

# Groton Daily Independent

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## The Living Stations

Wednesday, March 31  
7 p.m.  
SEAS Catholic Church  
Groton

A graphic featuring three black crosses of varying heights on a dark silhouette of a hill. The background is a warm, orange and yellow sunset sky with rays of light.

### **OPEN:** Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

## Spotlight on Groton Area Staff

**Name:** Jan Hoffman

**Occupation:** Special Education Paraeducator

**Length of Employment:** 1990-Present

Depending on the location and population of a school, there may be an abundance of students who require extra help with certain materials from a class. For students with special needs, certain subjects prove more difficult to comprehend. At Groton Area High School, there are staff members who work with students to help them understand the material in these classes. These staff are referred to as Paraeducators or Paraprofessionals.



Jan Hoffman graduated with a degree in Accounting from Aakers School of Business and Accounting in 1964. Prior to that point, Mrs. Hoffman had attended Jamestown College and had wanted to be an English and P.E. teacher, but her experience working at the accounting office in her college changed her mind. After graduating, Jan worked at Polar Telephone Communications in Park River, North Dakota as an Accountant. Her career in accounting lasted for 12 years in total and ended after moving to Brookings, SD with her husband and family.

After her work as an accountant, Mrs. Hoffman began her career as a stay-at-home mother for her four daughters. Jan started working as a Paraeducator at the Groton Area Elementary school after her husband passed away as it matched with her kid's schedule. She worked there for 10 years until the year 2000, at which point she began working at the Groton Area High School.

Jan Hoffman is still working to help students understand knowledge from a variety of classes, from Science to World History and Math. Mrs. Hoffman is well-versed in the fields of Chemistry and Physical Science. As a paraeducator who mainly works with special needs students, Jan thinks that knowing how to live independently is essential for life after high school.

**Editor's Note: This is a continuing series compiled by Benjamin Higgins. Higgins who is working for the Groton Independent through the Project Skills program.**



**Pictured are Desiree Yeigh, Braden Freeman and Austin Fordham.**

## **Freeman Selected to 2021 SD HS All State Band Ensemble**

On Friday March 26th, Braden Freeman proudly represented Groton Area in South Dakota's 71st Annual High School All State Band. The event was located at the Mitchell Performing Arts Center in Mitchell, SD.

Due to COVID-19, All State Band was cancelled in 2020. This year, the All-State Band was divided into four different ensembles with each ensemble having its own conductor. On Friday March 26th, the guest conductors were Dr. Rolf Olson and Dr. Jacob Wallace. On Saturday March 27th, the guest conductors were Dr. Haley Armstrong and Dr. John LaCognata. Braden was selected to play in Dr. Olson's ensemble.

The members of the 2021 South Dakota All-State Band were selected through statewide competitive auditions. The auditions were held virtually during the month of January with four All-State adjudicators, judging each online submission to select the top high school musicians in the state for the All-State Band.

Freeman rehearsed for only one day in large group and sectionals. Each group performed a concert the that same evening. Freeman was grateful to have the opportunity to be apart of a prestigious ensemble. Congratulations Braden! You made Groton Area extremely proud!



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## Cracker Barrell held

Scott Thorson goes over the final details for the Cracker Barrell held Tuesday night at the GHS Arena. Throson is the government teacher and the senior government class helped to put this event on. It was livestreamed on [GDILIVE.COM](http://GDILIVE.COM) and is now archived at [397news.com](http://397news.com). The school board candidates are Kara M. Pharis, Anna Schwan, Ryan Tracy and Martin D. Weismantel. The seniors who ran the program were Hailey Monson, Samantha Pappas, Paxton Bonn, Sage Mortenson and Nevaeh Pardick. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

## PUBLIC NOTICE OF MUNICIPAL ELECTION CANCELLATION

Due to an invalid submission of one candidate's nominating petition, the Municipal Election for Ward 1 scheduled for April 13, 2021 must be cancelled. The Groton Area School District School Board election will still be held as scheduled. Questions are directed to the Groton City Hall at 605-397-8422.

## **Governor Noem Declares State of Emergency for Drought and Fire Conditions**

PIERRE, S.D. – Today, Governor Kristi Noem signed Executive Order 2021-07, which declares a state of emergency through June 1, 2021, due to severe drought and dangerous fire conditions.

This executive order is in response to the numerous fire incidents occurring throughout the state. The order will allow the state to provide greater assistance to the response efforts of local and volunteer firefighters. Governor Noem has spent the past two days overseeing the response to the Schroeder Fire outside Rapid City while monitoring other fire incidents.

## **Regents Approve Tuition & Fee Rates for 2021-22**

ABERDEEN, S.D. – The South Dakota Board of Regents this week approved tuition and mandatory fees for the upcoming academic year. The impact to students in the public university system is an average cost increase of \$104.98 per year, or 1.1 percent.

“Affordability for students and their families is a major consideration for us,” said Brian L. Maher, the regents’ executive director and CEO. “Setting tuition and fees must be done with a mind to balancing student affordability against the real costs of providing education. A minimal 1 percent adjustment is consistent with those goals.”

There are a number of fixed costs that impact tuition and fee rates, including a 2.4 percent salary policy in the coming year for all employees. The state covers less than half of this salary and benefit package for employees in the public university system, so tuition, fees, and student charges are raised internally to cover the remainder of that obligation. “When the Legislature approves a base fund increase for employee salaries, tuition at the regental system must also increase to compensate for a portion of Board of Regents’ employees not funded with state dollars,” Maher explained.

On average, an in-state undergraduate student taking 30 credit hours next year will pay \$9,358.99 for tuition and mandatory fees. These new rates are effective for the 2021-22 academic year that begins this summer.



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## STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR EXECUTIVE ORDER 2021-07

**Whereas**, The State of South Dakota is suffering from widespread drought conditions, low humidity, high wind, and high temperatures that create serious peril for our state; and,

**Whereas**, The entirety of our state is suffering from abnormally dry, or moderate and severe drought conditions, with nearly 80 percent of our state being in moderate and severe drought conditions; and,

**Whereas**, Drought conditions threaten life, livestock, property, and the livelihood of our citizens, and resultant fires, worsened by these conditions, cause significant damage to infrastructure and cause unexpected costs; and,

**Whereas**, Substantial state and local government resources have been committed to help alleviate the effects of this severe weather and dangerous fire conditions, and local workforce and firefighting resources are being depleted for firefighting efforts; and,


**Whereas**, State, local, and federal government activities and resources are required to contain and control wildfire activity throughout the state:

**NOW, THEREFORE**, I, KRISTI NOEM, Governor of the State of South Dakota, under provisions of SDCL 34-48A, otherwise known as the Emergency Management law, do hereby declare a state of emergency to exist in South Dakota during this fire incident period through June 1, 2021, unless further extended by a subsequent Executive Order.

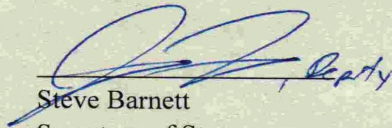
**BE IT FURTHER ORDERED**, Available resources and functions of state government are hereby authorized under the coordination of the Department of Agriculture, its successor the Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources, the Department of Public Safety, and the Wildland Fire Division, as necessary to provide relief and assistance.

Dated in Pierre, South Dakota this 30th day of March, 2021.



  
Kristi Noem  
Governor of South Dakota

ATTEST:

  
Steve Barnett  
Secretary of State



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**#401 in a series**

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

We're up by 62,700 new cases today, another substantial increase of 0.2%. The case total for the US in this pandemic is now 30,415,300. We currently have 40,317 people hospitalized, about 2000 above our recent low. There were 942 deaths reported today, increasing our total by 0.2% to 550,486. I will note here that the world has passed the 100 million-case mark. That's hard to wrap your head around.

On March 30, 2020, one year ago today, the US had 163,417 cases, over half of them in New York and New Jersey. Ten states had 78 percent of cases. Cases had quadrupled in just one week. The increase seemed to be slowing, but no one thought we'd reached our peak. We hadn't. There had been 3055 deaths, more than died on September 11, 2001. Of course, by the time we got to December 9, we were losing that many in a day, which makes this first milestone seem quaint. The first US military death from Covid-19 was reported on this day.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, speaking at the White House coronavirus briefing, projected based on modeling that we could see "millions of cases" and more than 100,000 could die in the US from this virus. He answered a question at the by saying he expected another outbreak in the fall, indicating to those who'd wondered that we were not close to through this thing. He also noted that, "We have a vaccine that's on track." We did, and he was right about the rest too, although even he admitted the other night he had no idea at the time how right.

Nursing homes were in terrible trouble. Medical supplies were in serious shortage, and states were having to slug it out for the little available. Health care staffs were stretched to breaking; states with large case numbers were putting out calls for workers from other states. Amazingly, they came. The homeless population was becoming a focus of infection. So were emergency workers and police, as well as staff and inmates in prisons. Chicago's McCormick Place Convention Center was being converted into a temporary patient care facility. Mass testing centers were opening at large venues—sports stadiums and such. A means for disinfecting single-use N95 masks for multiple days of use was introduced. More states issued stay-at-home orders for their residents. Janssen/Johnson & Johnson announced it would be ready for clinical trials of its vaccine candidate by September and, if all went well, ready for emergency use early in 2021.

Worldwide, there had been 732,000 cases reported with 33,579 deaths. There were signs the outbreak in Italy was slowing somewhat; there had been 101,739 cases identified and 11,591 deaths. Spain appeared to be slowing as well; they'd had over 85,000 cases and over 7000 deaths. Some of the earliest clinical trials for therapeutics were underway testing remdesivir, lopinavir-ritonavir, hydroxychloroquine, and interferon-beta. New dates for the Tokyo Olympics, postponed to summer, 2021, were announced.

Dr. Rochelle Walensky elaborated last night on her warning earlier in the day about feeling "a sense of impending doom," saying, "I'm watching the cases tick up, I'm watching us have increased numbers of hyper-transmissible variants, I'm watching our travel numbers tick up, and the sense is I've seen what it looks like to anticipate the oncoming surge. And what I would really hate to have happen is to have another oncoming surge, just as we're reaching towards getting so many more people vaccinated, you know, we're still losing people at 1,000 deaths per day." Me too.

We're now up to 148 million doses of vaccine administered in the US out of the 189 million shipped. That's close to 80 percent, so the folks giving shots are keeping up with the supply pretty well. We're still at a seven-day average of about 2.8 million doses, and we now have nearly 30 percent of our population having received at least one dose with about one in six of us fully vaccinated. About half of those 65 and over are now fully vaccinated and 70 percent have received at least one dose. There is talk of surging vaccines to hot spots, and that seems like a reasonable intervention to me. I'd like to hear from the public health experts, but I would hope consideration will be given to the possibility. We continue to make progress.

Here's a novel idea: Use an existing vaccine containing an active virus as a vector for getting coronavirus genetic material into the host cells. The principle is similar to the platform used by the Janssen/Johnson & Johnson vaccine and the Oxford/AstraZeneca candidate, both of which use an adenovirus (cold virus) vector to carry coronaviral DNA. This one just uses a different vector, measles virus, specifically, the same

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attenuated (modified) virus as is currently used to vaccinate against measles. There are other experimental measles-based viral vaccines currently in trials; this one would add to that constellation of possibilities. It may prove to be more cost-effective than the new vaccines, and the technology for manufacturing it is well-established, so folks know how to make it. In animal models, this experimental vaccine elicited a protective response, preventing viral replication in the lungs and nasal passages too. There might be something here, and no one thinks we're finished needing vaccines against this virus. As I've said (repeatedly), more vaccines is better.

The long-awaited WHO report on the origins of this pandemic was released today. It is the product of a team of 34 Chinese and international experts and their recent mission to Wuhan. I have a copy, but have not made my way through it yet; what you see here comes from summaries. Among the findings is that the Huanan market in Wuhan, which sold sika deer, badgers, bamboo rats, live crocodiles, and other animals and was long considered the original source, is likely not, although "massive transmission" was happening at the market according to Linfa Wang, a virologist from Duke-NUS Medical School in Singapore and part of the WHO team. About 28 percent of early cases had links to the Huanan market and 23 percent to other markets; but 45 percent had no history of links to the markets. The report suggests the more likely source is animals on wildlife farms that supplied these markets; the authors suggest more study on those farms is warranted. We've heard throughout the pandemic of various suspicions that a lab in Wuhan is the source, but the team of WHO investigators dismiss that as "extremely unlikely," perhaps without sufficient evidence. However, I recall reviewing genomic evidence early in this pandemic that seemed to point to the same conclusion—that this virus is highly unlikely to have originated in a lab. If you want to work your way through some pretty sciencey, albeit fascinating, stuff, check it out in my Update #42 posted April 6 at <https://www.facebook.com/marie.schwabmiller/posts/3487224904627224>.

The thinking that farms were the source is supported by the fact that, after promoting and investing in wildlife farming as a tool for economic development in rural areas over the past 20 years, the Chinese government suddenly shut down this \$70 billion industry, putting 14 million people out of work, last February, just as the Wuhan outbreak was declining. The shutdown was accompanied by careful instructions for safe disposal of the animals in a way that would prevent transmission of infection, which certainly looks indicative of something. It is also supported by the fact that a bat virus which is 96 percent genetically similar to SARS-CoV-2 has been found on those farms and that the farms were breeding animals known to carry coronaviruses.

It appears there is widespread agreement this virus emerged first in bats, but what we still don't know is how the virus made its way from the original bat host to the human host or the precise role of animal markets in this picture. The WHO team characterized direct transmission to humans from an animal source (likely a bat), something called spillover, as possible-to-likely and transmission to humans from an intermediate animal host infected by a bat as likely-to-very-likely. Work remaining to be done would be to trace the virus from farm to market and to identify which animal was the intermediate host and which farm(s) was implicated. The team recommended more testing of wildlife and animals bred on farms, more study of early cases, and more tracing of early cases. Given the reluctance of the Chinese government to cooperate with any of the inquiries thus far, it seems doubtful how much more they're going to want to do. I am well past caring who's to blame and more interested in how we prevent future occurrences; I believe early attempts to point a blaming finger at China or Wuhan or Asians generally have created an atmosphere where any inquiry into origins looks a whole lot more like a witch hunt than a scientific inquiry intended to keep us all safer in the future. And that is very unfortunate since it is a certainty that this sort of thing is going to happen again in the future. I can't think of a single person, however twisted, who looks forward to that.

There has also been some skepticism expressed about these findings, and it seems to stem from two things: (1) The team was granted limited and only "highly curated" access while in China, according Jamie Metzl, a geopolitics expert, who serves on a WHO genetic engineering advisory committee (but was not part of the team), and (2) China's failure to share raw data about early cases with the team. A group of experts including Metzl has signed a letter calling into question the findings of this committee that visited



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China.

Even Dr. Tedros Adhaom Ghebreyesus, the director-general of the WHO, has expressed concerns, saying, "I do not believe that this assessment was extensive enough. Further data and studies will be needed to reach more robust conclusions." Making a call on this one is well above my pay grade, so I'll wait for folks smarter than I to weigh in.

The Musée du Louvre in Paris is one of the world's largest museums. It is housed in the Louvre Palace built in the 1100s and 1200s as a fortress and has been expanded many times to its present size. It was used in the 1600s to display the royal collections and was converted to a public museum to "preserve the national memory" after the French Revolution with around 700 objects and works. The holdings have expanded pretty much steadily ever since, sometimes via looting and confiscation, for example, during Napoleonic rule, and are now divided into eight departments: Egyptian Antiquities; Near Eastern Antiquities; Greek, Etruscan, and Roman Antiquities; Islamic Art; Sculpture; Decorative Arts; Paintings; and Prints and Drawings estimated to include well over 600,000 items housed in the museum's more than 650,000 square feet. Only some 35,000 objects or so are on display at any one time. It is the most visited museum in the world, drawing some 15,000 visitors per day. I've never been there, but I've been given to understand it is crazy-crowded most of the time—it can be difficult to get close enough to even see popular exhibits like the Mona Lisa.

Of course, during much of the pandemic, the Louvre has been closed as it is today. That doesn't mean, however, that you can't visit. About three-fourths of its archive, some 482,000 works, have been digitized and are now available for viewing free online. Apparently, the collection is so large no one actually knows exactly how many items are in it; but there are more than you'll ever be able to view available to you today. Andrew McClellan, an expert on the Louvre from Tufts University, in an interview on NPR, likened this project to the Enlightenment ideals that underpinned its formation in the first place: "collecting the world's knowledge together under one roof, and then making it available for researchers and the general public." Every image has "title, artist, inventory number, dimensions, materials and techniques, date and place of production, object history, current location and bibliography," so you can just look or you can really study.

What's cool about this is that you can access here things you'd never see if you went to the museum in person. We all know about the famous works there; but the digitization project includes all kinds of little-known items as well. Suse Anderson, professor of Museum Studies at George Washington University, who studies digital technology's impact on museums, told NPR, the digitization project "helps you see things you might not otherwise. It helps you find surprises. And that's where I think you often get the connection to your own life, is when you find something that resonates, that isn't the thing you went looking for." That sounds like fun. Check out <https://www.louvre.fr/en/> and explore.

Take care. I'll be back.

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County	Total Cases	Recovered Cases	Negative Persons	Deceased Among Cases	Community Spread	% PCR Test Positivity Rate (Weekly)
Aurora	459	438	899	15	Minimal	12.0%
Beadle	2864	2784	6131	40	Substantial	10.7%
Bennett	386	372	1204	9	Minimal	3.6%
Bon Homme	1514	1480	2153	26	Moderate	5.0%
Brookings	3819	3646	12567	37	Substantial	6.0%
Brown	5290	5127	13201	91	Substantial	9.4%
Brule	701	688	1919	9	Minimal	2.7%
Buffalo	423	409	907	13	Minimal	5.3%
Butte	1007	981	3321	20	Minimal	1.3%
Campbell	131	127	268	4	None	0.0%
Charles Mix	1341	1273	4081	21	Substantial	3.8%
Clark	414	387	976	5	Substantial	12.5%
Clay	1869	1811	5621	15	Substantial	9.7%
Codington	4202	4025	10040	80	Substantial	15.8%
Corson	476	461	1023	12	Minimal	0.0%
Custer	780	758	2805	12	Moderate	9.6%
Davison	3097	2943	6829	66	Substantial	17.9%
Day	677	640	1857	29	Moderate	16.0%
Deuel	493	476	1174	8	Moderate	0.0%
Dewey	1438	1408	3921	26	Minimal	2.0%
Douglas	445	429	945	9	Minimal	15.4%
Edmunds	493	472	1098	13	Minimal	6.7%
Fall River	564	538	2727	15	Moderate	7.6%
Faulk	364	350	710	13	Minimal	0.0%
Grant	1009	944	2335	42	Moderate	15.3%
Gregory	571	525	1338	30	Moderate	4.9%
Haakon	260	248	559	10	None	0.0%
Hamlin	745	693	1851	38	Moderate	6.2%
Hand	354	342	862	6	Minimal	0.0%
Hanson	376	369	759	4	Minimal	14.3%
Harding	92	91	188	1	None	0.0%
Hughes	2364	2300	6802	37	Moderate	1.4%
Hutchinson	835	773	2465	26	Substantial	23.4%



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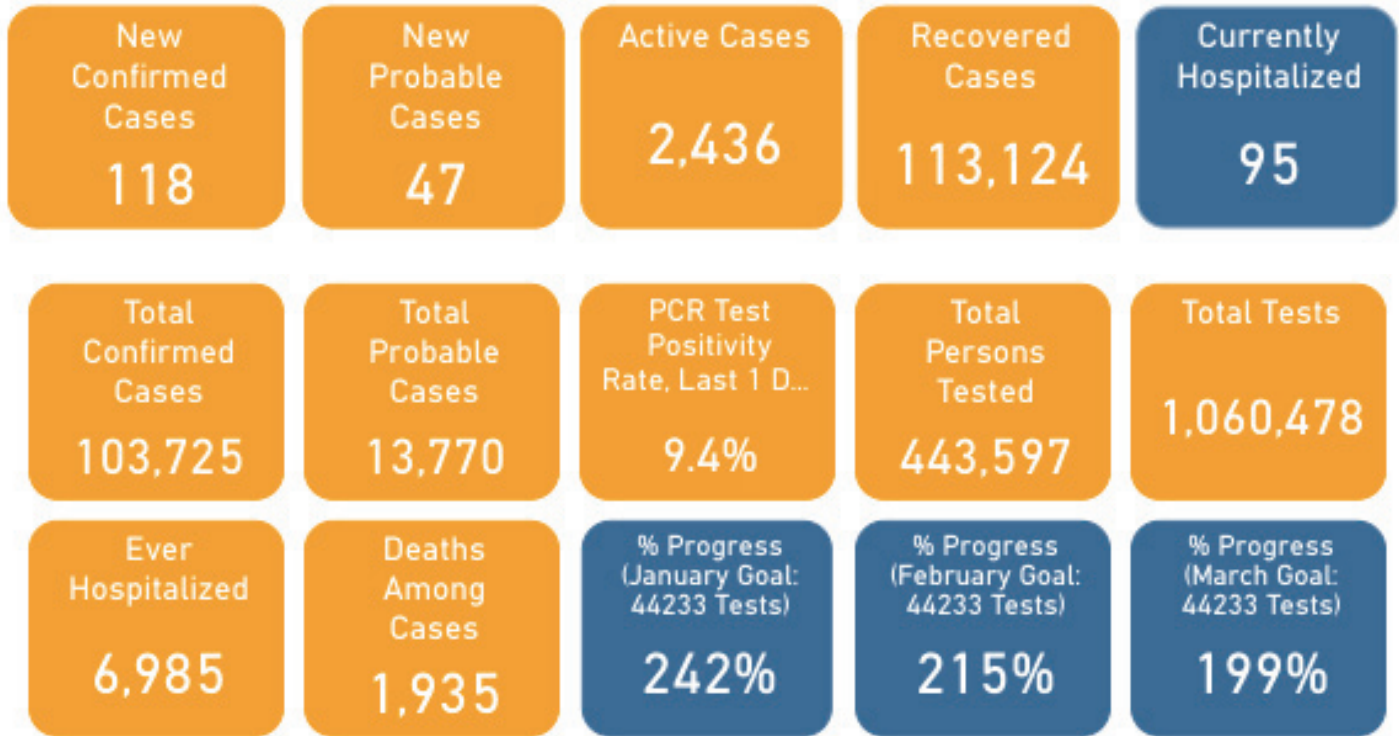
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Hyde	138	136	431	1	Minimal	0.0%
Jackson	284	269	928	14	None	0.0%
Jerauld	275	257	577	16	Minimal	9.1%
Jones	91	90	234	0	Minimal	11.1%
Kingsbury	728	649	1740	14	Substantial	20.4%
Lake	1292	1224	3540	18	Substantial	18.0%
Lawrence	2887	2823	8765	45	Moderate	4.7%
Lincoln	8202	7919	21093	77	Substantial	13.1%
Lyman	624	602	1927	10	Moderate	10.8%
Marshall	364	345	1258	6	Moderate	0.0%
McCook	783	743	1722	24	Moderate	9.7%
McPherson	240	235	581	4	None	0.0%
Meade	2686	2629	7972	31	Moderate	7.1%
Mellette	254	252	752	2	None	0.0%
Miner	289	270	602	9	Moderate	15.4%
Minnehaha	29655	28485	81523	343	Substantial	13.9%
Moody	625	603	1812	17	Minimal	0.0%
Oglala Lakota	2083	2018	6756	49	Minimal	1.7%
Pennington	13237	12904	40676	191	Moderate	6.0%
Perkins	351	336	842	14	Minimal	5.9%
Potter	387	381	868	4	Minimal	4.0%
Roberts	1310	1236	4291	38	Substantial	12.9%
Sanborn	337	331	712	3	Minimal	0.0%
Spink	823	785	2202	26	Moderate	6.2%
Stanley	339	336	969	2	Minimal	4.8%
Sully	136	133	330	3	None	0.0%
Todd	1218	1187	4216	29	Minimal	0.0%
Tripp	736	707	1530	17	Moderate	9.1%
Turner	1131	1048	2829	53	Substantial	9.5%
Union	2129	2018	6576	41	Substantial	12.0%
Walworth	753	718	1872	15	Moderate	11.5%
Yankton	2917	2821	9647	28	Substantial	11.8%
Ziebach	338	326	882	9	Minimal	9.1%
Unassigned	0	0	1911	0		

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## South Dakota



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

Race/Ethnicity	# of Cases	% of Cases
White, Non-Hispanic	88022	75%
Native American, Non-Hispanic	13751	12%
Unknown, Non-Hispanic	5517	5%
Hispanic	4264	4%
Black, Non-Hispanic	2629	2%
Other, Non-Hispanic	1701	1%
Asian, Non-Hispanic	1611	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	61088	911
Male	56407	1024



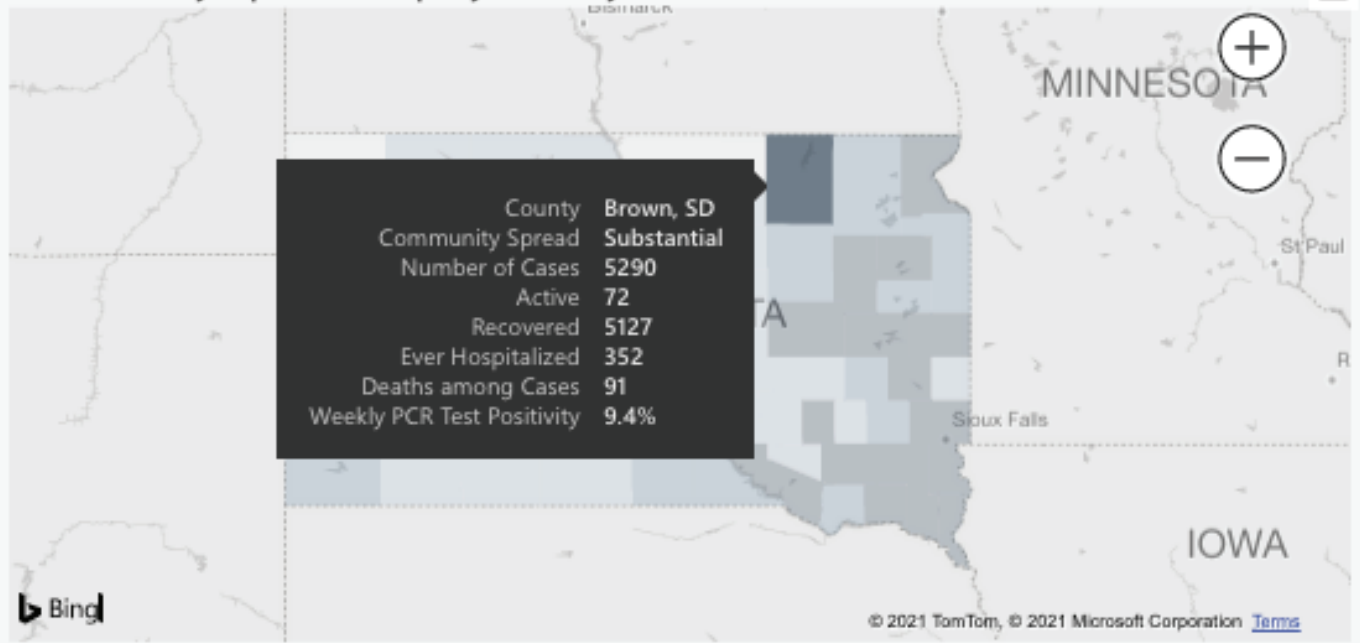
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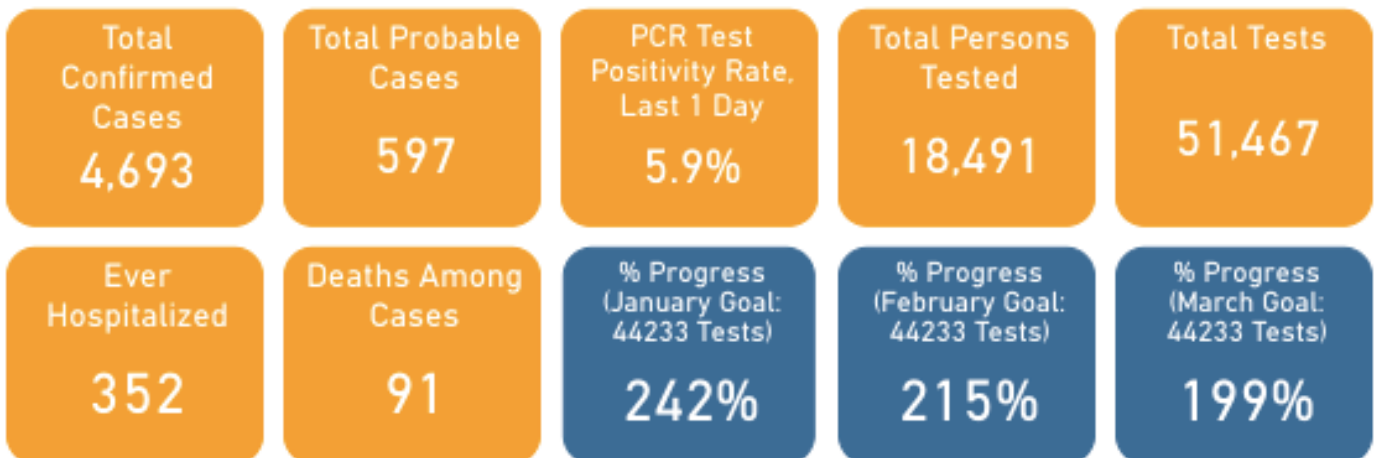
## Brown County



Community Spread Map by County of Residence



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



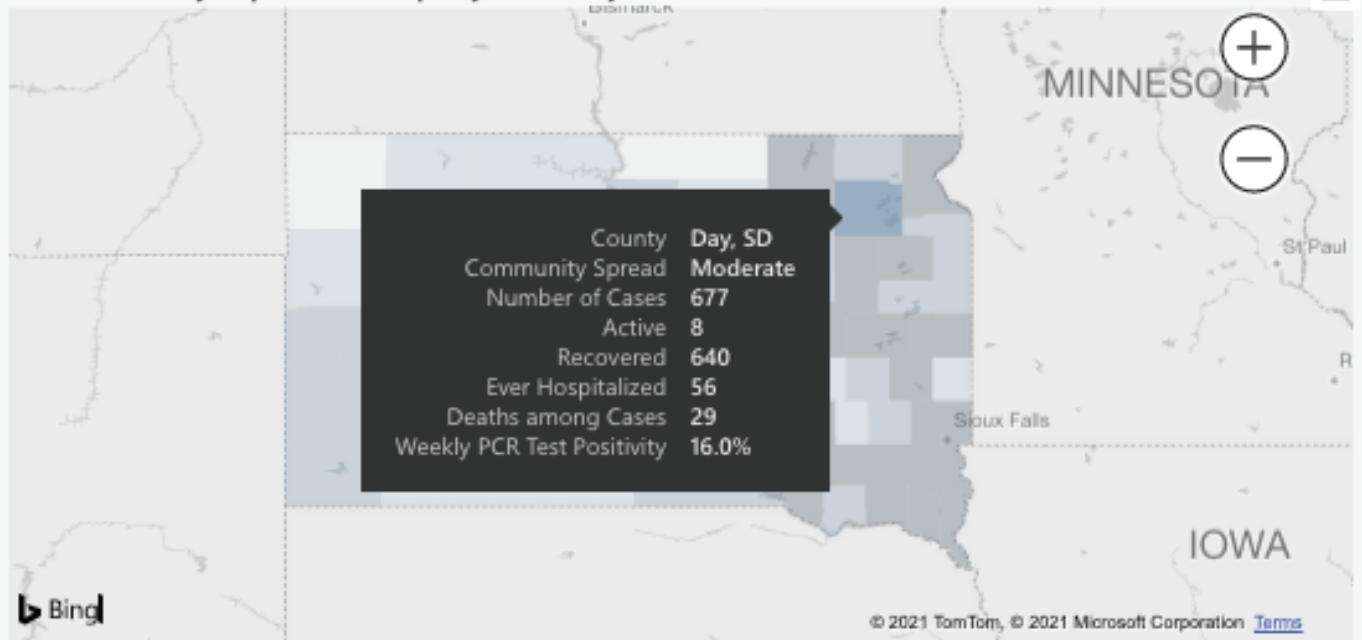
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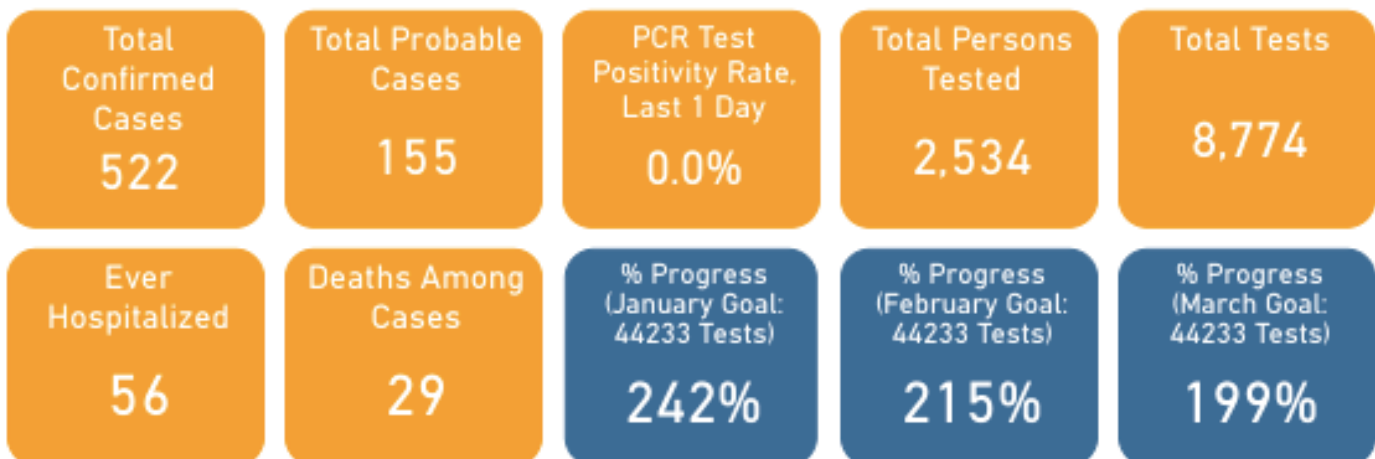
## Day County



### Community Spread Map by County of Residence



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





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## Vaccinations

Total Doses Administered

404,181

State Allocation

Total Persons Administered a Vaccine

249,042

State Allocation

Percent of State Population with at least 1 Dose

42%

State & Federal Allocation

Manufacturer	# of Doses
Janssen	8,033
Moderna	190,879
Pfizer	205,269

Doses	# of Recipients
Janssen - Series Complete	8,033
Moderna - 1 dose	45,513
Moderna - Series Complete	72,683
Pfizer - 1 dose	40,375
Pfizer - Series Complete	82,447

Doses	% of Pop.
1 dose	42.26%
Series Complete	28.00%

*Based on 2019 Census Estimate for those aged 16+ years. Includes aggregate data on IHS and federal*

County	# Doses	# Persons (1 dose)	# Persons (2 doses)	Total # Persons
Aurora	1,209	437	386	823
Beadle	8,635	2,470	3,082	5,552
Bennett*	565	141	212	353
Bon Homme*	4,402	876	1,763	2,639
Brookings	13,133	3,847	4,643	8,490
Brown	19,199	4,633	7,283	11,916
Brule*	2,163	479	842	1,321
Buffalo*	148	82	33	115
Butte	2,905	895	1,005	1,900
Campbell	1,247	179	534	713
Charles Mix*	3,873	1,123	1,375	2,498
Clark	1,626	492	567	1,059
Clay	6,792	2,190	2,301	4,491
Codington*	12,839	3,699	4,570	8,269
Corson*	342	68	137	205
Custer*	3,633	789	1,422	2,211
Davison	9,919	2,967	3,476	6,443
Day*	3,266	840	1,213	2,053
Deuel	1,906	564	671	1,235
Dewey*	429	61	184	245
Douglas*	1,469	423	523	946
Edmunds	1,783	393	695	1,088
Fall River*	3,184	650	1,267	1,917
Faulk	1,345	351	497	848
Grant*	3,718	686	1,516	2,202
Gregory*	2,148	564	792	1,356
Haakon*	641	119	261	380

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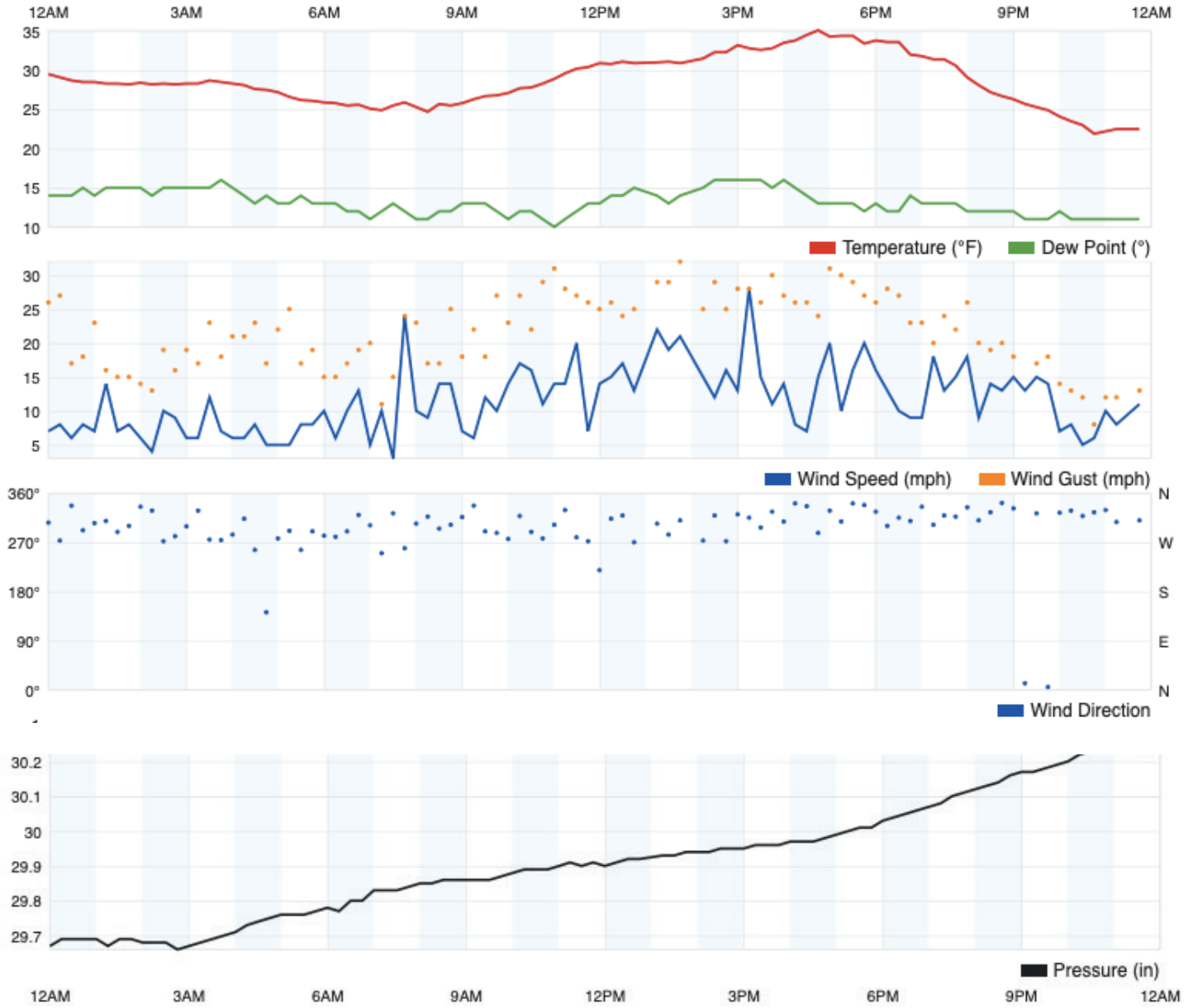
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Hamlin	2,265	599	833	1,432
Hand	1,850	550	650	1,200
Hanson	686	232	227	459
Harding	145	51	47	98
Hughes*	10,106	2,444	3,831	6,275
Hutchinson*	4,395	1,098	1,648	2,746
Hyde*	659	147	256	403
Jackson*	484	106	189	295
Jerauld	1,121	319	401	720
Jones*	760	136	312	448
Kingsbury	3,201	869	1,166	2,035
Lake	5,718	1,968	1,875	3,843
Lawrence	10,907	3,323	3,792	7,115
Lincoln	32,226	6,107	13,059	19,166
Lyman*	956	264	346	610
Marshall*	2,306	766	770	1,536
McCook	2,887	645	1,121	1,766
McPherson	316	68	124	192
Meade*	8,175	1,755	3,210	4,965
Mellette*	57	9	24	33
Miner	1,136	294	421	715
Minnehaha*	103,117	21,002	41,055	62,057
Moody*	2,324	684	820	1,504
Oglala Lakota*	207	51	78	129
Pennington*	47,171	8,839	19,166	28,005
Perkins*	780	254	263	517
Potter	1,200	354	423	777
Roberts*	5,313	915	2,199	3,114
Sanborn	1,310	383	463	846
Spink	3,648	782	1,433	2,215
Stanley*	1,505	333	586	919
Sully	494	126	184	310
Todd*	206	46	80	126
Tripp*	2,443	403	1,020	1,423
Turner	4,322	994	1,664	2,658
Union	4,252	1,574	1,339	2,913
Walworth*	2,340	392	974	1,366
Yankton	12,719	2,683	5,018	7,701
Ziebach*	69	15	27	42
Other	7,886	2,314	2,786	5,100

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs





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Today	Tonight	Thursday	Thursday Night	Friday
				
Sunny	Clear	Sunny then Sunny and Breezy	Mostly Clear then Mostly Clear and Breezy	Sunny
High: 39 °F	Low: 20 °F	High: 58 °F	Low: 36 °F	High: 73 °F

**Fire Weather Watch**

## Cool and Dry

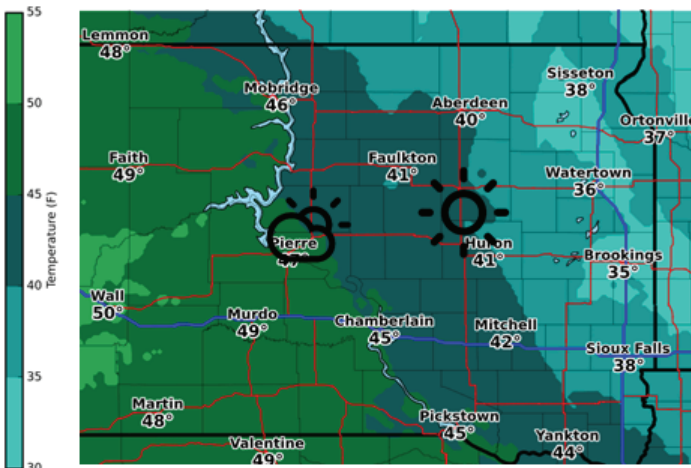


### Cool Today, but still very Dry

Highs will range from the mid 30s to the 40s (5 to 10 degrees below average for this time of year).

[see current forecast at weather.gov/](http://weather.gov/)

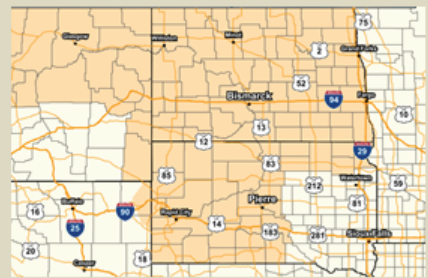
### HIGHS TODAY



### Elevated Fire Weather

Continued dry weather, low relative humidity, and breezy winds will create elevated fire weather concerns through the weekend – especially over central South Dakota.

Fire Weather Watch Thursday



Dry high pressure will be overhead today. Although temperatures will still be below average this afternoon, they will quickly move back to well above average for the end of the week and through the weekend. With the ongoing dry, warm, and occasionally windy conditions, elevated fire weather concerns will continue. Highs today will range from the upper 30s across much of eastern South Dakota and western Minnesota, to the 40s elsewhere. Expect temperatures to fall into the upper teens to low 20s overnight, and rebound into the mid 50s and 60s Thursday afternoon.

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## Today in Weather History

March 31, 1967: Heavy snow of 6 to 15 inches combined with 30 to 50 mph winds, caused blizzard conditions across most of northeast South Dakota. Many people were stranded, especially along Interstate-29 and Highway 12. In Hamlin County, a man was injured when his snowmobile struck a snowplow in Bryant in the early evening. Also, in the early afternoon, 4 miles west of Lake Norden on Highway 28, a car crossed the lane and hit a semi. The car was destroyed with thousands of dollars of damage to the semi. The driver of the car was injured. Many schools were let out early on the 31st and were canceled for April 1st. Many activities and sports events were either postponed or canceled. Some snowfall amounts included 6 inches at Doland, Conde, and Castlewood, 7 inches at Turton and Clear Lake, 8 inches at Clark and Britton, 9 inches at Bryant and Webster, 10 inches near Peever, and 11 inches at Summit. Snowfall amounts of a foot or more included, 12 inches at Watertown and Big Stone City, 13 inches at Victor, the Waubay NWR, and Sisseton, 14 inches at Wilmot, and 15 inches at Milbank.

March 31, 2014: A strong surface low-pressure area moving across the region brought mixed precipitation to all of the area including rain, freezing rain, sleet, snow along with some thunder. As the precipitation changed to over to all snow, northwest winds increased substantially to 30 to 40 mph with gusts to 50 to 60 mph causing widespread blizzard conditions. Much of the area received a coating of ice with trace amounts up to a tenth of an inch with several locations receiving up to 2 inches of sleet. Snowfall amounts from 2 to as much as 10 inches occurred with this storm. The precipitation changed over to snow in the morning out west and into the late afternoon hours across the east. The light snow did not end in the eastern portion of South Dakota until the early morning hours of April 1st. Many schools, government offices, and businesses were closed or canceled early. Travel was not advised across much of region with Interstate-29 being closed for a time from Brookings to the North Dakota border.

1890 - Saint Louis, MO, received 20 inches of snow in 24 hours. It was the worst snowstorm of record for the St Louis. (David Ludlum)

1942: 107 inches of rain fell during the month at Puu Kukui at Maui, Hawaii to set the U.S. record for rainfall in one month. The same place also holds the annual rainfall record for the United States with 578 inches in 1950.

1954 - The temperature at Rio Grande City, TX, hit 108 degrees, which for thirty years was a U.S. record for the month of March. (The Weather Channel)

1962 - A tornado struck the town of Milton, FL, killing 17 persons and injuring 100 others. It was the worst tornado disaster in Florida history. (David Ludlum)

1973 - A devastating tornado took a nearly continuous 75 mile path through north central Georgia causing more than 113 million dollars damage, the highest total of record for a natural disaster in the state. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - March went out like a lion in the northeastern U.S. A slow moving storm produced heavy snow in the Lower Great Lakes Region, and heavy rain in New England. Heavy rain and melting snow caused catastrophic flooding along rivers and streams in Maine and New Hampshire. Strong southerly winds ahead of the storm gusted to 62 mph at New York City, and reached 87 mph at Milton MA. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - March went out like a lion in eastern Colorado. A winter-like storm produced 42 inches of snow at Lake Isabel, including 20 inches in six hours. Fort Collins reported 15 inches of snow in 24 hours. Winds gusted to 80 mph at Centerville UT. Albuquerque NM received 14 inches of snow. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Afternoon thunderstorms produced severe weather from North Carolina to Pennsylvania. Thunderstorm winds gusted to 76 mph at Cape Henry VA. While squalls blanketed northwest Pennsylvania with up to 9 inches of snow, thunderstorms in eastern Pennsylvania produced golf ball size hail at Avondale. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

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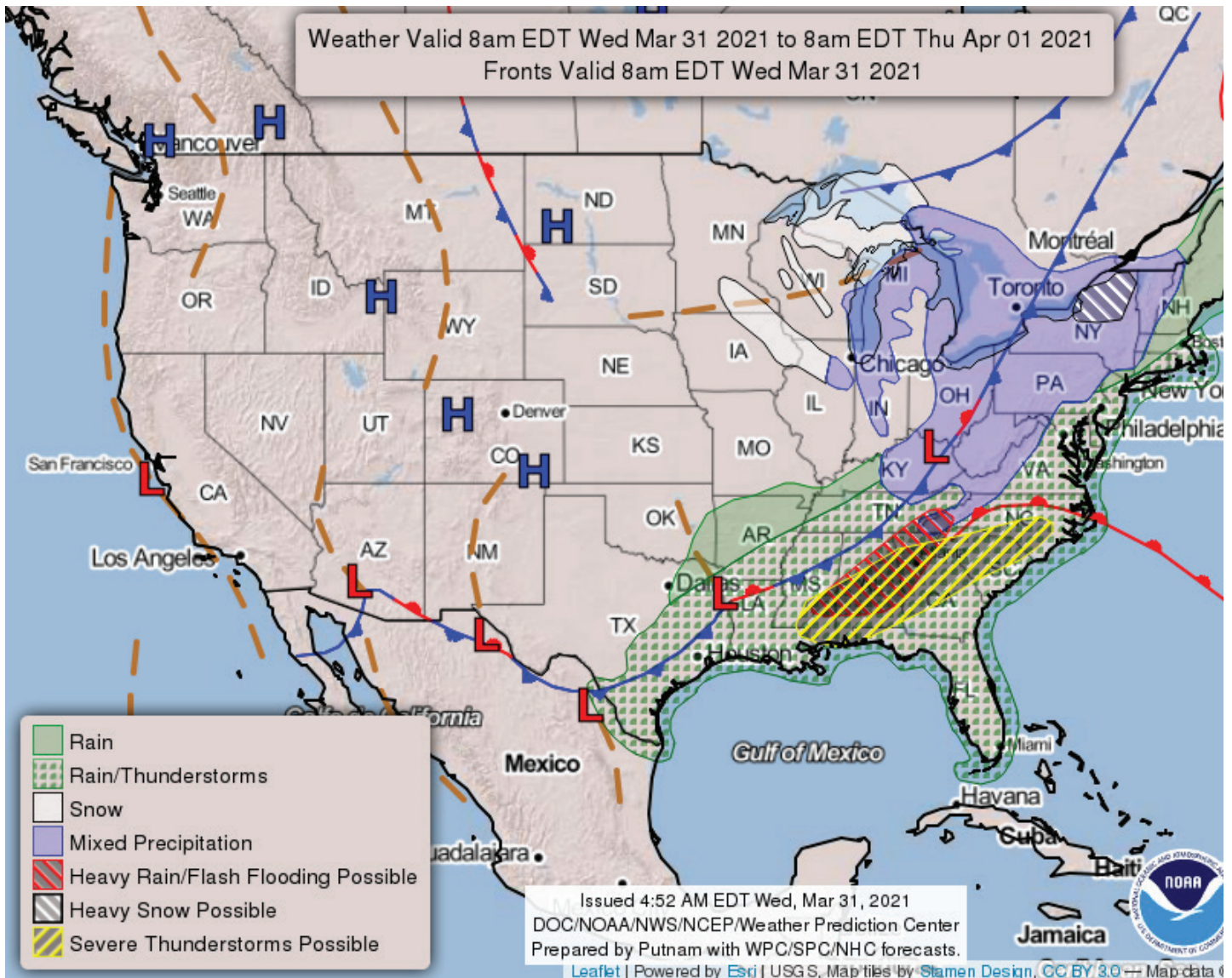
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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 35 °F at 4:40 PM**  
**Low Temp: 22 °F at 10:49 PM**  
**Wind: 32 mph at 1:33 PM**  
**Precip: .00**

## Today's Info

**Record High: 86 in 1946**  
**Record Low: 0° in 1899**  
**Average High: 48°F**  
**Average Low: 26°F**  
**Average Precip in Mar.: 1.11**  
**Precip to date in Mar.: 0.36**  
**Average Precip to date: 2.13**  
**Precip Year to Date: 0.54**  
**Sunset Tonight: 8:01 p.m.**  
**Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:13 a.m.**





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## COME! PRAISE THE LORD!

There seems to be an attitude of arrogance in the world today. It is summed up in the epigram that was written above the door of the saloon on the Titanic: "Not even God can sink this ship!" Imagine the irony of those words. They are carved in a piece of wood that is still rotting in the ocean after all of these years.

Unfortunately, there seems to be no fear of God in the world any longer. Today, the list of the world's fears includes the COVID-19 pandemic, a nuclear disaster, global warming, the national deficit, health care, a flu epidemic, identity theft or a stock market crash. It seems as though God has been assigned the role of being an ex-officio member of the "Board of Governors." It is a "position" with no power or influence. He is no longer recognized as one who makes any difference in the day to day operation of the universe. He's simply around to humor some people. Man is in charge now, thank you, and will bring good things to pass now that God is out of the way!

Psalm 34 takes the opposite view of God. The author blesses the Lord for what He has done. In deep humility he recognizes the power and presence of God. His view of the world is God-centered not man-exalting. Therefore, "His praise should always be on our lips."

How different it is today. People seem to do what they do for the recognition they may receive and the power they exert. Glory and honor belong to the one who can score the most points, accumulate vast wealth or demonstrate great power over people. God, to them, is a "thing" in the past. How very sad. Though He appears silent, He certainly is not!

Prayer: Father, may we praise You at all times and in all things for Your grace and sovereignty. Do "Your thing" through us so others may see You! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: I will praise the Lord at all times. I will constantly speak his praises. Psalm 34:1

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## FREE DATE CHANGES ON 2021 TOURS\*



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\*Free date changes anytime up to 45 days prior to departure for land tours, up to 95 days prior to departure for cruise tours. Deposits and final payments remain non-refundable. Prices are per person based on double occupancy plus \$299 in taxes & fees. Single supplement and seasonal surcharges may apply. Add-on airfare available. Offers apply to new bookings only, made by 6/30/21. Other terms & conditions may apply. Ask your Travel Consultant for details.

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## 2021 Community Events

- Cancelled** Legion Post #39 Spring Fundraiser (Sunday closest to St. Patrick's Day, every other year)
- 03/27/2021 Lions Club Easter Egg Hunt 10am Sharp at the City Park (Saturday a week before Easter Weekend)
- 04/10/2021 Dueling Pianos Baseball Fundraiser at the American Legion Post #39 6-11:30pm
- 04/24/2021 Firemen's Spring Social at the Fire Station 7pm-12:30am (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)
- 04/25/2021 Princess Prom (Sunday after GHS Prom)
- 05/01/2021 Lions Club Spring City-Wide Rummage Sales 8am-3pm (1st Saturday in May)
- 05/31/2021 Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services (Memorial Day)
- 6/7-9/2021 St. John's Lutheran Church VBS
- 06/18/2021 SDSU Alumni & Friends Golf Tournament at Olive Grove
- 06/19/2021 Lions Crazy Golf Fest at Olive Grove Golf Course, Noon
- 07/04/2021 Firecracker Golf Tournament at Olive Grove
- 07/11/2021 Lions Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 10am-4pm (Sunday Mid-July)
- 07/22/2021 Pro-Am Golf Tournament at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 07/30/2021-08/03/2021 State "B" American Legion Baseball Tournament in Groton
- 08/06/2021 Wine on Nine at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 09/11/2021 Lions Club Fall City-Wide Rummage Sales 8am-3pm (1st Saturday after Labor Day)
- 09/12/2021 Sunflower Classic Golf Tournament at Olive Grove
- 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

### Editorial Roundup: South Dakota

By The Associated Press undefined

**Yankton Press & Dakotan. March 30, 2021.**

#### Editorial: COVID-19 And Our Own Complacency

Monday sounded like a dire day in the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic which has claimed more than 550,000 American lives.

This grim vibe was reflected by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky, who during a COVID briefing spoke literally of "impending doom" in America's fight against the coronavirus. Noting the recent rise in new infections and deaths, she plainly told Americans that "right now, I'm scared."

However, to understand this message, one must consider the broader context in which her words, issued one year into this devastating pandemic, were uttered.

Her blunt assessments came on a day when the news generally on the COVID front was mostly very bright:

- Vaccinations continue to expand, with more than 12 million Americans vaccinated in the four days preceding Monday;
- More vaccine is coming online, and President Joe Biden announced that the federal pharmacy vaccination program, which has proven very popular with many people, is about to grow dramatically;
- Some states, including North Dakota, have announced they are making all adults eligible for vaccination;
- A CDC study announced Monday revealed that the Moderna and the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccines appeared to be 90% effective in preventing COVID infection in what was called a "real-world" setting.

That's all great news.

But that may also be the problem. Health officials are worried that people may let up in their commitment to defending themselves from the coronavirus. Reuters reported Monday that COVID infections in the U.S. climbed 9% last week, the first time since January that cases have gone up two weeks in a row. Infections ticked upward in 33 of 50 states. Nationally, deaths are dipping but still running at about 1,000 per day on average.

Walensky's worries are based on those trends, "What we've seen over the last week or so is a steady rise of cases," she said. "I know that travel is up, and I just worry that we will see the surges that we saw over the summer and over the winter again."

This is what has happened in Europe, and with the B.1.1.7 variant picking up steam in the U.S., the fear is that any letting up on the throttle, so to speak, could set America back considerably in this battle.

With Easter looming and with more events returning from one-year hibernation, the temptation to return to normal is growing by the day. But the message is clear: We're so close to winning this thing, but the battle isn't won yet — and our success could be reversed quickly if we don't maintain our vigilance.

Understandably, that's not what so many of us want to hear. We're weary of COVID life and are now energized by what is almost within our grasp. It's been such a long road, and help has arrived with the vaccines. South Dakota, which has endured a lot in the pandemic, has one of the highest vaccination rates in the country.

But complacency, after all this time, could become a landmine.

That's why Walensky sounded the alarm Monday.

That's why Biden, later in the day, DIDN'T contradict the CDC director (which was refreshing) and instead echoed her urgency by pleading with governors and mayors across the country to institute, or re-institute, mask mandates and to not open up too quickly.

"As much as we're doing, America, it's time to do even more," he said Monday.

The time will come when we can finally declare victory over COVID. You can sense it in the air.

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But the temptation to drop our guards too soon may be the biggest threat we face now. It's also the most avoidable.

## SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Mega Millions

11-37-47-53-56, Mega Ball: 15, Megaplier: 3

(eleven, thirty-seven, forty-seven, fifty-three, fifty-six; Mega Ball: fifteen; Megaplier: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$152 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$20 million

## Crews battling Black Hills wildfires gaining control

NEMO, S.D. (AP) — Firefighters on Tuesday began to gain control of wildfires in the Black Hills of South Dakota that have forced the evacuation of more than 400 homes and closed the Mount Rushmore National Memorial.

Three separate wildfires were burning near Rapid City, with the largest near Schroeder Road in the Nemo area. That fire has burned nearly 3.3 square miles (8.1 square kilometers). But officials said they expected to contain about half of the fire by the end of the day.

"It's not over yet, but we're in a pretty good spot," said Gov. Kristi Noem, who traveled to Rapid City to help oversee the fire response.

But the Republican governor acknowledged that fire danger had not passed, declaring a state of emergency until June. She cited "widespread drought conditions, low humidity, high wind and high temperatures that create serious peril for our state." The order allows state agencies to assist in tackling the wildfires.

The Schroeder Road fire has crossed into two neighborhoods near Rapid City, the Pennington County Sheriff's Office said Tuesday. At least one home has been destroyed, as well as several other structures. No injuries have been reported.

"There was quite a firefight last night," said Rob Powell, the firefighting official overseeing the response.

As winds died down throughout the day, firefighting crews worked both on the ground and from aircraft to contain the fire.

Two smaller blazes were burning southwest of Rapid City, including one inside the grounds of Mount Rushmore National Memorial. The monument, as well as surrounding roads, were closed through at least Wednesday. One fire has burned an estimated 117 acres (47 hectares) and is 30% contained; the other is about 9 acres (4 hectares), and officials hoped to have it 50% contained by the end of the day.

The fire near Mount Rushmore threatened 15 structures, including park facilities and private homes, but none have been destroyed, according to Great Plains Fire Public Information Officers Travis Mason-Bushman. He said the fire was near main access roads to the monument but wasn't close to the visitor center.

"The challenge is that it's burning in some pretty steep and rugged terrain," he said. "We need to bring in hand crews."

About 60 firefighters responded to the fire, as well as a South Dakota National Guard Black Hawk helicopter that was dumping water.

On Monday, multiple fires burst up across the region as winds in some places reached as high as 81 mph (130 kph). Firefighters initially responding to the Schroeder fire found "a fast-moving ground fire in extreme fire danger condition," officials reported. They immediately called for assistance from firefighters around the region, with about 250 responding.

The governor noted that it was "really early" in the year for wildfires and that battling them had taxed nearly all available resources. Officials said they do not have the firefighters to tackle any more large blazes

and were instead trying to snuff out smaller ones quickly.

"We're probably one of the first in the nation for 2021 facing this kind of a situation," Noem said.

Rapid City officials said they would not open up evacuated neighborhoods on Tuesday, but hoped to allow people to return to their homes early Wednesday.

Pennington County Sheriff Kevin Thom said his family was among those who were evacuated.

"I watched a neighbor's house go up in flames. So it touches all of us," Thom said Monday.

## Death penalty decision delayed in Rapid City murder trial

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A judge in Rapid City, South Dakota Tuesday granted a 90-day extension to the defense attorney of a man accused of murdering three people last year to be notified whether prosecutors will seek the death penalty.

The defense attorney for 36-year-old Arnon Absolu, a New York City man charged with three counts of premeditated first-degree murder for a series of alleged murders in August, asked the judge for the extension so he could investigate circumstances that may mitigate a death penalty sentence and meet with prosecutors, the Rapid City Journal reported. Absolu has pleaded not guilty to the charges, which are punishable by the death penalty or life in prison without parole.

The Pennington County State's Attorney Office will make a decision on whether to pursue the death penalty after it meets with Absolu's defense attorney, Timothy Rensch.

If Absolu is convicted, the judge or jury could consider the death penalty if there are aggravating circumstances, such as a murder-for-hire, murder that involved "torture, depravity of the mind or an aggravated battery," and if the defendant was distributing hard drugs.

The judge or jury would also consider mitigating circumstances, such as the defendant's childhood experience, mental health or developmental disorders.

## Man sentenced to 17 years in child pornography case

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — A Portland, Oregon man who served 12 years in prison for sexually abusing a child in California was sentenced Monday to serve 17 more years after using Facebook Messenger to convince a teenager to take sexually explicit videos of himself.

Prosecutors said Scott Lawrence, 57, posed online as a woman and communicated with the teenager from South Dakota, The Oregonian/OregonLive reported.

Lawrence obtained the boy's videos and distributed a graphic image of the boy to two other people, Assistant U.S. Attorney Gary Sussman said. Lawrence pleaded guilty to receiving and distributing child pornography and violating his supervised release conditions from a 2018 conviction for failure to register as a sex offender.

U.S. District Judge Robert E. Jones ordered Lawrence to face a life term of supervised release following his 17-year federal prison term.

Sussman argued the lengthy sentence was necessary to protect the public.

Both the prosecutor and Lawrence's lawyer, Francesca Freccero, jointly recommended the prison sentence imposed by the judge. Freccero unsuccessfully argued for five years of supervised release after Lawrence's prison term.

On Oct. 24, 2019, investigators raided Lawrence's Portland home with a federal search warrant, seized his cellphone and iPad, and found the videos, according to court records.

## Pandemic Prompts More Sheriff's Offices to Deploy Automated Kiosks

MINNEAPOLIS--(BUSINESS WIRE)--Mar 30, 2021--

Minneapolis-based Precision Kiosk Technologies today announced that the Covid-19 pandemic has prompted four additional law enforcement agencies to deploy its AB Kiosk® system to conduct court-



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mandated alcohol monitoring: The 24/7 Sobriety programs managed by the Sheriff's Offices of Brown and Brookings Counties in South Dakota; the Police Department of Ferndale, Michigan; and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in Saipan. Since October 1, 2020, four 24/7 Sobriety Programs in South Dakota have autonomously conducted more than 50,000 alcohol screening tests using seven AB Kiosks.

This press release features multimedia. View the full release here: <https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20210330005172/en/>

The AB Kiosk protects sheriff deputies and clients from Covid 19 transmission by autonomously conducting sobriety testing (Photo: Business Wire)

Courts often require clients to refrain from using alcohol as a condition of their pre-trial release, probation, or diversion program. To monitor compliance with these orders, clients must submit to daily alcohol screening, a process that is typically administered using handheld breathalyzers. During the Covid-19 pandemic, many jurisdictions have had to halt their alcohol screening programs to protect their clients and staff from the Covid-19 virus. This puts their communities at risk and limits the ability of the courts to monitor offenders.

The AB Kiosk system eliminates the need for face-to-face interactions between clients and staff by automating the entire alcohol monitoring process. The interactive Kiosk verifies the identity of the individual, captures still images and video as it administers each breathalyzer test, and automatically uploads all client data to cloud-based storage. The Kiosk can test up to 30 individuals per hour, and law enforcement staff can access testing data from any computer or smartphone. In addition, the AB Kiosk system frees up staff for higher-value work, reduces administrative costs, and immediately identifies those who violate the conditions of their release. More than 30 jurisdictions across the U.S. now use the AB Kiosk system for alcohol monitoring, pre-trial services, and probation check-ins.

About Precision Kiosk Technologies

Minneapolis-based Precision Kiosk Technologies provides automated high-volume probation monitoring and alcohol screening to law enforcement and courts. The company's AB Kiosk reduces the administrative burden of alcohol screening and other court-mandated programs, including probation check-ins, cashless bail, Huber work release, and pre- and post-trial services. The company has 36 Kiosks deployed across the U.S., including seven that are providing automated alcohol screening to 24/7 Sobriety Programs in South Dakota. To learn more about the AB Kiosk system, please visit [www.abkiosk.com](http://www.abkiosk.com).

## Ball in their court: Justices take on NCAA restrictions

By JESSICA GRESKO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The NCAA and former college athletes are getting ready to play ball at the Supreme Court.

With the March Madness basketball tournament ongoing, the high court will hear arguments Wednesday in a case about how colleges can reward athletes who play Division I basketball and football. The NCAA says if the former college students who brought the case win, it could erase the distinction between professional and college sports.

Under current NCAA rules, students can't be paid, and the scholarship money colleges can offer is capped at the cost of attending the school. The NCAA defends its rules as necessary to preserving the amateur nature of college sports.

But if the Supreme Court sides with the former students, those caps on educational benefits could go away. If individual athletic conferences agree, schools could offer tens of thousands of dollars in education benefits for things such as postgraduate scholarships, tutoring, study abroad opportunities, vocational school payments. That could create a bidding war for the best players.

The former athletes who brought the case, including former West Virginia football player Shawne Alston, say the NCAA's current rules deprive students of the ability to be rewarded for their athletic talents and hard work because most of them will never play professional sports. So far, the former players have won every round of the case. Lower courts agreed that the NCAA's rules capping the education-related benefits

schools can violate a federal antitrust law.

Whatever happens at the high court, how college athletes are compensated is already likely changing. The NCAA is in the process of trying to amend its longstanding rules to allow athletes to profit from their names, images and likenesses. That would allow athletes to earn money for things like sponsorship deals, online endorsement and personal appearances. For the top athletes, those amounts could dwarf any education-related benefits.

The former college athletes have some big-time supporters. The players associations of the NFL, NBA and WNBA are all urging the justices to side with the former athletes, as is the Biden administration.

The justices are hearing arguments by phone in the case as they have been doing for almost a year because of the coronavirus pandemic. They will almost certainly issue a decision in the case before they leave for their summer break at the end of June.

The NCAA wasn't happy with the outcome the last time its rules were before the Supreme Court. In 1984, the high court rejected NCAA rules restricting the broadcast of college football. The justices' ruling transformed college sports, helping it become the multibillion-dollar business it is today.

## **Pfizer says its COVID-19 vaccine protects younger teens**

By LAURAN NEERGAARD AP Medical Writer

Pfizer announced Wednesday that its COVID-19 vaccine is safe and strongly protective in kids as young as 12, a step toward possibly beginning shots in this age group before they head back to school in the fall.

Most COVID-19 vaccines being rolled out worldwide are for adults, who are at higher risk from the coronavirus. Pfizer's vaccine is authorized for ages 16 and older. But vaccinating children of all ages will be critical to stopping the pandemic — and helping schools, at least the upper grades, start to look a little more normal after months of disruption.

In a study of 2,260 U.S. volunteers ages 12 to 15, preliminary data showed there were no cases of COVID-19 among fully vaccinated adolescents compared to 18 among those given dummy shots, Pfizer reported.

It's a small study, that hasn't yet been published, so another important piece of evidence is how well the shots revved up the kids' immune systems. Researchers reported high levels of virus-fighting antibodies, somewhat higher than were seen in studies of young adults.

Kids had side effects similar to young adults, the company said. The main side effects are pain, fever, chills and fatigue, particularly after the second dose. The study will continue to track participants for two years for more information about long-term protection and safety.

Pfizer and its German partner BioNTech in the coming weeks plan to ask the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and European regulators to allow emergency use of the shots starting at age 12.

"We share the urgency to expand the use of our vaccine," Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla said in a statement. He expressed "the hope of starting to vaccinate this age group before the start of the next school year" in the United States.

Pfizer isn't the only company seeking to lower the age limit for its vaccine. Results also are expected soon from a U.S. study of Moderna's vaccine in 12- to 17-year-olds.

But in a sign that the findings were promising, the FDA already allowed both companies to begin U.S. studies in children 11 and younger, working their way to as young as 6-month-old.

AstraZeneca last month began a study of its vaccine among 6- to 17-year-olds in Britain. Johnson & Johnson is planning its own pediatric studies. And in China, Sinovac recently announced it has submitted preliminary data to Chinese regulators showing its vaccine is safe in children as young as 3.

While most COVID-19 vaccines being used globally were first tested in tens of thousands of adults, pediatric studies won't need to be nearly as large. Scientists have safety information from those studies and from subsequent vaccinations in millions more adults.

One key question is the dosage: Pfizer gave the 12-and-older participants the same dose adults receive, while testing different doses in younger children.

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It's not clear how quickly the FDA would act on Pfizer's request to allow vaccination starting at age 12. Another question is when the country would have enough supply of shots — and people to get them into adolescents' arms — to let kids start getting in line.

Supplies are set to steadily increase over the spring and summer, at the same time states are opening vaccinations to younger, healthier adults who until now haven't had a turn.

Children represent about 13% of COVID-19 cases documented in the U.S. And while children are far less likely than adults to get seriously ill, at least 268 have died from COVID-19 in the U.S. alone and more than 13,500 have been hospitalized, according to a tally by the American Academy of Pediatrics. That's more than die from the flu in an average year. Additionally, a small number have developed a serious inflammatory condition linked to the coronavirus.

Caleb Chung, who turns 13 later this week, agreed to volunteer after his father, a Duke University pediatrician, presented the option. He doesn't know if he received the vaccine or a placebo.

"Usually I'm just at home doing online school and there's not much I can really do to fight back against the virus," Caleb said in a recent interview. The study "was really somewhere that I could actually help out."

His father, Dr. Richard Chung, said he's proud of his son and all the other children volunteering for the needle pricks, blood tests and other tasks a study entails.

"We need kids to do these trials so that kids can get protected. Adults can't do that for them," Chung said.

AP video journalist Federica Narancio contributed to this report.

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## Suspect in attack on Asian American woman in NYC is arrested

By MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The suspect wanted in a brutal attack of an Asian American woman near New York City's Times Square has been arrested and charged with felony assault as a hate crime, police said early Wednesday.

The arrest comes after the man was seen on video kicking and stomping the woman on Monday. In a statement, police identified the man as Brandon Elliot, 38, of New York City, and said he faces charges of assault as a hate crime, attempted assault as a hate crime, assault and attempted assault.

The 65-year-old woman, whose name has not been made public, was walking to church in midtown Manhattan, a few blocks from Times Square, when police said a man kicked her in the stomach, knocked her to the ground, stomped on her face, shouted anti-Asian slurs and told her, "you don't belong here" before casually walking away.

The woman was discharged from the hospital Tuesday after being treated for serious injuries, a hospital spokesperson said.

Police on Tuesday had blanketed the midtown Manhattan neighborhood with wanted posters and offered a \$2,500 reward for information leading to the whereabouts of the man seen on surveillance video brutalizing the woman. And they had asked the public for help in doing its part to disrupt further assaults.

At the same time, officials admonished bystanders for doing nothing to stop the man.

The attack Monday was among the latest in a national spike in anti-Asian hate crimes, and happened just weeks after a mass shooting in Atlanta that left eight people dead, six of them women of Asian descent. The surge in violence has been linked in part to misplaced blame for the coronavirus and former President Donald Trump's use of racially charged terms like "Chinese virus."

New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio called Monday's attack "absolutely disgusting and outrageous." He said it was "absolutely unacceptable" that witnesses did not intervene.

"I don't care who you are, I don't care what you do, you've got to help your fellow New Yorker," de Blasio said, evoking the post-9/11 mantra of "see something, say something."



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The attack happened late Monday morning outside an apartment building two blocks from Times Square, a bustling, heavily policed section of midtown Manhattan known as the "Crossroads of the World."

Two workers inside the building who appeared to be security guards were seen on surveillance video witnessing the attack but failing to come to the woman's aid. One of them was seen closing the building door as the woman was on the ground. The attacker was able to casually walk away while onlookers watched, the video showed.

The building's management company said they were suspended pending an investigation. The workers' union said they called for help immediately.

"If you see someone being attacked, do whatever you can," de Blasio said. "Make noise. Call out what's happening. Go and try and help. Immediately call for help. Call 911. This is something where we all have to be part of the solution. We can't just stand back and watch a heinous act happening."

Mayoral candidate Andrew Yang, the son of Taiwanese immigrants, said the victim "could easily have been my mother." He too criticized the bystanders, saying their inaction was "exactly the opposite of what we need here in New York City."

This year in New York City there have been 33 hate crimes with an Asian victim as of Sunday, police said. There were 11 such attacks by the same time last year.

On Friday, in the same neighborhood as Monday's attack, a 65-year-old Asian American woman was accosted by a man waving an unknown object and shouting anti-Asian insults. A 48-year-old man was arrested the next day and charged with menacing. He is not suspected in Monday's attack.

The NYPD's Hate Crime Task Force has asked anyone with information to contact the department's confidential hot line or submit tips online.

Police Commissioner Dermot Shea announced last week that the department would increase outreach and patrols in predominantly Asian communities, including the use of undercover officers to prevent and disrupt attacks.

The neighborhood where Monday's attack occurred, Hell's Kitchen, is predominantly white, with an Asian population of less than 20%, according to city demographic data.

Shea called Monday's attack "disgusting," telling TV station NY1: "I don't know who attacks a 65-year-old woman and leaves her on the street like that."

According to a report from Stop AAPI Hate, more than 3,795 incidents were reported to the organization from March 19, 2020, to Feb. 28. The group, which tracks incidents of discrimination, hate and xenophobia against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in the U.S., said that number is "only a fraction of the number of hate incidents that actually occur."

## Some Capitol riot suspects apologize as consequences sink in

By JACQUES BILLEAUD and MICHAEL TARM Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — The helmet-wearing Idaho man photographed dangling by one hand from the Senate's balcony during the Jan. 6 riot at the U.S. Capitol turned himself in six days later. While buckled in the vehicle delivering him to the Boise jail, Josiah Colt made a video apologizing and expressing shame for storming the building.

Jacob Chansley, the self-described QAnon Shaman who posed for photos on the Senate dais while sporting face paint and a furry hat with horns, also lacks the enthusiasm he once showed for the riot. A month later, he wrote an apology from jail, asking for understanding as he was coming to grips with his actions.

Confronted with compelling video and photographic evidence in court, dozens of rioters have apologized and expressed regret as the consequences of their actions have started to sink in. The ramifications include potential job losses, financial ruin and possible time behind bars.

"This is going to have consequences for these people for the rest of their lives — and it should," said John Flannery, a former federal prosecutor and Capitol Hill lawyer.

Another possible consequence for Colt and others captured in photographs that went viral before they even left the Capitol building: ignominy beyond their lifetimes as those images make their way into his-

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tory books.

A lawyer for Dominic Pezzola, who authorities say is a member of the extremist group Proud Boys and broke a Capitol window with a police shield, said in a filing that his client's incarceration has placed his wife and two children in desperate financial straits.

Several workers at a floor installation business Pezzola manages are also out of work because Pezzola is jailed, attorney Jonathan Zucker wrote in a February filing seeking Pezzola's release pending trial.

Pezzola, the attorney wrote, was sorry for his actions, which included posting a video giving a triumphant speech inside the Capitol while smoking a "victory" cigar.

"Since his arrest, having time to reflect and see how things have revealed themselves, he now realizes he was duped into these mistaken beliefs " that the election was stolen from President Donald Trump, Zucker wrote.

Colt, who had expressed devotion to Trump and called House Speaker Nancy Pelosi a traitor, seemed to recognize the long-term consequences of his actions in the Capitol in the minutes before his arrest as he spoke on the video, later posted by KBOI-TV.

"I never intended to do anything that would bring a black eye to my family, country, me," he said, adding that he had received death threats.

Regret has struck some rioters sooner than others.

The day after Chad Jones allegedly swung a flag pole at police just outside the House chamber, he told a friend he was an "idiot," adding he knew he was "in big trouble," according to court documents.

He was right. A week later a federal complaint charged him with, among other things, using a weapon — the flag pole — to assault an officer. The charges carry a maximum 60 years in prison.

Samuel Camargo, who had posted a video on Instagram showing him tussling with police trying to get through a door to the Capitol, was on Facebook a day later with his apology.

"I'm sorry to all the people I've disappointed as this is not who I am nor what I stand for," he wrote. Camargo, too, was charged.

It didn't necessarily help his case. A judge ordered Camargo, who was arrested in Washington on Inauguration Day, jailed until trial after concluding no release condition could ensure Camargo's future appearance in court.

As a procession of rioters ended up before federal judges, some issuing apologies before they got to court, it was impossible to discern who was sincerely sorry and who was expressing contrition in a pre-emptive bid for leniency from the court.

From behind bars after his arrest in March and with a bond hearing upcoming, 18-year-old rioter Bruno Joseph Cua penned a letter to his judge, assuring the court he was regretful and had been humbled by the experience. "Lesson fully received, your Honor," Cua wrote, according to court documents.

Two months earlier Cua posted enthusiastic notes on social media saying he'd been part of history in joining throngs rushing the Capitol, charging documents say. He added in a sentence that jurors would likely take as an admission of guilt: "Yes, we physically fought our way in."

Among the rude awakenings: No plea deals yet, though they may be in the works. Given it was an attack on what many regard as the citadel of American democracy, the sentiment among prosecutors, judges and the public at large, at least for now, isn't exactly lenient.

Pezzola's judge denied his request for bond, citing a potential danger to the community and saying Pezzola's expressions of regret now can't outweigh evidence that he "was willing to play an important role in an act of political violence."

To date, more than 300 Capitol Hill rioters have been charged. Several are accused of careful planning and of coordinating the attack on Jan. 6. Most aren't accused of committing violence or damaging property but of walking past security lines and entering restricted areas.

In most cases, there's little dispute those charged did breach the Capitol building, having provided evidence of that themselves in selfies and videos posted online.

Edward Jacob Lang posted a photograph of himself in a crowd of Trump supporters pushing their way through a Capitol building tunnel, beating police as they went. He later went to the trouble of putting a

finger emoji on the photo pointing to a fuzzy image of someone by the tunnel. The caption he included read, "THIS IS ME." The photo was included in the Jan. 16 complaint charging him.

Some rioters, several speaking through attorneys, have said they went along with the flow of the mob and gave little thought to what they were doing until it was too late.

James Rahm said in a video statement before he was charged that he knew the second he stepped across the threshold of a Capitol door "the FBI was coming for me." The 61-year-old said he was seized by the "passion of the moment."

Psychologists have long observed how individuals in frenzied crowds seem to lose their sense of individual responsibility and become willing to engage in anti-social behavior they'd never contemplate on their own.

Courts are unlikely to allow lawyers to use the psychology of crowds as a defense at trial. It could potentially be raised at sentencing to try to explain how those with no previous criminal record ended up breaking the law.

Among the most well-known personalities in the Capitol riot to issue an apology is Chansley, the so-called QAnon Shaman from Phoenix who stormed the building while carrying a spear and expressed his disappointment with Trump, who had denied his pardon request.

In his apology, Chansley asked for patience for him and others who participated because they were "having a very difficult time piecing together all that happened to us, around us, and by us."

"We are good people who care deeply about our country," Chansley wrote.

A month later, a judge who denied Chansley's bid to be released from jail had questioned whether the Arizona man was still under Trump's spell, pointing out Chansley said in a CBS "60 Minutes+" interview that he didn't regret his loyalty to Trump.

Tarm reported from Chicago.

## Eager to build infrastructure, Biden plans to tax business

By JOSH BOAK and LISA MASCARO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden wants \$2 trillion to reengineer America's infrastructure and expects the nation's corporations to pay for it.

The president travels to Pittsburgh on Wednesday to unveil what would be a hard-hatted transformation of the U.S. economy as grand in scale as the New Deal or Great Society programs that shaped the 20th century.

White House officials say the spending over eight years would generate millions of new jobs as the country shifts away from fossil fuels and combats the perils of climate change. It is also an effort to compete against the technology and public investments made by China, the world's second-largest economy and fast gaining on the United States' dominant position.

White House press secretary Jen Psaki said the plan is "about making an investment in America — not just modernizing our roads or railways or bridges but building an infrastructure of the future."

Biden's choice of Pittsburgh for unveiling the plan carries important economic and political resonance. He not only won Pittsburgh and its surrounding county to help secure the presidency, but he launched his campaign there in 2019. The city famed for steel mills that powered America's industrial rise has steadily pivoted toward technology and health care, drawing in college graduates from western Pennsylvania in a sign of how economies can change.

The Democratic president's infrastructure projects would be financed by higher corporate taxes — a trade-off that could lead to fierce resistance from the business community and thwart any attempts to work with Republicans lawmakers. Biden hopes to pass an infrastructure plan by summer, which could mean relying solely on the slim Democratic majorities in the House and the Senate.

The White House says the largest chunk of the proposal includes \$621 billion for roads, bridges, public transit, electric vehicle charging stations and other transportation infrastructure. The spending would



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push the country away from internal combustion engines that the auto industry views as an increasingly antiquated technology.

Another \$111 billion would go to replace lead water pipes and upgrade sewers. Broadband internet would blanket the country for \$100 billion. Separately, \$100 billion would upgrade the power grid to deliver clean electricity. Homes would get retrofitted, schools modernized, workers trained and hospitals renovated under the plan, which also seeks to strengthen U.S. manufacturing.

The new construction could keep the economy running hot, coming on the heels of Biden's \$1.9 trillion coronavirus relief package — economists already estimate it could push growth above 6% this year.

Separately, Biden will propose in the coming weeks a series of soft infrastructure investments in child care, family tax credits and other domestic programs, another expenditure of roughly \$2 trillion to be paid for by tax hikes on wealthy individuals and families, according to people familiar with the proposal.

Funding the first \$2 trillion for construction and "hard" infrastructure projects would be a hike on corporate taxes that would raise the necessary sum over 15 years and then reduce the deficit going forward, according to a White House outline of the plan. Biden would undo the signature policy achievement of the Trump administration by lifting the corporate tax rate to 28% from the 21% rate set in a 2017 overhaul.

To keep companies from shifting profits overseas to avoid taxation, a 21% global minimum tax would be imposed. The tax code would also be updated so that companies could not merge with a foreign business and avoid taxes by moving their headquarters to a tax haven. And among other provisions, it would increase IRS audits of corporations.

White House officials led by National Economic Council Director Brian Deese offered a private briefing Tuesday for top lawmakers in both parties. But key GOP and business leaders are already panning the package.

"It seems like President Biden has an insatiable appetite to spend more money and raise people's taxes," Rep. Steve Scalise of Louisiana, the GOP whip, said in an interview.

Scalise predicted that, if approved, the new spending and taxes would "start having a negative impact on the economy, which we're very concerned about."

The business community favors updating U.S. infrastructure, but it dislikes higher tax rates. An official at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce who insisted on anonymity to discuss the private talks said the organization fears the proposed tax hikes could undermine the gains from new infrastructure. The Business Roundtable, a group of CEOs, would rather have infrastructure funded with user fees such as tolls.

Pittsburgh is a series of steep hills and three intersecting rivers. Its steel mills once covered the sky in enough soot that men needed to take spare white shirts to work because their button downs would turn to gray by lunch. Only last year the city, amid the coronavirus pandemic, met Environmental Protection Agency standards for air quality, even though it is increasingly the home of tech and health care workers with college degrees.

Infrastructure spending usually holds the promise of juicing economic growth, but by how much remains a subject of political debate. Commutes and shipping times could be shortened, while public health would be improved and construction jobs would bolster consumer spending.

Standard & Poor's chief U.S. economist, Beth Ann Bovino, estimated last year that a \$2.1 trillion boost in infrastructure spending could add as much as \$5.7 trillion in income to the entire economy over a decade. Those kinds of analyses have led liberal Democrats in Congress such as Washington Rep. Pramila Jayapal to conclude Tuesday, "The economic consensus is that infrastructure pays for itself over time."

But the Biden administration is taking a more cautious approach than some Democrats might like. After \$1.9 trillion in pandemic aid and \$4 trillion in relief last year, the administration is trying to avoid raising the debt to levels that would trigger higher interest rates and make it harder to repay.

Psaki said Tuesday that Biden believes it's "the responsible thing to do" to pay for infrastructure through taxes instead of borrowing. But the White House in its outline of the plan also couched the tax hikes as a matter of fairness, noting that 91 Fortune 500 companies paid \$0 in federal corporate taxes in 2018.

## A growing challenge for Iraq: Iran-aligned Shiite militias

By QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA and ZEINA KARAM Associated Press

BAGHDAD (AP) — It was a stark message: A convoy of masked Shiite militiamen, armed with machine guns and rocket-propelled grenades, drove openly through central Baghdad denouncing the U.S. presence in Iraq and threatening to cut off the prime minister's ear.

The ominous display underscored the growing threat that rogue militias loyal to Tehran pose for Iraq. It came at a time when Baghdad seeks to bolster relations with its Arab neighbors and is gearing up for early elections, scheduled for October, amid a worsening economic crisis and a global pandemic.

Last week's procession also sought to undermine Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi's credibility, with Iran-aligned militias driving down a major highway and passing near ministries as Iraqi security forces looked on. Ahead of a new round of talks between the U.S. government and Iraq, it sent a stark warning that the militias will not be curbed.

A fourth round of so-called strategic Iraq-U.S. talks is scheduled for next week after the Iraqi government requested it, partly in response to pressure from Shiite political factions and militias loyal to Iran that have lobbied for the remaining U.S. troops to leave Iraq.

The talks, which began in June under the Trump administration, would be the first under President Joe Biden. On the agenda is an array of issues, including the presence of U.S. combat forces in the country and the issue of Iraqi militias acting outside of state authority. The discussions are meant to shape the future of the U.S.-Iraq relationship, a senior U.S. official recently said.

It is a tightrope for al-Kadhimi, who has said that bringing armed groups under state control is a goal of his administration but finds himself increasingly helpless in reining in the groups. U.S. officials have said Washington will use the meetings to clarify that U.S. forces remain in Iraq for the sole purpose of ensuring the Islamic State group "cannot reconstitute" itself — a signal that the U.S. seeks to keep the 2,500 remaining American soldiers in Iraq.

Political analyst Ihsan Alshamary said the militias' military-style parade sought to weaken al-Kadhimi's government and project strength.

"It also aims at sending a message to Washington: We are the decision makers, not the government," he added.

The militiamen in the parade were mostly from a shadowy Shiite group known as Rabaallah — one of about a dozen that surfaced after the Washington-directed drone strike that killed Iranian general Qassem Soleimani and Iraqi militia leader Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis in Baghdad in January 2020.

Both Soleimani and al-Muhandis were key in commanding and controlling a wide array of Iran-backed groups operating in Iraq, and their deaths in the U.S. airstrike outraged Iraqi lawmakers, prompting them to approve a non-binding resolution to oust U.S.-led coalition forces from the country.

Since then, militias have also become increasingly unruly and disparate. Some Washington and Iraq-based observers argue the militias have splintered into new, previously unknown groups, allowing them to claim attacks under different names to mask the extent of their involvement.

"They are tools used for negotiating purposes and putting pressure on Washington when it comes to (Iran's) nuclear file," Alshamary said, referring to efforts under Biden to resurrect the 2015 nuclear deal between Tehran and world powers that former President Donald Trump withdrew from in 2018.

Rabaallah, for instance, is believed to be a front for one of the most powerful Iran-backed factions in Iraq, which the U.S. has blamed for rocket attacks targeting the American Embassy in Baghdad and military bases that house U.S. troops.

Last October, the group set fire to the headquarters of a Kurdish political party in Baghdad and attacked the offices of local media organizations in the capital. It has also been blamed for assaults on liquor stores and an Asian spa center in the Iraqi capital.

Rabaallah went so far as to try and dictate the exchange rate of the Iraqi dinar to the dollar, demanded the approval of a budget and denounced what it said was U.S. "occupation" of Iraq. It displayed posters of al-Kadhimi with a shoe printed across his forehead and a pair of scissors on the side of his face, with

the words: "It's time to cut his ear off."

Iraq lies on the fault line between the Shiite power Iran and the mostly Sunni Arab world and has long been a theater for settling regional scores. It has also been dragged into the U.S.-Iran proxy war. And though its relations with the U.S. took a hit following the airstrike that killed Soleimani, ties have improved since al-Kadhimi — approved by both Iran and the U.S. — became prime minister.

Political analyst Tamer Badawi said the Shiite militias aim to send a dual message to al-Khadimi's administration. The first is a warning against any attempt at curbing the militias' influence under the banner of fighting corruption. The other is to pressure the government to push the U.S. to scale down the number of coalition forces in Iraq.

For his part, al-Kadhimi has tried to curb the militias' money-making border activities, including smuggling and bribery, and show his American interlocutors that he is capable of keeping domestic adversaries in check.

Badawi said the pressure from the militias will likely increase ahead of the strategic talks with the U.S. on April 7.

In the days after the Rabaallah parade, Iraqi security forces fanned out in the streets and main squares of the capital Baghdad in what a senior Iraqi security official described as a "reassuring message."

But for Baghdad shopkeeper Aqeel al-Rubai, who watched the February militia parade from the street, the militia show was a terrifying sight that reflects a powerless government.

"I saw that this country is insecure and unfit to live in peace," he said.

Karam reported from Beirut.

## **Automakers BMW, Volvo back moratorium on deep seabed mining**

By FRANK JORDANS Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — Automakers BMW and Volvo announced Wednesday that they support a moratorium on deep seabed mining for minerals used in electric vehicle batteries and other products.

The call, which was also backed by Samsung's EV battery unit and tech giant Google, cites the importance of protecting fragile ocean ecosystems that are already under threat from overfishing, pollution, noise and man-made climate change.

While deep seabed mining is still in its infancy, several prospecting firms are seeking rights to extract potentially lucrative deposits from the depths of the ocean, particularly the metallic nodules that build up around hydrothermal vents.

"Before any potential deep seabed mining occurs, it needs to be clearly demonstrated that such activities can be managed in a way that ensures the effective protection of the marine environment," the four companies said in a statement.

"All alternatives to deep sea minerals must be explored as a matter of urgency, with a focus on reducing demand for primary metals, transitioning to a resource-efficient, closed-loop materials economy, and developing responsible terrestrial mining practices."

The companies said they were committed "not to source minerals from the deep seabed; to exclude such minerals from our supply chains; and not to finance deep seabed mining activities."

The call was supported by the environmental group World Wildlife Fund, which has campaigned against deep seabed mining.

"We need to take pressures off the ocean, not add additional pressures to it in order to guarantee that the ocean can provide services to humanity, such as climate regulation, food and medicines, into the future," said Jessica Battle, who heads the WWF campaign against deep seabed mining.

While minerals mined from the ocean floor can be used for a variety of goods, they are of particular interest to high-tech industries that rely on precious and rare metals.

"At least one of the leading nodule mining contractors, DeepGreen, cites generating metals for EV batteries as their major motivation for large-scale mining," said Craig Smith, a professor of oceanography at



the University of Hawaii at Manoa.

Stefan Bratzel, director of the Center of Automotive Management in Germany, said the announcement by BMW and Volvo was significant for other car manufacturers.

"It underlines the importance of ecological considerations in a comprehensive well-to-wheel perspective," he said, adding that other automakers "will now at least hesitate to use minerals mined from the ocean in their electric vehicle batteries."

## Beyond the pandemic: London tourism braces for slow recovery

By SYLVIA HUI Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — The cobblestones are deserted at the Tower of London. A biting wind blows and there is no sign of life. Even the storied ravens are nowhere to be seen.

England's top paid attraction, which normally draws more than 3 million visitors a year, has been closed for all but a dozen weeks since the pandemic began and international tourism to London came to an almost-complete standstill.

The quiet has been surreal for Amanda Clark, one of the Tower's famous resident guards known as Yeoman Warders, or Beefeaters. The affable Clark, a retired sergeant major, lives for interacting with people: directing tourists, telling them stories, posing for their selfies. Before March 2020, she would have been doing that happily every day as crowds streamed into the attraction, also home to the Crown Jewels.

"It's really quite extraordinary, how something so big and popular is just so quiet and empty," said Clark, 46. "Don't forget, we are classed as a prison. And these past few months have felt quite claustrophobic because there's just been nobody here."

Plagues, fires, war — London has survived them all. But it has never had a year like this. The coronavirus has killed more than 15,000 Londoners and shaken the foundations of one of the world's great cities. As a fast-moving mass vaccination campaign holds the promise of reopening, The Associated Press looks at the pandemic's impact on London's people and institutions and asks what the future might hold.

After three national lockdowns, London's tourist attractions and other hospitality businesses are making tentative plans to reopen in mid-May -- the earliest the government says international travel can resume. But deep uncertainty about COVID-19 remains. With quarantine requirements and travel restrictions still in place everywhere and Europe battling a new surge of infections, many are bracing for another bleak year.

For London's tourism industry, which employs one in seven workers in the capital, the pandemic has been a body blow. With hotels, attractions and leisure shopping in a near-total shutdown, the industry's contribution to London's economy plunged from 15.7 billion pounds (\$21.6 billion) in 2019 to just 3 billion pounds (\$4.1 billion) in the past year, according to VisitBritain, the national tourism agency.

Even national treasures like the Tower of London have struggled. Historic Royal Palaces, a charity that runs the Tower and other heritage attractions, has said it expected a 100 million-pound (\$137 million) shortfall because of COVID-19.

Many expect a slow recovery, particularly because London always has been reliant on international tourism. Over half of all consumer spending in the West End — home to the city center's bustling shops, restaurants, pubs and theaters — typically comes from European and other overseas visitors.

In normal times, short-haul markets like European countries would generally be expected to recover faster than long-haul ones like the U.S. and Asia. But with the threat of coronavirus variants in Europe and the slow vaccine rollout on the continent, experts say tourists are highly unlikely to return in earnest until autumn.

"We can see that other countries, particularly our European neighbors who tend to be the biggest markets for us, we can see them going into third waves of COVID," said Patricia Yates, director of strategy and communications at VisitBritain. "There is pent-up demand, people do want to come to Britain. But at the moment, that simply isn't possible."

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Nationally, officials forecast inbound tourism to generate just over 6 billion pounds (\$8.2 billion) this year, compared with more than 28 billion pounds (\$38 billion) in 2019. Heathrow Airport has said it does not expect passenger flows to return to 2019 levels until around 2024.

A key question for the recovery this year is whether cumbersome quarantine rules can be eased and replaced by an efficient system of vaccine certificates for travelers, Yates added.

Stuart Procter, who manages the luxury Stafford Hotel near central London's St. James's Palace, would usually go on marketing trips to America, his core market. This year, he hasn't bothered.

For many, planning a vacation to London now is impossible because there's no certainty that big events like the two-week Wimbledon tennis championships in July can go ahead normally, he said.

"They're not coming. There's no activities. ... There's nothing open for them to come to," Procter said. "We've missed our cream, we missed our summer. I don't think we'll see any green shoots until the fourth quarter, if I'm honest."

In the longer term, industry experts are confident that leisure travel will bounce back and tourists will return to London eventually. The big unknown, however, is whether business travel will ever be the same again.

"I think there's much more of a question mark on business travel. And, of course, that affects the cities most," said Yates of VisitBritain. "You know, those big four- or five-star hotels in London absolutely need business travelers coming back again."

Some attractions, including the Tower of London, are planning to focus on domestic visitors to recoup some losses. Laura Citron, CEO of London & Partners, which promotes business and investment in the capital, said one strategy is to market this year as the golden opportunity for Britons to enjoy its top attractions without the usual crowds.

"We're very much focused, certainly through the spring and the early summer, on Londoners and people from the rest of the U.K. rediscovering the city," Citron said.

That may be easier said than done. When restrictions eased last summer, many Britons flocked to coastal and rural destinations. Surveys have showed many remain wary of visiting a big city and using mass transit. London has always been proud of its public transportation network and how few people drive into the city, but that strength has become a weakness in the pandemic.

Some Londoners out on a recent weekend say that while they've enjoyed having the city to themselves, they're also keen to see it reopen to visitors soon.

"The usual tourist attractions, which are usually chock-a-block with people from outside of town, feel a little bit more accessible in a way that's a bit unexpected," said Ashleigh Muchatuta, 33.

"One of the things that makes London interesting is the fact it's a melting pot, the variety of people that you can bump into and hear just walking through the city," he added. "The things that attract people to the city are still going to be here and will outlast the pandemic, hopefully."

## Juzang sends No. 11 seed UCLA past Michigan to Final Four

By DAVE SKRETTA AP Basketball Writer

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — UCLA has made more trips to the Final Four than any program but North Carolina. None of the 19 was more surprising than this one.

After sneaking into the NCAA Tournament off four straight losses, and barely surviving Michigan State in their First Four game, the Bruins took down top-seeded Michigan on Tuesday night to continue a run for the ages.

Johnny Juzang poured in 28 points while playing most of the second half on a hurt ankle, and coach Mick Cronin's bunch of stubborn overachievers survived a set of nail-biting misses by the Wolverines in the final seconds for a 51-49 victory that made the Bruins only the fifth No. 11 seed to reach the national semifinals.

"These guys get all the credit," said Cronin, who had never been to the Elite Eight in 18 years as a college head coach, much less the Final Four. "Unbelievable heart, toughness. Nobody picked us. Nobody believed in us. That's how we like it."

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They'll be big underdogs again Saturday night: Overall No. 1 seed Gonzaga is up next.

"We know our next assignment is tough," Cronin said, "but their resiliency is unbelievable."

The Wolverines (23-5) missed their final eight shots, including a 3-pointer by Mike Smith with a couple seconds left and another by Franz Wagner at the buzzer, sending the Bruins (22-9) flying off the bench in a wild celebration.

They're the second First Four team to make the Final Four after VCU a decade ago.

"This is something growing up you dream about," said Juzang, the first player to score at least half of his team's points in a regional final victory since Cincinnati's Oscar Robertson in 1960. "It's just so wonderful. It's beautiful. It's beautiful sharing this moment with your brothers."

After dictating the pace all game, eschewing the slick style of Michigan in favor of a rock fight, it only seemed fitting that the underdog Bruins — having won two tourney games in overtime already — would take another to the buzzer.

They were clinging to a 50-49 lead when Michigan called a timeout with 19 seconds to go, intending to set up the game's final shot. Wolverines coach Juwan Howard set up an open 3-point look for the cold-shooting Wagner, who missed almost everything, and Eli Brooks also missed a put-back before UCLA finally corralled the rebound.

It was merely the start of a chaotic finish.

The Wolverines quickly fouled and sent Juzang to the line, where he missed the second of his two free throws with 6.3 seconds left. Michigan grabbed the rebound and called another timeout. This time, Howard had Smith race up court and unload a good look from the wing that was halfway down before bouncing back out.

The buzzer sounded and UCLA began to celebrate, only for the officials to put a half-second back on the clock.

That was enough time for Michigan to inbound one last time to Wagner, who again let fly a 3-pointer that clanked off the iron — and finally gave the Bruins freedom to spring from their benches for their first Final Four trip since 2008.

"We got the look, got the shot we wanted," Howard said. "There's not much you can do with a point-five, but that shot, it was a nice little heave. Unfortunately it didn't go in."

Hunter Dickinson led the Wolverines (23-5) with 11 points, but nothing came easy for the Big Ten freshman of the year — or anyone else in maize and blue. They were 3 of 11 beyond the arc, shot 39% overall and couldn't make one at the end.

"They played extremely hard. They earned that win," Brooks said. "I'm not going to take anything away from them. They made everything challenging."

The No. 1 seed in the East Region, the Wolverines had confidently strolled onto the court about 30 minutes before officials even rolled out balls for pregame warmups. They almost looked bored as they milled around, some listening to their music, others catching glimpses of the Southern California-Gonzaga game on the screens hanging over the court.

The Bulldogs won so easily it must have lulled them to sleep.

Instead of the crisp passing, unselfishness and eye-pleasing positionless basketball that carried Michigan to three easy wins in the tournament, there was sloppy ballhandling, off-balance jumpers and breakdowns on defense.

Then there was Juzang, who scored 14 of the Bruins' first 16 points. Whether it was a step-back 3-pointer, floater in the lane or drive to the bucket, one of March's breakout stars simply willed UCLA to a 27-23 halftime lead.

"Every point he got," Howard said with a shake of his head, "he worked hard for."

The Bruins stretched their lead to 34-25 before Juzang twisted his right ankle during a rebounding scrum, sending him to the bench to get it taped. He was only out a couple of minutes, but Michigan took advantage. Dickinson and Brooks each had back-to-back baskets, wiping out most of UCLA's hard-earned lead.

Then, two programs quite familiar with college basketball's biggest stage kept trading blows the rest of



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the way.

"It was a Big Ten battle royal game," Cronin said. "Just an awesome, awesome effort by our kids. All credit goes to them."

UP NEXT

Gonzaga has won two of three against the Bruins, though they've split their two meetings in the NCAA Tournament. UCLA won a regional semifinal in 2006 and the Bulldogs returned the favor in the 2015 regional semifinals.

## Gonzaga's bid for a perfect season moves on to Final Four

By JOHN MARSHALL AP Basketball Writer

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Gonzaga's countdown to perfection has ticked to two.

The Bulldogs are back in the Final Four, two wins from becoming the first undefeated team since the 1976 Indiana Hoosiers.

And, after all those upsets, the March Madness apex in the Hoosier State will be a high-seeded affair.

Gonzaga is a No. 1 seed. So is Baylor. Houston, a 2. UCLA is an 11, but it's also the all-time leader in national championships.

There also will be a trip down Southwest Conference memory lane.

But the Zags will be the team to beat.

Gonzaga (30-0) has been an offensive juggernaut rarely seen in college basketball. Fast moving and free flowing, the ultra-efficient Zags have steamrolled everyone in their way, winning a Division I-record 27 straight games by double digits.

An 85-56 dismantling of Southern California in the Elite Eight stretched their win streak to 34 games over two seasons and put them back in the Final Four for the second time in the past four NCAA Tournaments. Gonzaga came up short in a loss to North Carolina in the 2017 national title game, but has its sights set on finishing it off this time — and grabbing a piece of history.

"Everyone wants us to keep moving forward, but that's not how we roll," Gonzaga coach Mark Few said. "This is a heck of an accomplishment. We're going to take it and savor it for what it is. That doesn't lessen our desire to win this game, the next game or win two more games."

The next one won't be easy. Mick Cronin will make sure of that.

The former Cincinnati coach has returned UCLA to relevance after a couple of mediocre seasons. In two years at Westwood, he's added a level of toughness that's helped them go from the First Four to the Final Four after losing their last four games entering the NCAA Tournament.

UCLA (22-9) has grinded out five wins in the NCAA tourney, including No. 2 seed Alabama and a 51-49 takedown of top-seeded Michigan in the Elite Eight. The Bruins are in the Final Four for the first time since 2008 and play the kind of game that might be able to slow the Gonzaga machine.

"Obviously, I knew the expectations. It's pretty clear at UCLA," Cronin said. "I understood it and I wanted it."

The Texas half of the draw will have a Southwest feel.

Baylor and Houston were both members of the Southwest Conference, which splintered in 1996. The Bears were there when the league started, circa 1914. The Cougars made the move from independent to SWC status in 1975.

The latest versions of the two programs are nearly identical: long, athletic, quick, breath-squeezing defense.

Baylor went on a long rebuild to finally get here.

The Bears were embroiled in one of the darkest scandals in college basketball history, when Patrick Dennehy was murdered by teammate Carlton Dotson in 2003. Coach Dave Bliss then resigned after it was revealed he encouraged players to lie about Dennehy to cover up NCAA violations.

In stepped coach Scott Drew.

Drew took the Baylor job after serving a one-year stint succeeding his father, Homer, at Valparaiso, and

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he went through some extra-lean years early on in Waco.

He's since molded the program into a national powerhouse.

The Bears (26-2) were unstoppable this season before a COVID-19 pause slowed their roll, but they've been back to their dominating ways in March.

After twice failing at the regional final under Drew, Baylor beat Arkansas in the Elite Eight to reach the Final Four for the first time since 1950 — when the bracket was eight teams and the City College of New York Beavers won the national championship.

"Once we got into the (first) season and you found out that most of your team were walk-ons and most of them weren't over 6-foot-2, then you realized it might be tougher than you originally thought," Drew said. "But obviously the goal was always to build a program that could consistently compete and have an opportunity to play in March."

Kelvin Sampson has made a similar imprint on Houston.

The Cougars had lost the luster from the Phi Slama Jama days, reaching the NCAA Tournament once in 22 years before Sampson was hired in 2014.

Sampson gradually built Houston back up, taking it to the NCAA Tournament's second round in 2018, the Sweet 16 the next year. The fleet-footed Cougars (28-3) were dominating this season and grinded down their first four NCAA Tournament opponents to reach their first Final Four since losing in the 1984 national championship game.

The run has intriguingly come in Indiana, home of the NCAA and where Sampson's career nearly came to an end. He was forced out at Indiana in 2008 due to NCAA sanctions and now, 13 years later, has completed to circle back to the Hoosier State to compete for a national championship.

"We've taken a group of kids to get them to believe and they've accomplished something that no matter what happens this weekend, it's something that nobody can take from them," Sampson said. "They'll always be known as a Final Four participant. They played in the Final Four."

## **Mexico: Woman who died in police custody also was abused**

MEXICO CITY (AP) — A Salvadoran woman who died in police custody over the weekend in a Caribbean beach resort had also suffered abuse by her companion, who has been arrested, Mexican authorities said Tuesday.

Quintana Roo state Gov. Carlos Joaquin did not specify whether the abuse allegedly suffered by Victoria Esperanza Salazar was sexual or physical.

He said one of the woman's two daughters also had been abused and the man was arrested as part of the state government's effort to ensure justice for Salazar.

Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele wrote in his Twitter account that the arrested man, a Mexican, had sexually abused the daughter.

"Victoria filed a complaint weeks ago and took her daughter to a shelter to protect her," Bukele wrote. "Unfortunately, nothing was done until now, with Victoria murdered, it is not until now they are following up on the case."

Salazar died Saturday after a female police officer was seen kneeling on her on a street in the resort of Tulum, and officials have said four officers are being investigated. An autopsy found that the woman's neck was broken.

Joaquin acknowledged that Salazar's death "did a lot of damage to Quintana Roo's image," but the state's problems didn't end there.

Prosecutors said a foreign woman was wounded Tuesday in a bar shooting in Tulum. The prosecutors' office did not give the woman's nationality, but did say she had been treated and released from a local hospital. It said a suspect had been detained.

In another case of violence, the governor said that the killing of a woman over the weekend in the resort of Holbox, on the state's northern coast, "had to do with a sentimental or passion motive," and that a suspect in that case had also been arrested.

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Tulum's reputation as a laid-back, low-key beach resort unlike Cancún has been marred lately by land disputes, gang activity and increasing development.

The four police officers — three men and a woman — arrested in Salazar's death had been scheduled to appear in court Tuesday, but prosecutors said the defense asked for an extension until Saturday. All four remain in custody.

Quintana Roo State Prosecutor Oscar Montes de Oca said an autopsy confirmed that Salazar's broken neck "coincides with submission maneuvers applied to the victim during her detention" and demonstrate a "disproportionate" use of force by police.

The scenes were reminiscent of the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis in 2020. Floyd was declared dead after a white police officer pressed his knee against the Black man's neck for about nine minutes, holding his position even after Floyd went limp.

Manuel Barradas, owner of a small convenience store in Tulum, said Salazar appeared "off" to him so when she approached his store he barred her entry. Police detained her a short time later.

Authorities made no mention of Salazar being under the influence of anything in discussing the autopsy.

Salazar's death increased tensions in Quintana Roo, where police used live ammunition to ward off a throng of about 100 demonstrators in Cancun in November.

## Undefeated Gonzaga beats USC 85-66 to reach Final Four

By The Associated Press undefined

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Gonzaga got on a roll and put on a show Tuesday night, moving to 30-0 on the season and cruising into the Final Four with an 85-66 victory over Southern California.

Drew Timme had 23 points and five rebounds and, after one dunk, pretended to slick down his handlebar mustache for the few thousand fans in the stands. The top-seeded and top-ranked Bulldogs will be the third team to bring an undefeated record into the Final Four since the bracket expanded to 64 teams in 1985.

The last team to go undefeated was Indiana in 1976. On Saturday in the national semifinals, the Zags will face 11th-seeded UCLA, which beat Michigan 51-49 in a later Elite Eight game.

Jalen Suggs had 18 points, 10 rebounds and eight assists for Gonzaga, and All-American Corey Kispert had 18 points and eight boards.

Isaiah Mobley had 19 points and seven rebounds for sixth-seeded USC (25-8), and his brother Evan finished with with 17 points.

The game was interrupted by a frightening moment early, when official Bert Smith collapsed on the floor and had to be taken off in a wheelchair. In the second half, CBS passed along word that Smith was feeling OK and resting in the arena.

EAST REGION

UCLA 51, MICHIGAN 49

Johnny Juzang poured in 28 points while playing most of the second half on a hurt ankle, and UCLA became the fifth No. 11 seed ever to reach the Final Four.

After dictating the pace all game, eschewing the slick style of Michigan in favor of a rock fight, it only seemed fitting that the underdog Bruins — with two overtime wins in the tournament already — would take it to the buzzer.

They were clinging to a 50-49 lead when top-seeded Michigan called a timeout with 19 seconds to go. Juwan Howard set up an open 3-point look for cold-shooting Franz Wagner, who missed most of everything, and Eli Brooks missed a put-back.

The Wolverines quickly fouled and sent Juzang to the line, where he missed the second of his two free throws with 6.3 seconds left, and Michigan grabbed the rebound. After another timeout, Mike Smith raced up court and unloaded a good look from the wing that was halfway down before bouncing back out.

The buzzer sounded but the officials halted the Bruins' celebration, putting a half-second back on the clock. That was enough time for Michigan to inbound to Wagner, who again let fly a 3-pointer that clanked off the iron.



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Tyger Campbell added 11 points for UCLA (22-9), and Hunter Dickinson led the Wolverines (23-5) with 11 points.

## Quite a show: Zags stay undefeated with 85-66 win over USC

By EDDIE PELLIS AP National Writer

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Can anybody stop these guys?

For the 30th straight time this season, Gonzaga answered that question with a resounding “No.”

The Bulldogs got on a roll and put on a show, cruising into the Final Four with an 85-66 beatdown of a Southern California team that was nowhere near ready for what it ran into Tuesday night.

Drew Timme had 23 points and five rebounds and, after one dunk, pretended to slick down his handlebar mustache for the few thousand fans in the stands.

“This is a really, really big deal,” coach Mark Few said of the program’s return to the Final Four after a four-year hiatus. “And Zags know how to celebrate, OK?”

The top-seeded and top-ranked Bulldogs (30-0) will be the third team to bring an undefeated record into the Final Four since the bracket expanded to 64 teams in 1985. The last team to go undefeated was Indiana in 1976. On Saturday in the national semifinals, the Zags will face 11th-seeded UCLA, which beat Michigan 51-49 in a later Elite Eight game.

In the early contest, Timme did whatever he wanted against the nation’s fourth-ranked defense — a team that won its first three tournament games by an average of 21 points — as did pretty much everyone else in a white uniform.

Jalen Suggs finished with 18 points, 10 rebounds and eight assists. All-American Corey Kispert had 18 points and eight boards on an “off” night — only 6 for 19 from the floor. Gonzaga shot 44% in the second half and “only” 50% for the game. That was five under its nation-leading average, but it didn’t matter much.

“We just tried to stay moving,” Suggs said about attacking the USC zone, which had been shutting down teams all month in Indy. “We didn’t let the ball get too sticky. We kept moving, flashing into the high post. It was a lot for them to deal with — good cuts off the baseline, vertical cuts off the wings.”

Blowouts are supposed to be boring, but this had the feel of a Globetrotters game at times, filled with fancy bounce passes through traffic, reverse layups, a swooping power dunk from Joel Ayayi (nine points) and the occasional post-basket flex from the 6-foot-10 Timme.

Gonzaga led sixth-seeded USC 7-0 after two minutes, 25-8 after 8:30 and 36-15 after Kispert took a nifty dish from Timme for an easy layup with 6:03 left in the half.

“It was a little surprising,” USC coach Andy Enfield said, “because we’d been playing great basketball.”

The Zags have a way about doing that to people.

They walked into the locker room at halftime ahead by 19 and with a big fat zero in the turnover column — a gold-standard stat for a team that thrives on offensive efficiency.

The last 20 minutes were extended garbage time -- plenty of time for the Bulldogs to pad the stats.

They are a statistician’s dream — a team that came in No. 1 scoring (91.8), that has won 29 of its 30 games by double digits, and that wasn’t going to be slowed by the Brothers Mobley — Isaiah and Evan — who roam the middle for one of the country’s tallest teams (Average height, 6-7).

They both got theirs — Isaiah with 19 points and seven rebounds, and Evan with 17 and five — but the evening belonged to the Bulldogs.

“It’s such a special accomplishment, and to do it this year with as crazy as it’s been, as challenging as it’s been,” said Few, whose team had four games canceled in December because of COVID-19, but never lost its stride. “They’ve been unbelievable from Day 1.”

The game was interrupted by a frightening moment early, when official Bert Smith collapsed on the floor and had to be taken off in a wheelchair. In the second half, CBS passed along word that Smith was feeling OK and resting in the arena.

He was replaced by Tony Henderson, but there was no heavy lifting for the backup.

USC didn’t get closer than 16 in the second half, and though their intensity wandered at times, there

was never any doubt the Zags would be returning to Lucas Oil Stadium later this week, two wins away from perfection.

## ALL-WEST TEAM

The All-region team included both Mobley brothers, Suggs, Kispert and Timme, who was named the West's most outstanding player. Timme had 45 points and 11 rebounds over the two games this week.

## G. Gordon Liddy, Watergate mastermind, dead at 90

By WILL LESTER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — G. Gordon Liddy, a mastermind of the Watergate burglary and a radio talk show host after emerging from prison, died Tuesday at age 90 at his daughter's home in Virginia.

His son, Thomas Liddy, confirmed the death but did not reveal the cause, other than to say it was not related to COVID-19.

Liddy, a former FBI agent and Army veteran, was convicted of conspiracy, burglary and illegal wiretapping for his role in the Watergate burglary, which led to the resignation of President Richard Nixon. He spent four years and four months in prison, including more than 100 days in solitary confinement.

"I'd do it again for my president," he said years later.

Liddy was outspoken and controversial as a political operative under Nixon. He recommended assassinating political enemies, bombing a left-leaning think tank and kidnapping war protesters. His White House colleagues ignored such suggestions.

One of his ventures — the break-in at Democratic headquarters at the Watergate building in June 1972 — was approved. The burglary went awry, which led to an investigation, a cover-up and Nixon's resignation in 1974.

Liddy also was convicted of conspiracy in the September 1971 burglary of the office of the psychiatrist of Daniel Ellsberg, the defense analyst who leaked the secret history of the Vietnam War known as the Pentagon Papers.

After his release from prison, Liddy became a popular, provocative and controversial radio talk show host. He also worked as a security consultant, writer and actor. His appearance — piercing dark eyes, bushy moustache and shaved head — made him a recognizable spokesman for products and TV guest.

On air, he offered tips on how to kill federal firearms agents, rode around with car tags saying "H2OGATE" (Watergate) and scorned people who cooperated with prosecutors.

Born in Hoboken, New Jersey, George Gordon Battle Liddy was a frail boy who grew up in a neighborhood populated mostly by German-Americans. From friends and a maid who was a German national, Liddy developed a curiosity about German leader Adolf Hitler and was inspired by listening to Hitler's radio speeches in the 1930s.

"If an entire nation could be changed, lifted out of weakness to extraordinary strength, so could one person," Liddy wrote in "Will," his autobiography. His personal story was intriguing enough that "Will" was the basis of a TV movie in 1982 starring Robert Conrad.

As a boy Liddy decided it was critical to face his fears and overcome them. At age 11, he roasted a rat and ate it to overcome his fear of rats. "From now on, rats could fear me as they feared cats," he wrote.

After attending Fordham University and serving a stint in the Army, Liddy graduated from the Fordham University Law School and then joined the FBI. He ran unsuccessfully for Congress from New York in 1968 and helped organize Nixon's presidential campaign in the state.

When Nixon took office, Liddy was named a special assistant to Treasury and served under Treasury Secretary David M. Kennedy. He later moved to the White House, then to Nixon's reelection campaign, where his official title was general counsel.

Liddy was head of a team of Republican operatives known as "the plumbers," whose mission was to find leakers of information embarrassing to the Nixon administration. Among Liddy's specialties were gathering political intelligence and organizing activities to disrupt or discredit Nixon's Democratic opponents.

While recruiting a woman to help carry out one of his schemes, Liddy tried to convince her that no one

could force him to reveal her identity or anything else against his will. To convince her, He held his hand over a flaming cigarette lighter. His hand was badly burned. The woman turned down the job.

Liddy became known for such offbeat suggestions as kidnapping war protest organizers and taking them to Mexico during the Republican National Convention; assassinating investigative journalist Jack Anderson; and firebombing the Brookings Institution, a left-leaning think tank in Washington where classified documents leaked by Ellsberg were being stored.

Liddy and fellow operative Howard Hunt, along with the five arrested at Watergate, were indicted on federal charges three months after the June 1972 break-in. Hunt and his recruits pleaded guilty in January 1973, and James McCord and Liddy were found guilty. Nixon resigned on Aug. 9, 1974.

After the failed break-in attempt, Liddy recalled telling White House counsel John Dean, "If someone wants to shoot me, just tell me what corner to stand on, and I'll be there, OK?" Dean reportedly responded, "I don't think we've gotten there yet, Gordon."

Liddy claimed in an interview with CBS' "60 Minutes" that Nixon was "insufficiently ruthless" and should have destroyed tape recordings of his conversations with top aides.

Liddy learned to market his reputation as a fearless, if sometimes overzealous, advocate of conservative causes. His syndicated radio talk show, broadcast from Virginia-based WJFK, was long one of the most popular in the country. He wrote best-selling books, acted in TV shows like "Miami Vice," was a frequent guest lecturer on college campuses, started a private-eye franchise and worked as a security consultant. For a time, he teamed on the lecture circuit with an unlikely partner, 1960s LSD guru Timothy Leary.

In the mid-1990s, Liddy told gun-toting radio listeners to aim for the head when encountered by agents of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms. "Head shots, head shots," he stressed, explaining that most agents wear bullet-resistant vests under their jackets. Liddy said later he wasn't encouraging people to hunt agents, but added that if an agent comes at someone with deadly force, "you should defend yourself and your rights with deadly force."

Liddy always took pride in his role in Watergate. He once said: "I am proud of the fact that I am the guy who did not talk."

## Firefighter blocked from helping Floyd returns to stand

By STEVE KARNOWSKI and AMY FORLITI Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — A Minneapolis firefighter who voiced frustration at being prevented from using her EMT training to help George Floyd will be back on the stand Wednesday in the trial of the fired police officer charged in Floyd's death.

Genevieve Hansen, one of several bystanders seen and heard shouting at Derek Chauvin as he pinned Floyd facedown outside a convenience store last May, cried Tuesday as she recounted how she was unable to come to Floyd's aid or tell police what to do, such as administering chest compressions.

"There was a man being killed," said Hansen, who testified in her dress uniform and detailed her emergency medical technician training. "I would have been able to provide medical attention to the best of my abilities. And this human was denied that right."

Hansen was among several onlookers to testify Tuesday to what they saw of Floyd's May 25 death. They described their increasing frustration, anger and despair as they begged Chauvin to take his knee off Floyd's neck.

Witness after witness described how Chauvin was unmoved by their pleas, including the teenager who shot the harrowing video of the arrest that set off nationwide protests. She said the officer gave the crowd a "cold" and "heartless" stare.

"He didn't care. It seemed as if he didn't care what we were saying," said 18-year-old Darnella Frazier, one of several witnesses who testified through tears.

Chauvin continued to kneel on Floyd while fellow Officer Tou Thao held the crowd of about 15 back, even when Hansen identified herself as a firefighter and pleaded repeatedly to check Floyd's pulse, according to witnesses and bystander video.



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"They definitely put their hands on the Mace, and we all pulled back," Frazier told the jury.

Chauvin, 45, is charged with murder and manslaughter, accused of killing Floyd by pinning the 46-year-old handcuffed Black man to the pavement for what prosecutors said was 9 minutes, 29 seconds. Floyd was arrested after being accused of trying to pass a counterfeit \$20 bill at the convenience store.

Floyd's death, along with the bystander video of him pleading that he couldn't breathe, triggered sometimes violent protests around the world and a reckoning over racism and police brutality across the U.S.

The most serious charge against Chauvin carries up to 40 years in prison.

The defense has argued that Chauvin did what his training told him to do and that Floyd's death was not caused by the officer but by a combination of illegal drug use, heart disease, high blood pressure and the adrenaline flowing through his body.

On Tuesday, the prosecution asked multiple witnesses to describe their horror at what they saw, buttressing the testimony with multiple videos, some of which had never been seen before. Many described feeling helpless and guilty as Floyd gasped for air, pleaded for his life and finally fell limp and silent, his eyes rolling back in his head.

The testimony was apparently aimed at showing that Chauvin had multiple opportunities to think about what he was doing and change course.

But Chauvin attorney Eric Nelson sought to portray the onlookers as angry and agitated, in an apparent attempt to show that the crowd posed a potential threat to police that might have distracted them during their encounter with Floyd.

Hansen testified that the crowd was getting more upset and that the paramedics did a "load and go"—placing Floyd on a stretcher and quickly getting him away from the crowd so he could be treated elsewhere.

Earlier Tuesday, Donald Williams, one of the onlookers, testified that he called 911 after paramedics took Floyd away, "because I believed I witnessed a murder." In a recording of the emergency call, Williams can be overheard yelling at the officers: "Y'all is murderers, bro!"

During cross-examination, Nelson pointed out that Williams seemed to grow increasingly angry at the police, calling Chauvin "tough guy," "bum" and other names, then calling Chauvin expletives, which the defense lawyer repeated in court.

Williams, a professional mixed martial arts fighter, initially admitted he was getting angrier, but then backtracked and said he was controlled and professional, and was pleading for Floyd's life but wasn't being heard.

Williams said he was stepping on and off the curb, and at one point, Thao put his hand on Williams' chest. Williams admitted that he told Thao he would beat the officers if Thao touched him again.

But witnesses also testified that no bystanders interfered with police.

When Frazier was asked by a prosecutor whether she saw violence anywhere on the scene, she replied: "Yes, from the cops. From Chauvin, and from officer Thao."

Also Tuesday, prosecutors played cellphone video recorded by another bystander, 18-year-old Alyssa Funari, that showed onlookers shouting and screaming at Chauvin after Floyd stopped moving. The footage also showed Hansen, the Minneapolis firefighter, calmly walk up to Thao and offer to help. He ordered her to get back on the sidewalk.

"I felt like there wasn't really anything I could do as a bystander," a tearful Funari said, adding that she felt she was failing Floyd. "Technically I could've did something, but I couldn't really do anything physically ... because the highest power was there at the time," she said, referring to the police.

Frazier testified that she looks at her father and other Black men in her life and thinks of "how that could have been one of them."

"I stay up at night apologizing to George Floyd for not doing more ... not saving his life," she said, adding of Chauvin: "It's not what I should have done; it's what he should have done."

## G. Gordon Liddy, Watergate mastermind, dead at 90

By WILL LESTER Associated Press

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WASHINGTON (AP) — G. Gordon Liddy, a mastermind of the Watergate burglary and a radio talk show host after emerging from prison, died Tuesday at age 90 at his daughter's home in Virginia.

His son, Thomas Liddy, confirmed the death but did not reveal the cause, other than to say it was not related to COVID-19.

Liddy, a former FBI agent and Army veteran, was convicted of conspiracy, burglary and illegal wiretapping for his role in the Watergate burglary, which led to the resignation of President Richard Nixon. He spent four years and four months in prison, including more than 100 days in solitary confinement.

"I'd do it again for my president," he said years later.

Liddy was outspoken and controversial as a political operative under Nixon. He recommended assassinating political enemies, bombing a left-leaning think tank and kidnapping war protesters. His White House colleagues ignored such suggestions.

One of his ventures — the break-in at Democratic headquarters at the Watergate building in June 1972 — was approved. The burglary went awry, which led to an investigation, a cover-up and Nixon's resignation in 1974.

Liddy also was convicted of conspiracy in the September 1971 burglary of the office of the psychiatrist of Daniel Ellsberg, the defense analyst who leaked the secret history of the Vietnam War known as the Pentagon Papers.

After his release from prison, Liddy became a popular, provocative and controversial radio talk show host. He also worked as a security consultant, writer and actor. His appearance — piercing dark eyes, bushy moustache and shaved head — made him a recognizable spokesman for products and TV guest.

On air, he offered tips on how to kill federal firearms agents, rode around with car tags saying "H2OGATE" (Watergate) and scorned people who cooperated with prosecutors.

Born in Hoboken, New Jersey, George Gordon Battle Liddy was a frail boy who grew up in a neighborhood populated mostly by German-Americans. From friends and a maid who was a German national, Liddy developed a curiosity about German leader Adolf Hitler and was inspired by listening to Hitler's radio speeches in the 1930s.

"If an entire nation could be changed, lifted out of weakness to extraordinary strength, so could one person," Liddy wrote in "Will," his autobiography. His personal story was intriguing enough that "Will" was the basis of a TV movie in 1982 starring Robert Conrad.

As a boy Liddy decided it was critical to face his fears and overcome them. At age 11, he roasted a rat and ate it to overcome his fear of rats. "From now on, rats could fear me as they feared cats," he wrote.

After attending Fordham University and serving a stint in the Army, Liddy graduated from the Fordham University Law School and then joined the FBI. He ran unsuccessfully for Congress from New York in 1968 and helped organize Nixon's presidential campaign in the state.

When Nixon took office, Liddy was named a special assistant to Treasury and served under Treasury Secretary David M. Kennedy. He later moved to the White House, then to Nixon's reelection campaign, where his official title was general counsel.

Liddy was head of a team of Republican operatives known as "the plumbers," whose mission was to find leakers of information embarrassing to the Nixon administration. Among Liddy's specialties were gathering political intelligence and organizing activities to disrupt or discredit Nixon's Democratic opponents.

While recruiting a woman to help carry out one of his schemes, Liddy tried to convince her that no one could force him to reveal her identity or anything else against his will. To convince her, He held his hand over a flaming cigarette lighter. His hand was badly burned. The woman turned down the job.

Liddy became known for such offbeat suggestions as kidnapping war protest organizers and taking them to Mexico during the Republican National Convention; assassinating investigative journalist Jack Anderson; and firebombing the Brookings Institution, a left-leaning think tank in Washington where classified documents leaked by Ellsberg were being stored.

Liddy and fellow operative Howard Hunt, along with the five arrested at Watergate, were indicted on federal charges three months after the June 1972 break-in. Hunt and his recruits pleaded guilty in January

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1973, and James McCord and Liddy were found guilty. Nixon resigned on Aug. 9, 1974.

After the failed break-in attempt, Liddy recalled telling White House counsel John Dean, "If someone wants to shoot me, just tell me what corner to stand on, and I'll be there, OK?" Dean reportedly responded, "I don't think we've gotten there yet, Gordon."

Liddy claimed in an interview with CBS' "60 Minutes" that Nixon was "insufficiently ruthless" and should have destroyed tape recordings of his conversations with top aides.

Liddy learned to market his reputation as a fearless, if sometimes overzealous, advocate of conservative causes. His syndicated radio talk show, broadcast from Virginia-based WJFK, was long one of the most popular in the country. He wrote best-selling books, acted in TV shows like "Miami Vice," was a frequent guest lecturer on college campuses, started a private-eye franchise and worked as a security consultant. For a time, he teamed on the lecture circuit with an unlikely partner, 1960s LSD guru Timothy Leary.

In the mid-1990s, Liddy told gun-toting radio listeners to aim for the head when encountered by agents of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms. "Head shots, head shots," he stressed, explaining that most agents wear bullet-resistant vests under their jackets. Liddy said later he wasn't encouraging people to hunt agents, but added that if an agent comes at someone with deadly force, "you should defend yourself and your rights with deadly force."

Liddy always took pride in his role in Watergate. He once said: "I am proud of the fact that I am the guy who did not talk."

## Video shows vicious attack of Asian American woman in NYC

By MICHAEL R. SISAK and KAREN MATTHEWS Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A vicious attack on an Asian American woman as she walked to church near New York City's Times Square is drawing widespread condemnation and raising alarms about the failure of bystanders to intervene amid a rash of anti-Asian violence across the U.S.

A lone assailant was seen on surveillance video late Monday morning, kicking the 65-year-old woman in the stomach, knocking her to the ground and stomping on her face, all as police say he shouted anti-Asian slurs and told her, "you don't belong here."

The attack happened outside an apartment building two blocks from Times Square, a bustling, heavily policed section of midtown Manhattan known as the "Crossroads of the World."

Two workers inside the building who appeared to be security guards were seen on the video witnessing the attack but failing to come to the woman's aid. Their union said they called for help immediately. The attacker was able to casually walk away while onlookers watched, the video showed.

New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio called the video of the attack "absolutely disgusting and outrageous" and said it was "absolutely unacceptable" that witnesses did not intervene.

"I don't care who you are, I don't care what you do, you've got to help your fellow New Yorker," de Blasio said Tuesday at his daily news briefing.

"If you see someone being attacked, do whatever you can," he said. "Make noise. Call out what's happening. Go and try and help. Immediately call for help. Call 911. This is something where we all have to be part of the solution. We can't just stand back and watch a heinous act happening."

Mayoral candidate Andrew Yang, the son of Taiwanese immigrants, said the victim "could easily have been my mother." He too criticized the bystanders, saying their inaction was "exactly the opposite of what we need here in New York City."

The attack comes amid a national spike in anti-Asian hate crimes, and happened just weeks after a mass shooting in Atlanta that left eight people dead, six of them women of Asian descent. The surge in violence has been linked in part to misplaced blame for the coronavirus and former President Donald Trump's use of racially charged terms like "Chinese virus."

This year in New York City there have been 33 hate crimes with an Asian victim as of Sunday, police said. There were 11 such attacks by the same time last year.

On Friday, in the same neighborhood as Monday's attack, a 65-year-old Asian American woman was accosted by a man waving an unknown object and shouting anti-Asian insults. A 48-year-old man was



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arrested the next day and charged with menacing. He is not suspected in Monday's attack.

New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo called Monday's attack "horrifying and repugnant" and he ordered a state police hate crimes task force to offer its assistance to the NYPD. No arrests have been made.

The NYPD's Hate Crime Task Force, which is investigating the attack, released surveillance video of the attack and photographs of the suspect Monday evening and asked anyone with information to contact the department's confidential hot line or submit tips online.

The woman attacked Monday was hospitalized with serious injuries. She was discharged Tuesday evening, a hospital spokesperson said. Her name has not been released.

According to video footage of the assault Monday, two people who appeared to be security guards walked into the frame and one of them closed the building door as the woman was on the ground.

The property developer and manager of the building, Brodsky Organization, wrote on Instagram that it was aware of the assault and said staff members who witnessed it were suspended pending an investigation.

The head of the union representing building workers disputed allegations that the door staff failed to act. He said the union has information that they called for help immediately.

"Our union is working to get further details for a more complete account, and urges the public to avoid a rush to judgment while the facts are determined," SEIU 32BJ President Kyle Bragg said in a written statement. He condemned the attack as "yet another example of the unbridled hate and terror" against Asian Americans.

Police Commissioner Dermot Shea announced last week that the department would increase outreach and patrols in predominantly Asian communities, including the use of undercover officers to prevent and disrupt attacks.

The neighborhood where Monday's attack occurred, Hell's Kitchen, is predominantly white, with an Asian population of less than 20%, according to city demographic data.

Shea called Monday's attack "disgusting," telling TV station NY1: "I don't know who attacks a 65-year-old woman and leaves her on the street like that."

According to a report from Stop AAPI Hate, more than 3,795 incidents were reported to the organization from March 19, 2020, to Feb. 28. The group, which tracks incidents of discrimination, hate and xenophobia against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in the U.S., said that number is "only a fraction of the number of hate incidents that actually occur."

## Brazil military chiefs quit as Bolsonaro seeks their support

By DIANE JEANTET and DAVID BILLER Associated Press

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — The leaders of all three branches of Brazil's armed forces jointly resigned Tuesday following President Jair Bolsonaro's replacement of the defense minister, causing widespread apprehension of a military shakeup to serve the president's political interests.

The Defense Ministry reported the resignations — apparently unprecedented since at least the end of military rule 36 years ago — in a statement released without giving reasons. Replacements were not named. But analysts expressed fears the president, increasingly under pressure, was moving to assert greater control over the military.

"Since 1985, we haven't had news of such clear intervention of the president with regard to the armed forces," said Carlos Melo, a political science professor at Insper University in Sao Paulo.

Bolsonaro, a conservative former army captain who has often praised Brazil's former period of military dictatorship, has relied heavily on current and former soldiers to staff key Cabinet positions since taking office in January 2019, but Melo said the military itself has so far refrained from politics.

"Will this resistance continue? That's the question," Melo said.

The announcement came after the heads of the army, navy and air force met with the new defense minister, Gen. Walter Souza Braga Netto, on Tuesday morning.

Braga Netto's first statement on the new job showed he is aligned with Bolsonaro's views for the armed forces. The incoming defense minister, unlike his predecessor, celebrated the 1964-1985 military dictatorship that killed and tortured thousands of Brazilians.

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"The armed forces ended up assuming the responsibility for pacifying the country, facing the challenges to reorganize it and secure the democratic liberties that today we enjoy," said Braga Netto, who did not discuss the departure of the military chiefs. "The 1964 movement is part of Brazil's historic trajectory. And as such the events of that March 31st must be understood and celebrated."

A retired army general who has a relationship with the three commanders as well as with Braga Netto told The Associated Press that "there was an embarrassing circumstance so they all resigned." He agreed to discuss the matter only if not quoted by name, expressing fear of retribution.

Bolsonaro on Monday carried out a shake-up of top Cabinet positions that was initially seen as a response to demands for a course correction by lawmakers, diplomats and economists, particularly over his handling of the pandemic that has caused more than 300,000 deaths in Brazil.

That included the replacement of Defense Minister Fernando Azevedo e Silva, who said in his resignation letter that he had "preserved the armed forces as state institutions," a nod at his effort to keep generals out of politics.

Bolsonaro has often bristled at the checks and balances imposed by other branches of government and has attended protests targeting the Supreme Court and Congress.

He has also criticized the Supreme Court for upholding local governments' rights to adopt pandemic restrictions that he adamantly opposes, arguing that the economic effects are worse than the disease itself.

His recent slide in popularity, and the sudden likelihood that he will face leftist former President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva in the 2022 presidential election, has analysts saying he is looking to the armed forces for support.

Retired Gen. Carlos Alberto Santos Cruz, who previously served as Bolsonaro's government secretary, appeared to refer to such concerns when he responded to early rumors of military resignations with a tweet saying, "THE ARMED FORCES WON'T GO ON AN ADVENTURE."

Since Brazil's return to democracy in 1985, the armed forces have tried to keep a distance from partisan political quarrels.

"The government has to give explanations to the population about the change in the Defense Ministry," Santos Cruz added.

Sen. Kátia Abreu, who heads the Senate's foreign relations commission, said it would be "prudent" that the new defense minister speak to "calm the nation down about the impossibility of a military intervention."

"I have a conviction that we built a strong democracy. The armed forces are part of the Brazilian state and they have the confidence of all of us," said Abreu, a right-leaning Bolsonaro critic.

Earlier this month, Bolsonaro began mentioning the armed forces in connection with his dispute with state governors and mayors over restrictive measures meant to slow the spread of the coronavirus in Latin America's largest nation.

"My army doesn't go to the street to force people to stay at home," Bolsonaro told reporters March 19.

Thomas Traumann, an independent political analyst, told AP that it was the first time in living memory that all leaders of the armed forces had quit simultaneously.

"He wants people who will do whatever he wants, and so it is extremely risky," Traumann said. "He can put the army out to allow people to go to work. So the army would be in his hands, and not in the hands of the generals."

Speaking to supporters outside the presidential palace Tuesday night, Bolsonaro did not discuss the three commanders. When asked about the pandemic restrictions imposed by governors and mayors, the president said he respects the constitution, though he added: "But it has been some time that some authorities are not playing within the limits of the constitution."

Bolsonaro saw his popularity rise last year, thanks to a generous pandemic welfare aid program. That popularity has dropped since the program ended in December, and there have been renewed protests against him as the nation's daily death toll surged to the highest in the world.

Further clouding the outlook for Bolsonaro is the reemergence of da Silva after a Supreme Court justice annulled two corruption convictions and restored his political rights. Early polls indicate he would be a

formidable challenger in next year's election.

In other Cabinet changes, Bolsonaro replaced Foreign Minister Ernesto Araújo, who was accused by some of impeding the supply of vaccines by making comments seen as insulting to the Chinese and by not aggressively seeking sources.

Earlier this month, Bolsonaro also replaced his health minister, active-duty army Gen. Eduardo Pazuello, the third health minister to leave office since the beginning of the pandemic. Pazuello's tenure coincided with most of Brazil's 317,000 COVID-19 deaths.

On Tuesday, Brazil's health ministry said a new daily high of 3,780 deaths related to COVID-19 had been registered in the previous 24 hours. The previous high of 3,650 deaths was recorded Friday.

## **GOP Rep. Gaetz investigated over sexual relationship**

By MICHAEL BALSAMO, ERIC TUCKER and ALAN FRAM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republican Rep. Matt Gaetz, a prominent conservative in Congress and a close ally of former President Donald Trump, said Tuesday he is being investigated by the Justice Department over a former relationship but denied any criminal wrongdoing.

Gaetz, who represents parts of western Florida, is accused of having an inappropriate sexual relationship with a 17-year-old girl and paying her to travel with him, and he is under investigation to determine if he violated federal sex trafficking laws, a person familiar with the case told The Associated Press.

The probe has been underway for nearly a year and Gaetz has been aware for months that he was under investigation, the person said. The Justice Department has also been looking into whether Gaetz, 38, may have also been involved in relationships with other underage girls, the person said.

The person could not publicly discuss the details of an ongoing investigation and spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity.

Gaetz told Axios that his lawyers were informed that he was the subject of an investigation "regarding sexual conduct with women" but that he was not a target of the probe. He denied that he ever had a relationship with any underage girls and said the allegations against him were "as searing as they are false."

A subject is conventionally thought of as someone whose actions fall within the scope of a criminal investigation, whereas a target is someone whom prosecutors have gathered evidence linking to a crime. But during the course of an investigation, a subject can become a target.

Gaetz's comments came shortly after The New York Times first reported the investigation. It is a federal crime to transport a minor over state lines for sex.

Gaetz alleged that the allegations were part of an extortion plot by a former Justice Department official, whom he did not name.

"Over the past several weeks my family and I have been victims of an organized criminal extortion involving a former DOJ official seeking \$25 million while threatening to smear my name," Gaetz said in a statement.

Gaetz said his family has been cooperating with the FBI and said his father was wearing a recording device, at the FBI's direction, "to catch these criminals." He demanded the Justice Department release the recordings.

"No part of the allegations against me are true, and the people pushing these lies are targets of the ongoing extortion investigation," he said.

The Times cited three people familiar with the matter, saying the scrutiny was part of a broader Justice Department probe into one of his political allies and fellow Florida politician, Joel Greenberg, who was indicted last summer on sex trafficking and other charges that he stalked a political opponent. A judge ordered the former tax collector back to jail earlier this month for violating the conditions of his release.

"I believe that there are people at the Department of Justice who are trying to criminalize my sexual conduct, you know, when I was a single guy," Gaetz told Axios.

"I have definitely, in my single days, provided for women I've dated," Gaetz said. "You know, I've paid for flights, for hotel rooms. I've been, you know, generous as a partner. I think someone is trying to make that look criminal when it is not."



Gaetz has not been charged with a crime. The Justice Department did not immediately comment.

## **Witnesses: Onlooker anger increased as Floyd stopped moving**

By STEVE KARNOWSKI and AMY FORLITI Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Onlookers grew increasingly angry as they begged Minneapolis Officer Derek Chauvin to take his knee off George Floyd's neck, but Chauvin would not let up, and another officer forced back members of the crowd who tried to intervene, witnesses testified Tuesday at Chauvin's murder trial.

Witness after witness described how Chauvin was unmoved by their pleas, with the teenager who shot the harrowing video of the arrest that set off nationwide protests testifying that the officer gave the crowd a "cold" and "heartless" stare.

"He didn't care. It seemed as if he didn't care what we were saying," said 18-year-old Darnella Frazier, one of several witnesses who testified through tears.

Chauvin continued to kneel on Floyd while fellow Officer Tou Thao held the crowd of about 15 back, even when one of the onlookers identified herself as a firefighter and pleaded repeatedly to check Floyd's pulse, according to witnesses and bystander video.

"They definitely put their hands on the Mace, and we all pulled back," Frazier told the jury.

The firefighter, Genevieve Hansen, wept on the witness stand as she recalled how she was not allowed to give any medical assistance or tell the police what to do, such as administering chest compressions.

"There was a man being killed," said Hansen, who testified in her dress uniform and detailed her emergency medical technician training. "I would have been able to provide medical attention to the best of my abilities. And this human was denied that right."

Chauvin, 45, is charged with murder and manslaughter, accused of killing Floyd last May by pinning the 46-year-old handcuffed Black man to the pavement for what prosecutors said was 9 minutes, 29 seconds. Floyd was arrested after being accused of trying to pass a counterfeit \$20 bill at a convenience store.

Floyd's death, along with the bystander video of him pleading that he couldn't breathe, triggered sometimes-violent protests around the world and a reckoning over racism and police brutality across the U.S.

The most serious charge against the now-fired white officer carries up to 40 years in prison.

The defense has argued that Chauvin did what his training told him to do and that Floyd's death was not caused by the officer but by a combination of illegal drug use, heart disease, high blood pressure and the adrenaline flowing through his body.

On Tuesday, the prosecution asked multiple witnesses to describe their horror at what they saw, buttressing the testimony with multiple videos, some of which had never been seen before. Many testified about feelings of helplessness and guilt as Floyd gasped for air, pleaded for his life and finally fell limp and silent, his eyes rolling back in his head.

The testimony was apparently aimed at showing that Chauvin had multiple opportunities to think about what he was doing and change course.

But Chauvin attorney Eric Nelson also sought to portray the onlookers as angry and agitated, in an apparent attempt to show that the crowd posed a potential threat to police that might have distracted them during their encounter with Floyd.

Hansen testified that the crowd was getting more upset and that the paramedics did a "load and go"—placing Floyd on a stretcher and quickly getting him away from the crowd so he could be treated elsewhere.

Earlier Tuesday, Donald Williams, one of the onlookers, testified that he called 911 after paramedics took Floyd away, "because I believed I witnessed a murder." In a recording of the emergency call, Williams could be overheard yelling at the officers: "Y'all is murderers, bro!"

During cross-examination, Chauvin's lawyer pointed out that Williams seemed to grow increasingly angry at the police, taunting Chauvin with "tough guy," "bum" and other names, then calling Chauvin expletives, which the defense lawyer repeated in court.

Williams, a professional mixed martial arts fighter, initially admitted he was getting angrier, but then backtracked and said he was controlled and professional and was pleading for Floyd's life but wasn't be-

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ing heard.

Williams said he was stepping on and off the curb, and at one point, Thao, who was controlling the crowd, put his hand on Williams' chest. Williams admitted under questioning that he told Thao he would beat the officers if Thao touched him again.

But witnesses also testified that no bystanders actually interfered with police.

When Frazier was asked by a prosecutor whether she saw violence anywhere on the scene, she replied: "Yes, from the cops. From Chauvin, and from officer Thao."

Also Tuesday, prosecutors played cellphone video recorded by yet another bystander, 18-year-old Alyssa Funari, that showed onlookers shouting and screaming at Chauvin after Floyd stopped moving. The footage also showed Hansen, the Minneapolis firefighter, calmly walk up to Thao and offer to help, before he ordered her to get back on the sidewalk.

"I felt like there wasn't really anything I could do as a bystander," a tearful Funari said, adding that she felt she was failing Floyd. "Technically I could've did something, but I couldn't really do anything physically ... because the highest power was there at the time," she said, referring to the police.

Frazier testified that she looks at her father and other Black men in her life and thinks of "how that could have been one of them."

"I stay up at night apologizing to George Floyd for not doing more ... not saving his life," she said, adding of Chauvin: "It's not what I should have done; it's what he should have done."

## Beyond bridges: Biden redefines infrastructure to add people

By LISA MASCARO, JOSH BOAK and JONATHAN LEMIRE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Beyond roads and bridges, President Joe Biden is trying to redefine infrastructure not just as an investment in America the place, but in its workers, families and people.

The first phase of his "Build Back Better" package to be unveiled Wednesday in Pittsburgh would unleash \$2 trillion in new spending on four main hard infrastructure categories — transportation; public water, health and broadband systems; community care for seniors; and innovation research and development, according to people familiar with the proposal.

Those would be paid for by permanently raising the corporate tax rate from 21% to 28%, the people said, which would unwind the lower corporate rate put in place by the Trump administration.

The next phase would focus on soft infrastructure investments in child care, family tax credits and other domestic programs, paid for by tax hikes on wealthy individuals and families, they said.

Swelling to \$3 trillion or \$4 trillion, Biden's new package proposes a massive investment on par with the Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal or Lyndon Johnson's Great Society. Taken together, the administration's approach is transforming the old ideas of infrastructure investment into a 21st century concept that includes developing the human capital of America's population.

"He's talking about physical infrastructure and we're talking about human infrastructure," Sen. Bernie Sanders, the independent from Vermont who is chairman of the Budget Committee, said in an interview Tuesday.

The president is set deliver a speech Wednesday outlining the size and scope of his plan, the administration hoping to take a more deliberate and collaborative approach with the lawmakers than it did on the emergency COVID-19 rescue package, Biden's first big priority to be signed into law.

At a private briefing Tuesday for the top lawmakers of both parties, the administration shared plans for the first phase with Democratic committee chairmen and the top Republicans on the panels, a nod to the White House's efforts at outreach and bipartisanship.

The White House team led by National Economic Council Director Brian Deese explained that the \$2 trillion in spending would unfold over eight years, paid for by the corporate tax increases over 15 years.

That's an accounting maneuver outside of the traditional 10-year budget window used by Congress, meaning it will likely run into trouble with budget rules and need to be adjusted.

The details were provided by people familiar with the call and granted anonymity to discuss it.

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Funding Biden's infrastructure initiative with tax hikes has been controversial. Raising the corporate tax rate to 28% from 21% would generate some \$700 billion over 10 years, one of the people said. The administration is also eyeing a new global minimum tax.

Biden promised on the campaign trail not to raise individual taxes on those earning less than \$400,000 but new details on the individual tax hikes were scant at Tuesday's briefing.

Tax hikes on the wealthy, most likely changes to the top rates, are expected to pay for the human capital investments coming in two weeks.

Even though Republicans were invited to join Tuesday's briefing, key GOP leaders are already panning the package as too big and too costly for them to support.

"It seems like President Biden has an insatiable appetite to spend more money and raise people's taxes," said Rep. Steve Scalise of Louisiana, the GOP whip, in an interview.

Scalise predicted that, if approved, the new spending and taxes would "start having a negative impact on the economy, which we're very concerned about."

Sweeping in scope, the ambitious plan aims to make generational investments in infrastructure, revive domestic manufacturing, combat climate change and keep the United States competitive with China, according to administration officials.

Though the White House is emphasizing the urgency, the administration is also working deliberately to build support. It wants to see progress on the new legislation by Memorial Day and have it passed over the summer, White House officials said.

Biden's approach is about "making an investment in America," said White House press secretary Jen Psaki.

"Not just modernizing our roads, our railways and our bridges, but building an infrastructure of the future," she said, pointing to broadband access and the "needs in people's homes and communities."

Unlike the swift passage of the COVID-19 bill that exposed the president to criticism for going it alone with only Democratic votes, White House officials believe this time there will be far more opportunity to win some GOP support on Capitol Hill.

As the committees in Congress begin to tackle individual provisions — including those on transportation, China and others — some legislation could be peeled off for bipartisan support. Then Congress will work through the tax increases separately, according to officials.

Psaki said the president believes there's "more that can be done to make the corporate tax code fair, to reward work not wealth, to ensure that we can invest in the future industries that are going to help all people in this country."

An official at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce who insisted on anonymity to discuss the private talks said the administration is genuinely interested in working with Republicans on infrastructure, even though the tax hikes would likely be a nonstarter.

While hoping for collaboration, Democratic congressional leaders are also preparing a go-it-alone strategy, much as was done in the virus aid package, in case Congress hits a wall of GOP opposition.

Infrastructure gives Biden an opportunity to succeed on an issue where both his predecessors — Barack Obama and Donald Trump — made big promises that never came to fruition.

But with the House narrowly controlled by Democrats and the Senate split 50-50, Biden has little room for error with his own party.

Already some progressive Democrats are pushing for more while moderate Democrats are complaining about the size and scope.

Sanders wants the president to lower the Medicare eligibility age from 65 to 60 and expand benefits for seniors to include dental, vision and hearing aid care. He said the new benefits could be paid for by allowing the federal government to negotiate for lower priced prescription drugs.

Centrist Rep. Josh Gottheimer, D-N.J., and two House Democratic colleagues said Tuesday they would vote against any tax changes that did not include a repeal of the cap on state and local tax deductions from the 2017 GOP tax law, which hits residents in their states.

Rep. Pramila Jayapal, D-Wash., chairwoman of the nearly 100-member Congressional Progressive Caucus,

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suggested a proposal even twice the size of what Biden's team is discussing may be needed to adequately invest in the nation. "We'd like to see a plan that goes big," she said.

## Hundreds of migrants set out from Honduras, dreaming of US

By DELMER MARTÍNEZ and CLAUDIO ESCALON Associated Press

CORINTO, Honduras (AP) — A few hundred Honduran migrants set out for the Guatemalan border before dawn Tuesday in hopes of eventually reaching the United States, but by afternoon they had largely dispersed.

Other recent caravans have been broken up by Guatemalan authorities and this relatively small one appeared to dissolve before reaching the Guatemala border on a day that U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris spoke with Guatemala President Alejandro Giammattei about migration.

Young men and women, as well as families toting small children, walked along a busy six-lane road heading out of San Pedro Sula early Tuesday. They strung out into small groups with many hitching rides toward the border crossing at Corinto.

But relatively few arrived at the official border crossing and likely decided to cross at the numerous blind points along the border to avoid detection. There were three checkpoints before the border on the Honduras side where authorities checked documents, especially for those traveling with children. Across the border in Guatemala, there were several more military checkpoints.

Calls to form a new migrant caravan had circulated for days, but the turnout was smaller than one that formed January. That caravan, which grew to a few thousand migrants, was eventually dissolved by authorities in Guatemala using tear gas and riot shields.

The Guatemalan and Mexican governments have taken a harder line against such caravans in recent times under pressure from the United States.

The large traveling groups, however, represent only a fraction of the regular daily migration flows, which typically go relatively unnoticed. Mexico last week began restricting crossings at its southern border to essential travel and stepped up operations to intercept migrants, especially families, in the south.

There has been hope among migrants that the administration of President Joe Biden would take a more compassionate view of them, but White House officials have tried for months to make it clear that the U.S. border is closed.

On Tuesday, the White House said in a statement that the U.S. vice president had spoken with Giammattei about "the significant risks to those leaving their homes and making the dangerous journey to the United States, especially during a global pandemic."

Harris and Giammattei discussed efforts to address the root causes of migration and Harris thanked him for "his efforts to secure Guatemala's southern border."

U.S. authorities are expelling immediately the majority of migrants who cross the southern border, though a high number of unaccompanied children, which the Biden administration has said it will not expel, have created logistical challenges.

In Central America, some have taken the situation as a sign that if they bring young children, their chances of being allowed to remain in the U.S. will be higher.

The Northern Triangle countries — Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador — have accounted for the majority of migrants arriving at the U.S. southern border in recent years. Gang violence and a lack of economic opportunities are the main reasons migrants give for leaving.

The economic situation in those countries has only grown more acute under pressure from the COVID-19 pandemic and two major hurricanes that raked the region in November.

The Biden administration has said it wants to spend \$4 billion on development in those countries to address root causes of immigration.

## Volkswagen hoaxes media with fake statement on name change

By TOM KRISHER AP Auto Writer



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DETROIT (AP) — Volkswagen of America issued false statements this week saying it would change its brand name to “Volkswagen,” to stress its commitment to electric vehicles, only to reverse course Tuesday and admit that the supposed name change was a joke.

Mark Gillies, a company spokesman, confirmed Tuesday that the statement had been a pre-April Fool’s Day joke after having insisted Monday that the release was legitimate and the name change accurate. The company’s false statement was distributed again Tuesday, saying the brand-name change reflected a shift to more battery-electric vehicles.

Volkswagen’s intentionally fake news release, highly unusual for a major public company, coincides with its efforts to repair its image as it tries to recover from a 2015 scandal in which it cheated on government emissions tests and allowed diesel-powered vehicles to illegally pollute the air.

In that scandal, Volkswagen admitted that about 11 million diesel vehicles worldwide were fitted with the deceptive software. The software reduced nitrogen oxide emissions when the cars were placed on a test machine but allowed higher emissions and improved engine performance during normal driving. The scandal cost Volkswagen \$35 billion (30 billion euros) in fines and civil settlements and led to the recall of millions of vehicles.

The company’s fake news release, leaked on Monday and then repeated in a mass e-mail to reporters Tuesday, resulted in articles about the name change in multiple media outlets, including The Associated Press.

In falsely announcing a name change, the company went beyond telling reporters that its news release was legitimate. On Tuesday, the company emailed to reporters a press release that quoted its CEO announcing the fake change:

“We might be changing out our K for a T, but what we aren’t changing is this brand’s commitment to making best-in-class vehicles for drivers and people everywhere,” Scott Keogh, president and CEO of Volkswagen of America, said in the release.

The fake release could land Volkswagen in trouble with U.S. securities regulators because its stock price rose nearly 5% on Tuesday, the day the bogus statement was officially issued. Investors of late have been responding positively to news of companies increasing electric vehicle production, swelling the value of shares of Tesla as well as of some EV startups.

James Cox, who teaches corporate and securities law at Duke University, said the Securities and Exchange Commission should take action to deal with such misinformation, which can distort stock prices.

“The whole market has gone crazy,” Cox said. “We need to throw a pretty clear line in the sand, I believe, about what is permissible and what isn’t permissible.”

This week’s Volkswagen incident bears some similarity to one in 2018 in which Tesla’s CEO Elon Musk tweeted that he had the funding secured to take the company private — a comment that drove up the stock price, Cox noted. Later, it was revealed that the funding had not been lined up. Musk and Tesla each agreed to pay \$20 million in penalties to the SEC.

Erik Gordon, a business and law professor at the University of Michigan, said he thought that for the SEC to be interested, it would have to believe that VW knowingly issued the fake news release to manipulate its stock price.

“I don’t think the SEC is going to see this as stock price manipulation any more than when General Motors or Ford or Toyota or anybody talks about their (electric vehicle) future,” Gordon said. “It is incredibly stupid, but if being stupid were illegal, a third of the CEOs in the U.S. would be in jail.”

A message was left Tuesday seeking a comment from the SEC.

Late Tuesday, VW issued a statement confirming that it won’t be changing its brand name to “Volkswagen.”

“The renaming was designed to be an announcement in the spirit of April Fool’s Day,” the company said.

Tim Calkins, a clinical professor of marketing at Northwestern University, said April Fool’s jokes are common in marketing. But he said it’s rare for a company to deliberately mislead reporters.

“The problem is that in the short run, you can fool people, and it seems cute and entertaining,” Calkins said. “But in the long run, you really do need positive and good relations with the media. For a company

that already has credibility problems, this is really a strange move.”

Calkins said that while the incident might not hurt VW with consumers, the company needs good relations with reporters to build its brand image over time.

## **GOP governors ignore Biden’s latest plea on mask mandates**

By ANDREW SELSKY Associated Press

President Joe Biden’s pleas for states to stick with mask mandates to slow the spread of the coronavirus were being largely ignored Tuesday as several Republican governors stayed on track to drop the requirement in their states.

Biden and the director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said a day earlier that this is no time to relax safety measures.

In a call with governors on Tuesday, CDC Director Rochelle Walensky buttressed that message by citing “concerning” national trends: The seven-day average of 61,000 new COVID-19 cases per day is up 13%, and the seven-day average of deaths is up 6%.

But Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson announced Tuesday he is dropping the state’s mask mandate immediately, a day earlier than previously announced.

“We made our decision in Arkansas based upon the criteria we set,” said the Republican, who last month set targets for test positivity and hospitalizations in order for the state’s requirement to expire. “This is a goal we had. We achieved that, so we stuck with the principle that was outlined.”

The number of new reported cases in Arkansas was 79 on Monday, according to the CDC, part of a downward trend.

On the other end of the spectrum, Michigan has seen a steep rise in cases. That prompted Democratic Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer to ask whether the White House has considered surging additional vaccines to states with rapidly increasing infection rates.

Jeffrey Zeints, the White House coronavirus response coordinator, replied that officials are “thinking through how to address hot spots.” He promised to do everything to support Michigan in its “difficult situation.”

Staying the course is a “tough message” to communicate, White House press secretary Jen Psaki acknowledged.

“It’s important for people to hear that we’re still in a war with this virus, and people still need to be vigilant in order to return to normal,” Psaki told reporters Tuesday.

As more vaccines are deployed — with the nation on track to deliver 200 million doses overall by Wednesday — whether to enforce the wearing of masks has become the latest partisan focal point in the battle against the virus.

Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey intends for her state’s mask mandate to end on April 9 as planned, though she urged people to wear masks as a matter of personal responsibility.

“We have made progress, and we are moving towards personal responsibility and common sense, not endless government mandates,” said Gina Maiola, Ivey’s spokeswoman.

The Republican-controlled Arizona Senate voted Monday to rescind its mandatory mask policy, and the House speaker made the same move on his own authority.

That action comes on the heels of Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey’s move last week to lift remaining restrictions to curb the virus. The Republican’s executive order allows businesses to enforce mask mandates and distancing requirements if they want, but cities, towns and counties must lift theirs.

Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear, a Democrat, said he would appeal to his GOP counterpart in neighboring Indiana, Gov. Eric Holcomb, to reconsider dropping the state’s mask mandate.

“My hope is he hears the president’s call,” Beshear said.

Oregon has one of the country’s strictest mask requirements. Even high school athletes must wear them while running races.

Competitors in a race in Eugene, famed as a running mecca, have had to wear masks because the state

has mandated masks be worn during all practices and competitions for high school sports, the local Register Guard newspaper reported.

A handful of coaches from across the state petitioned Democratic Gov. Kate Brown and the Oregon Health Authority last month to make cross country exempt from the mask mandate. The appeal was denied.

"I've told my team to run at an effort that allows you to keep your mask on," Sheldon High School coach Ian Dobson said. "The rules are the rules. It's a horrible message to send if we say don't follow the rules.

"The other side to that — I think it's a stupid rule."

Scott Gottlieb, a former Food and Drug Administration commissioner under former President Donald Trump, said a surge of cases hitting Europe does not mean that a similar spike in infections will also happen in the U.S.

"Everything that happened in Europe eventually happened here. Now I think the tables have turned. We're ahead of Europe," Gottlieb told CNBC, citing higher immunity in the United States due to vaccinations and previous infections. He is a board member of Pfizer, which makes a COVID-19 vaccine.

Spain on Tuesday changed its mask-wearing policy to make them mandatory in all outdoor activities, including during exercise, in swimming pools or on beaches. Masks were already mandatory in all public spaces, including outdoors, when people could not maintain a distance of at least 5 feet (1.5 meters) between them.

## 'Major' pain: Biden's dog involved in 2nd biting incident

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden's younger dog Major this week was involved in his second biting incident of the month, the White House said Tuesday.

The dog "nipped someone while on a walk" on Monday, said Michael LaRosa, press secretary to first lady Jill Biden, adding that the dog "is still adjusting to his new surroundings." The individual was seen by the White House Medical Unit "out of an abundance of caution" and returned to work without injury, LaRosa added.

The dog had been seen by reporters on a walk around the White House South Lawn before the president and first lady traveled to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial early Monday evening.

The German shepherd only just returned to the White House last week, along with his sibling Champ, after causing a minor injury to an employee of the U.S. Secret Service on March 8.

After that incident, the president said Major was "a sweet dog." In an interview with ABC News, Biden explained the biting by saying that the dog had "turned a corner, there's two people he doesn't know at all, you know, and they move and moves to protect."

Biden added at the time that "85% of the people there love him."

Major, a 3-year-old rescue dog, and Champ, who is 12, were moved to the Bidens' Delaware home after the incident. The president said Major was being trained in Delaware but disputed the idea that the pup had been sent away after the incident. He said the dogs went to Wilmington because the first couple was going to be out of town.

"He was going home," Biden said. "I didn't banish him to home. Jill was going to be away for four days. I was going to be away for two, so we took him home."

The dogs met the Bidens two weekends ago at Camp David in Maryland and came back to Washington on March 21. Last week, one of the two German shepherds waited on the balcony of the White House as Marine One landed on the South Lawn, having ferried the president back from a speech in Columbus, Ohio.

"The dogs will come and go and it will not be uncommon for them to head back to Delaware on occasion as the president and first lady often do as well," said White House press secretary Jen Psaki.

This week's biting incident was first reported by CNN.

## Breonna Taylor's death: A push to limit no-knock warrants

PIPER HUDSPETH BLACKBURN Associated Press/Report for America

FRANKFORT, Ky (AP) — Kentucky's lawmakers passed a partial ban on no-knock warrants Tuesday, more

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than a year after the death of Breonna Taylor during a police raid on the Black woman's home.

The legislation now heads to Democratic Gov. Andy Beshear.

Taylor, a 26-year-old Louisville emergency medical technician studying to become a nurse, was shot multiple times in March 2020 after being roused from sleep by police at her door during a drug raid. A no-knock warrant was approved as part of a narcotics investigation. No drugs were found at her home.

The case fueled nationwide protests against police brutality and systemic racism and calls for demonstrators for a ban on no-knock warrants. When police came through the door using a battering ram, Taylor's boyfriend, Kenneth Walker, fired once.

The measure would only allow no-knock warrants to be issued if there was "clear and convincing evidence" that the "crime alleged is a crime that would qualify a person, if convicted, as a violent offender." Warrants also would have to be executed between 6 a.m. and 10 p.m.

It also would require officers to take additional steps in order to obtain warrants in the limited circumstances they are allowed. Judges also would be required to sign legibly when approving them.

The House amended the bill, including to allow regular officers in less populated counties to execute warrants if a special response team is not available.

The Senate concurred with the amended version.

Rep. John Blanton, a former state police officer who filed the floor amendment, insisted that the amendment helped rural police departments that lack the same resources and personnel as those in urban and suburban areas.

"What we don't want to do is have an emergency situation, and a rural area where a special response team may not be able to get to it in time to execute one of these," he said.

In the Taylor case, a grand jury indicted one officer on wanton endangerment charges in September for shooting into a neighbor's apartment. But no officers were charged in connection with her death. That was based in part on the presentation of Republican Attorney General Daniel Cameron, who recommended no charges against the officers who shot into Taylor's apartment.

Although police had a no-knock warrant, they said they knocked and announced their presence before entering Taylor's apartment, a claim some witnesses have disputed. No drugs were found in Taylor's apartment.

Some Democratic lawmakers said they cast their vote for the legislation reluctantly, wishing that the Republican-dominated House had advanced another proposal that sought a complete ban on no-knock warrants.

That other proposal, from Rep. Attica Scott, was brought up for discussion earlier this month in committee but was not voted on.

Rep. Reginald Meeks, a Democrat from Louisville, said that while he would have liked to vote for the bill, he felt the measure did not do enough to hold law enforcement officers accountable and prevent police brutality.

"I cannot go home and talk to my brothers and my sister and say that we've done something that's going to help save lives," he said.

If signed into law, the legislation would not interfere with Louisville's local ban on all no-knock warrants.

Three other states have prohibited the practice. Virginia passed a ban on all no-knock warrants last year. The warrants are also not permitted under Oregon and Florida state law.

## NFL owners approve 17-game regular season, 3 preseason games

By BARRY WILNER AP Pro Football Writer

The NFL is increasing the regular season to 17 games and planning to have full stadiums for those games.

While reducing the preseason to three games the league will be able to generate additional revenue, of course. America's most popular sport also will provide more content for the broadcast partners who soon will be spending a total of about \$10 billion a year on rights fees.

Team owners at a virtual meeting on Tuesday approved the 17th game as expected, marking the first



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time in 43 years the regular season has been increased. It went from 14 to 16 games in 1978.

The Super Bowl now will move back a week to Feb. 13, which places it directly in the middle of the Winter Olympics in Beijing. Coincidentally, NBC has the broadcast rights to both.

Each extra NFL game will be an interconference matchup based on where teams finished in the previous season. AFC teams will be hosting the 17th game in 2021.

Beyond next season, the league plans for some of the extra games to be played at international sites, with regular hosts London and Mexico City possibly joined by other venues.

"This is a monumental moment in NFL history," NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell said. "The CBA with the players and the recently completed media agreements provide the foundation for us to enhance the quality of the NFL experience for our fans. And one of the benefits of each team playing 17 regular-season games is the ability for us to continue to grow our game around the world."

Some players have voiced their unhappiness with the expanded regular season, but Goodell and other league executives point out that data accumulated over the past decade or so show more injuries occur in a preseason game than any other. Also as part of the labor agreement, the players now will receive 48.5% of shareable revenues with a 17th game, up from 47% last season.

This year, the AFC East will host the NFC East in Week 17, with Washington at Buffalo, the New York Giants at Miami, Dallas at New England and Philadelphia at the New York Jets.

The NFC West teams will visit AFC North clubs, with Seattle at Pittsburgh, the Los Angeles Rams at Baltimore, Arizona at Cleveland and San Francisco at Cincinnati.

NFC South members go to the AFC South, so New Orleans will be at Tennessee, Super Bowl champion Tampa Bay at Indianapolis, Carolina at Houston and Atlanta at Jacksonville.

For NFC North clubs, Green Bay goes to Kansas City for a juicy matchup of Aaron Rodgers and Patrick Mahomes, while Chicago is at Las Vegas, Minnesota at the Los Angeles Chargers and Detroit at Denver.

The full schedule will be released in May, but the Buccaneers will kick off the season on Thursday, Sept. 9. The regular season will end Jan. 9.

As for fans in the stands — 119 games, including the postseason, had some in-person attendance during the coronavirus-impacted 2020 season, with approximately 1.2 millions fans in total — Goodell sounded optimistic.

"We're discussing plans to welcome back all fans across the country at all stadiums," he said. "All of us want to see every one of our fans back. Football is not the same without fans, and we expect to have full stadiums in the upcoming season."

The Super Bowl will be played in Los Angeles at SoFi Stadium.

"We have been in constant communication with our partners about this change, and we're excited for the unprecedented opportunity of presenting the American audience with the two biggest events in media simultaneously," NBC said in a statement. "We will promote the Super Bowl during the first week of the Winter Olympics, and we'll promote the second week of the Winter Olympics during the Super Bowl. It's a win for us, our partners, advertisers, and certainly viewers."

Last season, the league added two playoff teams to increase the number of postseason games. Now, it is adding 16 more matches, or "inventory," as league executives often refer to it.

Also:

— The 32 franchises were told that organized team activities (OTAs) will begin April 19, with COVID-19 protocols in place. The early launch of OTAs afforded to teams with new head coaches has been waived this year.

Specifics on other offseason programs, including minicamps and the opening of training camps, are being discussed by the league and union.

— Dr. Allen Sills, the NFL's medical director who oversaw the COVID-19 response and protocols that helped the league play every game last season, updated the teams. Goodell said Sills and his staff are dealing "primarily in the area of education and trying to make sure not to just educate players but all our personnel on the importance of vaccinations — the fact it does help protect you from getting COVID and spreading COVID."

"We will be encouraging all personnel to get vaccinated and working with the players association on all these issues. ... We are also using our platforms publicly to talk about the importance of getting vaccinations."

The NFL doesn't plan to mandate vaccinations for players, coaches or staff members.

## Germany to restrict AstraZeneca use in under-60s over clots

By FRANK JORDANS Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — German health officials agreed Tuesday to restrict the use of AstraZeneca's coronavirus vaccine in people under 60, amid fresh concern over unusual blood clots reported in a tiny number of those who received the shots.

Health Minister Jens Spahn and state officials agreed unanimously to only give the vaccine to people aged 60 or older, unless they belong to a high-risk category for serious illness from COVID-19 and have agreed to take the vaccine despite the small risk of a serious side-effect. The same option will be available to anyone who gets the shot at their GP, which will start to become possible later this month.

"In sum it's about weighing the risk of a side effect that is statistically small, but needs to be taken seriously, and the risk of falling ill with corona," Spahn told reporters in Berlin.

The move follows the recommendations of Germany's independent vaccine expert panel and comes after the country's medical regulator released new data showing a rise in reported cases of an unusual form of blood clot in the head — known as sinus vein thrombosis — in recent recipients of the AstraZeneca vaccine.

The news is a further blow to the vaccine, which is critical to Europe's immunization campaign and a linchpin in the global strategy to get shots to poorer countries. It comes less than two weeks after the EU drug regulator said the vaccine does not increase the overall incidence of blood clots following a similar scare.

The European Medicines Agency said at the time that the benefits of vaccination outweigh the risks, but it could not rule out a link between the shot and some unusual kinds of clots, and recommended adding a warning about possible rare side-effects.

Several German regions — including the capital Berlin and the country's most populous state, North Rhine-Westphalia — had already suspended use of the shots in younger people earlier Tuesday after the country's medical regulator said its tally of the rare blood clots reported by March 29 had increased to 31. Some 2.7 million doses of AstraZeneca have been administered in Germany so far.

Nine of the people died and all but two of the cases involved women, who were aged 20 to 63, the Paul Ehrlich Institute said.

In a statement ahead of the announcement, AstraZeneca said tens of millions of people worldwide have received its vaccines, and noted that the EU regulator and the World Health Organization concluded that the benefits of the shot outweigh the risks.

The company said it would continue to work with German authorities to address any questions they might have, while also analyzing its own records to understand whether the rare blood clots reported occur more commonly "than would be expected naturally in a population of millions of people."

The suspensions come as Germany, along with other European countries, is scrambling to ramp up its vaccine program, which lags far behind those in Britain and the United States. By Monday, some 13.2 million people in the country had received at least one dose of vaccine, while nearly 4 million had received both shots.

Use of the AstraZeneca vaccine was temporarily halted in several European countries earlier this month over concerns about the rare blood clots. After a review by medical experts at the European Medicines Agency, most European Union countries, including Germany, resumed use of the vaccine on March 19.

On Monday, Canada suspended use of the AstraZeneca vaccine in people under 55, citing new concerning data from Europe.

"There is substantial uncertainty about the benefit of providing AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccines to adults under 55 given the potential risks," said Dr. Shelley Deeks, vice chair of Canada's National Advisory Committee on Immunization.

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Deeks said the updated recommendations come amid new data from Europe that suggests the risk of blood clots is now potentially as high as one in 100,000, much higher than the one-in-a-million risk believed before.

Germany's decision is likely to affect appointments made by tens of thousands of teachers and people with pre-existing conditions who received invitations to get vaccinated in Berlin in recent days. Appointments for the AstraZeneca shot were available sooner than for those made by Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna due to higher demand for those vaccines.

Scientists at the University of Greifswald, Germany, this week published the results of their investigation into the possible causes of the blood clots, saying the condition is similar to a side-effect seen in some patients who receive the blood thinning medication heparin.

The study, which hasn't been peer-reviewed yet, doesn't provide a conclusive explanation for why some people vaccinated with the AstraZeneca shot develop the rare blood clots. Still, experts not involved in the study said it offers important information to doctors.

Alice Assinger, a specialist in vascular diseases and blood clot research at the Medical University of Vienna, said there is a treatment for the rare clots.

But others warned the German decision could harm the vaccine campaign.

"If people are not vaccinated, because use of the vaccine is suspended, or because of a drop in confidence in the vaccine caused by the decision, some of them will get ill from Covid-19; and some of them will die," said Peter English, the former chairman of the British Medical Association's public health medicine committee. "Any decision to withhold the vaccine will directly cause excess, avoidable COVID-19 deaths."

Spahn acknowledged that the decision to suspend use of the vaccine for under-60s was "without doubt a setback" for the vaccination campaign, noting that Germany is due to receive 15 million AstraZeneca doses in the second quarter.

But he said the supply would now be made available to people over 60 who might otherwise have had to wait longer, reducing their risk of falling seriously ill with COVID-19.

Initially, several European countries hesitated to give the AstraZeneca shot to older people, citing a lack of data from the company about the vaccine's effectiveness in those aged 65 and over. Subsequent studies showing it works in older people prompted most countries to approve it for those age groups.

Among those who will likely be eligible for the shot soon is German Chancellor Angela Merkel.

The 66-year-old said Tuesday's decision was important for ensuring public trust in the vaccine campaign and that she would accept the shot made by the British-Swedish company.

"When it's my turn I'll allow myself to be vaccinated, including with AstraZeneca," Merkel said.

## 'Lighting a fuse': Amazon vote may spark more union pushes

By JOSEPH PISANI and BILL BARROW The Associated Press

What happens inside a warehouse in Bessemer, Alabama, could have major implications not just for the country's second-largest employer but the labor movement at large.

Organizers are pushing for some 6,000 Amazon workers there to join the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union on the promise it will lead to better working conditions, better pay and more respect. Amazon is pushing back, arguing that it already offers more than twice the minimum wage in Alabama and workers get such benefits as health care, vision and dental insurance without paying union dues.

The two sides are fully aware that it's not just the Bessemer warehouse on the line. Organizers hope what happens there will inspire thousands of workers nationwide — and not just at Amazon — to consider unionizing and revive a labor movement that has been waning for decades.

"This is lighting a fuse, which I believe is going to spark an explosion of union organizing across the country, regardless of the results," says RWDSU president Stuart Appelbaum.

The union push could spread to other parts of Amazon and threaten the company's profits, which soared 84% last year to \$21 billion. At a time when many companies were cutting jobs, Amazon was one of the few still hiring, bringing on board 500,000 people last year alone to keep up with a surge of online orders.

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Bessemer workers finished casting their votes on Monday. The counting begins on Tuesday, which could take days or longer depending on how many votes are received and how much time it takes for each side to review. The process is being overseen by the National Labor Relations Board and a majority of the votes will decide the final outcome.

What that outcome will be is anyone's guess. Appelbaum thinks workers who voted early likely rejected the union because Amazon's messaging got to them first. He says momentum changed in March as organizers talked to more workers and heard from basketball players and high-profile elected officials, including President Joe Biden.

For Amazon, which employs more than 950,000 full- and part-time workers in the U.S. and nearly 1.3 million worldwide, a union could lead to higher wages that would eat into its profits. Higher wages would also mean higher costs to get packages to shoppers' doorsteps, which may prompt Amazon to raise prices, says Erik Gordon, a professor at the University of Michigan's Ross School of Business.

In a statement, Amazon says it encouraged all its employees to vote and that "their voices will be heard in the days ahead."

Any push to unionize is considered a long shot, since labor laws tend to favor employers. Alabama itself is a "right-to-work" state, which allows workers in unionized shops to opt out of paying union dues even as they retain the benefits and job protection negotiated by the union.

Kent Wong, the director of the UCLA Labor Center, says companies in the past have closed stores, warehouses or plants after workers have voted to unionize.

"There's a history of companies going to great lengths to avoid recognizing the union," he says.

Walmart, the nation's largest retailer and biggest private employer, has successfully fought off organizing efforts over the years. In 2000, it got rid of butchers in 180 of its stores after they voted to form a union. Walmart said it cut the jobs because people preferred pre-packaged meat. Five years later, it closed a store in Canada where some 200 workers were close to winning a union contract. At the time, Walmart said demands from union negotiators made it impossible for the store to sustain itself.

The only other time Amazon came up against a union vote was in 2014, when the majority of the 30 workers at a Delaware warehouse turned it down.

This time around, Amazon has been hanging anti-union signs throughout the Bessemer warehouse, including inside bathroom stalls, and holding mandatory meetings to convince workers why the union is a bad idea, according to one worker who recently testified at a Senate hearing. It has also created a website for employees that tells them they'll have to pay \$500 in union dues a month, taking away money that could go to dinners and school supplies.

Amazon's hardball tactics extend beyond squashing union efforts. Last year, it fired a worker who organized a walkout at a New York warehouse to demand greater protection against coronavirus, saying the employee himself flouted distancing rules. When Seattle, the home of its headquarters, passed a new tax on big companies in 2018, Amazon protested by stopping construction of a new high-rise building in the city; the tax was repealed four weeks later. And in 2019, Amazon ditched plans to build a \$2.5 billion headquarters for 25,000 workers in New York after pushback from progressive politicians and unions.

Beyond Amazon is an anti-union culture that dominates the South. And unions have lost ground nationally for decades since their peak in the decades following World War II. In 1970, almost a third of the U.S. workforce belonged to a union. In 2020, that figure was 10.8%, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Private sector workers now account for less than half of the 14.3 million union members across the country.

Advocates say a victory would signal a shift in the narrative about unions, helping refute the typical arguments from companies, including Amazon, that workers can win adequate compensation and conditions by dealing with management directly.

"It is because of unions that we have a five-day work week. It is because of unions that we have safer conditions in our places of work. It is because of unions that we have benefits," says Rep. Terri Sewell, whose congressional district includes the Amazon facility. "Workers should have the right to choose whether



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they organize or not.”

Union leaders are circumspect about specific organizing plans after the Bessemer vote, and Appelbaum says he doesn't want to tip off Amazon to any future efforts. But there is broad consensus that a win would spur workers at some of the 230 other Amazon warehouses to mount a similar union campaign.

It's less clear whether any ripple effects would reach other prime targets like Walmart and the expansive auto industry that has burgeoned across the South in recent decades. Both have largely succeeded at keeping unions at bay.

The auto workers union has had some of the largest union pushes of the last decade, but their most intense and publicized efforts ended in failure. In 2017, a years-long campaign to unionize a Nissan plant in Canton, Mississippi, ended with a decisive 2,244-1,307 rejection of the union — the kind of margin that would be devastating in Bessemer. Two years later, however, Volkswagen workers in Tennessee had a much more evenly split vote, with 776 workers supporting unionization and 833 voting against it.

Besides the number of Amazon workers involved, the Alabama campaign has stood out because of how explicitly many advocates have linked the effort to the civil rights movement of the 20th century. The RWDSU estimates that more than 80% of the warehouse workers in Bessemer are Black.

Robert Korstad, a Duke Emeritus professor and labor history expert, says those dynamics could help in Bessemer.

“The history of the Black struggle in Alabama is pretty deeply entrenched in the social, political and religious institutions there,” he says. “We're starting to see people rise up again. So this Amazon struggle is part of a larger struggle that's gone on a long time.”

The question, Korstad says, is whether a win in Bessemer truly becomes a “ripple effect” that inspires workers across racial and ethnic lines elsewhere.

## SpaceX launches test rocket, breaks apart before landing

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — SpaceX chalked up another failed landing Tuesday for its futuristic, bullet-shaped Starship, as the prototype Mars rocket broke apart right before touchdown.

A camera on the rocket froze not quite six minutes into the test flight, and dense fog in South Texas obscured views of the ruptured rocket. Other video showed debris raining down and explosions could be heard.

“At least the crater is in the right place!” SpaceX chief executive Elon Musk tweeted.

Musk said “something significant” happened shortly after the engine firings for landing: “Should know what it was once we can examine the bits later today.” In addition, one of the three engines had trouble during the ascent, he noted.

This was the fourth full-scale stainless steel model to launch since December to an altitude of more than 6 miles (10 kilometers). The previous three exploded at touchdown or shortly afterward. The prototype is 164 feet (50 meters) tall.

“Another exciting test, as we say,” SpaceX launch commentator John Insprucker said as he concluded the webcast.

A newer version of the rocket has undergone hundreds of design changes, according to Musk.

“Hopefully, one of those improvements covers this problem,” he said.

SpaceX plans to use Starship to send astronauts and cargo to the moon and, ultimately, Mars. Musk said earlier this month that SpaceX will be landing Starships on Mars “well before 2030.” But he noted that “the really hard threshold is making Mars Base Alpha self-sustaining.”

Musk has named the launch and landing area at the southeastern tip of Texas, near the Mexico border, Starbase. A few hours after Tuesday's failure, he urged people to move to the area, saying on Twitter that he's looking to hire several thousand people over the next year or two — engineers, technicians, builders, workers of all sorts. He said he's also donating millions to the local school district and nearby city of Brownsville.

## Olympic gold medalist charged with child sex abuse in Utah

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — A gold medalist in sledding at the 2002 Winter Olympics has been charged with sexual abuse of a child in Utah, authorities said.

James "Jimmy" Shea made his first court appearance Monday on one count of aggravated sexual abuse of a child and two counts of sexual battery. The incidents occurred in 2020, court documents show.

Shea's attorney, Rudy Bautista, said Tuesday that the charges are a result of a family dispute and a misunderstanding about what his client contends was loving and affectionate touching.

Shea, 52, plans to plead not guilty to the charges that he thinks should be dropped, Bautista said.

The Associated Press isn't identifying the relationship of the alleged victim to Shea to protect the child's identity. In general, the AP does not identify people who say they are victims of sexual abuse.

Shea won gold in the skeleton competition at the 2002 Salt Lake Games and is a third-generation Olympian.

Skeleton involves athletes racing headfirst down the ice at about 80 mph on a sled that looks like a large lunch tray.

## WHO team urges patience after 1st look for origin of virus

By JAMEY KEATEN Associated Press

GENEVA (AP) — An international team behind a long-awaited study of the possible origins of COVID-19 with Chinese colleagues on Tuesday called it a "first start," while the United States and allies expressed concerns about the findings and China trumpeted its cooperation.

Team leader Peter Ben Embarek of the World Health Organization presented the team's first-phase look into the possible origins of the pandemic that has killed nearly 2.8 million people and pummeled economies since it first turned up in China over a year ago.

The report, obtained by The Associated Press on Monday and formally published on Tuesday, said transmission of the virus from bats to humans through another animal is the most likely scenario and that a lab leak is "extremely unlikely." The WHO chief has said all hypotheses remain open.

After the report's publication, the U.S. and over a dozen other countries expressed concerns about the study, pointing to delays and a lack of access to samples and data — without finger-pointing at Beijing directly. China responded by reiterating its criticism of efforts to "politicize" the issue.

White House press secretary Jen Psaki said the Biden administration was still reviewing the WHO report, but said "it lacks crucial data, information ... It lacks access. It lacks transparency." She said the study did not rise to the level of the impact that the pandemic has had on the world.

"That's why we also have called for additional forward-looking steps," she said in a briefing with reporters. "It doesn't lead us to any closer (an) understanding or greater knowledge than we had six to nine months ago about the origin."

Separately, in what it called a joint statement by 14 countries, the State Department said they were calling for "momentum" for a second-phase look by experts and pointed to the need for further animal studies "to find the means of introduction into humans" of the coronavirus.

The countries expressed support for the WHO's experts and staff, citing their "tireless" work toward ending the pandemic and understanding its origins to help prevent a future one. But they said the study had been "significantly delayed and lacked access to complete, original data and samples."

Psaki said China has "not been transparent" with the U.N. health agency.

Critics of China's government in Washington and beyond say it took too long to allow in the team members: Their roughly four-week visit to China in January and February came more than a year after the coronavirus outbreak was first noticed in the city of Wuhan.

The European Union, in a separate statement, echoed concerns about the late start to the study, the delayed deployment of the expert team, and the limited availability of samples and data, but called the report "a helpful first step."

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A statement on the Chinese Foreign Ministry's web site after the release pointed to China's cooperation with WHO and said the Chinese side of the team "offered necessary facilitation for the team's work, fully demonstrating its openness, transparency and responsible attitude."

It repeated China's frequent criticism of efforts to politicize the issue, saying that it will "jeopardize anti-pandemic cooperation, and cost more lives." It also reiterated the Chinese government's belief that the study of the pandemic's origins "should be conducted in multiple countries and localities."

Ben Embarek said the team members faced political pressure from "all sides," but insisted: "We were never pressured to remove critical elements in our report." He also pointed to "privacy" issues in China that prevented sharing of some data, saying similar restrictions exist in many countries.

Joined by several team members for a news conference, Ben Embarek said that "where we did not have full access to all the raw data we wanted, that has been put as a recommendation for the future studies."

That was a major theme for the WHO team: More needs to be done, and many questions remain unanswered.

"This is only a first start -- we've only scratched the surface of this very complex set of studies that need to be conducted," Ben Embarek said. "We have pointed to many additional studies that should be conducted from now on."

"This is a work in progress," he added, "and we all have to be patient."

Ben Embarek said it was difficult to know when -- if at all -- the precise origin of the pandemic will come to light. While the team members believe one hypothesis that the virus could have leaked from a laboratory was not likely, it was "not impossible" either, he said.

"We haven't seen or been able to hear or see or look at anything that would warrant different conclusions from our side," he said.

But in its report, the team proposed further research in every area except the lab leak hypothesis — a speculative theory that was promoted by former U.S. President Donald Trump among others. It also said the role played by a seafood market where human cases were first identified was uncertain.

Suspicion of China partially underpinned the theory that the virus escaped from a lab in Wuhan. The report cited several reasons for all but dismissing that possibility.

"This is a dynamic process. Nothing is cast in stone. There are no firm conclusions," Ben Embarek said. "And I think that's how we should look at the whole outcome of this report — and this work."

## Biden rolls out diverse first slate of judicial nominees

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE and JESSICA GRESKO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden on Tuesday nominated a racially diverse and overwhelmingly female group to federal and other judgeships, including three Black women for the U.S. courts of appeals, one pathway to the Supreme Court.

Biden promised as a candidate to nominate an African American woman to serve on the nation's highest court should a seat open up during his term.

With the announcement of his first slate of judicial nominees, Biden signaled his intent to counter his predecessor's reliance on white men to fill openings on the federal bench, and to appoint judges who bring a broader range of background and life experience to the role.

Several of Biden's nominees served as public defenders. One is a former military prosecutor. Nine of the 11 are women. The slate also includes a nominee for the Superior Court of the District of Columbia.

Biden's group includes candidates who, if confirmed by the U.S. Senate for lifetime federal appointments, would be the first Muslim federal judge in U.S. history, the first Asian American Pacific Islander woman to serve on the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia and the first woman of color to serve as a federal judge for the District of Maryland.

Three of the picks are Black women whom Biden wants for the federal courts of appeals, often a stepping stone to the Supreme Court. The most prominent of the trio is U.S. District Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson, whom Biden is nominating to the seat left vacant on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit by Judge

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Merrick Garland's departure to become Attorney General.

The two other Black women Biden wants for the appellate circuit are Tiffany Cunningham, 44, for the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit, based in Washington, and Candace Jackson-Akiwumi, 41, for the Chicago-based 7th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. Both are in private practice.

The D.C. Circuit, in particular, is a place where presidents have searched for Supreme Court justices. Three of the high court's current nine members have served on the D.C. Circuit.

Some liberal Democrats have urged Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer, who is 82, to retire to allow Biden to choose a possible replacement. Jackson, 50, is a graduate of Harvard Law School and previously served as a law clerk to Breyer.

Other Black women who would be front-runners if a spot on the U.S. Supreme Court were to open are California Supreme Court Justice Leandra Kruger and U.S. District Judge Michelle Childs. Childs is a favorite of Rep. James Clyburn, D-S.C., who made a crucial endorsement of Biden just before the state's presidential primary last year.

Some of Biden's candidates had been tapped for judgeships by Democratic President Barack Obama, but Republicans never allowed the full Senate to vote on them.

"This trailblazing slate of nominees draws from the very best and brightest minds of the American legal profession," Biden, a former Senate Judiciary Committee chair, said in a statement. "Each is deeply qualified and prepared to deliver justice faithfully under our Constitution and impartially to the American people — and together they represent the broad diversity of background, experience, and perspective that makes our nation strong."

The White House said Biden's choices reflect his strong belief that the federal courts should reflect the "full diversity of the American people."

Administration officials emphasized the speed with which Biden announced his first batch of nominees, stressing that the president was out of the gate with names faster than his immediate predecessors. There is good reason for Biden to move quickly on this front.

There currently are 72 judicial openings. The Senate, which must confirm the nominees, is split 50-50, with Vice President Kamala Harris called on to break some tie votes. Biden would need the Democratic caucus to stick together in support of his candidates if Republicans unite in opposition, though the administration hopes to attract GOP support for some, if not all, of the nominees.

There is no guarantee that Democrats will hold the majority after the 2022 midterm elections, meaning the White House and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., will have to be aggressive about pushing nominees through confirmation in much the same way that Trump and former Senate leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., did to get the former president's nominees confirmed.

Schumer and Senate Judiciary Committee Chair Dick Durbin, D-Ill., said the Senate will work quickly to hold hearings and confirm Biden's picks.

"America is so much better when our rich diversity is reflected in every aspect of society, especially our justice system," Schumer said.

Trump leaned heavily on white men to fill judicial vacancies. An Associated Press analysis found that over 86% of the more than 200 federal judges confirmed under Trump were white, the highest rate of white judicial appointments since George H.W. Bush's presidency.

Two-thirds of Trump's judicial appointees were white men; less than a quarter were women.

Overall, about a third of active federal judges are women, and Biden's nomination of three Black women to federal courts of appeals is particularly significant.

Currently, of the approximately 170 active judges on federal courts of appeals, only four are African American women, and all are 68 or older, according to a Federal Judicial Center database.

Sherrilyn Ifill, president and director-counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, said the organization was "gratified" that Biden is acting to diversify the federal bench.

"Such diversity will greatly enhance the judiciary and judicial decision-making," Ifill said in a statement.



## With ship now freed, a probe into Suez Canal blockage begins

By SAMY MAGDY and JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

SUEZ, Egypt (AP) — Experts boarded the massive container ship Tuesday that had blocked Egypt's vital Suez Canal and disrupted global trade for nearly a week, seeking answers to a single question that could have billions of dollars in legal repercussions: What went wrong?

As convoys of ships again began traveling through the artery linking the Mediterranean and Red Seas, a canal service provider said more than 300 vessels carrying everything from crude oil to cattle were still waiting for their turn in a process that will take days. Egyptian government officials, insurers, shippers and others similarly waited for more details about what caused the skyscraper-sized Ever Given to become wedged across the canal on March 23.

When blame gets assigned, it will likely lead to years of litigation to recoup the costs of repairing the ship, fixing the canal and reimbursing those who saw their cargo shipments disrupted. Since the vessel is owned by a Japanese firm, operated by a Taiwanese shipper, flagged in Panama and now stuck in Egypt, matters quickly become an international morass.

"This ship is a multinational conglomeration," said Capt. John Konrad, the founder and CEO of the shipping news website [gcaptain.com](http://gcaptain.com).

Experts boarded the Ever Given as it idled Tuesday in Egypt's Great Bitter Lake, just north of the site where it previously blocked the canal. A senior canal pilot, speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to talk to journalists, told The Associated Press that experts were looking for signs of damage and trying to determine why the vessel ran aground.

There could be significant damage to the the ship, Konrad warned. Stuck for days across the canal, the ship's middle rose and fell with the tide, bending up and down under the tremendous weight of some 20,000 containers across its 400-meter (quarter-mile) length. On Monday, when workers partially floated the ship, all that pressure came forward to its bow.

"Structural integrity is No. 1. You know, there was a lot of strain on that ship as it was sagging in the waterway," Konrad said. "They have to check everything for cracks and particularly that rudder and the propeller in the back that's connected to the engine room."

"And then they have to go through all the mechanical equipment, make sure they test the engines, all the safety valves, all the equipment, and then determine that it's safe to sail either by itself or with a tug escort to the next port," he added.

The ship's owner, Shoei Kisen Kaisha Ltd., said Tuesday that it would be part of the investigation along with other parties, though it did not identify them by name. It also refused to discuss possible causes of the grounding, including the ship's speed and the high winds that buffeted it during a sandstorm, saying it could not comment on an ongoing investigation. Initial reports also suggested a "blackout" struck the vessel, something denied by the ship's technical manager.

The company added that any damage to the ship was believed to be mostly on its keel. It said it was not immediately known whether the vessel will be repaired on site in Egypt or elsewhere, or whether it will eventually head to its initial destination of Rotterdam. That is a decision to be made by its operator, rather than the shipowner, the company said.

The Ever Given was seen to be stationary in the canal lake from the town of Fayed on Tuesday, still stacked with containers, with a specialist tugboat nearby. Other vessels in transit navigated around it.

The grounding of the ship had halted billions of dollars a day in maritime commerce. Analysts expect it could take at least another 10 days to clear the backlog — though Egypt's president said Tuesday it would take just three. The losses to shippers, as well as any physical damage to the vessel itself, likely will see lawsuits.

Shoei Kisen Kaisha Ltd. is covered with some \$3 billion in liability insurance through 13 Protection & Indemnity Clubs. Those clubs are not-for-profit mutual insurers used by the vast majority of global shipping firms.

Global legal firm Clyde and Co. said the Ever Given's owner likely would pay Egypt's canal authority for

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the assistance already rendered to the vessel. The authority also could fine the Ever Given.

"We anticipate a detailed investigation will follow which will determine the cause," the firm said. "Evidently the cause will impact upon the legal liabilities of the ship and cargo interests."

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi traveled Tuesday to the canalside city of Ismailia to praise those who freed the vessel.

Speaking to a small group of reporters on a dock overlooking the waterway, el-Sissi deflected questions about the investigation, saying Egypt would not interfere in a probe that will be left to "the specialists."

"We want to confirm to all the world, that things are back to as they were," he added. He stood before a sign that said: "Welcome to the Suez Canal: Egypt's lifeline of peace, prosperity and development."

On Monday, a flotilla of tugboats helped by the tides, wrenched the bulbous bow of Ever Given from the canal's sandy bank, where it had been firmly lodged. The tugs blared their horns in jubilation as they guided the Ever Given through the water after days of futility that had captivated the world, drawing scrutiny and social media ridicule.

The Ever Given had crashed into a bank of a single-lane stretch of the canal about 6 kilometers (3.7 miles) north of the southern entrance, near the city of Suez. That forced some ships to take the long, alternate route around the Cape of Good Hope at Africa's southern tip — a 5,000-kilometer (3,100-mile) detour that costs ships hundreds of thousands of dollars in fuel and other costs.

The unprecedented shutdown, which raised fears of extended delays, goods shortages and rising costs for consumers, added to strain on the shipping industry already under pressure from the coronavirus pandemic.

## States struggle to get rent relief to tenants amid pandemic

By MICHAEL CASEY Associated Press

Gov. Andrew Cuomo announced last July that New York would spend \$100 million in federal coronavirus relief to help cash-strapped tenants pay months of back rent and avert evictions.

By the end of October, the state had doled out only about \$40 million, reaching 15,000 of the nearly 100,000 people looking for help. More than 57,000 applicants were denied because of criteria set by lawmakers that many said was difficult to meet.

New York's experience played out nationwide, with states failing to spend tens of millions of federal dollars aimed at helping renters avoid eviction. Burdensome requirements, poorly administered programs and landlords refusing to cooperate meant tens of thousands of tenants never got assistance. Some states also shifted funding away from rental relief, fearing they'd miss a year-end mandate to spend the money — a deadline that got extended.

The problem, housing advocates said, was that the federal government didn't specifically earmark any of the coronavirus aid for rental relief, leaving states scrambling to set up programs with no guidance on how the money should be allocated. As much as \$3.43 billion in federal aid was spent on rental assistance, according to National Low Income Housing Coalition. But advocates said more should have been done, given tenants faced as much as \$34 billion in unpaid rent through January, according to a report released by the National Council of State Housing Agencies.

States' rental relief programs "were a very mixed success. It was sort of a patchwork of programs," Maryland Democratic Sen. Chris Van Hollen said in February. "There was a lot of experimentation — some successful, some not."

Several states have since made changes, hoping to be better positioned to handle their portion of more than \$45 billion in rental assistance coming from Congress in the coming months.

Last year, Pennsylvania, Louisiana, Mississippi and Kansas were among the states that struggled to distribute rental assistance. Kansas set aside \$35 million but siphoned off \$15 million for other uses, realizing only on Dec. 27 that it had more time to spend the money.

Mississippi allocated \$18 million for rental relief but committed less than \$3 million by December. The state said the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development determined the grant program it relied on could not help tenants behind on rent, only those at risk of homelessness. A HUD spokesman denied

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that, saying the money could be used for rental aid.

In New York, difficulties were blamed on lawmakers' criteria, including that tenants show they were paying over 30% of their income toward rent. Applicants also had to show a loss of income from April to the end of July, when some saw an increase from extended unemployment and other benefits.

"When you have \$100 million to help and only 40% is spent, something is wrong. There is no question there are a lot of people in need," Justin La Mort, a supervising attorney at Mobilization for Justice Inc., a nonprofit legal services provider in New York.

He said the program was too focused on preventing fraud — at the expense of helping people.

Bonney Ginett, whose massage therapy business dried up during the pandemic, applied for help in July and said she was denied in October because she failed to prove loss of income. The 66-year-old New York City resident now owes more than \$26,000 in back rent on her one-bedroom apartment and fears eviction.

"It's a well-meaning program and probably should and ought to be fixed, but it's hard to say because of how much overload their system experienced and might still be experiencing," Ginett said. "The types of relief that could help me are supposedly there. But then you run into a brick wall."

Lennard Katz, her landlord and a partner at Sussex Realty, said he didn't understand how Ginett couldn't get help.

"We believe it's a travesty that NY State has been unable or unwilling to get money to the tenants and landlords that desperately need assistance during the Covid crisis," he said by email.

Charni Sochet, a spokesperson for New York State Homes and Community Renewal, said the affordable housing agency "worked intensely for months to ensure rent-burdened households received the assistance for which they qualified" and that "the rent relief program quickly delivered funding to renters most in need in accordance with the specific requirements established by the Legislature."

Pennsylvania had similar problems, spending \$54 million on rental assistance and \$10 million on mortgage assistance, out of nearly \$175 million dedicated for the program. Just over one-third of applicants got help.

Facing the Republican-controlled Legislature's Nov. 30 deadline to spend the money, the state Housing Finance Authority returned the bulk of it. Some of it went to the corrections department.

"There were a lot of sort of roadblocks put up for people to really effectively and easily get into the program, get the assistance and stay in their homes," said Bryce Maretzki, director of the housing authority's Office of Strategic Planning & Policy.

Perhaps the biggest problem was a \$750 monthly cap. That's below the median rent in Pennsylvania, making it inadequate in bigger cities with higher housing prices.

Applicants also had to be 30 days behind on rent, which Maretzki said meant someone might fall behind to qualify, only to "run the risk of losing your house and then not qualifying for the program."

"There were many tenants who didn't think the money would come in time, so they moved in with a family or doubled up or found less suitable housing because they didn't think they could make the next month's rent," said Rachel Garland, an attorney at Community Legal Services in Philadelphia.

In Louisiana, \$24 million in assistance for renters facing pandemic-related financial problems was announced July 16, with about half coming from federal funding.

Just \$2.3 million has been distributed to 956 applicants, said Keith Cunningham of the Louisiana Housing Corporation, the agency administering the effort. The program was so swamped with inquiries, the online system shut down within days. And there was a lengthy application.

"Do you think the person who is reaching out to you has a fax machine or solid enough internet or a printer in their house to handle a 50-page application?" said Andreanecia Morris of the Greater New Orleans Housing Alliance.

Cunningham said the program's size was daunting, made more challenging by a busy tropical storm season.

"No one in the state has done anything on that scope," he said. "There was no infrastructure, no system to deliver. ... We had to really build it from scratch."

Yaeko Scott, who lost her housekeeping job during the pandemic and owes \$6,000 in rent on her family's two-bedroom apartment in New Orleans, said she's repeatedly tried to get help.

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"I'm aggravated," she said. "Nothing is being done. Everyone is calling asking about the rent. I'm not getting anything. It's really, really rough right now."

Some states have made changes with new federal aid coming.

In Louisiana, roughly 7,000 applicants who were initially considered will get priority for \$161 million, Cunningham said.

Pennsylvania fixed its \$750 rental cap by reinterpreting the law and said a different agency would handle the new funding.

New York expanded the program's eligibility and will reconsider applicants who were initially denied.

## Less than half of Americans are members of houses of worship

By BOB SMIETANA Religion News Service

(RNS) — Ask Americans if they believe in God and most will say yes. But a growing number have lost faith in organized religion.

For the first time since the late 1930s, fewer than half of Americans say they belong to a church, synagogue or mosque, according to a new report from Gallup.

Forty-seven percent of Americans now say they belong to a house of worship, down from 70% in the mid-1990s and 50% in 2019. The decline is part of a continued drop in membership over the past 20 years, according to Gallup data.

The polling giant has been measuring church membership since 1937 when nearly three-quarters of the population (73%) reported membership in a house of worship. For much of that time, membership remained at about 70% but began to decline after 1999. By the late 2000s, membership had dropped to about 62% and has continued to fall.

Pollsters at Gallup looked at survey data from more than 6,000 Americans and compared data from 2018 to 2020 with two other time frames: 2008 to 2020 and 1998 to 2000.

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The decline in membership coincides with the rise of the so-called "Nones" — those who claim no religious affiliation. Gallup reports about one in five Americans (21%) is a None — making them as large a group as evangelicals or Catholics. Other polls put the number at closer to 30%.

Few Nones belong to a house of worship, Gallup found.

"As would be expected, Americans without a religious preference are highly unlikely to belong to a church, synagogue or mosque, although a small proportion — 4% in the 2018-2020 (survey) — say they do," the report from Gallup states. "That figure is down from 10% between 1998 and 2000."

Gallup also found a decline in membership at churches, synagogues and mosques among religious Americans, who make up about 76% of the population. In the time frame from 1998 to 2000, about three-quarters (73%) of religious Americans were members of a house of worship. That number has fallen to 60%.

Younger Americans are increasingly disconnected from organized religion, according to the report from Gallup. But the number of older Americans who are members of a house of worship has also declined in recent years.

In the time from 2008 to 2010, 73% of "traditionalists" — Gallup's term for Americans born before 1945, were church members. That number has dropped to 66% in 2018 to 2020. Membership among Baby Boomers dropped from 63% to 58% during that same time frame, as did membership among Generation X (57% to 50%) and millennials (51% to 36%).

The gap between those who believe in a specific religion and those who participate in the life of a specific congregation is likely to prove a challenge for houses of worship. And the decline in church membership is likely to continue, according to Gallup.

"Churches are only as strong as their membership and are dependent on their members for financial support and service to keep operating," said the report. "Because it is unlikely that people who do not



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have a religious preference will become church members, the challenge for church leaders is to encourage those who do affiliate with a specific faith to become formal, and active, church members."

RELATED: White Christian American built a social safety net. What happens when it is gone?

Measuring church membership and religious affiliation remains a challenge for researchers. From 1850 to 1950, the U.S. Census Bureau collected data on religious congregations in the United States and from 1906 to 1936 published a "Census of Religious Bodies."

"The Census of Religious Bodies was conducted every 10 years until 1946," Pew Research noted in a 2010 article on religion and the Census. "The 1936 Census of Religious Bodies was the last one published, however, because the U.S. Congress failed to appropriate money either to tabulate or to publish the information collected in the 1946 census. By 1956, Congress had discontinued the funding for this census altogether."

RELATED: The Nones are growing - and becoming more diverse

Statisticians from more than 230 religious denominations and other religious bodies also compiled membership statistics for the 2010 U.S. Religion Census: Religious Congregations & Membership Study. That study, which includes county by county data, found religious organizations claimed just under half (48.7) of the United States population as adherents. Similar reports have been compiled every 10 years since 1980.

## Ariana Grande joining 'The Voice' for season 21 as a coach

By The Associated Press undefined

NEW YORK (AP) — "The Voice" is switching their positions for Ariana Grande: the pop star is taking her seat in the coach's chair later this year.

NBC said Tuesday that Grande will join the Emmy-winning series for its fall 2021 cycle.

Grande will be joined by Blake Shelton, Kelly Clarkson and John Legend. The 20th season of "The Voice" is currently on air and features those three singers along with Nick Jonas.

"I'm so honored and excited to join 'The Voice' family! I have been a huge fan of the show for such a long time. I can't wait to go head-to-head with the incredible coaches, get to know these new artists and help to take their craft to the next level," Grande said in a statement.

The Grammy-winning star has topped the Billboard charts since she released her debut album in 2013. Her hits include "Positions," "Thank U, Next" "No Tears Left to Cry," "Side to Side," "Problem" and "The Way."

"The Voice" debuted in 2011 with Shelton, Christina Aguilera, Adam Levine and CeeLo Green as coaches. Others who have worked as coaches on the show over the years include Pharrell Williams, Shakira, Usher, Alicia Keys and Gwen Stefani.

## French virus surge raises harrowing specter of ICU overloads

By JOHN LEICESTER, SYLVIE CORBET and ANGELA CHARLTON Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — When French President Emmanuel Macron holds his coronavirus strategy meeting this week, some of the figures at his disposal from overburdened hospitals will show why doctors are bracing for the possibility of unprecedented misery from rampaging infections.

Internal projections by the Paris public hospitals authority, some of which were seen by The Associated Press, suggest that intensive care units in the region of 12 million people may soon have to find space for more critically ill patients than ever. Nationwide, the number of ICU patients has already eclipsed the levels of France's last deadly surge in autumn.

Increasingly, hospital indicators suggest that this new surge risks becoming the worst one yet, raising the pressure on Macron to reverse course and lock down the country once again, as he did in October and November.

At Bichat Hospital, one of Paris' biggest, Dr. Aurelie Gouel's job of finding space for surgeries in its rabbit-warren of operating rooms is getting harder. Her phone rings constantly with requests for increasingly squeezed resources. Half of the ORs have been shut down this week to free up staff and space for COVID-19 care, Gouel said.

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"The hospital isn't big enough to absorb the people who are sick," she said Tuesday. "We're under pressure to open extra beds but can't do that with health care workers who are exhausted."

Less-urgent procedures like hip replacements are being postponed. "Even if the patient is in pain, and I understand that being in pain is a real problem, they will have to wait," Gouel said.

Outside the capital, ICU wards are also at the bursting point. Virus patients occupy all 16 regular ICU beds at the main hospital in Amiens, where Macron was born and schooled. Ten more temporary ICU beds set up this month in a pediatric wing for non-COVID-19 patients are mostly also full.

Dr. Michel Slama, the ICU deputy head, said Tuesday that at the current rate of admissions, and without stricter virus control measures, his hospital could soon be facing its worst battle with the virus to date.

"See that slope? See how sharp it is?" he said, pointing to a chart of virus infections and hospitalizations in northern France, including the Amiens region.

In the ICU, relatives circled in silence around the bed of a 60-year-old man close to death.

The French situation echoes the recent experience of Britain, which saw infections surge in December as a more contagious virus variant took hold, before then spreading in France and elsewhere in Europe. But where British Prime Minister Boris Johnson responded by locking his country down again, Macron has instead pursued a strategy of trying to contain infections with softer measures and to outrun them with vaccinations.

An overnight nationwide curfew has been in place since January. In Paris and other regions where the virus is spreading rapidly, residents also have extra restrictions on movement and nonessential stores are closed.

Doctors want even stricter controls, warning that surging infections could soon overwhelm their ability to care for the sick and force them to choose which patients they have resources to save. French ICUs had to make room for another 569 new patients on Tuesday, pushing the nationwide total beyond 5,000 for the first time in 11 months.

When Macron and his ministers and aides meet Wednesday, closing schools will be up for discussion. That's an option his government has described as a last resort and resisted since a switch to online teaching in France's first lockdown in 2020 proved particularly damaging for underprivileged kids and contributed to an explosion of child mental health issues.

The government says it wants to avoid reaching the point where ICU doctors have to turn patients away. "The absolute red line is triaging of the sick," the economy minister, Bruno Le Maire, said Tuesday.

But doctors say the red line is rushing closer. The Paris hospital authority projections seen by AP point alarmingly upward. They forecast that by Friday, the region's ICUs could have nearly 2,000 patients in care, up from 1,525 on Tuesday. That is beyond the peak of 1,138 patients that Paris-region ICUs absorbed in the last surge that forced France's lockdown that lasted until mid-December.

Other longer-term projections are darker still, pointing to unprecedented potential peaks of more than 3,400, or even 4,400 ICU patients in the Paris region by mid- to late April, said a hospital crisis director who has seen the forecasts and who spoke about them on condition of anonymity because they were internal. The director said the mere thought of so many gravely ill people to care for — which would be way beyond what Paris hospitals absorbed when the virus first hit in 2020 — was mind-boggling.

Other doctors say hospitals won't turn critically ill patients away but won't be able to offer their best care.

"Regardless of whatever political decision is taken, we are heading for the wall," Gilles Pialoux, the head of infectious diseases at the Tenon Hospital in Paris, said Tuesday on France Inter radio,

"The care on offer will be degraded, degraded for everyone, COVID and non-COVID alike," he said. "To the point, if we let it keep climbing, that we'll be in a situation like Lombardy (Italy), where families will understand that patients are going to die on gurneys. That is what we want to avoid."

## Two space fans get seats on billionaire's private flight

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — A billionaire's private SpaceX flight filled its two remaining seats Tuesday

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with a scientist-teacher and a data engineer whose college friend actually won a spot but gave him the prize.

The new passengers: Sian Proctor, a community college educator in Tempe, Arizona, and Chris Sembroski, a former Air Force missileman from Everett, Washington. They will join flight sponsor Jared Isaacman and another passenger for three days in orbit this fall.

Isaacman also revealed some details about his Inspiration4 mission, as the four gathered Tuesday at NASA's Kennedy Space Center. He's head of Shift4 Payments, a credit card-processing company in Allentown, Pennsylvania, and is paying for what would be SpaceX's first private flight while raising money for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis, Tennessee.

Their SpaceX Dragon capsule — currently parked at the International Space Station for NASA — will launch no earlier than mid-September, aiming for an altitude of 335 miles (540 kilometers). That's 75 miles (120 kilometers) higher than the International Space Station and on a level with the Hubble Space Telescope.

The capsule will be outfitted with a domed window in place of the usual space station docking mechanism for their trip.

Isaacman, 38, a pilot who will serve as spacecraft commander, still won't say how much he's paying. He's donating \$100 million to St. Jude, while donors so far have contributed \$13 million, primarily through the lottery that offered a chance to fly in space.

Hayley Arceneaux, 29, was named to the crew a month ago. The St. Jude physician assistant was treated there as a child for bone cancer.

That left two capsule seats open. Proctor, 51, beat out 200 businesses and nabbed the seat reserved for a customer of Isaacman's company. An independent panel of judges chose her space art website dubbed Space2inspire.

"It was like when Harry Potter found out he was a wizard, a little bit of shock and awe," Proctor told The Associated Press last week. "It's like, 'I'm the winner?'"

Sembroski, 41, donated and entered the lottery but wasn't picked in the random drawing earlier this month — his friend was. His friend declined to fly for personal reasons and offered the spot to Sembroski, who worked as a Space Camp counselor in college and volunteered for space advocacy groups.

"Just finding out that I'm going to space was an incredible, strange, surreal event," he said.

He's about to start a new job at Lockheed Martin and admits it will be a balancing act over the next six months, as the crew trains.

Isaacman insists they won't cut any corners as they prepare for launch.

"You don't go up on Everest, right, after just a hike in the backyard. You build your way to it," he told reporters.

Proctor, who studied geology, applied three times to NASA's astronaut corps, coming close in 2009, and took part in simulated Mars missions in Hawaii. She was born in Guam, where her late father — a "Hidden Figure" in her mind — worked at NASA's tracking station for the Apollo moonshots, including Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin's.

She plans to teach from space and create art up there, too.

"To me, everything that I've done ... has brought me to this moment."

## Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, March 31, the 90th day of 2021. There are 275 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On March 31, 1931, Notre Dame college football coach Knute Rockne (noot RAHK'-nee), 43, was killed in the crash of a TWA plane in Bazaar, Kan.

On this date:

In 1814, Paris was occupied by a coalition of Russian, Prussian and Austrian forces; the surrender of the French capital forced the abdication of Emperor Napoleon.

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In 1917, the United States took formal possession of the Virgin Islands from Denmark.

In 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Emergency Conservation Work Act, which created the Civilian Conservation Corps.

In 1943, "Oklahoma!," the first musical play by Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II, opened on Broadway.

In 1968, at the conclusion of a nationally broadcast address on Vietnam, President Lyndon B. Johnson stunned listeners by declaring, "I shall not seek, and I will not accept, the nomination of my party for another term as your President."

In 1976, the New Jersey Supreme Court ruled that Karen Ann Quinlan, a young woman in a persistent vegetative state, could be disconnected from her respirator. (Quinlan, who remained unconscious, died in 1985.)

In 1991, the Warsaw Pact military alliance came to an end.

In 1995, Mexican-American singer Selena Quintanilla-Perez, 23, was shot to death in Corpus Christi, Texas, by the founder of her fan club, Yolanda Saldivar, who was convicted of murder and sentenced to life in prison.

In 2004, four American civilian contractors were killed in Fallujah, Iraq; frenzied crowds dragged the burned, mutilated bodies and strung two of them from a bridge.

In 2005, Terri Schiavo (SHY'-voh), 41, died at a hospice in Pinellas Park, Florida, 13 days after her feeding tube was removed in a wrenching right-to-die court fight.

In 2009, Benjamin Netanyahu took office as Israel's new prime minister after the Knesset approved his government.

In 2019, rapper Nipsey Hussle was fatally shot outside the clothing store he had founded to help rebuild his troubled South Los Angeles neighborhood; he was 33. Former Vice President Joe Biden defended his interactions with women; saying he didn't believe he had ever acted inappropriately.

Ten years ago: Moammar Gadhafi struck a defiant stance after two high-profile defections from his regime, saying the Western leaders who had decimated his military with airstrikes should resign immediately — not him. (Gadhafi's message was in the form of a scroll across the bottom of state TV as he remained out of sight.)

Five years ago: An overpass collapsed onto a crowded Kolkata, India, neighborhood, killing 26 people. A man who was convicted of fatally beating another man to death after a night of drinking and drug use in 1994 was put to death in Georgia. A 34-year-old Illinois man fatally shot a Virginia state trooper at a busy bus terminal in Richmond before being killed by other troopers. A Maryland man accused of fatally beating his girlfriend's 9-year-old son over a missing piece of birthday cake pleaded guilty to second-degree murder and was sentenced to 30 years in prison.

One year ago: The White House released new projections that the number of coronavirus deaths in the U.S. could range from 100,000 to 240,000 even if current social distancing guidelines were maintained. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said President Donald Trump's impeachment trial had distracted the federal government from the coronavirus as it reached the United States in January. CNN's Chris Cuomo anchored his CNN show from the basement of his home after testing positive for the coronavirus. A temporary hospital in a New York City convention center began accepting patients. Britain's Prince Harry and his wife Meghan officially stepped down from duties as members of the royal family. Stocks finished the first quarter of 2020 with a decline of 20%, the market's worst quarter since the 2008 financial crisis. NFL owners voted to expand the number of playoff teams by one in each conference in the 2020 season.

Today's Birthdays: Actor William Daniels is 94. Actor Richard Chamberlain is 87. Actor Shirley Jones is 87. Musician Herb Alpert is 86. Sen. Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., is 81. Former U.S. Rep. Barney Frank, D-Mass., is 81. Actor Christopher Walken is 78. Comedian Gabe Kaplan is 77. Sen. Angus King, I-Maine, is 77. Rock musician Mick Ralphs (Bad Company; Mott the Hoople) is 77. Former Vice President Al Gore is 74. Author David Eisenhower is 73. Actor Rhea Perlman is 73. Actor Robbie Coltrane is 71. Actor Ed Marinaro is 71. Rock musician Angus Young (AC/DC) is 66. Actor Marc McClure is 64. Actor William McNamara is 56. Alt-