

# Groton Daily Independent

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# Thank You!

**A special Thank you to all  
who remember our  
60th Anniversary with cards,  
letters, gifts and calls.  
It was greatly appreciated!**  
*Over and Darlene Finnesand*

## Upcoming Schedule

**Monday, Feb. 22:** Boys Basketball hosts Warner with C game (Bob & Vicki Walter) at 5 p.m. followed by JV (Kent & Darcy Muller) and varsity.

**Tuesday, Feb. 23:** GBB Region: Groton Area hosts Milbank, 7 p.m.



## **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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The Region 1B Wrestling Tournament held in Groton was livestreamed on GDLIVE.COM throughout the whole day.

The sponsors of the event are listed on the left below.

We have videos of some of the Groton matches listed below right.

## **GDILIVE.COM Sponsors**

Weismantel Agency  
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John Sieh Agency  
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Bierman Farm Service  
Groton Vet Clinic  
S & S Lumber

J. Simon Photography  
Olive Grove  
Doug Abeln Seed Co  
Jerrie Vedvei  
Bahr Spray Foam  
Harry Implement

## **Professional Management Services**

Ken's Food Fair  
Milbrandt Enterprises Inc.  
Jungle Lanes & Lounge  
SD Army National Guard with Brent Wienk

## **Groton Videos Archived**

Adrian Knutson vs.  
Connor Logan, Sioux Valley

Christian Ehresmann vs.  
Boe Iverson, Sisseton

Christian Ehresmann vs.  
Keaton Rohlfs, Redfield Area

Christian Ehresmann vs.  
Lincoln Stowe, Potter County  
(3rd place match)

Cole Bisbee vs.  
Dylan Whitley, Redfield Area

Cole Bisbee vs.  
Easton Steinbach,  
Warner/Northwestern  
(3rd place match)

Cole Bisbee vs. Mason Shultz, Sisseton

Dragr Monson vs. Ian Metz, Sisseton

Dragr Monson vs. Mason Whitley,  
Redfield Area (1st place match)

Korbin Kucker vs.  
Chase Yellowhawk, Sully Buttes

Lane Krueger vs. Sean Sombke,  
Redfield (1st place match)

Lane Krueger vs. Michael Stevenson,  
Hamlin/Castlewood



## Kate's Confections puts smiles on people

by Dorene Nelson

Kate's Confections, owned by Katie Kesterson, is one of the newest additions to Groton's Main Street. In spite of the COVID pandemic, there has been growth and new business, including Next Level Nutrition, owned by Ashley Bentz; Kate's Confections, and soon-to-open Beauty Brew Boutique, owned by Carla Tracy and Kassie Dunbar.

Katie Kesterson, originally from Texas, is especially glad to be in South Dakota during this winter. "I don't really mind the cold," Kesterson admitted, "and it's better than having all of the weather-related issues now happening in Texas!"

"I lived in Groton before and worked for about nine months as the Director of Nursing at the nursing home," she explained. "I moved back to Texas for a while and then came back here, deciding to attend grad school to become a Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner (PMHNP)."

"I'm taking my classes online from Minneapolis," Kesterson stated. "I receive my assignments and the accompanying readings as well as have the opportunity to talk with my professors and classmates, all while here in Groton."

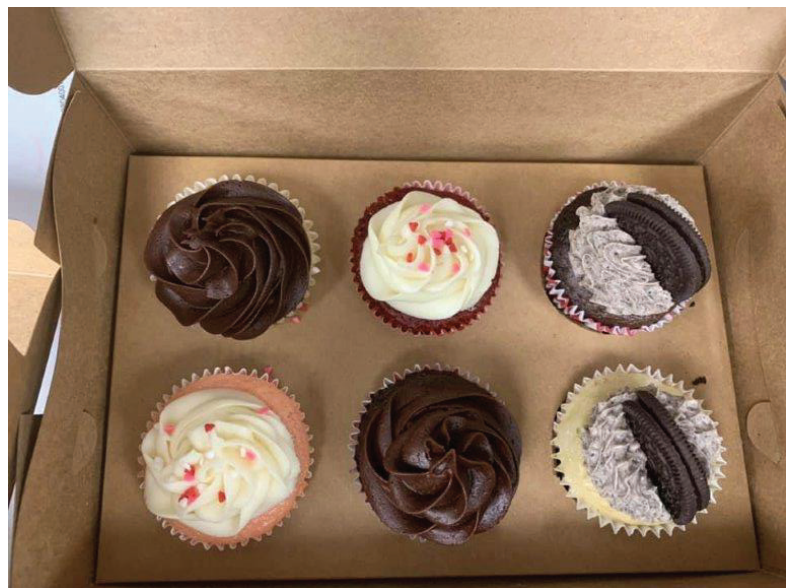
"I should finish my degree in November," she said. "When I've graduated, I hope to set up telehealth care for clients. This can be done in 36 states who have a compact licensure rule that makes this possible."

"Being able to offer my services online is especially important now during COVID and at other times of



**Katie Kesterson is busy mixing up a batch of cupcakes in the kitchen of Kate's Confections.**

(Photo by Dorene Nelson)



**A Valentine cookie and a collection of cupcakes are featured above made by Kate's Confections.** (Photos by Dorene Nelson)



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**Katie Kesterson is busy frosting an order of cupcakes.** (Photo by

Dorene Nelson)

crisis in people's lives," Kesterson explained. "Mental health services, in great need and demand, are not in abundance in the Midwest."

"In order for me to finish my graduate classes and run a business as well as being a mother to my three children does keep me very busy," she chuckled. "I have two boys, ages 11 and 8, and a 6 year-old daughter."

"Krystina McCollum, my best friend for over 20 years, is my baker and helps to keep me sane when the orders come in faster than I can count!" Kesterson admitted.

"I love to bake and cook and enjoy making people happy with my creations," she smiled. "I learned the skill of cake decorating by watching youtube and practicing, practicing, practicing!"

"A lot of what I did at first was the result of trial and error," Kesterson stated. "When my first customers came to pick up their orders, I always reassured them by saying: 'If nothing else, it tastes great!'"

"I have a large oven that allows me to bake at least 28 cakes at once," she explained. "Even with the oven full, the baking time for each item is not affected."

"When the cakes are baked and cooled, I freeze them in order to try to accommodate everyone," Kesterson said. "My favorite thing to do is decorating the cakes, cookies, and other creations, and my goal is to accommodate every request for baked goods and make people smile!"

## SENIOR MEALS PROGRAM

MARCH 2021

month/year

SITE: GROTON / CONDE

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
1 Beef Tips w/ Gravy Noodles Lettuce Salad w/ Dressing Fruit Whole Wheat Bread	2 DRI-54 BBQ Chicken Baked Potato w/S.Cream Carrots Applesauce Chocolate Cake Whole Wheat Bread	3 DRI-33 Chili Cornbread Coleslaw Lime Pear Jello	4 DRI-61 Roast Pork Mashed Potatoes/Gravy Tomato Spoon Salad Carrot Bar Whole Wheat Bread	5 DRI-9 Baked Fish AuGratin Potatoes 3-Bean Salad Blueberry Cobbler Whole Wheat Bread
8 DRI-23 Meatballs Mashed Potatoes/Gravy Carrots Mixed Fruit Whole Wheat Bread	9 NEW Ginger Pork Chop Baked Potato / S. Cream Mixed Vegetables Peaches Whole Wheat Bread	10 NEW Parmesan Chicken Potato Wedges Peas Fruit Whole Wheat Bread	11 DRI-3 Turkey & Dressing Mashed Potatoes/Gravy Broccoli Cranberry Sauce Pumpkin Bar w/Topping Whole Wheat Bread	12 DRI-32 Goulash Green Beans Apple Crisp Whole Wheat Bread
15 DRI-59 Turkey Chow Mein Rice and Chow Mein Noodles Broccoli Waldorf Salad Whole Wheat Bread	16 DRI-6 Meatloaf Baked Potato/S.Cream Creamed Peas Fruited Jello Whole Wheat Bread	17 DRI-40 Ranch Chicken Breast Boiled Potato Green Beans Cake w/Strawberries Whole Wheat Bread	18 DRI-16 Hearty Vegetable Beef Soup Chicken Salad Sandwich Mandarin Oranges Cookie	19 DRI-38 Breaded Codfish Parsley Buttered Potatoes Coleslaw Fruit Cocktail Cake Whole Wheat Bread
22 DRI-66 Sloppy Joe on Wheat Bun Oven Roasted Potatoes Mixed Vegetables Applesauce	23 DRI-19 Baked Chicken Rice Pilaf Cauliflower/Pea Salad Fruit Whole Wheat Bread	24 DRI-11 Swiss Steak Mashed Potatoes Cauliflower Apricots Jello Cake Whole Wheat Bread	25 DRI-24 Turkey Sandwich Macaroni Salad Mandarin Orange Dessert Peanut Butter Cookie	26 DRI-55 Baked Pork Chop AuGratin Potatoes Peas and Carrots Fruit Whole Wheat Bread
29 DRI-34 Spanish Rice/Hamburger Mixed Vegetables Mandarin Oranges Chocolate Pudding Whole Wheat Bread	30 DRI-49 Salisbury Steak Mashed Potatoes/Gravy California Blend Vegetables Fruit Whole Wheat Bread	31 DRI-47 Ham and Bean Soup Egg Salad Sandwich Tomato Spoon Salad Oatmeal Raisin Cookie		

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Before we look forward to how the Vikings can improve in 2021, we need to look back at the 2020 season to see how they fared. Last week we took a look at the offense, so this week we move to the defensive side of the ball.

With Mike Zimmer at the helm, the Vikings are accustomed to having one of the best defenses in the league. However, with a lot of turnover at key positions, along with injuries to some of the biggest stars, the Vikings' defense was one of the worst in the league. The Vikings lost their top three corners from 2019 and replaced them with rookies who didn't have the benefit of a traditional offseason. Starting inexperienced

cornerbacks wouldn't be the end of the world if the team had a productive pass rush, but injuries to star defensive end Danielle Hunter, linebacker Anthony Barr, and Everson Griffen leaving in free agency left the Vikings with zero pass rush. Add it all up, and it was a recipe for disaster for the Vikings in 2020.

The number one goal of a defense is to limit the points opposing offenses score. From 2014 to 2019, the Vikings have allowed:

- 21.4ppg (11th in NFL)
- 18.9ppg (5th)
- 19.2ppg (6th)
- 15.8ppg (1st)
- 21.3ppg (9th)
- 18.9ppg (5th)

As you can see, aside from Zimmer's first year, the Vikings have finished with a top 10 defense every season. In 2020, however, the Vikings allowed 29.7 points per game, which was 29th in the league. It was not ideal, to say the least.

The Vikings also allowed a ton of yards to opposing offenses in 2020. They finished 27th in the NFL, allowing 393.3 yards per game. Breaking that down further, the Vikings allowed 258.8 yards per game through the air (25th) and 134.4 yards per game on the ground (27th). As you can see, the Vikings' defense is the main reason the team failed to reach the playoffs last season.

To explain just how bad the Vikings' pass rush was without Danielle Hunter, Yannick Ngakoue was the team leader in sacks with five. Ngakoue was only with the Vikings for five games before being traded to Baltimore. The Vikings finished 28th in the league with only 23 sacks last season, far below their usual defensive line dominance. One area the Vikings did well in was interceptions, as they were tied for seventh with 15 – although those 15 INTs were produced by just six players, three of which were linebackers.

The defensive MVP for the Vikings in 2020 was Eric Kendricks. With Anthony Barr out for the season because of injury, Kendricks stepped his game up and was a one-man wrecking crew for most of the season. Although he missed five games due to injury, Kendricks still finished the season second on the team with 107 tackles, fifth in tackles for a loss (4.5), fourth in pass deflections (6), and second in interceptions (3). With Kendricks out of the lineup, the Vikings' defense was noticeably worse in nearly every category.

In a year of uncertainty, two rookies stood out on the Vikings' defense. The first was cornerback Cameron Dantzler, who vastly improved as the season progressed. Dantzler was named to Pro Football Focus' All-Rookie team for his performance in 2020. The other player who stood out was defensive end D.J. Wonnum, who was third on the team with three sacks. Wonnum had many excellent plays throughout the season, and he will be competing for a starting role in 2021. Skol!



By Jordan Wright



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## A Vaccine Story for the Ages

Last summer we heard the prediction that by the end of 2020, we would have a safe, effective vaccine to the SARS-CoV-2 virus, which had only been discovered, of course, in December 2019, before causing countless deaths and mayhem in the world as we knew it. I must admit, I was skeptical.



**By Dr. Kelly Evans-Hullinger ~ Prairie Doc® Perspectives**

Early in the pandemic, I learned that the fastest a vaccine had ever been developed was for the mumps virus, an effort which took four years. Even with all possible resources devoted to a COVID-19 vaccine, how could we ever do this in one year? Before I could even ponder this, however, my curiosity took me down the rabbit hole of the mumps vaccine.

Maurice Hilleman, to whom the mumps vaccine is credited, is something of a superhero in the world of virology and vaccine development. Over the course of his career, he was involved in the development of 40 vaccines, including an influenza vaccine in 1957 estimated to have prevented hundreds of thousands of deaths.

One night in 1963, Hilleman's young daughter Jeryl Lynn awoke him from sleep. She was feeling sick. Hilleman saw the telltale swelling of her salivary glands and knew she had the mumps. Mumps was a common childhood ailment, and while most children got mild illness including the classic swollen cheeks, it also caused aseptic meningitis, deafness, and infertility in males. Hilleman put Jeryl Lynn back to bed, then drove to his lab to retrieve a swab and culture media. He returned and awoke young Jeryl from her slumber to swab her mouth.

Over the next four years Hilleman cultured and tested the Jeryl Lynn strain of the mumps virus until it was safe enough to administer without the risk of illness but still effective in generating an immune response against a normal mumps virus. Jeryl Lynn was present when her younger sister Kirsten was publicly immunized with the new mumps vaccine as a small child. As a result of Hilleman's vaccine, the United States now has only about 200 cases of mumps per year, compared to 200,000 per year before the vaccine.

Back to that COVID-19 vaccine. Well, my timeline skepticism was unwarranted. In December 2020, data published on two separate vaccines using mRNA technology showed without ambiguity that we did have safe, effective vaccines just one year from the start of this pandemic. How so quickly? We can give credit to a modern technology being ready for this problem and the intellectual weight of thousands of scientists around the world. I think even Maurice Hilleman, the father of modern vaccines himself, would be impressed.

Kelly Evans-Hullinger, M.D. is part of The Prairie Doc® team of physicians and currently practices internal medicine in Brookings, South Dakota. For free and easy access to the entire Prairie Doc® library, visit [www.prairedoc.org](http://www.prairedoc.org) and follow Prairie Doc® on Facebook featuring On Call with the Prairie Doc® a medical Q&A show streaming on Facebook and broadcast on SDPB most Thursdays at 7 p.m. central.



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## Glimpses From Greenfield 2021-Week 6

Week 6 was a whole new experience for me! I learned from the Department of Health that I had been listed as a closet contact with another legislator who had tested positive for COVID. Therefore, I was told I should quarantine for 10 days. Thankfully, our workweek was an unprecedented 3-day'er, so I only had to work from home and attend all my meetings via Microsoft Teams for a relatively short time. After all was said-and-done, I can honestly say I hope to never have to do that again! It was really weird having bills up in certain committees during the appropriations time-slot and to have to text back-and-forth. "I'm in Approps. When my bill is getting close, let me know..." "Oh, no! I don't have an invitation to join your committee yet..." "OK, staff has sent you one..." "Are you ready? We're just finishing up the bill before yours..." 45 minutes later... "Good morning, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee..." I guess in many regards, working from home is not terribly dissimilar from being there in person. It's a lot of rolling with the punches and hurrying up and waiting.

In addition to Appropriations meetings beginning at 7:30, 7:00, and 6:45 this week, I had to appear before committees three different times to pitch two bills. I have covered them quite a bit in previous articles, but the moisture- and protein-meter bill went down in committee 4-2. In 2018, the industry's lobbyists brought a hoghouse amendment to me they said they would support, and the bill passed 35-0 on the Senate floor. Then, they went to the House prime sponsor and told him THEIR language was not workable and they got him to agree to try to kill the bill. In the end, this year I have had some very good conversations with people on both sides. As I said in committee, I am not accusing anybody of anything. I do not have a dog in the fight, but several of my constituents do. My ultimate question is what is the appropriate role of the Department of Public Safety's Division of Weights and Measures? They worry whether the scales at grocery stores read accurately when fractions of a cent on a bag of grapes or a bunch of bananas are at stake, and they worry about gas pumps being metered properly when a thousandth or two of a gallon of gas is a stake. Yet, when it comes to things of a grand scale, they say they do not have a role in ensuring accuracy or integrity for all those concerned. I would note that I absolutely believe a grain buyer from within the district when he tells me they are very serious about making sure their devices are accurate and they are tested regularly. But I've also seen invoices showing differences that cause producers to ask questions. And our Division of Weights and Measures sits idly by and TESTIFIES AGAINST THIS TYPE OF BILL citing concerns over costs they would incur. Of course, as with all bureaucrats, they heard my pitch and my plea for helping to find a better road forward, and they said, "Would you consider making it a summer study? Last year, we agreed to do a summer study that never got funded, but we were willing to work on it." And four sessions ago? At least one of their employees acknowledged privately that they "should be doing this" even if their official position was one of neutrality. I'm thinking it's time to maybe consider privatizing that whole operation. If it works when potentially hundreds of thousands-to-millions of dollars are at risk one way or the other, grapes and apples and bananas could be treated similarly.

On a happier note, SB 128 started out as a retread of a bill Rep. Spencer Gosch and I brought last year. And I am here to tell you Dr. Dan Swartos from the SD High School Activities Association (SDHSAA) proved himself to be a man of honor as I worked with him. He listened. He heard. He contemplated. And he provided feedback. He began as an opponent of SB 128. As I had worked on the bill prior to the first hearing, I brought some new language forth for the first committee hearing. The committee, likewise, heard the plea from those who testified. I was very appreciative of their willingness to listen with open minds. At this point, SB 128 has been amended twice at my request. The most recent iteration of the bill was the result of my give-and-take with Dr. Swartos. He was nothing but a gentleman as he provided me with feedback after the first committee hearing. The Education Committee amended the bill as we had asked and they passed it out unanimously. Very simply, as I have mentioned before, this bill seeks to ensure that all South Dakota journalism enterprises have free and equal access to all activities at our public schools prior to the state tournaments, at which time, the SDHSAA and SDPB (or whoever has the

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bid) have an exclusive contract and may establish the parameters for secondary broadcasts.

A few brief mentions of bills that were up for debate on the Senate floor:

SB 111 seeks to reduce the fee for an enhanced permits to carry concealed weapons. The fee is \$100, but this would reduce it to \$60. Currently, it is a \$50/\$50 split between the state and county. This would reduce the state's share to \$10, while maintaining the county's \$50 share. The bill prevailed, 35-0.

SB 177 would change elements regarding homeschooling. It would not longer require parents to state once a year that they intend to homeschool, rather it assumes they will continue doing so. It removes the periodic testing requirement because, as we have learned, it costs \$40,000 to administer the tests to homeschoolers, but there is no follow-up from either the school district or the state. It is just a hoop to jump through at this point. And finally, it allows home-schooled students to participate in athletics, fine arts and other extra- or co-curricular activities within a school district. This has been hotly debated. I rather expect it to be amended on the House side, but I will tell you that the SDHSAA voiced their concerns about the bill as drafted, and they have since stood down in their opposition, as they worked out several tweaks that satisfied many of their issues. The bill passed, 21-14.

SB 106 dealt with an effort to repeal an exemption regarding perpetual care cemeteries. While 99% of the public does not know what this is getting at, it was a powerful example of the South Dakota Funeral Directors' Assn. and other constituents coming together to defeat a bill. Near as I can tell, this would have affected only a minuscule handful of cemeteries, but those who would've been affected would have really felt the pinch. The bill failed on a vote of 13-22.

SB 117 said that if the Governor, OR THE LEGISLATURE, were to declare a housing emergency exists, then the South Dakota Housing Development Authority (SDHDA) SHALL administer no-interest loans to those who were affected. This goes to the sinkhole in the Black Hills. I sympathize with the people who were affected by that mine collapse. However, disasters have never been declared by the legislature, and if this bill had passed, it would have obligated funds of the SDHDA, which would have immediately jeopardized their AAA-bond rating. That could've meant millions of dollars in increased bond-repayments to public entities all across the state. It was a really, really well-intentioned bill that had broad and dire ramifications. The bill was killed, 11-24.

As you can see from the votes above, issues are becoming more contentious. This week marks cross-over week, so we will be working extra-long-and-hard to get through all our business and get bills out of their house of origin, whether that means they are killed or they move on in the process.

Thank you for reading, and I wish you and yours abundant blessings!

Brock

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## Region 1A Girls Basketball Tournament

### #1 Aberdeen Roncalli

Score:

Date: 2/25/21  
Time: 7:00 PM  
Site: Roncalli

Score:

SODAK 16 QUALIFIER

---

### #4 Sisseton

Score:

Date: 2/23/21  
Time: 7:00 PM  
Site: Sisseton

Score:

### #5 Webster Area

### #2 Redfield

Score:

Date: 2/23/21  
Time: 6:30 PM  
Site: Redfield

Score:

### #7 Tiospa Zina

Score:

Date: 2/25/21  
Time: 7:00 PM  
Site: TBA

Score:

SODAK 16 QUALIFIER

---

### #3 Groton Area

Score:

Date: 2/23/21  
Time: 7:00 PM  
Site: Groton Area

Score:

### #6 Milbank

School	Seed Pts.
Aberdeen Roncalli	45.000
Redfield	41.750
Groton Area	40.550
Sisseton	40.450
Webster Area	39.600
Milbank	37.650
Tiospa Zina	35.059



## No. 2 Men Fall To MSU Moorhead, Wolves Look to the Postseason

Aberdeen, S.D. – The No. 2 Northern State University men's basketball team dropped their first contest of 2021 in the regular season finale this afternoon. The Wolves were efficient offensively and mounted a comeback in each half, however were unable to make the defensive stops necessary to seal the win. Despite the loss, Northern State wins their fourth straight NSIC North Division Championship.

### THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 86, MSUM 93

Records: NSU 15-1 (13-1 NSIC), MSUM 9-3 (9-1 NSIC)

Attendance: 1408

### HOW IT HAPPENED

- MSU Moorhead led for a majority of the first half, however the Wolves stormed back from an 8-point deficit to take the lead, out-scoring the Dragons 12-0 in the final four minutes
- Northern lengthened their lead to as much as nine in the opening minutes of the second half, however MSUM was not giving in
- The Dragons rallied back taking their final lead of the game with 11:17 to play and extending that by 13 at the 8:34 mark
- The Wolves came within four, however were unable to break through the Moorhead attack
- Northern shot 50.8% from the floor, 48.3% from the 3-point line, and 54.5% from the foul line in the game
- They tallied 28 rebounds, 17 assists, 14 made 3-pointers, eight blocks, and one steal; notching 34 points in the paint, 15 points off the bench, and 15 second chance points
- Four Wolves scored in double figures, including senior Andrew Kallman who dropped a career high 22 in his final regular season game from Wachs Arena

### NORTHERN STATE STATISTICAL STANDOUTS

- Parker Fox: 23 points, 75.0 FG%, 9 rebounds, 5 assists, 3 blocks
- Andrew Kallman: 22 points (career high), 75.0 3-pt FG%, 4 rebounds, 3 assists, 2 blocks
- Mason Stark: 15 points, 4 rebounds, 3 assists, 2 blocks
- Jordan Belka: 12 points, 50.0 FG%, 6 rebounds

### UP NEXT

Northern State will now await their opponent for the opening round of the NSIC/Sanford Health Men's Basketball Tournament which kicks off next Thursday, February 25. The Wolves earned the first seed in the North Division and will face the fourth seed from the south at 4 p.m. from the Sanford Pentagon. Live video, stat, and audio links are available on the men's basketball schedule on [nsuwolves.com](http://nsuwolves.com).

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## Northern State Holds on for Last Second Victory over MSU Moorhead

Aberdeen, S.D. – The Northern State women’s basketball team defeated Minnesota State University Moorhead with a nail biting performance to end their season.

### THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 63, MSUM 62

Records: NSU 5-9 (5-9 NSIC), MSUM 7-5 (6-4 NSIC)

Attendance: 160

### HOW IT HAPPENED

- Northern recorded 12 points in the first, 14 points in the second, 18 points in the third, and 19 points in the fourth
- The Wolves struggled in the first quarter but out-scored Moorhead in the last three quarters by a score of 51-42
- NSU shot 42.2 % from the field, 41.2 % from the three point line, and 90.9% from the free throw line
- The Wolves contributed with a total of 34 rebounds, nine assists, and three blocks; and out-rebounded the Dragons by seven
- Northern tallied 12 points off the bench, as well as 28 points in the paint and 15 points from the Dragons turnovers
- The two teams traded the lead as time dwindled down in the fourth and Northern had the ball with under 0.20 to play
- Rianna Fillipi drove the lane and sealed the Wolves victory on a layup with 12 seconds remaining and the Wolves held the Dragons on their final offensive possession of the contest

### NORTHERN STATE STATISTICAL STANDOUTS

- Lexi Wadsworth: 19 points, 57.1 3PT%, 9 rebounds
- Haley Johnson: 15 points, 58.3 FG%, 7 rebounds
- Rianna Fillipi: 9 points, 6 rebounds, 4 assists
- Ellie Gess: 8 points, 60.0 FG%, 3 assists

### KRUEGER’S TAKE

“Gutsy team win - we hit the glass hard and gave ourselves a chance. Big defensive stops and rebounds down the stretch. Proud of this team and their perseverance.”

### UP NEXT

Northern State concludes the 2021 season with a 5-9 record overall and will graduate four seniors in Alayna Johnson, Joie Spier, Kendall Kohler, and Avery Terwilliger.



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## No. 2 Men's Basketball Thrills from Wachs Arena in Win over MSUM

Aberdeen, S.D. – It was a career night for multiple members of the No. 2 Northern State University men's basketball team in their win over MSU Moorhead. Parker Fox dropped a career high 39 points, while Mason Stark dished out a career high nine assists and became the 58th member of the 1,000 point club.

### THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 90, MSUM 83

Records: NSU 15-0 (13-0 NSIC), MSUM 8-3 (8-1 NSIC)

Attendance: 1492

### HOW IT HAPPENED

- Northern State produced a strong two halves of basketball in their most contested game of the season scoring 45 points in each frame
- The Wolves were efficient, shooting 56.1% from the floor and 45.5% from beyond the arc
- NSU tied their single season high of 58 points in the paint and added 17 fast break points, 11 second chance points, and ten points off turnovers
- The bench chipped in 11, led by Roko Dominovic with 7 points, as well as a career high four blocks
- Defensively, Northern held Moorhead below their season averages as the Dragons shot 41.5% from the floor and 38.9% from the 3-point line
- Four Wolves scored in double figures and tallied a minimum of five rebounds, as the team out-rebounded their opponents 40-35

### NORTHERN STATE STATISTICAL STANDOUTS

- Parker Fox: 39 points (career high), 66.7 FG%, 16 rebounds, 4 blocks, 2 assists, 2 steals
- Tommy Chatman: 13 points, 54.5 FG%, 5 rebounds, 1 assist
- Mason Stark: 12 points, 9 assists (career high), 5 rebounds, 2 steals, 1 block
- Andrew Kallman: 12 points, 71.4 FG%, 6 rebounds, 3 assists, 1 block
- Roko Dominovic: 7 points, 4 blocks (career high), 3 rebounds, 2 assists, 1 steal

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## Northern State Drops Road Contest to MSU Moorhead

Moorhead, Minn. – The Northern State women’s basketball team was unable to defeat MSU Moorhead Friday night, falling 51-63 on the road. Despite being a 2-point game at the half the Wolves could not find a groove to mount a comeback.

### THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 51, MSUM 63

Records: NSU 4-9 (4-9NSIC), MSUM 7-4 (6-3 NSIC)

Attendance: 160

### HOW IT HAPPENED

- Northern tallied 13 points in the first quarter, 15 points in the second quarter, 14 points in the third quarter, and 9 points in the fourth quarter
- The Wolves out-scored the Dragons, 15-12 in the second, shooting 40.0% from the field
- Joie Spier led the team with 13 points, while Rianna Fillipi recorded a team high 11 rebounds
- NSU shot 37.0% from the field, 25.0 % from the 3-point line, and 77.8% from the free throw line
- Defensively, they held MSUM to under 40.0% from the floor and beyond the arc, forcing 12 turnovers
- The Wolves notched 30 rebounds, nine steals, four made 3-pointers, and two blocks in the game
- Northern tallied a total of 20 points off the bench and added 22 points in the paint

### NORTHERN STATE STATISTICAL STANDOUTS

- Joie Spier: 13 points, 85.7 FG%, 3 rebounds, 2 steals
- Rianna Fillipi: 9 points, 11 rebounds, 2 steals
- Laurie Rogers: 8 points, 100.0 FT%, 1 block

### KRUEGER’S TAKE

“Fifteen offensive rebounds is simply too many – hard to beat anyone when you give them that many second chances. We went to a zone for a few possessions and they hit three 3-pointers – bad move as a coach.”

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## Lana's Annals: Week 6, South Dakota House of Representatives

Hello to all. This week was really a new experience; in lieu of several House members testing positive for Covid and because I was in direct contact with some of them in committee, I remained quarantined at home and did my work by remote. Several others also did the same. While a relatively simple procedure, it just was not as effective as being present. And yes, I was wearing a mask.

Our local government committee heard SB81. This bill allowed for the flying of not only an American flag but also an additional patriotic flag on private property. This may seem like a no brainer but came up based on a homeowners covenant that was in place in southeastern South Dakota. We had to make a choice: put forth a bill to override the covenant or keep the status quo. We decided to pass the bill in favor of displaying the patriotic flag. I want to mention that this should be a careful lesson: always when buying property, especially in a housing development. One should read about existing covenants, such as no flags, no sheds, a limit on trees, etc. Also if covenants do exist, how many years are they in force or are they in perpetuity. It would save a lot of trouble.

Also in the aforementioned meeting, we heard HB1238, which would allow y multi-jurisdictional totalizer hubs to operate in our state and conduct peri-mutuel horse and dog racing. Now I want to mention that I am not against people enjoying this type of entertainment; however, I had questions. Could these "hubs" operate from outside the country? The answer was affirmative. What would be in place to help regulate them, more specifically, did we have assurance of them being bonded. The answer was we would have no jurisdiction (obviously not). Those were red flags and must have been for others as well. We sent the bill to the 41st day, which means it is defeated.

Our education committee took up HB1241, to provide participation in a parent program upon filing for divorce. This was a mandate that before a divorce is granted, a four hour class has to be taken which would teach parents how to relate to their children to make the divorce transition easier for them. We were told that a couple of circuits in the state already has this in place. When asked about funding of it, I was told it runs from 5.00 to 25.00 per person and that Catholic Services in two circuits was one benevolent organization that helped defray the costs if needed. It then became unclear where the funding would come from in the other areas. At one point, it was stated that the state would probably receive a request for this funding.. No! We as a state do not have to get into the middle of divorce counseling costs. When people divorce, they have lawyers who help them work out details, of which this should be one. How many other people have to have a "finger in the pie?" Along with that, if the state was providing funds, the charges may increase. I asked a remote testifier (lawyer) what would happen if people refused to do this program. She said that they would not then be able to get a divorce. Wrong answer. The bill did pass, but I voted against it for reasons stated.

HB1254 prohibits preferential treatment in higher education employment. Simply put, no college employee can be given unequal treatment, either positive or negative, with respect to ideological, political, sectarian opinions, perspectives, or activities. All in all, departments of higher education systems should not have a predisposed agenda telling other employees how to think or what to believe. No employee should be incentivized or punished due to bias within departments.. I thought this is a good bill as we do not need this type of conflict to continue on our campuses. Others must have agreed and passed out of committee unanimously. I could have used the option to put it on consent; however, this would have been foolish as someone would have pulled the bill for further discussion on the House floor.

On the floor HB1140 proved to be controversial. It was to restrict conservation officers from entering private land without permission. I received mega e-mails..vote for this bill; it promotes property rights, which is very important. Then.. Do not vote for this; allow the officers to do their jobs. Allow them to conduct compliance checks.Back and forth ... When all was said and done, I voted against it. One of the letters that compelled me to cast a nay vote was from a former west river law enforcement officer who said he worked on joint operations with conservation officers and sometimes the land was owned by people who did not reside in the vicinity. Therefore to contact owners and maybe not be able to do



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so would have ruined the entire operation (hunting, drugs, other illegal activities). The bill did pass 41-28 so now it goes to a Senate committee for review. It is always interesting how there many times are 2 powerful sides to a bill and a lot to consider. Sometimes we get it right, sometimes not. It does prompt research, and with that, we acquire more knowledge on a subject for "next time.."

With that, I want to thank all of you who braved the cold weather to attend one of two Cracker Barrels (Clark and Refield) on President's Day. We have another one coming up on March 6 at NSU, Johnson Fine Arts Center in Aberdeen at 10 A.M. This has been an uncommon year for organization of and attendance at these functions, and we understand. Until next week, stay in the loop as to what we are doing by getting on to our South Dakota Legislative Irc site. Also a big thank you to Emily Hervi, Willow Lake, who served as a House Page. Great job!

Respectfully,

Rep. Lana Greenfield

[lane.greenfield@sdlegislature.gov](mailto:lane.greenfield@sdlegislature.gov)

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## Democratic Leaders Column from Rep. Jamie Smith and Sen. Troy Heinert— Week 6

PIERRE, SD (February 19, 2021) – Greetings from Pierre! The sixth week of the legislative session was short, but Democrats worked hard to bring bills aimed at increasing transparency and accountability in our state government. We also continue to work on issues that solve real problems and help people while we fight against bills that seem to be primarily political. Concerns about COVID in the Capitol remained high as well, prompting several house and senate members to participate remotely this week.

Two bills that received a lot of press attention this week were about government transparency. SB 153 would have outlined quarterly reporting requirements for the Department of Transportation's airplane fleet to the Joint Committee on Appropriations. SB 165 would amend state law by clarifying that certain expenditures related to providing security to the governor are not exempt from full disclosure.

"We have a high-profile governor, and that's fine," said Heinert, who authored SB 153. "But I would challenge anyone critical of our attempts to get this information to find out what is being reported. Plenty of journalists have requested details about the governor's travel while campaigning across the country for other candidates and those requests have been denied. This bill was about common-sense values that our constituents have asked for, and it's pretty obvious what is state business and what is political or personal. We think the people of South Dakota should get to see that information, but right now, we don't know."

Both SB 153 and SB 165 were voted down in their respective committees this week. Democrats have only 3 senate members and 8 house members, which means every committee in the South Dakota legislature holds a Republican majority. Finding common ground with folks across the aisle continues to be a challenge for Democrats this year, and that has become especially challenging due to COVID.

"We're told to practice personal responsibility," said House Minority Leader Jamie Smith. "The easiest thing to do is wear a mask and get tested, but when the people around you aren't taking the simplest precautions it makes our work here more difficult. This means a few of our house members are working remotely and missing those conversations that take place outside of the committee rooms."

"I worry about the staff at the Capitol as well as folks in the Pierre and Fort Pierre communities, who graciously open their hospitality to us," said Heinert. "I'm from a community that takes this seriously, and I'm a survivor of COVID, so I don't want to inflict a harmful virus on people here just doing their jobs. On the senate side we are respectful to distance, and wear masks, but with at least eight known cases in the house, it's disappointing to see that lack of personal responsibility."

Despite this, Democratic House and Senate members have enjoyed some success with the bills they have brought to committees. Representative Erin Healy's bill, HB 1196, to provide free tuition and fees to visually impaired residents for courses not subsidized by the state general fund, heard testimony in Senate Education. It passed unanimously and will move to the Senate floor. Senator Red Dawn Foster's bill, SB 166, to revise provisions regarding hate crimes and extend them to include LGBTQ+ Native Two-Spirit and people with disabilities, passed in Senate Judiciary and will be heard on the Senate floor.

"Democrats are working on bills that are about real issues our neighbors are facing and real problems that we can help them solve," says Smith. "We're proud of the work our representatives are doing to get past some of the ideological differences and find common sense solutions for South Dakotans. Some of the bills we've seen from Republicans seemed aimed at scoring political points, like the bills regarding abortion and reporting on embryos. We'd like to see health care solutions for people with disabilities who

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are struggling right now, and solutions to problems happening right now. That's why we're here."

-MORE-

In some cases, taking care of people now means looking to South Dakota's past. This week, Senator Heinert's resolution to rescind the Medals of Honor given to US soldiers for their involvement in Wounded Knee was heard in Senate Military and Veterans Affairs. The resolution was amended to open an investigation into the awards and will move to the senate floor.

"We can't change history, but we can right some wrongs, and that's what this resolution will do," said Heinert. "Resolutions like this are meant to pass to our South Dakota delegation to take action, and I had the chance to speak with Representative Johnson this week and he seems open to looking at it."

Democrats are also looking to the future with regard to Amendment A (recreational marijuana) and IM 26 (medical marijuana), and remain steadfast in respecting the will of the voters on these measures. Our representatives heard passionate, emotional testimony regarding the need for medical marijuana and we think there has been enough time to examine the process, hire consultants, and implement it.

"70% of the people were clear in their intention for these measures at the ballot box," said Heinert. "Our role is to institute the will of the people. When Republicans start talking about tax issues and wanting to slow down, it's a distraction. Look at the hemp program. We've almost missed our window to get that started. There is no excuse for not respecting South Dakota voters."

Democrats are here to work for the people, to work for you. We want to hear from you! Please contact us to share your questions or concerns about the current session. Our caucus meetings have always been open to the public each day the hour before floor session. We are observing COVID mitigation practices in place in the Capitol. If you are visiting, plan to allow extra time for screening at the entrance and wear a mask to keep you and others safe. Your voice matters to us, and we believe that together, we can create a South Dakota that works for all of us.

Representative Jamie Smith, [Jamie.Smith@sdlegislature.gov](mailto:Jamie.Smith@sdlegislature.gov)  
Senator Troy Heinert, [Troy.Heinert@sdlegislature.gov](mailto:Troy.Heinert@sdlegislature.gov)

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## Groton boys claim share of NEC title; Lady Tigers lock up third seed



**Cade Larson**

(Photo by Benjamin Higgins)

The Groton Area boys have at least a share of the Northeast Conference title with a 67-56 win over Deuel on Friday. The last time Groton won the NEC title was back in 1995. Groton could get the title outright if Tiospa Zina would beat Clark/Willow Lake and then Sisseton would beat Tiospa Zina. As of right now, there is a three-way tie, all with two losses.

Groton Area never trailed as the Cardinals never threatened as the Tigers led at the quarterstops at 22-12, 33-24 and 53-37.

Groton Area made 24 of 42 two-pointers for 59 percent, three of 12 three-pointers for 25 percent (all three by one Lane Tietz), 10 of 10 free throws for 100 percent, had 27

rebounds, 15 turnovers, 17 assists, 10 steals and 15 fouls.

Tietz led the Tigers with 17 points, three rebounds, eight assists and four steals. Jacob Zak had 16 points, six rebounds, four assists and two steals. Jacob Zak had 16 points, six rebounds, four assists and two steals. Jayden Zak had 10 points, three rebounds, one assist and one steal. Tristan Traphagen had eight points, two rebounds, two assists and one steal. Tate Larson had eight points, 10 rebounds, one assist and one steal. Cole Simon had six points and one rebound. Wyatt Hearnen had two points and one steal. Isaac Smith had one rebound and one assist and Lucas Simon had one rebound.

Deuel made 19 of 40 field goals for 48 percent, 11 of 16 free throws for 69 percent, had 13 team fouls and 18 turnovers. Tanner Preheim led the Cardinals with 10 points followed by Nathan Love with nine, Cooper Schiernbeck, Trey Maaland and Zane Bingham each had eight points, Layton Eide had six and Braydon Simon added two points.

### Boys NEC Standings

Groton	8-2
Clark/Willow Lake	7-2
Tiospa Zina	6-2
Sisseton	5-3
Milbank	5-4
Roncalli	5-4
Hamlin	7-3
Redfield	5-4
Deuel	2-8
Webster	1-9
Britton-Hecla	0-10



**Brooke Gengerke**

(Photo by Benjamin Higgins)



**Allyssa Locke**

(Photo by Benjamin Higgins)



**Lane Tietz**

(Photo by Benjamin Higgins)



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Meanwhile the Lady Tigers keep their number three position in the region and will host Milbank in the first round on Tuesday as Groton Area defeated Deuel, 55-30. Groton Area led at the quarter stops at 18-4, 26-14 and 43-21.

Groton Area made 18 of 36 two-pointers for 50 percent, six of 19 three-pointers for 32 percent (2 by Gracie Traphagen, 2 by Alyssa Thayler, one by Kenzie McInerney and one by Anna Fjeldheim), and made one of three free throws for 33 percent. The Tigers had 37 rebounds, five turnovers, 16 assists, eight steals and eight team fouls.



**Taylor Diegel**  
(Photo by Benjamin Higgins)



**Cole Simon**  
(Photo by Benjamin Higgins)



**Wyatt Hearnen**  
(Photo by Benjamin Higgins)

Deuel made 12 of 47 field goals for 26 percent, three of five in free throws for 60 percent, had eight fouls and eight turnovers.

Thaler led the Tigers with 21 points and five rebounds. Traphagen had a double-double night with 12 points, 11 rebounds and two assists. Sydney Leicht had six points, two rebounds, one assist and two steals. McInerney had five points, one rebound, two assists and three steals. Brooke Gengerke had four points, seven rebounds and three assists. Allyssa Locke had four points, five rebounds, seven assists and one steal. Anna Fjeldheim had three points. Aspen Johnson had two rebounds. Jaedyn Penning had three rebounds. Emma Schinkel had one rebound and Jerica Locke had one assist and two steals.



**Jerica Locke**  
(Photo by Benjamin Higgins)



**Jacob Zak**  
(Photo by Benjamin Higgins)

Deuel was led by Haley Winter with 11 points while Josie Andersen had 10, Harley Hennings six, Taylor Bauman two and Jalyn Bury added one point.

Both varsity games were 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,



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S.D. Army National Guard, John Sieh Agency, Groton Vet Clinic, Blocker Construction, Thunder Seed with John Wheeting, Milbrandt Enterprises, Inc. Greg Kjellsen was a guest commentator.

The boys junior varsity team won, 50-41. Deuel had a 19-17 lead after the first quarter and Groton Are had a 21-19 lead at half time and a 40-29 lead after three quarters. Craig and Tasha Dunker sponsored the livestream on GDILIVE.COM. Wyatt Hearnen had 14 points, Teylor Diegel 11, Cole Simon eight, Logan Ringgenberg seven, Colby Dunker three and Favian Sanchez and Jackson Cogley each had two.

The Lady Tigers won the junior varsity game, 33-11. Bob and Genni Neisen of Mahnomon, Minn, grandparents of Emily Clark, sponsored the broadcast on GDLIVE.COM. Laila Roberts had four points, Jerica Locke and Sydney Leicht each had three while adding two points apiece were Elizabeth Fliesh, Faith Traphagen, Brooklyn Hansen, Kennedy Hansen, Sara Menzia, Emily Clark and Jaedyn Penning.

Charlie Frost did the play-by-play action of both junior varsity games.

- Paul Kosel



**Sydney Leicht**  
(Photo by Benjamin Higgins)



**Jayden Zak**  
**Tristan Traphagen setting screen**  
(Photo by Benjamin Higgins)



**Sara Menzia**  
(Photo by Benjamin Higgins)

**Warner at Groton Area**  
**Monday, Feb. 22, 2021**  
**C game at 5 p.m.**  
**followed by JV and Varsity**

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**#364 in a series**

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

Everything continues to decrease. While I have no illusions we're out of the woods yet, the lower we push this before these new variants hit broadly across the country, the better place we're going to be. I do not see any events on the near horizon that scare me, depending what the NCAA tournament brings. Looks to me like the planned format for that might reduce the likelihood of ugly transmission as a result. We have held below 80,000 daily new cases every day this week after a spell where we hadn't been that low for 105 days. We did pass 28 million cases this week, but it took well over a week to get there from 27 million. We are now at 28,147,800 cases in the US, 0.2% more than yesterday. There were just 56,700 new case reports today. This is below where we've been running, but this is Sunday, so I think we have some weekend effect there, as well as some temporarily depressed numbers due to the winter storms across a chunk of the country.

Hospitalizations have been declining for over six weeks and are now at less than half our peak from January 7. We have 58,222 people hospitalized with this virus today.

We're down to 12 states and territories in the red zone (from 27 last week), up to 37 in orange (from 25 last week), and six in yellow (up from three). One-week increase in total cases was 641,700 last week and is down to 465,100 this week. Two-week increase was 1,472,000 last week and is down to 1,106,800 this week. I have us at a one-week daily average new-case number of 66,442.9; this is a decline of over 27 percent again this week and is below the summer's peak of 66,692 set on July 19, seven long months ago.

I track 54 states and US territories, including the District of Columbia; and the highest two-week rate of increase in any of them is 12.35%. As with last week, this is in Vermont where case numbers are still very low. Highest per capita rates of increase are in South Carolina, New York, New Jersey, Rhode Island, and North Carolina; all but one of these were among the leaders a week ago.

There were 1270 deaths reported today, a 0.3% increase to 498,650. We are certain to hit the half-million mark by Tuesday. Average daily deaths plummeted this week. Last time we saw numbers like this was November 29. We're at 1928.0 this week. This is the fourteenth consecutive week since spring we've reported over 10,000 deaths, but the first below 15,000 since late November. States with the most per capita deaths over the past week are Delaware, Kansas, Rhode Island, Georgia, Arizona, and Alabama.

We want to be cautious in interpreting declines in new case reports over the past week. While it seems likely we have seen real declines, we have to remember that testing was significantly impacted by the winter storms we saw move through much of the country during that time. Many testing centers were closed, and some states, Texas, for example, did not report new cases for several days at the height of the crisis there. We will also want to remember that vaccination efforts were slowed by the same set of circumstances, and these new highly-transmissible variants probably weren't slowed much at all during this time. A whole lot of vaccine was due to be delivered yesterday as backlogged supplies delayed by the weather shipped. There's hope that states can extend hours at vaccination sites in order to reschedule canceled appointments and get back on track.

Every time I try to do a comprehensive round-up of information on any particular topic, it never fails that something new drops in my lap right after I've finished. Happened again last night after I posted yesterday's update with what was supposed to be a comprehensive guide to vaccination. So here's some vaccination advice I didn't have until after that. This is for people who are due for mammograms soon: It is recommended you schedule your mammogram for before you receive vaccine or delay it until four to six weeks after your second dose. This is not because the X-rays activate the little microchip that is DEFINITELY NOT in the vaccine; it is because the vaccine has been causing swollen lymph nodes on the side of the body where you were injected, and swollen nodes, especially when they're on just one side of the body, is one of the things a mammogram is designed to pick up. Turns out this is an early marker for breast cancer: That shows up in your mammogram, you're going to need further work-up, and if the only reason for the nodes is vaccine, then this seems like a waste of resources. Breast radiologists started noticing an uptick in suspicious-looking nodes shortly after vaccinations got underway and put two and



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two together, alerting the public to the possibility. This issue is, however, not the end of the world; so if you can't reschedule, go ahead with both the vaccination and the mammogram—don't skip either one. No one's going to provide a false diagnosis of breast cancer based on one mammogram alone, so the worst outcome will be that you're going to need more follow-up. It's just best to avoid it if you can, and my guess is that most of the time it will be easy enough to schedule around this.

Interesting note: For folks who argue that these vaccines are dangerous, you might wish to point out to them that, according to Richard Kennedy, professor of medicine at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, and co-director of the Vaccine Research Group, speaking to NPR, "If the vaccine were as dangerous as the disease [Covid-19], we should see 34,000 people dying from the vaccine every day." Spoiler: We are not seeing that. In fact, there have been zero confirmed deaths as a result of these vaccines. So there.

Way back last May, I wrote about a Holocaust survivor, Cornelia Vertenstein, who at 92 was teaching piano to her Denver students through the pandemic using FaceTime. (Story is in my Update #93 posted May 26 at <https://www.facebook.com/marie.schwabmiller/posts/3627506700599043>.) I am sad to report that on February 1 Dr. Vertenstein taught her last lesson; then, not feeling well, arranged a ride to the hospital, where she died on February 12 at the age of 93. She did not have Covid-19. She told her daughter, "If I die, don't be sad. I led a productive life helping children."

The New York Times writer who did the story on her last May ended yesterday's article on her death this way:

"Minutes before her small, plain coffin was lowered into the earth, notes from former students were read. One recalled how Ms. Vertenstein never liked the word 'practice.'

"You do not practice, she would say. You make music.

"She sprinkled lessons everywhere."

I just thought we should note the passing of this extraordinary life.

San Marcos, Texas, about midway between San Antonio and Austin, is home to Texas State University and, since November, 2019, to the restaurant, OMG Seafood. OMG's co-owner Shane Billiot grew up in foster care, so he's seen tough times before. He also has some experience with natural disasters: He was living in Louisiana during the apocalyptic flooding in 2016, and then he managed to move to Houston in time for Hurricane Harvey. Now he's fetched up a little west of there so he could survive an epic winter storm. Some people are just lucky, I guess. Poor guy.

He has another store farther east of Austin in Bryan/College Station, home to Texas A&M University, and he was prepared in both locations for the big Valentine's Day weekend as well as Mardi Gras a few days later. He bought several thousand pounds of crawfish and other supplies for the big rush that happens every year for those events. Then, the restaurants had to close on February 15 due to the winter storm that moved in with sleet, freezing rain, and snow. Roads were closing. Nothing was moving. The next morning it became evident he was not going to be open for quite some time. There were 3500 pounds of crawfish sitting in his coolers, but no customers sitting at his tables. No prospect for customers either. People were just struggling to get through the day—freezing temperatures, streets iced over, no power, no water, no heat. Pure misery. Billiot's past informed his decisions at that point.

He posted a notice to the OMG Seafood Facebook page: "Our power is cutting on and off just like everyone else but our gas still comes on. We are boiling #CRAWFISH and giving it away for #Free. If you need something hot and spicy to eat, come see us. Please travel safely."

And come they did, starting around 10:30 in the morning until OMG ran out of food in both locations around 6:00 pm. These were people who were able to get to the stores on foot, including a whole lot of Texas State students in San Marcos and Texas A&M students in Bryan. Working in an unlit kitchen with propane burners, the cooks boiled crawfish all day long. Billiot told Community Impact he figured he fed well over 1000 people, giving away all the crawfish first and then frying up all of the catfish and handing that out as well—something like \$12,000 worth of food given away to anyone who showed up. He said he'd like to have done it again until the weather improved, but he couldn't: "I don't have anymore crawfish. I don't have anymore food. I gave out all our food."

Why would someone do this? This is from the Facebook page: "Between OMG San Marcos and OMB

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Bryan/College Station, we boiled over 100 sacks of #CRAWFISH and fed as many as we could for free. Difficult times like these is when the people with the means have an obligation to give back. As you may know, I was a foster child growing up. Total strangers opened their homes to me, fed me and gave me shelter. Most of all they showed me LOVE. I hope to always give back LOVE to all who need it as long as God allows me to have a beating heart. I love y'all." That's why.

This is a guy who, talking to a customer after a robbery at the store, said he wished the robber had just asked for help. "I would have helped them, feed 'em or given them money."

The Facebook page also indicates the community is grateful. One comment said, "[I]t touches my heart to know that there are caring (sic) people out there to help each other God bless you." And there was this: "This restaurant kept the Texas State college students alive by providing crawfish at no charge during the ice storm. As a grateful mom, thank you. I can't wait to visit your establishment when I pick him up in May. I can't say enough wonderful things about you." I find myself in the same predicament.

The only day they were open during this storm was Monday, and no money changed hands that day. Zero business, all the expense. Closed since. The Facebook page says they reopened today with limited supplies of crawfish. I am seriously hoping these communities are prepared to repay a favor. They owe this guy.

Stay healthy. We'll talk again.

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County	Total Cases	Recovered Cases	Negative Persons	Deceased Among Cases	Community Spread	% PCR Test Positivity Rate (Weekly)
Aurora	452	431	851	15	Minimal	14.3%
Beadle	2687	2574	5726	39	Substantial	12.4%
Bennett	381	367	1165	9	Minimal	2.4%
Bon Homme	1502	1474	2030	25	Minimal	6.3%
Brookings	3564	3454	11627	36	Substantial	3.5%
Brown	5085	4935	12432	85	Substantial	6.5%
Brule	688	673	1837	9	Minimal	17.9%
Buffalo	420	406	889	13	Minimal	0.0%
Butte	972	934	3160	20	Moderate	3.0%
Campbell	129	125	254	4	Minimal	25.0%
Charles Mix	1269	1207	3843	20	Substantial	13.2%
Clark	362	348	934	5	Substantial	6.1%
Clay	1781	1752	5110	15	Moderate	3.6%
Codington	3927	3743	9481	77	Substantial	13.8%
Corson	466	449	991	12	Minimal	13.3%
Custer	744	719	2649	12	Moderate	10.9%
Davison	2938	2848	6371	60	Moderate	4.7%
Day	654	602	1730	28	Substantial	20.0%
Deuel	471	453	1111	8	Moderate	16.1%
Dewey	1402	1369	3757	23	Minimal	2.4%
Douglas	424	408	886	9	Minimal	2.9%
Edmunds	478	454	1020	12	Moderate	5.3%
Fall River	520	497	2544	15	Moderate	4.4%
Faulk	355	330	681	13	Moderate	0.0%
Grant	954	891	2175	37	Substantial	16.7%
Gregory	532	484	1225	27	Substantial	6.4%
Haakon	246	236	524	9	Minimal	14.3%
Hamlin	695	632	1732	38	Moderate	8.8%
Hand	330	315	787	6	Minimal	3.8%
Hanson	355	342	694	4	Moderate	18.4%
Harding	91	90	179	1	Minimal	0.0%
Hughes	2286	2195	6421	34	Substantial	4.8%
Hutchinson	783	738	2292	24	Moderate	9.1%



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Hyde	136	134	399	1	Minimal	0.0%
Jackson	276	260	904	14	Minimal	15.4%
Jerauld	268	249	546	16	Minimal	0.0%
Jones	85	83	214	0	Minimal	0.0%
Kingsbury	631	599	1617	14	Moderate	9.7%
Lake	1176	1133	3202	17	Moderate	7.9%
Lawrence	2804	2733	8354	44	Moderate	6.8%
Lincoln	7668	7461	19805	77	Substantial	5.2%
Lyman	597	579	1846	10	Minimal	8.8%
Marshall	304	288	1155	5	Moderate	2.8%
McCook	738	703	1583	24	Moderate	7.0%
McPherson	237	231	544	4	Minimal	0.0%
Meade	2558	2476	7507	31	Moderate	10.4%
Mellette	245	239	715	2	Minimal	0.0%
Miner	270	251	560	9	None	0.0%
Minnehaha	27740	26954	76234	329	Substantial	5.0%
Moody	612	587	1726	16	Minimal	7.7%
Oglala Lakota	2051	1971	6569	49	Minimal	2.2%
Pennington	12746	12332	38415	185	Substantial	8.2%
Perkins	344	319	787	13	Minimal	12.9%
Potter	366	353	818	3	Moderate	13.3%
Roberts	1158	1085	4040	35	Substantial	4.8%
Sanborn	326	320	668	3	Minimal	0.0%
Spink	796	754	2079	25	Substantial	7.4%
Stanley	327	319	909	2	Minimal	3.7%
Sully	136	132	299	3	Minimal	6.3%
Todd	1218	1180	4085	28	Moderate	9.8%
Tripp	688	654	1448	16	Moderate	18.4%
Turner	1059	992	2649	53	Moderate	8.3%
Union	1960	1887	6093	39	Substantial	9.0%
Walworth	716	692	1798	15	Moderate	14.3%
Yankton	2789	2725	9137	28	Moderate	1.7%
Ziebach	336	325	853	9	None	0.0%
Unassigned	0	0	1805	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	4438	0
10-19 years	12491	0
20-29 years	19848	5
30-39 years	18292	17
40-49 years	15886	35
50-59 years	15690	109
60-69 years	12744	245
70-79 years	6819	422
80+ years	5096	1030

### SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Sex	# of Cases	# of Deaths Among Cases
Female	58019	879
Male	53285	984

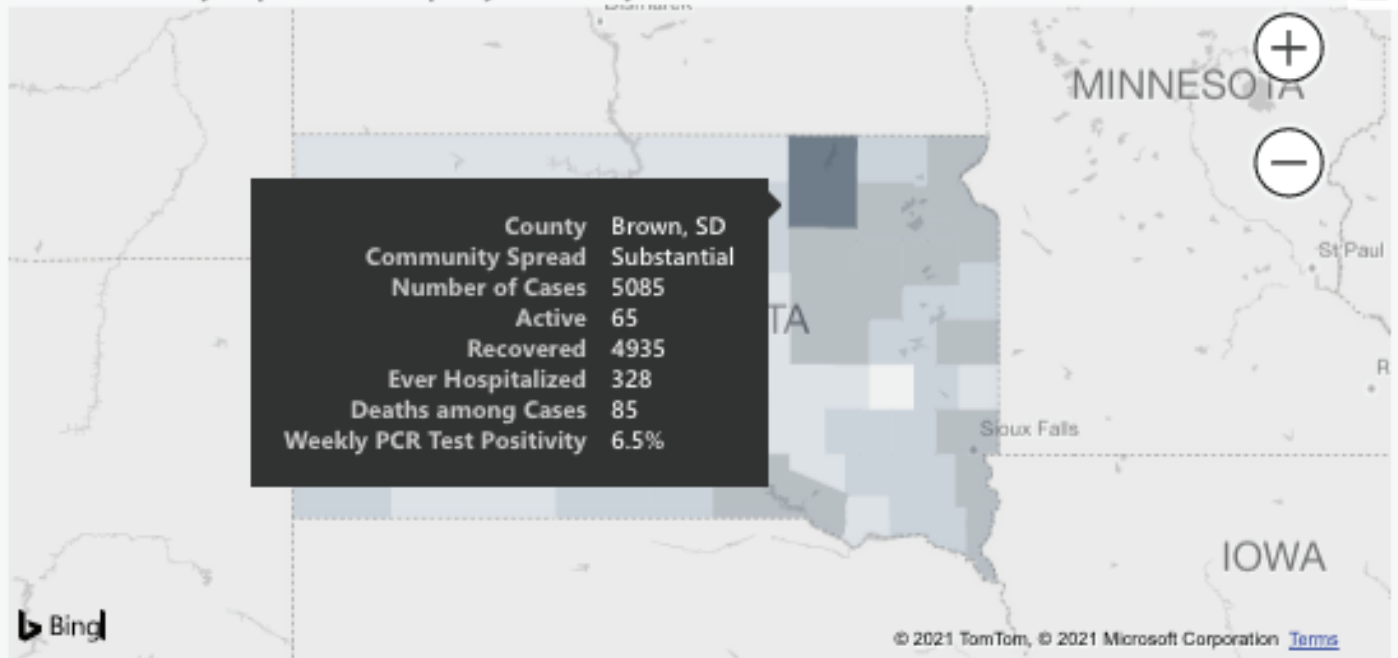
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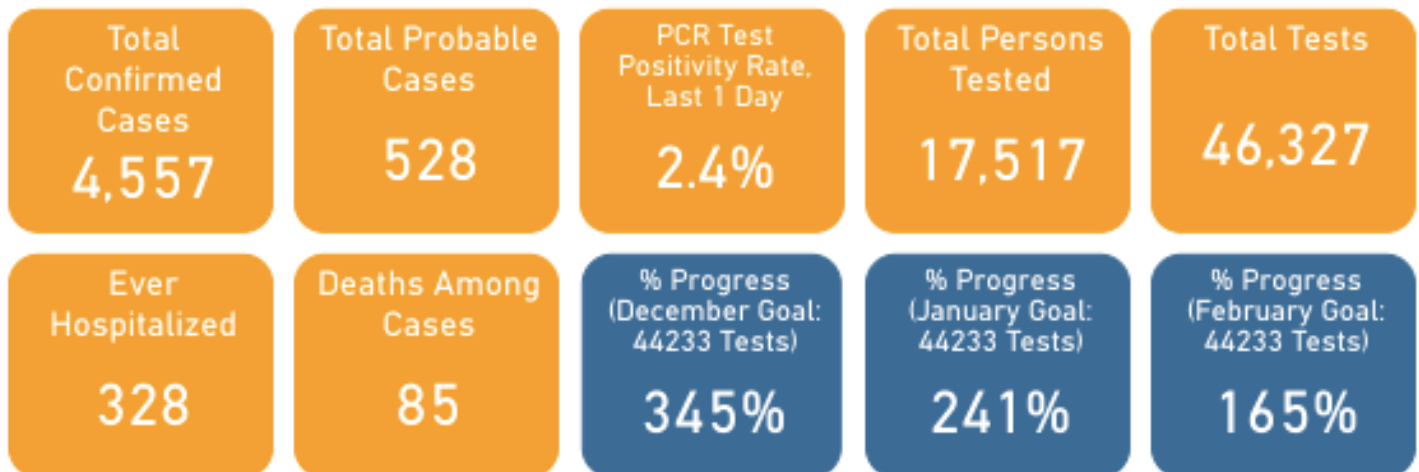
## Brown County



### Community Spread Map by County of Residence



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



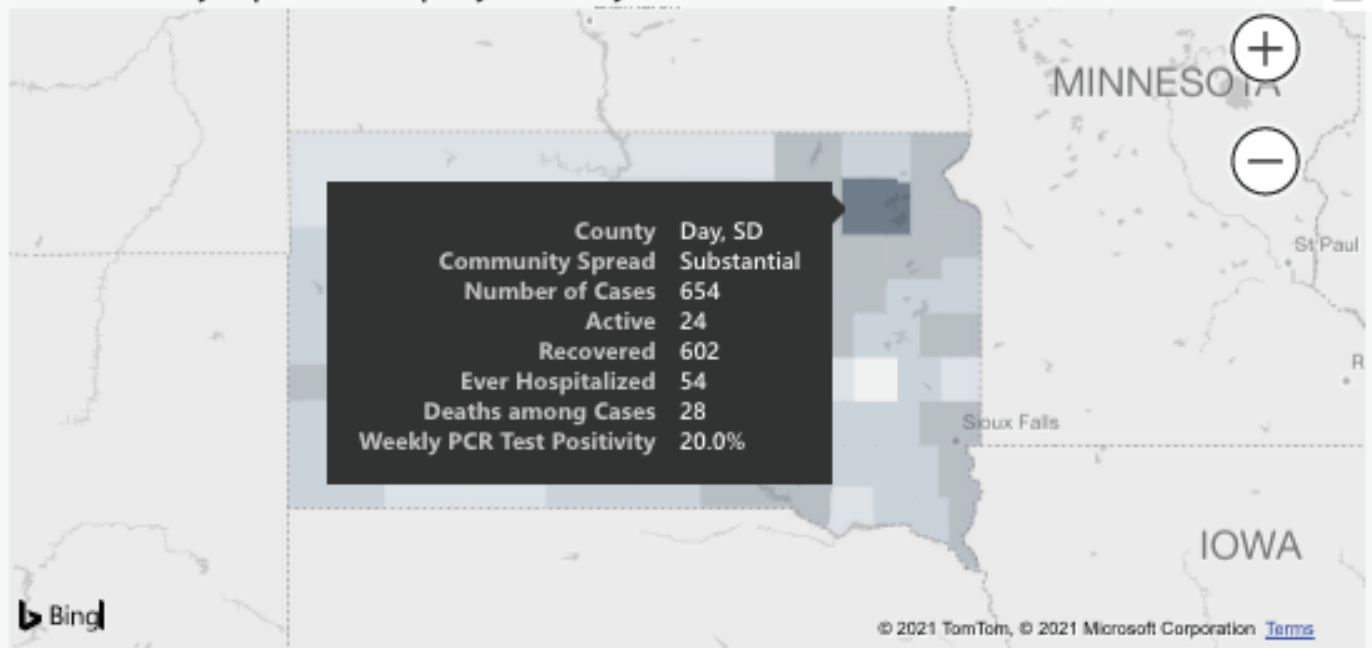
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## Day County

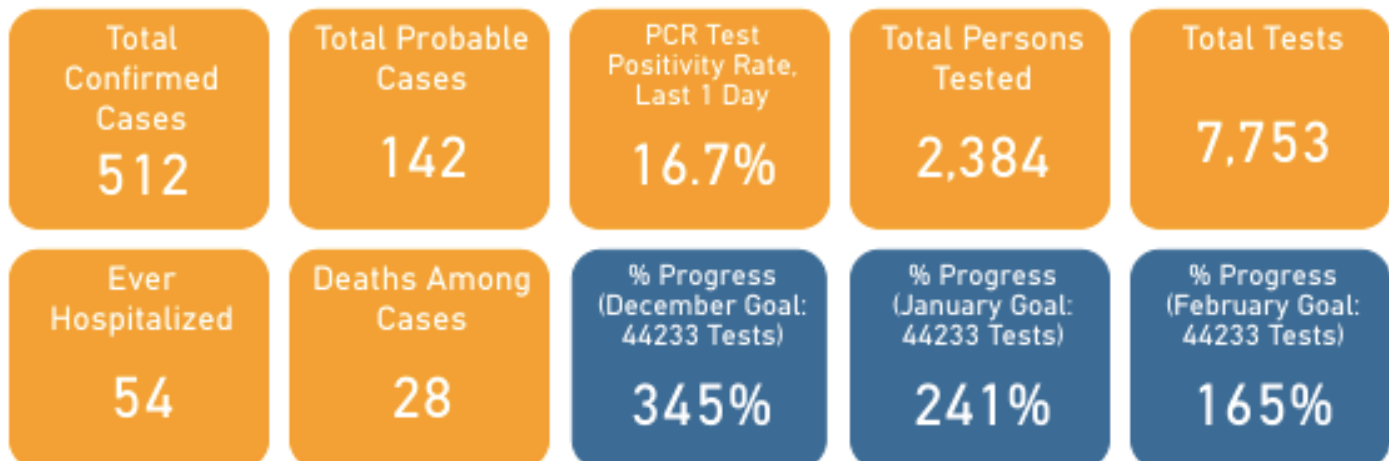


### Community Spread Map by County of Residence



Community Spread: None Minimal Moderate Substantial

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





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## Vaccinations

Total Doses Administered

184,841

Total Persons Administered a Vaccine

122,625

Percent of State Population with at least 1 Dose

18%

Manufacturer	# of Doses
Moderna	97,574
Pfizer	87,267

Doses	# of Recipients
Moderna - Series Complete	32,653
Moderna - 1 dose	32,268
Pfizer - Series Complete	29,563
Pfizer - 1 dose	28,141

Doses	% of Pop.
1 dose	17.77%
Series Complete	9.02%

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

County	# Doses	# Persons (1 dose)	# Persons (2 doses)	Total # Persons
Aurora	463	241	111	352
Beadle	3581	1,667	957	2,624
Bennett*	346	84	131	215
Bon Homme*	2047	1,119	464	1,583
Brookings	4862	1,662	1,600	3,262
Brown	8716	2,724	2,996	5,720
Brule*	1133	453	340	793
Buffalo*	98	76	11	87
Butte	1070	506	282	788
Campbell	676	224	226	450
Charles Mix*	1807	837	485	1,322
Clark	711	259	226	485
Clay	2915	1,025	945	1,970
Codington*	5893	2,109	1,892	4,001
Corson*	166	74	46	120
Custer*	1588	624	482	1,106
Davison	4598	1,634	1,482	3,116
Day*	1510	578	466	1,044
Deuel	863	353	255	608
Dewey*	294	56	119	175
Douglas*	750	266	242	508
Edmunds	750	276	237	513
Fall River*	1569	635	467	1,102
Faulk	614	220	197	417
Grant*	1352	494	429	923
Gregory*	983	397	293	690
Haakon*	345	113	116	229

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Hamlin	1011	419	296	715
Hand	770	348	211	559
Hanson	263	123	70	193
Harding	38	28	5	33
Hughes <sup>^</sup>	4957	1,607	1,675	3,282
Hutchinson <sup>^</sup>	2143	779	682	1,461
Hyde <sup>^</sup>	330	116	107	223
Jackson <sup>^</sup>	253	95	79	174
Jerauld	448	254	97	351
Jones <sup>^</sup>	377	141	118	259
Kingsbury	1263	547	358	905
Lake	2105	787	659	1,446
Lawrence	4358	1,966	1,196	3,162
Lincoln	16105	4,133	5,986	10,119
Lyman <sup>^</sup>	438	218	110	328
Marshall <sup>^</sup>	964	412	276	688
McCook	1244	462	391	853
McPherson	131	57	37	94
Meade <sup>^</sup>	3438	1,420	1,009	2,429
Mellette <sup>^</sup>	30	12	9	21
Miner	498	186	156	342
Minnehaha <sup>^</sup>	47819	13,735	17,042	30,777
Moody <sup>^</sup>	924	348	288	636
Oglala Lakota <sup>^</sup>	100	40	30	70
Pennington <sup>^</sup>	21906	6,330	7,788	14,118
Perkins <sup>^</sup>	311	175	68	243
Potter	456	196	130	326
Roberts <sup>^</sup>	2614	1,152	731	1,883
Sanborn	577	223	177	400
Spink	1874	670	602	1,272
Stanley <sup>^</sup>	740	270	235	505
Sully	216	90	63	153
Todd <sup>^</sup>	101	37	32	69
Tripp <sup>^</sup>	1337	477	430	907
Turner	2132	602	765	1,367
Union	1506	710	398	1,108
Walworth <sup>^</sup>	1299	375	462	837
Yankton	6123	1,381	2,371	3,752
Ziebach <sup>^</sup>	43	13	15	28
Other	3899	769	1,565	2,334

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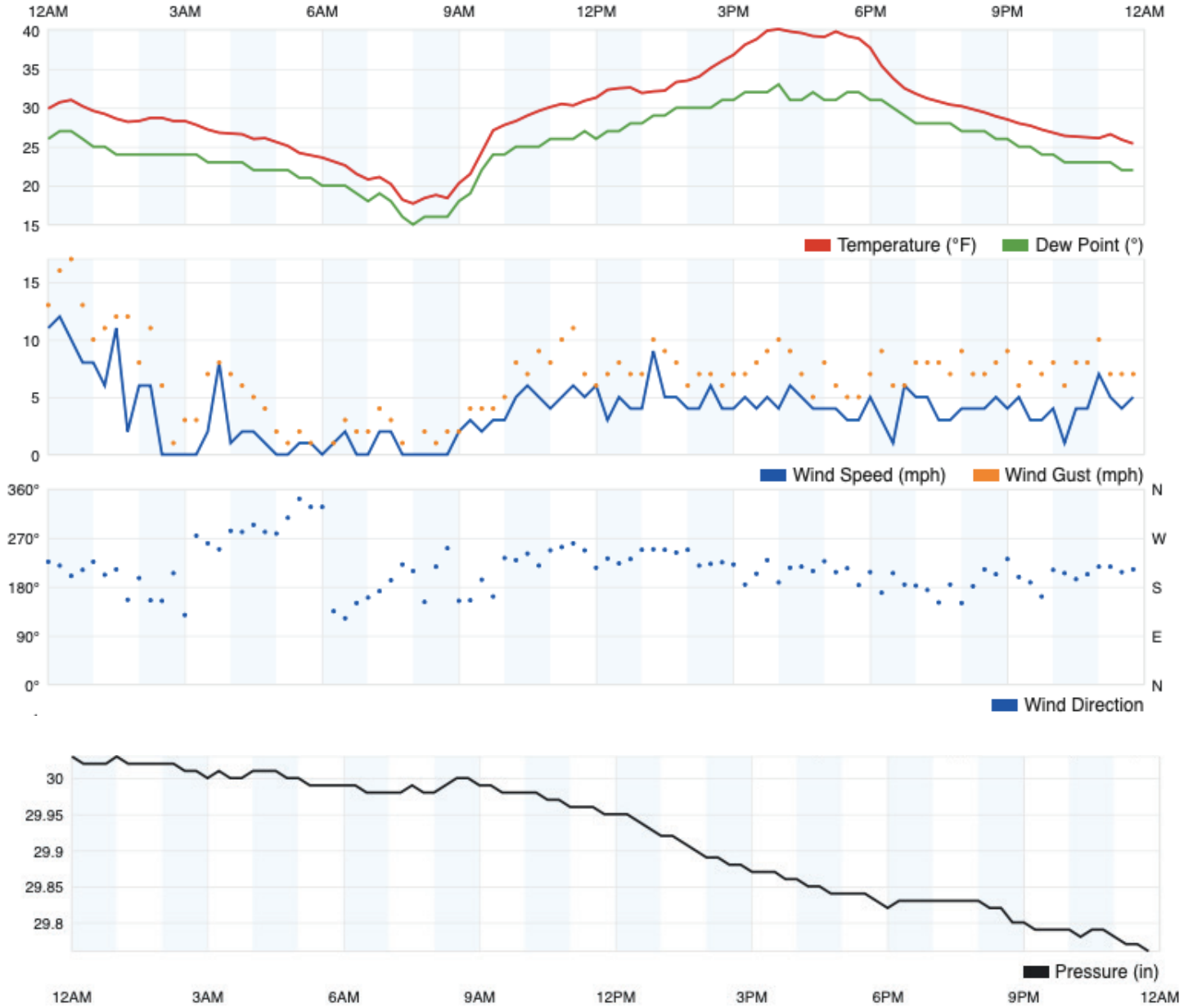


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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs





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Today	Tonight	Tuesday	Tuesday Night	Wednesday
				
				
Gradual Clearing and Breezy	Increasing Clouds	Slight Chance Wintry Mix then Slight Chance Rain	Partly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny
High: 55 °F	Low: 27 °F	High: 46 °F	Low: 22 °F	High: 38 °F

## Windy, Warm And Dry



Elevated fire danger concerns across the Missouri Valley **this afternoon**—avoid activities that may increase the chance for fires



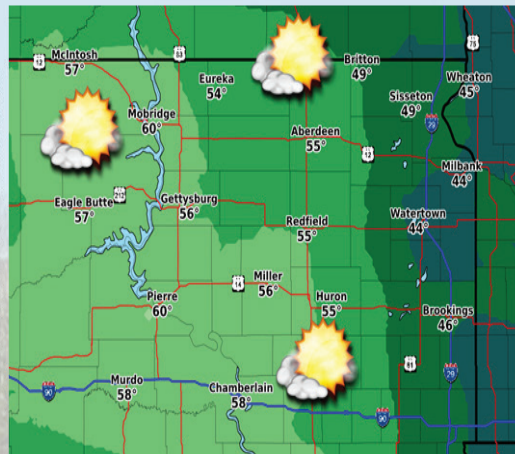
Unseasonably warm temperatures **today**—with above normal temps the rest of the week



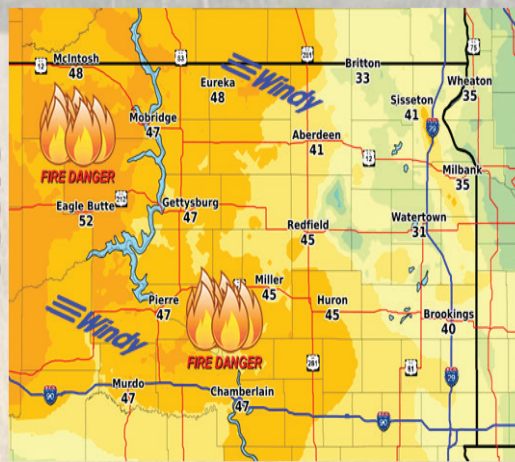
Breezy to Windy conditions will be possible for the better part of the week

 NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE  
OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

TODAY'S HIGHS



TODAY'S PEAK GUSTS



Unseasonably warm temperatures are expected today. Daytime highs this afternoon will be a good 15-20 degrees above normal for some areas. Along with the warmth will be strong west to northwest winds. Gusts between 40 and 50 mph will be possible for areas from the James valley and points west. The dry, bare ground across the Missouri valley combined with the strong winds and warm temperatures will elevate the grassland fire danger through the afternoon.

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## Today in Weather History

February 22, 1914: Heavy snow fell across parts of central and north-central South Dakota with 6 to 12 inches accumulations. Snowfall amounts included 6 inches at Timber Lake and Onida, 7 inches at Kennebec, and 12 inches at Murdo.

February 22, 2000: High temperatures across central and northeast South Dakota were in the 50s and 60s. Record highs occurred at Watertown, Pierre, and Kennebec. Watertown rose to 65 degrees, Pierre rose to 69 degrees, and Kennebec warmed to 71 degrees by late in the afternoon. Other high temperatures include; 55 degrees at Sisseton, 59 degrees at Aberdeen, and 64 degrees at Timber Lake.

1971: A 2-day blizzard dumped 36 inches of snow at Buffalo, and 25 inches at Gage, Oklahoma. Follett, Texas picked up 26 inches while Amarillo recorded 14 inches.

1998: Seven tornadoes struck east-central Florida late on this date and early on the 23rd. Three of the tornadoes were rated F3 on the Fujita scale. 24 people were killed in Kissimmee alone. A total of 42 people were killed, with 265 injured, and total damage was \$106 million.

1773 - The memorable "Cold Sabbath" in New England history. Many persons froze extremities while going to church. (David Ludlum)

1936 - Although heat and dust prevailed in the spring and summer, early 1936 brought record cold to parts of the U.S. Sioux Center IA reported 42 inches of snow on the ground, a state record. (20th-22nd) (The Weather Channel)

1986 - A twelve siege of heavy rain and snow, which produced widespread flooding and mudslides across northern and central California, finally came to an end. The storm caused more than 400 million dollars property damage. Bucks Lake, located in the Sierra Nevada Range, received 49.6 inches of rain during the twelve day period. (Storm Data)

1987 - A storm moving northeastward out of the Gulf of Mexico began to spread heavy snow across the Middle Atlantic Coast Region. Thunderstorms in northern Florida produced wind gusts to 65 mph in Alachua County. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Dry weather prevailed across the nation, with windy conditions from the Central Rockies to northern New England. Winds gusted to 58 mph at Cleveland OH, and reached 63 mph at Erie PA. Winds in the Central Rockies gusted to 120 mph at Mines Peak CO and Rendezvous Peak WY. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Strong northwesterly winds ushering cold arctic air into the north central U.S. produced snow squalls in the Great Lakes Region, with heavy snow near Lake Michigan. Totals in northwest Indiana ranged up to 24 inches at Gary, and up to 16 inches buried northeastern Illinois. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - Thunderstorms developing along and ahead of a cold front produced severe weather from southern Mississippi to North Carolina. One thunderstorm spawned a tornado just prior to dawn which touched down near Opp AL injuring ten persons and causing half a million dollars damage. Thunderstorm winds injured four persons south of Troy AL, and five people at Columbus GA. Thunderstorm winds gusted to 76 mph at Dothan AL. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)



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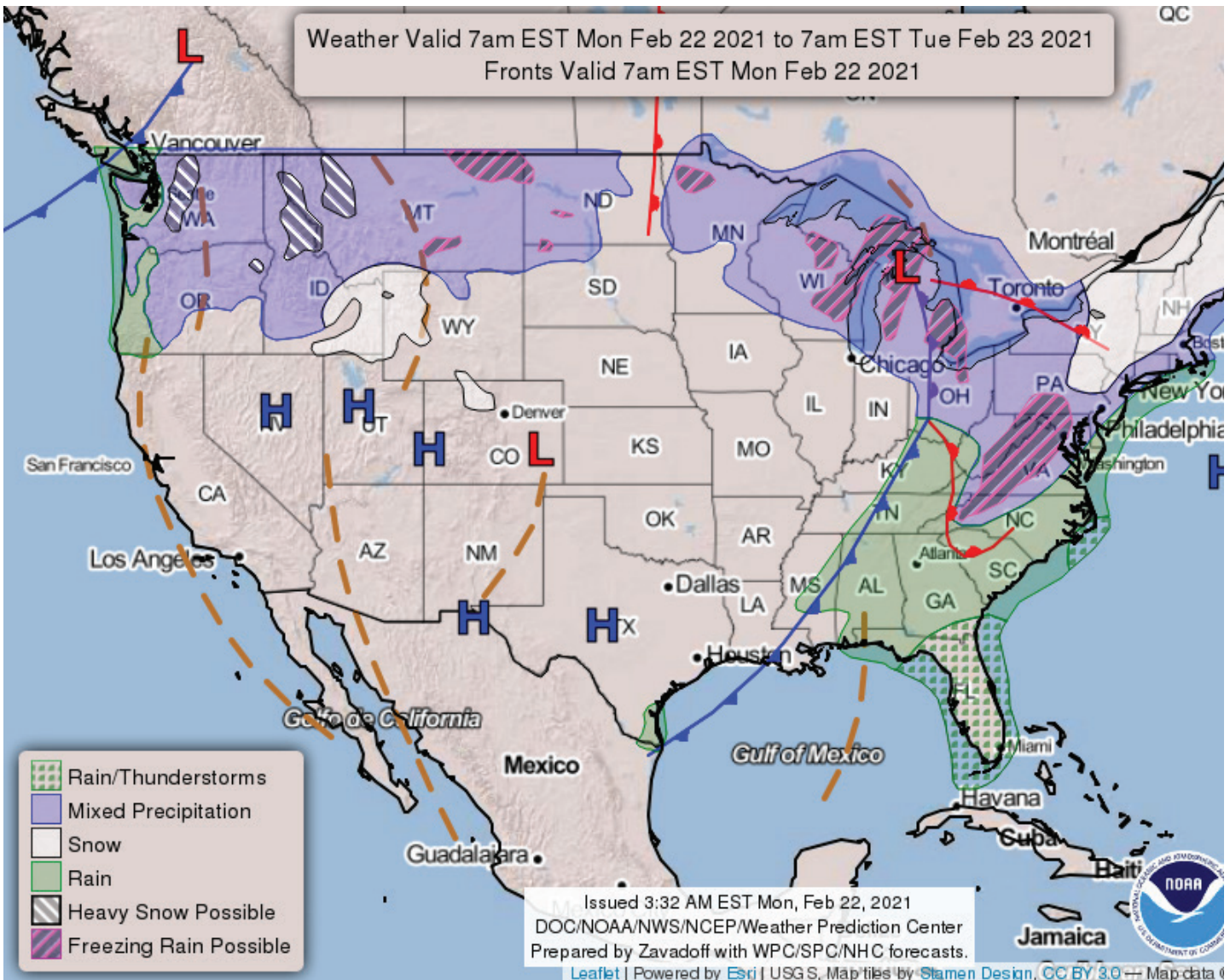
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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 40 °F at 3:59 PM**  
**Low Temp: 18 °F at 8:02 AM**  
**Wind: 19 mph at 12:16 AM**  
**Precip:**

## Today's Info

**Record High: 59° in 1958, 2000**  
**Record Low: -24° in 1918**  
**Average High: 30°F**  
**Average Low: 10°F**  
**Average Precip in Feb.: 0.37**  
**Precip to date in Feb.: 0.14**  
**Average Precip to date: 0.84**  
**Precip Year to Date: 0.14**  
**Sunset Tonight: 6:11 p.m.**  
**Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:22 a.m.**



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## BANNER UP!

A young boy was sitting on a bench in a park when a stranger walked by and stopped. Looking at Will and his dog, he asked, "What kind of dog is that, young fella?"

Thinking the man was making fun of his dog, Will responded, "He's a genuine police dog, Sir!"

Looking at the dog once again, he said, "Police dog? He sure doesn't look like a police dog to me."

"Of course not," said Will. "He's in the secret service."

Perhaps that can be said of many Christians: "They are in the Lord's Secret Service." They don't want anyone to know who they are or who they serve.

Strange, isn't it that the Christian life begins with a public confession of faith? A declaration that we willingly repent of our sins and choose to follow the Lord. God's Word makes it clear that "If we tell others that Jesus Christ is our Lord, and really believe in our hearts that God raised Him from the dead, we will be saved."

It's all rather simple, isn't it? If we say it, according to God's Word, we are to do it. On the one hand, it's easy to profess Jesus in church, but it is quite different to live as He would have us to live in the workplace, the gym, the Parent-Teacher meetings, and the lunches with business partners, customers, or whomever we don't see in church on a regular basis. But God's Word says, "Set up your banners!"

Confession is much more than what Christians say. It is what a Christian does. Our words are important, but not nearly as significant as what we do - especially when we think no one is looking. Because, usually, someone is.

Prayer: Lord, we only fool ourselves if we think we can fool You or others. May we be witnesses without words and walk our talk at all times. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: May we shout for joy when we hear of your victory and raise a victory banner in the name of our God. May the Lord answer all your prayers. Psalm 20:5



## FINAL EXPENSES

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## 2021 Community Events

- Cancelled** Legion Post #39 Spring Fundraiser (Sunday closest to St. Patrick's Day, every other year)  
03/27/2021 Lions Club Easter Egg Hunt 10am Sharp at the City Park (Saturday a week before Easter Weekend)  
04/10/2021 Dueling Pianos Baseball Fundraiser at the American Legion Post #39 6-11:30pm  
04/24/2021 Firemen's Spring Social at the Fire Station 7pm-12:30am (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)  
04/25/2021 Father/Daughter Dance (Sunday after GHS Prom)  
05/01/2021 Lions Club Spring City-Wide Rummage Sales 8am-3pm (1st Saturday in May)  
05/31/2021 Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services (Memorial Day)  
6/7-9/2021 St. John's Lutheran Church VBS  
06/18/2021 SDSU Alumni & Friends Golf Tournament at Olive Grove  
07/04/2021 Firecracker Golf Tournament at Olive Grove  
07/11/2021 Lions Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 10am-4pm (Sunday Mid-July)  
07/22/2021 Pro-Am Golf Tournament at Olive Grove Golf Course  
State "B" American Legion Baseball Tournament in Groton  
08/06/2021 Wine on Nine at Olive Grove Golf Course  
09/11/2021 Lions Club Fall City-Wide Rummage Sales 8am-3pm (1st Saturday after Labor Day)  
09/12/2021 Sunflower Classic Golf Tournament at Olive Grove  
10/08/2021 Lake Region Marching Band Festival (2nd Friday in October)  
10/09/2021 Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm (Saturday before Columbus Day)  
10/29/2021 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm (Halloween)  
10/31/2021 Groton United Methodist Trunk or Treat (Halloween)  
11/13/2021 Legion Post #39 Turkey Party (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)  
11/25/2021 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm (Thanksgiving)  
12/11/2021 Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services 9am-Noon

## News from the Associated Press

### Madison group has distributed nearly 800 unique quilts

By MARY GALES ASKREN Madison Daily Leader

MADISON, S.D. (AP) — Their actions reflect the lyrics of a 16th Century hymn -- they gather together to ask the Lord's blessing, trusting Him to make His will known, trusting He is beside them and guiding them.

At first glance, that may not be obvious. Gathered in the basement of Joyce Schrepel's home, the women of West Center Baptist's quilting group are not only engaged in quilt making but also in conversation and laughter.

"It's a sweatshop," Mary Kenyon quipped, turning from the iron she was using to press stitched quilt blocks. Others laughed.

Around the basement, eight women worked on quilts in different stages of completion. Several pinned quilt tops to batting and backing at one table. At another, quilt blocks were being cut using a straight-edge and rotary cutter.

Along the back wall, Karen Logan was stitching quilt blocks. Along another Marian Wiese, like Kenyon, was pressing stitched blocks. At the center of it all, Schrepel was providing guidance.

"The main priority of the quilts is the prayer -- whether a need or praise," Amy Brown said, pausing from the work she was doing.

The multi-generational group doesn't even recall the year they began meeting to quilt, but they know they've made more than 800 quilts. Not all have been distributed. Several dozen are stored on hangers in the basement room where Schrepel keeps her stash of fabric arranged by color on shelves and in cabinets.

Each quilt is different -- not only in the fabric selection but also in the pattern used. The women credit Schrepel with finding the quilt patterns, though they admit they are responsible for some of the designs.

"If you happen to sew the blocks together wrong, she just says, 'It's just a new pattern,'" Kenyon related.

They also credit Schrepel with selecting the fabrics for many of the quilts. This happens, in part, because she cuts quilt blocks between meetings. Those who sew get homework assignments when they come -- pieces for a top, complete with a diagram and written instructions.

However, from time to time, Schrepel also directs the other quilters into her stash with specific instructions. Choose five fabrics for a quilt. Select fabrics suitable for a quilt for a man. Whatever the women select is used for a quilt top.

While the women attend the same church, the group is not supported by church funds. Rather, they are supported by donations -- including fabric -- from many sources.

A Sioux Falls woman, also a quilter but unknown to any of group members, donated her entire stash to the group when she died.

"She liked what we did and gave us over 300 yards of fabric," said Schrepel.

To date, 778 quilts have been distributed. Among recent recipients were the teachers who attend their church and the Sunday School personnel. However, quilts have also been distributed to firefighters and law enforcement officers, the Madison Daily Leader reported.

"The thing with those groups is to recognize those who serve quietly," Kenyon explained.

Other quilts have gone to those who are ill, who have suffered trauma in their lives, who need encouragement or are engaged in mission work. The women don't know how many quilts they've sent overseas -- to Africa, China, Haiti, Brazil, Japan and Indonesia.

They also don't know many of the local recipients. If they hear of someone in need or read about someone in the paper, they pray over a quilt for that individual. The quilt is then given to the person for whom they prayed.

"It's not about us. It's about the prayers," said Stephanie Schubert, one of the quilters.

The women don't plan quilts for specific recipients, but they've often seen God's hand at work when they give a quilt. The thank-you notes received frequently indicate the fabric or colors have significance

for the recipient.

Schubert can testify to this. She and her husband received a welcome quilt when they joined the church. "It was perfect for us," she said.

Kenyon related the story of giving a quilt to a neighbor whose husband had died. Because he was an avid gardener, she chose one with blocks that had a floral pattern. She did not notice each also contained a lion's head.

When her neighbor received the blanket, she said, "How did you know that on my bucket list was hugging a big cat?"

In talking about the work they do, all of the women mention at one point or another how integral prayer is to their ministry. Since the COVID-19 pandemic hit, some of the group members have chosen to work at home. Those who meet always pray together.

"We work for a while and then we go upstairs and pray over three to five quilts," explained Holly Molascon.

A young mother with three children, she joined the group after she got married to meet people. Like Schubert, she has been a quilt recipient as well as a quilt maker.

"My second child was born in a van on the way to the hospital. They thought it was worthy of a quilt," Molascon noted.

She added that in addition to supporting others through the quilt ministry and prayer, the women support one another with encouragement and guidance on everything from recipes to parenting. Because the group members range in age, they bring a broad base of experience to their gatherings.

More than that, they bring the gift that St. Paul said in his first letter to the Corinthians is the greatest of all: love.

"We want to reach out and love everybody," Schrepel said.

## COVID-19 hospitalizations continue to fall in South Dakota

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota health officials said Sunday that the number of hospitalizations due to the coronavirus continue to fall, although a virus research group ranks the state among the top 10 for the number of deaths relative to population.

The state reported 140 new cases and four new deaths in the last day, raising the totals to 111,309 positive virus tests and 1,863 fatalities since the start of the pandemic. The COVID Tracking Project ranks South Dakota seventh in the country in the number of deaths per capita.

The update showed that the number of hospitalizations fell from 95 to 90. Of those patients, 17 were being treated in intensive care units and nine required ventilators.

There were about 230 new cases per 100,000 people in South Dakota over the past two weeks, which ranks 38th in the country for new cases per capita, according to Johns Hopkins University researchers. One in every 919 people in South Dakota tested positive in the past week.

For most people, the new coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough that clear up in two to three weeks. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia and death.

## Patrol names victims of South Dakota crash that killed 4

WAGNER, S.D. (AP) — Authorities have released the names of four people who were killed earlier this week in a two-vehicle crash in southern South Dakota.

The Highway Patrol identified the victims as 64-year-old Lynette Ashes, of Wagner; 31-year-old Agnes Drapeaux, of Mitchell; 28-year-old Michaela Rainbow, of Lake Andes; and 33-year-old Milton LaRose, of Omaha, Nebraska.

The patrol said the crash happened about 6 p.m. Tuesday near Wagner when a 2003 Chrysler Sebring driven by Drapeaux failed to stop at an intersection and collided with a 2008 Jeep Grand Cherokee driven by Ashes. The car subsequently plunged into a ditch where it caught fire, authorities said.

Ashes was the lone occupant of the SUV. There were four passengers in the car, including one man,



27-year-old Lawrence Thunder Horse, of Lake Andes, who suffered serious non-life threatening injuries. The patrol said none of people involved in the crash appeared to have been wearing seat belts.

## Man arrested in killing of 82-year-old Rapid City woman

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Authorities say a man accused of killing an 82-year-old woman in her Rapid City home was arrested on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation Saturday evening.

James Jumping Eagle is charged with felony first-degree murder in the death Reta McGovern on Feb. 10, according to online court records.

A fugitive task force arrested Jumping Eagle about 8:45 p.m. Saturday at a home a couple of miles south of Manderson, according to Bob Ecoffey, chief of the Oglala Sioux Police. The suspect was apprehended without incident, the Rapid City Journal reported.

McGovern, who lived alone, was found dead with a laceration to her throat on Feb. 10. Police announced Friday that Jumping Eagle was identified as the suspect through forensic DNA and called it a targeted crime.

Law enforcement is still investigating why they believe Jumping Eagle decided to target McGovern and whether they knew each other. No further details about the killing have been released.

It wasn't immediately known if Jumping Eagle had an attorney.

## Boeing: 777s with engine that blew apart should be grounded

By The Associated Press undefined

Boeing has recommended that airlines ground all of 777s with the type of engine that suffered a catastrophic failure over Denver this weekend, as U.S. regulators ordered United Airlines to step up inspections of those planes.

Several airlines, including United, said they were temporarily removing the aircraft from service after one of the American carrier's planes made an emergency landing at Denver International Airport Saturday because its right engine blew apart just after takeoff. Pieces of the casing of the engine, a Pratt & Whitney PW4000, rained down on suburban neighborhoods. None of the 231 passengers or 10 crew on board were hurt, and the plane landed safely, authorities said.

U.S. Federal Aviation Administration Administrator Steve Dickson said in a statement Sunday that based on an initial review of safety data, inspectors "concluded that the inspection interval should be stepped up for the hollow fan blades that are unique to this model of engine, used solely on Boeing 777 airplanes."

Dickson said that would likely mean some planes would be grounded — and Boeing said they should be until the FAA sets up an inspection regime. Japan ordered the planes out of service, according to the financial newspaper Nikkei, while saying that an engine in the same family suffered trouble in December.

Boeing said there were 69 777s with the Pratt & Whitney 4000-112 engines in service and another 59 in storage.

United is the only U.S. airline with the engine in its fleet, according to the FAA, and it had 24 of the planes in service. Two Japanese airlines have another 32 that are being pulled while Asiana Airlines grounded nine, seven of which were in service, until Boeing establishes a plan to fix the problems. Korean Air said it was discussing whether to ground 16 aircraft, six of which are in service.

"We are working with these regulators as they take actions while these planes are on the ground and further inspections are conducted by Pratt & Whitney," Boeing said in a statement issued Sunday, referring to American and Japanese regulators.

The engine maker said it was sending a team to work with investigators.

The emergency landing this past weekend is the latest trouble for Boeing, which saw its 737 Max planes grounded for more than a year after two deadly crashes in 2019. The planes began returning to the skies late last year — a huge boost for the aircraft maker, which lost billions during the Max grounding because it has been unable to deliver new planes to customers.

Video posted on Twitter from Saturday's emergency showed the engine fully engulfed in flames as the plane flew through the air. Freeze frames from different video taken by a passenger sitting slightly in front

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of the engine and also posted on Twitter appeared to show a broken fan blade in the engine.

Passengers, who were heading to Honolulu, said they feared the plane would crash after an explosion and flash of light, while people on the ground saw huge chunks of the aircraft pour down, just missing one home and crushing a truck. The explosion, visible from the ground, left a trail of black smoke in the sky.

The U.S. National Transportation Safety Board said that two of the engine's fan blades were fractured and the remainder of the fan blades "exhibited damage." But it cautioned that it was too early to draw conclusions about what happened.

United says it will work closely with the FAA and the NTSB "to determine any additional steps that are needed to ensure these aircraft meet our rigorous safety standards and can return to service."

The NTSB said the cockpit voice recorder and flight data recorder were transported to its lab in Washington so the data can be analyzed. NTSB investigations can take up to a year or longer, although in major cases the agency generally releases some investigative material midway through the process.

Japan's Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism said an engine in the PW4000 family suffered trouble on a Japan Airlines 777 flying to Tokyo from Naha on Dec. 4. The airline has said the plane had engine trouble after takeoff and returned to Naha. An inspection showed damage to the engine case and missing fan blades, according to the airline. Stricter inspections were ordered in response.

Japan Airlines and All Nippon Airways will stop operating a combined 32 planes with that engine, Nikkei reported. \_\_\_\_

This story has been updated to correct the name of one of the Japanese airlines mentioned. It is Japan Airlines, not Japan Airways.

## **Pubs, haircuts, gyms must wait as UK lifts lockdown slowly**

By JILL LAWLESS and DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — U.K. Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Monday was setting out a road map for lifting one of Europe's strictest national lockdowns — but the millions of Britons eager for a haircut or an evening out still face a long wait.

Johnson is expected to announce a plan to ease coronavirus restrictions in increments, starting by reopening schools in England on March 8. People will be allowed to meet one friend or relative for a chat or picnic outdoors beginning the same day.

Three weeks later, people will be able to meet outdoors in groups of up to six and amateur outdoor sports can resume. But restaurants, pubs, gyms and hairdressers are likely to remain closed until at least April.

The measures being announced apply to England. Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland all have slightly different lockdowns in place, with some children returning to class in Scotland and Wales on Monday.

Britain has had Europe's deadliest coronavirus outbreak, with more than 120,000 deaths.

Faced with a dominant virus variant that scientists say is both more transmissible and more deadly than the original virus, the U.K. has spent much of the winter under a tight lockdown. Bars, restaurants, gyms, schools, hair salons and nonessential shops are closed, people are urged not to travel out of their local area and foreign holidays are illegal.

Hopes for a return to normality rest largely on Britain's fast-moving inoculation program that has given more than 17.5 million people, a third of the country's adult population, the first of two doses of vaccine. The aim is to give every adult a shot of vaccine by July 31, and to protect the over 50s and the medically vulnerable by getting them a first vaccine jab by April 15.

But the government cautions that the return of the country's social and economic life will be slow. Johnson's Conservative government was accused of reopening the country too quickly after the first lockdown in the spring and of rejecting scientific advice before a short "circuit-breaker" lockdown in the fall.

It does not want to make the same mistakes again, although Johnson is under pressure from some Conservative lawmakers and business owners, who argue that restrictions should be lifted quickly to revive an economy that has been hammered by three lockdowns in the last year.

The Conservative government -- in normal times an opponent of lavish public spending -- spent 280 bil-

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lion pounds (\$393 billion) in 2020 to deal with the pandemic, including billions paying the salaries of almost 10 million furloughed workers.

Vaccines Minister Nadhim Zahawi said the government's plan for lifting restrictions was "steady as she goes."

"Outdoor versus indoor, priority being children in schools," he said. "Second priority is obviously allowing two people on March 8 to meet outside for a coffee to address some of the issues around loneliness."

The government says further easing will depend on vaccines proving effective at lowering hospitalization and deaths, infection rates remaining low and no new virus variants emerging that throw the plans into disarray.

Authorities are eagerly awaiting data on the impact of vaccination on infections, hospitalizations and deaths.

A Scottish study released Monday found that the vaccination program had led to a sharp drop in hospitalizations. Scientists from the University of Edinburgh, the University of Strathclyde and Public Health Scotland found that in the fourth week after an initial dose, the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine reduced hospital admissions by as much as 85% and the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine shot cut admissions by up to 94%.

Scientists said the results were encouraging, but cautioned that the study did not assess whether people who have been vaccinated can still pass the virus on to others.

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>

## Bone cancer survivor to join billionaire on SpaceX flight

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — After beating bone cancer, Hayley Arceneaux figures rocketing into orbit on SpaceX's first private flight should be a piece of cosmic cake.

St. Jude Children's Research Hospital announced Monday that the 29-year-old physician assistant — a former patient hired last spring — will launch later this year alongside a billionaire who's using his purchased spaceflight as a charitable fundraiser.

Arceneaux will become the youngest American in space — beating NASA record-holder Sally Ride by over two years — when she blasts off this fall with entrepreneur Jared Isaacman and two yet-to-be-chosen contest winners.

She'll also be the first to launch with a prosthesis. When she was 10, she had surgery at St. Jude to replace her knee and get a titanium rod in her left thigh bone. She still limps and suffers occasional leg pain, but has been cleared for flight by SpaceX. She'll serve as the crew's medical officer.

"My battle with cancer really prepared me for space travel," Arceneaux said in an interview with The Associated Press. "It made me tough, and then also I think it really taught me to expect the unexpected and go along for the ride."

She wants to show her young patients and other cancer survivors that "the sky is not even the limit anymore."

"It's going to mean so much to these kids to see a survivor in space," she said.

Isaacman announced his space mission Feb. 1, pledging to raise \$200 million for St. Jude, half of that his own contribution. As the flight's self-appointed commander, he offered one of the four SpaceX Dragon capsule seats to St. Jude.

Without alerting the staff, St. Jude chose Arceneaux from among the "scores" of hospital and fundraising employees who had once been patients and could represent the next generation, said Rick Shadyac, president of St. Jude's fundraising organization.

Arceneaux was at home in Memphis, Tennessee, when she got the "out of the blue" call in January asking if she'd represent St. Jude in space.

Her immediate response: "Yes! Yes! Please!" But first she wanted to run it past her mother in St. Fran-

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cisville, Louisiana. (Her father died of kidney cancer in 2018.) Next she reached out to her brother and sister-in-law, both of them aerospace engineers in Huntsville, Alabama, who "reassured me how safe space travel is."

A lifelong space fan who embraces adventure, Arceneaux insists those who know her won't be surprised. She's plunged on a bungee swing in New Zealand and ridden camels in Morocco. And she loves roller-coasters.

Isaacman, who flies fighter jets for a hobby, considers her a perfect fit.

"It's not all supposed to be about getting people excited to be astronauts someday, which is certainly cool," Isaacman, 38, said last week. "It's also supposed to be about an inspiring message of what we can accomplish here on Earth."

He has two more crew members to select, and he plans to reveal them in March.

One will be a sweepstakes winner; anyone donating to St. Jude this month is eligible. So far, more than \$9 million has come in, according to Shadyac. The other seat will go to a business owner who uses Shift-4Payments, Isaacman's Allentown, Pennsylvania, credit card-processing company.

Liftoff is targeted around October at NASA's Kennedy Space Center, with the capsule orbiting Earth two to four days. He's not divulging the cost.

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

## The Latest: COVID-19 hospitalizations plummet after jabs

By The Associated Press undefined

LONDON — Researchers in Scotland say its COVID-19 vaccination program has led to a sharp drop in hospitalizations.

Scientists from the University of Edinburgh, the University of Strathclyde and Public Health Scotland found that the Pfizer vaccine reduced hospital admissions by as much as 85% and the Oxford/AstraZeneca shot cut admissions by up to 94%.

The findings were based on a comparison of data from people who had received their first dose of vaccine and those who had not received an inoculation. The data was gathered between Dec. 8 and Feb. 15, a period during which 21% of Scotland's population received their first shot.

"These results are very encouraging and have given us great reasons to be optimistic for the future," said Professor Aziz Sheikh, director of the University of Edinburgh's Usher Institute. "We now have national evidence — across an entire country — that vaccination provides protection against COVID-19 hospitalizations."

### THE VIRUS OUTBREAK:

- Researchers in Scotland say its COVID-19 vaccination program has caused hospitalizations to plummet
- Russia's vaccine rollout picks up speed, but experts say the campaign is still moving slowly
- Elementary schools and kindergartens reopen in over half of Germany's 16 states
- Every Democratic vote is needed on \$1.9 trillion COVID-19 relief bill, but minimum wage and other issues will force choices
- Portugal finds 7 cases of coronavirus variant first identified in Brazil
- Follow all of AP's pandemic coverage at <https://apnews.com/hub/coronavirus-pandemic>, <https://apnews.com/hub/coronavirus-vaccine> and <https://apnews.com/UnderstandingtheOutbreak>

### HERE'S WHAT ELSE IS HAPPENING:

LONDON — British Prime Minister Boris Johnson is laying out a road map for lifting lockdown -- but millions of people in the U.K. longing for a haircut or a meal in a restaurant still face a long wait.

Johnson is set to announce a plan Monday to ease restrictions incrementally, starting by reopening schools in England on March 8. People will be allowed to meet one friend or relative for a chat or picnic



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outdoors from the same day.

Three weeks later, people will be able to meet outdoors in groups of up to six. But restaurants, pubs, gyms and hairdressers are likely to remain closed until at least April.

The government says progress will depend on vaccines proving effective, infection rates remaining low and no new virus variants emerging that throw the plans into disarray.

Britain has had Europe's deadliest coronavirus outbreak, with more than 120,000 deaths.

Vaccines Minister Nadhim Zahawi said the government's plan for easing restrictions was "steady as she goes."

**LISBON, Portugal** -- Portugal is the latest European Union country to detect a COVID-19 variant first identified in Manaus, Brazil.

Portuguese health authorities said late Sunday they had detected seven cases of the variant, warning that it is highly contagious and may be able to infect people who previously have had COVID-19.

More than 150,000 Brazilians live in Portugal. The two countries have close cultural and economic ties.

Portugal was for several weeks last month the world's worst-affected country in the pandemic, with the highest number of new daily cases and deaths, but a lockdown since Jan. 15 has eased the pressure on the public health service.

The European Centre for Disease Control says Portugal's 14-day case notification rate per 100,000 people is 590. That makes it the fourth highest in the 30 countries monitored by the EU agency.

The seven-day rolling average of daily deaths fell from 2.35 deaths per 100,000 people on Feb. 7 to 0.90 deaths per 100,000 people on Feb. 21, according to Johns Hopkins University.

**BERLIN** — Elementary schools and kindergartens in more than half of Germany's 16 states reopened Monday after two months of closure due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The move comes despite growing signs that the decline in case numbers in Germany is flattening out again and even rising in some areas.

Germany's education minister, Anja Karliczek, has defended the decision to reopen schools, saying younger children in particular benefit from learning together in groups.

Karliczek told German news agency dpa that schools should use "all available means to prevent virus transmission" and expressed confidence that state education officials — who are in charge of school matters in Germany — would consider infection numbers when deciding where to reopen.

Germany's disease control agency say there were 4,369 newly confirmed cases and 62 deaths in the past day, though Monday's numbers are often low due to reporting delays over the weekend.

Education unions have called for teachers and kindergarten workers to be moved into a higher priority group for vaccinations, an idea that government officials have said they will consider.

**COLOMBO, Sri Lanka** -- Sri Lankan fast bowler Lahiru Kumara has tested positive for COVID-19 ahead of a cricket tour of the West Indies, Sri Lanka Cricket said Monday.

He was tested positive during pre-departure tests of the squad and was isolated.

Kumara is the third member of the team to test positive for COVID-19. Coach Mickey Arthur and batsman Lahiru Thirimanne earlier tested positive, throwing the tour in doubt. However, the team was expected to depart for Antigua as scheduled later Monday.

Health authorities said on Monday that they have decided to purchase 10 million doses of the Oxford-AstraZenica vaccine from neighboring India. It is the only vaccine currently approved by the regulatory body in Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka is currently administering 500,000 doses of the Oxford-AstraZenica vaccine donated by India.

Sri Lanka has reported 79,999 COVID-19 patients, including 445 deaths.

**WASHINGTON** — President Joe Biden will mark 500,000 U.S. lives lost from COVID-19 with a moment

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of silence and candle-lighting ceremony at the White House.

The nation is expected to pass the grim milestone on Monday, just over a year after the first confirmed U.S. fatality of the pandemic.

The White House said Biden will deliver remarks at sunset to honor those who lost their lives. He will be joined by first lady Jill Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris and her husband, Doug Emhoff. They will participate in the moment of silence and lighting ceremony.

Biden has made a point of recognizing the lives lost from the coronavirus. His first event upon arriving in Washington for his inauguration a month ago was to deliver remarks at a COVID-19 memorial ceremony.

WELLINGTON, New Zealand — New Zealand will remove remaining coronavirus restrictions from Auckland on Monday after an outbreak discovered in the largest city fades.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said more than 72,000 tests had found no evidence the virus was spreading in the community.

Auckland was placed into a three-day lockdown this month after a mother, father and daughter tested positive. Another five contacts later tested positive. After the lockdown ended, Auckland continued to have restrictions including on gatherings.

The source of the outbreak remains unclear, although authorities continue to investigate whether there is a connection between infected airline passengers and the mother, who works at a company which cleans laundry for airlines.

New Zealand has an elimination strategy with the coronavirus and has managed to stamp out its spread in the community.

LOS ANGELES -- California's death toll during the coronavirus pandemic has topped 49,000, even as the rates of new infections and hospitalizations continue to plummet across the state.

California reported another 408 deaths Sunday, bringing the total since the outbreak began to 49,105 — the highest in the nation.

Health officials said Sunday that the number of patients in California hospitals with COVID-19 has slipped below 7,000, a drop of more than a third over two weeks.

The 6,760 new confirmed cases reported Sunday are more than 85% below the mid-December peak of about 54,000 in one day. Total cases are approaching 3.45 million.

The positivity rate for people being tested has been falling for weeks, which means fewer people will end up in hospitals.

CODOGNO, Italy — Italians are marking one year since their country was shocked to discover it had the first known locally transmitted COVID-19 case in the West.

With church services Sunday and wreath-laying ceremonies, including in small northern towns which were the first to be hard-hit by the pandemic, citizens paid tribute to the dead. Italy has a confirmed death toll from the virus of 95,500.

While the first wave of infections largely engulfed Lombardy and other northern regions, a second wave, starting in fall 2020, has raced throughout Italy, which so far has registered some 2.8 million cases.

The first locally transmitted case was discovered in a 38-year-old patient in a hospital in Codogno, Lombardy. That patient survived.

But in the northeastern town of Vo, which registered the nation's first known death on Feb. 21, 2020, officials unveiled a memorial plaque at a tree-planting ceremony.

WASHINGTON — The White House says about a third of the coronavirus vaccine doses delayed by this week's winter weather have been delivered this weekend.

Press secretary Jen Psaki says the administration has been working with shippers and states to close the roughly 6 million dose backlog created this week as power outages closed some vaccination centers and icy weather stranded some vaccine in shipping hubs.

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Psaki says the administration is making sure those catch-up doses out to vaccination centers "as soon as they can handle them."

Speaking to ABC's "This Week," Psaki says, "We've been able to get about 2 million of those 6 million doses out," adding, "We expect to rapidly catch up this week."

## Garland to focus on civil rights, political independence

By MICHAEL BALSAMO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Merrick Garland, President Joe Biden's nominee for attorney general, will appear for his confirmation hearing vowing to prioritize civil rights, combat extremist attacks and ensure the Justice Department remains politically independent.

Garland, a federal appeals court judge who was snubbed by Republicans for a seat on the Supreme Court in 2016, will appear Monday before the Senate Judiciary Committee and is widely expected to sail through his confirmation process with bipartisan support.

Garland's nomination has gained public support on both sides of the political aisle, from more than 150 former Justice Department officials — including former attorneys general Loretta Lynch, Michael Mukasey and Alberto Gonzales, along with 61 former federal judges. Others, including two sons of former Attorney General Edward Levi, have also written letters of support to Congress.

"There have been few moments in history where the role of attorney general — and the occupant of that post — have mattered more," the committee's chairman, Sen. Dick Durbin, D-Ill., says in remarks prepared for the hearing.

In his own prepared remarks, Garland focuses on prioritizing policing and civil rights to combat racial discrimination — he says America doesn't "yet have equal justice" — as well as confronting the rise in extremist violence and domestic terror threats and restoring the department's political independence after years of controversial decisions and turmoil.

"Communities of color and other minorities still face discrimination in housing, education, employment, and the criminal justice system; and bear the brunt of the harm caused by pandemic, pollution, and climate change," Garland says.

Garland is also planning to highlight the department's work prosecuting hundreds of pro-Trump rioters who stormed the U.S. Capitol as Congress was voting to certify Biden's electoral win on Jan. 6.

"I will supervise the prosecution of white supremacists and others who stormed the Capitol on January 6 — a heinous attack that sought to disrupt a cornerstone of our democracy: the peaceful transfer of power to a newly elected government," he says.

Biden's choice of Garland reflects the president's goal of restoring the department's reputation as an independent body. During his four years as president, Donald Trump insisted that the attorney general must be loyal to him personally, a position that battered the department's reputation. Garland's high-court nomination by President Barack Obama in 2016 died because the Republican-controlled Senate refused to hold a hearing.

"I believe that he is the right person for this moment in time," said Sen. Amy Klobuchar, D-Minn. "The fact that he's a judge, the fact that he has worked at the Justice Department, that he worked on domestic terrorism cases and headed them up. That he understands how important it is to bring the law back into the Justice Department."

Garland will inherit a Justice Department that endured a tumultuous time under Trump — rife with political drama and controversial decisions — and abundant criticism from Democrats over what they saw as the politicizing of the nation's top law enforcement agencies.

The department's priorities and messaging are expected to shift drastically in the Biden administration, with a focus more on civil rights issue, criminal justice overhauls and policing policies in the wake of nationwide protests over the death of Black Americans at the hands of law enforcement.

But Garland will also likely face questioning about his plans to handle specific investigations and politically

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sensitive cases, like the federal tax investigation involving Biden's son Hunter Biden, along with a Justice Department investigation examining whether New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo's administration intentionally manipulated data about nursing home coronavirus deaths.

A special counsel's inquiry started by William Barr, while he was attorney general, into the origins of the Trump-Russia investigation also remains open. It will be up to Garland to decide what to make public from that report.

Garland is a white man, but two other members of the Justice Department leadership, Vanita Gupta and Kristen Clarke, are women with significant experience in civil rights. Their selections appeared designed to blunt any concerns about Biden's choice for attorney general and served as a signal that progressive causes would be prioritized in the new administration.

Garland is an experienced judge who held senior positions at the Justice Department decades ago, including as a supervisor in the prosecution of the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing. But he is set to return to a department that is radically different from the one he left. His experience prosecuting domestic terrorism cases could prove exceptionally handy.

Associated Press writer Mary Clare Jalonick contributed to this report.

## Protests swell after Myanmar junta raises specter of force

YANGON, Myanmar (AP) — Protesters gathered in Myanmar's biggest city on Monday despite the ruling junta's threat to use lethal force against people who join a general strike against the military's takeover three weeks ago.

More than 1,000 protesters gathered near the U.S. Embassy in Yangon despite barriers blocking the way, but left to avoid a confrontation after 20 military trucks with riot police arrived nearby. Protests continued in other parts of the city, including next to Sule Pagoda, a traditional gathering point.

Factories, workplaces and shops were shuttered across the country Monday in response to the call for a nationwide strike. The closings extended to the capital, Naypyitaw.

The junta had warned against a general strike in a public announcement Sunday night on state television broadcaster MRTV.

"It is found that the protesters have raised their incitement towards riot and anarchy mob on the day of 22 February. Protesters are now inciting the people, especially emotional teenagers and youths, to a confrontation path where they will suffer the loss of life," the onscreen text said in English, replicating the spoken announcement in Burmese.

The junta's statement also blamed criminals for past protest violence, with the result that "the security force members had to fire back." Three protesters have been fatally shot.

Trucks cruised the streets of Yangon on Sunday night, blaring similar warnings.

The protest movement, which seeks to restore power to the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi and have her and other leaders released from detention, has embraced nonviolence.

The nationwide strike was dubbed Five-Twos, for the five number twos in the numeric form of Monday's date.

"I am joining the 22222 nationwide protest as a citizen of the country. We must join the protest this time without fail," said 42-year-old Zayar, who owns a bottled water business in the capital. "So I've closed down my factory and joined the demonstration."

Zin Mi Mi Aung, a 27-year-old saleswoman, also joined the strike.

"We don't want to be governed by the regime," she said as people marched and chanted behind her. "We will fight against them until we win."

Thousands of people gathered in the capital's wide boulevards, many on motorbikes to allow swift movement in the event of any police action.

Reports and photos of protests, some very large, in at least a dozen cities and towns were posted on social media. There were pictures of a particularly colorful event in Taunggyi, the capital of Shan State,



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where scores of small red hot-air balloons were set aloft. A bigger one was adorned with a drawing of the three-finger salute adopted by the anti-coup movement. The city is famous for its annual hot-air balloon festival.

In Pinyinana, a satellite town of Naypyitaw, police chased people through the streets to arrest them.

The general strike was an extension of actions called by the Civil Disobedience Movement, a loosely organized group that has been encouraging civil servants and workers at state enterprises to walk off their jobs. Many transport workers and white collar workers have responded to the appeal.

On Saturday, a General Strike Committee was formed by more than two dozen groups to provide a more formal structure for the resistance movement and launch a "spring revolution."

The ominous signs of potential conflict drew attention outside Myanmar, with the U.S. reiterating that it stood with the people of Myanmar, also called Burma.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Twitter the U.S. would take firm action "against those who perpetrate violence against the people of Burma as they demand the restoration of their democratically elected government."

"We call on the military to stop violence, release all those unjustly detained, cease attacks on journalists and activists, and respect the will of the people," State Department spokesman Ned Price said on Twitter.

On Sunday, crowds in Naypyitaw attended a funeral for the young woman who was the first person confirmed to have been killed in the protests, while demonstrators also mourned two other protesters who were shot dead on Saturday in Mandalay, the country's second-biggest city.

Large crowds came out again Monday in Mandalay.

The military prevented Parliament from convening on Feb. 1, claiming that elections last November won by Suu Kyi's party in a landslide were tainted by fraud. The election commission that affirmed the victory has since been replaced by the junta, which says a new election will be held in a year's time.

The coup was a major setback to Myanmar's transition to democracy after 50 years of army rule that began with a 1962 coup. Suu Kyi came to power after her party won a 2015 election, but the generals retained substantial power under a military-drafted constitution.

Under the junta, 640 people have been arrested, charged or sentenced, with 593, including Suu Kyi and President Win Myint, still in detention, according to the independent Assistance Association for Political Prisoners.

## Vaccinations start without rush in Australia, parts of Asia

CANBERRA, Australia (AP) — Australia started its COVID-19 inoculation program on Monday, days after its neighbor New Zealand, with both governments deciding their pandemic experiences did not require the fast tracking of vaccine rollouts that occurred in many parts of the world.

Other countries in the Asia-Pacific region that have dealt relatively well with the pandemic either only recently started vaccinating or are about to, including Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia and Singapore.

Catherine Bennett, an epidemiologist at Australia's Deakin University, said countries that do not face a virus crisis benefit from taking their time and learning from countries that have taken emergency vaccination measures such as the United States.

"We've now got data on pregnant women who are vaccinated. Natural accidents, like incorrect dosing, happen in a real world rollout," Bennett said. "All of those things are really valuable insights."

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison had his first dose of the Pfizer vaccine on Sunday in a show of confidence in the product. Australia is prioritizing building public confidence in COVID-19 vaccines ahead of speed of delivery.

Health and border control workers, as well as nursing home residents and workers, started getting the Pfizer vaccine on Monday at hubs across the country. Australian Health Minister Greg Hunt will get the AstraZeneca vaccine when it becomes available within weeks.

The vast majority of cases in Australia are travelers infected overseas who are detected during 14-day mandatory hotel quarantines. Australia has recorded 909 coronavirus deaths.

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New Zealand began inoculations last week after receiving its first batch of the Pfizer vaccine.

The nation of 5 million has successfully stamped out the spread of the virus, and the first people to get the shots are border workers and their families. That's a different priority group than in most countries, and the idea is to stop the virus from spreading from any arriving travelers who are infected. After that, healthcare and essential workers, along with vulnerable older people, will be vaccinated.

However, the rollout of a program to vaccinate the broader population in New Zealand won't begin until the second half of the year, behind many other countries.

In Australia, some infectious disease and ethics experts at Australian National University have accused the government of hoarding vaccines and argued that the government should send surplus supplies to countries in desperate need.

Elsewhere in Asia, Thailand, which has seen only 83 virus deaths, has yet to start vaccinations. It will receive the first 200,000 doses of the Sinovac vaccine on Wednesday. That is part of the Thai government's plan that has so far secured 2 million doses from Sinovac and 61 million doses from AstraZeneca.

The government has a policy to provide free vaccinations to all Thais and aims to inject half of the population this year. The government said it hopes to begin the vaccinations a few days after the first batch of vaccines arrive.

Vietnam, which has recorded 35 deaths, announced last week that it will receive 5 million vaccine doses by the end of February and hopes to start inoculations as early as the beginning of March. Five million people — mostly front-line workers — will be given the first shots.

Cambodia, which has yet to report any virus deaths, received its first shipment of 600,000 vaccine doses from China on Feb. 7, part of 1 million doses Beijing donated. The country began the vaccination program on Feb. 10, starting with Prime Minister Hun Sen's sons, government ministers and officials at a state run hospital.

In Singapore, which has reported 29 virus deaths, some 250,000 residents, including healthcare workers and other front-line workers, had been vaccinated as of last week, according to health officials. The aim is to get another 1 million people to receive their first dose of the vaccine by early April.

Laos, which also has reported no deaths, received 300,000 doses of the Sinopharm vaccine on Feb. 8. A Health Ministry official said that it expects 20% of the Lao population, or 1.6 million people, to be vaccinated within the year.

## Russia's COVID-19 vaccination drive slowly picking up speed

By DARIA LITVINOVA Associated Press

IKHALA, Russia (AP) — Maria Piparinen and other elderly residents of Ikhala were relieved when they heard that doctors were finally bringing a few doses of the coronavirus vaccine to their remote, snowy village in the Russian region of Karelia, near the border with Finland.

Otherwise, the 75-year-old said she would have had to hire a car to take her 10 kilometers (6 miles) to the town of Lakhdenpokhya, because the bus no longer runs there.

And besides, "I called the clinic in Lakhdenpokhya, but ... they told me (all the slots in) February were booked already," Piparinen told The Associated Press.

The village of wooden houses — carved out of a dense forest of fir trees about 20 kilometers (12 miles) from the Finnish border and 100 kilometers (60 miles) north of St. Petersburg — is one of several in the Karelia region where Russia's vaccination campaign has arrived in recent weeks.

More than 18,000 people have gotten their first dose of the Sputnik V vaccine in the region of 600,000 that was hit hard by COVID-19.

At one point in December, Karelia recorded a daily average of 75.7 cases per 100,000 people, the highest rate in Russia as a whole, which had been averaging 18.8 recorded cases per 100,000.

"When you watch TV and see how people are suffering ... you don't want that. You want to live a little longer," said 74-year-old Galina Shilova, one of Ikhala's nearly 700 residents. Some of those getting the shots last week at the makeshift clinic had to make their way cautiously along snowy footpaths.

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The goal is to vaccinate 290,000 people, or 60% of the region's adults, by summer, said Karelia Deputy Health Minister Galina Matveyeva.

Russia took pride in being the first country to approve a coronavirus vaccine, although it faced criticism for doing it before completing the advanced testing necessary to ensure Sputnik V's safety and effectiveness. It began vaccinations in December, another global first, but now lags behind a dozen nations that have been using vaccines developed in the West and China.

Russian authorities don't regularly release data on vaccination rates, but the number who have gotten at least the first shot appears to be somewhere between 2 million and 3.2 million.

On Feb. 10, Denis Logunov, deputy director of the Gamaleya Center that developed Sputnik V, said 2.2 million Russians, or less than 2%, had received their first dose of the two-shot vaccine and more than 1.7 million had gotten both shots. An analysis of regional media reports by AP found that some 3.2 million had gotten their first shot as of last week.

That compares with over 43 million people in the U.S., or about 13.2%, who have gotten their first shot, and 18.8 million who have gotten both in a campaign that has had its own difficulties.

Russia's slow rollout has raised questions in the West as more countries have agreed to buy millions of doses of Sputnik V.

The Russian Direct Investment Fund that bankrolled the vaccine's development and is marketing it abroad didn't respond to a request for comment on how many doses are going to other countries.

Media reports indicate about 20 countries ordered a total of over 200 million doses, said Elena Subbotina, consultant with Central & Eastern European Team of CBPartners, a global health care strategy consulting firm.

On Friday, an African Union-created task force said Russia has offered 300 million doses of Sputnik V.

"I must say we still wonder why Russia is offering theoretically millions and millions of doses while not sufficiently progressing in vaccinating their own people," said European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen on Feb. 17.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Russia's vaccination campaign is going at "normal" rates.

The drive has picked up speed but is still rather slow, said Alexander Dragan, an independent data analyst who monitors regional vaccination rates.

"Between the beginning of January and now, the vaccination rate has increased 10 times. During the New Year holidays, some 13,000 people a day were being vaccinated, and over the past nine days, I estimate that shots were being given to 135,000-145,000 people daily," Dragan said. "In absolute numbers, it looks impressive ... but in proportionate numbers, it's very modest, because one should keep in mind Russia's population of 146 million."

Dragan's estimate suggests the vaccination rate last week was about one-fourth of that in the U.S.

Health Minister Mikhail Murashko has announced plans to vaccinate 60% of the population by the end of June.

Experts and the media point to limited supply, distribution logistics complicated by its having to be stored and transported at minus-18 degrees C (minus-0.4 F), and hesitance among those wary of its rushed approval.

"It's supply-side or demand-side issues, and my guess is, it's a little of both," said Judy Twigg, a professor of political science at Virginia Commonwealth University specializing in global health.

Logunov, of the Gamaleya Center, said 7 million doses have been released for domestic use, another 1 million are expected by the end of February, and 10 million are planned to be produced in March.

The Health Ministry allocates the doses. While Muscovites can get vaccinated on the day they decide to do it, long waits have been reported in other regions.

In Karelia's capital of Petrozavodsk, patients told AP they waited more than two weeks. Residents of Sortavala, a town about 300 kilometers (185 miles) west of Petrozavodsk, complained on social media in early February about being unable to sign up.

Regulations state that vaccines must be administered by a team including a physician to examine recipi-

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ents and offer help in case of an adverse reaction — something that can also constrain the drive because of a limited number of available physicians.

Karelia has received 23,392 doses in total, 4,200 of which arrived last week. Matveyeva, the deputy health minister, said the region can store about 30,000 doses at once at minus-18 degrees C, limiting how many vaccines they can receive.

For last week, 250 doses were allocated to the Sortavala district and the neighboring district, an area that is home to 42,000 people, including those in Ikhala. A team led by Dr. Alexander Romanov, Sortavala hospital head, brought 10 doses to Ikhala on Tuesday.

When the outbreak surged in the fall, it didn't spare Ikhala, where 60 infections were registered.

"November, December, January — it was something," said Tatyana Tikhonova, the village paramedic.

Hamlets in Karelia, some of which became part of the Soviet Union after it fought a war with Finland in 1939-40, might appear to be cut off from more populated parts of Russia but actually are connected.

"Residents have relatives that work in cities and come to visit their parents, grandmothers and grandfathers on weekends and holidays, bringing the coronavirus with them," said Dr. Irina Garmina of the Sortavala hospital.

Tikhonova told her patients when the doses were coming to Ikhala — mostly the elderly with conditions putting them at risk for the virus. One declined because she believed she had already had COVID-19 and didn't want the vaccine without getting tested first.

Romanov acknowledged that "the number of vaccinated people is not high," but is convinced more doses will arrive soon.

"In the nearest future, when the region gets the sufficient amount of the vaccine, we will continue this work and expand the vaccination geography," he said.

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## US coronavirus death toll approaches milestone of 500,000

By JOHN RABY Associated Press

The U.S. stood Sunday at the brink of a once-unthinkable tally: 500,000 people lost to the coronavirus.

A year into the pandemic, the running total of lives lost was about 498,000 — roughly the population of Kansas City, Missouri, and just shy of the size of Atlanta. The figure compiled by Johns Hopkins University surpasses the number of people who died in 2019 of chronic lower respiratory diseases, stroke, Alzheimer's, flu and pneumonia combined.

"It's nothing like we have ever been through in the last 102 years, since the 1918 influenza pandemic," the nation's top infectious disease expert, Dr. Anthony Fauci, said on CNN's "State of the Union."

The U.S. virus death toll reached 400,000 on Jan. 19 in the waning hours in office for President Donald Trump, whose handling of the crisis was judged by public health experts to be a singular failure.

The nation could pass this next grim milestone on Monday. President Joe Biden will mark the U.S. crossing 500,000 lives lost from COVID-19 with a moment of silence and candle lighting ceremony at the White House.

Biden will deliver remarks at sunset to honor the dead, the White House said. He's expected to be joined by first lady Jill Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris and her husband, Doug Emhoff.

The first known deaths from the virus in the U.S. happened in early February 2020, both of them in Santa Clara County, California. It took four months to reach the first 100,000 dead. The toll hit 200,000 deaths in September and 300,000 in December. Then it took just over a month to go from 300,000 to 400,000 and about two months to climb from 400,000 to the brink of 500,000.

Joyce Willis of Las Vegas is among the countless Americans who lost family members during the pandemic. Her husband, Anthony Willis, died Dec. 28, followed by her mother-in-law in early January.



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There were anxious calls from the ICU when her husband was hospitalized. She was unable to see him before he died because she, too, had the virus and could not visit.

"They are gone. Your loved one is gone, but you are still alive," Willis said. "It's like you still have to get up every morning. You have to take care of your kids and make a living. There is no way around it. You just have to move on."

Then came a nightmare scenario of caring for her father-in-law while dealing with grief, arranging funerals, paying bills, helping her children navigate online school and figuring out how to go back to work as an occupational therapist.

Her father-in-law, a Vietnam vet, also contracted the virus. He also suffered from respiratory issues and died on Feb. 8. The family isn't sure if COVID-19 contributed to his death.

"Some days I feel OK and other days I feel like I'm strong and I can do this," she said. "And then other days it just hits me. My whole world is turned upside-down."

The global death toll was approaching 2.5 million, according to Johns Hopkins.

While the count is based on figures supplied by government agencies around the world, the real death toll is believed to be significantly higher, in part because of inadequate testing and cases inaccurately attributed to other causes early on.

Despite efforts to administer coronavirus vaccines, a widely cited model by the University of Washington projects the U.S. death toll will surpass 589,000 by June 1.

"People will be talking about this decades and decades and decades from now," Fauci said on NBC's "Meet The Press."

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Associated Press Writer Heather Hollingsworth in Kansas City, Missouri, contributed to this report.

## Gun provocation reveals tensions in Michigan tourist haven

By JOHN FLESHER Associated Press

TRAVERSE CITY, Mich. (AP) — Some 90 minutes into a routine meeting of the Grand Traverse County board, its agenda packed with mundane topics such as roads and libraries, came a surprising seven seconds that drew the kind of national attention no local government wants.

The Jan. 20 proceedings were livestreamed, with members joining from home because of the pandemic. As usual, citizens phoned in to sound off. Among them was Keli MacIntosh, who complained about remarks to the board last spring by members of the Proud Boys on designating the county four hours northwest of Detroit as a "Second Amendment sanctuary."

As MacIntosh urged the chairman to disavow the far-right group that was a leading agitator during the Jan. 6 riot at the U.S. Capitol, commissioner Ron Clous — seated in a room with deer heads mounted on a wall — briefly disappeared from view and returned holding a rifle. He brandished it for the webcam, then set it aside.

The chairman, Rob Hentschel, laughed onscreen. But many in this Lake Michigan bayside community, which prizes tourism and a friendly image, were not amused. To them, the provocative gesture that made national headlines was another sign of a deeper problem in this woodsy, idyllic region that couldn't be brushed aside.

Michigan's northwestern Lower Peninsula is more than a resort community with sandy beaches, cherry orchards and arts festivals where vacationers come to play. Beneath the cheery exterior lurk racial and cultural divides eerily similar to those that have ignited protests and violence elsewhere.

"In this age, no place is an island," said Warren Call, president of a business organization in Traverse City, the county seat. The incident "goes against everything we stand for."

This postcard-pretty patchwork of small towns, forests and fields is far removed from the tough streets of urban America and the South's racial tinderboxes. But as northern Michigan becomes more popular and accessible, long-simmering conflicts boil over.

Income inequality is stark in the area, notorious for skimpy wages. Producers of the fruit for which Tra-

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verse City bills itself “cherry capital of the world” are struggling to survive. Meanwhile, pricey condominium developments spring up to accommodate an influx of wealthy retirees and summer residents whose yachts pack lakefront marinas, while 20-somethings who serve their meals in upscale restaurants scramble for affordable housing.

Some elderly newcomers from big cities — and younger ones who can work remotely via wireless internet — bring progressive ideas that clash with Northern Michigan’s entrenched conservatism. The area remains solidly Republican, although Democrats have captured two county commission seats representing Traverse City, which has a gay mayor.

Leelanau County, adjacent to Grand Traverse and dotted with wineries and a national lakeshore, was embarrassed last August when road commissioner Tom Eckerle used the n-word during a meeting while blaming Blacks in Detroit for spreading the coronavirus. The 75-year-old farmer resigned under pressure.

“I got calls about that from the East Coast to the West Coast,” Chet Janik, the county administrator, said in an interview. “We had minority people asking if it was safe for them to come up here.”

Janik, 63, who immigrated to the area from Poland as a child and endured taunts about his heritage, said Eckerle’s racial slurs don’t represent his rural county. But he acknowledged the rapid pace of change had unsettled some.

“It’s just that they want things to be the way they used to,” he said.

But local residents of color say discrimination — often subtle, sometimes blatant — is commonplace in the region, which is well over 90% white.

Members of Northern Michigan E3, an anti-racism group, described uncomfortable encounters with law enforcement, bullying in schools, suspicious gazes in stores. A Native American pupil recently was the target of racist language and violent videos, said Holly T. Bird, an activist and attorney. A doctor of Iranian descent wrote in a local newspaper that a sheriff’s deputy had knocked on his door after someone apparently saw him in his yard and reported a “suspicious person.”

“We agree this is a wonderful place filled with wonderful people but it has a racism problem,” said Bird, who is Native American.

Tyasha Harrison, a Black woman who moved to nearby Benzie County eight years ago, said such experiences had made family and friends from elsewhere reluctant to visit.

“Some Black people that know what’s going on in Michigan don’t feel welcome, and for some reason we keep making national news for doing some crazy, off-the-wall, racist stuff,” she said in an interview.

Her organization formed after a Black Lives Matter rally along the Traverse City waterfront last summer. A handful of armed counter-demonstrators in camouflage garb showed up, but kept their distance.

Their presence came during a year of resurgent paramilitary activity in the state, with protesters angry over Gov. Gretchen Whitmer’s pandemic policies carrying firearms into the Capitol in Lansing. Last fall, six men were charged in an alleged plot to kidnap the Democratic governor. Eight others were accused of planning terrorist acts, including storming the statehouse.

Northern Michigan was a hub of the self-styled “militia” movement a generation ago. Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols, convicted in the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing that killed 168 people, reportedly met with activists in the state.

More recently, dozens of Michigan counties have declared themselves “Second Amendment sanctuaries,” pledging to resist gun control. Grand Traverse County’s board of commissioners did so last March.

The Jan. 20 incident involving Clous and his rifle vividly illustrated the region’s cultural and political schism. He and Hentschel, the chairman, rejected calls for their resignation, and the commission deadlocked on whether to censure them.

Clous didn’t return calls and emails from The Associated Press. He told the Traverse City Record-Eagle he wanted to show support for gun rights and described the Proud Boys as “decent guys.”

Hentschel said during the meeting he knew some members of the all-male organization, which says it defends “western chauvinism.”

“I’ve met multi-racial, Puerto Rican Proud Boys, and they informed me they also have gay proud boys,”

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he said. "I don't see how that's a hate group."

MacIntosh, who was speaking when Clous retrieved the firearm, said she was shaken by the gesture. "I didn't think he was going to shoot me, but I do think his whole point was to intimidate me," she said. The act prompted hours of phoned-in comments during subsequent meetings.

David Barr, a businessman, said in an interview that Clous should apologize but the matter had been "blown out of proportion."

"People feel if somebody makes a mistake any more on an elected body that you need to manufacture outrage and scream and holler and carry on like it's the end of the world," he said.

Six years ago, lawyer Michael Naughton joined the wave of young professionals moving from a big city — Detroit, in his case — to Traverse City, where he had vacationed as a child.

Now 42, married and the father of two daughters, he wrote a letter seeking Clous' resignation and shared it with others. Eventually more than 1,500 — including the mayor and city commissioners — signed on.

Naughton said he understood the mistrust of government shared by many in Michigan. But to shrug off the commissioner's act would send a message that such behavior is acceptable, he said.

"The picture of Mr. Clous with the gun is not what should define us," Naughton said.

## Big factor in COVID votes: Would Dems sink first Biden goal?

By ALAN FRAM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Democratic leaders have a potent dynamic on their side as Congress preps for its first votes on the party's \$1.9 trillion COVID-19 relief bill: Would any Democrat dare cast the vote that scuttles new President Joe Biden's leadoff initiative?

Democrats' wafer-thin 10-vote House majority leaves little room for defections in the face of solid Republican opposition, and they have none in a 50-50 Senate they control only with Vice President Kamala Harris' tie-breaking vote. Internal Democratic disputes remain over issues like raising the minimum wage, how much aid to funnel to struggling state and local governments and whether to extend emergency unemployment benefits for an extra month.

Yet with the House Budget Committee planning to approve the 591-page package Monday, Democrats across the party's spectrum show little indication they're willing to embarrass Biden with a high-profile defeat a month into his presidency.

Such a setback would deal early blows to both Biden and new Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y. It could also wound congressional Democrats overall by risking repercussions in the 2022 elections if they fail to unite effectively against clear enemies like the pandemic and the frozen economy.

"You think very seriously before casting a deciding vote against your own party's president's legislative agenda," said Ian Russell, a longtime Democratic consultant. But he cautioned that lawmakers must decide "for themselves how their vote is going to play out" at home.

The issue that's provoked the deepest divisions is a drive, largely by progressives, to boost the federal minimum wage to \$15 hourly over five years. The current \$7.25 minimum took effect in 2009.

"It was the No. 1 priority for progressives," Rep. Pramila Jayapal, D-Wash., chairwoman of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, said in an interview last week. "This is something we've run on and something we've promised to the American people."

An overall relief bill, including the minimum wage boost, is expected to clear the House, and likely the Senate as well. But the minimum wage boost's fate is shakier in the Senate, where Joe Manchin of West Virginia, perhaps the chamber's most conservative Democrat, has said the \$15 target is too expensive.

Sen. Kyrsten Sinema, D-Ariz., has suggested she might oppose it, too. She said Democrats shouldn't whisk it to passage using special rules that would let them avoid a Republican filibuster, which would require an unattainable 60 votes to overcome.

Manchin's office did not make him available for an interview. Earlier this month he told The Hill, a political publication, that \$11 hourly would be "responsible and reasonable."

Even more ominously, the Senate parliamentarian is expected to rule soon on whether the minimum

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wage provision must be tossed from the bill. Under expedited procedures Democrats are using, items can't be included that aren't principally budget-related, and it's unclear if Democrats would have the votes to overturn such a decision.

Yet even in a Congress where virtually every Democratic vote is needed, few if any are overtly threatening to take the entire bill down unless they get their way.

Senate Budget Committee Chairman Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., his chamber's chief minimum wage sponsor, said Democrats must "act boldly" and approve a package with the minimum wage increase. He answered indirectly when asked if he'd be willing to compromise to keep the plan in the overall bill.

"Every Democrat understands that at this moment in history, this unprecedented moment of pain and suffering for working families, it is absolutely imperative we support the president, that we do what the American people want and we pass that package," he said in an interview.

Moderate Rep. Brad Schneider, D-Ill., also signaled a distaste for intractable demands. The pathway to success is to "push as hard as you can to get as much as you can now that you want, not compromise your principles and know that tomorrow's another day," said Schneider, a leader of the New Democrat Coalition, a group of nearly 100 moderate House Democrats.

Republicans say the proposal is overpriced, not targeted to people who most need help, insufficiently prods schools to reopen and is a partisan Democratic power play to ignore the GOP.

The bill would provide one-time \$1,400 payments to millions of low- and middle-income people, increase child tax credits that could be paid in advance and monthly and provide extra \$400 weekly federal unemployment benefits through August. It would also provide hundreds of billions of dollars for state and local governments, shuttered schools, COVID-19 vaccines and testing and struggling airlines, restaurants and other businesses.

History has rich examples of lawmakers who've faced pivotal decisions on whether to loyally back priorities of their parties' presidents, with mixed results.

In 2017, three GOP defections — most famously a post-midnight thumbs-down by the now deceased Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz. — brought down then-President Donald Trump's trademark effort to repeal the Obama-era Affordable Care Act. McCain's vote sparked unending enmity from Trump. Of the other two, Maine Sen. Susan Collins was reelected last year and Alaska Sen. Lisa Murkowski faces reelection in 2022.

In 1993, new President Bill Clinton's \$500 billion deficit-reduction plan passed the House by a single vote after freshman Rep. Marjorie Margolies-Mezvinsky agreed to support it. Mezvinsky, who'd previously criticized the measure as lacking sufficient spending cuts, voted "yes" after Clinton sought her backing in a phone call she took in the House cloakroom during the vote.

"I told him I knew how important it was and I wouldn't let it go down, but I said I would only be the tie-breaking vote," she recalled this week in an interview. She said she also told him, "If I pull you over the top, you'll lose this seat."

Both scenarios played out.

The package passed 218-216, saved by her decisive vote. And the lawmaker, whose last name is now Margolies following divorce, lost her reelection two years later from what was a heavily GOP district in Philadelphia's suburbs.

She never returned to Congress. But one of her children, Marc Mezvinsky, later married Clinton's daughter, Chelsea.

## In Israel and beyond, virus vaccines bring political power

By JOSEF FEDERMAN Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Forget about oil and arms. Coronavirus vaccines are emerging as the newest currency of choice in the Middle East.

Israel's reopening of its economy, combined with a murky prisoner swap with Syria and the arrival of a batch of vaccines in the Gaza Strip, have all underscored how those with access to the vaccines have political power in the turbulent region.



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Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has been at the forefront of this trend, pinning his re-election hopes on the success of his campaign to vaccinate Israel's adult population. At the same time, he has offered rewards to those who vaccinate and punishments to those who don't.

Israel has jumped out to the world's fastest vaccination campaign, administering at least one dose to more than half its 9.3 million people and the required two doses to about a third in less than two months. In contrast to the long waits seen in Europe and the U.S., vaccines are plentiful and available almost on demand to anyone who wants one. Clinics have even offered free food and cappuccinos to help lure reluctant holdouts to come in and get the jab.

Netanyahu's efforts finally seem to be bearing fruit, and the number of new coronavirus infections and serious cases is dropping. That enabled the government on Sunday to lift a number of restrictions, re-opening stores, shopping malls, and many schools after a two-month lockdown. In the coming weeks, all schools and restaurants are expected to reopen, just in time for the March 23 election.

"The timing is good for him," said Gideon Rahat, a political scientist at Israel's Hebrew University.

Whether it is enough to divert attention from an ongoing corruption trial and the broader economic damage caused by the pandemic is another issue.

Much will depend on Netanyahu's "agenda setting," Rahat said. "He will talk about the vaccines all the time," he said, while others will focus on his missteps over the past year.

Hundreds of thousands of people have lost their jobs and businesses during a series of lockdowns, and there is widespread public anger over the flouting of lockdown restrictions by the ultra-Orthodox religious community, one of Netanyahu's key political allies. Many say Netanyahu waited too long to close the country's main airport, allowing fast-spreading variants of the virus to infect the unvaccinated.

Sticking to his script, Netanyahu on Saturday unveiled his "green pass" program, which will allow the fully vaccinated to attend cultural events, fly abroad and patronize restaurants and health clubs. These services and amenities will remain off limits for those who do not get immunized.

"I ask everyone who has not been vaccinated – go be vaccinated. You will have the Green Pass and you will also be able to benefit from it," Netanyahu said during a photo op at a Tel Aviv-area gym.

Israel has faced international criticism for largely excluding Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip from the vaccination campaign.

Yet Netanyahu reportedly showed little hesitation in agreeing to pay Russia some \$1.2 million to buy coronavirus vaccines for archenemy Syria as part of a deal last week to release an Israeli woman held captive in Damascus.

Netanyahu boasted last week that his warm ties with Russian President Vladimir Putin helped clinch the deal. His office made no mention of any vaccines and reportedly pushed the country's military censor to block the vaccine purchases.

Asked about the reported deal, Netanyahu was evasive. He said "not one Israeli vaccine" was delivered to Syria -- a country that harbors hostile Iranian forces. But he would not say whether Israel had paid Russia for the vaccines.

"It is legitimate for the Israeli government to decide to deviate from past norms and to pay with another form of currency," Yoav Limor, an Israel military affairs correspondent, wrote in Israel Hayom. "However, the decision to hide that is baffling and worrisome. Obviously, someone was very uncomfortable with having that matter come to light."

Yet Netanyahu does not appear to be deterred. An Israeli official said Sunday that Israel is considering sharing surplus vaccines with friendly nations. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because he was discussing internal government deliberations.

The disparities between Israel's successful vaccination push with its own population and the Palestinians have drawn criticism from U.N. officials and rights groups and have shined a light on the inequities between rich and poor countries getting access to vaccines.

These groups contend that Israel is responsible for vaccinating the Palestinians, while Israel has argued that under interim peace agreements it is not responsible for vaccinating them. Israel's vaccination cam-

paign has included its own Arab population.

Ahmad Tibi, a prominent Arab lawmaker in the Israeli parliament, wrote on Twitter: "Must we wait for a Jewish person to cross the border with Gaza for them to deserve vaccines?"

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas has struggled to secure vaccines for his people. So far, he has received 2,000 doses from Israel to treat medical workers in the West Bank, and 10,000 doses from Russia.

One of Abbas' main rivals on Sunday orchestrated the delivery of 20,000 doses of the Russian Sputnik V vaccine from the United Arab Emirates. The move by Mohammed Dahlan, a former Abbas aide forced into exile after a falling out with the Palestinian leader, appeared to be aimed in part at making Abbas appear weak ahead of parliamentary elections scheduled in May.

Dahlan, who is backing a list of supporters in the election, "boosted his position and political presence" with the delivery, said Mustafa Ibrahim, a Gaza-based writer. "It's part of the campaigning and empowers the group that delivers the aid."

AP correspondents Ilan Ben Zion in Jerusalem and Fares Akram in Gaza City, Gaza Strip, contributed reporting.

## Chinese loans to Latin America plunge as virus strains ties

By JOSHUA GOODMAN Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — It seemed like a match made in finance heaven.

In 2010, China, its economy roaring and state companies looking to expand globally, set its eyes on Latin America, a region starved of capital but rich in natural resources the Asian giant lacked. The result: a record \$35 billion in state-to-state loans that year.

Fast forward a decade and the once-torrid relationship is starting to mature in ways that suggest China may be growing wary of its once do-no-wrong partner.

For the first time in 15 years, China's two biggest policy banks — the China Development Bank (CDB) and the Export-Import Bank of China — made no new loans to the region in 2020, capping a multi-year slump driven by Latin America's worsening economic slide.

The data comes from a new report by the Inter-American Dialogue, a Washington think tank, and Boston University's Global Development Policy Center, both of which have been tracking for years China's yuan diplomacy in Washington's backyard.

China's growing economic and diplomatic influence in the region has worried U.S. policymakers, who have been at a loss to counter its rise. The task now falls to the Biden administration, which has warned that the Chinese footprint in the region is a national security threat. But with China having displaced the U.S. as the top trading partner of several South American nations, catching up will be no easy task.

Meanwhile, the U.S. may have fallen even farther behind during the pandemic, when China donated more than \$215 million in supplies — from surgical gloves to thermal imaging technologies — to allies in the region, according to the research. By comparison, the United State Agency for International Development and State Department has provided \$153 million. China also conducted clinical trials or plans to manufacture vaccines in five countries — Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Mexico and Peru.

"Without a doubt part of the region's COVID response has a Chinese face," said Rebecca Ray, a Boston University economist and one of the authors of the new report. "It's a missed opportunity for the U.S. but since the bottoming out of American manufacturing in the 1990s there's really no way to compete. Many of the same medical supplies China ships to Latin America we buy from China as well."

But while the pandemic has opened the door to much-welcomed Chinese aid, it's also made it harder for governments to pay their bills to Beijing. A deep 7.4% recession in the Latin America and Caribbean last year wiped out nearly a decade's worth of growth, according to International Monetary Fund data.

With borrowers squeezed, China has taken a hit. Last year, Ecuador negotiated to delay for a year nearly \$900 million in debt payments serviced by oil shipments. Venezuela — by far the region's biggest borrower — is believed to have received a similar grace period. At the same time,

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"With the region facing unprecedented challenges, China is unlikely to lend any more for now," said Margaret Myers, head of the Asia-Latin America program at the Dialogue. "Instead it has to grapple with its own problematic portfolio."

The slowdown in lending to Latin America reflects a broader, global pullback, as China turns inward to bolster its own recovery efforts amid the pandemic. The ruling Communist Party has lent billions of dollars to build ports, railways and other infrastructure across Asia to Africa, Europe and Latin America in order to expand China's access to markets and resources.

But Beijing has grown more cautious after some borrowers struggled to repay loans. Officials say they will examine projects and financing more carefully.

The China Development Bank and the foreign ministry didn't respond to questions about the reasons for the decline in Chinese loans to Latin America.

Even though lending has dried up, Chinese buying of Latin America's soybeans, iron ore and other commodities remained robust, at an estimated \$136 billion. That's despite a sharp rise of China's purchases of American farm goods, a promise reached with the Trump administration to end a debilitating trade war.

Chinese state-run energy companies also aggressively bought up at fire sale prices energy assets from exiting Western investors. Overall, Chinese mergers and acquisitions surged to \$7 billion in 2020, nearly double the amount of activity in 2019, according to the research.

Among the deals: the sale of Peru's largest electric company by San Diego, CA-based Sempra Energy to China Three Gorges Corp. Another \$5 billion deal giving State Grid Corp. of China control of a major utility in Chile was announced last year but not included in the data because it hasn't been finalized.

For the region's leaders, Chinese loans for big ticket infrastructure projects are hard to resist. Interest rates are low and unlike loans from the World Bank and IMF there are fewer strings attached and approval is faster, allowing leaders to tout accomplishments in time for the next election.

Even Colombia — Washington's staunchest regional ally and a country that was cool to China's entreaties — recently jumped on the bandwagon. Last year, a consortium including China Harbour Engineering Company broke ground on the capital Bogota's first metro, a \$3.9 billion project. No American firms placed bids for the project, which did not directly benefit from any Chinese loans.

U.S. officials have tried to push back, pointing out that U.S. overseas assistance is longstanding and more transparent.

"Beijing's assistance in the region is generally aimed at advancing the People's Republic of China's commercial or political interests," the State Department's Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs said in a statement.

In January, at the end of the Trump administration, the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation signed an unprecedented agreement with Ecuador to finance up to \$2.8 billion in infrastructure projects, money that it said could be used to "refinance predatory Chinese debt."

But the DFC's total funding — \$60 billion — pale in comparison to the \$1 trillion that China has earmarked for its "Belt and Road" initiative to expand influence around the world.

The U.S. loan package to Ecuador was significant because it also would require the government to privatize oil and infrastructure assets and to ban Chinese technology.

"This definitely would limit China's influence," said Myers. "But by burdening future generations with more debt, and encouraging the use of fossil fuels, does it really help Ecuador in the long run? If it doesn't, then it could backfire against the U.S."

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Associated Press writer Joe McDonald in Beijing contributed to this report.

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Joshua Goodman on Twitter: @APJoshGoodman

## Why some Texans are getting sky-high energy bills

By JOSEPH PISANI and JONATHAN MATTISE Associated Press Writers

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After unusual icy weather left millions of Texans without power, some are facing another crisis: Sky-high electricity bills.

The surge in pricing is hitting people who have chosen to pay wholesale prices for their power, which is typically cheaper than paying fixed rates during good weather, but can spike when there's high demand for electricity. Many of those who have reported receiving large bills are customers of electricity provider Griddy, which only operates in Texas.

Among them is Susan Hosford of Denison, Texas. On a typical February day, she pays Griddy less than \$2.50 for power. But the one-day cost spiked to hundreds of dollars after the storm. In all, she was automatically charged \$1,346.17 for the first two weeks of February, which was more than she had in her checking account, causing her bank to charge her overdraft fees and affect other bills.

"This whole thing has been a nightmare," she said.

Here's more on the soaring electricity bills:

**WHAT ARE WHOLESALE ELECTRICITY PRICES?**

Wholesale electricity prices fluctuate based on demand. Because natural gas pipelines and wind turbines froze up in Texas, there was less power available, but high demand for electricity, causing wholesale prices to shoot up, said Joshua Rhodes, an energy research associate at the University of Texas.

Wholesale prices are typically as low as a couple of cents per kilowatt-hour but spiked to \$9 per kilowatt-hour after the storm. Fixed rate customers pay a set amount that doesn't rise as much. Typically, they pay around 12 cents per kilowatt-hour. But Rhodes said fixed rate customers could see their price rise by a few cents later this year as companies hit by the icy conditions look to recoup their costs — but their bills won't be in the thousands.

People are able to pay wholesale prices in Texas because it's one of the only states that lets people pick which company it buys power from, Rhodes said.

**WHAT IS GRIDDY?**

Griddy, which launched in 2017, charges \$10 a month to give people a way to pay wholesale prices for electricity instead of a fixed rate. It warned customers of raising prices and urged them to switch providers. The company said wholesale prices returned to normal as of Feb. 20.

**HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE AFFECTED?**

Griddy said it has 29,000 members. It's unclear how many other Texans also pay wholesale prices from other companies.

"We won't get the full picture on the financial devastation for maybe 30 to 90 days," said Ed Hirs, an energy fellow at the University of Houston.

**WILL THOSE WHO GOT LARGE BILLS GET FINANCIAL HELP?**

That's unclear. Texas Governor Greg Abbott said Sunday that he is working with members of the legislature to address skyrocketing energy bills and "find ways that the state can help reduce this burden." But he didn't give specifics on what that may be. For the time being, the state has stopped companies from cutting off power for not paying.

Rhodes said bailing out customers may be a hard sell since they opted to pay wholesale prices and may have paid a much lower price than others for some time.

## **New Zealand remembers 185 who died in quake 10 years ago**

By NICK PERRY Associated Press

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (AP) — New Zealand lowered its flags on Monday and made special note of those who couldn't travel as it marked the 10th anniversary of the Christchurch earthquake that killed 185 people.

Hundreds of people attended an outdoor service in Christchurch, which continues to rebuild from the magnitude 6.3 quake that destroyed much of its downtown. A separate service was also held in the northern Japanese city of Toyama, home to 12 students who died in the quake.

Speaking at the Christchurch ceremony, New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said it was important



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to remember that 87 of the victims were foreigners and many of their families couldn't be there because of coronavirus travel restrictions.

"Our flags fly at half-mast for them today too," she said.

Christchurch Mayor Lianne Dalziel talked about the 28 Japanese citizens who died, the largest number of victims from any country outside of New Zealand.

"I especially wanted to mention all the Japanese family members who I last year met in Japan and who so wanted to be here," she said. "We are forever connected by this tragedy and we do not forget you even when we are apart. You are with us in spirit."

Another person who spoke at the Christchurch service was Maan Alkaisi, a university professor who has spent years trying to get authorities to press criminal charges against those who designed the CTV building which collapsed during the quake, killing 115 people including his wife, Maysoon Abbas.

A review after the quake found the building's design was flawed and it should never have been approved.

"Today commemorates 10 years of injustice and mistreatment," Alkaisi said. "Today reminds us of our responsibility to make sure we learn from this tragic experience and honor those lovely people we lost by ensuring their dreams are kept alive, by ensuring this will not happen again."

The memorial service was held on the banks of the Avon River, and people observed a moment's silence at 12:51 p.m., the moment the quake struck in 2011. Emergency service workers and others took turns reading out the names of each of the victims.

In a touching moment, Dalziel read out a message from Bob Parker, who was the mayor at the time of the quake and became an internationally known face of the tragedy. Parker recently suffered a stroke and attended the service in a wheelchair.

Ardern said the quake had affected people in many ways, and daily reminders including aftershocks and the fractured landscape had made the recovery harder.

"Ten years on there will be people still living their daily lives with the long shadow of that day," she said.

"But as we look ahead to the coming decade, I see hope and energy and optimism," she said. "And I see Christchurch taking its rightful place amongst New Zealand's best and brightest cities."

In Toyama, more than 100 family members, friends and school officials observed a moment of silence for the student victims and offered flowers during a ceremony at the Toyama College of Foreign Languages. Most of them joined online due to coronavirus measures.

"Now, 10 years after that earthquake, the sadness of losing you all and the indescribable regret are once again in our hearts," Tamehisa Ueda, head of the school, said at the ceremony.

The 12 Japanese students were having lunch at King's Education, an English language school for international students, when the quake struck, destroying the building.

Masatsugu Yokota, whose daughter Saki died at age 19 in the quake, told NHK public television that he still misses her.

"I still look for her while walking in town, or wherever I go," he said.

Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Katsunobu Kato pledged the government's ongoing support for the victims' families.

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Associated Press video journalist Chisato Tanaka contributed to this report from Toyama, Japan.

## FAA orders United to inspect Boeing 777s after emergency

By The Associated Press undefined

Federal aviation regulators are ordering United Airlines to step up inspections of all Boeing 777s equipped with the type of engine that suffered a catastrophic failure over Denver on Saturday.

United said it is temporarily removing those aircraft from service, as meanwhile Boeing recommended grounding aircraft with that model engine until the Federal Aviation.

The announcements come a day after United Airlines Flight 328 had to make an emergency landing at Denver International Airport after its right engine blew apart just after takeoff. Pieces of the casing of the

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engine, a Pratt & Whitney PW4000, rained down on suburban neighborhoods.

The plane with 231 passengers and 10 crew on board landed safely, and nobody aboard or on the ground was reported hurt, authorities said.

The Federal Aviation Administration FAA Administrator Steve Dickson said in a statement Sunday that based on an initial review of safety data, inspectors "concluded that the inspection interval should be stepped up for the hollow fan blades that are unique to this model of engine, used solely on Boeing 777 airplanes."

Boeing said it supported decisions by the Japan Civil Aviation Bureau and FAA to suspend operations of all 777 aircraft powered by Pratt & Whitney 4000-112 engines. It said there were 69 of the engines in service and another 59 in storage.

"We are working with these regulators as they take actions while these planes are on the ground and further inspections are conducted by Pratt & Whitney," it said in a statement issued Sunday.

The National Transportation Safety Board said that two of the engine's fan blades were fractured and the remainder of the fan blades "exhibited damage." The NTSB did caution that it was too early to draw conclusions about how the incident happened.

Video posted on Twitter showed the engine fully engulfed in flames as the plane flew through the air. Freeze frames from different video taken by a passenger sitting slightly in front of the engine and posted on Twitter appeared to show a broken fan blade in the engine.

United is the only U.S. airline with the Pratt & Whitney PW4000 in its fleet, the FAA said. United says it currently has 24 of the 777s in service.

United says it will work closely with the FAA and the NTSB "to determine any additional steps that are needed to ensure these aircraft meet our rigorous safety standards and can return to service."

The NTSB said the cockpit voice recorder and flight data recorder were transported to its lab in Washington for the data to be downloaded and analyzed. NTSB investigations can take up to a year or longer, although in major cases the agency generally releases some investigative material midway through the process.

Japan Airways and All Nippon Airways decided to stop operating a combined 32 planes with that engine, according to the financial newspaper Nikkei.

Nikkei reported that Japan's Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism also ordered the planes out of service, and the ministry said an engine in the same PW4000 family suffered unspecified trouble on a JAL 777 flying to Haneda from Naha on Dec. 4. It ordered stricter inspections in response.

## Hospitals confront water shortages in winter storm aftermath

By JUAN LOZANO, JONATHAN MATTISE and ADRIAN SAINZ Associated Press

HOUSTON (AP) — Hospitals across the South grappled with water shortages Sunday in the wake of a devastating winter storm as the region carried on with recovery efforts and the weather offered a balmy respite — temperatures as high as the mid-60s.

At the height of last week's storm, hospitals scrambled to care for patients amid record cold temperatures, snow and ice that battered parts of the country more accustomed to going through winter with light jackets and short sleeves. The icy blast ruptured water mains, knocked out power to millions of utility customers and contributed to at least 76 deaths — half of which occurred in Texas. At least seven people died in Tennessee and four in Portland, Oregon.

A rural hospital in Anahuac, Texas, about 50 miles (80 kilometers) east of Houston, lost both water and power.

William Kiefer, CEO of Chambers Health, which runs the hospital along with two clinics and a wellness center, said the facilities resorted to backup generators and water from a 275-gallon storage tank. They refilled it three times using water from a swimming pool in the wellness center.

When temperatures were in the teens last Monday, a woman about to give birth walked into the hospital after she could not make it through the ice and snow to her hospital in suburban Houston. Emergency room staff delivered the baby safely, Kiefer said.

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"It would have taken her another two hours to get to (the suburban Houston hospital) if our facility wasn't there," he said. "We can probably assume she would have had the baby in her car and the snow. Not a good situation."

Water was restored Thursday, and operations had returned to normal on Sunday, he said. The health system plans to look into installing more sophisticated backup systems, he said.

Houston Methodist Hospital spokeswoman Gale Smith said water had been restored at two community hospitals in the system, which was dealing with an influx of dialysis patients after their local centers closed, she added.

After temperatures plunged as much as 40 degrees below normal last week, the forecast for the Houston area called for a high of 65 degrees (18 degrees Celsius) on Sunday. The city lifted its boil-water advisory on Sunday afternoon.

About 30,000 Texans were still without power due to downed power lines and other equipment failures. Gov. Greg Abbott said during a news conference that he expected all service to be restored by Sunday night or Monday.

Abbott also said he was concerned about the threat of massive electric bills after wholesale energy prices skyrocketed while power plants were offline. He said it would be the "top priority" for the Legislature, and he vowed not to end the legislative session until lawmakers ensure that the state's power grid is retrofitted to handle extreme winter and summer weather.

Nearly 230,000 customers across the South were still without power as of Sunday, according to PowerOutage.us, a website that tracks power outages. Other large blackouts were in Mississippi, West Virginia, Kentucky and Oregon.

Memphis, Tennessee, saw 10 inches of snow last week. Memphis, Light, Gas & Water issued a boil-water advisory on Thursday out of concern that low water pressure caused by problems at aging pumping stations and water main ruptures could lead to contamination. The advisory was still in place Sunday; utility officials said they did not know when they might lift it.

About 260,000 homes and businesses were under the advisory. Hospitals and nursing homes have been forced to switch to bottled water. The Tennessee National Guard was supplying St. Francis Hospital with water.

Nearby Baptist Memorial Hospital took on some of St. Francis' patients, particularly those who need dialysis, said Dr. Jeff Wright, a pulmonary and critical care physician at Baptist. That hospital has a water purification system for dialysis and has water reserves for tasks such as cooking and bathing patients, he said.

"We have gallon jugs of water that were already stocked and ready to roll on day one," Wright said.

Methodist Le Bonheur Healthcare also reported problems at some of its Memphis-area facilities due to water pressure problems and the boil advisory. The system is using tanker trucks to boost water pressure and relying on help from facilities that have not been affected.

City officials planned to distribute water bottles at several locations Sunday. Grocery stores struggled to keep shelves stocked with bottled water. Many restaurants remained closed.

In Washington, the White House said about a third of the COVID-19 vaccine doses delayed by the storm were delivered over the weekend.

The weather created a backlog of about 6 million doses as power outages closed some vaccination centers and icy weather stranded vaccine in shipping hubs. White House press secretary Jen Psaki told ABC's "This Week" that about 2 million of those doses have gone out.

President Joe Biden is eager to visit Texas, which was hit especially hard by the weather, Psaki said. Biden hopes to travel to the state this week but "doesn't want to take away resources" from the response, she said. Biden declared a major disaster in Texas on Saturday.

"He is . . . very mindful of the fact that it's not a light footprint for a president to travel to a disaster area.

Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner told CBS' "Face the Nation" that Biden can come anytime.

"We certainly would welcome him," Turner said.

Texas Rep. Michael McCaul told CNN's "State of the Union" that federal disaster relief can be used to

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repair burst pipes and flood damage and to help Texans hit with skyrocketing energy bills.

McCaul also criticized fellow Republican Sen. Ted Cruz's decision to take his family on vacation amid the crisis.

"When a crisis hits my state, I'm there," McCaul said. "I'm not going to go on some vacation. I know Mr. Cruz called it a mistake, and he's owned up to that. But I think that was a big mistake."

Mattise reported from Nashville, Tennessee. Sainz reported from Memphis, Tennessee. Associated Press writers Hope Yen in Austin, Texas, and Zeke Miller in Washington contributed to this report.

## 139-year-old house rolls to new San Francisco address

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — After 139 years at 807 Franklin St. in San Francisco, a two-story Victorian house has a new address.

The green home with large windows and a brown front door was loaded onto giant dollies and moved Sunday to a location six blocks away.

Onlookers lined the sidewalks to snap photos as the structure rolled — at a top speed of 1 mph — to 635 Fulton St.

The house's journey has been in the planning stages for years, the San Francisco Chronicle reported.

Veteran house mover Phil Joy told the newspaper he had to secure permits from more than 15 city agencies.

Joy said this move is tricky in part because the first part of the journey involves going downhill.

"That's always difficult for a house," he said.

Along the route, parking meters were ripped up, tree limbs were trimmed and traffic signs were relocated.

The owner of the six-bedroom house, San Francisco broker Tim Brown, will pay about \$400,000 in fees and moving costs, the Chronicle said.

## UN nuclear chief says Iran to grant 'less access' to program

By AMIR VAHDAT, JON GAMBRELL and DAVID RISING Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — Iran will begin to offer United Nations inspectors "less access" to its nuclear program as part of its pressure campaign on the West, though investigators will still be able to monitor Tehran's work, the U.N. atomic watchdog's chief said Sunday.

Rafael Grossi's comments came after an emergency trip to Iran in which he said the International Atomic Energy Agency reached a "technical understanding" with Tehran to continue to allow monitoring of its nuclear program for up to three months. But his remarks to journalists underlined a narrowing window for the U.S. and others to reach terms with Iran, which is already enriching and stockpiling uranium at levels far beyond those allowed by its 2015 nuclear deal with world powers.

"The hope of the IAEA has been to stabilize a situation which was very unstable," Grossi said at the airport after his arrival back in Vienna, where the agency is based. "I think this technical understanding does it so that other political consultations at other levels can take place and most importantly we can avoid a situation in which we would have been, in practical terms, flying blind."

Grossi, the IAEA's director general, offered few specifics of the agreement he had reached with Iranian leaders. He said the number of inspectors on the ground would remain the same but that "what changes is the type of activity" the agency was able to carry out, without elaborating further. He stressed monitoring would continue "in a satisfactory manner."

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, who under President Hassan Rouhani helped reach the atomic accord, said the IAEA would be prevented from accessing footage from their cameras at nuclear sites. That came during a state TV interview Sunday even before his meeting with Grossi.

"This is not a deadline for the world. This is not an ultimatum," Zarif told the government-run, English-language broadcaster Press TV. "This is an internal domestic issue between the parliament and the gov-



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ernment.”

“We have a democracy. We are supposed to implement the laws of the country. And the parliament adopted legislation — whether we like it or not.”

Zarif’s comments marked the highest-level acknowledgement yet of what Iran planned to do when it stopped following the so-called “Additional Protocol,” a confidential agreement between Tehran and the IAEA reached as part of the landmark 2015 nuclear deal. The IAEA has additional protocols with a number of countries it monitors.

Under the protocol with Iran, the IAEA “collects and analyzes hundreds of thousands of images captured daily by its sophisticated surveillance cameras,” the agency said in 2017. The agency also said then that it had placed “2,000 tamper-proof seals on nuclear material and equipment.”

In his interview, Zarif said authorities would be “required by law not to provide the tapes of those cameras.” It wasn’t immediately clear if that also meant the cameras would be turned off entirely as Zarif called that a “technical decision, that’s not a political decision.”

“The IAEA certainly will not get footage from those cameras,” Zarif said.

Grossi didn’t address Zarif’s camera remarks Sunday night, but stressed that European and U.S. leaders needed to salvage the situation through negotiations.

“What we have agreed is something that is viable. It is useful to bridge this gap,” Grossi said. “It salvages this situation now, but, of course, for a stable, sustainable situation there will have to be a political negotiation and that is not up to me.”

There are 18 nuclear facilities and nine other locations in Iran under IAEA safeguards.

In 2018, then-President Donald Trump pulled the U.S. unilaterally out of the nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, saying it needed to be renegotiated.

Even as Iran has backed away from restrictions of the deal since then to put pressure on the other signatories — Germany, France, Britain, Russia and China — to provide new economic incentives to offset U.S. sanctions, those countries have insisted it’s critical to keep the deal alive so that inspectors are able to continue to verify Iran’s nuclear activities.

From Washington, U.S. National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan said President Joe Biden remained willing to negotiate with Iran over a return to the nuclear deal, an offer earlier dismissed by Zarif.

“He is prepared to go to the table to talk to the Iranians about how we get strict constraints back on their nuclear program,” Sullivan told CBS’s “Face the Nation.” “That offer still stands, because we believe diplomacy is the best way to do it.”

On U.S. citizens being held by Iran, Sullivan added: “We have begun to communicate with the Iranians on this issue.”

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh told state TV late Sunday night responding to Sullivan that “there are no direct talks between Iran and the U.S. in any field.” However, Khatibzadeh said the Swiss Embassy in Tehran, which has looked out for American interests in the decades since the 1979 hostage crisis, has passed messages between the countries on prisoner issues since Biden took office.

Grossi met earlier Sunday with Ali Akbar Salehi, the head of Iran’s civilian nuclear program.

Iran’s parliament in December approved a bill that would suspend part of U.N. inspections of its nuclear facilities if European signatories do not provide relief from oil and banking sanctions by Tuesday.

Already, Iran has slowly walked away from all the nuclear deal’s limitations on its stockpile of uranium and has begun enriching up 20%, a technical step away from weapons-grade levels. It also has begun spinning advanced centrifuges barred by the deal, which saw Iran limit its program in exchange for the lifting of economic sanctions.

An escalating series of incidents since Trump’s withdrawal has threatened the wider Mideast. Over a year ago, a U.S. drone strike killed a top Iranian general, causing Tehran to later launch ballistic missiles that wounded dozens of American troops in Iraq.

A mysterious explosion also struck Iran’s Natanz nuclear facility, which Iran has described as sabotage. In November, Iranian scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, who founded the country’s military nuclear program

some two decades earlier, was killed in an attack Tehran blames on Israel.

Zarif brought up the attacks in his interview with state TV, saying the IAEA must keep some of its information confidential for safety reasons.

"Some of them may have security ramifications for Iran, whose peaceful nuclear sites have been attacked," Zarif said. "For a country whose nuclear scientists have been murdered in terrorist operations in the past — and now recently with Mr. Fakhrizadeh — confidentiality is essential."

Jon Gambrell reported from Dubai, United Arab Emirates, and David Rising from Berlin. Associated Press writer Zeke Miller contributed to this report from Washington.

## Libyan interior minister survives attack on motorcade

By SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — The interior minister of Libya's U.N.-backed government survived an ambush by gunmen on his motorcade on Sunday, a brazen attack highlighting the towering challenges that remain for the newly appointed government that is trying to unite the country before elections late this year.

Armed men opened fire at Fathi Bashagha's motorcade on a highway in Tripoli, wounding at least one of his guards, said Amin al-Hashmi, a spokesman for the Tripoli-based Health Ministry.

He said the minister survived the attack and his guards chased the assailants, killing one and detaining two others.

The Interior Ministry said in a statement that Bashagha was returning to his residence in the Janzour neighborhood when armed men in an armored vehicle opened fire on his convoy.

The statement called the attack an "attempted assassination" of the minister.

Earlier Sunday, Bashagha met with Mustafa Sanalla, head of Libya's National Oil Corporation to discuss the security of oil facilities and how to strengthen the corporation's independence to "ensure a fair distribution of wealth among all Libyans." He posted a photo for both of them on his Twitter account, calling their meeting "fruitful."

The U.S. Ambassador in Libya Richard Norland also condemned the attack and called for an investigation to hold those responsible accountable.

"Minister Bashagha's focus on ending the influence of rogue militias has our full support," Norland said.

The U.N. special envoy to Libya Jan Kubis also urged a "full, rapid, and transparent investigation" into the incident, saying it had aimed at "derailing the political process and other efforts in support of Libya and its people."

He said the attack has also showed "how important it is to keep all the arms only in the hands of the legitimate authorities."

Oil-rich Libya was plunged into chaos after a 2011 NATO-backed uprising toppled and killed longtime dictator Moammar Gadhafi. The country has been divided between two governments, one in the east and another in the west, each backed by a vast array of militias as well as foreign powers.

Earlier this month, an UN-picked body comprised of Libyans from both sides appointed an interim government — a three-member Presidential Council and a prime minister — to lead the country through elections, scheduled for Dec. 24.

The newly appointed government, which has yet to resume its powers, called for judicial authorities to reveal the circumstances of the incident and bring those responsible before justice.

Bashagha was a contender for the post of prime minister, in the end Abdul Hamid Mohammed Dbeibah was chosen to lead the transitional Cabinet.

The forum also picked Mohammad Younes Menfi, a Libyan diplomat from the country's east, to lead the Presidential Council.

## Power failure: How a winter storm pushed Texas into crisis

By NOMAAN MERCHANT Associated Press

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HOUSTON (AP) — Two days before the storm began, Houston's chief elected official warned her constituents to prepare as they would for a major hurricane. Many took heed: Texans who could stock up on food and water, while nonprofits and government agencies set out to help those who couldn't.

But few foresaw the fiasco that was to come.

As temperatures plunged and snow and ice whipped the state, much of Texas' power grid collapsed, followed by its water systems. Tens of millions huddled in frigid homes that slowly grew colder or fled for safety. And a prideful state, long suspicious of regulation and outside help, was left to seek aid from other states and humanitarian groups as many of its 29 million people grasped for survival.

At one hospital, workers stood outside to collect rainwater. Others stood in line at a running tap in a park. A mother of three took her children to shelter in a furniture store after she could see her breath forming in the family's trailer. University professors fundraised so their students could afford meals.

Images of desperate Texans circulated worldwide. To some, they evoked comparisons to a less wealthy or self-regarding place. To others, they laid bare problems that have long festered.

The state's Republican leadership was blamed for ignoring warnings that winter could wreak the havoc that it did, and for not providing local officials with enough information to protect residents now. A lack of regulations to protect critical infrastructure and failure by officials to take recommended steps to winterize equipment left the nation's largest energy-producing state unprepared for last week's weather emergency.

A week after she warned her county's nearly 5 million residents about the impending storm, Harris County Judge Lina Hidalgo was sleeping on an air mattress at the county's emergency operations center. Her home was without power for three nights.

"It's worth asking the question: Who set up this system and who perpetuated it knowing that the right regulation was not in place?" Hidalgo said. "Those questions are going to have to be asked and I hope that changes will come. The community deserves answers."

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Around 2 a.m. Monday, the full measure of the crisis Texas faced began to be apparent.

Cold and ice had set in the day before, leading to spreading power outages across the state. But standing in the emergency operations center early Monday, Hidalgo and others learned that their local energy provider, CenterPoint Energy, would not be able to "roll" outages between homes as they had been told earlier.

Instead of short intervals of heat, enough to keep their homes safe, residents would have to go without for days on end.

Most people did not yet know that Texas' power grid had been on the brink of total failure. That revelation would come three days later.

Power outages spiraled through the day Monday, ultimately cutting off more than 4 million people. Grocery stores shut down, and hotel rates skyrocketed.

People who fled to the homes of relatives or neighbors had to consider the risks of contracting or spreading the coronavirus.

Ashley Archer and her husband decided to take in his best friend at their suburban Dallas home. She is pregnant and has been trying to protect herself from the virus for nearly a year.

The friend is "like family," she said. "We weren't going to let him freeze at his place."

Things got worse Tuesday. Thousands of people sought refuge from their freezing homes in warming shelters. Others sat in their cars; hundreds were hospitalized for carbon monoxide poisoning. A woman and her young daughter died after running their car inside a garage. An 11-year-old boy was found dead after his family's mobile home lost power.

In suburban Houston, Tina Rios could see her breath inside the trailer she shares with her husband and three children, ages 3, 9, and 10. She started "stressing really hard." Her refuge was a Gallery Furniture store opened to a desperate public by a well-known Houston businessman, Jim "Mattress Mack" McIngvale.

At her Dallas condominium, 51-year-old Stephanie Murdoch layered in blankets, two pairs of pants, two sweaters, three pairs of socks, a hat, and gloves. Her anger grew at the power companies and their ap-

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parent lack of preparation.

"We've got another blast of snow coming in this evening ... and still no clear answers as to why the grids aren't working better," she said.

By Wednesday, some started to get their power back, but a new shortage emerged -- drinkable water. Frozen pipes burst across the state. And the water that did come out of taps was often undrinkable due to dangerously low water pressure levels. At one point, an estimated 13 million people were under a boil-water order, nearly half of Texas' population.

Along with her roommates in Austin, Abigail Burns, a 20-year-old university student, had filled bathtubs with water as experts advise before a storm. Austin instituted a boil-water order. But Burns' apartment lacked the power to boil what they had.

After more than 80 hours without power and 24 hours without running water, they decided to brave icy roads, setting out for a friend's home about 20 minutes away.

Methodist Hospital's branch in far west Houston lost water, and hospital staff collected rainwater in carts so they could flush toilets. CEO Marc Boom said the hospital's flagship location near downtown had turned a conference room into a staging area for dialysis patients.

"Many of those people end up not only needing dialysis but end up being admitted to the hospital," Boom said. "There's a lot of people who have medical devices at home, oxygen; all of those don't work."

More than 35 people in Texas have been confirmed dead. That number is expected to rise as roads cleared and relatives and first responders could check on missing loved ones.

Mark Henry, Galveston County's judge, asked the state early in the week to send a refrigerated truck requested by the local medical examiner, who expected an influx of bodies.

"If they had been honest with us from the beginning, we would have ordered evacuations. But they didn't tell us that," he said. "What's not manageable is to lose your power for days with a temperature in the single to double digits."

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How could this happen in a state that is the nation's biggest energy producer and home to several of the world's biggest energy companies?

The disaster can be traced to mistakes by Texas' leadership and faults created by decades of opposition to more regulations and preparation.

Basically, the state is an island in the U.S. electrical system.

There is one large grid covering the Eastern half of the country, another for the West, with Texas wedged between them. There is a long and colorful history to how this came to be, but the simplest explanation is that Texas utilities wanted to be free of federal regulation. They accomplished that, going back to the middle of the last century, by avoiding sending power across state lines.

The Texas grid isn't walled off, but there are only a few, small interconnection points with the Eastern U.S. grid and Mexico. In the past, utility executives have argued that the Texas grid would be less reliable and more vulnerable to blackouts if it were fully connected to the rest of the country -- which would make it easier for other states to tap Texas during their own shortages.

The Electric Reliability Council of Texas, or ERCOT, was created in 1970; it became a more powerful broker over electricity flows after deregulation in this century. In the wake of the storm, it has taken most of the blame from Texas politicians and the public, losing trust with predictions that failed to capture the depth of the crisis and posting jargon-heavy tweets about power generation that were hard for anyone without a degree in engineering to decipher. Critics have noted some of ERCOT's board does not live in Texas and that CEO, Bill Magness makes more than \$800,000 a year.

Standing in Harris County's emergency management center early Monday, Lina Hidalgo said she and other officials realized "that we couldn't just take the words from ERCOT at face value."

"They kept telling us that more power generation was coming online, only to send more orders to utilities to cut people off power," she said Thursday.

Despite efforts by some Republicans to blame clean energy, the failures occurred in every part of the



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sector. While wind turbines and solar panels froze, a major nuclear plant lost half of its generation, and there were massive failures in coal, oil, and natural gas. Demand surged, meanwhile, as people accustomed to mild Texas winters turned on their heat.

In 2011, millions of Texans lost power during the Super Bowl, which was played in a Dallas suburb. Two agencies, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and the North American Electric Reliability Corporation, conducted a study on how Texas could "winterize" its energy infrastructure. At the highest end, winterizing 50,000 gas wells would cost an estimated \$1.75 billion, the study found.

Of the 2011 storm, the report said: "Generators and natural gas producers suffered severe losses of capacity despite having received accurate forecasts of the storm. Entities in both categories report having winterization procedures in place. However, the poor performance of many of these generating units and wells suggests that these procedures were either inadequate or were not adequately followed."

But there was no broad move to winterize equipment. Since then, bills requiring energy producers to hold more power in reserve or ordering a study of how to better prepare for winter failed in the Republican-controlled Texas House.

Texas lawmakers deregulated the energy market in 2002. Supporters say this lowered energy prices statewide, but critics say it gave producers leeway to avoid improvements that might have prevented events like this week's catastrophe.

The energy industry remains a political powerhouse. More than \$26 million of Republican Gov. Greg Abbott's contributions have come from the oil and gas industry, more than any other economic sector, according to an analysis by the National Institute on Money in Politics.

In a Fox News interview, Abbott blamed this week's fiasco on green energy -- an assertion for which he was sharply criticized. At other points, Abbott did note failures across the energy industry. But others among the Republican leadership continued to tweet condemnations of green energy or support for natural gas.

Todd Staples, president of the Texas Oil & Gas Association, declined an interview request but issued a statement saying the industry was "steadfastly committed to doing our part to help Texas recover."

Abbott has promised multiple investigations of this storm and made ERCOT an "emergency" item for the Legislature, which is currently in its biennial session.

"I think there is going to have to be a serious inquiry into why it was, what were the factors that led the grid not to be able to meet the energy needs of Texas," said Republican U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz.

Cruz spoke Thursday evening in the yard of his home in one of Houston's wealthiest neighborhoods, River Oaks. He had cut short a trip to Cancun, Mexico, after images circulated of him waiting at a Houston airport for his flight to the resort town.

Nearby, a group of protesters called on Cruz to resign.

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At week's end, as the cold weather began to loosen its grip, the power came back for most Texans. But the effects linger: Some Texans on variable-rate power contracts faced electric bills in the thousands of dollars, leading the governor to hold an emergency meeting Saturday with lawmakers.

There were dire shortages of drinking water. Cars lined up Friday for more than a mile in several directions to reach one water distribution site in northwest Houston, where volunteers were distributing two pallets of water bottles per vehicle.

Burst pipes had flooded thousands of homes. Earlier in the week, Abbott had asked plumbers from other states to come to Texas and help.

Fixing pipes is one thing. Fixing a whole state is another.

Extremes caused by global warming will make deadly weather more common. Hidalgo, the Harris County judge, said the state needs to overcome "the taboo of talking about climate change."

It's difficult to estimate how much it would cost for all the wintertime upgrades Texas needs, but the tab would likely be in the billions of dollars.

In California, long the foil of Texas Republicans, Pacific Gas and Electric is in the early stages of spending an estimated \$40 billion to \$50 billion upgrading its equipment to reduce the chances of igniting wildfires

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during hot and windy conditions that have become increasingly common during the late summer and early autumn.

Around the time Cruz was flying back from Cancun on Thursday, Joidice Slack waited in line at a west Houston park to fill up water from a running tap.

The 37-year-old market analyst lost power on Sunday, water on Monday. She carried two empty drums of water that she filled with a garden hose.

"Today would have been rough because we had about half of one of these and we were like, 'Let's go start looking. Hopefully we find some more water,'" she said.

"This is where we are at right now."

Associated Press journalists Jake Bleiberg and David Koenig in Dallas; Acacia Coronado and Paul J. Weber in Austin, Texas; Michael Liedtke in San Ramon, California; Juan A. Lozano in Houston; and Jamie Stengle in Dallas contributed to this report.

## **Beyond 100M: Biden team aiming for bigger vaccine numbers**

By ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — It sounded so ambitious at first blush: 100 million vaccination shots in 100 days. Now, one month into his presidency, Joe Biden is on a glide path to attain that goal and pitching well beyond it to the far more ambitious and daunting mission of vaccinating all eligible adults against the coronavirus by the end of the summer.

Limited supply of the two approved COVID-19 vaccines has hampered the pace of vaccinations — and that was before extreme winter weather delayed the delivery of about 6 million doses this past week. But the United States is on the verge of a supply breakthrough as manufacturing ramps up and with the expectation of a third vaccine becoming available in the coming weeks.

That means the act of delivering injections will soon be the dominant constraint, and it's prompting the Biden administration to push to dramatically expand the universe of those who will deliver injections and where Americans will meet them to get their shots.

"It's one thing to have the vaccine, and it's very different to get it in someone's arms," Biden said Friday as he toured Pfizer's manufacturing plant in Portage, Michigan. The company is set to double its pace of vaccine deliveries in the coming weeks.

Since their approval in December, more than 75 million doses of the two-shot-regimen Moderna and Pfizer vaccines have been distributed, of which 63 million have been injected, reaching 13% of Americans. Nearly 45 million of those doses have been administered since Biden's inauguration on Jan. 20.

The pace of deliveries of those vaccines is about to take off. About 145 million doses are set for delivery in the next 5 1/2 weeks, with an additional 200 million expected by the end of May and a further 200 million by the end of July.

That's before the anticipated approval by the Food and Drug Administration for emergency use of a third vaccine, from Johnson & Johnson. The single-dose J&J vaccine is expected to help speed the path to immunity and requires half the vaccination resources of the two-shot regimens. But there is no massive stockpile of J&J doses ready to roll out on Day One.

"We're going to be starting with only a few million in inventory," White House COVID-19 coordinator Jeff Zients said this past week. Still, when combined with the anticipated increases in the other vaccines, the J&J doses could prove the pivotal advance in delivering enough shots for nearly all American adults by the end of June, at least a month earlier than currently anticipated.

The daily inoculation average climbed to 1.7 million shots per day last week, but as many as double that number of doses are soon expected to be available on average each day. The focus of Biden's team is now quickly shifting to ensuring those doses can get used, though the administration has resisted the calls of some health experts to publicly set a "moonshot" target for how many daily doses it hopes to deliver.

Biden first set his target of 100 million doses in 100 days on Dec. 8, days before the first vaccines received

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emergency use authorization. By Inauguration Day, it was clear the U.S. was on course to attain that goal.

Dr. Leana Wen, an emergency physician and public health professor at George Washington University, said she would like to see the administration commit to a more ambitious 3 million shot-per-day target.

"I want to see them put that stake in the ground and ask everyone to help them achieve that goal," she said.

The current pace of vaccination dipped markedly in recent days as winter weather shuttered administration sites in Texas and across the South, and icy conditions stranded supplies at shipping hubs in Louisville, Kentucky and Memphis, Tennessee.

One-third of the delayed doses have already been delivered, Dr. Anthony Fauci, the nation's top infectious disease specialist, announced Sunday. The White House anticipates that remaining delayed doses will be injected by March 1 and that the daily pace of vaccinations will continue to climb.

Much of the increase, according to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, comes from people receiving their second dose of the Moderna or Pfizer vaccine. The pace of first-dose vaccinations, meanwhile, has been largely steady over the past several weeks, hovering around an average of 900,000 shots per day.

Increasing both the rate of first-dose administrations and the rate of overall vaccinations will be key to achieving herd immunity — estimated to require vaccination of about 80% of the population — in hopes of ending the pandemic and curtailing the emergence of potentially even more dangerous "mutant" strains of the coronavirus.

That means keeping demand high. The administration has expressed concerns about public surveys showing that tens of millions of Americans are reluctant to get the vaccine and it is stepping up public outreach to overcome that hesitancy as the U.S. death toll nears 500,000 — "a terribly historic milestone in the history of this country," as Fauci put it, and "we're still not out of it."

Dr. Cyrus Shahpar, the White House COVID-19 data director, said in an interview that the administration is "focused on going out to communities and making sure people know these vaccines are safe and how they can get them, with a goal of vaccinating nearly all Americans."

The administration has also turned its focus toward identifying new delivery paths for the vaccines beyond those already used by states, including federally run mass vaccination sites, smaller community health centers and retail pharmacies. The White House's goal is to stand up the sites now so that they will be ready to handle the influx of vaccine in the coming weeks.

"They can push a lot more volume through those channels, through those big box stores, through the community health centers," Scott Gottlieb, a former Trump administration FDA commissioner, told MSNBC on Friday. He praised the Biden administration for setting up those sites in advance.

The Pentagon, at the request of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, has started deploying thousands of active-duty troops to open mass vaccination centers across the country, with plans in place for as many as 100 sites capable of delivering 450,000 doses per day. The first of those facilities opened this past week in California, with locations in Texas and New York due to open in the coming days.

"We always knew along the way we would have to provide predominantly federally supported sites," FEMA's acting administrator, Robert Fenton, said this past week, describing the initial locations as a "pilot" for the larger deployment. "These will continue to grow as supply comes onboard."

The administration also rolled out the federal pharmacy program that had initially been announced by the Trump White House. It has delivered doses directly to chains such as CVS and Walgreens, leveraging existing distribution chains for injections like the flu vaccine.

Governors, along with the CDC, identified specific retail chains to begin administering the vaccines in their states, with an eye on reaching underserved communities and also testing the pharmacies' capacity to scale up injections.

In its first four days of operation, with about 15% of pharmacies nationwide participating, the pharmacy program administered more than 700,000 of the initial 1 million doses per week allotted by the federal government. That led the White House to quickly double it to 2 million doses this coming week.

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Further increases are likely, as the White House monitors the pharmacies' capacity to deliver injections. The National Association of Chain Drug Stores estimates its members alone have the capability to deliver more than 3 million doses per day.

The additional federal channels for delivering inoculations have drawn some grumbling from governors who want even more vaccines to flow through their state allocations. That figure has risen from fewer than 9 million doses per week to 13.5 million in Biden's first weeks in office.

"Everyone wants more vaccines," said Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, D-Mich., "I do know that the continuous increase is great news for all of us."

"The more ways we can bring the opportunities online the better," she added.

## After losing a company to COVID, owners seek the next gig

By JOYCE M. ROSENBERG AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — As airlines slashed flights and furloughs appeared inevitable in the early days of the coronavirus pandemic, Mike Catania sensed there would be little need for a service that helped airline crews find short-term housing.

So, Catania and his fellow owners shut down Padloop in early March, even though the nearly year-old company had just broken even.

Catania started looking at how life was changing amid the pandemic and came up with the idea for his next business: Locaris, a website to help apartment renters connect with prospective neighbors to get the scoop on buildings and landlords. Because the pandemic limited people's ability to meet in person, Locaris enabled renters to get the lowdown on a building safely.

"I tried to focus on, what is COVID a catalyst for? What trends is it bringing to market a couple of years ahead of schedule?" says Catania, who lives in Henderson, Nevada. Locaris launched in June and quickly found success.

As owners are forced to shut businesses, they've had to figure out what to do next. For entrepreneurs like Catania, the answer has been anticipating the next trend and creating a company to take advantage of it. Some owners have started businesses similar to those they lost, or companies that fill a different role in the same industry. Others have gone to work for someone else, while perhaps holding onto hopes of eventually reviving the businesses they shuttered.

It's not known how many small businesses have failed in the pandemic, but different estimates all show devastation. Based on a projection last spring by the National Bureau of Economic Research, the number is likely well into the hundreds of thousands. Data from the work scheduling software company UKG shows that about one in six small businesses have closed their doors since the pandemic began. And the National Restaurant Association, a trade group, said 17% of U.S. restaurants, or more than 110,000, had permanently shut by Dec. 1; it's likely that many were small or mid-sized businesses.

Alex Willen of San Diego was preparing to open a dog boarding business when the pandemic hit; he was about to sign papers for a Small Business Administration loan to cover construction costs when his bank said it was putting new business loans on hold. Willen sensed the virus outbreak wouldn't end quickly, which meant dog owners wouldn't be traveling and many would keep working at home, eliminating the need for his services.

By May, the loan money was available, but Willen decided to give up rather than open the business and not have revenue for months, maybe longer.

"It was looking like COVID was not going away by November or December, and those are huge months for dog boarding," says Willen.

Willen soon decided to restart a business he'd shelved in favor of boarding: dog treats. Willen didn't have to start at square one because he had already done some preliminary marketing and package design for the business.

Willen bakes for his two dogs, Cooper and Maple — which gave him the idea for Cooper's Treats. He sells the treats on his website and Amazon.



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"It's looking like a real business," he says.

Kathryn Valentine closed her consulting business last summer because she had lost her child-care options. Valentine's nanny quit to take care of her own children, and daycare centers were closed. With a baby and a toddler, the Atlanta-based mother couldn't work the 9-to-5 schedule followed by the apparel companies that were her clients. She had to come up with another line of work — and quickly.

She already was an expert in training women in negotiating, a skill necessary for career success. Valentine had researched the subject in business school, so she founded Worthmore Negotiations and began lining up corporate clients.

"About once a week I'll have a commitment during the day, but otherwise all my work gets done after 7 p.m.," she says. But Valentine hopes to revive her consulting business once the pandemic is over and she has child-care again. Her hope is to keep both businesses.

A series of lockdowns in Britain forced Steve West to close his acupuncture practice. With no money coming in, he returned to digital marketing, work that helped him get through a slowdown in his practice during the Great Recession. He's not sure when, or if, he'll return to acupuncture, given people's uncertainty about close contact.

He's also concerned that when life returns to normal, some clients will decide they've done just fine without acupuncture. Meanwhile, companies are in continual need of digital marketing, which helps them get more visibility in internet searches.

"This is the time to focus on this (digital marketing), and maybe come back to acupuncture in the future," says West, who lives in Haywards Heath, in the south of Britain.

Kriti Sachdeva has a new job, with an agency that does e-commerce consulting. She had to shut her business that organized fairs and markets in Britain and other European countries; she had just five days' notice that she had to cancel a fair in London last March, and five more events in the following months also were scrapped.

In April, Sachdeva realized she needed to get a job. "I knew this was going to take a long time and I knew I couldn't do nothing," she says.

She landed her position in June. She loves the work and sees herself doing it long-term, but also wonders about someday possibly organizing fairs on the side.

"I think about it every day," she says.

## **UK speeds up vaccinations: All adults get 1st jab by July 31**

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — The British government declared Sunday that every adult in the country should get a first coronavirus vaccine shot by July 31, at least a month earlier than its previous target, as it prepared to set out a "cautious" plan to ease the U.K.'s lockdown.

The previous aim was for all adults to get a jab by September. The new target also calls for everyone 50 and over and those with an underlying health condition to get their first of two vaccine shots by April 15, rather than the previous date of May 1.

The makers of the two vaccines that Britain is using, Pfizer and AstraZeneca, have both experienced supply problems in Europe. But U.K. Health Secretary Matt Hancock said Sunday that "we now think that we have the supplies" to speed up the vaccination campaign.

The early success of Britain's vaccination effort is welcome good news for a country that has had more than 120,000 coronavirus deaths, the highest toll in Europe. More than 17.5 million people, a third of U.K. adults, have had at least one vaccine shot since inoculations began on Dec. 8.

Britain is delaying giving second vaccine doses until 12 weeks after the first, rather than three to four weeks, in order to give more people partial protection quickly. The approach has been criticized in some countries — and by Pfizer, which says it does not have any data to support the interval — but it is backed by the U.K. government's scientific advisers.

News of the new vaccine targets came as Prime Minister Boris Johnson met Sunday with senior ministers

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to finalize a "road map" out of the national lockdown. He plans to announce details in Parliament on Monday.

Faced with a dominant virus variant that scientists say is both more transmissible and more deadly than the original virus, Britain has spent much of the winter under a tight lockdown. Bars, restaurants, gyms, schools, hair salons and all nonessential shops have been closed; grocery stores, pharmacies and takeout food venues are still open.

The government has stressed that economic and social reopenings will be slow and cautious, with nonessential shopping or outdoor socializing unlikely before April. Many children will go back to school beginning on March 8 and nursing home residents will be able to have one visitor from the same date.

Johnson's Conservative government has been accused of reopening the country too quickly after the first lockdown in the spring. The number of new confirmed cases, hospitalizations and deaths are all declining in February but remain high, and Johnson says his reopening road map will follow "data, not dates."

But he is under pressure from some Conservative lawmakers, who argue that restrictions should be lifted quickly to revive an economy that has been hammered by three lockdowns in the last year.

John Edmunds, a member of the government's scientific advisory group, said British hospitals are still treating almost 20,000 coronavirus patients, half the January peak but almost as much as the height of the first surge last spring.

"If we eased off very rapidly now, we would get another surge in hospitalizations" and deaths, he told the BBC.

Edmunds said there is added uncertainty because of new virus variants, including one identified in South Africa that may be more resistant to current vaccines.

Hancock told Sky News that the government would take a "cautious but irreversible approach" to reopening the economy.

Despite the success of Europe's fastest vaccination campaign, the U.K. government has been accused of failing to protect disabled people, who are among the most at-risk from coronavirus.

The Office for National Statistics has found that 60% of people who died with coronavirus in England in 2020 had a physical or mental disability. But many disabled people, apart from those with "severe or profound" learning disabilities, have not been put in a priority group for vaccination.

Jo Whiley, a well-known BBC radio DJ, on Sunday highlighted the plight of her 53-year-old sister Frances, who has a learning disability. Whiley said her sister contracted the coronavirus in an outbreak at her care home, whose residents had not been vaccinated.

Whiley said her sister had finally been offered a shot of vaccine — but it came too late.

"She was actually called in for her vaccine last night. My mum got a message to say that she could get vaccinated, but it's too late, she's fighting for her life" in the hospital, Whiley told the BBC. "It couldn't be crueller."

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Follow all of AP's pandemic coverage at:

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

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## Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Monday, Feb. 22, the 53rd day of 2021. There are 312 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Feb. 22, 1980, the "Miracle on Ice" took place in Lake Placid, New York, as the United States Olympic hockey team upset the Soviets, 4-3. (The U.S. team went on to win the gold medal.)

On this date:

In 1732 (New Style date), the first president of the United States, George Washington, was born in

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Westmoreland County in the Virginia Colony.

In 1889, President Grover Cleveland signed an enabling act paving the way for the Dakotas, Montana and Washington to become states.

In 1959, the inaugural Daytona 500 race was held; although Johnny Beauchamp was initially declared the winner, the victory was later awarded to Lee Petty.

In 1967, more than 25,000 U.S. and South Vietnamese troops launched Operation Junction City, aimed at smashing a Vietcong stronghold near the Cambodian border. (Although the communists were driven out, they later returned.)

In 1984, David Vetter, a 12-year-old Texas boy who'd spent most of his life in a plastic bubble because he had no immunity to disease, died 15 days after being removed from the bubble for a bone-marrow transplant.

In 1987, pop artist Andy Warhol died at a New York City hospital at age 58.

In 1997, scientists in Scotland announced they had succeeded in cloning an adult mammal, producing a lamb named "Dolly." (Dolly, however, was later put down after a short life marred by premature aging and disease.)

In 2004, consumer advocate Ralph Nader announced he was running again for president, this time as an independent.

In 2005, Buckingham Palace said Queen Elizabeth II would not attend the civil marriage ceremony of her son Prince Charles and Camilla Parker Bowles — but that her absence should not be interpreted as a snub.

In 2010, Najibullah Zazi (nah-jee-BOO'-lah ZAH'-zee), accused of buying beauty supplies to make bombs for an attack on New York City subways, pleaded guilty to charges including conspiring to use weapons of mass destruction. (Zazi faced up to life in prison but spent nearly a decade after his arrest helping the U.S. identify and prosecute terrorists; he was given a 10-year sentence followed by supervised release.)

In 2017, the Trump administration lifted federal guidelines that said transgender students should be allowed to use public school bathrooms and locker rooms matching their chosen gender identity.

In 2019, a California couple pleaded guilty to torture and years of abuse that included shackling some of their 13 children to beds and starving them. (The couple would be sentenced to up to life in prison.) Producers of the Fox TV show "Empire" announced that actor Jussie Smollett's character would be removed from the final two episodes of the season after his arrest on charges that he staged a racist, anti-gay attack on himself.

Ten years ago: A defiant Moammar Gadhafi vowed to fight to his "last drop of blood" and roared at supporters to strike back against Libyan protesters to defend his embattled regime. A magnitude-6.1 earthquake in Christchurch, New Zealand, killed 184 people. Somali pirates shot to death four Americans taken hostage on their yacht several hundred miles south of Oman. Former White House chief of staff Rahm Emanuel was elected mayor of Chicago.

Five years ago: President Barack Obama sent lawmakers an official \$1.9 billion request to combat the spread of the Zika virus in Latin America and the U.S. (Congress passed a \$1.1 billion package in Sept. 2016.) The City Council of Charlotte, North Carolina, voted 7-4 to pass a new law allowing transgender people to choose public bathrooms that corresponded to their gender identity. Country singer Sonny James, 87, died in Nashville. British cinematographer Douglas Slocombe, 103, died in London. The Lady Vols' streak of 565 consecutive weeks in The Associated Press women's basketball poll ended as Tennessee fell out of the Top 25.

One year ago: A dozen towns in northern Italy effectively went into lockdown after the deaths of two people infected with the coronavirus. South Korea reported an eight-fold jump in viral infections, with more than 400 cases mostly linked to a church and a hospital. Bernie Sanders scored a resounding win in Nevada's presidential caucuses, cementing his status as the Democrats' front-runner. Self-styled daredevil Mike Hughes, 64, died after a rocket in which he launched himself crashed into the ground near Barstow, California; he had said he wanted to fly to the edge of outer space to see if the world is round. Barbara Smith, known as "B." Smith, a top Black model who went on to open restaurants and launch a home products line, died at the age of 70 at her suburban New York home after being diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. British boxer Tyson Fury beat Deontay Wilder in their rematch in Las Vegas to win

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the heavyweight title for a second time.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Paul Dooley is 93. Actor James Hong is 92. Actor John Ashton is 73. Actor Miou-Miou is 71. Actor Julie Walters is 71. Basketball Hall of Famer Julius Erving is 71. Actor Ellen Greene is 70. Former Sen. Bill Frist, R-Tenn., is 69. Former White House adviser David Axelrod is 66. Actor Kyle MacLachlan is 62. World Golf Hall of Famer Vijay Singh is 58. Actor-comedian Rachel Dratch is 55. Actor Paul Lieberstein is 54. Actor Jeri Ryan is 53. Actor Thomas Jane is 52. TV host Clinton Kelly is 52. Actor Tamara Mello is 51. Actor-singer Lea Salonga (LAY'-uh suh-LONG'-guh) is 50. Actor Jose Solano is 50. International Tennis Hall of Famer Michael Chang is 49. Rock musician Scott Phillips is 48. Singer James Blunt is 47. Actor Drew Barrymore is 46. Actor Liza Huber is 46. Rock singer Tom Higgenson (Plain White T's) is 42. Rock musician Joe Hottinger (Halestorm) is 39. Actor Zach Roerig is 36. Actor Daniel E. Smith is 31.