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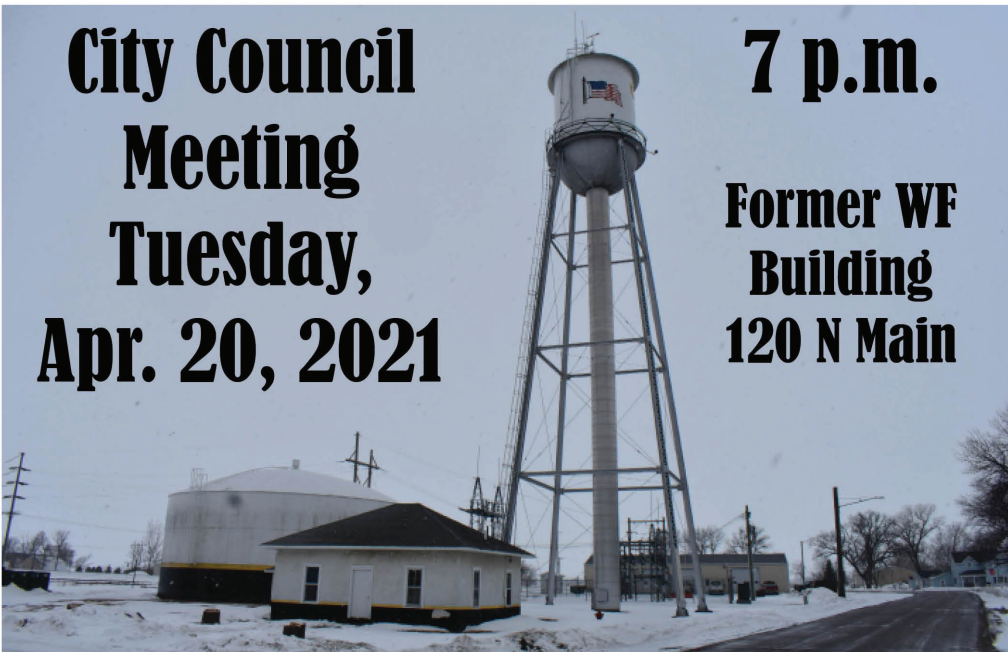
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“WHATEVER YOU ARE
DOING, LOVE
YOURSELF FOR DOING
IT. WHATEVER YOU
ARE FEELING, LOVE
YOURSELF FOR
FEELING IT.”
-THADDEUS GOLAS



**City Council
Meeting
Tuesday,
Apr. 20, 2021**

**7 p.m.
Former WF
Building
120 N Main**



Rescheduled Track Meets

The HS track meet scheduled for Tuesday at Deuel, 4/20/21 has been postponed to Thursday, 4/22/21. As a result the JH track meet scheduled for 4/22/21 in Groton has been rescheduled to Friday, 5/14/21.



OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

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Groton City Council Meeting Agenda
April 20, 2021 – 7:00pm
120 N Main Street
(NOTICE ADDRESS)

(IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO CALL IN TO THIS MEETING, PLEASE MAKE PRIOR ARRANGEMENTS TO DO SO BY CALLING CITY HALL 605-397-8422)

1. Public Comments - pursuant to SDCL 1-25-1
(Public Comments will offer the opportunity for anyone not listed on the agenda to speak to the council. Speaking time will be limited to 3 minutes. No action will be taken on questions or items not on the agenda.)

2. Minutes

3. Adjourn the 133rd City Council

4. Convene the 134th City Council – Oath of Office

- Election of Officers: President and Vice President
- Appoint Advisory Committees

5. Appoint Attorney

6. Motion to approve bills each meeting & authorize the Finance Officer to pay payroll and all regular monthly bills in a timely manner to avoid penalties and take advantage of discounts

7. Bills

8. March Finance Report

9. Public Hearing for a Package (off-sale) Liquor Alcoholic Beverage License for MJs Sinclair

10. 2nd Reading of Cable Franchise Ordinance with Midcontinent Communications and James Valley Cooperative Telephone Company

11. Land and Water Conservation Resolution

12. Revenue Bond to Finance Water Improvements via Loan Resolution

13. Revised Rate and Surcharge Establishment Resolution

14. First Reading of the Supplemental Appropriation Ordinance #746

15. Reminder – City Wide Clean up April 23rd to April 30th

16. Executive session personnel & legal 1-25-2 (1) & (3)

17. Wage adjustment for Electric Lineman

18. Adjournment



Region IV Choral Festival held in Aberdeen

The Region IV South Dakota Choral Festival was held Monday at the Aberdeen Civic Center. Students from Aberdeen Christian, Faulkton, Huron, Groton Area, James Valley Christian, Redfield, Sunshine Bible Academy, Warner and Wolsey-Wessington participated. The day was spent at the Civic Center rehearsing with the performance at 5:30 p.m. They sang the Star Spangled Banner followed by "Why We Sing", "ullaby (from Three Nocturnes), "There Shall A Star," "In Remembrance" and "Praise His Holy Name." The event was livestreamed at GDILIVE.COM and is now archived at 397news.com where GDI Subscribers will have access to it under "Other Events." The Choral Festival was held in lieu of there not being an All State Choir Event this year due to COVID-19. Dr. Timothy Woods, an associated professor of music and director of choral activities at Northern State University, was the director. (Photo

lifted from GDILIVE.COM video)

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This group features Cadance Tullis, Eliana Weismantel, Trinity Smith and Braden Freeman. (Photo by Kristi Peterson)



This group features Porter Johnson, Camryn Kurtz, Steven Paulson and Julianna Kosel. (Photo by Kristi Peterson)



This group features Anna Bisbee, Carter Barse, Shaylee Peterson and Isaac Smith. (Photo by Kristi Peterson)

**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: Joel Guthmiller

Occupation: 4th Grade Teacher and Golf Coach

Length of Employment: 1995-Present

When teaching younger students, a teacher must both educate the students about the basics of a subject while also ensuring that students do not become distracted or disruptive. While students in high school are more independent and attentive of their own volition, the same cannot be said for the children attending elementary school. It takes a teacher with a familiarity in the subject they are teaching and the ability to keep students interested in what they are saying to teach the younger students. In Groton Area, the teacher in charge of educating the 4th Grade students is Joel Guthmiller.

Over the course of his twenty-one year tenure at Groton Area Elementary School, Mr. Guthmiller has taught many subjects, including but not limited to Social Studies, Math, and Spelling. However, he does not simply provide information to students in an organized form, as more formal high school teachers do. To ensure his young audience can retain information and apply in it the real world, Mr. Guthmiller must make his information interesting and applicable to the kids he teaches. This may involve videos, interactive activities, or providing fun ways for students to remember what he taught. Starting this year, Mr. Guthmiller has been teaching students using the remote learning platform Brightspace.

Before teaching at Groton Area Elementary School, Mr. Guthmiller taught 7th and 8th grade students for a year at Pine Ridge Middle School. After that, he taught students in grades 5, 6, 7, and 8 the principles of mathematics for four years. During his time at Enemy Swim, he was the Physical Education coach for the entire school. After teaching at other schools for five years, Joel Guthmiller began teaching at Groton Area Elementary School, where he is still teaching to this day. In addition to his teaching duties, Mr. Guthmiller is the resident golf coach of Groton Area.

In addition to his duties as a teacher, Mr. Guthmiller also provides transport for students as part of his day and night school bus route. When he is not ferrying students between their homes and school or taking care of his three kids, Joel engages in various outdoors activities such as hiking, fishing, and hunting.

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.

#421 in a series

Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

More of the same. We're up to 31,761,200 total cases in the US, which is 0.2% more than yesterday's total. There were 70,300 new cases reported today. Hospitalizations were slightly down at 44,441. There were 483 deaths reported today. We have lost 567,287 lives to this virus in the US, 0.1% more than yesterday. Nothing really to see here.

April 29, 2020, one year ago today, was a Sunday, and there wasn't much for news. The US had 752,960 cases and 36,096 deaths. We were still seriously short of testing capacity. We also needed basic public health measures like contact tracing, but these efforts were woefully short too. There were over 2.3 million cases and 163,000 deaths worldwide.

As of today, all Americans 16 and older are now eligible for vaccination in all 50 states and all US territories. It is believed that 90 percent of us are within five miles of a vaccination site, and there are partnerships with ride-sharing services to help folks for whom this is still a burden to get to a site. Since there are over 50 million doses available right now, appointments should be easier to score than they were when this campaign started. Yesterday, we passed the half-way point in terms of adults who have received at least one dose.

It appears we're doing better in delivering vaccines to underserved populations. The federally-supported programs through retail pharmacies, mass vaccination sites, and qualified health centers are all delivering doses to these populations in higher proportions than the groups are represented in the population; this will help to narrow the gap between White and non-White communities. These programs have also coordinated closely with state vaccination programs to avoid duplication of effort and to target the correct pharmacy partners to extend this reach. State health officials are saying they're pretty satisfied with the balance between federal and state programs at the moment, although most would be wary of shifts to more federal control at this point. Federal coordinators have indicated a willingness to work with states to shift doses to places where they are most needed. There appears to have been an ongoing effort to troubleshoot problems, streamline supply chains, and coordinate supplies, storage, and staffing to keep the doses flowing out and into recipients as efficiently as possible. I'm sure this effort is not flawless, but it seems to be operating remarkably well for one this large and hurried.

The ranks of colleges and universities requiring vaccinations of all students before returning to campus this fall continues to grow. Yale and Columbia are just the latest addition. Their requirements are typical of those I've been seeing: They are allowing "reasonable exceptions" for religious or medical reasons. The University will vaccinate anyone who has been unable to secure a vaccination by the time they return to campus. This will significantly change the picture on campuses and in the towns in which they are located, and it should spell an end to quarantine dorms, truncated sports seasons, virtual versions of courses that don't really work virtually, and expulsions for "illegal" gatherings that used to be just normal student socializing. It even makes in-person graduation ceremonies possible again.

We can add a new species to our list of those susceptible to this virus: otters. The Georgia Aquarium reports it has Asian small-clawed otters who developed symptoms: sneezing, runny nose, lethargy, and coughing. They are all expected to make a full recovery. The assumption is that an asymptomatic caretaker infected them, and all workers are being tested as a precaution, even though animal-to-human transmission is highly unlikely.

Seems to me they're a little late to the party, but the CDC has new guidance on transmission by contact with surfaces. The no-surprise part of this new guidance is that the risk is low, and most of the time, washing with soap or detergent and water is sufficient. We knew that. They do mention that viruses will remain active longer on indoor surfaces than outdoor ones and on hard surfaces than on porous ones. This sort of transmission is most likely in the first 24 hours after infection, and disinfection of surfaces does have benefits when a household member or a person who has been in the area is infected. So you should clean frequently touched surfaces and objects—door knobs, light switches, telephones—with hot, soapy water regularly and use disinfectant if an infected person has been in the area. Otherwise, relax

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about the whole thing. They didn't mention this, but I would recommend continuing reasonable efforts at hand hygiene in public spaces because you just never know who's been through the place; but there's probably no need to get obsessive.

The US State Department announced today they're updating their travel advisories to align better with the CDC's advisories; that seems like an elementary step that should have been undertaken a very long time ago. They are still basically advising people not to travel abroad, but the CDC does have a zoned list of advisories ranging from "Level 4: COVID-19 Very High" to "Level 1: COVID-19 Low." Since the State Department uses a similar tiered list ranging from "Level 4: Do Not Travel" to "Level 1: Exercise Usual Precautions," these should mesh well. It is important to realize that the Department's list includes considerations other than epidemic disease, things like civil unrest, warfare, etc. We should note that the CDC's Level 4 covers much of the world—the entire Western Hemisphere except for Greenland, most of Europe, a good share of Asia, and about half of Africa—and Level 1 doesn't cover much besides Australia, most of China and Southeast Asia, and Greenland. It is expected the State Department's Level 4 will include about 80 percent of the countries in the world, which would comport pretty much with what I'm seeing on the CDC's website now. Additionally, it should be noted that, irrespective of the State Department's advisories, in fact, much of the world is not accepting travelers from the US anyhow because they perceive us as too risky, which is actually a good call on their part at the moment.

Joseph Cicchetti and his partner, Shirley Limburg, are retired and wanted to help people in their neighborhood during the pandemic, so they bought a used car to pick up prescriptions or groceries for people. But then as home delivery services came along, they weren't really needed for that until vaccines started to be approved last December. At that point, they realized they could provide a useful service. Lots of people didn't have a car or any way to get to vaccination appointments.

So Cicchetti spent a few months in his garage gluing dryer balls to PVC pipes to look like coronavirus spikes, spray-painting them red, and sticking them to the car's roof and hood. He dubbed the vehicle "Joe's Covee Car," and once they both were fully vaccinated, set up a Facebook page. Anyone with a vaccination appointment, but no way to get there could call them and get a free ride. To keep things safe, they require masks, check temperatures, and limit their service to one passenger at a time. They also answer questions about vaccine safety in an effort to encourage others to be vaccinated.

They're working to expand their service to other parts of the state by enlisting fully-vaccinated drivers who are willing to adhere to safety guidelines to join the effort in their own localities. They accept donations to cover costs, but not for their time. Cicchetti told the Washington Post, "We are not rich people by far. We are doing something that makes a difference. Yeah, money is important, but people's lives are really important." And so they carry on. All anyone has to do to join the effort is to get the damned vaccine. Not so much to ask.

Take care. I'll be back tomorrow.

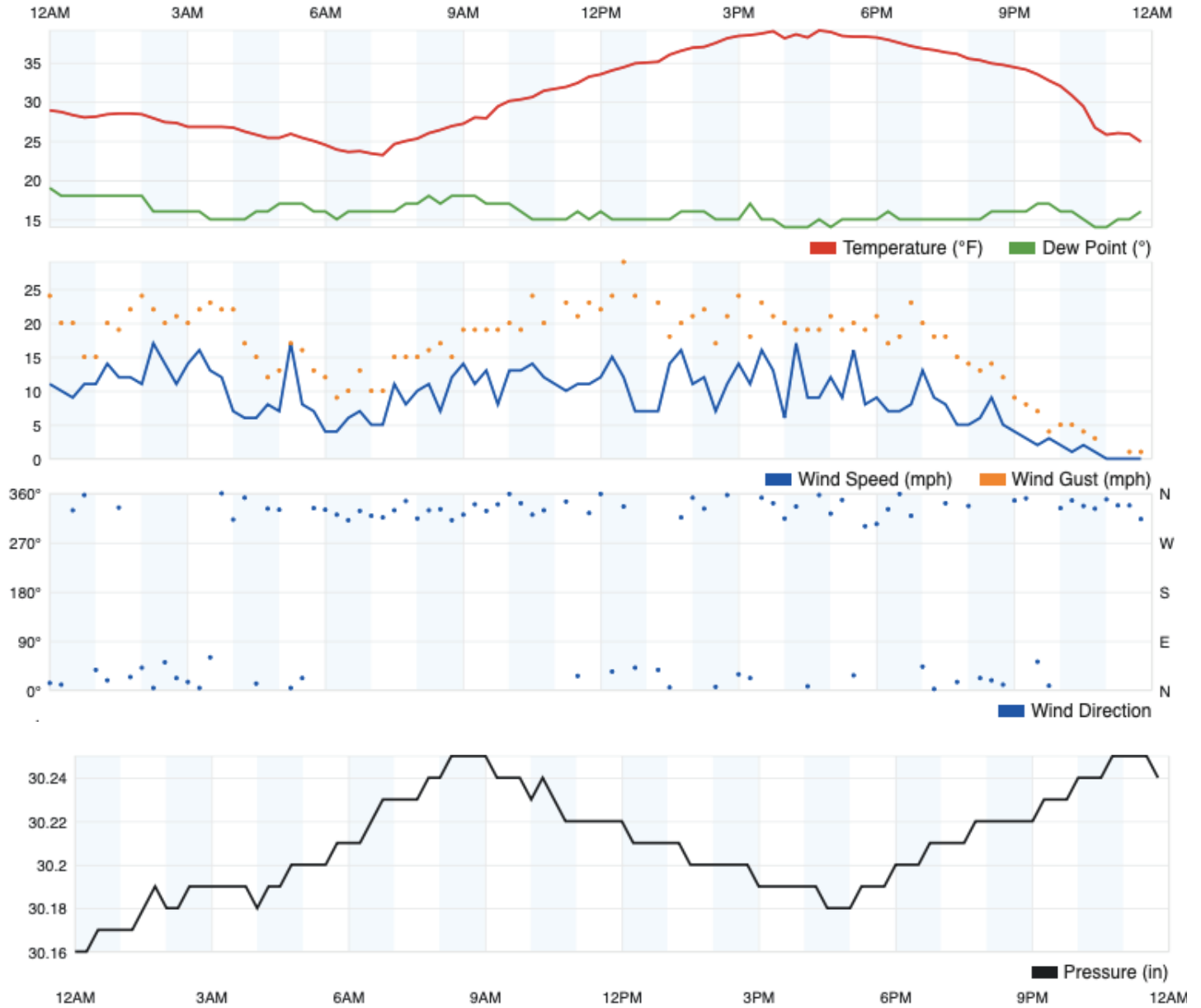
NOW HIRING

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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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today	Tonight	Wednesday	Wednesday Night	Thursday
				
Isolated Snow Showers then Scattered Rain/Snow	Scattered Rain/Snow then Partly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny	Mostly Clear	Sunny
High: 42 °F	Low: 20 °F	High: 51 °F	Low: 27 °F	High: 61 °F



Rain and Snow Showers Possible Today; Cool

Today
Rain and snow showers are possible across the area; Cool temperatures
Highs: 39-43°

Wednesday
Partly Cloudy
Highs 46-53°

Thursday
Partly Cloudy and warmer
Highs 58-63°

Completed 3AM CDT NWS Aberdeen SD 

Rain and snow showers are possible across the area today, although snow will probably be the dominant precipitation type. Visibility may be reduced briefly while snow showers are ongoing. Temperatures remain on the cool side today with highs in the upper 30s to low 40s before gradually increasing through mid-week.

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Today in Weather History

April 20, 1966: Canadian high pressure brought frigid air to the Rockies and northern Plains. Record lows included: 3 below in Scottsbluff, Nebraska, two below in Cheyenne and Casper, Wyoming, two above in Rapid City, 11 above in Fargo, Williston, and Aberdeen, and 15 in Huron.

April 20, 2007: Severe thunderstorms moved through parts of central and northeast South Dakota during the afternoon and evening hours, producing large hail. The most significant hail measured 1.75 inches in diameter and fell 3 miles east of Westport, in Brown County.

1912: A tornado moved north-northeast from 5 miles southeast of Rush Center, KS across the east half of Bison, KS. Farms were wiped out near Rush Center. The loss at Bison was \$70,000 as half of the town, about 50 homes, were damaged or destroyed. There were 15 injuries in town. A dozen farms were nearly wiped out. Debris from the farmhouses was carried for 8 miles. A senior man who made light of the storm was killed with his granddaughter on a farm 2 miles southwest of Bison.

1920: Tornadoes in Mississippi and Alabama killed 219 persons. Six tornadoes of F4 intensity were reported. Aberdeen, Mississippi was hard hit by an F4 tornado that killed 22 people. This same tornado killed 20 in Marion County, Alabama. Nine people in one family died in Winston County, Alabama.

1984: A temperature of 106 degrees at Del Rio, Texas set a new record high for April.

2004: A strong F3 tornado moved across the town of Utica, near LaSalle-Peru in north-central Illinois. This tornado destroyed several homes, a machinery building, and a tavern. The roof of the tavern collapsed, killing eight people inside; many of these people had come into town from nearby mobile homes, seeking sturdier shelter. The tornado dissipated on a steep bluff on the northeast side of the city. Another tornado developed shortly afterward, crossing I-80 near Ottawa. Several other tornadoes developed across north central and northeast Illinois, affecting areas around Joliet and Kankakee.

1901 - A spring storm produced unusually heavy snow in northeast Ohio. Warren received 35.5 inches in thirty-six hours, and 28 inches fell at Green Hill. Akron OH established April records of 15.6 inches in 24 hours, and 26.6 inches for the month. Pittsburgh PA established April records of 12.7 inches in 24 hours, and 13.5 inches for the month. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1920 - Tornadoes in Mississippi and Alabama killed 219 persons. (David Ludlum)

1952 - The tankers Esso Suez and Esso Greensboro crashed in a thick fog off the coast of Morgan City LA. Only five of the Greensboro's crew survived after the ship bursts into flame. (David Ludlum)

1987 - Fifty-two cities in the central and eastern U.S. reported new record high temperatures for the date. The high of 92 degrees at Memphis TN was a record for April, and the high of 94 at Little Rock AR equalled their April record. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - A storm in the western U.S. brought heavy rain to parts of California. Mount Wilson was soaked with 4.15 inches of rain in 24 hours. The heavy rain caused some flooding and mudslides in the Los Angeles area, and a chain reaction collision of vehicles along the Pomona Freeway which resulted in 26 injuries. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Hot weather spread from the southwestern U.S. into the Great Plains Region. Twenty-three cities reported new record high temperatures for the date. The afternoon high of 104 degrees at Tucson AZ was an April record, and highs of 87 at Provo UT, 90 at Pueblo CO, and 85 at Salt Lake City UT, equalled April records. (The National Weather Summary)

1990 - A fast moving Pacific storm produced heavy snow in the central mountains and the Upper Arkansas Valley of Colorado, with a foot of snow reported at Leadville. Thunderstorms in the south central U.S. produced wind gusts to 76 mph at Tulsa OK, and heavy rain which caused flooding of Cat Claw Creek in the Abilene TX area. Lightning struck the building housing a fish farm in Scott AR killing 10,000 pounds of fish. Many of the fish died from the heat of the fire. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2006 - Up to five feet of snow falls in the Dakotas. I-94 and other highways were closed, power was out for thousands and caused at least four deaths.

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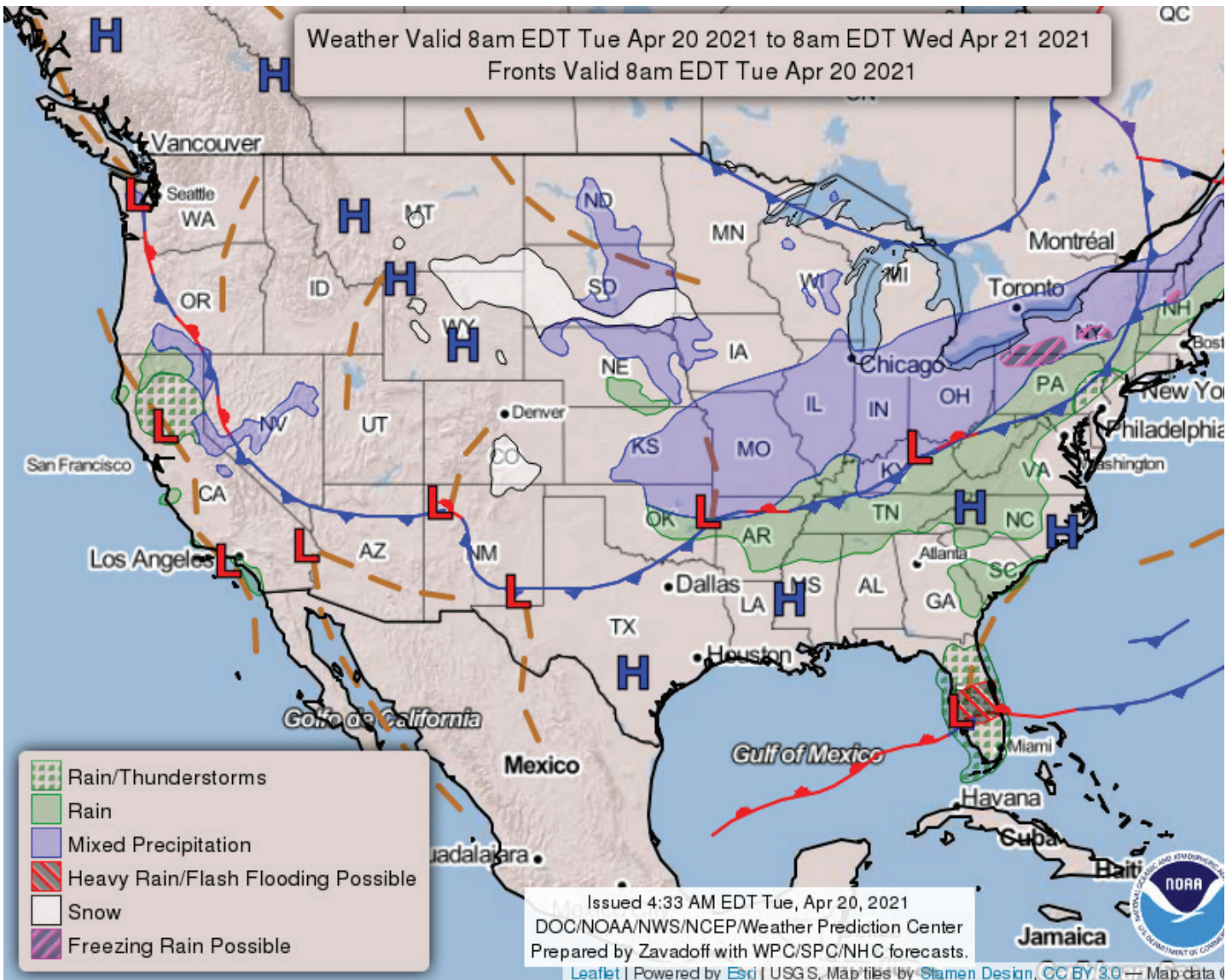
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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 39.1 °F
Low Temp: 23.2 °F
Wind: 29 mph
Precip: .00

Today's Info

Record High: 93° in 1980
Record Low: 11° in 1966, 2013
Average High: 60°F
Average Low: 34°F
Average Precip in Apr.: 0.98
Precip to date in Apr.: 2.33
Average Precip to date: 3.16
Precip Year to Date: 2.51
Sunset Tonight: 8:27 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:37 a.m.



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WHAT DOES GOD WANT MOST?

Often we deceive ourselves without realizing it. Our hearts can be deeply moved when we learn of an urgent need to do something special for our Lord. We gladly give sometimes, to the point when we have to do without. That is God-honoring and will not go unnoticed by Him. We tend to take great satisfaction in knowing we have done His will when He honors, blesses, and encourages us for our faithfulness to Him.

And no doubt there have been times when we have done this, and God has blessed us in ways that we never thought possible. Again, it is His way of blessing us for blessing Him. And heaven rejoices.

But David reminds us that there is something more that God wants from us than any gift we could give Him. He says that "sacrifices and offerings," even "burnt offerings and sin offerings you do not require." What is it, then that You want from me, God?"

After a moment of quiet contemplation, he said, "Then I realized" that what You want is ME! And he continued by exclaiming: "Here I am. I have come back and desire to do Your will. Your law is within my heart." He could not escape God's power and presence. God's law was written in his heart, and His Word controlled and motivated him.

David realized that none of his possessions made any difference to God. Nothing he had given or could give to God was of any significance – now or in the future. God wanted him completely to Himself to do whatever He, his Master, had for him to do. David, the Lord's anointed, finally presented himself in complete dedication to his God.

Prayer: Lord, may Your Spirit trouble our hearts and give us no peace until we surrender ourselves to You to do the work You have for us. Let us be Your gift. Amen!

Scripture For Today: I desire to do your will, my God; your law is within my heart. Psalm 40:8

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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

High court seems ready to send virus funds to Alaska Natives

By JESSICA GRESKO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court seemed inclined Monday to say that hundreds of millions of dollars in coronavirus relief money tied up in court should benefit Alaska Natives rather than be spread more broadly among Native American tribes around the U.S.

The justices heard arguments in a case involving the massive pandemic relief package passed last year and signed into law by then-President Donald Trump. The \$2.2 trillion legislation earmarked \$8 billion for “Tribal governments” to cover expenses related to the pandemic.

The question for the court is whether Alaska Native corporations, which are for-profit companies that provide benefits and social services to more than 100,000 Alaska Natives, count as “Indian tribes.”

The federal government set aside more than \$530 million for the corporations, but the funds have been tied up as a result of lawsuits by Native American tribes. If the tribes win, the disputed funds would be distributed among 574 federally recognized tribes both in and outside Alaska.

The case is important not only because of the amount of money it involves but also because Native Americans and Alaska Natives have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic.

On Monday, the justices agreed that Congress could have chosen clearer language in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act to describe who should get money. But both conservative and liberal justices also seemed to conclude that Congress intended Alaska Native corporations to get funds.

During about an hour and a half of arguments the justices heard by phone because of the pandemic, Justice Samuel Alito suggested it would be “absurd” for the law to be read as not covering the so-called ANCs. And Justices Clarence Thomas and Justice Neil Gorsuch suggested Congress could have chosen other language if it intended to exclude them.

Justice Elena Kagan called it “implausible” that Congress intended to leave ANCs out. And Justice Stephen Breyer seemed ready to excuse Congress’ grammar and conclude they should be covered.

“I’ve never heard of a canon that says you have to use perfect grammar, or even that you have to use good grammar when you are a member of Congress,” Breyer said.

Part of the issue for the justices is that Alaska is unique. Unlike in the lower 48 states, Alaska Native tribes aren’t situated on reservations. Instead, Native land is owned by Alaska Native corporations created under a 1971 law. The for-profit corporations run oil, gas, mining and other enterprises. Alaska Natives own shares in the corporations, and the corporations provide a range of services from healthcare and elder care to educational support and housing assistance.

Arguing for the federal government, Matthew Guarneri told the justices that the “settled understanding for the last 45 years has been that ANCs are eligible to be treated as Indian tribes.” Doing differently would be a “dramatic departure from the status quo,” he said. A lower court’s decision in favor of the Native American tribes “threatens to shut ANCs out of a wide range of important federal programs,” he said.

Guarneri acknowledged the language Congress used could have been clearer: “I’m not going to sit here and say that this is the best possible way to draft a statute,” Guarneri said. Kagan replied: “Well, I think we can all agree on that.”

Alaska has more than 200 federally recognized tribes, but many are “small and remote and not well-suited to distribute certain benefits,” the Alaska Native corporations argue. Moreover, many Alaska Natives are not affiliated with recognized tribes, the corporations say.

After the CARES Act was passed, three groups of tribes sued to prevent payments to ANCs. They argue that under the language of the law, only federally recognized tribes qualify for the aid and ANCs do not because they are not sovereign governments as tribes are. A trial court ultimately disagreed, but a unanimous panel of the District of Columbia Circuit reversed the decision.

Both the Trump and Biden administrations agreed that the CARES Act makes the corporations eligible

for the relief money. A decision in the case is expected by the end of June, when the court traditionally begins its summer break.

Victim of fatal bow hunting accident identified

WHITE, S.D. (AP) — Sheriff's officials have identified the victim of a fatal hunting accident in Brookings County.

Mark Steinborn, 62, of Sioux Falls died Friday when he was accidentally shot with an arrow while bow hunting turkeys in White.

Life saving measures were attempted at the scene, but were unsuccessful. The incident is under investigation by the Brookings County Sheriff's Office.

Rock climber rescued after falling at Palisades State Park

GARRETSON, S.D. (AP) — Multiple agencies helped rescue a rock climber who had fallen more than 40 feet at Palisades State Park in Garretson on Sunday.

The Minnehaha County Sheriff's Office said the 22-year-old woman was wedged on a cliff. Witnesses said the woman's friends rushed to help her and prevent her from falling another 35 feet (10.6 meters), KSFY-TV reported.

A bystander called 911.

According to sheriff's officials, rescue crews brought the woman to safety and got her medical attention.

Homeowners in mine collapse neighborhood appeal taxes

BLACK HAWK, S.D. (AP) — Homeowners whose houses were affected when the ground collapsed in a Black Hawk neighborhood and exposed an abandoned mine are appealing their property taxes.

Residents of more than a dozen homes in the Hideaway Hills neighborhood were forced to evacuate in April 2020 when the ground gave way. They can't sell their homes. They can't live in them either, creating a burden for families paying rent at another location.

Homeowner Stephany Fischer says her property value has gone down, but her mortgage payment has stayed the same.

"I hope that they do reduce our taxes to help with the financial burden. I feel as property owners we are responsible for our properties only this is beyond our control and I feel accountability should be taken," Fischer said.

Meade County is expected to take up the appeal later this month, KOTA-TV reported.

At least two lawsuits have been filed seeking compensation from the state of South Dakota. The plaintiffs say the state mined underneath the entire neighborhood up until 1993 but failed to reclaim or warn buyers about now-collapsing mine.

Lawyers for the plaintiffs say the mine is apparently larger than previously thought because homes and roads outside of the collapse are experiencing shifts in the ground and walls.

Out of sight but center stage, jurors weigh Chauvin's fate

By AMY FORLITI, STEPHEN GROVES and TAMMY WEBBER Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — The jurors who sat quietly off-camera through three weeks of draining testimony in Derek Chauvin's murder trial in George Floyd's death moved into the spotlight Tuesday, still out of sight but now in control of verdicts awaited by a skittish city.

The jury of six white people and six people who are Black or multiracial was set for its first full day of deliberations. The jury, anonymous by order of the judge and sequestered now until they reach a verdict, spent just a few hours on their task Monday after the day was mostly consumed by closing arguments in which prosecutors argued that Chauvin squeezed the life out of Floyd last May in a way that even a child knew was wrong.

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The defense contended that the now-fired white officer acted reasonably and that the 46-year-old Floyd died of a heart condition and illegal drug use.

Chauvin, 45, is charged with second-degree murder, third-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter, all of which require the jury to conclude that his actions were a "substantial causal factor" in Floyd's death and that his use of force was unreasonable.

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

"Use your common sense. Believe your eyes. What you saw, you saw," prosecutor Steve Schleicher said in closing arguments, referring to the bystander video of Floyd pinned to the pavement with Chauvin's knee on or close to his neck for up to 9 minutes, 29 seconds, as onlookers yelled at the officer to get off.

Chauvin attorney Eric Nelson countered by arguing that Chauvin did what any reasonable police officer would have done after finding himself in a "dynamic" and "fluid" situation involving a large man struggling with three officers.

As Nelson began speaking, the now-fired Chauvin removed his COVID-19 mask in front of the jury for one of the very few times during the trial.

With the case drawing to a close, some stores were boarded up in Minneapolis. The courthouse was ringed with concrete barriers and razor wire, and National Guard troops were on patrol. Floyd's death set off protests last spring in the city and across the U.S. that sometimes turned violent.

The city has also been on edge in recent days over the deadly police shooting of a 20-year-old Black man, Daunte Wright, in a nearby suburb on April 11.

About 300 protesters marched in the streets outside the courthouse shortly after the jury got the case, lining up behind a banner reading, "Justice 4 George Floyd & all stolen lives. The world is watching."

Prosecutor Jerry Blackwell had the final word Monday, offering the state's rebuttal argument. The prosecutor, who is Black, said the questions about the use of force and cause of death are "so simple that a child can understand it."

"In fact, a child did understand it, when the 9-year-old girl said, 'Get off of him,'" Blackwell said, referring to a young witness who objected to what she saw. "That's how simple it was. 'Get off of him.' Common sense."

Under the law, police have certain latitude to use force, and their actions are supposed to be judged according to what a "reasonable officer" in the same situation would have done.

Nelson noted that officers who first went to the corner store where Floyd allegedly passed a counterfeit \$20 bill were struggling with Floyd when Chauvin arrived as backup. The defense attorney also pointed out that the first two officers on the scene were rookies and that police had been told that Floyd might be on drugs.

"A reasonable police officer understands the intensity of the struggle," Nelson said, noting that Chauvin's body camera and badge were knocked off his chest.

Nelson also showed the jury pictures of pills found in Floyd's SUV and pill remnants discovered in the squad car. Fentanyl and methamphetamine were found in Floyd's system.

The defense attorney said the failure of the prosecution to acknowledge that medical problems or drugs played a role "defies medical science and it defies common sense and reason."

During the prosecution's argument, Schleicher replayed portions of the bystander video and other footage as he dismissed certain defense theories about Floyd's death as "nonsense." He said Chauvin killed Floyd by constricting his breathing.

Schleicher rejected the drug overdose argument, as well as the contention that police were distracted by hostile onlookers, that Floyd had "superhuman" strength from a state of agitation known as excited delirium, and that he suffered possible carbon monoxide poisoning from auto exhaust.

The prosecutor sarcastically referred to the idea that it was heart disease that killed Floyd as an "amazing coincidence."

"Is that common sense or is that nonsense?" Schleicher asked the jury.

Blackwell, his fellow prosecutor, likewise rejected the defense theory that Floyd died because of an en-

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larged heart: "The truth of the matter is that the reason George Floyd is dead is because Mr. Chauvin's heart was too small."

Earlier, Schleicher described how Chauvin ignored Floyd's cries and continued to kneel on him well after he stopped breathing and had no pulse. Chauvin was "on top of him for 9 minutes and 29 seconds and he had to know," Schleicher said. "He had to know."

He said Chauvin heard Floyd, "but he just didn't listen."

The prosecutor said Floyd was "not a threat to anyone" and was not trying to escape when he struggled with officers but instead was terrified of being put into the tiny backseat of the squad car.

He said a reasonable officer with Chauvin's training and experience — he was a 19-year Minneapolis police veteran — should have sized up the situation accurately.

Chauvin showed little expression as he watched himself and the other officers pinning Floyd to the ground on bodycam video played by his attorney. He cocked his head to the side and occasionally leaned forward to write on a notepad.

An unidentified woman occupied the single seat set aside in the pandemic-spaced courtroom for a Chauvin supporter.

Floyd's brother Philonise represented the family in court in the morning, followed later by a nephew, Brandon Williams.

Schleicher also noted that Chauvin was required to use his training to provide medical care to Floyd but ignored bystanders, rebuffed help from an off-duty paramedic and rejected a suggestion from another officer to roll Floyd onto his side.

"He could have listened to the bystanders. He could have listened to fellow officers. He could have listened to his own training," Schleicher said. "He knew better. He just didn't do better."

After closing arguments were done, Judge Peter Cahill rejected a defense request for a mistrial based in part on comments from California Rep. Maxine Waters, who said "we've got to get more confrontational" if Chauvin isn't convicted of murder.

The judge told Chauvin's attorney: "Congresswoman Waters may have given you something on appeal that may result in this whole trial being overturned." He called her comments "abhorrent" and "disrespectful to the rule of law and to the judicial branch."

Military: Chadian president killed after 30 years in power

By EDOUARD TAKADJI and KRISTA LARSON Associated Press

N'DJAMENA, Chad (AP) — Chadian President Idriss Deby Itno, who ruled the central African nation for more than three decades, was killed Tuesday on the battlefield in a fight against rebels, the country's top military commander announced on national television and radio.

The stunning announcement came just hours after electoral officials had declared Deby the winner of the April 11 presidential election, paving the way for him to stay in power for six more years.

The circumstances of Deby's death could not immediately be independently confirmed due to the remote location. It was not known why the president would have visited the area or participated in ongoing clashes with the rebels who opposed his rule.

'No place for you': Indian hospitals buckle amid virus surge

By ANIRUDDHA GHOSAL and NEHA MEHROTRA Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — Seema Gandotra, sick with the coronavirus, gasped for breath in an ambulance for 10 hours, as it tried unsuccessfully at six hospitals in India's sprawling capital to find an open bed. By the time she was admitted, it was too late, and the 51-year-old died hours later.

Rajiv Tiwari, whose oxygen levels began falling after he tested positive for the virus, has the opposite problem: He identified an open bed, but the 30-something resident of Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh can't get to it. "There is no ambulance to take me to hospital," he said.

Such tragedies are familiar from surges in other parts of the world — but were largely unknown in India,

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which was able to prevent a collapse in its health system last year through a harsh lockdown. But now they are everyday occurrences in the vast country, which is seeing its largest surge of the pandemic so far and watching its chronically underfunded health system crumble.

Tests are delayed. Medical oxygen is scarce. Hospitals are understaffed and overflowing. Intensive care units are full. Nearly all ventilators are in use, and the dead are piling up at crematoriums and graveyards. India recorded over 250,000 new infections and over 1,700 deaths in the past 24 hours alone, and the U.K. announced a travel ban on most visitors from the country this week. Overall, India has reported more than 15 million cases and some 180,000 deaths — and experts say these numbers are likely an undercounts.

India's wave of cases is contributing to a worldwide rise in infections as many places experience deepening crises, such as Brazil and France, spurred in part by new, more contagious variants, including one first detected in India. More than a year into the pandemic, global deaths have passed 3 million and are climbing again, running at nearly 12,000 per day on average. At the same time, vaccination campaigns have seen setbacks in many places — and India's surge has only exacerbated that: The country is a major vaccine producer but was forced to delay deliveries of shots to focus on its domestic demand.

Bhramar Mukherjee, a biostatistician at the University of Michigan who has been tracking India's pandemic, said India failed to learn from surges elsewhere and take anticipatory measures.

When new infections started dipping in September, authorities thought the worst of the pandemic was over. Health Minister Harsh Vardhan even declared in March that the country had entered the "endgame" — but he was already behind the curve: Average weekly cases in Maharashtra state, home to the financial capital of Mumbai, had tripled in the previous month.

Mukherjee was among those who had urged authorities to take advantage of cases being low earlier in the year to speed up vaccinations. Instead officials dithered in limiting huge gatherings during Hindu festivals and refused to delay ongoing elections in the eastern West Bengal state, where experts fear that large, unmasked crowds at rallies will fuel the spread of the virus.

Now India's two largest cities have imposed strict lockdowns, the pain of which will fall inordinately on the poor. Many have already left major cities, fearing a repeat of last year, when an abrupt lockdown forced many migrant workers to walk to their home villages or risk starvation.

New Delhi, the capital, is rushing to convert schools into hospitals. Field hospitals in hard-hit cities that had been abandoned are being resuscitated. India is trying to import oxygen and has started to divert oxygen supplies from industry to the health system.

It remains to be seen whether these frantic efforts will be enough. New Delhi's government-run Sanjay Gandhi Hospital is increasing its beds for COVID-19 patients from 46 to 160. But R. Meneka, the official coordinating the COVID-19 response at the hospital, said he wasn't sure if the facility had the capacity to provide oxygen to that many beds.

The government-run hospital at Burari, an industrial hub in the capitals' outskirts, only had oxygen for two days Monday, and found that most vendors in the city had run out, said Ramesh Verma, who coordinates the COVID-19 response there.

"Every minute, we keep getting hundreds of calls for beds," he said.

Kamla Devi, a 71-year-old diabetic, was rushed to a hospital in New Delhi when her blood sugar levels fell last week. On returning home, her levels plummeted again but this time, there were no beds. She died before she could be tested for the virus. "If you have corona(virus) or if you don't, it doesn't matter. The hospitals have no place for you," said Dharmendra Kumar, her son.

Laboratories were unprepared for the steep rise in demand for testing that came with the current surge, and everyone was "caught with their pants down," said A. Velumani, the chairman and managing director of Thyrocare, one of India's largest private testing labs. He said that the current demand was three times that of last year.

India's massive vaccination drive is also struggling. Several states have flagged shortages, although the federal government has claimed there are enough stocks.

India said last week that it would allow the use of all COVID-19 shots that had been greenlit by the World

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Health Organization or regulators in the United States, Europe, Britain or Japan. On Monday, it said that it would soon expand vaccinations to include every adult in the country, an estimated 900 million people. But with vaccine in short global supply, it isn't clear when Indian vaccine makers will have the capacity to meet these goals. Indian vaccine maker Bharat Biotech said it was scaling up to make 700 million doses each year.

Meanwhile, Shahid Malik, who works at a small supplier of oxygen, said that the demand for medical oxygen had increased by a factor of 10. His phone has been ringing continuously for two days. By Monday, the shop still had oxygen but no cylinders.

He answered each call with the same message: "If you have your own cylinder, come pick up the oxygen. If you don't, we can't help you."

Cape Town wildfire: About 90% of blaze now contained

By GERALD IMRAY Associated Press

CAPE TOWN, South Africa (AP) — Fire crews worked for a third day to extinguish a wildfire on the slopes of Cape Town's Table Mountain on Tuesday as the city came to terms with the damage caused by what officials have described as one of the area's worst blazes in years.

About 90% of the fire had been contained, the Table Mountain National Park authority said, but only after firefighters worked through the night.

Those firefighters faced "extreme circumstances," said the Working on Fire organization, which specializes in dealing with wildfires and has been helping the city's fire department. The operation on Table Mountain had now reached the "mop-up" stage, Working on Fire said.

Fire-fighting helicopters were dropping water on areas where the fire still smoldered and smoked on the rocky peaks of Table Mountain. South African army choppers had joined the operation to support the fire department after the helicopters were all grounded Monday because of strong winds.

That wind had dropped significantly, but a cloud of thick smoke still hung over the city.

The wildfire started early Sunday and, fueled by strong winds, ripped down and across the slopes of the mountain toward residential areas overlooking downtown Cape Town.

Neighborhoods were evacuated on Monday and people weren't yet able to return home. Firefighters mostly kept the flames at bay and away from homes — sometimes with just a few meters to spare. Around 250 firefighters were mobilized.

The University of Cape Town campus was one of the first sites to be hit on Sunday and appears to have suffered the most damage. Numerous buildings at the university burned, including part of a near 100-year-old library containing rare books and manuscripts on African studies. The university said some of those "priceless" works had been lost, but it was unclear yet how much.

Other historic buildings nearby, including a 225-year-old windmill and a restaurant near a memorial to British colonial politician Cecil Rhodes, also burned down.

The South African government said a residence owned by its Department of Public Works and Infrastructure was completely destroyed by the fire. The house was empty at the time but family members of a national minister and two deputy ministers had to be evacuated from their homes nearby. The fire also came close to South African Deputy President David Mabuza's Cape Town residence, the government said.

Around 600 hectares (1,482 acres) of land had burned, the Table Mountain National Park authority estimated. It said it would take days to completely put out the fire.

The cause of the blaze is still unknown, although wildfires are reasonably common in the mountains and peaks around Cape Town during the hot, dry summer months and become especially dangerous and unpredictable when fueled by strong coastal winds, as happened on Sunday and Monday.

Four firefighters were hurt battling the fire but no other casualties have been reported.

Latino groups want DOJ probe of shooting by Chicago police

By SARA BURNETT Associated Press

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CHICAGO (AP) — Latino lawyers and community leaders on Tuesday will ask the Department of Justice to investigate the fatal shooting of a 13-year-old boy by a Chicago police officer.

The group also will call on Mayor Lori Lightfoot to accelerate court-supervised changes to policing in Chicago, end foot pursuits by officers, and to invest federal COVID relief dollars to help young people in the neighborhood where Adam Toledo lived and died.

Officer Eric Stillman was responding to a call of shots fired around 3 a.m. on March 29 when he chased Adam into a dark alley in the Little Village neighborhood, a predominantly Latino area southwest of downtown. Bodycam video released last week shows the youth appearing to drop a handgun and begin raising his hands less than a second before Stillman fires his gun and kills him. His bodycam footage later shows Stillman shining a light on a handgun on the ground near the boy after he shot him.

Stillman is white and Adam was Latino. The video prompted grief and demonstrations in Chicago, a city with a long history of police misconduct and distrust between police and the community, especially among Black and Latino residents. It also came against the backdrop of a trial in Minneapolis for former Officer Derek Chauvin in the death of George Floyd and of another killing of a Black man, Daunte Wright, by a white officer in a Minneapolis suburb.

Lightfoot has said the city must allow its independent review agency to complete its investigation, but that she understands "that the surge of outrage around it is rooted in a long legacy of trauma in our city and country around police violence."

Chicago agreed to hundreds of changes in policing under a consent decree approved by a federal judge in 2019 after a Justice Department investigation found a record of racism and abuse by Chicago police, going back decades. The investigation was prompted by the 2014 killing of Laquan McDonald, a Black 16-year-old, by a white officer. Jason VanDyke was later convicted of murder for shooting the teen 16 times, video of which the city fought to suppress.

An independent monitor's report last month showed the city has made some progress on putting changes in place, but that significant work remains undone.

Lightfoot said last week she wants the police department to enact a new foot pursuit policy before summer.

The groups calling for changes Tuesday include the Hispanic Lawyers Association of Illinois and the Pilsen Law Center.

In death, long after loss, Mondale's liberal legacy stands

By WALTER MEARS and KATHLEEN HENNESSEY Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — In the last days of his life, former Vice President Walter Mondale received a steady stream of phone calls of appreciation. Former Presidents Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton, President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris all called to say goodbye and thank you.

It was a sign of respect for a man many Americans remember largely for his near-shutout defeat for the White House in 1984. But well after his bruising loss, Mondale remained a revered liberal elder — with a list of accomplishments that are still relevant today.

As a young senator, he co-wrote the Fair Housing Act of 1968, a pillar of federal civil rights legislation. He later engineered a 1975 bipartisan deal that ended the two-thirds rule for stopping filibusters, so that 60 senators instead of 67 could cut off debate.

Under President Jimmy Carter, he became the first vice president with a day job, as adviser to the president, not just a bystander. He called it the "executivization" of the vice presidency.

And as a Democratic presidential nominee, he chose the first female nominee for vice president from a major party.

Harris, who won the job 36 years later, specifically thanked him for all he did to change the office, according to a person familiar with the calls who asked for anonymity to discuss the private conversations.

Mondale, 93, died Monday at his home in Minneapolis, as the city awaits a verdict in a murder trial that has forced the nation to again wrestle with structural racism. He welcomed that debate, his family said in a statement: "We are grateful that he had the opportunity to see the emergence of another generation

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of civil rights reckoning in the past months.”

Mondale was appointed senator from Minnesota to succeed his political mentor, Hubert H. Humphrey, who resigned to become vice president. He won Senate elections in 1966 and 1972, and stepped down to become vice president in 1977. Carter lost to Ronald Reagan in 1980 and Mondale went into private law practice — while beginning his own campaign for the presidency. He won the nomination in 1984, chose Rep. Geraldine Ferraro of New York as his running mate, and was crushed in the landslide that reelected Reagan, carrying only Minnesota and the District of Columbia.

Mondale was ambassador to Japan from 1993 until 1996. In 2002, at 74, he was drafted for a political reprise, running a truncated campaign for the Senate after Sen. Paul Wellstone, the Democratic nominee, was killed in a plane crash shortly before the election. Mondale was favored at first, but he lost the election.

And it cost him one record that had consoled him in earlier defeat — until then, he had won every time he was on the ballot in Minnesota. Instead, he got another, unwanted, record: the only man to lose elections in each of the 50 states.

After his 1984 defeat to a former actor, Mondale said one of his campaign problems was that “I’ve never really warmed up to television and ... it’s never really warmed up to me.” Even his supporters said he came across as plastic and bland. His wife, Joan, said he was not a showman, just stable, hardworking and honest. “We call it Norwegian charisma,” she said.

Even so, Mondale has some striking moments on television, none more so than in a 1984 campaign debate against Sen. Gary Hart of Colorado, whose primary upsets threatened Mondale’s front-runner standing for the Democratic nomination. “You know, when I hear your new ideas I’m reminded of that ad ‘Where’s the beef?’” he told Hart, using a fast-food chain’s slogan to question the substance of his rival’s campaign proposals.

Suddenly, the bland candidate had delivered a telling quip and created a slogan that stuck. It was no ad-lib and it wasn’t original — a Mondale campaign ally had used it before. But no matter, it was a boost as Mondale limped through the presidential primaries, losing more states than he won, but steadily gaining delegates to capture the nomination

Against the favored Reagan, Mondale’s best opening came when the president’s age, 73, became an issue. The president seemed disengaged and even confused in early campaign debates. Reagan undid that one with his own quip in the final debate. Asked about it, the president said: “I will not make age an issue of this campaign. I am not going to exploit for political purposes my opponent’s youth and inexperience.”

Mondale could only smile as the audience laughed. But he said later he was smiling through tears because he knew from that moment that his quest was hopeless.

Then there was the 1984 Mondale line Republicans made into a telling issue against him. In accepting his nomination, Mondale said that whoever won the election, taxes were going to be increased. “Let’s tell the truth,” he said. “Mr. Reagan will raise taxes and so will I. He won’t tell you. I just did.” Republicans translated that into a Mondale campaign promise to raise taxes. He said he was just being honest. His forecast was accurate.

Mondale, “Fritz” to some of his friends, was a dedicated liberal. He used the label in the subtitle of his 2010 memoir, “The Good Fight.” As attorney general of Minnesota and in the Senate, his major causes included civil rights, consumer protection, education, housing and the problems of migrant workers.

The son of a Methodist minister and a music teacher, Walter Frederick Mondale was born Jan. 5, 1928, in tiny Ceylon, Minnesota, and grew up in several small southern Minnesota towns.

He was only 20 when he served as a congressional district manager for Humphrey’s successful Senate campaign in 1948. His education, interrupted by a two-year stint in the Army, culminated with a law degree from the University of Minnesota in 1956.

Mondale began a law practice in Minneapolis and ran the successful 1958 gubernatorial campaign of Democrat Orville Freeman, who appointed Mondale state attorney general in 1960. Mondale was elected attorney general in the fall of 1960 and was reelected in 1962.

As attorney general, Mondale moved quickly into civil rights, antitrust and consumer protection cases. He was the first Minnesota attorney general to make consumer protection a campaign issue.

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As Clinton's ambassador to Japan from 1993-96 he fought for U.S. access to markets ranging from cars to cellular phones. He helped avert a trade war in June 1995 over autos and auto parts, persuading Japanese officials to give American automakers more access to Japanese dealers and pushing Japanese carmakers to buy U.S. parts.

Mondale kept his ties to the Clintons. In 2008, he endorsed Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton for president, switching his allegiance only after Barack Obama sealed the nomination.

In 2002, state and national Democrats looked to Mondale when Wellstone died less than two weeks before Election Day. Mondale was working at the Minneapolis law firm of Dorsey & Whitney — he returned to the firm after the brief campaign — and serving on corporate and nonprofit boards.

He agreed to stand in for Wellstone, and early polls showed him with a lead over the Republican candidate, Norm Coleman.

But the 53-year-old Coleman, emphasizing his youth and vigor, out-hustled the then-74-year-old Mondale in an intense six-day campaign. Mondale was also hurt by a partisan memorial service for Wellstone, in which thousands of Democrats booed Republicans politicians in attendance. One speaker pleaded: "We are begging you to help us win this election for Paul Wellstone."

Polls showed the service put off independents and cost Mondale votes. Coleman won by 3 percentage points.

"The eulogizers were the ones hurt the most," Mondale said after the election. "It doesn't justify it, but we all make mistakes. Can't we now find it in our hearts to forgive them and go on?"

Years after the 2002 defeat, Mondale returned to the Senate to stand beside Democrat Al Franken in 2009 when he was sworn in to replace Coleman after a drawn-out recount and court battle.

Mondale and his wife, Joan Adams Mondale, were married in 1955. During his vice presidency, she pushed for more government support of the arts and gained the nickname "Joan of Art." She had minored in art in college and worked at museums in Boston and Minneapolis.

The couple had two sons, Ted and William, and a daughter, Eleanor. Eleanor Mondale became a broadcast journalist and TV host, with credits including "CBS This Morning" and programs with E! Entertainment Television; she died in 2011. Ted Mondale served six years in the Minnesota state Senate and made an unsuccessful bid for the Democratic nomination for governor in 1998, and William Mondale served for a time as an assistant attorney general. Joan Mondale died in 2014 at age 83 after an extended illness.

While he lacked the charisma of his mentor Humphrey, Walter Mondale had a droll sense of humor. When he dropped out of the 1976 presidential sweepstakes, he said, "I don't want to spend the next two years in Holiday Inns."

Reminded of that shortly before he was picked as Carter's running mate, Mondale said, "I've checked and found that they're all redecorated, and they're marvelous places to stay."

The Latest: Malaysian opposition seeks end to emergency

By The Associated Press undefined

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia — Malaysian opposition lawmakers led by former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad submitted a petition to the country's king on Tuesday seeking an end to a coronavirus emergency so Parliament can resume.

The king approved Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin's plan for an emergency in early January to curb the spread of the coronavirus, but critics said it was a political ruse to help the embattled leader stay in power amid challenges to his leadership.

The emergency involves no curfew or military powers but Parliament is suspended until Aug. 1. Muhyiddin's government remains in control and has extraordinary powers to introduce laws without parliamentary approval.

Mahathir, 95, accused Muhyiddin of using the king's name as a shield against critics, making many Malays angry with the monarch instead. He told reporters outside the palace gate that he hopes the king

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will heed the people's voices. More than 39,000 Malaysians have signed an online petition since March for the king to end the emergency.

THE VIRUS OUTBREAK:

- Learning to breathe: German clinic helps COVID-19 long haulers
- Asian Americans wrestle with returning to classrooms amid rising harassment
- Hungary's poor Roma children struggle with digital education
- 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:

PRAGUE — The coronavirus pandemic has badly affected beer consumption in the Czech Republic. In the beer-loving nation, average consumption per person dropped by 7 liters (14.8 pints) to 135 liters (285 pints) last year.

It's the lowest amount since the 1960s, according to the Czech union of brewers.

Frantisek Samal, the head of the union, said he has never experienced such a crisis. Up to 500 pubs have had to close permanently and hundreds more are expected to follow suit this year.

Bars and restaurants were closed for many months after the pandemic hit the country in March last year. A ban on drinking alcohol in public and the cancellation of sports, cultural and other events also contributed to the drop.

Overall beer production in the country was down by 6.9% at 20.1 million hectoliters (531 million gallons). Beer exports were down by 381,000 hectoliters to about 5 million hectoliters, the first decline after nine years of growth.

The Czech Republic has been one of the hardest-hit European countries. The nation of 10.7 million has had reported over 1.6 million COVID-19 cases, including 28,640 deaths.

MEXICO CITY — For the first time in a year, Mexican school children have returned to classrooms — at least in the southern state of Campeche.

The Gulf coast state has been the state least affected by the pandemic in Mexico, and it was the first to get its teachers vaccinated.

So Campeche is the first, and so far the only, of Mexico's 32 states to reopen its classrooms.

While it may have been good to get back to school Monday, the scene in Campeche was different from before: Grade-school children were allowed back in small groups to maintain social distancing, and they wore face masks and plastic face shields.

WELLINGTON, New Zealand — The Pacific nation of Fiji has closed schools and canceled sporting events as it deals with its first coronavirus infections outside quarantine cases in more than a year.

A soldier and a room cleaner at a quarantine facility have both tested positive, but there hasn't been any indication so far the virus is spreading more widely in the community.

Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama says Fiji is again facing a "grave and present danger." The government has ordered all gyms, bars and theaters within two containment zones closed and large gatherings across the nation canceled for at least two weeks.

Home to a little under 1 million people, Fiji has recorded just two COVID-19 deaths since the pandemic began, but experts fear its health system would be ill-equipped to deal with a major outbreak.

Walter Mondale, Carter's vice president, dies at 93

By DOUG GLASS Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Former Vice President Walter F. Mondale, a liberal icon who lost one of the most lopsided presidential elections after bluntly telling voters to expect a tax increase if he won, died Monday. He was 93.

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The death of the former senator, ambassador and Minnesota attorney general was announced in a statement from his family. No cause was cited.

Mondale followed the trail blazed by his political mentor, Hubert H. Humphrey, from Minnesota politics to the U.S. Senate and the vice presidency, serving under Jimmy Carter from 1977 to 1981.

In a statement Monday night, Carter said he considered Mondale "the best vice president in our country's history." He added: "Fritz Mondale provided us all with a model for public service and private behavior."

President Joe Biden said of Mondale: "There have been few senators, before or since, who commanded such universal respect. ... It was Walter Mondale who defined the vice presidency as a full partnership, and helped provide a model for my service."

Mondale's own try for the White House, in 1984, came at the zenith of Ronald Reagan's popularity. His selection of Rep. Geraldine Ferraro of New York as his running mate made him the first major-party presidential nominee to put a woman on the ticket, but his declaration that he would raise taxes helped define the race.

On Election Day, he carried only his home state and the District of Columbia. The electoral vote was 525-13 for Reagan — the biggest landslide in the Electoral College since Franklin Roosevelt defeated Alf Landon in 1936. (Sen. George McGovern got 17 electoral votes in his 1972 defeat, winning Massachusetts and Washington, D.C.)

"I did my best," Mondale said the day after the election, and blamed no one but himself.

"I think you know I've never really warmed up to television," he said. "In fairness to television, it never really warmed up to me."

Years later, Mondale said his campaign message had proven to be the right one.

"History has vindicated me that we would have to raise taxes," he said. "It was very unpopular, but it was undeniably correct."

In 2002, state and national Democrats looked to Mondale when Sen. Paul Wellstone, D-Minn., was killed in a plane crash less than two weeks before Election Day. Mondale agreed to stand in for Wellstone, and early polls showed him with a lead over the Republican candidate, Norm Coleman.

But the 53-year-old Coleman, emphasizing his youth and vigor, out-hustled the then-74-year-old Mondale in an intense six-day campaign. Mondale was also hurt by a partisan memorial service for Wellstone, in which thousands of Democrats booed Republican politicians in attendance. One speaker pleaded: "We are begging you to help us win this election for Paul Wellstone."

Polls showed the service put off independents and cost Mondale votes. Coleman won by 3 percentage points.

"The eulogizers were the ones hurt the most," Mondale said after the election. "It doesn't justify it, but we all make mistakes. Can't we now find it in our hearts to forgive them and go on?"

It was a particularly bitter defeat for Mondale, who even after his loss to Reagan had taken solace in his perfect record in Minnesota.

"One of the things I'm most proud of," he said in 1987, "is that not once in my public career did I ever lose an election in Minnesota."

Years after the 2002 defeat, Mondale returned to the Senate to stand beside Democrat Al Franken in 2009 when he was sworn in to replace Coleman after a drawn-out recount and court battle.

Mondale started his career in Washington in 1964, when he was appointed to the Senate to replace Humphrey, who had resigned to become vice president. Mondale was elected to a full six-year term with about 54% of the vote in 1966, although Democrats lost the governorship and suffered other election setbacks. In 1972, Mondale won another Senate term with nearly 57% of the vote.

His Senate career was marked by advocacy of social issues such as education, housing, migrant workers and child nutrition. Like Humphrey, he was an outspoken supporter of civil rights.

Mondale tested the waters for a presidential bid in 1974 but ultimately decided against it. "Basically I found I did not have the overwhelming desire to be president, which is essential for the kind of campaign that is required," he said in November 1974.

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In 1976, Carter chose Mondale as No. 2 on his ticket and went on to unseat Gerald Ford.

As vice president, Mondale had a close relationship with Carter. He was the first vice president to occupy an office in the White House, rather than in a building across the street. Mondale traveled extensively on Carter's behalf, and advised him on domestic and foreign affairs.

While he lacked Humphrey's charisma, Mondale had a droll sense of humor.

When he dropped out of the 1976 presidential sweepstakes, he said, "I don't want to spend the next two years in Holiday Inns."

Reminded of that shortly before he was picked as Carter's running mate, Mondale said, "I've checked and found that they're all redecorated, and they're marvelous places to stay."

Mondale never backed away from his liberal principles.

"I think that the country more than ever needs progressive values," Mondale said in 1989.

That year, Democrats tried to persuade him to challenge Minnesota GOP Sen. Rudy Boschwitz, but he decided against making the race, saying it was time to make way for a new generation.

"One of the requirements of a healthy party is that it renews itself," he said at the time. "You can't keep running Walter Mondale for everything."

That paved the way for Wellstone to win the Democratic nomination, and go on to upset Boschwitz. Wellstone had been preparing to take on Mondale in a primary but would have been a heavy underdog.

The son of a Methodist minister and a music teacher, Walter Frederick Mondale was born Jan. 5, 1928, in tiny Ceylon, Minnesota, and grew up in several small southern Minnesota towns.

He was only 20 when he served as a congressional district manager for Humphrey's successful Senate campaign in 1948. His education, interrupted by a two-year stint in the Army, culminated with a law degree from the University of Minnesota in 1956.

Mondale began a law practice in Minneapolis and ran the successful 1958 gubernatorial campaign of Democrat Orville Freeman, who appointed Mondale state attorney general in 1960. Mondale was elected attorney general in the fall of 1960 and was reelected in 1962.

As attorney general, Mondale moved quickly into civil rights, antitrust and consumer protection cases. He was the first Minnesota attorney general to make consumer protection a campaign issue.

After his White House years, Mondale served from 1993-96 as President Bill Clinton's ambassador to Japan, fighting for U.S. access to markets ranging from cars to cellular phones.

He helped avert a trade war in June 1995 over autos and auto parts, persuading Japanese officials to give American automakers more access to Japanese dealers and pushing Japanese carmakers to buy U.S. parts.

Mondale kept his ties to the Clintons. In 2008, he endorsed Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton for president, switching his allegiance only after Barack Obama sealed the nomination.

When Democrats came to him after Wellstone's death, Mondale was working at the Minneapolis law firm of Dorsey & Whitney and serving on corporate and nonprofit boards. He returned to the firm after the brief campaign.

Mondale and his wife, Joan Adams Mondale, were married in 1955. During his vice presidency, she pushed for more government support of the arts and gained the nickname "Joan of Art." She had minored in art in college and worked at museums in Boston and Minneapolis.

The couple had two sons, Ted and William, and a daughter, Eleanor. Ted Mondale served six years in the Minnesota Senate and made an unsuccessful bid for the Democratic nomination for governor in 1998. William Mondale served for a time as an assistant attorney general. Eleanor Mondale, who became a broadcast journalist and TV host, died of brain cancer in 2011.

Joan Mondale died in 2014 at age 83 after an extended illness.

Teen's death puts focus on split-second police decisions

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

It happened in less than a second.

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Thirteen-year-old Adam Toledo dropped the gun he'd been holding, turned and began raising his hands just as the officer had commanded. Then the cop fired a single shot, killing the boy in the dark Chicago alley.

The graphic video that became the latest tragic touchstone in the nation's reckoning with race and policing puts a microscope on those split-second decisions with far-reaching and grave consequences. Investigators are still sorting through exactly what happened, but the shooting has raised difficult questions about why the boy wasn't given more time to comply and whether the deadly encounter could have been prevented in the first place.

"Time and again, our communities of color are being told that these are isolated incidents or that they are the fault of the suspect. What do you say when you see the evidence with your own eyes?" Jose Lopez, the League of United Latin American Citizens' national vice president for the Midwest, said in a statement.

The white officer, Eric Stillman, was responding to reports of shots fired in Little Village, a predominantly Hispanic neighborhood of the city's southwest side, around 3 a.m. on March 29. Stillman's jumpy, nighttime bodycam footage shows him chasing Toledo, who was Latino, on foot down an alley for several seconds and yelling: "Police! Stop! Stop right (expletive) now!"

As the teen slows down, Stillman yells: "Hands! Hands! Show me your (expletive) hands!" Toledo then turns toward the camera, Stillman yells, "Drop it!" and midway between repeating that command, he fires and Toledo falls. Police found a gun next to a fence a short distance away after the shooting. Prosecutors have previously said a 21-year-old man with Toledo fired the rounds that originally drew the officer's attention.

The Cook County state's attorney's office will decide whether Stillman, who has been placed on administrative leave for 30 days, should face charges. But it's been rare to charge police with crimes in the death of civilians, and winning a conviction is harder in part because jurors are reluctant to second-guess an officer when the officer has been faced with a split-second decision in a life-or-death situation.

The U.S. Supreme Court has said an officer's fear for their life in the heat of the moment matters, even if in hindsight it turns out they weren't in danger. Chief Justice William Rehnquist wrote in a 1989 ruling that shaped the legal landscape that the "calculus must embody an allowance for the fact that police officers are often forced to make split-second decisions about the amount of force necessary in a particular situation."

It takes the brain about three-fourths of a second to react to a perceived threat, said Chris Burbank, a former police chief in Salt Lake City who is now with the Center for Policing Equity. Most police can then draw a gun and fire two accurate rounds in 1.5 seconds, so the pivotal portion of a confrontation can be over in less than three seconds.

The decisions made in that tiny period can be influenced by a host of factors, including training, immediate surroundings and structural biases like racism, he said. A growing body of research shows Black teenagers, for example, are often wrongly perceived as older and more threatening than white teenagers.

And it can be hard for officers to say after the fact exactly what made them shoot, said Eugene O'Donnell, a former New York City police officer and longtime professor of police studies at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice.

"It's always a shock to actually have to fire because firing is pretty rare in a big city," he said. "You talk to cops after shootings, a lot of it is a blur ... the truth is that you may not even know why you fired."

The often-used "show me your hands!" command can unintentionally accelerate a confrontation. The motions of a person trying to obey can appear at first like the moves someone makes to start an attack, said Von Kliem, a former police officer and director of consulting division for the Force Science Institute. Some in law enforcement-training circles have had concerns about how the phrase affects a situation since the mid-1990s, though it's still often used without causing serious problems.

But focusing solely on split-second heated moments can miss the larger systemic questions raised by a community mourning a child, said Nathan Morris, an attorney for a 13-year-old shot by police in Utah. That boy, Linden Cameron, has autism and his mother had called police to help handle a breakdown last

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year. Cameron was unarmed. He survived the shots that were fired after a chase by officers.

"Are we doing the right thing by putting our officers in situations that require a split-second decision?" Morris said. "Should they even be chasing a 13-year-old child down?"

Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot is now demanding a new policy on foot pursuits, something she called one of the most dangerous actions an officer can take. Some major cities have already taken action to limit foot chases, though experts say it would be hard to tell police not to try to stop someone with a gun.

Some shifts in police training could help, Burbank said. He spent years training police officers and being trained himself, and says nearly every law enforcement practice scenario ended with a shooting.

"There have to be 'no shoot' scenarios," he said. "We need to spend more time training for when you don't have to use force than when you do. And we do not do that."

Biden's virtual climate summit: Diplomacy sans human touch

By JONATHAN LEMIRE, SETH BORENSTEIN and AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — There will be no hands to shake or backs to slap, no way to look a foreign leader in the eye. The small human moments that define statecraft will be reduced to images on a screen.

President Joe Biden, a most hands-on politician, this week will host a major climate summit with dozens of world leaders — all of them stuck on Zoom.

Biden has made clear that he wants to reassert U.S. leadership on the world stage, including on climate change, after four tumultuous, often inward-looking years of President Donald Trump. But as much as the White House staff has tried to dress up the remote meetings he has held so far, while eyeing the climate summit Thursday and Friday as an important moment, the president has made no secret of how much he misses diplomacy with a more personal touch.

"There's no substitute for face-to-face discussions," Biden said Friday as he welcomed Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga to the White House for his first in-person world leader meeting.

"I greatly appreciate the chance to spend time with you in person and to exchange our ideas face to face," he added.

Biden has expressed to aides and advisers how much he misses the in-person interactions and friendly asides that typically happen on the sidelines of international meetings, moments that can often lead to foreign policy breakthroughs, according to three White House officials not authorized to speak publicly about private discussions. He was disappointed, at times, with the stilted nature of his first remote bilateral meeting, held with Canada's Justin Trudeau in February.

The White House has announced that South Korea's Moon Jae-in will travel to Washington in May for Biden's second in-person foreign leader meeting. And there are hopes the president will make his own overseas trip in June. But until then, expectations for major diplomatic developments have been reined in — and the climate summit is no exception.

Streamed 100% live with no backroom give-and-take, the summit will be more geared to sending a message about America's return to the climate fight and nudging the world toward a greener planet than about specific deals or action.

The world is still trying to figure out what the climate gathering will be, but experts know what it's not: Don't expect negotiations akin to those that produced the historic 2015 Paris climate accord.

In Paris, "every comma, every period and every sentence was negotiated 100 times," said Christiana Figueres, the former U.N. climate chief who was one of the chief architects behind the 6-year-old pact. By contrast, this week's summit, she says, "is a public confirmation of intent for every country to come forward with its current best effort."

Climate activists may hope for dramatic moments when countries like Japan, South Korea or even China are suddenly inspired by Biden and announce they will stop funding other nations' coal power plants. But Henry "Jake" Jacoby, who cofounded the MIT Center for Global Change Science, just laughs at the idea: "On a Zoom call with 40 nations of the world watching? Yeah, not a chance."

The summit instead is about planting seeds for a November climate meeting in Scotland, where expecta-

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tions and stakes are higher. But because of in-person restrictions due to the coronavirus pandemic and the short time period since Biden took office, this week's meeting is more of a show-and-tell among leaders, all streamed to whomever wants to watch it. The real action comes later.

The bulk of the diplomacy over the next seven months will be done not by presidents, but behind the scenes by diplomats, such as the recent travels by special U.S. climate envoy John Kerry, said Nigel Purvis, a former State Department climate negotiator in the administrations of Bill Clinton and George W. Bush.

The in-person meetings in Scotland are meant to pull everything together, which still could work, U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said Monday.

Biden has made clear he understands the necessity of doing meetings remotely: first, to safeguard the health of the leaders as well as the large traveling party that comes with a visit from a head of state. Moreover, keeping things remote helps set an example that his administration is still discouraging travel amid a rise in virus variants and COVID-19 cases.

But he has not always enjoyed the virtual substitutes. He struggled with the mute button at a remote fundraiser and watched as German Chancellor Angela Merkel forgot to silence her own feed and interrupted British Prime Minister Boris Johnson during a virtual Group of Seven leaders' meeting in February.

Biden's foreign policy outreach to this point has lacked the small moments amid summits and state visits meant to flatter and make memories for foreign dignitaries.

President Barack Obama took Dmitry Medvedev to a burger joint in 2010 when the Russian president visited Washington. Obama's younger daughter, Sasha, who was studying Chinese at her private D.C. school at the time, had a memorable moment trying out some simple phrases with China's Hu Jintao during his 2011 state visit.

Vladimir Putin's 2001 visit to George W. Bush's ranch in Crawford, Texas, included a barbecue dinner, a lesson on how to dance the Cotton-Eye Joe and a ride in the Republican president's pickup truck.

Such moments are difficult to create in the pandemic era, but that hasn't stopped Biden and his team from trying to bring some small flourishes to virtual statecraft. For example, Biden opened his recent virtual meeting with the leaders of Australia, India and Japan with a video of George W. Bush talking about the coalition's beginnings after the 2004 earthquake and tsunami in the Indian Ocean. It was part of an effort to stress bipartisanship and continuity in the alliance.

Write on Sports gets youngsters into sports communications

By BARRY WILNER AP Sports Writer

Kristie Keleshian was a shy middle schooler when she signed up for Write on Sports because her brother had joined.

Keleshian now is an accomplished journalist who credits the program for providing the confidence and impetus for her career.

Write on Sports, now in its 16th year, helps middle school students from underserved communities develop writing skills and build self-confidence through the lens of sports and the tools of journalism. Founded by former Associated Press sports editor Byron Yake, it has served more than 2,000 students in 40 communities with its after-school and summer sessions.

Keleshian had no idea that joining the program would be life changing.

"I was such a shy kid that even raising my hand was progress," she says. "It was, 'OK, fine I will take that application.' That was hard for me at that point in my life. It was probably the best decision I had ever made, and I am not exaggerating.

"It challenged me. I was not into public speaking. I wanted to do acting but was too scared. I was 12 at that point. As a kid, it got me out of my comfort zone without me knowing it. This really did get me out of what I was used to in terms of writing and public speaking and I wrote a lot about things I didn't think I would enjoy.

"Having that skill set from middle school put me head and shoulders above others in high school and then when I went to college at Montclair (N.J) State, it was easy going through learning how to edit and

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everything, and I was able to home in to being comfortable on camera.”

Today, Keleshian is a freelance reporter for WCBS Newsradio 880 in New York, and for News 12 New Jersey — one of dozens of graduates of Write on Sports who now are ensconced in journalism as a profession.

NBC’s Peter King, one of America’s top sports reporters, has been an advocate for the program for years. King, who also worked for Newsday and Sports Illustrated, recognizes the importance of such an initiative.

“So many middle school kids who may not have a lot of educational advantages are particularly disadvantaged in cities and poorer school districts,” King says. “So it’s easy to fall behind. Write on Sports has helped a lot of such kids over the past 15 years — in part because of excellent instruction, in part because lots of kids get a kick out of using sports as a learning tool. It’s fun.

“These programs work. We need these programs now more than ever, particularly with the scourge that COVID-19 has brought to our education system. It’s a tribute to the idea Byron Yake had years ago, and the execution of the instructors who are dedicated to help make kids’ lives better.”

King will host an “Inside the Draft” online fundraiser for the students on Thursday that also will include former Jets general manager Mike Tannenbaum and long-time NFL reporter Steve Wyche.

Many English teachers — not to mention professional writers and editors — bemoan the effect social media and texting have had on how the language is used. To some, strong reporting and creative writing is becoming a dying art.

Andy Beutel, a middle school history teacher who serves as Write on Sports’ assistant program director, believes the program’s approach is key to creating interest in and care for the written and spoken word.

“If students are interested in what learning and writing are about, it doesn’t feel like school,” he says. “They really see the potential of writing to learn. I say every summer, one of the best parts is seeing the students work for hours on writing or a visual piece. In doesn’t feel like work to them.

“We have such a great ratio of staff to students,” he adds of the five pupils per instructor, “so we’re able to talk to them for long periods of time. Through conversations we can figure out what they want to write about and help them along the way.”

The way Write on Sports helped Keleshian.

“Writing is definitely a muscle you need to exercise, along with other skills I picked up from Write on Sports,” she says. “I picked that up from that first camp. I think what was one of the most important things is if people don’t enjoy doing it because they don’t have a topic they enjoy writing about. And Write on Sports gave me a chance with a topic that motivated me to write even more as a kid.

“That’s something so priceless to me.”

Hungary’s poor Roma children struggle with digital education

By JUSTIN SPIKE Associated Press

BODVASZILAS, Hungary (AP) — Mihaly Horvath, a 12-year-old in a village in northeastern Hungary, can’t wait for his school to reopen.

As a devastating COVID-19 surge swept Hungary in the spring, classes were suspended and students were ordered to study online. But Mihaly’s family, part of Hungary’s large Roma minority, doesn’t have a computer or internet access at their home in Bodvaszilas, and he says he’s falling behind in his lessons as a result.

“Some students have telephones, some have computers. But there are others like me who don’t have either,” he said from the yard of a dilapidated house where he lives with nine other family members. “It’s more difficult for Gypsy kids like us. Some don’t even have writing utensils or anything else.”

His is one of thousands of Roma families in Hungary that have been particularly hard hit by the pandemic. Many already marginalized Roma adults lost work as Hungary’s economy buckled under coronavirus lockdowns, pushing their families deeper into poverty. Some have reported selling their belongings, like mobile phones, to make ends meet.

Karmen Bastyr, Mihaly’s great aunt, said most of the Roma children in Bodvaszilas don’t have access to digital devices and aren’t completing printed homework assignments given out by the school.

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"There's no help for them. (Mihaly) can't take advantage of online education since we don't have a computer," she said. "It would be easier because he could talk with his teacher who could help him with homework that he doesn't understand."

According to an August 2020 survey by the National Democratic Institute, a U.S.-based nonprofit organization, only 41% of Roma households in Hungary have access to both cable and mobile internet and 13% report no access to the internet at all.

A November 2020 report from Hungary's deputy ombudsperson for national minorities acknowledged that for Roma children from poor families, "the transition to digital education multiplied their already existing disadvantages."

Mihaly's relatives, like many Roma, rely on seasonal work or informal day labor for income. But business closures and other pandemic restrictions have caused them to lose work, leading to deeper impoverishment and food insecurity.

David Vig, director of the rights group Amnesty International Hungary, said the state has done little to help such workers, who were ineligible for unemployment benefits or wage support when their jobs disappeared.

"There is zero labor protection for those who work in (day labor)," he said. "Any COVID-related state support, if you don't have an official (work) contract, is not there."

Roma make up nearly 10% of Hungary's population, according to some estimates, and many live in one of the 1,300 segregated slums across the country.

Bodvaszilas is located in one of the least-developed regions in the 27-nation European Union. It's GDP per capita was only 40% of the EU average in 2013, according to Eurostat.

The local municipality provides one hot lunch to school-age children each weekday, in place of the free meals students normally receive at school. But Mihaly's family still struggles to put enough food on the table.

"Sometimes me and my husband don't eat and rather leave the food for the children," said Bastyr, who lives with Mihaly in the three-bedroom house along with children, grandchildren and cousins.

Two weeks ago, the family was told that the small, decaying house they rent had been sold and they must be out in a month or police would be called to evict them.

"He told us to clean up the yard, clean the house, remove all our furniture and leave. But we don't know where to go," Bastyr said.

"Our dream would be to have our own place where the kids could live in peace ... so me and my two grandchildren won't have to live in this misery," she said, through tears.

On Monday, Hungary reopened kindergartens and the first four grades of elementary schools. Mihaly is looking forward to May 10, when his grade can return to in-person classes. But by then, his family isn't sure he'll have a house to come home to.

Queen enters 'twilight' of reign after farewell to Philip

By DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Now that the Royal Family has said farewell to Prince Philip, attention will turn to Queen Elizabeth II's 95th birthday on Wednesday and, in coming months, the celebrations marking her 70 years on the throne.

This combination of events is reminding the United Kingdom that the reign of the queen, the only monarch most of her subjects have ever known, is finite. That has triggered speculation about how long she will remain on the throne, what the monarchy will look like in the future and, for some, even whether it should continue to exist.

"The queen is certainly moving now into the twilight of her reign and a new phase of her reign," said Anna Whitelock, director of the Centre for the Study of Modern Monarchy at Royal Holloway, University of London. "She now is a widow, and it remains to be seen how she's going to respond to that."

While most observers say the queen is unlikely to abdicate given her lifelong commitment to public service, she has already started to turn over more responsibilities to Prince Charles, 72, her eldest son. That

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process is likely to accelerate following Philip's death.

Charles' increased role began gradually, when the queen began cutting back on long-haul flights, resulting in Charles taking her place at a 2013 Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Sri Lanka.

Then in 2017, he represented the queen at the annual Remembrance Day ceremony marking the end of World War I, laying the monarch's wreath at the foot of the Cenotaph in London. It was the first time the queen hadn't performed the solemn ritual, other than when she was pregnant or out of the country.

Since then, Charles has taken on an increasing number of public engagements and been named the queen's designated successor as head of the Commonwealth, a voluntary association of 54 nations with links to the British Empire.

"Symbolically, the transition towards the succession is already underway," said Ed Owens, a historian and author of "The Family Firm, Monarchy, Mass Media and the British Public 1932-53."

"I anticipate that we're going to see a lot more of Prince Charles in the next couple of years so that we, as a people, start to see him in his future role as king."

For now, the longest serving monarch in British history continues to reign. But she will do so without Philip, the man the queen called her "strength and stay," a source of emotional support in her often lonely job.

Her loss was underscored by Saturday's funeral at St. George's Chapel on the grounds of Windsor Castle, where the figure of a widow in black sitting alone offered a glimpse of the next solitary phase of the queen's reign.

"Constitutionally, Prince Philip's death doesn't change anything. But, of course, at a time when the queen is approaching her 95th birthday, she's vulnerable and aging," Whitelock said. "Clearly, Prince Philip's death has begun this transition to the future and the beginning of the end of this phase of monarchy."

Questions about the end of the queen's reign will also fuel the debate over the long-term future of the monarchy, seen by many as a symbol of national unity but by others as an obsolete vestige of the nation's feudal history.

The BBC received more than 100,000 complaints about its decision to pre-empt popular TV programs for round-the-clock coverage of Prince Philip's death, the most it has ever received about a single programming decision.

And while there is enormous respect for the queen, the same isn't necessarily true for Charles and other members of the royal family, said Graham Smith, chief executive of Republic, which campaigns to replace the monarchy with an elected head of state.

Philip's death "serves as a reminder to an awful lot of people, who on the whole don't think much about the monarchy from one day to the next, that change is coming," Smith told the Express newspaper.

The queen's reign began with the death of her father, King George VI, on Feb. 6, 1952. She was formally crowned on June 2, 1953.

During that ceremony, televised around the world, the queen promised to govern the United Kingdom and her other realms. Six years earlier, in a speech in South Africa, then-Princess Elizabeth made clear that her commitment was for life.

"I declare before you all that my whole life, whether it be long or short, shall be devoted to your service and the service of our great imperial family to which we all belong," she said.

That is a pledge the queen intends to keep, said Robert Hardman, author of "Queen of the World," which chronicles the monarch's influence and stature around the globe.

Even as she mourned last week, the queen attended a ceremony marking the retirement of her Lord Chamberlain, who organizes all ceremonial events for the palace, and continued to hold conversations with Commonwealth leaders.

That shows she has no intention of emulating Queen Victoria, who retreated from public life when her husband, Prince Albert, died unexpectedly at the age of 42, Hardman told the BBC.

"The signal she's been putting out during the last week is that this is going to be business as usual, that duty comes before self," Hardman said. "She will continue with all her duties because ... she took a coronation oath and she's sticking to it."

But she won't be alone.

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While her popular grandson, Prince Harry, has stepped away from royal duties, the rest of the royals, backed by professional staff and advisers, are likely to rally round the queen and take on more tasks. Sustaining the institution will be the bedrock popularity of the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, who have a reliable ability to connect with the public.

The queen may also be helped by technology.

During the pandemic, Elizabeth has connected with the public through a series of Zoom calls. The appearances, released by the palace and posted on social media, have allowed people to see the queen speaking to schoolchildren, volunteers and health service officials — smiling, joking and making canny observations in a more personal way than the scripted speeches that have dominated her public life.

Last month, for example, she held a Zoom call with a group of children and scientists where she was asked about her meeting with the first man in space, Russian cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin. The monarch, who invited Gagarin to Buckingham Palace shortly after his historic flight in 1961, was asked what the pioneering spaceman was like.

"Russian," she replied with a smile. The audience chuckled.

Just another day of working from home.

"There'll be a lot of emphasis as soon as the funeral is done on a return to normalcy. (For) the Royal Family, it will be the 'Keep Calm and Carry On' sort of model, which they've been so good at promoting over the last 70, 80 years," Owens said, referring to the World War II-era adage.

"They'll want a quick return to the normal program of royal service."

Learning to breathe: German clinic helps COVID long haulers

By FRANK JORDANS and KERSTIN SOPKE Associated Press

HEILIGENDAMM, Germany (AP) — Simone Ravera rolls up her trousers, slips off her shoes and socks, then gingerly steps into the chilly waters of the Baltic Sea.

The 50-year-old rheumatology nurse is slowly finding her feet again after being struck down with COVID-19 last fall, seemingly recovering and then relapsing with severe fatigue and "brain fog" four months later.

"The symptoms were almost as bad as at the beginning," Ravera said.

Close to despair, she found a clinic that specializes in treating people with what have been called post-COVID-19, or long-term COVID-19, symptoms.

Located in Heiligendamm, a north German seaside spa popular since the late 18th century, the clinic specializes in helping people with lung diseases such as asthma, chronic bronchitis and cancer.

Over the past year it has become a major rehabilitation center for COVID-19 patients, treating 600 people from across Germany, according to its medical director, Dr. Joerdis Frommhold.

Some of her patients came close to death and now have to relearn how to breathe properly, rebuild their stamina and overcome a host of neurological problems associated with severe illness.

But Frommhold also treats a second group of patients who experienced mild to medium COVID-19 symptoms, and only spent a short time in the hospital, if at all.

"These patients get rebound symptoms after about one to four months," Frommhold said.

Most are aged between 18 to 50 and have no pre-existing conditions, she said. "They're the ones that are usually never ill."

After recovering from a bout of COVID-19, these patients suddenly find themselves short of breath, depressed and struggling to concentrate, said Frommhold. Some suffer symptoms resembling those of dementia.

One former dialysis nurse found her kitchen flooded because she'd forgotten to turn off the tap. "Others are unable to do homework with their kids because they don't understand the questions themselves," Frommhold said.

Their symptoms aren't always taken seriously by doctors.

Despite suffering hair loss, joint and muscle pain, irregular blood pressure and dizziness, routine test results for such patients usually come back normal.

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"They appear young, dynamic, high performing, but then they can't do any of the things they used to," Frommhold said.

Therapists at the clinic initially focus on stabilizing patients' breathing. Then they work to restore stamina and motor coordination with the help of occupational therapy and posture training. Cognitive therapy and psychological support are also part of the program.

Similar clinics for "long haulers" have sprung up around the world over the past year, including in the United States. In Germany, such treatment is increasingly being offered by the country's network of more than 1,000 medical rehabilitation centers, 50 of which specialize in pulmonary diseases.

"That doesn't exist in many other countries yet," Frommhold said.

It is unclear how many people suffer from long-term COVID-19, partly because the condition isn't clearly defined yet. Scientists are still trying to understand what is behind the wide range of symptoms patients report.

"No two patients have the same experience and it varies within patients," said Elizabeth Murray, a professor of e-health and primary care at University College London.

"The symptoms they are experiencing this week are not necessarily a guide to the symptoms they would be experiencing next week," said Murray, a former general practitioner. "It makes it difficult for everybody; it makes it very, very difficult for the patients."

Britain's Office for National Statistics said a survey of 9,063 respondents who tested positive for COVID-19 found that more than 20% reported persistence of some symptoms after five weeks. For about 10% of respondents that included fatigue, while similar numbers reported headaches or loss of taste and smell.

More than 140 million coronavirus infections have been confirmed worldwide to date, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University, meaning even a small percentage of long-term COVID-19 sufferers would suggest millions could be affected.

"That's a lot of extra people to treat and no health care system has got a lot of spare capacity," said Murray. She added that the economic impact of so many people dropping out of the labor force could be devastating, particularly as many sufferers are women who also shoulder a disproportionate burden at home.

Murray is developing a digital program, funded by Britain's National Institute for Health Research, to treat long-term COVID-19 symptoms and reach more patients faster than through traditional rehab facilities, ensuring they don't feel abandoned by the medical system.

Frommhold said a similar program might help Germany cope with the expected surge in long-term COVID-19 sufferers, but suggested that greater acceptance of the condition will also be necessary for those who don't fully recover.

"In my eyes we first need a campaign like the one there was for HIV awareness, that explains how there are different pathways even after recovery from COVID," she said.

Getting patients, their families and employers to understand that they now have a chronic condition could prevent long haulers from falling into a spiral of depression and anxiety, Frommhold said.

Heike Risch, a 51-year-old kindergarten teacher from the eastern city of Cottbus was hardly able to walk unaided upon leaving the hospital after recovering from COVID-19.

"I felt like I'd aged 30 years in a short period of time," she said.

At the clinic, Risch couldn't balance a table tennis ball on a racket and walk backward. She still can't read a clock properly.

"You don't trust your own body anymore. You don't trust your own head anymore," Risch said.

Still, she hopes to return to work someday. "I like working with children but I need to be able to concentrate. I need to be able to do two things at once occasionally," she said.

Ravera, the nurse, says she has come a long way thanks to the therapy in Heiligendamm and feels lucky to have support from friends and family.

But Ravera doubts she'll go back to doing three-shift weekends at the hospital she worked at in Bavaria.

"You don't know when you'll be well again. The illness comes in waves," she said.

Instead, Ravera is considering using what she learned in rehab to help others who are struggling to breathe properly again after COVID-19.

"It's a bit of a journey into the unknown," she said.

Amid US strains, China's Xi warns against 'unilateralism'

By JOE McDONALD Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — Chinese President Xi Jinping on Tuesday called for more equitable management of global affairs and, in an implicit rejection of U.S. dominance, said governments shouldn't impose rules on others.

Xi's speech at an economic forum comes amid rising tension with China's neighbors and Washington over its strategic ambitions and demands for a bigger role in making trade and other rules.

Without mentioning the United States, Xi criticized "unilateralism of individual countries" and warned against decoupling, a reference to fears U.S.-Chinese tension over technology and security will split industries and markets into separate, less productive spheres with incompatible standards.

"International affairs should be handled by everyone through consultation," Xi said by video link to the Boao Forum for Asia on the southern island of Hainan. "Rules made by one or more countries should not be forced upon others."

Xi called for stronger cooperation in research on coronavirus vaccines and steps to make them available to developing countries.

Xi's comments reflected the ruling Communist Party's desire for global influence to match China's status as the second-largest economy and frustration at what party leaders see as U.S. efforts to block its ambitions.

Those sentiments have been fueled by sanctions imposed by former President Donald Trump that block access to U.S. processor chips and other technology for Chinese tech giant Huawei and some other companies.

Some of Xi's comments clashed with Beijing's stepped-up military activity in the South China Sea and other areas where its territorial claims conflict with those of Japan, the Philippines, India and other countries.

"No matter how far it develops, China will never seek hegemony, expand, seek spheres of influence or engage in an arms race," Xi said.

China's military spending is the second-highest after the United States. Beijing is developing nuclear-capable ballistic missiles, submarines, stealth fighters and other weapons to extend its military reach.

The annual Boao forum, founded in 2001, is modeled on the Davos gathering of business leaders in Switzerland.

Xi warned against decoupling, a stance that clashes with Beijing's promotion of its own standards for telecoms, high-speed rail and other fields and pressure on companies to use Chinese suppliers instead of global sources, even if that increases costs.

Speeding up a two-decade-old campaign to make China self-reliant in technology has been declared this year's top economic priority by the ruling party.

"Building walls and decoupling violate economic and market rules, harming others," Xi said.

Asian Americans wary about school amid virus, violence

By PHILIP MARCELO Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — A Chinese American mother in the Boston suburbs is sending her sons to in-person classes this month, even after one of them was taunted with a racist "slanted-eyes" gesture at school, just days after the killings of women of Asian descent at massage businesses in Atlanta.

In the Dallas area, a Korean American family is keeping their middle schooler in online classes for the rest of the year after they spotted a question filled with racist Chinese stereotypes, including a reference to eating dogs and cats, on one of her exams.

As high schools and elementary schools across the country gradually re-open for full-time classes, Asian American families are wrestling with whether to send their children back out into the world at a time when anti-Asian hostility and violence is on the rise.

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Some Asian American parents say they're content to keep their children in virtual classes, especially with the school year winding down and COVID-19 cases rising in places. Others are conceding to adolescents craving normalcy, while still others refuse to shield their youths from bigotry.

Asian American students have the highest rates of remote learning more than a year after the coronavirus pandemic shuttered school buildings and forced districts to pivot to online classes. A federal government survey released earlier this month found just 15% of Asian American fourth graders were attending classes in-person as of February, compared with more than half of white fourth graders.

Those rates appear to be rising in some cities, but are still far lower than those of Black, Latino and white students. In Sacramento, Boston and Chicago public schools, for example, roughly a third of Asian American students are expected to return to in-person classes this month, compared with some 70% of white students, according to the most recent district data available.

Asian American youths have also not been spared anti-Asian harassment. A September report by Stop AAPI Hate found about 25% of Asian American youths surveyed experienced discrimination, including verbal harassment, social shunning, cyberbullying and physical assault, during the pandemic. The San Francisco-based group, which tracks incidents of discrimination against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, also says more than 12% of its reported incidents involved youths ages 17 and under.

Concerns about virus spread and rising racism are factors in the in-person learning disparities, but many Asian families also benefit from living in multi-generational households where grandparents and other relatives can help out, said Peter Kiang, director of Asian American Studies at the University of Massachusetts in Boston.

"These ethnic-defined support systems have been operating for more than a year already while parents are out working long hours, so there is no urgency to return to in-person classrooms," he said.

Another factor is that many Asian Americans live in major urban areas like Boston where schools are only now starting to widely re-open, said Robert Teranishi, a professor of education and Asian American studies at UCLA. Meanwhile San Francisco, where about a third of public school students are of Asian descent, has no timetable for the return of middle and high school students.

For Grace Hu, a 16-year-old in Sharon, Massachusetts, who has been learning remotely all school year, the decision to go back to in-person classes later this month was easy.

The high school sophomore helped organize a recent rally against anti-Asian hate in Boston, but said she's not concerned about facing vitriol in school. The district, about 25 miles (40 kilometers) south of Boston, has a sizeable Asian American student population and she's felt generally safe and welcomed.

"I'm feeling trapped at home," Hu said. "I just want to see my classmates again."

Closer to Boston, in Quincy, a city with the highest concentration of Asian Americans in the state, Kim Horrigan said she and her husband have struggled with their decision to keep their 8-year-old son in remote learning this school year, but for altogether different reasons.

Horrigan said she's never really considered racism a threat to her family, even though there's been tension in Quincy over the years as the Asian American community has grown to roughly 25% of the population, transforming a city famous for being the birthplace of two American presidents.

Instead, she's most concerned about exposing her household, which includes her Chinese immigrant parents, who are in their 70s, and two younger children, to COVID-19. At the same time, Horrigan worries about her son falling behind the longer he's home.

"We've taken so many precautions and sacrificed so much," she said. "Why would we drop our guard now, with just a few weeks left?"

Meanwhile, in Needham, another Boston suburb, Denise Chan said she hasn't second-guessed placing her three young sons back in classes full-time in recent weeks, even after the "slanted-eyes" incident.

Chan said another student approached her 11-year-old son at lunchtime, made a comment about Korean eyes and pulled his eyelids upward in the mocking gesture as other students looked on.

She said her son called out the racist remark, and his teacher eventually had the student apologize and promised racism would be addressed in the class curriculum.

"If the teacher did not deal with it the way she did, I would be more worried about sending him back,"

said Chan. "I was also proud of the way my son handled it. We've talked about why it's important to speak out."

But in Carrollton, Texas, Joy Lim said her parents decided to keep her younger sister in remote learning after publicly raising concerns about the racist test question.

The 21-year-old college student said the decision is in part because of fear of reprisals if the sixth-grader returns to classes. The district denounced the exam question as "derogatory and hurtful" and placed three teachers on administrative leave.

"What's been most discouraging is that people are still defending these educators," Lim said. "These aren't joking questions. They're cruel."

Swan Lee, a Chinese American mother in the Boston suburb of Brookline, isn't so sure keeping Asian American students at home is the answer to what ails the country.

Her two high school-age teens are preparing to return to classes full-time later this month, and she's emphasized the importance of being strong and staying positive, though she admits she's worried about what might happen outside the relative safety of the school building.

"It's not about protecting and shielding them. That's too passive and too defeatist," Lee said. "It's about confronting this in a constructive manner. People need to understand this kind of racism is wrong. That's the only way it goes away."

Feds weighing how to respond after verdict in Chauvin trial

By JONATHAN LEMIRE and MICHAEL BALSAMO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Biden administration is privately weighing how to handle the upcoming verdict in the trial of former Minneapolis Police Officer Derek Chauvin, including considering whether President Joe Biden should address the nation and dispatching specially trained community facilitators from the Justice Department, aides and officials told The Associated Press.

Closing arguments began Monday in Chauvin's trial with a prosecutor telling jurors that the officer "had to know" he was squeezing the life out of George Floyd as he cried over and over that he couldn't breathe and finally fell silent. Chauvin faces murder and manslaughter charges.

The plans for possible presidential remarks are still fluid, with the timing, venue and nature of the remarks still being considered, in part depending on the timing of the verdict, according to two White House aides who were not authorized to speak publicly about private conversations and spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity.

The White House has been warily watching the trial proceed in Minneapolis — and then another shooting of a Black man by a white police officer last week — and are preparing for the possibility of unrest if a guilty verdict is not reached in the trial. Biden may also speak after a guilty verdict, the White House aides said.

The verdict — and the aftermath — will be a test for Biden, who has pledged to help combat racism in policing, helping African Americans who supported him in large numbers last year in the wake of protests that swept the nation after Floyd's death and restarted a national conversation about race. But he also has long projected himself as an ally of police, who are struggling with criticism about long-used tactics and training methods and difficulties in recruitment.

Press secretary Jen Psaki said Monday that the White House has had a "range of conversations" about preparations for the upcoming verdict and added, "Our objective is to ensure there is space for peaceful protest."

"Of course we'll let the jury deliberate and we'll wait for the verdict to come out before we say more about our engagements," Psaki said.

Psaki said administration officials have been in contact with leaders in Minnesota and in other cities and states that saw unrest after Floyd's death last year.

She declined to answer if Biden would be "disappointed" if a not guilty verdict was reached.

Meanwhile, the FBI and the U.S. attorney's office in Minnesota have been working with local officials to support law enforcement as they prepare for the possibility of unrest after the verdict, officials said.

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And the Justice Department has also dispatched specially trained community facilitators ahead of a verdict, according to a senior Justice Department official. The official could not discuss the plans publicly and spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity.

The officials, part of the Justice Department's Community Relations Service, tout themselves as "America's Peacemaker" by mediating disputes in communities and holding listening sessions to help prevent future conflicts.

A federal civil rights investigation, separate from the trial, remains ongoing. Several witnesses were subpoenaed earlier this year to appear before a federal grand jury considering charges against Chauvin.

The Justice Department's civil rights investigation has been focused on Chauvin and some of the witnesses, including other officers who worked with Chauvin, people familiar with the matter have told the AP.

Chauvin was prepared to plead guilty to third-degree murder in George Floyd's death before then-Attorney General William Barr personally blocked the plea deal last year. Barr rejected the deal in part because he felt it was too soon, as the investigation into Floyd's death was still in its relative infancy, law enforcement officials said.

Across the country, police departments are also preparing for the possibility of rioting or other unrest, with some canceling vacation time and increasing the number of officers available for shifts. The federal government hasn't detailed its plan in the event of widespread or sustained civil unrest.

Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said Monday that there has been a request from officials in Washington, D.C., for D.C. National Guard forces in the event there is civil unrest in the nation's capital, and it is currently being reviewed by the Army. He said the Army secretary has the authority to approve any request for D.C. National Guard but did not have details on the request.

Afghanistan withdrawal draws concerns over abducted American

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — As the U.S. moves to withdraw its military from Afghanistan over the next five months, concerns are growing about one American who risks being left behind.

Mark Frerichs, a contractor from Lombard, Illinois, believed held for more than a year by the Taliban-affiliated Haqqani network, was not mentioned in President Joe Biden's address on Afghanistan last week. Nor was the troop withdrawal, scheduled to be complete by Sept. 11, conditioned on his release from custody, fueling concerns that the U.S. could lose bargaining power to get Frerichs home once its military presence is removed from the country.

"Any leverage that we had, we've just now announced to the world and to the Taliban and the Haqqanis that we're going to pull out. Not only is it our leverage, it's our military capability to rescue him," Rep. Michael Waltz, a Florida Republican and Green Beret who served in Afghanistan, said in an interview with The Associated Press. "So it's just utterly disheartening."

The Biden administration has said it regards the return of hostages to be a top priority. Despite this, the fate of a single captive is unlikely to sway the broader policy interest in ending a 20-year war that began in response to the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. It's not uncommon for detainee issues to be eclipsed by other foreign policy matters, as appeared to happen last week when the administration didn't mention Russia's detention of two Americans, even as it announced reasons for taking punitive action against Moscow.

Even so, for Frerichs' family, the failure to make his return a factor in the withdrawal is a source of frustration, as is the fact that the Trump administration signed a peace deal in February 2020, just weeks after Frerichs vanished in Afghanistan while working on engineering projects in the country.

His sister, Charlene Cakora, said in a statement that the military withdrawal "puts a time stamp on Mark. We have 150 days to get him home or our leverage is gone."

Frerichs' home-state senators, Democrats Tammy Duckworth and Dick Durbin, had raised similar concerns in a letter earlier this year to Biden.

In an interview Monday, Duckworth said she's been reassured by the administration that Frerichs has been part of the discussions and that officials are aware of his case. She said she spoke privately with Biden himself last Thursday, handing him a note with information about the case.

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"He said he was very well aware and he asked me to also let the family know that he was aware and was on top of it," Duckworth said.

The U.S. has not disclosed much about Frerichs' fate or status but confirmed Monday that it was in active negotiations with the Taliban.

State Department spokesman Ned Price said in a statement that U.S. peace envoy Zalmay Khalilzad, working closely with Roger Carstens, the special presidential envoy for hostage affairs, "has continued to press the Taliban for Mr. Frerichs' release, and continues to raise his status in senior level engagements in Doha and Islamabad. We place a high priority on Mark Frerichs' safety and will not stop working until he is safely returned to his family."

The AP reported in January that the Taliban during the Trump administration had sought the release of a combatant imprisoned on drug charges in the U.S. as part of a broader effort to resolve issues with Afghanistan. The request prompted dialogue between the State Department and the Justice Department about whether such a release could happen, though it ultimately did not.

Duckworth, who has spoken about the case with Khalilzad, said the Taliban remained "insistent" on that release and not moved off that condition.

The announced withdrawal from Afghanistan was one of two significant foreign policy moves announced by Biden last week. The other involved sanctions on Russia for election interference and for the hack of federal government agencies.

The White House did not use that opportunity to call out Moscow for what U.S. officials say is the unjust detention of at least two Americans: Paul Whelan, a corporate security executive from Michigan sentenced to 16 years in prison on espionage charges, and Trevor Reed, a Marine veteran who was convicted in an altercation with police in Russia and sentenced to nine years.

Whelan's brother, David, said in a statement that he was hopeful for rapprochement between Moscow and Washington but also concerned that the tit-for-tat actions — Russia responded to the U.S. sanctions with its own diplomatic sanctions — may have made that more challenging.

"First, the sanctions continue to make it difficult for the two nations to create the relationship and dialogue necessary to create conditions that might lead to Paul's release," Whelan wrote. "Second, the winnowing of US Embassy staff in Russia will make the difficult work of consular support even harder."

Japanese businessmen brighten makeup industry amid pandemic

By CHISATO TANAKA Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — The coronavirus pandemic has pushed many businesses in Japan to the edge of financial ruin, but Takumi Tezuka, who owns a makeup and hair salon for men in Tokyo, has seen his customer base expand.

Japanese businessmen in their 40s, 50s and 60s who had little interest in cosmetics before the pandemic are increasingly visiting Tezuka's salon, Ikemen-Works, hoping for a better look in online meetings.

A large personal care company, Shiseido, says one of its male makeup lines has seen double-digit growth during the pandemic. Company officials give a similar reason: Men, confronted with the sight of their faces repeatedly during online meetings, want to improve what they see.

"Before, most of our customers were males in their teens and 20s, but thanks to remote work we now have more businessmen," said Tezuka. Unlike many younger men, who want a drastic makeover, older businessmen want to show a slightly better version of themselves by using makeup, he said.

"Men in their 40s, 50s, and 60s come to our salon because they feel they must wear makeup," he said. Tezuka said that's because businessmen who work from home have more opportunities to see their faces during online meetings and have thus started to care more about their looks.

The men's beauty industry has been expanding in Japan. According to research company Fuji Keizai Group, the men's cosmetic market grew from about 600 billion yen (\$5.5 billion) to an estimated 623 billion yen (\$5.7 billion) from 2018 to 2019.

Tezuka said older businessmen tend to spend more money and visit more regularly than those in their 20s and 30s.

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One customer, Yoshihiro Kamichi, 44, recently came to Tezuka's salon to buy makeup for the first time. Kamichi chose makeup for his eyelids and had foundation applied to his face. A makeup artist carefully trimmed his eyebrows and contoured his nose and face with brown shadow power.

"Who is this person? I was surprised at how different I look," Kamichi said while looking at himself in the mirror.

Shiseido, one of the world's oldest cosmetics companies, released free online makeup filters last month that let male users look like they are wearing men's beauty products such as blemish balms and foundation.

After Shiseido released makeup filters for women for online meetings like Zoom last year, comments from businessmen flooded in to its social media accounts requesting filters for men.

Uno, Shiseido's men's care brand, is now expanding its target age for cosmetics from men in their early 20s to men in their 40s.

"I think the coronavirus has created a certain condition that urges businessmen to be more aware of their skin condition," said Uno's assistant branding manager, Yoshiyuki Matsuo. "We have seen double-digit growth even amid the pandemic."

Matsuo wouldn't provide more details about Uno's growth.

To make cosmetics accessible to men, Japanese cosmetics store @Cosme Tokyo created an entire section dedicated to male and unisex makeup items last year at their newly opened shop in front of Harajuku Station, a trendy Tokyo area.

One recent customer, Kenta Yamashita, 24, a hairdresser, has been using cosmetics daily.

"There are men who cannot buy cosmetic products because it's hard for them to casually drop in. I think it's nice we now have this section," Yamashita said. "But I wish they would make the section bigger so that men can more casually drop in."

In Minneapolis, a fortified city awaits Chauvin verdict

By TIM SULLIVAN Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Just outside the entrance to Smile Orthodontics, in a Minneapolis neighborhood of craft breweries and trendy shops, two soldiers in jungle camouflage and body armor were on watch Monday, assault rifles slung over their backs. Snow flurries blew around them. A few steps away at the Iron Door Pub, three more National Guard soldiers and a Minneapolis police officer stood out front, watching the street. A handful of other soldiers were scattered nearby, along with four camouflaged Humvees and a couple police cars.

Across the street was a boarded-up building spray-painted with big yellow letters: "BLACK LIVES MATTER ALL YEAR ROUND."

Adam Martinez was walking down the street when he briefly stopped to stare at the scene.

"This city feels like it's occupied by the military," said Martinez, a commercial painter who lives in nearby St. Paul. "This is so weird."

More than 3,000 National Guard soldiers, along with police officers, state police, sheriffs deputies and other law enforcement personnel have flooded the city in recent days, with a verdict looming in the trial of Derek Chauvin, the former police officer charged with murder in the death last year of George Floyd.

But in the city that has come to epitomize America's debate over police killings, there are places today in Minneapolis that can feel almost like a police state.

It leaves many wondering: How much is too much?

Concrete barriers, chain-link fences and barbed wire now ring parts of downtown Minneapolis so that authorities can quickly close off the courthouse where the trial is being held. It's become normal in recent days to pass convoys of desert-tan military vehicles on nearby highways, and stumble across armed men and women standing guard.

One day they'll park their armored vehicles in front of the high-end kitchen store with its \$160 bread knives and \$400 cooking pots. The next they'll be outside the Depression-era movie theater, or the popular Mexican grocery store or the liquor store ransacked by rioters during the protests that followed Floyd's

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death.

Meanwhile hundreds, and perhaps thousands, of stores and other buildings have been boarded up across the city, from Absolute Bail Bonds to glass-walled downtown office towers to Floyd's 99 Barbershop.

Behind all the security are the days of violence that began with protests over Floyd's death. Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey and Minnesota Governor Tim Walz faced withering criticism for not stepping in quicker to deploy the National Guard. City officials estimate the city suffered roughly \$350 million in damage, mostly to commercial properties.

"They're between a rock and hard place," said Eli Silverman, professor emeritus at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice and a longtime scholar of policing. "You don't want to overmilitarize and make it appear that you've converted a sovereign state into a police state. But on the other hand, you have to be prepared, too," in case protests flare again.

More important than the size of the force, he said, is the expertise and planning behind it. Law enforcement leaders, for example, need to ensure proper crowd control training, and that officers from other jurisdictions are under a single command.

"It's not just numbers, it's the strategic decisions that are incorporated in these things," he said.

Minneapolis has a coordinated law-enforcement plan, called Operation Safety Net, that oversees planning and law-enforcement responses.

Speaking on Monday to reporters, top law-enforcement officials stood alongside local community leaders and vowed to protect property, allow peaceful protests, and try to de-escalate tensions before demonstrations turn violent.

Recent history, though, hasn't been so peaceful. A little over a week ago, 20-year-old Daunte Wright, a Black man, was killed by police during a traffic stop in the Minneapolis suburb of Brooklyn Center.

Protests outside the city's police headquarters regularly spilled into violence, with protesters lobbing water bottles and the occasional rock at an array of law enforcement officers, and law enforcement responding by going after protesters - and sometimes journalists - with pepper spray, tear gas and rubber bullets.

"We know we need to do better. What happened the last few days wasn't something we wanted," Hennepin County Sheriff David Hutchinson said at the press conference. "But we had to act to keep the community safe. And I will never back down from anybody when it comes to keeping this county safe."

Many here doubt the promises of law enforcement, which has long had a troubled relationship with the city's Black community.

Burhan Israfael, a community organizer who lives in Cedar-Riverside, a Minneapolis neighborhood with one of the largest East African communities in the country, said the presence of military vehicles and armed soldiers was terrifying. He said the terror strikes particularly sharply at the city's many immigrants who fled violence for the safety of the United States.

"I don't know anybody that experienced and lived through something like that, that feels comfortable coming outside," he said. "To be faced with the violent image of somebody dressed in all that camouflage, sort of parading around those massive weapons — is unsettling for sure."

But plenty of others believe the city needs to be ready for trouble.

The Rev. Ian Bethel, a leader in the city's Black church community, sounded almost angry Monday as he spoke alongside the law enforcement officials.

"We're at a difficult time here, all of us having emotions, anxieties and stress that most of us have not been able yet to express in a proper way," he said. "But let me make this clear: One way you do not express whatever you got tied up in you is through violence."

On Monday afternoon, soon after lawyers' closing arguments and the Chauvin case going to the jury, about 300 protesters marched outside the courthouse.

There was no sign of violence.

Older Korean-Americans in LA fearful amid anti-Asian attacks

By JAE C. HONG Associated Press

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LOS ANGELES (AP) — Yong Sin Kim, an 85-year-old Korean immigrant living in a senior apartment complex in downtown Los Angeles, says he rarely leaves home these days. When he does, he carries a whistle with him; at least he could call for help if he's attacked.

Three floors up in the same building, Hyang Ran Kim, 74, waits for her daughter to pick her up. She is temporarily moving into her daughter's place in a quieter neighborhood in the suburbs. Kim says her daughter is worried about her safety.

Amid a surge of anti-Asian violence, fear creeps in and alters the daily life of vulnerable Asian seniors.

Asian Americans have been targets of discrimination, threats and violence that have escalated in the past year because the coronavirus pandemic originated in Wuhan, China. Some have blamed former President Donald Trump for fanning flames of intolerance by calling COVID-19 the "China virus" and "kung flu."

People of Asian descent have been spit on, beaten and told to go back to where they came from. Reports of violence have been on the rise, most notably when a white gunman killed eight people — six of them Asian women — in a string of shootings at Atlanta area spas in mid-March. Four of the women were of Korean descent.

While police haven't said that was a hate crime, overt examples of racism have surfaced, such as a surveillance video showing a man in New York City kicking an Asian American woman and stomping on her face while shouting anti-Asian slurs.

In LA's Koreatown, Denny Kim, a U.S. Air Force veteran said he was beaten in February by two men who shouted slurs such as "ching chong" and "China virus." Police were investigating it as a hate crime.

Discrimination against Asian groups has a long and ugly history dating back to California's origins — from Chinese laborers exploited during construction of the transcontinental railroad to the large number of Japanese immigrants and their American-born children herded into internment camps during World War II.

Korean Americans in Los Angeles found themselves under siege three decades ago during the 1992 riots that broke out following the acquittal of the police officers who beat Black motorist Rodney King. Anger over the verdict merged with tensions that had been brewing in the Black community over Korean ownership of mom-and-pop shops in their neighborhoods.

Arsons and looting spread from South Los Angeles into Koreatown, where merchants guarded their shops with guns. Despite the defense, much of the \$1 billion in the city's economic losses from the riots were in Koreatown.

For Yong Sin Kim and his wife, who were quarantined in their small apartment for days after they tested positive for COVID-19, their confinement continues to avoid another virus — violence.

"We don't go out at all. We stay home all day as if we are locked up," said Kim. "I can't even think of going for a walk."

For 74-year-old Sung Hee Chae in Koreatown, it's about a 6-minute walk to the nearest Korean grocery market. Chae said she doesn't go there alone anymore. Her son accompanies her to the market these days. Her daughter in South Korea urges her not to go out at all.

"I was terrified," said Chae about the recent shooting in Atlanta. "It was horrifying."

The bloodshed led to an outpouring of support for Asian Americans and rallies condemning hatred against any group.

"I wish all of us could get along fine regardless of the color of skin. I feel sad. I have mistreated no one," Chae said.

Jen Ho Lee, 76, has a faint heart. She is weak. She needs her walker to get around. She also limits her outings for the same reason as other Korean seniors.

But, the series of recent attacks against Asian people brought a different change for Lee.

Lee took a trip to Koreatown to attend a recent protest against anti-Asian hate crimes. It took her two buses to get there and two buses back to her home.

With signs that say "Stop Asian hate," and "I'm not a virus" taped around her walker, she chanted slogans.

"We should be united. We Asians can't stay silent," said Lee. "I didn't go to the rally because I had plenty of time or because I was healthy."

"It is wrong to think these attacks have nothing to do with me. This could happen to me or my family one day," Lee added.

Prosecutor: FedEx shooter didn't have 'red flag' hearing

By CASEY SMITH Associated Press/Report for America

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — A former employee who shot and killed eight people at a FedEx facility in Indianapolis never appeared before a judge for a hearing under Indiana's "red flag" law, even after his mother called police last year to say her son might commit "suicide by cop," a prosecutor said Monday.

Marion County Prosecutor Ryan Mears said authorities did not seek such a hearing because they did not have enough time under the law's restrictions to definitively demonstrate Brandon Scott Hole's propensity for suicidal thoughts, something they would need to have done to convince a judge that Hole should not be allowed to possess a gun.

The "red flag" legislation, passed in Indiana in 2005 and also in effect in other states, allows police or courts to seize guns from people who show warning signs of violence. Police seized a pump-action shotgun from Hole, then 18, in March 2020 after they received the call from his mother.

While recovering the shotgun, one of the responding officers also witnessed "white supremacist websites" on Hole's computer after the teen asked officers to cut the power to his computer, according to a police probable cause narrative from the 2020 incident released Monday.

Mears said that prosecutors were limited in their ability to prepare a "red flag" case against Hole following that incident due to a 2019 change in the law that requires courts to make a "good-faith effort" to hold a hearing within 14 days. An additional amendment required them to file an affidavit with the court within 48 hours.

"This individual was taken and treated by medical professionals and he was cut loose," and was not even prescribed any medication, Mears said. "The risk is, if we move forward with that (red flag) process and lose, we have to give that firearm back to that person. That's not something we were willing to do."

Indianapolis police previously said that they never did return the shotgun to Hole. Authorities have said he used two "assault-style" rifles to gun down eight people, four of them from the city's Sikh community, at the FedEx facility last Thursday before he killed himself.

Police on Monday identified the high-capacity weapons used by Hole, who was 19 at the time of the shooting. One was a Ruger AR-556 Hole purchased in September. The second was an HM Defense HM15F he bought in July, just months after police had seized the pump-action shotgun. A Ruger AR-556 also was used last month in a shooting that killed 10 people in Boulder, Colorado.

Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms determined that Hole purchased the guns legally through authorized dealers, according to a police news release that did not name the dealers. The release also said FedEx terminated Hole in October when he failed to return to work.

A police probable cause affidavit narrative also released Monday states describes Hole's March 2020 arrest, and a request he made to his arresting officers. "Brandon upon being placed in handcuffs became immediately anxious and stated, 'Please just turn the power strip off on my computer. I don't want anyone to see what's on it,'" it states, before adding that while securing the shotgun an officer saw "what through his training and experience indicated was white supremacist websites."

Paul Keenan, special agent in charge of the FBI's Indianapolis field office, said Friday that the FBI was contacted to the scene after items were found in Hole's bedroom but he did not elaborate on what those were. He said agents found no evidence of a crime and that they did not identify Hole as espousing a racially motivated ideology.

Republican state Sen. Erin Houchin, a sponsor of tougher provisions added to Indiana's red flag law in 2019, said in the Hole case the law "could have worked just as it should, but the prosecutor never pursued it."

Those 2019 changes to the law made it a misdemeanor for a person deemed dangerous to buy or possess a gun and a felony offense for anyone to give or sell a gun to a dangerous person.

But Mears said there are still problems that need to be addressed. He said he had spoken to legislators

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in the past about lengthening the two-week timeline for holding a red flag hearing, and he reiterated that call on Monday. Extending the time frame would give prosecutors more time to investigate a person's background and mental health history before going in front of a judge, he said. He added that he would also like to see the statute prohibit a person under investigation from buying a gun until the hearing is held and the judge makes a final ruling.

Mears said the red flag law is "a good start, but it's far from perfect."

"I think people hear 'red flag' and they think it's the panacea to all these issues. It's not," he said.

Democratic state Rep. Ed DeLaney, a gun control advocate, said he hoped Republicans would be receptive to reviewing the law in the future. He said there isn't time to force an immediate debate because the 2021 legislative session is slated to end later this week.

Paul Helmke, an Indiana University civics professor and former president of the Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence, said Indiana's law could be strengthened with mandated court hearings or language prohibiting a person from acquiring additional firearms until a judge issues an order about that person's competency.

In Hole's case, that would have meant that his family's agreement to not ask for the seized gun back would not have been enough to avoid a court hearing, and could have prevented him from purchasing additional weapons, said Helmke, a former Republican mayor of Fort Wayne, Indiana.

"Indiana should be doing more to address these loopholes," Helmke said.

Indiana was one of the first states to enact a red flag law, after an Indianapolis police officer was killed in 2004 by a man whose weapons were returned to him despite his hospitalization months earlier for an emergency mental health evaluation.

Indianapolis police recovered 191 guns last year under the red flag law, police said Monday in a release that did not say how many people that involved or the types of weapons.

Threats of expulsion as UEFA confronts Super League rebel 12

By ROB HARRIS and GRAHAM DUNBAR AP Sports Writers

MONTREUX, Switzerland (AP) — The deceptions, distrust and divisions in European soccer erupted in public on Monday between teams and even within the clubs breaking away to form a Super League that could leave them and their players outcasts in the global game.

Condemnation of the 12 rebels clubs from England, Spain and Italy even came from Prince William, who followed the British government in railing against moves to split from longstanding structures to play in a largely closed competition rather than Europe's existing UEFA-run Champions League.

UEFA President Aleksander Ceferin turned on club leaders he called "snakes" and "liars," singling out Juventus chairman Andrea Agnelli and Manchester United vice chairman Ed Woodward for betraying him by reneging on a pledge to stick within existing structures.

Ceferin threatened players from the Super League clubs with being banned from the European Championship and next year's World Cup.

"They will not be able to represent their national teams at any matches," Ceferin warned earlier. "UEFA and the footballing world stand united against the disgraceful self-serving proposal we have seen in the last 24 hours from a select few clubs in Europe that are fueled purely by greed above all else."

Real Madrid president Florentino Pérez, the founding chairman of the Super League, downplayed UEFA's threat to ban players.

The players "can be assured that this won't happen," Pérez said in a late-night Spanish television interview. "It's not going to happen. We won't get into the legal aspects of it, but it won't happen. It's impossible."

The strident rhetoric from Ceferin was followed on Monday by criticism of the Super League even by Liverpool manager Jürgen Klopp, despite Liverpool's owner John Henry securing the six-time European champion's participation in the new competition.

"I don't think it's a great idea," he said after Liverpool was held by Leeds to 1-1. It's a result that puts Liverpool two points from the four Champions League qualification places, showing just why Henry would

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want the team in a Super League where the spot is locked in.

Three of the 12 rebel clubs — Chelsea, Manchester City and Real Madrid — are scheduled to play in the Champions League semifinals next week. Two more, Manchester United and Arsenal, are in the Europa League semifinals. Ceferin said he wants to boot them out as “as soon as possible” from UEFA competitions, but that will require “legal assessments” that will begin Tuesday.

Pérez said the new competition is being created to “save soccer” and complained of a campaign to make the Super League look bad by those who would “lose their privileges.”

“We have to explain to everyone that this is not a league for the rich clubs,” Pérez said in an interview broadcast early Tuesday on the Spanish television program *El Chiringuito de Jugones*. “It’s a league to save all the clubs. Otherwise, soccer will die.”

He also said the new league likely won’t start next season if no deal is reached with European soccer’s governing body.

Ceferin led a meeting of UEFA’s executive committee Monday only hours after the 12 clubs announced the Super League project that threatens to split the historic structure of European soccer. He received backing from the English Football Association President Prince William, the second-in-line to the British throne.

“Now, more than ever, we must protect the entire football community – from the top level to the grass-roots – and the values of competition and fairness at its core,” he tweeted on the Kensington Palace account. “I share the concerns of fans about the proposed Super League and the damage it risks causing to the game we love.”

The 12 clubs planning to start the breakaway Super League have informed the leaders of FIFA and UEFA that they have begun legal action aimed at fending off threats to block their competition.

The letter was sent by the group to Ceferin and FIFA President Gianni Infantino saying the Super League has already been underwritten by funding of 4 billion euros (\$5.5 billion) from American bank JPMorgan Chase.

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 and Juventus, that legal action would be taken against them and said they also would be barred from existing domestic competitions such as the Spanish league and the Premier League.

“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 by the Super League, which intends to launch a 20-team competition with 15 founding members. Tottenham from England, Atletico Madrid from Spain, and AC Milan and Inter Milan from Italy are also among the 12 that have already signed.

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.

UEFA approved the new Champions League format proposal on Monday amid the turmoil.

The agreement was negotiated with the 246-member European Club Association. The ECA leader, Agnelli of Juventus, quit the UEFA executive committee overnight.

“He is probably the biggest disappointment of all,” Ceferin said of Agnelli. “I have never seen a person

that would lie so many times and so persistently as he did.

"Now I know who is who. Who is honest. Who loves football."

In their letter to the FIFA and UEFA presidents, the Super League clubs said their competition could also play alongside domestic leagues and cups.

"We do not seek to replace the UEFA's Champions League or the Europa League," they said, "but to compete with and exist alongside those tournaments."

Murder case against ex-cop in Floyd's death goes to the jury

By AMY FORLITI, STEPHEN GROVES and TAMMY WEBBER Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — The murder case against former Officer Derek Chauvin in the death of George Floyd went to the jury Monday in a city on edge against another round of unrest like the one that erupted last year over the harrowing video of Chauvin with his knee on the Black man's neck.

The jury of six white people and six people who are Black or multiracial began deliberating after nearly a full day of closing arguments in which prosecutors argued that Chauvin squeezed the life out of Floyd last May in a way that even a child knew was wrong.

The defense contended that the now-fired white officer acted reasonably and that the 46-year-old Floyd died of a heart condition and illegal drug use.

The jurors deliberated about four hours before retiring for the night to the hotel where they are being sequestered for this final phase of the trial. They were due to resume Tuesday morning.

After closing arguments were done, Judge Peter Cahill rejected a defense request for a mistrial based in part on comments from California Rep. Maxine Waters, who said "we've got to get more confrontational" if Chauvin isn't convicted of murder.

The judge told Chauvin's attorney: "Congresswoman Waters may have given you something on appeal that may result in this whole trial being overturned." He called her comments "abhorrent" and "disrespectful to the rule of law and to the judicial branch."

Chauvin, 45, is charged with second-degree murder, third-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter, all of which require the jury to conclude that his actions were a "substantial causal factor" in Floyd's death and that his use of force was unreasonable.

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

"Use your common sense. Believe your eyes. What you saw, you saw," prosecutor Steve Schleicher said in closing arguments, referring to the bystander video of Floyd pinned to the pavement with Chauvin's knee on or close to his neck for up to 9 minutes, 29 seconds, as onlookers yelled at the officer to get off.

Chauvin attorney Eric Nelson countered by arguing that Chauvin did what any reasonable police officer would have done after finding himself in a "dynamic" and "fluid" situation involving a large man struggling with three officers.

As Nelson began speaking, the now-fired Chauvin removed his COVID-19 mask in front of the jury for one of the very few times during the trial.

With the case drawing to a close, some stores were boarded up in Minneapolis. The courthouse was ringed with concrete barriers and razor wire, and National Guard troops were on patrol. Floyd's death set off protests last spring in the city and across the U.S. that sometimes turned violent.

The city has also been on edge in recent days over the deadly police shooting of a 20-year-old Black man, Daunte Wright, in a nearby suburb on April 11.

About 300 protesters marched in the streets outside the courthouse shortly after the jury got the case, lining up behind a banner reading, "Justice 4 George Floyd & all stolen lives. The world is watching."

Prosecutor Jerry Blackwell had the final word Monday, offering the state's rebuttal argument. The prosecutor, who is Black, said the questions about the use of force and cause of death are "so simple that a child can understand it."

"In fact, a child did understand it, when the 9-year-old girl said, 'Get off of him,'" Blackwell said, referring to a young witness who objected to what she saw. "That's how simple it was. 'Get off of him.' Common

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sense.”

Under the law, police have certain latitude to use force, and their actions are supposed to be judged according to what a “reasonable officer” in the same situation would have done.

Nelson noted that officers who first went to the corner store where Floyd allegedly passed a counterfeit \$20 bill were struggling with Floyd when Chauvin arrived as backup. The defense attorney also pointed out that the first two officers on the scene were rookies and that police had been told that Floyd might be on drugs.

“A reasonable police officer understands the intensity of the struggle,” Nelson said, noting that Chauvin’s body camera and badge were knocked off his chest.

Nelson also showed the jury pictures of pills found in Floyd’s SUV and pill remnants discovered in the squad car. Fentanyl and methamphetamine were found in Floyd’s system.

The defense attorney said the failure of the prosecution to acknowledge that medical problems or drugs played a role “defies medical science and it defies common sense and reason.”

During the prosecution’s argument, Schleicher replayed portions of the bystander video and other footage as he dismissed certain defense theories about Floyd’s death as “nonsense.” He said Chauvin killed Floyd by constricting his breathing.

Schleicher rejected the drug overdose argument, as well as the contention that police were distracted by hostile onlookers, that Floyd had “superhuman” strength from a state of agitation known as excited delirium, and that he suffered possible carbon monoxide poisoning from auto exhaust.

The prosecutor sarcastically referred to the idea that it was heart disease that killed Floyd as an “amazing coincidence.”

“Is that common sense or is that nonsense?” Schleicher asked the jury.

Blackwell, his fellow prosecutor, likewise rejected the defense theory that Floyd died because of an enlarged heart: “The truth of the matter is that the reason George Floyd is dead is because Mr. Chauvin’s heart was too small.”

Earlier, Schleicher described how Chauvin ignored Floyd’s cries and continued to kneel on him well after he stopped breathing and had no pulse. Chauvin was “on top of him for 9 minutes and 29 seconds and he had to know,” Schleicher said. “He had to know.”

He said Chauvin heard Floyd, “but he just didn’t listen.”

The prosecutor said Floyd was “not a threat to anyone” and was not trying to escape when he struggled with officers but instead was terrified of being put into the tiny backseat of the squad car.

He said a reasonable officer with Chauvin’s training and experience — he was a 19-year Minneapolis police veteran — should have sized up the situation accurately.

Chauvin, wearing a light gray suit with a blue shirt and blue tie, showed little expression as he watched himself and the other officers pinning Floyd to the ground on bodycam video played by his attorney. He cocked his head to the side and occasionally leaned forward to write on a notepad.

An unidentified woman occupied the single seat set aside in the pandemic-spaced courtroom for a Chauvin supporter.

Floyd’s brother Philonise represented the family in court, as he often has during the trial.

Schleicher also noted that Chauvin was required to use his training to provide medical care to Floyd but ignored bystanders, rebuffed help from an off-duty paramedic and rejected a suggestion from another officer to roll Floyd onto his side.

“He could have listened to the bystanders. He could have listened to fellow officers. He could have listened to his own training,” Schleicher said. “He knew better. He just didn’t do better.”

Feds weighing how to respond after verdict in Chauvin trial

By JONATHAN LEMIRE and MICHAEL BALSAMO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Biden administration is privately weighing how to handle the upcoming verdict in the trial of former Minneapolis Police Officer Derek Chauvin, including considering whether President Joe

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Biden should address the nation and dispatching specially trained community facilitators from the Justice Department, aides and officials told The Associated Press.

Closing arguments began Monday in Chauvin's trial with a prosecutor telling jurors that the officer "had to know" he was squeezing the life out of George Floyd as he cried over and over that he couldn't breathe and finally fell silent. Chauvin faces murder and manslaughter charges.

The plans for possible presidential remarks are still fluid, with the timing, venue and nature of the remarks still being considered, in part depending on the timing of the verdict, according to two White House aides who were not authorized to speak publicly about private conversations and spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity.

The White House has been warily watching the trial proceed in Minneapolis — and then another shooting of a Black man by a white police officer last week — and are preparing for the possibility of unrest if a guilty verdict is not reached in the trial. Biden may also speak after a guilty verdict, the White House aides said.

The verdict — and the aftermath — will be a test for Biden, who has pledged to help combat racism in policing, helping African Americans who supported him in large numbers last year in the wake of protests that swept the nation after Floyd's death and restarted a national conversation about race. But he also has long projected himself as an ally of police, who are struggling with criticism about long-used tactics and training methods and difficulties in recruitment.

Press secretary Jen Psaki said Monday that the White House has had a "range of conversations" about preparations for the upcoming verdict and added, "Our objective is to ensure there is space for peaceful protest."

"Of course we'll let the jury deliberate and we'll wait for the verdict to come out before we say more about our engagements," Psaki said.

Psaki said administration officials have been in contact with leaders in Minnesota and in other cities and states that saw unrest after Floyd's death last year.

She declined to answer if Biden would be "disappointed" if a not guilty verdict was reached.

Meanwhile, the FBI and the U.S. attorney's office in Minnesota have been working with local officials to support law enforcement as they prepare for the possibility of unrest after the verdict, officials said.

And the Justice Department has also dispatched specially trained community facilitators ahead of a verdict, according to a senior Justice Department official. The official could not discuss the plans publicly and spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity.

The officials, part of the Justice Department's Community Relations Service, tout themselves as "America's Peacemaker" by mediating disputes in communities and holding listening sessions to help prevent future conflicts.

A federal civil rights investigation, separate from the trial, remains ongoing. Several witnesses were subpoenaed earlier this year to appear before a federal grand jury considering charges against Chauvin.

The Justice Department's civil rights investigation has been focused on Chauvin and some of the witnesses, including other officers who worked with Chauvin, people familiar with the matter have told the AP.

Chauvin was prepared to plead guilty to third-degree murder in George Floyd's death before then-Attorney General William Barr personally blocked the plea deal last year. Barr rejected the deal in part because he felt it was too soon, as the investigation into Floyd's death was still in its relative infancy, law enforcement officials said.

Across the country, police departments are also preparing for the possibility of rioting or other unrest, with some canceling vacation time and increasing the number of officers available for shifts. The federal government hasn't detailed its plan in the event of widespread or sustained civil unrest.

Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said Monday that there has been a request from officials in Washington, D.C., for D.C. National Guard forces in the event there is civil unrest in the nation's capital, and it is currently being reviewed by the Army. He said the Army secretary has the authority to approve any request for D.C. National Guard but did not have details on the request.

EU warns "spark" could set off escalation at Ukraine borders

By RAF CASERT Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — The European Union's foreign policy chief said Monday that in the face of the big military buildup of Russian troops near Ukraine's borders, it will only take "a spark" to set off a confrontation.

In a glum assessment of relations with Moscow, Josep Borrell also said that the condition of imprisoned Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny was "critical" and that the 27-nation group would hold the Kremlin accountable for his health and safety.

Despite the developments, Borrell said after a virtual meeting of the EU foreign ministers that, "for the time being, there is no move in the field of more sanctions" to be imposed on Russia.

He also said there wasn't a request for a synchronized EU diplomatic move of expulsions in the standoff between Czech Republic, an EU member state, and Russia following Prague's accusation that Moscow was involved in a 2014 ammunition depot explosion.

More dangerous at this time, Borrell said, was the massing of Russian troops, including military field hospitals, and "all kinds of warfare."

"It is the highest military deployment of the Russian army on the Ukrainian borders ever. It's clear that it's a matter of concern when you deploy a lot of troops," Borrell said. "Well, a spark can jump here or there."

Initially, Borrell told reporters that "there's more than 150,000 Russian troops massing on the Ukrainian borders and in Crimea," and doubled down on the figure later before his services had to correct it in the transcript, saying the real figure was over 100,000.

Nevertheless, Borrell said that "the risk of further escalation — it's evident."

Borrell declined to say where he got the initial 150,000 Russian troop number from, but called it "my reference figure." It was higher than the 110,000 estimate provided by Ukrainian Defense Minister Andriy Taran on Wednesday.

More than 14,000 people have died in seven years of fighting between Ukrainian forces and Russia-backed separatists in eastern Ukraine that erupted after Russia's 2014 annexation of Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula. The EU has steadfastly opposed the annexation but has been unable to do anything about it.

Efforts to reach a political settlement have stalled and violations of a shaky truce have become increasingly frequent in recent weeks across Ukraine's eastern industrial heartland known as the Donbas.

Diplomats had expected there was little to no chance of immediate new sanctions on Moscow, but they now will seek to apply more pressure nevertheless through diplomacy.

"Moscow must switch from provocation to cooperation," German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said.

And over the weekend, French President Emmanuel Macron said that while dialogue with Russia is essential, "clear red lines" carrying possible sanctions must also be drawn with Moscow over Ukraine.

"All in all, the relations with Russia, are not improving, but the contrary, the tension is increasing in different fronts," Borrell said.

"We call on Russia to withdraw their troops," Borrell said.

Gaetz, Greene flaunt new paths to power, testing GOP leaders

By ALAN FRAM and BRIAN SLODYSKO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Congressional leaders have always faced rebels in their ranks. But Reps. Matt Gaetz and Marjorie Taylor Greene are presenting top House Republicans with a test of how to handle a new breed of Trump-era, social media-savvy firebrands.

Gaetz, a third-term Floridian, and Greene, a Georgia freshman, have attracted more public attention lately than most junior members of Congress. Much of it hasn't been positive.

That's confronting House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., with questions about whether the two hard-right provocateurs might hurt the GOP's goal of capturing House control in next year's elections. Party leaders must decide what, if anything, to do about them, and what impact any action would have on their supporters, who come from the GOP's staunchly conservative base.

"These are folks who operate in their own bubbles," said former Rep. Tom Davis, R-Va., who headed

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the House GOP's campaign operation. "They know how to get press, they don't worry about being too outrageous."

"They have absolutely safe seats," Davis said.

However, the Justice Department is investigating whether Gaetz violated sex trafficking laws and had sex with a 17-year-old girl, and McCarthy has suggested he'll take action if Gaetz is indicted.

And a memo linked to Greene described a proposed America First Caucus hailing "Anglo-Saxon political traditions" and warning of immigration's threat to the U.S.'s "unique culture," prompting McCarthy to denounce "nativist dog whistles."

Gaetz has denied the accusations against him, which were described by people familiar with the investigation. He hasn't been charged with any crimes and says he is "absolutely not resigning."

Greene called the caucus memo a staff-level proposal that she had not read from an outside group she didn't identify. She said "America First" embraces people "of every race, creed, and color," and added, "I will never back down."

Unlike most lawmakers, the two have sources of power that make them tough for leaders to curb. Their formulas include raising lots of money, amassing social media followers, appearing often on television, representing strongly conservative districts and being allied with former President Donald Trump, who's still idolized by legions of Republicans.

Their association with Trump "gives a lot of psychological power to the firebrands to know that they're on pretty safe ground," said former Rep. Dave Brat, R-Va., a hardline conservative who battled party leaders.

"In the past, if you wanted your profile as elevated as Matt Gaetz's or Marjorie Taylor Greene's, you'd run for president," said Rep. Thomas Massie, R-Ky., another conservative who's clashed with leadership.

From January 2019 through last week, Gaetz's 209 weekday appearances on the three major cable TV networks — nearly all on conservative Fox News — were exceeded by only five other members of Congress, according to Media Matters, a liberal group that monitors online political activity. His congressional and personal Twitter accounts both boast at least 1 million followers.

"The really powerful people in this town are the ones that can go on television and make an argument," Gaetz told the producers of "The Swamp," a 2019 HBO documentary. "And that's power that leadership can never take away from you."

Greene, in Congress since January, has 400,000 Twitter followers but has made no daytime appearances on the three top cable networks. She has appeared on the Trump-friendly One America News Network and Newsmax TV.

She also reported raising \$3.2 million during this year's first three months. That's more than double the \$1.5 million the typical House GOP incumbent spent on the entire 2020 election, according to Federal Election Commission figures.

Gaetz reported raising \$1.8 million through March.

"Celebrity fuels money-raising ability and popularity, and that is independent from the traditional power structure" in Congress, said Michael Steel, former top aide to former Speaker John Boehner, R-Ohio, and other leading Republicans.

The allegations against Gaetz, part of a broader probe of Florida Republican political figures, are serious enough to potentially threaten his political survival, whatever McCarthy does.

Internal House GOP rules say a lawmaker indicted for a serious felony should resign from committees, while House rules say they shouldn't vote on the chamber's floor if convicted. Members in such situations often resign or don't seek reelection.

Greene's situation is murkier. In a recent case, after years of racially offensive statements by Iowa Rep. Steve King, GOP leaders turned against him in 2019 when he questioned why terms like "white supremacist" were offensive. He didn't resign but lost his 2020 GOP primary.

Over GOP objections, the Democratic-majority House stripped Greene of her committee assignments in February for her online recycling of violent statements and conspiracy theories. McCarthy denounced her statements but didn't punish her.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., has her own insurgents, headlined by Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez,

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D-N.Y., and others in the progressive "squad." But with the party's paper-thin majority, all Democrats are under tremendous pressure to unify behind President Joe Biden's agenda, giving Pelosi more leverage.

McCarthy needs to gain just a few seats to win House control and would prefer no distractions. The GOP wants to focus on what it considers a target-rich environment of issues like migrants at the South-west border, Democratic proposals to boost taxes on high earners and corporations and the continued pandemic closure of school systems.

"It's a problem," said Sarah Chamberlain, who heads the Republican Main Street Partnership, an alliance of dozens of GOP centrists. "If Matt Gaetz becomes the face of the Republican Party, he can be used against us" by Democratic ads in moderate GOP districts, she said.

Usually, congressional leaders can pressure lawmakers by threatening to cut campaign contributions the parties control. Gaetz and Greene have already raised enough money to resist such pressure.

The two can use their money to buy online ads featuring hot-button issues that lure more supporters and contributions from the GOP base, and to court backing from colleagues by donating to their campaigns. Greene has already reported spending over \$800,000 to build an online fundraising operation, Gaetz over \$500,000.

Greene donated a healthy \$175,000 to the House GOP campaign arm shortly before Democrats stripped her of her committee assignments, according to campaign finance reports.

Gaetz last year donated to dozens of House Republicans.

Apple signals return of right-wing 'free speech' app Parler

By BARBARA ORTUTAY AP Technology Writer

Apple said it has reached an agreement with the right-wing social app Parler that could lead to its reinstatement in the company's app store. Apple kicked out Parler in January over ties to the deadly Jan. 6 siege on the U.S. Capitol.

In a letter to two Republican lawmakers in Congress, Apple said it has been in "substantial conversations" with Parler over how the company plans to moderate content on its network. Before its removal from the app store, Parler was a hotbed of hate speech, Nazi imagery, calls for violence (including violence against specific people) and conspiracy theories.

Apple declined to comment beyond the letter, which didn't provide details on how Parler plans to moderate such content. In the letter, Apple said Parler's proposed changes would lead to approval of the app.

Parler said it has implemented "several new safeguards" designed to detect posts that "would not fall within the protections of the First Amendment," but added that it did not make broad policy changes.

"While the App Store version of Parler will prohibit some posts that Parler allows, those posts will still remain visible on the web-based and Android versions of Parler," the company said in a statement.

The First Amendment does not apply to private companies such as Parler — it prohibits the government from making laws that impede free speech. But this has not stopped people from claiming that social media companies violate their free speech rights by moderating content, or from "free speech" apps such as Parler from popping up to fill a perceived void of "censorship-free" discussion sites.

As of midday Monday, Parler was not yet available in the app store and Apple did not give a timeline for when it will be reinstated. According to Apple's letter, Parler proposed changes to its app and how it moderates content. Apple said the updated app incorporating those changes should be available as soon as Parler releases it.

Google also banned Parler from its Google Play store in January, but Parler remains available for Android phones through third-party app stores. Apple's closed app system means apps are only available through Apple's own app store. On Monday, Google reiterated its January statement that "Parler is welcome back in the Play store once it submits an app that complies with our policies."

So far, this has not happened.

Parler remains banned from Amazon's Web Services. Amazon said in January that Parler was unable to moderate a rise in violent content before, during and after the insurrection. Parler asked a federal judge in Seattle to force Amazon to reinstate it on the web. That effort failed, and the companies are still fight-

ing in court.

Republican political donor Rebekah Mercer has confirmed she helped bankroll Parler and has emerged in recent months as the network's shadow executive after its founder John Matze was ousted as CEO in February.

New York AG investigating Cuomo's use of aides on book

By MARINA VILLENEUVE Associated Press

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) — New York's attorney general is investigating whether Gov. Andrew Cuomo broke the law by having members of his staff help write and promote his pandemic leadership book.

In a letter dated April 13, made public Monday, state Comptroller Tom DiNapoli authorized Attorney General Letitia James to investigate the work state employees did on drafting and editing the book, "American Crisis: Leadership Lessons from the COVID-19 Pandemic," which was released last fall.

James' office confirmed it received the referral letter but declined further comment, citing an "ongoing investigation."

Cuomo and his spokespeople have acknowledged that senior members of his staff helped with the book, but they've insisted the work was done on a voluntary basis on their private time.

DiNapoli, an independently elected fiscal officer, asked James to investigate the "alleged commission of any indictable offense or offenses in violation of" laws barring public officials from using state resources for private purposes.

DiNapoli authorized the attorney general to convene a grand jury, if she chose to do so, and prosecute anyone believed to have violated those laws.

A spokesperson for Cuomo, Rich Azzopardi, dismissed the idea of an investigation as a political stunt.

"We have officially jumped the shark," he said in a statement. "The idea there was criminality involved here is patently absurd on its face and is just the furthering of a political pile-on. Any state official who volunteered to assist on this project did so on his or her own time and without the use of state resources."

"This is Albany politics at its worst," he added. "Both the Comptroller and the Attorney General have spoken to people about running for Governor and it is unethical to wield criminal referral authority to further political self-interest."

The inquiry adds to a pile of trouble facing Cuomo, who like DiNapoli and James is a Democrat.

The attorney general is separately investigating allegations that Cuomo sexually harassed women, including one who accused him of groping her breasts. The state Assembly is investigating whether to impeach Cuomo over the sexual harassment claims, and other matters, including his administration's decision to conceal data related to COVID-19 deaths in nursing homes.

Federal prosecutors are also probing Cuomo's handling of COVID-19 data.

Cuomo has denied touching anyone inappropriately and defended his administration's handling of the COVID-19 crisis in nursing homes as having saved lives.

Cuomo received permission from state ethics commissioners last year to write his book — with conditions.

He had to write the book on "his own time and not on state time," according to state ethics rules. And, "no state property, personnel or other resources" could be used.

Yet, several people who work for the state did work on the book, including Secretary to the Governor Melissa DeRosa and the Director of Governor's Offices Stephanie Benton, according to reports in The New York Times, The Times-Union, of Albany, and the USA TODAY State News Network.

Cuomo's office hasn't provided direct responses to a list of questions from The Associated Press about which aides were involved with the book, or the type of work they did.

Azzopardi has said Cuomo's office made every effort to ensure no state resources were used.

The governor said Monday that he asked some people who he mentioned in the book to "review" it.

"On the book, some people volunteered to review the book," Cuomo said in a teleconference call with reporters. "You look at the people who are mentioned in the book. I wanted to make sure they were okay with the mention."

Azzopardi denied that any lower-level aides transcribed parts of the book. "To the extent an aide printed out a document, it appears incidental," he said.

Azzopardi has also disputed criticism about Cuomo discussing the book in news conferences and media appearances: "An offhand mention about writing a book, or answering questions from the media about it in no way is an advertisement of endorsement of it."

Cuomo has repeatedly declined to reveal how much he was paid to write the book.

The governor, who allows reporters to view personal income tax filings each year, said Monday that he would disclose financial details in those tax documents: "You will see everything you want to see in the personal income taxes."

Medical ruling: Capitol cop Sicknick died of natural causes

By MICHAEL BALSAMO and COLLEEN LONG Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Capitol Police Officer Brian Sicknick, who was injured while confronting rioters during the Jan. 6 insurrection, suffered a stroke and died from natural causes, the Washington, D.C., medical examiner's office ruled Monday, a finding that lessens the chances that anyone will be charged in his death.

Investigators initially believed the officer was hit in the head with a fire extinguisher, based on statements collected early in the investigation, according to two people familiar with the case. And they later thought the 42-year-old Sicknick may have ingested a chemical substance — possibly bear spray — that may have contributed to his death.

But the determination of a natural cause of death means the medical examiner found that a medical condition alone caused his death — it was not brought on by an injury. The determination is likely to significantly inhibit the ability of federal prosecutors to bring homicide charges in Sicknick's death.

U.S. Capitol Police said that the agency accepted the medical examiner's findings but that the ruling didn't change the fact that Sicknick had died in the line of duty, "courageously defending Congress and the Capitol."

"The attack on our officers, including Brian, was an attack on our democracy," police officials said in a statement. "The United States Capitol Police will never forget Officer Sicknick's bravery, nor the bravery of any officer on January 6, who risked their lives to defend our democracy."

Federal prosecutors have charged two men with using bear spray on Sicknick during the Jan. 6 riot. The arrests of George Tanios, 39, of Morgantown, West Virginia, and Julian Khater, 32, of Pennsylvania, were the closest federal prosecutors have come to identifying and charging anyone associated with the five deaths that happened during and after the riot.

Lawyers for the two men had no immediate comment Monday.

Sicknick died after defending the Capitol against the mob that stormed the building as Congress was voting to certify Joe Biden's electoral win over Donald Trump. It came after Trump urged his supporters to "fight like hell" to overturn his defeat.

Sicknick was standing guard with other officers behind metal bicycle racks as the mob descended on the Capitol.

"Give me that bear shit," Khater said before he reached into Tanios' backpack, according to court papers. Tanios told Khater "not yet" because it was "still early," but Khater responded that "they just f---ing sprayed me." Khater was then seen holding a can of chemical spray, prosecutors say.

As the rioters began pulling on one of the racks, Khater was seen with his arm in the air and the canister in his hand while standing just 5 to 8 feet from the officers, authorities said.

In February, Sicknick became only the fifth person in history to lie in honor in the Capitol Rotunda, a designation for those who are not elected officials, judges or military leaders. He was interred at Arlington National Cemetery.

India's capital to lock down amid explosive virus surge

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By AIJAZ HUSSAIN and ANIRUDDHA GHOSAL Associated Press

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

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 of medical facilities waiting to be let in. Ambulances also idled outside of crematoriums, carrying half a dozen dead bodies each. In an effort to combat crisis, India announced that it would soon expand its vaccination campaign to all adults.

"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.

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 who has been tracking infections in India.

The country is not alone. Several places in the world are seeing deepening crises, including Brazil and France, spurred in part by new variants. More than a year into the pandemic, deaths are on the rise again worldwide, running at nearly 12,000 per day on average, and new cases are climbing, too. Over the weekend, the global death toll passed a staggering 3 million people.

But the surge has been devastating in 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. In a sign of the high stakes, the chief executive of Serum Institute of India, the world's largest maker of vaccines, asked U.S. President Joe Biden on Twitter last week to lift the U.S. embargo on exporting raw materials needed to make the shots.

As it battles the rising cases, India announced Monday that it would vaccinate everyone older than 18 from May 1. The country began inoculating health workers in mid-January and later extended the drive to people over 45. India has so far administered 120 million doses to its population of nearly 1.4 billion.

The country 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. Amid the rise in cases, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson called off a trip to New Delhi.

The city of 29 million people has fewer than 100 beds with ventilators, and fewer than 150 beds available for patients needing critical care. Similar strains can be seen in other parts of the vast country, where the fragile health system has been underfunded for decades and a failure to prepare for the current surge has left hospitals buckling under the pressure of mounting infections.

In the Himalayan region of Indian-controlled Jammu and Kashmir, the weekly average of COVID-19 cases has increased 11-fold in the past month. In Telengana state in southern India, home to Hyderabad city where most of India's vaccine makers are based, the weekly average of infections has increased 16-fold in the past month.

Meanwhile, election campaigns are continuing in West Bengal state in eastern India, amid an alarming increase there as well, and experts fear that crowded rallies could fuel the spread of the virus. Top leaders of the ruling Bhartiya Janta Party, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, have campaigned heavily to win polls in the region.

By contrast, in New Delhi, 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 be allowed to travel to airports or train stations — a difference from the last lockdown when thousands of migrant workers were forced to walk to their home villages.

That harsh lockdown last year, which lasted months, 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, the Delhi official, urged calm, especially among migrant workers who particularly suffered during the previous shutdown, saying this one would be "small."

But many feared it would spell economic ruin. Amrit Tripathi, a laborer in New Delhi, was among the thousands who walked home in last year's lockdown.

"We will starve," he said, if the current measures are extended.

2 views of Floyd onlookers: Desperate to help, or angry mob?

By JIM SALTER Associated Press

To the prosecution, the witnesses who watched George Floyd's body go still were regular people — a firefighter, a mixed martial arts fighter, a high school student and her 9-year-old cousin in a T-shirt emblazoned with the word "Love" — going about their daily lives when they happened upon the ghastly scene of an officer kneeling on a man's neck.

"Normal folks, the bystanders," prosecutor Jerry Blackwell called them in his opening statement. "You're going to see these bystanders, a veritable bouquet of humanity."

In his closing argument on Monday, prosecutor Steve Schleicher described how Derek Chauvin, the former Minneapolis police officer charged with murder and manslaughter in Floyd's death, stayed on top of Floyd and "continued to push him down, to grind his knees, to twist his hand, to twist his fingers into the handcuffs that bound him looking at him, staring, staring down at times the horrified bystanders who had gathered and watched this unfold."

But some of the same people were portrayed as unruly, angry, even threatening by Eric Nelson, Chauvin's attorney. Nelson told the jury about the hostility the officers faced, how they were distracted and perhaps frightened by people at the scene. He described the bystanders as a "crowd" that created "a hostile environment."

Nelson said Monday that they played an important role, even "startling" Chauvin, during what he described as a "critical moment" in Floyd's death. As he played video of Floyd's last breath, he pointed out that Chauvin pulls out his mace and begins to shake it as an off-duty Minneapolis firefighter approaches Floyd.

"As the crowd grew in size, seemingly so too did their anger," Nelson said in his opening statement on March 29. "And remember, there's more to the scene than just what the officers see in front of them. There are people behind them, there are people across the street, there are cars stopping, people yelling. There is a growing crowd and what officers perceive to be a threat."

But Blackwell countered that notion in the state's rebuttal argument Monday: "What was there to be afraid of here, particularly at this scene? There were three high school juniors there and a second-grader who was going to the store to get candy."

The carefully calibrated language by each side was no accident. As Nelson cross-examined Donald Williams, a former wrestler and a mixed martial arts fighter who also worked security, he peppered his questions with the word "crowd": "Have you ever had to deal with a crowd of people?" "Have you ever had to deal with a crowd of people that was upset?" and "Is it easier or harder to deal with a crowd that is upset?"

Video of the scene suggests something less than a crowd. Around 15 people can be seen on surveillance video on the sidewalk in front of Cup Foods, where Chauvin pinned Floyd to the street. That camera shows Darnella Frazier, who made the most widely seen bystander video, walking past with her 9-year-old cousin, then returning to begin filming, one of the first people to stop and watch. Others gather, one by one.

A still image of body-camera footage from Officer Tou Thao, who was facing the bystanders and admonishing them to stay on the sidewalk, shows 14 people. At least five are female, including Frazier, her cousin and two teenagers. One bystander is a small child. At least three people have their phones out to capture the scene. Of the 14, only one — a teenage girl two steps into the street with her phone out — is off the sidewalk at that point, although the live video shows others stepping into the street at times.

Nelson suggested there were others off camera — across the street and on the other side of the intersection — though the broadest camera view doesn't show a crowd at the intersection. He also highlighted

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passing cars that may have heightened officers' stress.

Mike Brandt, a local defense attorney who closely watched the trial, said Nelson needed "to come up with some explanation as to why the cops kept doing what they were doing." He said during the trial that he did not think it would be persuasive.

"When you look at the 'crowd' you have visions of two or three people deep fanning out 180 degrees (if not more) around the officers," Brandt said. "That really wasn't the case."

Video shot by Frazier and others shows people upset by what they were seeing. Blackwell said bystanders first sought to "intercede with their voices," then began taking video. Before long, some were imploring Chauvin to have mercy on Floyd.

"You got him down — let him breathe," someone yells. A woman says, "How long y'all going to hold him down?"

Concern grows when Floyd falls silent. "He's not responsive right now," someone says. Onlooker Genevieve Hansen, a firefighter, urges officers to check his pulse. Another asks, "Did they (expletive) kill him?"

Hansen testified that she was on her way home from a walk when she saw the police vehicles.

"I was concerned to see a handcuffed man who was not moving, with officers with their whole body weight on his back, and a crowd that was stressed out," she said.

She said she identified herself as a firefighter but officers refused to let her come to Floyd's aid. She admitted raising her voice and using foul language "because I was desperate" to help Floyd. In cross-examination, Nelson asked her how she would react if she was fighting a fire and a crowd of bystanders took issue with her work. Hansen said she wouldn't have a problem.

No bystander was more vocal than Williams, and Nelson worked to draw him out.

Nelson asked if Williams grew angrier as the arrest continued, and the mixed martial arts fighter agreed that he did. Nelson also noted that Williams called Chauvin names -- "tough guy," "real man." He called him a "bum" 13 times. When Williams appeared to step off the curb and Thao touched him, Nelson said Williams threatened the officer.

Williams didn't disagree.

"Yeah, I did," he said without hesitation. "I meant it." But he said his anger was directed at what was happening to Floyd.

"You can't paint me out to be angry," he told Nelson.

Frazier, too, was at the center of a notable exchange with Nelson. She confirmed to him that as time went on, more people gathered, voices became louder, and people got more angry.

But Blackwell followed up by asking Frazier whether anyone threatened police, became violent, acted unruly or could be fairly called a "mob." No, she responded.

Did she see any onlooker "do anything to attack or threaten Mr. Chauvin?"

"No," she replied.

"Did you see a single thing that indicated to you that Mr. Chauvin was afraid of you, your little cousin or a single one of the bystanders?" Blackwell asked.

The answer, again, "No."

Supreme Court likely to bar some 'green card' applicants

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court appeared ready Monday to prevent thousands of people living in the U.S. for humanitarian reasons from applying to become permanent residents.

The justices seemed favorable, in arguments via telephone, to the case made by the Biden administration that federal immigration law prohibits people who entered the country illegally and now have Temporary Protected Status from seeking "green cards" to remain in the country permanently.

The designation applies to people who come from countries ravaged by war or disaster, protects them from deportation and allows them to work legally.

The case pits the administration against immigrant groups that contend federal law is more forgiving for

the 400,000 people who are TPS recipients. Many have lived in the U.S. for many years, given birth to American citizens and have put down roots in this country, their advocates say.

The Justice Department says it is maintaining a position held consistently for 30 years by administrations of both parties.

President Joe Biden supports changing the law to put TPS recipients, among other immigrants, on a path to citizenship. Legislation that would allow people who are here for humanitarian reasons to adjust their immigration status has passed the House, but faces uncertain prospects in the Senate.

Justice Brett Kavanaugh said the court should be "careful about tinkering with the immigration statutes as written," especially when Congress could act. "But just kind of big picture, why should we jump in here when Congress is very focused on immigration?" Kavanaugh asked.

The case turns on whether people who entered the country illegally and were given humanitarian protections were ever "admitted" into the United States under immigration law.

Justice Clarence Thomas said "they clearly were not admitted at the borders. So is that a fiction? Is it metaphysical? What is it? I don't know."

The case before the court involves a couple from El Salvador who have been in the country since the late 1990s. In 2001, the U.S. gave Salvadoran migrants legal protection to remain in the U.S. after a series of earthquakes in their home country.

People from 10 other countries are similarly protected. They are: Haiti, Honduras, Nepal, Nicaragua, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Venezuela and Yemen.

Alaska tribal health groups distribute vaccine far and wide

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.

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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 in the winter only by air or 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.

"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.

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

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

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

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

It was a brief hop — just 39 seconds and 10 feet (3 meters) — but accomplished all the major milestones.

"Goosebumps. It looks just the way we had tested," project manager MiMi Aung said as she watched the flight video during a later briefing. "Absolutely beautiful flight. I don't think I can ever stop watching it over and over again."

Flight controllers at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in California declared success after receiving the data and images via the Perseverance rover. Ingenuity hitched a ride to Mars on Perseverance, clinging to the rover's belly when it touched down in an ancient river delta in February.

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

Scientists cheered the news from around the world, even from space, and the White House offered its congratulations.

"A whole new way to explore the alien terrain in our solar system is now at our disposal," Nottingham Trent University astronomer Daniel Brown said from England.

This first test flight — with more to come by Ingenuity, the next as soon as Thursday — holds great promise, Brown noted. Future helicopters could serve as scouts for rovers, and eventually astronauts, in difficult, dangerous places.

Ingenuity has provided a third dimension to planetary exploration and "freed us from the surface now forever," said JPL director, Michael Watkins.

Ground controllers had to wait more than three excruciating hours before learning whether the preprogrammed flight had succeeded 178 million miles (287 million kilometers) away. The first attempt had been delayed a week because of a software error.

When the news finally came, the operations center filled with applause, cheers and laughter. More followed when the first black and white photo from Ingenuity appeared, showing the helicopter's shadow as it hovered above the surface of Mars.

"The shadow of greatness, #MarsHelicopter first flight on another world complete!" NASA astronaut Victor Glover tweeted from the International Space Station.

Next came stunning color video of the copter's clean landing, taken by Perseverance, "the best host little Ingenuity could ever hope for," Aung said in thanking everyone.

The helicopter hovered for 30 seconds at its intended altitude of 10 feet (3 meters), and spent 39 seconds airborne, more than three times longer than the first successful flight of the Wright Flyer, which lasted a mere 12 seconds on Dec. 17, 1903.

To accomplish all this, 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% the density of Earth's, engineers had to build a helicopter light enough — with blades spinning fast enough — to generate this otherworldly lift. The Martian wind was relatively gentle Monday: between 4 mph and 14 mph (7 kph to 22 kph).

More than six years in the making, Ingenuity is just 19 inches (49 centimeters) 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.

Ingenuity also had to be sturdy enough to withstand the Martian wind, and is topped with a solar panel for recharging the batteries, crucial for surviving the minus-130 degree Fahrenheit (minus-90 degree-Celsius) Martian nights.

NASA chose a flat, relatively rock-free patch for Ingenuity's airfield. Following Monday's success, NASA named the area for the Wright brothers.

"While these two iconic moments in aviation history may be separated by time and ... million miles of

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space, they now will forever be linked," NASA's science missions chief Thomas Zurbuchen announced.

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

Up to five increasingly ambitious flights are planned, and they could lead the way to a fleet of Martian drones in decades to come, providing aerial views, transporting packages and serving as lookouts for human crews. On Earth, the technology could enable helicopters to reach new heights, doing things like more easily navigating the Himalayas.

Ingenuity's team has until the beginning of May to complete the test flights so that the rover can 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.

The team plans to test the helicopter's limits, possibly even wrecking the craft, leaving it to rest in place forever, having sent its data back home.

Until then, Perseverance will keep tabs on 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.

Coast Guard: Search for missing crew to be suspended

STACEY PLAISANCE and KEVIN MCGILL Associated Press

CUT OFF, La. (AP) — The U.S. Coast Guard said it will suspend the search for crew members who disappeared when a lift boat capsized off Louisiana last week at sunset Monday, and authorities do not expect to find more survivors from the vessel.

The grim news from Capt. Will Watson, commander of the Coast Guard Sector New Orleans, comes after days of searching for the missing workers from the oil industry lift boat Seacor Power, which capsized Tuesday during a fierce storm in the Gulf of Mexico about eight miles (13 kilometers) south of Port Fourchon. Six of the 19 workers on the boat were rescued within hours of the wreck; five more bodies were found in the water or on board the vessel in the days since then. Eight remain missing.

Watson said officials had just come from briefing the families on the news.

"There was a lot of hugging and a lot of crying. There was a lot of sadness and grief," he said.

The president of the Seacor Marine, which owns the boat, said during the news conference that divers from a company they have contracted with will continue to search the entire vessel. John Gellert said they are about halfway through the vessel as of midday Monday. Gellert also said that divers from a company Seacor contracts with were on the scene four hours after the ship capsized.

"We are steadfast in our efforts to return those who remain missing," Gellert said. But he added that efforts will depend on the weather, not just on the surface but below the surface. "The currents are currently very strong. That will determine diving windows. When we are able to dive we will dive continuously."

Families who have been waiting for days for any news of their loved ones were already preparing for the worst earlier Monday. Arlana Saddler, the youngest sister of missing worker Gregory Walcott, told the AP earlier that she was trying to be realistic about her brother's chances of survival.

"I'm being real. This is the seventh day, and even if they made it through the boat turning over and all that, there's no food, no water. You're talking seven days," she said.

Many families have been questioning why the ship was out in such stormy seas. Gellert said while there were warnings of bad weather, what the boat actually encountered when it was offshore was significantly worse than expected.

"There were warnings. There were not warnings on the magnitude of which we encountered," he said. "The weather they were forecasted to encounter was well within the limits of the vessel. The weather that they encountered was well beyond the forecast, as far as we know, at this time."

Gellert said the decision on whether to go or not was entirely up to the captain, but he emphasized that the captain had the company's full support. The captain, David Ledet, 63, was among the dead.

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"He was one of our best captains. He was very prudent and conservative," he said.

The coroner's office has identified the other four people whose bodies have been recovered: Anthony Hartford, 53, of New Orleans; James Wallingsford, 55, of Gilbert, Louisiana; Ernest Williams, 69, of Arnaudville; and Lawrence J. Warren, 36, of Terrytown, Louisiana.

The Seacor Power is a lift boat. Such vessels have three legs that can be lowered to the sea floor to raise the ship off the water to serve as a temporary offshore platform. The boats are often used in the offshore oil industry. When they are traveling the legs stick straight up in the air.

Gellert said it appeared the legs were full retracted — meaning all the way up and a position he described as its "most vulnerable" — at the beginning of the voyage but there are indications that the captain was trying to lower the legs when the ship capsized.

"As far as we can make out there was about five feet of leg that was retracted from the hull, which leads us to believe the captain was starting, trying to jack down," said Gellert. He said it takes about a minute to move the legs down five feet. The ship capsized in about 50 to 55 feet of water.

Late Sunday, officials told family members that they had recovered another body — the fifth since the operation began. The coroner on Monday identified the body as that of Lawrence J. Warren, 36, of Terrytown, Louisiana. Frank Boeckl was Warren's uncle. He choked up while lovingly talking about his nephew "Larry," but said he was glad that he had been found and that the family's ordeal was over.

"We just feel so blessed that we are able to take him home, and we hope for the rest of the families that they are able to take their loved ones home, too," he said. "We're going to be able to take him home, and that's it. I just really pray for all the other families."

Andrew Ehlers, marine accident investigator for the National Transportation Safety Board that is investigating, estimated that it could be as long as two years before an official determination is made of what happened. He said they will be looking at three main areas: people involved in the case both on the ship and on land, the ship and equipment, and the weather.

Investigators are asking for anyone with information about the ship, people who might have served on it before and have photos or videos of it, or people who were out on the water that day to reach out.

Czech, Russian envoys fly home amid depot explosion dispute

By KAREL JANICEK Associated Press

PRAGUE (AP) — The two Russian military agents believed to be behind a massive Czech depot explosion in 2014 likely targeted the ammunition, not the Czech Republic itself, the country's prime minister and prosecutor general said Monday.

Prime Minister Andrej Babis said he didn't consider the Russian action "an act of state terrorism" but said "the presence of GRU agents is absolutely unacceptable."

"We're a sovereign state and it's unacceptable for foreign agents to conduct such operations here," Babis said.

On Sunday, Russia ordered 20 Czech diplomats to leave the country within a day in response to the Czech government's expulsion of 18 Russian diplomats it identified as spies from the GRU and the SVR, Russia's military and foreign intelligence services. Both sides sent government planes Monday to take the envoys and their families home.

Pavel Zeman, the Czech prosecutor general, said the ammunition targeted was mostly meant to be sent to an arms dealer in Bulgaria and be intentionally exploded after delivery. The 2014 depot blast in the town of Vrbetice killed two people.

"The explosion was not supposed to occur on Czech Republic's territory," Zeman said.

Zeman said the two Russian suspects were using false identities on passports from Tajikistan and Moldova when they booked a visit to the depot. They stayed in Prague and the eastern city of Ostrava, about two-hour drive from the depot, which is located in the eastern Czech Republic.

The suspects also used Russian passports to travel to the Czech Republic.

Their names and photos matched two Russians whom British authorities charged in absentia in 2018 with trying to kill former Russian spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter with the Soviet nerve agent Novichok in

the English city of Salisbury.

"The two were identified as the attackers in Salisbury in 2018," Zeman said.

Zeman said because the investigation has not been completed, authorities cannot reveal more details about the case and rejected Babis' request to publish them. Babis said his government is consider demanding compensation for damages from the Russians.

Czech Republic's Interior Minister Jan Hamacek, who is also the acting foreign minister, said Monday that the Russian expulsion of Czech diplomats effectively paralyzed the Czech Embassy in Moscow.

"We had to expect that to happen but the Czech Republic has not done anything wrong," Hamacek said. "It's us who are the victims of the Russian actions."

Babis said the Czechs will "certainly" respond to what is seen as a disproportionate Russian move.

The Czech government also decided not to allow the Russian state-controlled Rosatom nuclear corporation from participating in a tender for the planned construction of a nuclear reactor at its Dukovany nuclear plant.

The Czech intelligence services have repeatedly warned against allowing Russian and Chinese companies to bid in the multibillion-dollar tender, saying they pose security risk due to links to their respective governments.

Leaders of Proud Boys ordered jailed on Capitol riot charges

By MICHAEL KUNZELMAN Associated Press

A federal judge on Monday ordered two leaders of the far-right Proud Boys extremist group to be arrested and jailed while awaiting trial on charges they planned and coordinated an attack on the U.S. Capitol to stop Congress from certifying President Joe Biden's electoral victory.

Joseph Biggs and Ethan Nordean had been free since their March 10 indictment, but U.S. District Judge Timothy Kelly concluded that the two men are dangerous and no conditions for their release could be adequate. The judge said Biggs and Nordean "facilitated political violence" even if they weren't armed and didn't assault anybody at the Capitol on Jan. 6.

Kelly overruled another federal judge in Washington, D.C., who had ordered pretrial home confinement for Nordean. Biggs was freed after his initial Jan. 20 arrest in his home state of Florida. Justice Department prosecutors initially didn't seek to keep Biggs jailed but last month asked for his pretrial release to be revoked, saying new evidence shows he poses a "grave danger" to the community.

Attorneys for Biggs and Nordean asked Kelly to suspend Monday's ruling pending a possible appeal, but the judge denied their request.

Biggs and Nordean are among more than two dozen Capitol riot defendants who have been described by federal authorities as Proud Boys leaders, members or associates.

Last month's indictment charged Biggs, Nordean and two other men described as Proud Boys leaders with conspiring to impede Congress' certification of the Electoral College vote. Other charges in the indictment include obstruction of an official proceeding, obstruction of law enforcement during civil disorder and disorderly conduct.

Zachary Rehl and Charles Donohoe are charged in the same indictment as Biggs and Nordean and have been jailed since their arrests in March.

Police arrested the Proud Boys' top leader, Enrique Tarrio, in Washington two days before the riot and charged him with vandalizing a Black Lives Matter banner at a historic Black church during a protest in December. Tarrio, who was ordered to stay out of the District of Columbia, hasn't been charged in connection with the Capitol siege.

Nordean, 30, of Auburn, Washington, has been a Proud Boys chapter president and member of the group's national "Elders Council." Biggs, 37, of Ormond Beach, Florida, is a self-described Proud Boys organizer. Rehl, 35, of Philadelphia, and Donohoe, 33, of Kernersville, North Carolina, serve as presidents of their local Proud Boys chapters, according to the indictment.

Proud Boys members describe themselves as a politically incorrect men's club for "Western chauvinists."

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Its members frequently have engaged in street fights with antifascist activists at rallies and protests.

On the morning of the riot, Biggs and Nordean met other Proud Boys members at the Washington Monument and led them on a march to the Capitol before then-President Donald Trump finished addressing thousands of supporters near the White House, the indictment says.

Around two hours later, just before Congress convened a joint session to certify the election results, Proud Boys members followed a crowd of people who breached barriers at a pedestrian entrance to the Capitol grounds, the indictment says. Several Proud Boys also entered the Capitol building itself after the mob smashed windows and forced open doors.

During a March 3 hearing, U.S. District Judge Beryl Howell accused prosecutors of backtracking on their claims that Nordean had instructed Proud Boys members to split up into smaller groups and directed a "strategic plan" to breach the Capitol. However, Howell concluded that Nordean was extensively involved in "pre-planning" for the events of Jan. 6 and that he and other Proud Boys "were clearly prepared for a violent confrontation" that day.

Swedish teen Thunberg joins fight against vaccine inequity

By JAMEY KEATEN Associated Press

GENEVA (AP) — Teenage climate activist Greta Thunberg has urged governments, vaccine developers and the world to "step up their game" to fight vaccine inequity after the richest countries snatched up most COVID-19 vaccine doses and those in poorer nations have gone lacking.

Her comments on Monday came as the World Health Organization announced 5.2 million new confirmed virus cases over the latest week, the largest weekly count yet, according to the U.N. health agency.

The Swedish teen who inspired the "Fridays for Future" climate change movement chipped in 100,000 euros (\$120,000) from her charitable foundation to the WHO Foundation to help purchase COVID-19 vaccines for countries where they are needed — especially in poor countries.

"It is completely unethical that high-income countries are now vaccinating young and healthy people if that happens at the expense of people in risk groups and on the front lines in low- and middle-income countries," said Thunberg, who was invited as a guest for a regular WHO briefing.

While Thunberg hailed the development of COVID-19 vaccines in "record time," she cited estimates that 1 in 4 people in high-income countries have received them so far, while only 1 in 500 in middle- and lower-income countries have.

"The international community, governments and vaccine developers must step up their game and address the tragedy that is vaccine inequity," she said. "Just with the climate crisis, those who are the most vulnerable need to be prioritized and global problems require global solutions."

WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said new COVID-19 cases rose for an eighth straight week around the globe and deaths have risen for a fifth straight week.

He said infections among people 25 to 59 are "increasing at an alarming rate, possibly as a result of highly contagious variants and increased social mixing among younger adults."

More than 3 million COVID-19 patients have died in the pandemic and over 141 million have been infected, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University, but experts say both numbers understate the true toll of the pandemic.

Thunberg said people need to "step up for one another."

"We young people may be the ones who are least affected ... by the virus in a direct way," she said. "Of course, many young people fail to draw that connection."

"Not all, but some," she added.

GOP targets ballot drop boxes in Georgia, Florida, elsewhere

By CHRISTINA A. CASSIDY Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Atlanta-area voters looking to return their ballots using a drop box in next year's gubernatorial election will have to do some searching.

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Just eight boxes will be spread across Fulton County's nearly 529 square miles — or about one for every 100,000 registered voters. That's down from the 38 drop boxes that were available to voters last fall. It's the result of a broad new law pushed by Georgia Republicans in response to former President Donald Trump's false claims of a stolen election.

Georgia is one of several states controlled politically by Republicans that are seeking additional restrictions on voting, citing security concerns. A favorite target is ballot drop boxes, which have been used for years in states with expansive mail voting and which millions of voters used last year as a way to avoid polling places during the pandemic.

Democrats say the boxes are more secure than regular mailboxes, and their use was largely trouble-free last fall. Even Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp, a Republican who signed the restrictive bill into law, posted a video on his Twitter account that showed him using a drop box to cast his ballot last year, flashing a thumbs up sign afterward.

"They loved ballot drop boxes until Trump and the Republicans started losing," said state Rep. Erica Thomas, a Democrat from metro Atlanta.

For election officials and voters across the country, drop boxes seemed like an ideal solution to two major problems in 2020: a coronavirus pandemic that raised fears about crowded polling places and reports of mail delays that threatened on-time delivery of ballots.

The boxes were targeted a few times by vandals, but few other problems were reported across the country. Even so, Republicans say they want to ensure the boxes will be a secure way to cast a ballot.

"It's a continued narrative where you try to pit security against accessibility, and you have to choose one or the other," said Hillary Hall, a former county elections clerk in Colorado who now works with election officials across the country through the National Vote at Home Institute. "It's a false choice."

Drop boxes have been used for years in states such as Colorado, Oregon and Washington, where ballots are mailed to all registered voters ahead of every election.

Placement can vary widely. In some places, they're located inside public buildings, available only during office hours. Elsewhere, they are outside and accessible at any hour, typically with video surveillance or someone monitoring in-person.

"I'm just so glad we had that option," said Cynthia Vaughn, a retired financial manager from Atlanta who used a drop box at her local library in November and again for the state's January Senate runoff.

She said slashing access to them will be especially hard on those who don't have ready access to a vehicle or public transit: "Driving extra miles to get somewhere to drop off a ballot doesn't adhere to the whole point that it should be easy and accommodating for everyone to vote."

They were so popular in Florida last year that nearly 1.5 million voters used them, according to Florida Supervisors of Elections, a statewide group of local election officials. Even so, a bill pending in the Florida Senate would limit their use to hours when in-person early voting is offered. An earlier version would have eliminated them entirely, but that was revised after election supervisors opposed it.

The bill's sponsor, Republican Sen. Dennis Baxley, acknowledged during a legislative hearing that he was not aware of any problems with drop boxes in Florida last year. Nevertheless, he said they introduced security gaps into the state's mail voting process that must be closed.

"I don't think we should sit on our laurels or congratulate ourselves on a successful election," Baxley said. "Our time is better spent learning lessons from problems in other states to make sure we are prepared for 2022 and beyond."

No state reported any significant problems with drop boxes last year.

Democrats complained the bill would preclude voters from dropping off ballots in the days just before an election, when early voting is no longer available and voters are worried about relying on the U.S. Postal Service to deliver their ballots on time.

Republican lawmakers in other states, including Michigan and Wisconsin, also have proposed new limits, though the chances of many of them becoming law are slim because Democrats control the governor's offices.

As part of a broad GOP-led election overhaul in Iowa this year, lawmakers approved legislation to limit

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drop boxes in future elections to just one per county. Previously, state law did not say how many drop boxes counties could operate. Lawmakers in Texas, where the GOP is in full control, also are debating how voters can return ballots.

Election experts say outdoor drop boxes are arguably more secure than a regular U.S. Postal Service mailbox sitting on a sidewalk, especially when video surveillance is used. They are typically large, heavy and anchored to the ground.

Democrats in Congress, as part of their proposal to establish national election standards, want to require states to offer drop boxes. Their goal is one for every 20,000 registered voters in most counties by the 2022 midterm elections. For counties with fewer than 20,000 registered voters, a minimum of one drop box would be required.

In Georgia, drop boxes were permitted last year under an emergency rule prompted by the coronavirus pandemic. State Republicans have defended the new law as making drop boxes a permanent option for voters and requiring all counties to have at least one. But critics say the new limits mean there will be fewer drop boxes available in the state's most populous communities.

"There weren't any issues with the drop boxes, and that's the point," said Georgia Sen. Jen Jordan, a Democrat whose district includes parts of Fulton County. "It's definitely going to impact voters and their ability to access the ballot and cast their vote."

In fast-growing Cobb County north of Atlanta, officials had 16 drop boxes available in November but will be permitted about five under the new law. Janine Eveler, the county's elections director, said 60% of all returned absentee ballots last fall came through a drop box.

For the entire metro Atlanta area, Democrats estimate the number of drop boxes will fall from 94 last year to no more than 23 for future elections based on the new formula of one drop box per 100,000 registered voters.

Republican Sen. Brian Strickland, whose district sits south of Atlanta, said lawmakers were focused on making sure drop boxes were written into the law, available for future elections with strong security measures in place.

"If the provision we have is not workable — this is the first time we have tried this — I'm sure you will see us go back and amend that to allow additional drop boxes if more are needed," he said.

A job on the job: Companies, unions offer COVID-19 vaccines

By ALEXANDRA OLSON Associated Press

Marie Watson wanted to be among the first in line when she and other essential workers became eligible for the coronavirus vaccine — and with good reason.

The maintenance parts buyer for a Mission Foods tortilla plant in Pueblo, Colorado, had lost her father to COVID-19 in the fall and was told by a doctor last year that she herself almost certainly had the virus.

So when her union, the United Food Workers and Commercial Workers, secured appointments for the plant's 200 workers, she jumped in her car and drove to a nearby drive-thru clinic for the first of two doses.

"There was this sense of relief," Watson said. "This was more confirmation that I'm on my way to being normal."

A growing number of labor unions and companies are securing shots for their employees as eligibility widens. Some large companies such as Amazon are offering workplace vaccinations through licensed health care providers, while smaller outfits are booking appointments for workers at outside locations.

For employers, the vaccines are a critical step toward restoring normalcy at a time when they expect a spike in demand for their services as more people get inoculated. They are also betting that employees who did not initially trust the vaccine will have a change of heart when they see co-workers receiving it.

For workers, employer assistance with the vaccine eliminates hurdles, including transportation issues or maneuvering through a patchwork of websites to find appointments. That access could help to narrow the racial and socioeconomic gaps that have opened in the country's vaccination drive.

While many essential workers have spent weeks trying to get time slots, Watson got her shot days after

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Colorado extended eligibility to food workers.

Iliana de la Vega, owner of the Mexican restaurant El Naranjo in Austin, Texas, said she secured appointments for all 12 of her employees out of gratitude that they stuck with her through shutdown orders and capacity restrictions that ate into their pay.

Some workers hesitated at first but were quickly persuaded with the promise of a day off, De la Vega said. "A couple of them said, 'We are not sure.' I said, 'That's not an option. Take it or leave it. Who knows when you will be able to get it again?'" de la Vega said.

Despite the growing number of companies offering on-site vaccinations, there are signs that some may have lost interest. In March, when vaccine eligibility was widening and distribution efforts improving in the U.S., a survey by the consulting firm Gartner found 30% of companies planned to bring vaccines to their employees. That was down from 42% in January, when distribution was still spotty and obtaining appointments was still extremely difficult for most people.

"The speed of the rollout has exceeded their expectations so companies are realizing they can take a back seat," said Brian Kropp, chief of research at Gartner's human resources practice.

Vaccinating employees is also less urgent for a growing number of companies that are adopting permanent remote-work policies, Kropp said. While nearly two-thirds of companies plan to reopen their workplaces by the end of this year, the majority say they will allow many employees to keep working from home at least some days, according to Gartner, which surveyed 300 companies.

Nonetheless, prominent companies continue to join the list of those offering on-site vaccinations.

Ford Motor Co. and the United Auto Workers opened up on-site vaccinations Monday in Michigan, Kansas and Ohio. In Ohio, Gov. Mike DeWine had initially put a stop to workplace clinics out of concern they would tie up supply, but he allowed them to resume last week as demand dropped at the state's mass vaccination sites.

Amazon launched its long-anticipated on-site vaccinations last month in Kansas, Missouri and Nevada. Warehouse and other front-line workers can sign up for shots at kiosks or through Amazon's employee app.

Yogurt maker Chobani, which employs 2,200 people in the U.S., partnered with a local pharmacy to vaccinate hundreds of its employees at its Twin Falls, Idaho, plant, according to the company's chief People and Culture Officer Grace Zuncic.

American Airlines, Subaru, chicken producer Mountaire Farms, and agricultural equipment maker Vermeer are among 40 companies that brought vaccines to their employees through partnerships with Premise Health, a direct health care provider. American Airlines is administering vaccines at airports in Chicago, Charlotte, Tulsa and Dallas-Fort Worth, according to the company.

At least 25,000 people have been vaccinated through the partnerships, said Premise President Jami Doucette. He expects that number to climb into the millions.

Tyson Foods, one of the world's largest food companies, said it has vaccinated nearly 40,000 employees — nearly one-third of its workforce — at vaccination events in 16 states. Tyson also expanded its on-site event last week to include eligible family members of employees.

Bob Reinhard, who is leading Tyson's vaccination effort, said a minority of employees have refused to get vaccinated while some others are interested but want more information and don't want to go first.

"That secondary group is now coming around," Reinhard said.

Employer-organized vaccination events, along with incentives such as bonuses or paid time off, allow companies to keep track of how many employees get vaccinated. Employer are legally allowed to require the vaccine, but the vast majority have shied away from doing so; some say it doesn't make sense to do so until everyone is eligible and there is sufficient supply.

Still, the idea is gaining some traction. While Gartner's March survey showed just 8% of companies planned to require employees to show proof of vaccinations, that number was up from 2% in January.

Chobani, which says it has avoided outbreaks at its plants and has seen few positive cases among employees, has not ruled out requiring the vaccines, Zuncic said. The company plans to assess how many of its workers have been vaccinated by midyear.

"It's a discussion that continues," Zuncic said. "We want to get a pulse and sense of how far along we are."

Billions spent on coronavirus fight, but what happens next?

By MICHELLE R. SMITH, LAUREN WEBER and HANNAH RECHT Associated Press and KHN

Congress has poured tens of billions of dollars into state and local public health departments in response to the coronavirus pandemic, paying for masks, contact tracers and education campaigns to persuade people to get vaccinated.

Public health officials who have juggled bare-bones budgets for years are happy to have the additional money. Yet they worry it will soon dry up as the pandemic recedes, continuing a boom-bust funding cycle that has plagued the U.S. public health system for decades. If budgets are slashed again, they warn, that could leave the nation where it was before the coronavirus: unprepared for a health crisis.

"We need funds that we can depend on year after year," said Dr. Mysheika Roberts, the health commissioner of Columbus, Ohio.

When Roberts started in Columbus in 2006, an emergency preparedness grant paid for more than 20 staffers. By the time the coronavirus pandemic hit, it paid for about 10. Relief money that came through last year helped the department staff up its coronavirus response teams. While the funding has helped the city cope with the immediate crisis, Roberts wonders if history will repeat itself.

After the pandemic is over, public health officials across the U.S. fear, they'll be back to scraping together money from a patchwork of sources to provide basic services to their communities — much like after the Sept. 11 attacks and the SARS and Ebola outbreaks.

When the mosquito-borne Zika virus tore through South America in 2016, causing serious birth defects in newborn babies, members of Congress couldn't agree how, and how much, to spend in the U.S. for prevention efforts, such as education and mosquito abatement. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention took money from its Ebola efforts, and from state and local health department funding, to pay for the initial Zika response. Congress eventually allocated \$1.1 billion for Zika, but by then, mosquito season had passed in much of the U.S.

"Something happens, we throw a ton of money at it, and then in a year or two we go back to our shrunken budgets and we can't do the minimum things we have to do day in and day out, let alone be prepared for the next emergency," said Chrissie Juliano, executive director of the Big Cities Health Coalition, which represents leaders of more than two dozen public health departments.

Funding for Public Health Emergency Preparedness, which pays for emergency capabilities for state and local health departments, dropped by about half between the 2003 and 2021 fiscal years, accounting for inflation, according to Trust for America's Health, a public health research and advocacy organization.

Even the federal Prevention and Public Health Fund, which was established with the Affordable Care Act to provide \$2 billion a year for public health, was raided for cash over the past decade. If the money hadn't been touched, eventually local and state health departments would have gotten an additional \$12.4 billion.

Several lawmakers, led by Democratic U.S. Sen. Patty Murray of Washington, are looking to end the boom-bust cycle with legislation that would eventually provide \$4.5 billion annually in core public health funding. Health departments carry out essential government functions — such as managing water safety, issuing death certificates, tracking sexually transmitted diseases and preparing for infectious outbreaks.

Spending for state public health departments dropped by 16% per capita from 2010 to 2019, and spending for local health departments fell by 18%, KHN and The Associated Press found in a July investigation. At least 38,000 public health jobs were lost at the state and local level between the 2008 recession and 2019. Today, many public health workers are hired on a temporary or part-time basis. Some are paid so poorly they qualify for public aid. Those factors reduce departments' ability to retain people with expertise.

Compounding those losses, the coronavirus pandemic has prompted an exodus of public health officials because of harassment, political pressure and exhaustion. A yearlong analysis by the AP and KHN found at least 248 leaders of state and local health departments resigned, retired or were fired between April 1, 2020, and March 31, 2021. Nearly 1 in 6 Americans lost a local public health leader during the pandemic.

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Experts say it is the largest exodus of public health leaders in American history.

Brian Castrucci, CEO of the de Beaumont Foundation, which advocates for public health, calls Congress' giant influx of cash in response to the crisis "wallpaper and drapes" because it doesn't restore public health's crumbling foundation.

"I worry at the end of this we're going to hire up a bunch of contact tracers — and then lay them off soon thereafter," Castrucci said. "We are continuing to kind of go from disaster to disaster without ever talking about the actual infrastructure."

Castrucci and others say they need dependable money for high-skill professionals, such as epidemiologists — data-driven disease detectives — and for technology upgrades that would help track outbreaks and get information to the public.

In Ohio, the computer system used to report cases to the state predates the invention of the iPhone. State officials had said for years they wanted to upgrade it, but they lacked the money and the political will. Many departments across the country have relied on fax machines to report COVID-19 cases.

During the pandemic, Ohio's state auditor found that nearly 96% of local health departments it surveyed had problems with the state's disease reporting system. Roberts said workers interviewing patients had to navigate several pages of questions, a major burden when handling 500 cases daily.

The system was so outdated that some information could be entered only in a non-searchable comment box, and officials struggled to pull data from the system to report to the public — such as how many people who tested positive had attended a Black Lives Matter rally, which last summer was a key question for people trying to understand whether protests contributed to the virus' spread.

Ohio is working on a new system, but Roberts worries that, without a dependable budget, the state won't be able to keep that one up to date either.

"You're going to need to upgrade that," Roberts said. "And you're going to need dollars to support that."

In Washington, the public health director for Seattle and King County, Patty Hayes, said she is asked all the time why there isn't a central place to register for a vaccine appointment. The answer comes down to money: Years of underfunding left departments across the state with antiquated computer systems that were not up to the task when the coronavirus hit.

Hayes recalls a time when her department would conduct mass vaccination drills, but that system was dismantled when the money dried up after the specter of Sept. 11 faded.

Roughly six years ago, an analysis found that her department was about \$25 million short of what it needed annually for core public health work. Hayes said the past year has shown that's an underestimate. For example, climate change is prompting more public health concerns, such as the effect on residents when wildfire smoke engulfed much of the Pacific Northwest in September.

Public health officials in some areas may struggle to make the case for more stable funding because a large swath of the public has questioned — and often been openly hostile toward — the mask mandates and business restrictions that public health officials have imposed through the pandemic.

In Missouri, some county commissioners who were frustrated at public health restrictions withheld money from the departments.

In Knox County, Tennessee, Mayor Glenn Jacobs narrated a video posted in the fall that showed a photo of health officials after referencing "sinister forces." Later, someone spray-painted "DEATH" on the department office building. The Board of Health was stripped of its powers in March and was given an advisory role. A spokesperson for the mayor's office declined to comment on the video.

"This is going to change the position of public health and what we can and cannot do across the country," said Dr. Martha Buchanan, the head of the health department. "I know it's going to change it here."

A KHN and AP investigation in December found at least 24 states were crafting legislation that would limit or remove public health powers.

Back in Seattle, locally based companies have pitched in money and staff members for vaccine sites. Microsoft is hosting one location, while Starbucks offered customer service expertise to help design them. Hayes is grateful, but she wonders why a critical government function didn't have the resources it needed

during a pandemic.

If public health had been getting dependable funding, her staff could have been working more effectively with the data and preparing for emerging threats in the state where the first U.S. COVID-19 case was confirmed.

"They'll look back at this response to the pandemic in this country as a great example of a failure of a country to prioritize the health of its citizens, because it didn't commit to public health," she said. "That will be part of the story."

Rwanda report blames France for 'enabling' the 1994 genocide

By SYLVIE CORBET Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — The French government bears "significant" responsibility for "enabling a foreseeable genocide," a report commissioned by the Rwandan government concludes about France's role before and during the horror in which an estimated 800,000 people were slaughtered in 1994.

The report, which The Associated Press has read, comes amid efforts by Rwanda to document the role of French authorities before, during, and after the genocide, part of the steps taken by France's President Emmanuel Macron to improve relations with the central African country.

The 600-page report says that France "did nothing to stop" the massacres, in April and May 1994, and in the years after the genocide tried to cover up its role and even offered protection to some perpetrators.

It was made on Monday after its formal presentation to Rwanda's Cabinet.

It concludes that in years leading up to the genocide, former French President Francois Mitterrand and his administration had knowledge of preparations for the massacres — yet kept supporting the government of then-Rwandan President Juvénal Habyarimana despite the "warning signs."

"The French government was neither blind nor unconscious about the foreseeable genocide," the authors stress.

The Rwandan report comes less than a month after a French report, commissioned by Macron, concluded that French authorities had been "blind" to the preparations for genocide and then reacted too slowly to appreciate the extent of the killings and to respond to them. It concluded that France had "heavy and overwhelming responsibilities" by not responding to the drift that led to the slaughter that killed mainly ethnic Tutsis and the moderate Hutus who tried to protect them. Groups of extremist Hutus carried out the killings.

The two reports, with their extensive even if different details, could mark a turning point in relations between the two countries.

Rwanda, a small but strategic country of 13 million people, is "ready" for a "new relationship" with France, Rwanda's Foreign Affairs Minister Vincent Biruta told AP.

"Maybe the most important thing in this process is that those two commissions have analyzed the historical facts, have analyzed the archives which were made available to them and have come to a common understanding of that past," he said. "From there we can build this strong relationship."

A top official in Macron's office on Monday welcomed the report as a "decisive step" which showed "the willingness expressed by Rwandan authorities to write a shared history and, above all, to look to a common future."

He also noted "unprecedented political trust" reached between Paris and Kigali as Rwandan officials have shown signs that they agree with the "irreversible rapprochement approach" taken by France.

Macron is considering traveling to Rwanda in the coming months, said the official, who spoke anonymously in accordance with the French presidency's policies.

The Rwandan report, commissioned in 2017 from the Washington law firm of Levy Firestone Muse, is based on a wide range of documentary sources from governments, non-governmental organizations and academics including diplomatic cables, documentaries, videos, and news articles. The authors also said they interviewed more than 250 witnesses.

In the years before the genocide, "French officials armed, advised, trained, equipped, and protected the

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Rwandan government, heedless of the Habyarimana regime's commitment to the dehumanization and, ultimately, the destruction and death of Tutsi in Rwanda," the report charges.

French authorities at the time pursued "France's own interests, in particular the reinforcement and expansion of France's power and influence in Africa."

In April and May 1994, at the height of the genocide, French officials "did nothing to stop" the massacres, says the report.

Operation Turquoise, a French-led military intervention backed by the U.N. which started on June 22, "came too late to save many Tutsi," the report says.

Authors say they found "no evidence that French officials or personnel participated directly in the killing of Tutsi during that period."

This finding echoes the conclusion of the French report that cleared France of complicity in the massacres, saying that "nothing in the archives" demonstrates a "willingness to join a genocidal operation."

The Rwandan report also addressed the attitude of French authorities after the genocide.

Over the past 27 years, "the French government has covered up its role, distorted the truth, and protected" those who committed the genocide, it says.

The report suggests that French authorities made "little efforts" to send to trial those who committed the genocide. Three Rwandan nationals have been convicted of genocide so far in France.

It also strongly criticizes the French government for not making public documents about the genocide. The government of Rwanda notably submitted three requests for documents in 2019, 2020 and this year that the French government "ignored," according to the report.

Under French law, documents regarding military and foreign policies can remain classified for decades.

But things may be changing, the Rwandan report says, mentioning "hopeful signs."

On April 7, the day of commemoration of the genocide, Macron announced the decision to declassify and make accessible to the public the archives from 1990 to 1994 that belong to the French president and prime minister's offices.

"Recent disclosures of documents in connection with the (French) report ... may signal a move toward transparency," authors of the Rwandan report said.

President Paul Kagame of Rwanda praised the report commissioned by Macron as "a good thing," welcoming efforts in Paris to "move forward with a good understanding of what happened."

Félicien Kabuga, a Rwandan long wanted for his alleged role in supplying machetes to the killers, was arrested outside Paris last May.

And in July an appeals court in Paris upheld a decision to end a years-long investigation into the plane crash that killed Habyarimana and set off the genocide. That probe aggravated Rwanda's government because it targeted several people close to Kagame for their alleged role, charges they denied.

Last week, a Rwandan priest was arrested in France for his alleged role in the genocide, which he denied.

Macron's office said the French government is committed to provide the "necessary means" to allow the "intensification" of legal proceedings against alleged perpetrators of the genocide. Activists estimate more than 100 of them are believed to live on French territory.

'Downton Abbey' cast returns for sequel opening in December

NEW YORK (AP) — The original principal cast of "Downton Abbey" are returning for a second film that will arrive in theaters December 22 this year, Focus Features announced Monday.

"Downton Abbey" creator Julian Fellowes has written the sequel's screenplay, and Simon Curtis ("My Week With Marilyn") is directing. Hugh Bonneville, Michelle Dockery and 86-year-old Maggie Smith will all be back, along with some new faces, including Hugh Dancy, Laura Haddock, Nathalie Baye and Dominic West.

Production began last week on "Downton Abbey 2."

"After a very challenging year with so many of us separated from family and friends, it is a huge comfort to think that better times are ahead and that next Christmas we will be re-united with the much beloved

characters of 'Downton Abbey,'" said producer Gareth Neame.

The 2019 film, coming three years after the series ending, made \$194.3 million on a modest budget of less than \$20 million.

Myanmar junta cracks down on celebrations of new shadow govt

YANGON, Myanmar (AP) — Security forces in Myanmar used violence on Monday against demonstrators who sought to celebrate last week's formation of a shadow government to serve as an alternative to the military junta that has held power since a February coup.

Myanmar media and posts on social networks said the violence was especially intense in Myingyan, a town in central Myanmar, where the online news site The Irrawaddy reported at least one person was killed Sunday. Unconfirmed reports on social media said at least one more person was killed there Monday.

Marches were held in Mandalay, the country's second biggest city, and elsewhere to show support for the "National Unity Government" announced Friday by protest leaders. Security forces reportedly broke up a march at dawn in Mandalay that included Buddhist monks.

Social media were flooded with appeals to "Please save Myingyan."

Another news site, Myanmar Now, said security forces on Sunday launched attacks in Myingyan with the main target being a street stronghold set up by protesters, some believed armed with hunting rifles.

It said the stronghold, fortified with sandbags, was destroyed by government forces, rebuilt overnight and then destroyed again Monday morning.

Setting up street barricades is one of the tactics used by protesters against the Feb. 1 army takeover that ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi. Often the strongholds last for just a few hours before being captured and destroyed by police and soldiers, then are rebuilt overnight.

Their defenders use homemade weapons, such as gasoline bombs, and security personnel respond with overwhelming force, frequently resulting in multiple fatalities.

Most protesters, however, embrace nonviolence and seek to avoid confrontations in their marches and motorcycle processions. Security personnel frequently employ lethal force to break up their rallies as well.

Security forces have killed at least 737 protesters and bystanders since the military takeover, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, which monitors casualties and arrests.

The government in recent weeks seems to be pursuing a strategy of hunting down individual protest leaders nationwide, while using overwhelming force, town by town, to smash street protests and intimidate participants.

The military has issued widely circulated wanted lists of more than 200 protest supporters -- including actors, internet influencers and medical personnel -- accused of endangering public order, a charge punishable by up to three years in prison. Arrests are also highly publicized.

In a further apparent attempt at psychological warfare, government television stations on Sunday night showed photos of young people who had been arrested, looking badly bruised. The reports said they were accused of carrying out a series of explosions on Saturday in Yangon, the country's biggest city. Their supporters charged they were tortured in custody.

A Japanese journalist in Yangon was also arrested Sunday. Japan's government said it is asking Myanmar authorities to explain the arrest and release him as soon as possible.

On Friday, the protest movement advanced on the political front with its declaration of the National Unity Government, including members of Suu Kyi's ousted Cabinet and representatives of ethnic minority groups and other allies.

Opponents of the coup had been seeking an alliance with ethnic minority groups as a way of strengthening their resistance. The minorities have kept up on-again, off-again armed struggles for greater autonomy in borderlands for decades.

In the north, armed guerrillas of the Kachin Independence Organization have launched a series of attacks on government military outposts, while the Karen National Union in the east, on the border with Thailand, has offered shelter to fleeing protesters in the territory it controls.

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 the most awards of the night, 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 a small audience 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 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 — one of her three wins.

"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 of 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. She won two ACMs for song of the year — one for performing the hit and another for co-writing it, sharing the win with songwriters Laura Veltz and Jimmy Robbins.

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."

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Another mishap occurred when Martina McBride announced the winner of single of the year. McBride correctly said "I Hope You're Happy Now" won 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.

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 "atrocious." 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 the

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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-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."

Associated Press writer Jeff Amy in Marietta, Georgia, contributed to this report.

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 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 Aricique 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 Aricique, feeling as fragile as “a soap bubble ready to pop,” also wrestled the coronavirus. The 67-year-old retired building contractor credits a 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 Aricique 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 Aricique 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, Aricique 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, Aricique 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 Aricique’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.

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"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."

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, April 20, the 110th day of 2021. There are 255 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On April 20, 1999, the Columbine High School massacre took place in Colorado as two students shot and killed 12 classmates and one teacher before taking their own lives.

On this date:

In 1812, the fourth vice president of the United States, George Clinton, died in Washington at age 72, becoming the first vice president to die while in office.

In 1863, President Abraham Lincoln signed a proclamation admitting West Virginia to the Union, effective in 60 days (on June 20, 1863).

In 1914, the Ludlow Massacre took place when the Colorado National Guard opened fire on a tent colony of striking miners; about 20 (accounts vary) strikers, women and children died.

In 1916, the Chicago Cubs played their first game at Wrigley Field (then known as Weeghman Park); the Cubs defeated the Cincinnati Reds 7-6.

In 1938, "Olympia," Leni Riefenstahl's documentary about the 1936 Berlin Olympic games, was first shown in Nazi Germany.

In 1945, during World War II, allied forces took control of the German cities of Nuremberg and Stuttgart.

In 1971, the Supreme Court unanimously upheld the use of busing to achieve racial desegregation in schools.

In 1972, Apollo 16's lunar module, carrying astronauts John W. Young and Charles M. Duke Jr., landed on the moon.

In 1986, following an absence of six decades, Russian-born pianist Vladimir Horowitz performed in the Soviet Union to a packed audience at the Grand Hall of the Tchaikovsky Conservatory in Moscow.

In 1988, gunmen who had hijacked a Kuwait Airways jumbo jet were allowed safe passage out of Algeria under an agreement that freed the remaining 31 hostages and ended a 15-day siege in which two

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passengers were slain.

In 2003, U.S. Army forces took control of Baghdad from the Marines in a changing of the guard that thinned the military presence in the capital.

In 2010, an explosion on the Deepwater Horizon oil platform, leased by BP, killed 11 workers and caused a blow-out that began spewing an estimated 200 million gallons of crude into the Gulf of Mexico. (The well was finally capped nearly three months later.)

Ten years ago: Two Western photojournalists, including Oscar-nominated film director Tim Hetherington, were killed in the besieged Libyan city of Misrata while covering battles between rebels and government forces. The U.S. government announced new protections for air travelers when airlines lose their bags, bump them off flights or hold them on the runway for hours.

Five years ago: Five former New Orleans police officers pleaded guilty to lesser charges in the deadly shootings on a bridge in the days following Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Treasury Secretary Jacob Lew announced that Harriet Tubman, an African-American abolitionist born into slavery, would be the new face on the \$20 bill, replacing President Andrew Jackson. (The redesign of the bill was delayed during the administration of President Donald Trump, who had called the move "pure political correctness"; the effort was resumed by the Biden administration.) Pro wrestler Chyna (Joan Marie Laurer) was found dead in her Redondo Beach, California, apartment; she was 46.

One year ago: Georgia Republican Gov. Brian Kemp announced plans to restart the state's economy by lifting some coronavirus restrictions before the end of the week; the plan would allow gyms, hair salons, bowling alleys and tattoo parlors to reopen as long as owners follow strict requirements. Dr Anthony Fauci, the government's top authority on infectious diseases, warned again that resuming business too soon risked a fresh spike in virus infections. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said reports of accidental poisonings from cleaners and disinfectants were up about 20 percent in the first three months of the year; researchers believed it was related to the coronavirus epidemic.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Leslie Phillips is 97. Former Sen. Pat Roberts, R-Kan., is 85. Actor George Takei is 84. Singer Johnny Tillotson is 83. Actor Ryan O'Neal is 80. Bluegrass singer-musician Doyle Lawson (Quicksilver) is 77. Actor Judith O'Dea is 76. Rock musician Craig Frost (Grand Funk; Bob Seger's Silver Bullet Band) is 73. Actor Gregory Itzin (iht-zihn) is 73. Actor Jessica Lange is 72. Actor Veronica Cartwright is 72. Actor Clint Howard is 62. Actor Crispin Glover is 57. Actor Andy Serkis is 57. Olympic silver medal figure skater Rosalynn Sumners is 57. Actor William deVry is 53. Country singer Wade Hayes is 52. Actor Shemar Moore is 51. Actor Carmen Electra is 49. Reggae singer Stephen Marley is 49. Rock musician Marty Crandall is 46. Actor Joey Lawrence is 45. Country musician Clay Cook (Zac Brown Band) is 43. Actor Clayne Crawford is 43. Actor Tim Jo is 37. Actor Carlos Valdes (TV: "The Flash") is 32.