

Groton Daily Independent

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Brown County Fatal Crash

What: One-Vehicle Fatal Crash

Where: South Dakota Highway 37 and 144th Street
Ten miles south of Groton, S.D.

When: 7:26 a.m., Friday, Feb. 5, 2020

Driver: Male, 45, Fatal Injuries

Vehicle: 2014 Jeep Compass

GROTON, S.D. – A 45-year-old man died Friday morning in a one-vehicle crash south of Groton.

The name of the person involved in the crash is not yet being released pending notification of family members.

A 2014 Jeep Compass was northbound on South Dakota Highway 37 when it left the roadway, entered the west ditch and rolled. The driver, who was not wearing a seat belt, was pronounced dead at the scene.

South Dakota's Highway Patrol is investigating the crash. All information released so far is only preliminary. The Highway Patrol is part of the South Dakota Department of Public Safety.



OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

Three grapplers place at Big Dakota Conference

Three Groton Area wrestlers placed at the Big Dakota Conference wrestling tournament held Saturday. Dragr Monson took first place while Christian Ehresmann and Lane Krueger each placed fourth place.

113: Dragr Monson (31-0) placed 1st and scored 20.0 team points.

Dragr Monson pinned Tripp Schrempp (Cheyenne-Eagle Butte/Dupree) 0-4 (Fall 0:48); he scored by decision over Chase Hanson (Stanley County) 24-5 (Dec 7-1); and in the championship match, he decisioned Kellan Hurd (Miller/Highmore-Harrold) 32-5 (Dec 8-2)

126: Christian Ehresmann (27-5) placed 4th and scored 11.0 team points.

Christian Ehresmann pinned Wyatt Wientjes (Mobridge-Pollock) 14-12 (Fall 0:48); he was decisioned by Dominic Santiago (Chamberlain) 32-10 (Dec 12-5) he pinned Lincoln Wickstrom (Harding County) 8-21 (Fall 1:57); and in the third place match, he lost by a major decision to Lucas Lenz (Kimball/White Lake/Platte-Geddes) 17-10 (MD 8-0)

126: Easten Ekern (8-12).

Easten Ekern was pinned by Lincoln Stuwe (Potter County) 5-5 (Fall 0:32); and he was pinned by Lincoln Wickstrom (Harding County) 8-21 (Fall 2:07)

132: Nick Morris (0-3).

Nick Morris was pinned by Trey Frost (Stanley County) 20-8 (Fall 1:39); and he was pinned by Colby Kolda (Miller/Highmore-Harrold) 18-17 (Fall 0:34)

138: Korbin Kucker (13-15).

Korbin Kucker was pinned by Josh VanHeuvelen (Sunshine Bible Academy) 12-12 (Fall 1:29); and he lost by a major decision to Gunner Brueggeman (Miller/Highmore-Harrold) 11-16 (MD 11-3)

160: Cole Bisbee (16-16) .

Cole Bisbee pinned Jimmy Burma (Sunshine Bible Academy) 2-15 (Fall 0:23); he was pinned by Levi Stover (Stanley County) 17-8 (Fall 1:10); he pinned Roger Duba (Kimball/White Lake/Platte-Geddes) 1-9 (Fall 2:45); and he lost by a decision to Garret Ristau (Chamberlain) 24-19 (Dec 7-0)

195: Lane Krueger (18-6) placed 4th and scored 7.0 team points.

Lane Krueger lost by a major decision to Charley Pravecsek (Winner) 15-10 (MD 11-1); he pinned Cole Wellner (Mobridge-Pollock) 16-7 (Fall 2:31); and in the third place match, he was pinned by Noah Hutmacher (Chamberlain) 32-8 (Fall 2:39).

285: Adrian Knutson (10-17).

Adrian Knutson was decisioned Aiden Schoenard (Mobridge-Pollock) 26-8 (Dec 1-0); and he was pinned by Dylan Endres (Stanley County) 3-4 Fall 1:53).

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DF-CD-NP-Q121

Reply by:

April 15, 2021

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DF-CD-NP-Q121

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Tiger loss to Wambdi creates 5-way tie in NEC

Groton Area suffered its second Northeast Conference loss Saturday to the hands of Tiospa Zina at Agency Village, 49-44. The loss creates a five-way tie for first place in the Northeast Conference.

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

The Wambdi jumped out to a 6-0 lead and the Tigers never led in the contest. Tiospa Zina took a 13-9 lead at the end of the first quarter and a 21-14 lead at half time. The Wambdi started off the third quarter with a tree-pointer to take a 10-point lead, 24-14. Groton Area closed to within four, 26-22, but trailed by five at the end of the third quarter, 32-27. The Tigers scored first in the fourth quarter and made it a three-point game, 32-29, but Tiospa Zina would regain a 10-point advantage with 3:14 left at 39-29. Every time Groton would get a basket and Juron Adams would answer for the Wambdi in a matter of seconds as he scored nine of 17 points in the fourth quarter. Groton Area made it a four-point game, 45-41, with less than a minute left in the game, but was unable to close the gap any further.

Groton Area made three of 16 in three-pointers for 19 percent and was 13 of 36 in two-pointers for 36 percent. Tiospa Zina made 19 of 42 shots for 45 percent.

Groton Area had 17 turnovers while the Wambdi had 14 with nine being steals (Wyatt Hearnen 3 and Jayden Zak 3).

Three players hit double figures for the Tigers with Lane Tietz and Jacob Zak each having 13, Tristian Traphagen had 10 while Jayden Zak had six and Wyatt Hearnen two. Groton Area had 31 rebounds with Hearnen having 12, Traphagen seven and Jacob Zak six. Jayden Zak had three of the team's seven assists and Traphagen had one block. Groton Area had 11 team fouls while allowed the Wambdi to make eight of 16 free throws for 50 percent. Tiospa Zina had 14 team fouls which called the Tigers to make nine of 12 free throws for 75 percent.

Tiospa Zina won the junior varsity game, 33-24. The game was tied twice and there were two lead changes before the Wambdi took a 10-9 lead at half time and a 26-11 lead at the end of the third quarter. The game was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM, sponsored by Jim and Shirley VanDenhemel of Woonsocket, grandparents of Cade and Tate Larson.

Colby Dunker. Cole Simon and Jackson Cogley each had five points while Holden Sippel and Teylor Diegel each had two and Logan Ringgenberg added one free throw Juan Rios led the Wambdi with 10 points.

The Wambdi made it a clean sweep on the night with a 51-40 win in the C game. The game was tied three times in the first quarter before Tiospa Zina took a 15-7 lead after the first quarter, a 25-21 lead at half time and a 35-32 lead at the end of the third quarter. The game was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM, sponsored by the Imrie family in memory of Grandpa Jay.

Teylor Diegel led the Tigers with 14 points followed by Colby Dunker with 10, Dillon Abeln had five, Braxton Imrie and Holden Sippel each had four points and Logan Ringgenberg added two points.

Tate Never Misses A Shot led the Wambdi with 14 points while Austin Kohl had 13, Nate Thompson 10, Juan Rios, Jayvyn Adams and Storm Sierra each had five points.

| | |
|------------------------|-----|
| Groton | 6-2 |
| Milbank | 5-2 |
| Sisseton | 4-2 |
| Tiospa Zina | 3-2 |
| Clark/Willow Lake | 3-2 |
| Redfield | 4-3 |
| Roncalli | 4-4 |
| Webster..... | 1-7 |
| Deuel | 1-7 |
| Britton-Hecla..... | 0-5 |

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Upcoming Schedule

Monday, Feb. 8

Junior High Basketball in the Groton Arena with Webster. 7th grade at 5:30 p.m. followed by 8th grade game. The 8th grade game will be broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM sponsored by J. Simon Photography.

School Board Meeting, 7 p.m.

Tuesday, Feb. 9

Girls Basketball hosts Tiospa Zina. JV game (Ed and Connie Stauch) 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 (Trent and Heather Traphagen) 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).

Tuesday, Feb. 16: Girls Basketball hosts Warner with JV at 6:30 p.m. followed by varsity.

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.

Monday, Feb. 22: Boys Basketball hosts Warner with JV at 6:30 p.m. followed by varsity.

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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THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE

...Although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools...

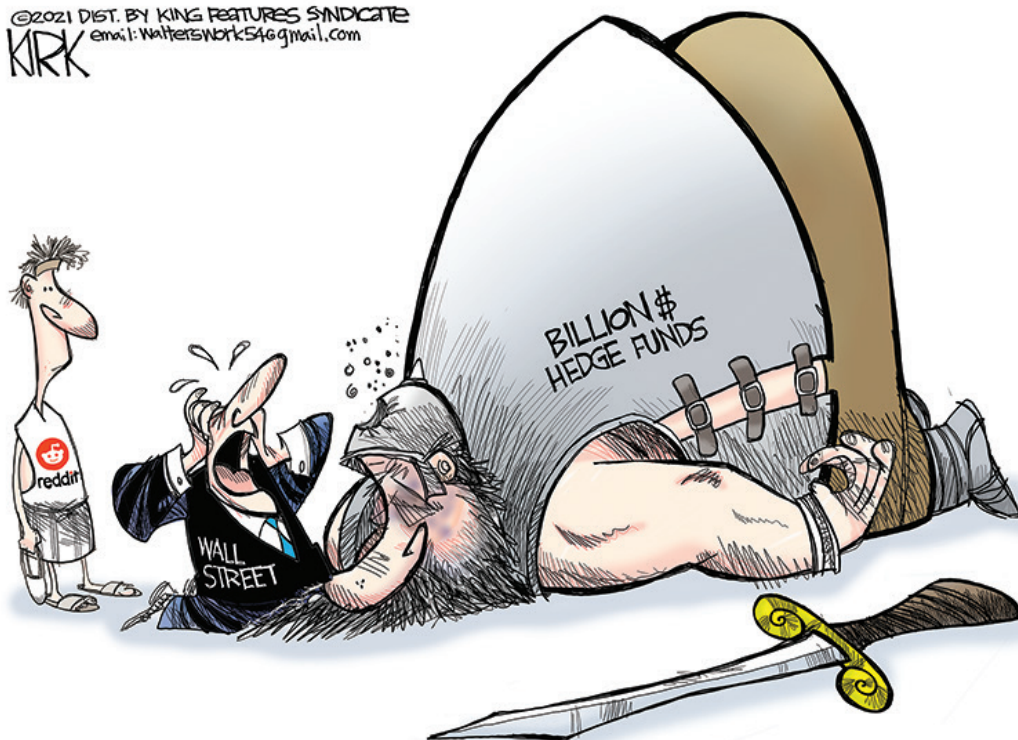
ROMANS 1: 21, 22

"The Three Kings" by Karl Schmidt-Rottluff (1917)



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email: WaltersWork54@gmail.com
KIRK



BIBLE TRIVIA

by Wilson Casey

1. Is the book of Song of Solomon in the Old or New Testament or neither?

2. From Revelation 21, what perfectly square city is described as having walls made of jasper? *New Damascus, Jericho, New Jerusalem, Philadelphia*

3. In Matthew 5, to what two things did Jesus compare Christians, salt and ...? *Water, Bread, Light, Mountains*

4. Saint Luke said Jesus was about how old when he began to teach? *18, 22, 30, 45*

5. Who became leader of the children of Israel after Moses' death? *Isaac, Joshua, Aaron, Abraham*

6. What was the trade of Paul? *Shepherd, Carpenter, Tentmaker, Tax collector*

ANSWERS: 1) Old; 2) New Jerusalem; 3) Light; 4) 30; 5) Joshua; 6) Tentmaker

"Test Your Bible Knowledge," a book with 1,206 multiple-choice questions by columnist Wilson Casey, is available in stores and online.

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by Healthy Exchanges

Valentine's Sundae Dessert Bars

- 18 (2½-inch) chocolate graham crackers
- 4 cups sugar- and fat-free vanilla ice cream
- 1 (4-serving) package sugar-free chocolate cook-and-serve pudding mix
- 2/3 cup nonfat dry milk powder
- 1 cup water
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 2 teaspoons reduced-calorie margarine
- 1/2 cup miniature marshmallows
- 3 tablespoons chopped pecans
- 1/2 cup reduced calorie whipped topping
- 4 maraschino cherries, halved

1. Arrange 9 graham crackers in a 9-by-9-inch cake pan. In large bowl, gently stir ice cream until slightly softened. Coarsely crush remaining 9 graham crackers and stir into softened ice cream. Spread mixture gently over graham crackers in cake pan. Cover and freeze while preparing topping.

2. In medium saucepan, combine dry pudding mix, dry milk powder and water. Cook over medium heat until mixture thickens and starts to boil, stirring constantly. Remove from heat.

3. Stir in vanilla extract, margarine and marshmallows. Drizzle hot mixture evenly over ice cream mixture. Sprinkle pecans evenly over top. Re-cover and continue to freeze for 2 hours or until firm.

3. Let set at room temperature for 10 minutes. Cut into 8 servings. To serve, top each with 1 tablespoon whipped topping and a maraschino cherry half. Makes 8 servings.

• Each serving equals: 191 calories, 3g fat, 7g protein, 34g carb., 199mg sodium, 1g fiber; Diabetic Exchanges: 2 Starch/Carb., 1/2 Fat.

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FLASH GORDON

Character Profile:

Aura

PRINCESS AURA HAS ALWAYS HAD A SPECIAL PLACE IN HER HEART FOR THE HANDSOME AND COURAGEOUS EARTHLING FLASH GORDON.

AN AFFECTION WHICH HAS BROUGHT HER IN DIRECT OPPOSITION TO HER FATHER...

...**MING**
THE MERCILESS.

THE DENIZENS OF THIS SQUALID REALM ATTACK, BUT WITH A RAISED HAND THEIR CHARGE IS HALTED.

PRINCESS AURA LEADS FLASH TO SAFETY, THEN BIDS HIM TO STAY HIDDEN WITHIN A ROCKET SHIP.

DONNING CLOTHES FOUND ON BOARD, FLASH WATCHES IN HORROR AS A SQUADRON OF SHIPS LAYS SIEGE TO THE CITY IN WHICH DALE IS BEING HELD CAPTIVE.

LEAVING TO THE CONTROLS, FLASH SENDS HIS SHIP SCREAMING TO THE ATTACK!

FLASH GORDON By JIM KEEFE

1-31

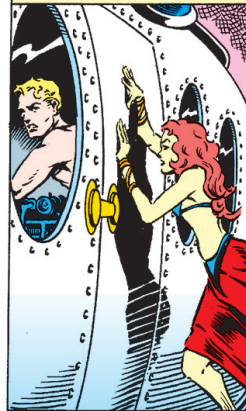
FLASHBACK:

FLASH AND PRINCESS AURA PLUNGE INTO THE DARKNESS BENEATH MING'S FORTRESS.

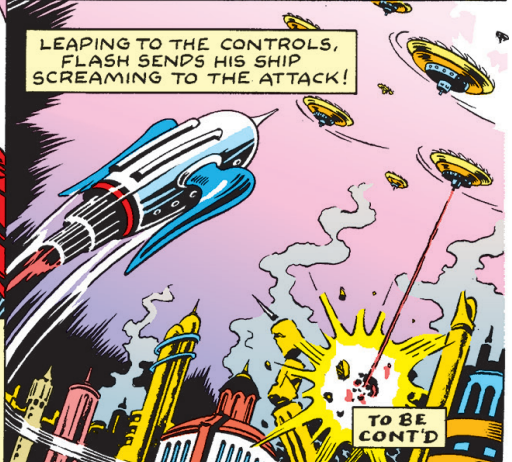
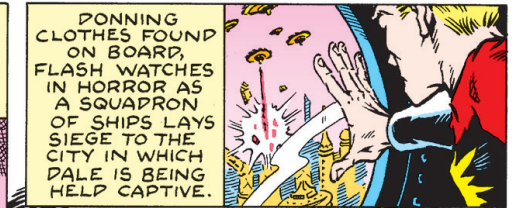
A PROTRUDING WATER PIPE ARRESTS THEIR FALL.



OBEYING THE PRINCESS'S COMMANDS, THEY RETURN TO THE MURKY DEPTHS FROM WHENCE THEY CAME.

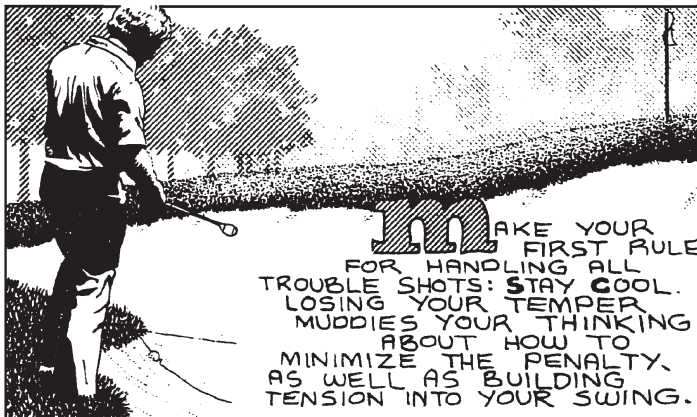


DESIRING THE MUSCLED YOUTH FOR HERSELF, SHE BOLTS THE POOR... ENSURING FLASH WILL BE DETAINED UNTIL MING MAKES DALE HIS BRIDE.

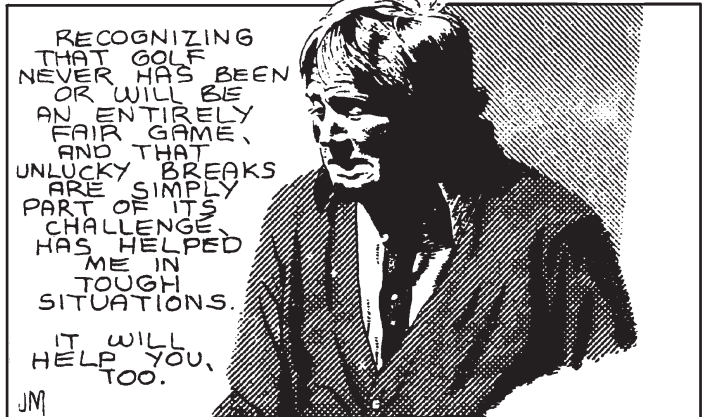


TO BE CONT'D

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IT WILL HELP YOU, TOO.

JM

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Vestibular Migraines Often Include Vertigo

DEAR DR. ROACH: Can you shed light on how vestibular migraines are diagnosed and the best treatment? — J.H.

ANSWER: The vestibule of the ear is where the organ of balance is located, so vestibular symptoms relate to balance issues in general, but most commonly, it means vertigo. The term “vestibular migraine” means vestibular symptoms attributed to migraine.

Vestibular migraine thus includes migraine headache — not everyone will have headache with every episode, but most people with vestibular migraine will have headache with at least some of the episodes — and vestibular symptoms. These could include vertigo (a sensation of movement when still), unsteadiness or movement symptoms with a change in head position that persists long after the head has moved. Abnormal sensitivity to sound and vision are also prominent in vestibular migraine.

There is a similarly named condition, basilar migraine, that also has vestibular symptoms. However, basilar migraine has additional symptoms seen during the early, or aura, phase coming from the brainstem, deep in the brain, such as clumsy movements or confusion. These occur most commonly five minutes to an hour before the headache.

Making the diagnosis of vestibular migraine is challenging, since there are many clinical entities with similar symptoms. There is no conclusive laboratory or radiology tests to confirm the diagnosis. In practice, the diagnosis of probable vestibular migraine is made in people with recurrent migraine symptoms associated with vertigo. Often, treatment is begun when the condition is considered probable, and if the person does not respond well to treatment, a more

thorough evaluation is considered.

Treatment for vestibular migraine is broken down into treatment for acute attacks and treatment to prevent attacks. Many neurologists use diazepam (Valium) and similar drugs for acute attacks. Preventive medicines come in many different families, and the choice of the best agent depends often on other conditions the person has. Everyone with migraine should try to find and avoid triggers. This includes eating on a reasonable schedule and good sleep hygiene.

If medications are needed, prescription choices include blood pressure medicines (beta blockers like propranolol and calcium channel blockers), antidepressants and seizure medicines. Over-the-counter options include riboflavin, magnesium, feverfew and coenzyme Q10, all of which have some but not conclusive evidence of benefit superior to placebo.

DEAR DR. ROACH: Can you tell me the possible causes of psoriasis? I have read that it is related to chronic inflammation. What type of inflammation might this be? — C.K.

ANSWER: Psoriasis, a chronic skin condition that can sometimes affect the joints, is indeed an inflammatory condition, but inflammation is a set of symptoms and observable signs, not an underlying cause or diagnosis. There are five cardinal signs of inflammation: redness, swelling, pain, warmth and loss of function.

Psoriasis appears to be a problem of a dysregulated immune system. It is unclear what triggers the body to begin responding with inflammation to the skin, but some proteins (called antimicrobial peptides) made by skin cells may start the process. These can be triggered by trauma to the skin, but also by some medications, alcohol, cigarette smoking, infections and stress, all of which can also act as triggers for people with psoriasis. These make the immune system cells specific to the skin become much more active.

Understanding the immune system issues in psoriasis has led to newer and more effective treatments, especially for more-severe psoriasis.

Dr. Roach regrets that he is unable to answer individual questions, but will incorporate them in the column whenever possible. Readers may email questions to ToYourGoodHealth@med.cornell.edu.



1. Name the only disco song to ever receive a Grammy.

2. Kim Wilde had a 1986 hit with “You Keep Me Hangin’ On.” Who originally released the song?

3. Paul McCartney wrote “Step Inside Love” in 1967 as the theme song for what British TV show?

4. “The Heat Is On” was used in what film?

5. Name the song that contains the opening line: “Do you remember the 21st night of September?”

Answers

1. “I Will Survive,” by Gloria Gaynor in 1980. The Best Disco Recording category was only recognized for that one year.

2. The Supremes, in 1966. Both versions went to No. 1 on the Billboard Hot 100. Vanilla Fudge and Reba McEntire also had top 10 covers of the song.

3. “Cilla,” a long-running series hosted by singer Cilla Black. The song began as just a verse and chorus for the show, with two more verses added the next year so Black could cut a single.

4. “Beverly Hills Cop” in 1984, sung by Glenn Frey, a founding member of the Eagles.

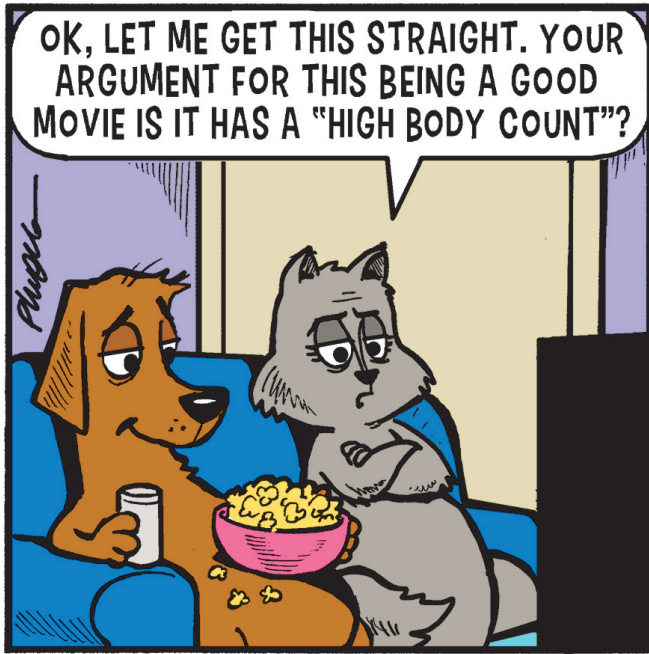
5. “September,” by Earth, Wind & Fire, in 1978. The song topped the soul charts for two weeks. The band went through all the dates — first, second, third, etc. — but said the one that felt best was the 21st.

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Just Like Cats & Dogs

by Dave T. Phipps



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GRIN and BEAR IT ^{Wagner}

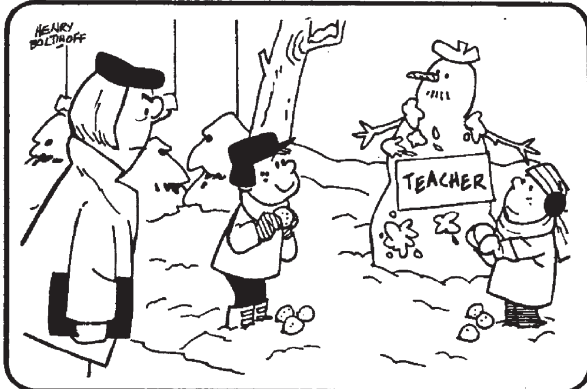


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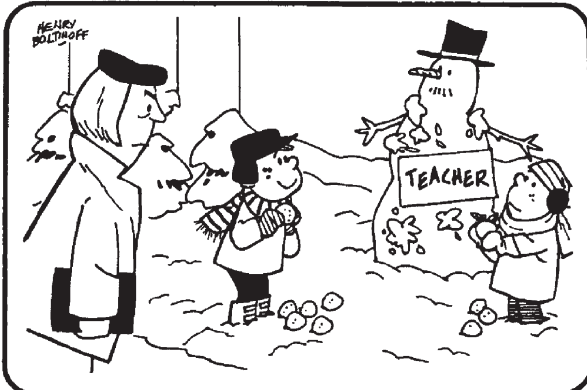
Wagner

HOCUS-FOCUS

BY HENRY BOLTINOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.



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Differences: 1. Snowman's hat is different. 2. Boy has a scarf. 3. Snowballs have been added. 4. Tree is missing. 5. Teacher's nose is different. 6. Boy is holding an apple.

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- Line your veggie and fruit drawers with plain paper towels to avoid messes in the refrigerator. Check through produce daily to remove any spoiled items.

- “For grease stains on fabric, I don’t reach any further than my kitchen sink. I saturate it with dishwashing liquid and throw it in the washer. it works better than any stain stick.” — *W.D. in Pennsylvania*

- “Everyone knows probably five uses for pantyhose with runs in them. Here’s one I heard from a friend that I had never heard before. Scrunch one leg up and use it like a dusting mitt on upholstered furniture to get rid of cat hair. I guess it would work for all pet hair, but I do this every day now, and it’s so easy.” — *G.T. in Washington*

- If you have a stinky sink problem, check your garbage disposal. The plastic insert in the drain will usually pull out to give you a better look.

Sometimes, all that is needed is to clean the plastic insert — it can collect a nasty food slime on the disposal-facing side. You can also try running it for a few minutes with ice cubes, citrus peels or baking soda and vinegar.

- If you have many books on a bookcase, here’s a tip that’ll blow you away: Use a hair dryer on the cool setting to blow dust off the top of the books. Work from the top down, wipe the visible shelf with a microfiber cloth, then vacuum the floor.

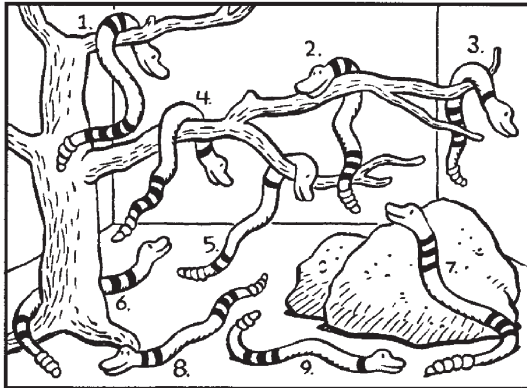
- “In one of my pizza boxes, I noticed a sheet of plastic netting that keeps the pizza crust crispy during delivery. I saved it, thinking I would find a use for it. I did — in my dishwasher! I had several small plastic containers that kept flipping up and collecting water, so I lined them up and placed the netting over them. I laid a spatula on top to keep it in place. It totally worked.” — *A.A. in Florida*

Send your tips to Now Here’s a Tip, 628 Virginia Drive, Orlando, FL 32803.

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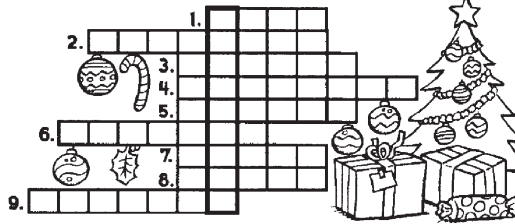
SNAKES ALIVE! Two of the above slinky serpents are exactly alike. Can you find them in 30 seconds?

Answer: Snakes 2 and 8.

Junior Whirl

by Charles Barry Townsend

THE BIG DAY IS ALMOST HERE!



Soon Santa will be racing the morning sun around the world. In our grid, we have room for nine words associated with Santa. The following hints should help:

1. Santa goes up the chimney when he lays his finger next to his ...?
2. Santa's other name.
3. Santa would never go to his house.
4. Santa's presents end up here.
5. Santa's physical description.
6. Santa's most important helper.
7. Santa's disposition.
8. Santa's associates.
9. Santa's other last name.

There is a dark frame around one of the columns in our grid. If you correctly solve the puzzle, the letters in the frame, top to bottom, will spell out Santa's last stop on Christmas Day.

Answers: 1. Nose. 2. Nicholas. 3. Grinch. 4. Stocking. 5. Chubby. 6. Rudolph. 7. Jolly. 8. Elves. 9. Kringle. The dark-framed column spells "North Pole."

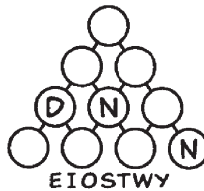
Illustrated by David Coulson

SEE IF YOU CAN make this math expression correct by rearranging the nine digits to the left of the equal sign. The two new numbers can include fractions.

$$1\ 2\ 3\ 4 + 5\ 6\ 7\ 8\ 9 = 100$$

Our answer is: $47\ 3/6 + 52\ 9/18 = (47\ 1/2 + 52\ 1/2 = 100)$.

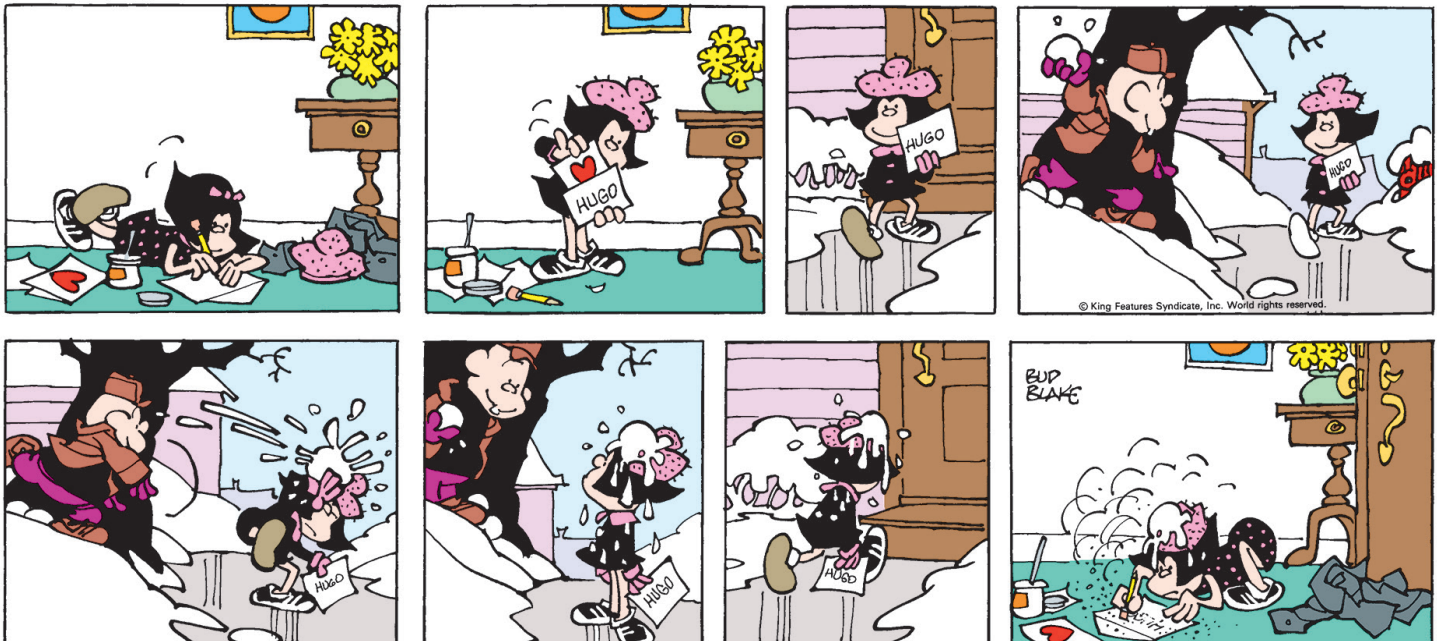
CHAIN REACTION! Take the seven letters printed below our diagram and place them in the circles so that eight four-letter words can be read, top to bottom, along the connecting lines. All the words will begin with the letter in the top circle.



Answers: top to bottom, left to right: tidy, tide, line, tins, tone, tons, towns.

TIGER

by BUD BLAKE



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King Crossword

ACROSS

- 1 To boot
- 5 Tummy muscles
- 8 Writer Rice
- 12 Appeared suddenly
- 14 Earth
- 15 Regatta
- 16 Pout
- 17 "— a Camera"
- 18 Decisive moments
- 20 A Musketeer
- 23 Prejudice
- 24 Reddish horse
- 25 Lake activity
- 28 CCV x X
- 29 Pre-diploma hurdles

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | | 5 | 6 | 7 | | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 |
| 12 | | | | 13 | | | | | 14 | | | |
| 15 | | | | | | | | | 16 | | | |
| | | | 17 | | | | 18 | 19 | | | | |
| 20 | 21 | 22 | | | | 23 | | | | | | |
| 24 | | | | | 25 | | | | | 26 | 27 | |
| 28 | | | | 29 | | | | | | 30 | | 31 |
| | 32 | | 33 | | | | | | 34 | | | |
| | | | 35 | | | | | 36 | | | | |
| 37 | 38 | 39 | | | | | 40 | | | | | |
| 41 | | | | | 42 | 43 | | | | 44 | 45 | 46 |
| 47 | | | | | | 48 | | | | | | |
| 49 | | | | | | 50 | | | | 51 | | |

- 30 Dig in
- 32 Straw hats
- 34 Carton sealer
- 35 School orgs.
- 36 Used a sponge
- 37 Stir-fry veggie
- 40 Crony
- 41 Slanted type (Abbr.)
- 42 Yacht lover's event
- 47 French 101 verb
- 48 Veteran
- 49 Easy targets
- 50 Ballot marks

51 Whig's rival

DOWN

- 1 NYPD alert
- 2 Brit's restroom
- 3 Hotel amenity
- 4 Choice
- 5 Leading man?
- 6 Tampa Bay NFLer
- 7 Dishes not on the regular menu
- 8 Home of St. Francis
- 9 Entre —

10 Egyptian river

- 11 BPOE members
- 13 Historic times
- 19 "Phooey!"
- 20 Branch
- 21 Pyramid, maybe
- 22 Saintly ring
- 23 Wild pigs
- 25 Challah holder
- 26 Tide variety
- 27 Be slack-jawed
- 29 "Beetle Bailey" dog
- 31 Danson of

"Cheers"

- 33 Granny Smiths
- 34 Mild cheese
- 36 Bulb measure
- 37 Slapstick arsenal
- 38 Jazzy James
- 39 Seniors' org.
- 40 Cushions
- 43 Flamenco cheer
- 44 Med. plan option
- 45 Not 'neath
- 46 Like some humor

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— King Crossword —

Answers

Solution time: 22 mins.

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | L | S | O | | A | B | S | | A | N | N | E | |
| P | O | P | P | E | D | U | P | | S | O | I | L | |
| B | O | A | T | R | A | C | E | | S | U | L | K | |
| | | I | A | M | | C | R | I | S | E | S | | |
| A | T | H | O | S | | B | I | A | S | | | | |
| R | O | A | N | | B | O | A | T | I | N | G | | |
| M | M | L | | O | R | A | L | S | | E | A | T | |
| | | B | O | A | T | E | R | S | | T | A | P | E |
| | | | P | T | A | S | | W | I | P | E | D | |
| P | E | A | P | O | D | | P | A | L | | | | |
| I | T | A | L | | B | O | A | T | S | H | O | W | |
| E | T | R | E | | O | L | D | T | I | M | E | R | |
| S | A | P | S | | X | E | S | | T | O | R | Y | |

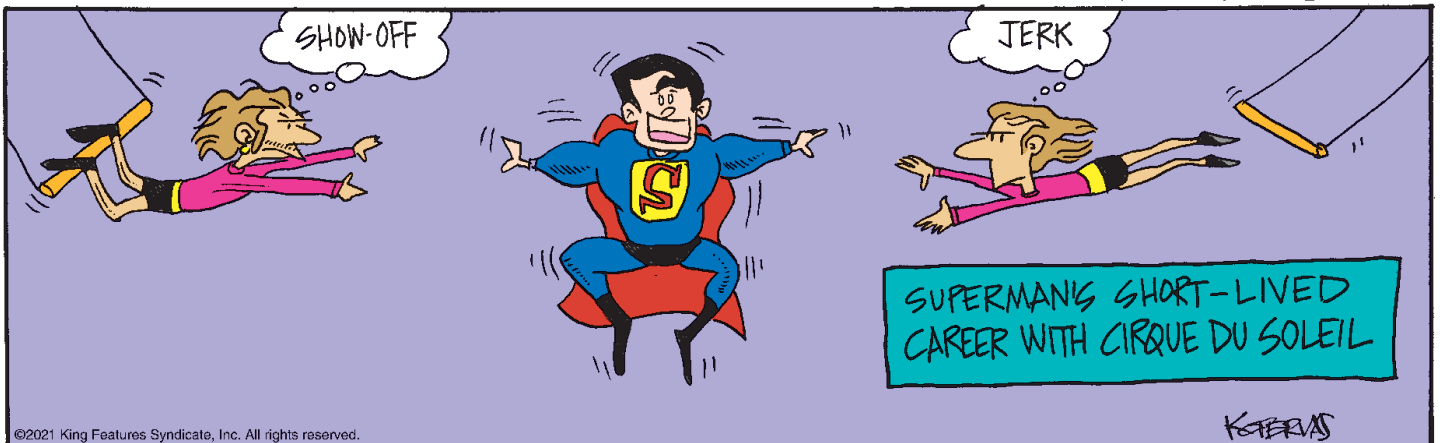
LAFF - A - DAY



"Gentlemen, let's not come to a hasty verdict. This is the first vacation from housework I've had in fifteen years!"

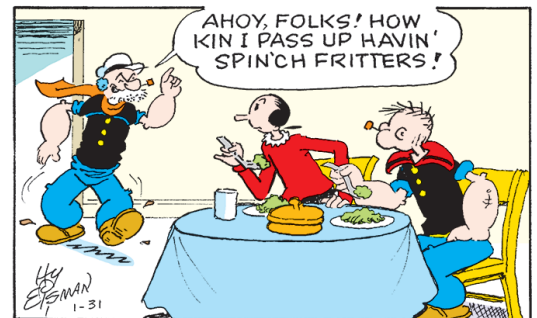
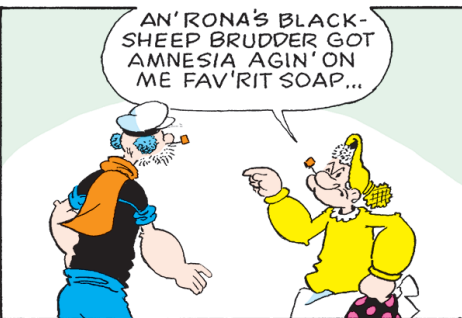
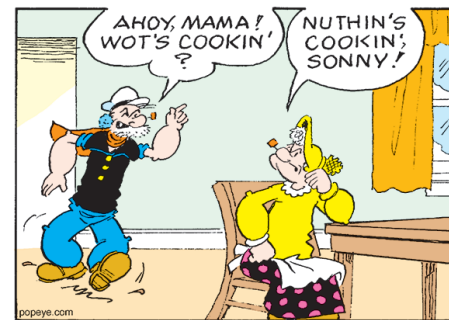
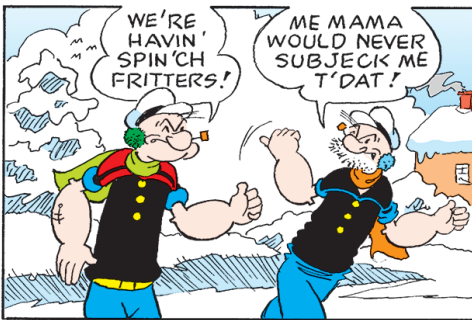
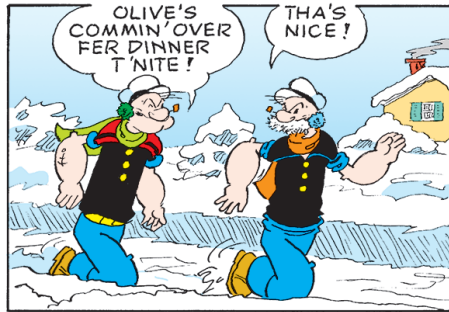
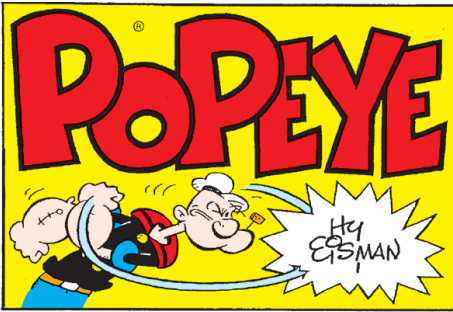
Out on a Limb

by Gary Kopervas



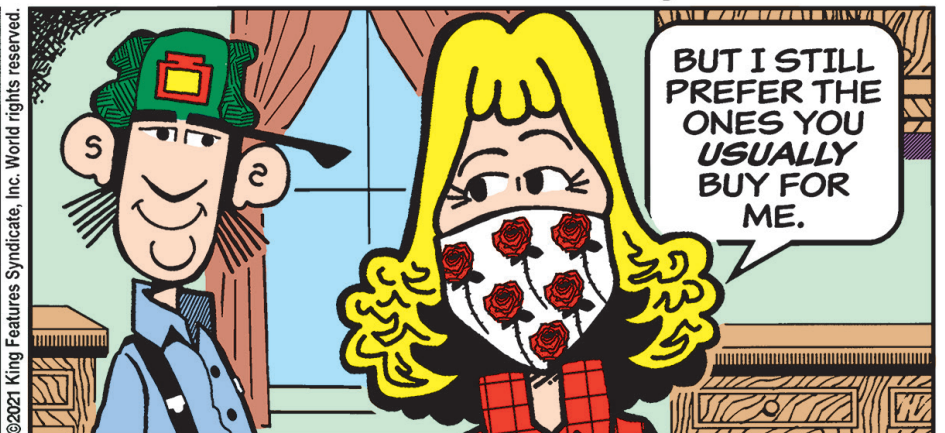
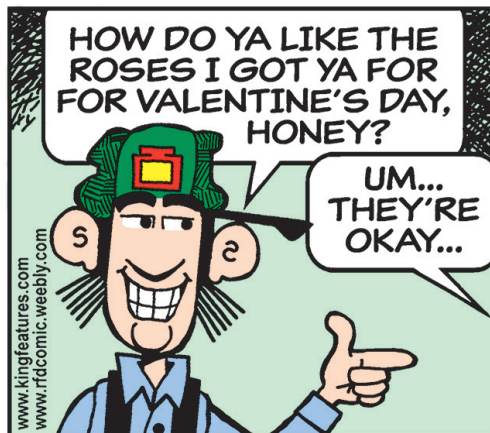
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R.F.D.

by Mike Marland



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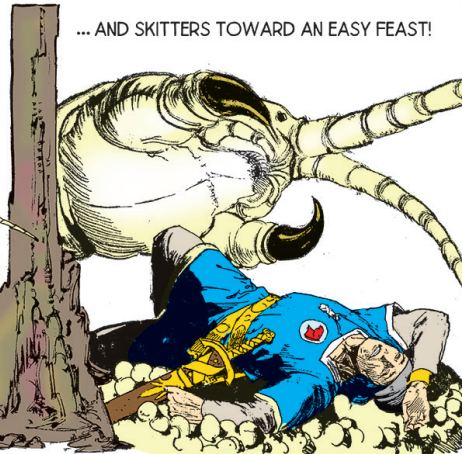
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Prince Valiant

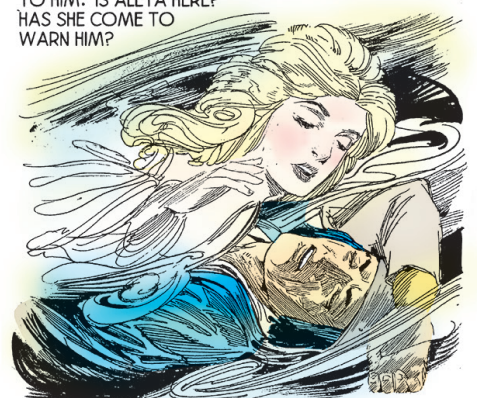
Our Story:
VAL'S FALL IS
BROKEN BY A
NEST OF SQUISHY EGGS -
BUT THE PRESUMED
PARENT TAKES NOTE ...



... AND SKITTERS TOWARD AN EASY FEAST!

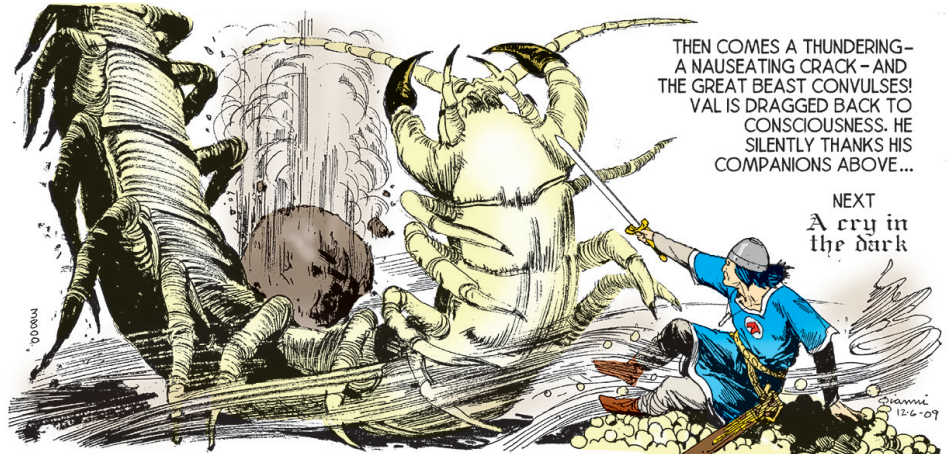


IN VAL'S FOGGED MIND, A VISION SEEMS TO CALL
TO HIM. IS ALETA HERE?
HAS SHE COME TO
WARN HIM?



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NO! THE VISION SWIMS, AND SUDDENLY IT IS AN
OLD WITCH! "NO REST YET, YOUNG PRINCE!"
CACKLES HORRIT. "NO
PEACE FOR
YOU!"

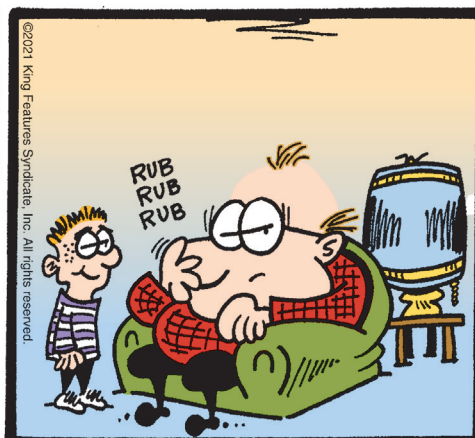
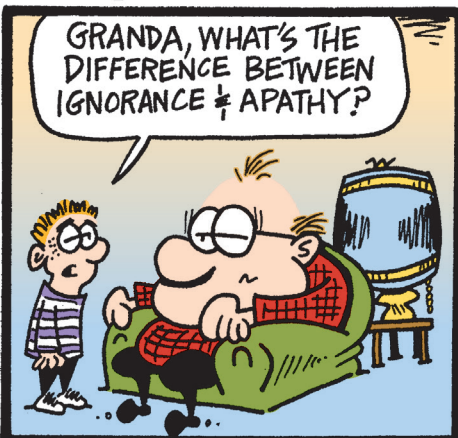


THEN COMES A THUNDERING -
A NAUSEATING CRACK - AND
THE GREAT BEAST CONVULSES!
VAL IS DRAGGED BACK TO
CONSCIOUSNESS. HE
SILENTLY THANKS HIS
COMPANIONS ABOVE...

NEXT
A cry in
the dark

The Spats

by Jeff Pickering



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SENIOR NEWS LINE

by Matilda Charles

Getting the COVID Vaccine

When can we get our COVID vaccine? Seniors everywhere are asking this question, and the answers are often vague, wrong or nonexistent.

Per the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines, the vaccines will be given first to health care workers, then “frontline essential workers,” seniors in descending order of age and those with high-risk medical conditions. While getting the vaccine to health care workers hasn’t been much of a problem, scheduling seniors has been more problematic.

One of the snags has been with distribution. States often don’t know how many doses they’re going to receive, which has made it difficult to schedule people to be at the vaccine site at a certain time on a certain date.

A more serious problem came to light when batches of vaccine sent to various states were found to be defective because they hadn’t been kept at the right temperature along their journey from manufacturing to vaccina-

tion site. In one state, for example, out of 50 boxes of vials, 35 were found to be defective.

All over the country websites have crashed as people have tried to sign up for the vaccine in their area, and many seniors have found the computer program impossible to use.

Do you know how to get on the list to receive your vaccine? Do you know what group in your state is currently allowed to receive the vaccine, or what priority group you’re in? Each state has been allowed to decide what its definitions is for seniors — over 75, over 70 or over 65.

Your best bet is to contact your doctor’s office. Ask if they have a wait list or can tell you specifically what steps you should take. Call the hospital and your pharmacy. Call your state’s health department.

This is one time where you need to be proactive if you want the vaccine.

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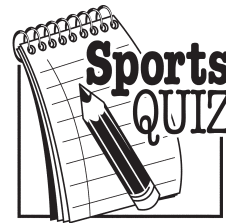
1. What Seattle Seahawks defender scored a safety 12 seconds into Super Bowl XLVIII when he tackled Denver Broncos running back Knowshon Moreno in the end zone?

2. The “Blake Street Bombers” — Larry Walker, Andres Galarraga, Dante Bichette and Vinny Castilla — were members of what MLB team in the mid-1990s?

3. What club did astronaut Alan B. Shepard use to hit golf balls on the moon during the Apollo 14 mission in 1971?

4. Who was knocked out by Muhammad Ali’s controversial “phantom punch” in the first round of a May 1965 heavyweight boxing championship rematch?

5. What style of cheese do competitors chase down a hill in England’s famous Cooper’s Hill Cheese-Rolling and Wake event?



by Ryan A. Berenz

6. Montreal Canadiens goaltender Gump Worsley suffered a concussion in a 1967 road game against the New York Rangers after being hit in the head by what?

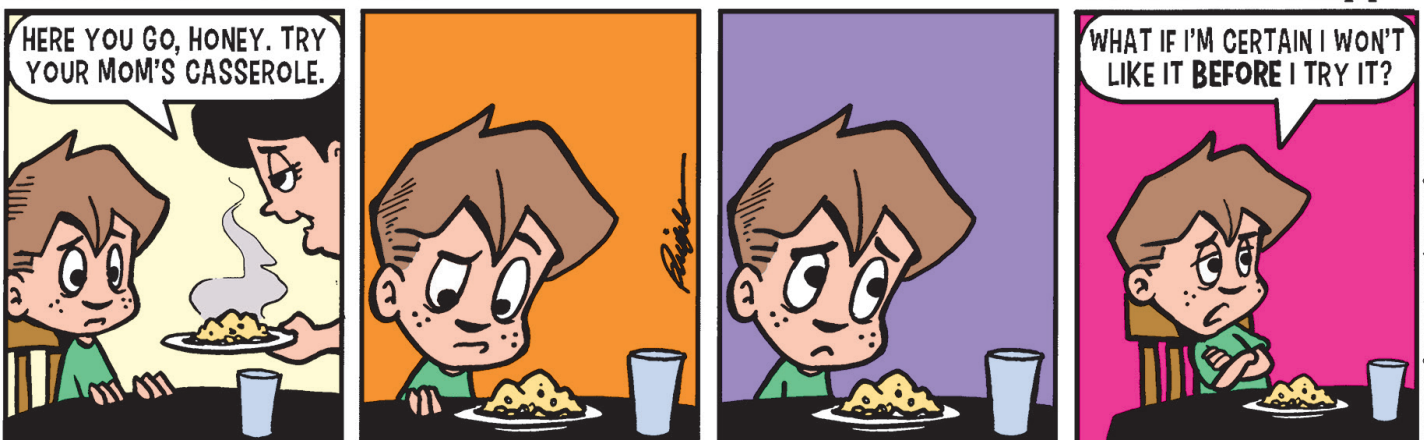
7. In 1938, what American tennis player won the Grand Slam — all four major tournaments — in a single calendar year?

Answers

1. Cliff Avril.
2. The Colorado Rockies.
3. A modified Wilson 6-iron.
4. Sonny Liston.
5. Double Gloucester.
6. An egg thrown from the upper deck.

Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps





Nuisance Critters Worry Rural Newcomer

DEAR PAW'S CORNER: I am relocating soon to rural Tennessee, in an area that the real estate agent said is filled with critters like raccoons, opossums, woodchucks, foxes, coyotes, muskrats, mink, snapping turtles, venomous snakes, crows, free roaming hogs, stray dogs and cats. My question is, What are the regulations for dealing with nuisance critters? Are there any restrictions I need to be aware of? I'm not computer literate and don't know how to look these up online. — *Karl B., via email*

DEAR KARL: I'm more of a pet-care specialist than a wildlife specialist, but I looked up some information for you. Tennessee allows landowners to capture nuisance wildlife and either release or euthanize the animal — unless it's a protected species. You

must use a box trap or other live trap. You can hire a professional to do the trapping for you. And you can call a state wildlife management official for advice, especially if you aren't sure whether an animal is protected. To learn more, perhaps someone who is computer savvy can access the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency website for you and search for "wildlife damage control."

I do hope you'll relocate rather than eliminate most of the species that you trap. Opossums are becoming endangered, and they're not ferocious at all; they eat ticks and are immune to Lyme disease. Bats are a threatened species that love to roost in dark, quiet attics. But they also eat tons of mosquitos. We really need these little natural vacuum cleaners around. Snakes keep the rodent population down. Coyotes and bears play their role in balancing the natural environment, even though they are quite scary to discover near your house.

Send your questions to ask@pawscorner.com.

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Strange BUT TRUE

By Lucie Winborne

- In 2003, Rapper Pusha T wrote the famous McDonald's jingle "I'm Lovin' It," but does not own any of the publishing rights. After wisely learning from that multimillion-dollar mistake, he now owns 40% of the publishing rights for the "We have the meats" campaign from Arby's.
- Baked beans aren't baked. They're stewed.
- After he seized power in Cuba, Fidel Castro banned the board game Monopoly and ordered every set to be destroyed.
- Researchers have found that there are 19 different types of smiles, but only six occur when we're having a good time. The rest happen when we're in pain, embarrassed, uncomfortable, horrified or even miserable!
- Genoan sailors were known colloquially as "Genes" and wore cotton pants, which is where we get the word "jeans."
- A singing birthday card has more computer power than the entire Allied Army of World War II.
- There is a spacecraft graveyard in the Pacific Ocean. Known as "Point Nemo," it is the farthest place on Earth from land and is home to over 300 spacecraft and associated space debris, including the Russian MIR space station, the first object assembled in planetary orbit.
- Horormeister Stephen King has triskaidekaphobia (fear of the number 13) and won't stop writing if he's on the page number is 13 or a multiple of it.
- OMG, the popular acronym for "Oh my God," was first used in writing in a letter to Winston Churchill in 1917, by John Arbuthnot Fisher, a retired Admiral of the British Navy, who said, "I hear that a new order of Knighthood is on the tapis, O.M.G. (Oh! My God!)."

Thought for the Day: "Most heroes live quiet, unassuming existences. They lend a hand and help, without any expectation of gratitude or fanfare." — *Ray Madaghiele*

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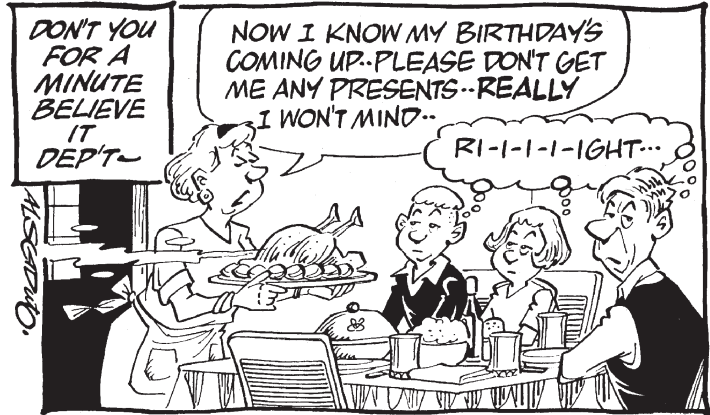
THEY'LL DO IT EVERY TIME

BY AL SCADUTO

HEAD HONCHO LOGIC-



Thank to MAX BAVERMAN, SARASOTA, FL.



Thank to TERRI ALTMAN, BELLMORE, N.Y.

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3-14



Soil temperatures

Tree and shrub roots can be damaged or killed if the temperature of the **soil** around them dips to 10°F or lower. To help protect roots, look for deep ruts or cracks in the soil around the roots, and fill them in with additional soil, tamping down lightly. Watering well in autumn helps to prepare the soil to better protect the roots from dangerous conditions. Covering the root zone **only** (not against the trunk) with 4-6 inches of organic mulch, as well as allowing snow to cover the mulch, will form a barrier that can help the soil retain optimal temperatures for root health. - Brenda Weaver

Source: pss.uvm.edu

VETERANS ★ POST ★

by Freddy Groves

VA, Fitbit Team Up

Do you have a Fitbit activity tracker? If so, the Department of Veterans Affairs has a free program for you.

The VA and Fitbit have hooked up to provide one year of free membership to eligible veterans who have the device. This couldn't have come at a better time, when we need more exercise, less stress and better sleep at night.

Up to 10,000 veterans (including caregivers and VA staff) can get one free year of Fitbit Premium, which includes a health metrics dashboard, guided programs and more. Plus, you'll have access to coaching. Check healthsolutions.fitbit.com.

Eligibility will depend on a few things, such as whether you already use Fitbit and where you are. A bonus for veterans who already use VA healthcare: You

might qualify for a Fitbit Sense, which is the Fitbit health smartwatch.

If for some reason you can't get into the Fitbit program, you have other options for exercise and working out. Step one is to call the gyms closest to you and ask if they offer anything for veterans. CrossFit, Gold's Gym, 24 Hour Fitness, OrangeTheory and numerous others offer discounts and special deals for veterans. Don't forget to try the non-chain locations. If you're eligible for Medicare, check into the Silver Sneakers program at local gyms; many Medicare plans will pay for that.

Near a base? If you're retired, are a MOH recipient or have a disability rating of 100%, you can qualify to use the gym on base.

For at-home equipment, if you're a Veterans Canteen Service (shopvcs.va.gov) member, check out the prices on equipment such as rowing machines and exercise bikes. Look online for a FreeCycle group in your area (freecycle.org), an online listing of items people are giving away. There are 5,300 groups across the U.S. Finally, don't forget [Craigslist.org](https://craigslist.org) for people selling equipment near you.

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Tri-Valley beats Groton Area Lady Tigers

Tri-Valley outscored Groton Area, 20-4, in the second quarter en route to a 52-32 win in girls basketball action played Saturday in Madison. It was part of the NEC-DAK XII clash.

The game was tied at six after the first quarter and the Mustangs took a 26-10 lead at half time and a 32-21 lead at the end of the third quarter.

Gracie Traphagen had a double-double with 15 points, 10 rebounds and three steals. Allyssa Locke had four points, one rebound and four assists. Alyssa Thaler had four points, nine rebounds, one assist and one block. Sydney Leicht had four points and one rebound. Brooke Gengerke had three points, three rebounds and one assist. Anna Fjeldheim had two points.

The Lady Tigers were eight of 26 in two-pointers for 31 percent, two of 15 in three-pointers for 13 percent, made 10 of 13 free throws for 77 percent, had 29 rebounds, 12 turnovers, seven assists, three steals, 11 fouls and one block shot.

- Paul Kosel

No. 2 Northern State Closes out Road Regular Season with a Win

Bismarck, N.D. – The No. 2 Northern State University men's basketball team extended their school record win streak on Saturday evening, defeating the University of Mary by 11 points. The Wolves battled through some foul trouble in the contest, but ultimately came out on top.

THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 70, MARY 59

Records: NSU 12-0 (10-0 NSIC), MARY 4-8 (4-6 NSIC)

Attendance: 250

HOW IT HAPPENED

- The first half with a back and forth battle with neither team taking a lead larger than seven points
- Northern entered the locker room with a 2-point lead and came out with a new defensive presence in the second
- NSU held the Marauders to 32.1% from the floor and 22.2% from the foul line in the second, giving up just 26 points
- UMary did edge out the Wolves by one in rebounds, however Northern forced more turnovers resulting in nine points
- The Wolves shot 53.8% from the floor, 43.8% from the 3-point line, and 46.7% from the foul line in the win
- They added 32 points in the paint, seven points off the bench, and six second chance and fast break points
- In addition, NSU knocked down seven 3-pointers and recorded 17 assists, 11 steals, and five blocks
- Three Wolves scored in double figures and four of the starting five tallied 3-plus assists, 4-plus rebounds, and at least one steal

NORTHERN STATE STATISTICAL STANDOUTS

- Mason Stark: 24 points, 60.0 FG%, 4 rebounds, 4 steals, 3 assists
- Andrew Kallman: 12 points, 80.0 FG%, 8 rebounds, 5 assists
- Tommy Chatman: 12 points, 54.5 FG%, 4 rebounds
- Jordan Belka: 6 points, 7 rebounds, 3 assists, 3 steals

UP NEXT

The Wolves will close out the regular season at home the next two weekends versus Minot State and MSU Moorhead. Northern will tip-off with the Beavers at 7 p.m. on Friday, February 12 and at 4 p.m. on Saturday. Live video, stat, and audio links are available on the men's basketball schedule on nsuwolves.com.

Click on ad below for more details

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CONGRESSMAN
DUSTY JOHNSON
Representing **SOUTH DAKOTA** at large



A New Tax Season

As we all know by now, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted just about every part of life – federal government agencies are no exception. One of the most frustrating realities of this pandemic was the impact it had on IRS operations.

In the spring of 2020, the IRS was processing not only 2019 tax returns but the first round of Economic Impact Payments (EIPs) a.k.a. stimulus checks. However, in response to the pandemic and efforts to lessen the spread of the virus, much of the IRS workforce was required to work remotely, resulting in a lengthy pause in the IRS mail processing.

As of today, the IRS has started bringing more employees safely back into work, but they are still woefully behind. While we know the IRS managed to provide tax returns for the majority of 2019 filers and delivered over 100 million EIPs, not every eligible person has received their due payment.

The official 2020 tax filing window opens on February 12, 2021, so below are some tips to keep in mind:

File 2020 taxes electronically. This ensures a quicker return and alleviates potential issues with paper returns getting lost or delayed.

The sooner you file your 2020 returns, the sooner it will be processed.

According to the IRS, any eligible individual who has not yet received either the first or second EIP should claim the Recovery Rebate Credit when filing their 2020 tax return.

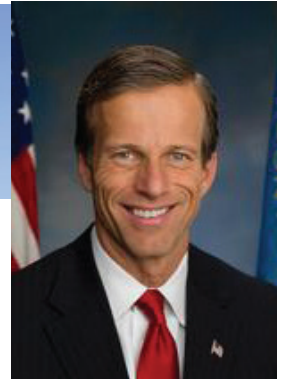
According to the IRS, any eligible individual who has not yet received either the first or second EIP, and is typically a non-filer, should claim the Recovery Rebate Credit on their 2020 tax return by filing a zero-return.

Make sure your information with the IRS is both correct and current. Visit www.irs.gov to create an account, change an address, update direct deposit information, track an EIP, and find additional resources.

The IRS typically uses mail as the primary means of communication. If someone calls you, and claims to be from the IRS, be on alert as this is likely a scam.

As always, my office is here to help constituents as best we can. If you have questions or concerns about the 2020 tax filing season, please reach out at <https://dustyjohnson.house.gov/>.

John Thune
U.S. SENATOR - SOUTH DAKOTA



People Over Partisanship

President Biden pledged to be a president for all Americans. He reiterated that sentiment at his inauguration, stating, "On this January day, my whole soul is in this: Bringing America together, uniting our people, uniting our nation." But it's not enough to talk about unity. It has to be matched with action. And too many of the president's actions so far have been more calculated to appeal to the far-left wing of the Democrat Party than to unite Americans.

In his first two weeks in office, the president has signed off on a long list of executive actions, many of which read like a wish list of liberal priorities. In a nod to the far-left environmental wing of the Democrat Party, the president issued a moratorium on new oil and gas leasing on federal lands and called a halt to the Keystone XL pipeline. On day one of his presidency, President Biden effectively fired 2,000 pipeline workers and told another 9,000 to never show up.

Then, of course, there's the president's order halting construction of the wall on our southern border. The Biden administration has plans for sweeping immigration reform, but does not seem to be placing much of an emphasis on border security. Instead, they've reduced the wall to a symbol of the Trump administration and chose to satisfy immigration activists by halting construction – without offering alternate ways to secure our borders against a flood of illegal immigration or drug and human trafficking and other criminal activity.

Then of course there's the president's decision to overturn the Mexico City policy, which prevents taxpayer dollars from being used to fund abortions in other countries. The majority of Americans do not believe in unrestricted abortion, yet the president has acted to ensure that American tax dollars can go to fund overseas abortions – whether Americans want them to or not. In addition, this administration has given every sign that it intends to pursue a radically pro-abortion agenda that is out of step with the views of the majority of Americans.

And most recently, the president teamed up with Senate Democrats to push through a partisan budget resolution designed to pave the way for a partisan COVID relief measure – despite the fact that Congress has produced five prior COVID relief packages and appropriated trillions of dollars on an overwhelmingly bipartisan basis.

Now is the time for President Biden to show whether he really intends to live up to his inaugural pledge and unify our nation. That means not just talk, but action. It means working with lawmakers of both parties to develop legislation – not pushing exclusively Democrat measures. It means urging Democrat congressional leaders to actually negotiate with Republicans, instead of trying to force through an agenda that lacks the support of half or more of the country. And it means focusing less on checking off the priorities of the far left and more on actually representing the views of a majority of Americans.

South Dakota Governor

Kristi Noem



South Dakota: *Under God, the People Rule*

The Sad Story of Keystone

It may seem cliché, but energy independence is a matter of national security. The United States is a net exporter of energy, which means that we can guarantee our ability to provide for our own energy needs, no matter what situation that the world may throw at us.

With that in mind, I was terribly disheartened to hear that President Biden cancelled the permit for the Keystone XL pipeline, which would have helped secure America's energy independence for years to come.

This issue strikes close to home for us here in South Dakota. Last year, TC Energy – the company building the pipeline – estimated that the project would bring 3,500 jobs to our state. Many of those jobs were already in place, as crews were laying the groundwork for the eventual pipeline itself.

But the impact to the South Dakota economy extends far beyond the direct pipeline jobs. Local businesses – hotels, gas stations, restaurants, and more – benefited from the business brought by these workers.

One such business was the Stroppel Hotel and Mineral Springs in Midland. Laurie Cox, the owner of that business, has said that the Keystone workers who stayed at her hotel for months have become like family. She says that she and other local business owners “responded to a need that was in the community” when they invested and grew these small businesses. And now, it doesn't appear that those investments will pay off for her or her neighbors.

But the impact of this decision goes beyond even the communities directly next to the proposed pipeline route. The pipeline would have helped every family in South Dakota because it would have saved them money on gas for their car, or their gas bill at home. Instead, citizens across South Dakota – and Americans nationwide – should expect to see their gas prices increase in the months and years to come as a result of the Biden administrations actions on oil and gas policy.

We all remember the days when gas was three dollars-per-gallon or higher. Thankfully, that hasn't happened since 2014. But it appears that we can expect far higher gas prices in the very near future.

Cancelling the pipeline is the wrong policy on national security. It's the wrong policy on jobs. But it's also the wrong policy on the environment.

Opponents of Keystone claim that they're supporting the environment. But the pipeline would have made it safer to transport oil from an environmental standpoint. The alternative is to transport it by truck or train – far riskier methods of transit. And the pipeline itself would have been Net-Zero emissions from the day it began operations, according to TC Energy.

Congressman Dusty Johnson is taking the lead on legislation that would get the Keystone XL pipeline reauthorized, and he has my support in this endeavor. We'll continue to fight to defend South Dakota communities from federal overreach. And I promise to work every day to help South Dakota small business owners like Laurie Cox.

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Targeted

I was talking to a friend the other day about the effectiveness of online advertisements. When you're scrolling through social media, you'll often see ads for products you've previously looked at online or items related to your search history. "It's kind of scary," my friend said. "It almost feels like they know what I want to buy before I do."

This past week, I was greeted by a surprise when I returned home to Ft. Pierre. Jean handed me something we had received in the mail while I was working in DC for the week - a stimulus check from the IRS. Clearly, that's not right. I am a member of the United States Senate and should not have been a recipient of this money. There's something wrong when a small business can do better targeting with a few bucks and a Facebook page than the federal government can with trillions of dollars.

Earlier this year, President Biden announced his proposal for COVID-19 relief, which he calls the "American Rescue Plan," that costs \$1.9 trillion and includes, among other things, direct payments up to \$1,400. While all the specifics haven't been fully laid out yet, we are expecting that the Democrats will use one of their previous bills as a starting point. In one of their proposals, a married couple with two children making \$300,000 per year would still receive a stimulus check. It's no wonder President Biden's proposal would cost taxpayers \$1.9 trillion.

Now, just how expensive is \$1.9 trillion? The quick answer is too expensive, especially when we passed a \$900 billion COVID-19 relief bill just over a month ago and much of that money has yet to be spent.

To be frank, the Democrats' proposal reads more like a radical wish list than a practical plan. Their proposal is filled with items that have nothing to do with COVID-19, like a provision that more than doubles the federal minimum wage to \$15 per hour. This alone would be a major job killer and devastating to small businesses and workers in South Dakota. I've already talked to several business owners in South Dakota who have indicated they will be forced to cut staff just to stay open should this drastic hike to the minimum wage take place.

On February 1, nine of my Republican colleagues and I met with President Biden to discuss our conservative alternative to COVID-19 relief. Our plan costs one-third of the price and specifically addresses the pandemic by targeting relief to those who need it most - families, schools, hospitals and small businesses. It also focuses on the expansion of testing and vaccines for states and tribes. Importantly, it omits unnecessary proposals, like the minimum wage, that are not specific to COVID-19 relief but were included in the Democrats' proposal. We told President Biden if he continues to submit to demands from the left-wing of his party, he will likely be the first president to run the country \$30 trillion in debt.

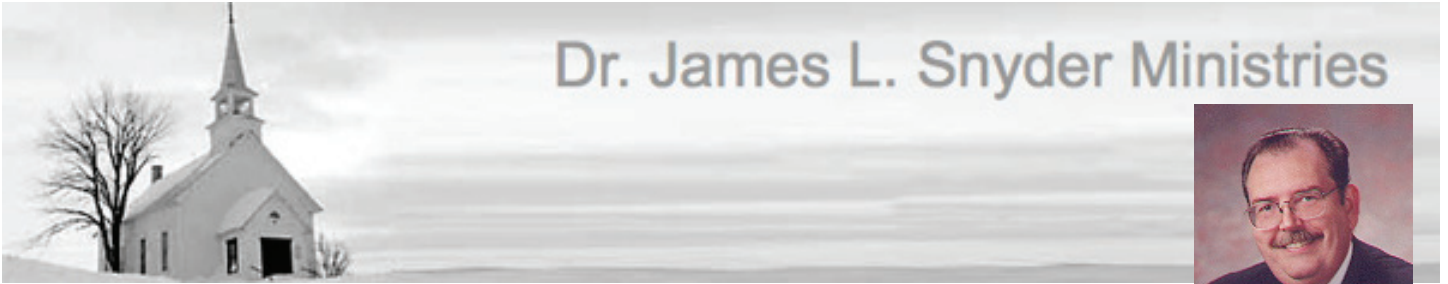
While our meeting with the president was productive, it does not appear that it will change the outcome. This is evident by the fact that Senate Democrats passed a Budget Resolution proposed by Bernie Sanders in the middle of the night. This is a legislative procedure that will allow Democrats to shove through their relief package even without the support of any Republicans.

If Democrats pass this legislation, it will be the sixth COVID-19 relief package that Congress has passed since the start of the pandemic. However, it will be the first that does not have wide bipartisan support. When the pandemic first began in March, members of Congress worked together to pass the CARES Act, a bipartisan bill (passed 96-0 in the Senate) which helped speed up the production of vaccines and save countless small businesses and jobs.

A pandemic is not an excuse to pass a partisan agenda that will saddle future generations with debt they're forced to pay back. Now is not the time to play political games. Now is the time to lead our country from the center, not from the left. Our goal should be to respond to this pandemic with targeted and specific relief to those who need our help the most.

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A Divided House Makes a Happy Home

Never has our world been more divided than today. Politics, religion, sports and on and on I could go. For the most part, so many people think being divided is a negative thing. And for many people it is.

However, after being married to the Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage for almost 50 years, I have discovered that a divided house can be a very happy house. It just depends on how you are divided and what divides you. That makes all the difference in the house.

Being married as long as I have been does not make me an expert in this area. I am only an expert in forbearance, which is the reason there is always a smile on my face. Whether you believe it or not, that smile is genuine.

All of this came to focus recently when we finally finished adding an office room to our house. It has been in process for at least four years. That's where my "forbearance" comes to play.

When I think everything is ready to close, something happens that kicks that can down the road another mile or two.

Last year we were almost ready to finish when the coronavirus hit and put everything on the pause. I'm not too fond of pause unless on a cat or dog.

So, except for some bookcases, the office has come to the point of completion.

This has brought our house to the Great Divide, which has brought a lot of happiness to our home.

On the other side of our house is a room called the Craft Room, which the Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage supervises. This is a room that, although I may be allowed to step in, for various reasons, I don't.

I look into that room, and I see all kinds of crafty stuff that I have no idea in the world what it is. And believe me, I am not going to ask what anything in that room is.

So, at one end of the house, we have my wife's Craft Room, and at the other end of the house, we now have the Pastor Cave, of which I am the sole supervisor and administrator. It is the place where I am in control of everything.

When my wife is in her Craft Room on one side of the house, and I'm in my Pastor Cave on the other side, we are significantly divided but enthusiastically happy.

My wife does her thing in her room, I do my thing in my room, and the twain shall never cross paths.

This great divide has brought a lot of happiness to our home.

The saying is true, what divides us may destroy us. But, if put together craftily, what divides us may bring us together on a different level.

She's happy in her room, I'm happy in my room, and the house rings with enthusiastic happiness.

Occasionally, my wife will come to the door of the Pastor Cave and say very enthusiastically, "Look what I just made." Then she shows me some craft that she has put together.

Because I'm not very crafty, what she shows me is very delightful, and I express my great delight in her craftiness.

One of the essential aspects of a good marriage is knowing what the other person delights in.

For example, my wife delights in crafts. I could not spend five minutes in a craft room working on some craft. I would go absolutely insane. I probably would cut myself using some of them in her craft room.

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My wife takes great delight in working in her craft room. And you know what they say, a delighted wife means a delighted husband.

I am delighted when she is delighted, and that makes everything come together.

I'm happy when I'm in my Pastor Cave and take great delight in what I'm doing. I have everything at my fingertips that I need to do that makes me happy.

If our home weren't so divided, we wouldn't have all that delight that we enjoy right now.

When we first started our marriage escapades almost 50 years ago, I had no idea that we would end up so marvelously divided as we are today. If someone would've told me that she would have her room one day to do what she likes to do and I would have my room to do what I like to do, I would've thought they were crazy.

I enjoy crazy today.

The other night I mentioned to my wife as we were watching TV that someone in the church had a birthday.

"Oh, my," she said very enthusiastically, "I need to go and make them a birthday card." And off she went to make a birthday card.

It may be a thank you card that we need to send to some family member or friend. And the good thing about all of this is, we don't have to go out to purchase any cards of any nature or holiday.

It's so wonderful to have all that you need where you need it.

I read in the Bible just the other day a wonderful verse, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3).

Amos must've been a husband to say something like this. The important thing is the focus of the agreement. At the opposite ends of our house, my wife and I are in full agreement.

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#349 in a series

Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

Weekend reporting, but good numbers nonetheless. There were 111,900 new case reports today. This is exceptionally low: Except for Christmas Day and Thanksgiving, both of which were almost certainly reporting anomalies, we haven't seen a number this low since November 8. We now have reported 26,949,000 new cases in the US during the pandemic, 0.4% more than yesterday; we'll be over 27 million before midday tomorrow. Hospitalizations are continuing to decline and are at 86,373 today.

There has been a decline in testing over the past couple of weeks; test numbers peaked on January 18 and have declined since then; the decline is almost 20 percent in that time. New cases have also been decreasing over that time. That could be a result of the reduced testing, but it could also be a real drop. One way to tell is to look at test positivity rates, the percentage of tests done which come back positive. When that number is high, it's a good sign there is undetected community spread and you are not testing enough; when that number is low, you can fairly safely conclude you are getting an accurate picture of community spread and you are testing enough. The fact that positivity is declining right along with new cases and testing is a pretty good indication that we are having an actual decrease in new cases. Nonetheless, this would be a good time to step up testing. As case numbers decline, we have a prayer of getting back to some semblance of contact tracing is there is enough testing. That would be nice; it would also be helpful if another surge caused by these new variants emerges. I'm getting a sense folks have decided to put all of our eggs in the vaccine basket, and I'd be a whole lot more comfortable if we didn't get too relaxed just yet. There's a ways to go yet on the vaccinating.

Can I just remind all the fans of football and party snacks that this is not a great time to gather with your friends around the big screen to tip up a beer and cheer on your team in the Super Bowl tomorrow? If you consider that there's a pandemic on, that you can't enjoy a beverage or Buffalo wings while masked, that most watch parties will be held indoors, and that shouting at the TV propels virus farther than quiet speaking, a Super Bowl party isn't the best idea you've had this year. I do not want to see the Super Bowl become a superspreader. Please think seriously about staying home.

We reported 2857 deaths today, which is lower as one would expect on a Saturday. There have been 461,765 deaths so far in the pandemic in the US, 0.6% more than we had yesterday.

We should mark the anniversary of the first US death from Covid-19. The deceased was Patricia Dowd, who lived in the Bay Area of California. She died last February 6, and she was not known to have died from Covid-19 until months later when retrospective testing revealed she was infected. We are now close to a half-million deaths down the road from that day, and the dying continues apace, in fact, over the past few weeks, at the highest rate of the pandemic.

It's been a thing when you get vaccinated to take a selfie and post it to social media, maybe just to celebrate and maybe to nudge reluctant friends and relatives to sign up for vaccine as soon as they're able. I certainly do understand the impulse and applaud the act. But some folks are taking selfies with their vaccine cards, those little items that show which vaccine you received and the date for your next dose; and that is apparently not a good idea at all. The Better Business Bureau is warning Americans that, because those cards often contain personal information, you can be setting yourself up for identity theft. Armed with just your name and birthdate, a scammer who checks out your social media account and discovers where you were born can put together enough digits from your Social Security number to start opening accounts or taking out loans in your name, maybe even collecting your tax refund. Word to the wise: Just a photo of you is best.

I have a sort of good news/bad news story. It's about genetics, a topic we've discussed from time to time throughout this pandemic; in fact, we've done a little molecular genetics primer over the past few months. I'm going to hazard a small guess that, if we'd done a survey a year ago, most folks hanging out here would not have said they had a New Year's resolution for 2020 to expand their knowledge of either molecular or microbial genetics, yet here we are. Sorry about that, but we're going to need to go there again, and tonight's the night. I'll spare you the fine points, but we do need to discuss some basics.

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Early on, we established that this coronavirus we're dealing with was not a big mutator; in fact, we said it is remarkably stable, genetically speaking. We pointed out that RNA viruses tend not to be very stable, but that this one has a pretty good and pretty unusual proofreading system when it replicates so that mistakes are frequently caught and fixed before they get incorporated into the viral genome. Then the virus made a liar out of us by mutating all over the place. We've discussed why that seems to be happening—that there is a kind of mutation which doesn't have a proofreading mechanism—the deletion or frame-shift mutation. (If you need a review or were not with us at that time, check out my Update #278 posted November 27 at <https://www.facebook.com/marie.schwabmiller/posts/4210859298930444>.)

But the greater problem is that, while the rate of mutation (that is the number of mutations per replication) may be low and the number of those mutations which might create some sort of biological/evolutionary advantage far lower, if you have enough replications, a rare event starts to get pretty common. A one-in-a-billion event is exceedingly rare in a world where there are only 100 million events, but a much bigger problem in a world where there are 100 trillion events. That's one reason we are so desperate to slow down viral transmission; the more transmissions we have, the more replication we have, and the more replication we have, the more common these rare mutations become, another subject also discussed at the Update linked above.

So there's all that. Then we also discussed the mutability of the influenza virus and the fact that this rapidly-changing virus changes so fast, not just because it's a not-very-well-proofread RNA virus, but also because it is able to change in a different way than simple mutation. That different way is something called recombination.

Recombination doesn't happen because of errors in replication at all; it happens because of a nasty tendency of the virus to exchange genetic material with others of its kind, a little piece breaking off one and melding itself into the other so that we are essentially moving whole chunks of RNA from one virus to the next. Surely you can see the implications of that. We are not talking here about some random mutagenic event which may or (more likely) may not yield a virus that can survive at all; we are talking about the transplantation of a chunk of nucleic acid that we already know is fully functional from one virus to the next. Think of this as a copy-and-paste error where you replace a string of text with a different sequence of text—one that works—all in one fell swoop. Reduces the element of chance by a lot, doesn't it? And it increases substantially the viability and maybe the fitness of the resulting virus.

Well, here's the bad news: There is growing evidence SARS-CoV-2 can undergo recombination. That might explain the rapidity with which new variants seem to be popping up just lately. Now it isn't necessarily the explanation: The unchecked spread of virus in much of the world is certainly sufficient to explain it. But this is a possibility and an unwelcome one at that.

We know that coronaviruses can recombine in the lab. What we don't know for sure is how often they do it in nature. After all, a virus that is replicating in one of your cells is making identical copies of itself. If two of these identical offspring exchange their identical genetic material, no one will ever know; exchanging like for like gets you exactly what you started with. What you need for recombination to matter is a person simultaneously infected with two different variants of the virus or two different variants that arose in the same person over time. If that happens, then the exchange of genetic material could modify the participant viruses; this is the way to get genetic change. Whether this happens is still open to question; but folks are getting nervous at the possibility. It could mean large-scale genetic change we'll have to figure out how to keep up with.

Once again, transmission rate matters here. An evolutionary epidemiologist at the Oxford Big Data Institute in Britain, Katrina Lythgoe, told the New York Times she's not so sure co-infection (simultaneous infection with two variants) happens very much, "[b]ut the new variants of concern have taught us that rare events can still have a big impact." That's sort of what we were saying in that Update linked above about rare mutations: The more opportunities you give a rare event to happen, the more common the rare event can become.

It could be that recombination matters more in the longer-term than in the months of this pandemic. Some scientists are evaluating a couple of centuries of coronaviral evolution (in a manner I'm not entirely

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clear on—will keep looking for that), and they are speculating whether this is how a coronavirus comes to be able to infect a new host, say, a human instead of a bat. I am currently wading through a paper posted in preprint (so it is not yet peer-reviewed) to see whether I can make sense of it, so I'll update you if I become smarter in the next day or two. One thing that seems clear is recombination events don't leave the sort of fingerprint in the viral genome that makes them easy to spot; so there's always the possibility that simple mutagenic viral diversification during viral evolution could account for what we're seeing, according to the way Dr. Feng Gao, a virologist at Jinan University in Guangzhou, China, explained things to the New York Times. Something that hampers the research needed to sort this stuff out is the danger of messing around with coronaviral recombination in the laboratory; the escape risk of strains under study—think hard about this pandemic, and you'll understand the risk—is significant, even if escape is unlikely. So at present, we're left to speculate and to wonder whether what we're seeing is a result of viral evolution or viral recombination. We do not have definitive evidence either way.

There is another reason to be interested in recombination in coronaviruses though, and that brings us to the good news portion of tonight's program. There is a very interesting study published a couple of weeks ago in PLOS Pathogens from a team led by Mark Denison, virologist at Vanderbilt University Medical Center, which identifies an enzyme, nsp14-ExoN, in a mouse coronavirus which appears to be essential to recombination; blocking the enzyme causes the number of recombination events to drop dramatically. Dr. Denison has teamed with a virologist at the University of Connecticut School of Medicine, Sandra Weller, to discover whether there's a way to use this knowledge to treat people with Covid-19.

This is all based on the observation that drugs we thought would interfere with viral replication by introducing errors in the process, drugs like remdesivir, don't work as well as we thought they would. The working theory is that the reason they don't work so well is this nsp14-ExoN is correcting the errors the drugs cause, basically rescuing the virus. So these folks are looking for drugs that block nsp14-ExoN so that the antiviral drugs can be more effective. We're looking at the concept of a drug that enhances the effect of another drug, an approach familiar to anyone who's worked on antiviral therapies for HIV. (We talked a few days ago about the ways HIV research has informed Covid-19 research, and this is an excellent example. If you want to review that or missed it the first time, have a look at my Update #343 posted January 31 at <https://www.facebook.com/marie.schwabmiller/posts/4396798993669806>.) Folks are looking at cocktail (combinations of more than one drug) therapies for Covid-19 similar to the cocktail therapies in use for HIV.

This is being heralded as a groundbreaking approach by many experts. That feeling is expressed well by Dr. Stephen Goldstein, evolutionary virologist at the University of Utah, who explained to the New York Times, "I think it's a good idea because you would push the virus into what's known as an 'error catastrophe'—basically that it would mutate so much that it's lethal for the virus." I'm just going to say that anything that's lethal to this virus is something I can really get behind.

Sherina Jones is a hairstylist whose salon had to close early in the pandemic. She managed to scrape by, but she could see others in her low-income neighborhood weren't getting enough to eat. She had a lot of spare time while she was off work and a little money saved up, so she used her savings to buy a refrigerator which she placed as a community refrigerator. The sign on the door says, "Take what you need, donate what you don't," and so people did just that. Some residents who had a little to spare stocked the refrigerator, and others who needed food took things out.

That was successful, so Jones did an online fundraiser and bought two more refrigerators which she set up in other neighborhoods. This project serves homeless people, day laborers who get their lunches from one of the refrigerators, and single moms, among others. They had stockpiled food in advance of the Thanksgiving holiday with a planned turkey giveaway scheduled for the day before Thanksgiving when one of the refrigerators was stolen. Someone made off with the whole thing—refrigerator and food. It was pretty devastating. But the residents of the community—the same people who have been barely getting by—all pulled together, each giving a little something to replace the stolen food.

A former classmate of Jones saw a post on social media about the theft and decided to donate another refrigerator to replace the stolen one. In fact, they went all-out and bought two. Then a local pastor heard

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about the theft on the news and decided to provide another one; he also convinced a construction worker he knew to build a housing around it so that it couldn't be hauled off by thieves. A group of local artists designed and sold t-shirts to raise money. An advertising agency cut back its planned holiday party and used their savings to buy food and contribute cash. The AP reported all of this activity and the result of a community fundraiser that brought in \$23,000 to support the project.

There was money for food and money for Christmas for some families who needed a boost. And this little community project has developed into a full-scale organization: Jones has applied for nonprofit status. This grew out of a community who has very little and still gives to others. A woman who's out of work made this her work. And as a result, families are getting fed and their future is a bit brighter. Nice.

Take care. We'll talk again.

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| County | Positive Cases | Recovered Cases | Negative Persons | Deceased Among Cases | Community Spread | % RT-PCR Test Positivity Rate (Weekly) |
|-------------|----------------|-----------------|------------------|----------------------|------------------|--|
| Aurora | 451 | 427 | 834 | 15 | Moderate | 5.00% |
| Beadle | 2623 | 2526 | 5586 | 39 | Moderate | 4.64% |
| Bennett | 378 | 363 | 1139 | 9 | Minimal | 0.93% |
| Bon Homme | 1499 | 1473 | 1998 | 24 | Minimal | 1.56% |
| Brookings | 3475 | 3318 | 11179 | 35 | Substantial | 3.32% |
| Brown | 5016 | 4777 | 12043 | 79 | Substantial | 11.35% |
| Brule | 680 | 666 | 1805 | 9 | Moderate | 7.50% |
| Buffalo | 419 | 403 | 879 | 13 | Minimal | 16.00% |
| Butte | 961 | 925 | 3078 | 20 | Moderate | 6.60% |
| Campbell | 126 | 120 | 244 | 4 | Moderate | 13.64% |
| Charles Mix | 1233 | 1190 | 3778 | 18 | Substantial | 10.00% |
| Clark | 355 | 330 | 914 | 4 | Moderate | 0.00% |
| Clay | 1761 | 1726 | 4958 | 15 | Substantial | 3.20% |
| Codington | 3788 | 3620 | 9252 | 75 | Substantial | 9.29% |
| Corson | 461 | 445 | 983 | 11 | Minimal | 13.04% |
| Custer | 730 | 709 | 2599 | 12 | Moderate | 8.45% |
| Davison | 2910 | 2812 | 6200 | 59 | Substantial | 4.35% |
| Day | 623 | 571 | 1679 | 28 | Substantial | 10.53% |
| Deuel | 460 | 446 | 1077 | 8 | Moderate | 11.63% |
| Dewey | 1390 | 1356 | 3721 | 21 | Substantial | 6.45% |
| Douglas | 415 | 399 | 870 | 9 | Minimal | 6.67% |
| Edmunds | 467 | 440 | 982 | 11 | Substantial | 6.67% |
| Fall River | 512 | 487 | 2495 | 15 | Moderate | 9.52% |
| Faulk | 345 | 320 | 666 | 13 | Moderate | 6.67% |
| Grant | 929 | 855 | 2104 | 37 | Substantial | 18.75% |
| Gregory | 514 | 466 | 1185 | 27 | Moderate | 0.00% |
| Haakon | 244 | 231 | 512 | 9 | Minimal | 0.00% |
| Hamlin | 672 | 616 | 1681 | 38 | Moderate | 8.06% |
| Hand | 323 | 311 | 763 | 6 | Minimal | 4.55% |
| Hanson | 341 | 326 | 673 | 4 | Moderate | 22.58% |
| Harding | 91 | 89 | 175 | 1 | None | 0.00% |
| Hughes | 2222 | 2146 | 6232 | 33 | Substantial | 2.01% |
| Hutchinson | 766 | 722 | 2228 | 24 | Moderate | 8.33% |

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| | | | | | | |
|---------------|-------|-------|-------|-----|-------------|--------|
| Hyde | 135 | 133 | 390 | 1 | None | 0.00% |
| Jackson | 270 | 253 | 892 | 14 | None | 0.00% |
| Jerauld | 268 | 246 | 535 | 16 | Minimal | 8.33% |
| Jones | 82 | 81 | 208 | 0 | Minimal | 7.14% |
| Kingsbury | 611 | 584 | 1557 | 13 | Moderate | 6.00% |
| Lake | 1152 | 1098 | 3097 | 17 | Substantial | 5.88% |
| Lawrence | 2766 | 2689 | 8182 | 44 | Moderate | 7.19% |
| Lincoln | 7522 | 7294 | 19194 | 75 | Substantial | 10.27% |
| Lyman | 591 | 577 | 1823 | 10 | Moderate | 7.69% |
| Marshall | 289 | 278 | 1111 | 5 | Moderate | 4.84% |
| McCook | 724 | 691 | 1535 | 24 | Moderate | 13.95% |
| McPherson | 236 | 221 | 530 | 4 | Moderate | 2.52% |
| Meade | 2496 | 2414 | 7312 | 31 | Substantial | 10.38% |
| Mellette | 241 | 236 | 707 | 2 | Minimal | 8.70% |
| Miner | 269 | 245 | 544 | 7 | Moderate | 28.57% |
| Minnehaha | 27257 | 26376 | 73933 | 319 | Substantial | 8.64% |
| Moody | 604 | 576 | 1684 | 16 | Substantial | 6.67% |
| Oglala Lakota | 2042 | 1962 | 6482 | 44 | Substantial | 10.78% |
| Pennington | 12494 | 12061 | 37508 | 177 | Substantial | 8.97% |
| Perkins | 339 | 314 | 756 | 12 | Substantial | 27.50% |
| Potter | 354 | 337 | 793 | 3 | Moderate | 8.70% |
| Roberts | 1117 | 1062 | 3958 | 35 | Substantial | 9.63% |
| Sanborn | 325 | 318 | 656 | 3 | Minimal | 3.39% |
| Spink | 787 | 727 | 2040 | 25 | Substantial | 12.36% |
| Stanley | 320 | 309 | 875 | 2 | Moderate | 0.00% |
| Sully | 135 | 131 | 290 | 3 | Minimal | 0.00% |
| Todd | 1214 | 1176 | 4041 | 26 | Substantial | 4.27% |
| Tripp | 659 | 636 | 1425 | 15 | Moderate | 6.98% |
| Turner | 1046 | 985 | 2577 | 50 | Moderate | 2.74% |
| Union | 1899 | 1796 | 5830 | 39 | Substantial | 9.91% |
| Walworth | 709 | 674 | 1763 | 15 | Moderate | 3.75% |
| Yankton | 2759 | 2686 | 8844 | 28 | Substantial | 4.37% |
| Ziebach | 337 | 327 | 849 | 9 | Minimal | 0.00% |
| Unassigned | 0 | 0 | 1801 | 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 | 4271 | 0 |
| 10-19 years | 12220 | 0 |
| 20-29 years | 19578 | 4 |
| 30-39 years | 17975 | 15 |
| 40-49 years | 15588 | 34 |
| 50-59 years | 15387 | 106 |
| 60-69 years | 12491 | 239 |
| 70-79 years | 6676 | 410 |
| 80+ years | 5043 | 1001 |

SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

| Sex | # of Cases | # of Deaths Among Cases |
|--------|------------|-------------------------|
| Female | 56985 | 857 |
| Male | 52244 | 952 |

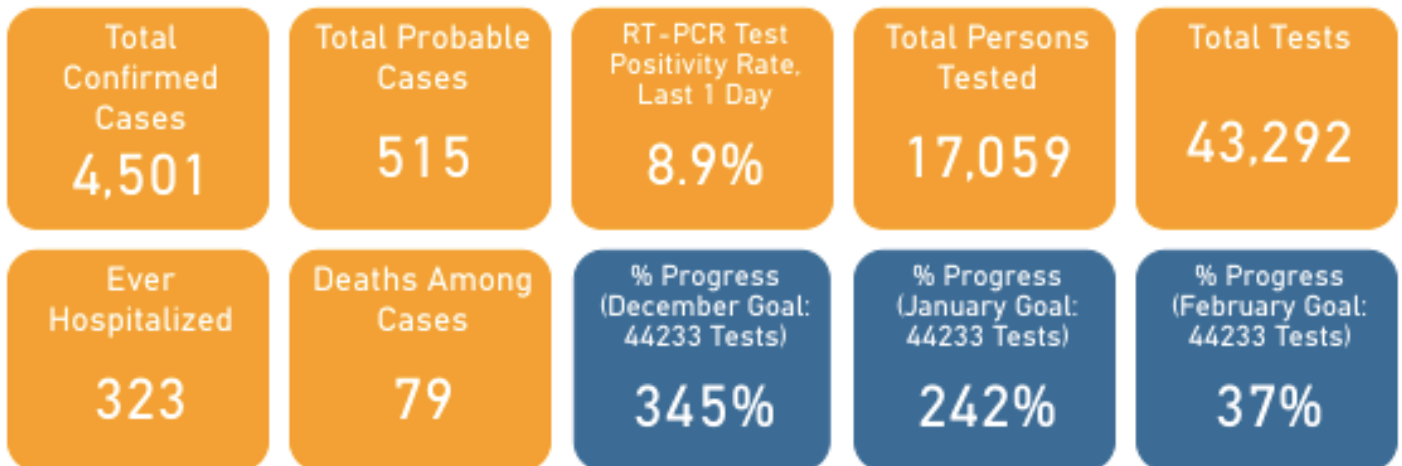
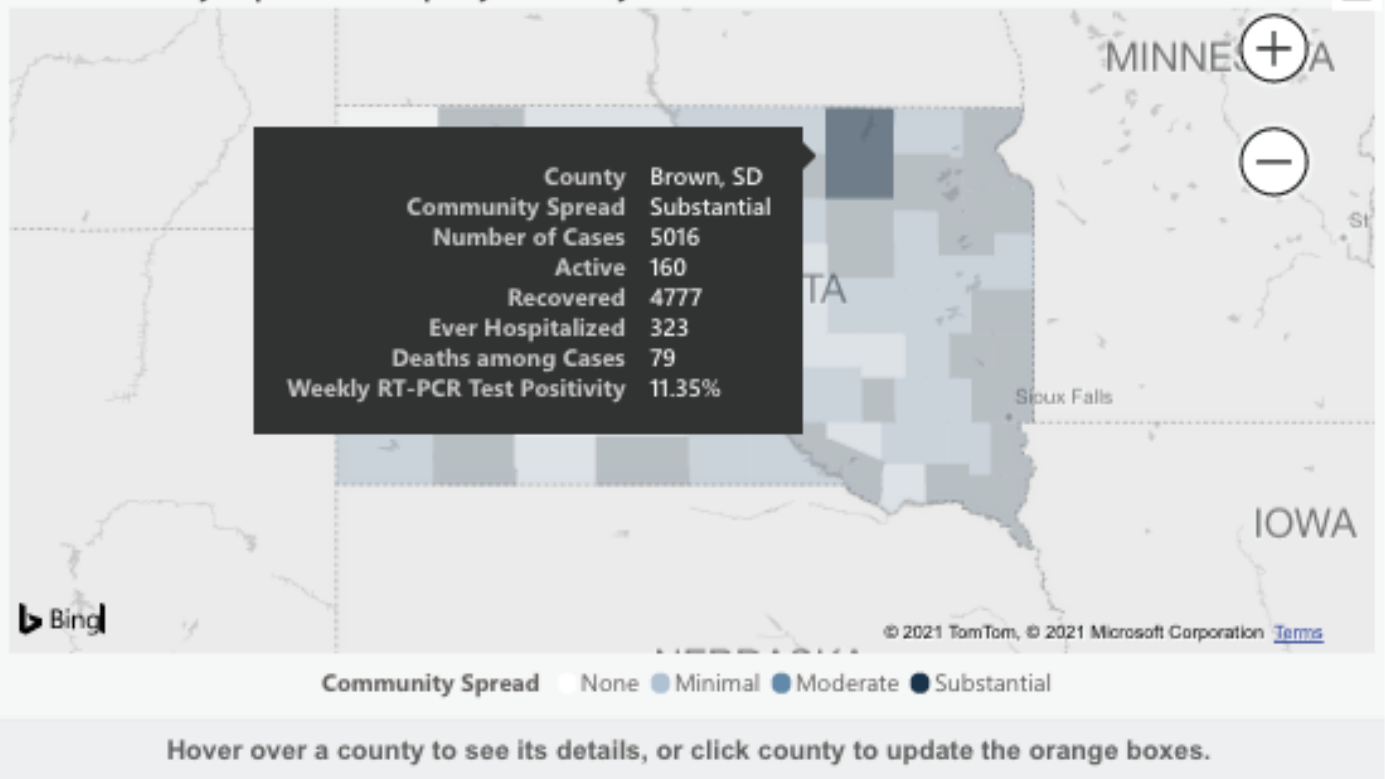
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Brown County



Community Spread Map by County of Residence



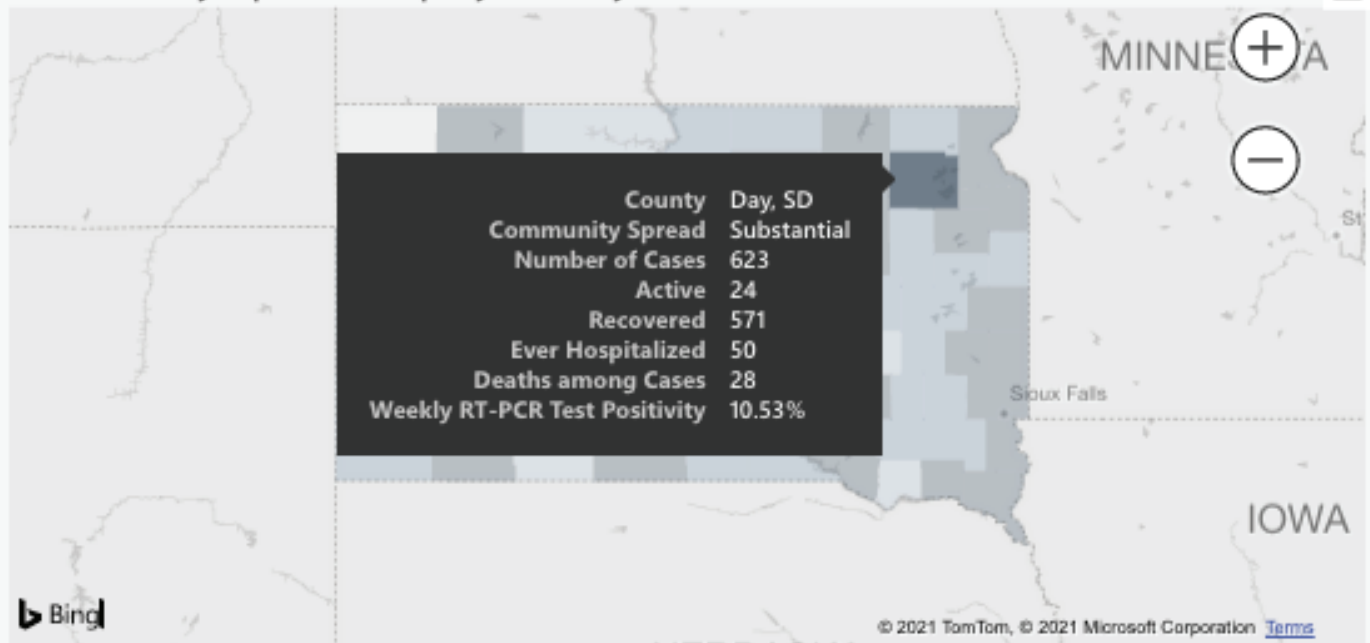
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Day County

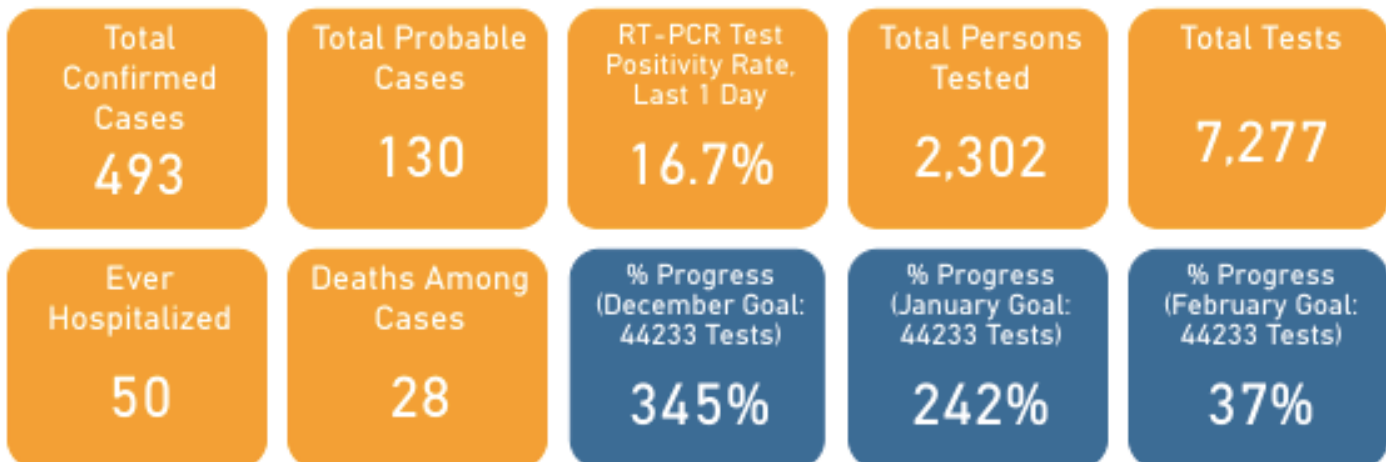


Community Spread Map by County of Residence



Community Spread: None (white), Minimal (light blue), Moderate (medium blue), Substantial (dark blue)

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



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Vaccinations

Total Doses Administered

124,265

Total Persons Administered a Vaccine

85,604

| Manufacturer | Number of Doses |
|--------------|-----------------|
| Moderna | 66,029 |
| Pfizer | 58,236 |

| Doses | Number of Recipients |
|---------------------------|----------------------|
| Moderna - 1 dose | 25,725 |
| Moderna - Series Complete | 20,152 |
| Pfizer - 1 dose | 21,218 |
| Pfizer - Series Complete | 18,509 |

| County | # Doses | # Persons (1 dose) | # Persons (2 doses) | Total # Persons |
|--------------|---------|--------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| Aurora | 293 | 111 | 91 | 202 |
| Beadle | 2374 | 1,142 | 616 | 1,758 |
| Bennett* | 205 | 123 | 41 | 164 |
| Bon Homme* | 1163 | 321 | 421 | 742 |
| Brookings | 3434 | 1,460 | 987 | 2,447 |
| Brown | 5546 | 1,774 | 1,886 | 3,660 |
| Brule* | 760 | 366 | 197 | 563 |
| Buffalo* | 83 | 75 | 4 | 79 |
| Butte | 665 | 387 | 139 | 526 |
| Campbell | 474 | 110 | 182 | 292 |
| Charles Mix* | 1095 | 369 | 363 | 732 |
| Clark | 458 | 234 | 112 | 346 |
| Clay | 2049 | 757 | 646 | 1,403 |
| Codington* | 4069 | 1,619 | 1,225 | 2,844 |
| Corson* | 83 | 57 | 13 | 70 |
| Custer* | 942 | 480 | 231 | 711 |
| Davison | 3369 | 729 | 1,320 | 2,049 |
| Day* | 953 | 425 | 264 | 689 |
| Deuel | 556 | 270 | 143 | 413 |
| Dewey* | 193 | 85 | 54 | 139 |
| Douglas* | 536 | 144 | 196 | 340 |
| Edmunds | 422 | 182 | 120 | 302 |
| Fall River* | 1074 | 488 | 293 | 781 |
| Faulk | 287 | 215 | 36 | 251 |
| Grant* | 981 | 263 | 359 | 622 |
| Gregory* | 657 | 207 | 225 | 432 |
| Haakon* | 241 | 87 | 77 | 164 |

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| | | | | |
|----------------|-------|--------|--------|--------|
| Hamlin | 673 | 305 | 184 | 489 |
| Hand | 516 | 184 | 166 | 350 |
| Hanson | 165 | 39 | 63 | 102 |
| Harding | 25 | 19 | 3 | 22 |
| Hughes* | 2887 | 1,267 | 810 | 2,077 |
| Hutchinson* | 1379 | 343 | 518 | 861 |
| Hyde* | 242 | 60 | 91 | 151 |
| Jackson* | 162 | 92 | 35 | 127 |
| Jerauld | 234 | 100 | 67 | 167 |
| Jones* | 265 | 101 | 82 | 183 |
| Kingsbury | 802 | 304 | 249 | 553 |
| Lake | 1425 | 629 | 398 | 1,027 |
| Lawrence | 2569 | 1,645 | 462 | 2,107 |
| Lincoln | 11957 | 3,251 | 4,353 | 7,604 |
| Lyman* | 267 | 159 | 54 | 213 |
| Marshall* | 603 | 317 | 143 | 460 |
| McCook | 839 | 323 | 258 | 581 |
| McPherson | 80 | 40 | 20 | 60 |
| Meade* | 2132 | 1,194 | 469 | 1,663 |
| Mellette* | 17 | 5 | 6 | 11 |
| Miner | 333 | 133 | 100 | 233 |
| Minnehaha | 33395 | 11,475 | 10,960 | 22,435 |
| Moody* | 595 | 197 | 199 | 396 |
| Oglala Lakota* | 57 | 37 | 10 | 47 |
| Pennington* | 13726 | 6,646 | 3,540 | 10,186 |
| Perkins* | 178 | 106 | 36 | 142 |
| Potter | 295 | 73 | 111 | 184 |
| Roberts* | 1484 | 996 | 244 | 1,240 |
| Sanborn | 363 | 195 | 84 | 279 |
| Spink | 1253 | 329 | 462 | 791 |
| Stanley* | 415 | 175 | 120 | 295 |
| Sully | 121 | 73 | 24 | 97 |
| Todd* | 74 | 26 | 24 | 50 |
| Tripp* | 853 | 363 | 245 | 608 |
| Turner | 1552 | 492 | 530 | 1,022 |
| Union | 824 | 320 | 252 | 572 |
| Walworth* | 767 | 325 | 221 | 546 |
| Yankton | 4684 | 1,250 | 1,717 | 2,967 |
| Ziebach* | 32 | 14 | 9 | 23 |
| Other | 3063 | 861 | 1,101 | 1,962 |

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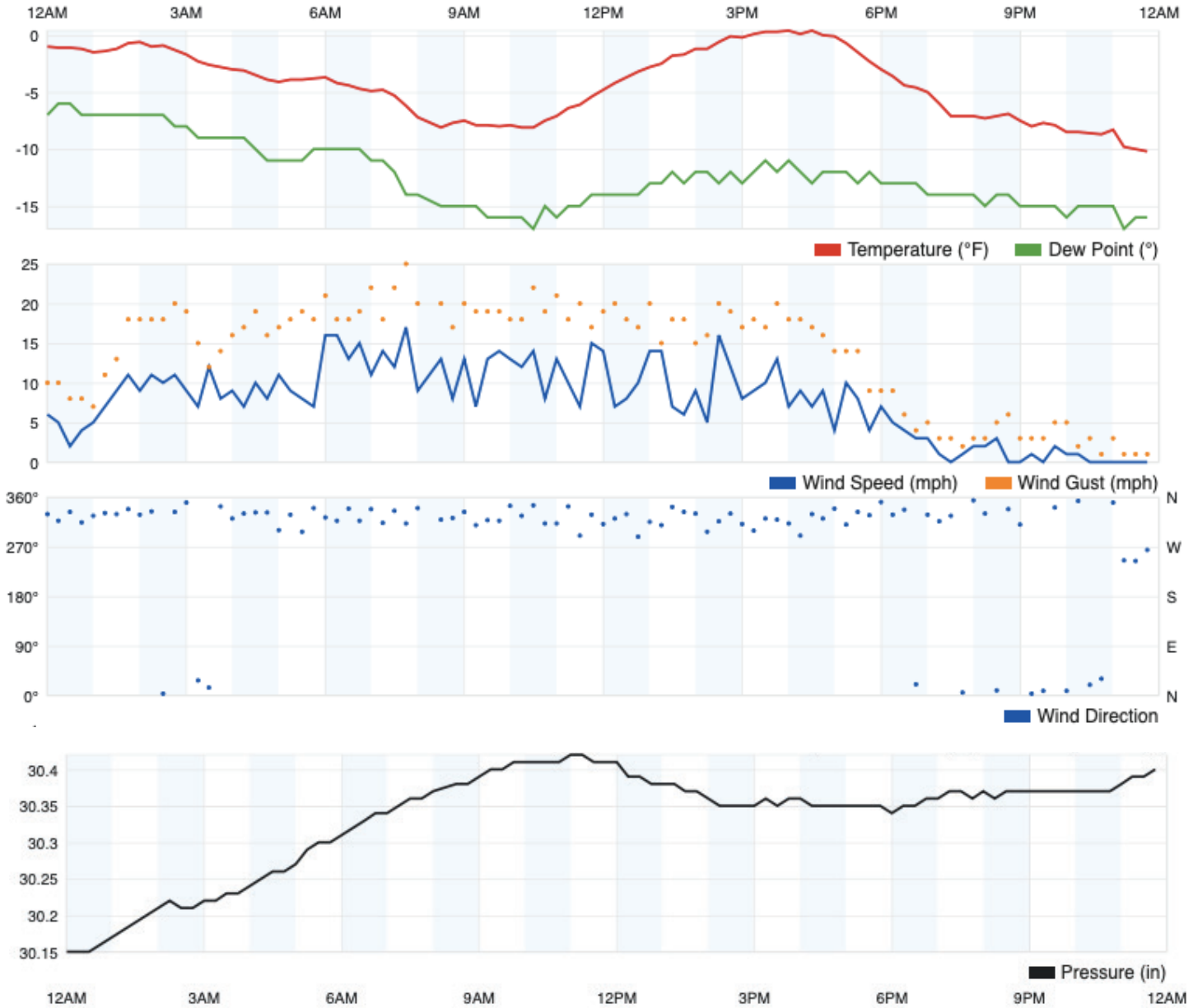
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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| This Afternoon | Tonight | Monday | Monday Night | Tuesday |
|--|---|---|--|---|
|  70% |  |  |  |  |
| Snow Likely | Mostly Cloudy | Cold | Partly Cloudy | Cold |
| High: -2 °F | Low: -13 °F | High: 6 °F | Low: -10 °F | High: 7 °F |



Today

Light snow through early afternoon, expect mainly dry over far ne SD and w MN

-6 to +8°

Wind Chills improving to -15 to -25° this afternoon
Coldest over northeastern SD & western MN

Tonight

-3 to -17°

Wind Chills falling to -15 to near -30° overnight
Coldest over northeastern SD & western MN

Unseasonably Cold through the week

 www.weather.gov/abr
National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD
Created: 2/7/2021 5:44 AM

Light snow will be possible through early afternoon, mainly over central South Dakota where a half inch or less snow is expected today. Wind Chills will improve to -15 to -25° this afternoon, coldest over northeastern SD and western MN. The unseasonably cold conditions will continue through the week.

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FRIGID WEEK AHEAD



An extended period of cold air with bitterly to dangerously cold wind chills is underway across the region

High Temperature Forecast

| | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri |
|-------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Eagle Butte | 6 | 9 | 5 | -3 | 0 |
| Mobridge | 8 | 10 | 6 | -1 | 3 |
| Gettysburg | 7 | 8 | 3 | -4 | -2 |
| Pierre | 12 | 14 | 10 | 3 | 4 |
| Eureka | 3 | 5 | 1 | -5 | -2 |
| Miller | 7 | 11 | 7 | 0 | 1 |
| Aberdeen | 5 | 7 | 3 | -2 | 0 |
| Redfield | 7 | 9 | 5 | -1 | 0 |
| Sisseton | 2 | 4 | 0 | -5 | -3 |
| Watertown | 3 | 5 | 2 | -5 | -4 |
| Milbank | 3 | 6 | 2 | -4 | -3 |
| Wheaton | -1 | 2 | -2 | -6 | -5 |

Low Temperature Forecast

| | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri |
|-------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Eagle Butte | -7 | -6 | -10 | -15 | -15 |
| Mobridge | -8 | -7 | -10 | -13 | -13 |
| Gettysburg | -9 | -7 | -12 | -15 | -15 |
| Pierre | -3 | -2 | -6 | -12 | -12 |
| Eureka | -14 | -11 | -15 | -18 | -18 |
| Miller | -7 | -5 | -9 | -15 | -15 |
| Aberdeen | -12 | -9 | -14 | -17 | -17 |
| Redfield | -9 | -7 | -12 | -16 | -16 |
| Sisseton | -12 | -8 | -14 | -16 | -16 |
| Watertown | -12 | -9 | -16 | -20 | -20 |
| Milbank | -12 | -9 | -14 | -18 | -18 |
| Wheaton | -17 | -13 | -19 | -21 | -21 |

Min Wind Chill Forecast

| | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri |
|-------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Eagle Butte | -20 | -22 | -21 | -29 | -33 |
| Mobridge | -17 | -21 | -20 | -26 | -30 |
| Gettysburg | -22 | -21 | -21 | -30 | -32 |
| Pierre | -13 | -12 | -15 | -23 | -29 |
| Eureka | -24 | -27 | -26 | -34 | -37 |
| Miller | -17 | -17 | -18 | -26 | -32 |
| Aberdeen | -22 | -23 | -23 | -31 | -32 |
| Redfield | -19 | -19 | -19 | -26 | -30 |
| Sisseton | -23 | -23 | -26 | -32 | -34 |
| Watertown | -19 | -21 | -23 | -31 | -36 |
| Milbank | -18 | -21 | -23 | -30 | -32 |
| Wheaton | -29 | -29 | -29 | -35 | -37 |

NWS Aberdeen, SD
Updated: 2/7/2021 11:08 AM CST

Dress in layers, Cover exposed skin, Limit outdoor time,
Don't forget about pets, Check vehicle safety kit



An Arctic air mass will remain firmly entrenched across the region through the entire upcoming work-week, with bitterly to dangerously cold wind chills each morning (frostbite on exposed skin in as little as 10 to 30 minutes). Those across south central South Dakota will feel the "warmest" during this stretch, with wind chills moderating to around zero degrees but only on Monday and Tuesday afternoon. Stay safe out there!

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Today in Weather History

February 7, 1994: Snow falling over the area produced heavy accumulations from central into northeast South Dakota with 11 inches at Kennebec and eight inches at Watertown from the 7th through the 9th. Extreme cold accompanied and followed the snow with low temperatures of 52 below zero at Promise and 45 below zero at Aberdeen on the 9th. Snow accumulation caused a roof to cave in on a drugstore at Bristol. A man died of exposure attempting to walk home near Sioux Falls after his car became stuck in a ditch.

February 7, 2001: Heavy snow of 6 to 16 inches fell across central and northeast South Dakota, resulting in school and activities cancellations, closing of some businesses, and challenging if not impossible travel. Several people became stranded and had to be rescued. There were also flight cancellations and delays along with some vehicle accidents resulting in minor injuries. Some snowfall amounts included, 6 inches at Mound City, Mobridge, Eureka, 7 inches at Milbank and 6 SE McIntosh, 8 inches at Aberdeen, Ipswich, Selby, Iona, and Britton, 9 inches at Clark, 1 S Columbia, Isabel, Webster, and 10 inches at Roscoe, Watertown, and 1 W of Summit. Locations with snowfall of a foot included, Mission Ridge, Murdo, 4 NW Onida, Castlewood, 23 N Highmore, and Timber Lake. Thirteen inches of snow fell at Canning, and Fort Pierre, 14 inches fell at Gettysburg, Eagle Butte, and Pierre with 15 inches at Miller and 16 inches of snow at Clear Lake, Mellette, and Faulkton.

February 7, 2010: A compact but strong area of low pressure moved from Canada and across the Northern Plains from the 7th through the 9th. A prolonged period of moderate to heavy snow developed over far northeast South Dakota and west-central Minnesota, bringing 6 to 8 inches of snow to the area. Some snowfall amounts included, 6 inches at Milbank, Wheaton, and Ortonville; 7 inches at Clear Lake, Sisseton, and Artichoke Lake; 8 inches at Summit, Victor, Wilmot, and Browns Valley.

1812: The Hard Shock of the New Madrid Earthquake series strikes the area around the small town of New Madrid, Missouri. A three-mile-long island, Island #32, was completely sunk! The Mississippi River once again ran backward. This major shock marked the beginning of the end of New Madrid's extended ordeal, even though aftershocks would continue to be felt for years, and the fault is still active. Click [HERE](#) for more information from the USGS.

1835: A Great Freeze took place from February 2-9 across southern Georgia, southeastern South Carolina, and northern Florida. During this freeze, the St. Johns River was frozen, "several rods from the shore," and people were able to walk a distance from the shore. Many citruses and other fruit trees were killed to the ground, never to grow again, when temperatures reached as low as 1°F in Charleston and 8°F in Jacksonville. A Florida gentleman told a newspaper that the state, "appeared as desolate as if a fire had swept over it," after the severe freeze of that winter season. According to Florida Citrus Mutual, this freeze was so severe that it is considered an impact freeze. This indicates that the freeze, annihilate entire groves across the state, killing both mature and young citrus trees while causing a profound economic impact on the citrus industry and prompting growers to replant farther south. This freeze ended attempts to grow citrus in southern Georgia, southeastern South Carolina, and northern Florida.

1892: The temperature falls to 90 degrees below zero in Verkhoyansk, Russia, on this day. The temperature was considered the coldest temperature ever recorded in the Northern Hemisphere. However, this reading was done by a spirit thermometer, which is less accurate than a mercury thermometer. The accepted record was 90 degrees below zero in Oymyakon on February 6, 1933.

1933: The USS Ramapo, a 478 ft. Navy oiler was traveling from Manila to San Diego when it encountered the tallest rogue wave ever recorded. The wave measured 112 feet in height was caused by 70 mph winds over a broad fetch of the ocean.

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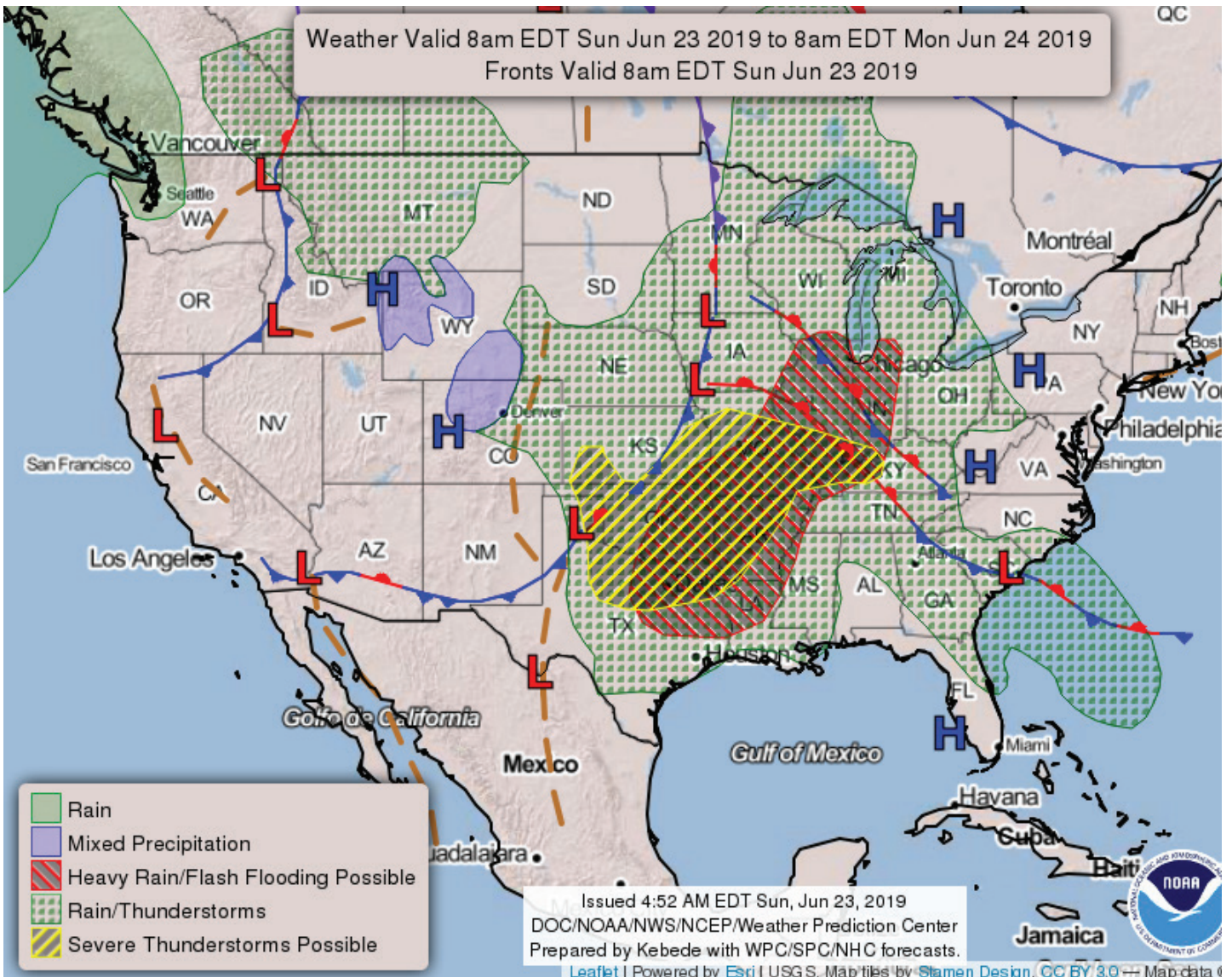
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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 1 °F at 3:36 PM
Low Temp: -11 °F at 11:53 PM
Wind: 25 mph at 7:41 AM
Precip:

Today's Info

Record High: 62° in 1987
Record Low: -42° in 1895
Average High: 26°F
Average Low: 4°F
Average Precip in Feb.: 0.09
Precip to date in Feb.: 0.14
Average Precip to date: 0.56
Precip Year to Date: 0.14
Sunset Tonight: 5:50 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:45 a.m.



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HAS ANYONE HERE SEEN GOD?

A rather well to do person decided that he would visit a church in a poverty-stricken area to see how people in the "poor section" of town worshiped. On the bottom of the cover of the Sunday bulletin was a statement that shocked him: "Not all who worship here are Christians. Do not leave your purse or any other personal belongings unattended."

It is tragic, but true, that many who profess one thing do not practice what they preach. But, we who claim to be followers of Jesus are responsible for living as He lived by doing the things He did. We are to back up our beliefs with our behavior. It is not how we want to live that matters. It is how God expects us to live that matters and must make the difference in our lives an obligation.

When the gears of a transmission turn inside of its transmission case, it will cause the crankshaft to turn, and the car will be ready to move when it is put in gear.

So it is with a Christian.

When our hearts are "turned" by the Holy Spirit to the things of God, we will be ready to serve the Lord. When this happens, others will see us "move" or live in agreement with His Word and His ways.

The life of the Christian is much more than churchgoing, Bible-reading, hymn-singing, and tithe-giving. If we do all of those "good things," we will still fall short of how God intends us to live: walk blamelessly and live righteously.

The Psalmist said that we are to be "blameless in your walk...and do what is righteous." Being blameless means that when others look at us, they find no faults in the way we live because we walk in righteous paths – for His Name's sake.

Prayer: Sometimes, Lord, what You ask of us seems unreal, even unfair. But, through Christ all things for God are possible. Help us to live righteously. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Those who lead blameless lives and do what is right, speaking the truth from sincere hearts. Psalm 15:2

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News from the Associated Press

South Dakota confirms 5 new deaths due to the coronavirus

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota health officials on Sunday reported five new deaths due to the coronavirus, lifting the total number of fatalities to 1,809 since the start of the pandemic.

There have been 31 deaths confirmed in February. The COVID Tracking Project ranks South Dakota's death count at 40th highest in the country overall and the sixth highest per capita at about 204 deaths per 100,000 people.

The update showed 98 new COVID-19 cases out of 509 examinations that were processed in the last day, lifting the total number of positive tests to 109,229. South Dakota is 46th in the country for the number of new cases per capita in the last two weeks. In that time, the rolling average number of daily new cases has decreased by 37%, researchers said.

One in every 831 people in South Dakota tested positive in the past week.

There are 113 people hospitalized due to complications from the coronavirus, with 25 in intensive care units and 15 on ventilators.

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.

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — These South Dakota lotteries were drawn Saturday:

Dakota Cash

23-25-27-33-34

(twenty-three, twenty-five, twenty-seven, thirty-three, thirty-four)

Estimated jackpot: \$22,000

Lotto America

13-16-28-44-51, Star Ball: 9, ASB: 2

(thirteen, sixteen, twenty-eight, forty-four, fifty-one; Star Ball: nine; ASB: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$2.85 million

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$68 million

Powerball

01-16-48-49-65, Powerball: 8, Power Play: 2

(one, sixteen, forty-eight, forty-nine, sixty-five; Powerball: eight; Power Play: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$30 million

S. Dakota St. beats South Dakota 89-78

BROOKINGS, S.D. (AP) — Douglas Wilson and Matt Dentlinger scored 21 points apiece as South Dakota State topped South Dakota 89-78 on Saturday night.

Baylor Scheierman had 19 points, nine assists and eight rebounds for South Dakota State (11-4, 7-2 Summit League). Noah Freidel added 10 points.

Stanley Umude had 34 points for the Coyotes (11-7, 10-3), whose 10-game win streak ended with the loss. A.J. Plitzuweit added 20 points. Xavier Fuller had eight rebounds.

The Jackrabbits registered their first win in three tries against the Coyotes this season. In the most recent matchup, South Dakota defeated South Dakota State 64-56 on Friday.

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

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No. 23 South Dakota State women rally to beat South Dakota

BROOKINGS, S.D. (AP) — Tylee Irwin hit a go-ahead jumper with 14.1 seconds left, Myah Selland and Paiton Burckhard combined for 48 points, and No. 23 South Dakota State scored the last 13 points of the game to beat South Dakota 80-75 on Saturday night.

Irwin's bucket gave the Jackrabbits a 76-75 advantage. Following a South Dakota timeout, Tori Nelson stole the Coyotes' inbounds pass and then made a pair of free throws with 9.2 seconds remaining to stretch the Jackrabbits' lead to 78-75.

After another Coyotes' timeout, Chloe Lamb shot an air ball on a 3-point attempt with five seconds left. Nelson sealed it with a pair of free throws.

South Dakota State (15-2, 8-0 Summit League), which also beat South Dakota 64-45 on Friday night, has won 12 straight.

Selland scored 26 points with two 3-pointers for South Dakota State. Burckhard finished with 22 points and made four 3s. Irwin added 12 points and Nelson had 11.

Lamb had 18 points to lead South Dakota (10-5, 6-2). Hannah Sjerven scored 10 of her 16 points in the fourth quarter. Liv Korngable added 15 points.

Jeniah Ugofsky's 3-pointer gave the Coyotes their largest lead, 75-67 with 2:56 remaining. Ugofsky finished with seven points.

More AP women's college basketball: <https://apnews.com/hub/womens-college-basketball> and https://twitter.com/AP_Top25.

Six additional coronavirus deaths in South Dakota

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota health officials reported six new coronavirus deaths on Saturday and 188 additional positive confirmed cases.

Since the start of the pandemic in South Dakota, 1,804 people have died on COVID-19 complications.

The total number of cases of the virus in the state to date is 109,132, according to the Department of Health.

Among the six deaths, one was a woman and five were men. Two were in their 50s, one in the 60 to 69 age range, two in their 70s and one was age 80 or older. They were residents of Codington, Jackson, Minnehaha and Todd counties.

People currently hospitalized from COVID-19 declined by six to 115, the DOH reported.

As of Saturday's report, the state has administered 115,783 doses of the vaccine to 80,700 people. Of the residents who have received the vaccine, 37,876 have completed both doses.

Virus lying low at Capitol, but still dominates agenda

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota lawmakers have survived to nearly the halfway mark in their 9-week legislative session without an outbreak of coronavirus infections, but that doesn't mean the coronavirus isn't on their minds. The pandemic has touched nearly every aspect of South Dakota law, from the judicial system to a state budget suddenly flush with money.

They are also preparing for the possibility that recreational marijuana will become legal in July, requiring an overhaul to banking, law enforcement and business licenses. With five weeks left in a legislative

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session that some lawmakers have described as “unprecedented,” here’s a look at where things stand with pandemic laws, the state’s budget, and marijuana:

CORONAVIRUS

Despite precautions like wearing masks noticeably lax in many parts of the Capitol, legislative leaders say they have not seen infections among lawmakers. The Senate has a rule requiring masks; in the House, it’s merely encouraged, and many Republicans aren’t masking. But so far, the session has not been derailed by the coronavirus.

“I think we are going to stay on track,” said Sen. Michael Deidrich, the assistant Republican leader. “We’re going to do our job in the amount of time that we committed to and get the people’s business done.”

He is pushing a bill through the Senate that would shield businesses, schools and hospitals from liability for coronavirus infections unless someone knowingly spread the virus. Proponents say the bill protects businesses, hospitals and schools that have already struggled during the pandemic, doing the best they can to stay open and protect people. But groups like the American Association of Retired Persons have opposed it, saying it would erode protections and the ability for people to sue for serious health violations. The bill already sailed through the House and is expected to have broad support next week from Republicans who dominate the Senate.

There are fewer than a dozen Democrats in the Capitol this year, but they brought a proposal for a statewide mask mandate in many public places. It was dismissed by a majority of Republicans, who said they prefer Gov. Kristi Noem’s approach of relying on personal responsibility to prevent infections. A handful of Republicans proposed barring cities or counties from issuing health orders to private businesses.

Noem’s strategy has brought criticism. While the state has seen dropping numbers of coronavirus infections in recent weeks, it is still recovering from a surge late last year that sent the rate of deaths per capita to the sixth-highest in the nation and the worst in the Midwest.

So far the vaccine rollout has gone smoothly, with almost 10% of the population receiving at least one dose of the vaccine. As the state prepares to administer vaccines to a much larger group of people, Noem on Friday issued an order allowing dentists with experience giving shots to administer the vaccine.

Her administration is also pushing to have several temporary pandemic measures made permanent, including the ability to use court orders to force people with coronavirus infections to isolate, allowing physicians to practice medicine through video calls and remote technology, and allowing people with medical licenses from other states to practice in South Dakota.

STATE BUDGET

Legislators are sitting on over \$250 million in one-time funds, largely thanks to the state offsetting expenses tied to the coronavirus with federal relief funds. But just because there’s plenty of money doesn’t mean lawmakers won’t be haggling over it.

“A lot of times it’s easier to have a legislative session with no money than when we have a lot of money,” said Sen. Troy Heinert, the Democratic leader in the Senate.

Noem, with the support of Senate Republicans, is pushing for the largest amount of money — \$100 million — to be spent on expanding broadband internet access across the state. She has also proposed putting \$50 million toward an endowment for college scholarships. Lawmakers are coming forward with their ideas, including ways to expand slaughterhouses and improve rural roads.

MARIJUANA

Many in the Capitol are awaiting word on a decision from a South Dakota circuit court judge on a lawsuit challenging a voter-passed constitutional amendment that would legalize recreational marijuana. If the amendment survives the legal challenge from Noem’s administration, as well as an appeal expected at the state Supreme Court, selling and possessing small amounts of marijuana will become legal in state law on July 1. Though many lawmakers are personally opposed to marijuana legalization, they are coming around to the fact they must address it.

“The outstanding litigation on that certainly has a psychological bearing on the whole process, but we’re not ignoring it in any way,” said Gary Cammack, the Senate Republican leader.

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Legislators have formed a "cannabis caucus" dedicated to creating a framework for the pot industry, tackling everything from licensing to banking for the industry. Other proposals suggest removing marijuana-related convictions from background reports, as well as prohibiting its use in vehicles.

Noem opposes marijuana legalization as bad for the state and pushed for the legal challenge to overturn its legalization.

But Heinert, the Senate Democratic leader, pushed lawmakers to get moving on the issue.

"Whether you agree with marijuana or not, you know the voters passed it," he said. "It's our job to institute the program."

Tripp County crash claims second victim

WINNER, S.D. (AP) — The South Dakota Highway Patrol is investigating a crash in Tripp County that has claimed a second life.

Two female passengers suffered fatal injuries when the car in which they were riding collided with a pickup truck at the junction of Highways 44 and 46 east of Winner Wednesday.

A 29-year-old woman who was thrown from the car died Wednesday after being transported to a hospital. A 59-year-old woman died Thursday at Rapid City Hospital, according to the Highway Patrol.

The pickup failed to come to a stop at the junction, according to officials. The 29-year-old male driver and the 30-year-old man driving the car suffered non-life threatening injuries and were taken to the hospital in Winner.

NEC-DAK 12 Girls Basketball at Madison

Game #1:

Tri-Valley Mustangs – 52

Groton Area Tigers – 32

Game #2:

Elk-Point/Jefferson – 35

Tiospa Zina Wambdi – 25

Game #3:

Vermillion Tanagers – 55

Redfield Pheasants – 42

Game #4:

Dell Rapids Quarriers – 54

Deuel Cardinals – 46

Game #9:

Sioux Falls Christian Chargers – 40

Hamlin Chargers – 42

Game #10:

West Central Trojans – 54

Aberdeen Roncalli Cavaliers – 38

Game #11:

Canton C-Hawks – 62

Clark/Willow Lake Cyclones – 52

Cheney says she won't quit the House after Wyoming censure

By HOPE YEN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Rep. Liz Cheney, the third-ranking House GOP leader, said Sunday she was undeterred by a censure from Wyoming Republicans and criticism from some House colleagues over her vote to impeach Donald Trump, and will not resign or back off her repudiation of the former president.

Cheney said the oath she took to the Constitution compelled her vote for impeachment, "and it doesn't bend to partisanship, it doesn't bend to political pressure."

She suggested that if she were in the Senate, she might vote to convict Trump over his role in the Jan. 6 riot at the Capitol. Trump's trial in the Senate begins Tuesday.

"I would listen to the testimony — I would listen to the evidence," Cheney told "Fox News Sunday." "I obviously believe and did then that what we already know is enough for his impeachment. What we already know does constitute the gravest violation of his oath of office by any president in the history of the country, and this is not something that we can simply look past or pretend didn't happen or try to move on."

"We've got to make sure this never happens again," she said.

On Saturday, the Wyoming Republican Party voted overwhelmingly to censure Cheney. Only eight of the 74-member state GOP's central committee opposed the punishment in a vote that did not proceed to a formal count. The censure document accused Cheney of voting to impeach Trump, even though the House didn't offer him "formal hearing or due process."

That followed a 145-61 secret-ballot vote this past week in the nation's capital in which House Republicans overwhelmingly rebuffed a rebellion by hard-right conservatives to toss Cheney from leadership over her impeachment vote.

"We need to honor President Trump. All President Trump did was call for a peaceful assembly and protest for a fair and audited election," said Darin Smith, a Cheyenne, Wyoming, attorney who lost to Cheney in the Republican primary for the House seat in 2016. "The Republican Party needs to put her on notice."

Cheney has said repeatedly she voted her conscience in backing impeachment for the riot, which followed a rally where Trump encouraged supporters to get rid of lawmakers who "aren't any good, the Liz Cheneys of the world."

Far from leading a peaceful demonstration, Trump "summoned this mob, assembled the mob, and lit the flame of this attack," Cheney said in a statement before the Jan. 13 impeachment vote. About two-thirds of House Republicans voted to back Trump's effort to overturn his November election loss — just hours after his supporters' deadly siege of the Capitol.



FILE - In this March 6, 2019, file photo, Rep. Liz Cheney, R-Wyo., speaks during a news conference on Capitol Hill in Washington. The Wyoming Republican Party voted overwhelmingly Saturday, Feb. 6, 2021 to censure U.S. Rep. Liz Cheney for voting to impeach President Donald Trump for his role in the Jan. 6 riot at the U.S. Capitol. (AP

Photo/Susan Walsh, File)

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"People have been lied to," she said Sunday. "The extent to which the president, President Trump, for months leading up to Jan. 6 spread the notion that the election had been stolen or that the election was rigged was a lie."

Rep. Debbie Dingell, D-Mich., said she was "afraid to say anything good about Ms. Cheney, I might get her in trouble. But she voted her conscience and we're all going to have to find some ways to put all of this bickering aside because the American people are counting on us to get some things done." Sen. Pat Toomey, R-Pa., called Cheney "a terrific, capable leader."

Cheney, the daughter of former Vice President Dick Cheney and a fixture of the party establishment, blasted her state party for the censure, noting that state Republicans embraced conspiracy theories such as the inaccurate claim that non-Trump supporters were behind the violent protests.

She also was critical of her House colleagues for standing behind Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, saying that her party — not Democrats — should have been the ones to punish the hard-right Georgia Republican for her online embrace of racist and violent views and bizarre conspiracy theories. The Democratic-led House on Thursday voted to strip Greene of her assignments on the House Education and Budget committees, with only 11 Republicans joining to support the move.

"We are the party of Lincoln, we are not the party of QAnon or anti-Semitism or Holocaust-deniers, or white supremacy or conspiracy theories. That's not who we are," Cheney said.

"We need to make sure that we as Republicans are the party of truth and that we're being honest about what really did happen in 2020, so we actually have a chance to win in 2022 and win the White House back in 2024," she said.

Dingell was on CNN's "Inside Politics" and Toomey appeared on CNN's "State of the Union."

Yellen: Biden's plan could restore full employment by 2022

By MARTIN CRUTSINGER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said Sunday the country was still in a "deep hole" with millions of lost jobs but that President Joe Biden's \$1.9 trillion relief plan could generate enough growth to restore full employment by next year.

Republican senators argued that Biden's proposal was too expensive and they cited criticism from Larry Summers, a treasury secretary under President Bill Clinton, that passage of the measure could run the risk of triggering runaway inflation. Summers also contended that Biden's plan would make less money available for other initiatives such as improving the nation's infrastructure.

Yellen, a former Federal Reserve chair who is the first woman to lead the Treasury Department, said the central bank had the tools to handle any potential inflationary threat. She said the urgent need now was to deal with the problems raised by the pandemic-induced recession: as joblessness, lost small businesses and reopening schools.

"We face a huge economic challenge here and tremendous suffering in the country. We have got to address that," Yellen said. "That's the biggest risk."

The House and Senate this past week approved the legislation necessary to pass Biden's package through a process known as reconciliation, which only requires 51 votes in the Senate. The Senate is split 50-50, with Vice President Kamala Harris the tiebreaking vote.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., has said she hopes to approve the specific budget details of the Biden proposal over the next two weeks, aiming to get the measure through Congress before current unemployment benefits run out in mid-March.

Republicans cited the warnings raised by Summers that the \$1.9 trillion plan was too large and that Biden was violating his campaign promise to work with Republicans once elected.

"Larry Summers is a liberal Democrat ... in favor of big government spending and he has said, this is way too much," said Sen. Pat Toomey, R-Pa.

Biden and his team have argued that a big economic package is needed to avoid the mistakes made in 2009 when the Obama administration was unable to get increased support through Congress, resulting in

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Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen speaks during a virtual roundtable with participants from Black Chambers of Commerce across the country to discuss the American Rescue Plan, Friday, Feb. 5, 2021, from the South Court Auditorium on the White House complex in Washington. (AP Photo/Jacquelyn

Martin)

a long, slow recovery after the 2008 financial crisis.

The government reported Friday that the economy only created 49,000 jobs in January after having lost jobs in December. Yellen said the recent jobs reports raised fears that the job market is stalling with 10 million people still unemployed and 4 million who have dropped out of the labor market.

"We're in a deep hole with respect to the job market and a long way to dig out," Yellen said.

Citing a report from the Congressional Budget Office, Yellen said the unemployment rate could remain elevated for years to come and it could take until 2025 to get unemployment back to 4%. The jobless rate stood at a half-century low of 3.9% a year ago before the pandemic hit.

She said if Biden's relief package is approved, the country could get back

to full employment by next year.

"There's absolutely no reason why we should suffer through a long, slow recovery," Yellen said.

The Biden package as been criticized for setting the cutoff for \$1,400 direct payments too high, allowing wealthier Americans to collect the payments. Yellen said the administration was willing to negotiate with lawmakers, but did not specify what that threshold should be.

Biden said in a CBS interview Friday that he believed his push to raise the federal minimum wage to \$15 per hour from \$7.25 probably would have to be removed in order to meet Senate rules on budget reconciliation.

But Sen. Bernie Sanders, chairman of the Senate Budget Committee, said on CNN's "State of the Union" that committee lawyers were trying to build the case that a wage increase would not violate those rules.

"People on top are doing phenomenally well," said Sanders, I-Vt. "And yet we have literally tens of millions of Americans working for starvation wages."

Longtime Reagan Secretary of State George Shultz dies at 100

By **MATTHEW LEE** AP Diplomatic Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Former Secretary of State George P. Shultz, a titan of American academia, business and diplomacy who spent most of the 1980s trying to improve Cold War relations with the Soviet Union and forging a course for peace in the Middle East, has died. He was 100.

Shultz died Saturday at his home on the campus of Stanford University, where he was a distinguished fellow at the Hoover Institution, a think tank, and professor emeritus at Stanford's Graduate School of Business.

The Hoover Institution announced Shultz's death on Sunday. A cause of death was not provided.

A lifelong Republican, Shultz held three major Cabinet positions in GOP administrations during a lengthy career of public service.

He was labor secretary, treasury secretary and director of the Office of Management and Budget under

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President Richard M. Nixon before spending more than six years as President Ronald Reagan's secretary of state.

Shultz was the longest serving secretary of state since World War II and had been the oldest surviving former Cabinet member of any administration.

Condoleezza Rice, also a former secretary of state and current director of the Hoover Institution, said in a statement that Shultz "will be remembered in history as a man who made the world a better place."

Shultz had largely stayed out of politics since his retirement, but had been an advocate for an increased focus on climate change. He marked his 100th birthday in December by extolling the virtues of trust and bipartisanship in politics and other endeavors in a piece he wrote for The Washington Post.

Coming amid the acrimony that followed the November presidential election, Shultz's call for decency and respect for opposing views struck many as an appeal for the country to shun the political vitriol of the Trump years.

"Trust is the coin of the realm," Shultz wrote. "When trust was in the room, whatever room that was -- the family room, the schoolroom, the locker room, the office room, the government room or the military room -- good things happened. When trust was not in the room, good things did not happen. Everything else is details."

Over his lifetime, Shultz succeeded in the worlds of academia, public service and corporate America, and was widely respected by his peers from both political parties.

After the October 1983 bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut that killed 241 soldiers, Shultz worked tirelessly to end Lebanon's brutal civil war in the 1980s. He spent countless hours of shuttle diplomacy between Mideast capitals trying to secure the withdrawal of Israeli forces there.

The experience led him to believe that stability in the region could only be assured with a settlement to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and he set about on an ambitious but ultimately unsuccessful mission to bring the parties to the negotiating table.

Although Shultz fell short of his goal to put the Palestine Liberation Organization and Israel on a course to a peace agreement, he shaped the path for future administrations' Mideast efforts by legitimizing the Palestinians as a people with valid aspirations and a valid stake in determining their future.

As the nation's chief diplomat, Shultz negotiated the first-ever treaty to reduce the size of the Soviet Union's ground-based nuclear arsenals despite fierce objections from Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev to Reagan's "Strategic Defense Initiative" or Star Wars.

The 1987 Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces Treaty was a historic attempt to begin to reverse the nuclear arms race, a goal he never abandoned in private life.



FILE - In this Jan. 9, 1985 file photo, Secretary of State George Shultz, center, walks with President Ronald Reagan and Vice President George Bush upon his arrival at the White House in Washington, after two days of arms talks with the Soviet Union in Geneva. Shultz, former President Reagan's longtime secretary of state, who spent most of the 1980s trying to improve relations with the Soviet Union and forging a course for peace in the Middle East, died Saturday, Feb. 6, 2021. He was 100. (AP Photo/Barry Thumma, File)

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"Now that we know so much about these weapons and their power," Shultz said in an interview in 2008, "they're almost weapons that we wouldn't use, so I think we would be better off without them."

Former Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger, reflecting in his memoirs on the "highly analytic, calm and unselfish Shultz," paid Shultz an exceptional compliment in his diary: "If I could choose one American to whom I would entrust the nation's fate in a crisis, it would be George Shultz."

George Pratt Shultz was born Dec. 13, 1920, in New York City and raised in Englewood, New Jersey. He studied economics and public and international affairs at Princeton University, graduating in 1942. His affinity for Princeton prompted him to have the school's mascot, a tiger, tattooed on his posterior, a fact confirmed to reporters decades later by his wife aboard a plane taking them to China.

At Shultz's 90th birthday party, his successor as secretary of state, James Baker, joked that he would do anything for Shultz "except kiss the tiger." After Princeton, Shultz joined the Marine Corps and rose to the rank of captain as an artillery officer during World War II.

He earned a Ph.D. in economics at MIT in 1949 and taught at MIT and at the University of Chicago, where he was dean of the business school. His administration experience included a stint as a senior staff economist with President Dwight D. Eisenhower's Council of Economic Advisers and as Nixon's OMB director.

Shultz was president of the construction and engineering company Bechtel Group from 1975-1982 and taught part-time at Stanford University before joining the Reagan administration in 1982, replacing Alexander Haig, who resigned after frequent clashes with other members of the administration.

A rare public disagreement between Reagan and Shultz came in 1985 when the president ordered thousands of government employees with access to highly classified information to take a "lie detector" test as a way to plug leaks of information. Shultz told reporters, "The minute in this government that I am not trusted is the day that I leave." The administration soon backed off the demand.

A more serious disagreement was over the secret arms sales to Iran in 1985 in hopes of securing the release of American hostages held in Lebanon by Hezbollah militants. Although Shultz objected, Reagan went ahead with the deal and millions of dollars from Iran went to right-wing Contra guerrillas in Nicaragua. The ensuing Iran-Contra scandal swamped the administration, to Shultz's dismay.

After Reagan left office, Shultz returned to Bechtel, having been the longest serving secretary of state since Cordell Hull under President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

He retired from Bechtel's board in 2006 and returned to Stanford and the Hoover Institution.

In 2000, he became an early supporter of the presidential candidacy of George W. Bush, whose father had been vice president while Shultz was secretary of state. Shultz served as an informal adviser to the campaign.

Shultz remained an ardent arms control advocate in his later years but retained an iconoclastic streak, speaking out against several mainstream Republican policy positions. He created some controversy by calling the war on recreational drugs, championed by Reagan, a failure and raised eyebrows by decrying the longstanding U.S. embargo on Cuba as "insane."

He was also a prominent proponent of efforts to fight the effects of climate change, warning that ignoring the risks was suicidal.

A pragmatist, Shultz, along with Kissinger, made headlines during the 2016 presidential campaign when he declined to endorse Republican nominee Donald Trump after being quoted as saying "God help us" when asked about the possibility of Trump in the White House.

Shultz was married to Helena "Obie" O'Brien, an Army nurse he met in the Pacific in World War II, and they had five children. After her death, in 1995, he married Charlotte Maillard, San Francisco's protocol chief, in 1997.

Shultz was awarded the nation's highest civilian honor, the Presidential Medal of Freedom, in 1989.

Survivors include his wife, five children, 11 grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren.

Funeral arrangements were not immediately announced.

___ Longtime AP Diplomatic Writer Barry Schweid, who died in 2015, contributed to this report.

140 are missing after glacier breaks in India's Himalayas

By BISWAJEET BANERJEE and RISHABH R. JAIN Associated Press

RISHIKESH, India (AP) — Indian rescue crews struggled to reach trapped victims Sunday after part of a glacier in the Himalayas broke off and released a torrent of water and debris that slammed into two hydroelectric plants. At least nine people were killed and 140 were missing in a disaster experts said appeared to point to global warming.

Video from India's northern state of Uttarakhand showed the muddy, concrete-gray floodwaters tumbling through a valley and surging into a dam, breaking it into pieces with little resistance before roaring on downstream. The flood turned the countryside into what looked like an ash-colored moonscape.

More than 2,000 members of the military, paramilitary groups and police took part in the search-and-rescue operation, including soldiers expert in mountaineering, working into the night under bright halogen lights, authorities said.

The flood was caused when a portion of Nanda Devi glacier snapped off in the morning, releasing water trapped behind it, authorities said. It rushed down the mountain and into other bodies of water, forcing the evacuation of many villages along the banks of the Alaknanda and Dhauliganga rivers.

A hydroelectric plant on the Alaknanda was destroyed, and a plant under construction on the Dhauliganga was damaged, said Vivek Pandey, a spokesman for the paramilitary Indo Tibetan Border Police. Flowing out of the Himalayan mountains, the two rivers meet before merging with the Ganges River.

Pandey said at least 42 workers were trapped in two tunnels at the Dhauliganga project. Twelve were rescued from one of the tunnels, while at least 30 others remained stranded inside the other, he said.

"The rescuers used ropes and shovels to reach the mouth of the tunnel. They dug through the debris and entered the tunnel. They are yet to come in touch with the stranded people," said Chief Minister Trivendra Singh Rawat, Uttarakhand's top elected official.

An additional 140 workers at the two plants were missing, Pandey said. Surjeet Singh, a police official, said at least nine bodies were recovered.

The Himalayan area has a chain of hydropower projects on several rivers and their tributaries. Rawat said authorities were able to save other power units downstream because of timely action taken to release water by opening gates.

The floodwaters also damaged houses, said Ravi Bejaria, a government spokesman, though he had no details on the number and whether any of the residents were injured, missing or dead.

"It all started sometime around 10 in the morning. We heard a bang, which shook our village," Dinesh Negi, a resident of Raini village, told The Associated Press by phone. He said they watched from high above one of the rivers as the water turned muddy and surged in a torrent.

"We knew something wrong had happened," Negi said. "We could see the fury of the river."

Video showed rescuers in camouflage uniforms and bright yellow or red helmets, using ropes to reach victims. A man who was pulled from a muddy hole threw his arms in the air, and rescuers laughed and



This photograph provided by Indo Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) shows a man reacting after he was pulled out from beneath the ground by ITBP personnel during rescue operations after a portion of Nanda Devi glacier broke off in Tapovan area of the northern state of Uttarakhand, India, Sunday, Feb.7, 2021. (Indo Tibetan Border Police via AP)

exulted with him. Rescue workers comforted victims lying in a row of stretchers in the open.

Scientists have long known that global warming is contributing to the melting and the breakup of the world's glaciers.

Anjal Prakash, research director and adjunct professor at the Indian School of Business who has contributed to U.N.-sponsored research on global warming, said that while data on the cause of the disaster was not yet available, "this looks very much like a climate change event as the glaciers are melting due to global warming."

Uttarakhand Police Chief Ashok Kumar said officials immediately alerted residents in the area and evacuated them to safer places. Downstream, popular tourist spots on the banks of the Ganges were shut, and all boating activities were stopped.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted that "the nation prays for everyone's safety" in Uttarakhand.

In 2013, thousands of people were killed in Uttarakhand after heavy rains triggered landslides and floods, washing away thousands of houses and roads and cutting communications in many places.

This story has been corrected to show that authorities launched their search operation on Sunday, not Saturday. It has also been corrected to show that the Dhauliganga hydropower plant is on the Dhauliganga River, not the Alaknanda River.

Banerjee reported from Lucknow, India.

Biden: China should expect 'extreme competition' from US



FILE - In this Dec. 4, 2013, file photo, Chinese President Xi Jinping, right, shakes hands with then U.S. Vice President Joe Biden as they pose for photos at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing. (AP Photo/Lintao Zhang, Pool, File)

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden says China is in for "extreme competition" from the U.S. under his administration, but that the new relationship he wants to forge need not be one of conflict.

In an interview broadcast Sunday, Biden acknowledged that he has yet to speak with Chinese President Xi Jinping since his inauguration Jan. 20, but noted that the two leaders had met many times when both men served their countries as vice president.

"I know him pretty well," Biden said in an excerpt of the interview aired Sunday by CBS' "Face the Nation."

When they do speak, they will have "a whole lot to talk about," Biden said.

Biden appears to be concentrating his initial telephone diplomacy on U.S. allies. He so far has spoken with the leaders of Canada, Mexico, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Japan,

South Korea, Australia and the NATO secretary-general.

He also worked in a conversation with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

In the interview, Biden described Xi as "very bright" and "very tough" but without "a democratic, small D, bone in his body."

Shortly after Biden succeeded President Donald Trump in the White House, a spokesperson for China's

Foreign Ministry said that "after this very difficult and extraordinary time, both the Chinese and American people deserve a better future." Beijing welcomed the Biden administration's decision to remain in the World Health Organization and return to the Paris climate agreement.

The new administration, however, is unlikely to significantly alter U.S. policies on trade, Taiwan, human rights and the South China Sea that have angered Xi's increasingly assertive government.

Biden, in the interview taped Friday, said he has said to Xi "all along, that we need not have a conflict." But, Biden added, there will be "extreme competition. And I'm not going to do it the way that he knows. And that's because he's sending signals as well."

Biden said he will not pursue U.S.-China relations in the way that Trump did but will focus on "international rules of the road."

Iran: US must lift sanctions before it lives up to nuke deal

By AMIR VAHDAT Associated Press



In this picture released by the official website of the office of the Iranian supreme leader, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei speaks during a meeting with army's air force and air defense staff in Tehran, Iran, Sunday, Feb. 7, 2021. Iran's supreme leader said the U.S. must lift all sanctions if it wants Iran to return to its commitments to the nuclear deal with Western powers. (Office of the Iranian Supreme

Leader via AP)

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — Iran's supreme leader on Sunday urged the United States to lift all sanctions if it wants Iran to live up to commitments under its nuclear deal with world powers, state TV reported, but President Joe Biden says the U.S. won't be making the first move.

"If (the U.S.) wants Iran to return to its commitments, it must lift all sanctions in practice, then we will do verification ... then we will return to our commitments," state TV quoted Ayatollah Ali Khamenei as saying, in his first comments on the matter since Biden took office.

Biden rejected the idea in a "CBS Evening News" interview taped Friday and airing Sunday.

He was asked if the US will lift sanctions first in order to get Iran back to the bargaining table.

"No," Biden replied. He was then asked if Iran has to stop enriching uranium first. Biden nodded.

Former President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew the U.S. in 2018 from the atomic deal, which saw Iran

agree to limit its enrichment of uranium in exchange for the lifting of economic sanctions. Biden has said he will seek to revive the deal, but insisted that Iran must first reverse its nuclear steps, creating a contest of wills between the nations.

"This is the definitive and irreversible policy of the Islamic Republic, and all of the country's officials are unanimous on this, and no one will deviate from it," Khamenei added Sunday, reiterating Iranian leaders' previous remarks that the U.S. must ease its sanctions before Iran comes back into compliance.

The supreme leader, 81, has the final say on all matters of state in Iran and approved the efforts at reaching the nuclear deal in 2015.

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In response to Trump's so-called "maximum pressure" campaign against Iran, the country began to gradually violate its atomic commitments, and threatened further provocations in a bid to increase its leverage and get Biden to prioritize a return to the deal as he moves to dismantle Trump's legacy. Biden has signed a series of executive actions that reverse course on a wide range of issues, including climate change and immigration.

Following the killing last December of an Iranian scientist credited with spearheading the country's disbanded military nuclear program, Iran's parliament approved a law to block international nuclear inspectors later this month — a serious violation of the accord.

Iran also has begun enriching uranium closer to weapons-grade levels and said it would experiment with uranium metals, a key component of a nuclear warhead. The country has announced its moves and insisted that all breaches of the pact are easily reversible. Tehran says its nuclear program is for peaceful purposes only.

AP PHOTOS: Harsh weather hits Europe, but also brings fun

LONDON (AP) — Severe weather in Europe, ranging from floods in France to heavy snow in Germany, has caused disruption and damage — but also magnificent backdrops to behold or play in.

Floodwaters devastated many vineyards and orchards in southwestern France, while the Seine River overflowed its banks for a fifth straight day in Paris.

In Britain, heavy snow is predicted for the coming days and set to bring disruption to southeast England as bitterly cold winds grip much of the nation. Some areas in the U.K. picked up accumulation Sunday.

A snowstorm and strong winds pounded northern and western Germany, forcing trains to cancel trips and leading to hundreds of vehicle crashes. Police said more than two dozen people were injured on icy roads.

But the storms have also brought picturesque scenes, with people enjoying the day as Sahara sand colored the snow near Altenberg, Germany. And a pony walked in show near Millhouse Green in northeast England, while a horse-drawn carriage drove through the German town of during a flurry.

A man used a surfboard to sled down a snow-covered hill in Wye National Nature Reserve near Ashford in southern England.

The weather is set to remain frigid in the coming days across the continent. Temperatures dipped to -21 C (-5.8 F) in Lithuania's capital, Vilnius, on Sunday.



A car makes its way through a street along the snow covered banks of the Neris river during the sun rises as temperatures dipped to -21 degrees Celsius (-5.8 degrees Fahrenheit) in Vilnius, Lithuania, Sunday, Feb. 7, 2021. (AP

Photo/Mindaugas Kulbis)

Weary postal workers hope Biden will bring new tone, change

By DAVID SHARP Associated Press

PORTLAND, Maine (AP) — The U.S. Postal Service's stretch of challenges didn't end with the November general election and tens of millions of mail-in votes. The pandemic-depleted workforce fell further into a hole during the holiday rush, leading to long hours and a mountain of delayed mail.

Postmaster General Louis DeJoy has vowed to make improvements after facing withering criticism and calls for his removal for his actions that slowed delivery of mail before the election. Some critics hoped President Joe Biden would fire DeJoy, but a president can't do that. Instead, Biden could and likely will use appointments to reshape the Board of Governors, which meets Tuesday for the first time since his election.

It's unclear how swiftly Biden's administration will move. A White House spokesperson declined to comment on upcoming appointments.

Mark Dimondstein, president of the American Postal Workers Union, said he's hoping for some "bold appointments" by Biden.

"We want a Board of Governors that understands fundamentally this is not called the United States Postal Business," he said. "It's not a profit-making business. It's here to serve the people."

A change in tone, at the least, would be welcomed by postal workers after former President Donald Trump called the Postal Service "a joke" last year in criticizing business practices that led to a growing operating deficit.

Despite the pandemic, on-time rates for first-class mail topped 90% for most of the year until DeJoy took office in June and began instituting changes that raised concerns about the delivery of mail-in election ballots. Workers decried DeJoy for limiting overtime and late or extra trips, resulting in delayed mail, and the dismantling of sorting machines ahead of the election.

All told, the Postal Service successfully delivered more than 130 million ballots to and from voters during the general election.

But by the time Christmas arrived, it had gotten so bad that more than a third of first-class mail was late, a dismal performance, even though DeJoy had backtracked on some of his changes by then.

At the holiday peak, tractor-trailers chock full of mail were left idling outside some postal-sorting facilities across the country because there was no room inside. Packages and letters piled up in distribution hubs. Delays grew by days, and then weeks.

A number of factors contributed to the nightmare.

Americans were using the Postal Service at unprecedented level because of the pandemic. Overtime couldn't make up for the impact of postal workers' COVID-19 illnesses and quarantines. Commercial flights that transport mail operated on reduced schedules. And FedEx and UPS dumped packages on the Postal Service when they reached their limit.



Postal carrier Josiah Morse heads out to deliver mail and packages, Wednesday, Feb. 3, 2021, in Portland, Maine. The U.S. Postal Service's stretch of challenges didn't end with the November general election and tens of millions of mail-in votes. The pandemic-depleted workforce fell further into a hole during the holiday rush, leading to long hours and a mountain of delayed mail. (AP Photo/Robert F. Bukaty)

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"At Christmastime, you could barely move in the facility," said Scott Adams, local president of the American Postal Workers Union in Portland, Maine. "Aisles were blocked with mail."

Jay Geller said it took 30 days for a birthday card mailed after Christmas from his mother-in-law in Iowa to reach her 8-year-old grandson at his home in Cleveland. And don't get him started on the homemade scones from Minnesota, which were late and inedible.

"By the time they arrived, they were hard as rocks and smushed flat," he said.

Terri Hayes experienced "Christmas in January" when many of her packages arrived late in Medina, Ohio. The last gift to arrive was a necklace and charm sent by a friend in Maryland on Dec. 5. It arrived on Jan. 28.

She sympathizes with overworked postal workers but also worries about more important items, like bills, being delayed.

"I just wish that they would put things back to the way they were when it worked," Hayes said. "Put the sorting machines back. Let them work the overtime hours."

The Postal Service contends it has now returned to "pre-peak" conditions, and DeJoy and six members of the board said they've learned from the election and the record holiday season in which more than 1.1 billion packages were delivered. The postmaster general and board are working on a 10-year plan that will include improvements.

"We must confidently plan for our future — which we believe is bright for the Postal Service and for America," they said in a statement.

Critics have called for DeJoy to be fired. And Rep. Bill Pascrell Jr., a New Jersey Democrat, wants Biden to fire the entire Postal Service Board of Governors for what he called dereliction of duty.

The Board of Governors, which selects the postmaster general, is currently made up of Trump appointees. The vice chair resigned in protest over the Trump administration's actions. That leaves a chairperson, Robert Duncan, who is a former Republican National Committee chair, along with three other Republican members and two Democratic members.

If Biden fills all vacancies, then Democratic members would hold a majority, though the board is officially bipartisan. No party may hold more than five seats on the nine-member board.

The postmaster general and deputy postmaster general vote on some but not all issues brought before the board.

Dimondstein said the recent announcement of more than 10,000 more permanent jobs in distribution hubs is a down payment on addressing problems. DeJoy has to come around to further changes to improve service and morale, he said.

"He's either going to do right by the people of the country. Or he needs to go," Dimondstein said.

Next stop Mars: 3 spacecraft arriving in quick succession

By **MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer**

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — After hurtling hundreds of millions of miles through space since last summer, three robotic explorers are ready to hit the brakes at Mars.

The stakes — and anxiety — are sky high.

The United Arab Emirates' orbiter reaches Mars on Tuesday, followed less than 24 hours later by China's orbiter-rover combo. NASA's rover, the cosmic caboose, will arrive on the scene a week later, on Feb. 18, to collect rocks for return to Earth — a key step in determining whether life ever existed at Mars.

Both the UAE and China are newcomers at Mars, where more than half of Earth's emissaries have failed. China's first Mars mission, a joint effort with Russia in 2011, never made it past Earth's orbit.

"We are quite excited as engineers and scientists, at the same time quite stressed and happy, worried, scared," said Omran Sharaf, project manager for the UAE.

All three spacecraft rocketed away within days of one another last July, during an Earth-to-Mars launch window that occurs only every two years. That's why their arrivals are also close together.

Called Amal, or Hope in Arabic, the Gulf nation's spacecraft is seeking an especially high orbit — 13,500

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FILE - In this Monday, July 20, 2020 file photo, men watch the launch of the "Amal" or "Hope" space probe at the Mohammed bin Rashid Space Center in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. The orbiter is scheduled to reach Mars on Tuesday, Feb. 9, 2021, followed less than 24 hours later by China's orbiter-rover combo. NASA's rover will arrive on the scene a week later, on Feb. 18, to collect rocks for return to Earth _ a key step in determining whether life ever existed at Mars. (AP Photo/Jon Gambrell)

ment," said Lori Glaze, NASA's planetary science director.

Perseverance is aiming for an ancient river delta that seems a logical spot for once harboring life. This landing zone in Jezero Crater is so treacherous that NASA nixed it for Curiosity, but so tantalizing that scientists are keen to get hold of its rocks.

"When the scientists take a look at a site like Jezero Crater, they see the promise, right?" said Al Chen, who's in charge of the entry, descent and landing team at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California. "When I look at Jezero, I see danger. There's danger everywhere."

Steep cliffs, deep pits and fields of rocks could cripple or doom Perseverance, following its seven-minute atmospheric plunge. With an 11 1/2-minute communication lag each way, the rover will be on its own, unable to rely on flight controllers. Amal and Tianwen-1 will also need to operate autonomously while maneuvering into orbit.

Until Perseverance, NASA sought out flat, boring terrain on which to land — "one giant parking lot," Chen said. That's what China's Tianwen-1 rover will be shooting for in Mars' Utopia Planitia.

NASA is upping its game thanks to new navigation technology designed to guide the rover to a safe spot. The spacecraft also has a slew of cameras and microphones to capture the sights and sounds of descent and landing, a Martian first.

Faster than previous Mars vehicles but still moving at a glacial pace, the six-wheeled Perseverance will drive across Jezero, collecting core samples of the most enticing rocks and gravel. The rover will set the samples aside for retrieval by a fetch rover launching in 2026.

Under an elaborate plan still being worked out by NASA and the European Space Agency, the geologic treasure would arrive on Earth in the early 2030s. Scientists contend it's the only way to ascertain whether

by 27,000 miles high (22,000 kilometers by 44,000 kilometers) — all the better to monitor the Martian weather.

China's duo — called Tianwen-1, or "Quest for Heavenly Truth" — will remain paired in orbit until May, when the rover separates to descend to the dusty, ruddy surface. If all goes well, it will be only the second country to land successfully on the red planet.

The U.S. rover Perseverance, by contrast, will dive in straight away for a harrowing sky-crane touchdown similar to the Curiosity rover's grand Martian entrance in 2012. The odds are in NASA's favor: It's nailed eight of its nine attempted Mars landings.

Despite their differences — the 1-ton Perseverance is larger and more elaborate than the Tianwen-1 rover — both will prowl for signs of ancient microscopic life.

Perseverance's \$3 billion mission is the first leg in a U.S.-European effort to bring Mars samples to Earth in the next decade.

"To say we're pumped about it, well that would be a huge understatement,"

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life flourished on a wet, watery Mars 3 billion to 4 billion years ago.

NASA's science mission chief, Thomas Zurbuchen, considers it "one of the hardest things ever done by humanity and certainly in space science."

The U.S. is still the only country to successfully land on Mars, beginning with the 1976 Vikings. Two spacecraft are still active on the surface: Curiosity and InSight.

Smashed Russian and European spacecraft litter the Martian landscape, meanwhile, along with NASA's failed Mars Polar Lander from 1999.

Getting into orbit around Mars is less complicated, but still no easy matter, with about a dozen spacecraft falling short. Mars fly-bys were the rage in the 1960s and most failed; NASA's Mariner 4 was the first to succeed in 1965.

Six spacecraft currently are operating around Mars: three from the U.S., two from Europe and one from India. The UAE hopes to make it seven with its \$200-plus million mission.

The UAE is especially proud that Amal was designed and built by its own citizens, who partnered with the University of Colorado at Boulder and other U.S. institutions, not simply purchased from abroad. Its arrival at Mars coincides with this year's 50th anniversary of the country's founding.

"Starting off the year with this milestone is something very important for the people" of the UAE, said Sharaf.

China, hasn't divulged much in advance. Even the spacecraft's exact arrival time on Wednesday has yet to be announced.

The China Academy of Space Technology's Ye Peijian noted that Tianwen-1 has three objectives: orbiting the planet, landing and releasing the rover. If successful, he said in a statement "it will become the world's first Mars expedition accomplishing all three goals with one probe."

The coronavirus pandemic has complicated each step of each spacecraft's 300 million-mile (480 million-kilometer) journey to Mars. It even kept the European and Russian space agencies' joint Mars mission grounded until the next launch window in 2022.

The flight control rooms will contain fewer people on the big day, with staff spread over a wider area and working from home. Desks have dividers and partitions. Masks and social distancing are mandatory.

Perseverance's deputy project manager Matt Wallace, who's working his fifth Mars rover mission, said the pandemic won't dampen the mood come landing day.

"I don't think COVID's going to be able to stop us from jumping up and down, and fist-bumping," he said. "You're going to see a lot of happy people no matter what, once we get this thing on the surface safely."

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AstraZeneca vaccine being tweaked to fight S. Africa variant

LONDON (AP) — Developers of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine expect to have a modified jab to cope with the South Africa coronavirus variant by autumn, the vaccine's lead researcher said Sunday.

Health officials in Britain are trying to contain the spread of the variant first identified in South Africa amid concerns that it is more contagious or resistant to existing vaccines. More than 100 cases of the South African variant have been found in the U.K.

Sarah Gilbert, lead researcher for the Oxford team, told the BBC on Sunday that "we have a version with the South African spike sequence in the works."

"It looks very likely that we can have a new version ready to use in the autumn," she added.

Her comments came as Oxford University said that early data from a small study suggested that the AstraZeneca vaccine offers only "minimal protection" against mild disease caused by the South Africa variant.

The study, which has not yet been peer reviewed, involved 2,000 people, most of whom were young and healthy. The volunteers' average age was 31.

"Protection against moderate-severe disease, hospitalization or death could not be assessed in this study

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as the target population were at such low risk," Oxford University said.

Robin Shattock, a scientist who is leading the coronavirus vaccine research at Imperial College London, urged caution about the study's early findings. But he said it was "concerning to some extent that we're seeing that it's not effective against mild or moderate disease."

Authorities in England last week went house-to-house to administer COVID-19 testing in eight areas where the South Africa variant is believed to be spreading, after a handful of cases were found in people who had no contact with the country or anyone who travelled there.

The testing blitz is a bid to snuff out the variant before it spreads widely and undermines the U.K.'s vaccination rollout. Public health officials are concerned about the South Africa variant because it contains a mutation of the virus' characteristic spike protein, which is targeted by existing vaccines.

Britain has seen Europe's deadliest coronavirus outbreak, with over 112,000 confirmed deaths, but it has embarked on a speedier vaccination plan than the neighboring European Union. So far the U.K. has given a first coronavirus vaccine jab to about 11.5 million people.



A deserted Regent Street, London, Sunday, Feb. 7, 2021, as the third national lockdown, due to the COVID-19 outbreak, continues. (AP Photo/Alberto Pezzali)

Internet access restored as Myanmar coup protests grow

YANGON, Myanmar (AP) — As enthusiastic crowds of tens of thousands marched through the streets of Myanmar's biggest city on Sunday to protest last week's coup ousting Aung San Suu Kyi's elected government, their spirits were lifted by the return of internet services that had been blocked a day earlier.

Separate protests that began in various parts of Yangon converged at Sule Pagoda, situated in the center of a roundabout in the city's downtown area. Protesters chanted "Long live Mother Suu" and "Down with military dictatorship." Protesters in other parts of the country echoed their calls.

Authorities had cut access to the internet as the protests grew Saturday, fanning fears of a complete information blackout. On Sunday afternoon, however, internet users in Yangon reported that data access on their mobile phones had suddenly been restored.

The demonstrators are seeking to roll back last Monday's seizure of power by the military and demanding the release from detention of Suu Kyi, the country's ousted leader, and other top figures from her National League for Democracy party.

The military has accused Suu Kyi's government of failing to act on its complaints that last November's election was marred by fraud, though the election commission said it had found no evidence to support the claims.

The growing protests are a sharp reminder of the long and bloody struggle for democracy in a country that the military ruled directly for more than five decades before loosening its grip in 2012. Suu Kyi's government, which won a landslide election in 2015, was the first led by civilians in decades, though it faced a number of curbs to its power under a military-drafted constitution.

During Myanmar's years of isolation under military rule, the golden-domed Sule Pagoda served as a ral-

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Protesters march towards the direction of Sule Pagoda in Yangon, Myanmar on Sunday, Feb. 7, 2021. Thousands of people rallied against the military takeover in Myanmar's biggest city on Sunday and demanded the release of Aung San Suu Kyi, whose elected government was toppled by the army that also imposed an internet blackout. (AP Photo)

and its allies for civil disobedience.

In one of Sunday's gatherings, at least 2,000 labor union and student activists and members of the public gathered at a major intersection near Yangon University. They marched along a main road, snarling traffic. Drivers honked their horns in support.

Police in riot gear blocked the main entrance to the university. Two water cannon trucks were parked nearby.

The mostly young protesters held placards calling for freedom for Suu Kyi and President Win Myint, who were put under house arrest and charged with minor offenses, seen by many as providing a legal veneer for their detention.

"We just want to show this current generation how the older generation fights this crisis, by heeding the guideline of Mother Suu, which is to be honest, transparent and peaceful," said 46-year-old protester Htain Linn Aung. "We don't want a military dictator. Let the dictator fail."

Reports on social media and by some Myanmar news services said demonstrations were taking place in other parts of the country as well, with a particularly large crowd in the central city of Mandalay, where there was also a motorbike procession in which hundreds took part, constantly beeping their horns.

Saturday had seen the size of street protests grow from the hundreds to the thousands, but it also saw the authorities cut most access to the internet. Holes in the military's firewall allowed some news to trickle out, but also fanned fears of a complete information blackout.

Social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter were earlier ordered blocked, but had remained partially accessible. Social media platforms have been major sources of independent news as well as organizing tools for protests.

Netblocks, a London-based service that tracks internet disruptions and shutdowns, confirmed that there had been a partial restoration of internet connectivity on Sunday, but noted that it might be temporary and social media remained blocked.

lying point for political protests calling for democracy, most notably in during a massive 1988 uprising and again during a 2007 revolt led by Buddhist monks.

The military used to deadly force to end both of those uprisings, with estimates of hundreds if not thousands killed in 1988. While riot police have been sent to watch the protests this past week, soldiers have been absent and there have been no reports of clashes.

Several videos posted online Sunday that were said to be from the town of Myawaddy, on Myanmar's eastern border with Thailand, showed police shooting into the air in an evident effort to disperse a crowd. There were no signs of panic and no reports of injuries.

Showing little fear, protest crowds have grown bigger and bolder in recent days, while remaining nonviolent in support of a call by Suu Kyi's party

The communication blockade was a stark reminder of the progress Myanmar is in danger of losing. During Myanmar's decades of military rule, the country was internationally isolated and communication with the outside world strictly controlled.

The elected lawmakers of Suu Kyi's party met in an online meeting Friday to declare themselves as the sole legitimate representatives of the people and asked for international recognition as the country's government.

Pope Francis joined the international chorus of concern over the situation.

In remarks to the public in St. Peter's Square on Sunday, the pope said he has been following "with strong worry the situation that has developed in Myanmar," noting his affection for the country since his visit there in 2017.

He said he hoped that Myanmar's leaders worked sincerely "to promote social justice and national stability for a harmonious democratic co-existence."

In pandemic, more people choose to die at home

By HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH The Associated Press

MISSION, Kan. (AP) — Mortuary owner Brian Simmons has been making more trips to homes to pick up bodies to be cremated and embalmed since the pandemic hit.

With COVID-19 devastating communities in Missouri, his two-person crews regularly arrive at homes in the Springfield area and remove bodies of people who decided to die at home rather than spend their final days in a nursing home or hospital where family visitations were prohibited during the pandemic.

He understands all too well why people are choosing to die at home: His own 49-year-old daughter succumbed to the coronavirus just before Christmas at a Springfield hospital, where the family only got phone updates as her condition deteriorated.

"The separation part is really rough, rough rough," said Simmons. "My daughter went to the hospital and we saw her once through the glass when they put her on the ventilator, and then we never saw her again until after she died."

Across the country, terminally ill patients — both with COVID-19 and other diseases — are making similar decisions and dying at home rather than face the terrifying scenario of saying farewell to loved ones behind glass or during video calls.

"What we are seeing with COVID is certainly patients want to stay at home," said Judi Lund Person, the vice president for regulatory compliance at the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization. "They



Mortuary owner Brian Simmons holds a photo of his daughter Rhonda Ketchum who died before Christmas of COVID-19, Thursday, Jan. 28, 2021, in Springfield, Mo. Simmons has been making more trips to homes to pick up bodies to be cremated and embalmed since the pandemic hit. For many families, home is a better setting than the terrifying scenario of saying farewell to loved ones behind glass or during video calls amid the coronavirus pandemic.

(AP Photo/Charlie Riedel)

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don't want to go to the hospital. They don't want to go to a nursing home."

National hospice organizations are reporting that facilities are seeing double-digit percentage increases in the number of patients being cared for at home.

The phenomenon has played out Carroll Hospice in Westminster, Maryland, which has seen a 30% to 40% spike in demand for home-based care, said executive director Regina Bodnar. She said avoiding nursing homes and coronavirus risks are the biggest factor behind the increase."

Lisa Kossoudji, who supervises nurses at Ohio's Hospice of Dayton, pulled her own mother, now 95, out of assisted living and brought her home to live with her after the pandemic hit. She had gone weeks without seeing her mother and was worried that her condition was deteriorating because she was being restricted to her room as the facility sought to limit the potential for the virus to spread.

Her mother, who has a condition that causes thickening and hardening of the walls of the arteries in her brain, is now receiving hospice services. Kossoudji is seeing the families she serves make similar choices.

"Lots of people are bringing folks home that physically, they have a lot physical issues, whether it is they have a feeding tube or a trachea, things that an everyday lay person would look at and say, 'Oh my gosh, I can't do this,'" she said. "But yet they are willing to bring them home because we want to be able to be with them and see them."

Before the pandemic, hospice workers cared for patients dying of heart disease, cancer, dementia and other terminal illnesses in long-term care facilities and, to a lesser extent, home settings. Many families hesitated to go the die-at-home route because of the many logistical challenges, including work schedules and complicated medical needs.

But the pandemic changed things. People were suddenly working from home and had more time, and they were more comfortable with home hospice knowing the alternative with lack of visitation at nursing homes.

"What happened with COVID is everything was on steroids so to speak. Everything happened so quickly that all of a sudden family members were prepared to care for their loved ones at home," said Carole Fisher, president of the National Partnership for Healthcare and Hospice Innovation. "Everything accelerated."

"I have heard families say, 'I can care for my aged mother now very differently than I could before because I am working from home,'" she added. "And so there is more of a togetherness in the family unit because of COVID."

Dying at home isn't for everyone, however. Caring for the needs of a critically ill relative can mean sleepless nights and added stress as the pandemic rages.

Karen Rubel recalled that she didn't want to take her own 81-year-old mother to the hospital when she had a stroke in September and then pushed hard to bring her home as soon as possible.

She is president and CEO of Nathan Adelson Hospice in Las Vegas, which has designated one of its in-patient facilities for COVID-19 patients.

"I get where people are coming from," she said. "They are afraid."

UK vaccine gambles paid off, while EU caution slowed it down

By **RAF CASERT** and **MASHA MACPHERSON** Associated Press

SAINT-HERBLAIN, France (AP) — French pharmaceutical startup Valneva had big news in September: a government contract for 60 million doses of its coronavirus vaccine candidate.

The buyer? The United Kingdom — not the European Union, as might be expected for a company on the banks of the Loire.

"What a true waste," bristled Christelle Morançais, president of the Pays de la Loire regional council, as she tried to wrap her head around the missed opportunity. The British, she told The Associated Press, "rolled out the red carpet for this company, helping with financing and the set-up. ... And we were powerless."

The U.K. has now ordered another 40 million doses and has options for more from Valneva, which has a plant in Scotland. The EU is still in talks with the company.

That pattern of Britain investing aggressively and early while the EU takes a slower, more cautious ap-

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Laboratory technicians work at Valneva headquarters in Saint-Herblain, western France, Wednesday, Feb. 3, 2021. French pharmaceutical startup Valneva had big news in September: a government contract for 60 million doses of its coronavirus vaccine candidate. The buyer? The United Kingdom — not the European Union, as might be expected for a company on the banks of the Loire. (AP Photo/David Vincent)

much of the world — it has so far been left in the U.K.'s rearview mirror. Britain has given at least one shot to about 15% of its population, compared to some 3% in the bloc. This is not only a matter of pride: The EU has already lost more than 490,000 out of its 450 million people to the pandemic, according to Johns Hopkins University, and uncounted others who were not tested before they died.

Diane Wanten, from Alken, Belgium, survived a bout with COVID-19 that put her in intensive care last spring. The 62-year-old now badly hopes for shots for herself and her husband Francesco, who has Parkinson's. "If there is a vaccine for me tomorrow, I'll be in line," she said.

Instead, "it is Britain which is towering head and shoulders above the rest," Wanten said. "I keep asking myself why things are possible there and not here in Belgium?"

Britain has its own struggles: a death toll of 112,000 in a country of 67 million and plenty who say the Conservative government should have moved faster to fight the virus. Still, it celebrated the Valneva contract as validation of its vaccine strategy — and its decision to leave the EU.

"We've backed many horses — no matter where they're from," Health Secretary Matt Hancock said. "It's a great example of what we can achieve together, working as one United Kingdom."

At the same time, EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen was at the European Parliament, answering questions about how things could have gone so wrong in a drive that was supposed to showcase how the EU makes its 27 members stronger.

She admitted EU errors — specifically a threat, eventually retracted, of border checks on vaccines from EU member Ireland to Northern Ireland, which is part of the U.K. But she was steadfast that the bloc's deliberate drive would prove successful.

"I see this as a marathon in which we just finished the first few kilometers," she said.

But in Marseille, France, the head of the intensive care ward at La Timone Hospital fears the EU stumbled at the starting line.

"There was a clear lack of anticipation. Then a lack of doses. Then we didn't vaccinate the right people,"

proach has been the hallmark of the vaccine race in Europe — and offers a window into problems that have dogged the vaccination rollout by the world's biggest trading bloc.

As with other countries that moved quickly, negotiating contracts earlier has helped Britain avoid some of the vaccine supply problems the 27-nation EU has faced — as when AstraZeneca said it hit a production issue. Valneva President Franck Grimaud told the AP that Britain will receive vaccine doses earlier because it signed first.

But the U.K. has also shown speed and agility in other areas: Its regulatory agency has authorized vaccines more quickly than the EU's, and its government has experimented with stretching out the time between shots — allowing it to roll out first doses faster so more people can have some protection quickly.

The EU has been more cautious on both counts. While bloc is still getting and distributing vaccine — unlike

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said Dr. Julien Carvelli.

When the virus took hold of the continent a year ago and the race for a vaccine began, the EU trumpeted its size as an asset in vaccine negotiations. The bloc did get competitive prices, but that took time — and the difference of a few months has cost it.

When the EU had a major row with AstraZeneca last month over the company's announcement it would only be able to deliver 31 million doses of a promised first batch of 80 million, CEO Pascal Soriot pointed out that "the U.K. contract was signed three months before the European vaccine deal. So with the U.K. we have had an extra three months to fix all the glitches."

Luck has also played a role. Many vaccine deals were signed before anyone knew which shots would even work or be produced first. The EU signed a contract with Germany-based CureVac in November while the U.K. just inked a deal a few days ago — but, so far, that hasn't mattered since the company is still testing its vaccine.

The EU was also slower to approve vaccines, opting for a longer process that gave the shots fuller scrutiny from the European Medicines Agency, rather than emergency authorization, to ensure greater public confidence, a decision it still defends.

As a result, Britain started giving out vaccine shots on Dec. 8 while the EU did not get going until Dec. 27. It has not caught up since.

France's Europe Minister Clement Beaune has said "Britain has taken enormous risks."

If that's true, it's paid off. Britain's health chief last week hailed a new study suggesting that a single dose of the AstraZeneca vaccine offers strong protection for 12 weeks against the virus, saying that supports the government's much-debated strategy of delaying the second shot.

Compare that with France, which flirted with extending the time between doses but decided not to. Other EU countries have sometimes held back doses to make absolutely sure a person could get a second shot at a specific time, thus denying a first shot for others.

Several EU nations have also proven even more risk-averse than the cautious EMA, which approved the AstraZeneca vaccine for use in the EU for all adults, despite some questions about whether there was enough data on its impact on the elderly.

Germany, France and Sweden decided to hold off on giving the AstraZeneca vaccine to those 65 and over. Belgium went further, restricting use to those under 55, even if it means carefully laid vaccination plans will have to be changed.

The EU's deliberate approach, however, may have prevented other problems. Without a joint strategy, smaller and poorer EU nations could have struggled to secure and pay for vaccines. With open borders, diverging national approaches could have led to chaos.

Despite the slow start, von der Leyen's pledge to have 70% of the bloc's adults vaccinated by the end of summer stands.

For now, it leaves Catherine Moureaux, mayor of Brussels' Molenbeek municipality, overseeing an empty vaccination center. But she's not complaining.

"We should not regret the fact that Europe is playing cautious," Moureaux said. "I actually think this is a good thing."

Analysis: Trump's Senate trial matters regardless of outcome

By STEVEN SLOAN AP Political Editor

WASHINGTON (AP) — This matters.

The outcome may seem preordained in the unprecedented second impeachment trial of Donald Trump. Democrats prosecuting the former president for inciting a deadly insurrection at the U.S. Capitol will struggle to persuade at least 17 Republicans to convict Trump and bar him from office. Forty-five of the 50 Republican senators backed a bid last month to dismiss the trial, essentially telegraphing how the final vote will play out.

But the trial set to begin Tuesday is ultimately a test of whether a president, holding an office that many

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FILE - In this Jan. 6, 2021, file photo, President Donald Trump arrives to speak at a rally in Washington. Arguments begin Tuesday, Feb. 9, in the impeachment trial of Donald Trump on allegations that he incited the violent mob that stormed the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6. (AP Photo/Jacquelyn Martin, File)

of the nation's founders feared could become too powerful in the wrong hands, is above the law. Senators will be forced to sit still, listen to evidence and wrestle with elemental questions about American democracy. There will be visual, visceral evidence, and the American people will also be sitting in their own form of judgment as they watch.

The verdict and the process itself will be scrutinized for generations.

"For historians, what that trial does is to provide additional evidence and documentation under oath," said Carol Anderson, a professor of African American studies at Emory University. "It also gives us a sense of the strength, or the weakness, in American democracy as the senators are confronted with this evidence."

That record is certain to be grisly, a reminder on a human level of the horror at the Capitol on Jan. 6.

Senators will review Trump's call that morning to "fight like hell" before the mob of loyalists showed up to Capitol Hill to do just that. Senators will be reminded of the rioters' chants calling for then-Vice President Mike Pence's hanging. House prosecutors could resurface the image of a police officer crushed between doors, blood trickling from his mouth, as the violent crowd moved in. There might be additional evidence of how another officer, Brian Sicknick, died defending the building.

If that's not enough, senators will be reminded of their own vulnerability as they fled the mob entering their chamber — one of the most rarefied spaces in Washington — in fear of their lives.

And then they'll have to decide whether there should be consequences. But the potential of an acquittal doesn't mean the trial should be abandoned before it begins, said Rep. Val Demings, who was an impeachment manager in Trump's first trial.

"The jury not convicting is always a possibility," the Florida Democrat said, recalling her previous career as the chief of the Orlando Police Department. "But decisions are never made solely on that."

Nearly two-thirds of Americans believe Trump bears at least a moderate amount of responsibility for the riot, according to a poll released last week by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. That includes half who say Trump bears a great deal or quite a bit of responsibility.

Most Republicans absolve him of guilt, but about 3 in 10 think he bears at least a measure of blame for the events.

Of course, Congress has more on its plate than another fight over the previous president. In the early days of his administration, President Joe Biden is pushing a \$1.9 trillion package to confront the coronavirus pandemic. He's also pressing lawmakers on immigration, health care and climate change.

Lee Hamilton, a former Democratic congressman from Indiana who served during President Bill Clinton's impeachment, said a trial could be a "distraction" from larger priorities. He suggested censure could be a better use of time and that the historical record could be achieved through the creation of a commission like the one he helped lead to investigate the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

But, he said, that only works if Congress is united on the need for a thorough investigation of what happened during the insurrection and provides the resources to back it up.

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"If you're going to do it, do it right," Hamilton said.

As much as the trial is about history, the implications are just as powerful in the present moment. Leaders in capitals across the world are watching what happens in Washington to assess whether the U.S. remains committed to democratic principles. Steadfast American allies, including Germany and the United Kingdom, expressed shock at the insurrection.

U.S. foes seized on the violence to say that the United States could not now lecture others on the sanctity of democracy.

"American democracy is obviously limping on both feet," Konstantin Kosachev, head of the foreign affairs committee in Russia's upper house of parliament, said after the riot. "America no longer charts a course and therefore has lost all rights to set it — and even more so to impose it on others."

It's telling that Republicans aren't going into the trial with a robust defense of Trump. Few are publicly defending his behavior in the runup to the insurrection, whether it's his baseless insistence that the election was "stolen" or his more specific — and troubling — calls to supporters to rally on his behalf.

Instead, the GOP is narrowly focused on a more technical constitutional issue, arguing that a president can't face an impeachment trial once out of office, a path they believe is easier to defend than trying to rationalize Trump's actions.

Anticipating that posture, Democrats filed a pretrial brief noting there's no "January exception" in the Constitution.

"Presidents do not get a free pass to commit high crimes and misdemeanors near the end of their term," the House impeachment managers wrote.

The trial comes as the GOP is struggling with its future.

Sen. Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, the Republican leader, has flirted with the possibility of purging Trump from the party. If Trump is convicted, the Senate could vote to bar him from seeking office again, a notable punishment for someone who has dangled the potential of a 2024 presidential run to keep bending the party to his will.

McConnell hasn't yet said how he'll vote, and, so far, only a few moderate Republicans seem certain to convict. They're running into the reality that Trump's supporters remain a dominant force in the party.

The trial "really will only reinforce what we already know about American politics," said Brendan Buck, a top adviser to former House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis. "And in that, I mean we are so tribal and divided that there's really no question where people will fall down on something that should generate thoughtful discourse and reflection about a fundamental democratic principle."

Big challenge: Biden is pressed to end federal death penalty

By MICHAEL TARM AP Legal Affairs Writer

CHICAGO (AP) — Joe Biden, the first sitting U.S. president to openly oppose the death penalty, has discussed the possibility of instructing the Department of Justice to stop scheduling new executions, officials have told The Associated Press.

If he does, that would end an extraordinary run of executions by the federal government, all during a pandemic that raged inside prison walls and infected journalists, federal employees and even those put to death.

The officials had knowledge of the private discussions with Biden but were not authorized to speak publicly about them.

White House press secretary Jen Psaki, when asked Friday about Biden's plans on the death penalty, said she had nothing to preview on the issue.

Action to stop scheduling new executions could take immediate pressure off Biden from opponents of the death penalty. But they want him to go much further, from bulldozing the federal death chamber in Terre Haute, Indiana, to striking the death penalty from U.S. statutes entirely.

A look at the steps Biden could take and the challenges he would face:

Q: WHY THE PUSH FOR ACTION NOW?

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A: While the coronavirus pandemic and election coverage dominated the news last year, many Americans who paid close attention to the resumption of federal executions under President Donald Trump were dismayed by their scale and the apparent haste to carry them out.

The executions, beginning July 14 and ending four days before Biden's inauguration on Jan. 20, were the first federal executions in 17 years. More were held in the last six months under Trump than in the previous 56 years combined.

Executions went ahead for inmates whose lawyers claimed were too mentally ill or intellectually disabled to fully grasp why they were being put to death.

Lawyers for Lisa Montgomery, convicted of killing a pregnant Missouri woman and cutting out her baby, said her mental illness was partly triggered by years of horrific sexual abuse as a child. On Jan. 13, she became the first woman executed federally in nearly 70 years.

Q: WOULD A DECISION TO STOP SCHEDULING EXECUTIONS END THE PRACTICE?

A: Biden can guarantee no federal executions during his presidency by simply telling the Justice Department never to schedule any. But that would not prevent a future president who supports capital punishment from restarting them.

Barack Obama, for whom Biden served as vice president, did place an informal moratorium on carrying federal executions out when he was president, ordering a review of execution methods in 2014 after a botched state execution in Oklahoma.

But Obama never took any steps toward ending federal executions for good. That left the door open for Trump to resume them. Death penalty critics want Biden to slam shut that door.

Q: WHAT ARE BIDEN'S RANGE OF OPTIONS?

A: The surest way to prevent a future president from again restarting executions is to sign a bill abolishing the federal death penalty. That would require Congress to pass such a bill.

Thirty-seven members of Congress urged Biden in a Jan. 22 letter to support the Federal Death Penalty Prohibition Act, sponsored by Rep. Ayanna Pressley, D-Mass., and Sen. Dick Durbin, D-Ill.

But Biden would have to persuade Republicans. In the 22 states that have struck the death penalty from their statutes, none succeeded in passing the required laws without bipartisan support.

Biden could draw immediately on his presidential powers and do what Obama did not: commute the death sentences of 50-some inmates still on death row in Terre Haute to life in prison. None of the death sentences could ever be restored.



FILE - This Aug. 28, 2020, file photo shows the federal prison complex in Terre Haute, Ind. Biden, the first sitting U.S. president to openly oppose the death penalty, has discussed the possibility of instructing the Department of Justice to stop scheduling new executions, officials said. Action to stop scheduling new executions could take immediate pressure off Biden from opponents of the death penalty. But they want him to go further, from bulldozing the federal death chamber in Terre Haute, Ind., to striking the death penalty from U.S. statutes. (AP Photo/Michael Conroy, File)

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Commutations in themselves would not stop prosecutors from seeking death sentences in new cases. That would require an instruction to Biden's Justice Department to never to authorize prosecutors to seek them.

Death Penalty Action has called on Biden to order the razing of the Terre Haute death-chamber building. Demolishing the bleak, windowless facility, argued Abe Bonowitz, director of the Ohio-based group, would symbolize Biden's commitment to stopping federal executions for good.

Q: DID THE TRUMP EXECUTIONS REENERGIZE DEATH PENALTY OPPONENTS?

A: The breakneck pace and the government's relentless push in the courts to get them done did galvanize opponents — and also attracted new adherents to their cause, said Robert Dunham, director of the Death Penalty Information Center.

"Trump demonstrated more graphically than at any other time what the abuse of capital punishment would look like," he said. "It has created a political opportunity, which is why death penalty opponents want the president to strike while the iron is hot."

Death Penalty Action, which organized protests outside the U.S. penitentiary in Terre Haute during the executions, saw numbers of those donating, signing petitions or requesting information soar from 20,000 to 600,000 over the past six months.

Bonowitz said interest spiked after reality TV star Kim Kardashian pleaded on Twitter for Trump to commute Brandon Bernard's death sentence to life. Bernard was executed anyway on Dec. 10.

Q: WILL BIDEN GET PUSHBACK IF HE SEEKS TO END THE FEDERAL DEATH PENALTY?

A: Yes, and not just from death penalty proponents in the Republican Party. It could also come from some members of his own party who will see bids to abolish capital punishment as a losing issue politically.

Clearing death row would also mean sparing the lives of killers such as Dylann Roof, the white supremacist who in 2015 shot dead nine Black members of a South Carolina church during a Bible study. Biden would be placed in the uncomfortable position of having to explain to victims' families why Roof and others killers should not die.

While support for the death penalty overall has plummeted to just over 50% in recent years, many Americans may not want to preclude the possibility of a death sentence in terrorism cases such as the Boston Marathon bombing. Dzhokhar Tsarnaev was convicted in that attack, which killed three people and injured hundreds.

The Supreme Court is currently considering an appeal from the Trump administration that sought to reverse a ruling by a lower court tossing Tsarnaev's death sentence. The Biden administration may have to decide soon whether to continue that appeal or tell the high court the government now accepts the lower court's decision.

Q: ARE THERE CLUES ABOUT WHAT BIDEN MIGHT DO?

A: Biden hasn't spoken at any length about the death penalty since becoming president. And he didn't make the death penalty a prominent feature of his presidential campaign.

On a campaign webpage on criminal justice reform, Biden did pledge "to pass legislation to eliminate the death penalty at the federal level, and incentivize states to follow the federal government's example." He offered no specifics.

Biden may also feel an obligation to do something big on the death penalty, given his past support for it. He played a central role as a senator in the passage of a 1994 crime bill that greatly expanded the number of federal crimes for which someone can be put to death. Several inmates executed under Trump were convicted and sentenced under provisions in that bill.



Which COVID-19 tests are required for international travel?

(AP Illustration/Peter Hamlin)

tests must have been taken no more than three days before departing for the U.S.

Health professionals usually give more sensitive lab tests via a nasal swab that take a day or more to yield results. Rapid tests have a turnaround time of about 15 to 30 minutes and are increasingly used to screen people at testing sites, offices, schools and nursing homes. For some rapid tests, users can swab themselves at home.

With either test, the U.S. requires electronic or printed proof of the negative result from a medical laboratory. That means that even if you plan to get the faster test you'll likely need to see a health care provider who can provide documentation.

England has a similar setup, accepting results from both types of tests. But health authorities there are imposing extra requirements, including that the tests meet certain thresholds for accuracy. Travelers are told to check to make sure their test meets the standards.

After countries instituted varying requirements, officials in the European Union agreed to standardize requirements across the 27-nation bloc.

Which COVID-19 tests are required for international travel?

By **MATTHEW PERRONE AP**
Health Writer

Which COVID-19 tests are required for international travel?

It depends on where you're going.

In an effort to limit the spread of new coronavirus variants, many countries are requiring incoming travelers to show a recent negative test.

The U.S., for example, will accept results from either a test that detects the genetic material of the virus — considered the most sensitive type of test — or a rapid test that looks for viral proteins called antigens. The

Burkina Faso hospitals struggle with new wave of COVID-19

By **SAM MEDNICK Associated Press**

OUAGADOUGOU, Burkina Faso (AP) — For nearly a year, Ousseni Yanogo thought he was doing everything he could to protect himself from the coronavirus. The 63-year-old retired gendarme diligently wore a mask, washed his hands and stayed a safe distance from other adults.

When he held hands with his granddaughter to sing happy birthday when she turned 6, he never imagined he'd find himself fighting to survive in a coronavirus isolation ward weeks later.

"I didn't know contact (with children) was that dangerous, otherwise I wouldn't have allowed the party to be organized," Yanogo said while seated on his bed at the Bogodogo Medical Teaching Hospital in Ouagadougou, the capital of the West African country of roughly 20 million.

After managing to avoid a catastrophic initial wave of the virus for various reasons, including that its figures were almost surely undercounted, the conflict-riddled nation, like much of Africa, is trying to cope with a much deadlier resurgence. Although Burkina Faso's virus figures are still relatively small compared to those in many parts of the world, officials worry that a general lack of understanding and adherence to basic safeguards will make it hard to rein in and could overwhelm the country's already strained health

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Oussen Yanogo, 63, sits on his bed at Ouagadougou's Bogodogo Medical Teaching Hospital Thursday Feb. 4, 2021. Yanogo contracted COVID-19 at his 6-year-old granddaughter's birthday. Since November, the conflict-riddled West African nation of Burkina Faso faces a much deadlier second coronavirus wave than the first and health officials worry a lack of knowledge and adherence to coronavirus measures is making it hard to rein in. (AP Photo/Sam Mednick)

system.

When the pandemic started, Burkina Faso was already suffering from a humanitarian crisis fueled by conflict involving Islamic militants, the army and local defense groups that has displaced more than a million people, pushed hundreds of thousands to the brink of starvation and forced the closure of more than 130 health centers in the country roughly the size of Colorado, according to government and aid groups.

As of Sunday, the government had recorded 11,227 COVID-19 cases, since the pandemic started, according to the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. But since the beginning of December, the average number of daily cases has shot up nearly ninefold, from 15 to 130. The death toll has similarly spiked, from 68 at the end of November to 134 and counting. And while mass vaccinations are underway in some parts of the world and are already being credited with helping keep the disease from

spreading as quickly, they aren't expected to start in Burkina Faso until next month at the earliest.

"We're concerned that in the upcoming weeks or months, the curve might not decrease like in the past. The virus is deep inside the community," said Chivanot Afavi, a supervising nurse with The Alliance for International Medical Action, an international aid group working on the front lines of the coronavirus response. People are not taking the proper precautions and don't seem to be worried about the disease, he said.

If the upward trend isn't reversed, the government warns that the country's hospitals could be overrun.

"If we don't manage to decrease the number of new cases, the risks are an increase in severe cases, which could lead to the inundation of hospitals' capacity to ensure the care of severe patients, resulting in an increase in harm linked to the disease and maybe an increase in mortality," said Dr. Brice Bicaba, an epidemiologist in charge of coordinating the country's coronavirus response.

During a rare visit Thursday to the Bogodogo hospital's coronavirus ward, there were only four patients. But when the secluded wing is full, which it has been for most of the past few months, there are generally four staff members to tend to 11 patients.

Workers told The Associated Press they were understaffed and overworked, and that the surge has taken an emotional toll. Last week, three patients died on the same day.

"It's stressful work," said Dr. Dieudonne Wend-Kuni Kientega. "Every time a patient dies, we're impacted because they're humans, they're our brothers, and they're our relatives."

Health experts worry that as COVID-19 cases and deaths rise, doctors and nurses will be diverted from treating patients with the country's endemic diseases.

"If this second wave of COVID-19 cases continues to rise, the additional strain placed on Burkina's health system, already weakened by the first wave and ongoing conflict, can likely increase disability and death from other causes such as malaria, malnutrition and other respiratory infections," said Donald Brooks,

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chief executive officer of Initiative: Eau, a U.S. aid group focused on water and sanitation that has been assisting in Burkina Faso's pandemic response.

Once it begins, the vaccine rollout will also likely use resources the country can't afford to reallocate, he said.

On Wednesday, COVAX, a global effort aimed at helping lower-income countries obtain shots, announced plans for an initial distribution of 100 million doses worldwide by the end of March. If certain criteria are fulfilled and the vaccine is approved by the World Health Organization, Burkina Faso could receive 1.6 million doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine within weeks.

While the country prepares for the vaccine's arrival, those treating the virus and suffering from it are calling on their communities to take it more seriously.

Yanogo said when he started coughing and having trouble breathing after his granddaughter's party, his son took him to a private clinic, where he tested positive and was then transferred to the public facility, where severe cases are taken. While his hospital stay and general medical care is free, patients have to pay out of pocket for tests such as X-rays and medicines that aren't available at the hospital. Since getting sick, Yanogo's been forced to ask relatives and friends to help pay approximately \$360 for his care, which includes daily oxygen therapy.

"It's hard for me. Many relatives contributed and friends contributed. I used all the money I had," said Yanogo, who wept softly into his shirt when talking about how touched he was by the support he's received.

Yanogo said he's faced tough situations before, but that he's never confronted anything like COVID-19. He also said he was feeling better and couldn't wait to get home to his worried family.

"I want to return home because of my wife, my children and everyone," he said. "As long as I'm here, they are not at ease."

In winter's quiet, Belarus opposition prepares new protests

By YURAS KARMANAU

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Winter's cold and harsh police actions in Belarus have put a chill on the protests against President Alexander Lukashenko that gripped the Eastern European nation for months. But opposition forces are preparing to turn up the heat in the spring and observers say Lukashenko doesn't have a clear strategy to overcome new unrest.

Here's a look at the country's situation six months after the start of an unprecedented wave of protests that attracted world attention.

ANTI-LUKASHENKO PROTESTS
"FROZEN"

Protests broke out after the Aug. 9 presidential election, the official results of which gave Lukashenko a



FILE In this file photo taken on Wednesday, Aug. 26, 2020, Belarusian opposition supporters seen through an old Belarusian national flag, as they light their smartphones as they gather at Independence Square in Minsk, Belarus. Protests against President Alexander Lukashenko that gripped Belarus for months seem quelled by Winter's cold and harsh police action, but opposition forces are preparing to turn up the heat in the spring and observers say Lukashenko doesn't have a clear strategy to overcome new unrest. (AP Photo/Sergei Grits, File)

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sixth term in office. Opposition figures and some poll workers, however, said those results were fraudulent. The nationwide demonstrations, some of which attracted up to 200,000 people, were the largest and most sustained challenge to Lukashenko in his 26 years of repressive rule.

The protests withered away as severe cold set in and Belarusians became wearied by police repressions that were often violent. Some relatively small and scattered protests took place in late January and about 250 people were arrested.

Overall, human rights activists say, more than 30,000 people have been arrested in the monthslong wave of protests, and many of them were beaten. While opposition leaders chose peaceful tactics, police in Belarus intensified their repression and began to use water cannons, gas and rubber bullets to disperse demonstrations.

"The protests ceased to be an existential threat to Lukashenko's power when it became clear that people were not ready for violent resistance," said Artem Shraibman, an independent analyst from Minsk.

"Lukashenko opened a new portal to violence — we were shocked and not ready," said Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, Lukashenko's main challenger on the presidential ballot who fled to Lithuania under pressure just after the election.

At one point, as protesters demanding his resignation massed outside the presidential palace, Lukashenko strode the grounds carrying an automatic rifle. That moment "exposed the tragedy of the situation — he is ready to shoot back, but not to leave," Tsikhanouskaya told The Associated Press.

Barbed wire, water cannons, thousands of soldiers on the streets, and internet shutdowns have become common in Minsk over the past six months. Thousands of Belarusians were forced to flee the country.

But harsh actions by security forces have only temporarily muted the protests, Shraibman said.

"Lukashenko does not have a clear vision of a future strategy. He doesn't know what to do with the majority of the urban population who have turned their backs on him," he said.

LUKASHENKO PLAYS FOR TIME

A \$1.5 billion loan from the Kremlin and a promise to send in Russian security forces if Lukashenko requests them helped Lukashenko maintain control over the security forces and officials.

In return, Lukashenko promised to reform the constitution and transfer a significant part of his powers to parliament and the government, and then leave. But these plans have been confused and contradictory.

At first, he said powers would be transferred to an All-Belarusian Assembly that is to convene in February. Then he disavowed these promises and announced amending the constitution by the end of 2021 and a new referendum. After the adoption of the new constitution, Lukashenko promised to hold a new presidential election.

"All statements are zigzag — the more he makes statements about the constitution, about the future state structure, the more we understand that there is no clear picture and he is just dragging his feet," said Shraibman.

During the period of mass protests, Lukashenko talked about "the decline of the presidential life" and possible resignation, but then he stopped such statements.

"Lukashenko is letting go of the so-called constitutional reform, which was mostly talked about by Russian leaders, since the protests have been suppressed and there is no longer any need for it," Shraibman said.

RUSSIA IN SEARCH OF AN ALTERNATIVE

Belarus and Russia are closely but awkwardly linked.

Moscow has supplied Minsk with cheap loans, oil and gas, keeping the unreformed Soviet-style economy of Belarus afloat. However, constant disputes over oil and gas prices have often led to public scandals and accusations by Lukashenko that Russia wants to absorb and incorporate Belarus. The Kremlin is uneasy with Lukashenko's volatility.

"Loud accusations and the scandalous character of Lukashenko are forcing the Kremlin to look for a replacement," said Alexander Klaskovsky, an independent analyst. "But Putin cannot refuse to support

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Lukashenko without having a clear alternative and a clear scenario of his own.”

Lukashenko also has pressured Russia into cooperation by portraying Belarus as a testing ground for future uprisings in Russia.

“Now his tail is wagging the dog,” Klaskovsky said. “No matter how disagreeable Lukashenko may be to Putin, they will have to endure each other.”

WESTERN SANCTIONS

The EU has already introduced three packages of sanctions against seven Belarusian companies and 84 individuals, including Lukashenko.

“The sanctions create a lot of headaches, but they do not change the regime, they are rather symbolic,” Shraibman said.

In December, the United States adopted the Belarus Democracy, Human Rights and Sovereignty Act, which provides for sanctions not only against Belarusians, but also against Russian officials, companies and individuals for supporting Lukashenko’s regime.

“The United States is using the mechanism of raising the price of Lukashenko for Putin, so that Minsk becomes an increasingly toxic and expensive partner for the Kremlin,” Shraibman said.

THE OPPOSITION’S LONG GAME

Peaceful protest and attempts to organize a nationwide strike failed. Officials and security personnel did not go over to the side of the opposition. Harsh repression and the imprisonment of opposition leaders has allowed authorities to take control of the situation.

But the opposition believes that Lukashenko has lost the support of the majority of Belarusians, and that this will eventually lead to changes within the country.

“Every day our resources are increasing, and the resources of the regime are dwindling. Every day he has less money, fewer people, fewer supporters inside and abroad, worse and worse reputation and, accordingly, fewer opportunities,” said Tsikhanouskaya.

The opposition aims to resume its mass actions on March 25, the anniversary of the 1918 declaration of a short-lived independent Belarus. The day traditionally has seen large opposition demonstrations.

“We’re in the mood for long-term play,” Tsikhanouskaya said.

AP PHOTOS: Sistine Chapel key-keeper opens up after lockdown

By PAOLO LUCARIELLO and ELISA COLELLA Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — The Sistine Chapel reopened to public view last week for the first time since its November coronavirus closure, but for Gianni Crea, the doors to Michelangelo’s magnificent frescoes were never really closed.

Crea is the “clavigero” of the Vatican Museums, the chief key-keeper whose job begins each morning at 5 a.m., opening the doors and turning on the lights through 7 kilometers (4 1/2 miles) of one of the world’s greatest collections of art and antiquities.

The Associated Press followed Crea on his rounds the first day the museum reopened to the public, joining him before dawn in the downstairs “bunker” where the 2,797 keys to the Vatican treasures are kept in wall safes overnight. As the keys dangled and jangled from giant keyrings he wears around his wrist, Crea wound his way through the Gallery of Maps, past the famed marble “Laocoön and His Sons” statue and finally to the Sistine Chapel.

There, at a tiny wooden doorway, Crea drew out a white envelope from his suit pocket, ripped it open and pulled out a small silvery-brass key.

Using a small flashlight to guide his way, he slipped the key into the keyhole, turned it gently and creaked open the door to reveal the still-darkened chapel where popes are made during the secret ceremonies that draw their very name — “conclave” — from the crucial role that keys play in them. Cardinals are essentially locked away “with a key” in the Sistine Chapel and the nearby Vatican hotel for the duration of

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the solemn vote to elect a new pope.

As a result, the Sistine Chapel key is of particular importance and is handled with its own protocol: After the room is shuttered for the day when the last visitor leaves, the key is put back in a new white envelope, sealed, stamped and replaced in the bunker wall safe, with its comings and goings duly noted in a thick registry book.

Crea recalls fondly the day that, three years into his now-23 years of service, he was finally allowed to open the door to the Sistine Chapel alone. The privilege in the two decades since has given him a chance to visit Michelangelo's "Last Temptation" and scenes of the New Testament and Old all alone, in the empty quiet of dawn.

"All the statues, all the rooms have a unique history, but naturally the Sistine Chapel always gives you a particularly emotion," Crea said.

Even though the public was shut out of the Vatican Museums for 88 days, Crea and his team of 10 key-keepers kept up their routine of opening and closing doors, since the exhibition rooms had to be cleaned, dusted and maintained by a small army of museum workers. Restorers took the

opportunity to do maintenance work that would otherwise be impossible when the nearly 7 million annual visitors pass through the museums during a normal year.

But 2020 was anything but normal. Only around 1.3 million visitors came, arranging visits around Italy's two COVID-19 lockdowns. Now, to maintain social-distancing protocols, up to 400 people can be admitted every 30 minutes, with timed tickets purchased in advance online.

Crea, who confesses that he sometimes misplaces his own house keys, will make sure the doors are open for them.

"It is a unique emotion, an incredible privilege for me and my colleagues to have the possibility of showing these extraordinary art works, that are part of our history, to visitors from all over the world," he said.



Gianni Crea, the Vatican Museums chief "Clavigero" key-keeper, holds a bunch of keys as he walks down the "Maps Aisle" to open the museum's rooms and sections, at the Vatican, Monday, Feb. 1, 2021. Crea is the "clavigero" of the Vatican Museums, the chief key-keeper whose job begins each morning at 5 a.m., opening the doors and turning on the lights through 7 kilometers of one of the world's greatest collections of art and antiquities. The Associated Press followed Crea on his rounds the first day the museum reopened to the public, joining him in the underground "bunker" where the 2,797 keys to the Vatican treasures are kept in wall safes overnight. (AP Photo/Andrew Medichini)

Former heavyweight champion Leon Spinks dies at 67

By TIM DAHLBERG AP Boxing Writer

LAS VEGAS (AP) — Leon Spinks, who won Olympic gold and then shocked the boxing world by beating Muhammad Ali to win the heavyweight title in only his eighth pro fight, has died. He was 67.

Spinks, who lived his later years in Las Vegas, died Friday night, according to a release from a public relations firm. He had been battling prostate and other cancers.

His wife, Brenda Glur Spinks, and a few close friends and other family members were by his side when he passed away.

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A lovable heavyweight with a drinking problem, Spinks beat Ali by decision in a 15-round fight in 1978 to win the title. He was unranked at the time, and picked as an opponent because Ali was looking for an easy fight.

He got anything but that, with an unorthodox Spinks swarming over Ali throughout the fight on his way to a stunning win by split decision. The two met seven months later at the Superdome in New Orleans, with Ali taking the decision this time before a record indoor boxing crowd of 72,000 and a national television audience estimated at 90 million people.

"It was one of the most unbelievable things when Ali agreed to fight him because you look at the fights he had up to then and he was not only not a top contender but shouldn't have been a contender at all," promoter Bob Arum said Saturday. "He was just an opponent but somehow he found a way to win that fight."

Spinks would lose the rematch to Ali in New Orleans and fought for the title only once after that, when he was stopped in the third round in 1981 by Larry Holmes. He continued fighting on and off into the mid-1990s, finishing with a record of 26-17-3.

Spinks, with a big grin that often showed off his missing front teeth, was popular among boxing fans for both his win over Ali and his easygoing personality. But he burned through his earnings quickly, and at one point after retiring was working as a custodian at a YMCA in Nebraska, cleaning locker rooms.

He later was part of a group of ex-fighters who had their brains studied by the Cleveland Clinic Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health in Las Vegas. Spinks was found to have brain damage caused by a combination of taking punches to the head and heavy drinking, though he functioned well enough to do autograph sessions and other events late in his life.

"He was a good soul," said Gene Kilroy, who was Ali's business manager when he fought Spinks and became friends with the fighter.

Spinks won the light heavyweight division at the 1976 Olympics in Montreal, beating Sixto Soria of Cuba in an upset to become one of five U.S. fighters to win gold. His brother, Michael, who would later become heavyweight champion himself, won the middleweight gold, and Sugar Ray Leonard took the welterweight title.

Spinks was hardly spectacular after turning pro, winning six of his first seven fights. Just four months before he met Ali, he could manage just a draw with journeyman Scott LeDoux and he wasn't on anyone's radar in the heavyweight title picture.

But Ali was coming off a brutal fight with Earnie Shavers and wasn't looking forward to what would have been a mandatory bout against Ken Norton, whom he had already fought three times and who seemed to have Ali's number. Instead, he sought an easy mark for a fight that was to be nationally televised on ABC, even knowing he would be stripped of one of his titles for taking another fight.

Enter Spinks, who was such a big underdog most sports books didn't even take bets on the fight.

"In that fight everything clicked," Arum said. "He came in with a game plan and he beat Ali. It wasn't



FILE - In this Feb. 15, 1978, file photo, Leon Spinks, right, connects with a right hook to Muhammad Ali, during the late rounds of their championship fight in Las Vegas. Former heavyweight champion Leon Spinks Jr. died Friday night, Feb. 5, 2021, after battling prostate and other cancers. He was 67. (AP Photo/File)

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that Ali wasn't at his best, but Leon shocked everybody with how good Leon was."

Suddenly, Spinks was the heavyweight champion of the world at the age of 25.

"I'm not The Greatest," Spinks said afterward. "Just the latest."

Arum was in the dressing room with Ali after the fight, and said Ali directed him to sign Spinks to a quick rematch. The two fought seven months later in a prime-time fight on CBS that set television viewing records at the time, with nearly half the country tuning in.

Ali took the rematch more seriously than he did the first fight, winning a decision though Spinks was competitive. Spinks might have been better, Arum said, but enjoyed the life of being heavyweight champion too much and partied much of the time between fights.

"Leon posed in a bathtub with a glass of champagne smoking a cigar. He suddenly had an entourage as big as one that Ali had," Arum said. "We were all staying at the same hotel in New Orleans for the rematch and one morning I was coming down to breakfast and Leon got in the elevator and collapsed on the floor. Obviously he had been out drinking and I said, 'Leon, are you crazy, you're fighting in just a few days.' He said 'What do you mean? I'm just coming in from roadwork.'"

Among the notable people in Spinks' entourage was Lawrence Tureaud, who would later be known as the actor Mr. T and served as bodyguard for the champion.

Spinks was born July 11, 1953, in St. Louis, raised in poverty along with his brother Michael. After discovering boxing both brothers became top amateurs, culminating in the 1976 Olympics where Leon won the light heavyweight gold and Michael won the middleweight gold.

Michael Spinks would go on to win the heavyweight title himself in 1985, defending it three times before being knocked out by Mike Tyson in 91 seconds in their 1988 fight in Atlantic City. By then, the best part of Leon's career was over, though he would fight until losing a December 1995 fight against Fred Houpe in St. Louis.

After moving to Las Vegas, Spinks was married to Brenda Glur Spinks in 2011. The two were often seen at boxing-related activities, including Spinks' 2017 induction into the Nevada Boxing Hall of Fame.

"He was happy go lucky, the salt of the earth," Arum said, chuckling at the memories. "Leon was nutty but you couldn't get angry at the guy. He never meant any harm to anyone. You couldn't help but love him even though you shook your head at how he acted."

Palestinian leader's path to elections is fraught with peril

By JOSEPH KRAUSS Associated Press

RAMALLAH, West Bank (AP) — Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas' call for elections has thrown his political future into peril, forcing him to negotiate competing demands to engage with a friendlier U.S. administration, mend the rift with his militant Hamas rivals and keep his unruly Fatah movement from breaking apart.

The presidential decree issued last month, calling for what would be the first Palestinian elections in 15 years, stemmed from negotiations launched with Hamas last year aimed at shoring up ranks in the face of unprecedented crises.

The Trump administration had cut off all aid and proposed a Mideast plan that overwhelmingly favored Israel and would have allowed it to annex parts of the occupied West Bank. A U.S.-brokered normalization agreement between Israel and the United Arab Emirates last summer put annexation on hold but left the Palestinians increasingly isolated in the region.

So Abbas embarked on talks with Hamas, the Islamic militant group that seized Gaza from his forces in 2007. Those discussions culminated in the presidential decree calling for legislative elections on May 22 and presidential elections on July 31.

It's far from clear the elections will actually be held. Doing so will require an agreement between Abbas' secular Fatah movement and Hamas, which have been bitterly divided for more than a decade despite multiple attempts at reconciliation. The two sides plan to meet in Cairo this week.

The outcome of the talks will largely depend on the 85-year-old Abbas. He has spent decades nonviolently

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seeking a Palestinian state in the West Bank, Gaza and east Jerusalem, territories seized by Israel in the 1967 war. Instead, he has come to rule an increasingly autocratic and unpopular Palestinian Authority confined to parts of the occupied West Bank.

Reconciling with Hamas and holding elections could shore up his legitimacy and meet longstanding Western demands for accountability. But even a limited victory by Hamas, which is considered a terrorist group by Israel and Western countries, could result in international isolation and the loss of vital aid — as it did after Hamas won the last parliamentary elections in 2006.

In a briefing with Palestinian journalists, EU representative Sven Kühn von Burgsdorff welcomed the call for elections but declined repeated requests to explain how the EU would respond to a Hamas victory.

“Do you put the cart before the horse?” he said. “Why don’t we start with the horse.”

President Joe Biden has restored aid to the Palestinians and vowed to adopt a more even-handed approach, but the Mideast conflict is likely to take a distant backseat to more pressing crises like the coronavirus pandemic, and the U.S. is unlikely to engage with any Palestinian government that includes Hamas. Even a government of independents supported by Hamas could pose problems for Western donors.

Elections could also precipitate the breakup of Abbas’ Fatah party. He has not groomed a successor, and could face a leadership challenge from Marwan Barghouti, a popular Fatah leader who is serving five life sentences in an Israeli prison for his role in the 2000 intifada, or uprising.

“For Barghouti, running for president is his only way out of prison, or at least this is what he thinks,” said Ali Jarbawi, a political science professor at Birzeit University in the West Bank.

Abbas might also have to contend with Mohammed Dahlan, a Fatah rival who was convicted in absentia of corruption charges by a Palestinian court after being driven out by Abbas. Dahlan has a base of support in his native Gaza and powerful allies in the United Arab Emirates, where he lives in exile.

“So far all the talk is about having one (Fatah) list, but it’s not unlikely that there would be two lists or even three,” said Jihad Harb, a Palestinian political analyst. “Or Barghouti may wait for the presidential election.”

Hamas would face its own challenges in elections, where voters might hold it accountable for the economic devastation in Gaza, which has endured three wars with Israel and a crippling Israeli-Egyptian blockade since the militant group seized power.

One idea making the rounds is to assemble a joint list of Fatah and Hamas, but that would largely settle the outcome of the parliamentary election before any ballots are cast, raising questions about its legitimacy.

Yara Hawari, senior analyst at Al-Shabaka, an international Palestinian think tank, says that either way, if the elections go ahead there will be an “engineered outcome” that allows Fatah and Hamas to maintain the status quo.



File - In this Saturday, Oct. 20, 2012 file photo, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas shows his ink-stained finger after casting his vote during local elections at a polling station in the West Bank city of Ramallah. President Abbas called for legislative elections on May 22 and presidential elections on July 31, 2021. (AP Photo/Majdi Mohammed, File)

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Both Palestinian authorities have suppressed dissent through torture and arbitrary arrests in the areas under their control, and Israel routinely detains Palestinian activists and cracks down on protests and boycott movements.

"It's already been rigged," Hawari said. "If you have a society that's completely stifled politically, that is punished routinely for political opposition — that's already rigged."

The unresolved issues between Fatah and Hamas could also be used as pretexts for cancelling or postponing the elections.

The two sides still need to agree on a court to settle election disputes and a mechanism for securing polling stations in Gaza, where Palestinian security forces have had no presence since Hamas seized power. The Palestinian Authority has also demanded that Israel allow Palestinians in annexed east Jerusalem to take part in the elections.

Khalil Shikaki, the director of the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, said Abbas could cancel or postpone the elections and blame Israel or Hamas.

"However, if Israel does not give him that pretext and Hamas does not give him that pretext, then his hand will be forced and he will have to go to elections," he said.

Abbas, whose presidential term expired in 2009, already faces a legitimacy crisis, and Western donors may rethink their support if elections are scrapped. Abbas could also face a backlash from the Palestinian public.

"The process has dynamics of its own, and although Abbas controls it, I think his calculation will have to adjust to what options he will be left with, if he unilaterally decides to cancel elections," Shikaki said. "There will be significant disagreement within Fatah about this."

Rodgers wins 3rd MVP, Donald gets 3rd top defensive player

By BARRY WILNER AP Pro Football Writer

A pair of Aarons pulled off an NFL hat trick Saturday night.

Packers quarterback Aaron Rodgers earned his third Associated Press Most Valuable Player award, while Rams defensive tackle Aaron Donald took his third top defensive player prize at NFL Honors.

Also taking home awards were two members of the Washington Football Team: quarterback Alex Smith was the Comeback Player of the Year in one of the most inspirational stories of 2020, and edge rusher Chase Young got the top defensive rookie.

Titans 2,000-yard rusher Derrick Henry won Offensive Player of the Year, and the offensive rookie honor went to Chargers quarterback Justin Herbert. Cleveland's Kevin Stefanski was the Coach of the Year, and Buffalo offensive coordinator Brian Daboll earned assistant coach honors.

Seattle quarterback Russell Wilson won the Walter Payton Man of the Year award for his work in the community.

Rodgers had perhaps the best season of his 16-year career, leading Green Bay to a 13-3 regular season, the NFC's best mark. Just a few months after questions arose about his comfort level with the Packers — and their choosing a quarterback in the first round of April's draft — Rodgers, who turned 37 in December, tore up the NFL.

Rodgers topped the league with 48 touchdown passes completion rate (70.7 percent), and a 121.5 rating. He was picked off just five times.

"It is really special to have won it in my fourth year as a starter and now to win it in my 13th year as a starter in a new offense is pretty amazing and something I am very proud of," Rodgers said. "To have sustained success and be able to play your best football at 37 in my 16th season is something I take a lot of pride in."

Donald, the Los Angeles Rams' unanimous All-Pro, added the 2020 top defensive player honor to his wins in 2017 and 2018. Only Pro Football Hall of Famer Lawrence Taylor (1981, '82, '86) and Houston edge rusher J.J. Watt (2012, '14, '15) have earned the award three times.

"You just named two great defensive players," he said, "so any time your name is mentioned with greats, you will be honored — especially there's only a few that have accomplished that. To be the third to do it

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that is truly a blessing. It shows the body of work that I have; anytime your hard work is rewarded you are going to be happy about that. It is just a blessing."

The 36-year-old Smith completed a remarkable comeback from a broken right leg that required 17 surgeries to repair. Smith stepped in to start eight games before a strained right calf in the same leg sidelined him for the postseason spot he helped the team secure.

Everyone across the league cited Smith as an inspiration.

"It is humbling when I hear that," Smith said. "I know for how long I spent thinking about and looking at the men and women who inspired me. I am stuck in the hospital bed, stuck in a wheelchair, spent countless hours googling and looking at videos of our service men and women going through the same rehab as I went through. ...

"So there were definitely people in front of me that I am so thankful for that allowed me to go down this path. And obviously I am humbled and I guess you hope that you can kind of be a link in that chain for anybody coming behind you."

Henry ran for 2,027 yards, the eighth player to surpass the magic 2,000 mark.

"Two thousand yards is always on a running back's mind, especially in the league because it is so unique," Henry said. "Always put the team goals first, then individual goals come second. But I knew we take a lot of pride in the running game and have had success, and then anything is possible with the group I am with, (so) we could accomplish it."

Stefanski's Browns snapped their postseason drought dating back to the 2003 season by going 11-5 in the rugged AFC North, then beating Pittsburgh in the wild-card round before a close loss at Kansas City.

"We never concerned ourselves with the past, we are all about moving forward," Stefanski said. "This season had its unique challenges and we focused on those each and every day and ultimately tried to put together a group of guys that would fight every single week, and I think we did that. But we were so focused on what we were doing in the here and now."

Daboll helped Buffalo to a 15-4 record and a spot in the AFC championship game as he oversaw the rapid development of quarterback Josh Allen in his third pro season. Only Green Bay with 509 scored more than Buffalo's 501 points.

Herbert, chosen sixth overall in last April's draft, is the second straight quarterback and the ninth since 2004 to be the top offensive rookie. Not even a starter when the season began, Herbert stepped in during the Chargers' second game when Tyrod Taylor was injured during a medical procedure. Herbert never looked back, and set a rookie record with 31 TD passes.

"I think it is a testament to all the hard work we have put in as a team, the coaching staff and the players," Herbert said. "It's been a tough year, but we put in a lot of good work, but just to be in the conversation (for the award) is an honor."



FILE - In this Jan. 16, 2021, file photo, Green Bay Packers quarterback Aaron Rodgers (12) runs with the ball during the team's NFL divisional playoff football game against the Los Angeles Rams in Green Bay, Wis. Rodgers earned his third Associated Press Most Valuable Player award, Saturday, Feb. 6, at the NFL Honors. (AP Photo/Jeffrey Phelps, File)

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Young was drafted four spots ahead of Herbert. The edge rusher led all rookies with 7 1/2 sacks and should be an anchor of the team's defense throughout the decade.

"I came in eager to just work hard and be a sponge," Young said, "and I watched coach (Jack) Del Rio and (head coach Ron) Rivera just from afar, and always just tried to pick their minds about football in general. And I feel like that helped me throughout the year."

Wilson invoked the words of Payton in his acceptance speech.

"We are stronger together than we are alone..." Wilson said. "To the young boy or girl who has a dream ... who wants to make a difference ... remember: Love always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

"Love changes things."

Game changers: Manning, Woodson, Megatron headed to Hall

By EDDIE PELLIS AP National Writer

Though others have eclipsed him in some sections of the record book, Peyton Manning's stamp on the NFL is very much a thing of 2021 and beyond.

Manning, the quarterback whose meticulous attention to detail helped turn the 21st-century gridiron into a chessboard on turf, was awarded his spot in the Pro Football Hall of Fame on Saturday in his first year of eligibility.

The son of Saints legend Archie and brother of two-time Super Bowl champion Eli will be joined later this year in Canton by another first-ballot lock, defensive back Charles Woodson, who beat out Manning for the Heisman Trophy in 1997, and then spent nearly two decades trying to stop him. Calvin Johnson — aka "Megatron" — was also a first-ballot selection, his mere nine years of playmaking excellence with the Lions more than enough to convince the panel.

Also making it were guard Alan Faneca, who made nine Pro Bowls and missed only one game over 13 seasons with the Steelers, Jets and Cardinals; and John Lynch, the hard-hitting safety who burnished his reputation in Tampa Bay, which plays Kansas City for the Super Bowl title Sunday.

Cowboys receiver Drew Pearson, Raiders coach Tom Flores and longtime Steelers scout Bill Nunn made it in the senior, coach and contributor categories, respectively.

In a nod to COVID-19, the voters eschewed their traditional all-day meeting Saturday in favor of a virtual gathering on Jan. 19. Manning found out a few days later, with his coaches and his family delivering the news. The winners' names were made public at the NFL Honors awards ceremony Saturday night. Jaguars left tackle Tony Boselli and Dolphins linebacker Zach Thomas were among the finalists whose names were not called.



FILE - In this Jan. 21, 2007, file photo, Indianapolis Colts quarterback Peyton Manning (18) celebrates running back Joseph Addai's three-yard touchdown run in the fourth quarter of the AFC Championship football game against the New England Patriots, in Indianapolis. Charles Woodson beat out Peyton Manning for a prestigious college award. Something called the Heisman Trophy. On Saturday, Feb. 6, 2021, they likely will share an even more impressive football honor: entry into the Pro Football Hall of Fame. (AP Photo/Amy Sancetta, File)

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Manning going into the hall was all but preordained. That's fitting, in a way, because more than any quarterback before him, he used every minute of his preparation during the week, and then every second at the line of scrimmage during the games, doing all he could to eliminate doubt about the result of every play before it happened.

His work in the video room, his "voluntary" offseason throw-and-catch sessions with receivers, his quizzing of coaches and teammates alike during practices — all were the stuff of legend.

The end game came on Sundays, for 14 seasons with the Indianapolis Colts, then four more with the Denver Broncos, when he barked "Omaha, Omaha!!" at the line of scrimmage — we still don't know what it means — then went about dissecting defenses en route to 186 regular-season victories, a still-record five MVP awards and two Super Bowl titles in four trips.

When Manning retired after leading the Broncos to the title in 2016, he had the career records for passing yardage (71,940) and touchdowns (539), among others, and was part of the conversation as Greatest Of All Time.

Drew Brees and Tom Brady have eclipsed those numbers. Brady, playing in his 10th Super Bowl on Sunday, has shut the door on the GOAT debate, and with a win will join Manning as the second quarterback to lead two franchises to a title. Still, he's well aware of Manning's role in making the modern-day passing game what it is today.

"Like any great quarterback, there's a lot of responsibility that you take on," Brady said this week in reflecting on Manning's place in the game. "You want to make sure everything's a reflection of how you see the game and you want to make sure everyone's on the same page. And when everyone's seeing it through the same set of eyes, it's a great way to play football."

One-time University of Tennessee assistant David Cutcliffe says he knew Manning was something special when the quarterback, in advance of his freshman year, took three pages' worth of handwritten notes on a base play the Vols ran called 62 Meyer.

"He redefined preparation," Cutcliffe said during a 2013 interview. "He redefined the quality of the work that's expected of the people around him."

He ushered in an era that turned the reading of the Xs and Os from an art to a science, setting the template for a modern-day passing game very much reliant on pre-snap reads that lead to quick decisions and allow the smartest of quarterbacks to get out of bad plays before they happen.

All those smarts, of course, belied a physical gift that allowed Manning to play for 18 years, including a comeback from four delicate neck surgeries that left him unable to grip a football at first.

Weeks after the second operation, Manning snuck off to a Colorado Rockies batting cage to throw with his old UT buddy, Todd Helton. Manning's first toss went about 5 yards before fluttering to the ground. Helton laughed because he thought Manning was joking.

Not three years later, Manning threw 55 touchdown passes — that record still stands as the most in a season — and started in the Super Bowl for the Broncos. Two seasons after that, he wasn't in much better shape, ailing with an arch injury that cost him half the season and what was left of his limited mobility. But he guided the Broncos to a win in Super Bowl 50 — then left the field forever.

"I called John Elway, called Dan Marino, called Troy Aikman, called Brett Favre, to let them know and (tell them) how thankful I am to be on the same team as them," Manning said shortly after he got word about his honor in an interview with the Broncos website. "And the impact they had on me, either studying them or them talking to me after a game, or whatever it may be."

Manning both entered and exited the NFL the same time as Woodson, the cornerback who went to one Super Bowl in his first eight years with the Raiders, then went to Green Bay to win his only Super Bowl title, before finishing out his career as a safety in Oakland.

He finished his career with 65 interceptions and 13 defensive touchdowns, tied for the career record with Rod Woodson and Darren Sharper.

California revises indoor church guidelines after ruling

By DAISY NGUYEN Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — California Gov. Gavin Newsom's office on Saturday issued revised guidelines for indoor church services after the Supreme Court lifted the state's ban on indoor worship during the coronavirus pandemic, but left in place restrictions on singing and chanting.

In the most significant legal victory against California's COVID-19 health orders, the high court issued rulings late Friday in two cases where churches argued the restrictions violated their religious liberty. The justices said for now California can't continue with a ban on indoor church services, but it can limit attendance to 25% of a building's capacity and restrict singing and chanting inside.

The new state guidelines limit attendance at indoor services in areas with widespread or substantial virus spread to 25% of a building's capacity. Indoor services in areas with moderate to minimum spread are limited to 50% capacity.

California had put the ban in place because the virus is more easily transmitted indoors and singing releases tiny droplets that can carry the disease.

Newsom's office said those measures were imposed to protect worshippers from getting infected.

"We will continue to enforce the restrictions the Supreme Court left in place and, after reviewing the decision, we will issue revised guidelines for worship services to continue to protect the lives of Californians," the governor's press secretary, Daniel Lopez, said in a statement.

Before the ruling, indoor worship services were banned in purple-tiered counties — those deemed to be at widespread risk of coronavirus transmission. This tier accounts for the vast majority of the state.

The justices were acting on emergency requests to halt the restrictions from South Bay United Pentecostal Church in Chula Vista and Pasadena-based Harvest Rock Church and Harvest International Ministry, which has more than 160 churches across the state.

"You can go to your house of worship, as of now! You can go back to church, we're excited about that," Pastor Art Hodges of the South Bay United Pentecostal Church told KNSD-TV.

The church has defied state orders since last May by holding service indoors while following COVID-19 safety protocols, Hodges said. He said he was thankful to hold services on Sunday "without any pressure or threat or concern" and added that the 25% attendance limit will make him add two or three more services to accommodate church members.

"It at least allows us some wiggle room to operate," he said.

On Instagram, Harvest Rock's ministry in downtown Los Angeles announced it would hold an in-person



FILE - In this Sunday, June 7, 2020, file photo, a hundred faithful sit while minding social distancing, listening to Los Angeles Archbishop Jose H. Gomez celebrate Mass at Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels, the first Mass held in English at the site since the re-opening of churches, in downtown Los Angeles. The Supreme Court is telling California it can't enforce a ban on indoor church services because of the coronavirus pandemic. The high court issued orders late Friday, Feb. 5, 2021, in two cases where churches had sued over coronavirus-related restrictions in the state. (AP Photo/Damian Dovarganes, File)

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service Saturday evening.

"Bring the kiddos! We'd love to see the whole family for service tonight!" the announcement said, followed by the hashtag #inpersonservice.

The church said in a statement it will continue to petition for the right to sing during indoor services, arguing the state was unfairly allowing the entertainment industry to film a singing competition but not during indoor worship.

"While it is one thing to lock down based on data, it is an entirely different motive to allow some groups a right that is denied to others," the statement said.

The court's newest justice, Amy Coney Barrett, said in her first signed opinion that it was up to churches to demonstrate that they were entitled to relief from the singing ban. Writing for herself and Justice Brett Kavanaugh, she said it wasn't clear at this point whether the singing ban was being applied "across the board."

Not all places of worships plan to reopen right away.

The head of Grace Cathedral in San Francisco said the Supreme Court was "not doing anyone a favor" by lifting the ban.

"We're trying to follow the science and we're trying to be patient," said Dean Malcolm Clemens Young told The San Francisco Chronicle.

The Archdiocese of Los Angeles, the largest of its kind in the U.S. with more than 5 million Catholics, cautiously advised "parishes who choose to return" to indoor worship to follow the singing and room-capacity rules, in addition to requiring physical distancing and face masks.

"The Archdiocese of Los Angeles is gratified by the Supreme Court's decision to allow indoor worship services," it said in a statement.

The court's action follows a decision in a case from New York late last year in which the justices split 5-4 in barring the state from enforcing certain limits on attendance at churches and synagogues. Shortly after, the justices told a federal court to reexamine California's restrictions in light of the ruling.

With few exceptions, California's COVID-19 restrictions have been largely upheld. But a number of lawsuits, such as one seeking to allow outdoor dining, are still in the courts.

Biden gives Calif. woman pep talk in weekly address revival

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

WILMINGTON, Del. (AP) — President Joe Biden gave a pep talk to a California woman who was laid off because of the coronavirus pandemic, during a conversation the White House said is part of an effort to help him engage more consistently with regular Americans.

The White House on Saturday released a two-and-a-half-minute video of Biden's long-distance telephone conversation with Michele Voelkert, identifying her only as Michele.

After losing her job at a startup clothing company in July, she wrote Biden a letter. He read it, then called her.

The Roseville, California, woman told Biden "it's been a tough time" trying to find work.

Biden, who spoke from his Oval Office desk, replied that his father used to say a job is about dignity and respect as much as it is about a paycheck. He described his \$1.9 trillion coronavirus relief plan, which calls for \$1,400 payments to people like Voelkert, and other economic aid for individuals and small businesses. There's also money to help distribute coronavirus vaccines.

"I've been saying a long time, the idea that we think we can keep businesses open and moving and thriving without dealing with this pandemic is just a nonstarter," Biden said.

The Sacramento Bee said it spoke to Voelkert, 47, after the call. "It was the opportunity of the lifetime," she said. "I'm still riding high."

The conversation is part of an effort to help Biden, who has largely limited his travel because of the pandemic, communicate directly with Americans, the White House said. Biden did fly to Wilmington, Delaware, on Friday to spend the weekend at home with his family.

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President Joe Biden walks to a motorcade vehicle as he departs an orthopaedic appointment, Saturday, Feb. 6, 2021, in Newark, Del. Biden fractured his right foot while playing with one of his dogs in November. (AP Photo/Patrick Semansky)

post-injury weight-bearing X-ray" was to make sure Biden had regained stability in his ligaments. O'Connor later reported that Biden's foot fractures had completely healed.

"There is a time-honored tradition in the country of hearing from the president in this way," press secretary Jen Psaki said Friday in previewing the video. She referenced Franklin D. Roosevelt's "fireside chats" and Ronald Reagan's establishment of a weekly radio address.

The radio address eventually grew to include a video version seen over the internet. The practice, however, lapsed under former President Donald Trump.

Biden's weekly address will be produced in a variety of forms, Psaki said.

Later Saturday, Biden left his home for a regularly scheduled X-ray of his right foot, which he broke in late November while playing with his dog Major.

Dr. Kevin O'Connor, the president's physician, said in a statement issued by the White House that the "10-week

Things to Know: Virus experts hope Super Bowl won't sack US

By The Associated Press undefined

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

THREE THINGS TO KNOW TODAY:

— Health officials are on edge as the coronavirus clashes with a Sunday sports event that typically brings millions of people together: the NFL Super Bowl. They fear that the game could seed new COVID-19 cases if fans attend parties to watch Tampa Bay play Kansas City. The new coronavirus strain that spread quickly in the United Kingdom was confirmed in Kansas after turning up in several other states. States, meanwhile, are in a race to vaccinate. The game will be played in front of about 22,000 masked fans in Tampa, many of them vaccinated health workers.

— Virus deaths won't be reflected in the 2020 census, a step that will have an impact on where congressional seats get apportioned, experts say. The important reference date for answering census questions was April 1, soon after U.S. deaths began. New York state, which has had about 44,000 deaths, is expected to lose a House seat due to population shifts but it could have lost two if the census date was later, said Kimball Brace, a redistricting expert at Election Data Services. The Census Bureau releases apportionment numbers by April 30.

— Make a deal or stick to his guns? President Joe Biden spent decades shaking hands on bipartisan fixes, first as a senator and then as vice president. But now the Democrat seems to be favoring quick action in Congress on a \$1.9 trillion coronavirus aid bill, even if Republicans get left behind. The administration has encouraged Democratic senators to prepare a plan that combines money to address the virus and vaccines with money to fulfill a progressive agenda that includes a higher federal minimum wage.

THE NUMBERS: According to data through Feb. 5 from Johns Hopkins University, the seven-day rolling

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Kansas City Chiefs head coach Andy Reid arrives with his team for the NFL Super Bowl 55 football game against the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, Saturday, Feb. 6, 2021, in Tampa, Fla. (AP Photo/Charlie Riedel)

average for daily new cases in the U.S. fell over the past two weeks, from 180,489 on Jan. 22 to about 125,854 on Feb. 5. Over the same period, the seven-day rolling average for daily new deaths rose from 3,088 to roughly 3,250.

QUOTABLE: "I'm still riding high," Michele Voelkert told the Sacramento Bee. The California woman who was laid off because of the pandemic was referring to a pep talk from Biden. The White House released a video of the phone call. The president called Voelkert after getting a letter from her. She lost her job in July at a startup clothing company. Biden recalled his father saying a job is about dignity and respect as much as it is about a paycheck.

ICYMI: Federal executions at the end of Donald Trump's presidency likely acted as a superspreader event,

according to the records reviewed by The Associated Press. It was something health experts warned could happen when the Justice Department insisted on resuming executions during a pandemic. Of the 47 people on death row, 33 tested positive between Dec. 16 and Dec. 20, becoming infected soon after executions of two men, according to attorney Madeline Cohen, who compiled the names. Many staff from prisons in other states with their own virus outbreaks traveled to the Terre Haute, Indiana, prison.

ON THE HORIZON: Some experts believe rapid tests could be better at identifying sick people when they are most contagious. North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University said it crushed the spread of an outbreak by using rapid screening after a Halloween party last fall. Rapid tests might be technically less accurate but they're fast. The U.S. reports about 2 million tests per day, the vast majority of which are known as PCR, the polymerase chain reaction test. The Food and Drug Administration said it supports "innovation in testing" but has only approved about a dozen rapid tests.

Utah police: Avalanche killed 4 local backcountry skiers

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — Four backcountry skiers in their 20s died when one of the deadliest avalanches in Utah history hit a popular backcountry skiing area, police said Sunday.

Four other people were also buried in the Saturday slide but managed to dig themselves out and didn't suffer serious injuries, according to Unified Police of Salt Lake County.

The skiers were from two separate groups, and all eight had prepared with the necessary avalanche safety gear, authorities said.

The four killed were all from the Salt Lake City area, not far the spot where they were swept up by the skier-triggered avalanche in Millcreek Canyon.

Three of the deceased were identified as Salt Lake City residents: Louis Holian and Stephanie Hopkins, both 26, and Thomas Louis Steinbrecher, 23. The fourth, 29-year-old Sarah Moughamian was from the suburb of Sandy, Utah.

They were experienced skiers who were well known in the community, Drew Hardesty with the Utah

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Avalanche Center told the Salt Lake Tribune. The avalanche danger around Salt Lake was high on Saturday, the center said as it tweeted out a warning hours before the avalanche.

A faint distress call from an avalanche beacon alerted police to the slide shortly before noon on Saturday. The survivors found their four companions and dug them out, but they were already dead, police said.

The still-unstable snow conditions kept rescuers from immediately recovering the bodies; recovering operations resumed on Sunday morning.

Avalanches have also claimed other lives in recent days: the bodies of three hikers were found near Anchorage, Alaska, on Thursday. In Colorado, four backcountry skiers have died in two separate slides in the last week.

Avalanche forecasters and search-and-rescue groups have been worried for weeks that more people would be venturing into the backcountry to avoid crowds and reservation systems at ski resorts during the coronavirus pandemic.



Salt Lake County Sheriff Search and Rescue crews respond to the top of Millcreek Canyon where four skiers died in an avalanche Saturday, Feb. 6, 2021, near Salt Lake City. Four other skiers were injured, authorities said. The Unified Police Department told local media that it was alerted to the avalanche about 11:40 a.m. after receiving a faint distress call from an avalanche beacon in the canyon. The skier-triggered avalanche swept up eight people in their early twenties to late thirties who were in two groups touring the backcountry, Unified Police Sgt. Melody Cutler told the Salt Lake Tribune. (Francisco Kjolseth/The Salt Lake Tribune via AP)

2nd major snowstorm in a week blankets Northeast

NEW YORK (AP) — Another major snowstorm hit the Northeast on Sunday, less than a week after a storm dumped as much as 2 feet on the region.

The National Weather Service predicted around up to 8 inches of snow New York City and 2 to 4 inches in Washington, D.C.

Forecasters predicted several inches of snow would fall along the New England coast, saying the precise amount would depend on how quickly the storm moved through the region.

Large, fluffy flakes began falling in Rhode Island late Sunday morning, prompting local governments to enact street parking bans and warn of poor travel conditions for the rest of the day.

Weather service forecaster Bob Oravec said a mix of snow and rain would move northward up the East Coast. "It is a fast-moving storm," Oravec said.

New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio said Sunday's snowfall, which started at around 9 a.m. in the city, would not close COVID-19 vaccination sites.

The massive snowstorm that hit the region on Feb. 1 forced the postponement of hundreds of vaccination appointments in New York and elsewhere.

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By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Sunday, Feb. 7, the 38th day of 2021. There are 327 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Feb. 7, 1962, President John F. Kennedy imposed a full trade embargo on Cuba.

On this date:

In 1812, author Charles Dickens was born in Landport, Portsmouth, England.

In 1931, aviator Amelia Earhart married publisher George P. Putnam in Noank, Connecticut.

In 1943, the government abruptly announced that wartime rationing of shoes made of leather would go into effect in two days, limiting consumers to buying three pairs per person per year. (Rationing was lifted in October 1945.)

In 1948, Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower resigned as U.S. Army chief of staff; he was succeeded by Gen. Omar Bradley.

In 1964, the Beatles arrived at New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport to begin their first American tour.

In 1984, space shuttle Challenger astronauts Bruce McCandless II and Robert L. Stewart went on the first untethered spacewalk, which lasted nearly six hours.

In 1985, U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration agent Enrique "Kiki" Camarena was kidnapped in Guadalajara, Mexico, by drug traffickers who tortured and murdered him.

In 1991, Jean-Bertrand Aristide (zhahn behr-TRAHN' ahr-ihs-TEED') was inaugurated as the first democratically elected president of Haiti (he was overthrown by the military the following September).

In 1998, the Winter Olympic Games were opened in Nagano, Japan, by Emperor Akihito.

In 1999, Jordan's King Hussein died of cancer at age 63; he was succeeded by his eldest son, Abdullah (ab-DUH'-luh).

In 2009, a miles-wide section of ice in Lake Erie broke away from the Ohio shoreline, trapping about 135 fishermen, some for as long as four hours before they could be rescued (one man fell into the water and later died of an apparent heart attack).

In 2019, former U.S. Rep. John Dingell, the longest-serving member of Congress in American history, died at his home in Dearborn, Michigan at the age of 92; the Democrat had served in the House for 59 years before retiring in 2014. Frank Robinson, the first Black manager in Major League Baseball, died in Los Angeles at the age of 83.

Ten years ago: Speaking to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, President Barack Obama echoed John F. Kennedy as he prodded business leaders to "ask yourselves what you can do for America," not just for company bottom lines. AOL Inc. announced the \$315 million purchase of The Huffington Post website.

Five years ago: Von Miller forced two fumbles to set up Denver's two touchdowns and the Broncos' defense frustrated Cam Newton the entire game to carry Peyton Manning to his second NFL championship with a 24-10 victory over the Carolina Panthers in Super Bowl 50. North Korea defied international warnings and launched a long-range rocket that the United Nations and others called a cover for a banned test of technology for a missile that could strike the U.S. mainland.

One year ago: Hundreds more Americans who were evacuated from the virus-stricken zone in China began arriving in the U.S., where they would be quarantined on military bases for two weeks. Japan confirmed 41 new cases of the virus on the quarantined Diamond Princess cruise ship, adding to 20 people who were escorted off the ship earlier. Two days after his acquittal in his Senate impeachment trial, President Donald Trump took retribution against two officials who had delivered damaging testimony; he ousted Lt. Col. Alexander Vindman, a national security aide, and Gordon Sondland, his ambassador to the European Union. Former NBA star Kobe Bryant and his 13-year-old daughter Gianna, who'd been killed with him in a helicopter crash, were buried in a cemetery near the family's Southern California home. Actor and comedian Orson Bean, 91, died after he was hit by a car while crossing a street in Los Angeles.

Today's Birthdays: Author Gay Talese is 89. Former Sen. Herb Kohl, D-Wis., is 86. Reggae musician Brian

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Travers (UB40) is 62. Comedy writer Robert Smigel (SMY'-guhl) is 61. Actor James Spader is 61. Country singer Garth Brooks is 59. Rock musician David Bryan (Bon Jovi) is 59. Actor-comedian Eddie Izzard is 59. Actor-comedian Chris Rock is 56. Actor Jason Gedrick is 54. Actor Essence Atkins is 49. Rock singer-musician Wes Borland is 46. Rock musician Tom Blankenship (My Morning Jacket) is 43. Actor Ashton Kutcher is 43. Actor Tina Majorino is 36. Actor Deborah Ann Woll is 36. NBA player Isaiah Thomas is 32. NHL center Steven Stamkos is 31.