Buoyed by Keystone XL, pipeline opponents want Biden to act

By AMY FORLITI Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — After President Joe Biden revoked Keystone XL's presidential permit and shut down construction of the long-disputed pipeline that was to carry oil from Canada to Texas, opponents of other pipelines hoped the projects they've been fighting would be next.

The Biden administration hasn't specified what action it might take on other pipelines, but industry experts doubt there will be swift changes like the one that stopped Keystone. They say the Keystone XL move on Biden's first day fulfilled a campaign promise and was symbolic for a president who has made climate

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change a national security priority and has called for a dramatic increase in cost-competitive renewable and clean-burning energy.

"I think generally we can expect more rigorous environmental reviews, more scrutiny and so forth. But I would be very surprised if Biden were to take any action of the executive order type," said Ben Cowan, an environmental law attorney who advises clients on permitting for pipelines and other energy projects.

A look at some other high-profile pipeline projects and what actions Biden might take:

DAKOTA ACCESS

Opponents of the Dakota Access pipeline, which carries oil from North Dakota to a shipping point in Illinois, want Biden's U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to shut it down.

A federal appeals court ruled last week that the project must undergo a more thorough environmental review, known as an environmental impact statement, but it declined to shut the line down while the review is completed.

Texas-based pipeline owner Energy Transfer maintains the line is safe. But pipeline opponents say the ruling means it is operating with an invalid permit.

The Army Corps faces a Feb. 10 hearing where it must tell a federal judge how it expects to proceed without a permit granting easement for the 1,172-mile (1,886 kilometer) pipeline to cross beneath Lake Oahe, along the Missouri River. The Standing Rock Sioux, who draw water from the river, have said they fear the line will someday fail and pollute the water and land.

"This pipeline doesn't have a permit and it's operating in violation of law and the court expects the Corps to do something about it," said Jan Hasselman, an attorney for the tribe. He said the Corps could halt the pipeline's operations until the environmental impact statement is completed.

The White House said in a statement it was reviewing the Dakota Access decision and is committed to complying with all legal obligations, including consulting with tribal nations before making any decision that would affect tribes or their land.

The Army Corps didn't respond to a message.

ENBRIDGE LINE 3

Opponents of the Line 3 replacement pipeline in Minnesota are stepping up pressure on Biden. More than 100,000 people have signed a petition — promoted by Democratic U.S. Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York — calling on Biden to revoke a water permit. Opponents also marched Friday to the Corps' St. Paul office.

Andy Pearson, the Midwest tar sands coordinator for the climate advocacy group MN350, said Line 3 is similar to Keystone XL in its makeup — it carries tar sands oil from Canada — but the federal permitting issues are similar to what Dakota Access faces.

Line 3 starts in Alberta and clips a corner of North Dakota before crossing northern Minnesota en route to Enbridge's terminal in Superior, Wisconsin. The 337-mile (542.35-kilometer) line in Minnesota is the last step in replacing a deteriorating pipeline built in the 1960s. The replacement will follow a different route in some places and carry more oil.

Pearson and others said revocation of Line 3's presidential permit at the U.S.-Canada border is unlikely because the line is already in place there. Instead, opponents are targeting the line's federal water permit, saying in a lawsuit that the Corps failed to address environmental issues or conduct a federal environmental impact statement when the permit was granted.

Pearson said Biden should put the pipeline on hold and make sure a thorough environmental review is done.

Enbridge Energy said Biden's decision on Keystone will have no impact on Line 3 or a similar Line 5 project in Michigan. Unlike the Keystone project, lines 3 and 5 are currently operating, the company said, and the Line 3 replacement was ordered by a consent decree during Obama's administration.

LINE 5

Line 5 is part of Enbridge's Lakehead network, which carries oil and liquids used in propane from western Canada to refineries in the U.S. and Ontario. Line 5 moves about 23 million gallons (87 million liters) daily from Superior, Wisconsin, to Sarnia, Ontario, traversing parts of northern Michigan and Wisconsin.

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Enbridge wants to replace the section beneath the Straits of Mackinac, which connect Lake Huron and Lake Michigan, with a new pipe housed in a tunnel that would be drilled beneath the straits.

Pipeline opponents want Biden to publicly support Michigan Democratic Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's order to shut down the existing pipeline in May. Whitmer says the company violated the terms of a 1953 easement that allowed the line on the lake's bottom. Enbridge is fighting her order in court.

Opponents also want the Corps to reject Enbridge's application for a permit to build the proposed tunnel, and they are seeking a full environmental review. Corps officials previously said they were studying how Whitmer's order might affect their review of Enbridge's application.

MOUNTAIN VALLEY

The Mountain Valley Pipeline is a natural gas pipeline that would run about 300 miles (483 kilometers) from northwestern West Virginia to southern Virginia. Some sections of it are under construction but others are blocked because of court disputes over federal permits.

David Sligh, conservation director for Wild Virginia, said leaders of the Bureau of Land Management, Forest Service and Fish and Wildlife Service have to decide how they will handle legal challenges to permits approved during Trump's administration. Meanwhile, Mountain Valley Pipeline is seeking individual Corps permits to cross numerous bodies of water — after one broad permit was stalled in court. Sligh's group is hopeful that the Corps will reject the new applications.

Agency leaders, he said, work "directly for the president and they have a responsibility to show they are doing what is in the broader public interest rather than the fossil fuel interest."

Mountain Valley spokeswoman Natalie Cox said regulators and courts have thoroughly scrutinized the pipeline and that natural gas "is needed as part of the transition to a lower-carbon economy."

Cowan said Mountain Valley could come under even more scrutiny because the man Biden picked to lead the Environmental Protection Agency, Michael Regan, expressed opposition to the project when he led the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality.

"It just faces a lot of headwinds in its permitting process generally," Cowan said. "And the regulatory climate is certainly not going to be any kinder to it now than it was."

Cowan said in general, legal and regulatory challenges have made companies think twice about investing in new pipelines. The 600-mile (965-kilometer) Atlantic Coast Pipeline across West Virginia, Virginia and North Carolina was canceled last summer after legal challenges prompted permit dismissals or suspensions and led to construction delays and ballooning costs that brought the estimated price tag to \$8 billion.

"I think a lot of people are questioning, frankly, whether it's worth it anymore," he said.

Follow Amy Forliti on Twitter: <https://www.twitter.com/amyforliti>

Biden to meet with GOP lawmakers to discuss virus relief

By AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden is set to meet Monday with a group of 10 Republican senators who have proposed spending about one-third of the \$1.9 trillion he is seeking in coronavirus aid, though congressional Democrats are poised to move ahead without Republican support.

An invitation to the White House came hours after the lawmakers sent Biden a letter Sunday urging him to negotiate rather than try to ram through his relief package solely on Democratic votes. The House and Senate are on track to vote as soon as this week on a budget resolution, which would lay the groundwork for passing an aid package under rules requiring only a simple majority vote in the closely divided Senate.

The goal is for passage by March, when extra unemployment assistance and other pandemic aid expires. The meeting to be hosted by Biden would amount to the most public involvement for the president in the negotiations for the next round of virus relief. Democratic and Republican lawmakers are far apart in their proposals for assistance.

White House press secretary Jen Psaki said Sunday that Biden had spoken with the leader of the group, Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine. Though Biden wants "a full exchange of views," Psaki reiterated that the

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president remains in favor of moving forward with a far-reaching relief package.

"With the virus posing a grave threat to the country, and economic conditions grim for so many, the need for action is urgent, and the scale of what must be done is large," Psaki said.

In challenging Biden to fulfill his pledge of unity, the group said in its letter that its counterproposal will include \$160 billion for vaccines, testing, treatment and personal protective equipment and call for more targeted relief than Biden's plan to issue \$1,400 stimulus checks for most Americans.

Winning the support of 10 Republicans would be significant for Biden in the 50-50 Senate where Vice President Kamala Harris is the tie-breaker. If all Democrats were to back an eventual compromise bill, the legislation would reach the 60-vote threshold necessary to overcome potential blocking efforts and pass under regular Senate procedures.

"In the spirit of bipartisanship and unity, we have developed a COVID-19 relief framework that builds on prior COVID assistance laws, all of which passed with bipartisan support," the Republican senators wrote. "Our proposal reflects many of your stated priorities, and with your support, we believe that this plan could be approved quickly by Congress with bipartisan support."

The plea for Biden to give bipartisan negotiations more time comes as the president has shown signs of impatience as the more liberal wing of his party considers passing the relief package through a process known as budget reconciliation. That would allow the bill to advance with only the backing of his Democratic majority.

The Republicans did not provide many details of their proposal. One of the signatories, Louisiana Sen. Bill Cassidy, said that it would cost about \$600 billion.

"If you can't find bipartisan compromise on COVID-19, I don't know where you can find it," said Ohio Sen. Rob Portman, who also signed the letter.

But even as Biden extended the invitation to the Republican lawmakers, Psaki said that \$1,400 relief checks, substantial funding for reopening schools, aid to small businesses and hurting families, and more "is badly needed."

"As leading economists have said, the danger now is not in doing too much: it is in doing too little," Psaki said. "Americans of both parties are looking to their leaders to meet the moment."

Biden also spoke on Sunday with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, who are facing a growing push from the more liberal Democratic members to move forward with Biden's legislation with or without Republican support.

The other GOP senators invited to meet with Biden are Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, Mitt Romney of Utah, Shelley Moore Capito of West Virginia, Todd Young of Indiana, Jerry Moran of Kansas, Mike Rounds of South Dakota, and Thom Tillis of North Carolina.

Brian Deese, the top White House economic adviser who is leading the administration's outreach to Congress, said earlier Sunday that administration officials were reviewing the letter. He did not immediately commit to a Biden meeting with the lawmakers.

But Cedric Richmond, a senior Biden adviser, said the president "is very willing to meet with anyone to advance the agenda." When asked about the senators' plan, Richmond said, "This is about seriousness of purpose."

Deese indicated the White House could be open to negotiating on further limiting who would receive stimulus checks. Portman suggested the checks should go to individuals who make no more than \$50,000 per year and families capped at \$100,000 per year.

Under the Biden plan, families with incomes up to \$300,000 could receive some stimulus money.

"That is certainly a place that we're willing to sit down and think about, are there ways to make the entire package more effective?" Deese said.

As a candidate, Biden predicted his decades in the Senate and his eight years as Barack Obama's vice president gave him credibility as a deal-maker and would help him bring Republicans and Democrats to consensus on the most important matters facing the country.

But less than two weeks into his presidency, Biden showed frustration with the pace of negotiations at a time when the economy exhibited further evidence of wear from the pandemic. Last week, 847,000

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Americans applied for unemployment benefits, a sign that layoffs remain high as the coronavirus pandemic continues to rage.

"I support passing COVID relief with support from Republicans if we can get it. But the COVID relief has to pass — no ifs, ands or buts," Biden said on Friday.

In the letter, the Republican lawmakers reminded Biden that in his inaugural address, he proclaimed that the challenges facing the nation require "the most elusive of things in a democracy: Unity."

Cassidy separately criticized the current Biden plan as "chock-full of handouts and payoffs to Democratic constituency groups."

"You want the patina of bipartisanship ... so that's not unity," Cassidy said.

Jared Bernstein, a member of the White House Council of Economic Advisers, said Biden remains willing to negotiate but that officials needed to see more details from Republicans. At the same time, Bernstein pressed the administration's argument that doing too little to stimulate the economy could have enormous impact on the economy in the near- and long-term.

"Look, the American people really couldn't care less about budget process, whether it's regular order, bipartisanship, whether it's filibuster, whether it's reconciliation," Bernstein said. "They need relief, and they need it now."

Portman and Deese were on CNN's "State of the Union," and Deese also was interviewed on NBC's "Meet the Press." Cassidy and Bernstein appeared on Fox News Channel's "Fox News Sunday," and Richmond was on CBS' "Face the Nation."

The Latest: Military backers celebrate army takeover

NAYPYITAW, Myanmar (AP) — The Latest on the military takeover in Myanmar (all times local):
4 p.m.

Supporters of Myanmar's military and the political party it backs held small rallies Monday to celebrate the ousting of the government of Aung San Suu Kyi and her National League for Democracy party.

Pickup trucks carrying about half a dozen people each cruised in small swarms through the main streets of Yangon, the country's biggest city. Some vehicles had loudspeakers blaring music and most carried the national flag. Some also displayed Buddhist flags.

In several areas, supporters of the military and the Union Solidarity and Development Party held small streetside rallies, with occasional minor violence, according to social media posts that could not immediately be verified.

Suu Kyi's party won a landslide victory in last November's elections, humiliating the opposition USDP. The military said it staged its takeover Monday, during which it detained Suu Kyi and other officials, because her government would not address its allegations of widespread voter fraud and other election flaws.

Similar rallies supporting the military were held last week. In imposing a one-year state of emergency on Monday, the military said the government's denials of wrongdoing sparked popular protests against the state election commission "in many cities."

It said other parties and individuals were planning their own demonstrations and provocations that could impact the nation's stability. However, there was little public sign of significant unrest.

3:10 p.m.

Myanmar's government agency in charge of air travel says it has stopped all passenger flights in the country.

The U.S. Embassy in Myanmar said on its Facebook page that the road to the international airport in Yangon, the country's biggest city, had been closed Monday. On Twitter it said that "reports indicate that all airports in Myanmar are closed."

The U.S. Embassy also issued a "security alert" saying it was aware of the detention of Myanmar's leader Aung San Suu Kyi as well as the shutdown of some Internet service, including in Yangon.

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"There is potential for civil and political unrest in Burma, and we will continue to monitor the situation," it said, using Myanmar's former name.

The U.S. State Department earlier issued a statement say it was "alarmed" by Monday's military takeover.

2:25 p.m.

China said it was still gathering information about Monday's developments in Myanmar.

China is one of Myanmar's most important economic partners and has invested billions of dollars in mines, infrastructure and gas pipelines in the Southeast Asian nation.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said at a daily news briefing: "We have noted what happened in Myanmar, and we are learning the further situation now,"

He added: "China is a friendly neighbor of Myanmar. We hope that all parties in Myanmar will properly handle their differences under the constitutional and legal framework and maintain political and social stability."

While China's ruling Communist Party tends to favor fellow authoritarian regimes, it has had a fractious history with Myanmar's military, sometimes related to its campaigns against ethnic Chinese minority groups and the drug trade along their long, mountainous border.

1:40 p.m.

Myanmar's military has announced it will hold a new election at the end of a one-year state of emergency it declared Monday when it seized control of the country and reportedly detained leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

The announcement on military-controlled Myawaddy TV came after an earlier declaration that because national stability was in jeopardy, all government functions would be transferred to military chief Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing under a provision in the 2008 constitution that was issued under military rule.

The announcement said once the election is held, the military would hand power to the winner.

Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party won a landslide victory in last November's general election, humiliating the military-backed opposition Union Solidarity and Development Party.

The military said it acted because Suu Kyi's government failed to address its allegations of widespread voter fraud and other election-related issues.

11:15 a.m.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has strongly condemned the detention of Myanmar's civilian leaders as the military announced it was taking control of the country for one year.

He expressed "grave concern" about the declaration that all legislative, executive and judicial powers have been transferred to the military. "These developments represent a serious blow to democratic reforms in Myanmar," said a statement from the U.N. chief's spokesperson, Stéphane Dujarric.

Guterres said the elections last November provided a strong mandate for Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy to govern. The announcement that the military was taking control came on the first day Myanmar's Parliament was to convene following the November elections.

The military has argued those elections were tainted by fraud, but the elections commission last week rejected those claims as lacking evidence.

11:10 a.m.

Human rights groups are calling for the immediate release of Aung San Suu Kyi and other civilian leaders in Myanmar.

A military takeover in the country was announced Monday morning on the day Myanmar's Parliament was to convene with new members sworn in following November elections. The military has claimed the election was tainted by fraud but an election board rejected those claims as lacking evidence.

Human Rights Watch expressed concern about the safety of the figures being detained.

"The military's actions show utter disdain for the democratic elections held in November and the right of Myanmar's people to choose their own government," said Phil Robertson, HRW's deputy Asia director.

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Amnesty International noted that violence and extrajudicial killings had marked past coups and urged Myanmar's armed forces to exercise restraint.

"The concurrent arrests of prominent political activists and human rights defenders sends a chilling message that the military authorities will not tolerate any dissent," Amnesty International said.

11 a.m.

Leaders in the Asia-Pacific region are expressing concern about the military's actions in Myanmar and detentions of top civilian leaders.

Myanmar military television said Monday morning the military was taking control of the country for one year and Suu Kyi and others had been detained. The actions came on the day Myanmar's Parliament was to convene with new members sworn in following November elections.

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison reiterated his country's opposition to any attempt to alter the election results and urged all parties to adhere to democratic norms.

Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Katsunobu Kato said the government had issued a safety advisory to Japanese citizens to be careful in the event of possible clashes.

"Japan believes it is important to resolve the problem peacefully through dialogue between the related parties based on democratic process," Kato said.

A statement released by Singapore's foreign ministry said it hoped all parties in Myanmar would work toward a positive and peaceful outcome. "We hope that the situation will return to normal as soon as possible."

10:15 a.m.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken is expressing alarm about Myanmar's military detaining Aung San Suu Kyi and other civilian leaders.

Myanmar military television said Monday morning the military was taking control of the country for one year and Suu Kyi and others had been detained. The actions came on the day Myanmar's Parliament was to convene with new members sworn in following November elections.

"We call on Burmese military leaders to release all government officials and civil society leaders and respect the will of the people of Burma as expressed in democratic elections on November 8," Blinken said in a statement from Washington. "The United States stands with the people of Burma in their aspirations for democracy, freedom, peace, and development. The military must reverse these actions immediately."

9 a.m.

Myanmar military television says the military has taken control of the country for one year.

An announcer on military-owned Myawaddy TV made the announcement Monday morning. The announcement follows days of concern about the threat of a military coup and comes as the country's new Parliament session was to begin.

The Irrawaddy, an established online news service, reported that State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi Suu Kyi, the nation's top leader, and the country's president, Win Myint, were both detained before dawn Monday. The news service cited Myo Nyunt, a spokesman for Suu Kyi's ruling National League for Democracy party.

Its report said that the party's Central Executive Committee members, lawmakers and regional Cabinet members had also been taken into custody.

The U.S., Australia and others have expressed concern about the actions.

8:40 a.m.

The U.S. and Australia have expressed concerned about a reported coup in Myanmar and urged its military to respect the rule of law.

"The United States is alarmed by reports that the Burmese military has taken steps to undermine the country's democratic transition, including the arrest of State Counselor Aung San Suu Kyi and other civilian

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officials in Burma," White House spokesperson Jen Psaki said in a statement from Washington. Burma is the former name of Myanmar.

She said President Joe Biden had been briefed on the reported developments.

"The United States opposes any attempt to alter the outcome of recent elections or impede Myanmar's democratic transition, and will take action against those responsible if these steps are not reversed," the statement said.

Australian Foreign Minister Marise Payne called for the release of Suu Kyi and others detained. "We strongly support the peaceful reconvening of the National Assembly, consistent with the results of the November 2020 general election," she said.

7:15 a.m.

Reports says a military coup has taken place in Myanmar and State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi has been detained under house arrest.

Online news portal Myanmar Now cited unidentified sources about the arrest of Suu Kyi and her party's chairperson early Monday and did not have further details.

All communications to Naypyitaw appeared to have been cut, and Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party could not be reached.

Myanmar lawmakers were to gather Monday for the first session of Parliament since last year's election, with tension lingering over recent comments by the military that were widely seen as threatening a coup.

WHO team in Wuhan visits disease control centers

By EMILY WANG FUJIYAMA Associated Press

WUHAN, China (AP) — A World Health Organization team investigating the origins of the coronavirus pandemic visited two disease control centers on Monday that had an early hand in managing the outbreak in the central Chinese city of Wuhan.

The WHO investigators arrived in Wuhan, the provincial capital, last month to look for clues and have visited hospitals and a seafood market where early cases were detected.

The team on Monday visited both the Hubei Provincial Center for Disease Control and its Wuhan city office, amid tight Chinese controls on access to information about the virus.

China has sought to avoid blame for alleged missteps in its early response to the outbreak, while promoting alternative theories that the virus originated elsewhere and may even have been brought to Wuhan from outside the country.

Following the visit to the provincial center, team member Peter Daszak told reporters it had been a "really good meeting, really important." No other details were given.

The evidence the team assembles will add to what is expected to be a years-long quest for answers. Pinning down an outbreak's animal sources requires massive amounts of research including taking animal samples, genetic analysis and epidemiological studies.

China has largely curbed domestic transmission through strict testing and contact tracing. Mask wearing in public is observed almost universally and lockdowns are routinely imposed on communities and even entire cities where cases are detected. The latest outbreaks have been mostly in the frigid northeast, with 33 new cases reported nationally Monday in three provinces.

Despite that, China recorded more than 2,000 new domestic cases of COVID-19 in January, the highest monthly total since the final phase of the initial outbreak in Wuhan last March. Two people died of the disease in January, the first reported COVID-19 deaths in China in several months.

Schools have gone online and travel has been drastically cut during this month's Lunar New Year holiday, with the government offering incentives for people to stay put during the most important time for family gatherings across the vast nation.

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EXPLAINER: Why is the military taking control in Myanmar?

By VICTORIA MILKO Associated Press

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP) — Myanmar's military has taken control of the country under a one-year state of emergency and reports say State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi and other government leaders have been detained. Here are some possible reasons why the military has taken over now:

THE CONSTITUTION

The announcement on military-owned Myawaddy TV cited Article 417 of the country's constitution, which allows the military to take over in times of emergency. The announcer said the coronavirus crisis and the government's failure to postpone November elections were reasons for the emergency.

The military drafted the constitution in 2008 and retains power under the charter at the expense of democratic, civilian rule. Human Rights Watch has described the clause as a "coup mechanism in waiting."

The constitution also reserves key Cabinet ministries and 25% of the seats in Parliament for the military, a portion that limits the power of a civilian government and rules out amending the charter without military support.

Some experts expressed puzzlement as to why the military would upset their powerful status quo, but others noted the looming retirement of Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, who has been commander of the armed forces since 2011.

"There's internal military politics around that, which is very opaque," said Kim Jolliffe, a researcher on Myanmar civilian and military relations. "This might be reflecting those dynamics and might be somewhat of a coup internally and his way of maintaining power within the military."

The military has assigned Vice President Myint Swe, a former military officer, as head of the government for one year.

THE ELECTIONS

In November elections, Suu Kyi's party captured 396 out of 476 seats in the combined lower and upper houses of Parliament. The state Union Election Commission has confirmed that result.

But the military since shortly after the elections has claimed there were millions of irregularities in voter lists in 314 townships that could have let voters cast multiple ballots or commit other "voting malpractice."

"But they haven't really shown any proof of that," Jolliffe said.

The election commission rejected the claims last week, stating there was no evidence to support them.

The military takeover came on what was to be the first day of the new Parliament following the elections.

Instead, Suu Kyi and other lawmakers who would have been sworn into office were reported detained.

A later announcement on Myawaddy TV said the military would hold an election after the one-year emergency ends and would turn over power to the winner.

WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW

Telecommunications came to a near halt in the morning and early afternoon. In the capital, internet and phone access appeared to be blocked. Many people elsewhere in the country who could still access the internet found their social media accounts had been temporarily suspended.

Barbed wire road blocks were set up across Yangon, the largest city, and military units began to appear outside government buildings such as City Hall.

Residents flocked to ATMs and food vendors, while some shops and homes removed the symbols of Suu Kyi's party, the National League for Democracy, that typically adorn the streets and walls of the city.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

Governments and international organizations condemned the takeover, saying it sets back the limited democratic reforms Myanmar has made.

"This is an extremely crushing blow to efforts to present Myanmar as a democracy," said Linda Lakhdhir, a legal adviser at Human Rights Watch. "Its creditability on the world stage has taken a massive hit."

Watchdogs fear a further crackdown on human rights defenders, journalists, and others critical of the military. Even before the current military takeover, journalists, free speech advocates and critics of the military often faced legal action for publicly criticizing it.

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A U.S. senator raised the possibility the United States could again impose economic sanctions, which the U.S. lifted when Myanmar was transitioning to civilian rule.

Myanmar's military leaders "must immediately free the democratic leaders of Myanmar and remove themselves from government," said Democratic Sen. Bob Menendez, the incoming chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. "If not, the United States and other countries should impose strict economic sanctions, as well as other measures" against the military and military leaders, he said.

Former U.S. diplomat Bill Richardson said the Biden administration and other governments should act swiftly to impose sanctions. He also questioned Suu Kyi's ability to lead given her defense of the military's actions against ethnic Rohingya Muslims.

"Because of Suu Kyi's failure to promote democratic values as Myanmar's de facto leader, she should step aside and let other Myanmar democratic leaders take the reins with international backing and support," Richardson said in a statement.

Report: Hate groups in decline, migrate to online networks

By AARON MORRISON Associated Press

During one of the most politically divisive years in recent memory, the number of active hate groups in the U.S. actually declined as far-right extremists migrated further to online networks, reflecting a splintering of white nationalist and neo-Nazi groups that are more difficult to track.

In its annual report, to be released Monday, the Southern Poverty Law Center said it identified 838 active hate groups operating across the U.S. in 2020. That's a decrease from the 940 documented in 2019 and the record-high of 1,020 in 2018, said the law center, which tracks racism, xenophobia and anti-government militias.

"It is important to understand that the number of hate groups is merely one metric for measuring the level of hate and racism in America, and that the decline in groups should not be interpreted as a reduction in bigoted beliefs and actions motivated by hate," said the report, first shared exclusively with The Associated Press.

The Montgomery, Alabama-based law center said many hate groups have moved to social media platforms and use of encrypted apps, while others have been banned altogether from mainstream social media networks.

Still, the law center said, online platforms allow individuals to interact with hate and anti-government groups without becoming members, maintain connections with likeminded people, and take part in real-world actions, such as last month's siege on the U.S. Capitol.

White nationalist organizations, a subset of the hate groups listed in the report, declined last year by more than 100. Those groups had seen huge growth the previous two years after being energized by Donald Trump's campaign and presidency, the report said.

The number of anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim and anti-LGBTQ hate groups remained largely stable, while their in-person organizing was hampered by the coronavirus pandemic.

Bottom line, the levels of hate and bigotry in America have not diminished, said SPLC President and CEO Margaret Huang.

"What's important is that we start to reckon with all the reasons why those groups have persisted for so long and been able to get so much influence in the last White House, that they actually feel emboldened," Huang told the AP.

Last month, as President Joe Biden's administration began settling in, the Department of Homeland Security issued an early national terrorism bulletin in response to a growing threat from home-grown extremists, including anti-government militias and white supremacists. The extremists are coalescing under a broader, more loosely affiliated movement of people who reject democratic institutions and multiculturalism, Huang said.

The SPLC's report comes out nearly a month after a mostly white mob of Trump supporters and members of far-right groups violently breached the U.S. Capitol building. At least five deaths have been linked to

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the assault, including a Capitol police officer. Some in the mob waved Confederate battle flags and wore clothing with neo-Nazi symbolism.

Federal authorities have made more than 160 arrests and sought hundreds more for criminal charges related to the deadly Jan. 6 assault. Authorities have also linked roughly 30 defendants to a group or movement, according to an AP review of court records.

That includes seven defendants linked to QAnon, a once-fringe internet conspiracy movement that recently grew into a powerful force in mainstream conservative politics; six linked to the Proud Boys, a misogynistic, anti-immigrant and anti-Semitic group with ties to white supremacy; four linked to the Oath Keepers, a paramilitary organization that recruits current and former military, law enforcement and first-responder personnel; four linked to the Three Percenters, an anti-government militia movement; and two leaders of "Super Happy Fun America," a group with ties to white nationalists known for organizing a so-called "straight pride" parade in downtown Boston in 2019.

Bipartisan critics of Trump have blamed him for inciting the attack on the Capitol, which some far-right groups have declared a success and are using as a recruitment tool to grow membership, according to the SPLC.

The final year of the Trump presidency, marked by a wide-ranging reckoning over systemic racism, also propelled racist conspiracy theories and white nationalist ideology into the political mainstream, the law center said.

According to an SPLC survey conducted in August, 29% of respondents said they personally know someone who believes that white people are the superior race. The poll also found that 51% of Americans thought the looting and vandalism that occurred across the country around Black Lives Matter demonstrations was a bigger problem than excessive force by police.

Protests over the Minneapolis police killing of George Floyd last May spurred a push to make the November election a referendum on white supremacy. Nestled in Trump's baseless claims of widespread voter fraud was a reality that turnout among Black and Hispanic voters played a significant role in handing victory to Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris, the first woman and first person of Black and South Asian heritage to hold that office.

During his inaugural address, Biden issued a strong repudiation of white supremacy and domestic terrorism, which is rare for such consequential speeches.

The SPLC made several recommendations for the new administration in its latest report. It called for establishing offices within the Department of Homeland Security, the Justice Department and the FBI to monitor, investigate and prosecute cases of domestic terrorism. It also urged improving federal hate crime data collection, training, and prevention; and for enacting federal legislation that shifts funding away from punishment models and toward preventing violent extremism.

People who support or express hatred and bigotry are not always card-carrying members of far-right groups. But that doesn't mean they can't be activated into violence, said Christian Picciolini, a former far-right extremist and founder of the Free Radicals Project, a group that helps people disengage from hate organizations.

It also doesn't mean that they can't be reached and deradicalized, he said.

"We have to have kind of a dual approach to stop what's happening now, but also to make sure that we are not creating a problem for us in the future, to understand how the propaganda is spread that is recruiting these people," Picciolini said.

"Right now, it's in a very self-service format online," he added. "We're facing a really big problem."

Morrison reported from New York. AP writer Michael Kunzelman contributed from College Park, Maryland.

Morrison is a member of the AP's Race & Ethnicity team. Follow him on Twitter: <https://www.twitter.com/aaronlmorrison>.

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Military takes control of Myanmar; Suu Kyi reported detained

NAYPYITAW, Myanmar (AP) — Myanmar military television said Monday that the military was taking control of the country for one year, while reports said many of the country's senior politicians including Aung San Suu Kyi had been detained.

An announcement read on military-owned Myawaddy TV cited a section of the military-drafted constitution that allows the military to take control in times of national emergency. It said the reason for takeover was in part due to the government's failure to act on the military's claims of voter fraud in last November's election and its failure to postpone the election because of the coronavirus crisis.

The announcement and the declaration of a state of emergency follows days of concern about the threat of a military coup — and military denials that it would stage one — and came on the morning the country's new Parliament session was to begin.

The takeover is a sharp reversal of the partial yet significant progress toward democracy Myanmar made in recent years following five decades of military rule and international isolation that began in 1962. It would also be shocking fall from power for Suu Kyi, who led the democracy struggle despite years under house arrest and won a Nobel Peace Prize for her efforts.

Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy released a statement on one of its Facebook pages saying the military's actions were unjustified and went against the constitution and the will of voters. The statement urged people to oppose Monday's "coup" and any return to "military dictatorship."

It was not possible to confirm who posted the message as NLD members were not answering phone calls.

The military's actions were already receiving international condemnation.

U.S. Secretary of State Anthony Blinken issued a statement expressing "grave concern and alarm" over the reported detentions.

"We call on Burmese military leaders to release all government officials and civil society leaders and respect the will of the people of Burma as expressed in democratic elections," he wrote, using Myanmar's former name.

The office of the U.N. secretary-general was also among those to issue a statement condemning the developments as a "serious blow to democratic reforms."

The detention of the politicians and cuts in television signals and communication services on Monday were the first signs that plans to seize power were in motion. Phone and internet access to Naypyitaw was lost and Suu Kyi's party could not be reached. Phone service in other parts of the country was also reported down, though people were still able to use the internet in many areas.

The Irrawaddy, an established online news service, reported that Suu Kyi, who as state counsellor is the nation's top leader, and the country's president, Win Myint, were both detained in the pre-dawn hours. It cited Myo Nyunt, a spokesman for the NLD.

The report said that the party's Central Executive Committee members, lawmakers and regional Cabinet members had also been taken into custody.

A list of other people believed to have been detained, compiled by political activists, included filmmaker Min Htin Ko Ko Gyi, writer Maung Thar Cho, and prominent veterans of the country's 1988 student protest movement, such as Ko Ko Gyi and Min Ko Naing. Their detention could not immediately be confirmed.

The military TV report said Commander-in-Chief Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing would be in charge of the country, while Vice President Myint Swe would be elevated to acting president. Myint Swe is a former general best known for leading a brutal crackdown on Buddhist monks in 2007. He is a close ally of former junta leader Than Shwe.

In a later announcement, the military said an election would be held in a year and the military would hand power over to the winner.

As word of the military's actions spread in Yangon, the country's biggest city, there was a growing sense of unease among residents who earlier in the day had still been packed into cafes for breakfast and had been doing their morning shopping.

People were removing the bright red flags of Suu Kyi's party that once adorned their homes and busi-

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nesses. Lines formed at ATMs as people waited to take out cash, efforts that were being complicated by internet disruptions. Workers at some businesses decided to go home.

The military maintains its actions are legally justified, though Suu Kyi's party spokesman as well as many international observers have said it is in effect a coup.

The 2008 constitution, implemented during military rule, has a clause that says in cases of national emergency, the president in coordination with the military-dominated National Defense and Security Council can issue an emergency decree to hand over the government's executive, legislative and judicial powers to the military commander-in-chief.

The clause had been described by New York-based Human Rights Watch as a "coup mechanism in waiting."

It is just one of many parts of the charter that ensured the military could maintain ultimate control over the country at the expense elected politicians. The military also was guaranteed 25% of seats in Parliament and control of several key ministries, especially those involved in security and defense.

The 75-year-old Suu Kyi is by far the country's most popular politician, and became the country's de facto leader after her party won 2015 elections, though the constitution barred her from being president. She had been a fierce antagonist of the army during her time under house arrest.

Nevertheless, once in power Suu Kyi had to balance her relationship with the country's generals and even went on the international stage to defend their crackdown on Rohingya Muslims in the country's west, a campaign the U.S. and others have labeled genocide. That has left her reputation internationally in tatters.

She remains wildly popular at home, where most supported the campaign against the Rohingya. Suu Kyi's party captured 396 out of 476 seats in the combined lower and upper houses of Parliament in November's polls.

The military has charged that there was massive voting fraud in the election, though it has failed to provide proof. The state Union Election Commission last week rejected its allegations.

Amid the bickering over the allegations, the military last Tuesday ramped up political tension when a spokesman at its weekly news conference, responding to a reporter's question, declined to rule out the possibility of a coup.

Then Wednesday, the military chief told senior officers in a speech that the constitution could be revoked if the laws were not being properly enforced. Adding to the concern was the unusual deployment of armored vehicles in the streets of several large cities.

On Saturday and Sunday, however, the military denied it had threatened a coup, accusing unnamed organizations and media of misrepresenting its position.

Survivors of Beirut's explosion endure psychological scars

By DALAL MAWAD Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Joana Dagher lay unconscious and hemorrhaging under a pile of rubble in her apartment after the massive Beirut port blast in August, on the brink of death.

She survived because of the courage of her husband who got her out, the kindness of a stranger who transported her in his damaged car and the help of her sisters during the chaos at the overwhelmed hospital.

But Dagher doesn't remember any of that: The 33-year-old mother of two lost her memory for two full months from the trauma she suffered in the explosion, including a cerebral contusion and brain lesions.

"I lost my life on August 4," Dagher said. "I lost my house, I lost my memory, I lost two friends," she added, referring to neighbors killed in the explosion. "I lost my mental health, and so I lost everything."

The Beirut explosion, which killed more than 200 people and injured more than 6,000, caused wounds on an even wider scale on the mental health of those who lived through it.

Dagher is gradually regaining her memory. But another kind of pain lingers.

Though therapy now helps, she said she no longer feels the same. Dagher is usually a calm and independent person, her sister Jihane said. Now she experiences bursts of anger and stress, emotionally shutting down and at times getting aggressive — all signs of post-traumatic stress disorder, according to experts.

"The past 6 months have been a purgatory," Jihane said. "When you see someone you love suffer so

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much, everyone suffers with them, you are helpless.”

The blast was caused by a fire that ignited nearly 3,000 tons of ammonium nitrate stored in a port warehouse. One of the biggest non-nuclear explosions ever recorded, the force tore through the city, sending people flying across rooms and slicing them with flying glass. Windows and doors were blown out miles away from the epicenter.

Even in a country that has seen many wars and bombings, never had so many people — tens of thousands — directly experienced the same traumatizing event at the same time.

It came on top of the stress that Lebanese were already feeling from multiple crises, including an unprecedented economic meltdown, the coronavirus pandemic and a feeling of helplessness after nationwide protests against corruption that failed to achieve their goals.

“There are very high levels of anxiety and worry across the population,” said Mia Atwi, psychologist and president of Embrace, an organization working on mental health awareness and support. “There is a low mood bordering on clinical depression for the majority of the population.”

Demand for therapists has ballooned, making it hard to find treatment, especially since many qualified experts are leaving the country.

Embrace expanded its clinic after the explosion and still it has a 60-person-long waiting list. It has provided support for 750 people since the blast. Most are experiencing post-explosion symptoms, depression and anxiety, Atwi said. On Embrace’s helpline, 67% of the phone calls since August are from people in emotional distress, and 28% had suicidal thoughts.

The blast left mental wounds even in those it didn’t wound physically.

Najla Fadel, 33, was miraculously unscratched when the blast shattered the glass windows of her house, badly injuring her child’s babysitter. In the last months of her pregnancy with her second child, Fadel transported the bleeding woman to the hospital by herself.

She has since struggled with nightmares. She often wakes up, heart pounding, thinking the explosion has happened again.

“I jump at any sound and start looking for shelter,” she says.

The worst, she said, are thunderstorms and the sound of the Israeli warplanes that regularly violate and fly low through Lebanon’s airspace.

“A few nights ago, when planes were roaming above Beirut, I slept in the corridor,” she said. “This way I am halfway from my kids’ room, I can grab them faster and run just in case.”

Fadel saw a therapist for a while. Many others don’t get help.

“There are a lot of people neglecting their mental health or don’t know what to do,” said Souraya Frem, president and co-founder of Cenacle De Lumiere, an organization that after the explosion began offering free mental health support in Beirut.

“People are struggling with poverty, how to make ends meet and so they don’t see mental health as a priority,” Frem said.

From Perth, Australia, where she moved after the blast, Sarah Copland said she has been seeing two therapists to cope with her loss.

In the explosion, a shard of glass tore through the tiny chest of her 2-year-old son, Isaac, ending his short life. That day, she said, her life came to a standstill.

“My last image of my little boy is something a mother should never see,” she said. “That comes into my mind when I least expect it — we are going to do something, and it comes. It is very distressing.”

At the time, Copland was employed by the U.N. in Beirut. Thousands of miles from Lebanon, the memory haunts her.

“The sight or sound of broken glass gives me anxiety,” she said. “Lying in bed at night I hear the wind against the windows and that really freaks me out. I freeze up because it reminds of the whishing sound as the explosion came through our windows.”

Copland’s 2-month-old son Ethan keeps her going, she said, but the pain is deep. “Hearing children scream, even if it is in delight, takes me back to the hospital, to Isaac and to the children screaming in pain.”

Now in a temporary apartment outside Beirut, Joana Dagher decided to stay in Lebanon, despite the

thousands who are leaving.

"I want to be close to those I love, to my family and I will not let those politicians remove me from my home or my country, I will stay here to see justice," she said.

But like most survivors of that horrific day, there is a fear that never leaves her. "The fear of losing those I love is stronger than ever."

Vaccine skepticism lurks in town famous for syphilis study

By JAY REEVES Associated Press

TUSKEGEE, Ala. (AP) — Lucenia Dunn spent the early days of the coronavirus pandemic encouraging people to wear masks and keep a safe distance from each other in Tuskegee, a mostly Black city where the government once used unsuspecting African American men as guinea pigs in a study of a sexually transmitted disease.

Now, the onetime mayor of the town immortalized as the home of the infamous "Tuskegee syphilis study" is wary of getting inoculated against COVID-19. Among other things, she's suspicious of the government promoting a vaccine that was developed in record time when it can't seem to conduct adequate virus testing or consistently provide quality rural health care.

"I'm not doing this vaccine right now. That doesn't mean I'm never going to do it. But I know enough to withhold getting it until we see all that is involved," said Dunn, who is Black.

The coronavirus immunization campaign is off to a shaky start in Tuskegee and other parts of Macon County. Area leaders point to a resistance among residents spurred by a distrust of government promises and decades of failed health programs. Many people in this city of 8,500 have relatives who were subjected to unethical government experimentation during the syphilis study.

"It does have an impact on decisions. Being in this community, growing up in this community, I would be very untruthful if I didn't say that," said Frank Lee, emergency management director in Macon County. Lee is Black.

Health experts have stressed both the vaccines' safety and efficacy. They have noted that while the vaccines were developed with record-breaking speed, they were based on decades of prior research. Vaccines used in the U.S. have shown no signs of serious side effects in studies of tens of thousands of people. And with more than 26 million vaccinations administered in the U.S. alone so far, no red flags have been reported.

Tuskegee is not a complete outlier. A recent survey conducted by the communications firm Edelman revealed that as of November, only 59% of people in the U.S. were willing to get vaccinated within a year with just 33% happy to do so as soon as possible.

But skepticism seems to run deeper here.

When Alabama and the rest of the South were still segregated by race, government medical workers starting in 1932 withheld treatment for unsuspecting men infected with syphilis in Tuskegee and surrounding Macon County so physicians could track the disease. The study, which involved about 600 men, ended in 1972 only after it was revealed by The Associated Press.

A lawsuit filed on behalf of the men by Black Tuskegee attorney Fred Gray resulted in a \$9 million settlement, and then-President Bill Clinton formally apologized on behalf of the U.S. government in 1997. But the damage left a legacy of distrust that extends far beyond Tuskegee: A December survey showed 40% of Black people nationwide said they wouldn't get the coronavirus vaccine. Such hesitancy is more entrenched than among white people, even though Black Americans have been hit disproportionately hard by the virus.

The Chicago-based Black nationalist group Nation of Islam is warning away members nationwide with an online presentation titled "Beyond Tuskegee: Why Black People Must Not Take The Experimental COVID-19 Vaccine."

Gray, now 90 and still practicing law in Tuskegee, rejects such comparisons. The syphilis study and the COVID-19 vaccine are completely different, he said. He believes that enough that he himself has gotten the vaccine and is publicly encouraging others to do the same.

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Georgette Moon is on a similar mission. Hoping to both protect herself and encourage skittish friends, the former city council member recently bared an arm and let a public health nurse immunize her. Now, Moon said, if only more fellow Black residents could overcome their lingering fears and get the vaccine.

"The study is a huge factor," Moon said. "I've had very qualified, well-educated people tell me they are not going to take it right now."

The Macon County health department, which is administering two-step Moderna vaccines in its modern building near downtown, could perform as many as 160 immunizations a day, officials said. But a maximum of 140 people received the vaccine on any single date during the first six days of appointments, with a total of 527 people immunized during the period. Health care workers, emergency responders and long-term care residents are currently eligible for shots in Alabama, along with people 75 and older.

There are some signs of hope. State statistics show a slow uptick in the number of people coming in for vaccinations, and word seems to be filtering through the community that it's OK to be vaccinated.

Down the street from the county clinic, the Veterans Affairs hospital in Tuskegee is vaccinating veterans 65 and older. While only 40% of the VA workers in the area have been vaccinated, officials said, more people are agreeing to the shots than during the initial wave.

"They know people who have had the vaccine, they hear more about it, they become more comfortable with it," said Dr. April Truett, an infectious disease physician at the hospital.

The Rev. John Curry Jr. said he and his wife took the shots after the health department said they could get appointments without a long wait. The pastor of the oldest Black church in town, Curry said he is encouraging congregants to get the vaccine.

Yet he said he also understands the power of lingering distrust in a town that will forever be linked to the syphilis study, one of the most reviled episodes of U.S. public health history.

"It's a blemish on Tuskegee," he said. "It hangs on the minds of people."

US watchdog: Taliban attacks increased in Afghan capital

By RAHIM FAIEZ Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — Taliban attacks in the Afghan capital of Kabul are on the rise, with increasing targeted killings of government officials, civil-society leaders and journalists, a report by a U.S. watchdog said Monday.

It comes as the Biden administration plans to take a new look at the peace agreement between the U.S. and the Taliban signed last February under President Donald Trump.

The report said Taliban-initiated attacks across Afghanistan during the last quarter of 2020 were slightly lower than in the previous quarter, but exceeded those of the same period in 2019, according to numbers provided by U.S. forces in Afghanistan.

"Enemy attacks in Kabul were higher than during the previous quarter," the report quoted U.S. forces. "They were much higher than in the same quarter last year."

The Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, known as SIGAR, monitors the billions of dollars the U.S. spends in war-ravaged Afghanistan.

The Taliban unleashed a wave of attacks in Afghanistan in December, including strikes in northern Baghlan and southern Uruzgan provinces over a two-day period that killed at least 19 members of the Afghan security forces. In Kabul, a roadside bomb struck a vehicle, wounding two, and a lawyer was shot in a targeted killing.

Resolute Support, the NATO-led mission in Afghanistan, reported 2,586 civilian casualties from Oct. 1 to Dec. 31 last year, including 810 killed and 1,776 wounded, according to the SIGAR report.

The report said the proportion of casualties caused by improvised explosive devices increased by nearly 17% in this quarter, correlating with an increase in magnetically attached IEDs or "sticky bomb" attacks, the report said.

Despite the ongoing violence, casualties across Afghanistan in the last quarter of 2020 decreased by 14%, compared to the previous quarter. The quarter saw an exceptionally high number of casualties for

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the winter months, however, when fighting normally subsides.

The U.S. has been the prime backer of the Afghan government since it invaded the country soon after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks and overthrew the Taliban, who were running the country and harboring al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden. The U.S. is still spending about \$4 billion a year to assist Afghan security forces.

The U.S. military said earlier this month that it had met its goal of reducing the number of troops in Afghanistan to about 2,500. Senior U.S. commanders are skeptical of the Taliban's stated commitment to peace, though they have said they can accomplish their mission in Afghanistan at that troop level.

"As the footprint of U.S. agencies continues to shrink, it will become more important that the U.S. and other donors perform aggressive and effective oversight of its dollars and programs," said Special Inspector General for Afghan Reconstruction John F. Sopko.

Corruption is rampant among Afghan government ministries, driving a wedge between the government and much of the population, frustrating international donors, and contributing to a poverty level in the country of more than 72%, according to the World Bank.

Also, recent international aid agency reports said that more than half of Afghans are in dire need of assistance just to survive 2021. The relentless corruption has alienated most Afghans caught between a war and relentless poverty, despite billions of dollars in international aid. By the end of 2020, Afghanistan's unemployment rate was projected to rise to 37.9%, up from 23.9% in 2019, said the report.

Taliban representatives and the Afghan government earlier this month resumed peace talks in Qatar, the Gulf Arab state where the insurgents maintain an office. The stop-and-go talks are aimed at ending decades of conflict but frustration and fear have grown over the recent spike in violence, and both sides blame one another.

U.S. airstrikes increased in the last quarter of 2020 as U.S. forces provided defensive support to Afghan security forces, according to the U.S. military. It reiterated that since the signing of the U.S.-Taliban deal, U.S. forces have ceased offensive strikes against the Taliban.

The White House said that President Joe Biden's national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, told his Afghan counterpart in a phone call last week that the new administration will "review" the February agreement between the U.S. and the Taliban.

Pentagon chief spokesman John Kirby said last week that the U.S. stands by its commitment under the deal for a full troop withdrawal, but the agreement also calls for the Taliban to cut ties with al-Qaida and reduce violence.

The authorized goal strength of Afghan defense forces has been adjusted downward to 208,000 personnel, the SIGAR report said. It had been roughly 227,000 for many years.

Afghan special forces conducted the highest number of ground operations in the last quarter of 2020 in more than a year, NATO said. The 1,152 ground operations were nearly double the number conducted during the same period last year, reflecting a 4% increase compared to the previous quarter.

Trump names 2 lawyers to impeachment defense team

By ERIC TUCKER and JILL COLVIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Former President Donald Trump announced a new impeachment legal defense team just one day after it was revealed that he had parted ways with an earlier set of attorneys with just over a week to go before his Senate trial.

The two representing Trump will be defense lawyer David Schoen, a frequent television legal commentator, and Bruce Castor, a former district attorney in Pennsylvania who has faced criticism for his decision to not charge actor Bill Cosby in a sex crimes case.

Both attorneys issued statements through Trump's office on Sunday saying that they were honored to take the job.

"The strength of our Constitution is about to be tested like never before in our history. It is strong and resilient. A document written for the ages, and it will triumph over partisanship yet again, and always," said Castor, who served as district attorney for Montgomery County, outside of Philadelphia, from 2000 to 2008.

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The announcement was intended to promote a sense of stability surrounding the Trump defense team as his impeachment trial nears. The former president has struggled to hire and retain attorneys willing to represent him against charges that he incited the deadly riot at the U.S. Capitol, which happened when a mob of loyalists stormed Congress as lawmakers met Jan. 6 to certify Joe Biden's electoral victory.

That's a contrast from his first impeachment trial, when Trump's high-profile team of attorneys included Alan Dershowitz, one of the best-known criminal defense lawyers in the country, as well as White House counsel Pat Cipollone, and Jay Sekulow, who has argued cases before the Supreme Court.

Trump's team had initially announced that Butch Bowers, a South Carolina lawyer, would lead his legal team after an introduction from Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham. But that team unraveled over the week-end due to differences over legal strategy.

One person familiar with their thinking said Bowers and another South Carolina lawyer, Deborah Barbier, left the team because Trump wanted them to use a defense that relied on allegations of election fraud, and the lawyers were not willing to do so. The person was not authorized to speak publicly about the situation and requested anonymity.

Republicans and aides to Trump, the first president to be impeached twice in American history, have made clear that they intend to make a simple argument in the trial: Trump's trial, scheduled for the week of Feb. 8, is unconstitutional because he is no longer in office.

"The Democrats' efforts to impeach a president who has already left office is totally unconstitutional and so bad for our country," Trump adviser Jason Miller has said.

Many legal scholars, however, say there is no bar to an impeachment trial despite Trump having left the White House. One argument is that state constitutions that predate the U.S. Constitution allowed impeachment after officials left office. The Constitution's drafters also did not specifically bar the practice.

Castor, a Republican who was the elected district attorney of Pennsylvania's third-most populated county, decided against charging Cosby in a 2004 sexual encounter. He ran for the job again in 2015, and his judgment in the Cosby case was a key issue used against him by the Democrat who defeated him.

Castor has said that he personally thought Cosby should have been arrested, but that the evidence wasn't strong enough to prove the case beyond a reasonable doubt.

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Schoen met with financier Jeffrey Epstein about joining his defense team on sex trafficking charges just days before Epstein killed himself in a New York jail.

In an interview with the Atlanta Jewish Times last year, Schoen said he had also been approached by Trump associate Roger Stone before Stone's trial about being part of the team and that he was later retained to handle his appeal. Trump commuted Stone's sentence and then pardoned him. Schoen maintained in the interview that the case against Stone was "very unfair and politicized."

Neither Schoen nor Castor returned phone messages seeking comment Sunday evening.

Associated Press writers Marc Levy in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, and Michael Balsamo in Washington contributed to this report.

In early going, Biden floods the zone with decrees

By CALVIN WOODWARD Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Modern American presidents have found that a good way to get off to a fast start in office is to issue decrees like an ancient king.

With a pen as their scepter, they "hereby proclaim." They "order," "direct," "revoke" and "declare," rendering commandments in regal language drawn from the deep past. President Joe Biden is flooding the zone with them, achieving head-snapping changes in national policy that he would have no hope of getting

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from Congress quickly, if at all.

Easy come, though, can also mean easy go. As President Donald Trump discovered with his hard-charging and often ill-fated executive actions, courts can be quick to shoot them down. Congress can effectively override them and at most they're only good until a contrarian president takes over and whipsaws off in another direction again.

Can transgender troops have a life in the armed forces? Not openly under Trump. Under Biden, yes they can. Under who comes next, who knows?

For now, though, the lumbering government is seeing change at light speed.

In Biden's opening days, he put the U.S. back into the Paris climate accord, ended Trump's restrictions on travel from some Muslim-majority countries, froze further construction of Trump's border wall, protected immigrants who were brought to the U.S. illegally as children, and reversed Trump's rollback of energy efficiency and pollution standards. That's just a sampling.

Altogether, Biden has brought a transformation both in tone and substance in the earliest days of his presidency. After the bellowing, never-self-questioning Trump, almost anyone would.

Twitter is a dead zone now for seeing what's on a president's mind in the moment. Things are being heard from the Oval Office that are foreign to our ears in recent times: "Correct me if I'm wrong." "How can I say it politely?" "I misspoke." Wearing a mask is mandated on federal property and encouraged everywhere; meantime the gags have come off the government's top public health scientists.

But Biden's expressions of humility and his common courtesies only go so far. When it comes to dismantling a predecessor's legacy with the stroke of a pen and the words "I have hereunto set my hand," Biden is off to a fierce start and, like many before him, testing the limits of what a president can do by decree.

"A lot of what he has done has been unwinding what Trump had done," said Kenneth Mayer, a University of Wisconsin-Madison political scientist and expert on presidential powers and executive actions. "Virtually all presidents push the envelope and do things that expand the scope of executive authority."

President Barack Obama struck a multinational nuclear deal with Iran and shaped and joined the Paris accord without Congress signing on, using the recognized authority of presidents to make international deals but leaving those moves vulnerable without the assent of lawmakers. Trump withdrew the U.S. from both.

Unable to get Congress to pass immigration legislation, Obama unilaterally shielded young immigrants from deportation, leaving nothing in law to guarantee their protections would last.

For most of his first year in office, until his tax cuts passed in late 2017, Trump chalked up no major legislative achievements despite having Republican control of Congress at the time. He did not score many big wins in law after, either, beyond budget agreements. But he was relentless with executive actions.

"Every president looks for those opportunities," Mayer said. "What Trump did was take the brakes off and do things that previous presidents had not done. He was enamored of his own powers. He was unusually aggressive and didn't respect the norm-based limits of what presidents ought to do.

"A lot of it was really quite sloppy," he added. "Shockingly incompetent."

Trump's orders to restrict entry from some Muslim countries were repeatedly blocked by federal judges until a weakened version passed muster at the Supreme Court. He declared a national emergency when no nationally recognized one existed at the southern border, allowing him to redirect some money already approved by Congress, but for other purposes, to his border wall.

Then there were the federal lands and waters that past presidents had acted to protect from development. Trump had his eye on them.

"For over 100 years, it was the accepted meaning of declaring national monuments that it was a one-way door," Mayer said. "You couldn't undeclare a national monument." But that custom shattered in 2017 with Trump's executive action to review or shrink the protected status of vast acres of national monument lands.

Biden moved to counter that with an order of his own. But his rollout of executive actions several months in the making has not been entirely smooth.

In Texas, a federal judge issued a temporary restraining order barring the government from enforcing a 100-day deportation moratorium on most deportations, ruling the new administration had failed to provide

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"any concrete, reasonable justification" for it.

Biden has acknowledged the limits of his early course of unilateralism as he gears up for heavy lifts with Congress on pandemic relief and his ambitious legislative agenda. Merely ruling by "executive fiat," he said, would "get us virtually nowhere."

Republicans growled about Biden's busy signature pen, voicing the standard complaint about presidential overreach that comes from whichever party is out of power in the White House.

Biden was a bit testy about the pushback when he was asked if Congress might require him to send the pandemic relief package in chunks instead of as a whole. "No one requires me to do anything," he said with a monarchical flourish.

Biden burst out of the gate with several dozen executive actions. It remains to be seen whether he'll surpass the unilateralism of Trump, who signed an average of 55 executive orders a year, the most in any single term since Jimmy Carter, who averaged 80 a year.

On this front, the king among presidents is Franklin Roosevelt, who signed 307 a year on average and paired that activism with towering legislation steering the country through depression and war.

If executive action is often fleeting, legislation is anything but.

Although there's no permanence in anything Washington does, hard-won legislation typically sinks deep roots. So it has been with "Obamacare," the law Republicans swore to upend from the start but never could.

Trump's first executive order, on the day of his inauguration, was directed squarely at unraveling the Affordable Care Act. But presidential decree could not take away what Congress had ordained, and neither could repeated efforts by Republican lawmakers to vote it out of existence.

Biden had an executive order on that matter, too. On Thursday he ordered the law's health insurance markets to reopen for a special sign-up window, giving the uninsured a chance to find coverage in a raging pandemic after the Trump administration had refused to take that step.

He ordered his administration in the same document to examine other Trump health care policies that he may nullify, like certain work requirements for Medicaid and curbs on abortion counselling.

It's all an effort to "undo the damage Trump has done," Biden said, and to restore things "which by fiat he changed."

Now, across the range of public policy, fiat chases fiat.

Biden to meet with GOP lawmakers to discuss virus relief

By AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden is set to meet Monday afternoon with a group of 10 Republican senators who have proposed spending about one-third of the \$1.9 trillion he is seeking in coronavirus aid, though congressional Democrats are poised to move ahead without Republican support.

An invitation to the White House came hours after the lawmakers sent Biden a letter Sunday urging him to negotiate rather than try to ram through his relief package solely on Democratic votes. The House and Senate are on track to vote as soon as this week on a budget resolution, which would lay the groundwork for passing an aid package under rules requiring only a simple majority vote in the closely divided Senate.

The goal is for passage by March, when extra unemployment assistance and other pandemic aid expires. The meeting to be hosted by Biden would amount to the most public involvement for the president in the negotiations for the next round of virus relief. Democratic and Republican lawmakers are far apart in their proposals for assistance.

White House press secretary Jen Psaki said Sunday that Biden had spoken with the leader of the group, Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine. Though Biden is wanting "a full exchange of views," Psaki reiterated that the president remains in favor of moving forward with a far-reaching relief package.

"With the virus posing a grave threat to the country, and economic conditions grim for so many, the need for action is urgent, and the scale of what must be done is large," Psaki said.

In challenging Biden to fulfill his pledge of unity, the group said in its letter that its counterproposal will include \$160 billion for vaccines, testing, treatment and personal protective equipment and call for more targeted relief than Biden's plan to issue \$1,400 stimulus checks for most Americans.

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Winning the support of 10 Republicans would be significant for Biden in the 50-50 Senate where Vice President Kamala Harris is the tie-breaker. If all Democrats were to back an eventual compromise bill, the legislation would reach the 60-vote threshold necessary to overcome potential blocking efforts and pass under regular Senate procedures.

"In the spirit of bipartisanship and unity, we have developed a COVID-19 relief framework that builds on prior COVID assistance laws, all of which passed with bipartisan support," the Republican senators wrote. "Our proposal reflects many of your stated priorities, and with your support, we believe that this plan could be approved quickly by Congress with bipartisan support."

The plea for Biden to give bipartisan negotiations more time comes as the president has shown signs of impatience as the more liberal wing of his party considers passing the relief package through a process known as budget reconciliation. That would allow the bill to advance with only the backing of his Democratic majority.

The Republicans did not provide many details of their proposal. One of the signatories, Louisiana Sen. Bill Cassidy, said that it would cost about \$600 billion.

"If you can't find bipartisan compromise on COVID-19, I don't know where you can find it," said Ohio Sen. Rob Portman, who also signed the letter.

But even as Biden extended the invitation to the Republican lawmakers, Psaki said that \$1,400 relief checks, substantial funding for reopening schools, aid to small businesses and hurting families, and more "is badly needed."

"As leading economists have said, the danger now is not in doing too much: it is in doing too little," Psaki said. "Americans of both parties are looking to their leaders to meet the moment."

Biden also spoke on Sunday with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, who are facing a growing push from the more liberal Democratic members to move forward with Biden's legislation with or without Republican support.

The other GOP senators invited to meet with Biden are Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, Mitt Romney of Utah, Shelley Moore Capito of West Virginia, Todd Young of Indiana, Jerry Moran of Kansas, Mike Rounds of South Dakota, and Thom Tillis of North Carolina.

Brian Deese, the top White House economic adviser who is leading the administration's outreach to Congress, said earlier Sunday that administration officials were reviewing the letter. He did not immediately commit to a Biden meeting with the lawmakers.

But Cedric Richmond, a senior Biden adviser, said the president "is very willing to meet with anyone to advance the agenda." When asked about the senators' plan, Richmond said, "This is about seriousness of purpose."

Deese indicated the White House could be open to negotiating on further limiting who would receive stimulus checks. Portman suggested the checks should go to individuals who make no more than \$50,000 per year and families capped at \$100,000 per year.

Under the Biden plan, families with incomes up to \$300,000 could receive some stimulus money.

"That is certainly a place that we're willing to sit down and think about, are there ways to make the entire package more effective?" Deese said.

As a candidate, Biden predicted his decades in the Senate and his eight years as Barack Obama's vice president gave him credibility as a deal-maker and would help him bring Republicans and Democrats to consensus on the most important matters facing the country.

But less than two weeks into his presidency, Biden showed frustration with the pace of negotiations at a time when the economy exhibited further evidence of wear from the pandemic. Last week, 847,000 Americans applied for unemployment benefits, a sign that layoffs remain high as the coronavirus pandemic continues to rage.

"I support passing COVID relief with support from Republicans if we can get it. But the COVID relief has to pass — no ifs, ands or buts," Biden said on Friday.

In the letter, the Republican lawmakers reminded Biden that in his inaugural address, he proclaimed that the challenges facing the nation require "the most elusive of things in a democracy: Unity."

Cassidy separately criticized the current Biden plan as “chock-full of handouts and payoffs to Democratic constituency groups.”

“You want the patina of bipartisanship ... so that’s not unity,” Cassidy said.

Jared Bernstein, a member of the White House Council of Economic Advisers, said Biden remains willing to negotiate but that officials needed to see more details from Republicans. At the same time, Bernstein pressed the administration’s argument that doing too little to stimulate the economy could have enormous impact on the economy in the near- and long-term.

“Look, the American people really couldn’t care less about budget process, whether it’s regular order, bipartisanship, whether it’s filibuster, whether it’s reconciliation,” Bernstein said. “They need relief, and they need it now.”

Portman and Deese were on CNN’s “State of the Union,” and Deese also was interviewed on NBC’s “Meet the Press.” Cassidy and Bernstein appeared on “Fox News Sunday” and Richmond was on CBS’ “Face the Nation.”

Trump names 2 lawyers to impeachment defense team

By ERIC TUCKER and JILL COLVIN Associated Press

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That’s a contrast from his first impeachment trial, when Trump’s high-profile team of attorneys included Alan Dershowitz, one of the best-known criminal defense lawyers in the country, as well as White House counsel Pat Cipollone, and Jay Sekulow, who has argued cases before the Supreme Court.

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Neither Schoen nor Castor returned phone messages seeking comment Sunday evening.

Associated Press writers Marc Levy in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, and Michael Balsamo in Washington contributed to this report.

The Latest: Lockdown in Perth, Australia reaches 5 days

By The Associated Press undefined

PERTH, Australia — The city of Perth has been locked down for five days after Western Australia state's first case of local COVID-19 infection in almost 10 months.

The city of 2 million people and coastal towns to the south were locked down from Sunday night until Friday night.

This followed a security guard who worked at a Perth quarantine hotel contracting a highly contagious British variant of the virus. Overseas travelers who arrive in Perth must isolate in hotel quarantine for 14 days.

The last previous known case of someone being infected with COVID-19 within Western Australia was on April 11.

Western Australia, Australia's largest state by area, has remained virus-free for months by enforcing the nation's toughest border restrictions in an elimination strategy. Those within the state have enjoyed some of Australia's least restrictive pandemic measures because of the low risk.

All Perth residents must stay at home unless shopping for essentials, attending to medical needs, exercising within their neighborhood or working if unable to do so remotely.

Schools which were due to resume on Monday will remain closed for another week.

THE VIRUS OUTBREAK:

- Thousands flout virus restrictions at Israel funerals
- Anxiety grows as long-term facilities await COVID-19 vaccines
- Fans who've been to every Super Bowl making plans again this year
- Even if schools reopen by late April, millions of students, many of them minorities in urban areas, may be left out.
- A World Health Organization team looking into the origins of the coronavirus pandemic is visiting a market in the Chinese city of Wuhan
- The U.S. is backing off for now on a plan to offer COVID-19 vaccinations to the 40 prisoners held at the detention center at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

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HERE'S WHAT ELSE IS HAPPENING:

JERUSALEM -- The Israeli Cabinet has voted to extend a nationwide lockdown for at least five more days as it struggles to bring a raging coronavirus outbreak under control.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office announced early Monday that the restrictions, which have forced nonessential businesses and most schools to remain closed for the past month, will remain in effect until at least Friday. A ban on nearly all incoming and outgoing flights will remain in effect for another week.

The Cabinet is to meet on Wednesday to decide whether to extend the restrictions even longer.

Israel has launched one of the world's most aggressive vaccination campaigns, inoculating more than one-third of its population in just one month.

But the vaccine has had little effect so far in controlling the outbreak, which has spread quickly with the arrival of foreign variants of the coronavirus and continued violations of lockdown restrictions. Thousands of ultra-Orthodox Israelis thronged a pair of funerals Sunday, defying a ban on large public gatherings.

Israel, a country of 9.3 million people, has been reporting an average of some 6,000 new cases of the coronavirus each day, one of the highest infection rates in the developed world. The Health Ministry says nearly 4,800 people have died since the beginning of the pandemic.

LOS ANGELES -- California on Sunday reported another 481 coronavirus deaths, a day after the statewide death toll topped 40,000 even as the rates of new infections and hospitalizations continue to fall.

The state said that the number of people in the hospital with COVID-19 slipped below 14,850 — a drop of more than 25% in two weeks.

The 18,974 new confirmed cases are about one-third the mid-December peak of 54,000.

With hospitalizations and confirmed cases falling, health officials are optimistic that the worst of the latest surge is over.

Deaths remain staggeringly high, however, with more than 3,800 in the last week.

It took six months for California to record its first 10,000 deaths, then four months to double to 20,000. In just five more weeks the state reached 30,000. It then took only 20 days to get to 40,000. On Sunday deaths rose to 40,697, while total cases topped 3.2 million.

NEW YORK — New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio is acknowledging that Black and Latino New Yorkers are receiving COVID-19 vaccines at far lower rates than white or Asian residents.

Data released by the city's health department shows that 48% of the city residents who have gotten at least one vaccine dose are white. That's far higher than the roughly one-third the city's population that is non-Hispanic white.

Just 11% of vaccine doses administered to New York City residents went to Black people and 15% to Latinos. The vaccine numbers are incomplete because about 40% of people who have been vaccinated in the city haven't provided demographic information.

Still, the figures mirror vaccination data from other cities and states.

"Clearly, we do see a profound disparity that needs to be addressed aggressively and creatively," de Blasio said in a conference call with reporters. "We've got a profound problem of distrust and hesitancy, particularly in communities of color."

BOSTON — Businesses like gyms, movie theaters, museums and sight-seeing harbor cruises can resume Monday in Boston under its coronavirus pandemic reopening plan.

The businesses can reopen, following a 25% capacity limit, given the improvement in the number of COVID-19 cases and in the city's positivity rate.

Other sites include aquariums, indoor recreational venues with the potential for low contact, such as

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batting cages and bowling alleys, and gaming arcades.

"While there has been some improvement in recent weeks, it's still vital that everyone remains vigilant," Mayor Marty Walsh said in a statement last week.

LIMA, Peru — Peru began what was supposed to be a severe lockdown Sunday to combat surging COVID-19, but the order was widely ignored in the nation's capital.

President Francisco Sagasti went on television urging Peruvians "to make an extra effort to contain the growing wave of infections and deaths." His government told people in the capital and nine other regions to limit trips outside the home to 60 minutes and it closed churches, gymnasiums, museums, libraries and other institutions.

But marketplaces were crowded. Even some bus drivers ignored mandatory face mask rules. Seventy percent of Peruvians have no income if they stay home. The government says it will give \$165 each to 4 million families — but only after the two-week quarantine.

Hundreds of people crowded bus stations in Lima to head for less-restricted rural regions before terminals close later this week. Flights from Brazil and Europe have been cancelled.

Lima Police Chief Jorge Angulo said his agency would try to enforce restrictions, and he noted that 540 of his officers already have died of the virus.

The country of 33 million people has recorded more than 1 million infections and more than 40,000 deaths from COVID-19.

THE HAGUE, Netherlands — Dutch elementary schools and childcare centers will reopen from a weeks-long coronavirus lockdown on Feb. 8.

The government announced the move Sunday following guidance from a team of experts that advises on policies to tackle the pandemic that has killed just over 14,000 in the Netherlands.

Education Minister Arie Slob says, "it's a relief that the schools can open again. For parents and teachers but, of course, especially for the students."

The Netherlands, which has been in a tough lockdown since mid-December and under a 9 p.m. to 4:30 a.m. curfew for just over a week, has seen rates of infections fall slowly in recent weeks, but the government remains concerned that new, more transmissible variants are gaining ground and will lead to a new rise in infections.

The education ministry says that when classrooms open again, any child with symptoms of COVID-19 will have to stay home, and if a student tests positive the whole class will have to go into isolation.

No date has been set for a reopening of high schools.

ATHENS, Greece — Greek authorities have confirmed the first detection of the South African variant of the new coronavirus in the country, prompting top health officials to fly to the area where it was found for meetings on Sunday.

The minister leading the government response to the pandemic and the head of the country's public health body met with doctors and the local bishop in the northern city of Thessaloniki. The variant is believed to be more contagious than the original type and it was detected in a 36-year-old deacon in a suburb of the city.

"We will be doing screenings to isolate the persons who have been in contact with the patient," said Panayiotis Arkoumanas, head of the National Public Health Organization.

There have also been 173 cases of people affected with a variant first detected in the U.K., authorities said Sunday.

Authorities announced 484 new cases of coronavirus on Saturday, as well as 17 deaths. The total number of confirmed cases since the start of the pandemic is 156,957, with 5,796 fatalities.

Experts warn there could be a resurgence in February and March and say the situation will remain volatile until a large number of vulnerable people are vaccinated.

"The virus is playing the drums and we are dancing to its beat," said Nikos Sipsas, member of the state

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advisory committee on the pandemic.

ROME — For the first time in weeks, the number of daily new admissions of COVID-19 patients to intensive care wards in Italy has dipped below 100, according to the Health Ministry's figures on Sunday.

The total number of COVID-19 ill in ICU beds nationwide stood at 2,215. While that number is far lower than the nearly 4,000 patients receiving intensive care in any day in late November, Italy has been struggling with a surge of coronavirus infections since autumn.

With 88,516 known dead, Italy has Europe's second-highest known toll, after Britain's. Italy, a nation of 60 million, has registered more than 2.5 million confirmed infections in the pandemic.

BRUSSELS — Belgian protesters denouncing coronavirus restrictions staged a demonstration on Sunday in central Brussels and local media say police arrested about 300 people who tried to join the unauthorized action.

Brussels police on Twitter repeatedly called on people not to gather and later dispersed the demonstration, which ended peacefully.

Authorities had warned that riots in the Netherlands over coronavirus restrictions could spark similar protests in neighboring Belgium.

Belgium's tough lockdown includes a 9 p.m. curfew and a ban on nonessential travel in and out of the country, which has had one of Europe's worst outbreaks.

Authorities have reported over 21,000 confirmed virus deaths in a nation of 11 million.

HARTFORD, Conn. — A top Connecticut official says that COVID-19 vaccines have been administered to enough nursing home residents in the state to potentially stop the transmission of the virus among those residents.

Josh Geballe, chief operating officer for the state, said Saturday that Connecticut nursing homes are reporting that 90% to 100% of residents have received at least the first of two vaccine shots.

He said the number of weekly COVID-19 cases in nursing homes has declined by 66% in the last three weeks. Geballe said some vaccine doses that had been earmarked for nursing homes are being reallocated to hospitals and retail sites.

LISBON, Portugal -- Portugal on Sunday reported 9,498 new cases and 303 more deaths as the country battles a raging surge in new coronavirus infections.

The figures came as Portugal and Spain began applying border restrictions for a period of two weeks. Portugal is in lockdown and has banned all nonessential travel abroad for its citizens.

The country has had the world's worst rate of new daily cases and deaths per 100,000 population for more than a week, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University.

Portuguese health authorities say total fatalities are now at 12,482 and the total number of cases has surpassed 720,500.

Virus patients in hospitals, many of which are close to full, are at 6,694.

Experts say the peak of the latest surge in Portugal may not come until mid-February, as a fast-spreading variant first identified in Britain takes hold.

BEIJING — China recorded more than 2,000 new domestic cases of COVID-19 in January, the highest monthly total since the tail end of the initial outbreak in Wuhan in March of last year.

The National Health Commission said Sunday that 2,016 cases were reported from Jan. 1-30. That does not include another 435 infected people who arrived from abroad. The tally for Jan. 31 is due to be released Monday.

Two people have died in January, the first reported COVID deaths in China in several months.

Most of the new cases have been in three northern provinces. Hardest-hit Hebei province, which borders

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Beijing, has reported more than 900 cases. Beijing, the Chinese capital, has itself had 45 cases this month.

The numbers, while low compared to many other countries, have prompted officials to tighten restrictions and strongly discourage people from traveling during the Lunar New Year, a major holiday when people typically return home for family reunions.

Train trips were down nearly 75 percent in the first three days of the holiday travel season, the official Xinhua News Agency said Sunday, citing the state railway company.

Thousands join in Jerusalem funerals, flout pandemic rules

By ILAN BEN ZION Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Thousands of ultra-Orthodox Israelis thronged a pair of funerals for two prominent rabbis in Jerusalem on Sunday, flouting the country's ban on large public gatherings during the pandemic.

The initial funeral procession, for Rabbi Meshulam Soloveitchik, who died at age 99, wended its way through the streets of Jerusalem in the latest display of ultra-Orthodox Israelis' refusal to honor coronavirus restrictions.

The phenomenon has undermined the country's aggressive vaccination campaign to bring a raging outbreak under control and threatened to hurt Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in March elections. Two challengers accused Netanyahu of failing to enforce the law due to political pressure from his ultra-Orthodox political allies.

Densely packed throngs of people gathered outside the rabbi's home, ignoring restrictions on outdoor gatherings of more than 10 people. Many did not wear masks. Thousands of black-garbed ultra-Orthodox funeral-goers coursed past the city's main entrance toward the cemetery where Soloveitchik was to be buried. A handful of police officers blocked intersections to traffic to allow participants to pass, but appeared to take no action to prevent the illegal assembly.

Israeli media said Soloveitchik, a leading religious scholar who headed a number of well-known seminaries, had recently suffered from COVID-19.

Later Sunday, thousands of ultra-Orthodox mourners attended the funeral of another respected rabbi, Yitzhok Scheiner, once again flouting the lockdown rules. Scheiner, 98, also died from COVID-19, reports said.

Alon Halfon, a Jerusalem police official, told Channel 13 TV that police had little choice but to allow the massive procession for Soloveitchik to proceed. He said police action had helped reduce the crowd size and that some 100 tickets were issued for health violations. But in such a densely packed environment, with children among the crowd, attempting to disperse the crowd would have been "unwise and dangerous."

Israel's Health Ministry has recorded over 640,000 confirmed cases of the coronavirus and at least 4,745 deaths since the start of the pandemic.

Israel has recently been averaging over 6,000 confirmed cases of the coronavirus each day, one of the highest infection rates in the developing world. At the same time, Israel has vaccinated over 3 million of its citizens, also one of the highest rates per capita in the world.

Health experts say it could take several weeks for the vaccination campaign to have an effect on infection and hospitalization rates. The Israeli Cabinet voted late Sunday to extend a nationwide lockdown until at least Friday, and possibly longer. The government imposed the movement restrictions and closure of schools and non-essential businesses last month in an effort to clamp down on Israel's runaway pandemic.

The Cabinet also said a ban on virtually all incoming and outgoing air traffic would remain in effect another week.

A disproportionate number of Israel's coronavirus cases are within the country's ultra-Orthodox minority. The strictly religious community, which makes up around 11% of Israel's 9.2 million people, has been accounting for about 40% of the new cases.

Many ultra-Orthodox sects have kept schools, seminaries and synagogues open, and held mass weddings and funerals in violation of lockdown restrictions that have closed schools and many businesses in other parts of the country. Recent weeks have seen violent clashes between members of the ultra-Orthodox

community flouting the rules and police officers trying to enforce them.

Ultra-Orthodox leaders say they have been unfairly singled out and argue the country's secular public does not understand the importance of public prayers and religious studies in their community. They claim the scofflaws are a small part of their diverse community, and blame crowded living conditions for the outbreak.

Netanyahu has long relied on ultra-Orthodox parties for support, and critics say he has refused to antagonize his allies ahead of critical elections. Without ultra-Orthodox support, it will be extremely difficult for Netanyahu to cobble together a governing coalition — especially as he seeks immunity from an ongoing corruption trial.

But there are signs that this alliance could become a liability due to widespread public anger over ultra-Orthodox behavior during the pandemic. A poll last week indicated that over 60% of Israelis do not want ultra-Orthodox parties to serve in the next coalition.

Sunday's funerals came a day after police used a water cannon to disperse anti-Netanyahu protesters near the prime minister's residence. And Israeli media showed police aggressively handing out fines to people violating the lockdown in Tel Aviv, drawing accusations that police were following double standards.

Gideon Saar, a right-wing Israeli politician challenging Netanyahu in the elections, criticized the prime minister on Twitter, saying "the pictures from Jerusalem prove that Netanyahu has given up on enforcing the law for political reasons. This won't happen in a government headed by me. There will be one law for all and it will be enforced."

Another challenger, Yair Lapid, leader of a centrist party appealing to middle class secular voters, said in a speech in parliament that he had nothing against the ultra-Orthodox or their parties.

"I have a big problem with someone who thinks the law doesn't apply to him," he said. "The law is for everyone."

Maine company successfully launches prototype rocket

By PATRICK WHITTLE Associated Press

BRUNSWICK, Maine (AP) — A Maine company that's developing a rocket to propel small satellites into space passed its first major test on Sunday.

Brunswick-based bluShift Aerospace launched a 20-foot (6-meter) prototype rocket, hitting an altitude of a little more than 4,000 feet (1,219 meters) in a first run designed to test the rocket's propulsion and control systems.

It carried a science project by Falmouth High School students that will measure flight metrics such as barometric pressure, a special alloy that's being tested by a New Hampshire company — and a Dutch dessert called stroopwafel, in an homage to its Amsterdam-based parent company. Organizers of the launch said the items were included to demonstrate the inclusion of a small payload.

The company, which launched from the northern Maine town of Limestone, the site of the former Loring Air Force Base, is one of dozens racing to find affordable ways to launch so-called nano satellites. Some of them, called Cube-Sats, can be as small as 10 centimeters by 10 centimeters.

Sascha Deri, chief executive officer of bluShift, said the company is banking on becoming a quicker, more efficient way of transporting satellites to space.

"There's a lot of companies out there that are like freight trains to space," Deri said. "We are going to be the Uber to space, where we carry one, two or three payloads profitably."

Another aspect that makes bluShift's rocket different is its hybrid propulsion system.

It relies on a solid fuel and a liquid oxidizer passing either through or around the solid fuel; the result is a simpler, more affordable system than a liquid fuel-only rocket, said spokesperson Seth Lockman. The fuel is a proprietary biofuel blend sourced from farms, Deri said.

"It's a very nontoxic fuel, I like to say that I could give it to either one of my little daughters. Nothing bad would happen to them, I swear," he said. "So it's very much nontoxic. It's carbon neutral."

The goal is to create a small rocket that could launch a 30-kilogram (66-pound) payload into low-Earth

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orbit, more than 100 miles (160 kilometers) above Earth's surface. Lockman said orbit could be possible by 2024.

The company has spent \$800,000 on research and development, with some of the money coming from NASA.

Representatives from bluShift said they don't anticipate being able to launch from Brunswick, where they are headquartered, because of population density in the area.

An attempted test launch in Limestone earlier in January was postponed because of weather. Sunday's launch was also held back by a couple of false starts, but event organizers described the eventual 3 p.m. liftoff as "perfect."

Associated Press journalist Cody Jackson contributed to this report from Miami.

Over 5,100 arrested at pro-Navalny protests across Russia

By JIM HEINTZ and VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — Chanting slogans against President Vladimir Putin, tens of thousands took to the streets Sunday across Russia to demand the release of jailed opposition leader Alexei Navalny, keeping up nationwide protests that have rattled the Kremlin. More than 5,100 people were detained by police, according to a monitoring group, and some were beaten.

The massive protests came despite efforts by Russian authorities to stem the tide of demonstrations after tens of thousands rallied across the country last weekend in the largest, most widespread show of discontent that Russia had seen in years. Despite threats of jail terms, warnings to social media groups and tight police cordons, the protests again engulfed cities across Russia's 11 time zones on Sunday.

Navalny's team quickly called another protest in Moscow for Tuesday, when he is set to face a court hearing that could send him to prison for years.

The 44-year-old Navalny, an anti-corruption investigator who is Putin's best-known critic, was arrested on Jan. 17 upon returning from Germany, where he spent five months recovering from nerve-agent poisoning that he blames on the Kremlin. Russian authorities have rejected the accusations. He was arrested for allegedly violating his parole conditions by not reporting for meetings with law enforcement when he was recuperating in Germany.

The United States urged Russia to release Navalny and criticized the crackdown on protests.

"The U.S. condemns the persistent use of harsh tactics against peaceful protesters and journalists by Russian authorities for a second week straight," U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Twitter.

The Russian Foreign Ministry rejected Blinken's call as "crude interference in Russia's internal affairs" and accused Washington of trying to destabilize the situation in the country by backing the protests.

On Sunday, police detained more than 5,100 people in cities nationwide, according to OVD-Info, a group that monitors political arrests, surpassing some 4,000 detentions at the demonstrations across Russia on Jan. 23.

In Moscow, authorities introduced unprecedented security measures in the city center, closing subway stations near the Kremlin, cutting bus traffic and ordering restaurants and stores to stay closed.

Navalny's team initially called for Sunday's protest to be held on Moscow's Lubyanka Square, home to the main headquarters of the Federal Security Service, which Navalny contends was responsible for his poisoning. Facing police cordons around the square, the protest shifted to other central squares and streets.

Police were randomly picking up people and putting them into police buses, but thousands of protesters marched across the city center for hours, chanting "Putin, resign!" and "Putin, thief!" — a reference to an opulent Black Sea estate reportedly built for the Russian leader that was featured in a widely popular video released by Navalny's team.

"I'm not afraid, because we are the majority," said protester Leonid Martynov. "We mustn't be scared by clubs because the truth is on our side."

At one point, crowds of demonstrators walked toward the Matrosskaya Tishina prison where Navalny is

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being held. They were met by phalanxes of riot police who pushed the march back and chased protesters through courtyards.

Demonstrators continued to march around the Russian capital, zigzagging around police cordons. Officers broke them into smaller groups and detained scores, beating some with clubs and occasionally using tasers.

Over 1,600 people were detained in Moscow, including Navalny's wife, Yulia, who was released after several hours pending a court hearing Monday on charges of taking part in an unsanctioned protest. "If we keep silent, they will come after any of us tomorrow," she said on Instagram before turning out to protest.

Amnesty International said that authorities in Moscow have arrested so many people that the city's detention facilities have run out of space. "The Kremlin is waging a war on the human rights of people in Russia, stifling protesters' calls for freedom and change," Natalia Zviagina, the group's Moscow office head, said in a statement.

Several thousand people marched across Russia's second-largest city of St. Petersburg, chanting "Down with the czar!" and occasional scuffles erupted as some demonstrators pushed back police who tried to make detentions. Over 1,100 were arrested.

Some of the biggest rallies were held in Novosibirsk and Krasnoyarsk in eastern Siberia and Yekaterinburg in the Urals.

"I do not want my grandchildren to live in such a country," said 55-year-old Vyacheslav Vorobyov, who turned out for a rally in Yekaterinburg. "I want them to live in a free country."

Swedish Foreign Minister Ann Linde, who currently chairs the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, condemned "the excessive use of force by authorities and mass detention of peaceful protesters and journalists" and urged Russia "to release all those unjustly detained, including Navalny."

As part of a multipronged effort by authorities to block the protests, courts have jailed Navalny's associates and activists across the country over the past week. His brother Oleg, top aide Lyubov Sobol and three other people were put under a two-month house arrest Friday on charges of allegedly violating coronavirus restrictions during last weekend's protests.

Prosecutors also demanded that social media platforms block calls to join the protests.

The Interior Ministry issued stern warnings to the public, saying protesters could be charged with taking part in mass riots, which carries a prison sentence of up to eight years.

Protests were fueled by a two-hour YouTube video released by Navalny's team after his arrest about the Black Sea residence purportedly built for Putin. The video has been viewed over 100 million times, inspiring a stream of sarcastic jokes on the internet amid an economic downturn.

Russia has seen extensive corruption during Putin's time in office while poverty has remained widespread. "All of us feel pinched financially, so people who take to the streets today feel angry," said Vladimir Perminov who protested in Moscow. "The government's rotation is necessary."

Demonstrators in Moscow chanted "Aqua discotheque!" — a reference to one of the fancy amenities at the residence that also features a casino and a hookah lounge equipped for watching pole dances.

Putin says neither he nor any of his close relatives own the property. On Saturday, construction magnate Arkady Rotenberg, a longtime Putin confidant and his occasional judo sparring partner, claimed that he himself owned the property.

Navalny fell into a coma on Aug. 20 while on a flight from Siberia to Moscow and the pilot diverted the plane so he could be treated in the city of Omsk. 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, claiming lack of evidence that he was poisoned.

Navalny was arrested immediately upon his return to Russia earlier this month and jailed for 30 days on the request of Russia's prison service, which alleged he had violated the probation of his suspended sentence from a 2014 money-laundering conviction that he has rejected as political revenge.

On Thursday, a Moscow court rejected Navalny's appeal to be released, and the hearing Tuesday could turn his 3 1/2-year suspended sentence into one he must serve in prison.

Carl Hiaasen retiring from Miami Herald after 35 years

MIAMI (AP) — Writer Carl Hiaasen is retiring from the Miami Herald after composing newspaper columns for the past 35 years, the newspaper says.

The Herald published a story this week saying that Hiaasen would be done after his last column on March 14. The 67-year-old Hiaasen said he no longer wants the pressure of a weekly deadline.

"I've been thinking about easing off as the years went by," Hiaasen told the Herald. "I was 23 when I started working there. I feel like I almost grew up in the newsroom. I also feel at this stage it's a good time to step away."

That's not to say that Hiaasen will stop writing. He said he plans to continue his book projects, which have ranged from comic novels such as "Tourist Season" and "Double Whammy" to children's titles such as "Hoot."

His latest book is "Squeeze Me," about the era of former President Donald Trump.

Hiaasen's friend and also longtime Herald columnist, Dave Barry, said it might not be easy for him to adjust.

"The hardest thing for Carl is going to be when the people of Florida, especially the elected officials, continue to do idiotic things and he can't talk about it. He'll have to deal with that," Barry said. "And it's going to be hard on his fans, who love him to death despite the fact that no one has ever been able to learn to spell his name correctly."

Hiaasen has seen his share of tragedy. His brother, Rob Hiaasen, was among the five people killed in the 2018 mass shooting at the Capital Gazette newspaper in Annapolis, Maryland. Rob Hiaasen was an editor at the paper.

Young men accuse Lincoln Project co-founder of harassment

By The Associated Press undefined

WASHINGTON (AP) — The influential anti-Donald Trump group Lincoln Project is denouncing one of its co-founders after multiple reports that over several years he sexually harassed young men looking to break into politics.

The Lincoln Project in a statement on Sunday called co-founder John Weaver, 61, "a predator, a liar, and an abuser" following reports that he repeatedly sent unsolicited and sexually charged messages online to young men, often while suggesting he could help them get work in politics.

"The totality of his deceptions are beyond anything any of us could have imagined and we are absolutely shocked and sickened by it," the Lincoln Project, the most prominent "Never Trump" Republican super PAC to emerge during the 45th president's time in the White House, said in its statement.

The online magazine The American Conservative first reported the sexual harassment allegations earlier this month.

Days later, Weaver, a strategist who advised the late Republican Sen. John McCain and former Ohio Gov. John Kasich in their unsuccessful runs for the White House, acknowledged in a statement to the web site Axios that he had sent "inappropriate" messages he "viewed as consensual, mutual conversations at the time."

The statement by Weaver came after several men had taken to social media to accuse him of sending sexually suggestive messages, sometimes coupled with offers of employment or political advancement.

The Lincoln Project made its most substantive comments about the mounting allegations against Weaver after The New York Times reported on Sunday that the paper had interviewed 21 men who said they had been harassed by Weaver.

One of the alleged victims told The Times he started receiving messages from Weaver when he was only 14. The messages became more pointed after he turned 18.

The Lincoln Project's other founders included 2012 Mitt Romney presidential adviser Stuart Stevens, former McCain and George W. Bush strategist Steve Schmidt, and GOP ad maker Rick Wilson.

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The group throughout the 2020 election cycle produced some of the most eviscerating broadsides against Trump, questioning the president and his aides' morality and leadership.

The Lincoln Project said in its statement that at "no time was John Weaver in the physical presence of any member" of the super PAC.

Weaver took medical leave from the Lincoln Project last summer. He told Axios earlier this month that he did not plan to return to the group.

Weaver did not immediately respond to a request for comment from The Associated Press.

VIRUS TODAY: GOP offers alternative COVID-19 relief plan

By The Associated Press undefined

Here's what's happening Sunday with the coronavirus pandemic in the U.S.:

THREE THINGS TO KNOW TODAY:

— A group of 10 Senate Republicans sent a letter to President Joe Biden calling for him to meet with them to negotiate over his proposed \$1.9 trillion coronavirus relief package. Their smaller counterproposal calls for \$160 billion for vaccines, testing, treatment and personal protective equipment and more targeted relief than the president's plan to issue \$1,400 stimulus checks for most Americans. Ohio Sen. Rob Portman suggested that the checks should be limited to individuals who make no more than \$50,000 per year and families who make \$100,000 per year.

— Biden wants most schools serving kindergarten through eighth grade students to reopen by late April, but even if that happens, millions of students, many of whom are minorities in urban areas, will be left out. Some argue powerful teachers unions are standing in the way of bringing back students with in-person learning, while the unions insist they are looking to protect the health and safety of teachers and students and their families. Dr. Anthony Fauci, the federal government's top infectious disease expert, said reopening K-8 classrooms might not be possible across the country within Biden's time frame.

— Frustration is growing at long-term care facilities over the pace of COVID-19 vaccination efforts. Some nursing homes are still waiting on first shots to fend off the virus that can devastate their vulnerable elderly residents. CVS and Walgreens, which have led the vaccination push in long-term care settings in nearly all states, say they are proceeding on schedule. But resident advocates and experts worry about delays in the delivery of vaccines that have been available for more than a month. Home operators and residents' relatives across the country have grown more irritated as states have opened vaccine eligibility to other populations before work is complete at long-term care homes.

THE NUMBERS: According to data through Jan. 30 from Johns Hopkins University, the seven-day rolling average for daily new deaths in the U.S. did not increase over the past two weeks, going from 3,335.3 on Jan. 16 to 3,141 on Jan. 30.

The average number of daily deaths has risen in the nation's three most populous states, according to the COVID Tracking Project. The seven-day rolling average of daily deaths in California has increased over the past two weeks from about 532 deaths per day on Jan. 16 to nearly 551 daily deaths on Jan. 30. Over the same period, Texas's rolling average of deaths each day has gone up from about 306 to 315, while Florida's has increased by nearly one additional daily death to 176. Cases have risen the highest over the past seven days in Arizona and South Carolina, where roughly 1 in 200 people in each state have been diagnosed with COVID-19.

QUOTABLE: "My hope is that the president will meet with us and we'll be able to work out something that is bipartisan," said Ohio Sen. Rob Portman, one of 10 GOP senators calling on President Joe Biden to negotiate with them over a new coronavirus aid package. Portman discussed the GOP proposal on CNN's "State of the Union."

ICYMI: Many states have had trouble distributing the coronavirus vaccine equitably. In North Carolina, Black people account for 22% of the population but 11% of first dose recipients, according to state data. 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. An Associated Press analysis shows Black people in several

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other parts of the U.S. are lagging behind whites in receiving COVID-19 vaccinations.

Captain Tom hospitalized for virus he raised money to fight

LONDON (AP) — Tom Moore, the 100-year-old World War II veteran who captivated the British public in the early days of the coronavirus pandemic with his fundraising efforts, has been hospitalized with COVID-19, his daughter said Sunday.

Hannah Ingram-Moore revealed in a statement posted on Twitter that her father, widely known as Captain Tom, has been admitted to Bedford Hospital because he needed “additional help” with his breathing.

She said that over the past few weeks her father had been treated for pneumonia and that he had tested positive for the coronavirus last week.

She said he is being treated in a ward, not in an intensive care unit.

“The medical care he has received in the last few weeks has been remarkable and we know that the wonderful staff at Bedford Hospital will do all they can to make him comfortable and hopefully return home as soon as possible,” she said.

Moore became an emblem of hope in the early weeks of the pandemic in April when he walked 100 laps around his garden in England for the National Health Service to coincide with his 100th birthday. Instead of the 1,000 pounds (\$1,370) aspiration, he raised around 33 million pounds (\$45 million).

Moore, who rose to the rank of captain while serving in India and Burma during the war, was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II in July for his fundraising efforts.

Best wishes came in from far and wide, including from British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who said in a tweet that Moore had “inspired the whole nation, and I know we are all wishing you a full recovery.”

Search is on for new leaders in journalism’s upper echelons

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The “help wanted” list for top management jobs in journalism is suddenly getting very long.

Searches for new leaders at brand names like The Washington Post, ABC News and the Los Angeles Times are coming at a time of rapid change in the news industry and increased attention paid to diversity in decision-making roles.

The two latest openings came this week when Marty Baron, the executive editor who transformed the Post over the past eight years, and ABC News President James Goldston both said they will step down over the next two months.

The Los Angeles Times is further along in its search for a successor to Executive Editor Norman Pearlstine. The Reuters news agency is looking to replace its editor-in-chief, Stephen Adler, who is retiring on April 1. HuffPost and Vox Media need leaders, too.

Dean Baquet, executive editor of The New York Times, is the subject of speculation, both because his job is the golden ring of journalism and he’s 64 years old. By tradition, the Times’ top editor steps down before reaching 66.

CNN chief Jeff Zucker, whose name was frequently invoked by former President Donald Trump during his administration’s battles with the media, is expected to announce soon whether or not he will move on.

Both Baron and Goldston cited the end of an intense election cycle and its exhaustive pace of news as a natural time to turn the page.

“It’s burnout on steroids,” said Joel Kaplan, associate dean for professional graduate studies at Syracuse University’s Newhouse School of Public Communications.

The moves offer news organizations a chance to anoint a new generation of leaders at a time the businesses need to be nimble and, following a reckoning brought on partly by society’s reaction to George Floyd’s death last spring, mindful of having a staff and stories that reflect their communities.

“What we’re going to have to do is really look at a lot of people who aren’t the usual suspects,” said Jill Geisler, an expert on media leadership at Loyola University of Chicago’s communication school.

Diversity issues have roiled several news organizations in the past year. The Los Angeles Times publicly

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came to terms with both how the paper historically fed into the city's racism with its coverage, and how it still lacked minority writers and managers.

The Washington Post named Krissah Thompson the newspaper's first managing editor for diversity and inclusion. The Philadelphia Inquirer's top editor resigned after many staff members were angered by a headline over a story about post-Floyd unrest.

This past week, CBS put two executives on administrative leave to investigate charges of intolerance to minorities and women at some of its local news operations. A blemish on Goldston's record was the dismissal of an ABC talent relations executive who made racially insensitive remarks.

With that backdrop, "one of these companies might want to make a statement," said Richard Prince, who blogs about minority issues in the news industry.

One was already made in December when longtime MSNBC President Phil Griffin stepped down and was replaced by Rashida Jones, a Black woman who has moved up the ranks at NBC News.

Kevin Merida, a senior vice president at ESPN and former Washington Post editor, is a name on many lists as a potential hire.

There's been quiet progress at smaller news outlets. Just this month, Manny Garcia was named editor of the Austin American-Statesman and David Ng head of the Providence Journal newsroom.

The news organizations looking for leaders are far more complex than they used to be. Baron's Post has nearly double the employees it had when he started eight years ago, with a robust video unit and data journalism. Goldston's successor won't just supervise "World News Tonight," but "The View" and the FiveThirtyEight blog, too.

Three issues that created unwelcome headlines for Baquet within the past two months were ones few of his predecessors could have conceived of.

The Times had to admit it couldn't vouch for the central character in an award-winning podcast that its audio unit produced, said it disciplined a reporter for using a racial slur at a Times-sponsored meeting for students and ended the contract of an editor who tweeted she had "chills" seeing Joe Biden's plane land.

"Is it any wonder some of these editors would want to throw up their hands and say it's time to retire?" Kaplan said.

The news industry's financial troubles over the past two decades has thinned the usual pipeline of leaders, Geisler said. The best new ones may be found in unusual places, or not have high profiles because they've been keeping their heads down and working.

New leaders will have to demonstrate they are sensitive to inclusion goals, responsive to their staffs and able to inspire those who work for them to produce great journalism, she said.

"You are going to want to have employees having a greater say than ever before in these decisions," she said. "The leaders are going to be vetted, almost like crowd-sourcing."

It's a time, she said, that demands creativity.

Fight The Man: What GameStop's surge says about online mobs

By BARBARA ORTUTAY and MATT O'BRIEN AP Technology Writers

It's a fable for our times: Small-time investors band together to take down greedy Wall Street hedge funds using the stock of a troubled video-game store.

But the revolt of online stock-traders suggests much more. The internet is shifting society's balance of power in unanticipated ways. And the same tools that empower the little guy — allowing people to organize quickly and seemingly out of nowhere, troll powerful institutions and unleash chaos — can also give rise to extremist mobs waging harassment campaigns or the Jan. 6 riot at the Capitol.

In the world of pseudonymous internet message boards, pranks-gone-wild and logic turned upside down amid a global pandemic, revolts come in all shapes, sizes and aims. Last week they gave us the Great GameStop Stock Uprising. Who knows what this week will bring.

One thing for sure: we'll be seeing more of it. More and more of us have learned to game the system, whether for a noble cause or, as they say, "for the lulz." If a meme of Bernie Sanders in mittens can distract

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us amid a presidential inauguration and a Reddit message board can send Wall Street big shots running in panic, perhaps some good can come out of this, too. Right?

"The internet can democratize access, upsetting power dynamics between the people and traditional institutions," tweeted Tiffany C. Li, a law professor and tech attorney focusing on privacy and technology platform governance.

With GameStop, she added in an interview Friday, the goal was to upset the interests of a few large hedge funds.

"But in other places the goal can be more nefarious. Online spaces are being used to radicalize people toward extremism, to plan hate crimes and attacks," she said. "The internet isn't really the villain or the hero."

Jason Wilkinson had dabbled in stocks but took a deeper dive into the Reddit forum WallStreetBets after losing his job at a tech company in the pandemic. The 30-year-old New York City resident started trading between other part-time jobs doing motorcycle delivery and sharpening knives, and started buying shares in GameStop back in November.

"I went from a \$9,000 position up to about \$30,000 as of last night. Today I lost 10 grand," he said Thursday. "I didn't sell. I'm going to hold. It's been an emotional week, let's say that."

As with many crowd movements, it was hard to trace where it all started, though there were at least a few high-profile instigators. Among them was Roaring Kitty, a YouTube personality from a Boston suburb who became a legendary fixture on the Reddit forum, expressing an early interest in buying GameStop shares and inspiring a growing legion of followers to pore through its financials.

The Reddit-based investors used the chat platform Discord to fire each other up and the trading app Robinhood to buy shares with a few clicks on their smartphones. They soon found a shared enemy in hedge fund managers who tried to short the stock, encouraging each other to keep buying GameStop and push it ever higher — "to the moon."

Wilkinson said the forums this week probably struck newcomers as "really, really childish and crazy," full of rocketship emojis, calls to pump stocks written to the tune of sea shanties and a flood of newcomers trying to jump on the bandwagon, but he said that's not been his usual experience there.

"Some of the people who are on that thread are probably on par with the stock pickers of these hedge funds," he said. "It's knowing how to know who to listen to and who to ignore. It's really just a bunch of people sharing ideas. It's the same thing as when Jim Cramer gets on CNBC smashing buttons."

In 2017, the hashtag "MeToo" began going viral as women — and some men — shared their experiences of sexual assault on social media. Though the term was coined in 2006 by activist Tarana Burke, a confluence of the political climate, the case against Harvey Weinstein and the rise of social media allowed the movement to take off 11 years later. Social media also helped Black Lives Matter activists organize rallies, record police violence and communicate during the marches sweeping the U.S. and other countries following the death of George Floyd last summer.

But the mass movement that emerged from online communities designed to let amateur stock traders share tips came as a shock to Wall Street.

"What these communities are doing is a gray area," said Allen Tran, 23, the administrator of a popular Robinhood trading group on Facebook that was temporarily shut down amid the frenzy. "The group mindset is where things can get iffy and get coordinated."

Sinal Aral, director of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Initiative on the Digital Economy, said the social media frenzy disrupting the stock market this week has parallels with the disinformation campaigns affecting national elections and the movement that led up to the Capitol riot — all situations where it can be hard to assign blame.

"There's an important distinction between an actor who is coordinating manipulation, and a retail investor who gets caught up in the movement," he said. "We witnessed those two types of people in the Capitol riot as well."

One thing distinguishing the GameStop rally from more nefarious crowdsourced actions is that it's less

about misinformation than about coordination. It's not clear whether or how the actions of those who instigated might have crossed the line into market manipulation.

Tran said some forums have a problem with "front loaders" who purchase a large stock position, drum up enthusiasm for it and profit off "the hype that follows."

The involvement of platforms like Robinhood also called to mind broader concerns about how many phone apps are designed in a way that reinforces people's compulsivity. Buy shares on the app and you get a celebratory notification with digital confetti.

"They're essentially activating the dopamine reward systems of our brains," Aral said.

So if the internet isn't the villain or the hero, how do we mitigate the harms while keeping it open for positive forces?

"There are ways to do this but it is a difficult balance," Li said. "You don't want to take down everything or censor everything so much that people can't use it for good."

Swedish nurse wins a week of isolation, films amid pandemic

By DAVID KEYTON Associated Press

GOTEBORG, Sweden (AP) — Cinema in lockdown: Scandinavia's largest film festival is exploring the social isolation resulting from COVID-19 by setting up a temporary cinema-for-one on a desolated island in the North Sea with the only companionship the events' entire movie selection and enough food to last the week.

Lisa Enroth was selected among 12,000 volunteers to spend a week on the island of Hamneskar at Pater Noster, a former lighthouse turned boutique hotel. An emergency ward nurse from Sweden with a passion for film, Lisa said the isolation would give her "time to reflect and be alone" after a busy year amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

This year's Goteborg Film Festival, which runs from Jan. 29-Feb. 8, is certainly unique. "The Isolated Cinema" is only accessible by small boat and is located at the very edge of an archipelago in one of western Sweden's most barren and windswept locations.

Enroth, who left for the island on Saturday, watches the films online either in her room or a living room, or she can watch them from the top of the lighthouse itself where organizers have set up a small screen surrounded by an amazing view.

The artistic director of the 44th Goteborg Film Festival, Jonas Holmberg, hopes this extreme viewing experience can help reflect on what the pandemic has done to our relationship with cinema.

"During this pandemic, so many people have turned to cinema when in isolation," he said. "But the pandemic has also changed how we experience films."

Like most events, the film festival has moved online as COVID-19 restrictions banned public gatherings, but organizers have set-up a real-time streaming platform accessible to people living in Sweden in a bid to replicate, albeit virtually, the collective cinema viewing experience.

At the Draken cinema, the traditional home of the film festival, only one ticket is available for each screening, but filmmakers, actors or producers may also appear to speak about their work.

The opening gala saw the Swedish premiere of *Tove*, the 2020 biographical film of the Finnish author and illustrator Tove Jansson, creator of the Moonins series. Walking down an empty red carpet, the movie's director and lead actress dressed the part and the organizers sought to replicate the excitement of a premiere to the lone viewer in the hall. But a buzz was also found online, with people posting photos dressed up for the premiere and drinking champagne.

"We want to encourage that and make it as much as a social experience as is possible," Holmberg said.

For the real world movie experience, a lottery determines who gets a ticket and on Saturday it was Sandra Fogel's turn to sit alone.

Of the 700-seats to choose from, she sat off-center a few rows from the side.

"It's a little bit sad," she said, "because you do not know what will happen when the pandemic is over. What will happen with the cinemas?"

GOP lawmakers seek tougher voting rules after record turnout

By ANTHONY IZAGUIRRE and ACACIA CORONADO Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Republican lawmakers in statehouses across the country are moving swiftly to attack some of the voting methods that fueled the highest turnout for a presidential election in 50 years.

Although most legislative sessions are just getting underway, the Brennan Center for Justice, a public policy institute, has already tallied more than 100 bills in 28 states meant to restrict voting access. More than a third of those proposals are aimed at limiting mail voting, while other bills seek to strengthen voter ID requirements and registration processes, as well as allow for more aggressive means to remove people from voter rolls.

"Unfortunately, we are seeing some politicians who want to manipulate the rules of the game so that some people can participate and some can't," said Myrna Pérez, director of the voting rights and elections program at the Brennan Center.

The proposals are advancing not only in Texas and other traditional red states but also in such places as Arizona, Georgia and Pennsylvania that supported Donald Trump four years ago, only to flip for Joe Biden in November.

Many Republicans have said the new bills are meant to shore up public confidence after Trump and his GOP allies, without evidence, criticized the election as fraudulent. Those claims were turned away by dozens of courts and were made even as a group of election officials — including representatives of the federal government's cybersecurity agency — deemed the 2020 presidential election the "the most secure in American history." Trump's former attorney general, William Barr, also said he saw no evidence of widespread fraud that would have changed the election results.

In last year's presidential election, nearly 70% of all ballots cast nationwide came before Election Day, with an estimated 108 million people voting through the mail, early in-person or by dropping off absentee ballots. The surge came after states expanded access to mail voting and early voting, with a few states sending absentee ballots to all registered voters in response to the coronavirus pandemic that raised safety questions about large crowds at the polls.

In Texas, the nation's largest Republican-controlled state, the 2020 presidential election was considered a resounding success by almost any measure. Millions took advantage of early in-person voting to shatter the state's turnout record. There were no reports of widespread system meltdowns, voter disenfranchisement or fraud.

But some GOP lawmakers there are seeking new criminal offenses to deter voter fraud, even though actual fraud is exceedingly rare. Other bills would prohibit independent groups from distributing application forms for mail-in ballots and clarify who can request an application. In September, the state sued Harris County, home to Democratic-leaning Houston, to stop officials from sending mail ballot applications to the more than 2 million registered voters there.

Texas Rep. Jacey Jetton, a Republican, said he hopes lawmakers will pass new regulations for verification of voters' identity for mail-in voting to ensure "elections are accurate and that people feel it is conducted in such a way they are getting a fair, accurate election result." Absentee voting already is limited in Texas, mostly allowed for voters who can't make it to the polls on Election Day because they will be out of town or have a medical condition.

Thomas Buser-Clancy, senior staff attorney for the ACLU of Texas, said the state already is known as a "voter suppression state," noting that Texas does not allow online voter registration or broad mail voting.

"I think it is fair to call Texas a voter suppression state where election laws are largely aimed at making it harder, more difficult and scary for individuals to exercise their fundamental right to vote," he said.

Buser-Clancy said laws such as prohibiting online voter registration or requiring certain forms of ID create burdens that "disproportionately fall on poor communities and communities of color," where some individuals may not have the resources and ability to go out and get or fix specific necessary items to exercise their right to vote.

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A bill to eliminate no-excuse mail voting has been introduced in Pennsylvania, though the proposal would need approval from the state's Democratic governor. In Arizona, Republicans have introduced bills that would eliminate the state's permanent early voting list, require mail ballots to be notarized, require mail-in ballots to be hand-delivered to a voting location and allow lawmakers to overturn presidential election results.

In Georgia, where Biden's win was verified in three separate tallies, Republicans in the GOP-controlled Legislature are gearing up to impose new barriers on mail voting, which was used heavily by Democrats in the presidential and Senate run-off elections.

A Republican senator has introduced a bill that would require voters to make copies of their photo ID and mail it to election officials twice in order to cast an absentee ballot. The state's Republican governor, lieutenant governor and secretary of state have backed the idea of requiring a photo ID for mail voting, though it's unclear if they support that specific bill.

"Despite the fact that Republicans know and understand there was no fraud, they are scared of their base," said Georgia Democratic Rep. Debra Bazemore. "That's the base that is loyal to Donald Trump. If they do not do anything, if they go against him, they might not be in office long."

Izaguirre reported from Lindenhurst, New York.

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Push to reopen schools could leave out millions of students

By GEOFF MULVIHILL, ADRIAN SAINZ and MICHAEL KUNZELMAN Associated Press

President Joe Biden says he wants most schools serving kindergarten through eighth grade to reopen by late April, but even if that happens, it is likely to leave out millions of students, many of them minorities in urban areas.

"We're going to see kids fall further and further behind, particularly low-income students of color," said Shavar Jeffries, president of Democrats for Education Reform. "There's potentially a generational level of harm that students have suffered from being out of school for so long."

Like some other officials and education advocates, Jeffries said powerful teachers unions are standing in the way of bringing back students. The unions insist they are acting to protect teachers and students and their families.

In a call Thursday evening with teachers unions, Dr. Anthony Fauci, the federal government's top infectious disease expert, said the reopening of K-8 classrooms nationally might not be possible on Biden's time frame. He cited concern over new variants of the virus that allow it to spread more quickly and may be more resistant to vaccines.

Biden is asking for \$130 billion for schools to address concerns by unions and school officials as part of a broader coronavirus relief package that faces an uncertain fate in Congress. If his reopening goal is realized, millions of students might still have to keep learning from home, possibly for the rest of the school year.

California was an epicenter of infection in the first part of January, and public health officials say many of the state's districts are in areas where transmission remains too high to reopen. But a statewide group called Open Schools California is pushing for reopening as soon as public health standards are met.

"I think that data will bear out that the children who have been most disadvantaged are going to be low-income children, Black and brown children, children with special education, learning differences, homeless and foster youth," said Megan Bacigalupi, a mother of students in the Oakland public schools and one of the organizers.

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It's hard to tally exactly how many schools are open in person now because of the size and diffuse nature of the nation's school system — and because districts' approaches change frequently.

By early January, about a third of students in a sample of 1,200 U.S. school districts were in schools where classes had been held exclusively online since last March — many of them in cities. By last week, more than half of students were enrolled in schools where in-person learning was at least an option, according to Burbio, a data service tracking school-opening policies.

For the first time since shuttering schools in March, Atlanta began returning the youngest and special education students to some in-person learning last week. Other districts planning to reopen by early March include Clark County, Nevada, which includes Las Vegas; Kansas City, Missouri; Boston and the big Ohio school systems.

Younger students in New York City already have the option to attend school in-person. Mayor Bill de Blasio said Friday that he expects middle school and high school students back in some capacity later this school year.

Jeffries acknowledges that there are reasons it's harder to open schools in cities: They're more densely populated, meaning the virus can spread faster; more people rely on public transportation, a potential hot spot for contamination; and more parents have front-line jobs that could expose them, and, in turn, their children, to the virus.

But he said the major obstacle to reopening city schools is political. "The teachers unions tend to be pretty obstinately opposed to going back to school," Jeffries said.

In Chicago, only prekindergartners have been in school so far. This week, the Chicago Teachers Union voted to teach online only in a showdown with the district over plans to bring students to school starting Feb. 1. The union has authorized a strike if school officials retaliate, but negotiations are continuing.

Claiborne Wade, 31, has three children in the Chicago Public Schools system, ages 10, 9 and 7. Wade believes the district is not quite ready to reopen schools, and he favors distance learning for now.

Even so, he said minority students in large urban districts have fewer resources for online learning. He's seen students from more affluent schools get a laptop and a tablet, and even a desk, while his kids only have a laptop to work with. Having both a laptop and tablet helps because the students can see their teacher on one screen and follow along with instruction materials on another, he said.

"It's been going on for years, even before the pandemic hit," he said. "We've always been at the bottom of the totem pole, in receiving resources that we need."

Public health officials increasingly say that virus transmissions in schools are low, so long as measures such as mask-wearing and social distancing are in place — even if teachers and other school staff have not received vaccinations.

On Jan. 21, Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan, a Republican, declared: "There is no public health reason for school boards to be keeping students out of school. None."

This past week, Maryland State Education Association President Cheryl Bost wrote to Hogan, saying his statement "would be laughable if it were not so dangerous." She said the coronavirus is not predictable and that dangers are heightened with the spread of new mutations. Infection risks increase when people gather indoors for long periods.

Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers, said it could be safe to return to schools in the spring semester with rigorous testing programs in place and the option for students and educators to remain online if they choose to.

"Teachers know how important in-person instruction is, but we have to make it safe. Testing and vaccination, as well as masking and distancing, are crucial, as are accommodations for educators at risk," she said in a statement last week.

Keith Benson, president of the Camden Education Association, which represents teachers in a New Jersey city with a long history of poverty, crime and high dropout rates, said conditions are different in the city than outside it. The schools there plan to keep buildings closed until at least April.

"What keeps someone safe in a suburban area is not the same thing that would keep folks safe here,"

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Benson said, adding that while remote learning is not ideal, he believes students will be able to catch up eventually.

Dr. Lavanya Sithanandam, a pediatrician who practices in the Maryland suburbs of Washington, said she has seen a record number of children and teenagers with mental health issues since online learning began in her area more than 10 months ago.

"Initially, many physicians, including myself, were very hesitant about kids returning to school," she said. "But as the data evolved, many of us have realized that school reopening is incredibly important."

Most of her patients are children from lower-income minority families. She said students she sees from private schools where classes are being held in person tend to fare better than their public school peers in terms of mental health.

"They've done the basics of masking, distancing, sometimes the windows being open. With that, they've been able to minimize any outbreaks," she said.

Grace Lovelace Guishard, a second grade teacher, also has three children enrolled in Maryland's Montgomery County public schools, a large and racially diverse district where classes are to remain all virtual until at least March 15, a schedule that will depend on the spread of the virus.

She said schools cannot take shortcuts in preparing to reopen and believes teachers must have the right to refuse to work if they believe conditions are unsafe. That also means ensuring that students like hers, many of whom come from Spanish-speaking households, will have equal treatment.

"Any plan for reopening schools needs to be centered around equity for all," she said.

Mulvihill reported from Cherry Hill, New Jersey, Sainz from Memphis and Kunzelman from College Park, Maryland. Also contributing were Associated Press writers Collin Binkley in Boston; Jennifer Peltz in New York; and Brian Witte in Annapolis, Maryland; and AP data journalist Larry Fenn in New York.

'I have to go': Fans who've been to every Super Bowl book in

By PATRICK WHITTLE Associated Press

PORTLAND, Maine (AP) — The Super Bowl is going to look different this year for three friends who've attended every installment of the big game.

But Don Crisman, Tom Henschel and Gregory Eaton have tickets in hand and say they will be there, as they have every year since the first AFL-NFL World Championship Game in 1967. The trio, who range in age from 79 to 84, are among an ever-shrinking group of fans who have witnessed every Super Bowl in person.

They normally use the event as a chance to catch up with each other, but this time they're working coronavirus-era precautions into the trip. They'll settle for an outdoor lunch while seated several feet apart to meet up this year.

In the stands, they'll be seated several rows apart.

"Of course I'm concerned. Who wouldn't be? My doctor's concerned. He said don't go," said Crisman, 84, of Kennebunk, Maine.

Crisman, who is flying from Boston to the game site of Tampa, Florida, hasn't been on a plane since his return trip from last year's Super Bowl. He's bringing his daughter, a medical technician who has been working COVID-19 vaccination clinics, to the game this year.

Crisman said he was ready to give up the streak, but Henschel's commitment to keeping it alive convinced him to make it.

"I have to go. I can't break my string. I have to be there," said the 79-year-old Pittsburgh area resident who winters in Tampa, making for an easy commute. "I'm slowing down, but I still love the game."

Crisman and Henschel first met at the 1983 Super Bowl, when they learned they had both been to every game to that point. Eaton, a Lansing resident who also spends his winters in Florida, met them years later in the mid-2010s. A few other members of their exclusive club of fans who never missed a Super Bowl have died in recent years.

Eaton, who is Black, said he has had to navigate challenges before to get to the game. He said he was turned away from a hotel because of his race when trying to find lodging for one of the first Super Bowls.

These days, one of his favorite aspects of the game is catching up with Henschel and Crisman.

"I look forward to it every year — and the relationships we've had these past five years are unbelievable," said Eaton, 81, who winters in the Palm Beach area. "We're like a brotherhood."

The defending champion Kansas City Chiefs face the Tampa Bay Buccaneers in the 2021 Super Bowl on Feb. 7 at Raymond James Stadium in Tampa. Attendance has been capped at 22,000, which includes 7,500 health care workers. The stadium will be about a third full.

Crisman is a New England Patriots fan who remains loyal to Tom Brady, the Buccaneers quarterback and former Patriot playing in his 10th Super Bowl.

Mostly, though, Crisman wants to keep his Super Bowl streak going and come back to Maine without contracting the virus. He said he has had one of the two doses of the coronavirus vaccine. Eaton said he has also had the first shot, while Henschel said he has not.

Crisman said he knows his streak has to end eventually, and he was initially prepared for this to be the year it did. But then he found himself game planning.

"Everything's got to end eventually. I can't explain it — it just happens," he said.

Anxiety grows as long-term care awaits COVID-19 vaccines

By TOM MURPHY AP Health Writer

Frustration is building over the pace of COVID-19 vaccinations at long-term care sites, where some homes still await first shots while fending off a virus that can devastate their residents.

The major drugstore chains tasked with giving shots in these places are far along in vaccinating nursing home residents and staff. But some other types of group residences won't receive first doses until mid-February or later, despite being among the top priorities for shots.

CVS and Walgreens have started a massive vaccination push in nearly all states, and they say they are proceeding on schedule. But resident advocates and experts are anxious about delays in delivering vaccines that have been available for more than a month.

"Every week that you wait and you're not vaccinating is a big deal here," said David Grabowski, a health policy professor at Harvard Medical School. "My sense is that this process is still going too slow."

Government officials placed long-term care residents and staff among their top vaccination priorities after they authorized the emergency use of shots from Pfizer and Moderna late last year. That includes both nursing homes, where residents get 24-hour-a-day medical care; assisted living facilities, where people generally need less help; and other types of group homes.

Vaccinations then proceeded quickly in some states like West Virginia, which didn't rely on the drugstore chains, and Connecticut.

But — as with other aspects of the rollout — the results have been choppy overall. In many places, home operators and residents' relatives have watched with frustration as states opened vaccine eligibility to other populations before the work in long-term care homes was finished.

Laura Vuchetich says her elderly parents live in a Milwaukee assisted living community and need shots badly. But they have been told they won't get them until the middle of February even as pharmacies have started handing out hundreds of doses to younger people, including a friend of hers in good health.

"They're supposed to be at the front of the line," she said. "They're in the mid 80s, and my mom had a heart attack last year. It's just baffling to me."

Such homes have been hit hard by the coronavirus.

A federal government study last fall found that an average of one death occurred among every five assisted living facility residents with COVID-19 in states that offered data. That compares with one death among every 40 people with the virus in the general population.

The government tasked CVS and Walgreens with administering the shots to long-term care locations in nearly every state. Each vaccine requires two shots a few weeks apart, and CVS and Walgreens say they have wrapped up first-dose clinics in nursing homes.

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The chains plan three visits to each location. CVS spokesman TJ Crawford said most residents will be fully vaccinated after the second visit, and the vast majority of assisted living facilities and other residences will have their third visits by mid-March. Some clinics will wrap up in April.

While they wait, the people working and living in those locations are stuck in limbo, hoping the virus doesn't spread to them or return, said Nicole Howell, who runs a California-based non-profit that advocates for long-term care residents.

"They are essentially standing at the front door fighting this disease with sanitizer and limited staff," said Howell, executive director of Ombudsman Services of Contra Costa, Solano, and Alameda counties.

Severine Petras watched a COVID-19 outbreak develop at a Pennsylvania assisted living home her company operates a couple weeks before the first vaccines arrived. The Priority Life Care CEO said the recent outbreak hit a "significant" amount of staff and some residents, including one person who died.

Vaccine scheduling has been slow in that state, she said.

"We should have had at least one round of vaccinations in there," she said. "It would have helped tremendously."

Petras said she's frustrated in part because it was widely known that COVID-19 cases would surge after the holidays. She wishes vaccines had been scheduled sooner to protect against that.

As of Sunday morning, 3.5 million doses have been given in long-term care facilities, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. That's about one-third of the roughly 10 million vaccines that Grabowski estimates will be needed to fully protect residents and employees.

"It almost feels like we went about this backwards where they contracted with the pharmacies and let set up the schedule versus saying, 'Here's the schedule that you need to meet,'" he said.

The drugstore chains have faced several challenges. At some locations, a high percentage of staff have declined the shots on the initial visits. The companies also had to set up thousands of clinics and reschedule some at locations where COVID-19 outbreaks developed.

CVS and Walgreens say states determined when they could start giving shots at assisted-living facilities, and they have finished first-dose clinics when they were allowed to begin in December. But other states didn't allow them to start until mid-January. They also say they are pouring thousands of employees into the effort.

Even so, Grabowski and Howell say outside assistance still may be needed to speed up the effort in some areas.

In New York, the Empire State Association of Assisted Living contacted state regulators because some homes had initial clinics scheduled in March, Executive Director Lisa Newcomb said. Those clinic dates were then moved mostly to late January.

"We had some members who were very, very upset about having to wait until March," she said.

In Florida, the state brought in an outside company to help deliver vaccines if the drugstore chains weren't able to schedule a first clinic until late January.

Innovation Senior Living CEO Pilar Carvajal said the company called one of her homes that hadn't had a clinic date set yet and showed up the next day to start delivering shots.

She said vaccinations should be complete at her six Florida assisted-living facilities by the end of March. Then she can stop worrying about employees bringing the virus to work after doing something as simple as going out to eat.

"That is the one thing we cannot control," she said. "The sooner we can get vaccinated, obviously the safer we will be."

AP Writer Bernard Condon contributed to this report.

Follow Tom Murphy on Twitter: @thpmurphy

For emerging adults, pandemic serves up unique challenges

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By HOLLY RAMER Associated Press

CONCORD, N.H. (AP) — The coronavirus pandemic has been hard on both kids and adults. But what about those who are in between?

Demographic shifts during the last century have given rise to a distinct developmental stage called “emerging adulthood.” Spanning the late teens and early 20s, it’s a volitional, transitional period marked by exploration of life and love, work and world views. But with the now nearly yearlong pandemic causing major disruptions in education, employment, housing and more, young people who are no longer adolescents but not quite adults are struggling to find their footing.

An 18-year-old in Florida selected a college sight unseen. A 23-year-old in Texas lost his job in his dream industry. And for a 24-year-old in New Hampshire, the pandemic halted her hard-won academic and social momentum.

“This generation is losing out on this key transition period,” says Kathryn Sabella, director of research at the University of Massachusetts Medical School’s Transitions to Adulthood Center for Research. She has been studying the pandemic’s effect on young people with mental health conditions and has found patterns of isolation, angst and uncertainty.

“We’re seeing a lot of stress about school, about finding a job in the short term, and longer term, what does this look like?” she says. “There’s a sense of despair and hopelessness.”

Emerging adulthood is a key time to explore career options, but the pandemic is putting that on hold. While some of Sabella’s study participants have picked up more hours in service sector or “gig economy” jobs, others are struggling to work from home or have lost their jobs.

“Even if it’s just babysitting or retail or working in a restaurant, you’re learning something about yourself and what you want in a long-term career,” she says. “So the limited amount of career exploration, the inability to seek out new jobs and secure those jobs, could definitely have long-term negative impacts.”

The impact varies, person to person, place to place.

— Connor Payne, 23, moved to Austin, Texas, in the summer of 2019 and was still getting to know the city and making new friends when the pandemic hit. He was working in his ideal field — event planning — and even as business dried up, he was hopeful his employer could pivot to new ventures. But he and several coworkers were laid off last week.

“When I got the news, I was 50% shocked and 50% not shocked,” said Payne, who hopes to find a new position in marketing and return to event planning once the pandemic passes.

“Right now, I’m definitely sitting with the emotions and allowing myself to feel them,” he said. “But I have confidence in the future, I’m very hopeful.”

— In Redlands, California, 19-year-old Hans Westenburg is also hopeful he can stay on track with his plans to become a physician. He’s a sophomore at the University of California-Irvine but is living at home with his mom and sister and attending classes remotely. He worries that the quality of his education has deteriorated, but he expects medical schools will take the temporary disruption into account.

“It’s not awful, but I do feel sort of grounded, like I can’t really explore my ambitions,” he says. “If this continues for a year or two, there would be more of that feeling, like, what could I have done with that time?”

— Augustus Bayard, meanwhile, is just eager to start his college career. He arrived at Brown University this month — a delayed start for the freshman class that wasn’t announced until July. With all his friends from his hometown of Anna Maria Island, Florida, already off to college, he ended up spending the summer in rural Vermont with a future classmate he met online.

“It’s an awkward point in your life to suddenly have to put your life on pause,” he says.

At Boston University’s School of Social Work, Hyeouk Chris Hahm has been conducting national surveys to measure how the pandemic is playing out among young people. Emerging adults have not been well studied in the past, she says, but it’s important to capture what they’re going through now because they make up a significant chunk of the current and future workforce.

“We have reason to be worried about it, and we have reason to provide more support for these young adults,” she says. “There are good times and bad times, and when you are graduating in a bad time, that

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can actually have an impact on your earnings for the next 10 years.”

Nearly half of the participants report depression, anxiety and loneliness, she says, and an open-ended question that allowed participants to express anything on their minds produced a torrent of negativity.

“We didn’t think so many people would pour out honestly how they feel,” she says. “People really needed to vent someplace or somewhere. They want to be heard.”

Jeffrey Arnett, the psychologist who coined the term “emerging adulthood” two decades ago, predicts this population will be able to pick up the pieces. Emerging adults tend to be pessimistic about society at large, and that likely will deepen due to the pandemic, he says. But they often are quite optimistic about their individual situations.

“That optimism is a real resource in bouncing back from setbacks, but at the same time, I certainly think we all ought to take seriously what a blow this is to people,” says Arnett, a visiting professor at Tufts University. “I wouldn’t diminish the difficulty of it. I just want to emphasize that they are resilient, and they’re at a point in life where you can recover from a year or even a two-year delay.”

Bryleigh McCarty, 21, says her life in Longmont, Colorado, got “10 times more stressful” when the pandemic hit, but therapy has helped her discover her own strength.

Last March, McCarty was managing a yarn shop that scrambled to shift to online sales, working 50 hours a week from a home she shares with her parents and five younger siblings. She and her boyfriend later broke up, and she switched careers and is working in a kindergarten classroom.

“It’s really easy to get caught up in those emotions of ‘Oh my God, everything sucks, I feel so discouraged.’ But I’m also really relishing my ability to sit back and laugh at everything that is going on because it’s so crazy,” she says. “I’ve learned that I am much stronger than I thought I was.”

But Arnett and other experts agree the pandemic poses particular challenges for some subsets of this population, including young people aging out of the foster system and those with serious mental illness.

Emerging adulthood is a critical period for the latter because rates of mental health problems increase during this time, conditions become more complex and the most serious disorders emerge, yet this age group is less likely to seek and receive help. Maryann Davis, director of the Transitions to Adulthood Center for Research, surveyed state child and adult mental health systems between 2003 and 2005 about the availability of a dozen services specifically aimed at transition age youth, including mental health treatment, vocational support and help with housing.

Back then, any one of the services was available in at most in 20% of states. But by 2019, that percentage increased to 50%, according to a survey conducted by The Associated Press. Fifteen years ago, only 5% of the child mental health systems and 7% of the adult systems had mental health treatment programs specifically tailored for transition age youth. Responding to the AP, two-thirds of the child systems and 85% of the adult systems said they offered that, though fewer than half of the states offered it statewide.

“Systems are finally seeing that the transition to adulthood is a critical developmental stage, that this is a real make-or-break period of life, and if we abandon young people right at the threshold of adulthood, they’re much more likely to fail,” Davis says.

Officials in several states say have seen increased demand for services during the pandemic but have had to curtail them or offer them remotely. While some say the pandemic has spurred lasting innovations, they also expressed concern about losing momentum for progress. In New Mexico, state officials accelerated the launch of a program to allow youth in foster care to receive state services until age 21 and have been working to connect youth to telehealth options.

But there is concern about a looming behavioral health crisis, says Charlie Moore-Pabst, spokesman for the state Children, Youth and Families Department.

“From what I’ve seen from other agencies across the country, I’m absolutely concerned it will undo some of the progress, especially when it comes to state-funded services,” he said in an email.

Finding enough help often has been hard for Lizzie Busby, of Manchester, New Hampshire, who is on the autism spectrum and lives with anxiety and depression. But by last winter, Busby, 24, was successfully juggling two community college classes, making new friends and enjoying increased independence.

“This was the first time I had a social group where I was really spending time with people outside of

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school, and I was getting invited to things, and I really enjoyed that," she says.

She ended up dropping a class when her school shifted to remote learning, and lost a tutor and other help she had been getting. "I felt like I was being set up to fail, and on top of all the stresses with the pandemic and everything on in the world around me, it was just a perfect storm," she says.

But 10 months later, she offered this when asked what advice she'd give friends in similar situations. "Keep on chugging along, don't lose hope and remember that it's OK to be struggling during these times," she says. "Reach out and ask for help if you need it."

Holly Ramer is a New Hampshire-based Associated Press reporter and recipient of the Rosalynn Carter Fellowship for Mental Health Journalism. Follow her on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/hramer>

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Monday, Feb. 1, the 32nd day of 2021. There are 333 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Feb. 1, 2003, the space shuttle Columbia broke up during re-entry, killing all seven of its crew members: commander Rick Husband; pilot William McCool; payload commander Michael Anderson; mission specialists Kalpana Chawla, David Brown and Laurel Clark; and payload specialist Ilan Ramon (ee-LAHN'rah-MOHN'), the first Israeli in space.

On this date:

In 1790, the U.S. Supreme Court convened for the first time in New York. (However, since only three of the six justices were present, the court recessed until the next day.)

In 1862, "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," a poem by Julia Ward Howe, was published in the Atlantic Monthly.

In 1865, abolitionist John S. Rock became the first Black lawyer admitted to the bar of the U.S. Supreme Court.

In 1893, inventor Thomas Edison completed work on the world's first motion picture studio, his "Black Maria," in West Orange, New Jersey.

In 1942, during World War II, the Voice of America broadcast its first program to Europe, relaying it through the facilities of the British Broadcasting Corp. in London.

In 1943, during World War II, one of America's most highly decorated military units, the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, made up almost exclusively of Japanese-Americans, was authorized.

In 1960, four Black college students began a sit-in protest at a Woolworth's lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina, where they'd been refused service.

In 1962, the Ken Kesey novel "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" was first published by Viking Press.

In 1968, during the Vietnam War, South Vietnam's police chief (Nguyen Ngoc Loan) executed a Viet Cong officer with a pistol shot to the head in a scene captured by news photographers. Richard M. Nixon announced his bid for the Republican presidential nomination.

In 1979, Iranian religious leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini (hoh-MAY'-nee) received a tumultuous welcome in Tehran as he ended nearly 15 years of exile.

In 1991, 34 people were killed when an arriving USAir jetliner crashed atop a commuter plane on a runway at Los Angeles International Airport.

In 2018, a judge ordered a Wisconsin girl, Morgan Geyser, to be committed to a mental hospital for 40 years for stabbing a classmate when she was 12 years old to curry favor with the fictional horror character Slender Man.

Ten years ago: Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak announced he would not run for a new term in September elections but rejected protesters' demands he step down immediately and leave the country, after a dramatic day in which a quarter-million Egyptians staged their biggest protest to date calling on him to go.

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Five years ago: Texas Sen. Ted Cruz swept to victory in Iowa's Republican caucuses, overcoming Donald Trump and a stronger-than-expected showing by Florida Sen. Marco Rubio; among Democrats, Bernie Sanders rode a wave of voter enthusiasm to a virtual tie with Hillary Clinton. The World Health Organization declared a global emergency over the explosive spread of the Zika virus, which was linked to birth defects in the Americas, calling it an "extraordinary event" that posed a public health threat to other parts of the world.

One year ago: As China's death toll from the new coronavirus rose to 259, Beijing criticized Washington's order barring entry to most foreigners who had visited China in the past two weeks. A World Health Organization official said governments needed to prepare for "domestic outbreak control." Sofia Kenin of the United States beat Garbiñe Muguruza of Spain to win the Australian Open for her first Grand Slam title.

Today's Birthdays: Singer Don Everly is 84. Actor Garrett Morris is 84. Bluegrass singer Del McCoury is 82. TV personality-singer Joy Philbin is 80. Political commentator Fred Barnes is 78. Rock musician Mike Campbell (Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers) is 71. Blues singer-musician Sonny Landreth is 70. Actor-writer-producer Bill Mumy (MOO'-mee) is 67. Rock singer Exene Cervenka is 65. Actor Linus Roache is 57. Princess Stephanie of Monaco is 56. Actor Sherilyn Fenn is 56. Lisa Marie Presley is 53. Comedian-actor Pauly Shore is 53. Actor Brian Krause is 52. Jazz musician Joshua Redman is 52. Rock musician Patrick Wilson (Weezer) is 52. Actor Michael C. Hall is 50. Rock musician Ron Welty is 50. Rapper Big Boi (Outkast) is 46. Roots rocker Jason Isbell is 42. Country singer Julie Roberts is 42. Actor Jarrett Lennon is 39. Rock singer-musician Andrew VanWyngarden is 38. TV personality Lauren Conrad is 35. Actor-singer Heather Morris is 34. Actor and mixed martial artist Ronda Rousey is 34. Rock singer Harry Styles (One Direction) is 27.

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