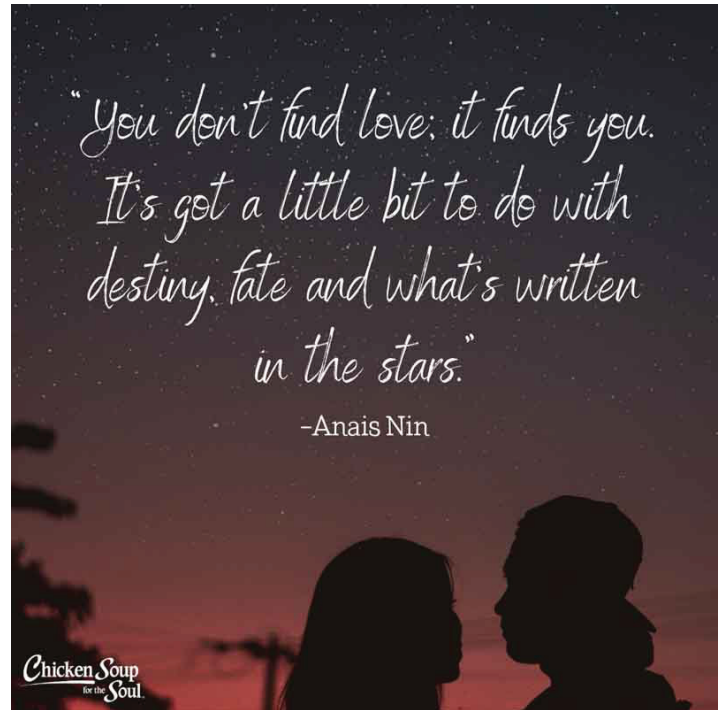


Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 223 ~ 1 of 79

- [2- Upcoming Schedule](#)
- [3- Covid-19 Update by Marie Miller](#)
- [6- Yesterday's COVID-19 UPDATE](#)
- [13- Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs](#)
- [14- Weather Pages](#)
- [17- Daily Devotional](#)
- [18- News from the Associated Press](#)



Scores from Yesterday
Varsity Boys: Groton 55, Milbank 34
JV Boys: Milbank 50, Groton 43 (OT)
Girls Varsity: Groton 35, Milbank 27
JV Girls: Groton 24, Milbank 14



OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 223 ~ 2 of 79

Upcoming Schedule

Saturday, Feb. 12

Basketball Doubleheader at Moberg.

JV girls (Rich and Tami Zimney) at 1 p.m. in the middle school gym. JV boys (White House Inn) at 1 p.m. in the high school gym followed by the varsity girls and then the 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 Moberg-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

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 223 ~ 3 of 79

#354 in a series

Covid-19 Updates: by Marie Miller

Numbers are up again today; this is dismaying. We're back over 100,000 new cases today after four days below. There were 105,700 new cases reported today. We're up to 27,427,600, which is 0.4% more than yesterday. Hospitalizations continue to march downward for the thirty-fifth consecutive day. We're at 76,979, which is 55,000 less than the record high. Progress.

We are up to 474,975 deaths, 0.8% higher than yesterday. At this rate, we'll be at a half-million well before the end of the month. There were 3878 deaths reported today, which is well above where we've been running. We'll see where we go from here.

File this under unintended consequences—or in the case of a pandemic where nothing is exactly intended, perhaps collateral damage. There's been a big increase in avalanche deaths in the US—the highest in a century. Some of this is due to the weather—early snow followed by a dry spell, which creates a weak first layer that can't support the later snow. The result is a high likelihood of the whole works cascading disastrously downhill; and it has. This happens from time to time without a big increase in loss of life. The pandemic part of this story is that more and more people have gone into the backcountry because there is no concern about distancing and transmission and all so they can feel a bit more free; that puts a whole lot more of them in harm's way. Simon Trautman, avalanche specialist for the US Forest Service's National Avalanche Center, told the New York Times, "The question is the second-order or third-order effect. I don't know, but what I do know is that there are more people out there this year because of Covid. There's just no doubt about it." And more folks hanging out in avalanche country means more folks caught in avalanches when they happen. This thing has long coattails, doesn't it?

California is the poster child for vaccination done right; they're running out of doses between shipments. Now, don't get me wrong: It would be far better if the supply were so large that no one could run out; but given the supply is what it is, running out means you're doing vaccination right. A friend who was vaccinated in the southern part of the state where the infection rate has been so terrifying reported their experience with a vaccination clinic was smooth and efficient. Looks like they've got this. And with more vaccine coming every week, that bodes well—if we can continue to run ahead of the variants.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute for Allergy and Infectious Diseases and chief medical adviser to the President for Covid-19, interviewed today on NBC's Today show. He reinforced a piece of information we've been getting lately, that most people should be eligible for vaccination by April; he estimates that there will be sufficient vaccine available to just start handing it out to all comers. By then, it is quite likely the Janssen/Johnson & Johnson candidate will be approved, with Novavax and possibly Oxford/AstraZeneca fairly close behind. This would make a huge difference in supply. It will still take a few months to administer vaccine to everyone who wants it; but April would be when things loosen up. He indicated a large majority of us could be vaccinated by mid- to late summer. We are averaging over 1.5 million doses administered per day at the moment; this number would need to increase by a lot to meet that projection. There are plenty of indications it will, indeed, increase; the federal government is pouring considerable resources into standing up mass vaccination programs across the nation such that, once additional vaccine supply is available, it should move out of vials and into people fairly efficiently. And the vaccine supply looks to be increasing rapidly.

Fauci was interviewed by ProPublica today too, and here he talked about vaccinations for children. He said, "I would think by the time we get to school opening, we likely will be able to get people who come into the first grade." Pfizer is running a trial in children, 12 to 15 which is fully enrolled and expected to yield results within a couple of months, and they are finalizing their study for children, ages 5 to 11. Moderna is still enrolling 12- to 18-year-olds and hoping to provide data by mid-year. They also have plans to study children as young as six months, but they don't expect data on that until next year. Still, we should have vaccines available to school-age children about the time school starts. That could be a game-changer.

More big cats with infections: The USDA announced today that an unnamed "facility that exhibits wild animals" in Texas has had several cats show symptoms of Covid-19. Two of them, a cougar and a tiger,

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 223 ~ 4 of 79

have tested positive. This is the first reported case in a cougar. It is thought they "acquired the infection from a person working as a team member or volunteer." As is typical of cats, their symptoms are mild and they are expected to recover.

In really not-great news, the first report of a variant, this one B.1.1.7, the highly transmissible one first seen in the UK, has come from a prison in the US. This could be devastating: Prisoners are among the individuals least able to protect themselves in this country, living in crowded, usually poorly ventilated, often unsanitary, conditions while having little—or more likely, no—choice about those conditions or ability to distance. The case was a staff member at the Bellamy Creek Correctional Facility in Ionia, Michigan. This prison has had 600 cases, 500 in inmates and 100 in workers, and one death of an inmate already. There have been more than 600,000 infections and 2700 deaths among prison inmates and workers in the US already, but this new variant could make that look like child's play. This is very, very bad.

There is news on the therapeutic front. It has to do with a rheumatoid arthritis drug we've discussed before, tocilizumab. (For those earlier posts, see my Update #114 posted June 16 at <https://www.facebook.com/marie.schwabmiller/posts/3687706237912422> and Update #209 posted September 19 at <https://www.facebook.com/marie.schwabmiller/posts/3990289160987460> for basic information and Update #259 posted November 6 at <https://www.facebook.com/marie.schwabmiller/posts/4154255651257476> for a thorough explanation of how IL-6 inhibitors work and what looked like bad news on its efficacy.)

The current news comes from a large study in the UK termed the RECOVERY (Randomized Evaluation of COVID-19 Therapy) Trial, which is a randomized trial started in March and intended to identify treatments which may benefit hospitalized patients. Because case numbers have been high, there has been opportunity to enroll large numbers of patients and make good progress. This is the trial which confirmed the usefulness of dexamethasone way back in June. The therapeutic in question this time is tocilizumab, a monoclonal antibody (one of those lab-made, highly-purified antibody preparations) which is an interleukin-6 inhibitor. (See that Update #259 linked above for the details of how an IL-6 inhibitor might be beneficial in cases of Covid-19.)

Tocilizumab was added to the RECOVERY trial in April, and the findings are now available in preprint (not peer-reviewed or published). There were 2022 participants in the trial. The findings say, "There were 596 deaths amongst the people in the tocilizumab group, 29%, and there were 694 deaths, 33%, in the usual care group. So that is a reduction in the risk of deaths of around a sixth or a seventh," according to Martin Landray, professor of medicine and epidemiology at the Nuffield Department of Population Health at the University of Oxford and deputy chief investigator, who spoke at a briefing today. There was an additional benefit of reducing the risk of progressing from supplemental oxygen to mechanical ventilation or death from 38 percent to 33 percent.

Additionally, for patients receiving steroids such as dexamethasone which were being administered to 82 percent of patients, the press release from Oxford said, "The data suggest that in Covid-19 patients with hypoxia (requiring oxygen) and significant inflammation, treatment with the combination of systemic corticosteroid (such as dexamethasone) plus tocilizumab reduces mortality by about one third for patients requiring simple oxygen and nearly one half for those requiring invasive mechanical ventilation."

Landry summed things up: "This is a treatment, just in summary, that reduces mortality, shortens hospital stay and reduces the chances of people needing invasive mechanical ventilators." This is the first such conclusive trial of this therapy; added to the earlier trials, the evidence, according to Landry, "becomes completely clear cut." Good news, indeed; we need all the tools we can find.

There's a new variant from the UK known as the Bristol variant. It's not looking more transmissible than D614G (the currently dominant variant in the US), but it appears this may "infect people who were previously infected, or have been previously vaccinated," according to Professor John Edmunds, a member of the UK Scientific Advisory Group of Emergencies. The UK has been doing a great job of genomic surveillance for a long while now, so their data are valuable. These findings are preliminary, but this isn't great news. We do not need more variants that offer the possibility of immune escapes; the only silver lining here is that this variant does not appear to be more transmissible, so it may not become dominant in any population. Still, it's a worry.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 223 ~ 5 of 79

Sophia Andrews has been dancing since she was very young. She used money from babysitting and odd jobs to pay her way to go to Nairobi, Kenya, with a group at age 14 to work with abandoned children. She discovered while she was there that many of the children she met had a love for the arts, and so she worked with them on dance. She told Kelly Clarkson, "I knew I couldn't leave that experience; I had to do more." So she started a nonprofit to assist these kids. She called it Ngoma-Kenya because Ngoma in Swahili means to dance and to sing. She has returned to Kenya many times to work with the children. She did fundraisers, raised money for books, and then took ballet shoes with her in 2017 when she returned to teach ballet to more kids.

Then Sophia graduated from high school and began college at American University, and the pandemic came. Her trips to Kenya have been halted. Ngoma-Kenya now has a US board of directors and a Kenya team of managers as well to do the day-to-day work. She said, "I've had to structure it in a way where I could support it from here in the states." There is also a Youth Advisory Committee composed of teens from the US and Kenya, so the organization was prepared to weather the pandemic, even when the founder cannot travel to Kenya. They support many aspects of the arts, not just dance; and now they focus on three things: orphan care, advocacy, arts education, and girls' rights.

When the pandemic hit, many elements in their program were put on hold, so they went to work on a feeding program, along with providing sanitary supplies and masks, that ran from March to July. Sophia says she knows not all of these kids will become professional ballerinas or musicians, but the arts still have an important impact on them as they build friendships, grow, and have fun, which are important aspects of childhood. She hopes to resume visits when it is safe and to move to Kenya when she graduates from college so that she can continue her work. I don't know what you were doing at 14 or at 18, but I'm going to guess it wasn't anything like this kid is doing. The future is in good hands.

Be well. We'll talk again.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 223 ~ 6 of 79

County	Positive Cases	Recovered Cases	Negative Persons	Deceased Among Cases	Community Spread	% RT-PCR Test Positivity Rate (Weekly)
Aurora	450	428	843	15	Minimal	0.00%
Beadle	2641	2547	5639	39	Moderate	11.97%
Bennett	378	364	1145	9	Minimal	0.00%
Bon Homme	1502	1474	2007	24	Minimal	0.00%
Brookings	3509	3363	11323	35	Substantial	2.76%
Brown	5038	4827	12201	80	Substantial	10.56%
Brule	682	668	1818	9	Minimal	0.00%
Buffalo	419	406	884	13	Minimal	0.00%
Butte	964	929	3105	20	Moderate	3.16%
Campbell	129	121	247	4	Minimal	7.69%
Charles Mix	1240	1191	3805	18	Substantial	14.29%
Clark	357	335	924	4	Substantial	5.56%
Clay	1770	1735	5016	15	Moderate	5.37%
Codington	3839	3642	9330	76	Substantial	7.98%
Corson	462	448	985	11	Minimal	4.55%
Custer	734	714	2621	12	Moderate	9.84%
Davison	2919	2820	6265	59	Moderate	2.99%
Day	633	579	1696	28	Substantial	20.45%
Deuel	464	447	1092	8	Minimal	0.00%
Dewey	1390	1359	3726	21	Moderate	2.04%
Douglas	417	401	877	9	Minimal	3.45%
Edmunds	473	444	989	12	Moderate	0.00%
Fall River	515	490	2515	15	Moderate	6.85%
Faulk	351	321	669	13	Moderate	9.09%
Grant	938	863	2133	37	Substantial	17.74%
Gregory	515	474	1203	27	Moderate	6.90%
Haakon	245	231	515	9	Minimal	7.69%
Hamlin	676	622	1702	38	Moderate	12.12%
Hand	326	312	771	6	Minimal	0.00%
Hanson	348	327	685	4	Moderate	13.04%
Harding	91	90	176	1	Minimal	20.00%
Hughes	2240	2158	6288	33	Substantial	1.04%
Hutchinson	770	724	2251	24	Moderate	7.32%

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 223 ~ 7 of 79

Hyde	135	133	394	1	Minimal	0.00%
Jackson	275	253	896	14	Minimal	8.33%
Jerauld	268	247	536	16	Minimal	9.09%
Jones	82	81	210	0	Minimal	0.00%
Kingsbury	615	590	1579	14	Moderate	3.28%
Lake	1160	1116	3142	17	Moderate	2.15%
Lawrence	2776	2697	8240	44	Moderate	3.98%
Lincoln	7566	7352	19460	76	Substantial	7.99%
Lyman	593	577	1829	10	Minimal	0.00%
Marshall	291	280	1125	5	Minimal	0.00%
McCook	728	693	1558	24	Moderate	10.26%
McPherson	237	227	536	4	Minimal	0.92%
Meade	2516	2434	7370	31	Moderate	8.62%
Mellette	242	238	713	2	Minimal	0.00%
Miner	269	247	551	9	Minimal	0.00%
Minnehaha	27408	26548	74849	323	Substantial	8.31%
Moody	605	581	1701	16	Minimal	6.06%
Oglala Lakota	2043	1962	6509	47	Moderate	2.20%
Pennington	12559	12143	37836	181	Substantial	7.70%
Perkins	339	315	763	12	Moderate	0.00%
Potter	357	340	797	3	Moderate	28.00%
Roberts	1121	1068	3985	35	Substantial	6.60%
Sanborn	325	319	663	3	Minimal	5.88%
Spink	788	740	2058	25	Substantial	10.23%
Stanley	321	314	886	2	Moderate	3.85%
Sully	135	131	290	3	Minimal	0.00%
Todd	1216	1176	4055	28	Moderate	8.96%
Tripp	667	640	1437	15	Moderate	1.23%
Turner	1049	987	2611	50	Moderate	5.88%
Union	1934	1830	5961	39	Substantial	12.96%
Walworth	712	677	1773	15	Moderate	11.48%
Yankton	2765	2704	8991	28	Moderate	1.75%
Ziebach	337	327	853	9	Minimal	7.14%
Unassigned	0	0	1843	0		

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 223 ~ 8 of 79

South Dakota



AGE GROUP OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Age Range with Years	# of Cases	# of Deaths Among Cases
0-9 years	4320	0
10-19 years	12298	0
20-29 years	19665	4
30-39 years	18071	15
40-49 years	15665	34
50-59 years	15480	107
60-69 years	12565	243
70-79 years	6732	415
80+ years	5063	1011

SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Sex	# of Cases	# of Deaths Among Cases
Female	57300	863
Male	52559	966

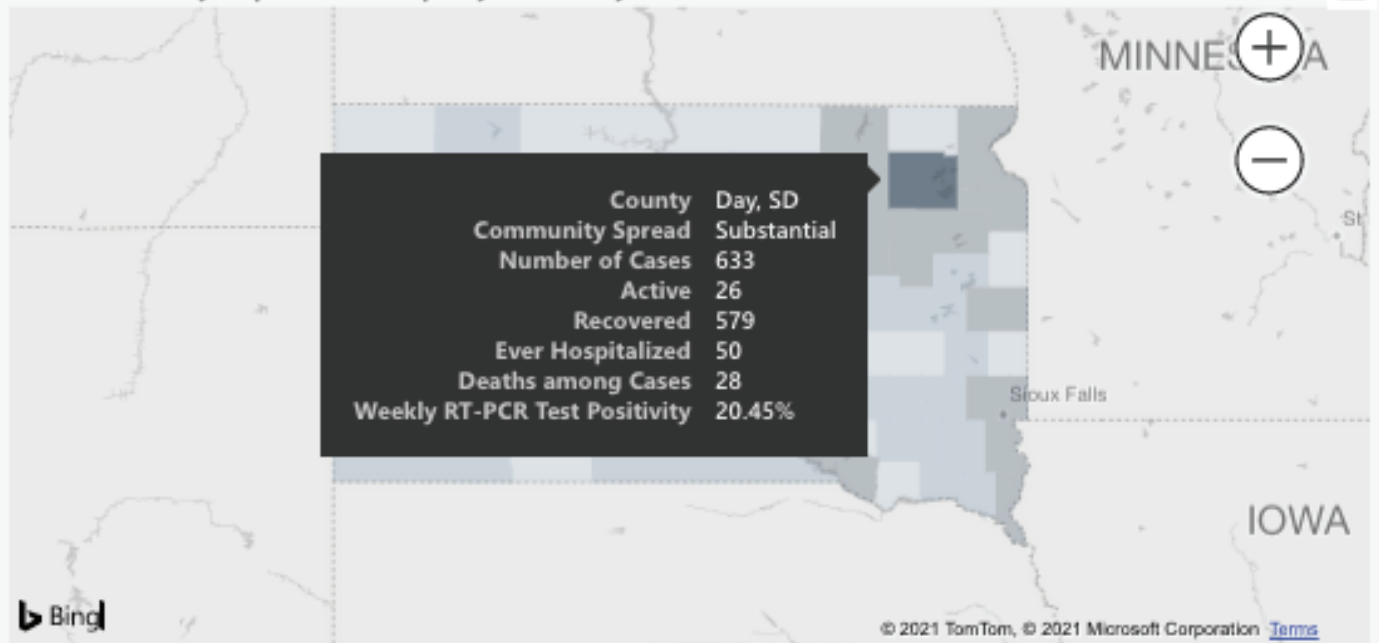
Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 223 ~ 9 of 79

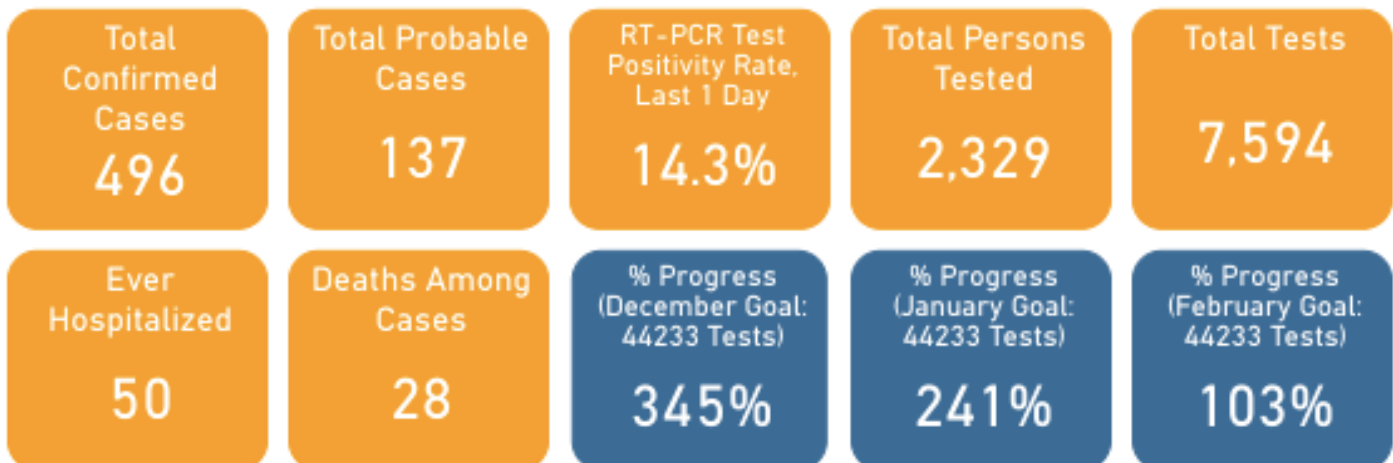
Brown County



Community Spread Map by County of Residence



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



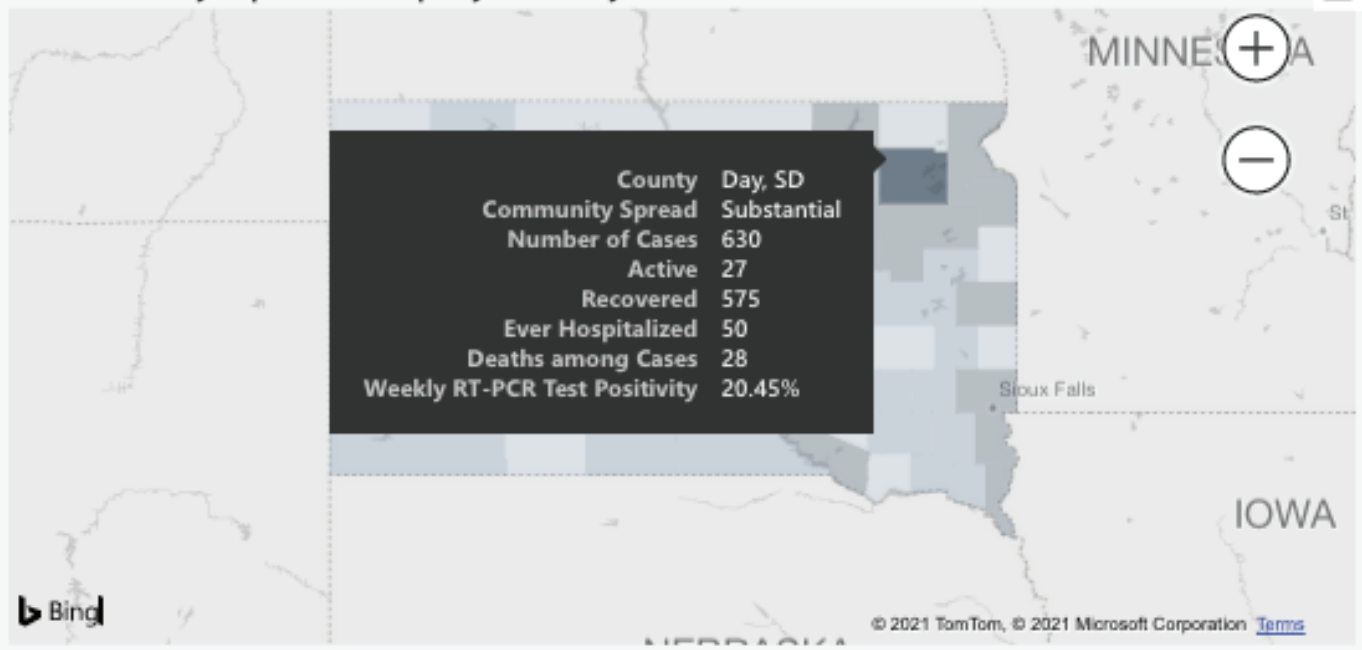
Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 223 ~ 10 of 79

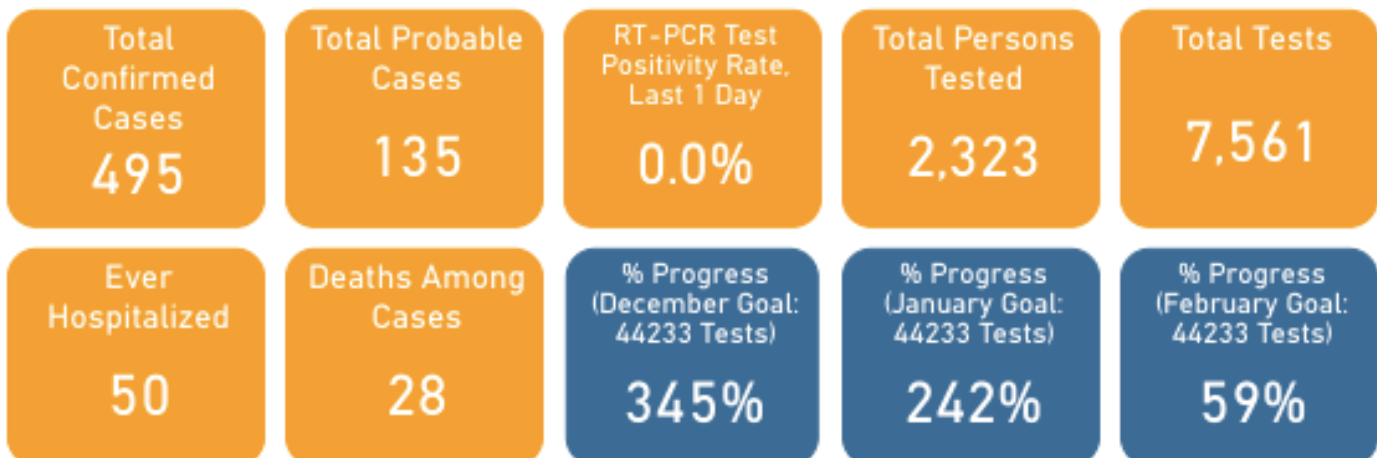
Day County



Community Spread Map by County of Residence



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



Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 223 ~ 11 of 79

Vaccinations

Total Doses Administered

134,780

Total Persons Administered a Vaccine

92,118

Percent of State Population with at least 1 Dose

13%

Manufacturer	# of Doses
Moderna	71,424
Pfizer	63,356

Doses	# of Recipients
Moderna - 1 dose	25,374
Moderna - Series Complete	23,025
Pfizer - 1 dose	24,082
Pfizer - Series Complete	19,637

Doses	% of Pop.
1 dose	13.35%
Series Complete	6.18%

Based on 2019 Census Estimate for those aged 16 years and older

County	# Doses	# Persons (1 dose)	# Persons (2 doses)	Total # Persons
Aurora	339	155	92	247
Beadle	2438	1,148	645	1,793
Bennett*	206	122	42	164
Bon Homme*	1263	409	427	836
Brookings	3688	1,610	1,039	2,649
Brown	6337	2,065	2,136	4,201
Brule*	848	434	207	641
Buffalo*	84	76	4	80
Butte	728	402	163	565
Campbell	476	112	182	294
Charles Mix*	1385	605	390	995
Clark	484	232	126	358
Clay	2074	748	663	1,411
Codington*	4329	1,595	1,367	2,962
Corson*	90	64	13	77
Custer*	1077	519	279	798
Davison	3726	1,052	1,337	2,389
Day*	994	434	280	714
Deuel	568	270	149	419
Dewey*	203	93	55	148
Douglas*	575	181	197	378
Edmunds	451	199	126	325
Fall River*	1091	489	301	790
Faulk	363	281	41	322
Grant*	1022	292	365	657
Gregory*	771	313	229	542
Haakon*	260	104	78	182

Groton Daily Independent

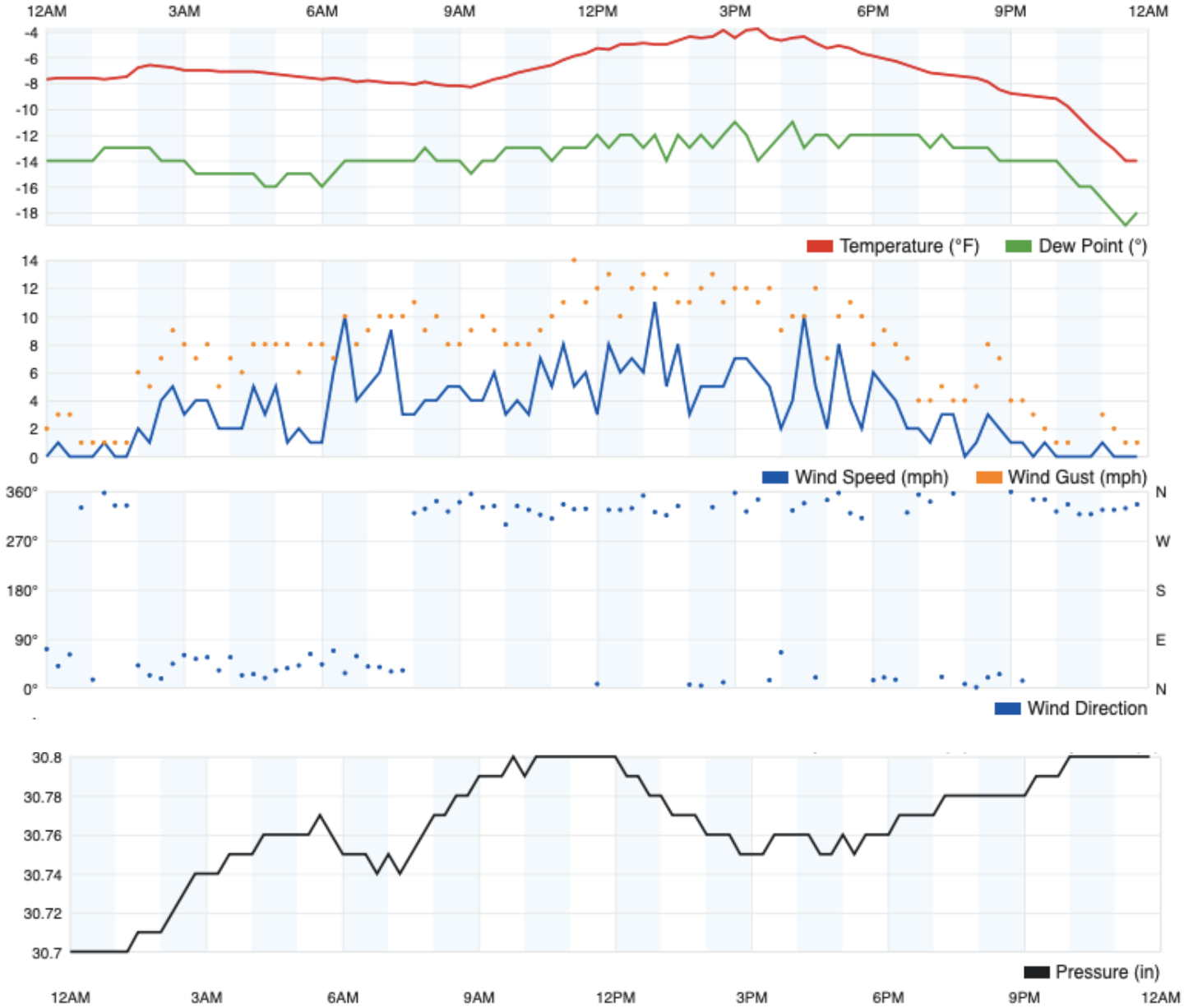
Friday, Feb. 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 223 ~ 12 of 79

Hamlin	741	339	201	540
Hand	613	273	170	443
Hanson	188	58	65	123
Harding	25	19	3	22
Hughes*	3172	1,514	829	2,343
Hutchinson*	1568	452	558	1,010
Hyde*	274	88	93	181
Jackson*	168	96	36	132
Jerauld	292	156	68	224
Jones*	276	110	83	193
Kingsbury	878	354	262	616
Lake	1550	562	494	1,056
Lawrence	2894	1,616	639	2,255
Lincoln	12720	3,318	4,701	8,019
Lyman*	303	187	58	245
Marshall*	679	251	214	465
McCook	879	335	272	607
McPherson	82	42	20	62
Meade*	2375	1,185	595	1,780
Mellette*	17	5	6	11
Miner	355	135	110	245
Minnehaha	35885	11,533	12,176	23,709
Moody*	669	255	207	462
Oglala Lakota*	63	39	12	51
Pennington*	15289	6,759	4,265	11,024
Perkins*	197	123	37	160
Potter	305	79	113	192
Roberts*	1766	806	480	1,286
Sanborn	394	218	88	306
Spink	1299	353	473	826
Stanley*	455	213	121	334
Sully	132	84	24	108
Todd*	77	27	25	52
Tripp*	907	383	262	645
Turner	1604	496	554	1,050
Union	1094	580	257	837
Walworth*	767	323	222	545
Yankton	4706	1,260	1,723	2,983
Ziebach*	32	14	9	23
Other	3220	812	1,204	2,016

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 223 ~ 13 of 79

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 223 ~ 14 of 79



High: -6 °F

Low: -22 °F

High: -8 °F

Low: -24 °F

High: -8 °F

Cold Weather Continues

Today through Sunday: Highs in the single digits below zero

Wind Chills of 20 below to 40 below zero each morning

You	Your Car	Your Pets	Your Home
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dress in Layers • Cover Exposed Skin • Stay Dry/Avoid Sweating • Limit Outdoor Time • Check on Family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep Gas Tank >½ Full • Add a Few Blankets • Maintain Tire Pressure • Get a Safety Kit Packed • Notify Family if Traveling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limit Outdoor Time • Bring Outdoor Pets Inside • Cover/Check Paws • Check Water & Food • Provide Shelter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slow Drip Faucets • Monitor Furnace • Use Caution W/ Indoor Heaters • Check Heating Vents for Ice Buildup

Bitterly cold temperatures over the next couple of days will cause wind chill values of 20 below to 40 degrees below zero. Frostbite can occur in as little as 10 to 30 minutes on exposed skin.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 223 ~ 15 of 79

Today in Weather History

February 12, 1905: On this date in weather history, record low temperatures occurred across northeast South Dakota and west central Minnesota with lows in the 30s below zero. Sisseton, Aberdeen, and Watertown all had record lows. Sisseton fell to 31 degrees below zero, Watertown saw 35 degrees below zero, and Aberdeen dropped to 36 degrees below zero in 1905. In central South Dakota, Kennebec fell to 34 degrees below zero.

1784: Ice floes were spotted in the Gulf of Mexico after passing out of the Mississippi River in February 1784. Ice blocked the river at New Orleans, Louisiana. The ice in New Orleans is one of two times that this occurred, the other during the Great Arctic Outbreak of 1899. The eruption of Laki in Iceland from June 8, 1783, through February 7, 1784, is the likely cause for the severe winter of 1783 to 1784.

1899: More from the bitter cold outbreak of 1899. Texas and the Eastern Plains experienced their coldest morning of modern record. The mercury dipped to 8 degrees below zero at Fort Worth, Texas and 22 degrees below zero at Kansas City, Missouri. The temperature at Camp Clarke, Nebraska plunged to 47 degrees below zero to establish a record for the state. The all-time record low for Oklahoma City was set. The mercury fell to a frigid 17 degrees below zero and broke the previous record low of 12 below zero, which was set on the previous day. In the eastern U.S., Washington D.C. hit 15 degrees below zero, while Charleston SC received a record four inches of snow. Snow was reported in Fort Myers, Tampa, and Tallahassee in Florida.

1958: Snow blanketed northern Florida, with Tallahassee reporting a record 2.8 inches. A ship in the Gulf of Mexico, 25 miles south of Fort Morgan Alabama, reported zero visibility in heavy snow on the afternoon of the 12th.

1899 - Texas and the eastern plains experienced their coldest morning of modern record. The mercury dipped to 8 degrees below zero at Fort Worth TX, and to 22 degrees below zero at Kansas City MO. The temperature at Camp Clarke NE plunged to 47 degrees below zero to establish a record for the state. In the eastern U.S., Washington D.C. hit 15 degrees below zero, while Charleston SC received a record four inches of snow. (David Ludlum)

1958 - Snow blanketed northern Florida, with Tallahassee reporting a record 2.8 inches. A ship in the Gulf of Mexico, 25 miles south of Fort Morgan AL, reported zero visibility in heavy snow on the afternoon of the 12th. (12th-13th) (The Weather Channel)

1960 - A snowstorm in the Deep South produced more than a foot of snow in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama. (David Ludlum)

1987 - A storm in the eastern U.S. produced high winds from North Carolina to Maine. A storm in the western U.S. produced up to thirty inches of snow in the Sierra Nevada Range of California. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - A classic "nor'easter" formed off the Carolina coast and intensified as it moved up the Atlantic coast bringing heavy snow to the northeastern U.S. Totals ranged up to 26 inches at Camden NY and Chester MA. Arctic cold gripped the north central U.S. Duluth MN was the cold spot in the nation with a low of 32 degrees below zero. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Unseasonably mild weather prevailed across Alaska. Morning lows of 29 degrees at Anchorage and 31 degrees at Fairbanks were actually warmer than those in northern Florida. (The National Weather Summary)

1990 - Strong southerly winds ahead of an arctic cold front pushed temperatures into the 70s as far north as Iowa and Nebraska. Twenty-one cities in the central U.S., seven in Iowa, reported record high temperatures for the date. Lincoln NE reported a record high of 73 degrees, and the afternoon high of 59 degrees at Minneapolis MN smashed their previous record for the date by twelve degrees. Springfield IL reported a record forty-eight consecutive days with above normal temperatures. (The National Weather Summary)

2006 - An intense snow squall off of Lake Michigan cuts visibility to zero along a section of US 31. The resulting whiteout causes 96 cars to pile up. 25 were injured.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 223 ~ 17 of 79



INNOCENT!

David's boldness is dramatic! He goes before God with confidence and conviction – not fearing what God may uncover in his heart. "Hear me, O Lord – my plea is just and my prayer does not rise from deceitful lips." Most of us, when we go to God in prayer, begin with a plea for forgiveness, knowing that our lives fall short of God's expectations and our best efforts. Sometimes, perhaps often, we fear approaching God.

David, in this psalm, had no fear of God. He said that "You, God, have probed my heart, examined me at night, have tested me and found no evil plans within me!" That's a boldness that we can actually see! Few of us would stand before God and make such statements! How was it that David could ask God to put him under His magnifying glass and have no fear? Was he a favorite of God's? Did he do something that gave him special privileges in God's sight? Or was he so aware of God's love, mercy, and grace that he could stand before God and say, "Judge me! I've been cleansed of my sin!"

David prayed for God's presence to be with him and His eyes to be upon him. And we, as David, can make that same claim! Not because we have a clear conscience or a just plea. Not because God has examined us and found us faultless. No! Indeed not.

We can ask for God's presence and His favors because we have a Savior Who cleanses us from all unrighteousness and Who pleads our cause before His Father. "In Him and through faith in Him we may approach God with freedom and confidence," said Paul.

Prayer: Your greatness and grace, Heavenly Father, are more than we deserve but not greater than our needs. Increase our faith and trust. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: O Lord, hear my plea for justice. Listen to my cry for help. Pay attention to my prayer, for it comes from honest lips. Psalm 17:1

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 223 ~ 18 of 79

News from the Associated Press

Rapid City police say elderly woman's death is a homicide

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — The death of an elderly Rapid City woman is being investigated as a homicide, according to police.

Officer were called to a residence Wednesday afternoon and found 82-year-old Reta McGovern with a laceration to her throat. An autopsy classified the death as a homicide.

According to police, McGovern was likely killed Wednesday morning. Authorities are working to identify a suspect.

Investigators are asking for the public's help in locating any surveillance video that would show a suspect in the area in the hours before or after the homicide.

Thursday's Scores

By The Associated Press

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL=

Aberdeen Central 78, Brookings 45

Aberdeen Christian 63, North Central Co-Op 27

Aberdeen Roncalli 52, Britton-Hecla 49

Alliance, Neb. 73, Rapid City Christian 61

Arlington 73, Lake Preston 51

Beresford 51, Alcester-Hudson 36

Brandon Valley 73, Huron 37

Burke 81, Kimball/White Lake 51

Centerville 64, Menno 51

Clark/Willow Lake 49, Redfield 42

Corsica/Stickney 70, Freeman 26

DeSmet 56, Wolsey-Wessington 42

Dell Rapids St. Mary 66, Howard 61

Ethan 78, Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 71

Flasher, N.D. 59, Lemmon 56

Jones County 64, Dupree 39

Lower Brule 54, Ipswich 43

Lyman 76, Philip 43

Potter County 65, Faulkton 43

Sioux Falls Roosevelt 53, Mitchell 49

Waverly-South Shore 51, Waubay/Summit 47

Wessington Springs 70, Miller 65

Western Christian, Iowa 80, Sioux Falls Christian 78, OT

White River 80, Stanley County 42

POSTPONEMENTS AND CANCELLATIONS=

Edgemont vs. Hulett, Wyo., ccd.

GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL=

Aberdeen Christian 37, North Central Co-Op 22

Alcester-Hudson 39, Beresford 34

Andes Central/Dakota Christian 46, Freeman Academy/Marion 17

Brookings 41, Aberdeen Central 32

Estelline/Hendricks 39, Elkton-Lake Benton 32

Faith 52, Bison 22

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 223 ~ 19 of 79

Florence/Henry 62, Dakota Valley 57
Hamlin 52, Sisseton 32
Hitchcock-Tulare 59, Iroquois 49
Howard 54, Dell Rapids St. Mary 39
Huron 51, Brandon Valley 46
Leola/Frederick 50, Sunshine Bible Academy 29
Lower Brule 65, Ipswich 55
Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 61, Ethan 35
Parkston 42, Freeman 34
Philip 48, Lyman 45
Scotland 56, Bridgewater-Emery 47
Sioux Falls O'Gorman 65, Sioux City, East, Iowa 33
Spearfish 61, Custer 54
POSTPONEMENTS AND CANCELLATIONS=
Edgemont vs. Hulett, Wyo., ccd.

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

Gov. Noem defends 'dark money' push as privacy protection

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem on Thursday defended her push to shield donor information of nonprofit organizations that influence public policy, including one group that was connected to her campaign.

The Republican governor said the bill was intended to protect the privacy rights of donors who wish to anonymously contribute to charities. Although she insisted it "does absolutely nothing on campaign finance," critics said it would further the use of "dark money" — contributions raised to influence policy and elections without clearly disclosing the individual donors.

"Even with the exemption for campaign finance filings, it could facilitate legal protections for dark money spending in South Dakota's elections," said Austin Graham, a lawyer with the Campaign Legal Center based in Washington.

The bill from Noem, seen as a potential presidential hopeful in 2024, has sailed through the Republican-dominated Legislature so far. It would bar state officials from requiring nonprofit groups — including those that work to influence policy — to disclose information on donors. Nonprofit organizations are already not required to reveal donor information unless they make direct contributions to political campaign committees. A second bill making its way through the Legislature would further protect donor privacy, allowing them to sue if their information were made public.

Such laws are not meant to protect donors to organizations like churches and soup kitchens, Graham said. Instead, they protect organizations that promote "social welfare" through research, lobbying and efforts to influence political campaigns.

These organizations, which are given nonprofit status by the Internal Revenue Service, can spend money to influence elections as long as it is not their primary purpose. Advocates for greater campaign finance transparency are worried by a trend of state legislatures moving to protect donor information in the last few years.

"Allowing the public to have access to information about the sources of money that are spent to influence their voting decisions is really a core tenet of a healthy democracy," Graham said.

Noem cast her bill as making sure state officials adhere to state laws that already say those organizations don't need to disclose donors.

But a nonprofit organization called Fight For Our Future was started in 2019 by her gubernatorial campaign chair, Steve Kirby. Noem's proposal would further shield donors to the organization, which could

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 223 ~ 20 of 79

engage in political activity to some level.

The governor did not discuss the activities of the group but pointed out that Kirby is no longer affiliated with Fight For Our Future. She said there was no crossover between the organization and her campaign.

The current president of the organization is Suzanne Veenis, who worked on Noem's staff when she was a congresswoman and was listed on the organization's board when it was started in 2019. The organization has no website. Its articles of incorporation only say it was established to "further the common good and general welfare of the citizens of South Dakota."

Veenis did not immediately return a request comment left at a phone number listed to her name.

Supporters of Noem's proposal have portrayed the legislation as a way to protect freedom of speech. They wanted to avoid what happened in California, where donors to conservative nonprofit groups Americans for Prosperity Foundation and Thomas More Law Center had their names revealed after the state attorney general's office required them to file the information. A legal battle that resulted after the organizations refused to disclose their donors is slated to be decided by the U.S. Supreme Court.

But Democrat Rep. Ryan Cwach said he is concerned that the bill would enshrine into law the practice of shielding organizations from disclosing who was giving to influence political campaigns. He said it could shape South Dakota political campaigns into what is seen at the national level, where corporate money and cash-rich interest groups flood elections without disclosing donors.

"Voters are getting browbeaten by all these different groups by these ads that we don't know who's behind them or what's behind them," he said.

Noem threatens veto for lawmakers' pot legalization push

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

PIERRE (AP) — South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem said Thursday she would likely veto any bills that allow recreational marijuana use this year, despite some GOP lawmakers weighing whether to move forward with legalization.

A circuit court judge ruled Monday that a constitutional amendment passed by voters to legalize recreational marijuana would have violated the state's constitution. But marijuana legalization has stayed on lawmakers' agenda with pro-marijuana groups planning to appeal the ruling to the Supreme Court. Some have argued the Legislature should legalize it this year, regardless of the high court's ruling, because it would reflect the will of voters and allow them to craft the policy.

But Noem remains an ardent opponent of marijuana legalization, saying at a news conference she would "not be inclined" to sign a bill legalizing it for recreational use.

The governor has also slow-walked the implementation of a medical pot program, arguing it will take at least a year to get everything in order. She has pushed lawmakers to delay implementing a law passed by voters until July 1, 2022. It was supposed to go into effect this year on July 1.

However, some lawmakers see the battle to keep legal marijuana out of the state as a losing one. Marijuana has become broadly accepted around the United States, with a Gallup Poll in November showing 68% of Americans favored legalization.

"In my mind, it's inevitable because we've already seen the support from the public," said Senate Republican leader Gary Cammack.

A group of lawmakers has started a "cannabis caucus," which has held weekly meetings to discuss marijuana legalization. Several at the Wednesday meeting said they felt they should legalize it this year.

"I didn't vote for recreational marijuana, but my constituents did," said Republican Greg Jamison. "Rarely do we get a chance to enact a law and not for sure know what our constituents think of that. Here we know."

The constitutional amendment to legalize adult-use of pot passed by 54%, while the initiative to legalize it for medical use cleared with 70% of the vote.

Jamison argued that the Legislature could craft a new law that didn't run afoul of the state constitution. It would also allow lawmakers to have their say on how the pot industry should look in the state.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 223 ~ 21 of 79

Legislators are also weighing the possibility that the state Supreme Court could overturn the lower court's ruling, leaving them with little time to help set up licensing, banking and other regulations for pot.

Both the House and Senate would need a two-thirds majority to overrule a veto from the governor. But Republican Sen. Timothy Johns said lawmakers have a chance to "write a better law" than what was passed by voters, but still fulfill their wishes.

"Sometimes it's just like bite the bullet, face reality and get it over with," he said.

Burgum says Corps should argue for keeping pipeline running

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — North Dakota Republican Gov. Doug Burgum is asking the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to argue for keeping the Dakota Access oil pipeline operating while it conducts an environmental review on the project.

A federal judge has asked the Corps to explain how "it expects to proceed" now that court rulings have determined that the pipeline is operating without a permit to cross beneath Lake Oahe, a reservoir along the Missouri River that is maintained by the Corps.

A hearing on the matter originally scheduled for Wednesday has been postponed to April 9.

Burgum's letter to the Corps said that shutting down the pipeline during the review "would have devastating consequences for the state" and a "chilling effect on infrastructure investment" across the country.

U.S. District Judge James Boasberg in April 2020 ordered further environmental study. He said the Corps had not adequately considered how an oil spill under the Missouri River might affect fishing and hunting rights for the Standing Rock Indian Reservation, which straddles the North and South Dakota border, or whether it might disproportionately affect the tribal community.

Burgum said to stop the flow of oil after more than three years would be a blow to a country that is in "desperate need of infrastructure upgrades, jobs and economic activity to accelerate recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic."

Profile® by Sanford Draws Attention With Celebrity Partners to Promote Healthy Lifestyles and Nutrition

SIOUX FALLS, S.D.--(BUSINESS WIRE)--Feb 11, 2021--

Profile® by Sanford, a nutrition and lifestyle coaching brand, in collaboration with Entercom, announced its partnership with a celebrity lineup featuring Lady A, Meghan Trainor and Emmitt Smith.

This partnership of strategically selected stars of music, sports and pop culture showcases Profile's commitment to delivering personalized nutrition plans and one-on-one health coaching to transform lives. The partnership includes special offers for Profile members like private virtual concerts and Q/A's with the talent.

Lady A, the multi-Platinum, seven-time Grammy winning country trio of Hilary Scott, Dave Haywood and Charles Kelley will be joining the Profile® one-on-one nutrition coaching program along with award-winning singer-songwriter Meghan Trainor, expecting her first child in February. Emmitt Smith, former NFL running back for the Dallas Cowboys and three-time Super Bowl Champion, will also help promote the importance of health and nutrition through Profile's program. The diverse talent will reinforce Profile's customized plans across every lifestyle, gender and life stage.

"We were really drawn to being part of and each personally joining Profile because it offers a personalized nutrition plan for each of us," explained Lady A's Hilary Scott. "We're all working parents who need a lot of energy and need a plan that's sustainable. So, having a program developed by physicians and scientists at Sanford Health that is tailored to each of us makes us excited for the opportunity to learn new healthy habits."

"Life has been crazy these days trying to balance album releases and getting ready for this baby," said Meghan Trainor. "I need a plan that's super easy to follow and I'm excited that I have my own Profile® coach to help me in the last part of my pregnancy and after I give birth. I'm looking forward to learning more about nutrition and sharing my experience so others can find their own plans!"

About Profile ® by Sanford

Profile ® by Sanford is an evidence-based, comprehensive behavioral weight management program delivered by health coaches designed to improve nutrition, activity and lifestyle behaviors. It was created by physicians, researchers, and dietitians at Sanford Health, one of the largest not-for-profit integrated health systems in the U.S.

Attorney general not reviewing use-of-force incidents

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Attorney General Jason Ravensborg has complied with a request from four law enforcement agencies to refrain from evaluating police use-of-force incidents while he's under investigation for fatally hitting a man with his car.

The request from the Rapid City and Sioux Falls police departments and Pennington and Minnehaha County sheriff offices was approved by the South Dakota police and sheriff associations.

"The attorney general then and still is under investigation for a death of an individual and we didn't want any doubt cast on the investigation of an officer-involved shooting," said Pennington County Sheriff Kevin Thom.

It appears to be the only work duty Ravensborg has given up since fatally hitting Joe Boever with his car on Sept. 12, 2020, the Rapid City Journal reported.

"Since the attorney general is currently involved in a separate investigation, the Chiefs' Association agreed it would be appropriate to seek out another office for the final review of any DCI investigation into an officer-involved shooting," said Police Chief Don Hedrick.

Ravensborg has continued to work on lawsuits and attend the the Law Enforcement Officers Standards and Training Commission. He served as an elector for President Donald Trump during the Dec. 14 electoral college vote and has recently been testifying about bills at the Capitol.

Ravensborg said he thought he hit a deer and only realized he hit and killed a person when he came across Boever's body while returning the Hyde County sheriff's personal vehicle the next morning.

UN: Over 2 million Yemeni children may starve in 2021

By NOHA ELHENNAWY Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — More than 2 million Yemeni children under the age of 5 are expected to endure acute malnutrition in 2021, four United Nations agencies said Friday, urging stakeholders to end the yearslong conflict that has brought the Arab world's poorest country to the brink of famine.

The U.N. report warned that nearly one in six of those kids — 400,000 of the 2.3 million — are at risk of death due to severe acute malnutrition this year, a significant increase from last year's estimates. The report also said a lack of funds was hampering humanitarian programs in Yemen, as donor nations have failed to make good on their commitments.

Compounding the crisis, around 1.2 million pregnant or breastfeeding women in Yemen are also projected to be acutely malnourished this year.

"These numbers are yet another cry for help from Yemen, where each malnourished child also means a family struggling to survive," said David Beasley, executive director of the World Food Program, which jointly issued the report with the Food and Agriculture Organization, UNICEF and the World Health Organization.

"The crisis in Yemen is a toxic mix of conflict, economic collapse and a severe shortage of funding," Beasley explained. In 2020, humanitarian programs in Yemen received only \$1.9 billion of the required \$3.4 billion, the report said.

UNICEF estimates that virtually all of Yemen's 12 million children require some sort of assistance. This can include food aid, health services, clean water, schooling and cash grants to help the poorest families scrape by.

"But there is a solution to hunger, and that's food and an end to the violence," Beasley said.

Yemenis have suffered six years of bloodshed, destruction and humanitarian catastrophe. In 2014, the

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 223 ~ 23 of 79

Iran-allied Houthi rebels seized the capital and much of the country's north. A Saudi-led coalition launched a sweeping military intervention months later to restore the U.N.-backed government. Despite relentless Saudi airstrikes and a blockade of Yemen, the war has ground to a stalemate.

Last week, President Joe Biden announced that the U.S. will no longer support the Saudi-led coalition. But reaching peace will be a difficult path.

Biden also reversed the Trump administration's designation of the Houthis as a terrorist organization. That move has been hailed by aid groups working in Yemen, who feared the designation would disrupt the flow of food, fuel and other goods barely keeping Yemenis alive.

"Malnourished children are more vulnerable to diseases ... It is a vicious and often deadly cycle, but with relatively cheap and simple interventions, many lives can be saved," said WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

Lawyer defending Trump accustomed to political disaster

By MARC LEVY Associated Press

HARRISBURG, Pa. (AP) — Bruce L. Castor Jr. answered his cellphone, but he had no time to talk.

"I'm 12 minutes from prime time," he said, before heading to the well of the U.S. Senate to defend his client, Donald Trump, as one of two defense lawyers in the ex-president's second impeachment trial.

It may have marked the high point for him.

Castor's moment in the national glare, televised from the well of the Senate chamber, was seen as an ambling and at times aimless hour-long disquisition in search of a point. And that was just the opinion of several Republican senators, including steadfast supporters of the president.

"I thought I knew where he was going, and I really didn't know where it was going," said Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., who is among Trump's most fervent backers.

Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas, added that Castor "just rambled on and on and on."

It was at odds with Castor's reputation as a sure-footed, loquacious, media-savvy prosecutor from the Philadelphia suburbs who for decades had seemed as comfortable in front of a camera as in a courtroom.

To be sure, he was not Trump's first choice for a lawyer, and perhaps not among the top ten of the limited options among those willing to take the case. He had to prepare his arguments in a matter of just a few days after the former president's legal team quit. And he had to learn the rules of an impeachment trial, a rarefied legal specialty.

Castor will have a chance to make a different impression when he begins to present Trump's defense, expected Friday.

Still, he stumbled in his first appearance Tuesday, referring to himself as the "lead prosecutor" for Trump's defense, before correcting himself, and called House managers — the real prosecutors in the case — "brilliant" and their presentation "well done." He also acknowledged something that former president has not, namely that Trump lost the election.

Instead of arguing a legal theory, he instead tried a political one, that Democrats only brought the impeachment on because they wanted to foreclose any chance of Trump running for president again.

"Let's understand why we are really here," Castor said. "We're really here because majority in the House of Representatives does not want to face Donald Trump as a political rival in the future. That's the real reason we're here."

He said he made that point to strip the bark of any other pretense. "Nobody says it that plainly, but unfortunately I have a way of speaking that way," Castor said.

Castor, 59, is familiar with politics, being elected as the ambitious, cowboy-booted and pinstripe-suited prosecutor from one of the state's wealthiest and most heavily populated counties in suburban Philadelphia.

There, he was accustomed to securing murder convictions and standing in front of the lights and cameras from Philadelphia TV stations, making him well known in the state's most politically dominant region.

But if he wanted to use that position as a springboard to higher office, the plan did not work out. In the middle of his eight years as Montgomery County's district attorney, he took on the Republican Party's

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 223 ~ 24 of 79

hand-picked candidate for state attorney general, slugging it out with the establishment in an expensive and nasty primary. He lost by about 5 percentage points.

Castor went on to become a county commissioner, but found himself sidelined by his colleagues, a Republican and a Democrat, who forged a working majority that froze him out. Castor hung his commissioner's certificate in the bathroom, above the office toilet.

In 2013, he became a strident critic of then-Gov. Tom Corbett, the Republican who had beaten Castor in 2004's primary for attorney general.

He toured the state exploring a primary challenge to Corbett's reelection bid, but Castor dropped it, lamenting that not enough people "were willing to stick their necks out and back me." Corbett's unpopularity ultimately led to his historic defeat.

Castor then ran for his old job as district attorney in the middle of emerging allegations that comedian Bill Cosby had sexually assaulted dozens of women and that he — Castor — had declined to prosecute one such case a decade earlier.

His decision not to prosecute became his Democratic opponent's central line of attack in the race. He defended himself by saying there was not enough evidence to successfully prosecute, but he lost and, later, went on to testify for Cosby's defense.

In doing so, he also questioned the credibility of the victim, Andrea Constand, who sued him for defamation. They settled the case in 2019.

Before Cosby was convicted in a second trial, Castor burst back on the scene as Pennsylvania's first-ever solicitor general.

In it, he stepped in to make legal decisions in the administration for the state's embattled and politically abandoned attorney general — Kathleen Kane, a Democrat — as she fought charges of leaking protected investigative information to smear a rival and lying to a grand jury about it.

She was soon convicted, leaving Castor as the state's acting attorney general — the position he had so long ago sought — but only for two weeks until an appointee of the governor took over.

His re-emergence as an impeachment lawyer for Trump was a head-scratching moment for Pennsylvania's political and legal world. Rob Gleason, a former state party chairman who helped with Trump's re-election campaign, called Castor to congratulate him, but hadn't spoken to him in five or six years.

"I had no knowledge who it was going to be, I never even thought about it, but yeah, I was surprised it was him," Gleason said.

Castor had burned bridges with much of the Republican establishment.

"The Republican Party is dead in Pennsylvania, never to rise again," he declared to the Philadelphia Inquirer in 2015.

He had pretty much stayed out of sight, seemingly content to never run for office again.

He had not campaigned for Trump and a longtime friend, Brian Miles, told the Inquirer that the two men had never discussed Trump before Castor mentioned recently that he was up for the job.

Castor answered the mystery, telling the Washington Post that his cousin, a House Republican staff lawyer, had "served as a conduit."

A few weeks later, there he was, checking notes on a yellow legal pad in the well of the Senate, and speaking as the world watched.

For all the criticism directed at him, Castor suggested that Trump did not criticize his performance.

"Far from it," he said. And of the broader criticism, he said, "only one person's opinion matters."

Follow Marc Levy on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/timelywriter>.

'I am a child!' Pepper spray reflects policing of Black kids

By DEEPTI HAJELA and LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

The 9-year-old Black girl sat handcuffed in the backseat of a police car, distraught and crying for her father as the white officers grew increasingly impatient while they tried to wrangle her fully into the vehicle.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 223 ~ 25 of 79

"This is your last chance," one officer warned. "Otherwise pepper spray is going in your eyeballs." Less than 90 seconds later, the girl had been sprayed and was screaming, "Please, wipe my eyes! Wipe my eyes, please!"

What started with a report of "family trouble" in Rochester, New York, and ended with police treating a fourth-grader like a crime suspect, has spurred outrage as the latest example of law enforcement mistreatment of Black people.

As the U.S. undergoes a new reckoning on police brutality and racial injustice in the wake of George Floyd's death last May, the girl's treatment illustrates how even young children are not exempt.

Research shows Black children are often viewed as being older than they are, and are more likely to be seen as threatening or dangerous. Advocates have long said that leads to police treating them in ways they wouldn't dream of treating white children. In some cases it has led to fatalities like the killing of Tamir Rice, a Black 12-year-old shot by a white police officer in Cleveland in 2014.

"Black children have never been given their opportunity to be children," said Kristin Henning, law professor and director of the Juvenile Justice Clinic and Initiative at Georgetown Law.

A study published in the journal *Pediatrics* in late 2020 found Black children and teenagers were six times as likely to die from police gunfire as white children. It analyzed data from police use of force in situations involving young people between the ages of 12 and 17 from 2003 to 2018.

"Black children have really been seen as older, more culpable, less amenable to rehabilitation and less worthy of the Western notions of innocence and the Western notions of childhood," Henning said.

The headlines from Rochester were deeply personal for Mando Avery, whose 7-year-old son was hit by pepper spray from a police officer aiming at someone else during a protest in Seattle last summer. The spray left her son's face and chest painful and swollen from chemical burns for several days, and even required a visit to the emergency room.

He has since had nightmares and now fears police. Small things can bring back bad memories, like using a spray bottle to do his hair.

"Their innocence goes away much, much sooner," he said. "What kind of temper tantrum leads to handcuffing a child?"

In the Rochester case, the girl's mother called police on Jan. 29 after an argument with her spouse and said she asked officers to call mental health services when her daughter grew increasingly upset.

But police body camera video shows only officers at the scene, first handcuffing the girl's hands behind her back and then growing increasingly impatient as they tried to get her into the police car, culminating in the pepper spray.

There's a point in the video when an officer says, "You're acting like a child!" to which the girl replies, "I am a child!"

The officers have been suspended pending an investigation. More video footage released Thursday showed the wait until an ambulance arrived for the girl.

The case comes months after the high-profile death last spring of Daniel Prude, a Black man undergoing a mental health crisis when his family called the Rochester police. Officers handcuffed him, then put a hood over his head when he spit at them. As he struggled, they pinned him face down on the ground, one officer pushing his head to the pavement until he stopped breathing.

The 9-year-old girl's mother, Elba Pope, told *The Associated Press* she didn't think the white officers saw her daughter the same way they would have seen a white child.

"Had they looked at her as if she was one of their children, they wouldn't have pepper sprayed her," she said.

Henning agreed. "This is where the question of race comes into play," she said. "If that child had looked like one of their little girls, looked like the little child that they tucked into bed, it is far less likely that they would have done that."

The president of the Rochester police union has said the officers didn't lack compassion but were dealing with a difficult situation with limited resources and were following department protocol.

New York isn't the only place where police treatment of Black children has been a flashpoint.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 223 ~ 26 of 79

In suburban Denver, four Black girls aged 6 to 17 were detained by police at gunpoint after they were wrongly suspected of being in a stolen car last year.

One officer tried to handcuff the 6-year-old, who was wearing a tiara for what was supposed to be a girls day out with her relatives, but the cuffs were too big, according to a lawsuit filed by the family.

In North Texas, a white police officer was recorded on video pushing a swimsuit-clad Black girl to the ground at a pool party in 2015. Later that year, a sheriff's deputy at a school in South Carolina flipped a girl to the floor and dragged her across a classroom after she refused to surrender her cellphone in math class.

In Tamir Rice's case, the 12-year-old was playing with a toy gun in November 2014 when Cleveland police responding to a call pulled up and within seconds, shot him. When his 14-year-old-sister ran to the scene, she was pushed to the ground and handcuffed. The officers were not indicted.

It's that history that makes Christian Gibbs, a Black father of three daughters, grateful the girl in Rochester wasn't more grievously injured — and angered that's even a worry.

"Thank God she wasn't killed. ... And the fact that we have to say that is already an indictment of the type of treatment that we expect to be doled out, even to little children," said Gibbs, 46, of Bowie, Maryland.

Holly M. Frye, of South Ogden, Utah, said she has near-daily conversations with her three children about how to act around police officers, the same kind of conversations her parents had with her.

"This sort of aggression toward the Black race has always been in existence, it's just being recorded now," she said. "It's a topic that never leaves our kitchen table, we're always constantly talking about it."

While data is scarce on very young children's interactions with police, Black youths are nearly five times as likely to be incarcerated compared with white young people, according to an analysis by the nonprofit The Sentencing Project.

The incarceration rate for white youth is 83 per 100,000; for Black youths that number jumps to 383, The Sentencing Project found. While that is partly due to differences in offending, studies have found teenagers of color are more likely to be arrested and more likely to face severe consequences compared with their white peers, the report said.

And it's not just policing and the criminal justice system. Black students face higher rates of suspension and expulsion from school, said Judith Browne Dianis, executive director of the Advancement Project, which fights against structural racism.

It's "the way that our Black children are questioned by adults, with this underlying assumption that they are not to be believed, and they're not to be trusted, and that they're always up to something wrong," she said.

That leads to trauma and mistrust on the part of Black youth toward the authorities around them, she said.

"There is no 'Officer Friendly' for Black kids," she said.

Hajela reported from Essex County, New Jersey, Whitehurst reported from Salt Lake City. Associated Press writer Carolyn Thompson in Buffalo, New York, contributed to this report.

Hajela is a member of the Race and Ethnicity reporting team at The Associated Press.

Mori is gone but gender issues remain for Tokyo Olympics

By STEPHEN WADE AP Sports Writer

TOKYO (AP) — Yoshiro Mori resigned as the president of the Tokyo Olympic organizing committee on Friday after sexist comments made last week in which he said women "talk too much."

The resignation of the former Japanese prime minister at an executive board meeting has left a mess in its wake. And it comes just over five months before the postponed Olympics are to open in the middle of a pandemic with public sentiment overwhelmingly against the games.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 223 ~ 27 of 79

The executive board did not immediately choose a successor for Mori, which CEO Toshiro Muto said would come "as soon as possible" and will be made by a review committee. He called it a "single-digit body" made up equally of men and women, and he repeatedly declined to give a specific time frame.

Muto also declined to say if Mori's replacement would be a woman. Gender inequality in Japan is exactly the issue that was raised last week by Mori's demeaning comments, and what drove his ouster. Women are largely absent in the boardroom and in top politics in Japan, and Muto acknowledged that the organizing committee has too few women in leadership roles, and no women at the vice president level.

"For myself in selecting the president, I don't think we need to discuss or debate gender," Muto said. "We simply need to choose the right person."

The front runner is probably Seiko Hashimoto, the current government Olympic minister who was also an bronze medalist in speedskating in the 1992 Albertville Games. She fits all the bills — female, a former Olympian, and she's been around the organizing committee.

Any pick will be tricky.

On Thursday, 84-year-old Saburo Kawabuchi, the former head of the governing body of Japanese soccer, gave interviews and said he had talked with the 83-year-old Mori and was likely to be his successor.

That news — that another elderly man was taking over — exploded Friday morning on national television and social media. A few hours later, Kawabuchi withdrew his candidacy at the board meeting and told Muto to make it public.

"He (Kawabuchi) is not thinking of becoming president, even if he is asked he will decline," Muto said.

Mori's departure comes after more than a week of non-stop criticism about his remarks earlier this month. He initially apologized but refused to step away, which was followed by relentless pressure from television commentators, sponsors and an online petition that drew 150,000 signatures.

"As of today I will resign from the president's position," Mori said to open an executive board and council meeting.

Mori was appointed in 2014, just months after Tokyo won the bid to host the Olympics.

"My inappropriate comments have caused a lot of chaos," he said, repeating several times he had regret over the remarks, but also said he had "no intention of neglecting women."

"As long as I remain in this position, it causes trouble," he told the board. "If that is the case, it will ruin everything we've built up."

Muto was asked repeatedly if Mori would have a behind the scenes role as an advisor, which seems logical.

"Currently we are not discussing any position for him," Muto said.

It's not clear that his resignation will clear the air and return the focus to exactly how Tokyo can hold the Olympics in just over five months in the midst of a pandemic.

The Olympics are to open on July 23 with 11,000 athletes and 4,400 more in the Paralympic a month later. About 80% of people in Japan in recent polls say they want the Olympics canceled or postponed.

Japanese media immediately pointed out there were three qualified women — all athletes and former Olympians and at least a generation younger — who could fill the job.

Kaori Yamaguchi won a bronze medal in judo at the 1988 Seoul Olympics. Mikako Kotani won two bronze medals at the same Olympics in synchronized swimming. And Naoko Takahashi was a gold medalist in the marathon at the 2000 Sydney Olympics.

Mori's remarks have put the spotlight on how far Japan lags behind other prosperous countries in advancing women in politics or the boardrooms. Japan stands 121st out of 153 in the World Economic Forum's gender equality rankings.

Koichi Nakano, a political scientist at Sophia University in Tokyo, characterized Japan as a country still run "by a club of old men." But he said this could be a watershed.

"Social norms are changing," he wrote in an email to The Associated Press. "A clear majority of the Japanese found Mori's comments unacceptable, so the problem is more to do with the lack of representation of women in leadership positions. This sorry episode may have the effect of strengthening the call for greater gender equality and diversity in the halls of power."

Though some on the street called for Mori to resign — several hundred Olympic volunteers say they are

withdrawing — most decision makers, including Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga, stopped short and simply condemned his remarks.

A comment a few days ago from Toyota Motor Corp. President Akio Toyoda seemed to move the needle. Toyota is one of 14 so-called Olympic TOP sponsors that pay about \$1 billion every four-year cycle to the International Olympic Committee. The company seldom speaks out on politics, and Toyoda did not call for Mori's resignation. But just speaking on the matter might have been enough.

"The (Mori) comment is different from our values," Toyoda said, "and we find it regrettable."

Associated Press writer Yuri Kageyama and Mari Yamaguchi contributed to this report.

AP Olympics: <https://apnews.com/hub/olympic-games> and https://twitter.com/AP_Sports

Some asylum-seekers waiting in Mexico to be allowed in US

By ELLIOT SPAGAT Associated Press

SAN DIEGO (AP) — The Biden administration on Friday announced plans for tens of thousands of asylum-seekers waiting in Mexico for their next immigration court hearings to be allowed into the United States while their cases proceed.

The first of an estimated 25,000 asylum-seekers in Mexico with active cases will be allowed in the United States on Feb. 19, authorities said. They plan to start slowly with two border crossings each processing up to 300 people a day and a third crossing taking fewer. Administration officials declined to name them out of fear they may encourage a rush of people to those locations.

The move is a major step toward dismantling one of former President Donald Trump's most consequential policies to deter asylum-seekers from coming to the U.S. About 70,000 asylum-seekers were enrolled in "Remain in Mexico," officially called "Migrant Protection Protocols," since it was introduced in January 2019.

On Biden's first day in office, the Homeland Security Department suspended the policy for new arrivals. Since then, some asylum-seekers picked up at the border have been released in the U.S. with notices to appear in court.

Biden is quickly making good on a campaign promise to end the policy, which the Trump administration said was critical to reversing a surge of asylum-seekers that peaked in 2019. But the policy also exposed people to violence in Mexican border cities and made it extremely difficult for them to find lawyers and communicate with courts about their cases.

"As President Biden has made clear, the U.S. government is committed to rebuilding a safe, orderly, and humane immigration system," said Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas. "This latest action is another step in our commitment to reform immigration policies that do not align with our nation's values."

Homeland Security said the move "should not be interpreted as an opening for people to migrate irregularly to the United States." Administration officials have said repeatedly that the vast majority of people who cross the border illegally are quickly expelled under a public health order in place since the pandemic struck in March, but releases of some asylum-seeking families in Texas and California has worked against that messaging.

White House press secretary Jen Psaki said Thursday that she was concerned that limited releases in the U.S. may encourage others to cross illegally because "we don't want people to put themselves in danger at a time where it is not the right time to come, because we have not had time to put in place a humane and moral system and process."

Hearings for people enrolled in "Remain in Mexico" have been suspended since June due to the pandemic. Getting word out on when to report to the border for release in the United States may prove a daunting job.

Homeland Security said it would soon announce a "virtual registration process" available online and by phone for people to learn where and when they should report. It urged asylum-seekers not to report to the border unless instructed.

Asylum-seekers will be tested for COVID-19 before entering the U.S.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 223 ~ 29 of 79

The announcement provides no relief to people whose cases were dismissed or denied, though administration officials did not rule out additional measures. Advocates argue that communication problems, including lack of working addresses in Mexico, caused some to miss hearings and lose their cases as a result.

More people are getting stopped crossing the border illegally since Biden took office.

Raul Ortiz, deputy chief of the Border Patrol, said Tuesday that more than 3,000 people had been stopped crossing the border illegally in each of the previous 10 days, compared to a daily average of 2,426 in January.

About 50 to 80 adults and children have been arriving daily since Jan. 27 at Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley in Texas, which temporarily houses people released by the Border Patrol, said Sister Norma Pimentel, the group's executive director. The charity tests for COVID-19 and sends anyone who tests positive to a hotel for isolation.

Jewish Family Service of San Diego housed 191 asylum-seekers the first 10 days of February after the were released by U.S. authorities, up from 144 in January and 54 in December, said Eitan Peled, the group's border services advocate. They are quarantined in hotels for 10 days.

What to watch as Trump's lawyers deliver impeachment defense

By MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Donald Trump's lawyers have a simple objective as they open their defense at the former president's impeachment trial: Don't lose any Republican votes.

Most Senate Republicans have indicated that they will vote to acquit Trump on the House charge of incitement of insurrection. They argue that the trial is unconstitutional and that Trump didn't incite supporters to lay siege on the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6 when he told them to "fight like hell" against the certification of President Joe Biden's victory. If Republicans hold the line, Democrats will fall well short of the two-thirds of the Senate needed for conviction.

Trump's two top lawyers, Bruce Castor and David Schoen, risked losing one Republican vote on Tuesday after Louisiana Sen. Bill Cassidy said they did a "terrible" job arguing that the trial is unconstitutional. Cassidy, who had voted with his party two weeks prior to stop the trial, switched his vote to side with Democrats.

Including Cassidy, six Republicans sided with Democrats on that vote that the trial is constitutional — far from the minimum of 17 Republican votes that would be needed to convict.

Here's what to watch for on Friday as the defense opens arguments in Trump's historic second impeachment:

THE ARGUMENTS

Trump's lawyers plan to argue their client's innocence on multiple fronts. Their main arguments include that the trial is unconstitutional, that the insurrectionists who broke into the Capitol did so on their own accord and that Trump's rhetoric to supporters was common political speech protected under the First Amendment.

Hoping that brevity will appeal to their restless Senate audience, the lawyers are expected to keep their arguments short. A Trump adviser said Thursday that they are expected to wrap up their defense in less than a day.

Like the House prosecutors, Trump's lawyers have up to 16 hours over two days to plead their case. Once the defense's presentation is finished, senators will have time to submit written questions to both sides.

PARTISAN ANGER

Taking a cue from their client, Trump's lawyers have injected searing criticism of Democrats into their arguments, hoping to convince not only GOP senators but also viewers of the trial around the country that Trump's second impeachment is fueled by "hatred" of the former president. They are expected to continue with that strategy on Friday, calling out Democrats they say similarly incited violence in cities around the country.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 223 ~ 30 of 79

Schoen told reporters in the Capitol on Thursday that Democrats' recounting of the riots on Wednesday — almost 90 minutes of brutal footage that saw the rioters injuring law enforcement and calling for the death of the vice president and the speaker of the House — was "offensive."

He said he believed Democrats were effectively making the public relive the tragedy in a way that "tears at the American people" and impedes efforts at unity.

CASTOR'S CLEANUP

All eyes will be on Castor, who delivered a rambling argument on Tuesday that Republican senators criticized as perplexing, "disorganized" and "random." Trump, too, was furious over the performance of his defense team as he watched the proceedings from his Mar-a-Lago club in Palm Beach, Florida, according to a person familiar with his thinking who spoke on condition of anonymity to describe a private conversation.

On Friday, Castor will get a second chance. After the Democrats' video presentation on Wednesday, he said the images "would have an emotional impact on any jury, but there are two sides of the coin and we haven't played ours."

At least one key senator had advice for the lawyers on Thursday.

Maine Sen. Susan Collins, a Republican who has been harshly critical of Trump's role in the riots, said she hopes Trump's lawyers will be "as specific as the House managers were — who went through the evidence, provided legal arguments and gave a very thorough presentation."

Associated Press writer Jill Colvin in Washington contributed to this report.

After Democrats' visceral presentation, Trump team on stage

By ERIC TUCKER, LISA MASCARO, MARY CLARE JALONICK and JILL COLVIN Associated Press
WASHINGTON (AP) — After a prosecution case rooted in emotive, violent images from the Capitol siege, Donald Trump's impeachment trial shifts on Friday to defense lawyers prepared to make a fundamental concession: The violence was every bit as traumatic, unacceptable and illegal as Democrats say.

But, they will say, Trump had nothing to do with it.

Stipulating to the horrors of the day is meant to blunt the visceral impact of the House Democrats' case and quickly pivot to what they see as the core — and more winnable — issue of the trial: whether Trump can be held responsible for inciting the deadly Jan. 6 riot.

The argument is likely to appeal to Republican senators who themselves want to be seen as condemning the violence without convicting the president.

"They haven't in any way tied it to Trump," David Schoen, one of the president's lawyers, told reporters near the end of two full days of Democrats' arguments aimed at doing just that.

He previewed the essence of his argument Tuesday, telling the Senate jurors: "They don't need to show you movies to show you that the riot happened here. We will stipulate that it happened, and you know all about it."

In both legal filings and in arguments earlier in the week, Trump's lawyers have made clear their position that the people responsible for the riot are the ones who actually stormed the building and who are now being prosecuted by the Justice Department.

Anticipating defense efforts to disentangle Trump's rhetoric from the rioters' actions, the impeachment managers spent days trying to fuse them together through a reconstruction of never-been-seen video footage alongside clips of the president's monthslong urging of his supporters to undo the election results.

Democrats, who wrapped their case Thursday, used the rioters' own videos and words from Jan. 6 to pin responsibility on Trump. "We were invited here," said one. "Trump sent us," said another. "He'll be happy. We're fighting for Trump."

The prosecutors' goal was to cast Trump not as a bystander but rather as the "inciter in chief" who spent months spreading falsehoods and revving up supporters to challenge the election.

In addition to seeking conviction, they also are demanding that he be barred from holding future federal office.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 223 ~ 31 of 79

Trump, they said, laid the predicate for the attack by stoking false claims of fraud, encouraging supporters to come to Washington and then fanning the discontent with his rhetoric about fighting and taking back the country.

"This attack never would have happened but for Donald Trump," Rep. Madeleine Dean, one of the impeachment managers, said as she choked back emotion. "And so they came, draped in Trump's flag, and used our flag, the American flag, to batter and to bludgeon."

For all the weight and moment that the impeachment of a president is meant to convey, this historic second trial of Trump could wrap up with a vote by this weekend, particularly since Trump's lawyers focused on legal rather than emotional or historic questions and are hoping to get it all behind him as quickly as possible.

With little hope of conviction by the required two-thirds of the Senate, Democrats delivered a graphic case to the American public, describing in stark, personal terms the terror faced that day — some of it in the very Senate chamber where senators are sitting as jurors. They used security video of rioters searching menacingly for House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Vice President Mike Pence, smashing into the building and engaging in bloody, hand-to-hand combat with police.

They displayed the many public and explicit instructions Trump gave his supporters — long before the White House rally that unleashed the deadly Capitol attack as Congress was certifying Democrat Joe Biden's victory. Five people died in the chaos and its aftermath.

Videos of rioters, some they posted to social media themselves, talked about how they were doing it all for Trump.

"What makes you think the nightmare with Donald Trump and his law-breaking and violent mobs is over?" asked Rep. Jamie Raskin, D-Md., the lead prosecutor. He said earlier, "When Donald Trump tells the crowd, as he did on Jan. 6, 'Fight like hell, or you won't have a country anymore,' he meant for them to 'fight like hell.'"

At the White House, Biden said he believed "some minds may be changed" after senators saw the security video, though he has previously said that conviction was unlikely.

Though most senators sat riveted as the jarring video played Wednesday in the chamber, some shaking their heads or folding their arms as screams from the video and audio filled the Senate chamber, most of the jurors seemed to have made up their minds. And by Thursday, as the House case wrapped up, many seem to be prepared to move on.

"I thought today was very repetitive, actually. I mean, not much new. I was really disappointed that they didn't engage much with the legal standards," said Republican Sen. Josh Hawley of Missouri.

The presentation by Trump's lawyers is low-risk in one sense given the likelihood of acquittal. But it is also being closely watched because of an uneven performance on Tuesday when one defense lawyer, Bruce Castor, gave such meandering arguments that Trump himself raged from his home in Florida.

They are expected to highlight different parts of the same speech focused on by prosecutors, when he told supporters assembled at the Ellipse outside the White House to "fight like hell."

They will contend that Trump in the very same remarks encouraged the crowd to behave "peacefully" and that his remarks — and his general distrust of the election results — are all protected under the First Amendment. Democrats strenuously resist that assertion, saying his words weren't political speech but rather amounted to direct incitement of violence.

The defense lawyers also may return to arguments made Tuesday that the trial itself is unconstitutional because Trump is now a former president. The Senate rejected that contention Tuesday as it voted to proceed with the trial, but Republican senators have nonetheless signaled that they remain interested in that argument.

By Thursday, senators sitting through a second full day of arguments appeared somewhat fatigued, slouching in their chairs, crossing their arms and walking around to stretch.

One Republican, Sen. Jim Inhofe of Oklahoma, said during a break: "To me, they're losing credibility the longer they talk."

Republican Sen. Marco Rubio said the facts of Jan. 6, though "unpatriotic" and even "treasonous," were

not his chief concern. Rather, he said Thursday, "The fundamental question for me, and I don't know about for everybody else, is whether an impeachment trial is appropriate for someone who is no longer in office. I don't believe that it is. I believe it sets a very dangerous precedent."

Chinese TV features blackface performers in New Year's gala

By JOE McDONALD Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — Chinese state TV included dancers in blackface portraying Africans during a national broadcast as Asia welcomed the lunar Year of the Ox with subdued festivities Friday amid travel curbs to contain renewed coronavirus outbreaks.

The "African Song and Dance" performance Thursday came at start of the Spring Festival Gala, one of the world's most-watched TV programs. It included Chinese dancers in African-style costumes and dark face makeup beating drums.

The five-hour annual program, which state TV has said in the past is seen by as many as 800 million viewers, also included tributes to nurses, doctors and others who fought the coronavirus pandemic that began in central China in late 2019.

Festivities for the holiday, normally East Asia's busiest tourism season, are muted after China, Vietnam, Taiwan and other governments tightened travel curbs and urged the public to avoid big gatherings following renewed virus outbreaks.

China's ruling Communist Party tries to promote an image of unity with African nations as fellow developing economies. But state broadcaster China Central Television has faced criticism over using blackface to depict African people in past New Year broadcasts.

On Twitter, Black Livity China, a group for people of African descent who work in or with China, called the broadcast "extremely disappointing." It noted CCTV's 2018 Spring Festival Gala featured performers in blackface with a monkey.

"We cannot stress enough the impact scenes such as these have on African and Afro-diasporic communities living in China," the group said.

Elsewhere in China, Buddhist and Daoist temples that usually are packed with holiday worshippers were closed. Streets in major cities were largely empty.

Visitors gathered outside the locked gates of the Tibetan-style Lama Temple on Beijing's north side to burn incense and pray.

Ji Jianping, who wore a jacket and face mask in red, the traditional color of good fortune, said she and her family skipped visiting their hometown in the northern province of Shanxi due to the pandemic.

"I wish for safety and health, as well as happiness for my family," said Ji, 62.

The government's appeal to China's public to avoid travel is denting spending on tourism and gifts. But economists say the overall impact might be limited if factories, shops and factories keep operating instead of taking their usual two-week break.

The Commerce Ministry said it found 48 million more people in Chinese cities planned to celebrate where they live instead of traveling. Departures from Beijing's two major airports were down 75% from last year on Wednesday, the Chinese capital's government reported.

In Taiwan, merchants said this year's sales are up 10%-20% because Taiwanese celebrated at home with family dinners instead of traveling abroad.

"Business this year is good. We have even more people," said a sausage vendor in the capital, Taipei, who would give only his surname, Tsai. "People stay home and prepare food for year-end dinner to share with friends and family."

AP video journalist Caroline Chen in Beijing and journalist Taijing Wu in Taipei, Taiwan, contributed to this report.

Australian city Melbourne begins 3rd lockdown due to cluster

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP) — Melbourne, Australia's second-largest city, will begin its third lockdown on Friday due to a rapidly spreading COVID-19 cluster centered on hotel quarantine.

The five-day lockdown will be enforced across Victoria state to prevent the virus spreading from the state capital, Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews said.

The Australian Open tennis tournament will be allowed to continue but without spectators, he said.

Only international flights that were already in the air when the lockdown was announced will be allowed to land at Melbourne Airport. Schools and many businesses will be closed. Residents are ordered to stay at home except to exercise and for essential purposes.

A population of 6.5 million will be locked down from 11:59 p.m. until the same time on Wednesday because of a contagious British variant of the virus first detected at a Melbourne Airport hotel that has infected 13 people.

Andrews said the rate of spread demanded drastic action to avoid a new surge in Melbourne.

"The game has changed. This thing is not the 2020 virus. It is very different. It is much faster. It spreads much more easily," Andrews told reporters. "I am confident that this short, sharp circuit breaker will be effective. We will be able to smother this."

Melbourne emerged from a 111-day lockdown in October following a fresh wave of infections that peaked at 725 cases a day. It was largely blamed on lax infection control procedures at two Melbourne hotels where international travelers were required to quarantine for 14 days.

At the time, the rest of Australia was relaxing restrictions due to low case numbers after an initial nationwide lockdown.

Some Australian states have imposed border restrictions on travelers from Melbourne. Federal lawmakers were on Friday rushing to get to the national capital Canberra to attend Parliament on Monday for fear that the Australian Capital Territory government will restrict their entry.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison and Health Minister Greg Hunt were in Melbourne to inspect biotechnology company CSL Ltd.'s plant where a local version of the AstraZeneca vaccine is being manufactured.

Morrison said before the lockdown was announced that he was confident the state government could handle the cluster.

"I wouldn't be here if I wasn't confident," Morrison told reporters. "I've just flown down from Sydney today. That's why I'm here. Business as usual for me being in Melbourne here today."

Pandemic takes a toll on exhausted UK funeral directors

By JILL LAWLESS and JO KEARNEY Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Funeral director Hasina Zaman recently helped a family say goodbye to a young man in his 30s who had died from COVID-19, on the same day she was planning a service for a husband and wife, both also lost to the virus.

Since the pandemic struck, Zaman's phone has rarely stopped ringing, with bereaved people seeking help that she is not always able to provide.

"Every week I think I don't have what it takes," said Zaman, whose company Compassionate Funerals serves a multicultural, multi-faith community in east London. The small firm normally arranges about five funerals a week, but COVID-19 has driven the number as high as 20.

"We just do it," Zaman said. "Literally just hands-on approach and just go for it and do it. And it's not sustainable. It's definitely not sustainable, because it's not healthy."

Funeral home staff are under pressure in many places, but the burden is especially intense in Britain, where more than 115,000 people with the virus have died, one of the highest per capita death tolls in the world. Undertakers, embalmers and others who deal with death for a living often regard the pressure on them as less important than the pain felt by bereaved families. But many are exhausted by the sheer amount of mortality they have faced, and the pandemic is increasing awareness that their own mental health also deserves tending to.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 223 ~ 34 of 79

Funeral directors across the country describe a heavy burden from more services, tougher hygiene measures and fewer staff because of illness and self-isolation requirements.

Emma Symons, an embalmer at Heritage & Sons Funeral Directors, northwest of London, says her workload has tripled.

"Some days it is relentless and is really difficult, particularly if we have younger people who've died," she said. "Sometimes it really does get a bit too much."

Heritage & Sons' parent company says its group of funeral homes across southeast England is arranging 30% to 50% more funerals than in a typical year. Ben Blunt, a senior funeral director at Heritage & Sons, says this winter's surge — which saw Britain record more than 30,000 coronavirus deaths in January alone, though cases and deaths are now falling — has been even worse than the peak last spring.

"In the first lockdown, we kind of didn't know what to expect," he said. "But having had the experience first time around and now going through it for a second time, there is that sort of slight dread, that we almost know what's on the horizon."

Alison Crake was better prepared for the pandemic than most. Before anyone had ever heard of COVID-19, she wrote a guide about how to plan for a pandemic for Britain's National Association of Funeral Directors. Crake anticipated some of the stresses a pandemic could bring, including staff absences, a shortage of mortuary space and the need to procure extra protective equipment.

But she says that if anyone had described the scale of death and disruption to come, "I probably would have gasped at the thought of it."

Crake, who runs her family's funeral firm in northeast England, says the profession has been shaken by shuttered places of worship, strict limits on attendance at funerals and other restrictions to slow the spread of the virus which mean funeral staff can't always give grieving families the comfort they crave.

Speaking sensitively to a bereaved family over Zoom is a new and delicate skill that funeral directors have had to learn. Blunt says it's painful not to be able to do something as simple as shake a client's hand.

"We're professionals," he said. "But we're human beings as well."

Still, Crake says funeral staff, who often regard their profession as a calling, can be reluctant to seek help — though some in the industry are trying to change that. The guide she wrote was updated in October with a greater emphasis on providing emotional support for employees. Those who are struggling can call Our Frontline, a service set up during the pandemic, partially funded by Prince William and his wife Catherine's Royal Foundation, that offers mental health support around the clock to key workers. Funeral staff have been included in that category, alongside medics and emergency services personnel.

"We understand that this is the profession that we've chosen," Crake said. "And for many of us, we see it as vocational. We consider ourselves to be part of our community and our community is part of us. But equally, there is a need to get that balance to make sure that this prolonged exposure to trauma doesn't result in compassion fatigue."

Conservative lawmaker John Hayes, who heads a parliamentary group on funerals and bereavement, recently paid tribute to the "quiet dignity" of funeral workers during the pandemic, saying their essential work "often goes unnoticed by those in the corridors of power."

Zaman is anguished at the restrictions on travel and assembly that mean families often can't grieve together. One recent weekday, mourners stood in the rain outside her parlor, taking turns to enter for socially distanced prayers over the coffin of a young man who had died far from his homeland of Gambia. A eulogy was delivered on the sidewalk over the rumble of cars and buses.

But she is proud of how the profession has adapted since the first surge of the outbreak. Livestreaming allows friends and family to watch funerals from afar. Thanks to training and protective equipment, she can let Muslim clients wash and shroud their loved ones' bodies before burial, in line with Islamic practice.

Zaman says when families can have that connection and catharsis, "you feel a sense of achievement" that makes the stress worthwhile.

"I am exhausted," she said. "For sure. But I look after myself. ... I recover. I've got 10 hours to recover after work and during the nighttime, and then I come back here and carry on."

Kearney reported from Aylesbury and Bletchley, England.

Attacks on older Asians stoke fear in Bay Area's Chinatowns

By DAISY NGUYEN Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. (AP) — Police are stepping up their patrols and volunteers are increasing their street presence after several violent attacks on older Asians stoked fear in the San Francisco Bay Area's Chinatowns and subdued the celebratory mood leading up to Lunar New Year.

City officials also have visited Chinatowns in San Francisco and Oakland this week to address residents' safety concerns and condemn the violence. They vowed to combat a problem that has been simmering since the start of the coronavirus pandemic but sparked new outrage after two unprovoked attacks were caught on video within a span of days and spread widely online.

In one, a young man shoved Vicha Ratanapakdee to the ground on Jan. 28 as he was taking his morning walk in San Francisco's Anza Vista neighborhood. The 84-year-old Thai man's head struck the pavement, and he died two days later in a hospital. Prosecutors charged a 19-year-old with murder and elder abuse.

On Jan. 31, a security camera caught a man in a hooded sweatshirt barreling into a 91-year-old Asian man in Oakland's Chinatown, causing him to fall face-first into the pavement, narrowly missing a bike rack. Police arrested the suspect and said he had assaulted a couple on the same block later that day and another on Feb. 1.

In just the last two weeks, authorities recorded 18 crimes against Asian Americans around Oakland's Chinatown, said Nancy O'Malley, district attorney for Alameda County.

Community advocates said the attacks have left many older Asians fearful about going out to shop for Friday's start of the Lunar New Year, the most important holiday in several East Asian countries that marks the beginning of the Chinese lunar calendar. Shops and restaurants are typically bustling in Chinatowns this time of year, but the pandemic and safety concerns have dampened the festive atmosphere.

"There's a huge amount of sadness and rage in the community," said Alvina Wong, director of the Asian Pacific Environmental Network. "Folks are on edge and tense and don't know when the next thing is going to happen. They see what's happening in other cities, and it's not stopping."

The recent attacks represent the latest spike in verbal and physical attacks against Asian Americans since the coronavirus, which emerged in China, reached the United States. Stop AAPI Hate, launched by two advocacy groups to encourage Asian Americans to report such incidents, has documented more than 3,000 attacks to date.

O'Malley said older Asians are targeted because of the stereotype that they don't report crimes due to language barriers. Her office is investigating whether the attacks were racially motivated and has launched a special response unit focused on crimes against Asian Americans, especially older Asians.

She said her team will focus on outreach and encourage victims to report crimes.

"For many of the seniors, it's not part of their nature or culture to call the police. Some of them come from countries where you do everything to avoid the police," the prosecutor said. "So the more they meet with us and understand our culture, the more people will open up to us about what's been happening to them."

Oakland's new police chief, LeRonne Armstrong, visited Chinatown twice in his first week to build trust with business owners and residents and let them know about the increased presence of police there.

"We want them to feel like they're not alone," he said.

Meanwhile, the attacks have prompted volunteers to offer to walk older residents to their cars or homes after shopping.

Jacob Azevedo said more than 200 people signed up after he posted on social media the idea of an on-call buddy system to chaperone residents who feel unsafe walking alone in Oakland's Chinatown. They also donated thousands of dollars to help him buy a personal alarm device that will be distributed to older Asians in the community.

"The only way that we can help people and stop this from happening is if everyone steps in," he said.

Azevedo said he intends to keep the program going "as long as old people don't feel safe and people are taking advantage of a vulnerable group like that."

Trump returns to spotlight in trial — but not on his terms

By JILL COLVIN and JONATHAN LEMIRE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — His rallying cry to supporters has been dissected. His videos, press conferences and calls to Fox News have played on loop. His Twitter account is once again dominating news coverage, his missives read aloud in the Senate chamber.

More than three weeks removed from the White House, Donald Trump's voice is again permeating the nation's capital — but not on his terms.

Stripped of his social media megaphone, the former president has watched the searing opening days of his historic second impeachment trial unfold on television with none of his former tools for fighting back at his disposal. Instead, he will have to rely on a hastily assembled team of lawyers — whose initial appearance he panned — to present his defense against Democrats' charges Friday.

"I think the only thing I can remember, frankly, where he's been in such a weak position and unable really to change the story would be the bankruptcies in the early '90s," said Sam Nunberg, a former longtime Trump adviser.

Still, he argued that if Trump had access to Twitter, he would likely dig himself deeper into trouble.

In the days before the trial began this week, Trump was relatively disengaged from developments in Washington, spending his time golfing and plotting his future as he adjusts to the rhythms of a far more placid post-presidential life.

But Trump was quickly snapped out of that disengagement Tuesday as he watched the trial's opening arguments unfold.

Trump exploded at aides about the shoddy performances of his lawyers, complaining that they seem ill-prepared and looked lousy on television. And he worked the phones, demanding a more aggressive defense, according to people familiar with his reaction.

Trump's team and allies have assured him that he has more than enough Republican votes to acquit him of the Democrats' charge that he incited the insurrection on Jan. 6. And they have convinced him that it is better he stay quiet to avoid the risk of saying something explosive that might alienate Senate jurors, including making his unfounded allegations of mass voter fraud a central argument of his defense. That means no media interviews, no blow-by-blow commentary, no call-ins to Fox News.

Trump's inner circle acknowledged the two days of searing video had been damaging, but thought the Democrats' case lost momentum on Thursday. Indeed, Trump was spotted back on the golf course by a CNN camera crew. What remained unclear: how and when Trump would respond to the verdict.

Trump's inner circle remains confident of acquittal, but there are concerns among allies about the lasting damage the trial could do to his already battered reputation, potentially diminishing his future standing and ability to exert influence over a party he has controlled with an iron fist.

Aides know that the powerful images being shown at the trial — and carried live on broadcast networks — are bound to reach beyond cable news-watching political junkies and reach low-information voters, which could further collapse Trump's standing. In the end, more Republicans may be willing to break from him, and some of his supporters may desert him, his aides fear.

"If he doesn't make a mid-course correction here, he's going to lose this Super Bowl," said Peter Navarro, a former White House economic adviser who remains close with Trump and has been urging him to ditch his current legal team and focus his case on the voter fraud allegations that have been dismissed by dozens of judges and state election officials, as well as Trump's former attorney general.

Trump is not expected to make any changes to his team, though David Schoen is expected to take the central role. Senior adviser Jason Miller said the legal team is expected to begin and conclude their argument Friday, using far less than their 16 hours of allotted time.

Even Trump loyalists have been surprised at how tight his grip has remained on the party since leaving

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 223 ~ 37 of 79

office, with those who had rebuffed his attempts to overturn the election being met with fierce anger from the former president's still-loyal base.

But Wednesday's presentation, in particular, was a damning indictment, filled with searing, never-before-seen video and audio of the riot as Trump's supporters violently clashed with police, smashed their way into the Capitol building and roamed the hallowed halls of Congress, menacingly hunting for lawmakers and successfully halting the final tally of electoral votes.

That footage was interspersed with Trump's tweets and excerpts from his speeches as the House Democratic prosecutors methodically traced his monthslong effort to undermine his supporters' faith in the election results, convince them the election had been stolen and push them to fight.

Through it all, Trump — who for decades described himself as the ultimate counterpuncher and his own best spokesperson — has been cut off from his former platforms. He has been banned from Twitter and Facebook. He no longer has a White House press corps on standby to chronicle his every utterance.

Even his post-presidential team's effort to communicate via traditional press releases has been hampered by technical difficulties that have resulted in frequent delays in emails landing in reporters' inboxes.

"It changes the dynamics so much, the fact that the president doesn't have that platform," said Scott Walker, the former Wisconsin Republican governor who ran against Trump in 2016, referring to his social media bullhorns.

GOP Sen. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina, a close ally of the president's, said he had stressed to Trump that, while his team "will do better, can do better," what matters is the outcome.

"I reinforced to the president: The case is over. It's just a matter of getting the final verdict now," he said.

Walker said that, in the end, he hoped the trial would help reunite Republicans currently engaged in a fierce debate over the future of the party and the extent to which Trump should be embraced.

"No matter where people are at in terms of the president's claims or concerns about election fraud or anything else, it's really easy for Republicans in the Senate — and for that matter, any Republicans, be they elected or otherwise — to be against the impeachment and basing it on the most fundamental reason, which is just it's a joke to try to impeach somebody who's not in office anymore," he said. "I think that's a great unifier."

Kim lays blame at officials for N. Korea's economic failures

By KIM TONG-HYUNG Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has ripped into the performance of his Cabinet and fired a senior economic official he appointed a month ago, saying they'd failed to come up with new ideas to salvage an economy in decay.

The report by state media on Friday comes during the toughest period of Kim's nine-year rule. The diplomacy he had hoped would lift U.S.-led sanctions over his nuclear program is stalemated, and pandemic border closures and crop-killing natural disasters last year deepened the damage to an economy broken by decades of policy failures, including a crippling famine in the 1990s.

The border closure caused trade volume with China, the main source of support for North Korea's economy, to drop by 75% in the first 10 months of the year. Raw materials shortages caused factory output to plunge to its lowest level since Kim took power in 2011, and prices of imported foods like sugar quadrupled, according to South Korea's spy agency.

Some analysts say the current challenges may set up conditions for an economic perfect storm in the North that destabilizes markets and triggers public panic and unrest.

The current challenges have forced Kim to publicly admit that past economic plans hadn't succeeded. A new five-year plan to develop the economy was issued during the ruling Workers' Party congress in January, but Kim's comments during the party's Central Committee meeting that ended Thursday were rich with frustration over how the plans have been executed so far.

During Thursday's session, Kim lamented that the Cabinet was failing in its role as the key institution managing the economy, saying it was producing unworkable plans while displaying no "innovative view-

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 223 ~ 38 of 79

point and clear tactics.”

He said the Cabinet’s targets for agricultural production this year were set unrealistically high, considering limited supplies of farming materials and other unfavorable conditions. Targets for electricity production were set too low, he said, showing a lack of urgency when shortages could stall work at coal mines and other industries.

“The Cabinet failed to play a leading role in mapping out plans of key economic fields and almost mechanically brought together the numbers drafted by the ministries,” the KCNA paraphrased Kim as saying.

The KCNA also said that O Su Yong was named as the new director of the Central Committee’s Department of Economic Affairs during this week’s meeting, replacing Kim Tu Il who was appointed in January.

During the January party congress, Kim Jong Un called for reasserting greater state control over the economy, boosting harvests and prioritizing the development of chemicals and metal industries. He also vowed all-out efforts to bolster his nuclear weapons program in comments that were seen as an attempt to pressure the new Biden administration.

To truly revive the economy, analysts say, the country needs to invest heavily in modern factory equipment and technology, and to either import more food or improve farm productivity: a U.N. assessment in 2019 found that 10.1 million people, or 40% of the population, were food insecure and in urgent need of assistance. The border closure has hindered updates on the situation, but output of staple grains had plateaued since surging a few years ago, when farmers were allowed to retain more of their harvests instead of handing them entirely over to the government.

The U.N. Food and Agricultural Organization estimates that nearly half of North Koreans are undernourished.

The metal and chemical industries are crucial for revitalizing stalling manufacturing, which has been decimated by U.N. sanctions and disrupted imports of factory materials amid the pandemic. However, most experts agree that North Korea’s new development plans aren’t meaningfully different from its previous ones that lacked in substance.

South Korean intelligence officials say there are also signs that the North is taking dramatic steps to strengthen government control over markets, including suppressing the use of U.S. dollars and other foreign currencies.

Such efforts might compel people to exchange their foreign currency savings for the North Korean won. They demonstrate the government’s sense of urgency over its depleting foreign currency reserves, analysts say.

Democrats pushing Biden’s COVID-19 bill through House panels

By ALAN FRAM, RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR and KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Democrats pushed half of President Joe Biden’s \$1.9 trillion COVID-19 relief plan through a House committee Thursday, advancing \$1,400 payments for millions of Americans and other initiatives that Republicans call too costly, economically damaging and brazenly partisan.

The Ways and Means Committee approved its \$940 billion chunk of Biden’s proposal on a 25-18 party-line vote, highlighting a frenzied week that’s seeing a dozen House panels fashion contributions to the sprawling measure. On Wednesday, the Education and Labor Committee approved another top Democratic priority — a boost in the federal minimum wage from \$7.25 to \$15 hourly over five years.

“Yes it will. We’re very proud of that,” House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., told reporters when asked if the overall House bill would include the minimum wage increase. Its fate remains precarious in the more moderate Senate.

The House bill would provide hundreds of billions for state and local governments and to boost vaccination efforts, raise tax credits for children and increase unemployment benefits and federal health care assistance. Democratic leaders hope for House passage later this month, with Senate approval and a bill on Biden’s desk by mid-March.

In committee after committee, Republicans futilely launched waves of amendments at the Democratic

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 223 ~ 39 of 79

measures in an attempt to derail the new president's top initial priority — a massive bill aimed at stemming the deadly pandemic and resuscitating an economy that's shed 10 million jobs and shuttered countless businesses.

And while Democrats fended the amendments off, their control of the House and Senate is razor thin. Divisions between progressives and moderates and solid GOP opposition means the bill's final contours can still shift.

Republicans' amendments spotlighted what they see as political soft spots they can exploit. Their themes were clear: Democrats are overspending, hurting workers and employers' job markets, being too generous to some immigrants, inviting fraud and rewarding political allies — allegations that Democrats dismiss as ludicrous.

And while the GOP amendments were beaten back, they forced Democrats to take positions that could tee up GOP campaign ads for the 2022 elections.

There were amendments to reduce the \$400 extra in weekly jobless benefits Democrats want to provide through August and exempt the smallest businesses from Democrats' plans to gradually raise the minimum wage to \$15 hourly from \$7.25. Others would have limited emergency grants for undergraduates to U.S. citizens and barred federal subsidies for some job-based health insurance to people without Social Security numbers, effectively targeting many immigrants.

GOP proposals would also have put strings on emergency funds to help schools reopen safely, required that schools offer in-person classes or give the money to parents for education savings accounts if they remain closed. Still others would have ensured that aid for renters, homeowners and the airline industry didn't extend long after the pandemic ends, and divided \$26 billion for urban transportation systems between cities and rural areas, which many Republicans represent.

"I don't know if the White House knows this, but you're supposed to be creating jobs, not killing them," said Texas Rep. Kevin Brady, top Republican on the Ways and Means panel.

Biden campaigned on reuniting a country riven by President Donald Trump's divisive four years. He met two weeks ago with 10 GOP senators to discuss the COVID-19 plan in a session that seemed cordial but has produced no visible movement.

Democrats say attempts to compromise with Republicans wasted time and resulted in a package that proved too small when President Barack Obama sought an economic stimulus compromise in 2009, his first year. They want to finish this initial Biden goal without any stumbles and before emergency jobless benefits expire on March 14.

House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., eyeing 2022 elections that he hopes will make him speaker of a GOP-run House, suggested Republicans were ready to work to restore jobs, reopen schools and provide vaccines "to those who want it." But he said Democrats' "policy distractions will only make America weaker and bring our recovery to a halt."

Democrats disputed Republican assertions that, for example, a proposed \$400 weekly pandemic unemployment benefit was so generous it would discourage people from seeking jobs.

"The whole force of this amendment is to not, quote unquote, spoil people by giving them too much money," said Rep. Gwen Moore, D-Wis. She said it suggested people who've lost jobs do not "deserve to live above a starvation-level wage."

Even so, Republicans voiced concerns about the sheer size of the \$1.9 trillion package. "Big doesn't necessarily mean good," said Rep. Anthony Gonzalez, R-Ohio.

The Congressional Budget Office expects the economy to add an average of 521,000 jobs a month this year, a sign of robust hiring made possible in part by government aid. But those gains will likely hinge on containing the virus. Employers kicked off 2021 by adding a mere 49,000 jobs in January as deaths from the disease curbed economic activity.

The Energy and Commerce Committee's section of the plan, exceeding \$180 billion, would provide billions for COVID-19 vaccination, testing, contact tracing and treatments. It would invest \$1.75 billion in "genomic sequencing," or DNA mapping of virus samples, to identify potentially more dangerous coronavirus mutations and study how fast they are spreading.

It would also advance longstanding Democratic priorities like increasing coverage under the Obama-era Affordable Care Act.

It dangles a fiscal carrot in front of a dozen states, mainly in the South, that have not yet taken up the law's Medicaid expansion to cover more low-income adults, proposing a temporary 5% increase in federal aid to states that newly expand the health care program for lower-income people.

Among the Medicaid expansion holdout states are major population centers like Texas, Florida and Georgia. Whether such a sweetener would be enough to start wearing down longstanding Republican opposition to Medicaid expansion is uncertain.

Associated Press writers Hope Yen and Josh Boak contributed to this report.

Attorneys spar over powers held by Britney Spears' father

By ANDREW DALTON AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Attorneys for Britney Spears and her father sparred Thursday over how he should share power with a financial company newly appointed as his partner in the conservatorship that controls her money.

Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Brenda Penny overruled an objection of Jamie Spears' attorney, Vivian Lee Thoreen, who argued that he should not yield previously granted rights and powers while working with his new co-conservator, The Bessemer Trust.

Thoreen had argued that the proposed order Britney Spears' court-appointed attorney Samuel Ingham III drafted to appoint the new co-conservator was "unclear and ambiguous by design" as he seeks to take authority away from Jamie Spears. Others of her objections to the order were sustained.

In a statement to The Associated Press after the hearing, Thoreen said "the rulings show the court's confidence in our client Jamie Spears and Bessemer Trust to manage the conservatorship of Ms. Spears estate together," and said Jamie Spears "looks forward to working with Bessemer ... in the best interests of his daughter."

While the judge's decision can be seen as a minor victory for Britney Spears and Ingham, appointed by the court to speak directly for her in the conservatorship's decisions, Ingham repeated that her goal is to have her father out entirely.

"It is no secret that my client does not want her father as co-conservator," Ingham said. "But we recognize that removal is a separate issue."

The judge declined Ingham's request to suspend Jamie Spears as conservator at a dramatic and contentious hearing in November, at which Ingham said that Britney Spears feared her father and refused to resume her career so long as he had power over it. Thoreen said the statements were inadmissible hearsay that did not reflect the reality of the situation.

Penny instead appointed the Bessemer Trust as a co-conservator, leading to the current fight over power-sharing.

Thursday's hearing was more technical and less emotional than November's hearing. The hearing came in the wake of the release of the FX and Hulu documentary "The New York Times Presents: Framing Britney." The documentary has few new revelations. But its historical look at the circumstances that led to the establishment of the conservatorship in 2008 have spurred sympathy for Britney Spears and brought greater attention to the case and the so-called #FreeBritney movement of fans who want to see her released and given control of her life.

Those fans increasingly include celebrities. Many including Bette Midler tweeted the #FreeBritney hashtag after the documentary aired. Miley Cyrus shouted "We love Britney!" during her pre-Super Bowl performance Sunday.

Pitbull, at a Hollywood news conference Thursday, said, "as far as what's going on with Britney, that's been going on for many, many, many years. Hopefully, they can break this cycle. And hopefully she gets a chance to control her own destiny."

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 223 ~ 41 of 79

The #FreeBritney protesters, some of whom were interviewed in the documentary, were chanting and holding signs at the downtown LA courthouse Thursday.

Thoreen defended the work of the conservatorship.

"From the beginning, the court has closely monitored Britney's situation," her statement to the AP said, "including annual accountings and in-depth reviews from a highly experienced and dedicated court investigator."

At Thursday's hearing, Thoreen emphasized that Britney Spears asked for and approved of her father's role as recently as 2019.

"Ms. Spears reflected in court papers that she wanted her father to be the sole conservator of her estate," Thoreen said.

Jamie Spears has repeatedly emphasized the need for the conservatorship in order to protect his daughter from those who would, or already have, preyed on her.

"My client Jamie Spears has diligently and professionally carried out his duties as one of Britney's conservators," Thoreen's statement said, "and his love for his daughter and dedication to protecting her is clearly apparent to the court."

Britney Spears did not take part in part in the hearing. She rarely appears in court.

Now 39 and the mother of two sons, she has not performed, recorded music or made media appearances since declaring a career hiatus early in 2019.

On her Twitter and Instagram accounts Tuesday, she shared a video of a performance from three years earlier with the caption, "I'll always love being on stage But I am taking the time to learn and be a normal person I love simply enjoying the basics of every day life !!!!"

Follow AP Entertainment Reporter Andrew Dalton on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/andyjamesdalton>

Lincoln Project to launch outside probe amid new revelations

By STEVE PEOPLES AP National Political Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The Lincoln Project, one of the best-known and best-funded organizations in the so-called Never Trump movement, announced plans late Thursday to launch an external investigation to review the tenure of a co-founder accused of sexual harassment.

The announcement came hours after The Associated Press reported that members of the organization's leadership were informed in writing and in subsequent phone calls of at least 10 specific allegations of sexual harassment against co-founder John Weaver, including two involving Lincoln Project employees. The revelations raised questions about the Lincoln Project's statement last month that it was "shocked" when accusations surfaced publicly this year.

In a statement released Thursday evening, the organization announced that its board had decided to retain "a best-in-class outside professional" to review Weaver's tenure "to establish both accountability and best practices going forward for The Lincoln Project."

The organization also encouraged anyone bound by a nondisclosure agreement to contact the Lincoln Project "for a release."

The situation threatens the stature of not just the Lincoln Project but also the broader coalition of establishment-oriented Republican groups working to excise Trump from the party.

Lincoln Project co-founder Steve Schmidt insisted Wednesday night that he and the rest of the group's leadership were not aware of any internal allegations of wrongdoing involving Weaver.

"The Lincoln Project believes the members of our movement and the victims of John Weaver's despicable and deceptive behavior are owed the facts, and you will have them," the organization said in a written statement Thursday night. "John Weaver betrayed all of us and you deserve the facts presented independently through a transparent process."

Weaver declined to comment for the AP's earlier story, but in a statement released late last month to Axios, he generally acknowledged misconduct and apologized.

"To the men I made uncomfortable through my messages that I viewed as consensual mutual conversa-

tions at the time: I am truly sorry," he wrote. "They were inappropriate and it was because of my failings that this discomfort was brought on you."

Convict Trump or face dire democracy damage, prosecutors say

By LISA MASCARO, ERIC TUCKER, MARY CLARE JALONICK and JILL COLVIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Dire harm from Donald Trump's false and violent incitements will vex American democracy long into the future unless the Senate convicts him of impeachment and bars him from future office, House prosecutors insisted Thursday as they concluded two days of emotional arguments in his historic trial.

Making their case, they presented piles of new videos of last month's deadly Capitol attack, with invaders proudly declaring they were merely obeying "the president's orders" to fight to overturn the election results as Congress was certifying his defeat to Democrat Joe Biden. Trump is accused of inciting the invasion, which prosecutors said was a predictable culmination of the many public and explicit instructions he gave supporters long before his White House rally that unleashed the Jan. 6 attack.

"If we pretend this didn't happen, or worse, if we let it go unanswered, who's to say it won't happen again?" argued prosecutor Rep. Joe Neguse, D-Colo. Even out of office, Democrats warned, Trump could whip up a mob of followers for similar damage.

Trump's defense will take the Senate floor on Friday, arguing that as terrible as the attack was, it clearly was not the president's doing. The proceedings could finish with a vote this weekend by the senators who are sitting as impeachment jurors.

The Democrats, with little hope of conviction by two-thirds of the evenly divided Senate, are also making their most graphic case to the American public, while Trump's lawyers and the Republicans are focused on legal rather than emotional or historic questions, hoping to get it all behind as quickly as possible. Five people died in the Capitol chaos and its aftermath, a domestic attack unparalleled in U.S. history.

Trump's second impeachment trial, on a charge of incitement of insurrection, has echoes of last year's impeachment and acquittal over the Ukraine matter, as prosecutors warn senators that Trump has shown no bounds and will pose a continuing danger to the civic order unless he is convicted. Even out of the White House, the former president holds influence over large swaths of voters.

The Democratic House members acting as prosecutors drew a direct line Thursday from Trump's repeated comments condoning and even celebrating violence — praising "both sides" after the 2017 outbreak at the white supremacist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia — and urging his rally crowd last month to go to the Capitol and fight for his presidency. He spread false claims about election fraud and urged his supporters to "stop the steal" of the presidency.

Prosecutors used the rioters' own videos from that day to pin responsibility on Trump. "We were invited here," said one. "Trump sent us," said another. "He'll be happy. We're fighting for Trump."

"They truly believed that the whole intrusion was at the president's orders," said Rep. Diana DeGette of Colorado. "The president told them to be there."

At the White House, President Biden said he believed "some minds may be changed" after senators saw chilling security video Wednesday of the deadly insurrection at the Capitol, including of rioters searching menacingly for House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Vice President Mike Pence.

Biden said he didn't watch any of the previous day's proceedings live but later saw news coverage.

Though most of the Senate jurors seem to have made up their minds, making Trump's acquittal likely, the never-before-seen audio and video released Wednesday became a key exhibit.

Senators sat riveted as the jarring video played in the chamber. The footage showed the mob smashing into the building and rioters engaging in hand-to-hand combat with police, with audio of officers pleading for backup. Rioters roamed the halls chanting, "Hang Mike Pence," and eerily singing out, "Where are you, Nancy?" in search of Pelosi.

Videos of the siege have been circulating since the day of the riot, but the graphic compilation offered a moment-by-moment retelling of one of the nation's most alarming days. And it underscored how dangerously close the rioters came to the nation's leaders, shifting the focus of the trial from an academic

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 223 ~ 43 of 79

debate about the Constitution to a raw retelling of the assault.

Trump attorney David Schoen took issue, saying that the presentation was "offensive" and that the Democrats "haven't tied it in any way to Trump."

He told reporters Thursday at the Capitol that he believed Democrats were making the public relive the tragedy in a way that "tears at the American people" and impedes efforts at unity in the country.

And by Thursday, senators sitting through a second full day of arguments appeared somewhat fatigued, slouching in their chairs, crossing their arms and walking around to stretch.

One Republican, Sen. Jim Inhofe of Oklahoma, said during a break: "To me, they're losing credibility the longer they talk."

The goal of the two-day presentation by prosecutors from the House, which impeached the outgoing president last month a week after the siege, was to cast Trump not as an innocent bystander but rather as the "inciter in chief" who spent months spreading falsehoods and revving up supporters to challenge the election.

"This attack never would have happened but for Donald Trump," Rep. Madeleine Dean, one of the impeachment managers, said as she choked back emotion. "And so they came, draped in Trump's flag, and used our flag, the American flag, to batter and to bludgeon."

Trump's lawyers are likely to blame the rioters themselves for the violence.

The first president to face an impeachment trial after leaving office, Trump is also the first to be twice impeached.

His lawyers say he cannot be convicted because he is already gone from the White House. Even though the Senate rejected that argument in Tuesday's vote to proceed to trial, the issue could resonate with Senate Republicans eager to acquit Trump without being seen as condoning his behavior.

While six Republicans joined with Democrats to vote to proceed with the trial on Tuesday, the 56-44 vote was far from the two-thirds threshold of 67 votes needed for conviction.

Associated Press writers Jonathan Lemire and Kevin Freking in Washington, Nomaan Merchant in Houston and Michelle L. Price in Las Vegas contributed to this report.

Chick Corea, jazz great with 23 Grammy Awards, dies at 79

By MARK KENNEDY AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Chick Corea, a towering jazz pianist with a staggering 23 Grammy Awards who pushed the boundaries of the genre and worked alongside Miles Davis and Herbie Hancock, has died. He was 79.

Corea died Tuesday of a rare form of cancer, his team posted on his website. His death was confirmed by Corea's web and marketing manager, Dan Muse.

On his Facebook page, Corea left a message to his fans: "I want to thank all of those along my journey who have helped keep the music fires burning bright. It is my hope that those who have an inkling to play, write, perform or otherwise, do so. If not for yourself then for the rest of us. It's not only that the world needs more artists, it's also just a lot of fun."

A prolific artist with dozens of albums, Corea in 1968 replaced Herbie Hancock in Miles Davis' group, playing on the landmark albums "In a Silent Way" and "Bitches Brew."

He formed his own avant-garde group, Circle, and then founded Return to Forever. He worked on many other projects, including duos with Hancock and vibraphonist Gary Burton. He recorded and performed classical music, standards, solo originals, Latin jazz and tributes to great jazz pianists.

Harvey Mason Jr., interim president and CEO of The Recording Academy, wrote: "Chick rewrote the rulebook for jazz in his more than five-decade long career, receiving mass critical acclaim along the way for his musical excellence."

Corea was named a National Endowment of the Arts Jazz Master in 2006. He was a member of the Church of Scientology and lived in Clearwater, Florida. He regularly won the title of Jazz Artist of the Year from Downbeat Magazine.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 223 ~ 44 of 79

In addition to his Grammy wins, Corea also had four Latin Grammy wins. In a tweet, the Latin Recording Academy called him "a virtuosic pianist and one of the most prominent Latin jazz musicians of all times." The Blue Note jazz club in New York City simply called him "irreplaceable."

Drummer Sheila E. took to Twitter to mourn. "This man changed my life thru his music and we were able to play together many times. I was very fortunate to call him my family," she wrote "Chick, you are missed dearly, your music and brilliant light will live on forever."

Hip-hop star Q-Tip called Corea "one of the coldest pianist/keyboardist/songwriters of all time" and rapper Biz Markie celebrated Corea's 1972 jazz fusion group Return to Forever, calling it "fossil fuel for an eternity of rap samples."

Last year, Corea released the double album "Plays," which captured him solo at various concerts armed simply with his piano.

"Like a runner loves to run because it just feels good, I like to play the piano just because it feels good," he told The Associated Press at the time. "I can just switch gears and go to another direction or go to another song or whatever I want to do. So it's a constant experiment."

The double album was a peek into Corea's musical heart, containing songs he wrote about the innocence of children decades ago as well as tunes by Mozart, Thelonious Monk and Stevie Wonder, among others.

Corea is the artist with the most jazz Grammys in the show's 63-year history, and he has a chance to posthumously win at the March 14 show, where he's nominated for best improvised jazz solo for "All Blues" and best jazz instrumental album for "Trilogy 2."

Corea was born in Massachusetts and began piano lessons at 4. But he bristled at formal education and dropped out of both Columbia University and the Juilliard School. He began his career as a sideman.

Corea liked inviting volunteers onto the stage during solo concerts, sitting them down near his piano and creating spontaneous, entirely subjective tone poems about the person. "It starts as a game — to try to capture something I see in music," he told the AP. "While I play, I look at them a couple of times like a painter would. I try to see if, while I'm playing, are they agreeing with what I'm playing? Do they think that this is really a portrait of them? And usually they do."

Late last year, Corea was working had two commissions: A trombone concerto for the New York Philharmonic and a percussion concerto for the Philadelphia Orchestra. "I get interested in something and then I follow that interest. And that's how my music comes out," he said then. "I've always followed my interest. It's been my successful way of living."

He's also started teaching online, creating the Chick Corea Academy to offer his views on music and share the opinions of others, take questions and chat with guests. He hopes his students will explore their freedom of expression and think for themselves.

"Does everyone have to like what I like? No. And it's what makes the world go around that we all have different likes," he told the AP. "We come together and we collaborate."

Corea is survived by his wife, Gayle Moran, and a son Thaddeus.

Béla Fleck, a virtuoso on the banjo, who recorded and toured with Corea, called him "my hero, mentor and friend," adding "The world has lost one of the great ones. I'm so honored to have known him."

AP Music Editor Mesfin Fekadu contributed to this report.

Mark Kennedy is at <http://twitter.com/KennedyTwits>

AP: Over 9,000 virus patients sent into NY nursing homes

By BERNARD CONDON and JENNIFER PELTZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — More than 9,000 recovering coronavirus patients in New York state were released from hospitals into nursing homes early in the pandemic under a controversial directive that was scrapped amid criticism it accelerated outbreaks, according to new records obtained by The Associated Press.

The new number of 9,056 recovering patients sent to hundreds of nursing homes is more than 40% higher

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 223 ~ 45 of 79

than what the state health department previously released. And it raises new questions as to whether a March 25 directive from Gov. Andrew Cuomo's administration helped spread sickness and death among residents, a charge the state disputes.

"The lack of transparency and the meting out of bits of important data has undermined our ability to both recognize the scope and severity of what's going on" and address it, said Richard Mollot, the executive director of the Long Term Care Community Coalition, a residents advocacy group.

The new figures come as the Cuomo administration has been forced in recent weeks to acknowledge it has been underreporting the overall number of COVID-19 deaths among long-term care residents. It is now nearly 15,000 up from the 8,500 previously disclosed.

The Cuomo administration's March 25 directive barred nursing homes from refusing people just because they had COVID-19. It was intended to free up space in hospitals swamped in the early days of the pandemic. It came under criticism from advocates for nursing home residents and their relatives, who said it had the potential to spread the virus in a state that at the time already had the nation's highest nursing home death toll.

In its reply to an AP Freedom of Information request from May, the state health department this week released two figures: a previously disclosed count of 6,327 admissions of patients directly from hospitals and a new count of 2,729 "readmissions" of patients sent back from a hospital to the nursing home where they had lived before.

Before the state released any data, the AP conducted its own survey and found at least 4,500 such patients.

Critics have long argued there were many other places those patients could have been sent, including New York City's Jacob Javits Convention Center, which had been set up as a makeshift hospital, and the USS Comfort military hospital ship. The state contends those facilities were not suitable substitutes for the care of nursing homes.

Cuomo reversed the directive May 10, barring nursing homes from accepting COVID-19 patients without a negative test first.

State health officials contend that asymptomatic nursing home employees, not recovering COVID-19 patients, were the driving factor in nursing home outbreaks. And they have repeatedly noted that by law, nursing homes weren't supposed to accept anyone they couldn't adequately care for.

"At least 98% of nursing home facilities in the state had COVID in their facility before their first admission or readmission, and as we've seen across the nation, the major driver of infections appears to be from asymptomatic staff through no fault of their own," said state Health Commissioner Dr. Howard Zucker in a statement to the AP.

He added that the March 25 directive followed federal guidance, and that the percentage of coronavirus deaths statewide that happened in nursing homes didn't change from the spring to the fall — after the directive was reversed.

A leader of a California group of nursing home clinicians and administrators, however, sees New York officials as seeking to shift blame.

"There has never been any question in my mind that sending COVID-19 patients into completely unprepared, understaffed and underresourced nursing homes both increased transmission and led to a greater number of deaths," said Dr. Michael Wasserman, president of the California Association of Long Term Care Medicine.

New York's health department in July released a 33-page report, heavily criticized by health experts and resident advocates, that said patients sent to homes posed little danger to residents because they had spent an average nine days at the hospitals — consistent with federal guidance at the time about how long it took for people to stop being contagious.

While it may be impossible to know whether the additional 2,729 patients factored in the virus' transmission in nursing homes, "any policy that is implemented that does not do everything it can to safeguard COVID from coming into a health care facility has the potential to increase the spread of the virus," said

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 223 ~ 46 of 79

Stephen Hanse, president of a large nursing home group called the New York State Health Facilities Association and the New York State Center for Assisted Living.

The months-later disclosure "further confirms the state's flawed approach in implementing a hospital-centric strategy to combat the COVID-19 pandemic," Hanse said.

Some states, including Connecticut, set up COVID 19-only nursing homes relatively early on.

Zucker told lawmakers in a letter this week that the state started working in November to establish COVID-only nursing homes for some "persistently positive" patients coming out of hospitals. There are now 19 such homes statewide, totaling nearly 2,000 beds.

Cuomo, who wrote a book about his leadership in the virus crisis, has repeatedly downplayed criticism of his administration's handling of nursing homes as a politically motivated "blame game."

But the flurry of new disclosures began last month after state Attorney General Letitia James, a fellow Democrat, issued a blistering report accusing the administration of underreporting its long-term care deaths by more than 50%.

That was consistent with an AP report from August that focused on the fact that New York is one of the only states that counts just those who died on nursing home property and not those who died after being transported to hospitals.

Under heavy pressure to change its methodology, New York began issuing reports in recent weeks that added thousands more to its long-term care death toll since March. The new data also confirmed that COVID-19 deaths at some nursing homes are double or more what had been previously reported.

Overall, New York has lost over 45,000 people to the virus, more than every other state except California, according to figures compiled by Johns Hopkins University.

Associated Press writer Jim Mustian contributed to this report.

6 killed in 130-vehicle pileup on icy Texas interstate

By JAMIE STENGLE Associated Press

DALLAS (AP) — A massive crash involving more than 130 vehicles on an icy Texas interstate left six people dead and dozens injured Thursday amid a winter storm that dropped freezing rain, sleet and snow on parts of the U.S.

At the scene of the crash on Interstate 35 near downtown Fort Worth, a tangle of semitrailers, cars and trucks had smashed into each other and had turned every which way, with some vehicles on top of others.

"There were multiple people that were trapped within the confines of their vehicles and requiring the use of hydraulic rescue equipment to successfully extricate them," said Fort Worth Fire Chief Jim Davis.

At least 65 people were treated at hospitals, with 36 of them taken by ambulance from the crash site, including three with critical injuries, said Matt Zavadsky, spokesman for MedStar, which provides the ambulance service for the area. Numerous others were treated at the scene and released, he said.

The crash happened about 6 a.m., as many hospital and emergency workers were heading to and from work, so some of those involved were health care workers and emergency responders, including police officers, officials said.

"We did see a large number of people that were victims of this accident that were in scrubs, that had hospital IDs on ... in some cases, our folks would know those folks," Zavadsky said.

Fort Worth police Chief Neil Noakes said three officers were en route to work when they were injured in the crash, and one officer was injured while working the scene. He said all have been released from the hospital and that none of them suffered serious injuries.

"The roadway was so treacherous from the ice that several of the first responders were falling on the scene," Zavadsky said.

Zavadsky said his crews carry a sand and salt mixture in the ambulances, which they used at the scene. At one point, he said, one of the ambulances was hit, but it sustained only minor damage and the crew members were fine.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 223 ~ 47 of 79

The ice storm came as a polar vortex — swirling air that normally sits over the Earth's poles — has moved near the U.S.-Canada border, resulting in colder weather farther south than usual, said Steve Goss, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service's Storm Prediction Center in Norman, Oklahoma.

"As a result we're getting unusually or unseasonably cold air that's spilling south across a good portion of the United States east of the Rocky Mountains," he said.

In Tennessee, police responded to about 30 traffic collisions and some flights were delayed at Memphis International Airport after freezing rain and sleet fell. In Kentucky, the governor declared a state of emergency to free up funding and help agencies coordinate as they responded to reports of slick roads and downed power lines. And in southern Indiana, schools and government offices closed.

In suburban Austin, more than two dozen vehicles were involved in a pileup on an icy highway, and five people were taken to a hospital, emergency officials said.

Goss said that smaller disturbances moving through the polar jet stream will bring "a shot of winter weather" into southern portions of the country.

He said some areas that don't normally get snowfall will likely see heavy amounts over the next several days. He said current estimates show some areas of the southern Plains could get a foot or more.

Associated Press writers Adrian Sainz in Memphis, Tenn., Rebecca Reynolds Yonker in Louisville, Ky., and Ken Kusmer in Indianapolis contributed to this report.

Law firm details sexual misconduct by global ministry leader

By DAVID CRARY AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Ravi Zacharias, who died in May after a high-profile career leading a global Christian ministry, engaged in sexual misconduct with massage therapists and carried on many amorous extramarital relationships via text message and email, according to a scathing, in-depth report from a law firm hired by the ministry.

Five of the therapists said Zacharias touched them inappropriately, and one said she was raped, according to the report. It said investigators searching Zacharias' mobile devices found more than 200 photographs of younger women, including nude images of a salon employee in Malaysia.

In blunt terms, the report by Atlanta-based Miller & Martin said Zacharias had lied in claiming in 2017 that "I have never engaged in any inappropriate behavior of any kind."

Coinciding with the report's release on Thursday, the board of directors of Ravi Zacharias International Ministries issued a statement of "corporate repentance." The board apologized for earlier statements that belittled accusers and pledged steps to support victims, combat abuse and harassment, and reassess the management structure, which is overseen by Zacharias' eldest daughter, ministry CEO Sarah Davis.

"We are devastated by what the investigation has shown and are filled with sorrow for the women who were hurt by this terrible abuse," the board said.

Zacharias, who died of cancer at the age of 74, was a widely popular author and speaker, with many celebrities and prominent Christian leaders among his admirers. Then-Vice President Mike Pence spoke at his memorial service in May, lauding him as a great evangelist "armed with intellect, girded with truth and love."

Zacharias founded his international ministry, known as RZIM, in 1984, with a mission to engage in "Christian apologetics" — defending Christianity with powerful intellectual arguments. Based in suburban Atlanta, RZIM has operations in about 20 countries and a roster of scores of traveling speakers.

In recent months, the organization has been plunged into crisis, precipitated by a Sept. 29 article in the evangelical publication Christianity Today. The article asserted that over a period of about five years, Zacharias sexually harassed three women who worked as massage therapists at two day spas he co-owned in an Atlanta suburb.

RZIM's leadership initially challenged the claims, asserting that the allegations "do not in any way comport with the man we knew for decades — we believe them to be false."

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 223 ~ 48 of 79

However, it hired Martin & Miller in October, which in turn engaged the services of a private investigation firm comprising former federal law enforcement officers. The law firm said more than 50 people, including more than a dozen massage therapists, were interviewed, and investigators were able to access data from four mobile devices used by Zacharias.

According to Martin & Miller, the data included amorous communications with numerous women, and more than 200 photographs of women.

Among the photos were six of Lori Anne Thompson – a Canadian woman who has contended that Zacharias “groomed” her into engaging in sexually explicit online conversations and eventually sending indecent photos.

In 2017, Thompson and her husband sent Zacharias a letter demanding \$5 million in exchange for a release of claims against him and the ministry. In response, Zacharias sued the Thompsons for extortion, but he soon dropped that lawsuit and the parties eventually reached a private settlement.

Martin & Miller said Thompson’s allegations of being exploited were strengthened by the findings on Zacharias’ communications with other women, as well as his evasive and angry responses when asked about his phone records at the time of the extortion lawsuit.

“We interviewed witnesses within RZIM who were not satisfied with Mr. Zacharias’ explanations, and some reported their belief that they were marginalized for raising questions,” the report said.

The RZIM board, which previously derided Thompson’s allegations, apologized to her on Thursday.

“We believe Lori Anne Thompson has told the truth about the nature of her relationship with Ravi Zacharias,” the board said. “It is with profound grief that we recognize that because we did not believe the Thompsons and both privately and publicly perpetuated a false narrative, they were slandered for years and their suffering was greatly prolonged and intensified.”

“This leaves us heartbroken and ashamed,” the statement added.

Thompson, in a message to The Associated Press, said she and her husband “are deeply indebted to every victim and whistleblower who spoke for not only themselves, but also for us.”

The law firm report and board statement are “an initial step in what we anticipate will be long and arduous journey towards institutional accountability,” she added.

The board outlined several steps “to make sure nothing like this happens again.”

Among them:

___ Hiring prominent victim advocate Rachael Denhollander to “educate and advise” the board and serve as a confidential liaison with survivors of abuse and harassment.

___ Hiring a consulting firm, Guidepost Solutions, to evaluate RZIM’s structure, culture, policies and finances.

The scandal had already had a negative impact on the ministry even before the law firm released its report. Several radio stations dropped RZIM programs, booksellers pulled Zacharias’ books from their offerings, and a network of student-led mission teams operating on British university campuses asked RZIM-affiliated speakers to withdraw from upcoming events.

Last month, RZIM’s affiliate in Canada announced it was halting fundraising for three months, and some of its staff resigned.

Dan Paterson, formerly a speaker for RZIM in Australia, used Twitter to express his dismay.

“I feel disappointed in myself and others who could have pushed harder against the tides of submissive loyalty to demand better answers earlier,” he tweeted. “There is no part of the evangelical creed that honors cowardice or sacrifices conscience.”

Associated Press religion coverage receives support from the Lilly Endowment through The Conversation U.S. The AP is solely responsible for this content.

Trial highlights: ‘We were invited’ and a quick defense

By BRIAN SLODYSKO Associated Press

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 223 ~ 49 of 79

WASHINGTON (AP) — Donald Trump incited a deadly attack on the U.S. Capitol, put his own vice president in danger and later expressed solidarity with rioters who attempted to overturn the 2020 election in his name, Democrats argued Thursday as they wrapped up opening arguments in Trump's impeachment trial.

Over two days of testimony, the Democrats asserted that Trump deliberately ordered his supporters to "fight like hell" and "go by very different rules" or they "wouldn't have a country anymore." They bolstered their case with accounts from the rioters themselves, some of whom said they were acting on Trump's orders.

The former president's defense team insists Trump's speech near the White House was protected under the First Amendment. And they argue he shouldn't be on trial in the Senate because he is no longer in office — an argument Democrats reject.

"The First Amendment does not create some superpower immunity from impeachment," said Rep. Jamie Raskin, a Maryland Democrat who is leading the prosecution. "If you don't find this a high crime and misdemeanor today, you have set a new terrible standard for presidential misconduct."

Highlights from the trial on Thursday:

'WE WERE INVITED HERE'

"Fight for Trump." "Trump sent us." "We are listening to Trump." "We wait and take orders from our president"

Democrats focused intently on words offered by rioters to rationalize their storming of the Capitol. It was part of a broader effort to directly link the president's call for his loyalists to "fight like hell" with the death, destruction and mayhem that followed his speech on Jan. 6.

In many cases, rioters, who sought to stop Congress from certifying President Joe Biden's Electoral College victory, explained that they were acting at Trump's behest.

To underscore their point, Democrats showed videos using rioters own words. Among them was Jennifer Ryan, a Texas real estate agent who was criminally charged but insists she was just "following my president."

One video showed a man in the Capitol during the siege, who suggested to his friends that they pick up an office phone and call Trump to say, "We love you, bro!"

Another captured a man shouting at police: "We were invited here."

Democratic impeachment managers also noted that many left after Trump released an online video hours after the attack, urging them to go home.

"Today is ours. We won the day," a man with a bullhorn can be heard saying in one clip. He then added that Trump wanted "everybody to go home."

A HISTORY OF VIOLENCE

The violence at the Capitol shocked the nation. But Democratic impeachment managers said that, in hindsight, it should have been no surprise.

Ever since Trump descended a golden escalator in his New York tower to launch his presidential bid in 2016, he has openly stoked and incited his supporters to violence, they said. Then they showed an exhibit cataloging his past incendiary remarks.

When Trump supporters attacked a protester at a 2016 campaign rally, the then-candidate called it "very, very appropriate."

Another time, he urged supporters to "knock the crap out of" a protester and promised to pay their legal fees.

In 2017, after a woman in Charlottesville, Virginia, was struck and killed by a car driven by a white supremacist during violent clashes, Trump said there were "fine people on both sides."

And last year, after armed protesters surged into the Michigan statehouse to protest pandemic lockdown measures, he criticized Democratic Gov. Gretchen Whitmer and tweeted "LIBERATE MICHIGAN."

"These are very good people but they are angry. They want their lives back again," Trump said.

The FBI later broke up a plot to kidnap Whitmer by anti-government extremists upset over coronavirus

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 223 ~ 50 of 79

restrictions she had imposed in the state.

"The siege of the Michigan statehouse was effectively a state-level dress rehearsal," Raskin said. "It was a preview of the coming insurrection."

A QUICK DEFENSE

Trump attorney David Schoen said Thursday that the defense's case should go quickly on Friday, making clear they have no intention of using the 16 hours available to them.

"There's no reason for us to be out there a long time," Schoen said during an appearance on Fox News before blasting Democrats for the "harm this is causing to the American people."

Schoen told reporters that the Democrats' video presentations during the trial were "offensive" and that they "haven't tied it in any way to Trump." He said he believed Democrats were effectively making the public relive the tragedy in a way that "tears at the American people" and impedes efforts at unity in the country.

Trump senior adviser Jason Miller said he expects the defense will wrap up in less than a day.

POST RIOT RESIGNATIONS

Many Senate Republicans have indicated they will not vote to impeach Trump, a sign of cooling of emotions that had run hot just over a month ago.

As Democrats look to secure the 67 votes needed for a conviction, they used a slideshow presentation on Thursday to remind Senate jurors of the widespread outrage voiced in the wake of the attack, when many in the party directly blamed Trump — including Republicans who had worked for him.

"Today's violent assault on our Capitol, an effort to subjugate American democracy by mob rule, was fomented by Mr. Trump," read a statement issued by James Mattis, Trump's former secretary of defense, hours after the attack.

Another slide showed a statement from John Kelly, Trump's former chief of staff, who said the violence was "a direct result of (Trump) poisoning the minds of people with the lies and the fraud."

"The invasion of our Capitol by a mob, incited by lies from some entrusted with power, is a disgrace to all who sacrificed to build our Republic," read another, which showed a tweet from former Republican House Speaker John Boehner.

Democrats also showed a chart of the 16 administration officials and Cabinet members who resigned in the aftermath of the attack on the Capitol, including Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao and Education Secretary Betsy DeVos.

"There is no mistaking the impact your rhetoric had on the situation, and it is the inflection point for me," DeVos said at the time.

AP FACT CHECK: The senator and Trump's misdialed phone call

By CALVIN WOODWARD and HOPE YEN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Donald Trump's Senate impeachment trial hit a snag when Republican Sen. Mike Lee of Utah objected to how Democrats characterized a phone call from the president when the Capitol insurrection was raging.

After exchanges over the matter that seemed to confuse everyone, the Democratic House impeachment managers agreed to strike their words from the record and move on. They said the episode was not vital to their case that Trump incited the mob Jan. 6. But their account Wednesday night was correct to begin with.

Rep. DAVID CICILLINE of Rhode Island, an impeachment prosecutor: "Sen. Lee describes it. He had just ended a prayer with his colleagues here in the Senate chamber, and the phone rang. It was Donald Trump. And how Sen. Lee explains it is that the phone call goes something like this. 'Hey, Tommy,' Trump asks. And Sen. Lee says, 'This isn't Tommy.' And he hands the phone to Sen. Tuberville. Sen. Lee then confirmed that he stood by as Sen. Tuberville and President Trump spoke on the phone. And on that call, Donald Trump reportedly asked Sen. Tuberville to make additional objections to the certification process. That's why he called."

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 223 ~ 51 of 79

LEE, asking that remarks about the phone call be removed from the record of the proceedings: "Statements were attributed to me moments ago by the House impeachment managers (that) were not made by me, they're not accurate." He added: "They are not true. I never made those statements."

THE FACTS: By his own admission, Lee made the statements directly attributed to him. He did not publicly characterize what was said on the phone call — but Democrats did not claim that he had done so.

Cicilline said that on the call, Trump "reportedly" asked that Senate Republicans delay the certification of Joe Biden as the next president. Indeed, published new reports said just that, citing anonymous sources. The Associated Press has not confirmed those reports.

But there's no question, as the Democrat said, that Lee took a call from Trump, realized the president was intending to call Alabama Sen. Tommy Tuberville and handed his phone to his colleague, standing nearby as Trump and Tuberville talked. We know this because Lee himself has described that scene.

He recounted it in text messages to Bryan Schott, a reporter for The Salt Lake Tribune.

"I went and found Senator Tuberville, handed him my phone, and explained that the president would like to speak to him," Lee texted. "I stood nearby for the next five or ten minutes as they spoke, not wanting to lose my phone in the middle of a crisis.

"Then the Capitol Police became very nervous and ordered us to evacuate the chamber immediately. As they were forcing everyone out of the chamber, I awkwardly found myself interrupting the same telephone conversation I had just facilitated.

"Excuse me, Tommy, we have to evacuate. Can I have my phone?"

"Senator Tuberville promptly ended the call and returned my phone to its rightful owner."

The House prosecutors produced a number of public statements by Trump as he openly stirred the anger of his supporters over the Congress's action to affirm Biden's election victory. They said this phone call was not central to their argument. But they said they might come back to it.

After the insurrectionists had been cleared from the Capitol, lawmakers certified Biden's Electoral College victory. Lee did not vote to object to the certification. Tuberville was one of six Republican senators who voted to sustain an objection raised against Arizona's electoral votes.

EDITOR'S NOTE — A look at the veracity of claims by political figures.

Find AP Fact Checks at <http://apnews.com/APFactCheck>

Follow @APFactCheck on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/APFactCheck>

Pandemic fever got you down? Smash up stuff at the rage room

By JOHN ROGERS Associated Press

WESTLAKE VILLAGE, Calif. (AP) — After nearly a year of being trapped in pandemic isolation, some people just want to pick up a sledgehammer and smash something to smithereens.

"That felt good," sweating insurance executive Josh Elohim said after reducing a computer printer and other stuff to piles of rubble. It reminded him of the workout he used to get chopping wood when he lived in Upstate New York.

Since last winter, Elohim and his wife, Michelle, have been isolated at home with four kids ranging in age from 4 to 17. They needed an outlet, and so they headed to the office of marriage and family therapist Yashica Budde, who outfitted them with protective gloves, full body suits and face coverings that resemble fencing masks.

Then she let them pick their "destructive devices" and turned them loose in one of two "rage rooms" plastered with inspirational signs proclaiming "Why Stress When You Can Smash" and "Never Give Up."

"We are believers, so we use God, obviously, as our main foundation," Elohim said afterward. "But," he added with a hearty laugh, "I'm not opposed to breaking some stuff to relieve some tension."

Before the coronavirus, rage rooms where patrons pay to obliterate objects were a lark, a place to go with friends or to let off steam after a breakup. But Budde, a licensed therapist for 13 years, sees her

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 223 ~ 52 of 79

rooms as valuable therapy during the pandemic.

"As a therapist, I know I have referred a lot of people for alternative therapy like yoga, misting therapy, meditation, all of those things, and I thought it would be amazing to see a rage room," she said.

She hopes the concept will eventually be embraced by the therapy community at large, adding that some fellow therapists have already referred patients to her rooms, called Smash RX, and she's referred some herself. What began in late 2019 as just a stress reliever for life's daily problems really blossomed after practically everything started shutting down last March.

Not every therapist sees smash therapy as a treatment of the future, however.

"I don't know of any therapist who would actually prescribe going to the rage room as a form of therapy. Especially if you have aggressive tendencies to begin with, going to a rage room seems counterproductive," said Kevin Bennett, a psychologist and professor of psychology at Pennsylvania State University. He compared it to treating a gambling addiction by encouraging people to gamble.

"I understand the therapeutic approach," he continued, adding, "The philosophy behind it goes back to Freudian psychotherapy almost a hundred years ago, this idea of catharsis, where you will relieve your aggression and anger and you feel better because you've vented it."

The problem, he said, is that more recent studies beginning in the 1960s revealed that in some people it conditions them to react violently later because they have been taught it's a valid release. So while some advocates of Freud may still support it, he said, he and most others think it's best left as just a form of entertainment.

Tom Daly, who operates one of the country's oldest rage rooms, stressed that while people do tell him that smashing stuff at his Break Bar, which opened in 2015 in New York City's mid-Manhattan, is often cathartic, its purpose is really just entertainment.

"We are purely designed for fun," he said. Daley noted a steady stream of visitors have been booking rage room appointments throughout the pandemic, even though one of its big draws over the years, the bar and grill he operates next door, has been closed for much of that time.

"I think everyone's stressed out across the country," he said.

Budde's business is tucked into a gleaming business park in Westlake Village, an upscale town on the edge of Los Angeles. For about \$50 to \$100 — a little more if someone wants to destroy something expensive like a computer — customers can pick up a sledgehammer, golf club, crowbar or baseball bat and smash away.

Among the destructors on a recent night were Asia Mape and her three teenage daughters, anxious to break stuff after being cooped up at home for months.

"As teenagers they've been out of school for so long until they're like, 'I don't even know if I'm ever really going to go back,'" she said, as her 17-year-old daughter, Piper added, "I lost my senior year."

Turned loose inside one of the rooms, Piper and her sisters, Jady and Berkley, giggled and cheered as they wiped out objects including a plate with "Covid-19" stenciled on it.

Budde gets her supplies from various sources, including a local Goodwill facility she says sells her breakable items at a good price and a restaurant that supplies her with empty beer and liquor bottles.

"I've never had a shortage of empty liquor bottles," she joked.

While people smash away to their heart's content, she monitors them through closed-circuit TV and is ready to step in if anything goes awry. But one of the biggest problems, she said, is simply assuring people it's all right to break everything they see in the rage room. That and cleaning up the mess afterward, then sanitizing the room for the next visitor.

For everyone who drops by, she has them cool down afterward (it turns out that a half hour of breaking stuff can be quite tiring), then sends them home with therapy cards offering advice on how to keep calm in today's world.

"I remind everyone don't try to plan for next month. Just worry about this month or today," she advises. "When we get through today, then tomorrow and then every day after that."

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 223 ~ 53 of 79

Rogers reported from Los Angeles. AP videographer Eugene Garcia and AP photographer Jae Hong, reporting from Westlake Village, California, contributed to this story.

Race to vaccinate older Americans advances in many states

By CARLA K. JOHNSON, BRYAN ANDERSON and ANGELIKI KASTANIS Associated Press

Two months after the first COVID-19 shots were administered, the race to vaccinate older Americans is gaining traction, with more than a third of people 65 and up having received their first dose in states that have provided data.

The finding comes from an Associated Press analysis of information from 27 states where data is available. Those states account for just over half of all first doses administered nationwide.

"This is very good news. This is a sign we're doing it right," said Ali Mokdad, professor of health metrics sciences at the University of Washington in Seattle. Vaccine hesitancy is dropping quickly as older Americans talk to their friends who have been vaccinated, he said. "They're watching people they know get the vaccine and seeing it's safe."

The effort is uneven, with many other states still lagging behind on vaccinations of the higher-risk population.

Mokdad added: "We can do better. I can't wait for the day when all those who want the vaccine can get the vaccine. The system we have in place is working. We have to keep pushing for more vaccine."

The proportion of vaccines given to those 65 years and older varies. It's about three-quarters of all first-dose shots in Florida and more than two-thirds in North Carolina.

In Indiana, Alaska and West Virginia, almost half of the population 65 years and older has received the first dose. In North Carolina, Louisiana, Colorado, Florida and Utah, about a third of that population has received the first dose.

Oregon, Pennsylvania, Kansas, Nebraska and Maryland, are on the lower end, with 20% or less of the 65-and-older population. The administration of Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Wolf and a bipartisan group of state lawmakers said Wednesday that they would create a vaccine task force that will brainstorm ways to administer COVID-19 shots more rapidly.

As of Wednesday, the federal government had distributed 46.4 million vaccine doses to states and other jurisdictions, according to statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. So far, almost 34 million people, or 10% of the U.S. population, have received at least one dose of the vaccine. Nearly 10.5 million people, or 3% of the population, have received both doses.

President Joe Biden, who is moving to ease supply bottlenecks, announced Thursday that the U.S. will have enough supply of the two-dose vaccine by the end of the summer to inoculate 300 million Americans. He said the U.S. had secured contractual commitments from Moderna and Pfizer to deliver the 600 million doses by the end of July — more than a month earlier than initially anticipated.

Older Americans have borne the brunt of the deaths and hospitalizations from the virus, which has claimed more than 473,000 lives in the U.S. About 80% of the people who have died from COVID have been adults 65 and older.

There's not yet enough data to analyze whether vaccination is reducing infections and deaths in that age group, Mokdad said. But his research center, the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation, plans to look at that during the coming weeks.

Experts recommend that people continue wearing masks and practicing social distancing even after receiving COVID-19 shots. Although recipients are expected to get some level of protection within a couple of weeks of the first shot, full protection may not happen until a couple weeks after the second shot. It's unclear whether vaccinated people can still spread the virus.

Still, the vaccines have already had a real impact on the lives of older Americans.

Stephanie LaBumbard, 80, spent most of last year alone and separated from family at home in Cadillac, Michigan. Now she's feeling a surge in positivity after getting her second vaccine dose.

"I'm not home free yet, but I feel in a lot better shape," LaBumbard said. She has yet to change her

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 223 ~ 54 of 79

cautious behavior but is making plans to do so and couldn't be happier about it. Being able to go out with friends again seems "just an absolute miracle."

"It's so wonderful to realize that we can be back to normal or something like it."

She's especially happy to be able to worship in person at her church, where she will return Sunday after taking part via Zoom for months. She had to give up volunteering at a hospital and getting coffee and dinner with friends, but she especially missed her family.

"I was alone at Thanksgiving. I was with just one of my sons for Christmas. Especially when you get to my age ... I feel young, but you don't know, this could be my last Christmas," she said, adding that she's pleased with Michigan's vaccine distribution. "It seems to me that they have done a fantastic job up here. They had everything so well organized."

It's a different story in North Carolina's rural Warren County, where Leticia Bonilla has been frustrated by an inability to make a vaccine appointment locally and would prefer not to wait in line at a mass vaccine clinic in another county.

The 66-year-old retired teacher said the nurse at her doctor's office offered to help her get on a waiting list, but she declined because it felt too uncertain.

"I said, 'Well, how long is the list?' She said, 'I don't know. We don't have any vaccines yet.' And I said, 'Well, why would I put my name there?' ... And I just hung up," Bonilla said.

North Carolina's vaccine distribution process runs through a decentralized system that enables county health departments and vaccine providers to develop their own processes for making vaccine appointments.

Lynn Bender and her husband, Mark Bender, both 70, got their second vaccine dose two weeks ago. The couple are from Monroe Township, New Jersey, but for about 10 weeks a year, they live in a retirement community in Coconut Creek, Florida, that Broward County used for a test rollout. They got to be part of it, and they are happy to be surrounded by people who are also vaccinated.

"It makes it very nice that at least when you feel safe you have somebody to be safe with," Lynn Bender said. "We're to the point now that we can socialize with somebody, play cards or mahjong."

They have especially missed attending art and craft fairs and supporting artists and artisans around the country throughout the year, something they are looking forward to doing when they can let their guard down further.

"We really haven't changed much, everybody's still being cautious," she said. "But as one of my friends says, knowing you're not going to die makes you feel better."

Associated Press writers Kelli Kennedy in Miami and Andrew Dalton in Los Angeles contributed to this report.

Cubans stranded for 33 days now in US immigration detention

By ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — Three Cubans who capsized and survived 33 days on coconut water, shellfish and rats atop a deserted rocky islet south of Florida were in U.S. immigration custody Thursday, and legal experts said they may be allowed to stay under current federal policies.

A Coast Guard helicopter earlier this week spotted the two men and one woman and hoisted them in baskets from a rocky cliff in Anguilla Cay, a Bahamian islet close to Cuba.

The three were flown to a Key West hospital and then taken Wednesday by U.S. Border Patrol officials to an Immigration and Customs Enforcement detention center in Pompano Beach, Florida. Officials said the Cubans had no serious injuries.

The Associated Press requested interviews with the survivors, but Coast Guard and immigration officials have not released their identities and did not grant access for interviews.

"They will receive comprehensive medical care from the moment of their arrival and throughout the entirety of their stay," said ICE spokesman Nestor Yglesias. "The three individuals will be afforded access to all legal processes available to them under the laws of the United States."

Because their names have not been released, it is not clear who their lawyers are. Attorneys familiar

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 223 ~ 55 of 79

with the Cuban Adjustment Act, which has given Cubans a virtually guaranteed path to legal residency and eventual citizenship, said the Cubans could have permission to stay on humanitarian grounds.

Because they were brought ashore by the Coast Guard, they could benefit from the 55-year-old law, which allows Cubans to apply for legal permanent residency a year after their arrival and released into the community, lawyers say.

"Sooner or later ICE will have to release these people to the community. They did not come here illegally," said Lorenzo Palomares, an immigration lawyer.

The U.S. Coast Guard did not respond to requests clarifying what considerations were made before the group was flown into the United States.

It was unclear whether the group was originally bound for the U.S. or simply lost at sea, and the Coast Guard has said it focused merely on rescuing them. However, the rocky, uninhabited island is routinely monitored by the Coast Guard for strandings of migrants hoping to reach U.S. soil.

Lt. Riley Beecher, a Coast Guard pilot, said that while on a routine mission they saw on Monday what looked like flags waving in the usually brown and light green topography. "I thought 'let's take a closer look.' I had never seen anything on that island." Lt. Beecher said. "Then I saw two people were frantically waving their hands trying to get us to come down."

The crew dropped fresh water and a radio to the three before another crew flew in additional supplies Monday prior to the three being pulled out Tuesday. The Coast Guard said the three told of drinking from coconuts to stay hydrated and eating rats and the meat of conchs, a sea mollusk.

David Abraham, a professor of immigration and citizenship law at the University of Miami school of law, said the migrants' status could be in limbo because it's unclear if they were considered to have been detained at sea.

Abraham said it will be interesting to see how Democratic President Joe Biden's administration will handle this case, considering that former Democratic President Barack Obama — in thawing relations with Cuba — had halted the "wet foot, dry foot" policy that in effect considered any Cuban who set foot on dry land to be automatically a legal arrival.

Thereafter, authorities were able to turn back Cuban migrants who were seeking to enter the country illegally, even after they had set foot on land, though many continued to come and seek protection under asylum laws.

Republican President Donald Trump reversed Obama's thaw and reinstated economic sanctions on Cuba but did not revert to the "wet foot, dry foot" policy, and his administration also took a harder line on asylum applications.

Some Cubans have been detained for months at ICE detention centers without being able to obtain a parole that would allow them to apply for residency in a year.

"This may provide the Biden administration an opportunity," Abraham said. "The Trump administration, as part of its general crackdown, did not honor that exception for Cubans. In the past ICE would have without question released these folks, paroled them from detention into the community. It would be interesting to see if they do that now."

Biden says US is securing 600 million vaccine doses by July

By ZEKE MILLER and JONATHAN LEMIRE Associated Press

BETHESDA, Md. (AP) — President Joe Biden said Thursday that the U.S. will have enough supply of the COVID-19 vaccine by the end of the summer to inoculate 300 million Americans.

Biden made the announcement at the sprawling National Institutes of Health complex just outside Washington as he visited some of the nation's leading scientists on the frontlines of the fight against the disease. He toured the Viral Pathogenesis Laboratory that created the COVID-19 vaccine now manufactured by Moderna and being rolled out in the U.S. and other countries.

The U.S. is on pace to exceed Biden's goal of administering 100 million vaccine doses in his first 100 days in office, with more than 26 million shots delivered in his first three weeks.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 223 ~ 56 of 79

"That's just the floor," Biden said. "Our end goal is beating COVID-19."

Biden announced on Thursday that the U.S. had secured contractual commitments from Moderna and Pfizer to deliver the 600 million doses of vaccine by the end of July — more than a month earlier than initially anticipated.

"We're now on track to have enough supply for 300 million Americans by the end of July," he announced.

The pace of injections could increase further if a third coronavirus vaccine from drugmaker Johnson & Johnson receives approval from the Food and Drug Administration.

Speaking with Dr. Anthony Fauci, the nation's top infectious-disease specialist, Biden emphasized that his administration is doing everything possible to increase the vaccine supply and the country's capacity to deliver injections into arms.

"It's been a hell of a learning process," Biden said.

Biden, wearing a mask, used his remarks to criticize President Donald Trump, saying he inherited "no plan to vaccinate most of the country."

"It is no secret that the vaccination program was in much worse shape than my team and I anticipated," he said.

To date, the Biden administration has deployed active-duty troops to help stand up mass vaccination sites in several states, as it looks to lay the groundwork for increasing the rate of vaccinations once more supply is available.

The Viral Pathogenesis Laboratory is led by Dr. Barney Graham, whose team made critical discoveries years ago that laid the groundwork for rapid development of that and other COVID-19 vaccines. Before the pandemic erupted, one of Graham's research fellows, Dr. Kizzmekia Corbett, had been using those earlier findings to develop a vaccine for MERS, a cousin of COVID-19.

On the tour, Biden was shown the lab bench where researchers sequenced the virus and developed the precursor of the Moderna vaccine.

Armed with their prior research, Corbett and Graham had a head start when Chinese scientists shared the genetic map of the new coronavirus in January 2020. They already knew how to make spike proteins, which coat the surface of the new coronavirus and its MERS relative, that were stable enough to be used as a key vaccine ingredient.

Within days, the NIH had sent instructions to Moderna to brew up doses, and Corbett and her colleagues were setting up the key lab and animal tests that would eventually prove they were on the right track.

Associated Press Medical Writer Lauran Neergaard in Washington contributed to this report.

Judge declines new arrest warrant for Kyle Rittenhouse

By TODD RICHMOND Associated Press

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — A judge on Thursday refused prosecutors' request to issue a new arrest warrant for an 18-year-old from Illinois accused of killing two people during a police brutality protest in Wisconsin last summer.

Kenosha County Assistant District Attorney Thomas Binger alleged that Kyle Rittenhouse failed to update his address when he moved out of his Antioch apartment in November, amounting to a bail violation.

In addition to a new arrest warrant, Binger asked Judge Bruce Schroeder to increase Rittenhouse's bail by \$200,000. Rittenhouse's attorneys countered that Rittenhouse is in hiding due to threats.

Schroeder refused both of Binger's requests. During a testy hearing the judge said people out on bail often fail to update their addresses and aren't arrested. He ordered Rittenhouse attorney Mark Richards to turn over Rittenhouse's current physical address but said it would be sealed to the public and only he and the Kenosha County Sheriff's Department would have access to it.

The judge refused to give Binger the address, saying he didn't want more violence in Kenosha. The move — and the comment — left Binger flabbergasted.

"I hope you're not suggesting sharing this with our office would lead to further violence," Binger said.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 223 ~ 57 of 79

"We are not the public. We are the prosecuting agency. I have never heard of a situation where the information has been withheld from my office."

Schroeder said the sheriff could handle any further bail violations. Binger countered that Rittenhouse doesn't live in Kenosha County so the sheriff can't touch him. Schroeder cut Binger off in mid-sentence and ended the hearing.

According to prosecutors, Rittenhouse, who is white, came to Kenosha on Aug. 25 to protect businesses as the city was in the throes of chaotic protests after a white police officer shot Jacob Blake, who is Black, in the back during a domestic disturbance. Rittenhouse was 17 at the time.

Rittenhouse allegedly opened fire on protesters Joseph Rosenbaum, Anthony Huber and Gaige Grosskreutz with an AR-15-style rifle. Rosenbaum and Huber were killed. Grosskreutz was wounded.

Rittenhouse faces multiple charges, including two homicide counts. He has argued he fired in self-defense after the protesters attacked him.

Black Lives Matter supporters have painted him as a trigger-happy white supremacist, but some conservatives see him as a symbol for gun rights and have rallied around him, generating \$2 million for his bail in November.

Binger said he suspected that Rittenhouse had moved in November but it wasn't confirmed until a hearing notice was returned as undeliverable in January and detectives subsequently found someone else living there.

Richards acknowledged that he should have updated the address but stressed that Rittenhouse has made every court appearance and isn't a flight risk.

"We have nothing to fear," Richards said. "The truth will set my client free."

Last month, Rittenhouse was captured on video at a Wisconsin bar wearing a T-shirt that read "Free as (expletive)," drinking and flashing white supremacist signs. Five men serenaded with him a song that has become the anthem for neo-fascist group The Proud Boys. He could legally drink in the bar because he was with his mother.

Huber's father, John, told the judge during the hearing that he thinks Rittenhouse's bail should be set at \$4 million.

"How would you feel if the killer of your son was just able to walk free and make videos in bars and just live it up?" he said.

Follow Todd Richmond at <https://twitter.com/trichmond1>

The Latest: Dems end opening arguments in Trump trial

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Latest on former President Donald Trump's second Senate impeachment trial (all times local):

4:30 p.m.

House Democrats prosecuting President Donald Trump's impeachment have wrapped up their opening arguments.

Rep. Jamie Raskin implored senators in his closing speech to exercise "common sense about what just took place in our country" and find Trump guilty of inciting an insurrection. Raskin is the lead prosecutor for the House.

He said senators have the power under the Constitution to find Trump guilty of having betrayed the oath of office the nation's founders wrote into the Constitution.

Another impeachment manager warned senators that acquitting Trump could have lasting consequences for the country. Rep. Joe Neguse said that "if we pretend this didn't happen, or worse, if we let it go unanswered, who's to say it won't happen again."

Trump's lawyers will begin their arguments when the trial resumes at noon Friday.

HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT FORMER PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP'S SECOND SENATE

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 223 ~ 58 of 79

IMPEACHMENT TRIAL:

Chilling security video of last month's deadly insurrection at the U.S. Capitol has become a key exhibit in Donald Trump's impeachment trial as lawmakers prosecuting the case wrap up their opening arguments for why Trump should be convicted of inciting the siege.

Read more:

- Trial highlights: Harrowing footage, focus on Trump's words
- 'Distressing and emotional': Senators relive horror of riot
- Did someone say impeachment? Biden avoids wading into debate
- Trump can't hang on to lawyers after false election claims

HERE'S WHAT ELSE IS GOING ON:

2:25 p.m.

One of Donald Trump's lawyers is calling the presentation by House impeachment managers "offensive." David Schoen told reporters on Thursday that Democrats were "making a movie" and had yet to tie the Jan. 6 siege at the U.S. Capitol to the former president.

He contended that the use of chilling video of the riot shown repeatedly by House Democrats during Wednesday's arguments was impeding efforts to bring unity.

Democratic House impeachment prosecutors have used their time to air searing video footage of the attack on the Capitol building and to build their case that Trump was responsible for the rioters' conduct that day.

Trump's legal team is expected to present opening arguments on Friday.

2 p.m.

Lawyers for former president Donald Trump are planning to begin and wrap up their defense in his impeachment trial in less than a day, using far fewer than their allotted argument hours.

That's according to his senior adviser Jason Miller, who said there could even be enough time left over for planned questioning to begin.

The rules for the trial gave both sides two days for arguments, lasting up to eight hours each day. Democratic House impeachment prosecutors have used their time to air searing video footage of the January 6 attack on the Capitol building and to build their case that Trump was responsible for the rioters' conduct that day.

Friday is the day Trump's lawyers are set to begin. It remains unclear when the final vote will take place, but Republicans have expressed a desire to wrap the trial quickly, even by Saturday.

South Dakota Sen. Mike Rounds said he thinks most senators "would like to have this completed by Saturday."

1:30 p.m.

House Democratic prosecutors began their second day of arguments in former President Donald Trump's impeachment trial by offering multiple examples of how Trump had cheered on or promoted acts of violence among his supporters in the years leading up to the Capitol insurrection on Jan. 6.

Lead impeachment manager Jamie Raskin said that the litany of examples showed "obvious intent" as Trump told his supporters to come to Washington, and then to "fight like hell" just before they laid siege to the U.S. Capitol.

Raskin showed clips of Trump encouraging violence and also sanctioning violence afterward – including his telling a crowd to "knock the crap out of" a protester at one of his speeches. He told the crowd that he would pay their legal fees if they did. Another clip showed him saying it was "very, very appropriate" when some of his supporters attacked a protester at a Trump event. "That's what we need a little bit more of," Trump said.

The Democrats also laid out evidence that Trump showed no concern for people who may have been

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 223 ~ 59 of 79

endangered, or remorse for the role he played, including when Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer was the target of a white supremacist plot in her state.

Raskin said Jan. 6 "was not some unexpected, radical break from his normal law-abiding and peaceful disposition."

Urging senators to convict Trump of "incitement of insurrection" and ban him from holding future office, Raskin said Trump knew that if he egged them on, "his most extreme followers would show up bright and early, ready to attack, ready to engage in violence, ready to fight like hell for their hero."

1:15 p.m.

The White House press secretary says President Joe Biden wasn't offering a "projection or a prediction" on the outcome of Donald Trump's impeachment trial when Biden weighed in on the proceedings earlier Thursday.

Biden had said that "some minds may be changed" after graphic videos of the Jan. 6 siege of the Capitol were played during the Senate trial.

Spokeswoman Jen Psaki says that comment reflected "how the president felt" when he watched some of the news coverage of the trial. She says the president was "impacted by the video as a human being."

Biden and his aides generally have avoided weighing in on the trial and whether the former president should be convicted.

Psaki was pressed during her briefing Thursday about whether Biden has an obligation to weigh in. She said Biden "knows there's a role for Congress to play and a role for him to play." She said Biden's role "is to be president of the United States" and to "govern."

12:20 p.m.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi says she'll sponsor legislation awarding the Congressional Gold Medal to the U.S. Capitol Police and other law enforcement officers who protected the Capitol as it was overrun by supporters of former President Donald Trump.

Capitol Police Officer Brian Sicknick died after the Jan. 6 attack, one of five people to be killed. More than 70 officers with the U.S. Capitol Police were injured. Many are struggling with the emotional trauma they experienced that day.

Pelosi's office was ransacked by rioters during the attack. Pelosi said Thursday, "We will never forget."

Congress has commissioned gold medals as its highest expression of national appreciation for distinguished achievements and contributions. The first recipient was George Washington. Over the years, the medal has been presented to military leaders, authors, athletes and civil rights icons.

At least two-thirds of the House and Senate must co-sponsor Congressional Gold Medal legislation before it is considered in committee.

The House is continuing its impeachment case against Trump over the riot. Trump's lawyers are expected to launch their defense by week's end.

11:10 a.m.

President Joe Biden says he believes "some minds may be changed" in former President Donald Trump's impeachment trial after the display of searing, graphic videos of the assault on the U.S. Capitol.

Biden told reporters in the Oval Office on Thursday that he didn't watch any of the previous day's proceedings live but later saw news coverage. The Democratic House impeachment managers used security video as part of their case, and the violent images of the riot shook senators and TV viewers alike.

Biden has steadfastly refused to weigh in on the trial and again on Thursday said his focus was on fulfilling his campaign promise to battle the coronavirus pandemic. Biden says the nation has "to move on." Aides have said Biden will address the proceedings after a verdict is reached.

The House is continuing its case Thursday. Trump's lawyers are expected to launch their defense by week's end.

White House says it will defer to CDC on reopening schools

By COLLIN BINKLEY AP Education Writer

Facing criticism that President Joe Biden has not acted aggressively enough on reopening schools, the White House on Thursday said it's aiming for a full reopening but will defer to science experts on how to achieve it in the middle of a pandemic.

The White House drew criticism this week when it said schools would be considered opened if they teach in-person at least one day a week. Asked about it Thursday, press secretary Jen Psaki said Biden hopes to get students in the classroom five days a week as soon as it's safe.

Psaki did not detail a timeline for that milestone, however, saying the administration will act on new school guidance that's expected to be released Friday by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"I can assure any parent listening that his objective, his commitment, is to ensuring schools are open five days a week," Psaki said at a press briefing. "That's what he wants to achieve, and we are going to lead with science and the advice they are giving us."

The task of helping schools reopen will fall to the CDC, Psaki said, and to Biden's pick for education secretary, Miguel Cardona, whose nomination was approved Thursday by the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee.

The panel voted 17-5 in favor of Cardona, who is expected to be approved by the full Senate. He won support from the committee's ranking Republican, Sen. Richard Burr of North Carolina, who said Cardona has the "background, qualifications and temperament" to become secretary.

"He's stressed the need for students to get back in school, and that's now finally a bipartisan mission," Burr said.

Biden has made schools a priority as he works to bolster a battered economy, but critics say he has scaled back on his goals amid growing challenges.

His initial pledge in December was to reopen "the majority of our schools" in his first 100 days in office. He later specified that the goal applied only to elementary and middle schools. And this week, the White House said schools would be considered open as long as they teach in-person once a week.

Republicans say Biden is backpedaling on his pledge and caving to teachers unions that have opposed reopening until their demands are met. Biden's critics say schools are safe to open now, citing CDC findings that, with the right precautions, it's generally safe to hold classes in-person.

Asked why parents should be satisfied with just one day of in-person teaching per week, Psaki appeared to back away from her previous stance. "They shouldn't be. I wouldn't be, as a parent," she said.

She did not change the administration's goal but said the president "will not rest until every school is open five days a week." Psaki added that Biden's primary role is to deliver funding to schools to help them reopen.

Biden's \$1.9 trillion pandemic relief plan includes \$130 billion to help schools upgrade buildings, buy protective equipment and take other steps to reopen. House Democrats advanced that portion of the package this week using a special process enabling them to pass the bill down party lines.

One obstacle to any school opening goal is that there's little data to measure progress. The Biden administration said it will start collecting data from 7,000 schools showing whether they are operating online, in-person or in a combination. The Trump administration declined to gather that information.

"The data, and the lack of data or effective data, is actually part of the problem," Psaki said.

RFK Jr. kicked off Instagram for vaccine misinformation

By The Associated Press undefined

Instagram on Wednesday banned Robert F. Kennedy Jr., son of former presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy, from repeatedly posting misinformation about vaccine safety and COVID-19.

Kennedy Jr. has amassed a huge following on social media, where he frequently posts debunked or unproven claims about vaccines. He also uses his social media pages to post about large pharmaceutical

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 223 ~ 61 of 79

firms and environmental health concerns.

"We removed this account for repeatedly sharing debunked claims about the coronavirus or vaccines," a spokesperson for Facebook, which owns Instagram, said Thursday.

In an emailed statement, Kennedy Jr. stood by his Instagram posts, adding they have been carefully vetted.

"This kind of censorship is counterproductive if our objective is a safe and effective vaccine supply," he said.

Most recently, Kennedy Jr. has posted misinformation about COVID vaccines. In a late January post, he described COVID vaccines that are currently being administered in the U.S. as posing a potential danger, despite studies on tens of thousands of people that found no serious side effects.

The suspension of Kennedy Jr.'s Instagram account comes just days after Facebook, which owns Instagram, announced it would step up efforts to block the spread of vaccine misinformation, including claims that the shots are ineffective, toxic, dangerous or cause autism. Countries around the world are ramping up efforts to inoculate citizens with version of the COVID-19 vaccine.

Still, Kennedy Jr.'s Facebook page, which has a following of more than 300,000 users, remained active as of Thursday morning. The company did not immediately respond to questions about Kennedy's Facebook account.

A Twitter account belonging to Kennedy Jr. also remains live, where he has more than 200,000 followers.

The controversial environmental lawyer has for years helped to popularize a debunked conspiracy theory that vaccines may cause autism, although repeated scientific studies in the U.S. and abroad have found no evidence linking vaccines to the developmental disorder.

Earlier this week Facebook announced it would ban ads on its platform that discourage vaccinations — with an exception carved out for ads about government vaccine policies. Unpaid posts by people or groups that discourage vaccinations will still be allowed.

Facebook has taken other steps to try to stop the spread of vaccine and coronavirus-related misinformation on its platform. Last year, it said it would begin hiding groups and pages that spread misinformation about vaccinations from the search function of its site.

Budget office expects \$2.3T deficit before Biden relief plan

By JOSH BOAK Associated Press

BALTIMORE (AP) — The Congressional Budget Office says the federal government is on track for a \$2.3 trillion deficit this year, down roughly \$900 billion from last year when the coronavirus pandemic led Congress to provide historic amounts of financial aid.

Stronger economic growth has helped to reduce the anticipated shortfall for this year. Still, the deficit could soon be revised upward if President Joe Biden's \$1.9 trillion coronavirus relief package becomes law. The additional aid — coming after roughly \$4 trillion was approved last year — would add more red ink once enacted, but isn't included in Thursday's CBO projections.

Excluding the Biden plan, this year's deficit will equal 10.3% of gross domestic product, which is a measure of the total value of the economy's goods and services. The past two years have the highest deficits relative to GDP since 1945.

The CBO expects the budget deficit to fall to about \$1 trillion in 2022 as the economy heals and there is less need for government spending. Deficits are supposed to average 4.4% of GDP from 2022 to 2031.

Several decades of deficit spending has meant that the total federal debt held by the public is slightly larger than GDP. That figure is projected to rise to 107% of GDP by 2031 as spending on Medicare and Social Security increases.

Shai Akabas, economic policy director at the Bipartisan Policy Center, said that additional coronavirus relief should be a priority, cautioning that the country still needs to find a way to put the deficit on a safer path.

"When it comes to recovery, the country faces many challenges that are likely to require an infusion of federal resources," Akabas said. "But it is crucial that lawmakers balance any new investment with a com-

mitment to stabilizing the precarious fiscal picture that CBO highlighted today. In this realm, 'wait and see' is not a strategy — it is a fiscal risk."

Fear of COVID-19 vaccine grows in Brazil's remote Amazon

By DIANE JEANTET and FERNANDO CRISPIM Associated Press

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — Navigating complex waterways to reach remote communities in Brazil's Amazon is only the first challenge for Waldir Bittencourt, a nurse vaccinating Indigenous and riverine people against COVID-19. Once there, he has faced something he didn't anticipate: a fear of the vaccine.

"It's a recent phenomenon among Indigenous peoples, stemming from the polarization surrounding the vaccine," said Bittencourt, 32, who during his eight-year career has been involved in campaigns against tuberculosis, diphtheria and tetanus.

Health professionals like Bittencourt are deploying to far-flung areas in northern Brazil, often traveling for hours on small planes and boats. Most jungle communities have only basic medical facilities unable to treat those with COVID-19. That makes vaccination all the more pressing in order to curb surging cases.

Brazil has had almost 235,000 deaths, second only to the U.S., according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University. In a survey last month by pollster Datafolha, 17% of respondents said they don't intend to get either of the vaccines approved in Brazil. That's higher in northern and west-central regions, which are grouped together by Datafolha, and lower in the wealthier southern and southeastern regions.

Health care workers, experts and anthropologists say rejection or fear of the vaccine is partly driven by the doubts sown repeatedly by President Jair Bolsonaro about its efficacy. Bolsonaro, who was infected with COVID-19 himself last year, has said he doesn't plan to get vaccinated and insists others shouldn't unless they want to.

He initially refused to authorize the purchase of China's Sinovac vaccine and said on Facebook that Brazilians would never be anyone's "guinea pig." He also declined the Pfizer vaccine, citing a clause that shielded the U.S. firm from potential liability. He joked there would be no recourse if women grew beards, men's voices became high-pitched, or people were transformed into alligators.

His anti-science message has made its way to the remote communities.

"This anti-vaccine movement does not come from them. It's being brought by certain missionaries, social media, fake news," said anthropologist Aparecida Maria Neiva Vilaça, who works with Indigenous communities in the northern state of Rondonia.

These communities have had greater access to technology and the internet in recent years, but information often arrives in a "very distorted way," Bittencourt said by phone from Macapa, capital of Amapa state.

In the Purure community, inside the Tumucumaque Mountains National Park, some residents asked Bittencourt if they could be injected with the vaccine imported from India, because they thought this meant it had been produced by Indigenous people. In Brazil, the word "Indian" is still widely used to refer to Indigenous people.

In other villages, some feared they were being used as test subjects for broader vaccination campaigns among non-Indigenous peoples, while others worried it would let the devil into their bodies.

Even though most eventually decided to get the shots, both Bittencourt and Vilaça said they had not seen such reticence before among Indigenous peoples.

Some evangelical leaders have been another source of misinformation, they said. Evangelicals largely backed Bolsonaro in the 2018 presidential campaign, and some pastors in remote communities have contributed to spreading his message against getting the COVID-19 vaccine.

Audio messages circulating on the WhatsApp messaging app told of pastors claiming they could cure the infected. In one message, a man recalls a pastor informing him that the vaccine wasn't necessary, because God could cure him.

Vilaça, who teaches social anthropology at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro when she is not in the north, said the rest of Brazilian society is no different when it comes to misinformation.

"A large portion of the population is also informed only by WhatsApp, social media, and have no access to newspaper information," she said.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 223 ~ 63 of 79

Nurse Luciana Dias da Costa also has faced some difficulties in Amazonas state. Vaccination is particularly crucial in the state, where a surge of infections has overwhelmed the already-fragile public health care system in the capital city of Manaus. It has forced a nationwide mobilization to get oxygen to patients struggling to breathe or airlift hundreds to better-equipped facilities in other states.

"We want to vaccinate everybody, but as I said, some accept, and some don't," da Costa, 46, said in an interview while traveling by boat to the Sao Joao do Tupe community, 25 kilometers (15 miles) west of Manaus. Many elders there told her that they feared effects of the vaccine they had heard about on the radio.

Official government data shows a death rate of 224 per 100,000 in Amazonas state -- double the national average. Some health experts believe a coronavirus variant that is more contagious and less vulnerable to some treatments has caused the dramatic spike in hospitalizations and deaths.

Dr. Ethel Maciel, an epidemiologist who advised the government on its COVID-19 vaccination program, said remote communities in the Amazon are a priority, given their lack of health infrastructure and the large distances people must travel for proper medical care in Manaus.

"With an acute infectious disease like COVID-19, which tends to get worse very quickly, by the time these people make the journey, the person has sometimes already died," she said.

In Amazonas, 71-year-old Jane Barbosa de Albuquerque said she was initially skeptical of the vaccine. "We are doubting. Which is the best? Which one am I going to take? Which one came to us here in Amazonas?" she asked.

Eventually, however, de Albuquerque agreed to let a nurse insert a needle in her left arm. "Health comes first," she said.

UK judge says newspaper invaded Meghan's privacy with letter

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — A newspaper invaded the Duchess of Sussex's privacy by publishing a personal letter to her estranged father, a British judge ruled Thursday, in a major victory for the royal in her campaign against what she sees as media intrusion.

The former American actress Meghan Markle, 39, sued publisher Associated Newspapers for invasion of privacy and copyright infringement over five February 2019 articles in the Mail on Sunday and on the MailOnline website that published large portions of a letter she wrote to her father after her 2018 wedding to Prince Harry.

High Court judge Mark Warby ruled that the publisher had misused the duchess's private information and infringed her copyright.

He said the duchess "had a reasonable expectation that the contents of the letter would remain private. The Mail articles interfered with that reasonable expectation."

Meghan said she was grateful to the court for holding Associated Newspapers to account "for their illegal and dehumanizing practices."

She said that "with this comprehensive win on both privacy and copyright, we have all won."

Associated Newspapers said it was "very surprised by today's summary judgment and disappointed at being denied the chance to have all the evidence heard and tested in open court at a full trial."

"We are carefully considering the judgment's contents and will decide in due course whether to lodge an appeal," said the publishing company, which had strongly contested Meghan's claim.

A trial in the case, scheduled for the fall, would have been one of the most high-profile civil legal showdowns in London for years. But at hearings last month, lawyers for the duchess asked for a summary judgment to settle the case without a trial.

In granting the request, the judge said the publisher's disclosures of large chunks of Meghan's private letter to her father, Thomas Markle, "were manifestly excessive and hence unlawful."

"There is no prospect that a different judgment would be reached after a trial," he said.

Meghan's lawyers said the "deeply personal" five-page letter was intended to be read by her father

alone. Her attorney, Justin Rushbrooke, argued in January that the publisher had “no real prospect” of winning the case.

“For these outlets, it’s a game,” Meghan said in her statement after the ruling. “For me and so many others, it’s real life, real relationships, and very real sadness. The damage they have done and continue to do runs deep.”

But the defense argued Meghan wrote the letter as part of a media strategy to rebut a negative view conveyed by her father in indiscreet media appearances, and with help from the communications team in the royal couple’s Kensington Palace office.

Thursday’s ruling means Meghan has won her case on privacy and copyright infringement grounds, but the judge said a “limited trial” should be held to decide the “minor” issue of whether Meghan was “the sole author” and lone copyright holder of the letter.

The defense argues that Jason Knauf, Harry and Meghan’s former communications director, was the letter’s co-author. The judge said that argument “cannot be described as convincing, and seems improbable,” but should still be decided at a trial.

Meghan, a former star of the American TV legal drama “Suits,” married Harry, a grandson of Queen Elizabeth II, at Windsor Castle in May 2018. Their son, Archie, was born the following year.

In early 2020, Meghan and Harry announced they were quitting royal duties and moving to North America, citing what they said were the unbearable intrusions and racist attitudes of the British media. They recently bought a house in Santa Barbara, California.

Mark Stephens, a media lawyer with the firm Howard Kennedy in London, cautioned that the legal saga might be far from over.

“The Mail on Sunday almost have to take it to appeal because the state of privacy laws (are) in a mess in this country, and they need a definitive statement,” he said. “So (Meghan) may not be allowed to walk off the pitch. She may have to go through an appeal yet. So this is just round one.”

Danica Kirka in London contributed to this story.

Autoworkers face uncertain future in an era of electric cars

By TOM KRISHER and JOHN SEEWER Associated Press

TOLEDO, Ohio (AP) — When General Motors boldly announced its goal last month to make only battery-powered vehicles by 2035, it didn’t just mark a break with more than a century of making internal combustion engines. It also clouded the future for 50,000 GM workers whose skills — and jobs — could become obsolete far sooner than they knew.

The message was clear: As a greener U.S. economy edges closer into view, GM wants a factory workforce that eventually will build only zero-emissions vehicles.

It won’t happen overnight. But the likelihood is growing that legions of autoworkers who trained and worked for decades to build machines that run on petroleum will need to do rather different work in the next decade — or they might not have jobs.

If the history-making shift from internal combustion to electric power goes as GM, Ford and others increasingly envision, jobs that now involve making pistons, fuel injectors and mufflers will be supplanted by the assembly of lithium-ion battery packs, electric motors and heavy-duty wiring harnesses.

Many of those components are now built overseas. But President Joe Biden has made the development of a U.S. electric vehicle supply chain a key part of his ambitious plan to create 1 million more auto industry jobs with electric vehicles.

Yet for workers at GM and other automakers, that future could be perilous. The more environmentally focused plants of the future will need fewer workers, mainly because electric vehicles contain 30% to 40% fewer moving parts than petroleum-run vehicles. In addition, many of the good union jobs that have brought a solid middle-class lifestyle could shift to lower pay as automakers buy EV parts from supply companies or form separate ventures to build components.

Most vulnerable in the transition will be the roughly 100,000 people in the United States who work at

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 223 ~ 65 of 79

plants that make transmissions and engines for gas and diesel vehicles.

They are people like Stuart Hill, one of 1,500 or so workers at GM's Toledo Transmission Plant in Ohio. At 38 years old and a GM employee for five years, Hill is still decades from retirement. The future of the plant and his role in it worries him.

"It's something that's in the back of my mind," Hill said. "Are they going to shut it down?"

He and others hope that Toledo will be among the sites where GM will build more EV parts. If not, he'd be open to moving to some other plant to continue to earn a solid wage; top-scale workers represented by the United Auto Workers are paid around \$31 an hour.

Yet there is hardly assurance that automakers will need as many workers in the new EV era. A United Auto Workers paper from two years ago quotes Ford and Volkswagen executives as saying that EVs will reduce labor hours per vehicle by 30%.

"There are just less parts, so of course it stands to reason that there is going to be less labor," said Jeff Dokho, research director for the UAW.

"We're sort of at the beginning of that transition," said Teddy DeWitt, an assistant professor of management at University of Massachusetts Boston who studies how jobs evolve over time. "It's not going to be just in the vehicle space."

The number of industry jobs that will be lost in the transition will likely reach into the thousands, though no one knows with any precision. And those losses will be made up, at least in part, by jobs created by a greener economy, from work involved in building electric vehicle parts and charging stations to jobs created by wind and solar electricity generation.

Indeed, the most far-reaching change in manufacturing since the commercial production of internal combustion-driven vehicles began in 1886 will ripple out to farm equipment, heavy trucks and even lawnmowers, snow blowers and weed-whackers. The oil and gas industries could suffer, too, as the fading of the internal combustion engine shrinks demand for petroleum.

At the century-old transmission plant in Toledo, GM workers make sophisticated six-, eight-, nine- or 10-speed gearboxes. Eventually, those parts will be replaced by far simpler single-speed drivetrains for electric vehicles. Especially for workers low on the seniority list, GM's plans for an "all-electric future" mean that eventually, their services will likely no longer be needed.

"This is that moment to define where we go in the future," said Tony Totty, president of the UAW local at the Toledo plant. "This is a time we need to ask ourselves in this country: What are we going to do for manufacturing? Is manufacturing dead in our country?"

Those worries already were in the air when Biden made an October campaign stop at the Toledo union hall. Totty delivered a letter imploring the candidate "not to forget about the people getting the job done today."

Even though fully electric vehicles now constitute less than 2% of U.S. new vehicle sales, automakers face intense pressure to abandon internal combustion engines as part of a global drive to fight climate change. California will ban sales of new gas-powered vehicles by 2035. European countries are imposing bans or strict pollution limits. Biden, as part of a push for green vehicles, pledged to build a half-million charging stations and convert the 650,000-vehicle federal fleet to battery power.

At the moment, though, American motorists have other ideas. They continue to spend record amounts on larger gasoline vehicles. With average pump prices close to a \$2 a gallon, trucks and SUVs have replaced more efficient cars as the nation's primary mode of transportation. In January, roughly three-fourths of new-vehicle sales were trucks and SUVs. A decade ago, it was only half.

All that demand will still keep Toledo in business for years. Yet there's little doubt that the move to electricity is inexorable. About 2.5 million electric vehicles were sold worldwide last year. IHS Markit expects that figure to increase 70% this year alone. In December, there were 22 fully electric models on sale in the United States; Edmunds.com expects that figure to reach 30 this year. GM alone has pledged to invest \$27 billion on 30 EV models worldwide by 2025.

The acceleration of the trend has heightened anxiety even at plants that are now running flat-out to meet demand for GM trucks.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 223 ~ 66 of 79

"It definitely scares me," said Tommy Wolikow, a worker at GM's heavy-duty pickup assembly plant in Flint, Michigan, who has worked eight years for GM. "I think that eventually there's a good chance that I might not be able to retire from this plant."

Depending on how fast consumers embrace electric vehicles, Wolikow fears he could be bumped out of his job by employees with more seniority. Workers already are starting to vie for jobs at three plants that GM has designated as electric vehicle assembly sites, two in the Detroit area and one in Tennessee.

In the meantime, GM says it needs its full factory workforce as it rebuilds inventory depleted by a coronavirus-related factory shutdown last spring.

"We have to run our current core business smart and strong, because that will ultimately allow us to invest in this all-electric future," spokesman Dan Flores said. "There's no way we can speculate on the future of any individual facility."

Not all internal combustion-related jobs will vanish in the transition. GM excluded heavier trucks in its EV goal. And some manufacturers will keep making gas-electric hybrids, said Kristin Dzikczek, a vice president at the Center for Auto Research, an industry think tank.

It's unclear what will happen to workers at GM or other automakers who might be squeezed out in the transition. In the past, GM has protected some workers in periods of downsizing. When it closed an assembly plant in Lordstown, Ohio, in 2019, for example, laid-off workers were given a chance to transfer to other plants. And when GM shuttered factories heading into a 2009 bankruptcy, laid-off employees received buyout and early retirement packages.

The UAW says it views the transformation to electricity as potentially less a threat than an opportunity for growth. Dokho suggested, for example, that the Biden administration could offer incentives to build more EV parts here.

"We're optimistic about making sure that there are jobs in the future, and that the jobs there now are protected," he said.

Every major industrial transformation, DeWitt said, has tended to result in both lost jobs and new work. He noted, for example, that when Americans migrated from farms to cities after the Civil War, agricultural jobs dwindled. But cities were wired for electricity, and jobs such as electricians were created.

If the automakers are willing, DeWitt said, most of their workers could be retrained to move from gas vehicles to electric parts and vehicle assembly.

"It feels unlikely to me that all of that knowledge we have built up in that workforce for the past 50 years is all of the sudden completely useless," he said.

The protection of jobs seems sure to be a top issue in the next round of UAW contract talks in 2023, and workers will especially want to preserve higher-wage positions. GM and other automakers now view battery manufacturing as a parts-supply function with lower pay.

The automaker is building a battery factory in Lordstown in a venture with South Korea's LG Chem. CEO Mary Barra has said that workers there will be paid less than those at vehicle assembly plants, to keep costs closer to what competing automakers will pay.

The 2023 contract bargaining could be even more contentious than it was two years ago, when a 40-day UAW strike cost GM \$3.6 billion.

Indeed, the reckoning between GM and the union may come sooner than anticipated, said Karl Brauer, executive publisher at the CarExpert.com website. Automakers, he said, generally work on vehicles five to seven years ahead of when they go on sale.

"You could make the argument that by 2028, they're not going to be doing any more development on internal combustion engine vehicles," he said. "Which starts to sound much closer than 2035."

Krisher reported from Detroit.

COVID-defying nun toasts 117th birthday with wine and prayer

By JOHN LEICESTER and JEFFREY SCHAEFFER Associated Press

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 223 ~ 67 of 79

PARIS (AP) — Question: How does one cram enough candles onto a birthday cake for one of the world's oldest survivors of COVID-19? Answer: With 117 candles, you can't.

A French nun who is believed to be the world's second-oldest person celebrated her 117th birthday in style on Thursday, with multiple treats and well-wishes, cards and flowers to fete her exceptional longevity through two world wars and a recent coronavirus infection.

Sister André also got a Mass in her honor and a feast with Champagne, red wine and port. Then came a nap followed by more festivities, including an afternoon snack of baked Alaska, her favorite dessert.

"It made me very, very, very, very happy," the birthday girl said. "Because I met all those I love and I thank the heavens for giving them to me. I thank God for the trouble they went to."

Sister André's big day got rolling with a morning video call with her great-nephews and great-great nephews, followed by a Mass in her honor led by the local Catholic bishop, said David Tavella, the communications manager for the care home in the southern French city of Toulon where the nun lives.

Her birthday feast included a starter of foie gras, followed by capon with fragrant mushrooms. "All of it washed down with red wine, because she drinks red wine. It's one of her secrets of longevity," Tavella told The Associated Press. There was also port and Champagne "because 117 years have to be toasted," he said.

She skipped dessert because she was tired, but got it served to her later after a nap — with three candles and the numerals 117 on top.

Packing on 117 candles would have been impossible.

"We stopped trying a long time ago," Tavella said. "Even if we made big cakes, I'm not sure that she would have enough breath to blow them all out. You would need a fire extinguisher."

Sister André's birth name is Lucile Randon. The Gerontology Research Group, which validates details of people thought to be 110 or older, lists her as the second-oldest known living person in the world, behind only an 118-year-old woman in Japan, Kane Tanaka.

Tavella told French media earlier this week that Sister André tested positive for the coronavirus in mid-January but she had so few symptoms that she didn't even realize she was infected. Her survival made headlines both in France and beyond.

"When the whole world suddenly started talking about this story, I understood that Sister André was a bit like an Olympic flame on a 'round the world tour that people want to grab hold of, because we all need a bit of hope at the moment," Tavella said.

When Tavella talked to her Thursday about celebrating her next birthday in 2022, she replied: "I won't be here next year," he quoted her as saying, adding: "But she has been saying that for 10 years."

By strange coincidence, Tavella celebrated his 43rd birthday on Thursday.

"We often joke that she and I were born on the same day," he said. "I never tell myself that she is 117 because she is so easy to talk to, regardless of age. It is only when she talks about World War I as though she lived through it that I realize, 'Yes, she did live through it!'"

Leicester reported from Le Pecq, France

3 years later, Parkland school shooting trial still in limbo

By CURT ANDERSON AP Legal Affairs Writer

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. (AP) — It's been more than 1,000 days since a gunman with an AR-15 rifle burst into a Florida high school, killed 17 people and wounded 17 others.

Yet, with Valentine's Day on Sunday marking the three-year milestone, the trial of 22-year-old Nikolas Cruz is in limbo.

One reason is the coronavirus, which has shut court operations down and made in-person jail access difficult for the defense. Another is the sheer magnitude of the case, with hundreds of witnesses from Feb. 14, 2018, at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland.

The case could have been all over by now. Cruz's lawyers have repeatedly said he would plead guilty in

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 223 ~ 68 of 79

exchange for a life sentence. But prosecutors won't budge on seeking the death penalty at trial.

"We are dedicated to ensuring that justice is done and we are working diligently to ensure that the criminal trial begins as soon as possible," said Broward County State Attorney Harold Pryor, who was elected in November.

The longtime state attorney he replaced, Michael Satz, is staying on to personally prosecute Cruz. Satz has said Cruz's fate must be decided by a jury, not by Cruz himself through a guilty plea.

Parents of those slain and wounded are divided over the death penalty, said Tony Montalto, whose 14-year-old daughter Gina was killed in the shooting and who is president of the victims' family group Stand With Parkland.

There's no doubt where Montalto stands.

"The option for a long life was not given to our children and spouses — it was taken that day," Montalto said. "Society in general should demand that someone who attacked the most vulnerable, our children, at their school, a place of learning, should be held ultimately accountable. Our families have already paid the ultimate price."

Michael Schulman, the father of shooting victim Scott Beigel — a school cross-country coach and geography teacher hailed for protecting students — wrote a newspaper opinion piece in which he said it would be better for everyone if Cruz could plead guilty and be locked away for life.

"Going for the death penalty will not bring our loved ones back to us. It will not make the physical scars of those wounded go away," Schulman wrote. "In fact, what it will do is to continue the trauma and not allow the victims to heal and get closure."

Even in the best of times, death penalty cases typically take years to go to trial. In Broward County, the average time between arrest and trial is about 3 1/2 years. Some complex cases have taken up to 10 years to get to trial.

"Even if we didn't have the pandemic to contend with, getting a death penalty case with this many victims to trial, in Florida, would have taken at least this long," said David Weinstein, a former federal prosecutor now in private practice in Miami. "The deposition process alone can take years, and then there are the experts and mitigation specialists."

If Cruz is convicted and sentenced to death, the appeals would probably stretch for decades. It's also possible the case could get reversed and sent back for another sentencing hearing or trial, forcing victims' families to confront it all again.

Cruz is represented by the Broward County public defender's office, which has taken depositions so far from about 300 witnesses. His lawyers declined comment for this story, but in court papers they have insisted there is no intent to delay the case.

Cruz had a well-documented history of mental problems, including an obsession with violence and death, before the shooting rampage when he was 19. His defense isn't focused on his guilt or innocence; it's more about sparing him from the death penalty, his lawyers have said in court.

One big sticking point is access to Cruz in jail. His lawyers say that mental health experts they need for the trial must interview him in person, which they will not do as long as the coronavirus remains a threat in the nation's jails. But officials have raised security concerns about transporting Cruz from jail to meet with defense experts elsewhere.

In recent weeks, there has also been a lengthy battle over prosecutors' desire to let the jury —when-ever the case gets to that point — visit the now-closed school building to see it for themselves. Defense attorneys say that would be too prejudicial and that ample video and other evidence exists.

Circuit Judge Elizabeth Scherer initially hoped to begin the trial in January 2020. That obviously did not happen. Then everything was shut down when the coronavirus pandemic struck in mid-March.

No trial date has been set. The next hearing is a status conference, conducted remotely like other such proceedings over the past several months, on Feb. 16.

Since the 2018 massacre:

—The sheriff at the time, Scott Israel, was removed by the governor because of the agency's perfor-

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 223 ~ 69 of 79

mance that day.

—The school security officer on duty the day of the shootings, former Broward County Deputy Scot Peterson, faces 11 criminal charges, including child neglect and negligence, for not entering the school building to confront Cruz. He has pleaded not guilty and also awaits trial.

— A commission set up to study the tragedy recommended that teachers be trained and armed in schools, and the state Legislature in 2019 passed a law to that effect.

— Multiple lawsuits have been filed over the shootings and will probably take years to resolve. The coronavirus outbreak has hindered those cases as well, though a judge recently ruled the school system had no duty to warn of the danger posed by Cruz, by then a former student.

Associated Press writer Terry Spencer in Fort Lauderdale contributed to this story.

Driver who plunged off Wisconsin ramp thankful to be alive

MILWAUKEE (AP) — A driver who survived when his pickup truck plunged about 70 feet (21 meters) off a slippery interchange exit ramp in Wisconsin said he feels thankful to be alive.

Richard Lee Oliver, in an interview that aired Thursday on ABC's "Good Morning America," said he was on his way to his mother's house when his truck hit snow on the shoulder of a Milwaukee-area overpass.

"There was just too much snow on the side of the road that once the tires got into like two foot of snow there's no controlling a vehicle of any kind," said Oliver, who was hospitalized with a broken back and a broken leg, among other injuries.

A Wisconsin Department of Transportation camera captured Saturday's crash in which the pickup can be seen flipping over the a barrier wall and plummeting to the interstate below as cars pass by. The truck landed upright on the right shoulder of the westbound lanes of Interstate 94.

Oliver, the father of a 6-month-old, said he is grateful to the two people who came to his aid, including a man who helped him make a phone call.

"He helped me in the bed of my truck and helped me call my mom just in case I wasn't going to make it," he said.

Greener pastures: Shell plans steady drop in oil business

By DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Royal Dutch Shell, one of the multinationals that has defined the oil industry, is slowly turning away from the fossil fuel that made its fortune over the decades but also worsened a global climate crisis.

The company said Thursday that its production of oil peaked before the coronavirus pandemic and will fall steadily as it attempts an ambitious pivot toward less polluting forms of energy. It's a milestone for the company and reflects the urgency facing governments and companies to reduce climate-warming emissions.

Shell unveiled new plans for reaching its goal of being carbon neutral by 2050 that include a 1% to 2% drop annually in oil output. It will eliminate seven of its 13 refineries and aims to cut production of gasoline and diesel fuel by 55% over the next decade.

The plan is part of a wider push, particularly among European oil companies, to overhaul their operations to reduce carbon emissions blamed for global warming while still making money. BP said last year that it wants to eliminate or offset all carbon emissions from its operations and the oil and gas it sells to customers by 2050.

Critics say energy companies have been moving too slowly to cut carbon emissions amid a United Nations drive to limit temperature increases to no more than 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) over pre-industrial levels.

"Our accelerated strategy will drive down carbon emissions and will deliver value for our shareholders, our customers and wider society," Shell's CEO, Ben van Beurden, said in a statement.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 223 ~ 70 of 79

Shell plans to increase production of liquefied natural gas, low-carbon fuels such as bioethanol and hydrogen as it seeks to eliminate or offset all carbon emissions from the company's operations and the products it sells.

It plans to increase its network of electric vehicle charging stations to about 500,000 by 2025 from 60,000 today and double electricity sales to retail and business customers. Shell said it will invest \$100 million annually in "nature-based solutions" that protect or redevelop forests, wetlands and grasslands that take carbon out of the atmosphere.

David Elmes, a professor at Warwick Business School in England who heads the Global Energy Research Network, said Shell's plan to reduce emissions is "ticking all the boxes" but the question remains whether the company will be able to make the shift lucrative enough for shareholders used to generous dividends.

The plan includes bets on new technologies such as capture carbon and storage that need a lot of investment.

"Today's plan is certainly a transformation, the question is can they afford it," he said.

Environmental activists said the plan was still not ambitious enough considering the speed with which global emissions need to be cut.

Greenpeace noted that Shell did not say it would cut production outright, just let it fade as the global economy moves toward other forms of power, like renewable energy. It also questioned Shell's reliance on tree-planting to offset carbon emissions as unrealistic.

Belarus leader vows to defeat foreign-backed 'rebellion'

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — The authoritarian leader of Belarus on Thursday slammed six months of demonstrations against him as a foreign-directed "rebellion," and he announced plans for constitutional reforms, which the opposition has rejected as window dressing.

Speaking to 2,700 participants of the All-Belarus People's Assembly in the capital of Minsk, President Alexander Lukashenko alleged that "very powerful forces" abroad were behind the protests.

Lukashenko didn't elaborate, but in the past several months, he has repeatedly accused the West of fomenting the protests.

"We must stand up to them no matter what, and this year will be decisive," he said at the opening of the two-day assembly made up of delegates nominated by labor collectives in sync with state-controlled unions loyal to Lukashenko.

He convened the group to discuss plans for the country's development, but the opposition has denounced it as an attempt to shore up his rule and soothe public anger with vague promises of reform.

Lukashenko, who has ruled Belarus for more than 26 years, vaguely promised Thursday to step down someday, saying that "the time will come and other people will come." He said a set of constitutional changes would be drafted later this year and put to a nationwide vote in early 2022.

The opposition has urged Belarusians to take to the streets to protest the assembly.

A tight police cordon surrounded the building where the gathering was held, but dozens of demonstrators formed "solidarity chains" in other parts of Minsk, waving the opposition's red-and-white flags and chanting "Stop dictatorship!" and "Go away!" to demand Lukashenko's resignation.

Police detained several people in Minsk and other cities, according to the Viasna human rights group.

Mass protests have gripped the ex-Soviet nation of 9.5 million people since official results from the Aug. 9 election gave Lukashenko a landslide victory. The main opposition candidate, Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, and her supporters have dismissed the result as rigged, and some poll workers also have described voting manipulation.

Speaking at the assembly, Lukashenko defended the election's validity, admitting that local officials could have tinkered with it to show him winning 80% of the vote but insisting he won a strong majority anyway.

"If some don't like 80, let it be 76 or even 68!" he said. "But we won it anyway, we were backed by an overwhelming majority."

Authorities have cracked down hard on the largely peaceful demonstrations, the biggest of which at-

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 223 ~ 71 of 79

tracted up to 200,000 people. Police have used stun grenades, tear gas, water cannons and truncheons to disperse the rallies. According to human rights advocates, more than 30,000 people have been detained since the protests began, and thousands of them were brutally beaten.

During his tenure, Lukashenko has relentlessly stifled dissent and relied on cheap energy and other subsidies from his main ally, Russia.

On Thursday, he said the West had incited the protests in Belarus as a "bridgehead" against Russia.

"It's deadly dangerous for Russia to lose Belarus," Lukashenko said, adding that the two countries planned massive joint military drills later this year.

He thanked Moscow for its support in the face of protests but reaffirmed that the union agreement between the two countries shouldn't limit Belarus' independence.

The United States and the European Union have responded to the election and the crackdown by introducing sanctions against Belarusian officials.

The U.S. Embassy said in a statement that Thursday's assembly is "neither genuine nor inclusive of Belarusian views and therefore does not address the country's ongoing political crisis."

While Lukashenko told the gathering that the West harbored aggressive intentions, he also urged the restoration of political ties and economic cooperation.

Observers described the assembly as part of Lukashenko's maneuvering to secure his position without making any changes.

"Lukashenko has no intention to leave and doesn't want to change the system. He's ready to strengthen repressions," said Alexander Klaskovsky, an independent Minsk-based political analyst. "Lukashenko didn't offer a plan of modernizing the country or any clear compromise with the society, and that means that the conflict remains unresolved and protests will continue."

Hard-hit restaurants feed COVID doctors, nurses to survive

By GILLIAN FLACCUS Associated Press

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — It was the week after Christmas and coronavirus case numbers and hospitalizations were soaring in Portland, Oregon.

At Oregon Health & Science University, the state's largest hospital, morale was low. Doctors and nurses caring for the most critically ill were burning out just when they were needed the most.

Then, the food started coming: hot and delicious individually wrapped meals from some of the city's trendiest restaurants, a buffet of cuisines from Chinese to Italian to Lebanese to Southern comfort food. For staffers who only took off their N95 masks once to eat during a 12-hour shift, the meals were more than just food — they were emotional sustenance.

"It's almost like having a weight lifted. It's like getting a surprise dozen roses or something," nurse Alice Clark said. "We're so grateful."

But the meals, paid for by a wellness grant from the Oregon-based insurance fund SAIF, also served another purpose: They kept struggling restaurants afloat. As fall and then winter set in, eateries were folding under the strain of a monthslong indoor dining ban. The hospital orders — sometimes 150 or 160 meals at a time — were a financial lifeline.

"It's kept the doors open and a small workforce employed. It's been the most heartfelt catering we've ever done," said Kiauna Floyd, third-generation owner of Amalfi's, a Portland institution that's been serving up Italian cuisine for 62 years.

Floyd's staff has prepared around 500 meals for OHSU, allowing her to keep a core crew employed after laying off three-quarters of her employees. The restaurant is currently limping along with seven tables on an outdoor patio in the height of winter, as well as takeout orders and pre-packaged meals-to-go.

Amalfi's focused on manicotti and lasagna dishes for the COVID support meals — and the restaurant's deliveries have proved to be among the most popular with the recipients.

"We want to do something as comforting as possible so when they are on their break and do get that lunch, it warms their soul," she said.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 223 ~ 72 of 79

For now, though, meal deliveries to OHSU have dried up with the grant funding, and the program ended on Jan. 19. Leaders are hoping for a new funding source to get meals running again soon. The three-week effort paid local eateries a total of \$39,000 at a critical time.

A similar effort funded by private donations through a now-defunct nonprofit called Frontline Foods PDX connected restaurants with Portland-area hospitals and clinics early in the pandemic, but then donations began to fall off and the effort slowed and then stopped.

That effort provided about 13,800 meals over three months to six facilities, including a veteran's hospital and a homeless clinic, and was a major source of pandemic revenue for 14 restaurants — many of them owned by people of color.

"To be able to call and say, 'Hey, I have \$2,000 of business for you' is just the most incredible feeling," said Shannon Tivona, who coordinated meal orders and delivery for OHSU and volunteered for Frontline Foods in its earlier work.

"The times where we're not doing anything are really tough. The restaurant owners call me and say, 'Do you have anything yet? Do you have anything?' And it's heartbreaking to have to say, 'No, I don't.'"

But many of the same restaurants were called upon to deliver 2,600 meals to OHSU doctors, nurses, physician assistants, custodial staff and other front-line workers in the emergency room and on two COVID-focused floors — three times a week, for both day and night shifts.

For nurse Henry Valdez, the meals were an essential break — and confirmation that the community had his back.

"I've never been more tired, mentally, physically and emotionally. It really has drained me," he said. "When these meals started, I was just in awe. One or two times it brought a tear to my eye, the generosity of people, because it has not been an easy year — and the food provided comfort."

Follow Gillian Flaccus on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/gflaccus>

"One Good Thing" is a series that highlights individuals whose actions provide glimmers of joy in hard times — stories of people who find a way to make a difference, no matter how small. Read the collection of stories at <https://apnews.com/hub/one-good-thing>

European deep freeze serves up fun, frustrations and danger

By MIKE CORDER Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — Three workers in a boat hacked away at ice Thursday to create a watery barrier around the Dutch prime minister's office, while others in the Netherlands tentatively tested the frozen surfaces of lakes and canals to see if they were safe to skate on.

The deep freeze gripping large parts of Europe is serving up both fun and frustrations, with heavy snow cutting power to thousands of homes in central Slovakia and snarling traffic in the east of the country, while snow on Dutch roads and sidewalks allowed some parents to pull children to school on sleds instead of riding them on bicycles.

Britain experienced its coldest night for a quarter century, with the temperature falling to minus 22.9 Celsius (minus 9.2 Fahrenheit) in Braemar, northeast Scotland — the lowest recorded in the U.K. since 1995, according to the Met Office weather service.

Most of Britain has experienced days of sub-zero temperatures and snowfall in the wake of winter Storm Darcy. The cold snap froze the famous fountains in London's Trafalgar Square and forced the temporary closure of some U.K. coronavirus vaccination sites.

Icicles coating a jetty on the frozen inland Ijsselmeer Sea north of Amsterdam drew photographers, while those hanging a house in the central German city of Erfurt attracted the attention of firefighters, who snapped them off.

In France, cold weather and ice alerts were in force for northern swathes of the country, as thermometers dipped well below freezing, making roads and pavements treacherous. Among the coldest places was

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 223 ~ 73 of 79

the riverfront city of Nancy, where the weather bureau reported minus 11 degrees Celsius (12 degrees F) before dawn on Thursday.

Berlin police said a man rescued alive from a frozen pond in the German capital has died. Police said Thursday that firefighters pulled the 43-year-old man out of the water after he had been submerged for more than two hours and managed to revive him, but he died in the hospital Wednesday evening. The man and three others had made holes in the ice to go ice swimming.

Greece, meanwhile, has been enjoying spring-like weather with temperatures in the 20s Celsius range (68 degrees Fahrenheit and up). But the southern nation is set to join the rest of Europe in the deep freeze in the coming days, with snow possible even in the capital, Athens.

In Albania, authorities evacuated several families, hundreds of sheep and thousands of chickens after the Buna River in the northwest burst its banks.

Even if the polar conditions persist, a legendary Dutch ice skating race over frozen canals and lakes in the northern Friesland province will not go ahead.

The organizers confirmed this week that the 11 Cities Tour, which attracts 25,000 participants and up to 1.5 million spectators, will not happen this winter due to the current Dutch coronavirus lockdown. In one of the "cities," the small town of Hindeloopen, nobody was skating on the canals Thursday morning. A row of twigs jutting out of the frozen surface served as a warning for dangerously thin ice.

With ice likely thick enough soon for people to skate on Hofvijver Lake, which runs along one side of the Dutch parliamentary complex, workers on Thursday made sure that skaters couldn't get right up to Prime Minister Mark Rutte's office by bashing through ice to create a water barrier.

AP writers around Europe contributed.

Desperation grows in battered Honduras, fueling migration

By MARÍA VERZA Associated Press

SAN PEDRO SULA, Honduras (AP) — Nory Yamileth Hernández and her three teenage children have been living in a battered tent under a bridge on the outskirts of San Pedro Sula since Hurricane Eta flooded their home in November.

They were there in the dust under the rumbling traffic, surrounded by other storm refugees, when Hurricane Iota hit barely two weeks later. And when the first migrant caravan of the year shuffled by in January, only fear and empty pockets kept them from joining Honduras' growing exodus.

"I cried because I don't want to be here anymore," the 34-year-old Hernández said. She had joined the first big caravan in October 2018, but didn't make it to Mexico before turning back. She's sure she will try again soon. "There's a lot of suffering."

In San Pedro Sula, Honduras' economic engine and the departure gate for thousands of Honduran migrants in recent years, families like Hernández's are caught in a cycle of migration. Poverty and gang violence push them out and increasingly aggressive measures to stop them, driven by the United States government, scuttle their efforts and send them back.

The economic damage of the COVID-19 pandemic and the devastation wrought by November's hurricanes have only added to those driving forces. Word of a new administration in the U.S. with a softer approach to migrants has raised hopes, too.

After her failed attempt to migrate in 2018, Hernández returned to scraping out a living in San Pedro Sula. Last year, she sold lingerie door-to-door in one of the country's most dangerous neighborhoods. But the storms wiped out her inventory and her customers had limited ability to pay her for items they bought on credit.

"I couldn't charge people because we all lost," Hernández said. "We all have needs, but you have to be sensitive. They don't have anything to pay with and why go to collect?"

Chamelecon is a neighborhood of low, tin-roofed houses and small shops with barred windows on the outskirts of the city. Only two of its streets are paved, including one that is the dividing line between the

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 223 ~ 74 of 79

rival gangs Mara Salvatrucha and Barrio 18.

At the bridge where Hernández's tent is pitched, tattooed youths smoke marijuana and residents slop around in rubber boots. The violence continues, with newspapers talking about finding bodies wrapped in plastic.

In December, Hernández got sick with fever, nausea and, she said, her brain hurt. She went to a hospital, but was never tested for COVID-19. In January, her eldest son writhed in their tent with fever.

The father of her youngest son lives in Los Angeles and encouraged her to get money together for another trip. "He told me that this year is going to be good because they had gotten rid of Trump and the new president was going to help migrants," Hernández said.

Within weeks, U.S. President Joe Biden signed nine executive orders reversing Trump measures related to family separation, border security and immigration. But fearing a surge in immigration, the administration also sent the message that little will change quickly for migrants arriving at the southern U.S. border.

Hernández recently found work cleaning flooded streets, but she still hasn't been able to tackle the house where she once lived with 11 others. It's still filled with several inches of mud and foul water.

The assembly plants that surround San Pedro Sula and power its economy are still not back to pre-hurricane capacity amid the pandemic.

The Sula Valley, Honduras' most agriculturally productive, was so heavily damaged that international organizations have warned of a food crisis. The World Food Program says 3 million Hondurans face food insecurity, six times higher than before. The dual hurricanes affected an estimated 4 million of Honduras' 10 million people. The area is also Honduras' hardest-hit by COVID-19 infections.

"It's a vicious cycle," said Dana Graber Ladek, head of the International Organization for Migration office in Mexico. "They're suffering poverty, violence, the hurricanes, unemployment, domestic violence, and with that dream of a new (U.S.) administration, of new opportunities, they're going to try (to migrate) again and again."

The last several attempted caravans have been foiled, first in Mexico and later in Guatemala, but the daily flow of migrants moved by smugglers continues and has shown signs of increasing. The hope and misinformation associated with the new U.S. administration helps that business too.

"The traffickers are using this opportunity of desperation, of political changes in the United States to spread rumors and false information," Graber Ladek said.

In January, San Pedro Sula was abuzz with plans to migrate.

Gabriela, 29, feeling like she had nothing to lose, went north just days before a few thousand Hondurans headed out of San Pedro Sula on Jan. 15. She had lost her cleaning job in the pandemic and the rest of her life to the hurricanes. She asked that her full name be withheld because she had made it to southern Mexico and feared being targeted.

Gabriela paid a smuggler, paid off authorities along her route and walked through jungle as part of her journey north.

She had lived in La Lima, a suburb of San Pedro Sula. Small businesses there have begun to reopen, but in outlying neighborhoods, the streets are still full of debris, dead animals, snakes and burning mattresses.

"Everyone wanted to leave," said Juan Antonio Ramírez, an elderly resident. His children and grandchildren were among some 30 people who spent six days stranded on a corrugated metal roof surrounded by floodwaters in November. "A lot of people went from here, but they all came back. The problem is there's a barrier and they send them back from Guatemala."

After the 2018 caravans and rising number of migrants at the U.S. border in early 2019, the U.S. government pressured Mexico and Central American countries to do more to slow migration across their territories. Numbers fell in the latter half of 2019 and Mexico and Guatemala effectively stopped caravans in 2020. In December, a caravan leaving San Pedro Sula didn't even make it out of Honduras.

But the U.S. has reported a rising number of encounters at the border, showing that beyond the caravans, the migration flow is increasing again.

In September, Liseth Contreras' husband made it to Miami. The La Lima resident said it took him three

months and \$12,000 paid to smugglers. She's thinking of going too, but for the moment has her small business selling necessities.

Biden has promised investment in Central America to get at the root causes of immigration, but no one expects to see any change soon. Honduras' primary elections are scheduled for March and nongovernmental organizations worry any aid will come with political strings attached.

Hernández admits confusion and disillusion. "I don't know. ... They all promise and then don't follow through," she said. "I don't see a good future here."

Gabriela, already halfway to her goal of reaching the U.S., has no thoughts of turning back, even after 19 people, believed to be mostly Guatemalan migrants, were found shot and burned in northern Mexico just across from Texas.

"I only go back to Honduras if Immigration sends me back," she said. "And if that happens I'll try again with my son."

Ethnic minorities protest Myanmar coup, as opposition grows

YANGON, Myanmar (AP) — Members of Myanmar's ethnic minorities marched through streets in traditional dress and floated on wooden long boats in a scenic lake Thursday to protest last week's coup, a sign of the broad and growing resistance to the military takeover.

Opposition to the coup received a major boost from abroad from U.S. President Joe Biden, who ordered new sanctions and promised more measures to come as he demanded the junta hand power back to the elected government. That's part of a growing trend, as more governments consider sanctions against the military.

The military seized power on Feb. 1, ousting leader Aung San Suu Kyi and preventing recently elected lawmakers from opening a new session of Parliament — a shocking reversal after about a decade of progress toward democracy in Myanmar. The junta said it was forced to step in because Suu Kyi's government failed to properly investigate allegations of fraud in recent elections, though the election commission has said there is no evidence to support those claims.

In response to the coup, tens of thousands of protesters have marched daily in Yangon and Mandalay, the country's biggest cities — and the demonstrations have spread throughout the country, showing depth of the resistance. The rallies have drawn people from all walks of life, despite an official ban on gatherings of more than five people. Factory workers and civil servants, students and teachers, medical personnel and people from LGBTQ communities, Buddhist monks and Catholic clergy have all come out in force.

On Thursday, people from Myanmar's ethnic minority groups, who are concentrated in far-flung, border states, joined in — a striking show of unity in a country where some groups have resented the Burman majority's control and have also had their differences with Suu Kyi. But their deep mistrust of the military, which has brutally repressed their armed struggles for more autonomy, has made them uneasy allies with her party.

"Our people have been oppressed by the junta for many years. They have cracked down brutally. How long are they going to keep doing this?" asked protester Naw Ohn Hla, a human rights activist from the Karen ethnic group, at a demonstration in Yangon. "But the people understand the situation, and most of them are joining now."

There have also been reports of police officers who belong to the Kayah ethnic group risking their jobs to protest the takeover. In a video shot Wednesday in a small village in the eastern state of Kayah, 42 police officers could be seen standing together to declare their support for the protesters and refuse entreaties from a senior officer to return to duty. Residents streamed to the scene to protect the defiant officers from arrest.

In Myanmar's eastern Shan State, home to the country's largest ethnic minority group, scores of wooden long boats used for fishing and transportation on scenic Inle Lake hosted a unique floating protest, with passengers holding placards denouncing the coup and calling for justice. Some protesters squeezed messages lengthwise onto oars, including "Respect Our Votes" and "Say No to Coup."

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 223 ~ 76 of 79

Large rallies have also taken place in the capital, Naypyitaw — which is unusual since the planned city has a large military presence. On Thursday, in the southern city of Dawei, protesters stamped and wiped their feet on a poster of Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, the much-scorned coup leader who now heads the ruling junta.

Hundreds of protesters also gathered outside the Chinese Embassy to criticize what they said was Beijing's failure to condemn the military takeover. They held signs, many in English and Mandarin, with slogans such as, "Reject the Coup, Shame on you China" and "Dear Chinese Government, Don't Stay Muted. This is not Zoom meeting."

Min Aung Hlaing indirectly acknowledged the widespread opposition to his government in a televised speech Thursday. In a translation released by the military, he noted in regard to measures to combat the coronavirus that "People are found assembling in public areas at present," a reference to the protests.

"It is urged to all to avoid it as such assembly could increase the rate of COVID-19 infection," he said. He did not mention the ban on gatherings of more than five people in most urban areas.

The junta leader also touched on the issue of civil servants joining the protests. "Due to unscrupulous persons' incitement, some civil service personnel have failed to perform their duties at present," he said.

"Those who are away from their duties are requested to return to their duties immediately for the interests of the country and people without focusing on the emotion."

About 220 politicians and activists have been arrested since the coup, according to the independent Assistance Association for Political Prisoners.

More senior members of Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party, along with other politicians and activists, were arrested Wednesday night.

So far, police have sprayed water cannons and shot rubber bullet and live rounds in the air in an attempt to disperse crowds. In the past, though, the military has not hesitated to employ force in big cities. It ruled directly for five decades after a 1962 coup, and used lethal force to quash a massive 1988 uprising and a 2007 revolt led by Buddhist monks.

International sanctions were employed by Western governments in reaction to those crackdowns, but they were eased when elections in 2010 and 2015 showed the country's tentative steps toward democracy.

At the White House on Wednesday, Biden said he was issuing an executive order that will prevent Myanmar's generals from accessing \$1 billion in assets in the United States.

It remains to be seen what, if any, impact the U.S. action will have on Myanmar's military regime. Many of the military leaders are already under sanctions because of attacks against the Muslim Rohingya minority.

Digital siege: Internet cuts become favored tool of regimes

By KELVIN CHAN AP Business Writer

LONDON (AP) — When army generals in Myanmar staged a coup last week, they briefly cut internet access in an apparent attempt to stymie protests. In Uganda, residents couldn't use Facebook, Twitter and other social media for weeks after a recent election. And in Ethiopia's northern Tigray region, the internet has been down for months amid a wider conflict.

Around the world, shutting down the internet has become an increasingly popular tactic of repressive and authoritarian regimes and some illiberal democracies. Digital rights groups say governments use them to stifle dissent, silence opposition voices or cover up human rights abuses, raising concerns about restricting freedom of speech.

Regimes often cut online access in response to protests or civil unrest, particularly around elections, as they try to keep their grip on power by restricting the flow of information, researchers say. It's the digital equivalent of seizing control of the local TV and radio station that was part of the pre-internet playbook for despots.

"Internet shutdowns have been massively underreported or misreported over the years," said Alp Toker, founder of internet monitoring organization Netblocks. The world is "starting to realize what's happening," as documenting efforts like his expand, he said.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 223 ~ 77 of 79

Last year there were 93 major internet shutdowns in 21 countries, according to a report by Top10VPN, a U.K.-based digital privacy and security research group. The list doesn't include places like China and North Korea, where the government tightly controls or restricts the internet. Shutdowns can range from all-encompassing internet blackouts to blocking social media platforms or severely throttling internet speeds, the report said.

Internet cuts have political, economic, and humanitarian costs, experts warned. The effects are exacerbated by COVID-19 lockdowns that are forcing activities like school classes online.

The shutdowns play into a wider battle over control of the internet. In the West, efforts to rein in social media platforms have raised competing concerns about restricting free speech and limiting harmful information, the latter sometimes used by authoritarian regimes to justify clampdowns.

In Myanmar, internet access was cut for about 24 hours last weekend, in an apparent bid to head off protests against the army's seizing of power and the detention of leader Aung San Suu Kyi and her allies. By Sunday afternoon, internet users reported data access on their mobile phones was suddenly restored.

Norway's Telenor ASA, which runs one of Myanmar's main wireless carriers, said the communications ministry cited "circulation of fake news, stability of the nation and interest of the public" in ordering operators to temporarily shut down networks.

Telenor said it had to comply with local laws. "We deeply regret the impact the shutdown has on the people in Myanmar," it said.

It's a familiar move by Myanmar's government, which carried out one of the world's longest internet shutdowns in Rakhine and Chin states aimed at disrupting operations of an armed ethnic group. The cutoff began in June 2019 and was only lifted on Feb. 3.

Another long-running internet shutdown is in Ethiopia's Tigray region, which has been choked off since fighting started in early November -- the latest in a series of outages with no sign of service returning anytime soon. That's made it challenging to know how many civilians have been killed, to what extent fighting continues or whether people are starting to die of starvation, as some have warned.

In Uganda, restrictions on social media sites including Twitter, Facebook and YouTube took effect ahead of a Jan. 14 presidential election, along with a total internet blackout on the eve of polling. Authorities said it was to prevent opposition supporters from organizing potentially dangerous street protests.

The social media curbs were lifted Wednesday, except for Facebook. Longtime leader Yoweri Museveni, who was facing his biggest challenge to power yet from popular singer-turned-lawmaker Bobi Wine, had been angered by the social network's removal before the vote of what it said were fake accounts linked to his party.

In Belarus, the internet went down for 61 hours after the Aug. 9 presidential election, marking Europe's first internet blackout. Service was cut after election results handed victory to authoritarian President Alexander Lukashenko but the vote was widely seen as rigged and sparked enormous protests. Access remained unstable for months, particularly around weekend protests, when mobile internet service repeatedly went down.

The risk is that regular shutdowns become normalized, said Toker.

"You get a kind of Pavlovian response where both the public in the country and the wider international community will become desensitized to these shutdowns," he said, calling it the "greatest risk to our collective freedom in the digital age."

Internet shutdowns are also common in democratic India, where Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government has increasingly used them to target his political opposition. His Hindu nationalist government has ordered hundreds of regional shutdowns, according to a tracking site.

Most have been in disputed Kashmir, which endured an 18-month blockade of high-speed mobile service that ended last week. But they've also been deployed elsewhere for anti-government demonstrations, including massive farmers' protests that have rattled Modi's administration.

"It used to be authoritarian governments who did this, but we are seeing the practice become more common in democracies such as India," said Darrell West, a vice president of governance studies at the

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 223 ~ 78 of 79

Brookings Institution who has studied internet shutdowns.

“The risk is that once one democracy does it, others will be tempted to do the same thing. It may start at the local level to deal with unrest, but then spread more broadly.”

Cara Anna in Nairobi, Rodney Muhumuza in Kampala, Uganda, Aijaz Hussain in Srinigar, India, and Sheikh Saaliq in New Delhi contributed to this report.

For all of AP’s tech coverage, visit <https://apnews.com/apf-technology>

Follow Kelvin Chan at www.twitter.com/chanman

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Friday, Feb. 12, the 43rd day of 2021. There are 322 days left in the year.

Today’s Highlight in History:

On Feb. 12, 1973, Operation Homecoming began as the first release of American prisoners of war from the Vietnam conflict took place.

On this date:

In 1809, Abraham Lincoln, the 16th president of the United States, was born in a log cabin in Hardin (now LaRue) County, Kentucky.

In 1818, Chile officially proclaimed its independence, more than seven years after initially renouncing Spanish rule.

In 1909, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People was founded.

In 1912, Pu Yi (poo yee), the last emperor of China, abdicated, marking the end of the Qing Dynasty.

In 1914, groundbreaking took place for the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. (A year later on this date, the cornerstone was laid.)

In 1924, George Gershwin’s “Rhapsody in Blue” premiered in New York.

In 1959, the redesigned Lincoln penny — with an image of the Lincoln Memorial replacing two ears of wheat on the reverse side — went into circulation.

In 1999, the Senate voted to acquit President Bill Clinton of perjury and obstruction of justice.

In 2000, Hall of Fame football coach Tom Landry, who’d led the Dallas Cowboys to five Super Bowls, died in Irving, Texas, at age 75.

In 2003, the U.N. nuclear agency declared North Korea in violation of international treaties, sending the dispute to the Security Council.

In 2013, At the Grammy Awards, Adele took home all five awards she was nominated for, including album (“25”), as well as record and song of the year (“Hello”).

In 2019, Mexico’s most notorious drug lord, Joaquin “El Chapo” Guzman, was convicted in New York of running an industrial-scale smuggling operation; a jury whose members’ identities were kept secret as a security measure had deliberated for six days. (Guzman is serving a life sentence at the federal supermax prison facility in Florence, Colorado.)

Ten years ago: Thousands of Algerians defied government warnings and dodged barricades in their capital, demanding democratic reforms; demonstrations continued in Yemen as well. Death claimed actors Betty Garrett, 91, and Kenneth Mars, 75.

Five years ago: Pope Francis, while en route to Mexico, embraced Patriarch Kirill during a stopover in Cuba in the first-ever meeting between a pontiff and the head of the Russian Orthodox Church. New York Mets reliever Jenrry Mejia (HEN’ree me-HEE’-uh) became the first player to receive a lifetime ban under Major League Baseball’s drug agreement after testing positive for a performance-enhancing substance for the third time.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 223 ~ 79 of 79

One year ago: Holland America Line said a cruise ship, the MS Westerdam, which had been barred from docking by four governments because of fears of the coronavirus, would arrive the next day in Cambodia. In Japan, officials confirmed 39 new cases on a cruise ship that had been quarantined at Yokohama, bringing the total number of cases on the Diamond Princess to 174. A second case of coronavirus was confirmed in the U.S. among evacuees from China; the person had been aboard a flight from Wuhan that arrived the previous week at a military base in Southern California. Former Massachusetts Gov. Deval Patrick, the last remaining African American candidate in the Democratic presidential field, ended his campaign after his late bid failed to catch fire. Pope Francis, in an eagerly awaited document, declined to approve the ordination of married men to address a priest shortage in the Amazon.

Today's Birthdays: Movie director Costa-Gavras is 88. Basketball Hall of Famer Bill Russell is 87. Actor Joe Don Baker is 85. Author Judy Blume is 83. Former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak is 79. Country singer Moe Bandy is 77. Actor Maud Adams is 76. Actor Cliff DeYoung is 75. Actor Michael Ironside is 71. Rock musician Steve Hackett is 71. Rock singer Michael McDonald is 69. Actor Joanna Kerns is 68. Actor Zach Grenier is 67. Actor-talk show host Arsenio Hall is 65. Actor John Michael Higgins is 58. Actor Raphael Sbarge is 57. Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh is 56. Actor Christine Elise is 56. Actor Josh Brolin is 53. Singer Chynna Phillips is 53. Rock musician Jim Creeggan (Barenaked Ladies) is 51. Actor Jesse Spencer is 42. Rapper Gucci Mane is 41. Actor Sarah Lancaster is 41. Actor Christina Ricci is 41. Actor Jennifer Stone is 28. Actors Baylie and Rylie Cregut (TV: "Raising Hope") are 11.