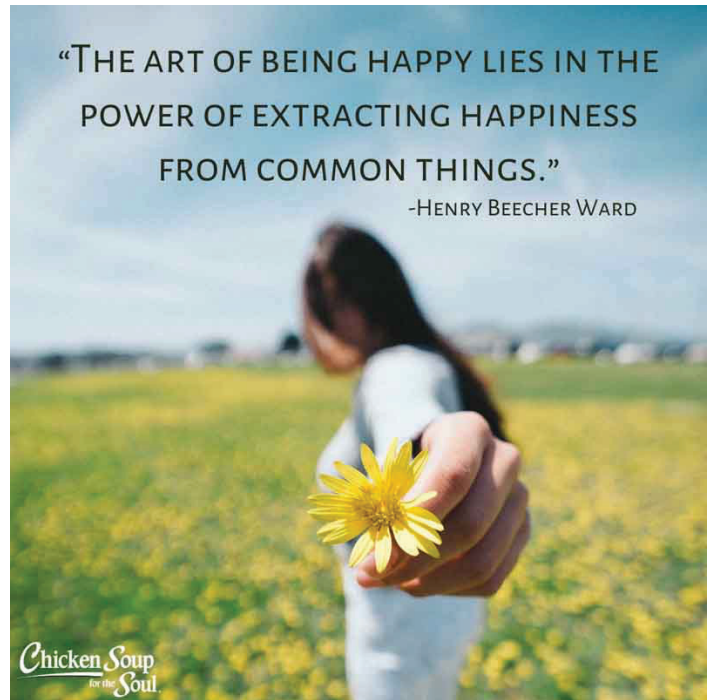


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Region Choir Festival

The Regional Choir Festival will be taking place Monday April 19th at the Aberdeen Civic Arena at 5:30 pm. Admission is free and doors will open shortly before. The event will also be Livestreamed at GDILIVE.COM.

This concert will feature students from different schools in this area. This event is being held as Allstate Choir was canceled this year. Students will sing songs that had been selected for Allstate.

Groton students participating are Carter Barse, Anna Bisbee, Braden Freeman, Porter Johnson, Julianna Kosel, Camryn Kurtz, Steven Paulson, Shaylee Peterson, Isaac Smith, Trinity Smith, Cadance Tullis and Elliana Weismantel.

REGIONAL
CHOIR
EVENT
On GDILIVE.COM
Monday, April 19, 2021, 5:30 p.m.
Aberdeen Civic Center



OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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



State FFA Degree Winners

The State FFA Convention was held last weekend and several Groton Area FFA members received their awards. These are the State FFA Degree recipients. In back, left to right, are Kannon Coats, Caleb Furney, Chandler Larson and Trey Gengerke; in front, left to right, are Samantha Pappas, Sage Mortenson and Tessa Erdmann; not pictured are Kale Pharis and Steven Paulson.

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Agriscience Fair - Plant Science Division
Second Place
Samantha Pappas and Steven Paulson



STAR FINALIST
Tessa Erdmann earned the STAR 2021 SD FFA Convention Farmer Finalist Award.



Dairy Cattle Team
5th place team
The Groton Dairy Cattle Team placed fifth in the state. Team members are Porter Johnson, Samantha Pappas (placed seventh as an individual), Cadence Feist and Ava Wienk.

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State FFA Convention Winners

Ag Business Management Team - 7th place: Trey Gengerke - 16th Individual, Chandler Larson, Lucas Simon

Agronomy Team - 10th place: Kaleb Antonsen - 10th place individual, Cole Bisbee, Caleb Hanten, Ethan Gengerke

Horse Evaluation - 11 place team: Dylan Krueger - 4th place individual , Jayla Jones, Faith Flihs

Meats Team - 6th place team: Lane Krueger - 13th place individual , Kansas Kroll - 14th place individual , Kennedy Anderson, Tina Zoellner

Milk Products Evaluation - 15th place team: Steven Paulson, Isaac Smith, Braden Freeman, Lee Iverson

Natural Resources - 17th Place team: Travis Townsend, Evin Nehls, Jace Kroll, Landon Kokales

Nursery Landscape - 21st Place team: Tiara DeHoet, Caleb Furney, Tristan Traphagen, Jace Craig

Vet Science - 27th Place Team: Sage Mortenson, Kannon Coats, Cassie Schultz

Dairy Production Proficiency: Steven Paulson - 2nd Place

Goat Production Proficiency: Tessa Erdmann - 1st Place

Scholarship Winners

Wosje Agricultural Business Scholarship The Wosje Agricultural Business Scholarships are sponsored by Chad and Rhonda Wosje, South Dakota State University graduates and Sioux Valley FFA Alumni members sponsor these \$750 scholarships. Tessa Erdmann was a recipient of this award.

Blue & Gold Scholarships The South Dakota FFA offers Blue and Gold Scholarships to any graduating senior who is planning to enroll in an agriculture-related field in one of South Dakota's institutions. This year's recipients of the \$750 scholarships included Sage Mortenson.



Erdmann elected State FFA President

To wrap up the 93rd South Dakota State FFA Convention, six members were elected to serve as the 2020-2021 South Dakota State FFA officer team and two members were elected to serve as the 2020-2021 South Dakota State FFA ambassadors.

Candidates vied for the six South Dakota leadership roles and went through extensive interviews. The individuals elected to the South Dakota State FFA officer team will travel across the state throughout the next year presenting speeches, facilitating workshops, hosting camps, holding conferences and conducting business for the South Dakota FFA Association. They will also represent the state of South Dakota at the National FFA Convention.

2021-2022 State FFA Officers (pictured right to left)

- President - Tessa Erdmann, Groton
- Vice President - John Petersen, Piedmont
- Secretary - Hadley Stiefvater, Salem
- Treasurer - Paige Lehrkamp, Hermosa
- Reporter - Alexis Hughes, Rapid City
- Sentinel - Trinity Peterson, Vienna

State FFA Ambassadors assist State Officers in hosting events throughout the year and are a crucial part of the South Dakota FFA Association.

2021-2022 State FFA Ambassadors

- Kayleigh Thill, Chancellor
- Kylie Harriman, Menno

**Weber
Landscaping
Greenhouse
opening this
Spring!**



**We will have a full greenhouse of beautiful
annuals and vegetables.**

Opening First Week of May!

**Located behind 204 N State St, Groton
(Look for the flags)**

**LET US HELP YOU BRIGHTEN
UP YOUR YARD!**

Spotlight on Groton Area Staff



Name: Janene Harry

Occupation: Art Teacher

Length of Employment: 1983-Present

In the Groton Area School District, Art is an elective class loved by many students. Not only does it function as an outlet for the creativity of students, but it also teaches them the principles of creating art and the ideas behind the masterpieces of old. The teacher who oversees the Art classes at Groton High School is Janene Harry, a staff member whose tenure has lasted for over 38 years.

Mrs. Harry graduated from Groton Area High School in 1977. She graduated from Northern State University with a major in Art Education for K-12 students. She began working as the resident Art Teacher at Groton Area High School in 1983, having taught Art for a year in Aberdeen before that.

In the first semester of the school year, Mrs. Harry teaches 6th Graders in two groups split between two nine-week periods. In the second semester, she teaches a singular group of 8th graders. For high schoolers, Mrs. Harry teaches the students for either a single semester or the whole year. The art classes for high schoolers are divided into four stages, with each stage teaching more advanced principles and techniques than the last while building upon the lessons taught in the previous classes.

In Art I, Mrs. Harry teaches students about the basic elements and principles of art. The elements of design Mrs. Harry teaches about in Art I are Lines, Colors, Shapes, Forms, Values, Space, and Textures. On the other hand, seniors take Art IV as a semester-long class that allows them to refine the techniques they have been taught over the course of previous classes.

Mrs. Harry was inspired to pursue a career in Art Education through her experiences with Mrs. Newman, the art teacher who held the position before her. Outside of teaching, Mrs. Harry frequents local garage sales and thrift stores to search for materials that can be made into art, whether by herself or her students. She has 4 children and 11 grandchildren. Editor's Note: This is a continuing series compiled by Benjamin Higgins. Higgins who is working for the Groton Independent through the Project Skills program.

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Strive to Prevent Falls

My grandmother was a lively, caring, wonderful woman, who remained very active late in her life. One spring day, after an unusual April blizzard, she stepped out of her apartment on her way to her weekly bridge game. She fell on the ice, in an event that led to an open ankle fracture and changed the course of the remainder of her life.



By Dr. Kelly Evans-Hullinger ~ Prairie Doc® Perspectives

We all know that a fall, especially in an elderly or frail person, can result in disaster. Major fall-related injuries such as hip fractures can sometimes precede abrupt decline in function and death in the worst cases. While many falls don't result in any injury at all, when I discuss falls with my patients, I consider those events near misses and potentially catastrophic for any elderly or frail person.

Falls can have many causes, and often numerous factors contribute. Some factors can be modified by at-risk people, and some cannot. Discussing the mechanism and contributors to falls with one's health care provider (or even better, a physical or occupational therapist) can help identify those factors. If a person can reduce their risk of fall and injury, by all means we want to help!

Modifiable risk factors might include weakness in large muscle groups, need for and proper use of an assistive device such as a walker or cane, and potential hazards in one's home such as rugs or bathtubs. Of course, in some patients there may be fall risk factors which cannot be easily modified, which might result in the decision for extra help or a change in living arrangement.

After my grandmother's ankle fracture, she had a rocky course. She endured surgeries, bone infection, hospitalizations, and other medical complications. She never regained the ability to walk independently again and spent much of the last couple years of her life in a nursing home where she could receive the care she required.

Last summer, my grandmother contracted COVID-19 at her nursing facility and sadly died a few weeks later. A woman who led a truly remarkable life lost her fierce independence after an accidental fall. I'm sure if she could have gone back in time, she would have just stayed home that icy April day. If you or a loved one is worried about falling, I hope you will talk to your primary care provider about it.

Kelly Evans-Hullinger, M.D. is part of The Prairie Doc® team of physicians and currently practices internal medicine in Brookings, South Dakota. For free and easy access to the entire Prairie Doc® library, visit www.prairedoc.org and follow Prairie Doc® on Facebook featuring On Call with the Prairie Doc® a medical Q&A show streaming on Facebook and broadcast on SDPB most Thursdays at 7 p.m. central.

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With free agency wrapping up and the NFL draft starting next week, now is the perfect time to examine the roster to see which positions the Minnesota Vikings need to target. Last week we went over the offense, so this week we turn to the defense.

The Vikings' defense last season was horrendous. Mike Zimmer even commented about how this was the worst defense he's ever coached. Luckily for the Vikings' defense, two of the main reasons they played so poorly last season should correct themselves. Danielle Hunter, Anthony Barr, Eric Kendricks, and Michael Pierce

all missed time due to injury or opting out due to the covid pandemic, and their presence alone makes the defense exponentially better. The younger players, who were thrust into a starting role after the Vikings released many long-time starters last offseason, should also improve with a year under their belt and an actual offseason program to attend.

Even with the defense poised to improve, there are still starting spots that will need to be sorted out and depth to be added. Let's take a look at which positions the Vikings will likely spend draft capital.

Defensive tackle – After signing Dalvin Tomlinson in free agency and with Pierce coming back from opting out of last season, defensive tackle is the lowest priority in the draft. However, because Tomlinson and Pierce are run-stuffing DTs, don't be surprised if the Vikings take a gamble on a pass-rushing big man in the later rounds. Some names to keep an eye on are Milton Williams from Louisiana Tech, Levi Onwuzurike from Washington, and Daviyon Nixon from Iowa.

Linebacker – Anthony Barr and Eric Kendricks will be back to man the middle, and with the Vikings playing a lot of two-linebacker sets, linebacker isn't high on the list of priorities. Barr's restructured contract means he can become a free agent after this season though, so it would be a good idea for the Vikings to grab one in the later rounds. Players like Dylan Moses from Alabama, Nick Bolton from Missouri, or Jamin Davis from Kentucky.

Safety – The Vikings watched Anthony Harris walk this offseason, opening a hole at safety. Xavier Woods was brought in to fill that void, but he is on a one-year deal and there is no guarantee he will progress in Zimmer's defense like he's hoping. So, just like defensive tackle and linebacker, the safety spot isn't a big need but could use some depth. Jamar Johnson from Indiana, Andre Cisco from Syracuse, and Christian Uphoff from Illinois State would fit nicely in the Vikings' defense.

Cornerback – Up until a few weeks ago, cornerback wasn't a need for the Vikings. The position had plenty of young, ascending players, and the Vikings brought in Patrick Peterson to provide a veteran presence. However, last year's first-round pick Jeff Gladney was recently charged with domestic abuse, a charge that will effectively end his career if true. At this point, it's unclear which direction the Vikings are going to go. If they are worried, they could grab one of the top corners in the draft like Patrick Surtain II from Alabama. If the team is confident in the players already on the roster, they could wait until the later rounds to grab someone like Jevon Holland from Oregon or Tay Gowan from UCF.

Defensive end – Defensive end has been mocked to the Vikings in the first round more than any position other than offensive linemen. However, most analysts simply look at the Vikings' poor sack totals last season without realizing they lost two of their biggest pass rushers to injury. With Hunter and Barr coming back, the Vikings' pass rush is already improved, but that won't stop the team from drafting a defensive end if the right player falls to them. Kwity Paye from Michigan and Jayson Oweh from Penn State are two physical freaks but will likely be drafted in the first round. If the Vikings want to wait until the middle to late rounds to draft a DE, keep an eye on Ronnie Perkins from Oklahoma and Rashad Weaver from Pitt.

Next week we'll do a mock draft to get you ready for the actual draft that will air live on April 29-May 1. Skol!



By Jordan Wright

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#420 in a series

Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

Editing this in after the numbers came in, late again: We're up to 15 from 14 states and territories in the red zone, down to 30 from 31 in orange, and have 10 in yellow. The one-week increase in total cases was up at 484,500 last week and back down again this week at 476,300, so that's a bright spot. Two-week increase was up to 932,900 and still up at 960,800 this week. I have us at a one-week daily average new-case number of 68,042.9, which is down a bit. Maybe things are looking up.

We're up to 15 from 14 states and territories in the red zone, down to 30 from 31 in orange, and have 10 in yellow. The one-week increase in total cases was up at 484,500 last week and back down again this week at 476,300, so that's a bright spot. Two-week increase was up to 932,900 and still up at 960,800 this week. I have us at a one-week daily average new-case number of 68,042.9, which is down a bit. Maybe things are looking up.

I track 54 states and US territories, including the District of Columbia; and we now have three over 10 percent increase in two weeks, Michigan at 13.65 percent, Maine at 11.30 percent, and Vermont at 10.61 percent. We're still at 11 states above five percent. Highest per capita rates of increase are in Michigan, Rhode Island, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Delaware.

We are up to 31,690,900 total cases, 0.1% more than yesterday. There were 40,500 new cases reported today. We have 45,643 people hospitalized, slightly more than yesterday. There have been 566,804 deaths in the US in this pandemic, 0.1% more than we had yesterday. There were 352 deaths reported today. Average daily deaths are down this week to 755.9, almost 240 below last week. States with the most per capita deaths this week were Michigan, New Jersey, Delaware, Georgia, and New York.

(Once again, I have no numbers for you; last refresh was the basis for yesterday's Update. If something comes through before the day is officially over at midnight, I will edit in the usual weekly analysis; otherwise, I guess it will be tomorrow for that. Maybe my database is suffering from pandemic fatigue too.)

On April 18, 2020, one year ago today, we were up to 726,800 cases and 34,589 deaths, and we really were slowing down. Everything looked rosy for getting this under control if we just held on to our restrictions and precautions for a while longer—and I'm just going to bet that sounds familiar, huh? The CDC had published guidelines "to get and keep American open." A group of experts outlined the amount of testing we were going to need in order to accomplish that goal; of course, we didn't have anything like that much capacity, even all these months into this thing. We ignored all of that right from the start in almost every state. The protests were well underway across the country declaring folks weren't scared of a virus and liberty(!) and the experts were lying and this was all a hoax and—well, you know—same stuff we're hearing today.

We were getting the idea that antibody tests weren't going to save us because (1) tests were not highly reliable, (2) we didn't yet know whether the presence of detectable antibodies tracked with protection against infection, and (3) we didn't have the capacity to do that many tests anyhow. There were also increasing, although still very small in number, reports of reinfections in recovered individuals. We were busy trying to sort that out too. There were over 2.25 million cases worldwide and around 158,000 deaths.

We're getting some early glimmers of hope that Michigan may be getting ready to turn a corner. They're still in a bunch of trouble, but their new case rate per 100,000 residents has been dropping slightly, but steadily. We're not seeing hospitalizations or deaths drop yet, but those are both lagging indicators, so I would expect it will be a couple or weeks or more before we see effects there. We do have a pattern in this country of waiting until things are completely out of hand and then seriousing up about precautions, and the serious-up phase of events seems to have taken hold in at least large parts of the state. We don't seem able to bring ourselves to do that until after a lot of folks lose their lives unnecessarily, but eventually we do get the message. I certainly hope what we're seeing is a trend, not a temporary lull. We should know by next Sunday. Long way to go there in any case; they're off the charts for transmission right now, and these genies never go back into the bottle as readily as they came out.

Case in point: Colorado. Their daily new-case average has increased by 18 percent in two weeks; hospi-

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talizations are up by about the same amount. In a news briefing a couple of days ago, Colorado's incident commander for Covid-19, Scott Bookman, said, "We are seeing what appears to be the beginning of a fourth wave of Covid-19 in Colorado." More than half of the new cases in the state seem to be from variants of concern, primarily B.1.1.7 that emerged in the UK and B.1.427/B.1.429 that emerged a couple of months ago in California. It does not help that the state has been loosening restrictions at the same time as this increase is occurring. We never learn.

One argument against being vaccinated goes something like this: "I'm not scared of this virus. I figure if I was going to get it, I would have by now, and so I'll be fine." Or it might start similarly like this: "I'm young and healthy; I hardly ever even get a cold, so I think my immune system can handle this virus. Because of that, I don't need to be vaccinated." However they're presented, they always start out with why the person in question feels safe and so doesn't need to protect themselves from this virus. If you then suggest maybe they have an obligation to get vaccinated to protect others—to contribute to the development of herd immunity—that situation where enough people are protected that the virus doesn't have anyone susceptible to transmit to—then they say, "Look, if you're so worried, you get vaccinated. Unless your damned vaccine doesn't work so well, after all. <superior smirk>"

That actually looks like a pretty good argument. If all the folks who are so worried about this virus get vaccinated, then who cares if the refuseniks are unprotected? They're not hurting anyone else, right? Right??

Except for this: There's a list of people in whom the vaccines don't work or don't work much. Who are these people? Four groups: (1) People born with faulty immune systems, (2) people with diseases that wipe out their immune responses, (3) people who have taken therapies that destroy their immunologic capabilities, and (4) some folks over 80 with senescent immune systems. Whole lot of people there all together. There is a host of immunologic deficiencies, some of them inherited or caused by some sort of damage in early life. Some are caused by blood cancers (leukemias and lymphomas), and some are caused by solid tumor kinds of cancers. Organ transplant recipients are immunosuppressed to prevent rejection of the transplanted organ, something we've talked about before in my Update #388 posted March 17 at <https://www.facebook.com/marie.schwabmiller/posts/4531713686845002>. Drugs used to treat inflammatory conditions like Crohn's disease, inflammatory bowel disease, or ulcerative colitis like Remicade; to treat rheumatoid arthritis like Rituxan; or to treat cancer like Gazyva or Imbruvica kill or block B cells, which you may recall produce antibodies. (If you're hazy on the details and want to know more, check out my Update #150 posted July 22 at <https://www.facebook.com/marie.schwabmiller/posts/3796230603726651> and Update #250 posted October 30 at <https://www.facebook.com/marie.schwabmiller/posts/4125507854132256>.)

When people like these are vaccinated, some have some degree of immune response; for some it may be at least partially protective. For many, there is little or no antibody response, which leaves them highly vulnerable. If they become infected, they often suffer prolonged infection; death rates have been as high as 55 percent. Additionally, those chronic infections have turned out to provide sort of a breeding ground for the emergence of mutations that could make the virus more lethal and enable it to evade the immune responses of those of us with normal immune systems—turns out a long-term infection gives the virus time to continue to mutate and mutate until it finds a way to avoid whatever immunologic roadblocks we've set in its way. That means, even if you're perfectly willing to write off these patients as necessary collateral damage in your pursuit of your freedom and your liberty and making the economy work, you could really be consigning all of us—even those with Jim-dandy immune systems to an unrelenting cycle of waves of infection with every-more-powerful variants until even your Jim-dandy immune system might not be enough. Which would be devastating to the economy, so we wouldn't have even that after your funeral—if that matters to you at that point.

There are patients who did become infected and showed zero antibody response after it was over. Less than half of patients taking Remicade showed any immune response after infection. Thirty-four percent of people taking the drug had a response adequate to be protective after a single dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine and only 27 percent of those receiving a single dose of the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine showed a protective response. Because this study was in the UK where they are delaying second doses, we're not sure what a second dose will do, but it doesn't look good. In a different study, fewer than 15 percent

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of those with blood cancers and 40 percent of patients with solid tumors produced antibodies after one dose of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine. And another study showed 17 percent of transplant recipients had detectable antibodies after a single dose of the Pfizer/BioNTech or the Moderna vaccine.

The consensus is that it's worth vaccinating these folks because some percentage of them does have an appreciable response, but that we cannot rely on the vaccine to protect them overall. That means their safety and their lives depend on the rest of us. I don't know how lost to humanity most of us are, but I keep hoping someone somewhere knows someone with one of these conditions—or just someone who's really, really old—and concludes they're willing to suffer some small inconvenience to protect someone besides themselves. We'll see how that goes.

We are making great progress in the vaccination campaign; we're up to more than half of adults who've received at least one dose, 50.4 percent, or 129,988,985 people, to be precise. That comes to 40 percent of the whole population. We have 25.4 percent of the entire population, 84 million people, fully vaccinated. Keep in mind that these are different metrics—adults vs. population—since around a quarter of the population is children who are not yet eligible for vaccination. We have administered 209,406,814 doses out of the 264,505,725 delivered for administration. That means around 3.5 million doses went into folks today. That does bring our seven-day average down slightly to 3.2 million—expected since there's a huge day (well over four million) in there that we can't hope to match every day, at least not yet.

We are accumulating data to show that people with Covid-19 today are younger than they've been in the past and young people are sicker than they've been in the past. They are suffering complications they didn't expect based on their understanding of the trajectory of this disease. Some of us have known for a long time that young people are not excluded from the worst outcomes, but that information seems to be coming home to young people now, which is a good thing.

We're not entirely clear on why young people are showing up more in hospitals. Could be simply that they, feeling fairly bulletproof, have been out and about more, thereby having more chances to acquire infections. Could be that, because such a high proportion of the elderly population has been vaccinated, a larger proportion of young people are going to show up in the infected population. And it could be that these variants have something special in store for the young. Or all of these.

We do see that B.1.1.7, the variant first identified in the UK, has mutations that make it better at binding to our cells; that would mean it takes fewer of them to make you sick. We've seen for a while that massive inoculums (doses of infecting virus particles) can make the healthiest person sick, and we think that explains how so many young, healthy health care workers were getting so sick early on—because they were exposed to such huge doses of virus at work. But if we have a variant that takes fewer viruses, then a briefer exposure or a smaller exposure could cause the same sort of results that earlier took a much larger one. It is also possible that, because B.1.1.7 binds so well, you are shedding larger numbers of virus because you have more of them in your respiratory tract; that would mean the same infected person from earlier in the pandemic could infect many more people at this stage of events. We are also seeing many more infections among children. They're not being hospitalized or dying at high rates, but it happens. And as long as we view children as somehow above the fray, some of them will become very ill and suffer consequences which might last a lifetime.

We are also seeing higher hospitalization rates among the young now. Maybe this is because old people have been exposed and recovered or died or they're vaccinated (80 percent at least one dose and 65 percent fully vaccinated); but the numbers are pretty stark. New Jersey had a 31 percent spike in hospitalizations in the 20 to 29 age group and a 48 percent increase in the 40 to 49 age group. We are seeing more young, previously healthy people having persistent trouble breathing or other side effects. However you define "young"—under 50 or 20 to 39 year—there are more hospitalizations. Whereas at the turn of the year, we were seeing half of hospitalizations among the 65-and-over age group, we are now seeing one-third in that age group, which means a whole lot more younger people hospitalized. We are seeing more cytokine storms in the younger age group; that makes sense when you consider that younger people have more active immune systems that may be more prone to the kinds of overreactions that lead to these storms. They're coming in with cardiomyopathy (damage to the heart muscle due to cytokine damage)

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and severe lung damage (also due to cytokines) requiring ECMO (extracorporeal membrane oxygenation, basically a substitute for a nonfunctional lung).

Additionally, there are more young people who are not sick enough to be hospitalized, but are suffering from long-term respiratory complications, persistent weight loss due to loss of the sense of smell, and neurologic symptoms that make working difficult or impossible. Not everyone suffers these sequelae, but the more who are infected, the more who have these complications. Some young people have suffered from debilitating symptoms for as long as a year—could turn out to be longer, but we don't have much more than a year's data. Dr. Jonathan Reiner, professor of medicine and surgery at George Washington University, told CNN, "So what I would say to young people is that Covid-19 doesn't have to kill you to wreck your life."

Much of what's fueling this increase in young people could be the relaxation of mask mandates and the reopening of bars and gathering places. Reiner said, "They're the people going out to bars. They're the people meeting for brunch. The older people in this country have been hunkered down for a year because they've been worried about dying from this virus. Young people in this country haven't worried so much about dying from this virus." And maybe they should have been more worried than they are.

Could be some of this is the B.1.1.7 variant; maybe it's not: too soon to tell. But if it is the variant, we already know what to do—mask, distance, practice hand hygiene, stay home as much as possible. And we already know that we do not want these variants to keep transmitting. The more transmissions, the more mutations we'll see. And the more mutations, the greater the chance a variant emerges that really scares us all. Mitigating spread is the smartest thing we can do at the moment.

Younger people are less likely to say they will be vaccinated; less than half of those under the age of 30 say they definitely will. Since many states have just opened up vaccination to this age group, we'll see how things develop as time goes on. They are already the least likely to take other precautions, so it matters whether they become willing to be vaccinated over the next few weeks.

Be well. I'll be back tomorrow.

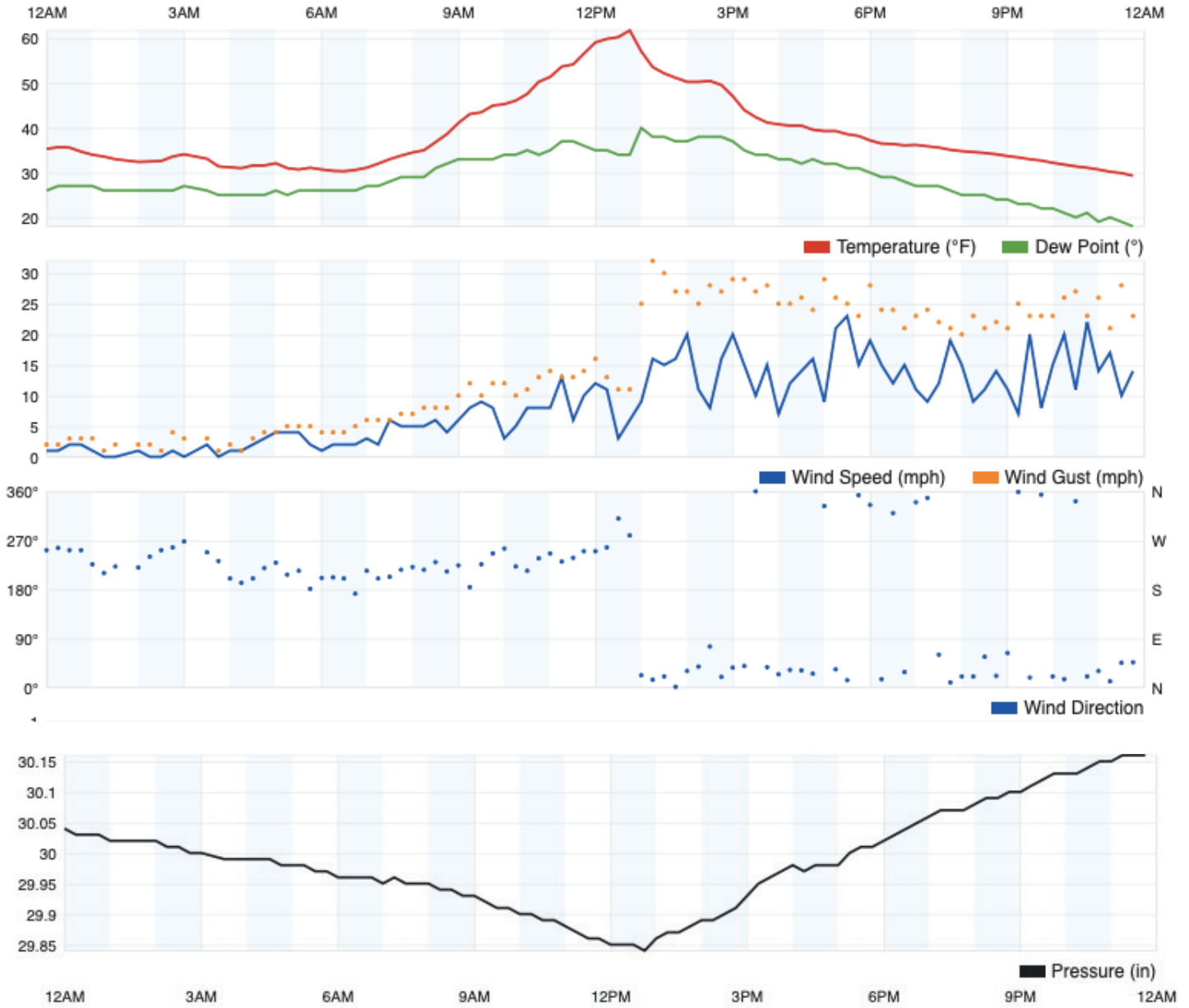
NOW HIRING

MJ's Sinclair of Groton is looking for someone to work weekends and nights. Stop out and see Jeff for an application.

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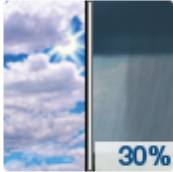


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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs








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Today	Tonight	Tuesday	Tuesday Night	Wednesday
				
Mostly Sunny then Increasing Clouds and Breezy	Decreasing Clouds	Partly Sunny then Chance Showers	Partly Cloudy	Sunny
High: 42 °F	Low: 17 °F	High: 43 °F	Low: 21 °F	High: 50 °F

5 Day Outlook

Early week chill, slowly warming mid-late week

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
				
Breezy Light snow showers tapering off across I-90 corridor.	Breezy Light rain & snow showers developing.	Becoming mostly sunny and slightly warmer.	Breezy Southwest breezes usher in mild air.	A few showers possible south and east.
HI: 36 to 44° LO: 20 to 28°	HI: 37 to 45° LO: 17 to 22°	HI: 43 to 54° LO: 18 to 24°	HI: 55 to 64° LO: 25 to 32°	HI: 51 to 59° LO: 30 to 38°



www.weather.gov/abr

Updated: 4/19/2021 3:49 AM Central

An early week chill will eventually give way to warmer conditions by the latter half of the week ahead. Our area will continue to see on and off chances for light rain or light snow showers the next couple days as temps remain well below normal. Drier conditions will win out by midweek as temps start to slowly modify. By the end of the work week, conditions should start to feel closer to normal for this part of April.

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Today in Weather History

April 19, 1955: An F2 tornado moved NNW from 16 miles Southwest of Aberdeen, in the Townships of Good Hope and Highland. Only the houses were left intact on the four farms that were torn apart. Also, an F2 tornado destroyed barns 8 miles Southeast of Gettysburg causing \$8,000 in damage. In Corson and Dewey Counties, two F0 tornadoes touched down, one after the other, causing over \$3,000 worth of damage and injuring two people. An additional F2 tornado moved NNW in Clear Lake and Richland Townships. Buildings were destroyed on five farms.

April 19, 1971: An unofficial rainfall amount of 6 inches in 24 hours was reported at White River. An official number of 4 plus inches was reported at Murdo, causing the washout of a railroad and derailment of a freight train. The Ghost Hawk Dam broke on the Rosebud Indian Reservation, and the flood waters damaged a trailer home and two cars. Flooding occurred along the Bad, White, and Little White Rivers and Pine Creek.

April 19, 2006: An intense spring snowstorm swept across the Dakotas, dumping up to 5 feet of snow. The heaviest snow fell in the Black Hills, with 59.4 inches at Lead, SD. Bowman, ND reported 18 inches. The storm closed highways including I-94 in North Dakota, cutting power to thousands and was responsible for at least four deaths. Further west, 1 to 3 feet of snow and 50 to 60 mph winds caused drifts up to 10 feet, widespread power outages, and livestock losses.

1775: The first engagement of the Revolutionary War took place under crisp, clear weather at Lexington-Concord.

1927: A deadly tornado outbreak occurred across the central part of Illinois, killing 21 people. The first tornado touched down near Hardin, traveling northeast through Carrollton, then skimmed the south side of Springfield. At Carrollton, a teacher was killed as she held the door of the school shut, saving the lives of her students. The second tornado, peaking at estimated F4 intensity, touched down on the southeast side of Springfield, then moved to affect the towns of Riverton, Buffalo Hart, Chestnut, and Cornland. In Buffalo Hart, only three houses were left standing, while the northern half of Cornland was leveled. The tornado track was 65 miles, ending in Ford County.

1941 - The temperature at Sodus, NY, soared to 95 degrees. The next day Albany, NY, reported a record for April of 93 degrees. (The Weather Channel)

1973 - Glenrock, WY, received 41 inches of snow in just 24 hours, and a storm total of 58 inches, to establish two state records. (18th-20th) (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1976 - The northeastern U.S. was in the midst of an early season heat wave, and the Boston Marathon took place in 90 degree heat. At Providence RI the mercury hit 98 degrees. (David Ludlum)

1986: A major storm system produced ten tornadoes in Texas. One of these tornadoes virtually annihilated the town of Sweetwater. The tornado struck at the unlikely time of 7:17 am. One person was killed, and 100 were injured.

1987 - Forty cities in the central U.S. reported new record high temperatures for the date as readings soared into the 80s and lower 90s for Easter Sunday. Fort Smith AR reported a record high of 95 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Severe thunderstorms over the southeastern U.S. early in the day spawned a strong (F-3) tornado which destroyed seventeen homes and severely damaged thirty houses near Madison FL killing four persons and injuring eighteen others. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - A dozen cities in the southwestern U.S. reported new record high temperatures for the date. The afternoon high of 98 degrees at Hanksville UT equalled their record for April. Tucson AZ reported their earliest 100 degree reading of record. (The National Weather Summary)

1990 - Five cities in the northeastern U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date as readings dipped into the 20s and upper teens. Elkins WV reported a record low of 20 degrees. Thunderstorms over the Southern Plains produced golf ball size hail at San Angelo TX, and up to four inches of rain in southwestern Oklahoma. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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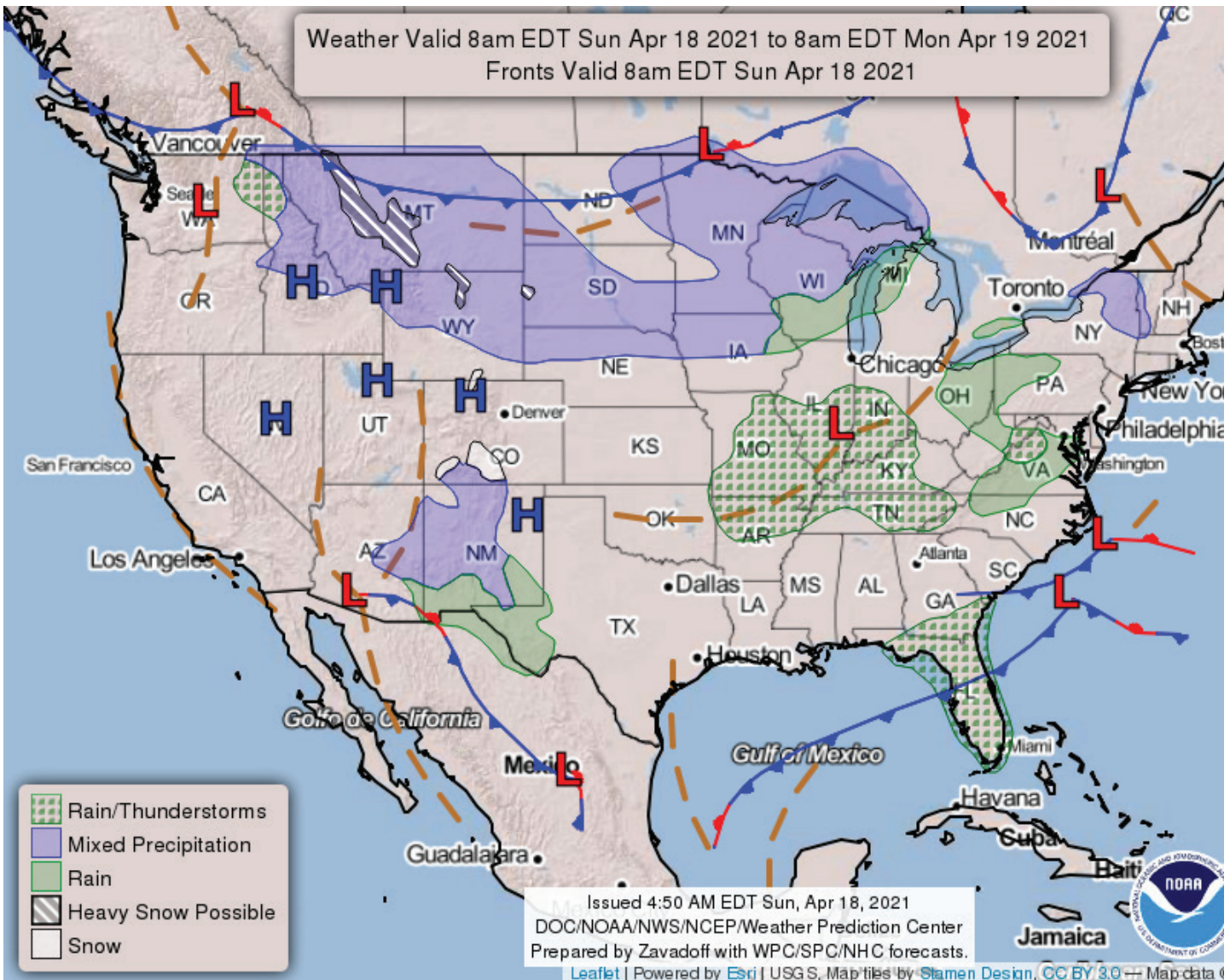
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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 62 °F at 12:52 PM
Low Temp: 29 °F at 11:54 PM
Wind: 32 mph at 1:08 PM
Precip: .04

Today's Info

Record High: 90° in 1923
Record Low: 12° in 1988
Average High: 59°F
Average Low: 33°F
Average Precip in Apr.: 0.92
Precip to date in Apr.: 2.33
Average Precip to date: 3.10
Precip Year to Date: 2.51
Sunset Tonight: 8:26 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:39 a.m.



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WHO DO YOU LOOK UP TO?

Many celebrities do not want to be held accountable as "role models." They do want attention and accolades, recognition and rewards, popularity and prestige. But they do not want the "pressure" to have to live lives that reflect integrity and honesty, purity and decency. They do not want, as many of them have said, "to be a role model." "I want to live my life as I choose."

Many of us, however, search for "role models." We want someone to look up to, to follow, to be our hero, our example. Often we think, "If I can see it, I can do it. If there is someone who has already done it, perhaps I can do it too!"

David, in many ways, can be a "hero" for most of us. However, he did not want that responsibility. Not because of the pressure that it would put on him. Instead, he wanted everyone to know that his hero was his Lord, and he wanted others to "hero-up" to Him.

"Blessed," he said, is the person who "trusts in the Lord," and does not "look to the proud or turn aside to false gods." Whenever we look at David, we see a man who knew victory as well as defeat, who sinned and had to plead with God for His forgiveness. He recognized his failures and would never set himself up as a model. And he recognized that there was only One person he could look up to as a model: his Lord and Savior.

When we put our faith in Him, we know that He is not a "false god" living in human flesh. We can follow the Lord confidently!

Prayer: We look to Your Son, Father, as the one who has "been there and done that" yet lived a flawless life filled with purpose. May He become our lifelong model. Amen.

Scripture For Today: Blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, who does not look to the proud, to those who turn aside to false gods Psalm 40:4

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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

Spearfish native journeys into polar regions for research

By WENDY PITLICK Black Hills Pioneer

SPEARFISH, S.D. (AP) — A Spearfish native has worked her way up to a pretty cool job — literally.

Jennifer Mercer has worked her way from Antarctica to the Arctic Ocean, doing atmospheric and snow studies. Now, she's the Acting Section Head for the Arctic Sciences Section of the National Science Foundation.

Mercer said her journey into the Arctic started in college with her interest in photography and journalism, when her mom bought her a coffee table book, "Poles Apart," by famous nature photographer Galen Rowell.

"It is a book that contrasts the Arctic against the Antarctic. I remember looking through it and thinking someday I'm going to go to these places. I carried it with me. I didn't know how I was going to go to those places, but that was the first conscious thought I had of anything related to traveling to the polar regions."

Mercer started her years at Black Hills State University as a mass communications major, and worked for the Black Hills Pioneer sports department. But just before her sophomore year she switched her major to environmental physical science.

"I had professors at BHSU who were really good mentors, as far as taking an interest in their students' strengths and encouraging us to think about what we could do," she said.

Those professors recognized Mercer's natural talent and encouraged her to pursue graduate school. After paying hundreds of dollars in application fees to schools across the west, a postcard about Dartmouth College in New Hampshire caught her eye. With a reasonable application rate of just \$15, Mercer decided to take a chance.

Right after she was accepted to Dartmouth, the small town girl who had never traveled east of the Mississippi was accepted into a student fellowship program at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution on Cape Cod.

"When I graduated in 1997, I packed up my little truck and drove across the country through many states that I had never visited," Mercer said. "I lived on Cape Cod for the summer, working for the Oceanographic Institution and then in the fall I moved to New Hampshire to start graduate school. My research was focused on reconstructing past climate and environmental conditions using ocean sediments. I spent a lot of time on ships and a lot of time at sea, collecting samples to analyze."

Five years later, after finishing her graduate degree, Mercer said a professor who was running a research team in Antarctica invited her to join his team working in the Dry Valleys near McMurdo Station, the Black Hills Pioneer reported.

"I ran to his office and said yes," she said. "That started my career in polar science. A few months after I graduated, I started working for him, and in 2002 I took my first trip to Antarctica."

Mercer arrived at Williams Field (a snow runway) near McMurdo Station on a ski-equipped LC-130 military plane, in the middle of a snow storm with white-out conditions. The Spearfish native took the weather in stride.

"We know what that's like in South Dakota," she said. "Somebody sort of appeared out of the snow and said 'come with me.' It was amazing. It's amazing to stand in places where very few people have ever been. It's just vast. It's similar in some ways to those areas of the prairie in western South Dakota and eastern Wyoming, where you can just look and see for miles and miles."

That experience solidified Mercer's love for the polar regions, as she worked to further her career in academia and then later transitioned over to civil service in the federal government. Since then she's made nine trips to Antarctica and more than a dozen trips (she's lost count) to the Arctic to either conduct research or oversee research operations.

"Antarctica is a continent in the south, surrounded by ocean. The Arctic in the north is an ocean, surrounded by land. In many places in the Arctic, it's very pure and there is no smell. In Antarctica, the area

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around McMurdo Station, the largest research station on the continent, a lot of times you smell diesel fuel because everything runs off of diesel. But once you get away from the research station there are no smells. It's very pure."

But venturing into the coastal villages of Greenland, Mercer said blueberry shrubs, animals and wildflowers fill the pure air with the aroma of nature. "So, there are different smells in the Arctic depending on where you are," she said.

The pure air and vast white landscape on a largely untouched territory are part of the beauty of the polar regions. But in an area where temperatures can get as high as 32 degrees Fahrenheit, and as low as negative 60, 70 or below, researchers have learned how to adapt to extreme temperatures. From regulating diet to include high carbs and good fats to insulate the body, staying away from caffeine and alcohol that naturally cools the body down, and making sure to change socks regularly, Mercer has learned a lot about staying warm.

"We have a rule in the Arctic and Antarctic and it's 'change your socks, change your attitude,'" Mercer said. "It's amazing how much you will sweat in your clothes and in your boots, and not realize that you're sweating. You might feel extremely cold, but your feet are actually sweating. So, if you change into a dry pair of socks it can really change your entire day."

"The other thing I have to convince people of is if you have to pee, go," she continued. "Your body spends a lot of energy warming your bladder, so if it's full your body spends time heating that. If you evacuate that then your body doesn't have to waste heat on keeping your bladder warm. It's the worst thing, if you think about it. You don't want to go out into the snow and pull your pants down, because it seems even colder. But as soon as you do, you feel so much warmer."

After finishing her first research trip to Antarctica in 2003, Mercer said she took a break from life in the eastern U.S. and returned to her home area, taking a job at the University of Wyoming as an atmospheric scientist. She continued doing research in the Antarctic until 2009, when she joined government service with the U.S. Army Cold Regions Research and Engineering Lab. Then, in 2016, Mercer was hired as a program officer for the National Science Foundation. In that capacity she provided Arctic research support and logistics, a job she still holds today.

"I oversee all of our U.S. research operations in the country of Greenland," she said. "It's a big job. We send about 400 researchers and contractors to Greenland per year. I coordinate all of that by working with the government of Greenland, with our U.S. military, with our State Department, with our contractors, and with my colleagues within the NSF and all of our researchers who are spread throughout the U.S."

The best part about her job, Mercer said, "I get to make a lot of science happen."

Currently, Mercer said she manages research across all science disciplines, including glaciologists and snow/ice scientists studying glaciers, sea ice and the ice sheets; biologists studying polar bears; and atmospheric scientists measuring clouds, gases, and particles in the atmosphere.

"The Arctic is really important in understanding how quickly things are changing and how that affects the rest of the planet," she said, explaining that much of the research helps us to understand climate change.

"The jet stream is more unpredictable than it used to be," she said. "I remember when I was a kid, watching the nightly news and the weather, and you would see the jet stream as this steady line across the U.S. Now the jet stream is this up and down, wobbly thing. That's because of the sea ice melt in the Arctic. The sea ice covering the Arctic Ocean has melted considerably over the last few decades. That sea ice used to cover the entire Arctic Ocean and created some stability in the atmosphere. That's the jet stream we remember seeing on the weather reports when we were kids. Now it's not stable, and it wobbles and we get these polar fronts that come down and create massive snow storms and really cold temperatures."

Mercer's new role as the acting section head for the Arctic Sciences Section of the National Science Foundation is a 90-day appointment that will last until NSF officials have filled the position permanently. But her job to provide real support for research in the polar regions is a permanent position with the NSF.

"We have a team of 15 people who manage Arctic Sciences for the National Science Foundation," she said. "We work regularly with other U.S. agencies and with our international counterparts. Eight nations

have territory in the Arctic (called the Arctic Eight), including the U.S., Canada, Denmark (Greenland), Iceland, Norway, Finland, Sweden, and the Russian Federation. In addition, several other countries conduct research there, including some of the Asian countries that send their research vessels to the Arctic Ocean. So we have to coordinate internationally as well. Our leadership role in these efforts is to make sure the U.S. is funding the best and most cutting-edge science to understand the Arctic.”

As Mercer enjoys her role in supporting research, she said she’s often asked to speak with high school students who may also be interested in the sciences. She particularly enjoys talking with youth in her home state.

“For all students and kids in South Dakota, think big,” she said. “Don’t let anyone tell you that you can’t do it. Don’t let anyone limit your thinking. Just try. The key thing for any of the STEM fields is persistence. You don’t have to be the smartest kid in the class. You should consistently get good grades, but it’s more about being persistent and not giving up. That’s really important.”

South Dakota health officials focus on vaccine hesitancy

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Among the best in the nation for the percentage of people who have received at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccine, South Dakota is now turning its focus toward those who are hesitant to get the shots, health officials said.

A map published by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services shows rural states like South Dakota, North Dakota and Wyoming with some of the highest concentrations of vaccine hesitancy in the country. In central South Dakota, the most rural part of the state, about 29% of people surveyed had reservations about getting vaccinated, the Rapid City Journal reported.

“We know we’ll have to circle back to folks who are hesitant for whatever reason,” state Secretary of Health Kim Malsam-Rysdon said, adding that officials are working on ways to make people feel comfortable about taking the vaccine.

Health officials have been emphasizing getting information about the vaccine from trusted sources and “social media is not usually one of them,” Malsam-Rysdon said.

“These viruses will continue to spread. They will find people that are not vaccinated. That’s just how that works,” Malsam-Rysdon said. “If you’re part of a group that is less vaccinated, you’re just putting yourself at higher risk of getting the disease and it’s impactful.”

India’s capital to lock down amid devastating virus surge

By AIJAZ HUSSAIN and ANIRUDDHA GHOSAL Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — New Delhi imposed a weeklong lockdown Monday night amid an explosive surge in coronavirus cases to prevent the collapse of the Indian capital’s health system, which authorities said had been pushed to its limit.

In scenes familiar from surges elsewhere, ambulances catapulted from one hospital to another, trying to find an empty bed over the weekend, while patients lined up outside waiting to be let in. Ambulances also idled outside of crematoriums, carrying half a dozen dead bodies each.

“People keep arriving, in an almost collapsing situation,” said Dr. Suresh Kumar, who heads Lok Nayak Jai Prakash Narayan Hospital, one of New Delhi’s largest hospitals for treating COVID-19 patients.

Most desperately need oxygen, Kumar said. But the city is facing shortages of oxygen and some medicine, according to Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, who told reporters that the new stringent measures being imposed were required to “prevent a collapse of the health system,” which had “reached its limit.”

Just months after India thought it had seen the worst of the pandemic, the virus is now spreading at a rate faster than at any other time, said Bhramar Mukherjee, a biostatistician at the University of Michigan has been tracking infections in India.

The surge is devastating for India and has weighed heavily on the global efforts to end the pandemic since the country is a major vaccine producer but has been forced to delay exports of shots abroad, hampering campaigns in developing countries in particular.

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The rise in cases comes as the global death toll from the coronavirus passed a staggering 3 million people Saturday amid repeated setbacks in the worldwide vaccination campaign and a deepening crisis in places beyond India as well, such as Brazil and France.

India reported over 270,000 infections on Monday, its highest daily rise since the pandemic started. It has now recorded more than 15 million infections and more than 178,000 deaths. Experts agree that even these figures are likely undercounts. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson called off a trip to New Delhi amid the rise in cases.

New Delhi, a city of 29 million people, has fewer than 100 beds with ventilators, and fewer than 150 beds available for patients needing critical care. Similar scenes played out in other parts of the vast country. In the Himalayan Jammu state in India's north, the weekly average of COVID-19 cases has increased 14-fold in the past month.

In response, officials have begun to impose stringent measures again. The Indian capital was shut down over the weekend, but now authorities are extending that for a week: All shops and factories will close, except for those that provide essential services, like grocery stores. People are not supposed to leave their homes, except for a handful of reasons, like seeking medical care. They will also be allowed to travel to airports or train stations.

They were the strictest measures imposed since India's harsh lockdown last year, which lasted months and left deep scars. Politicians have since been reticent to even mention the word. When similar measures were imposed in Maharashtra state, home to the financial capital of Mumbai, in recent days, officials refused to call it a lockdown. Those restrictions are to last 15 days.

Kejriwal urged calm, especially among migrant workers who particularly suffered during the previous shutdown, saying this one would be a "small lockdown."

But many feared it would spell economic ruin. Amrit Tripathi, a laborer in New Delhi, was among the thousands who walked home for miles after India had abruptly announced a harsh and nationwide lockdown in 2020. "We will starve," he said, if the current lockdown is extended.

Doctors and officials say the measures are necessary to ease pressure on the fragile health system, which has been underfunded for decades. A failure to prepare for the current surge has left hospitals, in New Delhi and other large cities, crumbling under the pressure of mounting infections.

NASA's Mars helicopter takes flight, 1st for another planet

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — NASA's experimental Mars helicopter rose from the dusty red surface into the planet's thin air on Monday, achieving the first powered flight on another planet.

The triumph was hailed as a Wright Brothers moment. The mini 4-pound (1.8-kilogram) copter named Ingenuity, in fact, carried a bit of wing fabric from the 1903 Wright Flyer, which made similar history at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina.

"Altimeter data confirms that Ingenuity has performed its first flight, the first flight of a powered aircraft on another planet," said the helicopter's chief pilot back on Earth, Harvard Grip, his voice breaking as his teammates erupted in cheers.

Flight controllers in California confirmed Ingenuity's brief hop after receiving data via the Perseverance rover, which stood watch more than 200 feet (65 meters) away. Ingenuity hitched a ride to Mars on Perseverance, clinging to the rover's belly upon their arrival in an ancient river delta in February.

The \$85 million helicopter demo was considered high risk, yet high reward.

"Each world gets only one first flight," project manager MiMi Aung noted earlier this month. Speaking on a NASA webcast early Monday, she called it the "ultimate dream."

Aung and her team had to wait more than three excruciating hours before learning whether the pre-programmed flight had succeeded 178 million miles (287 million kilometers) away. Adding to their anxiety: A software error prevented the helicopter from lifting off a week earlier and had engineers scrambling to come up with a fix.

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Applause, cheers and laughter erupted in the operations center when success was finally declared. More followed when the first black and white photo from Ingenuity appeared on their screens, showing its shadow as it hovered above the surface of Mars. Next came the stunning color images of the helicopter descending back to the surface, taken by Perseverance, "the best host little Ingenuity could ever hope for," Aung said in thanking everyone.

NASA had been aiming for a 40-second flight, and while details were initially sparse, the craft hit all its targets: spin-up, takeoff, hover, descent and landing.

To accomplish all that, the helicopter's twin, counter-rotating rotor blades needed to spin at 2,500 revolutions per minute — five times faster than on Earth. With an atmosphere just 1 percent the thickness of Earth's, engineers had to build a helicopter light enough — with blades spinning fast enough — to generate this otherworldly lift. At the same time, it had to be sturdy enough to withstand the Martian wind and extreme cold.

More than six years in the making, Ingenuity is a barebones 1.6 feet (0.5 meters) tall, a spindly four-legged chopper. Its fuselage, containing all the batteries, heaters and sensors, is the size of a tissue box. The carbon-fiber, foam-filled rotors are the biggest pieces: Each pair stretches 4 feet (1.2 meters) tip to tip.

The helicopter is topped with a solar panel for recharging the batteries, crucial for its survival during the minus-130 degree Fahrenheit (minus-90 degree-Celsius) Martian nights.

NASA chose a flat, relatively rock-free patch for Ingenuity's airfield, measuring 33 feet by 33 feet (10 meters by 10 meters). It turned out to be less than 100 feet (30 meters) from the original landing site in Jezero Crater. The helicopter was released from the rover onto the airfield on April 3. Flight commands were sent Sunday, after controllers sent up a software correction for the rotor blade spin-up.

The little chopper with a giant job attracted attention from around the world, from the moment it launched with Perseverance last July until now. Even Arnold Schwarzenegger joined in the fun, rooting for Ingenuity over the weekend via Twitter. "Get to the chopper!" he shouted, re-enacting a line from his 1987 sci-fi film "Predator."

Up to five helicopter flights are planned, each one increasingly ambitious. If successful, the demo could lead the way to a fleet of Martian drones in decades to come, providing aerial views, transporting packages and serving as scouts for astronauts. High-altitude helicopters here on Earth could also benefit — imagine choppers easily navigating the Himalayas.

Ingenuity's team has until the beginning of May to complete the test flights. That's because the rover needs to get on with its main mission: collecting rock samples that could hold evidence of past Martian life, for return to Earth a decade from now.

Until then, Perseverance will keep watch over Ingenuity. Flight engineers affectionately call them Percy and Ginny. "Big sister's watching," said Malin Space Science Systems' Elsa Jensen, the rover's lead camera operator.

Super League informs UEFA of legal action to force breakaway

By ROB HARRIS AP Global Soccer Writer

LONDON (AP) — The 12 European clubs planning to start a breakaway Super League have told the leaders of FIFA and UEFA that they have begun legal action aimed at fending off threats to block the competition.

The letter was sent by the group of English, Spanish and Italian clubs to FIFA President Gianni Infantino and UEFA counterpart Aleksander Ceferin saying the Super League has already been underwritten by funding of 4 billion euros (\$5.5 billion) from a financial institution.

Currently, teams have to qualify each year for the Champions League through their domestic leagues, but the Super League would lock in 15 places every season for the founding members. The seismic move to shake up the sport is partly engineered by the American owners of Arsenal, Liverpool and Manchester United, who also run franchises in closed U.S. leagues — a model they are trying to replicate in Europe.

UEFA warned the Super League clubs, including Barcelona, Real Madrid and Juventus, that legal action would be taken against them and said they would be barred from existing domestic competitions like the

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Spanish league, the Premier League and international competitions.

"We are concerned that FIFA and UEFA may respond to this invitation letter by seeking to take punitive measures to exclude any participating club or player from their respective competitions," the Super League clubs wrote to Infantino and Ceferin in a letter obtained by The Associated Press.

"Your formal statement does, however, compel us to take protective steps to secure ourselves against such an adverse reaction, which would not only jeopardize the funding commitment under the Grant but, significantly, would be unlawful. For this reason, SLCo (Super League Company) has filed a motion before the relevant courts in order to ensure the seamless establishment and operation of the Competition in accordance with applicable laws."

The courts were not named.

"It is our duty, as SLCo's board members, to ensure that all reasonable actions available to protect the interests of the Competition and our stakeholders are duly taken, given the irreparable damage that would be suffered if, for any reason, we were deprived of the opportunity to form promptly the Competition and distribute the proceeds of the Grant," the Super League letter continued.

The Super League intends to launch a 20-team competition with 15 founding members but only 12 have currently signed up. The others are Arsenal, Chelsea, Liverpool, Manchester City and Tottenham from England, Atletico Madrid from Spain, and AC Milan and Inter Milan from Italy.

The breakaway was launched just as UEFA thought it had agreement on an expansion of the Champions League from 2024. Now, the same officials who backed the plans have decided to go it alone while claiming the existing competitions could remain — despite losing their most successful teams, including record 13-time European champion Real Madrid and six-time winner Liverpool.

"The Competition is to be played alongside existing domestic league and cup competitions, which are a key part of European football's competitive fabric," reads the Super League letter to Infantino and Ceferin. "We do not seek to replace the UEFA's Champions League or the Europa League but to compete with and exist alongside those tournaments."

Biden pressed on emissions goal as climate summit nears

By MATTHEW DALY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — When President Joe Biden convenes a virtual climate summit on Thursday, he faces a vexing task: how to put forward a nonbinding but symbolic goal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions that will have a tangible impact on climate change efforts not only in the U.S. but throughout the world.

The emissions target, eagerly awaited by all sides of the climate debate, will signal how aggressively Biden wants to move on climate change, a divisive and expensive issue that has riled Republicans to complain about job-killing government overreach even as some on the left worry Biden has not gone far enough to address a profound threat to the planet.

The climate crisis poses a complex political challenge for Biden, since the problem is harder to see and far more difficult to produce measurable results on than either the coronavirus pandemic relief package or the infrastructure bill.

The target Biden chooses "is setting the tone for the level of ambition and the pace of emission reductions over the next decade," said Kate Larsen, a former White House adviser who helped develop President Barack Obama's climate action plan.

The number has to be achievable by 2030 but aggressive enough to satisfy scientists and advocates who call the coming decade a crucial, make-or-break moment for slowing climate change, Larsen and other experts said.

Scientists, environmental groups and even business leaders are calling on Biden to set a target that would cut U.S. greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50% below 2005 levels by 2030.

The 50% target, which most experts consider a likely outcome of intense deliberations underway at the White House, would nearly double the nation's previous commitment and require dramatic changes in the power and transportation sectors, including significant increases in renewable energy such as wind and

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solar power and steep cuts in emissions from fossil fuels such as coal and oil.

Anything short of that goal could undermine Biden's promise to prevent temperatures from rising more than 1.5 degrees Celsius, experts say, while likely stirring up sharp criticism from international allies and Biden's own supporters

The target is significant, not just as a visible goal for the U.S. to achieve after four years of climate inaction under President Donald Trump, but also for "leveraging other countries," Larsen said. "That helps domestically in the battle that comes after, which is implementing policies to achieve that target. We can make a better case politically at home if other countries are acting at the same level of ambition as the U.S."

The 2030 goal, known as a Nationally Determined Contribution, or NDC, is a key part of the Paris climate agreement, which Biden rejoined on his first day in office. It's also an important marker as Biden moves toward his ultimate goal of net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.

"Clearly the science demands at least 50%" in reduced greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, said Jake Schmidt, a climate expert at the Natural Resources Defense Council, a leading environmental group.

The 50% target "is ambitious, but it is achievable," he said in an interview. It's also a good climate message, he said: "People know what 50% means — it's half."

Whatever target Biden picks, the climate summit itself "proves the U.S. is back in rejoining the international effort" to address climate change, said Larsen, now a director at the Rhodium Group, an independent research firm.

The summit is "the starting gun for climate diplomacy" after a four-year "hiatus" under Trump, she said. John Kerry, Biden's climate envoy, has been pressing global leaders in person and online ahead of the summit for commitments and alliances on climate efforts.

Nathaniel Keohane, another former Obama White House adviser and now a vice president at the Environmental Defense Fund, said experts have coalesced around the need to reduce emissions by at least 50% by 2030.

"The number has to start with 5," he said, adding, "We've done the math. We need at least 50%."

The 2030 target is just one in a sometimes overlapping set of goals that Biden has outlined on climate. He also has said he expects to adopt a clean energy standard that would make electricity carbon-free by 2035, along with the wider goal of net-zero carbon emissions economy-wide by 2050.

Biden's climate adviser, Gina McCarthy, acknowledged that the sheer volume of numbers can be confusing. At a forum last week, she and former New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg said climate activists should focus on actions in the next decade.

"Let's stop talking about 2050," said McCarthy, who is leading White House efforts to develop U.S. climate commitments for 2030.

Bloomberg, 79, was even more blunt: 2050 "is a good number for people who give speeches, but I don't know anyone giving those speeches who's going to be alive in 2050."

Some Republican lawmakers call the focus on reducing U.S. emissions counter-productive, saying Biden's plan would raise energy costs and kill American jobs while allowing Russia, China and other countries to increase greenhouse gas emissions.

"The Biden administration will set punishing targets for the United States, while our adversaries keep the status quo. That won't solve climate change," said Sen. Wyoming Sen. John Barrasso, the top Republican on the Senate Energy Committee. The United States already leads the world in reducing carbon emissions, Barrasso said, adding that Biden should try to "make American energy as clean as we can, as fast as we can, without raising costs for consumers."

Some on the left think Biden is not going far enough.

Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a New York Democrat who has called for a massive Green New Deal, said Biden deserves "a lot of credit" for his infrastructure plan's vision and scope, but said it falls far short of what is needed to meaningfully combat the climate crisis. She and her supporters are calling for at least \$10 trillion in federal spending over the next decade to address climate change and other problems.

McCarthy disputed the notion that Biden has backtracked from campaign promises to lead on climate.

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"We're always either doing too little or too much," she told reporters earlier this month. "But rest assured that the president put a (spending) number out here that he felt was not just defensible but required to meet this moment in time."

Much of the proposed spending to address climate change is included in Biden's \$2.3 trillion infrastructure bill.

If Republicans think less money should be spent on clean energy and infrastructure, McCarthy added, "then we'll have those conversations."

Marcella Burke, a former Trump administration official who now is an energy lawyer in Houston, gives Biden an "A-Plus for enthusiasm" on climate, but an incomplete on details. "We've had a lot of goals, but not a lot of strategy announced to get there," she said. "So the jury is still out."

Georgia's Abrams navigates voting law fight with eye on 2022

By BILL BARROW Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — President Joe Biden called Georgia's new voting law an "atrociousness." A leading Black bishop called for a national boycott of companies headquartered in the state. But when Stacey Abrams, the state's well-known voting rights advocate, is asked about the law that has set much of her party on fire, she is critical but measured.

"These are laws that respond to an increase in voting by people of color," Abrams told The Associated Press recently. But she discouraged boycotts and reassured Democrats they can still win races under the new rules, even as she hoped they would be struck down in the courts.

The approach demonstrates how Abrams, a former and potentially future candidate for governor, is navigating the politics in the new battleground. Abrams, her allies say, knows statewide Democratic victories — whether Biden's in November or her own in 2022 — require winning more than just Democrats' racially diverse and liberal base outraged over Republicans' attempts to make it harder for some citizens to vote. Democrats also need moderate voters more reluctant to take sides on the matter.

"Stacey's been responsible. She's tried to create a dialogue where we can create change," said Democrat Steven Henson, a former state legislative leader alongside Abrams.

Certainly, Abrams cannot be described as anything but a staunch opponent of the new law.

Her political organization, Fair Fight, backs federal lawsuits to overturn the changes. She's frequented national cable networks and published national op-eds criticizing the measure. In the newspaper USA Today, she called on big business to oppose related GOP measures pending in Texas and elsewhere and to put corporate muscle behind Democrats' counter proposals in Congress.

"Republicans are gaming the system because they're afraid of losing an election," Abrams told the AP.

Yet Abrams has mostly avoided harsh individual criticism of Gov. Brian Kemp, her 2018 Republican rival whom she once dubbed an "architect of voter suppression." She rarely mentions former President Donald Trump, who falsely blames his defeat on voter fraud. And she's pointedly not backed business boycotts of her home state or consumer boycotts of the major firms, including Delta Air Lines and the Coca-Cola Co., based there.

"I understand the notion of boycotts as a macro good," she told the AP, noting her upbringing as a Black woman in the Deep South and her parents' voter registration work during the Jim Crow era. But Abrams said boycotts ultimately hurt "the victims of these bills."

Abrams' position puts her somewhat at odds with fellow activists. "It seems to infer that if we do absolutely nothing and the votes of Black people and people of color are suppressed, that is not a problem," said Bishop Reginald Jackson of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Georgia.

But her stance has made it hard for conservatives, including Kemp, to fairly blame Abrams for the economic fallout from the voting law, mostly notably Major League Baseball's decision to move the 2021 All-Star Game from suburban Atlanta.

Abrams has other incentives to take a softer line with Georgia-based companies. Should she run for governor again and win, she'd occupy an office long friendly with local corporate giants — Delta, Coca-

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Cola, professional sports franchises and others — now enmeshed in boycott politics.

"Historically, that relationship in Georgia, especially in Atlanta, between the governor, the mayor and those top corporate leaders has been productive," said Tharon Johnson, a prominent Democrat who served as senior adviser to Biden's presidential campaign in Georgia.

Abrams drew modest local corporate support in her 2018 race against Kemp. According to the Center for Responsive Politics, a campaign finance watchdog, that included \$6,600 from Home Depot's political action committee. The database listed no contributions from Delta or Coca-Cola.

In that race, Kemp and his GOP allies spent millions tagging Abrams as a "radical" and "too extreme for Georgia." She lost by 55,000 votes out of about 4 million cast. Biden — along with two Democratic Senate candidates — built on her machine to win in the 2020 cycle.

While much could change before a 2022 rematch, it could be Kemp who fights the extremist label next time. While the GOP governor didn't embrace Trump's lies about fraud in the 2020 election, he did back Republican lawmakers' efforts to overhaul Georgia's voting laws in response to Trump's claims.

The Georgia law imposes a new voter identification requirement for mail-in ballots rather than the signature match used in 2020, a change Abrams says is burdensome for older, poorer voters who may not have a state-issued ID or the documentation required to attain one. The law also requires drop-boxes for mail ballots, but limits their number and the times they're available. It also requires more weekend early voting days, a provision Kemp touts as expanding ballot access.

Biden declared the bill "un-American" and "Jim Crow in the 21st century." Abrams doesn't necessarily dispute those characterizations, noting that even the harshest Jim Crow voter suppression laws didn't explicitly say "Black people can't vote" but instead put up barriers. Still, she said the latest version, even if burdensome, could end up stoking Democratic turnout because of anger.

When Georgia's corporate leaders came out in opposition to the law — although they had a hand in writing it — Kemp blamed Abrams and Biden. The companies, he said, were "scared" of Democrats and "caving" to "lies" about the final version.

Abrams, he said, is "raising millions off the fake outrage she has created."

A recent Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research poll found some partisan divisions among voters. About half of Americans support expanding access to early and mail voting, while about 3 in 10 opposed the ideas and the rest had no opinion. Automatic voter registration was the most popular Democratic proposal in the survey, endorsed by 60% of Americans. But an even larger majority — nearly three-quarters of all Americans, including majorities of both parties — expressed support for requiring photo identification.

Georgia voters will have many months to sort out who they believe.

Brian Robinson, once a top aide to former Gov. Nathan Deal, said Trump's lies about the 2020 election were "the nail in the coffin" for former Sens. David Perdue and Kelly Loeffler, Georgia Republicans who backed Trump and lost their Jan. 5 runoffs, because those lies turned off moderate Georgia voters.

Now, he argued, "they're being gaslighted by Stacey Abrams."

Abrams is betting that Robinson underestimates the number of voters like Chris Srock of Marietta, north of Atlanta. At a park with his wife and daughters recently, Srock described himself as "something in-between" a Democrat and Republican.

Srock isn't blaming the voting-law fallout on Abrams. After all, he noted, Republicans enacted it.

"It negatively affects poorer communities. It seems to negatively affect people of color," he said. "A lot of people unfairly blame Stacey for (Georgia) going blue, so I think she's going to have some problems. But I think Mr. Kemp is going to have some problems, too."

The Latest: EU to purchase 100 million more vaccine doses

By The Associated Press undefined

BERLIN — Pharmaceutical company BioNTech and its U.S. partner Pfizer say they will provide 100 million

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more doses of their coronavirus vaccine to the European Union this year.

The two companies said Monday that the 27-nation group's executive Commission exercised an option to purchase the additional doses, bringing the total number of shots to be delivered to the EU in 2021 to 600 million.

The announcement offers a much-needed boost to the EU's sluggish and much-criticized vaccine rollout.

Sean Marett, the chief business officer of BioNTech, said deliveries of the company's mRNA-based vaccine this year will cover two-thirds of the EU population.

The bloc has so far administered about 105 million shots to its population of some 450 million. Most vaccines require two shots to provide full immunization.

THE VIRUS OUTBREAK:

- CDC says half of U.S. adults have received at least one COVID-19 shot
- AP PHOTOS: As global toll tops 3 million, 15 photographers each reflect on a single shot of the pandemic
- Iran sees highest daily death toll in months as virus surges
- Fashion industry evolves, as virus forces a rethink

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

HERE'S WHAT ELSE IS HAPPENING:

ISLAMABAD — Pakistan's minister for planning and development said Monday that authorities are struggling to maintain the much-needed supply of oxygen to hospitals for COVID-19 patients.

Asad Umar, who also oversees Pakistan's response to the coronavirus, said on Twitter that hospitals were continuously receiving coronavirus patients amid a surge in new cases.

He said currently more than 4,500 COVID-19 patients need critical care at hospitals, but many people are still violating social distancing rules. Umar said citizens are "making a huge mistake by not following" social distancing rules.

His warning comes hours after Pakistan reported 73 fatalities in a single day from the coronavirus and 5,152 new cases.

Pakistan has reported 16,316 deaths among 761,437 cases since last year.

So far, the government has resisted demands from doctors that it impose a nationwide lockdown to contain the spread of the virus.

LANSING, Mich. — Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer says her state could be seeing a drop in infections after leading the nation's COVID-19 daily case rate for weeks.

Whitmer has extended a pandemic order that limits business capacity and requires masks in public, but the Democrat has avoided further restrictions in place during previous surges, including suspending indoor restaurant dining.

She told NBC's "Meet the Press" on Sunday that cases could be beginning to slow down. She didn't discuss specific data and Michigan doesn't release coronavirus-related data on Sundays. Health officials said Friday that the seven-day average positivity rate had dropped in recent days to 17.1%, but remained above a December peak of 14.4%.gov

Whitmer has urged a voluntary pause on activities like dining out and pushed for more vaccinations from the White House, which has said it would help with other logistics but continue allocating based on population.

WASHINGTON — Advisers to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention plan to meet this coming Friday to discuss the pause in Johnson & Johnson's COVID-19 vaccine, and the top U.S. infectious disease expert says he'd be "very surprised if we don't have a resumption in some form by Friday."

Dr. Anthony Fauci said Sunday that "a decision almost certainly will be made by Friday. I don't really

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anticipate that they're going to want it stretch it out a bit longer."

Fauci tells CBS' "Face the Nation" that one possibility would be to bring the one-and-done shots back "with some form of restrictions or some form of warning. ...I believe by Friday we're going to know the answer to that."

The Johnson & Johnson vaccine is in limbo in the U.S. after federal health advisers said last week they needed more evidence to decide if a handful of unusual blood clots were linked to the shot — and if so, how big the risk is.

The reports are rare — six cases out of more than 7 million inoculations with the J&J vaccine in the United States. The clots were found in six women between the ages of 18 and 48. One person died.

Fauci told NBC's "Meet the Press" that "I doubt very seriously if they just cancel it. I don't think that's going to happen."

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — The U.S. Supreme Court will hear oral arguments in a case that will determine who is eligible to receive more than \$530 million in federal virus relief funding set aside for tribes more than a year ago.

More than a dozen Native American tribes sued the U.S. Treasury Department to keep the money out of the hands of Alaska Native corporations, which provide services to Alaska Natives but do not have a government-to-government relationship with the United States.

The question raised in the case set for oral arguments Monday is whether the corporations are tribes for purposes of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act, which defines "tribes" under a 1975 law meant to strengthen their abilities to govern themselves.

The case has practical impacts. Native Americans have been disproportionately sickened and killed by the pandemic — despite extreme precautions that included curfews, roadblocks, universal testing and business closures — and historically have had limited financial resources. About \$530 million of the \$8 billion set aside for tribes hasn't been distributed.

Luke Bryan wins top ACM Award, but female acts own the night

By MESFIN FEKADU AP Music Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Carrie Underwood brought the Academy of Country Music Awards to church. Maren Morris won two honors, including song of the year. Miranda Lambert performed three times and held on to her record as the most decorated winner in ACM history. And Mickey Guyton, the first Black woman to host the awards show, gave a powerful, top-notch vocal performance.

Though female country stars didn't compete for the night's top prize — Luke Bryan was named entertainer of the year — they owned Sunday's ACM Awards.

Underwood's performance stood out the most. She was joined by gospel legend CeCe Winans and the dynamic duo blended their voices like angels onstage. Underwood performed songs from her recent gospel hymns album "My Savior," kicking off the set with "Amazing Grace" and "Great Is Thy Faithfulness." Then Winans joined in, matching her strong vocal performance.

Lambert performed three times, first alongside rock-pop singer Elle King for a fun, energetic performance of their new duet "Drunk (And I Don't Wanna Go Home)." Lambert, who founded pet shelter nonprofit MuttNation, also performed alongside album of the year winner Chris Stapleton for "Maggie's Song," a tribute to Stapleton's dog who died 2019. Her final performance was with Jack Ingram and Jon Randall.

The performances that aired Sunday were pre-taped at various locations in Nashville, Tennessee, including the Grand Ole Opry House, the Ryman Auditorium and The Bluebird Cafe. Winners, wearing masks, accepted awards in real time in front of small audiences made up of medical and health care workers.

Bryan was set to perform Sunday but backed out of the show because he recently tested positive for the coronavirus.

"I'm so sorry I could not be there," he said from Los Angeles. "And to all my fans out there and country radio, we miss touring. We've missed being on the road with everybody that makes me an entertainer. My

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bus drivers, my band, my crew, what a challenging year. But to all the fans and everybody we'll be back out on the road doing what we love."

Morris spoke about the taxing year without live music when she won female artist of the year.

"Really just happy to be in a category with women that were not able to tour this year, but brought so much heat to the game to country music this year. You've inspired me so much to no end, and even in a year where no one's gotten to play shows, I have heard some of the best music out of all of you this past year. So thank you so much for inspiring me," she said.

Collaborating onstage was the theme of the awards show, and Morris and hubby Ryan Hurd sang together, ending with a kiss. A teary-eyed Morris won song of the year for her Grammy-nominated hit "The Bones," which topped the country music charts for months last year.

Morris lost single of the year, where all of the nominated songs were performed by female artists. Carly Pearce and Lee Brice's platinum duet, "I Hope You're Happy Now," won the prize.

"We wrote this song about my story and I guess it resonated with everybody," Pearce said onstage, also thanking busbee, who produced the song and died in late 2019. "This is the last song that my producer worked on."

Another tender moment came when Blanco Brown presented Old Dominion with group of the year. It marked Brown's first public appearance after suffering significant injuries in a head-on vehicle collision last year.

But the entire three-hour show didn't go smoothly. The Grammy-winning duo Dan + Shay performed their latest hit, "Glad You Exist," but the pre-taped moment aired out of sync.

"Apparently there was an audio/video sync issue on the television broadcast," the duo tweeted. "We're bummed about it, but it happens, especially when performances are happening in multiple locations."

Another mishap occurred when Martina McBride announced the winner of single of the year. McBride correctly announced "I Hope You're Happy Now" though "I Hope" by Gabby Barrett appeared on the TV screen.

Pearce and Brice's "I Hope You're Happy Now" also won musical event of the year, while Barrett was named new female artist of the year. Rhett won male artist of the year and Jimmie Allen was named new male artist of the year.

Those acts performed Sunday, as did Alan Jackson, Lady A, Blake Shelton, Ashley McBryde, Brothers Osborne and Guyton, who gave an all-star performance of "Hold On" during the show, which she hosted with Keith Urban. She recently had her first child and became the first Black solo woman nominated for a Grammy in the country category this year.

Little Big Town also performed — but as a threesome. The Grammy winners sang "Wine, Beer, Whiskey" without band member Phillip Sweet since he recently tested positive for COVID-19.

Sweet and Bryan weren't the only country stars missing from the show. Morgan Wallen, whose latest album and singles have found major success on both the country and pop charts, was declared ineligible by the ACMs after he was caught on camera using a racial slur earlier this year.

Australia-New Zealand travel bubble opens with joy, tears

By NICK PERRY Associated Press

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (AP) — As the passengers walked a little dazed through the airport gates, they were embraced one after another by family members who rushed forward and dissolved into tears.

Elation and relief marked the opening of a long-anticipated travel bubble between Australia and New Zealand at the Wellington Airport on Monday. Children held balloons and banners and Indigenous Maori performers welcomed the arrivals home with songs.

The start of quarantine-free travel was a long time coming for families who have been separated by the coronavirus pandemic as well as to struggling tourist operators. It marked the first, tentative steps toward what both countries hope will become a gradual reopening to the rest of the world.

Danny Mather was overcome to see his pregnant daughter Kristy and his baby grandson for the first

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time in 15 months after they flew in from Sydney for a visit on the first flight after the bubble opened. What did they say to each other?

"Not a thing," he said, laughing. They just hugged. "It's just so good to see her and I'm just so happy to have her back."

Kristy Mather said it was overwhelming to be reunited with her family and it was amazing the bubble had opened.

"I wished it had happened earlier, but it's happened now," she said. "I just wanted to get on that first flight because you never know, it may go south. Let's hope it sticks around."

Danny Mather said he wanted to keep New Zealand safe from the virus but also thought the time was right to open the bubble.

The idea of a travel bubble between Australia and New Zealand had been talked about for months but faced setbacks because of several small virus outbreaks in both countries, which were eventually stamped out.

To mark the occasion, Wellington Airport painted an enormous welcome sign near its main runway and Air New Zealand ordered some 24,000 bottles of sparkling wine, offering a complimentary glass to adult passengers.

Air New Zealand's Chief Operating Officer Carrie Hurihanganui said the carrier had previously been running just two or three flights a day between the two countries but that jumped to 30 flights on Monday carrying 5,200 passengers.

She said the day marked a turning point and people were excited.

"You can feel it at the airport and see it on people's faces," she said.

The leaders of both countries welcomed the bubble, saying it was a world-leading arrangement because it aimed to both open borders and keep the virus from spreading.

"Today's milestone is a win-win for Australians and New Zealanders, boosting our economies while keeping our people safe," Australian Prime Scott Morrison said.

New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said her country was welcoming the new arrivals.

"The bubble marks a significant step in both countries' reconnection with the world and it's one we should all take a moment to be very proud of," she said.

Travelers who lined up at Sydney and Melbourne airports early Monday said they were excited or relieved to finally fly to New Zealand after more than a year. Some were visiting family and friends, while others were attending funerals.

Both countries have managed to keep out the virus by putting up barriers to the outside world, including strict quarantine requirements for travelers returning from other countries where the virus is rampant.

"They did very well with the precautions and everything, better than all the world. Everywhere else cannot go anywhere safely," said Ameera Elmasry, who was at the Wellington airport to greet her son Shady Osman, a doctor who she hadn't seen in 16 months. "It's very good what's happened now."

Australia had previously allowed New Zealanders to arrive without going into quarantine but New Zealand had taken a more cautious approach, requiring travelers from Australia complete a quarantine.

The start of the bubble comes ahead of the New Zealand ski season and is welcome news for many tourist towns, including the ski resort of Queenstown.

Bitter experience helps French ICUs crest latest virus wave

By JOHN LEICESTER Associated Press

ROUEN, France (AP) — Slowly suffocating in a French intensive care ward, Patrick Aricque feared he would die from his diseased lungs that felt "completely burned from the inside, burned like the cathedral in Paris," as tired doctors and nurses labored day and night to keep gravely ill COVID-19 patients like him alive.

A married couple in the same ICU died within hours of each other as Aricque, feeling as fragile as "a soap bubble ready to pop," also wrestled the coronavirus. The 67-year-old retired building contractor credits a

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divine hand for his survival. "I saw archangels, I saw little cherubs," he said. "It was like communicating with the afterlife."

On his side were French medical professionals who, forged on the bitter experiences of previous infection waves, now fight relentlessly to keep patients awake and off mechanical ventilators, if at all possible. They treated Aricque with nasal tubes and a mask that bathed his heaving lungs in a constant flow of oxygen. That spared him the discomfort of a thick ventilation tube deep down his throat and heavy sedation from which patients often fear — sometimes, rightly so — that they will never awake.

While mechanical ventilation is unavoidable for some patients, it's a step taken less systematically now than at the start of the pandemic. Dr. Philippe Gouin, who heads the ICU ward where Aricque underwent treatment for severe COVID-19, said, "We know that every tube we insert is going to bring its share of complications, extensions in stay, and sometimes morbidity."

About 15% to 20% of his intubated patients don't survive, he said.

"It's a milestone that weighs on survival," Gouin said. "We know that we will lose a certain number of patients who we won't be able to help negotiate this corner."

The shift to less-invasive breathing treatments also is helping French ICUs stave off collapse under a renewed crush of coronavirus cases. Super-charged by a more contagious virus variant that first ravaged neighboring Britain, the third infection wave in France has pushed the country's COVID-19-related death toll past 100,000 people. Hospitals across the country are grappling again with the macabre mathematics of making space for thousands of critically sick patients.

"We have a continuous flow of cases," said Dr. Philippe Montravers, an ICU chief at Bichat Hospital in Paris, which is again shoe-horning patients into makeshift critical care units. "Each of these cases are absolutely terrible stories — for the families, for the patients themselves, of course, for the physicians in charge, for the nurses."

Sedated patients kept alive with mechanical ventilation often occupy their ICU beds for several weeks, even months, and the physical and mental trauma of their ordeals can take months more to heal. But 13 days after he was admitted for ICU care in the Normandy cathedral city of Rouen, Aricque was sufficiently recovered for another critically ill patient to take his place.

A non-invasive nasal ventilation system dispensing thousands of liters (hundreds of gallons) of life-sustaining oxygen every hour got him through the worst of his infection, until he was well enough for the flow to be reduced to a trickle and to sit upright, his New Testament bible at his side. Tucking into a small lunch of omelette and red cabbage to start rebuilding his strength, Aricque said he felt resurrected. A nurse freed him from drips that had been plugged into arms, binning the tubes like entrails.

Making rounds with junior doctors and nurses in tow, Dr. Dorothee Carpentier allowed herself a mini-celebration as she swept past Aricque's room, having declared him fit for discharge. The patient in the adjacent room also could leave, she decided. She described the imminent departures as "little victories" for the full 20-bed ward, a temporary set-up in what was previously a surgical unit and is now entirely converted for COVID-19 care.

"I imagine they'll be filled again by the morning," Carpentier said of the two vacated beds. "The tough thing about this third wave is that there is no stop button. We don't know when it will start to slow."

Further down the corridor, a 69-year-old woman placed face-down on her stomach was struggling with the effort of breathing with an oxygenation mask and getting dangerously close to the point where doctors would decide to anesthetize and intubate her. Nurse Gregory Bombard recruited the woman's visiting daughter-in-law in an effort to stave off that next step, impressing on her the importance of sticking with the mask.

"Morale is so important, and she has to turn this corner," Bombard said. "We do what we can. They have to make the effort to win, too, otherwise they will lose."

"Do what you can," the nurse told the daughter-in-law..

The relative later emerged from the patient's room misty-eyed and shaken.

"It's really tough to see her like this," she said. "She is letting herself go."

In another room, Gouin gently pleaded with a 55-year-old market stall operator who complained that

his oxygenation mask made him feel claustrophobic.

"You have to play the game," the doctor insisted. "My goal is that we don't get to the point where we have to put you to sleep."

The patient concurred. "I don't want to be intubated, be in a coma, not knowing when you are going to wake up," he said.

Intubations can be traumatic for everyone involved. A patient who sobbed when he was put to sleep remained sedated in the ICU nearly two weeks later.

"You could see he was terrified," Bombard recalled. "It was awful."

Remote Alaska villages boast high vaccination rates

By BECKY BOHRER Associated Press

JUNEAU, Alaska (AP) — John Waghiyi remembers rushing his cousin to the clinic in the Bering Sea city of Savoonga in December, worried he was having a possible heart attack while out butchering a bowhead whale. Waghiyi arrived to see elders waiting in the lobby for a COVID-19 vaccine.

Waghiyi, 66, said he joined them and got a shot before returning to the coast to help finish the whale harvest.

Elders, he said, have set the tone in the Alaska Native community of 735 on the coast of isolated St. Lawrence Island. Vaccination rates for eligible residents 16 or older are among the region's best, with over 80% having had at least one dose, according to the regional tribal health corporation.

"We live for our children. We want to bring that sense of normalcy back in our lives," he said, adding that protecting the community "needs to be No. 1."

Alaska's highest vaccination rates have been in some of its remotest, hardest-to-access communities, where the toll of past flu and tuberculosis outbreaks hasn't been forgotten. With the COVID-19 pandemic, health officials say local leaders have helped share information, and they cite the importance of residents getting shots from providers they know and at convenient locations, including their homes and grocery stores.

Tribal health organizations had flexibility in deciding how best to distribute vaccine allocations they received from the federal Indian Health Service. And they played a significant role in Alaska's overall vaccine rollout, sharing doses with outside communities and in some cases expanding eligibility faster than the state.

Logistics have at times been challenging. In Tanana, in Alaska's remote interior, temperatures were so frigid earlier this year the plane a health team flew in on to vaccinate more than 100 people would not start, said Dan Nelson, pharmacy director with the Tanana Chiefs Conference's Chief Andrew Isaac Health Center. A backup plane also wouldn't start, and a third plane had to be sent to pick up the team so it could visit another community the next day "at 40 below," he said.

Nelson said health care staff called thousands of residents in his organization's coverage area, to answer questions and help schedule appointments. He said Tanana Chiefs Conference planned to rely on the one-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine for some rural communities, citing in part the logistical ease over the two-dose vaccines, but said officials would reevaluate that with the recommended pause on its use by federal health agencies to allow time to review rare blood clot cases.

In Mekoryuk, an Alaska Native community of about 205 people in the Bering Sea, nearly all residents eligible for vaccines have gotten one, according to the Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corp., the regional tribal health organization. The corporation chief of staff, Dr. Ellen Hodges, credits well-known mother and daughter health aides who worked to build community confidence in the vaccine.

In White Mountain, an Alaska Native community of 200 east of Nome accessible only by air, or in the winter, snowmobile, health officials report over 90% of eligible residents have gotten vaccinations. There are signs life is creeping toward normal after what felt like the "longest winter ever," said Dan Harrelson, a City Council member and village public safety officer. Open gyms have resumed at the school, allowing kids and adults to escape the cold to play basketball or volleyball. The regional air carrier has eliminated testing requirements for those fully vaccinated.

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"We're so anxious for this to pass," Harrelson said of the pandemic. "Our patience is wearing thin a little bit."

The Norton Sound Health Corp., with a hospital in Nome and 15 clinics across western Alaska, has given away prizes to further encourage vaccinations. Winnings included airline tickets, money toward a four-wheeler, and \$500 for groceries or fuel — huge in isolated places where gas can top \$6 a gallon, four-wheelers can outnumber cars and basic necessities cost a premium because of shipping.

But not all villages are the same, and tribal health officials say they are encountering some of the hesitancy reported in other parts of the state.

Misinformation or unanswered questions could be factors in a slowdown in the Bering Strait region served by the Norton Sound Health Corp., spokesperson Reba Lean said.

She said the corporation has probably reached everyone "who was willing to be swayed" by prizes, and officials are trying to determine how best to reach others.

Kivalina, a community with fewer than 500 people at the tip of a barrier reef in northwest Alaska, saw a rash of COVID-19 cases this year. Only 20% of its eligible residents have had at least one vaccine dose, according to Maniilaq Association, a tribal health provider.

Lucy Nelson, mayor of the Northwest Arctic Borough, which covers an area the size of Indiana and includes Kivalina, in an email said outreach across the region has been positive. Some people don't want a vaccine, which she said is their right.

But she said officials are trying to provide incentives in hopes it will have a "domino effect." An order currently in place allows nonessential travel within the borough for vaccinated people and exempts them from quarantine requirements after they return from outside the borough.

Some are taking a stronger approach. Bering Straits Native Corp., an Alaska Native corporation, is requiring its employees, including those who work for its subsidiary businesses, to be vaccinated. The corporation headquartered in Nome cited the "painful scar" left on the region by the flu epidemic a century ago that "negatively affected our Native customs and traditions in ways that endure to this very day."

It noted accommodations could be made for those with documented medical concerns or religious objections.

Gov. Mike Dunleavy has said there would be "no statewide mandate to compel employees to have vaccines."

The Republican has called vaccination a personal decision but encouraged Alaskans to get inoculated.

"Each vaccinated person gets us one step closer to putting the pandemic behind us and getting back to living life freely like we did before COVID-19," he said.

Back in Savoonga, Waghiyi is hopeful for the future.

Waghiyi, who is St. Lawrence Island Yupik, said the pandemic prevented his family from having a reception or doing a traditional dance as part of the healing process when his daughter died last year.

This month, he attended the funeral of another relative, "and we danced for the first time in over a year."

As more people are vaccinated, he sees more customary aspects of life returning. "By god, we do need that sense of normalcy in our lives," he said.

Key events since George Floyd's arrest and death

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — A timeline of key events that began with George Floyd's arrest on May 25, 2020, by four police officers in Minneapolis:

May 25 — Minneapolis police officers respond to a call shortly after 8 p.m. about a possible counterfeit \$20 bill being used at a corner grocery and encounter a Black man, later identified as George Floyd, who struggles and ends up handcuffed and face down on the ground. Officer Derek Chauvin uses his knee to pin Floyd's neck for about nine minutes while bystanders shout at him to stop. Bystander video shows Floyd crying "I can't breathe" multiple times before going limp. He's pronounced dead at a hospital.

May 26 — Police issue a statement saying Floyd died after a "medical incident," and that he physically resisted and appeared to be in medical distress. Minutes later, bystander video is posted online. Police

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release another statement saying the FBI will help investigate. Chauvin and three other officers — Thomas Lane, J. Kueng and Tou Thao — are fired. Protests begin.

May 27 — Mayor Jacob Frey calls for criminal charges against Chauvin. Protests lead to unrest in Minneapolis, with some people looting and starting fires. Protests spread to other cities.

May 28 — Gov. Tim Walz activates the Minnesota National Guard. Police abandon the 3rd Precinct station as protesters overtake it and set it on fire.

May 29 — Chauvin is arrested and charged with third-degree murder and manslaughter. President Donald Trump tweets about “thugs” in Minneapolis protests and warns: “When the looting starts, the shooting starts.” Protests turn violent again in Minneapolis and elsewhere.

May 30 — Trump tries to walk back his tweet. Protests continue nationwide and some turn violent.

May 31 — Walz says Attorney General Keith Ellison will lead prosecutions in Floyd’s death. The nationwide protests continue.

June 1 — The county medical examiner finds that Floyd’s heart stopped as police restrained him and compressed his neck, noting Floyd had underlying health issues and listing fentanyl and methamphetamine use as “other significant conditions.”

June 2 — Minnesota’s Department of Human Rights launches a civil rights investigation into the Minneapolis Police Department.

June 3 — Ellison files a tougher second-degree murder charge against Chauvin and charges the other three officers who were involved in Floyd’s arrest.

June 4 — A funeral service for Floyd is held in Minneapolis.

June 5 — Minneapolis bans chokeholds by police, the first of many changes to be announced in coming months, including an overhaul of the police department’s use-of-force policy.

June 6 — Massive, peaceful protests happen nationwide to demand police reform. Services are held for Floyd in Raeford, North Carolina, near his birthplace.

June 7 — A majority of Minneapolis City Council members say they support dismantling the police department. The idea later stalls but sparks a national debate over police reform.

June 8 — Thousands pay their respects to Floyd in Houston, where he grew up. He’s buried the next day.

June 10 — Floyd’s brother testifies before the House Judiciary Committee for police accountability.

June 16 — Trump signs an executive order to encourage better police practices and establish a database to track officers with excessive use-of-force complaints.

July 15 — Floyd’s family sues Minneapolis and the four former officers.

July 21 — The Minnesota Legislature passes a broad slate of police accountability measures that includes bans on neck restraints, chokeholds and so-called warrior-style training.

Oct. 7 — Chauvin posts \$1 million bond and is released from state prison, sparking more protests.

Nov. 5 — Judge Peter Cahill rejects defense requests to move the officers’ trials.

Jan. 12 — Cahill rules Chauvin will be tried alone due to courtroom capacity issues. The other officers will be tried in August.

Feb. 12 — City leaders say George Floyd Square, the intersection blocked by barricades since Floyd’s death, will reopen to traffic after Chauvin’s trial.

March 9 — The first potential jurors are questioned for Chauvin’s trial after a day’s delay for pretrial motions.

March 12 — Minneapolis agrees to pay \$27 million settlement to Floyd family.

March 19 — Judge declines to delay or move the trial over concerns that the settlement could taint the jury pool.

March 23 — Jury selection completed with 12 jurors and three alternates.

March 29 — Opening statements are given.

April 11 — Daunte Wright, a 20-year-old Black man, is fatally shot by a white police officer during a traffic stop in suburban Brooklyn Center, sparking successive days of protest.

April 12 — Judge declines request to sequester Chauvin jury immediately due to Wright shooting.

April 15 — Testimony ends.

April 19 — Closing arguments scheduled.

Attorneys at Chauvin trial in Floyd death make final pitch

By AMY FORLITI and TAMMY WEBBER Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Attorneys in the trial of a former Minneapolis police officer charged with killing George Floyd are set to make their closing arguments Monday, each side seeking to distill three weeks of testimony to persuade jurors to deliver their view of the right verdict.

For prosecutors, Derek Chauvin recklessly squeezed the life from Floyd as he and two other officers pinned him to the street for 9 minutes, 29 seconds outside a corner market, despite Floyd's repeated cries that he couldn't breathe — actions they say warrant conviction not just for manslaughter but also on two murder counts.

For the defense, Floyd, who was Black, put himself at risk by swallowing fentanyl and methamphetamine, then resisted officers trying to arrest him — factors that compounded his vulnerability to a diseased heart and raise sufficient doubt that Chauvin, who is white, should be acquitted.

Each side will pull key testimony to support their narrative for what killed Floyd in a case that roiled America 11 months ago and continues to resonate. The anonymous jury will later deliver verdicts in a courthouse surrounded by concrete barriers and razor wire, in an anxious city heavily fortified by National Guard members and just days after fresh outrage erupted over the police killing of a 20-year-old Black man in a nearby suburb.

The attorneys aren't limited by time, though legal experts say overlong arguments risk losing jurors' attention and may be less effective. Prosecutors Steve Schleicher and Jerry Blackwell will share the closing, with Schleicher leading off and Blackwell coming on for the last-word rebuttal of defense attorney Eric Nelson's closing.

Chauvin, 45, is charged with second-degree murder, third-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter. Experts expect Schleicher to walk jurors through the elements of the charges. All three require the jury to conclude that Chauvin's actions were a "substantial causal factor" in Floyd's death — and that his use of force was unreasonable.

Schleicher can remind jurors of key testimony from a myriad prosecution medical experts who testified that Floyd died of asphyxiation caused by being pinned to the pavement. He and Blackwell can point to plentiful testimony from use-of-force experts who said Chauvin's actions were clearly improper, as well as Minneapolis Police Department officials saying they were outside his training.

Video played a huge role at trial, both in buttressing the expert testimony and in driving home the emotional impact of Floyd's anguish and death. Prosecutors can re-play video during their closings, and experts say they expect it.

Guilty verdicts must be unanimous, which means Nelson needs to raise doubt in the minds of just a single juror on the various counts. His closing is certain to return to the themes of his cross-examination of prosecution witnesses and the brief defense case he mounted.

Nelson is sure to highlight how the county medical examiner, Dr. Andrew Baker, did not conclude that Floyd died of asphyxia — putting him at odds with the prosecution's medical experts, even though Baker did call Floyd's death a homicide and testify that he believes Floyd's heart gave out in part due to being pinned to the ground.

Nelson is also certain to remind the jury of Floyd's drug use, perhaps with the same language he frequently used during the testimony phase — with questions that emphasized words such as "illicit." Despite the long duration of Floyd's restraint, he's likely to again portray Chauvin's use of force as dictated by "fluid" and "dynamic" factors that shouldn't be second-guessed, including the prospect that Chauvin was distracted by a threatening group of bystanders.

Nelson is also likely to question perhaps the strongest single part of the state's case — the video of Floyd's arrest, including bystander Darnella Frazier's video that largely established public perceptions of events. Nelson argued that camera angles can be deceptive, and used other views to suggest to jurors

that Chauvin's knee wasn't on Floyd's neck at all times.

"If I was Nelson, I'd do a lot of things, because a lot of things need to be done," Joe Friedberg, a local defense attorney not involved in the case, said. "He's in desperate trouble here."

Fourteen jurors heard testimony, two of them alternates. If Judge Peter Cahill follows the usual practice of dismissing the last two chosen as alternates, the 12 who will deliberate will include six white and six Black or multiracial jurors.

Second-degree murder requires prosecutors to prove Chauvin intended to harm Floyd. Third-degree murder requires proof that Chauvin's actions were "eminently dangerous" and done with indifference to loss of life. Second-degree manslaughter requires jurors to believe that he caused Floyd's death through negligence and consciously took the chance of causing severe injury or death.

Each count carries a different maximum sentence: 40 years for second-degree unintentional murder, 25 years for third-degree murder, and 10 years for second-degree manslaughter. Sentencing guidelines call for far less time, including 12 1/2 years on either murder count.

India's electric vehicles face practical, technical hurdles

By NEHA MEHROTRA Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — H.S. Panno, an independent contractor living in a spacious two-story penthouse in New Delhi, had his doubts when he bought his first electric car in September.

So far, he's pleased with his savings on gas and maintenance, which are down by more than half, but disappointed with the practical limitations of driving his Nexon XZ+. For starters, he says he's only getting 200 kilometers (125 miles) per charge, not the promised range of 315 kilometers (195 miles). And he can't drive the car outside the city because of a lack of charging stations.

EVs are a rarity in India, where more than 300 million vehicles, most of them scooters and three-wheel motorized rickshaws, jam the highways. The country is now making an ambitious push for what it calls "electric mobility," to reduce smog. But the effort is plagued with technological and logistical hurdles, even for those relatively simple vehicles.

The EV passenger car segment may be potentially huge but for now it is a niche within a niche: In March, 25,640 electric vehicles were sold across the country, of which 90% were two and three-wheelers. The total 400,000 EVs registered in India in 2019 accounted for less than 0.2% of all vehicles.

Panno got a \$1,770 rebate as a government incentive for buying his Nexon XZ+, Indian automaker Tata's mid-range electric vehicle model. It cost \$22,740, about twice the price of the company's most popular gas-fueled models.

"It's a good car and a pleasure to drive, but I'm still scared of breaking down midway from a lack of charge," Panno said.

Officials see EVs as a solution to the deadly smog choking city streets, even though for the most part heavily polluting coal power plants generate the electricity needed to charge them.

India's capital New Delhi provides a slew of subsidies to first-time EV buyers. EVs are also exempt from road tax and registration fees and there are other incentives to encourage swapping of old gas and diesel vehicles for new electric ones. About half of India's 31 states have drafted similar EV policies with varying degrees of progress.

The New Delhi government recently dropped the Nexon XZ+ and Nexon XM from its list of a dozen four-wheel vehicles eligible for subsidies. The reason? Their low range.

Tata said the Nexon XZ+'s 315-kilometer range was verified by the official Automotive Research Association of India. But the actual range depends on factors such as air conditioning, "individual driving style and the conditions in which the vehicle is driven," the company said in a statement.

The EV market has been growing at an annual rate of 20% and is dominated by five major players: Tata, Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd., MG Motor India, Olectra Greentech Ltd. and JBM Auto Ltd. Startups also are joining the fray.

Local automakers have been slow to get into making EVs and their parts, largely because of a lack of

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demand. Those that have jumped in mostly rely on cheap imports that have added to complaints over poor quality.

Last year, India raised tariffs on imports of EVs and their parts, including all-important and expensive lithium-ion batteries. That and other policies are aimed at encouraging domestic production, raising quality and bringing prices down to the level of conventional autos.

Some companies, both domestic and foreign, have taken heed and dozens of projects are in the pipeline. Tata plans a \$54 million lithium-ion production facility in the Indian state of Gujarat. Japan's Toshiba-Denzo-Suzuki has set up a factory in the western state of Gujarat, an auto manufacturing hub, to make lithium-ion batteries for Maruti Suzuki and Suzuki motor plants. Elon Musk recently announced Tesla plans to set up an EV factory in southern India.

Moushumi Mohanty, head of electric mobility at the Centre for Science and Environment, a nonprofit focused on sustainable development, says the lack of charging stations remains a big hurdle.

"For the supply side to work, the government will have to formulate a standardized regulatory framework to monitor the quality of technology and safety parameters," Mohanty added.

India has been striving to follow the lead of the U.S., Japan, and China in building up its auto industry, which already employs more than 35 million people, directly or indirectly, and contributes more than 7% to the country's gross domestic product. To help repair damage from the pandemic, the country's leaders are aiming to double exports of vehicles and components in the next five years.

The effort to ramp up EV use is part of a global trend. Sales of such vehicles rose 40% in 2019 from a year earlier to account for 2.6% of worldwide car sales, or about 1% of all vehicles, according to the International Energy Agency.

But for the foreseeable future, India's EV market will likely remain the domain of electric scooters and rickshaws, which cost \$1,200 to \$3,680 and like passenger cars need charging facilities.

Ashok Kumar switched to driving an electric rickshaw taxi from working at a printing press three years ago, after hearing the New Delhi government was offering subsidies. However, he never got the promised rebate on his \$1,770 electric rickshaw.

Kumar sets out each day acutely aware that he has just until lunchtime to earn as much as he can. Then he has to rush home to charge his vehicle.

It takes 12 hours of charging to get a running time of five hours, he says.

"It's absolutely useless," he said about the e-rickshaw as he waited for customers outside a metro station.

So far, New Delhi, a city of 31 million people, has only 72 active charging stations, with another 100 in the pipeline. That's nowhere near enough for a city that plans to ensure one-quarter of all new vehicles sold, whatever their size, be electric.

The problem is worst for commercial vehicles that cannot afford to stop in the day to recharge. Most private EV owners just charge their vehicles at home, viewing public charging stations as a last resort.

Jasmine Shah, vice chairman of the Delhi Dialogue and Development Commission, a government think tank leading the capital's electric mobility initiative, shrugs off such complaints. India needs EVs to improve the environment, he said.

"We're simply focusing on creating demand for electric vehicles. The rest will follow," Shah said.

Police: FedEx shooter legally bought guns used in shooting

By CASEY SMITH Associated Press/Report for America

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — The former employee who shot and killed eight people at a FedEx facility in Indianapolis legally bought the two rifles used in the attack despite red flag laws designed to prevent such purchases, police said.

A trace of the two guns found by investigators at the scene revealed that suspect Brandon Scott Hole, 19, of Indianapolis, legally bought the rifles last July and September, officials with the Indianapolis police said Saturday.

The police did not say where Hole bought what they described as "assault rifles," citing the ongoing

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investigation, but said he was seen using both rifles during the shooting.

Details about the weapons' make, model and caliber won't be released until the investigation is complete, said Genae Cook, a spokesperson for the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department.

Authorities said Hole shot and killed eight people, four of them from the city's Sikh community, at the FedEx facility late Thursday before killing himself.

The FBI said agents had questioned Hole last year after his mother called police to say her son might commit "suicide by cop." Officers seized a pump-action shotgun from Hole's home after responding to the call, according to a police report. Police said the gun was never returned to him.

Republican Sen. Todd Young called Sunday for more mental health services across all level of governments. "We know that we have a Hoosier family who cried out for help, knowing they had a child who required mental health treatment. We know we have members of our law enforcement community who, for a period of time, responded to that call for help. And we know that in the end, that wasn't enough," he told The Associated Press before addressing a gathering at the Gurdwara Sikh Satsang, a Sikh house of worship on the east side of Indianapolis.

Young questioned whether Indiana's red flag laws "were actually enforced" to prevent the shooting.

Mark Bode, a spokesperson for Indianapolis Mayor Joe Hogsett, said Sunday his office also "continues to monitor closely the findings of the ongoing investigation, and what breakdowns in the red flag law processes may have come into play."

Indiana has had a "red flag law" allowing police or courts to seize guns from people who show warning signs of violence since 2005. It became one of the first states to enact such a law after an Indianapolis police officer was killed by a man whose weapons had to be returned despite hospitalization months earlier for an emergency mental health evaluation.

The law is intended to prevent people from purchasing or possessing a firearm if they are found by a judge to present "an imminent risk" to themselves or others.

Authorities have two weeks after seizing someone's weapon to argue in court that the person should not be allowed to possess a gun. Officials have not said whether Hole's case was brought before a judge. Michael Leffler, a spokesperson for the Marion County Prosecutor, said Sunday that the office is "looking into this matter."

If Hole had a court hearing and prevailed, state law indicates the shotgun would have been returned to him. If a judge ruled him dangerous or incompetent, however, he should have been barred from buying another gun.

Gaganpal S. Dhaliwal, a member of the Sikh community who also spoke at the gathering Sunday, added that victims' families want to see "common sense gun laws" and stricter hate crime policies.

"This shooter had a shotgun confiscated, but he was still able to get his hands on rifles," Dhaliwal said. "We need to make sure that guns don't end up in the wrong hands."

Dhaliwal also called for roughly two dozen fast-tracked visas from the U.S. and Indian governments to allow relatives to travel for funeral ceremonies that will take place in the next two weeks, he said.

Hole was a former employee at the FedEx facility who left his job last year, police said. Authorities have not yet announced a possible motive for the attack.

Hole's family said in a statement they are "so sorry for the pain and hurt" his actions caused.

The attack was another blow to the Asian American community a month after authorities said six people of Asian descent were killed by a gunman in the Atlanta area and amid ongoing attacks against Asian Americans during the coronavirus pandemic.

About 90% of the workers at the FedEx warehouse near the Indianapolis International Airport are members of the local Sikh community, police said.

The shooting is the deadliest incident of violence collectively in the Sikh community in the U.S. since 2012, when a white supremacist burst into a Sikh temple in Wisconsin and shot 10 people, killing seven.

Police: Suspect on the run in fatal shooting of 3 in Texas

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By JIM VERTUNO Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — A manhunt was underway Sunday for a former sheriff's deputy wanted in the fatal shooting of three people in Austin, Texas, as an official said it wasn't known if the suspect was still in the city.

Interim Austin Police Chief Joseph Chacon said those who live near where the shooting happened late Sunday morning no longer had to shelter in place, but he said they should "remain vigilant." He said officials were transitioning the search for Stephen Broderick, 41, from that area to a "fugitive search."

"The victims were all known to this suspect.," Chacon said. "At this point, we do not think this individual is out there targeting random people to shoot. That does not mean he is not dangerous."

Earlier in the day, nearby residents had been asked to shelter in place and to call their neighbors to check on them. Chacon had said earlier that officials were concerned that Broderick "might possibly take a hostage and be himself sheltered somewhere waiting for us to leave."

Chacon said Broderick is 5 feet, 7 inches (1.7 meters) tall and Black. He was wearing a gray hoodie, sunglasses and a baseball cap. Chacon said police do not know if he's in a vehicle or on foot.

He said that Broderick was a former deputy with the Travis County sheriff's office, which is based in Austin.

Travis County District Attorney Jose Garza said in a statement that Broderick had been arrested for sexual assault of a child last June and was released on \$50,000 bond. He said that the district attorney's office on Sunday filed a motion to revoke that bond and is actively supporting law enforcement as they pursue Broderick.

Sheriff's spokeswoman Kristen Dark tells the Austin American-Statesman that Broderick, a property crimes detective, resigned after the arrest.

The newspaper also reports that Broderick's wife filed for a protective order and divorce shortly after his arrest.

Chacon said Broderick is suspected in the killing of two Hispanic women and one Black man. He said Broderick knew the victims but didn't elaborate on how or provide a motive for the shootings. Chacon also said a child was involved but that the child has been located and is safe.

Brenda Torres said she was driving by when she saw a little boy flag down a car and a Black man lying facedown on the ground.

"I saw the little boy point down the street," Torres said. "There was someone lying on the ground. I thought someone had just fallen down or something. As my light turns green and I'm driving, I see cop car after cop car after cop car rushing toward where I just was."

Chacon said the three were not shot in a building but did not give any further details.

Following the shooting, there was a large presence of emergency responders at the scene, including dozens of police cars, several ambulances, two SWAT trucks and two police helicopters. Later Sunday, law enforcement began leaving the area.

The area includes a strip mall containing several retail stores and large apartment complexes situated near wooded rolling hills.

Josh Katzowitz, who had been shopping at the nearby Trader Joe's, said police and ambulances came "pouring in" to the area as he was leaving. He didn't hear any shooting.

"The cops had their guns out," he said. "Some had pistols, some had rifles and they were strapping on bulletproof vests. There were all of a sudden ambulances, sirens and police cars. There were cops coming from everywhere."

European soccer split as 12 clubs launch breakaway league

By ROB HARRIS AP Global Soccer Writer

LONDON (AP) — A group of 12 elite English, Spanish and Italian clubs dramatically split European soccer on Sunday by announcing the formation of a largely-closed Super League. They are leaving the existing UEFA-run Champions League structure despite warnings they could be kicked out of their domestic competitions and face legal action.

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The seismic move to shake up the world's biggest sport is partly engineered by the American owners of Arsenal, Liverpool and Manchester United who also run U.S. franchises in closed leagues — a model they are trying to replicate in Europe.

The power-play came after the rebel clubs reneged on a promise on Friday to back the plan by UEFA — European football's governing body — to expand the Champions League beginning in 2024. The deal was designed to appease their wishes for more games, seemingly because they couldn't control the sale of rights to the existing competition.

The Super League plan was first leaked in January but re-emerged this weekend.

Real Madrid president Florentino Perez would be the founding chairman of the SL, which said it "intended to commence as soon as practicable" as a 20-team competition playing in midweek like the current Champions League and Europa League.

"We will help football at every level and take it to its rightful place in the world," Perez said in a statement. "Football is the only global sport in the world with more than four billion fans and our responsibility as big clubs is to respond to their desires."

No evidence was presented that supporters want a Super League. Fan groups across Europe last week criticized even the current Champions League expansion plan as a "power grab."

Only 12 clubs have signed up for now — with none from France or Germany — but the SL hopes for three more as permanent members. Barcelona and Atletico Madrid are the other founding members, along with Juventus, AC Milan and Inter Milan. Five slots would be left open to be determined each year based on the previous season's results.

UEFA warned clubs that joining the "cynical project" based on self-interest would see them banned from playing in any other competition — domestic, European or global. It said their players could be denied the opportunity to represent their national teams.

The statement was issued jointly with the leagues and national governing bodies from England, Spain and Italy.

England has the most clubs with the six including Chelsea and Manchester City, who are due to contest a Champions League semifinals this month. Also included is Tottenham, which is outside of the Premier League's top four to qualify for the Champions League next season,

"By bringing together the world's greatest clubs and players to play each other throughout the season, the Super League will open a new chapter for European football, ensuring world-class competition and facilities, and increased financial support for the wider football pyramid," said Joel Glazer, co-owner of Manchester United and SL vice chairman.

Another vice chairman of the new competition would be Andrea Agnelli who on Sunday night quit his role as chairman of the European Club Association, which was working with UEFA on enlarging the Champions League to 36 teams. Agnelli also resigned as a member of the executive committee of UEFA — rupturing his previously-close friendship with the governing body's president, Aleksander Ceferin.

The UEFA leader has been determined not to grant more control of the sale of television and commercial rights to the clubs.

"We have come together at this critical moment," Agnelli said, "enabling European competition to be transformed, putting the game we love on a sustainable footing for the long-term future, substantially increasing solidarity, and giving fans and amateur players a regular flow of headline fixtures."

The rebel clubs are all members of the ECA which has a working agreement with UEFA, signed in 2019, which commits all its members to take part in and respect the Champions League and other European competitions through the 2023-24 season.

While FIFA issued a statement in January warning that players in a Super League could be banned from the World Cup, the world governing body has not denied that its president, Gianni Infantino, has been involved in the breakaway talks with officials, including Real Madrid's Perez.

"FIFA can only express its disapproval to a 'closed European breakaway league' outside of the international football structures," the world body said in a statement on Sunday while not answering questions

about any role by Infantino.

The Premier League said the Super League would “undermine the appeal of the whole game” by going against the principles of open competition. There was even an intervention by British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who warned that a Super League would be “very damaging.”

The Super League confirmed on Sunday that each of the 15 founding members would get a share of at least 3.5 billion euros (\$4.2 billion) in initial infrastructure grants.

The AP previously reported that this money would be split among four tiers of clubs, with the top six each getting 350 million euros (\$420 million). The competition would begin with two groups of 10 teams, with the top three from each group advancing to the quarterfinals. The teams finishing fourth and fifth would be involved in a playoff to complete the last-eight lineup. The knockout phase would still feature two-legged quarterfinals and semifinals before a single fixture final.

The previously-reported Super League proposal hoped to generate 4 billion euros (\$4.86 billion) annually from broadcasters.

In comparison, UEFA said the total commercial revenue was 3.25 billion euros (\$3.9 billion) for each of the past three seasons from selling the rights to the Champions League, Europa League and UEFA Super Cup.

For the 2021-24 sales cycle, UEFA is expected to sell around \$14 billion in broadcast and sponsor deals for its club competitions, which includes the new third-tier Europa Conference League.

Those sales were completed worldwide on the legal commitment of top clubs to play according to the UEFA-ECA accord. Any breach of the cooperation deal would likely lead to legal threats and suits.

“We will consider all measures available to us, at all levels, both judicial and sporting in order to prevent this happening,” UEFA said of the Super League. “Football is based on open competitions and sporting merit; it cannot be any other way.”

Suspect apprehended in fatal shooting at Wisconsin tavern

KENOSHA, Wis. (AP) — Authorities say they have apprehended a person in connection with a shooting at a busy tavern in southeastern Wisconsin early Sunday that left three men dead and three men injured.

Kenosha County Sheriff’s Department spokesman Sgt. David Wright said the suspect is facing a charge of first-degree intentional homicide, with additional criminal charges likely after further investigation. Authorities said earlier they weren’t sure if there was more than one shooter.

“There is no threat to the community at this time,” Wright said in a release. He said no further information on the suspect would be released Sunday.

Kenosha County Sheriff David Beth said earlier a suspect was asked to leave the Somers House Tavern in Kenosha County but returned and opened fire. Beth said shots were fired inside and outside the bar, which he described as “very busy” at the time. He said he believed at least one handgun was used.

Kenosha is about 30 miles (50 kilometers) south of Milwaukee, not far from the Wisconsin-Illinois border.

Officials originally said two people were injured but said they were checking with hospitals for people who may have been hurt in the shooting. Wright said in the updated release that authorities believe there is one “possible unknown shooting victim.”

Beth said two people died at the scene. The third person hopped in a car with two other people, who moments later flagged down a police vehicle. The officer drove the victim to a hospital where that person was pronounced dead, Beth said.

Wright said investigators have reviewing surveillance video from the scene. The tavern installed video cameras a couple of years ago, Beth said, but he didn’t know if the surveillance video is from the business.

Wright called it a complex investigation that involves several crime scenes.

“Detectives have followed up on multiple leads and gathered surveillance video evidence during extensive neighborhood canvasses,” he said.

A man who lives near the bar, Peter Ploskee, told WLS-TV that he heard gun shots, looked out a window and saw “people running from the bar in every direction.”

“It was just chaos,” he said. “People are just running, people screaming.”

Wisconsin Gov. Tony Evers called it a “senseless tragedy” and said he and his wife are “thinking of the

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families and loved ones affected and the entire Kenosha community as they grieve and grapple with yet another tragic incident of gun violence.”

It was the latest in a recent string of shootings across the country, including the killings of eight people at a FedEx warehouse in Indianapolis on Thursday. Last month, four people were killed at an office shooting in California, eight people were fatally shot at massage businesses in the Atlanta area, and 10 died in gunfire at a supermarket in Boulder, Colorado.

The nearby city of Kenosha was the scene of serious unrest last summer, after police shot a young Black man, Jacob Blake, leaving him paralyzed. A white Illinois teenager was accused of fatally shooting two people during the Kenosha protests. Kyle Rittenhouse of Antioch is charged with homicide and attempted homicide in the Aug. 25 shootings. He has pleaded not guilty and says he fired in self-defense.

Half of US adults have received at least one COVID-19 shot

By HOPE YEN and JONATHAN MATTISE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Half of all adults in the U.S. have received at least one COVID-19 shot, the government announced Sunday, marking another milestone in the nation’s largest-ever vaccination campaign but leaving more work to do to convince skeptical Americans to roll up their sleeves.

Almost 130 million people 18 or older have received at least one dose of a vaccine, or 50.4% of the total adult population, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported. Almost 84 million adults, or about 32.5% of the population, have been fully vaccinated.

The U.S. cleared the 50% mark just a day after the reported global death toll from the coronavirus topped a staggering 3 million, according to totals compiled by Johns Hopkins University, though the actual number is believed to be significantly higher.

The country’s vaccination rate, at 61.6 doses administered per 100 people, currently falls behind Israel, which leads among countries with at least 5 million people with a rate of 119.2. The U.S. also trails the United Arab Emirates, Chile and the United Kingdom, which is vaccinating at a rate of 62 doses per 100 people, according to Our World in Data, an online research site.

The vaccine campaign offered hope in places like Nashville, Tennessee, where the Music City Center bustled Sunday with vaccine seekers. High demand for appointment-only shots at the convention center has leveled off enough that walk-ins will be welcome starting this week.

Amanda Grimsley, who received her second shot, said she’s ready to see her 96-year-old grandmother, who lives in Alabama and has been nervous about getting the vaccine after having a bad reaction to a flu shot.

“It’s a little emotional. I haven’t been able to see my grandmother in a year and a half almost,” said Grimsley, 35. “And that’s the longest my entire family has ever gone without seeing her. And we’ll be seeing her in mid-May now.”

The states with the highest vaccination rates have a history of voting Democratic and supporting President Joe Biden in the 2020 election: New Hampshire at the top, with 71.1%, followed by New Mexico, Connecticut, Massachusetts and Maine, CDC data show.

The demand has not been the same in many areas of Tennessee — particularly, rural ones.

Tennessee sits in the bottom four states for rates of adults getting at least one shot, at 40.8%. It’s trailed only by Louisiana, Alabama and Mississippi — three other Southern states that lean Republican and voted for Donald Trump last fall.

Vaccination rates do not always align with how states vote. But polling from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research has shown trends that link political leanings and attitudes about the vaccines and other issues related to the pandemic, which has killed more than 566,000 people in the U.S.

A poll conducted in late March found that 36% of Republicans said they will probably or definitely not get vaccinated, compared with 12% of Democrats. Similarly, a third of rural Americans said they were leaning against getting shots, while fewer than a fourth of people living in cities and suburbs shared that hesitancy.

Overall, willingness to get vaccinated has risen, polling shows.

In January, 67% of adult Americans were willing to get vaccinated or had already received at least one

shot. The figure has climbed to 75%, according to the latest AP-NORC poll.

Nationwide, 24% of Black Americans and 22% of Hispanic Americans say they will probably or definitely not get vaccinated, down from 41% and 34% in January, respectively. Among white Americans, 26% now say they will not get vaccinated. In January, that number was 31%.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, the nation's top infectious disease expert, said the goal is to get community figures, from athletes to clergy, to encourage vaccinations, particularly as the seven-day national average of cases remains over 60,000 new infections per day.

"What we are doing is we're trying to get, by a community core, trusted messages that anyone would feel comfortable with listening to, whether you're a Republican, a Democrat, an independent or whomever you are, that you're comfortable," Fauci said Sunday on ABC's "This Week."

Fauci also indicated Sunday that the government will likely move to resume use of Johnson & Johnson's COVID-19 vaccine this week, possibly with restrictions or broader warnings after reports of some very rare blood clot cases.

In a series of news show interviews, Fauci said he expects a decision when advisers to the CDC meet Friday to discuss the pause in J&J's single-dose vaccine.

"I would be very surprised if we don't have a resumption in some form by Friday," he said. "I don't really anticipate that they're going to want it stretch it out a bit longer."

Fauci, who is President Joe Biden's chief medical adviser, said he believed federal regulators could bring the shots back with limits based on age or gender, or with a blanket warning, so the vaccine is administered in a way "a little bit different than we were before the pause."

The J&J vaccine was thrown into limbo after the CDC and the Food and Drug Administration said last week that they needed more evidence to decide if a handful of unusual blood clots were linked to the shot — and if so, how big the risk is.

The reports are rare — six cases out of more than 7 million U.S. inoculations with the J&J vaccine. The clots were found in women between the ages of 18 and 48. One person died.

Authorities stressed that they have found no sign of clot problems with the most widely used COVID-19 vaccines in the U.S. — from Moderna and Pfizer.

Auction brings Hall of Famer Ted Williams to NFT market

By JIMMY GOLEN AP Sports Writer

BOSTON (AP) — Teddy Ballgame is about to become Teddy Blockchain.

Hall of Famer Ted Williams is coming to the digital memorabilia market with a release of nine different cards that follow the No. 9's career from skinny rookie to Cooperstown inductee. The collectors' items offered by Williams' daughter are hand drawn by Brazilian illustrator Andre Maciel, known as Black Madre, who created the non-fungible tokens for football star Rob Gronkowski that sold out last month for \$1.6 million.

"I wrote to him. I told him who I was. I said, 'My dad is Ted Williams.' I said, 'Here's what I want to do,'" Claudia Williams said, adding that she didn't know whether Maciel would be familiar with the baseball star.

"For all he knows, I'm just some person reaching out saying, 'Hey, could you make me some NFTs?'" she said. "Just the respect that he showed the art, I know that he knows who Ted Williams is."

Eight cards come in limited editions numbered 1-9, with the ninth — titled "The Splendid Splinter" — a one-of-a-kind release that comes with an autographed bat, three autographed pictures and an Airbnb stay at a house Williams lived in in Vermont. Each of the 73 cards include the digital autograph of the Red Sox slugger, who remains the last major leaguer to bat .400, hitting .406 in 1941.

The collection also recognizes Williams' achievements as a fishing hall of famer and a fighter pilot who missed parts of five seasons to serve in WWII and the Korean War. Claudia Williams wrote the text on the back of each card.

The auction begins Monday and runs through Saturday.

"My life's goal is to keep my dad as relevant and inspirational as ever," Claudia Williams said last week in a telephone interview from her Florida home. "I want to leave his legacy behind when his last surviving

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child is gone.”

Non-fungible tokens can be works of art, video clips or even tweets or news articles tied to a digital record — or blockchain — that allows the collector to prove ownership. The NBA has gotten into NFTs by creating a market called Top Shot, which has more than 800,000 users and at least \$500 million in sales.

Williams said if the auction is successful, she will donate some of the proceeds to the Jimmy Fund, a children’s cancer charity that has been a favorite of the Red Sox since her father’s playing days.

“It’s all about inspiration and honoring my dad,” she said. “I am very much my father’s daughter: I do not do squat if I don’t feel passionate about it.”

Williams played 19 years — all for the Red Sox — missing time for the two wars before retiring at the age of 41 in 1960 with a .344 average, 521 home runs and 1,839 RBIs. He was a 19-time All-Star, two-time AL MVP and two-time triple crown winner.

Williams was also a notorious curmudgeon who derided reporters as “Knights of the Keyboard” and refused to tip his cap to the fans. But he was one of the few white players to argue for Negro Leagues players to be included in the Baseball Hall of Fame.

Claudia Williams said her father might not have been an early adopter on NFTs, but he encouraged his children to keep up on the latest technology. His book “The Science of Hitting” was ahead of its time. (Williams, who died in 2002, has been frozen in liquid nitrogen at an Arizona cryonics facility in the hopes that medical advances will someday allow him to be brought back to life.)

“Daddy was so about cutting edge,” she said. “When he learned about something new, he embraced it. He might say, “... I don’t know the first thing about this NFT, but I think it’s great.’ But he would learn about it, and he would love it.”

The Latest: Michigan governor: State’s surge may be ending

By The Associated Press undefined

LANSING, Mich. — Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer says her state could be seeing a drop in infections after leading the nation’s COVID-19 daily case rate for weeks.

Whitmer has extended a pandemic order that limits business capacity and requires masks in public, but the Democrat has avoided further restrictions in place during previous surges, including suspending indoor restaurant dining.

She told NBC’s “Meet the Press” on Sunday that cases could be beginning to slow down. She didn’t discuss specific data and Michigan doesn’t release coronavirus-related data on Sundays. Health officials said Friday that the seven-day average positivity rate had dropped in recent days to 17.1%, but remained above a December peak of 14.4%.gov

Whitmer has urged a voluntary pause on activities like dining out and pushed for more vaccinations from the White House, which has said it would help with other logistics but continue allocating based on population.

THE VIRUS OUTBREAK:

- CDC says half of U.S. adults have received at least one COVID-19 shot
- AP PHOTOS: As global toll tops 3 million, 15 photographers each reflect on a single shot of the pandemic
- Iran sees highest daily death toll in months as virus surges
- Fashion industry evolves, as virus forces a rethink

Follow all of AP’s pandemic coverage at <https://apnews.com/hub/coronavirus-pandemic> and <https://apnews.com/hub/coronavirus-vaccine>

HERE’S WHAT ELSE IS HAPPENING:

WASHINGTON — Advisers to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention plan to meet this coming Friday to discuss the pause in Johnson & Johnson’s COVID-19 vaccine, and the top U.S. infectious disease

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expert says he'd be "very surprised if we don't have a resumption in some form by Friday."

Dr. Anthony Fauci said Sunday that "a decision almost certainly will be made by Friday. I don't really anticipate that they're going to want it stretch it out a bit longer."

Fauci tells CBS' "Face the Nation" that one possibility would be to bring the one-and-done shots back "with some form of restrictions or some form of warning. ...I believe by Friday we're going to know the answer to that."

The Johnson & Johnson vaccine is in limbo in the U.S. after federal health advisers said last week they needed more evidence to decide if a handful of unusual blood clots were linked to the shot — and if so, how big the risk is.

The reports are rare — six cases out of more than 7 million inoculations with the J&J vaccine in the United States. The clots were found in six women between the ages of 18 and 48. One person died.

Fauci told NBC's "Meet the Press" that "I doubt very seriously if they just cancel it. I don't think that's going to happen."

ISTANBUL - Turkey recorded 318 deaths due to COVID-19 on Sunday, the Health Ministry said, the highest daily count since the start of the pandemic.

The figure for the previous 24 hours took the country's total death toll to 35,926. There were 55,802 new daily infections, pushing the overall figure to nearly 4.27 million, the ministry added.

Weekly data also released Sunday showed the northwest province of Canakkale had the highest rate of cases in the country, with 962.98 infections per 100,000 people.

Turkey has seen rising numbers of COVID-19 cases and deaths since restrictions were eased at the start of March, when daily cases were below 10,000. The government has blamed the rising numbers on coronavirus mutations.

A partial closure was re-introduced on April 13, with tighter controls such as an extended evening weekday curfew, a return to online education and a ban on unnecessary intercity travel.

Earlier, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan had also re-imposed weekend lockdowns and ordered restaurants and cafes shut during the holy Muslim month of Ramadan.

A vaccination program was launched in mid-January and Erdogan said Saturday that 20 million doses had been administered in the country of nearly 84 million.

VATICAN CITY — Pope Francis says he is happy to be back greeting the faithful in St. Peter's Square for his traditional Sunday noon blessing after weeks of lockdown measures.

Italy later this month will start gradually lifting some anti-pandemic restrictions, allowing, for example, outdoor dining at cafes and restaurants in areas of the country where the COVID-19 outbreak has been showing signs of improvement.

A couple of hundred people, including nuns and families, standing a safe distance apart in the vast square, turned out to see the pope speak from a window of the Apostolic Palace. "Thank God, we can gather in this square again," Francis said. "I have to say, I miss the square."

The past weeks have seen Francis standing at a lectern inside the palace to deliver his Sunday noon remarks via TV, radio and internet.

"Thank God and thank you for your presence," Francis told those who showed up despite clouds threatening a downpour in Rome.

JERUSALEM — Israel has lifted a public mask mandate and fully reopened its education system in the latest easing of coronavirus restrictions following its mass vaccination drive.

All primary and secondary school grades returned to classrooms on Sunday, and health officials ended a year-long requirement to wear a mask in public spaces. Masks are still required indoors and in large gatherings.

Israel has speedily inoculated a majority of its population against the coronavirus in a world-leading

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vaccination campaign. It has lifted most of its coronavirus restrictions and announced last week that it would be reopening the country to vaccinated foreign tourists starting in May.

Israel's coronavirus czar, Nachman Ash, told Israeli public radio on Sunday that removing the mask requirement outdoors and reinitiating in-class studies was a "calculated risk."

Since the start of the pandemic last year, Israel has recorded over 836,000 cases of the coronavirus and at least 6,331 deaths, according to the Health Ministry. Over 53% of its 9.3 million citizens has received two shots of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine.

In the months since Israel launched its vaccination campaign in December, serious cases and deaths have fallen precipitously and allowed the economy to fully reopen.

The vaccination campaign in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza has been slow to get off the ground, with Israel facing criticism for not sharing more of its supplies.

ISLAMABAD — Pakistan has reported its highest single-day death toll from COVID-19, bringing the country's total deaths in the pandemic to nearly 162,430.

Federal authorities on Sunday said 149 new deaths were recorded in 24 hours confirmed. They also confirmed over 6,000 new coronavirus cases since the day before, bringing Pakistan's total confirmed cases to more than 756,285.

Authorities in Pakistan decided Saturday to start vaccinating people aged 50 to 59 next week.

Pakistan has largely relied on donated or imported Chinese vaccines, which had been offered only to health workers and elderly people. But those groups have not responded in overwhelming numbers to the vaccination campaign, prompting officials to offer the vaccines to a younger cohort.

Pakistan, with a population of 220 million, hopes to receive 15 million COVID-19 vaccine doses through the U.N.-backed COVAX program by next month.

HUTCHINSON, Minn. — Prosecutors have charged a Minnesota man with felony assault and allege that he attacked a home improvement store employee and a police officer after the store worker told him to wear a mask.

The Minneapolis Star Tribune reported that the incident began Wednesday afternoon when a cashier at a Menards in Hutchinson told 61-year-old Luke Oeltjenbruns that he couldn't check out unless he put on a mask, according to a criminal complaint. Oeltjenbruns tried to leave with his merchandise, prompting the cashier to grab his cart.

The complaint alleges that Oeltjenbruns hit the cashier with a piece of lumber. Police later found Oeltjenbruns sitting in his pickup truck in another store's parking lot.

After a slow-speed chase, officers surrounded his truck with their squad cars, but he refused to get out. Officer Steven Sickmann got up on the truck's running board and reached through the window. The complaint says Oeltjenbruns closed the window on the officer's arm, trapping him, and drove off, crashing into squad cars.

The complaint says Sickmann tried to use a rescue hammer to break the window, but Oeltjenbruns took it from him and hit him on the head with it.

Oeltjenbruns was eventually arrested. The complaint says the officer's injuries included a head wound.

TORONTO — New pandemic restrictions imposed by Canada's most populous province have immediately ran into opposition. Police departments insisted Saturday they wouldn't use new powers to randomly stop motorists and health experts complained the rules focus on outdoor activities rather than more dangerous indoor settings.

Ontario Premier Doug Ford's government announced Friday it was giving police authority to require anyone not at home to explain why they're out and provide their address. Tickets can be written.

But at least a dozen forces throughout Ontario, including in the capital of Toronto, said there will be no random stops of people or cars.

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"We are all going through a horrific year of COVID-19 and all associated with it together. The (department) will NOT be randomly stopping vehicles for no reason during the pandemic or afterwards," Halton Police Chief Steve Tanner tweeted.

The new rules limit outdoor gatherings to those in the same household and close playgrounds and golf courses. The decisions sparked widespread criticism in a province already on lockdown. Restaurants and gyms are closed as is in-class schooling. Most nonessential workers are working from home.

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — The U.S. Supreme Court will hear oral arguments in a case that will determine who is eligible to receive more than \$530 million in federal virus relief funding set aside for tribes more than a year ago.

More than a dozen Native American tribes sued the U.S. Treasury Department to keep the money out of the hands of Alaska Native corporations, which provide services to Alaska Natives but do not have a government-to-government relationship with the United States.

The question raised in the case set for oral arguments Monday is whether the corporations are tribes for purposes of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act, which defines "tribes" under a 1975 law meant to strengthen their abilities to govern themselves.

The case has practical impacts. Native Americans have been disproportionately sickened and killed by the pandemic — despite extreme precautions that included curfews, roadblocks, universal testing and business closures — and historically have had limited financial resources. About \$530 million of the \$8 billion set aside for tribes hasn't been distributed.

HARARE, Zimbabwe — Zimbabwe has begun releasing about 3,000 prisoners under a presidential amnesty aimed at easing congestion to reduce the threat of COVID-19 in the country's overcrowded jails.

About 400 prisoners were released from Chikurubi prison and other jails in the capital, Harare, on Saturday with more coming from other prisons countrywide.

Zimbabwe's prisons have a capacity of 17,000 prisoners but held about 22,000 before the amnesty declared by President Emmerson Mnangagwa.

Those to be released had been convicted of nonviolent crimes.

The amnesty "will go a long way" to reduce expenditure and the threat of the spread of the virus in prisons, said Alvord Gapare, the commander for prisons in Harare. He said prisons in the capital had recorded 173 confirmed infections and one death.

Zimbabwe has recorded 37,534 cases of COVID-19, including 1,551 deaths by Apr. 17, according to the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

RICHMOND, Va. — The first cases of the so-called Brazil COVID-19 variant have been identified in two samples from residents of Virginia, state health officials said Friday.

In a news release, the Virginia Department of Health said one case involving the P.1 variant was identified in an adult resident of the Northwest Region who had a history of domestic travel during the exposure period. The second case was identified in an adult resident of the Eastern Region with no history of travel, the department said.

According to the department, neither case had a record of COVID-19 vaccination prior to the onset of the illness.

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. — State health officials say more than 8 million COVID-19 vaccines have been administered in Illinois.

The state's Department of Public Health said Sunday that the seven-day average of daily shots is just over 125,000. The news comes as the state on Sunday added 2,666 new confirmed and probable cases of coronavirus disease and logged 10 additional deaths.

Illinois has reported 21,663 deaths from COVID-19 with more than 1.3 million infections overall. On Friday,

Chicago officials announced plans to open a vaccination program at a hospital where vaccine shipments were paused after reports the hospital acted with favoritism in dispensing the treatment.

Egypt says 11 killed in train crash north of Cairo

By SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — A passenger train derailed Sunday north of Cairo, killing at least 11 people, Egyptian authorities said. It was the latest of several rail accidents to hit the country in recent years.

Four train wagons ran off the railway at the city of Banha in Qalyubia province, just outside Cairo, the railway authority said in a statement. Videos on social media showed wagons overturned and passengers escaping to safety along the railway.

The train was travelling to the Nile Delta city of Mansoura from the Egyptian capital, the statement said.

The Health Ministry said in a statement that besides the dead, at least 98 people were injured, with most of them suffering from broken bones, cuts and bruises.

At least 60 ambulances were sent to the scene and the injured were taken to nearby hospitals, the ministry added.

Salvage teams could be seen searching for survivors and removing the derailed wagons. It was not immediately clear what caused the train to derail. Prosecutors said they were investigating the causes of the crash.

The state-run Ahrām daily reported that authorities have detained at least 10 railway officials, including the train driver and his assistant, pending an investigation into the crash.

At Banha University hospital, people lined up to donate blood for the crash victims. Families were also present looking for loved ones who had been travelling on the train.

"We were surprised by the train speeding up," said Tarek Goma'a, one of the injured. "We found ourselves on top of each other."

Sunday's train accident came three weeks after two passenger trains collided in the province of Sohag, killing at least 18 people and injuring 200 others, including children.

Prosecutors said they found that gross negligence by railway employees was behind the deadly March 25 crash, which caused public outcry across the country.

Train wrecks and mishaps are common in Egypt, where the railway system has a history of badly maintained equipment and mismanagement. The government says it has launched a broad renovation and modernization initiative. President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi said in March 2018 that the government needs about 250 billion Egyptian pounds, or \$14.1 billion, to overhaul the run-down rail system.

Hundreds of train accidents are reported every year. In February 2019 an unmanned locomotive slammed into a barrier inside Cairo's main Ramses railway station, causing a huge explosion and a fire that killed at least 25 people. That crash prompted the then-transportation minister to resign.

In August 2017, two passenger trains collided just outside the Mediterranean port city of Alexandria, killing 43 people. In 2016, at least 51 people were killed when two commuter trains collided near Cairo.

Egypt's deadliest train crash was in 2002, when over 300 people were killed after a fire broke out in an overnight train traveling from Cairo to southern Egypt.

Alma Wahlberg, mother of Mark, Donnie Wahlberg, dies at 78

By LINDSEY BAHR AP Film Writer

Alma Wahlberg, the mother of entertainers Mark and Donnie Wahlberg and a regular on their reality series "Wahlburgers," has died, her sons said on social media Sunday. She was 78.

"My angel. Rest in peace," Mark Wahlberg tweeted.

Donnie Wahlberg posted a longer tribute to his mother on his Instagram account.

"It's time to rest peacefully, mom," Donnie Wahlberg wrote. "I love you, miss you, thank you and will celebrate you, today and always."

No information was given about the cause, date or location of her death. Donnie Wahlberg often posted

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about his mother on his accounts and in July updated his fans on her health, writing that she "didn't remember much and was often confused but somehow she was still Alma."

The Boston-born mother of nine became a household name thanks to her appearances on the A&E series "Wahlburgers," about the family's burgeoning burger chain.

"She made no apologies for who she was, but never put herself above anyone else. She kicked our butts if we messed up, kicked anyone else's butts if they messed with us. Taught us right, made us pay the price when we were wrong," Donnie Wahlberg wrote Sunday. "She was the epitome of the word grace."

He also included a video of them dancing at his wedding to one of her favorite songs, "If I Could" by Regina Belle. He wrote that she danced to that song at each of her children's weddings, but at his own, he surprised her by having Belle there to perform it live.

On the "Today" show in 2018, Alma Wahlberg opened up about her parenting and how hard it was early on. "I invented the craziest meals," she said. English muffin pizzas were among her creations to feed her hungry lot.

More than a few of her children went on to great successes and fame. Her son Paul Wahlberg, who is the chef behind the namesake burger chain, also named the Alma Nove restaurant in Hingham, Massachusetts, after her.

"People know me as being the mother of famous children, and although this fact has brought many gifts into my life and has afforded me opportunities that may never have been possible otherwise, there is a whole lot more to my story than most people know," Alma Wahlberg said in an interview with Boston's WCVB-TV in 2018. "I've lived with alcoholism and abuse; struggled with poverty and experienced great wealth; lost so many that I've loved; struggle to raise nine children, and I love them more than anything else; watch them suffer, learn and come out on the other side; lost myself; found myself, again and again; and kept moving forward, no matter what."

Alma Wahlberg is survived by eight children. Her daughter Debbie died in 2003.

Key moments at Derek Chauvin's trial in George Floyd's death

By TAMMY WEBBER Associated Press

The three weeks of testimony at a former Minneapolis police officer's trial in the death of George Floyd were filled with indelible moments, ranging from witnesses breaking down as they relived what they saw to a clinical account by one expert pinpointing on video the instant he believes Floyd died.

Derek Chauvin, 45, is on trial for murder and manslaughter after pinning Floyd to the pavement last May for what prosecutors said was 9 1/2 minutes. The case is expected to head to the jury Monday after closing arguments.

Here's a look back at some of the most compelling moments of the trial:

'DISBELIEF AND GUILT'

Jurors heard testimony from several witnesses to Floyd's arrest, and many of them grew emotional as they recalled their frustration and desperation at not being able to help Floyd.

Darnella Frazier, the teenager who shot the harrowing video of the arrest that set off nationwide protests, testified through tears that Chauvin ignored bystanders' shouts as Floyd gasped for air, pleaded for his life and finally fell limp and silent.

"It's been nights I stayed up, apologizing and apologizing to George Floyd for not doing more, and not physically interacting and not saving his life," Frazier, 18, said, adding of Chauvin: "But it's like, it's not what I should've done, it's what he should've done."

Christopher Martin, the convenience store cashier who sold cigarettes to Floyd and was handed a suspected counterfeit \$20 bill, said he felt "disbelief and guilt" as he stood on the curb a short time later, his hands on his head as he watched Floyd's arrest.

"If I would've just not taken the bill, this could've been avoided," the 19-year-old said.

And Charles McMillian, 61 — who tried to persuade a panicky Floyd to cooperate with officers trying to put him in their squad car, shouting "You can't win!" — wept openly after watching police body camera

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video of the struggle.

"I feel helpless," he said.

'MAMA'

As part of prosecutors' effort to humanize Floyd for jurors, Floyd's girlfriend Courteney Ross recounted how they met at a Salvation Army shelter where he was a security guard with "this great, deep Southern voice," and how they both struggled with an addiction to opioids.

Chauvin attorney Eric Nelson drove hard at Floyd's drug use while cross-examining Ross, then slipped in a seemingly unrelated question: What name, he asked, came up on Floyd's phone when she called him?

"Mama," Ross answered.

With that, Nelson called into question the widely reported account of Floyd crying out for his late mother as he lay pinned to the pavement — likely part of a wider strategy to sow doubt where he could.

'LIFE GOES OUT'

Dr. Martin Tobin, a lung and critical care specialist, was one of the most compelling of many medical experts called by the prosecution. He discussed the mechanics of breathing in simple terms, including loosening his tie, placing his hands on his own neck and encouraging jurors to do the same as he explained why he believes Floyd died of a lack of oxygen that damaged his brain and stopped his heart.

Tobin also narrated video of Floyd held to the pavement and pinpointed what he said was a change in Floyd's face and a telltale leg kick that told him Floyd was dead — around 5 minutes after police began holding him down.

"You can see his eyes. He's conscious, and then you see that he isn't," Tobin said. "That's the moment the life goes out of his body."

'MRS. LINCOLN'

Prosecutors were mostly clinical in examining witnesses. One exception came after Nelson — trying to raise doubt about Floyd's cause of death — posed a series of hypothetical questions to a retired forensic pathologist testifying for the prosecution.

"Let's assume you found Mr. Floyd dead in his residence. No police involvement, no drugs, right? The only thing you found would be these facts about his heart. What would you conclude to be the cause of death?" Nelson asked Dr. Lindsey Thomas, noting Floyd's enlarged heart, high blood pressure and blocked arteries.

Thomas conceded in such a "very narrow set of circumstances," she probably would rule heart disease as the cause. She also agreed that she would certify Floyd's death as a drug overdose if there were no other explanations. Fentanyl and methamphetamine were found in his system.

Prosecutor Jerry Blackwell was sarcastic in his response.

"Aren't those questions a lot like asking, 'Mrs. Lincoln, if we take John Wilkes Booth out of this ...'" Blackwell began, before Nelson objected.

'RESTING COMFORTABLY'

Prosecutors also pounced when a use-of-force expert called by the defense, former California police officer Barry Brodd, said police were justified in keeping Floyd pinned because he kept struggling instead of "resting comfortably."

That sparked a lectern-pounding response from prosecutor Steve Schleicher: "Did you say 'resting comfortably?'" he asked incredulously.

"Or laying comfortably," replied Brodd, whose testimony contradicted that of authorities from inside and outside the Minneapolis Police Department who said Chauvin violated his training.

"Resting comfortably on the pavement?" Schleicher asked again.

Brodd: "Yes."

CAUSE OF DEATH

The chief medical examiner who ruled Floyd's death a homicide was called to the stand by prosecutors only to disagree with their carefully built case that Floyd died of asphyxia when his airway was blocked by Chauvin's knee.

Instead, Hennepin County Medical Examiner Dr. Andrew Baker said Floyd's heart gave out because of

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the pressure on his neck. He said Floyd's heart problems combined with the way police held him down and compressed his neck, "was just more than Mr. Floyd could take."

Though Baker did not rule asphyxiation as a cause of Floyd's death, at one point he testified that he isn't an expert on breathing and would defer certain questions to those who are.

WHAT DID FLOYD SAY ON THE CLIP?

Nelson played a short video clip of a chaotic and noisy scene as Floyd, handcuffed and lying on his stomach, yelled and moaned in distress, then asked a prosecution witness: "Does it sound like he says, 'I ate too many drugs?'"

That witness said he couldn't make out the hard-to-hear clip, but Nelson soon asked another witness — Senior Special Agent James Reyerson of the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension — and Reyerson agreed that was what Floyd appeared to say.

It was a bad moment for the prosecution, and it took some time before they regrouped — leaving Nelson's version to linger in jurors' minds. Later in the day, they replayed a longer clip from the same video and Reyerson reconsidered his assessment, saying: "I believe Mr. Floyd was saying, 'I ain't do no drugs.'"

WHAT WAS SEEN IN FLOYD'S MOUTH

Later in the trial, Nelson questioned a defense witness about whether Floyd might have taken drugs as officers approached.

After showing former Maryland chief medical examiner Dr. David Fowler an image taken from a police body camera, Nelson asked: "In your review did you determine whether there was the possibility that controlled substances were ingested at the time of approach" by officers?

"Yes," Fowler replied, saying that "in the back corner of Mr. Floyd's mouth, you can see what appears to be a white object."

Nelson zoomed in on the image and had Fowler use a stylus to point out the dot for jurors.

Evidence already presented at trial had revealed that remnants of a pill found in the back of the squad car contained Floyd's DNA and tested positive for fentanyl and methamphetamine.

On cross-examination, Blackwell all but accused Fowler of jumping to conclusions and trying to confuse the jury, playing video of Floyd from inside Cup Foods that appeared to show him chewing something white.

"He could have been chewing, I don't know," Fowler responded.

"Let's play it again because I would like for you to know," Blackwell said.

After viewing enlarged still images of Floyd in the store, Fowler conceded that the substance in Floyd's mouth looked "very similar" to the white object he identified in Nelson's image.

But, Fowler pointed out, he'd been careful to use the word "object" in earlier testimony, not "pill."

New migrant facilities crop up to ease crowding, again

By ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON and AMY TAXIN Associated Press

For the third time in seven years, U.S. officials are scrambling to handle a dramatic spike in children crossing the U.S.-Mexico border alone, leading to a massive expansion in emergency facilities to house them as more kids arrive than are being released to close relatives in the United States.

More than 22,000 migrant children were in government custody as of Thursday, with 10,500 sleeping on cots at convention centers, military bases and other large venues likened to hurricane evacuation shelters with little space to play and no privacy. More than 2,500 are being held by border authorities in substandard facilities.

The government failed to prepare for a big increase in children traveling alone as President Joe Biden ended some of his predecessor's hardline immigration policies and decided he wouldn't quickly expel unaccompanied kids from the country like the Trump administration did for eight months.

So many children are coming that there's little room in long-term care facilities, where capacity shrank significantly during the coronavirus pandemic. As a result, minors are packed into Border Patrol facilities not meant to hold them longer than three days or they're staying for weeks in the mass housing sites that often lack the services they need. Lawyers say some have not seen social workers who can reunite

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them with family in the U.S.

"As it currently stands with a lot of these emergency intake sites, children are going in and there's no way out," said Leecia Welch, senior director of legal advocacy and child welfare at the National Center for Youth Law. "They're complete dead ends."

Both Donald Trump and Barack Obama faced similar upticks in Central American children crossing the border alone in 2019 and 2014. The numbers have now reached historic highs amid economic fallout from the pandemic, storms in Central America and the feeling among migrants that Biden is more welcoming than his predecessor.

The Trump administration had predicted the strain on capacity, documents show. Projections from a former top official in the U.S. Health and Human Services Department, which cares for migrant children until they're reunited with family, said the agency would run out beds by mid-January or early February. On Feb. 22, the Biden administration reopened a tent facility used during previous increases as smaller shelters ran out of beds.

The Border Patrol encountered 18,663 unaccompanied children in March, the highest monthly total on record, well above previous highs of 11,475 in May 2019 and 10,620 in June 2014.

The number of children in custody rose after eight months of expulsions that began in March 2020, when Trump invoked a section of an obscure public health law amid the pandemic. More than 15,000 unaccompanied children were expelled between April and November last year, according to government figures.

In response to a 2019 uptick in crossings, the Trump administration had increased the number of beds in small and medium-size shelters that are better prepared to handle family reunifications — to 13,000 by early 2020.

But pandemic restrictions brought down actual capacity to 7,800 beds by November, said Mark Greenberg, who was acting assistant secretary for the Administration of Children and Families at U.S. Health and Human Services during Obama's second term and part of Biden's transition team. A February government tally had it at 7,100 beds.

"Throughout 2020, they didn't rebuild capacity," Greenberg said of the Trump administration. "For much of last year, the number of children in custody was very low, and they had 8,000 available beds, and the government was expelling children at the border. It was in that context that they didn't rebuild the loss of supply."

During the last months of Trump's term, unaccompanied minors were allowed to stay after a federal judge ruled in November that the government couldn't use the pandemic as a reason to expel them. In January, an appeals court said the government could resume the practice, but Biden decided against it.

The numbers quickly rose under Biden, who ended other Trump policies, including one that made asylum-seekers wait in Mexico for court hearings in the U.S.

Jonathan H. Hayes, who directed Health and Human Services' Office of Refugee Resettlement from February 2019 to March 2020, said the Biden administration needed to listen to estimates on capacity needs before undoing Trump's policies.

Projections of arrivals threatened to strain the system and should have prompted officials to hit pause, considering the time it takes to get licensed shelters up and running, Hayes said.

It took longer than usual after protests in 2018 and 2019 turned the public against Health and Human Services, Hayes said, referring to demonstrations outside facilities that housed migrant children separated from their parents under Trump's "zero tolerance" policy.

Opening shelters for unaccompanied minors normally took four to six months as the government acquired state licenses and local permits. But in 2019, it was taking anywhere from nine to 12 months because of community pushback.

"We had Democrats, state and local officials who didn't want to cooperate because in their minds they had bought into this idea that kids were in cages in HHS," Hayes said.

Recent federal court filings show the problems that Health and Human Services faces as the number of children rises.

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The challenge "will likely increase in severity in the coming weeks and months," Cindy Huang, director of HHS' Office of Refugee Resettlement, wrote last week. She said the agency is prioritizing moving children out of border authorities' custody, relying on the growing network of large emergency venues run by private contractors.

Setting up the sites has cut in half the number of unaccompanied minors in U.S. Customs and Border Protection custody to 2,500, down from 5,000 in late March. But the transfers are severely straining Health and Human Services resources.

The first week of April, 5,000 children were transferred to HHS sites or shelters, but only about 2,000 were released to relatives, according to government figures. This was after already reducing the average length of stay in HHS custody from 51 days in October to 35 in March and instituting measures to speed up releases, such as flying children to their families.

HHS spokesman Mark Weber said the Biden administration has taken "aggressive actions" to expedite transfers out of Border Patrol facilities and shorten stays at the large emergency sites.

"They're just not able to keep pace with the need," said Wendy Young, president of Kids in Need of Defense, which provides legal services to immigrant children. "We are not thrilled by the fact they're using these mega ad hoc emergency facilities, but I will say better to have kids there than a Border Patrol situation, or in Mexico."

Eleven emergency sites have opened since mid-March. At two recently visited by attorneys, children said they had not met with case managers tasked with reuniting them with family.

Attorneys have long pressed for expanding HHS' capacity to vet sponsors and prepare children to be released promptly — not continually add more bed space to keep them detained, said Peter Schey, president and executive director of the Center for Human Rights and Constitutional Law.

"Had they done that, this entire crisis could have easily been avoided," he said. "The solution was to pour a lot more money into case managers."

Students' struggles pushed Peru teacher to run for president

By FRANKLIN BRICEÑO and REGINA GARCIA CANO Associated Press

CHUGUR, Peru (AP) — As schools across Peru closed due to the coronavirus pandemic, Pedro Castillo tried to find a way to keep classes going for his 20 fifth- and sixth-grade students. But in his impoverished rural community deep in the Andes, his efforts were futile.

Seventeen of the students didn't even have access to a cellphone. Tablets promised by the government never arrived.

"I called my students who have a basic cellphone, and the father answers you from the farm. You cannot connect with the child," he said. "You call again in the afternoon or evening. The children don't answer because they are exhausted in bed."

"Where is the state?" Castillo, 51, told The Associated Press after a day of planting sweet potatoes on his own land.

It was the last straw for Castillo, who over 25 years had seen his students struggle in crumbling schools where teachers also cook, sweep floors and file paperwork. He'd already dabbled in activism with the local teachers' union and helped lead a national strike in 2017. But now he went further, tossing his name into a crowd of 18 candidates in Peru's presidential election.

Defying the polls, the elementary school teacher came first in the April 11 voting, albeit with less than 20% of the overall vote. The stunning result gave him a place in June's presidential runoff against Keiko Fujimori, one of Peru's most established political figures and the daughter of former president Alberto Fujimori. It is her third attempt to become president.

Castillo's unlikely campaign comes at a turbulent time for the South American nation that has suffered like few others from the COVID-19 pandemic. It recently ran through three presidents in a week after one was removed by congress over corruption allegations. Every president of the past 36 years has been ensnared in corruption allegations, some imprisoned. One died by suicide before police could arrest him.

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Fujimori herself has been imprisoned as part of a graft investigation though she was later released. And her father Alberto, who governed between 1990 and 2000, is serving a 25-year sentence for corruption and the killings of 25 people. She has promised to free him should she win.

The two candidates have had dramatically different lives.

While Fujimori's father himself was a political outsider when he won office, his daughter grew up in the halls of power. She attended Boston University and got a master's from Columbia University in the United States. She later served as first lady during her father's last six years in office.

Castillo is the son of illiterate peasants, the third of nine children. While he went on to complete a degree in educational psychology at Peru's César Vallejo University, he still lives in the country's third poorest district, his home surrounded by cypress trees, cornfields, pigs and cows.

He wears ponchos, straw hats and sandals made from leftover tires. When he walks through rural areas, people run to shake his hand.

"He is my neighbor, he is good people, he talks to us wherever he is," said Emelina Medina, 70, who was shucking corn at her home a few blocks from Castillo's house.

He also made a favorable impression on 31-year-old Elizabeth Altamirano, though she said she doesn't know him personally.

"He is in favor of the countryside. We have not finished primary school, we have not had the ability to eat good food," she said. "He is a peasant, a teacher. Politicians have only come to the (presidential) palace to profit, while we live in misery."

Castillo's politics mingle a nationalist, agrarian leftism with socially conservative impulses. He is Catholic and his wife, Lilia Paredes, a rural teacher like him, and his two children are evangelical. He has expressed opposition to same-sex marriage and has said that for him abortion and LGBT issues "are not a priority."

He has proposed nationalizing mining, oil and energy sectors as well as deporting all immigrants living in the country illegally who commit crimes, a move aimed largely at the wave of Venezuelans who have sought refuge from their country's crisis.

His chances of enacting his policies are uncertain. He would face a deeply divided unicameral congress that was newly elected on April 11. At the moment, his party has 37 of the 130 seats though the electoral counting to determine how many seats each party gets has not yet concluded.

It is also very much up in the air his chance of winning the June runoff against Fujimori. He received roughly 19% support in the first round of voting and she about 13%, leaving a vast sector of the electorate that supported neither.

His proposals to nationalize broad sectors of the economy have alarmed many in Peru, including business interests.

Peruvian Nobel Prize laureate for literature Mario Vargas Llosa, a longtime critic of Keiko Fujimori and her father, in a column published Saturday in the newspaper *El País*, warned that if Castillo wins in June, Peru will become like crisis-wracked Venezuela.

"It is an unprecedented danger, the daughter of pure ignorance," wrote Vargas Llosa, who lost Peru's 1990 presidential election to Alberto Fujimori. He urged people to support Keiko Fujimori as "the lesser evil."

Whoever wins the runoff will have to cope with the economic hammer-blow of the pandemic, which prompted a lockdown of more than 100 days that left about 7 million people unemployed.

The country has recorded more than 1.6 million confirmed cases and over 56,400 deaths from COVID, and rising death counts recently forced the return of lockdowns.

According to data collected by Johns Hopkins University, only 1.48% of the population has been fully vaccinated, undermining hopes for a quick recovery from the pandemic.

Unlike former Bolivian President Evo Morales - an Indigenous former coca growers' union leader to whom he has been compared - Castillo has held no public office before this run for the presidency. Morales held a seat in Bolivia's Chamber of Deputies before becoming president.

Castillo's lone "political post" was leading the 55-day teachers' strike for better pay. He was an active rural teacher until 2020. Even with the campaign entering a critical phase, Castillo has continued to work on his farm in Chugur, hundreds of miles north of Lima, the capital.

"When you go out to ask for rights, they say that you are a terrorist," said Castillo, apparently referring

to unsupported allegations by some Peruvian media outlets that has ties to the country's Maoist Shining Path rebel group.

"I know the country and they will not be able to shut me up," he said. "The terrorists are hunger and misery, abandonment, inequality, injustice."

GOP White House hopefuls move forward as Trump considers run

By JILL COLVIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Less than three months after former President Donald Trump left the White House, the race to succeed him atop the Republican Party is already beginning.

Trump's former secretary of state, Mike Pompeo, has launched an aggressive schedule, visiting states that will play a pivotal role in the 2024 primaries, and he has signed a contract with Fox News Channel. Mike Pence, Trump's former vice president, has started a political advocacy group, finalized a book deal and later this month will give his first speech since leaving office in South Carolina. And Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis has been courting donors, including in Trump's backyard, with a prominent speaking slot before the former president at a GOP fundraising retreat dinner this month at Mar-a-Lago, the Florida resort where Trump now lives.

Trump ended his presidency with such a firm grip on Republican voters that party leaders fretted he would freeze the field of potential 2024 candidates, delaying preparations as he teased another run. Instead, many Republicans with national ambitions are openly laying the groundwork for campaigns as Trump continues to mull his own plans.

They're raising money, making hires and working to bolster their name recognition. The moves reflect both the fervor in the party to reclaim the White House and the reality that mounting a modern presidential campaign is a yearslong endeavor.

"You build the ark before it rains," said Michael Steel, a Republican strategist who worked for Jeb Bush's presidential 2016 campaign, among others. "They're going to do the things they need to do if he decides not to run."

Trump, at least for now, is giving them plenty of leeway, convinced they pose little threat to his own ambitions.

"It's a free country. Folks can do what they want," Trump adviser Jason Miller said in response to the moves. "But," he added, "if President Trump does decide to run in 2024, the nomination will be his if you're paying any attention to public polling of Republican voters."

Polling does indeed show that Trump remains a commanding figure among GOP voters, despite his loss in November to Democrat Joe Biden. Republican leaders, including those who may hope to someday succeed him, have been careful to tend to his ego and make clear they have no plans to challenge his standing.

Florida Sen. Rick Scott, the chairman of the National Republican Senatorial Committee, last weekend awarded Trump a new "Champion for Freedom Award," which the group publicized — complete with a photo of a smiling, golf-attired Trump holding a small, gleaming cup — even after the former president went after Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky in a profanity-laden speech.

A day later, former South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley, considered a top-tier 2024 candidate, told The Associated Press that she will sit out the race if Trump runs again.

"I would not run if President Trump ran, and I would talk to him about it," she said in Orangeburg, South Carolina. "That's something that we'll have a conversation about at some point, if that decision is something that has to be made."

The deference is, in part, an acknowledgement of Trump's continued power. Even out of office and without his Twitter megaphone, Trump remains deeply popular with the GOP base and is bolstered by an \$85 million war chest that can be shared with endorsed candidates, spent on advertising and used to fund travel and pay for polling and consultants.

Trump is making plans to soon increase his visibility, with aides discussing options to hold rallies as soon as late spring or summer. "There's a pretty strong demand out there to get President Trump on the road,"

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Miller said.

Many Republicans acknowledge Trump would leap to the front of the pack if he chooses to mount a bid to become the only president other than Grover Cleveland to serve two nonconsecutive terms. Still, there is deep skepticism in many corners of the party that Trump will run again.

While people close to him insist he is serious, many see Trump's continued flirtations as a means to maintain relevance as he has settled into a comfortable post-White House life. At Mar-a-Lago in Palm Beach, he's courted by candidates and met by rounds of applause and standing ovations whenever he enters the dining room.

In the meantime, other could-be-candidates are making moves, even as many of their aides insist their focus is squarely on next year's congressional elections and helping Republicans win back control of the House and Senate.

Jeff Kaufmann, the chair of the Iowa Republican party, said the activity in his state has begun even earlier this year than in the past two election cycles, with every candidate on his potential 2024 list having already visited or thinking of visiting the first state on the GOP nominating calendar.

"I know of no one — honestly no one — that is hesitating to come out," he said. "Now some are a little more subtle than others, but that may not necessarily be tied to Donald Trump. That may be just tied into their campaign style and not wanting to get too far ahead of their skis until they see if they have any traction whatsoever."

Pompeo, arguably the most aggressive to date, is among those who have already spent time in Iowa, as well as New Hampshire, and this week past he addressed Rabbi Shmuley Boteach's World Values Network in New York, where he was introduced by video by Republican megadonor Miriam Adelson. And on Saturday, he headlined the Palm Beach County Republican Party's annual Lincoln Day dinner at Mar-a-Lago along with Scott and DeSantis.

DeSantis, who is up for reelection next year, recently hired a top Republican strategist who served as executive director of the Republican Governors Association. DeSantis also has been using the race to build a deep fundraising network that could support him if he chooses to run nationally.

The party, which for a time appeared to be paralyzed by division, has grown more united in its opposition to Biden, even as Trump continues to spar with McConnell and works to defeat incumbents who voted for his impeachment. Republicans in Congress have found common cause railing against Biden's border policies, voting against his COVID-19 relief bill and pushing for new restrictions on voting, while railing against corporate interference in the voting rights debate.

"I think you would find broad agreement in our party that we need to be having the debate about policy," said Rep. Liz Cheney, R-Wyoming, the No. 3 House Republican, who continues to face enormous backlash after voting for Trump's impeachment. "We need to be talking about policy," she said while speaking to Georgetown University's Institute of Politics and Public Service last week.

Regardless of Trump's ultimate decision, his critics and acolytes alike say they see the future of the party as dependent on maintaining their appeal to Trump voters, while at the same time winning back the suburban voters who abandoned them last fall.

"I think everyone's trying to find that magic combination of 'Trump-plus,' of continuing to appeal to the new voters that President Trump brought to the Republican coalition while also bringing back some of the college-educated suburban folks that were repelled by his antics," said Steel.

Refugees win rare victory in landmark Serbia pushback ruling

By JOVANA GEC Associated Press

BELGRADE, Serbia (AP) — Hamid Ahmadi still can feel the cold of the February night when Serbian police left him and two dozen other refugees in a forest.

Crammed into a police van, the refugees from Afghanistan thought they were headed to an asylum-seekers' camp in eastern Serbia. Instead, they were ordered out near the country's border with Bulgaria in the middle of that night four years ago. In below-freezing temperatures and desperately in need of help,

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they had no choice but to head to Bulgaria — the country they had left just a day earlier.

"I will not forget it as long as I live," said Ahmadi, who was 17 at the time and now lives in Germany. "Even after a period of good life and stability, one cannot forget the tough times."

The Serbian border police had engaged in a pushback, or collective expulsion, one of many such actions along the travel routes used by migrants and refugees trying to reach Western Europe. But unlike most such illegal deportations, the officers' actions in February 2017 resulted in the Afghan refugees winning an unprecedented legal victory in Serbia's highest court.

The Balkan country's Constitutional Court ruled in December that the border control officers unlawfully deported the refugees and violated their rights. The court also ordered Serbian authorities to pay the 17 members of the group who brought the lawsuit 1,000 euros (\$1,180) each in compensation.

"The importance of this verdict is immense for Serbia," said Belgrade lawyer Nikola Kovacevic, who represented the refugees in the case. It sends a "clear message to state authorities to harmonize their border practices with domestic and international law."

The ruling is a rare official acknowledgment that countries in Europe conduct pushbacks in violation of European Union and international laws which ban forcibly returning people to other countries without looking into their individual circumstances or allowing them to apply for asylum.

Although refugees and economic migrants passing through the Balkans regularly give accounts of the practice, authorities routinely deny that their agencies carry out pushbacks, which are difficult to prove and mostly go unpunished.

Turned back and forth at various borders, people fleeing war and poverty spend months, if not years, on the road, exposed to harsh conditions and danger in the hands of people-smugglers and human traffickers. Sometimes, refugees and migrants are sent back over two or three borders it had taken them months to cross.

Human rights groups have called repeatedly for governments to uphold their responsibilities involving refugee rights and accused the European Union of turning a blind eye to the illegal activity taking place at its doorstep.

The United Nations mission in Bosnia called this month for urgent action to halt pushbacks along EU member Croatia's border with Bosnia after a U.N. team encountered 50 men with wounds on their bodies who reported authorities pushed them back and took their possessions away when they tried to enter Croatia.

According to the U.N. refugee agency's office in Serbia and its partners, 25,180 people were pushed back into Serbia from Croatia, Bosnia, Hungary and Romania last year.

Kovacevic, the lawyer in Serbia, said collective expulsions became increasingly common after the EU and Turkey made a 2016 agreement intended to curb migration to Europe. More than a million people from the Middle East, Africa and Asia had streamed to the continent the year before. The agreement called for Turkey to control the flow of people departing its territory in exchange for aid for the large number of Syrian refugees in Turkey, as well as other incentives.

"All the borders have introduced the practice of systematic violations of the ban on collective expulsions," Kovacevic said. "But at least now in Serbia, this was officially confirmed, not by a non-government organization, local or foreign, but the highest authority for protection of human rights."

To hide any evidence of wrongdoing, border control officers routinely strip refugees of mobile phones or documents. In the case of Ahmadi and the others, a clear trace of evidence was left behind thanks to what Kovacevic said was the "blatant arrogance" of the Serbian police who "thought they could do whatever they wanted."

It started on Feb. 2, 2017, when 25 migrants, including nine children, were caught at the border with Bulgaria and brought to a nearby police station in Serbia. They were kept for hours in a basement room, then taken before a judge to face charges of illegally crossing the border. The judge, however, ruled that the group should be treated as refugees and taken to an asylum center.

Ahmadi, who spoke to the AP from Germany through an interpreter, said he clearly remembers when the judge asked them if they wanted to stay in Serbia. He said he was happy they would finally have a

place in the camp after traveling through Turkey and Bulgaria.

Hours later, inside the border police van that was supposed to take them to the camp, Ahmadi realized something was wrong. When police abandoned them in the forest, "I felt broken," he recalled. "I thought about my family at home."

In the pitch dark and freezing temperatures, the refugees headed on foot toward Bulgaria — and straight into the hands of border police in that country. They managed to phone an interpreter in Serbia, who alerted refugee rights activists in both Serbia and in Bulgaria.

The refugees stayed in camps in Bulgaria, some for days and others longer, before making it back to Serbia again and later moving on toward Western Europe. The rights lawyers later collected documentation left behind by the Serbian court and the Bulgarian authorities, establishing a clear trace of events that helped build the case in the court.

Four years later, Kovacevic is trying to establish contact with all the people from Afghanistan he represented; they are scattered in countries that also include France and Bosnia. Coronavirus lockdowns have made it more difficult to establish contact and arrange money transfers for the damages they won, he said.

"It's taking a little longer, but we will get there," smiled Kovacevic.

Ahmadi, who was granted asylum in Germany five months ago, said he plans to use the damages to help him and his wife start a new life in Europe. He is now taking German language lessons before looking for a job.

"This compensation means a lot to me," he said. "I will be able to buy a bed and a little something for our flat once we rent it."

Wunderkind ex-mayor to face jurors in fraud, bribery case

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — After he was elected mayor of Fall River, Massachusetts, at just 23 years old, it seemed Jasiel Correia's political career had nowhere to go but up. Bright and dynamic, Correia charmed voters by portraying himself as a successful entrepreneur who could revive the struggling old mill city.

Prosecutors say in reality he was a fraud and a thief.

Correia heads to trial this month on charges that he stole more than \$230,000 from investors in a smartphone app he created to pay for things like a Mercedes, casino trips and adult entertainment. As mayor, he's accused of convincing his chief of staff to give him half of her salary in order to keep her city job and extorting hundreds of thousands of dollars from marijuana businesses seeking to operate there.

The trial — one of the first to be held in Boston's federal court since the start of the coronavirus pandemic — will showcase Correia's dramatic rise and fall in the southeastern Massachusetts city of 89,000 that's still hurting by the collapse of its once-booming textile industry. Prosecutors will try to show that Correia swindled investors just like his critics say he smooth-talked voters into entrusting him with the city.

"My husband says it best: He could convince the pope that there's no God," said Linda Pereira, a Fall River city councilor whom Correia defeated to be reelected mayor in 2017.

Even as Correia's former chief of staff and three others have pleaded guilty in the extortion scheme, the former mayor, now 29, has remained defiant. He has denied any wrongdoing, insisted the app designed to help businesses connect with consumers was legitimate and blamed the charges on political foes who want to bring him down.

The question now becomes: Will he take the stand to try to convince jurors? Correia's name is on the defense's witness list, but it remains unclear whether he will actually testify.

Unlike many defendants who keep quiet to avoid saying anything that could be used against them in court, Correia has been outspoken since his 2018 arrest. He walked reporters through a PowerPoint presentation to rebut the allegations days after the first charges were brought, and participated in a documentary series executive produced by Mark Wahlberg about Correia's tumultuous political career.

"If I'm doing something wrong, come and get me. Go ahead and do it. But I didn't do anything wrong," Correia said in the series called "Run This City" that aired last year on the now-defunct streaming platform

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Quibi.

"I'm innocent until proven guilty and I'm not going to be proven guilty," he said.

Jury selection is scheduled to begin on Tuesday. Correia faces charges including wire fraud, extortion conspiracy and bribery.

His attorney declined to comment to The Associated Press, but has previously said the indictment "reads like a bad John Grisham novel" and that prosecutors have "no corroboration, no physical evidence, no legitimate witness."

After Correia became a city councilor at the age of 22, the city's local paper, The Herald News, described him as "a classic example of a Fall River kid made good."

Correia was at the center of a media frenzy in 2014 when he alleged that Mayor Will Flanagan intimidated him with a gun during a late-night meeting over Correia's support of a mayoral recall petition. Flanagan never faced criminal charges, but was recalled in an election that year and replaced by the county's district attorney. Correia will be defended at trial by the same lawyer who represented Flanagan during that probe.

In the 2015 race against Mayor Sam Sutter, Correia touted the app called SnoOwl, capitalized on social media to reach voters and vowed to attract young residents and rebrand the city with the motto, "We'll try." Sutter raised some questions about Correia's business, but said he regrets not seizing on the issue during the race.

"Jasiel was making the case that he was a millionaire entrepreneur when he wasn't and I kind of fault myself for not being able to expose that. I knew SnoOwl was a bust," Sutter said.

Authorities say three years before Correia became mayor, he began seeking investors in his start-up, promising he wouldn't take a salary and had already sold another app for a big profit. Within weeks of getting \$50,000 check from one investor, prosecutors say Correia used \$10,000 of that to buy a Mercedes sedan.

Over the next several months, prosecutors say Correia used investors' cash to pay for dating services, luxury hotels and designer clothes, ease his student loan debt and support his political career. Overall, prosecutors allege he spent nearly two thirds of the more than \$360,000 he took from investors for himself.

For months after his arrest, Correia resisted calls to leave office and survived a bizarre election in March 2019 during which he was recalled by voters and reelected the same night. But after federal agents arrested him a second time — this time for the extortion scheme — he agreed in October 2019 to take a leave of absence. He was ousted by voters the next month.

As mayor, Correia is accused of soliciting bribes from marijuana companies in exchange for letters of approval from the city they need in order to get a license. Authorities say Correia or associates negotiated the bribes with owners of the companies at places like a swanky Boston steakhouse, cigar bars, and a Dunkin Donuts.

"You're family now," Correia's chief of staff, Genoveva Andrade, told one of them after they agreed on the bribe during a meeting in 2018, authorities say in court documents.

In another case, a middleman left an envelope filled with \$25,000 in cash from a marijuana business owner in a shed behind the home of a Correia aide, prosecutors said. Authorities say the aide later returned the money to the middleman, saying Correia feared it was "Fed money."

Three of Correia's associates who pleaded guilty in the extortion scheme are among those who could testify against him.

Meanwhile, in Fall River, many who feel hurt by the former mayor will be watching closely.

"There was a local person who I know personally who cried to me telling me how stupid he felt that this kid conned him," said Pereira, the city councilor.

"I said, 'You know what? Don't feel that way because he convinced a whole community,'" she said.

Faith leaders across US join in decrying voting restrictions

By DAVID CRARY, JONATHAN J. COOPER and EMILY LESHNER Associated Press

In Georgia, faith leaders are asking corporate executives to condemn laws restricting voting access — or

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face a boycott. In Arizona and Texas, clergy have assembled outside the state capitols to decry what they view as voter-suppression measures targeting Black and Hispanic people.

Similar initiatives have been undertaken in Florida, Michigan, Missouri, Ohio and elsewhere as many faith leaders perceive a threat to voting rights that warrants their intervention in a volatile political issue.

"It is very much in a part of our tradition, as Christians, to be engaged in the public square," said the Rev. Dr. Eric Ledermann, pastor at University Presbyterian Church in Tempe, Arizona, after the event outside the Statehouse.

"When people say, 'Let's not get political in the church' — Jesus was very political," Ledermann said. "He was engaged in how his culture, his community was being shaped, and who was being left out of the decision-making process."

Georgia already has enacted legislation with various restrictive voting provisions. More than 350 voting bills are now under consideration in dozens of other states, according to the Brennan Center for Justice, a public policy think tank. Among the proposals: tightening requirements for voter IDs, reducing the number of ballot drop boxes and curtailing early voting.

African Methodist Episcopal Bishop Reginald Jackson, who oversees AME churches in Georgia, has been urging corporate leaders to do more to fight voting restrictions. So far, he's dissatisfied with the response, and says he may call for boycotts of some companies.

In numerous states, voting rights activism is being led by multifaith coalitions that include Christian, Jewish and Muslim groups. Here is what some of the faith leaders are saying:

— The Rev. Dr. Cassandra Gould, executive director of Missouri Faith Voices, for whom the issue is "very personal":

"I'm from Alabama, a little town called Demopolis. It's 47 miles west of Selma, where my mother fought for rights, went to jail on Bloody Sunday (in 1965). ... So those are the stories that I grew up with. I never imagined that I would still be fighting the same fight."

"There is a playbook to suppress votes, to shrink the electorate. And we believe fundamentally, as a tenet of faith, that it should be expanded so that people are included, not excluded."

— The Rev. Dr. Warren H. Stewart, Sr., senior pastor at First Institutional Baptist Church in Phoenix and chairman of Arizona's African American Christian Clergy Coalition:

"If you read the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, it talks about justice, talks about being on the side of the oppressed, the downtrodden, the orphan, the poor. And this whole voter-suppression issue is about fighting against those who would oppress people of color, the poor, people who are struggling to make it in life. So it is a faith issue as much as a justice issue. They're not disconnected."

"The reaction of the Republican Party, to the most people ever voting in the history of the United States, is that 'we're gonna lose in the future.' So it's very obvious that this is not about accountability or about ethics, it's about politics. And that's unjust, and so that's why we're out here."

— The Rev. Frederick Haynes III, pastor of Friendship-West Baptist Church in Dallas:

"We have those in leadership — in Texas government — who have in their ideological DNA the same mindset of those slave masters who denied the humanity of Black people. The same mindset of those individuals who upheld Jim and Jane Crow segregation. ... Gov. (Greg) Abbot and his Republican cronies have decided to dress up Jim and Jane Crow in a tuxedo of what they call voter integrity, but it's still Jim and Jane Crow. ... You are simply trying to create a problem for voters you don't want to vote."

— The Rev. Edwin Robinson, organizer of Dallas Black Clergy:

"No matter what side of the political aisle you find yourself, any attempt to hinder voting is an attempt to take away our greatest freedom and liberty. ... We should be doing everything to protect our greatest freedoms — and make ways for our citizens to enthusiastically vote and do so free from fear and intimi-

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ation.”

The Rev. Anne Ellsworth, priest at St. Augustine’s Episcopal Parish in Tempe:

“I am a pastor in a white congregation. I am a priest in a church, the Episcopal Church, that is famous for our white, Christian, moderate stance. ... My interest is in awakening knowledge in other white, moderate, Christian women who have remained silent or who have felt powerless or think that it doesn’t matter to them. My guiding light is a quote from Martin Luther King: ‘There are not enough white people who value or who cherish democratic principles more than white privilege.’”

“White Christian women know what it is to have our voices silenced. And we cannot stand by while other people’s voices are also being silenced. We need to recognize our privilege and use it as leverage to fight voter suppression aimed at Black Americans.”

Rabbi Lydia Medwin of The Temple in Atlanta:

“The Jewish community has responded to the call of our African American brothers and sisters since the since the Civil Rights era began. When our partners and people that we care deeply about say to us, ‘We’re hurting, we’re being treated unfairly,’ we have no other response but to step up.”

Rabbi David Segal, Texas organizer for the Religious Action Center for Judaism Reform:

“The backlash against Georgia passing legislation is actually helping us in Texas, because we’re able to point to that and organize the anger around those laws to try and stop it here. ... People of faith stand for inclusion and stand for respect and stand for acceptance and a different kind of justice.”

Pope calls on Russia and Ukraine to seek reconciliation

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Pope Francis on Sunday voiced apprehension over a recent Russian troop buildup near the border with Ukraine and called for efforts to ease tensions in the 7-year conflict in eastern Ukraine pitting Ukrainian forces against Russia-backed rebels.

Ukrainian authorities say cease-fire violations have become more frequent in recent weeks, with nearly 30 troops killed this year. They accused Russia of fueling tensions by deploying 41,000 troops near the border with eastern Ukraine and 42,000 to Crimea, where Russia maintains a large naval base.

“I observe with great apprehension the increase of military activities,” Francis said in remarks to the public gathered in St. Peter’s Square.

“Please, I strongly hope that an increase of tensions is avoided, and, on the contrary, gestures are made capable of promoting reciprocal trust and favoring the reconciliation and the peace which are so necessary and so desired,” Francis said.

“Take to heart the grave humanitarian situation facing the population, to whom I express my closeness and for whom I invite prayers,” the pope said before praying aloud for his intentions.

Ukraine accuses Russia of fueling tensions with its troop deployment, while Russia has sought to justify the buildup as part of readiness drills organized in response to what it claims are NATO threats.

The United States and NATO say the concentration of Russian troops is the largest since 2014, when Russia seized Ukraine’s Crimea Peninsula and fighting broke out between Ukrainian forces and the separatists in eastern Ukraine.

Beside contending there are threats from NATO, Russia has cast the buildup as a necessary security precaution amid what it described as Ukraine’s provocations along the line of control.

US, China agree to cooperate on climate crisis with urgency

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — The United States and China, the world’s two biggest carbon polluters, agreed to cooperate to curb climate change with urgency, just days before President Joe Biden hosts a virtual summit of world leaders to discuss the issue.

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The agreement was reached by U.S. special envoy for climate John Kerry and his Chinese counterpart Xie Zhenhua during two days of talks in Shanghai last week, according to a joint statement.

The two countries "are committed to cooperating with each other and with other countries to tackle the climate crisis, which must be addressed with the seriousness and urgency that it demands," said the statement, issued Saturday evening U.S. time.

Meeting with reporters in Seoul on Sunday, Kerry said the language in the statement is "strong" and that the two countries agreed on "critical elements on where we have to go." But the former secretary of state said, "I learned in diplomacy that you don't put your back on the words, you put on actions. We all need to see what happens."

China is the world's biggest carbon emitter, followed by the United States. The two countries pump out nearly half of the fossil fuel fumes that are warming the planet's atmosphere. Their cooperation is key to the success of global efforts to curb climate change, but frayed ties over human rights, trade and China's territorial claims to Taiwan and the South China Sea have been threatening to undermine such efforts.

Noting that China is the world's biggest coal user, Kerry said he and Chinese officials had a lot of discussions on how to accelerate a global energy transition. "I have never shied away from expressing our views shared by many, many people that it is imperative to reduce coal, everywhere," he said.

Su Wei, a member of the Chinese negotiation team, told state broadcaster CCTV on Sunday that a major accomplishment of the talks was "restarting the dialogue and cooperation between China and the United States on climate change issues." Su said the two countries reached a consensus on key areas for future cooperation on climate issues.

Biden has invited 40 world leaders, including Chinese President Xi Jinping, to the April 22-23 summit. The U.S. and other countries are expected to announce more ambitious national targets for cutting carbon emissions ahead of or at the meeting, along with pledging financial help for climate efforts by less wealthy nations.

It's unclear how much Kerry's China visit would promote U.S.-China cooperation on climate issues.

While Kerry was still in Shanghai, Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Le Yucheng signaled Friday that China is unlikely to make any new pledges at next week's summit.

"For a big country with 1.4 billion people, these goals are not easily delivered," Le said during an interview with The Associated Press in Beijing. "Some countries are asking China to achieve the goals earlier. I am afraid this is not very realistic."

During a video meeting with German and French leaders Friday, Xi said that climate change "should not become a geopolitical chip, a target for attacking other countries or an excuse for trade barriers," the official Xinhua News Agency reported.

On whether Xi would join the summit, Le said "the Chinese side is actively studying the matter."

The joint statement said the two countries "look forward to" next week's summit. Kerry said Sunday that "we very much hope that (Xi) will take part" in the summit but it's up to China to make that decision.

Biden, who has said that fighting global warming is among his highest priorities, had the United States rejoin the historic 2015 Paris climate accord in the first hours of his presidency, undoing the U.S. withdrawal ordered by his predecessor Donald Trump.

Major emitters of greenhouse gases are preparing for the next U.N. climate summit taking place in Glasgow, U.K., in November. The summit aims to relaunch global efforts to keep rising global temperatures to below 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) as agreed in the Paris accord.

According to the U.S.-China statement, the two countries would enhance "their respective actions and cooperating in multilateral processes, including the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement."

It said both countries also intend to develop their respective long-term strategies before the Glasgow conference and take "appropriate actions to maximize international investment and finance in support of" the energy transition in developing countries.

Xi announced last year that China would be carbon-neutral by 2060 and aims to reach a peak in its emissions by 2030. In March, China's Communist Party pledged to reduce carbon emissions per unit of

economic output by 18% over the next five years, in line with its goal for the previous five-year period. But environmentalists say China needs to do more.

Biden has pledged the U.S. will switch to an emissions-free power sector within 14 years, and have an entirely emissions-free economy by 2050. Kerry is also pushing other nations to commit to carbon neutrality by then.

Iran sees highest daily death toll in months as virus surges

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — Iran's daily coronavirus death toll climbed over 400 for the first time in months on Sunday, as the country, which has long had the region's largest outbreak, battles a post-holiday infection surge.

Iranian health authorities recorded 405 fatalities from the virus, pushing the total death toll to 66,732. Officials increasingly have warned about the impact of trends seen nationwide during the Persian New Year, or Nowruz. The two-week holiday last month brought increased travel, relaxed restrictions and large gatherings without precautions.

After COVID-19 cases broke record after record earlier this month, the Health Ministry reported 21,644 infections on Sunday, bringing the total count over 2.2 million. Hospitals are rapidly filling across the country, particularly in the capital. Authorities reported 130 deaths in Tehran alone, according to Mohsen Hashemi, head of the Tehran municipal council. The single-day death toll nationwide reached a peak of over 480 last November.

The coronavirus pandemic has hammered Iran for months, but the government has signaled it can't sustain the punishing lockdowns seen in the U.S. and Europe without risking economic catastrophe, especially for the nation's poorest. Its ailing economy has struggled under harsh U.S. sanctions, reimposed when former President Donald Trump abandoned the 2015 landmark nuclear deal that granted the country sanctions relief in exchange for curbs on its nuclear program.

Still, Iran has restricted business operations in more than 250 cities for a period of 10 days, shuttering restaurants, beauty salons, malls and bookstores, confectionaries and public parks.

The country's inoculation rollout has gotten off to a slow start, with Iran producing and promoting a range of domestically made vaccines and warning against the import of American-made ones amid deep-rooted suspicion of the West.

However, President Hassan Rouhani stressed the importance of importing foreign-made vaccines in a speech last week.

"We cannot wait for the domestic vaccine to reach mass production," he said. "We need to expand vaccination this spring by importing vaccines in appropriate ways."

Delights of Ramadan disappear for Syrian refugees in Lebanon

By SARAH EL DEEB and MARIAM FAM Associated Press

BHANNINE, Lebanon (AP) — It was messy and hectic in Aisha al-Abed's kitchen, as the first day of Ramadan often is. Food had to be on the table at precisely 7:07 p.m. when the sun sets and the daylong fast ends.

What is traditionally a jovial celebration of the start of the Muslim holy month around a hearty meal was muted and dispirited for her small Syrian refugee family.

As the 21-year-old mother of two worked, with her toddler daughter in tow, reminders of life's hardships were everywhere: In the makeshift kitchen, where she crouched on the ground to chop cucumbers next to a single-burner gas stove. In their home: a tent with a concrete floor and wooden walls covered in a tarp. And, definitely, in their iftar meal -- rice, lentil soup, french fries and a yogurt-cucumber dip; her sister sent over a little chicken and fish.

"This is going to be a very difficult Ramadan," al-Abed said. "This should be a better meal ... After a day's fast, one needs more nutrition for the body. Of course, I feel defeated."

Ramadan, which began Tuesday, comes as Syrian refugees' life of displacement has gotten even harder

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amid their host country Lebanon's economic woes. The struggle can be more pronounced during the holy month, when fasting is typically followed by festive feasting to fill empty stomachs.

"High prices are killing people," said Raed Mattar, al-Abed's 24-year-old husband. "We may fast all day and then break our fast on only an onion," he said, using an Arabic proverb usually meant to convey disappointment after long patience.

Lebanon, home to more than 1 million Syrian refugees, is reeling from an economic crisis exacerbated by the pandemic and a massive explosion that destroyed parts of the capital last August.

Citing the impact of the compounded crises, a U.N. study said the proportion of Syrian refugee families living under the extreme poverty line — the equivalent of roughly \$25 a month per person by current black market rates — swelled to 89% in 2020, compared to 55% the previous year.

More people resorted to reducing the size or number of meals, it said. Half the Syrian refugee families surveyed suffer from food insecurity, up from 28% at the same time in 2019, it said.

Refugees are not alone in their pain. The economic turmoil, which is the culmination of years of corruption and mismanagement, has squeezed the Lebanese, plunging 55% of the country's 5 million people into poverty and shuttering businesses.

As jobs became scarce, Mattar said more Lebanese competed for the low-paying construction and plumbing jobs previously left largely for foreign workers like himself. Wages lost their value as the local currency, fixed to the dollar for decades, collapsed. Mattar went from making the equivalent of more than \$13 a day to less than \$2, roughly the price of a kilo and a half (about 3 pounds) of non-subsidized sugar.

"People are kind and are helping, but the situation has become disastrous," he said. "The Lebanese themselves can't live. Imagine how we are managing."

Nerves are fraying. Mattar was among hundreds displaced from an informal camp last year after a group of Lebanese set it on fire following a fight between a Syrian and a Lebanese.

It was the fifth displacement for al-Abed's young family, bouncing mainly between informal settlements in northern Lebanon. They had to move twice after that, once when a Lebanese landowner doubled the rent, telling Mattar he can afford it since he gets aid as a refugee. Their current tent is in Bhannine.

This year, Syrians marked the 10th anniversary of the start of the uprising-turned-civil war in their country. Many refugees say they cannot return because their homes were destroyed or they fear retribution, either for being considered opposition or for evading military conscription, like Mattar. He and al-Abed each fled Syria in 2011 and met in Lebanon.

Even before Ramadan started, Rahaf al-Saghir, another Syrian in Lebanon, fretted over what her family's iftar would look like.

"I don't know what to do," said the recently widowed mother of three daughters. "The girls keep saying they crave meat, they crave chicken, biscuits and fruit."

As the family's options dwindled, her daughters' questions became more heart wrenching. Why can't we have chips like the neighbors' kids? Why don't we drink milk to grow up like they say on television? Al-Saghir recalled breaking into tears when her youngest asked her what the strawberry she was seeing on television tasted like. She later bought her some, using U.N. assistance money, she said.

For Ramadan, al-Saghir was determined to stop her daughters from seeing photos of other people's iftar meals. "I don't want them to compare themselves to others," she said. "When you are fasting in Ramadan, you crave a lot of things."

The start of Ramadan, the first since al-Saghir's husband died, brought tears. Her oldest daughters were used to their father waking them for suhoor, the pre-dawn meal before the day's fast, which he'd prepare.

A few months before he died — of cardiac arrest — the family moved into a one-bedroom apartment shared with a relative's family.

This year, their first iftar was simple — french fries, soup and fattoush salad. Al-Saghir wanted chicken but decided it was too expensive.

Before violence uprooted them from Syria, Ramadan felt festive. Al-Saghir would cook and exchange visits with family and neighbors, gathering around scrumptious savory and sweet dishes.

"Now, there's no family, no neighbors and no sweets," she said. "Ramadan feels like any other day. We

may even feel more sorrow.”

Amid her struggles, she turns to her faith.

“I keep praying to God,” she said. “May our prayers in Ramadan be answered and may our situation change. ... May a new path open for us.”

Some Jan. 6 defendants try to use journalism as riot defense

By MICHAEL KUNZELMAN and JACQUES BILLEAUD Associated Press

The Trump supporters who stormed the U.S. Capitol in January created a trove of self-incriminating evidence, thoroughly documenting their actions and words in videos and social media posts. Now some of the camera-toting people in the crowd are claiming they were only there to record history as journalists, not to join a deadly insurrection.

It’s unlikely that any of the self-proclaimed journalists can mount a viable defense on the First Amendment’s free speech grounds, experts say. They face long odds if video captured them acting more like rioters than impartial observers. But as the internet has broadened and blurred the definition of a journalist, some appear intent on trying.

At least eight defendants charged in the Jan. 6 riot have identified themselves as a journalist or a documentary filmmaker, including three people arrested this month, according to an Associated Press review of court records in nearly 400 federal cases.

The insurrection led to the deaths of five people, including a police officer, and there were hundreds of injuries. Some rioters manhandled and menaced the reporters and photographers who are credentialed to cover Congress and were trying to cover the mayhem that day. A group of AP journalists had photographic equipment stolen and destroyed outside the building.

One defendant, Shawn Witzemann, told authorities he was inside the Capitol during the riot as part of his work in livestreaming video at protests and has since argued that he was there as a journalist. That explanation did not sway the FBI. The plumber from Farmington, New Mexico, is charged with joining in demonstrating in the Capitol while Congress was certifying Joe Biden’s electoral victory over Donald Trump.

“I seek truth. I speak to sources. I document. I provide commentary. It’s everything that a journalist is,” Witzemann told a New Mexico television station after his arrest April 6. He did not respond to a social media message and email from the AP.

Witzemann’s nightly news show is titled the “Armenian Council for Truth in Journalism” — satirically, his attorney says. On its YouTube page, which has just over 300 subscribers, the show says it “delivers irreverent and thought provoking commentary and analysis, on an eclectic range of subjects.”

Another defendant works for Infowars, the right-wing website operated by conspiracy theorist Alex Jones. Others have fringe platforms named “Political Trance Tribune,” “Insurgence USA,” “Thunderdome TV” and “Murder the Media News.”

But while the internet has given more people a platform to use their voice, the definition of a “journalist” is not that broad when put into practice in court, said Lucy Dalglish, dean of the University of Maryland’s Philip Merrill College of Journalism, who used to practice media law as an attorney.

She said it is an easy case to make that Capitol riot defendants were not journalists because reporters and photographers must have credentials to work there. She said any defendant captured on video encouraging rioters cannot credibly claim to be a journalist.

“You are, at that point, an activist with a cellphone, and there were a lot of activists with copyrighted videos who sold them to news organizations,” Dalglish said. “That doesn’t make them journalists.”

Even credentialed reporters and news photographers are not immune from prosecution if they break a law on the job, said Jane Kirtley, who teaches media ethics and law at the University of Minnesota.

“It’s not a get-out-of-jail-free card,” Kirtley said.

Samuel Montoya, an Infowars video editor, was arrested Tuesday in Texas on charges including impeding passage through the Capitol grounds. Montoya spoke on an Infowars show about witnessing a police officer shoot and kill a woman inside the Capitol.

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Montoya also recorded and narrated a video while walking through the building, occasionally referring to himself as a journalist while wearing a red "Make America Great Again" hat.

"We're gonna do whatever it takes to MAGA," he said, according to the FBI.

Montoya told a judge on Wednesday that he works for Infowars and mentioned that Jones also was in Washington on Jan. 6. Jones has not been charged in the riot, but Montoya asked if returning to work or contacting his boss could violate his pretrial release conditions.

"I certainly understand what you're asking because this was also a news event and you work in the news or information business, but this is a line that you're going to have to be careful of on your own," U.S. District Judge Susan Hightower said.

Far-right internet troll Tim "Baked Alaska" Gionet, who was arrested less than two weeks after the riot, streamed live video that showed himself inside the Capitol and encouraging other protesters to stay. Investigators say Gionet also profanely called an officer an "oathbreaker" and chanted, "Whose house? Our house!"

Prosecutors dispute that Gionet is a journalist. His lawyer said the former BuzzFeed employee only went to Washington to film what happened.

"That is what he does. January 6th was no different," defense attorney Zachary Thornley wrote in a court filing.

Another defendant, John Earle Sullivan, leads the protest organizing group "Insurgence USA" and identifies himself as an activist and journalist who films protests, the FBI said. Defense attorney Steven Kiersh challenged court-ordered restrictions on Sullivan's use of the internet and social media.

Sullivan "is legitimately self-employed as a documentarian and it is oppressive to require that he not be allowed to continue his primary area of employment for an extended period of time," Kiersh wrote in court papers, attaching receipts for work Sullivan has done for CNN and other news outlets.

Sullivan is accused of saying, "Let's burn this (expletive) down," after the mob breached a security barrier, entering the Capitol through a broken window and telling officers inside to back down.

Witzemann's lawyer argued that prohibiting him from traveling outside New Mexico would violate his First Amendment rights as a freelance journalist. The charges against Witzemann include violent entry and disorderly conduct on Capitol grounds.

After his arrest, Witzemann told KOB-TV that others had breached barricades outside the Capitol before he arrived.

"My only goal was to get right up to the front of the action, so to speak, to film it," he said.

Other defendants identifying as journalists have been tied to an extremist group or movement by federal authorities.

Nicholas DeCarlo told the Los Angeles Times that he and another alleged rioter, Nicholas Ochs, are journalists. But the FBI said Ochs and DeCarlo are self-identified Proud Boys and content producers for an online forum called "Murder the Media News."

Prosecutors say DeCarlo wrote "Murder The Media" on a door in the building. When authorities later searched DeCarlo's home, they found a framed photo of DeCarlo and Ochs posing in front of the door with a thumbs-up.

Japanese leader asks Pfizer for additional vaccine supply

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga asked the U.S. drug maker Pfizer Inc. for additional supplies of the COVID-19 vaccine to speed up his country's inoculation drive, which lags behind many other nations.

Suga, after holding talks with President Joe Biden at the White House, wrapped up his Washington visit on Saturday with a phone call to Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla.

Taro Kono, a Cabinet minister tasked with vaccinations, told a Japanese television talk show Sunday that the two sides have "practically reached an agreement" over the vaccines.

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Suga requested Bourla provide additional supplies that would cover all eligible recipients by September, as well as to ensure the stable and prompt delivery of the ongoing vaccine shipments, Japanese officials said Sunday. No details were released.

According to the officials, Bourla told Suga that Pfizer planned to closely coordinate with the Japanese government to discuss the requests.

Japan, with its domestic vaccine development still in the early stages, has to rely on imports and has signed agreements with Pfizer, AstraZeneca and Moderna. The Pfizer vaccine is the only one Japan has approved so far.

Japan's government says it has secured 314 million doses, enough to cover its entire population by the end of this year. That includes 144 million doses from Pfizer.

Inoculations started in mid-February and have covered less than 1% of the population. The slow process is hampered by the shortage of vaccines amid export controls by the European Union.

Kono has said the pace of the vaccine shipments is expected to pick up beginning in May. Addressing concerns about the shortage of medical workers administering the jabs, the government recently revised a law to recruit nurses who have retired or are on leave to temporarily help with the vaccinations.

The rise in cases led the government to issue an alert status for Tokyo and nine other urban prefectures. It has also fueled doubts about whether or how the July 23-Aug. 8 Tokyo Olympics can go ahead.

Japan added 4,532 cases on Saturday for a total of 525,218 since the pandemic began, with 9,584 deaths.

Fashion industry evolves, as virus forces a rethink

By THOMAS ADAMSON and FRANCOIS MORI Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — The pandemic has torn a multibillion-dollar bite out of the fabric of Europe's fashion industry, stopped runway shows and forced brands to show their designs digitally instead.

Now, amid hopes of a return to near-normality by the year's end, the industry is asking what fashion will look like as it dusts itself off and struggles to its well-heeled feet again.

Answers vary. Some think the Fashion Week format, in use since the 1940s, will be radically rethought. Others believe Asia will consolidate its huge gains in influence. Many see brands seeking greater sustainability to court a younger clientele.

"The impact of the pandemic will be unquestionably to increase the importance and influence of Asia on fashion," said Gildas Minvielle, economist at the Institut Francais de la Mode in Paris.

"Luxury in Europe has already rebounded but it's only because it's globalized, only because of Asian buyers," Minvielle said. "They spent on European brands."

Asian buyers are still considered a largely untapped market, yet their wealth has recently tipped over that of Westerners. China, in particular, was already considered the worldwide engine of growth in the luxury industry before the pandemic. Its quicker containment of the virus will leave it in an even stronger position.

"In the next 50 years money will come from the East as it has been (coming) in the last 50 years from the West," said Long Nguyen, chief fashion critic of The Impression.

This could see a designer aesthetic that panders more to Chinese tastes.

Another trend that's been strengthened during the pandemic is the decision to forgo the frenetic pace of runway calendar shows.

As the virus tore across the globe from East to West, these morphed overnight from a live, in-person, sensory experience to a pre-taped digital display released online. Many predicted devastation for the industry, but houses have proved surprisingly resilient. That's because the system was already overdue a shift.

Since the advent of social media, brands have become much less reliant on traditional advertising outlets such as fashion magazines. Now, they create their own online channels, circumventing the glossies, to get their designs out.

"Each brand is a media entity unto itself," Nguyen said, calling the way the industry operates "obsolete."

Moreover, as buyers themselves move online, houses have necessarily become much less dependent on traditional sales outlets such as department stores.

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Some houses have done better than expected with the new digital format. Smaller brands, in particular, have welcomed the break from staging runway shows that can be astronomically expensive — for relatively little return.

Paris couture designer Julien Fournie said the virus has led him to question “whether fashion shows were really necessary” in the first place.

The virus saw many brands, including Balenciaga, Alexander McQueen and Bottega Veneta of French luxury giant Kering, tearing up the traditional calendar to show their new collections when it suits them — both creatively and financially. Saint Laurent started the trend last year, drawing headlines for quitting Paris Fashion Week to “take control of its pace.”

The advantage for these brands is to set dates on their own terms, with collections that don’t compete with others for attention at the same time. Yet many nostalgic critics, buyers and consumers argue that nothing can replace the physical runway experience.

“Brands have been deciding more and more when their optimal time to show is... They want to control their business more and that is their right,” Pascal Morand, Paris fashion federation Executive President.

“But this is not the end to Fashion Week. No matter what people say they are all awaiting a return to the runway and to come back to the physical experience.”

Stella McCartney, who unveiled her fall collection off-schedule last month, said that the industry has been seriously questioning the relevance of seasons “even before COVID,” as climate change has sadly highlighted how absurd it is.

“There was a moment at the beginning of lockdown — in the sky there were no airplanes, you could hear birds,” McCartney said. “Everyone was talking about nature reclaiming its rightful place,” she added, expressing frustration with the industry’s lifestyle that requires thousands of kilometers of travel per year.

McCartney said that across the industry now there is a sense that brands must embrace sustainability “in order to survive,” especially to attract the young, more environmentally conscious consumer.

One example of such eco-thinking is in reducing waste in collections. Luxury giants have been criticized in the past for burning unused or unsold luxury goods.

And McCartney also doesn’t seem to think that this will be the end of the runway show.

“I don’t think we will throw away where we are today and I don’t think we’ll dismiss where we were yesterday,” she said. “It took me a while, but I miss the energy at the end of the show, the engagement with my community, I miss seeing clothes in real life and moving, expressions of the models, the sound. That is the art.”

In Minneapolis, armed patrol group tries to keep the peace

By STEPHEN GROVES and JOHN MINCHILLO Associated Press

BROOKLYN CENTER, Minn. (AP) — As protests intensified in the Minneapolis suburb where a police officer fatally shot Daunte Wright, a group of Black men joined the crowd intent on keeping the peace and preventing protests from escalating into violence.

Hundreds of people have gathered outside the heavily guarded Brooklyn Center police station every night since Sunday, when former Officer Kim Potter, who is white, shot the 20-year-old Black motorist during a traffic stop. Despite the mayor’s calls for law enforcement and protesters to scale back their tactics, the nights have often ended in objects hurled, tear gas and arrests.

The Black men at the edge of the crowd wear yellow patches on protective vests that identify them as members of the Minnesota Freedom Fighters, a group formed to provide security in Minneapolis’ north side neighborhoods during unrest following the death of George Floyd last year. They are not shy about casting a forceful image — the group’s Facebook page features members posing with assault-style weapons and describes itself as an “elite security unit” — but on Friday the Freedom Fighters didn’t appear to be armed and said they intended only to encourage peaceful protesting.

As several people began to rattle a fence protecting the Brooklyn Center police department, the Freedom Fighters communicated to each other over walkie-talkies. They declined to say how many are in their group.

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On recent nights, the Freedom Fighters have moved through the crowd in formation, wearing body armor and dark clothing, weaving past umbrella-wielding demonstrators to create separation along a double-layer perimeter security fence. Their passive tactics are intended to deescalate the tension, preventing agitators from pressing forward and provoking the law enforcement officers standing at attention with pepper-ball and less-lethal sponge grenade launchers at the ready.

"We can keep it peaceful," said Tyrone Hartwell, a 36-year-old former U.S. Marine who belongs to the group. "There's always somebody in the group that wants to incite something," adding that throwing objects at the police takes the focus away from their calls for justice and saps energy from the movement.

Minneapolis is on edge — simultaneously watching the trial of former police officer Derek Chauvin in Floyd's death and reeling from the shooting of Wright. In the midst of that, Hartwell said the Freedom Fighters are trying to push the movement for racial justice forward, while keeping at bay the violence and destruction that often acutely affects minority communities.

"This is a very difficult time in the history of this country," said U.S. Rep. Maxine Waters, a Democrat from California who joined the protest on Saturday. "We have to let people know that we are not going to be satisfied unless we get justice in these cases."

The 82-year-old congresswoman decried the 11 p.m. curfew set by authorities as a way to tamp down demonstrations and encouraged the crowd of roughly 150 people to "stay in the street."

But local residents have also suffered from the nightly clashes between law enforcement and demonstrators, Hartwell said. He pointed to the apartments across the street from the Brooklyn Center police department, where residents have complained of tear gas streaming into their homes.

The Freedom Fighters formed after the NAACP put out a call for armed men to organize and protect their neighborhoods from looting and arson following Floyd's death. Hartwell said groups of white people had come into predominantly Black communities and harassed children.

They have also formed relationships with the city government and police department. City spokeswoman Sarah McKenzie said there are several "formal and informal relationships" with members of the Freedom Fighters, but it does not fund or contract with the organization because it is an armed group.

However, some demonstrators said those ties mean the Freedom Fighters act at the behest of the police and are not aggressive enough in calling them to account.

The Freedom Fighters have clashed this week with umbrella-carrying demonstrators intent on provoking law enforcement officers. On Saturday, members of the group removed a group of demonstrators who had tried to cut the chains connecting the fencing outside the police department.

For much of the night, the street outside the police department was more subdued than in previous nights — protesters chanted and spat insults towards police, but at times also danced to music.

Law enforcement also refrained from firing the flash-bang canisters and sponge grenades they had employed on previous nights. And as curfew passed, law enforcement officers did not advance on the crowd; instead, it mostly dissipated on its own.

Another group of protesters tried a different tack by traveling to Stillwater, Minnesota, to protest at the home of Washington County Attorney Pete Orput to push him to bring more severe charges against Potter. A crowd of roughly 100 people marched through the streets of his neighborhood.

One of the organizers of the protest, lawyer and activist Nekima Levy Armstrong, said Orput came out of his home at one point to explain why his office charged Potter with second-degree manslaughter, instead of more severe murder charges.

She credited him with engaging with the protesters, something she said never happened with Hennepin County Attorney Mike Freeman after Floyd died. The Minnesota Attorney General eventually took over prosecution, and Freeman sold his home after frequent protests.

But Levy Armstrong indicated they would not let up the pressure on Orput, saying, "We are committed to continuing to have conversations with him until we see some murder charges."

After child dies, US regulator warns about Peloton treadmill

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By JOSEPH PISANI AP Retail Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Safety regulators warned people with kids and pets Saturday to immediately stop using a treadmill made by Peloton after one child died and others were injured.

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission said children and at least one pet were pulled, pinned and entrapped under the rear roller of the Tread+ treadmill, leading to fractures, scrapes and the death of one child.

The safety commission said in a news release and in emails that it knows of 39 “incidents” with the treadmill, involving “multiple” or “dozens” of children, but it did not specify a number of children. It said the majority of the incidents resulted in injuries, including the one death.

The commission posted a video on its YouTube page of a child being pulled under the treadmill.

Of the 39 incidents, 23 involved children, according to New York-based Peloton Interactive Inc.; 15 included objects like medicine balls, and one included a pet, it said.

Peloton said in a news release that the warning from the safety commission was “inaccurate and misleading.” It said there’s no reason to stop using the treadmill as long as children and pets are kept away from it at all times, it is turned off when not in use, and a safety key is removed.

But the safety commission said that in at least one episode, a child was pulled under the treadmill while a parent was running on it, suggesting it can be dangerous to children even while a parent is present.

If adults want to keep using the treadmill, the commission said, they should use it only in a locked room so children and pets can’t come near it. When not in use, the treadmill should be unplugged and the safety key taken out and hidden away. The commission also said to keep exercise balls and other objects away from it, because those have been pulled under the treadmill, too.

Peloton is best known for its stationary bikes, but it introduced the treadmill about three years ago and now calls it the Tread+. It costs more than \$4,000.

Sales of Peloton equipment have soared during the pandemic as virus-weary people avoid gyms and workout at home instead. The company brought in \$1 billion in revenue in the last three months of 2020, more than double its revenue from the same period a year before.

The commission did not say how many of the Peloton treadmills have been sold.

Sikh community calls for gun reforms after FedEx shooting

By CASEY SMITH and RICK CALLAHAN undefined

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Members of Indianapolis’ tight-knit Sikh community joined with city officials to call for gun reforms Saturday as they mourned the deaths of four Sikhs who were among the eight people killed in a mass shooting at a FedEx warehouse.

At a vigil attended by more than 200 at an Indianapolis park Saturday evening, Aasees Kaur, who represented the Sikh Coalition, spoke out alongside the city’s mayor and other elected officials to demand action that would prevent such attacks from happening again.

“We must support one another, not just in grief, but in calling our policymakers and elected officials to make meaningful change,” Kaur said. “The time to act is not later, but now. We are far too many tragedies, too late, in doing so.”

The attack was another blow to the Asian American community a month after authorities said six people of Asian descent were killed by a gunman in the Atlanta area and amid ongoing attacks against Asian Americans during the coronavirus pandemic.

About 90% of the workers at the FedEx warehouse near the Indianapolis International Airport are members of the local Sikh community, police said Friday.

Kiran Deol, who attended the vigil in support of family members affected by the shooting, said loopholes in the law that make it easier for individuals to buy guns “need to be closed now,” and emphasized that anyone who tries to buy a firearm should be required to have their background checked.

“The gun violence is unacceptable. Look at what’s happened ... it needs to be stopped,” Deol said. “We need more reform. We need gun laws to be harder, stronger, so that responsible people are the ones that

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have guns. That's what we want to bring awareness to."

Satjeet Kaur, the Sikh Coalition's executive director, said the entire community was traumatized by the "senseless" violence.

"While we don't yet know the motive of the shooter, he targeted a facility known to be heavily populated by Sikh employees," Kaur said.

There are between 8,000 and 10,000 Sikh Americans in Indiana, according to the coalition. Members of the religion, which began in India in the 15th century, began settling in Indiana more than 50 years ago.

One of the victims of Thursday night's shooting was Amarjit Sekhon, a 48-year-old Sikh mother of two sons who was the breadwinner of her family.

Kuldip Sekhon said his sister-in-law began working at the FedEx facility in November and was a dedicated worker whose husband was disabled.

"She was a workaholic, she always was working, working," he said. "She would never sit still ... the other day she had the (COVID-19) shot and she was really sick, but she still went to work."

In addition to Sekhon, the Marion County Coroner's office identified the dead as: Matthew R. Alexander, 32; Samaria Blackwell, 19; Amarjeet Johal, 66; Javinder Kaur, 50; Jaswinder Singh, 68; Karli Smith, 19; and John Weisert, 74.

Kuldip Sekhon said his family lost another relative in the shooting — Kaur, who was his son's mother-in-law. He said both Kaur and Amarjit Sekhon both began working at the FedEx facility last year.

"We were planning to have a birthday party tonight, but now we're here instead. This ... this is tough for us," Sukhpreet Rai, who is also related to Kaur and Sekhon, said Saturday. "They were both very charming."

Komal Chohan, who said Amarjeet Johal was her grandmother, said in a statement issued by the Sikh Coalition that her family members, including several who work at the FedEx warehouse, are "traumatized" by the killings.

"My nani, my family, and our families should not feel unsafe at work, at their place of worship, or anywhere. Enough is enough — our community has been through enough trauma," she said in the statement.

The coalition says about 500,000 Sikhs live in the U.S. Many practicing Sikhs are visually distinguishable by their articles of faith, which include the unshorn hair and turban.

The shooting is the deadliest incident of violence collectively in the Sikh community in the U.S. since 2012, when a white supremacist burst into a Sikh temple in Wisconsin and shot 10 people, killing seven.

In Indianapolis, police said Brandon Scott Hole, 19, a former worker at the FedEx facility killed eight people there before killing himself. Authorities have not released a motive.

Hole was in possession of two assault rifles, which he purchased legally in July and September of 2020, according to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms. Police said Hole was witnessed using both rifles during the assault.

Hole's family said in a statement Saturday they are "so sorry for the pain and hurt" his actions caused.

Paul Keenan, special agent in charge of the FBI's Indianapolis field office, said Friday that agents questioned Hole last year after his mother called police to say that her son might commit "suicide by cop." He said agents found no evidence of a crime and that they did not identify Hole as espousing a racially motivated ideology.

Samaria Blackwell, of Indianapolis, was a soccer and basketball player who last year graduated from Indy Genesis, a Christian competitive sports organization for homeschooled students. Her parents said Saturday in a statement that she was an outgoing "people person" who will be missed "immensely" by them and her dog, Jasper.

"As an intelligent, straight A student, Samaria could have done anything she chose to put her mind to, and because she loved helping people, she dreamed of becoming a police officer. Although that dream has been cut short, we believe that right now she is rejoicing in heaven with her Savior," they said.

Matthew Alexander, of Avon, just west of Indianapolis, was a former Butler University student and a 2007 graduate of Avon High School. Relatives and several of his former teammates on Avon's baseball team attended a game Saturday in his memory. They carried his former uniform, No. 16, onto the field,

where they hugged and cried.

Albert Ashcraft, a former FedEx driver, said Alexander dispatched drivers to locations for deliveries, prepared their paperwork and was well-liked because he looked out for the drivers, even making sure they got treats.

"People would bring doughnuts in and he was always sticking doughnuts back for his drivers," he told The Indianapolis Star.

Ontario retracts new restrictions that drew the ire of many

By ROB GILLIES Associated Press

TORONTO (AP) — Ontario's premier retracted restrictions Saturday that banned playgrounds and allowed police to require anyone not at home to explain why they're out after a backlash from police forces, health officials and the public.

The pandemic restrictions imposed by Canada's most populous province immediately ran into opposition as police departments insisted they wouldn't use new powers to randomly stop pedestrians or motorists and health experts complained the rules focus on outdoor activities rather than more dangerous indoor settings.

Ontario Premier Doug Ford's government announced Friday it was giving police authority to require anyone not at home to explain why they're out and provide their address. Tickets can be written.

But Ontario Solicitor General Sylvia Jones said Saturday officers will no longer have the right to stop any pedestrian or vehicle to ask why they are out or request their home address.

But Jones said police may require a person to provide information to ensure they are complying with restrictions if the officer has reason to suspect the person is participating in an organized public event or social gathering,

Earlier at least a dozen police forces throughout Ontario, including in the capital of Toronto, said there will be no random stops of people or cars.

"We are all going through a horrific year of COVID-19 and all associated with it together. The (department) will NOT be randomly stopping vehicles for no reason during the pandemic or afterwards," Halton Police Chief Steve Tanner tweeted.

Ford's Friday announcement limited outdoor gatherings to those in the same household and closed playgrounds and golf courses. The decisions sparked widespread criticism in a province already on lockdown. Restaurants and gyms are closed as is in-class schooling. Most nonessential workers are working from home.

On Saturday, Ford retracted an initially announced ban on playgrounds, but added that the ban on "gatherings outside will still be enforced," Ford tweeted.

Ford complained about crowded parks and playgrounds, but at Friday's new conference did not mention workplaces considered essential, such as factories, where the virus is spreading

"What we need: increased restrictions to reduce indoor contact, supports for frontline essential workers, paid sick leave, a re-prioritized vaccine rollout for hard-hit communities," tweeted Joe Cressy, who is on Toronto's city council.

"What we got: the closure of outdoor amenities, which we need to keep people safe and healthy."

"I have yet to intubate a COVID patient who had become infected from being in a playground," tweeted Dr. Ian Preyra, who works at Joseph Brant Hospital in Burlington, Ontario.

"Warehouse worker, truck driver, construction worker ... not one of my COVID patients today acquired this at the park. They are angry and they have no voice. Shameful," tweeted Dr. Aman Sidhu, a lung doctor in Toronto.

Dr. Andrew Morris, a professor of infectious diseases at the University of Toronto, said that closing playgrounds and other outdoor recreation facilities "will hurt the very kids and their families whose well-being we have already damaged by being forced to close schools."

He complained the new rules don't create paid sick leave or improved protections for essential workers even as they allow "police to target whomever they choose to accost them to ensure they are appropri-

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ately outside of their home.

"This won't affect a white guy like me. This is going to target essential workers and racialized people. THIS is what people talk about when they describe systemic racism," Morris wrote in weekly email to followers.

Ontario reported 4,362 new infections on Saturday and a record 2,065 people in hospital receiving treatment for COVID. It has pleaded with other provinces to send nurses and other health workers.

Vaccinations have ramped up in Canada, the presence of more contagious variants in Ontario has led to a third wave of infections.

Ford said a lack of vaccines made the new restrictions necessary.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced Friday that that Pfizer would double its shipments of vaccines to Canada over the next month, with millions more shots than expected arriving in May and June.

Every eligible Canadian is expected to get at least one shot by July.

Ontario just closed schools days ago after insisting for weeks they were safe.)The new initial order to close playgrounds infuriated parents.

"The cognitive dissonance between the minister of education insisting schools are safe and then shutting playgrounds down boggles the mind," said Jim Vlahos, a 44 year-old father of two in Toronto.

"There's no rhyme or reason to the outdoor closures."

Owen Holliday, a 16-year old who works at a golf course in Shelburne, Ontario, is now out of work and said he was very upset, especially for seniors who get their exercise through the sport.

"With all the protocols, prepaid booking, clubhouses closed, masks on if riding with someone outside of household, no gatherings after tee times, golf is as safe as it can get," he said.

Black Americans experiencing collective trauma, grief

By KAT STAFFORD Associated Press

Carlil Pittman knows trauma firsthand.

As the co-founder of the Chicago-based youth organization GoodKidsMadCity-Englewood, he grieved the loss of Delmonte Johnson, a young community activist, more than two years ago to the very thing the teen fought fiercely against: gun violence.

He's also been angered and frustrated by the onslaught of stories of Black Americans killed at the hands of police across the nation throughout the past year.

First, there was Breonna Taylor, a Black woman who was fatally shot in her Louisville, Kentucky, home last March. Then there was George Floyd, whose Memorial Day killing by a Minneapolis officer sparked global protests. Just this week, Daunte Wright, a 20-year-old Black man, was fatally shot by a police officer during a traffic stop in Brooklyn Center, Minnesota — just minutes from where Floyd died. And on Friday, Pittman spent much of the day planning a demonstration with other Chicago organizers to protest the police killing of 13-year-old Adam Toledo, who was Latino.

"We're constantly turning on the TV, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and seeing people that look like us who are getting murdered with no repercussions," said Pittman, an organizer for A New Deal for Youth. "It's not normal to see someone get murdered by the click of a video on your phone, yet it has become the norm for our people, our Black and brown communities."

Many Black Americans are facing a collective sense of grief and trauma that has grown more profound with the loss of each life at the hands of police in America. Some see themselves and their children reflected in the victims of police violence, heightening the grief they feel. That collective mourning is a great concern to experts and medical professionals who consider the intersectionality of racism and various forms of trauma impacting communities of color a serious public health crisis facing America.

The racial trauma impacting Black Americans isn't new. It's built upon centuries of oppressive systems and racist practices that are deeply embedded within the fabric of the nation. Racial trauma is a unique form of identity-related trauma that people of color experience due to racism and discrimination, according to Dr. Steven Kniffley, a licensed psychologist and coordinator for Spalding University's Collective Care Center in Louisville, Kentucky.

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"A lot of cities across the country are realizing that racial trauma is a public health issue," Kniffley said, citing health concerns such as increased rates of suicide among Black men, a life expectancy gap and post-traumatic stress disorder. "There's no other way that we can explain that except for the unique experiences Black and brown folks have based on their identity, and more specifically, when they encounter racism and discrimination."

Kniffley said each generation of Black Americans since slavery has faced its own unique iteration of racism and discrimination, which has manifested into a form of intergenerational trauma.

"We've essentially handed down 10 or 15 generations worth of boxes of trauma that have yet to be unpacked, and that's what's contributing to a lot of those biological and mental health related issues that we're having," Kniffley said, noting the trauma extends beyond police violence.

In a 2018 study examining the mental health impact of police killings on Black Americans, researchers found exposure to police killings of unarmed Black Americans had adverse effects on mental health among Black people. Nearly half of Black Americans who responded said they were exposed to one or more police killings of unarmed Black Americans in their state of residence — either through word of mouth or the media.

"That effect was found only in Black (Americans)," said Dr. Atheendar S. Venkataramani, one of the authors of the study and a physician at Penn Presbyterian Medical Center in Philadelphia.

Rashad Robinson, the president of Color of Change, said the trauma has also created generations of Black Americans who have valid mistrust of law enforcement agencies. And many are experiencing further mental anguish while watching the trial of Derek Chauvin, the former Minneapolis police officer who pressed his knee into Floyd's neck.

"We have a whole set of folks with badges and guns who are supposed to protect and serve and they do neither," Robinson said. "In order to survive, we have to integrate into a system in a structure which is brutal — brutal to our lives, our dignity, our health. It has collective and long-term impact."

While much of the media spotlight on police killings impacting Black Americans is focused on Black men, experts say it's important to also highlight misogynoir — misogyny directed toward Black women. Black women experience misogynoir in various aspects of their lives but also in connection with police violence. The #SayHerName campaign was launched in 2014 to bring awareness to the lesser-known stories of Black women and girls who have been victimized by police. The hashtag flourished again after Taylor's death, prompting accusations of delayed justice in her case.

"As a mom, I'm constantly in fear for my son and my heart is broken by this country over and over again," said Aimee Allison, who leads She the People. "It really calls into question how Black women in particular, who've sacrificed so much to serve this country in terms of democracy and bringing voters to the polls, upholding a vision of peace and justice for everyone else, how much more can we take?"

Chicago resident Erendira Martinez said the Little Village community, a Chicago neighborhood with a majority Latino population, is also hurting, not just from Toledo's killing but also from the trauma of losing other children to gun violence.

On Thursday night, just hours after the video of Toledo's death was released, a 17-year-old girl was shot and killed in the same neighborhood. Martinez's own teenage daughter was shot and killed in Little Village in December.

"We had just buried my daughter, and a month later, we're burying this kid that grew up with my daughter," she said. "No mother should bury their child."

Some community organizations are working to address the trauma, said Aswad Thomas, chief of organizing for Alliance for Safety and Justice, who runs Crime Survivors for Safety and Justice, a network of more than 46,000 crime survivors from mostly Black and Latino communities. The group is releasing its first-ever National Crime Victims Agenda next week to address collective trauma.

"The tragic truth is that police violence is the most horrific, visible symptom of a larger systemic problem of how our public safety system is designed and we need to address that head-on," Thomas said. "But while also investing in the mom and pops who are on the front lines to violence, hosting the community

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vigils and interventions groups.”

Uzodinma Iweala, CEO of The Africa Center, based in New York, said sometimes the thought of what he and so many other Black Americans have experienced is rage-inducing. He thinks of the times he and his brothers have been stopped by police. Or the time his uncle was called a racial slur by an officer. And how in each instance they prayed they would make it out alive — experiences he thinks some white Americans willfully ignore.

“We’re going to need a real fundamental examination of the roots of what America is,” Iweala said. “America refuses to acknowledge that America is not a country without the labor of and the blood, sweat and tears of Black people. Until America values those contributions, it will never value Blackness as a life form.”

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Monday, April 19, the 109th day of 2021. There are 256 days left in the year.

Today’s Highlight in History:

On April 19, 1995, a truck bomb destroyed the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, killing 168 people. (Bomber Timothy McVeigh, who prosecutors said had planned the attack as revenge for the Waco siege of two years earlier, was convicted of federal murder charges and executed in 2001.)

On this date:

In 1775, the American Revolutionary War began with the battles of Lexington and Concord.

In 1865, a funeral was held at the White House for President Abraham Lincoln, assassinated five days earlier; his coffin was then taken to the U.S. Capitol for a private memorial service in the Rotunda.

In 1897, the first Boston Marathon was held; winner John J. McDermott ran the course in two hours, 55 minutes and 10 seconds.

In 1943, during World War II, tens of thousands of Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto began a valiant but ultimately futile battle against Nazi forces.

In 1977, the Supreme Court, in *Ingraham v. Wright*, ruled 5-4 that even severe spanking of schoolchildren by faculty members did not violate the Eighth Amendment ban against cruel and unusual punishment.

In 1989, 47 sailors were killed when a gun turret exploded aboard the USS Iowa in the Caribbean. (The Navy initially suspected that a dead crew member had deliberately sparked the blast, but later said there was no proof of that.)

In 1993, the 51-day siege at the Branch Davidian compound near Waco, Texas, ended as fire destroyed the structure after federal agents began smashing their way in; about 80 people, including two dozen children and sect leader David Koresh, were killed.

In 1994, a Los Angeles jury awarded \$3.8 million to beaten motorist Rodney King.

In 2005, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger of Germany was elected pope in the first conclave of the new millennium; he took the name Benedict XVI.

In 2013, Dzhokhar Tsarnaev (joh-HAHR’ tsahr-NEYE’-ehv), a 19-year-old college student wanted in the Boston Marathon bombings, was taken into custody after a manhunt that had left the city virtually paralyzed; his older brother and alleged accomplice, 26-year-old Tamerlan (TAM’-ehr-luhn), was killed earlier in a furious attempt to escape police.

In 2015, Freddie Gray, a 25-year-old Black man, died a week after suffering a spinal cord injury in the back of a Baltimore police van while he was handcuffed and shackled. (Six police officers were charged; three were acquitted and the city’s top prosecutor eventually dropped the three remaining cases.)

In 2018, Raul Castro turned over Cuba’s presidency to Miguel Mario Diaz-Canel Bermudez, the first non-Castro to hold Cuba’s top government office since the 1959 revolution led by Fidel Castro and his younger brother Raul.

Ten years ago: Cuba’s Communist Party picked 79-year-old Raul Castro to replace his ailing brother Fidel

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as first secretary during a key Party Congress. Syria did away with 50 years of emergency rule, but emboldened and defiant crowds accused President Bashar Assad of simply trying to buy time while clinging to power. Norwegian runner Grete Waitz, 57, who'd won nine New York marathons and the silver medal at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics, died in Oslo.

Five years ago: Front-runners Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton swept to resounding victories in New York's primary. Cuban revolutionary leader Fidel Castro delivered a valedictory speech to the Communist Party that he put in power a half-century earlier, telling party members he was nearing the end of his life and exhorting them to help his ideas survive.

One year ago: Canadian authorities brought an end to a deadly weekend rampage, fatally shooting a man who had killed 22 people in shootings and fires across central and northern Nova Scotia; Gabriel Wortman had been driving a replica police car during the rampage. A handful of Eastern Orthodox priests held mass for the Christian holiday of Easter in an empty Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem due to coronavirus restrictions. (Eastern Christian rites mark Easter a week after the Catholic calendar.)

Today's Birthdays: Actor Elinor Donahue is 84. Rock musician Alan Price (The Animals) is 79. Actor Tim Curry is 75. Pop singer Mark "Flo" Volman (The Turtles; Flo and Eddie) is 74. Actor Tony Plana is 69. Former tennis player Sue Barker is 65. Motorsports Hall of Famer Al Unser Jr. is 59. Actor Tom Wood is 58. Former recording executive Suge Knight is 56. Singer-songwriter Dar Williams is 54. Actor Kim Hawthorne (TV: "Greenleaf") is 53. Actor Ashley Judd is 53. Singer Bekka Bramlett is 53. Latin pop singer Luis Miguel is 51. Actor Jennifer Esposito is 49. Actor Jennifer Taylor is 49. Jazz singer Madeleine Peyroux (PAY'-roo) is 47. Actor James Franco is 43. Actor Kate Hudson is 42. Actor Hayden Christensen is 40. Actor Catalina Sandino Moreno is 40. Actor-comedian Ali Wong is 39. Actor Victoria Yeates is 38. Actor Kelen Coleman is 37. Actor Zack Conroy is 36. Roots rock musician Steve Johnson (Alabama Shakes) is 36. Actor Courtland Mead is 34. Retired tennis player Maria Sharapova is 34. NHL forward Patrik Laine is 33.