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Church Services

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

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United Methodist Church

Groton and Conde

Sunday, March 14

Conde Worship, 9 a.m.; Sunday school, 10 a.m.; Confirmation Sunday, 11 a.m.; Groton Worship in person following CDC Guidelines, 11 a.m.

Monday, March 15

Groton Lenten Small Group, 7 p.m.

Tuesday, March 16

Bible Study using social distancing in fellowship hall, 10 a.m.; Conde Ad Council, 5 p.m.; Conde Lenten Small Group, 6 p.m.

Wednesday, March 17

Ad Council, 7 p.m.

Thursday, March 18

UMW, 1:30 p.m.

Sunday, March 21

9:00 AM Conde Worship, 9 a.m.; NO Sunday School (Spring Break); Groton Worship in person following CDC Guidelines, 11 a.m.

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton &

St. Joseph Catholic

Groton and Turton

Weekend Mass Schedule

Saturday 4:30pm Groton

Sunday 8:30am Groton & 11:00am Turton

Weekday

Tues 5:00pm Turton, W-F 8:30am Groton

Sat 10am Newman Center

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament

Each morning before Weekday Mass at 7:15am

Tues 3:45pm Turton

Confessions:

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

Sun. 10:30-10:45am (T)

Emmanuel Lutheran Church

Groton

Sunday, March 14

9am Worship

Milestones 3yr old's,

2nd gr & 3rd gr

Monday, March 15

6:30 am Bible Study

Wednesday, March 17

6pm Confirmation

7pm Lenten Service

Sunday, March 21

9am Worship/Communion

Heaven Bound Ministries

Pierpont

Buffalo Lake Lutheran

Rural Eden

Sunday, March 14: Worship at Buffalo Lake at 10:30 a.m.

Sunday, March 14: Worship at Pierpont at 5:30 p.m. - Guest Speaker Gideon Jon Wold.

Saturday, March 20: Worship at Pierpont, 5:30 p.m.

Sunday, March 21: Worship at Buffalo Lake 10:30 a.m.

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

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



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

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

†Requires minimum purchase of \$449.



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Redemption code:

DF-CD-NP-Q121

Reply by:

April 15, 2021

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

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

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

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

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DF-CD-NP-Q121

Avera expands to 2 visitors per patient - with exceptions

ABERDEEN, S.D. – Most patients at Avera St. Luke's Hospital, clinics and emergency department are now able to have two visitors per day, with exceptions.

Visitors must be at least 18 years old. One of the visitors may be clergy, if the patient or their family allows.

There are no visitors allowed for COVID-positive or kidney dialysis patients and only one visitor is allowed per patient at Avera Orthopedics and Avera Dakota Plains Surgical Center, which includes AMG Pain Management and AMG Physical Medicine and Rehab.

Patients in the Birthplace may have one person stay throughout their care and also have one adult visitor per day. These patients will receive more details and further instructions from their OB/GYN.

Long-term care visitations are still determined by state and federal guidelines, as well as county positivity rates. These visitation policies could change at any time.

Visitors must be screened, including a temperature check, wear masks within any Avera facility, and practice social distancing when possible. Anyone experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 or that has been exposed should not visit.

The increase in the number of visitors per patient per day is due to the decline of COVID-positive cases throughout the state and an adequate supply of protective equipment including masks. It's important to remember that the pandemic is not over. People should still wear a mask, wash their hands, practice social distancing and stay home when sick.

"The health and safety of our patients and our employees continues to be our highest priority, and we know patients benefit from having their loved ones visit. Because COVID-19 is still in our population, we must be cautious and yet hopeful as we expand visitation within our facilities," said Regional President and CEO Todd Forkel.

The change was put into effect on February 17. Visiting hours for the hospital are currently 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. These are subject to change.

Visitor rules and exceptions may vary across the Avera system.

Funding Available for Housing Development

PIERRE, S.D. – South Dakota Housing Development Authority (SDHDA) is inviting developers to submit applications for funding from the Housing Trust Fund (HTF) program.

The Housing Trust Fund, funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, provides financing to developers and/or owners to expand the supply of decent, safe and affordable housing for extremely low income South Dakotans. Funding is targeted to 30 percent of the Area Median Income and below. This funding source has \$4 million available for this application round.

The HTF program allocation plan and application form can be found on SDHDA's website at www.sdhda.org. Complete applications will be accepted starting Friday, April 16, and must be received at SDHDA by Friday, May 28, before 5 p.m. Central Time.

For more information contact Chas Olson at 605.773.3181 or chas@sdhda.org.

Robotic milking is latest high-tech tool on dairy farms in S.D.

Bart Pfankuch

South Dakota News Watch

Dairy farmer Rodney Elliott stands in a small room where part of his \$12 million robotic milking system is doing its job.

The robotic system is located inside a huge new barn on Elliott's farm northeast of Lake Norden and is one of only a handful of fully robotic milking operations in South Dakota.

As the system functions flawlessly around him — feeding, watering, bedding, washing and milking hundreds of cows day and night with nary a human touch — Elliott watches with a mix of excitement and awe.

"My mother milked cows with just a bucket and a stool," Elliott said, his Irish accent rising as in song. "We've sure come a long way, haven't we?"

Elliott, 57, is the owner of Drumgoon Dairy, one of the largest, most successful and now most technologically advanced dairy farms in South Dakota.

After years of study and hesitance, Elliott made the move into robotic milking in mid-2020 and his first robotic systems launched in late January 2021.

The system seeks to make milking easier and more efficient for farmers but also for cows.

In the system designed by Swedish agricultural manufacturing company DeLaval, about 75 cows are assigned to each milking machine.

Within each robotic system, cows are trained to move on their own through a large rectangular pen split into two sides and outfitted with a series of one-way gates separating areas where they are fed, watered and rested before entering a small gated area where milking takes place. They can be milked up to three times a day.

The system is similar to traditional milking operations except cows are housed very close to where they are milked, they move on their own through the process without human guidance, and sophisticated ro-



Dairy Farmer Rodney Elliott of Lake Norden, S.D., stands amid some of the support systems for the robotic milking operation he recently installed at his farm. Photo: Bart Pfankuch, South

Dakota News Watch

bots perform the actual milking.

Cows eat silage placed in reach of their pens and drink water until fully sat-ed. The cows then walk around the end of the rectangle through one-way gates to resting areas where they bed down in sand until their udders are filled with milk. At that point, they feel the need to be milked and make their way one by one to a holding or "perching" area where they await their turn to enter a gated milking chamber known as the "box."

After a cow enters the "box," the robotic milking begins.

'The cow can milk herself'

Once secure in the box, a robotic arm affixed with a \$150,000 high-definition camera swings beneath the cow and its udder full of milk. The camera locates the cow's four teats, and the robot arm uses a device to wash and dry the teats one by one.

Now that the cow is ready for milking, the robot arm swings back to the milking machine, grabs a suction cup and, with the help of the camera, attaches it to a teat. Once all four cups are attached, milk begins to flow through flexible tubes that carry it to a nearby tank. To prevent any interruptions in the flow of milk, the robotic arm sweeps up the four tubes and holds them clear of the cow's feet during milking.

All the while, a sophisticated computer that has identified the cow by number records how much milk is being collected from each teat. The computer knows the age of the cow, how long she has been milking, whether she has been bred and a host of historical information about when she has been milked and how much milk she produced. It records the temperature and other characteristics of the milk.

When the cow runs dry, the robotic arm removes the cups and returns them to the milking machine, where they are washed clean. The robotic arm swings beneath the cow once again and uses the camera to locate each bare teat, which is then given a quick burst of blue disinfectant.

Just then, a gate in front of the cow opens and she walks forward, making room for another cow that soon enters. During this transition, the robotic arm moves the camera to a sponge and gives the screen a splash of water, a rub on the sponge and a blast of air to clean and dry it.

After a milked cow has left, a gate closes behind it. A gate at the entry to the box swings open to allow in another cow, and the milking process repeats.



In a modern dairy farm, workers attach milking machines while working in a small channel situated beneath the cows, which are held in pens on both sides above them. Robotic milking operations all happen on the same level and do not require the use of employees to attach milking equipment or move cows into position. Photo: Bart

Pfankuch, South Dakota News Watch

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During the six-minute milking process, neither Elliott nor any other farm worker has touched the cow or the milking machine. No one had to position the cow, move her in or out of the machine, pull her back to a pen for food and water, attach any milking cups or shovel any manure. Wastes from the cows are scraped by an automatic mechanism that moves the wastes to a collection pipe that leads to a clay-lined earthen pit outside the barn.

After being milked, cows walk through a container of solution that cleans their hooves, and they can lean against a large vertical robotic brush that cleans their hides and scratches any itches.

"It's called a voluntary milking system and it basically means that the cow can milk herself," Elliott said. After milking, "she goes back to feed, back to her stall, back to water, then lounges around in a nice sand bed until she feels the need to be milked again."

*****Interest in automation rising

Dairy farming and milk collection have undergone a series of technological improvements and increased automation in recent years, said Marv Post, president of the South Dakota Dairy Producers Association.

In most modern dairy farms, for example, cows are backed into pens on a concrete platform that has a channel below it where workers handle the cows, cleaning their teats, attaching milking machines and monitoring the operation. The machines automatically collect the milk and carry it to holding tanks before it is loaded onto trucks. Most data collection on cows and milking is done through computers.

Post said he first learned about robotic milking 15 or 20 years ago at a dairy expo in Wisconsin, and was skeptical the process could catch on in South Dakota. He has been pleasantly surprised, he said, by its implementation and effectiveness so far in improving productivity and creating a better living environment for the animals.

"These barns are amazing," Post said. "I'm still amazed at how these cows will walk up, get milked, and the next one is ready to come in."

Post said he and other dairy industry leaders are trying to find funding to support educational programs at South Dakota State University that will train the next generation of farmers in robotics and further automation of dairies.

"We want to support research and get students trained in how the dairy industry is today, but also on what is coming in the next 10 years or more."

The dairy industry in South Dakota is in a mode of rapid expansion as existing dairies expand and new



This cow is undergoing milking performed by a robotic arm and milking machine at the Drumgoon Dairy. The robotic arm contains a high-definition camera that locates each teat and cleans it before attaching milking cups. Photo: Bart Pfankuch, South Dakota News Watch

dairies have arisen to meet a growing need for milk by the burgeoning cheesemaking industry in the state.

Tom Peterson, director of the state dairy association, said the shift to robotic dairy farming is likely to be slow across the industry in South Dakota, mostly because of the large investment needed.

"It really has to fit their mode of farming and it's a significant investment, so it all has to pencil out for that to be the route," Peterson said.

Yet Peterson added that more farmers may start to consider adding robotics once they realize the production, efficiency and data-collection benefits. "With the amount of data mining available through robotic milking, it enhances milk quality, it enhances animal care and has just so much capability to identify any issues far in advance."



VIDEO: In this video, dairy Farmer Rodney Elliott discusses the importance of caring for animals and proper waste removal procedures on his farm near Lake Norden. Photo/video: Bart Pfankuch, South

Dakota News Watch

Robotics part of growth pattern at Drumgoon

Elliott is a native of Northern Ireland who moved to South Dakota to farm in 2006; his farm is named for the rural region of Northern Ireland where he grew up on a small farm and owned 140 cows before moving stateside.

Elliott runs the dairy operation and several associated businesses with his wife, Dorothy, and his two sons (he also has an adult daughter). Elliott served as the general contractor on construction of the new barn and installation of robotics. He said some fine-tuning of the operating robotics and new barn are underway even as more robotic milking stations are being built.

The financial goals of the robotics are to reduce employee costs and improve milk production of each cow and his herd as a whole, which have in fact occurred since the robotics launched in January 2021. Elliott also sees robotics as a way to improve living conditions for his cows, which live in greater comfort, move about on their own and are handled less amid automation.

Cows in the robotic system have already shown an increase in milk production, he said. His goal was to increase per-cow daily milk production to 75 pounds per cow, and already he has seen 82 to 83 pounds per day from robotic milking. His robotic operation will eventually include about 1,400 cows, still a fraction of his overall operation that has about 6,000 milking cows.

The long-range wish for Elliott is that robotic milking will build a bridge to a brighter future in which his children and other young farmers in South Dakota can enter the dairy industry without the nearly 24/7/365 work and worry that Elliott and other dairy farmers have undergone for generations.

"I feel strongly that the future is going to be trying to find young people who want a better lifestyle than

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this industry has afforded them so far," Elliott said, "so they don't have to do the physical, overnight work because this facility never shuts down."

Elliott's cell phone, its ringer sounding like a train whistle, is a constant companion that keeps him on his toes. The phone holds an application tied into the robotic system that alerts him immediately if any issues arise.

On a recent day, he awoke at 3 a.m. to help solve a problem in a dairy barn, then returned to bed before waking at 5:30 a.m. to start his actual workday. He sometimes stays engaged in dairying and running his other businesses until well after dark.

Elliott has a quick wit, an unassuming appearance and a self-deprecating sense of humor that belie his farming and business acumen. He's known to baby talk his cows to encourage compliance, and in a light moment he jests that, "I once heard a dairy farmer in Ireland say the dairy industry is for the industrious in the world and not the intelligent, so I thought it was a perfect industry for me."

In fact, the entry into robotics is only the latest of Elliott's many ventures that have resulted in a truly vertical integration of his businesses, which he said has resulted in \$20 million in gross annual revenues and a bank valuation of his overall operation at \$40 million.

He grows feed for his cows on 1,200 acres of farmland, has part ownership of a large cow-breeding operation in Kansas that supplies him with milking stock, and recently sold a million pounds of gravel off land he bought that was not suitable for crop farming.

He took a step in a new direction last year with the purchase of the Alsville Crossing truck stop, convenience store and restaurant that sits on a busy intersection of U.S. 81 a couple of miles south of his farm. Elliott put his son and daughter-in-law in charge of the modern facility that just happens to be a few miles from Lake Norden, where the Agropur cheese plant tripled capacity in 2019 and is now supporting hundreds of truck trips daily.

Elliott is committed to running a high-quality operation with a strong focus on proper treatment of animals and people, including his roughly 50 employees.

He pays for travel and housing for many of his immigrant laborers who are given training in dairying and farming techniques. He promotes employees from within and has helped several start their own operations. Two years ago, he ended the use of all antibiotics in his animals.

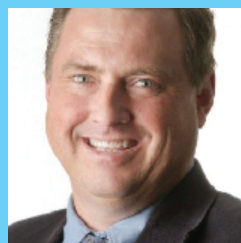
He also takes great care in the cleanliness of his farm and how wastes are handled. Elliott said he considers his South Dakota Concentrated Animal Feeding Permit and water-use permit to be a privilege, not a right, that entrusts him with protecting the environment as much as possible.

Upon reflection, Elliott said he sometimes worries that his expansions have brought him to "the point where the dairy farm is running you instead of you running the dairy farm."

He hopes to buy a boat this summer to cruise nearby Lake Poinsett and will try to play more golf and make more visits to see his children and growing gaggle of grandchildren.

"I'm a crazy person; that's the best way to describe it," Elliott said. "I enjoy the people part of the operation and the strategizing, but what you could say is that 'this guy just really loves cows.'"

ABOUT BART PFANKUCH



Bart Pfankuch, Rapid City, S.D., is the content director for South Dakota News Watch. A Wisconsin native, he is a former editor of the Rapid City Journal and also worked at newspapers in Florida. Bart has spent more than 30 years as a reporter, editor and writing coach.

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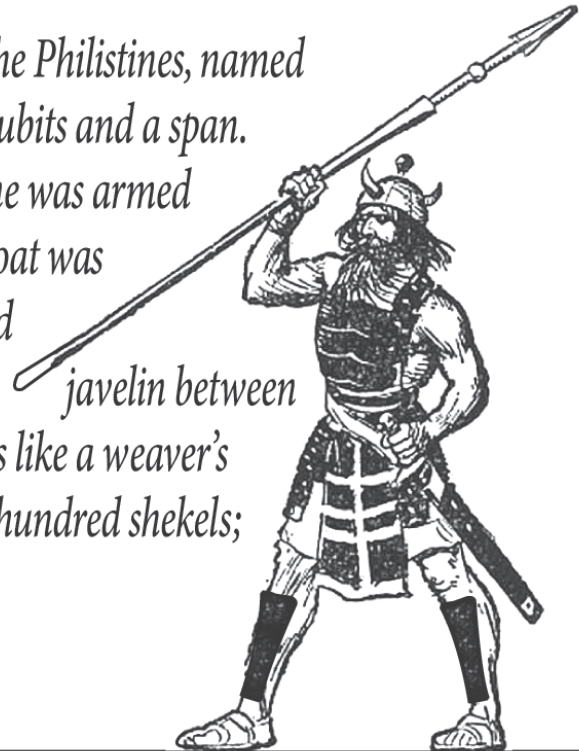
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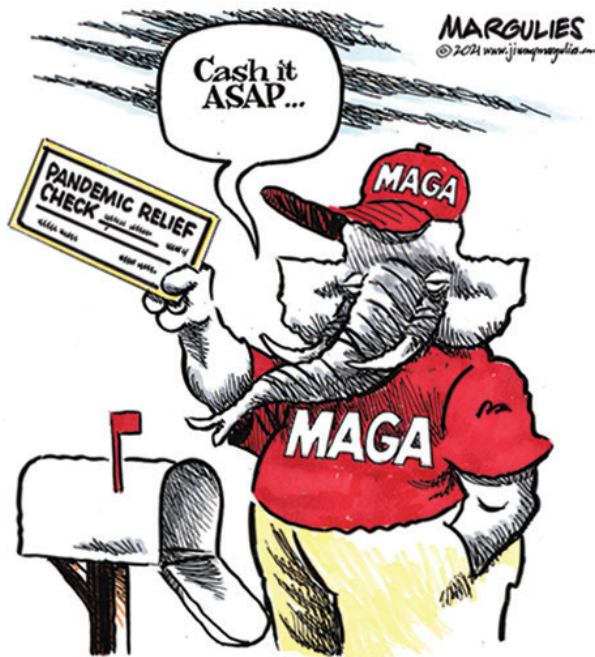
THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE

...A champion went out from the camp of the Philistines, named Goliath, from Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span. He had a bronze helmet on his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail, and the weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of bronze. And he had bronze armor on his legs and a bronze javelin between his shoulders. Now the staff of his spear was like a weaver's beam, and his iron spearhead weighed six hundred shekels; and a shield-bearer went before him.



1 SAMUEL 17: 4-7

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BIBLE TRIVIA

by Wilson Casey

1. Is the book of Mark in the Old or New Testament or neither?
2. From Genesis 8:4, where did Noah's ark rest after the great flood? *Dead Sea bottom, Mountains of Ararat, Near Garden of Eden, Atop Mt. Sinai*
3. What kind of physical problem did Timothy have of which Paul advised a little wine? *Back, Stomach, Head, Legs*
4. How many days was Jesus on earth after His resurrection? *3, 40, 100, 346*
5. From Acts 8, who baptized the Ethiopian eunuch? *Isaiah, James, Philip, Paul*
6. How old was Abraham when he died? *70, 175, 202, 256*

ANSWERS: 1) New; 2) Mountains of Ararat; 3) Stomach; 4) 40; 5) Philip; 6) 175 (Genesis 25:7)

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

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Italian Simmered Chicken Breasts

This is one of those "I've got 10 minutes to make dinner, and I'm serving chicken again" solutions we bet you'll love. If you've got a can of soup, a can opener and some tangy spices, you've got the meal under control!

- 16 ounces skinned and boned uncooked chicken breasts, cut into 4 pieces
1 (10 3/4-ounce) can reduced-fat tomato soup
1/2 cup water
1 1/2 teaspoons Italian seasoning

1. In a large skillet sprayed with olive oil-flavored cooking spray, brown chicken pieces for 3 to 4 minutes on each side. In a small bowl, combine tomato soup, water and Italian seasoning. Evenly spoon soup mixture over chicken pieces.

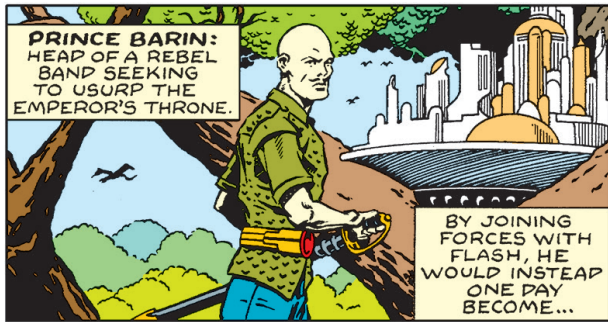
2. Lower heat, cover and simmer for 15 minutes or until chicken is tender. When serving, evenly spoon sauce over top of chicken pieces. Makes 4 servings.

* Each serving equals: About 162 calories, 2g fat, 27g protein, 9g carb., 304mg sodium, 0g fiber; Diabetic Exchanges: 3 Meat, 1/2 Starch.

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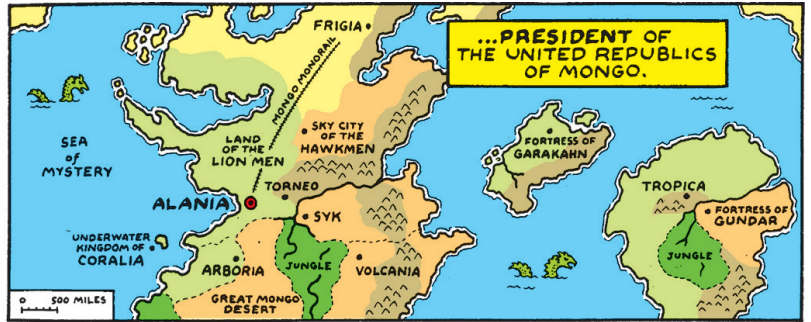
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PRINCE BARIN:
HEAD OF A REBEL
BAND SEEKING
TO USURP THE
EMPEROR'S THRONE.

BY JOINING
FORCES WITH
FLASH, HE
WOULD INSTEAD
ONE DAY
BECOME...



...PRESIDENT OF
THE UNITED REPUBLICS
OF MONGO.

FRIGIA • SKY CITY OF THE HAWKMEN
LAND OF THE LION MEN • TORNEO • SYK
ALANIA • UNDERWATER KINGDOM OF CORALIA
ARBORIA • GREAT MONGO DESERT • VOLCANIA
SEA OF MYSTERY • MONGO MOUNTAINS
FORTRESS OF GARAKAHN • TROPICA • JUNGLE • FORTRESS OF GUNDAR

0 500 MILES

FLASH GORDON

By JIM KEEFE

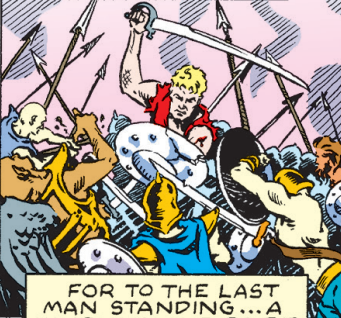
3-7

EVERY CHALLENGE IS MORE INSIDIOUS THAN THE LAST. AFTER DAYS OF HORRIFIC BATTLE, ONLY FLASH AND A MYSTERIOUS MASKED MAN ARE LEFT STANDING.

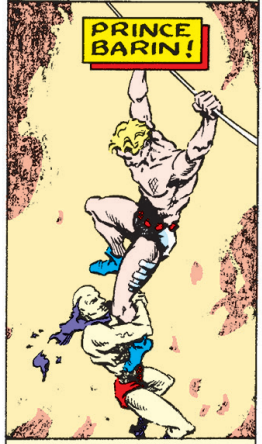
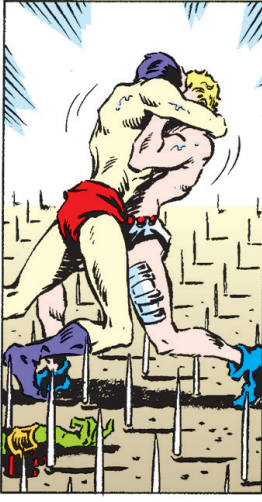
FLASH'S BLOOD RUNS COLD AS HIS APVERSARY'S IDENTITY IS REVEALED...

THE VALOR AND BRAVERY OF FLASH AND THE EXILED PRINCE GALVANIZES THE SPECTATORS. THE CROWD CRIES OUT THAT BOTH MEN BE PROCLAIMED VICTORS.

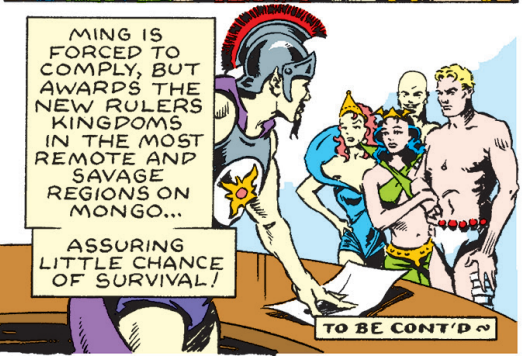
FLASHBACK:
FLASH ENTERS THE TOURNAMENTS OF MONGO.




FOR TO THE LAST MAN STANDING... A KINGDOM AND BRIDE OF HIS CHOOSING.



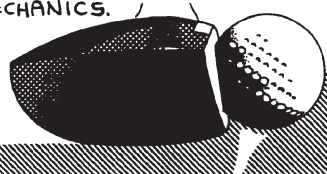

MADLY IN LOVE WITH PRINCESS AURA, BARIN HAD RISKED ALL IN HOPES OF WINNING HER HAND.



Play Better Golf with JACK NICKLAUS



YOU'VE "TIMED" YOUR SWING PERFECTLY WHEN YOU DELIVER THE CLUBFACE TO THE BALL SQUARELY AND TRAVELING AT TOP SPEED. ACHIEVING THIS REPETITIVELY REQUIRES GOOD TEMPO AND RHYTHM AS WELL AS SOUND MECHANICS.

GOOD TEMPO DERIVES FROM GIVING YOURSELF ENOUGH TIME IN THE SWING TO EXECUTE ALL THE MOVES CORRECTLY.

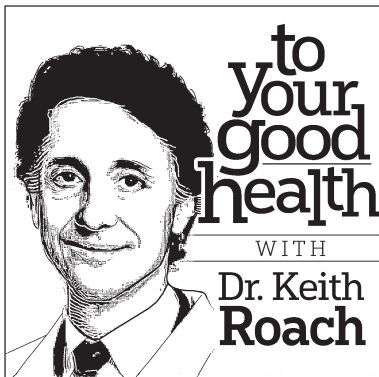
GOOD RHYTHM DERIVES FROM MAKING THEM SMOOTHLY AND FLUIDLY — PARTICULARLY THE TAKEAWAY AND THE CHANGE OF DIRECTION.

1-26

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Can Mushroom Microdose Help With Depression?



DEAR DR. ROACH: I am battling depression and have a question about psilocybin. I stopped taking Effexor for my depression because I did not like the side effects. I also tried SAM-e, which had only a small effect. So, for the past three months I have been trying cognitive behavioral therapy, using certain tactics.

I've cut back my days of work and avoid all news when not on the job. I stringently avoid social media. I don't put myself into situations that I know will upset me. I am also limiting my alcohol consumption. Lately I've been reading about how microdosing the psilocybe mushroom can elevate or change moods for the better.

I would like to know your opinion on the use of psilocybin for depression.

It seems to be gaining traction, but my fear is that it can bring on degrees of psychosis. -- S.M.

ANSWER: I found two studies on psilocybin, a naturally occurring chemical in 200 or so species of mushrooms, especially those of the genus psilocybe. One study from 2016 was in 29 people with cancer, and anxiety and depression: 60%-80% had "clinically significant reductions in depression or anxiety." Another study (also from 2016) treated 12 patients with treatment-resistant depression with two doses of psilocybin, and their depression scores were reduced by more than half at five weeks. All 12 patients had adverse effects, usually mild, such as headache, nausea or confusion. Two patients had paranoia. All adverse effects lasted less than a day.

While I am optimistic that this might lead to an additional option for therapy, these are very small studies. Further, the authors of the second study note "patients have taken pharmaceutical grade compounds of known strength and purity, under the supervision of trained therapists." The authors and research institution "cannot advise on the procurement of illegal psychoactive substances, nor can we recommend self-medication." I can't emphasize that enough.

DEAR DR. ROACH: Someone I know, who is a nurse, mentioned to me that she had Lyme disease about 15 years ago. She said her doctor at the time told her that if she gets it again, she will die. Is this true? I would have thought some immunity would be gained once you have it. She is completely healed and said she has no health issues associated with it. -- D.S.

ANSWER: Lyme disease is caused by the bacteria *Borrelia burgdorferi*, and is spread by the deer tick. There are many manifestations of Lyme disease, including rash, many nonspecific symptoms, and late symptoms such as arthritis.

Death from Lyme disease is rare, and is usually a result of carditis, which is heart inflammation. This happens in about 1% of cases of Lyme disease. There were nine cases of fatal Lyme carditis reported between 1985 and 2018.

People who are treated early for Lyme disease, such as those get the classic bull's-eye rash, do not get immunity to Lyme. However, people who have had Lyme long enough to develop arthritis do develop some resistance to future episodes. Unfortunately, we are still at least several years away from a Lyme vaccine.

I could find nothing to support a significant risk of death from people who get Lyme disease a second (or subsequent) time, so I think you can reassure your friend.

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



Beware the Ides of March. Or so says the soothsayer to Julius Caesar. The mid-March date was known in ancient Rome as a time for settling debts, and in William Shakespeare's tragedy, it's a clear warning of the deadly coming events for Caesar — a knifing courtesy of his friends in the Senate. Which is why it makes me think of all the great movies featuring assassins. Here are eight — some funny, some cult favorites, but every one guaranteed to slay.

Point of No Return — A robbery perpetrated by a strung-out junkie goes wrong and she's given a last-ditch second chance: instead of a death sentence, train to be an elite assassin under the control of the government. Stars Bridget Fonda as Maggie, the would-be assassin, and Gabriel Byrne as her handler.

Grosse Pointe Blank — In a romp that mixes comedy, romance and murder-mayhem, John Cusack stars as Martin Blank, a neurotic assassin having a rough patch. He travels home to Michigan for his 10-year high-school reunion, reuniting with the girl he stood up for prom (Minnie Driver) and chased by a rival killer (Dan Ackroyd).

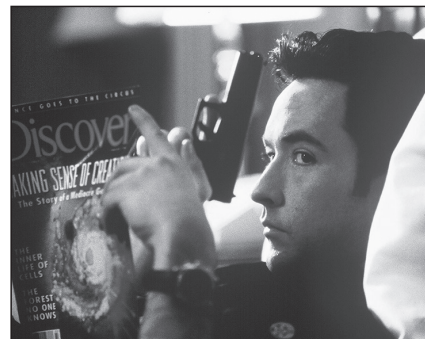
In the Line of Fire — A cat and mouse featuring Secret Service agent Frank Horrigan (Clint Eastwood) and rogue CIA assassin "Booth" (John Malkovich). Horrigan is the last living agent who served on Kennedy's detail in Dallas, and Booth taunts Horrigan with this fact all while threatening to assassinate the current president.

The Accountant — An autistic young boy with a dysfunctional family and extraordinary math abilities (Ben Affleck) becomes a forensic accountant by day and cold-blooded

killer by night. Dual story lines trace his history with an FBI agent and his current assignment uncovering accounting shenanigans at a medical prosthesis company.

No Country for Old Men — The Coen Brothers tackle the neo-crime Western genre when a Texas hunter (Josh Brolin) claims the remains of a desert drug deal gone awry. No crime is secret, and soon hitman Anton Chigurh (Javier Bardem) is dispatched to retrieve the money — by any means necessary.

The Day of the Jackal — The 1973 classic follows a paramilitary group's intent to assassinate French President Charles de Gaulle. They eventually resort to professional assistance in the form of The Jackal, a hit man of infamy, who settles down to business as his identity is slowly uncovered by a Paris detective.



Buena Vista Pictures

John Cusack in "Grosse Pointe Blank"

Collateral — Jamie Foxx plays a cab driver who takes one last high-dollar fare: a man (Tom Cruise) who offers him \$600 to make a series of stops. Catch is, the fare is a hit man wiping out witness after witness.

Pulp Fiction — Any discussion of movie assassins would not be complete without cult favorites Vincent Vega (John Travolta) and Jules Winfield (Samuel L. Jackson), from director Quentin Tarantino's breakout film. The philosophical pair stand out for their effortless cool and eminent quotability.

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1. What was the title of the last Allman Brothers Band album that included guitarist Duane Allman?
2. Who released "Let's Get It On," and when?
3. Which band released "Black Dog" in 1971?
4. Name the singer-songwriter who released "Forever in Blue Jeans."
5. Name the song that contains this lyric: "It must have been cold there in my shadow, to never have sunlight on your face."

Answers

1. "Eat a Peach," released in 1972. Allman had been killed in a motorcycle accident the previous October. The album contained studio and live recordings from the Fillmore East, a New York City rock venue.

2. Marvin Gaye, in 1973. He was shot and killed in

1984 during a violent argument with his father. Mr. Gaye Sr. received only a few years of probation, even though the second shot was at point-blank range after Gaye was already dead.

3. Led Zeppelin. The title was inspired by a black Lab that hung around the recording studio.

4. Neil Diamond, in 1979.

5. "Wind Beneath My Wings." While numerous artists covered the song, it was Bette Middle in 1988 who released the highest charting version for the soundtrack of the film "Beaches."

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Just Like Cats & Dogs

by Dave T. Phipps



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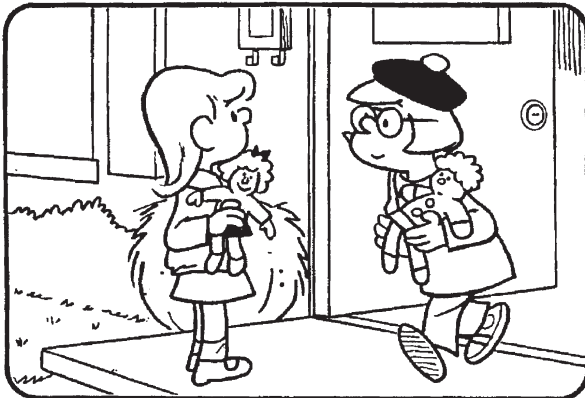
GRIN and BEAR IT ^{by Wagner}



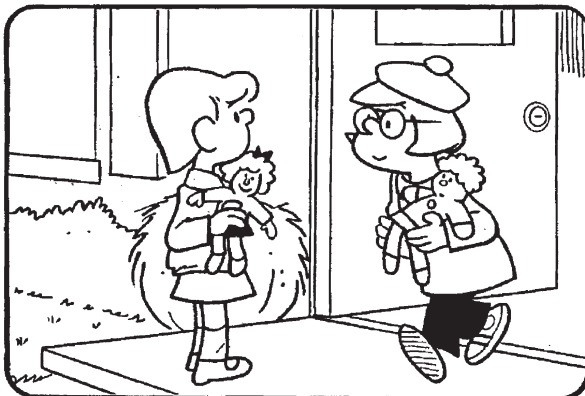
"Is this your only store?"

HOCUS-FOCUS

BY HENRY BOLTINOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.



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Differences: 1. Hat is different. 2. Socks are higher. 3. Button is removed. 4. Hair is shorter. 5. Pants are different. 6. Mailbox is missing.



- “Shaving cream can be used as a spot remover for many carpets. Use only a small amount, and follow up with a damp cloth.” — *D.L. in New Brunswick, Canada*

- Here’s a great rule of thumb in the kitchen: The quicker it cooks, the more direct the heat. So, for a thin piece of steak that’ll cook quickly, a cast-iron pan fry will do nicely. For a thicker cut of, say, chicken, you should bake at a lower temp for a longer time.

- To rid a shirt of a deodorant stain, sponge plain white vinegar onto the residue and rub briskly.

- “Need sliced mushrooms for your salad or recipe. They are hard to cut, but you might already have the perfect tool for the job in your kitchen. If you have an egg slicer, get it out. It works very well for mushrooms, and it’s eas-

ier to use than trying to cut those slices yourself.” — *J.R. in Utah*

- Got an ink stain? Try using the ubiquitous nowadays (thankfully) hand sanitizer! Apply a little sanitizer to the ink stain, then use a clean, dry white rag to blot, checking the rag often and moving to a different spot on the rag as it takes up the ink.

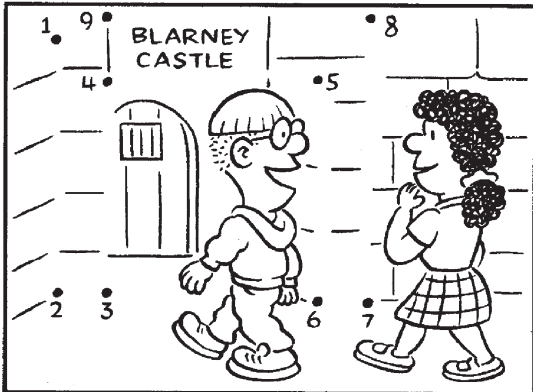
- To get clothing really clean, don’t overfill your washer. Oftentimes, we want to get the laundry done quickly by stuffing in as much as possible, thereby reducing the number of loads. But if there isn’t enough space for everything to move about, it can actually keep the clothing from getting clean. Never fill more than three-fourths full.

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

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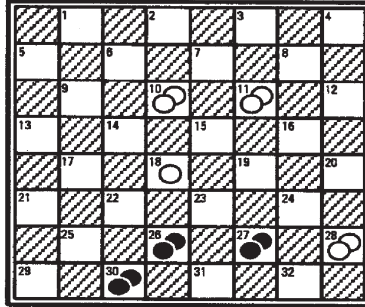
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RIDDLE-DOTS! "Linda, can you tell me what's the richest country in Europe?" Connecting the dots should help you solve this riddle.
 Answer: Ireland. Its capital is always Dublin (doubling).

Junior Whirl

by Charles Barry Townsend



A CHECKER PUZZLE

ONE game that everyone knows how to play is checkers, and one type of puzzle that will help you to be a better player is a cracker-barrel checker challenge. Pictured here is a checkerboard showing a game in progress. The white checkers are moving up the board and the black checkers are moving down. It's the black checkers' turn to go. See if you can figure out the best moves to make so that the black checkers will win the game.

Answer: The winning moves are: 27 to 24, 28 to 19, 19 to 26 and then a quadruple jump: 30 to 23 to 14 to 7 to 16.

LET'S BEHEAD A WORD! When you behead a word you drop the first letter of the word. Using the following clues see if you can figure out what the starting word is:

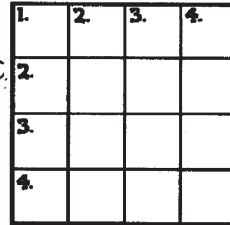
1. Behead a thief and he'll be angry.
2. Behead again and get the cost per unit of something.
3. Behead yet again and get the past tense of consume.



Answer: Pirate, rate, rate, ate.

A WORD SQUARE! In this puzzle the same four-letter words are used horizontally and vertically when filling in the crossword grid at the right. The following hints should help you solve this one in under four minutes.

1. What leprechauns will give you.
2. Scent.
3. A trademark.
4. Piece of hard candy.



Illustrated by David Coulson

Answer: 1. Gold. 2. Odor. 3. Logo. 4. Drop.

TIGER

by BUD BLAKE



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King Crossword

ACROSS

- 1 Gearwheel tooth
- 4 Baby elephant
- 8 Bar bills
- 12 Coffee vessel
- 13 — about (circa)
- 14 Panache
- 15 Salty expanse
- 16 Chills and fever
- 17 — avis
- 18 Driver's aid
- 21 Superlative suffix
- 22 Inlet
- 23 Protractor measure
- 26 Actress Lucy
- 27 "See ya!"

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

- 30 Old salts
- 31 "The Bells" author
- 32 Edge
- 33 Sea, to Henri
- 34 Periodical, for short
- 35 Belt holders
- 36 Summer cooler
- 37 "Alice" waitress
- 38 Fortress on the Thames
- 45 Pearl Harbor site
- 46 Stage show
- 47 Docs' bloc
- 48 Alum
- 49 Give temporarily
- 50 Use a ray gun
- 51 Bygone jets
- 52 Talks nonstop
- 53 Before
- 7 Giveaway
- 8 Towel material
- 9 Jai —
- 10 Hoedown site
- 11 Unforeseen problem
- 19 Morays
- 20 Vichy water
- 23 \$ dispenser
- 24 Scot's denial
- 25 Spike's warning
- 26 Journal
- 27 Buddy
- 28 Shrill bark
- 29 Type measures
- 31 Magnificent
- array
- 32 Benefit
- 34 Ruin the veneer
- 35 British insurer
- 36 Vendettas
- 37 Be on either side of
- 38 Raiments
- 39 Rowboat needs
- 40 "Huh?"
- 41 Dog bane
- 42 Stupor
- 43 Actor Epps
- 44 Scruff

DOWN

- 1 Point
- 2 Sandwich cookie
- 3 Chew (on)
- 4 Sandpaper type
- 5 Uneasy feeling
- 6 LummoX

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— King Crossword —

Answers

Solution time: 21 mins.

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

LAFF - A - DAY

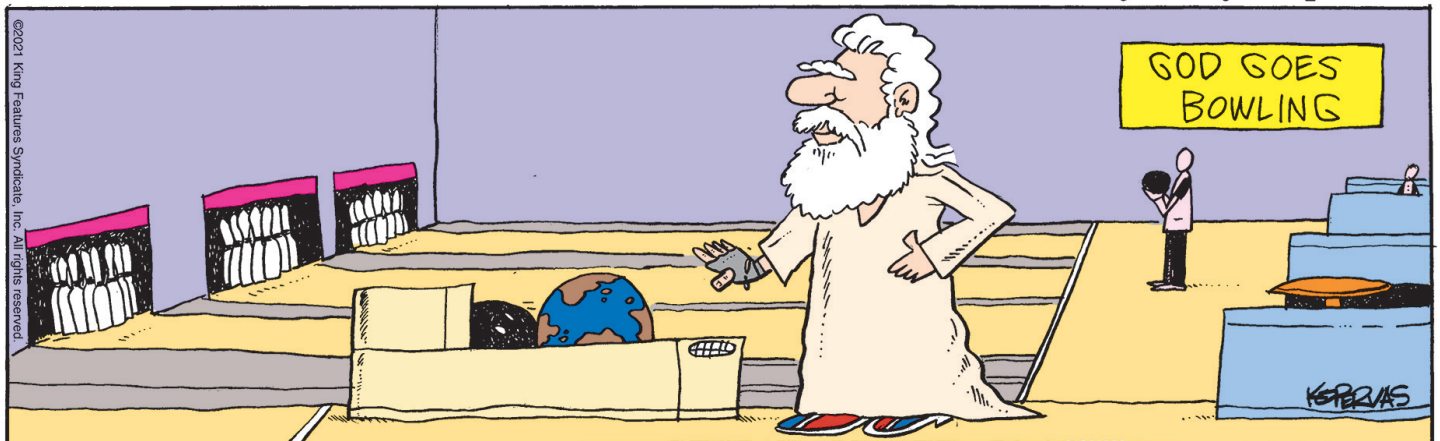


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"Well, if you won't marry me, Annabelle, will you at least help me get up?"

Out on a Limb

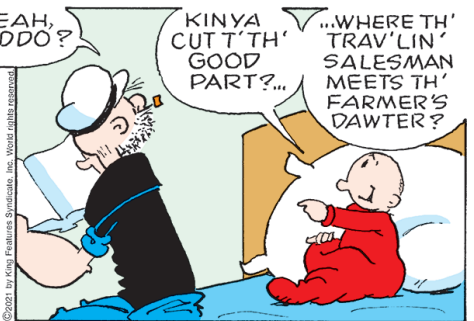
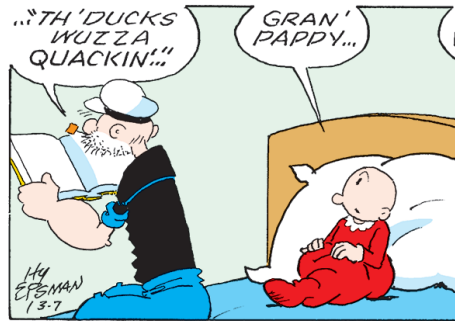
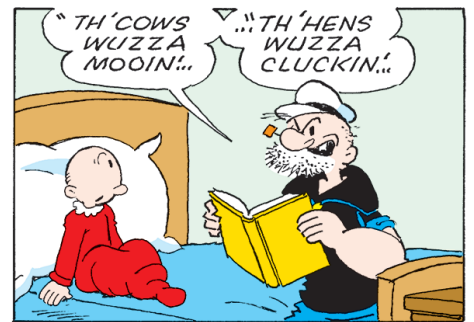
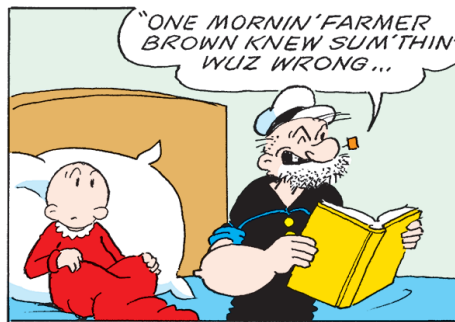
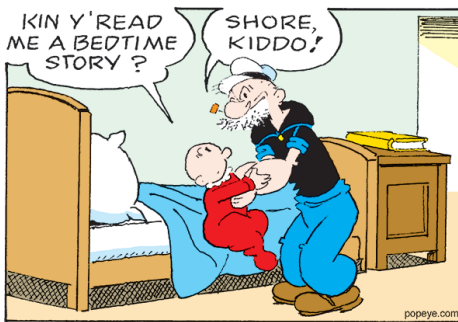
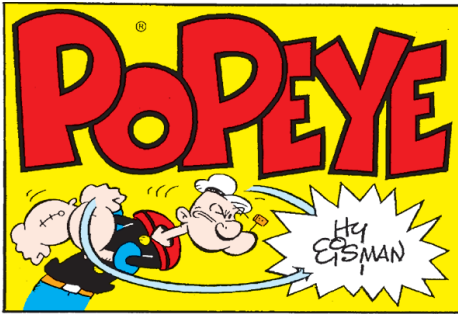
by Gary Kopervas



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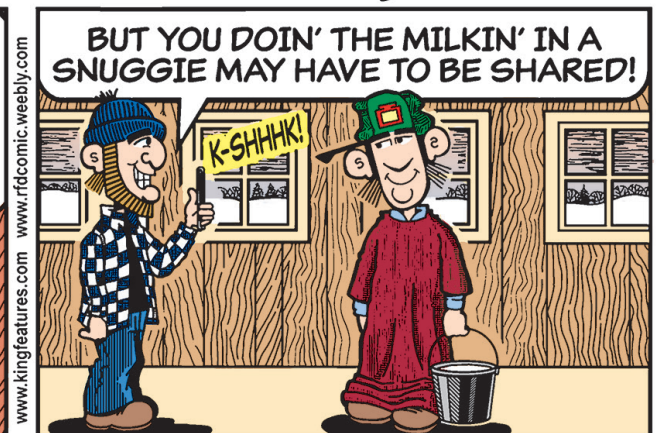
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R.F.D.

by Mike Marland



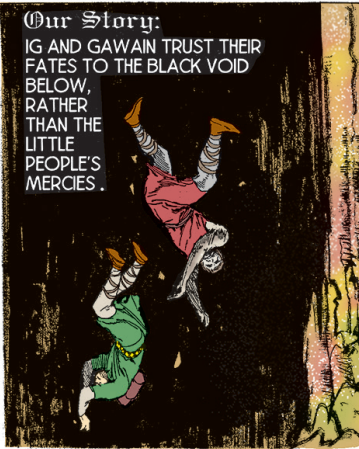
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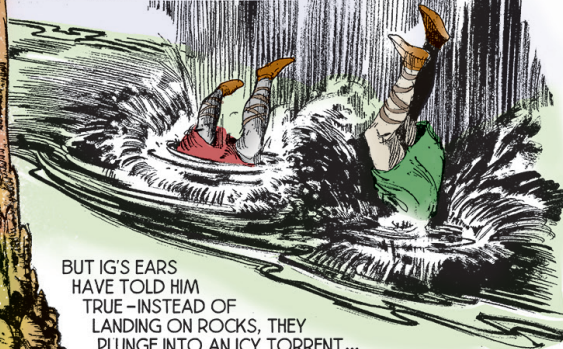
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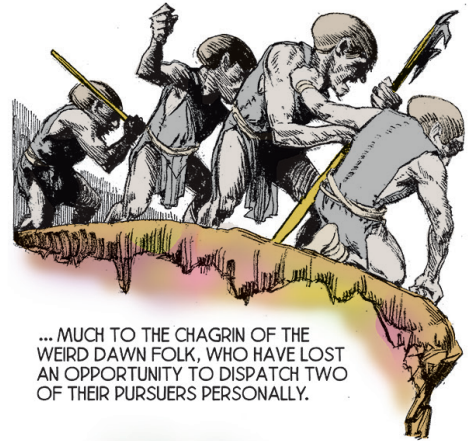
Our Story:
IG AND GAWAIN TRUST THEIR FATES TO THE BLACK VOID BELOW, RATHER THAN THE LITTLE PEOPLE'S MERCIES.



Hal Foster's BY GIANNI AND SCHULTZ
Prince Valiant



BUT IG'S EARS HAVE TOLD HIM TRUE - INSTEAD OF LANDING ON ROCKS, THEY PLUNGE INTO AN ICY TORRENT...



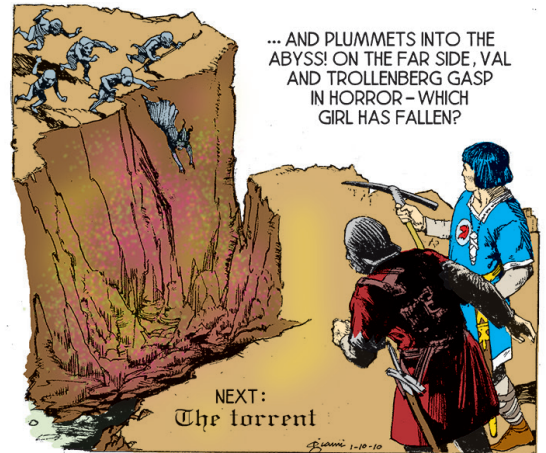
... MUCH TO THE CHAGRIN OF THE WEIRD DOWN FOLK, WHO HAVE LOST AN OPPORTUNITY TO DISPATCH TWO OF THEIR PURSUERS PERSONALLY.



FARTHER ALONG THE TRAIL, THE KIDNAPPED WOMEN WITNESS THE COMMOTION. "VAL!" SCREAMS ALETA, AND THE THREE BEGIN A BRAVE STRUGGLE TO DELAY THEIR MARCH.



BUT IN THE DARKNESS, ONE OF THE WOMEN BREAKS HER CAPTOR'S GRIP...



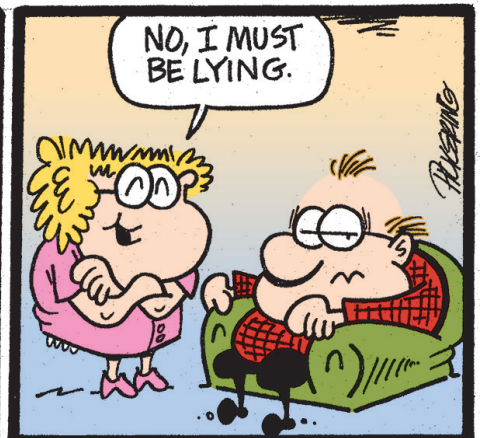
... AND PLUMMETS INTO THE ABYSS! ON THE FAR SIDE, VAL AND TROLLENBERG GASP IN HORROR - WHICH GIRL HAS FALLEN?

NEXT:
The torrent

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The Spats

by Jeff Pickering



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Pickering

SENIOR NEWS LINE

by Matilda Charles

Seniors Raising Grandchildren

For many seniors, retirement plans can change instantly when it becomes apparent that they'll need to raise their grandchildren. The reasons this can happen are many, and none of them good: parental drug use, arrest and incarceration, a dangerous military assignment, alcoholism and even death of the parents.

The potential complications can be immediate: You have no extra room because you downsized, you're in a strict 55-plus seniors community, you're on a very limited Social Security budget, your health isn't great ... and so much more.

If you're a senior who's now in this position, you're not alone. It's estimated that 3 million children are being raised by grandparents.

But help is available.

Start with the Child Welfare Information Gateway (www.childwelfare.gov) and scroll to your state. Ask about Medicaid for Children, SNAP benefits, TANF (Temporary Assistance for

Needy Families) and Supplemental Security Income for children.

Raising Your Grandchildren (www.raisingyourgrandchildren.com) has a wealth of information. State Resources, for example, will take you to social workers, support groups and programs in your state.

The legal aspect of raising your grandchildren can't be ignored because it will impact all parts of your life.

What you're providing is called Kinship Care. Be sure you understand the differences between Formal, Informal, Temporary and Voluntary. Formal Kinship Care, for example, means the state has legal custody of the child but he lives with you. State laws vary, and you'll have caseworkers, court appointments and more.

Informal Kinship Care, on the other hand, leaves the courts and caseworkers out of your lives, but legal custody remains with the parents. That can be a problem when it comes to getting the child medical care and enrolling them

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1. What Pro Football Hall of Fame linebacker and defensive end recorded 160 sacks in his NFL career from 1985-99?

2. The Calder Cup is the trophy awarded to the champion of what professional ice hockey league?

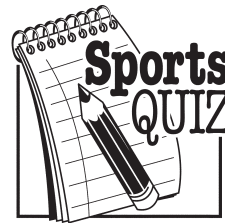
3. In 1973, Los Angeles Lakers center Elmore Smith set an NBA record for blocks in a game with how many?

4. What athletic shoe, first released in 1989, had a built-in device that inflated portions of the tongue for a custom fit?

5. What facility outside of Green Bay hosted two to four Packers home games per season from 1953-94?

6. What big-hitting outfielder won World Series championships with the Philadelphia Phillies (2008) and San Francisco Giants (2010)?

7. What actor, known for roles in "Necessary Roughness" (1991), "Street Fighter" (1994) and "BASEketball" (1998), was a replacement



player for the Los Angeles Rams during the 1987 NFL players strike?

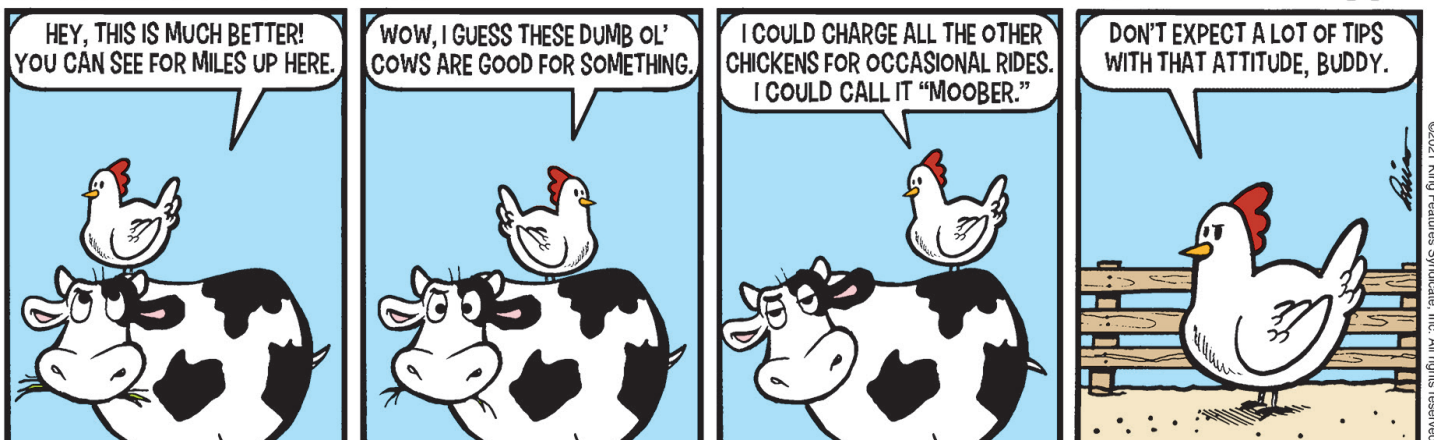
Answers

1. Kevin Greene.
2. The American Hockey League (AHL).
3. 17.
4. The Reebok Pump.
5. Milwaukee County Stadium.
6. Pat Burrell.
7. Peter Tuasosopo.

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Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps





Neighbor Lets His Dog Poop in My Yard

DEAR PAW'S CORNER: My neighbor constantly lets his dog come into my yard and do his business. Sometimes the dog is off leash, and other times he is on the leash while the neighbor just stands there. I'm tired of picking up after this dog! What can I do? Should I go out and squirt the dog in the face with water? — *Frustrated in White Plains, New York*

DEAR FRUSTRATED: This isn't the dog's fault at all — it's the fault of the owner for allowing his dog into your yard. Squirting the dog in the face (or the owner) will not help things and will only escalate the situation.

The next time the owner comes by, talk to him — calmly — and ask him not to let the dog poop in your yard, to keep the dog on a leash, and to pick up after the dog. Explain that keeping him

on a leash keeps the dog safe.

If the neighbor keeps letting the dog into your yard, or if you don't feel safe talking to this person, then contact the city. White Plains, like many municipalities in the U.S., has a leash law and imposes fines on owners who don't keep their dog on a leash, who don't pick up after their dog, or who allow their pet to go onto someone else's property without permission.

And please, whatever you do, don't take this out on the dog. Pets are unaware of boundaries unless they're trained to stay away from certain areas. They don't realize they're doing something wrong, especially if the owner is not correcting them. It's up to the owner to control his dog while outside.

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

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Strange BUT TRUE

By Lucie Winborne

* Iguanas have three eyes: two in the normal spots and a third on top of their heads, that only perceives brightness.

* Banks employ therapists known as wealth psychologists who help ultra-rich clients unable to mentally cope with the guilt they feel over their immense wealth, advise on inheritance issues and counsel parents on how to raise children who aren't spoiled by money.

* Tyromancy is the practice of predicting the future with cheese.

* In 2016, a student left a pineapple in an art museum in Scotland. Two days later, it had been

placed in a glass case as part of an exhibition.

* "Coffin birth" is a phenomenon that occurs when a pregnant woman delivers a child spontaneously after her death, due to gases that build up in the abdominal area, putting pressure on the mother's uterus and forcing the baby through the birth canal.

* The scientific term for brain freeze is "sphenopalatine ganglioneuralgia." Now you know why we call it brain freeze.

* Originally scheduled to be erected in Barcelona, the Eiffel Tower was rejected because citizens thought it was an eyesore.

* Alcatraz was the only prison to offer its inmates hot showers, but that had nothing to do with personal comfort. Rather, the reasoning went that if the prisoners were used to the hot shower-water, they'd be unable to cope with the frigid temps of the San Francisco Bay and hence deterred from attempting to escape.

* Hershey's Kisses take their name from the kissing sound deposited chocolate makes as it falls from the machine to the conveyor belt.

* If you point your car keys to your head, it will increase the remote's signal range.

Thought for the Day: "Looking at beauty in the world is the first step of purifying the mind." -- Amit Ray

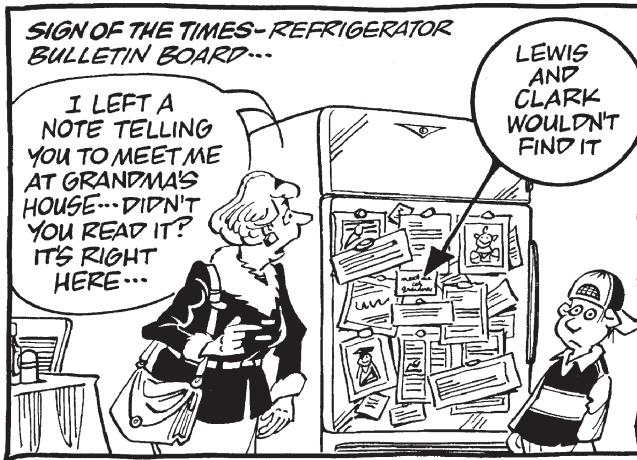
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THEY'LL DO IT EVERY TIME

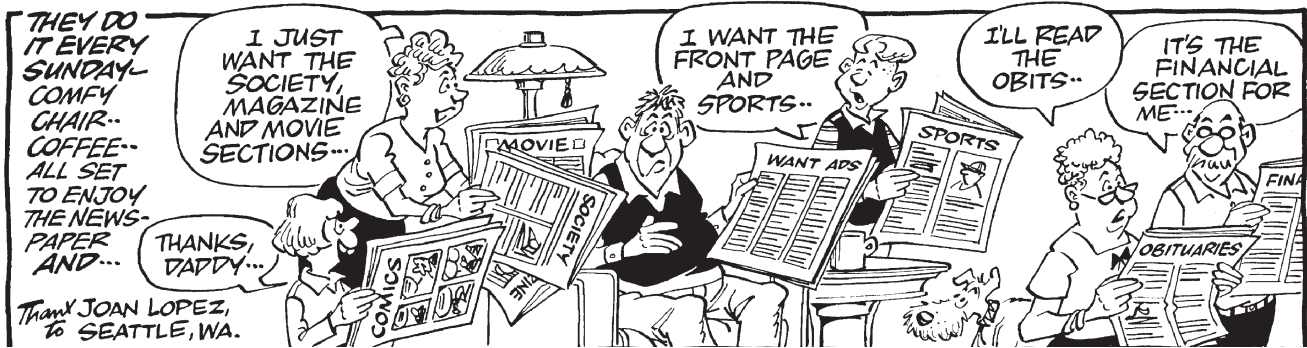
BY AL SCADUTO



Thank to AMY LEONE, BLAUVELT, N.Y.



Thank to W. BECHTMAN, OAKLAND, CA.



Thank JOAN LOPEZ, SEATTLE, WA.



John Parkinson began his apprenticeship to a London apothecary in 1585. He went on to have a distinguished career as a medical practitioner. In 1622, he gave up this career to concentrate on his garden in London's Long Acre. He started researching and writing his first book, *Paradisi in sole paradisus terrestris*. The book included descriptions and illustrations of hundreds of plants, their origins, alternative names and medicinal properties. Parkinson was given the title First Botanist to the King by King Charles I. – Brenda Weaver

Sources: www.parksandgardens.org, wikipedia.org

VETERANS ★ POST ★

by Freddy Groves

VA: More Good News on Debt Repayments

The Department of Veterans Affairs, which recently announced an extension of home loan forbearance (delaying collections until June 30), has now added to the list of available financial help. Due to the pandemic, debt collection of VA benefits overpayments and medical copayments has been suspended until Sept. 30 for those debts incurred after April 1, 2020.

The VA will notify veterans of the status of their debt, as well as any options, but while you wait on that communication from the VA, the particulars can be found online. Go to www.va.gov/manage-va-debt/ and sign in with your DS Logon, My HealtheVet or ID.me accounts. If you don't have an ID.me, you can create one right there on the page.

Once logged in, you'll be able to

check on debts for GI Bill or other education benefits, disability compensation or veteran pension. (Family members cannot use this tool.) You'll find information on the amount and status of the debt, what you can do about it and any letters the VA has sent you.

Once the payment suspension is lifted at the end of September, repayment will be made as painless as possible. You'll have four choices: 1) monthly offsets (they hold back a certain amount of your benefits), 2) small monthly payments (if you don't get benefits), 3) you make a compromise offer and pay a smaller amount, or 4) the debt is waived. For the last two, you'll need to fill out a Financial Status Report (VA Form 5655).

When you visit the debt management page, be sure to click the plus (+) signs. They open up much more information under each question.

If you need help from the Debt Management Center, call them weekdays at 800-827-0648, 7:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. ET. They're apparently slammed with calls and suggest you call Tuesday through Thursday from 10:30 a.m. to noon, or from 2:15 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. ET.

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



Time to Change Those Clocks...Again

Temps are rising and the sun isn't setting at 4:30 in the afternoon – that can only mean one thing – Daylight Saving Time (DST) is here.

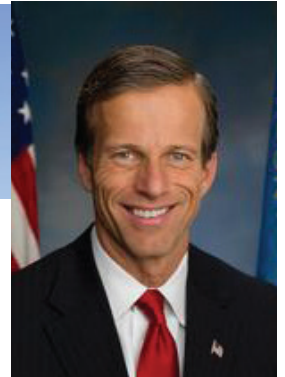
The “spring forward” has its pros and cons – the cons, we lose an hour of sleep and our kids’ schedules are in disarray for a few days – but for me, the extra daylight in the evening is well worth it. It’s the “fall back” I dislike, so much of the afternoon daylight is lost.

Congress established Daylight Saving Time through legislation, so Congress could just as easily undo it. That’s why I signed on to the Sunshine Protection Act, a bill that would make daylight savings time permanent. Namely, it would make the “spring forward” version of Daylight Saving Time the default – no more “fall back.” Most importantly, no more changing of the clocks twice a year.

There is broad, bipartisan support for this proposal. Since 2015, at least 45 states have introduced legislation to change their observance of DST, and eleven states have made this permanent switch to “spring forward.”

There’s nothing more depressing than leaving work or school only to be greeted by a dark sky. The Sunshine Protection Act solves this problem. Congress should do everyone a favor and let this weekend be the last time we’re all forced to change our clocks.

John Thune
U.S. SENATOR - SOUTH DAKOTA



A Taxpayer-Funded Liberal Wish List

While Democrats have tried to sell their recently signed \$1.9 trillion spending legislation as a COVID relief bill, the truth is it isn't one. Just 1 percent of this bill actually goes to our top COVID priority – vaccinations – and less than 10 percent of this bill is directly related to combating the virus. There's been a lot of talk about how this bill is a liberal wish list – which it is. But that's almost being too generous.

A liberal wish list at least suggests some grand policy schemes. This bill is mostly just a collection of payoffs to Democrat interest groups and Democrat states. For the extreme abortion wing of the Democrat Party, this bill omits longstanding federal restrictions on using taxpayer dollars to pay for abortion. It makes labor unions eligible for loans designed to rescue Main Street small businesses. It bails out failing union pensions – a bailout even the New York Times described as having “nothing to do with the pandemic” and as an “almost unheard-of” use of taxpayer dollars.

It provides nearly \$129 billion for K-12 schools – despite the fact that these schools have spent just \$5 billion of the \$68 billion already given to them – while keeping teachers' unions happy by making sure funding isn't tied to any requirement to actually get back to in-person instruction, which South Dakota teachers and schools have been doing all year.

Then there's the money for states. The bill appropriates a staggering \$350 billion for states – despite the fact that a majority of states already have the resources they need to weather the rest of the pandemic. On top of that, the distribution formula for that \$350 billion is heavily weighted in favor of blue states – like California, which stands to see billions under this legislation despite the fact that California's revenues are up by \$15 billion. Imagine the outcry if Republicans were directing funding to states that voted Republican in the last election.

And lest anyone think any of this was unintentional, Democrats doubled down on the partisanship when it came to amendments. They rejected an amendment that would have protected Americans from having their tax dollars used to pay for abortions – even though multiple Democrats broke ranks with their party to support this amendment. They rejected an amendment to tie funding for schools to schools actually reopening and an amendment to ensure seamless support to non-public schools serving low-income students.

They rejected an amendment to stop labor unions from taking loan money intended for small businesses. They rejected an amendment to provide greater transparency on nursing home COVID deaths – presumably in an attempt to protect the Democrat governor of New York, who is under fire for seemingly deliberate attempts to obscure reporting of these deaths. In a nod to the far-left environmental wing of their party, they rejected an amendment to reverse the president's cancellation of the Keystone XL Pipeline, which will cost thousands of American jobs.

Democrats passed an amendment that provides an incentive for some Americans to stay on unemployment by making more than \$10,000 of their unemployment benefits non-taxable. Working Americans will still have to pay their taxes – even if they're making less money than they would on unemployment. But a substantial amount of unemployment benefits will be tax-free. That doesn't seem too fair. Not to mention that the last thing we should be doing right now is discouraging people from going back to work.

It's deeply disappointing that Democrats have turned a bipartisan process into a totally partisan exercise. We could have passed a bill with overwhelming support from both parties, but that would have required Democrats to be willing to genuinely collaborate with Republicans. Unfortunately, it's becoming clear that collaboration is not a part of the new way of doing business in the Democrat-led Senate. No matter the roadblocks, you can be sure I will continue fighting for South Dakota's hardworking citizens and our priorities.

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South Dakota Governor

Kristi Noem



South Dakota: *Under God, the People Rule*

Wrapping up a Great Legislative Session

This week, the 2021 legislative session came to a close. In South Dakota, we keep things short; the session lasts a maximum of 40 legislative days. Every bill gets a hearing, its opportunity to be weighed and vetted by the 105 legislators that you elect to serve you in Pierre.

This year was unique in many ways. South Dakota's legislative session was perhaps the most "normal" in the country, with legislators still voting in person. And South Dakota had record revenue numbers and huge amounts of one-time money to invest in the long-term future of our state.

I challenged the legislature that we wanted these dollars to fix problems for 20-30 years or longer into the future. And that's what we're doing.

We're investing a combined \$100 million to finish connecting the state to high-speed broadband. We're putting \$50 million into an endowment for the South Dakota Freedom Scholarship, which will help kids who need financial assistance get a college degree. We're building the new Dakota Events Complex to make Huron a destination for national and regional rodeo events. And there are so many more important projects to strengthen communities.

We're also putting record dollars into savings and trust funds to strengthen the state budget for the future. South Dakota's economy is strong right now, but we want to make sure we're prepared for any future difficulties.

We improved healthcare for South Dakotans by making it more flexible and affordable. We recognized healthcare licenses for folks moving to South Dakota from other states. We provided greater transparency in healthcare costs by requiring that insurance companies show you what the cost of a procedure will be. And we're allowing South Dakotans to have greater flexibility in their access to healthcare.

We also defended the rights and freedoms of South Dakotans.

We defended life. I signed legislation to protect babies who were born alive. And I'll be signing a bill to ban abortions based on a diagnosis of Down syndrome very soon.

We defended liberty. We simplified youth hunting. We empowered parental choice in education. And we didn't expand government control over our citizens lives like we're seeing in other states.

And we defended property rights. We passed asset forfeiture reform with regards to conservation officers. We're allowing landowners East River to hunt on their own lands. And we passed legislation to codify the Department of Game, Fish & Parks' policy as it pertains to open fields.

All told, it was a fantastic legislative session. We had a lot to get done in a short amount of time, and I'm happy to report that we accomplished quite a bit to make South Dakota safer, stronger, and healthier for our kids and our grandkids.

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Democratic Leaders Column from Rep. Jamie Smith and Sen. Troy Heinert– Week 9

PIERRE, SD (March 12, 2021) – Greetings from Pierre, where the legislative session is over, but in many ways our work is just beginning. Democratic representatives and senators worked hard to build relationships, pass meaningful legislation, fight against dangerous and discriminatory ideas, and shape policy in our state government.

“Working through a pandemic that affected our fellow legislators throughout this session was a unique challenge this year,” says House Minority Leader, Jamie Smith. “We remained respectful while following the Covid mitigation practices put into place. Allowing remote testimony and voting when necessary was crucial to getting work done. I think this demonstrates the cooperative spirit in this year’s legislature. We appreciated those efforts and made it through the entire session, which is an accomplishment on its own.”

“We can’t thank the capitol staff enough for their efforts to keep us all safe,” says Senate Minority Leader, Troy Heinert. “They did the best they could. We’re not done with this yet as we’ve seen with the new variants emerging in our state. We must continue to keep our communities safe and keep it at bay. We will get through this together.”

Working together and agreeing on the state budget is always the most important work legislators do at the end of each session. This year’s budget was unique due to a significant amount of one-time money from federal Covid relief funds and revenues exceeding expenditures. The budget includes increases in ongoing spending, including 2.4 percent for education, Medicaid providers and state employees. It also includes additional one-time funds of \$50 million for a need-based “Freedom Scholarship” for college students, \$75 million for broadband expansion, and additional funds for railroad and radio tower infrastructure and other projects across the state.

“We just passed a historic \$5.1 billion budget for next year that includes funding for education, state employees, and community service providers that have been Democratic priorities for years,” says Smith. “This is an incredible opportunity to help a lot of people and will really move South Dakota forward.”

“I’m proud of the work our legislators on the appropriations committee got done this year,” said Heinert. “They had to work through the challenge of being left out of a lot of conversations that took place behind closed doors, but I can honestly say it was the best product we could put forward. We listened to our constituents and will continue to fight for them.”

Listening to our constituents and our communities is always a Democratic priority. This year was no exception as we had to fight against some discriminatory and dangerous legislation. We had bills that died in committee get “smoked out” on the senate floor, which is a rare occurrence in a typical session.

Bills that were smoked out include HB 1217 to protect women’s sports and HB 1212, clarifying the use of force. HB 1217 is clearly aimed at keeping trans youth from participating in activities that affirm their identity, and HB 1212, also known as a “stand your ground” law, creates ambiguous self-defense arguments. Both bills were defeated almost unanimously in committee, but they were revived with a third of the Senate supporting a hearing on the Senate floor.

“The committee process is the best place to hear testimony from both citizens and organizations who feel strongly about a particular bill,” says Heinert. “If committee members are absent or if the vote is

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close, then the smoke-out is an effective tool to use. However, no legislator should use it just because they didn't like the outcome of those committee hearings. It isn't respectful to the legislative process, and it isn't fair to the people who come here to testify on their own behalf. It silences their voices and that's not why we're here."

Respecting the voices and the votes of people through the initiated measure process is another priority for Democrats. Finding common ground and common-sense solutions to issues like Amendment A and IM 26 were huge areas of concern this year. HB 1100, the governor's bill to modify the medical marijuana program and delay its implementation, was passed in the house. The senate amended the bill to add an "affirmative defense" provision to provide legal protection for people who have a legitimate medical use for cannabis. A conference committee was created to work out an agreement. No agreement was reached so IM 26 is the law of the land and medical marijuana will become legal on July 1, 2021 unless the Governor's office takes additional actions.

"We were getting down to crunch time, and we had to do something," says Smith. "This is the best path forward to get back to IM 26 as it was approved by the voters. It's time for the administration to get to work to implement the will of the people."

The legislature will be meeting over the summer to continue work on its appropriations and audit functions. The executive board will also meet and choose topics for summer studies. Most importantly, we will also be meeting on redistricting. The legislature will meet again in November for a special session to debate and approve new legislative election maps that take effect for the 2022 election cycle.

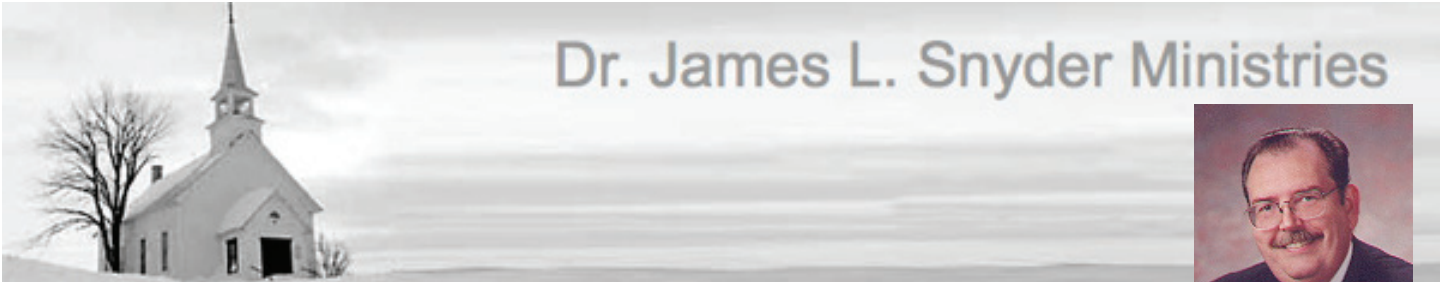
"I encourage everyone, especially those who live in larger areas, to attend field hearings on redistricting this year," says Heinert. "It's critically important that you show up and make sure your voice is heard so you have representation in the legislature."

Democrats in South Dakota work for you, and we want to hear from you! Please contact us to share your questions or concerns about this session and the future of our state. Your voice matters, and we believe that together we can create a South Dakota that works for all of us.

Representative Jamie Smith, Jamie.Smith@sdlegislature.gov
Senator Troy Heinert, Troy.Heinert@sdlegislature.gov

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New Normal: If It's Free, It Ain't for Me

Once when I wore a younger man's suit I would take anything free. I assumed it was my right to get something free.

Then I had a conversation with my grandfather. If anybody knew how to squeeze a buffalo out of a nickel, it was my grandfather. But you couldn't trick him by offering him something free. He said to me, "Son, if it's free, it ain't for me."

Explaining that, he said, "For everything free, somebody, somewhere has to pay for it."

At the time, I just chuckled and fluffed off this advice. After all, if I'm offered something free I'm going to jump and even dance to get it.

Getting something free wasn't too bad, and I tried to be careful about some of these free offers. But that was back in the day when there was no Internet or websites. Oh, those were the good old days.

I would see a free offer in the newspaper and immediately cut it out and send it in and wait for that free offer to come. I must say I did get a lot of free things back in those days, but if I would examine them, they weren't worth the postage I used to send for them.

Also, there were free offers on TV programs at the time. I applied for as many as I could get.

But then came the Internet, and everything has changed.

When I first started seeing these "free" offers, I jumped at the opportunity. After all, it was the Internet, and you didn't have to spend any money on postage. So I was in my glory. After all, you can trust the Internet.

I got free pens, a free hat, a free notebook, and boy, it goes on and on and on. All I had to do was send my name and address, and everything was fine.

My fun was just beginning.

The change was that now I could get something free if I just paid the shipping. I didn't think that was too bad, I was just thinking about what I was getting for free.

Not being too sophisticated about how this works, I entered my name, address, phone number, and then [drumroll] my credit card number. After all, I was getting something free, and I only had to pay the shipping.

I know I'm an old country boy that's very naïve along these lines. I wouldn't rob anybody, so I don't think anybody would rob me. It goes both ways.

Pretty soon, those sunny days were overcome by a dark cloud of rain and thunderstorms.

In checking my bank account, I noticed some suspicious withdrawals on my account. I thought maybe I bought something I had forgotten about, so I didn't give it much thought.

Then one day, I noticed in my bank account a withdrawal of \$1,699, which took place in California. I was in California, but that was 20 years ago. How I was able to purchase something in California for such an amount of money, I don't know.

Then the next day, a withdrawal of \$3,699, which took place in Texas.

I rode my snorting horse to the bank to see what in the world was going on.

"Have you ever," the banker said to me, "ordered something online and used your credit card?"

"I don't order anything online, particularly that expensive."

She looked at my account very carefully and then look back at me, "Have you ever used your credit

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card online?"

"The only time I do is when I am taking advantage of some free product where I only pay the shipping."

"So," she said rather hesitatingly, "you have used your credit card online for some purchase."

There was a long pause in the office while she continued looking at my account online.

"You do know that when you use your credit card online, some people can scam that account and use it to make purchases?"

Staring at her, I said, "Who in the world would do something like that?"

I don't think I heard a chuckle but I thought I sensed a smile in her direction.

"Who would do something like that?" Then she read to me from my account the fraudulent companies that extracted money from my account.

She then explained to me the new normal for online transactions. According to her, when you apply for some free gift and only have to pay the shipping, you expose yourself to some fraud scheme.

"Somebody out there," she said very soberly, "is interested in your money, and they don't care how they get it."

From my side of the room came a deep, heartfelt sigh. I never expected people just to take advantage of me to get my money. They need to find out that I don't have enough money to go around.

She then explained to me that she could reverse all of these transactions and turn them over to the bank's fraud department, and they would take care of it.

In a few days, those transactions disappeared from my account. I then understood what my grandfather used to say, "If it's free, it ain't for me."

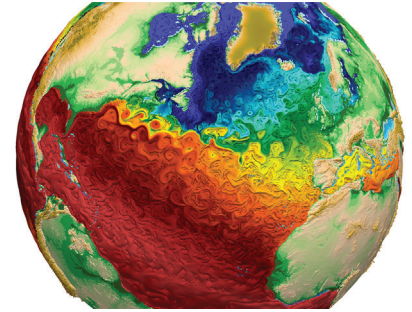
I can only trust God. "O Lord my God, in thee do I put my trust: save me from all them that persecute me, and deliver me" (Psalm 7:1).

God will never scam me.

EARTHTALK

EarthTalk®

From the Editors of E - The Environmental Magazine



Dear EarthTalk: How does climate modeling work? What is the state-of-the-art in the field these days, and what do these most recent models tell us about our future?
— J.M., Austin, TX

Climate models are 3D figures of the Earth's surface that demonstrate the cycling of energy and materials through the atmosphere, oceans and land. They compile geography, physics, chemistry and biology to analyze historical data and predict future global conditions. Ultimately, these models allow researchers and the public to explore Earth's systems, climate change and the impacts of human activity on the planet.

The Coupled Model Intercomparison Projects (CMIP), conducted by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), are some of the most detailed and expansive climate models to date. They show that the warming predicted from this century may be 0.4 degrees C greater than what was deduced from the CMIP5 in 2013. This may not sound significant, but it takes an immense amount of heat and, in this case, trapped greenhouse gases to warm the atmosphere, oceans and land that much. In the 1700s, it only took a 1-2 degree drop in global temperature to plunge the Earth into the Little Ice Age.

The CMIPs have also been proven to be very accurate. Fourteen of the 17 models done between 1970 and 2007 made similar projections of temperature change through the next decade as found by UC Berkeley researchers. These findings have bolstered the support for and confidence in the use of climate models.

Climate models may be portrayed as alarmist or extreme by some skeptics, but they actually tend to be more conservative with their predictions since a net positive feedback—that is, an overloading of the system with greenhouse gases—skews toward a stronger climate response. One example is the recorded sea level rise from satellite data collected from 1993 to 2008. CMIP3 models predicted just 1.9 millimeters of sea level rise while the data collected in the following years showed 3.4 millimeters of sea level rise. CMIP models also underestimated sea ice melt-out rates. Between 2007 and 2009, the amount of sea ice that melted was 40 percent greater than the average predicted by CMIP4 models.

One aspect of the new CMIP6 models that will work toward addressing underestimations are their higher climate sensitivity in comparison to past assessments. Climate sensitivity is the amount of long-term warming expected after a doubling of carbon emissions that greatly affects the model's predictions. To eliminate more of the uncertainty from past models, scientists and mathematicians are constantly evolving climate models to improve their accuracy.

Though it is undeniable that models innately have uncertainties and the Earth encompasses a collection of complex systems, climate models have proven to be reliable predictors of climate change trends. Whether or not these most recent models will continue in that vein can only be determined over time, but climate action is not something that can wait any longer.

The paint-like swirls of this visualization from Los Alamos National Laboratory depict global water-surface temperatures, with the cooler temperatures designated by blues and warmer temperatures by reds, as delineated by recent climate modeling efforts. Credit: Los Alamos National Laboratory, FlickrCC.

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#384 in a series

Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

Weekend numbers, so take all of this with a grain of salt; but I'm going to say if these turn out to be genuine, we may be moving in the right direction again. I don't want to get too hopeful because I've been disappointed so many times before; but we'll take what we get for the day. I'll let you know what we see on Tuesday or so when things right themselves. There were 48,700 new cases today. This brings us to 29,421, 800, which is 0.2% more than yesterday. There were 43,254 people reported as hospitalized today; this is the third consecutive day at the same total. I'm going to conclude the data are not being reported daily; but this number is still well below our January 7 peak of 132,464, in fact, less than a third of that. We have now reported 533,769 deaths in this pandemic, some 0.3% more than yesterday. There were 1741 deaths reported today.

On March 13, 2020, one year ago today, we had 2033 cases in 48 states. The only states still without cases were Montana and West Virginia. Still, over half of these were in just three states, the same old three: Washington with 509, New York with 421, and California with 276. There'd been 48 deaths in 8 states. We were showing a 25 to 35 percent increase daily; this is enormous—even worse when you consider how seriously inadequate was our testing capacity at that time; we were missing huge numbers of cases. The country was facing terrible shortages of testing. This was the day South Dakota schools closed; I'd been talking with school people for a few days at this point about closing, but the statewide decision took the hard part out of their hands.

There were over 132,500 cases and almost 5000 deaths worldwide. China, with nearly 81,000 cases, reported only eight new ones on this day. Italy was up to 2547 cases.

I posted twice on this day. One provided the sort of information you see above; the other talked about shutting things down, and I thought it might be interesting as a retrospective piece, so here's a link to my Update #17 posted March 13, 2021 at <https://www.facebook.com/marie.schwabmiller/posts/3427183377298044>. I closed the other one with this: "Be well, and help others to be well too. You have the power to change the way this works out. Make good choices, and don't harass the public officials who are making the hard decisions. No one's having fun right now." I was right about that: No one was.

This day was the first time the International Olympic Committee (IOC) acknowledged the Games might not go forward when IOC president, Thomas Bach, told TV station ARD, "We listen to the advice of the WHO that is the expert group who is responsible for exactly these questions. . . . We will follow the advice of the WHO." This was the first chink in the professed certainty; what a difficult decision this had to be. The TSA began to allow larger bottles of hand sanitizer than the standard 3.4 ounces to be screened as "medical liquids." Mr. Trump declared a national emergency. Nike encouraged employees to work from home. We were kicking around the question whether a recovered individual would be able to be reinfected. We were also contemplating whether we would get a reprieve when summer came. Cancellations and closures: the Washington Monument; Poland; the Ellen Degeneres Show, The Daily Show, Last Week Tonight, Real Time with Bill Maher, Jimmy Kimmel Live, and Lights Out; schools in 16 states; a whole lot of cruises; interest on federally-insured student loans; production on seven Disney movies; the Eiffel Tower; the London and Boston Marathons; large gatherings in Massachusetts; Knotts Berry Farm and Six Flags Magic Mountain; the Louisiana primary; the UK's elections; the Louvre; two NASCAR races; the Masters golf tournament; the Giro d'Italia bike race; the English Premier League's season; LGPA's Founders Cup, Kit Classic, and ANA Inspiration and the PGA's Players Championship; the Formula One and Formula E seasons; Manila; and Mount Everest expeditions.

I mentioned last night that I'm nervous; seeing the current news out of Italy right at the anniversary of Italy's last brutal surge—and what followed in the US—makes me more nervous. They're talking about locking down the country again for all the reasons they did it a year ago. We haven't talked about the viral reproduction number, *Re*, for a while. To bring those who have joined us more recently up to date and to refresh memories for the rest of us, the *Re* is the average number of people each case will transmit the virus to. When this number is over 1, each case will transmit to more than one new person, the number of

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cases will grow, and the outbreak will worsen; when this number is 1, each case will transmit to just one other person, the number of cases will be steady, and the outbreak levels off; when this number is less than 1, each case will transmit to less than one other person, the number of cases will decline, and the outbreak will get better. This means we're shooting for an R_e less than 1—the farther below 1, the better.

Italy's is currently estimated at 1.6, which is pretty scary. That means, allowing for a cycle time (time between exposure and transmitting to the next person) of 5 days and if no mitigation measures are employed, a month from now you're going to have 16 times as many cases as you do today. So if we have 1000 people infected today, by the middle of April, we're looking at well over 16,000. Much of this appears to be driven by the prevalence of B.1.1.7, the variant first seen in the UK; but they're also seeing growth in cases with B.1.1.28.1, the variant first identified in Brazil which is far more transmissible than even B.1.1.7 as well as maybe more resistant to our antibodies.

If you think we're smarter or more prepared or better equipped—or whatever—than Italy, so that can't happen here, I will invite you to cast your mind back to a year ago right now when Italy was experiencing horrifying surges while we were telling ourselves that we're smarter and more prepared and better equipped, so that couldn't happen here. What followed is that we have done worse than Italy on every metric since early summer. So have a look at what we're seeing there because I think that could well be our future. This time we could once again defy those rosy expectations and do even worse than everyone else has done. Because we refuse to learn from experience. Sort of like Paul Revere, I've been hollering, "The variants are coming!" for a while now. I'd love to be wrong about that, but it's not looking good.

Here's what I'm seeing: seven-day new-case averages have been running in the mid-50,000 range. While this is the lowest they've been since the middle of October, it is only 10,000 off our peak from last summer and is about 10,000 higher than our last plateau in September. Seven-day deaths average has been running around 1500. This is the lowest that's been since mid- to late November—about right to reflect the October surge. Worryingly, it is higher than last summer's peak, which was right around 1200, and it's about double our last plateau. New-case and deaths rates have both leveled off over the past week or two and, as I've been mentioning with some frequency, now give the appearance of being on the increase again. The factors to consider are the increasing prevalence of highly-transmissible variants and the increasing, but still small, number of us who are vaccinated. For the record, while everyone thinks these new variants are bound to take over and are real trouble, no one thinks we have anything like enough people vaccinated yet. Meanwhile, in a situation like this one, we're dropping restrictions, opening things up, permitting capacity crowds in large public venues, planning our vacation trips, hosting parties. It's that whole learn-from-experience thing again. As Yogi Berra said, "It's déjà vu all over again."

And right on cue, we're being stupid. Yesterday, 1.4 million people passed through TSA screening at our nation's airports, making that the biggest day since March 2020, back when most of us didn't get it. Even though this is still low compared with the Before Times, it's far too much for a moment when we're in danger of one last, ugly, lethal surge. One would think most of us would be getting it by now; but then one would be wrong. Dr. Rochelle Walensky, director of the CC, said this week on MSNBC, "We know that after mass travel, after vacations, after holidays, we tend to see a surge in cases. And so, we really want to make sure—again with just 10 percent of people vaccinated—that we are limiting travel." Or not. Sigh.

Additionally, the spring break crowds, most or all without masks, in Florida would—should—make your blood run cold. Let's add to that the big motorcycle rally on Daytona Beach. Restaurants are reservation-required. The mayor of Miami Beach told the New York Times, "Unfortunately, we're getting too many people looking to get loose. Letting loose is precisely what we don't want." Miami has had huge new-case rates lately; this is not exactly what they need at the moment.

Jose Villarruel, an 77-year-old immigrant from Mexico, had been a substitute teacher in Fontana, California, for eight years. His students know him as Mr. V and remember him fondly. He has a family to support and sends money to other family members in Mexico; with the cost of living in southern California, he can't do all that on a substitute teacher's salary—maybe \$10 to \$15 per hour—and afford a place to live. So he lives in his car, a 1997 Ford Thunderbird LX. But then his work dried up when the pandemic hit. At that point, he told WSOCTV, "I decided the school situation has changed completely and I believed that

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a job of a substitute was over. In May, I submitted my resignation. I managed to do all of the paperwork, all of the arrangements to get my pension. I got my check, but that check didn't last long because I had debts already.

A former student, Stephen Nava, saw Villarruel going through his trunk, and realized the man was homeless. He felt the need to do something to support his former teacher: This is the guy who helped him to pass math. He remembered Mr. V thus: "Mr. V was a great funny and helpful educator and substitute teacher in the Fontana Unified School District. He's struggled with getting back on his feet after the pandemic hit and has been living in his car ever since despite the brutal weather and living conditions." He created a fundraising account and shared it on social media. He was thinking he could raise maybe \$5000 and give the guy a boost; but then the donations poured in. He met with Villarreal on March 11, which just happened to be the teacher's birthday, to hand him a \$27,000 check in the presence of other former students. Turns out Mr. V was appreciated more widely than he had probably realized.

He told KCBS news, "The greatest feeling that I have right now is like an obligation that I need to do a lot for the world and the greatest feeling is I can do it and I'm going to find a way to do it." Thinking of others throughout hard times is admirable. I hope this guy lands softly.

Be well, We'll talk again.

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County	Total Cases	Recovered Cases	Negative Persons	Deceased Among Cases	Community Spread	% PCR Test Positivity Rate (Weekly)
Aurora	455	432	878	15	Minimal	0.0%
Beadle	2822	2684	5954	39	Substantial	15.6%
Bennett	382	371	1184	9	None	0.0%
Bon Homme	1510	1477	2101	26	Minimal	3.8%
Brookings	3650	3546	12159	37	Moderate	2.6%
Brown	5200	5040	12854	89	Substantial	8.1%
Brule	697	681	1892	9	Minimal	8.6%
Buffalo	421	406	900	13	None	0.0%
Butte	990	956	3253	20	Moderate	9.0%
Campbell	131	127	259	4	Minimal	25.0%
Charles Mix	1318	1253	3973	21	Substantial	7.2%
Clark	377	363	958	5	Moderate	5.9%
Clay	1822	1778	5446	15	Substantial	3.0%
Codington	4079	3893	9761	77	Substantial	7.7%
Corson	473	458	1004	12	Minimal	14.8%
Custer	767	742	2747	12	Substantial	11.4%
Davison	2999	2892	6627	63	Moderate	6.3%
Day	675	633	1796	29	Substantial	6.5%
Deuel	478	463	1148	8	Minimal	0.0%
Dewey	1427	1389	3835	26	Substantial	4.7%
Douglas	436	422	923	9	Moderate	0.0%
Edmunds	487	467	1069	13	Moderate	5.0%
Fall River	553	518	2658	15	Substantial	9.8%
Faulk	362	347	703	13	Minimal	14.3%
Grant	985	926	2271	39	Substantial	6.8%
Gregory	554	507	1307	30	Moderate	11.9%
Haakon	258	243	543	10	Moderate	0.0%
Hamlin	729	671	1797	38	Substantial	21.9%
Hand	350	331	829	6	Moderate	5.3%
Hanson	369	360	731	4	Moderate	26.3%
Harding	92	90	185	1	Minimal	20.0%
Hughes	2333	2268	6664	36	Substantial	1.2%
Hutchinson	795	757	2405	26	Minimal	5.3%

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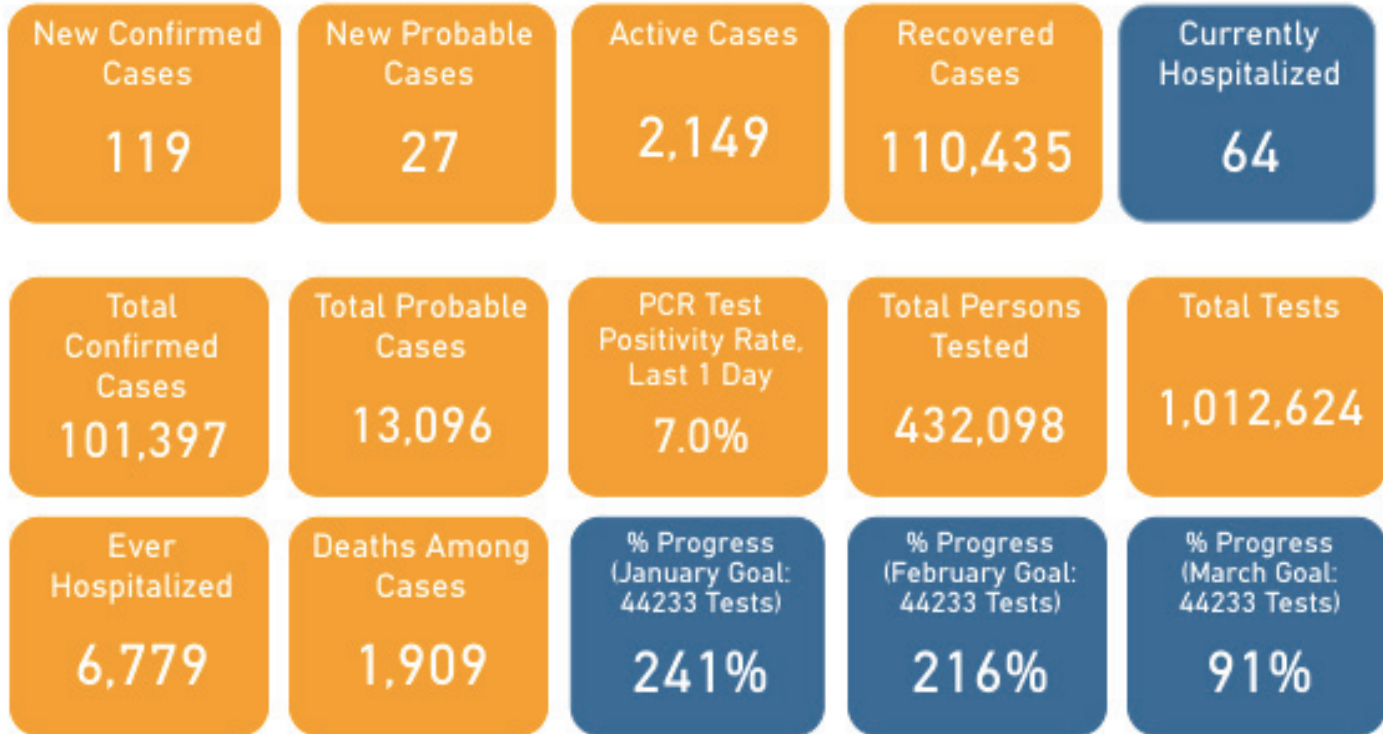
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Hyde	139	138	412	1	Minimal	5.3%
Jackson	281	264	918	14	Minimal	0.0%
Jerauld	275	252	560	16	Minimal	0.0%
Jones	86	86	227	0	Minimal	0.0%
Kingsbury	652	625	1695	14	Moderate	5.6%
Lake	1235	1172	3394	18	Substantial	9.0%
Lawrence	2839	2773	8595	45	Moderate	3.4%
Lincoln	7937	7682	20529	77	Substantial	10.5%
Lyman	606	589	1882	10	Minimal	2.6%
Marshall	346	321	1207	6	Substantial	12.3%
McCook	765	716	1647	24	Moderate	12.1%
McPherson	240	233	560	4	Minimal	0.0%
Meade	2640	2551	7770	31	Substantial	9.5%
Mellette	256	248	740	2	Moderate	8.8%
Miner	275	254	582	9	Minimal	18.2%
Minnehaha	28613	27707	79175	337	Substantial	8.7%
Moody	621	599	1769	17	Moderate	5.6%
Oglala Lakota	2072	1997	6673	49	Moderate	5.4%
Pennington	13067	12698	39806	189	Substantial	5.6%
Perkins	348	330	826	14	Minimal	2.8%
Potter	384	367	838	4	Moderate	0.0%
Roberts	1252	1166	4198	36	Substantial	19.4%
Sanborn	335	324	696	3	Minimal	5.2%
Spink	813	769	2149	26	Minimal	6.3%
Stanley	337	333	942	2	Moderate	2.9%
Sully	137	133	316	3	Minimal	0.0%
Todd	1220	1188	4171	29	Minimal	0.0%
Tripp	720	680	1501	16	Substantial	20.0%
Turner	1087	1012	2749	53	Moderate	6.3%
Union	2034	1940	6357	39	Substantial	8.0%
Walworth	733	704	1835	15	Moderate	8.6%
Yankton	2836	2767	9416	28	Moderate	7.9%
Ziebach	336	326	868	9	Minimal	7.7%
Unassigned	0	0	1788	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	4660	0
10-19 years	13001	0
20-29 years	20250	7
30-39 years	18838	18
40-49 years	16368	36
50-59 years	16134	114
60-69 years	13132	253
70-79 years	6970	436
80+ years	5140	1045

SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Sex	# of Cases	# of Deaths Among Cases
Female	59573	898
Male	54920	1011

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Brown County

New Confirmed Cases

5

New Probable Cases

3

Active Cases

71

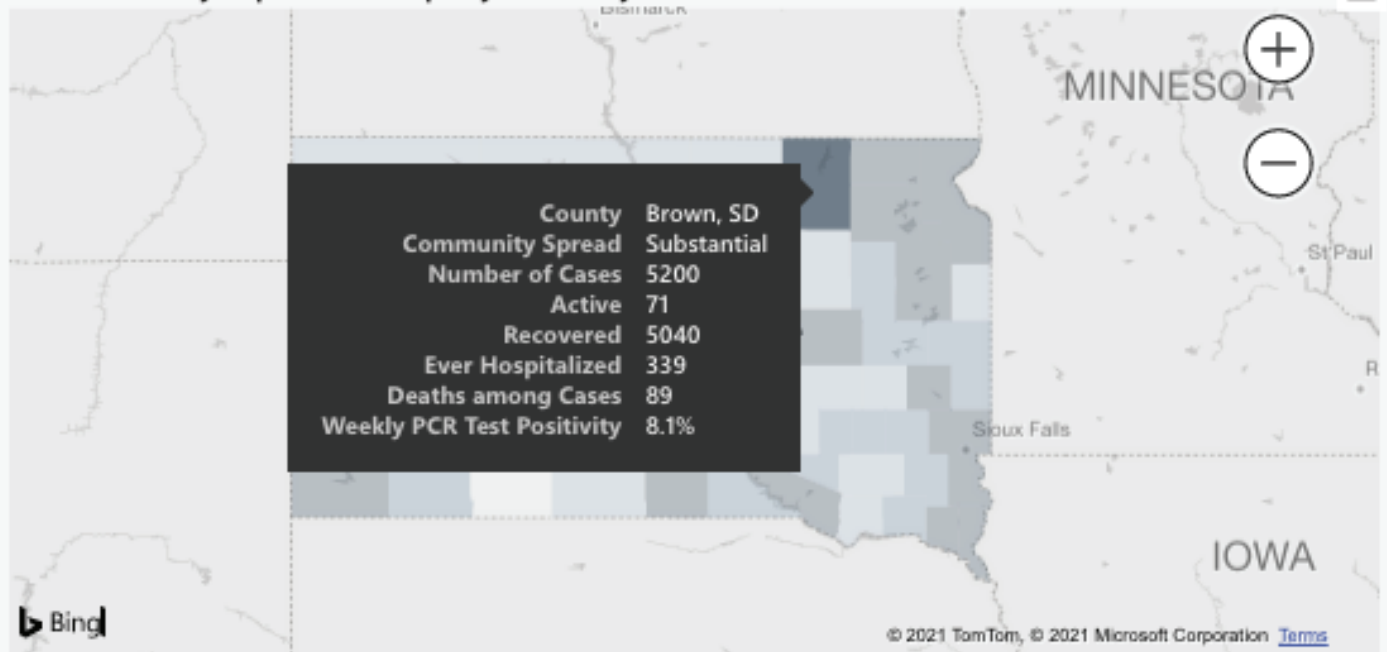
Recovered Cases

5,040

Currently Hospitalized

64

Community Spread Map by County of Residence



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

Total Confirmed Cases

4,633

Total Probable Cases

567

PCR Test Positivity Rate, Last 1 Day

15.8%

Total Persons Tested

18,054

Total Tests

49,473

Ever Hospitalized

339

Deaths Among Cases

89

% Progress (January Goal: 44233 Tests)

241%

% Progress (February Goal: 44233 Tests)

216%

% Progress (March Goal: 44233 Tests)

91%

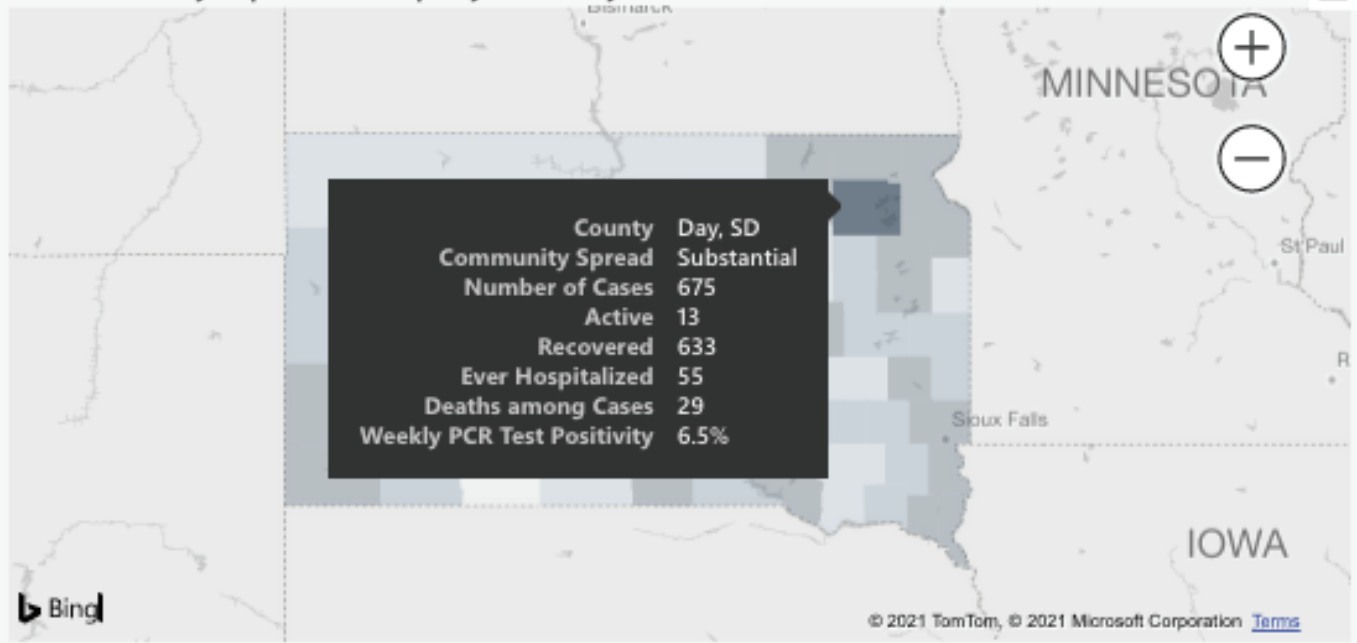
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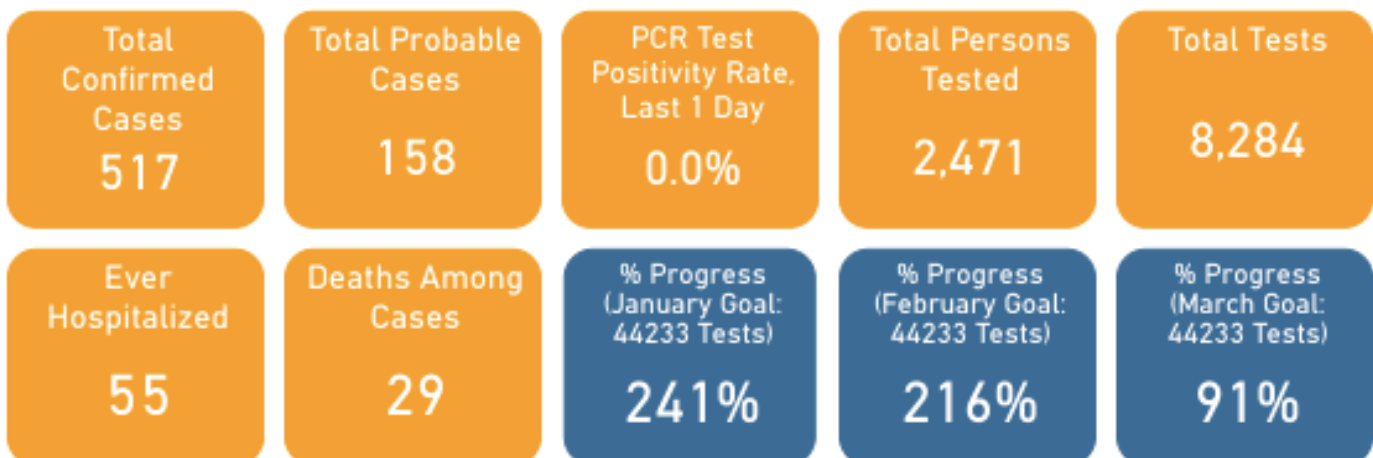
Day County



Community Spread Map by County of Residence



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



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Vaccinations

Total Doses Administered

294,590

State Allocation

Manufacturer	# of Doses
Janssen	2,129
Moderna	144,763
Pfizer	147,698

Total Persons Administered a Vaccine

189,111

State Allocation

Doses	# of Recipients
Janssen - Series Complete	2,129
Moderna - 1 dose	42,845
Moderna - Series Complete	50,959
Pfizer - 1 dose	38,675
Pfizer - Series Complete	54,511

Percent of State Population with at least 1 Dose

33%

State & Federal Allocation

Doses	% of Pop.
1 dose	32.73%
Series Complete	18.60%

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

County	# Doses	# Persons (1 dose)	# Persons (2 doses)	Total # Persons
Aurora	819	297	261	558
Beadle	5988	1,967	2,010	3,977
Bennett*	440	124	158	282
Bon Homme*	3442	1,056	1,193	2,249
Brookings	9424	3,896	2,764	6,660
Brown	14468	3,928	5,270	9,198
Brule*	1774	514	630	1,144
Buffalo*	126	80	23	103
Butte	2048	828	610	1,438
Campbell	961	267	347	614
Charles Mix*	3098	1,126	986	2,112
Clark	1146	352	397	749
Clay	4526	1,732	1,397	3,129
Codington*	9114	3,000	3,057	6,057
Corson*	293	89	102	191
Custer*	2626	854	886	1,740
Davison	6757	1,899	2,429	4,328
Day*	2401	853	774	1,627
Deuel	1449	539	455	994
Dewey*	368	72	148	220
Douglas*	1158	362	398	760
Edmunds	1341	437	452	889
Fall River*	2464	764	850	1,614
Faulk	992	282	355	637
Grant*	2669	1,195	737	1,932
Gregory*	1708	608	550	1,158
Haakon*	524	152	186	338

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Hamlin	1574	526	524	1,050
Hand	1328	436	446	882
Hanson	426	156	135	291
Harding	99	51	24	75
Hughes*	7308	1,346	2,981	4,327
Hutchinson*	3147	1,080	1,033	2,113
Hyde*	514	134	190	324
Jackson*	370	110	130	240
Jerauld	800	328	236	564
Jones*	601	149	226	375
Kingsbury	2287	899	694	1,593
Lake	3712	1,350	1,181	2,531
Lawrence	7618	2,826	2,396	5,222
Lincoln	24264	5,581	9,341	14,922
Lyman*	763	253	255	508
Marshall*	1517	479	519	998
McCook	2133	625	754	1,379
McPherson	238	78	80	158
Meade*	5852	1,762	2,045	3,807
Mellette*	41	17	12	29
Miner	843	241	301	542
Minnehaha*	75515	19,046	28,232	47,278
Moody*	1655	606	524	1,130
Oglala Lakota*	164	50	57	107
Pennington*	34289	8,343	12,973	21,316
Perkins*	659	299	180	479
Potter	835	291	272	563
Roberts*	4132	1,244	1,444	2,688
Sanborn	893	279	307	586
Spink	2777	875	951	1,826
Stanley*	1121	205	458	663
Sully	343	59	142	201
Todd*	153	49	52	101
Tripp*	1932	568	682	1,250
Turner	3290	966	1,162	2,128
Union	2754	1,086	834	1,920
Walworth*	1836	518	659	1,177
Yankton	9050	1,920	3,565	5,485
Ziebach*	54	14	20	34
Other	5579	1,523	2,028	3,551

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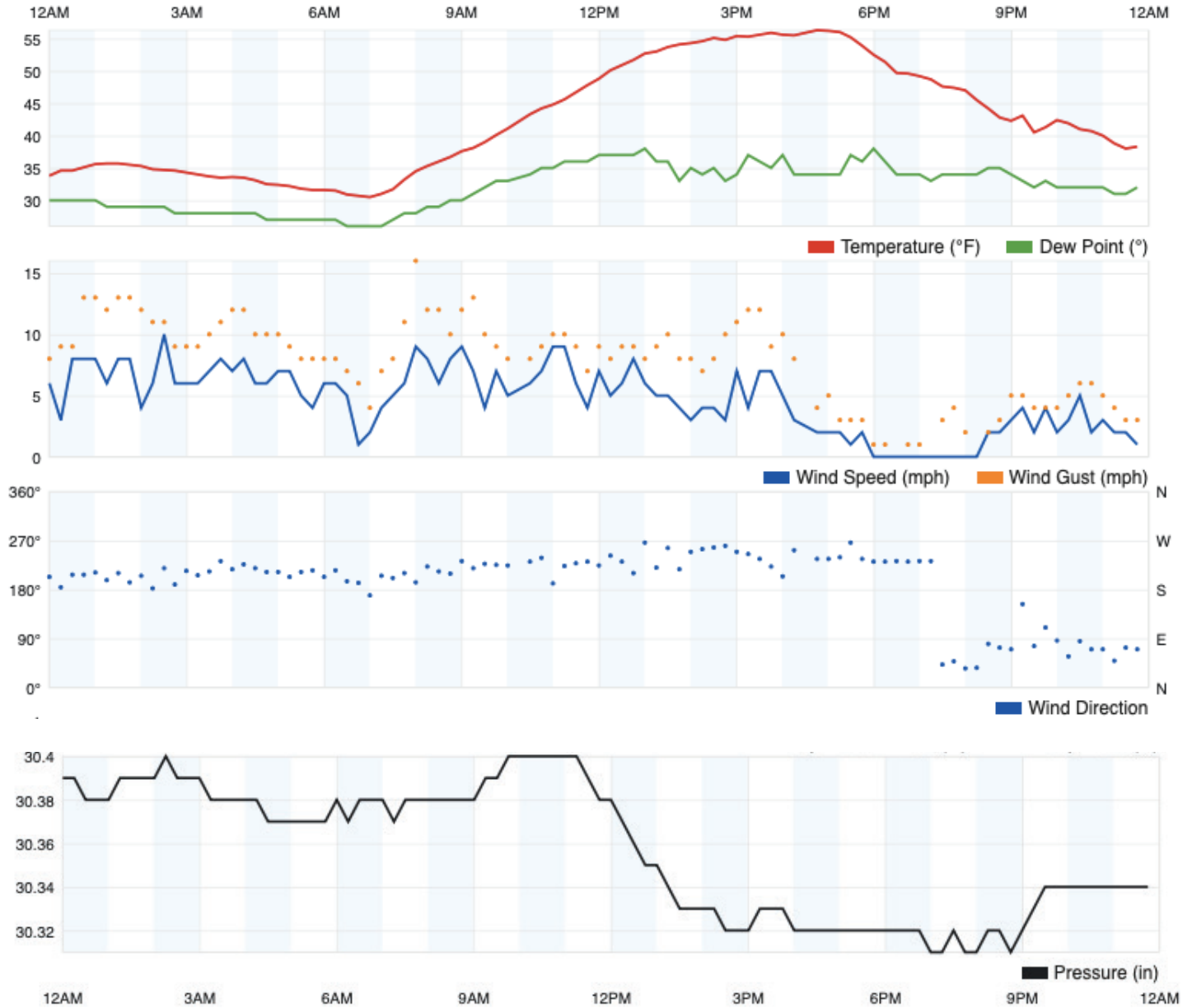
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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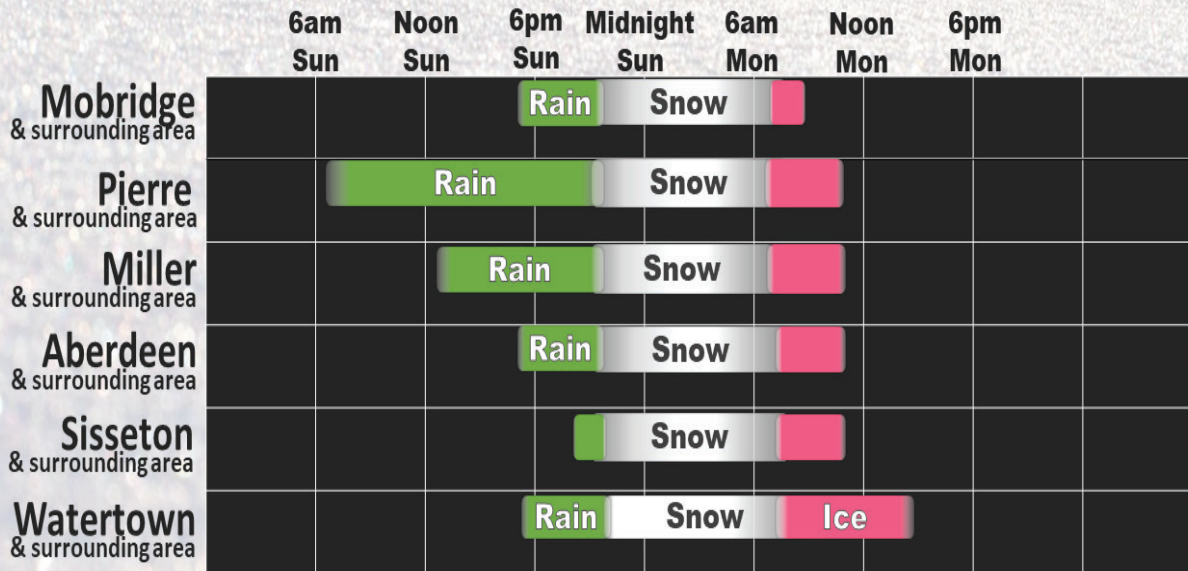
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Today	Tonight	Monday	Monday Night	Tuesday
				
Cloudy and Breezy	Chance Rain/Snow then Rain/Snow	Wintery Mix Likely then Chance Wintery Mix	Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy
High: 45 °F	Low: 29 °F	High: 37 °F	Low: 27 °F	High: 41 °F



Winter Weather Threats Timeline

A storm system will bring moisture to the region Today through Monday. General trends for the area suggest rain moving in today, transitioning to snow this evening/overnight, at which point we will see accumulations, then a change to light drizzle early Monday...and with temperatures hovering around freezing that might result in ice.



Visit www.weather.gov/abr for a detailed local forecast

Updated: 3/14/2021 3:38 AM CT



Here is the expected timing for precipitation as it moves across central/north central and northeast South Dakota

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Today in Weather History

March 14, 1989: A fast-moving winter storm produced freezing rain and heavy snow across most of South Dakota. The visibility was reduced to 100 ft within areas of blowing snow. Driving conditions were treacherous, resulting in abandoned vehicles, several accidents, and the temporary closing of I-29 from Sioux Falls to the North Dakota border.

March 14, 1990: Heavy Snow fell across parts of the southwest, central, and north-central South Dakota from the late afternoon on the 13th into the morning hours of the 14th. The highest accumulations were recorded in the north-central part of the state, including 9 inches at Gettysburg, 8 inches at Pollock, and 5 inches at Pine Ridge.

March 14, 2002: Heavy snow of 6 to 16 inches fell across parts of central and northeast South Dakota from the early morning to the evening hours. Some freezing rain fell across parts of the area before changing over to snow. Also, the winds increased from the north resulting in blowing snow and reduced visibilities. The combination of ice, heavy snow, and blowing snow resulted in challenging travel conditions. There were several accidents across the area, along with many vehicles sliding off the road. Schools either started late or were closed. Some snowfall amounts included, 6 inches at Blunt, 7 inches at Murdo, 8 inches at Stephan and Clark, 9 inches at Gann Valley and Miller, and 11 inches at Highmore and Watertown. Locations with a foot or more of snowfall included, 12 inches at Hayti and Milbank, 14 inches at Castlewood and Presho, 15 inches at Clear Lake, and 16 inches at Kennebec.

1933: A deadly tornado outbreak affected the Middle Tennessee region, including Nashville, on this day. The outbreak, which produced five or more tornadoes, killed 44 people and injured at least 461 others. The strongest tornado, F3, cut a path through the center of Nashville. About 1,400 homes were damaged or destroyed. Windows were blown out of the State Capitol Building.

1935: Suffocating dust storms frequently occurred in southeast Colorado between the 12th and the 25th of the month. Six people died, and many livestock starved or suffocated. Up to six feet of dust covered the ground. Schools were closed, and tenants deserted many rural homes.

2008: An EF2 tornado moved through downtown Atlanta, Georgia, shortly before 10 pm, damaging the Georgia Dome where the SEC men's basketball tournament was underway.

1870 - The term blizzard was first applied to a storm which produced heavy snow and high winds in Minnesota and Iowa. (David Ludlum)

1944 - A single storm brought a record 21.6 inches of snow to Salt Lake City UT. (The Weather Channel)

1960 - Northern Georgia was between snowstorms. Gainesville GA received 17 inches of snow during the month, and reported at least a trace of snow on the ground 22 days in March. Snow was on roofs in Hartwell GA from the 2nd to the 29th. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A powerful storm in the western U.S. produced 15 inches of snow in the Lake Tahoe Basin of Nevada, and wind gusts to 50 mph at Las Vegas NV. Thunderstorms in the Sacramento Valley of California spawned a tornado which hit a turkey farm near Corning. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Squalls in the Great Lakes Region continued to produce heavy snow in northwest Wisconsin and Upper Michigan, and produced up to 14 inches of snow in northeast Ohio. Poplar WI reported 27 inches of snow in two days. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - High winds in Colorado and Wyoming gusted above 120 mph at Horsetooth Heights CO. High winds in the Central Plains sharply reduced visibilities in blowing dust as far east as Kansas City MO. Winds gusting to 72 mph at Hill City KS reduced the visibility to a city block in blowing dust. Soil erosion in north-west Kansas damaged nearly five million acres of wheat. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - Fifty-three cities reported record high temperatures for the date as readings warmed into the 70s and 80s from the Gulf coast to the Great Lakes Region. Charleston WV was the hot spot in the nation with a record high of 89 degrees. It was the fourth of five consecutive days with record warm temperatures for many cities in the eastern U.S. There were 283 daily record highs reported in the central and eastern U.S. during between the 11th and the 15th of March. (The National Weather Summary)

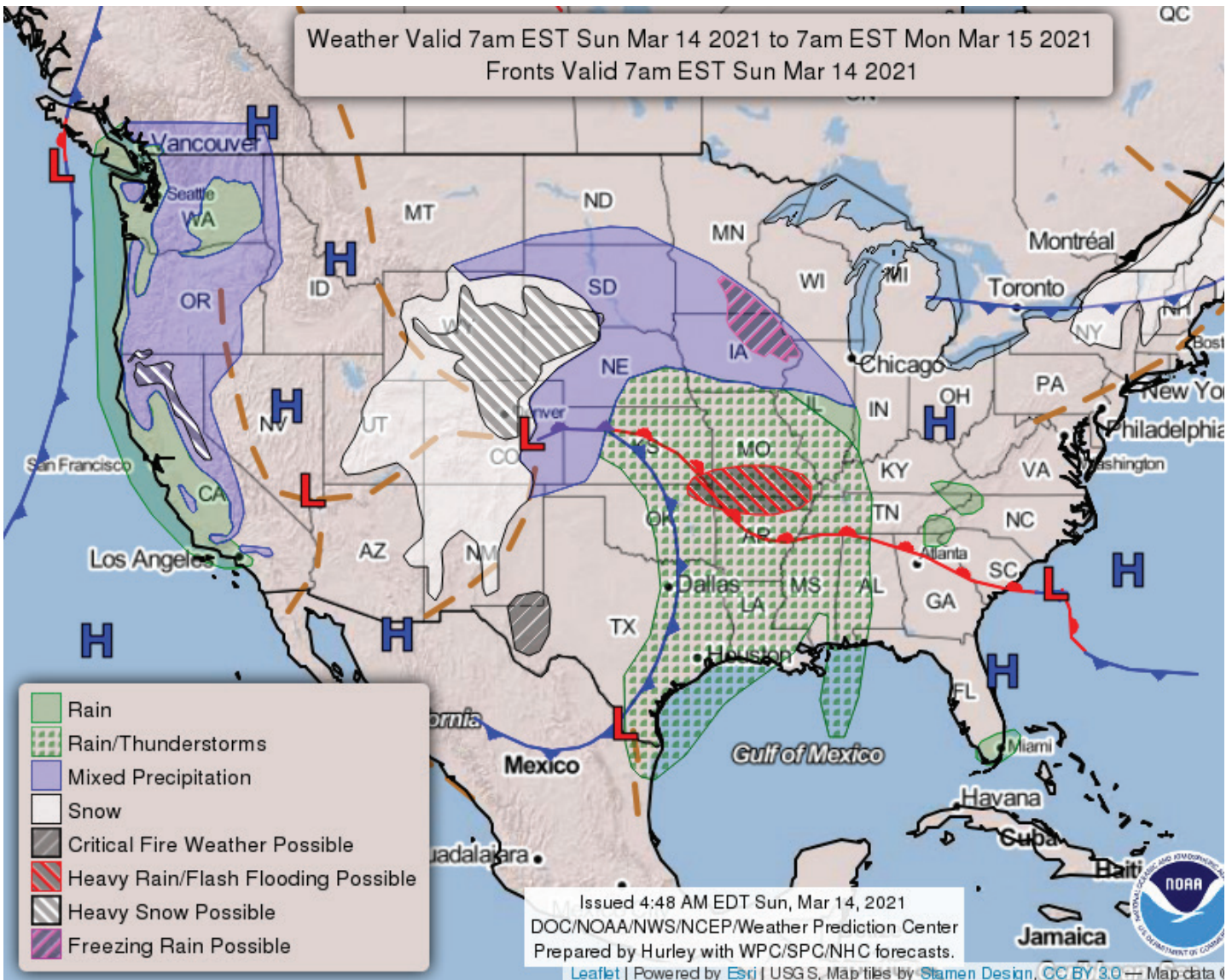
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

High Temp: 57 °F at 4:35 PM
Low Temp: 30 °F at 6:55 AM
Wind: 16 mph at 7:59 AM
Precip:

Record High: 71° in 1981
Record Low: -31° in 1897
Average High: 39°F
Average Low: 19°F
Average Precip in Mar.: 0.40
Precip to date in Mar.: 0.35
Average Precip to date: 1.42
Precip Year to Date: 0.53
Sunset Tonight: 7:39 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:46 a.m.



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DON'T GIVE UP!

The endless questions of growing children often become boring and frustrating. There are times when no answer will do, and no explanation is ever sufficient. The child persists and refuses to be satisfied with our best answers. The questions never stop.

Perhaps David had times in his life, as we all do, when it seemed as though his "King" would not answer his questions. It appears that the Lord stood far beyond and above him, unavailable, unable and unwilling to answer him when he called. So, what did David do? He thought that he understood God and did what he knew God expected of him to the best of his ability. Yet we see him standing there in wonder – wanting and waiting to hear a voice, unable to bear the silence.

What was his problem? And do we have this same problem today? Perhaps.

Instant gratification and sudden success do not breed faith in God. But patient expectation and utter dependence on Him does. Perhaps our "fast-food-lanes" and "any-time-bank-tellers" have eroded the importance of waiting and watching and wondering. Hopefully, deep within us, we believe that He will answer our prayers and meet our needs. We know- at least we say we do - that His power is beyond our imagination. David realized this, too.

But, David had an intimate knowledge of God and knew Him personally which we may not. Yet, he asked the who question twice as though His power was not available. But it was! God wanted David to wait and trust and grow. And, God expects the same of us.

Prayer: We know, Lord, that Your power is more than sufficient to meet our needs. Increase our faith to meet our needs and trust in You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Who is the King of glory? Psalm 24:8

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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 Princess Prom (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
06/19/2021 Lions Crazy Golf Fest at Olive Grove Golf Course, Noon
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
07/30/2021-08/03/2021 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
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

Governors evade sunshine laws to keep records from public

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem's outspoken business-as-usual approach throughout the coronavirus pandemic has made her a darling of national conservatives and allowed her to hopscotch across the country as a fundraising force.

But the public cannot see emails on how she made her decisions or how much state taxpayers are spending for her traveling security detail.

Despite Noem's 2018 promise "to throw open the doors" of government, the South Dakota governor's office has denied requests for both records, citing broad exemptions to the state's sunshine law. Her state is among half a dozen where governors' offices routinely block access to executive records, keeping the public in the dark about decision making and possible influence peddling by special interests.

"Things that are in the public's interests are still being hidden from the public," said Jack Marsh, a former executive editor of The Argus Leader newspaper and co-founder of the nonprofit South Dakota News Watch.

He said South Dakota's open-records laws are "some of the weakest in the country" and noted that there has been little advancement of transparency under Noem's administration other than a 2019 law that shields reporters from being forced to reveal sources.

In most states, sunshine laws give the public insight into the governor's decisions. Since last year, governors across the country have provided thousands of pages of emails in response to requests filed by The Associated Press, revealing how some pushed economic interests ahead of public health guidance as they battled the pandemic.

But Noem and governors in five other states — Arkansas, California, Massachusetts, Michigan and New Jersey — have thwarted records requests by citing exemptions.

Her administration has refused to disclose how much it costs to send state troopers with her as she travels the country campaigning for former President Donald Trump and raising her own campaign cash. The governor's office has cited state law exempting security details from records requests and argued that providing the information would "put lives in danger."

Several GOP lawmakers pushed the governor's office to disclose its annual security costs to the Legislature. But Noem, a fellow Republican, pressured them to drop the matter.

"I just think it's important the taxpayers know where every dollar goes," Republican Rep. Taffy Howard said.

When the AP sought records detailing how businesses belonging to Noem's brothers received over \$600,000 from a state pandemic grant program pushed by the governor, those too were denied under the state's exemptions for disclosure.

In California, Gov. Gavin Newsom's office last year denied an AP request for communications showing how the Democratic governor made decisions related to the virus outbreak.

California's exemption dates to 1968 with legislation enacted under then-Gov. Ronald Reagan that shielded all documents belonging to the governor's office.

David Snyder, executive director of the First Amendment Coalition in San Francisco, called the exemption a "big barrier" to gaining insight into how Newsom's office was communicating with public agencies.

Such a blanket rule "sweeps far too broadly and keeps out of public view a range of communications that really should not be exempt from public scrutiny," Snyder said.

Lawmakers, newspapers and open-government advocates have pressed over the years to narrow the exemptions. But after the Los Angeles Times sued in 1988 to get appointment calendars and other records that would show the governor's daily activities, the state Supreme Court ruled the public interest was better served by not disclosing the calendar.

Today, Newsom discloses his monthly calendars, as Gov. Jerry Brown did before him. But they come

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with caveats. Pointing to the earlier court decisions, Newsom's lawyers write that they "will not disclose entries that reveal the deliberative process" and note the calendars are an incomplete look at the governor's activities.

Massachusetts' exemptions can be traced to a 1997 ruling in a case seeking access to a questionnaire completed by the governor's nominee to the state's high court. The ruling denied the request to make the questionnaire public while also finding that the state's public records law does not expressly include the Legislature, judicial branch or governor's office.

Secretary of the Commonwealth William Galvin, the state's top public records official, said he agrees that a governor needs the freedom to seek a range of opinions. But he said the interpretation of the 1997 court decision has become too broad, sweeping up nearly all information a governor wants to keep secret.

In New Jersey, the pandemic has given the governor another way to deny records requests. Gov. Phil Murphy, a Democrat, has said his administration is dedicated to transparency, but the governor's office also has blocked multiple requests for information.

It rejected the AP's email request on the grounds it was "overbroad," a kind of catch-all denial under the state's Open Public Records Act. It also cited the 2005 Emergency Health Powers Act, which dates to Hurricane Katrina and says reports and other records made during an emergency are not considered public. The state has been under such an order for a year because of the pandemic.

Murphy used the Katrina-era law to deny AP's request for reports to the governor's office on hospital and nursing home capacity. Other news organizations say they have been denied on the same grounds. That includes The USA Today Network, which operates across New Jersey and had sought records showing how the state managed protective gear.

NJ Advance Media, which publishes the Newark Star-Ledger, unsuccessfully sought agreements the state made with laboratories and consultants related to the coronavirus.

That was not lawmakers' intent when the bill passed, said Democratic Senate Majority Leader Loretta Weinberg, who was a co-sponsor of the law.

"When we are in a crisis like this, people have to have faith in their leadership because they're asking us — demanding of us — some pretty big personal sacrifices and with good reason," she said in an interview last year. "I'm not questioning any of that. But because our residents need to have complete faith in the leadership, then it is more important that they be completely honest."

Associated Press writers Mike Catalini in Trenton, New Jersey; Steve LeBlanc in Boston; David A. Lieb in Jefferson City, Missouri; and Kathleen Ronayne in Sacramento, California, contributed to this report.

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Dakota Cash

01-03-18-25-29

(one, three, eighteen, twenty-five, twenty-nine)

Estimated jackpot: \$68,000

Lotto America

07-30-40-49-50, Star Ball: 10, ASB: 5

(seven, thirty, forty, forty-nine, fifty; Star Ball: ten; ASB: five)

Estimated jackpot: \$3.69 million

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$93 million

Powerball

05-11-51-56-61, Powerball: 2, Power Play: 2

(five, eleven, fifty-one, fifty-six, sixty-one; Powerball: two; Power Play: two)

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Estimated jackpot: \$169 million

Saturday's Scores

By The Associated Press

GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL=

SDHSAA State Tournament=

Class A=

Championship=

Aberdeen Roncalli 48, Hamlin 31

Fifth Place=

Sioux Falls Christian 51, Dakota Valley 48

Seventh Place=

McCook Central/Montrose 49, Belle Fourche 42

Third Place=

Winner 54, St. Thomas More 51

Class AA=

Championship=

Sioux Falls Washington 43, Rapid City Stevens 26

Fifth Place=

Harrisburg 65, Mitchell 59

Seventh Place=

Aberdeen Central 61, Rapid City Central 33

Third Place=

Sioux Falls O'Gorman 53, Brandon Valley 47

Class B=

Championship=

White River 57, Castlewood 37

Fifth Place=

Herreid/Selby Area 53, Waverly-South Shore 36

Seventh Place=

Viborg-Hurley 40, Hanson 37

Third Place=

Ethan 59, Corsica/Stickney 48

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

Late FG lifts South Dakota State over Youngstown State 19-17

BROOKINGS, S.D. (AP) — Pierre Strong Jr. ran 21 times for 124 yards, Cole Frahm kicked a 29-yard field goal in the final minute, and South Dakota State beat Youngstown State 19-17 on Saturday.

Frahm came through when South Dakota State needed him most after he had missed a PAT attempt early in the third quarter and a 43-yard FG attempt early in the fourth.

Mark Gronowski helped get the FCS No. 8 Jackrabbits (3-1, 3-1 Missouri Valley Football Conference) into field goal position by completing back-to-back passes of 39 and 16 yards to Zach Heins. The drive started at the South Dakota State 21 with 2:53 left and ended on Frahm's field goal with 31 seconds to go.

The Jackrabbits' Tolu Ogunrinde sacked Mark Waid and forced a fumble that Thomas Stacker recovered to secure the win with a second left in the game.

Jaleel McLaughlin ran 26 times for 122 yards and two touchdowns for the Penguins (0-4, 0-4).

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

Missouri State uses big plays to beat South Dakota 27-24

VERMILLION, S.D. (AP) — Montrae Braswell scored on kickoff and interception returns in the first half and Eric Johnson blocked a field goal in the fourth quarter to help Missouri State beat South Dakota 27-24 on Saturday.

Braswell returned a kickoff 100 yards for a touchdown to tie it at 7 late in the first quarter and intercepted Carson Camp's pass and returned it 36 yards to give the Bears (2-4, 2-1 Missouri Valley Football Conference) a 17-14 lead in the middle of the second quarter.

Jeremiah Wilson, who ran for 57 yards, made it 24-all for Missouri State on a 6-yard TD run late in the third quarter, and Johnson blocked a 44-yard field goal attempt by South Dakota's Mason Lorber to keep it tied with 12:35 left in the fourth.

Missouri State then drove 42 yards on nine plays and capped the scoring with Jose Pizano's 28-yard field goal with 7:51 left in the game.

South Dakota outgained Missouri State 440-325, but the Bears had no turnovers and sacked Camp six times.

Camp passed for 339 yards and a touchdown for the Coyotes (1-2, 1-2).

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

Winter storm could deliver more than a foot of snow in SD

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Forecasters expect a significant winter storm could bring more than a foot of snow to the central and southern Black Hills this weekend.

The National Weather Service says between 8 inches (20.3 centimeters) and 16 inches (40.6 centimeters) of snow is expected at Mount Rushmore, Custer, Wind Cave National Park, Hermosa and other regional locations.

The storm is expected to impact southwest South Dakota overnight Saturday through Monday morning, the Rapid City Journal reported.

"Confidence is rather high that significant accumulations will occur in the Black Hills and far southwest South Dakota, as well as higher elevations of northeastern Wyoming. Accumulations farther east onto the South Dakota plains are more difficult to predict and will be dependent on elevation," the weather service said.

It issued a winter storm warning for the Black Hills and a winter storm watch for the southern plains.

In the Northern Hills, anywhere between 10 inches (25.4 centimeters) to 15 inches (38.1 centimeters) is expected in Lead, Deadwood, Galena and Nemo.

For Rapid City, Sturgis, Spearfish, Piedmont and Summerset, more than 6 inches of snow is forecast, the National Weather Service said.

This weekend's winter storm will have a major impact on ranchers in the Nebraska Panhandle and southwest South Dakota plains just as the spring calving season begins.

Noem's senior advisor plans to leave governor's staff

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Gov. Kristi Noem's senior advisor has announced her resignation.

Maggie Seidel, who is also the governor's policy director, sent an email Friday afternoon announcing her decision to leave Noem's staff and accept a position elsewhere, although she didn't say where she's headed.

In her email, Seidel noted the challenges that 2020 and 2021 have presented, but said she enjoyed "each and every moment of it."

Seidel has been advising Noem since November 2019.

Her biography says Seidel holds a master's degree in economics from George Mason University, a master's degree in elections and campaign management from Fordham University and a bachelor's degree in

political science from Villanova University.

Noem's office didn't comment on Seidel's departure.

Virus tolls similar despite governors' contrasting actions

By DAVID A. LIEB Associated Press

Nearly a year after California Gov. Gavin Newsom ordered the nation's first statewide shutdown because of the coronavirus, masks remain mandated, indoor dining and other activities are significantly limited, and Disneyland remains closed.

By contrast, Florida has no statewide restrictions. Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis has prohibited municipalities from fining people who refuse to wear masks. And Disney World has been open since July.

Despite their differing approaches, California and Florida have experienced almost identical outcomes in COVID-19 case rates.

How have two states that took such divergent tacks arrived at similar points?

"This is going to be an important question that we have to ask ourselves: What public health measures actually were the most impactful, and which ones had negligible effect or backfired by driving behavior underground?" said Amesh Adalja, a senior scholar at the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security.

Though research has found that mask mandates and limits on group activities such as indoor dining can help slow the spread of the coronavirus, states with greater government-imposed restrictions have not always fared better than those without them.

California and Florida both have a COVID-19 case rate of around 8,900 per 100,000 residents since the pandemic began, according to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. And both rank in the middle among states for COVID-19 death rates — Florida was 27th as of Friday; California was 28th.

Connecticut and South Dakota are another example. Both rank among the 10 worst states for COVID-19 death rates. Yet Connecticut Gov. Ned Lamont, a Democrat, imposed numerous statewide restrictions over the past year after an early surge in deaths, while South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem, a Republican, issued no mandates as virus deaths soared in the fall.

While Lamont ordered quarantines for certain out-of-state visitors, Noem launched a \$5 million tourism advertising campaign and welcomed people to a massive motorcycle rally, which some health experts said spread the coronavirus throughout the Midwest.

Both contend their approach is the best.

"Even in a pandemic, public health policy needs to take into account people's economic and social well-being," Noem said during a recent conservative convention.

Lamont recently announced that he is lifting capacity limits at retail stores, restaurants and other facilities, effective March 19. But bars that don't serve food will remain closed and a mask mandate will continue.

"This is not Texas. This is not Mississippi. This is Connecticut," Lamont said, referencing other states that recently lifted mask mandates.

"We're finding what works is wearing the mask, social distancing and vaccinations," he said.

As new COVID-19 cases decrease nationally, governors in more than half the states have taken actions during past two weeks to end or ease coronavirus restrictions, according to an Associated Press tally. Some capacity limits ended Friday in Maryland and Oklahoma. Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York and Wyoming are relaxing restrictions in the coming week.

In almost all cases, governors have lauded their approach to the pandemic, while critics have accused them of being too stringent or too lax.

California's slow reopening is expected to gain steam in April. But Republicans in California are helping organize a recall effort against Newsom that has drawn nearly 2 million petition signatures from people frustrated over his long-lasting limits on businesses, church gatherings and people's activities. He also faces intense pressure over public school closures and the glacial pace of getting them reopened.

Newsom asserted that California has been a leader in combating the virus while delivering his State of the State address this past week from Dodger Stadium, where the empty seats roughly equaled the state's

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55,000 COVID-19 deaths.

"From the earliest days of this pandemic, California trusted in science and data, and we met the moment," Newsom said.

He added: "We're not going to change course just because of a few naysayers and doomsdayers."

In his own State of the State address, DeSantis asserted that Florida was in better shape than others because its businesses and schools are open. Florida's unemployment rate ranked below the national average, and significantly lower than California's, at the start of this year.

"While so many other states kept locking people down over these many months, Florida lifted people up," DeSantis said.

Determining which approach is best is more complicated than just looking at statewide policies and overall case rates.

Like Florida, Missouri had no statewide mask mandate, ended business restrictions last June and has a cumulative COVID-19 death rate similar to California's. In the absence of statewide orders, many of the largest cities in Florida and Missouri imposed their own mask requirements and business restrictions. In Missouri, that meant about half the population was still subject to mask mandates.

Republican Gov. Mike Parson has touted "a balanced approach" to the pandemic that left many public health decisions up to local officials and allowed Missouri's economy "to come back strong." New COVID-19 cases and unemployment are both low, and consumer spending has returned to pre-pandemic levels, Parson said this past week.

State health director Randall Williams believes residents heeded Parson's call to voluntarily mask up when Missouri's coronavirus cases spiked last fall to some of the highest levels nationally.

Public health experts said individual choices could help explain the similar outcomes among some states with loose or strict orders from the governor.

Some people voluntarily were "being more vigilant in states where the guidelines are more relaxed," said Thomas Tsai, an assistant professor at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. Yet in states with more government mandates, "people generally in public were wearing masks and following the guidelines, but in private they were letting down their guard and less vigilant," he said.

Imposing strict measures, like forbidding families from visiting grandparents and friends from gathering, is like taking an abstinence-only approach to combating drug use and sexually transmitted disease, said Adalja, of Johns Hopkins University.

Some will comply. But other "people are going to do those activities, anyway," he said.

David A. Lieb reported from Jefferson City, Missouri. Associated Press writers Brendan Farrington in Tallahassee, Florida; Stephen Groves in Pierre, South Dakota; Susan Haigh in Norwich, Connecticut; and Kathleen Ronayne in Sacramento, California, contributed to this story.

Democrats bank on relief aid to win back wary working class

By WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

JEANNETTE, Pa. (AP) — When Joe Biden visited this corner of southwestern Pennsylvania in the final weeks before the election, his goal wasn't to win it so much as to show the area's overwhelmingly white working-class electorate that his party was at least willing to try.

"A lot of white, working-class Democrats thought we forgot them," Biden said after touring a union training facility during a late September swing through Westmoreland County. "I get their sense of being left behind."

Democrats have offered paeans like that since President Franklin D. Roosevelt delivered the New Deal and cemented an alliance with working-class voters. That bond was rooted in the notion that the Democrats' policies would improve workers' lives.

But that relationship has steadily frayed, with working-class voters now casting Democrats as the party of cultural elites who talk down to them and reject their values. Such resentment has even driven workers

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to vote against their economic self-interest.

Now Biden and his party are hoping that by muscling through passage of the \$1.9 trillion coronavirus relief and economic stimulus bill — with benefits heavily weighted toward lower- and middle-income Americans — they can win back at least a larger share of working-class voters.

The president is flying Tuesday to Delaware County, outside Philadelphia, to help promote the new aid.

Still, that proposition — which Republicans dismiss as a “liberal wish list” — will be tested in places such as Westmoreland County. More than 250 miles west, the county was a Democratic stronghold until its industrial base withered.

“These are the kind of issues that are a little bit more meat-and-potatoes and that we should focus on in this area,” said Paul Adams, a former county Democratic official.

“Despite the fact that our sympathies may be with other issues,” Adams said, referring to larger efforts to tackle racism and promote gay rights, “it’s hard to get traction with that with the local population.”

Democrats are banking on direct payments of \$1,400 to most Americans under the COVID-19 law as a strong counter to that criticism. The package also dramatically expands tax credits for families with children, bolsters unemployment benefits, reduces taxes on student loan debt and lowers costs of the Obama-era health law’s coverage.

Ed Rendell, a former Democratic governor of Pennsylvania, said the legislation won’t singlehandedly solve the party’s problems with working-class voters but is “a good first mile down the road.”

“It is incumbent upon us to make the case — which I believe has always been there to make, we’ve just done a (terrible) job — that we’re the party of the working guy,” Rendell said. “And the Republicans are using smoke and mirrors.”

By some estimates, the law could reduce the nation’s poverty rate by one-third. That may have an out-size impact on Westmoreland County, whose under-65 population receives more federal disability benefits than the national average and where less than one-third of residents have a college degree, according to federal estimates.

The town of Jeannette used to boast of being the “Glass Capital of the World,” but nearly all of those factories are long gone. A nearby Volkswagen plant shuttered in 1988, wiping out 2,500 jobs.

But the strong economic incentives in the relief bill are colliding with the structural support here for former President Donald Trump. Trump 2020 yard signs and flags — often carefully preserved against winter snows — still line the hilly roadsides beyond the hulking husks of the abandoned bottle works. The Democratic county sheriff became a Republican last summer, saying his old party wasn’t supporting law enforcement strongly enough during demonstrations that swept the country over police brutality and racism.

Like Biden, Trump campaigned in Westmoreland County, and he won the county by nearly 30 percentage points. But Biden got about 11,000 more votes here than Hillary Clinton did in 2016. That’s significant given that Biden won Pennsylvania by only about 80,500 votes.

Bill Bretz, chairman of the county’s Republican Party, said the new direct economic benefits are canceled out by other Biden administration policies. That includes nixing the Keystone XL pipeline, which has raised fears that Pennsylvania’s natural gas producers could face similar limits in the name of battling climate change.

“There’s a lot of people who are still registered Democrats, who still hold on to those working-class Democratic values,” Bretz said. “But their sensitivities are violated by the national Democratic platform.”

Indeed, people like Mary Wilmes, who owns a gift shop in the county seat of Greensburg, doesn’t like to rile customers with talk of politics. But she did offer praise for Biden and his work promoting the stimulus. “He’s giving you the sense that he cares about people,” she said.

“It’s not like before,” Wilmes added, “when what we had was, ‘It’s all about himself.’”

The white working-class helped fuel Trump’s 2016 rise, but those voters have actually been gravitating to Republicans since 1992, according to research by Noam Lupu, a political science professor at Vanderbilt University. Working-class African Americans have remained steadfastly loyal to Democrats, but Trump saw his support among Latinos improve in 2020. That could indicate that a broader shift away from Democrats

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may be resonating with some Hispanics.

"I think, for the Democratic Party, it's a tough coalition to maintain: working-class voters who are really focused on their economic interests, but, at the same time, very progressive social positions for the urban, educated voters," Lupu said. "I think Biden has an opportunity to rebrand the party a little bit."

Working-class generally denotes people without college degrees who have lower wage jobs. It also can mean better educated, better paid middle-class earners who don't like defining themselves as rich or poor. Trump won 62% of white voters without a college degree in November, according to AP VoteCast, a nationwide survey of the electorate.

During the campaign, Biden tried to contrast what he called the working family sensitivities of his birth city of Scranton, Pennsylvania, with Trump's Fifth Avenue, big city values. Biden also has pledged to be "the most pro-union president you've ever seen."

"A number of working-class people have seen politics not deliver for their families, and sometimes that's when Democrats are in charge and sometimes that's when Republicans are in charge," said Rick Levy, president of the Texas AFL-CIO. "It creates an opening for demagogues who say, 'I can fix it.'"

Some top Republicans have begun arguing that theirs is actually the party of the working-class — mixing economic appeal with key social issues such as promoting gun rights and opposing abortion, along with emphasizing opposition to the cancellation of some Dr. Seuss books and dropping "Mr." from Potato Head so the toy better promotes gender inclusivity.

"We are a working-class party now," Missouri Republican Sen. Josh Hawley tweeted on election night. Hawley also offered legislation to raise the minimum wage to \$15, long a position of progressive Democrats.

Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, recently declared the GOP the "party of steel workers and construction workers and taxi drivers and cops and firefighters and waitresses." He has proposed a \$10,000 scholarship helping parents who live in areas where schools remain shuttered because of the virus to pay for education elsewhere.

Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., endorsed a union organizing drive at an Amazon warehouse in Alabama, accusing the online giant's leadership of waging a "culture war against working-class values."

Levy said Democrats can now point to concrete provisions of the relief law, which he said also shows that the GOP is "never going to support working-class people."

But some say the stimulus package may prove hollow over the long term.

"It's a good thing now," Lucas Szekely, a 19-year-old community college student from Irwin, west of Jeannette, said of getting another stimulus check. "But you can't keep doing it forever."

With Cuomo under fire, No. 2 Kathy Hochul treads carefully

By CAROLYN THOMPSON Associated Press

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — As a chorus of top Democrats demanded New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo's resignation over sexual harassment allegations last week, the woman who would succeed him if he stepped down did what she's done for most of her time in office: Kept a discreet profile.

Lt. Gov. Kathy Hochul delivered virtual remarks at an array of small events statewide. She sent tweets that hyped small businesses in the Adirondacks, reminded people to wear masks and urged them: "When it's your turn, get vaccinated!" She herself got inoculated against the coronavirus Friday, drawing rare local TV coverage.

If the Democrat's schedule hasn't changed lately, what may be different is the number of people tuning in to learn more about the politician who would become the state's first female governor if Cuomo can't hold on to power.

After two terms living deep in the shadow of a governor famous for demanding the spotlight, Hochul is an unknown quantity to most New Yorkers. Baruch College political science Professor Doug Muzzio said Hochul is probably preparing herself now in case she's called on to step in.

"The next stage of the game is if he resigns and Hochul becomes governor. What does that mean? Who is she? What does she think?" Muzzio said. "New Yorkers are totally, totally unaware of this woman."

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I mean, I spent half my life focusing on this stuff. And I don't know that much."

Hochul briefly acknowledged the storm swirling around Cuomo on Tuesday in a statement expressing faith in an independent investigation into his workplace conduct, led by the state's attorney general.

"I trust the inquiry to be completed as thoroughly and expeditiously as possible," she wrote. "New Yorkers should be confident that through this process they will soon learn the facts."

Then she was back on message, tweeting out the latest vaccine eligibility criteria and plugging post-coronavirus pandemic revitalization efforts for overlooked upstate downtowns "oozing with charm & character."

"Kathy has the difficulty of being loyal to the governor, as she always has been unflinchingly, but also remaining steadfast in her leadership to ensure that there's no sexual harassment anyplace, anywhere, anytime," said former U.S. Rep. John LaFalce, whom Hochul has called a mentor after working as his legislative assistant in Washington for three years in the 1980s.

"And to think, well, what would she do if all of a sudden she is governor, and then how do you begin to prepare for that?" said LaFalce, a Democrat who has remained close with Hochul and her husband, former U.S. Attorney Bill Hochul.

The granddaughter of Irish immigrants and daughter of a steelworker, Hochul has leveraged an upbeat and approachable style to pull off challenging electoral wins over her career.

Now 62, she was a town council member in Hamburg, New York, near Buffalo, for 14 years before becoming the Erie County Clerk in 2007.

In 2011, she was the surprise winner in a special election for a vacant congressional seat in a conservative western New York district, one of only four in the state that had gone for Republican John McCain over President Barack Obama in 2008.

In her unsuccessful run for reelection to Congress, Hochul was endorsed by the National Rifle Association and called herself a staunch advocate for sportsmen who would protect gun rights in Washington.

Earlier as the Erie County Clerk, Hochul had strongly opposed a proposal to allow people to get driver's licenses without having to prove they are in the country legally.

After Cuomo picked her as his choice for lieutenant governor, she moved to the left.

She backed New York's SAFE Act, one of the nation's toughest gun-control laws, as well as the state's new Green Light Law, which has let unauthorized immigrants get driver's licenses.

"Her willingness to shift politically does not suggest she would offer any kind of independent judgment," the New York Times editorial board wrote in 2014 when it endorsed her primary opponent in the race for lieutenant governor, Columbia University law professor Timothy Wu.

Hochul won that race, then won again in a close contest in 2018 against then-New York City Council member Jumaane Williams, now the city's public advocate.

Republican Assembly member Angelo Morinello is among the many state lawmakers who want Cuomo to step aside, but he spoke favorably about Hochul and her ability to bring perspective from beyond politically dominant New York City.

"Kathy is a very accomplished individual. For western New York, where she's from and where I'm from, it would be a plus for us. She has experience and wherewithal and a staff that would be able to keep things going," Morinello said.

"I called her a Joe Biden Democrat," said Len Lenihan, the former Democratic chair in Hochul's home base, Erie County. "She just takes joy in serving. She, in all of her races in western New York, appeals to the base Democratic voter, but also has the ability to go beyond that."

"She's visited every every corner of the state, knows every town supervisor and village mayor," Lenihan added. "She just has really leaned into this job and it's a joy for her."

Known as a tireless campaigner, Hochul delivered endorsements for dozens of candidates nationwide in the latest general election and just wrapped up a term as chair of the 24-member Democratic Lieutenant Governors Association, which offers help to candidates hoping to join their ranks.

"She's campaigning every minute of the day," LaFalce said. "Nobody campaigns as tenaciously as Kathy does. Tenacious is the best word I can think of to describe her. When she sinks her teeth into something,

whether it's a campaign or an issue, she's dogged."

But, said LaFalce, "The most important thing in politics is likability. And everybody loves Kathy."

Associated Press journalist Marina Villeneuve contributed from Albany, New York.

Watching the watchers: Who's at helm of EU's border agency?

By LORNE COOK Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — The European Union's border and coast guard agency Frontex, the pride of the 27-nation bloc's vast effort to keep watch over its frontiers and anyone who might try to enter without authorization, is itself under surveillance — and under fire.

Almost literally sometimes: In the Aegean Sea, Turkish fighter jets and ships have buzzed Frontex aircraft or intimidated the agency's boats monitoring migrant movements in the narrow strip of sea between Turkey and Greece's eastern islands. Turkish troops allegedly fired warning shots in the air at the land border too.

And in the European Parliament, calls have come for Executive Director Fabrice Leggeri to resign. Some lawmakers say he's mishandled allegations that the agency was involved in fundamental violations of migrants' rights.

Charity groups and media outlets accuse Frontex of denying people their right to apply for asylum — which is illegal under EU law and refugee treaties. They say it was also complicit in, or failed to prevent, alleged pushbacks at sea by Greece's coastguard, where migrants were returned to Turkish waters.

Although the agency was supposed to have hired 40 fundamental rights officers by December, it still hasn't.

An inquiry found no link between Frontex and Aegean pushbacks. But the Parliament has set up a "scrutiny group," to delve into the reports and human rights concerns. The EU's anti-fraud office is also looking at them, and at claims of misconduct by senior managers.

Even as criticism mounts, Frontex's powers are growing. In coming years, the agency is projected to swell to a 10,000-strong standing force, with armed officers and hi-tech surveillance equipment. Its budget has ballooned to 5.6 billion euros (\$6.7 billion) over the next seven years.

In 2014, the year before the EU's migrant challenge hit its peak, the agency had an annual budget of around 100 million euros and had to request border staff from member countries.

Its role is expanding too. Recently, when the United Kingdom left the EU, it insisted that Frontex handle border controls at the airport in the British territory of Gibraltar rather than Spanish officers.

But as Frontex's powers and duties grow, so does the need for oversight.

"It is, in my view, the most important agency in the whole European Union. And with power and funding comes responsibility, and of course safeguards and scrutiny," EU Migration Commissioner Ylva Johansson told investigating EU lawmakers on March 4.

Moreover, any failures at Frontex are an added embarrassment for nations that for years have been deeply divided over who should take responsibility for people entering without authorization and whether other member states should be obliged to help out.

"In the absence of the EU agreeing on migration management, what happens on the ground firmly shapes how the EU is viewed from the outside," Hanne Beirens, at the Migration Policy Institute, told The Associated Press.

The question is: who exactly is at the helm when it comes to Frontex?

The agency is supervised by a management board of national interior ministry, police and border officials which establishes its work plan and operations. The Commission, which supervises the respect of EU laws, has two of the 28 board seats.

Leggeri, a French civil servant named Executive Director in 2015 just as hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees were arriving in Europe, is tasked with carrying out the board's strategy. The posts of deputy director and a number of other senior positions are unfilled.

On paper, Frontex is legally accountable to the 27 member countries and the European Parliament. The

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Commission, through Johansson, has political but not legal responsibility for Frontex's actions.

Out on the sea, or at land borders, though, Frontex operations are controlled by the country whose territory they take place on. In the Aegean, where many pushbacks have been reported, that means the Greek coastguard. This is where the lines of responsibility get muddy.

Frontex and Greece vehemently deny carrying out pushbacks, and the inquiry cleared the agency, although it did expose "monitoring and reporting" failures. But Leggeri requested twice last year that Athens probe the conduct of the Greek coastguard.

He also told the EU lawmakers that when Turkey waved thousands of migrants through to its borders with Greece last March, Athens decided in an emergency measure "to make optimal use of the provisions on interception" to stop the attempted influx.

That means, Leggeri said, "that in some cases the migrants' boats can be instructed not to stay in the territorial waters or not to enter." To some, that might appear to be the very definition of a pushback, and it begs the question: should Frontex comply when an order to intercept a migrant boat might actually be breaking the law?

These blurred legal definitions, unclear lines of command and the conflicting interests of coastal or inland EU member countries make the Frontex ship a complex one to command.

German conservative lawmaker Lena Duepont — a European Parliament "scrutiny group" member — told the AP that there's plenty of room to improve "the management ecosystem of the agency," especially the way Frontex is growing.

"It's the first time that we have someone wearing a gun, someone wearing a European uniform," as part of a standing corps rather than officers sent on request from member countries, she said. Frontex is more "European than ever before, and this is a drastic change within the agency."

Follow AP's global migration coverage at <https://apnews.com/hub/migration>

Beyoncé, Taylor Swift could have historic night at Grammys

By MESFIN FEKADU AP Music Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — It could be a night for the history books for Taylor Swift and Beyoncé at Sunday's Grammy Awards — for both good and bad reasons.

Swift could become the first woman to win the show's top prize, album of the year, three times. Her first surprise album of 2020 — the folky, alternative adventure "folklore" — is competing for the top honor, an award she first won in 2010 for "Fearless," her breakthrough that helped establish her as a bona fide pop star even though she sang country music. She won again in 2016 for "1989," her first full-length pop album that dominated the charts with a bounty of hits.

Stevie Wonder, Frank Sinatra and Paul Simon are some of the male performers who have won album of the year three times. Producers or engineers have also won the award three times, including Phil Ramone, Ryan Tedder, David Foster, Bob Ludwig, Serban Ghenea and others.

The only person to win the prize four times is mastering engineer Tom Coyne, who died in 2017.

Beyoncé has never won album of the year throughout her career — she's not up for the honor this year because she didn't release a project during the eligibility period — but she is the most nominated act. With 24 wins and nine nominations this year, she could surpass Alison Krauss' 27 wins and become the most decorated woman in Grammys history.

Beyoncé's "Black Parade" scored nominations like record and song of the year as well as best R&B song and best R&B performance, while her guest appearance on Megan Thee Stallion's "Savage" earned bids for record of the year, best rap performance and best rap song.

Beyoncé holds the record for most Grammy nominations for a female act, with 79. She and Paul McCartney tie for second place among all Grammy nominees, only behind Quincy Jones and Jay-Z, who have earned 80 nods each.

The royal family of music could walk away with a number of wins for their home. Jay-Z co-wrote "Black

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Parade" and "Savage," earning him nominations for song of the year, best R&B song and best rap song. He has won 22 Grammys throughout his career.

Their daughter, Blue Ivy Carter, is nominated alongside her mother for best music video for "Brown Skin Girl." Ivy Carter gives a vocal performance on the song and appears in the video; she is also listed as a co-writer of the song with Jay-Z and Beyoncé.

Ivy Carter, 9, could become the second youngest person to ever win a Grammy. Leah Peasall was 8 when The Peasall Sisters won album of the year at the 2002 show for their appearance on the T Bone Burnett-produced "O Brother, Where Art Thou?" soundtrack. "Brown Skin Girl," a song celebrating brown and dark-skinned women, has won Ivy Carter several awards, including two Soul Train Music Awards, a BET Award and a NAACP Image Award.

While Beyoncé could have a historic night, history could repeat itself and she could be shut out of winning a top award — a common occurrence for R&B and rap artists throughout Grammy history. Of her 24 wins, only one has been for one of the big four Grammys, song of the year. She has lost album of the year three times and record of the year five times.

Jay-Z has never won a top award, and he and his wife join a list of mostly Black performers who have been restricted to wins in the rap and R&B categories, including Kendrick Lamar, Kanye West, Mariah Carey, Eminem, Drake, Missy Elliott, Mary J. Blige and more.

This year The Weeknd was the one who was snubbed. Despite having the biggest hit of 2020 with "Blinding Lights" and a top-selling, multi-hit album, he didn't earn any nominations. He's won three Grammys so far — only in the R&B categories — but he's vowed to boycott the Grammys because he doesn't agree with how the Recording Academy selects its winners.

The album of the year prize has only been given to two rap-based acts — Lauryn Hill's "The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill" and Outkast's "Speakerboxxx/The Love Below." Though rap is the most popular genre today, no rap albums scored a nomination for the top award this year. A rap song was never awarded song of the year or record of the year until Childish Gambino made history in 2019 with "This Is America."

Beyoncé and Megan Thee Stallion's "Savage" could become the second hip-hop song to win record of the year.

Megan Thee Stallion could also become the first female rapper to win best rap song. The Houston rapper, along with D Smoke, Chika and Doja Cat, could also become the fifth rap-based act to win best new artist. Their competition includes Phoebe Bridgers, Noah Cyrus, Kaytranada and Ingrid Andress, who could become just the fourth act from country music to win.

Other women who could make history Sunday include Grace Potter, who has the chance of being the first female performer to win best rock album in over two decades, and sister trio HAIM, the first all-female rock band nominated for album of the year.

Though 84 awards will be handed out — roughly 10 during the live telecast and the rest during the pre-ceremony — viewers are most likely watching for the performances.

About two dozen acts will hit stages in downtown Los Angeles, including Swift, Bruno Mars, Cardi B, BTS, Billie Eilish, Harry Styles, Bad Bunny, Megan Thee Stallion, DaBaby, Dua Lipa, Post Malone, Chris Martin, Lil Baby, John Mayer, Maren Morris and Doja Cat.

Trevor Noah will host the show, which airs at 8 p.m. Eastern on CBS and Paramount+. The Grammys were originally scheduled for Jan. 31 but were pushed back because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Artists competing with Swift for album of the year include Coldplay, Post Malone, Dua Lipa, Jhené Aiko, HAIM, Jacob Collier and Black Pumas.

Follow AP's complete coverage of the Grammys at www.apnews.com/GrammyAwards

London police under pressure over clashes at women's protest

By SYLVIA HUI Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — London's Metropolitan Police was under heavy pressure Sunday to explain its actions

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during a vigil for a woman whom one of the force's own officers is accused of murdering.

Hundreds defied coronavirus restrictions to gather and protest violence against women, but the event ended with clashes between police and those attending.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said scenes from Saturday's vigil in south London were "upsetting" and she is seeking a full report on what happened from the Metropolitan Police. The capital's mayor, Sadiq Khan, said the police response was "at times neither appropriate nor proportionate."

Police were seen scuffling with some women at the event, and one woman was seen pinned to the ground by two officers. Several women were led away in handcuffs as other attendees chanted "Shame on you" at police. The force later said four people were arrested for violating public order and coronavirus regulations.

Defending the force's actions, Assistant Commissioner Helen Ball said "hundreds of people were packed tightly together," posing a very real risk of transmitting the virus. She added that officers had repeatedly encouraged those attending to leave, but "a small minority" of people chanted at police, pushing and throwing objects.

"We accept that the actions of our officers have been questioned," Ball said. "We absolutely did not want to be in a position where enforcement action was necessary. But we were placed in this position because of the overriding need to protect people's safety."

Many of those attending the vigil were already wary of police because a serving Metropolitan Police officer, Wayne Couzens, was charged with the kidnap and murder of Sarah Everard, a 33-year-old woman who vanished March 3 while walking home in London. Her body was found a week later.

The case has sparked a national outcry and a heated debate on women's safety. Organizers had planned an official vigil at Clapham Common, a park near where Everard was last seen alive, but were forced to cancel the event because of COVID-19 restrictions. A huge crowd turned up Saturday nonetheless.

Jamie Klingler, who organized the canceled "Reclaim These Streets" event, blamed police for denying women their right to have a silent vigil in the first place. The force got the angry reaction Saturday because they refused to facilitate a peaceful rally, she said.

"I think we were shocked and really, really sad and to see videos of policemen handling women at a vigil about violence against women by men ... I think it was painful and pretty triggering to see," Klingler told Britain's PA Media news agency Sunday.

Couzens, 48, appeared in court Saturday for the first time. He was remanded in custody and has another appearance scheduled Tuesday at London's Central Criminal Court.

The Metropolitan Police has said it is "deeply disturbing" that one of its own is a suspect in the case. The force said Couzens joined its ranks in 2018 and most recently served in the parliamentary and diplomatic protection command, an armed unit responsible for guarding embassies in the capital and Parliament.

Everard was last seen walking home from a friend's apartment in south London at about 10:30 p.m. on March 3. Her body was found hidden in an area of woodland in Kent, more than 50 miles southeast of London, on Wednesday. A post-mortem examination was underway, police said Friday.

At least 4 people shot dead in Myanmar anti-coup protests

YANGON, Myanmar (AP) — At least four people were shot dead during protests in Myanmar on Sunday, as security forces continued their violent crackdown against dissent following last month's military coup.

Two of the victims were killed in Yangon, the country's largest city. One of them was shot in the head and another was shot in the abdomen, according to local media covering the demonstrations in Hlaing Thar Yar Township.

A third person died in the northern city of Hpakant when police fired into a crowd of demonstrators, local media reported. A fourth victim, a woman, died after being shot in the head in Mandalay, the country's second-largest city, as security forces were conducting clearance operations.

In Yangon, video posted on social media showed crowds of people, some wearing hard hats and gas masks, running down a street amid sounds of gunfire. The demonstrators quickly sprayed vapor from fire

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extinguishers as they retreated.

The use of fire extinguishers — common now in protests across Myanmar — is intended to smother tear gas and also create a vapor screen that makes it harder for police to pursue or shoot demonstrators.

There were also reports of injuries from live rounds and rubber bullets in other parts of Yangon, including Insein district, where billows of black smoke could be seen after security forces reportedly set roadblocks on fire.

On Saturday, the civilian leader of Myanmar's government in hiding vowed to continue supporting a "revolution" to oust the military leaders who seized power in the Feb. 1 coup. Mahn Win Khaing Than, who was named the acting vice president by Myanmar's ousted lawmakers and is a member of deposed leader Aung San Suu Kyi's political party, addressed the public for the first time since the coup.

"This is the darkest moment of the nation and the moment that the dawn is close," he said in a video posted on the shadow government's website and social media.

"In order to form a federal democracy, which all ethnic brothers who have been suffering various kinds of oppressions from the dictatorship for decades really desired, this revolution is the chance for us to put our efforts together," he said.

He added: "We will never give up to an unjust military, but we will carve our future together with our united power. Our mission must be accomplished."

At the end of the message, he flashed the three-finger salute that has become a symbol of resistance to the military rulers.

Also Saturday, security forces again opened fire on demonstrators, killing four in Mandalay, two in Pyay in south-central Myanmar, and one in Twante, a suburb of Yangon. Details of all seven deaths were posted on multiple social media accounts, with some accompanied by photos of the victims.

The actual death toll is likely to be higher, as police apparently seized some bodies, and some of the victims suffered serious gunshot wounds that doctors and nurses working at makeshift clinics would be hard-pressed to treat. Many hospitals are occupied by security forces, and as a result are boycotted by medical personnel and shunned by protesters.

The independent U.N. human rights expert for Myanmar, Tom Andrews, said last week that credible reports indicated that at least 70 people had died so far, and cited growing evidence of crimes against humanity by the military.

Other unofficial but carefully compiled tallies put the number of deaths since the coup at around 90.

Saturday's killings did not faze demonstrators in Yangon who crowded a downtown commercial area past the official 8 p.m. curfew to hold a mass candlelight vigil and sing about their cause. The mostly young protesters rallied at an intersection where they usually gather for daytime protests.

After-dark rallies were also held in Mandalay and elsewhere.

The nighttime protests may reflect a more aggressive approach to self-defense that has been advocated by some protesters. Police have been aggressively patrolling residential neighborhoods at night, firing into the air and setting off stun grenades as part of intimidation.

They have also been carrying out targeted raids, taking people from their homes with minimal resistance. In at least two known cases, the detainees died in custody within hours of being hauled away.

The Latest: Extra flights to Mallorca laid on from Germany

By The Associated Press undefined

BERLIN — A German airline says it is laying on extra flights to Mallorca over the Easter period after the lifting of a German travel warning for the Spanish island prompted a big increase in bookings.

Germany's disease control center, the Robert Koch Institute, said on Friday that it was removing parts of Spain — including the Balearic Islands — from its list of "risk areas" effective Sunday. People arriving in Germany from such areas must go into quarantine.

Germany-based travel operator TUI said on Friday that it was moving up the start of flights from some German airports to Mallorca by six days to March 21.

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Lufthansa's budget airline, Eurowings, said Sunday that many flights were booked out within hours of the announcement. It said it is expanding its so-far limited program of services to Mallorca by adding another 300 flights over the Easter period. Passengers to Mallorca require a negative coronavirus test. The German foreign ministry is still advising, though no longer warning, against nonessential tourist travel there.

Germany's own lockdown is set to stay largely in place until at least March 28, and prospects of further relaxation are uncertain as infections are rising again. Hotels in Germany haven't been allowed to accommodate tourists since early November.

THE VIRUS OUTBREAK:

- Medically vulnerable in U.S. put near end of vaccine line
- Virus tolls similar in some states despite governors' contrasting actions
- Nurses fight conspiracy theories along with the coronavirus
- California governor acknowledges mistakes, says recall unjustified
- Warp-speed spending and other surreal stats of COVID times

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HERE'S WHAT ELSE IS HAPPENING:

ISLAMABAD — Amid a third wave of the coronavirus that is gripping Pakistan's largest province, Punjab, and the northern part of the country, Pakistani health and administrative authorities have imposed a partial lockdown in affected areas.

Punjab authorities fined scores of marriage halls and restaurants for violating restrictions imposed again to fight the virus.

Officials in the capital, Islamabad, warned citizens that they must wear face masks and maintain social distancing in public.

Pakistan has reported 605,200 cases, including 13,508 deaths.

DURHAM, N.C. -- Duke University issued a quarantine order for all of its undergraduates effective Saturday night due to a coronavirus outbreak caused by students who attended recruitment parties, the school said.

The university said in a statement that all undergraduate students will be forced to stay-in-place until at least March 21. Suspension or dismissal from the school are potential punishments for "flagrant or repeat violators."

Over the past week, the school has reported more than 180 positive coronavirus cases among students. There are an additional 200 students who may have been exposed and have been ordered to quarantine.

The school said in the statement that the outbreak was "principally driven by students attending recruitment parties for selective living groups."

Duke said it would provide a policy update on Thursday.

LOS ANGELES — Coronavirus hospitalizations in California's most populous county have slipped below 1,000 for the first in four months.

The number of patients with COVID-19 in Los Angeles County hospitals hit 979, the lowest since Nov. 23. There are 3,250 people hospitalized statewide, a drop of more than 85% since peaking around 22,000 in early January.

Case rates also remain low and much of the state is preparing for some restrictions to be lifted in the coming days.

State officials announced Friday that 13 counties would be eligible to open restaurants, movie theaters, gyms and museums at limited capacity on Sunday.

On Monday the state is opening up vaccinations to an estimated 4.4 million people ages 16-64 with dis-

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abilities and certain health conditions, including severe obesity, type 2 diabetes, chronic kidney disease at stage 4 or above and Down syndrome.

ROME — The new Italian government says it aims to have 80% of the population vaccinated against COVID-19 by the end of September.

Premier Mario Draghi's office on Saturday announced more goals of the national vaccination program, which only recently has started picking up its pace after delays in vaccine deliveries and other logistics slowdowns.

Just under 2 million people in Italy – or roughly 3% of the population – had been fully vaccinated as of Saturday.

On Monday, much of the country, including Rome's region, Lazio, will be put under tougher restrictions on citizens' movements outside the home. Hospitals are struggling with an increase of ICU admissions for COVID-19 patients. Daily new caseloads of confirmed infections have soared above 20,000 in recent days, including on Saturday, with the Health Ministry reporting 26,062 cases.

Italy has now tallied some 3.2 million cases in the pandemic. After Britain, Italy has Europe's second-highest known death toll, with 101,881 dead.

PHOENIX — Arizona on Saturday reported 262 new cases of COVID-19 — the lowest one-day total since September at the trough between the summer and winter surges.

The state has now recorded 823,094 cases and 16,546 deaths with the 27 newly reported. Hospitalizations for the disease dropped to 814, down from the Jan. 11 pandemic peak of 5,082, according to the state's coronavirus dashboard.

The state also reported fewer than 1,000 additional cases on three of the previous six days.

But the state Department of Health Services announced late Friday it has detected three cases of a fast-spreading variant of the coronavirus that was first discovered in Brazil. It's unclear how widespread that variant is in Arizona, but studies indicate vaccines are effective against it, the department said in a news release.

Also Friday, Gov. Doug Ducey said Arizona can meet President Joe Biden's goal to offer vaccinations to everyone who wants one by May as long as the federal government supplies enough vaccines.

WASHINGTON - Commercial air travel appears to be on the upswing despite the coronavirus pandemic.

The Transportation Security Administration said its agents screened more than 1.3 million passengers at airport security checkpoints nationwide on Friday.

Spokesperson Lisa Farbstein said in a tweet that the last time the number was that high was March 15, 2020 – about a year ago.

Public health officials generally have cautioned against commercial travel.

Farbstein included a reminder in her tweet, saying "if you choose to fly, wear that mask!"

President Joe Biden marked Thursday's first anniversary of the pandemic with a prime-time address to the nation in which he said he expects to have enough coronavirus vaccine for all Americans by May 1.

Africans rethink big, bountiful weddings as pandemic bites

By RODNEY MUHUMUZA and FARAI MUTSAKA Associated Press

KAMPALA, Uganda (AP) — The moment of truth for Ivan Arinaitwe came when he had to choose among many relatives and friends whom to invite to his wedding. An initial 150 people swelled to 300 as he agonized. No matter how he tried, it would be hard to achieve Uganda's recommended "scientific" wedding, slimmed down for the COVID-19 pandemic.

In Africa, where weddings often go big, he would invite 1,300 people if he could. Now he worries about how the uninvited might react and the consequences for his family.

"It's a bit complicated, very complicated actually," said the employee of a government research agency

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whose wedding is scheduled for April. "But we have a scapegoat of the COVID-19 pandemic. I will say, 'It's not me. It's what the government has said. If I didn't invite you, please understand.'"

He is not alone. Many Africans are rethinking big, bountiful weddings amid the economic ravages of the pandemic. In Uganda, an East African country of 45 million where colorful wedding convoys are a street spectacle on weekends, President Yoweri Museveni last year ordered so-called scientific weddings, attended by no more than 10 people, to stem the spread of the coronavirus.

Museveni put on such a wedding for a cousin in July in the lush gardens of the official residence, State House, with the masked couple in socially distanced seats. Even the simple bridal cake looked dismal, unlike the giant tiered cakes that often dominate receptions.

The pandemic is forcing change in communities where family can mean a whole clan and weddings are seen as key in cementing relations between communities. Extended families often plan weddings, and large, extravagant ones are a status symbol in places like Nigeria, where over \$2 million can be spent.

Many in Uganda have expressed skepticism about small weddings, and there were reports of police interrupting noncompliant ceremonies before the rules were gradually eased to allow up to 200 attendees.

But now, as the pandemic continues to bite, more people are cautious with their money.

"When the coronavirus struck, people adjusted quickly, very quickly," said the Rev. Sammy Wainaina, provost of All Saints Cathedral in the Kenyan capital, Nairobi. "For weddings, people have gone small."

More Kenyans now opt for laid-back "garden" events as well as the civil unions that became popular in the past year, he said. While that may be a good thing, Wainaina said, he's concerned that some "can become very casual with such weddings and only realize later that they were not committed to the vows they made."

The demand for church weddings "has gone down considerably," he said.

A similar trend is reported in Uganda by Charles Nsimbi, an official in charge of registering civil unions, who told the New Vision newspaper that the average number of unions per day has risen to 12 from five before the pandemic.

Arinaitwe, the Ugandan planning a small church wedding, said he decided not to have the reception in his rural district, where even the uninvited can show up. The invitations specify two people, and no children. He knows that will leave many upset, yet it's necessary to keep numbers in check and avoid starting his marriage with a hefty bill to pay.

"Given that the disposable incomes of people have drastically reduced, people are in survival mode," said Moses Mugarura, a Ugandan pastor who owns a restaurant in the capital, Kampala, that was once in high demand by couples.

His restaurant hosted no wedding meeting from February 2020 through January, he said. And he went from attending a wedding every other weekend to only four last year, citing families worried that their eligible daughters "are not exposed to the normal opportunities."

"I believe that many people have lost faith and have gotten to the low-hanging fruit," he said, referring to cohabitation.

But simply living together is not a solution for some in conservative societies including Noel Mporebuce in the Rwandan capital, Kigali. When the central African nation reported its first virus cases, he was preparing for a wedding initially scheduled for Boxing Day. The lockdown imposed to slow the pandemic effectively banned social gatherings and left him with fading hopes of a classic wedding.

"By now we would be happily married, living as husband and wife," he said. "Everything is now left in the hands of God. Coronavirus is busy killing our future."

Another Kigali resident, teacher Emmanuel Gatera, described a different problem for a sister whose wedding had been scheduled for Christmastime but is indefinitely postponed as her partner struggles to make ends meet. The pregnant woman moved in with him anyway because she feared he would change his mind about getting married.

"Cohabitation is unthinkable in our society, and that scar will live with (my sister) forever," Gatera said.

And yet for others the pandemic has presented an opportunity to circumvent wedding ceremonies that normally cannot be bypassed.

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Philemon Jambaya, a freelance journalist in Zimbabwe, said he negotiated down the bride price via WhatsApp, then had a small and brief traditional wedding recorded on smartphones. Family elders didn't resist, he said.

His success is noteworthy in the southern African country where a traditional marriage can be elaborate, involving up to a dozen steps that take months leading to a crowded betrothal and meal.

"I never imagined marrying that way, but I couldn't wait," Jambaya said. "Everyone knew how much I loved her and how desperate I was to make her my wife, and that we are also living in abnormal times."

Mutsaka reported from Harare, Zimbabwe. Associated Press writer Ignatius Ssuuna in Kigali, Rwanda, contributed to this report.

Governments delay access to public records during pandemic

By DAVID A. LIEB Associated Press

As states prepared to reopen their economies following coronavirus shutdowns last spring, The Associated Press asked governors across the U.S. for records that could shed light on how businesses and health officials influenced their decisions.

Nine months later, after several more COVID-19 surges and shutdowns, the AP still has not received records from about 20 states. Some outright denied the requests or sought payments the AP declined to make. Others have not responded, or said they still need more time.

Public records have become harder to get since the world was upended by the pandemic a year ago. Governors, legislatures and local officials have suspended or ignored laws setting deadlines to respond to records requests. They cited obstacles for staffers who are working at home or are overwhelmed with crisis management.

The result is that information that once took a few days or weeks to obtain now often takes months — depriving the public of timely facts about decisions their leaders are making.

"The pandemic rages on, but investigative journalism doesn't halt. The public's right to know doesn't cease to exist," said Gunita Singh, a legal fellow at the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press, which has tracked nationwide delays in responding to public records requests.

"Having these unnecessary measures in place that hinder open government sets a terrible precedent," Singh said.

U.S. states and local governments are far from alone in their deferrals and delays. Dozens of countries suspended or altered their right-to-information policies last year while citing the pandemic, according to a joint tracking effort by the Centre for Law and Democracy and Access Info Europe.

Open-government advocates have started to worry about potential long-lasting effects.

The pandemic could "give cover for emergency measures to come into force that could then over time become permanent," said Joe Powell, deputy CEO of the Open Government Partnership, a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit that works with governments in 78 countries, including the U.S., to promote transparency and public participation.

Even before the pandemic, some government agencies routinely blew past their own deadlines for responding to public records requests. But the number of such cases has grown over the past year, according to AP interviews with government watchdog groups.

New data indicates there has been both a higher demand for government information during the pandemic and longer waits to obtain it.

State, county and city governments experienced a sixfold increase in their time spent on public records requests last year, rising from an average of 346 hours in the first quarter to 2,121 hours by the last quarter, according to an analysis by GovQA, a company that provides cloud-based software to manage public records requests.

That surge was driven by both the volume and complexity of requests. After shutdowns led to a dip in records requests accepted by government agencies from April to June, the number of such requests shot

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up by 23% over the rest of the year, according to the GovQA data.

Processing delays were exacerbated by remote work, outdated public-records laws, underfunded budgets and increased oversight from top administrators wanting to review potentially sensitive data before it was released, said GovQA spokesperson Jen Snyder.

The AP last May sought copies of communications about the coronavirus between governors' offices, state health directors and groups representing businesses, health care providers and local governments. By August, the AP had received records from about one-third of the states, revealing that some governors had allowed businesses to help write the reopening rules affecting their own industries.

The AP still has requests pending in Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Kansas, Maine, New York and Texas. Illinois this past week finally provided 74 pages of documents, heavily redacted.

After months of repeated AP inquiries, Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine's office on March 3 released just two documents from last spring — one from a hospital association proposing criteria for resuming elective procedures, the other from a mayor's group about guidelines for opening swimming pools and camps. A spokesperson for the Republican governor apologized for the delay, citing "human error" for a breakdown of staff communication.

Delaware Gov. John Carney was one of several chief executives who initially suspended the state's response deadline for public records requests during the coronavirus emergency. With no end to the pandemic in sight, the Democratic governor reversed course and lifted the suspension in September.

But Carney's administration did not fulfill the AP's request until Feb. 10, when it provided 109 pages of documents and a note that more could come later. Though most were merely press clippings, the records included emails from representatives of car dealers, home builders and other industries seeking to keep operating during a shutdown.

More than a half-dozen states — Connecticut, Hawaii, Indiana, Mississippi, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Washington — continue to suspend some open-records requirements through gubernatorial orders, according to an AP review of public-records policies.

Hawaii Gov. David Ige, a Democrat, took the most sweeping action when he suspended the state's entire open-records law in March 2020. Ige eased the suspension under pressure from open-government advocates. But his most recent order, issued in February, still allows deadlines to be suspended if hard copies of documents are inaccessible, staff are backlogged with other requests or a response would pull agency employees away from other COVID-19 work.

Some state legislatures also relaxed response deadlines for records requests during the pandemic.

The Missouri House in February overwhelmingly passed legislation that would suspend response requirements whenever governmental bodies are closed for extended periods. That bill is now in the Senate.

By contrast, Pennsylvania lawmakers pushed for quicker responses. After the state's open-records office advised that days when public offices are closed don't count toward response deadlines, the Republican-led Legislature passed a law prohibiting Democratic Gov. Tom Wolf's administration from ignoring or suspending records requests during disaster emergencies.

Some local governments also have rolled back records law suspensions.

Last April, Virginia's Albemarle County, which surrounds Charlottesville, extended indefinitely the deadlines to respond to records requests. The county board later softened that stance before finally repealing the extension in November — a move that came shortly after state Attorney General Mark Herring, a Democrat, said state law does not allow local governments to modify such deadlines.

Albemarle County spokesperson Emily Kilroy said the timing of the repeal was merely coincidental.

"The ordinance was not intended to get out of the responsibilities that we have under the Freedom of Information Act," she said. "It was really in response to the pandemic."

The Dallas Independent School District suspended all records requests for seven months while its employees were working from home with laptop computers. Staff likely could have processed some requests for electronic records. But because the legal team was unable to access other records stored in offices, it chose not to process any requests "in order for everyone to be on the same playing field," district spokes-

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person Robyn Harris said.

When staff returned to in-person work on Oct. 7, the school district had a backlog of 424 records requests, she said.

Among those was a July 7 request from Keri Mitchell, executive director of the Dallas Free Press, seeking information about internet hot spots provided for students' families during the previous school year. By the time she finally received the information, Mitchell had moved on to other news stories.

"If we can't get timely responses to open-records requests, we can't get people actual answers," she said. "It just creates another barrier to the information people need to literally survive."

Follow David A. Lieb at: <http://twitter.com/DavidALieb>

Call me? US-Turkey reset faces long list of hurdles

By SUZAN FRASER Associated Press

ANKARA, Turkey (AP) — Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has toned down his anti-Western and anti-US rhetoric in an apparent effort to reset the rocky relationship with his NATO allies, but so far he's been met by silence from U.S. President Joe Biden.

Nearly two months into his presidency, Biden still hasn't called Erdogan, which some in Turkey see as a worrying sign. By contrast, former President Donald Trump and Erdogan spoke just days after the 2016 election.

Ties between Ankara and Washington — which once considered each other as strategic partners — have steadily deteriorated in recent years over differences on Syria, Turkey's cooperation with Russia and more recently on Turkish naval interventions in the eastern Mediterranean, which U.S. officials have described as destabilizing.

Despite tensions, many within Erdogan's government were hoping for four more years of the administration led by Trump, who had a personal rapport with Erdogan and didn't give him any lectures about Turkey's human rights record.

Biden drew ire from Turkish officials after an interview with the New York Times in which he spoke about supporting Turkey's opposition against "autocrat" Erdogan.

In public statements, Turkish officials have played down the lack of a phone call from the White House, noting that conversations are happening at other levels, but a senior Turkish government official told The Associated Press that Erdogan's office "is not thrilled" about it. The official spoke on condition of anonymity due to the sensitivity of the issue.

Jen Psaki, the White House press secretary, said last week that there were many world leaders Biden still hadn't talked to and that she was sure he would call Erdogan "at some point."

Left with few friends due to a spate of assertive foreign policy, anti-Western rhetoric and increasing authoritarianism, Turkey is now looking to attract foreign investments to rescue its troubled economy. Erdogan has been reaching out to the U.S., European nations and other former allies in a bid to patch troubled relations and end its international isolation.

Biden, who has spoken about restoring international alliances and traditional ties as well as strengthening NATO, would have an interest in rebuilding ties and trying to pull Turkey away from Russia's sphere of influence.

But analysts say it's going to be very difficult to reset the relationship, given the range of issues where the two countries don't see eye to eye, including Turkey's decision to acquire the advanced Russian S-400 anti-aircraft system, which Washington says poses a threat to NATO and to the U.S. F-35 fighter aircraft program. Washington kicked Turkey out of the F-35 production program and last year imposed sanctions on senior Turkish defense industry officials as well as bans on military export licenses.

Turkey argues that the Russian system, which cost the country \$2.5 billion, is not a threat to the NATO alliance and it has repeatedly called for dialogue to resolve the issue. Washington insists the sanctions cannot be lifted as long as the Russian system remains on Turkish soil.

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During a Senate hearing before his confirmation as U.S. secretary of state, Antony Blinken described Turkey as a "so-called strategic partner" and called it "unacceptable" for Turkey to be "in line with one of our biggest strategic competitors in Russia."

Merve Tahiroglu of the Washington-based Project on Middle East Democracy, said it would be difficult for Erdogan to backtrack on the S-400 "because he made such a big deal about the purchase and what this would mean for Turkey's geopolitical independence."

American military support for Syrian Kurdish fighters to combat the Islamic State group is another point of contention. Turkey argues they are inextricably linked to a decades-long Kurdish insurgency and Defense Minister Hulusi Akar has said that ties cannot improve unless Washington halts its cooperation with the Syrian Kurdish group.

In 2019, Biden accused Trump of betraying U.S. allies, following the latter's decision to withdraw troops from northern Syria, which paved the way for a Turkish military offensive against the Syrian Kurdish group.

The Biden administration is likely to put pressure on Turkey on its energy dispute with Greece in the eastern Mediterranean, which led to a tense standoff between two NATO members. Turkey has since halted its search for energy reserves in disputed waters while Erdogan has toned down his fiery rhetoric.

Gonul Tol, director of the Middle East Institute's Center for Turkish Studies, said Turkey cannot give concessions in the eastern Mediterranean "because it is considered a national cause by a wide segment of Turkish society."

The Biden administration is expected to place more emphasis on democracy and human rights than Trump did. During a telephone call with Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu, Blinken underlined the "importance of democratic institutions, inclusive governance and respect for human rights" for Turkey, according to a U.S. readout of the conversation.

Last week, Erdogan pledged a series of reforms to improve human rights but analysts said they were unlikely to make a huge impact or lead to the release from prison of high-profile figures such as activist Osman Kavala, who is accused of ties to anti-government protests in 2013 as well as a 2016 failed coup attempt.

"For a true reset to happen, the Biden administration needs to see more of a democratization process ... that can come in the form of major judicial reforms or by the release of some of the most contentious political figures," Tahiroglu said.

Turkey is also seeking the extradition of U.S.-based cleric Fethullah Gulen, whom Ankara accuses of orchestrating a failed military coup in 2016. U.S. officials say Ankara has not been able to present documents that would allow his extradition. Turkey accuses Washington of providing him shelter.

Also threatening to perturb ties is a trial against Turkish state bank, Halkbank, accused of helping Iran to evade U.S. sanctions worth \$20 billion.

"If the court sentences Halkbank, it is going to be devastating for the Turkish economy and I don't see how you can have a reset after that," Tol said.

German election year opens with tough test for Merkel party

By GEIR MOULSON Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — Elections in two German states on Sunday pose a difficult test for Chancellor Angela Merkel's party, six months before a national vote that will determine who succeeds the country's longtime leader.

Voters are choosing new regional legislatures in Baden-Wuerttemberg, an economic powerhouse region in southwestern Germany, and neighboring Rhineland-Palatinate.

Those ballots kick off an electoral marathon this year, which features six state elections and culminates in the Sept. 26 vote for a new national parliament.

Polls point to weak results for Merkel's center-right Christian Democratic Union. Amid discontent over a sluggish start to Germany's vaccination drive, and with coronavirus restrictions easing only gradually, Merkel's Union bloc has been hit over the past two weeks by allegations that two lawmakers profited from

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deals to procure masks early in the coronavirus pandemic.

The CDU already faced a challenging task against two popular state governors from rival parties.

In Baden-Wuerttemberg, Germany's only Green party governor, Winfried Kretschmann, has become popular with centrist voters in 10 years running a region that is home to automakers Daimler and Porsche. The region was long dominated by the CDU until Kretschmann won power shortly after Japan's 2011 Fukushima reactor disaster, which accelerated the end of nuclear power in Germany.

Kretschmann, 72, a fatherly figure with a conservative image, features on Green election posters with the slogan "You know me." That is a slogan that Merkel famously once used in a pre-election debate to underline her own largely ideology-free appeal.

In Baden-Wuerttemberg's last election in 2016, the Greens overtook the CDU to become the strongest party in the state. Polls suggest they can hope to widen their lead Sunday.

That would be a hopeful signal for the national election campaign, in which the traditionally left-leaning environmentalist party is expected to make its first bid for the chancellery. Merkel isn't seeking a fifth term after nearly 16 years in power.

About 7.7 million people are eligible to vote in Baden-Wuerttemberg and some 3.1 million in Rhineland-Palatinate. The center-left Social Democrats have led that region for 30 years — currently under governor Malu Dreyer, whose personal popularity has kept her party's support above its dismal national ratings. Dreyer is the favorite this time, though in a close race.

It's an awkward moment for new CDU leader Armin Laschet to face his first major test since being elected in January. Laschet has sought to pre-empt any fallout, saying that state elections "always have their very own character" and the outcome won't affect the stability of his leadership. However, bad results may raise questions over his hopes of running to succeed Merkel in September.

Many people had already voted by mail, so it's unclear how far the scandal — over lawmakers in the CDU and its Bavaria-only sister party, the Christian Social Union, allegedly enriching themselves through mask deals — will impact Sunday's vote. Nikolas Loebel, a CDU lawmaker from Baden-Wuerttemberg, and the CSU's Georg Nuesslein have both quit their parties and say they won't run for parliament again.

The Union bloc of CDU and CSU benefited from Merkel's perceived good management of the pandemic over the past year. It still leads national polls by a distance, but this year has started badly. Germany's vaccination campaign has been significantly slower than those of Israel, Britain and the U.S.

Laschet says that he and Markus Soeder, the CSU leader and Bavarian governor who is the other serious contender to run for chancellor, will decide on the center-right candidate to succeed Merkel in April or May. Soeder has gained in stature during the pandemic.

China, NKorea loom as Blinken, Austin head to Asia

By MATTHEW LEE AP Diplomatic Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Threats from China and North Korea will loom large over the Biden administration's first Cabinet-level trip abroad, part of a larger effort to bolster U.S. influence and calm concerns about America's role in Asia.

A senior administration said Saturday that U.S. officials have tried to reach out to North Korea through multiple channels since last month, but have yet to receive a response, making consultations with the reclusive country's neighbors, Japan, South Korea and China, all the more critical.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin are heading to Japan and South Korea for four days of talks starting Monday as the administration seeks to shore up partnerships with the two key regional treaty allies. Blinken and Biden's national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, will then meet with senior Chinese officials in Anchorage, Alaska,

Their first official overseas visits are intended to restore what Biden hopes will be a calming and even-keeled approach to ties with Tokyo and Seoul after four years of transactional and often temperamental relations under the previous president, Donald Trump. He had upended diplomatic norms by meeting not once, but three times, with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

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In addition to their official talks, Blinken and Austin plan virtual meetings with journalists, civil-society members and others. After reassuring their counterparts of U.S. commitments to Japanese and South Korean security, they plan to focus their talks on cooperating to confront an increasingly assertive China, the nuclear challenge from North Korea and the coronavirus pandemic.

In his first months in office, Biden has already signaled his desire to return the Asia-Pacific — or Indo-Pacific, as has become more common in officialese — to the top of the U.S. foreign policy agenda. In keeping with his broader “America is back” diplomatic theme, Biden has pledged to keep stability in the region at the core of his international initiatives.

On Friday, Biden participated in a virtual summit with the leaders of India, Japan and Australia. “A free and open Indo-Pacific is essential,” Biden told his fellow members of the so-called Quad. “The United States is committed to working with you, our partners and all of our allies in the region to achieve stability.”

As part of that effort and “to reduce the risks of escalation,” the senior official said efforts had been made to connect with the North Koreans since mid-February, including through what is known as the “New York channel.” To date, the official said, “we have not received any response from Pyongyang.” The official spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the sensitive diplomatic outreach.

As the administration plots its strategy, the official said it would continue to consult with the Japanese and South Koreans, as well as with the Chinese, and had also reached out to numerous former U.S. officials involved in North Korea policy, including from the Trump presidency.

Biden’s meeting with the Quad came less than a week after U.S. and South Korean negotiators overcame years of contentious discussions under Trump to reach a tentative deal on paying for the American troop presence in South Korea. That agreement, along with a similar one for Japan, will be front and center in Blinken and Austin’s meetings.

As he had done with allies in Europe, Trump threatened to reduce security cooperation unless host countries paid more, sparking fears of troop withdrawals at a time of particular uncertainty as China boosts efforts to dominate the region and North Korea’s nuclear weapons remain a major source of angst.

“Diplomacy is back at the center of our foreign policy, and we are working to strengthen America’s relationships with our allies as well as the relationships among them,” said Sung Kim, a career diplomat who is the top U.S. diplomat for Asia. He served in the Philippines and Indonesia during the Trump administration and was also previously the special envoy for North Korea.

Yet, for all of Biden’s suggestions that he will reverse Trump’s overt hostility to China, he has yet to countermand a single one of his predecessor’s policies. He has, in fact, reaffirmed several of them, including maintaining sanctions in response to human rights abuses in western Xinjiang and Hong Kong and restating a Trump-era decision to reject outright nearly all of China’s maritime claims in the South China Sea.

And, many of China’s policies that the U.S. finds objectionable — including its crackdown in Hong Kong, stepped up rhetoric against Taiwan and actions in the South China Sea — began during the Obama administration. The previous Democratic administration took office promising a “pivot to Asia” after a period of what many saw as American neglect for the region during George W. Bush’s presidency, which was consumed by the onset of wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

In fact, although some obvious circumstances have changed since 2009, Blinken and Austin’s trip mirrors in many ways the initial overseas journey of President Barack Obama’s first secretary of state, Hillary Clinton, when she traveled to Japan, South Korea, Indonesia and then China in a bid to re-assert U.S. interests in the Asia-Pacific. Obama’s engagement with China, however, did not produce the desired results, and the North Korean threat grew.

Although China is not on Blinken’s itinerary, after wrapping up the stop in Seoul, he will fly back to Washington via Anchorage, Alaska, where he and Sullivan, will meet senior Chinese officials. Austin, meanwhile, will fly from Seoul to New Delhi, where he’ll meet top Indian leaders.

Still, the administration is convinced that its domestic efforts to revitalize the U.S. economy and step up the fight against COVID-19 have put it in a better position both to blunt Chinese ambitions directly and leverage its partnerships to do the same.

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"After the work of the past 50 days, Secretary Blinken and I will enter the meeting with senior Chinese representatives from a position of strength," Sullivan said on Friday.

How that strength will play with rivals like China and North Korea, let alone allies like Japan and South Korea, remains to be seen.

FEMA to help manage unaccompanied minors at US-Mexico border

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

WILMINGTON, Del. (AP) — The Biden administration is turning to the Federal Emergency Management Agency for help managing and caring for record numbers of unaccompanied immigrant children who are streaming into the United States by illegally crossing the border with Mexico.

FEMA will support a governmentwide effort over the next three months to safely receive, shelter and transfer minor children who arrive alone at the U.S. southwest border, without a parent or other adult, Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas said Saturday.

Government figures show a growing crisis at the border as hundreds of children illegally enter the U.S. from Mexico daily and are taken into custody.

The Homeland Security Department is supposed to process and transfer unaccompanied minor children to the Department of Health and Human Services within three days so that they can be placed with a parent already living in the United States, or other suitable sponsor, until their immigration cases can be resolved.

But more children are being held longer at Border Patrol facilities that weren't designed with their care in mind because long-term shelters run by the Department of Health and Human Services have next to no capacity to accommodate them. Children are being apprehended daily at far higher rates than HHS can release them to parents or sponsors.

Mayorkas said FEMA is working with the Health and Human Services Department to "look at every available option to quickly expand physical capacity for appropriate lodging."

"Our goal is to ensure that unaccompanied children are transferred to HHS as quickly as possible, consistent with legal requirements and in the best interest of the children," Mayorkas said.

During an record influx of unaccompanied minors in 2014, the Obama administration also turned to FEMA for help coordinating the governmentwide response. During that crisis, FEMA helped stand up temporary shelters and processing stations on military bases.

President Joe Biden has ended the Trump-era practice of expelling immigrant children who cross the border alone, but maintained expulsions of immigrant families and single adults.

While his administration has tried to deter immigrants from entering the U.S., many believe they have a better chance now that Biden is president.

There have also been growing reports of parents sending their children across the border alone while they remain in Mexico or Central America.

Associated Press writer Nomaan Merchant in Houston contributed to this report.

The Latest: All Duke University undergrads must quarantine

By The Associated Press undefined

DURHAM, N.C. -- Duke University issued a quarantine order for all of its undergraduates effective Saturday night due to a coronavirus outbreak caused by students who attended recruitment parties, the school said.

The university said in a statement that all undergraduate students will be forced to stay-in-place until at least March 21. Suspension or dismissal from the school are potential punishments for "flagrant or repeat violators."

Over the past week, the school has reported more than 180 positive coronavirus cases among students. There are an additional 200 students who may have been exposed and have been ordered to quarantine.

The school said in the statement that the outbreak was "principally driven by students attending recruitment parties for selective living groups."

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Duke said it would provide a policy update on Thursday.

THE VIRUS OUTBREAK:

- Virus tolls have been similar in U.S. states despite governors' contrasting actions
- By some measures, the pandemic's been more costly for U.S. than World War II
- Rules have put medically vulnerable near the end of vaccine lines in many places
- In a pandemic, the Navajo community steps up for the vulnerable
- IRS says new round of COVID relief payments on the way
- After a long pandemic year, a changed New York shows signs of revival

Follow 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:

LOS ANGELES — Coronavirus hospitalizations in California's most populous county have slipped below 1,000 for the first in four months.

The number of patients with COVID-19 in Los Angeles County hospitals hit 979, the lowest since Nov. 23. There are 3,250 people hospitalized statewide, a drop of more than 85% since peaking around 22,000 in early January.

Case rates also remain low and much of the state is preparing for some restrictions to be lifted in the coming days.

State officials announced Friday that 13 counties would be eligible to open restaurants, movie theaters, gyms and museums at limited capacity on Sunday.

On Monday the state is opening up vaccinations to an estimated 4.4 million people ages 16-64 with disabilities and certain health conditions, including severe obesity, type 2 diabetes, chronic kidney disease at stage 4 or above and Down syndrome.

ROME — The new Italian government says it aims to have 80% of the population vaccinated against COVID-19 by the end of September.

Premier Mario Draghi's office on Saturday announced more goals of the national vaccination program, which only recently has started picking up its pace after delays in vaccine deliveries and other logistics slowdowns.

Just under 2 million people in Italy – or roughly 3% of the population – had been fully vaccinated as of Saturday.

On Monday, much of the country, including Rome's region, Lazio, will be put under tougher restrictions on citizens' movements outside the home. Hospitals are struggling with an increase of ICU admissions for COVID-19 patients. Daily new caseloads of confirmed infections have soared above 20,000 in recent days, including on Saturday, with the Health Ministry reporting 26,062 cases.

Italy has now tallied some 3.2 million cases in the pandemic. After Britain, Italy has Europe's second-highest known death toll, with 101,881 dead.

PHOENIX — Arizona on Saturday reported 262 new cases of COVID-19 — the lowest one-day total since September at the trough between the summer and winter surges.

The state has now recorded 823,094 cases and 16,546 deaths with the 27 newly reported. Hospitalizations for the disease dropped to 814, down from the Jan. 11 pandemic peak of 5,082, according to the state's coronavirus dashboard.

The state also reported fewer than 1,000 additional cases on three of the previous six days.

But the state Department of Health Services announced late Friday it has detected three cases of a fast-spreading variant of the coronavirus that was first discovered in Brazil. It's unclear how widespread that variant is in Arizona, but studies indicate vaccines are effective against it, the department said in a

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news release.

Also Friday, Gov. Doug Ducey said Arizona can meet President Joe Biden's goal to offer vaccinations to everyone who wants one by May as long as the federal government supplies enough vaccines.

WASHINGTON - Commercial air travel appears to be on the upswing despite the coronavirus pandemic. The Transportation Security Administration said its agents screened more than 1.3 million passengers at airport security checkpoints nationwide on Friday.

Spokesperson Lisa Farbstein said in a tweet that the last time the number was that high was March 15, 2020 – about a year ago.

Public health officials generally have cautioned against commercial travel.

Farbstein included a reminder in her tweet, saying "if you choose to fly, wear that mask!"

President Joe Biden marked Thursday's first anniversary of the pandemic with a prime-time address to the nation in which he said he expects to have enough coronavirus vaccine for all Americans by May 1.

BUDAPEST— Hungary reported a record-breaking day of new COVID-19 cases on Saturday, and the number of patients being treated in the country's hospitals also reached a new high.

Health authorities announced 9,444 new confirmed cases, more than 1,000 more than the previous record set on Friday. The jump came amid a rapid spread of a coronavirus variant first discovered in the United Kingdom.

The outbreak has put a strain on Hungary's health care system. Officials reported the hospitalization of 179 more COVID-19 patients, bringing the national total to a record high of 8,897

Hungary has the second-highest COVID-19 vaccination rate in the 27-nation European Union, underpinned by the acquisition of vaccines from Russia and China as well as the EU. The number of people who have received at least one dose of a vaccine climbed to nearly 1.3 million in the country of fewer than 10 million.

Officials say they plan to have all people over age 60 vaccinated by Easter.

As of Saturday, Hungary reported 16,790 virus-related deaths since the beginning of the pandemic, giving the country the seventh-worst death rate per 1 million people in the world, according to Johns Hopkins University.

TBILISI, Georgia — Georgia received its first batch of coronavirus vaccines on Saturday and is set to become the last European country to launch a COVID-19 vaccination drive.

The ex-Soviet nation received 43,200 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine through the COVAX program, a United Nations-backed initiative aimed at ensuring equal access to vaccines. Georgia's second shipment of 87,000 vaccines is expected next month.

Georgian Health Minister Ekaterina Tikaradze said the country will start administering the vaccine on Monday, with the first shots given to medical workers.

Georgia hopes to vaccinate 60% of its population of 3.7 million this year.

The country has engaged in talks to receive additional batches of the AstraZeneca and Moderna vaccines. Georgia is also negotiating with China to receive the Sinovac vaccine.

THE HAGUE, Netherlands — Police in France have arrested a Dutch man and an American man suspected of involvement in the stabbing of two Dutch police officers in the northern Dutch city of Groningen.

The incident happened after the officers questioned two men who were outdoors during the Netherlands' coronavirus curfew on Wednesday night.

One of the police officers suffered serious injuries to his face and neck in the stabbing.

Police in Groningen say that French officers detained the suspects Saturday morning in northern France.

One was a 20-year-old Dutch man and the other a 32-year-old American national. Their identities have not been released.

Police say procedures are underway to have the suspects sent back to the Netherlands.

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VIENNA — Police in Austria are enforcing new rules requiring people to show a negative coronavirus test to leave Wiener Neustadt, a city of more than 45,000 people.

The system that took effect Saturday involves police and other officials controlling 26 exit roads from the city south of Vienna around the clock. Wiener Neustadt has an exceptionally high level of coronavirus infections -- more than 500 new cases per 100,000 inhabitants over seven days, compared with a national average of 198 per 100,000.

Fines of up to 1,450 euros (\$1,730) are foreseen for people who violate the rules.

Mayor Klaus Schneeberger said testing stations set up in recent days have a capacity to test 15,000 people per day. He said he didn't understand why Austria's health ministry "doesn't use this occasion to start a vaccination campaign here so we get this under control."

A targeted campaign to vaccinate the entire adult population is underway in the Schwaz district in western Austria, which has seen a significant number of cases of the more contagious virus variant first detected in South Africa.

BERLIN — The leaders of Austria, Slovenia, the Czech Republic, Latvia and Bulgaria are calling for talks among European Union leaders about the distribution of vaccines within the 27-nation bloc.

Austrian media reported Saturday that the five leaders wrote a joint letter to European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and European Council President Charles Michel. That came after Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz complained on Friday that, even though the EU had agreed on distribution of the vaccines on a per-capita basis, some countries were receiving considerably more than others.

The letter asserted that "if this system were to carry on, it would continue creating and exacerbating huge disparities among Member States by this summer."

Officials elsewhere have noted that countries have wanted differing amounts of various vaccines and have not always taken up their full allocation.

Austria's health ministry — which is run by Kurz's junior coalition partner — was among those rejecting Kurz's criticism. Oe1 radio reported that its general secretary, Ines Stilling, said negotiations on distributing the vaccines had been "balanced and transparent."

AMMAN — Jordan has become the first country in the Middle East to receive coronavirus vaccines through the global COVAX initiative.

A plane carrying 144,000 shots of AstraZeneca vaccine landed in Amman's airport late Friday and was greeted by representatives of the agencies supporting the COVAX program — the United Nations, the World Health Organization and the European Union.

The COVAX alliance aims to share COVID-19 vaccines with more than 90 lower and middle-income nations. However, the program is facing delays, underfunding and limited supply.

The EU has allocated 8 million euros to support Jordan's purchase of vaccines. A second shipment from COVAX is expected in April.

Jordan launched its vaccination drive in mid-January with plans to inoculate over 4 million residents in 2021, according to Health Minister Nathir Obeidat.

The kingdom, home to nearly 10 million people, has approved five vaccine types, including Russian and Chinese ones. The vaccination campaign also targets some of the 650,000 Syrian refugees.

The country is struggling to contain the surge of infections. It has reported over 465,000 cases and more than 5,200 deaths.

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka: Sri Lankan health authorities said on Saturday that they will continue to use the AstraZeneca vaccine and that health workers have begun inoculating people over 60.

Sri Lanka has so far received 1.264 million doses of the vaccine and, by Saturday, 760,765 Sri Lankans had received a shot.

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The Health Ministry said on Saturday that it is continuing to use the AstraZeneca vaccine despite it being suspended in some countries, including Denmark.

According to State Minister Channa Jayasumana who oversees pharmaceutical production, supply and regulation, Sri Lanka has not yet taken a decision to suspend the vaccine.

Sri Lanka received 500,000 doses of the vaccine from India as a donation, while the island nation bought the same number again from the Serum Institute of India. It received another 264,000 doses from the COVAX facility.

Sri Lanka has also planned to purchase some 13 million doses of the AstraZeneca vaccines directly.

By Saturday, Sri Lanka's total positive cases stood at 87,285, with 525 fatalities.

ISLAMABAD — The provincial government in Pakistan's largest province, Punjab, has announced the shutting of 15 famous shrines, including that of the Sufi saint famously known as Data Ganj Bakhsh in Lahore, amid the third wave of the coronavirus.

Federal authorities earlier announced the closing of educational institutions for two weeks in seven cities in Punjab and some in northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

Pakistan has reported 602,536 cases, including 13,476 deaths.

WASHINGTON — U.S. health officials are warning health professionals about the risk of false positive results with a widely used laboratory test for COVID-19 and flu.

The Food and Drug Administration issued the alert to Friday for health facilities using Roche's cobas test for coronavirus and seasonal flu. The agency warned that problems with the test's processing tubes could result in false diagnosis in people who are not actually infected.

Roche's testing system is widely used to screen large batches of patient samples in hospitals and laboratories.

The FDA recommends health workers test samples multiple times to help assure accuracy. If the test delivers conflicting results it may indicate a problem and use should be discontinued, the agency says.

Boxing great Marvelous Marvin Hagler dies at 66

By TIM DAHLBERG AP Boxing Writer

Marvelous Marvin Hagler stopped Thomas Hearns in a fight that lasted less than eight minutes yet was so epic that it still lives in boxing lore. Two years later he was so disgusted after losing a decision to Sugar Ray Leonard — stolen, he claimed, by the judges — that he never fought again.

One of the great middleweights in boxing history, Hagler died Saturday at the age of 66. His wife, Kay, announced his death on the Facebook page for Hagler's fans.

"I am sorry to make a very sad announcement," she wrote. "Today unfortunately my beloved husband Marvelous Marvin passed away unexpectedly at his home here in New Hampshire. Our family requests that you respect our privacy during this difficult time."

Hagler fought on boxing's biggest stages against its biggest names, as he, Leonard, Hearns and Roberto Duran dominated the middleweight classes during a golden time for boxing in the 1980s. Quiet with a brooding public persona, Hagler fought 67 times over 14 years as a pro out of Brockton, Massachusetts, finishing 62-3-2 with 52 knockouts.

"If they cut my bald head open, they will find one big boxing glove," Hagler once said. "That's all I am. I live it."

Hagler was unmistakable in the ring, fighting out of a southpaw stance with his bald head glistening in the lights. He was relentless and he was vicious, stopping opponent after opponent during an eight year run that began with a disputed draw against Vito Antuofermo in 1979 that he later avenged.

He fought with a proverbial chip on his shoulder, convinced that boxing fans and promoters alike didn't give him his proper due. He was so upset that he wasn't introduced before a 1982 fight by his nickname of Marvelous that he went to court to legally change his name.

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"He was certainly one of the greatest middleweights ever but one of the greatest people that I've ever been around and promoted," promoter Bob Arum said. "He was a real man, loyal and just fantastic person."

Any doubts Hagler wasn't indeed Marvelous were erased on a spring night in 1985. He and Hearns met in one of the era's big middleweight clashes outdoors at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas and when the opening bell rang they traded punches for three minutes in an opening round many consider the best in boxing history.

Hagler would go on to stop Hearns in the third round, crumpling him to the canvas with a barrage of punches even as blood poured out of a large gash on his forehead that nearly caused the referee to stop the fight earlier in the round.

"When they stopped the fight to look at the cut, I realized they might be playing games and I wasn't going to let them take the title away," Hagler said later. "It was a scary feeling. I thought, 'Why are they stopping this fight?' I didn't realize I was bleeding. It wasn't in my eyes. Then I knew I had to destroy this guy."

Arum said Hagler simply willed himself to victory over Hearns, whose big right hand was feared in the division but couldn't keep Hagler at bay.

"That was an unbelievable fight," Arum said. "Probably the greatest fight ever."

Hearns said Saturday he was thinking about Hagler and their historic fight. Hagler wore a baseball cap with the word "War" while promoting it while on a 23-city tour with Hearns that Arum said made the fighters despise each other before they even entered the ring.

"I can't take anything away from him," Hearns told The Associated Press. "His awkwardness messed me up but I can't take anything away from him. He fought his heart out and we put on a great show for all time."

Hagler would fight only two more times, stopping John Mugabi a year later and then meeting Leonard, who was coming off a three-year layoff from a detached retina, in his final fight in 1987. Hagler was favored going into the fight and many thought he would destroy Leonard — but Leonard had other plans.

While Hagler pursued him around the ring, Leonard fought backing up, flicking out his left jab and throwing combinations that didn't hurt Hagler but won him points on the ringside scorecards. Still, when the bell rang at the end of the 12th round, many thought Hagler had pulled out the fight — only to lose a controversial split decision.

Hagler, who was paid \$19 million, left the ring in disgust and never fought again. He moved to Italy to act, and never really looked back.

"I feel fortunate to get out of the ring with my faculties and my health," he said a year later.

Hagler took the long route to greatness, fighting mostly in the Boston area before finally getting his chance at the 160-pound title in 1979 against Antuofermo as a co-main event with Leonard fighting Wilfredo Benitez on the same card. Hagler bloodied Antuofermo and seemed to win the fight, but when the scorecards were tallied he was denied the belt with a draw.

Hagler would travel to London the next year to stop Alan Minter to win the title, and he held it for the next seven years before his disputed loss to Leonard.

Arum remembered being at a black tie event honoring top fighters a year later that was attended by both Hagler and Leonard, among others. He said Leonard came up to him and pointed to Hagler across the room and suggested he go talk to him about a rematch that would have earned both fighters unbelievable purses.

"I went over to Marvin and said Ray is talking about a rematch," Arum said. "He glared at me as only Marvin could and said, 'Tell Ray to get a life.'"

Hagler was born in Newark, New Jersey, and moved with his family to Brockton in the late 1960s. He was discovered as an amateur by the Petronelli brothers, Goody and Pat, who ran a gym in Brockton and would go on to train Hagler for his entire pro career.

He was inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame and World Boxing Hall of Fame in 1983.

London police tactics at vigil for slain woman draw scrutiny

By SYLVIA HUI Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — London's police department is under scrutiny for the way officers handled some participants at an unofficial vigil Saturday night for a London woman whose death led to murder charges against a fellow officer and spurred a national conversation about violence against women in the U.K.

Hundreds of people disregarded a judge's ruling and police requests by gathering at Clapham Common in honor of Sarah Everard, 33, who last was seen alive near the south London park on March 3. Demonstrators said they wanted to draw attention to the fear and danger many women see as a daily part of British life.

Everard disappeared while walking home from a friend's apartment at about 10:30 p.m. and was found dead a week later. The slaying sent shockwaves across the U.K. because a Metropolitan Police officer is charged with her kidnapping and murder.

Video of Saturday's informal vigil turned rally showed officers from the same police force tussling with participants as they pushed their way through the crowd. At one point, several male officers grabbed hold of several women and pulled them away in handcuffs to screaming and shouting from onlookers, Britain's Press Association reported.

London Mayor Sadiq Khan decried the police actions.

"The police have a responsibility to enforce Covid laws, but from images I've seen it's clear the response was at times neither appropriate nor proportionate," Khan said on Twitter.

Home Secretary Priti Patel tweeted that she had asked the Metropolitan Police for a full report on what happened.

The gathering happened hours after London constable Wayne Couzens, 48, appeared in court for the first time since his arrest in Everard's death. As Metropolitan Police officers approached the Clapham Common bandstand on Saturday evening, boos, jeers and shouts of "Shame on you" came from the crowd, according to the Press Association.

Organizers had hoped to hold "Reclaim the Streets" vigils in Everard's memory at the south London location and in other U.K. cities on Saturday but canceled the in-person events after a judge refused to grant an order allowing them to go on despite coronavirus restrictions that bar mass gatherings.

Hundreds of people showed up nonetheless. Before police moved in, many participants laid flowers at the park bandstand. Among them was Kate, the Duchess of Cambridge, who was seen pausing for a moment in front of the sea of flowers.

Other people held signs reading "We will not be silenced" and "She was just walking home," and the crowd chanted, "Sisters united will never be defeated."

In the wake of Everard's disappearance and killing, many women have taken to social media to share their own experiences of being threatened or attacked while walking outside.

A 33-year-old nurse who works in the Clapham area, Mel Clarke, said she felt "very conflicted" about attending Saturday's gathering because of pandemic restrictions, but in the end "just felt that I needed to be here."

"I'm really pleased that there are a lot of men here. I hope that this is kind of an opportunity for men to learn how women feel, how vulnerable we are," Clarke said. "I hope that this is the start of justice being served for Sarah."

The Metropolitan Police has expressed shock and horror that one of its own was a suspect in the case. The London police force said Couzens joined its ranks in 2018 and most recently served in the parliamentary and diplomatic protection command, an armed unit responsible for guarding embassies in the capital and Parliament.

During his court appearance earlier in the day, Couzens stood wearing a gray tracksuit as the charges were read to him. He was remanded into custody and has another appearance scheduled Tuesday at London's Central Criminal Court.

Everard's body was found hidden in an area of woodland in Kent, more than 50 miles southeast of London, on Wednesday, a week after she went missing. A post-mortem examination is underway, police said Friday.

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TV and radio presenter Sandi Toksvig said at the start of a vigil held online Saturday that a "cultural shift about how women are viewed and treated both in the public and private space" was needed.

"I am filled in equal measure with profound sorrow and rage, and I know there are many who share this rage, and I think it is entirely justifiable," Toksvig said. "But I also know that it will harm rather than help us if we don't try and direct that anger to good purpose."

This version has been corrected to show that Home Secretary Patel is a woman.

For Biden, there's no place like a weekend home in Delaware

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

WILMINGTON, Del. (AP) — As he stood in the Rose Garden celebrating his first big legislative win, President Joe Biden gestured to the White House and said it's a "magnificent building" to live in.

Except on weekends.

Of the eight weekends since Biden took office, he has spent three at his longtime home outside Wilmington, Delaware, including this weekend. Tentative plans for another weekend visit were scrubbed due to Senate action on Biden's \$1.9 trillion coronavirus relief plan.

Biden also spent a weekend at the Camp David presidential retreat in Maryland.

Many presidents have complained at one point or another about feeling confined in the White House. Biden already has echoed earlier presidents in comparing the experience to living in a "gilded cage."

So trading the 132-room executive mansion for a less confining, more relaxing weekend hangout can help presidents unwind, said University of Chicago political scientist William Howell.

"What he wanted to be was president," Howell said. "It is not the White House per se that is the draw."

The White House defends Biden's leisure travel at a time when both he and federal health officials have been pleading with the public to take the coronavirus pandemic seriously, including by avoiding unnecessary travel.

"The president lives in Wilmington. It's his home. That's where he's lived for many, many years," press secretary Jen Psaki said recently. "And as you know, as any president of the United States does, he takes a private airplane called Air Force One to travel there."

"I think most Americans would also see that as a unique circumstance," she said of the government aircraft available to Biden.

No president travels alone, though, no matter how private the plane. It requires that lots of other people travel as well. And the costs mount quickly.

Besides the Air Force flight crew, a president's travel party includes Secret Service agents, White House staff, journalists and family. Depending on the destination and purpose of the trip, lawmakers, Cabinet secretaries or other guests may fly with the president.

Biden occasionally brought some of his six grandchildren on trips when he was vice president, as well as during last year's presidential campaign.

Presidential travel doesn't come cheap.

Federal agencies spent an estimated \$13.6 million on four trips that then-President Donald Trump took to his waterfront Mar-a-Lago estate in Palm Beach, Florida, in February and March of 2017, the Government Accountability Office reported in 2019.

The figure includes \$10.6 million to operate government aircraft and boats, and \$3 million for transportation, lodging, meals and other expenses for government personnel supporting the president on the road, the report said.

But not all presidential travel is the same.

Trump took the more familiar version of Air Force One, a modified 747, on the two-hour-plus flight to the commercial airport in West Palm Beach, Florida. Biden has flown a smaller version of the aircraft for the roughly half-hour flight to the Delaware Air National Guard Base. He made this weekend's trip on the Marine One presidential helicopter.

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Trump's Florida home is on the water, which required the addition of Coast Guard security patrols. Biden goes back to his longtime home near Wilmington, where he lived as a senator before being elected vice president in 2008 and where he returned after his time in that office was up.

Now serving as Biden's weekend refuge, the home is where he watched Tom Brady, the Tampa Bay Buccaneers' new quarterback, win a record seventh Super Bowl ring in February. While there, Biden often meets with advisers, attends church and enjoys Sunday dinner with the family.

"We try to keep the Sunday night dinners," Jill Biden told TV talk-show host Kelly Clarkson. "I mean, it's been a little busy lately. We still do it, and the kids look forward to it."

Biden owns a second home in the seaside community of Rehoboth Beach, Delaware. He has yet to visit it since becoming president but it could see more action as the weather warms up.

During a tearful farewell in January as he left Wilmington for Washington, Biden credited the state with helping shape his values, character and world view. "It all comes from Delaware," he said.

Biden lived the majority of his 78 years in Wilmington after his parents relocated from Scranton, Pennsylvania, when he was a boy. He represented Delaware in the U.S. Senate for 36 years, and was a regular passenger on the Amtrak train to and from Washington.

"Getting out of the White House was more cumbersome than it is now," said Doug Wead, a former White House aide and author of books about presidents and their families.

Early presidents were consigned to bumpy trains, he said. But motorcades, Air Force One and Marine One all help to ease a modern president's path out of the nation's capital.

But there is no presidential playbook for how and where to spend the weekend.

Trump spent many weekends at Mar-a-Lago or his Trump golf club in central New Jersey, leading critics to accuse him of trying to profit off the presidency.

Barack Obama spent most Saturdays and Sundays in Washington because his young daughters belonged to weekend soccer and basketball leagues.

George W. Bush had his ranch in Crawford, Texas.

Howell said Biden — who has cultivated his image as a "regular Joe" — has strong connections to his family, many of whom are in Delaware, that he wants to maintain.

The president's first wife, Neilia, and their baby daughter, Naomi, who were killed in a 1972 car accident, and their son Beau, who died of brain cancer in 2015 at age 46, are buried in a cemetery at the church where Biden attends services.

People close to Biden also note the strong affection he has for Delaware.

As he left the state in January, Biden, who is of Irish descent, alluded to an Irish poet who is believed to have said Dublin will be written on his heart when he dies.

Overcome with emotion, Biden said, "when I die, Delaware will be written on my heart."

In Louisville, Breonna Taylor's family honors her legacy

By PIPER HUDSPETH BLACKBURN Associated Press/Report for America

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (AP) — On the one-year anniversary of Breonna Taylor's death, the slain Black woman's family continued their call for justice as hundreds of demonstrators gathered in downtown Louisville on Saturday.

"Eyes are on Louisville, Kentucky, today so let's show America what community looks like," said Taylor's aunt, Bianca Austin, who wore her niece's emergency medical technician jacket.

Austin spoke from a stage set up in Jefferson Square Park, which became an impromptu hub for protesters during months of demonstrations last summer. Flanked by two hand-painted murals of Taylor, activists repeated calls to charge the police officers who killed the Black woman during a raid at her apartment.

The crowd shouted Taylor's name and "No justice, no peace" as they gathered near an outdoor memorial that includes a mural, posters, artwork and other mementos honoring Taylor's life. Some organizers gave away food during the speeches.

Taylor's family then led the protesters on an afternoon march past City Hall.

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In a tweet Saturday, President Joe Biden called Taylor's death "a tragedy, a blow to her family, her community, and America."

"As we continue to mourn her, we must press ahead to pass meaningful police reform in Congress. I remain committed to signing a landmark reform bill into law," he wrote.

The rally came a day after Kenneth Walker, Taylor's boyfriend, filed a federal lawsuit against the Louisville Metro Police Department, alleging his constitutional rights were violated during last year's botched raid, news outlets reported. Walker last year filed an ongoing state lawsuit against the city and police, saying he was the victim of assault, battery, false arrest and malicious prosecution.

Taylor's front door was breached by Louisville officers as part of a drug raid in the early morning hours of March 13, 2020. Walker fired his gun once, saying later that he feared an intruder was entering the apartment. One officer was struck, and he and two other officers fired 32 shots into the apartment, striking Taylor five times.

Taylor's death initially flew under the media radar, as the COVID-19 crisis shut down society, but George Floyd's death in Minnesota and the release of a chilling 911 call from Walker in late May sparked interest in the case.

A grand jury indicted one officer on wanton endangerment charges in September for shooting into a neighbor's apartment, but no officers were charged in connection with Taylor's death.

Police had a no-knock warrant but said they knocked and announced their presence before entering Taylor's apartment, a claim some witnesses have disputed. No drugs were found in Taylor's apartment.

A Kentucky judge last week signed an order permanently closing a criminal case against Walker for firing at the officer.

Walker referenced the closure of the case against him during Saturday's rally.

"I gotta say that's a nice start, but that's not where we finish," Walker said. "We've got to keep going."

Demonstrator Olivia Alexander said the anniversary of Taylor's death reminded her to continue to work for racial justice, despite some setbacks in the past year.

"As we've seen, there's not been any justice for Breonna Taylor, and a lot of the other brutal killings of Black Americans, so holding onto hope has been the most important thing," Alexander said.

An ongoing federal investigation could be wide ranging and is regarded by many as the last chance for justice for Taylor's death.

Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear, a Democrat, tweeted a statement in support of Taylor's family, including her mother, Tamika Palmer.

"Today we remember Breonna Taylor, her tragic and unnecessary loss and the immense work we have ahead of us," he said. "I will never understand the unimaginable grief of Tamika Palmer and other family and loved ones, but I am committed to listening and working with others to be build a more suitable and fair commonwealth for every Kentuckian."

Hudspeth Blackburn is a corps member for the Associated Press/Report for America Statehouse News Initiative. Report for America is a nonprofit national service program that places journalists in local newsrooms to report on undercovered issues.

Bolivia arrests ex-leader in crackdown on opposition

By CARLOS VALDEZ Associated Press

LA PAZ, Bolivia (AP) — The conservative interim president who led Bolivia for a year was arrested Saturday as officials of the restored leftist government pursue those involved in the 2019 ouster of socialist leader Evo Morales, which they regard as a coup, and the administration that followed.

Jeanine Áñez was detained in the early morning in her hometown of Trinidad and was flown to the capital, La Paz, where she appeared before a prosecutor.

"This is an abuse," she told reporters after the appearance. "There was no coup d'état, but a constitutional succession" when she took over.

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From a police cell in La Paz, Añez called on the Organization of American States and the European Union to send missions to Bolivia to evaluate what she called "an illegal detention."

The arrest of Añez and warrants against numerous other former officials further worsened political tensions in a South American country already torn by a cascade of perceived wrongs suffered by both sides. Those include complaints that Morales had grown more authoritarian with nearly 13 years in office, that he illegally ran for a fourth reelection and then allegedly rigged the outcome, that right-wing forces led violent protests that prompted security forces to push him into resigning and then cracked down on his followers, who themselves protested the alleged coup.

Dozens of people were killed in a series of demonstrations against and then for Morales.

"This is not justice," said former President Carlos Mesa, who has finished second to Morales in several elections. "They are seeking to decapitate an opposition by creating a false narrative of a coup to distract from a fraud."

Morales, meanwhile, sent a tweet saying, "The authors and accomplices of the dictatorship should be investigated and punished."

Other arrest warrants were issued for more than a dozen other former officials. Those include several ex-cabinet ministers, as well as former military leader William Kaliman and the police chief who had urged Morales to resign in November 2019 after the country was swept by protests against the country's first Indigenous president.

After Morales resigned — or was pushed — and flew abroad, many of his key supporters also resigned. Añez, a legislator who had been several rungs down the ladder of presidential succession, was vaulted into the interim presidency.

Once there, she abruptly wrenched Bolivia's policies to the right and her administration tried to prosecute Morales and an array of his supporters on terrorism and sedition charges, alleging election rigging and oppression of protests.

But Morales Movement Toward Socialism remained popular. It won last year's elections with 55% of the vote under Morales' chosen candidate Luis Arce, who took the presidency in November. Añez had dropped out after plunging in the polls.

Two ministers in Añez's government were also arrested on Friday, including former Justice Minister Alvaro Coimbra, who had helped lead the prosecution of Morales' aides. A former defense minister and others also have been accused.

New Justice Minister Iván Lima said that Añez, 53, faces charges related to her actions as an opposition senator, not as former president.

Interior Minister Eduardo del Castillo denied it was an act of persecution, saying the case arose from a criminal complaint of conspiracy and sedition filed against her in November, the month she left office.

The Americas director of Human Rights Watch, José Miguel Vivanco, said from Washington that the arrest warrants against Añez and her ministers "contain no evidence whatsoever that they have committed the crime of terrorism."

Families begin burying murdered Guatemalan migrants

By SONIA PÉREZ D. Associated Press

COMITANCILLO, Guatemala (AP) — Families of some of the 16 Guatemalan migrants killed near the Mexico-U.S. border in late January began burying their remains Saturday in the town of Comitancillo, where 11 of the victims were from.

The migrants' charred bodies arrived Friday night to the region near Guatemala's border with Mexico after being sent from the other side of Mexico, Reynosa, just across the U.S. border from Texas.

Neighbors brought flowers to a wake for Elfego Roliberto Miranda Díaz, 24, and a mariachi sang Christian music at the memorial for the young pastor.

"We are seeing his coffin, we will not see his face anymore," reflected Magdalena Dalila Miranda, the young man's sister. "We are thinking about how it happened, how these people came to kill him."

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A dozen state police officers in Mexico were arrested in connection with the killings, but authorities have not ruled out possible links to drug cartels that frequently charge immigrant smugglers for passing through their territory.

"We are all asking for justice, to know why those police in Mexico killed him, they left his family, his wife has three children and is pregnant," said the sister. She noted that relatives of one of the other migrants got a call from a family member at the scene, telling them that police were chasing the migrants and they were hiding in the bushes.

President Alejandro Giammattei confirmed this month that five Guatemalans had survived the attack and were under protection in the United States.

Giammattei said Friday that his government remained in communication with Mexican authorities to ensure "those responsible for such a deplorable act" are punished. He said the crime must be cleared up so that nothing similar happens again.

"No more. No more violence against migrants," said the Rev. Mario Aguilón Cardona at services for mourners in the town's soccer stadium.

Ricardo García said his daughter Santa Cristina García, 20, had gone north to earn money for an operation for her younger sister. Her remains returned Friday in a coffin.

"She sacrificed herself for others. She was a good girl," said Garcia.

The Guatemalan government declared three days of mourning.

The 16 bodies, along with three others, were found piled in a charred pickup truck in Camargo, across the Rio Grande from Texas, in an area that has been bloodied for years by turf battles between the remnants of the Gulf cartel and the old Zetas cartel.

Relatives of the dead first raised the alarm that something horrible had happened in Camargo. Because the bodies had been burned, it took weeks for positive identifications through DNA samples, but the families in Guatemala had already started mourning.

The families had suddenly lost communication with their migrating relatives around Jan. 21, and believed they had been near the area where Mexican authorities made the grisly discovery.

The massacre raised memories of another migrant massacre in Tamaulipas in August 2010, when members of the Zetas cartel killed 72 migrants near the town of San Fernando.

Nurses fight conspiracy theories along with coronavirus

By ALI SWENSON and DAVID KLEPPER Associated Press

Los Angeles emergency room nurse Sandra Younan spent the last year juggling long hours as she watched many patients struggle with the coronavirus and some die.

Then there were the patients who claimed the virus was fake or coughed in her face, ignoring mask rules. One man stormed out of the hospital after a positive COVID-19 test, refusing to believe it was accurate.

"You have patients that are literally dying, and then you have patients that are denying the disease," she said. "You try to educate and you try to educate, but then you just hit a wall."

Bogus claims about the virus, masks and vaccines have exploded since COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic a year ago. Journalists, public health officials and tech companies have tried to push back against the falsehoods, but much of the job of correcting misinformation has fallen to the world's front-line medical workers.

In Germany, a video clip showing a nurse using an empty syringe while practicing vaccinations traveled widely online as purported evidence that COVID-19 is fake. Doctors in Afghanistan reported patients telling them COVID-19 was created by the U.S. and China to reduce the world population. In Bolivia, medical workers had to care for five people who ingested a toxic bleaching agent falsely touted as a COVID-19 cure.

Younan, 27, says her friends used to describe her as the "chillest person ever," but now she deals with crushing anxiety.

"My life is being a nurse, so I don't care if you're really sick, you throw up on me, whatever," Younan said. "But when you know what you're doing is wrong, and I'm asking you repeatedly to please wear your

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mask to protect me, and you're still not doing it, it's like you have no regard for anybody but yourself. And that's why this virus is spreading. It just makes you lose hope."

Emily Scott, 36, who is based at a Seattle hospital, has worked around the world on medical missions and helped care for the first U.S. COVID-19 patient last year. She was selected because of her experience working in Sierra Leone during the 2014-2016 Ebola outbreak.

While many Americans were terrified of Ebola — a disease that isn't nearly as contagious as the coronavirus and poses little threat in the U.S. — they aren't nearly afraid enough of COVID-19, she said.

Scott blames a few factors: Ebola's frightening symptoms, racism against Africans and the politicization of COVID-19 by American elected officials.

"I felt so much safer in Sierra Leone during Ebola than I did at the beginning of this outbreak in the U.S.," Scott said, because of how many people failed to heed social distancing and mask directives. "Things that are facts, and science, have become politicized."

ER nurse L'Erin Ogle has heard a litany of false claims about the virus while working at a hospital in the suburbs of Kansas City, Missouri. They include: The virus isn't any worse than the flu. It's caused by 5G wireless towers. Masks won't help and may hurt. Or, the most painful to her: The virus isn't real, and doctors and nurses are engaged in a vast global conspiracy to hide the truth.

"It just feels so defeating, and it makes you question: Why am I doing this?" said Ogle, 40.

Nurses are often the health care providers with the most patient contact, and patients frequently view nurses as more approachable, according to professor Maria Brann, an expert on health communication at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis. That means nurses are more likely to encounter patients spreading misinformation, which gives them a special opportunity to intervene.

"Nurses have always been patient advocates, but this pandemic has thrown so much more at them," Brann said. "It can definitely take a toll. This isn't necessarily what they signed up for."

In some cases, it's nurses and other health care workers themselves spreading misinformation. And many nurses say they encounter falsehoods about the coronavirus vaccine in their own families.

For Brenda Olmos, 31, a nurse practitioner in Austin, Texas, who focuses on a geriatric and Hispanic patient population, it was a no-brainer to get the vaccine. But first she had to debate her parents, who had heard unsubstantiated claims that the shot would cause infertility and Bell's palsy on Spanish-language TV shows.

Olmos eventually convinced her parents to get the vaccine, too, but she worries about vaccine hesitancy in her community.

When she recently encountered an elderly patient with cancerous tumors, Olmos knew the growths had taken years to develop. But the man's adult children who had recently gotten him the vaccine insisted that the two were connected.

"To them, it just seemed too coincidental," Olmos said. "I just wanted them to not have that guilt."

Olmos said the real problem with misinformation is not just bad actors spreading lies — it's people believing false claims because they aren't as comfortable navigating often complex medical findings.

"Low health literacy is the real pandemic," she said. "As health care providers, we have a duty to serve the information in a way that's palatable, and that's easy to understand, so that people don't consume misinformation because they can't digest the real data."

When Texas Gov. Greg Abbott lifted the state's mask mandate this month against the guidance of many scientists, nurse practitioner Guillermo Carnegie called the decision a "spit in the face."

"I was disgusted," said Carnegie, 34, of Temple, Texas. "This governor, and different people, they act like, 'Oh, we're proud of our front-line workers, we support them.' But then they do something like that, and it taxes the medical field tremendously."

Brian Southwell, who started a program at Duke University School of Medicine to train medical professionals how to talk to misinformed patients, said providers should view the patient confiding in them as an opportunity.

"That patient trusts you enough to raise that information with you," Southwell said. "And so that's a good thing, even if you disagree with it."

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He said medical workers should resist going into “academic argumentation mode” and instead find out why patients hold certain beliefs — and whether they might be open to other ideas.

That act of listening is imperative to building trust, according to Dr. Seema Yasmin, a physician, journalist and Stanford University professor who studies medical misinformation.

“Put down your pen, put down your notebook and listen,” Yasmin said.

Associated Press Writer John Leicester in Le Pecq, France, contributed to this report.

More AP coverage of the pandemic’s first year: [Pandemic: One Year](#)

Chicago River dyed green in surprise move by city’s mayor

CHICAGO (AP) — The Chicago River was dyed a bright shade of green Saturday after Mayor Lori Lightfoot reversed an earlier decision not to tint the waterway for second year because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Crews on boats began dumping green dye into the riverfront about 7 a.m. after Lightfoot authorized the dyeing ahead of St. Patrick’s Day, delighting pedestrians with the vivid scene.

Chicago residents Lori Jones and Mike Smith surveyed the green waters, saying they were glad the tradition that dates to 1962 was resumed this year.

“We’re happy that Mayor Lightfoot decided to continue with this tradition because we truly missed it last year, as a lot of other things in 2020,” Jones, 59, told the Chicago Tribune.

Last year, Lightfoot abruptly canceled the city’s 2020 parades and the river dyeing just days before they were to take place in the early days of the pandemic. She called off the parades again this year due to the lingering pandemic and said the river would once again not be dyed.

But a Lightfoot spokesman said in a statement that the city opted “to honor the long-standing tradition” and authorized its partners, the Chicago Plumbers Union Local 130, to dye the river.

The event was not publicized in advance “in order to minimize crowds and avoid congregating,” the spokesman said. “Furthermore, the Riverwalk will be closed on Saturday and Chicagoans looking to see the River during the day are urged to ‘keep it moving’ and celebrate safely and responsibly.”

Spacewalkers take extra safety precautions for toxic ammonia

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — Spacewalking astronauts had to take extra safety precautions Saturday after possibly getting toxic ammonia on their suits from the International Space Station’s external cooling system.

Victor Glover and Mike Hopkins had no trouble removing and venting a couple of old jumper cables to remove any ammonia still lingering in the lines. But so much ammonia spewed out of the first hose that Mission Control worried some of the frozen white flakes might have gotten on their suits.

Hopkins was surprised at the amount of ammonia unleashed into the vacuum of space. “Oh yeah, look at that go. Did you see that?” he asked flight controllers. “There’s more than I thought.”

Even though the stream of ammonia was directed away from the astronauts and the space station, Hopkins said some icy crystals may have contacted his helmet. As a result, Mission Control said it was going to “be conservative” and require inspections.

The astronauts’ first suit check found nothing amiss. “Looks clean,” Hopkins called down.

NASA did not want any ammonia getting inside the space station and contaminating the cabin atmosphere. The astronauts used long tools to vent the hoses and stayed clear of the nozzles, to reduce the risk of ammonia contact.

Once the ammonia hoses were emptied, the astronauts moved one of them to a more central location near the NASA hatch, in case it’s needed on the opposite end of the station. The ammonia jumper cables were added years ago following a cooling system leak.

As the nearly seven-hour spacewalk drew to a close, Mission Control said the astronauts had already spent enough time in the sunlight to bake off any ammonia residue from their suits. Indeed, once Glover

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and Hopkins were back inside, their crewmates said they could smell no ammonia but still wore gloves while handling the suits.

The hose work should have been completed during a spacewalk a week ago, but was put off along with other odd jobs when power upgrades took longer than expected.

Saturday's other chores included: replacing an antenna for helmet cameras, rerouting ethernet cables, tightening connections on a European experiment platform, and installing a metal ring on the hatch thermal cover.

Eager to get these station improvements done before the astronauts head home this spring, Mission Control ordered up the bonus spacewalk for Glover and Hopkins, who launched last November on SpaceX. They teamed up for back-to-back spacewalks 1 1/2 months ago and were happy to chalk up another.

"It was a good day," Glover said once back inside.

Although most of their efforts paid off, there were a few snags.

The spacewalk got started nearly an hour late, so the men could replace the communication caps beneath their helmets in order to hear properly. A few hours later, Glover's right eye started watering. The irritation soon passed, but later affected his left eye.

Then as Glover wrapped up his work, a bolt came apart and floated away along with the washers, becoming the latest pieces of space junk.

"Sorry about that," Glover said. "No, no, it's not your fault," Mission Control assured him.

It was the sixth spacewalk — and, barring an emergency, the last — for this U.S.-Russian-Japanese crew of seven. All but one was led by NASA.

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How Cuomo investigation, possible impeachment could play out

By MICHAEL R. SISAK and MARINA VILLENEUVE Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Gov. Andrew Cuomo has urged New Yorkers to "wait for the facts."

Patience, though, has grown thin. The state's two U.S. senators, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, and most of the 27 other members of New York's congressional delegation have called for his resignation. In the state legislature, more than 120 lawmakers have called on the Democrat to quit.

Leaders in the state Assembly on Thursday announced an impeachment investigation, a first step toward potentially removing Cuomo from office.

Cuomo has rebuffed calls to resign and staked his political future on the outcome of an independent investigation by Attorney General Letitia James, who is examining allegations that the governor sexually harassed or inappropriately touched several female aides.

Here's a look at the next steps on a possible road to impeachment:

ATTORNEY GENERAL'S INVESTIGATION

James, an independently elected Democrat, hired former Acting U.S. Attorney Joon Kim and employment discrimination attorney Anne Clark to lead her inquiry into the governor's workplace conduct.

The investigative team will have the power to subpoena documents and interview witnesses. Its findings will go in a public report.

Cuomo has since said that he will "fully cooperate."

James lacks power to unilaterally remove Cuomo from office, but any findings corroborating the allegations could sway potential impeachment proceedings — or add pressure for Cuomo to leave voluntarily.

Kim and Clark may choose to limit their scope to allegations that are already public, or broaden it to look for other women who might have complaints about Cuomo's behavior.

James' office sent a letter last week instructing the governor's office to preserve all evidence related to the harassment allegations. That could include documents and emails to and from Cuomo's staff, calendar

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entries and communications involving the transfer of one of his accusers to another office.

There is no deadline for completing the investigation and James hasn't said how long she expects it to take. A 2010 investigation that Cuomo oversaw as attorney general into his predecessor, Gov. David Paterson, lasted about five months.

Andrew G. Celli Jr., who was chief of the civil rights bureau in the office of attorney general from 1999 to 2003, said that while James is a Democrat, her independence would allow her to "do what she thinks is in the best interest of all the people, even if that means an adverse finding to the governor."

THE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

The Assembly's Judiciary Committee will also have power to subpoena documents and witness testimony. It could rely on work done by the attorney general's team of investigators, or gather its own evidence.

The scope of its inquiry might go beyond Cuomo's conduct with women. The governor is also under fire for his handling of the COVID-19 crisis in the state's nursing homes.

Many lawmakers have been outraged that the Cuomo administration declined, for months, to release the full number of nursing home patients killed by the virus.

The governor's office said some of the data, related to deaths of nursing home patients who had been transferred to hospitals, was unreliable. But in a recorded conference call with lawmakers, Cuomo's top aide said the administration withheld the data in late summer because it was afraid the fatality numbers could be "used against us."

Federal investigators are scrutinizing how the Cuomo administration handled data about nursing home deaths.

The committee's work could result in the drafting of articles of impeachment against Cuomo, though that outcome is far from certain.

One of the women who has reportedly accused Cuomo of groping her has not spoken publicly about what happened and it is unclear whether she would be willing to offer public testimony in an impeachment trial.

THE IMPEACHMENT PROCESS

New York's process for impeaching and removing a governor from office has some parallels — and some important differences — to the process the U.S. Congress uses for impeaching presidents.

Like at the federal level, New York impeachments starts in lower house of the legislature — in this case, the Assembly. If a majority of members vote to impeach Cuomo, a trial on his removal from office would be held in what's known as the Impeachment Court.

The court consists not only of members of the state Senate, but also judges of the state's highest court, the Court of Appeals, who would also cast votes. There are seven appeals court judges and 63 senators, though not all would serve on the impeachment court.

Lt. Gov. Kathy Hochul (HOH-kull) and Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins are also members, but they are excluded when a governor is on trial. At least two-thirds of the jurors must vote to convict in order to remove Cuomo.

Democrats control both chambers of the Legislature. Many have joined Republicans in calling for Cuomo's resignation or impeachment in recent days. Cuomo has appointed all seven members of the Court of Appeals.

New York has only impeached a governor once, in 1913, when Gov. William Sulzer was bounced after 289 days in office in what he claimed was retribution for turning his back on the powerful Tammany Hall Democratic machine.

Sulzer, accused of failing to report thousands of dollars in campaign contributions and commingling campaign funds with personal funds, blasted the court's secret deliberations, complaining: "A horse thief in frontier days would have received a squarer deal."

SIDELINING CUOMO

If Cuomo were impeached by the Assembly, state law might force him to step aside immediately — a dramatic difference from what happens when the U.S. president is impeached.

A section of the state's judicial code regarding impeachment states: "No officer shall exercise his office,

after articles of impeachment against him shall have been delivered to the senate, until he is acquitted.”

According to the state constitution, the lieutenant governor would then take over.

“In case the governor is impeached, is absent from the state or is otherwise unable to discharge the powers and duties of the office of governor, the lieutenant-governor shall act as governor until the inability shall cease or until the term of the governor shall expire,” the constitution states.

When Sulzer was impeached, Lt. Gov. Martin Glynn was appointed acting governor.

If Cuomo were to be acquitted in an impeachment court, he would return to office. If the Impeachment Court were to remove him from office, Hochul would serve out the remainder of Cuomo’s term — through the end of 2022. The court could also opt to disqualify him from holding office in the future, on top of removing him.

Villeneuve reported from Albany, New York.

On Twitter, follow Michael Sisak at twitter.com/mikesisak and Marina Villeneuve at <https://twitter.com/reportermarina>.

Call of the wild: Great outdoors is great escape in pandemic

By PAT GRAHAM and TALES AZZONI AP Sports Writers

For those venturing off the beaten path, be advised — it’s a little crowded out there.

By nature’s standards, anyway, as the great outdoors has become the great escape.

Hiking trails, parks and other open spaces were packed in 2020 with a cooped-up population searching for fresh air during the coronavirus pandemic. Locked down, shut in or just fearful of crowds, people took up hiking, biking, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, camping, tennis and golf — to name several — in significant numbers.

“It’s both heartening and a little bit mind-blowing to think how things are going this year,” said Richard Hodges, the Nordic director at White Pine Touring in Park City, Utah. “It’s been really fun — a lot of work, but really fun. All we’re doing is trying to get people outside to go play in the snow.”

Outdoor enthusiasts are certainly stepping outside to play in whatever environment — when pandemic restrictions permit it, of course, and in accordance with stay-at-home guidelines. But the numbers illustrate that many are heeding the call to the wild:

— 8.1 million more Americans went hiking in 2020 compared to ‘19, according to a preview of an upcoming outdoor participation report from the Outdoor Foundation, the philanthropic wing of the Outdoor Industry Association.

— 7.9 million more went camping last year.

— 3.4 million more participated in freshwater fishing.

The foundation’s research also reflected a decline in inactivity for most age groups and across all income levels. There was a 52.9% surge in outdoor participation, an increase from 50.5% in 2018 and 50.7% in 2019.

The upward trend in hiking doesn’t come as a surprise to Sandra Marra, the president and CEO of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy.

From nearly day one of the pandemic, a myriad of hikers have been trekking along the Appalachian Trail, which encompasses about 2,200 miles (3,540.6 kilometers), traverses through 14 states and sees about 3 million-plus visitors a year.

Word of caution before going: Check the weather reports and dress accordingly. And don’t park on someone’s property, even if the trailhead lots are full.

“What’s happened is a whole bunch of people that never really recreated outdoors like this, suddenly discovered the fact there are these easily accessible trails not that far from their backyard,” Marra explained. “That’s wonderful. But we’re finding a lot of people are out there not prepared for just how rugged this trail is. It’s not a walk on the bike trail in the middle of the city.”

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Daily walks — “constitutionals” in another era, perhaps — are on a rapid rise, too. No numbers needed to reflect that — just meander down any block or street in any city or any country.

In New York City, when the weather is good, people are out in droves — conjuring images of Edith Wharton characters strolling the promenade. It just so happens there is an Edith Wharton Walking Tour in New York. For now, it's limited to an online stroll through the Gilded Age.

It's the Gliding Age for cross-country skiing, which hasn't seen popularity like this since the 1970s after waxless skis were introduced. Equipment is quickly leaving the shelves. Rentals have been booming, too.

“Every single day of the week is like a weekend day,” said Hodges, who has about 20 kilometers (12.4 miles) of tracks at the Nordic center in Park City. “I'm stunned about the seemingly limitless interest right now in cross-country skiing.”

Reese Brown, the executive director of the trade group Cross Country Ski Areas Association, envisioned this sort of surge happening after bikes — along with other outdoor equipment — became such a hot commodity during the summer.

“We started to see what was happening with biking and hiking and this mass flocking to the outdoors by people who generally would be running on a treadmill somewhere,” Brown said. “That's when it kind of switched for us as a industry. We were like, ‘Wait a second. This is going to continue.’”

Golf remains on the upswing, too, according to an engagement study by the National Golf Foundation. There were almost 502 million rounds, which was the most since 2006 and the biggest yearly increase since 1997 — the season Tiger Woods captured his first major championship. The number of active, on-course golfers in the U.S. grew by half a million in 2020, the study found, up to 24.8 million.

The sport also grew by double digits around the world. Golf Australia said participation has increased by up to 15% since the lockdowns went into effect, with golf memberships up by 30% in the 24-39 age group.

Already popular in Sweden, the number of rounds increased a whopping 42%. And the first 18-hole course open to the public in Spain, Golf Olivar de la Hinojosa, saw an increase of 30% in the number of rounds played. Gregorio González-Irún Velasco, the general director of a company that oversees Golf Olivar and another golf course in the Madrid community, said golf schools and driving ranges have been operating near capacity for some time.

Ana Fernández de Diego, a Spanish professional golfer who owns and teaches at Golf Vídeo Escuela, said she has seen unprecedented growth in the sport.

“Golf is one of the things that people can do without any risks now,” she said. “It's in open air, with safe distancing, and it gives you the luxury of not having to wear a mask for four or five hours.”

Tennis courts were popular as well with nearly three million first-time players, according to data cited by the United States Tennis Association through the Physical Activity Council's Participation report. In all, more than 21.6 million Americans took the courts in 2020.

“It's evident that many people recognize tennis as the ideal social-distancing sport,” USTA CEO Mike Dowse said in a story on the tennis association's website.

Tennis is not alone. Hiking, anyone?

“This is the new future for us. The new reality,” Marra said. “There's huge opportunity to build a whole new generation of land stewards.”

AP Sports Writers Dennis Passa, Steve Douglas, Samuel Petrequin and James Ellingworth contributed to this report.

J-Rod continues: Lopez, Rodriguez say they're still together

By The Associated Press undefined

LOS ANGELES (AP) — J-Lo and A-Rod are still J-Rod.

Jennifer Lopez and Alex Rodriguez said Saturday that reports of their split are inaccurate, and they are working things through.

A day earlier, multiple reports based on anonymous sources said the pop star-actor and the former

baseball great had called off their two-year engagement. The couple started dating in early 2017.

"All the reports are inaccurate," said the joint statement Saturday "from Jennifer and Alex," emailed to The Associated Press by representatives. "We are working through some things."

The New York Post's Page Six was the first to report that the pair had split.

The couple was given the nickname "J-Rod" three years ago after they landed on the cover of Vanity Fair magazine.

Virus tolls similar despite governors' contrasting actions

By DAVID A. LIEB Associated Press

Nearly a year after California Gov. Gavin Newsom ordered the nation's first statewide shutdown because of the coronavirus, masks remain mandated, indoor dining and other activities are significantly limited, and Disneyland remains closed.

By contrast, Florida has no statewide restrictions. Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis has prohibited municipalities from fining people who refuse to wear masks. And Disney World has been open since July.

Despite their differing approaches, California and Florida have experienced almost identical outcomes in COVID-19 case rates.

How have two states that took such divergent tacks arrived at similar points?

"This is going to be an important question that we have to ask ourselves: What public health measures actually were the most impactful, and which ones had negligible effect or backfired by driving behavior underground?" said Amesh Adalja, a senior scholar at the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security.

Though research has found that mask mandates and limits on group activities such as indoor dining can help slow the spread of the coronavirus, states with greater government-imposed restrictions have not always fared better than those without them.

California and Florida both have a COVID-19 case rate of around 8,900 per 100,000 residents since the pandemic began, according to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. And both rank in the middle among states for COVID-19 death rates — Florida was 27th as of Friday; California was 28th.

Connecticut and South Dakota are another example. Both rank among the 10 worst states for COVID-19 death rates. Yet Connecticut Gov. Ned Lamont, a Democrat, imposed numerous statewide restrictions over the past year after an early surge in deaths, while South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem, a Republican, issued no mandates as virus deaths soared in the fall.

While Lamont ordered quarantines for certain out-of-state visitors, Noem launched a \$5 million tourism advertising campaign and welcomed people to a massive motorcycle rally, which some health experts said spread the coronavirus throughout the Midwest.

Both contend their approach is the best.

"Even in a pandemic, public health policy needs to take into account people's economic and social well-being," Noem said during a recent conservative convention.

Lamont recently announced that he is lifting capacity limits at retail stores, restaurants and other facilities, effective March 19. But bars that don't serve food will remain closed and a mask mandate will continue.

"This is not Texas. This is not Mississippi. This is Connecticut," Lamont said, referencing other states that recently lifted mask mandates.

"We're finding what works is wearing the mask, social distancing and vaccinations," he said.

As new COVID-19 cases decrease nationally, governors in more than half the states have taken actions during past two weeks to end or ease coronavirus restrictions, according to an Associated Press tally. Some capacity limits ended Friday in Maryland and Oklahoma. Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York and Wyoming are relaxing restrictions in the coming week.

In almost all cases, governors have lauded their approach to the pandemic, while critics have accused them of being too stringent or too lax.

California's slow reopening is expected to gain steam in April. But Republicans in California are helping organize a recall effort against Newsom that has drawn nearly 2 million petition signatures from people

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frustrated over his long-lasting limits on businesses, church gatherings and people's activities. He also faces intense pressure over public school closures and the glacial pace of getting them reopened.

Newsom asserted that California has been a leader in combating the virus while delivering his State of the State address this past week from Dodger Stadium, where the empty seats roughly equaled the state's 55,000 COVID-19 deaths.

"From the earliest days of this pandemic, California trusted in science and data, and we met the moment," Newsom said.

He added: "We're not going to change course just because of a few naysayers and doomsdayers."

In his own State of the State address, DeSantis asserted that Florida was in better shape than others because its businesses and schools are open. Florida's unemployment rate ranked below the national average, and significantly lower than California's, at the start of this year.

"While so many other states kept locking people down over these many months, Florida lifted people up," DeSantis said.

Determining which approach is best is more complicated than just looking at statewide policies and overall case rates.

Like Florida, Missouri had no statewide mask mandate, ended business restrictions last June and has a cumulative COVID-19 death rate similar to California's. In the absence of statewide orders, many of the largest cities in Florida and Missouri imposed their own mask requirements and business restrictions. In Missouri, that meant about half the population was still subject to mask mandates.

Republican Gov. Mike Parson has touted "a balanced approach" to the pandemic that left many public health decisions up to local officials and allowed Missouri's economy "to come back strong." New COVID-19 cases and unemployment are both low, and consumer spending has returned to pre-pandemic levels, Parson said this past week.

State health director Randall Williams believes residents heeded Parson's call to voluntarily mask up when Missouri's coronavirus cases spiked last fall to some of the highest levels nationally.

Public health experts said individual choices could help explain the similar outcomes among some states with loose or strict orders from the governor.

Some people voluntarily were "being more vigilant in states where the guidelines are more relaxed," said Thomas Tsai, an assistant professor at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. Yet in states with more government mandates, "people generally in public were wearing masks and following the guidelines, but in private they were letting down their guard and less vigilant," he said.

Imposing strict measures, like forbidding families from visiting grandparents and friends from gathering, is like taking an abstinence-only approach to combating drug use and sexually transmitted disease, said Adalja, of Johns Hopkins University.

Some will comply. But other "people are going to do those activities, anyway," he said.

David A. Lieb reported from Jefferson City, Missouri. Associated Press writers Brendan Farrington in Tallahassee, Florida; Stephen Groves in Pierre, South Dakota; Susan Haigh in Norwich, Connecticut; and Kathleen Ronayne in Sacramento, California, contributed to this story.

'Nothing but problems': Shipwreck tear-down enters 5th month

By RUSS BYNUM Associated Press

SAVANNAH, Ga. (AP) — When salvage crews began cutting apart the capsized Golden Ray, a shipwreck the size of a 70-story office building with 4,200 cars within its cargo decks, in early November they predicted the demolition could be wrapped up by New Year's Day.

Four months later, the job remains far from finished.

Both ends of the cargo ship have been cut away and carried off by barges in a pair of giant chunks. But roughly three-fourths of the vessel remains beached on its side off St. Simons Island on the Georgia coast, where the South Korean freighter overturned soon after leaving port Sept. 8, 2019.

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"It's been nothing but problems out here," said Andy Jones, a St. Simons Island resident who heads to the wreck site in his small fishing boat most days to monitor the demolition and post updates to a YouTube channel. "It's a disappointingly slow pace."

Salvage experts decided more than a year ago that the Golden Ray, measuring 656 feet (199 meters) long, was too big to remove intact. They settled on a plan to carve the ship into eight massive chunks, each weighing up to 4,100 tons (3,720 metric tonnes).

They straddled the wreck with a towering crane with a winch and pulley system attached to 400 feet (122 meters) of anchor chain that acts as a dull sawblade, tearing through the ship's hull with brute force.

Start-to-finish, each individual cut was supposed to take a single day. Taking into account time needed to load each severed ship section onto a barge and prepare for the next slice, the multiagency command overseeing the effort predicted the job would take eight weeks.

It's turned out to be a lot harder.

The first cut began Nov. 6 and took three weeks. Lifting the ship's bow section revealed battered cars and SUVs in neat, layered rows on the interior decks. The second cut started a month later, on Christmas Day, and was finished in a week.

Crews spent the entire month of February attempting a third cut through the ship's engine room, a section fortified with thicker steel. After strain on the cutting apparatus forced extensive maintenance, the salvage crew stopped with the cut only about half finished.

They spent days moving the crane to the other end of the ship, where they began cutting a new section May 7 while rethinking plans to complete the unfinished one.

The ship's steel has proven tougher than anticipated, slowing the process, and crews have taken pauses to perform extra inspections and maintenance, said Coast Guard Petty Officer 2nd Class Michael Himes, a spokesman for the multiagency command overseeing the demolition.

"If people are wondering when it is going to be done, we're doing it as quickly and as safely as can be done," Himes said. "But quick takes a back seat to safety."

He said it's possible the last chunk of the ship could head to the scrapyard by June, the first month of the Atlantic hurricane season. Workers have taken steps to make the cutting more efficient, using torches to remove strips of the ship's hull plating and form a guide for the cutting chain. They're also using a big mechanical claw to pluck cars from inside the ship to shed weight before sections are cut and lifted.

Conservationists worry the longer the shipwreck stays in St. Simons Sound, the greater pollution threat it poses to the area's waterways, beaches and saltwater marshes.

The wreck site is surrounded by a mesh barrier intended to contain debris for cleanup once the big sections get removed. Boats equipped with skimmers and absorbent booms stay on standby to mop up any leaking oil or other pollutants.

Still, bumpers, tires and other car parts falling from the ship have been found on beaches. Birds have been found coated in oil. And though most fuel has been drained from the ship's tanks, there's concern that an estimated 44,000 gallons (166,500 liters) remaining could come gushing out once the cutting chain severs the ship's fuel line.

"The longer anything sits in the water, the ship or these cars, it breaks down," said Susan Inman, coastkeeper for the Altamaha Riverkeeper conservation group. "You have lead paint on your ship. You have all these plastic pieces, hydraulic fluid. A lot of this stuff is just going to be around for years."

By the time demolition of the Golden Ray began in November, the project had already delayed for several months because of a busy hurricane season and handful of coronavirus infections among salvage team members.

Ironically, wreck site commanders insisted on removing the ship in large chunks because it was supposed to be faster. A year ago, the command fired its original salvage contractor for wanting to dismantle the ship in smaller pieces, saying it would take too long. The jilted firm sued in federal court, but a judge refused to halt the salvage after agreeing there was no time to waste.

Paul Hankins oversaw planning for a smaller-scale demolition of the Golden Ray until his employer, Donjon-SMIT, lost the job to a competitor. He has since left the company. Had his team not been fired,

Hankins said, the overturned ship would now be a memory in coastal Georgia.

"We would have been done," Hankins said. "Here we are a year later, and they're nowhere close."

Medically vulnerable in US put near end of vaccine line

By BRYAN ANDERSON Associated Press/Report for America

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — When Ann Camden learned last month that her 17-year-old daughter got exposed to the coronavirus at school and was being sent home, she packed her belongings, jumped in the car and made the two-hour drive to the coast to stay with her recently vaccinated parents.

The 50-year-old mother had been diagnosed with stage IV breast cancer and could not afford to become infected. She also was not yet eligible under North Carolina's rules to receive a COVID-19 vaccine. So she left her twin daughters with her husband and fled for safety.

Across the United States, millions of medically vulnerable people who initially were cited as a top vaccination priority group got slowly bumped down the list as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention modified its guidelines to favor the elderly, regardless of their physical condition, and workers in a wide range of job sectors.

North Carolina is one of 24 states that currently places people under 65 with "underlying medical conditions" near the bottom of the pack to receive the vaccine, according to Jen Kates, senior vice president and director of global health and HIV policy at the Kaiser Family Foundation. A report she wrote for the foundation last month listed Pennsylvania as the lone state making vaccines available to the medically vulnerable during its first phase of distribution.

When North Carolina unveiled its initial guidance in October, it placed people with multiple chronic conditions near the top of the list. In response to December recommendations from the CDC to prioritize people 75 and older, however, it dropped those with chronic conditions to Phase 2. When the guidance changed again to expand eligibility to those 65 and up, medically vulnerable residents learned in January they would be dropped to Phase 4 — to be vaccinated after "frontline essential workers" but before "everyone."

"When they slid us to group 4, it was very quiet," Camden said. "It was like, 'We don't want to talk about it. We're just gonna kind of tuck you over there.' That in itself was kind of insulting."

The state's top public health official, Dr. Mandy Cohen, said residents under 65 with chronic conditions were moved down the list after health officials received data showing elderly residents are far more likely to die of COVID-19, though she acknowledged "age is not a perfect proxy for risk."

Camden decided not to wait for the state to qualify her. Just two days after she arrived at her parents' house, a friend connected her with a CVS pharmacist in Wilmington who had spare doses of the vaccine about to go to waste. Camden received a Moderna shot in the pharmacist's dining room on Feb. 21.

"It's incumbent on all of us to take it when we can get it," Camden said. "I don't want to feel guilty or embarrassed because I was gonna get it whenever I could."

Jon D'Angelo, a 32-year-old Carteret County resident who suffers from spinal muscular atrophy, didn't qualify for a vaccine since he doesn't live in a long-term care facility. He said he jumped the line, but declined to describe where and how he got the vaccine. After a minute-long pause when asked how he justified his actions, he replied, "Justice is more important."

Responding to the frustrations of people like Camden and D'Angelo, states are now revising their guidelines again. As of Monday, 28 states had at least partially opened up vaccine eligibility statewide to those with high-risk medical conditions, Kates said. Four additional states are making the vaccine available to medically vulnerable residents living in certain counties.

North Carolina announced this week that it would start vaccinating people 16 years or older with at least one of 18 at-risk conditions on March 17. And last week, the state expanded its eligibility guidelines to include people like D'Angelo who receive at-home care. D'Angelo is now retroactively eligible under Phase 1, which launched in December.

"I'm glad they did it, but the fact that it took three months to correct is outrageous," D'Angelo said.

On Monday, South Carolina expanded eligibility to disabled and at-risk people, and Michigan did so for medically vulnerable residents 50 and older. California is opening up vaccinations to the disabled and at-

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risk on March 15.

In Georgia, the governor announced this week that those 16 or older with serious health conditions will be eligible starting March 15. Shana Frentz, a 36-year-old with two autoimmune conditions, said she secured an appointment at a Georgia pharmacy that began signing up people a day before the announcement. Before that, she had explored the possibility of going to a neighboring state. During the months it took before she became eligible in Georgia, she said she and others like her felt "kind of tossed aside."

Maura Wozniak, a 42-year-old Charlotte-area resident, has cystic fibrosis and will wait until it's her turn to get vaccinated. Wozniak was furious with North Carolina's decision to push her back in line, as it meant a lengthier delay for her kids to get back to the classroom. But after learning on social media that she'd soon become eligible, she cried in relief.

"They were able to hear the pleas from high-risk individuals in the state," Wozniak said. "The fact that they gave us a date was promising. Is everything gonna be perfect? No. But at least there's a certain window now."

Associated Press writer Anila Yoganathan in Atlanta contributed to this report.

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

Follow Anderson on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/BryanRAnderson>.

Anderson is a corps member for the Associated Press/Report for America Statehouse News Initiative. Report for America is a nonprofit national service program that places journalists in local newsrooms to report on undercovered issues.

In a pandemic, Navajo community steps up for its vulnerable

By FELICIA FONSECA Associated Press

TEESTO, Ariz. (AP) — For as long as Raymond Clark has lived alone on this quiet stretch of the Navajo Nation under the watch of the "Praying Mountain," he has depended on everyone yet no one.

The 71-year-old has no vehicle or running water but is content hitchhiking and carrying jugs down a dusty washboard road to replenish his supply. He works at home in Teesto painting murals and silversmithing, but friends often stop by.

Or at least they did before the pandemic. Now, rides and visits are scarcer in an area with no grocery store or gas station and where homes sit far apart.

The sense of community, though, never faded. With residents urged to stay home, tribal workers, health representatives and volunteers have stepped up efforts to ensure the most vulnerable citizens get the help they need.

"Our grandmas and grandpas teach us, you have to give back to your people," said Sophia Francis, secretary for the Teesto Chapter, one of 110 tribal precincts that make up the vast reservation that extends into Arizona, New Mexico and Utah. "We have to help our elders. We have to help the community."

Clark is among hundreds who live within the rural chapter, which functioned as a community lifeline even before the pandemic.

On a recent day, he stepped outside his home in the midst of juniper trees and greeted a trio of Teesto Chapter employees who were unloading firewood from a flatbed trailer. It was unseasonably warm, but Clark knew he'd need the wood for frigid days ahead.

Beside hauling wood, the chapter has filled water cisterns at people's homes, arranged for a monthly food bank distribution, provided septic cleaning and a one-time supply of propane during the pandemic. A tribal lawmaker also distributed hay.

"The biggest thing I was trying to encourage is for people not to travel," said Clara Tsosie, the chapter

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manager.

In many ways, the groundwork had already been laid. When Tsose was hired as a chapter planner in 2015, she worked on a rural addressing system that included GPS coordinates to every home. Community assessments mean Teesto knows who needs a bathroom addition, water or wood.

The Winslow Indian Health Care Center worked with Teesto and other chapters in its service area to bring the wood split and ready to be delivered.

A network of community health representatives track who needs roads cleared to get dialysis, medication or emergency assistance. Many times, they go door to door to check on people. That practice has been amplified by the pandemic, with representatives disinfecting themselves and their vehicles at each visit, honking the horn when they arrive and talking to residents through windows or screen doors.

"They are thankful; they are appreciative," said Sheila Bedoni, who oversees the health representatives in the Winslow-area unit. "And sometimes we show up when there's nobody."

In that, communities in the region have learned more about themselves and their expanding needs. Health representatives discovered new residents, families living in sheds and even found someone living on a mountain in a makeshift shelter.

"When it really happened, nobody knew what to do with the experience we had," Bedoni said. "We learned a lot. There's a lot of positive things we can take from it."

Nearly 30,000 people on the reservation have been infected with COVID-19 over the past year, and more than 1,200 have died. What once had been a national hotspot is seeing a significant downturn in infections weeks after the holiday surges.

The tribe is planning a soft reopening Monday with 25% capacity for some businesses under certain restrictions. Still, mask mandates and daily curfews remain.

When COVID-19 hit the Teesto Chapter the day before Thanksgiving, Tsose was floored and worried about her staff. The workers rallied to check up on an infected colleague, delivered food and prepared traditional herbs.

"Sometimes I think we all feel like we wanted to give up," Tsose said. "We can't give up."

Other chapters on the Navajo Nation have closed at times. Teesto never shut down completely. Before the pandemic, people went to the chapter house for internet access, fill water drums in the back of their pickups, check mail, dump trash and seek assistance for burials or other emergencies.

Those services are more controlled now. The public isn't allowed in the main chapter building. When people walk up, they knock or are spotted on surveillance cameras, and the staff goes outside to greet them. The meeting hall has limited spots for students to do homework. Others catch the Wi-fi signal outside, from their cars.

Signs remind people to wear masks and social distance.

Clark used to spend a lot of time at the senior center next to the chapter house but doesn't venture into nearby communities much now except to check his mail and get shots for chronic hip pain.

Before the pandemic, people regularly stopped by Clark's two-bedroom house, where he has turned nearly every space into an art studio and sleeps on the couch. A mural on his kitchen floor illustrating Navajo men's role in society soon will be installed at a local school.

In the living room, Clark giggles as he describes how he uses a plastic bin for hand washing and sponge baths. He fashioned a faucet with a foot pump, tubing and a 5-gallon bucket but drinks bottled water. Outside is an outhouse and a nameless, feisty puppy that someone dropped off before dawn one day.

Clark thinks back to his childhood in that area, taking care of sheep and shining a mirror into the sun to summon neighbors for a ride.

"We had to learn how to help ourselves, even at a young age," he said.

Rescue aid package may reduce inequality, but for how long?

By PAUL WISEMAN AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Democrats have celebrated President Joe Biden's \$1.9 trillion COVID-19 relief plan as a blow against one of America's most entrenched economic woes: The vast inequality that divides the

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richest from the rest — a gap made worse by the viral pandemic.

Hailed as the biggest anti-poverty package in generations, the plan delivers huge benefits to low- and middle-income families. It sends \$1,400 checks to most adults and extends \$300-a-week unemployment aid for six months. Perhaps most significantly, it greatly expands a child tax credit and turns it into steady income for poor families. All told, experts say, the package will reduce child poverty by nearly half.

Yet for how long?

As ambitious and expensive as it is, the American Rescue Plan, which Biden signed into law Thursday, stands to go only so far in reducing income and wealth inequality.

Its boldest measures, including a massive tax cut for the poorest families, are only temporary. To make a lasting difference, these provisions would have to be extended, probably in the face of stiff resistance from Republicans. And as an emergency response to a health and economic crisis, the legislation would do little to address the outsize gains in earnings and wealth that the richest tier of Americans have accumulated.

From 1979 to 2019, the wealthiest 1%'s share of pre-tax income jumped from about 11% to 19%, according to the World Inequality Database, maintained by Gabriel Zucman, an economist at the University of California, Berkeley, and other experts on inequality. And that group's share of wealth — including real estate and stock portfolios — surged from roughly 23% to 35% in the same period.

"To further reduce inequality, Congress would need to increase taxation at the top end — in particular, the taxation of wealth and capital income," Zucman said. "There is a real risk, otherwise, that wealth concentration, which has surged over the last four decades, will keep rising in the post-COVID world."

For now, needy families will receive a substantial new financial cushion from the expansion of the child tax credit — though only until the expansion expires at the end of this year.

Under current law, most taxpayers can cut their federal tax bill by up to \$2,000 per child. The rescue plan raises that to \$3,000 for each child ages 6 to 17 and \$3,600 for children under 6. Families eligible for the full credit will receive a chunk of the benefit as a monthly payout from July through December — \$250 a month per child ages 6 to 17 and \$300 a month for each child younger than 6.

The legislation makes the credit even more generous by for the first time providing it fully to families no matter how low the taxes they owe. To conservative critics, who have opposed the Biden package, the no-strings-attached approach to federal benefits will reduce the incentive to work.

All told, according to Columbia University's Center on Poverty and Social Policy, the rescue package stands to slash child poverty by 45%, including declines of 52% for Black children and 62% for Native American children,

And according to the nonpartisan Tax Policy Center, the provisions of the legislation involving the federal income tax will give an average \$2,960 tax cut to the poorest fifth of Americans, thereby raising their after-tax income by roughly 21%. For those in the middle fifth, the legislation would cut taxes by \$3,720 and increase take-home pay 6%. But for the top 0.1% of earners, the measure would reduce after-tax income by an average of about \$970.

(By contrast, President Donald Trump's 2017 tax cut was worth an average of just \$60 to those making less than \$25,000 a year but \$193,000 on average to the top 0.1%, according to the Tax Policy Center senior fellow Howard Gleckman.)

Still, inequality runs so deep in the United States that even the nearly \$2 trillion in the Biden package alone won't uproot it. Since the pandemic struck, the disparities have likely widened. A stock market rally and sizable gains in home values have enriched affluent households, while low-income workers have been disproportionately hurt by unemployment. Inequality.org, which is affiliated with the left-leaning Institute for Policy Studies, reports that the collective wealth of the world's top 657 billionaires has rocketed by \$1.3 trillion in the past year.

Conservatives argue that the best thing to help the poor is a robust economy and that Biden's plan could backfire. They argue that the \$1.9 trillion package is too bloated, that many of its benefits, like aid to recovering cities and states, are unnecessary and wasteful and that the magnitude of spending will overheat an economy that's already recovering from the recession.

An excessively fast economy with rising inflation might, in turn, compel the Federal Reserve to raise

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interest rates to fight inflation and cause the recovery to come to a premature end — too soon to benefit most of the poor. In the wake of the 2007-2009 Great Recession, after all, wages for lower-income workers didn't really start to pick up until 2015.

Yet supporters, like Thea Lee, president of the liberal Economic Policy Institute, say they believe the rescue package will make a meaningful difference in lifting up the most vulnerable families, even though many of its major provisions come with an expiration date.

"I would give it high marks for reducing income inequality, recognizing that it's not meant to be a long-term structural change," she said. "It's a one-time relief package."

Lee said she predicts that the expanded child credits will prove "so popular that they will get extended" and that policymakers will consider raising taxes on the richest once they need to find money to pay for Biden's other plans, especially a big public works program. They could get a start, she said, by providing more money to an underfunded Internal Revenue Service to conduct more audits, raising revenue by targeting tax cheats at the top of the income scale.

Biden's plan had originally called for gradually raising the federal minimum wage from \$7.25 an hour to \$15 by 2025, a move that would raise incomes at the bottom and thereby narrow the income gap.

The minimum wage hike didn't survive deliberation in the Senate. But Democrats hope to revive it.

"To us, it was both fair and economically smart to raise the minimum wage," said Lee, a former AFL-CIO official. "We hope this is not the end of the conversation."

Warp-speed spending and other surreal stats of COVID times

By CALVIN WOODWARD Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. effort in World War II was off the charts. Battles spread over three continents and four years, 16 million served in uniform and the government shoved levers of the economy full force into defeating Nazi Germany and imperial Japan.

All of that was cheaper for American taxpayers than this pandemic.

The \$1,400 federal payments going into millions of people's bank accounts are but one slice of a nearly \$2 trillion relief package made law this past week. With that, the United States has spent or committed to spend nearly \$6 trillion to crush the coronavirus, recover economically and take a bite out of child poverty.

Set in motion over one year, that's warp-speed spending in a capital known for gridlock, ugly argument and now an episode of violent insurrection.

For a year now, Americans have grappled with numbers beyond ordinary comprehension: some 30 million infected, more than half a million dead, millions of jobs lost, vast sums of money sloshing through government pipelines to try to set things right.

How high can you count? At one turn after another, that may be the rhetorical question of these COVID-19 times.

THE TOLL

Once, the attack on Pearl Harbor was the modern marker for national trauma. About 2,400 Americans died in the assault on the naval base in Hawaii that drew the United States into the Pacific war. The nearly 3,000 dead from the terrorist attacks Sept. 11, 2001, became the new point of comparison as the ravages of COVID-19 grew.

The U.S. reached a total of 3,000 COVID-19 deaths even before March 2020 was out. By December, the country was experiencing the toll of 9/11 day after day after day. In that time, COVID-19 was killing more Americans than any other disease, any other single cause.

"COVID-19 now is the leading cause of death, surpassing heart disease," Dr. Robert Redfield, then leading the Centers for Disease and Prevention, said Dec. 10. Looking to the weeks ahead, he said "it's going to be the most difficult time in the public health history of this nation."

So it was, even with the vaccine rollout five days later.

With deaths now moderating — so that a 9/11 toll comes cumulatively every few days — the U.S. death toll now has surpassed 530,000, exceeding U.S. combat deaths of all of the last century's wars.

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A new marker looms: the estimated 675,000 Americans who died in the 1918-19 pandemic misnamed the Spanish flu.

That milestone may not be reached, if worst-case scenarios are avoided. Yet this much is clear — the United States has taken a proportionally worse hit in this pandemic.

The U.S. has experienced 1 in 5 deaths worldwide, compared with 1 in 75 deaths globally by the rough estimates of the pandemic a century ago.

THE RESPONSE

The blame game is on, exacerbated by the record of a president, Donald Trump, who rarely acknowledged the gravity of the crisis and routinely distorted it. He told Americans in March 2020 the country would be “just raring to go by Easter” and declared on the cusp of soaring infections that the U.S. was “rounding the final turn” on the virus.

“We were hit with a virus that was met with silence and spread unchecked,” President Joe Biden said in his prime-time address Thursday. “Denials for days, weeks, then months.”

But while Trump persisted in sunny side up, he also opened the coffers on vaccine development and pandemic relief, backing \$4 trillion in aid, equal to 20% of the U.S. economy.

And he pulled together a Star Wars-sounding effort that pretty much lived up to the hyperbole of its name. By the usual yearslong lag in coming up with a vaccine, the authorization to release two vaccines — now three — proved something of an Operation Warp Speed.

The Trump administration’s striking success in backing the invention of coronavirus vaccines through direct spending or advance purchase commitments has been followed by the Biden administration’s nascent success in spurring the production and delivery of those shots.

On this Trump-Biden continuum, shots have risen from 48,757 the first day, Dec. 15, to an average of 1.5 million to 2 million per day the first week of March, raising hope that a persistent bottleneck and vaccine shortages can be overcome. More than 100 million doses have been administered; 35 million people have been fully vaccinated.

The bill for it all is stratospheric.

Back in February 2020, when the financial markets showed strain from the pandemic and oil prices started to plunge, many economists began to predict that the U.S. government would need to borrow sums unimaginable to older generations.

Now that’s reality.

Biden’s \$1.9 trillion package follows five others in the past year, altogether worth almost \$6 trillion. That’s about \$1 trillion more than U.S. military expenditures in World War II, all in today’s dollars. It’s more than the government’s entire budget just two years ago, \$4.4 trillion.

About two-thirds of the money in Biden’s plan is to be spent in one year, a hefty infusion that has some economists worried about inflation.

How can the U.S. possibly afford this?

At least for now, debt is cheap.

The cost of servicing the debt last year was only 1.6% of the gross domestic product — a bargain compared with the 1990s, when the total debt was much lower. Back then, the federal government spent about 3% of GDP on net interest costs.

Bargain, of course, is relative. Debt is historically high, up 130% over 10 years even before the latest relief package, a burden made manageable by historically low interest rates. Big-ticket plans on infrastructure and more are still to come.

And they are bound to come with 12 zeroes. It’s a world of trillions now.

Associated Press writers Alan Fram and Josh Boak contributed to this report.

Today in History

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By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Sunday, March 14, the 73rd day of 2021. There are 292 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On March 14, 1964, a jury in Dallas found Jack Ruby guilty of murdering Lee Harvey Oswald, the accused assassin of President John F. Kennedy, and sentenced him to death. (Both the conviction and death sentence were overturned, but Ruby died before he could be retried.)

On this date:

In 1794, Eli Whitney received a patent for his cotton gin, an invention that revolutionized America's cotton industry.

In 1883, German political philosopher Karl Marx died in London at age 64.

In 1900, Congress ratified the Gold Standard Act.

In 1951, during the Korean War, United Nations forces recaptured Seoul.

In 1962, Democrat Edward M. Kennedy officially launched in Boston his successful candidacy for the U.S. Senate seat from Massachusetts once held by his brother, President John F. Kennedy. (Edward Kennedy served in the Senate for nearly 47 years.)

In 1965, Israel's cabinet formally approved establishment of diplomatic relations with West Germany.

In 1967, the body of President John F. Kennedy was moved from a temporary grave to a permanent memorial site at Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia.

In 1980, a LOT (laht) Polish Airlines jet crashed while attempting to land in Warsaw, killing all 87 people aboard, including 22 members of a U.S. amateur boxing team.

In 1990, the Soviet Congress of People's Deputies held a secret ballot that elected Mikhail S. Gorbachev to a new, powerful presidency.

In 1991, a British court overturned the convictions of the "Birmingham Six," who had spent 16 years in prison for a 1974 Irish Republican Army bombing, and ordered them released.

In 2001, inspectors tightened U.S. defenses against foot-and-mouth disease a day after a case was confirmed in France.

In 2015, Robert Durst, a wealthy eccentric linked to two killings and his wife's disappearance, was arrested by the FBI in New Orleans on a murder warrant a day before HBO aired the final episode of a serial documentary about his life. (Durst's murder trial in Los Angeles was paused in July 2020 because of the coronavirus; it has yet to resume.)

Ten years ago: In the wake of Japan's earthquake and tsunami and mounting nuclear crisis, President Barack Obama said that he had offered the Japanese government any assistance the United States could provide. Neil Diamond, Alice Cooper, Tom Waits, Darlene Love, Dr. John and Leon Russell were inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. Olympic champion Evan Lysacek won the 2010 Sullivan Award, becoming the fourth figure skater to be honored as the top amateur athlete in the United States.

Five years ago: The Senate voted 49-40 to confirm John B. King Jr. as the nation's education secretary; King had been serving as acting secretary since Arne (AR'-nee) Duncan stepped down in Dec. 2015. Europe and Russia launched the ExoMars probe on a joint mission to explore the atmosphere of Mars and hunt for signs of life on the red planet. An Amtrak train traveling from Los Angeles to Chicago derailed west of Dodge City, Kansas, injuring 28 of the 144 people on board.

One year ago: The number of U.S. deaths from the coronavirus climbed past 50. President Donald Trump expanded a ban on travel from European countries, adding Britain and Ireland to the list. Trump said he had been tested for the virus after interactions with people who'd been infected; the White House later said the test was negative. Officials in Miami Beach ordered hundreds of college spring breakers and others from around the world to leave the beach. About 3,000 Americans returning from Europe were stuck for hours in the customs area at O'Hare International Airport in Chicago, violating social distancing recommendations; they were screened for coronavirus symptoms before they were allowed to leave the airport.

Today's Birthdays: Former astronaut Frank Borman is 93. Actor Michael Caine is 88. Composer-conductor

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Quincy Jones is 88. Actor Raymond J. Barry is 82. Movie director Wolfgang Petersen is 80. Country singer Michael Martin Murphey is 76. Rock musician Walt Parazaider (payr-ah-ZAY'-dur) (formerly with Chicago) is 76. Actor Steve Kanaly is 75. Comedian Billy Crystal is 73. Actor-writer-comedian-radio personality Rick Dees is 70. Country singer Jann Browne is 67. Actor Adrian Zmed is 67. Prince Albert II, the ruler of Monaco, is 63. Actor Laila Robins is 62. Actor Tamara Tunie (tuh-MAH'-ruh TOO'-nee) is 62. Actor Penny Johnson Jerald is 61. Producer-director-writer Kevin Williamson is 56. Actor Elise Neal is 55. Actor Gary Anthony Williams is 55. Actor Megan Follows is 53. Rock musician Michael Bland is 52. Country singer Kristian Bush is 51. Rock musician Derrick is 49. Actor Betsy Brandt is 48. Actor Grace Park is 47. Actor Daniel Gillies is 45. Actor Corey Stoll is 45. Actor Jake Fogelnest is 42. Actor Chris Klein is 42. Actor Ryan Cartwright (TV: "Kevin Can Wait") is 40. Actor Kate Maberly is 39. Singer-musician Taylor Hanson (Hanson) is 38. Rep. Dan Crenshaw, R-Texas, is 37. Actor Jamie Bell is 35. Rock musician Este Haim (HY'-uhm) (Haim) is 35. NBA star Stephen Curry is 33. Actor Ansel Elgort is 27. Olympic gold medal gymnast Simone Biles is 24. Actor James Freedson-Jackson (Film: "The Strange Ones") is 19.