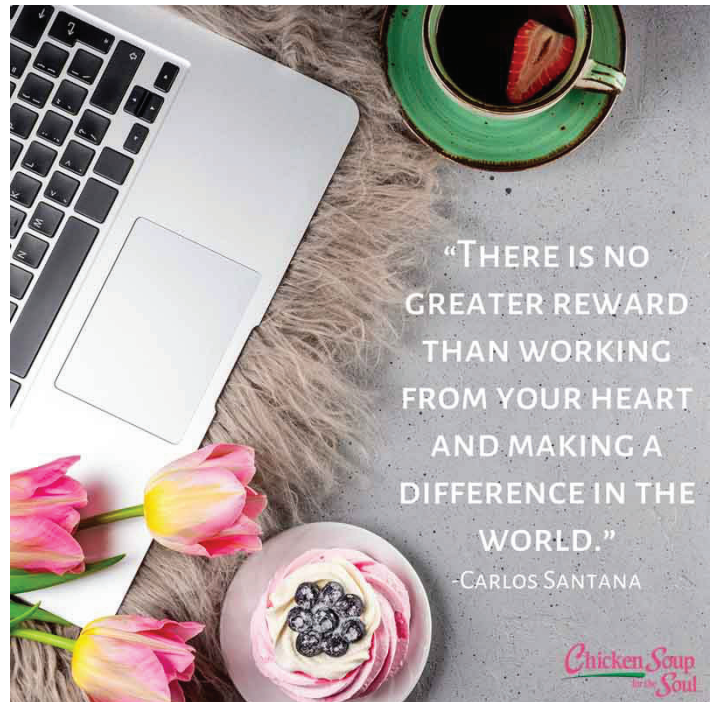


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- [2- School Board Agenda](#)
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Due to the weather forecast the Rob Luecke Track Invitational scheduled for Tuesday April 13th has been cancelled.



The evening performance of the POPS Concert is archived at 397news.com.



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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GROTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT #06-6

School Board Meeting

April 12, 2021 – 7:00 PM – Groton Area Elementary Commons

AGENDA:

1. Call to Order with members present. Approve agenda as proposed or amended.

POTENTIAL CONFLICTS DISCLOSURE PURSUANT SDCL 23-3

OLD/CONTINUING BUSINESS:

1. Approval of minutes of March 8, 2021 and March 22, 2021 school board meetings as drafted or amended.
2. Approval of March 2021 Financial Report, Custodial Accounts, and Investments.
3. Approval of March 2021 Transportation Report
4. Approval of March 2021 School Lunch Report
5. Open Forum for Public Participation...in accordance with Board Policy & Guidelines.
6. Continued discussion and necessary action on District response to COVID-19.
7. Administrative Reports: (a) Superintendent's Report; (b) Principal's Reports; (c) Business Manager Report

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Approve signed administrative contracts.
2. Adopt resolution Authorizing Membership in the South Dakota High School Activities Association for the 2021-2022 school year.
3. Approve hiring Greg Kjellsen, JH Boys Basketball Coach, for 2021-2022 school year.
4. Approve hiring Shaun Wanner, Head Track Coach, for 2021-2022 school year.
5. Executive session pursuant SDCL 1-25-2(4) for negotiations and SDCL 1-25-2(1) for personnel.

ADJOURN

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



National Parks Week

South Dakota is lucky to call home to seven of our nation's National Parks, Monuments and Recreation Areas. As we celebrate National Parks Week in the month of April, I can't help but reminisce on the beauty of places like the Badlands, Mount Rushmore, and the Missouri River.

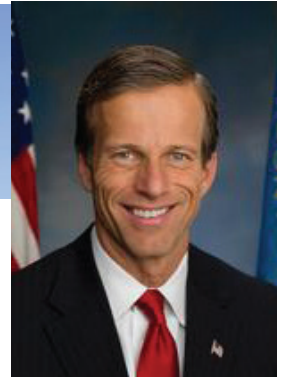
The Badlands or the 'Land of Stone and Light' span more than 244,000 acres of our great state. Thousands of folks trek to its vast terrain every year. You can explore fossil trails with your kids, get your feet blistered on a long hike, or take the scenic route — whether you're an avid hiker or a novice outdoorsman, there is something in the Badlands for you.

If someone mentions South Dakota, America's 'Shrine of Democracy' is quick to come to mind. I don't blame anyone outside of the state when that's the first thing they mention during a conversation; it's definitely a sight to see. For many of us, last year's fireworks display at Mount Rushmore served as a glimmer of light during a dark year. I'll continue to fight to protect this unique monument with my legislation, the Mount Rushmore Protection Act, as political activists seek to dismantle our great presidents' faces.

And finally, the great Missouri River. Not as many people know this is a national recreational river, but if you live along the River, you're well aware of its majestic, and sometimes unpredictable presence. You can hunt or fish right along the river – if you haven't done so along the Missouri you should add that to your bucket list.

Despite tourism being down by 13% last year, South Dakota was one of the best performing states in the country. Tourism contributed nearly 5% of South Dakota's economy last year – I'm hopeful that with the opening of the vaccine to all Americans, we can begin to welcome more visitors to our great parks.

John Thune
U.S. SENATOR - SOUTH DAKOTA



On the Road Again

For the last two weeks, I have been crisscrossing the state to meet with business owners, students, teachers, health care workers, community leaders, and South Dakotans of every walk of life. It might sound cheesy, but "Great Faces, Great Places" refers to a lot more than the faces on Mt. Rushmore. In cities and towns across the state, I always find people willing to spare a few minutes, or sometimes more, and I am incredibly thankful for the stories they share.

My first stop was North Sioux City, where I dropped by Dakota Valley High School to speak with students. I'm always impressed with the informed and thoughtful questions I get from South Dakota students. I also checked in on the VA outpatient clinic, where staff are working hard to ensure veterans who want the vaccine have access to it. The final stop of the day was a tour of Sterling Computers, a great South Dakota company that's brought high-paying tech jobs into the area.

Next, I headed out west to Sturgis, Spearfish, and Newell, where I was briefed by firefighting teams, toured health care facilities, checked in with local residents, and had candid discussions with community and business leaders. A hopeful part of my time in West River was witnessing two local residents get their vaccine. It's truly a testament to American ingenuity and grit that our country developed, manufactured, and distributed a safe vaccine in record time.

A highlight of my two weeks traveling the state was visiting St. Francis House. Its mission of moving people from homelessness to hope was especially poignant leading into Easter weekend. Fortunately, in 2018, my office was able to assist St. Francis House in getting the correct IRS designation to begin construction on a new facility. This meant its new (COVID-compliant) transitional home was up and running just in time for St. Francis to help hundreds of people safely through the pandemic.

After spending Easter weekend with family, I was back on the road to Madison and Yankton. I had discussions with health care staff at Madison Regional Health System and with local business and community leaders and Rotary Club members in both towns. I share many of the concerns I heard about Democrats' plans for our country, and I reassured everyone I spoke to that I'm using every available tool to fight back against their radical liberal agenda. And, as always, I continue to do everything I can to promote issues important to South Dakota.

The last stop on the trip was back out west in Box Elder and Rapid City, where I was able to join the Box Elder community in celebrating the groundbreaking at the Liberty Center. This new addition near Ellsworth Air Force Base will give our airmen, their families, and the Box Elder community a new, world-class recreation facility. This is part of the larger plan for the Liberty Plaza development, which will further enhance the quality of life around Ellsworth as it prepares for the arrival of the B-21 Raider. This center will have a real impact on our service members and their families. I also toured the new Ascent Innovation Center – expanding on the success of the current incubator located on the SDSM&T campus. There is a lot of good work being done to foster the fantastic high-tech innovation and entrepreneurship we're seeing in Rapid City. It's really inspiring to see the investment being made in our state.

When the Senate is not in session, extended work periods allow me to make stops around the state and connect with South Dakotans with different backgrounds and expertise. Nothing is more critical to my work in the Senate than hearing from South Dakotans about their views on the issues we face as a nation. After the year we have had, it's an opportunity that makes me feel particularly grateful.

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South Dakota Governor

Kristi Noem



South Dakota: *Under God, the People Rule*

Infringed.

The Constitution doesn't always use plain language, but when it comes to our right to defend ourselves, the Second Amendment is quite straightforward: "The right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed."

It's often been said that the Second Amendment exists to defend all the rest, including the First. I couldn't agree more. That's why the very first bill that I signed as governor was Constitutional Carry, which guarantees the right of every law-abiding South Dakotan to keep and bear arms.

I love hunting with my family. My grandma Dorris taught me how to bird hunt, and to this day my favorite way to decompress is to hunt big game with my brothers. The Second Amendment guarantees our ability to hunt, but it's so much more important than that. Government exists to protect our rights, but that doesn't preclude us from protecting ourselves and our loved-ones. In fact, our Founders intended the Second Amendment to include protection from a tyrannical government. That's why they took up arms against Great Britain in the first place.

Unfortunately, many politicians seem determined to directly infringe on our right to bear arms, despite the Second Amendment's clear wording that it "shall not be infringed."

President Biden recently announced several executive actions regarding gun control. He claimed that these actions wouldn't infringe on the Second Amendment. But that's false.

President Biden's actions include a Red Flag order. Such laws can be used to take away guns from a law-abiding citizen. They deprive individuals of both their liberty and property rights. And they aren't just an infringement on the Second Amendment; they're also a violation of both our Fourth Amendment right against unreasonable search and seizure and our Fifth Amendment right to due process.

President Biden is also proposing new limits on firearm sales and ammunition purchases. But these, too, are infringements on the Second Amendment. What good is the right to keep and bear arms if you can't first purchase them? What good is the right to keep and bear arms if you can't buy ammo to load them? Why would we want to limit ammo purchases when we're in the midst of a nationwide ammo shortage specifically because of the threat of gun control?

To top it off, President Biden indicated that his executive orders don't go far enough, and he called on Congress to further infringe on the Second Amendment. In response to such threats to our rights, I promise that South Dakota will do everything in our power to defend your right to defend yourself and your loved-ones.

"Shall not be infringed" could not be any plainer. If only President Biden could be forthcoming and realize that his actions are a direct infringement on our right to keep and bear arms.

#413 in a series

Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

This will be another short one. I'm tired and there isn't much news. We're up to 14 from 13 states and territories in the red zone, up to 31 from 27 in orange, and have 9 in yellow. The one-week increase in total cases was up at 448,400 last week and up again to 484,500 this week, so we're continuing to see growth. Two-week increase was up to 887,800 last week and is up again to 932,900 this week. I have us at a one-week daily average new-case number of 69,214.3, which is well above last week. All the numbers are worse than last week, and we have more states in trouble now than last week. Our situation grows more serious.

I track 54 states and US territories, including the District of Columbia; and we still have two over 10 percent increase in two weeks, Michigan at 13.36 percent and Vermont at 12.66 percent. We're up to 11 states above five percent from nine. Highest per capita rates of increase are in Michigan, New Jersey, Rhode Island, New York, and Minnesota.

We are up to 31,214,600 total cases, 0.2% more than yesterday. There were 52,000 new cases reported today. We have 43,706 people hospitalized, slightly fewer than yesterday. There have been 561,513 deaths in the US in this pandemic, 0.06% more than we had yesterday. There were 313 deaths reported today. Average daily deaths are up this week to 993.6, over 170 above last week. States with the most per capita deaths this week were Montana, Minnesota, Kentucky, West Virginia, and New Jersey.

On April 11, 2020, one year ago today, we had broken the half-million mark with 528,301 cases and also the 20,000 mark with 20,554 deaths. Big day. The proportion of cases accounted for by New York and New Jersey and by the top-10 states continued to drop, indicating that while these states were starting to peak and slow down, much of the rest of the country was just starting to see trouble. Some states were past their peaks while other states were still weeks away. This clearly wasn't over yet.

The Cook County Jail had almost 500 cases; two inmates had died. More meat packing plants had outbreaks. Burning Man, an annual event held in Nevada's desert, was cancelled. I saw this headline on an article on that day: "If the US stops social distancing in May, forecasts show the coronavirus could rebound in July." Much of the country did, indeed, stop with the whole being-careful thing. Anyone want to guess what happened in July? What kills me is we're doing that again. Worldwide, we had over 1.77 million infections and 108,800 deaths.

We have enough data now to see many breakthrough infections, that is, infections in fully vaccinated people. This should not come as a surprise: We knew the vaccines were not 100 percent effective, and hundreds of millions of doses have been administered. It was inevitable we were going to have dozens and dozens of breakthroughs. There was a study done in Israel on breakthrough infections with the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine, which is the one in almost exclusive use in this population which is at least 50 percent fully vaccinated. This situation sets up the conditions for a real-life study. There were 150 people who developed infections despite vaccination whose virus was genomically sequenced so the variant involved could be identified.

The scientists broke the infected people into two groups: those who had a positive test between 14 days after the first dose and seven days after the second, which they designated partial effectiveness (PE), and those who had a positive test at least a week after the second dose, which they designated as full effectiveness (FE). They matched these folks demographically (age, sex, ethnicity, location) with unvaccinated and infected individuals to reduce something called selection bias which can influence the interpretation of results. They sequenced virus from all of the cases in these matched samples.

Here are their conclusions: (1) B.1.1.7, the variant first identified in the UK, was the predominant variant in Israel over the sampling period. (2) B.1.351, the variant first described in South Africa, had an overall frequency of less than one percent. (3) No other variants of concern or variants of interest were found in the sample, and they did not find evidence for the increased presence of any additional mutations. (4) There was reduced vaccine effectiveness against B.1.1.7 after one dose, but after two doses the vaccine was very effective. (5) B.1.351 may be more resistant compared to both B.1.1.7 and WT—eight cases

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with this variant in FE compared to one in the non-immunized—but there were no cases with B.1.351 at 14 or more days after dose #2.

Overall, they concluded there is an increased incidence of B.1.351 in breakthrough infections in the FE group, but not after 14 days post-dose #2, and increased incidence of B.1.1.7 in the PE group. Something we should note is that some of the breakthroughs diagnosed seven days post-dose #2 may have actually been acquired earlier before the immunity from the boost was established, so this study may not fully evaluate enhanced immunity from the boost. We will also note these are fairly small samples, which can skew results. Seems to me B.1.351 is not our biggest worry now or possibly well into the future: It is not spreading efficiently or outcompeting B.1.1.7, which is susceptible to our vaccines, and it is also not doing well in the fully vaccinated (as we define them). It is looking like good public health measures are sufficient to contain B.1.351 because B.1.1.7 is going to outcompete it.

I've been talking to plenty of folks who've been vaccinated. Some of them breeze through both doses without a care in the world; others not so much. Here's what we know: Side-effects are more likely with dose #1 in people who've been previously infected, following the second dose, in women, and in younger people. None of this is to say an old male with no history of Covid-19 can't have side-effects after a first dose, but those are the probabilities. The most common side-effects are flu-like symptoms, fever, headache, fatigue, muscle aches, joint aches, nausea, chills. They tend to show up within 24 hours of the vaccination (and sometimes as soon as within a couple of hours) and last one to two days, occasionally to as long as seven days. Most people aren't sick enough to need a day off work, but some might be. I wouldn't plan anything important for the day or two following dose #2 for sure.

We've talked about the fact that most experts say you shouldn't premedicate, that is, take a painkiller or anti-inflammatory before you go in for your vaccination. You shouldn't really be taking medication for symptoms you don't yet have because every dose of medication carries some risk and it's silly to take risks when you don't know whether you'll need the medication. There is some concern that the painkillers will mute the effects of the vaccine, and although no one thinks this effect is great, why give up a percentage point or two when you don't have to? After the dose is administered, if you're suffering, it's completely cool to take something to deal with the side-effects. It's become popular to say the side-effects are a sign the vaccine is working—and there's something to that line of thinking: A vigorous immune response can cause these symptoms, no doubt.

So the next question is whether those of us (I count myself among them) who have little to no side-effects are getting the full effect of the vaccine. After all, if all that sickness is a sign it's working, isn't the lack of the sickness a sign it is not working? Actually, no, it's not a sign of that at all. Some folks' immune responses are just noisier than others; the noisy ones have side-effects, and the quieter ones don't. Tufts University Department of Infectious Disease and Global Health professor, Jonathan Runstadler, told NPR, "The fact that [an individual] did not see a reaction is not a reason to believe that their body did not develop an appropriate response that will be protective." He explains that the reaction to a vaccine "varies a lot between individuals and the individual's circumstances."

Recent data show that B.1.1.7 is most prevalent in Michigan, Florida, Colorado, California, Minnesota, and Massachusetts. While its early rise was masked by the overall decline in case numbers, it is showing itself now. It is about 60 percent more transmissible and two-thirds more lethal than D114G, the previously prevalent variant. Infected people shed more virus and shed it for longer; these characteristics make it much more difficult to deal with.

Our prisons have been hotbeds of infection; we all knew that. The dimensions of the problem are becoming more apparent. Here are the numbers: Worldwide, two percent of people have been infected; in the US nine percent have been infected; and in US prisons, 34 percent have been infected. That's pretty bad. When you couple this with the problem that inmates cannot voluntarily distance and they've often been denied access even to masks and sanitation is not always great, it's not a big surprise that infection rates have been out of control. For over a years now the daily rate of new infections has been more than 1400 and the daily death rate has been seven. That translates to at least 2700 people dead in a setting where access to good health care is poor.

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More and more colleges are requiring vaccinations for residential students returning in the fall. This isn't a new thing; colleges have long had vaccination requirements for other diseases. This is just one more. These rules have held up to court scrutiny for at least 100 years. There is a chance a court might rule Covid-19 vaccines which are available under emergency use authorization (EUA) may not be OK to require; but that shouldn't slow colleges down much because we expect licensing (the full FDA approval) for at least one of them within a few weeks. I do expect difficulties with this. For example, suppose a prospective international student has completed a vaccination series but the vaccine used was not approved in the US? Do we call that vaccinated or, or what?

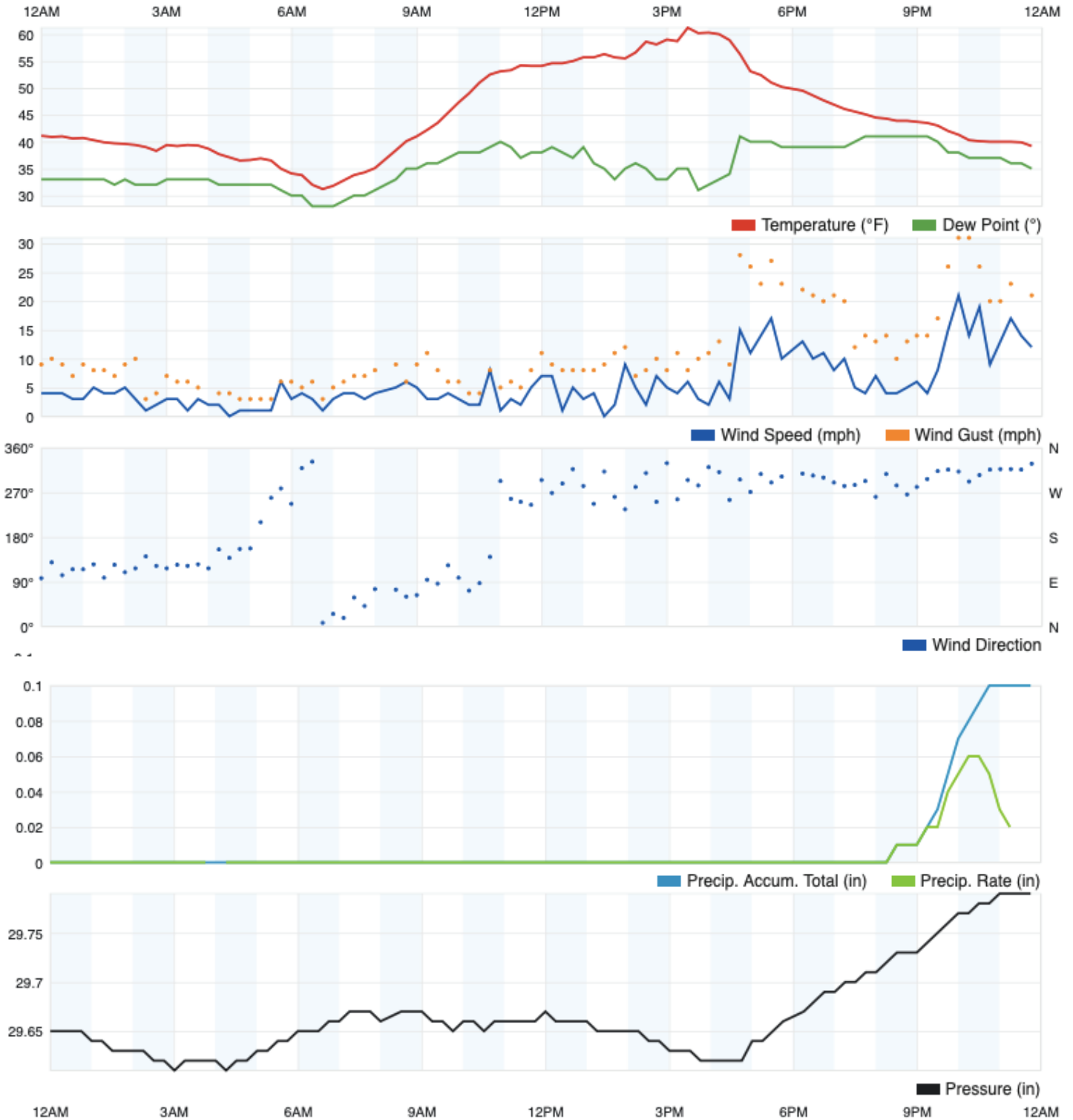
It's not just inmates getting sick and dying: Over 138,000 prison and jail officers have been infected, and 261 of those have died. Both prisoners and workers have been slow to sign up for vaccinations, which means future outbreaks are pretty certain.

And with that, I'll sign off. Be well. I'll be back tomorrow.

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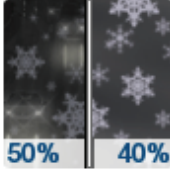



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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today	Tonight	Tuesday	Tuesday Night	Wednesday
				
30% 50%	50% 40%	30% 30%	20%	
Breezy. Chance Rain/Snow then Chance Showers	Chance Rain/Snow and Blustery then Chance Snow Showers	Breezy. Chance Snow Showers then Chance Rain/Snow	Slight Chance Rain/Snow and Blustery then Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy
High: 45 °F	Low: 23 °F	High: 35 °F	Low: 24 °F	High: 42 °F



Today:
Highs 40-50°F
Chance of Rain

Tonight:
Lows 20-25°F
Chance of Light Snow

Tuesday:
Highs 35-45°F
Northeast SD – West central MN, Rain/snow mix

**Breezy to Windy
Gusts of 35-45 mph**

Aberdeen, SD
Weather Forecast Office

A storm system will slowly cross the region through Tuesday, bringing gusty winds, cold temperatures, and light precipitation. Some of that precipitation could fall as snow, with light accumulations possible, mainly tonight into the morning hours on Tuesday.

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Today in Weather History

April 12, 1970: A strong spring storm affected the northern and western two-thirds of South Dakota. Heavy snow fell throughout the morning hours dumping over a foot of snow over a large area of the state. Winds whipped the snow into 2 to 4-foot drifts across much of northern South Dakota. The Aberdeen area was the hardest hit with around 17 inches reported. While southeast South Dakota, southwest Minnesota, and northwest Iowa did not feel the effects of the storm, east-central South Dakota was not as fortunate. Freezing drizzle and freezing rain resulted in heavy icing in east central South Dakota causing extensive damage. The ice storm caused power outages to 20 to 80% of the rural electric service in the area.

1927: A tornado wiped out the town of Rock Springs Texas, killing 72 persons and causing 1.2 million dollars damage. The tornado was more than one mile in width and destroyed 235 of 247 buildings, leaving no trace of lumber or contents in many cases. Many survivors were bruised by large hail that fell after the passage of the tornado.

1934: Winds atop Mount Washington New Hampshire, averaged 186 mph for five minutes, with a peak gust of 231 mph, the highest wind speed ever clocked in the world at that time. In a report released by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), that record was topped in 1996 at Barrow Island, Australia during Typhoon Olivia. The new world record is now 253 mph. The 316 mph wind speed recorded at Moore, Oklahoma on 5/3/1999 logged during an F5 tornado was not recorded at ground level.

1945: A series of significant tornadoes raked Oklahoma, Arkansas, Missouri, and Illinois. Antlers, Oklahoma were nearly obliterated by a massive F5 tornado that zigzagged from southwest to northeast across the town. 69 people died in the twister. Another tornado killed eight people in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. The disaster was overshadowed by the loss of President Franklin Roosevelt, who died suddenly at his vacation home at Warm Springs, Georgia.

1927 - A tornado wiped out the town of Rock Springs, TX, killing 72 persons and causing 1.2 million dollars damage. The tornado, more than one mile in width, destroyed 235 of 247 buildings, leaving no trace of lumber or contents in many cases. Many survivors were bruised by large hail which fell after the passage of the tornado. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A cold front crossing the central U.S. produced heavy snow in the Central Rockies, and severe thunderstorms over Kansas and Oklahoma. Snowfall totals ranged up to 16 inches at Red Mountain Pass CO. Thunderstorm winds gusted to 87 mph at Ponca City OK. Winds associated with the cold front itself gusted to 69 mph at Tucumcari NM. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Snow blanketed the Southern Appalachians. Totals in North Carolina ranged up to 17 inches at Mitchell. Winds at Flat Top Mountain gusted to 80 mph. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Twenty-two cities in the south central and eastern U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date, including Elkins WV with a low of 15 degrees, and Baton Rouge LA with a reading of 37 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1990 - Arctic air invaded the central U.S. Lincoln, NE, reported a record low of 17 degrees. Thunderstorms developing along the arctic cold front produced heavy snow in north central Kansas, wind gusts to 61 mph at Midland TX, and wind gusts to 69 mph at Rawlins WY. Warm weather prevailed in the southwestern U.S. Las Vegas NV reported a record high of 91 degrees, and on the 13th, Sacramento CA reported a record high of 95 degrees. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

2010 - One-inch diameter hail falls in Fresno, CA. Two condominiums are destroyed by thunderstorms in California's San Joaquin Valley. Up to three funnel clouds were also seen in the region.

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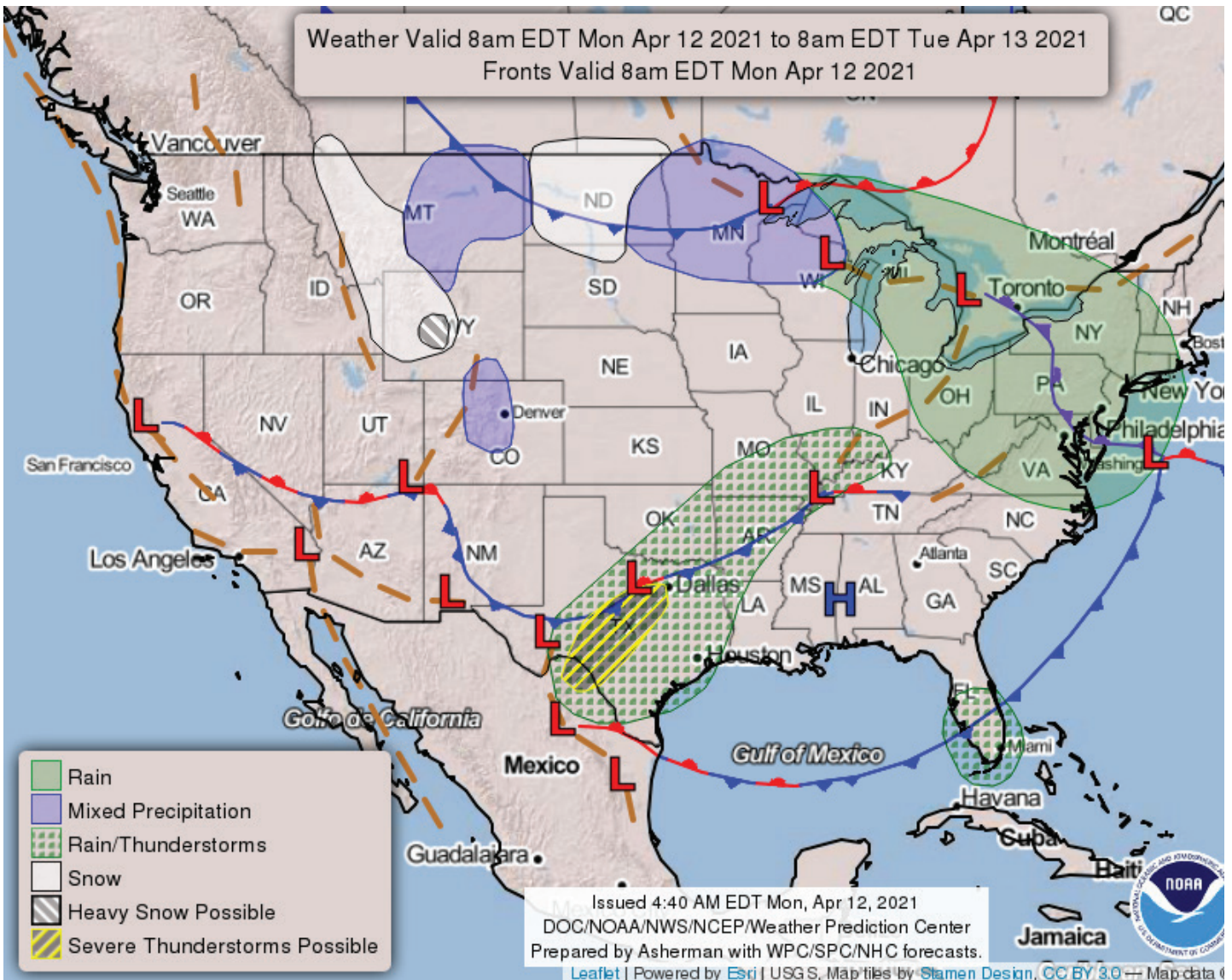
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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 61 °F at 3:30 PM
Low Temp: 31 °F at 6:46 AM
Wind: 31 mph at 9:58 PM
Precip: .10

Today's Info

Record High: 85° in 1925, 1931
Record Low: 9° in 1961
Average High: 55°F
Average Low: 30°F
Average Precip in Apr.: 0.52
Precip to date in Apr.: 2.21
Average Precip to date: 2.70
Precip Year to Date: 2.39
Sunset Tonight: 8:16 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:51 a.m.



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WHY DO GOOD?

"Finders keepers! Losers weepers!"

That statement, which some think comes from an ancient Roman law, has guided the decisions of many children. It has also found its way into the lives of many adults. If someone loses "it," and someone else finds "it," what's the right thing to do with "it"?

In Deuteronomy, the Hebrews were told that they were to care for and return animals, as well as any property that someone might have lost, to their rightful owners. The reason for this rule is that when someone protected and returned the property of another person, that one was kept from being envious and greedy. Envy and greed seem to be the "gateway" to almost every other sin.

"Turn from evil and do good," advises David. He wanted the "just," those who lived "moral lives," to know that the Lord loved them and that He would always be faithful to them. Additionally, David added, that the "just" will "inherit the land" – have eternal life.

How blest we are to know that God wants us to have hope in Him and look forward to being with Him throughout eternity. God has placed within every heart the longing for Someone to bring completeness and purpose into their life. The emptiness, the loneliness, the "desire for something more" that we find in God is the "inheritance" that awaits those "who turn from evil and do good" and find fulfillment and meaning in God.

But there is more to look forward to than our future inheritance. We can look forward to God's presence, power, purpose, and peace in our lives today and every day. He loves the "just"- those who live lives of fairness and justice because He is fair and just. And He will never forsake the "faithful" because He is faithful. What more can we expect?

Prayer: Thank You, Father, for the gift of Your Son. In Him, we can find power, peace, presence, and purpose for living. May we follow His example. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Turn from evil and do good, and you will live in the land forever. Psalm 37:27

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2021 Community Events

- Cancelled** Legion Post #39 Spring Fundraiser (Sunday closest to St. Patrick's Day, every other year)
- 03/27/2021 Lions Club Easter Egg Hunt 10am Sharp at the City Park (Saturday a week before Easter Weekend)
- 04/10/2021 Dueling Pianos Baseball Fundraiser at the American Legion Post #39 6-11:30pm
- 04/24/2021 Firemen's Spring Social at the Fire Station 7pm-12:30am (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)
- 04/25/2021 Princess Prom (Sunday after GHS Prom)
- 05/01/2021 Lions Club Spring City-Wide Rummage Sales 8am-3pm (1st Saturday in May)
- 05/31/2021 Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services (Memorial Day)
- 6/7-9/2021 St. John's Lutheran Church VBS
- 06/18/2021 SDSU Alumni & Friends Golf Tournament at Olive Grove
- 06/19/2021 Lions Crazy Golf Fest at Olive Grove Golf Course, Noon
- 07/04/2021 Firecracker Golf Tournament at Olive Grove
- 07/11/2021 Lions Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 10am-4pm (Sunday Mid-July)
- 07/22/2021 Pro-Am Golf Tournament at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 07/30/2021-08/03/2021 State "B" American Legion Baseball Tournament in Groton
- 08/06/2021 Wine on Nine at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 09/11/2021 Lions Club Fall City-Wide Rummage Sales 8am-3pm (1st Saturday after Labor Day)
- 09/12/2021 Sunflower Classic Golf Tournament at Olive Grove
- 09/18-19 Groton Fly-In/Drive-In, Groton Municipal Airport
- 10/08/2021 Lake Region Marching Band Festival (2nd Friday in October)
- 10/09/2021 Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm (Saturday before Columbus Day)
- 10/29/2021 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm
- 10/31/2021 Groton United Methodist Trunk or Treat (Halloween)
- 11/13/2021 Legion Post #39 Turkey Party (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)
- 11/25/2021 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm (Thanksgiving)
- 12/11/2021 Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services 9am-Noon

News from the Associated Press

Missouri River managers turn attention from flood to drought

By RANDY DOCKENDORF Yankton Press and Dakotan

YANKTON, S.D. (AP) — With anticipated continued drought, flooding likely won't be an issue this year in the upper Missouri River basin, according to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and other federal officials.

Despite recent rainfall, the Yankton region remains a combination of abnormally dry and moderate drought conditions, according to the U.S. Drought Monitor. A similar situation is found in much of the upper basin.

Reservoir inflows in the basin above Sioux City, Iowa, were well-below average in March. The updated 2021 upper basin runoff forecast is 21.3 million acre-feet (MAF), 83% of average.

For the most part, the open winter provided much less runoff, according to Kevin Low with the Missouri River Basin Forecast Center.

"The flood risk over most of the Missouri River basin is much reduced because of the below-normal snowpack," he said. "You have the lack of plains snow and near average for mountain snowpack."

While some parts of the basin have received recent rainfall, the overall condition remains dry, said John Remus, chief of the Missouri River Basin Water Management Division.

"Abundant precipitation fell during March in the lower basin below Sioux City, Iowa. However, March precipitation was less than 50% of normal over much of the upper basin," Remus said.

"Due to the lack of plains snowpack in 2021, below-average mountain snowpack, and dry upper basin conditions, we expect upper basin runoff to be below average."

The runoff forecast is based on soil moisture conditions, plains and mountain snowpack and long-term precipitation and temperature outlooks, the Yankton Press and Dakotan reported.

Those conditions may not change much in the coming months, Low said.

The outlook for April-June calls for warmer-than-normal temperatures along the entire basin, Low said. The precipitation outlook shows odds favoring below-normal precipitation to the west but equal chances of above-, below- and normal throughout the rest of the basin.

The April-June outlook also calls for below-average precipitation with similar conditions expected beyond that time period, Low said.

"It looks like late summer — July, August and September — will be warmer than normal over the entire basin," he said. "The precipitation outlook during the same three months suggests the entire Missouri River basin will see less than normal precipitation over the summer months."

A La Nina weather pattern out of the Pacific Ocean is expected to fade into neutral this spring, Low said. "Whether we have a La Nina or El Nino plays a very small role in forecasting summertime weather in the basin," he said.

Mountain snowpack in the upper Basin is accumulating at below-average rates. The April 1 mountain snowpack in the Fort Peck reach was 88%, and the mountain snowpack in the Fort Peck to Garrison reach was 94% of average.

By April 1, about 97% of the total mountain snowpack has typically accumulated. Currently, plains snowpack in the upper basin is light.

The reservoir system storage is currently 56.1 MAF, at the base of the annual flood control zone. The system is positioned to serve all congressionally-authorized purposes during 2021, including flood control, navigation and water supply.

Gavins Point Dam releases were increased near the end of March to begin flow support for Missouri River navigation. During the past month, Gavins Point saw average releases of 20,200 cfs. The current release rate stands at 29,000 cfs, while the forecast release rate is 29,500 cfs.

Remus said Gavins Point should continue to meet flow targets for navigation and continue operating as normal during repairs on lower Missouri River structures.

Fort Randall Dam at Pickstown, directly upstream of Gavins Point, saw average releases of 14,300 cfs

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during the past month. The figure allows for any tributary inflows between the two dams.

Fort Randall releases will be adjusted as necessary to maintain the desired reservoir elevation at Gavins Point and to back up Gavins Point releases.

Kevin Grode and Mike Swenson, both with the Missouri River Water Management Division, outlined details about meeting the needs of the system.

"The Corps' main priority is regulating the mainstem reservoirs so they operate safely," Grode said. "The operational decisions for the basin are driven by runoffs. The system is regulated to meet the eight congressionally-authorized purposes."

Flood control remains a priority, along with navigation and water supply, Grode said. Besides fulfilling those needs, the Corps also serves the other five areas of hydropower, fish and wildlife, irrigation, water quality control and recreation.

"In making these operational decisions, (the Corps) will comply with all applicable federal laws," Grode said.

The Corps vacates water from the flood control and multiple use zone during the later summer, fall and winter, Grode said. The system will continue serving the authorized purposes while preparing the reservoirs for the following year's runoff.

The system receives 75% of the annual runoff from March to July, Grode said. The records of the annual runoff above Sioux City date back to 1898. The basin has seen great variability during those 123 years, but the 2021 forecast runoff would fall in the lowest one-fourth of all time, he added.

Swenson provided an update on the current reservoir conditions and the expected results for the authorized purposes in 2021.

As of April 5, the Fort Randall elevation was 1,354.3 feet above the base of the flood control zone and very close to the normal operating level of 1,355 feet this time of year.

All the 2020 flood water was evacuated from the reservoir system by mid-December, Swenson said. However, flooding can still occur due to downstream rainfall. The ability to reduce storages diminishes farther downstream because of the increased travel time and the uncontrolled drainage over large unregulated areas, he added.

Looking ahead, the river should be able to maintain a full navigation season, provide about 9.5 billion kilowatt-hours of hydropower, which is average, and provide recreation, water supply and irrigation, Swenson said.

In addition, the system holds enough storage to take care of fish and wildlife, including endangered species, he added.

The Corps conducts reservoir storage checks July 1 for scheduling the second half of the year and Sept. 1 for the winter flow release levels, Remus said.

However, the Corps evaluates its releases and forecasts every week, he said. If dealing with drought, the Corps looks at ways of meeting needs, he added.

"When it's below-normal runoff, we look at what is needed to be released every day to meet those targets, and that could fluctuate on a daily basis," he said.

"It's a zero-sum game. There is only so much water. If we release more water in April or May than we would normally, we have less water to release in August and September."

South Dakota hits halfway mark for vaccine-eligible people

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Half of South Dakota's population age 16 and over has received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, the state's Department of Health announced Saturday.

Health officials opened vaccine eligibility to anyone over age 16 on Monday. Nearly 300,000 in total have received at least a single dose of the vaccine, and about 70% of those people have completed their vaccinations.

"This milestone would not have been possible without the help of our healthcare professionals and all responsible South Dakotans who've chosen to be vaccinated," Secretary of Health Kim Malsam-Rysdon said in a statement. "Vaccinations is the quickest way out of this pandemic."

However, Malsam-Rysdon warned that there has been a 75% jump in COVID-19 infections among people in their 20s over the last six weeks.

The state has reported 2,413 people with active infections, including 238 new cases. There are 102 people in the hospital with COVID-19.

Chilly weather doesn't dampen UK joy at lockdown easing

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — People across Britain flocked to shed shaggy locks and browse for clothes, books and other "non-essential" items as shops, gyms, hairdressers, restaurant patios and beer gardens reopened Monday after months of lockdown.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson urged people to "behave responsibly" as the country that has had Europe's deadliest coronavirus outbreak took a big step on its roadmap toward a resumption of normal life.

Monday brought the easing of restrictions that have been in place in England since early January to suppress a surge in infections linked to a more transmissible new virus variant first identified in the southeast of the country.

Long lines formed outside some stores, including a branch of Nike Town on London's busy Oxford Street, and pubs and restaurants with outdoor space reported a flood of bookings.

Helen Dickinson, chief executive of the British Retail Consortium, said businesses that have endured months of enforced closure were "excited and desperate" to welcome customers back.

At a hairdresser in Birmingham, customer Amy Smith said she was thrilled to be getting a trim at last. "It's great to be here, I've been going with this weird little topknot for a few months now," she said. "I'm going to go to a beer garden experience later, so it's going to be good."

Many people were planning outdoor meals and drinks, despite unseasonably cold weather that brought springtime snow flurries to many areas — including, briefly, London.

Emma McClarkin, chief executive of the British Beer & Pub Association, said Monday's opening for outdoor service was "a first small step in a very long journey to recovery" for the "Great British pub."

Across the country, hardy pub-goers ordered pints on patios and in beer gardens despite the chilly weather. "Absolutely delicious," said Pippa Ingram, as she tasted her first drink alongside a hot breakfast at the Royal Victoria Pavilion pub in the seaside town of Ramsgate, southeast England. "That is banging," she said appreciatively.

England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are following distinct but broadly similar plans to ease lockdown.

Britain has had Europe's worst coronavirus outbreak, with more than 127,000 confirmed deaths.

Infections, hospitalizations and deaths have all fallen thanks to the lockdown, and a mass vaccination program that has given at least one dose to more than 60% of the adult population.

The situation in Britain stands in contrast to many of its neighbors, including France, where new lockdowns have been introduced to combat surging infections and deaths.

Johnson and epidemiologists have urged caution, saying that many people remain unvaccinated and relaxing social distancing rules or allowing foreign holidays this summer could bring a new spike in infections.

Indoor drinking and dining won't be allowed in England until May 17 at the earliest, and theaters, cinemas, nightclubs and most other venues remain closed, while indoor socializing is tightly restricted and foreign holidays remain banned.

The prime minister had promised to visit a pub for a pint to mark the occasion, but postponed the celebratory drink after the death of Prince Philip, husband of Queen Elizabeth II, on Friday at age 99.

Iran blames Israel for sabotage at Natanz nuclear site

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Iran blamed Israel on Monday for a sabotage attack on its underground Natanz nuclear facility that damaged centrifuges it uses to enrich uranium, warning that it would

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avenge the assault.

Israel has not claimed responsibility for the attack. However, suspicion fell immediately on it as Israeli media widely reported that the country had orchestrated a devastating cyberattack that caused the blackout.

Sunday's assault and Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh's comments blaming Israel could imperil ongoing talks in Vienna with world powers about saving a tattered accord aimed at curbing Iran's nuclear program.

If Israel was responsible, it would further heighten tensions between the two nations, already engaged in a shadow conflict across the wider Middle East. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who met Sunday with U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, has vowed to do everything in his power to stop the reviving of the nuclear deal.

At a news conference at Israel's Nevatim air base Monday, where he viewed Israeli air and missile defense systems and its F-35 combat aircraft, Austin declined to say whether the Natanz attack could impede the Biden administration's efforts to re-engage with Iran in its nuclear program.

"Those efforts will continue," Austin said. The previous American administration under Donald Trump had pulled out of the nuclear deal with world powers, leading Iran to begin abandoning its limits.

Details remained scarce about what happened early Sunday at the facility. The event was initially described as a blackout caused by the electrical grid feeding its above-ground workshops and underground enrichment halls.

"The answer for Natanz is to take revenge against Israel," Khatibzadeh said. "Israel will receive its answer through its own path." He did not elaborate.

Khatibzadeh acknowledged that IR-1 centrifuges, the first-generation workhorse of Iran's uranium enrichment, had been damaged in the attack, but did not elaborate. State television has yet to show images from the facility.

A former chief of Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard said the attack had also set off a fire at the site and called for improvements in security. In a tweet, Gen. Mohsen Rezaei said that the second attack at Natanz in a year signaled "the seriousness of the infiltration phenomenon." Rezaei did not say where he got his information.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif separately warned Natanz would be reconstructed with more advanced machines. That would allow Iran to more quickly enrich uranium, complicating talks on the deal.

"The Zionists wanted to take revenge against the Iranian people for their success on the path of lifting sanctions," Iran's state-run IRNA news agency quoted Zarif as saying. "But we do not allow (it), and we will take revenge for this action against the Zionists."

Officials launched an effort Monday to provide emergency power to Natanz, said Ali Akbar Salehi, the head of Iran's civilian nuclear program. He said the sabotage had not stopped enrichment there, without elaborating.

The IAEA, the United Nations body that monitors Tehran's atomic program, earlier said it was aware of media reports about the blackout at Natanz and had spoken with Iranian officials about it. The agency did not elaborate.

Natanz has been targeted by sabotage in the past. The Stuxnet computer virus, discovered in 2010 and widely believed to be a joint U.S.-Israeli creation, once disrupted and destroyed Iranian centrifuges there during an earlier period of Western fears about Tehran's program.

In July, Natanz suffered a mysterious explosion at its advanced centrifuge assembly plant that authorities later described as sabotage. Iran now is rebuilding that facility deep inside a nearby mountain. Iran also blamed Israel for the November killing of a scientist who began the country's military nuclear program decades earlier.

Multiple Israeli media outlets reported Sunday that an Israeli cyberattack caused the blackout. Public broadcaster Kan said the Mossad was behind the attack. Channel 12 TV cited "experts" as estimating the attack shut down entire sections of the facility.

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While the reports offered no sourcing for their information, Israeli media maintains a close relationship with the country's military and intelligence agencies.

"It's hard for me to believe it's a coincidence," Yoel Guzansky, a senior fellow at Tel Aviv's Institute for National Security Studies, said of the blackout. "If it's not a coincidence, and that's a big if, someone is trying to send a message that 'we can limit Iran's advance and we have red lines.'"

It also sends a message that Iran's most sensitive nuclear site is penetrable, he added.

Netanyahu late Sunday toasted his security chiefs, with the head of the Mossad, Yossi Cohen, at his side on the eve of his country's Independence Day.

"It is very difficult to explain what we have accomplished," Netanyahu said of Israel's history, saying the country had been transformed from a position of weakness into a "world power."

Israel typically doesn't discuss operations carried out by its Mossad intelligence agency or specialized military units. In recent weeks, Netanyahu repeatedly has described Iran as the major threat to his country as he struggles to hold onto power after multiple elections and while facing corruption charges.

Biden Republicans? Some in GOP open to president's agenda

By WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — Jay Copan doesn't hide his disregard for the modern Republican Party.

A solid Republican voter for the past four decades, the 69-year-old quickly regretted casting his 2016 ballot for Donald Trump. When Trump was up for reelection last year, Copan appeared on roadside billboards across North Carolina, urging other Republicans to back Democratic rival Joe Biden.

Nearly three months into the new administration, Copan considers himself a "Biden Republican," relieved by the new president's calmer leadership style and coronavirus vaccine distribution efforts. Copan is the type of voter Biden is counting on as he pushes an agenda that's almost universally opposed by Republicans in Washington.

As Biden meets Monday with a bipartisan group of lawmakers to discuss his massive infrastructure plan, he's betting that the GOP's elected leaders are making a political miscalculation. The party's base remains overwhelmingly loyal to Trump, but Biden believes that Republican leaders are overlooking everyday Americans eager for compromise and action.

The question is whether there are enough Republicans like Copan.

"I really want there to be a good two-party system," said Copan, a former senior officer with the American Gas Association. His vote for Biden for president was his first for a Democrat since Jimmy Carter in 1976 but probably won't be his last. "I think there's a lot of people like me out there."

The ranks of Republican crossovers may be smaller than he would expect. Only 8% of Republicans voted Democratic in November's presidential race, according to AP VoteCast, a survey of the electorate nationwide.

"If there's any Republicans voting for Biden, they were not voting for Biden, they're just Never Trumpers," said Phillip Stephens, a former Democrat who is now Republican vice chairman in Robeson County, about 90 miles south of Raleigh. The county twice voted for Barack Obama but went for Trump in 2016 and again last year.

In Biden's early months, Stephens sees the president catering more to the left than to conservative Democratic voters.

During last year's campaign, Biden at times courted Republicans at the risk of alienating the Democratic left. Several prominent Republicans got speaking positions during the Democratic National Convention, such as former Ohio Gov. John Kasich.

A number of Republican groups also openly backed Biden. Republican Voters Against Trump spent \$2 million on billboards in swing states, featuring Republicans opposed to reelecting their own party's president. That's how Copan's beaming and bespectacled image, 12 feet (3.6 meters) high, ended up on billboards with the words: "I'm conservative. I value decency. I'm voting Biden."

As president, Biden has expressed openness to working with Republicans. But he also helped ram through Congress the largest expansion of the social safety net in a generation as part of a coronavirus relief and

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stimulus package that didn't get a single Republican vote. He's now calling for spending trillions more on infrastructure, pushing a proposal meant to appeal to people in both parties.

Biden has so far enjoyed wide, relatively bipartisan support, with 73% of Americans approving of his coronavirus response and 60% approving of his handling of the economy. Still, favorable ratings don't always translate to votes: Of the more than 200 counties that supported Obama in 2012 and Trump in 2016, only about 25 went back to Biden in November.

The limited crossover power is even true in places that were bright spots for Democrats. Biden flipped longtime Republican stronghold Kent County, Michigan, which includes Grand Rapids, Gerald Ford's hometown. But those gains were built more on the local electorate getting younger than any measurable surge of conservatives backing Biden.

Joe Farrington ran for Congress as a "working class Republican" and owns a bar in Lyons, Michigan, about 50 miles east of Grand Rapids, in Ionia County, where Trump won nearly two-thirds of the vote. During a candidates' debate, he called Trump "somewhat of an idiot" — and finished fourth in a five-way primary race.

He says Biden is doing the right thing on infrastructure, social issues and the environment. Still, Farrington said he'll remain loyal to the Republican Party — even if he runs for Congress again in 2022 in opposition to much of what it stands for. "We need to change it from within," he says.

Scott Carey, former general counsel of the Tennessee Republican Party, wrote an op-ed in October saying he was voting for Biden. He's been mostly satisfied so far — but not about to become a born-again Democrat. He worries about tax increases and government overreach.

"I don't see myself becoming a big Harris, or certainly a Bernie fan or anything like that," Carey said of Vice President Kamala Harris and liberal Sen. Bernie Sanders. If Biden decides not to seek a second term in 2024, Carey said, he'd be more excited about Republicans, including "some governors I've never even heard of who would step up post-Trump and bring us back to sound governing policies."

Others, though, say they've left the GOP for good.

Tom Rawles is an ex-Republican county supervisor in Maricopa County, which includes Phoenix and was critical in Biden carrying swing-state Arizona. After voting for Biden, Rawles registered as a Democrat.

"I'd rather fight philosophically within the Democratic Party than I would for character in the Republican Party, because there's none there," said Rawles. He's 71 and said he doesn't expect the GOP to return to principles he can support in his lifetime.

Rawles and his wife spent months before the election sitting in their driveway along a busy suburban Phoenix road, hoisting Biden signs for four hours a day. Some drivers stopped to chat or offer water. Others made rude gestures or screamed that they were interlopers from fiercely blue California.

"Some people would yell, 'Go home!,'" Rawles recalls. "And we'd say, 'We're in our driveway. Where do you want us to go?'"

EXPLAINER: Iran atomic sites targeted by diplomacy, sabotage

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Iran's nuclear program has been targeted by diplomatic efforts and sabotage attacks over the last decade, with the latest incident striking its underground Natanz facility.

The attack Sunday at Natanz comes as world powers try to negotiate a return by Iran and the U.S. to Tehran's atomic accord. The sabotage threatens to upend those negotiations and further heighten regional tensions across the Mideast.

FROM 'ATOMS FOR PEACE' TO PROLIFERATION

Iran's nuclear program actually began with the help of the United States. Under its "Atoms for Peace" program, America supplied a test reactor that came online in Tehran in 1967 under the rule of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. That help ended once Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution overthrew the shah.

In the 1990s, Iran expanded its program, including secretly buying equipment from Pakistan's top nuclear

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scientist Abdul Qadeer Khan. Khan helped create Pakistan's nuclear weapons program and his proliferation aided North Korea in obtaining the atomic bombs it has today. Khan's designs allowed Iran to build the IR-1 centrifuges that largely power its uranium enrichment.

Tehran insists its atomic program is peaceful. However, Iran "carried out activities relevant to the development of a nuclear explosive device" in a "structured program" through the end of 2003, the International Atomic Energy Agency has said. That's an assessment shared by U.S. intelligence agencies and the State Department. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu long has alleged Iran continues to want nuclear weapons to this day.

IRAN'S NUCLEAR SITES

Natanz, in Iran's central Isfahan province, hosts the country's main uranium enrichment facility. Iran has one operating nuclear power plant in Bushehr, which it opened with Russia's help in 2011. Iran previously reconfigured its Arak heavy-water reactor so it couldn't produce plutonium. Its Fordo enrichment site is also dug deep into a mountainside. Tehran also still operates the Tehran research reactor.

DIPLOMACY TO DISARRAY

Iran struck the nuclear deal in 2015 with the United States, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, Russia and China. The deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, saw Iran dramatically limit its enrichment of uranium under the watch of IAEA inspectors in exchange for the lifting of economic sanctions. The small stockpile of less-enriched uranium blocked Iran from having enough material to build a nuclear bomb if it chose.

Then-President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew America from the accord in 2018, in part over the deal not addressing Iran's ballistic missile program and its support of allied militant groups in the Mideast. Architects of the deal, containing provisions that expire over time, had said they hoped American officials could build on it for future agreements.

Since the U.S. withdrawal, Iran has in response abandoned all the deal's limits of its uranium enrichment. It spins advanced centrifuges, grows its stockpile and enriches up to 20% purity — a technical step away from weapons-grade levels of 90%.

President Joe Biden, who took office in January, has said he's willing to re-enter the nuclear deal. Countries began negotiations in Vienna last week seeking to find a way forward. Israel, which under Netanyahu has vowed not to see the deal revived, is widely suspected of recently stepping up a shadow campaign targeting Iran.

'NUCLEAR TERRORISM'

With the sabotage of Natanz on Sunday, the head of Iran's civilian nuclear program described it as "nuclear terrorism." But it marked merely the latest attack targeting the Iranian program.

Natanz found itself first targeted by a major cyberattack in the late 2000s. Called Stuxnet, the virus attacked control units for centrifuges at Natanz, causing the sensitive devices to spin out of control and destroy themselves. Experts widely attribute the attack to America and Israel, as does Iran.

Another sabotage attack targeted Natanz in July. An explosion ripped apart an advanced centrifuge assembly plant at the site. Afterward, Iran said it would rebuild the site deep inside a nearby mountain. Satellite photos show that work continues. Suspicion widely fell on Israel for the blast as well.

Then there have been a series of assassinations targeting Iranian nuclear scientists over the last decade. The killings involved bombings and shootings. The most-recent killing saw the scientist who founded Iran's military nuclear program decades ago shot in November by what authorities have described as a remote-controlled machine gun that later exploded. Iran blames Israel for those slayings as well.

SINGING AMONG THE CENTRIFUGES

The extent of the damage to Natanz remains unclear at the moment. Iran has yet to broadcast any im-

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ages of the facility on state television. It's unclear if any of the damage will be able to be seen from the air as its centrifuge halls are all underground. NASA fire satellites detected no visible blasts at the facility either Saturday or Sunday.

The longterm effects on Iran's atomic program as a whole also remain unclear. If the attack halts centrifuges at Natanz, they still spin at Fordo. Ali Akbar Salehi, the head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, vowed Sunday to keep advancing the country's nuclear technology.

The sabotage comes at a sensitive time for outgoing President Hassan Rouhani, whose administration is trying to claw back its signature diplomatic achievement through the Vienna talks. Term-limited from seeking office again, the relative-moderate Rouhani will bow out to whoever wins Iran's upcoming June presidential election.

If Iran can't regain the benefits of the deal, it could boost hard-liners within the Islamic Republic. Already, some media outlets demanded Monday for Rouhani to pull out of the Vienna negotiations.

The Natanz sabotage also further links Iran's nuclear program to the propaganda aired by state television urging the country to resist outside pressure. Before the sabotage, state TV aired a segment showing men in white lab coats singing among Natanz's silver centrifuges, some holding pictures of the scientists slain in the earlier assassinations.

"We are proud and victorious in science," the men sang. "We believe in ourselves and don't pin hopes to foreigners."

The singers likely weren't nuclear scientists, however. Iran since the killing has carefully blurred their images, worried about them being targeted again.

White House issuing reports on states' infrastructure needs

By JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Biden White House is amplifying the push for its \$2.3 trillion infrastructure package with the release of state-by-state breakdowns that show the dire shape of roads, bridges, the power grid and housing affordability.

The figures in the state summaries, obtained by The Associated Press, paint a decidedly bleak outlook for the world's largest economy after years of repairs being deferred and delayed. They suggest that too much infrastructure is unsafe for vehicles at any speed, while highlighting the costs of extreme weather events that have become more frequent with climate change as well as dead spots for broadband and a dearth of child care options.

President Joe Biden is scheduled to meet Monday afternoon with Republican and Democratic lawmakers and can use the state summaries to show that his plan would help meet the needs of their constituents.

Drawn from an array of private and public data, the reports show there are 7,300 miles (11,748 kilometers) of highway in Michigan alone that are in poor condition. Damaged streets in North Carolina impose an average yearly cost of \$500 on motorists. Iowa has 4,571 bridges in need of repair. There is a roughly 4-in-10 chance that a public transit vehicle in Indiana might be ready for the scrap yard. Pennsylvania's schools are short \$1.4 billion for maintenance and upgrades.

The administration is banking that the data will confirm the everyday experiences of Americans as they bump over potholes, get trapped in traffic jams and wait for buses that almost never correspond to published schedules. There is already a receptive audience to the sales pitch, and the strategy is that public support can overcome any congressional misgivings.

"We don't have a lot of work to do to persuade the American people that U.S. infrastructure needs major improvement," Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg said on Fox News Channel's "Fox News Sunday" ahead of the reports' release. "The American people already know it."

Republican lawmakers have been quick to reject the infrastructure proposal from Biden. They say just a fraction of the spending goes to traditional infrastructure, as \$400 billion would expand Medicaid support for caregivers and substantial portions would fund electric vehicle charging stations and address the racial injustice of highways that were built in ways that destroyed Black neighborhoods.

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The reports give some data to back up their argument that more money should be spent on roads and bridges. Biden's plan would modernize 20,000 miles (32,187 kilometers) worth of roadways, but California by itself has 14,220 miles (22,885 kilometers) of highway in poor condition.

Republican lawmakers also object to funding the package by increasing the corporate tax rate from 21% to 28% and increasing the global minimum tax, among other tax changes including stepped-up IRS enforcement being proposed by the Biden administration.

"This is a massive social welfare spending program combined with a massive tax increase on small-business job creators," Sen Roger Wicker, R-Miss., said on ABC's "This Week" on Sunday. "I can't think of a worse thing to do."

Yet the state-by-state reports make clear that many of the people Wicker represents could benefit from the package, an aspect of the Biden effort to engender the backing of voters across party lines.

Wicker was among four Republicans on the White House guest list for Biden's Monday meeting, along with Sen. Deb Fischer of Nebraska and Reps. Garret Graves of Louisiana and Don Young of Alaska. Democrats on the list were Sens. Maria Cantwell of Washington and Alex Padilla of California and Reps. Donald Payne Jr. of New Jersey and David Price of North Carolina.

Mississippi needs \$4.8 billion for drinking water and \$289 million for schools. Nearly a quarter of households lack an internet subscription, and a similar percentage lives in areas without broadband. Mississippians who use public transportation have to devote an extra 87.7% of their time to commuting.

Small but quick: Bhutan vaccinates 93% of adults in 16 days

THIMPU, Bhutan (AP) — When plotted on a graph, the curve of Bhutan's COVID-19 vaccination drive shoots upwards from the very first day, crossing Israel, United States, Bahrain and other countries known for vaccinating people rapidly.

Those countries took months to reach where they are, painstakingly strengthening their vaccination campaigns in the face of rising coronavirus cases. But the story of Bhutan's vaccination campaign is nearly finished — just 16 days after it began.

The tiny Himalayan kingdom wedged between India and China has vaccinated nearly 93% of its adult population since March 27. Overall, the country has vaccinated 62% of its 800,000 people.

The rapid rollout of the vaccine puts the tiny nation just behind Seychelles, which has given jabs to 66% of its population of nearly 100,000 people.

Its small population helped Bhutan move fast, but its success has also been attributed to its dedicated citizen volunteers, known as "desuups," and established cold chain storage used during earlier vaccination drives.

Bhutan received its first 150,000 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine from neighboring India in January, but the shots were distributed beginning in late March to coincide with auspicious dates in Buddhist astrology.

The first dose was administered by and given to a woman born in the Year of the Monkey, accompanied by chants of Buddhist prayers.

"Let this small step of mine today help us all prevail through this illness," the recipient, 30-year-old Ninda Dema, was quoted by the country's Kuensel newspaper as saying.

Dr. Pandup Tshering, secretary to the Ministry of Health, said jabs were still being provided to those who could not get vaccinated during the campaign period and that the country had enough doses to cover its entire population.

Bhutan has recorded 910 infections with the coronavirus and one COVID-19 death so far. It has a mandatory 21-day quarantine for all people arriving in the country. All schools and educational institutions are open and are monitored for compliance with COVID-19 protocols, Tshering said.

Bhutan is the last remaining Buddhist kingdom in the Himalayas. But the country has transitioned from an absolute monarchy to a democratic, constitutional monarchy.

Asia Today: India overtakes Brazil as 2nd-worst hit country

NEW DELHI (AP) — India reported another record daily surge in coronavirus infections Monday to overtake Brazil as the second-worst hit country.

The 168,912 cases added in the last 24 hours pushed India's total to 13.5 million, while Brazil has 13.4 million, according to data compiled by Johns Hopkins University.

India also reported 904 deaths in the past 24 hours, taking its total to 170,179, which is the fourth highest toll, behind the United States, Brazil and Mexico.

India is experiencing its worst surge of the pandemic, with a seven-day rolling average of more than 130,000 cases per day. Hospitals across the country are becoming overwhelmed with patients, and experts worry the worst is yet to come.

The latest surge also coincides with the shortage of vaccines in some Indian states, including western Maharashtra state, home to financial capital Mumbai, which is the worst hit state and has recorded nearly half of the country's new infections in the past two weeks.

In other developments in the Asia-Pacific region:

— The hard-hit Philippine capital and four nearby provinces were placed under a lighter coronavirus lockdown Monday to avoid further damage to an already battered economy despite a continuing surge in infections and deaths. Presidential spokesman Harry Roque said Metropolitan Manila and the provinces of Bulacan, Cavite, Laguna and Rizal, a region of more than 25 million people, would remain under lighter quarantine restrictions up to the end of April after a two-week hard lockdown. "Our emerging strategy is to increase our bed capacities instead of closing the economy," said Roque, who spoke in a televised news briefing from a Manila hospital after contracting COVID-19 like many Cabinet members. The Philippines has long been a Southeast Asian coronavirus hotspot, with about 865,000 confirmed infections and nearly 15,000 deaths.

— New Zealand is requiring that all border workers be vaccinated against the coronavirus by the end of the month. Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said Monday that beginning immediately, employers would need to consider alternative options for any of their employees who haven't been vaccinated. That could mean those workers are redeployed to roles away from the border or fired. Ardern had previously set April as a deadline for vaccinating frontline workers but on Monday talked about it in stronger terms after three workers at a quarantine facility caught the virus. New Zealand has stamped out the spread of the virus within the community, so returning travelers who may have caught COVID-19 abroad are considered the biggest vulnerability.

— Tokyo adopted tougher measures against the coronavirus as it struggles to curb the rapid spread of a more contagious variant ahead of the Olympics in a country where less than 1% of people have been vaccinated. Japan expanded its vaccination drive Monday to older residents, with the first shots being given in about 120 selected places around the country. The tougher COVID-19 rules allow Tokyo's governor to mandate shorter opening hours for bars and restaurants, punish violators and compensate those who comply. Tokyo Gov. Yuriko Koike urged residents to be cautious while vaccinations are in an early stage.

— Bhutan's COVID-19 vaccination drive was fast from the start. As other countries rolled out their vaccination campaigns over months, Bhutan is nearly done just 16 days after it started. The tiny Himalayan kingdom has vaccinated nearly 93% of its adults. Its small population helped Bhutan move fast, but dedicated volunteers and the use of cold chain storage from earlier vaccination drives are credited as well. Bhutan distributed the shots to coincide with auspicious dates in Buddhist astrology and the recipient and provider of the first shot were women born in the Year of the Monkey.

— The new mayor of South Korea's capital demanded swift approval of coronavirus self-testing kits, saying that his city urgently needs more tools to fight the pandemic and keep struggling businesses open. Oh Se-hoon spoke Monday as Seoul and nearby metropolitan towns shut down hostess bars, night clubs and other high-risk entertainment venues to slow transmissions. Similar businesses were also shut down in the southern port city of Busan. The Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency said 350 of the country's 587 new cases were from the greater Seoul area. Kwon Jun-wook, director of South Korea's National Health Institute, said earlier this month that authorities are reviewing whether to approve rapid

home tests. But the review has proceeded slowly with some experts saying such tests would do more harm than good because they are less accurate than standard laboratory tests.

Prince Philip vs Philip of 'The Crown': Fact and fiction

By LYNN ELBER AP Television Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — In "The Crown," a dishy naval officer captures the heart of a future queen. But he chafes at playing royal second fiddle and crosses the boundaries of decorum and, maybe, fidelity. He eventually finds his way as a trusted partner and family patriarch.

How does the Netflix drama's portrayal of Prince Philip, who died at age 99 on Friday, compare with the man himself and the life he lived with Britain's Queen Elizabeth II?

Prince Philip dwelled in his wife's shadow, and the same goes for Philip in "The Crown," as the title makes plain. But some episodes take a fuller measure of the man, or at least the character (played in succession by Matt Smith and Tobias Menzies, with Jonathan Pryce in the wings).

Peter Morgan, creator of the series that's in a lull before its fifth and penultimate season arrives in 2022, has said "The Crown" is the product of historical research and imagination, and includes scenes not to be taken as fact.

Barring a tell-all from the parties involved, for instance, we don't know if Philip was as rigid in his approach to parenting son Charles as he was sensitive with daughter Anne, as "The Crown" has it. Or what to make of the drama's dainty hints of marital infidelity by Philip.

The series thus far has brought Philip to middle age, covering only half of the real royal's nearly 100 years. Also absent from "The Crown" is Philip's unapologetic fondness for demeaning one-liners about women and people of color.

But there are aspects of the Greek-born prince's life that warrant comparison to the fictional version, whom "The Crown" depicts in a mostly flattering light: A bold and restless spirit, one bound to the end by duty and devotion to queen and country.

DOMESTIC STRIFE

"The Crown": Reluctant to surrender traditional male privilege, Philip wants their children to carry his last name (Mountbatten), not hers (Windsor). The answer is no.

When the death of Elizabeth's father, King George VI, brings her to the throne, Philip leaves military service for the role of consort. Quarrels with Elizabeth follow, including over his reluctance to kneel to her during her coronation.

They find a balance, with Philip a worthy half of an affectionate marriage.

In reality: When Philip lost his bid to use Mountbatten as the family name, according to Gyles Brandreth's "Philip and Elizabeth: Portrait of a Royal Marriage," he complained, "I am nothing but a bloody amoeba," a man barred from giving his children his name.

Eight years later, it was decided the couple's descendants would use a hyphenated surname — as in Archie Harrison Mountbatten-Windsor, the son of Harry and Meghan.

Under protest or not, Philip knelt before the newly crowned queen in 1952 and pledged to become her "liege man of life and limb, and of earthly worship."

On their 50th wedding anniversary, Elizabeth called him "my strength and stay."

MAN OF ACTION

"The Crown": In 1969, Philip is immersed in TV coverage of the first moon landing and faults his life in comparison. After prosaic royal engagements at dental and textile facilities, the trained flier has the opportunity to take the controls of a private jet.

He pushes the plane toward the edge of space and, as the pilot protests that the trembling aircraft is at its limit, Philip responds: "Perhaps. But look, we've also lived. Just for a minute."

Meeting with the U.S. astronauts when they visit England as part of a victory lap, Philip tells them his position and marriage kept him from "the things I would've liked to, as a man, as an adventurer."

In reality: During World War II, Philip saw action while serving on battleships and destroyers, was deco-

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rated and, at age 21, achieved the rank of first lieutenant in the Royal Navy.

While he carried out a full schedule of royal duties and headed hundreds of charities, he learned to fly in the 1950s and was an avid polo player and yachtsman, as well as painter and art collector. Still driving at 97, he flipped his Land Rover in a crash.

MAN OF FAITH

"The Crown": Philip is asked to allow a spiritual retreat to be created on Windsor Castle's grounds for clergy in need of midlife inspiration. He ridicules the plan as "hot air" but agrees to it, and ends up finding solace in its version of a men's therapy group.

"How's your faith?" he recalls his mother asking him with concern, then tells the gathering and its dean, "I'm here to admit to you I've lost it ... I come to say, 'Help.'"

In reality: Robin Woods, the then-dean of Windsor, proposed the founding of St. George's House in 1966 and Philip became its co-founder and an enthusiastic fundraiser, according to a companion book to "The Crown" by historian Robert Lacey. The center fosters discussion of contemporary issues, its website says.

Woods and Philip were lifelong friends, and the prince would critique his sermons at Windsor's St. George's Chapel. Philip's funeral will be held there April 17.

Christened in the Greek Orthodox Church — though a practicing Anglican, married to the supreme governor of the Church of England — Philip was a visitor to Mount Athos, a monastic community and religious sanctuary in Greece. Leaders of several faiths in Britain say he took a deep interest in spiritual matters.

His coat of arms bears the motto, "God is my help."

ON TEAM DIANA

"The Crown": When Diana Spencer is introduced at a family gathering at Balmoral Castle in Scotland, she and Philip bond over a day of stag hunting and he supports her marriage to Charles.

The relationship turns bitter, and Diana tells Philip she's considering splitting with Charles and the royal family she finds uncaring. Philip cautions her against the step and faults her perspective: Everyone is an outsider apart from the queen, the "one person, the only person, who matters," he says.

In reality: In letters between Diana and Philip said to have been leaked, Philip is supportive of Diana and critical of his son's extramarital affair with now-wife Camilla.

But after Diana's candid TV interview and a revealing biography, Philip's tone allegedly turned sterner and he wrote that she must "fit in" or exit the family.

Soviet cosmonaut made pioneering spaceflight 60 years ago

By VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — Crushed into the pilot's seat by heavy G-forces, Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin saw flames outside his spacecraft and prepared to die. His voice broke the tense silence at ground control: "I'm burning. Goodbye, comrades."

Gagarin didn't know that the blazing inferno he observed through a porthole was a cloud of plasma engulfing Vostok 1 during its re-entry into the Earth's atmosphere, and he was still on track to return safely.

It was his quiet composure under pressure that helped make him the first human in space 60 years ago.

Gagarin's steely self-control was a key factor behind the success of his pioneering 108-minute flight. The April 12, 1961, mission encountered glitches and emergencies — from a capsule hatch failing to shut properly just before blastoff to parachute problems in the final moments before touchdown.

From the time 20 Soviet air force pilots were selected to train for the first crewed spaceflight, Gagarin's calm demeanor, quick learning skills and beaming smile made him an early favorite.

Two days before blastoff, the 27-year-old Gagarin wrote a farewell letter to his wife, Valentina, sharing his pride in being chosen to ride in Vostok 1 but also trying to console her in the event of his death.

"I fully trust the equipment, it mustn't let me down. But if something happens, I ask you Valyusha not to become broken by grief," he wrote, using a nickname for her.

Authorities held onto the letter and eventually gave it to Gagarin's widow seven years later after he died in an airplane crash. She never remarried.

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Gagarin's pioneering, single-orbit flight made him a hero in the Soviet Union and an international celebrity. After putting the world's first satellite into orbit with the successful launch of Sputnik in October 1957, the Soviet space program, rushed to secure its dominance over the United States by putting a man into space.

"The task was set, and people were sleeping in their offices and factory shops, like at wartime," Fyodor Yurchikhin, a Russian cosmonaut who eventually made five spaceflights, recalled.

As the Soviet rocket and space program raced to beat the Americans, it suffered a series of launch failures throughout 1960, including a disastrous launch pad explosion in October that killed 126 people. Missile Forces chief Marshal Mitrofan Nedelin was among the victims.

Like Gagarin, Soviet officials were prepared for the worst. No safety system had been installed to save the cosmonaut in case of another rocket explosion at blastoff or after.

Authorities drafted three versions of a bulletin about Gagarin's flight for the official TASS news agency: one announcing a successful flight, another in case of problems, and the third one for a mission ending in disaster.

Apart from potential engine failures and other equipment malfunctions, scientists questioned an individual's ability to withstand the conditions of spaceflight. Many worried that a pilot could go mad in orbit.

Soviet engineers prepared for that situation by developing a fully automatic control system. As an extra precaution, the pilot would receive a sealed envelope containing a secret code for activating the capsule's manual controls. The theory was that a person who could enter the code must be sane enough to operate the ship.

Everyone in the space program liked Gagarin so much, however, that a senior instructor and a top engineer independently shared the secret code with him before the flight to save him the trouble of fiddling with the envelope in case of an emergency.

Problems began right after Gagarin got into Vostok 1, when a light confirming the hatch's closure did not go on. Working at a frantic pace, a leading engineer and a co-worker removed 32 screws, found and fixed a faulty contact, and put the screws back just in time for the scheduled launch.

Sitting in the capsule, Gagarin whistled a tune. "Poyekhali!" — "Off we go!" — he shouted as the rocket blasted off.

As another precaution, the orbit was planned so the spacecraft would descend on its own after a week if an engine burn failure stranded the ship. Instead, a glitch resulted in a higher orbit that would have left Gagarin dead if the engine had malfunctioned at that stage.

While the engine worked as planned to send the ship home, a fuel loss resulted in an unexpected reentry path and a higher velocity that made the ship rotate wildly for 10 agonizing minutes.

Gagarin later said he nearly blacked out while experiencing G-forces exceeding 10 times the pull of gravity. "There was a moment lasting two or three seconds when instruments started fading before my eyes," he recalled.

Seeing a cloud of fiery plasma around his ship on re-entry, he thought his ship was burning.

A soft-landing system hadn't been designed yet, so Gagarin ejected from the module in his spacesuit and deployed a parachute. While descending, he had to fiddle with a sticky valve on his spacesuit to start breathing outside air. A reserve chute unfolded in addition to the main parachute, making it hard for him to control his descent, but he landed safely on a field near the Volga River in the Saratov region.

Gagarin was flown to Moscow to a hero's welcome, hailed by Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev and greeted by enthusiastic crowds cheering his flight as a triumph on par with the victory in World War II. In the years before he died at age 34, he basked in international glory, visiting dozens of countries to celebrate his historic mission.

"The colossal propaganda effect of the Sputnik launch and particularly Gagarin's flight was very important," Moscow-based aviation and space expert Vadim Lukashevich said. "We suddenly beat America even though our country hadn't recovered yet from the massive damage and casualties" from World War II.

Gagarin was killed in a training jet crash on March 27, 1968. Not quite 16 months later, the U.S. beat the Soviet Union in the space race, putting an astronaut on the moon.

The 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union ended the era of rivalry. Russia's efforts to develop new rockets and spacecraft have faced endless delays, and the country has continued to rely on Soviet-era technology. Amid the stagnation, the much-criticized state space corporation Roscosmos has focused on a costly plan to build its new, rocket-shaped headquarters on the site of a dismantled rocket factory.

US colleges divided over requiring student vaccinations

By COLLIN BINKLEY AP Education Writer

BOSTON (AP) — U.S. colleges hoping for a return to normalcy next fall are weighing how far they should go in urging students to get the COVID-19 vaccine, including whether they should — or legally can — require it.

Universities including Rutgers, Brown, Cornell and Northeastern recently told students they must get vaccinated before returning to campus next fall. They hope to achieve herd immunity on campus, which they say would allow them to loosen spacing restrictions in classrooms and dorms.

But some colleges are leaving the decision to students, and others believe they can't legally require vaccinations. At Virginia Tech, officials determined that they can't because the U.S. Food and Drug Administration has only allowed the emergency use of the vaccines and hasn't given them its full approval.

The question looms large as more colleges plan to shift back from remote to in-person instruction. Many schools have launched vaccination blitzes to get students immunized before they leave for the summer. At some schools, the added requirement is meant to encourage holdouts and to build confidence that students and faculty will be safe on campus.

"It takes away any ambiguity about whether individuals should be vaccinated," said Kenneth Henderson, the chancellor of Northeastern University in Boston. "It also provides a level of confidence for the entire community that we are taking all appropriate measures."

Northeastern and other colleges requiring shots believe they're on solid legal ground. It's not unusual for colleges to require students to be vaccinated for other types of diseases, and a California court last year upheld a flu shot requirement at the University of California system.

But legal scholars say the COVID-19 vaccines' emergency use status moves the issue to a legal gray area that's likely to be challenged in court, and some colleges may take a more cautious approach to avoid litigation.

Harvard Law professor Glenn Cohen, who teaches health law and bioethics, said there's no legal reason colleges wouldn't be allowed to require COVID-19 vaccinations. It makes no difference that the shots haven't been given full approval, he said, noting that many colleges already require students to take coronavirus tests that are approved under the same FDA emergency authorization. But there's also no federal guidance explicitly permitting vaccination mandates.

The biggest clashes could come in states taking a stance against vaccination requirements, he said.

In Florida, Gov. Ron DeSantis this month banned all businesses from requiring customers to show proof of vaccination. The order raises questions about Nova Southeastern University's plan to require students and staff to get vaccinated. The college's president said he's still confident in the plan, but he also promised to "respect the laws of our state and all federal directives."

The governor of Texas, the country's second-largest state, issued a similar order.

There's a parallel debate about whether to require vaccination for faculty and staff, an issue that employers across the nation are grappling with. At the University of Notre Dame, one of the latest schools to require student vaccinations, shots are still optional for workers. Northeastern is considering whether to extend its mandate to employees.

Even at schools making shots mandatory, there are exemptions. Federal law requires colleges to provide accommodations to students who refuse a vaccine for medical reasons, and most schools are also offering exemptions for religious reasons.

At Brown, students who forgo shots and have no valid exemption must file a petition to study remotely or take a leave of absence next fall, the school's president, Christina Paxson, told students in a letter last

week.

But enforcing vaccine mandates will bring its own challenges. Cornell and Northeastern say students will be asked to show proof of vaccination, but there is no widely accepted vaccine credential. Cornell told students they can provide the card given out at their vaccination site, but card formats vary and generally seem like they would be easy to forge.

At Northeastern, officials are still deciding whether students will have to provide a medical record proving they were vaccinated or whether they will be allowed to attest to having been immunized — essentially taking their word for it.

"We would expect students to be honest and forthright about any attestation they make to the university," Henderson said.

Northeastern student Tyler Lee said he thinks requiring vaccinations is the right move because it will help stop the virus' spread and protect the community around the downtown Boston campus. There has been some pushback from parents, but little from students, he said.

"It's Northeastern's decision," said Lee, a senior who is awaiting his second shot. "If I didn't like it, I would transfer. And that's what most students feel."

Ariana Palomo, an incoming freshman at Brown, said the university's mandate sends the message that it's serious about keeping students safe. She was "happy and relieved" when she heard about it, she said.

"I know that I'm going to feel so much safer on campus," said Palomo, 18. "This is the next step in protecting one another and preventing more lives from being lost."

Schools expect some pushback, and Republican student groups on some campuses have opposed mandates, saying it should be a choice.

Colleges are also grappling with what to expect of international students, who may not have access to vaccines in their home countries or who may get shots that are not used in the United States. Some colleges say they're planning to develop arrangements to make shots available for international students when they arrive.

Other colleges are using a lighter touch to promote shots, including at Dickinson State University in North Dakota, which is exempting students from a campus mask mandate two weeks after they are fully vaccinated.

Many others are hoping a word of encouragement will be enough. Campus officials at Bowdoin College in Maine said it's their "hope and expectation" that all students will get shots. Harvard University officials "strongly recommend" that students get vaccinated but have stopped short of a mandate.

Some, including Dartmouth College, are waiting for shots to become more widely available before making a decision. Diana Lawrence, a spokesperson for Dartmouth, said officials "cannot make a determination regarding required vaccination until vaccines are accessible for all students."

Unusual treatment shows promise for kids with brain tumors

By MARILYNN MARCHIONE AP Chief Medical Writer

For decades, a deadly type of childhood cancer has eluded science's best tools. Now doctors have made progress with an unusual treatment: Dripping millions of copies of a virus directly into kids' brains to infect their tumors and spur an immune system attack.

A dozen children treated this way lived more than twice as long as similar patients have in the past, doctors reported Saturday at an American Association for Cancer Research conference and in the New England Journal of Medicine.

Although most of them eventually died of their disease, a few are alive and well several years after treatment -- something virtually unheard of in this situation.

"This is the first step, a critical step," said the study's leader, Dr. Gregory Friedman, a childhood cancer specialist at the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

"Our goal is to improve on this," possibly by trying it when patients are first diagnosed or by combining it with other therapies to boost the immune system, he said. The patients in the study were given the

experimental approach after they failed other treatments.

The study involved gliomas, which account for 8% to 10% of childhood brain tumors. They're usually treated with surgery, chemotherapy or radiation but they often recur. Once they do, survival averages just under six months.

In such cases, the immune system has lost the ability to recognize and attack the cancer, so scientists have been seeking ways to make the tumor a fresh target. They turned to the herpes virus, which causes cold sores and spurs a strong immune system response. A suburban Philadelphia company called Treovir developed a treatment by genetically modifying the virus so it would infect only cancer cells.

Through tiny tubes inserted in the tumors, doctors gave the altered virus to 12 patients ages 7 to 18 whose cancer had worsened after usual treatments. Half also received one dose of radiation, which is thought to help the virus spread.

Eleven showed evidence in imaging tests or tissue samples that the treatment was working. Median survival was just over a year, more than double what's been seen in the past. As of last June -- the cutoff for analyzing these results -- four were still alive at least 18 months after treatment.

Tests also showed high levels of specialized immune system cells in their tumors, suggesting the treatment had recruited the help needed from the body to attack the disease.

No serious safety issues were seen, though there were several procedure-related complications and mild side effects including nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and fatigue.

Jake Kestler had the treatment when he was 12.

"It went very well. He lived for a year and four months after that," long enough to celebrate his bar mitzvah, go with his family to Hawaii and see a brother be born, said his father, Josh Kestler, a financial services executive from Livingston, New Jersey.

Jake died April 11, 2019, but "we have no regrets whatsoever" about trying the treatment, said Kestler, who with his wife has started a foundation, Trail Blazers for Kids, to further research.

"It's a devastating disease for these patients and their families," and the early results suggest the virus treatment is helping, but they need to be verified in a larger study, which doctors are planning, said Dr. Antoni Ribas, a cancer specialist at the University of California, Los Angeles, and president of the group holding the conference.

Friedman said studies are continuing in adults as well, and plans are in the works for other types of childhood brain tumors. U.S. government grants and several foundations paid for the study, and several doctors have financial ties to Treovir.

Only one similar virus therapy is currently approved in the United States -- Imlygic, also a modified herpes virus, for treating melanoma, the most serious type of skin cancer.

Muslims navigate restrictions in the second pandemic Ramadan

By MARIAM FAM, KATHY GANNON and BASSEM MROUE Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — For Ramadan this year, Magdy Hafez has been longing to reclaim a cherished ritual: performing the nighttime group prayers called taraweeh at the mosque once again.

Last year, the coronavirus upended the 68-year-old Egyptian's routine of going to the mosque to perform those prayers, traditional during Islam's holiest month. The pandemic had disrupted Islamic worship the world over, including in Egypt where mosques were closed to worshippers last Ramadan.

"I have been going to the mosque for 40 years so it was definitely a very, very, difficult thing," he said. "But our religion orders us to protect one another."

Still, "It's a whole other feeling, and the spirituality in Ramadan is like nothing else."

Egypt has since allowed most mosques to reopen for Friday communal prayers and for this Ramadan it will let them hold taraweeh, also with precautions, including shortening its duration.

Ramadan, which begins this week, comes as much of the world has been hit by an intense new coronavirus wave. For many Muslims navigating restrictions, that means hopes of a better Ramadan than last year have been dashed with the surge in infection rates though regulations vary in different countries.

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A time for fasting, worship and charity, Ramadan is also when people typically congregate for prayers, gather around festive meals to break their daylong fast, through cafes and exchange visits.

Once again, some countries are imposing new restrictions. But concern is high that the month's communal rituals could stoke a further surge.

"The lack of adherence that happened last Ramadan, hasty lifting of the curfew imposed at the time and re-opening of places of congregations ... led to grave consequences that lasted for months," said Ahmed Al-Mandhari, the World Health Organization's regional director for the Eastern Mediterranean.

"We have a lot of worries of a repeat of what had happened last Ramadan, especially since Ramadan coincides with another important holiday, which is Easter," he said by email. Orthodox Christians mark Easter on May 2.

In Pakistan, new case numbers grew from fewer than 800 a day at the start of the month last year to more than 6,000 a day a few weeks after Ramadan ended. Officials largely attributed the increase to Pakistanis flouting restrictions. After a dip, the country is back up to more than 5,000 new cases a day.

Iran on Saturday began a 10-day lockdown amid a severe surge in infections that followed a two-week public holiday for Nowruz, the Persian New Year.

Economic hardship also looms over the month for many. In war-torn Syria, Abed al-Yassin was concerned about what his iftar — the meal at sunset breaking the fast— will look like this year.

"It will be difficult to even have fattoush," al-Yassin said, referring to a salad that is a staple of the holy month in his country.

He's spending his second Ramadan in a tent settlement near the Turkish border after he was driven from his hometown last year during a Russian-backed government offensive that displaced hundreds of thousands.

"Our main wish is to return to our homes," said al-Yassin, who lives with his wife, three sons and daughter in a tent. He relies mostly on food aid, he said. Camp residents have recently received bags of lentils, pasta and bulgur and receive bread on daily basis.

Lebanon is being squeezed by the worst economic and financial crisis in its modern history, exacerbated by the pandemic and a massive deadly explosion in Beirut in August.

"We are going through a period when some people are fasting whether during Ramadan or not," said Natalie Najm, an insurance broker. Even with her job, she can barely cover food costs, she said. "What about others who lost their jobs?"

To prevent large gatherings in Ramadan, Saudi Arabia has forbidden mosques from serving iftar and suhoor, a meal just before the fast's start at sunrise.

Many Muslim religious leaders, including in Saudi Arabia, have tried to dispel concerns about getting the coronavirus vaccine in Ramadan, saying that doing so does not constitute breaking the fast.

With new infections exceeding earlier peaks in India, Muslim scholars there have appealed to their communities to strictly follow restrictions and refrain from large gatherings, while asking volunteers and elders to look after the needy.

Last year's Ramadan in India was marred by rising Islamophobia following accusations that an initial surge in infections was tied to a three-day meeting of an Islamic missionary group, the Tablighi Jamaat, in New Delhi.

In Pakistan, authorities are allowing mosques to remain open during Ramadan with rules in place that include barring worshippers over 50 years old and requiring masks.

But given how rules were widely ignored last year there, doctors have been asking the government to close mosques.

"We are very concerned about the gatherings," Dr. Qaiser Sajjad, secretary general of the Pakistan Medical Association, said Sunday. He urged the government and Pakistan's clerics to put together a better plan during Ramadan to stop the spread of the virus.

"We must learn from the previous year," he said. Sajjad is calling for a complete lockdown of the eastern city of Lahore.

Afghanistan is leaving it up to worshippers to watch out for each other, keep their distance and stay

away from the mosques if they are feeling ill.

"Saving a human life is an obligation ... you can't put the life of a human in danger or at risk at all," said Sayed Mohammad Sherzadi, head of Hajj and religious affairs department for Kabul province.

Malaysia has some movement restrictions in place and has declared a coronavirus emergency that suspended Parliament until August following spikes in infections. But it has lifted last year's ban on taraweeh prayers and Ramadan bazaars, which sell food, drink and clothes, though strict measures will be in place.

Back in Egypt, Nohh Elesawy, undersecretary for mosque affairs at the country's Ministry of Endowments, had a message to the faithful ahead of the start of the month: "If you want the houses of God to remain open, adhere to the precautionary procedures and regulations."

Ramadan also typically has a distinct cultural and social flavor for many.

In Egypt, giant billboards bearing the faces of celebrities advertise Ramadan television series, a favorite pastime for many. In bustling markets around Cairo's Al-Sayeda Zainab Mosque, shoppers browsed stalls stacked with decorative Ramadan lanterns in vibrant colors, inspected the offerings and bargained for a deal.

In another Cairo neighborhood, people posed with a giant Ramadan lantern towering over one street and snapped photos.

One Ramadan tradition in Egypt that remains a casualty of the virus for the second year is the "Tables of the Compassionate," communal charity iftars where strangers would break bread together at free meals served on long tables on the street.

The tables may be gone, but not the month's spirit of giving.

Neveen Hussein, 48, said colleagues brought her "Ramadan bags" filled with rice, oil, sugar and other staples to distribute to needy families. It's an annual tradition, she said, rendered more urgent by a pandemic that has hurt the livelihoods of many of those already struggling.

"This is a month of mercy," she said. "God is generous, and this is a month of generosity."

For Chauvin's trial attorney, it's all about raising doubt

By AMY FORLITI and DOUG GLASS Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Derek Chauvin's defense attorney was questioning George Floyd's girlfriend about the couple buying drugs when he abruptly shifted gears for what seemed an innocuous question: He presumed the couple had pet names for each other. Under what name, he asked, did she appear in Floyd's phone?

Courtney Ross first smiled at the question, then paused before replying: "Mama."

The fleeting exchange called into question the widely reported account that Floyd was crying out for his deceased mother as he lay pinned to the pavement. And it appeared to be one in a series of moves aimed at undermining a dominant narrative of Floyd's death — established through bystander video and saturation news coverage and commentary — of a reckless, arrogant cop ignoring a man's "I can't breathe" cries as his life is snuffed out.

At another moment in the trial, Nelson asked a paramedic if he had responded to "other" overdose calls before quickly correcting himself to say "overdose calls" — perhaps a simple mistake, or an attempt to plant the idea that Floyd's death was an overdose.

Expert witnesses for the prosecution have asserted drugs did not kill Floyd.

Nelson has repeatedly called the bystanders at Floyd's arrest a "crowd" and "unruly" and suggested there were more people present than seen on camera. He drilled a fire department captain on taking 17 minutes to reach the scene when an ambulance called first arrived much sooner. And he persistently suggested Chauvin's knee wasn't on Floyd's neck for 9 minutes, 29 seconds as prosecutors have argued — suggesting instead it was across Floyd's back, shoulder blades and arm.

"Many times as an attorney, you've got some facts that are just ... bad for you. But you either want to downplay them or create another narrative," said Mike Brandt, a Minneapolis defense attorney who is closely watching the case.

Any good defense attorney has to try and "take what you can get," Brandt said. "Sometimes we say in

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a trial, you want to throw as much mud on the wall as you can and hope some of it sticks.”

Nelson, 46, handles cases ranging from drunken driving arrests to homicides, and is one of a dozen attorneys who take turns working with a police union legal defense fund to represent officers charged with crimes. One of his bigger cases involved Amy Senser, the wife of Joe Senser, a former Minnesota Vikings tight end, who was convicted in a 2011 hit-and-run death.

Nelson has joked with witnesses at times and, perhaps to connect with the jury, made light of his occasional fumbles with technology or mispronunciations of words. He’s a Minnesota native who, during a break in the trial, chatted up Police Chief Medaria Arradondo, asking whether he remembered the fight song for Minneapolis Roosevelt — the high school both attended.

Away from the lighter moments, Nelson has appeared well-prepared even as he goes up against a prosecution team many times larger. He has gone hard and consistently at his chief message: that Floyd’s consumption of illegal drugs is to blame for his death, rather than something Chauvin did. An autopsy found fentanyl and methamphetamine in Floyd’s system.

In the trial’s second week, Nelson played a snippet of officer body-camera video and asked two witnesses whether they could hear Floyd say, “I ate too many drugs.” The audio was hard to make out, but Nelson got a state investigator to agree with his version of the quote. Prosecutors later played a fuller clip and the investigator backtracked, saying he believed Floyd said “I ain’t do no drugs.”

As the state paraded medical experts to testify that Floyd died because his oxygen was cut off, not because of drugs, Nelson challenged the substance of their findings that the amounts detected in Floyd either were small or that people had survived significantly higher levels. But he also frequently framed questions to include the phrase “illicit drugs,” pointed out there’s no legal reason for a person to have methamphetamine in their system, and asked one witness whether he agreed that the number of deaths of people mixing meth and fentanyl had risen.

“This is a typical tactic that we’d say good defense attorneys do,” David Schultz, a law professor at the University of Minnesota who is watching the trial closely, said. “Not all of them are as subtle or gifted as Eric Nelson.”

When the paramedics first to the scene testified, Nelson’s questions included asking them why they did a “load and go” — that is, putting Floyd in their ambulance and moving a few blocks away before beginning treatment. It implied a delay in potentially life-saving treatment, but also fed into another recurring Nelson theme that prosecutors reject: the officers were distracted from caring for Floyd by a threatening crowd.

Video of the scene worked against the argument, showing about 15 people watching as Floyd was restrained, including several teens and girls, though several were shouting at the officers to get off Floyd and check him for a pulse.

Nelson has at times taken aim at the mountain of bystander, surveillance and body-camera video offered by police, suggesting it only tells part of the story and can be misleading. At one point, Nelson used the phrase “camera perspective bias” to suggest that Chauvin’s knee was not where the camera appeared to show it.

He has also argued that Chauvin was merely following the training he’d received throughout a 19-year career, even as several police supervisors — including Arradondo — testified otherwise. Nelson showed jurors an image from department training materials of a trainer with a knee on the neck of an instructor playing a suspect, and got some witnesses to agree generally that use of force may look bad but still be lawful.

Brandt said anything Nelson can do now — while the state is presenting its case — is huge, and will only serve as building blocks that he can use when he starts presenting his own case.

Schultz said attorneys have to be careful. He noted how Nelson’s questioning of Donald Williams, one of the most vocal bystanders, sparked a backlash on social media. Users accused Nelson, who pressed Williams on whether he was angry and repeated his profanities in court, of perpetuating an “angry Black man” trope.

Some jurors might have felt the same, Schultz said.

"You as the attorney have to sell yourself to the jury," Schultz said. "And an attorney who risks pushing too far risks being disliked by the jury, and that's damaging to the case, too."

Top Chinese official admits vaccines have low effectiveness

By JOE McDONALD and HUIZHONG WU Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — China's top disease control official, in a rare acknowledgement, said current vaccines offer low protection against the coronavirus and mixing them is among strategies being considered to boost their effectiveness.

China has distributed hundreds of millions of doses of domestically made vaccines abroad and is relying on them for its own mass immunization campaign.

But the director of the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Gao Fu, said at a conference Saturday their efficacy rates needed improving.

"We will solve the issue that current vaccines don't have very high protection rates," Gao said in a presentation on Chinese COVID-19 vaccines and immunization strategies at a conference in the southwestern city of Chengdu. "It's now under consideration whether we should use different vaccines from different technical lines for the immunization process."

He also praised the benefits of mRNA vaccines, the technology behind the two vaccines seen as the most effective, Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna, months after questioning whether the then-unproven method was safe.

In a message to The Associated Press, Gao said late Sunday night he was speaking about the effectiveness rates for "vaccines in the world, not particularly for China." He did not respond to further questions about which vaccines he was referring to.

He directed the AP to an interview he did with the state-owned Global Times, which has published several articles raising doubts about the safety of Pfizer's mRNA vaccine. Gao was quoted by the outlet Sunday as saying he was misunderstood and merely talking in general terms about improving vaccine efficacy.

Beijing earlier tried to promote doubt about the effectiveness of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, which uses genetic code called messenger RNA, or mRNA, to prime the immune system.

Health officials at a news conference Sunday didn't respond directly to questions about Gao's comment or about possible changes in official plans. But another CDC official said Chinese developers are working on mRNA-based vaccines.

"The mRNA vaccines developed in our country have also entered the clinical trial stage," said the official, Wang Huaqing. He gave no timeline for possible use.

Experts say mixing vaccines, or sequential immunization, might boost effectiveness. Researchers in Britain are studying a possible combination of Pfizer-BioNTech and the AstraZeneca vaccine.

Gao concluded his presentation Saturday with praise for mRNA vaccines and called for innovation in research.

"Everyone should consider the benefits mRNA vaccines can bring for humanity," Gao said. "We must follow it carefully and not ignore it just because we already have several types of vaccines already."

Gao previously questioned the safety of mRNA vaccines. He was quoted by the official Xinhua News Agency as saying in December he couldn't rule out negative side effects because they were being used for the first time on healthy people, saying "there is a safety concern."

Chinese state media and popular health and science blogs also questioned the safety and effectiveness of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, though large-scale trials and the rollout of the vaccines in the U.S. have established its safety.

China currently has five vaccines in use in its mass immunization campaign, three inactivated-virus vaccines from Sinovac and Sinopharm, a one-shot vaccine from CanSino, and the last from Gao's team in partnership with Anhui Zhifei Longcom.

The effectiveness of the vaccines range from just over 50% to 79%, based on what the companies have said.

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The shot from Gao's team, was given emergency use approval a month ago, and has not publicly disclosed data yet about its efficacy.

Pfizer and Moderna's vaccines, which are primarily being used in developed countries, have both been shown to be about 95% in protecting against COVID-19 in studies.

As of April 2, some 34 million people in China have received the full two doses of Chinese vaccines and about 65 million received one, according to Gao.

Globally, public health experts have said that any vaccine that is 50% effective would be useful, and many governments have been eager to use Chinese vaccines as rich countries around the world have snapped up shots from Pfizer and Moderna.

WHO Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said Friday that while one in four people in rich countries had received a vaccine, only one in 500 people in poorer countries had gotten a dose.

The coronavirus pandemic, which was first detected in central China in late 2019, marks the first time the Chinese drug industry has played a role in responding to a global health emergency.

Vaccines made by Sinovac, a private company, and Sinopharm, a state-owned firm, have made up the majority of Chinese vaccines distributed to several dozen countries including Mexico, Turkey, Indonesia, Hungary, Brazil and Turkey.

However, the companies have not publicly published peer-reviewed data on the final stage clinical trial research and been criticized for a lack of transparency.

Sinovac's vaccine, for example, raised concerns when it was found to have different efficacy rates from each of the trials it conducted in different countries, ranging from around 50% to over 83%.

A Sinovac spokesman, Liu Peicheng, acknowledged varying levels of effectiveness have been found but said that can be due to the age of people in a study, the strain of virus and other factors.

Beijing has yet to approve any foreign vaccines for use in mainland China.

The Sinovac spokesman, Liu, said studies find protection "may be better" if time between vaccinations is longer than the current 14 days but gave no indication that might be made standard practice.

Prime minister leads celebrations of Matsuyama's Masters win

By YURI KAGEYAMA and KOJI UEDA Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Led by Japan's prime minister, the country celebrated golfer Hideki Matsuyama's victory in the Masters — the first Japanese player to win at Augusta National and pull on the famous green jacket.

"It was really wonderful," Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga said with his country struggling to pull off the postponed Tokyo Olympics in just over three months. "As the coronavirus drags on, his achievement moved our hearts and gave us courage."

Masashi "Jumbo" Ozaki, who tied for eighth in the Masters in 1973, said he hoped more Japanese male golfers would be inspired by Matsuyama.

"This is a great achievement for the Japanese golf world," he said in comments on Japanese media. "And it came about because of Mr. Matsuyama's own ability to take up challenges, his courage and all the effort that went into that."

Isao Aoki finished second to Jack Nicklaus in the 1980 U.S. Open, the previous best finish by a Japanese male golfer in a major.

Two Japanese women have won golf majors: Chako Higuchi at the 1977 LPGA Championship and Hinako Shibuno at the 2019 Women's British Open.

Aoki recalled how Matsuyama won the low amateur title in the 2011 Masters just weeks after the earthquake, tsunami and the meltdown of three nuclear reactors devastated the northeastern Fukushima area of Japan.

About 18,000 people died in the disaster and the area is still struggling to recover.

"This time, your Masters win came at a time when many people were feeling down, with many activities restricted in Japan amid a coronavirus pandemic, and you gave hope to so many people," Aoki said in comments carried online in Japanese in Golf Digest.

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Aoki added: "This win, which was the first for a Japanese as well as an Asian, was a moment we were all waiting for, not just myself but all the Japanese golf fans and those involved in the golf world."

Nicklaus was as equally effusive on social media.

"I've been blessed to spend a lot of time in Japan and I know they love the game of golf," Nicklaus said. "They're also very proud people and they're even prouder today!"

"I competed against the great Isao Aoki, and know how revered he was and is. Hideki will also now forever be a hero to his country. The day and moment belongs to Hideki Matsuyama . . . this is a great day for him, for Japan, and for the global game of golf!"

The U.S. Embassy in Japan sent its congratulations to Matsuyama as "the first Japanese golfer to win The Masters."

Outside busy Shimbashi train station in central Tokyo, retired worker Takashi Atsumi called it a "tremendous result."

"For him, I think it was a goal that was hard to reach despite his tremendous efforts over the past 10 years," Atsumi said. "I think it's absolutely fantastic that he was able to achieve the goal today. I think he set a great milestone for the next generation of Japanese people."

Dubai parts with curtain covers for restaurants in Ramadan

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Dubai is parting with a longstanding requirement that restaurants be covered by curtains in the daytime during Ramadan to shield the sight of food from people fasting.

The move, announced Sunday by the city-state's Economic Development Department, is the latest change aimed at boosting tourism in the autocratically ruled Muslim nation.

"Restaurants will be allowed to serve customers without putting in place curtains, dividers or facades as has been the mandatory practice previously," the state-run WAM news agency said. "The new circular replaces circulars issued in previous years that have required restaurants to block dining areas from the sight of those who are fasting."

The new rules also don't require restaurants to obtain special permits to serve food during sunlight hours as well.

During Ramadan, Muslims observing the holy month abstain from food and drink — even water — during the day. Muslims traditionally break the daylong Ramadan fast with their first sips of water and their evening meal, called iftar.

Among Gulf Arab states, home to large, non-Muslim expatriate populations, most require curtains be put up to block the sight of food from those fasting. Eating and drinking in public also could bring fines and legal trouble.

Dubai, one of the seven sheikhdoms in the United Arab Emirates, long has been a tourism destination for those wanting beaches, shopping and partying in this skyscraper-studded city. However, Ramadan always represented a slower period due to its restrictions.

In recent years, hoping to boost tourism as Ramadan will be marked during its crucial winter months, Dubai has started to change. In 2016, Dubai loosened rules prohibiting daytime alcohol sales.

Truck seized over 'munitions of war,' 5 forgotten bullets

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Gerardo Serrano ticked off the border crossing agents by taking some photos on his phone. So they took his pickup truck and held onto it for more than two years.

Only after Serrano filed a federal lawsuit did he get back his Ford F-250. Now he wants the Supreme Court to step in and require a prompt court hearing as a matter of constitutional fairness whenever federal officials take someone's property under civil forfeiture law.

The justices could consider his case when they meet privately on Friday.

It's a corner of the larger forfeiture issue, when federal, state or local officials take someone's property, without ever having to prove that it has been used for illicit purposes.

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Since 2000, governments have acquired at least \$68.8 billion in forfeited property, according to the Institute for Justice, a libertarian public interest law firm that represents Serrano and tracks seizures. The group says the number "drastically underestimates forfeiture's true scope" because not all states provide data.

Serrano's troubles stemmed from some pictures he took along the way of a long trip from his home in Tyner, Kentucky, to visit relatives, including a dying aunt, in Zaragosa, Mexico. The photo-taking attracted the attention of U.S. Customs and Border Protection agents in Eagle Pass, Texas.

When Serrano refused to hand over the password to his phone, the agents went through the 2014 silver pickup truck in great detail. They justified its seizure by saying they found "munitions of war" inside — five forgotten bullets, though no gun.

Serrano, 62, initially took a gun, for which he has a permit, but a Mexican cousin warned him not to bring it into Mexico. He ditched the weapon, but forgot about the few bullets the agents eventually found.

A one-time Republican candidate for Congress, Serrano recalled being surprised at his treatment at the border in September 2015.

"I deleted the photos, but I'm not giving you my phone," Serrano said.

Told to park the truck, he said, he complained a bit before one agent reached into the pickup, opened the door, unfastened Serrano's seat belt and yanked him out of the vehicle.

"I got rights, I got constitutional rights and he snaps back at me, 'You don't have no rights here. I'm sick and tired of hearing about your rights.' That took me aback," Serrano said.

He was handcuffed and held for several hours, refusing to unlock the phone or answer any questions. Eventually, he was told he could go, but without his truck.

"I said, 'How am I going to get home?' There's this smirk I can't forget. 'We don't care how you get home,'" Serrano said.

He left the border station on foot, called a relative who lived nearby and hung around the area for several weeks, hoping to reclaim the pickup truck. Serrano finally rented a car and returned home. He continued to make \$673 monthly payments on the seized truck.

Serrano might get some support from at least one justice. While an appeals court judge in New York, Justice Sonia Sotomayor wrote an opinion requiring New York City to hold prompt hearings when police seized cars. "It is this intermediate deprivation, lasting months or sometimes years without any prompt hearing before a neutral fact-finder, that we deem constitutionally infirm," Sotomayor wrote in 2002.

The Supreme Court took up the issue of whether governments must hold a reasonably quick hearing following a seizure once before, in a case from Chicago in 2009. But the court dismissed the case because the seized vehicles all had been returned by the time the case was argued.

The Biden administration is urging the court to reject the case, saying there was nothing wrong with the initial seizure of the pickup and arguing that Serrano's claims ended when the vehicle was returned to him.

But Serrano's lawyers contend that the court should confront the issue because otherwise governments will continue to hold property for long periods and return it only to evade a judge's review.

"The rampant due process violations associated with modern civil forfeiture warrant review," they said in a high-court filing.

Serrano did get to see his aunt on the 2015 trip. Cousins drove across the border and took him to her. "When I went back home, three days later they called me and said she died," he said.

Prosecution case nears end in ex-cop's trial in Floyd death

By AMY FORLITI, STEVE KARNOWSKI and TAMMY WEBBER Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — The trial of a former Minneapolis police officer charged in George Floyd's death enters its third week Monday, with the state nearing the end of a case built on searing witness accounts, official rejections of the neck restraint and expert testimony attributing Floyd's death to a lack of oxygen.

Derek Chauvin, 45, who is white, is charged with murder and manslaughter in Floyd's May 25 death. Police were called to a neighborhood market where Floyd, who was Black, was accused of trying to pass a counterfeit bill. Bystander video of Floyd, pinned by Chauvin and two other officers as he cried "I can't

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breathe" and eventually grew still, sparked protests and scattered violence around the U.S.

Chauvin attorney Eric Nelson argues that Floyd's death was caused by drug use and underlying health conditions including a bad heart. He's expected to call his own medical experts after the prosecution wraps its case, expected early this week. Nelson hasn't said whether Chauvin will testify.

The second week of the trial was dominated by technical testimony, beginning with senior Minneapolis Police Department officials, including Chief Medaria Arradondo, testifying that Chauvin's restraint of Floyd violated department policy.

Prosecutors say Floyd was pinned for 9 minutes, 29 seconds. Police officials testified that while officers might sometimes use a knee across a person's back or shoulder to gain or maintain control, they're also taught the specific dangers for a person in Floyd's position — prone on his stomach, with his hands cuffed behind him — and how such a person must be turned into a side recovery position as soon as possible.

Prosecutors called a string of medical experts to testify that Floyd died due to a lack of oxygen, led by Dr. Martin Tobin, a lung and critical care specialist who walked jurors through graphics and charts and had them feel their own necks as he analyzed evidence from videos.

Tobin testified that other factors, not just Chauvin's knee, made it hard for Floyd to breathe: officers lifting up his handcuffs, the hard pavement, his turned head and a knee on his back. He pinpointed the moment when he said he could see Floyd take his last breath — and said Chauvin's knee remained on Floyd's neck another 3 minutes, 2 seconds.

"At the beginning, you can see he's conscious, you can see slight flickering, and then it disappears," Tobin said as he highlighted a still image from police body-camera video. "That's the moment the life goes out of his body."

Nelson sought to raise doubt about the prosecution's case. During testimony about Chauvin's use of the neck restraint, he sought to point out moments in video footage when he said Chauvin's knee didn't appear to be on Floyd's neck. And he again questioned officers about how a gathering crowd might affect officers' use of force.

A potential gap in prosecutors' case appeared Friday when Hennepin County's chief medical examiner, Dr. Andrew Baker, testified that the way police held Floyd down and compressed his neck "was just more than Mr. Floyd could take" given his heart issues.

Baker didn't attribute Floyd's death to asphyxia, as several prosecution medical experts did. And while he said that neither Floyd's heart problems nor drugs caused his death, he agreed with Nelson that those factors "played a role" in the death.

Ted Sampsell-Jones, a law professor at Mitchell Hamline School of Law in St. Paul, Minnesota, said Baker's testimony might raise a reasonable doubt about cause of death, but that the legal standard for establishing causation is quite low. The state has to show only that Chauvin's conduct was a substantial contributing cause.

"If the state had to show that Chauvin's conduct was the sole or even primary cause of death, the case would be in real trouble," Sampsell-Jones said.

Ecuador goes with conservative banker in presidential vote

By REGINA GARCIA CANO and GONZALO SOLANO Associated Press

QUITO, Ecuador (AP) — Voters in Ecuador appeared to turn to a conservative businessman in Sunday's presidential runoff election, rebuffing a leftist movement that has held the presidency for over a decade marked by an economic boom and then a yearslong recession, while in neighboring Peru a crowded field of 18 candidates was virtually certain to result in a second round of presidential voting in June.

Voters in Ecuador and Peru cast ballots under strict public health measures because of the coronavirus pandemic, which has recently strengthened in both countries, prompting the return of lockdowns and heightening concerns over their already battered economies. Peruvians also were electing a new Congress.

The Electoral Council in Ecuador had not declared an official winner in the contest to replace President Lenín Moreno next month, but results released by the agency showed former banker Guillermo Lasso with about 53% of votes and leftist Andrés Arauz at 47%, with just over 90% of votes counted. Arauz had led

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the first round of voting with more than 30% on Feb. 7, while Lasso edged into the final by finishing about a half a percentage point ahead of environmentalist and Indigenous candidate Yaku Pérez.

Arauz was backed by former President Rafael Correa, a major force in the South American country despite a corruption conviction that sent him fleeing to Belgium beyond the reach of Ecuadoran prosecutors. Moreno was also an ally of Correa but turned against him while in office.

"Correa's negatives outweighed the expectation of a new, unknown candidate who had no career and who did not campaign very well," said Grace M. Jaramillo, an adjunct professor at the University of British Columbia whose research includes Latin America. "He did not speak for all audiences ... for the entire population, and he could not respond to human rights accusations of the Correista era."

Correa governed from 2007 to 2017 as an ally of Cuba's Fidel Castro and Venezuela's Hugo Chavez. He oversaw a period of economic growth driven by an oil boom and loans from China that allowed him to expand social programs, build roads and schools and pursue other projects.

But Correa increasingly cracked down on opponents, the press and businesses during his latter stage in office and feuded with Indigenous groups over development projects. Ecuador also hit an economic slowdown in 2015, largely driven by the drop in oil prices.

Lasso finished second in the previous two presidential contests. He favors free-market policies and Ecuador's rapprochement with international organizations. During the campaign, he proposed raising the minimum wage to \$500, finding ways to include more youth and women in the labor market and eliminating tariffs for agricultural equipment.

"For years, I have dreamed of the possibility of serving Ecuadorians so that the country progresses, so that we can all live better," Lasso said before a room full of supporters despite social distancing guidelines. "Today, you have resolved that this be so."

Accompanied by his wife, María de Lourdes Alcívar, Lasso said that from May 24 on he will dedicate himself "to the construction of a national project that continues to listen to everyone, because this project will be yours."

Despite his declared conservative position on issues such as marriage equality, he promised to accept other points of view.

Elections officials did not plan to officially declare a winner Sunday, but at least one head of state congratulated Lasso on the election's outcome. Uruguayan President Luis Lacalle Pou tweeted that he had spoken with Lasso "to congratulate him on his success and to get to work together on the issues that our countries have in common."

Ecuador is deep in a recession that many fear will worsen as lockdowns return because of a spike in COVID-19 cases. Ecuador has tallied more than 344,000 cases and over 17,200 deaths as of Sunday, according to data from Johns Hopkins University in the United States.

The new president's main task will be "to depolarize the country," Jaramillo said. "There will be no signs of governance if the new government does not reach out and generate a platform where agreements with the (National) Assembly are possible."

Peru's election turned into a popularity contest in which one candidate even addressed how he suppresses his sexual desires. The crowded field of presidential hopefuls came months after the country's political chaos reached a new level in November, when three men were president in a single week after one was impeached by Congress over corruption allegations and protests forced his successor to resign in favor of the third.

All former Peruvian presidents who governed since 1985 have been ensnared in corruption allegation, some imprisoned or arrested in their mansions. One died by suicide before police could arrest him.

Claudia Navas, a political, social and security risk analyst with the global firm Control Risks, said the fragmented election was the result of a political system that has 11 parties lacking ideological cohesiveness. She said Peruvians overall do not trust politicians, with corruption being a key driver of the disillusionment toward the political system.

Navas said the congressional elections would likely result in a splintered legislature, with no party holding a clear majority and political alliances remaining short lived. She said the new Congress also was likely

to continue to exercise its impeachment authority to reinforce its own influence and block any initiative that threatens its own power.

"So, we'll likely continue to see significant legislative populism. This implies moves that seek to satisfy the public short-term needs and demands to the detriment of medium- and long-term sustainability," Navas said. "Regardless of who wins, we believe that the president is somewhat unlikely to complete his or her term in office because of the populist-type of stance of the Congress and the risk of political instability is likely to persist through the administration.

To avoid a June runoff, a candidate would need more than 50% of the votes, and an exit poll indicated the leading candidate would get only about 16% support. The poll had conservative leftist teacher Pedro Castillo as the frontrunner, followed by right-wing economist Hernando de Soto and Keiko Fujimori, the opposition leader and daughter of the polarizing former President Alberto Fujimori.

The country is among the hardest hit by COVID-19, with more than 1.6 million cases and over 54,600 deaths as of Sunday.

Officer accused of force in stop of Black Army officer fired

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) — One of two police officers accused of pepper-spraying and pointing their guns at a Black Army officer during a traffic stop has since been fired, a Virginia town announced late Sunday, hours after the governor called for an independent investigation into the case.

The town of Windsor said in a statement that it joined calls from election officials, including Gov. Ralph Northam, in requesting an investigation by Virginia State Police into the December 2020 encounter in which two Windsor officers were accused of drawing their guns, pointing them at U.S. Army second lieutenant Caron Nazario and using a slang term to suggest he was facing execution.

Nazario, who is Black and Latino, was also pepper-sprayed and knocked to the ground by the officers, Joe Gutierrez and Daniel Crocker, according to the lawsuit he filed earlier this month against them.

The two sides in the case dispute what happened, but Crocker wrote in a report that he believed Nazario was "eluding police" and he considered it a "high-risk traffic stop." Attorney Jonathan Arthur told The Associated Press that Nazario wasn't trying to elude the officer, but was trying to stop in a well-lit area.

In the statement Sunday, Windsor officials said an internal investigation opened at the time into the use of force determined that department policy wasn't followed. Officials said disciplinary action was taken and Gutierrez has since been fired.

Officials added that departmentwide requirements for additional training were also implemented beginning in January.

"The Town of Windsor prides itself in its small-town charm and the community-wide respect of its Police Department," the statement said. "Due to this, we are saddened for events like this to cast our community in a negative light. Rather than deflect criticism, we have addressed these matters with our personnel administratively, we are reaching out to community stakeholders to engage in dialogue, and commit ourselves to additional discussions in the future."

Northam called the December 2020 encounter "disturbing" in a tweet Sunday, adding that he directed State Police to review what happened.

"Our Commonwealth has done important work on police reform, but we must keep working to ensure Virginians are safe during interactions with police, the enforcement of laws is fair and equitable, and people are held accountable," Northam said in his statement calling for a review of the actions.

The Windsor police chief didn't respond to messages sent through the police department's Facebook page over the weekend.

Windsor is about 70 miles (112 kilometers) southeast of Richmond.

Matsuyama becomes first Japanese in Masters green jacket

By DOUG FERGUSON AP Golf Writer

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AUGUSTA, Ga. (AP) — The pressure was even more than Hideki Matsuyama could have imagined when he stood on the first tee Sunday at Augusta National. So was the emotion when he walked off the 18th green as the first Masters champion from golf-mad Japan.

His arms securely inside the sleeves of the green jacket, he thrust them in the air.

Ten years after he made a sterling debut as the best amateur at the Masters, the 29-year-old Matsuyama claimed the ultimate prize and took his place in history.

Whether he's Japan's greatest player is not his concern.

"However, I'm the first to win a major," he said through his interpreter. "And if that's the bar, then I've set it."

Staked to a four-shot lead, the nerves stayed with Matsuyama from the time he hit his opening tee shot into the trees to back-to-back birdies that led to a six-shot lead to a few nervous moments at the end when Xander Schauffele made a late run at him.

Only when he belted his drive down the 18th fairway and twirled the club in his hands could he feel this victory was in hand. He played so well for so long that three bogeys over the last four holes made this Masters look closer than it was.

He closed with a 1-over 73 for a one-shot victory over Masters rookie Will Zalatoris (70).

Schauffele ran off four straight birdies to get within two shots with three holes to play, only to hit 8-iron into the water on the par-3 16th for a triple bogey that ended his hopes. He shot a 72 with a triple bogey and a double bogey on his card and tied for third with Jordan Spieth (70).

"Man, he was something else. He played like a winner needs to play," Schauffele said. "Sixteen, I really would have loved to have put more pressure on him there, but basically gave him the tournament at that point."

Then his thoughts turned to the significance of what Matsuyama achieved. Schauffele's mother was raised in Japan and his grandparents still live there.

"No one really wants to talk about how much pressure is on him," Schauffele said. "You look at the media that follows him. You look at what he's done in his career. He's a top-ranked player with a ton of pressure on him, and that's the hardest way to play. He's able to do it."

And he did it.

The emotion for a player who says so little was never more evident. Moments before Dustin Johnson helped him into the green jacket, Matsuyama needed no interpreter in Butler Cabin when he said in English, "I'm really happy."

So masterful was this performance that Matsuyama stretched his lead to six shots on the back nine until a few moments of drama. With a four-shot lead, he went for the green in two on the par-5 15th and it bounded hard off the back slope and into the pond on the 16th hole.

Matsuyama did well to walk away with bogey, and with Schauffele making a fourth straight birdie, the lead was down to two shots. And then it was over.

Schauffele was in the water. Matsuyama made a safe par on the 17th and ripped one down the middle of the 18th fairway. He made bogey from the bunker to finish at 10-under 278, soaking in the moment with a few thousand spectators on their feet to celebrate a career-changing moment.

Spieth has competed in Japan and has played alongside Matsuyama on his home turf. He could relate to having a four-shot lead, which Spieth had when he won the Masters in 2015. He can't relate to the expectations of an entire country.

"He's got a lot of pressure on himself," Spieth said. "I remember the feeling on a four-shot lead, and he's got Japan on his back and maybe Asia on his back. I can't imagine how that was trying to sleep on that, even with somebody who's had so much success."

Matsuyama won for the 15th time worldwide, and it was his sixth PGA Tour title. He had gone 93 tournaments without winning, the longest drought for a Masters champion since 1987, and went to No. 14 in the world.

He becomes the second man from an Asian country to win a major. Y.E. Yang of South Korea won the

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2009 PGA Championship at Hazeltine over Tiger Woods.

Matsuyama won in Japan as an amateur, and four times after he graduated college and turned pro in 2013.

His first PGA Tour victory was at the Memorial in 2014, prompting tournament host Jack Nicklaus to say, "I think you've just seen the start of what's going to be truly one of your world's great players over the next 10 to 15 years."

That moment came Sunday.

Matsuyama is not big on emotion, and he speaks even less even when cornered after every round by the large contingent of Japanese media.

Most of the media was absent this year due to COVID-19 travel restrictions, and Matsuyama had said on the eve of the final round that it has been a lot less stress.

There was plenty on the golf course, right from the start.

"I felt really good going to the first tee, until I stood on the first tee, and then it hit me that I'm in the last group of the Masters Tournament and I'm the leader by four strokes. And then I was really nervous," he said. "But I caught myself. And the plan today was just go out and do my best for 18 holes. And so that was my thought throughout day, just keep doing my best."

Matsuyama sent his opening tee shot into the trees right of the first fairway. He punched it under the trees from the pine straw, hit a soft pitch that rolled down the slope away from the pin and was happy to leave with bogey. Two groups ahead of him, Zalatoris opened with two straight birdies.

Just like that, the lead was down to one. Matsuyama quickly restored his cushion by making it through the toughest stretch on the front nine as everyone around him dropped shots. He had a five-shot lead at he turn, and Schauffele was the only one who had a serious chance at the end.

He is the first winner with a final round over par since Trevor Immelman in 2008. No matter. Matsuyama is the Masters champion, a major that defines his elite status in the game and gives Japan the biggest week it has ever had in April.

It started a week ago Saturday when Tsubasa Kajitani won the second Augusta National Women's Amateur. Matsuyama wasn't around to see it, but he was well aware of it. All he wanted was to follow her path and made Japan proud.

His play spoke volumes. So did his reaction.

The Latest: Matsuyama hopes to be pioneer for Japanese golf

AUGUSTA, Ga. (AP) — The Latest on the Masters, the first golf major of the year (all times EDT): 8:40 p.m.

Hideki Matsuyama has delivered golf-mad Japan the grandest and greenest prize of all.

A decade after Matsuyama made a sterling debut as the best amateur at Augusta National, he claimed the ultimate trophy with a victory in the Masters.

Matsuyama becomes the first Japanese winner of a men's major championship. He's just the second male from an Asian country to capture a major, following Y.E. Yang of South Korea at the 2009 PGA Championship.

Moments before Dustin Johnson helped him into the green jacket, Matsuyama needed no interpreter in Butler Cabin when he said in English, "I'm really happy."

Never mind that Matsuyama bogeyed three of his last four holes, making him the first Masters champion with a final round over par since Trevor Immelman shot 75 in 2008.

All that mattered was that uphill walk to the 18th green. He blasted out of the bunker and took two putts to seal a one-stroke victory over Masters rookie Will Zalatoris.

Matsuyama says he hopes to be "a pioneer and many other Japanese will follow."

7:05 p.m.

Hideki Matsuyama has made history as the first male golfer from Japan to win a major championship.

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Matsuyama held on after knocking one in the water at the 15th, shooting a 1-over 73 to win the Masters by one stroke.

Arriving at Augusta as a five-time winner on the PGA Tour, Matsuyama took control of the tournament with a brilliant 65 on Saturday, doing his best work after a rain delay.

Xander Schauffele closed within two strokes after Matsuyama made bogey at No. 15. But Schauffele put one in the water at the 16th and took the first triple-bogey of his major championship career.

That cleared the way for Matsuyama to claim the green jacket. He made a bogey at No 18 but that was enough to hold off Masters rookie Will Zalatoris, who stamped himself as a future star with a 9-under 279.

Matsuyama was one shot better at 278.

6:55 p.m.

Hideki Matsuyama is going to the final hole of the Masters with a two-stroke lead and poised to become the first male player from Japan to win one of golf's major championships.

Matsuyama gave his challengers a bit of hope by skipping one into the water at No. 15, leading to a bogey that reduced his lead to two shots over Xander Schauffele.

But Schauffele found the water at 16, leading to the first triple-bogey of his major championship career. The only player with any hope left is Will Zalatoris, who's in the clubhouse with a 9-under 279.

Matsuyama is at 11 under and in good shape after his tee shot at the 18th.

6:45 p.m.

Xander Schauffele's chances of catching Hideki Matsuyama have apparently ended with the first triple-bogey of his major championship career.

Having closed within two shots of the lead after Matsuyama put one in the water at the 15th hole, Schauffele stepped up at the next tee with the confidence of having made four straight birdies.

It all fell apart when the tee shot at the iconic par-3 hole known as Redbud rolled into the pond.

Schauffele wound up with an ugly 6. Even though Matsuyama made a three-putt bogey, he still picked up two shots on his playing partner.

But Matsuyama's lead is still rather precarious — two strokes with two holes to play at 11 under.

Masters rookie Will Zalatoris salvaged a par at the final hole after driving in the bunker. He's in the Augusta National clubhouse with a 9-under 279.

6:25 p.m.

Suddenly, there's some drama in the final round of the Masters.

Hideki Matsuyama drove his second shot over the green at the 15th hole, the ball skipping into the pond at the next hole.

Matsuyama wound up with his second bogey in four holes. Meanwhile, playing partner Xander Schauffele pulled off his fourth straight birdie with an up-and-down from the bunker, moving within two shots of the lead.

That's as close as it's been since early in the round.

It looks like we might be headed for a dramatic finish at Augusta National after all.

6:10 p.m.

Xander Schauffele is trying to put some heat on Hideki Matsuyama at the Masters.

Schauffele tapped in for his third straight birdie at No. 14, pushing his score to 9 under for the tournament and within four strokes of the leader in the final group at Augusta National.

But the American is running out of time. Matsuyama is 2 under for the day, 13 under overall and merely has to avoid any major mistakes to become the first male player from Japan to win a major championship.

Will Zalatoris is the only other player within five shots of Matsuyama. The Masters rookie made a birdie at the par-5 15th to get to 8 under.

5:40 p.m. **Weber**
 A rarity for Hideki Matsuyama.
 A bogey
 The Masters leader made 4 after dropping three shots in four holes.
 But Matsuyama still had a comfortable lead over Xander Schauffele.
 Zalatoni's opening tee shot was on the green, but he missed the hole for a bogey on the par-4 third hole.
 4:55 p.m.
 Hideki Matsuyama remains comfortably ahead at the Masters without much pressure from those chasing him. At least of all Xander Schauffele.
 Schauffele was within three shots of the leader, but he dropped three shots in four holes.
 His pitch failed to get up the slope to the third green and rolled back to the fairway, leading to bogey.
 Then, he came up short on the par-4 third hole, and he missed the hole for another shot. The fifth hole, the toughest at Augusta National this week, was his undoing.
 Schauffele was on the edge of the bushes off the tee, couldn't quite get back to the fairway and then hit a flyer over the green into a bunker. It took him two to get out of the sand and he had to scramble for a double bogey. Just like that, he's seven shots back.
 Matsuyama's lead is now 10 shots. Zalatoni's opening tee shot was on the green, but he missed the hole for a bogey on the par-4 third hole.
 The only player making a move was Jon Rahm, and he started too far back. Rahm, 11 shots back to start the final round, was 5 under playing the 15th.



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2:40 p.m.

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Hideki Matsuyama has teed off in the final round of the Masters with a three-stroke lead.

A five-time winner on the PGA Tour, the 29-year-old Matsuyama is trying to become the first male player from Japan to capture one of golf's major championships.

He seized control of the tournament on Saturday with a bogey-free, 7-under 65 that pushed him to 11 under overall.

Matsuyama claimed a four-stroke lead after the third round, but Masters rookie Will Zalatoris has already clipped one shot off the margin with a birdie at the first hole.

Only four players have squandered a lead of at least four strokes going to Sunday. Rory McIlroy was the more recent to do it in 2011.

Matsuyama is playing in the final group with American Xander Schauffele, who is at 7 under along with Australia's Marc Leishman and England's Justin Rose.

Zalatoris is a 24-year-old American who doesn't even have a full PGA Tour card. He is trying to become the first player since Fuzzy Zoeller in 1979 to capture a green jacket on his first attempt.

2:25 p.m.

Billy Horschel has made another stop at Waterworld.

After playing barefoot out of the creek at Augusta National's 13th hole for the second day in a row, Horschel flew the green with his second shot on No. 15, the ball skipping all the way into the pond at the next hole.

He took a penalty drop and wound up with a bogey 6.

Horschel bounced back with a birdie at the 16th — yes, he managed to avoid the pond this time.

Thankfully for the Floridian, he doesn't have to worry about any more aqua misadventures at the final two holes of the Masters. Neither has any water hazards.

1:30 p.m.

Welcome to the new Masters tradition: Billy Horschel playing barefoot on the 13th hole.

Horschel created a stir Saturday by slipping barefoot down a slope before playing a ball from the water on the par-5 13th hole. The shoes came off again on the 13th on Sunday, though the only thing that slipped this time was Horschel down the leaderboard.

His tee shot landed in the water, so just like Saturday, he removed his shoes and socks and rolled up his pant legs over his calves to go try to play the ball. He only advanced it a few yards, not getting it back to the fairway, then tried to hack at it again from a combination of grass, mud and rocks — before taking an unplayable lie and moving on.

The final damage: A triple-bogey 8, dropping him from 41st to 50th on the leaderboard and to 6 over for the tournament.

10:15 a.m.

The final round of the Masters has started with all the familiar pin positions for Sunday at Augusta National.

Hideki Matsuyama takes a four-shot lead into the final round. He is trying to become the first Japanese player to win a major and the second major champion from an Asian country. (The first was Y.E. Yang of South Korea in the 2009 PGA Championship at Hazeltine.)

It's never easy at Augusta National. In November, Dustin Johnson had a four-shot lead that was trimmed to one shot after only five holes. He recovered with a birdie and went on to win by five. Rory McIlroy lost a four-shot lead after 10 holes in 2011 when he shot 80 in the final round.

The most famous was Greg Norman losing a six-shot lead in 1996.

Xander Schauffele, Justin Rose, Marc Leishman and Will Zalatoris were all four shots behind Matsuyama. Rose is the only major champion in that group. Zalatoris is trying to become the first player in 42 years to win a green jacket in his first attempt.

Business faces tricky path navigating post-Trump politics

By BRIAN SLODYSKO and JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — For more than a half-century, the voice emerging from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's monolithic, Beaux Arts-styled building near the White House was predictable: It was the embodiment of American business and, more specifically, a shared set of interests with the Republican Party.

The party's bond with corporate America, however, is fraying.

Fissures have burst open over the GOP's embrace of conspiracy theories and rejection of mainstream climate science, as well as its dismissal of the 2020 election outcome. The most recent flashpoint was in Georgia, where a new Republican-backed law restricting voting rights drew harsh criticism from Delta Air Lines and Coca Cola, whose headquarters are in the state, and resulted in Major League Baseball pulling the 2021 All-Star Game from Atlanta.

Republicans were furious. Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky warned that their actions were "quite stupid," alienating "a lot of Republican fans." GOP strategists argued that they no longer needed corporate America's money to win elections as they try to rebrand as a party of blue-collar workers.

That extends an opportunity to President Joe Biden and congressional Democrats to find an ally in an unlikely place when the party has unified control of the federal government for the first time in a decade. Biden is pushing an ambitious \$2.3 trillion infrastructure package that includes corporate tax increases — which the White House is characterizing to CEOs as upfront investments that will ultimately make companies more profitable.

"It's important for making the country more competitive," said Cedric Richmond, the White House's director of public engagement. "We think the plan is so important to the country that we are advocating and singing its praises to all businesses."

Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo estimates she has talked to more than 50 business leaders about the plan, including a round of Easter weekend phone calls. She is encouraging companies to focus on the entire package instead of the tax increases.

"You can't look at one piece of it and say that one number makes you walk away," she said. "They say, 'That's fair. Let me think about it.' That's how they run their businesses."

Whether the corporate split with the GOP widens could help answer questions about the political direction of the country and the extent to which business can continue to influence Washington.

"Nobody in the business community wants hostile communities, angry finger-pointing workforces and turbulent shareholder bases," said Jeffrey A. Sonnenfeld, a senior associate dean at the Yale School of Management. "It makes your job so much harder to have every constituency group at war within themselves, which has become the hallmark of the GOP."

Sonnenfeld helped organize a Zoom call this weekend with 100 business leaders to discuss how to oppose Republican-backed proposals across the country that could limit voting. Options include stopping political donations and holding off in investments in states that approve the laws.

Corporate America's marriage with Republicans has long been one of convenience, united by a belief in low taxes and the need to repeal regulations. But the relationship, already strained during Donald Trump's presidency, has come under increasing pressure as companies take cultural stands.

That Republicans and businesses report to increasingly distinct constituencies helps explain the tension.

A solid majority of Republican voters are white (86%) and older than 50 (62%), according to APVoteCast, a national survey of the 2020 electorate. Yet figures from the Bureau of Labor Statistics show that workers are more racially diverse and younger than the Republican base.

James Bailey, a management professor at George Washington University, published an analysis last year that suggested people who identified as Democrats cared more about a company's political activity than Republicans do. Of business people, he said the uproar over the Georgia voting law "is a great opportunity for them to get on board with the young socially active consumer and to do so without much cost."

Just as important, Democratic counties have become the primary engines for growth. The counties that backed Biden last year account for 71% of all U.S. economic activity, according to the Brookings Institution.

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Democrats say business are comfortable partnering with them to address longstanding issues such as infrastructure after a decade of congressional gridlock, even though companies dislike the possibility of footing the bill.

"Responsible corporate leaders want economic growth and predictable, competent policy— that's what Democrats are offering," said Rep. Sean Patrick Maloney of New York, who is running the House Democrats' campaign arm for the 2022 midterm elections.

Many Republicans are exasperated by business's efforts to woo consumers through liberal social politics.

"They are never going to satisfy the demands of the left," said Steven Law, a former attorney for the Chamber who now runs Senate Leadership Fund, a big-spending outside group aligned with McConnell. Meantime "they risk alienating their natural allies in the Republican Party."

Still, Republicans have been a major driver of the rift, looking to capitalize on the culture clash to turn out the party base in the next election. Early indicators suggest business could face blowback.

Georgia's Republican-controlled House voted to strip Delta of a tax break worth tens of millions of dollars annually for its criticism of the new restrictive law, which voting rights groups have excoriated as an attack on democracy. The intended punishment was rendered moot after the GOP Senate failed to take it up before the legislative session adjourned.

Campaign finance disclosures suggest corporate America's money doesn't buy as much influence as it once did.

Roughly a decade ago, donations from company-sponsored political action committees accounted for an important share of the fundraising pie. But it's stagnated as a source of campaign cash, as court rulings enabled wealthy GOP activists to pour money into the political system.

Just 10 GOP megadonors account for half of the giving to major super political action committees controlled by Republican congressional leaders since 2012, collectively pouring \$541 million into the committees, according to an analysis by The Associated Press of donors who gave over \$1,000. The megadonors also contributed twice as much as conventional PACs and other groups that represent a broad swath of corporate interests.

Political spending by the Chamber has also dropped precipitously. After spending \$29 million in 2016, mostly supporting Republicans and attacking Democrats, the group's contributions dropped to \$10.9 million in 2018, according to data from nonpartisan Center for Responsive Politics. In 2020, the group endorsed 23 Democrats, which Republicans saw as a betrayal.

That's diminished the group's once unassailable standing with GOP congressional leaders.

"There is absolutely no love lost for corporations, especially when they consistently weigh in on things they don't understand," said Josh Holmes, a political adviser to McConnell. "There's no sympathy."

Common ground still exists between Republicans and business on the value of tax cuts. The Chamber and the Business Roundtable oppose raising the corporate rate to 28% from the 21% level set in 2017, as well as an enhanced global minimum tax. Yet both groups want government spending on infrastructure.

Neil Bradley, the Chamber's chief policy officer, said the broader business community isn't fully aligned with either party. But the hyperpartisan nature of today's politics is creating pressure to choose one side.

"It really causes people to want to sort everything into a red camp or a blue camp," he said. "Businesses aren't partisan. They aren't Republicans or Democrats. They have to operate and function in divided governments, operate in states that are solid blue and solid red."

Republicans caution, however, that business faces considerable risk weighing in on hot-button disputes.

"They ought to tread carefully because they risk getting into the middle of a culture war that will earn them no friends and a lot of enemies," said Law, the McConnell ally.

'Nomadland' wins 4 BAFTAs including best picture, director

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Gig-economy Western "Nomadland" won four prizes including best picture on Sunday at the British Academy Film Awards, which were handed out during a pandemic-curbed ceremony that

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recognized a diverse array of screen talent.

"Nomadland" filmmaker Chloe Zhao became only the second woman, and the first woman of color, to win the BAFTA for best director, and star Frances McDormand was named best actress. "Nomadland" also took the cinematography prize.

Emerald Fennell's revenge comedy "Promising Young Woman" was named best British film, while the best actor trophy went to 83-year-old Anthony Hopkins for playing a man grappling with dementia in "The Father."

An event that was criticized in the recent past with the label #BAFTAsSoWhite rewarded a diverse group of talents, including Black British star Daniel Kaluuya, newcomer Bukky Bakray — who shone as a London teenager in "Rocks" — and veteran Korean actress Yuh-Jung Youn.

The fact that Britain remains under coronavirus lockdown measures, with its movie theaters still closed, gave the evening a poignant tone, as did the death on Friday of Prince Philip, husband of Queen Elizabeth II, a long-time patron of the British film academy.

Prince William, who had been due to attend and make a speech in his role as president of Britain's film academy, was absent following the death of his grandfather. The ceremony opened with a tribute to Philip, who was the academy's first president in 1959.

Presenters including Hugh Grant, Tom Hiddleston, Gugu Mbatha-Raw and Priyanka Chopra Jonas announced the winners from the stage of London's Royal Albert Hall, but recipients accepted their honors remotely, and there was no black-tie audience to cheer them on.

Director Remi Weekes, who won the British debut prize for his first feature, "His House," noted the surreal sensation of accepting the award while sitting in his living room in a tuxedo.

"Nomadland" stars McDormand as a middle-aged woman who travels the American West while living out of her van and picking up short-term work.

Zhao, who lived among real American travelers for the film, thanked "the nomadic community who so generously welcomed us into their lives."

"How we treat our elders says a lot about who we are as a society, and we need to do better," she said.

The only previous female directing winner was Kathryn Bigelow in 2010 for "The Hurt Locker."

The British film academy expanded its voting membership and shook up its rules last year in an attempt to address a glaring lack of diversity in the nominations. In 2020, no women were nominated as best director for a seventh consecutive year, and all 20 nominees in the lead and supporting performer categories were white.

Under new rules that, among other things, made watching all longlisted films compulsory for academy voters, this year's slate of acting nominees was strikingly more diverse, and four of the six filmmakers nominated for best director were women: Zhao, Sarah Gavron ("Rocks"), Shannon Murphy ("Babyteeth") and Jasmila Zbanic ("Quo Vadis, Aida?").

Asked what her directing prize meant for Asian women in film, Zhao said: "If this means more people like me get to live their dreams, then I feel very grateful."

BAFTA chief executive Amanda Berry said the academy was "determined to make change."

"We are not there yet, this is definitely still a work in progress, but I am really pleased with how far we have come," she said.

Kaluuya was named best supporting actor for playing Black Panther leader Fred Hampton in "Judas and the Black Messiah."

Youn appeared astonished to win the best-actress prize for Korean-American family drama "Minari." The Korean performer said she had always thought of the British as "very snobbish people." But, she later clarified, "not in a bad way."

Bakray, 19, won the Rising Star award, whose previous winners include Kaluuya, Kristin Stewart, Tom Hardy and John Boyega.

"I don't know how to feel," she said. "When we filmed 'Rocks,' I thought 100 people would watch this film, max."

Danish director Thomas Vinterberg's "Another Round" was named best film not in the English language.

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Vinterberg paid tribute to his daughter Ida, who had been due to appear in the film and died in a car crash at the start of the shoot.

"We made this movie for her, so the honor granted by you, BAFTA voters, means more to us than you could ever imagine," he said.

The British awards are usually held a week or two before the Academy Awards and have become an important awards-season staging post. This year, both the BAFTAs and the Oscars were postponed from their usual February berths because of the coronavirus pandemic.

BAFTAs in craft and backstage categories were handed out in a separate ceremony on Saturday, when "Ma Rainey's Black Bottom" won two prizes, for costume design and hair and makeup.

Other double winners included "The Father" (best actor and adapted screenplay), "Sound of Metal" (editing and sound), "Promising Young Woman" (British film and original screenplay) and "Soul" (animated film and musical score).

Director Ang Lee was awarded the academy's top honor, the BAFTA Fellowship.

Actor, writer and director Noel Clarke received the outstanding British contribution to cinema award, dedicating it to "my young Black boys and girls out there that never believed it could happen to them."

Mexican candidate accused of rape vows to block elections

MEXICO CITY (AP) — A Mexican ruling party state candidate accused of rape, who later had his candidacy canceled by regulatory authorities on other grounds, said Sunday he will not allow elections in his home state unless he is allowed to run.

Félix Salgado is running for the governorship of the troubled Pacific coast state of Guerrero. While two women accused him of rape, he has not been charged and was allowed by President Andrés Manuel López Obrador's Morena party to continue running.

But in late March, elections regulators ordered him taken off the ballot, saying he failed to report campaign spending. The country's electoral court last week ordered the Federal Electoral Institute to reconsider that decision.

Salgado is leading a caravan of vehicles to protest at the electoral institute's office in Mexico City, and on Sunday, Salgado said unless that decision is overturned, he won't allow the June elections in Guerrero to occur without him.

"If we are on the ballot, there will be elections," Salgado told a crowd of supporters in Iguala, Guerrero. "If are not on the ballot, there will not be any elections."

The threat is entirely believable in Guerrero, which is home to the resort of Acapulco.

Guerrero is a violence-plagued state with a patchwork of drug gangs, vigilantes and militant farm groups that sometimes overlap. Elections have been partial disrupted in the past, and many former governors have been forced from office before finishing their terms.

López Obrador has defended Salgado and criticized women's groups who objected to his candidacy, calling it "an attack on democracy."

The National Electoral Institute ruled in late March that Salgado had failed to report the money he spent during the primary process, and that his candidacy would no longer be officially recognized. But the court ordered the institute to review that decision.

Mexico will hold state and federal mid-term elections on June 6.

Salgado won the nomination of López Obrador's Morena party despite protests by women's rights activists. He has not personally addressed the accusations, though his lawyer has denied them.

Salgado has not been charged; the statute of limitations ran out on one case and the other is still being investigated.

Salgado, who goes by the nickname Toro, or "Bull," is a former federal legislator and mayor of Acapulco who has been known for questionable behavior in the past. He was filmed scuffling with police in Mexico City in 2000.

Trump goes after Pence, McConnell in speech to party donors

By STEVE PEOPLES AP National Political Writer

PALM BEACH, Fla. (AP) — It was supposed to be a unifying weekend for a Republican Party at war with itself over former President Donald Trump's divisive leadership. But Trump himself shattered two days of relative peace in his closing remarks to the GOP's top donors when he insulted the party's Senate leader and his wife.

Ahead of the invitation-only speech at Trump's new home inside his Mar-a-Lago resort, the former president's advisers said he would emphasize his commitment to his party and Republican unity.

Trump veered sharply from prepared remarks Saturday night and instead slammed Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., as a "stone-cold loser" and mocked McConnell's wife, Elaine Chao, who was Trump's transportation secretary.

Trump also said he was "disappointed" in his vice president, Mike Pence, and used a profanity in assessing McConnell, according to multiple people in attendance who were not authorized to publicly discuss what was said in a private session. He said McConnell had not thanked him properly for putting Chao, who was labor secretary under President George W. Bush, in his Cabinet.

McConnell's office did not immediately respond to a request for comment Sunday.

Trump's words left some attendees feeling uncomfortable.

Former House Speaker Newt Gingrich did not defend Trump as he left Palm Beach on Sunday.

"We are much better off if we keep focusing on the Democrats. Period," Gingrich said.

Saturday's speech was the final address of the Republican National Committee's weekend donor summit in Palm Beach. Most of the RNC's closed-door gathering was held at a luxury hotel a few miles away from Mar-a-Lago; attendees were bused to Trump's club for his remarks.

While a significant faction of the Republican Party hopes to move past Trump's divisive leadership, the location of the event — and the former president's prominent speaking slot — suggests that the GOP, at least for now, is not ready to replace Trump as its undisputed leader and chief fundraiser.

Ahead of his latest attack on fellow Republicans, Trump's team reported that his remarks were intended to reinforce his continued leadership role in Republican affairs, a sharp break from past presidents.

"Saturday's speech will be welcomed words to the Republican donors visiting Mar-a-Lago to hear directly from President Trump," Trump adviser Jason Miller said. "Palm Beach is the new political power center, and President Trump is the Republican Party's best messenger."

The new tension between Trump and establishment-minded Republican leaders comes as GOP officials are trying to play down an internal feud over his role in the party, his commitment to Republican fundraising and his plans for 2024. Trump is also continuing to insist that the last election was "stolen" from him, repeating false claims that Joe Biden won the election only because of voter fraud.

Such claims ultimately fueled the Jan. 6 attack on the Capitol.

McConnell and Chao have been particularly critical of Trump's role in encouraging the insurrection; Chao resigned her post in protest. Pence, meanwhile, presided over a congressional session that certified Biden's election victory over Trump.

Rep. Liz Cheney, R-Wyo., was among 10 House Republicans who joined every Democrat in voting to impeach Trump for inspiring the Jan. 6 attack. Seven Republican senators later voted to convict Trump, even after he had left office.

"The former president is using the same language that he knows provoked violence on Jan 6. As a party, we need to be focused on the future, we need to be focused on embracing the Constitution, not embracing insurrection," Cheney told CBS' "Face the Nation."

Trump and his allies have already promised to fuel primary challenges against Cheney and those Republicans who supported his impeachment.

And while the Republican National Committee signaled its commitment to Trump by hosting its spring donor summit at his doorstep, Trump's commitment to the GOP is far from certain.

Earlier in the year, he raised the possibility of creating a new political party. Just a month ago, Trump's political action committee sent letters to the RNC and others asking them to "immediately cease and de-

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sist the unauthorized use of President Donald J. Trump's name, image, and/or likeness in all fundraising, persuasion, and/or issue speech."

GOP officials saw Trump's weekend participation as a sign that he is willing to lend his name to the party. At the same time, he continues to aggressively accumulate campaign cash to fuel his own political ambitions.

Trump has accumulated a total of roughly \$85 million so far, a small fortune that rivals the RNC's bank account. He has teased the prospect of another presidential run in 2024, but has also positioned himself to play the role of kingmaker for Republicans who may run if he does not.

The weekend gathering featured Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis and Arkansas Sen. Tom Cotton, among other early 2024 prospects.

In his remarks Friday night, Cotton leaned into the GOP's culture wars, attacking the Democrats' positions on transgender youth, voter ID laws and Major League Baseball's decision to move its All-Star Game to protest Republican voting laws.

DeSantis, who spoke before Trump on Saturday night, also seized on corporations and business leaders who have begun joining the Democrats' fight against GOP-backed voting legislation moving through state legislatures across the country, including Florida. Critics and voting experts suggest the new laws would make it more difficult for Black Americans and Latinos to cast ballots.

DeSantis specifically warned Saturday that there would be "consequences" for business leaders who pressure lawmakers in Florida as they did in Georgia. But neither DeSantis nor Cotton attacked any fellow Republicans.

Meanwhile, the second-ranking Republican senator, South Dakota's John Thune, gently condemned Trump's attack on McConnell.

"I think a lot of that rhetoric is — you know, it's part of the style and tone that comes with the former president," Thune said on "Fox News Sunday." "But I think he and Mitch McConnell have a common goal, and that is getting the majority back in 2022. And in the end, hopefully that will be the thing that unites us, because if we want to defeat and succeed against the Democrats and get that majority back, that's the best way to do it."

Andrew: Philip's death has left 'huge void' in queen's life

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — The death of Prince Philip has left a "huge void" in Queen Elizabeth II's life, their son Prince Andrew said Sunday, as Princess Anne paid tribute to her father as "my teacher, my supporter and my critic."

As hundreds well-wishers continued to leave floral tributes outside the gates of royal residences in memory of the monarch's husband, Anne — Philip and the queen's only daughter — said her father "leaves a legacy which can inspire us all."

"You know it's going to happen but you are never really ready," Anne said of Philip's death on Friday, at the age of 99.

In a message released by Buckingham Palace, Anne praised Philip's "ability to treat every person as an individual in their own right with their own skills," a nod to the many charities and other organizations he was involved with.

"I would like to emphasize how much the family appreciate the messages and memories of so many people whose lives he also touched," she said. "We will miss him, but he leaves a legacy which can inspire us all."

Andrew, the third of Philip and the queen's four children, attended church at the Royal Chapel of All Saints in Windsor Castle along with other members of the royal family.

Andrew said his mother "described it as having left a huge void in her life."

"We've lost, almost, the grandfather of the nation," he said. "And I feel very sorry and supportive of my mother, who's feeling it probably more than everybody else."

His younger brother, Prince Edward, called Philip's death a "dreadful shock" but said the 94-year-old queen was "bearing up."

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Edward's wife, Sophie, Countess of Wessex said the monarch was "thinking of others before herself." She said Philip's death at Windsor Castle, which came three weeks after he was discharged from a month-long hospital stay, was "peaceful."

"It was right for him and it was so gentle. It was just like someone took him by the hand and off he went," Sophie told well-wishers. "It was very, very peaceful and that's all you want for somebody, isn't it?"

Prince Charles, the queen and Philip's eldest son, paid his own tribute to his "dear Papa" on Saturday, and said he "would have been amazed by the reaction and the touching things that have been said about him."

Both palace and government officials urged people not to come in person to pay their respects because of coronavirus restrictions on social mixing. But hundreds of people on Sunday brought notes, cards and flowers to the gates of Windsor Castle, located 20 miles (32 kilometers) west of London, while others laid tributes outside Buckingham Palace in the British capital.

Neil Loughton, founder of the Penny Farthing Club, rode his antique bicycle to the palace gates to pay tribute.

"I think that there are some things that are just important and need to be done. Ninety-nine years of life and more than 70 years of service deserves some recognition," he said.

Philip's funeral is set to take place April 17 at Windsor Castle. Only 30 people will be able to attend under the current coronavirus restrictions in England, but the slimmed-down service is scheduled to be broadcast live on television..

Philip's grandson Prince Harry, who stepped away from royal duties last year and now lives in California, will attend the service along with other members of the royal family, palace officials have said.. His wife, Meghan, Duchess of Sussex, is pregnant and has been advised by her doctor not to make the journey.

Royal family members said they appreciated the outpouring of tributes and good wishes from people across Britain and around the world to Philip, who was the queen's consort and support through more than seven decades of marriage.

Prince Edward, 57, said the "extraordinary" tributes meant a lot to the royal family.

"It just goes to show, he might have been our father, grandfather, father-in-law, but he meant so much to so many other people," he said.

Andrew, 61, who has largely kept out of the public eye since 2019 amid controversy over his friendship with the late convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein, also praised the "absolutely amazing tributes."

Biden sees 'win' for US in electric vehicle battery deal

By MATTHEW DALY and TOM KRISHER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Two big South Korean electric vehicle battery makers said Sunday they have settled a long-running trade dispute that will allow one company to move ahead with plans to manufacture batteries in Georgia. President Joe Biden called it "a win for American workers and the American auto industry."

The agreement between LG Energy Solution and SK Innovation ended the need for Biden to intervene in a case closely watched for its implications on Biden's clean-energy agenda, which includes a sharp increase in the number of electric vehicles as part of his plan to address climate change. Biden had until Sunday night to make a decision, following a ruling in February by a trade commission.

The companies said in a joint statement that SK will provide LG Energy with a total of \$1.8 billion and an undisclosed royalty. They agreed to withdraw all pending trade disputes in the United States and South Korea and not assert new claims for 10 years.

"We have decided to settle and to compete in an amicable way, all for the future of the U.S. and South Korean electric vehicle battery industries," said Jun Kim, CEO and president of SK, and Jong Hyun Kim, CEO and president of LG Energy.

The companies pledged to work together to strengthen the EV battery supply chain in the U.S. and support the Biden administration's efforts to advance clean energy policies, including electric vehicles.

The U.S. International Trade Commission had decided in February that SK stole 22 trade secrets from LG Energy, and that SK should be barred from importing, making or selling batteries in the United States

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for 10 years.

The decision could have left Ford and Volkswagen scrambling for batteries as they both roll out additional electric vehicle models, a priority for the companies and for the Biden administration. SK has contracts to make batteries for an electric Ford F-150 pickup truck and an electric Volkswagen SUV.

The commission said SK could supply batteries to Ford Motor Co. for four years and to Volkswagen AG for two years. The decision had jeopardized a \$2.6 billion battery factory that SK is building in Commerce, Georgia.

Democratic Sen. Jon Ossoff of Georgia, who at Biden's request had jump-started negotiations between two companies, said the settlement "has saved the battery plant in Commerce, Georgia, ensuring thousands of jobs, billions in future investment, and that Georgia will be a leader in electric vehicle battery production for years to come."

U.S. Trade Representative Katherine Tai said the deal "builds confidence" in the reliability and responsibility of the two companies as suppliers to the U.S. auto industry. The agreement puts the U.S. "in a stronger position to drive innovation and ... clean energy technology while also respecting the rights of technology innovators at the heart of trade and manufacturing policy," Tai said.

Added Sen. Raphael Warnock, D-Ga.: "The best way to protect workers in Commerce — and the jobs Georgians were promised — is for the companies involved to negotiate a settlement in good faith." He said he raised the battery issue with Biden during the president's March 19 visit to Atlanta.

Biden said in a statement that building electric vehicles and the batteries needed for them is an important part of his \$2.3 trillion infrastructure plan.

"We need a strong, diversified and resilient U.S.-based electric vehicle battery supply chain, so we can supply the growing global demand for these vehicles and components — creating good-paying jobs here at home, and laying the groundwork for the jobs of tomorrow. Today's settlement is a positive step in that direction," Biden said.

Gov. Brian Kemp, R-Ga., called the settlement "fantastic news for northeast Georgia and our state's growing electric vehicle industry."

Ford, in a statement, said the deal "allows us to focus on delivering a range of Ford world-class battery electric vehicles for our retail and fleet customers, while also supporting American workers, the economy and our shared goal of protecting the planet."

Sam Abuelsamid, principal analyst for Guidehouse Insights, said a settlement was always the most likely outcome. Demand for electric vehicles is projected to rise dramatically by 2035, and other companies will start making them in the U.S. to meet that demand, he said.

Switching the U.S. fleet of roughly 279 million largely gas-powered cars and trucks to electric vehicles is a focus of Biden's infrastructure plan, with \$174 billion allocated for EV incentives, a half-million charging stations and development of a domestic supply chain. Experts say it's possible the U.S. will run short of electric vehicle batteries if it doesn't set up its own network of parts suppliers.

"We don't have nearly enough (existing) battery production capacity to meet the kind of volumes that companies are talking about producing," Abuelsamid said.

Iran calls Natanz atomic site blackout 'nuclear terrorism'

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Iran on Sunday described a blackout at its underground Natanz atomic facility an act of "nuclear terrorism," raising regional tensions as world powers and Tehran continue to negotiate over its tattered nuclear deal.

While there was no immediate claim of responsibility, suspicion fell immediately on Israel, where its media nearly uniformly reported a devastating cyberattack orchestrated by the country caused the blackout.

If Israel was responsible, it further heightens tensions between the two nations, already engaged in a shadow conflict across the wider Middle East. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who met Sunday with U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, has vowed to do everything in his power to stop the nuclear deal.

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Details remained few about what happened early Sunday morning at the facility, which initially was described as a blackout caused by the electrical grid feeding its above-ground workshops and underground enrichment halls.

Ali Akbar Salehi, the American-educated head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, who once served as the country's foreign minister, offered what appeared to be the harshest comments of his long career, which included the assassination of nuclear scientists a decade ago. Iran blames Israel for those killings as well.

He pledged to "seriously improve" his nation's nuclear technology while working to lift international sanctions.

Salehi's comments to state TV did not explain what happened at the facility, but his words suggested a serious disruption.

"While condemning this desperate move, the Islamic Republic of Iran emphasizes the need for a confrontation by the international bodies and the (International Atomic Energy Agency) against this nuclear terrorism," Salehi said.

The IAEA, the United Nations' body that monitors Tehran's atomic program, earlier said it was aware of media reports about the incident at Natanz and had spoken with Iranian officials about it. The agency did not elaborate.

However, Natanz has been targeted by sabotage in the past. The Stuxnet computer virus, discovered in 2010 and widely believed to be a joint U.S.-Israeli creation, once disrupted and destroyed Iranian centrifuges at Natanz amid an earlier period of Western fears about Tehran's program.

Natanz suffered a mysterious explosion at its advanced centrifuge assembly plant in July that authorities later described as sabotage. Iran now is rebuilding that facility deep inside a nearby mountain. Iran also blamed Israel for the November killing of a scientist who began the country's military nuclear program decades earlier.

Multiple Israeli media outlets reported Sunday that an Israeli cyberattack caused the blackout in Natanz. Public broadcaster Kan said the Mossad was behind the attack. Channel 12 TV cited "experts" as estimating the attack shut down entire sections of the facility.

While the reports offered no sourcing for their information, Israeli media maintains a close relationship with the country's military and intelligence agencies.

"It's hard for me to believe it's a coincidence," Yoel Guzansky, a senior fellow at Tel Aviv's Institute for National Security Studies, said of Sunday's blackout. "If it's not a coincidence, and that's a big if, someone is trying to send a message that 'we can limit Iran's advance and we have red lines.'"

It also sends a message that Iran's most sensitive nuclear site is "penetrable," he added.

Netanyahu later Sunday night toasted his security chiefs, with the head of the Mossad, Yossi Cohen, at his side on the eve of his country's Independence Day.

"It is very difficult to explain what we have accomplished," Netanyahu said of Israel's history, saying the country had been transformed from a position of weakness into a "world power."

Israel typically doesn't discuss operations carried out by its Mossad intelligence agency or specialized military units. In recent weeks, Netanyahu repeatedly has described Iran as the major threat to his country as he struggles to hold onto power after multiple elections and while facing corruption charges.

Speaking at the event Sunday night, Netanyahu urged his security chiefs to "continue in this direction, and to continue to keep the sword of David in your hands," using an expression referring to Jewish strength.

Meeting with Austin on Sunday, Israeli Defense Minister Benny Gantz said Israel viewed America as an ally against all threats, including Iran.

"The Tehran of today poses a strategic threat to international security, to the entire Middle East and to the state of Israel," Gantz said. "And we will work closely with our American allies to ensure that any new agreement with Iran will secure the vital interests of the world, of the United States, prevent a dangerous arms race in our region, and protect the state of Israel."

The Israeli army's chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Aviv Kochavi, also appeared to reference Iran.

The Israeli military's "operations in the Middle East are not hidden from the eyes of the enemy," Kochavi

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said. "They are watching us, seeing (our) abilities and weighing their steps with caution."

On Saturday, Iran announced it had launched a chain of 164 IR-6 centrifuges at the plant. Officials also began testing the IR-9 centrifuge, which they say will enrich uranium 50 times faster than Iran's first-generation centrifuges, the IR-1. The nuclear deal limited Iran to using only IR-1s for enrichment.

Since then-President Donald Trump's withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal in 2018, Tehran has abandoned all the limits of its uranium stockpile. It now enriches up to 20% purity, a technical step away from weapons-grade levels of 90%. Iran maintains its atomic program is for peaceful purposes.

The nuclear deal had granted Tehran sanctions relief in exchange for ensuring its stockpile never swelled to the point of allowing Iran to obtain an atomic bomb if it chose.

On Tuesday, an Iranian cargo ship said to serve as a floating base for Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard forces off the coast of Yemen was struck by an explosion, likely from a limpet mine. Iran has blamed Israel for the blast. That attack escalated a long-running shadow war in Mideast waterways targeting shipping in the region.

Pubs, hairdressers set to reopen as UK eases virus lockdown

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Millions of people in Britain will get their first chance in months for haircuts, casual shopping and restaurant meals on Monday, as the government takes the next step on its lockdown-lifting road map.

Nationwide restrictions have been in place in England since early January, and similar rules in the other parts of the U.K., to suppress a surge in coronavirus infections that swept the country late last year, linked to a more transmissible new variant first identified in southeast England.

Britain has had Europe's worst coronavirus outbreak, with more than 127,000 confirmed deaths.

Infections, hospitalizations and deaths have all fallen thanks to the lockdown, and a mass vaccination program that has given at least one dose to more than 60% of the adult population.

But Prime Minister Boris Johnson and epidemiologists have urged caution, saying that many people remain unvaccinated and relaxing social distancing rules or allowing foreign holidays this summer could bring a new spike in infections.

"The situation in the U.K. is becoming clear and is stabilizing, but people have to remember that's not the case elsewhere," said Peter Horby, who chairs the government's New and Emerging Respiratory Threats Advisory Group. "The pandemic is still raging globally.

"And many countries in Europe even are still seeing racing case numbers or having to reintroduce lockdowns. So it's very hard to predict what will happen in the next couple of months," he told Times Radio.

On Monday, nonessential shops will be allowed to reopen, along with hair salons, gyms and outdoor service at pubs and restaurants.

The prime minister had promised to visit a pub for a pint to mark the occasion, but postponed the celebratory drink after the death of Prince Philip, husband of Queen Elizabeth II, on Friday.

Indoor drinking and dining won't be allowed until May 17 at the earliest, and theaters, cinemas, nightclubs and most other venues remain closed, while indoor socializing is tightly restricted and foreign holidays remain banned.

The easing is good news for retail and hospitality businesses, which have endured several stretches of lockdown over the past year. But it's a long way from business as usual; the British Beer and Pub Association estimates that just 40% of pubs in England have the space to reopen for outdoor service.

The rules apply in England. The other parts of the United Kingdom — Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland — are following their own, broadly similar plans.

Las Vegas pushes to become first to ban ornamental grass

By SAM METZ and KEN RITTER Associated Press

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LAS VEGAS (AP) — A desert city built on a reputation for excess and indulgence wants to become a model for restraint and conservation with a first-in-the-nation policy banning grass that nobody walks on.

Las Vegas-area water officials have spent two decades trying to get people to replace thirsty greenery with desert plants, and now they're asking the Nevada Legislature to outlaw roughly 40% of the turf that's left.

The Southern Nevada Water Authority estimates there are almost 8 square miles (21 square kilometers) of "nonfunctional turf" in the metro area — grass that no one ever walks on or otherwise uses in street medians, housing developments and office parks.

They say this ornamental grass requires four times as much water as drought-tolerant landscaping like cactus and other succulents. By ripping it out, they estimate the region can reduce annual water consumption by roughly 15% and save about 14 gallons (53 liters) per person per day.

Las Vegas might be known for splashy displays like the Bellagio fountains on the neon-lit Strip, but officials say residents of bedroom communities and sprawling suburbs embrace conservation measures, including aggressive monitoring of sprinklers and leaky irrigation systems.

"The public perception outside of Las Vegas is certainly much different — and has been for a long time — than the water conservation ethic within the community," said Colby Pellegrino, Southern Nevada Water Authority water resources director.

California imposed a temporary ban on watering ornamental grass during last decade's drought, but no state or major city has tried to phase out certain categories of grass permanently.

"The scale of this is pretty unprecedented in terms of a full ban on this nonfunctional turf," said John Berggren, a water policy analyst at Western Resource Advocates.

The proposal is part of a turf war waged since at least 2003, when the water authority banned developers from planting green front yards in new subdivisions. It also offers owners of older properties the region's most generous rebate policies to tear out sod — up to \$3 per square foot.

Those efforts are slowing. The agency says the number of acres converted under its rebate program fell last year to six times less than what it was in 2008. Meanwhile, water consumption in southern Nevada has increased 9% since 2019.

Last year was among the driest in the region's history, when Las Vegas went a record 240 days without measurable rainfall. And the future flow of the Colorado River, which accounts for 90% of southern Nevada's water, is in question.

The waterway supplies Arizona, California, Colorado, Utah, Nevada, New Mexico, Wyoming and Mexico. As drought and climate change decrease what the river provides, the amount allocated to Arizona, California and Nevada is projected to be cut further.

Justin Jones, a Clark County commissioner who serves on the water authority's board, doesn't think ripping out ornamental turf will upend people's lives.

"To be clear, we are not coming after your average homeowner's backyard," he said. But grass in the middle of a parkway, where no one walks: "That's dumb."

"The only people that ever set foot on grass that's in the middle of a roadway system are people cutting the grass," Jones said.

The agency has different regulations for yards and public parks. Based on satellite imaging, it believes banning ornamental grass will primarily affect common areas maintained by homeowner associations and commercial property owners.

Jones said the proposal has drawn resistance in some master-planned communities, but water officials say years of drought-awareness campaigns and policies like the rebates have cultivated a cultural change.

Southern Nevada Homebuilders' Association lobbyist Matt Walker said consumer preferences have reached the point that potential homebuyers from wetter regions aren't turned off from neighborhoods that have parks but no ornamental grass.

Conservation frees water, reduces per capita consumption and strengthens builders' arguments that the desert can accommodate more growth, Walker said. "And the benefits are the ability to keep doing what we do, which is building homes."

"We've really gotten a comfort level that buyers are very much willing to go along with responsible de-

velopment practices when it comes to water use," he added.

Other desert cities aren't so sure. Salt Lake City has an ordinance that requires a certain amount of yard and median greenery. Phoenix, where some neighborhoods remain lush from flood irrigation, has never offered grass removal rebates.

Water officials elsewhere are loath to compare their policies to southern Nevada. Particularly in cities where water consumption per person is high, they say there's no one-size-fits-all approach for a drier future.

Las Vegas, for example, mostly ignores toilets, showers and dishwashers because the water authority is able to treat and recycle indoor wastewater and let it flow through a natural wash into Lake Mead — the Colorado River reservoir behind Hoover Dam. It is filtered again for reuse.

A draconian anti-grass policy might not work in downtown Phoenix, said Cynthia Campbell, water resources adviser for the nation's fifth-largest city. Trees and grass blunt public health dangers of "urban heat islands" — areas lacking green landscaping to offset heat through evaporative cooling.

Regional water officials understand future consumption will have to be reduced but fear the preparation and perception could backfire if the community doesn't buy in.

"There comes a point when people's demands start to harden," Campbell said. "They'll say, 'This is the point of no return for me.' For some people, it's a pool. For some people, it's grass."

The Southern Nevada Water Authority isn't sure the idea of banning grass will spread to other cities. But Pellegrino, the water resources chief, said other places will have to make changes.

"Particularly every community that relies on Colorado River water."

Some GOP-led states target abortions done through medication

By DAVID CRARY and IRIS SAMUELS Associated Press

About 40% of all abortions in the U.S. are now done through medication — rather than surgery — and that option has become all the more pivotal during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Abortion rights advocates say the pandemic has demonstrated the value of medical care provided virtually, including the privacy and convenience of abortions taking place in a woman's home, instead of a clinic. Abortion opponents, worried the method will become increasingly prevalent, are pushing legislation in several Republican-led states to restrict it and in some cases, ban providers from prescribing abortion medication via telemedicine.

Ohio enacted a ban this year, proposing felony charges for doctors who violate it. The law was set to take effect next week, but a judge has temporarily blocked it in response to a Planned Parenthood lawsuit.

In Montana, Republican Gov. Greg Gianforte is expected to sign a ban on telemedicine abortions. The measure's sponsor, Rep. Sharon Greef, has called medication abortions "the Wild West of the abortion industry" and says the drugs should be taken under close supervision of medical professionals, "not as part of a do-it-yourself abortion far from a clinic or hospital."

Opponents of the bans say telemedicine abortions are safe, and outlawing them would have a disproportionate effect on rural residents who face long drives to the nearest abortion clinic.

"When we look at what state legislatures are doing, it becomes clear there's no medical basis for these restrictions," said Elisabeth Smith, chief counsel for state policy and advocacy with the Center for Reproductive Rights. "They're only meant to make it more difficult to access this incredibly safe medication and sow doubt into the relationship between patients and providers."

Other legislation has sought to outlaw delivery of abortion pills by mail, shorten the 10-week window in which the method is allowed, and require doctors to tell women undergoing drug-induced abortions that the process can be reversed midway through — a claim that critics say is not backed by science.

It's part of a broader wave of anti-abortion measures numerous states are considering this year, including some that would ban nearly all abortions. The bills' supporters hope the U.S. Supreme Court, now with a 6-3 conservative majority, might be open to overturning or weakening the 1973 Roe v. Wade decision that established the nationwide right to end pregnancies.

Legislation targeting medication abortion was inspired in part by developments during the pandemic,

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when the Food and Drug Administration — under federal court order — eased restrictions on abortion pills so they could be sent by mail. A requirement for women to pick them up in person is back, but abortion opponents worry the Biden administration will end those restrictions permanently. Abortion-rights groups are urging that step.

With the rules lifted in December, Planned Parenthood in the St. Louis region would mail pills for telemedicine abortions overseen by its health center in Fairview Heights, Illinois.

A single mother from Cairo, Illinois, more than a two-hour drive from the clinic, chose that option. She learned she was pregnant just a few months after giving birth to her second child.

"It wouldn't have been a good situation to bring another child into the world," said the 32-year-old woman, who spoke on the condition her name not be used to protect her family's privacy.

"The fact that I could do it in the comfort of my own home was a good feeling," she added.

She was relieved to avoid a lengthy trip and grateful for the clinic employee who talked her through the procedure.

"I didn't feel alone," she said. "I felt safe."

Medication abortion has been available in the United States since 2000, when the FDA approved the use of mifepristone. Taken with misoprostol, it constitutes the so-called abortion pill.

The method's popularity has grown steadily. The Guttmacher Institute, a research organization that supports abortion rights, estimates that it accounts for about 40% of all abortions in the U.S. and 60% of those taking place up to 10 weeks' gestation.

"Beyond its exceptionally safe and effective track record, what makes medication abortion so significant is how convenient and private it can be," said Megan Donovan, Guttmacher's senior policy manager. "That's exactly why it is still subject to onerous restrictions."

Planned Parenthood of Southwest Ohio, which includes Cincinnati, says medication abortions account for a quarter of the abortions it provides. Of its 1,558 medication abortions in the past year, only 9% were done via telemedicine, but the organization's president, Kersha Deibel, said that option is important for many economically disadvantaged women and those in rural areas.

Mike Gonidakis, president of Ohio Right to Life, countered that "no woman deserves to be subjected to the gruesome process of a chemical abortion potentially hours away from the physician who prescribed her the drugs."

In Montana, where Planned Parenthood operates five of the state's seven abortion clinics, 75% of abortions are done through medication — a huge change from 10 years ago.

Martha Stahl, president of Planned Parenthood of Montana, says the pandemic — which increased reliance on telemedicine — has contributed to the rise in the proportion of medication abortions.

In the vast state, home to rural communities and seven Native American reservations, many women live more than a five-hour drive from the nearest abortion clinic. For them, access to telemedicine can be significant.

Greef, who sponsored the ban on telemedicine abortions, said the measure would ensure providers can watch for signs of domestic abuse or sex trafficking as they care for patients in person.

Yet advocates of the telemedicine method say patients are grateful for the convenience and privacy.

"Some are in a bad relationship or victim of domestic violence," said Christina Theriault, a nurse practitioner for Maine Family Planning who can perform abortions under state law. "With telemedicine, they can do it without their partner knowing. There's a lot of relief from them."

The group has health centers in far northern Maine where women can get abortion pills and take them at home under the supervision of health providers communicating by phone or videoconferencing. It spares women a drive of three to four hours to the nearest abortion clinic in Bangor, Theriault said.

Maine Family Planning is among a small group of providers participating in an FDA-approved research program allowing women to receive the abortion pill by mail after video consultations. Under the program, the Maine group also can mail pills to women in New York and Massachusetts.

Ukraine says 1 soldier killed in east as tensions rise

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — The Ukrainian military said that a soldier was killed and another seriously wounded in artillery fire from Russia-backed separatist rebels Sunday, as hostilities rise sharply in the country's east.

As of the reported attack, Ukraine says 27 soldiers have been killed in the east this year, more than half the number who died in all of 2020. Attacks have intensified in recent weeks and Russia has built up troops along the Ukraine border.

Russia denies Western claims that it has sent troops into eastern Ukraine to help the rebels, but officials say the army could intervene if Ukraine tries to retake the area by force. The troops buildup has raised sharp concerns in the West.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken warned Sunday that "if Russia acts recklessly, or aggressively, there will be costs, there will be consequences."

Ukrainian forces and Russia-backed separatists have been fighting in eastern Ukraine since shortly after Moscow's 2014 annexation of Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula. More than 14,000 people have died in the conflict, and efforts to negotiate a political settlement have stalled.

Jordanian prince makes first public appearance since arrest

By JOSEF FEDERMAN and OMAR AKOUR Associated Press

AMMAN, Jordan (AP) — Jordan's Prince Hamzah on Sunday made his first public appearance since he was placed under house arrest last week, reciting Quranic verses together with King Abdullah II at the graves of their forefathers. The gesture appeared to be an attempted show of unity on a major Jordanian holiday.

Abdullah has attempted to signal in recent days that the situation is under control. But Sunday's staged event left it unclear whether the king and his popular half brother have truly put aside their differences. The conflict had escalated into the most serious public rift in the ruling family in decades, although Hamzah has denied any wrongdoing.

Hamzah joined members of the Jordanian royal family marking the centenary of the establishment of the Emirate of Transjordan, a British protectorate that preceded the kingdom. The royal palace released a photo and video with Abdullah and Hamzah joining other dignitaries at the grave of their father, the late King Hussein, and the late King Talal, their grandfather.

A photo and video showing the family together reciting the opening chapter of the Quran appeared to be aimed at sending a message of unity at a sensitive time for the kingdom. The chapter, known as the Fatiha, is traditionally recited at people's gravesides.

It was the first time that Hamzah was seen in public since he was placed under a form of house arrest on April 3 following accusations that he was involved in a "malicious plot" to destabilize the kingdom.

In statements leaked to the media, Hamzah denied the accusations and accused the country's government of corruption and incompetence. Hamzah has said his actions are out of love for the country. But his past criticism of government policies, and more recently, his outreach to powerful tribal leaders critical of the government, have been seen as threats to the king.

Abdullah subsequently said authorities had thwarted an attempt at sedition involving his half brother and some 18 suspects, while saying he was angry and in shock. Abdullah also suggested there was continued control over Hamzah's movements, saying the prince was "with his family at his palace, under my care."

Authorities have imposed a sweeping gag order on any coverage of the royal dispute in a sign of how sensitive they are to how it is perceived. The gag order and the king's willingness to sanction his own brother also reaffirmed what Jordanians understand as their "red line" — an absolute ban on criticizing the monarch or the royal family.

Sunday's appearance by Hamzah indicated that he was safe, but it remained unclear whether he had come voluntarily or been released from the restrictions on his movement. Hamzah, wearing a suit, traditional headdress and blue surgical mask, joined his relatives in prayers but did not comment in public. His whereabouts after the ceremony were not immediately known.

There also has been no sign that authorities have released up to 18 other detainees, including members

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of one of the powerful tribes on which the monarchy has historically relied.

Even before the palace drama, Jordan was grappling with an economic crisis exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic, with one in four people out of work. Longstanding complaints about corruption and misrule have fueled scattered protests in recent months.

At the same time, the region's strategic landscape is shifting as powerful Gulf states pursue closer ties with Israel, potentially undermining Jordan's role in the Middle East peace process.

The United States, along with regional allies, have all rallied behind the king. Jordan has long been seen as a relatively stable western ally in the Middle East in a turbulent region. But the past year of the coronavirus has rocked the country's largely tourism-dependent economy.

Abdullah and Hamzah are both sons of King Hussein, who ruled Jordan for nearly a half-century before his death in 1999 and remains a widely beloved figure. Abdullah had appointed Hamzah as crown prince upon his succession but stripped him of the title in 2004 and gave his eldest son the title instead.

Jordan has a large Palestinian population, including more than 2 million refugees from past wars with Israel and their descendants. The monarchy has granted most of them full citizenship but has historically viewed them with suspicion. Its main base of support is powerful tribes from east of the Jordan River, who dominate the security forces.

For decades, the monarchy has cultivated close ties with the U.S. and other Western nations, which it has used to press for the creation of a Palestinian state including the West Bank and east Jerusalem, which Israel captured from Jordan in the 1967 war.

That strategy has hit a wall in recent years as the peace process has ground to a halt. Israel and Jordan made peace in 1994 and maintain close security ties, but relations have soured amid a series of recent diplomatic spats.

At the same time, Gulf countries have been cultivating closer ties with Israel over their shared antipathy toward Iran, relations made public last year when the United Arab Emirates agreed to normalize relations with Israel in a U.S.-brokered deal. Saudi Arabia has at times appeared to be weighing a similar move.

Brazil's virus outlook darkens amid vaccine supply snags

By DIANE JEANTET and DAVID BILLER Associated Press

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — April is shaping up to be Brazil's darkest month yet in the pandemic, with hospitals struggling with a crush of patients, deaths on track for record highs and few signs of a reprieve from a troubled vaccination program in Latin America's largest nation.

The Health Ministry has cut its outlook for vaccine supplies in April three times already, to half their initial level, and the country's two biggest laboratories are facing supply constraints.

The delays also mean tens of thousands more deaths as the particularly contagious P.1 variant of COVID-19 sweeps Brazil. It has recorded about 350,000 of the 2.9 million virus deaths worldwide, behind only the U.S. toll of over 560,000.

Brazil's seven-day rolling average has increased to 2,820 deaths per day, compared with the global average of 10,608 per day, according to data through April 8 from Johns Hopkins University.

The death toll is forecast to continue rising in the next two weeks to an average of nearly 3,500 per day before receding, according to the University of Washington's Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation.

Public health experts blame President Jair Bolsonaro for refusing to enact strict measures to halt infections and for clashing with governors and mayors who did.

Failure to control the spread has been compounded by the Health Ministry betting big on a single vaccine, AstraZeneca, then buying only one backup, the Chinese-manufactured CoronaVac, after supply problems emerged. Authorities ignored other producers and squandered opportunities until it was too late to get large quantities of vaccine for the first half of 2021.

With extensive experience in successful, massive vaccination programs, Brazil should have known better, said Claudio Maierovitch, former head of Brazil's health regulator.

"The big problem is that Brazil did not look for alternatives when it had the chance," he said. "When

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several countries were placing their bets, signing contracts with different suppliers, the Brazilian government didn't even have vaccination on its agenda."

For months, Bolsonaro's administration ignored pleas to sign more than one contract for vaccines. The president publicly questioned the reliability of other shots and scoffed at contractual terms, suggesting that recipients of the Pfizer vaccine would have no legal recourse were they to transform into alligators. He insisted he wouldn't force anyone to get vaccinated and only recently said he might get a shot himself.

Denise Garrett, vice president of the Sabin Vaccine Institute that advocates for expanding global vaccine access, said she despaired at the government strategy. Brazil has been far and away Latin America's immunization front-runner, so much so that she hadn't seen it in the same league as the region's other countries.

Given the problems in vaccine development and distribution, "it's definitely not a good idea to put all your eggs in one basket," she said from Washington.

Stalled supplies of the AstraZeneca vaccine in January amid pressure for Brazil to begin its vaccination campaign prompted the Health Ministry to acquire tens of millions of shots from Sao Paulo state's Butantan Institute, which is mixing an active ingredient from China with a sterile solution and bottling it. The shots were the fruit of the state's negotiations with Chinese company Sinovac and went ahead despite Bolsonaro's criticisms.

Brazil's government also dragged its feet in signing on to the World Health Organization's COVAX initiative providing vaccines to poorer nations. It ultimately bought the bare minimum — enough for 10% of its population of 210 million.

"I was so anxious when that was going on; I couldn't believe they weren't going to sign it," said Garrett, who is Brazilian. "When I heard they signed, I was relieved. We were all relieved. But they signed for the minimum amount possible. ... Brazil isn't in a better vaccination position now because of the incompetence or inactivity of the federal government."

In February, Brazil began signing contracts with other pharmaceutical companies, but none of their shots have been administered. Of the 10% of people who received one dose so far, the vast majority received Butantan's shot and the rest got the AstraZeneca shot, which government health institute Fiocruz is bottling.

Both Brazilian labs face supply problems. Butantan said Wednesday it was suspending production while it awaits shipments of the active ingredient from China. Fiocruz has produced only 4 million of the 50 million doses it agreed to deliver by the end of April.

That threatens to reduce the speed of vaccinations, which finally hit 1 million doses per day last week, according to a consortium of local media that compiles data from state health secretariats.

Intensive care units for COVID-19 patients in most Brazilian states are above 90% capacity. Seven of every 10 hospitals in the country risk running out of supplemental oxygen and anesthetic in the next few days, the newspaper Folha de S. Paulo reported April 8.

At the municipal hospital of Sao Joao de Meriti, a city in Rio de Janeiro's metropolitan area, the ICU ward is almost full, with many patients sharing space and oxygen bottles while being treated. Hospital director Altair Soares Neto said health professionals scarcely find time to sleep.

"Will we have the medicines, the oxygen, the conditions to care for this patient accordingly? Today we do. But, if cases keep growing, sometime we will fight chaos," he said.

The surge of deaths has brought widespread outcry. Brazil's Association of Collective Health, which has nearly 20,000 members including doctors, nurses and health experts, published an open letter this week demanding a three-week national lockdown, echoing increasingly urgent calls from others.

Bolsonaro has refused proposed lockdowns, arguing their economic impact would be even more devastating than the virus. He even took three states to the Supreme Court last month for adopting such restrictions.

"If we just wait for the vaccine to reach all risk groups, many people will die," said the health association's president, Gulnar Azevedo e Silva. "There is no national coordination. And if we don't have that, what happens? Chaos."

An agreement for FioCruz to acquire AstraZeneca's technology would allow Brazil to produce an entirely

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locally made vaccine and make the nation less vulnerable to constraints on imported active ingredients. Fiocruz forecasts deliveries will start in September. But that date could be pushed back due to the complexity of the process and strict quality control, its press office said in an emailed response to questions.

While visiting Fiocruz on Friday, health minister Marcelo Queiroga told reporters there are other countries that are also experiencing problems with their supply of active ingredients, and that vaccines won't remedy Brazil's high level of COVID-19 deaths in the short-term. He said the government doesn't have a "magic wand to fix all the problems."

Carla Domingues, former coordinator of Brazil's national immunization program, praised the country for approaching 1 million doses per day but said it had the infrastructure for a stronger campaign if only the government had secured the vaccines.

"Of course, we would like to vaccinate more, like in the U.S., but we can't," she said. "We're going to have to live with this virus for a long time." ____ Associated Press photographer Felipe Dana contributed to this report.

Chloé Zhao becomes 1st woman of color to win top DGA honor

By LINDSEY BAHR AP Film Writer

Chloé Zhao's "Nomadland" continued its tour of dominance through awards season Saturday night, when Zhao took top honors at the 73rd annual Directors Guild Association Awards.

She is the second woman to earn the honor and the first woman of color to do so. Kathryn Bigelow was the first for "The Hurt Locker." And it all but solidifies her frontrunner status leading up to the Oscars on April 25.

The untelevised event was held virtually with nominees accepting over zoom calls from around the world, in lieu of the typical hotel ballroom ceremony in Beverly Hills.

Only seven times in history has the DGA winner ever not gone on to take the best director prize at the Academy Awards. Last year was a rare exception when the Guild honored "1917" director Sam Mendes and then the Oscar went to "Parasite" director Bong Joon Ho.

Zhao was up against Emerald Fennell for "Promising Young Woman," Aaron Sorkin for "The Trial of the Chicago 7," Lee Isaac Chung for "Minari" and David Fincher for "Mank." The only difference in the Oscars lineup is that Sorkin is not among the nominees — instead, Thomas Vinterberg is for "Another Round."

Zhao's lyrical film about transient workers in the American West starring Frances McDormand started its awards journey winning the Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival, the People's Choice award at the Toronto International Film Festival, the Golden Globe for best drama and best director and the top honor from the Producer's Guild.

The first-time directing prize went to Darius Marder for "Sound of Metal," his innovative exploration of what happens when a drummer has severe, traumatic hearing loss. And documentary directing was given to Gregory Kershaw and Michael Dweck for "The Truffle Hunters," which follows a group of older men who seek out the expensive and rare white Alba truffle in the forests of Piedmont, Italy.

The Directors Guild also celebrates achievements in television directing.

Lesli Linka Glatter won the dramatic prize for her "Homeland" episode "Prisoners of War," Susanna Fogel took the comedy honor for the "In Case of Emergency" episode of "The Flight Attendant" and Scott Frank was recognized for directing the limited series "The Queen's Gambit."

Religious leaders recall Prince Philip's spiritual curiosity

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Churches in Britain held services Sunday to remember Prince Philip as people of many religions reflected on a man whose gruff exterior hid a strong personal faith and deep curiosity about others' beliefs.

Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby led a service of remembrance at Canterbury Cathedral in south-east England for the husband of Queen Elizabeth II, who died Friday at the age of 99.

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Welby, who is set to preside at Philip's funeral on Saturday at Windsor Castle, led prayers for Philip, also known as the Duke of Edinburgh, and contemplated "a very long life, remarkably led."

In London's Westminster Abbey, where Philip married the then-Princess Elizabeth in 1947, Dean of Westminster David Hoyle remembered the former naval officer's "self-effacing sense of service."

Most people's glimpses of Philip in a religious setting were of him beside the queen at commemorative services, or walking to church with the royal family on Christmas Day. But his religious background and interests were more varied than his conventional role might suggest.

Born into the Greek royal family as Prince Philip of Greece and Denmark, he was baptized in the Greek Orthodox Church. His father was exiled and his family left Greece when Philip was very young. He became an Anglican when he married Elizabeth, who as queen is supreme governor of the Church of England.

In the 1960s, he helped set up St. George's House, a religious study center at the royal family's Windsor Castle seat, where Philip would join clergy, academics, businesspeople and politicians to discuss the state of the world.

He was a regular visitor to Mount Athos, a monastic community and religious sanctuary in Greece, and was a long-time patron of the Templeton Prize, a lucrative award for contribution to life's "spiritual dimension" whose winners include Mother Teresa.

Philip's longstanding environmentalism, which saw him serve as patron of the Worldwide Fund for Nature, was connected to his faith. He organized a 1986 summit in Assisi, Italy where representatives of Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism and Hinduism pledged to protect the environment. Philip said at the time that "a new and powerful alliance has been forged between the forces of religion and the forces of conservation."

Blunt-spoken and quick-witted, Philip also was known for making remarks that could be deeply offensive, some of them sexist and racist. But former Archbishop of York John Sentamu, who was born in Uganda, said those who saw Philip as a bigot were wide of the mark.

"If somebody challenged him, you would enter into an amazing conversation," Sentamu told the BBC. "The trouble was that because he was the Duke of Edinburgh, the husband of the queen, people had this deference."

"I'm sure sometimes he regretted some of those phrases, but in the end it's a pity that people saw him as somebody who makes gaffes," Sentamu said. "Behind those gaffes was an expectation of a comeback, but nobody came back, and the gaffe, unfortunately, stayed."

Inderjit Singh, a prominent British Sikh leader, said Philip had a strong knowledge of Sikhism and "contributed to the understanding and harmony between differing faith communities."

"He recognized what we should all recognize....We are all of one common humanity," Singh said.

Philip's faith may have been partly a legacy of his mother, Princess Alice of Battenberg, who established an order of nuns, sheltered Jews in Nazi-occupied Greece during World War II and is buried below a Russian Orthodox church in east Jerusalem.

"I suspect that it never occurred to her that her action was in any way special," Philip said on a 1994 trip to Israel, where he visited his mother's grave. "She was a person with deep religious faith, and she would have considered it to be a totally human action to fellow human beings in distress."

His interests in religion and ecology have been passed on to his eldest son, Prince Charles. The heir to the throne is a strong environmentalist who has said he wants to be "defender of faiths" when he takes the throne, rather than the monarch's official title as defender of the Anglican faith

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Monday, April 12, the 102nd day of 2021. There are 263 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On April 12, 1945, President Franklin D. Roosevelt died of a cerebral hemorrhage in Warm Springs,

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Georgia, at age 63; he was succeeded by Vice President Harry S. Truman.

On this date:

In 1861, the Civil War began as Confederate forces opened fire on Fort Sumter in South Carolina.

In 1877, the catcher's mask was first used in a baseball game by James Tyng of Harvard in a game against the Lynn Live Oaks.

In 1955, the Salk vaccine against polio was declared safe and effective.

In 1961, Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin became the first man to fly in space, orbiting the earth once before making a safe landing.

In 1963, civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. was arrested and jailed in Birmingham, Alabama, charged with contempt of court and parading without a permit. (During his time behind bars, King wrote his "Letter from Birmingham Jail.")

In 1975, singer, dancer and civil rights activist Josephine Baker, 68, died in Paris.

In 1981, the space shuttle Columbia blasted off from Cape Canaveral on its first test flight. Former world heavyweight boxing champion Joe Louis, 66, died in Las Vegas, Nevada.

In 1988, the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office issued a patent to Harvard University for a genetically engineered mouse, the first time a patent was granted for an animal life form.

In 1989, former boxing champion Sugar Ray Robinson died in Culver City, Calif., at age 67; radical activist Abbie Hoffman was found dead at his home in New Hope, Pa., at age 52.

In 1990, in its first meeting, East Germany's first democratically elected parliament acknowledged responsibility for the Nazi Holocaust, and asked the forgiveness of Jews and others who had suffered.

In 2009, American cargo ship captain Richard Phillips was rescued from Somali pirates by U.S. Navy snipers who shot and killed three of the hostage-takers. Angel Cabrera became the first Argentine to win the Masters.

In 2015, Hillary Rodham Clinton jumped back into presidential politics, announcing in a video her much-awaited second campaign for the White House. Jordan Spieth (speeth) romped to his first major championship with a record-tying performance at the Masters, shooting an 18-under 270 to become the first wire-to-wire winner of the green jacket since 1976.

Ten years ago: Japan ranked its nuclear crisis at the highest possible severity on an international scale — the same level as the 1986 Chernobyl disaster — even as it insisted radiation leaks were declining at its tsunami-crippled nuclear plant. The state of Ohio executed two-time murderer Clarence Carter for beating and stomping to death a fellow jail inmate. Booming cannons, plaintive period music and hushed crowds ushered in the 150th anniversary of the start of the Civil War during morning ceremonies in Charleston, South Carolina.

Five years ago: Navy Secretary Ray Mabus (MAY'-buhs) told 1,500 Marines and sailors at Camp Pendleton, California, that the Pentagon's decision to let women compete for all military combat positions was as irreversible as earlier edicts to integrate Blacks and allow gays and lesbians to openly serve. Actor Anne Jackson, who often appeared onstage with her husband, Eli Wallach, in comedies and classics, died in New York at age 90. David Gest, a music producer and Liza Minnelli's former husband, died in London at 62.

One year ago: Christians around the world celebrated Easter Sunday isolated in their homes by the coronavirus. St. Peter's Square was barricaded to keep out crowds. Pope Francis celebrated Easter Mass inside the largely vacant basilica, calling for global solidarity in the face of the pandemic and urging political leaders to give hope and opportunity to people who had lost jobs. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson was discharged from a London hospital after treatment for the coronavirus. Former golfer Doug Sanders died in Houston at 86; he was a four-time runner-up in a major, and was known as the "Peacock of the Fairways" for the bright colors he wore on the golf course.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Jane Withers is 95. Playwright Alan Ayckbourn (AYK'-bohrn) is 82. Jazz musician Herbie Hancock is 81. Rock singer John Kay (Steppenwolf) is 77. Actor Ed O'Neill is 75. Actor Dan Lauria is 74. Talk show host David Letterman is 74. Author Scott Turow is 72. Actor-playwright Tom Noonan is 70. R&B singer JD Nicholas (The Commodores) is 69. Singer Pat Travers is 67. Actor Andy Garcia is 65. Movie director Walter Salles (SAL'-ihs) is 65. Country singer Vince Gill is 64. Actor Suzanne (cq) Douglas

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is 64. Model/TV personality J Alexander is 63. Rock musician Will Sergeant (Echo & the Bunnymen) is 63. Rock singer Art Alexakis (al-ex-AH'-kihs) (Everclear) is 59. Country singer Deryl Dodd is 57. Folk-pop singer Amy Ray (Indigo Girls) is 57. Actor Alicia Coppola is 53. Rock singer Nicholas Hexum (311) is 51. Actor Retta is 51. Actor Nicholas Brendon is 50. Actor Shannen Doherty is 50. Actor Marley Shelton is 47. Actor Sarah Jane Morris is 44. Actor Jordana Spiro is 44. Rock musician Guy Berryman (Coldplay) is 43. Actor Riley Smith is 43. Actor Claire Danes is 42. Actor Jennifer Morrison is 42. Actor Matt McGorry is 35. Actor Brooklyn Decker is 34. Contemporary Christian musician Joe Rickard (Red) is 34. Rock singer-musician Brendon Urie (Panic! at the Disco) is 34. Actor Saoirse (SUR'-shuh) Ronan is 27.