

Groton Daily Independent

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**Today on
GDILIVE.COM**



Dance Showcase
Sugar Babes
Sweet Sensations
Spice Girlz

Monday, Mar. 1, 2021 ~ 6:45 p.m.



OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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



2021 Groton Area Elementary Kindergarten Roundup (Screening) for children turning 5 on or before September 1, 2021

Friday, March 12, 2021

If your child is currently attending Junior Kindergarten at Groton Area Elementary school, please DISREGARD this notice. Your teacher will be sending information if necessary.

Packets are being sent home this week with information regarding KG Roundup. These would apply to families who have children eligible for KG and JK this coming 2021-2022 school year who are not currently enrolled in our school. Please contact the school if you do not receive a packet by the end of this week.



Bates Township Annual Meeting Notice

Bates Township
BATES TOWNSHIP ANNUAL MEETING
NOTICE

Bates Township will hold its annual meeting and election on Tuesday, March 2nd, 2021 at the home of the Clerk, 14523 409th Ave, Conde.

Election of officers and business meeting will be held at 6:30 p.m.

We will be receiving bids for road maintenance and gravel. Please mail bids to

Betty Geist, Bates Township Clerk, 14523 409th Ave., Conde, SD 57434 prior to meeting date.

Betty Geist, Township Clerk (0217.0224)

Groton Township Notice of Annual Meeting

Groton Township Notice of Annual Meeting
NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING AND ELECTION IN GROTON TOWNSHIP Notice is hereby given that the annual Groton Township Annual and Election of Officers will be held Tuesday, March 2, 2021, at the Groton Community Center. Meeting at 1 p.m. followed by election of officers. Sealed bids will be accepted for gravel, loaded and delivered, to designated places in Groton Township. The township board reserves the right to inspect the gravel before awarding the bid. Bids must be addressed to Jeff Howard, Township Clerk, 40829 131st Street, Groton, SD 57445, sealed and plainly marked "Bid for Gravel." Separate bids will be accepted for mowing weeds along road ditches, removal of snow and blading. Bidders are to furnish township with name and address of insurance agent. Bids will be opened by the Board of Supervisors, Tuesday, March 2, 2021, at 1 p.m. The board reserves the right to accept or reject any or all bids. Jeff Howard, Township Clerk

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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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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

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The 2020 NFL season saw a ton of changes to how the game was played because of the global pandemic. With most stadiums having little to no fans in the stands, the NFL took a financial hit, and teams around the league are feeling the effects this offseason. The salary cap (how much money a team can spend on players) varies from year to year and is directly tied to league revenue. Instead of going up like it does every offseason, the cap for 2021 went down. Now, NFL teams are left scrambling, trying to find any way to get under the cap. As of right now, the cap hasn't been officially set – however, most believe it will be close to \$185 million (a decrease of \$13MM).

Factoring in the projected cap, the team's dead money, and any carryover from 2020, the Minnesota Vikings are currently \$7MM over the cap. Not only do the Vikings have to cut \$7 million from the roster, but they'll also need additional space so they can sign their rookie class and veteran free agents to fill out the roster. Let's take a look at the roster to determine which players are likely to be cut or asked to restructure their contract.

Kirk Cousins is taking up the most cap room with \$31 million (16.36%), but if the Vikings cut him they'll have to pay Cousins the remaining guaranteed money in his contract (\$41MM). So it will cost an additional \$10MM to cut Cousins – it's safe to assume he'll be back next season (unless the Vikings trade him, but we won't get into that now).

Danielle Hunter comes in second with \$17.75 million. The Vikings would save \$5.75 million if they cut Hunter, but after seeing how atrocious the pass rush was without him, it's safe to assume he will also be back next season.

Riley Reiff's \$17.45MM cap hit is third on the roster. With only \$3.7MM in guaranteed money left on his contract, the Vikings could save nearly \$14 million if they choose to cut Reiff. He was solid last season and was easily the second-best lineman on the team, so cutting him would save money but open a giant hole at left tackle that will need to be filled. Maybe Ezra Cleveland will be ready to kick out to tackle, or maybe the Vikings will be able to draft an offensive tackle with their first-round pick, but either way, the team needs to have a plan in place if they want to replace Reiff.

Anthony Barr is another player who could be cut, although it's hard to see Zimmer cutting the first player he drafted after becoming the head coach. At the end of the day, however, the NFL is a business, and the \$7MM in cap relief could be incredibly attractive.

Some other players the team could cut to save cap space:

- Harrison Smith - \$10.25MM savings
- Kyle Rudolph - \$5.1MM savings
- Shamar Stephen - \$3.75MM savings
- Britton Colquitt - \$1.78MM savings
- Dan Bailey - \$1.7MM savings

This will be a remarkably interesting offseason, as teams struggle to get under the cap while also adding pieces in their quest for the Lombardi trophy. Don't miss next week's article, where I'll break down some free agents that could help the Vikings' offense in 2021. Skol!



By Jordan Wright

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The No. 8 Northern Men Make History from the Sanford Pentagon

Sioux Falls, S.D. – The No. 8 Northern State University men’s basketball team became the first NSIC program in tournament history to win four straight titles with a dominant win over MSU Moorhead. The Wolves avenged their loss over the Dragons to close out the regular season, automatically qualifying for the NCAA Central Region Tournament.

Parker Fox, Andrew Kallman, and Tommy Chatman were named to the All-Tournament team, while Mason Stark was named the Tournament MVP. Northern is now 20-5 from the Sanford Pentagon since the 2013 season. Not only is Northern State the only NSIC team to win four straight conference tournament championships, they now hold the crown for most tournament championships overall winning their sixth. In addition, they improve their conference tournament win streak to 15 games.

THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 78, MSUM 57

Records: NSU 18-1, MSUM 10-4

Attendance: 88

HOW IT HAPPENED

- The Wolves came out with all cylinders firing, out-scoring the Dragons 45-18 in the first half, shooting 60.0% from the floor and 54.6% from the 3-point line
- Northern held Moorhead to 8-of-30 from the floor in the first and ultimately 1-of-15 from beyond the arc in the game
- The Dragons tallied 39 points to the Wolves 33 in the second
- NSU tallied 38 rebounds, 12 assists, nine made 3-pointers, eight blocks, and six steals
- They scored 40 points in the paint, 14 points off turnovers, and nine fast break and bench points
- Three Wolves scored in double figures, led by MVP Mason Stark with 24, hitting 9-of-14 from the field
- Northern held their largest lead of the game, 29 points, just a minute into the second half
- MSU Moorhead rallied back with under ten to play, however the Wolves shut that down quickly, extending their lead once again with under four minutes to play
- The Wolves shot 49.2% from the floor, 45.0% from the 3-point line, and 73.3% from the foul line in the win
- Defensively, they held the Dragon starting five, who all average in double figures, to just 29 points

NORTHERN STATE STATISTICAL STANDOUTS

- Mason Stark: 24 points, 64.3 FG%, 4 rebounds, 3 assists
- Parker Fox: 20 points, 63.6 FG%, 7 rebounds, 5 blocks, 2 steals
- Tommy Chatman: 10 points, 4 assists

UP NEXT

Northern State will advance to the NCAA Central Region Tournament hosted in Aberdeen. Opponents and game information will be announced in the coming days with the NCAA Selection Show scheduled for March 7 at 9:30 p.m. (CT) on ncaa.com. Live video, stat, and audio links are available on the men’s basketball schedule on nsuwolves.com.

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Friendly Fellows and Daisies 4-H Club

February 2021

The Friendly Fellows and Daisies 4-H Club met on February 7, 2021, at the Claremont Methodist Church. American Pledge was led by Blake Pauli. The 4-H Pledge was led by Colin Frey. Roll call topic was favorite candy. There were few communications. The treasurer's report was approved by Hailey Pauli and 2nd by Ashlynn Warrington. There were no additions or improvements. The Secretaries report was approved by Colin Frey and 2nd by Kennedy Anderson. There was no old business. Old business was closed by Ashlynn Warrington and 2nd by Logan Warrington. For new business the club read the newshound, talked about the ski trip, and fundraisers. New business was closed by Hailey Pauli and 2nd by Ashlynn Warrington. The meeting was adjourned by Braden Boe and 2nd by Ashlynn Warrington. Lunch was served by Braden Boe and family.

Submitted by Logan Warrington, Club Reporter



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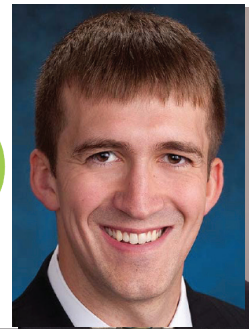
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Influenza Rare This Season

Do you know anyone who had influenza this past year? Chances are you do not. Sure, plenty of people had the "stomach flu" with vomiting and diarrhea, otherwise known as gastroenteritis. Some people had colds and others had COVID-19. But cases of influenza this season have been exceptionally low.



By Andrew Ellsworth, MD ~ Prairie Doc® Perspectives

Starting a year ago, when someone came to my clinic with symptoms of influenza, including fevers, chills, muscle aches, or respiratory symptoms, we tested for both COVID-19 and for influenza. At first, every COVID-19 test was negative while many influenza tests were positive. However, with social distancing, mask wearing, washing hands, and people staying home when they were sick, influenza cases in South Dakota plummeted faster than I have ever seen.

The charts put out by the South Dakota Department of Health speak for themselves. Every week they send out the latest influenza statistics and compare them to past years. The number of influenza cases forms something like a bell curve or mountain which peaks in South Dakota typically during the third week of February and then tapers down again. This year that line of cases for 2020-2021 is essentially flat, and this week we saw a slight increase in cases which will hopefully only form a small bump on the chart as opposed to a mountain.

Usually there are well over 2,000 confirmed cases of influenza in South Dakota each year, with almost 15,000 confirmed in last year's season. In a normal year, many more people have influenza but go unrecorded because they are not tested. For this current influenza season, many people are being tested for COVID-19 and influenza at the same time. Despite thousands of tests, there have been only 55 confirmed cases of influenza in the state through the third week of February.

Over the last decade, influenza claimed an average of 32 lives each year in South Dakota. The worst season was 2017-2018 when 73 people died, and the fewest deaths occurred in 2015-2016 when 9 people died. We know that this past year, COVID-19 claimed the lives of more than 1,850 people in South Dakota. COVID-19 still managed to thrive even while influenza withered. The biggest reason is because COVID-19 is more contagious than influenza. Vaccinations and past immunity to influenza also help reduce its occurrence.

We cannot stress how important and helpful everyone's efforts over this last year have been toward keeping the numbers of COVID-19 down as much as we could to "flatten the curve" and avoid a catastrophe with everyone getting sick at once. We are not out of the woods yet, but we are getting closer. As far as influenza goes, it would appear that washing our hands, staying home when sick, social distancing, and wearing masks have drastically helped to minimize the spread.

Andrew Ellsworth, M.D. is part of The Prairie Doc® team of physicians and currently practices family medicine in Brookings, South Dakota. For free and easy access to the entire Prairie Doc® library, visit www.prairiedoc.org and follow Prairie Doc® on Facebook featuring On Call with the Prairie Doc® a medical Q&A show streaming on Facebook and broadcast on SDPB most Thursdays at 7 p.m. central.

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Glimpses From Greenfield 2021-Week 7

As I glanced at my article from last week, I noticed a typo that probably did not get corrected in most newspapers. For the record, during Week 6 of the session, I was in quarantine due to being notified that I was a "close" contact with a legislator who had tested positive for COVID. In my unedited draft that I submitted for publication, it said I had been a "closet" contact. Hopefully everybody figured out what I meant. If so, you probably got a chuckle at the typo. If not, you were probably scratching your head wondering what in the heck I meant!

Week 7 of Session was very eventful for me. As crossover week was upon us, I had two Senate bills that remained on the Senate side that I was working on passing over to the House. I also took upon myself the responsibility of trying to work on an amendment for another bill that was causing great consternation for several people. I have mentioned SB 187 and SB 128 in previous articles. The other one was SB 183. Although I was not the prime sponsor on SB 183, I understood what the aim of the proponents' was, while also being sensitive to the concerns and frustrations of the opponents. In summary, the proponents had been made aware that in some surrogacy contracts previously drafted in SD, the contracts contains provisions that if the intended parents determined for some reason they did not want the surrogate to carry the child to term, the intended parents could demand their surrogate mother had to undergo an abortion. Certainly, this is problematic, as nobody should be contractually bound to subject him or herself to a medical procedure against his/her will. Last year, there was a bill that ultimately sought to ban surrogacy in SD. Because of that, the opponents of this year's legislation were extremely leery of the aim of the sponsors of this year's bill. In the end, I offered clarifying language to ensure that no pregnant woman could be compelled by anybody to have an abortion, while also making sure that any lawyer who is putting such terms in a contract would be subject to investigation and penalty. A highly contentious, hotly contested issue as it was introduced, I managed to find the sweet spot through a series of discussions, and I offered an amendment that resulted in a 35-0 vote. As it heads to the House, I remain in conversations with parties on both sides to figure out whether further clarifying language is necessary, but we are very close to having a happy resolution. More importantly, there is an increasing level of empathy between people on either side of the issue, and that, my friends, is a good thing!

SB 187 was originally introduced as a vehicle bill to accommodate adult-use marijuana legislation. This was essentially a companion bill to HB 1225. Both bills had only Representative Derby and me as prime sponsors. HB 1225 included 72 sections that covered 22 pages. That bill was killed on the House side last week. However, through hard work on the part of many, SB 187 was amended with major components of 1225 but was pared back to 27 sections that spanned 8 pages. Section 1 of the amended bill establishes that even though a number of legislators do not necessarily agree with the vote on Amendment A that sought to legalize recreational marijuana because it is still federally prohibited and because some have a fundamental disagreement with the broader issue, we feel it is our responsibility to try to establish a process that recognizes the will of the voters, while still respecting the fact that the issue continues to play out in the courts. The next 25 sections establish the skeletal framework of what an adult-use marijuana program would look like in SD. We recognized that we already have a process in place for selling other products intended for those over 21 years of age. With that in mind, we focused in on how our malt beverage statutes are structured and largely did a copy-and-paste of those sections of code. 187 sets up a process that would require an applicant to submit a request to the SD Dept of Revenue and go through a background check and await word on whether that person or entity is deemed eligible for licensure. However, that is only the beginning of the process. Every applicant would also have to go through the same process with the local jurisdiction, whether city or county, as current malt-beverage license holders go through. Any local jurisdiction would ultimately be charged with publishing notice of and then holding a public hearing, at which time a decision would be made as to whether or not a permit would be granted

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to conduct business. The ultimate decision rests with the locals. The final section of the bill puts three triggers in place that would make the bill, if passed, operative. First, if Constitutional Amendment A is determined by the SD Supreme Court to be constitutional; or, second, if the federal government legalizes or decriminalizes marijuana; or, third, if the voters subsequently pass another measure that is deemed to be constitutional or is unchallenged, this would be in full force and effect. The Senate recognized this conversation needs to continue, as we try to navigate what to do in order that we do not have an unregulated industry in the state, and the bill passed, 19-15. A number of people who voted against the bill expressed that they feel we need to do something, and they said they are open to voting for the measure if it is amended and comes back to the Senate for concurrence or if it gets vetoed. And that remains the crux of the matter. Anything we do has to meet with the support of both bodies of the legislature and with the Governor. I have tried to work with other people to figure out what the best way is to proceed, being wholly respectful of the will of the electorate, the pending litigation, the uncertainty as to whether the federal government will lift the federal ban on marijuana, and the concerns of the Governor and a number of legislators. Personally, I did not vote for either marijuana measure that was on the ballot last November, but I heard the voice of the people, and I'm putting forth my best effort at anticipating the future and trying to figure out the best way to put a program in place.

Finally, SB 128 speaks to the issue of exclusive media contracts as they pertain to covering public high school activities. I have discussed this issue in two previous articles, so let me just point out that Dr. Dan Swartos of the SD High School Activities Association appeared as an opponent to the bill as it was introduced, but he has been very receptive to hearing the concerns of the proponents of the bill. We have worked together to satisfy concerns on both sides, and after I amended the bill twice in committee, the bill sailed out of committee and off the Senate floor with unanimous votes. I truly appreciate Dr. Swartos' openness to hearing us and working with us. I will also point out that the state level competitions remain subject to exclusive contracts between the SDHSAA and the entity (in recent years, SD Public Broadcasting) with whom they enter into exclusive contracts. Any secondary media broadcasts of state events remain subject to the conditions of SDPB and the SDHSAA. Every other activity that involves media access to covering public school events, though, if this bill passes, will not be restricted to any of our media outlets.

With two weeks to go, we have reached crunch time for all remaining policy and fiscal debates. There will be long days ahead. Next week, I will try to provide shorter snapshots of a lot more bills and any updates on where we stand with respect to funding decisions. Until then, be well and be blessed.

Brock

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#371 in a series

Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

New cases continue to decrease. After a week below 80,000 daily new cases every day, we managed to get above that point one day this week. Considering that early this month we hadn't been below even 100,000 cases this year, this is progress. We are now at 28,620,300 cases in the US, 0.2% more than yesterday. There were just 49,700 new case reports today—first time below 50,000 since October 19, 132 days ago. We definitely are seeing weekend effect today across the board. We'll take tomorrow to rebound, and then on Tuesday, we'll see where we are. Nonetheless, I like where we are a whole lot better than I did a couple of months ago or even on February 1.

Hospitalizations have been declining for over seven weeks and are now approaching one-third our peak from January 7. We have 48,871 people hospitalized with this virus today.

We're holding at 12 states and territories in the red zone, down to 36 in orange (from 37 last week), and seven in yellow (up from six): small shifts. One-week increase in total cases was 465,100 last week and is 472,500 this week; it is worrying that this number increased this week. Two-week increase was 1,106,800 last week and is down to 937,600 this week. I have us at a one-week daily average new-case number of 67,500.09; this is an increase of just under two percent this week. I am not thrilled with the uptick this week; I'm hoping this turns around.

I track 54 states and US territories, including the District of Columbia; and the highest two-week rate of increase in any of them is 11.12%. As with last week, this is in Vermont where case numbers are still very low. Highest per capita rates of increase are in South Carolina, New York, New Jersey, Rhode Island, and Delaware; all but one of these were among the leaders a week ago.

There were 996 deaths reported today, a 0.2% increase to 512,829. We are certain to hit the half-million mark by Tuesday. Average daily deaths a small increase in raw numbers even though it represented the same percentage increase. We're at 2025.6 this week. This is the fifteenth consecutive week since spring we've reported over 10,000 deaths, increased from last week, but still below 15,000, a milestone. States with the most per capita deaths over the past week are Virginia, Arizona, Alabama, Oklahoma, Texas, and Delaware.

I talked a couple of days ago about remembering the time I wrote that the risk level for this virus was "low." Found that: It was one year ago today, and here's the quote: "Current CDC word is that the general American public is unlikely to be exposed to the disease at this time, so the general risk level for today is considered officially to be 'low.' Health care workers are considered to be at higher risk. That said, experts also believe a pandemic is likely, and if that happens, this risk assessment will change, perhaps radically. Remains to be seen." I guess we can say the risk assessment did indeed change, didn't it? Some folks knew what we were getting into: Bill Gates wrote an op-ed in the New England Journal of Medicine calling this a "once-in-a-century pandemic." Smart guy, but then we knew that.

Also one year ago, we confirmed our 64th case with one more pending confirmation—you think testing is slow now, you should think back a year. We confirmed a second known case of community transmission, this one in Santa Clara County in California's Bay Area. And this was the day the first known death from Covid-19 occurred in the US. As we discussed the other night, this was not our actual first death—there had been one on February 6 and another on February 17 in California which were discovered to be Covid-19 deaths only months later—but it was the first one we knew of at the time. The death occurred in King County, Washington, which was about to become the epicenter of our first frightening outbreak with some 50 suspected, but mostly not confirmed, cases on this day. Florida was "monitoring" 150 potential cases. It was like that here and there across the country: monitoring, but not able to test or waiting for results. For the record, in the ensuing year (366 days because 2020 was a leap year), 511,833 people have died in the US; that comes to a horrifying average of 1398.5 deaths per day. That's around one every 25 minutes. For a year.

We were about to get an idea what we might be up against. Italy had 821 cases, and we now know where that went. Cancellations had started—the Geneva Motor Show, the Association of Southeast Nations

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(ASEAN) meeting, ITB Berlin, the Mobile World Conference, Facebook's F8, the Google News Initiative Global Summit. Soccer games in Europe convened without fans. Tokyo's Disneyland and DisneySea closed for two weeks. This was on a Friday.

February 29 was a Saturday last year. I think I rather naively believed my work here was done, so I went off to a big fundraiser on Saturday and took the weekend off from Facebook. I do remember running into an old friend who asked me whether this whole thing was just a hoax as she'd been reading, and I also remember soberly assuring her that no, this was no hoax. I didn't know at all what was coming, but it was already evident this could be one large challenge. Not sure it would have changed anything for me that last weekend of freedom had I known; even now with benefit of hindsight, I'm relatively certain none of us at that party that night was in any immediate danger because we gathered. By the following weekend, however, we knew—or should have known—this was a different breed of cat. More on that later.

So how's the future shaping up? There are unknowns—mostly behavioral (although I can guess how folks are going to behave based on what I've see so far, and the news isn't great on that front)—but based on a series of interviews done by the New York Times with 21 leading experts, here's what we might reasonably expect. If all goes well, we could be living lives resembling what we remember as normal by summer; but that's weeks off, and there is some uncertainty between now and then. The emergence of variants is concerning, and as long as we have so much transmission, that introduces an element of chance which is unsettling. Meanwhile, the B.1.1.7 (UK) variant is expected to become the dominant variant circulating in the US within a month. Much depends on what happens between now and then.

"If all goes well" encompasses things like whether we're able to bring transmissions under control and how fast, how well vaccines interrupt transmission, whether new variants with dangerous characteristics emerge, and how fast we get people vaccinated—in the US and in the rest of the world (because no one is really safe until all of us are safe—see earlier commentary on unchecked transmission and mutation for details). There is no thought we're going to go back to our worst days, so the worst may be behind us; but there are signs we're relaxing rather too quickly, and that has folks worried. Many scientists are talking about a fourth wave: Adam Kucharski, epidemiologist at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, says these new variants mean "we're essentially facing a pandemic within a pandemic."

Our recent dramatic declines appear to be leveling off at numbers as high as we had last fall, and letting up now might put us into that next surge. Marc Lipsitch, epidemiologist at the Harvard TH Chan School of Public Health, said, "Very, very high case numbers are not a good thing, even if the trend is downward. Taking the first hint of a downward trend as a reason to reopen is how you get even higher numbers." A real concern at this point is that young people drive transmission and they're not the ones being vaccinated at the moment. Soon, we hope, but not yet.

The experts seem to concur that the primary reason for the declines in new cases seen pretty much around the world are due to behavioral change, not to vaccination or developing herd immunity—too soon for that. This is a good thing, but it's also highly reversible, especially in light of the fact that, while the overall number of new cases is declining, the number of new cases with B.1.1.7 is soaring. That more contagious and possibly more deadly variant is the wild card here because the behavioral change which has mitigated upward trends so far will soon be insufficient to mitigate upward trends in B.1.1.7. This means continuing to do what we've been doing will no longer be enough, just at a time everyone's breathing a big sigh of relief and planning a trip cross-country and a big old family gathering. There's the big concern.

The majority of the scientists interviewed agreed there will be a fourth wave. They also agreed it could be blunted if we play our cards right. Some think the expanding vaccination program will stay ahead of the virus. A few, including Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases and White House adviser on Covid-19, think, "We're at that crossroads, where it could go well or it could go badly."

Work done at Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center modeled vaccinations' effect on the development of that fourth wave and found, right before all these scary new variants emerged, that we need to vaccinate about one million people per day in the US to limit that wave. That projection's been upended by the high transmissibility of the variants and potential for lowered effectiveness of antibodies against

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one or more of them. Even if vaccines hold against them, we do have evidence of reinfections with the B.1.351 (South Africa) and B.1.1.28.1 (Brazil) variants in recovered individuals. If we can't count on robust protection in those recovered individuals, that's going to change the calculation of how many we need to vaccinate and how fast we need to do it. And if we all lose our minds and start doing all the things we've been longing to do—and without masks or distancing—then we could be in for a rough road ahead. One virologist at Scripps Research Institute, Kristian Anderson, said he believes cases will continue to decline and then plateau in late March before climbing again. He says, "We're going to see hospitalizations go up" in April; "It's just a question of how much."

If we can hold things together and mute that surge, everyone pretty much agrees summer will be different with the surge ebbing in early summer. Then if we can really get everyone vaccinated we can persuade by the end of summer, we might actually be in a pretty good place—warm weather, more gathering outdoors, lots of vaccinated people. All of this buys us time to continue to persuade and vaccinate. We might still be wearing masks and distancing in public places because we still will not have persuaded all the adults, and children will remain largely unvaccinated. The first pediatric trials likely won't conclude until late summer or early fall, and some will not get there until year's end; so widespread vaccination of children is still a ways off. The outlines of a future are there, and it's within hollering distance.

We think vaccines are probably going to end up being shown to substantially reduce transmission, but likely not prevent it entirely. That means we're really going to need to get vaccination numbers up as high as possible; the percentage needed for herd immunity goes up if you don't get sterilizing immunity from your vaccines. We'll probably never be rid of this virus: That ship sailed months and months ago. Even with herd immunity, that doesn't mean no one ever gets sick; it just means we don't get a wave of infections sweeping across the population when there is an outbreak. But that looks manageable. With a lot of vaccine refusal, it's going to remain more of a problem going forward. That too, it turns out, depends on behavior.

Women pilots aren't very common; Black women professional pilots are downright rare: Out of over 150,000 professional pilots in the US, there are only 150 Black women at this time. That means there aren't really many role models for young Black women who aspire to fly airplanes. Nonetheless, Cailey Stewart has set a career in the air as her goal ever since the fifth grade, despite difficult financial circumstances. She took flight lessons and soloed for the first time in 2019 when she was just 16, which is the minimum age to do so. Her mom has taken out loans for her flight lessons, but was recently furloughed due to the pandemic; and now the family is not sure how to make Cailey's dream come true.

Now a senior in high school, she has been accepted into several colleges with aviation programs; but the costs include, in addition to the usual tuition and room and board, the cost of flight lessons; and that's been tough to figure out. She does have the benefit of mentoring from an organization called Sisters of the Sky, a group of Black women pilots working in airline transport, commercial, military, and certified flight instruction, but the money's been difficult. That is until Boeing heard her story. The company has decided to contribute \$50,000 toward the cost of her education, and now things look a whole lot easier.

Not every kid with a dream gets lucky this way; but it feels better when that kid is one against whom the deck's been stacked for a long, long time. Hoping this becomes true for more and more people who've suffered disadvantages for decades.

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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	2730	2602	5792	39	Substantial	18.3%
Bennett	382	370	1175	9	Minimal	2.6%
Bon Homme	1504	1477	2047	25	Minimal	0.0%
Brookings	3588	3493	11798	37	Substantial	2.6%
Brown	5129	4978	12579	88	Moderate	3.8%
Brule	691	676	1861	9	Moderate	9.1%
Buffalo	420	406	895	13	Minimal	0.0%
Butte	978	942	3201	20	Moderate	7.7%
Campbell	129	125	257	4	Minimal	0.0%
Charles Mix	1294	1213	3881	21	Substantial	9.4%
Clark	371	357	939	5	Moderate	12.5%
Clay	1793	1757	5170	15	Moderate	2.1%
Codington	3986	3811	9568	77	Substantial	13.5%
Corson	468	453	995	12	Minimal	21.1%
Custer	749	728	2682	12	Moderate	9.5%
Davison	2952	2867	6452	61	Moderate	9.8%
Day	663	616	1750	28	Substantial	17.6%
Deuel	473	459	1122	8	Moderate	10.3%
Dewey	1412	1373	3795	26	Moderate	13.5%
Douglas	434	412	899	9	Moderate	16.7%
Edmunds	482	459	1031	12	Moderate	8.3%
Fall River	527	501	2580	15	Moderate	6.0%
Faulk	360	340	689	13	Moderate	4.5%
Grant	974	904	2207	38	Substantial	9.5%
Gregory	539	496	1253	29	Moderate	12.5%
Haakon	251	236	530	10	Minimal	0.0%
Hamlin	712	648	1758	37	Substantial	23.3%
Hand	338	321	799	6	Minimal	4.8%
Hanson	363	347	703	4	Moderate	22.2%
Harding	91	90	181	1	None	0.0%
Hughes	2299	2222	6507	36	Substantial	1.9%
Hutchinson	788	748	2344	24	Moderate	19.6%

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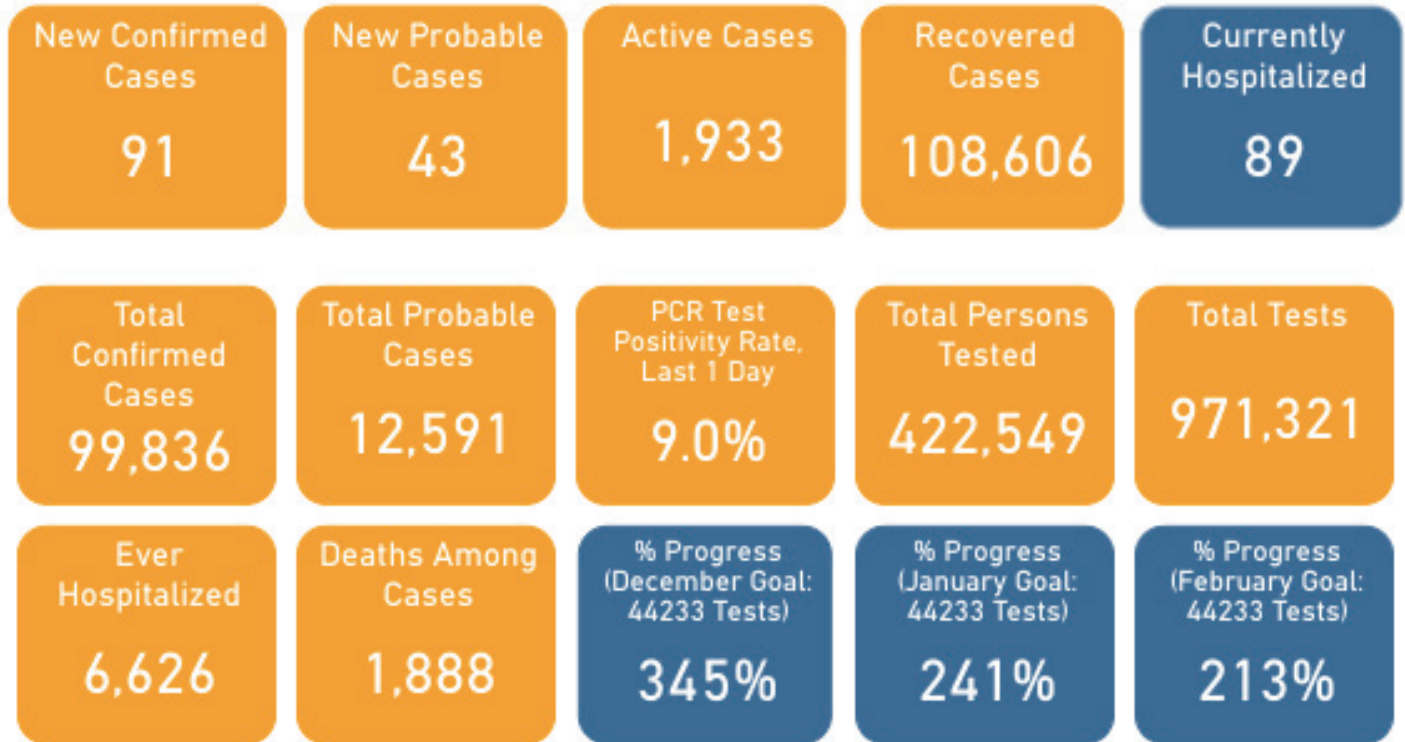
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Hyde	138	135	402	1	Minimal	0.0%
Jackson	279	262	907	14	Minimal	9.1%
Jerauld	272	249	547	16	None	0.0%
Jones	85	83	219	0	Minimal	0.0%
Kingsbury	639	609	1650	14	Substantial	11.9%
Lake	1191	1144	3258	17	Moderate	4.2%
Lawrence	2823	2746	8451	45	Moderate	5.2%
Lincoln	7751	7529	20010	77	Substantial	9.4%
Lyman	598	585	1861	10	Minimal	0.0%
Marshall	318	295	1174	5	Moderate	2.8%
McCook	740	709	1605	24	Moderate	12.5%
McPherson	239	231	547	4	None	0.0%
Meade	2590	2506	7593	31	Substantial	12.0%
Mellette	248	242	723	2	Minimal	16.7%
Miner	271	252	568	9	Minimal	16.7%
Minnehaha	28011	27240	77241	332	Substantial	6.9%
Moody	619	591	1738	16	Moderate	9.5%
Oglala Lakota	2058	1990	6604	49	Moderate	6.3%
Pennington	12903	12488	38871	189	Substantial	9.6%
Perkins	347	329	801	14	Minimal	11.8%
Potter	371	358	823	4	Moderate	0.0%
Roberts	1189	1110	4093	36	Substantial	12.7%
Sanborn	329	321	679	3	Minimal	0.0%
Spink	798	766	2101	25	Moderate	11.1%
Stanley	331	322	917	2	Minimal	0.0%
Sully	137	132	307	3	Minimal	0.0%
Todd	1219	1189	4088	28	Minimal	1.5%
Tripp	699	663	1467	16	Substantial	21.3%
Turner	1067	1001	2695	53	Moderate	3.4%
Union	1981	1909	6181	39	Substantial	9.6%
Walworth	725	693	1811	15	Moderate	3.6%
Yankton	2802	2741	9219	28	Moderate	6.6%
Ziebach	336	327	859	9	Minimal	8.3%
Unassigned	0	0	1812	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	4512	0
10-19 years	12645	0
20-29 years	19983	7
30-39 years	18494	18
40-49 years	16047	35
50-59 years	15860	113
60-69 years	12876	249
70-79 years	6890	431
80+ years	5120	1035

SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Sex	# of Cases	# of Deaths Among Cases
Female	58602	888
Male	53825	1000

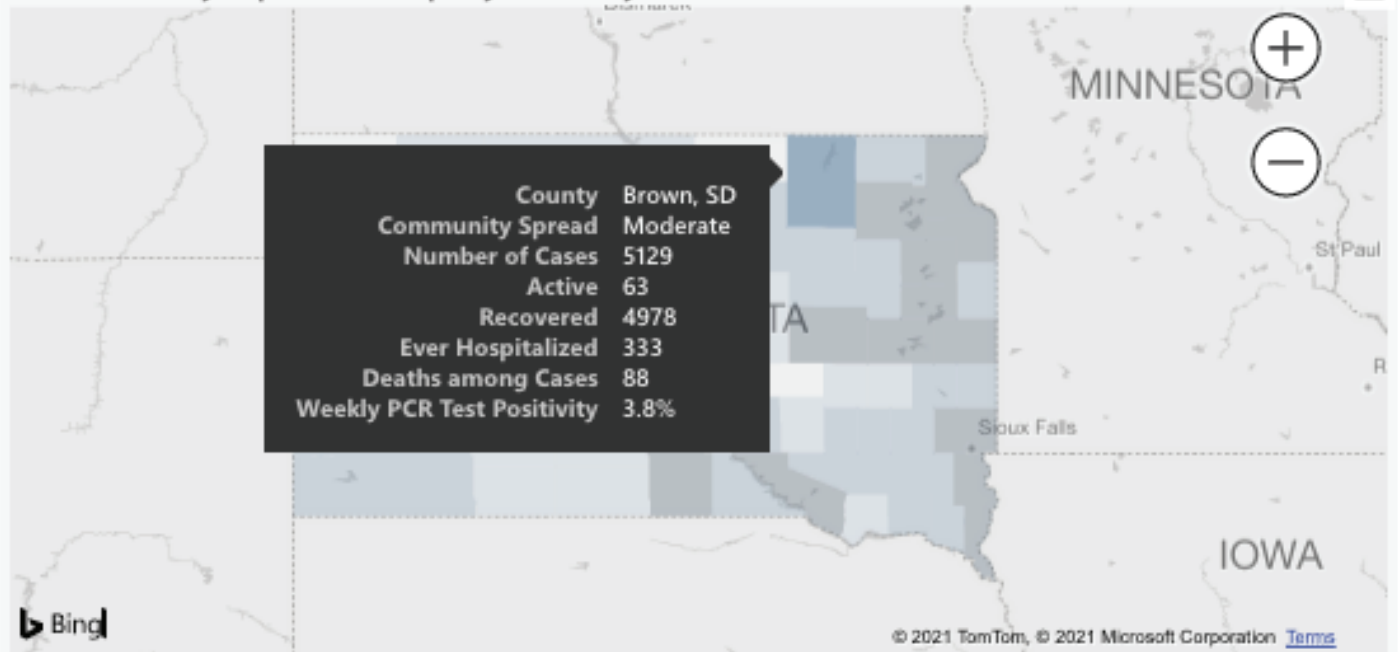
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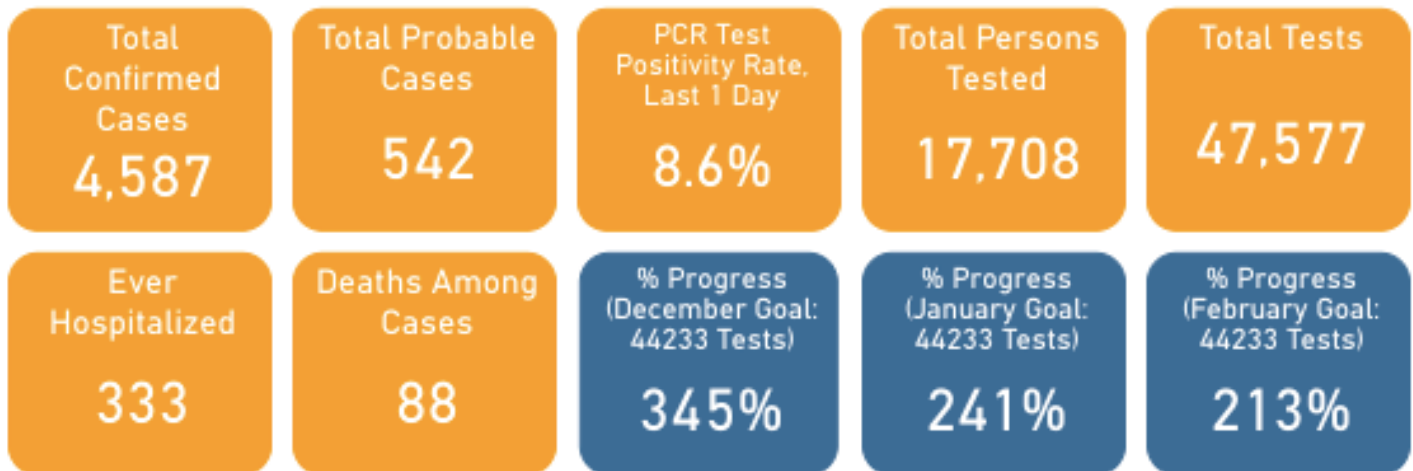
Brown County



Community Spread Map by County of Residence



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



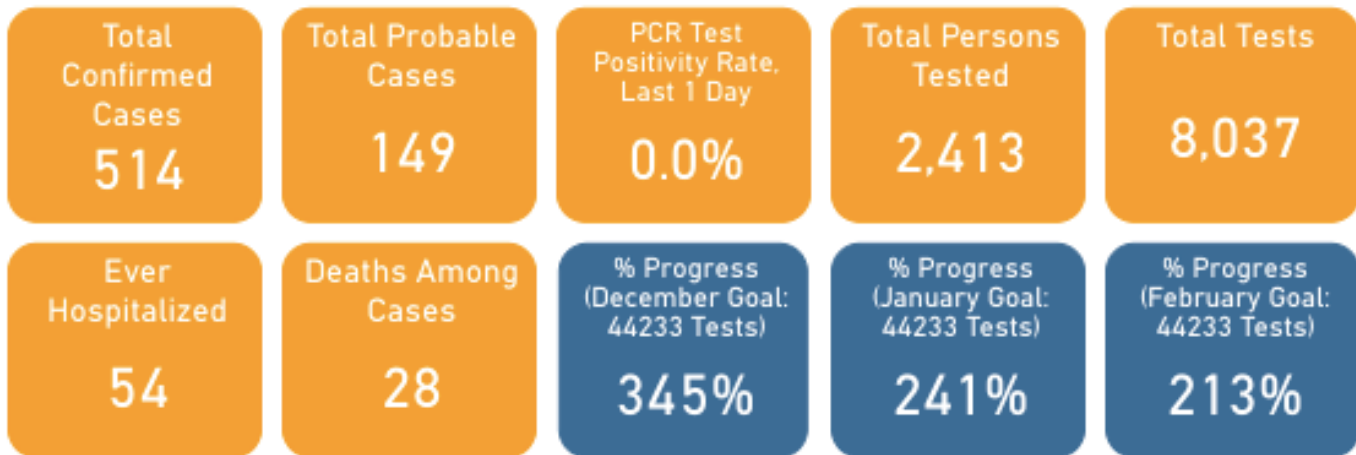
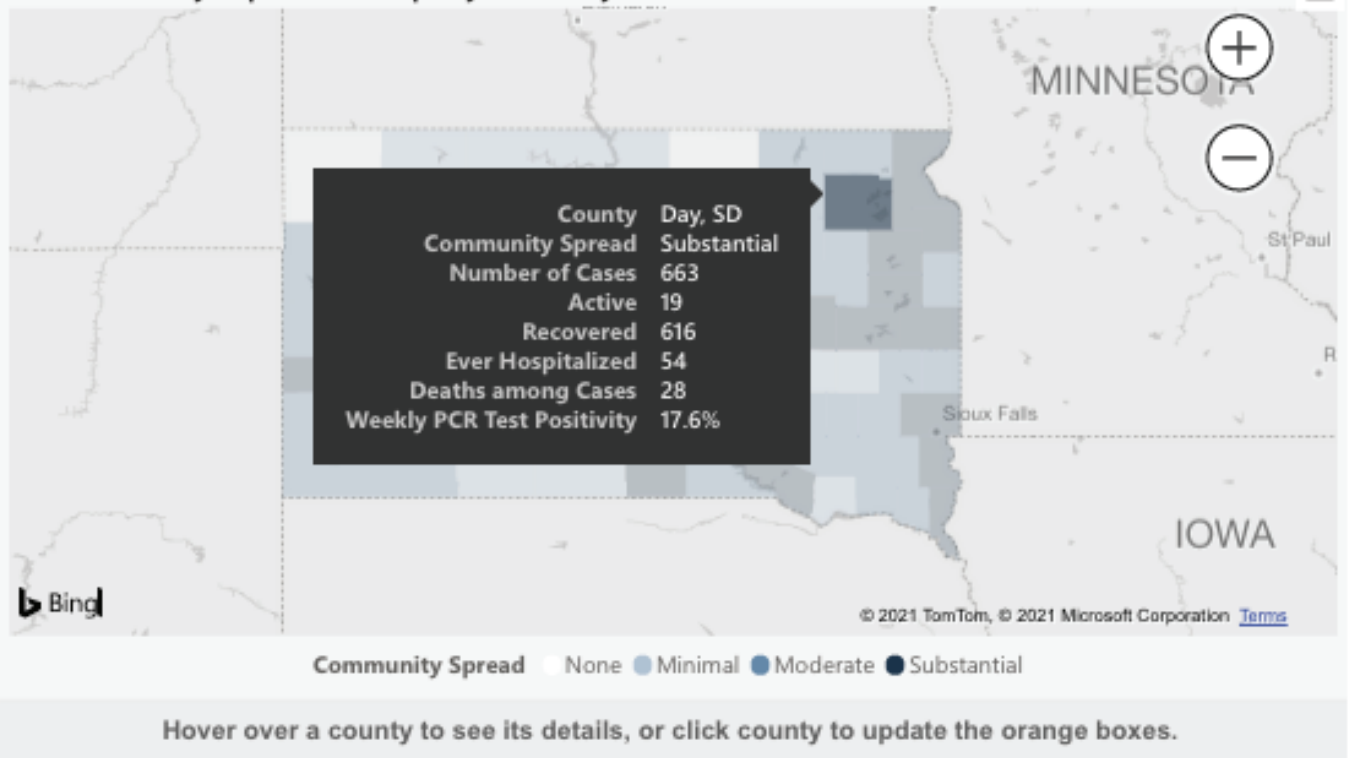
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Day County



Community Spread Map by County of Residence



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Vaccinations

Total Doses Administered

221,231

Total Persons Administered a Vaccine

144,585

Percent of State Population with at least 1 Dose

25%

Manufacturer	# of Doses
Moderna	113,015
Pfizer	108,216

Doses	# of Recipients
Moderna - 1 dose	36,099
Moderna - Series Complete	38,458
Pfizer - 1 dose	31,840
Pfizer - Series Complete	38,188

Doses	% of Pop.
1 dose	25.38%
Series Complete	13.20%

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

County	# Doses	# Persons (1 dose)	# Persons (2 doses)	Total # Persons
Aurora	547	229	159	388
Beadle	4484	1,674	1,405	3,079
Bennett*	380	102	139	241
Bon Homme*	2435	1,125	655	1,780
Brookings	6415	2,737	1,839	4,576
Brown	9691	2,755	3,468	6,223
Brule*	1364	414	475	889
Buffalo*	112	72	20	92
Butte	1472	660	406	1,066
Campbell	793	283	255	538
Charles Mix*	2074	936	569	1,505
Clark	819	325	247	572
Clay	3473	995	1,239	2,234
Codington*	6983	2,325	2,329	4,654
Corson*	192	72	60	132
Custer*	1948	754	597	1,351
Davison	5253	1,737	1,758	3,495
Day*	1785	619	583	1,202
Deuel	1026	344	341	685
Dewey*	323	73	125	198
Douglas*	812	250	281	531
Edmunds	869	325	272	597
Fall River*	1882	726	578	1,304
Faulk	713	263	225	488
Grant*	1616	664	476	1,140
Gregory*	1165	459	353	812
Haakon*	413	147	133	280

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Hamlin	1223	475	374	849
Hand	912	344	284	628
Hanson	316	138	89	227
Harding	54	38	8	46
Hughes [*]	5465	1,903	1,781	3,684
Hutchinson [*]	2346	812	767	1,579
Hyde [*]	373	149	112	261
Jackson [*]	300	106	97	203
Jerauld	540	282	129	411
Jones [*]	471	147	162	309
Kingsbury	1510	670	420	1,090
Lake	2655	949	853	1,802
Lawrence	5626	2,176	1,725	3,901
Lincoln	18995	4,463	7,266	11,729
Lyman [*]	546	178	184	362
Marshall [*]	1083	437	323	760
McCook	1628	514	557	1,071
McPherson	160	64	48	112
Meade [*]	4255	1,701	1,277	2,978
Mellette [*]	35	17	9	26
Miner	636	196	220	416
Minnehaha [*]	58152	14,888	21,632	36,520
Moody [*]	1074	430	322	752
Oglala Lakota [*]	130	52	39	91
Pennington [*]	26289	7,441	9,424	16,865
Perkins [*]	385	143	121	264
Potter	552	280	136	416
Roberts [*]	3195	1,313	941	2,254
Sanborn	702	248	227	475
Spink	2050	716	667	1,383
Stanley [*]	826	312	257	569
Sully	243	101	71	172
Todd [*]	126	40	43	83
Tripp [*]	1551	561	495	1,056
Turner	2571	663	954	1,617
Union	1878	836	521	1,357
Walworth [*]	1506	474	516	990
Yankton	7338	1,712	2,813	4,525
Ziebach [*]	46	12	17	29
Other	4449	893	1,778	2,671

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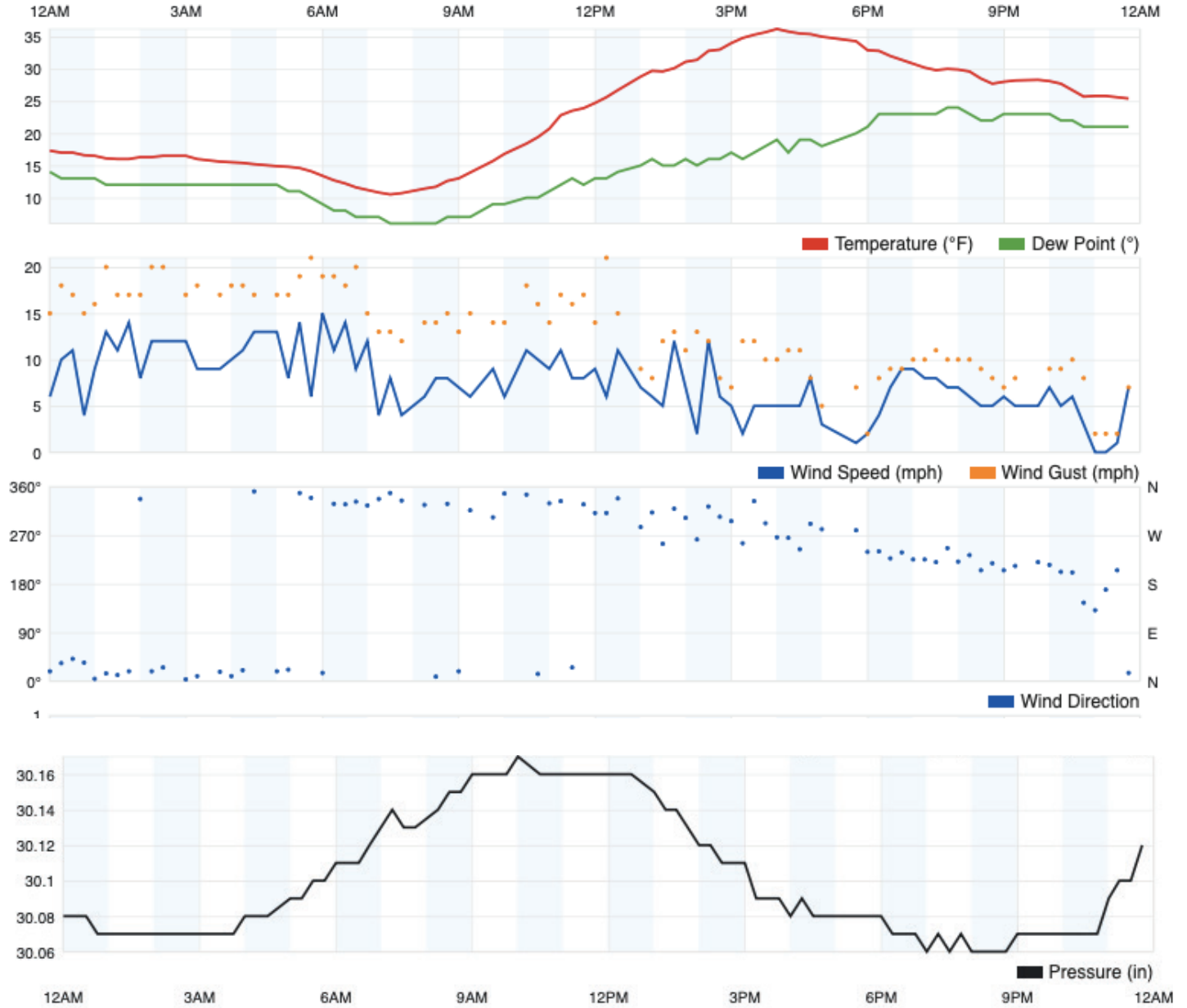


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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs







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Today	Tonight	Tuesday	Tuesday Night	Wednesday
				
Becoming Sunny	Mostly Clear	Sunny	Mostly Clear	Mostly Sunny
High: 37 °F	Low: 27 °F	High: 57 °F	Low: 25 °F	High: 54 °F

Warming Up Again!

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
			
Partly Cloudy	Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Sunny
Highs: 25-40°F In northeast SD 40-50°F in central and north central SD	Highs: 50-62°F	Highs: 50-62°F	Highs: 48-60°F

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

www.weather.gov/abr

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After a slightly cooler weekend (still above normal!), temperatures climb again during the work week, with highs in the 50s and 60s from Tuesday through next weekend. Mostly dry conditions are expected all week.

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Today in Weather History

March 1, 1970: Freezing rain and drizzle impacted much of South Dakota on March 1, 1970. Ice accumulation up to 1/8 of an inch thick was reported in Rapid City, with heavier amounts in the northwestern part of the state. Some utility lines were broken, but there was no extensive line damage. Also, some schools were closed due to icy roads.

March 1, 1998: An incredible amount of snow falls on Lead, South Dakota from February 25 through March 1. The official storm total was 103 inches for five days.

March 1, 2014: Arctic air combined with strong northwest winds brought bitter cold wind chills to central and northeast South Dakota east of the Missouri River. Bitter wind chills of 35 below to around 40 below occurred. Some of the coldest wind chills include; 39 degrees below zero west of Long Lake; 40 degrees below zero at Highmore; 41 degrees below zero near Roy Lake; and 42 degrees below zero at Summit.

1910: The worst avalanche in US history regarding lives lost occurred in Wellington, Washington. Heavy snow occurred from February 26 through the 28th, which blocked the rail lines. Weather conditions turned on the 28th with a thunderstorm occurring over the area. Just after 1 AM on March 1st, a ten to 14 foot high mass of snow broke free from the mountainside and pushed the trains 150 feet down into the Tye River Gorge. In all, 96 people were killed by this avalanche.

1914 - High winds and heavy snow crippled New Jersey and New York State. Two feet of snow were reported at Ashbury Park, and at New York City the barometric pressure dropped to a record 28.38 inches. The storm caused complete disruption of electric power in New Jersey. (David Ludlum)

1980 - Norfolk, VA, received 13.7 inches of snow to push their season total to a record 41.9 inches exceeding their previous record by more than four inches. (David Ludlum)

1980 - An unusually large Florida tornado, 500 yards in width at times, killed one person and caused six million dollars damage near Fort Lauderdale. (The Weather Channel)

1983 - A ferocious storm battered the Pacific coast. The storm produced heavy rain and gale force winds resulting in flooding and beach erosion, and in the mountains produced up to seven feet of snow in five days. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A storm crossing the Great Lakes Region produced heavy snow and gale force winds from Wisconsin to northern New England, with eight inches of snow reported at Ironwood MI. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Thunderstorms produced large hail and damaging winds in north central Texas. Baseball size hail was reported at Lake Kickapoo. Hail fell continuously for thirty minutes in the Iowa Park area of Wichita Falls. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - March came in like a lion, with snow and high winds, in the northwestern U.S. Winds gusted to 86 mph in the Rosario Strait of western Washington State. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - A series of low pressure systems moving out of the Gulf of Alaska spread high winds and heavy snow across western Alaska. Winds in the Anchorage area gusted to 69 mph at Glen Alps, and Talkeetna was buried under three feet of snow in two days. Valdez received 21.4 inches of snow, raising their total for the winter season to 482.4 inches. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2006 - Dallas/Forth Worth Airport breaks a 107-year-old North Texas temperature record after reaching 93 degrees. Mineral Wells reached 97, Wichita Falls 96 and Fort Worth Meacham Airport 90.

2011 - Snowfall across Idaho broke numerous accumulation records. Pierce received 15 inches, Powell 14.5 inches, Potlatch 12 inches and Kellogg and Plummer 7 inches. The same storm created high winds across the Pacific Northwest. A weather station at 10,000 feet on Mount Ranier measures a wind gust of 137 MPH with a sustained 1-minute wind reading of 112 MPH.

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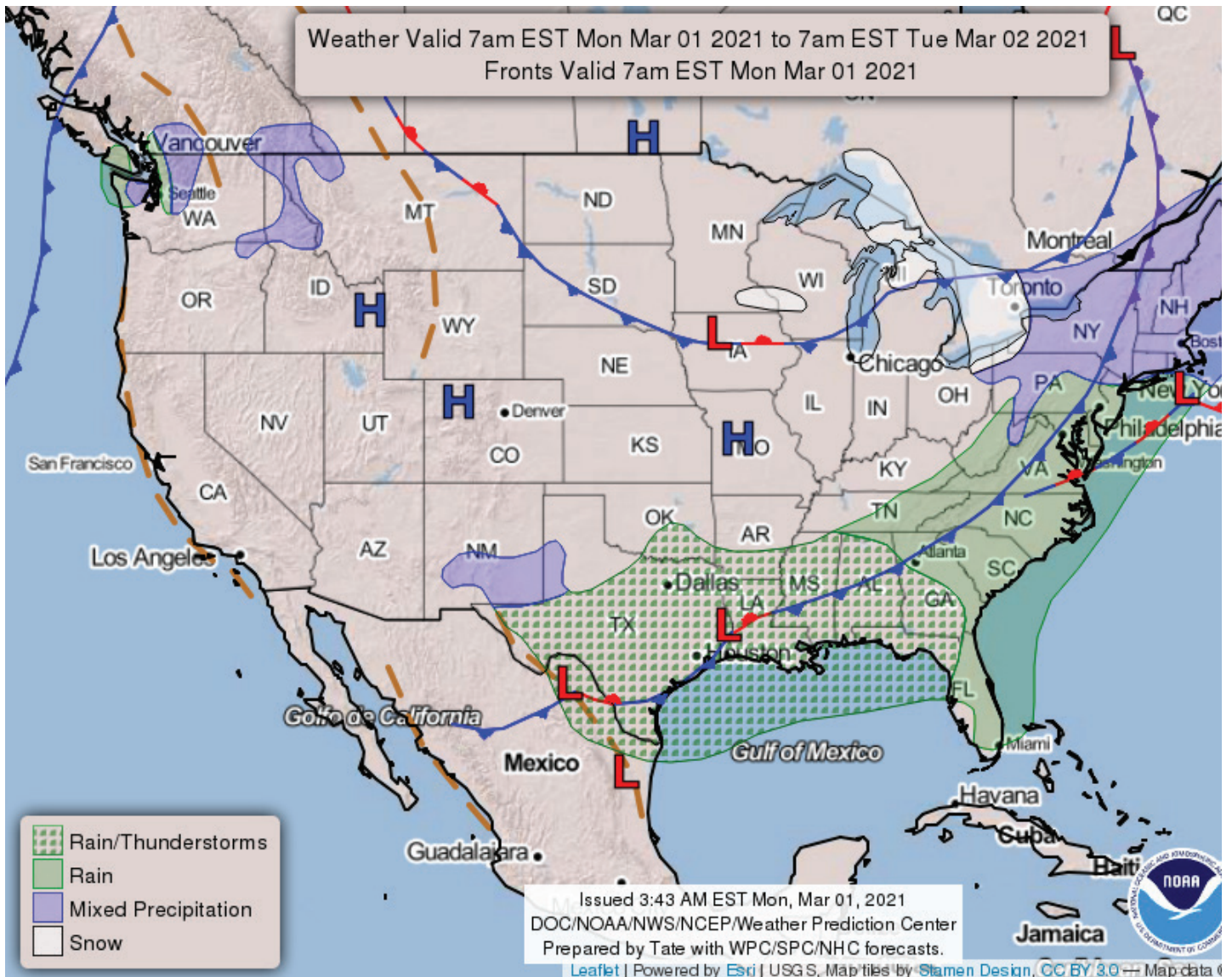
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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 36 °F at 4:00 PM
Low Temp: 10 °F at 7:38 AM
Wind: 23 mph at 2:33 AM
Precip:

Today's Info

Record High: 73° in 1992
Record Low: -29° in 1962
Average High: 33°F
Average Low: 13°F
Average Precip in Feb.: 0.55
Precip to date in Feb.: 0.18
Average Precip to date: 1.02
Precip Year to Date: 0.18
Sunset Tonight: 6:21 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:10 a.m.



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FROM HEAD TO HEART

JoAnn was watching her grandfather mulch the soil around his smiling pansies. "Papa," she asked, "may I please have the yellow one with the purple face?" "Of course, my dear," he said, handing her a flower with a stem that was once near the center of the plant.

After carefully examining its intricate details she said, "Here, Papa, now take it back and put it where it was."

"I can't do that, my dear," he replied. "It came from the heart of the plant and there is no way to put it back."

Words are like that pansy. They come from the heart. Whatever we say or whatever anyone else says comes from the heart, and words once spoken can never be returned to their source. Our words either help or harm, do good or cause damage, build up or tear down, bring out the best in people or make them fearful to act.

How wise of David to want his words and thoughts to be pleasing to God. God wants us to love Him, worship Him, serve Him, and please Him. But if we do not know Him we will never be able to honor and serve Him. And we cannot know Him unless we study His Word and allow its message to penetrate our minds.

Then, as we think godly thoughts we will speak godly words and do godly deeds that come from godly hearts and then our lives will be pleasing to Him. Whatever is in our hearts will eventually come out in our words and deeds.

Prayer: We ask, Father, for hearts that are filled with Your Word and lives that are pleasing in Your sight. Only then will what we say be right. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer. Psalm 19:14

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2021 Community Events

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

News from the Associated Press

Wilderness ski trek meant to call attention to Native issues

By DAN GUNDERSON Minnesota Public Radio News

ST. PAUL, Minn. (AP) — Ty Olson grew up in the windswept Red River Valley of northern Minnesota and North Dakota, so he knows something about bitter cold and biting winter winds.

But the recent frigid weather gave him a new appreciation for what it means to be cold.

"Negative 20 is uncomfortable, and -30 just hurts," he said. "but -40 — I mean, it just sucks. There's no other way to put it."

Olson is skiing through some of the most inhospitable terrain of northernmost Minnesota, during some of the most bitterly cold days of the winter.

He began his trip in Voyageurs National Park in mid-February just as the sub-zero weather set in, skiing about eight hours a day while towing two sleds with the 150 pounds of supplies that will sustain him for the 250-mile trip. He's traveling across the frozen lakes and rivers of the U.S.-Canadian border toward Grand Portage, a trip he expects to take him till the middle of March.

It's more than just a physical challenge for the 32-year-old filmmaker: Olson is skiing for a cause.

Trekking through the bitter cold, he said, is appropriate, because he's skiing to keep other people warm. He's raising money to help heat homes on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota, Minnesota Public Radio News reported.

About a week into the trip, Olson was on Crane Lake, not far from International Falls, likely his last stop with cell phone service for several days. He sat on a sled enjoying the sunshine, calm winds and the barely above-zero temperatures.

"When you have a week of -30, everything else feels fine," he said with a laugh. "So I'm feeling really good. This next week, I'm actually concerned about being too warm and just sweating. I'm probably gonna be shirtless next week."

Olson prefers the cold, because he needs solid ice to safely complete his trip. It has also kept him focused on the people he's trying to help.

"I'm skiing for firewood because people in Pine Ridge want it, need it, and ask for it. But they want more than that," he said. "They want justice. I feel obligated to use my privilege to give voice to that."

Even on nights when the temperature has dipped to -40 degrees, Olson has stayed warm in a four-layer sleeping system, with five zippers and 11 drawstrings.

"The cold really isn't the problem. It's just the feeling of being so constricted," he said. "And then the ice cracking beneath the tent. The ice just booms and cracks all night long in these temperatures. And then of course the wolves howling every night."

He sleeps 10 hours a night, but it's a tenuous rest, sleeping mostly on frozen lakes.

"Sometimes you wake up with a bit of a chill and you just have to force yourself to go back to sleep," he said. "The worst part though is when you wake up at 2:30 in the morning having to pee and it's -40 outside."

So far he's averaging about eight miles a day. He hopes to pick up that pace as he works through his supplies, and he's pulling a lighter load.

Olson said he's eating 3,800 calories a day now, and will increase that to about 5,500 calories as the trip progresses.

"I eat a lot of butter. I add butter to my oatmeal, which is a very power-packed meal to start the day. I add butter to my lunch, which is like this spaghetti parmesan, deep-fried bacon butter fiasco," he said.

His favorites are the food his mom sent along: "Blueberry soup, which is a classic Swedish hot fruit drink that my mom put together. That has been the pleasure of my day, that and these homemade chocolate truffle balls."

He hopes to arrive in Grand Portage by mid-March. He very purposely chose the route, through some

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of the most undeveloped land left in Minnesota.

"Where else can we find an undeveloped route of this length in the Dakota/Lakota/Ojibwe territory? We settled, cut over, and farmed everything else. What lasting legacy has that had for Native peoples?" Olson said.

That, he says, is the real purpose of his trip: elevating the conversation about land, treaties, poverty and justice.

"I just want people to listen to Native people and learn more because I'm still learning. I don't have all the answers. I'm just a guy skiing, but I know that we have to listen, we have to learn," he said.

He grew up oblivious to the fact that the land he grew up on was essentially taken from Ojibwe people in the mid 1800s. He now lives near Walker, in north-central Minnesota, but said his ancestors settled in the Red River Valley, and generations of his family have prospered on the rich farmland.

"Why did I not learn about the Treaty of Old Crossing growing up? Why did it take me until I was 32 years old to really understand what that meant for Native people?" he said.

The Treaty of Old Crossing transferred about 11 million acres of land in Minnesota and North Dakota from Ojibwe bands to the federal government — for about two cents an acre.

"We stole the land," he said. "We continue to benefit from the genocide and colonization of Indigenous peoples. And they continue to suffer the consequences. I'm no savior, and I don't have all the answers. I'm still learning, and I just want other non-Natives to learn, too."

Olson wants to be clear that he's not trying to speak for Indigenous people. He's trying to convince people to seek out the truth from Native people who know and live the history.

"There's so much we have to change about the narrative," he said, "and not just change the narrative, to see the narrative for what it is. So that's ultimately my goal, is to get people to see the truth."

South Dakota hits big screen with Oscar favorite 'Nomadland'

By Makenzie Huber Sioux Falls Argus Leader

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Already nominated for Golden Globes and a favorite for Oscar success, "Nomadland" is a newly released film in which South Dakota takes center stage.

"Nomadland" follows Fern (played by Frances McDormand) as she searches for peace and community across the country. The story covers several states, but Fern stops at several South Dakota locales in the film.

"Taking in many of the USA's most extraordinary landscapes, this meditative, moving film looks set to be not only one of 2021's most award-laden but also its most beautiful," according to an article from Traveller.

McDormand is seen hiking in Badlands Park, working at Wall Drug — while also wearing a Wall Drug paper hat, and exploring the Pine Ridge Reservation in southwestern South Dakota.

In the movie, she finds work in a campground and then works as a waitress at Wall Drug.

Shots from the trailer show her traveling through Custer State Park and admiring the view of the Black Hills.

Director Chloé Zhao lived with the Lakota Sioux on the Pine Ridge Reservation to prepare for a previous film, "The Rider," according to South Dakota Tourism. Her film "Songs My Brother Taught Me," from 2015, was also set in a South Dakota reservation, the Sioux Falls Argus Leader reported.

The shooting of "Nomadland" was spread out over six months beginning in September 2018.

"Nomadland" is based on a non-fiction work by journalist Jessica Bruder, which takes a look into the rising number of Americans who consider the normal, stable, way of living unaffordable due to outside factors.

Fern, 61, discovers a new way of life as she searches for work across the American West after she loses everything, including her husband, during the Great Recession.

The film features the American landscape and includes the real-life nomads from Bruders book.

The film is set to rake in awards across the film industry this year, including nominations for Golden Globes and talk surrounding BAFTA and the postponed April 2021 Oscars.

"Nomadland" won the Golden Lion at the 2020 Venice Film Festival and took home the People's Choice

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Award at the Toronto International Film Festival.

The film was the big winner in the North Dakota Film Society Awards in January. The movie earned top honors for Best Picture, Director, Actress, Cinematography and Film Editing.

Several South Dakotans have non-acting roles in the film, according to South Dakota Tourism. Shots include tourists and locals throughout southwestern South Dakota.

While McDormand was in Wall Drug, the popular tourist destination's owners let McDormand serve customers who didn't even recognize the Academy Award-winning actress, according to a Vulture article.

The film was released in theaters and on Hulu on Feb. 19.

Griesel carries North Dakota St. over South Dakota 89-77

VERMILLION, S.D. (AP) — Sam Griesel scored a career-high 26 points as North Dakota State defeated South Dakota 89-77 in the regular-season finale on Sunday.

Griesel shot 10 of 15, including 4 of 7 from 3-point distance. Tyree Eady added 18 points for North Dakota State (13-11, 11-5 Summit League), matching his career high. Jarius Cook and Rocky Kreuser each added 13 points.

The win wraps up the No. 3 seed into the Summit League tournament for NDSU. The Bison face No. 6 seed UMKC.

Stanley Umude scored 39 points for the Coyotes (13-10, 12-6), who enter the Summit tournament as the second seed. Tasos Kamateros scored a career-high 22 points. Xavier Fuller had eight rebounds.

South Dakota takes on No. 7 seed Western Illinois.

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

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South Dakota confirms 134 new positive COVID-19 tests

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota health officials on Sunday confirmed two new deaths due to the coronavirus and 134 new cases of COVID-19.

The update increased the number of fatalities to 1,888 and the number of overall cases to 112,427 since the start of the pandemic.

There were about 237 new cases per 100,000 people in South Dakota over the past two weeks, which ranks 31st in the country for new cases per capita, according to Johns Hopkins University researchers. One in every 782 people in the state tested positive in the past week.

The state's death count is the 41st highest in the country overall and the seventh highest per capita at about 214 deaths per 100,000 people, researchers said.

State health officials said 214,507 doses of the vaccines had been administered as of Sunday morning. More than 25% of the state's population has received at last one dose and more than 13% have completed both shots.

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

EXPLAINER: How a primary got Hong Kong activists in trouble

HONG KONG (AP) — Hong Kong democracy supporters are being locked up in jail, charged with being a threat to national security.

Their arrests come under a new security law imposed on the semi-autonomous Chinese territory by

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Beijing that has largely silenced dissent in Hong Kong. China says the city needs stability after months of anti-government protests in 2019. Those now facing charges held a primary election for legislators picked through one of the last vestiges of direct democracy in Hong Kong.

Some key questions about the arrests:

HOW CAN A PRIMARY ELECTION THREATEN NATIONAL SECURITY?

Authorities say the primary was part of a plan to paralyze the government and undermine state power. The security law criminalizes attempts to subvert government, as well as secession, terrorism and collusion with foreign powers.

As evidence, police pointed to an opinion piece, "10 steps to mutual destruction," that was published in the Apple Daily, a newspaper supportive of the democracy movement.

Authored by Benny Tai, a veteran activist and former law professor, it mapped out a strategy that began with winning a legislative majority. Following that, opposition legislators would intensify protests, block the budget twice to force Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam to resign and back international sanctions against China's ruling Communist Party.

The primary was an attempt to galvanize public support for pro-democracy candidates, though it's unclear whether all the candidates agreed with Tai's manifesto.

WHO WAS ARRESTED?

Police initially rounded up 55 people in January on suspicion of subversion. Of those, 47 were charged with that crime on Sunday. It's unclear whether the other eight remain under investigation and will be charged in the future.

Those charged include former lawmakers and others who were candidates in the primary. It is by far the largest number of people targeted in a case so far under the national security law, which took effect last June.

WHAT HAPPENED TO DEMOCRACY IN HONG KONG?

The pro-democracy faction was set to make gains in the 2020 legislative election and possibly even take a majority. The latter was an uphill battle, though, as only half of the 70 seats in the legislature are directly elected by voters. The rest represent various interest groups.

Lam scrapped the election, citing the risks of holding one during the coronavirus pandemic. Activists said the pro-Beijing majority feared losing seats.

China's central government signaled last week that it may take steps to restrict who can run for office in Hong Kong. The city's leader is selected by a China-controlled committee of 1,200 electors, and candidates must be approved by Beijing. However, a small percentage of those are drawn from directly elected district council members, and Beijing appears unwilling to continue allowing them to have a say in the selection process.

Xia Baolong, director of the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office of the State Council, said Hong Kong could only be ruled by "patriots," excluding those who lobby other countries for foreign sanctions and "troublemakers."

The electoral changes are expected to be discussed and possibly passed at the annual meeting of China's National People's Congress, which starts Friday.

Even more chaotic than usual, Globes still had their moments

By JOCELYN NOVECK AP National Writer

In the opening moments of a Golden Globes night even more chaotic and confounding than usual, co-host Tina Fey raised a theoretical question: "Could this whole night have been an email?" Only the next three hours would tell.

Well, sure, it could have been an email. But then you wouldn't have had Chadwick Boseman's eloquent widow, bringing many to tears as she explained how she could never be as eloquent as her late husband. Or Jane Fonda, sharply calling out Hollywood for its lack of diversity on a night when her very hosts were under fire for exactly that. Or Chloé Zhao, making history as the first woman of Asian descent to win best

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director (and the first woman since 1984.)

Or 98-year-old Norman Lear, giving the simplest explanation for his longevity: never living or laughing alone. Or Jodie Foster kissing her wife joyfully, eight years after very tentatively coming out on the same telecast.

Of course, there were the usual confounding results and baffling snubs, compounded here by some epic Zoom fails. But then we had the kids and the dogs. And they were adorable.

Next year, can we still have the kids and the dogs, please?

Some key moments of the first and hopefully last virtual Globes night:

AN OVERDUE RECKONING

The evening began under a cloud of embarrassing revelations about the Hollywood Foreign Press Association and its lack of inclusion, including the damaging fact that there are no Black members in the 87-person body. Fey and co-host Amy Poehler addressed it early: "Even with stupid things, inclusivity is important." Winners like Daniel Levy of "Schitt's Creek" and presenters like Sterling K. Brown referred to it. Jane Fonda made it a theme of her powerful speech accepting the Cecil B. DeMille award. And the HFPA made a hasty onstage pledge to change. "We recognize we have our own work to do," said vice president Helen Hoehne. "We must have Black journalists in our organization."

"I DON'T HAVE HIS WORDS"

The best-actor award to Chadwick Boseman for "Ma Rainey's Bottom" had been expected. That did not dull the emotional impact of his victory. His widow, Taylor Simone Ledward, tearfully accepted in his honor, telling viewers that her husband, who died of colon cancer at 43 before the film was released, "would say something beautiful, something inspiring, something that would amplify that little voice inside of all of us that tells you you can. That tells you to keep going, that calls you back to what you are meant to be doing at this moment in history." But, she said poignantly, "I don't have his words." Co-star Viola Davis could be seen weeping as Ledward spoke. She was not alone.

PREDICTABLE ZOOM FAILS

It was obvious there were going to be awkward Zoom fails. It started early, when the very first winner, Daniel Kaluuya for "Judas and the Black Messiah," was on mute as he accepted his award, leaving presenter Laura Dern to apologize for technical difficulties. Thankfully, the problem was resolved in time for the actor to speak. Jason Sudeikis, whose charmingly rambling speech ("This is nuts!") and ruffled hoodie signaled he hadn't expected to win, finally realized he needed to "wrap this puppy up." And winner Catherine O'Hara ("Schitt's Creek") had some perhaps unwelcome help from her husband, whose efforts to provide applause sounds and play-off music on his phone while she spoke lost something in translation, causing confusion on social media. Oh yes, and there were those conversations between nominees before commercials — did they know we heard them?

KIDS AND PETS, STILL BRINGING JOY

Still, the virtual acceptances from winners stuck at home had a huge silver lining: happy kids and cute pets. When Mark Ruffalo won for "I Know This Much is True," two of his teens could not control their joy enough to stay out of the camera shot. Not to be outdone, the adorable young daughter of Lee Isaac Chung, writer-director of the Korean-American family drama "Minari," sat in his lap and hugged him throughout his acceptance for best foreign language film. "She's the reason I made this film," said Chung. Winner Jodie Foster ("The Mauritanian") also had a family member in her lap: her dog. Also seen: Sarah Paulson's dog, and Emma Corrin's cat.

LOVE FOR BORAT, SNUB FOR BAKALOVA ... AND EXPOSURE FOR GIULIANI

Bulgarian actress Maria Bakalova, breakout star of Amazon's "Borat Subsequent Moviefilm," had been widely expected to win, but lost out to Rosamund Pike ("I Care a Lot") who saluted Bakalova's bravery. In her movie, Pike said, "I had to swim up from a sinking car. I think I still would rather do that than have been in a room with Rudy Giuliani." The former New York mayor's infamous cameo was also the butt of jokes from "Borat" star Sacha Baron Cohen, who called Giuliani "a fresh new talent who came from nowhere and turned out to be a comedy genius ... I mean, who could get more laughs from one unzip-

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ping?" Baron Cohen, who won for best actor in a comedy, also joked that Donald Trump was "contesting the result" of his win.

A FIERY FONDA

Did you expect anything less from Fonda? In her memorable DeMille award speech, the multiple Globe winner extolled the virtues of cinematic storytelling — "stories can change our hearts and our minds" — then pivoted to admonishing Hollywood. "There's a story we've been afraid to see and hear about ourselves," she said, "a story about which voices we respect and elevate and which we tune out: a story about who's offered a seat at the table and who's kept out of the rooms where decisions are made." She said the arts should not merely keep step with society, but lead the way. "Let's be leaders," she said.

ZHAO MAKES HISTORY

When Zhao won best director for her haunting and elegant "Nomadland," she was the first Asian American woman ever to win that award. But that wasn't the only way she made history: it was the first directing Globe for a woman in nearly 40 years, since Barbra Streisand won for "Yentl." Her film, a look at itinerant Americans, "at its core for me is a pilgrimage through grief and healing," Zhao said. "For everyone who has gone through this difficult and beautiful journey at some point in their lives, we don't say goodbye, we say: See you down the road." With Zhao's win, the road widens for other female directors.

This story has been corrected to show that Norman Lear is 98, not 99.

Netanyahu accuses Iran of attacking Israeli-owned cargo ship

By ILAN BEN ZION Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Monday accused Iran of attacking an Israeli-owned ship in the Gulf of Oman last week, a mysterious explosion that further spiked security concerns in the region.

Without offering any evidence to his claim, Netanyahu told Israeli public broadcaster Kan that "it was indeed an act by Iran, that's clear."

"Iran is the greatest enemy of Israel, I am determined to halt it. We are hitting it in the entire region," Netanyahu said. Iran promptly dismissed the charges.

The blast struck the Israeli-owned MV Helios Ray, a Bahamian-flagged roll-on, roll-off vehicle cargo ship, as it was sailing out of the Middle East on its way to Singapore on Friday. The crew was unharmed, but the vessel sustained two holes on its port side and two on its starboard side just above the waterline, according to American defense officials.

The ship came to Dubai's port for repairs on Sunday, days after the blast that revived security concerns in Mideast waterways amid heightened tensions with Iran.

Iran has sought to pressure the U.S. to lift sanctions on Tehran as President Joe Biden's administration considers option for returning to negotiations with Iran over its nuclear program. Biden has said repeatedly the U.S. would return to the nuclear deal between Tehran and world powers that his predecessor, Donald Trump, withdrew from in 2018 only after Iran restores its full compliance with the accord.

The explosion on the Israeli-owned ship last week recalled the tense summer of 2019, when the U.S. military accused Iran of attacking several oil tankers in the Gulf of Oman with limpet mines, designed to be attached magnetically to a ship's hull. The Gulf of Oman leads through the narrow Strait of Hormuz, a vital passage for the world's oil supplies. Tehran has denied the accusations that it was behind the limpet mine attacks.

It remains unclear what caused Friday's blast on the Helios Ray. The vessel had discharged cars at various ports in the Persian Gulf before the explosion forced it to reverse course. Over the weekend, Israel's defense minister and army chief had both indicated they held Iran responsible for what they said was an attack on the vessel.

Iran responded to Netanyahu's statement saying it "strongly rejected" the claim that it was behind the attack. In a press briefing, Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said Netanyahu was "suffering

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from an obsession with Iran" and described his charges as "fear-mongering."

Khatibzadeh also accused Israel of taking "suspicious actions in the region" against Iran in recent months to undermine the 2015 nuclear deal, without elaborating, and vowed Iran would respond.

"Israel knows very well that our response in the field of national security has always been fierce and accurate," he said.

Overnight, Syrian state media reported a series of alleged Israeli airstrikes near Damascus, saying air defense systems had intercepted most of the missiles. Israeli media reports said the alleged airstrikes were on Iranian targets in response to the ship attack.

Israel has struck hundreds of Iranian targets in neighboring Syria in recent years, and Netanyahu has repeatedly said Israel will not accept a permanent Iranian military presence there. Iran and its Lebanese proxy Hezbollah have provided military support to Syrian President Bashar Assad in the more than decade-long Syrian civil war.

The Israeli military declined comment.

Iran also has blamed Israel for a recent series of attacks, including another mysterious explosion last summer that destroyed an advanced centrifuge assembly plant at its Natanz nuclear facility and the killing of Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, a top Iranian scientist who founded the Islamic Republic's military nuclear program two decades ago. Iran has repeatedly vowed to avenge Fakhrizadeh's killing.

"It is most important that Iran doesn't have nuclear weapons, with or without an agreement, this I also told to my friend Biden," Netanyahu said Monday.

Iranian threats of retaliation have raised alarms in Israel since the signing of normalization deals with the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain in September.

Associated Press writers Isabel DeBre in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, and Nasser Karimi in Tehran, Iran, contributed to this report.

Thousands flee rebel violence in Central African Republic

By ADRIENNE SURPRENANT Associated Press

BANGASSOU, Central African Republic (AP) — Monique Moukidje fled her home in Central African Republic's town of Bangassou in January when rebels attacked with heavy weapons, the fighting killing more than a dozen people.

"I ran away because the bullets have no eyes," the 34-year-old said sitting in the shade while waiting for water purification tablets, a tarp, and other supplies to help her in Mbangui-Ngoro, a village where she and hundreds of other displaced people are sheltering.

She is among an estimated 240,000 people displaced in the country since mid-December, according to U.N. relief workers, when rebels calling themselves the Coalition of Patriots for Change launched attacks, first to disrupt the Dec. 27 elections and then to destabilize the newly-elected government of President Faustin Archange Touadera. The rebels' fighting has enveloped the country and caused a humanitarian crisis in the already unstable nation.

Hundreds of thousands of people are also left without basic food or health care, and with the main roads between Central African Republic and Cameroon closed for almost two months, prices have skyrocketed leaving families unable to afford food.

The rebels control nearly two-thirds of the country, making it difficult to deliver humanitarian aid. Aid delivery was stopped for nearly a month in some zones.

"The most pressing needs are on the axis (the main roads)," says Marco Doneda, project coordinator for Doctors Without Borders based in Bangassou, on the country's southeastern border with Congo.

When rebels left Bangassou in mid-January, after an ultimatum from the United Nations peacekeeping force, some established their bases in nearby towns, like in Niakari, about 17 kilometers (10 miles) from Bangassou. Doctors Without Borders has been trying to reach the populations there with mobile clinics since then, but they have been prevented by the possibility of military action or unpredictable fighting

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between the rebels and the army.

Along the main supply road from Cameroon to Bangui, Central African Republic's capital, and in Bambari and Bossangoa, the government forces and its Rwandan and Russian allies have led drives against the rebel forces in the past two weeks.

The impact of violence and the lack of humanitarian access is visible in Siwa, a camp for internally displaced people, a few kilometers (miles) from Bangassou.

Hundreds of people must rely only on filthy brown water to drink, cook, and clean. They are living in makeshift shelters made of leaves and branches from palm trees. No toilets have been built and food distribution only arrived six weeks after the camp was created.

A displaced man hopes his wife will receive treatment and psychological support after she was raped by armed men.

"I didn't have the strength to defend my wife," he said. "I'm a farmer. I don't have the means to bring her to Bangassou for treatment, but I'm worried, I can't leave her like this. Her body is not wounded, but in her mind, she is not all right." The Associated Press does not name victims of sexual violence.

Central African Republic's instability erupted into fighting in Bangui in 2013 when the Seleka rebels coming from the north seized power from then-President Francois Bozize.

Later that year, the Seleka government was challenged by a militia group that formed in response and called themselves the anti-Balaka. Fighting spiraled, with targeted attacks that left thousands dead in the capital and displaced hundreds of thousands more.

The newly formed rebel coalition includes armed groups from both the ex-Seleka and anti-Balaka.

The Seleka rebel president eventually stepped aside amid international pressure and an interim government organized democratic elections in 2016, which Touadera won.

Touadera won re-election to a second term in December with 53% of the vote, but he continues to face opposition from forces linked to ex-president Bozize, who was disqualified from taking part in the presidential vote. Much of the recent violence began after the courts rejected his candidacy before the Dec. 27 elections.

Residents of Central African Republic are discouraged by the country's years of violence and insecurity.

"We really moved backward," said Pierrette Benguere, prefect of the Mbomou area that includes Bangassou. "It is discouraging to see my country having to start over again with the negotiations we've been holding on and off since 2003."

Report: US wasted billions on cars, buildings in Afghanistan

By KATHY GANNON Associated Press

ISLAMABAD (AP) — The United States wasted billions of dollars in war-torn Afghanistan on buildings and vehicles that were either abandoned or destroyed, according to a report released Monday by a U.S. government watchdog.

The agency said it reviewed \$7.8 billion spent since 2008 on buildings and vehicles. Only \$343.2 million worth of buildings and vehicles "were maintained in good condition," said the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, or SIGAR, which oversees American taxpayer money spent on the protracted conflict.

The report said that just \$1.2 billion of the \$7.8 billion went to pay for buildings and vehicles that were used as intended.

"The fact that so many capital assets wound up not used, deteriorated or abandoned should have been a major cause of concern for the agencies financing these projects," John F. Sopko, the special inspector general, said in his report.

The U.S. public is weary of the nearly 20-year-old war and President Joe Biden is reviewing a peace deal his predecessor, Donald Trump, signed with the Taliban a year ago. He must decide whether to withdraw all troops by May 1, as promised in the deal, or stay and possibly prolong the war. Officials say no decision has been made but on Monday, Washington's peace envoy and the American who brokered the U.S.-Taliban

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deal, Zalmay Khalilzad, was back in the Afghan capital for a tour of the region.

Taliban insurgents and the Afghan government have been holding on-again-off-again talks in the Gulf Arab state of Qatar but a deal that could bring peace to Afghanistan after 40 years of relentless war seems far off.

After Kabul, Khalilzad will travel to Qatar's capital of Doha and neighboring countries, including Pakistan, to push anew for progress in the Doha talks and a cease-fire to end the relentless violence.

Analyst Bill Roggio of the Long War Journal said the findings by SIGAR are not surprising. The reasons for the financial losses include Taliban attacks, corruption and "throwing money at the problem without considering the implications," he said.

"It is one thing to build a clinic and school, it is another to operate, maintain, and in many cases defend this infrastructure from Taliban attacks," said Roggio. "Additionally, the West has wildly underestimated the impact of Afghan corruption and in many cases incompetence. It was always a recipe for failure."

U.S. agencies responsible for construction didn't even ask the Afghans if they wanted or needed the buildings they ordered built, or if they had the technical ability to keep them running, Sopko said in his report.

The waste occurred in violation of "multiple laws stating that U.S. agencies should not construct or procure capital assets until they can show that the benefiting country has the financial and technical resources and capability to use and maintain those assets effectively," he said.

Torek Farhadi, a former adviser to the Afghan government, said a "donor-knows-best" mentality often prevailed and it routinely meant little to no consultation with the Afghan government on projects.

He said a lack of coordination among the many international donors aided the wastefulness. For example, he said schools were on occasion built alongside other newly constructed schools financed by other donors. The construction went ahead because once the decision was made — contract awarded and money allocated — the school was built regardless of the need, said Farhadi.

The injection of billions of dollars, largely unmonitored, fueled runaway corruption among both Afghans and international contractors. But experts say that despite the waste, the need for assistance is real, given the Afghan governments heavy dependence on international money.

The worsening security situation in Afghanistan also greatly impeded the monitoring of projects, with shoddy construction going undetected, said Farhadi, the former Afghan government adviser.

"Consult with the locals about their needs and sustainability of the project once the project is complete," he urged U.S. funding agencies looking to future projects. "Supervise, supervise, supervise project progress and implementation and audit every single layer of expenditure."

Going forward, Roggio said smaller, more manageable projects should be the order of the day. To build big unmanageable projects that Afghanistan has neither the capacity nor technical expertise for after 40 years of relentless war "feeds into the Taliban narrative that the government is corrupt, incompetent, and incapable of providing for the Afghan people," he said.

Defying lethal shootings, Myanmar protesters back on streets

YANGON, Myanmar (AP) — Police in Myanmar's biggest city on Monday fired tear gas at defiant crowds who returned to the streets to protest the military's seizure of power a month ago, despite reports that security forces had killed at least 18 people around the country a day earlier.

The protesters in Yangon were chased as they tried to gather at their usual meeting spot at the Hledan Center intersection. Demonstrators scattered and sought to rinse their faces with water in vain attempts to ease the irritating effects of the gas.

In the capital, Naypyitaw, the country's ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi made a court appearance Monday via videoconference, the independent Myanmar Now online news agency reported. It said she received a charge under Section 505(b) of the Penal Code for allegedly inciting unrest. Further details of the court appearance were not immediately available.

Suu Kyi had already been charged with two other offenses — possession of walkie-talkies that had been

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imported without being registered, and violating an order issued under the Natural Disaster Management Law limiting public gatherings in order to fight the spread of the coronavirus.

The 75-year-old Suu Kyi was initially detained by the military at her Naypyitaw residence, but fellow members of her National League for Democracy party are uncertain of her present whereabouts. If she is convicted, the charges against her could provide a legal way of barring her from running in the election the junta has promised in a year's time.

At least five people were believed to have been killed Sunday in Yangon when police shot at the protesters, who are demanding that Suu Kyi's elected government be restored to power after being ousted in a Feb. 1 coup. The protesters' civil disobedience movement has adhered so far to the tenets of nonviolence despite provocation from the security forces and pro-military counter-demonstrators.

People erected makeshift sidewalk shrines at the spots where several of the victims were shot and also paid their respects by standing outside the hospitals from which the bodies of the victims were being released to their families.

In Dawei, a small city in southeastern Myanmar where an estimated five people were killed Sunday, the number of protesters on the streets Monday was lower than usual. Marchers there split into smaller groups, parading through the city to the applause of bystanders who also made the three-finger salutes adopted by the resistance movement to show their support.

The coup reversed years of slow progress toward democracy in Myanmar after five decades of military rule. Suu Kyi's 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.

The U.N. said it had "credible information" that at least 18 people were killed and 30 were wounded around Myanmar on Sunday. Counts made by other sources, such the Democratic Voice of Burma, an independent television and online news outlet, put the death toll in the 20s.

Any of those reports would make it the highest single-day death toll since the military takeover.

"Deaths reportedly occurred as a result of live ammunition fired into crowds in Yangon, Dawei, Mandalay, Myeik, Bago and Pokokku," the U.N. Human Rights Office said in a statement, referring to several cities, adding that the forces also used tear gas, flash-bang grenades and stun grenades.

Confirming the deaths of protesters has been difficult amid the chaos and general lack of news from official sources, especially in areas outside Yangon, Mandalay and Naypyitaw, the capital. But in many cases, photos and video circulated showed circumstances of the killings and gruesome photos of bodies.

In a long statement published Monday in the state-run Global New Light of Myanmar newspaper, Myanmar's Foreign Ministry restated the military's rationale for its takeover and declared that the junta "is exercising utmost restraint to avoid the use of force in managing the violent protests systematically, in accordance with domestic and international laws in order to keep minimum casualties."

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres strongly condemned the crackdown, calling the use of lethal force against peaceful protesters and arbitrary arrests "unacceptable," and expressed serious concern at the increase in deaths and serious injuries, said U.N. spokesperson Stephane Dujarric.

The U.N.'s independent expert on human rights in Myanmar, Tom Andrews, issued a statement saying the reports of Sunday's deaths were "horrible but not surprising news." He said Myanmar's ruling junta was sending a clear message: "They are going to continue their assault on the people of Myanmar."

"What the world is watching in Myanmar is outrageous and unacceptable," Andrews said. "Words of condemnation are necessary and welcome but insufficient. The world must act. We must all act."

Social media posts from Myanmar have increasingly urged the global community to invoke the doctrine of "responsibility to protect" to intervene directly to restrain the junta.

In Washington, White House National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan issued a statement saying the U.S. is "alarmed" by the violence and stands in solidarity with Myanmar's people, "who continue to bravely voice their aspirations for democracy, rule of law, and respect for human rights."

Washington has imposed sanctions on Myanmar because of the coup, and Sullivan said it would "impose further costs on those responsible," promising details "in the coming days."

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Security forces began employing rougher tactics on Saturday, taking preemptive action to break up protests and make mass arrests. Many of those detained were taken to Insein Prison in Yangon's northern outskirts, historically notorious for holding political prisoners.

The independent Assistance Association of Political Prisoners reported that it was aware that about 1,000 people were detained Sunday, of whom they were able to identify 270. That brought to 1,132 the total number of people the group has confirmed being arrested, charged or sentenced since the coup.

An Associated Press journalist was taken into police custody on Saturday morning while providing news coverage of the protests. The journalist, Thein Zaw, remains in police custody.

The AP called for his immediate release.

"Independent journalists must be allowed to freely and safely report the news without fear of retribution. AP decries in the strongest terms the arbitrary detention of Thein Zaw," said Ian Phillips, the AP's vice president for international news. The Foreign Correspondents' Club of Myanmar also condemned the arrest.

Countries call on drug companies to share vaccine know-how

By LORI HINNANT and MARIA CHENG Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — In an industrial neighborhood on the outskirts of Bangladesh's largest city lies a factory with gleaming new equipment imported from Germany, its immaculate hallways lined with hermetically sealed rooms. It is operating at just a quarter of its capacity.

It is one of three factories that The Associated Press found on three continents whose owners say they could start producing hundreds of millions of COVID-19 vaccines on short notice if only they had the blueprints and technical know-how. But that knowledge belongs to the large pharmaceutical companies who produce the first three vaccines authorized by countries including Britain, the European Union and the U.S. — Pfizer, Moderna and AstraZeneca. The factories are all still awaiting responses.

Across Africa and Southeast Asia, governments and aid groups, as well as the WHO, are calling on pharmaceutical companies to share their patent information more broadly to meet a yawning global shortfall in a pandemic that already has claimed nearly 2.5 million lives. Pharmaceutical companies that took taxpayer money from the U.S. or Europe to develop inoculations at unprecedented speed say they are negotiating contracts and exclusive licensing deals with producers on a case-by-case basis because they need to protect their intellectual property and ensure safety.

Critics say this piecemeal approach is just too slow at a time of urgent need to stop the virus before it mutates into even deadlier forms. Last month, WHO called for vaccine manufacturers to share their know-how to "dramatically increase the global supply."

"If that can be done then immediately overnight every continent will have dozens of companies who would be able to produce these vaccines," said Abdul Muktedir, whose Incepta plant in Bangladesh already makes vaccines against hepatitis, flu, meningitis, rabies, tetanus and measles.

All over the world, the supply of coronavirus vaccines is falling far short of demand, and the limited amount available is going to rich countries. Nearly 80% of the vaccines so far have been administered in just 10 countries, according to WHO. More than 210 countries with a collective population of 2.5 billion haven't received a single shot.

The deal-by-deal approach also means that some poorer countries end up paying more for the same vaccine than richer countries. South Africa, Mexico, Brazil and Uganda all pay different amounts per dose for the same AstraZeneca vaccine — more than governments in the European Union, according to studies and publicly available documents. AstraZeneca said in an email that the price of the vaccine will differ depending on factors such as production costs, where the shots are made and how much countries order.

"What we see today is a stampede, a survival of the fittest approach, where those with the deepest pockets, with the sharpest elbows are grabbing what is there and leaving others to die," said Winnie Byanyima, executive director of UNAIDS.

In South Africa, home to the world's most worrisome COVID-19 variant, the Biovac factory has said for weeks that it's in negotiations with an unnamed manufacturer with no contract to show for it. And in

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Denmark, the Bavarian Nordic factory has capacity to spare and the ability to make more than 200 million doses but is also waiting for word from the producer of a licensed coronavirus vaccine.

Governments and health experts offer two potential solutions to the vaccine shortage: One, supported by WHO, is a patent pool modeled after a platform set up for HIV, tuberculosis and hepatitis treatments for voluntary sharing of technology, intellectual property and data. But not a single company has offered to share its data or transfer the necessary technology.

The other, a proposal to suspend intellectual property rights during the pandemic, has been blocked in the World Trade Organization by the United States and Europe, home to the companies responsible for creating the vaccines described as the best way to stop the spread of coronavirus. That drive has the support of at least 119 countries among the WTO's 164 member states, and the African Union, but is adamantly opposed by vaccine makers.

Pharmaceutical companies say that instead of lifting IP restrictions, rich countries should simply give more of the vaccines they have to poorer countries through COVAX, the public-private initiative WHO helped create for equitable vaccine distribution. The organization and its partners delivered its first doses last week — in very limited quantities.

But rich countries are not willing to give up what they have. Earlier this month, Ursula Von der Leyen, head of the European Commission, used the phrase "global common good" to describe the vaccines. However, by the end of the week, the European Union had imposed export controls on vaccines, giving countries the power to stop shots from leaving their borders in some cases.

The long-held model in the pharmaceutical industry is that companies pour in huge amounts of money and research in return for the right to reap profits from their drugs and vaccines. At an industry forum last May, Pfizer's CEO Albert Bourla described the idea of sharing IP rights widely as "nonsense" and even "dangerous." AstraZeneca's chief Pascal Soriot said that if intellectual property is not protected, "there is no incentive for anybody to innovate."

Thomas Cueni, director general of the International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers, called the idea of lifting patent protections "a very bad signal to the future. You signal that if you have a pandemic, your patents are not worth anything."

Advocates of sharing vaccine blueprints argue that, unlike with most drugs, taxpayers paid billions to develop vaccines that are now "global public goods" and should be used to end the biggest public health emergency in living memory.

"People are literally dying because we cannot agree on intellectual property rights," said Mustaqeem De Gama, a South African diplomat who has been deeply involved in the WTO discussions.

Paul Fehlner, the chief legal officer for biotech company Axcella and a supporter of the WHO patent pool board, said governments that poured billions of dollars into developing vaccines and treatments should have demanded more from the companies they were financing from the beginning.

"A condition of taking taxpayer money is not treating them as dupes," he said.

In a Feb. 3 interview with the Journal of the American Medical Association, Dr. Anthony Fauci, the leading pandemic expert in the United States, said all options need to be on the table, including increasing aid, improving production capacity in the developing world and working with pharmaceutical companies to relax their patents.

"Rich countries, ourselves included, have a moral responsibility when you have a global outbreak like this," Fauci said. "We've got to get the entire world vaccinated, not just our own country."

It's hard to know exactly how much more vaccine could be made worldwide if intellectual property restrictions were lifted, because the spare production capacity of factories has not been publicly shared. But Suhaib Siddiqi, former director of chemistry at Moderna, said that with the blueprint and technical advice, a modern factory should be able to get vaccine production going in at most three to four months.

"In my opinion the vaccine belongs to the public," said Siddiqi, who is still active in the field. "Any company which has experience synthesizing molecules should be able to do it."

Back in Bangladesh, the Incepta factory tried to get what it needed to make more vaccines in two ways,

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by offering its production lines to Moderna and by reaching out to a WHO partner. Moderna did not respond to multiple requests for comment about the Bangladesh plant, but its CEO, Stéphane Bancel, told European parliamentarians that the company's engineers are fully occupied on expanding production in Europe.

"Doing more tech transfer right now could actually put the production and the increased output for the months to come at great risk," he said. "We are very open to do it in the future once our current sites are running."

Muktadir said he was also in discussions last May with CEPI, or the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, one of WHO's partners in a global effort to buy and distribute COVID-19 vaccines fairly, but nothing came of it. CEPI spokesman Tom Mooney said the talks last year with Incepta didn't raise interest, but that CEPI is still in discussions "about matchmaking opportunities including the possibility of using Incepta's capacity for second wave vaccines."

Muktadir said he fully appreciates the extraordinary scientific achievement involved in the creation of vaccines this year, wants the rest of the world to be able to share in it, and is willing to pay a fair price.

"Nobody should give their property just for nothing," he said. "A vaccine could be made accessible to people — high quality, effective vaccines."

Cheng reported from Toronto. Jamey Keaten in Geneva, Jan M. Olsen in Copenhagen, Denmark, Al-Emrun Garjon in Dhaka, Bangladesh, and Andrew Meldrum in Johannesburg, South Africa, contributed to this report.

Welcome back: Optimism abounds as MLB's spring includes fans

By DAVID BRANDT AP Sports Writer

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. (AP) — Brian Delaney checked his ticket, found his seats and then sat down for a minute in the sunshine. It wasn't a typical late February day in Arizona — a little cool, a little breezy — but Delaney didn't complain a bit.

"You ever been through a Colorado winter?" the Colorado Rockies fan said with a grin.

The good humor and smiles were easy to find as baseball fans streamed into Sunday afternoon's spring training opener between the Rockies and Arizona Diamondbacks. A downward trend in COVID-19 cases throughout most of the country has meant that a limited amount of fans are allowed back in spring training facilities throughout Arizona and Florida.

At Salt River Fields at Talking Stick, the crowd was capped at about 2,200 fans, which is 16% of the usual capacity. Delaney said he never hesitated to get tickets for himself and Debra Mierzwa once they went on sale a few weeks ago.

"Oh yeah," Delaney said. "We were never worried. This is great."

The happy and halfway-normal scene on Sunday was a far cry from 353 days ago, when incredulous fans stood outside Salt River Fields and digested the news that baseball — and pretty much the rest of the world — was being shutdown because of the spreading coronavirus pandemic.

Nearly a year later, things are very different.

"It seemed like forever," said Brandon Ramsey, who lives in the Phoenix area and went to the Red-Indians game in Goodyear on Sunday. "Last year got cut a little short. To come out here for opening day is just fantastic. They did a great job in socially distancing. They made sure we were safe."

Aside from the World Series and NL Championship Series held last October at a neutral-site park in Arlington, Texas, this marked the first time fans were allowed at big league baseball games since March 12.

By now the safety protocols for sports events have become familiar. Fans in Scottsdale are spread out in small pods of two, four or six people. Masks are worn except when eating and drinking. People sitting on blankets in the grass beyond the outfield wall were given spray-painted squares to stay separate. Cleaning crews are ubiquitous.

But spring baseball appears to have considerable safety advantage over its NBA, NHL and college basketball counterparts: It's played outdoors where studies have shown the virus is less effective at spreading.

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"We feel really good about our ability to host spring training in the safest possible way," Cactus League executive director Bridget Binsbacher said.

All 30 teams in Major League Baseball are allowing fans at their spring training facilities in Arizona and Florida, though capacity will be severely limited. The Chicago Cubs are welcoming the most fans (3,630 per game) while the San Francisco Giants will have the fewest (1,000 per game).

The Yankees and Twins have the largest percentage of seats available, with the potential to reach 28% of capacity.

Fans certainly seem excited about getting back to the park. The players have missed them, too.

Oakland right-hander Daulton Jefferies got a thrill from facing the loaded Los Angeles Dodgers lineup with fans in the seats at last. The limited crowd of 1,998 was a sellout at Hohokam Stadium in Mesa, Arizona.

"Even though it's 20-percent capacity it didn't feel like it," Jefferies said. "Everyone was very loud. It was just a lot of fun. I think we truly underestimated how much we missed it."

The outlook for spring training has changed drastically just in the past month. Back in January, the Cactus League sent a letter to MLB suggesting that the spring schedule be delayed because of high COVID-19 case counts in Maricopa County, which is home to all 15 teams in Arizona.

But then cases plummeted in Arizona and the plan to play games pushed forward. Binsbacher and others became much more optimistic.

For some fans, the progress came too late.

Don Witynski is a 58-year-old Milwaukee Brewers fan from Wisconsin who has traveled to Arizona the past four years for about a week during spring training. He said his family of four would watch three or four baseball games but the trip also includes hiking and other outdoor activities in the Arizona sun.

Not this year. He said most of his friends are staying in Wisconsin this year, though a few will make the trip to the desert.

"We're hunkering down, staying home," Witynski said. "I've got teenagers, 13-year-old twins. Obviously until this vaccine rolls out more we're definitely staying home this year unfortunately."

Those are the kinds of stories that have Arizona and Florida bracing for another year of lost revenue. But limited fans are better than no fans. The appetite to watch baseball appears strong: The Rockies and Diamondbacks — who share the Salt River Fields facility — both sold out their entire spring ticket allotments about 24 hours after they went public.

Delaney said he and Mierzwa were coming to Arizona regardless of the baseball situation. They enjoy trail running and Arizona in February is a fine time for that sport. Businesses in Arizona hope there more Delaneys and Mierzwas out there to make 2021 a little less painful.

"It's all part of moving the right direction," Binsbacher said. "I can't stress enough — health and safety was at the forefront of everything we did. But the financial numbers are real. It definitely impacts our businesses and the numbers speak for themselves. It's a tremendous impact."

The COVID-19 hit to central Arizona's baseball economy was stark: A study from Arizona State University found that the Cactus League's season generated an estimated economic impact of \$363.6 million in 2020 before the shutdown in mid-March, which was down nearly \$300 million from the estimated \$644.2 million generated in 2018.

The study added that 2020 would have been "on a par" with 2018 had it not been for the coronavirus.

As for 2021, there is cautious optimism that the Cactus League season won't be a complete washout for the local economy. But for hotels, restaurants, bars, golf courses and rental house companies, there's little doubt that finances will take a hit for a second straight year.

Stephanie Pressler, who is the director of community affairs for Experience Scottsdale, said businesses are balancing realism with a little optimism now that COVID-19 cases have gone down and all teams are allowing at least some fans.

"This is normally the busiest time of year for Scottsdale's tourism industry, largely because of Cactus League spring training," Pressler said in an email. "Understandably, our expectations are muted this year given the ongoing pandemic, though Experience Scottsdale is excited that the season is moving forward in a way that will keep teams, fans, employees and residents safe."

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AP Sports Writer Steve Megargee in Milwaukee, AP Baseball Writers Ronald Blum and Janie McCauley and AP freelancer Gary Schatz in Goodyear, Arizona, contributed to this story.

More AP baseball: <https://apnews.com/MLB> and https://twitter.com/AP_Sports

Review: A virtual Golden Globes is no party, but they tried

By LINDSEY BAHR AP Film Writer

Tina Fey asked the tough question 10 minutes into the three-hour Golden Globes broadcast Sunday: Could this whole night have been an email? Well, maybe.

We wouldn't have gotten to see the awkwardness of Daniel Kaluuya's acceptance speech (almost) cut before it began, Don Cheadle giving a tie-dyed sweatshirt clad Jason Sudeikis the wrap-up signal, or Catherine O'Hara's husband playing her off with his iPhone — a funny bit hampered by bad sound.

But we also wouldn't have gotten to tear up along with Chadwick Boseman's widow Taylor Simone Ledward or see the sweetness of Mark Ruffalo's kids standing proudly behind him when he won, or Ethan Hawke's sitting with him when he didn't.

We also wouldn't have gotten swept away by Norman Lear's heartfelt remarks. It helped that Lear's setup looked professionally produced. Many did not. Celebrities, we've all learned over the past year, have bad lighting and shoddy internet connections too, even on an awards show night.

The 78th Annual Golden Globes came in limping Sunday, not just because of the strangeness of producing a live, bicoastal show a year into a pandemic, but because in the week leading up to the event, the 87-person organization behind the endeavor, the Hollywood Foreign Press Association, was given an unflattering spotlight in a series of exposes in The Los Angeles Times and The New York Times. The most stinging revelation was that there are zero Black members in their ranks.

Whether or not they would address it was perhaps the biggest question going into the night. Hosts Fey and Amy Poehler said they needed to change. And three members of the HFPA came out on stage to say they intended to. The remoteness of it all allowed them to control the controversy on their own terms, or at least manage it. For the show, it was a silver lining. For the audience, it felt like a punt. In a normal year, every nominee and guest would have been asked about it on the red carpet. All the celebrities who posted that Time's Up message on their socials would have had to say something. Sunday, there was no one to ask. The HFPA may have just bought themselves another year to get their act together.

Although their nominations are occasionally absurd, the ultimate winners often aren't. "Nomadland" director Chloé Zhao became the first woman to win best director since Barbra Streisand in 1984. Boseman won too. As did "Minari" and Lee Isaac Chung (who also shared an especially sweet moment with his young daughter), even if it was relegated to the foreign language category. Kate Hudson, who proved to be a trouper despite all the fun made of her nomination and film, did not. Unfortunately, as the night wore on, more and more winners found themselves played off by the show, including most of "The Crown." Worse, the cut off music was bad.

The evening had its inspired comedic moments too, most of which came from hosts Fey and Poehler who in their fourth time leading the show seamlessly played off of one another with almost 3,000 miles between them. Though it was easy to forget that they were on different coasts, they were always ready with a well-timed gag acknowledging that they weren't. They also mocked the weirdness of it all, about halfway through exhaustedly recapping the meager GIF and meme moments thus far — Cheadle, Tracy Morgan mispronouncing "Soul" as sal and Sudeikis' hoodie.

"Those are the messy things we love about the Globes," Poehler said.

The show has always been touted as a party, boozy, glamorous and unruly with hosts who are welcome to poke fun and occasionally even cross the line. The booziness perhaps has been overstated of late — most are far too savvy to get drunk on camera before their category. Besides, that's what the after parties are for. But there was a lot lost here, even as the show tried to manufacture moments between

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the nominees with awkward semi-public five-way conversations before commercial breaks.

"This is so weird," said Lily Collins, to the heads on the five disconnected screens around her. She could have been speaking for all of us.

Cutting away to the nominees after a joke or a related win was rarely successful and often stilted, although the later categories seemed to learn from the mistakes of the earlier ones. But it made it even more frustrating that the show failed to use their in-person talent more creatively. Yes, Kristen Wiig and Annie Mumolo got a fun "Barb and Star" moment, as did Maya Rudolph and Kenan Thompson. But they also got Tiffany Haddish to show up and all she got was one quip about Eddie Murphy's mansions. The NBC tie-ins, too, seemed more shameless than usual.

The Golden Globes have in years past been a frivolity that's still a pretty watchable, star-studded show. It occasionally even captured the zeitgeist in surprisingly meaningful ways. Audiences expect the worst and sometimes find it. But there are also grace notes in all the silliness— remember the sea of black to support the newly formed Time's Up a few years ago and that Oprah speech? And maybe it's that tension that has kept the Globes audience relatively stable. Whether or not this year will hold up when the numbers come in remains to be seen, but it would be a surprise. And does it matter? It's not as though anyone involved is planning to relive this experience.

"We all know that awards shows are stupid," Fey said early on.

Yes, they are. But maybe it's just the stupidity we all need after a very tough year.

Follow AP Film Writer Lindsey Bahr on Twitter: www.twitter.com/ladbahr

'Nomadland,' 'Borat' win at a socially distant Golden Globes

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — With homebound nominees appearing by remote video and hosts Tina Fey and Amy Poehler on different sides of the country, a very socially distanced 78th Golden Globe Awards trudged on in the midst of the pandemic and amid a storm of criticism for the Hollywood Foreign Press Association, with top awards going to "Nomadland," "Borat Subsequent Moviefilm," "The Crown" and "Schitt's Creek."

The night's top award, best picture drama, went to Chloé Zhao's elegiac road movie "Nomadland," a Western set across economic upheaval and personal grief. Zhao, the China-born filmmaker of, became the first woman of Asian descent to win best director. She's only the second woman in the history of the Globes to win, and the first since Barbra Streisand won for "Yentl" in 1984.

"Nomadland at its core for me is a pilgrimage through grief and healing," said Zhao, accepting the awards remotely. "For everyone who has gone through this difficult and beautiful journey at some point in their lives, this is for you."

With a canceled red carpet and stars giving speeches from the couch, Sunday's Globes had little of their typically frothy flavor. But they went on, nevertheless, with winners in sweats and dogs in laps, in a pandemic that has sapped nearly all the glamour out of Hollywood.

Facing scant traditional studio competition, streaming services dominated the Globes like never before — even if the top award went to a familiar if renamed source: Searchlight Pictures, the now Disney-owned specialty label behind "12 Years a Slave" and "Birdman."

Amazon's "Borat Subsequent Moviefilm" — one of the few nominated films shot partly during the pandemic — won best film, comedy or musical. Its star, guerilla comedian Sacha Baron Cohen, also won best actor in a comedy. Referring to Rudy Giuliani's infamous cameo, Baron Cohen thanked "a fresh new talent who came from nowhere and turned out to be a comedy genius."

"I mean, who could get more laughs from one unzipping," he said.

Netflix, which came in with a commanding 42 nominations, won the top TV awards. "The Crown," as expected, took best drama series, along with acting wins for Josh O'Connor (Prince Charles), Emma Corrin (Princess Diana) and Gillian Anderson (Margaret Thatcher). "The Queen's Gambit" won best limited series, and best actress in the category for Anya Taylor-Joy. "Schitt's Creek," the Pop TV series that found

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a wider audience on Netflix, won best comedy series for its final season. Catherine O'Hara also took best actress in a comedy series.

Chadwick Boseman, as expected, posthumously won best actor in a drama film for his final performance, in the August Wilson adaptation "Ma Rainey's Black Bottom" — a Netflix release. Boseman's wife, Taylor Simone Ledward, tearfully, emotionally accepted the award.

"He would thank God. He would thank his parents. He would thank his ancestors for their guidance and their sacrifices," said Ledward. "He would say something beautiful, something inspiring."

Apple TV+ scored its first major award when a sweatshirt-clad Jason Sudeikis won best actor in a comedy series for the streamer's "Ted Lasso."

The NBC telecast began in split screen. Fey took the stage at New York's Rainbow Room while Poehler remained at the Globes' usual home at the Beverly Hilton. In their opening remarks, they managed their typically well-timed back-and-forth despite being almost 3,000 miles from each other.

"I always knew my career would end with me wandering around the Rainbow Room pretending to talk to Amy," said Fey. "I just thought it would be later."

They appeared before masked attendees but no stars. Instead, the sparse tables — where Hollywood royalty are usually crammed together and plied with alcohol during the show — were occupied by "smoking-hot first responders and essential workers," as Fey said.

In a production nightmare but one that's become familiar during the pandemic, the night's first winner accepted his award while muted. Only after presenter Laura Dern apologized for the technical difficulties did Daniel Kaluuya, who won best supporting actor for his performance as Black Panther leader Fred Hampton in "Judas and the Black Messiah," get his speech in. When he finally came through, he wagged his finger at the camera and said, "You're doing me dirty!"

Pandemic improvising was only part of the damage control for the Hollywood Foreign Press Association, which puts on the Globes. After The Los Angeles Times revealed that there are no Black members in the 87-person voting body of the HFPA, the press association came under mounting pressure to overhaul itself and better reflect the industry it holds sway in.

This year, none of the most acclaimed Black-led films — "Ma Rainey's Black Bottom," "One Night in Miami," "Judas and the Black Messiah," "Da 5 Bloods" — were nominated for the Globes' best picture award. With the HFPA potentially fighting for its Hollywood life, Sunday's Globes were part apology tour. Fey and Poehler started in quickly on the issue.

"Look, a lot of flashy garbage got nominated but that happens," said Poehler. "That's like their thing. But a number of Black actors and Black-led projects were overlooked."

Within the first half hour of the NBC telecast, members of the press association appeared on stage to pledge change. "We recognize we have our own work to do," said vice president Helen Hoehne. "We must have Black journalists in our organization."

Whether those statements — along with a diverse group of winners — did enough to remedy anything remained unclear. The moment the show ended, Time's Up sent letters to both the HFPA and NBCUniversal demanding more. "The Globes are no longer golden. It's time to act," wrote Tina Tchen, the group's president.

COVID-19 circumstances led to some award-show anomalies. Mark Ruffalo, appearing remotely, won best actor in a limited series for "I Know This Much Is True" with his kids celebrating behind him and his wife, Sunrise Coigney, sitting alongside.

Lee Isaac Chung, writer-director of the tender Korean-American family drama "Minari" (a movie the HFPA was criticized for ruling ineligible for its top award because of its non-English dialogue), accepted the award for best foreign language film while his young daughter embraced him. "She's the reason I made this film," said Chung.

John Boyega, supporting actor winner for his performance in Steve McQueen's "Small Axe" anthology, raised his leg to show he was wearing track pants below his more elegant white jacket. Jodie Foster ("The Mauritanian") won one of the biggest surprise Globes, for best supporting actress in a film, while, sitting on the couch next her wife, Alexandra Hedison, and with her dog, Ziggy on her lap.

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Even if speeches sometimes lacked drama without Hollywood gathered in one place, representation was a common refrain. Pointedly referring to the diversity of the HFPA, presenter and previous winner Sterling K. Brown began, "Thank you. It is great to be Black at the Golden Globes," he said. "Back."

Jane Fonda, the Cecil B. DeMille Award honoree, spoke passionately about expanding the big tent of entertainment for all. "Art has always been not just in step with history but has lead the way," said Fonda. "So let's be leaders."

Other awards included Pixar's "Soul" for best animated film; Rosumund Pike took best actress in a comedy or musical film for "I Care a Lot"; Aaron Sorkin ("Trial of the Chicago 7") for best screenplay; and, in the night's biggest surprise, Andra Day ("The United States vs. Billie Holiday") for best actress in a drama, besting Carey Mulligan ("Promising Young Woman") and Frances McDormand ("Nomadland").

Despite considerable pre-show backlash, the Globes have persisted because of their popularity (the show ranks as the third most-watched award show, after the Oscars and Grammys), their profitability (NBC paid \$60 million for broadcast rights in 2018) and because they serve as important marketing material for contending films and Oscar hopefuls.

The Academy Awards will be held April 25.

China said to speed up move to more survivable nuclear force

By ROBERT BURNS AP National Security Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — China appears to be moving faster toward a capability to launch its newer nuclear missiles from underground silos, possibly to improve its ability to respond promptly to a nuclear attack, according to an American expert who analyzed satellite images of recent construction at a missile training area.

Hans Kristensen, a longtime watcher of U.S., Russian and Chinese nuclear forces, said the imagery suggests that China is seeking to counter what it may view as a growing threat from the United States. The U.S. in recent years has pointed to China's nuclear modernization as a key justification for investing hundreds of billions of dollars in the coming two decades to build an all-new U.S. nuclear arsenal.

There's no indication the United States and China are headed toward armed conflict, let alone a nuclear one. But the Kristensen report comes at a time of heightened U.S.-China tensions across a broad spectrum, from trade to national security. A stronger Chinese nuclear force could factor into U.S. calculations for a military response to aggressive Chinese actions, such as in Taiwan or the South China Sea.

The Pentagon declined to comment on Kristensen's analysis of the satellite imagery, but it said last summer in its annual report on Chinese military developments that Beijing intends to increase the peacetime readiness of its nuclear forces by putting more of them in underground silos and operating on a higher level of alert in which it could launch missiles upon warning of being under attack.

"The PRC's nuclear weapons policy prioritizes the maintenance of a nuclear force able to survive a first strike and respond with sufficient strength to inflict unacceptable damage on an enemy," the Pentagon report said.

More broadly, the Pentagon asserts that China is modernizing its nuclear forces as part of a wider effort to build a military by mid-century that is equal to, and in some respects superior to, the U.S. military.

China's nuclear arsenal, estimated by the U.S. government to number in the low 200s, is dwarfed by those of the United States and Russia, which have thousands. The Pentagon predicts that the People's Liberation Army Rocket Forces will at least double the size of its nuclear arsenal over the next 10 years, still leaving it with far fewer than the United States.

China does not publicly discuss the size or preparedness of its nuclear force beyond saying it would be used only in response to an attack. The United States, by contrast, does not rule out striking first, although President Joe Biden in the past has embraced removing that ambiguity by adopting a "no first use" policy.

Kristensen, an analyst with the Federation of American Scientists, said the commercial satellite photos he acquired appear to show China late last year began construction of 11 underground silos at a vast missile training range near Jilantai in north-central China. Construction of five other silos began there earlier. In

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its public reports the Pentagon has not cited any specific number of missile silos at that training range.

These 16 silos identified by Kristensen would be in addition to the 18-20 that China now operates with an older intercontinental ballistic missile, the DF-5.

"It should be pointed out that even if China doubles or triples the number of ICBM silos, it would only constitute a fraction of the number of ICBM silos operated by the United States and Russia," Kristensen wrote on his Federation of American Scientists' blog. "The U.S. Air Force has 450 silos, of which 400 are loaded. Russia has about 130 operational silos."

Nearly all of the new silos detected by Kristensen appear designed to accommodate China's newer-generation DF-41 ICBM, which is built with a solid-fuel component that allows the operator to more quickly prepare the missile for launch, compared to the DF-5's more time-consuming liquid-fuel system. The DF-41 can target Alaska and much of the continental United States.

China already has a rail- and road-mobile version of the DF-41 missile.

"They're trying to build up the survivability of their force," by developing silo basing for their advanced missiles, Kristensen said in an interview. "It raises some questions about this fine line in nuclear strategy," between deterring a U.S. adversary by threatening its highly valued nuclear forces and pushing the adversary into taking countermeasures that makes its force more capable and dangerous.

"How do you get out of that vicious cycle?" Kristensen asked.

Frank Rose, a State Department arms control official during the Obama administration, said recently there is little prospect of getting China to join an international negotiation to limit nuclear weapons. The Trump administration tried that but failed, and Rose sees no reason to think that will change anytime soon.

"They're not going to do it out of the goodness of their heart," he said, but they might be interested in talking if the United States were willing to consider Chinese concerns about related issues like U.S. missile defenses.

Rose says China's main interest is in building up its non-nuclear force of shorter- and intermediate-range missiles, which, combined with a cyberattack capability and systems for damaging or destroying U.S. satellites, could push the United States out of the western Pacific. This would complicate any effort by the United States to intervene in the event Beijing decided to use force against Taiwan, the semi-autonomous democracy that Beijing views as a renegade province that must eventually return to the communist fold.

Trump calls for GOP unity, repeats lies about election loss

By JILL COLVIN Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) — Taking the stage for the first time since leaving office, former President Donald Trump called for GOP unity, even as he exacerbated intraparty divisions by attacking fellow Republicans and promoting lies about the election in a speech that made clear he intends to remain a dominant political force.

Speaking Sunday at the Conservative Political Action Conference, where he has been hailed as a returning hero, Trump blasted his successor, President Joe Biden, and tried to lay out a vision for the future of the GOP that revolves firmly around him, despite his loss in November.

"Do you miss me yet?" Trump said after taking the stage to his old rally soundtrack and cheers from the supportive crowd.

Trump, in his speech, tried to downplay the civil war gripping the party over the extent to which Republicans should embrace him, even as he unfurled an enemies list, calling out by name the 10 House Republicans and seven GOP senators who voted to impeach or convict him for inciting the U.S. Capitol riot. He ended by singling out Rep. Liz Cheney, the No. 3 House Republican, who has faced tremendous backlash in Wyoming for saying Trump should no longer play a role in the party or headline the event.

While he insisted the division was merely a spat "between a handful of Washington, D.C., establishment political hacks and everybody else, all over the country," Trump had a message for the incumbents who had dared to cross him: "Get rid of 'em all."

The conference, held this year in Orlando instead of the Washington suburbs to evade COVID-19 re-

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strictions, served as a tribute to Trump and Trumpism, complete with a golden statue in his likeness on display. Speakers, including many potential 2024 hopefuls, argued that the party must embrace the former president and his followers, even after the deadly insurrection at the Capitol on Jan. 6.

They also repeated in panel after panel his unfounded claims that he lost reelection only because of mass voter fraud, even though such claims have been rejected by judges, Republican state officials and Trump's own administration.

Trump, too, continued to repeat what Democrats have dubbed the "big lie," calling the election "rigged" and insisting that he won in November, even though he lost by more than 7 million votes.

"As you know, they just lost the White House," he said of Biden, rewriting history.

It is highly unusual for past American presidents to publicly criticize their successors in the months after leaving office. Ex-presidents typically step out of the spotlight for at least a while; Barack Obama was famously seen kitesurfing on vacation after he departed, while George W. Bush said he believed Obama "deserves my silence" and took up painting.

Not Trump.

He delivered a sharp rebuke of what he framed as the new administration's first month of failures, especially Biden's approach to immigration and the border.

"Joe Biden has had the most disastrous first month of any president in modern history," Trump said.

White House press secretary Jen Psaki had brushed off the expected criticism last week. "We'll see what he says, but our focus is certainly not on what President Trump is saying at CPAC," she told reporters.

Aside from criticizing Biden, Trump used the speech to crown himself the future of the Republican Party, even as many leaders argue they must move in a new, less divisive direction after Republicans lost not just the White House, but both chambers of Congress.

Though Trump has flirted with the the idea of creating a third party, he pledged Sunday to remain part of "our beloved" GOP.

"I'm going to continue to fight right by your side. We're not starting new parties," he said. "We have the Republican Party. It's going to be strong and united like never before." Yet Trump spent much of the speech lashing out at those he has deemed insufficiently loyal and dubbed "RINOs" — Republican in name only — for failing to stand with him.

"We cannot have leaders who show more passion for condemning their fellow Americans than they have ever shown for standing up to Democrats, the media and the radicals who want to turn America into a socialist country," Trump said.

Trump did not use his speech to announce plans to run again, but he repeatedly teased the prospect as he predicted a Republican would win back the White House in 2024.

"And I wonder who that will be," he offered. "Who, who, who will that be? I wonder."

It remains unclear, however, how much appetite there would be for another Trump term, even in the room of staunch supporters.

The conference's annual unscientific straw poll of just over 1,000 attendees found that 97% approved of the job Trump did as president. But they were much more ambiguous when asked whether he should run again, with only 68% saying he should.

If the 2024 primary were held today and Trump were in the race, just 55% said they would vote for him, followed by Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis at 21%. Without Trump in the field, DeSantis garnered 43% support, followed by 8% for South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem and 7% each for former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Texas Sen. Ted Cruz.

While he no longer has his social media megaphone after being barred from Twitter and Facebook, Trump had been inching back into public life even before the speech. He called into conservative news outlets after talk radio star Rush Limbaugh's death and has issued statements, including one blasting Mitch McConnell after the Senate Republican leader excoriated Trump for inciting the Capitol riot. McConnell has since said he would "absolutely" support Trump if he were the GOP nominee in 2024.

At his Mar-a-Lago club in Palm Beach, Florida, Trump has also been quietly meeting with aides and senior

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party leaders as he builds his post-presidential political operation. While he has already backed several pro-Trump candidates, including one challenging an impeachment supporter, aides have been working this past week to develop benchmarks for those seeking his endorsement to make sure the candidates are serious and have set up full-fledged political and fundraising organizations before he gets involved.

They are also planning a new super PAC that could raise unlimited amounts of money, though one aide cautioned they were still deciding whether to create a new entity or repurpose an existing America First super PAC.

Trump hinted at the effort Sunday, voicing his commitment to helping elect Republicans and calling on attendees to join him.

"I stand before you today to declare that the incredible journey we begun together ... is far from being over," he said.

The Latest: 'Nomadland' wanders into the Globe winner circle

By The Associated Press undefined

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The Latest on the Golden Globe ceremony (all times local):

8:05 p.m.

"Nomadland" has come in from the desert to take the Golden Globe for best picture in the drama category.

The film, a prime candidate for a best-picture Oscar, took home two Globes on Sunday night in the most atypical of years, where the pandemic had a major effect on the scaled-back, bi-coastal ceremony and on the films released.

Earlier, Chloe Zhao became the first woman of Asian descent to win the Golden Globe for best director for the film.

"Nomadland" follows a woman, played by Frances McDormand, who leaves her small town to join a group of wanderers in the American West.

It beat out fellow nominees "Mank," "The Father," "The Trial of the Chicago 7" and "Promising Young Woman."

Accepting the best picture award, Zhao paid tribute to all those who have been on difficult journeys, quoting a line from the film: "We don't say goodbye, we say see you down the road."

8:00 p.m.

Andra Day was singing no blues at the Golden Globes.

In a major surprise, the Globe for best actress in a drama film went to Day in "The United States vs. Billie Holiday" on Sunday night.

It's the first acting Golden Globe for the 36-year-old singer, songwriter and actress Day.

She was one of several Black actors, including Daniel Kaluuya and the late Chadwick Boseman, who won Globes on a night when the organization that hands them out was under a cloud for having no black voting members.

Day plays the legendary jazz and blues singer Holiday in the biopic directed by Lee Daniels.

A tearful and overwhelmed Day spoke through tears as she said she was "in the presence of giants," naming her fellow nominees Viola Davis, Carey Mulligan, Vanessa Kirby and Frances McDormand.

7:55 p.m.

It is biggest night for Borat at Golden Globes!

"Borat Subsequent Moviefilm" is the winner of the Globe for best picture, musical or comedy.

Sacha Baron Cohen directed and reprises the title role of a man from Kazakhstan documenting America in the sequel to 2006's "Borat" that also stars Maria Bakalova in a Globe-nominated role.

Baron Cohen thanked "comic genius" Rudy Giuliani, who was tricked into appearing in the film.

It beat out fellow nominees "Hamilton," "Music," "Palm Springs" and "The Prom."

Baron Cohen then won best actor in a musical or comedy for the role, the after winning the same award

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for the original "Borat!" in 2006.

7:50 p.m.

Chloe Zhao became the first woman of Asian descent to win the Golden Globe for best director on Sunday night in a groundbreaking year for female filmmakers.

Zhao, an Oscar frontrunner, was favored to win Sunday night for her film "Nomadland."

She is the first woman to win the award since Barbra Streisand won for "Yentl" in 1984.

She was one of three women nominated in the category, along with Regina King and Emerald Fennell.

7:40 p.m.

Six months after his death at age 43, Chadwick Boseman has won a Golden Globe.

The award for best actor in a dramatic film was earned by Boseman for his final role, in "Ma Rainey's Black Bottom."

Boseman's widow, Taylor Simone Ledward, accepted the award for her late husband, saying "he would thank God, he would thank his parents, he would thank his ancestors for their guidance and their sacrifices."

Through tears, Ledward added: "I don't have his words, but we have to take all the moments to celebrate those we love."

In the Netflix film, Boseman plays an ambitious trumpeter named Levee who aims to launch himself with his own updated version of the songs of Ma Rainey, the powerhouse blues singer played by Viola Davis.

Boseman, who starred in the Marvel blockbuster "Black Panther," died in August after privately battling colon cancer for four years.

7:35 p.m.

It's checkmate for "The Queen's Gambit. It has captured two Golden Globes.

The Netflix show about a young girl in an orphanage who becomes a chess prodigy won the Globe on Sunday night for best limited series or TV movie, moments after star Anya Taylor-Joy won best actress in a limited series.

"The Queen's Gambit" beat out nominees including "Normal People," "Small Axe," "The Undoing," and "Unorthodox."

7:30 p.m.

Jodie Foster has won her first Golden Globe in nearly three decades.

Foster won the Globe for best supporting actress in a film Sunday night for her role in "The Mauritanian."

It's the third acting Golden Globe for the 58-year-old Foster, but the first since she won in 1992 for "Silence of the Lambs."

She said "I never expected to ever be here again" as she accepted the award.

In "The Mauritanian," Foster stars opposite Tahar Rahim as a lawyer seeking to free a man held without charges for 14 years at Guantanamo Bay.

She also won the Globes' Cecil B. DeMille lifetime achievement award in 2013, and has won two Oscars.

Foster beat out nominees including Olivia Colman, Glenn Close, Helena Zengel and Amanda Seyfried.

7:20 p.m.

Jane Fonda accepted the Cecil B. DeMille Award at the Golden Globes, praising the "community of storytellers" for their vital role in troubled times, and calling for greater diversity in Hollywood.

The 83-year-old actor and activist, star of "Barbarella," "Klute," "Coming Home," "On Golden Pond" and "9 to 5," received the Globes' version of a lifetime achievement award, one of the few honorees to accept a Globe in person in Beverly Hills.

Wearing a white suit just as Hillary Clinton and Kamala Harris did for significant political speeches, Fonda said, "We are a community of storytellers, aren't we, and in turbulent, crisis-torn times like these, storytelling has always been essential."

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She said stories let us "have empathy, to recognize that for all our diversity we are all humans."

But she said there is another "story we've been afraid to see and hear about ourselves in this industry, about which voices we respect and elevate and which we tune out, who is offered a seat at the table and who is kept out of the rooms where decisions are made."

Fonda called for Hollywood's leaders to "make an effort to expand that tent" so that "everyone has a chance to be seen and heard."

The DeMille award honors "outstanding contributions to the world of entertainment."

Previous winners include Walt Disney, Judy Garland, John Wayne, Sidney Poitier, Oprah Winfrey, Tom Hanks and Fonda's father Henry Fonda. The Fondas become the first parent and child to both receive the DeMille award.

7:10 p.m.

"The Crown" is tops again.

The Netflix show won its third Golden Globe of the night as it took best TV drama series for its fourth season.

The season documented the British royal family in the 1980s with Olivia Colman as Queen Elizabeth II, Josh O'Connor as Prince Charles and Emma Corrin as Princess Diana.

O'Connor and Corrin won the awards for best actor and actress in a TV drama earlier in the evening. Corrin beat out her co-star Colman.

It's the second best drama award for the show, which also won in 2017.

7:00 p.m.

Charles and Diana took home matching Golden Globes.

The Globe for best actor in a TV drama series went to Josh O'Connor for "The Crown" on Sunday night.

The 30-year-old British actor won the award for playing Prince Charles in season four of the Netflix series, moments after Emma Corrin won best actress in a TV drama for playing Princess Diana on the show.

O'Connor beat out fellow nominees Jason Bateman, Bob Odenkirk, Al Pacino and Matthew Rhys.

6:45 p.m.

Rosamund Pike is the surprise winner of the Golden Globe for best actress in a movie musical or comedy for her work in "I Care a Lot."

Pike took home the virtual trophy on Sunday night for her role in the dark comedy as a woman who poses as a saintly legal guardian to use the courts to bilk elderly people of everything they're worth.

The 42-year-old British actor appeared genuinely stunned to win the award in her third Globe nomination over fellow nominees Kate Hudson, Michelle Pfeiffer, Maria Bakalova and Anya Taylor-Joy.

She thanked "America's broken legal system for making it possible to make stories like this."

6:30 p.m.

The love just keeps flowing down "Schitt's Creek."

The Canadian comedy series created by the father-son team of Eugene and Dan Levy that dominated September's Emmy Awards is the winner of the Golden Globe for best comedy or musical TV series.

Dan Levy accepted the award Sunday night, saying that by its final season, "Schitt's Creek" took him and his cast and crew "to places we never thought possible."

It was the second Globe of the night for the Pop TV series, after Catherine O'Hara won best actress in a TV musical or comedy series early in the show.

It topped fellow nominees "Ted Lasso," "The Great," "The Flight Attendant" and "Emily in Paris."

Moments earlier, Jason Sudeikis scored a minor upset over Eugene Levy and others when he won the Golden Globe for best actor in a musical or comedy series for "Ted Lasso."

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6:20 p.m.

The Golden Globe for best actress in a drama series goes to Emma Corrin in "The Crown."

The 25-year-old Corrin, who played Princess Diana in season four of the Netflix series, appeared stunned and nearly tearful as she accepted the award in a remote location Sunday night.

She thanked the woman she played, saying "you have taught me compassion and empathy beyond any measure I could ever imagine."

Corrin beat out fellow nominees Laura Linney, Jodie Comer, Sarah Paulson and her "Crown" castmate Olivia Colman.

6:00 p.m.

Norman Lear accepted the Carol Burnett Award on Sunday at the Golden Globes for his storied career in television, saying he "could not feel more blessed."

The 98-year-old still-working television legend, creator of "All in the Family," "The Jeffersons" and "One Day at a Time, is the third winner of the award that honors "outstanding contributions to television on or off the screen."

Speaking from what appeared to be his home and sitting in an easy chair, Lear praised the woman for whom the award is named.

"I am convinced that laughter adds time to one's life, and nobody has made me laugh harder, nobody I owe more time to, than Carol Burnett," Lear said.

He went on to pay tribute to "a lifetime of partners, performers, associations and creative talents for which I am eternally grateful."

5:40 p.m.

The leaders of the organization that gives out the Golden Globes is vowing change, and diversity, after reports that the group has no Black voting members.

Early in the Globes ceremony on Sunday night, three senior leaders of the Hollywood Foreign Press Association took the stage and said they would do better.

Vice President Helen Hoehne said "we recognize we have our own work to do" and, "We must have Black journalists in our organization."

Board chair Meher Tatna said, "We need to insure that all under-represented communities get a seat at our table, and we are going to make that happen."

HFPA president Ali Sar says that "means creating an environment where diverse membership is the norm, not the exception," and "we look forward to a more diverse future."

In stories in the run-up to the show, the Los Angeles Times and The New York Times reported that the HFPA's membership of 87 journalists includes no Black voters.

5:30 p.m.

Catherine O'Hara has ridden "Schitt's Creek" to a Golden Globe.

O'Hara won the Globe for best actress in a musical or comedy series on Sunday, signaling what may be another big night for "Schitt's Creek." The show, co-created by and co-starring Eugene Levy and his son Daniel Levy, swept the comedy categories at the Emmys.

From a couch in a remote location, O'Hara praised the Levys for "an inspiring, funny, beautiful family love story in which they let me wear 100 wigs and speak like an alien."

The 66-year-old O'Hara is more than 30 years older than all of the fellow nominees she beat: Kaley Cuoco, Elle Fanning, Lily Collins and Jane Levy.

5:15 p.m.

The winner of the Golden Globe for best supporting actor in a film is Daniel Kaluuya for his work in "Judas and the Black Messiah."

Kaluuya's acceptance speech could not be heard from his location at first, and he jokingly shouted "You

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did me dirty!" once the audio was restored.

On a night when the organization that gives out the Golden Globes is facing condemnation for having no Black voting members, the night's first award went to a Black actor.

Kaluuya didn't mention the issue directly in his acceptance, though he praised the man he played to win the award, Black Panther leader Fred Hampton, who was killed in an FBI raid in 1969.

The actor was nominated in 2018 for his leading role in "Get Out."

He topped fellow nominees Leslie Odom Jr., Sacha Baron Cohen, Bill Murray and Jared Leto.

5:10 p.m.

Tina Fey and Amy Poehler began the pandemic-era Golden Globe Awards on Sunday night, delivering a split-screen opening from separate coasts.

With Poehler at the Beverly Hilton in Beverly Hills, California, and Fey in New York's Rainbow Room on Sunday night, the two did an initial gag where Fey reached out through the screen and stroked Poehler's hair.

The Globes, normally a loose-and-boozy party that serves as the kickoff for Hollywood's awards season, has been beset with problems beyond the coronavirus leading up to this year's ceremony. They include a revelation in the Los Angeles Times that the Hollywood Foreign Press Association, which gives out the awards, has no Black voting members in the group.

Fey took a shot at the organization in the show opening, explaining to the two small live audiences made up of first responders and essential workers that "the Hollywood Foreign Press Association is made up of around 90 no black journalists."

UN: At least 18 killed by Myanmar forces in several cities

YANGON, Myanmar (AP) — Security forces in Myanmar opened fire and made mass arrests Sunday as they sought to break up protests against the military's seizure of power, and a U.N. human rights official said it had "credible information" that at least 18 people were killed and 30 were wounded.

That would be the highest single-day death toll among protesters who are demanding that the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi be restored to power after being ousted by a Feb. 1 coup. About 1,000 people are believed to have been detained Sunday.

"Deaths reportedly occurred as a result of live ammunition fired into crowds in Yangon, Dawei, Mandalay, Myeik, Bago and Pokokku," the U.N. Human Rights Office said in a statement referring to several cities, adding that the forces also used tear gas, flash-bang grenades and stun grenades.

An Associated Press journalist was taken into police custody on Saturday morning while providing news coverage of the protests. The journalist, Thein Zaw, remains in police custody.

The AP called for his immediate release.

"Independent journalists must be allowed to freely and safely report the news without fear of retribution. AP decries in the strongest terms the arbitrary detention of Thein Zaw," said Ian Phillips, AP vice president for international news. The Foreign Correspondents Club of Myanmar also condemned the arrest.

The Democratic Voice of Burma reported that as of 5 p.m. in Myanmar, there had been 19 confirmed deaths in nine cities, with another 10 deaths unconfirmed. The independent media company broadcasts on satellite and digital terrestrial television, as well as online.

DVB counted five deaths in Yangon and two in Mandalay, the largest and second-largest cities.

It registered five deaths in Dawei, a much smaller city in southeastern Myanmar that has seen tens of thousands of protesters nearly every day since the coup. Witnesses said Sunday's march was also large and people were determined not to be driven off the streets.

Confirming the deaths of protesters has been difficult amid the chaos and general lack of news from official sources, especially in areas outside Yangon, Mandalay and the capital of Naypyitaw. But in many cases, photos and video circulated showed circumstances of the killings and gruesome photos of bodies.

The independent Assistance Association of Political Prisoners reported it was aware that about 1,000 people were detained Sunday, of whom they were able to identify 270. That brought to 1,132 the total

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number of people the group has confirmed being arrested, charged or sentenced since the coup.

Gunfire was reported almost as soon the protests began Sunday morning in Yangon, as police also fired tear gas and water cannons while trying to clear the streets. Photos of shell casings from live ammunition used in assault rifles were posted on social media.

Initial reports on social media identified one young man believed to have been killed. His body was shown in photos and videos lying on a sidewalk until other protesters carried him away.

In Dawei, local media reported at least three people were killed during a protest march, supported by photos and video. Photos on social media showed one wounded man in the care of medical personnel.

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

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres strongly condemned the crackdown, calling the use of lethal force against peaceful protesters and arbitrary arrests "unacceptable," and expressed serious concern at the increase in deaths and serious injuries, U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric said.

"The secretary-general urges the international community to come together and send a clear signal to the military that it must respect the will of the people of Myanmar as expressed through the election and stop the repression," Dujarric said.

U.S. officials including Secretary of State Antony Blinken also condemned the violence. White House National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan issued a statement saying the U.S. is "alarmed" by the violence and stands in solidarity with Myanmar people "who continue to bravely voice their aspirations for democracy, rule of law, and respect for human rights."

Washington has imposed sanctions on Myanmar because of the coup, and Sullivan said it would "impose further costs on those responsible," promising details "in the coming days."

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.

On Sunday morning, medical students marched in Yangon 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 as police charged at them, and residents setting up makeshift roadblocks to slow their advance. Some protesters managed to throw tear gas canisters 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 be detained.

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

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

India giving COVID-19 vaccines to more people as cases rise

By ANIRUDDHA GHOSAL AP Science Writer

NEW DELHI (AP) — India is expanding its COVID-19 vaccination drive beyond health care and front-line workers, offering the shots to older people and those with medical conditions that put them at risk. Among the first to be inoculated on Monday was Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Those now eligible to be vaccinated include people older than 60, as well as those over 45 who have ailments such as heart disease or diabetes that make them vulnerable to serious COVID-19 illness. The shots will be given for free at government hospitals and will also be sold at over 10,000 private hospitals

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at a fixed price of 250 rupees, or \$3.40, per shot.

Modi, who is 70, got the shot at New Delhi's All India Institute of Medical Science. He appealed for all to get vaccinated, tweeting afterward, "together, let us make India COVID-19 free!"

The country of nearly 1.4 billion people started one of the world's largest vaccination drives in January, but the rollout has been sluggish.

New coronavirus infections are increasing again after months of consistent decline, and scientists have detected worrisome variants of the virus that they fear could hasten infections or render vaccines or treatments less useful. Vaccinating more people is a priority, with India's Health Ministry on Sunday urging states "not to lower their guard" and "squander away the gains of the collective hard work of the last year."

India has recorded more than 11 million cases, second in the world behind the United States, with over 157,000 deaths in the country from COVID-19.

Even though India is home to the world's largest vaccine makers and has one of the biggest immunization programs, things haven't gone according to plan. Of the 10 million health care workers that the government had initially wanted to immunize, only 6.6 million have gotten the first shot and 2.4 million have gotten both. Of its estimated 20 million front-line workers like police or sanitation workers, only 5.1 million have been vaccinated so far.

Dr. Gagandeep Kang, an infectious diseases expert at Christian Medical College Vellore in southern India, said the hesitancy by health workers to be vaccinated highlights the paucity of information available about the vaccines. If health workers are reticent, "you seriously think that the common public is going to walk up for the vaccine?" she said.

India had set a target of immunizing 300 million people, nearly the total U.S. population, by August.

The spike in infections in India is most pronounced in the western state of Maharashtra, where the number of active cases has nearly doubled to over 68,000 in the past two weeks. Lockdowns and other restrictions have been reimposed in some areas, and the state's chief minister, Uddhav Thackeray, has warned that another wave of cases is "knocking on our door."

Similar surges have been reported from states in all corners of the massive country: Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir in the north, Gujarat in the west, West Bengal in the east, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh in central India, and Telangana in the south.

Top federal officials have asked authorities in those states to increase the speed of vaccinations in districts where cases are surging, and to track clusters of infections and monitor variants.

"There is a sense of urgency because of the mutants and because cases are going up," said Dr. K. Srinath Reddy, president of the Public Health Foundation of India.

He said that the consistent dip in cases over months resulted in a "reduced threat perception," leading to vaccine hesitancy. Experts point out that the reticence to get vaccinated was amplified, at least in part, by the government's opaque decision making while green-lighting vaccines. "The (vaccination) drive began when perception was that the worst was over, so people were more hesitant," Reddy said.

India's health care system is patchy, and in many small cities people depend on private hospitals for their medical needs. Allowing these hospitals to vaccinate will open up access to the shots, experts said. India had rolled out online software to keep track of the shots and recipients, but the system was prone to glitches and delays.

What is still not clear, though, is whether people will get a choice between the AstraZeneca vaccine or one from Indian vaccine maker Bharat Biotech. The latter got the go-ahead by Indian regulators in January without any evidence from late trials that showed that the shots were effective in preventing illness from a coronavirus infection.

The priority for now is to increase the number of vaccines every day, said Jishnu Das, a health economist at Georgetown University who advises West Bengal state on the pandemic. But he added that with COVID-19, there are always troughs and peaks, and the key lesson is that it won't end until enough people have been vaccinated for the spread of the virus to slow.

"Don't use a trough to declare success and say it's over," he said.

Associated Press writer Krutika Pathi contributed to this report.

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Some GOP state lawmakers help spread COVID-19 misinformation

By JULIE CARR SMYTH and BECKY BOHRER Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — Many Republican lawmakers have criticized governors' emergency restrictions since the start of the coronavirus outbreak. Now that most legislatures are back in session, a new type of pushback is taking root: misinformation.

In their own comments or by inviting skeptics to testify at legislative hearings, some GOP state lawmakers are using their platform to promote false information about the virus, the steps needed to limit its spread and the vaccines that will pull the nation out of the pandemic.

In some cases, the misstatements have faced swift backlash, even getting censored online. That's raised tough questions about how aggressively to combat potentially dangerous misinformation from elected officials or during legislative hearings while protecting free speech and people's access to government.

Last week, YouTube pulled down a video of committee testimony in the Ohio House after a witness inaccurately claimed COVID-19 wasn't killing children. The platform said the video violated its community standards against the spread of misinformation.

Ben Wizner, director of the ACLU Speech, Privacy, and Technology project, said YouTube went too far. "When we're talking about testimony that occurred at a public hearing, the far better response would be counterspeech, maybe in the form of fact-checking or labeling, rather than this attempt to flush it down the memory hole," Wizner said.

But opposing voices aren't always present in committee hearings.

In Michigan, for example, a House Oversight Committee meeting didn't feature state health officials or other virus experts in a discussion about an extended pause on youth contact sports ordered by Democratic Gov. Gretchen Whitmer.

It did include Jayme McElvany, a virus skeptic who also has posted about the QAnon conspiracy and former President Donald Trump's unfounded claims of election fraud. Founder of a group called Let Them Play, McElvany questioned mask mandates and the science behind state COVID-19 data during a legislative hearing that didn't feature any witnesses from the other side. The committee chairman, Republican Rep. Steven Johnson, said the state health department was invited to testify but did not. Legislative Republicans have been challenging decisions of the Whitmer administration throughout the coronavirus pandemic.

Wizner said such imbalances need to be highlighted, not suppressed.

"People need to know this is what passes for local government," he said. When the hearings are posted online, YouTube owner Google has plenty of tools for flagging questionable information and directing people to facts, Wizner said.

In Tennessee, a Republican lawmaker is pushing legislation that would ban most government agencies from requiring anyone to get COVID-19 vaccines, which isn't a mandate anywhere. Rep. Bud Hulseby has tried to drum up support downplaying the seriousness of the disease.

While testifying, he ticked off selective statistics that COVID-19 has a lower death rate among children and falsely alleged that the vaccines could cause genetic modifications.

Hulseby faced pushback from a fellow Republican, Rep. Sabi Kumar, a surgeon who has been a rare GOP advocate for proper mask-wearing while lawmakers gather at the Tennessee Capitol.

"The concern I have is that (the bill) creates an anti-vaccine attitude," Kumar said.

Kumar pointed out that vaccines have saved countless lives throughout the centuries and repeatedly fact-checked Hulseby by emphasizing that the vaccines don't change a person's DNA.

Hulseby wasn't convinced.

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"People have seen governments all across this country do things that have never ever happened in the history of the United States, and it scares them," he said. "They have every right to be afraid."

His bill has advanced out of a House subcommittee.

In Alaska, Gov. Mike Dunleavy is fighting what he called a pattern of misrepresentations by state Sen. Lora Reinbold, a fellow Republican, saying he would no longer send members of his administration before her Senate Judiciary Committee.

In a scathing Feb. 18 letter that referenced her Facebook posts, Dunleavy accused Reinbold of misrepresenting the state's COVID-19 response and deceiving the public.

"The misinformation must end," the governor wrote.

Reinbold has been a vocal critic of Dunleavy issuing disaster declarations while the Legislature wasn't in session. She has used her committee to amplify voices of those who question the effectiveness of masks and the effects of the government's emergency response.

On social media, she characterized the Dunleavy administration as being "wild" over "these experimental" vaccines. At a hearing in early February, Reinbold questioned the extent to which the administration had suspended regulations during the pandemic.

"It's almost like martial law," she said.

The governor said that while he has tried to ease rules on businesses such as suspending fees, he's never imposed martial law or forced Alaskans to get vaccines. Reinbold has called the governor's criticism of her baseless.

"Some call 'misinformation' information they do not agree with or do not want to hear," Reinbold said by email.

The dustup prompted intervention by the Senate president, who said he expected his committees to provide a "balanced approach."

In Idaho, Rep. Heather Scott opened the legislative session in January by declaring, "The pandemic is over." She said Idaho's 1,600-plus COVID-19 deaths at that time amounted to "nowhere close to a pandemic."

The average number of daily COVID-19 cases is falling in Idaho, but the death toll has risen.

During a live Zoom forum with constituents in mid-February, Scott criticized the National Governors Association, which last year issued a statement with tips for fighting misinformation about the virus. She alleged that the group is run by "globalists" at the World Economic Forum and that "they are the ones that came out with COVID." The term "globalists" is widely considered to be an anti-Semitic slur.

Scott didn't immediately respond to a message seeking clarification on what she meant.

Several of those who are spreading bogus virus information in legislatures also have supported Trump's false claims that the 2020 election was stolen.

In Virginia, Republican Del. Dave LaRock, who attended the Trump rally in Washington, D.C., that preceded the attack on the U.S. Capitol, warned a state House Health committee in late January that COVID-19 vaccines couldn't be trusted. He said they were especially risky for several communities, including the elderly and people of color.

Democratic Del. Cia Price, who is Black, called LaRock's false claims "simply dangerous."

"There is legitimate vaccine hesitancy in communities that the gentleman listed, but actual and factual information is key, not fanning the flames that are based on historic events," she said.

Bohrer reported from Juneau, Alaska. Associated Press writers David Eggert in Lansing, Michigan; Kimberlee Kruesi in Nashville, Tennessee; Geoff Mulvihill in Cherry Hill, New Jersey; Sarah Rankin in Richmond, Virginia; and Keith Ridler in Boise, Idaho, contributed to this report.

Cuomo sorry for remarks aide 'misinterpreted' as harassment

By KAREN MATTHEWS and MARINA VILLENEUVE Associated Press

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) — New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo acknowledged for the first time Sunday that some

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of his behavior with women "may have been insensitive or too personal," and said he would cooperate with a sexual harassment investigation led by the state's attorney general.

In a statement released amid mounting criticism from within his own party, the Democrat maintained he had never inappropriately touched or propositioned anyone. But he said he had teased people about their personal lives in an attempt to be "playful."

"I now understand that my interactions may have been insensitive or too personal and that some of my comments, given my position, made others feel in ways I never intended. I acknowledge some of the things I have said have been misinterpreted as an unwanted flirtation. To the extent anyone felt that way, I am truly sorry about that," he said.

Cuomo, one of America's most prominent governors, is facing the most serious challenge of his decade in office following claims he sexually harassed at least two women who worked for him. Democrats in New York and around the nation aren't rallying to his side, leaving him increasingly isolated from traditional allies.

His partial admission of wrongdoing came after a day of wrangling over who should investigate his workplace behavior.

By day's end, Cuomo acquiesced to demands that Attorney General Letitia James control the inquiry.

James said she expected to receive a formal referral that would give her office subpoena power and allow her to deputize an outside law firm for "a rigorous and independent investigation."

"This is not a responsibility we take lightly," said James, a Democrat who has been, at times, allied with Cuomo but is independently elected and had emerged as a consensus choice to lead a probe.

Calls for an investigation mounted after a second former employee of Cuomo's administration went public Saturday with harassment claims.

Charlotte Bennett, a low-level aide in the governor's administration until November, told The New York Times Cuomo asked questions about her sex life, including whether she ever had sex with older men, and made other comments she interpreted as gauging her interest in an affair.

Her accusation came days after another former aide, Lindsey Boylan, a former economic development adviser, elaborated on harassment allegations she first made in December. Boylan said Cuomo subjected her to an unwanted kiss and comments about her appearance.

Cuomo, 63, said he had intended to be a mentor for Bennett, who is 25. He has denied Boylan's allegations.

Over several hours Sunday, James and other leading party officials rejected two of Cuomo's proposals for how an investigation might proceed.

Under his first plan, a retired federal judge picked by Cuomo, Barbara Jones, would have reviewed his workplace behavior. In the second proposal, announced Sunday morning in an attempt to appease legislative leaders, Cuomo asked James and the state's chief appeals court judge, Janet DiFiore, to jointly appoint a lawyer to investigate and issue a public report.

James rejected both plans, demanding a formal referral giving her office authority to subpoena documents and witness testimony.

Many of the biggest names in New York politics lined up behind James.

Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins and Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie, both Democrats, said they wanted the attorney general to handle the investigation. Republican leaders had, for days, called on James to launch a probe. On Sunday, Republican state Senate Minority Leader Robert Ortz called on Cuomo to resign.

New York's two U.S. senators, Charles Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand, both said an independent investigation was essential.

"These allegations are serious and deeply concerning. As requested by Attorney General James, the matter should be referred to her office so that she can conduct a transparent, independent and thorough investigation with subpoena power," Gillibrand said.

Cuomo's statement that women had misinterpreted comments that were intended to be jokes was met with outrage from some people, who said he appeared to be blaming the women.

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"Is it 'playful' to touch one's employees' legs & kiss them on the lips against their will? Bc better men than A Cuomo have been fired for that," tweeted former Fox News and NBC journalist Megyn Kelly, whose sexual harassment allegations against late Fox News Chairman Roger Ailes helped lead to his ouster.

White House press secretary Jen Psaki said President Joe Biden also supported an independent review that "should move forward as quickly as possible."

The furor comes amid a new round of criticism over Cuomo's leadership style and actions his administration took to protect his reputation as a leader in the coronavirus pandemic.

Cuomo won praise as a strong hand during last spring's crisis of rising case counts and overflowing morgues. His book, "American Crisis: Leadership Lessons from the COVID-19 Pandemic," was published in October.

But in recent weeks his administration was forced to revise its count of COVID-19 deaths in nursing homes following criticism that it had undercounted the fatalities to blunt accusations that some of his administration's policies had made the situation worse.

James fueled some of that criticism by issuing a report saying the Cuomo administration had undercounted deaths.

Now, his support is eroding faster.

"Lindsey Boylan and Charlotte Bennett's detailed accounts of sexual harassment by Gov. Cuomo are extremely serious and painful to read," U.S. Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez said on Twitter Sunday. "There must be an independent investigation — not one led by an individual selected by the Governor, but by the office of the Attorney General."

Matthews reported from New York City.

Prince Harry: Split from royal life 'unbelievably tough'

By LYNN ELBER AP Television Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Prince Harry says the process of separating from royal life has been very difficult for him and his wife, Meghan.

In an interview with Oprah Winfrey, Harry invoked the memory of his late mother, Princess Diana, who had to find her way alone after she and Prince Charles divorced.

"I'm just really relieved and happy to be sitting here talking to you with my wife by my side, because I can't begin to imagine what it must have been like for her going through this process by herself all those years ago," Harry said, adding, "because it's been unbelievably tough for the two of us."

"But at least we have each other," Harry said, in a clip from the interview special, which is scheduled to air March 7 on CBS and the following day in Britain. Diana was shown in a photo holding toddler Harry as he made the comments. His mother died in 1997 of injuries suffered in a car crash.

Harry and Meghan sat opposite Winfrey and side-by-side, holding hands during the interview that was conducted in a lush garden setting. The couple lives in Montecito, California, where they are neighbors of Winfrey. Meghan, who recently announced she is pregnant with the couple's second child, wore an empire-style black dress with embroidery. Harry wore a light gray suit and white dress shirt, minus a tie.

As Meghan Markle, the actor starred in the TV legal drama "Suits." She married Queen Elizabeth II's grandson at Windsor Castle in May 2018, and their son, Archie, was born a year later.

The brief promotional clip was one of two of that aired Sunday during CBS' news magazine "60 Minutes." Winfrey's questions and comment were predominant in the other clip, including her statement that, "You said some pretty shocking things here," without an indication of what she was referring to. Meghan was not heard from in the clips.

Harry and Meghan stepped away from full-time royal life in March 2020, unhappy at media scrutiny and the strictures of their roles. They cited what they described as the intrusions and racist attitudes of the British media toward the duchess, who is African American.

It was agreed the situation would be reviewed after a year. On Friday, Buckingham Palace confirmed

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that the couple will not be returning to royal duties and Harry will give up his honorary military titles — a decision that makes formal, and final, the couple's split from the royal family.

The pair, also known as the Duke and Duchess of Sussex, verified "they will not be returning as working members of the Royal Family."

A spokesperson for the couple hit back at suggestions that Meghan and Harry were not devoted to duty. "As evidenced by their work over the past year, the Duke and Duchess of Sussex remain committed to their duty and service to the U.K. and around the world, and have offered their continued support to the organizations they have represented regardless of official role," the spokesperson said in a statement.

Trump calls for GOP unity, repeats lies about election loss

By JILL COLVIN Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) — Taking the stage for the first time since leaving office, former President Donald Trump on Sunday called for GOP unity, even as he exacerbated intraparty divisions by attacking fellow Republicans and promoting lies about the election in a speech that made clear he intends to remain a dominant political force.

Speaking at the Conservative Political Action Conference, where he has been hailed as a returning hero, Trump blasted his successor, President Joe Biden, and tried to lay out a vision for the future of the GOP that revolves firmly around him, despite his loss in November.

"Do you miss me yet?" Trump said after taking the stage to his old rally soundtrack and cheers from the supportive crowd.

Trump, in his speech, tried to downplay the civil war gripping the party over the extent to which Republicans should embrace him, even as he unfurled an enemies list, calling out by name the 10 House Republicans and seven GOP senators who voted to impeach or convict him for inciting the U.S. Capitol riot. He ended by singling out Rep. Liz Cheney, the No. 3 House Republican, who has faced tremendous backlash in Wyoming for saying Trump should no longer play a role in the party or headline the event.

While he insisted the division was merely a spat "between a handful of Washington, D.C., establishment political hacks and everybody else, all over the country," Trump had a message for the incumbents who had dared to cross him: "Get rid of 'em all."

The conference, held this year in Orlando instead of the Washington suburbs to evade COVID-19 restrictions, served as a tribute to Trump and Trumpism, complete with a golden statue in his likeness on display. Speakers, including many potential 2024 hopefuls, argued that the party must embrace the former president and his followers, even after the deadly insurrection at the Capitol on Jan. 6.

They also repeated in panel after panel his unfounded claims that he lost reelection only because of mass voter fraud, even though such claims have been rejected by judges, Republican state officials and Trump's own administration.

Trump, too, continued to repeat what Democrats have dubbed the "big lie," calling the election "rigged" and insisting that he won in November, even though he lost by more than 7 million votes.

"As you know, they just lost the White House," he said of Biden, rewriting history.

It is highly unusual for past American presidents to publicly criticize their successors in the months after leaving office. Ex-presidents typically step out of the spotlight for at least a while; Barack Obama was famously seen kitesurfing on vacation after he departed, while George W. Bush said he believed Obama "deserves my silence" and took up painting.

Not Trump.

He delivered a sharp rebuke of what he framed as the new administration's first month of failures, especially Biden's approach to immigration and the border.

"Joe Biden has had the most disastrous first month of any president in modern history," Trump said.

White House press secretary Jen Psaki had brushed off the expected criticism last week. "We'll see what he says, but our focus is certainly not on what President Trump is saying at CPAC," she told reporters.

Aside from criticizing Biden, Trump used the speech to crown himself the future of the Republican Party,

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even as many leaders argue they must move in a new, less divisive direction after Republicans lost not just the White House, but both chambers of Congress.

Though Trump has flirted with the the idea of creating a third party, he pledged Sunday to remain part of "our beloved" GOP.

"I'm going to continue to fight right by your side. We're not starting new parties," he said. "We have the Republican Party. It's going to be strong and united like never before." Yet Trump spent much of the speech lashing out at those he has deemed insufficiently loyal and dubbed "RINOs" — Republican in name only — for failing to stand with him.

"We cannot have leaders who show more passion for condemning their fellow Americans than they have ever shown for standing up to Democrats, the media and the radicals who want to turn America into a socialist country," Trump said.

Trump did not use his speech to announce plans to run again, but he repeatedly teased the prospect as he predicted a Republican would win back the White House in 2024.

"And I wonder who that will be," he offered. "Who, who, who will that be? I wonder."

It remains unclear, however, how much appetite there would be for another Trump term, even in the room of staunch supporters.

The conference's annual unscientific straw poll of just over 1,000 attendees found that 97% approved of the job Trump did as president. But they were much more ambiguous when asked whether he should run again, with only 68% saying he should.

If the 2024 primary were held today and Trump were in the race, just 55% said they would vote for him, followed by Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis at 21%. Without Trump in the field, DeSantis garnered 43% support, followed by 8% for South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem and 7% each for former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Texas Sen. Ted Cruz.

While he no longer has his social media megaphone after being barred from Twitter and Facebook, Trump had been inching back into public life even before the speech. He called into conservative news outlets after talk radio star Rush Limbaugh's death and has issued statements, including one blasting Mitch McConnell after the Senate Republican leader excoriated Trump for inciting the Capitol riot. McConnell has since said he would "absolutely" support Trump if he were the GOP nominee in 2024.

At his Mar-a-Lago club in Palm Beach, Florida, Trump has also been quietly meeting with aides and senior party leaders as he builds his post-presidential political operation. While he has already backed several pro-Trump candidates, including one challenging an impeachment supporter, aides have been working this past week to develop benchmarks for those seeking his endorsement to make sure the candidates are serious and have set up full-fledged political and fundraising organizations before he gets involved.

They are also planning a new super PAC that could raise unlimited amounts of money, though one aide cautioned they were still deciding whether to create a new entity or repurpose an existing America First super PAC.

Trump hinted at the effort Sunday, voicing his commitment to helping elect Republicans and calling on attendees to join him.

"I stand before you today to declare that the incredible journey we begun together ... is far from being over," he said.

Fraud overwhelms pandemic-related unemployment programs

By GEOFF MULVIHILL and ANDREW WELSH-HUGGINS Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — With the floodgates set to open on another round of unemployment aid, states are being hammered with a new wave of fraud as they scramble to update security systems and block scammers who already have siphoned billions of dollars from pandemic-related jobless programs.

The fraud is fleecing taxpayers, delaying legitimate payments and turning thousands of Americans into unwitting identity theft victims. Many states have failed to adequately safeguard their systems, and a review by The Associated Press finds that some will not even publicly acknowledge the extent of the problem.

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The massive sham springs from prior identity theft from banks, credit rating agencies, health care systems and retailers. Fraud perpetrators, sometimes in China, Nigeria or Russia, buy stolen personal identifying information on the dark web and use it to flood state unemployment systems with bogus claims.

The U.S. Justice Department is investigating unemployment fraud by "transnational criminal organizations, sophisticated domestic actors, and individuals across the United States," said Joshua Stueve, a spokesman for the department's criminal division.

The Labor Department inspector general's office estimates that more than \$63 billion has been paid out improperly through fraud or errors — roughly 10% of the total amount paid under coronavirus pandemic-related unemployment programs since March.

"We're all learning that there is an epidemic of fraud," said U.S. Rep. Kevin Brady of Texas, the ranking Republican on the House's powerful Ways and Means Committee. Brady said the \$63 billion estimate "is larger than the entire budget of the Department of Homeland Security."

"These are frightening levels of fraud," he said.

California has been the biggest target, with an estimated \$11 billion in fraudulent payments and an additional \$19 billion in suspect accounts. Colorado has paid out nearly as much to scammers — an estimated \$6.5 billion — as it has to people who filed legitimate unemployment claims.

Other estimates, according to AP reporting across the states, range from several hundred thousand dollars in smaller states such as Alaska and Wyoming to hundreds of millions in more populous states such as Massachusetts and Ohio.

The nationwide fraud has fed on twin vulnerabilities: a flood of jobless benefit applications since the pandemic began that has overwhelmed state unemployment agencies and antiquated benefit systems that are easy prey for crafty and persistent criminals.

In Ohio, weekly first-time unemployment claims have ranged from 17,000 to more than 40,000 during the pandemic. But since late last month, those claims have topped more than 140,000 some weeks, with many of them believed to be fraudulent. The state has paid at least \$330 million in fraudulent pandemic unemployment benefit claims.

Trying to catch so many bogus claims delays payouts to Ohioans who are legitimately in need of help. In the Columbus suburb of Upper Arlington, Cynthia Sbertoli was receiving \$228 a week after she was laid off in March from her job with a nonprofit that runs high school student exchange programs.

Her benefits were put on hold in January after she informed the state that someone had tried to use her identity in a scam to claim benefits. She thought the problem was resolved but has yet to see a renewal of her benefit checks, which she and her husband use to help pay for a son's vision and auditory therapy.

"It's just not a good way to take care of people," said Sbertoli, 49.

In Indiana, Kentucky and Maryland, officials have said that for certain weeks in the new year at least two-thirds of the claims they received were classified as suspicious due to problems verifying identities. It's not the first brush with serious fraud for Maryland. In July, officials said they'd discovered a massive criminal enterprise that had stolen more than \$500 million in unemployment benefits.

Among states that have been hardest hit are those participating in the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance program adopted by Congress last year. It has been a lifeline for out-of-work freelancers and gig workers who normally don't qualify for unemployment insurance, but it's also been a boon for criminals who use stolen identities to make claims. Nearly 800,000 of the 1.4 million claims Ohio has received through this program have been tagged for potential fraud.

Scams have been so widespread that the U.S. Department of Justice is setting aside money to hire more prosecutors. In New York alone, the Department of Labor says it has referred "hundreds of thousands of fraud cases" to federal prosecutors. The state says it has blocked \$5.5 billion in fraudulent claims, while New Jersey says it's prevented \$2.5 billion from flowing into the hands of criminals.

Despite those efforts, a government watchdog agency says not enough states are taking the necessary steps to prevent fraud.

In its memo this past week, the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Inspector General said that by the end of last year, 22 of the 54 state and territorial workforce agencies were still not following its repeated

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recommendation to join a data exchange run by the National Association of State Workforce Agencies.

That system is designed to check Social Security numbers used in claims to see if they are being used in multiple states, or are linked to dead people or other scam methods. The office said it had found \$5.4 billion in fraudulent payments from March through October.

The biggest chunk of that, \$3.5 billion, came through claims that used the same Social Security numbers in multiple states. One number was used on claims in 40 states. Twenty-nine of the states paid those claims, totaling more than \$220,000.

"The Department needs to take immediate action and increase its efforts to ensure (states) implement effective controls to mitigate fraud in these high risk areas," the inspector general warned Labor officials.

The people whose identities are used to claim improper benefits often don't find out until they receive their tax statements.

Andrew Heidtke received a letter in September from the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development notifying him that unemployment claims he never applied for were being processed.

"I had no idea what was happening," said Heidtke, who works as an administrative assistant for an engineering lobbying organization. "I kind of just thought it was spam at first."

Another victim was 99-year-old Harry Hollingsworth of Strongsville, Ohio. The retired elevator car factory worker received a form in late January showing he had received \$3,156 in benefits. Hollingsworth died recently, and his son, Jim Hollingsworth, said the bogus claim created a big hassle.

"It looks like the state, they dropped the ball on this completely," he said.

In its own survey of state governments, the AP found that many are not publicly disclosing the level of fraud. Some officials expressed concern that providing any information, no matter how general, could provide criminals an opening to exploit their systems further.

President Joe Biden's administration is pledging to cut down on unemployment fraud even as it tries to extend benefits through September. As part of previous legislation, the administration is sending states \$200 million to fight it.

That would be welcome in Virginia, where House Minority Leader Todd Gilbert, a Republican, said the Legislature's watchdog agency should investigate how the state allowed \$40 million in bogus payments through prison inmate-related scams.

"How many desperate people, laid off through no fault of their own, could have been helped with that money?" he asked. "It's maddening."

Mulvihill reported from Cherry Hill, New Jersey.

Associated Press writers Kimberlee Kruesi in Nashville, Tennessee; Sarah Rankin in Richmond, Virginia; Todd Richmond in Madison, Wisconsin; and Casey Smith in Indianapolis contributed.

The Latest: First US J&J vaccine doses shipping Sunday night

By The Associated Press undefined

WASHINGTON — Nearly 4 million doses of the newest COVID-19 vaccine will be shipped Sunday night, and will begin to be delivered to states for injections starting on Tuesday.

The White House said the entire stockpile of the newly approved single-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine will go out immediately. J&J will deliver about 16 million more doses by the end of March and 100 million total by the end of June, but the distribution would be backloaded.

Though the new shot is easier to administer and requires only one dose, the administration is not altering its distribution plans.

The White House is encouraging Americans to take the first dose available to them, regardless of manufacturer.

THE VIRUS OUTBREAK:

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— Fraud is overwhelming pandemic-related unemployment programs. 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 team readies a broader economic measure after virus relief.

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:

WASHINGTON — A U.S. advisory panel has endorsed the new one-dose COVID-19 vaccine from Johnson & Johnson as a third option to bolster the national effort against the coronavirus pandemic.

Advisers to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention voted overwhelmingly to recommend the vaccine for adults 18 years old and up. The ruling followed emergency clearance of the vaccine by U.S. regulators a day earlier.

Members of the group emphasized that all three vaccines now available in the U.S. are highly protective against the worst effects of the virus, including hospitalization and death.

J&J plans to ship several million vaccine doses to states in the coming week, delivering a total of 20 million shots by the end of March. Health officials are eager to have an easier-to-use vaccine against COVID-19, which has killed more than 511,000 Americans and continues to mutate in troubling ways.

CDC recommendations are not binding on state governments or doctors, but are widely heeded by the medical community. The same CDC panel previously recommended use of the two vaccines from Pfizer and Moderna authorized in December.

SALT LAKE CITY — Utah is canceling about 7,200 coronavirus vaccine appointments after an error in the state health department's registration website allowed people without qualifying conditions to register for the shots.

Department spokesman Tom Hudachko said in a statement that the error allowed residents who are not 65 or older or who don't have an underlying medical condition to sign up.

The Salt Lake Tribune reported Sunday those appointments are being canceled.

People who meet the state's conditions can keep their vaccine appointments scheduled through [Vaccinate.utah.gov](https://vaccinate.utah.gov). Public school teachers and first responders also are eligible for vaccines.

Utah so far has administered more than 680,000 vaccine doses and estimates that 10% of its 3.2 million population has been fully vaccinated.

ATHENS, Greece — Greek health authorities have announced that 70 specialized intensive care units will be added to Athens hospitals as high hospitalization rates have nearly filled the available ones.

The Athens area along with several others across the country are under lockdown until March 8, with most shops closed, schools operating on distance learning and a 9 p.m. curfew, but many experts talk of extending this for at least another week.

On Sunday, authorities announced 1,269 new COVID-19 cases, along with 36 deaths. This brings the number of confirmed cases since the start of the pandemic to 191,100, with 6,504 deaths. There are 391 patients on ventilators in ICUs, close to a record high.

RIO DE JANEIRO — Brazil's capital has entered a two-week lockdown, joining several states in adopting measures to reduce the spread of COVID-19 as intensive care beds begin to fill in some important cities.

At least eight Brazilian states adopted curfews over the past week due to the rise in cases and deaths from COVID-19. Thursday was Brazil's deadliest day since the beginning of the pandemic, with 1,541 deaths confirmed from the virus. So far 254,000 people have died overall.

Brasilia Gov. Ibaneis Rocha decreed the total closure of bars, restaurants, shopping malls and schools until March 15 and prohibited gatherings of people. Sale of alcoholic beverages was prohibited after 8 p.m.

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In the federal district, 85% of hospital beds were occupied on Sunday, according to the local health ministry.

President Jair Bolsonaro again criticized such measures, saying on his Twitter account: "The people want to work." He threatened on Friday to cut off federal emergency pandemic assistance to states resorting to lockdowns.

ROME — While new COVID-19 cases surge in Italy's north, the island of Sardinia has earned coveted "white zone" status, allowing for evening dining and drinking at restaurants and cafes and the reopening after months of closure of gyms, cinemas and theaters.

Earlier this year, the Italian government added "white zone" status to its color-coded system of restrictions on businesses and schools, with "red zone" designation carrying the strictest measures.

Starting on Monday, the region of Sardinia, with an incidence of fewer than 50 cases per 100,000 residents, will be able to allow the most liberties since a second wave of coronavirus infections last fall prompted the government to tighten restrictions nationwide after easing them during summer.

The Health Ministry report covering the third week of February shows nationwide incidence was 145 cases per 100,000 inhabitants, and several regions had far higher incidence.

The Mediterranean island of Sardinia is a popular vacation destination. Last summer, crowds at seaside discos and clubs there were cited as a factor in the climb in an explosion of cases in Italy in the last months of 2020.

TEHRAN, Iran — Iran has surpassed 60,000 known coronavirus-related deaths, the latest grim milestone for the hardest-hit country in the Middle East.

The Health Ministry reported 93 new deaths from COVID-19 on Sunday and more than 8,000 new infections, pushing the total infection count over 1.63 million.

After more than a year of the pandemic, deaths from COVID-19 recently have declined in Iran as movement restrictions in the capital have set in, including inter-city travel bans, mask mandates and school closures.

The government on Sunday banned incoming travelers from a list of 32 countries, including Britain and other states in Africa and Latin America, due to fears of new virus variants.

Over the year, Iran has struggled with surges that at times overwhelmed its health system as authorities resisted a total lockdown to salvage an economy crippled by U.S. sanctions.

Iran's vaccine drive recently has gotten underway, with Russia's Sputnik V vaccine administered to health workers this month. An additional 250,000 doses by the Chinese state-backed pharmaceutical Sinopharm arrived in Iran over the weekend.

The country is also accelerating efforts to produce a domestic vaccine, beginning human trials for its second vaccine on Sunday.

BERLIN — The German disease control agency is adding France's Moselle region to its list of areas with a high rate of variant coronavirus cases, meaning travelers from there will face additional hurdles when crossing the border into neighboring Germany.

The Robert Koch Institute said Sunday that the restrictions would come into force at midnight on March 2, putting Moselle on a par with countries such as the Czech Republic, Portugal and the United Kingdom.

Travelers from those areas must produce a recent negative coronavirus test before crossing the German border. The measure is likely to affect many people who live on one side of the frontier and work on the other.

The Moselle region in northeastern France includes the city of Metz and borders with the German states of Saarland and Rhineland-Palatinate.

Clement Beaune, the French minister for European affairs, said France regrets the decision and is in negotiations with Germany to try to lighten the measures for 16,000 inhabitants of Moselle who work across the border.

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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.

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

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.

US still open to Iran nuclear talks after Iran's rejection

By MATTHEW LEE AP Diplomatic Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Biden administration said Sunday it remains open to talks with Iran over the 2015 nuclear deal despite Tehran's rejection of an EU invitation to join a meeting with the U.S. and the other original participants in the agreement.

A senior administration official said the U.S. was "disappointed" in the rejection but was flexible as to the timing and format of the talks and saw Iran's decision to snub the European invitation as part of the diplomatic process. The official said the U.S. would be consulting with the other participants — Britain, China, France, Germany, Russia and the European Union — on the way forward.

The official was not authorized to discuss the matter by name and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Earlier Sunday, Iran turned down the offer for talks saying the "time isn't ripe" for the meeting, at which the U.S. would have participated as an observer. Iran had been insisting that the U.S. lift or ease sanctions imposed on it by the Trump administration under its "maximum pressure campaign" before sitting down with the United States.

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President Joe Biden has said repeatedly that the U.S. would return to the deal that his predecessor, Donald Trump, withdrew from in 2018 only after Iran restores its full compliance with the accord.

"Considering US/E3 positions & actions, time isn't ripe for the proposed informal meeting," Iranian foreign ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said on Twitter. He referred to the so-called E3, which comprises Britain, France and Germany.

"Remember: Trump failed to meet because of his ill-advised 'Max Failure,'" he said. "With sanctions in place, same still applies. Censuring is NOT diplomacy. It doesn't work with Iran."

The Biden administration announced earlier this month that it would accept an EU invitation to participate in a meeting of deal participants and at the same time rescinded a Trump determination from the U.N. Security Council that Iran was in significant breach of the agreement that all U.N. sanctions had been restored.

The U.N. move had little practical effect as nearly all members of the world body had rejected Trump's determination because the U.S. was no longer a participant in the nuclear deal. Biden administration officials said the withdrawal of the determination was intended to show goodwill toward its partners and at the same time had eased severe restrictions on the movement of Iranian diplomats posted to the U.N.

Separately on Sunday, the State Department condemned a weekend attack by Iran-backed Yemeni rebels on Saudi Arabia, saying it damaged prospects for peace. Along with the overtures to Iran on the nuclear front, the Biden administration also reversed several late Trump administration moves against Iranian-backed rebels in Yemen.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken rescinded his predecessor's designation that the Houthi rebels were a "foreign terrorist organization," a move that the U.N. and relief groups had said would make the already disastrous humanitarian situation in Yemen even worse. In addition, the Biden administration decided to halt all offensive assistance to Saudi Arabia for its military campaign against the Houthis in Yemen.

The Houthis, however, have stepped up their operations in the country, pressing ahead with an offensive in Marib province and launching attacks on Saudi Arabia.

On Saturday, Saudi authorities said they had intercepted a missile attack over their capital and reported that bomb-laden drones had targeted a southern province, the latest in a series of airborne assaults they have blamed on the Houthis.

State Department spokesman Ned Price on Sunday said the U.S. "strongly condemns the Houthis' attacks on population centers in Saudi Arabia." He said they "threaten not only innocent civilians but also prospects for peace and stability in Yemen" and called on the Houthis "to end these egregious attacks."

"The United States remains committed to its longstanding partnership with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and to helping Saudi Arabia defend its territory as it faces attacks from Iranian-aligned groups," Price said.

On Friday, the Biden administration further strained ties with the Saudis when it published a declassified intelligence report finding that Saudi Arabia's crown prince had ordered an operation to capture or kill Jamal Khashoggi, a Washington Post journalist and U.S. resident who was brutally slain at the Saudi consulate in Turkey. Saudi Arabia has forcefully rejected the report's conclusions.

Associated Press writer Ellen Knickmeyer contributed to this report.

Spacewalking astronauts prep station for new solar wings

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — Spacewalking astronauts ventured out Sunday to install support frames for new, high-efficiency solar panels arriving at the International Space Station later this year.

NASA's Kate Rubins and Victor Glover put the first set of mounting brackets and struts together, then bolted them into place next to the station's oldest and most degraded solar wings. But the work took longer than expected, and they barely got started on the second set before calling it quits.

Rubins will finish the job during a second spacewalk later this week.

The spacewalkers had to lug out the hundreds of pounds of mounting brackets and struts in 8-foot

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(2.5-meter) duffle-style bags. The equipment was so big and awkward that it had to be taken apart like furniture, just to get through the hatch.

Some of the attachment locations required extra turns of the power drill and still weren't snug enough, as indicated by black lines. The astronauts had to use a ratchet wrench to deal with the more stubborn bolts, which slowed them down. At one point, they were two hours behind.

"Whoever painted this black line painted outside the lines a little bit," Glover said at one particularly troublesome spot.

"We'll work on our kindergarten skills over here," Mission Control replied, urging him to move on.

With more people and experiments flying on the space station, more power will be needed to keep everything running, according to NASA. The six new solar panels — to be delivered in pairs by SpaceX over the coming year or so — should boost the station's electrical capability by as much as 30%.

Rubins and Glover tackled the struts for the first two solar panels, due to launch in June. Their spacewalk ended up lasting seven hours, a bit longer than planned.

"Really appreciate your hard work. I know there were a lot of challenges," Mission Control radioed.

The eight solar panels up there now are 12 to 20 years old — most of them past their design lifetime and deteriorating. Each panel is 112 feet (34 meters) long by 39 feet (12 meters) wide. Tip to tip counting the center framework, each pair stretches 240 feet (73 meters), longer than a Boeing 777's wingspan.

Boeing is supplying the new roll-up panels, about half the size of the old ones but just as powerful thanks to the latest solar cell technology. They'll be placed at an angle above the old ones, which will continue to operate.

A prototype was tested at the space station in 2017.

Rubins' helmet featured a new high-definition camera that provided stunning views, particularly those showing the vivid blue Earth 270 miles (435 kilometers) below. "Pretty fantastic," observed Mission Control.

Sunday's spacewalk was the third for infectious disease specialist Rubins and Navy pilot Glover — both of whom could end up flying to the moon.

They're among 18 astronauts newly assigned to NASA's Artemis moon-landing program. The next moonwalkers will come from this group.

Last week, Vice President Kamala Harris put in a congratulatory call to Glover, the first African American astronaut to live full time at the space station. NASA released the video exchange Saturday.

"The history making that you are doing, we are so proud of you," Harris said. Like other firsts, Glover replied, it won't be the last. "We want to make sure that we can continue to do new things," he said.

Rubins will float back out Friday with Japanese astronaut Soichi Noguchi to wrap up the solar panel prep work, and to vent and relocate ammonia coolant hoses.

Glover and Noguchi were among four astronauts arriving via SpaceX in November. Rubins launched from Kazakhstan in October alongside two Russians. They're all scheduled to return to Earth this spring.

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Purim celebrations threaten fresh virus outbreak in Israel

JERUSALEM (AP) — Mass gatherings took place in Jerusalem on Sunday as Israelis celebrated the Jewish holiday of Purim in violation of coronavirus restrictions.

Authorities had been concerned about a repeat of last year, when Purim celebrations helped fuel an initial wave of the coronavirus in the earliest days of the global pandemic. The government urged people to celebrate at home this year, and police attempted to block traffic from entering Jerusalem and declared strict limits on public gatherings.

But the restrictions were not able to prevent street parties as well as mass prayer celebrations in ultra-Orthodox areas, which have repeatedly flouted safety rules. With traffic clogged at the entrance of Jerusalem, Israeli TV stations showed videos of ultra-Orthodox families walking along the side of the highway

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into the city.

Purim marks the victory of Jews over a tyrant in ancient Persia and is celebrated with costumes, drinking and parties.

The holiday was celebrated nationwide over the weekend, with Jerusalem celebrating a day later than the rest of the country. Similar safety violations took place in both secular and religious areas of the country.

The celebrations have threatened to undercut Israel's successful vaccination campaign. The country has vaccinated most of its adult population, but younger Israelis in their teens, 20s and 30s have been slow to get inoculated.

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.

Republicans say if the White House approach on the COVID relief bill — which passed the House Saturday on a near party-line vote and now heads to the Senate — is a sign of things to come for Biden's plan on infrastructure and other initiatives, it could be a difficult road ahead in Congress.

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+.

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"They made a conscious decision not to include us," said Sen. Bill Cassidy, R-La., on Sunday, calling the White House's assertion that the views of Republicans were taken into account with the COVID bill a "joke."

Cassidy, one of 10 centrist Republicans who met with Biden in early February about getting bipartisan support on that bill, said Biden "so far has been about rhetoric" when it comes to his pledge of seeking unity and bipartisanship. He called it worrisome for other legislative initiatives.

"Republicans remain willing and are working on issues that require bipartisan cooperation," he told CNN's "State of the Union."

West Virginia Sen. Shelley Moore Capito, a Republican who will be helping to craft legislation on the Senate side, 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," said Capito, the ranking member on the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee.

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.

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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.

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

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.

Republicans say if the White House approach on the COVID relief bill — which passed the House Saturday on a near party-line vote and now heads to the Senate — is a sign of things to come for Biden's plan on infrastructure and other initiatives, it could be a difficult road ahead in Congress.

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.

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Israeli-owned ship docked in Dubai after mysterious blast

By ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — An Israeli-owned cargo ship that suffered a mysterious explosion in the Gulf of Oman came to Dubai's port for repairs Sunday, days after the blast that revived security concerns in Mideast waterways amid heightened tensions with Iran.

Associated Press journalists saw the hulking Israeli-owned MV Helios Ray sitting at dry dock facilities at Dubai's Port Rashid. Although the crew was unharmed in the blast, the vessel sustained two holes on its port side and two on its starboard side just above the waterline, according to American defense officials.

It remains unclear what caused the blast, but the incident comes amid sharply rising tension between the U.S. and Iran over its unraveling 2015 nuclear deal. Iran has sought to pressure President Joe Biden's administration to grant the sanctions relief it received under the accord with world powers that former President Donald Trump abandoned.

From the shore, AP journalists could not immediately see damage to the vessel. The dock blocked the view of the vessel's starboard side down to the waterline and the port side could only be seen from a distance. The blue and white ship was anchored near Dubai's storied floating hotel, the Queen Elizabeth 2. An Emirati coast guard vessel was seen sailing behind the ship, with Dubai police and Emirati armed forces vehicles parked nearby.

Emirati officials did not respond to requests for comment on the vessel docking in the country.

Friday's blast on the ship, a Bahamian-flagged roll-on, roll-off vehicle cargo vessel, recalled a string of attacks on foreign oil tankers in 2019 that the U.S. Navy blamed on Iran. Tehran denied any role in the suspected assaults, which happened near the Strait of Hormuz, a key oil chokepoint.

Several Israeli officials hinted that they believed Iran was responsible for the explosion on the ship. In a speech at an army base on Sunday, Israeli military Chief of Staff Aviv Kochavi accused Iran of carrying out "operations against civilian targets," a charge the army later confirmed was in reference to the suspected ship attack.

Israeli Defense Minister Benny Gantz echoed concerns about Iran's threats against Israel, adding in a speech that the army was "working to build up our forces and is preparing itself for any scenario, including one in which we would need to take operative action to prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons." In an interview with Israeli Kan TV the day before, he said the circumstances of the explosion pointed toward Iranian involvement but stressed it needed to be investigated further.

Meanwhile on Sunday, Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels claimed responsibility for firing a ballistic missile and nine bomb-laden drones at "sensitive sites" in Saudi Arabia's capital Riyadh the night before. The group's military spokesman Yahia Sarei added that another six explosive drones targeted "military positions" in the southwestern cities of Abha and Khamis Mushait. The Saudi interception of the missile set off an apparent explosion over Riyadh that startled residents and scattered shell debris, without causing casualties.

The Helios Ray had discharged cars at various ports in the Persian Gulf before making its way out of the Middle East toward Singapore. The blast hit as the ship was sailing from the Saudi port Dammam out of the Gulf of Oman, forcing it to turn to Dubai, in the United Arab Emirates, for inspection.

Iranian authorities have not publicly commented on the ship. The country's hard-line Kayhan daily, whose editor-in-chief was appointed by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, alleged the Helios Ray was "possibly" on an "espionage" mission in the region, without offering any evidence to support the claim. The Sunday report speculated the ship may have been "trapped in an ambush by a branch of resistance axis," referring to Iranian proxies in the region.

Iran also has blamed Israel for a recent series of attacks, including a mysterious explosion last summer that destroyed an advanced centrifuge assembly plant at its Natanz nuclear facility and the killing of Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, a top Iranian scientist who founded the Islamic Republic's military nuclear program

two decades ago.

Iran's repeated vows to avenge Fakhrazadeh's killing have raised alarms in Israel, particularly as the Gulf sees an increase in Israeli traffic following the country's normalization deals with the UAE and Bahrain.

Associated Press writers Jon Gambrell and Malak Harb in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, Ilan Ben Zion and Josef Federman in Jerusalem and Samy Magdy in Cairo contributed to this report.

Nigerian families await news of 300 kidnapped schoolgirls

By IBRAHIM MANSUR Associated Press

JANGEBE, Nigeria (AP) — Families in Nigeria waited anxiously for news of their abducted daughters after more than 300 schoolgirls were kidnapped by gunmen from a government school in the country's north last week, the latest in a series of mass school kidnappings in the West African nation.

Worried parents on Sunday gathered at the school, guarded by police. Aliyu Ladan Jangebe said his five daughters aged between 12 and 16 were at the school when the kidnappers stormed in. Four were taken away but one escaped by hiding in a bathroom with three other girls, he told The Associated Press.

"We are not in (a) good mood because when you have five children and you are able to secure (just) one. We only thank God ... But we are not happy," said Jangebe.

"We cannot imagine their situation," he said of his missing daughters. Residents of a nearby village said the kidnappers had herded the girls through the town like animals, he said.

One resident said the gunmen also attacked a nearby military camp and checkpoint, preventing soldiers from responding to the mass abduction.

Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari said the government's priority is to get all the hostages returned safe and unharmed. Police and the military have begun joint operations to rescue the girls, said Mohammed Shehu, a police spokesman in Zamfara state.

The girls' abduction has caused international outrage.

Pope Francis decried the kidnapping and prayed for the girls' quick release, during his public address in St. Peter's Square on Sunday.

"I pray for these girls, so that they may return home soon ... I am close to their families and to them," Francis said, asking people to join him in prayer.

Last week, U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres strongly condemned the abductions and called for the girls' "immediate and unconditional release" and safe return to their families. He called attacks on schools a grave violation of human rights and the rights of children, U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric said.

Nigeria has seen several such attacks and kidnappings in recent years. On Saturday, 24 students, six staff and eight relatives were released after being abducted on February 17 from the Government Science College Kagara in Niger state. In December, more than 300 schoolboys from a secondary school in Kankara, in northwestern Nigeria, were taken and later released. The government has said no ransom was paid for the students' release.

The most notorious kidnapping was in April 2014, when 276 girls were abducted by the jihadist rebels of Boko Haram from the secondary school in Chibok in Borno state. More than 100 of those girls are still missing.

Boko Haram is opposed to western education and its fighters often target schools. Other organized armed groups, locally called bandits, often abduct students for money. The government says large groups of armed men in Zamfara state are known to kidnap for money and to press for the release of their members held in jail.

Nigeria's criminal networks may plot more such abductions if this round of kidnappings go unpunished, say analysts.

"While improving community policing and security in general remains a mid-to-long-term challenge, in the short term authorities must punish those responsible to send a strong message that there will be zero tolerance toward such acts," said Rida Lyammouri, senior fellow at the Policy Center for the New South, a Moroccan based think tank.

Israel approves plan to vaccinate West Bank laborers

By JOSEF FEDERMAN Associated Press

Israel on Sunday announced plans to vaccinate tens of thousands of Palestinians who work inside Israel and its West Bank settlements, at a time of vast disparities in access to vaccines between the Israeli and Palestinian populations.

Israel has launched one of the world's most successful vaccination programs, inoculating over half of its population in just two months. But it has come under international criticism for not sharing its vaccine stockpile with the Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, even as it plans to share surplus vaccines with far-flung allies in Africa, Europe and Latin America.

The Israeli government approved the program for Palestinian workers to "maintain public health and the functioning of the economy," said COGAT, the Israeli defense body responsible for Palestinian civilian affairs. It said the program is expected to begin in the coming days.

It said the vaccines would be administered by Israeli medical teams at various checkpoints and industrial zones across the West Bank.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has moved aggressively to vaccinate Israel's population, securing deals with drug makers Pfizer and Moderna to ensure enough supplies for Israel's 9.3 million people. He expects to have the vast majority of the adult population vaccinated by the end of March.

But before Sunday's announcement, Israel has shared just 2,000 vaccines with the Palestinian Authority to protect front-line medical workers in the West Bank.

The Israeli program should provide some relief to the Palestinians, who have obtained just a few thousand vaccines on their own and were forced over the weekend to impose a new lockdown to control the latest coronavirus outbreak in the West Bank. Some 110,000 West Bank Palestinians have permits to work inside Israel or in the settlements.

The gap between Israel and the Palestinians has illustrated the global inequity between rich and poor nations in terms of access to vaccines.

U.N. officials and human rights groups have expressed concerns over the disparity, saying Israel is an occupying power that is responsible for the wellbeing of the Palestinians. Israel says that under interim peace accords of the 1990s, it has no such responsibility. Israel has immunized its own Arab population, including Palestinians who live in Israeli-annexed east Jerusalem.

Netanyahu came under criticism last week when he announced that he was sharing small quantities of surplus vaccines with diplomatic allies. An Israeli TV station said the countries included Honduras, Guatemala, Chad and Mauritania.

U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders said it was "outrageous that Netanyahu would use spare vaccines to reward his foreign allies while so many Palestinians in the occupied territories are still waiting." The plan was later frozen due to legal questions in Israel.

Some upset in Cyprus over 'satanic' Eurovision song choice

By MENELAOS HADJICOSTIS Associated Press

NICOSIA, Cyprus (AP) — A man has been charged with uttering threats and causing a disturbance after barging onto the grounds of Cyprus' public broadcaster to protest what he said was the country's "blasphemous" entry into this year's Eurovision song contest, police said Sunday.

Police told The Associated Press the man, who hasn't been named, was released after being charged with four counts, including being verbally abusive.

Police said witnesses to Saturday's incident told investigators the man verbally accosted employees outside the Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation's news department. He was apparently upset that the broadcaster had selected the song "El Diablo" ("The Devil") performed by Greek singer Elena Tsagrinou to represent Cyprus, since he said it was as an affront to Christianity.

Amateur video of the man confronting CyBC staff showed him screaming at a number of employees in

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the yard, asking how they could justify supporting such a song.

The title of "El Diablo" as well as its lyrics — "I gave my heart to el diablo...because he tells me I'm his angel" — have touched a raw nerve with some in the east Mediterranean island nation, who consider it to be fraught with Satanic connotations.

According to the Cyprus News Agency, an association representing theologians who teach in high schools expressed their "disgust" over the song and called for it to be withdrawn because it "pledges life-long devotion and professes love for Satan."

The agency also reported the broadcaster received threatening phone calls that "it would be burned down" because of the song.

The far-right ELAM political party issued a statement saying even if the song's lyrics are metaphorical, it "attacks and insults our faith in a shadowy way."

Others, meanwhile, took to social media to heap scorn on "El Diablo" as a good song, defend it as simply a ditty about a "scorching love affair" or to label its detractors religious zealots.

Cyprus' best-ever showing in the popular music competition was as runner-up in 2018 with the song "El Fuego" by singer Eleni Foureira.

The annual Eurovision contest is a beloved European institution watched by millions that often involves songs that are controversial, in questionable taste or just plain bad.

Biden administration promises focus on environmental justice

By TRAVIS LOLLER Associated Press

When President Joe Biden made environmental protection a key element of his campaign, he promised to overhaul the federal office that investigates complaints from people in minority communities who believe they have been unfairly harmed by industrial pollution or waste disposal.

Although the Environmental Protection Agency acknowledges that disadvantaged communities in America are disproportionately affected by pollution, hundreds of complaints sent to its civil rights office since the mid-1990s have only once resulted in a formal finding of discrimination.

The situation has provoked criticism from the U.S. Civil Rights Commission, the EPA's own Office of Inspector General and citizens who have filed complaints that sometimes languished for years — or decades.

Under Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, states, cities and other entities that receive federal funds are prohibited from discriminating because of race, color or national origin. That means citizens bearing the brunt of industrial pollution can bring a complaint if federal money is tied to the project.

In Uniontown, Alabama — a mainly Black town of 2,200 — residents complained to the EPA in 2013 about the Alabama Department of Environmental Management's oversight of a huge landfill containing 4 million tons of coal ash that residents blame for respiratory, kidney and other ailments. Five years later, the EPA dismissed the complaint, saying residents hadn't proven the landfill caused their health problems.

The U.S. Civil Rights Commission called the dismissal of the Uniontown complaint "another distressing step in the wrong direction" by the EPA office.

The outcome was typical. In three decades of fielding complaints, EPA's civil rights office has almost never found pollution was adversely affecting human health. And without such a finding, the agency won't even consider whether illegal discrimination occurred.

Marianne Engleman-Lado, who was recently appointed by the Biden administration to the EPA's office of general counsel, had helped Uniontown residents with their case. She maintains the way the EPA evaluates such complaints makes it nearly impossible to prevail because proving with scientific certainty that pollution is causing disease is a nearly insurmountable obstacle.

Ben Eaton, a Perry County Commissioner involved in the Uniontown complaint, said attorneys warned that discrimination claims usually go nowhere, but residents felt their evidence — including photos and videos — was compelling. "What's the use of having these agencies," he said, "if they're not going to do the job?"

Residents of a predominantly Black and Latino community in Oakland, California were similarly disap-

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pointed with results of their civil rights complaint over air pollution from ships and truck traffic at the busy Port of Oakland.

Margaret Gordon, a co-founder of the West Oakland Environmental Indicators Project, said her group did not have a seat at the table when EPA hammered out an informal resolution with the port. Air pollution is still a problem, she said, although port officials are now more willing to listen to community members.

Lilian Sotolongo Dorka, who heads the EPA's office of external civil rights enforcement, touted the 2019 Oakland resolution as an "extremely effective" example of the difference her office is making in people's lives.

But Richard Grow, who worked at EPA for 40 years before retiring in 2019 and was one of the agency's negotiators, agrees with Gordon's assessment.

"We put forth a number of very practical ... solutions and recommendations and they just said 'No,'" Grow said. When he reported the port's and city's position to Dorka's office, he said he was told nothing could be done.

The office had no further comment, and the port issued a statement saying it is committed to continuing a dialogue with the community.

The EPA has the power to withdraw funding from groups that discriminate, although it has never used that power. Dorka defends her office's record, saying it has eliminated a chronic backlog of complaints.

"I disagree very significantly with the conclusion that you can judge our civil rights program by the number of formal findings (of discrimination) we've made," she said, noting the office is required by regulation to seek informal resolutions wherever possible.

U.S. Sen. Cory Booker (D-New Jersey) is among those who think EPA's civil rights office should do more. During confirmation hearings this month for Michael Regan, Biden's nominee for EPA administrator, Booker spoke of meeting Alabama citizens suffering from tropical diseases they attribute to sewage pollution, children with elevated lead levels in his own state, and families in Louisiana's so-called "cancer alley" who felt abandoned by their government.

The EPA's civil rights office "has been eviscerated over the years," the African-American senator told Regan. "You're not even equipped, in my opinion, to actually begin to fight against these issues that affect millions of Americans."

Regan promised to make environmental justice a top priority, including "restructuring and reorganizing" the office of civil rights, which has 12 fulltime employees. "We will need additional resources. ..." he said.

Critics concede that Dorka, who took over the office of external civil rights under President Barak Obama, has made some progress, including producing a case resolution manual to guide investigations.

Obama's last day in office marked the only time Dorka's office issued a formal finding of discrimination — in a complaint filed 25 years earlier over the Genesee Power Plant outside Flint, Michigan. The agency dismissed allegations that the plant's emissions hurt Black residents, finding insufficient evidence of harm to their health. However, the EPA did find residents were not given a fair opportunity to participate in the permitting process.

Dorka said progress has continued under the Trump administration.

EPA spokeswoman Lindsay Hamilton said that "The new leadership team will be working closely with career colleagues ... as well as receiving input from stakeholder groups, in an effort to bolster the agency's capabilities to deliver on our environmental justice and civil rights missions."

Environmental justice advocates say the changes need to be significant.

"There are still places where people don't have access to safe drinking water, where they live in close proximity to hazardous sources," said Vernice Miller-Travis, a longtime advocate and cofounder of WE ACT for Environmental Justice. "This could be a moment of real sea change in terms of how the EPA is not just paying lip service to civil rights."

Follow Travis Loller on Twitter: @travisloller

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Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Monday, March 1, the 60th day of 2021. There are 305 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On March 1, 1954, four Puerto Rican nationalists opened fire from the spectators' gallery of the U.S. House of Representatives, wounding five members of Congress.

On this date:

In 1781, the Continental Congress declared the Articles of Confederation to be in force, following ratification by Maryland.

In 1893, inventor Nikola Tesla first publicly demonstrated radio during a meeting of the National Electric Light Association in St. Louis by transmitting electromagnetic energy without wires.

In 1954, the United States detonated a dry-fuel hydrogen bomb, codenamed Castle Bravo, at Bikini Atoll in the Marshall Islands.

In 1957, "The Cat in the Hat" by Dr. Seuss was released to bookstores by Random House.

In 1961, President John F. Kennedy signed an executive order establishing the Peace Corps.

In 1966, the Soviet space probe Venera 3 impacted the surface of Venus, becoming the first spacecraft to reach another planet; however, Venera was unable to transmit any data, its communications system having failed.

In 1968, Johnny Cash married June Carter at the First Methodist Church in Franklin, Kentucky.

In 1971, a bomb went off inside a men's room at the U.S. Capitol; the radical group Weather Underground claimed responsibility for the pre-dawn blast.

In 1974, seven people, including former Nixon White House aides H.R. Haldeman and John D. Ehrlichman, former Attorney General John Mitchell and former assistant Attorney General Robert Mardian, were indicted on charges of conspiring to obstruct justice in connection with the Watergate break-in. (These four defendants were convicted in Jan. 1975, although Mardian's conviction was later reversed.)

In 2005, Dennis Rader, the churchgoing family man accused of leading a double life as the BTK serial killer, was charged in Wichita, Kansas, with 10 counts of first-degree murder. (Rader later pleaded guilty and received multiple life sentences.) A closely divided Supreme Court outlawed the death penalty for juvenile criminals.

In 2010, Jay Leno returned as host of NBC's "The Tonight Show."

In 2015, tens of thousands marched through Moscow in honor of slain Russian opposition leader Boris Nemtsov, who had been shot to death on Feb. 27.

Ten years ago: Yemen's embattled president, Ali Abdullah Saleh, accused the U.S., his closest ally, of instigating the mounting protests against him, but the gambit failed to slow the momentum of his ouster. The GOP-controlled House handily passed legislation to cut the federal budget by \$4 billion and avert a partial shutdown of the government for two weeks. (The Senate passed the stopgap funding bill the next day.)

Five years ago: In the Super Tuesday primaries and caucuses, Republican Donald Trump won Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Massachusetts, Tennessee, Vermont and Virginia; Ted Cruz won Alaska, Oklahoma and his home state of Texas; Marco Rubio won Minnesota. On the Democratic side, Hillary Clinton won Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Massachusetts, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia while Bernie Sanders prevailed in Colorado, Minnesota, Oklahoma and his home state of Vermont.

One year ago: Health officials in Washington state, announcing what was believed at the time to be the second U.S. death from the coronavirus, said the virus may have been circulating for weeks undetected in the Seattle area. (Earlier deaths in the Seattle area and in California were subsequently linked to the virus.) State officials said New York City had its first confirmed case of the coronavirus, a woman in her late 30s who had contracted the virus while traveling in Iran. The U.S. government advised Americans against any travel to regions in northern Italy that had been hard hit by the virus; the U.S. also banned travel to Iran, where the official death toll surged past 50. President Donald Trump said there was "no reason to

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panic" about the virus. The NBA told players not to high-five fans or take any items for autographs, in the league's latest response to the coronavirus. Pete Buttigieg ended his campaign for the Democratic presidential nomination with a call for unity.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Robert Clary is 95. Singer/actor Harry Belafonte is 94. Rock singer Mike D'Abo (Manfred Mann) is 77. Former Sen. John Breaux, D-La., is 77. Rock singer Roger Daltrey is 77. Actor Dirk Benedict is 76. Actor-director Ron Howard is 67. Country singer Janis Gill (aka Janis Oliver Cummins) (Sweethearts of the Rodeo) is 67. Actor Catherine Bach is 66. Actor Tim Daly is 65. Singer-musician Jon Carroll is 64. Rock musician Bill Leen is 59. Actor Bryan Batt is 58. Actor Maurice Bernard is 58. Actor Russell Wong is 58. Actor Chris Eigeman is 56. Actor John David Cullum is 55. Actor George Eads is 54. Actor Javier Bardem (HAH'-vee-ayr bahr-DEHM') is 52. Actor Jack Davenport is 48. Rock musician Ryan Peake (Nickelback) is 48. Actor Mark-Paul Gosselaar is 47. Singer Tate Stevens is 46. Actor Jensen Ackles is 43. TV host Donovan Patton is 43. Rock musician Sean Woolstenhulme (WOOL'-sten-hyoolm) is 40. Actor Joe Tippett is 39. Actor Lupita Nyong'o is 38. Pop singer Kesha (formerly Ke\$ha) is 34. R&B singer Sammie is 34. Pop singer Justin Bieber is 27.