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*"Love is something eternal:
the aspect may change, but
not the essence."*

-VINCENT VAN GOGH



OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

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Lady Tigers surprise Mobridge-Pollock with big win

Groton Area's girls basketball team handed Mobridge-Pollock only its sixth loss on a season winding down with a 54-39 win.

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

The game was tied twice in the first quarter. Brooke Gengerke hit a three-pointer late in the first quarter to the game at the break at 12. Groton took a 10-point lead at the end of the half, 30-20. Mobridge-Pollock then unleashed its fury and in less than two and one-half minutes into the third period, Mobridge-Pollock took the lead, 33-32. Then a drought set in for Mobridge-Pollock and Groton Area continued to pound away at the board and kept adding to the tally, leaving Mobridge-Pollock way behind. Groton Area would score 17 unanswered points in an eight-minute span and took a 49-33 lead and went on to win.

Gracie Traphagen led the Tigers with 24 points, eight rebounds and one steal and she made three three-pointers. Brooke Gengerke made three three-pointers on her way to 13 points with five rebounds and four assists. Alyssa Thaler made two three-pointers and had 12 points, one rebound and two assists. Allyssa Locke had three points, four rebounds, four assists and one steal. Sydney Leight had two points, one rebound, one assist and one steal. Kenzie McInerney had two assists and two seals. Aspen Johnson had three rebounds and three steals. Anna Fjeldheim and Jaedyn Penning each had one rebound.

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Groton Area made 10 of 21 two-pointers for 48 percent, eight of 18 three-pointers for 44 percent, 10 of 15 free throws for 67 percent, had 24 rebounds, 18 turnovers, 13 assists, eight steals and eight team fouls.

Mobridge-Pollock made 15 of 46 shots for 32 percent, four of seven free throws for 57 percent had 23 turnovers, 20 rebounds, nine steals, 10 assists and 14 team fouls.

Mobridge-Pollock won the junior varsity game, 33-22. Groton had closed to within five, 27-22, with two minutes left in the game. Anna Fjeldheim had four points, Kennedy Hansen made five of six free throws, Jerica Locke had four points, Sydney Leicht had five points, Mia Crank and Emily Clark each had two and Laila Roberts had one free throw.

The game was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM, sponsored by Rich and Tami Zimney, grandparents of Laila Roberts.

Groton Area will host Warner on Tuesday and will conclude the regular season on Friday as part of a double header with Deuel. Groton Area is 9-9 on the season and Mobridge-Pollock is 12-6.

Hamlin.....	9-0
Roncalli	9-1
Redfield	6-2
Sisseton	5-3
Groton	5-4
Webster.....	5-4
Clark/Willow Lake	3-5
Milbank	4-6
Deuel	1-7
Tiospa Zina	1-8
Britton-Hecla.....	0-7

- Paul Kosel

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Plus get \$100 off installation[†] when you call today!

*Requires 36-month monitoring contract for intrusion only with a minimum charge of \$28.99 after the 12 month term. Equipment shown requires ADT Secure or higher. Early term. and installation fees apply. Taxes add'l. For full terms and pricing see below.

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April 15, 2021

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General: Additional charges may apply in areas that require guard response service for municipal alarm verification. System remains property of ADT. Local permit fees may be required. Prices and offers subject to change and may vary by market. Additional taxes and fees may apply. Satisfactory credit required. A security deposit may be required. Simulated screen images and photos are for illustrative purposes only.

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DF-CD-NP-Q121

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Mobridge-Pollock pulls out 2-point home court win over Groton

The home team continues the winning streak in the battle of the Tigers. Mobridge-Pollock held off Groton Area for a two-point win, 53-51. According to a sports guru in Mobridge, this is the 14th straight time that the home team has won.

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

Mobridge-Pollock won the game from the free throw line, making 18 of 32 free throws for 56 percent off of Groton Area's 20 team fouls. Groton Area was nine of 13 from the line for 69 percent off of Mobridge-Pollock's 18 team fouls.

The game was tied once in the first quarter and there were two lead changes before Groton Area took a 15-10 lead at the end of the period. Groton Area had a 25-24 lead with 2:11 left in the second period before Mobridge-Pollock scored the final nine points of quarter to take a 33-25 lead at half time. Mobridge-Pollock would make 10 of 14 shots in the second quarter for 71 percent and Groton Area made two of six for 33 percent.

Groton	7-2
Clark/Willow Lake	6-2
Sisseton	5-2
Tiospa Zina	4-2
Milbank	5-3
Roncalli	5-4
Hamlin.....	5-4
Redfield	4-4
Deuel	2-7
Webster.....	1-8
Britton-Hecla.....	0-7

Groton Area outscored Mobridge-Pollock in the third quarter, 12-9, to close the gap to five, 42-37.

Jayden Zak, who was on fire in three-point country, made two three-pointers in the fourth quarter to even the score. Groton Area tied the game at 49 with 2:41 left before Braden Goehring would make Mobridge-Pollock's only three-pointer of the game to make it 52-49 with 1:46 left. A charging foul and a missed shot in Groton's last two possessions prevented a tie or win for the Tigers as Mobridge-Pollock hung on for the win.

Jayden Zak would make seven of eight three-pointers and two for two free throws to boot to lead all scorers with 23 points. He also had one rebound, five assists and two steals. Tristan Traphagen had 11 points, six rebounds, two assists and one block. Tate Larson had 11 points, three rebounds, one assist and one steal. Jacob Zak had four points, three rebounds, four assists and one steal. Wyatt Hearnen had two points. Lane Tietz had three rebounds, two assists and one steal. Isaac Smith had one rebound and Cole Simon had one steal.

Groton Area made nine of 17 two-pointers for 53 percent, eight of 15 three-pointers for 53 percent, had 17 rebounds, 15 turnovers, 14 assists, six steals and one block shot.

Mobridge-Pollock made 18 of 32 in field goals for 56 percent and had 10 turnovers.

Mobridge-Pollock won the junior varsity game, 55-35. That game was sponsored by the White House Inn on GDILIVE.COM. Wyatt Hearnen led Groton Area with 10 points followed by Taylor Diegel with eight, Colby Dunker six, Cole Simon six, and Jackson Cogley and Logan Ringgenberg each had four points.

Groton Area is now 11-5 on the season and will play at Aberdeen Roncalli on Monday and then host Deuel for a Northeast Conference game on Friday. Mobridge-Pollock goes to 12-3 on the season.

- Paul Kosel

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Upcoming Schedule

Monday, Feb. 15

Roncalli has changed the schedule for Monday's games again. 7th grade will play at 4 and 8th grade at 5, there will be NO C GAME, JV and Varsity will follow the JH games. All games will be played at Roncalli HS.

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

City Council meeting, 7 p.m., Groton Community Center.

Thursday, Feb. 18

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

Friday, Feb. 19

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

Saturday, Feb. 20

Regional Wrestling Tournament in Groton, 10 a.m.

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

Tuesday, Feb. 23: GBB Region

Thursday, Feb. 25: GBB Region

Friday, Feb. 26

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

Tuesday, March 2: BBB Region

Thursday, March 4: GBB SoDAK 16

Friday, March 5: BBB Region

Tuesday, March 9: BBB SoDAK 16

March 11-13: State Girls Basketball Tournament in Watertown

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

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THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE



*Therefore do not worry
about tomorrow, for tomorrow
will worry about its own things.
Sufficient for the day
is its own trouble.*

MATTHEW 6:34

"Self-Portrait With Hand On Brow" by Kathe Kollwitz (1910)

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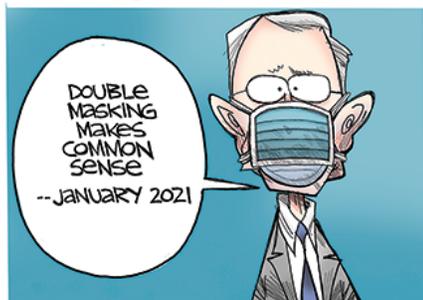
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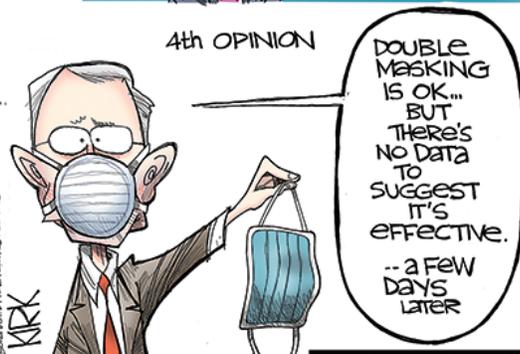
2nd OPINION



3rd OPINION



4th OPINION



TO BE CONTINUED

BIBBLE TRIVIA by Wilson Casey

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

2. From Philippians 4, what does the apostle Paul instruct us to do rather than worry? *Cry, Pray, Love, Talk*

3. Who, perhaps, did Jesus give a standing ovation to in Acts 7:55-59? *Herod, James, John the Baptist, Stephen*

4. How long did the journey of Ezra take from Babylon to Jerusalem? *3 days, 2 weeks, 4 months, 4 years*

5. Who's the runaway slave in the book of Philemon? *Lemuel, Marcus, Doulos, Onesimus*

6. All of Job's children were killed in a ...? *Flood, Fire, Wind, Stampede*

ANSWERS: 1) Neither; 2) Pray; 3) Stephen; 4) 4 months; 5) Onesimus; 6) Wind

Hardcore trivia fan? Visit Wilson Casey's subscriber site at www.patreon.com/triviaguy.

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by Healthy Exchanges

Cozy Vegetable Soup

We now have more winter behind us than before us, but it sure seems like a long, long time before we see spring. We need some comforting soup NOW to see us through.

- 2 cups water
- 4 cups chopped cabbage
- 1 cup shredded loose-packed frozen potatoes
- 1/2 cup chopped onion
- 1 (12 fluid-ounce) can evaporated fat-free milk
- 3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon dried parsley flakes
- 1/8 teaspoon black pepper
- 2 tablespoons chopped real bacon bits
- 1/4 cup grated reduced-fat Parmesan cheese

1. In a large saucepan, combine water, cabbage, potatoes and onion. Bring mixture to a boil. Lower heat and simmer for 10 minutes.

2. In a covered jar, combine evaporated milk and flour. Shake well to blend. Pour milk mixture into cabbage mixture. Mix well to combine.

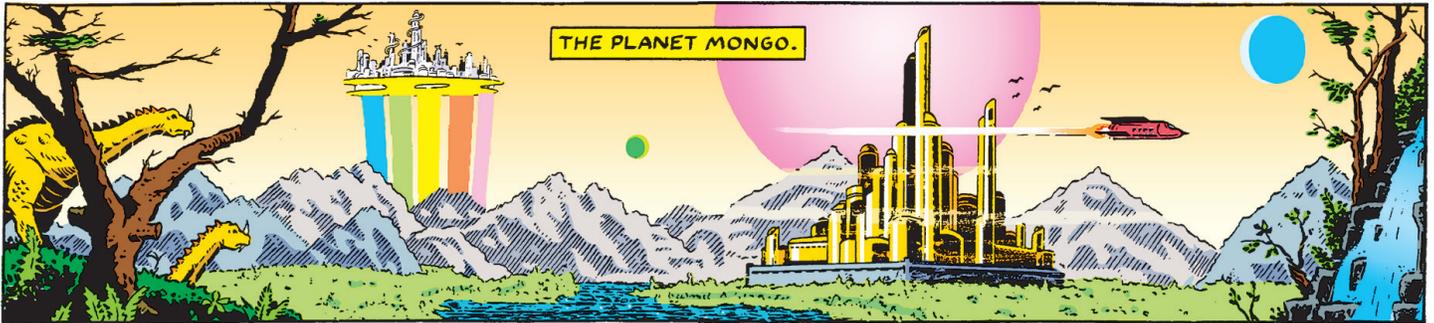
3. Stir in parsley flakes, black pepper, bacon bits and Parmesan cheese. Lower heat and continue cooking until mixture thickens and is heated through, stirring occasionally. Makes 4 (1 1/4-cup) servings.

• Each serving equals: 169 calories, 1g fat, 11g protein, 29g carb., 328mg sodium, 3g fiber; Diabetic Exchanges: 1 Fat-Free Milk, 1 Starch, 1 Vegetable.

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FLASH GORDON By JIM KEEFE
2-7

FLASHBACK:
WITH DALE BEING HELD PRISONER IN THE CAPITAL BELOW, FLASH DEFENDS MINGO CITY FROM A SQUADRON OF FIGHTERS.

FLASH IS HIT!

HIS SHIP FLOUNPERS, THEN PLUMMETS.

FROM THE WRECKAGE OF A NEARBY SHIP A FIGURE EMERGES...
PRINCE THUN.

THE LION MAN PAUSES, EXPECTING TO FIND ONE OF MING'S MEN, HE'S TAKEN ABACK BY THE SIGHT OF THE WHITE-SKINNED YOUTH.

AS FLASH COMES TO, HE EXPLAINS HIS DIRE SITUATION.
A BOND IS MADE.

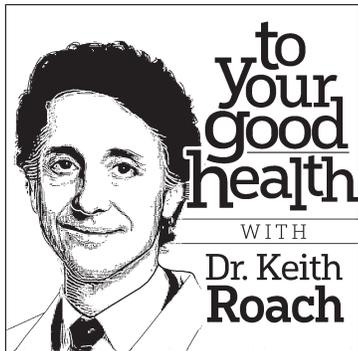
UNITING AGAINST A COMMON FOE, THE DUO BRAVE THE CATACOMBS BENEATH MING'S FORTRESS IN HOPES OF RESCUING DALE.

TO BE CONT'D ~

Play Better Golf with JACK NICKLAUS

BECAUSE A BALL HIT FROM LONG, WET OR FLUFFY GRASS CARRIES LESS BACKSPIN, IT FLIES LOWER AND ROLLS FARTHER THAN NORMAL. LEARN HOW TO ADJUST FOR SUCH "FLIER" SITUATIONS.

ONE WAY IS TO SWING BACK AND DOWN MORE STEEPLY TO MINIMIZE THE EFFECT OF GRASS COMING BETWEEN BALL AND CLUBFACE. ANOTHER IS TO PLAY A HIGHER FADING TYPE OF SHOT. HOWEVER, THE EASIEST WAY FOR AVERAGE PLAYERS IS SIMPLY TO TAKE LESS CLUB AND ALLOW FOR MORE ROLL.



Childhood Vaccinations Still Mostly Effective

DEAR DR. ROACH: I am in my mid-50s and in good health (I don't take any medications). I rarely get sick with colds or flu. I have been vaccinated with all the common vaccinations for our childhood. With all the immigrants coming into our country, I am wondering if any have been given childhood vaccinations in their countries. I fear that chickenpox, measles, etc., could re-enter this country. If so, do our childhood vaccinations still protect us from these diseases? Should seniors be re-vaccinated or is that harmful at our age? — C.S.

ANSWER: Legal immigrants into the U.S. are required to have all vaccinations as recommended by the Advisory Committee for Immunization Practices.

Undocumented immigrants are more difficult to study, but what data there is suggests that vaccination rates are roughly the same in the countries of origin of many undocumented immigrants as in the United States. In fact, several Central American countries have higher vaccination rates than the U.S. currently.

Analysis of outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases have suggested that most of these outbreaks have come from visitors (Americans or foreign visitors) from countries with high levels of ongoing transmission who spread the disease to others during their infectious period. Because there are some communities where there are enough unvaccinated people due to medical reasons, personal choice or ineffective vaccination to allow spread of the disease, there continues to be ongoing infection in the U.S. This is especially true of measles.

People born before 1957 are generally considered to be immune to measles, and the vast majority have had chickenpox. People born between 1963 and 1967 (that might be you) are at risk for having had ineffective measles vaccination, and those at risk should check their immunization status and may need revaccination, especially those in an area near an outbreak.

DEAR DR. ROACH: I read your recent column on vaginal estrogen. Based on plants such as soy, bioidentical hormones are a safe solution for older people that provide sexual rejuvenation. You should spread the word! — P.F.

ANSWER: I appreciate your passion, but there are several problems with your statement.

First, the bioidentical female hormone in humans is estradiol, which is available only by a prescription. It remains my choice for women who need hormone replacement, such as women with severe symptoms of menopause (replacement is given by mouth or patch), or for women with atrophic vaginitis (given vaginally, by cream, tablets or ring). It is certainly the most natural option.

Second, phytoestrogens (the soy-based hormones, such as isoflavones and lignans) have chemical structures similar to estradiol, but absolutely are not bioidentical. They have both estrogen and anti-estrogen properties. They may slightly reduce breast cancer risk, probably have no effect on endometrial cancer risk and probably do not increase clotting risk. However, for women with a history of breast cancer, many oncologists recommend against soy protein due to its estrogen activity. Some hematologists warn against these in people with history of abnormal blood clots.

The effect of phytoestrogens on sexual function has been studied, and a 2018 review showed that soy "had no promising effect" on sexual function. Of course, some women will have better effects than others.

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

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1. What was Wayne Newton's first No. 1 single?
2. Vicki Lawrence had a single hit. What was it?
3. Who sang the theme song in Clint Eastwood's 1971 film "Play Misty for Me"?
4. What was the original title of "Leaving on a Jet Plane"?
5. Name the song that contains this lyric: "Never been this blue, Never knew the meaning of a heartache, But then again, I've never lost at love before."

Answers

1. "Daddy, Don't You Walk So Fast," in 1972. The song topped the charts on Cashbox and in Canada. Newton has performed over 30,000 shows on the Las Vegas strip.
2. "The Night the Lights Went Out in Georgia," in 1973. Lawrence's successes were more in the television industry, mostly on "The Carol Burnett Show."
3. Johnny Mathis. His 1959 version was the favorite of all the covers at the time.
4. "Babe, I Hate to Go," as written by John Denver. It was Peter, Paul and Mary's version in 1969 that was the bigger hit.
5. "Stand Tall," by Burton Cummings, in 1976. Cummings, former lead singer of The Guess Who, wrote the song after breaking up with his girlfriend of nine years. He still tours, this year all across Canada.

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Just Like Cats & Dogs

by Dave T. Phipps



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GRIN and BEAR IT ^{by Wagner}



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"Mr. Figby, your wife wants you near enough to get her hands on you."

HOCUS-FOCUS

BY HENRY BOLTINOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.



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Differences: 1. Sale sign is added. 2. Button missing from woman's jacket. 3. Ceiling light is added. 4. Bowtie is missing. 5. Man's tie is white. 6. Row of rings is missing.

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- Fruit math: A tomato or an apple plus green bananas in a paper bag equals ripe bananas.

- Empty tissue boxes have so many uses. Try lining one with a plastic grocery bag and keeping it in your car for stray trash. Or you can use it to corral all of those plastic grocery bags until you need them — just stuff them in one at a time. Lastly, and probably my favorite: Cut out doors and windows to use as houses for kids' toys. Imagination makes the possibilities endless. — *JoAnn*

- “Jazz up your pancakes by adding pureed frozen blueberries or strawberries. It turns the mix either blue or red, and it's fun for the kiddos.” — *V.R. in Florida*

- “We are always prompted to choose strong passwords, but a random collection of letters, numbers and special symbols can be hard to remember. I make a strong password by using a cod-

ed phrase, like “My three boys are No. 1,” which might be “MY3boysR#1.” Just thought I'd share my trick, but not my password!” — *R.W. in Iowa*

- Keep a bottle of club soda handy for spot stains on carpets or upholstery. It's good for more than just drinks.

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

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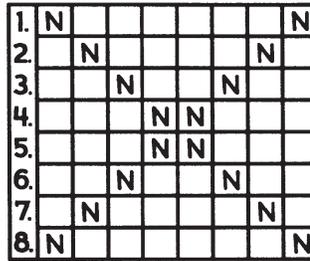
HOUSE HUNTERS! These two birds want to find two houses that are exactly alike. Can you spot them?

Answer: Houses 1 and 9.

Junior Whirl

by Charles Barry Townsend

FIND THE BIG WORDS!



Using the definitions and the anagrams below, find the eight eight-letter words that fit into the framework pictured on the left. For each definition, the letters in the two anagram words must be unscrambled and used to form the word asked for.

Illustrated by David Coulson

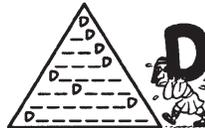
ONE, TWO, BUCKLE MY SHOE! In our AlphaMath puzzle, you must replace the letters with the digits 0, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9, so that you have a correct addition problem. The same letters get the same digits. Try to get the highest possible total.



Our answer: J=5, U=2, M=7, P=0, R=4, O=6, E=3, G=9, A=8 (5270 + 4603 = 9873).

THE "D" PYRAMID! As you move down the word pyramid show here, each word contains the same letters as the word above it, plus a new letter. We give you all the D's. Here are some hints from the top down.

1. Roman numeral 500 (in place).
2. State abbr.
3. To free from.
4. Dry climate.
5. N. African currency.
6. Confer holy orders on.
7. Type of motor.
8. One who is suave.



Answers: The words are: D, ID (dah), rd, ard, dinar, ordain, inboard, debonair.

DEFINITIONS:

1. A brief, informal letter.
2. Grinding your teeth.
3. To formally accuse.
4. What the horse did.
5. Little old ladies.
6. A string of words.
7. What a baker does.
8. Fierce medieval fighter.

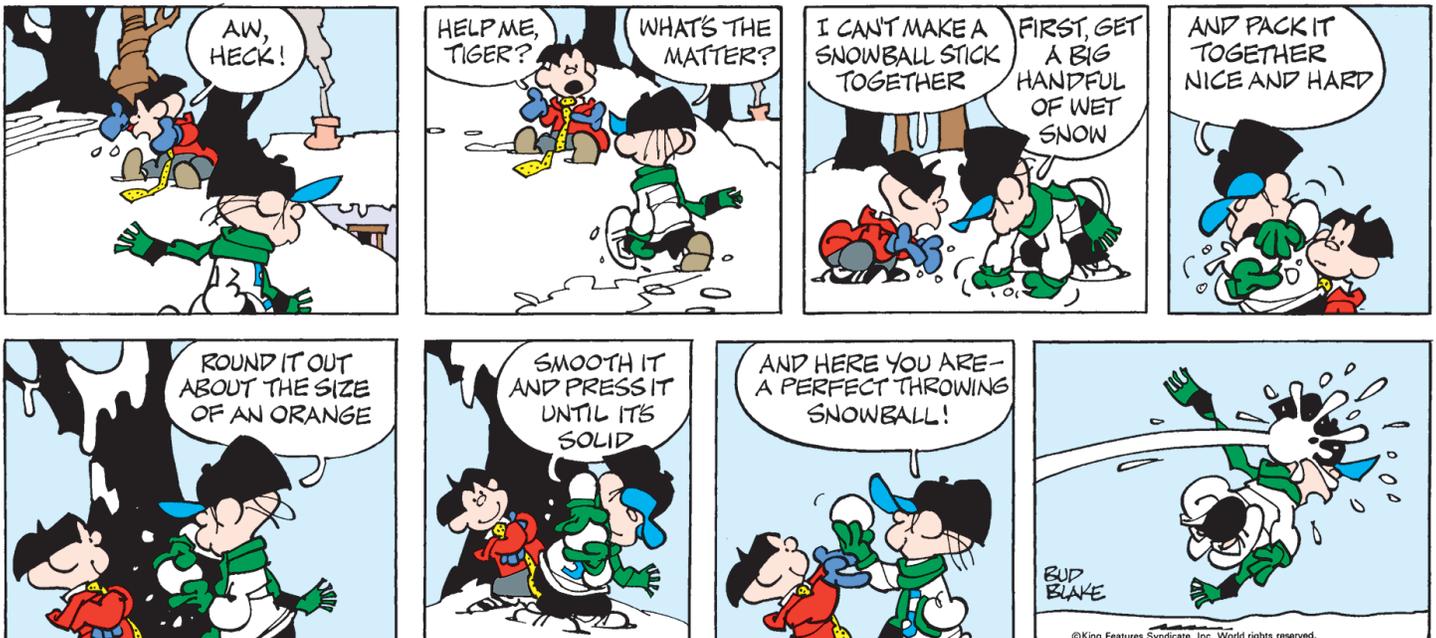
ANAGRAMS:

- anti + toon
- sing + hang
- cede + noun
- hind + wine
- rein + snag
- cent + seen
- king + dean
- sane + morn

Answers: 1. Notation; 2. Gashing; 3. Denounce; 4. Whinied; 5. Granules; 6. Sentence; 7. Kneading; 8. Norseman.

TIGER

by BUD BLAKE



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King Crossword

ACROSS

- 1 Seize
- 5 Butte's kin
- 9 Cardinal cap letters
- 12 "Othello" villain
- 13 In — (lined up)
- 14 Weeding tool
- 15 Reality show for aspiring entrepreneurs
- 17 PC key
- 18 Minor quibbles
- 19 Hospital sections
- 21 Type of beam
- 24 Pack (down)
- 25 Reverberate
- 26 Rubber

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8		9	10	11
12					13					14		
15				16						17		
			18					19	20			
21	22	23					24					
25					26	27					28	29
30				31						32		
33			34						35			
		36						37				
38	39					40	41					
42				43	44					45	46	47
48				49					50			
51				52						53		

- wedge, say
- 30 Small battery
- 31 All better
- 32 Actress Thurman
- 33 Hoedown musicians
- 35 Author Harte
- 36 Seeing things
- 37 Tubular pasta
- 38 Tribal emblem
- 40 Coffee, slangily
- 42 Mess up
- 43 Temporary
- 48 GPS suggestion
- 49 Last write-up
- 50 Despot
- 51 British verb

- ending
 - 52 Zilch
 - 53 Bigfoot's cousin
- DOWN**
- 1 USO audience
 - 2 Fan's cry
 - 3 Khan title
 - 4 Third-largest island
 - 5 "The Martian" actor Damon
 - 6 Historic periods
 - 7 Junior
 - 8 Clumsy
 - 9 Mountain road feature
 - 10 Snitched
 - 11 Reply to "Shall we?"
 - 16 White wine cocktail
 - 20 Mornings (Abbr.)
 - 21 Piece of lettuce
 - 22 Exotic berry
 - 23 Elm, for one
 - 24 Low digits
 - 26 Union payment
 - 27 Bruins legend
 - 28 Portent
 - 29 Canape spread
 - 31 South Carolina uni-

- iversity
- 34 Decorate Easter eggs
- 35 Actor Warren
- 37 Beetle Bailey's rank (Abbr.)
- 38 Garr of "Tootsie"
- 39 Scraps
- 40 Unite
- 41 Museo display
- 44 Showtime rival
- 45 Jargon suffix
- 46 Squealer
- 47 Hosp. scan

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— King Crossword —

Answers

Solution time: 23 mins.

G	R	A	B		M	E	S	A		S	T	L	
I	A	G	O		A	R	O	W		H	O	E	
S	H	A	R	K	T	A	N	K		A	L	T	
			N	I	T	S		W	A	R	D	S	
L	A	S	E	R				T	A	M	P		
E	C	H	O		D	O	O	R	S	T	O	P	
A	A	A		C	U	R	E	D		U	M	A	
F	I	D	D	L	E	R	S			B	R	E	T
		E	Y	E	S				P	E	N	N	E
T	O	T	E	M		J	A	V	A				
E	R	R			S	H	O	R	T	T	E	R	M
R	T	E			O	B	I	T		T	S	A	R
I	S	E			N	O	N	E		Y	E	T	I

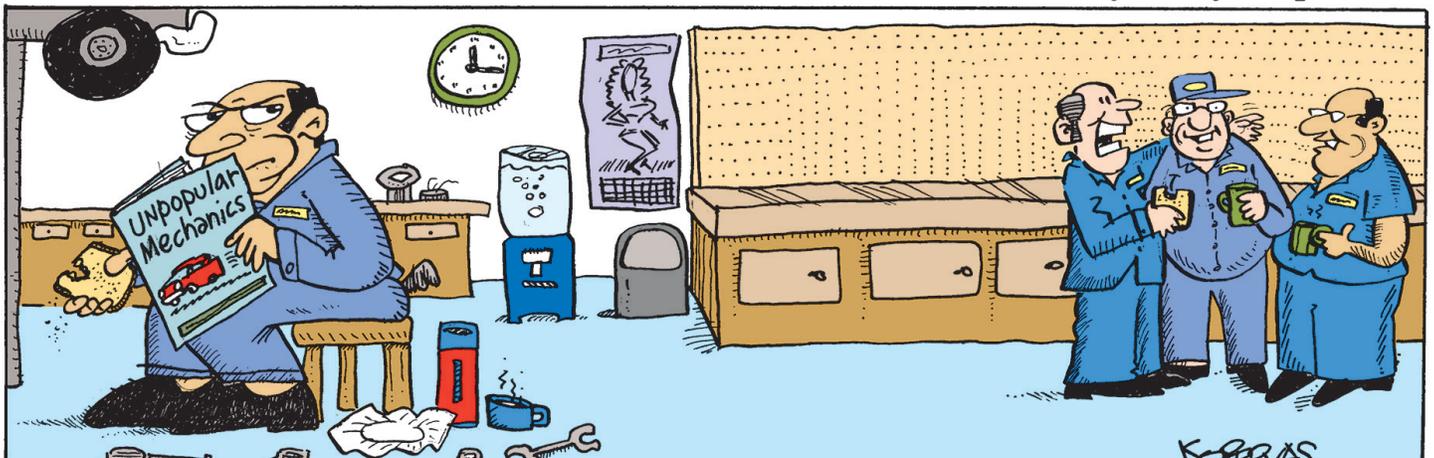
LAFF - A - DAY



"Now we know what that funny little plug was."

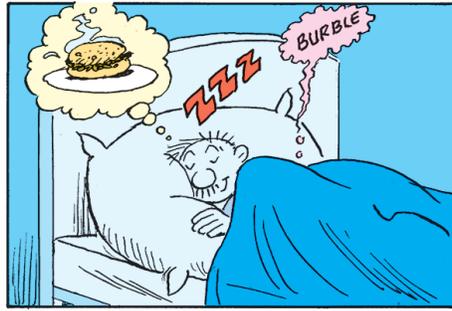
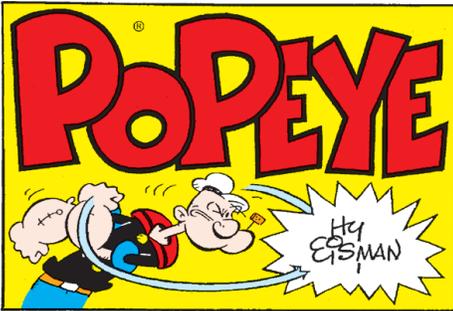
Out on a Limb

by Gary Kopervas



Groton Daily Independent

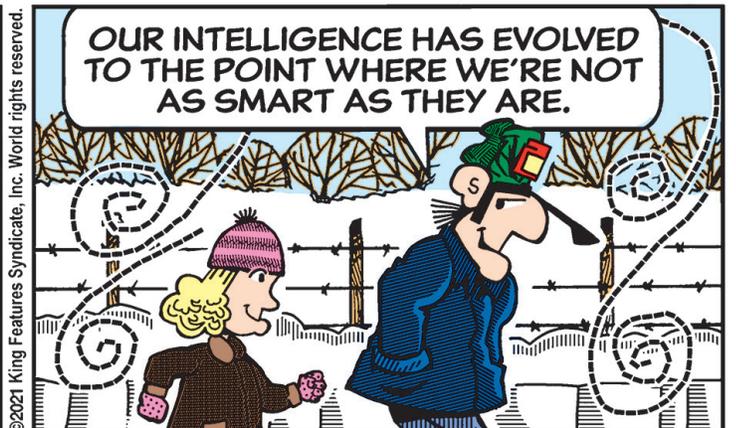
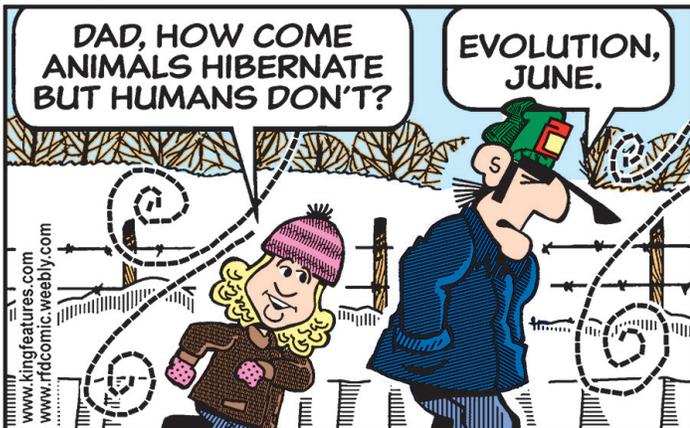
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R.F.D.

by Mike Marland



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Hal Foster's BY GIANNI AND SCHULTZ
Prince Valiant

Our Story:

FROM SOMEWHERE HIGH ABOVE, IG, GAWAIN AND TROLLENBERG RAIN CRUSHING BOULDERS ON THE CAVE CREATURE.



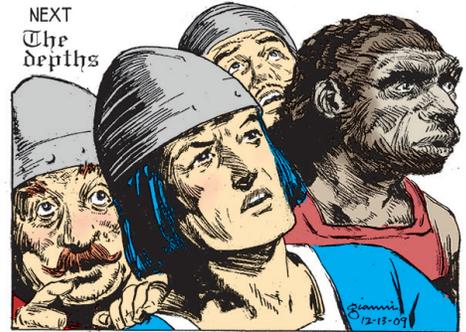
THE MONSTER THRASHES, GIVING VAL A SPLIT SECOND TO UNSHEATH HIS SINGING SWORD AND DELIVER THE COUP DE GRÂCE.



SOON, HIS FRIENDS HELP EXTRACT HIM FROM UNDER THE OOZING CORPSE. 'I SAW MY LIFE PASS BEFORE ME, GAWAIN...'

"... AND IT WAS NOT PRETTY..." BUT BEFORE VAL CAN FINISH— A SHOCKING ECHO CUTS HIM SHORT.

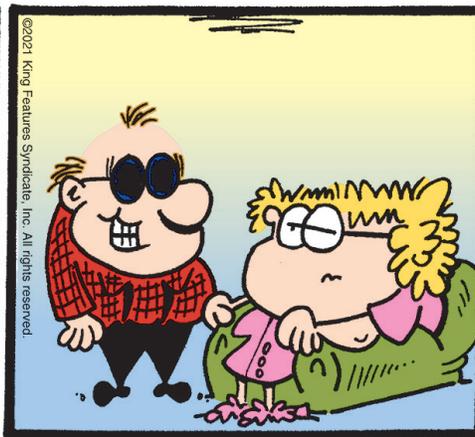
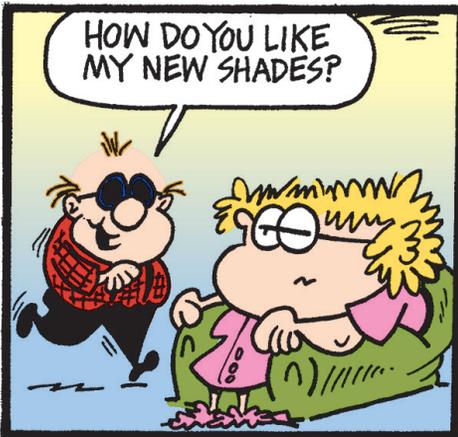
HELP!



NEXT
The depths

The Spats

by Jeff Pickering



SENIOR NEWS LINE

by Matilda Charles

Another COVID Scam

You know it's getting bad when local police chiefs go on the nightly news to warn against scams. That's what is happening in my area, and possibly in yours. Scammers are going all out to steal your information, money and identity, and they're using the COVID vaccine as their tool.

A few weeks ago, the scammers' tactic was to claim we were eligible for a special COVID Medicare card. The card doesn't exist. So many of us might have said that in response to the frequent phone calls that the scammers changed tactics. Now they claim to have an appointment for you to get the COVID vaccine.

Here's how it works: A scammer will claim to be calling from your doctor's office, without actually naming the doctor. All they need from you, they say, is your Medicare card number and possibly your bank account or Social Security number "for identification." Your best bet is to just hang up. But if you ask for the name of the doctor, they won't know it. It's the same with hospitals and clinics.

If you're not sure whether the call is fake, hang up and call your doctor, the hospital or clinic, and ask if they've tried to contact you.

Scammers also are using different tactics: telling you they can fit you into a quick appointment, saying they're from Medicare or your insurance provider, sending you an email that indicates you can get a fast appointment reservation by calling their special phone number, or offering you the vaccine at a "reduced cost" (the vaccines are free). Some of them actually offer to mail the vaccine to you.

Don't fall for any of these scams. If you need help signing up online for an appointment, call your doctor's office or the senior center. Don't give scammers any information, not even your name.

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1. Who was the trainer of Triple Crown-winning racehorses Gallant Fox (1930) and Omaha (1935)?

2. It's tradition for Notre Dame Fighting Irish football players to touch a sign posted in Notre Dame Stadium before taking the field. What does the sign read?

3. What former NFL defensive lineman played the role of Sloth in the 1985 adventure comedy film "The Goonies"?

4. What American female distance runner won the Boston Marathon in 1979 and '83, and won the gold medal in the marathon at the 1984 Los Angeles Summer Olympics?

5. What cross-country skiing distance race, first held in 1973, is traditionally run every February in northern Wisconsin?

6. What Boston Celtics player suffered a season-ending knee injury



by Ryan A. Berenz

attempting a dunk after the whistle in the final minutes of a 97-84 loss to the Indiana Pacers in 2007?

7. What NHL defenseman, who played with the Montreal Canadiens and Colorado Avalanche from 1990-2009, raced in the NASCAR Canadian Tire Series from 2009-15?

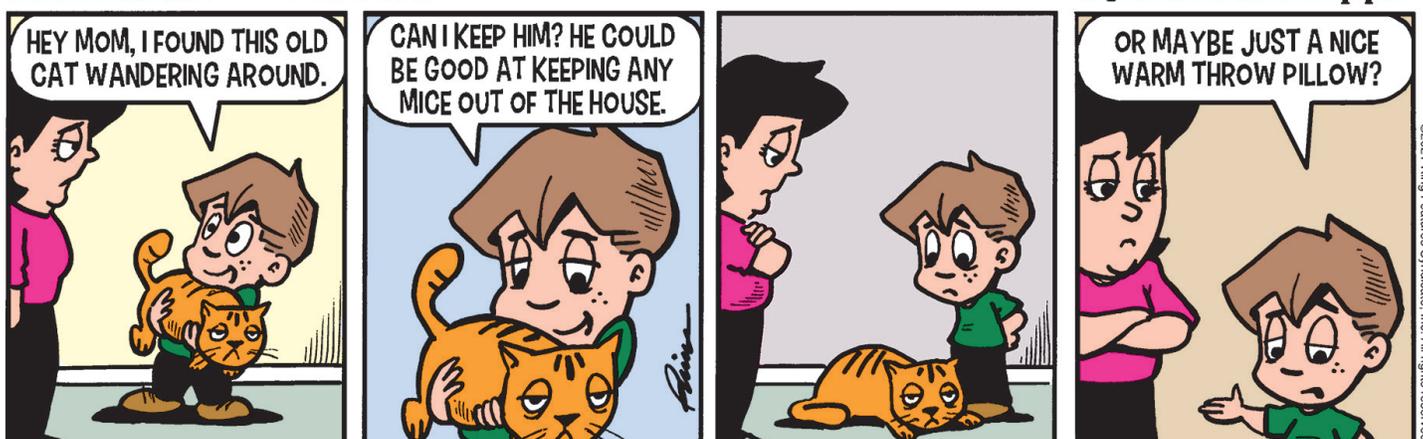
Answers

1. James "Sunny Jim" Fitzsimmons.
2. "Play like a champion today."
3. John Matuszak.
4. Joan Benoit.
5. The American Birkebeiner.
6. Tony Allen.
7. Patrice Brisebois.

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Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps





Neighbor's Dog Is Giving Him the Eye

DEAR PAW'S CORNER: My neighbor's dog, every day since I moved into this house in rural New York, has a habit of coming up to the property line when I go out to check on my garden. She will stand right at the edge, lift a paw, bark at me, then turn around and leave. What's up with that behavior? — *Jim G., via email*

DEAR JIM: That sounds like a well-behaved, well-trained dog. Or, your next-door neighbor has, or had, a low-power wire along the property edge that delivers a shock to a dog when it crosses the line. Whatever it is, she was trained not to cross into the neighbor's yard.

I like that you noted her body mannerisms. Raising a paw is a signal that she is alerted and checking you out. A nonaggressive bark is an attention signal. It's something like, "I see you, and

I want you to know that I've got my eye on you." And her turning back after that bark is a good sign. She doesn't see you as a threat. She's said her piece, and now she's off on her way.

Being aware of a dog's body language and barking is important even if you don't own a dog. A bark followed by a growl (or vice versa) is a warning signal meaning "back off." A raised paw and an intent stare at a specific object is typical of an alert and energetic but calm dog. A dog that charges and stops is being aggressive and there's a good chance that behavior can escalate into an attack.

If you get the opportunity to meet your neighbors, compliment them on their dog's good behavior.

Send your questions, comments or tips to ask@pawscorner.com.

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Strange BUT TRUE

By Lucie Winborne

- A team of Japanese scientists and engineers created a fire alarm for the deaf that works by spraying vaporized wasabi into the air — it will even wake them up if they're sleeping.

- Bees can fly higher than Mount Everest.

- In 1960, during a period of high tensions between Havana and Washington, a Cuban cow got hit by a chunk of a falling U.S. satellite. Islanders got a dig in at their American neighbors by parading another cow through the streets sporting a sign that read, "Eisenhower, you murdered one of my sisters!"

- Before trees existed, the earth was covered with giant white mushrooms.

- All astronauts going to the International Space Station have to learn to speak Russian, as the controls of their Soyuz spacecraft are in that language.

- Fried chicken originated in Scotland.

- Off-duty paramedic Matthew McKnight earned the dubious Guinness World Record for furthest distance thrown by a car when he was hit by a vehicle traveling 70 mph and was catapulted 118 feet. Amazingly, while he suffered serious injuries, he managed to recover.

- There is a Fictitious Athlete Hall of Fame. Inductees include Rocky Balboa, Mr. Miyagi and Happy Gilmore.

- You're more likely to be bitten by a human than a shark.

- Not that we think you'd actually drink this much, but 10 gallons of carrot juice will kill you. Its vitamin A content is high enough to make your brain swell, along with other nasty symptoms. By the way, you can also overdose on the vitamin by eating a pound of polar bear liver every day.

Thought for the Day: "Actually, in my opinion you never completely find yourself because you are always growing as a person and learning throughout your life. It is a process." — *Robert A. Bofman*

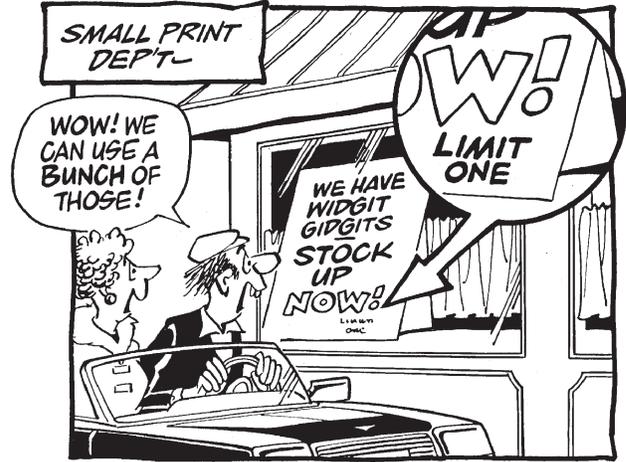
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THEY'LL DO IT EVERY TIME

BY AL SCADUTO

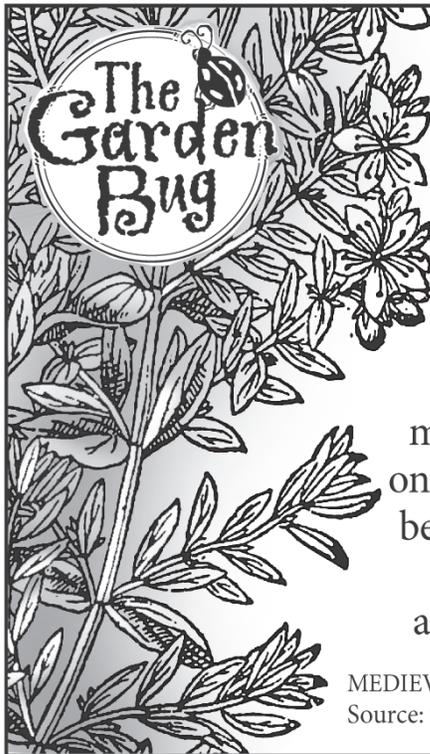


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BUSINESS HI-JINX - MISTER BIG HOTSHOT TRAVEL AGENT TAKES HIS THREE WEEKS OFF...

Thank to ADRIAN ALLEN, 22 SHARON CIRCLE, ROSSVILLE, GA.



Saint John's Wort

Traditionally, sprigs of this plant were harvested in June to honor St. John the Baptist, then hung near a painting or statue of him in the home to protect it from evil spirits. As a garden plant, it performs best in fertile soils with ample moisture, but can tolerate drier conditions once established. Saint John's Wort has long been used in healing treatments for kidney ailments, insomnia, depression, lung ailments and in wound care. - Brenda Weaver

MEDIEVAL WOOD CUT
Source: www.thespruce.com



by Freddy Groves

Internet Access for Veterans

Fifteen percent of veterans do not have an internet connection, limiting their access to Department of Veterans Affairs video telehealth services. But no longer. The VA's new Digital Divide Consult has geared up to help over 12,000 eligible veterans so far.

If you're a veteran living in a rural area, have limited broadband service, don't have a device with video, have a serious medical condition or are in temporary housing, you can get help with internet access and devices.

But there's more:

If you're part of a HUD-VA program, you can receive a smartphone to reach telehealth.

If you use TracFone SafeLink, T-Mobile (was Sprint) or Verizon, you can hook up with VA Video Connect health care without incurring data charges on your bill. Go to mobile.va.gov/app/va-video-connect for details. The VA will even do a test call before your visit to check your connection.

If you're in a rural area or don't have broadband at home, the VA has coordinated with various groups and businesses to create locations for you to use for talking privately to your health care providers. The American Legion, VFW and certain Walmarts are part of the Accessing Telehealth through Local Area Stations (ATLAS) program. Go to connectedcare.va.gov/partners/atlas for locations near you.

The Microsoft Airband Initiative is charged with creating broadband (high speed) in rural areas. Look at microsoft.com/corporate-responsibility/airband. (While you're there, check into the Microsoft Software & Systems Academy, 18 weeks of training for high-paying jobs.)

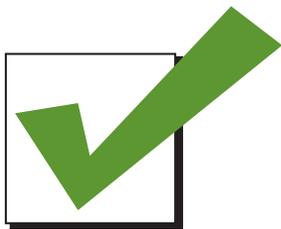
Additionally, you could be eligible for the FCC's Lifeline program, which subsidizes broadband and phone service for low-income veterans and veterans who get the following: Medicaid, SNAP, SSI, pension and survivors benefits, and more. Check lifelinesupport.org or call 800-234-9473.

Get started by contacting a VA social worker, who will have all the details and can determine your eligibility.

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



Amplifying Voices of South Dakota

By Congressman Dan Newhouse (WA-04)

By now, many of us understand that President Biden's Executive Order to halt the Keystone XL Pipeline is going to have disastrous effects on our nation's economy, energy security, and thousands of American jobs. By terminating the Pipeline, we are even risking our international standing and relationship with our Canadian neighbors who have also invested billions of dollars and years of design and permitting to accomplish a first-of-its-kind, innovative oil pipeline – the safest way we have to transfer oil and natural gas resources.

Representative Dusty Johnson understands that we can talk about numbers all day long, but the impacts of this Executive Order go way beyond that. Like a ripple effect, it will impact nearly every American and particularly those in the rural communities who rely on the Pipeline, the workers, and the economic activity that comes along with them. The sense of community that we cherish in rural America is being damaged as pipeline employees are forced to leave their small towns, and the stability that was guaranteed by dozens of local, state, and federal permits, environmental reviews, and court decisions is gone.

The Congressional Western Caucus is a group composed of Members from across the United States who proudly serve as a voice for rural America. As Chairman of the Western Caucus, I work with Members, like Representative Johnson, to amplify the voices of those who feel they have been ignored by the federal government for far too long. That is why I was grateful that Representative Kelly Armstrong (R-ND) and I were invited to his roundtable in Philip to hear directly from the community members, small business owners, and families who have been impacted by the President's Keystone XL Pipeline decision.

The stories that were shared around the table in Philip were heartbreaking. Tricia Burns, who owns Ignite Wellness Studio, said something that really stuck with me: "We get caught up in dollars and cents, we get caught up in money, we get caught up in the economy – but behind it all, there are human lives that are being destroyed." She is exactly right, and in order to be effective in Washington, D.C., we have to hear and share these stories.

For South Dakotans, Keystone represents more than just jobs for pipeline workers. It represents an opportunity to modernize our energy infrastructure and strengthen local economies. It represents an opportunity to reinvigorate the small towns where pipeline workers live and work. It represents an opportunity to build upon a strong energy industry and a commitment from the federal government to invest in these communities. On his first day in the White House – with the flick of a pen – President Biden eliminated these opportunities.

Can you imagine if President Trump had unilaterally made the decision to kill thousands of American jobs amidst a global pandemic? It would be a national outrage. Well, we understand that President Biden's actions are indeed a national outrage, felt by the communities along the Keystone XL Pipeline and beyond.

America needs to keep hearing from the people of South Dakota. I know Representative Johnson will continue to make sure the voices and the stories we listened to at the roundtable continue to be heard in the nation's capital. We will continue to work together through our efforts in the Western Caucus to strengthen the rural communities of South Dakota and across the country by promoting a strong domestic energy sector, inspiring American innovation and creating good-paying jobs, and ensuring that President Biden understands the true impacts of his reckless executive actions.

Dan Newhouse represents Washington's 4th Congressional District in Congress and currently serves as Chairman of the Congressional Western Caucus. He is a third-generation farmer from Central Washington and previously served as Director of the Washington State Department of Agriculture.



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South Dakota Governor

Kristi Noem



South Dakota: *Under God, the People Rule*

Safe and Effective Medicinal Marijuana

Whenever our state faces a major policy change, it's the role of the state government to ensure that it is implemented and regulated in a way that best benefits the people of South Dakota. Our role is to create and administer a program that operates safely and effectively. This past week, legislative leaders and I announced our plan to guarantee a safe and effective program for medicinal marijuana.

This past Fall, voters strongly supported access to medicinal marijuana in our state. We're committed to respecting that vote, and it's our role to make sure that South Dakota patients have access to safe and accessible medicinal marijuana. In doing so, we will be taking into consideration every aspect of this major cultural shift.

Since starting to tackle this issue, the more that we've dug into it, the more that we've realized that there are still questions that need to be answered before this program takes effect. We know that we're not experts in this area, so we contracted with the nation's leading consultant – the folks at Cannabis Public Policy Consulting – to help us understand how to best implement this program. Our experts told us that they had never seen a safe and effective program stood up in under 8 months, the timeline set up by Initiated Measure (IM 26). In other states, it took much longer – even up to 2 or 3 years – to do this right. So this week, we announced our plan to do this right.

Our plan does two things. First, it gives us additional flexibility on the implementation timeline. The medicinal marijuana program will take effect on July 1, 2022. Additionally, our plan sets up an interim committee to meet between now and next legislative session to address the wide-ranging questions that we still have and the diverse policy decisions that should be open for public input.

IM 26 did not cover all the areas that need to be addressed to implement this program effectively. In other areas, we have concerns with what IM 26 put into place. Should cities or the state have oversight over licensed establishments, and to what extent? What testing do we need to do to ensure that products are safe for human consumption, and who is charged with testing? Should marijuana be allowed to be grown at home, as is permitted under IM 26? What will the taxation system look like? What will the system look like for students taking medicinal marijuana in school? And so on.

We are committed to getting this done. And we are committed to getting this done right. It will take time to implement a safe and effective system, and we are going to take the time that it requires. The people of South Dakota deserve nothing less.

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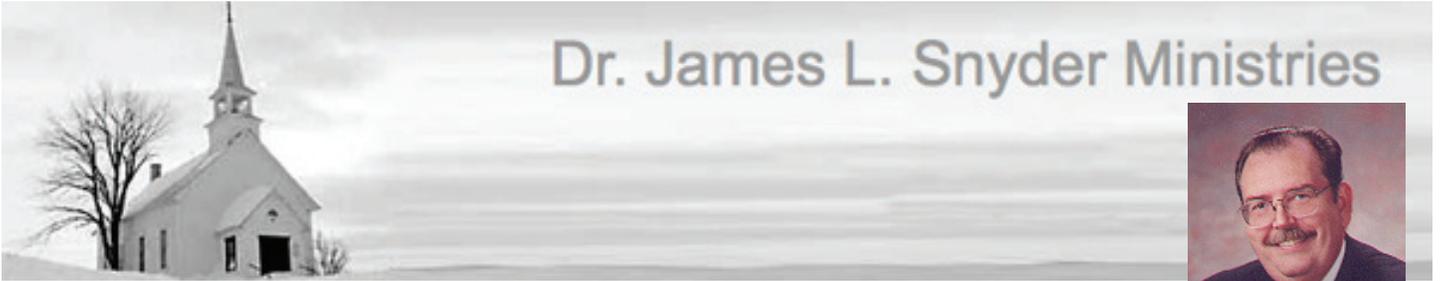
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If It Was Up To Me

Fifty years ago, I was a teenager. Boy, do I miss those Days of Yore. It's not that I would like to relive them, but I was a much different person back then.

As a teenager, I knew everything, and all you had to do was ask me. Even if you didn't ask me, I still would tell you what was on my mind. I wished I knew everything today because people are asking me questions I can't even answer.

A teenager is someone between being a baby and being an adult. I sure don't want to be a baby, and I've had misgivings about becoming an adult. An adult has all kinds of responsibilities, of which none define the term "let's have fun."

One of the marvelous things about being a teenager is that you really don't know what's going on in the world. When I was a teenager, television wasn't the big thing it is today. And we didn't have the Internet with all of the social media associated with it. I could go a whole week and not know what was going on out in the world.

If you would watch the TV news at night, which I did very rarely, in under 30 minutes they could tell you everything going on in the world. Now, the news needs a 24/7 platform, and even then, they can't get all of the news out there.

A characteristic of a teenager is that they don't know what they don't know. And what they don't know doesn't interest them at all. Those were the good old days.

Back in those days, NEWS meant Nothing Ever Worth Seeing. And I lived by that rule.

Today, however, is a little bit different for me. At the end of the day, I like to sit in my easy chair with a nice hot cup of coffee and try to catch up with the news. To catch up with the news is like spilling Ketchup on your shirt while eating a hot dog. It's there, but it disgusts you.

Towards the end of last week, I came home from the office, situated myself in my easy chair with my coffee, and began watching the news. It went from one story to another story, and it was hard to tell the difference between any of them.

It was almost as entertaining as watching the Three Stooges. Political stooges, however, repeat the same thing over and over and over again. Before they go into office, I think our politicians need to sit down and have a 24-hour binge-watching the Three Stooges. Not that they would learn anything, but it might give us 24 hours of peace.

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To say I was getting a little irritated is to put it rather mildly. It's not often that I get irritated at anything, but watching the news really made me irritated that night. Maybe it was because I had a hard week or something, I'm not sure. But I was irritated.

Finally, the Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage joined me, and I could hold it back no longer.

Taking a deep breath, raising my right fist, I said, "If it were only up to me. I'd fix that problem. What's wrong with those stupid politicians?"

When I calmed down a little bit, I heard some chuckling across the room. I'm not used to hearing chuckling across the room, and so I did not know what was going on. I looked, and wouldn't you know it, it was the Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage laughing.

"What are you laughing about?"

Looking at me, still chuckling, she said, "Are you sure you could fix that problem?"

I wasn't quite sure what she was getting at, and at this point, I was not going to jeopardize my happiness by asking her to explain what she just said.

I did not have to ask her because as she cooled down her chuckling, she began to explain why she was chuckling. I didn't want to hear it.

"If you can fix that problem," she said, still chuckling, "I have a list of problems that I would like you to fix." With that said, she continued chuckling.

At the time, I did not find it worth chuckling, but I did realize I had dug a hole that I'm not going to get out of very easily.

Still chuckling, she continued, "Which problem would you like to start with? You can pick whichever one you want."

Trying to smile as best I could, which at the time was quite tricky, I said, "I was just speaking parenthetically. I'm just a little upset that our politicians don't do the work that they say they're going to do."

"That's okay, and I understand," my wife said, "you now can set the example by taking this list and begin fixing one problem after another."

This is why I am very careful what I say out loud. Somebody is always listening.

As we were sitting there, I was reminded of what that wise old King Solomon once said. "In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise" (Proverbs 10:19).

Solomon had more wives than I can count, and perhaps that was why he came to this wonderful piece of wisdom. It's easy to say something, but once you do, you can never unsay it.

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#356 in a series

Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

This is a weekend, but even so, things look pretty good. There were just 85,900 new case reports today. That brings our total cases to 27,616,800, which is 0.3% more than yesterday. A really positive development is that yesterday our seven-day new-case average in the US, that is, the average number of new cases reported over the past week, dropped below 100,000 for the first time in nearly 100 days. The last time we were below 100,000 was on November 5, we peaked at 259,564 on January 8, and yesterday we were at 99,565. There's a trend I could get behind, although we should remember that prior to this fall surge, our record day was 75,000 and change, so we've a ways to go to get back there. Hospitalizations continue to decline. We're now at 71,497.

I figured out the source of the data anomaly around deaths yesterday. Ohio found a bunch of deaths that didn't get fed into the national reporting system at the time they occurred, some 4000 of them. They had them tallied, but they were not appearing in the official numbers we've been evaluating. The 600+ I knew about and commented on yesterday were actually added on Thursday; it looks like another close to 2500 were added yesterday. That's enough to account for the spike we saw yesterday. It's nice to have that sorted out; this is the sort of thing that nags at me. For today, we're now up to 484,031 deaths in the US from this virus, 0.7% more than yesterday. There were 3389 deaths reported today, but I had a look, and it appears Ohio dumped in another thousand or so today. I'll keep an eye on them yet tomorrow, but I think we've accounted for most of those they'd discovered, so today or tomorrow may take care of the rest. Once those are all accounted for, we can go back to taking the numbers at face value.

Dated Thursday, although it didn't appear until yesterday, the UK Health Service posted an article to its website with unwelcome news, consisting of "updated and additional analyses, which together strengthen the earlier finding of increased disease severity in people infected with VOC B.1.1.7 compared to other virus variants." That means there is growing support for thinking the B.1.1.7 (UK) variant of SARS-CoV-2 is causing more severe disease and more deaths; it is more virulent by a fair amount.

The published analysis compiles a fairly large number of reports from around the UK. They are giving a relative hazard of death ranging from 1.3 to 1.7, which translates to a variant 30 to 70 percent more lethal than the D614G variant we've been dealing with for months. So most folks are still going to survive, but considering this variant is estimated to be 30 to 50 (and higher in some estimates) percent more transmissible, so that there are likely to be more cases, the last thing we need is higher case fatality rates too. We should put in perspective that while this is still based on a small proportion of overall deaths, it does include about twice as many studies as earlier analyses and include a higher number of B.1.1.7 deaths than earlier estimates as well. That firms up the reliability of the estimates we're seeing. There is really no way this is good news.

A new Kaiser Family Foundation analysis of late January polling looks at vaccine hesitance in the US. The poll analyzed is one in which 31 percent of Americans said they will "wait until it has been available for a while to see how it is working for other people" before they'd be willing to get a vaccine themselves. The analysis points out that this group consists of people who would make "an important target for outreach and messaging," which is what the analysis is all about—what it would take to persuade some of them to be vaccinated. The concerns expressed by this group are around safety and long-term effects of vaccines and the perception that they do not have enough information about the vaccines. Sixty percent of this group did not know someone who'd been vaccinated; it seems reasonable to believe some of them may be persuadable as that situation changes, as more of their friends and neighbors do receive vaccine. 61 percent said they would be more likely to get vaccinated if they believed vaccinating most people would be the fastest way to return to normal life. 51 percent said learning millions of people had been safely vaccinated would help to convince them. 37 percent said they would be more willing if they knew a family member or friend was vaccinated. There was fairly thorough analysis of partisanship and race/ethnicity in this relatively young and diverse group with a view to determining what sorts of messages might be most effective. This sort of work is going to become increasingly important as we move through vaccinating the

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eager and willing and need to find ways to increase the proportion of the population that is willing to be vaccinated. The poll under analysis here showed only 47 percent of Americans are willing to be vaccinated now or already have been vaccinated, so there are many in the “wait and see” group, 13 percent in the “definitely not” group, and 7 percent in the “only if required” group. Lots of hurdles here, considering we need something between 70 and 85 percent vaccinated to reach effective herd immunity.

This whole effort is particularly important when we realize that, according to projections from the Institute of Health Metrics and Evaluation at the University of Washington, if we can get 145 million adults vaccinated by June 1, we could prevent 114,000 deaths—unless, of course, a new variant throws a spanner into our works. I guess time will tell about that; but the vaccination effort is really critical to reducing loss of life, as well as illness, hospitalization, and long-term effects of infection. Then there’s the whole saving-the-economy thing hanging over our heads too.

Oxford University, which partnered with AstraZeneca on one of the leading vaccine candidates, has started testing its vaccine in children down to the age of 6. They have 300 participants, ages 6 to 17, enrolled in a trial which will administer the vaccine to 240 of these participants. Those not receiving Covid-19 vaccine will receive a meningitis vaccine proven safe in children, but which mimics the side effects of the Covid-19 vaccine. This is a preliminary study, although it should be noted that no one expects full-blown phase 3-type trials to occur in children. What is typical in testing an established vaccine in a new population group is a smaller-scale trial designed differently and, especially when the trial is in children who, for the most part, do not suffer severe disease, very focused on safety. It is important to note that, even though it is generally thought children are about half as likely as adults to spread this virus, that’s still a whole lot of transmission; so we really do need to include vaccines in these younger age groups as part of our response strategy.

An interesting phenomenon we knew was coming has arrived. We have something like 63 vaccines in some stage of clinical trials around the world. The companies developing them are running into trouble accessing supplies. The makers of the already-approved vaccines have scooped up the world’s supplies of all kinds of reagents and materials needed in manufacture, even of vials and stoppers and such. This is making it difficult to scale up production with long waits on orders from vendors. And another difficulty is of an ethical nature: Is it ethical to run a placebo trial of an unproven vaccine when we know there are effective vaccines on the market? How do you deliberately deny some of your trial participants access to a proven thing in the interest of science?

And yet, this isn’t just in the interest of random scientific curiosity. We need more vaccines—not just more doses, but more alternatives. It could be one—more than one—of these 63 candidates is more effective in one age group or another or less likely to stimulate an allergic response or easier to store and transport or requiring fewer doses or having fewer side effects or cheaper. Maybe one of them is less susceptible to the kinds of viral mutations we see showing up: only one way to find out. And we need more doses too; more companies with vaccines means more production facilities running full-tilt pumping the stuff out. To some extent, existing companies without viable candidates of their own are going to work helping the established companies to produce and package vaccine. We talked a few days ago about Merck, one of the world’s preeminent vaccine producers whose candidates both failed, partnering to do fill and finish for another company. We may see more of that going forward; but I have a strong belief we need more of these other candidates to get through their trials and those which are safe and effective to see authorization and production. We have nine billion people to vaccinate across the world, and no one is safe until everyone is safe.

One potential alternative to placebo-controlled trials is the kind of trial where you vaccinate every participant and then compare their antibody responses to those elicited by proven vaccines. The problem with that sort of thing at the moment is we do not yet know enough about the character of those effective responses to run a legitimate comparison. We’re still working on what are called correlates of protection—known indicators of immunity that we can measure. When we know that, we can look for those correlates in the trial participants and make the comparison; but we are likely months away from being ready to do that. And regulators haven’t had much to say about just what sort of trial would be acceptable to them in

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terms of proving efficacy. Lots to see here as this develops. I'll be watching with some interest.

I received a question about a drug called budesonide a few days ago; this is an already-licensed drug currently used for asthma, and there's been some talk about it possibly being an effective therapeutic for some cases of Covid-19. I wrote about it back in July in my Update #149 posted on July 21 at <https://www.facebook.com/marie.schwabmiller/posts/3792961134053598>. I hadn't seen much news since until a few days ago (which news I'm going to guess is what occasioned the question) when a very small study surfaced, part of the STerOids in COVID-19 (STOIC) study, which seems to indicate there is a benefit to patients if the drug is given early in the course of infection. I read a paper in preprint (so not yet peer-reviewed). It should be noted that there were only 146 participants in the study, but results were promising. What needs to happen next if this holds up to peer review is a larger randomized trial so that we can be sure what we think we see is what we actually see—which is a large part of most scientific research, stuff you do to make sure you're not fooling yourself. There is potential here, so we'll stay tuned for that too.

Alondra Carmona is a high school senior in Houston. She wants to be a physician. No one in her family has ever been to college, but she is an accomplished senior, so she has long had a plan to be the first. She did a six-week research internship studying cervical cancer at Rice University and wants to do research. Her particular interest is in neuroscience, and she thinks she wants to minor in Latin American studies. She got a part-time job last winter working at a fast-food restaurant, and as a result was able to help her mom out when she was injured and unable to work; then she set the rest of her paychecks aside for her college fund. She also applied to lots of schools for admission and for scholarships. Her savings grew, and then she heard she had been accepted at Barnard College, a school in New York City affiliated with Columbia University and which accepts only 11 percent of applicants. A great school, a great opportunity.

She told the Washington Post, "I was just really excited. It was just unbelievable because I really thought I was going to get rejected or deferred. I come from a really small school and I thought all the stuff that I did, it wasn't going to be enough." But nope, she was in. What's more, she was also awarded a partial scholarship. Now that wasn't enough to cover room and board, but she thought, if she added some extra hours at work, using the additional income to supplement the \$2000 she had saved up might get her close. She also had some hope the College might increase her scholarship offer, which would have made it more of a sure thing; but a week or so ago, they told her on a call that wasn't going to happen. Carmona said, "I muted myself so that he could not hear me cry." Still, she was going to give it everything she had to put the necessary money together.

Then last week her mom sat her and her sister down and told them something she'd been keeping from them because she hadn't wanted them to worry: She'd been laid off due to the pandemic three months ago. She kept hoping she would get called back before her situation got desperate, but that did not happen. Now she had no choice but to tell her girls because she was two months behind on the rent and was threatened with eviction. On Tuesday, the door was locked, and they would not be permitted inside even to gather their possessions unless they made an immediate payment. They didn't know the threat of eviction was illegal; they just knew they were about to become homeless.

You know how this ends, right? Carmona told the Post, "Everything was falling apart. My mom needed help. So, what am I supposed to do? That's the least I could do . . . It doesn't compare to everything that she has done for us." On Good Morning America, she explained, "She's always been a single parent and would work nights It was really hard, but she made sacrifices for us to have a better life."

The \$2000 kept the landlord away for the time being. But a dream died. Maybe. Carmona was knocked down, but not yet out. She started a fundraiser to replace her precious \$2000. I am giving this kid all kinds of points for guts.

This, of course, is the kind of thing that, if all the stars align just so, gets traction. Local news carried the story, where she was excited to tell them she had raised \$3180 to cover her freshman expenses. Then Good Morning America picked up her story. It got crazy from there: Carmona now has almost \$168,000 in her account. She told the Post, "I never would have thought in a million years that this would blow up and so many people would be donating."

Now, I want to be clear that I love this story, and I'm impressed with this woman's drive and persistence.

I am delighted her path is now clear. But I have to say that this cannot be the only story like this from the pandemic. I have to wonder how many thousands of other kids who worked just as hard as Ms. Carmona and also had big dreams will just be lost potential. The damage from this pandemic is broad and deep. We all owe it to our society to do whatever we can to bring this thing to a close and, where we can, to give a helping hand to the innocent victims of the fallout. Bright stars like Carmona's must not be allowed to dim. Take care—of yourself and someone else. We'll talk again.

No. 2 Wolves Remain Unscathed Following Saturday Win over Minot State

Aberdeen, S.D. – The No. 2 Northern State University men's basketball battled with a relentless Minot State crew Saturday afternoon, coming away with an 11-point victory. Despite the Beavers knotting the game up on three occasions, Northern held the lead for the entire 40 minutes of action.

THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 75, MINOT 64

Records: NSU 14-0 (12-0 NSIC), MINOT 6-6 (4-4 NSIC)

Attendance: 1205

HOW IT HAPPENED

- Northern continued to do what they do best, shoot efficiently and distribute the ball, notching 20 assists and a 51.7 field goal percentage in the win
- The Wolves scored 38 points in the first and 37 points in the second, and defensively held the Beavers to 24-of-61 from field goal range
- NSU forced 13 turnovers resulting in 11 points and out-rebounded Minot 35-28 in the game
- Northern tallied 44 points in the paint, 16 fast break points, 12 points off the bench, and seven second chance scores
- They tallied 20 assists, seven blocks, seven made threes, and six steals
- All five Northern State starters shot above 50.0% from the floor, led by Parker Fox hitting 9-of-11
- In addition, three Wolves scored in double figures and five tallied multiple assists and multiple rebounds
- NSU tallied their 12th win of the season where they out-shot their opponents and seventh shooting 50.0% or better as a team

NORTHERN STATE STATISTICAL STANDOUTS

- Parker Fox: 20 points, 81.8 FG%, 7 rebounds, 4 blocks, 2 steals
- Mason Stark: 15 points, 50.0 FG%, 5 rebounds, 3 assists
- Tommy Chatman: 12 points, 62.5 FG%, 3 assists, 1 steal
- Jordan Belka: 9 points, 9 rebounds (career high), 2 assists, 1 block, 1 steal
- Andrew Kallman: 7 points, 8 assists, 3 rebounds, 2 blocks

UP NEXT

Northern will cap off the regular season next February 19 and 20 versus MSU Moorhead from Wachs Arena. Tip-off is set for 7 p.m. on Friday and 4 p.m. on Saturday. The Wolves and Dragons sit tied atop the NSIC North Division standings heading into the final weekend of the regular season. Live video, stat, and audio links are available on the men's basketball schedule on nsuwolves.com.

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County	Positive Cases	Recovered Cases	Negative Persons	Deceased Among Cases	Community Spread	% RT-PCR Test Positivity Rate (Weekly)
Aurora	452	428	846	15	Minimal	0.00%
Beadle	2651	2554	5661	39	Moderate	11.97%
Bennett	380	364	1148	9	Minimal	0.00%
Bon Homme	1502	1473	2009	25	Minimal	0.00%
Brookings	3531	3378	11404	35	Substantial	2.76%
Brown	5055	4857	12249	81	Substantial	10.56%
Brule	686	669	1820	9	Minimal	0.00%
Buffalo	420	406	886	13	Minimal	0.00%
Butte	965	931	3120	20	Moderate	3.16%
Campbell	129	123	248	4	Minimal	7.69%
Charles Mix	1248	1193	3805	18	Substantial	14.29%
Clark	359	339	922	4	Substantial	5.56%
Clay	1771	1741	5042	15	Moderate	5.37%
Codington	3863	3655	9368	76	Substantial	7.98%
Corson	462	447	990	12	Minimal	4.55%
Custer	736	715	2629	12	Moderate	9.84%
Davison	2924	2832	6283	59	Moderate	2.99%
Day	639	585	1704	28	Substantial	20.45%
Deuel	465	448	1091	8	Minimal	0.00%
Dewey	1392	1366	3731	22	Moderate	2.04%
Douglas	418	404	881	9	Minimal	3.45%
Edmunds	473	445	999	12	Moderate	0.00%
Fall River	515	492	2521	15	Moderate	6.85%
Faulk	351	322	671	13	Moderate	9.09%
Grant	943	873	2139	37	Substantial	17.74%
Gregory	521	476	1206	27	Moderate	6.90%
Haakon	245	231	516	9	Minimal	7.69%
Hamlin	682	622	1706	38	Moderate	12.12%
Hand	326	313	773	6	Minimal	0.00%
Hanson	349	333	687	4	Moderate	13.04%
Harding	91	90	179	1	Minimal	20.00%
Hughes	2245	2161	6325	34	Substantial	1.04%
Hutchinson	774	730	2257	24	Moderate	7.32%

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Hyde	136	133	395	1	Minimal	0.00%
Jackson	275	254	901	14	Minimal	8.33%
Jerauld	268	249	543	16	Minimal	9.09%
Jones	82	81	212	0	Minimal	0.00%
Kingsbury	619	591	1585	14	Moderate	3.28%
Lake	1163	1120	3151	17	Moderate	2.15%
Lawrence	2785	2703	8273	44	Moderate	3.98%
Lincoln	7581	7380	19558	76	Substantial	7.99%
Lyman	594	577	1832	10	Minimal	0.00%
Marshall	294	280	1128	5	Minimal	0.00%
McCook	730	694	1568	24	Moderate	10.26%
McPherson	237	229	538	4	Minimal	0.92%
Meade	2524	2443	7396	31	Moderate	8.62%
Mellette	242	238	713	2	Minimal	0.00%
Miner	269	250	553	9	Minimal	0.00%
Minnehaha	27488	26662	75198	323	Substantial	8.31%
Moody	606	585	1708	16	Minimal	6.06%
Oglala Lakota	2043	1967	6521	47	Moderate	2.20%
Pennington	12601	12198	37973	183	Substantial	7.70%
Perkins	339	316	769	13	Moderate	0.00%
Potter	361	344	805	3	Moderate	28.00%
Roberts	1127	1071	3991	35	Substantial	6.60%
Sanborn	327	319	663	3	Minimal	5.88%
Spink	790	744	2066	25	Substantial	10.23%
Stanley	322	317	894	2	Moderate	3.85%
Sully	135	131	294	3	Minimal	0.00%
Todd	1217	1177	4056	28	Moderate	8.96%
Tripp	673	642	1441	15	Moderate	1.23%
Turner	1051	986	2621	51	Moderate	5.88%
Union	1945	1853	6016	39	Substantial	12.96%
Walworth	713	684	1781	15	Moderate	11.48%
Yankton	2769	2708	9005	28	Moderate	1.75%
Ziebach	336	326	849	9	Minimal	7.14%
Unassigned	0	0	1830	0		

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South Dakota



AGE GROUP OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Age Range with Years	# of Cases	# of Deaths Among Cases
0-9 years	4350	0
10-19 years	12350	0
20-29 years	19720	4
30-39 years	18120	15
40-49 years	15711	34
50-59 years	15525	107
60-69 years	12608	243
70-79 years	6748	418
80+ years	5073	1017

SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Sex	# of Cases	# of Deaths Among Cases
Female	57480	868
Male	52725	970

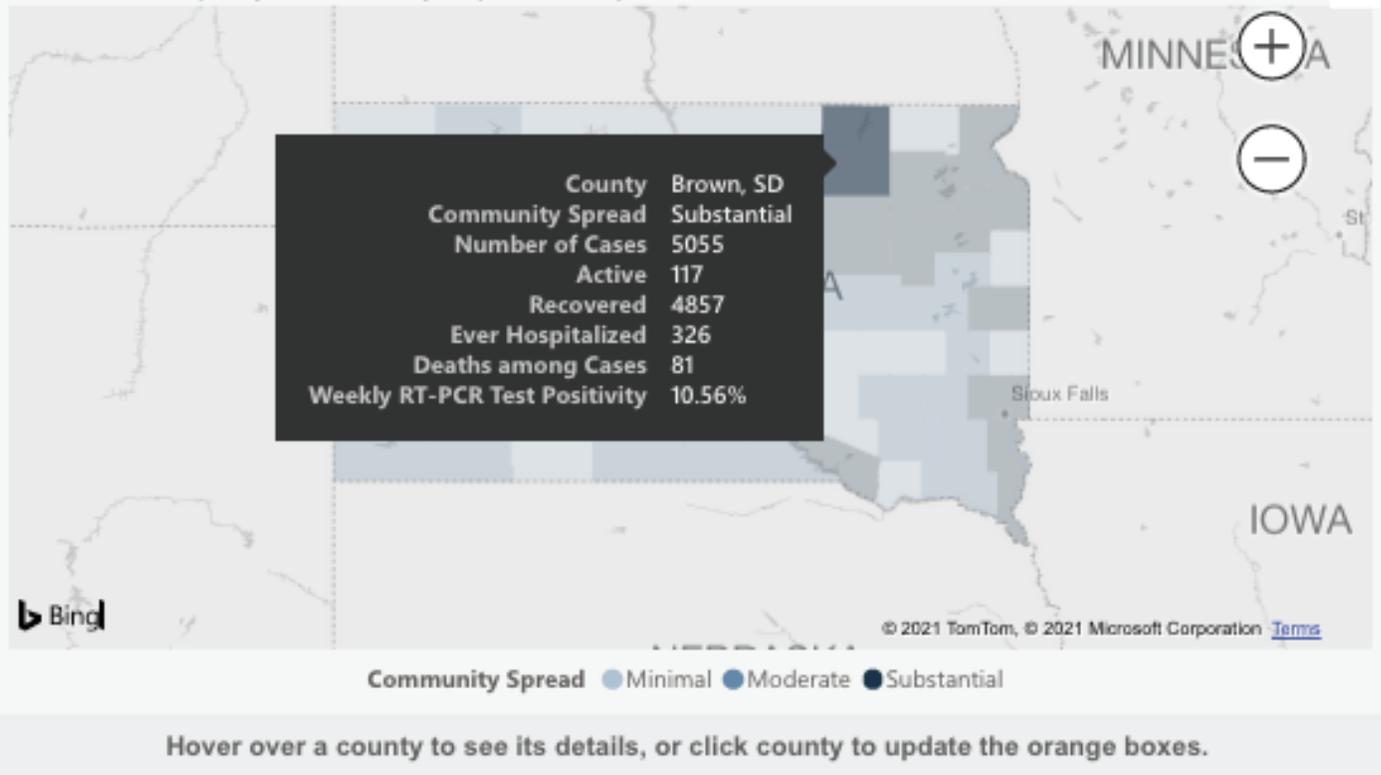
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Brown County



Community Spread Map by County of Residence



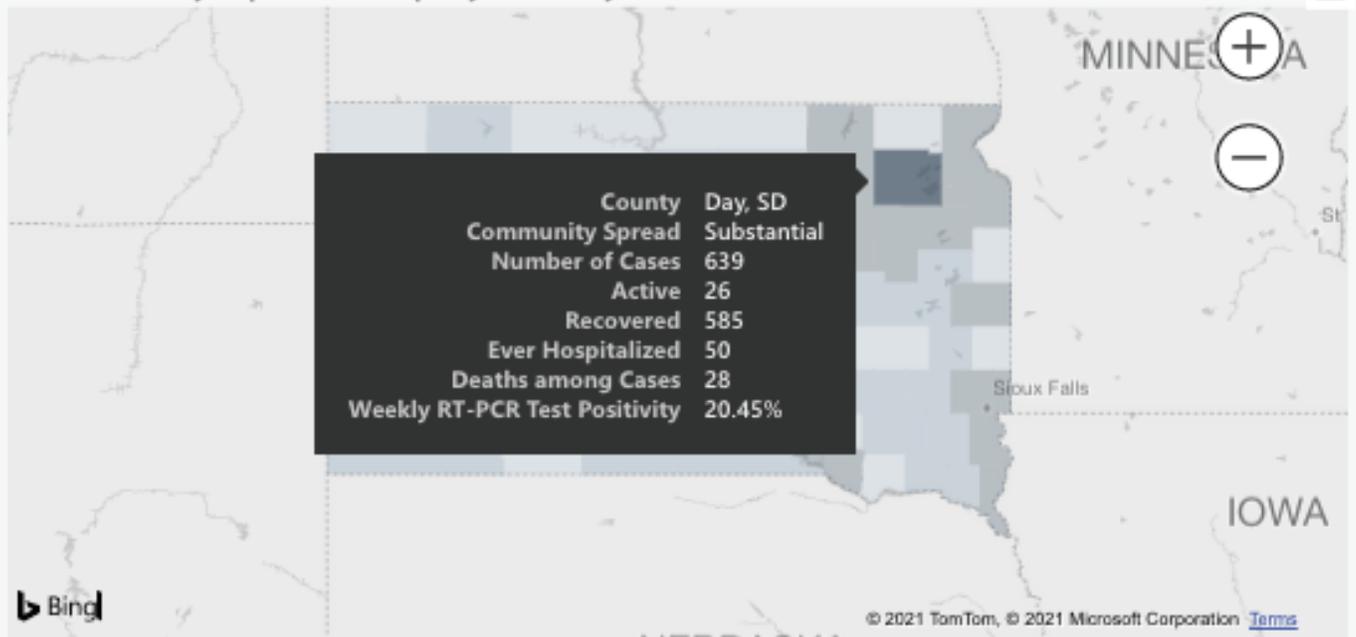
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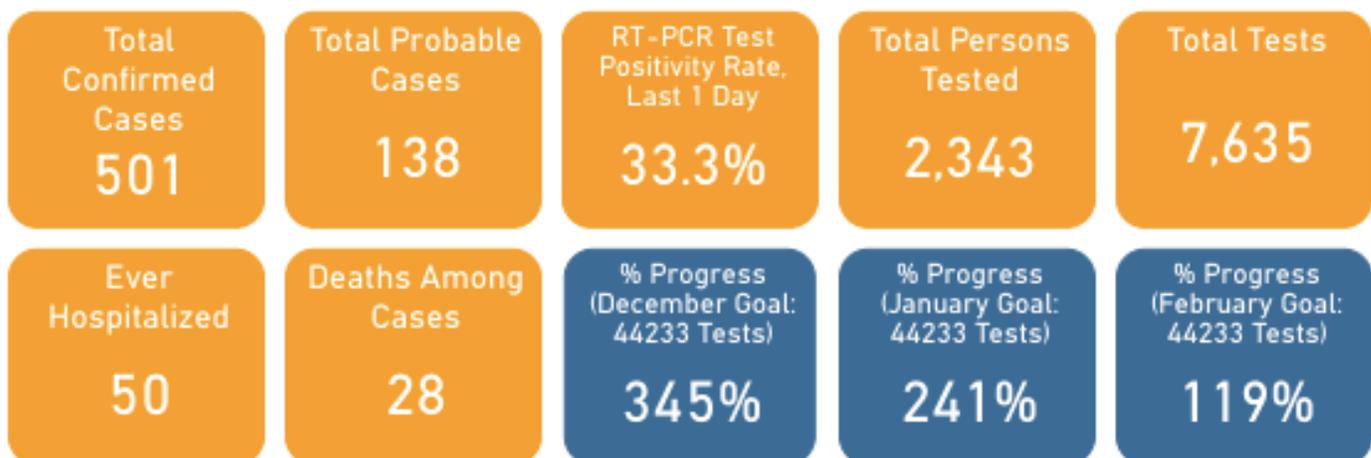
Day County



Community Spread Map by County of Residence



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



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Vaccinations

Total Doses Administered

148,858

Total Persons Administered a Vaccine

101,053

Percent of State Population with at least 1 Dose

15%

Manufacturer	# of Doses
Moderna	79,151
Pfizer	69,707

Doses	# of Recipients
Moderna - 1 dose	27,275
Moderna - Series Complete	25,938
Pfizer - 1 dose	25,973
Pfizer - Series Complete	21,867

Doses	% of Pop.
1 dose	14.65%
Series Complete	6.93%

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

County	# Doses	# Persons (1 dose)	# Persons (2 doses)	Total # Persons
Aurora	364	176	94	270
Beadle	2905	1,213	846	2,059
Bennett*	208	122	43	165
Bon Homme*	1646	784	431	1,215
Brookings	4150	1,502	1,324	2,826
Brown	6967	2,199	2,384	4,583
Brule*	904	452	226	678
Buffalo*	85	77	4	81
Butte	796	440	178	618
Campbell	542	162	190	352
Charles Mix*	1494	662	416	1,078
Clark	543	279	132	411
Clay	2275	865	705	1,570
Codington*	4606	1,852	1,377	3,229
Corson*	114	84	15	99
Custer*	1209	559	325	884
Davison	3862	1,134	1,364	2,498
Day*	1103	465	319	784
Deuel	641	311	165	476
Dewey*	250	68	91	159
Douglas*	617	203	207	410
Edmunds	583	243	170	413
Fall River*	1251	541	355	896
Faulk	536	194	171	365
Grant*	1181	353	414	767
Gregory*	803	337	233	570
Haakon*	285	115	85	200

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Hamlin	779	341	219	560
Hand	660	250	205	455
Hanson	206	76	65	141
Harding	28	22	3	25
Hughes*	3793	1,773	1,010	2,783
Hutchinson*	1620	486	567	1,053
Hyde*	290	96	97	193
Jackson*	188	100	44	144
Jerauld	308	166	71	237
Jones*	307	131	88	219
Kingsbury	1005	429	288	717
Lake	1684	640	522	1,162
Lawrence	3209	1,733	738	2,471
Lincoln	13704	3,762	4,971	8,733
Lyman*	328	202	63	265
Marshall*	794	346	224	570
McCook	1049	417	316	733
McPherson	91	49	21	70
Meade*	2706	1,190	758	1,948
Mellette*	20	8	6	14
Miner	436	178	129	307
Minnehaha	39204	12,510	13,347	25,857
Moody*	785	279	253	532
Oglala Lakota*	81	43	19	62
Pennington*	17264	6,226	5,519	11,745
Perkins*	231	127	52	179
Potter	390	152	119	271
Roberts*	1986	844	571	1,415
Sanborn	421	227	97	324
Spink	1468	462	503	965
Stanley*	538	252	143	395
Sully	154	100	27	127
Todd*	81	29	26	55
Tripp*	973	445	264	709
Turner	1735	577	579	1,156
Union	1139	589	275	864
Walworth*	916	424	246	670
Yankton	4909	1,439	1,735	3,174
Ziebach*	35	11	12	23
Other	3423	725	1,349	2,074

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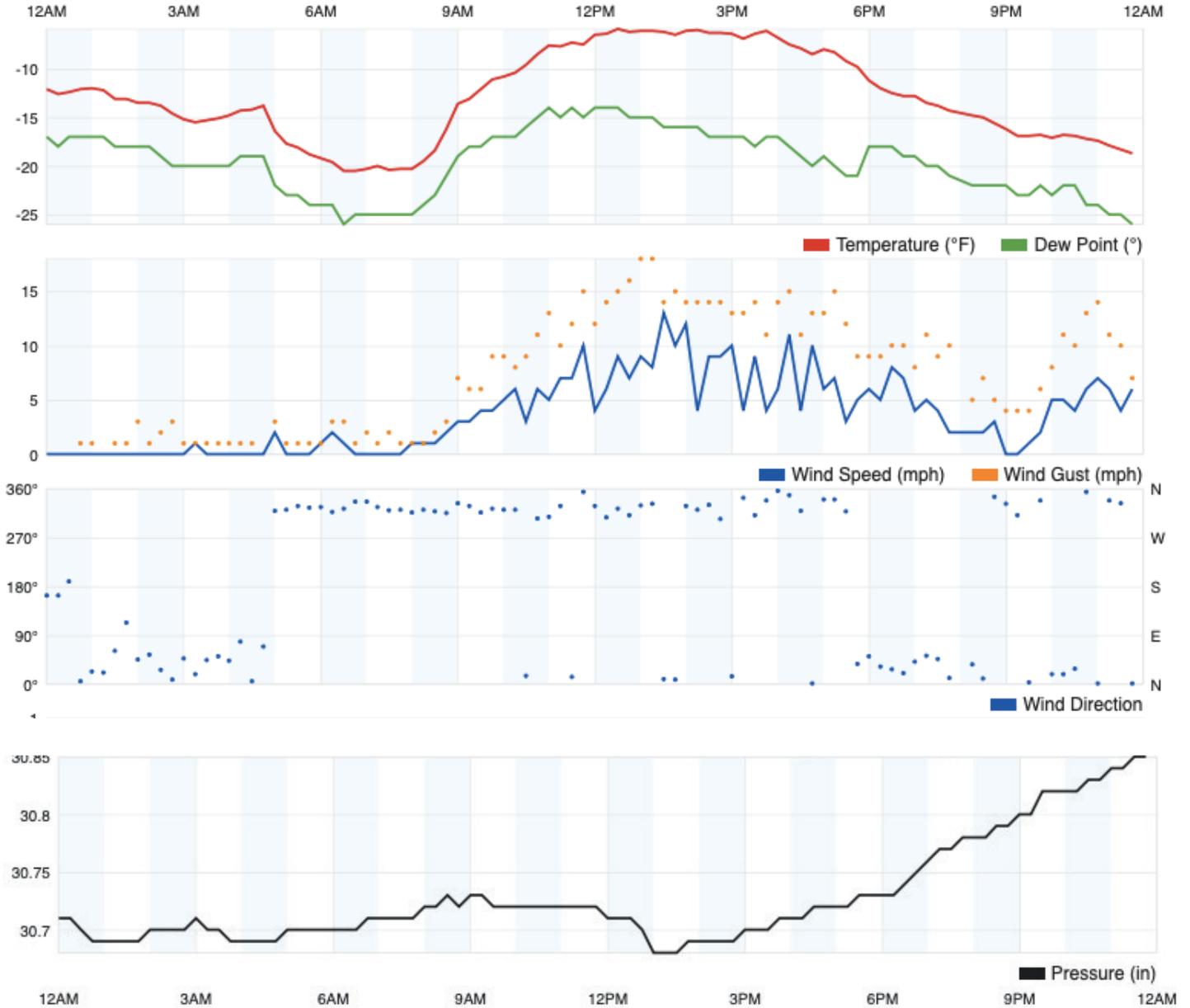
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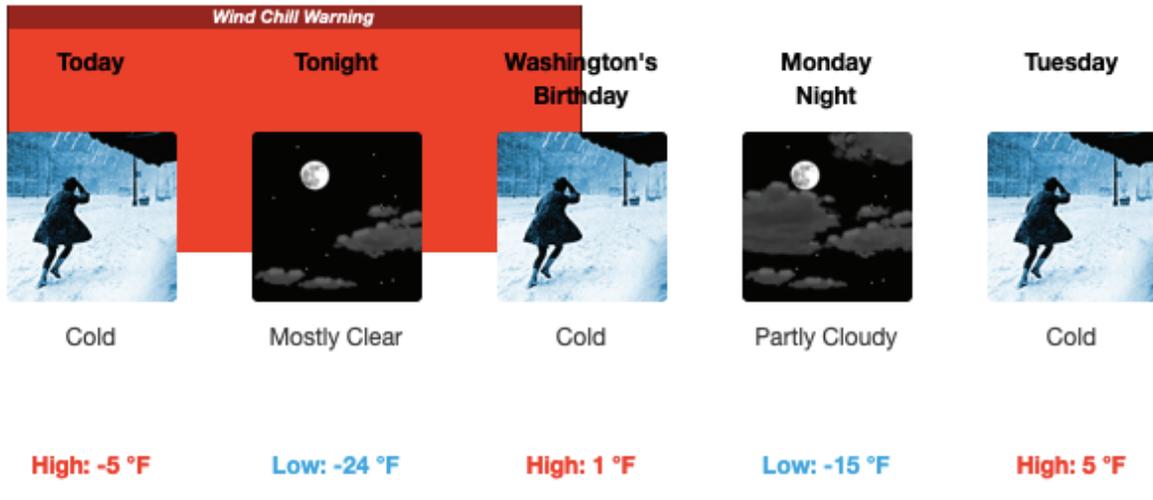
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Bitter Cold Continues!
Highs Today:
Single digits on either side of zero.

Wind Chills as cold as -35°F to -50°F this morning. Some improvement this afternoon, these wind chills will return tonight – Monday morning.

*Dress in layers.
Cover exposed skin.
Limit outdoor time.*



 National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD
Updated: 2/14/2021 4:48 AM Central

The coldest temperatures of this Arctic outbreak will be today into the morning hours on Monday. Extended exposure to the cold can lead to frostbite or hypothermia. Slow moderation in temperatures can be expected through the workweek with no meaningful snow.

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Today in Weather History

February 14, 1967: The heaviest snow fell in the central part of the state, with Pierre receiving 10 inches with 14 inches reported near Harrold. Elsewhere, 1 to 4 inches of snow was common. Winds of 20 to 30 mph with gusts over 40 mph caused extensive drifting and blowing snow reducing visibilities to near zero at times. Many schools were closed, and other activities canceled. Temperatures of 5 to 15 degrees below zero were typical on the morning of the 15th. A farmer died in the storm near Yale, where his car stalled, and he attempted to walk.

February 14, 1979: High winds of 50 mph or greater and snow from a half-inch to more than 14 inches moved through the state late on the 14th with winds slowly subsiding on the 16th. Visibility was reduced to near zero at the height of the storm, and no travel was advised. Temperatures fell to 25 degrees below zero with wind chills to 80 to 90 below on the 15th. One man suffered frostbite after being stranded in his truck for seventeen hours. Power was lost at Wall due to high winds snapping power lines together.

1895: The most significant snowfall in the history of Houston, Texas, occurred on the 14th and 15th. The Houston area saw 20 inches of snow.

1990: Valentine's Day was a snowy one for many parts of Iowa and Illinois. Five to ten inches of snow fell across Iowa. Six to 12 inches of snow blanketed northern Illinois, and strong northeasterly winds accompanied the heavy snow. Air traffic came to a halt during the evening at O'Hare Airport in Chicago, where 9.7 inches of snow was reported. More than 250 traffic accidents were reported around Des Moines, Iowa, during the evening rush hour. An ice storm glazed east central sections of Illinois, causing twelve million dollars damage in Champaign County alone.

2010: Vancouver continues to struggle with above average, non-winter-like temperatures during the first weekend of the 2010 Winter Olympics. In fact earlier this morning, Vancouver was warmer, 48 degrees, than Miami, Florida 45 degrees!

1899 - A great blizzard struck the eastern U.S. Washington D.C. received 20.5 inches of snow to bring their total snow depth to nearly three feet. The storm produced 36 inches of snow at Cape May NJ. (David Ludlum)

1940 - A "Saint Valentine's Day Blizzard" hit the northeastern U.S. Up to a foot and a half of snow blanketed southern New England, and whole gales accompanied the heavy snow stranding many in downtown Boston. (David Ludlum)

1987 - A powerful storm spawned severe thunderstorms in Texas and Oklahoma, and produced heavy snow in the Rocky Mountain Region. Snowfall totals in Colorado ranged up to 27 inches at Telluride. Straight line winds gusting to 104 mph howled through Guadalupe Pass in West Texas. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Strong northerly winds ushered arctic air into the north central U.S. Snow and high winds created blizzard conditions in Minnesota and the Dakotas. Winds gusted to 56 mph at Rapid City SD, and reached 65 mph at Cody WY. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - While "Valentine's Day" was a soggy one in the Ohio Valley and the Tennessee Valley, unseasonably warm weather prevailed in the southeastern U.S. Seventeen cities reported record high temperatures for the date as readings warmed into the 70s and 80s. (The National Weather Summary)

1990 - Valentine's Day was a snowy one for many parts of the western and central U.S. Five to ten inches of snow fell across Iowa, and 6 to 12 inches of snow blanketed northern Illinois, and strong northeasterly winds accompanied the heavy snow. Air traffic came to a halt during the evening at O'Hare Airport in Chicago, where 9.7 inches of snow was reported. More than 250 traffic accidents were reported around Des Moines IA during the evening rush hour. An icestorm glazed east central sections of Illinois, causing twelve million dollars damage in Champaign County alone. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2004 - Dallas receives 3 inches of snow, wreaking havoc with Valentine's Day flower deliveries. The greatest snowfall since 1978 caused numerous traffic accidents, power outages and flight cancellations at Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport.

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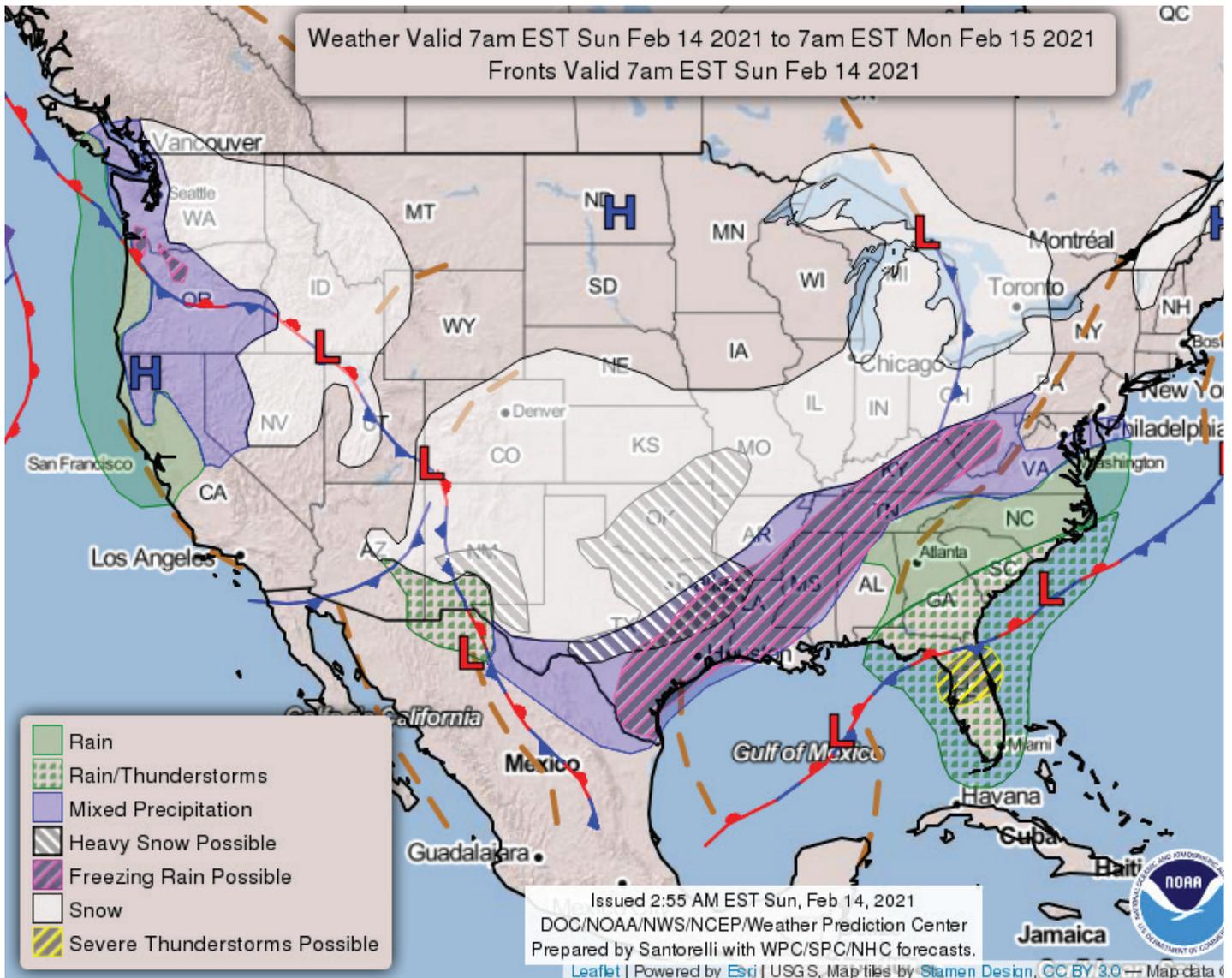
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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: -6 °F at 12:30 PM
Low Temp: -20 °F at 6:30 AM
Wind: 18 mph at 12:58 PM
Precip:

Today's Info

Record High: 57° in 1934
Record Low: -30° in 1906, 1936
Average High: 28°F
Average Low: 7°F
Average Precip in Feb.: 0.21
Precip to date in Feb.: 0.14
Average Precip to date: 0.68
Precip Year to Date: 0.14
Sunset Tonight: 6:00 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:35 a.m.



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FROM DARKNESS COMES LIGHT

This may be hard to believe. But...

A thief, running through a crowded street, caught the eye of a police officer after a person shouted, "Help!" Instinctively, the officer ran after him and caught him. While searching his pockets, he found hundreds of dollars that he had taken from a "Mini-Market."

"How foolish of you to steal in broad daylight! Most thieves steal at night when it's dark," said the officer.

"I know, sir," came the reply. "But, I'm afraid of running when it's dark. I might trip."

The fear of darkness is one of the greatest fears in the world. But darkness was not created by God. Darkness is the absence of light, as well as the Light.

There was a time when the earth was chaotic and covered with darkness. Then God said, "Let there be light!" And there was.

Man does not receive "true light" from the darkness of the world when he is born. That Light, the Light that man needs to guide him through life and into eternity, comes only from God's Son. But, that Light must be accepted by us if we are to find His way out of the darkness of sin into "the light" and eternal life through Christ.

"My God," said the Psalmist, "turns my darkness into light!" But, as brightly as that Light shines, and as necessary as it is for us to follow to receive eternal life, it must be accepted. The Apostle John wrote, "In Him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it."

The way to understand that Light comes from His Word – Jesus Christ.

Prayer: Thank You, Father, for providing us that Light. May we accept the Light that comes from Your Son to save us and guide us into Your presence. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: You light a lamp for me. The Lord, my God, lights up my darkness. Psalm 18:28

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News from the  Associated Press

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Dakota Cash

03-22-24-25-27

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

Estimated jackpot: \$30,000

Lotto America

36-40-44-46-50, Star Ball: 6, ASB: 2

(thirty-six, forty, forty-four, forty-six, fifty; Star Ball: six; ASB: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$2.95 million

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$96 million

Powerball

20-28-33-63-68, Powerball: 20, Power Play: 2

(twenty, twenty-eight, thirty-three, sixty-three, sixty-eight; Powerball: twenty; Power Play: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$56 million

Saturday's Scores

By The Associated Press

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL=

Chadron, Neb. 51, Hot Springs 48

Custer 66, Belle Fourche 63

Deubrook 52, Chester 42

Deuel 56, Britton-Hecla 46

Flandreau 57, Clark/Willow Lake 39

Gregory 71, Jones County 45

Kadoka Area 66, Edgemont 52

Madison 69, Canton 59

Mitchell 64, Harrisburg 46

Mobridge-Pollock 53, Groton Area 51

Potter County 71, Timber Lake 68

Sioux Falls O'Gorman 85, Brookings 36

Sioux Falls Washington 65, Sioux Falls Lincoln 64

Sioux Valley 74, Parker 43

Stanley County 68, Wall 43

Vermillion 71, Beresford 22

Webster 53, Leola/Frederick 46

Winner 75, Hill City 60

DWU/Culver's Classic=

Canistota 61, Dell Rapids St. Mary 56

Corsica/Stickney 66, Freeman Academy/Marion 61

DeSmet 76, White River 63

Hanson 56, Chamberlain 42

Howard 47, Platte-Geddes 45

Lyman 44, Bridgewater-Emery 41

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St. Thomas More 63, Dell Rapids 53
Viborg-Hurley 50, Aberdeen Christian 40
GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL=
Aberdeen Central 48, Watertown 45
Belle Fourche 56, Custer 39
Bennett County 60, Hot Springs 50
Beresford 40, Vermillion 32
Bison 34, Lead-Deadwood 30
Brandon Valley 54, Sioux Falls Roosevelt 40
Canton 40, Madison 31
DeSmet 50, Howard 37
Deubrook 68, Chester 30
Deuel 51, Britton-Hecla 23
Flandreau 58, Clark/Willow Lake 40
Groton Area 54, Mobridge-Pollock 39
Harrisburg 60, Mitchell 52
Jones County 45, Gregory 27
McCook Central/Montrose 64, Garretson 52
Milbank 52, Tri-Valley 35
North Central Co-Op 46, Northwestern 31
Sioux Falls Christian 56, Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 42
Sioux Falls Washington 58, Sioux Falls Lincoln 23
Sioux Valley 51, Parker 42
Timber Lake 64, Potter County 48
Wall 44, Stanley County 24
Waubay/Summit 77, Tri-State 55
Webster 60, Leola/Frederick 40
West Central 60, St. Thomas More 53
Winner 58, Hill City 49
Warner Classic=
Aberdeen Christian 53, Highmore-Harrold 43
Aberdeen Roncalli 59, Florence/Henry 55
Arlington 36, Ipswich 30
Hamlin 60, Waverly-South Shore 25

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

Abmas lifts Oral Roberts past S. Dakota St. 103-86

TULSA, Okla. (AP) — Max Abmas had a career-high 42 points as Oral Roberts beat South Dakota State 103-86 on Saturday.

Abmas shot 5 of 8 from 3-point range and 9 of 10 from the line for the second biggest output in the nation this season. D'Moi Hodge of Cleveland State scored 46 points.

Kevin Obanor had 18 points and 11 rebounds for Oral Roberts (11-8, 8-3 Summit League). Sheldon Stevens added 16 points. Carlos Jurgens had 13 points.

Oral Roberts scored 56 points in the second half, a season best for the team.

Matt Dentlinger had 16 points for the Jackrabbits (11-5, 7-3). Douglas Wilson added 15 points. Baylor Scheierman had 15 points and 10 rebounds.

Noah Freidel had only 2 points. The Jackrabbits' leading scorer heading into the contest at 17 points per game, he shot 0 of 5 from beyond the arc.

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

Elements of this story were generated by Automated Insights, <http://www.automatedinsights.com/ap>, using data from STATS LLC, <https://www.stats.com>

Panoam leads North Dakota past South Dakota 85-76

GRAND FORKS, N.D. (AP) — Bentiu Panoam had a career-high 25 points as North Dakota topped South Dakota 85-76 on Saturday.

Ethan Igbanugo had 15 points for North Dakota (7-15, 7-9 Summit League). Filip Rebraca added 13 points and 11 rebounds. Seybian Sims had 11 points.

A.J. Plitzuweit had 27 points for the Coyotes (11-8, 10-4). Stanley Umude added 26 points and 13 rebounds. Kruz Perrott-Hunt had 11 points.

The Fighting Hawks improve to 2-0 against the Coyotes this season. North Dakota defeated South Dakota 75-71 on Dec. 10.

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

This was generated by Automated Insights, <http://www.automatedinsights.com/ap>, using data from STATS LLC, <https://www.stats.com>

No. 23 Jackrabbit women go 11 for 11 in 2nd, roll by ORU

TULSA, Okla. (AP) — Myah Selland scored 18 points, Sydney Stapleton had all nine of her points in a stunning second quarter and No. 23 South Dakota State rolled to an 82-60 win over Oral Roberts on Saturday.

The Jackrabbits (16-2, 9-10 Summit Conference) bolted to their 13th straight win by hitting all 11 of their field-goal attempts, seven from 3-point range, to outscore the Golden Eagles 32-13 in the second quarter. They were 3 of 4 from the foul line.

Eight different players scored, five hitting a 3-pointer and Stapleton hitting three.

Despite that dominating quarter, the Jackrabbits finished 10 of 24 from 3-point range and 42% overall. That was enough with a 51-28 rebounding advantage and 39% shooting by Oral Roberts.

Tori Nelson contributed 12 points and Madysen Vlastuin 10 for South Dakota State. Selland, Nelson and Paiton Burckhard all grabbed seven rebounds and Selland had five assists.

Tierney Coleman and Keni Jo Lippe scored 16 each for Oral Roberts (16-11, 4-5), which went 7 of 12 from the field in the first quarter to SDSU's 3-of-19 and led 14-11.

The teams square off again on Sunday.

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

South Dakota reports 7 more COVID-19 deaths, 137 new cases

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota health officials have reported seven more COVID-19-related deaths on Saturday and 137 new cases of the virus.

The new figures bring the state's death toll to 1,838 since the pandemic began; a total of 110,205 cases of the virus have been reported since the pandemic began.

The Argus Leader reports that active cases are continuing to decline. There were 2,119 active cases

of COVID-19 on Saturday, down 61 from the day before.

A total of 82 people were hospitalized due to the virus, down two from Friday.

The state says that 47,805 people have completed the full two-dose series of a COVID-19 vaccine. A total of 148,858 doses of vaccine have been administered in South Dakota.

Wait baffles family of man killed in South Dakota AG crash

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Most days, brothers Nick and Victor Nemeč drive past the spot where South Dakota Attorney General Jason Ravensborg struck and killed their cousin Joseph Boever with his car. And five months later, with key questions unanswered, they are frustrated that they still don't know if the state's top law enforcement officer will face criminal charges.

The blood stains on the rural stretch of highway have nearly disappeared, a faint reminder of the September night when Ravensborg struck Boever as he drove home from a Republican fundraiser.

The attorney general has said he is confident he did not commit a crime. According to a statement he released in September, Ravensborg at first thought he had hit a deer and only discovered he had killed a man when he returned to the crash scene the next morning.

But investigators have said the attorney general was distracted and turned their findings over to prosecutors. The attorneys deciding whether to charge Ravensborg have taken months to further assess the crash.

That's left the Nemeč brothers with questions: How did Ravensborg not realize he had hit a man? How did the sheriff who responded to the crash not find Boever's body, which appeared to be lying just feet from the pavement? What caused Ravensborg to swerve onto the shoulder of the road where investigators say Boever was walking?

The brothers have little to go on except for one notebook page they filled with measurements of tire skid marks and blood streaks at the crash scene.

"You reach a point of resignation," Nick Nemeč said. "You get beat down by the system and you just kind of resign."

Michael Moore, a state's attorney from Beadle County who is helping the local prosecutor, Emily Sovell, with the case, said some answers will come in the "next few weeks." Sovell has not responded to requests for comment.

"The question that everybody is waiting for is, is he is criminally responsible for the death?" Moore said.

Prosecutors are trying to find whether Ravensborg purposely disregarded safe driving. They are pulling together cellphone GPS data, video footage from along the route Ravensborg was driving and DNA evidence in an effort to assess whether he should be criminally charged.

Ravensborg accumulated eight traffic tickets, including six for speeding, from 2004 to 2019.

Moore said he understands the frustration with waiting for a decision in such a high-profile case, but that it was not unusual for a criminal crash investigation to take this long.

But Gov. Kristi Noem, who oversaw the Department of Public Safety's investigation, has expressed frustration at how the investigation has dragged. She said this week that she did not know why it has taken prosecutors five months, but was hopeful they would "come to an agreement" on charges.

Ravensborg said this week that he hoped prosecutors would take however long they feel is "appropriate."

But he also hinted he is impatient, saying: "I think that everybody involved would like to have the answer."

Union says meatpacking workers should be vaccinated sooner

By JOSH FUNK Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Hundreds of meatpacking workers have been vaccinated against the coronavirus but the union that represents many of them says several hundred thousand more have not, despite the risks they continue to face at work.

The United Food and Commercial Workers International union is lobbying for workers to be moved up vaccination priority lists, and major meat companies have launched campaigns to educate employees and

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dispel rumors about the vaccines. One has offered bonuses to workers who get vaccinated.

But in most states, meatpacking workers are still waiting for their turn to be vaccinated and are ranked behind health care workers, residents of long-term care centers and people aged 65 and older.

Marc Perrone, UCFW president, argues that meatpacking workers, grocery store employees and other essential workers should be vaccinated ahead of older people who don't have other health conditions.

"Those folks that have to keep our economy going, our food supply going, should in fact be next," Perrone said.

While major meat companies have not advocated for their workers to jump the line, JBS, Smithfield Foods, Cargill and Tyson Foods are pushing to get their workers vaccinated soon.

"We have witnessed a troubling trend in some jurisdictions where our essential team members who were once prioritized in vaccination strategies are being pushed further down the priority list," JBS spokeswoman Nikki Richardson said.

Among the first to get shots were 45 older workers last week at a Tyson Foods plant in Wilkesboro, North Carolina. JBS officials estimate that 500 of their workers nationwide have been vaccinated because they meet age requirements or work in occupational health jobs, but that's a tiny percentage of the overall workforce. The industry employs more than 500,000, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, although not all of those are production jobs.

Antonio Jimenez, who works at a JBS pork plant in Worthington, Minnesota, said he was out of work for months after contracting the virus last year, and he still deals with lingering symptoms including fatigue. He believes he and his colleagues should be near the head of the line for COVID-19 vaccines.

"I don't want anyone else to go through what I went through," Jimenez said. "Essential workers like us who keep America safe must be vaccinated."

Some companies are trying to set up vaccination clinics at their plants. JBS has been working with health officials to vaccinate workers who are eligible because of their age while discussing the possibility of vaccinating all plant employees.

"We have not yet had the opportunity to vaccinate an entire facility, but we continue to pursue every option to ensure vaccine availability for our essential workers as quickly as possible," Richardson said. "We are currently focused on achieving the highest voluntary participation rate possible and preventing barriers to getting the vaccine."

Last spring, the virus tore through meatpacking plants, where workers stand shoulder-to-shoulder on production lines, and as a result the UFCW believes members will be eager for vaccines. In a recent union survey that also included grocery and other food production workers, 70% of respondents said they want to be vaccinated.

"They went through a little bit of hell during this pandemic and I think they're ready to get the shots and get the pandemic behind them," said Mark Lauritsen, the union's vice president of food processing and meatpacking.

The UFCW, which represents roughly 80% of the nation's beef and pork workers and 33% of its poultry workers, estimates that at least 21,900 meatpacking workers have been infected or exposed, and 132 have died of COVID-19.

After the outbreaks last spring, meat producers tried to protect workers by instituting temperature checks and wellness screening, installing plastic dividers between workstations, increasing plant sanitization, conducting random virus testing, and requiring masks and other protective gear. In some cases, companies upgraded their plant ventilation systems.

The companies say those measures have reduced infections in their plants, even as the virus spread widely last fall. The industry has been able to keep production to near capacity since the summer by expanding operations from just weekdays to include more Saturdays, and by producing larger cuts of meat to save time.

"We continue to see success from our approach, even amid the current increase nationally in cases," said Keira Lombardo, Smithfield's chief administrative officer. "While the nation has been in a period of high

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relative incidence, we continue to see a sustained period of low relative incidence – and many employees, from coast to coast, report that they feel safer at work than elsewhere in the community.”

BJ Motley, the president of the union for workers at a large Smithfield pork processing plant in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, worries that they remain vulnerable and are not receiving vaccines quickly enough. With new variants of the virus emerging and a handful of infections still being reported weekly at Smithfield, he said workers must be vaccinated urgently.

Last spring, over 1,000 Smithfield workers in Sioux Falls were sickened and four died. Other meatpacking plants also dealt with major outbreaks and at one point in April the industry’s meat production fell to about 60% of normal levels.

“I think the company is not pushing enough to get these people vaccinated, but now they want them to show up at work,” Motley said.

Sandra Sibert, who has worked at the Sioux Falls plant for 15 years, said even with additional safety measures, workers remain worried about the coronavirus.

“Meatpacking workers are still getting sick in my plant. And I know they are getting sick at other plants across the country,” Sibert said. “Meatpacking workers like me are still facing risks every day.”

Associated Press writer Stephen Groves in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, contributed to this report.

Average US virus cases dip below 100K for 1st time in months

By SUDHIN THANAWALA and KATE BRUMBACK Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Average daily new coronavirus cases in the United States dipped below 100,000 in recent days for the first time in months, but experts cautioned Sunday that infections remain high and precautions to slow the pandemic must remain in place.

The seven-day rolling average of new infections was well above 200,000 for much of December and went to roughly 250,000 in January, according to data kept by Johns Hopkins University, as the pandemic came roaring back after it had been tamed in some places over the summer.

That average dropped below 100,000 on Friday for the first time since Nov. 4. It stayed below 100,000 on Saturday.

“We are still at about 100,000 cases a day. We are still at around 1,500 to 3,500 deaths per day. The cases are more than two-and-a-half-fold times what we saw over the summer,” Dr. Rochelle Walensky, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, said on NBC’s “Meet the Press.” “It’s encouraging to see these trends coming down, but they’re coming down from an extraordinarily high place.”

She added that new variants, including one first detected in the United Kingdom that appears to be more transmissible and has already been recorded in more than 30 states, will likely lead to more cases and more deaths.

“All of it is really wraps up into we can’t let our guard down,” she said. “We have to continue wearing masks. We have to continue with our current mitigation measures. And we have to continue getting vaccinated as soon as that vaccine is available to us.”

The U.S. has recorded more than 27.5 million virus cases and more than 484,000 deaths, according to the Johns Hopkins data.

With parents and political leaders eager to have children around the country back in school for in-person learning, it is important that people continue to observe precautions, Walensky said.

“We need to all take responsibility to decrease that community spread, including mask wearing so that we can get our kids and our society back,” she said.

The CDC released guidance on Friday outlining mitigation strategies necessary to reopen schools or to keep them open.

Follow all of AP’s pandemic coverage at <https://apnews.com/hub/coronavirus-pandemic>, <https://apnews.com/hub/coronavirus-vaccine> and <https://apnews.com/UnderstandingtheOutbreak>

UK hits target: Gives at least 1 vaccine shot to 15 million

By DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — The U.K. government said Sunday that it reached its goal of giving at least one COVID-19 vaccine shot to the most vulnerable people in the country, increasing pressure on ministers to clarify when they will ease a lockdown imposed in early January.

More than 15 million people, or 22% of the U.K. population, have received their first shot. The figure includes most people in the government's top four priority groups, including everyone over 75, frontline healthcare workers and nursing home staff and residents.

"15,000,000! Amazing team," Nadhim Zahawi, the vaccines minister, said in a tweet that featured a red heart and three syringes. "We will not rest till we offer the vaccine to the whole of phase1 the 1-9 categories of the most vulnerable & all over 50s by end April and then all adults."

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson plans to unveil his roadmap for easing restrictions on Feb. 22 amid signs that infection rates, hospitalizations and deaths have fallen sharply since England's third national lockdown began on Jan. 4.

"This country has achieved an extraordinary feat - administering a total of 15 million jabs into the arms of some of the most vulnerable people in the country," Johnson said in a tweet.

Johnson said in England, everyone in the four top priority groups had been offered the vaccine. He plans to release further details on the vaccination effort on Monday.

Jockeying has already begun between those who want the measures lifted as soon as possible and those who fear moving too fast will lead to a resurgence of the virus.

Britain got a head start on its vaccination effort in December, when it became the first country to authorize widespread use of a COVID-19 shot. It ranks behind only Israel, 71%, the Seychelles, 53%, and the United Arab Emirates, 50% in the percentage of people who have received one dose, according to Oxford University. The U.S. is fifth at 15%.

At the same time, coronavirus lockdown rules that have closed schools, restaurants and nonessential shops in the U.K. are starting to pay off. The number of new infections, hospital admissions and deaths recorded over the past seven days have all dropped by more than 20% from the previous week.

When Johnson announced the lockdown, he said the government would review the measures in mid-February based on their success in controlling the pandemic and progress in the vaccination effort. Johnson's first priority is to reopen schools, and he has promised to give schools two weeks notice to give teachers time to prepare for the return of students.

Britain has reported over 117,000 virus-related deaths, the highest pandemic toll in Europe.

Mark Harper, a member of Parliament from the ruling Conservative Party, has warned the government against "moving the goalposts" for deciding when to ease the lockdown.

Johnson should start by reopening schools, then gradually lift other restrictions as more people are vaccinated, said Harper, who leads about 70 lawmakers who have lobbied the government to consider the negative economic and social impacts of the restrictions along with the health benefits.

"If you think about the restrictions that the government's placed on everybody, they are the toughest set of restrictions that have ever been placed on the British people outside of the Second and First World Wars," Harper told the BBC. "So it's kind of just worth stepping back a bit and saying, 'This isn't normal, and it shouldn't continue, frankly, for a moment longer than it's absolutely necessary.'"

After meeting the target for reaching the most vulnerable people, U.K. authorities will progressively expand the vaccination drive to the next five priority groups until everyone over 50 and vulnerable younger people with health conditions that put them at higher risk from the virus have been offered the vaccine.

Public health officials say the top nine priority groups account for 99% of the deaths caused by COVID-19 so far.

While the vaccines currently authorized for use in the U.K. require two doses to ensure full protection against COVID-19, British authorities say one dose provides a significant level of protection.

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Because of this, they have made it their priority to give the first dose to as many people as possible as quickly as possible. To do this, Britain has suggested that the second dose be administered after three months, instead of one month as recommended by the manufacturers.

Jeremy Farrar, director of the Wellcome Trust health think tank, said the number of COVID-19 infections in Britain is still too high to think about lifting the restrictions.

"We've made enormous progress ... but the transmission is incredibly high still and we've got to get it lower," he said.

There are other dangers on the horizon. U.K. government scientific advisers say the COVID-19 variant now predominant in the country may be up to 70% more deadly than previous variants, underscoring concerns about how mutations may change the characteristics of the disease.

The findings from the New and Emerging Respiratory Virus Threats Advisory Group, published Friday on the government's website, builds on preliminary research released Jan. 21. The group, known as NERVTAG, includes experts from universities and public agencies across the U.K.

The new report is based on analysis of a dozen studies that found the so-called Kent variant, named after the county where it was first identified, is likely 30% to 70% more deadly than other variants. The studies compared hospitalization and death rates among people infected with the variant and those infected with other variants.

"Based on these analyses, it is likely that infection with (the Kent variant) is associated with an increased risk of hospitalization and death compared to infection" with other variants, the advisory group said. "It should be noted that the absolute risk of death per infection remains low."

Follow all of AP's pandemic coverage at <https://apnews.com/hub/coronavirus-pandemic>, <https://apnews.com/hub/coronavirus-vaccine> and <https://apnews.com/UnderstandingtheOutbreak>

Myanmar rattled by army movements, expected internet cutoff

YANGON, Myanmar (AP) — Sightings of armored personnel carriers in Myanmar's biggest city and leaked orders of an impending internet shutdown raised political tensions late Sunday, after vast numbers of people around the country flouted orders against demonstrations to protest the military's seizure of power.

Public concern has already been heightened for the past few nights by what many charge is the military's manipulation of criminals released from prison to carry out nighttime violence and instill panic.

The military seized power on Feb. 1, detaining the country's elected leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, and members of her government and preventing recently elected lawmakers from opening a new session of Parliament.

The junta, led by Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, said it was forced to step in because the government failed to properly investigate allegations of fraud in last year's election, which Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party won in a landslide. The state election commission refuted that contention, saying there is no evidence to support it.

There was no official word about why armored personnel carriers traversed the streets of Yangon in broad daylight Sunday, making their way through busy traffic. As night fell, there were videos and other reports on social media of the movement of other military vehicles.

An order that appears to be from the Ministry of Transport and Communications told mobile phone service providers to shut down internet connections from 1 a.m. to 9 a.m. Monday. It circulated widely on social media, as did a notice said to be from service provider Oredoo Myanmar containing the same details.

Previous leaks of government orders to limit internet access have proven accurate, and the U.S. Embassy issued a caution to American citizens about the military movements and possible internet shutdown. The authorities have previously sought with mixed success to block social networks, and also shut off access to the internet for about a day.

Monday holds the prospect of two flashpoints for the political standoff.

Suu Kyi remains under house arrest, but a remand order holding her on a minor charge of possessing

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unregistered imported walkie-talkies expires Monday and a court in the capital, Naypyitaw, is supposed to take action on her case. Her freedom is a major demand of the protest movement.

Khin Maung Zaw, a lawyer asked by Suu Kyi's party to represent her, said he was uncertain if she would have a court appearance Monday, and it could be delayed by a day. He has not been able to make contact with Suu Kyi.

There is also the possibility that a young woman who was shot during a demonstration last week, also in Naypyitaw, will be declared legally dead. She has been on life support in a hospital in the capital, and unofficial memorial services were held for her Sunday at protests in Yangon and Mandalay, the country's two biggest cities.

Large demonstrations were also held in Naypyitaw and far-flung corners of the country dominated by ethnic minorities.

Resistance also took place in cyberspace, as a group calling itself BrotherHood of Myanmar Hackers defaced the government's Myanmar Digital News website, replacing content on its home page with words and pictures against the military takeover.

Protesters in Yangon again rallied outside the Chinese and U.S. embassies. They accuse Beijing of proping up the military regime and applaud Washington's actions sanctioning the military.

"The civil disobedience movement and demonstrations show that the people of Myanmar want democracy. We stand with them," said a statement Saturday on the U.S. Embassy's Twitter account.

Other protesters carried signs urging people to boycott businesses linked to the military.

Eight days of street demonstrations are estimated to have drawn hundreds of thousands of people to the streets despite the threat of six months' imprisonment for violating an order banning gatherings of five or more people. The same order imposes an 8 p.m. to 4 a.m. curfew.

Sunday's activism took place after the ruling junta issued a new order suspending several basic civil liberties.

The order, issued late Saturday and published Sunday in state newspapers, suspends provisions in an existing law on security and privacy protection, allowing the authorities to carry out searches and make arrests without court warrants.

It also allows the interception of electronic and other communications without a warrant and permits the detention of detainees for more than 24 hours without court permission.

Civil servants have been very active in the protests, and social media postings on Sunday indicated that state railway workers have joined them, with some unconfirmed claims that they have gone on strike.

The public at large has been alarmed since the government last week declared an amnesty that led to the release of more than 23,000 convicts. There are many claims on social media that some have been recruited by the authorities to carry out violent activities at night in residential areas to spread panic, especially by setting fires. Some areas have responded by setting up their own neighborhood watch groups.

The truth of the allegations about government-directed thugs is difficult to verify, even with videos claiming to show their activities. There is historical precedent, as the military released convicts to carry out violence and cause chaos in 1988 during a failed popular uprising against a military dictatorship.

People have also been rattled by police raids carried out during curfew hours to seize individuals seen as opposed to the coup. In several cases, nearby residents rushed to the scene in such numbers that security forces abandoned their attempts to haul in their targets.

The independent Assistance Association for Political Prisoners says 384 people have been detained since the coup, with 360 still being held.

Detainees have included political leaders, government officials, civil servants, activists and student leaders. Medical personnel have been singled out because their community initiated the civil disobedience campaign against the military takeover and remains in its vanguard.

After impeachment acquittal, Trump remains dominant in GOP

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By STEVE PEOPLES AP National Political Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The Republican Party still belongs to Donald Trump.

After he incited a deadly riot at the U.S. Capitol last month, the GOP considered purging the norm-shattering former president. But in the end, only seven of 50 Senate Republicans voted to convict Trump in his historic second impeachment trial on Saturday.

For Trump's loyalists, the acquittal offers a vindication of sorts and a fresh connection to the former president's fiery base. And for Trump's GOP antagonists, it marks another alarming sign that the party is lurching further in a dangerous direction with little desire to reconnect with the moderates, women and college-educated voters Trump alienated.

Ultimately, the resolution of the impeachment trial brings into clear relief a divide in the GOP that party leaders, donors and voters will have to navigate as they try to regain control of Congress next year and aim to retake the White House in 2024.

That tension was on display in the immediate aftermath of the vote. After supporting Trump's acquittal, Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., delivered a speech that echoed some of the very points Democratic impeachment managers emphasized in seeking Trump's conviction.

The former president, McConnell said, was "practically and morally responsible for provoking the events" that led to the insurrection. But he argued that there were no constitutional grounds for the Senate to convict Trump now that he's out of office, a procedural point embraced by many in the GOP.

"He got a load off a chest obviously, but unfortunately he put a load on the back of Republicans," said Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., on "Fox News Sunday." Graham said McConnell is "going to be center stage now" as Republicans try to win back the Senate in 2022.

The history books will show that 10 members of the president's party in the House and another seven in the Senate ultimately believed that Trump's behavior was egregious enough to warrant conviction — and even a lifetime ban on holding future office. Never before have so many members of a president's party voted for his removal.

But by most objective measures, Trump's grasp on the GOP and its future remains airtight.

Gallup reported last month that Trump's approval among self-described Republicans stood at 82%. And more recently, Monmouth University found that 72% of Republicans continue to believe Trump's false claims that President Joe Biden won the November election only because of widespread voter fraud.

Lest there be any doubt about Trump's strength, House Republicans voted overwhelmingly last week to defend a diehard Trump loyalist, Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, R-Ga., even after evidence surfaced that she had repeatedly embraced violence, bigotry and conspiracy theories on social media.

Just days after House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy called Trump responsible for the violent attack, McCarthy reversed himself and made a personal visit to Trump's Florida estate to ensure there was no lingering animosity.

Of the seven Republicans who voted to convict Trump on Saturday, only one faces reelection in the next four years. Indeed, in Trump's Republican Party, there are very few willing to cross him if they harbor future political ambitions.

One of them, 2024 prospect Nikki Haley, who was U.S. ambassador to the United Nations under Trump, drew attention this week after telling Politico that Trump's role in the Jan. 6 attack essentially disqualified him from running for office again.

"He's fallen so far," Haley said. "He went down a path he shouldn't have, and we shouldn't have followed him, and we shouldn't have listened to him. And we can't let that ever happen again."

Another Republican presidential prospect, Sen. Ben Sasse, R-Neb., voted to convict Trump on Saturday, declaring that Trump's "lies" about widespread voter fraud endangered "the life of the vice president" and are "bringing us dangerously close to a bloody constitutional crisis."

While Sasse may run for president in 2024, he won't face Republican primary voters in Nebraska again unless he chooses to run for reelection in 2026.

Similarly, GOP Sen. Bill Cassidy of Louisiana faced a censure by his state party after voting to convict Trump. But he won't face voters again until 2026 so is relatively insulated from political consequences.

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Despite McConnell's criticism, Trump's most vocal Republican opponents at this point will likely consist of a collection of retired Republicans on cable news and a "Never Trump" movement grappling with its own existential challenges.

The Lincoln Project, perhaps the most prominent and best-funded anti-Trump Republican group, is coming off a tumultuous week following revelations that its leaders knew about multiple allegations of sexual misconduct against a co-founder several months before acknowledging them publicly.

The self-described "senior leader" of the organization, veteran Republican strategist Steve Schmidt, stepped down from the board on the eve of the Senate impeachment vote, a day after the Lincoln Project announced plans to bring in an outside investigator.

The fallout threatens to undermine the organization's fundraising appeal and its influence, even as the super PAC works to expand its reach through a popular podcast and expanding streaming video channel that drew more than 4 million views last month alone.

Even before the crisis, co-founder Reed Galen acknowledged that Trumpism was winning.

"The authoritarian side of the Republican Party is the dominant side," he said. "They have the momentum. For now, they have the money."

Sarah Longwell, a Republican strategist who leads the anti-Trump group known as Defending Democracy Together, said that "what the last two months have shown is if Donald Trump was a cancer on the country and the party, he's metastasized."

"I thought we could push past him," she said. "But now I don't think that."

Still, the Republican Party faces tremendous political risks should its leaders continue to embrace Trump and his brand of norm-shattering politics.

Already, scores of Republican-friendly businesses have vowed to stop giving money to Trump's allies in Congress, cutting off a critical revenue stream just as Republicans hope to reclaim the House and Senate majorities in next year's midterm elections.

Trump's critics in both parties are vowing to make sure the business community and voters alike do not forget what the former president and his allies did.

"We will remind voters that Republicans were willing to neglect their oaths of office all out of loyalty to one man, and that one man was more important than their constituents, more important than the Constitution of the United States, more important than the democracy that we have in this great nation," said Democratic National Committee Chair Jaime Harrison.

But Trump himself is not going away. Immediately after his acquittal, he issued a written statement promising to reemerge "soon."

"Our historic, patriotic and beautiful movement to Make America Great Again has only just begun," Trump said. "In the months ahead I have much to share with you, and I look forward to continuing our incredible journey together to achieve American greatness for all of our people."

Doctors who say no to opioid use face threats from patients

By TAMMY WEBBER Associated Press

One patient threatened to shoot Dr. Terry Hunt if physical therapy didn't relieve his pain as effectively as opioids did. Another harassed his staff, then roamed a hospital searching for Hunt after being told he would be weaned off painkillers he had used inappropriately.

Hunt was unharmed, but shaken enough to ask the central Illinois hospital system where he worked to dismiss both patients.

So when he heard about Tuesday's attack at a medical clinic in Buffalo, Minnesota, that left one person dead and four injured, "the first thing I assumed is that it was something to do with pain medication," said Hunt, who now works for the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, and a Mayo Clinic Health System facility in Red Wing, Minnesota. "It makes us ask about our own workplace: How secure are we?"

Authorities said Gregory Paul Ulrich, 67, was angry about his medical treatment before he shot five workers and detonated three apparent pipe bombs at an Allina Health clinic. A police report says he had

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threatened a similar mass shooting in 2018, allegedly as revenge against people who he said "tortured" him with back surgeries and prescribed medication.

A former roommate said Ulrich became upset when a doctor stopped prescribing painkillers, and that Ulrich also used other drugs and had untreated mental health issues. Law enforcement and the health system have not addressed the specifics of Ulrich's treatment or medications.

Doctors who treat pain say threats of violence escalated markedly in recent years as mounting legal and regulatory pressure stemming from the deadly opioid epidemic led many to prescribe alternatives and taper their patients off addictive painkillers.

While some patients benefit from careful use of opioids, and doctors don't want to stigmatize them, many would be better off treating pain with other therapies, experts say. But many become addicted to the drugs that are usually intended for short-term use following surgeries.

"It hijacks their brain," said Dr. Carrie DeLone, regional medical director at Penn State Health Community Medical Group. "They don't see themselves as having a problem."

Pain specialist Dr. Andrew Kolodny, a professor at Brandeis University and a founder of Physicians for Responsible Opioid Prescribing, said patients are convinced that opioids are treating their underlying problem because if they try to go without a dose or as their previous dose wears off, "they're feeling horrible, agonizing pain," when it can be the withdrawal that is causing pain hypersensitivity.

"It's much easier to give the patient what they want. You write the prescription ... they walk out the door happy and there are no problems. To try and help a patient taper down ... is much harder," Kolodny said.

And when a doctor says no, things can turn ugly.

"We've had patients waiting for doctors in parking lots to harass them. We've had them say 'We're going to shoot you' or 'We're going to burn your house down,'" DeLone said.

Almost half of pain specialists surveyed during a violence education session at a 2019 American Academy of Pain Medicine meeting cited opioid management as the reason they had been threatened, said Dr. W. Michael Hooten, president-elect of the organization.

In response to threats, doctors have dismissed patients. But they have also installed alarm systems and panic buttons and set up exams rooms so doctors are closest to the door. Some even advocate carrying weapons, said Hooten, noting that smaller clinics are at greatest risk because they might not be able to afford security.

After his 2018 threat, police took Ulrich for a mental health evaluation, and Allina took legal action to bar him from the company's property. A restraining order prohibited Ulrich from contact with the doctor or going into the clinic and nearby Allina-run Buffalo Hospital, where he once frightened a nurse so much that a colleague hit a panic button for help.

Police said they had had no recent interactions with Ulrich that would have raised alarms before the attack in Buffalo, a small city about 40 miles (65 kilometers) northwest of Minneapolis.

St. Joseph County, Indiana, Prosecutor Ken Cotter said he didn't know that such threats were common until 2017, when a man shot and killed a doctor who refused to prescribe opioids to his wife. Michael Jarvis ambushed Dr. Todd Graham in a parking lot hours after the appointment, said Cotter, adding there was evidence that Jarvis also was using opioids. Jarvis took his own life soon after.

Before that, "I do not recall ever reading a threat report" from a doctor, said Cotter, who said he received calls from about 20 doctors after the shooting telling him how common they were. "They took (threats) as a cost of doing business."

Cotter said about a dozen meetings were held with doctors, law enforcement officials and others to discuss how to keep doctors safe, including deescalating tense situations, but also alternatives to opioids, disposal of old medications, and tackling the addiction problems that plague their communities.

"When you've got doctors calling to say we have to do something, this is ... literally our whole community's crusade," Cotter said.

Kolodny, from Brandeis, said he has been compared to Hitler, threatened on Twitter, and a bag of nails was mailed to his home. Last month, protesters carried signs near his office demanding that he be fired

because of his work advocating less opioid use and helping to sue opioid manufacturers.

"The threats have "gotten really scary," he said. "It's just gotten really heated up."

Webber reported from Fenton, Michigan. Associated Press Writer Amy Forliti contributed from Minneapolis.

Buddhist temple food pantry a lifeline for Nepalese students

By LUIS ANDRES HENAO and JESSIE WARDARSKI Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Inside the temple in the New York City borough of Queens, monks clad in maroon robes chanted and lit incense and candles at an altar before a golden statue of Buddha.

Earlier, on the sidewalk outside, people with face masks, shopping baskets and reusable bags stood in a socially distanced line stretching two city blocks, waiting to cart off badly needed rice, fruit and vegetables to get them through hard times due to the pandemic.

"It's really a big help because you get all fresh, organic," said Jyoti Rajbanshi, a Nepalese nursing student at Long Island University who has lost work and resorted to running up her credit cards and relying on the weekly pantry. "And then at least you don't have to spend some money on buying the groceries."

The United Sherpa Association launched the food program from scratch last April as the coronavirus was ravaging the borough and other parts of the city. The Buddhist temple and community center serves all comers, including immigrants living in the country without legal permission and the swollen ranks of the unemployed, but it has become a particularly important lifeline for Nepalese college students living thousands of miles from their families.

Some were forced by lockdowns to leave dorms where previously they got most of their meals. They don't qualify for federal stimulus checks. Their student visas generally don't allow them to work full-time or off-campus to support themselves. And there's often little help from home, with families in their heavily tourism-dependent country struggling mightily during the pandemic.

"They don't have unemployment insurance. They don't have homes here. They are far away from home," said Urgen Sherpa, the association's president, who calls the students it helps "unknown victims" of the coronavirus.

They're part of the estimated 2 million residents of New York City facing food insecurity, a number said to have nearly doubled amid the biggest surge in unemployment since the Great Depression.

Early on in the pandemic, residents of the immigrant-rich Jackson Heights, Elmhurst and Corona neighborhoods of Queens were hit hard and tested positive for the virus in greater numbers than in other parts of the city. The United Sherpa Association closed its temple and canceled its sports programs, cultural activities and Sherpa and Nepali language classes.

It also sprang into action to help those who were struggling, with members calling contacts across the world to import masks, gloves and hand sanitizer that were often out of stock at local stores. The association gave \$500 stipends to more than 30 students and mobilized an army of volunteers to make home deliveries of personal protective equipment and boxes of food.

When the pantry launched, word spread through social media and students volunteered to pick up food and distribute it every Friday outside the temple, housed in a former Christian church.

Some of the volunteers are beneficiaries themselves, like Tshering Chhoki Sherpa, a 26-year-old graduate student at Baruch College who started working there in July.

"It feels good being a part of it," she said, "and also getting help."

Beyond mere sustenance, the pantry also comforts the spirit, she said: "When I come here I feel like I'm back home, because everyone talks in Nepali."

Like many who worship at the temple, she belongs to the Sherpa, an ethnic group from the Himalayan region whose members are known for working as guides and support staff for adventurers who come to climb Mount Everest and other peaks among the highest in the world.

Nepal, a country of 30 million people, was closed to foreigners much of the last year because of the pandemic, devastating the tourism industry and resulting in shuttered businesses and lost jobs. Tshering

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Chhoki Sherpa's family, for their part, temporarily closed the hotel they ran on one of the trekking paths to Everest, and she got by in New York on savings and the pantry.

Nepal was also hit hard by the virus, and shortages of available hospital beds led the government to ask patients with lesser symptoms to isolate at home. So for students struggling in New York, going home wasn't seen as a viable solution.

Rajbanshi said her parents both contracted COVID-19. So did her uncle, who died. She hasn't seen her family in Nepal in three years, and she worries about them.

It's a common sentiment.

"In Nepal, every day I hear harder news," said Mina Shaestha, 23, who deferred her entrance to LaGuardia Community College because of the pandemic. "People are dying of hunger. They are staying in the same room because of quarantine."

Her partner works part-time at a grocery store, and with little money coming in, the potatoes, onions, pasta, pumpkins and milk they get from the pantry are crucial to feed them and their 2-year-old son.

"We save the money from the food and we can pay the extra things, like rent," Shaesta said.

Pantry volunteer Deshen Karmo Sherpa, a 16-year-old who was born in the United States to Nepalese parents, said she was moved to support it because she saw a community in need.

It was "a way to actually give back," she said, "in a time where you feel so helpless."

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Ultra-Orthodox Londoners roll up sleeves to fight COVID

By DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — As people across England huddled indoors amid freezing temperatures and a national lockdown, nearly 300 elderly men and women lined up outside a health center in northeast London to be vaccinated against COVID-19.

But the wide-brimmed hats and long black coats that shielded them against the cold were more about religion than the weather. These ultra-Orthodox Jews are members of a community that has been especially hard hit by the virus, which has killed almost 117,000 people in Britain.

In hopes of breaking down barriers that sometimes isolate the Orthodox from wider society, community leaders organized the pop-up vaccination event for Saturday night to coincide with the end of Shabbat, the Jewish day of rest. They believed this was the best time to attract the faithful because it would fit perfectly into post-service schedules — and people would be more relaxed since no one was working.

"I want to see the grandchildren and I haven't seen them for months, so you know this is an ideal time to get it," Asatr Walmborg, 66, said after he rolled up his sleeve. "And hopefully we can see them soon."

As Britain's National Health Service races to reach its goal of giving a first dose of vaccine to more than 15 million people by Monday, including healthcare workers and everyone over 75, health care workers are trying to reach those who have been missed. The need is particularly great in Stamford Hill, the center of north London's ultra-Orthodox community.

Since many ultra-Orthodox shun social media and the internet, people here were slow to realize the dangers of COVID-19 and their community has experienced some of London's highest infection rates. Many fell ill last March after the Jewish festival of Purim, a day of feasting and merriment.

Local leaders, determined not to allow history to repeat itself, raised 10,000 pounds (\$13,840) and asked to be studied by the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine to find out why they were so hard hit.

An analysis of blood samples from 1,242 people found an infection rate of 64% — one of the highest recorded anywhere in the world. In contrast, the Office for National Statistics estimates that about 16% of England's population has had COVID-19.

Assistant Professor Michael Marks, one of the researchers on the project, said preliminary results suggest the ultra-Orthodox saw a lot of cases because public health officials didn't fully understand the virus

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last spring and because their small community is so close-knit.

COVID-19 was probably circulating much more widely than initially thought, which meant that government messaging about the virus lagged behind the real risk. This allowed the virus to spread rapidly in the community.

"And then they had a big religious event, which they all attended, because at the time the advice was to carry on, so I think that might explain the big uptick at the beginning," Marks said.

Community leaders now believe one way to prevent a recurrence is to ensure that as many people as possible get vaccinated. So they eliminated excuses not to attend. Besides the timing, the message to come went out through community channels, so people heard about it. In light of sensitivities, it was staffed with both male and female vaccinators.

"It's just about people feeling comfortable, people feeling at ease," said Joel Friedman, public affairs director for the Interlink Foundation, an umbrella group for Orthodox volunteer organizations.

Other faith leaders took part, like Mustafa Field of Faiths Forum for London, a Muslim. They are hoping a cross-religion model helps community organizations take the lead. It's a model the British government hopes to use across the country as the NHS tries to ensure the vaccination drive doesn't miss other hard-to-reach communities.

"Having them do this here is really a great lesson to see how we can replicate some of this," said Vaccination Minister Nadhim Zahawi, who attended the event. "So we will take this as a great model of faith groups working with the local government and, of course, the NHS."

Jewish leaders also hope the vaccination drive will help dispel the misconception that ultra-Orthodox Jews are ignoring the danger posed by COVID-19.

Police raided an Orthodox wedding at a local school last month because it was attended by 100 people in violation of lockdown rules barring large gatherings. An investigation by the Jewish News suggested it was not an isolated event. Ugly headlines about the event were seen as tarring the whole community, rather than the rule-breakers.

"What happened was unacceptable. Hopefully, scenes like that will never happen again," Friedman said. "But there is a strong feeling that we're being treated a little bit unfairly, and the whole community is being branded with the same paintbrush, which is very unfair."

The vaccine is a "big step forward" for the Orthodox community and British society as a whole, Rabbi Michael Biberfeld said as he sat down to get his shot. He said Orthodox Jews have an obligation to "take the vaccine as soon as possible to make sure" they stay healthy and don't infect other people.

"As I quoted one of the Israeli rabbis saying, 'This is one prick for the person taking the vaccine, but a huge leap forward for all of us, for humanity,'" he said.

Follow all of AP's pandemic coverage at <https://apnews.com/hub/coronavirus-pandemic>, <https://apnews.com/hub/coronavirus-vaccine> and <https://apnews.com/UnderstandingtheOutbreak>

No longer an outlier: New York ends commercial surrogacy ban

By DAVID CRARY AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — To become a father of two daughters, New York state Sen. Brad Hoylman and his husband made cross-country trips to California, where the girls were born through surrogacy arrangements.

At the time, New York was one of a handful of states outlawing commercial surrogacy. Now, it's about to become legal after years of activism by Hoylman and a host of allies who finally overcame tenacious political opposition.

Instead of being a national outlier, New York will become a leader, according to experts on surrogacy. They say the new law, passed in April and taking effect on Monday, has a surrogates' bill of rights providing the nation's strongest protections for women serving as surrogates.

Among the provisions: the right to independent legal representation, a guarantee of comprehensive medical coverage, and the right to make their own health care decisions, including whether to terminate

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or continue a pregnancy.

"We went to California because it had the best laws," Hoylman said. "Now New York has the best law. We think it's a model for other states."

The new law allows gestational surrogacy on a commercial basis, involving a surrogate who is not genetically related to the embryo. An egg is removed from the intended mother, fertilized with sperm and then transferred to a surrogate — in contrast to so-called traditional surrogacy that involves an egg from the surrogate. The gestational option is welcomed by many LGBTQ people who want to be parents, as well as by couples struggling with infertility.

With the change in New York, surrogacy advocates say only Louisiana and Michigan have laws explicitly prohibiting paid gestational surrogacy. Nebraska has no explicit ban, but a statute there says paid surrogacy contracts are unenforceable.

Hoylman, who was the surrogacy bill's lead sponsor in the New York Senate, and his husband, filmmaker David Sigal, made about 10 trips to California between them to help oversee the arrangements that led to the births of their daughters, Silvia, now 10, and Lucy, 3.

Gestational surrogacy routinely costs between \$100,000 and \$150,000. Hoylman declined to estimate the total costs incurred by him and Sigal but said, "It was worth every penny."

Among the standard costs are fees for lawyers and the surrogacy agency, the cost of in vitro fertilization, plus compensation and health insurance for the surrogate. Compensation rates vary widely — generally \$25,000 to \$50,000.

The first bill seeking to repeal the New York ban was introduced by Assemblywoman Amy Paulin in 2012, the year Hoylman was elected to the Senate. It floundered for years in the face of staunch opposition by the Roman Catholic Church and some feminists, who argued that paid surrogacy led to the exploitation of women.

"Under this bill, women in economic need become commercialized vessels for rent, and the fetuses they carry become the property of others," renowned feminist Gloria Steinem wrote to lawmakers in 2019.

New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo, who earlier in his tenure pushed hard to legalize same-sex marriage, argued in response that the surrogacy ban was "based in fear, not love" and was especially harmful to same-sex couples.

A leading surrogacy expert in California, Parham Zar, says gay couples and single men have constituted about half of his clientele in 20 years as managing director of the Egg Donor & Surrogacy Institute in Beverly Hills.

The institute has overseen more than 1,200 surrogacy births during that period, according to Zar, and he now plans to open an office in New York City. He expects that an expanded clientele will include many foreigners from countries where surrogacy is sharply restricted or illegal.

Zar says he advises clients to be braced for at least \$100,000 in costs for a gestational surrogacy.

The bills can be higher. Andrew Kabatchnick, an accountant from White Plains, New York, says he and his wife, occupational therapist Leah Marx, have spent \$250,000 to \$300,000 on two gestational surrogacy births. Their 2-year-old daughter, Sophie, was brought to term by a surrogate in Alabama; a second baby is due in June via a surrogate in Arkansas.

Kabatchnick says it was "an easy decision" to have a second child, though he acknowledges the costs could be burdensome for many couples.

Kabatchnick and Marx have been clients of attorney Vicki Ferrara, founder and legal director of Worldwide Surrogacy in Fairfield, Connecticut.

She is impressed by New York's new law, saying it "brings surrogacy into a new realm of ethics that we haven't seen in other states."

For example, she said, ethical surrogacy practices that are optional in some states will now be statutorily required in New York. And no out-of-state surrogacy agency can operate in New York without obtaining a state license, thereby becoming obligated to follow the new regulations.

Ferrara hopes New York will push for careful screening of surrogates and intended parents before any

contracts are signed.

"We're asking people who don't know each other to come together to bring a baby into the world," she said. "We need to have both the intended parents and the surrogate protected so the baby is brought into a situation that is really positive."

Marriage & divorce amid pandemic: Couples' challenges abound

By DAVID CRARY AP National Writer

For many U.S. couples yearning to be married, the pandemic has wreaked havoc on their wedding plans while bolstering their teamwork and resilience. For couples already married, it has posed a host of new tests, bringing some closer, pulling others apart.

Spending more time together — a common result of lockdowns, furloughs and layoffs — has been a blessing for some couples who gain greater appreciation of one another. For other spouses, deprived of opportunities for individual pursuits, the increased time together "may seem more like a house arrest than a fantasy," suggested Steve Harris, a professor of marriage and family therapy at the University of Minnesota and associate director of a marriage counseling project, Minnesota Couples on the Brink.

Gregory Popcak, a psychotherapist in Steubenville, Ohio, who specializes in marriage counseling for Catholics, says the pandemic has been particularly troublesome for spouses whose coping strategies have been disrupted.

"For couples who had a tendency to use their business to avoid problems, the pandemic has made things infinitely worse," he said. "The lockdown has raised the emotional temperature a few notches. ... Things that were provocative before are now catastrophic."

Overall, people have become more cautious amid the pandemic, said sociologist W. Bradford Wilcox, director of the National Marriage Project at the University of Virginia.

"This caution is making them less likely to get divorced, less likely to get married, less likely to have a child," he said.

Comprehensive national statistics on marriage and divorce during the pandemic won't be compiled for many months, but the numbers available thus far from a few states suggest there's a notable decline in each category.

In Oregon, divorces in the pandemic months of March through December were down about 24% from those months in 2019; marriages were down 16%. In Florida, for the same months, divorces were down 20% and marriages were down 27%. There also were decreases, though smaller, in Arizona.

One reason for fewer divorces: In many states, access to courts for civil cases was severely curtailed during the pandemic's early stages. Another reason, according to marriage counselors, is that many couples backed off from a possibly imminent divorce for fear it would only worsen pandemic-fueled financial insecurity.

The Rev. Russ Berg, who runs a faith-based marriage counseling ministry in Minneapolis, tries to encourage that kind of hesitancy among the couples he advises.

"Some come in saying they're overwhelmed, fighting over finances, their kids' education," Berg said. "Without going to work, they don't have that buffer of being physically gone. They feel they're on top of each other."

"I try to put it in perspective, that everyone is stressed out right now and it's not a good time to make decisions about the future of your marriage," he said. "I say, 'Let's work on it for six months and make sure you don't add the pain of regret to the pain of divorce. Explore all your options before you decide.'"

For countless couples on the brink of marriage, the pandemic plunged fine-tuned wedding plans into disarray due to restrictions on large gatherings and wariness about long-distance travel.

In San Diego, Kayleigh and Cody Cousins initially planned an April wedding, postponed it after the pandemic took hold, rescheduled it for December, then had to shift gears again when a new lockdown was imposed.

"That was devastating," said Kayleigh. "We said, 'Let's just do it on Zoom.'"

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So they set up an altar at home, recruited a friend to officiate virtually, and had a wedding ceremony Dec. 27 watched remotely by about 40 of their friends and family.

Professionally, Kayleigh helps her husband run a tree-cutting service, so they understand each other's work demands. For many couples, there's work-related friction.

Danielle Campoamor, a freelance writer in New York City, says she and her partner of seven years find themselves arguing frequently as the pandemic complicates the challenges of raising their two children and earning needed income. She works from home; he commutes to an Amazon fulfillment center.

"He goes to work for 12-hour shifts," said Campoamor, 34. "I'm left alone helping my 6-year-old with online learning, potty-training my 2-year-old, cooking and cleaning.

"There are days when I think, 'Yes, we can do this,' and other days I say, 'No way that I can do this,'" she said. "We don't have time to discuss our relationship, to work on improving it, or on separating. Sometimes I don't have the capacity to remember what day it is."

Atlanta-based attorney Elizabeth Lindsey, president of the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers, says she and other divorce lawyers generally have kept busy, in some cases grappling with pandemic-related complications regarding child visitation rights.

She expects there will be pent-up demand for divorces once the COVID-19 threat eases.

"Plenty of people I've consulted with were not ready to pull the trigger during the pandemic," she said.

Recent months have been busier than usual for Louise Livesay, a lawyer in St. Paul, Minnesota, who specializes in collaborative divorce — a process in which the spouses are represented by attorneys seeking to negotiate outcomes fair to both parties.

Livesay said the stresses of the pandemic exacerbated existing strains in some marriages, pushing couples toward divorce. But she said many of her clients were eager to avoid contentious litigation and were open to equitable financial arrangements.

"I found people to be a bit more willing to work toward solutions when things are difficult," she said.

For some couples, a jarring consequence of the pandemic has been the discovery by one spouse that the other was cheating on them.

"It has brought to light a lot of extramarital affairs that people couldn't hide anymore," said Harris, at the University of Minnesota. "Maybe they would meet on the way to or from work. Now they're texting, and the other spouse asks: 'Who are you texting?'"

For other couples, a key problem is loss of their pre-pandemic routines.

Harris described one troubled couple who entered marriage counseling a year ago, just before the pandemic took hold.

Now, the wife feels pressure to keep working, Harris said, while the husband tries to help their children with online schoolwork even though his teaching skills aren't great. His beloved adult hockey league has shut down.

"They're in this relationship that's struggling, and all their coping mechanisms are stripped away," Harris said. "My heart breaks for them."

In the Catholic diocese of Arlington, Virginia, psychologist Michael Horne, who counsels couples on behalf of Catholic Charities, has observed one heart-warming development that he attributes partly to the pandemic. There are now 20 couples enrolled in the agency's adoption program, up from seven a year ago.

"Having more time together has afforded couples time to have those really important conversations," he said. "What does it mean to be a family?"

Virus may never go away but could change into mild annoyance

By ANIRUDDHA GHOSAL and CHRISTINA LARSON Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — What if COVID-19 never goes away?

Experts say it's likely that some version of the disease will linger for years. But what it will look like in the future is less clear.

Will the coronavirus, which has already killed more than 2 million people worldwide, eventually be elimi-

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nated by a global vaccination campaign, like smallpox? Will dangerous new variants evade vaccines? Or will the virus stick around for a long time, transforming into a mild annoyance, like the common cold?

Eventually, the virus known as SARS-CoV-2 will become yet "another animal in the zoo," joining the many other infectious diseases that humanity has learned to live with, predicted Dr. T. Jacob John, who studies viruses and was at the helm of India's efforts to tackle polio and HIV/AIDS.

But no one knows for sure. The virus is evolving rapidly, and new variants are popping up in different countries. The risk of these new variants was underscored when Novavax Inc. found that the company's vaccine did not work as well against mutated versions circulating in Britain and South Africa. The more the virus spreads, experts say, the more likely it is that a new variant will become capable of eluding current tests, treatments and vaccines.

For now, scientists agree on the immediate priority: Vaccinate as many people as quickly as possible. The next step is less certain and depends largely on the strength of the immunity offered by vaccines and natural infections and how long it lasts.

"Are people going to be frequently subject to repeat infections? We don't have enough data yet to know," said Jeffrey Shaman, who studies viruses at Columbia University. Like many researchers, he believes chances are slim that vaccines will confer lifelong immunity.

If humans must learn to live with COVID-19, the nature of that coexistence depends not just on how long immunity lasts, but also how the virus evolves. Will it mutate significantly each year, requiring annual shots, like the flu? Or will it pop up every few years?

This question of what happens next attracted Jennie Lavine, a virologist at Emory University, who is co-author of a recent paper in *Science* that projected a relatively optimistic scenario: After most people have been exposed to the virus — either through vaccination or surviving infections — the pathogen "will continue to circulate, but will mostly cause only mild illness," like a routine cold.

While immunity acquired from other coronaviruses — like those that cause the common cold or SARS or MERS — wanes over time, symptoms upon reinfection tend to be milder than the first illness, said Ottar Bjornstad, a co-author of the *Science* paper who studies viruses at Pennsylvania State University.

"Adults tend not to get very bad symptoms if they've already been exposed," he said.

The prediction in the *Science* paper is based on an analysis of how other coronaviruses have behaved over time and assumes that SAR-CoV-2 continues to evolve, but not quickly or radically.

The 1918 flu pandemic could offer clues about the course of COVID-19. That pathogen was an H1N1 virus with genes that originated in birds, not a coronavirus. At the time, no vaccines were available. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that a third of the world's population became infected. Eventually, after infected people either died or developed immunity, the virus stopped spreading quickly. It later mutated into a less virulent form, which experts say continues to circulate seasonally.

"Very commonly the descendants of flu pandemics become the milder seasonal flu viruses we experience for many years," said Stephen Morse, who studies viruses at Columbia University.

It's not clear yet how future mutations in SARS-CoV-2 will shape the trajectory of the current disease.

As new variants emerge — some more contagious, some more virulent and some possibly less responsive to vaccines — scientists are reminded how much they don't yet know about the future of the virus, said Mark Jit, who studies viruses at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

"We've only known about this virus for about a year, so we don't yet have data to show its behavior over five years or 10 years," he said.

Of the more than 12 billion coronavirus vaccine shots being made in 2021, rich countries have bought about 9 billion, and many have options to buy more. This inequity is a threat since it will result in poorer countries having to wait longer for the vaccine, during which time the disease will continue to spread and kill people, said Ian MacKay, who studies viruses at the University of Queensland.

That some vaccines seem less effective against the new strains is worrisome, but since the shots provide some protection, vaccines could still be used to slow or stop the virus from spreading, said Ashley St. John, who studies immune systems at Duke-NUS Medical School in Singapore.

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Dr. Gagandeep Kang, an infectious diseases expert at Christian Medical College at Vellore in southern India, said the evolution of the virus raises new questions: At what stage does the virus become a new strain? Will countries need to re-vaccinate from scratch? Or could a booster dose be given?

"These are questions that you will have to address in the future," Kang said.

The future of the coronavirus may contrast with other highly contagious diseases that have been largely beaten by vaccines that provide lifelong immunity — such as measles. The spread of measles drops off after many people have been vaccinated.

But the dynamic changes over time with new births, so outbreaks tend to come in cycles, explained Dr. Jayaprakash Muliyl, who studies epidemics and advises India on virus surveillance.

Unlike measles, kids infected with COVID-19 don't always exhibit clear symptoms and could still transmit the disease to vulnerable adults. That means countries cannot let their guard down, he said.

Another unknown is the long-term impact of COVID-19 on patients who survive but are incapacitated for months, Kang said.

The "quantification of this damage" — how many people can't do manual labor or are so exhausted that they can't concentrate — is key to understanding the full consequences of the disease.

"We haven't had a lot of diseases that have affected people on a scale like this," she said.

Larson reported from Washington.

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'Obamacare' sign-ups reopen as Democrats push for more aid

By RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — HealthCare.gov's market for subsidized health plans reopens Monday for a special three-month sign-up window as the Democratic-led Congress pushes a boost in financial help that could cut premiums by double digits.

This enrollment period during the coronavirus pandemic is an early test of President Joe Biden's strategy to use the Affordable Care Act as a springboard toward health coverage for all. Advancing on a parallel track, the new COVID-19 relief bill from House Democrats would offer a generous, though temporary, increase in subsidies for people covered by the law known as "Obamacare."

"It is a hugely important signaling move," said Katherine Hempstead of the nonpartisan Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. "The administration is doing more than having open enrollment here, they're saying they want to make this coverage more affordable."

While policy experts like Hempstead are taking note, it's unclear how uninsured Americans will respond. Former President Barack Obama's health law has been on the books over a decade, but surveys consistently show that many people lacking job-based insurance do not realize they may qualify. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that about 33 million people are uninsured this year.

At Foundation Communities, an Austin, Texas, nonprofit that serves low-income working people, program director Kori Hattermer says she's seeing an uptick in interest. Although her agency had not started advertising, appointments for enrollment assistance booked up quickly. Volunteer counselors are being called back.

For clients, "it's their last chance probably to enroll in health insurance for 2021," Hattermer said.

One is Jacklindy Barradez, a housekeeper and restaurant worker unemployed since the start of the pandemic. Her husband hung on to his maintenance job, but the couple and their two children are uninsured. Barradez said a friend told her about the health law and she intends to follow through.

With no health insurance as the pandemic stretches into its second year, Barradez is uneasy. "We are not exempt from having something happen to us," she said in Spanish, her first language. "Not having the means to respond is extremely worrisome."

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The Biden administration is going the extra mile to try to sign up people such as Barradez.

HealthCare.gov will be accepting applications through May 15, a period about twice as long as annual open enrollment. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, which runs the program, has a \$50 million advertising budget, five times what the Trump administration would spend on annual open enrollment. Under Biden, there will be a special emphasis on reaching Black and Latino communities that have borne a heavy burden from COVID-19.

Across the country, people in the 36 states served by the federal HealthCare.gov marketplace will be able to apply. Additionally, most states that run their own marketplaces are matching the federal effort, giving it the feel of a national campaign.

The appeal for uninsured people could become much clearer if Congress increases premium subsidies as part of its next virus relief package.

"That would be a great incentive to get people in the door," said Tara Straw, a health policy analyst with the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, which advocates on behalf of low-income people. More generous help would be available not just to the newly enrolled, but to all who are covered through the law's marketplaces.

By the budget center's calculations, a family of four making \$50,000 would pay \$67 a month in premiums for a standard plan, instead of an average of \$252 currently, while also qualifying for help with deductibles and copays. The boost in premium assistance would be available for this year and for 2022.

Similarly, a single person making \$30,000 a year would pay \$85 a month for a standard plan instead of the current \$195.

The Democratic proposal would allow more solid middle-class households to qualify for financial help. On the opposite end of the scale, those who've experienced unemployment would qualify for extra-generous subsidies.

Republicans who tried but failed to repeal the law under President Donald Trump are calling the Democratic plan a waste of taxpayer dollars. But many Democrats see it as merely a down payment on a more ambitious health care agenda.

The Obama health law now covers more than 20 million people through a combination of subsidized private plans and, in most states, expanded Medicaid.

Experts agree that job losses during the pandemic have led to more uninsured people, but it's unclear how many more. Some estimates range from 5 million to 10 million, while the Congressional Budget Office suggests a lower number, more like 3 million.

Chris Sloan of the consulting firm Avalere Health says it's likely that many who became unemployed in the pandemic had no job-based health insurance to begin with. That means they represent the demographic for which the health law was originally designed.

"People are coming back into the workforce as the unemployment rate comes down, but they may not necessarily have the same job or as good a job," said Sloan. "This will be an important option for people still facing job and employment insecurity."

EXPLAINER: Why impeachment evidence tested TV's standards

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — All the words abounded — the ones that you're not supposed to hear on broadcast television or, for that matter, in a lot of other places.

Former President Donald Trump's impeachment trial last week featured explicit language rarely heard on American airwaves, particularly during a dramatic 13-minute video presented by House managers that showed scenes from the Jan. 6 Capitol riot and the enraged, violent mob that caused it.

Why was hearing that language on network television unusual? And what might it mean for the future when it comes to broadcast standards?

WHAT DID THE RIOTERS SAY?

Repeated obscenities were shouted by members of the angry and agitated pro-Trump mob as they

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moved toward and inside the U.S. Capitol that day. They included a chant of “f--- the blue,” apparently directed at police officers, and other swear words including “motherf---,” as the crowd became more confrontational and violent.

They were heard on several networks, including ABC, CBS, NBC, CNN, Fox News Channel and MSNBC. Often, they were seen as well; the House managers printed some of the dialogue on screens so viewers were clear about the often-muffled sounds that they were hearing.

Many of the networks bleeped out the offending language when repeating videos later, but not when they were broadcast live.

WHY IS THAT UNUSUAL?

The Federal Communications Commission prohibits broadcasters from airing indecent or profane content on television between the hours of 6 a.m. and 10 p.m., when children could reasonably be expected to be in the audience.

You can thank the late comic George Carlin for perpetuating that standard. When his famous routine, “The Seven Words You Can Never Say on Television,” was played on a New York radio station in 1973, it led to a U.S. Supreme Court ruling that affirmed the FCC’s authority to fine radio or television stations for using such words and, potentially, take away their license to broadcast.

ARE THE RULES THE SAME FOR BROADCAST, CABLE AND STREAMING SERVICES?

No. Broadcasters — networks like ABC, CBS, NBC, Fox and PBS — are subject to penalties because their signals are sent over public airwaves. The other services are different, because users subscribe to them, and thus are not subject to FCC penalties.

So-called “basic” cable services like CNN, ESPN or USA tend to keep profanity to a minimum because they don’t want to offend advertisers. Premium services like HBO and Netflix don’t depend on advertising, so they can let their freak flags fly.

WHAT’S THE LIKELIHOOD THAT BROADCAST NETWORKS WILL BE PENALIZED?

The first requirement for FCC action is getting a complaint from the public, which would lead the government body to open an investigation. There have been some complaints, an agency spokesman said Friday. But enforcement is unlikely for several reasons.

The FCC fined ABC and Fox in 2012 after they aired obscenities blurted out during an awards show, but the Supreme Court threw the action out, saying the networks could not have anticipated the language. Networks could argue the same thing with the impeachment trial; it strengthens that point when they “bleeped” out the bad language for later reruns.

The FCC received complaints in 2018 after news programs aired stories about Trump referring to some African and Latin American nations as “s---hole countries,” but did not take enforcement action.

ARE STANDARDS DIFFERENT FOR NEWS EVENTS?

That’s not in the rules. But in practice, that’s the case, says Paul Levinson, a professor of communications and media studies at Fordham University. “The FCC doesn’t want to get anywhere near what would be considered political censorship,” he said.

News executives who aired the language this week argued that it would be wrong to edit language being used on the floor of the U.S. Senate. Given the explicitness of the language used this week, during daytime hours, Levinson said he believes it’s a watershed moment in broadcast standards.

“The fact that this language was put out there,” he says, “is a very important step forward in terms of freedom of expression.”

David Bauder, the media writer for The Associated Press, has been covering the business of television for more than two decades. Follow him on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/dbauder>

Women fleeing Burkina Faso violence face sexual assault

By SAM MEDNICK Associated Press

KAYA, Burkina Faso (AP) — A 20-year-old woman could no longer live in her village amid the rising vio-

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lence caused by Islamic extremists. But she needed to return and retrieve the family's cows in hopes of selling them.

If her husband went, jihadists would almost certainly kill him. She went instead, and was dragged into the bush, beaten and raped at knifepoint.

"I screamed, but I couldn't overtake him, so I cried," she recalled in a phone interview from Barsalogo town in the Center North region where she now lives. The Associated Press does not identify victims of sexual violence.

The extremist violence in Burkina Faso linked to al-Qaida and the Islamic State group is fueling an increase in sexual assaults against women, especially those displaced by attacks. Many are preyed upon as they attempt to collect belongings they left behind.

The violence killed more than 2,000 people last year, according to the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project. It also displaced more than 1 million people.

In Burkina Faso's Center North region, sexual assault cases increased from two to 10 during a three-month period last year, according to a report by humanitarian groups including the United Nations. Some 85% of survivors were internally displaced people mainly living in makeshift camps in Barsalogo and Kaya towns, it said.

Women in Kaya told AP they feared being attacked while going to fetch firewood for cooking.

"I won't go more than 4 kilometers (2.5 miles) outside of Kaya to farm because I'm afraid for my safety," said Kotim Sawadogo. The 37-year-old fled Dablo in August and struggles to afford food for her four children. In September 2019, her niece was raped by jihadists while farming outside the village, she said.

"They won't be killed but they'll be raped, which is like being killed inside anyway," said Fatimata Sawadogo, who was displaced last year from Dablo to Kaya and knows women who have been raped by jihadists while farming. Women often assume the rapists are jihadists because they carry guns and wear masks.

Sometimes after assaulting the women, the jihadists burn their food, and yet some women are so desperate that they return the next day to salvage it, she said.

Aid groups say jihadists are not the only perpetrators and that there has been an increase in domestic violence and exploitation of displaced women by host communities.

"This reality is made worse by the lack of economic opportunities for women, the shortage of food and shelter for women and the lack of access to quality health care," said Jennifer Overton, West Africa regional director for Catholic Relief Services.

Earlier this month, a woman in Kaya said she had sex with a community leader twice, in June and November, because he promised he could add her name to a list to receive food. "I regret it, but I thought I'd get food and I never did," she said, who spoke on condition of anonymity for her safety.

Before the violence, Burkina Faso didn't have specialized services focused on sexual assault. Now humanitarians are struggling to cope, said Awa Nebie, a gender-based violence specialist with the United Nations Population Fund.

This year the humanitarian response plan for Burkina Faso estimates that more than 660,000 people will need protection against gender-based violence, Nebie said.

Since August, the organization has created six safe spaces in the Center North to help women and girls speak freely about their experiences, but it's inadequate, she said. And some areas of the country like the Sahel and East regions are hard to access due to insecurity.

Local government officials say the daily influx of displaced people is straining resources and putting women at risk by forcing them to venture farther into the bush to collect wood for cooking.

"In the past, women could find resources two or three kilometers (one to two miles) away, but with the increasing number, they go farther and farther and it is very worrying," said Saidou Wily, head of social welfare services in Barsalogo.

The government increased security around the town and is advising women not to go into the bush alone. Yet mothers trying to feed their children say they have little choice.

Last year, a 40-year-old mother of seven was gang-raped at gunpoint by two masked men who dragged

her into an abandoned farmhouse while she was trying to return to her town in the Sahel region to get food, she said.

Now living in Kaya, she's too afraid to leave again, but she has no money to support her family. "I think about it a lot and I don't even know what I'm thinking about, I just cry," she said. "It's misery."

New Zealand city going into 3-day lockdown after virus found

By NICK PERRY Associated Press

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (AP) — New Zealand's largest city of Auckland will go into a three-day lockdown beginning just before midnight Sunday following the discovery of three unexplained coronavirus cases in the community.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern announced the move after an urgent meeting with other top lawmakers in the Cabinet. She said they decided to take a cautious approach until they find out more about the outbreak, including whether the infections are of the more contagious variants.

The lockdown is the first in New Zealand in six months and represents a significant setback in the nation's largely successful efforts to control the virus. It will also force a delay in the America's Cup sailing regatta.

New Zealand had successfully stamped out community spread, and many people elsewhere in the world looked on in envy as New Zealanders went back to work and began attending concerts and sporting events without the need to wear masks or take other precautions.

Indeed, Ardern on Sunday had planned to attend the Big Gay Out, an Auckland festival that celebrates the rainbow community and attracts tens of thousands of people. She ended up canceling those plans and returning to Wellington to manage the outbreak.

"I'm asking New Zealanders to continue to be strong and to be kind," Ardern said at a hastily arranged press conference on Sunday evening. "I know we all feel the same way when this happens. We all get that sense of 'Not again.' But remember, we have been here before and that means we know how to get out of this again, and that is together."

New Zealand's greatest vulnerability has been at the border.

New cases are regularly caught among returning travelers, all of whom are required to spend two weeks in quarantine. Despite precautions, there have been several times when the virus has leaked out from the border before being controlled again, and officials are trying to determine whether that's happened again.

In the latest case, an Auckland mother, father and daughter caught the disease. Officials said the mother works at a catering company that does laundry for airlines, and officials are investigating whether there is a link to infected passengers. Officials said the woman hadn't been going aboard the planes herself.

Officials said the rest of New Zealand outside of Auckland will also be placed under heightened restrictions, although will not go into lockdown.

"We are gathering all of the facts as quickly as we can, and the system that served us so well in the past is really gearing up to do so again," said COVID-19 Response Minister Chris Hipkins.

He described the cases as new and active. He said scientists are carrying out genome sequencing to see whether they are variants, and also to see whether they match with any infected passengers.

"New Zealand has kept COVID-19 contained better than almost any other country," Hipkins said. "But as we have kept saying, there is no such thing as no risk."

New Zealand, with a population of 5 million, has reported a total of just over 2,300 cases and 25 deaths since the pandemic started.

The country has been hosting the America's Cup sailing regatta. Racing was due to continue on Wednesday in the Prada Cup challenger series, but organizers have announced that a postponement will be necessary. Italy's Luna Rossa Prada Pirelli leads Britain's INEOS Team UK 4-0 in the first-to-seven series. The winner will then take on Emirates Team New Zealand for the America's Cup.

Russia moves to extinguish pro-Navalny 'flashlight' protests

By DARIA LITVINOVA Associated Press

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MOSCOW (AP) — When the team of imprisoned Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny urged people to come out to their residential courtyards and shine their cellphone flashlights in a display of unity, many responded with jokes and skepticism. After two weekends of nationwide demonstrations, the new protest format looked to some like a retreat.

But not to Russian authorities, who moved vigorously to extinguish the illuminated protests planned for Sunday.

Officials accused Navalny's allies of acting on NATO's instructions. Kremlin-backed TV channels warned that flashlight rallies were part of major uprisings around the world. State news agencies cited unnamed sources saying a terrorist group was plotting attacks during unapproved mass protests.

The suppression attempts represent a change of tactics for the authorities who once tried to weaken Navalny's influence by erasing him.

Kremlin-controlled TV channels used to largely ignore protests called by Navalny. Russian President Vladimir Putin has never mentioned his most prominent critic by name. State news agencies referred to the politician and anti-corruption investigator as "a blogger" in the rare stories they ran mentioning him.

"Navalny went from a person whose name is not allowed to be mentioned to the main subject of discussion" on state TV, Maria Pevchikh, head of investigations at Navalny's Foundations for Fighting Corruption, said in a YouTube video Friday.

Pevchikh credited Navalny's latest expose for the sudden surge in attention. His foundation's two-hour-long video alleging that a lavish palace on Black Sea was built for Putin through elaborate corruption has been watched over 111 million times on YouTube since it was posted on Jan. 19.

The video went up two days after Navalny was arrested upon returning to Russia from Germany, where he spent five months recovering from nerve-agent poisoning that he blames on the Kremlin. The Russian government denies involvement and has said it has no evidence that Navalny was poisoned.

While the high-profile arrest and the subsequent expose were a double blow to authorities, political analyst and former Kremlin speech writer Abbas Gallyamov says that keeping Navalny and his activity off the airwaves to deprive him of additional publicity no longer makes sense.

"The fact that this strategy has changed suggests that the pro-government television audience is somehow receiving information about Navalny's activities through other channels, recognizes him, is interested in his work, and in this sense, keeping the silence doesn't make any sense," Gallyamov said.

The weekend protests in scores of cities last month over Navalny's detention represented the largest outpouring of popular discontent in years and appeared to have rattled the Kremlin.

Police reportedly arrested about 10,000 people, and many demonstrators were beaten, while state media sought to downplay the scale of the protests.

TV channels aired footage of empty squares in cities where protests were announced and claimed that few people showed up. Some reports portrayed police as polite and restrained, claiming officers had helped people with disabilities cross busy streets, handed out face masks to demonstrators and offered them hot tea.

Once the protests died down and Navalny ally Leonid Volkov announced a pause until the spring, Kremlin-backed media reported that grassroots flash mobs titled "Putin is our president" started sweeping the country. State news channel Rossiya 24 broadcast videos from different cities of people dancing to patriotic songs and waving Russian flags, describing them as a genuine expression of support for Putin.

Several independent online outlets reported that instructions to record videos in support of Putin came from the Kremlin and the governing United Russia party, and that people featured in some of the recordings were invited to shoots under false pretenses.

The Russian president's spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, said the Kremlin had nothing to do with the pro-Putin videos.

After Navalny's team posted its video involving the palace allegedly built for Putin, state channel Rossiya aired its own expose of Navalny. Anchor Dmitry Kiselev said that while working on the investigation in Germany, Navalny lived "in the luxury he so much despises."

The reporter sent to chronicle the allegedly luxurious lifestyle the politician maintained while abroad

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filmed inside a house Navalny rented but failed to capture any high-end items in the two-story building, which featured several bedrooms and a small swimming pool.

She pointed to "two sofas, a TV, fresh fruit on the table" in the living room and "a kitchen with a coffee machine," and described a bedroom as "luxurious" even though it didn't look much different from a room in a business hotel.

In recent days, official media coverage has focused on plans for this weekend's flashlights-in-courtyards protest. Reports extensively quoted Navalny ally Volkov's social media post announcing the event and accused him of acting on instructions from his Western handlers, pointing to an online conference with European officials he took part in the day before.

The political talk show "60 Minutes" devoted nearly a half-hour to the topic, calling the flashlight rally an idea from a handbook on revolutions. It aired footage of protesters shining flashlights during the 2014 Maidan protests in Ukraine, mass rallies in Belarus last summer and other uprisings around the world.

On Thursday, state news agencies Tass and RIA Novosti reported, citing anonymous sources, that a terrorist group from Syria was training insurgents for possible terrorist attacks in Russian cities "at locations of mass rallies."

The reports didn't refer to any specific protests. Neither did public warnings against "unauthorized public events" the Prosecutor General's office and Russia's Interior Ministry issued Thursday, although the ministry mentioned events "planned for the nearest time."

"The Kremlin is awfully scared of the flashlight action," because such a peaceful, light-hearted event would allow the opposition to build a rapport with new supporters who are not ready to be more visible and involved in the protests, Volkov said in a YouTube video.

He suggested that the heavy-handed response to the announcement actually helped dispel skepticism about the courtyard demonstrations.

"I saw many posts on social media (saying) 'When Navalny's headquarters announced the flashlight rally, I thought what nonsense... But when I saw the Kremlin's reaction, I realized they were right to come up with it.'"

Powerful Japan quake sets off landslide, minor injuries

By YURI KAGEYAMA and MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Residents in northeastern Japan on Sunday cleaned up clutter and debris in stores and homes after a strong earthquake set off a landslide on a highway, damaged buildings and parts of bullet train lines and caused power blackouts for thousands of people.

The 7.3 magnitude temblor late Saturday shook the quake-prone areas of Fukushima and Miyagi prefectures that 10 years ago had been hit by a powerful earthquake that triggered a tsunami and a meltdown at a nuclear power plant.

More than 140 people suffered mostly minor injuries, many of them by falling objects and cuts while stepping on broken glass. Three people were confirmed with serious injuries but there were no reports of deaths, Chief Cabinet Secretary Katsunobu Kato said.

Tokyo Electric Power Co., the utility that runs the Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear power plant that was hit by the March 2011 disaster, said the water used to cool spent fuel rods near the reactors had spilled because of the shaking. But there were no radiation leaks or other irregularities, TEPCO said.

The quake did not cause a tsunami because the epicenter was deep at 55 kilometers (34 miles) beneath the ocean.

Noriko Kamaya, a Japan Meteorological Agency spokesperson, said in a news conference that the quake is considered to be an aftershock of the 9.1 magnitude quake in 2011.

Power had been restored by early Sunday, although some bullet train services were still halted. East Japan Railway Co. said the bullet train on the northern coast will be suspended through Monday due to damage to its facility.

TV footage and video shared on social media showed boxes, books and other items scattered on floors.

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In the northern Fukushima city of Soma, a roof at a Buddhist temple collapsed.

Workers were clearing up a major coastal highway connecting Tokyo and northern cities where a major landslide occurred. Several other roads were also blocked by rocks.

Saturday's powerful rattling less than a month before the 10th anniversary of the 2011 triple disaster was a frightening reminder of the earlier tragedy for the residents in the region.

"It started with minor shaking, then suddenly became violent," said Yuki Watanabe, a convenience store employee in the Fukushima town of Minamisoma, told the Asahi newspaper. "I was so frightened," she said, adding it reminder her of the 2011 quake.

As she ran outside, she heard banging noise coming from behind the store as glass bottles from the shelves smashed against the floor.

Experts warned of more aftershocks. Many residents spent the night at evacuation centers, where tents were set up as part of coronavirus protection measures.

Yasutoshi Nishimura, the minister in charge of economic and fiscal policy, expressed sympathy for those who had suffered damage and injuries.

"The government will continue to do our utmost to respond," he said.

Defense troops also were mobilized to provide water in some areas.

Yuri Kageyama is on Twitter <https://twitter.com/yurikageyama>

Trump acquitted, denounced in second impeachment trial

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

WASHINGTON (AP) — Donald Trump was acquitted of inciting the horrific attack on the U.S. Capitol, concluding a historic impeachment trial that spared him the first-ever conviction of a current or former U.S. president but exposed the fragility of America's democratic traditions and left a divided nation to come to terms with the violence sparked by his defeated presidency.

Barely a month since the deadly Jan. 6 riot that stunned the world, the Senate convened for a rare weekend session to deliver its Saturday verdict, voting while armed National Guard troops continued to stand their posts outside the iconic building.

The quick trial, the nation's first of a former president, showed in raw and emotional detail how perilously close the invaders had come to destroying the nation's deep tradition of a peaceful transfer of presidential power after Trump had refused to concede the election. Rallying outside the White House, he unleashed a mob of supporters to "fight like hell" for him at the Capitol just as Congress was certifying Democrat Joe Biden's victory. As hundreds stormed the building, some in tactical gear engaging in bloody combat with police, lawmakers fled for their lives. Five people died.

The verdict, on a vote of 57-43, is all but certain to influence not only the former president's political future but that of the senators sworn to deliver impartial justice as jurors. Seven Republicans joined all Democrats to convict, but it was far from the two-third threshold required.

The outcome after the uprising leaves unresolved the nation's wrenching divisions over Trump's brand of politics that led to the most violent domestic attack on one of America's three branches of government.

"Senators, we are in a dialogue with history, a conversation with our past, with a hope for our future," said Rep. Madeleine Dean, D-Pa., one of the House prosecutors in closing arguments.

"What we do here, what is being asked of each of us here, in this moment, will be remembered."

Trump, unrepentant, welcomed his second impeachment acquittal and said his movement "has only just begun." He slammed the trial as "yet another phase of the greatest witch hunt in the history of our Country."

Though he was acquitted of the sole charge of incitement of insurrection, it was easily the largest number of senators to ever vote to find a president of their own party guilty of an impeachment count of high crimes and misdemeanors.

Voting to find Trump guilty were GOP Sens. Richard Burr of North Carolina, Bill Cassidy of Louisiana, Susan Collins of Maine, Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, Mitt Romney of Utah, Ben Sasse of Nebraska and Patrick

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Toomey of Pennsylvania.

Even after voting to acquit, the Republican leader Mitch McConnell condemned the former president as "practically and morally responsible" for the insurrection. McConnell contended Trump could not be convicted because he was gone from the White House.

In a statement issued several hours after the verdict, Biden highlighted the bipartisan nature of the vote to convict as well as McConnell's strong criticism of Trump. In keeping with his stated desire to see the country overcome its divisions, Biden said everyone, especially the nation's leaders, have a duty "to defend the truth and to defeat the lies."

"That is how we end this uncivil war and heal the very soul of our nation. That is the task ahead. And it's a task we must undertake together," said Biden, who had hardly weighed in on the proceedings during the week.

The trial had been momentarily thrown into confusion when senators Saturday suddenly wanted to consider potential witnesses, particularly concerning Trump's actions as the mob rioted. Prolonged proceedings could have been especially damaging for Biden's new presidency, significantly delaying his emerging legislative agenda. Coming amid the searing COVID-19 crisis, the Biden White House is trying to rush pandemic relief through Congress.

Biden was spending the weekend with family at the presidential retreat in Camp David, Maryland.

The nearly weeklong trial has delivered a grim and graphic narrative of the riot and its consequences in ways that senators, most of whom fled for their own safety that day, acknowledge they are still coming to grips with.

House prosecutors have argued that Trump's was the "inciter in chief" stoking a months-long campaign with an orchestrated pattern of violent rhetoric and false claims they called the "big lie" that unleashed the mob. Five people died, including a rioter who was shot and a police officer.

Trump's lawyers countered that Trump's words were not intended to incite the violence and that impeachment is nothing but a "witch hunt" designed to prevent him from serving in office again.

The senators, announcing their votes from their desks in the very chamber the mob had ransacked, were not only jurors but also witnesses. Only by watching the graphic videos — rioters calling out menacingly for House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Vice President Mike Pence, who was presiding over the January certification tally — did senators say they began to understand just how perilously close the country came to chaos.

Many senators kept their votes closely held until the final moments on Saturday, particularly the Republicans representing states where the former president remains popular. Most of them ultimately voted to acquit, doubting whether Trump was fully responsible or if impeachment is the appropriate response.

"Just look at what Republicans have been forced to defend," said Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer. "Look at what Republicans have chosen to forgive."

The second-ranking Republican, John Thune of South Dakota, acknowledged, "It's an uncomfortable vote," adding, "I don't think there was a good outcome there for anybody."

In closing arguments, lead defender Michael van der Veen emphasized an argument that Republican senators also embraced: that it was all a "phony impeachment show trial."

"Mr. Trump is innocent of the charges against him," said van der Veen. "The act of incitement never happened."

The House impeached Trump on the sole charge of incitement of insurrection one week after the riot, but the Senate was not in full session and McConnell refused requests from Democrats to convene quickly for the trial. Within a week Biden was inaugurated, Trump was gone and Pelosi sent the article of impeachment to the Senate days later, launching the proceedings.

The turmoil on Saturday came as senators wanted to hear evidence about Trump's actions during the riot, after prosecutors said he did nothing to stop it.

Fresh stories overnight had focused on Rep. Jaime Herrera Beutler of Washington state, who said in a statement that Trump had rebuffed a plea from House Republican leader Kevin McCarthy to call off the

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rioters.

Several Republican senators voted to consider witnesses. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina changed his vote to join them on that 55-45 vote.

But with the Senate facing a prolonged trial and the defense poised to call many more witnesses, the situation was resolved when Herrera Beutler's statement about the call was read aloud into the record for senators to consider as evidence. As part of the deal, Democrats dropped their planned deposition of the congresswoman and Republicans abandoned their threat to call their own witnesses. They also agreed to include GOP Sen. Mike Lee's time stamp of a call from Trump around the time Pence was evacuated, minutes after Trump sent a tweet critical of his vice president.

Impeachment trials are rare, senators meeting as the court of impeachment over a president only four times in the nation's history, for Andrew Johnson, Bill Clinton and now twice for Trump, the only one to be twice impeached. There have been no convictions.

Unlike last year's impeachment trial of Trump in the Ukraine affair, a complicated charge of corruption and obstruction over his attempts to have the foreign ally dig up dirt on then-campaign rival Biden, this one brought an emotional punch displayed in graphic videos of the siege that laid bare the unexpected vulnerability of the democratic system.

At the same time, this year's trial carried similar warnings from the prosecutors that Trump must be held accountable because he has shown repeatedly he has no bounds. Left unchecked, he will further test the norms of civic behavior, even now that he is out of office still commanding loyal supporters, they said.

Biden White House seeks to turn page on Trump

By ALEXANDRA JAFFE and JONATHAN LEMIRE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The end of former President Donald Trump's impeachment trial opens a new chapter for his successor in the White House.

But while President Joe Biden and his team are eager to move past the impeachment, the bitterly partisan tone of the proceedings underscores the deep challenges ahead as the president and his party try to push forward their agenda and address historic crises.

Biden, who was at the Camp David presidential retreat when the Senate voted Saturday to acquit Trump, had acknowledged that Democrats needed to hold the former president responsible for the siege of the U.S. Capitol but did not welcome the way it distracted from his agenda.

The trial ended with every Democrat and seven Republicans voting to convict Trump, but the 57-43 vote was far from the two-third threshold required for conviction. Whether the seven GOP votes against Trump offered Biden any new hope for bipartisan cooperation within Congress remained an open question.

In a statement, Biden referenced those GOP votes in favor of convicting the former president — and Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell's own indictment of Trump's actions — as evidence that "the substance of the charge," that Trump was responsible for inciting violence at the Capitol, is "not in dispute."

But he quickly moved on to the work ahead, sounding a note of unity and declaring that "this sad chapter in our history has reminded us that democracy is fragile" and that "each of us has a duty and responsibility as Americans, and especially as leaders, to defend the truth and to defeat the lies."

"It's a task we must undertake together. As the United States of America," Biden said.

Biden made a point of not watching the trial live, choosing to comment only briefly on the searing images of the riot that gripped the nation. Though his White House publicly argued that the trial did not hinder their plans, aides privately worried that a lengthy proceeding could bog down the Senate and slow the passage of his massive COVID-19 relief bill. That \$1.9 trillion proposal is just the first part of a sweeping legislative agenda Biden hopes to pass as he battles the coronavirus pandemic, which has killed more than 480,000 Americans and rattled the nation's economy.

"The No. 1 priority for Democrats and the Biden administration is going to be to deliver on the promises that have been made on the pandemic, both on the vaccine front and the economic front," said Democratic strategist Josh Schwerin.

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The end of the impeachment trial frees the party to focus on less divisive and more broadly popular issues and policies, like the coronavirus relief package, which polls show has significant support among Americans.

Throughout his campaign, Biden worked to avoid being defined by Trump and his controversies and instead sought to draw a contrast on policy and competence, a guiding principle that he and his aides have carried over into the White House.

His team kept up a steady drumbeat of events during the trial, including an update on vaccine development and Biden's first visit to the Pentagon as commander in chief. With the proceedings on the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue now over, the White House plans to increase its efforts to spotlight the fight against the pandemic and push past Trump's chaos.

Former Democratic Sen. Heidi Heitkamp of North Dakota predicted that in a state like hers, where Trump won 65% of the vote, focusing on those urgent issues would make more headway with average voters now.

"What we have to be talking about is the economy — getting the economy back working, and turning the page" on the last administration, she said. "Good policy is good politics. We need to get back to that."

Democrats have a decision to make in how to deal with Trump going forward. While the end of the impeachment trial offers a clear opportunity for the party to focus squarely on its own agenda, Trump can also be a potent political weapon for Democrats, not to mention a big driver of campaign cash.

After Saturday's vote, American Bridge 21st Century, the Democratic Party's opposition research arm, issued a statement calling out senators from Ohio and Florida, two states that Democrats are targeting in the 2022 election, for voting against convicting Trump.

"Ron Johnson, Marco Rubio, and nearly every other Senate Republican put their loyalty to Donald Trump ahead of the rule of law, the Capitol police officers who protect them every day, and the oaths they swore to uphold the Constitution," said Bradley Beychock, the group's president, calling the senators "spineless sycophants."

Still, Schwerin cautioned that Trump can't be Democrats' "primary focus."

"We shouldn't ignore the fact that a lot of the problems that the country is dealing with are because of Trump's failures, but he shouldn't be the focus of every fundraising email and press release. We should be looking forward," he said.

Biden plans to keep up a busy schedule focused on the coronavirus pandemic in the coming week.

The president will make his first official domestic trips this week: a TV town hall in Wisconsin on Tuesday to talk to Americans impacted by the coronavirus and a visit to a Pfizer vaccine facility in Michigan on Thursday.

White House legislative affairs staffers were poised to work with House committees on crafting details of the COVID-19 relief bill, which Democrats hope to vote on next month.

Still, some within the party aren't finished with Trump. The Progressive Change Campaign Committee, a leading progressive advocacy group, issued a petition Saturday night encouraging supporters to call on attorney general nominee Merrick Garland to "investigate and prosecute Trump and his entire criminal network for law breaking."

Biden is likely to continue to face questions about how his Justice Department will handle a number of ongoing federal and criminal probes into Trump's businesses and his conduct as president.

And his aides will be watching for Trump's next moves, particularly if he claims exoneration and heats up his political activity and even points toward a 2024 campaign. The plan, for now, is to try to ignore the former president.

Former Democratic National Committee Chair Donna Brazile warned that Trump won't make it easy but Democrats need to avoid getting sucked back into his orbit.

"I don't think Donald Trump is going to disappear from anyone's lips any day soon, and that's because Donald Trump will always seek to find ways to inject himself and serve himself," she said.

"While Donald Trump is figuring out who he is going to go after next, Democrats are going to figure out how they're going to lift people up and how they're going to protect and help the American people."

Analysis: Impeachment proves imperfect amid US polarization

By JULIE PACE AP Washington Bureau Chief

WASHINGTON (AP) — Three Republican senators spent an hour talking strategy with lawyers for the accused. The entire Senate served as jurors even though they were also targets of the crime. No witnesses were called. And the outcome was never in doubt.

The second impeachment trial of Donald Trump laid bare the deep imperfections in the Constitution's only process for holding a president accountable, for "high crimes and misdemeanors." The proceedings packed an emotional punch and served as history's first accounting of the Jan. 6 riots on the U.S. Capitol, but the inherently political process never amounted to a real and unbiased effort to determine how the insurrection unfolded and whether Trump was responsible.

The results were ultimately unsurprising: a fast impeachment in the Democratic-led House followed by acquittal in the Senate, where 17 Republicans were needed to convict. Only seven voted guilty, an insufficient number but a record for votes from an opposition party.

"We have seen that the polarization of the parties has made it easier to get a majority to impeach in the House at exactly the same time it has made it harder to get a two-thirds majority in the Senate," said Brian Kalt, a constitutional law professor at Michigan State University. "As such, it is now less useful — for both parties — as a tool for holding presidents accountable."

Congress has rarely deployed its power to hold a president accountable for crimes and misdemeanors: impeaching Andrew Johnson in 1868, Bill Clinton in the 1999 and Trump twice over the past year. The House also launched impeachment proceedings against Richard Nixon, but he resigned from office before a vote on charges. Each of the other instances ended with the president — or in this most recent instance, former president — acquitted, and few satisfied with the process.

"Time will tell, but I don't think there was a good outcome there for anybody," Sen. John Thune, R-S.D., said Saturday after his vote to acquit Trump.

If any alleged presidential offense could have resulted in a more palatable process, it initially seemed as though Trump's role in the deadly Jan. 6 insurrection on the Capitol was the one. The siege left lawmakers shaken and Congress on edge. Many Republicans who had stood by Trump throughout his presidency were furious that he had encouraged his supporters to head to the Capitol as they voted to affirm the results of the 2020 election, whipping them into a frenzy with lies about the integrity of the vote. The fact that Trump was also on the brink of leaving office also seemed to lessen his hold on the GOP.

Democrats moved swiftly to lodge a single charge against Trump: impeachment for "inciting violence against the government of the United States." Ten House Republicans joined them in voting to impeach — just a sliver of the GOP caucus yet enough to make it the most bipartisan impeachment vote in modern U.S. history.

But politics ground down the Senate trial even before it started. In the closing days of his tenure as majority leader, Sen. Mitch McConnell used his power to stall the trial until after Trump was out of office, giving some Republican senators a procedural out: They could lean on the notion that it was unconstitutional to hold an impeachment trial for a former president instead of deciding the case on the merits.

McConnell took that off-ramp himself. He voted not guilty on procedural grounds, then moments later took to the Senate floor to castigate Trump for being "practically and morally responsible" for the Capitol insurrection. McConnell, an institutionalist, also was engaged in a dexterous straddle: The Senate had voted that the trial was constitutional and McConnell ignored that very precedent in rationalizing his vote to acquit.

Democrats, too, were constrained by political realities — chief among them, a desire to speed through the trial so as to not hold up progress on President Joe Biden's agenda. Though the presentations from House impeachment managers were compelling and infused with powerful imagery from the riot, there was little new put forward that wasn't already in the public domain.

Among the questions left unanswered: was Trump aware of intelligence assessments about the risk for

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violence in Washington on Jan. 6? When did he know about the danger Vice President Mike Pence and lawmakers were in as his supporters stormed the Capitol? How did he respond once that danger became clear?

When an eleventh-hour opportunity arose on Saturday to call witnesses, Democrats abruptly backed away out of concern that doing so would prolong the trial and complicate Biden's efforts to quickly pass a sweeping pandemic relief package.

There was also this reality for Democrats: Even with witness testimony, there was almost no chance that enough Republicans would vote to convict Trump. The deep anger some Republicans privately held toward the president was overshadowed by the reality that he remains the most powerful force in GOP politics. Others, particularly those seeking to pick up the mantle of Trumpism for future White House runs, made clear from the start that they were not impartial jurors.

Congress has a handful of other options for rebuking Trump for his role in the Capitol insurrection, including a vote on censure, but some key lawmakers appear ready to move on. McConnell suggested that with Trump now a private citizen, his fate should now be up to the courts, where a trial would feature much of what the impeachment process did not: a robust evidentiary process, witnesses and a jury without a personal political stake in the outcome.

Saladin Ambar, a senior scholar at the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University-New Brunswick, said he hoped Trump's acquittal would not cause lawmakers to be reluctant to bring impeachment forward as a remedy for future presidents accused of violating their oath of office. If anything, Ambar argued, Congress needs to prove that as a co-equal branch of government, it can act as a real check on the actions of a president.

"If you abdicate your responsibility over time, the problem grows," Ambar said. "Congress needs to step up its game."

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

2 impeachment trials, 2 escape hatches for Donald Trump

By CALVIN WOODWARD Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Donald Trump's first impeachment trial centered on a phone call Americans never heard with the leader of a country very far away. The trial went on for two weeks of he-said-she-said. There was a mountain of evidence to pore over but not one drop of blood to see.

Trump's second impeachment trial was a steroidal sequel centered on the rage, violence and anguish of one day in Washington. There was nothing foreign or far away about it. There was blood.

Together these trials a year apart spoke to one president's singular capacity to get into, and out of, trouble — the story of Trump's life. The only president to be impeached twice has once again evaded consequences, though this time as an election loser shunted off the field of play to the jeering section, at least for now.

In a broadside against Trump every bit as brutal as that leveled by Democrats, Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell declared the ex-president "practically and morally responsible for provoking the events of the day" with his "unconscionable behavior" and "disgraceful dereliction of duty."

"The leader of the free world cannot spend two weeks thundering that shadowy forces are stealing our country and then feign surprise when people believe them and do reckless things," McConnell said.

But this was after he gave Trump an escape hatch for the ages, voting to acquit him on the grounds that the Senate, in his view, cannot legitimately try a president out of office.

Until the conclusion of the five-day trial, the noisiest man in America stayed silent, down in Florida. But the panic, terrified whispers of officials hiding from their attackers and the crack of a fatal gunshot played out on a big screen in the Senate chamber penetrated less than six weeks earlier by the Trump-flag-waving insurrectionists.

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This time the case did not hang on a whistleblower in the bowels of the national security bureaucracy. This was an impeachment driven by what people saw happen and by Trump's voluminous public rhetoric, heard that day, for weeks before, and after — until Twitter exiled him and he let his lawyers and supporters do the talking while the trial played out.

"We saw it, we heard it, we lived it," said the Democratic majority leader, Sen. Chuck Schumer. "This was the first presidential impeachment trial in history in which all senators were not only jurors and judges but were witnesses to the constitutional crime that was committed."

Trump's fanciful boast five years ago that he could shoot someone in the middle of New York's Fifth Avenue and still be loved by his followers was never, of course, put to the test in his presidency. But something like it was, on Pennsylvania Avenue.

On Jan. 6, he sent his followers down that street to the Capitol, where they committed their mayhem. And in the end, that did not cost him the loyalty of enough supporters in Congress to convict him on the charge of inciting an insurrection.

The Senate acquitted Trump on a 57-43 vote Saturday, well short of the 67 needed to convict him.

2020

"Sorry haters, I'm not going anywhere," Trump declared after his Senate acquittal Feb. 5, 2020, on charges of abusing power and obstructing justice. The Senate, then under narrow Republican control, voted 52-48 to clear him of abuse of power and 53-47 to clear him of obstruction.

It had taken Democrats some four months to get to that point, grinding through congressional inquiries into Trump's effort to persuade Ukraine to investigate Hunter Biden's business dealings there. The goal was to tarnish Joe Biden, the father, as he sought the Democratic nomination and the presidency.

Hundreds of millions of dollars in U.S. military aid needed by Ukraine in its conflict with Russia were hanging in the balance. The power and resources of the U.S. government had been put in service of Trump's personal political benefit, said the Democrats.

To many Republicans in Congress, Democrats were merely impeaching Trump for being Trump. For others, Trump's behavior, while troubling, didn't rise to the extraordinary level they said was required to try to remove a president between elections.

"I would like you to do us a favor," Trump told Ukrainian Volodymyr Zelenskiy, uttering the sentence that emerged from a rough transcript of their phone call and came to symbolize the heavy-handed lobbying by the president and his aides.

Trump unleashed over 270 tweets when his fate was in the Senate's hands, many attacking the process and the participants. "Our case against lyin', cheatin', liddle' Adam 'Shifty' Schiff, Cryin' Chuck Schumer, Nervous Nancy Pelosi, their leader, dumb as a rock AOC, & the entire Radical Left, Do Nothing Democrat Party, starts today," said one.

The verdict came strictly along partisan lines, with one exception. Republican Sen. Mitt Romney of Utah voted with Democrats to convict Trump of abusing power.

McConnell, fully with the president on this one, was ready to move on. "As far as I'm concerned, it's in the rearview mirror," he said in response to Trump's acquittal.

So it was for nearly everyone, quite suddenly. In the trial's final days, the U.S. declared a public health emergency due to the coronavirus outbreak, already spreading, and the first COVID-19 death was recorded in the country by the end of the month.

2021

Trump went tweetless during impeachment No. 2, blocked from his main social media platforms for his history of false statements and conspiracy theories about the election. He stayed low, no longer popping up for his once-frequent interviews with conservatives on TV, either.

As in the first impeachment, no witnesses were called.

The House Democratic impeachment managers came forward with new and graphic video from the as-

sault and a clearer picture of how close the lawmakers trapped at the Capitol had been to the attackers hunting for them. The peril to Trump's vice president, Mike Pence, who was presiding in the Senate during the day's election certification, also came into sharper relief.

If there was anything like a smoking gun, it had been fired in plain sight.

But there was little more suspense about the outcome than there had been for the Ukraine affair. Democrats never expected to win the necessary two-thirds of the vote. Seven Republicans voted with the Democrats in the end, more than anticipated but not enough. Romney was among them.

It was known on the final day that McConnell would vote to acquit.

It was not known that he would denounce Trump with such scorching words even while passing the hot potato to the Biden Justice Department or state attorneys general, with the observation that Trump the private citizen now is exposed to criminal and civil laws.

"He didn't get away with anything," McConnell said. "Yet."

7 Republicans vote to convict Trump in impeachment trial

By ALAN FRAM and BRIAN SLODYSKO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Seven Republicans voted Saturday to convict former President Donald Trump in his Senate trial, easily the largest number of lawmakers to ever vote to find a president of their own party guilty at impeachment proceedings.

While lawmakers acquitted Trump of inciting the Jan. 6 Capitol attack, they voted 57-43 to convict him — short of the two-thirds majority needed to find him guilty. Still, with seven Republicans joining all 50 Democrats in voting "guilty," the Senate issued an unmistakable bipartisan chorus of condemnation of the former president that could have political implications for a GOP conflicted over its future.

"If I can't say what I believe that our president should stand for, then why should I ask Alaskans to stand with me?" Sen. Lisa Murkowski of Alaska told reporters.

Besides Murkowski, other Republican senators voting against Trump were Richard Burr of North Carolina, Bill Cassidy of Louisiana, Susan Collins of Maine, Mitt Romney of Utah, Ben Sasse of Nebraska and Patrick Toomey of Pennsylvania.

Underscoring the perils of affronting Trump and his legions of GOP loyalists, by late evening top Republicans from at least two of the defecting senators' states had blasted them.

Pennsylvania GOP Chairman Lawrence Tabas issued a statement saying he shared "the disappointment of many of our grassroots leaders and volunteers" over Toomey's vote. Louisiana's Republican Party said, "We condemn, in the strongest possible terms" Cassidy's vote and said its executive committee voted unanimously to censure him.

Democrats holding out long-shot hopes of convicting Trump would have needed 17 Republicans to prevail, which as expected proved an unreachable goal. That hope died after the influential Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., said he would vote to acquit because he believed lawmakers had no jurisdiction over a former president.

Even so, McConnell delivered searing words against Trump in a speech after the vote, saying the former president was "practically and morally responsible" for provoking the attack on lawmakers as they formally certified Trump's Electoral College defeat by Joe Biden. Five people died, and the House impeached Trump for inciting insurrection.

Most of the defecting Republicans had clashed with Trump over the years. Burr and Toomey have said they will retire and not seek reelection when their terms expire next year, and Murkowski and Collins have histories of clashing with Trump over health care and other policies.

Perhaps the day's most surprising GOP defector was Burr, a 16-year Senate veteran who keeps a low profile in Washington and after years as top Republican on the Senate Intelligence Committee is used to telegraphing little about his views.

Burr, 65, will not seek reelection next year and will retire. In a written statement, he said Trump made unfounded claims about a fraud-riddled election "because he did not like the results." He said Trump used

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the presidency to "inflare" the rioters rather than urging them to stand down. "The evidence is compelling that President Trump is guilty of inciting an insurrection against a coequal branch of government," Burr said.

Also striking was the "guilty" vote by Cassidy, who was reelected in November from a deep-red state where GOP support is widespread.

Cassidy, 63 and a physician, had initially sided with the vast majority of Senate Republicans who voted last month to block the trial from moving forward. But he blasted a shambolic performance by Trump's legal team at the start of the trial while praising Democrats for presenting a compelling case.

"Our Constitution and our country is more important than any one person. I voted to convict President Trump because he is guilty," Cassidy said in a one-sentence statement issued after his vote to convict.

Toomey, a traditional conservative, decried Trump's efforts to overturn election results — Trump's targets include Toomey's Pennsylvania — and to encourage his supporters' march on the Capitol.

"All of this to hold on to power despite having legitimately lost," Toomey said. He said that because of Trump's actions, "for the first time in American history, the transfer of presidential power was not peaceful" and said Trump had "betrayed the confidence millions of us placed in him."

Sasse has long criticized Trump's authoritarian streak. Last week he excoriated pro-Trump Republican Party officials in his home state, telling them in a video message that "politics isn't about the weird worship of one dude."

"Tribalism is a hell of a drug, but our oath to the Constitution means we're constrained to the facts," Sasse said Saturday. He said he wouldn't vote against his own conscience "simply because it is politically convenient."

Romney's "guilty" vote at Trump's initial impeachment trial last February made him the first senator to ever vote to convict a president of the same party. The trial that ended Saturday was Trump's second — making him the first president to ever be tried twice for impeachment — and the fourth in presidential history.

Presidents Andrew Johnson in 1868 and Bill Clinton in 1999 were acquitted and received unanimous support from their Democratic Party.

Trump acquitted, denounced in historic impeachment trial

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

WASHINGTON (AP) — Donald Trump was acquitted Saturday of inciting the horrific attack on the U.S. Capitol, concluding a historic impeachment trial that spared him the first-ever conviction of a current or former U.S. president but exposed the fragility of America's democratic traditions and left a divided nation to come to terms with the violence sparked by his defeated presidency.

Barely a month since the deadly Jan. 6 riot that stunned the world, the Senate convened for a rare weekend session to deliver its verdict, voting while armed National Guard troops continued to stand their posts outside the iconic building.

The quick trial, the nation's first of a former president, showed in raw and emotional detail how perilously close the invaders had come to destroying the nation's deep tradition of a peaceful transfer of presidential power after Trump had refused to concede the election. Rallying outside the White House, he unleashed a mob of supporters to "fight like hell" for him at the Capitol just as Congress was certifying Democrat Joe Biden's victory. As hundreds stormed the building, some in tactical gear engaging in bloody combat with police, lawmakers fled for their lives. Five people died.

The verdict, on a vote of 57-43, is all but certain to influence not only the former president's political future but that of the senators sworn to deliver impartial justice as jurors. Seven Republicans joined all Democrats to convict, but it was far from the two-third threshold required.

The outcome after the uprising leaves unresolved the nation's wrenching divisions over Trump's brand of politics that led to the most violent domestic attack on one of America's three branches of government.

"Senators, we are in a dialogue with history, a conversation with our past, with a hope for our future," said Rep. Madeleine Dean, D-Pa., one of the House prosecutors in closing arguments.

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"What we do here, what is being asked of each of us here, in this moment, will be remembered."

Trump, unrepentant, welcomed his second impeachment acquittal and said his movement "has only just begun." He slammed the trial as "yet another phase of the greatest witch hunt in the history of our Country."

Though he was acquitted of the sole charge of incitement of insurrection, it was easily the largest number of senators to ever vote to find a president of their own party guilty of an impeachment count of high crimes and misdemeanors.

Voting to find Trump guilty were GOP Sens. Richard Burr of North Carolina, Bill Cassidy of Louisiana, Susan Collins of Maine, Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, Mitt Romney of Utah, Ben Sasse of Nebraska and Patrick Toomey of Pennsylvania.

Even after voting to acquit, the Republican leader Mitch McConnell condemned the former president as "practically and morally responsible" for the insurrection. McConnell contended Trump could not be convicted because he was gone from the White House.

In a statement issued several hours after the verdict, Biden highlighted the bipartisan nature of the vote to convict as well as McConnell's strong criticism of Trump. In keeping with his stated desire to see the country overcome its divisions, Biden said everyone, especially the nation's leaders, have a duty "to defend the truth and to defeat the lies."

"That is how we end this uncivil war and heal the very soul of our nation. That is the task ahead. And it's a task we must undertake together," said Biden, who had hardly weighed in on the proceedings during the week.

The trial had been momentarily thrown into confusion when senators Saturday suddenly wanted to consider potential witnesses, particularly concerning Trump's actions as the mob rioted. Prolonged proceedings could have been especially damaging for Biden's new presidency, significantly delaying his emerging legislative agenda. Coming amid the searing COVID-19 crisis, the Biden White House is trying to rush pandemic relief through Congress.

The nearly weeklong trial has delivered a grim and graphic narrative of the riot and its consequences in ways that senators, most of whom fled for their own safety that day, acknowledge they are still coming to grips with.

House prosecutors have argued that Trump's was the "inciter in chief" stoking a months-long campaign with an orchestrated pattern of violent rhetoric and false claims they called the "big lie" that unleashed the mob. Five people died, including a rioter who was shot and a police officer.

Trump's lawyers countered that Trump's words were not intended to incite the violence and that impeachment is nothing but a "witch hunt" designed to prevent him from serving in office again.

The senators, announcing their votes from their desks in the very chamber the mob had ransacked, were not only jurors but also witnesses. Only by watching the graphic videos — rioters calling out menacingly for House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Vice President Mike Pence, who was presiding over the January certification tally — did senators say they began to understand just how perilously close the country came to chaos.

Many senators kept their votes closely held until the final moments on Saturday, particularly the Republicans representing states where the former president remains popular. Most of them ultimately voted to acquit, doubting whether Trump was fully responsible or if impeachment is the appropriate response.

"Just look at what Republicans have been forced to defend," said Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer. "Look at what Republicans have chosen to forgive."

The second-ranking Republican, John Thune of South Dakota, acknowledged, "It's an uncomfortable vote," adding, "I don't think there was a good outcome there for anybody."

In closing arguments, lead defender Michael van der Veen emphasized an argument that Republican senators also embraced: that it was all a "phony impeachment show trial."

"Mr. Trump is innocent of the charges against him," said van der Veen. "The act of incitement never happened."

The House impeached Trump on the sole charge of incitement of insurrection one week after the riot, but the Senate was not in full session and McConnell refused requests from Democrats to convene quickly for

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the trial. Within a week Biden was inaugurated, Trump was gone and Pelosi sent the article of impeachment to the Senate days later, launching the proceedings.

The turmoil on Saturday came as senators wanted to hear evidence about Trump's actions during the riot, after prosecutors said he did nothing to stop it.

Fresh stories overnight had focused on Rep. Jaime Herrera Beutler of Washington state, who said in a statement that Trump had rebuffed a plea from House Republican leader Kevin McCarthy to call off the rioters.

Several Republican senators voted to consider witnesses. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina changed his vote to join them on that 55-45 vote.

But with the Senate facing a prolonged trial and the defense poised to call many more witnesses, the situation was resolved when Herrera Beutler's statement about the call was read aloud into the record for senators to consider as evidence. As part of the deal, Democrats dropped their planned deposition of the congresswoman and Republicans abandoned their threat to call their own witnesses. They also agreed to include GOP Sen. Mike Lee's time stamp of a call from Trump around the time Pence was evacuated, minutes after Trump sent a tweet critical of his vice president.

Impeachment trials are rare, senators meeting as the court of impeachment over a president only four times in the nation's history, for Andrew Johnson, Bill Clinton and now twice for Trump, the only one to be twice impeached. There have been no convictions.

Unlike last year's impeachment trial of Trump in the Ukraine affair, a complicated charge of corruption and obstruction over his attempts to have the foreign ally dig up dirt on then-campaign rival Biden, this one brought an emotional punch displayed in graphic videos of the siege that laid bare the unexpected vulnerability of the democratic system.

At the same time, this year's trial carried similar warnings from the prosecutors that Trump must be held accountable because he has shown repeatedly he has no bounds. Left unchecked, he will further test the norms of civic behavior, even now that he is out of office still commanding loyal supporters, they said.

The Latest: Biden says all Americans must 'defend the truth'

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

11:00 p.m.

President Joe Biden is responding to the acquittal of Donald Trump by stating that all Americans, especially the nation's leaders, have a duty and responsibility "to defend the truth and to defeat the lies."

Biden says that in doing so, "that is how we end this uncivil war and heal the very soul of our nation. That is the task ahead. And it's a task we must undertake together."

The new president also says "that violence and extremism has no place in America."

The White House issued Biden's statement late Saturday night, several hours after the Senate failed to muster the two-thirds vote needed to convict Trump of incitement in the attack on the U.S. Capitol. The 57-43 vote included seven members of Trump's own Republican Party.

In looking back on the insurrection at the U.S. Capitol and Trump's role in it, Biden says "this sad chapter" in American history is a reminder that democracy is fragile and must always be defended. He also says that the nation "must be ever vigilant."

5:30 p.m.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi scoffed at the "cowardly" Senate Republicans who voted to acquit Donald Trump of inciting the Capitol siege.

With the impeachment trial now over, some Democrats and Republicans in the House and Senate have suggested censure as an option.

Pelosi panned those efforts as grossly inadequate in the face of the violent attack on the nation's seat of power. Five people died.

"What we saw in that Senate today was a cowardly group of Republicans who apparently have no op-

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tions because they were afraid to defend their job," she said at the Capitol.

"We censure people for using stationary for the wrong purpose. We don't censure people for inciting insurrection that kills people in the Capitol."

Pelosi joined House prosecutors at a press conference at the Capitol following the Senate impeachment trial.

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

The Senate met in a rare weekend session to wrap up Donald Trump's second impeachment trial. An unexpected morning vote in favor of hearing witnesses threw the trial into confusion, but both sides ultimately reached a deal that allowed it to proceed with no witness testimony. The trial ended with closing arguments, followed by a vote on whether the former president incited the Jan. 6 siege on the Capitol.

Read more:

- Republican leader McConnell votes to acquit and then condemns Trump.
- Seven GOP senators vote to convict.
- Rep. Herrera Beutler in middle of impeachment trial turmoil.
- Graffiti painted outside Trump attorney's home.

HERE'S WHAT ELSE IS GOING ON:

5:05 p.m.

Trump lawyer jokes after acquittal: "We're going to Disney World!"

Donald Trump's legal team is taking a victory lap after securing his acquittal in the Senate impeachment trial.

Addressing reporters after the trial concluded, the team thanked the Senate for finding the former president not guilty of inciting the Jan. 6 insurrection at the Capitol.

Michael van der Veen, who presented the bulk of the defense, fist-bumped a colleague as he departed the Capitol. He joked: "We're going to Disney World!"

The vote on Trump's impeachment was 57-43, with seven Republicans joining all Democrats to vote for Trump's conviction.

Two thirds of the Senate, or 67 votes, was needed for conviction.

4:30 p.m.

Minutes after voting to acquit Donald Trump of the impeachment charge, Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell said there is still "no question" that Trump was "practically and morally responsible for provoking" the deadly attack on the U.S. Capitol.

McConnell said he could not vote to convict Trump because he is "constitutionally not eligible for conviction" because he is no longer president.

He added that a conviction would have created a dangerous precedent that would give the Senate power to convict private political rivals and bar them from holding future office.

McConnell added that impeachment is a "narrow tool for a narrow purpose."

The Senate voted 57-43 on Saturday to acquit Trump. A conviction required 67 votes.

4:25 p.m.

House impeachment managers were the driving force behind the last-minute move to call witnesses, then strike an agreement to avoid that step.

That's according to a person familiar with the matter who spoke to The Associated Press. The person could not publicly discuss internal deliberations and spoke to AP on condition of anonymity.

The person said the managers hadn't initially planned to call witnesses, but came to Democratic leaders, including Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, to ask them to vote to allow the witnesses on Saturday.

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The managers later decided they should settle for an agreement with Trump's lawyers not to call the witnesses. That decision came, in part, after they decided that calling witnesses wasn't likely to drastically improve their case, the person said.

— By Michael Balsamo.

4:10 p.m.

The Senate's top Democrat says Jan. 6 will live as a "day of infamy" in American history and that the vote to acquit Donald Trump "will live as a vote of infamy in the history of the United States Senate."

Sen. Chuck Schumer, a New York Democrat, took to the Senate floor on Saturday to decry the Senate's acquittal of the former president on a charge that he incited the deadly insurrection at the U.S. Capitol.

He applauded the seven Republicans who joined all 50 Democrats in voting to convict Trump.

He called the day of the riot the "final, terrible legacy" of Trump and said the stain of his actions will never be "washed away."

4:05 p.m.

Former President Donald Trump is welcoming his second impeachment acquittal and says his movement "has only just begun."

Trump in a lengthy statement is thanking his attorneys and his defenders in the House and Senate, who he said "stood proudly for the Constitution we all revere and for the sacred legal principles at the heart of our country."

He is slamming the trial as "yet another phase of the greatest witch hunt in the history of our Country." And he is telling his supporters that, "Our historic, patriotic and beautiful movement to Make America Great Again has only just begun" and that he will have more to share with them in the months ahead.

While Trump was acquitted by the Senate, seven Republicans voted to convict him, making it the most bipartisan vote in the history of presidential impeachments.

3:58

The Senate has acquitted Donald Trump of inciting the Jan. 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol, bringing his trial to a close and giving the former president a historic second victory in the court of impeachment.

Trump is the first president to be impeached twice, and he is also now twice acquitted as the majority of Republicans defended his actions. The Senate voted 57-43 that Trump is "not guilty" of incitement. Two thirds of the Senate, or 67 votes, was needed for conviction.

House Democrats argued that Trump caused the violent attack by repeating for months the false claims that the election was stolen from him, and then calling on his supporters to "fight like hell" just before they laid siege to the Capitol. Democrats argued that Trump had "obvious intent" as he egged on supporters they said were primed for violence.

Trump's lawyers argued that the trial was brought on by Democrats' "hatred" of Trump and that it was unconstitutional because he had left office. They said the rioters acted on their own accord, despite Trump's words. And they argued that Trump was protected by freedom of speech and to convict him for something he said would set a dangerous precedent.

The House impeached Trump before he left office for "incitement of insurrection" after the violent mob broke into the Capitol, destroyed property and hunted for lawmakers as they counted the presidential electoral votes. Five people died.

If Trump had been convicted, the Senate would have taken a second vote on whether to ban him from running for office again. Only two other presidents, Bill Clinton in 1999 and Andrew Johnson in 1868, have been impeached. Both were also acquitted.

3:55

Seven Republicans have voted to convict former President Donald Trump at his Senate impeachment trial.

Though the chamber voted to acquit him Saturday, it was easily the largest number of lawmakers to

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ever vote to find a president of their own party guilty at impeachment proceedings.

Voting to find Trump guilty were GOP Sens. Richard Burr of North Carolina, Bill Cassidy of Louisiana, Susan Collins of Maine, Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, Mitt Romney of Utah, Ben Sasse of Nebraska, Patrick Toomey of Pennsylvania.

Romney's "guilty" vote at Trump's initial impeachment trial last February had made him the first senator to ever vote to convict a president of the same party.

3:50 p.m.

Enough senators have cast "not guilty" votes to acquit Donald Trump of inciting the Jan. 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol. The vote will give the former president an historic second acquittal in an impeachment trial.

House Democrats, who voted a month ago to charge Trump with "incitement of insurrection," needed two thirds of the Senate, or 67 votes, to convict him.

The Democrats argued in the short trial that Trump caused the violent attack by repeating for months the false claims that the election was stolen from him, and then telling his supporters gathered near the White House that morning to "fight like hell" to overturn his defeat. Five people died when they then laid siege to the Capitol.

Trump's lawyers argued that the rioters acted on their own accord and that he was protected by freedom of speech, an argument that resonated with most Republicans. They said the case was brought on by Democrats' "hatred" of Trump.

3:40 p.m.

The White House was not involved in the discussion on Capitol Hill about calling witnesses for former President Donald Trump's impeachment trial. That's according to a senior administration official not authorized to publicly discuss private conversations and speaking on condition of anonymity.

The official says White House officials were watching the drama over witnesses play out in the Senate, but were not involved in brokering the agreement that ultimately allowed the trial to proceed to closing arguments and a vote Saturday.

President Joe Biden spent the weekend with family at Camp David, the traditional presidential retreat in Maryland, and had plans to meet with his national security advisers on Saturday.

3:15 p.m.

A lawyer for Donald Trump says everyone acknowledges the horror of the deadly riot at the U.S. Capitol last month but that the former president wasn't responsible for it.

Michael van der Veen gave his closing arguments on the Senate floor on Saturday in the impeachment trial of Trump.

He says there is no evidence that Trump incited an "armed insurrection" to "overthrow the U.S. government" and to think that Trump would have wanted that is "absurd." He says the event on Jan. 6 was supposed to be peaceful but that a small group "hijacked" it for their own purposes.

He also repeated the arguments from Friday that other politicians have engaged in incendiary rhetoric, though impeachment managers noted that none of those speeches precipitated an attack on the U.S. government.

3:10 p.m.

As a vote in Donald Trump's impeachment trial nears a close, lead Democratic impeachment manager Jamie Raskin told the Senate that "this is almost certainly how you will be remembered by history."

Raskin said that "none of us can escape the demands of history and destiny right now" as the House managers argue that Trump incited the violent Jan. 6 attack on the Capitol and the Senate decides whether to convict him.

He said the trial is not about Trump, but "about who we are."

Trump's lawyers, and many Senate Republicans, have argued that the trial is unconstitutional. They also

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say Trump did not intentionally incite the riot when he told a mob of his supporters to "fight like hell" to overturn his election defeat and march to the Capitol as Congress was counting the electoral votes.

The House managers laid out video evidence of the violent assault, in which five people died. Raskin said they proved that Trump betrayed his country and "betrayed his oath of office."

3 p.m.

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell has told senators in an email obtained by The Associated Press that his decision to vote to acquit former President Donald Trump at his impeachment trial was a "close call."

McConnell says he believes presidents can be prosecuted for criminal misconduct after they leave office. He says that eases the "otherwise troubling" argument House prosecutors have made that not convicting Trump would create a "January exception" for trying impeached presidents who've already left office.

McConnell says he thinks impeachment is chiefly to remove an official "and we therefore lack jurisdiction."

1 p.m.

Senators have resumed Donald Trump's impeachment trial without calling witnesses after agreeing to accept new information from a Republican congresswoman about his actions on the day of the deadly Capitol siege.

After a delay of several hours, the trial is back on track with closing arguments and Saturday's session heading toward a vote on the verdict.

Under the deal, Rep. Jaime Herrera Beutler's statement on a phone call between Trump and House Republican leader Kevin McCarthy as rioters stormed the Capitol was entered into the trial record as evidence. No further witnesses were called.

Senators brought the proceedings to a standstill when a majority voted Saturday morning to consider potential witnesses.

The information from Herrera Beutler sparked fresh interest on Trump's actions that day.

12:45 p.m.

Senate leaders are working on an agreement that could end a standoff over calling witnesses in Donald Trump's impeachment trial and allow it to proceed with closing arguments and a vote on whether he incited the deadly Capitol siege.

Under the agreement being discussed, the information that a Republican congresswoman has made public about Trump's actions on the day of the riot would be entered into the record of the trial in exchange for Democrats dropping plans to deposition testimony from the congresswoman, Rep. Jaime Herrera Beutler of Washington. No witnesses would be called to testify.

That would allow the trial to resume Saturday with closing arguments and a vote on the verdict.

A Democrat granted anonymity to discuss the private talks confirmed the pending agreement.

The Senate came to a standstill shortly after convening for the rare Saturday session when a majority voted to consider calling witnesses.

Herrera Beutler's account of Trump's call with House Republican leader Kevin McCarthy as rioters were breaking into the Capitol on Jan. 6 sparked fresh interest in Trump's actions that day.

— Lisa Mascaro.

12:30 p.m.

Republican senators are warning that any vote to allow witnesses at the impeachment trial of Donald Trump will significantly prolong the case, and that they have their own lists of people they would want to hear from.

Sen. Ted Cruz told reporters that if there are witnesses called by Democrats, the process "won't be one-sided" and the former president will be able to have his own witnesses, too.

Sen. Lindsey Graham, who was among five Republicans who joined Democrats in voting to consider wit-

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nesses, said that although he'd like to see the case go to trial, he'll insist on multiple witnesses if Democrats get to have theirs. He says he would want to hear from House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

A Trump adviser was seen holding a sheet of paper showing that Trump's lawyers are prepared to call more than 300 witnesses.

The vote Saturday to consider witnesses upended the trial, which had been racing toward closing arguments and a vote on whether to acquit or convict Trump.

11:15 a.m.

Former President Donald Trump's impeachment trial came to an abrupt standstill after a majority of senators voted to consider calling witnesses about the deadly storming of the Capitol.

Even senators seemed confused by the sudden turn of events Saturday. The quick trial had been racing toward closing arguments and a vote on whether to acquit or convict Trump.

Under Senate rules for the trial, it appears debate and votes on potential witnesses could be allowed, potentially delaying the final vote.

House prosecutors want to hear from a Republican congresswoman who has said she was aware of a conversation Trump had with the House GOP leader as rioters were ransacking the Capitol over the election results.

Rep. Jamie Herrera Beutler of Washington has widely discussed her reported conversation with House Republican leader Kevin McCarthy, who had called on Trump to stop the attack by his supporters.

Five Republican senators joined all Democrats in voting 55-45 on a motion to consider witnesses and testimony.

Trump's defense attorneys blasted the late action. Attorney Michael van der Veen said it's time to "close this case out."

Senators are in a brief recess as leaders confer on next steps.

10:50 a.m.

The proceedings in former President Donald Trump's impeachment trial have come to an abrupt halt, with senators seemingly confused about the next steps.

Senators were huddling on the floor of the chamber as leaders spoke to the clerks at the dais.

Impeachment trials are rare, especially for a president, and the rules are negotiated for each one at the outset.

For Trump's trial, the agreement said if senators agree to hear witnesses, votes to hear additional testimony would be allowed.

It's unclear if there will be support in the evenly split Senate for calling witnesses.

10:35 a.m.

Senators have voted to consider witnesses in the impeachment trial of former President Donald Trump.

Closing arguments were expected Saturday with no witnesses called. But lead Democratic prosecutor Jamie Raskin of Maryland asked for a deposition of Rep. Jaime Herrera Beutler over fresh information.

She has widely shared a conversation she had with House Republican leader Kevin McCarthy over Trump's actions on Jan. 6 as the mob was rioting over the presidential election results.

Raskin said it was necessary to determine Trump's role in inciting the deadly Jan. 6 riot. There were 55 senators who voted to debate the motion to subpoena, including Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham, who changed his vote in the middle of the count.

Trump's attorney Michael van der Veen balked at the request, saying he'd then call 100 witnesses and said it was not necessary.

10:30 a.m.

Trump impeachment lawyer Michael van der Veen is telling senators that if Democrats wish to call a witness, he will ask for at least 100 witnesses and will insist they give depositions in person in his office

in Philadelphia.

His animated statement was met with laughter from the chamber, which visibly angered van der Veen. "There's nothing laughable here," he said. The trial is being held in person, but lawmakers are wearing masks and the coronavirus pandemic has halted most normal activity, including close contact in offices for depositions. In many civil and criminal cases, such work is handled via conference call.

Closing arguments are expected Saturday in the impeachment trial against former President Donald Trump. But lead Democratic prosecutor Jamie Raskin of Maryland has asked for a deposition of Rep. Jaime Herrera Beutler over fresh information.

She has widely shared a conversation she had with House Republican leader Kevin McCarthy over Trump's actions on Jan. 6 as the mob was rioting over the presidential election results.

10:20 a.m.

House impeachment prosecutors say they will be preparing a deposition of Rep. Jaime Herrera Beutler over fresh information in Donald Trump's trial over the deadly attack at the Capitol.

Lead Democratic prosecutor Jamie Raskin of Maryland said Saturday he would seek to hear from the Republican congresswoman, who has widely shared a conversation she had with House Republican leader Kevin McCarthy over Trump's actions Jan. 6 as the mob was rioting over the presidential election results.

It's unclear if she or any other witnesses will be called.

Raskin said he would pursue a virtual interview with the Washington lawmaker.

Senators are meeting in a rare Saturday session in what is expected to be the final day in Trump's historic trial.

Hundreds of thousands without power in Northwest ice storm

By GILLIAN FLACCUS and REBECCA BOONE Associated Press

LAKE OSWEGO, Ore. (AP) — A winter storm blanketed the Pacific Northwest with ice and snow Saturday, leaving hundreds of thousands of people without power and disrupting travel across the region.

Freezing rain left roads, power lines and trees coated in ice in the Portland, Oregon, region, and by Saturday morning more than 270,000 people were without power. The extreme conditions, loss of power and transportation problems prompted Oregon Gov. Kate Brown to declare a state of emergency Saturday afternoon.

"Crews are out in full force now and are coordinating with local emergency response teams on communications for emergency services, such as warming centers," Brown said in a statement. "I'm committed to making state resources available to ensure crews have the resources they need on the ground."

Winter storms and extreme cold affected much of the western U.S., particularly endangering homeless communities. Volunteers and shelter staffers were trying to ensure homeless residents in Casper, Wyoming, were indoors as the National Weather Service warned of wind chill reaching as much as 35 degrees below zero over the weekend. Authorities in western Washington and western Oregon opened warming shelters in an effort to protect homeless residents from the wet and cold.

The power outages in the Portland region could extend throughout the weekend for some, said Elizabeth Lattanner, a spokeswoman for PGE, one of the major electricity providers in the region.

"In storms like these, restoration takes time given all of the challenges our crews face in getting to restoration sites and repairing those outages," Lattanner said. "We have more than 600 PGE and contract personnel responding to the storm — it's all hands on deck."

Many ice-laden trees snapped under the weight, falling on power lines and causing transformers to blow out in showers of blue and orange sparks. By noon Saturday, more than 1,200 PGE power lines were down, Lattanner said.

Brian Zevenbergen watched Saturday as a crew sawed up two large, ice-covered trees that had crashed across his driveway overnight, narrowly missing two cars parked there. His house in Lake Oswego had also

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lost power overnight. Just around the corner, another massive tree blocked the street in the suburb south of Portland and had taken out a city street light.

"Last night, everything was standing, and this morning the two trees had me blocked in the driveway and were blocking at least half the street," he said. "Friends on the lower levels have power so I have invites to go hang out there."

The ice and lost power didn't stop children from rejoicing at a second straight day of sledding in a place that rarely sees sustained snowfall. Residents blocked streets with cones and shooed snowplows away so kids could sled down ice-slicked hills.

The ice and snowfall caused treacherous driving conditions, forcing Oregon transportation officials to close Interstate 84 in the Columbia River Gorge, and the regional transit agency TriMet suspended all bus and train service in the region.

TriMet spokesperson Tia York asked people to avoid all travel unless it's an emergency. "It is too dangerous out there," York wrote in a statement.

Police in Salem, Oregon, also warned residents in Marion and Polk counties to watch for downed power lines and falling tree limbs, and the Oregon State Police said fallen trees blocked several roads across the region.

Some Washington state residents were also socked in by the weather, with snow falling throughout the Seattle region on Saturday morning and freezing rain falling along the coast in Grays Harbor County. The city of Seattle activated its Emergency Operations Center Saturday morning to coordinate the city's winter storm response.

Heavy snowfall also led to dangerous driving conditions in parts of eastern Oregon and southwestern Idaho, with Malheur County, Oregon, and Boise, Idaho, expected to get as much as 6 inches (15 centimeters) of snow by Saturday afternoon.

The National Weather Service said all three states should brace for another surge of winter moisture to hit the Northwest Sunday night, potentially leading to more heavy snowfall through Monday. The "unsettled winter conditions" would likely continue throughout the week, the National Weather Service said Saturday morning.

Western Washington was expected to get an additional 3 to 6 inches (8 to 15 cm) of snow on Saturday, with another 2 inches (5 cm) possible on Sunday and Monday. Rain falling on accumulated snow raised the possibility of urban flooding happening Sunday night or Monday in some areas, according to the National Weather Service.

The heavy snow made for dangerous avalanche conditions in the many areas across the Olympics and Cascades mountain ranges, with large avalanches possible. Officials with the Payette Avalanche Center in west-central Idaho also warned of increasing avalanche risk in the days ahead.

Idaho's neighbors to the east were blasted by brutally frigid weather, with the National Weather Service warning of dangerous wind chills in Montana and Wyoming. The wind chills were expected to reach as low as 50 degrees below zero in Billings and near Missoula, Montana, and nearly as low across parts of Wyoming.

Wind chills that low can cause frostbite on exposed skin in just a few minutes. The bitter cold was expected to last throughout the weekend.

The National Weather Service warned that the wind chill could be dangerous for pets and young livestock, at a time when calving season is beginning for many cattle ranchers.

The Colorado Avalanche Information Center also warned of dangerous avalanche conditions in zones around Apsen, Steamboat and Flat Tops, Grand Mesa and Gunnison. Frigid temperatures with lows below zero were expected to last through Monday morning in Denver and across the Colorado plains, according to the the National Weather Service.

Boone reported from Boise, Idaho.

Nursing home disclosures taint Cuomo's pandemic performance

By MICHAEL HILL, MARINA VILLENEUVE and JENNIFER PELTZ Associated Press

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) — New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo wrote a book on managing the COVID-19 crisis. Now he faces intensifying accusations that he covered up the true death toll of the pandemic on nursing home residents, attacks that challenge his reputation for straight-shooting competency and could cloud his political future.

State lawmakers called for investigations, stripping Cuomo of his emergency powers and even his resignation after new details emerged this week about why certain nursing home data was kept under wraps for months, despite requests from lawmakers and others.

Top aide Melissa DeRosa told lawmakers the data was delayed because officials worried that the information was "going to be used against us" by the Trump administration's Department of Justice.

The new salvos from Republicans and Cuomo's fellow Democrats mark a stark turnaround from the early days of the pandemic, when Cuomo's daily briefings helped cement a national reputation for leadership. The briefings, in which he promised to deliver "just the facts," won him an International Emmy and helped lead to his book, "American Crisis."

"He stepped in it, more than a little bit. It would be bad enough if this had come out and he had not been publicly sort of celebrating, and been celebrated, for his handling of the pandemic," said Jeanne Zaino, political science professor at Iona College. "But putting that aside, it doesn't get more serious than this. You're talking about the deaths of 15,000 people."

The Cuomo administration for months dramatically underreported the statewide number of COVID-19 deaths among long-term care residents. It is now nearly 15,000, up from the 8,500 previously disclosed.

The new toll amounts to about one-seventh of the roughly 90,000 people living in nursing homes as of 2019 in New York, which has among the most care home residents in the nation.

Cuomo has pointed to a small but growing body of research suggesting unchecked community spread is the biggest factor in nursing home outbreaks, and he has said inadequate federal government help with travel restrictions, testing and protective gear left New York City and its suburbs particularly vulnerable.

He has dismissed criticism as political and noted that the thousands of nursing home residents' deaths in hospitals were always counted in the state's overall tally.

"Died in a hospital, died in a nursing home — they died," he said Jan. 29.

The uproar might not have the same impact on the third-term Democrat as it would if he were facing reelection for the first time this year, Zaino said. But it could make him less likely to be tapped for a post in the Biden administration.

And Cuomo — who says he will run again in 2022 — is now facing criticism that is increasingly coming from members of his own party.

"The governor's lack of transparency and stonewalling regarding his administration's nursing home actions is unacceptable," said state Sen. John Mannion, one of 14 Democratic state senators who said Friday that Cuomo's expanded emergency powers should be repealed as soon as possible.

The higher death tolls were only divulged hours after a report late last month from Democratic state Attorney General Letitia James examining the administration's failure to include nursing home residents who died at hospitals. The updated numbers backed up the findings of an Associated Press investigation last year that concluded the state could have been understating deaths by thousands.

Nursing home residents' advocates and relatives have questioned whether the virus's spread in nursing homes was fueled by a March 25 state directive that barred the facilities from refusing people just because they had COVID-19. The directive was intended to free up space in rapidly filling hospitals.

Debra Diehl, 62, who lost her 85-year-old father, Reeves Hupman, to presumptive COVID-19 in May at a nursing home outside Albany, wants to know why Cuomo and the state didn't do more to separate residents who may have had the virus, perhaps by putting them in field hospitals.

"They had people coming up, sent from downstate hospitals up here," Diehl said. "It just seemed like Typhoid Marys, just spreading it further. He did not know what he was doing, or he did not care."

In reply to a Freedom of Information request from the AP in May, the state Health Department released

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records this week showing that more than 9,000 recovering coronavirus patients in New York were released from hospitals into nursing homes from March 25 to May 10, when Cuomo undid the directive.

The state issued a report insisting the patients didn't drive the virus's transmission in nursing homes, though it didn't rule out whether the directive played any role.

Cuomo has said the facilities had a responsibility to accept only patients they could care for. State health inspectors have uncovered infection control violations at dozens of nursing homes amid the pandemic and levied at least \$1 million in fines.

Still, DeRosa has estimated that New York nursing home residents represent 40% of the lives lost this winter. New York has reported over 10,000 deaths since Dec. 1.

The disclosure of DeRosa's comments this week in a conference call with Democratic lawmakers essentially brought months of complaints to a boiling point.

She said the state "froze" in responding to lawmakers August request for the number of nursing home residents who died in hospitals because officials were also responding to a Justice Department inquiry and fretted that "what we start saying was going to be used against us, and we weren't sure if there was going to be an investigation."

DeRosa issued a statement Friday saying that the state was slow to respond to the lawmakers because it was dealing with the Justice Department, and then with the virus's resurgence in autumn and with vaccinations. The governor's office declined to comment further, and the Justice Department also declined to comment late Saturday.

"It gave the impression of them trying to whitewash the information," said Sen. Rachel May, one of the 14 Democrats calling for rescinding Cuomo's emergency powers.

Senate Republican Leader Rob Ortt said Cuomo "needs to demand the immediate resignation of anyone involved in this cover-up, and if he was aware, he must be removed from office."

The criticism could resonate because it fits with a common complaint that for all of his ability, Cuomo's controlling nature can undercut his effectiveness.

Cuomo has dismissed that idea, writing in his book: "You show me a person who is not controlling, and I'll show you a person who is probably not highly successful."

To Fordham University political scientist Christina Greer, the recent disclosures "call into question: Can we trust news coming out of the governor's office? Not just out of nursing homes, but can we trust it about schools, can we trust it about prisons, can we trust it about other communities?"

"It's definitely cast a bad shadow on the administration," she said.

Peltz reported from New York.

Trump remains dominant force in GOP following acquittal

By STEVE PEOPLES AP National Political Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The Republican Party still belongs to Donald Trump.

After he incited a deadly riot at the U.S. Capitol last month, the GOP considered purging the norm-shattering former president. But in the end, only seven of 50 Senate Republicans voted to convict Trump in his historic second impeachment trial on Saturday.

For Trump's loyalists, the acquittal offers a vindication of sorts and a fresh connection to the former president's fiery base. And for Trump's GOP antagonists, it marks another alarming sign that the party is lurching further in a dangerous direction with little desire to reconnect with the moderates, women and college-educated voters Trump alienated.

Ultimately, the resolution of the impeachment trial brings into clear relief a divide in the GOP that party leaders, donors and voters will have to navigate as they try to regain control of Congress next year and aim to retake the White House in 2024.

That tension was on display in the immediate aftermath of the vote. After supporting Trump's acquittal, Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., delivered a speech that echoed some of the very points

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Democratic impeachment managers emphasized in seeking Trump's conviction.

The former president, McConnell said, was "practically and morally responsible for provoking the events" that led to the insurrection. But he argued that there were no constitutional grounds for the Senate to convict Trump now that he's out of office, a procedural point embraced by many in the GOP.

The history books will show that 10 members of the president's party in the House and another seven in the Senate ultimately believed that Trump's behavior was egregious enough to warrant conviction — and even a lifetime ban on holding future office. Never before have so many members of a president's party voted for his removal.

But by most objective measures, Trump's grasp on the GOP and its future remains airtight.

Gallup reported last month that Trump's approval among self-described Republicans stood at 82%. And more recently, Monmouth University found that 72% of Republicans continue to believe Trump's false claims that President Joe Biden won the November election only because of widespread voter fraud.

Lest there be any doubt about Trump's strength, House Republicans voted overwhelmingly last week to defend a diehard Trump loyalist, Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, R-Ga., even after evidence surfaced that she had repeatedly embraced violence, bigotry and conspiracy theories on social media.

Just days after House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy called Trump responsible for the violent attack, McCarthy reversed himself and made a personal visit to Trump's Florida estate to ensure there was no lingering animosity.

Of the seven Republicans who voted to convict Trump on Saturday, only one faces reelection in the next four years. Indeed, in Trump's Republican Party, there are very few willing to cross him if they harbor future political ambitions.

One of them, 2024 prospect Nikki Haley, who was U.S. ambassador to the United Nations under Trump, drew attention this week after telling Politico that Trump's role in the Jan. 6 attack essentially disqualified him from running for office again.

"He's fallen so far," Haley said. "He went down a path he shouldn't have, and we shouldn't have followed him, and we shouldn't have listened to him. And we can't let that ever happen again."

Another Republican presidential prospect, Sen. Ben Sasse, R-Neb., voted to convict Trump on Saturday, declaring that Trump's "lies" about widespread voter fraud endangered "the life of the vice president" and are "bringing us dangerously close to a bloody constitutional crisis."

While Sasse may run for president in 2024, he won't face Republican primary voters in Nebraska again unless he chooses to run for reelection in 2026.

Similarly, GOP Sen. Bill Cassidy of Louisiana faced a censure by his state party after voting to convict Trump. But he won't face voters again until 2026 so is relatively insulated from political consequences.

Despite McConnell's criticism, Trump's most vocal Republican opponents at this point will likely consist of a collection of retired Republicans on cable news and a "Never Trump" movement grappling with its own existential challenges.

The Lincoln Project, perhaps the most prominent and best-funded anti-Trump Republican group, is coming off a tumultuous week following revelations that its leaders knew about multiple allegations of sexual misconduct against a co-founder several months before acknowledging them publicly.

The self-described "senior leader" of the organization, veteran Republican strategist Steve Schmidt, stepped down from the board on the eve of the Senate impeachment vote, a day after the Lincoln Project announced plans to bring in an outside investigator.

The fallout threatens to undermine the organization's fundraising appeal and its influence, even as the super PAC works to expand its reach through a popular podcast and expanding streaming video channel that drew more than 4 million views last month alone.

Even before the crisis, co-founder Reed Galen acknowledged that Trumpism was winning.

"The authoritarian side of the Republican Party is the dominant side," he said. "They have the momentum. For now, they have the money."

Sarah Longwell, a Republican strategist who leads the anti-Trump group known as Defending Democracy Together, said that "what the last two months have shown is if Donald Trump was a cancer on the country

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and the party, he's metastasized."

"I thought we could push past him," she said. "But now I don't think that."

Still, the Republican Party faces tremendous political risks should its leaders continue to embrace Trump and his brand of norm-shattering politics.

Already, scores of Republican-friendly businesses have vowed to stop giving money to Trump's allies in Congress, cutting off a critical revenue stream just as Republicans hope to reclaim the House and Senate majorities in next year's midterm elections.

Trump's critics in both parties are vowing to make sure the business community and voters alike do not forget what the former president and his allies did.

"We will remind voters that Republicans were willing to neglect their oaths of office all out of loyalty to one man, and that one man was more important than their constituents, more important than the Constitution of the United States, more important than the democracy that we have in this great nation," said Democratic National Committee Chair Jaime Harrison.

But Trump himself is not going away. Immediately after his acquittal, he issued a written statement promising to reemerge "soon."

"Our historic, patriotic and beautiful movement to Make America Great Again has only just begun," Trump said. "In the months ahead I have much to share with you, and I look forward to continuing our incredible journey together to achieve American greatness for all of our people."

This story has been corrected by deleting a reference to President Andrew Johnson's impeachment in 1868 as drawing the most support of members of his own party. No members of Johnson's party, the Democrats, voted for his removal.

GOP's McConnell: Trump morally responsible for Jan. 6 attack

By ALAN FRAM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — In his speech Saturday from the Senate floor, Sen. Mitch McConnell delivered a scalding denunciation of Donald Trump, calling him "morally responsible" for the Jan. 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol.

But in his vote on Trump's impeachment, McConnell said "not guilty" because he said a former president could not face trial in the Senate.

Washington's most powerful Republican and the Senate's minority leader used his strongest language to date to excoriate Trump minutes after the Senate acquitted the former president, voting 57-43 to convict him but falling short of the two-thirds majority needed to find him guilty. Seven Republicans voted to convict.

Clearly angry, the Senate's longest-serving GOP leader said Trump's actions surrounding the attack on Congress were "a disgraceful, disgraceful dereliction of duty." He even noted that though Trump is now out of office, he remains subject to the country's criminal and civil laws.

"He didn't get away with anything yet," said McConnell, who turns 79 next Saturday and has led the Senate GOP since 2007.

It was a stunningly bitter castigation of Trump by McConnell, who could have used much of the same speech had he instead decided to convict Trump.

But by voting for acquittal, McConnell and his fellow Republicans left the party locked in its struggle to define itself after Trump's defeat in November. Fiercely loyal pro-Trump Republicans, and the base of the party they represent, are colliding with more traditional Republicans who believe the former president is damaging the party's national appeal.

A guilty vote by McConnell, which likely would have brought some other Republicans along with him, would have marked a more direct effort to wrest the party away from Trump.

That could have prompted 2022 primary challenges against GOP incumbents, complicating Republican efforts to win the Senate majority by nominating far-right, less-electable candidates. McConnell has spent years fending off such candidates.

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"Time is going to take care of that some way or another," said Sen. Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa, asked about the party's course. "But remember, in order to be a leader you got to have followers. So we're gonna find out."

After Saturday's vote, furious Democrats launched their own attacks against McConnell and the GOP. Speaking to reporters, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., mocked the "cowardly group of Republicans" in the Senate she said were afraid to "respect the institution in which they served."

She also said McConnell had created a self-fulfilling prophecy, forcing the Senate trial to begin after Trump left the White House by keeping the chamber out of session. Republicans say Pelosi could have triggered the proceedings earlier by delivering official impeachment documents sooner.

McConnell had signaled last month that he was open to finding Trump guilty, a jaw-dropping admission of alienation after spending four years largely helping him or ducking comments about his most outrageous assertions. McConnell informed GOP senators how he would vote in a private email early Saturday, saying, "While a close call, I am persuaded that impeachments are a tool primarily of removal and we therefore lack jurisdiction."

He expanded on his rationale on the Senate floor after Saturday's roll call, making clear his enmity toward Trump's actions.

"There is no question, none, that President Trump is practically and morally responsible for provoking the event of that day," he said.

Even before the November election, Trump repeatedly claimed that if he lost it would be due to fraud by Democrats, a false accusation that he continued to assert until leaving office.

He summoned supporters to Washington for Jan. 6, the day Congress would formally certify his Electoral College loss to Joe Biden, then used a provocative speech near the White House to urge them to march on the Capitol as that count was underway. His backers violently fought past police and into the building, forcing lawmakers to flee, temporarily disrupting the vote count and producing five deaths. The visceral, bloody images from that day were at the core of Democrats impeachment case against Trump.

McConnell called that assault a "foreseeable consequence" of Trump using the presidency, calling it "the largest megaphone on Planet Earth." Rather than calling off the rioters, McConnell accused Trump of "praising the criminals" and seeming determined to overturn the election "or else torch our institutions on the way out."

The 36-year Senate veteran maneuvered through Trump's four years in office like a captain steering a ship through a rocky strait on stormy seas. Battered at times by vindictive presidential tweets, McConnell made a habit of saying nothing about many of Trump's outrageous comments.

He ended up guiding the Senate to victories such as the 2017 tax cuts and the confirmations of three Supreme Court justices and more than 200 other federal judges.

Their relationship, built more on expedience than admiration, plummeted after Trump's denial of his Nov. 3 defeat and relentless efforts to reverse the voters' verdict with his baseless claims that Democrats fraudulently stole the election.

It withered completely last month, after Republicans lost Senate control with two Georgia runoff defeats they blamed on Trump, and the savage attack on the Capitol by Trump supporters. The day of the riot, McConnell railed against "thugs, mobs, or threats" and described the attack as "this failed insurrection."

Associated Press writers Mary Clare Jalonick and Lisa Mascaro contributed to this report.

White House aide resigns after threatening reporter

By ALEXANDRA JAFFE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — White House deputy press secretary T.J. Ducklo has resigned, the day after he was suspended for issuing a sexist and profane threat to a journalist seeking to cover his relationship with another reporter.

Ducklo had been put on a weeklong suspension without pay on Friday after a report surfaced in Van-

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ity Fair outlining his sexist threats against a female Politico journalist to try to suppress a story about his relationship, telling her "I will destroy you." The journalist had been seeking to report on his relationship with a political reporter at Axios who had previously covered the Biden campaign and transition.

In a statement Saturday, Ducklo said he was "devastated to have embarrassed and disappointed my White House colleagues and President Biden."

"No words can express my regret, my embarrassment and my disgust for my behavior," he said. I used language that no woman should ever have to hear from anyone, especially in a situation where she was just trying to do her job. It was language that was abhorrent, disrespectful and unacceptable."

Before Politico broke the story Tuesday, People Magazine published a glowing profile of the relationship. It was the first time either one had publicly acknowledged that they were dating.

It's the first departure from the new administration, less than a month into President Joe Biden's tenure, and it comes as the White House was facing criticism for not living up to standards set by Biden himself in their decision to retain Ducklo.

During a virtual swearing-in for staff on Inauguration Day, Biden said that "if you ever work with me and I hear you treat another colleague with disrespect, talk down to someone, I will fire you on the spot."

"No ifs, ands or buts," Biden added.

White House press secretary Jen Psaki faced a flurry of questions about the controversy Friday, with reporters highlighting Biden's comments and questioning the decision to merely suspend Ducklo for a week.

Confronted with those comments from the president, Psaki said Friday that Ducklo's conduct "doesn't meet our standards, it doesn't meet the president's standard, and it was important that we took a step to make that clear." She pointed to apologies made by top members of the White House communications team and Ducklo himself to the Politico reporter as ample moves reflecting the seriousness of the situation.

On Saturday, Psaki said in a statement that Ducklo's decision came with the support of White House chief of staff Ron Klain, and added that "we are committed to striving every day to meet the standard set by the President in treating others with dignity and respect, with civility and with a value for others through our words and our actions."

Pioneering Hollywood casting director Lynn Stalmaster dies

By MICHELLE MONROE Associated Press

Lynn Stalmaster, the Oscar-winning casting director whose eye for talent helped launch the careers of John Travolta, Christopher Reeve, Richard Dreyfuss and many other actors, has died. He was 93.

Stalmaster became the first person to receive an Academy Award for casting when he accepted an honorary Oscar for lifetime achievement in 2016. The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences had long resisted giving special recognition to casting directors and Stalmaster was brought to tears.

"It's not only an Oscar for me, but it's recognizing the major contribution casting makes," he said.

He began his career as an actor, even appearing with John Wayne in the 1951 film "Flying Leathernecks," but wanted a backup plan. He was an apprentice to a pair of TV producers who made him their casting director.

Stalmaster was searching for stars for shows such as "Gunsmoke" and "Ben Casey" when director Robert Wise tapped him to cast supporting actors in a 1958 film starring Susan Hayward called "I Want to Live!"

Stalmaster opened his independent casting office just as the reign of Hollywood's contract-based studio system ended, which allowed actors and directors new freedom of choice in picking their projects. Stalmaster made it his business to know every young performer in Los Angeles and New York, and traveled the U.S. and Europe to find fresh talent.

Stalmaster cast more than 200 films, including "The Graduate," "Fiddler on the Roof," "Harold and Maude," "Tootsie," "Deliverance," "Being There," "Judgment at Nuremberg" and "The Right Stuff." He also worked on a documentary about casting directors, "Casting By," its title a reference to how Stalmaster and his peers were credited in films, as opposed to being called "casting directors."

"A pioneer of our craft, Lynn was a trailblazer with over half a century of world-class film and television

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casting credits," said the Casting Society of America in a statement. "Thank you, Lynn, for showing us the way."

Born in Omaha, Nebraska in 1927, Stalmaster said his father gave him the confidence to become an actor. "Imagine my father — he was on the Supreme Court in Nebraska — dads don't want their sons to be actors," he said. "But he said to me, 'I want you to go to the Abbey Theater.'"

With his background in acting, Stalmaster would often read opposite the actors he hoped to cast to bring out their best performance during auditions.

"I could look into their eyes and play the scene," he said in a 2016 interview. "And I probably played more roles than any other actor in history — and females!"

He suggested Travolta for what became his breakout role: Vinnie Barbarino in the sitcom "Welcome Back, Kotter." Other actors who can thank Stalmaster for early film roles include Dreyfuss, who had one line in 1967's "The Graduate," as well as Jon Voight, James Caan, Martin Landau and Jeff Bridges.

Former Associated Press Writer Sandy Cohen compiled biographical material for this obituary.

Social justice at NASCAR's forefront as new season begins

By JENNA FRYER AP Auto Racing Writer

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. (AP) — NASCAR received warnings — "Go Woke, Go Broke" — from every corner of the internet last summer. Fans said they didn't want to hear about social justice, and banning the Confederate flag at racetracks would drive them from the sport forever.

If there has been an exodus, NASCAR has not noticed.

A predominately white sport with deep Southern roots and a longtime embrace of Confederate symbols, NASCAR was forced last summer to face its own checkered racial history during the country's social unrest: Bubba Wallace wore an "I Can't Breathe" T-shirt on pit road and raced a car with "Black Lives Matter" painted on the hood; his peers promised to listen and learn; a NASCAR official knelt during the national anthem; and the governing body vowed to do a better job of addressing racial injustice.

As a new season begins Sunday with the Daytona 500, a new era of social consciousness has enveloped the sport and NASCAR is committed for the long haul. There's not a Confederate flag to be found at the speedway. A large sign before an infield tunnel warns that the Stars and Bars are barred from the property, and compliance has not been a problem at Daytona.

In fact, NASCAR President Steve Phelps cited a brand tracking study by Directions Research that found that 1,750 self-identified "avid NASCAR fans" overwhelmingly supported the sanctioning body's stance on social justice in 2020.

"It was a moment in time back in June that seemed, for us, it was the right time to act. I think it was the right time for our country. I think it was the right time for our sport. The response to that was fantastic," Phelps said. "What we do in the areas of social justice and diversity equity inclusion is going to be authentic to who we are. May not be the right thing for the NBA, but it's going to be the right thing for us."

Wallace, the only full-time Black racer at the national level, has been the face of NASCAR's movement. Born in Alabama but raised in North Carolina, Wallace no longer wanted to see the Confederate flag at his workplace.

Wallace found his voice on racial injustice after the deaths of Ahmaud Arbery in Georgia and George Floyd in Minneapolis, and the backlash was immediate. Less than two weeks after Wallace's successful push to ban the Confederate flag, fans paraded past the entrance at Talladega Superspeedway with the flag flying from their vehicles.

He received death threats, has been booed during driver introductions and the crowd at Bristol Motor Speedway cheered when he wrecked. A garage pull in his NASCAR stall had been fashioned into a noose — an FBI investigation found it had been hanging for months — and people falsely accused Wallace of faking a hate crime.

Even President Donald Trump blasted NASCAR on Twitter for banning the flag and wrongly accusing

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Wallace of perpetrating "a hoax."

Wallace has since signed multiple companies to a sponsorship portfolio so deep that Michael Jordan and Denny Hamlin were able to build a race team around Wallace that debuts in the Daytona 500.

DoorDash is Wallace's sponsor for the opener and, a week after its first Super Bowl commercial, will air a spot during the Daytona 500. The Super Bowl ad featured entertainer Daveed Diggs and the Sesame Workshop as DoorDash reinforced its mission to grow and empower local economies.

The Daytona ad, a 30-second spot titled "Race Car Driver," has an entirely different feel yet still promotes DoorDash's social agendas. Created to celebrate Black History Month and the Black drivers who raced before Wallace, the spot is black and white and lists the first names of Elias Bowie, Charlie Scott, Wendell Scott, George Wiltshire, Willy T. Ribbs and Bill Lester.

If not for the brief fadeout that flashes Bubba Wallace, 23XI Racing and DoorDash, the commercial has no brand marketing or overt NASCAR symbolism.

"Our goal was to create work that would celebrate Bubba's voice, his journey and his mission, and stand apart in its stark evocative simplicity from every other ad that runs during the Daytona 500," said Kofi Amoo-Gottfried, DoorDash's vice president of marketing.

"We share Bubba's drive for change — a desire for a more inclusive sport, and a more inclusive world. This is a long journey, one that began before Bubba and will continue with him and future drivers, so we also wanted to recognize the lineage of Black drivers who have moved the sport forward."

It's a dramatically forward-thinking approach for a sponsor catering to car enthusiasts, but Wallace's brand encompasses much more than racing. Wallace has found that the new companies he's brought into NASCAR — DoorDash, Columbia Sportswear and Root Insurance — chose to partner with him because of his activism first, racing second. Along with McDonald's and Dr Pepper, Wallace has a fully funded car for the first time in his career.

"The conversations we've had (with sponsors), they've all wanted to know, 'What are we going to do off the track to keep pushing for change?'" Wallace said. "They've all said: 'Oh, we'll be on the car, that's obvious, that's a no-brainer. But what are we going to do? They are more focused on the messaging and how we can ignite others to do better and be better."

Phelps believes taking a position was "a seminal moment" for NASCAR that showed that the sport is welcoming to new fans and new companies.

"It opened up an aperture to a brand-new fan base," Phelps said. "There was a question at the time: Social justice, is that something a sport should do, NASCAR should do? Do we have permission to do it? The answer is yes.

"You're going to have critics no matter what you do. You're not going to please all the people for sure. We're going to do what we believe is right for the sport, right for the growth of this sport."

More AP auto racing: <https://apnews.com/hub/auto-racing> and https://twitter.com/AP_Sports

A bleak Valentine's Day, lovers find hope in roses, vaccines

By CLAIRE GALOFARO and DON BABWIN undefined

The notecards poking from bouquets rushing out of a Chicago florist all carry similar messages: "looking forward to celebrating in person."

"The notes aren't sad," said Kate Prince, a co-owner of Flora Chicago on the city's North Side. "They're hopeful."

On this Valentine's Day, Americans are searching for ways to celebrate love amid so much heartache and isolation as the coronavirus pandemic stretches past its year anniversary. Some are clinging to hope, seen in the most vulnerable and frontline workers getting vaccinated, in loosening restrictions on restaurants in the hardest hit places, in case numbers starting to wane. But the death toll is still climbing toward a half-million dead in the United States and many remain shuttered in their homes.

Prince said florists are scrambling to keep up with the onslaught of orders from people trying to send

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their love from a safe distance.

"We are crushed," she said.

Phones are ringing off the hook at restaurants in cities that have loosened restrictions on indoor dining just in time for Valentine's Day, one of the busiest days of the year for many eateries that have been devastated by shutdowns designed to slow the spread of the virus.

In Chicago, the mayor loosened up indoor dining restrictions this week. After limiting restaurants to 25% capacity and 25 people per room, restaurants now must remain at 25% but they can serve as many as 50 per room.

The Darling restaurant is fully booked for this weekend and has been for weeks.

Sophie Huterstein, the restaurant's owner, said COVID-19 has allowed the 2-year-old eatery to accomplish the impossible: make people happy to agree to a 4 p.m. reservation.

"People are being very flexible," she said.

They are also this Valentine's Day willing to do something else over a weekend where the high temperature will reach the teens and the low will plummet well below zero.

"We have 14 greenhouses and people are coming out in full ski gear," she said.

In New York City, the America Bar restaurant in the West Village is also fully booked for Valentine's Day with a long waiting list and high demand for the newly allowed 25% capacity for indoor tables, said David Rabin, a partner in the eatery. More seats, along with the governor's decision to allow closing times to move from 10 p.m. to 11 p.m., has allowed him to give more shifts to his workers.

"For us, it's a welcome gift," he said. "It's been great."

T Bar NYC Steak and Lounge on the Upper East Side is also fully booked. Owner Tony Fortuna says some of his customers won't dine indoors and he understands, but for those that have been clamoring to get back to restaurant dining, 25% is a good start. It gives people a glimmer of normalcy at a heartbreaking time.

"It gets everybody motivated, we see a little bit of hope," he said. "It's all about perception: you see people going out and moving around it makes everybody feel in a different mood."

In Portland, a couple married 55 years has special Valentine's Day plans.

Gil and Mercy Galicia have barely left their home in almost a year since lockdowns began, said their daughter, Cris Charbonneau. They had seen their close-knit family, three children and six grandchildren spread across the country.

Like many seniors, the year has been especially hard on them. They immigrated from the Philippines in the 1960s and have lived in their home on a half-acre plot for more than 40 years.

Mercy, 80, is a cancer survivor and has been diagnosed with early-onset Alzheimer's. Gil, 88, used to go on daily walks at the mall to stay active, but he hasn't for a year. He is fearful that the isolation has set them back, and he doesn't know how much longer they can manage living on their own.

"We're losing years, COVID has stolen this time that's so precious," Charbonneau said.

They don't have a computer. When the vaccine became available, Gil called everywhere and couldn't get through. Charbonneau was on a video call with them Thursday and saw a tweet from a local news station that the grocery store near their home had opened appointments online.

She was scrambling to get two appointments. She wasn't paying attention to the date. She told them she'd booked them for Sunday, Feb. 14.

"That's Valentine's Day!" her father exclaimed and smiled at his wife.

"What a great way to celebrate my love for you."

They hung up. Their daughter wept.

"That's what we needed," she said, "some hope."

Babwin reported from Chicago and Galofaro from Louisville, Kentucky. Associated Press journalists Tom Hays and Julie Walker contributed from New York City.

In Nevada desert, a technology firm aims to be a government

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By SAM METZ Associated Press/Report for America

CARSON CITY, Nev. (AP) — In the Nevada desert, a cryptocurrency magnate hopes to turn dreams of a futuristic “smart city” into reality. To do that, he’s asking the state to let companies like his form local governments on land they own, which would grant them power over everything from schools to law enforcement.

Jeffrey Berns, CEO of Nevada-based Blockchains LLC, envisions a city where people not only purchase goods and services with digital currency but also log their entire online footprint — financial statements, medical records and personal data — on blockchain. Blockchain is a digital ledger known mostly for recording cryptocurrency transactions but also has been adopted by some local governments for everything from documenting marriage licenses to facilitating elections.

The company wants to break ground by 2022 in rural Storey County, 12 miles (19 kilometers) east of Reno. It’s proposing to build 15,000 homes and 33 million square feet (3 million square meters) of commercial and industrial space within 75 years. Berns, whose idea is the basis for draft legislation that some lawmakers saw behind closed doors last week, said traditional government doesn’t offer enough flexibility to create a community where people can invent new uses for this technology.

“There’s got to be a place somewhere on this planet where people are willing to just start from scratch and say, ‘We’re not going to do things this way just because it’s the way we’ve done it,’” Berns said.

He wants Nevada to change its laws to allow “innovation zones,” where companies would have powers like those of a county government, including creating court systems, imposing taxes and building infrastructure while making land and water management decisions.

The prospect has been met with intrigue and skepticism from Nevada lawmakers, though the legislation has yet to be formally filed or discussed in public hearings. Most in the Democratic-controlled Legislature are eager to diversify Nevada’s tourism-dependent economy, but many fear backlash against business incentives as they struggle to fund health care and education.

This proposal differs from the big tax rebates they have grown wary of offering, like the \$1.3 billion given to Tesla to build its northern Nevada battery factory or the billions New York and Virginia offered Amazon to build new corporate headquarters.

But it raises deeper issues about increasing tech companies’ grip on everyday life at a time when anti-trust regulators and Democrats in Congress allege tech giants like Facebook and Google are controlling markets and endangering people’s privacy.

Blockchains LLC and so-called innovation zones were a key part of Gov. Steve Sisolak’s January State of the State address, when he outlined plans to rebuild a more diversified economy after the coronavirus pandemic.

Sisolak, whose campaign and affiliated political action committee received a combined \$60,000 from the company, said the proposal would transform Nevada into “the epicenter of this emerging industry and create the high-paying jobs and revenue that go with it.”

The governor’s office declined to comment further on innovation zones. But with Sisolak’s backing, the idea could garner serious consideration in the Legislature.

“I don’t know enough yet to say whether I’m comfortable with this as the next step or not. But, look, it’s a big idea and Nevada has been built on big ideas, so let’s hear it out,” said state Sen. Ben Kieckhefer, a Republican who sponsored blockchain-related legislation in 2017 and 2019.

If lawmakers back the proposal, technology companies with 50,000 acres of land (200 square kilometers) that promise a \$1 billion investment could create zones governed by three people like county commissioners. The draft legislation says two of them initially would be from the company itself.

In Storey County, which is home to Tesla’s factory, officials are waiting for more information before offering opinions but say questions still need to be answered.

Commissioner Lance Gilman, who owns the Mustang Ranch brothel and bought most of the county’s land to turn it into an industrial park decades ago, has supported luring technology companies to the area and growing its population. But Gilman, who worked in marketing for Blockchains LLC from 2018 to 2019,

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said there are many unknowns about ceding control to a new jurisdiction that falls within county borders.

"(The bill) wants the host county to let it form, become successful, not pay them very much money, and eventually let them take over the whole county and all the operations, if it becomes successful," Gilman said. "If it doesn't become successful, who becomes responsible for all the stuff that was built in the meantime?"

The county's master plan doesn't permit residential development in the Tahoe-Reno Industrial Center, where most of Blockchain LLC's property lies, but it allows for 3,500 homes in Painted Rock, a subsection of the company's 67,000 acres (271 square kilometers).

Berns said officials told him in an informal discussion two years ago that they weren't interested in zoning for more homes, a meeting that former County Manager Pat Whitten confirmed. Berns understands that elected leaders in Storey County may not want an experimental city in their backyard but believes the idea should be a state decision because of its potential to "singularly define Nevada going forward."

"We bought 70,000 acres of land in the county. What did they think we were going to do?" he said.

The former consumer protection attorney said the idea was born from how he sees government as an unnecessary middleman between people and ideas.

"For us to be able to take risks and be limber, nimble and figure things out like you do when you're designing new products, that's not how government works. So why not let us just create a government that lets us do those things?" Berns said.

Associated Press writer Michelle L. Price contributed reporting from Las Vegas. Metz is a corps member for the Associated Press/Report for America Statehouse News Initiative. Report for America is a nonprofit national service program that places journalists in newsrooms to report on undercovered issues.

High court denies accused Ghosn smugglers' bid to stay in US

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — The U.S. Supreme Court cleared the way Saturday for the extradition of an American father and son wanted by Japan in the escape of former Nissan Motor Co. boss Carlos Ghosn.

Justice Stephen Breyer denied a bid to put the extradition on hold to give Michael and Peter Taylor time to pursue an appeal in their case challenging the U.S. officials' plans to hand them over to Japan.

Michael Taylor, a U.S. Army Special Forces veteran, and his son are accused of helping Ghosn, who led the Japanese automaker for two decades, flee the country last year with Ghosn tucked away in a box on a private jet. The flight went first to Turkey, and then to Lebanon, where Ghosn has citizenship but which has no extradition treaty with Japan.

Lawyers for the Taylors argue the men can't legally be extradited and will be treated unfairly in the Japan. Their lawyers told the Supreme Court in a brief filed Friday that the men would face harsh treatment in the Japanese criminal justice system.

"The issues raised by petitioners merit full and careful consideration, and the stakes are enormous for them. The very least the U.S. courts owe the petitioners is a full chance to litigate these issues, including exercising their appellate rights, before they are consigned to the fate that awaits them at the hands of the Japanese government," their attorneys wrote.

U.S. authorities had said they would not hand the men over to Japan while their bid for a stay was pending before Breyer, an attorney for the Taylors said.

Michael Taylor said in an interview with The Associated Press that he feels betrayed that the U.S. would try to turn him over to Japan after his service to the country. Taylor refused to discuss the details of the case because of the possibility that he could be tried in Japan, but he insisted his son had no involvement.

The 1st U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Boston refused Thursday to put the extradition on hold, finding that the Taylors are unlikely to succeed on the merits of their case. The Taylors have been locked up at a suburban Boston jail since their arrest last May.

Ghosn was out on bail at the of his escape and awaiting trial on allegations that he underreported his income and committed a breach of trust by diverting Nissan money for his personal gain. Ghosn said he

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fled because he could not expect a fair trial, was subjected to unfair conditions in detention and was barred from meeting his wife under his bail conditions. Ghosn has denied any wrongdoing.

Party in a pandemic: NASCAR fans power through at Daytona

By DAN GELSTON AP Sports Writer

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. (AP) — Sam Maxwell and his band of Cleveland bros packed up their 1997 Four Winds motorhome with 105,000 miles on it, headed south in the thick of the pandemic and pinned their hopes on a party.

Traveling on a budget, the friends like to hit a premier sporting event each year, and this week — thanks only to interest spiked by playing FanDuel — parked in the infield grass at Daytona International Speedway. They came to soak in the Daytona 500 atmosphere, or whatever they found among the campers killing time with games of cornhole and flip cup.

"We're still going to have a party one way or the other," Maxwell said. "Whether there's 100 people or just the four of us, we're still going to have fun."

The diehard Browns fans brought the party to them. They hit a thrift store, plunking down \$25 for a ratty sofa — perfect to absorb spilled PBR — and even plucked a keyboard out of a dumpster.

They blew up red balloons and tied them to a sign: "Moms Drink 4 Free!!!" Their plan to liven up the bash was overheard by a neighbor, who pressed her face against a window screen and asked if there was an age limit for the moms.

At Daytona, in both speed and celebrations, there are no limits.

So one of the gang waved her down and busted out the Fireball.

In the middle of a pandemic that has killed more than 480,000 people in the U.S., the carousing was more casual than crazy this week at Daytona as race day approached. The roughly 30,000 fans inside the sprawling facility that usually packs more than 100,000 are expected to make Sunday's Daytona 500 the largest-attended single sporting event in the nation since the coronavirus shut down much of the sports world 11 months ago.

Mask wearing? Not so much, and there's more space between stock cars pack racing on the superspeedway than there is between most campers.

"I'm not really too concerned about it," Maxwell said.

The track made all the usual window-dressing moves to prove safety is a priority, with temperature checks, distanced seating, cashless concessions and adherence to CDC guidelines. Speedweeks, the runup to the big race, is actually sponsored by a health care system headquartered in Florida and COVID-19 testing information sits above a link to official travel packages on the track's website.

Yet in a week where Victoria's state government imposed a five-day lockdown — stripping the Australian Open of fans while play continues — Florida is going for two: The Super Bowl hosted 25,000 fans last week in Tampa, about 150 miles southwest of Daytona, and viral videos showed throngs of mostly mask-less fans and packed sports bars as the hometown Buccaneers won it all.

NASCAR went down this road last season when Bristol had about 22,000 fans for its All-Star race last July. Daytona is bigger, even with social distancing in place for the grandstands, a mandatory mask order and no access to garages or pit row. Asked for comment, the Florida Department of Health in Volusia County said "event planners implemented several strategies to maintain healthy environments" and noted access to the infield was "limited to camping customers and essential staff."

Those campers are having a ball. Even if Tent City — famous for its raucous parties — has been reimagined as a "Turn 3 drive-in" setup for the RV crowd.

Mark Minadeo of Boca Raton was attending his ninth Daytona 500 and bought a motorhome for Speedweeks.

"This is ridiculous," he said of the view. "It's completely empty. A lot of people don't know what's going on. As you're walking around as you ask people who work at the track, they're like, 'Yeah, you can go over there and watch the race.'"

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Some traditions are in start-and-park mode.

Revelers, park your wheelbarrows. The booze-fueled races — some might say, the real races at Daytona — are an informal tradition of dumping your buddy in the belly of the barrow then sprinting, stumbling to the finish.

Dave Rotax of Bristol, Vermont, drilled a hole in his No. 9 Chase Elliott wheelbarrow tire and filled it with expanding foam — consider it a sort of steroid for wheels — and had it on standby for ambitious racers.

There was one bird chirping all day in a tree inside the fan zone that served as the soundtrack for the day more than the Q-&A sessions with drivers that often entertained the masses. The mood is in stark contrast to last year when NASCAR fans were revved for then-President Donald Trump's visit. Trump banners dotted the infield and the makeshift bars that lined the roads served drinks like the "Subpoena Colada."

Trump flags swayed here and there this week, and there was at least one notably profane one directed at President Joe Biden, but politics was greatly tamped down. The fan support was mostly reserved for cutouts of greats like Dale Earnhardt or paint schemes for champion Chase Elliott.

But perhaps that little patch of Cleveland was a sign of what's ahead. They are 20- and 30-somethings who got hooked on NASCAR through daily fantasy sports. The majority had never been to a NASCAR race. But a hole on Brandon McCoy's jorts revealed a deeper level of fandom: He had the NASCAR logo and "Turn Left" tattooed on his right leg.

He got the fresh ink just week.

Why?

"I knew I was coming," he said, laughing.

More AP auto racing: <https://apnews.com/hub/auto-racing> and https://twitter.com/AP_Sports

Brazil governors seek own vaccine supplies as stocks run low

By MAURICIO SAVARESE Associated Press

SAO PAULO (AP) — Brazilian state governors are pursuing their own vaccine supply plans, with some expressing concern that President Jair Bolsonaro's government won't deliver the shots required to avoid interrupting immunization efforts.

Governors are under pressure from mayors, some of whose vaccine stocks have already been depleted, including three cities in the metropolitan area of Rio de Janeiro. Northeastern Bahia state's capital Salvador suspended vaccination on Thursday because supplies are dwindling. Brazil's two biggest cities, Rio and Sao Paulo, are expected to be without shots in a matter of days.

The governor who has pushed hardest to shore up his state's own vaccine supply during the pandemic is Sao Paulo's João Doria, a former Bolsonaro ally turned adversary. The president repeatedly criticized Doria's deal to purchase 100 million CoronaVac shots from Chinese pharmaceutical company Sinovac and said the federal government wouldn't buy them.

Bolsonaro reversed course in January, facing delay in the delivery of the only vaccine his administration purchased and watching as other nations began immunizing their citizens while Brazil's 210 million people were on hold.

"It it weren't for this (CoronaVac) shot, Brazil today would be a country without vaccines," Doria told The Associated Press in an interview. He added that he is negotiating for 20 million more doses and, if the federal government doesn't buy them, he could sell them to other governors. "It is not for a state government to secure vaccines, but here we are."

Bolsonaro's administration has a deal for 100 million AstraZeneca doses, but only 2 million of them have arrived, with more expected only in March, according to Fiocruz, the Rio-based laboratory that will produce the shots in Brazil.

Brazil's government last month contracted for 46 million CoronaVac shots from Sao Paulo, of which nearly 10 million have so far been delivered, and is under pressure to sign another deal for 54 million more.

Vaccines purchased by the federal government have been distributed across the nation, which is more

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expansive than the U.S.' contiguous 48 states. With local authorities administering the shots, the number of people immunized isn't clear, nor which locations have looming shortages.

With nearly 12 million total doses available to date, 4.9 million people have received shots, according to a consortium of Brazilian media formed last year to counter COVID-19 data blackouts.

Bahia state's Gov. Rui Costa also struck out on his own, reaching an agreement in September to purchase the rights to 50 million doses of the Sputnik V shot from Russia. It hasn't yet been authorized by Brazil's health authorities.

After ignoring Costa's deal for months, Brazil's Health Minister Eduardo Pazuello said on Feb. 5 that the government will buy 10 million Sputnik V shots. Fueling pressure on Pazuello to seek alternatives, recent studies cast doubt on the efficacy of the shot his ministry had purchased from AstraZeneca against variants of the coronavirus.

One such variant has been widely detected in Amazonas state's capital Manaus, which last month saw its health system overwhelmed by the crush of patients in desperate need for oxygen. The variant is less vulnerable to some treatments.

Pazuello said at a Senate hearing on Tuesday that the Brazilian variant is three times more contagious than the original virus, without providing further details. He also said he expects half the population to be vaccinated by June, and the rest by year-end. Brazilian health experts say the country needs about 340 million shots for the entire population above age 18. COVID-19 shots that received authorization for emergency use have not been tested adequately in teenagers and children.

Brazil's government last year declined to buy 70 million doses of the Pfizer vaccine. Bolsonaro defended the decision, saying the Pfizer contract was conditional on the government agreeing to release the company from any potential liabilities.

With sustained supply of shots from the federal government in doubt, Manaus-based state judge Etelvina Braga handed down a ruling Friday that gives Amazonas state's government and Manaus' City Hall 20 days to secure a letter of intent with pharmaceutical companies for the purchase of vaccines. In her decision, she noted that other states, including Alagoas that is one of Brazil's poorest, already have such letters that are the first step toward securing a contract.

Maranhao state Gov. Flavio Dino, one of Bolsonaro's most vocal critics, says the pandemic and difficulties in vaccine rollout have given conservative and progressive governors common cause. Most of Brazil's 27 governors backed the president in the 2018 election, he added, but his relationship with state authorities has soured.

"The health crisis and the lack of dialogue with Bolsonaro made the governors grow closer, even if they have deep ideological differences," said Dino, a former judge and member of the opposition Communist Party, speaking by phone. "He acts as if he weren't in charge, so we see each other as the ones dealing with reality."

Draghi takes helm in Italy, focused on pandemic recovery aid

By FRANCES D'EMILIO Associated Press

ROME (AP) — Mario Draghi, the man largely credited with saving the euro currency, took the helm as Italy's premier Saturday after assembling a government of economic experts and other technocrats along with career politicians from across the spectrum to guide the pandemic-devastated nation toward recovery.

Draghi and his 23 Cabinet ministers took their oaths of office at the Quirinal presidential palace. Italian President Sergio Mattarella had tasked the former European Central Bank president with trying to form a government up to managing the the health, economic and social crises of the coronavirus pandemic.

In deference to coronavirus precautions, all participants in the swearing-in ceremony were masked, and a palace aide provided each minister with a fresh pen to sign their oath. Draghi made no public comments during the first hours of his premiership, and his eyes showed no discernible emotion over his N95 mask.

Draghi's most-quoted words so far have been those uttered in 2012 when the euro-zone risked collapsing in a crisis of confidence and he vowed the European Central Bank would do "whatever it takes" to rescue

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the euro.

The current head of the European Central Bank, Christine Lagarde, tweeted her congratulations. "I wish him all the best as he takes on the task ahead, leading the government in the best interests of all Italian citizens," she said.

Also tweeting good wishes was the European Union's top executive, Ursula von der Leyen, who called Draghi's experience "an exceptional asset for Italy & Europe." She said she was looking forward to working with Draghi "for our common recovery."

Draghi, 73, an economist who also previously led Italy's central bank, replaced now-former Premier Giuseppe Conte, whose government collapsed after a small party yanked support over the handling of the pandemic. Broad political backing for the new Cabinet will be crucial in the Italian Parliament, where Draghi next week must win mandatory confidence votes.

With pandemic lockdowns pummeling Italy's long-stagnant economy, he chose for his economy minister a non-political appointee, Daniele Franco, an expert in public finances who has served in Italian central bank posts.

Eager to have some role in deciding how Italy will spend some 209 billion euros (about \$250 billion) in European Union recovery funds, politicians from parties that have spent years demonizing each other set aside differences, at least for now, and agreed to join a Draghi government.

The prospect of funneling EU money into concrete projects to improve citizens' lives practically overnight transformed the euroskepticism of Matteo Salvini, the right-wing League leader, into a publicly enthusiastic pro-Europe proponent of a Draghi government.

Salvini didn't get a ministry himself, but three League stalwarts did, including longtime aide and lawmaker Giancarlo Giorgetti, who was put in charge of the economic development ministry. Italy urgently needs to bolster businesses knocked to the ground by the government's anti-pandemic measures, which shuttered stores, shopping malls, restaurants and cafes for weeks.

With tourism accounting for some 13% of Italy's gross domestic product, the pandemic obliterated a significant chunk of the economy. The new government will have a tourism Ministry from the previous culture ministry.

A League senator heads the new tourism post. Keeping the reins of the culture ministry is Dario Franceschini, a high-profile Democrat who revitalized Italy's museums to attract many more visitors.

The EU funds are contingent on projects aimed at reforming Italy's bureaucratic institutions, creating new jobs, especially for young people, and transforming the nation digitally and environmentally.

Italy's slow and complex justice system is often blamed for discouraging business investment. The new justice minister is Marta Cartabia, former president of Italy's constitutional court. How to revamp the Justice Ministry fueled feuding within Conte's last coalition.

Italy's health minister through the pandemic, Roberto Speranza, kept his post, the sole minister from a small left-wing party.

Ministry posts were handed out to four parties that were in Conte's imploded coalition, including a small centrist party led by ex-Premier Matteo Renzi, whose defection triggered the political crisis ultimately resolved by Draghi's arrival on the scene.

The biggest party in the Italian Parliament, the populist 5-Star Movement, has the most political posts in Draghi's Cabinet, four.

Born as an anti-establishment movement, the Movement was already splintering after being the lead party in back-to-back Conte governments since 2018 — one right-leaning and the other left-leaning. Its decision to join a Draghi government threatened to widen the fractures in the Movement, with roots in distrust of Brussels.

Clinching populists' support for Draghi was the former central banker's creation of a ministry of ecological transition. The new post will be headed by a physicist and technology champion, Roberto Cingolani.

Back in government after a decade with three ministry posts is the center-right Forza Italia party, led by Silvio Berlusconi, the former premier who bills himself as a staunch champion of Europe.

Ex-Premier Conte, a mediation specialist lawyer who heads no party, is riding high in opinion polls from

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his 2 1/2 years in office. Many observers consider him ripe to form his own party ahead of the next general election, which is scheduled for 2023 but could come sooner given the political tensions among existing parties.

As Conte strode through the courtyard of Chigi Palace on his way out, career employees of the premier's office, from bureaucrats to ushers, leaned out of windows to warmly applaud.

This story has been corrected to show that employees applauded for Conte, not Draghi.

Imprisoned ex-FBI agent who worked with Bulger seeks release

BOSTON (AP) — The former FBI agent serving a 40-year prison sentence for alerting Boston mobster Whitey Bulger that he could be implicated in a murder is seeking to be released from prison on medical grounds.

The Florida Commission on Offender Review will hear the request Wednesday from John "Zip" Connolly, who is being held at the Reception and Medical Center in Lake Butler, Florida.

"It's on the docket for the 17th and he's seeking a conditional medical release," said commission spokesperson Angela Meredith. A majority vote would lead to Connolly's release, she said.

Connolly's Cambridge lawyer, Peter Mullane, confirmed to the Boston Herald Friday that Connolly, who is 80, is seeking to be released.

"He has multiple melanomas and pretty bad diabetes. Two serious illnesses," Mullane said.

Connolly, who was James "Whitey" Bulger's FBI handler, was convicted in 2008 of second-degree murder after a mob hitman killed World Jai Alai President John Callahan in Fort Lauderdale in 1982. Trial evidence showed Connolly tipped Bulger that Callahan was about to implicate the gang in another killing.

Separately, Connolly served nearly 10 years in prison after being convicted in 2002 of racketeering and obstruction of justice for protecting members of Bulger's Winter Hill Gang from prosecution and tipping them about informants in their ranks.

Bulger, who spent 16 years as one of America's most wanted men before being arrested in California in 2011, was killed in federal prison in West Virginia in 2018.

Connolly's wife and three grown children are still living in the Boston area, Mullane said, and they hope he will be allowed to return to Massachusetts.

"This has been a punishment for the whole family, and they have suffered," Mullane said.

Callahan's wife, Mary, also 80, said she just celebrated what would have been her 61st wedding anniversary.

"For me, this is never over. My daughter said that to me recently," Mary Callahan said Friday. "I remember the last time we celebrated my anniversary, John told me you get me 'for another year.' That's an Irish joke. He actually gave me a string of pearls."

As suicides rise, young survivors make case for hope in film

By LYNN ELBER AP Television Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — "Each and Every Day" represents studies in courage, both in life and in the MTV documentary about young people and suicide.

In frank and revelatory conversations, nine survivors recount what took them to the brink and how they fought, and continue to fight, to keep claim on themselves and their right to live.

With suicides by young people already on the rise in recent years and the relentless pandemic piling on pressure, a film giving voice to those who attempted or considered suicide takes on more urgency. It airs commercial-free at 9 p.m. EST Tuesday on MTV.

One young person, a college student named Hannah, didn't hesitate when she was invited to be part of the project from director Alexandra Shiva and executive producer Sheila Nevins. (The last names of the participants were omitted from the documentary.)

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"It was an immediate 'yes,'" Hannah said in an interview. "I need to do this, I need to take this opportunity to tell my story. Hopefully, kids and people out there who watch will listen to my story. Hopefully, they see that I overcame so many obstacles and they can, too."

She emphasized what others in the film say: It's critical to realize you can't go it alone.

"I was struggling really badly and I didn't reach out for help, and not reaching out for help almost killed me," said Hannah. "I really want them to see what not to do."

Family and friends also have a crucial role, Shiva said.

"If you think someone is thinking about suicide, ask them. Talking about it isn't going to put someone more at risk," she said.

According to a September 2020 report released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the suicide rate nationally among people age 10 to 24 increased 57.4% from 2007 to 2018, from 6.8 per 100,000 in 2007 to 10.7 in 2018. By comparison, the report said, the rate had been statistically stable from 2000 to 2007.

The pandemic appears to be further undermining mental health in America, with young adults aged 18 to 24 among the groups most prone to thoughts of suicide, according to a survey released last August by the CDC.

"Each and Every Day" doesn't dwell on statistics or experts, instead giving the floor to the participants and their individual stories. There's also a group Zoom discussion that lets the young adults connect with each other and, indirectly, viewers.

With quiet, undramatic honesty, they talk about how long they've battled depression — many since middle school — and what it took for them to realize they couldn't survive without support. For those of color, skeptical community attitudes about mental health treatment and the pressure of expectations are cited as further burdens.

"I grew up with this idea of always having to be perfect, always having to portray Black excellence," Hannah said.

Latino and Indian American participants said they've dealt with the prejudice that psychological issues are shameful, while LGBTQ participants share their own burdens. Others in the film prove that no one is exempt, including those who come from happy homes or affluence or avoid facing ethnic or other bias.

The filmmakers wanted to ensure "we had enough of a variety of experience so that if someone turns on MTV, they don't feel like they're not being represented. They can actually see themselves in someone," Shiva said. The film also will be available on mtv.com and the MTV app, and later on Pluto TV.

An effort also was made to include the widely different therapies, some including medication and others not, that participants had found valuable.

The Jed Foundation, which aims to foster emotional health and prevent suicide among teens and young adults, was a partner with MTV Documentary Films on the project and was among the groups that helped Shiva and producer Lindsey Megrue find participants.

The foundation's Donna Satow said she admires the brave candor of those in "Each and Every Day," and believes they will carry weight with peers who see the film. She and her husband, Phil, created the foundation after losing their youngest son, Jed, to suicide in 1998.

"So many young people suffer in silence. They really do not want to speak up about these feelings," Donna Satow said. "So when they see their own age group speak up and speak up in a language they actually speak and understand, it is powerful and it really moves the conversation to the next step."

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Sunday, Feb. 14, the 45th day of 2021. There are 320 days left in the year. This is Valentine's Day.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Feb. 14, 2018, a gunman identified as a former student opened fire with a semi-automatic rifle at

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Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School near Fort Lauderdale, Florida, killing 17 people in the nation's deadliest school shooting since the attack in Newtown, Connecticut, more than five years earlier.

On this date:

In 1778, the American ship Ranger carried the recently adopted Stars and Stripes to a foreign port for the first time as it arrived in France.

In 1876, inventors Alexander Graham Bell and Elisha Gray applied separately for patents related to the telephone. (The U.S. Supreme Court eventually ruled Bell the rightful inventor.)

In 1912, Arizona became the 48th state of the Union as President William Howard Taft signed a proclamation.

In 1920, the League of Women Voters was founded in Chicago; its first president was Maud Wood Park.

In 1929, the "St. Valentine's Day Massacre" took place in a Chicago garage as seven rivals of Al Capone's gang were gunned down.

In 1945, during World War II, British and Canadian forces reached the Rhine River in Germany.

In 1967, Aretha Franklin recorded her cover of Otis Redding's "Respect" at Atlantic Records in New York.

In 1979, Adolph Dubs, the U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan, was kidnapped in Kabul by Muslim extremists and killed in a shootout between his abductors and police.

In 1984, 6-year-old Stormie Jones became the world's first heart-liver transplant recipient when the surgery was performed at Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh (she lived until November, 1990).

In 1989, Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini called on Muslims to kill Salman Rushdie, author of "The Satanic Verses," a novel condemned as blasphemous.

In 2013, American Airlines and US Airways announced an \$11 billion merger that turned American into the world's biggest airline.

In 2019, William Barr was sworn in for his second stint as the nation's attorney general; he succeeded Jeff Sessions, who'd been pushed out of office by President Donald Trump after Trump denounced Sessions' decision to recuse himself from the Russia investigation.

Ten years ago: President Barack Obama unveiled a \$3.7 trillion budget plan that would freeze or reduce some safety-net programs for the nation's poor but turn aside Republican demands for more drastic cuts to shrink the government to where it was before he took office. Protesters took to the streets in Iran, Bahrain and Yemen, inspired by the popular uprising in Egypt that brought down President Hosni Mubarak. The TV game show "Jeopardy!" began airing the first of three episodes pitting human players Brad Rutter and Ken Jennings against an IBM computer named "Watson." (Watson ended up winning with a cumulative total of \$77,147 versus \$24,000 for Jennings and \$21,600 for Rutter.)

Five years ago: Pope Francis condemned the drug trade's "dealers of death" and urged Mexicans to shun the devil's lust for money as he led a huge open-air Mass for more than 300,000 people in the poverty-stricken Mexico City suburb of Ecatepec (EHK'-ah-teh-PEHK'). The first NBA All-Star Game outside the U.S. was the highest-scoring ever, with the West defeating the East 196-173 at the Air Canada Centre in Toronto.

One year ago: A Chinese health official said more than 1,700 medical workers had been infected by the coronavirus, and six had died. Egypt confirmed its first case of the new virus, which had infected more than 64,000 people globally. After being stranded at sea for two weeks because five ports refused to allow their cruise ship to dock, passengers cheered as they left the MS Westerdam in Cambodia; the Holland America Line had said no cases of the virus had been confirmed among passengers and crew. (An 83-year-old American woman who was on the ship and flew from Cambodia to Malaysia was later found to be carrying the virus.)

Today's Birthdays: Actor Andrew Prine is 85. Country singer Razy Bailey is 82. Former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg is 79. Jazz musician Maceo Parker is 78. Journalist Carl Bernstein is 77. Former Sen. Judd Gregg, R-N.H., is 74. TV personality Pat O'Brien is 73. Magician Teller (Penn and Teller) is 73. Cajun singer-musician Michael Doucet (doo-SAY') (Beausoleil) is 70. Actor Ken Wahl is 64. Opera singer Renee Fleming is 62. Actor Meg Tilly is 61. Pro Football Hall of Famer Jim Kelly is 61. Singer-producer Dwayne Wiggins is 60. Actor Sakina Jaffey is 59. Actor Enrico Colantoni is 58. Actor Zach Galligan is 57.

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Actor Valente Rodriguez is 57. Former tennis player Manuela Maleeva is 54. Actor Simon Pegg is 51. Rock musician Kevin Baldes (Lit) is 49. Rock singer Rob Thomas (Matchbox Twenty) is 49. Former NFL quarterback Drew Bledsoe is 49. Actor Danai Gurira is 43. Actor Matt Barr is 37. Actor Stephanie Leonidas is 37. Actor Jake Lacy is 35. Actor Tiffany Thornton is 35. Actor Brett Dier is 31. Actor Freddie Highmore is 29.