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*“Why do you look for the living among the dead?
He is not here.
He has risen!”*



OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

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United Methodist Church

Groton and Conde

Sunday, April 4, 2021 (Easter Sunday)

Conde: 9 a.m.

Groton, 11 a.m.

Tuesday, April 6, 2021

Bible Study 10:00 AM

Missions Meeting 7:00 PM

Sunday, April 11, 2021

Conde Worship 9:00 AM

Sunday School 10:00 AM

Groton Worship 11:00 AM

Emmanuel Lutheran Church

Groton

Sunday, April 4 (Easter Sunday)

7 a.m.: Sunrise service w/ Communion

9 a.m. & 11 a.m. Service W / Communion

Monday, April 5

6:30 a.m.: Bible Study

Wednesday, April 7

5 p.m.: Sarah Circle

6 p.m.: Confirmation

Thursday, April 8

2 p.m.: Nigeria Circle

Sunday, April 11

9 a.m.: Worship

Milestones: Kindergarten

Jr Kindergarten

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton &

St. Joseph Catholic

Groton and Turton

Sunday, April 4, 2021 (Easter Sunday)

8:30 a.m.: Mass at SEAS, Groton

11 a.m.: Mass at St. Joseph, Turton

Weekend Mass Schedule

Saturday 4:30pm Groton

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

Weekday

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

Sat 10am Newman Center

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament

Each morning before Weekday Mass at 7:15am

Tues 3:45pm Turton

Confessions:

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

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

St. John's Lutheran Church

Groton

Sunday, April 4, 2021 (Easter Sunday)

7:30 a.m.: Worship at Zion Lutheran, Andover

9 a.m.: Worship at St. John's Lutheran, Groton

Tuesday, April 6, 2021

Ladies Aid LWML, 1 p.m.

Wednesday, April 7, 2021

Confirmation, 4 p.m.

Sunday, April 11, 2021

Bible Study, 8 a.m.

St. John's Worship, 9 a.m.

Heaven Bound Ministries

Pierpont

Buffalo Lake Lutheran

Rural Eden

Sunday, April 4: Worship at Buffalo Lake 10:30 a.m.

Saturday, April 10: Worship at Pierpont, 5:30 p.m.

Sunday, April 11: Worship at Buffalo Lake 10:30 a.m.

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

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Medical marijuana in Oklahoma: 'A mess' or a potential model for South Dakota?

Bart Pfankuch

South Dakota News Watch



Traci Wolfe, right, owner of Classen Apothecare in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma talks to customer Mary McAninch about which strains are better suited to treat anxiety. McAninch uses medical marijuana to treat chronic pain from a nerve condition, arthritis and anxiety. Photo: Courtesy

of Oklahoma Watch

As South Dakota moves forward on creating a regulatory system for medical marijuana by the end of 2021, some people have looked to Oklahoma for guidance on how — or how not to — develop a functioning framework.

Oklahoma voters approved the legal sale, possession and use of medical marijuana on a statewide ballot measure in June 2018. The measure required rapid implementation of a regulatory framework, providing only about 10 weeks to prepare for legal sales compared with an average of more than a year in most states.

Since then, the state has taken a free-market approach to certification of marijuana-related businesses and has one of the least restrictive physician-certification processes for patients who want to obtain medical pot.

At a press conference in mid-March, South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem said Oklahoma was the only state to put a medical marijuana program in place

faster than required by South Dakota Initiated Measure 26, which takes effect July 1 and has deadlines for creation of a regulatory framework by the Department of Health by Oct. 29, 2021, and issuance of medical marijuana cards to patients by Nov. 18, 2021.

Noem, who opposes legal marijuana in any form, said the resulting program in Oklahoma is "a mess." Noem pushed for a one-year delay in implementation of the South Dakota medical program but was rebuffed by the state Legislature.

Noem spokesman Ian Fury responded to an email from South Dakota News Watch seeking clarification of the governor's views by providing only a link to a June 2020 news report by Oklahoma Watch, a nonprofit news organization. That article begins, "Welcome to the Wild West of weed," and goes on to examine how fast Oklahoma started and has since expanded its medical marijuana program. Asked for further specifics

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of Noem's concerns about Oklahoma's program, Fury failed to respond.

Some experts in Oklahoma say the program there has been a great success because it has embraced the wishes of voters by making medical marijuana widely available to those who need it and obtain a physician's approval to get it.

"The main goal was to legalize access for medical marijuana patients and provide them an abundant source of medicine, and 1,000 percent that has been a success," said Chip Paul, a business owner who played a lead role in writing the state's regulatory framework for medical pot.

Most states that have approved medical marijuana, including South Dakota, North Dakota, Minnesota and Montana, have a list of medical conditions that a patient must be diagnosed with before becoming certified to obtain medical marijuana. One significant area where Oklahoma stands apart in the U.S. is that patients do not have to suffer from any specific illness or condition; they must only get a doctor's certification that the marijuana will help them in some way.

Oklahoma has also seen the rise of a cottage industry of physicians who make themselves readily available to approve medical marijuana cards for patients, including through virtual visits that can be arranged online. For a time, doctors were diagnosing patients from the same buildings as marijuana dispensaries, though that practice has been banned.

Recent data from the Oklahoma program reveal that the raw number and per-capita rates of certified patients and number of dispensaries dwarf the patient-and-dispensary totals from other Great Plains states where medical marijuana is legal.

As of March 5, 2021, Oklahoma had more than 381,000 patients or caregivers who are legally able to obtain and use medical marijuana, making up about 9.5% of the state's overall population of 4 million people. The state had about 2,150 medical marijuana dispensaries on that date.

North Dakota has eight dispensaries and about 5,000 certified patients in its medical marijuana program, and Minnesota has 13 dispensaries and about 45,000 patients. Both states have certified less than 1% of their populations to obtain medical marijuana; Montana has 355 dispensaries and about 42,000 certified patients, a patient rate of about 4% of its overall population.

Paul, who led the Oklahomans for Health group that authored and promoted the medical marijuana initiative in Oklahoma, acknowledged there have been some bumps in the road to creating a sensible regulatory framework in the state. But Paul said that overall, the program has been effective in providing medical marijuana to those who want or need it to reduce pain or anxiety, ease suffering from illness or reduce symptoms of psychiatric conditions such as PTSD.

Paul noted that 57% of voters approved medical marijuana in 2018 but that subsequent surveys have shown that 70% of Oklahomans support legalization (69.92% of South Dakota voters in November 2020 approved IM 26).

Paul said he disagrees with criticism that Oklahoma's medical marijuana is so loosely regulated as to become a de facto recreational program.

"It might look recreational, but it is for people who have a medical need and who are motivated enough



Medical marijuana dispensaries have opened across the state of Oklahoma, including at this storefront location in Oklahoma City. Photo: Courtesy Oklahoma Watch

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Medical marijuana in Oklahoma is relatively affordable, even with a sales and excise tax added to each purchase. Photo: Courtesy Oklahoma Watch

to get on the radar of a medical doctor," said Paul, president of the firm GnuPharma. "It's not like you can go in a dispensary, show your ID and get marijuana; you still have to have a medical card."

He added that states that require patients to have certain qualifying medical conditions before obtaining medical marijuana are blocking many patients who really need it.

"Those limited conditions restrict your medical program to a very small percentage of your population, whereas Oklahoma's medical program is open to 100% of the population," he said.

Paul said he was not surprised by opposition to medical marijuana from elected officials. "It's interesting that the legal-marijuana issue is one of the biggest disconnects between the people who really want it and how the people who lead us interpret that," he said.

South Dakota state Rep. Mike Derby, a leader of the legislative Cannabis Caucus, said he appreciates

that Oklahoma has provided a level of "social equity" to its program by creating business opportunities for entrepreneurs and small-business owners across the state.

"The sales and licensing and distribution are not controlled by just a few big companies; instead they provide entrepreneurs a chance to participate in this industry," said Derby, R-Rapid City. However, Derby added that South Dakota should not use too much of Oklahoma's medical marijuana program as a model for its own.

Oklahoma has almost 11,000 businesses licensed to operate in the medical pot market, and the industry generated a total of \$831 million in sales in 2020, up from \$345 million in 2019. With a 7% excise tax and sales tax of 5%, medical marijuana sales generated \$127.8 million in combined taxes in 2020, an increase of 133% over the \$54.8 million generated in 2019.

States tax medical marijuana differently, with most charging only sales taxes; South Dakota's medical marijuana sales as proposed would not be subject to sales or excise taxes.

Terri Watkins, spokeswoman for the Oklahoma Medical Marijuana Authority within the state Department of Health, said the state was forced to rush to implement its medical marijuana program but has done its best to accommodate the needs of medical patients and businesses and individuals in the industry. OMMA was created as a separate division of the health department solely to manage the state medical marijuana program.

"I would certainly not say we're a mess," Watkins said, noting that the state recently created a seed-to-sale tracking program and has a lab-testing program to monitor potency and safety of medical marijuana. "We had some challenges implementing a program in about two months, and that made it difficult, but now there are a lot of things coming into play two and half years later that we're looking to improve on."

Dr. Jean Hausheer, an ophthalmologist in Lawton, Okla., was president of the Oklahoma Medical Association when medical marijuana passed and has remained active in the association's effort to improve the medical marijuana program in the state.

Hausheer called the Oklahoma program a "free-for-all" that has made it too easy for patients to get medical marijuana and has in many ways become essentially a recreational adult-use marijuana program.



Jean Hausheer

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Hausheer said she had concerns about several negative health aspects of overprescribing of medical marijuana, including the propensity for motorists to drive while high; the potential for harm to unborn children of marijuana users; and a lack of safety regulations on the production, packaging and sale of marijuana products.

he said the medical community successfully lobbied for a 60-day license that allows for temporary medical marijuana use; initially all licenses held by patients were valid for two years.

Oklahoma physicians are also now able to request a license revocation if necessary; safety labeling on products is more clear and better prevents child misuse; and smokable products are now subject to the same public-use laws as tobacco products. The association also tried to require that a pharmacist be on site when marijuana is dispensed and to increase training requirements of employees who dispense marijuana.

Hausheer, who helped form a statewide group called "Keep the Medical in Medical Marijuana," says she is troubled by how quickly and widely medical marijuana has been made available in the state, including across rural Oklahoma.

"Your worst fear is that it's going to show up in every inch of your state, and it has really, it has overtaken things," she said.

Hausheer and others in the medical association continue to push for greater influence in the regulation of medical marijuana in Oklahoma.

"I'm not an anti-pot person ... for the right circumstance or situation, I get it," Hausheer said. "But I don't like how this was one size fits all, free-for-all. People have just gone to this because they don't know what else to do, rather than seeking help for medical conditions where good therapeutic or medical approaches haven't been tried or they don't know they exist."

Dr. Benjamin Krasne said patients are generally aware of how marijuana can help them. Krasne is the founder and owner of DigiDrs.com, an online physician-referral service that aids potential medical marijuana patients in finding a doctor to diagnose them in Oklahoma and three other states. The site offers a service in which virtual consultations are free and patients pay a \$109 fee only if a medical marijuana card is issued.

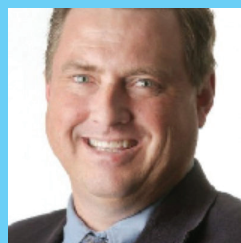
Krasne said he looks at the heavy regulation of medical marijuana as being similar to Prohibition, a mostly failed experiment to stop Americans from drinking alcohol. He said people who are suffering should be given a simple way to access any medication that they and a doctor feel can help them, including marijuana.

"I don't see how you can stand in its way," Krasne said. "People want this for relief."

South Dakota's proposed medical marijuana legislation allows an adult 21 or over, or a younger person with parental permission, to qualify for a medical marijuana card if a doctor diagnoses them with a "debilitating medical condition, a chronic or debilitating disease or medical condition or its treatment." Those conditions must produce one or more of the following: cachexia or wasting syndrome; severe, debilitating pain; severe nausea; seizures; or severe and persistent muscle spasms, including those characteristic of multiple sclerosis; or any other medical condition or its treatment added by the [health] department."

South Dakota voters approved a constitutional amendment in November that would have legalized recreational marijuana use by adults starting July 1, 2021, but that measure was overturned by a circuit judge and is now likely to be decided by the state Supreme Court.

ABOUT BART PFANKUCH



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

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THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE

Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice, for the Lord has done marvelous things!

Do not be afraid, you beasts of the field; for the open pastures are springing up, and the tree bears its fruit; The fig tree and the vine yield their strength.

❧ JOEL 2: 21,22 ❧



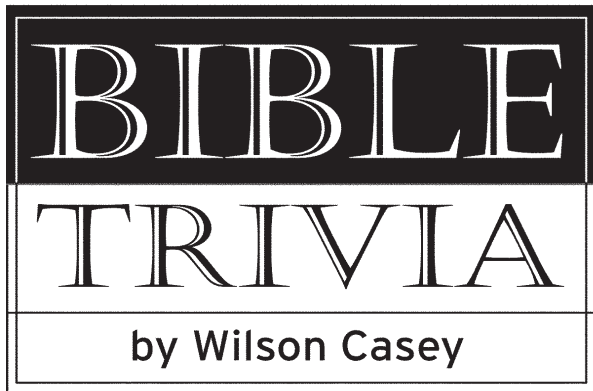
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TRUMP ERA



BIDEN ERA



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

2. From 1 Kings 11, what was the number of wives and princesses, along with 300 concubines of King Solomon? 3, 50, 100, 700

3. When he had a vision, who said "Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean"? Adam, Reuben, Samson, Peter

4. From Acts 7, who was the first person martyred for his belief in Jesus Christ? Apollos, John the Baptist, Jehu, Stephen

5. When he met King Abimelech, Abraham pretended that Sarah was his ...?

Mother, Neighbor, Sister, Daughter

6. Besides Jonah, what other prophet ministered in Nineveh? Nathan, Paul, Nahum, Philip

ANSWERS: 1) Old; 2) 700; 3) Peter; 4) Stephen; 5) Sister; 6) Nahum

"Test Your Bible Knowledge," a book with 1,206 multiple-choice questions by columnist Wilson Casey, is available in bookstores and online.

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Peanut Butter Kisses Muffins

You'll get more than your share of hugs and kisses from everyone who finds these goodies tucked inside their lunch bags or waiting for them at the breakfast table!

1 1/2 cups reduced-fat biscuit baking mix
Sugar substitute to equal 1/4 cup sugar, suitable for baking
1/2 cup fat-free milk
1/3 cup no-fat sour cream
6 tablespoons reduced-fat peanut butter
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/4 cup mini chocolate chips

1. Preheat oven to 350 F. Spray 8 wells of a 12-hole muffin pan with butter-flavored cooking spray, or line with paper liners.

2. In a large bowl, combine baking mix and sugar substitute. Add milk, sour cream, peanut butter and vanilla extract. Mix well just to combine. Fold in chocolate chips.

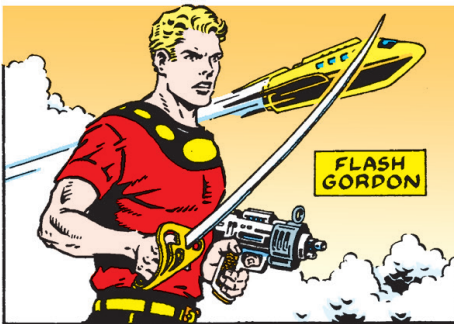
3. Evenly spoon batter into prepared muffin wells. Bake for 20 to 25 minutes or until golden brown. Place muffin pan on a wire rack and let set for 5 minutes. Remove muffins from pan and continue cooling on wire rack. Makes 8 servings.

* Each serving equals: 183 calories, 7g fat, 5g protein, 25g carbs., 339mg sodium, 1g fiber; Diabetic Exchanges: 1 1/2 Starch, 1/2 Meat, 1/2 Fat.

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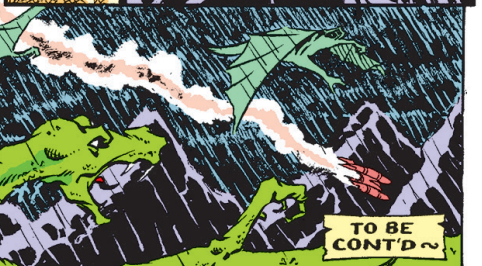
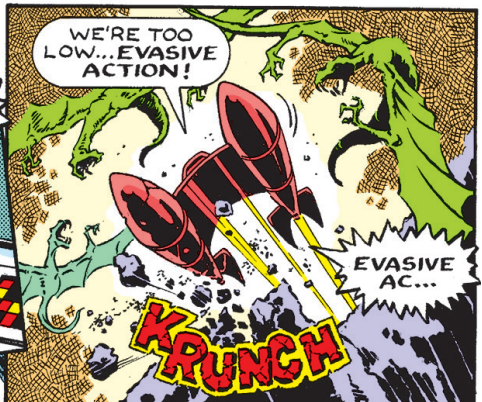


FLASH GORDON

By JIM KEEFE

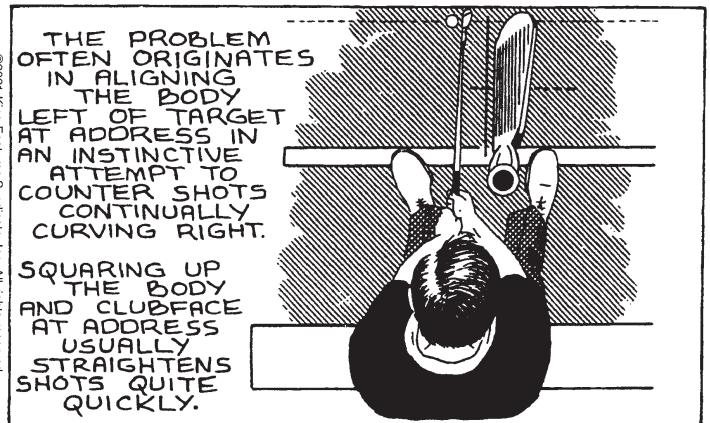
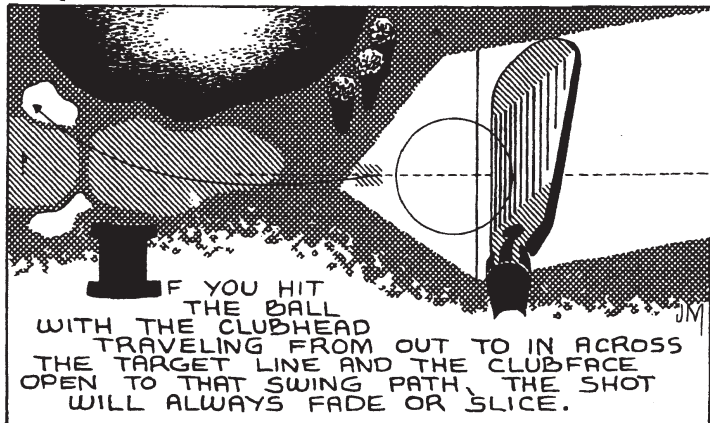
3-28 Pencils: BRIAN BILTER

AN ARBORIAN SHIP FALLS PREY TO A ROGUE STORM.



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Play Better Golf with JACK NICKLAUS



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TB Test Recommended Only for Those at Risk

DEAR DR. ROACH: I am a nursing student in my 30s and originally from the Philippines. As part of my testing, I had a skin test for tuberculosis, which was positive. I had a friend in the hospital recently with tuberculosis. My doctor has recommended that I get treated for latent tuberculosis. What does this mean? -- A.C.S.

ANSWER: Most people who are exposed to tuberculosis will not develop the disease. Some people will develop "latent" infection. This means there is active tuberculosis bacteria in their body, but their system is keeping it from becoming a full-blown infection. People in this situation are at risk of

the latent tuberculosis escaping the immune system and developing into tuberculosis. Treatment of the latent tuberculosis is intended to reduce the risk of this happening.

Testing is recommended only for people who are likely to be treated. You have two reasons to be tested: First, as a health care worker -- congratulations on becoming a nurse, we need you! -- you are at risk of acquiring tuberculosis infection and should be screened. Second, people born in the Philippines are at risk for having acquired tuberculosis, often in childhood.

People in their 30s are generally at very low risk of serious side effects from the medications used to treat latent tuberculosis infection. Isoniazid (INH) and rifampin are the medicines commonly used. Since the risk of developing disease later in life is much higher than the risk of a serious side effect, treatment is recommended in your case.

DEAR DR. ROACH: I'm an 85-year-old woman with no major health problems. I lead an active life and exercise daily. About four years ago, I began being bothered by cold feet at night. At first, I could just wear socks to bed. Now I must put my feet in an electric heated pouch in my bed, which doesn't stay in place. When I travel, I take the heated insoles skiers use to keep their feet warm. Without some device, I'm kept awake by a feeling of icy soles. I am not diabetic. I've described the problem to a neurologist, a rheumatologist and my primary caregiver. No one has explained what causes the icy feet or if there's any cure. Is there one? -- J.S.

ANSWER: There are quite a few possible causes for your cold feet, and your doctors need to first identify why they are cold. To do this, they should start by checking the blood flow to the feet. At age 85, the likelihood of blockages to the arteries in your feet are pretty high. A simple test can make the diagnosis. Since blockages in the feet predict blockages in the heart too, it's important to know. Treatment can improve symptoms as well as reduce risk of a heart attack.

Severe anemia and low thyroid levels can cause very cold feet. Nerve damage is common in diabetes and unusual without it, but a neurologist should have found physical findings for neurologic causes.

Raynaud's syndrome, which usually happens in the hands, occasionally affects the feet preferentially to the hands. Medicines, especially beta blockers, can cause cold feet.

Sometimes there isn't a known cause, and physicians are left advising on treatments to relieve symptoms. I wouldn't give up before a circulation test, however.

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



April may not be the classic time of the year to talk about road trips, which are typically a summer affair. But it should be, especially now. With a little luck and a bit of self-control, we should see our lives returned to a semblance of normal by late summer. Even those who have been hunkered down in their homes will be able to get out and see the sights. What better time than now to plan a road trip? Getting in the car and jumping on the highway can give you a sense of purpose and freedom, making it a terrific setting for movies. There's no limit to the reasons for hitting the road. Here are just a few to rev your engine.

Almost Famous — Patrick Fugit plays William, who spends an unforgettable 1973 summer chronicling the band Stillwater for Rolling Stone magazine.

Easy Rider — The 1969 classic features Dennis Hopper and Peter Fonda as two hippies on motorcycles who head from California to Mardi Gras, exploring the good and bad of life along the way.

Joy Ride — A college freshman, his alluring love interest and a ne'er-do-well older brother prank a trucker and are treated to pavement pounding payback.

Magic Mike XXL — Channing Tatum returns to the stage, joining his best friends on a road trip that has the boys sexy-dancing all the way to a stripper convention in Myrtle Beach.

The Cannonball Run — Cross-country shenanigans ensue when contestants race from Connecticut to California in an "outlaw road race" to see who is the fastest.

True Romance — Two fated misfits — an Elvis fanatic named Clarence and a call girl named Alabama — fall in love and escape from Detroit to LA with a duffel bag of drugs to finance their future.



Universal Pictures/Disney

Scene from "The Muppet Movie"

Zombieland — It's the end of the world, and four survivors and unlikely adventure-mates traverse a zombie-infested America while in search of and studiously avoiding humanity.

Please Stand By — A young autistic woman (Dakota Fanning) obsessed with "Star Trek" travels to Los Angeles to turn in a script in order to win a contest after she misses the mail-in deadline.

The Muppet Movie — The delightful 1979 origin story of the Muppets, this film features Kermit the Frog, who heads to Hollywood to seek fame and fortune, encountering and collecting his soulmate pals along the way.

Over the Top — Long-haul trucker Lincoln Hawk (Sylvester Stallone) struggles to bond with and protect his son while heading to the World Arm-wrestling Championship in Las Vegas.

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1. Who released "This Old Heart of Mine"?
2. Which group wrote and released "If You Leave Me Now"?
3. What is Madonna's 1986 "Papa Don't Preach" about?
4. Which group released "Crush on You" in 1986?
5. Name the song that contains this lyric: "Bus driver, please look for me 'cause I couldn't bear to see what I might see."

Answers

1. The Isley Brothers, in 1969. The song also was featured in a "Moonlighting" TV episode in 1980, and was on the soundtrack.

2. Chicago, in 1976. The song topped the charts around the world, including in Canada, France, Aus-

tralia and South Africa.

3. The song is about a teenage girl having to tell her father she's pregnant. The song caused a problem with the Vatican. It didn't help that Madonna dedicated the song to a pope.

4. The Jets. The group was eight kids from the same family.

5. "Tie a Yellow Ribbon Round the Ole Oak Tree," by Tony Orlando and Dawn in 1973. In the song, a prisoner is finally released and goes home. He asked for a yellow ribbon to be put on a tree if he's still welcome.

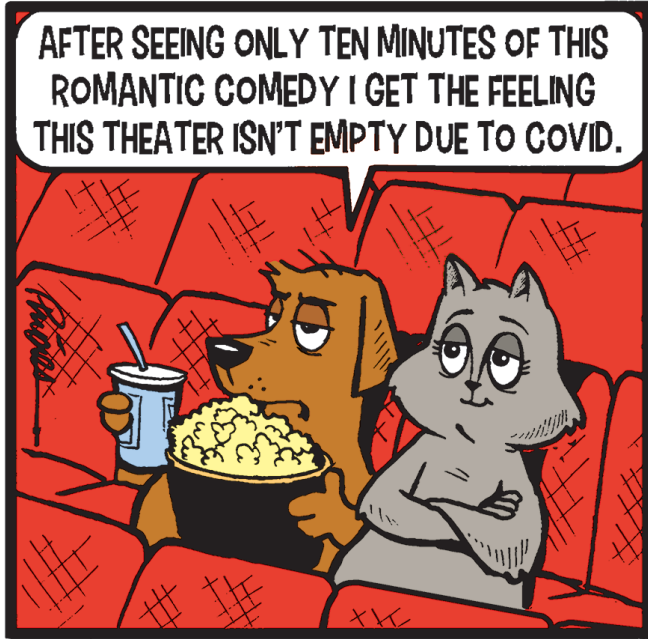
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Just Like Cats & Dogs

by Dave T. Phipps



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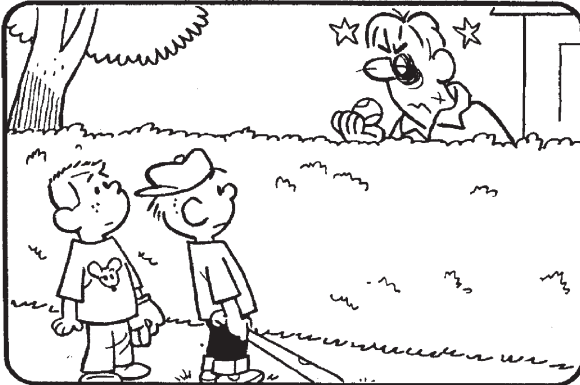
GRIN and BEAR IT ^{by Wagner}



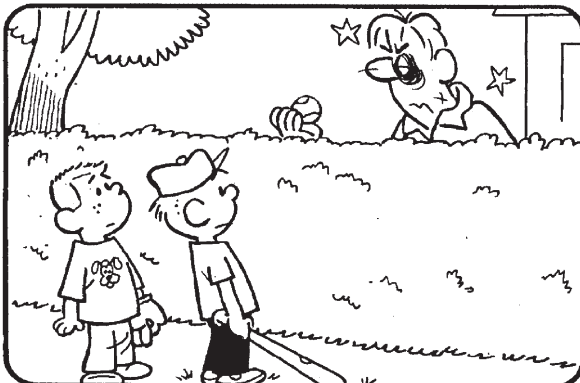
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HOCUS-FOCUS

BY HENRY BOLTIKOFF



FIND AT LEAST 6 DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PANELS.



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Differences: Cap is reversed. 2. Star is moved. 3. Sleeve is shorter. 4. Hand is moved. 5. Cuffs are missing. 6. Shirt is different.

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- Trying to spot roof damage but not quite sure you're ready for a trip up the ladder? Before you get up on the roof, get out your binoculars. You'd be surprised how much you can see from the ground, and you can do a cursory examination and then decide if anything needs a closer look.

- Upcycle an unused bread box as a charging station. Simply mount a power strip in the back of the box on the inside, and you can put phones and other small devices directly inside to charge. Run a cord through the side so that larger tablets can sit on top of the box to charge.

- “Use lip balm to help a too-tight ring slide off of a finger. This happened to me when I tried on my sister's ring in church. I had some lip balm in my pocket, and it helped me

get the ring off quickly and quietly without having to get up.” — A.E. in Washington

- If your phone's buzzing and ringing with alerts has you distracted during your workday, use the “do not disturb” function to create periods of quiet. Schedule blocks of deep focus time by making an appointment with yourself in your calendar. This can help you to organize your time to get things done.

- Using cold water for laundering protects colors and uses less energy.

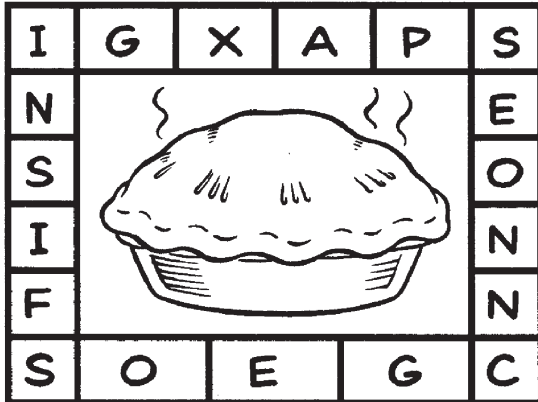
- If you have some sticky gum that's stuck on fabric, it might be best to set it aside and wait for it to harden. Or if you can't wait that long, try using a piece of duct tape. Press the tape over the gum, then lift off from the side. You can repeat this process to pull up all of the gum.

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

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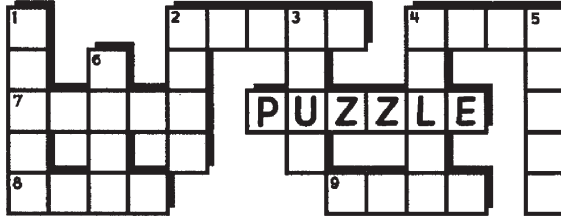
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Junior Whirl

by Charles Barry Townsend

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TOY STORE PUZZLE

PICTURED at left is a crossword puzzle grid with one of the words filled in.

FRAMED! Hidden in the above frame of letters is the first line of a famous nursery rhyme. You can find it by reading every other letter in the frame as you read around it clockwise. The trick is to find the correct letter to start with. The picture is a clue.

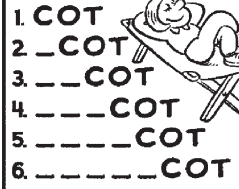
Answer: Starting at "S" in the lower left-hand corner, read: "Sing a song of sixpence..."

A NUTTY CHALLENGE! Tell your friends that you have in your hand something that no one on earth has ever seen, and that after you show it to them no one will ever see it again. When they fail to figure out what you're holding, open your hand and show them a peanut shell. Open the shell and show them the peanuts inside. No one has ever seen them before. Now pop them into your mouth and chew them up. No one will ever see them again!



WAKE UP! No sleeping on this one. In this puzzle, all of the words get progressively longer, and they all end in COT. Use the following definitions:

1. COT (in place).
2. Native of Glasgow.
3. A broad scarf.
4. Symbol of a sports team.
5. A yellow-orange fruit.
6. Paneling on walls.



1. COT
2. _COT
3. __COT
4. ___COT
5. ____COT
6. _____COT

Answers: 1. Cot. 2. Scot. 3. Ascot. 4. Mascot. 5. Apricot. 6. Wainscot.

Below are the words that you'll need to finish the puzzle. The items are all things that you might buy in a toy store. See if you can fill in the puzzle before the store closes in 10 minutes.

4-letter words

BOAT
DART
DRUM
MASK
NETS
SLED

5-letter words

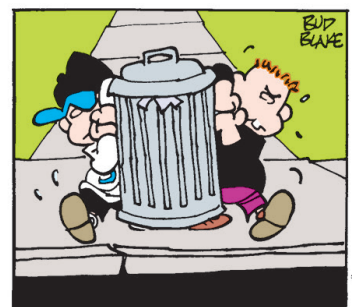
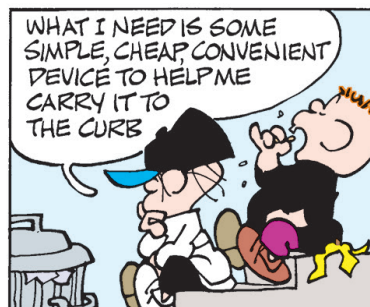
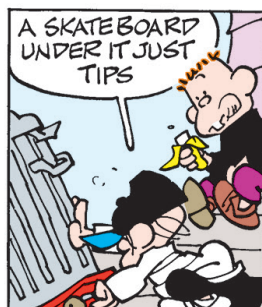
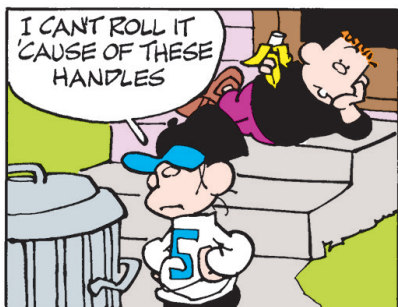
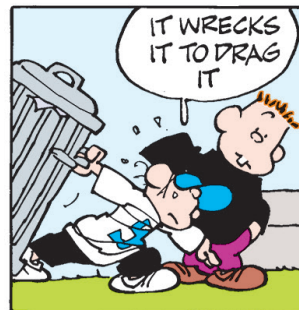
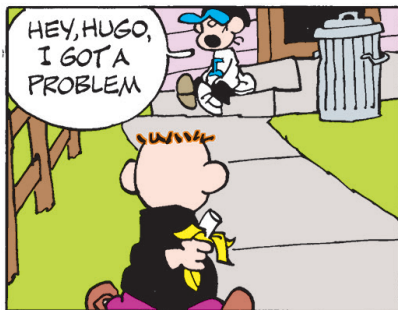
DOLLS
GLOVE
SLIDE
TRAIN
WAGON

Illustrated by David Coulson

Answers: (Across) 2. Slide. 4. Dart. 7. Glove. 8. Nets. 9. Mask. (Down) 1. Wagon. 2. Sled. 3. Drum. 4. Dolls. 5. Train. 6. Boat.

TIGER

by BUD BLAKE



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King Crossword

ACROSS

- 1 Zilch
- 5 Male swan
- 8 "Ditto"
- 12 Mideast air-line
- 13 Glacial
- 14 "Let's go!"
- 15 Pattern
- 17 Help a hood
- 18 Old photo tint
- 19 Walks with pride
- 21 Yuletide tune
- 24 Archipelago unit (Abbr.)
- 25 Verifiable
- 28 Carton sealer
- 30 Mimic
- 33 Hostel
- 34 Goes belly up
- 35 Water tester
- 36 "Acid"
- 37 French 101 verb
- 38 Quick look
- 39 Online address
- 41 Ump's call
- 43 Steak choices
- 46 Toy bricks
- 50 Actor McGregor
- 51 Intensify
- 54 Damon of Hollywood
- 55 Essen exclamation
- 56 Grand tale

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

- 57 On the briny
- 58 Fish story
- 59 Take five
- 9 Walk
- 10 Champagne brand
- 11 Tolkien creatures
- 16 Thai language
- 20 Cravats
- 22 Coup d' —
- 23 Hideaways
- 25 Up to
- 26 ER workers
- 27 Move in waves
- 29 Entreaty
- 31 "The Raven" writer
- 32 "A mouse!"
- 34 Fedora fabric
- 38 Kitchen gadget
- 40 Oscar de la —
- 42 Ga. neighbor
- 43 Disaster aid org.
- 44 "As — saying ..."
- 45 Barking critter
- 47 Be slack-jawed
- 48 Elevator name
- 49 Faction
- 52 High school subj.
- 53 "Evita" role

DOWN

- 1 Tennis barriers
- 2 Sheltered
- 3 Slightly wet
- 4 Skiing style
- 5 Spy org.
- 6 Halloween mo.
- 7 Tournament passes
- 8 Surgery reminders

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— King Crossword —

Answers

Solution time: 24 mins.

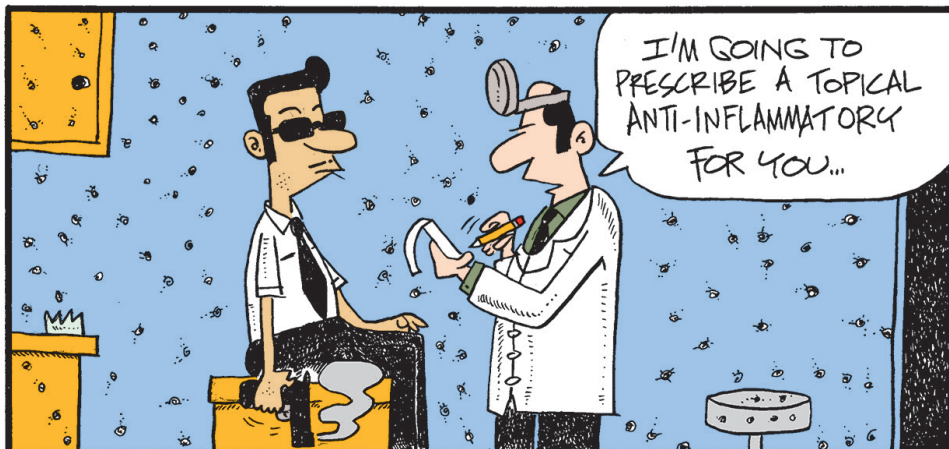
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S	E	P	I	A		S	T	R	U	T	S	
		N	O	E	L		I	S	L			
T	R	U	E		T	A	P	E		A	P	E
I	N	N		F	A	I	L	S		T	O	E
L	S	D		E	T	R	E		P	E	E	K
		U	R	L		S	A	F	E			
F	I	L	E	T	S		L	E	G	O	S	
E	W	A	N		E	S	C	A	L	A	T	E
M	A	T	T		A	C	H		E	P	I	C
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LAFF - A - DAY



"Once upon a time..."

Out on a Limb



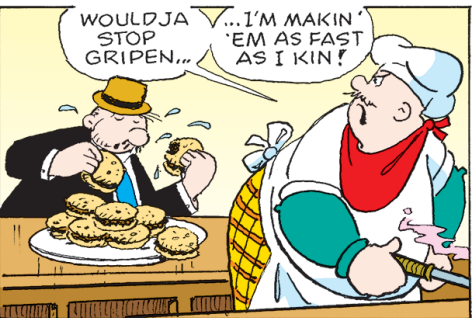
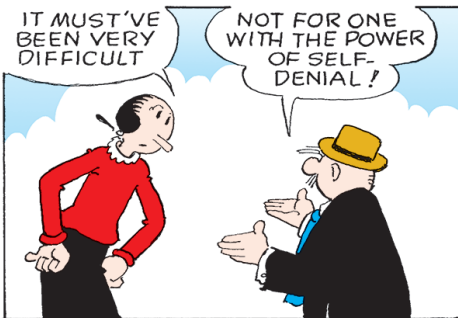
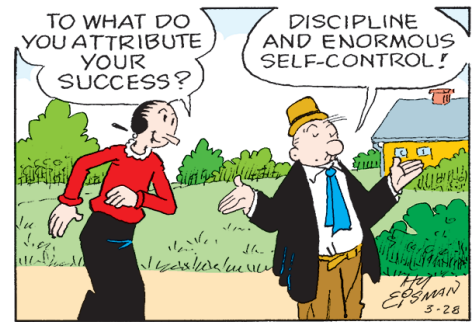
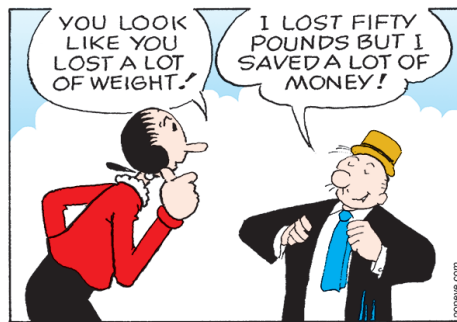
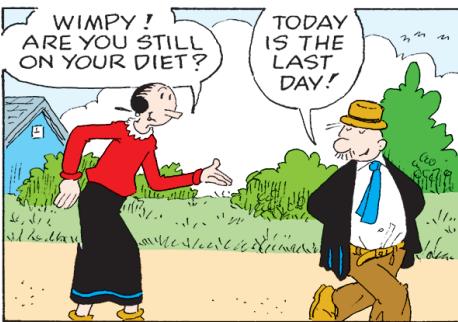
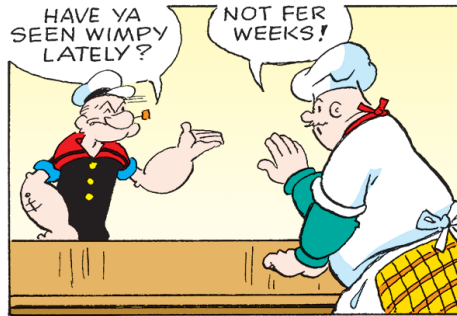
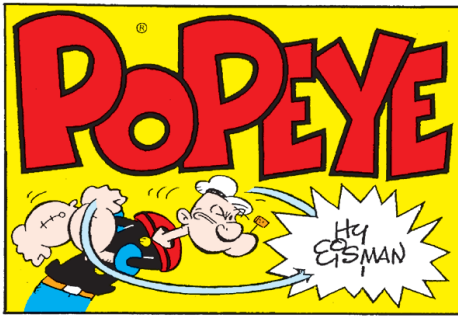
by Gary Kopervas

BIG SAL'S ITCHY TRIGGER FINGER FLARES UP AGAIN.

KOPERVAS

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R.F.D.

by Mike Marland



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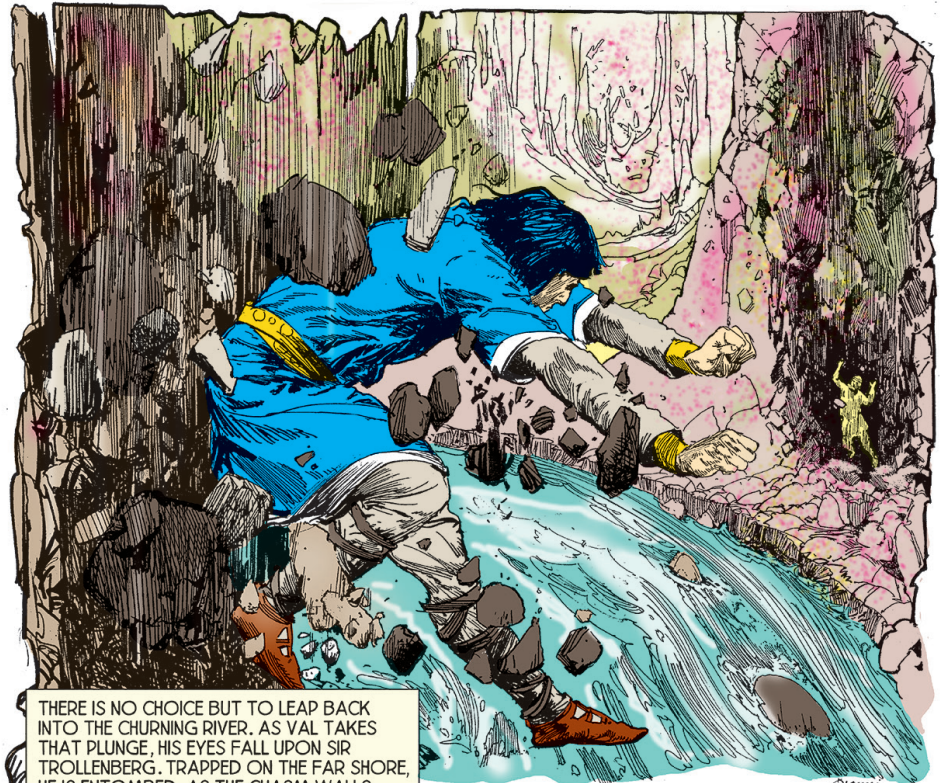
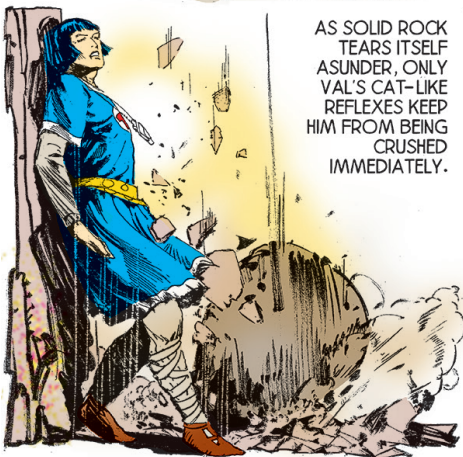
Hal Foster's
Prince Valiant BY GIANNI AND SCHULTZ

Our Story:

EARTHQUAKE! LOST DEEP IN THE BOWELS OF THE EARTH, SEPARATED FROM HIS COMPANIONS, VAL FACES THE GREATEST HORROR OF ALL ...



AS SOLID ROCK TEARS ITSELF ASUNDER, ONLY VAL'S CAT-LIKE REFLEXES KEEP HIM FROM BEING CRUSHED IMMEDIATELY.



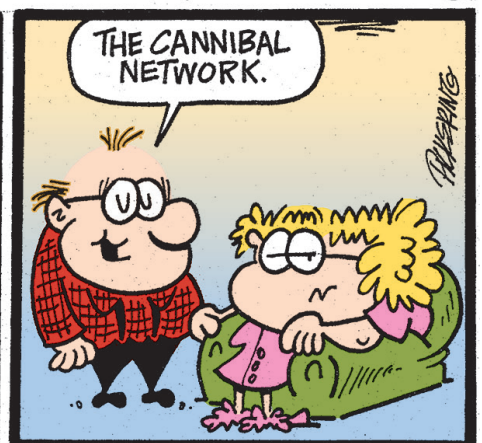
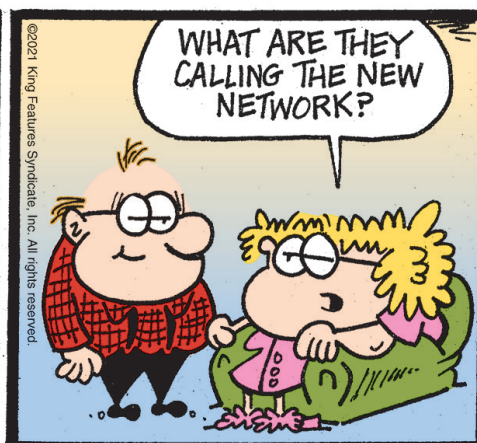
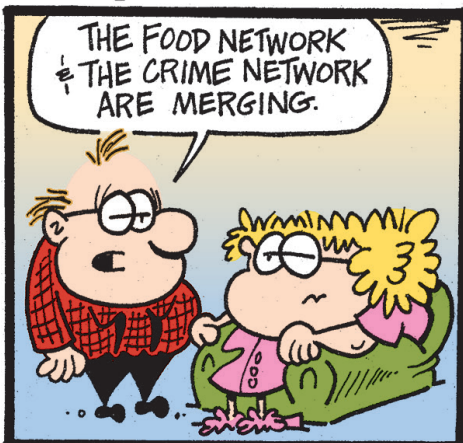
THERE IS NO CHOICE BUT TO LEAP BACK INTO THE CHURNING RIVER. AS VAL TAKES THAT PLUNGE, HIS EYES FALL UPON SIR TROLLENBERG. TRAPPED ON THE FAR SHORE, HE IS ENTOMBED, AS THE CHASM WALLS COLLAPSE ON TOP OF HIM!

NEXT: Swept away

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The Spats

by Jeff Pickering



SENIOR NEWS LINE

by Matilda Charles

Vaccinated? COVID Advice Clear as Mud

If you're confused about COVID vaccine and when our lives are going to change for the better, you're not alone.

We're considered to be fully vaccinated once two weeks have passed after the second dose of Pfizer or Moderna vaccines, or two weeks after the one-dose Johnson & Johnson.

What's new is this, per the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: If fully vaccinated, you can be indoors with other fully vaccinated people without wearing a mask. You can meet indoors with unvaccinated people in one household unless one of those people has a health risk. If you've been around someone who has COVID, you don't have to stay away from people or get tested unless you have symptoms ... or live in a group setting. In that case, stay away from others for 14 days and get tested, even if you don't have symptoms.

Clear as mud, right?

It gets worse. According to the CDC, as fabulous as this new vaccine is, even

if fully vaccinated, we still need to wear masks in public. We still need to social distance. We still need to avoid medium and large crowds. We still need to stay out of poorly ventilated spaces. We should delay travel.

So what's the holdup? Why are we still under restrictions after getting the vaccine? The best I can figure out is that the answer lies with the COVID variants, the different versions created as the virus mutates. It appears that not all of the vaccines work equally well on all of the variants. Frankly, some of the vaccines work rather poorly, depending on which variant it encounters.

Until scientists figure this out, we still need to be cautious: wear masks, stay away from people, stay out of crowds. Except for getting the vaccine, not much has changed.

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1. What baseball executive served as president of the American League from 1974-83?

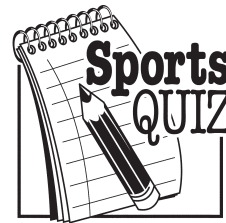
2. Name the NFL running back who repeatedly said "I'm just here so I don't get fined" at a Super Bowl XLIX media-day press conference.

3. Brazilian footballer Manuel Francisco dos Santos, famous for his spectacular dribbling, was better known by what nickname?

4. On June 30, 1970, the Atlanta Braves' Hank Aaron hit the first home run in the history of what stadium?

5. What boxing writer and sports historian, known for his signature fedora and cigar, was editor and publisher of "The Ring" magazine from 1979-83?

6. What sport, originating in Spain in 2005, combines volleyball, soccer and gymnastics with music, and is played on an inflatable court with



by Ryan A. Berenz

trampolines on both sides of the net?

7. Mexico's premier motorsports track is named after two brothers who both died in auto-racing incidents nine years apart. Who are they?

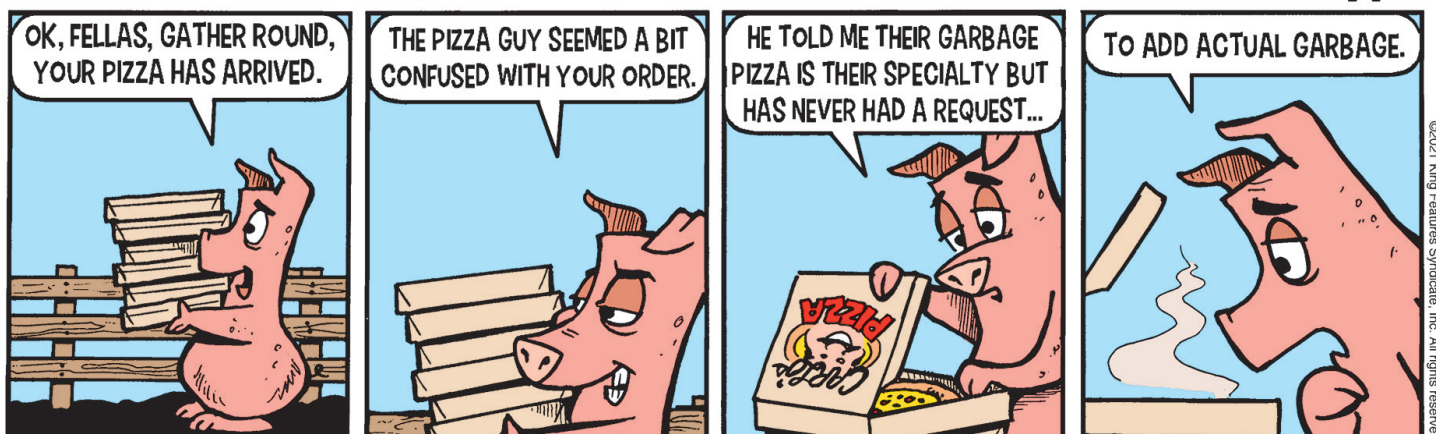
Answers

1. Lee MacPhail.
2. Marshawn Lynch, Seattle Seahawks.
3. Garrincha.
4. Cincinnati's Riverfront Stadium.
5. Bert Sugar.
6. Bossaball.
7. Pedro and Ricardo Rodriguez.

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Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps





Outdoor Cats Risk More Than Disease

DEAR PAW'S CORNER: Your recent answer on whether cats can get COVID-19 is correct: There is very little data, and only a few recorded cases, of house pets testing positive for this coronavirus. So the risk of pets getting ill from it may be low, but I think that a much higher risk for cats is when they're allowed to roam outside. Not only can they be exposed to feline diseases like FIV, but the critters they catch, like small lizards and songbirds, may also carry diseases. For example, many songbirds carry salmonella, a bacterial infection that can be fatal to cats. — *Greg, via email*

DEAR GREG: That's absolutely right, as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention mentions on its website (www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/COVID-19 and Animals). Thank you

for pointing this out.

I've written frequently about the risks faced by cats that are allowed to roam outdoors — from being struck by vehicles to being attacked by feral cats or other wildlife, like coyotes. Outdoor cats also are direct threats to other wildlife. I'm sure most cat owners are familiar with the 2013 study published in *Smithsonian Magazine* that estimated about 2.4 billion birds and around 12.3 billion small animals are killed by outdoor cats each year.

While feral cats certainly are part of the problem, we can at least keep our housecats from contributing to the massive number of small critters killed each year.

Folks, keep your cats indoors. If you've got a cat that insists on being outside, find a compromise: perhaps a screened enclosure in the backyard or a window seat, so your cat can watch the world go by. Bolstering bird populations and reducing the risk of transmitted diseases is worth it.

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

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Strange BUT TRUE

By Lucie Winborne

* "The Whole Shabang" is a brand of potato chips once sold only in jails and prisons. It was so popular that in 2016, due to demand from ex-inmates, it was finally made available to the general public.

* The majority of people will tilt their head to the right when they kiss.

* Sherlock Holmes creator Sir Arthur Conan Doyle helped popularize skiing by being the first Englishman to document the sport.

* In Alabama, it's against the law to drive while impersonating a member of the clergy.

* For centuries, doctors thought that medicines made with human flesh, blood or bone could be effective in curing all kinds of ailments, from epilepsy to headaches. The practice was called "corpse medicine."

* The original name for the search engine Google was Backrub. It was renamed after the googolplex, which is the number 1 followed by 100 zeros.

* The fear of young people is known as "ephebiphobia."

* Gatling gun salesmen went to Civil War battlefields to demonstrate their products in actual combat.

* A newly sworn-in Barack Obama visited the U.K. in 2009 and presented some rather curious gifts to the prime minister and queen: 25 DVDs to David Cameron, and an iPod Classic to the then-octogenarian Elizabeth II. Cameron returned the gesture with some "wellies" and Hobgoblin ale.

* In the Solomon Islands, dolphin teeth were (and still are) used as a form of currency.

* Historically, most Easter celebrants would have eaten lamb for the occasion, as the holiday has its roots in the Jewish Passover. Most American Easter dinners now feature ham, however, because years ago, hams cured over the winter would have been ready to serve in early spring.

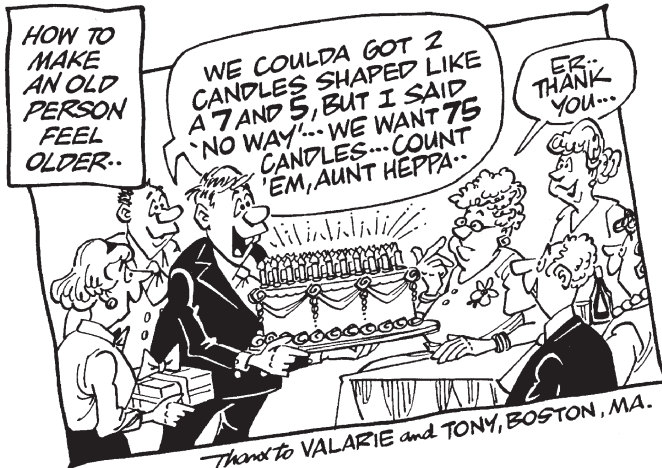
Thought for the Day: "When writing the story of your life, don't let anyone else hold the pen." -- Harley Davidson

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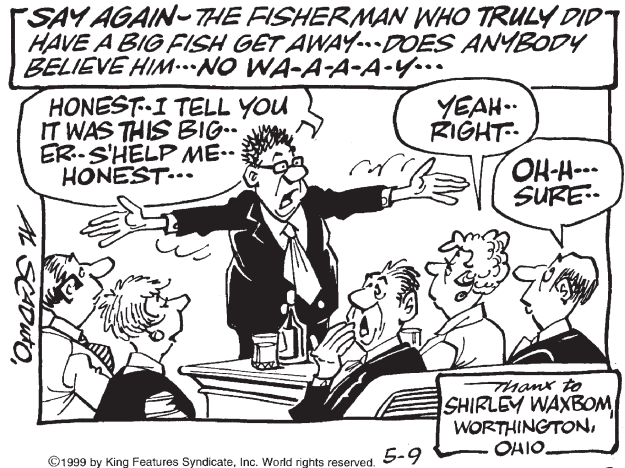
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THEY'LL DO IT EVERY TIME



—Thank to VALARIE and TONY, BOSTON, MA.

BY AL SCADUTO



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ASK MOM, SHE'LL TELL YOU - MOP UP AFTER THE KIDS AND... OH-OH... HERE WE GO AGAIN... OH, YEAH!



—Thank to H. MELTZER, SACRAMENTO CA.



Birds use plants



Birds forage among plants for seeds, flower nectar, berries, fruit, nuts and grains. They collect dried grass, pine needles, lichen, moss, twigs, small plant roots, plant down, plant stems, sticks and weeds to use in building their nests. Their favorite places for shelter are in a thorny hedge, spiky plants or trees, in high tree canopy, in densely foliated trees such as conifers, in the cavities of tree trunks or branches, flowering shrubs or in dense ground cover. - Brenda Weaver

Sources: www.vandusengarden.org, www.allaboutbirds.org



by Freddy Groves

VA Extends Deadlines for Life Insurance

Nobody wants to think about it, but the need for life insurance is a fact of life. And now the cost of life insurance for veterans is dropping, opening the door for more of us to be able to afford it.

After separation, we've had 240 days to apply and hand over the initial premium to transfer from Service-members' Group Life Insurance to Veterans' Group Life Insurance without having to provide proof of good health. After that deadline we had one year plus 120 days to file and pay, but needed to submit proof of good health in the form of a questionnaire about our medical conditions.

Now, with COVID, the Department of Veterans Affairs has extended the application time by an additional 90 days for both categories. This will expire in June, but it does buy a little

more time to get insurance.

To learn more about VA life insurance, go to www.benefits.va.gov/insurance. Follow the Eligibility links to see if you qualify for any of the whole menu of VA insurance. Consult the rates chart to see what your premiums would be. As an example, a \$300,000 policy for a 50-year-old veteran would run you \$99 per month. Rates across all categories jump significantly once you hit the age 55 column, so if you're considering it, don't delay. A \$100,000 policy at age 30 will cost you a mere \$9 per month.

At that same webpage you can apply to convert your SGLI policy to VGLI, apply for service-disabled insurance, update your beneficiary, file an insurance claim and more, as well as getting forms for all of these.

On the right side of the screen you'll see Assessing Your Life Insurance Needs. Click that to use the calculator to zero in on how much you should have. It might be more than you think.

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Conservation for Generations to Come

"I recognize the right and duty of this generation to develop and use the natural resources of our land; but I do not recognize the right to waste them, or to rob, by wasteful use, the generations that come after us." -Teddy Roosevelt

Historically, the Black Hills National Forest has flourished by serving many purposes. From camping to grazing, hiking to timber production, mining and wildlife habitat, the Black Hills have balanced economic, conservation, and recreational interests for decades.

This week, I travelled to the Black Hills with Natural Resources Committee Republican Leader Westerman to meet with both employees of the Hill City sawmill and U.S. Forest Service officials.

Throughout our time there, the one thing that stood out to me most was that no matter who we spoke with, whether it was the sawmill workers who are fighting to keep their jobs, or the Black Hills forest service supervisor, or the first responders fighting the Schroeder fire, the unifying message was a shared love for the Black Hills and the shared commitment to finding a solution to ensure the longevity of our beautiful forest.

Being good stewards of the land means not just sitting back, but actively finding ways to responsibly develop, utilize, and conserve our natural resources. Proactive forest management has proved to be successful in reducing the impacts of insect infestations, like the mountain pine beetle, and wildfires, like we've seen this week. As firefighters continue to fight the catastrophic Schroeder fire, we are reminded more than ever of the importance of active forest management.

Proactive efforts in forest management provide an opportunity for economic development, in turn, bolstering the local communities around and within the Hills. Striking a balance between the two interests is not only economically beneficial, but vitally important to the long-term health of the forest.

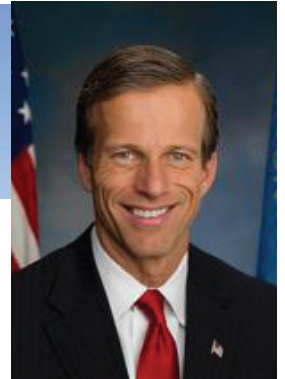
As I sat down with two mill workers who recently lost their jobs due to the sawmill closure, I was struck by their stories, it was one of the most powerful experiences I've had in Congress. After 53 years of operation, the mill is shutting down following years of Forest Service missing timber sale targets. Worse yet, they could be reduced further. This is yet another example of how federal policies can hurt real livelihoods.

We need innovative solutions that don't come from faraway politicians in Washington, D.C., but from those who have grown up in the Hills and understand the intricate balance of not just preserving but conserving the forest. I have faith that the timber industry and the Forest Service can work together along with state and local partnerships to brainstorm new approaches to keeping the timber harvest at levels that serve both the forest and the timber industry.

I am grateful for the first responders who worked around the clock to contain the Schroeder fire, and law enforcement in carrying out evacuations to keep residents safe. I never tire of the majestic beauty of the Hills, and I want to preserve their beauty for generations to come, but it takes action and sound policy that take into consideration all stakeholders.

Teddy Roosevelt said it best that we must develop and use our natural resources but not waste them. We must be good stewards of the land. Proper forest management and active mills are vital to ensuring the enjoyment of the Black Hills for generations to come.

John Thune
U.S. SENATOR - SOUTH DAKOTA



Seeing the Border Crisis Firsthand

The situation at our southern border is spiraling out of control, and there is a direct connection to the policies the Biden administration put into place. I recently went down to our southern border to see the conditions firsthand and learn the truth about the growing humanitarian crisis that the Biden administration has blocked the press from covering.

Make no mistake – despite the efforts of the administration to distract and downplay, this is a crisis. And as long as the Biden administration continues to implement policies that give the impression of an open, porous border, people are going to keep flooding into our country.

What I saw on the border was harrowing. Border Patrol officers are overwhelmed and under-supported, smugglers who often have close ties to drug cartels are profiting massively, drugs are slipping through cracks of an overwhelmed system, and there are hundreds of kids scared and alone. One facility we toured that was designed to handle no more than 250 people under COVID safety guidelines is currently handling 4,200 people, and many of them are testing positive for COVID-19.

The Biden administration halfheartedly told migrants “don’t come,” but its relaxed, open-border policies say otherwise. The message received by prospective migrants is: If you can make it to the U.S. border and claim asylum, whether legitimate or not – even if you illegally cross the border – you’re in. And the spotlight is stuck on green.

One of the most heartbreaking loopholes created by the Biden administration incentivizes migrants to bring along very young children because the administration won’t deport anyone with a child who is 6 years or younger. This change sent the message that a child is an automatic passport into the United States. Caught in between are the children being taken and exploited as a “ticket” into our country. It was shocking to see hundreds of very young children packed into these border facilities, and even more horrible to hear about the traumatic journeys they’ve made from countries thousands of miles away. Talking to Border Patrol officers, there’s no doubt that migrants have been incentivized to make the dangerous trek by welcoming policies and loopholes put in place by this administration.

The administration isn’t blocking illegal border crossings, but they are blocking the press and transparency on the crisis they created. As a group of United States Senators, we were told not to document what we saw and even to delete photos we took. This administration knows how bad the situation at the southern border looks for immigration policies long championed by Democrats – especially after downplaying and ridiculing the improvements President Trump made to discourage migrants and secure our border. President Biden should be less concerned with optics and more concerned with making common-sense changes to his immigration policies. There’s no excuse for blocking the press and attempting to hide this crisis from the American people.

Perhaps the most frustrating part of this situation is that this crisis would have been totally avoidable if the administration had listened to the warnings of our border experts. But, once again, President Biden caved to his political left, and the result is a humanitarian and public safety emergency that is worsening by the day.

In order to end the Biden border crisis, the administration should support strong border security, stop asylum abuse, and crack down on the traffickers and cartels that prey on migrants. President Biden has the power to start ending this crisis today by enforcing immigration law and strongly stating that the way to come to this country is to come legally. He’s choosing not to take any of the steps necessary to improve the terrible conditions I saw firsthand.

For the sake of the unaccompanied children and all those trying to cross our borders, and for the sake of the Americans who have been endangered by his policies, I hope the president will visit the border to see the crisis for himself and take action to secure our border.

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South Dakota Governor

Kristi Noem



South Dakota: *Under God, the People Rule*

Taxation Without Infrastructure

When I was in Congress, I had the tremendous honor of being on the conference committee that ironed out the final details of President Trump's tax cuts. We cut rates for every South Dakotan. We doubled the standard deduction. We returned \$2,400 to the pockets of the average South Dakota family, and the economy grew for years as a result.

We trusted that the people can spend their own money better than the government can. Unfortunately, President Biden is proposing that we undo much of the progress made with the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, all in the name of an "infrastructure" package that has very little to do with infrastructure.

President Biden's "infrastructure" proposal spends more on electric cars than it does on roads or bridges. In reality, this bill is full of giveaways to liberal special interests who want government subsidized green industries to take over our economy.

Unfortunately, the rest of the economy will suffer as a result. One of the most crucial parts of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act was cutting the corporate tax rate to 21%, below the international average. Wages went up for employees as a result. But President Biden is proposing that we undo that tax cut.

Here's what higher taxes will lead to: Prices of groceries and other daily necessities will go up. Wages will go down as companies try to recuperate some of the costs. Some employees will even lose their jobs.

South Dakota didn't shut down this past year, but virtually every other state did. And their economies were devastated as a result. Now, just as these economies are starting to get back on their feet, President Biden is proposing a job-killing tax hike that will devastate the economy all over again.

This "infrastructure" proposal would also repeal all state "Right to Work" laws, which protect workers from overreaching unions. Unions have their place in our economy, but workers should not be forced to join them. They certainly shouldn't be forced to pay union dues that fund political causes that the workers themselves might not support. "Right to Work" legislation protects workers from this, but Democrats want to undo all of these state laws in one fell swoop. That's not only wrong, it's against the principle of federalism that our nation was built upon.

I also want to highlight one item of President Biden's proposal that hits very close to home for me. As many of you know, I first got involved in politics because I was frustrated that my family was forced to pay death taxes after my dad died. We doubled the death tax exemption in the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, but Democrats are proposing that we undo that by eliminating the step-up in basis when assets are passed on at death. This will lead to a tax increase on family farms, ranches, restaurants, and small businesses. And it will increase paperwork, costs, and heartache on families who have just gone through a tragedy.

Again, all of this is to pay for an "infrastructure" bill that has very little actual infrastructure included. And to top it off, this legislation would be the most expensive in American history. We cannot afford to keep borrowing from our kids and grandkids to pay for liberal priorities. South Dakota lives within its means. The United States government should do the same.



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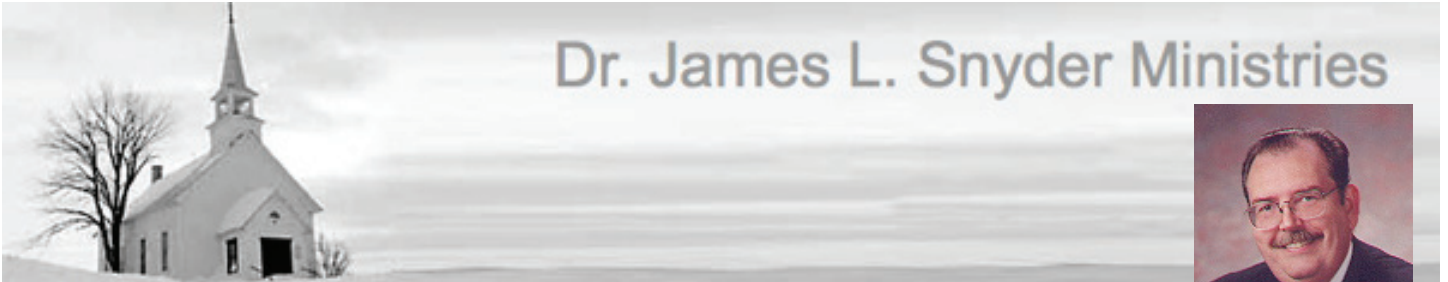
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Dr. James L. Snyder Ministries



Seeing Can Be Rather Expensive

As I get older, and my goal is to get as old as I can, I begin to realize some of the things I haven't noticed in my life. You know how it is; things creep up little by little, and then all of a sudden, there it is.

That happened to me recently with my eyes. Since I was in the ninth grade (I will not disclose the year), I have been wearing glasses and have become used to wearing them. Every year I would have them upgraded, and the upgrade was little by little until if I took my glasses off, I couldn't see my real self.

The advantage of that is, I don't wear my glasses when I look in the bathroom mirror. That saves me a lot of problems. What am I going to do what I can really see?

About two years ago, when I was at the eye doctor, he noticed some things in my eyes.

"You have cataracts in both eyes."

I was caught by surprise and did not know what he was talking about, but I responded despite that.

"No, Dr.," I said rather seriously, "I do not have a Cadillac, let alone two, but I do have a Chevrolet. I'm quite happy with my Chevrolet; thank you."

The doctor looked at me as though he was looking at some crazy person. Then he said something that somewhat confused me. "Do you think I'm a psychologist?"

Looking at me straight in the eyes, he said, "You have cataracts in your eyes."

"Well," I said, looking at him, "I did have my eye on several Cadillacs, the one I liked was a brilliant blue. The only problem with that Cadillac was I couldn't afford it. But I must tell you I'm still eyeing that Cadillac."

"Look at me," the doctor said rather sternly, "I am not talking about Cadillacs; I'm talking about cataracts in your eyes. You will need surgery to remove those cataracts."

I must say I felt a little embarrassed. I don't know if the doctor spoke with a lisp or I was hearing with a lisp, I thought he said Cadillac, which confused me.

He then explained what this cataract business was all about and how I should go and get them removed and replaced.

That was almost two years ago, and because of the pandemic, everything pretty much shut down.

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Then recently, things began to open up, and I could go to the eye clinic and get prepped for surgery. As they explained it to me, it would take approximately six weeks to have it done, although the surgery itself would be about 15 minutes. They had to do one eye and then two weeks later do the other eye. There were two weeks of preparation before and two weeks after to complete the process.

The eye clinic was on the other side of town, and I could not drive my vehicle when I went to visit them. Henceforth, my chauffeur for those appointments was the Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage.

Then the day of the actual surgery came, and I was chauffeured to the eye clinic and went in for the preparation. I'm not sure why so much paperwork is needed these days, but I signed paper after paper after paper. I got to the point where I almost forgot what my name was.

Then I went in, and the nurse took me to prepare for the doctor's surgery. The nurse spent about an hour and a half with me while the doctor used only 15 minutes.

There comes a point when I have had enough. You go through all the routine in checking the blood pressure and extracting blood from my body. I know it's all necessary, but it sure can be monotonous.

She was finishing all of the prep work and was ready to take me in so that the doctor could do the surgery on my cataract.

At that point, I said very seriously, "Could I change my mind?"

She looked at me and sighed very deeply, and I could see she was not a happy camper. But she said very calmly, "Yes, you can change your mind if you really want to."

"Great," I chirped, "can I have your mind?"

Staring at me, she then gave me a piece of her mind. I didn't see that one coming.

The surgery went fine, and I was surprised. I have been wearing glasses for a long time, and now, out of my left eye, I could see almost perfectly, whatever that is. I couldn't see up close, and the doctor said I would probably need reading glasses. But I have never seen the world so bright as I did that day.

Darkness seems to creep up on a person without that person even knowing it. That happened with me. Nothing is better than seeing the brightness of the light.

As my wife was driving me home, I happen to think of a verse of Scripture. "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" (Psalm 27:1).

Sometimes I get discouraged by the darkness around me and don't realize how dark it is. But when I put my eyes on the Lord Jesus Christ in the Bible, I see that marvelous light that lighteth the world.

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From the Editors of E - The Environmental Magazine

Dear EarthTalk: What are the environmental pros and cons of so many of us relying on GPS apps (Waze, Google Maps, etc.) to get around these days?
-- B. Rogers, Newark, NJ

It's hard to measure whether having GPS apps on our smartphones is positive or negative for the planet, but some environmentalists are skeptical. Indeed, the rise of Waze, Google Maps, Inrix and other apps that respond to live traffic data to reroute drivers accordingly—not to mention the concomitant proliferation of app-following Uber and Lyft drivers—has turned millions of formerly main-route-following drivers into sneaky shortcut seekers. Formerly quiet peaceful neighborhoods may never be the same again.

On the plus side, the widespread use of these apps saves individual drivers some time and may slightly reduce the amount of time we all spend burning extra fuel by idling in congested traffic. But the data on this is mixed and warrants further research.

While you may have gotten to work three minutes faster this morning, what was the cost? Neighborhoods everywhere are miffed at the proliferation of cars racing through formerly quiet back streets to circumvent the latest highway logjam. The problem has been especially noticeable in already car-crazed Los Angeles, where neighborhood streets filled up with traffic once Waze hit the market in 2011 and started alerting Angelinos of the fastest, least congested routes to and fro. As more and more drivers followed Waze's directions, the app sent them deeper and deeper into formerly forlorn byways. With Google Maps, Inrix and others following Waze's lead, the problem has only gotten worse in recent years.

Research out of the University of California's Institute of Transportation Studies (ITS) concludes that while GPS apps are helping individuals get from point A to B faster, they are also making congestion worse overall. ITS's traffic simulations show how freeway flow changes in response to an accident when no drivers use GPS apps versus when 20 percent of drivers have them activated. With more app-using drivers, congestion builds up at off-ramps and traffic on the highway slows. "The situation then gets much worse because hundreds of people just like you want to go on the side streets, which were never designed to handle the traffic," says ITS director Alexandre Bayen. "So, now, in addition to congesting the freeway, you've also congested the side streets and the intersections."

Critics of these apps blame the software designers—not us consumers just trying to get to and from work or the grocery store—for the negative effects on traffic flows and neighborhood peace. If the apps are so smart, why can't they disperse drivers onto different routes and away from back streets and quiet neighborhoods to smartly reduce congestion overall? To wit, later this year Google Maps will start routing drivers to the most fuel-efficient route—not necessarily the fastest—to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and save drivers money in fuel costs. If the greener route is significantly slower than another way, the app will give users the option to choose for themselves, but at least this move is a nod to how much greenhouse gas busting power a little bit of code on your phone can have to help save the planet.

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GPS nav apps may be good for individual drivers' commute times but may be slowing traffic overall and ruining neighborhood vibes across the nation.

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#405 in a series

Covid-19 update: by Marie Miller

Not much change. We reported 63,300 new cases today. We're up to 30,693,400 cases in the US, 0.2% more than yesterday. Michigan's seven-day new case average grew from 1030 on February 21 to 5663 on March 31—huge increase. Other states have issues, but Michigan leads the way. There were 41,518 people hospitalized today and our seven-day average admitted to hospital daily rose to 4950. We've lost 554,287 lives to this virus. There were 738 deaths reported today.

On April 3, 2020, one year ago today, we went over a quarter-million cases. We were up to 272,502 cases and 7046 deaths. New York and New Jersey still accounted for almost half the cases, and the top 10 states accounted for close to 80 percent. New York City alone had over 55,000 cases. We were setting one-day records for deaths every day and would continue to do so for another week and a half; this day's number was almost 1400. A 39 year-old TSA canine handler died from Covid-19. We were now receiving advice to wear a simple cloth mask when outside the home. We had gathered sufficient evidence of asymptomatic transmission and the benefit offered by masks, although we were under the impression they were mostly protective of others. It was not yet understood that a cloth mask protects the wearer too; that came much later. We were advised that masks would not substitute for social distancing; they were to be deployed in combination with the other precautions.

The US Supreme Court postponed the final two weeks of arguments scheduled to start later in the month. The White House began rapid-testing everyone who would come into close contact with Mr. Trump or Mr. Pence. The Army Corps of Engineers reported they'd received 750 requests for field hospitals. Funeral homes in New York were running out of storage. Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, told Fox and Friends, our situation was going to "get worse, much worse, before it gets better."

Worldwide, there were 1,026,975 cases and 53,975 deaths. Spain had lost almost 11,000 people; they'd had well over 110,000 cases, but finally were experiencing a drop in daily deaths. There was a spike in cases in the Middle East.

Good news: There were 4.08 million vaccinations administered in the US today—first time ever over four million; and also for the first time, we're averaging over three million vaccinations (at 3.1 million) per day in the US. Twenty million were given this past week. According to the CDC, in the 109 days since the first dose was given, almost 162 million doses of the 208 million distributed have been administered; 104 million people have received at least one dose. This is an astonishing achievement. In the middle of January, we were averaging around 800,000 per day; then we passed two million per day just a month ago, and now here we are. Almost a third of us have received at least one dose of vaccine while production continues to increase. To offset that, new cases have increased 19 percent in 14 days. We're still averaging about 900 deaths per day. Cases are starting to increase in the Midwest: Michigan and Minnesota are in trouble; Nebraska just joined them there; Ohio is watching cases tick upward. More states are likely to follow.

Something we should note is that the surge in Michigan seems to be fueled by increases cases in children, a group we haven't been too worried about so far in this pandemic. Since February 19, average new cases among children under 10 increased 230 percent; this is more than any other age group. The 10 to 19 group rose 227 percent, the second-highest in the state. We are seeing similar trends in Minnesota, where under-20s account for almost a fourth of new cases; this group had only 15 percent of new cases a month ago. This repeats in several other states, likely due to reopenings of schools and school sports. New outbreaks seem to be disproportionately linked to schools and other youth programs, including the socialization that occurs after the events. Sports resumed in Michigan on February 8, and this is what followed. Kids are less at risk for severe disease and death; but they are still a means for transmission. We will see in coming weeks whether there is a spike in that rare but serious syndrome called MIS-C (multi-inflammatory syndrome in children), which can cause long-lasting damage or even death. You can't game this virus; it finds you.

The Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation at the University of Washington, one of the premier

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modelers, have increased their projection for US deaths from the pandemic by July 1 from 600,000 last week to 609,000 this week. Two things factored into this increase: the spread of variants and our reduced adherence to precautions. Even with increasing vaccinations, they are projecting increased deaths. Ali Mokdad, population health professor at the IHME, tweeted, "The trajectory of the pandemic requires stronger preventive measures and depends on the behavioral response in terms of vaccine confidence, mask wearing, and avoidance of situations that pose a high risk for transmission." We're not really doing any of that.

Right now, we're averaging more daily new cases than we saw a full month into the calamitous wave that started last fall. I don't think that means we're going where we went over the winter, but it does mean this virus isn't done with us yet. There will be more sickness, and there will be more death. There shouldn't be.

What's going on here is that the same folks who will refuse to their dying breath to be vaccinated are the ones who will refuse to their dying breath any sort of measures to contain this virus. The people least likely to say they were getting vaccinated are the same folks who are least likely to say they'd stayed out of crowds, avoided gathering in groups, or declined to travel. I am reminded of the stories from the ICU nurse who told of patients shouting at her that they couldn't be getting intubated because this virus is a hoax as they were being intubated because this virus was killing them—literally to their last conscious breath: They never woke up. I guess some of the rest of us won't wake up either; I don't know whether they'll take some other folks with them, but it seems likely. I guess the best we can hope for is that they either kill themselves or get immune via natural infection in time to give the rest of us a shot at achieving herd immunity so we can put this nightmare to bed. This is neither the easy way nor the fast way, but it may be the only way we're going to get there. I want to weep.

The CDC has laid out guidance for cruise ships. I'm sure the list is longer than this, but one thing that struck me is that they will be required to operate practice cruises with volunteers before they can take ticketed passengers. I'm going to guess there are folks who wonder how to score one of those volunteer spots. They will also have to report cases daily and vaccinate staff. Given what a disaster cruises were at the start of the pandemic, I'm not surprised the agency is cautious about starting up again.

That plant in Baltimore owned by Emergent BioSolutions where the mess-up in Janssen/Johnson & Johnson vaccine production occurred is going to be taken over by Janssen/Johnson & Johnson; the administration pulled Oxford/AstraZeneca production out of the plant. It has long been against the rules for a single plant to produce two adenovirus-vectored vaccines due to concerns about just such an issue; apparently, that rule was abridged a year or so ago when contracts were awarded to the plant for both Janssen/Johnson & Johnson and Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccines in the interest of ramping up production of both. It appears to me to be problematic that the official in charge of awarding that contract had worked as a paid consultant to Emergent and formed a start-up with Emergent's chairman, but failed to mention either of these to the Senate committee in charge of his confirmation. Additionally, there were some production issues at this plant before the last administration even awarded them a contract to produce vaccines as a part of Operation Warp Speed, so they've been on regulators' radar for a while.

What appears to have happened here is that components of the two vaccines were inadvertently mixed in the processing. The cost of the mix-up is limited to the waste of 15 million doses of Janssen/Johnson & Johnson vaccine and the delay of an FDA certification to produce either of these vaccines; no contaminated doses got bottled or shipped or anywhere near a patient. So now Janssen/Johnson & Johnson will take over production of its vaccine at the plant, sending in additional staff to oversee production, and the administration will help Oxford/AstraZeneca to relocate their production to a different plant. Even though the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine has not received emergency use authorization (EUA) in the US, it has been authorized in several other countries, and so there is a need to keep production levels up. The current stance is that the Janssen/Johnson & Johnson commitment to deliver 100 million doses to the US by the end of next month will still be able to be met. For now, that production line has not been certified by the FDA, so anything produced here cannot be distributed; prior batches processed are stockpiled awaiting certification I'm going to guess the FDA's going to be very careful before issuing that certification, but once it does, vaccine should flow pretty quickly.

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This is a tiny matter in the scheme of things, but Broadway lit up—a little—today. For 36 minutes. On a bare stage at the St. James, a historic landmark, in front of a very small audience of only 150 seated far apart in a 1700-seat room, two Tony winners, actor Nathan Lane and tap dancer Savion Glover performed. First time for a Broadway performance in 387 days—an improvisational dance and a comedic monologue by two of the big names. You couldn't buy a ticket: You had to be invited. Most of the invitees were workers for the Actors Fund and Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS. It must have been quite the event. I'll take this as a sign that one day we'll all be in The After Times. Hang in there folks; it's coming one way or the other.

And stay safe. I'll be back.

Medicare has changed. Find out how it can affect you.

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County	Total Cases	Recovered Cases	Negative Persons	Deceased Among Cases	Community Spread	% PCR Test Positivity Rate (Weekly)
▲						
Aurora	460	440	903	15	Minimal	12.0%
Beadle	2870	2790	6190	40	Substantial	10.7%
Bennett	387	374	1211	9	Minimal	3.6%
Bon Homme	1515	1479	2171	26	Moderate	5.0%
Brookings	3878	3690	12719	37	Substantial	6.0%
Brown	5331	5150	13330	91	Substantial	9.4%
Brule	699	687	1932	9	Minimal	2.7%
Buffalo	422	408	910	13	Minimal	5.3%
Butte	1012	984	3344	20	Minimal	1.3%
Campbell	130	126	270	4	None	0.0%
Charles Mix	1352	1298	4118	21	Substantial	3.8%
Clark	423	390	980	5	Substantial	12.5%
Clay	1874	1826	5693	15	Substantial	9.7%
Codington	4230	4076	10106	80	Substantial	15.8%
Corson	476	462	1027	12	Minimal	0.0%
Custer	789	761	2821	12	Moderate	9.6%
Davison	3124	2971	6909	66	Substantial	17.9%
Day	678	642	1871	29	Moderate	16.0%
Deuel	497	480	1189	8	Moderate	0.0%
Dewey	1441	1409	3954	26	Minimal	2.0%
Douglas	448	431	955	9	Minimal	15.4%
Edmunds	493	475	1103	13	Minimal	6.7%
Fall River	566	541	2750	15	Moderate	7.6%
Faulk	365	351	715	13	Minimal	0.0%
Grant	1011	958	2368	42	Moderate	15.3%
Gregory	573	531	1346	30	Moderate	4.9%
Haakon	260	249	562	10	None	0.0%
Hamlin	754	699	1871	38	Moderate	6.2%
Hand	354	347	865	6	Minimal	0.0%
Hanson	380	372	764	4	Minimal	14.3%
Harding	92	91	188	1	None	0.0%
Hughes	2381	2312	6861	37	Moderate	1.4%
Hutchinson	847	782	2495	26	Substantial	23.4%

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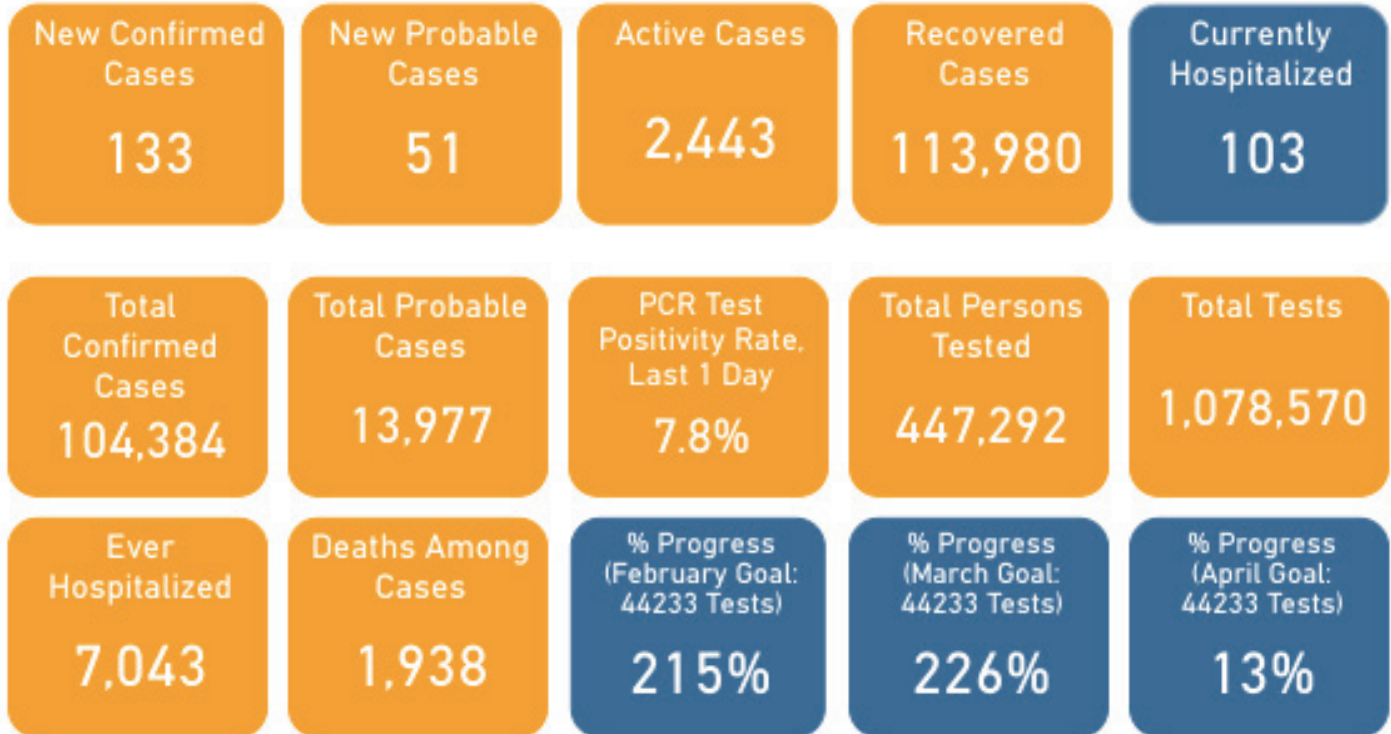
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Hyde	140	137	436	1	Minimal	0.0%
Jackson	285	269	938	14	None	0.0%
Jerauld	273	257	581	16	Minimal	9.1%
Jones	93	91	241	0	Minimal	11.1%
Kingsbury	748	671	1765	14	Substantial	20.4%
Lake	1311	1251	3590	18	Substantial	18.0%
Lawrence	2897	2830	8806	45	Moderate	4.7%
Lincoln	8277	7981	21276	77	Substantial	13.1%
Lyman	627	603	1955	11	Moderate	10.8%
Marshall	364	356	1264	6	Moderate	0.0%
McCook	795	747	1737	24	Moderate	9.7%
McPherson	242	236	592	4	None	0.0%
Meade	2701	2640	8021	31	Moderate	7.1%
Mellette	254	252	766	2	None	0.0%
Miner	292	273	607	9	Moderate	15.4%
Minnehaha	29959	28741	82267	344	Substantial	13.9%
Moody	626	605	1827	17	Minimal	0.0%
Oglala Lakota	2089	2029	6815	49	Minimal	1.7%
Pennington	13275	12971	40886	191	Moderate	6.0%
Perkins	352	337	848	14	Minimal	5.9%
Potter	387	382	873	4	Minimal	4.0%
Roberts	1320	1246	4340	38	Substantial	12.9%
Sanborn	340	333	721	3	Minimal	0.0%
Spink	825	791	2211	26	Moderate	6.2%
Stanley	339	337	982	2	Minimal	4.8%
Sully	137	133	330	3	None	0.0%
Todd	1219	1188	4253	29	Minimal	0.0%
Tripp	741	708	1539	17	Moderate	9.1%
Turner	1137	1060	2849	54	Substantial	9.5%
Union	2159	2044	6659	41	Substantial	12.0%
Walworth	758	725	1883	15	Moderate	11.5%
Yankton	2946	2845	9781	28	Substantial	11.8%
Ziebach	341	329	890	9	Minimal	9.1%
Unassigned	0	0	1911	0		

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South Dakota



AGE GROUP OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Age Range with Years	# of Cases	# of Deaths Among Cases
0-9 years	4950	0
10-19 years	13667	0
20-29 years	20900	7
30-39 years	19514	19
40-49 years	16970	38
50-59 years	16628	116
60-69 years	13497	259
70-79 years	7074	443
80+ years	5161	1056

RACE/ETHNICITY OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Race/Ethnicity	# of Cases	% of Cases
White	88743	75%
Native American	13807	12%
Unknown	5532	5%
Hispanic	4307	4%
Black	2647	2%
Other	1709	1%
Asian / Pacific Islander	1616	1%

VARIANT CASES OF COVID-19 IN SOUTH DAKOTA

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

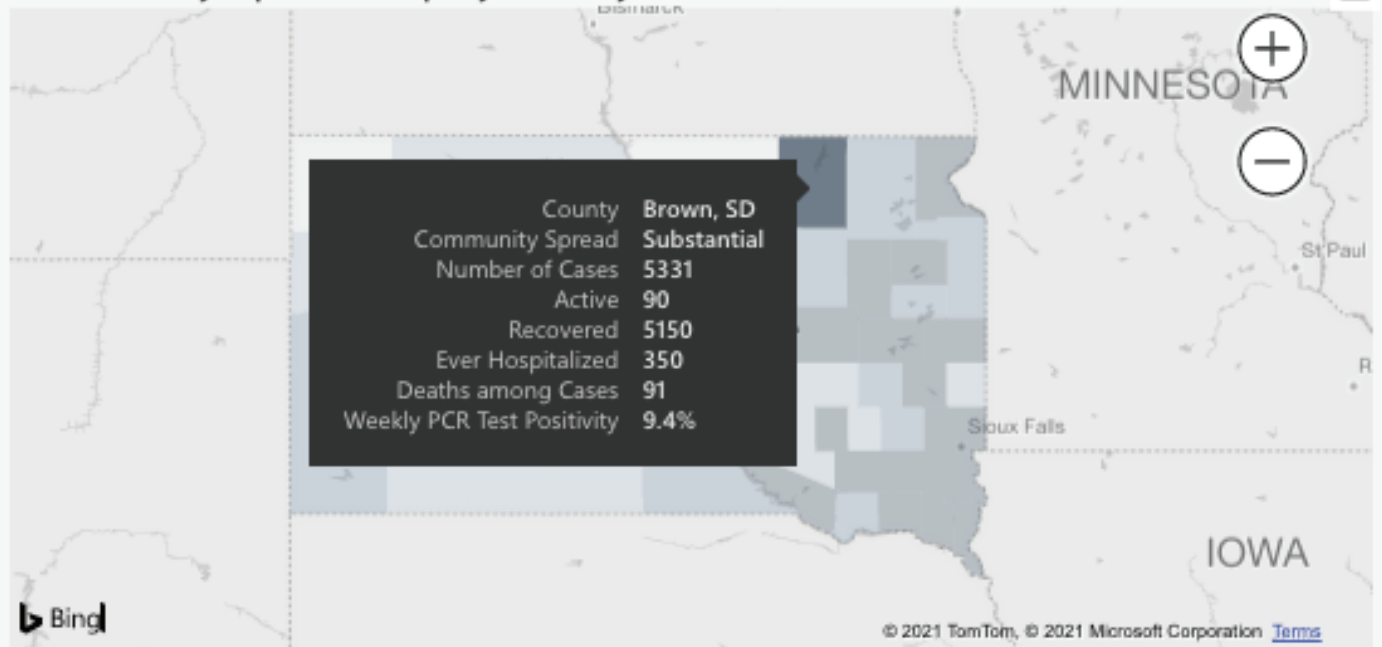
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Brown County

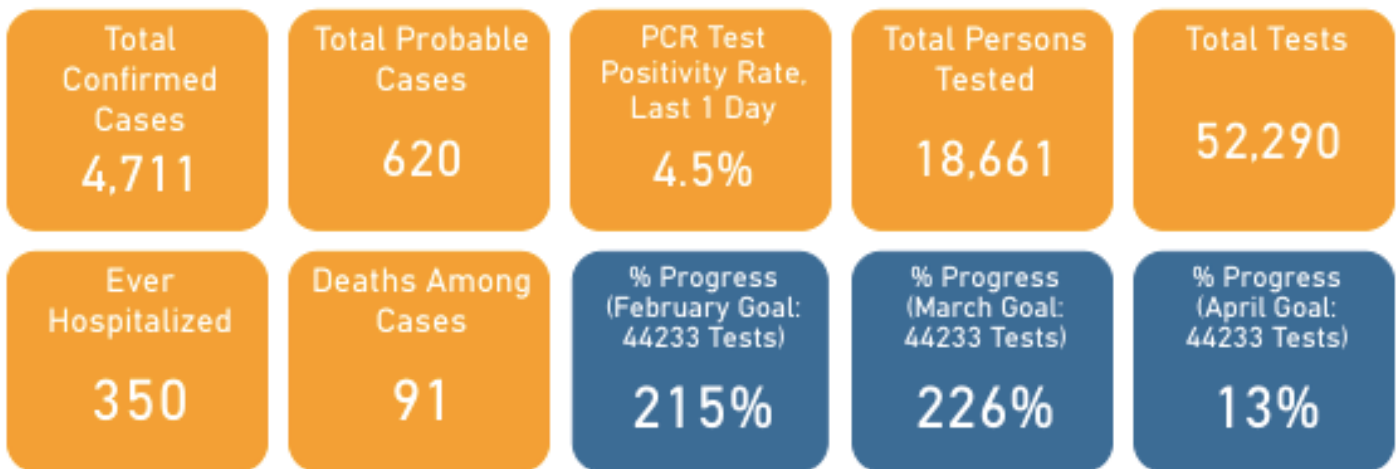


Community Spread Map by County of Residence



Community Spread: None, Minimal, Moderate, Substantial

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



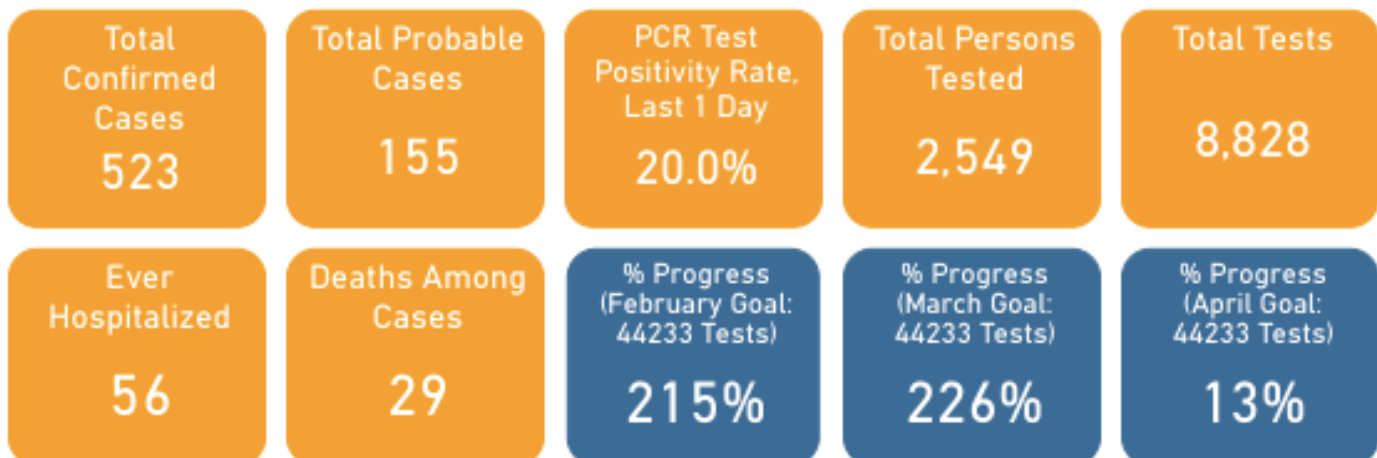
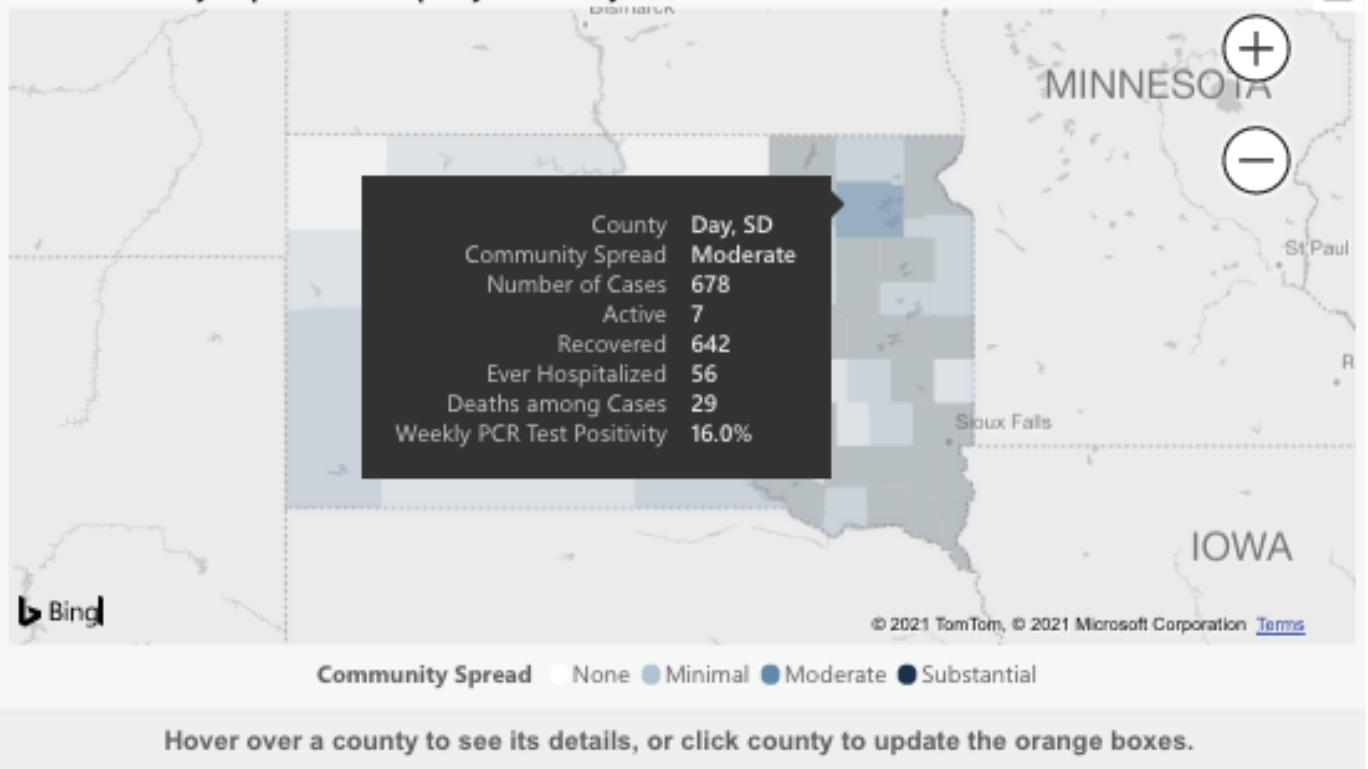
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Day County



Community Spread Map by County of Residence



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Vaccinations

Total Doses Administered*

442,380

Total Persons Administered a Vaccine*

270,625

Percent of State Population with at least 1 Dose**

46%

Manufacturer	# of Doses
Janssen	9,256
Moderna	206,570
Pfizer	226,554

Doses	# of Recipients
Janssen - Series Complete	9,256
Moderna - 1 dose	45,170
Moderna - Series Complete	80,700
Pfizer - 1 dose	44,460
Pfizer - Series Complete	91,047

Doses	% of Pop.
1 dose	45.52%
Series Complete	30.74%

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

County	# Doses	# Persons (1 dose)	# Persons (2 doses)	Total # Persons
Aurora	1,361	393	484	877
Beadle	9,521	2,454	3,533	5,987
Bennett*	613	121	246	367
Bon Homme*	4,814	662	2,076	2,738
Brookings	15,158	5,474	4,842	10,316
Brown	21,484	4,322	8,581	12,903
Brule*	2,358	404	977	1,381
Buffalo*	157	77	40	117
Butte	3,206	824	1,191	2,015
Campbell	1,339	183	578	761
Charles Mix*	4,119	1,111	1,504	2,615
Clark	1,793	525	634	1,159
Clay	7,565	2,327	2,619	4,946
Codington*	14,215	3,997	5,109	9,106
Corson*	382	50	166	216
Custer*	3,894	738	1,578	2,316
Davison	11,218	3,110	4,054	7,164
Day*	3,563	765	1,399	2,164
Deuel	2,129	559	785	1,344
Dewey*	448	78	185	263
Douglas*	1,622	390	616	1,006
Edmunds	1,935	317	809	1,126
Fall River*	3,394	562	1,416	1,978
Faulk	1,441	347	547	894
Grant*	4,147	613	1,767	2,380
Gregory*	2,314	488	913	1,401
Haakon*	693	91	301	392

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Hamlin	2,482	694	894	1,588
Hand	1,949	549	700	1,249
Hanson	788	244	272	516
Harding	168	48	60	108
Hughes*	10,974	2,584	4,195	6,779
Hutchinson*	4,686	1,131	1,777	2,908
Hyde*	705	139	283	422
Jackson*	519	101	209	310
Jerauld	1,237	291	473	764
Jones*	840	128	356	484
Kingsbury	3,542	926	1,308	2,234
Lake	6,205	1,947	2,129	4,076
Lawrence	11,984	3,132	4,426	7,558
Lincoln	35,362	6,973	14,194	21,167
Lyman*	1,099	235	432	667
Marshall*	2,477	829	824	1,653
McCook	3,045	691	1,177	1,868
McPherson	356	64	146	210
Meade*	8,806	1,730	3,538	5,268
Mellette*	60	6	27	33
Miner	1,254	318	468	786
Minnehaha*	113,395	23,960	44,715	68,675
Moody*	2,569	633	968	1,601
Oglala Lakota*	233	47	93	140
Pennington*	49,840	8,404	20,718	29,122
Perkins*	954	158	398	556
Potter	1,298	304	497	801
Roberts*	5,663	837	2,413	3,250
Sanborn	1,434	386	524	910
Spink	4,118	770	1,674	2,444
Stanley*	1,651	343	654	997
Sully	543	143	200	343
Todd*	221	43	89	132
Tripp*	2,648	436	1,106	1,542
Turner	4,699	921	1,889	2,810
Union	4,736	1,604	1,566	3,170
Walworth*	2,433	469	982	1,451
Yankton	13,864	3,138	5,363	8,501
Ziebach*	74	14	30	44
Other	8,586	2,526	3,030	5,556

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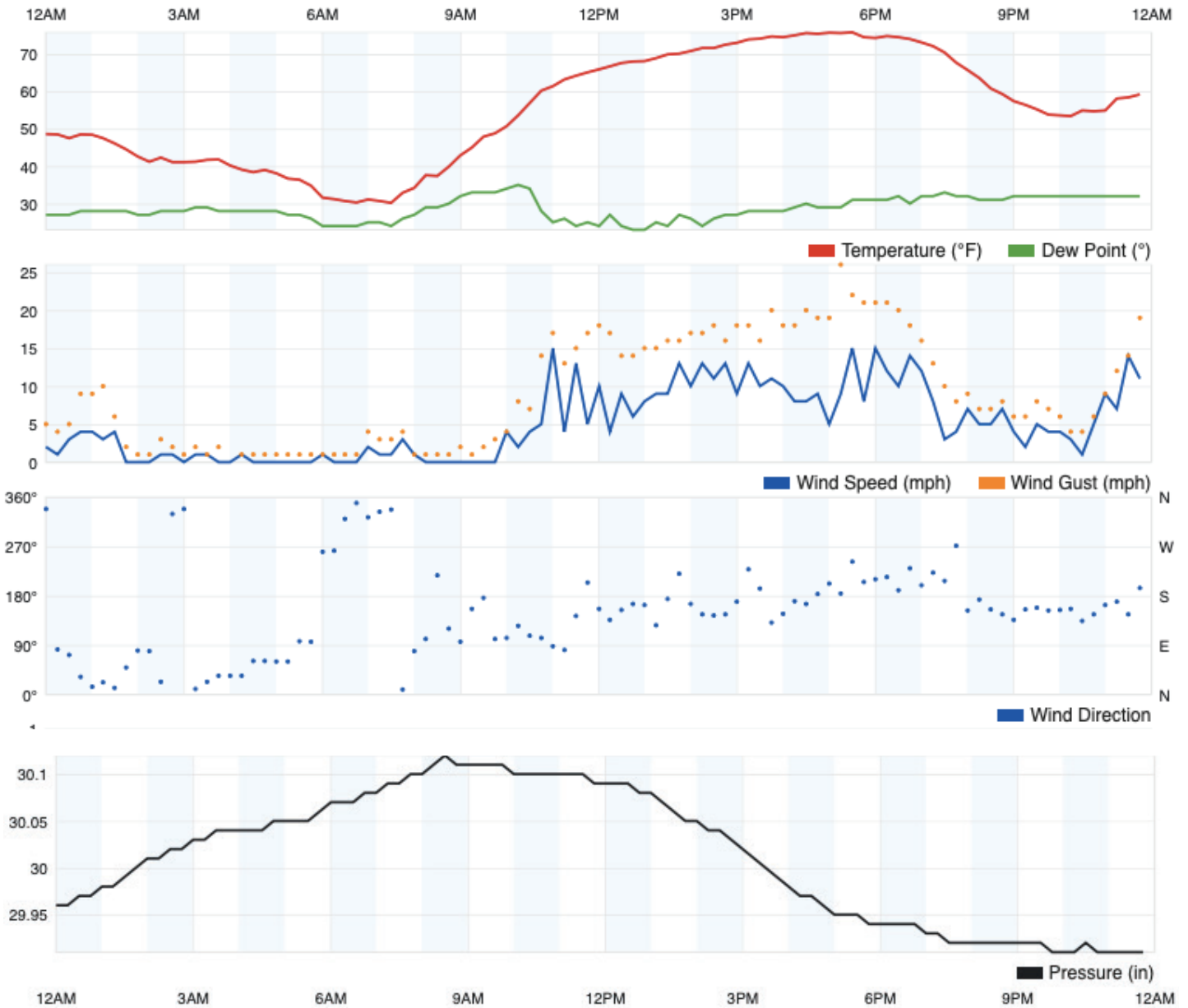
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

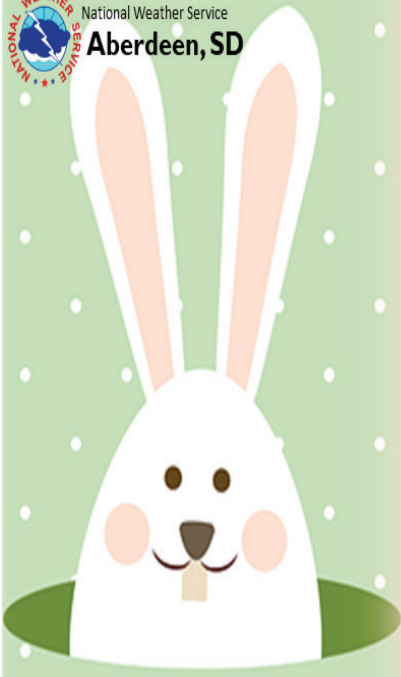


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Today	Tonight	Monday	Monday Night	Tuesday
				
Increasing Clouds	Partly Cloudy	Sunny then Mostly Sunny and Breezy	Partly Cloudy and Breezy	Mostly Sunny then Slight Chance Showers
High: 78 °F	Low: 44 °F	High: 77 °F	Low: 38 °F	High: 59 °F

Updated: 4/4/2021 2:56 AM
National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD



Very Warm

and still **Very Dry** through Monday

Today	Monday	Tuesday
75 to 85°	72 to 80°	near 60°
		
Increasing clouds this afternoon	Isolated showers possible Monday evening over eastern SD & western MN	Scattered showers, with the highest chance of precipitation south of US-212 in the afternoon & Tuesday night

Very Warm conditions continue. However, our very dry period may be coming to an end in a couple of days. Until then, we still have very high to extreme grassland fire danger to contend with. Light rain will return to the forecast for Monday evening over portions of far eastern South Dakota and western Minnesota, with more widespread rain Tuesday. Most of the rain on Tuesday will hold off until the afternoon hours, with the best chance of any significant accumulations staying mainly south of U.S. highway 212.

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Today in Weather History

April 4, 1961:

High winds of 40-60mph, with 80-90mph gusts, affected Central and Western South Dakota. The most extensive property damage occurred in the Pierre area. The roof was blown off, and one wall damaged at a new motel. One trailer home was blown over, numerous windows and large signboards were destroyed, and roofs sustained damages in Pierre. Total loss estimated \$10,000.

1804: A group of tornadoes slashed a 120-mile path across seven counties in Georgia and one county in South Carolina killing 11 people near Augusta, GA. The tornado's path through heavy timber was still visible some 71 years later as noted in an Army Signal Corps survey.

1923: An estimated F4 tornado killed 15 people and injured 150 at Alexandria and Pineville, LA. 142 homes and businesses in Pineville were destroyed.

1933 - Pigeon River Bridge, MN, reported 28 inches of snow, which established the state 24 hour snowfall record. (4th-5th) (The Weather Channel)

1966: One of the strongest tornadoes in Florida's history moved in from the Gulf of Mexico and ripped through Pinellas, Hillsborough, Polk, and Osceola County. Damage was very severe in the towns of Gibsonia and Galloway in Polk County. 11 people were killed, and 350 were injured. The tornado was classified as F4.

1973 - Sandia Crest, NM, reported a snow depth of 95 inches, a record for the state of New Mexico. (The Weather Channel)

1977: A massive F5 tornado moved across northern Birmingham, Alabama, killing 22 people and injuring 130. The tornado cut a 15-mile path from just northwest of Birmingham to the town of Tarrant. 167 homes were destroyed, primarily in the Smithfield Estates subdivision. Daniel Payne College sustained substantial damage. At one point, the tornado was three-quarters of a mile wide. The tornado crossed busy I-65, tossing cars and trucks like they were toys. Other tornadoes killed one other person in Alabama and one person in Georgia that day.

1977: A Southern Airways DC-9 jet crashed near New Hope, Georgia, after being struck by large hail. The hail and associated heavy precipitation caused the engines to flame out. Seventy-two people (including nine on the ground) died.

1983 - Colorado was in the midst of a three day winter storm. Buckhorn Mountain, located west of Fort Collins, received 64 inches of snow. (Storm Data)

1987 - Rains of five to eight inches drenched eastern New York State, and ten persons were killed in a bridge collapse over Schoharie Creek. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Sunny and warm weather prevailed across the nation. Fort Smith AR reported a record high of 90 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather from the Lower Mississippi Valley to the Southern Appalachians. The thunderstorms spawned seventeen tornadoes, including one which caused two million dollars damage at Baldwin AL. Thunderstorm winds gusted to 90 mph at Bremen GA. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - A deep low pressure system in northern New York State brought heavy snow to parts of western and central New York during the day. The snowfall total of 5.8 inches at Buffalo was a record for the date, and 9.5 inches was reported at Rochester. Snowfall totals ranged up to 11 inches at Warsaw. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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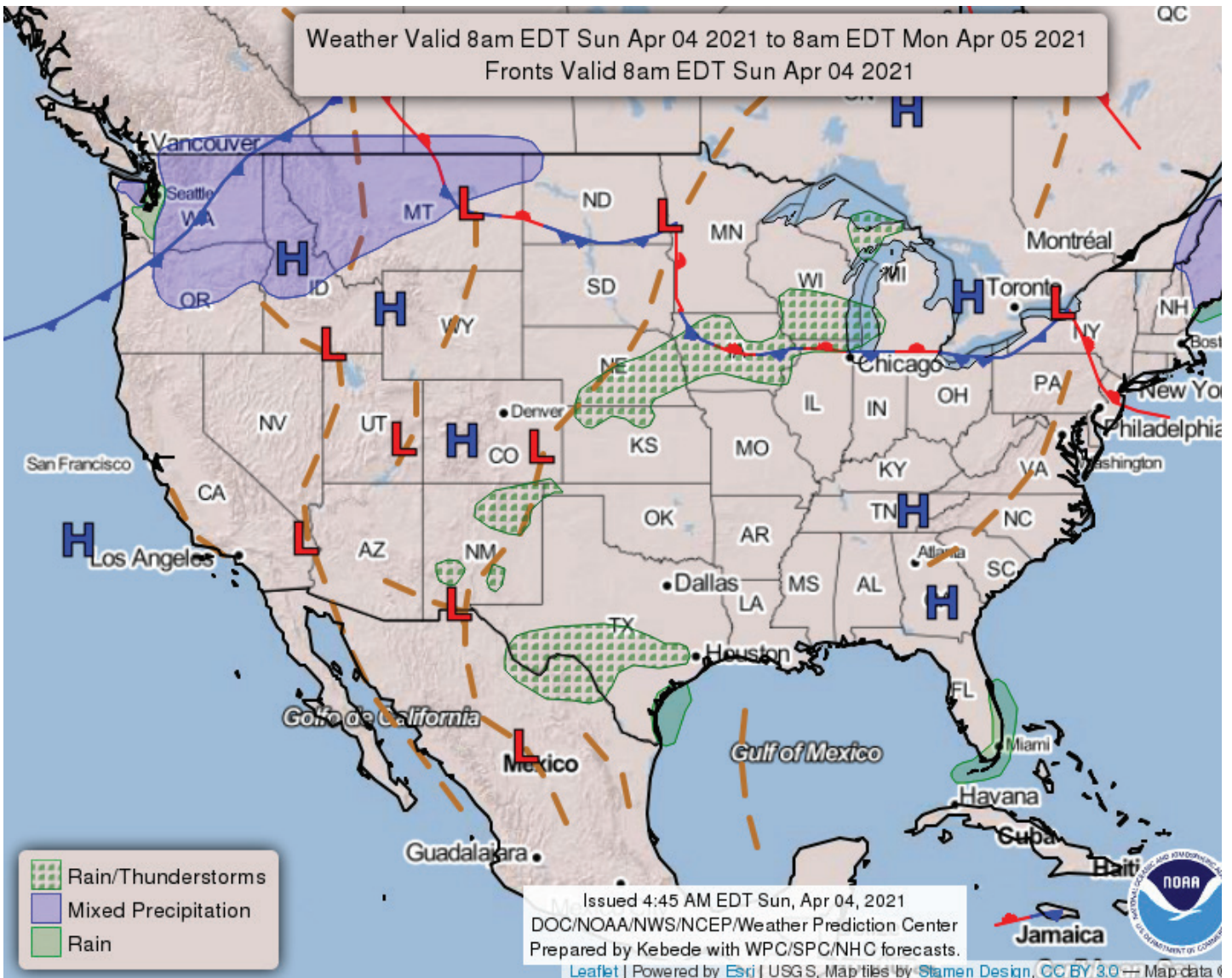
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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 76 °F at 5:09 PM
Low Temp: 30 °F at 6:42 AM
Wind: 26 mph at 5:11 PM
Precip: .00

Today's Info

Record High: 90° in 1921
Record Low: -6° in 2018
Average High: 51°F
Average Low: 27°F
Average Precip in Mar.: 1.29
Precip to date in Mar.: 0.36
Average Precip to date: 2.31
Precip Year to Date: 0.54
Sunset Tonight: 8:06 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:07 a.m.



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FIGHT FOR ME, GOD!

Perhaps the deepest wounds any of us carry are the wounds that come from being betrayed. They leave a bitter taste in our mouths and a desire for revenge in our minds and hearts. When a trusted friend turns out to be an enemy, especially and seemingly without cause, it fractures – sometimes forever – what was expected to be a confidant for life. Trust turns into resentment and what was love seeks revenge. Grief turns into anger and a large hole grows in our heart. We question what to do or how to do it.

What is the best course of action for us to take? Spread rumors about “the enemy?” Seek ways to destroy that person’s reputation? Allow depression to overtake us and hide from the light of day? It’s too difficult to remain calm when our insides churn.

When David was being destroyed by those who he thought were his closest friends and advisors, he turned to God. He did not ask God to forgive them. Nor did he ask God to convict them to make amends to him. No! He asked God to arm Himself with a shield, buckler, and spear and go after his foes. He allowed God to settle the score His way.

And then he asked God to speak to him, bring peace to his heart and assure him that “I, God, am your salvation!” He was angry but trusted in God to make things right.

David had done no wrong in this instance. He deserved to be vindicated. He was aware, however, that if he took things into his own hands it might have been disastrous if he lost control of his anger. So, in his wisdom, he asked God to vindicate him. And God did!

Prayer: Help us, God, to turn to You when we are wronged by others and to trust in You to make things right on our behalf. May we trust in Your fairness. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Then I will rejoice in the Lord. I will be glad because he rescues me. Psalm 35:9

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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

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News from the  Associated Press

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Dakota Cash

04-11-14-22-32

(four, eleven, fourteen, twenty-two, thirty-two)

Estimated jackpot: \$107,000

Lotto America

17-42-43-47-48, Star Ball: 5, ASB: 3

(seventeen, forty-two, forty-three, forty-seven, forty-eight; Star Ball: five; ASB: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$4.51 million

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$184 million

Powerball

01-12-17-39-53, Powerball: 5, Power Play: 2

(one, twelve, seventeen, thirty-nine, fifty-three; Powerball: five; Power Play: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$32 million

New law complicates middle name changes for married women

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A South Dakota law passed this year to allow people to change their last name while receiving a marriage license will also make it more costly and time-consuming for women who want their maiden name to become their middle name.

The Rapid City Journal reported that people who want to change their middle name after getting married will soon have to pay more than \$70 in fees, publish the change in a newspaper and appear in court.

County officials had urged lawmakers to create a pathway for people to easily change their last names on marriage licenses. But the new process left out those who want to change their middle names as well, meaning they must go through the formal legal process of a name change.

"We all understand the biggest impact here will be on women," said Hannah Haksgaard, a professor of family law at the University of South Dakota.

She said that the new law will do away with an "informal system" in which clerks at the Department of Motor Vehicles would allow middle and last name changes with a marriage license.

Republican lawmakers who pushed the bill defended it, but said the law may be amended in the future.

Myanmar anti-coup protesters launch 'Easter egg strike'

YANGON, Myanmar (AP) — Anti-coup demonstrators in Myanmar, adept at finding themes to tie together protests nationwide, took to the streets holding painted eggs in a nod to the Easter holiday on Sunday.

In the biggest city of Yangon, one group marched through the Insein district chanting and singing protest songs and cradling eggs bearing the slogan "Spring Revolution." Many of the eggs also bore a drawing of the three-fingered salute, a symbol of resistance to the Feb. 1 coup.

At dawn in Mandalay, the country's second largest city, demonstrators gathered on motorbikes to shout protests against the power grab that overthrew the democratically elected government.

Myanmar's military has violently cracked down on protesters and others in opposition, with the latest civilian death toll since the coup at 557, according to the independent Assistance Association for Political Prisoners. More than 2,750 people have been detained or sentenced, the group said.

On Sunday, security forces opened fire on a crowd of protesters in Pinyinmana in central Myanmar, killing

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at least one person, local news outlet Khit Thit Media reported.

Pope Francis, in his Easter Sunday address at St. Peter's Basilica, prayed for the "young people of Myanmar committed to supporting democracy and making their voices heard peacefully, in the knowledge that hatred can be dispelled only by love."

Sunday's so-called "Easter Egg Strike" follows other themed days. They included a "Flower Strike," in which protesters laid flowers in public places to honor those killed by security forces, and a "Silent Strike," in which people across the country left the streets deserted.

Dr. Sasa, the Myanmar special envoy to the U.N. who goes by one name, posted an image of painted eggs on Twitter and wrote that Myanmar's people have a "great future in federal democracy," reflecting hopes for the military to step down and reinstate a democratic system.

Security forces have continued to spread fear among ordinary citizens. Overnight, a resident of Yangon recorded video of a group of soldiers and police using sling shots to fire stones at the windows of homes, breaking the night's silence. At other times, soldiers and police keep up their intimidation at night with raids on neighborhoods, during which they shout abuse, shoot at random, make arrests and vandalize property.

On Saturday, police opened fire killing several protesters in Monywa in central Myanmar and elsewhere.

With most of the internet access cut or severely restricted by the junta, it is becoming increasingly difficult for people in Myanmar to get images of their plight to the outside world.

After weeks of overnight internet cutoffs, the military on Friday shut all links apart from those using fiber-optic cable, which was working at drastically reduced speeds. Access to mobile networks and all wireless — the less costly options used by most people in the developing country — remained blocked on Sunday.

Vast archives at JFK Library help bring 'Hemingway' to life

By MARK PRATT Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — A new Ken Burns documentary on Ernest Hemingway — powered by vast but little-known archives kept at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum in Boston — is shedding new light on the acclaimed novelist.

"Hemingway," premiering on PBS on three consecutive nights starting April 5, takes a more nuanced look at the author and his longstanding reputation as an alcoholic, adventurer, outdoorsman and bullfight-loving misogynist who struggled with internal turmoil that eventually led to his death by suicide at age 61.

The truth about the man many consider America's greatest 20th-century novelist — whose concise writing style made him an outsized celebrity who became a symbol of unrepentant American masculinity — is much more complex, said Lynn Novick, who collaborated with Burns on the three-part film.

"We hope this film opens up opportunities to look at Hemingway in different ways," said Novick, who has worked with Burns on several other documentaries including "The Vietnam War" and "Prohibition." "There is a complexity beneath the surface."

That complexity would have been nearly impossible to detail without the largest-in-the-world Hemingway collection that ended up at the JFK Library, thanks to Hemingway's and Kennedy's widows.

Although the two men never met, they admired each other and corresponded briefly. Hemingway was even invited to Kennedy's inauguration but couldn't make it because of illness, said Hilary Justice, the Hemingway scholar in residence at the library.

When Hemingway's fourth wife, Mary Hemingway, was figuring out what to do with her late husband's effects, she asked Jackie Kennedy if they could be housed at the JFK Library.

The archives contain Hemingway's manuscripts — including "The Sun Also Rises" and "For Whom the Bell Tolls" — personal correspondence and about 11,000 photographs.

Much of the material used in the documentary has not been widely seen in public, if at all, Novick said.

Burns had been to the JFK Library on multiple occasions for several functions, but had no idea about the extent of the Hemingway archives until they started researching the film, which has been in the works for years.

"The Hemingway collection was central to the process," Burns said. "It helped us understand just what

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a disciplined writer he was.”

Much of the documentary deals with Hemingway’s complicated relationship with the women in his life, from his mother and sisters to the nurse he fell love with while recovering from wounds suffered in World War I to his four wives.

“So much of what he did in life was about love: running to it, running from it and ruining it,” Burns said.

While considered the archetype of American manhood, the truth about Hemingway’s masculinity was more complex, the filmmakers found.

As a child, Hemingway’s mother treated him and one of his sisters as twins, often dressing them in identical outfits, sometimes as boys, sometimes as girls. He explored gender fluidity both in his books and in life, letting his hair grow as his wives cropped theirs short.

“We wanted to push back against this idea that Hemingway didn’t like women,” Novick said.

Novick’s favorite part of the collection were Hemingway’s manuscripts, many handwritten on store-bought notebooks. They show in great detail his thinking process as he wrote, rewrote, amended and edited his works through cross-outs, scribbles and notes in the margins.

Hemingway, for example, wrote dozens of endings to “A Farewell to Arms” — as many as 47, according to one count.

“You can trace how each work developed, from first draft to final manuscript,” she said.

For Burns, the most striking thing about the collection are the pieces of shrapnel dug from Hemingway’s body after he was almost killed as a teenager driving a Red Cross ambulance in World War I. Burns can’t help but think that such a profound near-death experience had a major impact on the rest of Hemingway’s life, and contributed to his death.

Whether you’re a Hemingway aficionado, or know virtually nothing about him, there is something in the series for you, Novick said.

“There’s a huge amount to be learned and new interpretations of his work and life in here,” she said.

New to DC, Buttigieg looks to build bridges with Biden plan

By HOPE YEN, JONATHAN LEMIRE and THOMAS BEAUMONT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Pete Buttigieg was a few weeks into his job as transportation secretary, buried in meetings and preparing for the launch of President Joe Biden’s \$2.3 trillion public works plan, when evening arrived along with a time to try something new in Washington.

Instead of climbing into the back seat of a black SUV like most Cabinet secretaries, he headed to a bike-share rack. Helmet on, and with a couple of Secret Service agents flanking him, he pedaled the mile-long trip to his home in the Capitol Hill neighborhood.

It wasn’t a one-time stunt. On Thursday, Buttigieg arrived at the White House for a Cabinet meeting on his two-wheeler. And that wasn’t his only “regular guy” moment. Dog park devotees in the District of Columbia have also seen him there, chatting up anyone from children to members of Congress such as Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-N.Y.

Buttigieg first had his eye on the job of the man who is now his boss, Biden. Buttigieg’s presidential campaign was surprisingly successful — he essentially tied for first with Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders in the Iowa caucuses and finished a close second to him in the New Hampshire primary — and he made a strong impression as someone who represented the future of the Democratic Party.

Now the man known during his campaign as “Mayor Pete” — he was the mayor of South Bend, Indiana — faces the first test of that potential in his first job in Washington: leading a Cabinet department with a \$75 billion annual budget and a mandate to help spur an infrastructure program that Biden has likened to the building of the interstate highway system in the 1950s.

He will have to navigate the complicated politics of both an entrenched bureaucracy at the Transportation Department and the fraught politics of a bitterly divided Washington.

He may have found a way by just riding a bike, which has gained fans from even skeptics in Congress.

“You’ve got to keep your head up,” Buttigieg told The Associated Press, explaining the path and potential

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dangers posed from unaccustomed drivers, but he said it can be a much quicker journey from point A to B.

Biden on Thursday tasked Buttigieg and four other Cabinet members — the “Jobs Cabinet” — with selling the administration’s infrastructure and climate plan, a flood of money for roads, bridges, airports, broadband communications, water systems and electric cars.

But the plan has already hit a wall with Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., who objects to the corporate tax increases Biden says will pay for the plan and pledges to oppose it “every step of the way.” On the other side, Rep. Pramila Jayapal, D-Wash., the chair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, says the package should be significantly larger.

Daunting as it may seem, the challenge of helping build consensus fits the ambition of the man who had the audacity to run for president from the perch of being mayor of a midsize town in Indiana. When Biden selected the smooth-talking Naval reserve veteran for the transportation post, he praised him as offering “a new voice with new ideas determined to move past old politics.”

In an interview, Buttigieg said he believes that bipartisan consensus is attainable.

Joining Buttigieg in selling the plan are Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm, Housing and Urban Development Secretary Marcia Fudge, Labor Secretary Marty Walsh and Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo.

“I’ve had enough conversations, especially the one-on-one conversations away from the cameras with members from both sides of the aisle, to know there really is a sincere interest in getting this done,” Buttigieg told the AP. “Now politics can get in the way of that of course. But I think unlike a lot of other issues where there is just deep passionately felt profound disagreement about what to do, here there’s a really healthy overlap in terms of our ideas about what has to happen, even if there is a lot of difference on how to get there.”

Translation? Republicans like smooth roads and fast internet for their constituents, too. But so far, there is no indication Republicans share his position.

The proposal offers big stakes for Buttigieg at the department, where he pledges to promote public transit and other green alternatives to gas-guzzling cars and apply an “equity lens” to infrastructure projects.

“Black and brown neighborhoods have been disproportionately divided by highway projects or left isolated by the lack of adequate transit and transportation resources,” Buttigieg tweeted in December. Under Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris, he said, “we will make righting these wrongs an imperative.”

Just two months into the job, Buttigieg has met with two dozen House members and 13 senators and in recent days has upped that pace, talking to lawmakers both parties every day.

Republicans describe the former McKinsey consultant as likable and open-minded, even if they wonder at times about his actual level of sway on legislation.

Illinois Rep. Rodney Davis, the top Republican on a key panel overseeing highways, said he’s talked with Buttigieg twice, once at a meeting with Biden and a bipartisan group of lawmakers at the White House. He called the conversations “really good.”

“I’m very excited to be able to work with him,” said Davis, a cyclist back home in his rural district, who thinks the former mayor can bring a valuable street-level perspective to filling potholes and easing congested streets.

“If he wants to go for a ride to discuss bike lanes and public transit, I’d welcome that,” he said.

Though the youngest Cabinet member at age 39, Buttigieg possesses a star power matched by few others in the group. He’s displayed an ability to command media attention and use those moments — including during a series of memorable Fox News hits around the election — to sway the public, including those not always apt to vote Democratic.

He’s spoken at the popular SXSW conference in Texas, joined Gov. Ralph Northam, D-Va., to promote expanded passenger rail, and tweets at a frequency to a wider public that comes close to rivaling Donald Trump when he was president. Buttigieg promotes transit policy both on his official and personal account, where he also expresses devotion to his husband, Chasten.

Buttigieg, who owns two dogs, has even been seen at a neighborhood park with Ocasio-Cortez. A chance meeting, he said.

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The new transportation secretary had one recent stumble: He had to quickly walk back a plan to charge drivers per mile they drove. It's a proposal that has some support among Republicans but could violate Biden's campaign pledge not to raise taxes on people earning less than \$400,000.

Buttigieg has impressed West Wing aides with his work ethic and willingness to learn, and he was quickly granted approval to pursue a robust engagement with the media.

The president's advisers also hold warm feelings toward the former mayor for his decision last spring to quickly endorse Biden after abandoning his own campaign, helping accelerate the end of the Democratic primary contest. And Biden has compared Buttigieg to his late son Beau, a powerful evocation that helped cement his importance to the president.

Now bound to Biden's agenda and performance, Buttigieg begins a phase likely to enhance his public service portfolio — and life experience.

This phase accomplishes what some allies have said Buttigieg needed, a next chapter, beyond the underdog story of the boy wonder from the small Midwestern city. Friends and advisers had long suggested that he get out of South Bend and see more of the world than his seven-month deployment to Afghanistan in 2014 allowed.

Buttigieg was also busy taking steps toward running for president when he got married in June 2018 and when his father died six months later. During the campaign, he said he and Chasten had hopes of becoming parents.

Asked about his desire to be a father, Buttigieg told the AP "we're still working at that," before adding with a smile, "Stay tuned."

As quickly as he rose, Buttigieg swiftly suspended his campaign in March 2020, before Biden's ascension in the primary was clear. He knew when to get out. He'll probably know when to get back in, too, if he does.

"He has incredible political talent and skill," said Mayor Nan Whaley of Dayton, Ohio, a longtime friend and 2020 campaign supporter. "But part of that talent and skill is having really great political timing."

On that front, she sees his work on infrastructure not as "part of this grand plan on his next move," but rather as a demonstration of his ability to focus on the task at hand.

Buttigieg and his husband have been spotted walking around their new neighborhood, Capitol Hill, where they live in a one-bedroom apartment, meandering the artisanal stalls at Eastern Market to smiles from residents. Last weekend, they wandered along the brick row houses and blooming magnolia cherry blossom trees, greeting neighbors with waves and allowing young children to pet their dogs. Their one-eyed puggle named "Buddy," adopted in late 2018, has become something of an Instagram star.

Buddy lingered as a blond-haired little girl ran up and sat to snuggle him while the other lab mix, Truman, stood nearby.

"He loves the attention," Chasten Buttigieg explained to the girl, a trait Buddy picked up during the campaign.

Pete Buttigieg smiled as the girl gave the dog a goodbye scratch on the head, and the couple slowly made the way back on a path toward the Capitol.

Jordanian prince's criticism put kingdom's allies in bind

By JOSEF FEDERMAN Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Jordan's allies on Sunday rallied around King Abdullah II after his half-brother unleashed unprecedented public criticism of how the country is run, complaining of corruption and lack of free expression.

The swift show of support, even as Abdullah placed Prince Hamzah under house arrest, underscored Jordan's strategic importance as an island of relative stability in the turbulent region. While the harsh criticism from a popular member of the ruling family could lend support to growing complaints about the kingdom's poor governance, the king's tough reaction also illustrated the limits to which he will accept public dissent.

Labib Kamhawi, a Jordanian analyst, said Hamzah had crossed a red line by indicating he might be an alternative to the long-ruling king.

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"This is something the king does not accept or tolerate," he said. "This is why we are now witnessing what has happened. This file is now more or less closed."

Early on Sunday, Hamzah's mother, Queen Noor, expressed sympathy for "innocent victims."

"Praying that truth and justice will prevail for all the innocent victims of this wicked slander. God bless and keep them safe," she tweeted.

In his video, Hamzah said he was visited early Saturday by the kingdom's military chief and told he could not go out, communicate with people or meet with them. He said his phone and internet service were cut and his satellite internet, used to record the message, was being cut off as well.

He said he was told he was being punished for taking part in meetings in which the king had been criticized, though he said he was not accused of joining in the criticism.

Hamzah then lashed out at the "ruling system" without mentioning the king by name, saying it had decided "that its personal interests, that its financial interests, that its corruption is more important than the lives and dignity and futures of the 10 million people that live here."

"I'm not part of any conspiracy or nefarious organization or foreign-backed group, as is always the claim here for anyone who speaks out," he said. "There are members of this family who still love this country, who care for (its people) and will put them above all else."

"Apparently, that is a crime worthy of isolation, threats and now being cut off," he added.

Hamzah is a former crown prince who was stripped of that title by Abdullah in 2004, five years after becoming king following the death of their father, the late King Hussein.

Hamzah is a popular figure in Jordan, widely seen as pious and modest. It is extremely rare for senior members of the ruling family to clash so publicly.

Adding to the kingdom's embarrassment, his claims contradicted statements by the military chief, Gen. Yousef Huneiti, denying that Hamzah was detained or under house arrest.

The general told the official Petra news agency that Hamzah had been merely asked to "stop some movements and activities that are being used to target Jordan's security and stability," and that an investigation was ongoing.

Whatever damage the crisis might have inside Jordan, however, appeared to have little immediate effect on outside support for Abdullah.

U.S. State Department spokesman Ned Price said, "King Abdullah is a key partner of the United States, and he has our full support."

The U.S. considers Jordan a major ally, granting it access to military equipment and assistance. U.S. special forces and other troops routinely train with the Jordanians. The kingdom hosts some 3,000 American troops.

Pro-U.S. Gulf Arab countries, which have many Jordanians working across public sector jobs, also immediately issued statements backing the king and his government.

The state-run Saudi Press Agency said the kingdom's royal court supported King Abdullah's efforts "to maintain security and stability and defuse every attempt to influence them."

Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates similarly issued statements supporting Abdullah.

Abdullah and the Saudi crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman, are believed to have had a sometimes tense relationship over Saudi gestures toward Israel in recent years. However, Saudi social media lit up overnight with images of the Saudi crown prince and King Abdullah, apparently in a sign of support.

Israeli Defense Minister Benny Gantz called Jordan a "strategic ally" and dismissed the turmoil as an "internal Jordanian matter."

Stability in Jordan and the status of the king have long been matters of concern throughout the region, particularly during the Trump administration, which gave unprecedented support to Israel and sought to isolate the Palestinians, including by slashing funding for Palestinian refugees.

That placed Jordan, which serves as the custodian of Islamic holy sites in Jerusalem and is home to a large Palestinian population in a delicate position.

Jordan made peace with Israel in 1994. The countries maintain close security ties, but relations have oth-

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erwise been tense in recent years, largely due to differences linked to Israel's conflict with the Palestinians.

In early 2018, as then-President Donald Trump was threatening to cut aid to countries that did not support U.S. policies, the administration boosted assistance to Jordan by more than \$1 billion over five years.

With Hamzah remaining under house arrest Sunday, it was unclear how long the standoff could continue without threatening Abdullah's international standing.

Adam Coogle, deputy director for the Middle East and North Africa for Human Rights Watch, said there has been a slow but steady slide in personal freedoms in Jordan in recent years.

"There's no question that there's been a real degradation in the space for critical political conversation and in terms of basic freedoms," he said. "We've reached a real low point."

Coogle cited the rise of the Islamic State group and the threat it posed to the Jordanian regime and the warming of ties between Israel and Gulf Arab countries during the Trump era, often at Jordan's expense. He also pointed to the decline in Jordan's economy during the coronavirus pandemic. Unemployment has skyrocketed to some 25%, while the country has been saddled with an influx of some 1 million Syrian refugees.

Oded Eran, a former Israeli ambassador to Jordan and senior research fellow at the Institute for National Security Studies in Tel Aviv, said the the past year has created "pockets of resentment and frustration."

But he did not think there is a credible threat to Abdullah's rule and it is unlikely to lead to a popular uprising.

"I doubt that this could be more than talk of disgruntled people, important as they are," he said.

Singing hymns through masks, Christians mark pandemic Easter

By FRANCES D'EMILIO Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Christianity's most joyous feast day was celebrated worldwide with faithful sitting far apart in pews and singing choruses of "Hallelujah" through face coverings on a second Easter Sunday conditioned by pandemic precautions.

From Protestant churches in South Korea to St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican, worshippers followed national or local regulations aimed at preventing the transmission of the coronavirus.

At a hospital in the Lombardy region of Italy, where the pandemic first erupted in the West in February 2020, a hospital gave a traditional dove-shaped Easter cake symbolizing peace to each person who lined up to receive a COVID-19 vaccine. Many of the ones who came were in their 80s and accompanied by adult children.

In Jerusalem, air travel restrictions and quarantine regulations prevented foreign pilgrims from flocking to religious sites during Holy Week, which culminates in Easter celebrations.

Inside St. Peter's Basilica, Pope Francis sprinkled incense near an icon of Jesus and said, "May the joy of Easter extend to the whole world."

The 200 or so faithful who were allowed to attend looked lost in the cavernous cathedral. Normally, thousands would attend the popular service and a crowd would gather outside in St. Peter's Square, with more than 100,000 sometimes assembling to receive the pope's special Easter blessing after Mass.

But this year, like last year, crowds are banned from gathering in Italy, and at the Vatican. So Francis scheduled his noon Easter address on world affairs to be delivered from inside the basilica.

Intent on tamping down weeks of surging infections, the Italian government ordered people to stay home during the three-day weekend except for essential errands like food shopping or exercise. Premier Mario Draghi did grant a concession, permitting one visit to family or friends per day in residents' home regions over the long weekend, which includes the Little Easter national holiday on Monday.

In Jerusalem, the Easter service at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher was celebrated by Latin Patriarch Pierbattista, the senior Roman Catholic cleric in the Holy Land. The site in Jerusalem's Old City is where many Christians believe Jesus was crucified, buried and rose from the dead.

Israel has launched one of the world's most successful vaccination campaigns, allowing the country to reopen restaurants, hotels and religious sites. Israel captured the Old City, home to holy sites of the

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three Abrahamic religions, in a 1967 war and later annexed it in a move unrecognized by the international community.

In South Korea, Yoido Full Gospel Church, the biggest Protestant church in the country, allowed only about 2,000 church members to attend Easter service, or about 17% of the capacity of church's main building. Masked church members sang hymns, clapped hands and prayed as the service was broadcast online and by Christian TV channels.

Seoul's Myeongdong Catholic Cathedral, the biggest Catholic church in South Korea, limited Mass attendance to 20% capacity and livestreamed the Easter service on YouTube.

In Italy's southern region of Puglia, the governor and many mayors urged the faithful to stay home and watch Mass on TV. The region is one of many in Italy under the most severe "red-zone" restrictions due to the COVID-19 infection rate.

Attending a Saturday night Easter Vigil Mass is a popular practice for many in Italy. But with the nation under a 10 p.m. to 5 a.m. curfew, churches moved up the traditional starting times by a couple of hours. Church bells in Italy summoned people to services unusually early, tolling before sunset in some places.

A similar scenario played out in France, which is reeling from a frightful uptick in COVID-19 cases that are overtaking already strained hospitals. Some French churches held their traditional midnight Easter services just before dawn Sunday instead of on Saturday night because of a nationwide 7 p.m. to 6 a.m. curfew.

Expats struggle to get vaccines in Kuwait, citizens come 1st

By ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — In the tiny, oil-rich sheikhdom of Kuwait, the foreigners who power the country's economy, serve its society and make up 70% of its population are struggling to get coronavirus vaccines.

Unlike other Gulf Arab states that have administered doses to masses of foreign workers in a race to reach herd immunity, Kuwait has come under fire for vaccinating its own people first.

That leaves legions of laborers from Asia, Africa and elsewhere, who clean Kuwaiti nationals' homes, care for their children, drive their cars and bag their groceries, still waiting for their first doses, despite bearing the brunt of the pandemic.

"The only people I've seen at the vaccination center were Kuwaiti," said a 27-year-old Kuwaiti doctor, who like most people interviewed for this story spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of government reprisals. "Kuwait has a citizens-first policy for everything, including when it comes to public health."

Kuwaiti authorities did not respond to repeated requests for comment from The Associated Press on their vaccination strategy.

When Kuwait's vaccination registration site went live in December, authorities declared that health-care workers, older adults and those with underlying conditions would be first in line. As weeks ticked by, however, it became increasingly clear the lion's share of doses was going to Kuwaitis, regardless of their age or health. Initially, some expat medical workers said they couldn't even get appointments.

Kuwait's labor system, which links migrants' residency status to their jobs and gives employers outsized power, prevails across the Gulf Arab states. But hostility toward migrants long has burned hotter in Kuwait. The legacy of the 1991 Gulf War, which triggered mass deportations of Palestinian, Jordanian and Yemeni workers whose leaders had supported Iraq in the conflict, fueled anxiety about the need for self-reliance in Kuwait that endures today — even as Southeast Asian laborers rushed to fill the void.

A 30-year-old Indian woman who has spent her whole life in Kuwait watched her Instagram feed fill with celebratory photos of Kuwaiti teenagers getting the jab. Her father, a 62-year-old diabetic with high blood pressure, could not — like the rest of her relatives living there.

"All the Kuwaitis I know are vaccinated," she said. "It's more than just annoying, it's a realization that no, this is not cool, there is no way to feel like I belong here anymore."

Kuwait has vaccinated its citizens at a rate six times that of non-citizens, the Health Ministry revealed earlier this year. At the time, despite some 238,000 foreigners registering online to book an appointment,

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only 18,000 of them — mostly doctors, nurses and well-connected workers in state oil companies — were actually called in to receive the vaccine. Meanwhile, some 119,000 Kuwaitis were vaccinated.

With vaccine information only available in English or Arabic, advocates say that locks out scores of low-wage laborers from Southeast Asia who speak neither language.

The disparity set off a roiling debate on social media, with users decrying what they called the latest instance of xenophobia in Kuwait. They say the pandemic has magnified resentment of migrant workers, deepened social divides and hardened the government's resolve to protect its own people first. Medical professionals warned Kuwait's inoculation hierarchy damages public health.

Compared to the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, among the world's fastest vaccinators per capita, Kuwait's drive has lagged. While foreigners wait for shots, medical workers say Kuwaiti citizens remain reluctant to register because of vaccine conspiracy theories shared widely on social media. Infections have soared, prompting the government to impose a strict nightly curfew last month.

With pressure mounting on the Health Ministry, barriers eased in recent weeks, with a growing number of foreign residents 65 years of age and older reporting they were able to get vaccinated. Still, most expats insist the inequality in access remains striking.

"We are waiting and waiting for the call," said a 55-year-old house cleaner from Sri Lanka. "The moment I get the call, I will go. I need the vaccine to be safe."

The government has not released a demographic breakdown of vaccinated foreigners vs. Kuwaitis since the outrage over the inequality erupted in mid-February, only overall vaccination statistics. As of this week, 500,000 people have received at least one dose of either Pfizer-BioNTech or Oxford-AstraZeneca, according to health authorities.

Even as the bulk of front-line workers in grocery stores and cafes remain unvaccinated, Kuwait is making plans to reopen society for the inoculated. Those who can prove they got the jab will be able to attend schools in the fall, go to cinemas in the spring and skip quarantine after flying into the country, the government announced.

Foreign workers in Kuwait have felt this frustration before. When the pandemic first struck, lawmakers, talk show hosts and prominent actresses blamed migrants for the virus's spread.

As the coronavirus ripped through crowded districts and dormitories where many foreigners live, authorities imposed targeted lockdowns and published surging virus counts with a breakdown of nationalities. When infections among Kuwaitis rose, the government stopped releasing demographic data.

"It's easy for migrants to be seen as the root of all problems in Kuwait," said Rohan Advani, a researcher of sociology at the University of California, Los Angeles. "Citizens don't have political or economic power, so when they don't like what's happening to their country, blaming foreigners becomes the main outlet."

Despite having an outspoken parliament, final power in Kuwait rests with the ruling emir. Kuwaiti citizens, who are guaranteed spots on the public payroll and reap the benefits of a cradle-to-grave welfare state, increasingly have clamored for policies that limit the flow of migrants.

Earlier this year, the government banned the renewal of visas for expats over 60 without college degrees, effectively expelling an estimated 70,000 people, including many who have lived in Kuwait for decades.

"This discrimination is not new for us. The pandemic has just highlighted the worst of it," said a 30-year-old Lebanese woman who grew up in Kuwait and whose older relatives are still waiting for vaccines.

"But this is life and death," she said. "I never really thought it would reach this point."

To the bank! Suggs hits the winner, Zags top UCLA 93-90

By EDDIE PELLIS AP National Writer

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Jalen Suggs took the inbound pass and saw nothing but clear sailing. Three dribbles. Past the half-court line. A little stutter-step.

And straight into history.

The Gonzaga freshman banked in a shot at the buzzer from near the Final Four logo for a 93-90 overtime

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win over UCLA on Saturday night that vaulted the Bulldogs to within one win of an undefeated season and the national title.

Talk about a perfect finish!

This thriller in the national semifinal was the best game of the tournament, and, considering the stakes, it served up possibly the best ending in the history of March Madness — a kiss off the glass from near midcourt to keep a perfect season alive.

"Stuff like this is something you dream of as a kid and that you practice on your mini-hoop," Suggs said.

After the shot went in, Suggs ran to the mostly empty press row, jumped up on the table, pumped his fists and let out a huge yell to the crowd of 8,000-or-so socially distanced fans. The refs checked to make sure he got the shot off before the buzzer sounded. He did, and the Bulldogs moved to 31-0 and into Monday night's final, where they'll play Baylor for the title.

They are the first team to bring an undefeated record into the championship game since Larry Bird and Indiana State in 1979. Bird lost that game to Magic Johnson and Michigan State. It means Gonzaga could become the first team since the 1976 Indiana Hoosiers to go undefeated.

"We were lucky enough to hit a 50-footer," Gonzaga coach Mark Few said. "So it helps when you have a magical, special guy like Jalen, special at the end of games."

Even without Suggs' shot, it would've been hard to beat this game for pure excitement — a welcome relief in a tournament that has produced mostly blowouts and duds, sort of like Baylor's 78-59 snoozer over Houston earlier in the evening.

The nightcap featured 15 ties and 19 lead changes and an 11th-seeded UCLA team that simply wouldn't give in. Even though they lost, the Bruins snapped a streak of 27 straight double-digit wins by Few's juggernaut.

Some might say it was the greatest game ever.

"I'd say no because we didn't win," UCLA coach Mick Cronin said.

UCLA (22-10) was the first team to lead Gonzaga in the second half over five games of tournament play and, in fact, had a chance to win at the end of regulation.

With the game tied at 81, Johnny Juzang was taking it hard to the hoop in the final seconds, when Zags forward Drew Timme, playing with four fouls, stepped into the paint, planted his feet and took a charge.

Gonzaga called time and tried a Grant Hill-to-Christian Laettner full-court pass with 1.1 seconds left. It didn't connect. Five minutes later, Suggs knocked Laettner's shot down a spot on the list of all-timers.

Turns out, it's a shot the freshman — who chose Gonzaga basketball over a chance to play Division I football — practices every day.

"I'm just telling you he makes those ones all the time in practice," Few said. "He's just got this magical aura about him. I knew when he shot it, it was going in."

Before that, Suggs' best play might have been his rejection of UCLA big man Cody Riley (14 points, 10 rebounds), who looked to be going in for a dunk that would have put the Bruins up by two at the 2-minute mark. Suggs got the block, then fed Timme (25 points) for a dunk that instead gave the Zags the slight advantage with 1:55 left.

UCLA deserved better than this.

The Bruins went toe-to-toe all night with the top-ranked team in the country. This was their third overtime out of six games in the tournament — they played an extra one in the First Four play-in round — and they never trailed by more than seven. They got everything they could have dreamed of on a magical night of college hoops. Everything but the win.

And so, they stay "stuck" on their nation-leading 11 titles, most of them won back in the '60s and '70s when John Wooden was the coach.

"I just told them, 'We've got to let that shot go,'" Cronin said. "We won. I sit in coach Wooden's seat. When you sit in his seat, you have to channel the things that he taught. True greatness is giving your best effort."

Who would dare say they didn't?

Juzang had 29 points for the Bruins, including a 15-footer with 1:27 left in regulation that helped them

claw back from seven down to tie it at 79.

Jamie Jaquez Jr. was also unintimidated by Gonzaga. He handled Timme's inside pressure all night, scoring 19 points. Jaquez's two free throws tied it at 81 with 43 seconds left.

It looked like it would be Timme's overtime. He dipped and ducked for Gonzaga's first six points of the extra session and an 87-83 lead that felt like breathing room in this one.

But Cronin called a timeout and UCLA chipped away again.

Juzang's putback with 3.3 seconds left tied it at 90. Few didn't call timeout. Corey Kispert collected the ball as it fell through the net, passed it in to Suggs, and that set the stage for a great shot. Maybe a re-write of the history books, too.

There was Laettner's catch-and-shoot to help Duke beat Kentucky back in 1992. In 2016, Kris Jenkins made a 3 to help Villanova win the title at the buzzer. Eleven years ago, right here in Indy, Gordon Hayward of Butler launched a half-court heave that went in and out and almost toppled Duke.

Suggs' shot came from a little closer.

But it went in.

"This is," he said, "the greatest feeling I've ever been a part of."

AP source: Suspect in Capitol attack suffered delusions

By MICHAEL BALSAMO, ERIC TUCKER and NOMAAN MERCHANT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The man who rammed a car into two officers at a barricade outside the U.S. Capitol, killing one of them before he was shot to death by police, had been suffering from delusions, paranoia and suicidal thoughts, a U.S. official told The Associated Press. Investigators believe it was an isolated incident from a disturbed young man.

Video of the Friday afternoon attack shows the driver emerging from the crashed car with a knife in his hand and starting to run at the pair of officers, Capitol Police acting Chief Yogananda Pittman told reporters. Police shot the suspect, 25-year-old Noah Green, who died at a hospital.

Investigators are increasingly focused on Green's mental health as they work to identify any motive for the attack, said the official, who was not authorized to speak publicly about an ongoing investigation and spoke to the AP on Saturday on condition of anonymity. The official said investigators had talked to Green's family, who spoke of his increasingly delusional thoughts.

In online posts since removed, Green described being under government thought control and said he was being watched. He described himself as a follower of the Nation of Islam and its longtime leader, Louis Farrakhan, and spoke of going through a difficult time when he leaned on his faith. Some of the messages were captured by the group SITE, which tracks online activity.

"To be honest these past few years have been tough, and these past few months have been tougher," he wrote in late March. "I have been tried with some of the biggest, unimaginable tests in my life. I am currently now unemployed after I left my job partly due to afflictions, but ultimately, in search of a spiritual journey."

It was the second line-of-duty death this year for the U.S. Capitol Police, still struggling to heal from the Jan. 6 insurrection. The attack underscored that the building and campus — and the officers charged with protecting them — remain potential targets for violence.

Authorities installed a giant fence around the Capitol perimeter and for months restricted traffic along the roads closest to the building, but they had begun pulling back some of the emergency measures. And the most recent incident could delay the gradual reopening of the building's grounds to the public.

"I just ask that the public continue to keep U.S. Capitol Police and their families in your prayers," Pittman said. "This has been an extremely difficult time for U.S. Capitol Police after the events of Jan. 6 and now the events that have occurred here today.

Police identified the slain officer as William "Billy" Evans, an 18-year veteran who was a member of the department's first responders unit.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi hailed Evans as a "martyr for our democracy," while Senate Majority Leader

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Chuck Schumer said he was "heartbroken." Pelosi and Schumer both spoke Friday with members of Evans' family.

President Joe Biden said in a statement that he and his wife were heartbroken to learn of the attack and expressed condolences to Evans' family. He directed flags at the White House to be lowered to half-staff.

In 2013, officers with the Capitol Police and Secret Service fatally shot a woman inside her car after she led them on a high-speed chase that began outside the White House. Miriam Carey's family said she suffered from postpartum depression with psychosis but was not dangerous.

Friday's crash and shooting happened at a security checkpoint near the Capitol typically used by senators and staff on weekdays, though most were away from the building for the current recess. The attack occurred about 100 yards (meters) from the entrance of the building on the Senate side of the Capitol.

The Washington region remains on edge nearly three months after a mob of insurrectionists loyal to former President Donald Trump stormed the building as Congress was voting to certify Biden's presidential win.

Five people died in the Jan. 6 riot, including Capitol Police officer Brian Sicknick, who was among a badly outnumbered force trying to fight off the intruders. It took hours for the National Guard to arrive, a delay that has driven months of finger-pointing among that day's key decision makers.

Almost 140 Capitol Police officers were wounded in that attack, including officers not issued helmets who sustained head injuries and one with cracked ribs, according to the officers' union. Two officers, one from Capitol Police and another from Washington's Metropolitan Police Department, died by suicide following the Jan. 6 attack.

Capitol Police and National Guard troops were called upon soon afterward to secure the Capitol during Biden's inauguration and faced another potential threat in early March linked to conspiracy theories falsely claiming Trump would retake the presidency.

The area was locked down for hours Friday but has since reopened, and National Guard troops stood outside the building on Saturday.

Rapper DMX on life support after heart attack, lawyer says

By DAVE COLLINS and JONATHAN LANDRUM Jr. undefined

DMX's longtime New York-based lawyer, Murray Richman, said the rapper was on life support Saturday evening at White Plains Hospital.

"He had a heart attack. He's quite ill," Richman said.

Richman said he could not confirm reports that DMX, 50, overdosed on drugs and was not sure what caused the heart attack.

"I'm very sad about it, extremely sad. He's like my son," Richman said. "He's just a tremendous person, tremendous entertainer, tremendous human being. And so much to offer, so much to say. Not the run-of-the-mill rapper. A person of great depth."

On Saturday night, the TMZ.com website reported that it received a statement from a representative of DMX, whose real name is Earl Simmons, that said: "Last night Earl 'DMX' Simmons was rushed to the hospital after collapsing at home. At this time he remains in ICU in critical condition. Earl has been a warrior his entire life. This situation represents yet another road he must conquer.

"The Simmons Family appreciates the overwhelming outpouring of heartfelt love, encouragement, support and prayers for Earl. Earl is someone whose life and music have been a source of inspiration and strength to so many people around the world. It is reassuring to see his fans return that same passion and energy to him during his time of need."

DMX made a splash in rap music in 1998 with his first studio album "It's Dark and Hell is Hot," which debuted No. 1 on the Billboard 200 chart. The multiplatinum selling album was anchored by several hits including "Ruff Ryders' Anthem," "Get At Me Dog" and "Stop Being Greedy."

The rapper had four other chart-topping albums including "...And Then There Was X," "Flesh of My Flesh, Blood of My Blood," "The Great Depression" and "Grand Champ." He has released seven albums

and earned three Grammy nominations.

Along with his music career, DMX paved his way as an actor. He starred in the 1998 film "Belly" and appeared in "Romeo Must Die" a couple years later with Jet Li and the late singer Aaliyah. DMX and Aaliyah teamed up for the film's soundtrack song "Come Back in One Piece."

The rapper also starred in "Exit Wounds" with Steven Seagal and "Cradle 2 the Grave" with Li.

Over the years, DMX has battled with substance abuse. The rapper canceled a series of shows to check himself into a rehabilitation facility in 2019. In an Instagram post, his team said he apologized for the canceled shows and thanked his fans for the continued support.

Last year, DMX faced off against Snoop Dogg in a Verzuz battle, which drew more than 500,000 viewers.

Bearing down: Baylor routs Houston 78-59 to reach title game

By DAVE SKRETTA AP Basketball Writer

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Nearly two decades ago, Scott Drew decided to leave his comfort zone at tiny Valparaiso for the scandal-plagued basketball program at Baylor, explaining to his father that there was nowhere for the Bears to go but up.

Now, they're one win away from the top.

Led by Jared Butler and the rest of their brilliant backcourt, a defense that refused to give Houston an inch and a coach intent on making the most of his first trip to the Final Four, the Bears roared to a 78-59 victory Saturday night in their first appearance in the NCAA Tournament semifinals in 71 long years.

"Every day you're grinding, and you don't really look back. You're pressing forward," Drew said, "but I'm so blessed to have these unbelievable players that bought into what we like to do with the program."

Or, as Butler put it: "This is what we came to Baylor to do."

Butler scored all 17 of his points in the first half, but just about everyone from Baylor (27-2) got into the act, with five players scoring in double figures. They built a 45-20 lead by halftime and coasted the rest of the way in the first Final Four showdown between schools from the Lone Star State.

Next up for the Bears is Gonzaga, the overall No. 1 seed, which beat UCLA 93-90 when Jalen Suggs banked in a buzzer-beater in overtime. Monday night's championship is a matchup that was supposed to take place in December, but that game was called off hours before tipoff due to a COVID-19 outbreak within the Bulldogs program.

"They got pros, we got pros. They win a lot of games, we win a lot of games," Butler said. "I think we match up pretty well."

Better than Houston did with them.

Marcus Sasser had 20 points and Quentin Grimes 13 for the cold-shooting Cougars (28-4), whose dream path to their first Final Four since 1984 — they faced teams seeded 15th, 10th, 11th and 12th along the way — ended with a whimper against a team that spent most of the season ranked No. 2 in the nation behind Gonzaga.

"We had a great run," Sasser said as he choked back tears. "Just fell short this year."

Butler said this week that Baylor had been focused squarely on the Final Four since the moment last year's tournament was canceled by the pandemic. And for Drew, the wait goes back even longer.

He took over a program 18 years ago embroiled in arguably the biggest controversy in college basketball history: the graphic shooting death of player Patrick Dennehy, his teammate Devon Dotson pleading guilty to his murder, attempts by then-coach Dave Bliss to cover it all up and NCAA sanctions that lasted well into Drew's own tenure.

Yet somehow, the son of longtime Valpo coach Homer Drew could always picture the very scene that unfolded Saturday night: His team playing selflessly, almost effortlessly, never once feeling the pressure of college basketball's biggest stage, then celebrating their success at midcourt when the final buzzer sounded.

Well, there were a couple things Drew probably didn't picture.

Instead of 70,000 fans reaching to the rafters, the Bears were cheered in the lower bowl by thousands of cardboard cutouts — the late Georgetown coach John Thompson, New Mexico State mascot Pistol Pete

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and everyone in between — due to COVID-19 measures that have forced them to live in a bubble for the last three weeks.

The roughly 8,000 fans that were allowed through the doors, socially distanced in a vast ocean of blue seats, provided a muted soundtrack to the blowout taking place inside the cavernous home of the Indianapolis Colts.

"This was probably the toughest year for any of us," Houston coach Kelvin Sampson said, "and not just the bubble here but COVID challenges, isolation, being quarantined, social distancing, masks — this was quite a year. But you know, the sting of this will leave them. Days will turn into weeks, weeks into months, and what they'll remember is the memories."

At least, all those leading up to Saturday night.

The Bears controlled the game from the jump, unleashing an early 14-3 run fueled by the crisp passing, silky shooting and dastardly defense that made them unbeatable before a 23-day COVID-19 pause late in the regular season.

When the Cougars finally scored, the Bears ripped off another 16-3 run later in the first half, carving up the nation's top 3-point field-goal defense with ruthless efficiency. By the time Davion Mitchell knocked down back-to-back 3-pointers to end the first half, the Bears had a 45-20 lead that felt insurmountable.

"I don't think I've seen a team with five guards at that level, no drop-off," Sampson said, "and they were good at both ends of the floor."

Sasser did everything he could to keep Houston alive, hitting five 3-pointers and scoring 17 himself. But the rest of the Cougars were 1 of 15 from the field, including their All-American guard Grimes (0 for 5) and DeJon Jarreau (1 for 7), who earned MVP honors in the Midwest Region.

Sampson, whose reputation for being a master tactician was stretched to the limit, tried to get the guard-heavy Cougars to go to the basket more in the second half. But nothing seemed to work.

"We came out of the locker room and competed," Sampson said with a shake of his head, "but Baylor is the best team we've played. They may be the best team we've played in the seven years I've been here."

Meanwhile, the big cushion down the stretch gave the Bears — mullet-haired Matthew Mayer, MaCio Teague and Jonathan Tchamwa Tchatchoua in their bright pink sneakers, Butler and Mitchell and the rest of their guys lounging on the bench — plenty of time to celebrate the program's second trip to the national title game.

"It hasn't sunk in yet, to be honest with you," Butler said. "I think it'll sink in later in life, or two months from now, and I'll think, 'Wow, we were in the national title game.' Or next year when I watch it, I'll think, 'Wow, we were there.'"

Facebook data on more than 500M accounts found online

NEW YORK (AP) — Details from more than 500 million Facebook users have been found available on a website for hackers.

The information appears to be several years old, but it is another example of the vast amount of information collected by Facebook and other social media sites, and the limits to how secure that information is.

The availability of the data set was first reported by Business Insider. According to that publication, it has information from 106 countries including phone numbers, Facebook IDs, full names, locations, birthdates, and email addresses.

Facebook has been grappling with data security issues for years. In 2018, the social media giant disabled a feature that allowed users to search for one another via phone number following revelations that the political firm Cambridge Analytica had accessed information on up to 87 million Facebook users without their knowledge or consent.

In December 2019, a Ukrainian security researcher reported finding a database with the names, phone numbers and unique user IDs of more than 267 million Facebook users — nearly all U.S.-based — on the open internet. It is unclear if the current data dump is related to this database.

"This is old data that was previously reported on in 2019," the Menlo Park, California-based company

said in a statement. "We found and fixed this issue in August 2019."

AP source: Suspect in Capitol attack suffered delusions

By MICHAEL BALSAMO, ERIC TUCKER and NOMAAN MERCHANT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The man who rammed a car into two officers at a barricade outside the U.S. Capitol, killing one of them before he was shot to death by police, had been suffering from delusions, paranoia and suicidal thoughts, a U.S. official told The Associated Press on Saturday. Investigators believe it was an isolated incident from a disturbed young man.

Video of the Friday afternoon attack shows the driver emerging from the crashed car with a knife in his hand and starting to run at the pair of officers, Capitol Police acting Chief Yogananda Pittman told reporters. Police shot the suspect, 25-year-old Noah Green, who died at a hospital.

Investigators are increasingly focused on Green's mental health as they work to identify any motive for the attack, said the official, who was not authorized to speak publicly about an ongoing investigation and spoke to The AP on condition of anonymity. The official said investigators had talked to Green's family, who spoke of his increasingly delusional thoughts.

In online posts since removed, Green described being under government thought control and said he was being watched. He described himself as a follower of the Nation of Islam and its longtime leader, Louis Farrakhan, and spoke of going through a difficult time when he leaned on his faith. Some of the messages were captured by the group SITE, which tracks online activity.

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It was the second line-of-duty death this year for the U.S. Capitol Police, still struggling to heal from the Jan. 6 insurrection. The attack underscored that the building and campus — and the officers charged with protecting them — remain potential targets for violence.

Authorities installed a giant fence around the Capitol perimeter and for months restricted traffic along the roads closest to the building, but they had begun pulling back some of the emergency measures. And the most recent incident could delay the gradual reopening of the building's grounds to the public.

"I just ask that the public continue to keep U.S. Capitol Police and their families in your prayers," Pittman said. "This has been an extremely difficult time for U.S. Capitol Police after the events of Jan. 6 and now the events that have occurred here today.

Police identified the slain officer as William "Billy" Evans, an 18-year veteran who was a member of the department's first responders unit.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi hailed Evans as a "martyr for our democracy," while Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said he was "heartbroken." Pelosi and Schumer both spoke Friday with members of Evans' family.

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The Washington region remains on edge nearly three months after a mob of insurrectionists loyal to former President Donald Trump stormed the building as Congress was voting to certify Biden's presidential win.

Five people died in the Jan. 6 riot, including Capitol Police officer Brian Sicknick, who was among a badly outnumbered force trying to fight off the intruders. It took hours for the National Guard to arrive, a delay

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that has driven months of finger-pointing among that day's key decision makers.

Almost 140 Capitol Police officers were wounded in that attack, including officers not issued helmets who sustained head injuries and one with cracked ribs, according to the officers' union. Two officers, one from Capitol Police and another from Washington's Metropolitan Police Department, died by suicide following the Jan. 6 attack.

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Jordan prince says he's confined, lashes out at authorities

AMMAN, Jordan (AP) —

The half-brother of Jordan's King Abdullah II said Saturday he has been placed under house arrest and accused the country's "ruling system" of incompetence and corruption, exposing a rare rift within the ruling monarchy of a close Western ally.

Prince Hamzah's videotaped statement came after the country's official news agency reported that two former senior officials and other suspects had been arrested for "security reasons," even as authorities denied that Hamzah had been detained or placed under house arrest.

In a video leaked to the British Broadcasting Corp., Hamzah — a former crown prince stripped of his title in 2004 — said he was visited early Saturday by the country's military chief and told he was not allowed to go out, communicate with people or meet with them.

He said his security detail was removed, and his phone and Internet service had been cut. He said he was speaking over satellite Internet and expected that service to be cut as well. The BBC said it received the statement from Hamzah's lawyer.

Hamzah said he had been informed he was being punished for taking in part in meetings in which the king had been criticized, though he said he was not accused of joining in the criticism.

He then lashed out at the "ruling system" without mentioning the king by name, saying it had decided "that its personal interests, that its financial interests, that its corruption is more important than the lives and dignity and futures of the 10 million people that live here."

"I'm not part of any conspiracy or nefarious organization or foreign-backed group, as is always the claim here for anyone who speaks out," he said. "There are members of this family who still love this country, who care for (its people) and will put them above all else."

"Apparently, that is a crime worthy of isolation, threats and now being cut off," he added.

It is rare for a senior member of the ruling family to express such harsh criticism of the government, and any sign of instability in Jordan is likely to raise concerns among the country's Western allies.

Hamzah is a popular figure in Jordan. He is seen as religious and modest, in touch with the common people and similar to his beloved father, the late King Hussein. He has criticized the government in the past, accusing officials of "failed management" after they approved an income tax law in 2018.

The country's top general had earlier denied that Hamzah was detained or under house arrest. Hamzah was asked to "stop some movements and activities that are being used to target Jordan's security and stability," Gen. Yousef Huneiti was quoted as saying by the official Petra news agency.

He said an investigation was ongoing and its results would be made public "in a transparent and clear form."

"No one is above the law, and Jordan's security and stability are above all," he added.

Petra had earlier reported that Sharif Hassan bin Zaid, a member of the royal family, and Bassem Ibrahim Awadallah, a former head of the royal court, were detained. Awadallah also previously served as planning minister and finance minister and has private business interests throughout the Gulf region.

The agency did not provide further details or name the others who were arrested.

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Abdullah has ruled Jordan since the 1999 death of his father, King Hussein, who ruled the country for close to a half-century. Abdullah has cultivated close relations with U.S. and other Western leaders over the years, and Jordan was a key ally in the war against the Islamic State group. The country borders Israel, the occupied West Bank, Syria, Iraq and Saudi Arabia.

"We are closely following the reports and in touch with Jordanian officials," State Department spokesman Ned Price said. "King Abdullah is a key partner of the United States, and he has our full support."

Saudi Arabia's official news agency said the kingdom "confirmed its full support to Jordan and its king and crown prince in all decisions and procedures to maintain security and stability and defuse any attempt to affect them."

Jordan's economy has been battered by the coronavirus pandemic. The country, with a population of around 10 million, also hosts more than 600,000 Syrian refugees.

Jordan made peace with Israel in 1994. The countries maintain close security ties, but relations have otherwise been tense in recent years, largely due to differences linked to Israel's conflict with the Palestinians. Jordan is home to more than 2 million Palestinian refugees, most of whom have Jordanian citizenship. Israel's Foreign Ministry declined comment.

Stability in Jordan and the status of the king has long been a matter of concern, particularly during the Trump administration, which gave unprecedented support to Israel and sought to isolate the Palestinians, including by slashing funding for Palestinian refugees.

In early 2018, as then-President Donald Trump was threatening to cut aid to countries that did not support U.S. policies, the administration boosted assistance to Jordan by more than \$1 billion over five years.

Abdullah stripped his half-brother Hamzah of his title as crown prince in 2004, saying he had decided to "free" him from the "constraints of the position" in order to allow him to take on other responsibilities. The move was seen at the time as part of Abdullah's consolidation of power five years after the succession.

The current crown prince is Abdullah's oldest son, Hussein, who is 26.

Jordan's ruling family traces its lineage back to Islam's Prophet Muhammad. Abdullah had chosen Hamzah as his crown prince hours after their father died of cancer in February 1999. The designation was out of respect for King Hussein, who was known to have favored Hamzah the most among his 11 children from four marriages.

Until now, Abdullah and Hamzah have not displayed any open rivalry. In the videotaped statement, a portrait of King Hussein could be seen on the wall behind the prince.

Georgia governor vows a fight after MLB yanks All-Star Game

MAE ANDERSON undefined

News of Major League Baseball's decision to pull this summer's All-Star Game from Georgia over its sweeping new voting law reverberated among fans Saturday, while Gov. Brian Kemp vowed to defend the measure, saying "free and fair elections" are worth any threats, boycotts or lawsuits.

The Republican governor said at a news conference that MLB "caved to fear and lies from liberal activists" when it yanked the July 13 game from Atlanta's Truist Park. He added the decision will hurt working people in the state and have long-term consequences on the economy.

"I want to be clear: I will not be backing down from this fight. We will not be intimidated, and we will also not be silenced," Kemp said.

"Major League Baseball, Coca-Cola and Delta may be scared of Stacey Abrams, Joe Biden and the left, but I am not," he said, referring to companies that have also criticized the new law.

Three groups already have filed a lawsuit over the measure, which adds greater legislative control over how elections are run and includes strict identification requirements for voting absentee by mail. It also limits the use of ballot drop boxes and makes it a crime to hand out food or water to voters waiting in line, among other provisions.

Critics say the law will disproportionately affect communities of color.

Georgia Republicans say the changes were needed to maintain voter confidence in the election system,

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and the governor insists opponents have mischaracterized what the law does. Yet GOP lawmakers made the revisions largely in response to false claims of fraud in the 2020 elections made by former President Donald Trump and his supporters.

Abrams, who has championed voting rights since narrowly losing to Kemp in the 2018 election, is among those who have spoken out against the law. The Democrat is being closely watched to see if she seeks a 2022 rematch.

Baseball fans, meanwhile, appeared divided on pulling the game from Georgia.

Patrick Smith, a lifelong Braves fan in Ellisville, Mississippi, said he thinks the league made the right decision and noted that not taking a stand would have polarized some supporters.

"When governments restrict access to the ballot box, someone has to step in to encourage these entities to roll back those measures," he said.

Lorre Sweetman, in Kahului, Hawaii, said it was a poor move by MLB because it wasn't based on the actual new voting laws but on "political pandering" and misinformation.

Still, while some fans upset about the decision have called for a boycott of professional baseball, she said she will not stop watching games and her three grandsons are still learning the sport.

"They caved to pressure without considering the message this sends to fans who just want to enjoy the game and support their team," she said. "We need to take politics out of sports."

But Dick Pagano, a baseball fan in Elk Grove Village, Illinois, said he will not watch or attend any games this year.

"They shot themselves in the foot," said Pagano, who added he will be disappointed to miss the planned Hank Aaron celebration during the All-Star Game, because he once saw him play in the 1957 World Series. Aaron, who played for the Braves in Atlanta and Milwaukee for most of his career, faced extensive hate mail and racism as he closed in on breaking Babe Ruth's home run record.

Jeffrey Guterman, a retired mental health counselor in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, who calls himself an amateur baseball historian, said the decision shows baseball changing with the times.

"I'm surprised when people argue that moving it away from Atlanta is a bad move because it would bring lots of money to the area," he said. "The question is what costs more, moving the All-Star Game or reinforcing the oppression of votes."

The league did not immediately respond to a request for comment Saturday.

MLB Commissioner Rob Manfred previously said he made the call to move the All-Star events and the amateur draft from Atlanta after discussions with individual players and the Players Alliance, an organization of Black players formed after the death of George Floyd last year. A new ballpark for the events wasn't immediately revealed.

Kemp also criticized the league for not trying to improve voter access in its home state of New York, where he said voters need an excuse to vote by mail and have fewer days of early voting than in Georgia. He said its decision means "cancel culture" is coming for American businesses and jobs.

Trump also blasted the league's move, while former President Barack Obama congratulated MLB for its decision, saying there was no better way for baseball to honor Aaron, "who always led by example."

Meanwhile, Republican U.S. Rep. Jeff Duncan of South Carolina said he's asked his staff to begin drafting a bill to remove the league's antitrust law exemption in response to the decision.

"An overwhelming bipartisan majority of Americans support requiring an ID to vote, and any organization that abuses its power to oppose secure elections deserves increased scrutiny under the law," he said in a tweet.

Baseball antitrust exemptions, in place since a 1922 Supreme Court decision, primarily allow MLB to prevent franchise moves without owner approval.

Chauvin's trial leaves many Black viewers emotionally taxed

By NOREEN NASIR and COREY WILLIAMS Associated Press

For some it's too much to watch. Others just can't turn away.

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The televised trial of Derek Chauvin, the former white police officer charged in the death of George Floyd, has provoked strong emotions among many Black men and women — all tinged with an underlying dread that it could yield yet another devastating disappointment.

For many, it has brought back memories of the disturbing video of Floyd's last moments as he gasped for breath with Chauvin's knee on his neck. The video galvanized protests in cities across the U.S. and the world, as the words "Black Lives Matter" took hold.

"I had to mute the TV," said Lisa Harris, 51, of Redford Township, just west of Detroit. "Hearing Mr. Floyd continue to say he can't breathe and call for his mother — it was a lot. It's been a lot to watch."

Steven Thompson remembers closely watching the 2013 trial of George Zimmerman in the shooting death of 17-year-old Trayvon Martin in Florida and feeling blindsided. Zimmerman, who identifies as Hispanic, was acquitted on all counts in the unarmed Black teen's death, including second-degree murder.

"I didn't expect that outcome," Thompson, 35, said. "But I'm a lot less ignorant now."

Thompson is choosing not to watch the trial of Chauvin, the former Minneapolis officer charged with murder and manslaughter, even though he feels there is a strong case against him.

"I definitely have a fear of being let down. And instead of investing my time and energy into it now, knowing how these things go, I'd rather be pleasantly surprised," the Los Angeles resident said.

Marlene Gillings-Gayle said she had planned not to watch the trial to preserve her peace of mind. But she's found herself watching almost all of it. She's had to force herself to go outside and take walks, or risk watching the trial all day and feeling upset.

The retired high school teacher who lives in New York City describes herself as a political person who likes to stay aware of current events and vocalize her opinions.

"I'm trying not to be pissed, because we've been here and done that too many times," she said, referring to other police officers acquitted in the deaths of unarmed Black people. She's watching the trial with apprehension, as she ponders what Floyd's killing and the way the trial has unfolded so far says about America and its values.

Chauvin, 45, who was eventually fired from the police force, is accused of killing a handcuffed Floyd last May by pinning his knee on the 46-year-old Black man's neck for 9 minutes, 29 seconds, as he lay face-down. Floyd had been accused of passing a counterfeit \$20 bill at a neighborhood market.

The first week of the trial has included emotional testimonies from several people who witnessed Floyd's death: The young woman, a teenager at the time, who filmed Floyd's last moments and told the courtroom she stays "up nights apologizing to George Floyd;" the 61-year-old man who sobbed on the stand, compelling the judge to order a 10-minute recess; the firefighter who begged officers to let her check Floyd's pulse as he gasped for air, saying, "I was desperate to help."

The grief and trauma of these witnesses has been on full display, filling in details from new perspectives to create a fuller picture of the scene that people around the world watched over cellphone video last May.

For Kyra Walker, it was enough to tune out and shut down Twitter one day.

"I realized I just didn't have it in me to watch all this," she said.

Floyd's death was traumatizing enough for Walker, but seeing conversations about the trial on Twitter this week brought back a flood of emotions she has grappled with over the course of the last year.

"I had a moment where I just felt broken and I started thinking about Ahmaud Arbery and Breonna Taylor and how in such a short time frame, it was like one Black death after the other, without a break," she said. It has made her feel paranoid at times for her 11-year-old Black son anytime he leaves home.

The trial is only furthering the uneasiness many felt when the video of Chauvin pressing his knee to Floyd's neck started to circulate online.

"It took me a while to watch it because I know what these videos are about. I know the ending already," Thompson said.

Leigh Smith, a logistics operations manager who lives in the Detroit suburb of Grosse Pointe Park, said he has tuned in each day of the trial. He calls some of the testimony "freaking depressing."

"You catch a murder on camera and you're going to explain away to me that this man died of a heart

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attack?" Smith said of Floyd. "All this does is reaffirm the hatred and entrenchment of white supremacy and white domination over communities of color."

Brenda Hill, 57, of Detroit watched every video during every minute of the trial's first two days. Hill, who works for a nonprofit that advocates for low-wage workers, isn't so sure the rest of the country is viewing the trial — or how African Americans continue to be treated — through the same lens.

"We don't have any trust in this criminal justice system," she said. "I should be assured that by this time everyone saw what I did. I'm disgusted, I'm hurt by everything."

As witnesses and attorneys in the courtroom recount the final moments of Floyd's life in detail, the emotional trauma many Black Americans have felt over the last several years is resurfacing.

"Our country needs counseling," Gillings-Gayle said. "The witnesses have been grieving and suffering for the last 10 months. And we've all been grieving, too."

Vaccine passports are latest flash point in COVID politics

By MARK SCOLFARO Associated Press

HARRISBURG, Pa. (AP) — Vaccine passports being developed to verify COVID-19 immunization status and allow inoculated people to more freely travel, shop and dine have become the latest flash point in America's perpetual political wars, with Republicans portraying them as a heavy-handed intrusion into personal freedom and private health choices.

They currently exist in only one state — a limited government partnership in New York with a private company — but that hasn't stopped GOP lawmakers in a handful of states from rushing out legislative proposals to ban their use.

The argument over whether passports are a sensible response to the pandemic or governmental overreach echoes the bitter disputes over the past year about masks, shutdown orders and even the vaccines themselves.

Vaccine passports are typically an app with a code that verifies whether someone has been vaccinated or recently tested negative for COVID-19. They are in use in Israel and under development in parts of Europe, seen as a way to safely help rebuild the pandemic-devastated travel industry.

They are intended to allow businesses to more safely open up as the vaccine drive gains momentum, and they mirror measures already in place for schools and overseas travel that require proof of immunization against various diseases.

But lawmakers around the country are already taking a stand against the idea. GOP senators in Pennsylvania are drawing up legislation that would prohibit vaccine passports, also known as health certificates or travel passes, from being used to bar people from routine activities.

"We have constitutional rights and health privacy laws for a reason," said Pennsylvania House Majority Leader Kerry Benninghoff, a Republican. "They should not cease to exist in a time of crisis. These passports may start with COVID-19, but where will they end?"

Benninghoff said this week his concern was "using taxpayer money to generate a system that will now be, possibly, in the hands of mega-tech organizations who've already had problems with getting hacked and security issues."

A Democratic colleague, Rep. Chris Rabb of Philadelphia, sees value in vaccine passports if they are implemented carefully.

"There's a role for using technology and other means to confirm people's statuses," Rabb said. "But we do have concerns around privacy, surveillance and inequitable access."

Republican legislators in other states have also been drafting proposals to ban or limit them. A bill introduced in the Arkansas Legislature on Wednesday would prevent government officials from requiring vaccine passports for any reason, and would ban their use as a condition of "entry, travel, education, employment or services."

The sponsor, Republican state Sen. Trent Garner, called vaccine passports "just another example of the Biden administration using COVID-19 to put regulations or restrictions on everyday Americans."

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President Joe Biden's administration has largely taken a hands-off approach on vaccine passports.

At a news conference this week, Andy Slavitt, acting administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, said he considered them a project for the private sector, not the government.

He said the government is considering federal guidelines to steer the process surrounding vaccine passports. Among its concerns: Not everyone who would need a passport has a smartphone; passports should be free and in multiple languages; and private health information must be protected.

"There will be organizations that want to use these. There will be organizations that don't want to use these," said Dr. Brian Anderson of Mitre, which operates federally funded research centers and is part of a coalition working to develop standards for vaccine certifications to make their use easier across vendors.

Anderson noted the Vaccination Credential Initiative is not making recommendations on how — or even if — organizations choose to use the certifications.

In Montana, GOP lawmakers this week voted along party lines to advance a pair of bills that would ban discrimination based on vaccine status or possession of an immunity passport, and to prohibit using vaccine status or passports to obtain certain benefits and services.

And a freshman Republican state lawmaker in Ohio spoke out about the concept, saying more restrictions or mandates are not the answer to every COVID-19 problem.

"Ohioans are encouraged to take the COVID-19 vaccine for the health and well-being of themselves and others," Rep. Al Cutrona said. "However, a vaccine should not be mandated or required by our government for our people to integrate back to a sense of normalcy."

Republican Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis on Friday issued an executive order that said no governmental entity can issue a vaccine passport, and businesses in that state can't require them. He said he expected the Legislature to pass a similar law.

His order said requiring "so-called COVID-19 vaccine passports for taking part in everyday life — such as attending a sporting event, patronizing a restaurant, or going to a movie theater — would create two classes of citizens."

U.S. Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, R-Georgia, a newly elected member who has embraced and promoted a range of far-right political positions, told her supporters on Facebook earlier this week that "something called a vaccine passport" was a form of "corporate communism" and part of a Democratic effort to control people's lives.

And a GOP lawmaker in Louisiana has teed up a bill to keep the state from including any vaccination information on the Louisiana driver's license or to make issuance of a driver's license subject to vaccine status.

In New York, a government-sponsored vaccine passport called the Excelsior Pass is being introduced. A smartphone app, it shows whether someone has been vaccinated or recently tested negative for COVID-19.

Democratic Gov. Andrew Cuomo touted the idea as letting an event venue usher, for example, use their own smartphone to scan a concertgoer's code.

New York officials have not released specific details about how the app will work, access someone's vaccination or testing status or protect a user's name, date of birth or the location where their code was scanned. The app's privacy policy says data will be "maintained in a secure manner" and won't be used for sales or marketing purposes or shared with a third party. But some privacy experts say the public needs more specifics to ensure its information is protected.

Albert Fox Cahn, founder and executive director of the Surveillance Technology Oversight Project at the Urban Justice Center, a New York-based civil rights and privacy group, warned the Excelsior Pass creates a new layer of surveillance without sufficient details about how it collects data or protects privacy.

"We basically only have screenshots of the user interface and not much more," Cahn said of Excelsior Pass.

Deadly breach could delay decisions about Capitol fencing

By MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

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WASHINGTON (AP) — The latest deadly breach of the Capitol's perimeter could delay the gradual re-opening of the building's grounds to the public just as lawmakers were eyeing a return to more normal security measures following the Jan. 6 insurrection.

Capitol Police officer William "Billy" Evans, an 18-year veteran of the force, was killed Friday when a man rammed his car into a barrier outside the Senate side of the building. The driver, identified as 25-year-old Noah Green, was shot and killed after he ran his car into Evans and another officer, got out and lunged at police with a knife.

The deaths came less than two weeks after the Capitol Police removed an outer fence that had temporarily cut off a wide swath of the area to cars and pedestrians, blocking major traffic arteries that cross the city. The fencing had been erected to secure the Capitol after the violent mob of then-President Donald Trump's supporters attacked the building Jan. 6., interrupting the certification of President Joe Biden's victory. The violence led to the deaths of five people, including a Capitol Police officer.

Police, who took the brunt of the assaults that day, have left intact a second ring of fencing around the inner perimeter of the Capitol as they struggle to figure out how to best protect the building and those who work inside it. That tall, dark fencing — parts of it covered in razor wire until just recently -- is still a stark symbol of the fear many in the Capitol felt after the mob laid siege two months ago.

Lawmakers have almost universally loathed the fencing, saying the seat of American democracy was meant to be open to the people, even if there was always going to be a threat.

But after Friday's attack, some said they needed to proceed with caution.

"It's an eyesore, it sucks," Democratic Rep. Tim Ryan of Ohio said about the fencing. "Nobody wants that there. But the question is, is the environment safe enough to be able to take it down? In the meantime, maybe that fence can prevent some of these things from happening."

Ryan, chairman of a House spending committee that oversees security and the Capitol, stressed that no decisions had been made, and that lawmakers would be "reviewing everything" after the latest deadly incident. His committee and others are looking at not only the fence but at the staffing, structure, and intelligence capabilities of the Capitol Police.

"The scab got ripped off again here today," Ryan said. "So we've got to figure this out."

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., said in a statement Saturday that Evans' death "has only added to the need to address security at the Capitol in a comprehensive way" after the January breach. Along with Ryan's House panel, two Senate committees have been looking into what changes need to be made.

Despite the fencing, Friday's breach happened inside the perimeter. The driver slipped through a gate that had opened to allow traffic in and out of the Capitol and rammed a barrier that had protected the building long before Jan. 6. And there was no evidence that Green's actions were in any way related to the insurrection.

Still, it was a reminder that there is always a target on one of the country's most visible public buildings, especially as political tensions have risen since the insurrection and there has been broad public scrutiny of the security failures that day.

"This may just cause everybody to pump the brakes a bit on taking the fence down entirely because of the sense of security that it provides us," said Democratic Rep. Jennifer Wexton of Virginia, another member of the spending panel that oversees the legislative branch.

As a lawmaker who represents the suburbs of Washington, Wexton said she wants to see the Capitol open again to visitors. While the indoor parts of the building have been closed to the public for the last year because of the coronavirus pandemic, the plazas, roads and sidewalks that surround the Capitol were only cut off after the riot, keeping the public completely away from the area.

"I would like to see it come down at the earliest possible moment," Wexton said of the fencing.

While lawmakers were initially supportive of the fencing to secure the area, and the thousands of National Guard troops sent to the Capitol to back up the overwhelmed police force, they soon said they were ready for a drawdown.

"I think we've overdone it," said Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky last month. "It

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looks terrible to have the beacon of our democracy surrounded by razor wire and National Guard troops.”

Missouri Sen. Roy Blunt, the top Republican on the Senate Rules and Administration Committee, said the fencing should come down because the next security problem is “highly unlikely to be a carbon copy of the last problem.” Republican Rep. Carlos Gimenez of Florida told Fox News he believed Democrats were keeping the fence up for “political reasons.”

But abhorrence of the fence is a rare issue on which the two parties can agree.

“It’s just ghastly, it’s an embarrassment,” said Illinois Sen. Dick Durbin, the second-ranking Democrat. “If there’s a better way to protect us, I want to see it. I want to work to get it.”

Security officials, though, say that the Capitol cannot return to what had been status quo.

In February, acting Capitol Police Chief Yogananda Pittman told lawmakers that “the Capitol’s security infrastructure must change.”

A security review requested by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., in the aftermath of the riot and conducted by a task force recommended eventually replacing the barrier with mobile fencing and “an integrated, retractable fencing system” that could be used as needed. But it is unclear whether such an expensive proposal could win approval from Congress.

Ryan said his committee was doing extensive research and even had a recent call with Israeli security officials to learn how they keep their government secure.

“We’ve got to figure out what the sweet spot is with the security,” he said.

Italy enters 3-day Easter lockdown amid vaccination snags

By NICOLE WINFIELD and ANDREA ROSA Associated Press

ROME (AP) — Italy entered a three-day nationwide coronavirus lockdown Saturday to deter Easter travel and get-togethers even as the country’s variant-fueled spike in new infections began to wane.

The government had announced last month that it would place all regions into the strictest “red zone” lockdown over the Easter weekend to limit the chances of contagion, taking the same precautions it enforced over Christmas and New Year’s.

Travel between regions and visits to relatives were being limited through Monday. Nonessential shops were closed and restaurants and bars were only open for take-out.

“People are tired, but they are aware that protecting health is essential in these times,” said Maj. Fabio Palletta, a Carabinieri military police officer manning a checkpoint in Rome on Saturday, one of many set up around the country this weekend to ensure people on the roads were authorized to travel.

The Interior Ministry also ordered up extra foot police patrols to break up large gatherings in squares and parks, which over Easter are usually packed with picnic-goers.

“I’m glad they are doing checks. It means something is working in this whole mess,” said Amato Montanari, who was pulled over for a check in Rome.

Italy, where Europe’s outbreak began, has recorded more than 110,000 COVID-19 dead, more than any other European country but Britain. Another 21,000 infections were reported Saturday in Italy, along with 376 dead.

An estimated 87% of Italy’s newest cases have been traced to the highly contagious variant first detected in Britain. But the Health Ministry reported Friday that for the second week in a row, new cases had “slightly diminished.”

But because Italian hospitals in most regions are still well over their COVID-19 capacity in both intensive care units and other wards, the ministry concluded that new infections were still “too high ... to allow any reduction in current restrictive measures.”

Italians, however, are upset over the country’s stumbling vaccination campaign, which despite having promised to prioritize older people has left many of Italy’s eldest, most vulnerable people behind while teachers, police officers and other professional workers get their jabs.

The Lombardy region, Italy’s biggest, has suffered more COVID-19 infections and deaths than any other but still has had a faltering vaccination campaign, earning a personal visit this week from Italy’s new virus

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czar, Gen. Francesco Figliuolo.

"There are things that aren't going well," Figliuolo said. "We'll note them, and then we'll fix them together."

More than three months into Italy's nationwide vaccination campaign, Lombardy this week opened a new centralized appointment portal after its previous system sent some elderly people hundreds of kilometers (miles) from home to get a jab and left others unable to get an appointment.

Lombardy's embattled regional governor, Attilio Fontana, acknowledged "some difficulties" but insisted that they hadn't impacted the overall vaccination campaign. He said the criticism of the regional effort was "nauseating."

Italy has administered 10.8 million vaccines nationwide, though only 3.3 million of the country's 60 million people have received both doses. Lombardy, which counts one sixth of the population and has long prided itself on its health care system, has administered 1.7 million doses.

On Saturday in Sicily, a church opened its doors temporarily to become a pop-up vaccination center.

"For those who are Christians celebrating Easter, today means above all to be a good and honest citizen," said the Rev. Michele Viviano, parish priest of the Salesian parish of Don Bosco in San Gregorio di Catania, Sicily.

"This means also cooperating with the immunization campaign, participating in it and organizing it," he said.

Pope urges hope amid 'darkness' of pandemic in Easter vigil

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

ROME (AP) — Pope Francis urged his coronavirus-weary flock to not lose hope even through the continued "dark months" of the pandemic as he celebrated a scaled-back Easter vigil service in St. Peter's Basilica on Saturday.

Due to social-distancing norms, only about 200 masked people were allowed to attend the service, which marks the period between Christ's crucifixion and his joyous resurrection on Easter Sunday.

For the second year in a row, the Vatican cut out the traditional sacrament of baptism for a handful of adults to limit the chance of contagion. Usually a long, late-night ritual, this year's vigil service also started earlier than usual to respect Italy's 10 p.m. COVID-19 curfew.

But the service began in the dramatic way it always does, with the pope lighting a single candle in the darkened basilica and then sharing its flame with others until the pews slowly begin to twinkle and the basilica's lights are turned on.

In his homily, Francis said Easter offers a message of hope and new starts.

"In these dark months of the pandemic, let us listen to the risen Lord as he invites us to begin anew and never lose hope," he said. "It is always possible to begin anew, because there is a new life that God can awaken in us in spite of all our failures."

Francis, who again eschewed a facemask, limped considerably through the service, in a sign that he is suffering through a prolonged bout of sciatica nerve pain.

On Sunday, Francis is to preside over Easter Mass before a similarly small group of faithful and deliver his traditional "Urbi et Orbi" blessing "to the city and the world." Usually the Easter Mass and blessing is celebrated before tens of thousands of people in a flower-decked St. Peter's Square.

But this year Francis will celebrate the service in the basilica and deliver the blessing from the altar, to prevent crowds from forming in the piazza.

Pressure mounts on corporations to denounce GOP voting bills

By BILL BARROW Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Liberal activists are stepping up calls for corporate America to denounce Republican efforts to tighten state voting laws, and businesses accustomed to cozy political relationships now find themselves in the middle of a growing partisan fight over voting rights.

Pressure is mounting on leading companies in Texas, Arizona and other states, particularly after Major

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League Baseball's decision Friday to move the 2021 All-Star Game out of Atlanta. A joint statement from executives at nearly 200 companies, including HP, Microsoft, PayPal, Target, Twitter, Uber and Under Armour, took aim at state legislation "threatening to make voting more difficult" and said "elections are not improved" when lawmakers impose new barriers to voting.

The outcry comes a week after Georgia Republicans enacted an overhaul of the state's election law that critics argue is an attempt to suppress Democratic votes.

Other companies have, somewhat belatedly, joined the chorus of critics.

Delta Air Lines and The Coca-Cola Co., two of Georgia's best-known brands, this past week called the new law "unacceptable," although they had a hand in writing it. That only angered Republicans, including Gov. Brian Kemp and several U.S. senators, who accused the companies of cowering from unwarranted attacks from the left.

The fight has thrust corporate America into a place it often tries to avoid — the center of a partisan political fight. But under threat of boycott and bad publicity, business leaders are showing a new willingness to enter the fray on an issue not directly related to their bottom line, even if it means alienating Republican allies.

"We want to hold corporations accountable for how they show up when voting rights are under attack," said Marc Banks, an NAACP spokesman. "Corporations have a part to play, because when they do show up and speak, people listen."

Kemp said at a news conference Saturday that baseball "caved to fear and lies from liberal activists" and moving the game means "cancel culture" is coming for American businesses. Kemp said state leaders worked in good faith with leaders in the business community on the legislation, including some of the same companies that have now "flip-flopped on this issue." He added: "We shouldn't apologize for making it easy to vote and hard to cheat."

Civil rights groups have sued to block the new Georgia law, which was passed after Democrats flipped the once-reliably Republican state in an election that Donald Trump falsely claimed was rife with fraud. Some activists have called for consumer boycotts of Delta, Coca-Cola and others. They dismiss business leaders' assertions that they helped water down the bill to ease earlier, more restrictive proposals; those leaders, they argue, should have tried to block the plan altogether.

In Texas, the NAACP, League of Women Voters and League of United Latin American Citizens, among other organizations, are urging corporations in the state to speak out against a slate of Republican-backed voting proposals. "Democracy is good for business," the campaign says.

Nine organizations took out full-page ads in The Houston Chronicle and The Dallas Morning News, the state's leading newspapers, urging corporate opposition to the plan. The Texas proposal would limit some early voting hours, bar counties from setting up drive-thru voting and prohibit local officials from proactively sending applications for mail ballots before voters request them.

Unlike their Georgia-based counterparts, American Airlines and Dell Technologies didn't wait for the Texas measure to pass. "To make American's stance clear: We are strongly opposed to this bill and others like it," American said in a statement.

Arizona, which Biden flipped from Trump in November, hasn't seen high-profile corporate players engage yet. But 30-plus groups sent a joint letter to Allstate Insurance, CVS Health and Farmers' Insurance, among others, urging their public opposition to proposed voting restrictions. Emily Kirkland, executive director of Progress Arizona, a progressive group that signed the letter, said there's been no response yet.

Other groups are demanding that corporations focus on Washington, where congressional Democrats are pushing measures intended to make it easier for Americans to vote, regardless of state laws. Among the changes, Democrats would enact automatic voter registration nationally and standardize access to early and mail voting.

Democrats also want to restore parts of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 that require the federal government to approve all election procedures in states and locales with a history of discrimination. The Supreme Court struck down those provisions, which applied to Georgia and Arizona, among other states, in 2013.

Corporate giants were mostly quiet when Trump falsely claimed he lost because of fraud. Business lead-

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ers largely maintained that caution as Republican state lawmakers used Trump's lie to justify a flood of new bills to make it more cumbersome to vote.

The reticence was a stark contrast to how chambers of commerce reacted six years ago when Republican-run states pushed "religious freedom" measures. Indiana, under then-Gov. Mike Pence, the future vice president, saw immediate corporate backlash. After North Carolina passed a "bathroom bill" limiting LGBTQ rights in 2016, PayPal scuttled expansion plans there and the NBA moved its all-star game from Charlotte. An AP analysis in 2017 found the reaction would eventually cost North Carolina at least \$3.76 billion in lost business.

Then, Georgia's corporate lobbying groups — with Delta's and Coca-Cola's backing — took no such chances, speaking out forcefully against Georgia conservatives' version of a "religious freedom" bill. Lawmakers passed it anyway but Kemp's predecessor, Republican Nathan Deal, vetoed it amid the chamber outcry.

Today, Delta and Coca-Cola's response to the Georgia voting fight is standing as a cautionary tale for other businesses.

Ed Bastian, the airline's chief executive, initially released a statement noting the business lobby's role in altering the bill as it moved through the General Assembly. Officials at the Atlanta Metro Chamber, where Bastian currently serves as president, detailed how corporate lobbyists spent weeks at the Capitol on mitigating provisions.

Some Georgia Republicans wanted to roll back the state's no-excuse absentee voting law, end automatic voter registration and ban Sunday early voting used heavily by Black churches. They also wanted to require photocopies of state IDs to receive and submit absentee ballots, while banning "drop boxes" as ballot collection receptacles.

The final law preserved no-excuse absentee voting and automatic registration. The new ID requirement for absentee ballots allows a voter to write their state ID number, rather than produce a photocopy, and the legislature included funding for free state IDs. The law also codifies in-person early voting on weekends, although it allows counties to choose whether to be open for voting for up to two Sundays. And it made drop boxes of mail ballots a permanent fixture in Georgia, but limited the number.

Business leaders' philosophy, according to Democratic state Sen. Jen Jordan, was "basically, Republicans are going to pass something, so they might as well try to keep from being awful."

But by Wednesday, the same day 72 Black business executives published a letter in The New York Times urging corporate leaders to speak out, Bastian was more direct. He sent a companywide memo declaring the law "unacceptable" and "based on a lie" — though he didn't mention Trump.

Big business's mistake, Jordan said, was "thinking there was ever any version that wouldn't end up like this."

UK: Benefits outweigh risks for AstraZeneca despite 7 deaths

By PAN PYLAS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Britain's medicines regulator is urging people to continue taking the AstraZeneca coronavirus vaccine, despite revealing that seven people in the U.K. have died from rare blood clots after getting the jab.

The Medicines and Healthcare Regulatory Agency, or MHRA, said it wasn't clear if the shots are causing the clots, and that its "rigorous review into the U.K. reports of rare and specific types of blood clots is ongoing."

Though the agency said late Friday that seven people had died as a result of developing blood clots, it didn't disclose any information about their ages or health conditions.

In total, MHRA said it had identified 30 cases of rare blood clot events out of 18.1 million AstraZeneca doses administered up to and including March 24. The risk associated with this type of blood clot is "very small," it added.

"The benefits of COVID-19 vaccine AstraZeneca in preventing COVID-19 infection and its complications continue to outweigh any risks and the public should continue to get their vaccine when invited to do so,"

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said Dr. June Raine, the agency's chief executive.

Concerns over the AstraZeneca vaccine have already prompted some countries including Canada, France, Germany and the Netherlands to restrict its use to older people.

The U.K., which has rolled out coronavirus vaccines faster than other European nations, is particularly reliant on the AstraZeneca vaccine, which was developed by scientists at the University of Oxford. It has also been using the vaccine developed by Pfizer-BioNTech, of which the agency has not seen any reported blood clot events.

Figures Saturday showed that the U.K. has given a first dose of vaccine to 31.4 million people, or around 46% of its population, a much higher rate than the rest of Europe. Delivering second doses is the priority for April, with 5.2 million people now having received two jabs.

The relative success of the country's vaccination program has been credited for helping to sharply reduce new coronavirus infections in the U.K. after a winter surge, paving the way for a modest easing of lockdown restrictions on gatherings.

On Saturday, the U.K. recorded another 3,423 infections, slightly up on the previous day's six-month low of 3,402. It also recorded only 10 coronavirus-related deaths, its lowest daily total since early September.

Despite the improved coronavirus backdrop, the U.K. has recorded Europe's highest COVID-related death toll, with over 126,500 deaths.

In France, which has restricted use of the AstraZeneca vaccine to people over 55, the family of a 38-year-old woman who died after suffering post-vaccination blood clots in the brain filed a criminal complaint in Toulouse on Saturday seeking a manslaughter investigation.

She is among four people in France who died after suffering blood clots in the weeks after getting an AstraZeneca vaccine shot. France's national medicine safety agency says it is investigating those cases and eight other cases of severe blood clotting in people who survived.

MHRA's view about the relative benefits of the vaccine is shared by the European Medicines Agency. It has said a causal link between unusual blood clots in people who have had the AstraZeneca vaccine is "not proven, but is possible," and that the benefits of the vaccine outweigh the risks of side effects. The World Health Organization has also urged countries to continue using the jab.

Adam Finn, a professor of pediatrics at the University of Bristol, said the "extreme rarity" of the blood-clotting events in the context of the millions of jabs administered in the U.K. makes the decision very straightforward.

"Receiving the vaccine is by far the safest choice in terms of minimizing individual risk of serious illness or death," he said.

Hundreds of French sports figures accused of sexual violence

By ANGELA CHARLTON Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — A year-long, nationwide French effort to uncover and combat sexual violence in sports has identified more than 400 coaches, teachers and others suspected of abuse or covering it up.

Most of the victims were under 15, according to data released Friday by the sports ministry. The alleged abuse included sexual assault, harassment or other violence.

Sixty people have faced criminal proceedings, more than 100 have been temporarily or permanently removed from their posts, and local investigations are under way into other cases, the ministry said.

The abuse reached across the country and across the whole sector, with accusations targeting a total of 48 sports federations.

Of those accused, 96% are men. Of the victims, 83% were women or girls, and 63% were under 15, the ministry said.

The fact-finding probe was launched in February 2020 after 10-time French skating champion Sarah Abitbol said in a book that she was raped by coach Gilles Beyer from 1990-92, when she was a teen. Beyer was handed preliminary charges of sexual assault and the investigation is ongoing.

In the wake of Abitbol's accusations, more skaters spoke out to denounce alleged sexual violence from

coaches. The sports ministry set up a dedicated platform for athletes' testimonies and conducted a year of hearings.

In its statement, the ministry called Abitbol's testimony "a historic moment for French sport" that raised awareness and has pushed authorities to crack down on abuse. A new law on tougher screening of sports educators, including volunteer coaches, went into effect Friday, and the French government and sports federations have pledged to respond faster and more effectively to reports of abuse.

Sports Minister Roxana Maracineanu has played a key role in raising awareness. In a recent interview with The Associated Press, the former swimming champion described her own experiences facing sexism, and said it's time for French mindsets to change when it comes to women's rights within the male-dominated sports world.

At a government meeting Friday to assess efforts to fight sexual violence, Abitbol told the group that she's "healing" and was glad to see other victims speaking out, according to L'Equipe newspaper. Former tennis champion Isabelle Demongeot described the "battle" she faced among the public and colleagues after accusing her coach of rape. Former hammer thrower Catherine Moyon de Beacque, who first spoke out about abuse in 1991, welcomed the current action "at the highest level of the state."

Confederate symbols prove difficult to remove in many states

By ACACIA CORONADO Associated Press/Report for America

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Just past the gate at an entrance to the Texas Capitol, a large monument honoring the soldiers of the Confederacy looms, with towering statues and an inscription that reads, "Died for state rights guaranteed under the Constitution."

It is one of seven Confederate memorials on the Texas Capitol grounds alone. There are over 2,000 Confederate symbols — from monuments to building names — in public spaces nationwide, more than a century and a half after the Civil War ended slavery, according to the Southern Poverty Law Center.

The movement to remove Confederate monuments and depictions of historical figures who mistreated Native Americans became part of the national reckoning over racial injustice following George Floyd's death last year in Minneapolis. While many have been removed — or torn down by protesters — it's proven difficult to remove those that remain.

At least six Southern states have policies protecting monuments, the law center said, while historical preservation boards and Republican legislative majorities have slowed the momentum, saying it's important to preserve America's past.

"We are at a really important moment of reckoning and racial justice," said Texas Rep. Rafael Anchia, a Democrat who introduced a proposal in the Republican-controlled Legislature to remove Confederate depictions at the Statehouse. "This fits into that process of really racial truth and reconciliation."

But he's up against Republican legislation to protect monuments. Anchia's measure is still waiting for a committee hearing, where attempts to remove Confederate monuments and holidays have died in previous sessions.

Texas isn't the only place where the issue faces an uphill battle.

Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee have preservation laws meant to "protect primarily monuments and memorials to the Confederacy," said Lecia Brooks, chief of staff of the Southern Poverty Law Center. A majority of them went up in the early Jim Crow era.

"The truth of the matter is that most of these monuments and memorials don't offer any historical context at all," Brooks said. "It is just a way to venerate people who fought for the continuation of slavery."

In Alabama, a 2017 law approved as some cities began taking down Confederate statues forbids the removal or alteration of monuments more than 40 years old. Violations carry a \$25,000 fine, but some cities have opted to pull them down and pay.

In March, Alabama lawmakers rejected revisions to the law that would have given cities and counties a way to take down Confederate monuments and relocate them for preservation.

In Pennsylvania, a bill from Senate Republicans would prevent removing public monuments without

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legislative approval, with penalties of up to a felony charge.

In a statement, GOP state Sen. Doug Mastriano said Pennsylvania is home to thousands of memorials and monuments "that help tell America's story to future generations." He said his legislation came "in response to high-profile cases in which public monuments were vandalized."

Mastriano's measure also would withhold state support from local governments that refuse to uphold laws protecting public monuments and "require the Pennsylvania Attorney General to prioritize the prosecution of any matters related to the vandalism of monuments within the state's jurisdiction when a district attorney refuses to prosecute."

At the Ohio Capitol, the removal of a 9-foot-tall (3-meter-tall) copper statue of Christopher Columbus has been delayed until at least 2025. It's stood on the Statehouse grounds in the city that bears his name since 1932. Critics say monuments to the explorer ignore the mistreatment of Indigenous people as Europeans settled in North America.

Delaying the statue's removal came after a board of state lawmakers and city leaders decided in July that a formal removal process must be done by the agency managing the grounds.

According to a rule approved in February by the Capitol Square Review and Advisory Board, anyone can submit a proposal to remove "commemorative works," but final approval will take five years. That came days after Mayor Andrew Ginther swiftly removed a similar Columbus statue from City Hall.

Board spokesman Mike Rupert said in a statement that the rule mirrors the process for erecting a "commemorative work" at the Ohio Capitol. He said it was not targeting any monument.

In California, amid racial injustice protests last summer, icons were toppled of Junipero Serra, an 18th century Roman Catholic priest who founded nine of the state's 21 Spanish missions and is credited with bringing Roman Catholicism to the U.S. West. Serra forced Native Americans to stay at the missions after they were converted or face punishment. His statues have been defaced for years by people who said he destroyed tribes and their culture.

California's first Native American assemblyman, James Ramos, wants to replace a statue of Serra at the Capitol. The Democrat said he worked with tribes on replacement options and to bring awareness to "atrocities, genocide and forced labor" endured by Indigenous people during the Spanish missionary period.

"We are bringing that discussion and that voice that was left out of the equation when those monuments were put up to be able to have that voice now in 2021," Ramos said.

While facing a tougher fight in Texas, Anchia still has hope for removing contentious icons at the Capitol after one of the state's largest Confederate monuments — in Dallas — became one of 168 Confederate symbols removed nationwide last year.

But his legislation is up against a monument protection bill from Republican state Sen. Brandon Creighton. It would create a process, with public input, for altering a state memorial to any historical figure — whether it's a monument or a street name.

"One opinion thinks that erasing that part of our past is healthy and is the best route Texas can take," Creighton said. "And then you have my opinion, and I believe many others here, that keeping that history in place is very important."

Coming out of the cave: As life creeps back, some feel dread

By KELLI KENNEDY Associated Press

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. (AP) — Dinner reservations are gleefully being made again. Long-canceled vacations are being booked. People are coming together again, in some of the ways they used to.

But not everyone is racing back.

Their stories are emerging as the world begins to reopen — people secretly dreading each milestone toward normalcy, envisioning instead anxiety-inducing crowds and awkward catch-up conversations. Even small tasks outside the home — a trip to the grocery store, or returning to the office — can feel overwhelming.

Psychologists call it re-entry fear, and they're finding it more common as headlines herald the imminent

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return to post-pandemic life.

"I have embraced and gotten used to this new lifestyle of avoidance that I can't fathom going back to how it was. I have every intention of continuing to isolate myself," says Thomas Pietrasz, who lives alone and works from his home in the Chicago suburbs as a content creator. His alcohol and marijuana use also increased during the pandemic.

Pietrasz says his anxiety has grown markedly worse as talk of post-vaccine life grows. He says he got used to "hiding at home and taking advantage of curbside and delivery in order to avoid every situation with people."

As the world edges back toward some semblance of normal life, many report challenges like Pietrasz's playing out in their own lives. The time at home — lockdown, dread, fear, isolation — has changed them and made existing worries worse or created new ones entirely.

"It's been a mix of reactions," says Amy Cirbus, Director of Clinical Content at Talkspace, an online mental health group with nearly 50,000 current clients. "Some people are very relieved about going back to normal. Others are struggling. Many people are experiencing spikes in anxiety as they feel they aren't ready for re-entry."

While some felt restricted by the confinement of home, others found safety, comfort and even enjoyment there, internalizing the isolation into what some psychiatrists consider a dysfunctional baseline of behavior.

Like many others, Pietrasz said his anxiety is largely unrelated to catching COVID and more about social interactions. Psychologists say fears about leaving home have little to do with reasonable concerns about spreading the virus and sometimes can't be pinpointed or aren't based in reality.

In some cases, psychologists say the manifestation is subtle, like someone who begins making repeated excuses to avoid meeting up with friends, even within a safe, socially distanced setting or if they've been vaccinated. But some cases are more extreme, says Dr. Arthur Bregman, a psychiatrist who noticed this phenomenon in his Miami practice and dubbed it "cave syndrome."

"The people who have the most anxiety disorders in my practice, they are the worst-affected. They can't even get out," says Bregman, who has been studying the 1918 influenza pandemic's psychological impact on the world.

After that lockdown, roughly 40% of the population would be diagnosed with what we now call PTSD, Bregman says. "It took 10 years for the people to get out of this," he says.

The pandemic exacerbated issues for those already struggling with anxiety, depression and other mental health issues. But some patients are experiencing these symptoms for the first time.

Dr. Julie Holland, a New York psychiatrist, says the pandemic triggered new trauma for some, especially in the unpredictable early weeks of lockdown as people questioned whether there would be enough food or if it was even safe to touch their mail.

According to a survey in February by the American Psychological Association, nearly half the respondents said they felt uneasy about adjusting to in-person interactions once the pandemic ends. Shockingly, vaccination status had little impact on people's responses, with 48% of vaccinated adults saying they still felt uneasy.

"You've been taught for an entire year to distance yourself from people and you've learned to be afraid of people because they could make you sick or kill you," Holland says. "There's no question that it's easier to learn to be afraid than to be unafraid."

The fight-or-flight physical manifestations like racing heart, trouble breathing and feeling dizzy can be terrifying.

"People who are really free and they're planning their vacations are really upsetting my patients because they're challenging their level of fear and risk tolerance," says Dr. Sharon Batista, a New York psychiatrist who has noticed a spike in patient referrals since the holidays.

Children and teens are especially vulnerable. Before the pandemic, 17-year-old Erin had lots of close friends, but said those interactions slowly waned while on lockdown in the DC suburbs. Now she barely talks to them.

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She's dreading "having to catch up and go through all that small talk stuff that nobody likes," said the high school junior, who has been on anxiety medication for several years. The Associated Press is only using her first name because she is a minor.

"A year ago, I went outside hoping I'd run into a friend from school and go on an adventure," she recently posted on social media. "Now, I'm terrified to leave the house because I'm afraid I'll run into a friend from school and go on an adventure."

Nicole Russell became so fearful of leaving her Miami home that she retreated to her bedroom for days at a time, unable to interact with others inside the home, including her 11-year-old daughter. It got so bad that she was often up all night, sleeping during the day, checking social media obsessively and cleaning constantly, even scrubbing the floor with a toothbrush.

"I would not leave my little corridor for days at a time because I could not deal with the pressures of talking to other people," says Russell, who left notes to remind herself to shower and brush her teeth. "I wasn't living, that's for sure."

Last Month, Russell even waved off family and friends when they tried to plan something small for her birthday last month. "We were forced into isolation," she says, "and now we've grown accustomed to it."

Experts say taking small steps over time is one of the most effective treatments. The more patients go to the store or see friends, the more they'll discover the forgotten enjoyment of social interactions and learn that much of the world is unchanged, making it easier to venture out again. Others may need medication.

Russell, who described herself as "nonfunctional," took some steps in that direction recently. She forced herself to take a terrifying trip to the grocery store. She saw people laughing and talking, and she was inspired.

She started therapy along with an antidepressant. It worked, she says, and within a week things were far better. Now, "I'm up and moving around and I want to start catching up with everybody."

Gaetz sex probe suddenly threatens a speedy Washington rise

By ALAN FRAM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Compared with most congressional newbies, it didn't take Rep. Matt Gaetz long. Phone calls from the president. Rides aboard Air Force One. Hundreds of television appearances. A darling in conservative circles.

Yet barely four years after arriving in Washington as a little-known Republican state legislator from Florida's Panhandle, the 38-year-old unblinking defender of Donald Trump is facing a possible abrupt end to his once promising career because of a federal sex-trafficking investigation.

The overwhelming reaction of Gaetz's GOP colleagues — a deafening silence. That reflects the resentments he's sparked during his breakneck rise as one of the party's celebrities and the challenge he faces to retain his seat.

Government agents are investigating if Gaetz had sex with a 17-year-old and other underage girls and violated federal sex trafficking laws, people familiar with the probe have told the AP. No charges have been filed, and Gaetz has denied the allegations.

But with new, damaging details emerging regularly, Gaetz's political arc is beginning to resemble the myth of Icarus, who plunged to earth after ignoring warnings that his waxen wings would melt if he flew too close to the sun.

The coming days will test the crisis management skills of one of the most visible members of Congress' younger generation, who critics say care more about promoting their own brand than serious legislating.

"They're here for notoriety and to perform to their base, and anything else that may come is secondary," said Doug Heye, a Trump critic and former top GOP congressional aide. "And if you boo him that's great too, as long as you're watching."

David Bossie, president of Citizens United, which backs conservative causes and candidates, countered that Gaetz "has been a conservative warrior, working every day to make America great again and fight for President Trump's agenda."

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Gaetz's congressional Twitter account is topped with a photo of himself taking a selfie with Trump, apparently on Air Force One. On his personal Twitter account, Gaetz describes himself as "Florida man. Fiancé. Firebrand. America First." He became engaged at Trump's Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida in December.

Gaetz is quick with a quote and looks little older than a college student. And by his own account, he's hardly led a prudish lifestyle while battling for conservative causes.

In his 2020 autobiographical book, "Firebrand," Gaetz praised Trump as someone "who doesn't care for puritanical grandstanding or moralistic preening." He added, "If politicians' family lives aren't what really matter to the voters, maybe that's a good thing. I'm a representative, not a monk."

Chris Latvala, a former GOP colleague in the Florida legislature, suggests that while there, Gaetz went too far. On Friday, Latvala revived a 2020 tweet in which he accused Gaetz of creating a "game where members of the FL House got 'points' for sleeping with aides, interns, lobbyists, and married legislators."

Latvala wrote Friday, "I am just sorry that this guy may have victimized others, including possibly minors before others came forward to verify it."

The game was also described by two other Florida Republicans, who spoke on condition of anonymity to reveal what was a private matter. Gaetz has denied knowing about it.

The son of Don Gaetz, a wealthy businessman and one-time Florida state Senate president, Matt Gaetz came to Congress after six years of building his conservative credentials in the state House with pro-gun and other legislation.

Just months after Gaetz arrived in Washington in 2017, when Trump's presidency also began, special counsel Robert Mueller began investigating Russia's influence in Trump's election.

Gaetz sprang into action to defend Trump, filing one resolution asserting investigative wrongdoing aimed at making Mueller resign, and essentially never stopped. His persistence was noted by Trump, who began calling the young lawmaker.

The day before a House hearing on the Russia investigation in 2019, Gaetz tweeted at former Trump attorney Michael Cohen, who'd turned on Trump and was about to testify, asking, "Do your wife & father-in-law know about your girlfriends?" The House Ethics Committee formally admonished Gaetz for the tweet, which some saw as an attempt at intimidation, and he apologized.

Gaetz was highly visible again months later when the House began its impeachment investigation over Trump's efforts to pressure Ukraine to provide political dirt on Democrat Joe Biden, who would eventually defeat Trump in the election.

Most notably, Gaetz led a cluster of House Republicans who barged past Capitol Police officers into a secure basement meeting room where House Intelligence Committee members were questioning witnesses. They caused a delay of several hours that had little impact on the probe but garnered press attention.

Gaetz was grabbing the spotlight in other ways, too. He brought a white nationalist who questioned the Holocaust as his guest to Trump's 2018 State of the Union address, later claiming ignorance of the man's views.

In March 2020 as the pandemic was taking hold, Gaetz wore a gas mask on the House floor. Critics accused him of downplaying COVID-19, as Trump repeatedly did, but Gaetz asserted he was calling attention to lawmakers' vulnerability to the disease.

All the while, his visibility was growing. Gaetz has made 346 weekday cable news appearances since August 2017, according to Media Matters, a liberal group that monitors conservative media activity.

That makes Gaetz second in Congress only to Rep. Jim Jordan, R-Ohio, a fellow Trump ally and ubiquitous TV presence.

Through it all, Gaetz has shown no hesitation to criticize fellow Republicans.

In a 2020 tweet, he accused Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman Richard Burr, R-N.C., of "screwing all Americans" by dumping stock using insider information as the coronavirus pandemic was starting. The Justice Department investigated Burr but brought no charges.

In Gaetz's book, in a first chapter called "Sex and Money," he wrote that when he arrived in Congress, he asked current House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., for a seat on the Armed Services Com-

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mittee. Gaetz wrote that “to my shock,” McCarthy suggested he contribute \$75,000 to the House GOP’s campaign committee — a donation Gaetz wrote he actually doubled.

This past January, Gaetz helped spearhead an effort to depose Rep. Liz Cheney, R-Wyo., from her post as No. 3 House GOP leader after she was among 10 Republicans to vote for Trump’s second impeachment.

Gaetz even traveled to a campaign event in Wyoming, where he urged voters to oppose her 2022 re-election and accused her of ignoring “the will of the people.” Days later, Cheney was reelected to her leadership post.

All of that helped alienate him from many Republicans, several GOP lawmakers and aides said.

Among his only defenders this week has been Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, R-Ga., who tweeted, “Take it from me rumors and headlines don’t equal truth.” Greene has become a pariah even among some Republicans for showing support for false and violent sentiments.

Having a deep well of support among colleagues can help a beleaguered lawmakers retain their seat should party leaders begin viewing them as a liability. Ominously, McCarthy has called the charges against Gaetz “serious.”

Gaetz has reportedly had inconclusive discussions with Newsmax, a small pro-Trump television outlet, about working for it or another network. A person close to Newsmax said Friday the network has no plans to hire him as a talent.

From child care to COVID, rising job market faces obstacles

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — A surge in hiring in the United States last month — 916,000 added jobs, the most since August — coincides with growing confidence that a blistering pace of job growth will continue as vaccinations increase and federal aid fuels economic growth.

The most optimistic economists even predict that between now and year’s end, the nation could produce as many as 10 million more jobs and restore the labor market to its pre-pandemic level.

Maybe so. Yet even in normal times, it would be hard to regain all those jobs so quickly. And these aren’t normal times.

Many people who’ve been thrown out of the labor force remain fearful of the coronavirus and reluctant to take face-to-face service jobs. Millions of women are still caring for children attending school online — and can’t take jobs because they can’t find or afford child care.

Extended unemployment aid has meant that some employers might have to pay more to attract workers, which they may feel unable to do. And some people will need new skills before they can land a job to replace the one they lost.

While few doubt that the trillions in federal money flowing through the economy will help accelerate hiring, the challenges are sure to endure. Here’s a look at some of them:

HEALTH FEARS

For now, a sizable majority of Americans remain unvaccinated. And after weeks of sharp declines, the number of daily infections is creeping back up. Recruiters say that trend is discouraging some of the unemployed from taking jobs.

“People are afraid to come to work — there is some of that,” said Tammy Browning, president of KellyOCG, a staffing agency.

Eventually, ongoing vaccinations ought to gradually reduce such fears, although a portion of Americans remain hesitant to get vaccinated. Browning also suggested that employers will need to become more creative about making workers feel comfortable on the job. Many of her firm’s clients are manufacturing companies. On many hot factory floors, their employees have to wear masks and gloves for eight or more hours a day.

Companies should consider providing more break times, Browning said, and allow workers to remove their masks outside or in socially distant break rooms.

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As a single mother, Jennifer Knapp of Augusta, Maine, worries about what a return to work would mean for her and her children's health. A year ago, Knapp, 44, lost her job as a receptionist at a hotel and spa, a place she described as a "hub of germs."

"There is work out there, if you want to put yourself at risk," she said.

But the open jobs she sees are typically temporary and offer low pay. Right now, Knapp is living off savings, child support payments from her ex-husband and unemployment aid. Like many parents, she'd like to find a work-from-home job, ideally in her field of psychology and social work.

"The goal," she said, "is to get back out there and work, as long as my kids are doing OK."

NEED FOR CHILD CARE

Nearly 2.5 million women lost jobs and stopped looking for work during the pandemic. In most cases, experts say, it was because so many children were suddenly stuck at home, going to school online, and their parents lacked available or affordable child care. Better child care options or more flexible work schedules would be needed to fully reverse that trend.

Some such change is becoming evident as schools and child care centers reopen. About 500,000 women returned to the labor force in March and found jobs. The improvement could continue in the coming months: Jed Kolko, chief economist at Indeed, the job listings website, says job openings at child care centers are growing, a sign that more of these centers are back in business.

Recruiters also say flexible or hybrid work schedules, along with benefits for part-time workers, may be critical in attracting job seekers, especially women. More companies could provide on-site child care.

"I think it is going to require some systemic changes by employers," said Karen Fichuk, chief executive of Randstad North America, a recruiting firm.

EXTENDED JOBLESS AID

Recruiters say the \$300-a-week federal unemployment benefit that was provided by President Joe Biden's \$1.9 trillion COVID aid package, on top of regular state jobless benefits that average about \$340 a week, might have made it harder for some employers to find workers. For some job seekers, especially those fearful of the virus, part-time or temporary jobs at restaurants or stores that may pay less than their unemployment aid, aren't much of an alternative.

Economic research suggests that unemployment benefits generally don't deter workers from taking jobs: A study by the JPMorgan Chase Institute found that last year's federal unemployment payment didn't discourage recipients from working. But the new \$300-a-week federal supplement is set to last six months — longer than the previous payment did.

"It's a much more attractive benefit now," said Julia Pollak, an economist at ZipRecruiter. "It would be foolish to think that wouldn't have any effect."

Economists have calculated that roughly half the unemployed are earning more from benefits than they did at their former jobs.

Another factor is that jobless benefits normally require the unemployed to document their efforts to seek a job in order to remain eligible. But during the pandemic, most states have suspended this requirement. That means there is less incentive to job hunt.

Browning said her firm is advising clients to pay more and offer other benefits, including bonuses, to offset the extended jobless aid. Six months ago, a client raised the hourly rate for a temporary position by \$4 an hour. The proportion of jobs filled, she said, jumped from 35% to 98%.

"You really have to encourage people to come back to work," Browning said, "and that means pay at the level the market is demanding."

NEED FOR NEW SKILLS

For some of the unemployed, their old job appears gone for good. In some cases, their former employers have learned to operate with fewer workers. Landing a job will require finding work in a new occupation or industry — perhaps only after obtaining job training. This takes time.

Many economists expect more companies to help reskill workers themselves, particularly if they become desperate to hire. Should the unemployment rate keep declining, businesses might have little choice.

"When the economy is running hot, businesses begin to increase training and take risks on someone they might not have hired in the past," said Ryan Sweet, an economist at Moody's Analytics.

OPTIMISM NEEDED

For millions of Americans, the past year has meant demoralizing job losses — sometimes multiple layoffs — and fruitless job searches, leading many to give up on finding work.

As an example, the number of people who said they want a job but were too discouraged to look for one in the past month didn't change in March. That was true even though several job search websites report that job postings have risen sharply in recent weeks.

For discouraged workers, Pollak said, it can take time to regain confidence.

"There are many job seekers who haven't yet realized how rapidly the conditions in the labor market have changed," she said. "Many searched for work earlier during the pandemic, when it was most difficult and frustrating to do so, and are now discouraged."

The final insult: Some dying of COVID while awaiting vaccine

By JAY REEVES Associated Press

After months of hoping to receive a COVID-19 immunization and then weeks of fighting the illness after one never came, Air Force veteran Diane Drewes was down to her last few breaths at a hospice center in Ohio when the phone rang. It was a health care worker, calling to schedule her first appointment for a coronavirus shot.

Drewes' daughter Laura Brown was stunned by the timing of the call in January but didn't lash out over the phone or even explain that her 75-year-old mom was at the point of death. There just wasn't any point, she said.

"But me and my sister were upset that it came too late," Brown said. "It seemed like the final insult."

More than 247,000 people have died of COVID-19 in the U.S. since vaccines first became available mid-December. Officials had warned that dispensing enough vaccines to reach herd immunity would take months. And with the initial vaccine supply extremely limited and the virus running rampant across the nation over the winter, it was a sad reality that some would contract COVID-19 and die before they could be inoculated.

With surveys showing a large percentage of the U.S. population leery of vaccines, it's impossible to say exactly how many of the dead would have even wanted an immunization. But Brown said her mother wanted one — desperately. Other families have similar, wrenching stories of loved ones being infected after months of staying safe and then dying before they could get a dose.

Charlotte Crawford, who has spent 40 years working in the microbiology laboratory at Parkland Hospital in Dallas, was fully immunized in January after receiving two doses of the Moderna vaccine because of her work. Yet she then endured the agony of watching her husband and two adult children contract COVID-19 and die before they could get shots.

Henry Royce Crawford, 65, had an appointment for a vaccine when he fell ill, his widow said. Their children, Roycie Crawford, 33, and Natalia Crawford, 38, also wanted the shot but had yet to find one when they got sick and died, Crawford said.

The days since their deaths in late February and early March seem like a jumble to Crawford; she is still trying to sort out what happened as she pleads with anyone who will listen to get a vaccine as soon as possible.

"All I know is I did three funerals in three weeks," said Crawford, of Forney, Texas.

While more than 96 million people in the U.S. have received at least one dose of vaccine, only 53 million are fully vaccinated, or roughly 16% of the nation's population, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

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With doses now more widely available, shots are proceeding at a quickened pace. More than a dozen states have opened vaccine eligibility to all adults amid an increase in virus cases.

Only the Johnson & Johnson shot is complete after one dose, so the wait time between the first and second shot of either the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines leaves a period of weeks when a recipient remains vulnerable and subject to infection.

The wait for a second shot proved too long for Richard Rasmussen of Las Vegas, said daughter Julie Rasmussen.

Richard Rasmussen, 73, fervently believed in wearing face masks for protection and had his first dose of the Pfizer vaccine in early January. "He was very excited to get his vaccine," she said.

Yet Rasmussen tested positive for the virus 10 days later and died Feb. 19 before receiving a second dose, Julie Rasmussen said. His final decline was stunning for its speed, she said.

"And now I am alone," Rasmussen said in an email interview. "He was my best friend. We texted every day, all day. I have no siblings. No husband/boyfriend. He was single. I am all alone navigating the legal system and packing his house."

The same day Rasmussen died, Deidre Love Sullens, of Oklahoma City, was standing in the icy, snow-covered parking lot of a vaccine clinic amid the grief of losing both her mother, Catherine Douglas, 65, and stepfather, Asa Bartlett Douglas, 58, to COVID-19 in a span of 16 days before they could get shots.

"They, and I, looked at the vaccine as the single life-changing factor that would allow us to see one another in person again. It was our goal. We all aimed to get the vaccine so we could gather again, so my mother could play with my daughter again, so we could maybe visit my grandma in the nursing home and not be restricted to window visits," Sullens said in an interview conducted by email.

On that cold February day, with some doses to spare because foul weather kept others from making appointments, a worker called Sullens in to the clinic to be immunized. Sullens said she was overcome by tears and a "surreal feeling of disbelief" as she entered.

"My mind was thinking, 'If only my parents could have held out an extra two months ... they'd be here getting the vaccine too. They'd be alive. They'd be here with me,'" she said.

France urges Iran to avoid nuclear escalation ahead of talks

PARIS (AP) — France's top diplomat spoke with his Iranian counterpart Saturday and urged Iran to be "constructive" and avoid further nuclear escalation ahead of talks next week aimed at trying to salvage a global accord curbing the Iranian nuclear program.

The United States and Iran said Friday they will begin indirect negotiations next week, in one of the first signs of progress in efforts to try to get both countries back into compliance with the 2015 accord. Then-President Donald Trump pulled the U.S. out of the accord in 2018, and Iran has been steadily violating its restrictions ever since.

Diplomats from Britain, China, France, Germany, Russia and Iran will take part in Tuesday's EU-brokered talks in Vienna. Those six countries have remained in the accord, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, which bound Iran to nuclear restrictions in return for relief from U.S. and international sanctions.

French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian spoke Saturday with Iranian Foreign Minister Jawad Zarif to prepare for the talks.

"I encouraged Iran to be constructive," Le Drian said in a statement. "I called on Iran to abstain from any further violation of its current commitments in the nuclear domain that could threaten the movement toward resumed discussions."

Iran insists it is not seeking to make nuclear bombs.

President Joe Biden came into office saying that getting back into the nuclear accord and getting Iran's nuclear program back under international restrictions was a priority for his U.S. administration. Iran wants sanctions to be lifted first.

Historic Houston movie theater closes due to pandemic

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By JUAN A. LOZANO Associated Press

HOUSTON (AP) — A historic Houston theater that director Richard Linklater called his “film school” and that for decades was the place to catch hard-to-find independent and foreign films has closed for good — like many theaters and other businesses, a victim of the coronavirus pandemic.

After nearly 82 years in business, the River Oaks Theatre turned off its projectors last month, depriving the nation’s fourth-largest city of an institution where everyone from rappers to suburban kids and cinephiles formed friendships, fell in love and found community. Its loss has left more than just an empty building behind.

“Throughout the pandemic, we’ve experienced so much loss and so much grief and loss of life. It is also a profound grief to lose the places of community and the places that you would come together and feel that love ... that safety,” Leen Dweik, 24, told dozens of other River Oaks fans during a vigil after the theater’s final showings.

Dependent on large crowds to survive, U.S. movie theaters have been hammered by the pandemic, as they were shut down for months and saw their revenues plunge by 80% in 2020. Although some have managed to survive with the help of aid and through workarounds, Landmark Theatres, which ran the River Oaks, wasn’t able to reach an agreement with its landlord, Weingarten Realty, over rent it couldn’t pay during the pandemic. Weingarten Realty didn’t respond to an email seeking comment.

Movie theater trade groups believe their industry will bounce back after the pandemic, in part with the help of more than \$16 billion in federal funding from the Shuttered Venue Operators Grant program. Theaters are also hoping to get a boost from “Godzilla vs. Kong,” one of the first event movies to be released during the pandemic. And there’s cause to be optimistic, as it made \$123.1 million internationally last weekend.

About 55% of the 5,800 movie theaters in the U.S. are currently open, but many are still saddled by capacity limits and lingering fears about spending long periods in crowded indoor spaces — justifiable, given the recent case surges in some states despite the ongoing vaccination efforts. In China, where the pandemic is well under control, moviegoing is close to pre-pandemic levels.

“We’re optimistic. Things may change permanently, but it’s not going to be the end of cinema by any means,” said Rich Daughtridge, a board member with the Independent Cinema Alliance, which represents more than 300 independent theater owners.

Patrick Corcoran, a spokesman for the National Association of Theatre Owners, which also represents larger theater chains, said his organization doesn’t have a comprehensive list of theaters that have permanently closed or declared bankruptcy due to the pandemic, but that it’s still a relatively small number.

That may be, but several chains have thrown in the towel or shown they’re in distress. Cinemagic announced in February that it was closing all eight of its locations in Massachusetts, Maine and New Hampshire. And two larger chains — Alamo Drafthouse Cinemas Holdings and the company that owns CMX Cinemas — have filed for bankruptcy protection during the pandemic.

“There are still going to be some tough times after we get back to normal, that may still have some effects on companies,” Corcoran said.

Supporters of the River Oaks, including Linklater and Houston rapper Bun B, hope that the theater — with its distinctive marquee, Art Deco architecture and ornate carvings — won’t be torn down or drastically altered and might even be used again to show films or host live performances.

“That was the church I had wandered into (in the early 1980s) and found the holy spirit of cinema,” Linklater, whose films include “Dazed and Confused” and “Boyhood,” said during a virtual panel held Wednesday in support of the theater.

The River Oaks opened in 1939 and for the last 45 years, it has mainly operated as an art-house theater showcasing independent and foreign cinema. Although there are other Houston theaters that show such films, none had the profile of the River Oaks.

“We’re not just losing a movie house,” Bun B, a self-described cinephile, said during the panel discussion. “We’re losing one of those places where artists can come and present themselves to the world, but then also young creators can come and ponder what their future might be.”

River Oaks supporters hope the venue doesn’t have the same fate as another nearby historic theater that was converted into a Trader Joe’s grocery store. Although the River Oaks received city landmark status

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when it was in danger of being torn down in 2007, it could still be razed and the notoriously developer-friendly city doesn't have a great history of preserving its historic buildings, said Sarah Gish, who helped start the group Friends of River Oaks Theatre to try and save the building.

"The main thing is save the building itself because that is the cultural history. We have already lost so much of the history" in Houston, Linklater said.

The pandemic exacerbated many of the concerns that movie theaters were already facing, including shrinking windows in which to exclusively show films. With some studios now simultaneously releasing new movies in theaters and on streaming platforms, it's going to be even harder for independent and art house venues like the River Oaks, Bob Berney, CEO of film distributor Picturehouse, said during the panel discussion.

Gish, who worked at the River Oaks in the 1990s, said she still hopes that it might be saved.

"All movie theaters are a repository for huge emotions. They're community gathering spots, they're memory makers, all of that. That's what we're losing with the River Oaks Theatre going away," Gish said.

Follow Juan A. Lozano on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/juanlozano70>

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Easter Sunday, April 4, the 94th day of 2021. There are 271 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On April 4, 1968, civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr., 39, was shot and killed while standing on a balcony of the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee; his slaying was followed by a wave of rioting (Washington, D.C., Baltimore and Chicago were among cities particularly hard hit.) Suspected gunman James Earl Ray later pleaded guilty to assassinating King, then spent the rest of his life claiming he'd been the victim of a setup.

On this date:

In 1818, Congress decided the flag of the United States would consist of 13 red and white stripes and 20 stars, with a new star to be added for every new state of the Union.

In 1841, President William Henry Harrison succumbed to pneumonia one month after his inaugural, becoming the first U.S. chief executive to die in office.

In 1850, the city of Los Angeles was incorporated.

In 1865, President Abraham Lincoln, accompanied by his son Tad, visited the vanquished Confederate capital of Richmond, Virginia, where he was greeted by a crowd that included former slaves.

In 1917, the U.S. Senate voted 82-6 in favor of declaring war against Germany (the House followed suit two days later by a vote of 373-50).

In 1933, the Navy airship USS Akron crashed in severe weather off the New Jersey coast with the loss of 73 lives.

In 1945, during World War II, U.S. forces liberated the Nazi concentration camp Ohrdruf in Germany. Hungary was liberated as Soviet forces cleared out remaining German troops.

In 1949, 12 nations, including the United States, signed the North Atlantic Treaty in Washington, D.C.

In 1975, more than 130 people, most of them children, were killed when a U.S. Air Force transport plane evacuating Vietnamese orphans crash-landed shortly after takeoff from Saigon. Microsoft was founded by Bill Gates and Paul Allen in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

In 1983, the space shuttle Challenger roared into orbit on its maiden voyage. (It was destroyed in the disaster of January 1986.)

In 1991, Sen. John Heinz, R-Pa., and six other people, including two children, were killed when a helicopter collided with Heinz's plane over a schoolyard in Merion, Pennsylvania.

In 2015, in North Charleston, South Carolina, Walter Scott, a 50-year-old Black motorist, was shot to

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death while running away from a traffic stop; Officer Michael Thomas Slager, seen in a cellphone video opening fire at Scott, was charged with murder. (The charge, which lingered after a first state trial ended in a mistrial, was dropped as part of a deal under which Slager pleaded guilty to a federal civil rights violation; he was sentenced to 20 years in prison.)

Ten years ago: Yielding to political opposition, the Obama administration gave up on trying avowed Sept. 11 mastermind Khalid Sheik Mohammed and four alleged co-conspirators in civilian federal courts and said it would prosecute them instead before military commissions. President Barack Obama's campaign announced in a web video that he would run for re-election in 2012. The Connecticut Huskies beat the Butler Bulldogs 53-41 for the NCAA men's basketball title.

Five years ago: The Supreme Court, in *Evenwel v. Abbott*, unanimously endorsed election maps that bolstered the growing political influence of America's Latinos, ruling that states could count everyone, not just eligible voters, in drawing voting districts. A tourist helicopter crashed and burned in Great Smoky Mountains National Park in eastern Tennessee, killing all five people aboard. Kris Jenkins hit a 3-pointer at the buzzer to lift Villanova to the national title with a 77-74 victory over North Carolina in one of the wildest finishes in the history of the NCAA Tournament.

One year ago: President Donald Trump warned that the country could be heading into its "toughest" weeks yet as the coronavirus death toll mounted, but he also expressed growing impatience with social distancing guidelines; he said of the virus-related shutdowns, "The cure cannot be worse than the problem." A cruise ship with coronavirus victims on board, including two who died, docked in Miami; the *Coral Princess*, with nearly 1,900 passengers and crew, had been in limbo for days awaiting permission to dock as passengers self-isolated in their staterooms.

Today's Birthdays: Recording executive Clive Davis is 89. Author Kitty Kelley is 79. Actor Craig T. Nelson is 77. Actor Walter Charles is 76. Actor Christine Lahti is 71. Country singer Steve Gatlin (The Gatlin Brothers) is 70. Actor Mary-Margaret Humes is 67. Writer-producer David E. Kelley is 65. Actor Constance Shulman is 63. Actor Phil Morris is 62. Actor Lorraine Toussaint is 61. Actor Hugo Weaving is 61. Rock musician Craig Adams (The Cult) is 59. Talk show host/comic Graham Norton is 58. Actor David Cross is 57. Actor Robert Downey Jr. is 56. Actor Nancy McKeon is 55. Actor Barry Pepper is 51. Country singer Clay Davidson is 50. Rock singer Josh Todd (Buckcherry) is 50. Singer Jill Scott is 49. Rock musician Magnus Sveningsson (The Cardigans) is 49. Magician David Blaine is 48. Singer Kelly Price is 48. R&B singer Andre Dalyrimple (Soul For Real) is 47. Country musician Josh McSwain (Parmalee) is 46. Actor James Roday is 45. Actor Natasha Lyonne is 42. Actor Eric Andre is 38. Actor Amanda Righetti is 38. Actor-singer Jamie Lynn Spears is 30. Actor Daniela Bobadilla is 28. Pop singer Austin Mahone (muh-HOHN') is 25. Actor Aliyah Royale is 21.