

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 1 of 91

- [1- 3M Hiring Event](#)
- [2- DENR Announces \\$1,326,000 Loan for City of Groton Drinking Water Improvements](#)
- [3- DENR Announces More Than \\$69 Million for Statewide Environmental Projects](#)
- [5- SD-DOH Confirms Detection of Additional Coronavirus Variants in](#)
- [6- Covid-19 Update by Marie Miller](#)
- [9- Yesterday's COVID-19 UPDATE](#)
- [16- Social Security Disability Benefits Ad](#)
- [17- Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs](#)
- [18- Weather Pages](#)
- [21- Daily Devotional](#)
- [22- 2021 Community Events](#)
- [23- News from the Associated Press](#)

"WE CAN ONLY LOVE OTHERS  
AS MUCH AS WE LOVE  
OURSELVES." -BRENÉ BROWN



Chicken Soup  
for the Soul

## You're Invited

**Date:** Saturday, March 27<sup>th</sup>

**Arrive Anytime Between:**  
9:00am – 1:00pm

**Location:**

Aberdeen Civic Arena  
203 S. Washington St.

COVID protocols apply;  
face coverings required

Onsite  
Offers

- ✓ Production Operators
- ✓ Maintenance Technicians
- ✓ Electrical System Technicians

3M is an equal opportunity employer

**OPEN:** Recycling Trailer in Groton

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



## **DENR Announces \$1,326,000 Loan for City of Groton Drinking Water Improvements**

PIERRE, S.D. – Today, the South Dakota Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) announced the Board of Water and Natural Resources has approved a \$1,326,000 Drinking Water State Revolving Fund loan for Phase 2 of Groton's drinking water improvements.

The loan will be administered through the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. Loan terms are 2.125 percent for 30 years.

Groton plans to replace the remaining asbestos cement pipe in the distribution system, loop several waterlines, and paint the ground storage tank. These improvements will ensure the drinking water provided to its residents is safe and reliable. The Board previously approved a \$1,798,000 loan for Phase 1 of the project.

The loan will cover the estimated project cost.

The State of South Dakota and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency fund the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund Program, which provides low-interest loans for public drinking water system projects.

The board met yesterday via remote video connection.

## DENR Announces More Than \$69 Million for Statewide Environmental Projects

PIERRE, S.D. – Today, the South Dakota Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) announced the Board of Water and Natural Resources has approved a \$69,445,450 for water, wastewater, and solid waste projects.

The \$69,445,450 total includes \$12,236,450 in grants and \$57,209,000 in low-interest loans, with \$13,446,000 in principal forgiveness.

The grants and loans approved by the board will be administered through the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

Grants were awarded to:

DENR, \$600,000 for waste tire and solid waste cleanup projects  
Miller, \$247,450 for drinking water and wastewater improvements

Loans were awarded to:

Bear Butte Valley Water, \$2,058,000 to make drinking water system improvements  
Castlewood, \$800,000 to make drinking water system improvements  
Custer, \$1,539,000 to make wastewater improvements  
Groton, \$1,326,000 to make drinking water improvements  
Joint Well Field Inc, \$5,523,000 to make drinking water improvements  
Kingbrook Rural Waster System, \$360,000 to make drinking water improvements  
Northdale Sanitary District, \$440,000 to relocate a sanitary sewer line  
Salem, \$1,567,000 to make drinking water and wastewater system improvements  
Tea, \$10,586,000 for drinking water and wastewater improvements  
Watertown, \$2,500,000 to make wastewater system improvements  
Yankton, \$3,500,000 to make wastewater system improvements

Loans with principal forgiveness were awarded to:

Alcester, \$3,710,000 in loans, with \$2,650,000 in principal forgiveness, for wastewater system improvements  
Cresbard, \$5,192,000 in loans, with \$4,363,000 in principal forgiveness, for wastewater and drinking water system improvements  
Faith, \$1,609,000 in loans with \$1,099,000 in principal forgiveness to make drinking water improvements  
Waubay, \$1,365,000 in loans, with \$545,000 in principal forgiveness, for wastewater system improvements

Grant and loan packages were awarded to:

Chancellor, \$5,777,000 for drinking water and wastewater projects, which includes \$3,019,000 in grants and \$2,758,000 in loans with \$2,050,000 in principal forgiveness  
Elkton, \$4,752,000 for drinking water and wastewater projects, which includes \$1,782,000 in grants and \$2,970,000 in loans with \$1,820,000 in principal forgiveness  
Lake Norden, \$4,599,000 for drinking water and wastewater projects, which includes a \$1,145,000 grant, and \$3,454,000 in loans with \$525,000 in principal forgiveness  
Roscoe, \$1,792,000 for drinking water and wastewater projects, which include \$950,000 in grants and \$842,000 in loans with \$394,000 in principal forgiveness  
Saint Lawrence, \$2,487,000 for wastewater improvement projects, which includes \$2,091,000 in grants

# Groton Daily Independent

**Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 4 of 91**

and a \$396,000 loan

Tabor, \$4,150,000 for wastewater improvements, which includes a \$1,902,000 grant and a \$2,248,000 loan  
Vermillion, \$2,966,000 for storm sewer improvements and landfill expansion, which includes \$500,000  
in grants and \$2,466,000 in loans

The grants and loans were awarded from DENR's Consolidated Water Facilities Construction Program, Drinking Water State Revolving Fund Program, Clean Water State Revolving Fund Program and Solid Waste Management Program.

The Consolidated Water Facilities Construction Program, funded in part by revenues from the Petroleum Release Compensation Tank Inspection fee and the sale of lotto tickets, provides grants and loans for water, wastewater and watershed projects.

The State of South Dakota and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency fund the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund Program, which provides low-interest loans for public drinking water system projects. The State of South Dakota and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency fund the Clean Water State Revolving Fund Program, which provides low-interest loans for wastewater, storm water, water conservation, and nonpoint source projects. Principal forgiveness is a subsidy option that results in a reduced loan repayment amount for the borrower.

The Solid Waste Management Program provides grants and loans for solid waste disposal, recycling and waste tire projects. The Legislature annually appropriates dedicated water and waste funding for the Consolidated and Solid Waste programs through the Governor's Omnibus Water Funding Bill.

The board met yesterday via remote video connection.

## SD-DOH Confirms Detection of Additional Coronavirus Variants in South Dakota

PIERRE, S.D. – The South Dakota Department of Health (SD-DOH) can confirm that additional variants of the

COVID-19 virus have been detected in South Dakota. This includes one case of the B.1.351 (the “South African variant”) and five cases of B.1.429 (the “California variant”). The announcement comes two weeks after the B.1.1.7 variant (the “U.K. variant”) of COVID-19 was initially detected in the state, now at 14 cases.

“The appearance of new variants is something we have been tracking and preparing for,” said Dr. Joshua Clayton, State Epidemiologist. “Continuing mitigation practices, like washing hands, social distancing, and staying home when you are sick, help slow transmission rates. Getting tested as soon as COVID-19 symptoms are detected is key.”

The location(s) of the identified variants include: B.1.1.7: Brookings, Lyman, Minnehaha & Pennington County

B.1.351: Brookings County

B.1.429: Roberts County

Available COVID-19 vaccines have shown some reduced effectiveness against these variants but are safe and offer good protection. The SD-DOH strongly encourages state residents to choose getting vaccinated at their earliest convenience. On Monday, vaccination priority group 1E was opened statewide, covering approximately 227,000 South Dakotans.

South Dakotans can get more information on local opportunities to be vaccinated by clicking [HERE](#). Additionally, state residents can request their FREE at-home COVID-19 test kits [HERE](#).

For additional information and the latest COVID-19 resources, visit [COVID.SD.GOV](https://COVID.SD.GOV).



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 6 of 91

**#396 in a series**

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

OK, I'm officially concerned with these numbers; tonight looks nearly as rough as last night. There were 68,100 new cases reported today; I do not like to see two consecutive days that far—more than 10,000—above our seven-day average. We're up to 30,100,500 cases now, 0.2% more than yesterday. Hospitalizations are unchanged at 39,439. We're up to 546,182 total deaths in the US, 0.2% more than yesterday. There were 1188 reported today. I don't like the look of this at all.

Our seven-day new-case average is creeping upward—not a lot; but upward movement is worrisome at this stage of the game, what with the variants and the spring breakers and the general relaxation of restrictions. We're up around three percent over the past week. The new hospitalization rate is also moving upward, although deaths remain fairly flat—not surprising; if they go up, it will happen later. We'll see what develops over the next couple of weeks, but I'd rather it was moving the other direction.

On March 25, 2020, one year ago today, we were at 68,508 cases in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and three territories, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the US Virgin Islands. We knew we were far from identifying all of the cases due to our serious deficit in testing capacity. New York still had nearly half of our cases with four more states over 2000 cases. The top 10 states accounted for 80 percent of the cases. There had been 990 deaths; we were about to hit the 1000 mark. We were setting up tent hospitals and converting convention centers to hospitals in hard-hit areas. People were waiting in line at emergency rooms, sometimes for hours, sometimes until they died. Hospitals were renting refrigerated trucks for temporary morgues. Sometimes more than one patient was being placed on the same ventilator due to equipment shortages. The system was under unprecedented strain. The Army reached out to retired medical personnel for help. States had begun to acquire and stockpile supplies for themselves, having given up on the federal government for help. Hospitals were discharging non-Covid patients early and preparing for the worst, and the worst was arriving. It was also becoming evident that cardiac injury was occurring in hospitalized patients. Convalescent plasma was becoming a thing.

Gradually, less populous and less densely-populated states were bracing for surges which were beginning to materialize; their raw numbers were lower than New York's, but the strain was not. The idea had been proposed that we protect the vulnerable and just let this burn through the country so we could keep the economy humming along until we achieved herd immunity; and the experts were warning us how foolhardy such a strategy is. They pointed out that we cannot, for example, cut the elderly off from society to protect them and that, even though young people have lower ICU and death rates, the cost in suffering and lives would be catastrophic. And they pointed out—over and over—the necessity for adequate testing, something that didn't materialize for months and months with terrible consequences.

Worldwide, there were 438,749 cases and 19,675 deaths. China led with 81,661 cases. Italy continued to escalate: 74,386 cases and 7503 deaths, 683 more than the day before, highest in the world. Spain had 47,610 cases and 3434 deaths, passing China in deaths. Canada was imposing a 14-day quarantine on all travelers entering the country. The WHO Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said in a news briefing, "The time to act was actually a month ago, two months ago." We were in trouble, and it was rapidly growing worse.

Fifty thousand US citizens were stranded abroad, looking for ways to get home. Cancellations and closures: filming on the Batman movie; the NHL draft; the REAL ID deadline; the Tony Awards; in-person federal court proceedings in much of the US; transfers among US military personnel overseas; federal student loan payments and interest; all flights to and from London City Airport; NFL team facilities.

Lord, I hope this is the last of the drama in the ongoing Oxford/AstraZeneca saga. In response to concerns expressed by the Data Safety Monitoring Board (DSMB), the company has released additional data which still shows the vaccine candidate is very effective, just slightly less effective than the first data set showed. The initial release, which included 141 cases of Covid-19 among all participants, led to the finding that the candidate had 79 percent efficacy in preventing symptomatic disease; the new data, now including 190 cases, brings that down a bit to 76 percent, still very good, particularly when one considers

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 7 of 91

efficacy was 85 percent in over-65 people and there were no hospitalizations or deaths at all in the vaccine arm of the trial. (And if you're trying to do the math, remember these cases cited are among both the vaccinated and the placebo groups.) I have no idea how or why this sort of error occurs. When you have a good candidate, it really does look, as Dr. Fauci mentioned the other day, like an "unforced error." The problem, of course, is that this whole debacle undermines public confidence in what should clearly become an important part of the global strategy in dealing with this virus. We didn't need this.

Pfizer's pediatric vaccine trials in very young children are getting underway. They have begun injecting 144 children down to the age of 5. These early-stage trials are intended to establish an appropriate dose, looking for how well tolerated increasing doses are. Once they've sorted out dosing in this age group, they will begin a second round in children down to the age of 2. Next will come 6 months and up. When dosing is nailed down, they'll begin the actual clinical trial for safety and efficacy; that will involve around 4500 children. They've already been working with 2259 children ages 12 to 15; their current authorization covers those 16 and older. The 12-and-over data read-out is expected in late summer; the younger group results will come closer to the end of the year.

Moderna, who also has a fully-enrolled 12 to 18 clinical trial in progress, began enrolling children from 6 months to 12 years in its pediatric trials. These are likewise aimed first at establishing dosage. They're looking to include 6750 children in the US and Canada, and the response to the call for participants has been overwhelming, according to Dr. Steve Plimpton, principal investigator for the trial in Phoenix, Arizona. In an interview with NPR, he said parents are "literally calling all day long, asking for when they can get their kids vaccinated." He said he expects the trial to bring a data read-out ahead of the scheduled 14 months because the enrollment process, always a time-consuming procedure, is going so quickly. Doses have already begun to be administered.

Janssen/Johnson & Johnson is currently running a trial in children 12 and older and expects results within the next few weeks—roughly, I'd guess, when the others expect theirs. They get a little head start because they don't have to wait to administer a second dose. They say their plan is to extend trials to younger children after they've evaluated how the vaccine does in this older group. And Oxford/AstraZeneca began testing in children 6 months and older last month. This means there's a whole lot of progress on the pediatric front. I expect the upcoming school year to be able to proceed much more normally than this one has. Vaccinating children will also contribute significantly to our ability to achieve herd immunity safely, given the under-18 group is around 23 percent of the population. I'll just wish them all well; if they're all as successful in children as they have been in adults, we should have plenty of options within months.

We have a new paper in the American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology reporting results from work done at Massachusetts General Hospital, Brigham and Women's Hospital, MIT, and Harvard. This research group took a look at pregnant and lactating people who were vaccinated with one of the mRNA vaccines. They found the vaccine-induced antibody levels in the pregnant and lactating people were equivalent to those in non-pregnant/non-lactating people and higher than those seen when natural infection developed during pregnancy. There were also antibodies detected in the placenta and in breast milk, which may mean these are being passed to fetuses and newborns as well. There was no evidence of more or worse vaccine side effects in this group. These are good signals with respect to both safety and effectiveness in this group.

A new vaccination initiative is targeted to dialysis centers. It is intended to get vaccine to a medically vulnerable population by providing them at the dialysis centers; it is also intended to supply doses to the workers in these clinics. This is not a huge number of people—maybe 50,000 patients are on dialysis at any one time in the US—but it is a group it is important to reach.

Under the heading of "In case you didn't have enough to worry about," there are concerning signals coming from Brazil, where case numbers are rocketing upward and they're losing 3000 people per day. That's like what we were seeing in our very bad days over the winter, but in a population less than two-thirds of ours. This is terrible on the ground in Brazil and has implications for the rest of the world in all the ways we've discussed to death; but this isn't the worst part of the story. The really bad part is that they are seeing a noticeable increase in severe cases and deaths among the young—people in their 20s,

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 8 of 91

30s, and 40s, even as cases and deaths in the elderly have dropped.

Dr. Pedro Archer, an intensivist in Rio de Janeiro, told CNN, "We have otherwise healthy patients that are between 30 and 50-years-old and that is the profile of the majority of patients. That is the big differentiator in this latest wave." Another physician noted that these patients' conditions are "much more critical." The Health Ministry statistics show that the number of people dying aged 30 to 59 had increased by seven percent since November. Sixty percent of younger patients were needing ICU beds.

That, of course, leads to the question, why? There appear to be a few possibilities: (1) That these young folks are feeling sort of bulletproof, much as younger people in the US have felt, and they are going out more and engaging in riskier behaviors. There's no doubt this is happening: There were New Year's parties and Carnival, as well as many, many illegal gatherings. Given P.1, the variant which emerged in the country and makes up a large proportion of cases, being over twice as transmissible as D614G, the dominant variant in the US, we may just be seeing large numbers attributable to this enhanced transmissibility. (2) The vaccination program is underway in Brazil with a focus on the elderly. Perhaps the increasing proportion of that population which is protected is shifting the outbreak to a younger age group. I'm not holding my breath on this one. Things aren't proceeding all that rapidly, and so I don't think they have enough elderly vaccinated yet to have this kind of impact on cases and deaths. (3) The more disquieting possibility is that P.1 may be playing a role in the demographic shift, that it preferentially attacks younger people or has higher lethality, at least in some age groups. There is no clear evidence of this yet, but the possibility must be entertained when we see a pattern like this. It would be good to get that sorted out before P.1 gains a foothold in the US, which it certainly will if we cannot get our own outbreak under some semblance of control. It's too soon to know what's operating here, but there is cause for concern. It is also illustrative of the reasons we must turn some of our attention outward to the rest of the world. I know I'm repeating myself, but no one's really safe until we're all safe. Brazil's problem isn't just Brazil's problem; it is everyone's problem.

The Salgado family, parents and four children, were sound asleep in their Arizona home on New Year's morning until they awakened to someone pounding on their front door, ringing the doorbell, and calling out. The mom ran to check on her children while the dad went to the front door where he found their next-door neighbor, Carolyn Palisch, standing there in her robe. As soon as the door opened, she said, "Your house is on fire. Get out! Move!" She then stepped inside and sort of pushed the children right out the door, saying, "It's OK. You guys, go to my house." This was all captured on the family's doorbell camera feed.

Palisch said she'd gotten up early that day and just happened to look out her window at her neighbor's house. She noticed there was smoke coming from their roof, realized they didn't have a fireplace, and concluded there was a problem. So she set her coffee down and hurried across the lawn, just in time to save a few lives.

Once everyone was out and the children were on their way to Palisch's house, the parents went back in for their pets. They did get them all out successfully. Moments later the roof collapsed, the house a total loss. Nicole Salgado told Madison.com, "It was just kind of frantic at first, making sure we got everyone out and the dogs out. Then once we realized the full extent of it we were just in shock as we watched our home burn." Terrible loss, but it could have been so much worse. I'll call that a happy ending.

Be well. We'll talk again.



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 9 of 91

County	Total Cases	Recovered Cases	Negative Persons	Deceased Among Cases	Community Spread	% PCR Test Positivity Rate (Weekly)
Aurora	457	436	890	15	Minimal	6.3%
Beadle	2851	2759	6073	40	Substantial	6.9%
Bennett	386	372	1197	9	Minimal	0.0%
Bon Homme	1514	1480	2139	26	Minimal	3.3%
Brookings	3750	3602	12440	37	Substantial	2.9%
Brown	5258	5108	13107	91	Moderate	6.4%
Brule	699	686	1915	9	Minimal	13.3%
Buffalo	423	408	907	13	Minimal	0.0%
Butte	1006	975	3297	20	Moderate	6.7%
Campbell	131	127	264	4	None	0.0%
Charles Mix	1337	1268	4052	21	Substantial	8.6%
Clark	403	373	967	5	Substantial	34.5%
Clay	1852	1805	5584	15	Substantial	5.6%
Codington	4174	3974	9919	79	Substantial	14.5%
Corson	475	460	1018	12	Minimal	9.5%
Custer	776	752	2781	12	Moderate	10.9%
Davison	3059	2924	6765	66	Substantial	11.6%
Day	683	644	1834	29	Moderate	3.0%
Deuel	489	468	1165	8	Moderate	22.7%
Dewey	1435	1408	3911	26	Moderate	0.0%
Douglas	442	428	940	9	Minimal	8.3%
Edmunds	490	471	1092	13	Minimal	5.3%
Fall River	561	538	2706	15	Moderate	2.8%
Faulk	363	348	709	13	Minimal	0.0%
Grant	1005	938	2319	40	Moderate	9.4%
Gregory	571	520	1327	30	Moderate	8.8%
Haakon	260	248	554	10	Minimal	0.0%
Hamlin	738	688	1850	38	Moderate	18.5%
Hand	354	337	857	6	Moderate	4.0%
Hanson	376	366	748	4	Moderate	6.3%
Harding	92	91	189	1	None	0.0%
Hughes	2353	2287	6761	36	Moderate	4.7%
Hutchinson	811	767	2453	26	Moderate	1.9%

# Groton Daily Independent

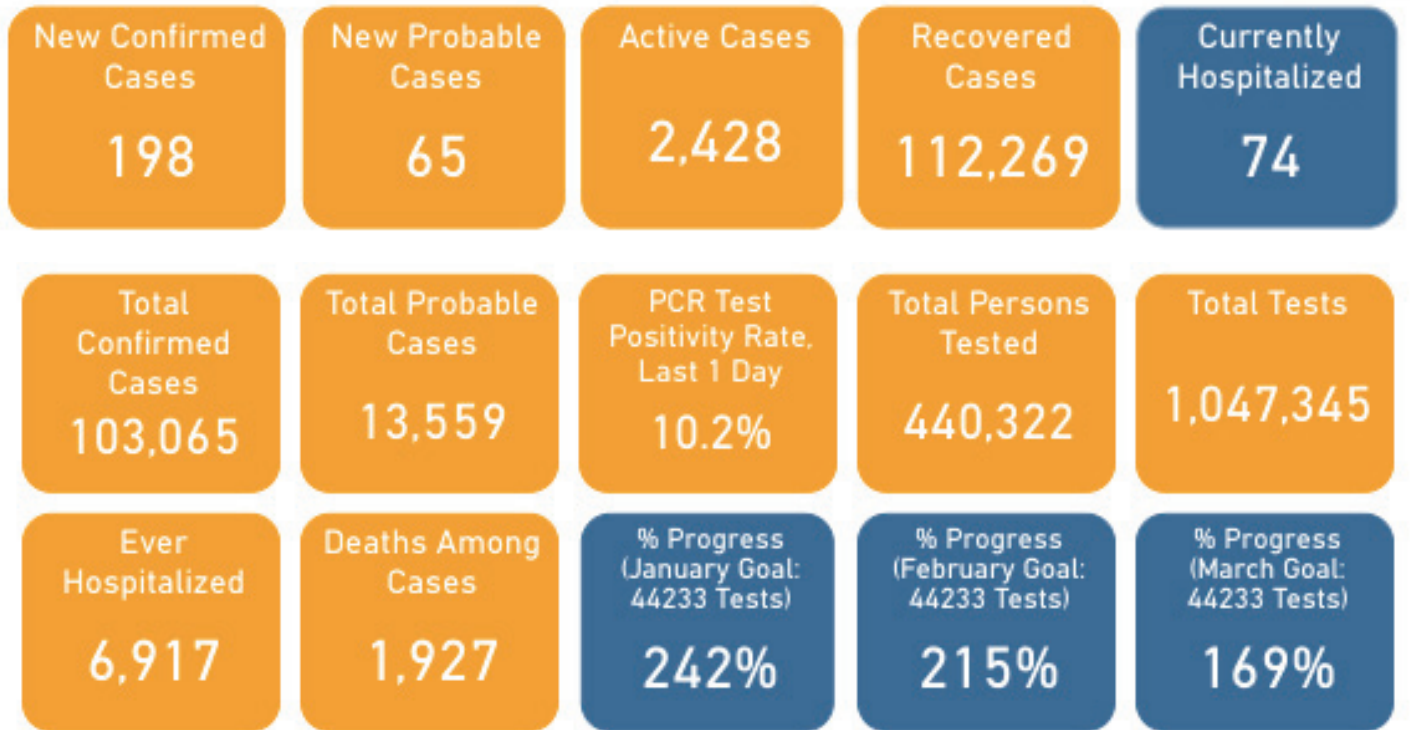
Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 10 of 91

Hyde	138	136	428	1	Minimal	10.0%
Jackson	284	269	924	14	Minimal	0.0%
Jerauld	275	255	569	16	None	0.0%
Jones	91	89	230	0	Minimal	28.6%
Kingsbury	695	637	1720	14	Substantial	20.8%
Lake	1282	1198	3509	18	Substantial	15.1%
Lawrence	2881	2818	8689	45	Moderate	1.5%
Lincoln	8130	7843	20916	77	Substantial	13.6%
Lyman	620	596	1911	10	Moderate	4.5%
Marshall	364	336	1249	6	Substantial	7.2%
McCook	776	734	1707	24	Substantial	11.5%
McPherson	240	234	570	4	None	0.0%
Meade	2683	2617	7927	31	Moderate	6.2%
Mellette	255	251	750	2	None	0.0%
Miner	284	264	597	9	Moderate	6.3%
Minnehaha	29317	28201	80838	341	Substantial	11.6%
Moody	623	602	1807	17	Minimal	1.7%
Oglala Lakota	2083	2015	6726	49	Moderate	4.0%
Pennington	13209	12866	40450	191	Moderate	7.5%
Perkins	351	333	839	14	Minimal	10.5%
Potter	387	380	865	4	Moderate	3.4%
Roberts	1297	1217	4270	36	Substantial	18.1%
Sanborn	336	330	708	3	Minimal	0.0%
Spink	819	783	2191	26	Moderate	8.7%
Stanley	339	336	964	2	Minimal	8.7%
Sully	137	134	328	3	None	0.0%
Todd	1220	1189	4190	29	Minimal	8.3%
Tripp	732	700	1520	17	Moderate	17.1%
Turner	1127	1032	2810	53	Substantial	13.5%
Union	2103	1977	6521	41	Substantial	15.0%
Walworth	746	713	1858	15	Moderate	15.1%
Yankton	2888	2802	9578	28	Substantial	9.5%
Ziebach	338	326	882	9	Minimal	0.0%
Unassigned	0	0	1927	0		

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 11 of 91

## South Dakota



### RACE/ETHNICITY OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Race/Ethnicity	# of Cases	% of Cases
White, Non-Hispanic	87290	75%
Native American, Non-Hispanic	13715	12%
Unknown, Non-Hispanic	5588	5%
Hispanic	4231	4%
Black, Non-Hispanic	2600	2%
Other, Non-Hispanic	1697	1%
Asian, Non-Hispanic	1503	1%

COVID-19 Variant	# of Cases
B.1.1.7	14
B.1.429	5
B.1.351	1
B.1.427	0
P.1	0

### SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Sex	# of Cases	# of Deaths Among Cases
Female	60657	906
Male	55967	1021

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 12 of 91

## Brown County

New Confirmed Cases

4

New Probable Cases

1

Active Cases

59

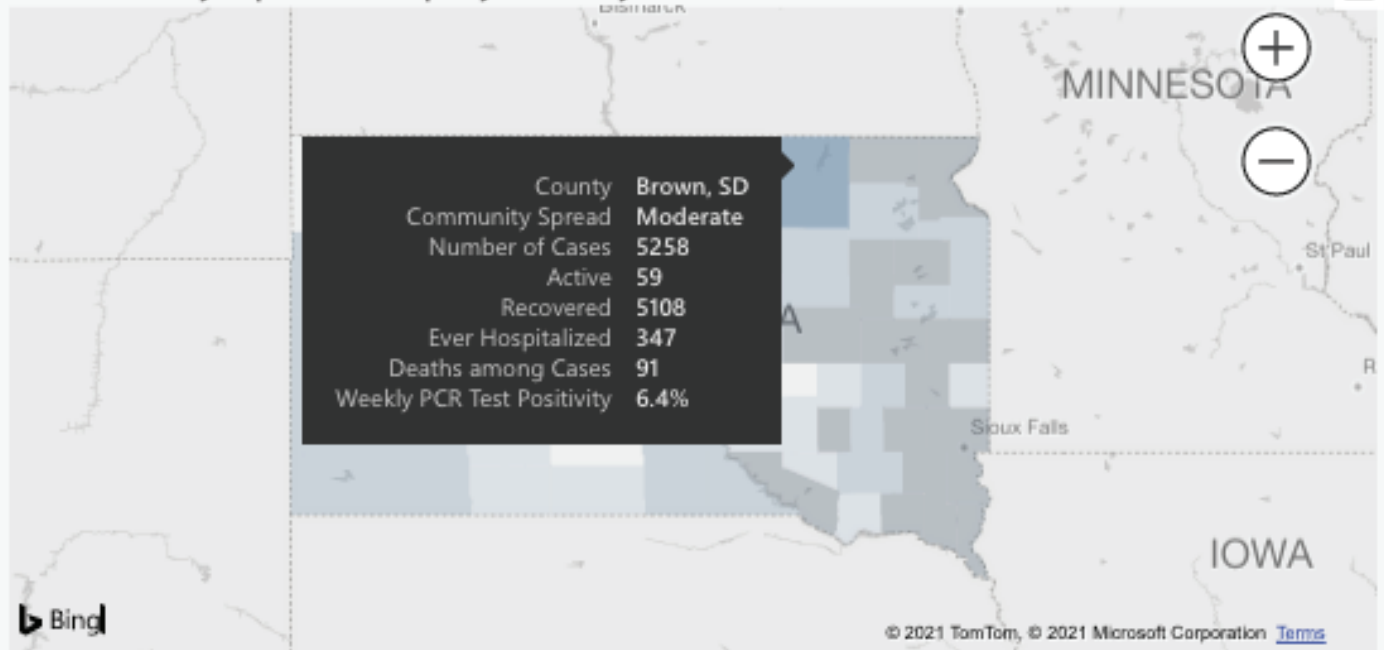
Recovered Cases

5,108

Currently Hospitalized

74

### Community Spread Map by County of Residence



Community Spread ● None ● Minimal ● Moderate ● Substantial

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

Total Confirmed Cases

4,670

Total Probable Cases

588

PCR Test Positivity Rate, Last 1 Day

14.0%

Total Persons Tested

18,365

Total Tests

50,958

Ever Hospitalized

347

Deaths Among Cases

91

% Progress (January Goal: 44233 Tests)

242%

% Progress (February Goal: 44233 Tests)

215%

% Progress (March Goal: 44233 Tests)

169%



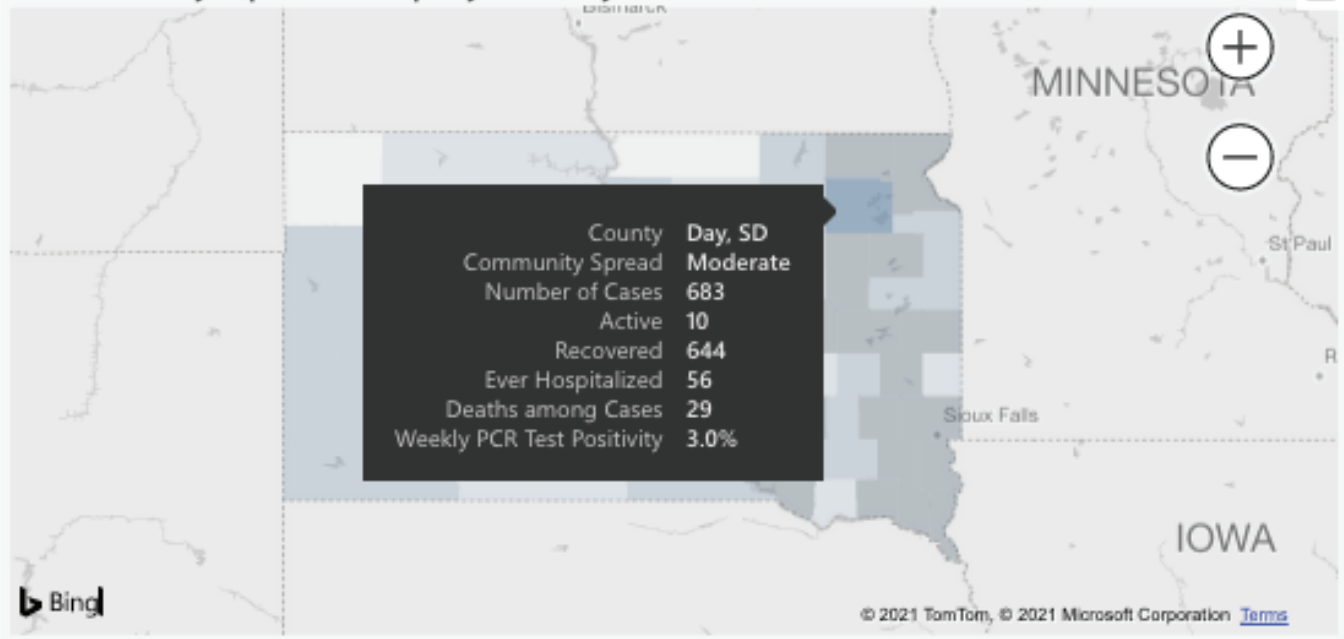
# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 13 of 91

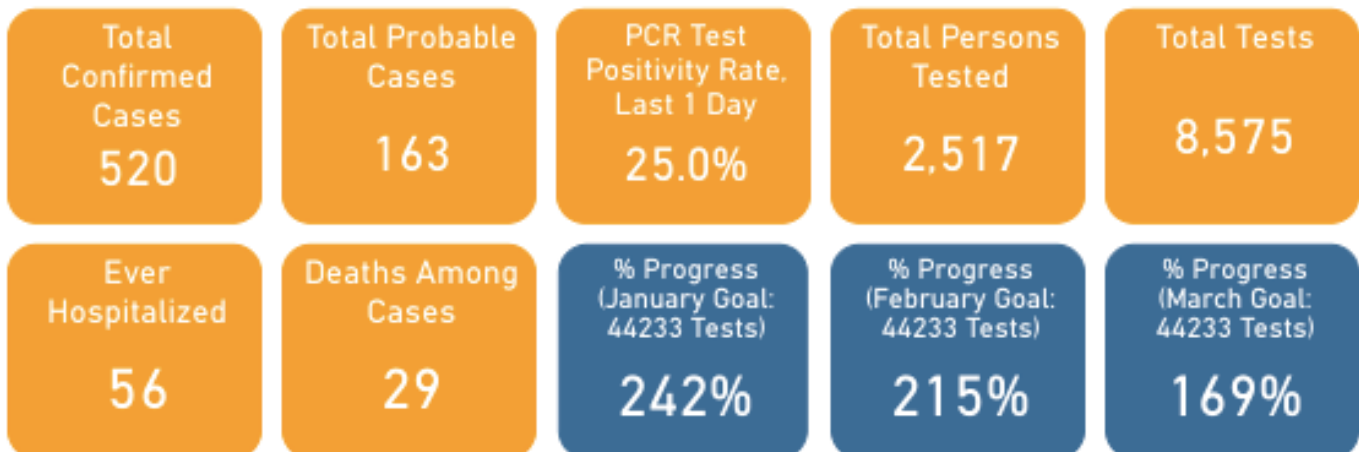
## Day County



### Community Spread Map by County of Residence



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





# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 14 of 91

## Vaccinations

Total Doses Administered

**366,972**

State Allocation

Total Persons Administered a Vaccine

**228,659**

State Allocation

Percent of State Population with at least 1 Dose

**39%**

State & Federal Allocation

Manufacturer	# of Doses
Janssen	5,844
Moderna	175,987
Pfizer	185,141

Doses	# of Recipients
Janssen - Series Complete	5,844
Moderna - 1 dose	44,867
Moderna - Series Complete	65,560
Pfizer - 1 dose	39,651
Pfizer - Series Complete	72,745

Doses	% of Pop.
1 dose	38.97%
Series Complete	24.87%

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

County	# Doses	# Persons (1 dose)	# Persons (2 doses)	Total # Persons
Aurora	1,077	371	353	724
Beadle	7,802	2,267	2,767	5,034
Bennett*	555	145	205	350
Bon Homme*	4,070	862	1,604	2,466
Brookings	11,128	4,454	3,337	7,791
Brown	17,054	4,376	6,339	10,715
Brule*	2,067	497	785	1,282
Buffalo*	140	82	29	111
Butte	2,628	936	846	1,782
Campbell	1,206	172	517	689
Charles Mix*	3,646	1,164	1,241	2,405
Clark	1,480	476	502	978
Clay	6,102	2,010	2,046	4,056
Codington*	11,335	2,929	4,203	7,132
Corson*	316	70	123	193
Custer*	3,333	805	1,264	2,069
Davison	8,862	2,626	3,118	5,744
Day*	2,904	848	1,028	1,876
Deuel	1,757	511	623	1,134
Dewey*	395	57	169	226
Douglas*	1,416	402	507	909
Edmunds	1,558	396	581	977
Fall River*	2,907	603	1,152	1,755
Faulk	1,271	327	472	799
Grant*	2,999	1,003	998	2,001
Gregory*	2,090	540	775	1,315
Haakon*	612	126	243	369

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 15 of 91

Hamlin	2,045	621	712	1,333
Hand	1,760	550	605	1,155
Hanson	584	206	189	395
Harding	122	48	37	85
Hughes*	9,043	2,211	3,416	5,627
Hutchinson*	4,135	1,106	1,514	2,620
Hyde*	632	152	240	392
Jackson*	453	117	168	285
Jerauld	1,080	294	393	687
Jones*	700	142	279	421
Kingsbury	2,851	1,013	919	1,932
Lake	5,045	1,681	1,682	3,363
Lawrence	9,907	3,305	3,301	6,606
Lincoln	29,548	5,679	11,934	17,613
Lyman*	918	278	320	598
Marshall*	2,075	665	705	1,370
McCook	2,467	629	919	1,548
McPherson	288	72	108	180
Meade*	7,440	1,820	2,810	4,630
Mellette*	52	14	19	33
Miner	1,002	292	355	647
Minnehaha*	93,682	19,127	37,275	56,402
Moody*	2,145	743	701	1,444
Oglala Lakota*	196	52	72	124
Pennington*	43,606	9,412	17,097	26,509
Perkins*	755	247	254	501
Potter	1,086	394	346	740
Roberts*	4,911	1,087	1,912	2,999
Sanborn	1,189	367	411	778
Spink	3,491	837	1,327	2,164
Stanley*	1,378	306	536	842
Sully	434	110	162	272
Todd*	180	42	69	111
Tripp*	2,228	482	873	1,355
Turner	4,092	890	1,601	2,491
Union	4,041	1,437	1,302	2,739
Walworth*	2,124	308	908	1,216
Yankton	11,434	2,504	4,465	6,969
Ziebach*	60	14	23	37
Other	7,083	2,045	2,519	4,564

**Need help Getting  
Social Security  
Disability Benefits?**

**We can help!**



## **FIGHTING FOR YOUR SOCIAL SECURITY DISABILITY BENEFITS FOR OVER 25 YEARS!**

**You Could Be Eligible To Receive:**



Steady monthly income  
depending on your paid  
in amount



A lump sum payment  
of benefits owed from  
back-pay



Annual cost of living  
increases

- We simplify the process & strive for quick claim approval
- Starting the process is easy and takes only minutes to complete

**BILL GORDON**  
&  
ASSOCIATES

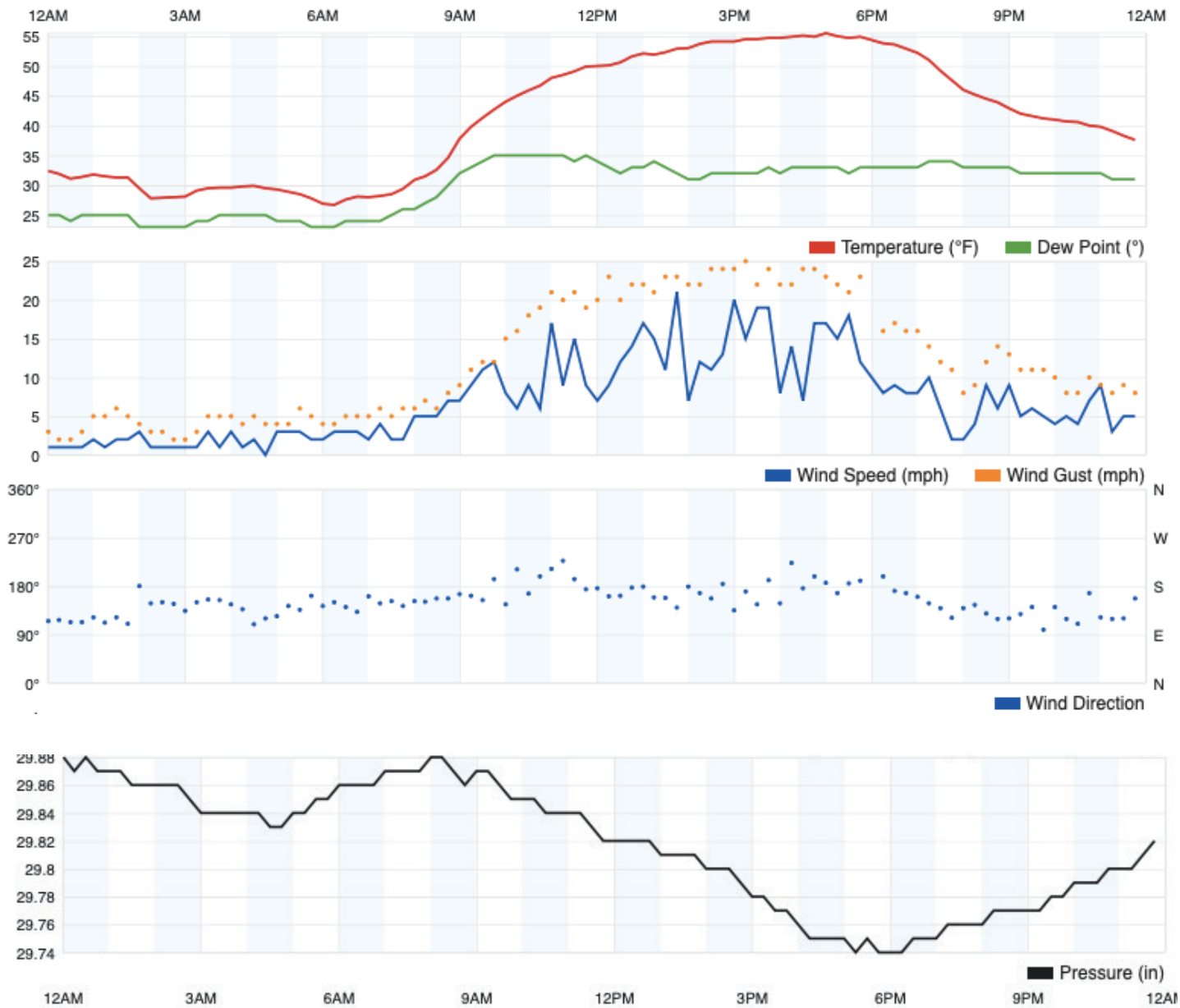
# 866-254-9043

*Helping thousands get the benefits they deserve*

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 17 of 91






## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



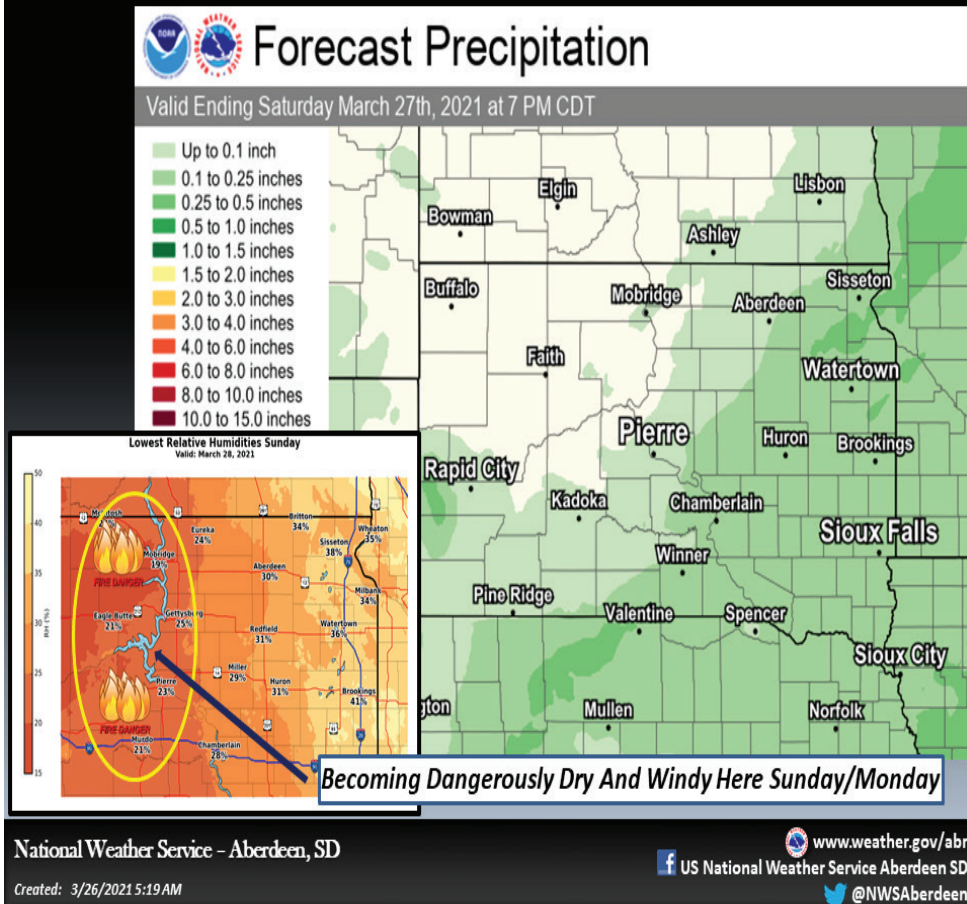


# Broton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 18 of 91

Today	Tonight	Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday
				
Mostly Cloudy	Chance Rain	Partly Sunny	Mostly Clear	Sunny then Mostly Sunny and Breezy
High: 58 °F	Low: 35 °F	High: 52 °F	Low: 24 °F	High: 65 °F

## Forecast Rainfall Amounts Tonight/Saturday



A slow moving cold front could set off a few rain showers by early this evening across portions of central and south central South Dakota. These showers, and any areas of rain that develop later tonight, will move off to the northeast, passing over portions of northeast South Dakota into western Minnesota. Much warmer and drier and windy conditions are forecast to develop on Sunday and continue into Monday. Burning on Sunday and Monday is discouraged.



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 19 of 91

## Today in Weather History

March 26, 1977: During the early morning, severe weather event, hail up to 1.75 inches in diameter fell 1 mile NE of Watertown in Codrington County. Also, hail up to 1.50 inches in diameter fell in Milbank, Grant County.

March 26, 1995: Heavy snow fell over most of central South Dakota, as well as in the northern Black Hills. Heavier accumulations included 14 inches at Murdo, 13 inches at Lead, and 12 inches at Eureka, and Leola. Only a few traffic accidents were reported, although many other vehicles slid into ditches. There was some damage to power lines and poles. Some livestock losses were feared, as the snow fell during the calving season, although this could not be assessed in the short term.

March 26, 2008: An area of low pressure moving across the Northern Plains brought heavy snow from 6 to 15 inches in a band across much of central and northeast South Dakota from the evening to the early morning hours. Schools were delayed or canceled and road travel was difficult, if not impossible. Some snowfall amounts included: 6 inches at Stephan, Willow Lake, Harrold, Miller, and near Hoven; 7 inches at Hayti, east of Hayes, and Eagle Butte; 8 inches at Highmore and Doland; 9 inches at Orient, Bryant, and near Onida; 10 inches at Gettysburg and Faulkton; 11 inches at Seneca and Redfield. Locations with a foot or more of snowfall included: 12 inches 23 miles north of Highmore; 13 inches near Agar; 15 inches 24 miles north of Highmore.

1913 - The Ohio River Basin flood reached a peak. Ten inch rains over a wide area of the Ohio River Basin inundated cities in Ohio, drowning 467 persons, and causing 147 million dollars damage. The Miami River at Dayton reached a level eight feet higher than ever before. The flood, caused by warm weather and heavy rains, was the second mostly deadly of record for the nation. (David Ludlum)

1948: Good Friday tornadoes moved from Terre Haute to Redkey, Indiana killing 20 people. About 80% of the town of Coatesville was destroyed, and 16 people were killed. The Coatesville Carnegie Library was a total loss. The path was a half mile wide.

1954 - The temperature at Allaket, AK, plunged to 69 degrees below zero. (The Weather Channel)

1971 - Parts of northern and central Georgia experienced their worst snow and ice storm since 1935. Two day power outages ruined two million eggs at poultry hatches. Two persons were killed when a tree landed on their car. (25th-26th) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A cold front crossing the Plateau Region produced high winds in Utah causing some property damage. Winds gusted to 51 mph at Salt Lake City. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Twenty cities in the southwestern U.S. reported new record high temperatures for the date. Afternoon highs of 73 degrees at Flagstaff AZ, 90 degrees at Sacramento CA, 95 degrees at Santa Maria CA, 95 degrees at Los Angeles CA, 99 degrees at Tucson AZ, and 100 degrees at Phoenix AZ set records for March. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - The Easter Bunny brought record warm temperatures to the central U.S. while such records were still welcome. A dozen cities reported record warm readings, including Dodge City KS with an afternoon high of 88 degrees. Strong southerly winds gusted to 51 mph at Dodge City, and reached 55 mph at Salina KS. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - Fair weather prevailed across the nation for the second day in a row. Freezing temperatures were reported in the Middle Atlantic Coast Region in the wake of an early spring snowstorm. Afternoon highs were again in the 70s and 80s in the southeastern U.S., and for the ninth day in a row, temperatures in the southwestern U.S. reached the 90s. (The National Weather Summary)

2009: The proof is in the pudding - A NOAA Weather Radio can save your life. Near Belk, AL, a family was alerted to a tornado by their weather radio; they went to their storm cellar. They heard the "jet roar" of the EF1 tornado as it damaged their home; they were unhurt.

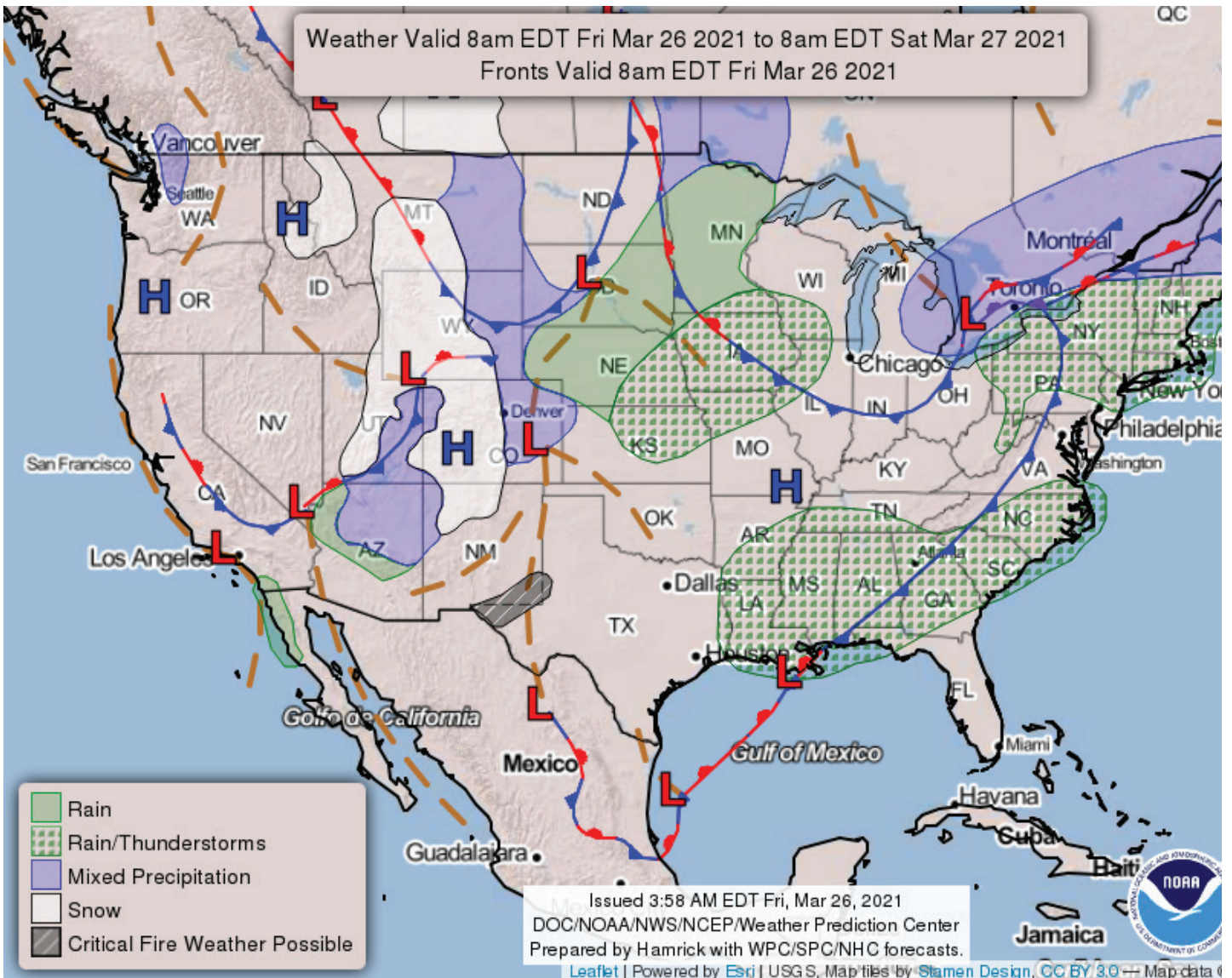
# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 20 of 91

## Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

**High Temp: 56 °F at 5:00 PM**  
**Low Temp: 27 °F at 6:06 AM**  
**Wind: 32 mph at 2:19 PM**  
**Precip:**

**Record High: 74° in 1905**  
**Record Low: -13° in 1964**  
**Average High: 45°F**  
**Average Low: 24°F**  
**Average Precip in Mar.: 0.88**  
**Precip to date in Mar.: 0.35**  
**Average Precip to date: 1.90**  
**Precip Year to Date: 0.53**  
**Sunset Tonight: 7:55 p.m.**  
**Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:23 a.m.**



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 21 of 91



## THE WONDER OF WORSHIP

"Is worship an act or an attitude?" asked the Old Testament professor.

As soon as the question was asked, a fierce debate erupted among the students. There was more heat than light in the classroom as positions were defined and reinforced with passages of Scripture and definitions from a dictionary. There was little disagreement about the fact that the end of worship was to show deep, profound, and extravagant respect and devotion to God. But the when and where seemed to be a problem.

Many Christians place worship on their weekly schedule as something "to do" on Sunday morning at eleven o'clock. It is an "event" that has been part of their lives since they were children and one they will continue to "practice" as long as they live.

However, worship in Psalm 29 is something we are to do because of what God has done for us. We are to show submission by kneeling or bow down before Him in an "act" of humility and sincerity that reflects our "attitude" of devotion.

When there is a parade that honors Queen Elizabeth II, we see people bow as she passes before them. We hear them shout, "Long live the Queen" and they address her as "Your Majesty." These acts reflect an attitude of submission to her as their Queen. They are openly demonstrating their devotion to her and willingness to submit to her.

Can we do less for our Lord? Says the Psalmist, "Worship – bow down in submission - to the Lord in the splendor of His holiness!" Wherever we look we can see God if we open our eyes to His glory and grace and goodness. And when we see Him at work in our lives or in His world, we are to bow in worship to our King.

Prayer: Father, may we recognize Your grace and gifts in our lives, and bow before You with grateful hearts and worship You in humility and devotion. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Honor the Lord for the glory of his name. Worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness. Psalm 29:2

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 22 of 91

## 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
- 09/18-19 Groton Fly-In/Drive-In, Groton Municipal Airport
- 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

### **Smithfield Foods offers COVID-19 shots at Sioux Falls plant**

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Smithfield Foods in Sioux Falls is making it easier for some of its employees to get the coronavirus vaccine.

The company is offering COVID-19 shots Friday at the food processing plant where hundreds of workers have been infected with the virus since the pandemic began.

The vaccine comes from the South Dakota Department of Health and will be administered by Avery Health. Department spokesman Daniel Bucheli says 500 vaccine doses are available. Smithfield workers will receive the one-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine, and it will be voluntary, the Argus Leader reported.

The plant in Sioux Falls employs about 3,600 workers. Back in April of 2020, the plant was home to the largest outbreak of coronavirus at a single facility in the United States.

At least 1,294 Smithfield workers contracted coronavirus, and four employees died from complications in the spring of 2020, according to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

South Dakota health officials on Thursday confirmed 263 new COVID-19 cases and three new deaths, increasing the totals to 116,370 positive tests and 1,927 deaths since the start of the pandemic.

The number of active cases continues to rise at 2,428, a month after hitting a low of 1,891. Hospitalizations are up to 74, with 16 patients being treated in intensive care units.

### **Brookings fire chief accused of driving under the influence**

BROOKINGS, S.D. (AP) — The fire chief in Brookings is accused of driving while intoxicated.

Brookings Police Chief David Erickson says Chief Darrell Hartmann was pulled over last Friday about midnight, was given a field sobriety test and was arrested.

State's Attorney Dan Nelson says police brought Hartmann to the county jail and he was released on bond Saturday morning, KELO-TV reported.

"He'll appear on that complaint, alleging that he committed driving under the influence," Nelson said. "He'll have an opportunity to plead guilty, not guilty, no contest at that initial hearing. If he pleads not guilty, there will be a jury trial that will be set."

Nelson says despite Hartmann's title this case will be handled just like any other DUI charge.

Hartmann did not immediately return a call for comment. A court date is set for April 26.

### **Dominion Voting sues Fox for \$1.6B over 2020 election claims**

By COLLEEN LONG Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Dominion Voting Systems on Friday filed a \$1.6 billion defamation lawsuit against Fox News, arguing the cable news giant falsely claimed in an effort to boost faltering ratings that the voting company had rigged the 2020 election.

It's the first defamation suit filed against a media outlet by the voting company, which was a target of misleading, false and bizarre claims spread by President Donald Trump and his allies in the aftermath of Trump's election loss to Joe Biden. Those claims helped spur on rioters who stormed the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6 in a violent siege that left five people dead, including a police officer. The siege led to Trump's historic second impeachment.

Dominion argues that Fox News, which amplified inaccurate assertions that Dominion altered votes, "sold a false story of election fraud in order to serve its own commercial purposes, severely injuring Dominion in the process," according to a copy of the lawsuit obtained by The Associated Press.

Some Fox News on-air reporting segments have debunked some of the claims targeting Dominion. An email sent to Fox News on Friday morning, seeking comment on the lawsuit, was not immediately returned.

There was no widespread fraud in the 2020 election, a fact that a range of election officials across the



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 24 of 91

country — and even Trump's attorney general, William Barr — have confirmed. Republican governors in Arizona and Georgia, key battleground states crucial to Biden's victory, also vouched for the integrity of the elections in their states. Nearly all the legal challenges from Trump and his allies were dismissed by judges, including two tossed by the Supreme Court, which has three Trump-nominated justices.

Still, some Fox News employees elevated false charges that Dominion had changed votes through algorithms in its voting machines that had been created in Venezuela to rig elections for the late dictator Hugo Chavez. On-air personalities brought on Trump allies Sidney Powell and Rudy Giuliani, who spread the claims, and then amplified those claims on Fox News' massive social media platforms.

Dominion said in the lawsuit that it tried repeatedly to set the record straight but was ignored by Fox News.

The company argues that Fox News, a network that features several pro-Trump personalities, pushed the false claims to explain away the former president's loss. The cable giant lost viewers after the election and was seen by some Trump supporters as not being supportive enough of the Republican.

Attorneys for Dominion said Fox News' behavior differs greatly from that of other media outlets that reported on the claims.

"This was a conscious, knowing business decision to endorse and repeat and broadcast these lies in order to keep its viewership," said attorney Justin Nelson, of Susman Godfrey LLC.

Though Dominion serves 28 states, until the 2020 election it had been largely unknown outside the election community. It is now widely targeted in conservative circles, seen by millions of people as one of the main villains in a fictional tale in which Democrats nationwide conspired to steal votes from Trump, the lawsuit said.

Dominion's employees, from its software engineers to its founder, have been harassed. Some received death threats. And the company has suffered "enormous and irreparable economic harm," lawyers said.

Dominion has also sued Giuliani, Powell and the CEO of Minnesota-based MyPillow over the claims. A rival technology company, Smartmatic USA, also sued Fox News over election claims. Unlike Dominion, Smartmatic's participation in the 2020 election was restricted to Los Angeles County.

Dominion lawyers said they have not yet filed lawsuits against specific media personalities at Fox News but the door remains open. Some at Fox News knew the claims were false but their comments were drowned out, lawyers said.

"The buck stops with Fox on this," attorney Stephen Shackelford said. "Fox chose to put this on all of its many platforms. They rebroadcast, republished it on social media and other places."

The suit was filed in Delaware, where both companies are incorporated, though Fox News is headquartered in New York and Dominion is based in Denver.

## **EXPLAINER: North Korean missiles getting more agile, evasive**

By KIM TONG-HYUNG and HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — In resuming its ballistic testing activity after a yearlong pause, North Korea has demonstrated a potentially nuclear-capable weapon that shows how it continues to expand its military capabilities amid a stalemate in diplomacy with the United States.

The two short-range missiles the North fired into the sea this week were its first meaningful provocation since the inauguration of President Joe Biden, who on Thursday delivered a restrained response to the launches, saying "there will be responses if they choose to escalate."

Since a provocative run in North Korean nuclear and missile tests in 2016 and 2017, much of the U.S. focus has been on North Korea's intercontinental ballistic missiles that pose a direct threat to the American homeland.

But experts say North Korea's growing arsenal of shorter-range solid-fuel weapons are more destabilizing for U.S. allies South Korea and Japan. And the latest launches underscored the North's efforts to improve its capacities for delivering nuclear strikes and overwhelming missile defense systems.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 25 of 91

## THE MISSILE

North Korea's state media said Friday the weapons it fired a day earlier from its eastern coast were a new type of "tactical guided projectile" that borrowed the core technology of an earlier system.

According to the Korean Central News Agency, the new solid-fuel missiles, which are designed to be fired from land vehicles, could be armed with warheads weighing as much as 2.5 tons. During Thursday's tests, the missiles demonstrated low-altitude, maneuverable flight and accurately hit a sea target 600 kilometers (372 miles) away.

Analysts say the North likely tested an upgraded version of a system modeled after Russia's Iskander mobile ballistic missiles. Their flatter trajectories compared to conventional ballistic weapons make them fly at an altitude where air is dense enough to allow for maneuverability. The unpredictability makes them harder to be intercepted by missile defense systems, experts say.

South Korea's military took an unusually long time to release its assessment on the launches Thursday before it said hours later that the missiles traveled as far as 450 kilometers (279 miles).

Kim Dong-yub, a professor from Seoul's University of North Korean Studies, said the discrepancy between the South Korean and North Korean assessments possibly shows how difficult it is for radar systems to accurately track these missiles during flight.

"Even if our military got things wrong, it doesn't matter for now as they could easily adjust their assessment after analyzing satellite data," said Kim, a former South Korean military official. "But how are you going to do that in times of war?"

## THE WARHEAD

Whether missiles traveled 450 kilometers or 600 kilometers, that's more than enough range to hit any corner of mainland South Korea. And experts say the North's efforts to arm them with huge warheads indicate they are being designed for nuclear strikes.

The tests came after North Korean leader Kim Jong Un during a January ruling party congress vowed to bolster his nuclear deterrent in face of U.S.-led sanctions and pressure and issued a broad wish list of military hardware that included new tactical nuclear weapons.

If North Korea successfully develops an operational system, these missiles will provide an ability to launch tactical nuclear attacks on military bases and other strategic targets in South Korea, said Yang Wook, a military expert who teaches at South Korea's Hannam University.

"We have long said it would be difficult for North Korea to put nuclear warheads on (short-range) missiles if it fails to make them small and light enough," said Yang. But North Korea would no longer have to do so if its missiles could reliably deliver a warhead of 2.5 tons, which Yang said would be more than three times heavier than most warheads on existing North Korean missiles.

Lee Choon Geun, a missile expert at South Korea's Science and Technology Policy Institute, said the missiles would pose a huge threat for South Korea even if they are conventionally armed.

"A conventional warhead of 2.5 tons would be enough to bust deeply built bunkers," he said. "That capacity would also allow for something more powerful than tactical nuclear weapons, possibly thermonuclear devices."

## MORE TESTING

North Korea has a history of testing new U.S. administrations with weapons demonstrations aimed at forcing the Americans back to the negotiating table.

Kim Jong Un so far has nothing to show for his ambitious summits with former President Donald Trump, which collapsed in 2019 over disagreements in exchanging the release of crippling U.S.-led sanctions against North Korea and the North's disarmament steps.

While Thursday's launches were less provocative compared to the nuclear and ICBM tests in 2017 that inspired war fears before the North shifted toward diplomacy with the Trump administration in 2018, most experts say the North is likely to dial up its testing activities.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 26 of 91

The North conducted more than a dozen short-range launches amid stalled diplomacy in 2019 and 2020 as Trump dismissed the tests despite the threat they posed to South Korea and Japan. The United States stations a total of 80,000 troops in the two Asian countries, the core of America's military presence in the Asia-Pacific region.

"These missiles are no joke because it seems pretty clear they're aiming to mount nuclear warheads," and evade missile defense systems, said Duyeon Kim, a senior analyst at the Washington-based Center for a New American Security.

She said the nature of these missiles would require U.S. and South Korea to develop an effective response by returning to their normal scale and scope of joint military exercises, which have been downsized under the Trump administration to make room for diplomacy.

AP writer Amer Madhani contributed to the story from Washington.

## Tornado outbreak strikes Alabama, Georgia; at least 5 dead

By KEVIN MCGILL Associated Press

Blaring tornado sirens and howling winds roared across parts of western Georgia early Friday as severe storms pounded southern states, including in Alabama where at least five people died in twisters that wrecked homes, splintered trees and crumpled businesses.

Meteorologists said a large, dangerous tornado swept through metro Atlanta's Coweta County around midnight Friday, sparking a tornado emergency for the city of Newnan and surrounding communities. There were several reports downed trees and power lines.

Newnan police asked residents to "get off the roads" in a Facebook post, explaining that emergency officials were surveying the area.

Newnan Utilities said the storm knocked out its phone and internet services. Hours later, general manager Dennis McEntire said the phone lines returned. He urged residents to follow the utility on social media for any updates.

"It's still dark so it's hard to assess all of the damage but we believe we have 30 broken poles," McEntire said. "We serve about 10,000 customers and about half are without electricity right now."

McEntire said the damage from the storm was severe and it will "take several days, with the help from outside crews, to put the system together again."

Newnan Mayor Keith Brady said no fatalities were immediately reported.

The strong storm followed a series of tornadoes that ripped through Alabama on Thursday, including one that authorities said traveled roughly 100 miles (160 kilometers) across the state.

In east Alabama, Calhoun County Sheriff Matthew Wade said five people died in a twister that cut a diagonal path across the county, striking mostly rural areas — something that likely kept the death toll from being higher.

"Our hearts, our thoughts and our prayers go to the families, and we are going to do our best to let them know we love them," Wade said at an evening briefing.

Multiple twisters sprang from a "super cell" of storms that later moved into Georgia, said John De Block, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Birmingham.

Several school districts were closed or delayed Friday due to the damage.

Vast areas of Shelby County near Birmingham — the state's biggest city — were badly damaged.

In the city of Pelham, James Dunaway said he initially ignored the tornado warning when it came over his phone. But then he heard the twister approaching, left the upstairs bedroom where he had been watching television and entered a hallway — just before the storm blew off the roof and sides of his house. His bedroom was left fully exposed.

"I'm very lucky to be alive," Dunaway, 75, told Al.com.

Firefighters outside a flattened home in the Eagle Point subdivision, also in Shelby County, said the family that lived there made it out alive. Nearby homes were roofless or missing their second stories.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 27 of 91

Farther west in the city of Centreville, south of Tuscaloosa, Cindy Smitherman and her family and neighbors huddled in their underground storm pit as a twister passed over their home.

A tree fell on the shelter door, trapping the eight inside for about 20 minutes until someone came with a chain saw to help free them, said Smitherman, 62. The twister downed trees, overturned cars and destroyed a workshop on the property.

"I'm just glad we're alive," she said. "Praise the Lord."

Centreville Mayor Mike Oakley told ABC 33/40 news that a local airport was hit. "We have airplanes torn apart like toys. We've got homes along here that are totally destroyed, trees down, power lines down. It's pretty devastating."

As many as eight tornadoes might have hit Alabama on Thursday, De Block said. He said investigation teams will review eight suspected tornado tracks, and the final twister number will depend on if any of those tracks can be connected.

First lady Jill Biden postponed a trip to Birmingham and Jasper, Alabama, that she had planned for Friday because of the severe weather, her office said in a news release.

"Thinking of everyone in Alabama and all of those impacted by the severe weather across the South tonight. My prayers are with the grieving families. Please stay safe," Biden tweeted late Thursday.

Earlier, Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey issued an emergency declaration for 46 counties, and officials opened shelters in and around Birmingham.

Other parts of the southern U.S. were also affected, with dangerous thunderstorms and flooding concerns for parts of Tennessee, Kentucky and the Carolinas.

In addition to deaths in Alabama, Mississippi had a storm-related death on Wednesday. Ester Jarrell, 62, died in that state's Wilkinson County when a large tree toppled over onto her mobile home after heavy rain soaked the ground, an official told AP.

---

McGill reported from New Orleans. Associated Press writer Kim Chandler in Montgomery, photographer Butch Dill in Alabama, and Desiree Mathurin in Atlanta contributed to this report.

## Hands touch: Italy's nursing homes emerge from COVID tunnel

By COLLEEN BARRY Associated Press

ALZANO LOMBARDO, Italy (AP) — Their last hug was through plastic.

Palmiro "Mario" Tami knew this was the day he was getting his second coronavirus vaccine shot. But with the northern Italian region of Lombardy again under lockdown, he did not know it would be accompanied by a visit from his wife of 58 years. Nor that he would be able, at last, to touch her hand.

"Franca? Is that you?" Tami, 82, exclaimed as he peered through the window of the nursing home room at a figure wrapped in a hospital gown, coiffed hair covered by green surgical netting and face obscured by a surgical mask. Still, through the glass, her bright blue eyes shone through.

His wife, Franca Persico, held a red rose she had brought for him. Tami reached inside his canvas pouch for a tiny statuette of a girl for her. "I won it at Bingo," Tami said with delight.

The Martino Zanchi Foundation Nursing Home has been closed to visitors for most of the month, as Italy's pandemic epicenter of Lombardy plunged again into a near-total lockdown. Tami and his wife last saw each other in person on Feb. 24, Tami's birthday. They were able to embrace through a hug tunnel, an inflatable plastic structure that permitted residents to safely hug loved ones. Even that muffled touch had been denied since August.

The final jab for the first one-third of the nursing home's 94 residents this week marked the beginning of the end of a year-long struggle to protect its fragile wards.

Nursing homes like the Martino Zanchi Foundation suffered the brunt of Italy's first wave, claiming at least one-third of Italy's official virus victims. Many more were not tested or counted as they died.

Nursing home director Maria Giulia Madaschi estimates that three-quarters of the 21 people who died in her care in March and April 2020 had COVID-19, which ravaged the valley next to Bergamo, spreading



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 28 of 91

from Alzano Lombardo's hospital nearby. But the system was too taxed to test nursing home residents and those deaths never figured into Italy's death toll.

Italy has prioritized vaccines to the devastated nursing homes, and officials have declared a decline in cases among residents "an initial success" in a vaccination campaign otherwise marred by supply delays and disorganization. Half of Italy's over-80s at large still have not been vaccinated, despite initial promises to have them fully vaccinated by the end of March.

On Monday, 27 of the nursing home's residents received their second shot. Another round of vaccinations were made in the week, and the final group will be protected in early April. Madaschi hopes this is a sign that they are emerging from the dark COVID-19 tunnel.

"A little light, I can see," she said.

Tami, a retired nurse in orthopedic surgery, received his jab happily. The doctor who administered it, knowing Tami's pride in his former profession, teased that she had once been his apprentice.

Tami had arrived at the nursing home in August during a lull in the pandemic. Tami had suffered mobility and cognitive declines due to heart issues, and then his wife underwent surgery for cancer shortly before Italy's 2020 spring lockdown. Doctors advised she could no longer give him the care he needed at home.

The irregularity of visits and the changing restrictions due to COVID-19 were a cause of stress — and a strong enough reason for Madaschi to make an exception to the no-visitor rule.

Madaschi picked Persico, 77, up at the apartment the couple had shared, which was filled with family photographs, including that of a first great-grandchild, and cut crystal glasses and vases. Persico, dressed elegantly in a knit top with a shimmer of gold lurex, confessed she had been ready since 7 a.m.

"I wasn't even this nervous on my wedding day," she said. "Maybe because I was younger."

The couple's reunion started hesitantly, separated at first by glass. But the nursing home staff had prepared a private table in the rec room for lunch. The couple sat at either end, as Persico explained that she still hadn't been vaccinated, reminding her husband that she was a cancer patient who needed to take extra care.

"I am crazy in love with you," Tami said across the long table. "Can I touch your hand?"

Madaschi pushed Tami outdoors into the sunlight, where the couple, at last, clasped hands. "We can kiss each other again?" he asked from behind his mask.

Of course, his bride of 58 years answered. When she, too, has had the vaccine.

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

## In a nation founded on whiteness, how to really discuss it?

By DEEPTI HAJELA Associated Press

John Bost seems precisely the kind of person that his fellow Americans could have a conversation with — politically moderate, neither an Obama voter nor a Trump one, willing to engage with those both more liberal and more conservative than he is, the former mayor of the North Carolina town where he has lived for more than a quarter century.

Trouble is, when it comes to talking about race with other white people, when it comes to THAT conversation, the talks he tries to have often lead to the exact same place: absolutely nowhere.

"They try to compliment you. But I read between the lines. They say, 'You're a deep thinker,'" Bost, 72, of Clemmons, North Carolina, says, laughing. "After a while, they just don't show up as much."

The conversation. The one about race. The one about whiteness and what it means in a multiracial society that is 150 years out of slavery but still reverberating with racial horror. The 21st-century conversation that seems more relevant than ever, yet the one many white people simply don't have, or don't want to.

As pervasive and perpetual a subject as race is and has been in the United States — a reality that revealed itself even more starkly over the past year — the conversation about it has been a lopsided one. Most of the talking, protesting and calling for change has come from people of color.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 29 of 91

"We have all these other ways to not talk about race and white supremacy and white nationalism," says the Rev. Jason Chesnut, a minister in Vancouver, Washington, who is white.

Call it the "fish don't know they're in water" perspective: As the largest, dominant group in the United States, assuming the position of the "norm," white people generally have not identified with having an everyday collective racial identity like Black, Asian American, Native and Latino communities.

And yet, those who research it say, whiteness — and a commitment to it, however conscious — is as present as the air.

"For a long time, it was very easy for white people to sort of ignore race, because they could take their racial group for granted, and especially in an environment where they didn't perceive a lot of threats to their group and its status," said Ashley Jardina, an assistant professor of political science at Duke University who researches white identity politics.

S. Michael Gaddis, an assistant professor of sociology at UCLA, says research shows that for many white people, "their views on race are still in an era where race is something we should not be talking about."

The day of the insurrection at the U.S. Capitol in January proved an apt case study for looking at this issue.

The racial makeup of the Jan. 6 insurrection was hard to miss — a predominantly white crowd of rioters, including some with connections to white nationalist and extremist groups, violently disrupting the certification of the presidential election and running unhindered through the Capitol, a symbol of American democracy.

The lax policing, a contrast to the strong law enforcement presence seen last summer during protests over the police killings of Black men and women, was swiftly pointed out as a racial double standard, and the presence of current or former military or law enforcement among the rioters sparked concern over extremism in military ranks.

But the entire crowd wasn't law enforcement, or flag-waving extremist militia. Far from it. They were also regular, everyday white people — small business owners, students, employees — who were ready to overturn an election because they thought their candidate needed to stay in office.

That's something white Americans must wrestle with, as Chesnut sees it. Trouble is, he's not particularly optimistic, based on his experience doing anti-racist work. Most white people he meets are surprised that a white man would even talk about race as much as he does.

"I don't know if white people have learned how to be in a multiracial democracy," Chesnut says. "White supremacy is destroying us, too, and I don't think we talk enough about that."

Or about much having to do with whiteness. In 2019, a Pew Research Center survey found that just 15% of white people considered being white either extremely or very important to how they think about themselves. That compares to 74% of Black people, 59% of Hispanic people and 56% of Asian people. The number of white people who considered their race extremely important to their self-image was just 5%.

Laurissa Steadman, a conservative and a Trump supporter, says it's easier for white Americans who are liberal to speak about their politics than it is for white conservatives. She says white conservatives like her are often accused of being racist.

Steadman, from California's San Francisco Bay Area, doesn't see race in what happened at the Capitol. She says it was an expression of political frustration, and that the supremacist presence was a small fringe that does not represent conservatives.

But she acknowledges the criticism that white conservatives face by not being willing to have a conversation about race.

"I believe there will be assumptions made about them, and their voices will not be heard and the assumptions will be the narrative," she says.

High-profile events driven by racists also impede conversation. When white Americans have emphasized their racial identity in ways viewed as threatening — such as during the Capitol insurrection or the 2017 white nationalist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia — it makes white people in general more reluctant to acknowledge white as their racial identifier, Jardina says.

"The more we associate people storming the Capitol and waving Confederate flags with white identity

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 30 of 91

and white supremacy, with a capital W and a capital S, the more we'll find that many white Americans are going to back away from this," she says.

That avoidance is precisely the problem, says the Rev. Susan Chorley, a Boston-area pastor.

"This mess has been from the founding of this country. This mess has been in our soil. It's in our soul," Chorley says. "It's everywhere, and we've never really completely decided that we will look at it."

If white people want the future to be different, she says, they have to be willing to look at the past and the present — and talk about it as if the nation depended upon it. Which, many say, it does.

"I think it's on us," Chorley says. "We as white people need to be gathering up our white people."

But getting white Americans to genuinely wrestle with these issues, Jardina says, will be a struggle.

"Are white people willing to confront and have a conversation about the extent to which white racial prejudice and white racism, and the desire to maintain white power in the United States, is part of our political process?" she asks. "I'd say that for the majority of white people, the answer is no, they're not ready to have that conversation."

---

Hajela is a member of The Associated Press' Race and Ethnicity team. Follow her on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/dhajela>

## Sticky bombs latest weapon in Afghanistan's arsenal of war

By KATHY GANNON Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — Sticky bombs slapped onto cars trapped in Kabul's chaotic traffic are the newest weapons terrorizing Afghans in the increasingly lawless nation, as Washington searches for a responsible exit after decades of war.

The primitive devices, sometimes made in mechanics' workshops for little money, are used by militants, criminals or those trying to settle personal scores. Over the past year, one or more cars have been exploding in Kabul almost every day and residents are terrified.

The administration of President Joe Biden has alternated between coaxing and sharp words — even offering a ready-made peace proposal — to hurry the Taliban and the Afghan government toward an end to the conflict. In the Afghan capital last weekend, U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin said America wanted a "responsible end" to Afghanistan's relentless war. But in the meantime violence is escalating and taking the occasional new twist, such as the sticky bombs.

Kabul, a city traumatized by war, has been the scene of many suicide bombings and shooting attacks. But the heavy use of sticky bombs is relatively new, said former interior minister Masoud Andarabi. "What is new is that they (attackers) have created a simple model," he said, noting that sticky bombs are easy to make for about \$25 and easy to carry.

Some victims are targeted, while others appear to have been chosen at random, with the aim of terrorizing an entire population, Andarabi said. One motive appears to be to undermine faith in peace efforts among ordinary Afghans, with the Taliban and the government blaming each other for the chaos.

The campaign has had an impact, leaving motorists navigating Kabul's chaotic traffic wondering if the nearby car might explode, or whether a beggar weaving through the traffic might be carrying a sticky bomb.

Typically, sticky bombs consist of explosives packed in a small box, a magnet attached to the box and a mobile phone. The bomb-maker programs a number into the phone number and dials it, with the last digit setting off the blast once he is clear of the targeted car.

Tactics vary, say security forces. Occasionally, a small child begging for money will be used to distract the driver, while the bomber sticks the small box under the wheel well. A new ruse is to drop the sticky bomb from inside a hole cut near the gearshift of the attacker's vehicle as the target vehicle approaches from behind. When the target is over the small bomb it is detonated.

There is no shortage of recruits from the city's poor, who make up roughly two-thirds of Afghanistan's 35 million people. According to the World Bank, 72% of Afghanistan's 35 million people live on roughly \$1.90 a day and unemployment is around 30%.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 31 of 91

In January, a mechanic was arrested in Kabul's destitute Shah Shaheed area, where ramshackle shops line up tightly against each other. Abdul Sami, 30, was accused of putting sticky bombs inside newly repaired vehicles.

Sami's shop was one of more than a dozen workshops and spare parts shops on a rutted road in Shah Shaheed. It's now shuttered and the tattered sign that once welcomed customers has been removed.

In 2015 the neighborhood was blown apart by a powerful truck bomb that killed 15 people and injured nearly 150. Ruins from that day still litter the local landscape.

Most of the mechanics in the area knew Sami, who was accused by security forces of putting sticky bombs on random cars, not particularly targeting anyone. Like the other mechanics, Sami was poor, making around \$6 on some days and nothing on many other days, said Massoud, a mechanic who wanted to give only his first name for fear of attracting the attention of government security forces.

Since Sami's arrest, police and security personnel have hovered in the area, interrogating mechanics, watching them.

Massoud was reluctant to talk.

"We never knew he was involved with sticky bombs," he said. "We still don't know if he was doing it. The security officials came and arrested him, we never knew that he was doing anything wrong."

Sticky bombs have targeted journalists, members of the judiciary and reformers from Afghanistan's nascent civil society. But Andarabi, the former interior minister, said attacks have also been random and unpredictable, designed to terrorize and cast the government as incompetent and unable to protect its citizens.

Andarabi blamed the Taliban, while the insurgent group pointed the finger at the security forces, claiming they use the bombings to discredit the Taliban and sabotage peace talks to stay in power.

The Islamic State group affiliate, fought by both the government and the Taliban, has claimed many of the attacks, particularly those targeting journalists, the judiciary and civil society.

A former intelligence chief said mechanics are typically just pawns in the network that plans these attacks.

"They're not ideologues. Someone like the mechanic is just poor, maybe even threatened: 'If you don't do this then your family will be in danger.' I think then anyone would do it," said Rahmatullah Nabil, a former head of Afghanistan's intelligence, known as the NDS.

Massoud, the mechanic, said he worries with every new customer. "Whenever a driver brings in his vehicle for repairs I am afraid there might be a sticky bomb somewhere on the car," he said. He said he fears he could find himself in jail, accused of planting the explosives.

Kabul taxi driver Dil Agha said he's afraid of children and panhandlers jostling among the cars and tries to stay clear of government vehicles, in case they are targeted. Agha said he worries every day on the job might be his last.

"We are afraid of everyone, the street children and the beggars, who might put the sticky bomb on our cars, especially in a crowded area," he said.

---

Follow Kathy Gannon on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/KathyGannon>

## N Korea confirms missile tests as Biden warns of response

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korea on Friday confirmed it had tested a new guided missile, as President Joe Biden warned of consequences if Pyongyang escalates tensions amid stalled nuclear negotiations.

The North's official Korean Central News Agency said the two "new-type tactical guided projectiles" accurately hit the target off the eastern coast on Thursday. Photos on the website of the North's main Rodong Sinmun newspaper showed a missile lifting off from a transport erector launcher amid bright flames.

KCNA quoted top official Ri Pyong Chol, who supervised the test, as saying that the new weapon's development "is of great significance in bolstering up the military power of the country and deterring all



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 32 of 91

sorts of military threats existing on the Korean Peninsula.”

Japanese officials said both weapons tested Thursday were ballistic missiles, which are prohibited by U.N. Security Council resolutions. According to South Korean officials, North Korea fired two other missiles on Sunday but they were likely cruise missiles, which are not banned.

The test-firings were the North’s first major provocation since Biden took office in January. Some experts say North Korea aimed to apply pressure on the Biden administration to boost its leverage in future talks.

“We’re consulting with our allies and partners,” Biden told a news conference Thursday. “And there will be responses if they choose to escalate. We will respond accordingly. But I’m also prepared for some form of diplomacy, but it has to be conditioned upon the end result of denuclearization.”

The United States has asked for a meeting of the U.N. Security Council committee that monitors sanctions against North Korea, and it’s set to take place Friday morning behind closed doors. The committee includes representatives from all 15 nations on the council.

South Korean President Moon Jae-in, who’s pursuing better ties with North Korea, issued a rare criticism of Pyongyang on Friday over the launches.

“I know very well our people have big worries about North Korea’s missile launches yesterday,” Moon said during a military ceremony. “Now is time for South and North Korea and the United States to make efforts to (resume) talks. An act that hampers the dialogue mood is not desirable at all.”

U.S.-North Korea talks on curbing the North’s nuclear ambitions have been in a limbo for about two years due to disputes over U.S.-led sanctions on the North. In January, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un said he would expand his weapons arsenal and build up his country’s military capability to cope with what he called American hostility.

KCNA said the new weapon’s warhead weight has been improved to 2.5 tons (5,510 pounds). It said Thursday’s test also confirmed the reliability of the improved version of the weapon’s solid fuel engine, which would boost missile mobility, and of its low-altitude, maneuverable flight.

South Korean observers said the weapon is likely an upgraded North Korean version of the Russian-made Iskander, a short-range nuclear-capable missile designed to fly at a low altitude and make in-flight guidance adjustments. They said it has a better chance of evading missile defense systems in South Korea.

Japanese Defense Minister Nobuo Kishi said Friday the North Korean weapon is a new type of ballistic missile that was shown during a military parade in Pyongyang in January. Kishi said Japan would strengthen its missile defense system to “ensure peace and safety.”

---

Associated Press writers Edith M. Lederer at the United Nations and Mari Yamaguchi in Tokyo contributed to this report.

## **Ethiopia says Eritrea agrees to withdraw troops from Tigray**

KHARTOUM, Sudan (AP) — Ethiopia’s prime minister said Friday that Eritrea has agreed to withdraw its forces from the Tigray region, where witnesses have described them looting, killing and raping civilians.

The statement by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed’s office comes after intense pressure from the United States and others to address the deadly crisis in Tigray.

Abiy’s statement after a visit to Eritrea said that Ethiopian forces will take over guarding the border areas “effective immediately.”

Abiy only in the past week has acknowledged the presence of soldiers from Eritrea, long an enemy of the Tigray leaders who once dominated Ethiopia’s government.

The new statement doesn’t say how many Eritrean soldiers have been in Ethiopia, though witnesses have estimated well in the thousands.

There was no immediate comment from Eritrea, one of the world’s most secretive countries.

Abiy shocked the region in 2018 by making peace with Eritrea after a long border war in the Tigray region, an achievement for which he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. But since the current Tigray conflict began in November, Abiy has been accused of teaming up with Eritrea to pursue the now-fugitive

Tigray leaders.

Abiy's statement accuses the former Tigray leaders of starting the conflict by attacking Ethiopian forces, then drawing Eritrea into the fighting by firing rockets into Eritrea's capital. But witnesses have alleged the involvement of Eritrean soldiers from the start of the fighting.

The U.S. weeks ago demanded that Eritrean soldiers leave Tigray immediately, and pressure increased in recent days with the Biden administration dispatching Sen. Chris Coons to Ethiopia nearly a week ago for hours of talks with Abiy.

No one knows how many thousands of people, especially civilians, have been killed in the Tigray fighting. The region of some 6 million people has been largely cut off from the world, and despite some progress in aid delivery, humanitarian workers have warned that food and other supplies coming in are far from enough amid fears of starvation.

And only in recent days has the United Nations human rights office said it's been allowed into the Tigray region in a limited capacity to support investigations into alleged atrocities including mass rapes by Eritrean soldiers and others.

A spokeswoman for Abiy's office did not immediately respond to questions about Friday's statement, including why the Eritreans had not withdrawn after earlier requests.

## **New problems arise for crop storage as planet gets warmer**

By JOHN FLESHER AP Environmental Writer

MECOSTA, Mich. (AP) — For generations, Brian Sackett's family has farmed potatoes that are made into chips found on grocery shelves in much of the eastern U.S.

About 25% of the nation's potato chips get their start in Michigan, where reliably cool air during September harvest and late spring has been ideal for crop storage. That's a big reason why the state produces more chipping potatoes than any other.

But with temperatures edging higher, Sackett had to buy several small refrigeration units for his sprawling warehouses. Last year, he paid \$125,000 for a bigger one. It's expensive to operate, but beats having his potatoes rot.

"Our good, fresh, cool air is getting less all the time, it seems like," he said on a recent morning as a front-end loader scooped up piles of plump, light-brown potatoes that would be packed into a tractor trailer for shipment to chip factories.

The situation here illustrates a little-noticed hazard that climate change is posing for agriculture in much of the world. Once harvested, crops not immediately consumed or processed are stored — sometimes for months. The warming climate is making that job harder and costlier.

The annual period with outdoor air cool enough to store potatoes in Michigan's primary production area likely will shrink by up to 17 days by mid-century and up to a month by the late 2100s, according to an analysis by Julie Winkler, a Michigan State University geography and climate scientist.

The window for unrefrigerated storage is also narrowing for apples in the Northwest and Northeast, peanuts in the Southeast, lettuce in the Southwest and tomatoes in the Ohio valley, according to follow-up research published last year by plant physiology scientist Courtney Leisner at Auburn University.

Techmark Inc., an agricultural engineering company based in Lansing, Michigan, designed the Sackett farm's equipment. Co-owner Todd Forbush, whose customers also include growers of sugar beets, onions and carrots, said storage of those crops increasingly will need refrigeration.

Growers will face tough choices about the economics of their operations. Producers who install equipment to regulate temperature and humidity will see power costs rising as the outside air gets hotter.

"Whose pocket is it going to come out of? Probably the consumer," Leisner said, adding that the potential effects of global warming on storage had been "largely ignored."

"There's a big disconnect in our minds about the chain of events between the field and the grocery store and onto our plate," she said. "Just a few degrees can make all the difference in whether it's economical to store the fruits and vegetables that we expect to have on our dinner table 365 days a year."

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 34 of 91

Aside from potentially higher prices, climate change may worsen food shortages caused by spoilage. About 14% of food produced globally — and 20% of fruits and vegetables — goes bad between harvest and retail, according to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization. Wasted food is a significant source of greenhouse gases.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, small farmers lose up to one-third of their stored grain to insects and mold, which can produce toxins. Rising temperatures will make it easier for pests to survive winters, said Tanya Strathers, an associate professor with the University of Greenwich's Natural Resources Institute in London.

Stored grain will be more susceptible to rotting, Strathers said.

"When people are getting production off just an acre or two of land, their margin for error is very low," said Jake Ricker-Gilbert, a Purdue University agricultural economist who has worked in several African nations including Malawi and Tanzania.

For delicate fruits and vegetables in the U.S. and Europe, a leading storage hurdle comes immediately after harvest, when temperatures must be lowered quickly to avoid decay. Lettuce and leafy greens such as kale are especially vulnerable, said Deirdre Holcroft, a plant biologist who worked previously for Dole Food Co. Inc.

Climate change is "going to add more and more pressure into the system," Holcroft said.

In Mecosta, Michigan, the Sackett potato operation long needed only fans to cool down freshly dug potatoes to 60 degrees (15.5 degrees Celsius) or lower, and keep them there for months.

A computer-controlled system pulls in outside air, which industrial-sized wall fans blow across a humidifying pad. Floor slats in the 16 storage bins enable the air to rise through mounds of potatoes, regulating their temperature and moisture so they won't dry out or get too wet and spoil.

But as the weather warms, it isn't always enough.

During the 1990s, there were three years when Michigan's average temperature in September and October was above normal. The 2000s had six such years. From 2010-2020, the total rose to eight.

Sackett began investing in small refrigeration units about a decade ago. The larger, custom-made device he got last year can be wheeled around to different bins, helping cool things down as needed.

"Definitely not a cheap purchase," he said, adding that another may become necessary.

What all this means for the price of a bag of potato chip isn't clear. But producers will have to offset their rising costs somehow, said Forbush of Techmark, the equipment company.

"We as a society need to do a better job of not wasting food," he said. "If we don't put the necessary energy into storing that product, it could get worse."

---

Follow John Flesher on Twitter: @johnflesher

## As contact tracing ebbs in parts of US, NYC stays committed

By JENNIFER PELTZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Coronavirus contact tracing programs across the U.S. scaled back their ambitions as cases surged in winter, but New York City has leaned into its \$600 million tracing initiative.

The city hired more tracers during the holiday season surge and in early March hit its goal of reaching at least 90% of people who test positive, a mark it hadn't reached since around Thanksgiving. Last week, the number hit 96%.

Overwhelmed tracing programs elsewhere confronted the wave by switching to automated calls, limiting the types of cases they trace or telling infected people simply to reach out to their contacts themselves.

But New York remains committed, saying tracing helped curb the city's second surge and is all the more necessary now as vaccination campaigns race to outpace the spread of worrisome viral variants.

"This is the danger zone, where we can't let our guard down," contact tracing chief Dr. Ted Long says.

Still, considerable challenges remain. Less than half of people who test positive name anyone they might have exposed to the virus. Some stop answering a blizzard of follow-ups meant to ensure they're staying isolated.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 35 of 91

There's some debate among public health experts over whether local governments should cut back on contact tracing and focus more on vaccination.

After enduring the country's deadliest coronavirus surge last spring, New York City set up what appears to be the biggest contact tracing effort in any U.S. city, now counting about 4,000 tracers and a \$582 million budget for this fiscal year and next. Another \$184 million is budgeted for services such as voluntary hotel stays for people who can't isolate at home.

Tracing infected people was easier in mid-August, when the city had about 200 new cases daily. It became a monumental effort by mid-January, when new cases topped 6,000 per day.

Since then, the daily caseload has fallen by about half. Still, the city's five boroughs have infection rates in the top 2% of counties nationwide. Long argues the city's tracing program helped limit the surge to considerably fewer new deaths per person than in the U.S. as a whole.

Tracer Jessica Morris said "it was very intense for two-and-a-half straight months" during the wave.

Slammed with calls to make and callbacks to answer, tracers strove to compress their conversations without skipping important information. "I've mastered the art of breaking the ice really efficiently," she said.

Though responses vary, Morris said she's "usually able to get through to some degree — maybe not full-blown contact sharing, but at least a willingness to stay home" and respond to monitoring.

Some infected people report they were already quarantining so didn't have any contacts. Others simply don't name names, saying they personally called their contacts and felt they didn't need the city's involvement.

The city's tracing efforts can be intense.

Emmaia Gelman, a graduate student in New York City, said contact tracers called her about 70 times after she tested positive. Each day brought calls, texts or both to monitor her and her two children, who tested negative.

Gelman briefly stopped answering the calls. She also held back some names of people she'd been in contact with before her symptoms emerged, for reasons including the people's immigration status.

"You're always wary because you're putting people's names on a list," said Gelman, who said she notified all her contacts before a tracer called her.

Long said the city is now planning to let one person answer for a family.

"But I do stand by our persistence," he said. "One of the characteristics of our program that I'm proud of is that we're a group of people that will not give up."

Faced with their own surges, some other state and local governments decided to dial back their tracing efforts.

In Philadelphia, tracers were stretched so thin that they tried to reach just half of new cases as of early February — and fewer lately as most staffers temporarily switched to helping with vaccination call centers and distribution, Public Health Department spokesman Matt Rankin said.

Chicago began automating calls and instructing recipients to notify their own contacts in December, conducting in-person interviews only in clusters and for cases deemed priorities, according to Health Department spokesperson Alyse Kittner. Automation is enabling the city to reach over 90% of newly diagnosed people, she said.

New York City hasn't needed to take such steps, Long said.

Yet some other public health experts are having second thoughts about U.S. contact tracing efforts.

A new study of 300 people who had antibodies for the virus found that 60% had no idea they had been infected, making it unlikely tracers knew either. The study, which hasn't yet been reviewed by other scientists, also found that less than 18% had been asked about their contacts.

"Contact tracing is not a tactic that's going to work well, given the speed and the scale and the stealth with which this virus spreads," said lead author Denis Nash, a City University of New York epidemiology professor. He argues that resources may be better spent on addressing vaccination disparities, among other strategies.

Philadelphia-based epidemiologist Carolyn Cannuscio saw contact tracing hit its limits as she helped lead



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 36 of 91

Penn Medicine's program. The holiday season surge forced tracers to focus on cases seen as high spreading risks, though tracers have since resumed trying to reach all its patients who test positive.

Still, she said tracing remains valuable and could help answer such questions as whether vaccinated people can transmit the virus.

"We shouldn't just give up and think, 'Now is not the time for contact tracing,'" she said.

## Georgia Gov. Kemp signs GOP election bill amid an outcry

By BEN NADLER and JEFF AMY Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp drew protests Thursday as he signed into law a sweeping Republican-sponsored overhaul of state elections that includes new restrictions on voting by mail and greater legislative control over how elections are run.

Democrats and voting rights groups say the law will disproportionately disenfranchise voters of color. It is one of a wave of GOP-backed election bills introduced in states around the country after former President Donald Trump stoked false claims that fraud led to his 2020 election defeat.

President Joe Biden called such GOP efforts "un-American" and "sick" during a news conference Thursday. And a group of voter mobilization groups filed a lawsuit late Thursday in federal court in Atlanta challenging the new law.

The Republican changes to voting law in Georgia follows record-breaking turnout that led to Democratic victories in the presidential contest and two U.S. Senate runoffs in the once reliably red state.

"After the November election last year, I knew, like so many of you, that significant reforms to our state elections were needed," said Kemp, who drew Trump's ire after certifying Biden's victory in Georgia.

Kemp signed the bill less than two hours after it cleared the Georgia General Assembly. The state House approved it 100-75, before the state Senate quickly agreed to House changes, 34-20. Republicans supported it, with Democrats opposed.

At his first news conference, Biden harshly criticized Republican moves to limit voting rights and vowed to do all he could with allies to stop the effort.

"The Republican voters I know find this despicable, Republican voters, the folks outside this White House. I'm not talking about the elected officials. I'm talking about voters." Biden said.

In Georgia, Democratic state Senate Minority Leader Gloria Butler called the efforts by Republicans "voter suppression tactics."

"We are witnessing right now a massive and unabashed assault on voting rights unlike anything we've seen since the Jim Crow era," Butler added.

As Kemp delivered his remarks he was interrupted by a commotion before a livestream of the event cut out.

Democratic state Rep. Park Cannon, who is Black, was arrested by Capitol police amid a protest after knocking on the door of the governor's office during his remarks.

Video captured by a bystander shows Cannon, who is handcuffed with her arms behind her back, being forcibly removed from the Capitol by two officers, one on each arm. She says "where are you taking me?" and "stop" as she is taken from the building.

Cannon was charged with felony obstruction of law enforcement, punishable by one to five years in prison, and with disrupting a session of the General Assembly. She was released late Thursday night.

It wasn't immediately known if Cannon had a lawyer who could comment.

The Georgia law requires a photo ID in order to vote absentee by mail, after more than 1.3 million Georgia voters used that option during the COVID-19 pandemic. It also cuts the time people have to request an absentee ballot and limits where ballot drop boxes can be placed and when they can be accessed.

Democratic Rep. Rhonda Burnough said the bill is based on lies told by Republicans after November's election.

"Georgians turned out in record-breaking numbers because they could access the ballot," Burnough said. "Lies upon lies were told about our elections in response, and now this bill is before us built on those

same lies.”

Republican Rep. Jan Jones said the provisions cutting the time people have to request an absentee ballot are meant to “increase the likelihood of a voter’s vote being cast successfully,” after concerns were raised about mail ballots not being received in time to be counted.

One of the biggest changes gives the GOP-controlled legislature more control over election administration. That has raised alarms about potential greater partisan influence.

The law replaces the elected secretary of state as the chair of the state election board with a new appointee of the legislature after Republican Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger rebuffed Trump’s attempts to overturn Georgia’s election results. It also allows the board to remove and replace county election officials deemed to be underperforming.

That provision is widely seen as something that could be used to target Fulton County, a Democratic stronghold covering most of Atlanta, which came under fire after long lines plagued summertime primary elections.

Republican Rep. Barry Fleming, a driving force in crafting the law, said that provision would only be a “temporary fix, so to speak, that ends and the control is turned back over to the locals after the problems are resolved.”

The law also reduces the timeframe in which runoff elections are held, including the amount of early voting for runoffs. And it bars outside groups from handing out food or water to people in line to vote.

The law does not contain some of the more contentious proposals floated by Republicans earlier, including limits on early voting on Sundays, a popular day for Black churchgoers to vote in “souls to the polls” events. It instead mandates two Saturdays of early voting ahead of general elections, when only one had been mandatory, and leaves two Sundays as optional.

A lawsuit filed late Thursday in the U.S. District Court in Atlanta by three groups — New Georgia Project, Black Voters Matter Fund and Rise — challenged key provisions of the new law and said they violated the Voting Rights Act. There was no immediate response from Georgia officials.

## Small Texas border town is thoroughfare for migrant children

By ELLIOT SPAGAT Associated Press

ROMA, Texas (AP) — As darkness sets on the Rio Grande, U.S. Border Patrol agents hear pumps inflating rafts across the river in Mexico. It is about to get busy.

Within an hour, the rafts drop off about 100 people in six trips into the United States, including many families with toddlers and children as young as 7 traveling alone. All of them wear numbered yellow plastic wristbands that look like they could be used to get into a concert or amusement park, and everyone rips them off and tosses them on the ground after setting foot in the U.S. Large black letters on the wristbands read, “Entregas,” or “Deliveries,” apparently a mechanism for smugglers to keep track of migrants they are ferrying across the river that separates Texas and Mexico.

Roma, a town of 10,000 people with historic buildings and boarded-up storefronts in Texas’ Rio Grande Valley, is the latest epicenter of illegal crossings, where growing numbers of families and children are entering the United States to seek asylum.

U.S. authorities reported more than 100,000 encounters on the southern border in February, the highest since a four-month streak in 2019. More than 16,000 unaccompanied children were in government custody Thursday, including about 5,000 in substandard U.S. Customs and Border Protection facilities.

President Joe Biden, whom many migrants see as more welcoming than his predecessor, pushed back Thursday against suggestions that his administration’s immigration policies are responsible for the rising numbers. At his first news conference since taking office, Biden said the government will take steps to more quickly move hundreds of migrant children and teenagers out of cramped detention facilities.

On the Rio Grande, a smuggler balked when a U.S. agent asks him to land downriver on a rare patch of sand, complaining that another agent punctured his raft days earlier. The agent reassures him and negotiates a landing away from gnarly branches.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 38 of 91

"Children aboard," another smuggler shouts to authorities.

As the rafts approached shore Wednesday night, smugglers jumped into the shallow water, lifted children and took the hands of adults lined up single file to get off the rafts. The migrants walked — or are carried — a few steps, and the smuggler turned around for the next passenger without touching dry land.

A 7-year-old girl named Kaylee fought back tears as she bemoaned leaving her phone in the raft. A smuggler tells her she didn't, and she appears to shrug it off. Her mother's U.S. phone number is written in black marker on the arm of her shirt.

U.S. agents escort groups of migrants about a half-mile over dirt roads to a dead-end street on the edge of Roma, where other agents at a white folding table examine identification documents, take names and destinations, and answer questions. Children traveling alone are separated from families, and people put their valuables in plastic bags.

From there, they head to a nearby parking lot and get into buses, vans and SUVs. Unaccompanied children are supposed to be held by CBP no more than 72 hours, but they are often held longer because U.S. Health and Human Services lacks space. Health and Human Services is housing children at the Dallas Convention Center and said it will open emergency facilities at venues or military bases in San Antonio, El Paso, San Diego and elsewhere.

The Biden administration expels nearly all single adults without an opportunity to seek asylum under pandemic-related powers declared under a public health law. But six of 10 people in migrant families encountered by authorities in February were allowed to stay in the U.S. to seek asylum. Authorities say family expulsions have been limited by Mexico's reluctance to accept some of them, particularly from the Rio Grande Valley, the busiest corridor for illegal crossings.

In 2019, Central American migrants favored a nearby area to cross, but a wall built during Donald Trump's presidency has pushed them closer to Roma, where the channel is relatively narrow but the current is brisk.

A 17-year-old from El Salvador said he left home recently because he felt threatened by gangs and believes Biden is sympathetic to migrants. Asked how he knew of Biden's positions, he said, "people who talk."

Maynor Cruz, 29, said Biden's policies had nothing do with his decision to leave San Pedro Sula, Honduras, about two months ago, but he heard that families with young children were being allowed to remain in the United States.

Cruz said he was happy to be in the U.S. after a treacherous journey through Mexico, during which someone tried to kidnap his daughter. He left Honduras with his wife and children, ages 7 and 2, because he lost his job in a condiment factory when the pandemic struck and his home was destroyed by a tropical storm in November. He was able to raise enough money for the journey through family in the United States.

"It's difficult to begin from zero (in Honduras) with what you earn there," he said.

At the river, a lull set in after the initial rush. CBP reported that it took 681 unaccompanied children into custody Wednesday. That total excludes Mexicans, who are typically returned immediately.

## Weather service: 8 tornadoes hit Alabama, killing at least 5

By KEVIN MCGILL Associated Press

A string of deadly tornadoes roared through Alabama on Thursday, toppling trees, demolishing homes and knocking out power to thousands, part of a broad swath of violent weather sweeping across the Deep South. At least five fatalities and an unknown number of injuries were reported.

The confirmed deaths were in Calhoun County, in the eastern part of the state, where one of multiple twisters sprang from a "super cell" of storms that later moved into Georgia, said John De Block, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Birmingham.

Pat Lindsey, a resident of the county's hard-hit town of Ohatchee, told The Associated Press that a neighbor of his was killed when a twister destroyed his mobile home. "He was good as gold," Lindsey said.

Calhoun County Sheriff Matthew Wade said the twister cut a diagonal path across the county, striking mostly rural areas — something that likely kept the death toll from being higher.

"Tonight, five people lost their lives and for those families, it will never be the same," Wade said at an

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 39 of 91

evening briefing. "Our hearts, our thoughts and our prayers go to the families, and we are going to do our best to let them know we love them."

Farther west, vast areas of Shelby County near Birmingham were badly damaged. In the city of Pelham, James Dunaway said he initially ignored the tornado warning when it came over his phone. But it wasn't long before he could hear the twister approaching, so he left the upstairs bedroom where he had been watching television and entered a hallway — just before the storm blew off the roof and sides of his house, completely exposing the bedroom. All three of his vehicles were undriveable.

"I'm very lucky to be alive," the 75-year-old Vietnam War veteran told Al.com.

Pelham authorities posted video of large trees blocking roads and utility poles leaning menacingly over debris-littered streets. Firefighters outside a flattened home in the Eagle Point subdivision, also in Shelby County, said the family that lived there made it out alive before they arrived. Nearby homes were roofless or missing their second stories.

Shelby County Sheriff John Samaniego told the AP that some houses in the county "have been completely destroyed."

As many as eight tornadoes might have hit the state on Thursday, De Block said. He said investigation teams will review eight suspected tornado tracks, and the final twister number will depend on if any of those tracks can be connected.

Search and rescue efforts were complicated by strong weather that continued to rake across the region. Radar "debris signatures" showed a tornado that formed in southwest Alabama traveled roughly 100 miles (161 kilometers) and stayed on the ground for about an hour and 20 minutes, De Block said.

The twisters ripped through towns from west to east. In the western city of Centreville, south of Tuscaloosa, Cindy Smitherman and her family and neighbors huddled in their underground storm pit as the twister passed over their home.

A tree fell on the shelter door, trapping the eight of them inside for about 20 minutes until someone came with a chain saw to remove the tree, said Smitherman, 62. The twister downed trees, overturned cars and destroyed a workshop on the property.

"I'm just glad we're alive," she said. "Praise the Lord."

Centreville Mayor Mike Oakley told ABC 33/40 news that a local airport was hit. "We have airplanes torn apart like toys. We've got homes along here that are totally destroyed, trees down, power lines down. It's pretty devastating," Oakley said.

More than 35,000 customers were without power in Alabama.

First lady Jill Biden postponed a trip to Birmingham and Jasper, Alabama, that she had planned for Friday because of the severe weather, her office said in a news release.

"Thinking of everyone in Alabama and all of those impacted by the severe weather across the South tonight. My prayers are with the grieving families. Please stay safe," Biden wrote on Twitter.

While Alabama was bearing the worst of Thursday's weather, forecasters warned of dangerous thunderstorms, flash floods and possible twisters from eastern Mississippi into western Georgia, and northward into Tennessee and Kentucky. Also, flash flood warnings and watches extended to the western Carolinas.

Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey issued an emergency declaration for 46 counties as the severe weather approached, and officials opened shelters in and around Birmingham.

Flash floods were a problem in parts of Alabama at times. State troopers closed all lanes of a section of Interstate 65 near Cullman after floodwaters covered the roadway. The highway was reopened later in the day.

Mississippi had a storm-related death on Wednesday. Ester Jarrell, 62, died when a large tree toppled over onto her mobile home after heavy rain soaked the ground, a Wilkinson County official told The Associated Press.

McGill reported from New Orleans. Associated Press writer Kim Chandler in Montgomery and photographer Butch Dill in Alabama contributed to this report.



## Biden leaves door open for Senate changes to advance agenda

By JONATHAN LEMIRE and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden at his first news conference left the door open to backing fundamental changes in Senate procedure to muscle key parts of his agenda like immigration and voting rights past Republican opposition “if there’s complete lockdown and chaos.”

Even as his administration navigates the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting economic damage, Biden is grappling with how to deliver on a host of big promises despite a razor-thin Senate majority. He teased that changes to Senate rules that would allow bills to pass with fewer votes may be necessary for him to achieve some of those goals.

“If there’s complete lockdown and chaos, as a consequence of the filibuster, then we’re going to have to go beyond what I’m talking about,” he said at the Thursday news conference.

Despite strong poll numbers, Biden faces headwinds in delivering on his ambitious legislative agenda. His party’s congressional majorities are narrow, Republican opposition appears entrenched and not all Democrats are aligned in reforming Senate rules on the filibuster.

Biden at first backed a modification — but not elimination — of the arcane procedural tactic. But he then suggested, at least on certain issues, he would go further, saying the filibuster — which requires 60 votes to pass legislation in the Senate — was being “abused in a gigantic way” by Republicans.

“I want to get things done. I want to get them done consistent with what we promised the American people,” said Biden, who spent decades in the Senate. “I am going to say something outrageous: I have never been particularly poor at calculating how to get things done in the United States Senate.”

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer at his own press conference Thursday declined to lean too heavily into filibuster changes, only saying that “everything, everything is on the table.”

And West Virginia Sen. Joe Manchin, a moderate Democrat whose vote is critical, said he thought the rules were there to make sure “the big guy doesn’t pick on the little guy,” adding that he was trying to protect “basic civility.”

Biden’s own political future came up at the press conference as well. The 78-year-old president said for the first time his “plan is to run for reelection, that is my expectation.” But he made clear his focus was on the here and now and not a distant election.

“I am going to deal with all of those problems,” he pledged.

One key item on the list: Republican efforts to limit voting rights, an effort the president deemed “sick” and “un-American.” He argued that even GOP voters believe actions that make it harder for people to cast ballots are “despicable” attempts to undermine democracy.

The president was repeatedly pressed about the situation at the U.S.-Mexico border, where increasing numbers of young migrants have overwhelmed the government’s holding facilities. Biden promised better media access to the camps — once his administration has a better handle on things — as well as improvements to the nation’s immigration system and U.S. help to improve conditions in the migrants’ home countries.

“I can’t guarantee that we’re going to solve everything, but I can guarantee that we’re going to make it better,” he said.

And in the aftermath of two mass shootings in a week, Biden was pressed on his plans for new gun violence laws. He responded that legislating is “a matter of timing” and then gave a long-winded answer about his infrastructure plan, which he said will be his administration’s next legislative priority.

Biden had held off on holding his first news conference until he could use it to celebrate progress against the pandemic and passage of a giant COVID-19 relief package.

In his opening remarks, he declared that “hope is on the way,” and he doubled his original goal on COVID-19 vaccines by pledging that the nation will administer 200 million doses by the end of his first 100 days in office. The administration had met Biden’s initial goal of 100 million doses earlier this month — before even his 60th day in office — as the president pushes to defeat a pandemic that has killed more than 545,000 Americans.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 41 of 91

While seemingly ambitious, Biden's vaccine goal amounts to a continuation of the existing pace of vaccinations through the end of next month.

When Biden moved on to fielding questions, the president didn't get a single query about the virus that has rewritten the rules of society for more than a year.

Biden was the first chief executive in four decades to reach this point in his term without holding a formal news conference, where reporters have the opportunity for extended back-and-forth with the president on the issues of the day. That delay produced a surprising level of anticipation for a chief executive who has deliberately tried to turn down the temperature in a city overheated by his predecessor Donald Trump.

Biden, who once proclaimed himself a "gaffe machine," avoided any major stumbles even as he rambled at times and cut himself off at one point, suddenly asking, "Am I giving too long an answer?"

He acknowledged several vexing foreign policy problems that he faces immediately, including growing concerns about North Korea's nuclear program, a looming May 1 deadline to withdraw U.S. troops from Afghanistan, and China's rising stature as an economic competitor.

Early Thursday, North Korea launched the first ballistic missile tests of the Biden administration, what some analysts say was a measured provocation to catch the new president's attention.

The Biden administration has sought to restart talks with Kim Jong Un's regime in hopes of persuading the North to give up its nuclear program, but thus far has faced radio silence from the North. Biden was restrained as he admonished the North for the latest tests..

"There will be responses if they choose to escalate," he said. "We will respond accordingly. But I'm also prepared for some form of diplomacy, but it has to be conditioned upon the end result of denuclearization."

On Afghanistan, Biden committed to pulling U.S. troops out of Afghanistan, but expressed doubts about meeting the May 1 deadline that was set by an agreement signed under Trump.

"We will leave," he said. "The question is when we will leave." He added that he did not believe troops would still be there in 2022.

Biden also vowed that China's ambition of becoming the wealthiest and most powerful country in the world is "not going to happen under my watch."

The scene for Biden's press conference was very different from what Americans are used to seeing at such events. The president still stood behind a podium in the East Room against a backdrop of flags. But due to the pandemic, the White House limited attendance and only 30 socially distanced chairs for journalists were spread out in the expansive room.

West Wing aides had dismissed the high interest in the news conference as a Washington obsession, pointing to Biden's high approval ratings while suggesting that the general public was not concerned about the event. The president himself, when asked Wednesday if he was ready for the press conference, joked, "What press conference?"

The nationally televised event was a chance for reporters to press Biden and move him away from the carefully curated talking points produced by his extremely disciplined White House. There were none of the personal attacks on members of the press like those made by his predecessor, yet at one point he noted that the session had run more than an hour and it was time to wrap up.

"Folks, I'm going," Biden said as he walked away.

---

Associated Press writers Aamer Madhani in Chicago and Lisa Mascaro in Washington contributed reporting.

## Loved ones struggle with why New Mexico friends were killed

By SUSAN MONTOYA BRYAN and FELICIA FONSECA Associated Press

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (AP) — Jennifer Lannon loved her children, though she lost custody of them because of her struggle with prescription drug use. Just about a year before the mother of five went missing, she posted a heartfelt message to her daughter on social media for her sixth birthday, calling her unforgettable, sweet, sassy and smart.

"Somehow you were able to learn early on that life is too short to take it for granted. Thank you for

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 42 of 91

reminding me when I forget so easily," Lannon wrote.

The decomposing body of the 39-year-old mother and those of two of her troubled friends — Jesten Mata, 40, and Matthew Miller, 21 — were found this month in a pickup truck at the Albuquerque airport. With them was the body of Randal Apostalon, a man known to give rides for money.

The gruesome discovery at the parking garage — about 80 miles (129 kilometers) from the tiny town where Lannon, Mata and Miller lived — touched off a nationwide manhunt for Lannon's ex-husband in a strange case stretching from New Mexico to New Jersey that raised questions about possible serial killings and left grieving loved ones trying to understand what happened.

Sean Lannon, 47, was arrested in St. Louis and charged with the beating death of a man in New Jersey he said sexually abused him as child. Authorities have not said why Lannon was in Missouri, but they revealed that he claimed he had killed a total of 16 people in New Mexico, including the four found at the airport.

They are investigating his claims but have said there are no missing people or other police reports to indicate additional victims.

On Thursday night, a man wanted for questioning in the disappearances of Jennifer Lannon, Marta and Miller was arrested on a warrant in Albuquerque. The city's police department said 45-year-old Daniel Lemos was taken into custody by the U.S. Marshals Service.

Meanwhile, those who loved the three friends from the town of Grants are searching for answers.

The trio had their share of struggles with substance abuse, according to authorities and court records.

Police Lt. David Chavez said Miller "had his demons" — an addiction to opioids that led to run-ins with officers over minor offenses like loud music and traffic violations. He described Miller as a decent guy who was fond of his pets.

Miller would never leave his dogs and cats, so when he had not been home for some time, something had to be wrong, authorities said. Police began investigating in late January and learned Jennifer Lannon and Mata also were missing.

It had been a rough year for Miller. His father died in January 2020, only to be followed by his grandparents and mother.

His maternal grandmother, Juanita Shult, said Miller was mixed up with the wrong people and she couldn't get through to him about not using drugs. She said Miller couldn't work because of a health issue with his brain and sometimes couldn't keep the utilities on. He would drive to her home to fill buckets of water, shower or ask for money.

"I know this hit Matthew hard," she said of the string of deaths in his family. "I didn't want to make any excuses for him. But he didn't deserve this. Nobody did. He has two little sisters that are brokenhearted over this."

Shult said she has days when she feels like she failed as a mother and grandmother, when she's sat in the car sobbing and when she imagines her daughter and grandson together in heaven.

Miller's remains were still being held as evidence, with autopsy results pending. When his body is released, Shult plans to have him cremated and place his ashes next to his mother.

Mata had talked about making changes in his life, for his 17-year-old son with an ex-girlfriend and for the children of his fiancée, Leony Calzada.

Calzada said Mata was sweet and good with children, especially her 5-year-old son, Jayden, who considered Mata his best friend. Mata had trouble finding work in Grants because of the time he spent incarcerated on charges ranging from shoplifting to drug trafficking, and Calzada said people didn't give him a chance.

"Everyone has their faults," she said. "He was a real nice person. He would help anybody."

The ex-girlfriend, Hilary Sweeney, met Mata in high school in the Arizona mountain town of Show Low where Mata's family still lives. She was drawn to the tall, handsome guy with a great smile who would wrap his arms around her like a security blanket. They were together for several years.

Sweeney would send Mata coloring pages, school assignments and pictures of Ryan to keep in touch when he was locked up. It had been years since she saw Mata in person, but she said they talked last year about him getting to know his son and getting his life straight.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 43 of 91

"I told him, 'I want you to be happy. I don't want you to worry about Ryan and I financially. I made it to where I already know, you need to take care of you and focus on you and get better so you can be part of Ryan's life,'" Sweeney said. "That was the plan, and things didn't go as planned."

Separate from the friends, Apostalon was likely in the wrong place at the wrong time when he was killed, Albuquerque police said. They confirmed Wednesday that he died by blunt force trauma but didn't release other details.

The 60-year-old from Albuquerque had no criminal record. After some financial trouble, Apostalon had been working odd jobs.

While Sean Lannon is considered the primary suspect in the four killings, charges have yet to be filed. He's due in court next month on charges in the New Jersey slaying.

Albuquerque investigators planned a trip back east next week to question Lannon again. Grants police talked to him shortly after his arrest in St. Louis.

Chavez, the Grants police lieutenant, has been tightlipped about what might have led to the killings but says drugs were not the main motive. He describes it as a complicated case.

As is life.

Jennifer Lannon's family remembered her as a beloved daughter, sister, friend and most important, a mom. She provided a glimpse into her life via social media with posts about resilience and understanding herself better after a rough patch.

She described life last summer as low key and happy.

"... just learning to focus on little moments together as a family," she wrote, "and reminding everyone that we don't get time like this to really be together often so don't take it for granted!"

Fonseca reported from Flagstaff, Arizona.

## 2,000 honor Boulder shooting victims; suspect hears charges

By THOMAS PEIPERT, COLLEEN SLEVIN and BERNARD CONDON Associated Press

BOULDER, Colo. (AP) — About 2,000 people gathered for a vigil honoring the 10 people killed in the Colorado supermarket shooting Thursday night, just hours after attorneys for the shooting suspect asked during his first court appearance that he receive a mental health evaluation before the case against him proceeds.

The memorial at Fairview High School, just a half-mile (0.8 kilometers) from the scene of the shooting at a King Soopers supermarket, emphasized remembrance and healing. The crowd said aloud the names of those slain this week in Boulder after one resident read the names of the eight people killed in a mass shooting in Georgia just days earlier.

Many held candles and roses while locking arms or embracing at Fairview High School near the base of the snow-covered Rocky Mountain foothills. After a singer led the crowd in "Amazing Grace," Nicole LiaBraaten, a local leader of the gun-control group Moms Demand Action, asked everyone to "take a healing breath."

"Our hearts are broken, and our festering wounds are split open once again. And this time it's for the whole world to see," said Liabraaten, whose group helped organize the vigil.

U.S. Rep. Joe Neguse, whose district includes Boulder, told the crowd no words could describe how he felt when he heard about the shooting.

"Ten lives. Ten precious lives lost too soon and remembered by so many," he said.

Neguse said he had spoken with some of his Democratic colleagues about how to curb gun violence. "It does not have to be this way," he said, prompting cheers.

One woman yelled, "Ban assault weapons." That prompted another woman to scold her for not showing respect. "This is about people who died," she said. "This is a memorial."

Earlier Thursday, an attorney for accused shooter Ahmad Al Aliwi Alissa asked for the mental health evaluation but provided no details about Alissa's health. Alissa's next hearing will not be scheduled for two to three months to allow the defense to evaluate his mental state and evidence collected by investigators.



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 44 of 91

"Our position is we cannot do anything until we are able to fully assess Mr. Alissa's mental illness," public defender Kathryn Herold said.

Alissa, 21, did not speak except to say "yes" to a question from the judge, who advised him that he is charged with 10 counts of first-degree murder and one count of attempted murder for allegedly shooting at a police officer, who was unhurt.

Another Boulder officer, 51-year-old Eric Talley, was among those killed. His funeral was set for Tuesday.

Alissa did not enter a plea, which will come later in the judicial process. He has been jailed without bail.

Alissa entered court in a wheelchair, presumably because of a gunshot wound to the leg that he suffered Monday in a gunbattle with police. He appeared alert and attentive, his eyes darting back and forth from his lawyers to the judge.

Boulder police tweeted Thursday that they used the handcuffs of the slain officer, Talley, to take the suspect from a hospital to jail earlier this week — and told him so.

A law enforcement official briefed on the shooting previously said that the suspect's family told investigators they believed Alissa was suffering some type of mental illness, including delusions. The official was not authorized to speak publicly and spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity.

Alissa's legal team includes public defender Daniel King, who represented Colorado theater gunman James Holmes, as well as Robert Dear, who is accused of killing three people in a 2015 attack on a Planned Parenthood clinic in Colorado Springs, two cases in which mental illness was a factor.

Depending on what they learn from investigators about Alissa's mental health, his lawyers could ask the court to order an examination by a psychiatrist or psychologist to determine whether he is competent to stand trial.

If defendants are unable to understand the proceedings and assist their lawyers, proceedings can be delayed to see if treatment, such as medication, can make them ready for trial.

A mentally ill defendant might eventually plead not guilty by reason of insanity, as Holmes did in the 2012 shooting at an Aurora movie theater that killed 12 people and injured 70. It would be up to a jury to decide whether the defendant knew right from wrong at the time of the crime — the state's legal definition of insanity.

Screenshots of what was believed to be Alissa's Facebook page hint of fears that he was secretly being tracked on his phone and reflect his interest in Islamic teachings, immigration and martial arts. The screenshots and dozens of postings were captured by the online extremist tracking firm SITE Intelligence Group.

"There was no indication on his Facebook account that suggested radical views of any kind, whether it be Islamist, anti-Trump, or anything else," said Rita Katz, executive director of SITE, which analyzed the postings. "He did mention Islam on his Facebook, but never to any extremity."

In July 2019, Alissa wrote that his phone was being hacked by "racist islamophobic people." At another point, he wrote that his old high school had likely gotten access to his phone, asking Facebook followers for advice on how to stop it.

After a white supremacist killed 51 people in the 2019 New Zealand mosque massacre, Alissa called the dead "victims of the entire Islamophobia industry that vilified them."

"What Islam is really about," he wrote in one post that referred to a list of teachings from the Koran, including to "be good to others" and "restrain anger."

According to two law enforcement officials, Alissa was born in Syria in 1999, emigrated to the U.S. as a toddler and later became a U.S. citizen. He would need to be a citizen to buy a gun. The officials were not authorized to speak publicly and spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity.

An AR-15-style gun recovered inside the supermarket was believed to have been used in the attack, said a law enforcement official briefed on the shooting who was not authorized to speak publicly and spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity.

---

Associated Press writers Jim Anderson in Denver, Patty Nieberg in Boulder, Bernard Condon in New York, Michael Balsamo and Colleen Long in Washington and AP staff members from around the U.S. contributed to this report. Nieberg 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.

## Church in NY virus epicenter leads congregants out of sorrow

By LUIS ANDRES HENAO and JESSIE WARDARSKI Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — For nearly two decades, Juan Tapia, head of maintenance at Our Lady of Sorrows, has taken pride in the upkeep of the Roman Catholic church he considers his second home. But in recent months, he's made it his mission to scrub every corner.

"The experience of all those deaths we had to live through makes me want to do my job with great care, because I don't want anyone to get infected," said Tapia, who sometimes wears a hazmat suit to sanitize the pews between services.

More than 100 congregants of the parish in the mostly Latino Corona neighborhood of Queens died of COVID-19, many of them in the early days of the pandemic. And Tapia's family was not spared.

Tapia's son, Juan Jr., had worked with him at the church. The son was diagnosed with lung cancer before he contracted the virus that infected the whole family; he died on May 6, the anniversary of his baptism more than 20 years before. He was 27 years old.

"No family should have to go through this," said his father.

The depth of the sorrows of Our Lady of Sorrows has become apparent in the months since this nearly 150-year-old church was a major hotspot in New York City's roaring coronavirus contagion. Its pastor says the numbers of cases and deaths went underreported early on because church officials lacked accurate information and many people feared the stigma surrounding the illness.

Many are undocumented, lack access to health care and share crowded apartments that make them vulnerable to infection. The crisis has been exacerbated by record job losses and growing food insecurity.

But the church has helped lead the way out of those dark times, setting up a free COVID-19 testing site outside and resuming indoor confessions once it was safe — thanks partly to Juan Tapia's dedication to disinfecting the wooden confessional. More recently he sanitized the palm fronds that will be used on Palm Sunday, the beginning of Holy Week.

"Faith has made the difference here for our people ... because this church is really the epicenter of the social life and of the spiritual life in this neighborhood," said the Rev. Manuel Rodriguez, the pastor.

At 17,000 congregants, Our Lady of Sorrows is the largest parish in the Diocese of Brooklyn, which also oversees churches in Queens. Rodriguez said up to 1,000 people typically filled each of 12 Sunday Masses before in-person services halted in March 2020, when the city shut down to contain the fast-spreading virus. Many in the parish — including its former pastor, Monsignor. Raymond Roden — fell ill at the pandemic's onset.

Away from their church, parishioners suffered in silence. Tapia said when he and his wife contracted the virus, they feared spreading it to their already weak, cancer-ridden son.

"We couldn't even give him a glass of water, a cup of tea, a hug," he said. Isolating in their bedroom, they relied on one of their daughters to take care of him.

They still don't know if he caught COVID-19 at the hospital or if they passed it on to him. Almost a year later, his wife still can't speak about the death of their youngest child and only son.

"This pandemic has left such a mark on us that nothing will be the same," Tapia said.

Rodriguez was brought in from another parish in late June and in short order reopened the church, on July 4. "I thought to myself, 'if we keep this church closed one more day, people here, they're simply going to start falling apart.'"

Since there was a limit on gathering inside, he rented a huge tent that was put up in the parking lot for outdoor Mass and confession.

"Confession gives you the opportunity to have a one-on-one encounter with the people, so that's really healing," Rodriguez said. The church also organized food drives and bought new cameras to improve the livestream quality of its Masses.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 46 of 91

Operating seven days a week out of a van, the testing site came about thanks to Helen Arteaga Lander, a longtime parishioner and former student of the church's school who founded the Plaza del Sol Family Health Center in Corona. Rodriguez sought her help after another priest tested positive, and she contacted the NYC COVID-19 Test & Trace Corps to get it up and running.

"The mobile unit has become part of the church — it's Sunday, and now it's like, 'oh, we're going to go to church and we're all getting tested together as a family,'" Arteaga said. "It brings down the anxiety ... and it also normalizes that getting tested is not a bad thing."

Arteaga contracted the virus in April and credits nearby Elmhurst Hospital with saving her life. When she recovered, she became the hospital's new CEO. Surviving COVID-19 has helped her better understand the needs of the hospital's patients and members of her congregation.

"When you even say COVID, you feel this heaviness in our church. You feel this thing of, 'How are we going to overcome this because it's still here?'" Arteaga said.

"But now we have the tools: We have our faith, we have the vaccine and we still have daily breath to keep moving."

On the first Sunday of spring, hundreds in masks turned out for indoor Masses as many more listened on loudspeakers outside, bowing their heads or kneeling on the stone steps. People waited in line to be tested, and vendors sold shrimp ceviche, clothes and ice cream.

Maria Quizhpi said she was praying for the soul of her father, Manuel Quizhpi, who died at 59 from COVID-19 on April 9.

The whole family contracted the virus. At one point Quizhpi became so weak that she fainted in the kitchen of their apartment; her husband administered mouth-to-mouth resuscitation as her 17-year-old daughter and 9-year-old son watched in horror.

"Every time I come here, I thank God for saving my mom's life," said Melani Morocho, the daughter.

The family is grateful to be able to gather at the church alongside others who also mourn loved ones.

"It left a huge void for us," Quizhpi said. "But we're still happy, glad because we have another opportunity to live and grow closer to God."

---

Associated Press religion coverage receives support from the Lilly Endowment through The Conversation U.S. The AP is solely responsible for this content.

## Texas death toll from February storm, outages surpasses 100

By PAUL J. WEBER and JAMIE STENGLE Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Texas officials on Thursday raised the death toll from February's winter storm and blackouts to at least 111 people — nearly doubling the state's initial tally following one of the worst power outages in U.S. history.

The frigid weather also was blamed for dozens of more deaths across other Southern states including Arkansas, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Kentucky and Alabama.

The majority of the Texas deaths are associated with hypothermia, according to the Texas Department of State Health Services. And the dramatic number of new victims is still a potential undercount, as officials continue investigating deaths that happened around the time the storm knocked out power to more than 4 million customers in Texas.

Many homes went without power or drinkable water for days after subfreezing temperatures, failing power plants and record demand for heat pushed Texas' electric grid to the breaking point.

Texas officials earlier this month put the initial tally of deaths at 57 but warned it would increase. The toll now officially exceeds that of Hurricane Harvey in 2017, which was blamed for 68 deaths in Texas.

The list of victims from the February snowstorm cut a wide swath across the state of 30 million people: Some fatalities were nearly as far north as Oklahoma, while others were close to the U.S.-Mexico border. State officials said the causes of "multiple deaths" included motor vehicle accidents, carbon monoxide poisoning, medical equipment failures, exacerbation of chronic illness, lack of home oxygen, falls and fire.

The most confirmed deaths occurred around Houston, where Harris County officials have reported at

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 47 of 91

least 31 victims.

Among them was Gilbert Rivera, 60, who told relatives after the power went out in his garage apartment that he was cold but staying bundled up. Rivera, who had worked for about two decades as a custodian, had a learning disability but reveled in his independence and chose to live on his own.

Lawrence Ibarra, his 44-year-old nephew, said that after being unable to reach Rivera since the day earlier, his father went out on Houston's treacherously icy and snowy roads to check on him. When he arrived at Rivera's apartment, he found his brother bundled up and dead on the floor.

Ibarra said his father told him: "I think he froze to death."

The autopsy determined the cause of death was hypothermia, which occurs when one's body loses heat faster than it can produce it.

Ibarra noted that the temperature in his own house—which also lost power—had dropped to 37 F (3 C).

The body first tries to generate heat by shivering and boosting one's heart rate, but if internal temperatures keep dropping, that slows and the body will restrict blood circulation to extremities to maintain blood in the core and keep internal organs warm.

Left untreated, hypothermia begins to affect the brain.

"As people get colder, their mental status can change, and they can become unresponsive and not think as clearly," said Dr. Deborah Diercks, chair of emergency medicine at UT Southwestern in Dallas.

Rivera's family is among dozens who have filed lawsuits against electricity providers and the state's embattled power grid, the Electric Reliability Council of Texas. The disaster led to a congressional investigation and the ouster of ERCOT CEO Bill Magness.

Next week, the Texas House is expected to vote on a package in response to the storm, including efforts to winterize power plants. On Thursday, ERCOT announced that projections show a "low risk" for blackouts during Texas' sweltering summer months, when demand on the system is typically highest.

Stengle reported from Dallas.

## Mexico tops 200,000 COVID-19 deaths, but real toll is higher

By LISSETTE ROMERO Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — As Mexico surpassed 200,000 test-confirmed deaths from COVID-19 Thursday, President Andrés Manuel López Obrador framed ramped-up vaccination efforts as a race against time.

The president prepared to call out more military, state and local personnel to spur the vaccination effort as more doses arrive, including a shipment of 1.7 million AstraZeneca shots the United States has "loaned" Mexico.

Mexico's total 200,211 confirmed COVID-19 deaths announced Thursday trail only the United States and Brazil, countries with larger populations. The real death toll is believed to be drawing closer to 300,000, due to the country's extremely low rate of testing.

"I think it is more. I think, for example, that the numbers on the news are not correct, I think it is higher," funeral home worker Benigno Clemente Zarate said of the death toll.

Zarate said he has tended to multiple deaths in a single household.

"We have had some jobs where two or three people have died in the same household, in the same family," he said.

The Mexican government stopped publishing numbers on excess deaths at the end of 2020. The last time the numbers were reported was at the start of January, before the worst of the second wave of deaths hit.

But authorities in Mexico City have published excess death figures through the end of February, and they show that January's deaths were almost 46% higher than in the city's first wave in June.

It is a dance of figures. Mexico's Health Department acknowledges almost 220,000 'estimated' COVID-19 deaths as of mid-March, but that estimate is not based on excess death reports and probably doesn't include the considerable number of people who die at home in Mexico.

Mexico City was among the hardest-hit cities in the world. Mexico City's 9 million inhabitants suffered 38,627 deaths; with only 7.1% of the country's population, the capital has had 19.3% of the country's



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 48 of 91

total deaths.

While large, closely packed cities with intensive mass transit systems may have suffered more across the globe, Mexico City also has far better health care facilities than the rest of the country. Still, the capital saw about 430 confirmed COVID-19 deaths per 100,000.

The human toll is overwhelming.

Patricia Silva Caudillo, 46, went to a dusty cemetery on the eastern edge of the city to bury her husband, construction worker Pedro Capilla, 51. Capilla, a diabetic, was getting dialysis treatment at a local hospital where he was apparently infected with COVID-19.

"He was everything to me," said Silva Caudillo. "He was my companion, my support."

Raquel Díaz also came to the cemetery to bury a relative. "This has left a lot of pain, a lot of tragedy, it has left so many people orphaned or widowed," Díaz said. "I don't think this pandemic has brought anything good."

López Obrador said Thursday he views it as a race against time to get all people over 60 vaccinated with at least one dose by the end of April, before a possible third wave hits.

"We have to avoid any rebound, an undesired, extraordinary situation of a rebound in infections like those that are occurring in some other parts of the world," López Obrador said. "We do not want a resurgence."

It is unlikely that Mexico's approximately 6 million vaccines delivered so far have played much of a role in the statistical reduction in deaths in recent weeks, and it is unclear how many Mexican will take the shots.

The Mexican government has been widely using two Chinese-made vaccines, but suspicion remains due to a lack of information on their effectiveness, something that could encourage already widespread skepticism.

In a March 6-9 poll, only 52% of the 1,000 Mexicans surveyed said they were willing to get vaccinated, according to the GEA-ISA polling firm; 20% said they weren't sure, and 28% said they would not get vaccinated. The poll had a margin of error of plus-or-minus 3.1 percentage points.

## USC agrees to \$852 million payout in sex abuse lawsuit

By STEFANIE DAZIO Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The University of Southern California has agreed to an \$852 million settlement with more than 700 women who have accused the college's longtime campus gynecologist of sexual abuse, the victims' lawyers and USC announced Thursday.

It's believed to be a record amount for such a lawsuit. When combined with an earlier settlement of a separate class-action suit, USC has agreed to pay out more than \$1 billion for claims against Dr. George Tyndall, who worked at the school for nearly three decades.

Tyndall, 74, faces 35 criminal counts of alleged sexual misconduct between 2009 and 2016 at the university's student health center. He has pleaded not guilty and is free on bond.

(Editor's note: This story includes discussion of sexual assault. If you or someone you know needs help, please call the National Sexual Assault Hotline at 1-800-656-4673.)

Hundreds of women came forward to report their allegations to police but some of the cases fell outside the 10-year statute of limitations, while others did not rise to the level of criminal charges or lacked sufficient evidence to prosecute. Still, he faces up to 64 years in prison if convicted.

"I am deeply sorry for the pain experienced by these valued members of the USC community," USC President Carol L. Folt said in a statement. "We appreciate the courage of all who came forward and hope this much needed resolution provides some relief to the women abused by George Tyndall."

Folt took office in 2019 as part of an overhaul of USC leadership amid the unfolding gynecologist and college entrance bribery scandals.

The \$852 million civil settlement is believed to be the largest sexual abuse settlement against any university, according to the plaintiffs' attorneys, as well as the largest personal injury settlement against any college or university. The lawyers say no confidentiality or non-disclosure agreements were attached.

Tyndall was deposed for the settlement and largely invoked his rights against self-incrimination in answers,

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 49 of 91

the plaintiff's lawyers said. While he signed the settlement, he did not contribute any money toward it and did not admit to any wrongdoing.

"Dr. Tyndall continues to deny that he has engaged in any misconduct," said Leonard Levine, Tyndall's attorney. "He has pleaded not guilty to the criminal charges and remains confident that when the allegations are tested in court in a jury trial, he will be totally exonerated."

In 2018, Michigan State University agreed to pay \$500 million to settle claims from more than 300 women and girls who said they were assaulted by sports doctor Larry Nassar. That settlement was considered the largest at the time, far surpassing the \$100 million-plus paid by Penn State University to settle claims by at least 35 people who accused assistant football coach Jerry Sandusky of sexual abuse.

Separately, USC earlier agreed to pay \$215 million to settle a class-action lawsuit that applies to about 18,000 women who were patients of Tyndall's. The individual payouts to those victims range from \$2,500 to \$250,000, and were given regardless of whether the women formally accused Tyndall of harassment or assault. The final payouts are expected to be issued this month.

Allegations against Tyndall first surfaced in 2018 in an investigation by the Los Angeles Times, which revealed that the doctor had been the subject of complaints of sexual misconduct at USC dating back to the 1990s.

He wasn't suspended until 2016, when a nurse reported him to a rape crisis center. He was able to quietly resign with a large payout the next year.

Tyndall surrendered his medical license in September 2019, records show.

## **In shift, oil industry group backs federal price on carbon**

By MATTHEW DALY and MATTHEW BROWN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The oil and gas industry's top lobbying group on Thursday endorsed a federal price on carbon dioxide emissions that contribute to global warming, a reversal of longstanding policy that comes as the Biden administration has pledged dramatic steps to address climate change.

The American Petroleum Institute, whose members include ExxonMobil, Chevron and other oil giants, announced the shift ahead of a virtual forum Thursday by the Interior Department as it launches a months-long review of the government's oil and gas sales.

API also called for fast-tracking commercial deployment of long-sought technology to capture and store carbon emissions, as well as federal regulation of methane emissions from new and existing oil and gas wells, after strongly resisting such regulations proposed by the Obama administration.

"Confronting the challenge of climate change and building a lower-carbon future will require a combination of government policies, industry initiatives and continuous innovation," API President and CEO Mike Sommers said in a statement.

The reversal comes as President Joe Biden has made tackling climate change a top priority, moving in his first days in office to suspend oil and gas lease sales from federal lands and waters and cancelling the contentious Keystone XL oil sands pipeline from Canada.

Biden said during the campaign he supports "an enforcement mechanism" that targets carbon pollution, and the White House has left open use of a carbon tax to help lower U.S. emissions of greenhouse gases. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen has spoken in favor of the idea, telling the Senate Finance Committee, "We cannot solve the climate crisis without effective carbon pricing."

While industry critics expressed suspicions over the sincerity of the move, Sommers emphasized that oil companies want "market-based solutions" such as a carbon tax or a cap-and-trade policy, rather than "heavy-handed government regulation." The oil industry played a key role in the defeat of proposed cap-and-trade legislation in the Senate a decade ago, and its endorsement of a carbon price and other federal action marks a turnaround after years of opposition to federal legislation to address climate change.

Interior Secretary Deb Haaland on Thursday kicked off a broad review of the government's oil and gas program that could lead to a long-term ban on leases or other steps to discourage drilling and reduce emissions.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 50 of 91

Industry representatives and Republican lawmakers have sharply criticized the leasing suspension and warn that widespread job losses are likely in energy-producing states should it become permanent.

But Haaland, the nation's first Native American cabinet member, said it was time to "take a longer view" just as her ancestors did as they farmed the same land for centuries. "In order to tackle the climate crisis and strengthen our nation's economy, we must manage our lands and waters and resources, not just across fiscal years, but across generations," she said.

Ahead of the forum, the White House hosted a videoconference meeting Monday with industry executives, including ExxonMobil and Royal Dutch Shell. The White House said climate adviser Gina McCarthy "made clear that the administration is not fighting the oil and gas sector."

The meeting came after weeks of friction over moves the administration made to halt new oil leasing on federal lands and to review Trump administration deregulation efforts aimed at helping U.S. oil and gas producers.

During a Thursday press conference, Biden pitched an emerging \$3 trillion proposal to upgrade U.S. infrastructure and other needs as an opportunity to create new jobs without making global warming worse.

"We have over 100,000 (oil and gas) wells that are not capped, leaking methane. We can put as many pipefitters and miners to work capping those wells at the same price that they would charge to dig those wells," Biden said.

The White House declined comment Thursday, but the industry turnaround on carbon pricing was met with doubt among some environmentalists and scorn from congressional Republicans.

"We're deeply skeptical," said Joshua Axelrod, senior advocate for the Natural Resources Defense Council.

API has not specified what price should be put on carbon, and a tax alone would not directly address other environmental problems caused by drilling, such as groundwater contamination from fracking or air pollution from oil refineries, Axelrod said.

Louisiana Rep. Garret Graves, top Republican on a special House committee on climate change, said a carbon tax would increase the cost of everything from "food for our families to fuel for our cars," while costing jobs and harming the economy.

"We need serious American solutions that are based on American innovation ... not a cop-out approach to appease the radical left," Graves said.

Biden has already postponed lease sales in the Gulf of Mexico and western states and suspended leasing in Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

Interior officials say the fossil fuel program has failed to consider climate impacts and that irresponsible leasing practices carve up wildlife habitat, threaten Native American cultural and sacred sites and lock up public lands that could be used for recreation or conservation.

After what they call a "fire sale" of public energy reserves under former President Donald Trump, Biden's team argues that companies still have plenty of undeveloped leases — almost 14 million non-producing acres in western states and more than 9 million acres offshore. Companies also have about 7,700 unused drilling permits — enough for years.

Despite the moratorium on new leases, the Biden administration has continued to issue permits for existing leases, including more than 200 in March, records show.

Environmentalists want that to stop, but an outright drilling ban would raise thorny legal issues. Companies could claim they have the right to extract oil and gas after spending years and millions of dollars to secure leases.

Thirteen states sued the Biden administration Wednesday to end the leasing suspension. The Republican-leaning states, led by Louisiana Attorney General Jeff Landry, seek a court order ending the moratorium imposed by Biden in a Jan. 27 executive order.



## EXPLAINER: Suez Canal block could hit product supply chains

By DAVID KOENIG and CHRIS RUGABER AP Business Writers



**This satellite image from Cnes2021, Distribution Airbus DS, shows the cargo ship MV Ever Given stuck in the Suez Canal near Suez, Egypt, Thursday, March 25, 2021. The skyscraper-sized cargo ship wedged across Egypt's Suez Canal further imperiled global shipping Thursday as at least 150 other vessels needing to pass through the crucial waterway idled waiting for the obstruction to clear, authorities said.** (Cnes2021, Distribution Airbus DS via AP)

The cargo ship blocking the Suez Canal is holding up traffic that carries nearly \$10 billion worth of goods every day, so a quick clearing of the logjam is key to limiting the economic fallout.

Efforts continued Thursday to dislodge the Ever Given container ship and restore traffic on the critical man-made waterway that connects the Mediterranean to the Red Sea and provides a shipping shortcut between Europe and Asia.

### HOW VITAL IS THE CANAL TO SHIPPING?

About 10% of all global trade flows through the 120-mile-long (193-kilometer-long) canal, which allows tankers and container ships to avoid a long trip around the southern tip of Africa.

The iconic shipping journal Lloyd's List estimates that goods worth \$9.6 billion pass through the canal every day. Lloyd's says about \$5.1 billion of that traffic is westbound and \$4.5 billion is eastbound.

About one-fourth of that traffic is on container ships — like the one that is currently burrowed into one side wall of the canal. Lloyd's says more than 50 ships traverse the canal on an average day, carrying 1.2 billion tons of cargo.

### WHAT EFFECT WILL THIS HAVE ON SUPPLY CHAINS?

When it comes to shipping goods from Asia to Europe, there are virtually no alternatives such as rail or truck transportation, said Sharat Ganapati, an economics professor at Georgetown University. The blockage will delay a range of parts and raw materials for European products such as cotton from India for clothes, petroleum from the Middle East for plastics, and auto parts from China, he said.



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 52 of 91

"The fact that you have the most pivotal node in the trading network being blocked is going to have important welfare effects around the world," said Woan Foong Wong, an economics professor at the University of Oregon.

There will be less direct impact on the United States, which receives most shipments from Asia on the West Coast. Still, imports from Europe may be delayed, and the blockage will prevent empty shipping containers from being returned to Asia, adding to a container shortage caused by rising demand for consumer goods during the pandemic.

"If you get a bump in one place, that is going to percolate through the system," Ganapati said. "It is going to take a while to get things un-gummed up."

## IS THE SUPPLY CHAIN IN TROUBLE?

The Suez situation could compound issues for a supply chain already under pressure from the pandemic and a surge in buying.

Virus-related restrictions have trapped crews on merchant ships. Congested ports have led to container ships anchoring off the California coast, unable to dock and unload their goods. Shortages of semiconductors and rare-earth elements have plagued manufacturers of cars and other consumer products.

"We have lots of things indicating a vulnerable supply chain at risk for disruptions, and now you put one more thing on top of that," said Julie Swann, a logistics expert at North Carolina State University.

## HOW WILL CONSUMERS BE AFFECTED?

It's possible that U.S. consumers will feel some impact if shipping is disrupted for more than a few days. Finished products from Asia to the United States go over the Pacific. However, some components for products that are assembled in Europe and shipped to the U.S. could be delayed by the canal closure.

Mark Zandi, chief economist at Moody's Analytics, said the canal blockage likely won't have much impact on the U.S. or global economies unless it drags on for weeks or months.

It may push up oil prices, "but we are not talking dollars on the barrel, we are talking pennies on the barrel," Zandi said.

Germany's economy could suffer, though, if the blockage delays the shipment of auto parts to that company's large car manufacturers, Zandi said.

And Spain, Italy, and France could see higher gas prices because they rely on oil shipments through the canal, Ganapati said.

## WHAT ABOUT OIL SHIPMENTS?

About 1.9 million barrels of oil a day go through the canal, according to Lloyd's. That's about 7% of all seaborne oil. The closure could affect shipments of oil and natural gas from the Mideast to Europe. S&P Global Platts Analytics said about 1 million barrels of crude and 1.4 million barrels of gasoline and other refined products flow from the Middle East and Asia north through the canal to Europe on the average day.

Jim Burkhard, who heads crude oil research at IHS Markit, said the impact on the global oil market will be limited if the canal is cleared soon. Energy demand is still weak due to the pandemic, and the Sumed pipeline has unused capacity to move oil around the canal, from one end near Alexandria, Egypt, to a terminal near the Red Sea.

"If this were to last a month, there are other options — you can sail around Africa. Of course, that would add cost," Burkhard said. "If this ship is moved in the next week, it will be a footnote in history when it comes to the oil market."

The price of benchmark international crude rose after the blockage, but prices retreated Thursday. Analysts attributed the price drop to an industry group's report of large U.S. inventories and concern that pandemic-related lockdowns in Europe will further dent demand for energy — outweighing concern about the stuck ship.

## COULD OIL-RELATED PRODUCTS BE SLOWED?

Shipments of Europe-bound refined petroleum products such as gasoline and jet fuel also go through the canal, and they will be delayed. Burkhard said refineries in Europe could be pushed to temporarily increase production to pick up the slack, Burkhard said.

Tankers using the Suez carry 8% to 10% of the world's liquefied natural gas, according to research firms. Wood Mackenzie analyst Lucas Schmitt said only a few LNG shipments were near the canal when the blockage occurred.

"We don't expect major bottlenecks unless the situation drags on," Schmitt said. He added that the timing of the incident — it's spring, when LNG demand typically eases — means it will have less impact on prices than recent delays at the Panama Canal had. Those delays caused LNG shipping rates to surge, according to data from S&P Global Platts Analytics.

## Biden leaves door open for Senate changes to advance agenda

By JONATHAN LEMIRE and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden at his first news conference Thursday left the door open to backing fundamental changes in Senate procedure to muscle key parts of his agenda like immigration and voting rights past Republican opposition "if there's complete lockdown and chaos."

Even as his administration navigates the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting economic damage, Biden is grappling with how to deliver on a host of big promises despite a razor-thin Senate majority. He teased that changes to Senate rules that would allow bills to pass with fewer votes may be necessary for him to achieve some of those goals.

"If there's complete lockdown and chaos, as a consequence of the filibuster, then we're going to have to go beyond what I'm talking about," he said.

Despite strong poll numbers, Biden faces headwinds in delivering on his ambitious legislative agenda. His party's congressional majorities are narrow, Republican opposition appears entrenched and not all Democrats are aligned in reforming Senate rules on the filibuster.

Biden at first backed a modification — but not elimination — of the arcane procedural tactic. But he then suggested, at least on certain issues, he would go further, saying the filibuster — which requires 60 votes to pass legislation in the Senate — was being "abused in a gigantic way" by Republicans.

"I want to get things done. I want to get them done consistent with what we promised the American people," said Biden, who spent decades in the Senate. "I am going to say something outrageous: I have never been particularly poor at calculating how to get things done in the United States Senate."

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer at his own press conference Thursday declined to lean too heavily into filibuster changes, only saying that "everything, everything is on the table."

And West Virginia Sen. Joe Manchin, a moderate Democrat whose vote is critical, said he thought the rules were there to make sure "the big guy doesn't pick on the little guy," adding that he was trying to protect "basic civility."

Biden's own political future came up at the press conference as well. The 78-year-old president said for the first time his "plan is to run for reelection, that is my expectation." But he made clear his focus was on the here and now and not a distant election.

"I am going to deal with all of those problems," he pledged.

One key item on the list: Republican efforts to limit voting rights, an effort the president deemed "sick" and "un-American." He argued that even GOP voters believe actions that make it harder for people to cast ballots are "despicable" attempts to undermine democracy.

The president was repeatedly pressed about the situation at the U.S.-Mexico border, where increasing numbers of young migrants have overwhelmed the government's holding facilities. Biden promised better media access to the camps — once his administration has a better handle on things — as well as improvements to the nation's immigration system and U.S. help to improve conditions in the migrants' home countries.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 54 of 91

"I can't guarantee that we're going to solve everything, but I can guarantee that we're going to make it better," he said.

And in the aftermath of two mass shootings in a week, Biden was pressed on his plans for new gun violence laws. He responded that legislating is "a matter of timing" and then gave a long-winded answer about his infrastructure plan, which he said will be his administration's next legislative priority.

Biden had held off on holding his first news conference until he could use it to celebrate progress against the pandemic and passage of a giant COVID-19 relief package.

In his opening remarks, he declared that "hope is on the way," and he doubled his original goal on COVID-19 vaccines by pledging that the nation will administer 200 million doses by the end of his first 100 days in office. The administration had met Biden's initial goal of 100 million doses earlier this month — before even his 60th day in office — as the president pushes to defeat a pandemic that has killed more than 545,000 Americans.

While seemingly ambitious, Biden's vaccine goal amounts to a continuation of the existing pace of vaccinations through the end of next month.

When Biden moved on to fielding questions, the president didn't get a single query about the virus that has rewritten the rules of society for more than a year.

Biden was the first chief executive in four decades to reach this point in his term without holding a formal news conference, where reporters have the opportunity for extended back-and-forth with the president on the issues of the day. That delay produced a surprising level of anticipation for a chief executive who has deliberately tried to turn down the temperature in a city overheated by his predecessor Donald Trump.

Biden, who once proclaimed himself a "gaffe machine," avoided any major stumbles even as he rambled at times and cut himself off at one point, suddenly asking, "Am I giving too long an answer?"

He acknowledged several vexing foreign policy problems that he faces immediately, including growing concerns about North Korea's nuclear program, a looming May 1 deadline to withdraw U.S. troops from Afghanistan, and China's rising stature as an economic competitor.

Early Thursday, North Korea launched the first ballistic missile tests of the Biden administration, what some analysts say was a measured provocation to catch the new president's attention.

The Biden administration has sought to restart talks with Kim Jong Un's regime in hopes of persuading the North to give up its nuclear program, but thus far has faced radio silence from the North. Biden was restrained as he admonished the North for the latest tests..

"There will be responses if they choose to escalate," he said. "We will respond accordingly. But I'm also prepared for some form of diplomacy, but it has to be conditioned upon the end result of denuclearization."

On Afghanistan, Biden committed to pulling U.S. troops out of Afghanistan, but expressed doubts about meeting the May 1 deadline that was set by an agreement signed under Trump.

"We will leave," he said. "The question is when we will leave." He added that he did not believe troops would still be there in 2022.

Biden also vowed that China's ambition of becoming the wealthiest and most powerful country in the world is "not going to happen under my watch."

The scene for Biden's press conference was very different from what Americans are used to seeing at such events. The president still stood behind a podium in the East Room against a backdrop of flags. But due to the pandemic, the White House limited attendance and only 30 socially distanced chairs for journalists were spread out in the expansive room.

West Wing aides had dismissed the high interest in the news conference as a Washington obsession, pointing to Biden's high approval ratings while suggesting that the general public was not concerned about the event. The president himself, when asked Wednesday if he was ready for the press conference, joked, "What press conference?"

The nationally televised event was a chance for reporters to press Biden and move him away from the carefully curated talking points produced by his extremely disciplined White House. There were none of the personal attacks on members of the press like those made by his predecessor, yet at one point he

noted that the session had run more than an hour and it was time to wrap up.

"Folks, I'm going," Biden said as he walked away.

Associated Press writers Amer Madhani in Chicago and Lisa Mascaro in Washington contributed reporting.

## 'Arrested Development' actor Jessica Walter dies at 80

By LYNN ELBER AP Television Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Jessica Walter, whose roles as a scheming matriarch in TV's "Arrested Development" and a stalker in "Play Misty for Me" were in line with a career that drew on her astringent screen presence more than her good looks, has died. She was 80.

Walter's death was confirmed Thursday by her daughter, Brooke Bowman, an entertainment industry executive. A cause of death and other details were not immediately provided.

"It is with a heavy heart that I confirm the passing of my beloved mom Jessica. A working actor for over six decades, her greatest pleasure was bringing joy to others through her storytelling both on screen and off," Bowman said in a statement.

Walter will also be well-remembered for "her wit, class and overall joie de vivre," or life of love, her daughter added.

"She was a force, and her talent and timing were unmatched," Tony Hale, her "Arrested Development" co-star said on Twitter.

"I loved you Jessica Walter. I grew up watching you AND admiring you. Always consistently excellent," Viola Davis tweeted.

Although Walter's photogenic appearance qualified her for standard leading lady roles, she claimed no regrets about being viewed as a character actor.

She loved playing difficult women because "those are the fun roles. They're juicy, much better than playing the vanilla ingénues, you know — Miss Vanilla Ice Cream," Walter said in an AV Club website interview.

Her most memorable film part was in Clint Eastwood's 1971 thriller "Play Misty For Me" — her first significant lead — in which she plays Evelyn Draper, the woman who becomes obsessed with Eastwood's disc jockey character. Walter was widely praised for her unnerving performance.

A Roger Ebert review compared her to "something like flypaper; the more you struggle against her personality, the more tightly you're held."

Walter's comedic flair as the deeply flawed mom of a dysfunctional family in "Arrested Development" won her a new generation of fans. She addressed the second-act success in candid style.

"It exposed me to a demographic of people who thought I was sick or dead," Walter said in a 2013 interview with The Associated Press.

"Jessica Walter's spectacular turn as the devilish Lucille Bluth is one of the great comedic performances of television history, and we loved working with her as much as audiences loved her on 'Arrested Development,'" the series' producer, 20th Television, said in a statement.

Younger viewers also discovered her gifts in "Archer," in which she played a petty, martini-swilling spy-master whose deeply dysfunctional relationship with her title character son was the subject of most of the show's early plots when it launched in 2009.

Walter's feature debut was in the 1964 film "Lilith," with Warren Beatty, Jean Seberg and Gene Hackman, who was also on his first film.

She won a role in John Frankenheimer's racing epic "Grand Prix," from 1966, as the glamorous but discontented wife of a Formula One racer who falls for another driver.

That same year she appeared in Sidney Lumet's "The Group," a female-led ensemble about the graduates of a prestigious university (Walter played the catty Libby), and acted for Lumet again in 1968's "Bye Bye Braverman."

Walter was the Brooklyn-born, Queens-raised daughter of a Soviet immigrant mother who was a teacher and a father who played bass in the NBC Symphony Orchestra.



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 56 of 91

She graduated from New York's High School of the Performing Arts and by her early 20s was an established actress who would work steadily for the rest of her life. She made her Broadway debut in 1963's "Photo Finish" and starred in the TV series "Love of Life" from 1962 to 1965.

She made numerous appearances on popular '60s shows including "Naked City," "Route 66," "The Alfred Hitchcock Hour," "The Fugitive" and "Flipper."

Walter earned an Emmy for best actress in a limited series in 1975 for "Amy Prentiss," in which she played the title character, the first woman to become chief of detectives in the San Francisco Police Department. The show, a spin-off of "Ironside," featured Helen Hunt as Walter's teenage daughter.

Walter was married to Ross Bowman from 1966 to 1978, with whom she had daughter Brooke. Walter was married to actor Ron Leibman from 1983 until his death in 2019.

Walter and Leibman, who won a Tony Award for playing Roy Cohn in 1993's "Angels in America," were often co-stars, including a Broadway run in 1988 of Neil Simon's "Rumors," and on "Archer," where Leibman also voiced a recurring role as her husband.

AP Film Writer Lindsey Bahr and AP Entertainment Writer Andrew Dalton contributed to this report.

## **Biden not ruling out chance US stays longer in Afghanistan**

By LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden on Thursday did not rule out the possibility of U.S. troops staying in Afghanistan through the end of the year, and one of his top generals told Congress that Afghanistan's military forces need American assistance to successfully counter the Taliban.

Biden, at his first news conference as president, repeated his assessment that it will be hard for the United States to meet the May 1 deadline for a full American troop withdrawal, as outlined in a peace agreement between the Trump administration and the Taliban.

"It's not my intention to stay there for a long time," Biden said, "We will leave. The question is when we leave." When asked if U.S. troops will still be in Afghanistan next year, he said, "I can't picture that being the case."

Earlier in the day, Gen. Richard Clarke, the head of U.S. Special Operations Command, told a Senate hearing that, "the capabilities that the U.S. provides for the Afghans to be able to combat the Taliban and other threats that reside in Afghanistan are critical to their success." Clarke echoed the sentiments of other military leaders when he said it was clear that the Taliban have not upheld their commitment to reduce violence in Afghanistan and instead have made a deliberate decision to increase attacks. Those attacks have largely been against Afghans and haven't targeted Americans.

With his comment, which are backed by assessments from military commanders about the precarious security situation in Afghanistan, Biden may be laying the groundwork for a decision to at least temporarily extend America's force presence in the country beyond the May 1 deadline, nearly two decades after the war there began.

Clarke, at the Senate hearing, declined to provide any details of possible options he has outlined to Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin on how he could provide needed counterterrorism troops or capabilities if special operations forces are not physically in Afghanistan.

Clarke noted that no decision has been made about the withdrawal, adding that "we will always provide options" to deter or defeat al-Qaida, the Islamic State group or other terrorism threats.

Similarly, Christopher Maier, the acting assistant defense secretary for special operations, expressed concerns when asked about another troop withdrawal decision by the Trump administration that led to all U.S. forces being pulled from Somalia.

Sen. Jim Inhofe, R-Okla., said he was opposed to that decision and questioned whether it was the right move.

Maier said a review of that decision is underway. "From my perspective, there is probably significant downsides to the pullout from the perspective of cost and effectiveness," he said.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 57 of 91

More broadly, Clarke and Maier said Special Operations Command has taken steps to shift some of its focus to the great power competition against China and Russia.

Clarke said he has also worked to reduce the pace of operations for the commando forces, which he said have been overly focused on deployments and mission accomplishments.

After nearly 20 years of persistent counterterrorism operations in war zones and around the globe, special operations forces have seen spikes in suicides and bad behavior. Clarke, who ordered a review last year to address the problems, said they have cut back deployments by about 20% and have shifted leadership out of overseas headquarters so they can more closely supervise and train their forces.

## **EXPLAINER: Varying views on how to keep accurate voter rolls**

By CHRISTINA A. CASSIDY Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — A key element of voting restrictions pushed by Republican state lawmakers this year focuses on cleaning voter rolls to ensure only those eligible are registered. Maintaining accurate voter rolls is a bipartisan concern, but there is little agreement on the best way to do it. Democrats say some of the actions proposed by Republicans are too aggressive and will end up purging eligible voters. Republicans say Democrats are too lax, resulting in bloated voter rolls that undermine confidence and invite fraud.

In Congress, a Democratic voting rights bill would prohibit states from using a person's failure to vote to initiate their removal from the rolls. Here is an explanation of how voter rolls are maintained, how states do it differently and the conflicts over this year's legislative proposals.

### **WHAT ARE VOTER ROLLS AND HOW ARE THEY MAINTAINED?**

Every state except North Dakota requires voters to register in advance of an election. A growing number allow for same-day registration during early voting periods and, in some cases, on Election Day. Under federal law, voters can be removed upon their request or through a process based on an indication that they are no longer eligible.

When an election official receives information that a voter has moved, that typically triggers a notice to the voter that must be returned. Otherwise, the voter will be deemed inactive and eventually removed from the rolls unless there is some subsequent contact with the elections office, such as updating their address. Federal law also directs states to remove those who have died from voter lists and prohibits the removal of any voter within 90 days of an election.

### **ARE THERE EXAMPLES OF PEOPLE BEING WRONGLY PURGED?**

Yes. In 2016, New York City's Board of Elections improperly removed more than 200,000 names from the voter rolls. The same year, 7,700 people in Arkansas were identified for removal for felony convictions, but it was later determined the list included people who had never been convicted of a felony along with those whose voting rights had been restored after their conviction. These examples were cited in a 2018 report by the Brennan Center for Justice at NYU that found some states rely on faulty data and lack safeguards to detect and correct problems.

### **WHAT IS BEING PROPOSED THIS YEAR?**

Experts with the Brennan Center, which advocates for greater voting access, say roughly 40 state bills have been introduced this year that could result in voters being improperly removed from the rolls. Some would require election officials to use the National Change of Address database, which people sometimes use for temporary changes. Some legislation also would require the use of citizenship data, but experts say this can quickly become outdated as people gain U.S. citizenship. Election experts say data sources are not perfect and that it's important for officials to use multiple sources, be transparent and provide opportunities for voters to correct errors.

### **WHAT IS 'USE IT OR LOSE IT'?**

Federal law prohibits states from removing voters for not voting, what some call "use it or lose it." But a U.S. Supreme Court decision in 2018 said failure to vote in one election could be an indication that someone has moved. It can be used to justify an election office sending a notice to voters asking them to confirm their address and eligibility. Critics, including former U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder, say people have a

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 58 of 91

right not to vote and that targeting infrequent voters disproportionately affects minorities. Younger voters who tend to move more frequently also are affected.

West Virginia Secretary of State Mac Warner, in written testimony, said congressional Democrats' voting rights bill "eviscerates" his state's ability to maintain voter rolls and could lead to "more registered voters than voting age population on registration rolls."

## WHAT HAS PASSED THIS YEAR?

Many of the state bills are still working their way through legislatures, so it will not be known for weeks or months how many become law. In Iowa, Republican Gov. Kim Reynolds already has signed into law a GOP-backed bill that not only adds restrictions on early and mail voting but speeds up the process for cancelling the registrations of voters who do not participate in elections.

Voters will be marked in Iowa's voter registration database as inactive if they do not vote in a single general election, which occur every two years. If they miss two more general elections while listed as inactive, their registrations will be cancelled.

Simply getting marked as inactive should have no immediate effect on voters because they can reactivate themselves simply by showing up with an ID at their polling place, said Linn County Auditor Joel Miller, a Democrat and elections commissioner of the state's second largest county.

Those who are cancelled after years of inactivity will be required to re-register, but Iowa also offers Election Day voter registration. State Sen. Eric Giddens, a Cedar Falls Democrat, said he still worries the change would lead to unwarranted purges because people won't know about the law.

---

Associated Press writer Ryan J. Foley in Iowa City, Iowa, contributed to this report.

## Hundreds arrested in Belarus 'Freedom Day' protest

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Protesters calling for the resignation of Belarus' authoritarian president marched in small groups Thursday throughout the capital of Minsk, the first sizable turnout of demonstrators since weeks of protest rocked the country last year.

The groups marched through courtyards and streets in a tactic aimed at avoiding widescale arrests like those during the massive protest gatherings of 2020, some of which approached 200,000 people.

Riot police set up a heavy presence in the center of Minsk on Thursday and deployed water cannon. Videos on social media showed police arresting people holding the red-and-white flags that are an emblem of the opposition to President Alexander Lukashenko.

Interior Ministry spokeswoman Olga Chemodanova said more than 200 people were detained in connection with unauthorized gatherings throughout the country.

Lukashenko, frequently characterized as Europe's last dictator, has strongly repressed opposition and independent news media during 26 years as president.

The protests that broke out in August after a disputed election which gave him a sixth term in office were the largest and most persistent show of opposition the former Soviet republic has seen.

Protests dwindled markedly in recent months as freezing winter weather gripped the country and opposition morale flagged amid harsh arrests.

More than 33,000 people were arrested during last year's protests, many of them beaten by police. Some of those arrested have drawn long prison sentences, including two journalists who were sentenced in February to two years in prison for covering the protests.

But opposition leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, who ran against Lukashenko and then fled into exile in Lithuania after the election, has called on Belarusians to start a new wave of protests.

The Thursday protest marked the anniversary of the 1918 declaration of the Belarus People's Republic, an independent state that lasted only a few months before the Red Army moved in. The opposition traditionally observes the anniversary as the country's unofficial Freedom Day.

The U.S. Embassy on Thursday called on Belarusian authorities to stop their repression, saying that "The United States congratulates the people of Belarus on the March 25 anniversary and looks forward to the

day when the people of Belarus will define their own future.”

Also Thursday, police arrested several top figures of an organization of ethnic Poles in Belarus. The arrests came a day after their leader, Andżelika Borys, was sentenced to 15 days in jail for holding unauthorized mass events.

Authorities on Thursday opened a criminal case against Borys for allegedly inciting social hatred, a charge that could carry a sentence of 12 years. Leaders of the ethnic Poles have organized actions in memory of the anti-communist underground in Poland and Belarus after World War II that have offended Belarusian authorities.

## Shipping losses mount from cargo vessel stuck in Suez Canal

By JON GAMBRELL and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

ISMAILIA, Egypt (AP) — Dredgers, tugboats and even a backhoe failed to free a giant cargo ship wedged in Egypt’s Suez Canal on Thursday. More than 150 vessels are now backed up, with hundreds more headed to the vital waterway, and losses to global shipping are mounting.

The skyscraper-sized Ever Given, carrying cargo between Asia and Europe, ran aground Tuesday in the narrow, man-made canal dividing continental Africa from the Sinai Peninsula. Even helped by high tides, authorities have been unable to push the Panama-flagged container vessel aside, and they are looking for new ideas to free it.

In a sign of the turmoil the blockage has caused, the ship’s Japanese owner even offered a written apology. “We are determined to keep on working hard to resolve this situation as soon as possible,” Shoei Kisen Kaisha Ltd. said. “We would like to apologize to all parties affected by this incident, including the ships travelling and planning to travel through Suez Canal.”

As efforts to free it resumed at daylight Thursday, an Egyptian canal authority official said workers hoped to avoid offloading containers from the vessel as it would take days to do so and extend the closure. The official spoke on condition of anonymity as he wasn’t authorized to talk to journalists.

So far, dredgers have tried to clear silt around the massive ship. Tug boats nudged the vessel alongside it, trying to gain momentum. From the shore, at least one backhoe dug into the canal’s sandy banks, suggesting the bow of the ship had plowed into it. However, satellite photos taken Thursday and analyzed by The Associated Press showed the vessel still stuck in the same location.

The vessel remained stuck as of Thursday night despite “continuous” efforts to refloat it, according to canal service provider Leth Agencies.

Lt. Gen. Osama Rabei, the head of the canal authority, said navigation through the waterway would remain halted until the Ever Given is refloated. A team from Boskalis, a Dutch firm specialized in salvaging, arrived at the canal Thursday, although one of its top officials warned removing the vessel could take “days to weeks.”

A team from the Boskalis subsidiary SMIT “spent the day doing inspections and doing calculations to assess the state of the vessel and a plan on how to refloat the vessel,” spokesman Martijn Schuttevaer told the AP. He did not offer a time frame.

The Suez Canal Authority said one idea the team discussed was scraping the bottom of the canal around the ship.

Bernhard Schulte Shipmanagement, the company that manages the Ever Given, said they were focusing on dredging to remove sand and mud from around the port side of the vessel’s bow. It said a specialized suction dredger would join other dredgers on the site. That dredger is able to shift 2,000 cubic meters of material every hour, it said.

“BSM’s continuing priorities are to safely re-float the vessel and for marine traffic in the Suez Canal to resume,” it said without providing timeframe.

Boskalis chairman Peter Berdowski on Wednesday described the ship as “a very heavy whale on the beach.”

“The ship, with the weight it now has, can’t really be pulled free. You can forget it,” he told the Dutch current affairs program “Nieuwsuur.”



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 60 of 91

Bernhard Schulte Shipmanagement said its 25-member crew was safe and accounted for. Shoen Kisen Kaisha said all the crew came from India.

The ship had two pilots from Egypt's canal authority aboard the vessel to guide it when the grounding happened around 7:45 a.m. Tuesday, Bernhard Schulte Shipmanagement said.

Canal service provider Leth Agencies said at least 150 ships were waiting for the Ever Given to be cleared, including vessels near Port Said on the Mediterranean Sea, Port Suez on the Red Sea and those already stuck in the canal system on Egypt's Great Bitter Lake.

Cargo ships already behind the Ever Given in the canal will be reversed south back to Port Suez to free the channel, Leth Agencies said. Authorities hope to do the same to the Ever Given when they can free it.

But many more ships already are en route to the canal.

Using data from Automatic Identification System trackers on ships at sea, data firm Refinitiv shared an analysis with the AP showing over 300 ships remained on the way to the waterway over the next two weeks. Some vessels could still change course, but the crush of ships listing the Suez Canal as their destination shows an even-greater backlog looms for shippers already under pressure amid the coronavirus pandemic.

"Blocking something like the Suez Canal really sets in motion a number of dominos toppling each other over," said Lars Jensen, chief executive of Denmark-based SeaIntelligence Consulting. "The effect is not only going to be the simple, immediate one with cargo being delayed over the next few weeks, but will actually have repercussions several months down the line for the supply chain."

Evergreen Marine Corp., a major Taiwan-based shipping company that operates the ship, said the Ever Given had been overcome by strong winds as it entered the canal, something Egyptian officials earlier said as well. High winds and a sandstorm plagued the area Tuesday, with winds gusting to 50 kph (30 mph).

An initial report suggested the ship suffered a power blackout before the incident, something Bernhard Schulte Shipmanagement denied.

"Initial investigations rule out any mechanical or engine failure as a cause of the grounding," the company said.

In Japan, Chief Cabinet Secretary Katsunobu Kato told reporters the Suez Canal is part of a crucial international sea lane, and that the Japanese government was gathering information and working with local authorities.

The closure could affect oil and gas shipments to Europe from the Mideast, which rely on the canal to avoid sailing around Africa. The price of international benchmark Brent crude stood at over \$61 a barrel Thursday.

Overall, famed shipping journal Lloyd's List estimates each day the Suez Canal is closed disrupts over \$9 billion worth of goods that should be passing through the waterway. A quarter of all Suez Canal traffic a day comes from container ships like the Ever Given, the journal said.

The Ever Given, built in 2018 with a length of nearly 400 meters (a quarter mile) and a width of 59 meters (193 feet), is among the largest cargo ships in the world. It can carry some 20,000 containers at a time. It previously had been at ports in China before heading toward Rotterdam in the Netherlands.

Opened in 1869, the Suez Canal is a crucial link for oil, natural gas and cargo. It also remains one of Egypt's top foreign currency earners. In 2015, the government of President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi completed a major expansion of the canal, allowing it to accommodate the world's largest vessels. However, the Ever Given ran aground south of that new portion of the canal.

Gambrell reported from Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Associated Press writers Mari Yamaguchi in Tokyo, Isabel DeBre in Dubai and Mike Corder at The Hague, Netherlands, contributed.

## Michigan, Villanova push past key injuries in Sweet 16 run

By AARON BEARD AP Basketball Writer

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Villanova spent all season operating with the security of having senior point guard Collin Gillespie leading the attack. Michigan knew it could depend on versatile veteran Isaiah Livers.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 61 of 91

Now the Wildcats and Wolverines have figured out how to win without them in the NCAA Tournament. Gillespie is out with a serious knee injury suffered in the regular season's final week. Livers is out indefinitely with a foot injury diagnosed during the Big Ten Tournament. And both teams are in the Sweet 16 after successfully adjusting so far to those major late-season hits.

"Obviously things are going to happen in the season, but we just try to stay consistent," said Michigan's Brandon Johns Jr., a starter with Livers out. "We try to work together at all times. And we just work on it in practice and everything, just to keep the flow going and try to instill that confidence in everybody to step up. It's been working, so we've just got to keep it rolling."

It hasn't been easy for either team. But they're still advancing, with the fifth-seeded Wildcats meeting top-seeded Baylor in Saturday's South Region semifinal and the No. 1-seeded Wolverines facing Florida State the following day in the East.

"There's no feeling sorry for ourselves," Villanova forward Jermaine Samuels said after the second-round win against North Texas. "There's no being down on ourselves, blaming each other for anything, it's just the next challenge, next man up, and keeping that laser focus on trying to be the best team we can be. And whatever happens, happens."

Gillespie provided Villanova with scoring (14 points), playmaking (4.6 assists) and 3-point shooting (nearly 38%). But he went down in the first half against Creighton on March 3 with a torn medial collateral ligament in his left knee, with Villanova then losing at Providence to close the regular season and then to Georgetown in the Big East Tournament.

In the NCAA Tournament, however, Justin Moore — who assumed duties at the point — scored 15 points in each round after averaging 12.6 entering the tournament, while sophomore Chris Arcidiacono — whose older brother Ryan helped the Wildcats win the 2016 NCAA title — is now starting.

Leading scorer Jeremiah Robinson-Earl has also stepped up as a playmaker, tallying six assists — matching his career high — in each win. Meanwhile, coach Jay Wright has found a way for Gillespie to contribute from afar by having him compile his own Baylor scouting report, with hopes Gillespie and fellow injured senior Dhamir Cosby-Roundtree (sidelined all year) join the team Saturday.

"We were all, myself included, just so comfortable with (Gillespie) leading the way for us in everything we did," Wright said. "I would consult with him about decisions we'd make about travel, about days off. He was such a big part of it."

"So it took us a while. But I think that Jeremiah Robinson-Earl and Jermaine Samuels have really stepped up and just kind of taken over the leadership of his team. It's pretty impressive to watch."

For Michigan, the 6-7, 230-pound Livers is a senior captain averaging 13.1 points and 6.0 rebounds while shooting 43% from 3-point range. But he hasn't played since the Wolverines won their Big Ten Tournament opener.

Coach Juwan Howard said after Sunday's win against LSU that it would take multiple Wolverines to step up to cover for Livers' impact in multiple areas.

So far, they've responded.

Johns, a 6-8 junior, has tallied 18 points and three blocks through two NCAA games after averaging 4.1 points coming in. And against LSU, senior guard Eli Brooks and Wake Forest senior transfer Chaundee Brown Jr. each came through with season highs of 21 points.

It will take more of those types of performances for the Wolverines and Wildcats to stick around.

"When you have a family member that goes down with an injury, everyone pulled together to help that particular player go through the experiences of what he's dealing with," Howard said. "And it's not easy, it's very hard. So when it comes to playing out there on the floor, there's a lot of moments in practice where you see your team and see what each guy provides to help the team in any ways to impact winning."

"We have a very deep roster. So the next-man-up mentality is never to disrespect a player's injury, (it's) to always feel that you got your brother's back."

AP\_Top25

Follow Aaron Beard on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/aaronbeardap>

## 'The world got dimmer': Shooting victims' lives remembered

By PATTY NIEBERG, HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH and JENNIFER PELTZ Associated Press

BOULDER, Colo. (AP) — One victim of the Colorado supermarket shooting was leaving after fixing a coffee machine. Another worked at the store but was only there because he stopped in to shop during his time off. A third was a police officer who was first to answer the 911 calls.

Some died just as they began adulthood. Others were on the verge of milestones: an upcoming marriage, a new grandchild. A few were visible parts of life in the Rocky Mountain foothills city of Boulder, owning or working in downtown shops and appearing in local theater productions.

The 10 deaths Monday left a trail of pain from California to southeastern Europe.

The victims were Tralona "Lonna" Bartkowiak, 49; Suzanne Fountain, 59; Teri Leiker, 51; Kevin Mahoney, 61; Lynn Murray, 62; Rikki Olds, 25; Neven Stanistic, 23; Denny Stong, 20; police Officer Eric Talley, 51; and Jodi Waters, 65.

NEVEN STANISTIC

He had finished a job — fixing a coffee machine at the Starbucks inside the King Soopers grocery store — and was in his car, getting ready to go to another assignment, when the gunman opened fire in the parking lot, said Father Radovan Petrovic, the parish priest at the Stanistic family's church.

Born in the Denver area to Serbian refugees from Bosnia, Stanistic lived in suburban Lakewood. After graduating in 2016 from Alameda International Jr./Sr. High School, he went to work with his father at a company that maintains commercial coffee and juice machines, said Petrovic of St. John the Baptist Serbian Orthodox Church.

Stanistic was an "all-around good person, quiet boy, very well mannered — respectful of others and older people — and hardworking person," the priest said.

Stanistic's parents came to the U.S. in 1998 after losing everything in their war-torn homeland, where conflict followed the breakup of the former Yugoslavia. Over 100,000 people were killed, and more than 2 million were driven from their homes.

The U.S. Embassy in Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina, has lowered its flag to half-staff in honor of the victims, noting Stanistic's roots in the country.

"They survived the war and came here to start to have a new life, a better life. And then to have this happen to them — it's mind-blowing," Petrovic said.

TRALONA BARTKOWIAK

Just this September, she helped her friend Sarah Lewis endure her grief after losing a loved one to a shooting in September.

"I would not have gotten through it without her. She is the one who I cried to every day about it, and she just listened, and when so many other people couldn't listen to me cry anymore," Lewis said. "She was the kindest, sweetest, most generous, just warm-hearted friend."

When the two celebrated Lewis' birthday last week, Bartkowiak — who went by Lonna — was delighted to see her friend doing better.

"I couldn't have done it without her," Lewis said, choking back sobs, "and so I am like, 'What do we do now?'"

Lewis said she had been looking forward to planning a bachelorette party for her friend, who got engaged on Christmas Day.

A memorial filled with candles and flowers grew outside Umba, the clothing and accessories shop that Bartkowiak ran with her sister on Boulder's popular Pearl Street Mall.

"You would go in her store and put something on, and she would make you feel like such a goddess, no matter what it was," said Stefanie Clarke. She recalled chatting with Bartkowiak a couple of weeks

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 63 of 91

ago about how eager they were to go to concerts and festivals after a year of coronavirus cancellations.

"I know she was just as excited as any of us to put on her dancing pants and get back to it," Clarke said, fighting tears.

Lewis, who sells jewelry online, said Bartkowiak let many local artists sell their pieces in her shop.

Tricia Hunter, a manager at the Savory Spice store next door, said Bartkowiak was dedicated to her business and worked hard but "I rarely saw her in a bad mood."

"She was a very free spirit, kind to everyone, always smiling, always happy," said Hunter, who went to Umba to borrow shipping boxes and saw Bartkowiak on Sunday. Her death the next day was a shock.

"It is pretty heartbreaking that somebody is just running to the store to get something, and a gunman is there shooting people, and you get killed," she said.

JODI WATERS

Before the coronavirus pandemic, she worked at a downtown Boulder boutique called Island Farm.

The store staff was like a family, and Waters helped it feel like home, they said.

"She immediately took me under her wing, treating me like her own daughter," said Madeline Soultz, 23, a former sales associate whose family lives far away.

Store manager Lily Rood, 26, said Waters, who had two daughters and a son, was "a mother to all the girls here."

Island Farm opened its doors to customers, friends and loved ones who came to reminisce about Waters — her penchant for collecting heart-shaped leaves on hikes, her animal-print decor at home, her get-togethers with co-workers over margaritas and the advice she gave.

"You could go to her with any problem," Soultz said. Waters wasn't shy about letting people know if they made mistakes, but "she knew your potential, even if you didn't know it."

Boutique owner Jen Haney added, "The world got dimmer without her."

DENNY STONG

He was off the clock when he stopped in to shop at the grocery store and ended up in the line of fire, said co-worker Emily Giffen, who was on a smoke break when shots initially erupted outside the store.

Stong, whose mother also works at the store, was studying to become a pilot, Giffen said. In the meantime, he was a "goofball" who provided comic relief when his co-workers needed it.

"If you needed to laugh, he would always tell me these horrible dad jokes," Giffen said. "He was a really well-rounded person and really a lot, a lot that he was still going to do."

ERIC TALLEY

He joined the police force in Boulder in 2010 with a background that included a master's degree in computer communications, his father said.

"At age 40, he decided he wanted to serve his community," Homer "Shay" Talley, 74, told The Associated Press from his ranch in central Texas. "He left his desk job. He just wanted to serve, and that's what he did. He just enjoyed the police family."

Eric Talley was the first to arrive after a call about shots being fired and someone carrying a rifle, Boulder Police Chief Maris Herold said.

Talley was "by all accounts, one of the outstanding officers" in the department, Boulder County District Attorney Michael Dougherty said.

Talley's father said his son — who had seven children, ages 7 to 20 — was a devoted father who "knew the Lord."

"When everyone else in the parking lot was running away, he ran toward it," Shay Talley said.

"We know where he is," he added. "He loved his family more than anything. He wasn't afraid of dying. He was afraid of putting them through it."

Talley grew up in Albuquerque, New Mexico, where he was "the most liked person in our class," said elementary school classmate Kerry O'Bryant, who started a fundraiser for Talley's children.

"He wasn't necessarily Mr. Jock or Mr. Popularity or whatever, but everybody liked Eric. There was nobody who didn't," O'Bryant told the Albuquerque Journal.



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 64 of 91

"If there was anyone who was potentially going to be able to go in and defuse a bad situation, it was him — because he was such a lovable person," O'Bryant said.

TERI LEIKER

A longtime King Soopers employee, she was a "spitfire" who felt free to yell "hello" across the store when colleagues came in to work, Giffen said.

"She wore her emotions on her sleeve, and whatever she felt was what she felt, and you could never shame her for it," Giffen said. She said Leiker was dating a co-worker and that the two complemented each other.

Leiker loved to watch the University of Colorado marching band perform in a kickoff celebration called the Pearl Street Stampede on Friday nights before home football games on the Boulder campus, band director Matt Dockendorf told The Denver Post.

"She was there even before we started gathering, which is half an hour before the stampede started," Dockendorf said. "She was just a staple. She was kind of a personal cheerleader for the band."

SUZANNE FOUNTAIN

An actress who performed in Boulder and Denver, ran a music venue and helped people navigate the Medicare system, she was known for her deep caring and commitment to those she loved.

Within a day of her death, her life partner, Phi Bernier, was flooded with calls and text messages from people she had connected with over the years.

"I've never been loved like the way she loved me," said Bernier, an actor who first met Fountain about 30 years ago when they were playing lead roles in "The Glass Menagerie."

They dated for a time, went their separate ways and reconnected in 2013 after Fountain spotted his name in an ad for a show at the Boulder theater where they first met. She went to see it with her son, Nathaniel Getz.

Fountain trained at the Circle in the Square Theatre School in New York and worked as a financial counselor at Boulder Community Hospital before becoming a Medicare agent who helped people sign up for the federal health care program, according to a biography released by her family. It also noted that she was a strong feminist and great hostess.

In her work, Fountain "never skimmed. She never did something because it was easier," Bernier said.

Until the pandemic, Fountain worked as the house manager at eTown, a Boulder nonprofit organization that hosts concerts, which are nationally broadcast by radio.

"Suzanne was a bright light to all she met, and we were proud to have her represent eTown in our community as she welcomed people into our space hundreds and hundreds of times," the organization said in a Facebook post.

Fountain won praise for her acting from both reviewers and those who worked with her.

"She was absolutely lovely, a natural, someone you simply didn't forget," Brian Miller, who worked with her on a show, told The Denver Post.

A Boulder Daily Camera review said her 2002 performance as a nurse in "Wit," a Pulitzer Prize-winning play about a woman dealing with cancer, brought "a simple but crucial compassion to the play."

KEVIN MAHONEY

He "represents all things Love," his daughter Erika Mahoney said in a poignant tweet that featured a wedding photo and drew wide attention on social media.

"I'm so thankful he could walk me down the aisle last summer," added Mahoney, who is the news director at a California public radio station.

She told NPR in an interview that aired Wednesday that the pandemic had almost forced her to reschedule the wedding, which she and her husband decided to hold in a small backyard ceremony with their families.

Erika Mahoney said her father had tried to hold back his tears "in big life moments for me, like when he took me to the airport for college, but really, it's just his softness shining through," she said. "I admire my dad so much, and that's why I picked that photo, because I'm looking up at him."

She also tweeted that she's pregnant and knows her father "wants me to be strong for his granddaughter."

Erika Mahoney said her father was shopping at King Soopers when he was killed. As news of his death

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 65 of 91

became public, she said, friends texted her that he was like a father to them as well.

"One death trickles to so many people and to an entire community and beyond," she said. "In this case, 10 lives were lost, and I think about my daughter and that my dad will never be able to hold her, but I know on some level, he will be there and he was so excited — and I'm going to tell her that he loves her so much."

LYNN MURRAY

She was shopping at King Soopers, where a friend's daughter had seen her. Word made it to her husband, John Mackenzie, who drove to the store and started texting his wife.

After getting no answer in about five minutes, "I just fell over in my chair," he said, choking up.

Murray had a long career taking photos for magazines including Cosmopolitan and Vogue, Mackenzie said. "She charmed the pants off me" when they met at a photography studio in New York City years ago, he said. Computer backgammon games soon evolved into a relationship and eventually, two children.

"She's the kindest person I ever knew, hands down. She had an aura about her that was the coolest freakin' thing you'd ever want to know. She was just a cool chick," Mackenzie said.

"She had it all together — she really did," he said, and offered a message:

"Don't live in fear. My wife, none of the victims, would ever want you to live in fear. They'd want you to be bolder and live bolder. That's what this place is."

RIKKI OLDS

She had a big laugh and an effervescent personality, the kind of person who cheered everyone up and didn't sweat what anyone thought of her tattoos or ever-changing hair color, her family and friends said.

"Rikki lived life on her own terms," uncle Robert Olds said, calling her a "strong, independent young woman" who encouraged the idea of "being your own person."

As a preschooler, she'd tag along with him and his sons to baseball tournaments and ask to go to McDonald's afterward. As she grew up, she played softball and developed a love for camping, hiking and other outdoor activities.

"She was just a very kind and loving, bubbly person who lit up the room when she walked in," said her grandmother, Jeanette Olds.

Rikki Olds originally wanted to be a nurse, but her plans changed, her family said. A front-end manager at King Soopers, Olds aspired to work her way up to store manager.

No matter what she did, she wanted to help people and be nurturing, her uncle said.

"There's a hole in our family that won't be filled," Robert Olds said.

Co-workers said Olds was the go-to person when someone needed to vent, laugh or share a little gossip.

"She was just the funkiest, silliest, most wonderful person," said Giffen, who remembered talking with Olds about a customer complaint Monday.

"I said, like, 'Hang in there, girl,'" Giffen recalled. "It's groceries. Nobody dies over groceries."

---

Peltz reported from New York and Hollingsworth from Mission, Kansas. Associated Press writers Colleen Slevin in Denver; Corey Williams in West Bloomfield, Michigan; Susan Montoya Bryan in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and Thalia Beaty in New York contributed. Nieberg 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.

## Final vote results show major setback for Israel's Netanyahu

By JOSEF FEDERMAN Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his right-wing allies fell short of winning a parliamentary majority in Israel's latest election, according to a final vote count released Thursday, leaving a political deadlock that put the long-time leader's future in question.

The fourth election in just two years brought a stinging rebuke for Netanyahu, the most dominant figure in Israeli politics in a generation. Adding to the pain, he lost ground to former partners who vowed never

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 66 of 91

to sit in a government with him again.

Under Israel's fragmented political system, Netanyahu could still try to reach across the aisle and cobble together a governing coalition. But the makeup of the new parliament will make that extremely difficult, giving his opponents the upper hand in coalition talks. It's also quite possible Israel will go into a fifth election later this year.

"It is clear that Netanyahu does not have a majority to form a government under his leadership," said Gideon Saar, one of the former Netanyahu allies who now oppose him. "Action must now be taken to realize the possibility of forming a government for change."

In order to form a government, a candidate must work with allied partners to secure a 61-seat majority in the Knesset, or parliament.

According to the final results released by Israel's election commission, Netanyahu and his allies captured 52 seats, compared to 57 held by his opponents.

In the middle were two undecided parties: Yamina, a seven-seat nationalist party headed by a former Netanyahu lieutenant, and Raam, an Arab Islamist party that won four seats.

Neither Naftali Bennett of Yamina nor Mansour Abbas of Raam has committed to either camp. Yet deep divisions in both the pro-Netanyahu and anti-Netanyahu blocs could make it difficult for either side to secure a majority with them.

"Israel is experiencing its worst political crisis in decades. It's apparent that our political system finds it very difficult to produce a decisive outcome," said Yohanan Plesner, president of the Israel Democracy Institute. "This is as a result of inherent weaknesses in our electoral system, but it's also because of the Netanyahu factor."

Tuesday's vote was widely seen as a referendum on Netanyahu's leadership style and fitness to rule while under indictment. "Israelis are split right down the middle on this question," Plesner said.

Netanyahu's supporters see him as a statesman uniquely qualified to lead the country. He campaigned on his management of the country's successful coronavirus vaccination program and diplomatic agreements reached last year with four Arab countries.

His opponents, however, say Netanyahu is untrustworthy and has bungled many aspects of the coronavirus crisis. They also say he should not be running the country at a time when he is on trial on multiple corruption charges. The evidentiary phase, in which a series of former aides are to take the stand against him, is set to begin on April 5.

Thursday's results set the stage for weeks of uncertainty as the country's figurehead president, Reuven Rivlin, consults with party leaders to see if they can agree on a candidate who can cobble together a new governing majority.

Merav Michaeli, whose center-left Labor party won seven seats, declared victory for the anti-Netanyahu camp. "Now it is time to form a government," she told Channel 13 TV.

That may not be so simple. The anti-Netanyahu camp includes a diverse array of parties ranging from leftist Arab factions to hard-line nationalists opposed to cooperation with them.

One option floated on Thursday was the possibility of using their slim parliamentary majority to pass legislation that would disqualify an indicted politician from forming a new government, a measure aimed at barring Netanyahu from office. Several parties said they were leaning in that direction.

Netanyahu is on trial for fraud, breach of trust and accepting bribes in three cases. He has denied any wrongdoing and has dismissed the charges as a witch-hunt by a biased law enforcement and media. His opponents accuse him of leading the country into repeated elections in hopes of winning a parliament that would grant him immunity from prosecution.

Dani Dayan, a member of Saar's New Hope party, said he wasn't thrilled about pursuing a "personalized" law but said it was worth considering.

"Netanyahu has made such a mishmash between his lawsuit and the needs of the state. Therefore, there's room for debate on the matter," he said.

Netanyahu's Likud party issued an angry statement comparing his opponents to the clerical leadership in Iran, which vets candidates for office. "The 'change bloc' is just a nice way of saying an 'anti-democratic

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 67 of 91

bloc," Likud said.

Despite the charges against him, Netanyahu's Likud party received around a quarter of the votes, making it the largest party in parliament. A total of 13 parties received enough votes to enter the Knesset — the most since the 2003 election — leaving the parliament divided among a host of midsize parties representing ultra-Orthodox Jewish, Arab, secular, nationalist, and liberal factions.

For Netanyahu to secure a majority, he would likely need to bring in both Bennett, who leads a party popular with hard-line Jewish nationalists, and Abbas, whose party is inspired by the regionwide Muslim Brotherhood movement. Bennett has ruled out an alliance with Abbas.

In another blow to Netanyahu, Bezalel Smotrich, an ally of the prime minister and head of the far-right Religious Zionism party, said Thursday that "a right-wing government will not be established with support from Abbas. Period. Not on my watch."

Netanyahu will also try to look for individual lawmakers on the other side of the aisle to "defect" and join him.

That, for now, looks like a longshot given the hostility toward the prime minister.

Bennett, Saar and Avigdor Lieberman, leader of the secular nationalist Yisrael Beiteinu party, are all former Netanyahu confidants who had messy breakups with the prime minister.

Benny Gantz, leader of the Blue and White party, formed a power-sharing deal with Netanyahu last year, only to see it quickly disintegrate amid nonstop infighting.

Netanyahu's opponents will also explore various possible combinations that could secure the required 61-seat majority. This could include luring Netanyahu's ultra-Orthodox allies and even disgruntled members of Likud.

The mind-boggling array of possibilities means that weeks of uncertainty most likely lie ahead, with a chance of an unprecedented fifth consecutive election if an alternative coalition cannot be found.

Late Thursday, Yair Lapid, whose centrist Yesh Atid party finished second with 17 seats, announced he had met with Michaeli and "discussed options for cooperation to build a coalition for change."

It said they agreed to "meet again and continue discussions."

## **EXPLAINER: What we know about a ship blocking the Suez Canal**

By ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — A giant backhoe and a squadron of tugboats look minuscule against the cargo ship's bulk, demonstrating the enormity of the challenge at hand: freeing the wedged, skyscraper-sized container ship that has blocked the entire width of the Suez Canal and created a major traffic jam on one of the world's most crucial trade routes.

The tugs and diggers toiled on Thursday as over 150 vessels carrying goods to destinations across the world on tight schedules remained trapped on either end of the canal, which links the Mediterranean and Red Seas.

Over its 150-year history, Egypt's Suez Canal has seen wars and crises — but nothing quite like the stranding of the Ever Given.

HOW DID THIS HAPPEN?

That remains murky. The vessel entered the canal from the Red Sea on Tuesday morning and ran aground 45 minutes later.

The ship's operator and Egyptian officials blamed winds gusting as much as 50 kilometers per hour (30 miles per hour), along with a sandstorm sweeping the area.

Cargo ships have grown in recent years to take on more containers as fuel prices have risen because big boats burn less fuel per container moved. Some have wondered if the ultra-large size of the Ever Given was a factor.

While the supertankers can increase their risk of running aground in the Suez Canal, boats just as big buffeted by winds just as strong have passed through the waterway without incident before.

Instead, it's likely that "a combination of factors" was at play, said Ian Woods, a marine cargo lawyer and partner with the firm Clyde & Co.



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 68 of 91

"There's the exposure to the elements, potential for a loss of power, potential for steering problems," Woods said. "We'd expect a full investigation."

The obstruction could prove embarrassing for Egypt, where the waterway long has been a symbol of national pride. President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi poured \$8.2 billion into a lavish expansion of the canal that was unveiled in 2015. However, the Ever Given got stuck just south of that new section.

## HOW WILL THEY FIX THIS?

So far, dredgers and tugboats haven't been able to free the ship. An expert salvage team, whose job it is to respond to boat-related disasters, flew from the Netherlands to the canal on Thursday to join the efforts.

Already, it seems the ship's massive weight, some 220,000 tons, could make it impossible to dislodge and float. To lighten the load, the team says it may have to remove at least some of the ship's containers and drain the vessel of the water serving as ballast before further dredging the area and then trying again to nudge the ship using tugboats.

Officials had indicated initially they didn't want to do that because the unloading itself could take days or weeks.

## WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Over 10% of global trade, including 7% of the world's oil, passes through the canal. After the blockage, the price of international benchmark Brent crude shot up some 3% to \$63 a barrel.

Goods passing through the canal are typically moving from east to west. In addition to oil, liquified natural gas from the Persian Gulf and furniture, clothes and supermarket basics from China use the canal to avoid taking a circuitous 5,000-kilometer (3,100-mile) route around Africa.

Shipping journal Lloyd's List estimates that the closed waterway is tying up billions of dollars of goods each day the canal is closed — at a time when the coronavirus pandemic is already causing demand in consumer goods to surge.

Not only will deliveries be delayed, but the jam also prevents the return of empty containers back to Asia, exacerbating a container shortage caused by the pandemic's disruptions to shipping.

"It's almost like a ketchup bottle," said Lars Jensen, chief executive of SeaIntelligence Consulting. "The longer this lasts, the higher risk that we are going to see major congestion problems in the European ports."

## WHAT IS THE WORLD'S REACTION?

While the real-world consequences of the jam are serious, many also noted the absurdity of the situation in a seemingly endless flood of social media memes.

In one viral post, the gigantic ship was captioned "my tasks," and the comparatively puny backhoe "me, dutifully chipping away at my tasks." In another, the boat was "your first draft" and the backhoe "editors."

This story has been updated to correct the mile conversion of the length of the route around Africa.

Follow Isabel DeBre on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/isabeldebre](https://www.twitter.com/isabeldebre).

## Rallies in Atlanta, nation against hate after spa shootings

By KATE BRUMBACK Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — A diverse crowd gathered Saturday near the Georgia state Capitol to demand justice for the victims of recent shootings at massage businesses and to denounce racism, xenophobia and misogyny.

Hundreds of people of all ages and varied racial and ethnic backgrounds gathered in Liberty Plaza in Atlanta, and in similar rallies across the country, waving signs and chanting slogans.

In Atlanta, they cheered U.S. Sens. Raphael Warnock and Jon Ossoff, and Georgia state Rep. Bee Nguyen, the first Vietnamese American to serve in the Georgia House.

"I just wanted to drop by to say to my Asian sisters and brothers, we see you, and, more importantly, we

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 69 of 91

are going to stand with you," Warnock said to loud cheers as passing drivers honked car horns in support.

Robert Aaron Long, a 21-year-old white man, is accused of killing four people inside two Atlanta spas and four others at a massage business about 30 miles (50 kilometers) away in suburban Cherokee County. Six of the eight people killed Tuesday were women of Asian descent. Another person was shot but survived.

Investigators have said Long confessed to the slayings but said they weren't racially motivated. He claimed to have a sex addiction, which caused him to lash out at what he saw as sources of temptation, according to authorities. Police have said they're still working to establish a motive, including looking into whether the attacks can be classified as hate crimes.

Georgia lawmakers last year passed a hate crimes law allowing additional penalties for certain offenses when motivated by a victim's race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender or disability. A hate crime is not a standalone crime under Georgia law, but can be used to add time to a sentence of someone convicted of another crime.

"No matter how you want to spin it, the facts remain the same. This was an attack on the Asian community," said Nguyen, an advocate for women and communities of color. She noted the shooter targeted businesses operated by women of Asian descent.

"Let's join hands with our ally community and demand justice for not only these victims but for all victims of white supremacy," she said.

A couple hundred people gathered in a separate Atlanta park and marched through the streets to join the larger rally, chanting "Stop Asian hate" and "We are what America looks like."

Frankie Laguna, who's 23 and uses the pronoun they, grew up in Atlanta and now lives in Tennessee and was an organizer of that group. They told the crowd they were the first person in their family born in the U.S. after their mother arrived from Taiwan.

"I'm sick of being belittled and hypersexualized and hated for who I am, for something I can't change," Laguna said as the group marched.

Bernard Dong, a 24-year-old student from China at Georgia Tech, said he came out to the protest for the rights not just for Asians but for all minorities. "Many times Asian people are too silent, but times change," he said.

Dong said he was "angry and disgusted" about the shootings, and the violence that persists in 2021 against Asians, minorities and women.

Otis Wilson, a 38-year-old photographer who's Black, said people need to pay attention to the discrimination those of Asian descent face. "We went through this last year with the Black community, and we're not the only ones who go through this," he said.

Camden Hunt, who's 28 and uses the pronoun they, said they first got involved in activism in their native Baltimore. They attended protests over the death of Freddie Gray, a Black man who suffered a broken neck in police custody in Baltimore in 2015. They moved to Atlanta four years ago and got involved in community organizing, last summer pulling together an event to support Black women victimized by police violence.

Hunt, who's Black, joined Saturday's rally to "show Black and Asian solidarity," adding "I think it's amazing. I look out and I see people of all shades and ages and backgrounds."

Similar rallies were held from coast to coast. In San Francisco, hundreds gathered in Portsmouth Square, in the middle of Chinatown, to grieve the victims and to call for an end to racist and sexist violence against Asian Americans. The participants waved signs reading "stop Asian hate."

In Pittsburgh, hundreds also rallied, and videos posted to social media showed former Grey's Anatomy actress and Golden Globe Award winner Sandra Oh speaking to the crowd.

"I will challenge everyone here ... If you see one of our sisters and brothers in need, will you help us?" she said, later yelling into a megaphone: "I am proud to be Asian! I belong here!"

In Chicago, about 300 people gathered and in New York City, hundreds marched from Times Square to Chinatown, news outlets reported.

---

Associated Press writers Candice Choi in Atlanta and Daisy Nguyen in San Francisco contributed reporting.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 70 of 91

## The Latest: Biden aims to check China's growing ambitions

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Latest on President Joe Biden's first news conference since taking office Jan. 20 (all times local):

2:35 p.m.

President Joe Biden says China's ambition of becoming the wealthiest and most powerful country in the world is "not going to happen under my watch."

Biden says at his first formal news conference as president that he'd look to help counter China's rise by increasing American investment in science and research. It's an area where he says China is thriving while the U.S. hasn't kept pace.

The president also says he's made clear to Chinese leader Xi Jinping that the United States will continue to call out Beijing in an "unrelenting way" on human rights violations.

2:30 p.m.

President Joe Biden says Republican-led efforts in state legislatures aimed at voting restrictions are "un-American" and "sick."

Biden is mentioning prohibitions on bringing water to people waiting to vote and efforts to close polls at 5 p.m.. He says that's a time when many voters are just getting off work and heading to vote.

The issue of voting law changes came up Thursday at Biden's first formal news conference as president.

The president compared the push to limit voting to Jim Crow laws that were once common in the South. He said he'd keep pushing for voting rights legislation that's already passed the House but faces an uncertain future in a Senate split 50-50.

2:25 p.m.

President Joe Biden says addressing a nuclearized North Korea is his top foreign policy issue.

Biden says at his first news conference as president that North Korea has violated U.N. resolutions by launching ballistic missiles and that the United States and its allies will respond if the North escalates the situation.

Biden says: "I'm also prepared for some form of diplomacy, but it has to be conditioned upon the end result of denuclearization."

He says he agrees with former President Barack Obama's warning that North Korea was the most pressing foreign policy priority to watch.

Four missiles fired this week were all short-range and don't pose a direct threat to the U.S. mainland. According to South Korea's assessment, the first two weapons launched Sunday were believed to be cruise missiles. But Japan says the two fired Thursday were ballistic missiles. They're more provocative weapons that North Korea is banned from testing by U.N. resolutions.

2:20 p.m.

President Joe Biden says he makes "no apology" for undoing some of the hard-line Trump-era immigration policies.

The Biden administration announced on Feb. 2 that it would no longer uphold the Trump administration policy of automatically deporting unaccompanied minors seeking asylum. Two weeks later, the White House announced plans to admit 25,000 asylum-seekers to the United States who'd been forced to remain in Mexico.

Since then, the number of young migrants crossing into the U.S. without adults has risen. Both Customs and Border Protection, and Health and Human Services officials have struggled to house the influx of children. Immigration officials say the number of adult migrants and families trying to enter the U.S. illegally also has surged.

Biden says his administration is working on solutions to manage the number of children coming to the border. Biden officials have largely blamed the problems on what they say were shoddy Trump policies.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 71 of 91

2:15 p.m.

President Joe Biden is committing to pulling U.S. troops from Afghanistan. But he's expressing doubts about meeting a May 1 deadline for withdrawal that was set by an agreement signed by Donald Trump.

Biden was asked about America's longest war at his first news conference since taking office. The president said, "We will leave. The question is when we will leave."

The U.S. invaded Afghanistan in response to the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks and has been there ever since. Last year, the Trump administration signed a peace deal with the Taliban that would remove the last of several thousand American troops by May 1.

At the news conference, Biden repeated recent comments that it would be difficult to meet the deadline.

2:10 p.m.

President Joe Biden says it's his "expectation" that he'll run for reelection in 2024.

Biden is 78 and already the oldest president to hold office. He would be 82 at the start of a second term.

Biden was asked at the first news conference of his presidency whether he thought he could face a rematch against Donald Trump.

Biden scoffed at the question. "Oh, I don't even think about it," Biden said. "I have no idea."

2:05 p.m.

President Joe Biden says his administration is working on getting beds and other facilities up and running so children held in Border Patrol custody can be transferred.

Biden says in his first news conference that most of the migrants who are coming to the U.S.-Mexico border are being sent back, except for children. He says his administration is working to ease delays so children can be released from government custody to sponsors.

Biden says when parents send their children alone across the border, it's a "desperate act." The president says he wants to help change the conditions in Central American countries when the migrants are coming from, but he says there's no easy answer.

Biden is pushing back against the idea there's a crush of migrants coming to the border.

1:55 p.m.

President Joe Biden says he's committed to making progress on overhauling the U.S. immigration system, bolstering gun laws and strengthening voting rights. And he's not ruling out supporting changes to Senate procedures that would help him achieve those goals.

Biden says at the first formal news conference of his term that he believes senators should have to engage in old-fashioned filibusters if they want to try to hold up legislation. That would force senators to have to stand on their feet and talk for hours, as was the case during the civil rights era and is portrayed in Hollywood movies, if they want to object to Biden's agenda.

But Biden says the rule is being abused in a "gigantic way."

He adds: "If there's complete lockdown and chaos, as a consequence of the filibuster, then we're going to have to go beyond what I'm talking about."

1:25 p.m.

President Joe Biden is pledging to have 200 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines administered by the end of his first 100 days in office. That's double the goal he set in December and reached earlier this month before his 60th day in office.

Biden announced the new goal Thursday at the start of his first formal news conference since his term began on Jan. 20.

Biden's goal seems ambitious, but it actually amounts to a continuation of the country's existing pace of vaccinations through the end of month. The U.S. is now averaging about 2.5 million doses per day.

A rate even greater than that is possible. Over the next month, two of the bottlenecks to getting Americans vaccinated are set to be lifted. The U.S. supply of vaccines is on track to increase and states are



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 72 of 91

lifting eligibility requirements for people to get the shots.

11:15 a.m.

The scene is set for President Joe Biden's first formal news conference in the East Room of the White House on Thursday afternoon.

It'll look quite different from past presidential news conferences, given the coronavirus pandemic.

The presidential lectern is on a rug before American and presidential flags in the expansive room. Just 30 socially distanced chairs are set out, and the White House is limiting attendance at the news conference due to the virus.

Microphones will be shuttled to reporters by White House aides and will be sanitized before being passed to the next journalist. Biden has gone longer than any recent president in waiting to hold an initial formal news conference. He took office Jan. 20.

10:30 a.m.

President Joe Biden has been in the White House since Jan. 20., but only on Thursday, more than two months after taking office, is he holding his first formal news conference.

Biden is the first chief executive in four decades to reach this point in his term without having conducted such a question-and-answer session. The president is set to meet with reporters for the nationally televised afternoon event in the East Room.

Biden has been on pace with his predecessors in taking questions from the press in other formats. But he tends to field just one or two informal inquiries at a time, usually in a hurried setting at the end of an event or in front of a whirring helicopter.

Pressure had mounted on Biden to hold a formal session, which allows reporters to have an extended back-and-forth with the president. Biden's conservative critics have pointed to the delay to suggest that Biden was being shielded by his staff.

West Wing aides have dismissed the questions about a news conference as a Washington obsession.

## **The Latest: Twitter grilled about blocking a NY Post article**

Associated Press undefined

WASHINGTON (AP) — The latest news from a House committee questioning the CEOs of Facebook, Google and Twitter. All times local.

2:30 p.m.

Rep. Steve Scalise, a Louisiana Republican, raised the long-running conservative talking point that Twitter, Facebook and Google are biased against conservative viewpoints and censor material based on political or religious viewpoints. Experts say there's no widespread evidence that this is true.

Scalise highlighted Twitter's blocking of a New York Post article on Hunter Biden, which CEO Jack Dorsey said was a mistake that the company corrected within 24 hours. Dorsey added that the content of the article wasn't the issue, but an imperfect application of the platform's "hacked materials" policy.

"We make mistakes and our goal to correct them as quickly as possible and in that case we did," Dorsey said. Scalise asked if anyone in Twitter's "censoring department" was held accountable.

"Well, we don't have a censoring department," Dorsey replied.

In a February report, New York University's Stern Center for Business and Human Rights called the accusations political disinformation spread by Republicans. The report recommended that social media sites give clear reasoning when they take action against material on their platforms.

2 p.m.

Thursday's hearing is the second time in five months that Congress has called on the CEOs of Facebook, Google and Twitter to testify about content moderation, misinformation, extremism and the liability shield

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 73 of 91

known as Section 230, which protects tech companies from legal responsibility for what users post on their platforms.

These hearings tend to be highly partisan, long and often focus largely on optics rather than substantial policy. Experts, including former Facebook Chief Security Officer Alex Stamos, have suggested that if Congress wanted to get more "useful hearings," they should call executives at the companies who have a direct hand in content-moderation decisions.

This would include product vice presidents of integrity, trust and safety and vice presidents of platform policy — at Facebook, Twitter, YouTube (rather than Google, which owns YouTube) and perhaps an upstart like TikTok.

"Instead we get hours of trying to score imaginary C-Span points by tripping up a CEO on decisions made three levels down," Stamos said on Twitter Tuesday.

1:30 p.m.

Executives whose companies run influential social media platforms are — perhaps understandably — having trouble giving simple answers to lawmakers' questions.

Committee chair Frank Pallone, D-N.J., asked the CEOs of all three platforms to answer, in "yes or no" fashion, whether their platforms bear some responsibility for disseminating misinformation related to the election and the "stop the steal movement that led to the attack on the Capitol."

Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg began saying, "Our responsibility is to build systems..." but Pallone cut him off and asked again for a yes-or-no answer, which Zuckerberg didn't have.

Alphabet CEO Sundar Pichai said, "We always feel some sense of responsibility," but also didn't have a yes-or-no answer.

Twitter's Jack Dorsey may have scored a point with his answer: "Yes, but you also have to take into consideration a broader ecosystem, it's not just the technology platforms we use."

1 p.m.

Lawmakers are lambasting three Big Tech CEOs for allowing hate speech and disinformation to thrive on their social media platforms, signaling congressional interest in stepping up heavy scrutiny of the powerful tech industry and possible legal changes.

Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg, Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey and Sundar Pichai, CEO of YouTube parent Google, are facing questioning at a hearing by the House Energy and Commerce Committee. They have previously pledged strong steps to stanch disinformation, and Facebook and Twitter kicked former President Donald Trump off their platforms following the Jan. 6 deadly insurrection at the U.S. Capitol.

Committee chair Frank Pallone, D-N.J., said, "The time for self-regulation is over. It's time we legislate to hold you accountable."

Referencing the Jan. 6 riot, Rep. Mike Doyle, D-Pa., said the attack "started and was nourished on your platforms."

## Russia opposition leader Navalny's health worsens in prison

By VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny has accused prison authorities of failing to provide proper treatment for his back pain and leg problems, saying in a letter posted Thursday that his physical condition has worsened in prison and he now has trouble walking.

Navalny blamed his health problems on prison officials failing to provide the right medicines and refusing to allow his doctor to visit him behind bars. He also complained in a second letter that the hourly checks a guard makes on him at night amounted to sleep deprivation torture.

Copies of his letters to penitentiary officials and Russia's top prosecutor were posted on Navalny's website.

The 44-year-old Navalny, who is President Vladimir Putin's most outspoken opponent, was arrested on Jan. 17 upon his return from Germany, where he spent five months recovering from a nerve-agent poison-

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 74 of 91

ing that he blames on the Kremlin. Russian authorities have rejected the accusation.

Last month, Navalny was sentenced to 2 1/2 years in prison for violating the terms of his probation while convalescing in Germany. The sentence stems from a 2014 embezzlement conviction that Navalny has rejected as fabricated — and which the European Court of Human Rights has ruled to be unlawful.

“My condition has worsened. I feel acute pain in my right leg, and I feel numbness in its lower part,” Navalny wrote in the letter. “I have trouble walking.”

He said that the authorities have given him standard pills and ointment for his pain, but refused to accept medicines earlier prescribed by his doctor.

He accused prison officials of undermining his health with a “deliberate denial of due medical assistance.”

Russia’s Federal Penitentiary Service said earlier Thursday that Navalny had undergone medical check-ups the previous day, describing his condition as “stable and satisfactory.”

But Navalny’s lawyer, Olga Mikhailova, said Thursday after visiting him in prison that “his right leg is in terrible shape.”

Mikhailova said on Dozhd TV that Navalny was taken to a hospital outside his prison on Wednesday for magnetic resonance tomography but wasn’t given the results.

She said Navalny had experienced back pain for four weeks, but prison officials also would not permit a visit by his doctor. The lawyer argued that authorities should transfer Navalny to Moscow so he could get better treatment.

Navalny’s wife, Yulia, said on Instagram that she doesn’t trust the prison medics, and she called on authorities to let doctors who have her and her husband’s trust in to see him. She said prison authorities refused to accept a note from Navalny’s doctor prescribing some exercises to ease his back pain.

She denounced the treatment of her husband in prison as part of Putin’s “personal revenge.”

Putin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters that the Kremlin wasn’t following Navalny’s condition, referring questions to the penitentiary service.

Earlier this month, Navalny was moved to a prison colony in Pokrov in the Vladimir region, 85 kilometers (53 miles) east of Moscow. The facility stands out among Russian penitentiaries for its particularly strict regime that includes routines like standing at attention for hours.

In a note earlier this month, Navalny described the prison, IK-2, as a “friendly concentration camp.” He said he hadn’t seen “even a hint at violence” there but lived under controls that he compared to George Orwell’s “Nineteen Eighty-Four.”

Navalny, whom prison authorities had earlier marked as a flight risk, said he was subject to particularly close oversight, including a guard waking him up every hour at night and filming him to demonstrate he is in the required place.

He complained about the practice in a separate letter to the chief of the penitentiary service and the top prosecutor that also was released Thursday, saying that the hourly checks amount to “sleep deprivation torture.”

Navalny’s arrest in January triggered a wave of protests that drew tens of thousands of participants across Russia. Authorities detained about 11,000 people, many of whom were fined or given jail terms ranging from seven to 15 days.

Navalny’s associates called earlier this week for another mass protest across the country to demand his release from prison. They urged Russians to sign up for a protest on an interactive map and said they would set a date for it when the number of people willing to take part reaches at least 500,000 nationwide.

More than 250,000 have registered on a dedicated website since it opened Tuesday.

Russian officials have rejected demands from the United States and the European Union to free Navalny and stop the crackdown on his supporters.

---

An earlier version corrected the surname of Navalny’s lawyer to Mikhailova, not Volkova,

**Rare Van Gogh masterpiece sells for \$15.4 million in Paris**

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 75 of 91

PARIS (AP) — A rare painting by Vincent Van Gogh was sold at auction Thursday by Sotheby's Paris for 13.1 million euros (\$15.4 million).

The sale of "Street Scene in Montmartre" was highly anticipated as it was one of the few paintings by the Dutch Impressionist master to still have been in private hands. The auction house had expected it to sell for between 5 million euros and 8 million euros.

Sotheby's said the work had remained in the same family collection for more than 100 years, out of the public eye.

It depicts a windmill named the Pepper Mill, seen from the street under a bright sky, with a man, a woman and a little girl walking in front of wooden palisades that surrounded the place.

It was painted in 1887, one year after Van Gogh moved to Paris and lived in Montmartre while he was lodging with his brother Theo. He left the French capital in 1888 for southern France, where he lived until his death in 1890.

It was among over 30 works being sold by Sotheby's on Thursday from masters including Modigliani, Rodin, Camille Claudel, Degas, Klee and Magritte.

## UK extends emergency coronavirus powers by 6 months

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — British lawmakers agreed Thursday to prolong coronavirus emergency measures for six months, allowing the Conservative government to keep its unprecedented powers to restrict U.K. citizens' everyday lives.

The House of Commons voted to extend the powers until September, and approved the government's road map for gradually easing Britain's strict coronavirus lockdown over the next three months.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson's large Conservative majority in Parliament guaranteed the measures passed by a decisive 484-76 margin. But Johnson faced rebellion from some of his own party's lawmakers, who argued that the economic, democratic and human costs of the restrictions outweigh the benefits.

The Coronavirus Act, passed a year ago as Britain went into lockdown, brought in a wide range of temporary health, economic and social powers to deal with the pandemic. It gives authorities the power to bar protests, shut down businesses, restrict travel and detain people suspected of having the virus.

Health Secretary Matt Hancock said Parliament had had to take "extraordinary measures in response to this extraordinary threat."

But Conservative lawmaker Mark Harper, a leading lockdown skeptic, said he had not "heard a single good answer" as to why the British government needed to extend the "draconian" powers for another six months.

The opposition Liberal Democrats opposed the extension, with leader Ed Davey saying it gave ministers "a blank check to use draconian powers they don't need." Former Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn also spoke out against them, saying "our liberties are at stake."

Britain has recorded more than 126,000 coronavirus deaths, the highest toll in Europe. But the U.K.'s fast-moving vaccination program has so far given at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine to more than half of its adult population, a far better record than the European Union's much-criticized vaccine rollout.

Virus infections and deaths in Britain have fallen sharply in the last month even as they are rising in much of Europe.

Simon Stevens, chief executive of the National Health Service in England, said Thursday that English hospitals were treating about 4,000 coronavirus patients, down from 34,000 in mid-January. He said the health system's coronavirus alert level should be lowered from 4 to 3 on a five-point scale because the pressures on the system had eased.

The British government is gradually lifting a national lockdown. Children returned to school on March 8 and shops, hairdressers and outdoor dining are to reopen on April 12, followed by indoor venues on May 17. Remaining restrictions are to end June 21, if the country is not facing a new virus surge.

Hancock said infections were likely to rise as society opened up, but thanks to vaccines that would not



automatically mean more virus-related deaths. But he said it was still right to proceed with caution.

"We must restore the freedoms that we all cherish, but in a way that doesn't put the (National Health Service) at risk," he said.

Some lawmakers were concerned about suggestions that people in Britain may have to prove they have been vaccinated in order to travel, attend mass events or even go to the pub. The government is studying proposals for "coronavirus status certificates" and says it will lay out its plans next month.

Johnson conceded there were "moral complexities" around the proposal, since some people cannot be vaccinated for medical reasons.

The idea of "pub passports" has been strongly criticized by restaurant and bar owners. Kate Nicholls, chief executive of the UKHospitality trade body, said the idea was "simply unworkable."

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

## UN-backed vaccine delivery program warns of supply delays

By JAMEY KEATEN and ANIRUDDHA GHOSAL Associated Press

GENEVA (AP) — The U.N.-backed program to ship COVID-19 vaccines worldwide has announced supply delays involving a key Indian manufacturer, a major setback for the ambitious rollout aimed at helping low- and middle-income countries vaccinate their populations and fight the pandemic.

Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, and its partners said Thursday that the Serum Institute of India, a pivotal vaccine maker behind the COVAX program, will face increasing domestic demands as coronavirus infections surge.

"Delays in securing supplies of SII-produced COVID-19 vaccine doses are due to the increased demand for COVID-19 vaccines in India," Gavi said.

The move will affect up to 40 million doses of the Oxford University-AstraZeneca vaccines being manufactured by the Serum Institute that were to be delivered for COVAX this month, as well as 50 million expected next month.

COVAX, an initiative devised to give countries access to coronavirus vaccines regardless of their wealth, has so far shipped vaccines to some 50 countries and territories.

The Serum Institute of India has been contracted to supply vaccines to 64 countries, and Gavi said the U.N.-backed program has "notified all affected economies of potential delays."

Gavi said the Serum Institute has pledged that "alongside supplying India, it will prioritize the COVAX multilateral solution for equitable distribution."

Gavi, which runs COVAX jointly with the World Health Organization and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, has distributed 31 million doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine -- 28 million from the Serum Institute and another 3 million from a South Korean contractor also producing it.

The program had been aiming to deliver some 237 million AstraZeneca vaccines through the end of May. A Gavi spokesman said the delays were not expected to affect the overall goal of shipping some 2 billion doses worldwide through COVAX by the end of the year.

U.N. officials, governments, advocacy groups and others in recent months have pleaded with manufacturers to do more to speed up and broaden production of COVID-19 vaccines and ensure fair distribution — insisting that the pandemic can only be defeated if everyone is safe from it.

The Serum Institute of India, also known as SII, is the world's largest maker of vaccines. Unlike many other manufacturers, it pledged to prioritize making shots for COVAX.

India's foreign minister, S. Jaishankar, tweeted a photograph Thursday afternoon of vaccines received by South Sudan, although there have been growing concerns that vaccine exports from India have dwindled in the past week.

India has consistently maintained that it would try to export vaccines to as many countries as possible, but with the caveat that supplies would be based on availability and the requirements of India's own immu-

nization program.

India's need for vaccines is set to increase significantly beginning April 1, when it plans to start vaccinating everyone over 45, age groups that account for 88% of all virus-related deaths in India.

The expanded vaccinations coincide with a sharp spike in COVID-19 infections and concerns about more contagious variants circulating in the country. India reported over 50,000 new confirmed cases on Thursday, the highest daily number so far this year,

AP Science writer Aniruddha Ghosal reported from New Delhi.

## High court: More police excessive force suits can go forward

By JESSICA GRESKO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court is siding with a New Mexico woman who was shot by police as she drove away from them, in a case that will allow more excessive force lawsuits against police to go forward.

The justices ruled 5-3 on Thursday that Roxanne Torres' suit could continue because she had been "seized" by police when she was shot, even though she fled. The five justices in the majority included the court's three liberals and two of its conservative members.

"The question in this case is whether a seizure occurs when an officer shoots someone who temporarily eludes capture after the shooting. The answer is yes: The application of physical force to the body of a person with intent to restrain is a seizure, even if the force does not succeed in subduing the person," Chief Justice John Roberts wrote in an 18-page opinion for himself, conservative Brett Kavanaugh and liberals Stephen Breyer, Sonia Sotomayor and Elena Kagan.

The decision does not end the case. Roberts wrote that the "Fourth Amendment does not forbid all or even most seizures — only unreasonable ones." Lower courts will have to weigh in on the "reasonableness of the seizure, the damages caused by the seizure, and the officers' entitlement to qualified immunity," which could also end the case in the officers' favor.

When the case was argued in October, the Trump administration had urged the justices to side with Torres and send the case back to lower courts.

Torres was shot in 2014 when four members of the New Mexico State Police arrived at her Albuquerque apartment with an arrest warrant for someone else. Torres was in her car with the engine running when officers attempted to speak with her. But Torres, who was experiencing a methamphetamine withdrawal, did not notice them until she said one tried to open her car door. Thinking the officers were carjackers, Torres hit the gas. Two of the officers fired their weapons 13 times as she drove off. She was hit twice in the back.

Torres pleaded no contest to aggravated fleeing from a law enforcement officer and assault on a peace officer. She also pleaded no contest to unlawfully taking a different motor vehicle, which she took after she fled and used to drive to a hospital 75 miles away.

Torres sued officers. She claimed they used excessive force, making the shooting an unreasonable seizure under the Fourth Amendment. A lower court ruled for officers and dismissed the case; an appeals court agreed. The Supreme Court's decision now lets the suit move forward.

Justices Clarence Thomas, Samuel Alito and Neil Gorsuch dissented.

"The majority holds that a criminal suspect can be simultaneously seized and roaming at large. On the majority's account, a Fourth Amendment 'seizure' takes place whenever an officer 'merely touches' a suspect. It's a seizure even if the suspect refuses to stop, evades capture, and rides off into the sunset never to be seen again. That view is as mistaken as it is novel," Gorsuch wrote in a 26-page dissent.

Justice Amy Coney Barrett had not yet joined the court when the case was heard on Oct. 14 and did not participate in the decision.

The case is Torres v. Madrid, 19-292.

## NCAA tourney proof of narrowing talent gap in college hoops

By DAVE SKRETTA AP Basketball Writer

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — One by one, the college basketball coaches had filed into the sweltering gym on the campus of Whitney Young Magnet High School, dressed in their polos and windbreakers and sporting their school logos, all craning their necks to get a glimpse of one of the best prep prospects to come out of Chicago in years.

It was impossible to miss the 6-foot-11 frame of Jahlil Okafor, casually throwing down those dunks in the warmup line.

It was much easier to miss freshman teammate Lucas Williamson.

A few years later, Okafor has gone from can't-miss prospect to one-and-done star at Duke to the riches of the NBA, while Williamson has become one of the darlings of the NCAA Tournament. The slender guard with the big game has become the do-everything star for Loyola Chicago, which is once again making an inspired run through March.

The fact that Williamson ended up at Loyola Chicago, and Loyola Chicago in the Sweet 16, is evidence of what some coaches have predicted for years: A once-yawning talent gap between haves and have-nots has narrowed to nothing.

The difference in a top-50 kid headed to Duke or Kentucky and an unranked kid heading to Loyola might have felt like night and day 15 years ago. Now, the difference is negligible — if it exists at all.

"There's just more good players," Loyola Chicago coach Porter Moser explained. "Thirty years ago when I got into this in Texas, to now, you look at it — there's so many five-star players. But it's across the board. Kids are getting better. They're doing more improvement. Skill development. They're getting bigger and stronger. There's more of it."

That sheer volume of talent on high school and AAU teams is why a kid like Williamson, who had every big-name school in his gym to watch Okafor during his freshman year, could still get overlooked by just about everybody.

By the time he was a senior, Williamson had few scholarship offers and ultimately chose to join a team now led by All-American forward Cameron Krutwig, a three-star prospect out of high school in suburban Chicago whose only other offers were from Northern Illinois and American.

Backcourt mate Braden Norris began his career at Oakland before he arrived on Chicago's north side. Marquise Kennedy is perhaps the most coveted prospect Loyola has landed in years, but even he picked the Ramblers over offers from the likes of Bradley, Hofstra and Northeastern.

The bluebloods of college basketball weren't beating down the doors for any of them.

Not that it bothers them these days. Kentucky and Duke didn't even make the NCAA Tournament. Kansas and Illinois were sent packing the opening weekend. And the Ramblers, the guys who ousted the top-seeded Illini, moved on to face Oregon State on Saturday.

"The end of the day," Williamson said, "the respect that teams give us before we play, that doesn't really concern us. We're only focused on winning games and continuing this big run that we've been having."

Oregon State can relate. The Beavers' signing classes have ranked outside the top 50 nationally each of the past two years, according to recruiting site Rivals.com. Yet they ran roughshod through the Pac-12 tourney to earn an NCAA invite, then beat Tennessee and Oklahoma State to reach their first Sweet 16 since 1982.

One of their leaders, sophomore guard Jarod Lucas, chose to play for the Beavers over Nevada and Fresno State.

"I think at the end of the day it's all about, there's a bigger plan for all of us," he said. "Not a lot of us had the best looks or the high-majors, other bluebloods, but we all had one coach, one university that believed in you. All of us at Oregon State have one coach that believed in us. And we all appreciate the belief coach (Wayne) Tinkle has in us."

Recruiting rankings are heavily subjective, of course. Prospects grow and develop in college, some more than others, and it's nearly impossible to identify intrinsic qualities such as pride and work ethic that

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 79 of 91

portend a future star.

Yet rankings do illustrate how evenly spread talent is across college basketball these days.

Five of the top 12 schools in Rivals.com's final recruiting rankings for 2020 failed to make this year's tourney, and the top four from the previous year failed to make it, too. That includes Kentucky, which had the No. 1 class last spring but went 9-16 this season, and Memphis, which was No. 1 in 2019 but had its bubble burst on Selection Sunday.

Meanwhile, nine of the 16 teams remaining had recruiting classes last season that landed outside of the top 25. Loyola, Creighton, Syracuse and UCLA haven't had a top-40 class the past three seasons. Oral Roberts, the second No. 15 seed to ever reach this point in the tournament, hasn't had a class that ranked in the top 100.

The Golden Eagles are a prime example of unearthing overlooked and underappreciated talent. There isn't a team in the country that wouldn't love to have high-scoring guard Max Abmas or talented forward Kevin Obanor, who led Oral Roberts to wins over Ohio State and Florida and have their sights set on Arkansas this weekend.

Obanor played at North Carolina prep school power Mount Zion Christian Academy, which produced the likes of NBA stars Tracy McGrady and Amar'e Stoudemire. Its campus is less than 5 miles from Cameron Indoor Stadium, yet Duke never came calling. Twenty miles the other direction is North Carolina State, which only showed mild interest.

Think the Blue Devils and Wolfpack would like to be playing basketball this weekend?

"We put our shoes on just like they put their shoes on," said Obanor, who had 30 points against the Buckeyes and 28 against the Gators. "We don't look at, 'OK, they are ranked No. 2 or they have higher standards so they are better than us.' We come out with the mentality that, 'You feel like you're better than us? Just prove it.'"

More AP college basketball: <https://apnews.com/hub/College-basketball> and [http://www.twitter.com/AP\\_Top25](http://www.twitter.com/AP_Top25)

## Guns are on Supreme Court's agenda days after mass shootings

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A possible expansion of gun rights is on the Supreme Court's agenda, days after mass shootings in Colorado and Georgia.

The justices are meeting in private Friday to discuss adding new cases to their docket for the fall. Among the prospects is an appeal from gun rights advocates that asks the court to declare a constitutional right to carry a handgun outside the home for self-protection.

It's the first major gun case to come before the court since Amy Coney Barrett became a justice in late October and expanded the conservative majority to 6-3.

The case had been scheduled before a shooter killed eight people at massage businesses in the Atlanta area last week and another shooter killed 10 people at a supermarket in Boulder, Colorado, on Monday.

Georgia is among 21 states with Republican attorneys general calling on the court to take up the case and expand the rights of gun owners.

The court's consideration of gun rights comes as President Joe Biden and Democrats in Congress are pushing a variety of restrictions, including expanded background checks, that appear unlikely to win approval, for now.

The appeal comes from New York, which gun rights groups say is among eight states that make it difficult if not virtually impossible for people to get permits to carry guns in public. The other states are California, Delaware, Hawaii, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey and Rhode Island.

In the rest of the country, gun owners have little trouble legally carrying their weapons when they go out.

Paul Clement, a frequent advocate before the Supreme Court who represents challengers to New York's permit law, said the court should use the case to settle the issue once and for all. "Thus, the nation is



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 80 of 91

split, with the Second Amendment alive and well in the vast middle of the nation, and those same rights disregarded near the coasts," Clement wrote on behalf the New York State Rifle & Pistol Association and two New York residents.

Calling on the court to reject the appeal, the state said its law promotes public safety and crime reduction and neither bans people from carrying guns nor allows everyone to do so.

Federal courts have largely upheld the permit limits. On Wednesday, an 11-judge panel of the federal appeals court in San Francisco rejected a challenge to Hawaii's permit regulations in an opinion written by a conservative judge, Jay Bybee.

"Our review of more than 700 years of English and American legal history reveals a strong theme: government has the power to regulate arms in the public square," Bybee wrote in a 7-4 decision for the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

The issue of carrying a gun for self-defense has been seen for several years as the next major step for gun rights at the Supreme Court, following decisions in 2008 and 2010 that established a nationwide right to keep a gun at home for self-defense.

But the justices have passed on earlier appeals, most recently in June. At the time, Justice Clarence Thomas, joined by Justice Brett Kavanaugh, wrote a dissent in the court's denial of a New Jersey resident's appeal seeking the right to carry a gun. Rather than take on the constitutional issue, Thomas wrote, "the Court simply looks the other way."

But that was before Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg's death and her replacement by Barrett, who has a more expansive view of gun rights than Ginsburg had.

"The justices have mostly steered clear of Second Amendment cases recently, and this New York case could be the one that prompts the justices to get involved," said Adam Winkler, an expert on gun rights at the UCLA School of Law. "The addition of Justice Barrett makes it much more likely that the court's going to take a gun case soon."

Barrett's most prominent opinion on guns was a dissent she wrote in 2019, when she was a judge on the federal appeals court in Chicago, arguing that a conviction for a nonviolent felony — in this case, mail fraud — shouldn't automatically disqualify someone from owning a gun.

She said that her colleagues in the majority were treating the Second Amendment as a "second-class right, subject to an entirely different body of rules than the other Bill of Rights guarantees."

Barrett quoted from a 2010 opinion by Justice Samuel Alito that extended gun rights, but the phrase also has been used more recently by Thomas and other conservatives to complain that the Supreme Court has shied away from recognizing gun rights.

Unclear is whether the recent mass shootings will affect the court's consideration of the case.

"The justices may be more reluctant to take a big Second Amendment case right now," Winkler said. "I could see that weighing on some justices in terms of timing and the public image of the court."

## Vaccination race enlists grassroots aides to fight mistrust

By LINDSEY TANNER AP Medical Writer

CHICAGO (AP) — His last job was selling cars, but in his new gig, working to turn the tide against a pandemic, Herman Simmons knows not to be too pushy or overbearing.

He's one of more than 50 outreach workers a Chicago hospital has enlisted to promote vaccination against COVID-19 in hard-hit Black and brown neighborhoods.

Their job is approaching strangers at laundromats, grocery stores and churches, handing out educational material and making vaccination appointments for those who are willing.

"I see myself as my brother's keeper. I don't try to force them. I'm persistent," he said.

Top U.S. health officials say they're in a race to vaccinate as many people as quickly as possible as COVID-19 variants spread, mask and distancing rules are relaxed, and Americans crave a return to normalcy.

As part of these efforts, the Biden administration announced Thursday it will invest nearly \$10 billion to expand vaccine access in communities of color, rural areas, low-income populations and other underserved

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 81 of 91

communities. Some of the money will go to community health centers. Funding comes mostly from the American Rescue Plan.

While the U.S. is vaccinating roughly 2.5 million people daily and nearly 1 in 3 adults have received at least one shot, roughly that many say they are skeptical or won't get vaccinated.

"There will be a hard core that never want to be vaccinated and we can't do anything about that," said Dr. Eric Toner, a senior scholar at Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security.

He said that number is unlikely to prevent effective control of the virus. To make sure it doesn't, authorities are working to change minds and boost access in minority communities where skepticism is among the hurdles to vaccination.

They're showcasing Black leaders getting shots, preaching vaccination benefits at Sunday services, holding Zoom meetings where experts dismantle the myths. Michigan is enlisting barber shops and salons. Mobile clinics have been set up to vaccinate Kentucky racetrack workers and California migrant workers.

In the socially distanced age of COVID-19, the in-the-trenches work of regular folk-turned-recruiters stands out.

Simmons is Black, amiable and talkative — a natural for this kind of work.

"I tell 'em I was a little afraid at first" about getting the shots, said Simmons, who quit the car dealership when co-workers got sick with the virus. He tells them he has friends and family members who've died, and how easy it is to sign up.

Sometimes it's a tough sell.

"I would like to say that I get more sign-ins than not," Simmons said, "but I don't think that's the case."

"They don't trust it. Some think the vaccines were made too quickly to be safe," he said. "They feel like lab rats."

That's a common narrative. But it's not the whole story.

For many Black people, mistrust of medical institutions is deep-seated. Their reasons are varied, vehement and often valid. And they don't even start with Tuskegee, the U.S. government study that began in 1932 and withheld treatment for Black men with syphilis.

Mistrust stems from surgeries on enslaved women to the absence of Black people in studies that guide modern-day medical decisions. It includes mistaken assumptions claiming race-based biological differences, and disrespect in the doctor's office.

Some are afraid of needles. Some believe internet myths. And some say they intend to get vaccinated but want to wait and see how others fare first. For some, the problem is no transportation to vaccination sites, no internet to get information on where and when to get vaccinated, or no regular physician. However, the shots are free and you don't need a doctor to get them.

Some U.S. polls and statistics show hesitancy in some communities of color is falling, though vaccination rates are still highest among white people. In Chicago, the gap has narrowed but rates for first doses are 36% white people, 30% Hispanic people and 24% Black people.

Simmons is on a mission to change that.

On a chilly March Saturday, his battleground was a laundromat in a working-class neighborhood southwest of downtown Chicago. Saint Anthony Hospital had set up a makeshift center where recruits gathered as outreach workers took down contact information and arranged appointments.

Masked and carrying a folder of vaccine information, Simmons approached Tasha McClinton, 34, a stylish Black woman with long blond tresses pulling clothes from an orange duffel bag and heaving them into a washer.

His shirt was the first pitch, emblazoned with the words, "It's Worth the Shot," and an image of a syringe. Next he offered to sign her up. McClinton shook her head no and listed her reasons.

She hasn't been sick, she said, and no one in her family has gotten COVID-19. "It might cause me to have complications," she added. Simmons accepted that and walked away.

But he returned a few minutes later, apologizing "if I caught you off guard," and told her: "I was just really interested in why you aren't interested." She said she doesn't trust the shots and declined his pamphlets.

"You don't want to be really pushy," Simmons said later. "You got to be a good judge of character too."

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 82 of 91

C.B. Johnson, who runs a Chicago drug recovery group in the Black neighborhood where he grew up, is helping people there get vaccinated. He said that insider cred helps. So does patience.

"We deal with a lot of people that a lot of people don't want to deal with," Johnson said. "We're able to give them the option to say, 'Hey, if you want to do it we can get you there, but if you don't, we will still be here when you decide that you want to.'"

"When you listen to what their concerns are and you hear them out and you validate their concerns, and then you come back and explain to them, 'Hey, look, I mean what happens if you catch COVID? Would you rather have the vaccine that helps you?'"

Community activist Debra Stanley helps lead a support group for former drug users and ex-offenders in South Bend, Indiana. Vaccination was the topic at a recent meeting, and skeptics spoke up.

When Goodwill employee Sonya Chandler mentioned seeing social media posts about weird vaccine side effects, Darryl McKinney, an Air Force vet, whipped out his cellphone and read Centers for Disease Control and Prevention information aloud.

Stanley gently chided in responding: "Darryl got his information from CDC, you got yours from Facebook. Know your sources."

Still, McKinney said he doesn't trust the U.S. government and won't get vaccinated.

"Last time I was at my barber, a few guys were talking about it," McKinney said. "We're not going to be guinea pigs."

Stanley said she's not out to twist arms.

"Our whole thing is staying abreast of all the information and making sure the latest gets to the people," she said. "We don't ever believe it's our role to promote a decision. It is our role to ensure that people have the best information when they get ready to make their decision."

Chandler said later that the meeting "made me more aware. Now I'm looking at it as, well, I may as well get the shot because it will help the rest of the community to not get sick."

Back at the Chicago laundromat, Simmons scored a win with Theopolis Polk, a 62-year-old demolition worker he approached on the sidewalk. The gray-bearded Black man readily agreed to sign up. Inside, he retrieved a wad of dog-eared paper scraps from the pocket of his faded green coveralls, fumbling to find the one where his phone number was scrawled.

"I've been wanting to get vaccinated but I don't have no primary doctor," Polk said. He said he knows people who've died from COVID-19, and works around people who don't wear masks. He lives in this neighborhood, so getting to the vaccination site at nearby Saint Anthony's won't be difficult.

"I'm scared of needles. I hate to get any kind of shots. But you have to," Polk said. "I'm not worried because I've got God on my side."

---

Follow AP Medical Writer Lindsey Tanner at @LindseyTanner.

## WWII codebreaker Turing honored on UK's new 50-pound note

By PAN PYLAS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — The rainbow flag flew proudly Thursday above the Bank of England in the heart of London's financial district to commemorate World War II codebreaker Alan Turing, the new face of Britain's 50-pound note.

The design of the bank note was unveiled before it is being formally issued to the public on June 23, Turing's birthday. The 50-pound note is the most valuable denomination in circulation but is little used during everyday transactions, especially during the coronavirus pandemic as digital payments increasingly replaced the use of cash.

The new note, which is laden with high-level security features and is made of longer-lasting polymer, completes the bank's rejig of its paper currencies over the past few years. Turing's image joins that of Winston Churchill on the five-pound note, novelist Jane Austen on the 10-pound note and artist J. M. W. Turner on the 20-pound note.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 83 of 91

Turing was selected as the new face of the 50-pound note in 2019 following a public nomination process that garnered around 250,000 votes, partly recognition of the discrimination that he faced as a gay man after the war.

Among his many accomplishments, Turing is most famous for the pivotal role he played in breaking Nazi Germany's Enigma code during World War II. The code had been believed to be unbreakable as the cipher changed continuously. Historians say the cracking of the code may have helped shorten the war by at least two years, potentially saving millions of lives.

"There's something of the character of a nation in its money, and we are right to consider and celebrate the people on our bank notes," Bank of England Gov. Andrew Bailey said.

"Turing is best known for his codebreaking work at Bletchley Park, which helped end the Second World War. However, in addition he was a leading mathematician, developmental biologist and a pioneer in the field of computer science. He was also gay and was treated appallingly as a result."

During World War II, Turing worked at the secret Bletchley Park code-breaking center, where he helped crack Enigma by creating the "Turing bombe," a forerunner of modern computers. He also developed the "Turing Test" to measure artificial intelligence.

After the war, he was prosecuted over his relationship with a man in Manchester and given a choice between imprisonment and probation with the condition of undergoing female hormone treatment, which at the time was used as a form of chemical castration.

His conviction led to the removal of his security clearance and meant he was no longer able to work for Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ). He died at 41 in 1954 after eating an apple laced with cyanide.

Turing received a posthumous apology from the British government in 2009 and a royal pardon in 2013. Four years later, the Turing law, which pardoned gay men with past convictions, was passed.

Actor and author Stephen Fry said the latest commemoration of Turing marks another step in the nation's long overdue recognition of "this very great man," whose "talents ranged far and wide."

In a YouTube video posted by the bank, Fry laid out the levels of discrimination and "barbaric punishments" that gay men faced in the years after World War II.

"Alan Turing was among the thousands of men who were harried and harangued by the authorities," he said. "Not just down to the hostile attitude to their sexuality alone, but also under the bigoted belief that there was a link between homosexuality and communism."

Over the past decade, Turing's life has become known to a much wider audience, especially in the wake of the 2014 film "The Imitation Game" that saw Benedict Cumberbatch play the role of Turing.

As part of the new note's design — which includes a metallic hologram that changes between the words "Fifty" and "Pounds" when the note is tilted and an image of a microchip — the bank collaborated with U.K. intelligence and security agency GCHQ to create The Turing Challenge, a set of 12 puzzles

GCHQ said the full challenge could take an experienced puzzler seven hours to complete and may have even left Turing "scratching his head, although we very much doubt it."

Turing's great-nephew James Turing, who runs the Turing Trust that refurbishes U.K. computers for use in African schools, told BBC radio that the puzzle is "a wonderful recognition, and a bit reminiscent of the famous crossword that they used for recruiting at Bletchley Park back in the day."

## 'Godzilla vs. Kong'; A heavyweight bout with a light touch

By RYAN PEARSON Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The original 1950s Godzilla movies stomped into theaters carrying a metaphor about nuclear destruction. Two years ago, "Godzilla: King of the Monsters" sounded alarms about climate change.

But don't fret about finding a message amid the mayhem as the towering radioactive lizard clashes with that instantly-recognizable giant ape in "Godzilla vs. Kong," debuting Wednesday.

"It's about two big guys bashing each other around," laughed actor Rebecca Hall, who plays a researcher studying King Kong. "There is a sense that the less that humans meddle with stuff, the better, is a general



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 84 of 91

theme.

"But yeah, it's mostly a big fight," she said.

Director Adam Wingard's clash of the titans caps Legendary Entertainment's "Monsterverse" series, which includes 2014's "Godzilla" and 2017's "Kong: Skull Island." While not all were winners with critics, they've grabbed plenty of cash at the box office — more than \$1.4 billion worldwide.

All four films take their central creatures seriously — both within the stories and by pouring money into nuanced special effects — while often winking at audiences with self-aware references. The films have featured performances from top-caliber actors enjoying the silliness of it all: Bryan Cranston, Ken Watanabe, Tom Hiddleston, John C. Reilly, Sally Hawkins, Vera Farmiga.

In the newest entry, the returning Millie Bobby Brown and Kyle Chandler are joined by Hall, Alexander Skarsgård, Brian Tyree Henry and Eiza González, among others. No matter the scene, the actors always knew who was filling the top spots on call sheets during production — Godzilla and King Kong.

"They're divas, that's what's so difficult. You go on to set, they don't look at you in the eye. It is in their contracts. Whatever. I found it really difficult to work with specifically Kong, just because he thought he ruled the roost," cracked Brown. "You just want your close-up. And Zilla is like 'rawr' and you're like, 'Bro, calm down.'"

Wingard said he focused on keeping the humans "as close together as possible" with the monsters throughout his film, including an "E.T."-evoking moment with deaf actor Kaylee Hottle.

But when the titular showdowns start, "it was really important to me to do what the original films did. Like if you look at all the Showa-era films, when the monster battles happened, it just stays with the monsters. ... We wanted to make sure the monsters were able to do their thing and just get into it."

That includes a fight on and underneath an aircraft carrier in the middle of the ocean, with Kong struggling and Godzilla moving smoothly and realistically through water. Later, shattering neon highlights an eye-popping clash among and through the skyscrapers of a heavily-stylized Hong Kong.

Skarsgård, whose character leads a human team following Kong to the film's most fantastical location, said Wingard's approach was to "really lean into the craziness of it. And his take on it was, well, if you're going to go big, go really big. Go crazy, let's have fun with it, we haven't seen these titans go toe-to-toe in 50 years, 60 years. So let's really enjoy this."

Godzilla's atomic breath and Kong's chest-thumping were crafted for maximum sensory impact, but viewers can also see it on the small screen. A pandemic-disrupted rollout has the film debuting Wednesday both at theaters and on streaming service HBO Max. The film's stars say they're just happy to share the spectacle, whether it's on an IMAX or iPhone screen.

"These are extraordinary times that demand extraordinary measures," said Demián Bichir, who plays an overreaching tech mogul. "This is one of those films that will be seen in every corner of the planet. And that alone makes me very, very happy."

Henry, the "Atlanta" series star who plays a conspiracy-theorizing podcast host, said the film's extravagance feels right for this moment in the pandemic.

"People need something to just like celebrate and cheer and have fun and see millions of dollars of special effects," he said. "It's like we shifted what we do in summer blockbusters to the spring because it's like we just need something to break out, something to have fun with."

Legendary and distributor Warner Bros haven't announced any future "Monsterverse" installments after "Godzilla vs. Kong." Wingard said he'd be happy to return to a "phase two" of the franchise, envisioning a "nearly silent film where we just watch the monsters do their thing."

"There are enough characters that are well-enough defined where we can imprint whatever we want on them," he said. "I think audiences are ready. And I think the special effects world is up-to-date to be able to handle that."

---

Follow AP Entertainment Writer Ryan Pearson on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/ryanwrdr>

## **AstraZeneca confirms strong vaccine protection after US rift**

By LAURAN NEERGAARD AP Medical Writer

AstraZeneca insisted that its COVID-19 vaccine provides strong protection even after counting additional illnesses in its U.S. study, as the drugmaker responded to concerns raised by American officials in an unusually public rebuke that threatened to further erode confidence in the shot.

In a late-night news release Wednesday, AstraZeneca said it had analyzed more data from that study and concluded the vaccine is 76% effective in preventing symptomatic COVID-19, instead of the 79% it had reported earlier in the week.

Some experts called the new analysis reassuring and said the updated details didn't look substantially different from what was announced earlier. A peek at the full data won't come for at least another few weeks, once the Food and Drug Administration begins its own stringent review. For now, it's not clear if the new figures will be sufficient to repair the credibility in a vaccine that, despite being widely used in Britain, Europe and other countries, has had a troubled rollout.

Earlier this week, an independent panel that oversees the U.S. trial of the vaccine had accused AstraZeneca of cherry-picking data to tout the protection offered by its shot. The panel, in a harsh letter to the company and to U.S. health leaders, said AstraZeneca had left out some COVID-19 cases that occurred in the study.

The drugmaker responded that the results it reported included cases up to mid-February, as agreed in the study rules, and that it was preparing a fuller analysis of cases that had occurred since then — which it released Wednesday.

"AstraZeneca may have just been too hasty in submitting the earlier, incomplete interim analysis rather than waiting to analyze and submit the full dataset," said Julian Tang, a virologist at the University of Leicester who was not connected to the research. He said the updated details were likely solid enough for U.S. regulators to authorize the vaccine.

Before the new results were released, Dr. Anthony Fauci, the top U.S. infectious disease expert, told reporters he hoped that when all the data was publicly vetted by the FDA, it would dispel any hesitancy caused by the spat. He predicted it would "turn out to be a good vaccine."

AstraZeneca had been counting on findings from a predominantly U.S. study of 32,000 people to help rebuild confidence in its shot, which is crucial to global efforts to end the coronavirus pandemic since it is cheap, easy to store and a pillar of the COVAX initiative aimed at bringing vaccines to low- and middle-income countries. Despite evidence from trials and in real-world use that it does protect, previous studies have turned up inconsistent data about the degree of effectiveness.

Then last week a scare over blood clots had some countries temporarily pausing inoculations. Most have since restarted after the European Medicines Agency said the vaccine doesn't increase the overall incidence of blood clots, though it did not rule out a connection to some rare clots. On Thursday, Denmark announced it would continue its suspension of the vaccine.

AstraZeneca's newest effectiveness calculations were based on 190 COVID-19 cases that occurred during the U.S. study, 49 more than it had included earlier in the week. The vaccine appears especially protective against the worst outcomes, with no severe illnesses or hospitalizations among vaccinated study volunteers compared to eight severe cases among those given dummy shots, the company said. It didn't provide a breakdown of the rest of the cases.

Some European authorities have questioned how protective the vaccine is in older adults. In the U.S. study, it was 85% effective in volunteers 65 and older, the company said. The study didn't turn up safety concerns.

The updated information "confirms that our COVID-19 vaccine is highly effective in adults, including those aged 65 years and over," AstraZeneca research chief Mene Pangalos said in a statement. He said the company looks forward to "the rollout of millions of doses across America."

The study hasn't ended, so additional COVID-19 cases could still accrue. AstraZeneca cautioned that 14 additional possible cases already are being examined and that could lead to further changes in the data.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 86 of 91

The company intends to seek FDA clearance of the vaccine within a few weeks. The agency will publicly debate all the evidence with its outside advisers before making a decision.

Stephen Evans, a vaccines expert at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, said it was difficult to understand why the dispute between AstraZeneca and U.S. officials spilled into the public. Such rifts during ongoing studies typically remain confidential.

"Given the details given here, it seems an unnecessary action to have raised concerns in public," he said. "Results fluctuate as data accumulate ... what counts will be the FDA assessment and that will be done based on scrutiny of the full data and not press releases." He said any vaccine with an efficacy rate higher than 60% is useful.

He said it was unclear why there was "a breakdown in relations" between AstraZeneca and the independent U.S. data experts monitoring the trial and worried that could undermine confidence in the vaccine.

"This vaccine is so important for global health, and the disputes do not promote global health," he said. "At least in the short term, (this) will undermine confidence both in the U.S. and more importantly in the rest of the world."

Associated Press Medical Writer Maria Cheng in London and Jan M. Olsen in Copenhagen contributed to this report.

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

## Science panel: Consider air cooling tech as climate back-up

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

The U.S. must seriously consider the idea of tinkering with the atmosphere to cool a warming Earth and accelerate research into how and whether humanity should hack the planet, the National Academy of Sciences said Thursday.

The report by the academy, set up by Abraham Lincoln to provide the government with expert advice, doesn't recommend carrying out solar geoengineering to bounce heat back to space. At least not yet.

But an emergency plan needs to be explored, the report says, because climate change-driven extreme weather has worsened since the last time the academy looked at the highly-charged issue in 2015. That requires coordinated research into whether air-tinkering technology would work, its potentially dangerous side effects, its ethics and the potential for political fall-out.

The report looks at three possible ways to cool the air: Putting heat-reflecting particles in the stratosphere, changing the brightness of ocean clouds and thinning high clouds.

"Climate engineering is a really dumb idea, but it might not be as dumb as doing nothing at this point or continuing to do what we've been doing," Scripps Institution of Oceanography atmospheric chemist Lynn Russell, a report co-author, told The Associated Press. "It has a lot of risks and those are important to learn as much as we can about."

The panel recommended ramping up research spending by several fold to \$40 million a year, along with "exit ramps" to end study if an unacceptable risk is found.

"I honestly don't know whether or not it's going to make sense," said committee chairman Chris Field of Stanford University.

Critics, such as Oxford University's Raymond Pierrehumbert, worry that there's a "moral hazard" providing a tempting option to use questionable technology instead of the necessary cutting back on carbon pollution. He said the term geoengineering wrongly makes it sound like humans have control over heat like a thermostat.

Texas A&M University's Andrew Dessler sees geoengineering as a safety feature for the planet, like car airbags you hope to never need.

A Harvard team is working on a small-scale experiment where eventually a balloon would put a few

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 87 of 91

pounds of aerosols 12 miles (20 kilometers) into the air to reflect the sun. That group hopes to run a system test, with no chemical injection, later this year over Sweden.

This report is more forceful than the 2015 version, detailing government oversight and how research should be done, said academy president Marcia McNutt, who chaired the earlier study.

Is geoengineering too risky to even consider?

"It is not so much playing with fire as it is researching fire, so that we understand it well enough to deploy, if necessary," said Waleed Abdalati, a former NASA chief scientist who was on the 2015 panel. "Sometimes you have to examine very risky options when the stakes are as high as they are with climate change."

Follow Seth Borenstein on Twitter at @borenbears.

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

## US jobless claims fall to 684,000, fewest since pandemic

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The number of people seeking unemployment benefits fell sharply last week to 684,000, the fewest since the pandemic erupted a year ago and a sign that the economy is improving.

Thursday's report from the Labor Department showed that jobless claims fell from 781,000 the week before. It is the first time that weekly applications for jobless aid have fallen below 700,000 since mid-March of last year. Before the pandemic tore through the economy, applications had never topped that level.

The number of people seeking benefits under a federal program for self-employed and contract workers also dropped, to 241,000, from 284,000 a week earlier. All told, the number of applicants fell below 1 million for the first time since the pandemic.

Economists are growing more optimistic that the pace of layoffs, which has been chronically high for a full year, is finally easing.

"While the level of claims remains elevated," said Nancy Vanden Houten, an economist at Oxford Economics, "we expect they will continue to recede as the recovery gains momentum."

Still, a total of 18.9 million people are continuing to collect jobless benefits, up from 18.2 million in the previous week. Roughly one-third of those recipients are in extended federal aid programs, which means they've been unemployed for at least six months.

Their prolonged joblessness could prove to be a long-term hindrance: Typically, many people who have been unemployed for extended periods struggle to find work even as the economy regains its health.

The economy has been showing signs of emerging from the pandemic crisis with renewed vigor, with spending picking up, manufacturing strengthening and employers adding workers. Hiring increased in February, with 379,000 added jobs — more than double January's total. The economy expanded at a 4.3% annual rate in the final three months of last year, the government estimated Thursday, slightly faster than its previous estimate. That pace is widely expected to accelerate in the coming months, fueled by substantial government rescue aid.

Credit card data from JPMorgan Chase showed that consumer spending jumped last week as the \$1,400 checks that are going to most adults under President Joe Biden's \$1.9 trillion emergency aid package began to be paid out. The Treasury says it has so far distributed 127 million payments worth \$325 billion.

Last week, Federal Reserve policymakers substantially boosted their forecast for the economy this year, anticipating growth of 6.5% for 2021, up from an estimate of just 4.2% three months ago. That would be the fastest rate of expansion in any year since 1984. The Fed also projects that the unemployment rate will reach 4.5% by the end of this year, down from the current 6.2%.

Some individual states reported sharp drops in applications for aid last week. In Illinois, they tumbled 80% to just under 15,000. In Ohio, which several weeks ago had flagged a significant portion of claims as fraudulent, they fell by nearly a third to 69,000.



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 88 of 91

Nationally, though, the number of recipients in an extended federal jobless benefits program jumped by 730,000 to 5.5 million. Nearly all the increase occurred in California, which has a biweekly filing system that can cause sharp fluctuations, up or down, from week to week.

Historically, the weekly unemployment claims figure has been considered an accurate reflection of the pace of layoffs. But that connection has weakened during the pandemic. Widespread fraud and the processing of backlogged claims have distorted many states' jobless aid data. That has been particularly true for the federal program that covers self-employed and gig workers; this data has fluctuated wildly in many states.

And a report from the California Policy Lab last week illustrated another complicating factor: Many people have applied multiple times during the pandemic, having been initially laid off or furloughed, then been called back to work, then been laid off again. Each layoff has triggered a new application for unemployment benefits.

The Policy Lab's report found that 75% of jobless claims in California in the final week of February were from people who had previously been laid off and applied for benefits.

Across the country, economic activity slowed in February as severe winter weather caused sharp drops in home sales, retail spending and orders for heavy factory goods. Most economists, though, say they think the economy is now rebounding as the weather improves and additional support from the new \$1.9 trillion federal rescue package kicks in.

Some analysts are increasingly optimistic that hiring will accelerate quickly this year. Two senior fellows at the Brookings Institution have forecast that employers will add a substantial 700,000 to 1 million jobs per month, on average, over the next 10 months. At the higher end of that estimate, the economy by year's end would have regained all the 9.5 million jobs that remain lost to the pandemic.

There are still risks that could frustrate such hopes. The number of new daily coronavirus infections has leveled off, though hospitalizations and deaths continue to fall. And as many states have dropped or relaxed pandemic-related restrictions on gatherings and business activity, another wave of infections could weigh on the economy.

Though growth may accelerate this year, hiring often lags behind economic growth as businesses wait to see if rising demand is sustainable. What's more, roughly 4 million Americans stopped looking for work during the pandemic and aren't counted in the unemployment rate. Most of them will need to be re-hired for the economic recovery to be fully complete.

## **Few Black women coaches lead Power Five basketball programs**

By TERESA M. WALKER AP Sports Writer

Dawn Staley and Joni Taylor embraced before and after the Southeastern Conference Tournament championship, savoring a historic moment in women's basketball.

It took 41 years for two Black women head coaches to meet in a tournament championship of a Power Five conference. For it to happen quicker was statistically improbable with the few Black women coaching at the highest level of the college game.

And it remains a longshot to happen again in a Power Five league other than the Southeastern Conference.

In the last five years, there have been a total of 16 Black women head coaches at Power Five schools, and this past season there were just 13 — with four hired last year. Of those 13, seven resided in the SEC.

"You can't dream what you can't see," said Taylor, whose Georgia squad came up short against Staley and South Carolina on March 7. "So (the SEC title game) was a chance for people to dream something that they haven't seen before."

The Big 12 was the only Power Five league on the women's side this season without a Black head coach — male or female. The Atlantic Coast Conference had three Black female head coaches, and two Black male head coaches; the Pac-12 had two Black women head coaches, and Rutgers' Hall of Famer C. Vivian Stringer was the only Black female head coach in the Big Ten.

It is clear there still is work to be done when it comes to diversity even as women held 45 of the 65 head coaching jobs at Power Five conferences this season.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 89 of 91

Staley said her phone was swamped by text messages from other Black coaches around the country congratulating and thanking her and Taylor after the SEC game "for giving them hope that one day they can be in this position, assistant coaches as well."

The pipeline of potential candidates appears full, and hiring managers don't have to look far to find them. Of the 65 Power Five schools, 62 have at least one Black assistant on staff.

But there is disconnect somewhere in the hiring process.

"There are a lot of assistant coaches out there who have had as long a career as I have assistant coaching, Black, white, all of them. But Black women haven't got a whole lot of opportunities to be head coaches in Division I basketball," said Staley, who noted her success has come because she has worked with people who believed in her.

Promoting assistants falls on athletic directors, where there's an even greater lack of diversity. There are only five women ADs at Power Five schools, and two are in the ACC. And of the five female athletic directors, only Carla Williams at Virginia and Vanderbilt's Candice Lee are Black.

Lee became the third straight Black athletic director at Vanderbilt and the first full-time woman AD in the SEC last May. She also played basketball for the Commodores and loved watching Staley and Taylor coach in the title game because "representation matters."

But the Vanderbilt AD also noted race and gender aren't the only factors to look at when scrutinizing her peers around the country.

Lee, one of only two Black ADs in the SEC along with Auburn's Allen Greene, said clearly white ADs have hired Black coaches in women's basketball.

"Sometimes we exclude people because we use words like pedigree and pipeline when the reality is that we're not making it a priority," Lee said. "And if we believe that representation matters, and many of our women's basketball student athletes are Black and brown, then I think it would come to bear that you would see more diversity in the coaching ranks. And I just think we've got to be intentional about rewarding opportunities."

Taylor has a suggestion of how ADs can help improve diversity when hiring new coaches.

"People who are making decisions need to make sure they're talking to different people when they're compiling their list to make sure that list is diversified," said Taylor, who led Georgia to the second round of the women's NCAA Tournament.

Kentucky AD Mitch Barnhart looked to the Wildcats' bench to replace Matthew Mitchell. He made associate head coach Kyra Elzy the interim coach, then sat down with Elzy twice to let her make her case for the job.

After a 6-0 start, Barnhart made Elzy the second Black woman's basketball coach in Kentucky history, joining Bernadette Mattox. Barnhart said Elzy is the right person for the job, and yes, race was an important factor that can't be ignored with all that has happened in recent months.

"It was important for our players to know that they were being supported on every level of playing, of personal, (the) cultural world that we're in," Barnhart said. "It was important on every level, and Kyra does that at a high level. She's an absolute professional."

A recent NCAA survey of athletes found that minority women's basketball players reported having a far more challenging overall experience compared to athletes in other sports. One response was a push for the one-time transfer rule, which California coach Charmin Smith said Black female coaches questioned as an attempt to send unhappy players elsewhere.

Smith said the survey was a reminder of the need to acknowledge shortcomings of diversity, equity and inclusion.

"It's time that we understand that that representation does matter," Smith said. "And it's extremely important in how it shapes the experience of our student-athletes. And that's who we're supposed to be catering to during this experience."

SEC Commissioner Greg Sankey said they will keep raising the issue at the league's headquarters, but noted the final decisions are made by schools. The commissioner does believe change is happening, and

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 90 of 91

not just in the SEC.

"That is our future," Sankey said, referring to two Black women coaching in the SEC title game.

"And it's not simply the demographics," he added. "It's important for us. And I think it's important on a national stage as well."

Contributing to this report were: AP Basketball Writer Doug Feinberg and AP Sports Writers Pete Iacobelli, Janie McCauley, Stephen Hawkins, Anne M. Peterson, Steve Megargee, Eric Olson and Hank Kurz Jr.

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

## Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Friday, March 26, the 85th day of 2021. There are 280 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On March 26, 1982, groundbreaking ceremonies took place in Washington, D.C., for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

On this date:

In 1812, an earthquake devastated Caracas, Venezuela, causing an estimated 26,000 deaths, according to the U.S. Geological Survey.

In 1827, composer Ludwig van Beethoven died in Vienna.

In 1874, poet Robert Frost was born in San Francisco.

In 1892, poet Walt Whitman died in Camden, New Jersey.

In 1917, the Seattle Metropolitans became the first U.S. team to win the Stanley Cup as they defeated the Montreal Canadiens in Game 4 of the finals by a score of 9-1.

In 1945, during World War II, Iwo Jima was fully secured by U.S. forces following a final, desperate attack by Japanese soldiers.

In 1962, the U.S. Supreme Court, in *Baker v. Carr*, gave federal courts the power to order reapportionment of states' legislative districts.

In 1964, the musical play "Funny Girl," starring Barbra Streisand as Fanny Brice, opened on Broadway.

In 1979, a peace treaty was signed by Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin (men-AH'-kem BAY'-gihn) and Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and witnessed by President Jimmy Carter at the White House.

In 1992, a judge in Indianapolis sentenced former heavyweight boxing champion Mike Tyson to six years in prison for raping a Miss Black America contestant. (Tyson ended up serving three years.)

In 1997, the bodies of 39 members of the Heaven's Gate techno-religious cult who committed suicide were found inside a rented mansion in Rancho Santa Fe, California.

In 2010, the U.S. and Russia sealed the first major nuclear weapons treaty in nearly two decades, agreeing to slash the former Cold War rivals' warhead arsenals by nearly one-third.

Ten years ago: Former Democratic vice presidential candidate Geraldine Ferraro, the first female major party nominee for the office, died in Boston at 75.

Five years ago: Bernie Sanders scored wins over Hillary Clinton in the Washington state, Alaska and Hawaii Democratic caucuses. Author Jim Harrison ("Legends of the Fall") died in Patagonia, Arizona, at age 78.

One year ago: Federal officials said two men who had been on a coronavirus-stricken cruise ship stalled for days off the California coast had died; officials confirmed that fewer than half the ship's 2,400 passengers were tested for the virus. (More than 100 people who were on the Grand Princess were found to be infected with the coronavirus; at least eight died.) The government reported a record-high number of new unemployment claims – nearly 3.3 million – amid an economic shutdown caused by the coronavirus. The U.S. surpassed official Chinese government numbers to become the country with the most reported

# Groton Daily Independent

**Friday, March 26, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 263 ~ 91 of 91**

coronavirus infections, more than 85,000. The U.S. Justice Department indicted Venezuela's socialist leader Nicolás Maduro and several aides on charges of narcoterrorism. Fred "Curly" Neal, the dribbling wizard who starred with the Harlem Globetrotters for parts of three decades, died at the age of 77.

Today's Birthdays: Retired Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor is 91. Actor Alan Arkin is 87. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas is 86. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi is 81. Actor James Caan is 81. Author Erica Jong is 79. Journalist Bob Woodward is 78. Singer Diana Ross is 77. Actor Johnny Crawford is 75. Rock singer Steven Tyler (Aerosmith) is 73. Singer and TV personality Vicki Lawrence is 72. Actor Ernest Thomas is 72. Comedian Martin Short is 71. Country singer Ronnie McDowell is 71. Movie composer Alan Silvestri is 71. Rock musician Monte Yoho is 69. Former Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao is 68. Radio talk show host Curtis Sliwa is 67. Country singer Dean Dillon is 66. Country singer Charly McClain is 65. TV personality Leeza Gibbons is 64. Actor Ellia English is 62. Actor Jennifer Grey is 61. College and Pro Football Hall of Famer Marcus Allen is 61. Actor Billy Warlock is 60. Actor Eric Allan Kramer is 59. Basketball and College Basketball Hall of Famer John Stockton is 59. Actor Michael Imperioli is 55. Rock musician James Iha (EE'-hah) is 53. Country singer Kenny Chesney is 53. Movie director Martin McDonagh (Film: "Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri") is 51. Actor Leslie Mann is 49. Actor T.R. Knight is 48. Rapper Juvenile is 46. Actor Amy Smart is 45. Actor Bianca Kajlich (KY'-lihk) is 44. Moderator Margaret Brennan (TV: "Face the Nation") is 41. Actor Sterling Sulieman is 37. Actor Keira Knightley is 36. Rapper J-Kwon is 35. Actor Carly Chaikin is 31.