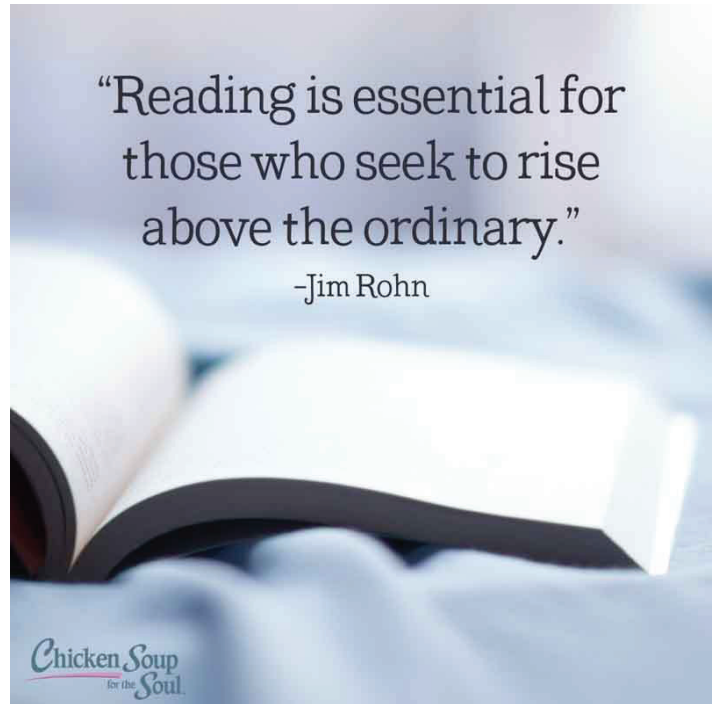


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Church Services

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church: Worship in the church at 8:30 a.m. (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/215332349572015/>)

Groton Christian & Missinary Alliance Church: Worship in the church at 10:30 a.m.: (<https://www.facebook.com/GrotonCMA/>)

St. John's Lutheran Church: Worship in the church at 9 a.m. (<https://www.facebook.com/stjohnsgroton/>)

Emmanuel Lutheran Church - Worship inside at 9 a.m.

(<https://www.facebook.com/Emmanuel-Lutheran-Church-GrotonSD-ELCA-636505039852208/>)

United Methodist Church: Worship, at 11 a.m. inside (<https://www.facebook.com/grotonsdumc>)

Buffalo Lake Lutheran Church, rural Eden, 10:30 a.m. Worship inside or stay in vehicle and listen on the FM.

Heaven Bound Ministries of Pierpont has worship on Saturdays at 5:30 p.m. in the basement.

Heaven Bound Ministries of Pierpont / Buffalo Lake Lutheran Church, rural Eden - will have a podcast posted. <https://anchor.fm/paul-irvin-kosel>



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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United Methodist Church

Groton and Conde

Sunday, Feb. 28

9:00 AM Conde Worship
10:00 AM Sunday School
11:00 AM Groton Worship in person following CDC

Guidelines

Monday, March 1

7:00 PM Groton Lenten Small Group

Tuesday, March 2

10:00 AM Bible Study Using Social Distancing in Fellowship Hall

6:00 PM Conde Lenten Small Group

Wednesday, March 3

4:00 PM Confirmation

Sunday, March 7

Communion in Worship (white)
9:00 AM Conde Worship Limited
11:00 AM Groton Worship in person following CDC Guidelines

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton &

St. Joseph Catholic

Groton and Turton

Weekend Mass Schedule

Saturday 4:30pm Groton
Sunday 8:30am Groton & 11:00am Turton

Weekday

Tues 5:00pm Turton, W-F 8:30am Groton
Sat 10am Newman Center

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament

Each morning before Weekday Mass at 7:15am
Tues 3:45pm Turton

Confessions:

Sat. 3:45-4:15pm & Sun. 7:45am to 8:15am (G)
Sun. 10:30-10:45am (T)

Emmanuel Lutheran Church

Groton

Monday, March 1

6:30 am Bible Study

Wednesday, March 3

5pm Sarah Circle
6pm Confirmation
7pm Lenten Service

Thursday, March 4

2pm Nigeria Circle

Sunday, March 7

9am Worship/Communion
Milestones 7th & 8th grade

Heaven Bound Ministries

Pierpont

Buffalo Lake Lutheran

Rural Eden

Sunday, Feb. 28: Buffalo Lake Worship outside only in vehicle, 89.3 FM, 10:30 a.m.

Saturday, March 6: Worship at Pierpont at 5:30 p.m.

To submit your monthly or weekly church calendar, email to
news@grotonsd.net

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Call now to get your ADT security system starting at \$19.99/mo.*



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

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

†Requires minimum purchase of \$449.



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DF-CD-NP-Q121

Reply by:

April 15, 2021

We're available 24/7. See if you qualify for same-day service!

***\$19.99/month + †\$100 off Installation:** Requires 36-month monitoring contract with a minimum charge of \$28.99/mo. (before instant savings) (24-month monitoring contract in California, total fees from \$695.76 (before instant savings) and enrollment in Easy Pay. Service and installation charges vary depending on system configuration, equipment and services selected. Offer includes (i) \$9.00 instant savings per month applicable only towards monthly monitoring charge for the first 12 months of initial contract term (total value of \$108.00) and (ii) \$100 instant savings on installation with minimum purchase of \$449 after promotion is applied. Traditional Service Level requires landline phone. Excludes ADT's Extended Limited Warranty. Upon early termination by Customer, ADT may charge 75% of the remaining monthly service charges for the balance of the initial contract term. Limit one offer per new ADT customer contract. Not valid on purchases from ADT Authorized Dealers. Expires 4/15/2021.

Interactive Services: ADT Command Interactive Solutions Services ("ADT Command") helps you manage your home environment and family lifestyle. Requires purchase of an ADT alarm system with 36 month monitoring contract ranging \$45.99-\$57.99/mo with QSP (24-month monitoring contract in California, total fees ranging \$1,103.76-\$1,391.76), enrollment in ADT Easy Pay, and a compatible device with Internet and email access. These interactive services do not cover the operation or maintenance of any household equipment/systems that are connected to the ADT Command equipment. All ADT Command services are not available with all interactive service levels. All ADT Command services may not be available in all geographic areas. You may be required to pay additional charges to purchase equipment required to utilize the interactive service features you desire.

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

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DF-CD-NP-Q121

Governor Noem Signs Legislation to Simplify Youth Hunting and Fishing

PIERRE, S.D. – Yesterday, Governor Kristi Noem signed [House Bill 1034](#), which simplifies youth hunting and fishing requirements in South Dakota.

“2020 was a tremendous year for youth hunting and fishing in South Dakota, and we’re building on that for the future,” said Governor Kristi Noem. “The goal of this legislation is to get more young people involved in our outdoor way of life at an early age so they continue those experiences long into their adulthood.”

House Bill 1034:

- Provides consistent age requirements across all youth licenses for those under the age of 18;
- Allows resident and nonresident youth to fish without a license;
- Allows nonresident youth age 15 and under to participate in the mentored hunting program with a resident sponsor;
- Clarifies small game license and deer license requirements for youth.

In 2020, South Dakota saw increases in youth and first-time hunters. The state also sold a record number of licenses for youth-mentored hunting. And South Dakota saw increases in youth combo licenses as well as resident and nonresident fishing licenses.

Governor Noem Signs Bills into Law

PIERRE, S.D. – Friday, Governor Kristi Noem signed ten bills into law:

[SB 81](#) authorizes certain flags and flagpoles to be located on residential property regardless of any private covenants, restrictions, bylaws, rules, or requirements.

[SB 82](#) revises certain regulations pertaining to dealers of motor vehicles, boats, snowmobiles, or manufactured homes and mobile homes.

[SB 92](#) requires that certain proposed rules include a housing cost impact statement.

[SB 94](#) revises requirements to the publication of milk regulation ordinances.

[SB 101](#) revises provisions regarding warranty agreements with certain repair facilities.

[SB 102](#) protects voter registration information for certain voters.

[SB 136](#) changes the criteria for a petition to vacate a highway.

[HB 1034](#) revises certain youth hunting requirements.

[HB 1068](#) revises the requirement for written findings of fact and conclusions in certain judicial proceedings involving a child.

[HB 1109](#) modifies requirements and restrictions related to certain alcoholic beverages.

Governor Noem has signed ninety-two bills into law this legislative session.



Photos by Scott Thorson of the championship match.

Monson wins state title undefeated

Groton Area's Senior Dragr Monson has gone through his senior year undefeated and a state champion as he decisively defeated Hadley Tobin (Mt. Vernon/Plankinton/Corsica-Stickney), 5-3, in the final match. Monson scored a major decision and a decision win on Friday and a first round pin on Thursday.

Christian Ehresmann and Lane Krueger each lost a first round match, but then both came back for a second round pin and both lost in the third round. Cole Bisbee lost both of his matches via a pin.

B-113: Dragr Monson (40-0) placed 1st and scored 25.0 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Dragr Monson (Groton Area) 39-0 won by fall over Brady Unser (Ipswich/Leola/Bowdle) 21-14 (Fall 2:41)

Quarterfinal - Dragr Monson (Groton Area) 39-0 won by major decision over Iden Myers (Kimball/White Lake/Platte-Geddes) 22-12 (MD 12-2)

Semifinal - Dragr Monson (Groton Area) 39-0 won by decision over Teague Granum (Canton) 34-6 (Dec 7-3)

1st Place Match - Dragr Monson (Groton Area) 40-0 won by decision over Hadley Tobin (Mt. Vernon/Plankinton/Corsica-Stickney) 22-3 (Dec 5-3)

B-126: Christian Ehresmann (34-8) scored 3.0 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Porter Neugebauer (Parkston) 31-11 won by decision over Christian Ehresmann (Groton Area) 34-8 (Dec 9-2)

Cons. Round 1 - Christian Ehresmann (Groton Area) 34-8 won by fall over Jude Sargent (Winner Area) 18-20 (Fall 0:21)

Cons. Round 2 - Brady Bierema (Bon Homme/Scotland/Avon) 20-9 won by decision over Christian Ehresmann (Groton Area) 34-8 (Dec 8-6)

B-160: Cole Bisbee (19-21)

Champ. Round 1 - Dylan Whitley (Redfield Area) 32-4 won by fall over Cole Bisbee (Groton Area) 19-21 (Fall 0:37)

Cons. Round 1 - Gunnar Stephens (Burke/Gregory) 27-20 won by fall over Cole Bisbee (Groton Area) 19-21 (Fall 0:58)

B-195: Lane Krueger (24-9) scored 3.0 team points.

Champ. Round 1 - Charlie Patten (Parker) 42-6 won by fall over Lane Krueger (Groton Area) 24-9 (Fall 1:43)

Cons. Round 1 - Lane Krueger (Groton Area) 24-9 won by fall over Cole Wellner (Mobridge-Pollock) 19-10 (Fall 1:44)

Cons. Round 2 - Josh Merkle (Canton) 37-7 won by fall over Lane Krueger (Groton Area) 24-9 (Fall 3:27)

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Survive and Advance, No. 8 Wolves Set to Face MSU Moorhead in NSIC Title Game

Sioux Falls, S.D. – The No. 8 Northern State University men’s basketball team advanced to the NSIC/Sanford Health Basketball Tournament Championship with a 9-point victory over Minot State. The Wolves will look to win their fourth straight championship, which would be the first for any program in the NSIC.

THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 72, MINOT 63

Records: NSU 17-1, MINOT 14-1

Attendance: 73

HOW IT HAPPENED

- Northern State trailed 34-26 at the half, however rallied back in the second to seal the semifinal victory
- Yet again this season the Wolves held Minot’s leader Max Cody to just three points and one rebounds
- Offensively the Wolves shot 46.3% from the floor and 27.3% from the 3-point line
- Defensively they held the Beavers to 35.9% from the floor and 20.0% from beyond the arc
- Minot State edged out Northern State in rebounds 41-38, however the Wolves tallied 12 second chance points
- In addition, Northern notched 36 points in the paint, ten fast break points, nine points off turnovers, and nine bench points
- NSU added 18 assists, six made 3-pointers, 6 blocks, and three steals
- Three Wolves scored in double figures and Parker Fox notched a double-double

NORTHERN STATE STATISTICAL STANDOUTS

- Mason Stark: 22 points, 53.3 FG%, 5 rebounds, 3 assists
- Parker Fox: 18 points, 88.9 FG%, 12 rebounds, 4 blocks, 3 assists, 2 steals
- Andrew Kallman: 12 points, 5 assists, 4 rebounds

UP NEXT

Northern State will face MSU Moorhead in the championship contest today 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.

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Attention: Groton Area School District Patrons

An election for Groton Area Board of Education will be held on Tuesday, April 13, 2021. Four candidates running for two open positions are Anna Schwan, Martin D. Weismantel (I), Ryan Tracy and Kara M. Pharis (I). To vote in this election, you must be a registered voter of the Groton Area School District. If you are in doubt about your registration status, contact your local county auditor. Voter registration ends March 29, 2021.

On election day, the school district will operate polling sites from 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM at Andover Other Place, Bristol Community Center, Columbia Legion and Groton Community Center. With respect to COVID-19 issues, please make good health related decisions when voting on election day.

In-person absentee voting will be available beginning March 15, 2021 at the High School Business Office located in Groton at 502 North 2nd Street from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM Monday through Friday. Voters may vote in-person up until 5:00 PM the day before the election.

Voters may also vote absentee by mail or absentee by messenger, in the event of confinement due to sickness or disability. To receive a South Dakota Absentee Ballot Application Form call Mike Weber, at 605-397-2351 extension 1008, or email mike.weber@k12.sd.us. Forms are also available on-line at www.grotonarea.com and www.sdsos.gov.

Mike Weber
Election Superintendent
Groton Area Schools



THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE

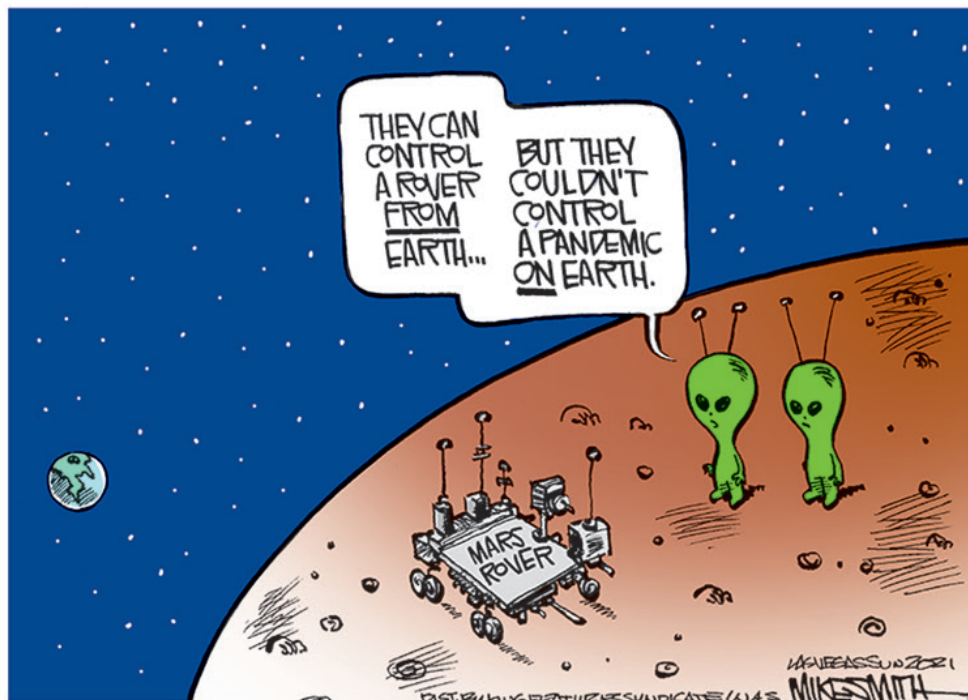
*“O My people, what have I done to you?
And how have I wearied you?
Testify against Me. For I brought
you up from the land of Egypt,
I redeemed you from the house
of bondage; and I sent before
you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.*

MICAH 6: 3, 4



“Mothers” by Käthe Kollwitz (1919)

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BIBLE TRIVIA

by Wilson Casey

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

2. In Acts 9, to what city was Saul traveling when suddenly there shined around about him a light from heaven?
Jerusalem, Damascus, Anab, Ekron

3. How many days did it take Nehemiah to get the wall around Jerusalem completed? *6, 52, 100, 1,000*

4. From Acts 17, at what church was Paul accused of turning the world upside down? *Antioch, Smyrna, Thessalonica, Galatia*

5. In Genesis 3:15, the snake is supposed to strike at (bruise) what part of man? *Throat, Hand, Heel, Eyes*

6. From Revelation 12, what angel fights against Satan? *Gabriel, Angel of the Lord, Cherubim, Michael*

ANSWERS: 1) New; 2) Damascus; 3) 52; 4) Thessalonica; 5) Heel; 6) Michael

Comments? More Trivia? Gift ideas? Visit www.TriviaGuy.com

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Broccoli-Corn Scallop

If you love broccoli, we can almost promise that this tasty side dish will become a favorite. If you hate broccoli, then I guess you'll just have to skip over this recipe. But, oh, what good food you're missing!

3 cups frozen chopped broccoli, thawed and drained

2/3 cup nonfat dry milk powder

3/4 cup water

2 eggs or equivalent in egg substitute

1 teaspoon dried onion flakes

10 reduced-fat butter-flavored crackers, made into crumbs

1 (8-ounce) can cream-style corn

1 (8-ounce) can whole-kernel corn, rinsed and drained

1. Preheat oven to 350 F. Spray an 8-by-8-inch baking dish with butter-flavored cooking spray. Evenly arrange broccoli in prepared baking dish.

2. In a large bowl, combine dry milk powder and water. Add eggs, onion flakes and half of the cracker crumbs. Mix well to combine. Stir in cream-style corn and whole kernel corn. Spread corn mixture evenly over broccoli. Sprinkle remaining cracker crumbs evenly on top. Lightly spray top with butter-flavored cooking spray.

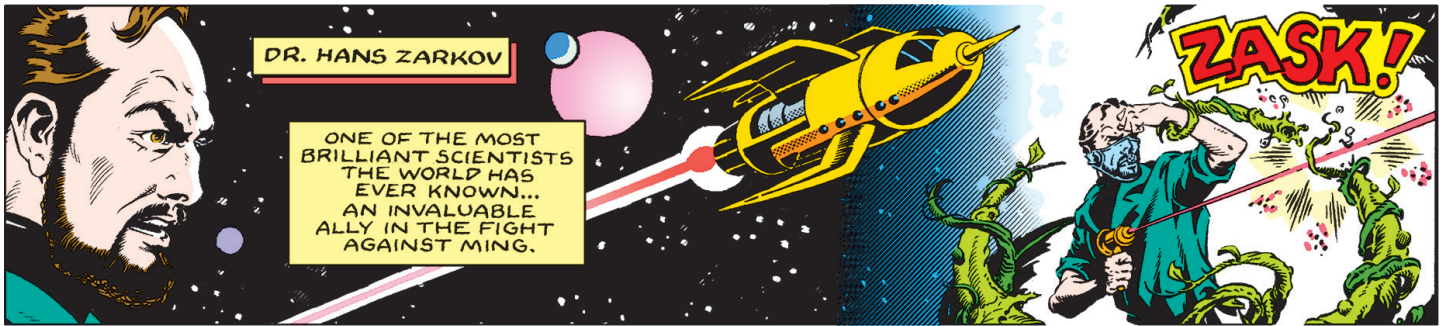
3. Bake for 35 to 40 minutes. Place baking dish on a wire rack and let set for 5 minutes. Divide into 6 servings.

* Each serving equals: 142 calories, 2g fat, 8g protein, 23g carb., 242mg sodium, 3g fiber; Diabetic Exchanges: 1 1/2 Starch, 1 Vegetable.

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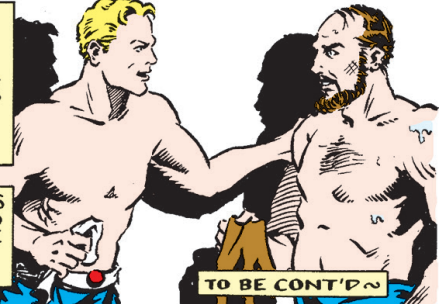
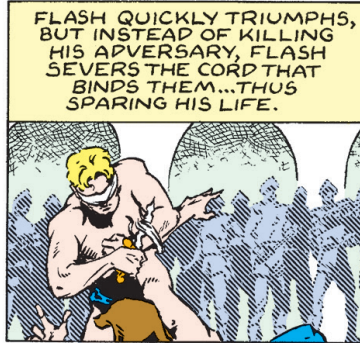
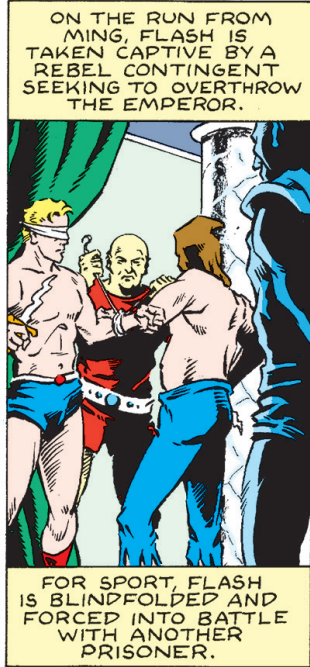
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FLASH GORDON

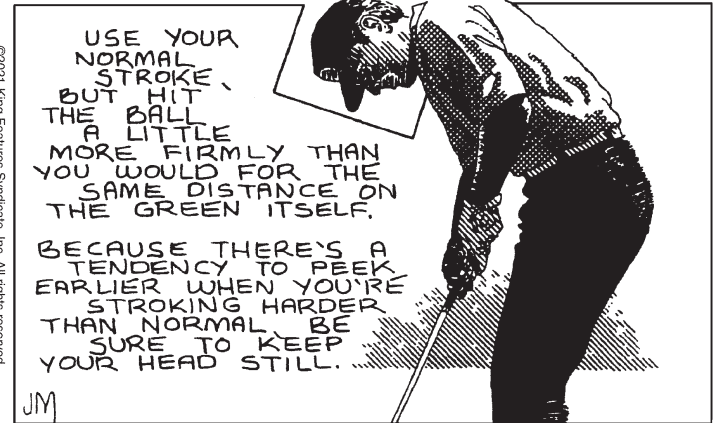
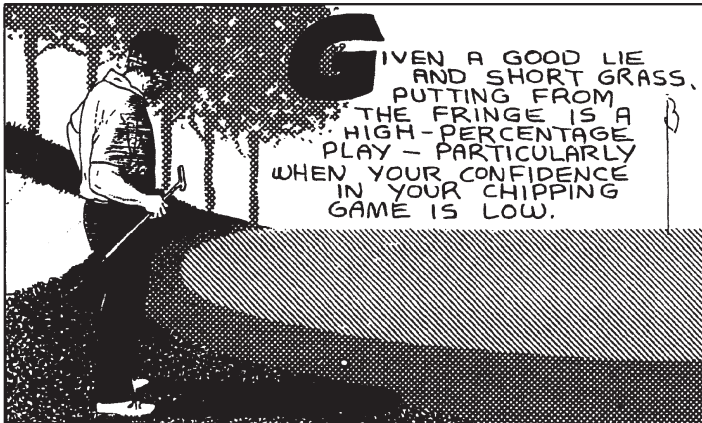
By JIM KEEFE

2-21



TO BE CONT'D

Play Better Golf with JACK NICKLAUS



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JM

Half of Seniors Have H. Pylori Infection



DEAR DR. ROACH: Could you give some additional information about H. pylori infection? I was diagnosed with it recently, via biopsies taken during an endoscopic procedure. I was given instructions on antibiotics to be taken, which I followed through on. When talking to my doctor's physician assistant, I asked what could have caused the infection, to try to prevent it from recurring. I was given a very cursory response, including that it could have come from eating at "Mom and Pop" restaurants. From research I did after that, it seems that it can be present for a long period of time without being noticed, and many times the cause is unsure.

After I finished the antibiotics, I was told to have a follow-up test to make sure they were effective. I was given a choice of a stool test or a breathing test; I chose the breathing test. I was surprised at how easy it was. Are

those tests also used to initially detect an infection, without a biopsy? -- A.J.Y.

ANSWER: *Helicobacter pylori* is an important cause of chronic gastritis (stomach inflammation), the most important cause of stomach ulcers, and is an important factor in stomach cancer and intestinal lymphoma. Between 50% and 66% of the population of the world is affected. The older a person is, the more likely he or she is to have infection: In the U.S., it's about 10% in those between 18 and 30 years old, but 50% in those over 60. This likely represents an improvement in hygiene, as most infections are acquired in childhood and persist throughout life.

It is thought that most infection occurs person-to-person, possibly through water or from poor handwashing before food preparation. H. pylori is much more common in developing nations. In the U.S., infection is more common in people of lower socioeconomic status.

Not everyone with H. pylori has symptoms or needs treatment. People with ulcers or gastritis are generally treated with several antibiotics for 10-14 days along with antacid medicine. The diagnosis can be made by biopsy, as yours was, or by the stool or breath test.

The breath test is at least 95% specific (if the test is positive, it's very likely to be a true positive) but 90% sensitive, meaning one person in 10 with the bacteria will have a false negative test. The stool test is close to 95% sensitive and specific. Blood testing is more likely to have false positive and false negative results. In addition to making the diagnosis, the stool or breath test is recommended to confirm eradication of the infection.

For more reading, I'd recommend you start at <https://medlineplus.gov/helicobacterpyloriinfections.html>.

DEAR DR. ROACH: Is chlamydia easy to cure with antibiotics? -- Anon.

ANSWER: Although there are several different species of the bacterium *Chlamydia*, including an important one that causes pneumonia, I assume you mean *chlamydia trachomatis*, the kind that causes genital disease in both men and women.

Yes, it can be easily cured. The cure rate with either of the first-line antibiotics, doxycycline or azithromycin, is 96% to 100%. The hard part is making the diagnosis, since the infection can be clinically silent, but can still be passed on. Unfortunately, unless all partners are treated simultaneously, it's possible to be reinfected.

Gonorrhea is often present at the same time as chlamydia, and it's important that testing for that infection also be done.

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



March is Women's History Month, kicked off in part by International Women's Day on March 8. It's billed as "a global day celebrating the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women," and by golly, there's much to celebrate — strong female characters, biopics of groundbreaking women, inspirational stories from every corner of the globe. Here are five wonderful stories of women to start you off:

Whale Rider — Paikea Apirana ("Pai") was born into a New Zealand tribe that awards its leadership to the first-born male. Pai is first-born and in the line of succession, and feels that being chief is a destiny and right, but she is a 12-year-old girl. However, through word and deed, she proves her feelings right again and again, despite a grandfather who rebuffs her attempts to learn the traditional fighting style (which she learns anyway and masters) and who does not include her in ritual initiations (finding a whale tooth).

Queen of Katwe — The true story of Ugandan chess phenomenon Phiona Mutesi (Madina Nalwanga), born in Katwe, a slum on the outskirts of Kampala. Under the tutelage of missionary Robert Katende (David Oyelowo), she learns chess, perseverance and the power of confidence. Phiona works her way through local and international contests, setting her sights on the success necessary to lift her loving family out of poverty.

On the Basis of Sex (PG-13) — A brilliant mind coupled with an incredibly dedicated work ethic, Associate Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg (Felicity

Jones), the Notorious RBG, finished law school with honors under adverse circumstances, but couldn't find a job working as a lawyer due solely to her being a woman. When her lawyer husband comes across an obscure but revolutionary tax-law case, Ruth sees it for the opportunity it is. You can't please all of the people when you dramatize the life of a cherished legend, but I liked this story's inspirational focus.



Focus Features

Cynthia Erivo in "Harriet"

Harriet (PG-13) — From self-liberation to American human-rights icon, Harriet Tubman (Cynthia Erivo) takes center stage in a stirring and inspirational biopic. When her husband, a freeman, attempts to secure her release, the farm's owner refuses. Tubman is labeled a troublemaker and sent to be sold, but escapes, making the arduous trek to Pennsylvania and winning her freedom. She then returns for her family again and again, bringing home many slaves in the process.

A League of Their Own — A lively cast of characters led by Geena Davis, Lori Petty, Madonna and Rosie O'Donnell (oh, and Tom Hanks) breathes life into the story of the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League, a wartime effort to keep sports alive while the boys were off fighting. Although treated as a joke by some fans and even male managers, the players become real pioneers in women's sport being seen as watchable in its own right. Plus, it's funny!

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1. Who wrote and released "When Will I Be Loved" and when?
2. Which group wrote and released "Take It to the Limit" in 1975?
3. Name the song the Beatles debuted on Our World in 1967.
4. When and where was the Summer of Love?
5. Name the song that contains this lyric: "So don't misunderstand me, You put the light in my life, Oh you put the spark to the flame, I've got your heart in my sights."

Answers

1. The Everly Brothers, in 1960. Their version went to No. 8 on the Billboard chart. Linda Ronstadt's cover shot to No. 2 in 1975. She changed the order of the

verses in her version and gave it a country flavor.

2. The Eagles. Willie Nelson and Waylon Jennings released a cover duet in 1983.
3. "All You Need Is Love." Our World was a live satellite broadcast that included musicians and artists around the world, reaching 700 million people.
4. 1967, in San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury district.
5. "Don't Go Breaking My Heart," by Elton John and Kiki Dee in 1976. Songwriter credits were under pseudonyms, with Ann Orson (Elton John) and Carte Blanche (Bernie Taupin) being listed.

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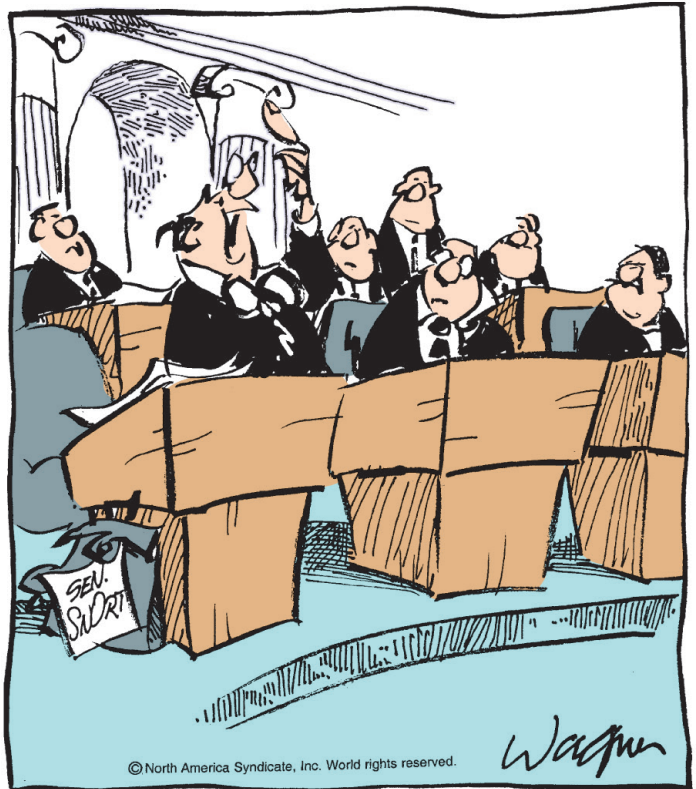
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Just Like Cats & Dogs

by Dave T. Phipps



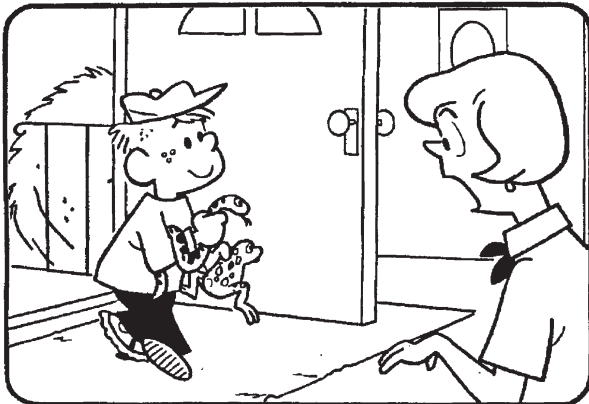
GRIN and BEAR IT



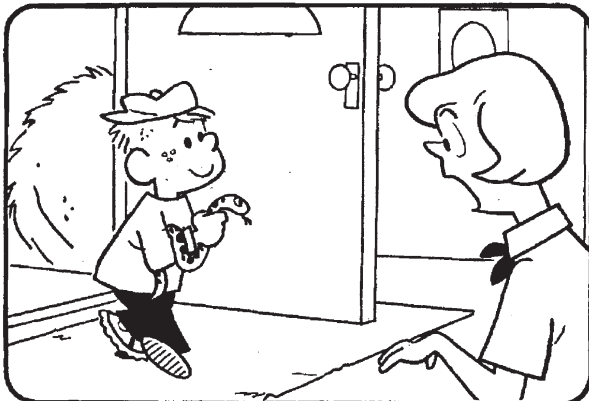
"The time has come to put aside party differences and do what's right for the country. ... What am I saying?"

HOCUS-FOCUS

BY HENRY BOLTINOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.



Differences: 1. Window is different. 2. Frog is missing. 3. Door knob is higher. 4. Railing is different. 5. Cap is reversed. 6. Earring is missing.



- If your pooch doesn't like to poop in the snow, here's a great trick to secure a patch of grass (even if frozen). Lay a square of plywood down on the ground, with a rope secured as a handle. After a snow, pull up the wood to reveal the ground underneath.

- Use mismatched socks to protect glass items when transporting them from place to place, or even in storage.

- Refillable spray bottles work best for cleaners. Refills can be economical, they put less waste in the system, and here's one more reason: less propellants used, which can be a serious irritant to lungs. Purchase an attractive bottle, and then look up some recipes for eco-friendly cleaners. You might be surprised how well they work and how great they smell!

- "Add some nuts to your morning

cereal or smoothie for a nutritious boost. It's not just for oatmeal or granola. I like to crush a handful of walnuts and sprinkle them across my waffles." — *J.E. in Maine*

- Get rid of the smell of burned popcorn in your microwave by setting a bowl of coffee grounds in it overnight. Somehow, when you remove it in the morning, it smells of neither popcorn nor coffee!

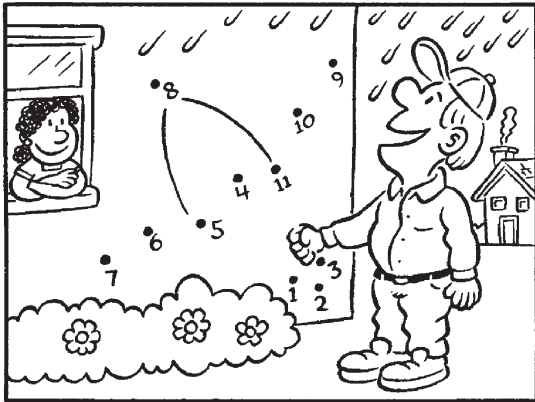
- Before removing a splinter, ice the area. There's less fussing and a wooden splinter might absorb some liquid, causing it to swell enough to pop out a bit more.

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

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RIDDLE-DOTS! "Hey, Mike! What can go up a chimney down but can't go down a chimney up?" Connect the dots and solve the riddle.

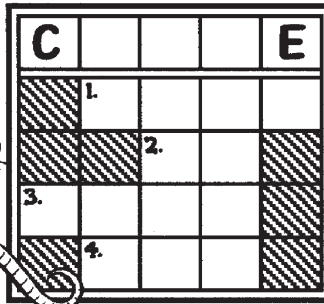
SOMETHING IN COMMON: What do the following two sentences have in common? 1. No lemons, no melon. 2. Was it a car or a cat I saw?

Both can be read the same forwards or backwards.



FIND-A-WORD! On the top line is our mystery word. You need to fill in the missing letters. Clue words (smaller words contained in letter-by-letter order within the mystery word) are defined below.

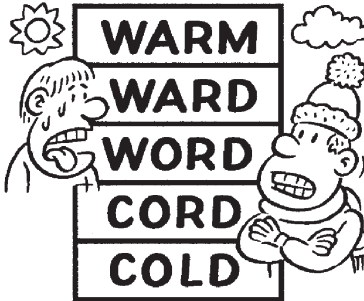
1. Cost per unit.
2. In or near.
3. Spoiled --.
4. Long-tailed critter.



1. Rate. 2. At. 3. Brat. 4. Rat. Mystery word: Crate.

Junior Whirl

by Charles Barry Townsend



LADDER PUZZLES

LADDER puzzles have been around for over a hundred years. They were made famous by Lewis Carroll, the author of "Alice in Wonderland." In this type of puzzle you are given a word that must be changed into another word in a series of moves. During each move you must change one letter in the previous word so as to form a new word. In our example we changed WARM into COLD in four moves. See if you can change the following four words:

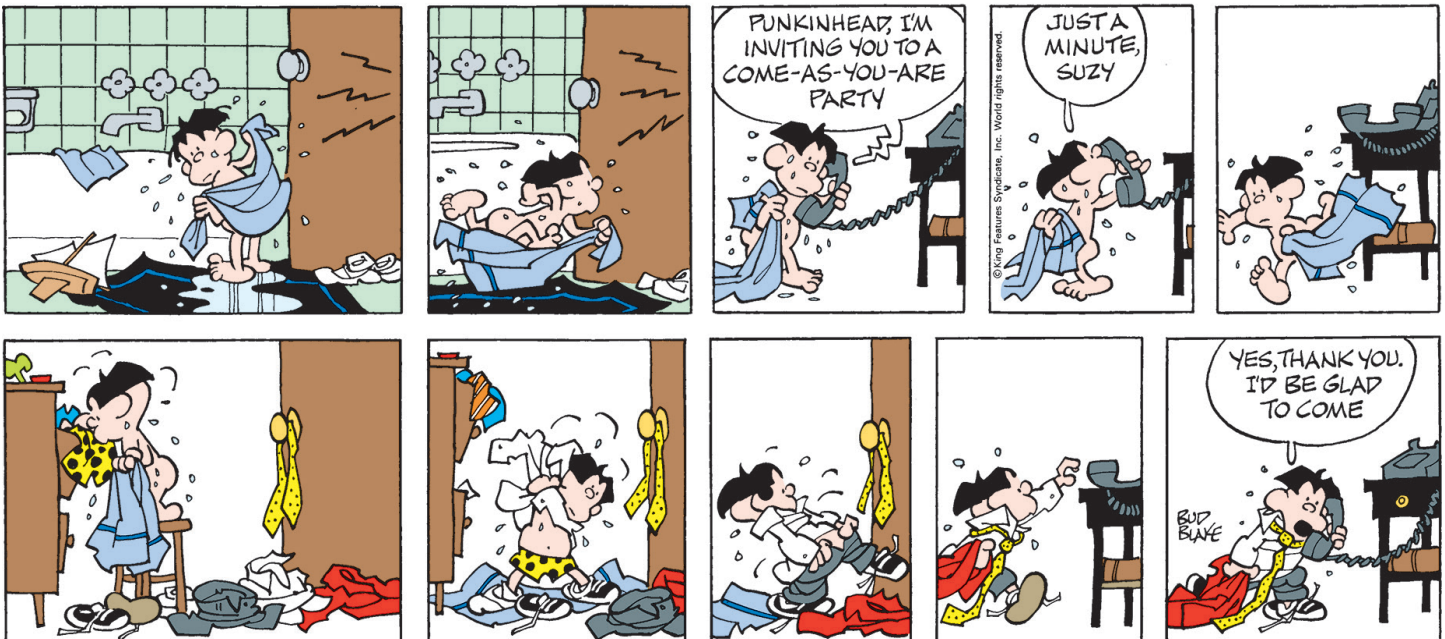
1. BOAT to CASH.
2. MORE to LESS.
3. FISH to MEAT.
4. SICK to WELL.

1. BOAT, COAT, COST, CAST, CASH.
 2. MORE, LORE, LOSE, LOSS, LESS.
 3. FISH, FIST, FIAT, FEAT, MEAT.
 4. SICK, SILK, SILL, SELL, WELL.

Illustrated by David Coulson

TIGER

by BUD BLAKE



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King Crossword

ACROSS

- 1 Peruke
- 4 Tousle
- 8 Labyrinth
- 12 Altar constellation
- 13 Isaac's eldest
- 14 Modern taxi alternative
- 15 World of organized crime
- 17 Dross
- 18 Earth (Pref.)
- 19 Poetic feet
- 21 Ohio city
- 24 Actress Long
- 25 Mentalist Geller
- 26 Candied veggie
- 28 Knight wear
- 32 Stagger
- 34 Gaiety
- 36 Flintstones' pet
- 37 Seoul setting
- 39 Fawn's mom
- 41 Dol. fractions
- 42 Bearded beast
- 44 Salsa scoopers
- 46 "La Mer" composer
- 50 4, on a phone
- 51 Pre-diploma hurdle
- 52 Ruffian
- 56 Church area
- 57 Rochester's

1	2	3		4	5	6	7		8	9	10	11
12				13					14			
15			16						17			
		18			19		20					
21	22				23		24					
25				26		27		28		29	30	31
32			33		34		35		36			
37				38		39		40		41		
			42		43		44		45			
46	47	48				49		50				
51					52		53				54	55
56					57					58		
59					60					61		

- love
- 8 Hot dog condiment
- 31 Colonial seamstress
- 58 Citrus drink
- 9 With skill
- 33 Lentils, for example
- 59 Privation
- 10 Gusto
- 35 Dijon denial
- 60 Source
- 11 Work units
- 38 Reply (Abbr.)
- 61 At once
- 16 "Gosh!"
- 40 Aerie newborn
- 20 "Homeland" org.
- 43 Leading man?
- 21 Ankara resident
- 45 Greek X
- 22 Crunchy cookie
- 46 Transaction
- 47 Big fair, for short
- 23 Klutz
- 48 Striped fish
- 27 Wet dirt
- 49 Vacillate
- 29 State made of two peninsulas
- 53 Spanish gold
- 30 Aware of
- 54 Hubbub
- 55 Just out

DOWN

- 1 Witty one
- 2 A Gershwin brother
- 3 More like a string bean
- 4 Tune
- 5 "Born in the —"
- 6 Grit
- 7 Egypt's neighbor

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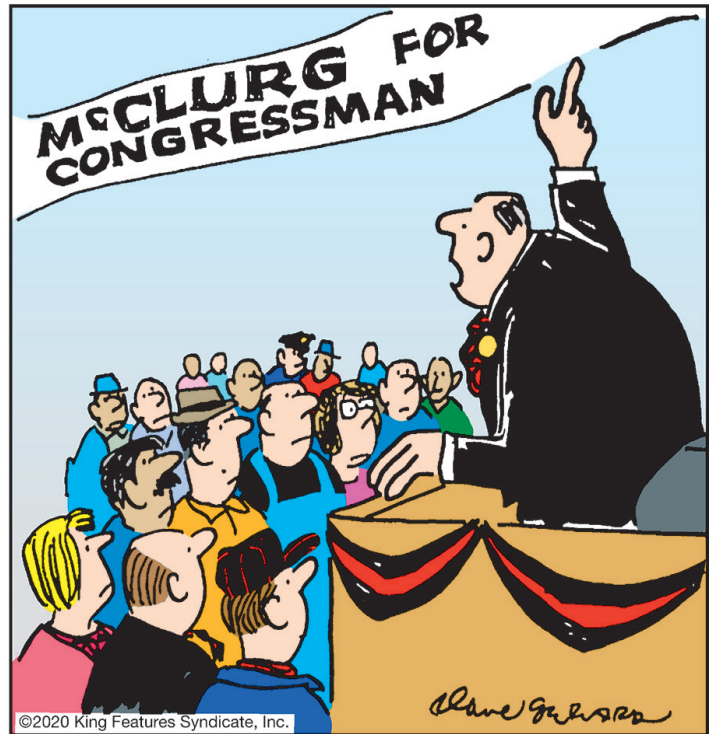
— King Crossword —

Answers

Solution time: 25 mins.

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

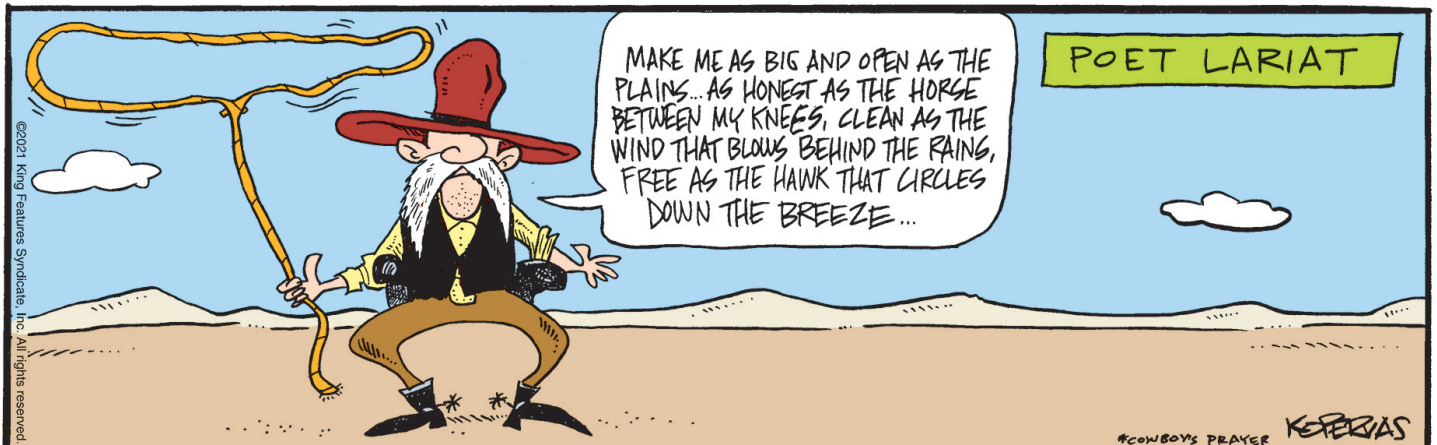
LAFF - A - DAY



"And, I promise you — if I'm elected — things won't get any worse!"

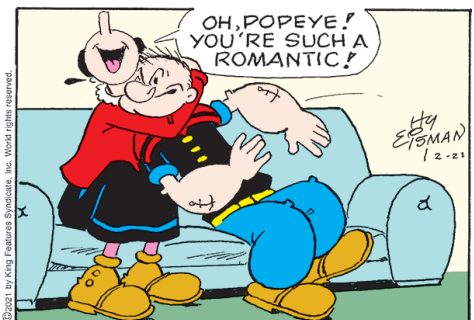
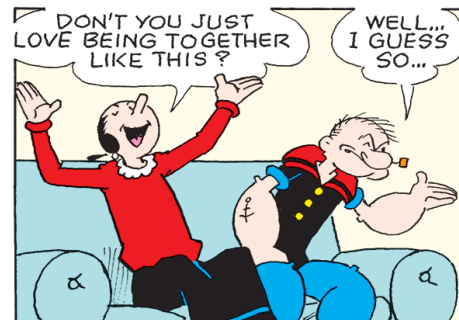
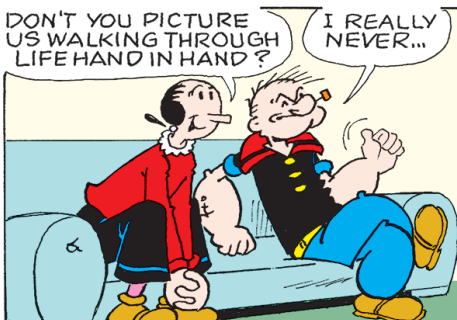
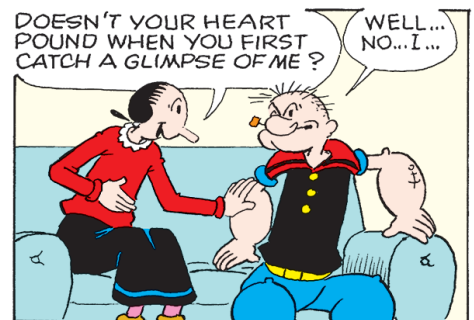
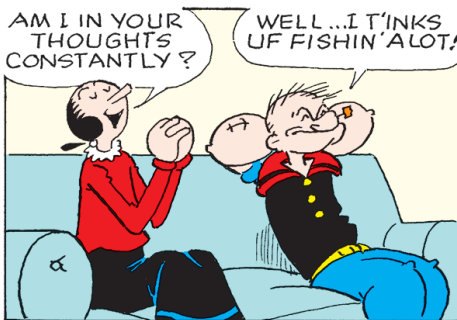
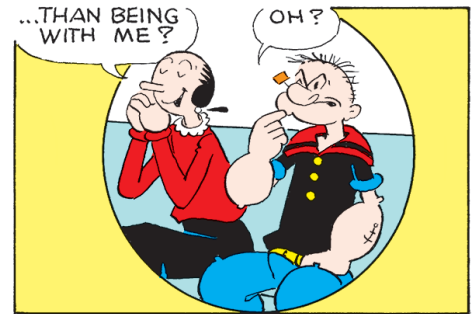
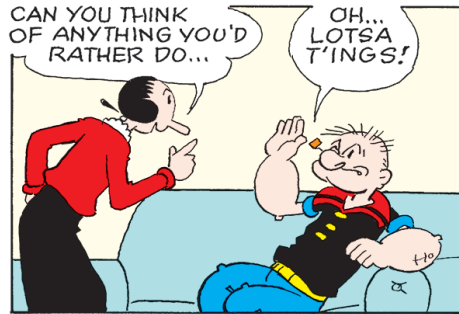
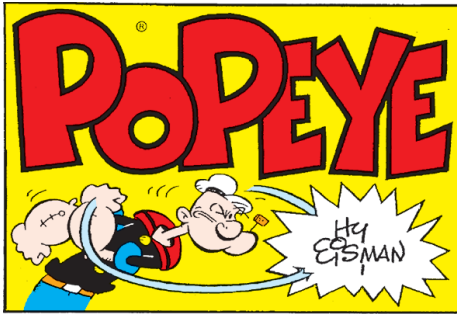
Out on a Limb

by Gary Kopervas



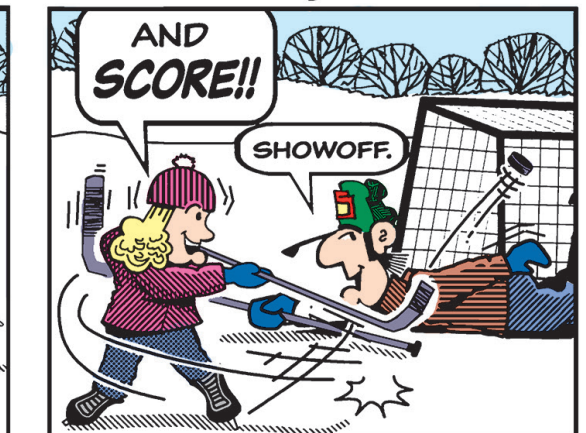
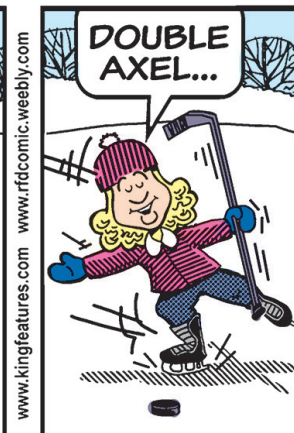
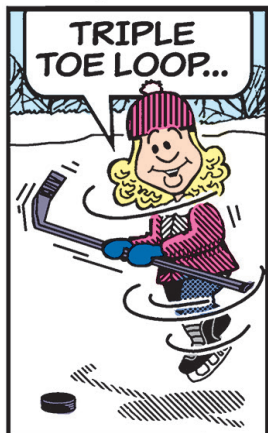
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R.F.D.

by Mike Marland



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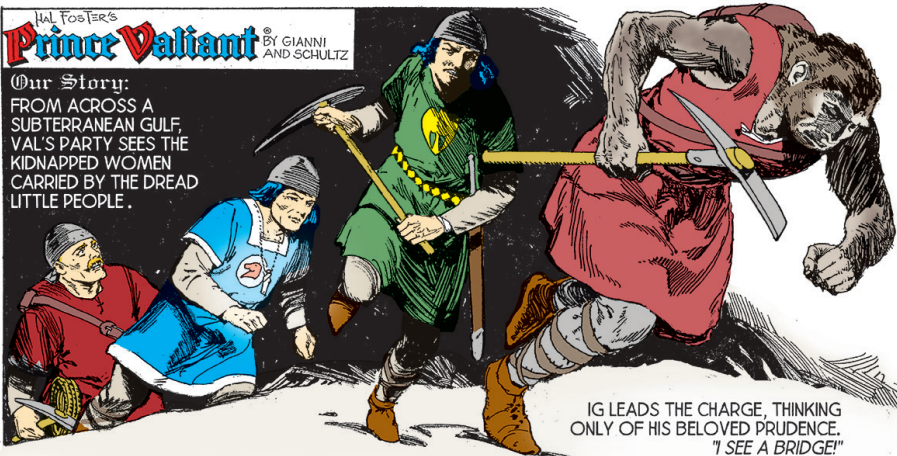
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Hal Foster's
Prince Valiant
BY GIANNI AND SCHULTZ

Our Story:
FROM ACROSS A
SUBTERRANEAN GULF,
VAL'S PARTY SEES THE
KIDNAPPED WOMEN
CARRIED BY THE DREAD
LITTLE PEOPLE.



IG LEADS THE CHARGE, THINKING
ONLY OF HIS BELOVED PRUDENCE.
"I SEE A BRIDGE!"

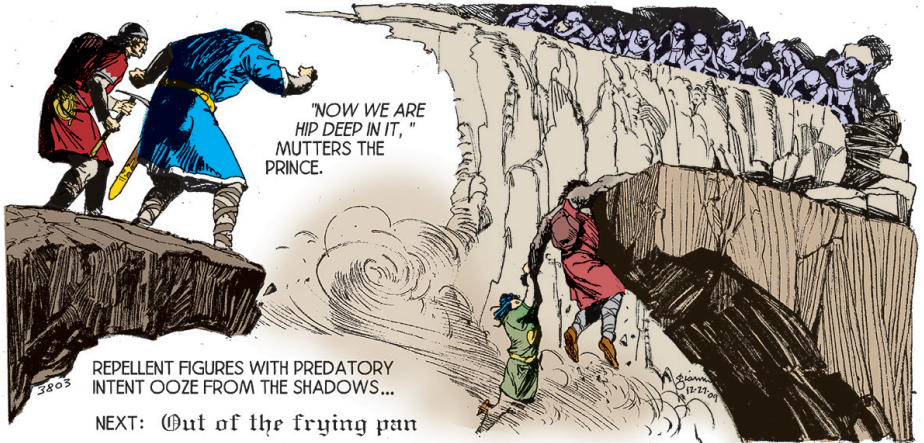
"WAIT!" VAL CRIES, "THE DAWN FOLK ARE DEVIUS! THEIR
BRIDGE MAY BE RIGGED..."
BUT IG PULLS
AHEAD...



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... AND GAWAIN, EVER THE UNREFLECTIVE
GALLANT, FOLLOWS. VAL'S FEARS ARE REALIZED.



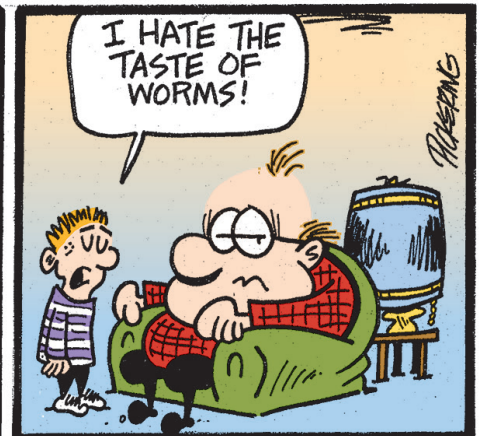
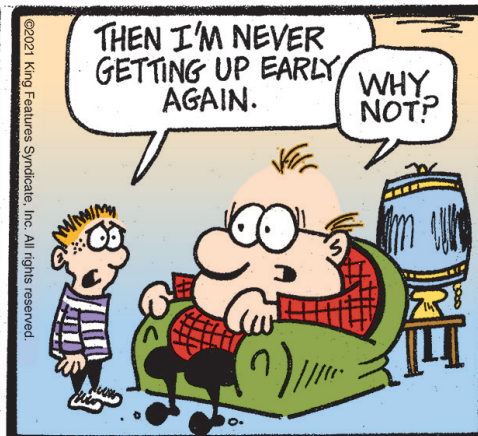
"NOW WE ARE
HIP DEEP IN IT,"
MUTTERS THE
PRINCE.

REPELLENT FIGURES WITH PREDATORY
INTENT OOZE FROM THE SHADOWS...

NEXT: Out of the frying pan

The Spats

by Jeff Pickering



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PICKERING

SENIOR NEWS LINE

by Matilda Charles

We Seniors Have Financial Clout

Have you given any thought to just how much financial clout we seniors have? Not because we necessarily have a lot of money, but because there are so many of us. As a “silver block” we can make some changes. And with every day that passes, more and more people join our group.

Shopping locally has immediate benefits close to home. According to the Small Business Administration, for every \$100 spent locally, \$48 of it stays in the community. At a big-box chain store, only \$14 stays in town.

Consider that every local purchase you make might actually be the one that keeps a neighbor employed as small businesses struggle to stay open. Foods that are made locally will be in your hands when they’re fresher. And you’re likely to get better service and free delivery from a local business that’s grateful for your order.

Check a list of stores in your area to see if they have websites. If not, call and ask how orders are placed.

Look for local farmers who sell their products at farmers markets. Call local appliance dealers before your next big purchase. Contact bakeries, shoe stores, and toy, pet and furniture stores that are locally owned.

If shopping locally is too limiting, expand your view to goods made in the U.S.A. As a block, we have a lot of clout there as well. Finding those items, however, can be difficult. When it comes to products made in America, here are a few websites that list by category dozens or hundreds of items made here:

I Buy American Store (www.ibuyamericanstore.com).

Made in America Store (madein-americanstore.com).

Clark Howard (clark.com). Put “Made in America” in the search box and look for 100-plus brands made in the U.S.A.

Do your homework before you place an order. Call the individual manufacturer to verify that the items are indeed made in America.

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1. In 1932, Phillip E. Young established what brand of golf equipment in Massachusetts?

2. What ailment plagued NBC sportscaster Bob Costas during the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics broadcasts?

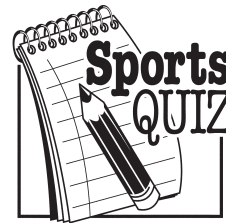
3. Running back Curt Warner and quarterback Kurt Warner both played (at different times) for what NFL franchise?

4. Theagenes of Thasos, Sostratus of Sicyon and Polydamas of Skotousa were participants in what ancient Olympic combat sport that was similar to modern mixed martial arts?

5. What team selected California Golden Bears basketball standout Shareef Abdur-Rahim with the third overall pick in the 1996 NBA Draft?

6. What was the name of the first U.S.-based team to play in the Canadian Football League?

7. What Asian arena was the site of James "Buster" Douglas' shocking 1990



by Ryan A. Berenz

knockout victory over Mike Tyson?

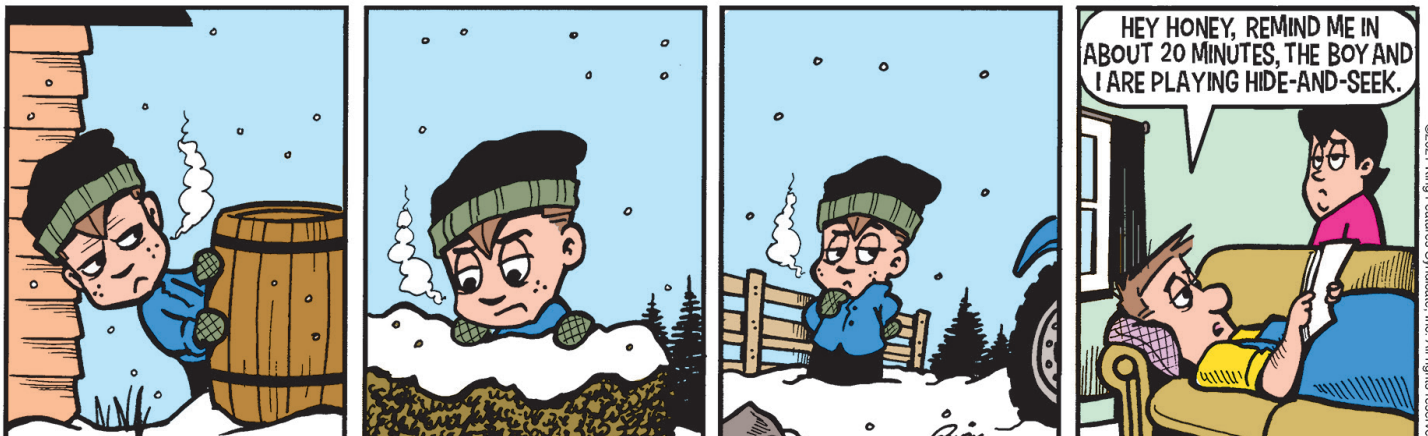
Answers

1. Titleist.
2. Conjunctivitis (pink eye).
3. The Los Angeles/St. Louis Rams.
4. Pankration.
5. The Vancouver Grizzlies.
6. The Sacramento Gold Miners.
7. The Tokyo Dome.

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Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps



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Local Shelters Need Your Help

DEAR PAW'S CORNER: I run a shelter in a rural area, and I wanted your readers to know that there is still a great need for donations of any kind at my shelter and just about every animal shelter in the country. While cash is the biggest way to help a local shelter obtain food, medical supplies and other items to take care of lost and abandoned pets, we also accept donations of goods. Pet food, old blankets and pet toys are always appreciated. The best way to make sure your donation is needed is to call your local shelter and ask what they need! Believe me, shelter workers won't hesitate to tell you, because they know what items are needed and they usually need them right away. — *Carol in Alexandria, Louisiana*

DEAR CAROL: Thank you for all

that you do for animals! Readers, take note that animal shelters, like many businesses, are struggling and getting by day to day during this ongoing pandemic. Anything that you can donate will be appreciated.

Find local shelters by searching online or on Facebook. Contact the shelters by phone or email to find out what they need.

One thing I see a big call for from rescue shelters is old newspapers. These are used to line the bottom of cages — they are easy to put in and easy to clean up. Used collars and leashes also are welcome.

If you don't have pet items to donate, find out if the shelter needs office supplies. Pens, printer paper, sticky notes, file folders and other items may be gratefully accepted.

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

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Strange BUT TRUE

By Lucie Winborne

* Ladies, before you put a ring on it, you might want to consider that a survey of 17,000 people across 28 countries found that the amount of time a man spends doing chores on a weekly basis decreases significantly after he marries.

* The name for the shape of a Pringles potato chip is "hyperbolic paraboloid."

* In 1862, the King of Siam offered Abraham Lincoln many elephants on the grounds that a "country as great as the United States should not be without elephants." President Lincoln politely declined.

* The stage before frostbite is called -- wait for it -- frostnip.

* Boeing uses potatoes to test their in-flight Wi-Fi, as they reflect and absorb the signals in a fashion similar to humans. The process is called Synthetic Personnel Using Dialectic Substitution, or SPUDS.

* "Digging a hole to China" is theoretically possible if you start in Argentina.

* The first roller coaster was used to transport coal down a hill. After people found that it could reach speeds up to 50 mph, tourists started asking to ride on it for a few cents.

* A flower that smells like chocolate? Yep, but you'll have to limit your enjoyment of this dark-red Mexican native to sniffing, as the "cosmos atrosanguineus," or "chocolate cosmos," isn't edible.

* In 2014, a missing woman on vacation in Iceland was found when it was discovered that she was in the search party looking for herself!

* Donkey Kong got his curious moniker because his creator, Shigeru Miyamoto, believed "donkey" meant "stupid" in English and wanted to convey the impression that the character was a "stupid ape."

Thought for the Day: "By walking on the right path, you create a golden fate for yourself and you also become a silver lining for the others!" -- Mehmet Murat ildan

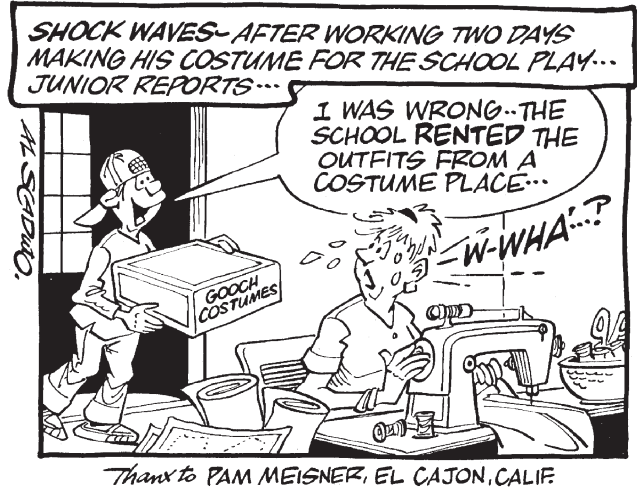
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THEY'LL DO IT EVERY TIME

BY AL SCADUTO





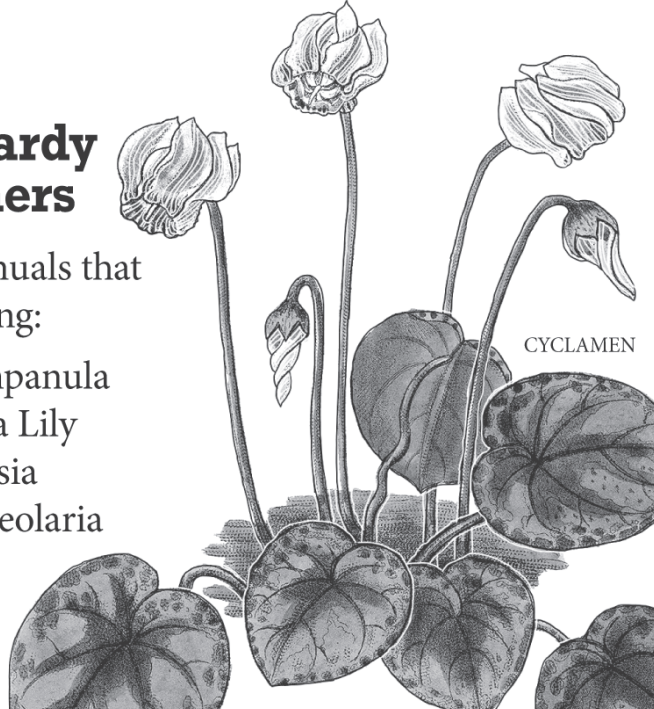
Cold-hardy bloomers

Here are eight colorful annuals that you can plant in early spring:

- Senetti pericallis
- Campanula
- Cyclamen
- Calla Lily
- Ranunculus
- Freesia
- Dianthus
- Calceolaria

— Brenda Weaver

Source: www.costafarms.com



CYCLAMEN



by Freddy Groves

‘Federal Partners’ Get Vaccine From VA

Who are the Department of Veterans Affairs federal partners? Inquiring minds want to know.

A recent VA press release boasted about surpassing the VA’s milestone of administering 1 million doses of the COVID vaccine. That’s a great number, but that 1 million-plus isn’t all veterans.

Some 626,000 veterans got the first and (and sometimes) second dose. Over 400,000 went to VA employees. But 1,200 doses went to “federal partners.”

Nowhere, in much research across the Internet, could I find just who those partners were.

The VA has done a good job of setting up a website showing just how many people at each of the many sites across the country have received the vaccine. But once again, those “federal partners” weren’t identified.

They also aren’t identified in the 88-page Memorandum of Agreement between the VA and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, where it’s stated that the VA will vaccinate those “federal partners.” It did say that those who receive the vaccine will be entered into the VA’s electronic medical record, and that they could be given by VA staff who go to the partner sites. The VA will let the CDC know how many doses they need out of the VA’s vaccine allocation.

So, who are they, these federal partners?

I did come across a few clues about “partners” in my search, although not the ones getting the vaccine: Federal Partners in Bullying Prevention, Bureau of the Fiscal Service (which seems to keep a list of taxpayers who owe child support), Veteran Employment Services Office, the Food and Drug Administration Federal Partners’ Collaborative, the Bureau of Indian Education and the Faith-based and Community Initiatives.

In other words, it’s across the board, and all manner of government departments can have sub-groups that may be considered partners.

Granted, 1,200 doses isn’t huge given the scope of the program, but these are doses that didn’t go to veterans.

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



Rising to the Challenge: The Congressional Award

One of the best parts of my job is the unique opportunity I have to meet with outstanding young people from across the state. I am inspired by their energy and dedication to make a positive impact in their communities and across the country.

It's easy to look at today's political climate and feel discouraged, but as I am reminded every time I meet with young people, the future of this country is in good hands.

I believe it is important to recognize young people for practicing good citizenship and contributing to their communities. That's why I am excited to highlight Congress's highest honor bestowed on a young person: The Congressional Award.

In 1979, Congress established the Congressional Award to highlight the service, initiative, and achievement of America's youth. The Congressional Award is a non-partisan program where participants set and achieve challenging goals in four core areas: voluntary public service, personal development, physical fitness, and expedition/exploration.

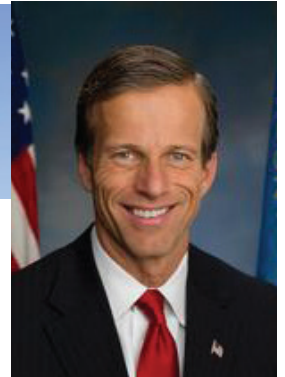
As participants reach their goals, they earn Bronze, Silver, and Gold Certificates and Bronze, Silver, and Gold Medals. The program is open to anyone between the ages of 14-23 and accommodates for young people with disabilities. In order to participate, individuals must register online.

Community service makes states like South Dakota stronger, and I'm proud many of our youth are stepping up voluntarily. If you are interested in learning more about the Congressional Award or would like to register, visit <https://www.congressionalaward.org>. I look forward to honoring South Dakotans willing to take on this unique challenge.

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John Thune
U.S. SENATOR - SOUTH DAKOTA



Let's Work Together

Congress has passed five COVID relief bills, and every single one of them was overwhelmingly bipartisan. It's unfortunate that as we consider additional relief measures, Democrats have made it clear that they are determined to do it on a purely partisan basis – which is particularly disappointing because, again, up until now, COVID relief has been a bipartisan process.

In a recent speech, President Biden acknowledged that people have criticized his \$1.9 trillion plan but asked, "What would they have me cut? What would they have me leave out?" Let me offer a few ideas.

For starters, it might be a good idea to cut the sections of the Democrats' bill that have nothing to do with combating COVID. Less than 10 percent of the bill is directly related to combating COVID through public health spending. Less than 10 percent.

He could also cut the bill's minimum wage hike. The Democrat spending bill would more than double the federal minimum wage – at the cost of an estimated 1.4 million jobs, according to the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office. That would be problematic enough at a time when we're already dealing with substantial job losses. It's even worse when you realize that the people most likely to lose their jobs as a result of this hike would be lower-income workers.

I would also suggest that the president cut his \$86 billion bailout of multiemployer pension plans, which has nothing to do with emergency COVID relief.

The president could also consider cutting his \$350 billion slush fund for states and localities – which would be used mostly to reward states that shut down their businesses for extended periods and, therefore, have higher unemployment rates. It's become clear that a majority of states, including South Dakota, are doing okay financially, despite the pandemic. A number of states actually saw higher tax revenues in 2020, and a majority of states have the resources they need to weather the rest of this crisis.

Then of course there's the money the bill includes for schools. While children in some places – like South Dakota – are in school, we need to get all kids back to in-person learning. In-person learning is important for kids' academic, social, and emotional health, and as Republicans have demonstrated, we want to ensure schools have the resources they need to get back into the classroom safely. Our previous coronavirus bills contained more than \$100 billion for education, and I think it's safe to say that every Republican would support additional dollars if needed.

But the fact of the matter is, schools still have billions of dollars from previous coronavirus legislation that remains unspent. And the Biden spending bill would appropriate an additional \$129 billion for schools that would receive the funding whether or not they get kids back into the classroom. On top of that, most of that money going to schools will stretch all the way to 2028 – in other words, long after the pandemic will be over. In fact, 95 percent of the education spending would occur after 2021. Ultimately, the Biden spending bill's school funding ends up looking less like a plan to get our kids back in schools and more like caving in to the teachers' unions.

If President Biden would like to know what to cut, I'd suggest he start with some of the things I've highlighted. I would ask that he and the Democrat leadership abandon their plan to shove through a bloated, partisan bill and start trying for the unity the president has talked about. The president could show that he really meant what he said in his inaugural address by sitting down with Republicans to develop targeted relief legislation. We're ready to come to the table. The ball is in the president's court.

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South Dakota Governor

Kristi Noem



South Dakota: *Under God, the People Rule*

Celebrating America

There is no better place to celebrate America's birthday than Mount Rushmore, surrounded by the beautiful Black Hills and in the presence of four iconic American leaders. Last year, we brought fireworks back to Mount Rushmore for the first time in more than a decade. The celebration was a tremendous opportunity to showcase our state to the world, and I am committed to continuing the celebration this year.

Now, you may be wondering why I'm talking about the Fourth of July when it's still cold outside. This week in the United States Senate, there was a confirmation hearing for Rep. Deb Haaland, who is President Biden's pick to be the new Secretary of the Interior. The Department of the Interior has oversight over our national parks, including Mount Rushmore, so if Rep. Haaland is confirmed as secretary, she would have oversight over our fireworks celebration as well.

During the hearing, Senator Roger Marshall, a former colleague of mine, asked Rep. Haaland whether she would join us for the Mount Rushmore Fireworks. Her response was promising. She said that she'd "never been to Mount Rushmore," but implied that she'd like to "if the pandemic is over." I have the same hope that she does: that the pandemic is old news by July. And I'm glad that COVID hospitalizations have fallen off their peak by about 85% in South Dakota.

We are moving forward with planning a Fireworks Celebration. We signed the agreements with the Department of the Interior for the 2021 celebration on the same day as the 2020 celebration – we just need the Biden administration to honor those agreements.

This event is a huge deal for our state. Last year's celebration carried an advertising value of more than \$22 million, and Google searches for "Mount Rushmore" reached an all-time high – more than 12 times higher than the previous record. This attention to our state will be an economic boon for years to come, as families choose South Dakota as their road trip destination.

I know that some suggest that this event poses safety risks to the park and the surrounding Hills, and I take these concerns very seriously. South Dakota takes great pride in our care for our natural resources. When weather conditions have not been favorable to the fireworks celebration in the past, we have refrained from holding the event. And we will continue to manage these celebrations responsibly moving forward.

I've also asked Senator Thune, Senator Rounds, and Congressman Johnson to help me advocate to the Biden administration on behalf of our Mount Rushmore Fireworks Celebration. Together, I'm confident that we can make it happen. And if President Biden wants to join us, we'd be glad to have him.

Again, there's no better place to celebrate America's birthday. Washington won our Independence – a fight that was driven by Jefferson's ringing call to freedom: "all men are created equal." Lincoln secured that freedom for the oppressed. And Teddy Roosevelt guaranteed the sustainability of the West so that future generations could enjoy it. These men embody so much of what makes America great. I look forward to once again celebrating our Independence Day in the presence of four such iconic leaders.

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Lana's Annals- week 7 House of Representatives

Greetings to all. This week was by far the busiest one we have encountered-many early mornings and some late nights at the capitol.

In local government we heard HB1138, a bill regarding the issuing of camping permits. We were told that getting summer camping sites sometimes is very difficult so this bill is trying to give preference to our residents when it comes to making reservations. The first two weeks of reservations would be taken from only South Dakota residents. Two things convinced me to vote in favor: we do give residents a week to pheasant hunt before non-residents are allowed to do so. Also, we residents pay for the facilities and roads to campgrounds with our tax dollars. Therefore it seemed like a reasonable bill. It passed our committee and also the House floor. Now, it's on to a Senate committee.

House Education passed HB1146, which states that the Board of Regents would no longer have the majority party have 6 members and three others from the other party affiliations. Instead, the bill would make the appointments non-political, and would be appointed on qualifications. The language of having only one member coming from a particular county remains in tact. I thought this was good as members then cannot over-represent a certain area or a certain party. Others may see it different as it moves its way along.

On Thursday we were all supposed to wear black for crossover day, the day when the bills must be voted on by their respective Chambers. Black symbolizes bills that have been voted down, and there have been many.

Crossover day found us debating HB1100H a bill that set up the framework for medical marijuana. We decided to have a summer work group that would finish the implementation of the plans, and medical cards would be available for issue by January 1, 2022. Although some wanted this to be a reality sooner, we had a good debate and ended up passing the bill. Many agreed as long as we were putting this into legislation, it would be good to do it right the first time.

Another talker on the floor this week was HB1154, which would prohibit contracts with no compete clauses. In some areas healthcare people, when they are hired for a position, have to sign a no compete clause, which essentially locks them into one healthcare organization. The argument in favor of this is that if the worker is trained extensively by one healthcare group, he/she should be obligated to stay. On the flip side is the fact that not all people want to remain in the same position with the same group forever. Thus if they have signed a contract with a no compete clause, nothing may be available in a town where they live, so they may have to work several miles out of town in order to have a job. As most thought this was unfair, the bill was passed to reflect worker favor.

The House this week also HB1112. This bill would have increased safety zone distance for gun discharge. The current bill defines the area of safety as 660 ft. and the proposal was to moved it to 300 yards. A couple of legislators who are avid hunters felt this bill was against hunters and road hunting. While I was not certain if this was the bill's intent or if it was merely trying to protect property and dwellings, it just seemed a little unreasonable. Therefore, I voted against it. The bill lost 27-40 with 3 absent.

HB1210, to make an appropriation for a new bioproducts facility at the Brookings research park, passed by exactly a 2/3 vote. This will provide a place to be used by SDSU and SM&T to do research to develop new industries within our state. That could be hemp, timber, and soy products, just to name a few. I am not one to spend a lot of money, but I felt this would be a 20 million dollar investment in continuing to promote our economy and new opportunities for our college students and eventually jobs for them after graduation. We got some matching money from big industries and well as equipment commitments to be used in conjunction with research.

We also voted in the 900,000 dollar Governor's request to continue implementing materials and teacher training for teaching South Dakota civics and history. Many of us spoke favorably, and it handily passed.

Keep in mind, that all of the bills mentioned are House bills and still have to meet up with Senate approval. All in all, we have much work to do in the next 2 weeks. I am certain there will be more 16 hour days before we conclude. With that said, I will conclude for this week. If you are a "night owl." you can continue to watch the House and Senate proceedings at midnite or on SD.Net in the afternoons daily.

Rep. Lana Greenfield

lana.greenfield@sdlegislature.gov

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Democratic Leaders Column from Rep. Jamie Smith and Sen. Troy Heinert— Week 7

PIERRE, SD (February 26, 2021) – Greetings from Pierre! The seventh week of the legislative session ended with crossover day. Thursday was the last day for bills to move out of their chamber of origin to be voted on in the other chamber. The senate adjourned Thursday afternoon at about 3pm while the house debated bills until midnight. Democrats have bills that would do good things for South Dakota. Some were passed, others were voted down. We also continue to speak up against bills that seem to be solutions looking for problems, or that go against the will of voters.

“Of course, we are deeply concerned about HB 1217 that keeps transgender students from participating in sports,” says House Minority Leader, Jamie Smith. “I don’t see how bills like this make us a more inclusive state. I was really disappointed in the number of people that supported it. As a former coach, I am very familiar with Title IX, and the officers in the South Dakota High School Sports Association. If they were in support of the bill, they would have been in committee testifying.”

A more inclusive bill that would have helped vulnerable people in our state was Senator Red Dawn Foster’s, SB 166. It would revise provisions regarding hate crimes and extend them to include LGBTQ+ Native Two-Spirit and people with disabilities. It was voted down on the senate floor. A bill brought by Representative Erin Healy, HB 1220, that would have allowed pregnant minors to provide consent to their prenatal, delivery process, or postnatal care failed in its committee.

“Democrats in Pierre are bringing good bills that solve real problems that our most vulnerable citizens are facing,” says Senate Minority Leader Troy Heinert. “I’m proud of the work they are doing here. We have to keep listening to what our constituents are telling us and represent them the best that we can.”

Examples of these include Rep. Healy’s HB 1196, that restores free online tuition for college students who blind and visually impaired and HB 1132, which adds dental hygienists as mandatory reporters of abuse and neglect. Both of these bills have made it through both the house and senate and are on their way to the Governor’s desk waiting to be signed into law.

On Tuesday, the house passed HB 1199, a proposal to create an office under the Office of the Attorney General to coordinate tribal, state and local law enforcement agencies in tackling the crisis of missing Indigenous people. Representative Peri Pourier, proposed the office as part of an effort to solve how a disproportionate number of Indigenous people go missing and are murdered in the state. This bill would create a one-person office within the attorney general’s office to specialize in coordinating law enforcement efforts across agencies.

“This is a significant step in the right direction to address the problem of missing Indigenous people in our state,” says Heinert. “I look forward to speaking to this bill and having this much needed discussion in the Senate. This bill, along with SR 701, to open an official inquiry into the Medals of Honor given to United States soldiers for their involvement in the Wounded Knee Massacre, will go a long way to foster healing in our state. For decades, Lakota people have asked for the rescinding of the 20 Medals of Honor that were awarded to 7th Calvary soldiers for their actions at Wounded Knee on December 29, 1890. The resolution received unanimous support on the Senate floor and is the first time that the South Dakota Legislature has supported this movement. It’s time to right this wrong, and I’m deeply grateful to the Senate Republicans for supporting this.”

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The bill that received a lot of attention this week was HB 1100, the governor's bill to delay the implementation of medical marijuana to July 1, 2022, going against the will of the voters who overwhelmingly supported implementation to begin this year.

"The house debated this bill for over an hour, and our representatives spoke up for the folks who made it clear that we can't wait on this," says Smith. "There are a lot of people in our state who are suffering from medical conditions that medical marijuana would alleviate, and we hear them. The vote to delay that help is disheartening, but we hope the senate will do a better job respecting the will of South Dakota voters."

"On the senate side, we heard SB 189, a bill that would have decriminalized small amounts of marijuana, and that bill failed," says Heinert. "So, clearly we have a number of senators who aren't listening. I'll say it again, it's our job as legislators to implement the will of the voters and Democrats in the state legislature will fight for their decision."

The next big issue in the legislature will be the budget. There is more money this year than in previous years, which means more decisions to be made on how it is spent.

"It's a good problem to have," says Heinert. "I just hope these decisions aren't being made behind closed doors. We'll be hearing a lot of appropriations bills coming up, including bills to appropriate funds for a new airplane for the governor's use. The house bill to accomplish this failed, but there is another one coming from the senate side that includes that expenditure that will be debated over the next two weeks."

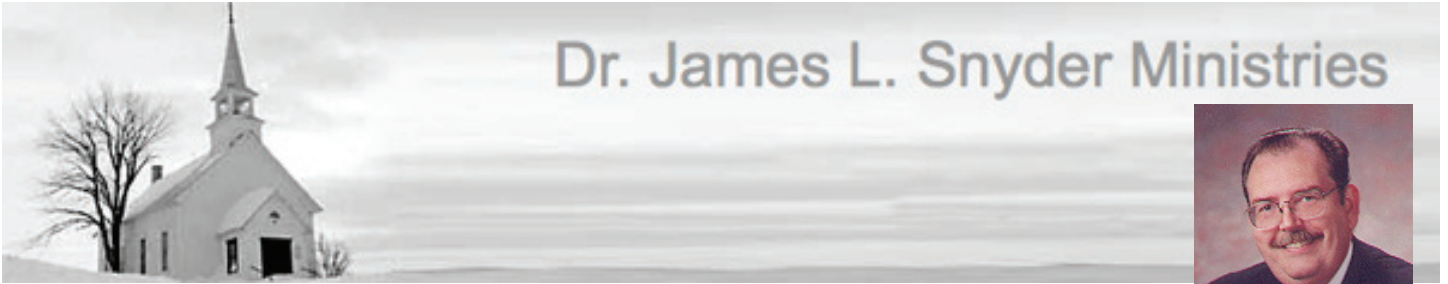
Democrats are here to work for the people, to work for you. We want to hear from you! Please contact us to share your questions or concerns about the current session. Our caucus meetings have always been open to the public each day the hour before floor session. We are observing COVID mitigation practices 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
Senator Troy Heinert, Troy.Heinert@sdlegislature.gov

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Knock, Knock; Someone's in Trouble

For some reason, the last several weeks we have been getting many visitors at our door. I'm not sure if this is a general trend or if it is just our door.

Some of them have been salesmen, religious people, scam artists, and a host of other people. They only had one goal in mind, and that was to get our money.

I guess I have not realized how wealthy I am. Everybody wants my money. If they only knew how little money I had, they would be running away from our house. I can't even get my money because I'm not sure where it is.

This year the Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage and I will have been married 50 years. I think my wife married me for my money, but in the last 50 years, she has not found any of it. I'll give her another 50 years, and then we are going to have to reexamine the situation. When she does find it, we will take a vacation to Hawaii.

Money we have not, and the more they pester us for our money, the more frustration we acquire. If they want frustration, we have plenty of that and are more than happy to give it to them.

My wife and I are very frugal when it comes to money because we do not have that much. But the money we do have will stay in our account and not be given to somebody who wants to sell us an extended car warranty policy. Every time they call about that, I have something I want to extend to them, and it is not money.

When someone calls on the phone, you can always hang up or not even answer it. When somebody knocks on your door, you do not have that kind of choice. You do not know who is there or what they want.

It might be somebody scoping the neighborhood for a house to rob.

Because my wife knows everybody in the neighborhood, as soon as someone knocks at our door and almost before the door is closed, she has texted everybody on the street to be aware of someone coming to knock on the door. It is great when a neighborhood hangs together.

Once two Jehovah's Witnesses came to our door, and I happened to answer it.

They introduced themselves, then I introduced myself as a pastor and began a sermon right there at the front door. I have 100 sermons in my mind ready to use. I kept preaching, and they tried to interrupt, but you can never interrupt a preacher.

Before I got to the end of my sermon, they turned around and walked away as fast as I have ever seen anybody walk away. After all, they came to my door.

Then we had several men come by wanting to come inside and show us how solar energy could save us a bundle of money.

Fortunately, for us, it was the Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage that answers the door for them. If

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you think you can get in our house and get by her, you really have not gotten up this morning and had your coffee.

A few weeks ago, it was getting terrible. Almost every day, someone was at the door knocking. I usually handle the phone calls, and she handles the door.

I could see she was getting frustrated, and I understood, quite severely.

She just finished making our lunch, and we just sat down and began to enjoy our lunch together.

Then, someone knocked at the door.

My wife sighed very deeply and said, "Whoever that is, I'm going to give them a piece of my mind. I'm tired of this."

Although we had prayed for our lunch, I was now ready to pray for whoever was at the front door.

On several occasions, I have had a piece of her mind. It's not a pretty sight. She has enough mind to give to many people, and I was very concerned about the people at the front door.

"I don't care who you are. I don't care what you're selling. I don't want it, and I want you to leave and never come back again."

With that, he slammed the door shut and walked away.

"Who was at the door?"

She just looked at me and then said, "I don't know, but I gave them a piece of my mind."

I was chuckling underneath, trying not to let it come to the surface for any recognition.

"Are you sure," I said as serious as I could maintain, "that you gave them the right piece of your mind?"

She just stared at me, "What do you mean?"

"Are you sure you did not give them the left piece of your mind?"

She finally smiled and then said, "No, I'm saving that piece for you."

I was smiling on the outside but not on the inside. I was honored that she has a special piece of her mind for me, but I have no idea what it will be and when it will come my way.

I thought of the Scripture along this line. "And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise" (Luke 6:31).

I think this is hard to do for many reasons. God can give me the strength to do this for his honor and glory.

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EARTHTALK ™

EarthTalk®

From the Editors of E - The Environmental Magazine

Dear EarthTalk: How are bee population numbers doing these days?

– B. Turner, via e-mail

Whether you've noticed it or not, there are far fewer bees around nowadays. One-quarter of the world's 20,000 bee species are in precipitous decline or have already gone extinct since 1990. A range of causes are to blame, including indiscriminate overuse of pesticides, loss of plants, and habitat destruction from human encroachment. But the latest and greatest threat is now climate change, which is warping the bees' environments (blooming seasons, plant diversity, etc.) at a faster rate than they are able to adapt.

Today in the U.S. only eight bee species are afforded protection under the Endangered Species Act. Seven are found only in Hawaii while the other, the Rusty patched bumble bee, occupies the tallgrass prairie of the Upper Midwest, most of which has been lost to farmland, strip malls and housing developments. Rusty patched bee populations have fallen off by 87 percent as a result.

In February 2021, conservation groups petitioned the Biden administration to grant the American bumblebee endangered species protection as well. Once the most common type of bee from coast-to-coast, this iconic bee has declined by some 89 percent in just the last two decades alone. Conservationists are worried about the implications for bee-pollinated plants and the animals (like us) that depend on them.

While the bees' decline worldwide is unquestionably due to human activity, the silver lining is that human activity can also help bring them back. A new map of global bee distribution and density created by researchers from the Chinese Academy of Sciences and the University of Georgia aims to help conservationists track the health of various bee populations across the U.S. and around the globe.

As for what readers can do to help bees, plant some native plants that attract them to your backyard. Regardless, if you happen to see bees nearby, snap some photos of them with your phone and upload them to iNaturalist so researchers can use your sighting to help track population dynamics. For more ideas on how you can help bees rebound locally, check out the website of the Bee Conservancy, a U.S.-based non-profit that is coordinating efforts to save bee populations around the world.

The good news is that bee populations in the U.S. and globally have seen a slight increase during the course of the COVID pandemic, due to reduced human activity. But the problem is hardly solved—especially as we all get back to business as usual.

They may be small, but if we do not care for bees, we lose natural pollinators for the vast majority of cultivated crops and wild plants. If we can't save bees now, fresh fruits and vegetables could be scarce worldwide, which could in turn lead to massive social upheaval, even wars. It seems well worth our time, money and effort at this point to protect bees now, if not for their own sake, then for ours.

EarthTalk® is produced by Roddy Scheer & Doug Moss for the 501(c)3 nonprofit EarthTalk. See more at <https://emagazine.com>. To donate, visit <https://earthtalk.org>. Send questions to: question@earthtalk.org.



American bumblebee numbers have fallen by 89% over the last two decades across the U.S., and conservationists want the Biden administration to add this little flying stinger to the Endangered Species List. Credit: James Johnston,

FlickrCC.

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#370 in a series

Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

Nothing startling in the numbers today. We're at 28,470,600 cases, which is 0.2% more than yesterday. There were 70,600 new cases reported today. Hospitalizations declined to 51,112. There were 1628 deaths reported. We have now lost 511,833 lives, 0.3% more than yesterday. I will note that it was one year ago today that the first possible case of community spread in the US was announced, a woman in Sacramento, California. Community spread is a case that was not in a returning traveler from a known area with Covid-19 and which is not identifiably a contact of such a returning traveler. It took a few days for a diagnosis and confirmation, but that was, indeed, our first confirmation that we were in trouble.

The FDA issued an emergency use authorization (EUA) for the Janssen/Johnson & Johnson vaccine today. This is the one-dose adenovirus-vectored DNA vaccine which produced 85% protection against serious disease and 100% protection against hospitalization and death in the phase 3 clinical trials in three countries, the US, Brazil, and South Africa. It is also the first vaccine to show efficacy head-to-head with the new viral variants B.1.1.28.1 (Brazil) and B.1.351 (South Africa). That last variant is the one that has seen diminished activity from the two earlier-authorized vaccines from Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna. Dr. Gregory Poland, virologist at Mayo Clinic and a consultant to the company, told the Vaccines and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee yesterday that this candidate "nearly checks all the boxes. To me it is clear that the known benefits vastly outweigh the known risks." That panel clearly agreed; yesterday's vote was unanimous. The FDA director's job today—to accept or to reject the Committee's recommendation—should have been a slam-dunk, and there were no surprises here. So we have another safe and highly effective vaccine, this one a single-dose version, coming on the market. We have to get through the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices which works out labeling and guidance for administration if the vaccine; but doses will likely start to ship tomorrow. The company expects to deliver 20 million doses in the US in the next month and 100 million by summer. I can hardly believe our luck.

I will also note that further trials are ongoing for this vaccine. Some early-stage trials over the summer with a two-dose regimen showed a second dose nearly triples antibody levels in participants; and the company is following up on those results with a two-dose trial. This would be similar to the booster strategy we've seen Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna are taking in some early research too. I would guess this will develop as a just-in-case strategy.

I saw some talk yesterday on social media suggesting we should set this latest entrant aside for young and healthy people and reserve the "better" mRNA vaccines for the elderly or at-risk and also suggesting that the vulnerable should hold out for the "better" vaccines. To which I reply, "Hogwash!" The best vaccine for you is the one someone has in a syringe right in front of you while you to roll up your sleeve. Take the first opportunity to be vaccinated that presents itself. Unless you're allergic to a component of one of the vaccines, don't even ask which one they're giving today; just take what's on offer. There really isn't simply "better" and "worse:" All of these are protective—completely protective—against you going to the hospital, ending up in an ICU on a vent, or dying. Collectively, these vaccines have the potential to reduce this fearsome virus from something that can kill you to just something that might—but probably won't—make you sick. Take the vaccine. Any vaccine. If a worse one or one that's worse for some people comes along, I'll play straight with you. What we have now are all well worth receiving.

I am also seeing people starting to talk about resuming normal activity. I'm going to discourage that for just a while longer, even for those who are vaccinated. The steep declines in new case numbers seem to be leveling off. While the declines we've seen are all phenomenal news, leveling off now leaves us at too high a baseline for comfort if we get hit with a new wave of ugly. Until the declines resume, consider the situation fragile, and don't start taking chances yet. We need to get more people vaccinated before we all start feeling like this is over. Let's hold things down while we see what these new variants do and how much trouble they're going to cause.

On the subject of vaccination, we have more good news on the subject. A Kaiser Family Foundation poll published yesterday shows continuing decreases in vaccine hesitancy. We're up to 55 percent of Ameri-

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cans who say they either have received vaccine or will do so as soon as possible; this is increased from 34 percent in December and 47 percent in January. Those who want to "wait and see" how the vaccines are working for others are down from 39 percent in December and 31 percent in January to 22 percent in February. About a quarter of these people say they would be more likely to get vaccinated if only one dose was required; nice that we're bringing on-board a one-dose vaccine then, isn't it? A big contributor to changing views appears to be knowing someone who has been vaccinated. Half of people who have a close friend or family member who's been vaccinated say they want vaccine "as soon as possible;" only a third of those who do not have a close friend or family member who's been vaccinated say they want vaccine as soon as possible. It seems likely that, as more people are vaccinated, hesitancy may decrease. I hope so.

There seems to be a ceiling though. There is a fairly persistent 20 percent from month to month who say they will "definitely not" be vaccinated or who say they will receive vaccine only if required to do so for work or school. Something it seems to me we could work on is the reasons for hesitancy. A couple of them are based on misinformation: fears that a person could get Covid-19 from the vaccine and concerns about the cost to be vaccinated. Could be further education can help to overcome some of these. Others are worried about side effects that might cause them to miss work. This seems like a legitimate cause for concern if you don't have sick leave and can't afford to miss a day; there might be an opening here to target some funding at this very specific problem; this also provides a target for the deployment of a one-dose vaccine. There were also fears that people won't be able to get vaccine from a place they trust. I'm not sure what people have in mind here, but there might be a role here for neighborhood health clinics or units composed of residents in the specific community to be administering to those who are familiar with the folks handing out vaccines.

Two new studies were published in The Lancet yesterday, both on the subject of immune responses to a single dose of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine in those who had been previously infected, and the news looks promising. One was done at University College London and Public Health England and tracked 51 health care workers, half of whom had been infected and then received a first vaccine dose. These people have been tracked for antibodies and virus for nearly a year, so it was relatively easy to see and interpret what was happened after vaccination. One dose increased antibodies to more than 140 times their previous level and seemed to give better antibody titers than two doses in someone who had not been previously infected. The other study at Imperial College London looked at 72 health care workers, about a third of whom had previously been infected. In these people, a single dose elicited what the research team reported as "very strong" antibody and T-cell responses. It appears that the original infection is serving much the same purpose as a first dose of vaccine, to prime the system for a better response, and then the first dose is having the booster effect we expect from a second dose. These studies provide further evidence that perhaps a single dose of this vaccine will be sufficient to provide protection in previously-infected people. I don't know where the tipping point is where our experts will be comfortable with making a change to our immunization practices; I plan to wait for folks who know a whole lot more than I do to weigh in.

Haijun Si immigrated with his wife and two small children to California from Zhengzhou, China, four years ago and moved into a planned community in Orange County in the fall. They love living here, but their new home has had problems. There is a group of about 20 teenagers in the community who, in what appears to be a well-coordinated and well-organized effort, have been coming by, a few at a time, every night to shout racial slurs, throw rocks at their house, and pound on the door. Si told the Washington Post, "They yell, punch the door and windows, and ring the bell day and night." He has called law enforcement and an investigation has been opened; but this continues, night after night. "I installed a camera and a fence, but they kept coming back. They are scaring my kids at night. They are afraid to go in their room themselves, so we have to move them to our room for almost five months now."

This country is showing one of its ugly sides to Asian Americans lately: Jeremy Lin, the well-known Asian American professional basketball player, recently reported he was called "Coronavirus" on the court. Asian Americans have been subjected to racist assaults, some of them seriously hurt, by people tying the pandemic to all Asian people. There's been a lot of inflammatory language and injury directed at this

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segment of our population. That's not OK.

Si, at the end of his rope, confided in a neighbor. She said she knew there'd been teenaged pranks, but was aware of nothing at this level. She posted video footage from Si's cameras of an attack in a neighborhood Facebook group and asked for volunteers to take turns standing guard outside the Si home at night. The plan was to have someone there from 6:00 pm to midnight, so they asked people to take one-hour shifts. About 50 volunteers have rushed to sign on to the effort, and so now every night neighbors have stood guard outside the house. It gets pretty chilly at night here, but they've bundled up and come anyway. Some sit on the Si front lawn, some watch from their cars, and some patrol the block. In any case, there is someone every night, and the attacks have diminished, although they have not stopped. One volunteer said she could still see and hear the teenagers throwing rocks, yelling, and hollering profanities.

The neighborhood also had a Lantern Festival of Hope planned for last night's Lunar New Year celebration as a cultural event. There were going to be food trucks, speeches, and traditional lanterns for distribution to residents. I like this two-pronged approach of protecting and also giving people a chance to do better. One of the co-founders of CUSD Against Racism, a student-led organization working in the local school district to combat racism, said, "We wanted to show Mr. Si and his family, as well as all the other Asian families, that we are banding together to give them support and make them feel at home. Mr. Si has indicated he wants to focus on educating the group of teenagers perpetrating the attacks.

Meanwhile, residents plan to continue standing guard until the Si family feels safe. Big commitment. Also the right thing to do.

Take care. 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	453	432	860	15	Minimal	0.0%
Beadle	2724	2598	5784	39	Substantial	18.3%
Bennett	382	370	1174	9	Minimal	2.6%
Bon Homme	1504	1476	2042	25	Minimal	0.0%
Brookings	3581	3491	11779	37	Substantial	2.6%
Brown	5126	4977	12561	88	Moderate	3.8%
Brule	691	676	1860	9	Moderate	9.1%
Buffalo	420	406	894	13	Minimal	0.0%
Butte	978	941	3197	20	Moderate	7.7%
Campbell	129	125	256	4	Minimal	0.0%
Charles Mix	1288	1213	3879	21	Substantial	9.4%
Clark	371	357	938	5	Moderate	12.5%
Clay	1790	1753	5166	15	Moderate	2.1%
Codington	3984	3805	9553	77	Substantial	13.5%
Corson	468	453	994	12	Minimal	21.1%
Custer	748	727	2683	12	Moderate	9.5%
Davison	2947	2865	6445	61	Moderate	9.8%
Day	663	614	1750	28	Substantial	17.6%
Deuel	473	459	1120	8	Moderate	10.3%
Dewey	1411	1371	3795	25	Moderate	13.5%
Douglas	433	411	896	9	Moderate	16.7%
Edmunds	482	459	1030	12	Moderate	8.3%
Fall River	527	501	2576	15	Moderate	6.0%
Faulk	360	340	688	13	Moderate	4.5%
Grant	973	902	2203	38	Substantial	9.5%
Gregory	538	496	1251	29	Moderate	12.5%
Haakon	250	236	531	10	Minimal	0.0%
Hamlin	709	647	1756	37	Substantial	23.3%
Hand	336	320	800	6	Minimal	4.8%
Hanson	361	344	701	4	Moderate	22.2%
Harding	91	90	181	1	None	0.0%
Hughes	2298	2219	6492	36	Substantial	1.9%
Hutchinson	788	748	2338	24	Moderate	19.6%

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Hyde	137	135	402	1	Minimal	0.0%
Jackson	279	261	904	14	Minimal	9.1%
Jerauld	272	249	547	16	None	0.0%
Jones	85	83	217	0	Minimal	0.0%
Kingsbury	638	608	1649	14	Substantial	11.9%
Lake	1190	1142	3253	17	Moderate	4.2%
Lawrence	2821	2743	8427	45	Moderate	5.2%
Lincoln	7736	7523	19992	77	Substantial	9.4%
Lyman	598	585	1861	10	Minimal	0.0%
Marshall	318	294	1170	5	Moderate	2.8%
McCook	740	708	1605	24	Moderate	12.5%
McPherson	239	231	547	4	None	0.0%
Meade	2588	2502	7584	31	Substantial	12.0%
Mellette	248	242	722	2	Minimal	16.7%
Miner	271	252	568	9	Minimal	16.7%
Minnehaha	27973	27212	77151	332	Substantial	6.9%
Moody	616	591	1736	16	Moderate	9.5%
Oglala Lakota	2057	1988	6596	49	Moderate	6.3%
Pennington	12890	12474	38820	188	Substantial	9.6%
Perkins	347	328	801	14	Minimal	11.8%
Potter	371	358	822	4	Moderate	0.0%
Roberts	1186	1107	4089	36	Substantial	12.7%
Sanborn	329	321	678	3	Minimal	0.0%
Spink	798	765	2098	25	Moderate	11.1%
Stanley	331	322	915	2	Minimal	0.0%
Sully	137	132	305	3	Minimal	0.0%
Todd	1219	1189	4088	28	Minimal	1.5%
Tripp	698	662	1467	16	Substantial	21.3%
Turner	1066	1000	2689	53	Moderate	3.4%
Union	1978	1910	6170	39	Substantial	9.6%
Walworth	723	694	1808	15	Moderate	3.6%
Yankton	2801	2737	9212	28	Moderate	6.6%
Ziebach	336	327	859	9	Minimal	8.3%
Unassigned	0	0	1809	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	4498	0
10-19 years	12623	0
20-29 years	19969	6
30-39 years	18476	18
40-49 years	16032	35
50-59 years	15835	112
60-69 years	12861	249
70-79 years	6884	431
80+ years	5115	1035

SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Sex	# of Cases	# of Deaths Among Cases
Female	58528	887
Male	53765	999

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Brown County

New Confirmed Cases

3

New Probable Cases

6

Active Cases

61

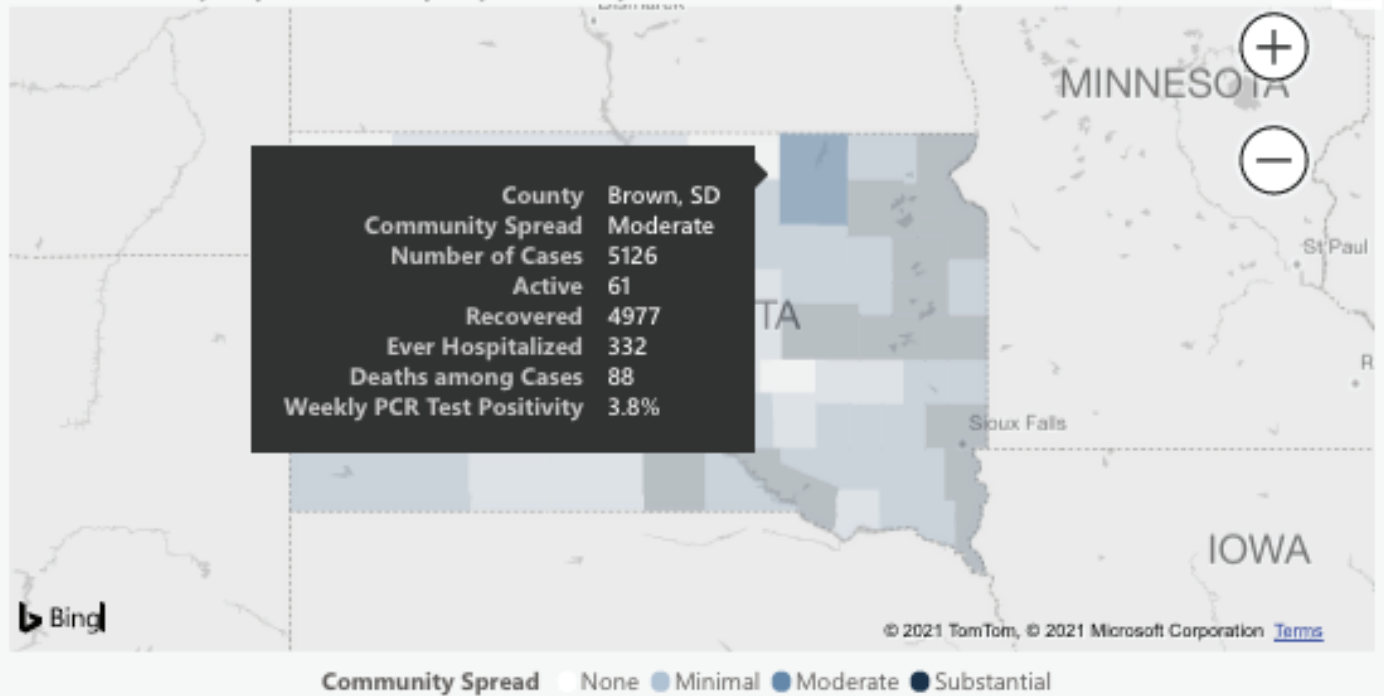
Recovered Cases

4,977

Currently Hospitalized

91

Community Spread Map by County of Residence



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

Total Confirmed Cases

4,584

Total Probable Cases

542

PCR Test Positivity Rate, Last 1 Day

6.9%

Total Persons Tested

17,687

Total Tests

47,531

Ever Hospitalized

332

Deaths Among Cases

88

% Progress (December Goal: 44233 Tests)

345%

% Progress (January Goal: 44233 Tests)

241%

% Progress (February Goal: 44233 Tests)

210%

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Day County

New Confirmed Cases

0

New Probable Cases

1

Active Cases

21

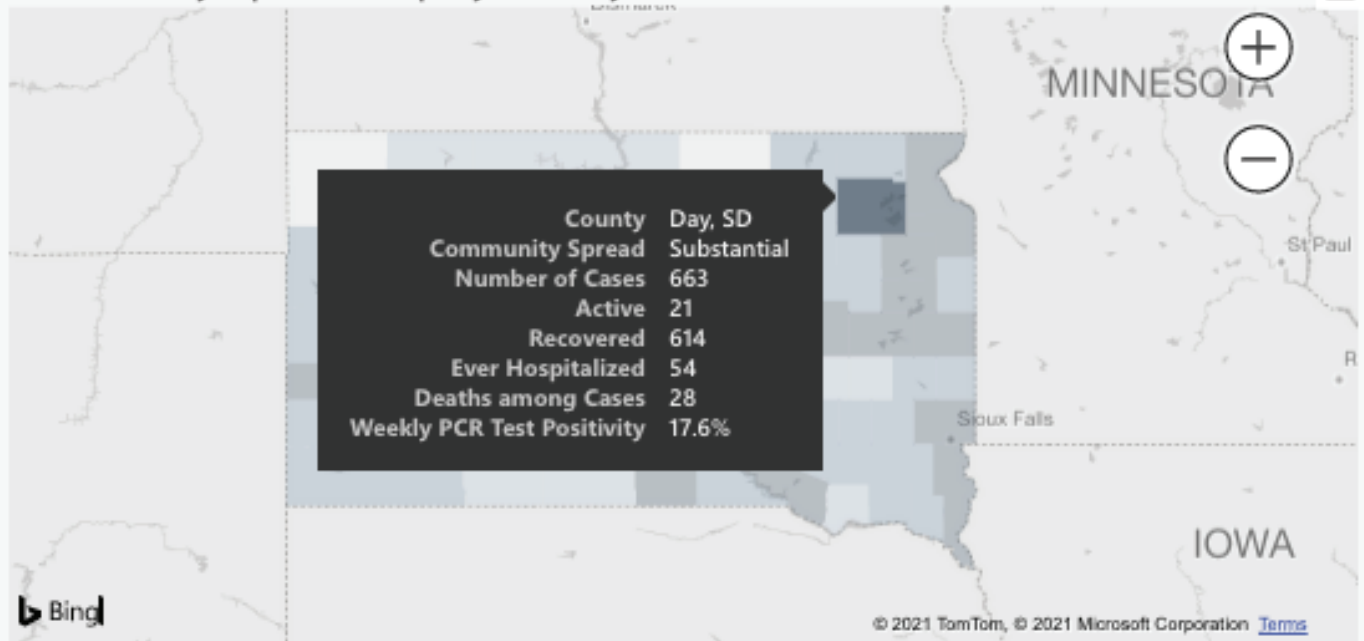
Recovered Cases

614

Currently Hospitalized

91

Community Spread Map by County of Residence



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

Total Confirmed Cases

514

Total Probable Cases

149

PCR Test Positivity Rate, Last 1 Day

0.0%

Total Persons Tested

2,413

Total Tests

8,032

Ever Hospitalized

54

Deaths Among Cases

28

% Progress (December Goal: 44233 Tests)

345%

% Progress (January Goal: 44233 Tests)

241%

% Progress (February Goal: 44233 Tests)

210%

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Vaccinations

Total Doses Administered

214,507

Total Persons Administered a Vaccine

140,217

Percent of State Population with at least 1 Dose

25%

Manufacturer	# of Doses
Moderna	110,524
Pfizer	103,983

Doses	# of Recipients
Moderna - 1 dose	35,390
Moderna - Series Complete	37,567
Pfizer - 1 dose	30,537
Pfizer - Series Complete	36,723

Doses	% of Pop.
1 dose	24.75%
Series Complete	12.86%

Based on 2019 Census Estimate for those aged 16+ years. Includes

County	# Doses	# Persons (1 dose)	# Persons (2 doses)	Total # Persons
Aurora	500	228	136	364
Beadle	4395	1,699	1,348	3,047
Bennett*	361	89	136	225
Bon Homme*	2359	1,051	654	1,705
Brookings	6320	2,676	1,822	4,498
Brown	9663	2,729	3,467	6,196
Brule*	1345	403	471	874
Buffalo*	110	70	20	90
Butte	1367	595	386	981
Campbell	793	283	255	538
Charles Mix*	2034	924	555	1,479
Clark	804	330	237	567
Clay	3298	1,064	1,117	2,181
Codington*	6793	2,259	2,267	4,526
Corson*	187	67	60	127
Custer*	1866	756	555	1,311
Davison	4883	1,547	1,668	3,215
Day*	1704	686	509	1,195
Deuel	1022	340	341	681
Dewey*	321	73	124	197
Douglas*	806	246	280	526
Edmunds	869	325	272	597
Fall River*	1871	727	572	1,299
Faulk	708	262	223	485
Grant*	1558	608	475	1,083
Gregory*	1145	441	352	793
Haakon*	408	142	133	275

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Hamlin	1191	467	362	829
Hand	906	344	281	625
Hanson	285	123	81	204
Harding	51	37	7	44
Hughes*	5358	1,820	1,769	3,589
Hutchinson*	2284	806	739	1,545
Hyde*	370	148	111	259
Jackson*	296	102	97	199
Jerauld	534	282	126	408
Jones*	465	149	158	307
Kingsbury	1490	664	413	1,077
Lake	2637	933	852	1,785
Lawrence	5361	2,065	1,648	3,713
Lincoln	18540	4,422	7,059	11,481
Lyman*	540	176	182	358
Marshall*	1065	425	320	745
McCook	1582	500	541	1,041
McPherson	157	61	48	109
Meade*	4087	1,631	1,228	2,859
Mellette*	35	17	9	26
Miner	632	194	219	413
Minnehaha*	56171	14,697	20,737	35,434
Moody*	1060	428	316	744
Oglala Lakota*	123	49	37	86
Pennington*	25431	7,261	9,085	16,346
Perkins*	376	136	120	256
Potter	550	280	135	415
Roberts*	3009	1,183	913	2,096
Sanborn	655	247	204	451
Spink	2039	715	662	1,377
Stanley*	813	303	255	558
Sully	239	97	71	168
Todd*	123	39	42	81
Tripp*	1547	563	492	1,055
Turner	2549	667	941	1,608
Union	1849	829	510	1,339
Walworth*	1506	474	516	990
Yankton	6713	1,103	2,805	3,908
Ziebach*	46	12	17	29
Other	4352	858	1,747	2,605

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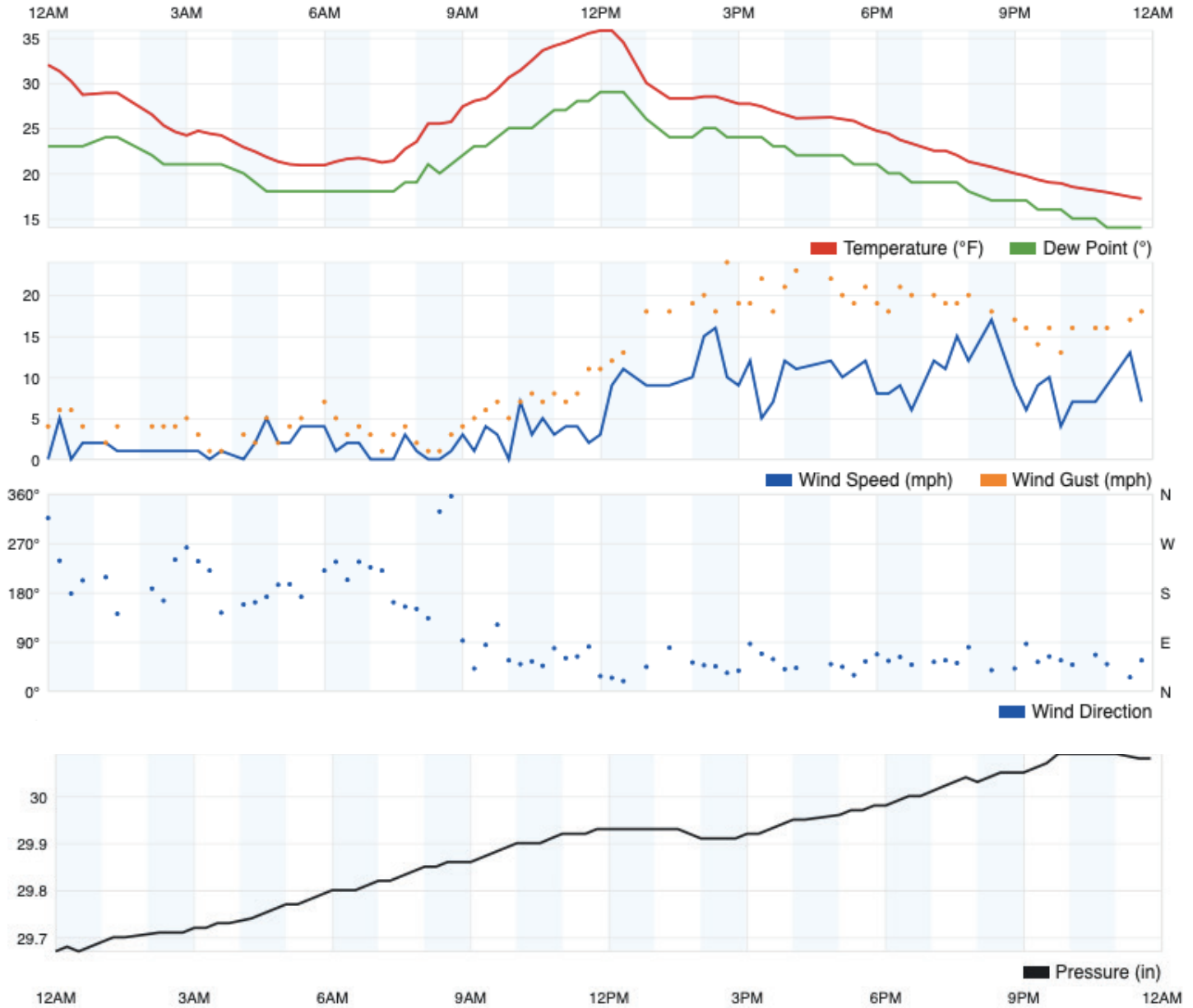


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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



Becoming
Sunny

High: 37 °F

Tonight



Partly Cloudy

Low: 12 °F

Monday



Sunny

High: 38 °F

Monday
Night



Clear

Low: 25 °F

Tuesday



Sunny

High: 56 °F

02-20-2018 01:27:24 PM Tue

Today

- AM Snow
- Highs: upper 20s to lower 40s
- Breezy

Tonight


- Mostly Clear
- Lows: upper single digits to teens

Monday

- AM Fog and Increasing Clouds
- Highs: mid 20s east, 40s west.

FLIR

Graphic Created 2/28/2021 5:34 AM



Snow will end this morning as high pressure builds in. Expect cooler temperatures in areas with fresh snow over the next couple of days. Generally dry but breezy conditions are expected today through Monday.

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Today in Weather History

February 28, 2007: Another late February strong low-pressure area moving across the central plains spread heavy snow of 6 to 11 inches across northeast South Dakota and west-central Minnesota. Many schools and college classes were canceled, and many events were postponed. Road conditions became deplorable, with some accidents occurring along with ditched vehicles. The snow continued into the first day of March and ended between in the morning. Snowfall amounts included 6 inches at Aberdeen, 7 inches at Wilmot and Artichoke Lake, 8 inches at Conde, Watertown, and Milbank, 9 inches at Browns Valley and Wheaton, and 11 inches at Clark. This heavy snow event was followed by more snowfall along with blizzard conditions that developed across the area during the afternoon and evening of March 1st.

1792: Heavy snow collapsed the Ashley River Bridge in Charleston, South Carolina.

1900: A massive storm spread record snows from Kansas to New York State. Snow fell for over 24-hours in Toledo, Ohio. When it was all over, the 19 inches set a single storm record for the city. Topeka, Kansas, reported 18.7 inches of snow in 24 hours to set their record for most snow in 24 hours. Thirty-six inches of snow at Astoria, Illinois, set a new state 24-hour snowfall record. Northfield, Vermont, picked up 31 inches of snow. Snowfall totals ranged up to 17.5 inches at Springfield, Illinois, and 43 inches at Rochester, New York. Sixty inches fell in parts of the Adirondack Mountains of New York State.

1962: Wilmington, North Carolina, reached a high temperature of 85 degrees. This is the warmest temperature on record during February.

2007: A severe storm, named Xynthia, blows into France, Portugal, and Spain, smashing sea walls, destroying homes, polluting farmland with saltwater, and devastating the Atlantic coast's oyster farms. Winds reach about 125 mph on the summits of the Pyrenees and up to nearly 100 mph along the Atlantic Coast. Wind speeds of 106 mph are measured atop the Eiffel Tower in Paris. The hardest-hit area was in the Vendee and Charente-Maritime regions in southwestern France. The storm is blamed for 52 deaths in France. A Napoleonic sea wall collapsed off the coastal town of La'Aiguillon-sur-Mer. A mobile home park close to the sea wall was particularly hard hit.

1952 - An intense storm brought coastal sections of southeastern Massachusetts to a halt, stranding 3000 motorists on Lower Cape, and leaving ten thousand homes on the Cape without electricity. Winds gusting to 72 mph created mountainous snowdrifts of the 18 inches of snow which buried Nantucket and Hyannis. A barometric pressure reading of 29.02 inches was reported at the center of the storm. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A powerful storm produced severe thunderstorms in Louisiana and Mississippi early in the day. About mid morning a monstrous tornado touched down near Moselle MS and grew to a width of two miles as it passed near Laurel MS. The tornado traveled a distance of 40 miles killing six persons, injuring 350 others, and causing 28.5 million dollars damage. The tornado swept homes right off their foundations, and tossed eighteen wheel trucks about like toys. Strong straight line winds associated with the powerful storm system gusted to 70 mph at Jonesboro AR and Carbondale IL. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Thunderstorms in California produced severe weather during the early morning hours. Strong thunderstorm winds, gusting to 74 mph, downed trees in the Sacramento area. Unseasonably mild weather prevailed in the northwestern U.S. The afternoon high of 71 degrees at Portland OR was a February record. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Thunderstorms in the southeast corner of the nation produced winds gusts to 58 mph at Fort Lauderdale FL, and a total of seven inches of rain. Heavy snow whitened parts of the Northern Plateau and the Northern Rockies, with ten inches reported at Marion MT. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - Showers and thunderstorms over the Southern Plains Region capped a record wet February for parts of Oklahoma. Totals for the month ranged up to 9.11 inches at McCurtain, with 4.63 inches reported at Oklahoma City. Snow and sleet fell across northern Oklahoma, with four inches reported at Freedom and Jefferson. Snow also spread across southern Kansas into Missouri and Arkansas, with six inches of snow reported at Harrison AR. In Alaska, February temperatures at Nome averaged 21 degrees below normal, ranging from -38 degrees to 29 degrees during the month. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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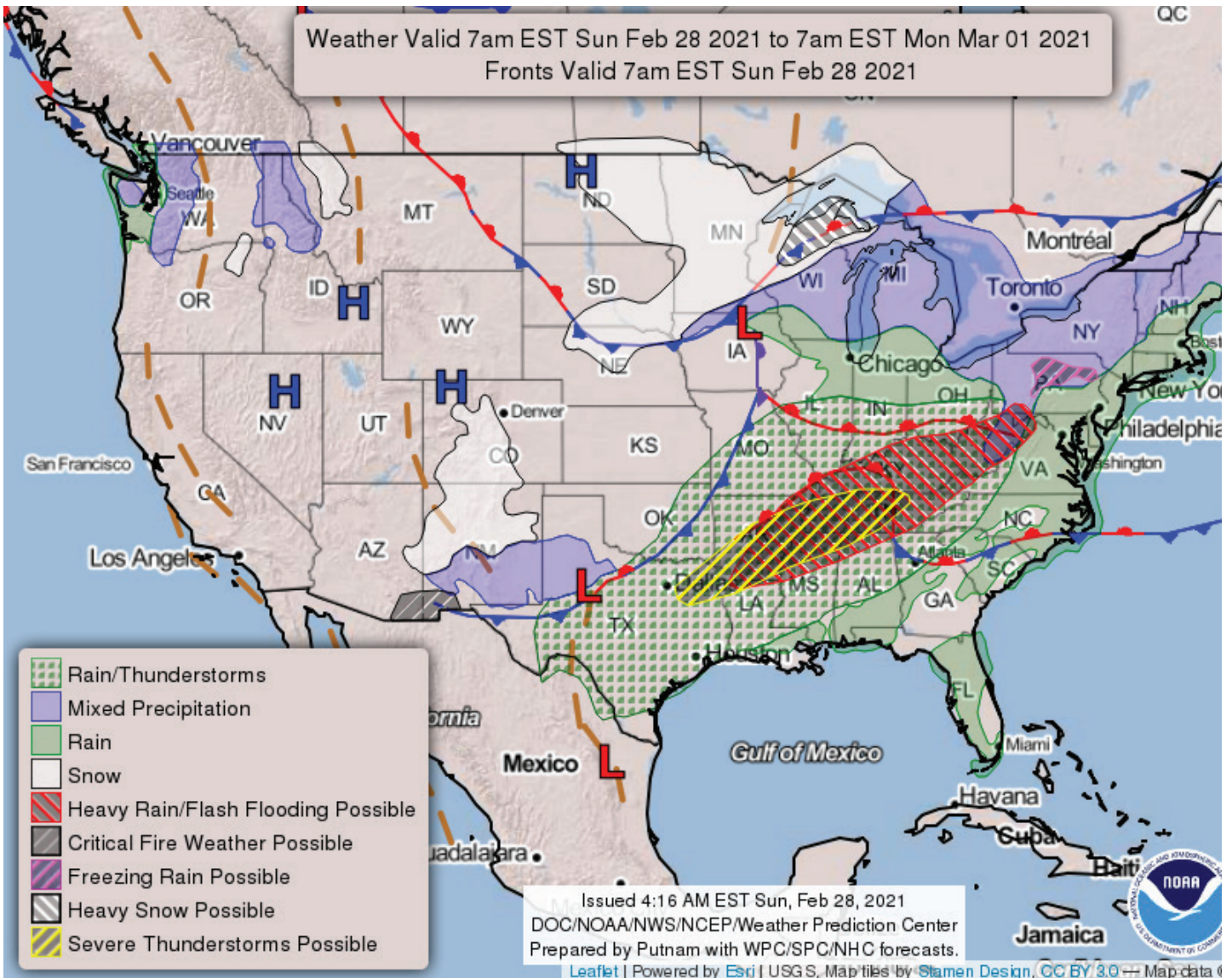
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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 36 °F at 11:56 AM
Low Temp: 17 °F at 11:45 PM
Wind: 24 mph at 2:43 PM
Precip:

Today's Info

Record High: 59° in 1934
Record Low: -27° in 1962
Average High: 33°F
Average Low: 13°F
Average Precip in Feb.: 0.52
Precip to date in Feb.: 0.18
Average Precip to date: 0.99
Precip Year to Date: 0.18
Sunset Tonight: 6:20 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:11 a.m.



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WHAT'S WORTHY OF OUR TRUST?

A small child needed a minor operation but was allergic to anesthetics. The surgeon knew the procedure would be painful, but not unbearable. So, he took a shiny silver dollar from his pocket and said, "This is for you. I'm going to hurt you a little bit. So, I want you to take a good look at it and hold it really tight in your right hand. Be sure to remember what you were thinking about while I'm at work, because I'm going to ask you what it was when I'm finished. If you do what I ask, it won't hurt you as much."

When he finished, he gently rubbed her forehead and said, "You are a brave little girl. What did you think about?"

Quickly she replied, "The words, 'In God we trust.'" In Psalm 25:2, David wrote, "In You, I trust, O my God." Why would a powerful king need to trust in God?

First, for pardon. Later in the Psalm he wrote, "Forgive my iniquity, for it is great." Our relationship with God begins when we ask Him to cleanse us from sin and all unrighteousness so we may enter into His presence. David knew the importance of being rightly related to God. It became the most important thing in his life.

Second, for peace. "Free me from my anguish," he prayed. Fear is the natural feeling when we are filled with anxiety. Only God can quiet our hearts and calm our souls.

Finally, for protection. "Guard my life and rescue me," he pled. As a warrior, he knew the threats and dangers of war. He knew that only One could keep him safe in dangerous situations. Although a great warrior, he trusted God to protect him.

Prayer: Lord, we have all that we need in You. May we lift our hearts in prayer and praise You for Your presence, peace, and power in our lives. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: I trust in you, my God! Do not let me be disgraced, or let my enemies rejoice in my defeat. Psalm 25:2

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

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News from the  Associated Press

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Dakota Cash

01-04-06-22-29

(one, four, six, twenty-two, twenty-nine)

Estimated jackpot: \$47,000

Lotto America

10-27-30-44-47, Star Ball: 6, ASB: 2

(ten, twenty-seven, thirty, forty-four, forty-seven; Star Ball: six; ASB: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$3.15 million

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$43 million

Powerball

02-28-31-44-52, Powerball: 18, Power Play: 3

(two, twenty-eight, thirty-one, forty-four, fifty-two; Powerball: eighteen; Power Play: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$106 million

Hot-shooting South Dakota State beats UMKC 89-77

BROOKINGS, S.D. (AP) — Douglas Wilson had 20 points as South Dakota State beat UMKC 89-77 on Saturday night.

Baylor Scheierman, Luke Appel and Matt Dentlinger added 16 points apiece for South Dakota State (15-6, 11-4 Summit League), which shot 74% (25 of 34) from the field.

The Jackrabbits made 35 of 42 (83%) free throws. Wilson and Dentlinger combined for 16-of-22 shooting from the line. Scheierman made all six of his free-throw attempts and Appel hit 6 of 7.

Josiah Allick had 17 points for the Roos (11-12, 7-7). Marvin Nesbitt Jr. added 16 points. Franck Kamgain had 10 points.

The Jackrabbits improve to 2-0 against the Roos for the season. South Dakota State defeated Kansas City 67-49 last Friday.

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

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

No. 22 South Dakota State women hold off UMKC 72-66

BROOKINGS, S.D. (AP) — Paiton Burckhard scored a season-high 24 points, T ylee Irwin scored a critical basket with 20 seconds to go and No. 22 South Dakota State held on to defeat UMKC 72-66 on Saturday, wrapping up a perfect Summit League regular season for the first time.

The Jackrabbits, who led by as many as 17 late in the third quarter, went ice cold down the stretch. The Roos had a 7-0 run to pull within 68-64 with 2:31 to play.

Both teams missed and had turnovers before the Jackrabbits had a miss with 26 seconds to go. In a scramble for the offensive rebound, the ball went to South Dakota State with six seconds on the shot clock. Irwin got the ball on the left wing, drove to the basket and finished in traffic from close range, ending a

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scoreless drought of 5 minutes, 10 seconds.

Irwin finished with 17 points for South Dakota State (21-2, 14-0), which has won 18 straight games. The Jackrabbits were without conference scoring leader Myah Selland after she suffered a possible season-ending leg injury last weekend. Selland and starting forward Tori Nelson both missed their third-straight game.

Naomie Alnatas scored 19 points for UMKC (10-11, 7-8) and Paige Bradford add 17 with 11 rebounds.

The Roos for 7 of 11 in the fourth quarter, going 3 of 4 from 3-point to finish 10 of 20 from 3-point range and 24 of 48 overall after shooting less than 40 percent in a loss to SDSU on Friday.

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

Umude lifts South Dakota past North Dakota St. 80-71

VERMILLION, S.D. (AP) — Stanley Umude scored 26 points as South Dakota won its seventh consecutive home game, getting past North Dakota State 80-71 on Saturday. A.J. Plitzuweit added 20 points for the Coyotes. Plitzuweit also had six rebounds.

Tasos Kamateros had 14 points for South Dakota (13-9, 12-5 Summit League). Kruz Perrott-Hunt added 10 points.

Rocky Kreuser had 17 points and 13 rebounds for the Bison (12-11, 12-6). Maleeck Harden-Hayes added 14 points. Jarius Cook had 12 points.

The Coyotes leveled the season series against the Bison. North Dakota State defeated South Dakota 74-67 on Dec. 11.

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

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

Camp, S. Dakota step up and shell shock Illinois St. 27-20

NORMAL, Ill. (AP) — Carson Camp threw for 221 yards and a pair of touchdowns and South Dakota's defense helped key the Coyotes in a 27-20 comeback win against Illinois State on Saturday in a Missouri Valley Conference opener for both teams.

The seventh-ranked Redbirds built a 17-0 lead before South Dakota's defense triggered Illinois State's implosion.

The Coyotes forced fumbles on two straight drives and came up with an interception on a third, and the offense returned the favors with a field goal and a pair of touchdowns in succession during a four-minute span to tie it at 17 before halftime.

Camp threw a 5-yard touchdown pass to Carter Bell with 10:01 left in the third quarter to give South Dakota (1-0, 1-0) the lead for good.

Despite the collapse, Illinois State (0-1, 0-1) still had a chance on its final drive. Bryce Jefferson led an eight-play, 68-yard drive, but on second-and-4 at the Coyotes' 17, he was intercepted by Elijah Reed at the goal line with 39 seconds remaining to end it.

Jefferson threw for 280 yards and was picked four times; twice by Myles Harden. The Redbirds fumbled it away three times.

More AP college football: <https://apnews.com/Collegefootball> and https://twitter.com/AP_Top25

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North Dakota upsets South Dakota State 28-17

GRAND FORKS, N.D. (AP) — Otis Weah had a 40-yard TD run in the fourth quarter and North Dakota rallied for a 28-17 upset over South Dakota State 28-17 on Saturday.

Weah broke a couple of tackles in the backfield and cut to an open lane up the right sideline. South Dakota State's Isaiah Stalbird punched the ball out at the 7, but it bounced back up into Weah's path and he recovered it just before he plunged into the end zone to cap the scoring with 6:53 left in the game.

The Fighting Hawks (2-0, 2-0 Missouri Valley Football Conference) took the momentum in the third quarter when the defense forced a three-and-out and the special teams blocked the punt on fourth down. Tommy Schuster connected with Garrett Maag for a 16-yard TD pass two plays later to give North Dakota its first lead of the game at 21-17.

Schuster passed for 184 yards and a touchdown, and Maag had 87 yards and a touchdown on five catches. Weah ran 17 times for 88 yards and two scores.

Mark Gronowski passed for 309 yards, two touchdowns and two interceptions for the Jackrabbits (1-1, 1-1), ranked No. 3 in the FCS Top 25. Jaxon Janke had seven catches for 161 yards and two TDs, and Jadon Janke had five catches for 109 yards.

More AP college football: <https://apnews.com/hub/college-football> and https://twitter.com/AP_Top25

Dozens protest transgender female athletics legislation

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Dozens of advocates for transgender students protested in Sioux Falls and around the state on Saturday to speak out against legislation that prohibits transgender girls from participating in female sports at public schools.

The bill, which has passed the House and was sent to a Senate committee, means female sports would only be available to participants who are female based on their biological gender at birth. The bill's sponsors say it will promote fairness in female sports. Opponents of the bill include the American Civil Liberties Union, which says it is unconstitutional.

The Argus Leader reported that more than 75 people gathered at the Southeast Technical Institute in Sioux Falls as part of the statewide protests. Protesters held signs promoting rights of transgender people, and chanted "Transphobes have got to go!" and "Trans rights now!"

Susan Williams, executive director of the Transformation Project Advocacy Network, said: "We want to show these trans kids that we have their backs, we're here for them and there are people here that will fight for their rights."

A group of South Dakota teachers participated to show support for their students.

Ashley McKeown, a Roosevelt High School teacher, said: "I think it's important for them to see that their teachers are fighting for them not just inside the classroom but outside the classroom as well."

South Dakota reports 7 new COVID-19 deaths, 187 more cases

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota health officials reported seven more COVID-19 related-deaths and 187 new cases of the virus on Saturday.

The new figures bring the state's death toll to 1,886 since the pandemic began. There have been a total of 112,293 confirmed COVID-19 cases in the state overall — as of Saturday, 1,910 of those cases were considered to be active.

The Argus Leader reported that hospitalizations due to COVID-19 dropped by five. A total of 91 people are currently hospitalized from the virus.

According to online data from the health department, 24.75% of the state's population received at least one dose of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine, and 12.86% — or 71,800 people — have received the full two-dose series.

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Biden team readies wider economic package after virus relief

By KEVIN FREKING, HOPE YEN and JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Looking beyond the \$1.9 trillion COVID relief bill, President Joe Biden and lawmakers are laying the groundwork for another top legislative priority — a long-sought boost to the nation's roads, bridges and other infrastructure that could run into Republican resistance to a hefty price tag.

Biden and his team have begun discussions on the possible outlines of an infrastructure package with members of Congress, particularly mindful that Texas' recent struggles with power outages and water shortages after a brutal winter storm present an opportunity for agreement on sustained spending on infrastructure.

Gina McCarthy, Biden's national climate adviser, told The Associated Press that the deadly winter storm in Texas should be a "wake-up call" for the need for energy systems and other infrastructure that are more reliable and resilient.

"The infrastructure is not built to withstand these extreme weather conditions," said Liz Sherwood-Randall, a homeland security aide to the president. "We know that we can't just react to extreme weather events. We need to plan for them and prepare for them."

A White House proposal could come out in March.

"Now is the time to be aggressive," said Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg, a former South Bend, Indiana, mayor who knows potholes.

At a conference with state and local highway officials Thursday, he referred to the often-promised, never-achieved mega-initiative on roads, bridges and the like from the Trump administration.

"I know you are among those who are working and waiting most patiently, or maybe impatiently, for the moment when Infrastructure Week will no longer be a kind of Groundhog's Day promise — but actually be something that delivers generational investments," he said.

Much of America's infrastructure — roads, bridges, public drinking and water systems, dams, airports, mass transit systems and more — is in need of major restoration after years of underfunding, according to the American Society of Civil Engineers. In its 2017 Infrastructure Report Card, it gave the national infrastructure an overall grade of D+.

Both chambers of Congress will use as starting points their unsuccessful efforts to get infrastructure bills through the last session.

Democrats passed a \$1.5 trillion package in the House last year, but it went nowhere with the Trump administration and the Republican-led Senate. A Senate panel approved narrower bipartisan legislation in 2019 focused on reauthorizing federal transportation programs. It, too, flamed out as the U.S. turned its focus to elections and COVID-19.

Biden has talked bigger numbers, and some Democrats are now urging him to bypass Republicans in the closely divided Congress to address a broader range of priorities urged by interest groups.

During the presidential campaign, Biden pledged to deploy \$2 trillion on infrastructure and clean energy, but the White House has not ruled out an even higher price tag. McCarthy said Biden's upcoming plan will specifically aim at job creation, such as with investments to boost "workers that have been left behind" by closed coal mines or power plants, as well as communities located near polluting refineries and other hazards.

"He's been a long fan of investing in infrastructure — long outdated — long overdue, I should say," White House press secretary Jen Psaki said Thursday. "But he also wants to do more on caregiving, help our manufacturing sector, do more to strengthen access to affordable health care. So the size — the package — the components of it, the order, that has not yet been determined."

Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., chairman of the Senate Budget Committee, recently told the White House that he's ready to use the budget maneuver known as reconciliation to pass a broad economic recovery package with only Democratic votes. That drew stern warnings from Republicans who have already closed ranks against Democrats' COVID-19 relief bill.

West Virginia Sen. Shelley Moore Capito, the top Republican on the Senate Environment and Public

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Works Committee, said there's bipartisan support for ambitious steps on infrastructure. But that "should not extend to a multitrillion-dollar package that is stocked full with other ideologically driven, one-size-fits-all policies that tie the hands of our states and our communities," she said.

Capito will be helping to craft bipartisan legislation on the Senate side.

Rep. Peter DeFazio, chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, told the AP that he foresees a comprehensive House package that will go beyond roads, bridges and public transit.

He also expects it to have money for water systems, broadband and the power grid — addressing a weak infrastructure laid bare after the crippling blackouts in Texas.

He's not ready to talk overall costs yet. DeFazio, D-Ore., said it will be up to the Biden administration and the House Ways and Means Committee to figure out how to pay for it.

DeFazio said General Motors' recently announced goal of going largely electric by 2035 demonstrates the need for massive spending on charging stations across the country. Biden campaigned on a plan to install 500,000 charging stations by the end of 2030.

"I'm totally willing to work with (Republicans) if they're willing to recognize climate change," DeFazio said, "or if they don't want to recognize climate change, they can just recognize that electric semis and electric vehicles are a flood on the horizon and we've got to get ahead of it."

Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, D-Mich., expressed a similar sentiment, urging strong action on carbon emissions and the vehicle charging stations to help achieve a "full transition to electric." She also wants states to have more federal grants for infrastructure repairs after natural disasters and extreme weather.

At the Senate hearing where she spoke, Republican Gov. Larry Hogan of Maryland said there's bipartisan support among governors for relieving congestion, cutting red tape, leveraging private sector investment and ensuring projects can better withstand cyber attacks and natural disasters.

Democratic Sen. Tom Carper of Delaware, the new chairman of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, said his goal is for his committee to pass an infrastructure bill by Memorial Day.

In the House, Rep. Sam Graves, the top Republican on the transportation panel, said Republicans would be open to a larger package as long as it didn't greatly add to the national debt.

But many lawmakers oppose an increase in the federal gas tax, one way to help pay for the spending, while groups such as the Chamber of Commerce argue against increasing taxes on companies during a pandemic.

White House aide Cedric Richmond, a former congressman from Louisiana, told state transportation officials the president intends for most of the spending to be paid for, not added to the debt. In part, this would be by reversing some of the Trump administration tax cuts.

Ed Mortimer, a vice president at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, said removing items in last year's infrastructure bill for renovating schools and low-income housing could lower the price tag, because the COVID relief measure passed by the House already has hundreds of billions of dollars for those purposes.

"Affordable housing, school construction, very meritorious, but we're not sure that that's a key focus that's going to get a bill signed into law," Mortimer said.

Yen reported from Austin, Texas. AP writer Matthew Daly contributed to this report.

Fatalities reported as Myanmar police intensify use of force

YANGON, Myanmar (AP) — Security forces in Myanmar made mass arrests and appeared to use lethal force on Sunday as they intensified their efforts to break up protests a month after the military staged a coup. At least four people were reportedly killed.

There were reports of gunfire as police in Yangon, the country's biggest city, fired tear gas and water cannons while trying to clear the streets of demonstrators demanding that the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi be restored to power. Photos of shell casings from live ammunition used in assault rifles were posted on social media.

Reports on social media identified by name one young man believed to have been killed in Yangon. His

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body was shown in photos and videos lying on a sidewalk until other protesters were able to carry him away.

A violent crackdown also occurred in Dawei, a much smaller city in southeastern Myanmar, where local media reported that at least three people were killed during a protest march. The fatalities could not immediately be independently confirmed, though photos posted on social media showed a wounded man in the care of medical personnel, and later laid out in a bed under a blanket with flowers placed on top.

Confirming reports of protesters' deaths has been difficult amid the chaos and general lack of news from official sources.

Prior to Sunday, there had been eight confirmed reports of killings linked to the army's takeover, according to the independent Assistance Association of Political Prisoners.

The Feb. 1 coup reversed years of slow progress toward democracy after five decades of military rule. Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party would have been installed for a second five-year term in office, but the army blocked Parliament from convening and detained her and President Win Myint, as well as other top members of Suu Kyi's government.

Sunday's violence erupted in the early morning when medical students were marching in Yangon's streets near the Hledan Center intersection, which has become the gathering point for protesters who then fan out to other parts of the city.

Videos and photos showed protesters running away as police charged at them, and residents setting up makeshift roadblocks to slow their advance. Some protesters managed to throw tear gas cannisters back at police. Nearby, residents were pleading with police to release those they picked up from the street and shoved into police trucks to be taken away. Dozens or more were believed to have been detained.

Demonstrators regrouped later Sunday and security forces continued to chase them in several neighborhoods.

There was no immediate word on Yangon casualties. Sounds of gunfire could be heard in the streets and there were what appeared to be smoke grenades thrown into the crowds.

"The Myanmar security forces' clear escalation in use of lethal force in multiple towns and cities across the country in response to mostly peaceful anti-coup protesters is outrageous and unacceptable, and must be immediately halted," said Phil Robertson, deputy Asia director for New York-based Human Rights Watch. "Live ammunition should not be used to control or disperse protests and lethal force can only be used to protect life or prevent serious injury."

"The world is watching the actions of the Myanmar military junta, and will hold them accountable," he said.

On Saturday, security forces began employing rougher tactics, taking preemptive actions to break up protests and making scores, if not hundreds, of arrests. Greater numbers of soldiers have also joined police. Many of those detained were taken to Insein Prison in Yangon's northern outskirts, historically notorious for holding political prisoners.

According to the Assistance Association of Political Prisoners, as of Saturday, 854 people had been arrested, charged or sentenced at one point in relation to the coup, and 771 were being detained or sought for arrest. The group said that while it had documented 75 new arrests, it understood that hundreds of other people were also picked up Saturday in Yangon and elsewhere.

MRTV, a Myanmar state-run television channel, broadcast an announcement Saturday night from the Foreign Ministry that the country's ambassador to the United Nations had been fired because he had abused his power and misbehaved by failing to follow the instructions of the government and "betraying" it.

Ambassador Kyaw Moe Tun had declared in an emotional speech Friday at the U.N. General Assembly in New York that he represented Suu Kyi's "civilian government elected by the people" and supported the struggle against military rule.

He urged all countries to issue public statements strongly condemning the coup, and to refuse to recognize the military regime. He also called for stronger international measures to stop violence by security forces against peaceful demonstrators.

Hong Kong detains 47 activists on subversion charges

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By ZEN SOO Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — Hong Kong police on Sunday detained 47 pro-democracy activists on charges of conspiracy to commit subversion under the city's national security law, in the largest mass charge against the semi-autonomous Chinese territory's opposition camp since the law came into effect last June.

The former lawmakers and democracy advocates had been previously arrested in a sweeping police operation in January but were released. They have been detained again and will appear in court on Monday, police said in a statement.

They allegedly violated the national security law that was imposed by Beijing for participating in unofficial election primaries for Hong Kong's legislature last year.

The defendants include 39 men and eight women aged between 23 and 64, police said.

The move is part of a continuing crackdown on the city's democracy movement, with a string of arrests and prosecutions of Hong Kong's democracy proponents — including outspoken activists Joshua Wong and Jimmy Lai — following months of anti-government protests in 2019.

The pro-democracy camp had held the primaries to determine the best candidates to field to win a majority in the legislature and had plans to vote down major bills that would eventually force Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam to resign.

In January, 55 activists and former lawmakers were arrested for their roles in the primaries.

Authorities said that the activists' participation was part of a plan to paralyze the city's legislature and subvert state power.

The legislative election that would have followed the unofficial primaries was postponed by a year by Lam, who cited public health risks during the coronavirus pandemic. Mass resignations and disqualifications of pro-democracy lawmakers have left the legislature largely a pro-Beijing body.

Among those arrested on Sunday was former lawmaker Eddie Chu. A post on his official Twitter account confirmed that he was being charged for conspiracy to commit subversion and that he was denied bail.

"Thank you to the people of Hong Kong for giving me the opportunity to contribute to society in the past 15 years," Chu said in a post on his Facebook page.

Another candidate in the primaries, Winnie Yu, was also charged and will appear in court on Monday, according to a post on her official Facebook page.

American lawyer John Clancey, a member of the now-defunct political rights group "Power for Democracy" who was arrested in January for his involvement in the primary, was not among those detained on Sunday.

"I will give full support to those who have been charged and will be facing trial, because from my perspective, they have done nothing wrong," Clancey told reporters.

The security law criminalizes acts of subversion, secession, terrorism and collusion with foreign powers to intervene in Hong Kong's affairs. Serious offenders could face a maximum punishment of life imprisonment. Nearly 100 people have been arrested since the law was implemented.

The Latest: All UK children to get free COVID-19 test kits

By The Associated Press undefined

LONDON — Britain's government says families with children in school will be provided with free coronavirus home test kits as part of plans for schools to reopen beginning on March 8.

Free, twice-weekly tests will be provided to children's households regardless of whether anyone has symptoms, officials said Sunday. The tests will also be offered to adults working with schools, including bus drivers.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said testing family members will provide "another layer of reassurance to parents and education staff that schools are as safe as possible." Schools in England have been closed except to children of key workers since January.

Britain is also racing ahead with its vaccination program, with almost 20 million in the U.K. who have now had a first jab. Some 2 million people aged 60 to 63 in England will start getting invitations to book their shots beginning on Monday. The government aims to offer a first jab to all adults by the end of July.

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Britain has Europe's worst virus death toll at nearly 123,000 dead.

THE VIRUS OUTBREAK:

- J&J's one-dose shot cleared, giving U.S. a 3rd COVID-19 vaccine to use
- Health experts are urging Pope Francis to rethink his March trip to Iraq, saying that could become a huge superspreading event for the virus
- Plunging demand for COVID-19 tests may leave US exposed
- Biden hails House passage of \$1.9 trillion virus bill, now to Senate
- Turkish vaccination teams brave snowy roads to reach isolated mountain villages

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:

BUDAPEST — Hungary's prime minister on Sunday received a COVID-19 vaccine developed in China as his country aims to boost vaccination rates using jabs developed in eastern countries.

Prime Minister Viktor Orban posted photos on Facebook of himself being inoculated with the Sinopharm vaccine. Hungary last week became the first country in the European Union to begin using the Chinese jab.

Hungary's government has been critical of the speed of the EU's vaccination program, and has purchased vaccines from Russia and China to boost procurements.

"The vaccines reserved by the EU are simply not arriving, and they are arriving more slowly than predicted. If we didn't have the Russian and Chinese vaccines, we would be in big trouble," Orban said during a radio interview on Friday.

He earlier said he would choose to receive the Sinopharm vaccine because he trusted it the most.

ROME — Infectious disease experts are expressing concern about Pope Francis' upcoming trip to Iraq, given a sharp rise in coronavirus infections there, a fragile health care system and the unavoidable likelihood that Iraqis will crowd to see him.

No one wants to tell Francis to call it off, and the Iraqi government has every interest in showing off its relative stability by welcoming the first pope to the birthplace of Abraham. The March 5-8 trip is expected to provide a sorely-needed spiritual boost to Iraq's beleaguered Christians.

But from a purely epidemiological standpoint, a papal trip to Iraq amid a global pandemic is not advisable, health experts say.

"I just don't think it's a good idea," said Dr. Navid Madani of Harvard Medical School's Dana-Farber Cancer Institute. "This could potentially lead to unsafe or superspreading risks."

Their concerns were reinforced with the news Sunday that the Vatican ambassador to Iraq, the main point person for the trip, tested positive for COVID-19 and was self-isolating. The embassy said Archbishop Mitja Leskovar's symptoms were mild and that he was continuing to prepare for Francis' visit.

Beyond his case, experts note that wars, economic crises and an exodus of Iraqi professionals have devastated the country's hospital system, while studies show most of Iraq's new COVID-19 infections are the highly-contagious variant first identified in Britain.

ANKARA, Turkey — Traveling across roads covered with ice and snow, vaccination teams have been going to Turkey's isolated mountain villages as the government seeks to inoculate 60% of the country's people against coronavirus over the next three months.

After much effort, medical workers arrived Friday to vaccinate older villagers in Gumuslu, a small settlement of 350 in the central province of Sivas that lies 140 miles (230 kilometers) from the provincial capital.

"It's a difficult challenge to come here," said Dr. Rustem Hasbek, head of Sivas Health Services. "The geography is tough, the climate is tough, as you can see."

Turkey rolled out the Chinese Sinovac vaccine on Jan. 14 and has so far given out 8.2 million doses.

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Ankara has also ordered 4.5 million doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine.

Health Minister Fahrettin Koca said Turkey aims to vaccinate 52.5 million people by the end of May.

HELSINKI — Police in Denmark said eight people were arrested following in an anti-lockdown demonstration with 1,200 participants in the center of Copenhagen, the Danish capital.

The demonstration proceeded largely peacefully Saturday but those detained are suspected of behaving violently against police or violating fireworks regulations, police said. Participants gathered in a square in front of Copenhagen's town hall.

The rally was organized by a group identifying as "Men in Black Denmark." It was the first demonstration in Copenhagen since the Danish government last week that it was extending several anti-coronavirus restrictions.

BANGKOK — Thailand started its first vaccinations Sunday with 200 public health officials receiving the Sinovac vaccine from China.

Health Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul was given the first shot at a hospital near Bangkok, followed by the deputy health minister and other senior officials.

Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha, who attended the vaccination ceremony, said the public should have confidence in the safety and effectiveness of the vaccine, as it has been approved by authorities in Thailand and other countries.

Prayuth did not receive the vaccine on Sunday because he is older than Sinovac's recommended age, which is 18-59. Prayuth is 66.

Thailand received the first 200,000 doses of the Sinovac vaccine on Wednesday. They are part of the government's plan that has so far secured 2 million doses from Sinovac and 61 million doses from Astra-Zeneca.

Thailand has had more than 25,000 confirmed cases and 83 deaths from COVID-19.

WASHINGTON — The U.S. now has a third vaccine to prevent COVID-19.

The Food and Drug Administration on Saturday cleared a Johnson & Johnson shot that works with just one dose instead of two.

Health experts have anxiously awaited a one-and-done option to help speed vaccinations. The virus has already killed more than 510,000 people in the U.S. and is mutating in increasingly worrisome ways.

The FDA said J&J's vaccine offers strong protection against what matters most: serious illness, hospitalizations and death. One dose was 85% protective against the most severe COVID-19 illness, in a massive study that spanned three continents.

LONDON — Church bells rang out and a World War II-era plane flew over the funeral service of Captain Tom Moore, in honor of the veteran who raised millions for Britain's health workers by walking laps in his backyard.

Captain Tom, as he became known, died Feb. 2 at age 100 after testing positive for COVID-19. Just eight members of the veteran's immediate family attended Saturday's private funeral service, but soldiers carried his coffin and formed a ceremonial guard.

"Daddy, you always told us 'Best foot forward' and true to your word, that's what you did last year," Moore's daughter Lucy Teixeira said at the service.

Moore, who served in India, Burma and Sumatra during World War II, set out to raise a modest 1,000 pounds for Britain's NHS by walking 100 laps of his backyard by his 100th birthday last year. But donations poured in from across Britain and beyond as his quest went viral.

His trademark phrase -- "Please remember, tomorrow will be a good day" -- inspired the nation at a time of crisis. He was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II in July at Windsor Castle.

A version of the song "Smile" singer Michael Bublé recorded for the funeral was played. So was "My

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Way" by Frank Sinatra, as Moore requested.

MILAN — The Lombardy region where Milan is located is heading toward a partial lockdown on Monday. Mayor Giuseppe Sala said in a video message he was disturbed by scenes of people gathering in public places, often with their masks down.

Italy has failed to flatten the curve on the fall resurgence, with numbers of new infections and deaths remaining stubbornly high amid new variants creating new outbreaks. The Italian Health Ministry reported 18,916 new infections and 280 deaths on Saturday.

The regions of Lombardy, Piedmont and Marche will go into partial lockdown on Monday, meaning no table service at bars and restaurants. Police vans blocked entrance to Milan's trendy Navigli neighborhood Saturday evening after the mayor announced increased patrols to prevent gatherings during a spring-like weekend.

Basilicata and Molise will be designated red zones on Monday, which means upper grades will have remote learning and non-essential stores are closed. A 10 p.m. curfew remains in effect throughout the country.

CARIBOU, Maine — Republican Sen. Susan Collins of Maine wants the Biden administration to reconsider U.S.-Canada border restrictions that were imposed a year ago because of the pandemic.

Her letter came less than a week after Department of Homeland Security announced the U.S., Mexico and Canada had jointly agreed to maintain land border restrictions until March 21.

Collins wrote in a letter to DHS Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas that an "equitable solution" is needed for border communities that recognizes lower risk levels.

Only Canadian citizens, Americans with dual citizenship and family members and partners can cross for nonessential purposes.

ALBANY, N.Y. — New York's new coronavirus-era dance rules aren't exactly "Footloose" strict, but don't plan on cutting loose and kicking off the Sunday shoes with just anybody.

The state says when wedding receptions resume next month, guests will be allowed to hit the dance floor only with members of their immediate party, household or family seated at the same table.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo previously announced weddings can begin again on March 15. Venues will be restricted to 50% of capacity, up to 150 guests, and all must be tested for coronavirus beforehand.

Dancers must wear face masks and stay within their own "dancing areas or zones."

Happy couples can still take a twirl for a ceremonial first dance, and other couples can join in, but they must all stay 6 feet apart.

BISMARCK, N.D. — Nearly 10% of residents in North Dakota have completed both doses of the COVID-19 vaccine.

The North Dakota Department of Health data indicates nearly 70,000 people in the state, or 9.5% of the population, have received the full two-dose series. More than 126,000, or 17.3%, have received the first dose.

North Dakota reported three COVID-19-related deaths on Saturday, bringing the state's confirmed death toll to 1,445. Another 71 cases were confirmed, for a total of 99,780 overall.

Meanwhile, the North Dakota Department of Commerce announced \$20 million in grants to help the state's hotels, motels and lodging businesses that lost revenue due to the pandemic.

INDIANAPOLIS — Nearly 900 new cases of the coronavirus and 27 more deaths have been reported in Indiana.

The Indiana Department of Health says the 897 newly diagnosed cases bring the state's confirmed total to 660,942 since the start of the pandemic.

The state has registered 12,125 deaths, while another 431 probable deaths have been reported based on clinical diagnoses in patients with no positive test on record.

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More than 981,000 Indiana residents have received a first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine and 552,241 are fully vaccinated.

JUNEAU, Alaska — The federal government has approved Alaska's plan to give the state's fishing industry almost \$50 million in pandemic relief.

Commercial applicants will be required to provide evidence that the coronavirus pandemic caused them to lose at least 35% of revenue in 2020. Applications will be accepted from March until May.

Alaska Department of Fish and Game Deputy Commissioner Rachel Baker says the final plan excludes commercial permit holders who fish in Alaska but live in other states that received coronavirus relief. Payments could begin as early as June.

CoastAlaska reported Friday the decision came after two major revisions to the plan and more than 200 public comments from every industry sector.

SEATTLE — People looking for a unique outdoor dining option during the pandemic can now make a run to the home of the Seattle Seahawks.

A dining series called "Field to Table" kicked off this month at Lumen Field. It features four-course meals from local chefs, plus a view of the NFL stadium normally reserved for players and coaches.

Diners eat their meals under an open-sided tent on the field, near the north end zone.

Event producer Sam Minkoff says the series' original dates quickly sold out, but additional reservations will be available soon.

A portion of the proceeds go to the nonprofit Big Table, which helps struggling restaurant and hospitality workers. Seattle area eateries recently resumed reduced-capacity indoor seating after being restricted to takeout or limited outdoor seating.

'Not a good idea:' Experts concerned about pope trip to Iraq

By NICOLE WINFIELD and SAMYA KULLAB Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Infectious disease experts are expressing concern about Pope Francis' upcoming trip to Iraq, given a sharp rise in coronavirus infections there, a fragile health care system and the unavoidable likelihood that Iraqis will crowd to see him.

No one wants to tell Francis to call it off, and the Iraqi government has every interest in showing off its relative stability by welcoming the first pope to the birthplace of Abraham. The March 5-8 trip is expected to provide a sorely-needed spiritual boost to Iraq's beleaguered Christians while furthering the Vatican's bridge-building efforts with the Muslim world.

But from a purely epidemiological standpoint, as well as the public health message it sends, a papal trip to Iraq amid a global pandemic is not advisable, health experts say.

Their concerns were reinforced with the news Sunday that the Vatican ambassador to Iraq, the main point person for the trip who would have escorted Francis to all his appointments, tested positive for COVID-19 and was self-isolating.

In an email to The Associated Press, the embassy said Archbishop Mitja Leskovar's symptoms were mild and that he was continuing to prepare for Francis' visit.

Beyond his case, experts note that wars, economic crises and an exodus of Iraqi professionals have devastated the country's hospital system, while studies show most of Iraq's new COVID-19 infections are the highly-contagious variant first identified in Britain.

"I just don't think it's a good idea," said Dr. Navid Madani, virologist and founding director of the Center for Science Health Education in the Middle East and North Africa at Harvard Medical School's Dana-Farber Cancer Institute.

The Iranian-born Madani co-authored an article in The Lancet last year on the region's uneven response to COVID-19, noting that Iraq, Syria and Yemen were poorly placed to cope, given they are still struggling with extremist insurgencies and have 40 million people who need humanitarian aid.

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In a telephone interview, Madani said Middle Easterners are known for their hospitality, and cautioned that the enthusiasm among Iraqis of welcoming a peace-maker like Francis to a neglected, war-torn part of the world might lead to inadvertent violations of virus control measures.

"This could potentially lead to unsafe or superspreading risks," she said.

Dr. Bharat Pankhania, an infectious disease control expert at the University of Exeter College of Medicine, concurred.

"It's a perfect storm for generating lots of cases which you won't be able to deal with," he said.

Organizers promise to enforce mask mandates, social distancing and crowd limits, as well as the possibility of increased testing sites, two Iraqi government officials said.

The health care protocols are "critical but can be managed," one government official told The Associated Press, speaking on condition of anonymity.

And the Vatican has taken its own precautions, with the 84-year-old pope, his 20-member Vatican entourage and the 70-plus journalists on the papal plane all vaccinated.

But the Iraqis gathering in the north, center and south of the country to attend Francis' indoor and outdoor Masses, hear his speeches and participate in his prayer meetings are not vaccinated.

And that, scientists say, is the problem.

"We are in the middle of a global pandemic. And it is important to get the correct messages out," Pankhania said. "The correct messages are: the less interactions with fellow human beings, the better."

He questioned the optics of the Vatican delegation being inoculated while the Iraqis are not, and noted that Iraqis would only take such risks to go to those events because the pope was there.

In words addressed to Vatican officials and the media, he said: "You are all protected from severe disease. So if you get infected, you're not going to die. But the people coming to see you may get infected and may die."

"Is it wise under that circumstance for you to just turn up? And because you turn up, people turn up to see you and they get infected?" he asked.

The World Health Organization was diplomatic when asked about the wisdom of a papal trip to Iraq, saying countries should evaluate the risk of an event against the infection situation, and then decide if it should be postponed.

"It's all about managing that risk," said Maria Van Kerkhove, WHO's technical lead on COVID-19. "It's about looking at the epidemiologic situation in the country and then making sure that if that event is to take place, that it can take place as safely as possible."

Francis has said he intends to go even if most Iraqis have to watch him on television to avoid infection. The important thing, he told Catholic News Service, is "they will see that the pope is there in their country."

Francis has frequently called for an equitable distribution of vaccines and respect for government health measures, though he tends to not wear face masks. Francis for months has eschewed even socially distanced public audiences at the Vatican to limit the chance of contagion.

Dr. Michael Head, senior research fellow in global health at the University of Southampton's Faculty of Medicine, said the number of new daily cases in Iraq is "increasing significantly at the moment" with the Health Ministry reporting around 4,000 a day, close to the height of its first wave in September.

Head said for any trip to Iraq, there must be infection control practices in force, including mask-wearing, hand-washing, social distancing and good ventilation in indoor spaces.

"Hopefully we will see proactive approaches to infection control in place during the pope's visit to Baghdad," he said.

The Iraqi government imposed a modified lockdown and curfew in mid-February amid a new surge in cases, closing schools and mosques and leaving restaurants and cafes only open for takeout. But the government decided against a full shutdown because of the difficulty of enforcing it and the financial impact on Iraq's battered economy, the Iraqi officials told AP.

Many Iraqis remain lax in using masks and some doubt the severity of the virus.

Madani, the Harvard virologist, urged trip organizers to let science and data guide their decision-making.

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A decision to reschedule or postpone the papal trip, or move it to a virtual format, would “be quite impactful from a global leadership standpoint” because “it would signal prioritizing the safety of Iraq’s public,” she said.

Kullab reported from Baghdad. Jamey Keaten in Geneva contributed.

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>

In oil-rich Iraq, a few women buck norms, take rig site jobs

By SAMYA KULLAB Associated Press

BASRA, Iraq (AP) — It’s nearly dawn and Zainab Amjad has been up all night working on an oil rig in southern Iraq. She lowers a sensor into the black depths of a well until sonar waves detect the presence of the crude that fuels her country’s economy.

Elsewhere in the oil-rich province of Basra, Ayat Rawthan is supervising the assembly of large drill pipes. These will bore into the Earth and send crucial data on rock formations to screens sitting a few meters (feet) away that she will decipher.

The women, both 24, are among just a handful who have eschewed the dreary office jobs typically handed to female petroleum engineers in Iraq. Instead, they chose to become trailblazers in the country’s oil industry, donning hard hats to take up the grueling work at rig sites.

They are part of a new generation of talented Iraqi women who are testing the limits imposed by their conservative communities. Their determination to find jobs in a historically male-dominated industry is a striking example of the way a burgeoning youth population finds itself increasingly at odds with deeply entrenched and conservative tribal traditions prevalent in Iraq’s southern oil heartland.

The hours Amjad and Rawthan spend in the oil fields are long and the weather unforgiving. Often they are asked what — as women — they are doing there.

“They tell me the field environment only men can withstand,” said Amjad, who spends six weeks at a time living at the rig site. “If I gave up, I’d prove them right.”

Iraq’s fortunes, both economic and political, tend to ebb and flow with oil markets. Oil sales make up 90% of state revenues — and the vast majority of the crude comes from the south. A price crash brings about an economic crisis; a boom stuffs state coffers. A healthy economy brings a measure of stability, while instability has often undermined the strength of the oil sector. Decades of wars, civil unrest and invasion have stalled production.

Following low oil prices dragged down by the coronavirus pandemic and international disputes, Iraq is showing signs of recovery, with January exports reaching 2.868 million barrels per day at \$53 per barrel, according to Oil Ministry statistics.

To most Iraqis, the industry can be summed up by those figures, but Amjad and Rawthan have a more granular view. Every well presents a set of challenges; some required more pressure to pump, others were laden with poisonous gas. “Every field feels like going to a new country,” said Amjad.

Given the industry’s outsized importance to the economy, petrochemical programs in the country’s engineering schools are reserved for students with the highest marks. Both women were in the top 5% of their graduating class at Basra University in 2018.

In school they became awestruck by drilling. To them it was a new world, with its own language: “spudding” was to start drilling operations, a “Christmas tree” was the very top of a wellhead, and “dope” just meant grease.

Every work day plunges them deep into the mysterious affairs below the Earth’s crust, where they use tools to look at formations of minerals and mud, until the precious oil is found. “Like throwing a rock into water and studying the ripples,” explained Rawthan.

To work in the field, Amjad, the daughter of two doctors, knew she had to land a job with an interna-

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tional oil company — and to do that, she would have to stand out. State-run enterprises were a dead end; there, she would be relegated to office work.

"In my free time, on my vacations, days off I was booking trainings, signing up for any program I could," said Amjad.

When China's CPECC came to look for new hires, she was the obvious choice. Later, when Texas-based Schlumberger sought wireline engineers she jumped at the chance. The job requires her to determine how much oil is recoverable from a given well. She passed one difficult exam after another to get to the final interview.

Asked if she was certain she could do the job, she said: "Hire me, watch."

In two months she traded her green hard hat for a shiny white one, signifying her status as supervisor, no longer a trainee — a month quicker than is typical.

Rawthan, too, knew she would have to work extra hard to succeed. Once, when her team had to perform a rare "sidetrack" — drilling another bore next to the original — she stayed awake all night.

"I didn't sleep for 24 hours, I wanted to understand the whole process, all the tools, from beginning to end," she said.

Rawthan also now works for Schlumberger, where she collects data from wells used to determine the drilling path later on. She wants to master drilling, and the company is a global leader in the service.

Relatives, friends and even teachers were discouraging: What about the hard physical work? The scorching Basra heat? Living at the rig site for months at a time? And the desert scorpions that roam the reservoirs at night?

"Many times my professors and peers laughed, 'Sure, we'll see you out there,' telling me I wouldn't be able to make it," said Rawthan. "But this only pushed me harder."

Their parents were supportive, though. Rawthan's mother is a civil engineer and her father, the captain of an oil tanker who often spent months at sea.

"They understand why this is my passion," she said. She hopes to help establish a union to bring like-minded Iraqi female engineers together. For now, none exists.

The work is not without danger. Protests outside oil fields led by angry local tribes and the unemployed can disrupt work and sometimes escalate into violence toward oil workers. Confronted every day by flare stacks that point to Iraq's obvious oil wealth, others decry state corruption, poor service delivery and joblessness.

But the women are willing to take on these hardships. Amjad barely has time to even consider them: It was 11 p.m., and she was needed back at work.

"Drilling never stops," she said.

Virginia lawmakers vote to legalize marijuana in 2024

By DENISE LAVOIE and SARAH RANKIN Associated Press

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) — Virginia lawmakers gave final approval Saturday to a bill that will legalize marijuana for adult recreational use, but not until 2024, when retail sales of the drug would also begin.

With a compromise bill clearing the House and Senate, Virginia becomes the first Southern state to vote to legalize marijuana, joining 15 other states and the District of Columbia. The legislation now goes to Democratic Gov. Ralph Northam, who supports legalization.

The bill was a top priority for Democrats, who framed legalization as a necessary step to end the disparate treatment of people of color under current marijuana laws. But talks between Democrats in the House and Senate grew tense in recent days, and a compromise version of the massive bill did not emerge publicly until late Saturday afternoon.

"It's been a lot of work to get here, but I would say that we're on the path to an equitable law allowing responsible adults to use cannabis," said Sen. Adam Ebbin, the chief sponsor of the Senate bill.

Several Democrats said they hoped Northam would send the legislation back to them with amendments, including speeding up the date for legalization.

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"If we have already made the decision that simple possession should be repealed, we could have done that today and ended the disproportionate fines on communities of color," said Sen. Jennifer McClellan.

"Let's be absolutely clear — this bill is not legalization, and there are a lot of steps between here and legalization," she said.

Northam's spokeswoman, Alena Yarmosky, said the governor "looks forward to continuing to improve this legislation."

"There's still a lot of work ahead, but this bill will help to reinvest in our communities and reduce inequities in our criminal justice system," she said.

Under the legislation, possession of up to an ounce (28.3 grams) of marijuana will become legal beginning Jan. 1, 2024, at the same time sales will begin and regulations will go into effect to control the marijuana marketplace in Virginia.

Under a provision Senate Democrats insisted on, the legislation will include a reenactment clause that will require a second vote from the General Assembly next year, but only on the regulatory framework and criminal penalties for several offenses, including underage use and public consumption of marijuana. A second vote will not be required on legalization.

The Senate had sought to legalize simple possession this year to immediately end punishments for people with small amounts of marijuana, but House Democrats argued that legalization without a legal market for marijuana could promote the growth of the black market.

Lawmakers last year decriminalized marijuana, making simple possession a civil penalty that can be punished by a fine of no more than \$25.

House Majority Leader Charniele Herring said that while the legislation isn't perfect, it was a "justice bill."

"This moves us in a ... direction to strike down and to address those institutional barriers, and over-policing, over-arrests, over-convictions of African Americans who do not use marijuana at a higher rate than our white counterparts, but we seem to get the brunt of criminal convictions," Herring said.

A recent study by the legislature's research and watchdog agency found that from 2010-2019, the average arrest rate of Black individuals for marijuana possession was 3.5 times higher than the arrest rate for white individuals. The study also found that Black people were convicted at a rate 3.9 times higher than white people.

The bill calls for dedicating 30% of marijuana tax revenue — after program costs — to a Cannabis Equity Reinvestment Fund. The money would be used to help communities that have been historically over-policed for marijuana crimes, with funds going toward scholarships, workforce development and job placement services, and low- or no-interest loans for qualified cannabis businesses.

Virginians who have a marijuana-related conviction, have family members with a conviction, or live in an area that is economically distressed could qualify as social equity applicants who would get preference for licenses to get into the marijuana marketplace as cultivators, wholesalers, processors and retailers.

The largest portion of the tax revenue from marijuana sales would go toward funding pre-K for at-risk kids.

The bill drew sharp criticism from the American Civil Liberties Union of Virginia and other racial justice advocacy groups.

"Today, the Virginia General Assembly failed to legalize marijuana for racial justice. Lawmakers paid lip service to the communities that have suffered decades of harm caused by the racist War on Drugs with legislation that falls short of equitable reform and delays justice," the ACLU said in a tweet.

Groups that opposed legalization entirely have said they are concerned that it could result in an increase in drug-impaired driving crashes and the use of marijuana among youth.

Republican lawmakers spoke against the measure Saturday night, saying such a critical issue deserved a less rushed approach.

"I would say there are not more than two or three members of this body that have a clue about the comprehensiveness of what this bill does," said Senate Minority Leader Tommy Norment.

2nd former aide accuses Cuomo of sexual harassment

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By DAVE COLLINS Associated Press

A second former aide said she was sexually harassed by New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo, who responded with a statement Saturday saying he never made advances toward her and never intended to be inappropriate.

Charlotte Bennett, a health policy adviser in the Democratic governor's administration until November, told The New York Times Cuomo asked her inappropriate questions about her sex life, including whether she ever had sex with older men.

Another former aide, Lindsey Boylan, a former deputy secretary for economic development and special adviser to the governor, recently accused Cuomo of subjecting her to an unwanted kiss and inappropriate comments. Cuomo denied the allegations.

Cuomo said in a statement Saturday that Bennett was a "hardworking and valued member of our team during COVID" and that "she has every right to speak out."

He said he had intended to be a mentor for Bennett, who is 25.

"I never made advances toward Ms. Bennett nor did I ever intend to act in any way that was inappropriate," Cuomo's statement said. "The last thing I would ever have wanted was to make her feel any of the things that are being reported."

Cuomo, however, said he had authorized an outside review of Bennett's allegations.

The governor's special counsel, Beth Garvey, said that review would be conducted by a former federal judge, Barbara Jones.

"I ask all New Yorkers to await the findings of the review so that they know the facts before making any judgements," Cuomo said. "I will have no further comment until the review has concluded."

Some top New York Democrats, however, said any investigation should be placed out of the control of the governor's office, including the selection of the investigator.

"The accused CANNOT appoint the investigator. PERIOD," tweeted U.S. Rep. Kathleen Rice, a Long Island Democrat. "The continued allegations are deeply disturbing and concerning. The behavior described has no place in the workplace. A truly independent investigation must begin immediately."

Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins and Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie, both Democrats, called for an independent investigator.

The pair of harassment allegations represent a deepening crisis for Cuomo, who just months ago was at the height of his popularity for his leadership during coronavirus pandemic..

In recent weeks, he has been assailed over revelations that his administration had underreported COVID-19 deaths in nursing homes. A state assemblyman went public with complaints that Cuomo had threatened to destroy him politically over statements he made in the press, prompting other politicians to share stories about having been bullied by the governor.

Bennett did not immediately return a Twitter message from The Associated Press seeking comment.

She told the Times her most disturbing interaction with Cuomo happened June 5 when she was alone with him in his Albany office. She said Cuomo started asking her about her personal life, her thoughts on romantic relationships, including whether age was a factor, and said he was open to relationships with women in their 20s.

Bennett said she also dodged a question from Cuomo about hugging by saying she missed hugging her parents. She said Cuomo never touched her.

"I understood that the governor wanted to sleep with me, and felt horribly uncomfortable and scared," Bennett told the Times. "And was wondering how I was going to get out of it and assumed it was the end of my job."

Bennett said Cuomo also told her he wanted a girlfriend, "preferably in the Albany area," and he was lonely since breaking up with Sandra Lee, a chef and TV personality.

Bennett also said she tried to change the subject when Cuomo's comments were making her uncomfortable, telling him she was thinking of getting a tattoo. Cuomo, she told the Times, responded by suggesting she put the tattoo on her buttocks.

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Bennett said she informed Cuomo's chief of staff, Jill DesRosiers, about the interaction less than a week later. She said she was transferred to another job on the opposite side of the Capitol. At the end of June she also gave a statement to a special counsel for Cuomo.

Garvey acknowledged that the complaint had been made and that Bennett had been transferred as a result to a position in which she had already been interested.

Garvey said in a statement that Bennett's allegations "did not include a claim of physical contact or inappropriate sexual conduct" and Bennett "was consulted regarding the resolution, and expressed satisfaction and appreciation for the way in which it was handled."

"The determination reached based on the information Ms Bennett provided was that no further action was required which was consistent with Ms Bennett's wishes," Garvey said.

Bennett told the newspaper she decided not to push for any further action by the administration. She said she liked her new job and "wanted to move on."

Jones, who would oversee the investigation, was appointed to the bench by President Bill Clinton, a Democrat, in 1995. As a judge, she struck down a portion of the Defense of Marriage Act denying federal recognition of same-sex marriage in a ruling later upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court.

After retiring, she joined the law firm Bracewell LLP, where her work focuses on corporate compliance and investigations.

Her arbitration work included a 2014 decision throwing out Ray Rice's suspension by the NFL for punching his fiancé in an elevator in an attack recorded on video.

It remained uncertain whether lawmakers would accept her appointment.

Asked if Jones' review is "truly independent," Mike Murphy, a spokesman for Stewart-Cousins, a Democrat, said, "No it is not, and it should be done by the attorney general's office."

State Senate Minority Leader Rob Ort, a Republican, said state Attorney General Letitia James should appoint a special prosecutor.

"The review suggested by someone handpicked by the Governor himself, is an outrageous, completely unacceptable idea. We need a truly independent investigation," Ort said in a statement.

Boylan said in Twitter postings Saturday night that she was proud of Bennett and alleged Cuomo "tried to destroy many, including me, in the press."

"You are not going to derail or destroy any more lives," she tweeted.

J&J's 1-dose shot cleared, giving US 3rd COVID-19 vaccine

By LAURAN NEERGAARD and MATTHEW PERRONE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. is getting a third vaccine to prevent COVID-19, as the Food and Drug Administration on Saturday cleared a Johnson & Johnson shot that works with just one dose instead of two.

Health experts are anxiously awaiting a one-and-done option to help speed vaccinations, as they race against a virus that already has killed more than 510,000 people in the U.S. and is mutating in increasingly worrisome ways.

The FDA said J&J's vaccine offers strong protection against what matters most: serious illness, hospitalizations and death. One dose was 85% protective against the most severe COVID-19 illness, in a massive study that spanned three continents — protection that remained strong even in countries such as South Africa, where the variants of most concern are spreading.

"This is really good news," Dr. Francis Collins, director of the National Institutes of Health, told The Associated Press Saturday. "The most important thing we can do right now is to get as many shots in as many arms as we can."

J&J initially is providing a few million doses and shipments to states could begin as early as Monday. By the end of March, J&J has said it expects to deliver 20 million doses to the U.S., and 100 million by summer.

J&J also is seeking authorization for emergency use of its vaccine in Europe and from the World Health Organization. The company aims to produce about 1 billion doses globally by the end of the year. On Thursday, the island nation of Bahrain became the first to clear its use.

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"This is exciting news for all Americans, and an encouraging development in our efforts to bring an end to the crisis," President Joe Biden said in a statement. "But I want to be clear: this fight is far from over," he added, encouraging people to stick with masks and other public health measures.

On Sunday, a U.S. advisory committee will meet to recommend how to prioritize use of the single-dose vaccine. And one big challenge is what the public wants to know: Which kind is better?

"In this environment, whatever you can get — get," said Dr. Arnold Monto of the University of Michigan, who chaired an FDA advisory panel that unanimously voted Friday that the vaccine's benefits outweigh its risks.

Data is mixed on how well all the vaccines being used around the world work, prompting reports in some countries of people refusing one kind to wait for another.

In the U.S., the two-dose Pfizer and Moderna shots were 95% protective against symptomatic COVID-19. J&J's one-dose effectiveness of 85% against severe COVID-19 dropped to 66% when moderate cases were rolled in. But there's no apples-to-apples comparison because of differences in when and where each company conducted its studies, with the Pfizer and Moderna research finished before concerning variants began spreading.

NIH's Collins said the evidence shows no reason to favor one vaccine over another.

"What people I think are mostly interested in is, is it going to keep me from getting really sick?" Collins said. "Will it keep me from dying from this terrible disease? The good news is all of these say yes to that."

Also, J&J is testing two doses of its vaccine in a separate large study. Collins said if a second dose eventually is deemed better, people who got one earlier would be offered another.

The FDA cautioned that it's too early to tell if someone who gets a mild or asymptomatic infection despite vaccination still could spread the virus.

There are clear advantages aside from the convenience of one shot. Local health officials are looking to use the J&J option in mobile vaccination clinics, homeless shelters, even with sailors who are spending months on fishing vessels — communities where it's hard to be sure someone will come back in three to four weeks for a second vaccination.

The J&J vaccine also is easier to handle, lasting three months in the refrigerator compared to the Pfizer and Moderna options, which must be frozen.

"We're chomping at the bit to get more supply. That's the limiting factor for us right now," said Dr. Matt Anderson of UW Health in Madison, Wisconsin, where staffers were readying electronic health records, staffing and vaccine storage in anticipation of offering J&J shots soon.

The FDA said studies detected no serious side effects. Like other COVID-19 vaccines, the main side effects of the J&J shot are pain at the injection site and flu-like fever, fatigue and headache.

An FDA fact sheet for vaccine recipients says there is "a remote chance" that people may experience a severe allergic reaction to the shot, a rare risk seen with the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines. Such reactions are treatable, and vaccine recipients are supposed to be briefly monitored after the injection.

The vaccine has been authorized for emergency use in adults 18 and older for now. But like other manufacturers, J&J is about to study how it works in teens before moving to younger children later in the year, and also plans a study in pregnant women.

All COVID-19 vaccines train the body to recognize the new coronavirus, usually by spotting the spikey protein that coats it. But they're made in very different ways.

J&J's shot uses a cold virus like a Trojan horse to carry the spike gene into the body, where cells make harmless copies of the protein to prime the immune system in case the real virus comes along. It's the same technology the company used in making an Ebola vaccine, and similar to COVID-19 vaccines made by AstraZeneca and China's CanSino Biologics.

The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are made with a different technology, a piece of genetic code called messenger RNA that spurs cells to make those harmless spike copies.

The AstraZeneca vaccine, already used in Britain and numerous other countries, is finishing a large U.S. study needed for FDA clearance. Also in the pipeline, Novavax uses a still different technology, made with lab-grown copies of the spike protein, and has reported preliminary findings from a British study suggest-

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ing strong protection.

Still other countries are using "inactivated vaccines," made with killed coronavirus by Chinese companies Sinovac and Sinopharm.

Associated Press journalists Ricardo Alonso-Zaldivar and Marion Renault contributed to this report.

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The Latest: U.S. FDA approves J&J single-shot vaccine

By The Associated Press undefined

WASHINGTON — The U.S. now has a third vaccine to prevent COVID-19.

The Food and Drug Administration on Saturday cleared a Johnson & Johnson shot that works with just one dose instead of two.

Health experts have anxiously awaited a one-and-done option to help speed vaccinations. The virus has already killed more than 510,000 people in the U.S. and is mutating in increasingly worrisome ways.

The FDA said J&J's vaccine offers strong protection against what matters most: serious illness, hospitalizations and death. One dose was 85% protective against the most severe COVID-19 illness, in a massive study that spanned three continents.

THE VIRUS OUTBREAK:

Sen. Susan Collins wants Biden Administration to reconsider U.S.-Canada border limits. U.S. House passes \$1.9 trillion pandemic bill on near party-line vote. Communities in U.S. seeing less demand for coronavirus testing. Top U.S. diplomat 'visits' Mexico, Canada on virtual trip. North Dakota vaccinates 10% of residents so far.

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 — Church bells rang out and a World War II-era plane flew over the funeral service of Captain Tom Moore, in honor of the veteran who raised millions for Britain's health workers by walking laps in his backyard.

Captain Tom, as he became known, died Feb. 2 at age 100 after testing positive for COVID-19. Just eight members of the veteran's immediate family attended Saturday's private funeral service, but soldiers carried his coffin and formed a ceremonial guard.

"Daddy, you always told us 'Best foot forward' and true to your word, that's what you did last year," Moore's daughter Lucy Teixeira said at the service.

Moore, who served in India, Burma and Sumatra during World War II, set out to raise a modest 1,000 pounds for Britain's NHS by walking 100 laps of his backyard by his 100th birthday last year. But donations poured in from across Britain and beyond as his quest went viral.

His trademark phrase -- "Please remember, tomorrow will be a good day" -- inspired the nation at a time of crisis. He was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II in July at Windsor Castle.

A version of the song "Smile" singer Michael Bublé recorded for the funeral was played. So was "My Way" by Frank Sinatra, as Moore requested.

MILAN — The Lombardy region where Milan is located is heading toward a partial lockdown on Monday. Mayor Giuseppe Sala said in a video message he was disturbed by scenes of people gathering in public places, often with their masks down.

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Italy has failed to flatten the curve on the fall resurgence, with numbers of new infections and deaths remaining stubbornly high amid new variants creating new outbreaks. The Italian Health Ministry reported 18,916 new infections and 280 deaths on Saturday.

The regions of Lombardy, Piedmont and Marche will go into partial lockdown on Monday, meaning no table service at bars and restaurants. Police vans blocked entrance to Milan's trendy Navigli neighborhood Saturday evening after the mayor announced increased patrols to prevent gatherings during a spring-like weekend.

Basilicata and Molise will be designated red zones on Monday, which means upper grades will have remote learning and non-essential stores are closed. A 10 p.m. curfew remains in effect throughout the country.

ALBANY, N.Y. — New York's new coronavirus-era dance rules aren't exactly "Footloose" strict, but don't plan on cutting loose and kicking off the Sunday shoes with just anybody.

The state says when wedding receptions resume next month, guests will be allowed to hit the dance floor only with members of their immediate party, household or family seated at the same table.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo previously announced weddings can begin again on March 15. Venues will be restricted to 50% of capacity, up to 150 guests, and all must be tested for coronavirus beforehand.

Dancers must wear face masks and stay within their own "dancing areas or zones."

Happy couples can still take a twirl for a ceremonial first dance, and other couples can join in, but they must all stay 6 feet apart.

BISMARCK, N.D. — Nearly 10% of residents in North Dakota have completed both doses of the COVID-19 vaccine.

The North Dakota Department of Health data indicates nearly 70,000 people in the state, or 9.5% of the population, have received the full two-dose series. More than 126,000, or 17.3%, have received the first dose.

North Dakota reported three COVID-19-related deaths on Saturday, bringing the state's confirmed death toll to 1,445. Another 71 cases were confirmed, for a total of 99,780 overall.

Meanwhile, the North Dakota Department of Commerce announced \$20 million in grants to help the state's hotels, motels and lodging businesses that lost revenue due to the pandemic.

INDIANAPOLIS — Nearly 900 new cases of the coronavirus and 27 more deaths have been reported in Indiana.

The Indiana Department of Health says the 897 newly diagnosed cases bring the state's confirmed total to 660,942 since the start of the pandemic.

The state has registered 12,125 deaths, while another 431 probable deaths have been reported based on clinical diagnoses in patients with no positive test on record.

More than 981,000 Indiana residents have received a first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine and 552,241 are fully vaccinated.

JUNEAU, Alaska — The federal government has approved Alaska's plan to give the state's fishing industry almost \$50 million in pandemic relief.

Commercial applicants will be required to provide evidence that the coronavirus pandemic caused them to lose at least 35% of revenue in 2020. Applications will be accepted from March until May.

Alaska Department of Fish and Game Deputy Commissioner Rachel Baker says the final plan excludes commercial permit holders who fish in Alaska but live in other states that received coronavirus relief. Payments could begin as early as June.

CoastAlaska reported Friday the decision came after two major revisions to the plan and more than 200 public comments from every industry sector.

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CARIBOU, Maine — Republican Sen. Susan Collins of Maine wants the Biden administration to reconsider U.S.-Canada border restrictions that were imposed a year ago because of the pandemic.

Her letter came less than a week after Department of Homeland Security announced the U.S., Mexico and Canada had jointly agreed to maintain land border restrictions until March 21.

Collins wrote in a letter to DHS Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas that an "equitable solution" is needed for border communities that recognizes lower risk levels.

Only Canadian citizens, Americans with dual citizenship and family members and partners can cross for nonessential purposes.

SEATTLE — People looking for a unique outdoor dining option during the pandemic can now make a run to the home of the Seattle Seahawks.

A dining series called "Field to Table" kicked off this month at Lumen Field. It features four-course meals from local chefs, plus a view of the NFL stadium normally reserved for players and coaches.

Diners eat their meals under an open-sided tent on the field, near the north end zone.

Event producer Sam Minkoff says the series' original dates quickly sold out, but additional reservations will be available soon.

A portion of the proceeds go to the nonprofit Big Table, which helps struggling restaurant and hospitality workers. Seattle area eateries recently resumed reduced-capacity indoor seating after being restricted to takeout or limited outdoor seating.

TAMPA, Fla. — The Toronto Raptors played without most of their coaching staff and one player on Friday night because of coronavirus-related issues.

Six members of their coaching staff, including head coach Nick Nurse, missed the game against the Houston Rockets. Forward Pascal Siakam also sat out, indicating either a testing or contact tracing issue.

The NBA has postponed 29 games this season because of virus-related issues with players or other personnel since the season began Dec. 22. It's the first time a team has said its coaching staff would miss a game because of the protocols.

NBA Commissioner Adam Silver says: "Anytime we have a positive case, we go through extensive contact tracing, player by player, team staff member by team staff member, and then that independent group makes that decision as to whether the game should go on."

Assistant Sergio Scariolo coached Toronto to a 122-111 win against the Rockets on Friday night in Tampa, Florida. The Raptors play their home games in Florida because of coronavirus travel restrictions between the U.S. and Canada.

WASHINGTON — Communities across the U.S. are seeing plummeting demand for coronavirus testing.

The drop comes at a significant moment in the outbreak, when experts are cautiously optimistic the coronavirus is lessening with the help of public health measures and vaccines. But they are concerned that emerging variants could prolong the epidemic.

U.S. testing hit a peak on Jan. 15. Since then, the average number of daily tests has fallen more than 28%. All major virus measures, including new cases, hospitalizations and deaths, are down. Other reasons for less testing include harsh winter weather, the end of the holiday travel season and a focus on vaccinations.

RAMALLAH, West Bank — The Palestinian government announced a 12-day lockdown in the Israeli-occupied West Bank after a surge in coronavirus cases, including new variants.

Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh announced the lockdown, which includes shutting down schools, a nighttime curfew and ban on travel to other governorates.

On Saturday, the Health Ministry reported 1,472 new infections in the West Bank. The confirmed death toll is 1,476 people.

The Palestinian Authority secured 10,000 doses of vaccines from Russia and began its limited inoculation drive. Israel delivered 2,000 doses of the Moderna vaccine and is yet to provide 3,000 more shots,

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covering a tiny fraction of the Palestinian population.

Israel, which has administered at least one dose of Pfizer vaccine on over half of its population, is facing scrutiny and criticism for not sharing the shots with Palestinians under its control. Israel says the Palestinian Authority is responsible for providing health services to its people.

TEHRAN, Iran — Iran's Health Ministry says the country expects to receive 250,000 doses of the Sino-pharm vaccine from China on Saturday.

Alireza Raisi, deputy health minister, says the country will receive doses of other vaccines, including from India, in the "near future" as the country struggles to fight the worst outbreak of the pandemic in the Middle East.

This month, Iran imported 120,000 doses of the Sputnik V vaccine from Russia. Reports have said Iran has purchased a total of 2 million doses.

Iran in December began human trials on the first vaccine manufactured in the country, which is expected to be distributed in the spring. The country is also working on a joint vaccine with Cuba.

Iran plans to import some 17 million doses of vaccine from the international COVAX program and millions more from individual countries.

Health Ministry spokeswoman Sima Sadat Lari put Iran's death toll from COVID-19 at 59,980 after 81 more died from the disease since Friday. Lari says 7,975 new confirmed cases have brought the total to more than 1.6 million in a country with a population of more than 83 million.

SANTA FE, N.M. — New Mexico health officials on Friday confirmed an additional 659 COVID-19 infections, the highest daily case count in more than three weeks.

Nearly 30% of the new cases involved state inmates.

Officials this week expressed optimism about downward trends in the overall spread of the virus, with all of the state's counties reporting positivity rates below 10%. However, they acknowledged that the seven-day rolling average of daily cases remained above targets.

In all, New Mexico has reported nearly 185,000 cases since the pandemic began. The death toll stands at 3,685, with more than a dozen deaths reported Friday.

OHAKUNE, New Zealand — New Zealand's largest city of Auckland is going back into a seven-day lockdown after a new unexplained coronavirus case was found.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern made the announcement Saturday evening after an urgent meeting with top lawmakers in the Cabinet. She said the lockdown would take effect from Sunday morning.

Auckland earlier this month was placed into a three-day lockdown after new cases of the more contagious variant first found in Britain were found.

New Zealand has pursued a zero-tolerance elimination strategy with the virus, and had successfully stamped out community spread before the latest cases were found this month.

Ardern said the latest patient had experienced symptoms since earlier in the week and could have infected others.

The rest of New Zealand will also have increased restrictions.

HONG KONG — Over 500,000 doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine arrived in Hong Kong on Saturday following a two-day delay due to export procedures, offering a second inoculation option for the city.

The Pfizer-BioNTech shots will be offered to about 2.4 million eligible residents from priority groups such as those aged 60 and above and health care workers.

About 70,000 residents who have registered for the vaccination program, which kicked off on Friday, will receive the shots developed by Chinese biopharmaceutical firm Sinovac. The Sinovac vaccines were the first to arrive last week.

Registration details for those wishing to receive the Pfizer-BioNTech shots haven't been announced yet.

Hong Kong has struck deals for a total of 22.5 million doses, with 7.5 million each from Sinovac, Astra-

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Zeneca and Fosun Pharma, which is delivering the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccines. The government has so far approved the Sinovac and Pfizer-BioNTech vaccines.

SEŌUL, South Korea — South Korea's Disease Control and Prevention Agency is allowing health workers to squeeze extra doses from vials of coronavirus vaccines developed by AstraZeneca and Pfizer.

The decision on Saturday came after some health workers who were administering the AstraZeneca shots reported to authorities that they still saw additional doses left in the bottles that had each been used for 10 injections.

KDCA official Jeong Gyeong-shil said skilled workers might squeeze one or two extra doses from each vial if they use low dead-volume syringes designed to reduce wasted medications and vaccines.

However, she said the KDCA isn't allowing health workers from combining vaccines left in different bottles to create more doses.

The KDCA had previously authorized 10 injections for each AstraZeneca vial and six for each Pfizer vial.

South Korea, which launched its public vaccination campaign on Friday, is administering the AstraZeneca shots to residents and workers at long-term care facilities and the Pfizer ones to front-line medical workers.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — The Navajo Nation has continued on a downward trend in the number of daily coronavirus cases.

Tribal health officials on Friday reported 23 new cases of COVID-19 and four additional deaths. The latest numbers bring the total to 29,710 cases since the pandemic began. The death toll is 1,165.

A curfew remains in effect for residents on the vast reservation that covers parts of Arizona, New Mexico and Utah to prevent the spread of the virus.

BRIDGEPORT, Conn. — Gov. Ned Lamont says Connecticut still has "a long way to go" to improve COVID-19 vaccination rates among Black and Hispanic residents, as new data show whites are getting inoculated at higher rates.

Lamont appeared with Black clergy members at St. Vincent's Medical Center in Bridgeport to try to convince people the vaccines are safe and effective. Several church leaders received vaccinations Friday. "We're doing better than we did two weeks ago, but not good enough," Lamont said.

New data released by the state Thursday shows 39% of white state residents ages 65 and older have received the first of two shots of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines, compared with 21% of Black residents and 27% of Hispanic citizens 65 and older.

Students abducted from Nigerian school 2 weeks ago freed

By SAM OLUKOYA Associated Press

LAGOS, Nigeria (AP) — Students, teachers and relatives abducted two weeks ago from a school in northern Nigeria have been freed.

The students, teachers and family members were abducted Feb. 17 by gunmen from the Government Science College Kagara.

Niger State Gov. Abubakar Sani Bello said he received 24 students, six staff and eight relatives on Saturday after they were released early in the morning.

This number released differed from the 42 people that the governor had originally said were kidnapped by the attackers, indicating some may still be missing. The discrepancy was not explained.

One of the students has been hospitalized for excessive exhaustion, he said, adding that the released will be medically checked and monitored for a few days before being reunited with family.

Sani Bello said that joint efforts of security, traditional leaders and stakeholders helped secure the release.

Their release was announced a day after police said gunmen had abducted 317 girls from a boarding school elsewhere in northern Nigeria, in Zamfara state. One resident said the gunmen also attacked a

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nearby military camp and checkpoint, preventing soldiers from interfering with the mass abduction.

Several large groups of armed men operate in Zamfara state, described by the government as bandits, and are known to kidnap for money and to push for the release of their members from jail.

Masauda Umar, 20, managed to escape from the school when the men arrived Friday.

She told The Associated Press the bandits came to their sleeping quarters and after knocking on the main door, they hit the people who answered it and made everyone gather.

"I was coming out from the door and I met somebody but ran back and hid under my bed," she said. "I'm scared of going back to school because of what happened really got me scared but I will go back if the government tackles insecurity."

Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari said Friday the government's primary objective is to get all the school hostages returned safe, alive and unharmed.

"We will not succumb to blackmail by bandits and criminals who target innocent school students in the expectation of huge ransom payments," he said. "Let bandits, kidnappers and terrorists not entertain any illusions that they are more powerful than the government."

Nigeria has seen several such attacks and kidnappings over the years, notably the mass abduction in April 2014 by jihadist group Boko Haram of 276 girls from the secondary school in Chibok in Borno state. More than a hundred of the girls are still missing.

In December, 344 students were abducted from the Government Science Secondary School Kankara in Katsina State. They were eventually released.

Republicans test history in vote against pandemic relief

By STEVE PEOPLES AP National Political Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — With the nation's financial system on the brink of collapse, all but three Republicans voted against the massive stimulus package designed to protect millions of Americans from financial ruin.

It was early 2009, just weeks after Joe Biden was sworn in as vice president, and the vote marked the beginning of a new era of partisan gridlock in Congress. And for beleaguered Republicans coming off a disastrous election, it was their first step back to political power.

Democrats voted alone to stabilize the economy, and two years later, a Republican Party unified only by its unwavering opposition to Barack Obama's presidency seized the House majority.

Now, just weeks into the Biden presidency, the GOP is gambling that history will repeat itself.

Early Saturday morning, 210 House Republicans joined two Democrats in voting against a \$1.9 trillion pandemic relief package that would send \$1,400 checks to most Americans and hundreds of billions more to help open schools, revive struggling businesses and provide financial support to state and local governments. Senate Republicans are expected to oppose a similar measure in the coming weeks, arguing that the bill is not focused enough on the pandemic. But with near-unanimous Democratic support, the measure could still become law.

It's far too soon to predict the political fallout from the first major legislative fight of the Biden era. But as the nation struggles to recover from the worst health and financial crises in generations, strategists in both parties agree that it's risky for Republicans to assume their 2009 playbook will lead to the same ballot-box success this time around.

"I think that the Republicans' misread here is that it is the same, or that they can just oppose it and there's no ramifications," said John Anzalone, the Biden campaign's chief pollster. "It's a different world."

Veteran Republican pollster Frank Luntz said Republicans now bear the burden of clearly articulating their opposition — a task made more difficult by the distraction of former President Donald Trump's high-profile war against the Republican establishment.

"The definer of the legislation wins this battle," Luntz said. "This could end up being the most important vote of 2021."

There are reasons to believe that politics have changed since Republicans last unified against a sweeping stimulus package, not the least of which is Trump's omnipresence in the party.

At the same time, the scale of the economic devastation and disruption wrought by the coronavirus pan-

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demic dwarfs that of the 2008 financial crisis. At its peak, roughly 9 U.S. million jobs were lost in the Great Recession, compared with 22 million jobs lost to the coronavirus. A year after the pandemic began, nearly 10 million U.S. jobs remain lost, more than 20 million children are out of school, half a million Americans are dead, and roughly 100,000 businesses are feared closed forever.

Polling suggests that an overwhelming majority of voters — including a significant number of Republicans — supports the Democrats' pandemic relief plan. And the business community along with state and local leaders in both parties are crying out for help.

On the eve of the House vote, Oklahoma City Mayor David Holt joined 31 other Republican mayors in a letter encouraging leaders in both parties to approve the package.

"The major part of the bill that relates to cities is sorely needed," Holt told The Associated Press, citing pandemic-related cuts to his city's police and fire departments. "I don't know any blue or red state or blue or red city that doesn't have a revenue shortfall due to COVID-19's fallout."

In another deep-red state, West Virginia Gov. Jim Justice also broke with Washington Republicans and said Congress should "go big or go home" on the new stimulus package.

"We have tried to underspend and undersize what was really needed to get over the top of the mountain," the Republican governor told reporters during a Friday coronavirus briefing. "You got a lot of people across this nation who are really hurting."

Yet no Republican in Washington voted to support the sweeping \$1.9 trillion stimulus package early Saturday.

Moderate Democratic Reps. Jared Golden of Maine and Kurt Schrader of Oregon were the only two lawmakers to cross party lines, joining 210 Republicans to vote against the legislation that ultimately passed 219-212.

"The swamp is back," House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy said shortly before the final vote, decrying what he called extraordinary "non-COVID waste" and a "blue state bailout."

"Most states are not in financial distress," McCarthy said.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce, traditionally a Republican ally, declined to support or oppose the Republican position. Neil Bradley, the chamber's executive vice president and chief policy officer, said there is a need for a rescue package that is "targeted, timely and temporary."

"There's a lot to like in the plan," Bradley told The AP. "But there's also a whole lot of elements that fail the test of targeted and timely and temporary."

The chamber, like congressional Republicans, opposes Democratic efforts to boost the federal minimum wage to \$15 hourly by 2025 from its current \$7.25 floor. The Senate parliamentarian ruled Thursday that the progressive priority could not be included in the Senate version of the bill, although Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer is considering a provision that would penalize large companies that don't pay workers at least \$15 an hour.

Whether the minimum wage provision is included or not, Senate Republicans are expected to oppose the final package.

While there could be political fallout from the GOP's strategy in next year's midterm elections, Republican officials privately concede they are more concerned about the intense intra-party feud pitting Trump and his loyalists against leading establishment Republicans such as Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell and the No. 3 House Republican, Rep. Liz Cheney of Wyoming.

That divide is playing out this weekend at the Conservative Political Action Conference in Orlando, Florida, where Trump himself is expected to attack his party's establishment on Sunday as he returns to the public stage for the first time since leaving the White House.

Arkansas Sen. Tom Cotton, another CPAC speaker and a 2024 Republican presidential prospect, said party unity is paramount moving forward.

"I think that Republicans need to recognize that what brings us together right now is the left-wing agenda of the Biden-Harris administration," Cotton told The AP. "The more that we focus on what they're trying to accomplish in the Congress and through the president's executive actions, the more united we will be, and the more we will move public opinion in our direction."

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Americans for Prosperity, a conservative political powerhouse, opposes the Democratic-backed package as well, but its president, Tim Phillips, says it's unclear whether the GOP strategy will be enough to unite the deeply fractured Republican Party.

"This feels a lot like 2009 — that united the Republican caucus and the activist base in a way that probably nothing else could have," Phillips said. "It served them well in 2009. I wonder if that'll happen this time."

2 skiers defy death in descent of Yosemite's Half Dome

YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK, Calif. (AP) — Two skiers navigated a thin layer of snow with no margin for error down the precipitous shoulder of Half Dome in Yosemite National Park and alternately skied and rappelled back to the valley floor in an unusually daring feat.

Jason Torlano, 45, and Zach Milligan, 40, completed the descent in five hours Sunday by carefully carving their way in crusty snow and using ropes to rappel several sections of bare rock known as the "death slabs" beneath the iconic face of Half Dome, the Fresno Bee reported Thursday.

"If you fall to your left or right, you're definitely dead," said JT Holmes, a professional free skier who is a friend of Torlano's. "If you fall down the middle, you have a small chance of not falling to your death — but it's a maybe."

Snowboarder Jim Zellers is believed to be the first to descend the 800-foot (243-meter) upper section on the shoulder of the dome in 2000. But no one is known to have attempted the entire 4,800-foot (1,463-meter) descent from peak to valley.

Torlano said he had been dreaming about skiing the dome since his family moved to Yosemite when he was 5 years old.

He first climbed Half Dome as a youngster, clinging to the same cables tens of thousands of visitors do every year to ascend the final steep pitch up the rounded side of the polished granite feature. He advanced to become one of an elite group of climbers to scale the sheer granite face using ropes only to catch his fall at least a dozen times. He later became a ranger in the park.

"It's just always been there," Torlano told the San Francisco Chronicle. "I've been attracted to Half Dome for as long as I can remember."

After also serving a stint in the U.S. Army, he settled down with his wife and children in a community near Yosemite. He specializes in using ropes to work in high-altitude and dangerous settings.

He said he tried to ski down Half Dome each of the past three years, but called it off after finding unsuitable snow. This year, an early February storm filled Yosemite with fresh powder, including about 2 to 3 inches (7.6 centimeters) of snow at the peak of Half Dome.

He rented a friend's small plane Feb. 19 to study the snow conditions and possible route before calling Milligan, a rock climbing buddy, to join him.

Milligan said he initially planned to only film Torlano skiing, but decided to make his own descent by carefully side slipping down on skis. He said things quickly turned dangerous when he skied over part of one of the cables and lost control before he used an ice ax to stop his slide and was able to right himself.

"I was just trying to stay in control and stay alive," Milligan said. "You're on that spine and you don't have a lot of room for error."

Pandemic leaves tribes without US recognition at higher risk

By CHRISTINE FERNANDO Associated Press

Rachel Lynne Cushman is used to getting calls from Chinook Nation members worried about losing housing or having their power shut off. Since COVID-19 hit, they come in daily.

Cushman is secretary-treasurer for the group of tribes whose rural, ancestral lands are based in one of Washington state's poorest counties. While they mostly have been spared from the health effects of the coronavirus, the pandemic has taken a significant economic toll.

"We're doing the best we can," Cushman said. "But the reality is we don't have the resources to help."

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Unlike federally recognized tribes, the Chinook Nation doesn't have a political relationship with the United States, which would make it eligible for federal coronavirus relief funding for state, local and tribal governments. Hundreds of tribes lack the designation, which they say leaves them struggling to help their members and less equipped to combat a pandemic that's disproportionately affected Native Americans and other people of color.

The 574 federally recognized tribes shared \$8 billion from a massive coronavirus relief package approved last March. They have used the money to provide meals, personal protective equipment, cleaning supplies, COVID-19 testing, business support, housing relief and more. Another bill that passed in December gives those tribes another year to spend the money and includes funding for vaccines, testing and housing assistance for federally recognized tribes.

The Chinook Nation — consisting of the Lower Chinook, Clatsop, Willapa, Wahkiakum and Kathlamet tribes — received some federal funding through a local nonprofit for small tribes to distribute food to elders and help with electricity bills, tribal council chairman Tony A. (Naschio) Johnson said. But even paired with grants, he said it's a drop in the bucket.

"It's completely unfair for our neighbors to get millions of dollars, and for us to get some trickle-down, if anything," Johnson said. "That's not to say that other tribes shouldn't be getting funding; we just need funding, too."

The path to federal recognition is long, complicated and expensive, requiring deep anthropological and genealogical research and extensive documentation proving that the tribe is distinct from others and has continuously operated since the 1900s. The process can cost millions of dollars.

Five tribes were recognized under the Obama administration and seven tribes under the Trump administration, the latest being the Little Shell Tribe of Chippewa Indians of Montana, according to the Interior Department.

Tribes have received the designation through treaties, acts of Congress or by applying to the Interior Department. With it, tribal land is protected from being sold, their governments are recognized as sovereign, and they share in federal funding for things like public safety, education and health.

The Chinook Nation's quest for federal recognition started with hiring lawyers to fight for land rights in 1899. The tribe was recognized in 2001, but the status was revoked 18 months later after the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs ruled that it failed to prove it had consistently existed as a tribe through history.

The revocation was traumatic, said Johnson, who cut his hair in a traditional sign of mourning. He said he sometimes looks back at a letter he wrote to his children about the bright future ahead and wants to scream.

They're still battling for the status and got a boost from a U.S. judge who ruled about a year ago that a ban on the tribe reapplying for federal recognition was unjustified.

Meanwhile, the Fernandeano Tataviam Band of Mission Indians, a tribe in Los Angeles County without a land base, has raised \$2.6 million to build a case. It's among six tribes based in California, Florida, Michigan and New Mexico whose petitions are being considered by the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Five more tribes in Louisiana, North Carolina and California are seeking federal recognition but haven't completed their paperwork yet.

The Los Angeles-area tribe's 900 members are facing job losses and food insecurity, tribal President Rudy Ortega said.

The problems are not unlike what federally recognized tribes and others are facing in the pandemic, he said, but his tribe has additional roadblocks to financial help. Grant funding has helped, but applying for the money has become more arduous after 10 tribal government employees were laid off, Ortega said.

"We do the best with what we have, but we wish we had more because we can't fulfill everyone's needs on our own," he said.

The tribe is recognized by California, but that doesn't guarantee government funding. While it can open access to state funding, state recognition is mostly seen as a stepping stone to federal recognition.

In the meantime, the tribe's leaders are asking members for help delivering food and donating money

for emergency rental assistance, COVID-19 testing and protective equipment. Other than that, much of the tribe's funding comes from grants and an online store.

Likewise, efforts within the Chinook Nation to combat the pandemic haven't gone far enough, tribal leaders say. While they have taken strict COVID-19 precautions, including canceling big events and encouraging people to socially distance, there was little to prepare the tribe for the economic effects.

Tribal leaders expanded a distribution system for those most in need and invested in a traditional foods program. They distributed two to five fish per household each week last summer, and processed elk and bear that volunteers offered for tribal refrigerators.

But Johnson, the tribal chairman, said what they need most is federal status and funding, which members have been fighting for through letter-writing efforts and social media campaigns.

"With federal recognition, that's how we're going to change the future of our community," he said.

Fernando reported from Chicago. Felicia Fonseca in Flagstaff, Arizona, contributed. Both are members of The Associated Press' Race and Ethnicity team. Follow Fernando on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/christinetfern> and Fonseca at <https://twitter.com/FonsecaAP>.

Archeologists find intact ceremonial chariot near Pompeii

By COLLEEN BARRY Associated Press

MILAN (AP) — Officials at the Pompeii archaeological site in Italy announced Saturday the discovery of an intact ceremonial chariot, one of several important discoveries made in the same area outside the park near Naples following an investigation into an illegal dig.

The chariot, with its iron elements, bronze decorations and mineralized wooden remains, was found in the ruins of a settlement north of Pompeii, beyond the walls of the ancient city, parked in the portico of a stable where the remains of three horses previously were discovered.

The Archaeological Park of Pompeii called the chariot "an exceptional discovery" and said "it represents a unique find - which has no parallel in Italy thus far - in an excellent state of preservation."

The eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 AD destroyed Pompeii. The chariot was spared when the walls and roof of the structure it was in collapsed, and also survived looting by modern-day antiquities thieves, who had dug tunnels through to the site, grazing but not damaging the four-wheeled cart, according to park officials.

The chariot was found on the grounds of what is one of the most significant ancient villas in the area around Vesuvius, with a panoramic view of the Mediterranean Sea. on the outskirts of the ancient Roman city.

Archaeologists last year found in the same area on the outskirts of Pompeii, Civita Giulian, the skeletal remains of what are believed to have been a wealthy man and his male slave, attempting to escape death.

The chariot's first iron element emerged on Jan. 7 from the blanket of volcanic material filling the two-story portico. Archaeologists believe the cart was used for festivities and parades, perhaps also to carry brides to their new homes.

While chariots for daily life or the transport of agricultural products have been previously found at Pompeii, officials said the new find is the first ceremonial chariot unearthed in its entirety.

The villa was discovered after police came across the illegal tunnels in 2017, officials said. Two people who live in the houses atop the site are currently on trial for allegedly digging more than 80 meters of tunnels at the site.

Biden hails House passage of \$1.9T virus bill, now to Senate

By ALAN FRAM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House approved a \$1.9 trillion pandemic relief bill that was championed by President Joe Biden, the first step in providing another dose of aid to a weary nation as the measure now moves to a tense Senate.

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"We have no time to waste," Biden said at the White House after the House passage early Saturday. "We act now — decisively, quickly and boldly — we can finally get ahead of this virus. We can finally get our economy moving again. People in this country have suffered far too much for too long."

The new president's vision for infusing cash across a struggling economy to individuals, businesses, schools, states and cities battered by COVID-19 passed on a near party-line 219-212 vote. That ships the bill to the Senate, where Democrats seem bent on resuscitating their minimum wage push and fights could erupt over state aid and other issues.

Democrats said that mass unemployment and the half-million American lives lost are causes to act despite nearly \$4 trillion in aid already spent fighting the fallout from the disease. GOP lawmakers, they said, were out of step with a public that polling finds largely views the bill favorably.

"I am a happy camper tonight," Rep. Maxine Waters, D-Calif., said Friday. "This is what America needs. Republicans, you ought to be a part of this. But if you're not, we're going without you."

Republicans said the bill was too expensive and said too few education dollars would be spent quickly to immediately reopen schools. They said it was laden with gifts to Democratic constituencies like labor unions and funneled money to Democratic-run states they suggested didn't need it because their budgets had bounced back.

"To my colleagues who say this bill is bold, I say it's bloated," said House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif. "To those who say it's urgent, I say it's unfocused. To those who say it's popular, I say it is entirely partisan."

The overall relief bill would provide \$1,400 payments to individuals, extend emergency unemployment benefits through August and increase tax credits for children and federal subsidies for health insurance.

It also provides billions for schools and colleges, state and local governments, COVID-19 vaccines and testing, renters, food producers and struggling industries like airlines, restaurants, bars and concert venues.

Moderate Democratic Reps. Jared Golden of Maine and Kurt Schrader of Oregon were the only two lawmakers to cross party lines. That sharp partisan divide is making the fight a showdown over whom voters will reward for heaping more federal spending to combat the coronavirus and revive the economy atop the \$4 trillion approved last year.

The battle is also emerging as an early test of Biden's ability to hold together his party's fragile congressional majorities — just 10 votes in the House and an evenly divided 50-50 Senate.

At the same time, Democrats were trying to figure out how to assuage liberals who lost their top priority in a jarring Senate setback Thursday.

That chamber's nonpartisan parliamentarian, Elizabeth MacDonough, said Senate rules require that a federal minimum wage increase would have to be dropped from the COVID-19 bill, leaving the proposal on life support. The measure would gradually lift that minimum to \$15 hourly by 2025, doubling the current \$7.25 floor in effect since 2009.

Hoping to revive the effort in some form, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., is considering adding a provision to the Senate version of the COVID-19 relief bill that would penalize large companies that don't pay workers at least \$15 an hour, said a senior Democratic aide who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal conversations.

That was in line with ideas floated Thursday night by Sens. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., a chief sponsor of the \$15 plan, and Senate Finance Committee Chair Ron Wyden, D-Ore., to boost taxes on corporations that don't hit certain minimum wage targets.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., offered encouragement, too, calling a minimum wage increase "a financial necessity for our families, a great stimulus for our economy and a moral imperative for our country." She said the House would "absolutely" approve a final version of the relief bill because of its widespread benefits, even if it lacked progressives' treasured goal.

While Democratic leaders were eager to signal to rank-and-file progressives and liberal voters that they would not yield on the minimum wage fight, their pathway was unclear because of GOP opposition and questions over whether they had enough Democratic support.

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House Ways and Means Committee Chair Richard Neal, D-Mass., sidestepped a question on taxing companies that don't boost pay, saying of Senate Democrats, "I hesitate to say anything until they decide on a strategy."

Progressives were demanding that the Senate press ahead anyway on the minimum wage increase, even if it meant changing that chamber's rules and eliminating the filibuster, a tactic that requires 60 votes for a bill to move forward.

"We're going to have to reform the filibuster because we have to be able to deliver," said Rep. Pramila Jayapal, D-Wash.

Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-N.Y., another high-profile progressive, also said Senate rules must be changed, telling reporters that when Democrats meet with their constituents, "We can't tell them that this didn't get done because of an unelected parliamentarian."

Traditionalists of both parties — including Biden, who served as a senator for 36 years — have opposed eliminating filibusters because they protect parties' interests when they are in the Senate minority. Biden said weeks ago that he didn't expect the minimum wage increase to survive the Senate's rules. Democrats narrowly hold Senate control.

Pelosi, too, seemed to shy away from dismantling Senate procedures, saying, "We will seek a solution consistent with Senate rules, and we will do so soon."

The House COVID-19 bill includes the minimum wage increase, so the real battle over its fate will occur when the Senate debates its version over the next two weeks.

Democrats are pushing the relief measure through Congress under special rules that will let them avoid a Senate GOP filibuster, meaning that if they are united they won't need any Republican votes.

It also lets the bill move faster, a top priority for Democrats who want the bill on Biden's desk before the most recent emergency jobless benefits end on March 14.

But those same Senate rules prohibit provisions with only an "incidental" impact on the federal budget because they are chiefly driven by other policy purposes. MacDonough decided that the minimum wage provision failed that test.

Republicans oppose the \$15 minimum wage target as an expense that would hurt businesses and cost jobs.

Associated Press writers Mary Clare Jalonick, Kevin Freking and Josh Boak in Washington contributed to this report.

AP sources: Feds pinpoint suspect in officer's riot death

By MICHAEL BALSAMO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Federal investigators probing the death of a U.S. Capitol Police officer killed in the Jan. 6 riot have zeroed in on a suspect seen on video appearing to spray a chemical substance on the officer before he later collapsed and died, two people familiar with the matter told The Associated Press.

The FBI has obtained video that shows the person spraying Brian Sicknick and other law enforcement officers during the Jan. 6 riot, the people said. But they cautioned that federal agents haven't yet identified the suspect by name and the act hasn't been directly tied to Sicknick's death.

The idea that Sicknick died after being sprayed by a chemical irritant has emerged in recent weeks as a new theory in the case.

Investigators initially believed that Sicknick was hit in the head with a fire extinguisher, based on statements collected early in the investigation, according to one of the people and another law enforcement official briefed on the case. But as they've collected more evidence, the theory of the case has evolved and investigators now believe Sicknick may have ingested a chemical substance — possibly bear spray — during the riot that may have contributed to his death, the officials said.

The people could not publicly discuss the details of an ongoing investigation and spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity.

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Sicknick died after defending the Capitol against the mob that stormed the building as Congress was voting to certify Joe Biden's electoral win over Donald Trump. It came after Trump urged supporters on the National Mall to "fight like hell" to overturn his defeat.

The circumstances surrounding Sicknick's death remain unclear and a final cause of death has not yet been determined. Capitol Police have said he died after he was injured "while physically engaging with protesters" and this week, the agency's acting chief said officials consider it a line-of-duty death.

Sicknick collapsed later on, was hospitalized and died. The Justice Department opened a federal murder investigation into his death, but prosecutors are still evaluating what specific charges could be brought in the case, the people said.

In a statement late Friday, Capitol Police said the medical examiner's report on Sicknick's death is not yet complete. "We are awaiting toxicology results and continue to work with other government agencies regarding the death investigation," the statement said.

The New York Times first reported investigators were zeroing in on one suspect in the case; CNN previously reported law enforcement had collected video evidence to identify a handful of potential suspects.

The FBI has already released about 250 photos of people being sought for assaulting federal law enforcement officers during the riot. Some have already been arrested and the Justice Department said about 300 people have been charged with federal offenses related to the riot.

AP: Trooper kicked, dragged Black man who died in custody

By JIM MUSTIAN Associated Press

A Louisiana State Police trooper has been suspended without pay for kicking and dragging a handcuffed Black man whose in-custody death remains unexplained and the subject of a federal civil rights investigation.

Body camera footage shows Master Trooper Kory York dragging Ronald Greene "on his stomach by the leg shackles" following a violent arrest and high-speed pursuit, according to internal State Police records obtained by The Associated Press.

The records are the first public acknowledgement by State Police that Greene was mistreated, and they confirm details provided last year by an attorney for Greene's family who viewed graphic body camera footage of the May 2019 arrest and likened it the police killing of George Floyd. The video shows troopers choking and beating the man, repeatedly jolting him with stun guns and dragging him face-down across the pavement, the attorney told AP.

State Police have repeatedly refused to publicly release the body camera footage. The agency has been tight lipped about Greene's death and initially blamed the man's fatal injuries on a car crash outside Monroe, La.

York, who turned his own body camera off on his way to the scene, is seen on other body-cam footage yanking Greene's shackles and repeatedly using profanity toward Greene before he died in custody.

"You're gonna lay on your f(asterisk)(asterisk)(asterisk)(asterisk)(asterisk)(asterisk) belly like I told you!" the trooper says at one point, according to the police records.

York was suspended without pay for 50 hours following an internal investigation that also led to the termination of another trooper, Chris Hollingsworth, who died in a single-car crash after learning he had been fired over his role in the incident. The AP last year published a 27-second audio clip from Hollingsworth's body camera in which he can be heard telling a colleague, "I beat the ever-living f--- out of" Greene before he "all of a sudden he just went limp."

"It is now undisputed that Trooper York participated in the brutal assault that took Ronald Greene's life," said Mark Maguire, a Philadelphia civil rights attorney who represents Greene's family. "This suspension is a start but it does not come close to the full transparency and accountability the family continues to seek."

Col. Lamar Davis, who took over as State Police superintendent last year, wrote York that his suspension had been decided by his predecessor, Kevin Reeves, adding he "would have imposed more severe discipline" had it been up to him. Reeves made the decision during his last week in office, before stepping down amid a series of scandals, but York was not notified of the reasons for his suspension until Dec. 29.

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York's attorney did not immediately respond to a message seeking comment.

York told investigators he turned his own body-worn camera off because it was beeping loudly and that his "mind was on other things" after arriving at the scene.

"I didn't think about it," he said.

The trooper who initially chased Greene, Dakota DeMoss, was recently arrested in connection with a separate police pursuit last year in which he and two other troopers allegedly used excessive force while handcuffing a motorist. Those charges followed a monthslong internal investigation into use-of-force incidents involving troopers in the northern part of the state.

It's not clear whether DeMoss has been disciplined in Greene's arrest.

Seattle ups its outdoor dining game, Seahawks-style

By TED S. WARREN Associated Press

SEATTLE (AP) — Sick of the same old, same old pandemic dining? Seattle says: Game on.

For a limited time, foodies can score a socially distanced, outdoor meal at the home of the city's NFL team, the Seahawks.

The "Field to Table" dining series kicked off this month at Lumen Field, offering upscale eats, plus a view of the stadium normally reserved for players and coaches.

It's not cheap though: The cost is \$100 per person, plus tax and a service charge. Beverages are also extra.

What's included? Arrival through the same Seahawks-logo steel tunnel used by the team on game day, a seat under an open-sided tent on the field near the north end zone, and a four-course meal served up by a rotating roster of local chefs.

Event producer Sam Minkoff says he believes the dining series is the first of its kind in the U.S.

And people are eating it up.

All the original dates quickly sold out, but Minkoff noted additional reservations will be available soon. He said his company, SE Productions, was able to book two weeks of overtime, extending the event through March.

Field to Table meals are prepared in the stadium kitchen and an adjoining warming tent. There are two seatings per evening, accommodating about 100 people each, as night falls and the stadium is transformed by the glow of purple and green lights.

Among the diners on the event's first night were Tom and Debbie Gallagher, who were celebrating their 45th wedding anniversary.

The Seattle couple — season ticketholders for more than 15 years — snapped selfies and sampled courses that included seared diver scallops and grilled, slow braised beef short ribs. Tom wore a #59 jersey from linebacker Julian Peterson, who played for the Seahawks from 2006 to 2008, and both donned Santa hats and protective masks in team colors.

A portion of the proceeds go to the nonprofit Big Table, which helps struggling restaurant and hospitality workers. Seattle area eateries recently resumed reduced-capacity indoor seating after being restricted to takeout or limited outdoor seating.

Minkoff is a veteran of producing events for thousands of people in cities across the U.S., but Field To Table is his first in-person event since the pandemic started.

He has been able keep his business alive with virtual cooking and crafting classes for customers at home.

But Minkoff said with the Lumen Field dining series, "we find ourselves back to doing what we love: bringing people together through shared experiences."

On the web: <https://www.fieldtotable.us/>

What's in an adjective? 'Democrat Party' label on the rise

By JULIE CARR SMYTH Associated Press

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COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — Two days before the assault on the U.S. Capitol, Pennsylvania state Sen. Doug Mastriano, a Republican, said supporters of then-President Donald Trump's claims of election fraud were basically in a "death match with the Democrat Party."

A day later, right-wing activist Alan Hostetter, a staunch Trump supporter known for railing against California's virus-inspired stay-at-home orders, urged rallygoers in Washington to "put the fear of God in the cowards, the traitors, the RINOs, the communists of the Democrat Party."

The shared grammatical construction — incorrect use of the noun "Democrat" as an adjective — was far from the most shocking thing about the two men's statements. But it identified them as members of the same tribe, conservatives seeking to define the opposition through demeaning language.

Amid bipartisan calls to dial back extreme partisanship following the insurrection, the intentional misuse of "Democrat" as an adjective remains in nearly universal use among Republicans. Propelled by conservative media, it also has caught on with far-right elements that were energized by the Trump presidency.

Academics and partisans disagree on the significance of the word play. Is it a harmless political tactic intended to annoy Republicans' opponents, or a maliciously subtle vilification of one of America's two major political parties that further divides the nation?

Thomas Patterson, a political communication professor at Harvard's Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy, said using "Democrat" as an adjective delivers a "little twist" of the knife with each usage because it irritates Democrats, but sees it as little more than that.

"This is," he says, "just another piece in a big bubbling kettle of animosities that are out there."

Others disagree. Purposely mispronouncing the formal name of the Democratic Party and equating it with political ideas that are not democratic goes beyond mere incivility, said Vanessa Beasley, an associate professor of communications at Vanderbilt University who studies presidential rhetoric. She said creating short-hand descriptions of people or groups is a way to dehumanize them.

In short: Language matters.

"The idea is to strip it down to that noun and make it into this blur, so that you can say that these are bad people — and my party, the people who are using the term, are going to be the upholders of democracy," she said.

To those who see the discussion as an exercise in political correctness, Susan Benesch, executive director of the Dangerous Speech Project, said to look deeper.

"It's just two little letters — i and c — added to the end of a word, right?" she said. "But the small difference in the two terms, linguistically or grammatically, does not protect against a large difference in meaning and impact of the language."

During the "Stop the Steal" rallies that emerged to support Trump's groundless allegations that the 2020 election was stolen from him, the construction was everywhere. Republican National Committee Chairwoman Ronna McDaniel accused "Democrat lawyers and rogue election officials" of "an unprecedented power grab" related to the election. Demonstrators for the president's baseless cause mirrored her language.

After Republican congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene of Georgia was removed from her House committees for espousing sometimes dangerous conspiracy theories, she tweeted: "In this Democrat tyrannical government, Conservative Republicans have no say on committees anyway."

Trump's lawyers used the construction frequently during his second impeachment trial, following the lead of the former president, who employed it routinely while in office. During a campaign rally last October in Wisconsin, he explained his thinking.

"You know I always say Democrat. You know why? Because it sounds worse," Trump said. "Democrat sounds lousy, but you know what? That's actually their name, the Democrat Party. Right? The Democrat Party. So I always say Democrat."

In fact, "Democratic" to describe some version of a U.S. political party has been around since Thomas Jefferson and James Madison formed the Democratic-Republican Party in the 1790s. Modern Democrats are loosely descended from a split of that party.

The precise origins of Republicans' truncated phrasing are difficult to pin down, but the Republican Na-

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tional Committee formalized it in a vote ahead of the 1956 presidential election.

Then-spokesman L. Richard Guylay told The New York Times that "Democrat Party" was "a natural," because it was already in common use among Republicans and better reflected the "diverse viewpoints" within the opposing party — which the GOP suggested weren't always representative of small-d democratic values.

Wisconsin Sen. Joseph McCarthy, who had just led his notorious campaign against alleged communists, Soviet spies and sympathizers, was the most notable user of the phrase "Democrat Party" ahead of the vote. The current RNC did not respond to emails and phone messages seeking comment for this story.

The construction was used sparsely in the following decades, but in recent times has spread to become part of conservatives' everyday speech.

At the height of last summer's racial justice protests, the group representing state attorneys general criticized "inaction by Democrat AGs" to support law enforcement. In explaining its rules for cleaning Georgia's voter roles, the office of Republican Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger said it was following a process started in the 1990s under "a Democrat majority General Assembly and signed into law by a Democrat Governor." Asked recently what he would think of his former health director running for the U.S. Senate in Ohio, Republican Gov. Mike DeWine responded, "I'm going to stay out of Democrat primaries."

Using Democrat as a pejorative is now so common that it's almost jarring to hear a Republican or conservative commentator accurately say "Democratic Party."

Ohio Supreme Court Chief Justice Maureen O'Connor said she wishes both parties would abandon their heightened rhetoric toward each other. She spoke out forcefully in September after the Ohio Republican Party maligned a "Democrat common pleas judge" who had ruled against them. The party later apologized.

Her objection was the politicization of the judiciary, which she has fought against, and not specifically the GOP's misuse of the word "Democrat." But in a later interview, she said the language was a reflection of today's hyperpartisan political environment.

"It's used as almost like a curse word," said O'Connor, a Republican. "It's not being used as a compliment or even for purposes of being a benign identifier. It's used as a condemnation, and that's not right."

For their part, Democrats rarely push back, even when the phrase is used in state legislative chambers or on the floor of Congress. It wasn't always that way.

Then-President George W. Bush departed from his written remarks and used the phrase "Democrat majority" in his 2007 State of the Union address. He was swiftly rebuked and apologized.

"Now look, my diction isn't all that good," a rueful Bush said. "I have been accused of occasionally mangling the English language, so I appreciate you inviting the head of the Republic party."

Bush's self-deprecating joke highlighted a key issue around Republicans' use of "Democrat" as an epithet, says political scientist Michael Cornfield, an associate professor at George Washington University. Democrats don't have a comparable insult for Republicans.

"It's a one-way provocation," he said.

In the 1950s, Democrats toyed with a tit-for-tat approach in which they would refer to Republicans as "Publicans," the widely despised toll collectors of ancient Rome. Republicans scoffed at the effort, which they rightly noted no one would understand. Republicans also could turn it around as a way to burnish their brand: In British usage, a publican is someone who owns a pub.

Meanwhile, "Republic" — without the "a-n" — isn't derogatory. It's known as a "God word" in American politics, just as small-d "democratic" is, meaning a revered cultural concept that's universally understood.

The truncated "Democrat," on the other hand, "rhymes with rat, bureaucrat, kleptocrat, plutocrat," Cornfield said. "'Crats' are bad. So you can see why they do it."

David Pepper, a former Democratic Party chairman in Ohio, says Republicans' phrasing has "clearly been thought about." Even so, he doesn't see trying to erase it as a good use of Democrats' time as the party seeks to reset the national agenda after four years of Trump.

He said that while President Joe Biden has pledged national unity, "the other side is literally trying to make the other party sound like rodents."

"To me," Pepper said, "that's absurd and disturbing at the same time."

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AP news researcher Jennifer Farrar in New York contributed to this report.

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Sunday, Feb. 28, the 59th day of 2021. There are 306 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Feb. 28, 2013, Benedict XVI became the first pope in 600 years to resign, ending an eight-year pontificate. (Benedict was succeeded the following month by Pope Francis.)

On this date:

In 1784, John Wesley, the co-founder of Methodism, chartered the first Methodist Church in the United States in Leesburg, Virginia.

In 1844, a 12-inch gun aboard the USS Princeton exploded as the ship was sailing on the Potomac River, killing Secretary of State Abel P. Upshur, Navy Secretary Thomas W. Gilmer and several others.

In 1849, the California gold rush began in earnest as regular steamship service started bringing gold-seekers to San Francisco.

In 1953, scientists James D. Watson and Francis H.C. Crick announced they had discovered the double-helix structure of DNA.

In 1972, President Richard M. Nixon and Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai issued the Shanghai Communique, which called for normalizing relations between their countries, at the conclusion of Nixon's historic visit to China.

In 1975, 42 people were killed in London's Underground when a train smashed into the end of a tunnel.

In 1983, the long-running TV series "M-A-S-H" ended after 11 seasons on CBS with a special 2½-hour finale that was watched by an estimated 121.6 million people.

In 1988, the 15th Olympic Winter Games held its closing ceremony in Calgary, Alberta.

In 1993, a gun battle erupted at a religious compound near Waco, Texas, when Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms agents tried to arrest Branch Davidian leader David Koresh on weapons charges; four agents and six Davidians were killed as a 51-day standoff began.

In 1996, Britain's Princess Diana agreed to divorce Prince Charles. (Their 15-year marriage officially ended in August 1996; Diana died in a car crash in Paris a year after that.)

In 2005, in Santa Maria, California, the prosecution and defense gave opening statements in the sexual molestation trial of Michael Jackson, who was later acquitted.

In 2018, Walmart announced that it would no longer sell firearms and ammunition to people younger than 21 and would remove items resembling assault-style rifles from its website. Dick's Sporting Goods said it would stop selling assault-style rifles and ban the sale of all guns to anyone under 21.

Ten years ago: The United States and European allies intensified efforts to isolate Libya's Moammar Gadhafi, redoubling demands for him to step down, questioning his mental state and warning that those who stayed loyal to him risked losing their wealth and facing prosecution for human rights abuses. Actor Jane Russell died in Santa Maria, California, at age 89.

Five years ago: One of Pope Francis' top advisers, Australian Cardinal George Pell, testifying before an investigative commission in Sydney via videolink from Rome, acknowledged the Catholic Church had made "enormous mistakes" in allowing thousands of children to be raped and molested by priests over centuries. "Spotlight" won the Academy Award for best picture of 2015; Brie Larson was recognized as best actress for "Room" while Leonardo DiCaprio was named best actor for "The Revenant." Oscar-winning actor George Kennedy, 91, died in Middleton, Idaho.

One year ago: The number of countries touched by the coronavirus climbed to nearly 60; Nigerian authorities reported the first case in sub-Saharan Africa, and Mexico said it had two confirmed cases. The State Department told Americans to avoid nonessential travel to Italy, which had seen nearly 900 virus

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cases. At a rally in South Carolina, President Donald Trump asserted that Democratic complaints about his handling of the virus threat were "their new hoax." Trump again picked Republican Rep. John Ratcliffe of Texas to be the nation's top intelligence official; he'd abandoned an earlier attempt to place Ratcliffe in the post. (Ratcliffe would be confirmed in May by a sharply divided Senate.) The Dow Jones Industrial Average finished the week 12.4% lower in the market's worst weekly performance since the 2008 financial crisis. Joe Coulombe, the founder of the Trader Joe's food markets, died at 89; he'd opened his first Trader Joe's in Pasadena, California, in 1967.

Today's Birthdays: Architect Frank Gehry is 92. Actor Gavin MacLeod is 90. Singer Sam the Sham is 84. Actor-director-dancer Tommy Tune is 82. Hall of Fame auto racer Mario Andretti is 81. Actor Frank Bonner is 79. Actor Kelly Bishop is 77. Actor Stephanie Beacham is 74. Writer-director Mike Figgis is 73. Actor Mercedes Ruehl is 73. Actor Bernadette Peters is 73. Former Energy Secretary Steven Chu is 73. Actor Ilene Graff is 72. Nobel Prize-winning economist Paul Krugman is 68. Comedian Gilbert Gottfried is 66. Basketball Hall of Famer Adrian Dantley is 66. Actor John Turturro is 64. Rock singer Cindy Wilson is 64. Actor Rae Dawn Chong is 60. Actor Maxine Bahns is 52. Actor Robert Sean Leonard is 52. Rock singer Pat Monahan is 52. Author Daniel Handler (aka "Lemony Snicket") is 51. Actor Tasha Smith is 50. Actor Rory Cochrane is 49. Actor Ali Larter is 45. Country singer Jason Aldean is 44. Actor Geoffrey Arend is 43. Actor Melanie Chandra (TV: "Code Black") is 37. Actor Michelle Horn is 34. MLB relief pitcher Aroldis Chapman is 33. Actor True O'Brien is 27. Actor Madisen Beaty is 26. Actor Quinn Shephard is 26. Actor Bobb'e J. Thompson is 25.