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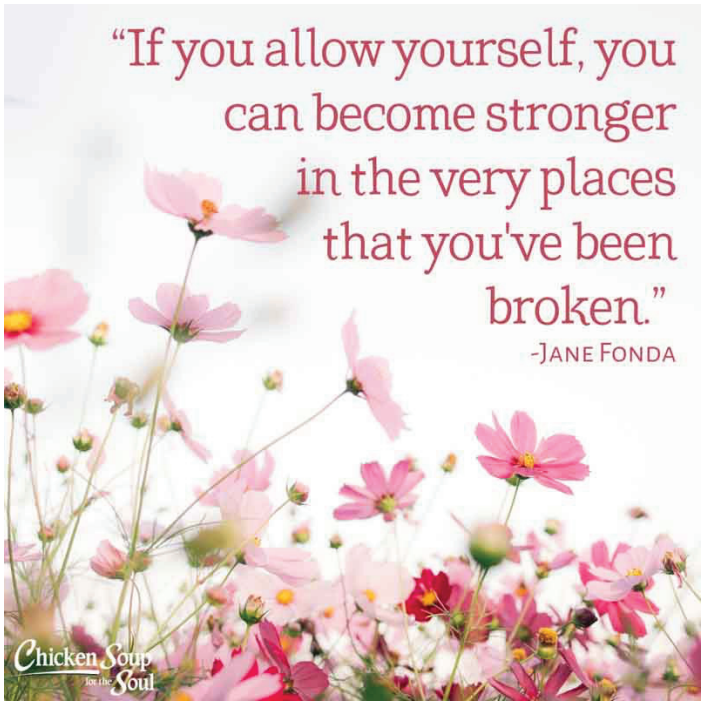

Severe Weather Awareness Day

Today is the day when the National Weather Service will cycle through a mock tornado watch and a mock tornado warning. The watch will be issued at 10 a.m. with the warning at 10:15 a.m. The sirens will sound in Groton at 10:15 a.m. in conjunction with the mock tornado warning.

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 March 2021 Financial Report

March 2021

Dacotah Bank Checking Acct	$ 2,531,843.38
General Cash	$ 300.00
SD FIT Acct	$ 1,452,213.49
Dacotah Bank Water CD	$ 84,912.52
SD FIT CD	$ 102,514.21
Cemetery Perp Care CD	$ 32,876.69
Total	$ 4,204,660.29

Invested In		
Cash	$ 300.00	0.01%
Dacotah Bank	$ 2,649,632.59	63.02%
SD Fit	$ 1,554,727.70	36.98%
Total	$ 4,204,660.29	100.00%

	Beginning Cash Balance	Receipts	Expenditures	Transfers	Ending Cash Balance
General	$ 861,390.96	$ 59,017.72	$ 253,583.96		$ 666,824.72
Bed, Board, Booze Tax	$ 87,477.22	$ 1,974.88			$ 89,452.10
Baseball Uniforms	$ 1,710.20				$ 1,710.20
Airport	$ 6,351.99	$ 9,847.42			$ 16,199.41
**Debt Service	$ 157,130.93				$ 157,130.93
Cemetery Perpetual Care	$ 34,756.69	$ -			$ 34,756.69
Water Tower	$ 180,000.00				$ 180,000.00
Water	$ 251,137.92	$ 46,032.02	$ 23,324.38		$ 273,845.56
Electric	$ 2,090,776.37	$ 170,878.59	$ 93,749.73		$ 2,167,905.23
Wastewater	$ 380,488.06	$ 18,355.06	$ 5,208.65		$ 393,634.47
Solid Waste	$ 36,991.19	$ 10,748.30	$ 16,008.79		$ 31,730.70
Family Crisis	$ 8,582.79	$ 330.00	$ -		$ 8,912.79
Sales Tax	$ 19,591.86	$ 10,908.26	$ 9,870.29		$ 20,629.83
Employment	$ (3,204.56)	$ -	$ 693.21		$ (3,897.77)
Utility Prepayments	$ 79,810.02	$ 4,017.79	$ -		$ 83,827.81
Utility Deposits	$ 81,793.01	$ 500.00	$ 500.00		$ 81,793.01
Other	$ 204.61	$ -	$ -		$ 204.61
Totals	$ 4,274,989.26	$ 332,610.04	$ 402,939.01	$ -	$ 4,204,660.29

**Debt to be Paid		
**2015 Refinance	$ 2,418,062.49	by 12/1/2035
**West Sewer	$ 64,668.43	by 10/15/2022
**RR Sewer Crossing	$ 35,883.11	by 7/15/22
Total Debt	$ 2,518,614.03	

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City council passes first reading on water surcharge fee

The Groton City Council gave first reading to a surcharge to the water rate of $7.85 per month for 30 years. The surcharge will pay for maintenance of the city's water reservoir tank in addition to expanding the city's water distribution system south and north of Groton. The city was approved for a the $1.3 million dollar project.

The city had received $296,000 in COVID-19 Relief Funds, of which $250,000 is earmarked for the purchase and other expenses for the new city hall. The remain funds will be divided out to $10,000 for baseball, $10,000 for pool, $10,000 for the new software for the library books and $16,000 for recreation (tennis/pickleball courts improvements and the start of a fund for new bathrooms at the park).

Brian Bahr was sworn in as a new councilman while Karyn Babcock, Jon Cutler and Shirley Wells were re-instated as councilmen. David Blackmun was re-elected as council president, Shirley Wells was re-elected as council vice-president and Drew Johnson was re-appointed as the city council attorney - a position he has had with Groton for 39 years.

The second reading for the cable franchise agreements was approved.

MJ's Sinclair was approved for an off-sale liquor alcoholic beverage license. This was the last such license left for the city.

After an executive session, the council gave lineman Landon Johnson a $1.19 raise (5%), bringing him to $24.93 an hour. He has recently completed the Merchants Training Course (he took the 4-year course in less than a year and a half) and is now getting his hours in as well.

The new council table (which also serve as a library table) at the new city hall location at the former Wells Fargo building. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

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Brian Bahr was sworn in as the new councilman from Ward 2 by Mayor Scott Hanlon. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

Mayor Scott Hanlon gives the oath of office to Karyn Babcock, Shirley Wells and Jon Cutler. They turned in petitions with no opposition.
(Photo by Paul Kosel)

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The football awards were finally presented after a long delay due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Academic All-State Award

Alexa Herr, Trey Gengerke, Chandler Larson, Jaime Farrell, Alex Morris

(Photo by Deb Gengerke)

11B All-State Team, Fullback/Tightend/H-Back Position: Jaime Farrell. (Photo by Deb Gengerke)

Rich Duerre Outstanding Senior Football Player Scholarship: Alex Morris. (Photo by Deb Gengerke)

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NEC All-Conference Team: Jordan Bjerke (Honorable Mention), Alex Morris, Jaime Farrell, Pierce Kettering (Honorable Mention). (Photo by Deb Gengerke)

Front Row: Pierce Kettering, Defense MVP; Alex Morris, Lineman MVP; Jaime Farrell, Offense MVP;

Back Row: Jacob Lewandowski, Defense Scout Team MVP; Ethan Gengerke, Offense Scout Team MVP; Jordan Bjerke, Most Improved Offense; Paxton Bonn, Most Improved Defense.

(Photo by Deb Gengerke)

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Spotlight on Groton Area Staff

Name: Brooke Compton

Occupation: Computer Science and Business Education Teacher

Length of Employment: 2014-Present

As part of the curriculum at Groton Area High School, students can choose to learn about the inner workings of independent businesses and corporations. This course functions to educate the future independent business owners of South Dakota in proper financial and management practices. These classes, with the exception of Personal Finance, are voluntary electives for students. The teacher in charge of educating the future entrepreneurs of Groton Area High School is Brooke Compton.

Brooke Compton graduated from Dakota State University with a major in Business Education. Mrs. Compton began working as Groton Area High School's resident business teacher in 2014. While she primarily teaches Accounting and Personal Finance, Mrs. Compton also teaches 8th grade students how to create computer programs and 6th graders how to type, in 8th Grade Coding and 6th Grade Typing, respectively. With the advent of the COVID-19 coronavirus, teachers have been forced to adapt to new practices and guidelines, including teaching through remote learning platforms such as Brightspace and D2L. Through the usage of remote learning platform Brightspace and prewritten materials, Mrs. Compton has adjusted to teaching one class in person while also teaching a separate class during the same period!

In addition to her duties as the resident finance and coding teacher, Mrs. Compton also coordinates the extracurricular group known as the FBLA, FBLA standing for Future Business Leaders of America. FBLA members work to comprehend the world of finance through interacting with various established entrepreneurs at FBLA events and conferences. Alongside FBLA, Mrs. Compton is as the overseer of Internship students. As part of Groton Area High School's offerings, students can take a period every day to work as temporary employees for local businesses. Mrs. Compton acts as the coordinator of this program and the envoy between students and employers.

In summation, Brooke Compton has a substantial number of duties as part of her job, including the Herculean task of teaching two classes at the same time. And yet, despite these hurdles, she continues to teach the students of Groton the intricacies of operating independent businesses, creating original computer programs, and many other sophisticated subjects, to the best of her ability.

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

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White weather returns

Tuesday's weather turned from sunny in the morning to snow in the afternoon. The snow started out as snow pellets (bottom photo) before changing over to snow flakes (bottom right photo). Over an inch of snow accumulated which made the tulips wonder what season it is (right photo).

From Wikipedia, Graupel (/ˈgraʊpəl/; German: [ˈgʁaʊpl̩]), also called soft hail, hominy snow, or snow pellets,[1] is precipitation that forms when supercooled water droplets are collected and freeze on falling snowflakes, forming 2–5 mm (0.08–0.20 in) balls of crisp, opaque rime.[2]

Graupel is distinct from hail and ice pellets. Hail is common in thunderstorms, while graupel typically falls in winter storms, and in convective showers.[3] The METAR code for graupel is GS.

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#422 in a series
Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

There just isn't much news here. We're up to 31,811,200 total cases here in the US, which is 0.2% more than yesterday's total. There were 50,000 new cases reported today. Hospitalizations were up to 45,772. There were 682 deaths reported today, taking us up to 567,969, which is 0.2% more than yesterday.

On April 20, 2020, one year ago today, the US had reported 780,330 cases and 37,382 deaths. I remember we were feeling pretty cocky about keeping deaths below 80,000 a horrid number that had been projected early on. I did my first round-up of all the organ systems this virus was damaging; You might find it interesting to visit a year ago at my Update #57 posted at https://www.facebook.com/marie.schwabmiller/posts/3526049614078086.

There were more than 2.4 million cases and 165,000 deaths worldwide. While Italy and Spain appeared to be on a downturn, Europe wasn't out of the woods yet; Ireland and France still had scary numbers. Russia was still not at its (first) peak either. India was suffering a surge. On the other hand, aided by their positioning as an island and a collaborative approach by all citizens, New Zealand was leveled off at 1440 total cases and 12 deaths.

Dylan Pfeifer is eight years old. He has also noticed not every family has the resources his does, so he decided to do food drives for those folks who might need a little help. With his school going virtual, he had time at home, so he set up his hand-lettered sign hanging on PVC pipe stuck into a couple of construction cones: It says, "Dylan's Food Drive." Each time he runs his drive, he draws posters, goes door-to-door to hand out flyers, and posts information on Facebook with his mom's help. He's done three drives so far from his neighborhood in a town just southeast of Phoenix, Arizona, saying to the AP, "I would plan one every day if I could."

St. Mary's Food Bank who receives his donations says on their website that they can convert $1 into seven meals. At that rate, Dylan has provided 6500 meals just from the money he's collected, and then there are the nonperishable food items he's collected, adding to the total. He and his sister also volunteer at the food bank to pack food into boxes for pick-up. One of his donors said, "It is inspiring because he is just an 8-year-old boy." I'd say so.

She added this aimed at Dylan: "I hope you have room in your chest for that growing heart of yours." I suspect he'll be fine; there'll be plenty of room.

Be well. I'll be back tomorrow.

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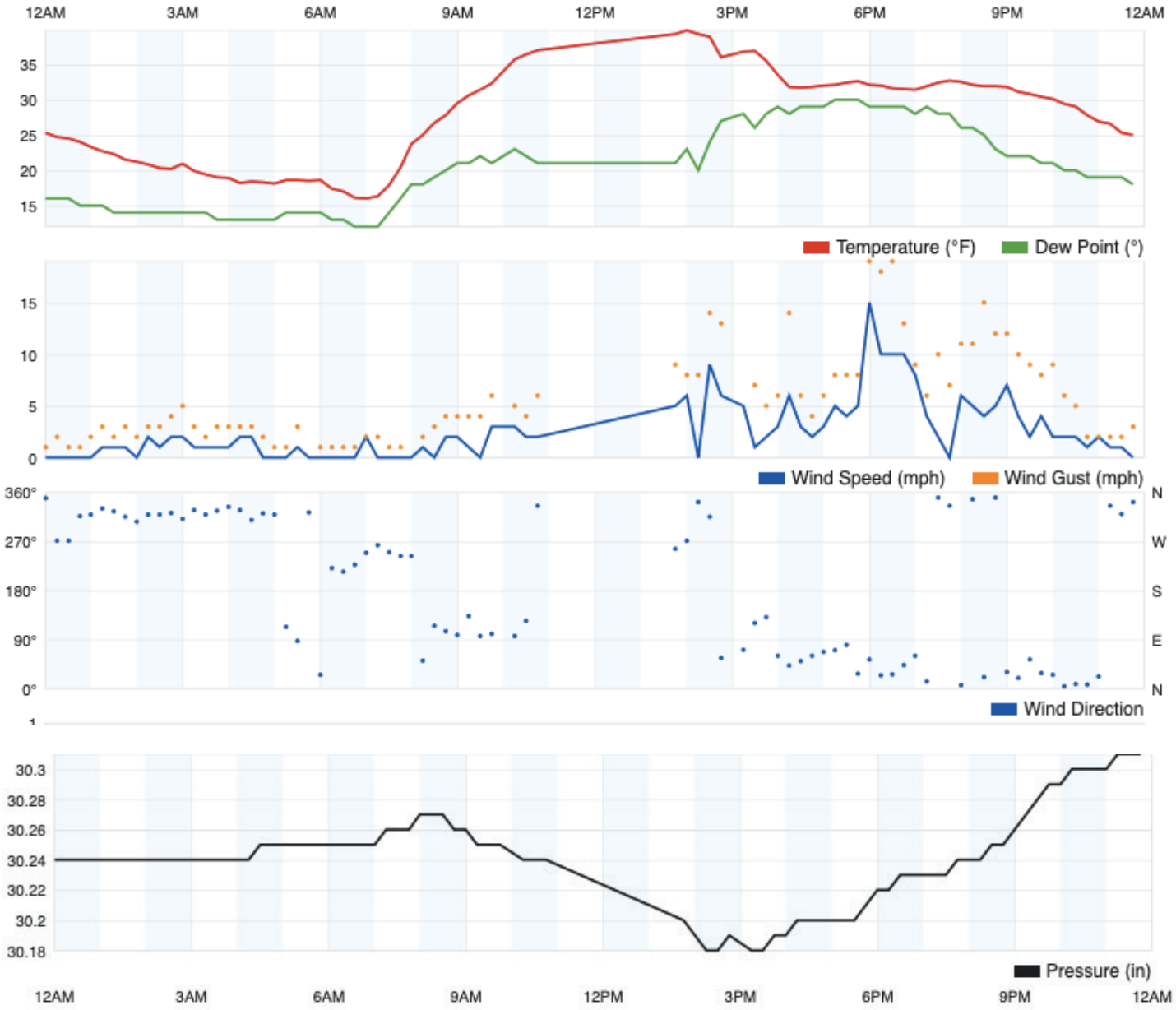
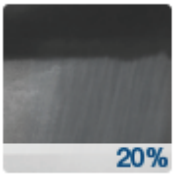
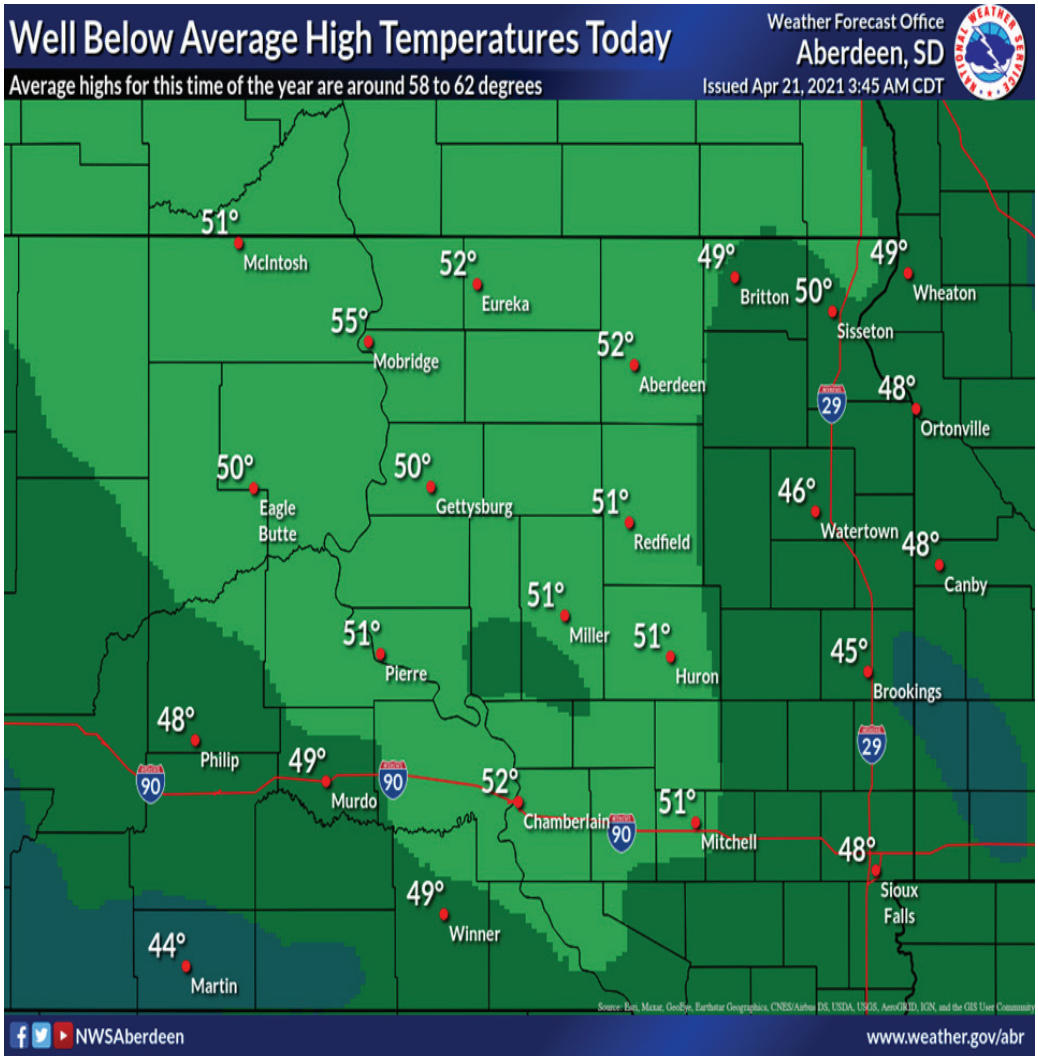
Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



Today	Tonight	Thursday	Thursday Night	Friday
				
Mostly Sunny	Mostly Clear	Sunny then Increasing Clouds and Breezy	Slight Chance Showers	Partly Sunny
High: 51 °F	Low: 27 °F	High: 59 °F	Low: 36 °F	High: 56 °F



Temperatures today will once again be well below average for this time of the year with highs generally in the mid-40s to low 50s, or around 10° below average.

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Today in Weather History

April 21, 2007: Heavy rains of 2 to 2.50 inches caused flash flooding in and around Watertown. Many streets were flooded in town, along with several roads outside of town. A warm front extending across the region was the focus for heavy rain, along with severe weather, during the evening across far northeast South Dakota. Hail up to the size of quarters, along with heavy rains of over 2 inches, caused some flooding mainly in Codington and Hamlin counties.

1885: A tornado struck the town of Denison, Texas in 1883 that destroyed a church. The congregation rebuilt the church. On this date, a second tornado destroyed the newly rebuilt church.

1967: Severe thunderstorms spawned 48 tornadoes in the Upper Midwest. Hardest hit was northern Illinois where sixteen tornadoes touched down during the afternoon and evening hours causing fifty million dollars damage. On that Friday afternoon, tornadoes struck Belvidere IL and the Chicago suburb of Oak Lawn, killing 58 persons.

1988: After having had just twelve rainouts in the previous twenty-six years at Dodger Stadium, the third day of heavy rain in southern California rained out a doubleheader at Dodger Stadium, which had been scheduled due to rainouts the previous two days.

1958 - Portions of Montana were in the midst of a spring snowburst. Snowfall amounts ranged up to 55 inches at Red Lodge, 61 inches at Nye Mine, and 72 inches at Mystic Lake. (David Ludlum)

1967 - Severe thunderstorms spawned 48 tornadoes in the Upper Midwest. Hardest hit was northern Illinois where sixteen tornadoes touched down during the afternoon and evening hours causing fifty million dollars damage. On that Friday afternoon tornadoes struck Belvidere IL, and the Chicago suburb of Oak Lawn, killing 57 persons. (David Ludlum)

1980 - The temperature at International Falls MN hit 90 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1987 - Unseasonably warm weather prevailed from the Gulf of Mexico to New England and the Great Lakes Region, with twenty-nine cities reporting record high temperatures for the date. Afternoon highs of 82 degrees at Caribou ME, 94 degrees at Mobile AL, 95 degrees at Monroe LA, and 93 degrees at New Orleans LA, were records for the month of April. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - After having had just twelve rainouts in the previous twenty-six years at Dodger Stadium, a third day of heavy rain in southern California rained out a double-header at Dodger Stadium which had been scheduled due to rainouts the previous two days. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - The temperature at Las Animas, CO, soared to 100 degrees to establish a state record for April. Twenty-two cities in the central and southwestern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. Eight cities equalled or exceeded previous April records. (The Weather Channel) (The National Weather Summary)

1990 - Afternoon and evening thunderstorms produced golf ball size hail in Oklahoma, and also caused some flash flooding in the state. Thunderstorms over the Southern High Plains produced golf ball size hail at Roswell NM and El Paso TX. Easterly winds and temperatures near zero produced wind chill readings as cold as 50 degrees below zero for the spring festival (Piuraagiaqta) outdoor events at Barrow AK. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2007 - The South Plains and Panhandle of West Texas were hit by an outbreak of severe thunderstorms. Between the hours of 5 and 6 pm, several thunderstorms developed across the western South Plains. Around 7 pm, a supercell produced a tornado which touched down around Fieldton (southwest of Olton) and then moved just south and east of Olton, doing damage to several structures and equipment. The thunderstorm continued to move northeast across northeast Lamb, northwest Hale, southeast Castro and southwest Swisher Counties, producing a long-lived tornado (along with hail up to the size of tennis balls). By 7:45 pm, the storm approached the town of Tulia in Swisher County. A tornado touchdown was reported in the town, causing major damage. The tornadic thunderstorm continued to move northeast across Swisher County over open country through about 8:30 pm. (NWS Lubbock, TX)

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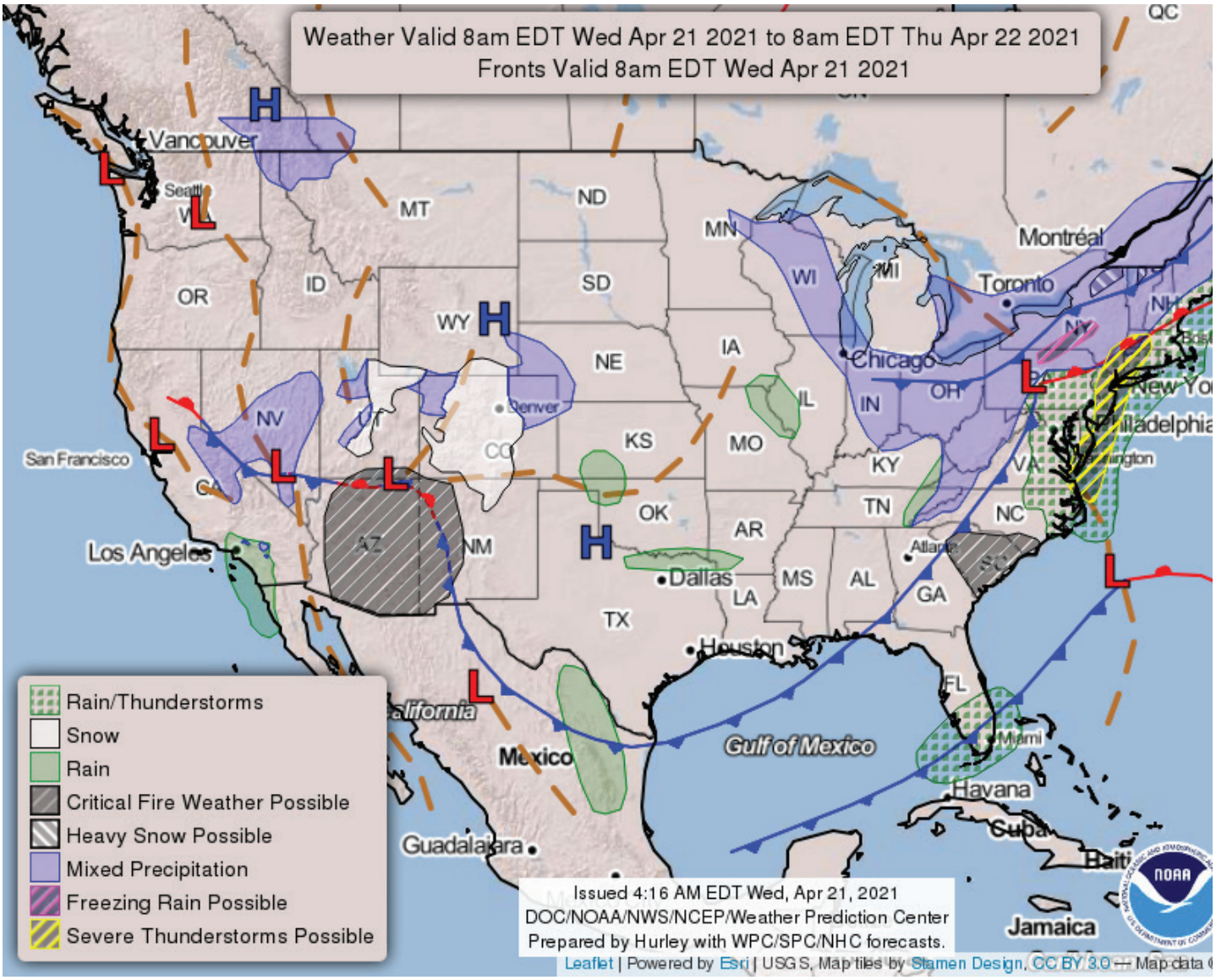
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 41 °F at 12:15 PM
Low Temp: 16 °F at 6:52 AM
Wind: 19 mph at 6:00 PM
Precip: 1.5" snow

Today's Info

Record High: 97°in 1980
Record Low: 16° in 1936
Average High: 60°F
Average Low: 34°F
Average Precip in Apr.: 1.04
Precip to date in Apr.: 2.33
Average Precip to date: 3.22
Precip Year to Date: 2.51
Sunset Tonight: 8:28 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:36 a.m.



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HE CALL FOR COURAGE

One of the major influences in our society today is the emphasis on being "politically correct." The threat or possibility of offending anyone about anything at any time has silenced many of us. We fear that we will be condemned or criticized. Unfortunately, many Christians now remain silent when opportunities to speak about their faith arise. Rather than defending the gospel, we have become fearful of offending others even if their values are wrong and beliefs unscriptural.

Being politically correct was not a problem for David. In fact, it was the exact opposite. He was not ashamed to speak boldly and publicly about God's involvement in his life. He had no hesitancy or fear to talk about his relationship with God. Once, at a very special occasion in front of a large crowd, he said, "I proclaim righteousness in the great assembly!" He put his faith on public display.

There was one period in particular when he had been through an intense struggle with God. It must have been both long and difficult. After his patience and perseverance, his respect and reverence for God were tested, his prayer was finally answered.

As he reflected on God's grace and goodness and thought about His mercy and blessings, he could not contain himself. "I speak of your faithfulness – Your salvation, love, and truth," he proclaimed. "I do not seal…I could not conceal…my gratitude."

If we were talking about this event today, we would say that David "gave his testimony to a large gathering." However, it was not the size of the group that mattered to David. It was his need "to proclaim" God's salvation and faithfulness to others. He could not be contained when it came to sharing his faith. We must do the same and share His gifts.

Prayer: Father, give us a courageous attitude and deep desire to share your gifts and greatness, boldly, with everyone, anywhere or anytime! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: I have told the good news about what is right and good in the big meeting with many people. You know I will not close my lips, O Lord. Psalm 40:9

2021 Community Events

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

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News from the Associated Press

Editorial Roundup: South Dakota

By The Associated Press undefined

Yankton Press & Dakotan. April 20, 2021.

Editorial: SD Vaccination Rates: Here's The Hard Part

As noted here last week, South Dakota — and South Dakotans — have done an excellent job so far in getting themselves vaccinated with one of the COVID-19 vaccines available. As of Monday, the Department of Health (DOH) online portal showed that 53% of South Dakotans age 16 and older had received at least one vaccination. It's great news in our fight against the coronavirus.

But now comes the harder part.

South Dakota health officials, who have said they want to reach a 70% vaccination rate in the state, must now make their case to those people who have not yet been vaccinated. While some of those people are now making their plans to get the jab —anyone 16 and older is now eligible to get vaccinated — there are still those who will be hesitant or continue to refuse altogether.

Health officials held a press conference Tuesday in an effort to keep the vaccination momentum going, asking South Dakotans to "encourage each other to choose to be vaccinated," Secretary of Health Kim Malsam-Rysdon said.

Her plea comes as a recent study conducted by the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, which is under the U.S. Department of Health, showed large concentrations of people with "vaccine hesitancy" throughout the western Dakotas and the entire state of Wyoming. The central counties in South Dakota have hesitancy rates of nearly 30%.

"We know we'll have to circle back to folks who are hesitant for whatever reason," Malsam-Rysdon told the Rapid City Journal last week. "So that will be work that we're starting to do and have been doing, and we'll have to continue to do to really tease out some of those populations that they either needed more time, they needed more information, they need to hear that information in a different way, so that they feel comfortable becoming vaccinated."

Malsam-Rysdon and state epidemiologist Josh Clayton have said they want to dispel misconceptions and rumors, such as concerns that the vaccine fuses itself or alters a person's DNA. They said this is not true.

"I think there has to be trust that it's not like we threw a few things together and here's your vaccine," Clayton said. "It is built on many years of science and a very solid foundation."

Another group being targeted is adults in their 20s. During last week's media briefing, Malsam-Rysdon and Clayton both said officials are working to get this group more open to vaccination, especially since their typical behavior patterns could lead to more infections via social spreading.

Since this age group is relatively new to being vaccine-eligible, there are hopes that vaccination levels will pick up in this category.

As for those who are vaccine hesitant — which includes people who have been eligible for weeks or even months — it's going to be a tougher sell, to be frank. For some, there remains a concern about a vaccine that was developed relatively quickly. For others, it is and will likely be an adamant refusal to take the vaccine for a variety of reasons.

This is going to make reaching the DOH's 70% goal a tougher climb going forward (and, hopefully, upward).

But DOH officials and their medical partners have been up to the task so far in getting people vaccinated; once again, it bears remembering that South Dakota has one of the highest vaccination rates in the country. That success can continue, but from here on out, it may come only with a lot of very hard work and considerable persuasion.

END

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined
PIERRE, S.D. (AP) _ These South Dakota lotteries were drawn Tuesday:
Mega Millions
06-23-43-49-52, Mega Ball: 5, Megaplier: 3
(six, twenty-three, forty-three, forty-nine, fifty-two; Mega Ball: five; Megaplier: three)
Estimated jackpot: $257 million
Powerball
Estimated jackpot: $90 million

Pipeline owner: Shutdown would cause dire financial effects

By DAVE KOLPACK Associated Press

FARGO, N.D. (AP) — The owner of the Dakota Access pipeline that moves oil from North Dakota to Illinois says shutting down the line would have dire financial consequences based on recent economic conditions.

Texas-based Energy Transfer said in its filing late Monday that U.S. District Judge James Boasberg should deny a motion by the Standing Rock Tribe and other pipeline opponents to halt the business while the U.S. Corps of Engineers conducts an extensive environmental review. The Biden administration has not asked for a shutdown, but the Corps has left open the possibility.

Dakota Access attorney William Scherman said in a 10-page motion that shuttering the pipeline would collectively result in billions of dollars in losses to various entities, including the state of North Dakota and Three Affiliated Tribes in the northwestern part of the state. It would eliminate thousands of jobs, encourage more dangerous transportation methods and lead to higher gasoline and diesel prices, he said.

"New data and other information available today show that the effects of a shutdown would be as bad as, and in a number of ways even more detrimental than, previously anticipated," Scherman wrote.

The $3.8 billion, 1,172-mile (1,886-kilometer) pipeline crosses beneath the Missouri River, just north of the Standing Rock Reservation that straddles the North Dakota-South Dakota border. The tribe, which draws its water from the river, says it fears pollution.

Boasberg has given the tribes until Friday to indicate whether they plan to file a response. Earthjustice attorney Jan Hasselman, an attorney for Standing Rock, said Tuesday he had yet to talk with his clients about the next step.

Meanwhile, the state of North Dakota filed a motion Monday to intervene in the lawsuit. State Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem said the Corps has abandoned its lead role in defending its decision to grant an easement for crossing the river. Stenehjem said the agency can no longer "adequately represent" North Dakota's interests.

An environmental review of the pipeline is expected to be done by next March. Energy Transfer is challenging a ruling from a three-judge panel of appellate judges affirming that the study must take place and is asking for a full review from the D.C. circuit.

The pipeline can carry up to 570,000 barrels of oil per day to the market. That accounts for about half of North Dakota's daily oil output.

Agriculture, Natural Resources departments officially merge

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota's Department of Agriculture and Department of Environment and Natural Resources have been officially combined despite some concerns by farmers, environmentalists and lawmakers.

Gov. Kristi Noem has cited overlap and the need for streamlining the agencies which become one as the Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

Noem has actually been working on combining the departments over the past nine months. Former Natural Resources Secretary Hunter Roberts leads the combine agencies.

Some state lawmakers expressed concern that combining the two major departments would lead to

more big government and put environmental concerns on the back burner, the Argus Leader reported. Some also say that agriculture, as the state's No. 1 industry, deserves its own department.

Five positions were cut as a result of the merger, resulting in state savings of $450,000.

A resolution to stop the merger was brought to the Senate floor by Democratic Sen. Troy Heinert, but failed by one vote in March.

The state's largest agricultural organization, the South Dakota Farmers Union, opposes the merger. But, South Dakota Farmers Bureau members voted at their November convention in support of it.

A formal budget for the new department will take effect on July 1, according to Roberts. Until then, DANR will operate under the remaining budgets for the two departments.

Supreme Court rejects defendant's appeal in 2015 slaying

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The South Dakota Supreme Court has upheld the life prison sentence given to a man who plotted the slaying of his ex-girlfriend, a 22-year-old Rapid City woman.

Jonathan Klinetobe pleaded guilty to first-degree manslaughter in a deal with prosecutors and was sentenced to life without the possibility of parole. Klinetobe was originally facing the death penalty in connection with the fatal stabbing of Jessica Rehfeld in 2015.

Prosecutors said Klinetobe was upset that Rehfeld broke up with him and convinced two other men to kidnap and kill her.

In his appeal, Klinetobe argued the judge who sentenced him abused her discretion and that the life term violates the Eighth Amendment's prohibition against cruel and unusual punishment, the Rapid City Journal reported.

The justices unanimously rejected both arguments.

Klinetobe convinced Richard Hirth and David Schneider to kill Rehfeld after he made up a story that the Hell's Angels would pay an $80,000 bounty since she had information on the motorcycle gang, according to prosecutors.

After Hirth and Schneider kidnapped and stabbed her to death while pretending to give her a ride to work, Klinetobe helped them bury her body in the woods near Rockerville, officials said.

Two weeks later, he hired Garland Brown and Michael Frye to help him dig up Rehfeld's body from the shallow grave and bury her farther into the woods and deeper underground.

Everyone but Hirth has pleaded guilty and been sentenced.

Top Navalny associates detained ahead of protests

By DARIA LITVINOVA Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — Two close associates of Alexei Navalny were detained Wednesday ahead of protests planned to support the imprisoned Russian opposition leader, who has been on a hunger strike since March 31.

Navalny's team called Sunday for nationwide protests after reports about the politician's health deteriorating in prison. Russian authorities have stressed that the demonstrations were not authorized and warned against participating in them.

Vladimir Voronin, a lawyer for top Navalny ally Lyubov Sobol said on Twitter that people "in uniform" removed Sobol from a taxi near a Moscow metro station on Wednesday morning. Sobol was taken to a police precinct and is being held in a minibus outside of the precinct building, Voronin said.

Police also detained Navalny spokeswoman Kira Yarmysh, who is currently under house arrest on charges related to January protests in support of the politician. Yarmysh was detained near the entrance of her apartment building when she went out during the one hour she is allowed to leave, her lawyer, Veronika Polyakova, said on Twitter.

According to Polyakova, Yarmysh also was taken to a police precinct and is being held in a car in front of the entrance.

Raids targeting Navalny's supporters and detentions of activists were reported in other regions of Russia.

Navalny's top strategist and chief of staff, Leonid Volkov, called the crackdown "traditional pre-rally hysteria."

"As usual, they think that if they isolate 'the leaders,' there will be no protest," Volkov tweeted Wednesday. "This, of course, is not the case."

Navalny was arrested in January upon his return from Germany, where he had spent five months recovering from a nerve agent poisoning he blames on the Kremlin. Russian officials have rejected the accusation. His arrest for an alleged violation of a suspended sentence from a 2014 embezzlement conviction triggered protests that represented the biggest show of defiance in Russia in recent years.

Soon after, a court ordered Navalny to serve 2 1/2 years in prison for the embezzlement conviction, which the European Court of Human Rights deemed to be "arbitrary and manifestly unreasonable."

Navalny began the hunger strike to protest prison officials' refusal to let his doctors visit when he began experiencing severe back pain and a loss of feeling in his legs. The penitentiary service has said Navalny was getting all the medical help he needs.

Navalny's physician, Dr. Yaroslav Ashikhmin, said Saturday that test results he received from Navalny's family showed sharply elevated levels of potassium, which can bring on cardiac arrest, and heightened creatinine levels that indicate impaired kidneys.

"Our patient could die at any moment," he said in a Facebook post.

On Sunday, the politician was transferred to a hospital in another prison and given a glucose drip. Prison officials rebuffed attempts by his doctors to visit him there.

In response to the news about Navalny's health, his team called for more nationwide protests on Wednesday, the same day that Russian President Vladimir Putin is scheduled to deliver his annual state of the nation address.

According to a website dedicated to the protests, demonstrations were planned in 165 Russian cities as of Wednesday morning.

Russian authorities, meanwhile, escalated their crackdown on Navalny's allies and supporters. The Moscow prosecutor's office asking a court to brand Navalny's Foundation for Fighting Corruption and his network of regional offices as extremist organizations. Human rights activists say such a move would paralyze the activities of the groups and expose their members and donors to prison sentences of up to 10 years.

Jury's swift verdict for Chauvin in Floyd death: Guilty

By AMY FORLITI, STEVE KARNOWSKI and TAMMY WEBBER Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — After three weeks of testimony, the trial of the former police officer charged with killing George Floyd ended swiftly: barely over a day of jury deliberations, then just minutes for the verdicts to be read — guilty, guilty and guilty — and Derek Chauvin was handcuffed and taken away to prison.

Chauvin, 45, could be sent to prison for decades when he is sentenced in about two months in a case that triggered worldwide protests, violence and a furious reexamination of racism and policing in the U.S.

The verdict set off jubilation mixed with sorrow across the city and around the nation. Hundreds of people poured into the streets of Minneapolis, some running through traffic with banners. Drivers blared their horns in celebration.

"Today, we are able to breathe again," Floyd's younger brother Philonise said at a joyous family news conference where tears streamed down his face as he likened Floyd to the 1955 Mississippi lynching victim Emmett Till, except that this time there were cameras around to show the world what happened.

The jury of six whites and six Black or multiracial people came back with its verdict after about 10 hours of deliberations over two days. The now-fired white officer was found guilty of second-degree unintentional murder, third-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter.

Chauvin's face was obscured by a COVID-19 mask, and little reaction could be seen beyond his eyes darting around the courtroom. His bail was immediately revoked. Sentencing will be in two months; the most serious charge carries up to 40 years in prison.

Defense attorney Eric Nelson followed Chauvin out of the courtroom without comment.

President Joe Biden welcomed the verdict, saying Floyd's death was "a murder in full light of day, and it ripped the blinders off for the whole world" to see systemic racism.

But he warned: "It's not enough. We can't stop here. We're going to deliver real change and reform. We can and we must do more to reduce the likelihood that tragedies like this will ever happen again."

The jury's decision was hailed around the country as justice by other political and civic leaders and celebrities, including former President Barack Obama, Oprah Winfrey and California Gov. Gavin Newsom, a white man, who said on Twitter that Floyd "would still be alive if he looked like me. That must change."

At a park next to the Minneapolis courthouse, a hush fell over a crowd of about 300 as they listened to the verdict on their cellphones. Then a great roar went up, with many people hugging, some shedding tears.

At the intersection where Floyd was pinned down, a crowd chanted, "One down, three to go!" — a reference to the three other fired Minneapolis officers facing trial in August on charges of aiding and abetting murder in Floyd's death.

Janay Henry, who lives nearby, said she felt grateful and relieved.

"I feel grounded. I can feel my feet on the concrete," she said, adding that she was looking forward to the "next case with joy and optimism and strength."

Jamee Haggard, who brought her biracial 4-year-old daughter to the intersection, said: "There's some form of justice that's coming."

The verdict was read in a courthouse ringed with concrete barriers and razor wire and patrolled by National Guard troops, in a city on edge against another round of unrest — not just because of the Chauvin case but because of the deadly police shooting of a young Black man, Daunte Wright, in a Minneapolis suburb April 11.

The jurors' identities were kept secret and will not be released until the judge decides it is safe to do so.

It is unusual for police officers to be prosecuted for killing someone on the job. And convictions are extraordinarily rare.

Out of the thousands of deadly police shootings in the U.S. since 2005, fewer than 140 officers have been charged with murder or manslaughter, according to data maintained by Phil Stinson, a criminologist at Bowling Green State University. Before Tuesday, only seven were convicted of murder.

Juries often give police officers the benefit of the doubt when they claim they had to make split-second, life-or-death decisions. But that was not an argument Chauvin could easily make.

Floyd, 46, died May 25 after being arrested on suspicion of passing a counterfeit $20 bill for a pack of cigarettes at a corner market. He panicked, pleaded that he was claustrophobic and struggled with police when they tried to put him in a squad car. They put him on the ground instead.

The centerpiece of the case was the excruciating bystander video of Floyd gasping repeatedly, "I can't breathe" and onlookers yelling at Chauvin to stop as the officer pressed his knee on or close to Floyd's neck for what authorities say was 9 1/2 minutes, including several minutes after Floyd's breathing had stopped and he had no pulse.

Prosecutors played the footage at the earliest opportunity, during opening statements, and told the jury: "Believe your eyes." From there it was shown over and over, analyzed one frame at a time by witnesses on both sides.

In the wake of Floyd's death, demonstrations and scattered violence broke out in Minneapolis, around the country and beyond. The furor also led to the removal of Confederate statues and other offensive symbols such as Aunt Jemima.

In the months that followed, numerous states and cities restricted the use of force by police, revamped disciplinary systems or subjected police departments to closer oversight.

The "Blue Wall of Silence" that often protects police accused of wrongdoing crumbled after Floyd's death. The Minneapolis police chief quickly called it "murder" and fired all four officers, and the city reached a staggering $27 million settlement with Floyd's family as jury selection was underway.

Police-procedure experts and law enforcement veterans inside and outside the Minneapolis department, including the chief, testified for the prosecution that Chauvin used excessive force and went against his

training.

Medical experts for the prosecution said Floyd died of asphyxia, or lack of oxygen, because his breathing was constricted by the way he was held down on his stomach, his hands cuffed behind him, a knee on his neck and his face jammed against the ground.

Chauvin's attorney called a police use-of-force expert and a forensic pathologist to try to make the case that Chauvin acted reasonably against a struggling suspect and that Floyd died because of a heart condition and his illegal drug use. Floyd had high blood pressure and narrowed arteries, and fentanyl and methamphetamine were found in his system.

Under the law, police have certain leeway to use force and are judged according to whether their actions were "reasonable" under the circumstances.

The defense also tried to make the case that Chauvin and the other officers were hindered in their duties by what they perceived as a growing, hostile crowd.

Chauvin did not testify, and all that the jury or the public ever heard by way of an explanation from him came from a police body-camera video after an ambulance had taken the 6-foot-4, 223-pound Floyd away. Chauvin told a bystander: "We gotta control this guy 'cause he's a sizable guy ... and it looks like he's probably on something."

The prosecution's case also included tearful testimony from onlookers who said the police kept them back when they protested what was happening.

Eighteen-year-old Darnella Frazier, who shot the crucial video, said Chauvin gave the bystanders a "cold" and "heartless" stare. She and others said they felt a sense of helplessness and lingering guilt from witnessing Floyd's slow-motion death.

"It's been nights I stayed up, apologizing and apologizing to George Floyd for not doing more, and not physically interacting and not saving his life," she testified.

Super League collapses after the 6 English clubs withdraw

By ROB HARRIS AP Global Soccer Writer

LONDON (AP) — The Super League collapsed before a ball was kicked in the European breakaway competition after being abandoned by the six English clubs, leaving the Spanish and Italian participants stranded.

Arsenal, Chelsea, Liverpool, Manchester United, Manchester City and Tottenham throughout Tuesday evening deserted the proposal to launch a largely-closed midweek competition amid an escalating backlash from their supporters and warnings from the British government that legislation could be introduced to thwart it.

The Super League project was overseen by Real Madrid President Florentino Perez, who also signed up Barcelona and Atlético Madrid in Spain, and Juventus, AC Milan and Inter Milan from Italy. The rival for the UEFA-run Champions League became unviable without the six clubs from the world's richest league.

The remaining fledgling Super League organization was defiant, blaming "pressure" being applied for forcing out the English clubs and insisting the proposal complied with the law and could yet be revived in some form.

"Given the current circumstances," the Super League said in a statement, "we shall reconsider the most appropriate steps to reshape the project, always having in mind our goals of offering fans the best experience possible while enhancing solidarity payments for the entire football community."

The English clubs heeded the appeals from UEFA President Aleksander Ceferin to remain part of the Champions League, which has a qualification criteria based on a team's performance in the domestic league.

"I said yesterday that it is admirable to admit a mistake and these clubs made a big mistake," he said. "But they are back in the fold now and I know they have a lot to offer not just to our competitions but to the whole of the European game.

"The important thing now is that we move on, rebuild the unity that the game enjoyed before this and move forward together."

As it became clear Chelsea and City were quitting the Super League on Tuesday evening, Liverpool

captain Jordan Henderson and his teammates posted a message advocating staying within the open European competitions.

Liverpool, which is owned by the Boston Red Sox investment group, eventually issued a statement thanking those inside and outside the club for "valuable contributions" before making the decision to stick within existing structures.

Manchester United defender Luke Shaw also went against his club by tweeting his backing of the existing Champions League minutes before his club's about-turn.

"We have listened carefully to the reaction from our fans, the UK government and other key stakeholders," said the club owned by the American Glazer family and listed on the New York Stock Exchange. "We remain committed to working with others across the football community to come up with sustainable solutions to the long-term challenges facing the game."

Just as the Glazers also own the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, Stan Kroenke has the NFL's Los Angeles Rams in his portfolio along with Arsenal. It is the closed models of American sports that were believed to be so appealing to the U.S. owners by offering financial certainty.

But they were resisted by fans of English clubs.

"It was never our intention to cause such distress, however, when the invitation to join the Super League came, while knowing there were no guarantees, we did not want to be left behind to ensure we protected Arsenal and its future," the north London club said. "As a result of listening to you and the wider football community over recent days we are withdrawing from the proposed Super League. We made a mistake, and we apologize for it.

"We know it will take time to restore your faith in what we are trying to achieve here at Arsenal but let us be clear that the decision to be part of the Super League was driven by our desire to protect Arsenal, the club you love, and to support the game you love through greater solidarity and financial stability."

Tottenham also gave a detailed explanation for why it signed up before backing away.

"We regret the anxiety and upset caused by the ESL proposal," chairman Daniel Levy said. "We felt it was important that our club participated in the development of a possible new structure that sought to better ensure financial fair play and financial sustainability whilst delivering significantly increased support for the wider football pyramid.

"We believe that we should never stand still and that the sport should constantly review competitions and governance to ensure the game we all love continues to evolve and excite fans around the world."

Chelsea, which is owned by Russian billionaire Roman Abramovich, said it only joined the Super League group last week.

"We have now had time to consider the matter fully and have decided that our continued participation in these plans would not be in the best interests of the club, our supporters or the wider football community," Chelsea said in a statement hours after its game against Brighton had been delayed by fan protests outside its Stamford Bridge stadium.

The Premier League threatened to sanction the six rebel clubs and Prime Minister Boris Johnson considered introducing laws to stop them forming a new European competition he called a "cartel."

Divisions within the Super League clubs also grew with Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola saying the Super League would damage the integrity and values of sport. Liverpool manager Jürgen Klopp has also expressed concerns about the actions of his club's owners.

The Premier League had threatened the six clubs with expulsion if they tried to go it alone in Europe. The other 14 clubs met Tuesday and "unanimously and vigorously" rejected the Super League plans.

Britain's Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden said out-of-touch owners "completely misjudged the strength of feeling from fans, players and the whole country."

The government is exploring adopting the 50-plus-1 rule from Germany that gives fans the majority of voting rights, nominally to protect clubs from being controlled by private investors.

"Our fan-led review will still happen and I remain convinced of the need for reform," Dowden said. "We must make sure this never happens again."

Everton decried the "preposterous arrogance" of Super League clubs. Everton's nine titles are the fourth most by a team in the history of the English top division, and the club from Merseyside was considered part of the country's elite in the 1980s and early 1990s.

"The backlash is understandable and deserved — and has to be listened to," Everton's board of directors said in a statement. "This preposterous arrogance is not wanted anywhere in football outside of the clubs that have drafted this plan."

The Italian clubs declined to comment earlier, and the Spanish teams were not commenting late Tuesday.

EU reaches major climate deal ahead of Biden climate summit

By RAF CASERT Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — The European Union reached a tentative climate deal that is intended to make the 27-nation bloc climate-neutral by 2050, with member states and parliament agreeing on new carbon emissions targets on the eve of a virtual summit hosted by U.S. President Joe Biden.

"Our political commitment to becoming the first climate-neutral continent by 2050 is now also a legal commitment. The climate law sets the EU on a green path for a generation," European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said early Wednesday.

Under the provisional deal reached after officials negotiated through the night, the EU will also commit itself to an intermediate target of cutting greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030 compared to 1990 levels.

"It was high time for the agreement, as Europe has to show where it stands in view of the positive developments in the USA and China," said European Parliament member Peter Liese, the negotiator for the EPP Christian Democrat group.

The 2030 target had been 40%, but under the pressure of increasing evidence of climate change and a more environmentally conscious electorate, it was pushed up, although the EU legislature had wanted a higher target of 60%.

Lawmakers from The Greens specifically complained that too many accounting tricks had been used to reach the level of 55% and that in reality the reduction would equate to a 52.8% reduction of direct emissions.

Its environmental expert, MEP Michael Bloss said EU member nations and parliament "have rushed through a weak climate law for the sake of a photo-op with President Joe Biden."

The chair of the negotiations, Liberal MEP Pascal Canfin of the Renew Europe group, said finding a middle way was necessary. He said "the compromise reached is ambitious: we will do 2.5 times more in nine years than we have done in the last 10 years in Europe."

The United States, the world's second-biggest polluter after China, is preparing to announce its new target for cutting greenhouse gas emissions by 2030.

Under Biden, the United States has returned to the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement and all global partners will be meeting in Glasgow, Scotland, to push for strong targets.

Both Washington and Brussels are aiming to go "carbon neutral" by midcentury, a goal scientists say needs to be achieved to keep average global temperatures from rising above 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 Fahrenheit) by the year 2100. The Paris accord's more ambitious target of capping global warming at 1.5 C (2.7 F) by the end of the century compared with pre-industrial times would likely require even more drastic worldwide cuts in emissions.

Wednesday's EU deal still needs to be officially approved by the member states and the European Parliament, but that should be little more than a rubber stamp.

'Sliver of hope.' Relief, caution as America absorbs verdict

By DEEPTI HAJELA and JOCELYN NOVECK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — When the verdicts came in — Guilty, Guilty, Guilty — Lucia Edmonds let out the breath she hadn't even realized she'd been holding.

The relief that the 91-year-old Black woman felt flooding over her when white former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin was convicted for killing George Floyd was hard-earned, coming after a lifetime of seeing other cases end differently.

"I was prepared for the fact that it might not be a guilty verdict because it's happened so many times before," the Washington, D.C., resident said. She recalled the shock of the Rodney King case nearly three decades ago when four Los Angeles officers were acquitted of beating King, a Black motorist.

"I don't know how they watched the video of Rodney King being beaten and not hold those officers to account," Edmonds said. About the Chauvin verdict, she said, "I hope this means there is a shift in this county, but it's too early for me to make that assumption." Still, she added: "Something feels different."

The same sense of relief, of accountability served and crisis at least temporarily averted, was palpable across the United States on Tuesday after a jury found Chauvin guilty of murder and manslaughter in killing Floyd, a Black man who took his last breath pinned to the street with the officer's knee on his neck.

But when it came to what's next for America, the reaction was more hesitant. Some were hopeful, pointing to the protests and sustained outcry over Floyd's death as signs of change to come, in policing and otherwise.

Others were more circumspect, wondering if one hopeful result really meant the start of something better in a country with a history of racial injustice, especially in the treatment of Black people at the hands of law enforcement.

With all the relief and gratitude 68-year-old Kemp Harris, a retired kindergarten teacher in Cambridge, Mass., felt upon hearing the verdict, it was tempered by what he'd seen in the much more recent past: The deaths of Daunte Wright in Minnesota and of Adam Toledo in Chicago.

"You know, I think it puts a period on the end of this particular incident," Harris, who is Black, said when asked if the Chauvin decision represented the end of a chapter. "But I don't think it puts a stoppage on what's been going on."

In Columbus, Ohio, some residents had their celebrations cut short by reports that police fatally shot a teenage Black girl.

"As you're getting one phone call that he was guilty, I'm getting the next phone call that this is happening in my neighborhood," Kimberly Shepherd said. Hours later, police released body-camera footage that appeared to show the officer firing just as the girl lunged at another female with a knife.

Beverly Mills, 71, of Pennington, New Jersey, and Elaine Buck, 67, of Hopewell Borough, New Jersey, found themselves thinking back through history as they reflected on the verdict in Minnesota.

"I was bracing myself for what would happen if he did get off," Mills said. "I couldn't even wrap my mind around it because I thought, then there is no hope." Mills said she was on her senior class trip to Washington, D.C., one of just four Black girls out of a class of 200 or so, when the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated in 1968.

"Washington and all the major cities were starting to erupt and they wanted to get the kids back to New Jersey. As the train was leaving, you could see the smoke starting to circle in the sky," Mills said.

Will the verdict change anything? Buck said: "It will make everybody aware that we're watching you. We're videotaping. What else are we supposed to do?"

Things are and will be different, insisted Aseem Tiwari, an Indian American screenwriter who lives in Los Angeles. He's convinced the level of outrage spurred by Floyd's death would last, even if it doesn't take the form of sustained, nationwide protests as it did in 2020.

He used himself as a case in point. Floyd's death drove him to be more involved and more willing to speak out than ever before — even during a pandemic when gathering carried a risk.

Before one protest, he recalled, his mother "asked me one simple question: 'Are you willing to get COVID and die while protesting for this?' And I didn't flinch for a second."

That kind of determination, he said, isn't just going to fade.

There's still a hard road ahead, said Jonathan Har-Even, of Glen Ridge, New Jersey, and the verdict, while important, doesn't necessarily feel like a victory.

"It feels like a step in the right direction," said Har-Even, who is white. "It feels positive, but it's hard to feel victorious."

Naim Rasheed, 26, of Oklahoma City, said he had assumed no one would face justice for Floyd's death. The guilty verdict, he said, was a relief, and he believes police officers will realize they can't get away with violence against Black Americans.

"I bet that they're going to take their lives a little bit more serious and their careers a little bit more serious now," Rasheed said.

Tina Ikpa, a Black attorney in Norman, Oklahoma, said she was "waiting for the other shoe to drop."

"I feel like there's some hope, but I still feel like there's a lot of work left to do," the 38-year-old said. "I feel like this is maybe a crack in the wall, but the wall has not come down. It's a small sliver of hope, but I'm hesitant to say we have reached the mountaintop."

If nothing else, the verdict gave the country a glimpse of something it hasn't always seen, said Harris, the retired teacher in Cambridge, Mass.

"I at least think that we saw what justice can look like in this country," he said. "We saw what can happen when people just deal with the truth of the matter."

Seoul court rejects sexual slavery claim against Tokyo

By KIM TONG-HYUNG Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — A South Korean court on Wednesday rejected a claim by South Korean sexual slavery victims and their relatives who sought compensation from the Japanese government over their wartime sufferings.

The Seoul Central District Court based its decision on diplomatic considerations and principles of international law that grant states immunity from jurisdiction of foreign courts. This appeared to align with the position maintained by Tokyo, which had boycotted the court proceedings and insists all wartime compensation issues were settled under a 1965 treaty normalizing relations with South Korea.

Activists representing sexual slavery victims denounced the decision and said the Seoul Central District Court was ignoring their struggles to restore the women's honor and dignity. They said in a statement that the plaintiffs would appeal.

It wasn't immediately clear how the ruling would affect relations between the estranged U.S. allies. They spent years escalating their feud in public over issues stemming from Japan's brutal occupation of Korea through end of World War II before facing pressure from the Biden administration to mend ties and coordinate action in the face of threats from China and North Korea.

Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary Katunobu Kato noted the decision conflicted with a previous ruling on a separate case that found the Japanese government responsible for compensating sexual slavery victims.

Kato said he wouldn't comment on the new ruling before examining the details more closely, but he added that Tokyo's stance on the sexual slavery issue remains unchanged. He said the previous ruling violated international law and was unacceptable.

"Japan continues to strongly ask South Korea to take appropriate steps in order to correct the state of international violation," he said.

The 20 plaintiffs, who had sued Japanese government in 2016, included 11 women who were forced to work at Japanese military brothels during World War II and relatives of other women who have since died.

The court said international law and previous rulings from South Korea's Supreme Court make it clear that foreign governments should be immune from civil damage suits in respect of their sovereignty.

"If we go against the (principles) of current customary international law regarding the immunity of states and deny immunity for the defendant, a diplomatic clash with the defendant will become unavoidable following the verdict and the process to forcibly execute it," the court said in a statement.

One of the plaintiffs — 92-year-old Lee Yong-soo — has been campaigning for South Korea and Japan to settle their decades-long impasse over sexual slavery by seeking judgment from the U.N.'s International Court of Justice.

She has said it has become clear the issue cannot be resolved through bilateral talks or rulings by South Korea's domestic courts that have been repeatedly rejected by the Japanese government, and that the friction between governments has hurt friendships between civilians.

"Regardless of the verdict, we will go to the International Court of Justice," she told reporters after Wednesday's ruling.

The same court in a largely symbolic ruling in January had called for the Japanese government to give 100 million won ($89,000) each to a separate group of 12 women who sued in 2013 over their wartime suffering as sex slaves.

Tens of thousands of women across Japanese-occupied Asia and the Pacific were moved to front-line brothels used by the Japanese military. About 240 South Korean women registered with the government as victims of sexual slavery by Japan's wartime military — only 15 of whom are still alive.

Japan insists compensation issues were settled under the 1965 treaty, in which Tokyo provided $500 million in economic assistance to Seoul.

Amnesty International in a statement called Wednesday's ruling a "major disappointment that fails to deliver justice to the remaining survivors of this military slavery system and to those who suffered these atrocities before and during World War II but had already passed away, as well as their families."

Referring to the January court ruling, Arnold Fang, Amnesty International's East Asia researcher, said, "What was a landmark victory for the survivors after an overly long wait is again now being called into question."

The ruling came as the Asian U.S. allies struggle to repair their relations that sank to post-war lows in recent years over history, trade, and military issues.

Their recurring animosity could possibly complicate President Joe Biden's efforts to bolster three-way cooperation with U.S. regional allies, which declined under years of President Donald Trump's "America first" approach, to coordinate action in face of China's growing influence and North Korea's nuclear threat.

Besides the impasse over sexual slavery, South Korea and Japan have feuded over South Korean court rulings that called for Japanese companies to compensate Koreans who were forced to work in factories during the war.

The countries have made little progress in repairing their relations despite South Korean President Moon Jae-in's vow last month to build "future-oriented ties" with Tokyo. Those comments came after Moon during a January news conference described that month's ruling on the sexual slavery survivors as "honestly a complicating" development for government efforts to improve bilateral relations.

Moon's office didn't immediately comment on Wednesday's ruling. Aside from the history issues, fresh tensions have risen after Japan confirmed it would release treated radioactive water from the Fukushima nuclear plant into the ocean.

In 2015, South Korea's previous conservative government reached a deal with Japan to "irreversibly" resolve the sexual slavery dispute. Under that deal, Japan agreed to fund a foundation to support victims in return for South Korea ceasing its criticism of Japan over the issue.

But Moon's government took steps to dissolve the foundation after he took office in 2017, saying the 2015 deal lacked legitimacy because officials failed to properly communicate with victims before reaching it.

Columbus police officer fatally shoots girl swinging knife

By FARNOUSH AMIRI and RYAN KRYSKA Report for America/Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — Columbus police shot and killed a teenage girl who swung at two other people with a knife Tuesday, according to bodycam footage from the officer who fired the shots just minutes before the verdict in George Floyd's killing was read.

Officials with the Columbus Division of Police showed a segment of the footage Tuesday night just hours after the shooting took place in a neighborhood on the city's east side. The decision to swiftly release the video was a departure from protocol as the force faces immense scrutiny from the public following a series of recent high-profile police killings that have led to clashes.

The 10-second clip begins with the officer getting out of his car at a house where police had been dispatched after someone called 911 saying they were being physically threatened, Interim Police Chief Michael Woods said at the news conference. The officer takes a few steps toward a group of people in the driveway when the girl, who was Black, starts swinging a knife wildly at another girl or woman, who falls backward. The officer shouts several times to get down.

The girl with the knife then charges at another girl or woman who is pinned against a car.

From a few feet away, with people on either side of him, the officer fires four shots, and the teen slumps to the ground. A black-handled blade similar to a kitchen knife or steak knife lies on the sidewalk next to her.

A man immediately yells at the officer, "You didn't have to shoot her! She's just a kid, man!"

The officer responds, "She had a knife. She just went at her."

The race of the officer wasn't clear.

The girl was taken to a hospital, where she was pronounced dead, police said. It remains unclear if anyone else was injured.

Police did not identify the girl or her age Tuesday. One family member said she was 15, while another said she was 16.

The shooting happened minutes before the verdict in the killing of George Floyd was announced. Protesters who had gathered peacefully after that verdict to call for police reform and accountability quickly shifted their focus to the killing of the girl. The crowd of about 100 could be heard chanting outside police headquarters as city officials offered their condolences to the family and acknowledged the rarity of showing bodycam footage so soon after a police shooting.

Woods said state law allows police to use deadly force to protect themselves or others, and investigators will determine whether this shooting was such an instance.

Columbus Mayor Andrew Ginther mourned the loss of the young victim but defended the officer's use of deadly force.

"We know based on this footage the officer took action to protect another young girl in our community," he told reporters.

Meanwhile, outside the briefing, hundreds of protesters pushed past barriers outside police headquarters and approached officers as city officials were showing the bodycam video inside. Many chanted, "Say her name!" While others signified the victim's age by yelling, "she was just a kid!" Officers with bicycles pushed protesters back and threatened to deploy pepper spray on the crowd.

The shooting happened about 25 minutes before a judge read the verdict convicting former Minneapolis Police Officer Derek Chauvin of murder and manslaughter in the killing of Floyd. It also took place less than 5 miles from where the funeral for Andre Hill, who was killed by another Columbus police officer in December, was held earlier this year. The officer in Hill's case, Adam Coy, a 19-year veteran of the force, is now facing trial for murder, with the next hearing scheduled for April 28.

Less than three weeks before Hill was killed, a Franklin County Sheriff's deputy fatally shot 23-year-old Casey Goodson Jr. in Columbus. The case remains under federal investigation.

Last week, Columbus police shot and killed a man who was in a hospital emergency room with a gun on him. Officials are continuing an investigation into that shooting.

Kimberly Shepherd, 50, who has lived in the neighborhood where Tuesday's shooting took place for 17 years, said she knew the teenage victim.

"The neighborhood has definitely went through its changes, but nothing like this," Shepherd said of the shooting. "This is the worst thing that has ever happened out here and unfortunately it is at the hands of police."

Shepherd and her neighbor Jayme Jones, 51, had celebrated the guilty verdict of Chauvin. But things changed quickly, she said.

"We were happy about the verdict. But you couldn't even enjoy that," Shepherd said. "Because as you're getting one phone call that he was guilty, I'm getting the next phone call that this is happening in my neighborhood."

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Guilty verdicts in Floyd's death bring joy — and wariness

By AARON MORRISON, GILLIAN FLACCUS and JACQUELYN MARTIN Associated Press

London Williams stood in Black Lives Matter Plaza in Washington, D.C., moments before the verdict was read in George Floyd's murder trial Tuesday, wondering how he would cope if the white police officer who killed the Black man was acquitted.

"I feel very nervous. It's already hard as it is as a Black man in today's society," said Williams, standing with a date in the space near the White House renamed after Floyd's death last May. "If this doesn't go right, I don't know how safe I will feel."

Then, the verdict came for former Minneapolis Officer Derek Chauvin: guilty on all counts. Williams, 31, doubled over with emotion, covered his face and wept.

With that outcome, Black Americans from Missouri to Florida to Minnesota cheered, marched, hugged, waved signs and sang jubilantly in the streets. The joy and relief stood in stark contrast to the anger and sometimes violent protests that engulfed the country following Floyd's death.

But Tuesday's celebrations were tempered with the heavy knowledge that Chauvin's conviction was just a first step on the long road to address racial injustices by police.

Many said they had prepared for a different result after watching countless deaths of people of color at the hands of police who went unpunished. The shooting death of another Black man, Daunte Wright, by officers in suburban Minneapolis during the trial and of 13-year-old Adam Toledo in Chicago last month heightened tensions and muted the court victory for many.

In Columbus, Ohio, some residents had their celebration over the verdict cut short by reports that police fatally shot a teenage Black girl. "As you're getting one phone call that he was guilty, I'm getting the next phone call that this is happening in my neighborhood," Kimberly Shepherd said. Several hours later, police released body-camera footage that appeared to show the officer firing just as the girl lunged at another female with a knife.

The Rev. Jesse Jackson traveled to Minneapolis for the verdict, and said there was relief but no celebrating "because the killing continues."

"Finally we did get some justice," Gwen Carr, the mother of Eric Garner, a Black man who died at the hands of police in New York City in 2014, said after pronouncing herself "elated" at the verdict. No criminal charges were brought in her son's death; his last words were "I can't breathe," which became a rallying cry among activists.

In St. Louis, a police association of about 260 predominantly Black officers called the verdict important but "a pebble in the ocean."

"Yet, why should we be thankful for something that is right? Why should we be thankful when George Floyd doesn't have his life or his future?" the Ethical Society of Police said in a statement.

Many saw the trial as a litmus test for how sincere Americans are about racial justice and consequential police reform after Floyd's death set off global protests. Jurors in the high-profile case deliberated for 10 hours over two days. Chauvin was handcuffed and taken into custody immediately after the verdict was read.

"It means so much to me," said Venisha Johnson, a Black woman who cried at a gathering in what's been dubbed George Floyd Square in Minneapolis. "I've been praying for George every day, every morning at 6 a.m. I'm just so happy. The way he was murdered was terrible! But thank you, Jesus."

In Los Angeles, several dozen people gathered to celebrate at the corner of Florence and Normandie avenues, which was the scene of chaos and violence in 1992 when the city dissolved into riots after four officers were acquitted in the beating of motorist Rodney king. A Black man in a Lakers cap danced and chanted: "Get used to this, get used to justice!" Passing cars blared their horns as demonstrators waved signs and Black Lives Matter flags.

In Houston's Third Ward, the historically Black neighborhood where Floyd grew up, a small crowd gathered under a tent near a mural of Floyd to listen as the verdict was read on TV. People driving by honked

their car horns and yelled, "Justice!"

"We feeling good. We thank everybody that stood with us. It's a blessed moment," said Jacob David, 39, who knew Floyd and wiped away tears.

Floyd's death on May 25, 2020, as Chauvin pressed a knee to his neck and the graphic bystander video that captured him pleading that he couldn't breathe shocked and appalled the world and triggered protests against police brutality and racial injustice.

"We've just become so accustomed to not receiving justice. I'm just so very, very overwhelmed right now," said Tesia Lisbon, a community activist in Florida's capital of Tallahassee.

Lisbon was one of 19 people arrested by police last September during a Black Lives Matter march.

"We just got so used to not hearing good news, to not having the justice system on your side for so long," Lisbon said.

Law enforcement in many cities had prepared for unrest.

In Grand Rapids, which had some of Michigan's worst violence after Floyd's death, authorities placed concrete barriers around the police building before the verdict was announced. Officials said they would protect the right to peacefully assemble but also wanted to be on guard for "chaos and destruction."

Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer called Tuesday's verdict "a reminder to continue pushing for justice in every corner of our society."

And in Portland, Oregon, which has seen repeated protests and vandalism since Floyd's death, the mayor declared a state of emergency and put state police and the National Guard on standby. Small groups of protesters have set fires, broken windows and vandalized buildings, including a church, a Boys & Girls Club and a historical society in recent days over the deaths of Wright and Toledo, as well as a fatal police shooting in Portland last week.

In overwhelmingly white Vashon Island off Seattle, resident Karen Oneil watched the verdict with her handmade sign half painted. One side said, "Justice For George." She didn't know what to write on the other — a message of relief or of protest — until the verdict came down.

When she headed to the island's quaint downtown to wave it, the white paint reading "Hope Begins" was still wet.

"People can celebrate today, but there is a lot of work to be done," Oneil said.

Floyd verdict gives hope, if only fleeting, to Black America

By AARON MORRISON and KAT STAFFORD Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Relief, even if fleeting and momentary, is a feeling that Black Americans have rarely known in America: From slavery to Jim Crow segregation to enduring punishments for living while Black, a breath of fresh air untainted by oppression has long been hard to come by.

Nonetheless, the conviction of ex-cop Derek Chauvin for murdering George Floyd nearly a year ago allowed many across this city and the nation to exhale pent-up anxiety — and to inhale a sense of hope.

But what might they feel hope for?

The fate of Chauvin — found guilty of murder and manslaughter for holding a knee to Floyd's neck, choking off his breathing until he went limp last May — showed Black Americans and their compatriots once again that the legal system is capable of valuing Black lives.

Or at least it can hold one white police officer in Minnesota accountable for what many declared an unambiguous act of murder months ago.

"This may be the beginning of the restoration of believing that a justice system can work," said civil rights leader Martin Luther King III, echoing a sentiment that many expressed Tuesday.

"But we have to constantly stay on the battlefield in a peaceful and nonviolent way and make demands," he said. "This has been going on for years and one case, one verdict, does not change how systematic racism has worked in our system."

Alexandria De La Cruz, a Minneapolis mother, brought her 7-year-old daughter to the intersection near where Floyd was murdered, now dubbed George Floyd Square. Along with the hundreds who gathered

there — Black, white and otherwise — De La Cruz erupted in cheers after it was announced Chauvin was guilty on all three counts.

"I feel relief that the justice system is working — it's working today," De La Cruz said.

Her daughter, Jazelle, sported a hooded sweatshirt that read, "Stop killing Black people." Perhaps that's a reminder, her mom said, that there's still work to do to ensure the feeling of relief isn't so fleeting this time.

"It's important to bring her (to the square), so she can see what's happening to our people, so that she can see what this country really is," De La Cruz said.

Black Americans have seen similar moments before. In recent years, they followed the convictions of the officers who killed Oscar Grant, Laquan McDonald and Walter Scott. Still, some of these victims' families continue to press for broader accountability from a policing culture they say has never proved it is meaningfully changed or reformed after the convictions of police officers.

And even as the Chauvin trial moved into its final days, the Twin Cities region and the nation were rocked by yet another police killing of an unarmed Black man. This time it was 20-year-old Daunte Wright, in Brooklyn Center, roughly 10 miles north of Minneapolis.

Keith Ellison, Minnesota's first Black attorney general, said the jury's decision was a reminder of how difficult it has been to enact enduring change and prevent the kind of upheaval and civil unrest that ignited the nation and the world last summer.

Furthermore, Ellison pointed out, America has known about and largely ignored the root causes of the upheaval and uneasiness in Black communities. More than a half-century ago, the Kerner and McComb commissions empaneled to study racial unrest warned of the dangers of doing just that.

"Here we are in 2021 still addressing the same problem," Ellison said. "This has to end. We need true justice. That's not one case. That is a social transformation that says that nobody's beneath the law, and no one is above it."

Rashad Robinson, president of Color of Change, an online racial justice group, echoed the attorney general.

"We cannot, every single time, have uprisings to deliver justice nor should we have to be in a conversation about holding police officers accountable when they go around killing us," Robinson said.

So again, what might Black Americans hope for after the outcome of Chauvin's trial?

It can't be about simply getting more police in front of a judge and jury, or about locking more of them up, said Miski Noor, an activist with the Twin Cities-based Black Visions Collective.

"That doesn't actually stop the murders of Black people," said Noor. "We're trying to get into a world where lives are not lost, when Black people actually get to live."

That's the hope.

As relieved as Floyd's family members are by the guilty verdicts, none see this as a bookend to the pursuit for justice. And three other former Minneapolis police officers face trial for the role they played in the case.

Brandon Williams, a nephew of Floyd's, called the verdicts a "pivotal moment for America."

"It's something this country has needed for a long time now," he said. "We need each and every officer to be held accountable. And until then, it's still scary to be a Black man and woman in America encountering police."

Biden to America after Floyd verdict: 'We can't stop here'

By JONATHAN LEMIRE, ZEKE MILLER and MICHAEL BALSAMO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden said the conviction of former Minneapolis Police Officer Derek Chauvin in the killing of George Floyd "can be a giant step forward" for the nation in the fight against systemic racism. But he declared that "it's not enough."

Biden spoke Tuesday from the White House hours after the verdict alongside Vice President Kamala Harris, with the pair saying the country's work is far from finished with the verdict.

"We can't stop here," Biden declared.

Biden and Harris called on Congress to act swiftly to address policing reform, including by approving a bill named for Floyd, who died with his neck under Chauvin's knee last May. Beyond that, the president

said, the entire country must confront hatred to "change hearts and minds as well as laws and policies."

"'I can't breathe.' Those were George Floyd's last words," Biden said. "We can't let those words die with him. We have to keep hearing those words. We must not turn away. We can't turn away."

Harris, the first Black woman to serve as vice president, said racism was keeping the country from fulfilling its founding promise of "liberty and justice for all."

"It is not just a Black America problem or a people of color problem. it is a problem for every American," she said. "It is holding our nation back from reaching our full potential."

"A measure of justice isn't the same as equal justice," she said.

Biden addressed the nation after telephoning Floyd's family following the verdict, telling them, "We're all so relieved." He added later that he sought to comfort Floyd's young daughter Gianna, telling her, "Daddy did change the world."

After about 10 hours of deliberations over two days, the jury convicted Chauvin of two counts of murder and one of manslaughte r.

The verdict — and the aftermath — will be a continuing test for Biden. He has pledged to help combat racism in policing, helping African Americans who supported him in large numbers in last year's election 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.

Earlier Tuesday, Biden broke his administration's silence on the trial, which has set the nation on edge for weeks, saying he was praying for "the right verdict."

Speaking from the Oval Office while the jury was deliberating in Minneapolis, Biden said, "I'm praying the verdict is the right verdict. I think it's overwhelming, in my view. I wouldn't say that unless the jury was sequestered now."

The president had repeatedly denounced Floyd's death but had previously stopped short of weighing in on Chauvin's trial, with White House officials saying it would be improper to speak out during active judicial proceedings. On Tuesday, White House press secretary Jen Psaki repeatedly refused to explain Biden's comments, doing nothing to dispel the impression that he thought Chauvin should be found guilty.

The White House had been privately weighing how to handle the verdict, dispatching specially trained community facilitators from the Justice Department in anticipation of potential protests, officials said. With word that a verdict had been reached Tuesday afternoon, Biden postponed planned remarks at the White House on his infrastructure package.

On Monday, Judge Peter Cahill, who presided over the trial, admonished public officials about speaking out while the trial was ongoing.

"I wish elected officials would stop talking about this case, especially in a manner that's disrespectful to the rule of law and to the judicial branch and our function," he said shortly after sending the jury to begin deliberations.

Defense attorneys often cite remarks made by public officials as a reason to appeal a verdict, in part because they could poison the jury against the defendant.

Cahill delivered his rebuke after rejecting 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. He conceded to Chauvin's attorneys that Waters' comments could potentially be grounds for an appeal.

On Monday, Cahill ordered that jurors be sequestered in an undisclosed hotel during their deliberations and instructed them to avoid all news about the case.

Despite Cahill's remarks, Brock Hunter, a criminal defense attorney and past president of the Minnesota Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, said he considered a successful appeal over remarks like Waters' and Biden's extremely unlikely.

"It's inevitable that public officials are going to comment on a case and its impacts on communities," he said. "Unless there is direct evidence that statements by a public official directly impacted a juror or

jurors, I don't think this even gets off the ground."

On Capitol Hill, Republicans as well as Democrats said they were relived at the verdict and predicted it could give momentum to policing reform legislation that has been proposed in both the House and Senate.

"I think the verdict just reinforces that our justice system continues to become more just," said Tim Scott of South Carolina, the only Black Republican senator. "This is a monumental day in many ways, in my opinion."

The Congressional Black Caucus watched the verdict together in the Capitol, and members hugged and fist pumped after the verdict was read.

"The room was filled with emotion and gratitude," said Georgia Rep. Hank Johnson. "Black lives mattered to this jury. And I'm very gratified at the verdict, very happy at the swiftness of the verdict. ... It's a vindication of justice in America."

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi joined the Black Caucus shortly afterward at a news conference outside, where she said she had spoken to Floyd's family just before the verdict. She said she called "to say to them, 'Thank you, God bless you, for your grace and your dignity, for the model that you are appealing for justice in the most dignified way.'"

AP sources: Biden to pledge halving greenhouse gases by 2030

By MATTHEW DALY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden will pledge to cut U.S. greenhouse gas emissions at least in half by 2030 as he convenes a virtual climate summit with 40 world leaders, according to three people with knowledge of the White House plans.

The 50% target would nearly double the nation's previous commitment and help the Biden administration prod other countries for ambitious emissions cuts as well. The proposal would require dramatic changes in the power and transportation sectors, including significant increases in renewable energy such as wind and solar power and steep cuts in emissions from fossil fuels such as coal and oil.

The nonbinding but symbolically important pledge is a key element of the two-day summit, which begins Thursday as world leaders gather online to share strategies to combat climate change.

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

The three people who know about the White House plans spoke on condition of anonymity on Tuesday because they were not authorized to discuss the pledge ahead of Biden's announcement.

Biden has sought to ensure that the 2030 goal, known as a Nationally Determined Contribution, or NDC, is aggressive enough to have a tangible impact on climate change efforts — not only in the U.S. but throughout the world — while also being achievable under a closely divided Congress.

The climate target is a key requirement of the 2015 Paris climate agreement, which Biden rejoined on his first day in office. It's also an important marker as Biden moves toward his ultimate goal of net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.

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

"Wow. That's ambition with a capital A," Georgia Tech climate scientist Kim Cobb said Tuesday after learning of Biden's plans. "That target would put us roughly in line with the most ambitious emissions reductions targets" projected by scientists and environmentalists.

Cobb, like other experts, said details of Biden's strategy will be crucial, "because those details will likely determine whether this ambitious new goal can be translated into policy. The clock is ticking fast, environmentally and politically."

Pennsylvania State University climate scientist Michael Mann said the 50% goal "is precisely what is needed ... an actionable goal within the next decade that puts us on the path toward limiting warming

below a catastrophic 1.5 degrees Celsius" globally.

The climate summit that Biden is hosting is among his first international actions since the United States officially returned to the Paris accord. The U.S. withdrawal from the global pact under former President Donald Trump was part of Trump's effort to step away from global allegiances in general and his oft-stated but false view that global warming was a hoax or at least an overstated claim by the world's scientists.

Biden, by contrast, has made action on climate change a centerpiece of his presidency. He has also paused new oil and gas drilling on federal lands and proposed a $2.3 trillion infrastructure plan that would remake the U.S. power grid and add 500,000 charging stations for electric vehicles, among other actions intended to sharply cut fossil fuel pollution that contributes to global warming.

The summit is "the starting gun for climate diplomacy" after a four-year "hiatus" under Trump, said Larsen, now a director at the Rhodium Group, an independent research firm.

Former Secretary of State John Kerry, Biden's top climate envoy, has been pressing global leaders, including his counterpart in China, for commitments and alliances on climate efforts.

Sen. Ed Markey, a Massachusetts Democrat who reintroduced the Green New Deal on Tuesday with Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-N.Y., said the 50% target was appropriate to meet the scope and scale of the climate crisis.

"The United States must be an undeniable global leader in climate action," Markey said Tuesday. "We cannot preach temperance from a barstool and not pay our fair share when approximately 40% of all the excess carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is red, white and blue."

A 50% reduction by 2030 is "technically feasible and well within our reach," Markey added. "We can and should fight to pass legislation and deploy funding that will allow us to exceed that target."

Sen. John Barrasso, R-Wyo., the top Republican on the Senate Energy Committee, said Biden's pledge would set "punishing targets" for the U.S. even as adversaries such as China and Russia "continue to increase emissions at will. The last thing the economy needs is higher energy prices and fewer jobs, but that's exactly what we're going to get."

Like other nations, the U.S. goal includes methane and some hydrofluorocarbon gases that trap more heat but don't last as long as carbon dioxide.

The 50% pledge was first reported by The Washington Post.

Hitting latest vaccine milestone, Biden pushes shots for all

By ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. is set to meet President Joe Biden's latest vaccine goal of administering 200 million COVID-19 shots in his first 100 days in office, as the White House steps up its efforts to inoculate the rest of the public.

With more than 50% of adults at least partially vaccinated, Biden on Wednesday will reflect on his efforts to expand vaccine distribution and access in his first three months in the White House. But with all those 16 and older now eligible for shots, the president is expected to outline his administration's plans to drive up the vaccination rate even further.

With roughly 28 million vaccine doses being delivered each week, demand has eclipsed supply as the constraining factor to vaccinations in much of the country. While surveys have shown that vaccine hesitancy has declined since the rollout of the shots, administration officials believe they have to make getting vaccinated easier and more appealing.

Maximizing the number of Americans vaccinated in the coming months is critical for the White House, which is aiming to restore a semblance of normalcy around the July Fourth holiday and even more so by the beginning of the next school year.

Biden was not expected to set new public targets for vaccinations, and administration officials have been careful to avoid predicting when they project the country will have vaccinated enough people to reach herd immunity. The U.S. is on track to have enough vaccine supply for every adult by the end of May and for every American by July, but administering them will be another matter.

In recent weeks the White House has launched a massive outreach campaign to Americans to get vaccinated, relying on funding from the $1.9 trillion virus relief package passed last month to launch ads and fund direct community engagement to under-vaccinated constituencies.

Biden set his 200 million shot goal last month after meeting his 100 million-in-100 days goal just over a month ago. At the time the U.S. was well on pace to meet the higher target, and the pace of vaccinations has only accelerated, to about 3 million shots per day.

The 100 million-dose goal was first announced on Dec. 8, days before the U.S. had even one authorized vaccine for COVID-19, let alone the three that have now received emergency authorization. Still, it was generally seen within reach, if optimistic.

By the time Biden was inaugurated on Jan. 20, the U.S. had already administered 20 million shots at a rate of about 1 million per day, bringing complaints at the time that Biden's goal was not ambitious enough. He quickly revised it upward to 150 million doses in his first 100 days.

It a deliberate effort by Biden to set clear — and achievable — metrics for success as part of a strategy of underpromising, then overdelivering. Aides believe that exceeding his goals breeds trust in government after the Trump administration's sometimes fanciful rhetoric on the virus.

US Sikh community traumatized by yet another mass shooting

By CASEY SMITH and LUIS ANDRES HENAO Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Ajeet Singh had to steel himself for a return to work at a FedEx warehouse in Indianapolis on Tuesday for the first time since a former employee shot dead eight people, including four members of Indianapolis' tightly knit Sikh community.

"I've been scared to go back," Singh said. "I don't know why this happened still. Was it random, or was it because of who I am?"

While the motive for last week's rampage remains under investigation, leaders and members of the Sikh community say they feel a collective trauma and believe more must be done to combat the bigotry, bias and violence they have suffered for decades in the country. Amid intense pain, they're channeling their grief into demands for gun reform and tougher hate crime statutes, and calls for outsiders to educate themselves about their Sikh neighbors.

"We are time and time again disproportionately facing senseless and often very targeted attacks," said Satjeet Kaur, executive director of the Sikh Coalition, a New York-based group that has urged investigators to examine bias as a possible motive in the shootings.

"The impact on the community is traumatic," she continued, "not just particularly the families that face the senseless violence, but also in the community at large because it's community trauma."

In the days since the shootings, the coalition facilitated a call with federal officials in which Sikh leaders in Indiana asked for the appointment of a Sikh American liaison in the White House Office of Public Engagement, among other requests.

A monotheistic faith founded more than 500 years ago in India's Punjab region, Sikhism is the world's fifth-largest religion with about 25 million followers, including about 500,000 in the United States.

Kaur said that as a relatively young faith with a low population in the Western world, Sikhism is generally not taught in schools to the same extent as other global religions or integrated in policy-making, resulting in misunderstanding and ignorance. Anti-Sikh discrimination can manifest itself in everything from schoolyard bullying to verbal attacks to shocking acts of violence.

Last year a man accused of running over the Sikh owner of a suburban Denver liquor store after reportedly telling him and his wife to "go back to your country" was charged with a hate crime and 16 other counts including attempted murder.

The latest killings dredged up painful memories for Rana Singh Sodhi, an Indian immigrant living in Arizona. He has spent nearly two decades preaching love and tolerance after his brother was shot dead four days after 9/11 by a man who mistook him for a Muslim because of his turban. Balbir Singh Sodhi was the first of scores of Sikhs who were the target of hate crimes in the aftermath of the 2001 terror attacks.

"It's very painful," Rana Singh Sodhi said. "I hope one day ... people will love each other and enjoy the life and working together and living together in this beautiful country."

There are between 8,000 and 10,000 Sikh Americans in Indiana, where they began settling more than 50 years ago and opened their first house of worship, known as a gurdwara, in 1999.

Most of the employees at the FedEx warehouse are members of the community. Gurinder Singh Khalsa of the Indiana-based Sikh Political Action Committee said many Sikhs live on Indianapolis' west and south sides, making the facility's airport location a convenient place to work.

On Monday his committee said it had set up a task force to seek answers about the shooting and to press government officials to take action. An important goal, Khalsa said, is to help people returning to work feel safe.

That would be a relief to people like Gaganpal Singh Dhaliwal, who said two of his aunts had just arrived for their shift at the warehouse Thursday night when the shooting started. His mother also works there. They all survived, but he's mourning colleagues and friends.

Dhaliwal expressed hope that the tragedy will inspire others to better understand the religion and cultural practices: "To all my fellow Americans, whether Republicans, Democrats, Muslims, Jewish, non-religious people, everyone: Google the word 'Sikh' today. ... Devote five minutes of your time to be aware about another people around you who may not look like you."

Already he's starting to see some signs of raised consciousness, notably in the flags flying at half-staff outside homes and businesses across Indianapolis and an "outpouring" of support to fundraisers for victims' families. He urged more people to build bridges to his community.

"If you see a person like me wearing a (turban) on the head, in your street, in your grocery shop, at your workplace, go talk to them," Dhaliwal said. "Tell them you know who Sikhs are, or give them a hug and say, 'Hey, you're welcome in the U.S.' Right now we're a community that needs a lot of support, and to know that we have a place in this place called America."

The killings have reverberated nationwide. Pardeep Singh Kaleka, executive director of the Interfaith Conference of Greater Milwaukee and the son of one of seven fatal victims of a 2012 mass shooting at a gurdwara in the suburb of Oak Creek, Wisconsin, said there are concerns about an escalating threat of violence.

Small communities traumatized by violence are left to wonder, "Was I targeted for my race?" Kaleka said. "Was I targeted for my ethnicity, for my religion? Was I targeted for something I can't control?"

And in California, Tejpaul Singh Bainiwal, a Stockton Gurdwara Sahib member and student of early Sikh American history, said he's grappling with a range of emotions including "anger, hurt, hopelessness and a feeling of not belonging." Frustrating, he said, is that much of the public focus has been on the shooter's mental state rather than the community he wounded so deeply.

"I am tired of the same old narrative," said Bainiwal, who was born and raised in the U.S. but has been told to "fit in."

In Indianapolis, the Sikh community is focusing on helping the bereaved, who are hoping to secure roughly two-dozen fast-tracked visas so relatives overseas may travel for funeral rites set to take place in the next two weeks. The proceedings will begin with cremation and then be followed by up to 20 days of reading of the 1,400-page Guru Granth Sahib scripture, Dhaliwal said.

Earlier last week the home of Sukhpreet Rai bustled with happy chatter and kitchen activity amid celebrations of Vaisakhi, a major Sikh holiday festival, and an upcoming family birthday. Now it has fallen silent in mourning for two of her relatives, Jasvinder Kaur and Amarjit Sekhon.

"We were supposed to be celebrating a birthday and being together as a family," Rai said. "We're together, and we have one another, but it's for something different — it's for a funeral."

Floyd's hometown exalts in verdict but tempers expectations

By JUAN A. LOZANO Associated Press

HOUSTON (AP) — The streets of Houston's Third Ward, a historically black neighborhood where George

Floyd grew up, echoed with screams filled with the word "justice" in the moments after former Minneapolis police Officer Derek Chauvin was convicted of murder.

"We feeling good. We thank everybody that stood with us. It's a blessed moment," said a tearful Jacob David, 39, who knew Floyd and thought of him as a mentor.

In the hours before Tuesday's verdict, some residents worried that justice would prove elusive again in a case involving an unarmed Black man killed by a police officer. Even amid the celebrations, some tempered their expectations for what the jury's decision might mean for racial justice in America.

"I think people's belief in the system that we got in place is so bad that they don't expect nothing good," Cal Wayne, a Houston rapper who was a childhood friend of Floyd's, said as he stood in front of a mural of Floyd on the wall of a popular corner store in the Third Ward.

Nicholas Watson, a Third Ward resident and business owner, said he had pondered how to do damage control if Chauvin were acquitted and the community's frustration boiled over into property destruction.

"All we want is equality. Just give us an opportunity," Watson said, adding that the Third Ward has contended with high crime and poverty in addition to racial injustice.

At a food trailer across the street from the corner store with the mural, Kim Hewitt served sandwiches to customers as she waited for the court's announcement.

When the flow of customers slowed down, Hewitt, who was also a friend of Floyd's, sang along with some of the songs that blared from speakers next to her food trailer. Some of the songs on her playlist included "White Man'z World" and "Breathin" by Tupac Shakur.

As the songs played, Hewitt sometimes picked up a microphone and expressed what she was feeling, saying, "Hey, we want (expletive) justice. Justice for Floyd" or "We want justice because they don't give a (expletive) about us."

When the verdict was announced, about 20 people gathered beneath a small tent next to the food trailer. Instead of music, the speakers had live audio as the verdict was broadcast on a news channel. Some Third Ward residents gathered at a nearby grassy empty lot while a couple of blocks away, others sat outside their homes.

Hewitt and others around her loudly cheered the guilty verdicts. They clapped and hugged one another.

"We finally got justice," Hewitt said. Floyd "woke up the whole world. The fight is just beginning."

People driving by the corner store and food trailer honked their car horns and waved as they went by, yelling, "Justice."

Third Ward residents celebrated the moment but also wondered about the future.

"Overall, there's no justice in situations like this because his life is still gone. I'm happy for the outcome. Hopefully this can transition things. I don't know how much it will," said James Walker, 39, who also knew Floyd. "In a country where the protector turns into the terminator, justice does not exist. Even after Floyd died ... young black men continue to die at the hands of the police."

Another Third Ward resident, Ceci Muñoz, cried and fell to the ground after the verdict.

"I'm so happy ... I'm not happy because the officer is going away. His family is going to suffer. But (Floyd) begged" for his life, Muñoz said as she cried. "When does it stop? When does it stop?"

Wayne said it will take more than a conviction in one case for the Third Ward and the Black community to believe that "real change" is at hand.

"This is a hell of a start," Wayne said.

Chauvin guilty of murder and manslaughter in Floyd's death

By AMY FORLITI, STEVE KARNOWSKI and TAMMY WEBBER Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Former Minneapolis Officer Derek Chauvin was convicted Tuesday of murder and manslaughter for pinning George Floyd to the pavement with his knee on the Black man's neck in a case that triggered worldwide protests, violence and a furious reexamination of racism and policing in the U.S.

Chauvin, 45, was immediately led away with his hands cuffed behind his back and could be sent to prison for decades.

The verdict — guilty as charged on all counts, in a relatively swift, across-the-board victory for Floyd's supporters — set off jubilation mixed with sorrow across the city and around the nation. Hundreds of people poured into the streets of Minneapolis, some running through traffic with banners. Drivers blared their horns in celebration.

"Today, we are able to breathe again," Floyd's younger brother Philonise said at a joyous family news conference where tears streamed down his face as he likened Floyd to the 1955 Mississippi lynching victim Emmett Till, except that this time there were cameras around to show the world what happened.

The jury of six whites and six Black or multiracial people came back with its verdict after about 10 hours of deliberations over two days. The now-fired white officer was found guilty of second-degree unintentional murder, third-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter.

Chauvin's face was obscured by a COVID-19 mask, and little reaction could be seen beyond his eyes darting around the courtroom. His bail was immediately revoked. Sentencing will be in two months; the most serious charge carries up to 40 years in prison.

Defense attorney Eric Nelson followed Chauvin out of the courtroom without comment.

President Joe Biden welcomed the verdict, saying Floyd's death was "a murder in full light of day, and it ripped the blinders off for the whole world" to see systemic racism.

But he warned: "It's not enough. We can't stop here. We're going to deliver real change and reform. We can and we must do more to reduce the likelihood that tragedies like this will ever happen again."

The jury's decision was hailed around the country as justice by other political and civic leaders and celebrities, including former President Barack Obama, Oprah Winfrey and California Gov. Gavin Newsom, a white man, who said on Twitter that Floyd "would still be alive if he looked like me. That must change."

At a park next to the Minneapolis courthouse, a hush fell over a crowd of about 300 as they listened to the verdict on their cellphones. Then a great roar went up, with many people hugging, some shedding tears.

At the intersection where Floyd was pinned down, a crowd chanted, "One down, three to go!" — a reference to the three other fired Minneapolis officers facing trial in August on charges of aiding and abetting murder in Floyd's death.

Janay Henry, who lives nearby, said she felt grateful and relieved.

"I feel grounded. I can feel my feet on the concrete," she said, adding that she was looking forward to the "next case with joy and optimism and strength."

Jamee Haggard, who brought her biracial 4-year-old daughter to the intersection, said: "There's some form of justice that's coming."

The verdict was read in a courthouse ringed with concrete barriers and razor wire and patrolled by National Guard troops, in a city on edge against another round of unrest — not just because of the Chauvin case but because of the deadly police shooting of a young Black man, Daunte Wright, in a Minneapolis suburb April 11.

The jurors' identities were kept secret and will not be released until the judge decides it is safe to do so.

It is unusual for police officers to be prosecuted for killing someone on the job. And convictions are extraordinarily rare.

Out of the thousands of deadly police shootings in the U.S. since 2005, fewer than 140 officers have been charged with murder or manslaughter, according to data maintained by Phil Stinson, a criminologist at Bowling Green State University. Before Tuesday, only seven were convicted of murder.

Juries often give police officers the benefit of the doubt when they claim they had to make split-second, life-or-death decisions. But that was not an argument Chauvin could easily make.

Floyd, 46, died May 25 after being arrested on suspicion of passing a counterfeit $20 bill for a pack of cigarettes at a corner market. He panicked, pleaded that he was claustrophobic and struggled with police when they tried to put him in a squad car. They put him on the ground instead.

The centerpiece of the case was the excruciating bystander video of Floyd gasping repeatedly, "I can't breathe" and onlookers yelling at Chauvin to stop as the officer pressed his knee on or close to Floyd's neck for what authorities say was 9 1/2 minutes, including several minutes after Floyd's breathing had stopped and he had no pulse.

Prosecutors played the footage at the earliest opportunity, during opening statements, and told the jury: "Believe your eyes." From there it was shown over and over, analyzed one frame at a time by witnesses on both sides.

In the wake of Floyd's death, demonstrations and scattered violence broke out in Minneapolis, around the country and beyond. The furor also led to the removal of Confederate statues and other offensive symbols such as Aunt Jemima.

In the months that followed, numerous states and cities restricted the use of force by police, revamped disciplinary systems or subjected police departments to closer oversight.

The "Blue Wall of Silence" that often protects police accused of wrongdoing crumbled after Floyd's death. The Minneapolis police chief quickly called it "murder" and fired all four officers, and the city reached a staggering $27 million settlement with Floyd's family as jury selection was underway.

Police-procedure experts and law enforcement veterans inside and outside the Minneapolis department, including the chief, testified for the prosecution that Chauvin used excessive force and went against his training.

Medical experts for the prosecution said Floyd died of asphyxia, or lack of oxygen, because his breathing was constricted by the way he was held down on his stomach, his hands cuffed behind him, a knee on his neck and his face jammed against the ground.

Chauvin's attorney called a police use-of-force expert and a forensic pathologist to try to make the case that Chauvin acted reasonably against a struggling suspect and that Floyd died because of a heart condition and his illegal drug use. Floyd had high blood pressure and narrowed arteries, and fentanyl and methamphetamine were found in his system.

Under the law, police have certain leeway to use force and are judged according to whether their actions were "reasonable" under the circumstances.

The defense also tried to make the case that Chauvin and the other officers were hindered in their duties by what they perceived as a growing, hostile crowd.

Chauvin did not testify, and all that the jury or the public ever heard by way of an explanation from him came from a police body-camera video after an ambulance had taken the 6-foot-4, 223-pound Floyd away. Chauvin told a bystander: "We gotta control this guy 'cause he's a sizable guy ... and it looks like he's probably on something."

The prosecution's case also included tearful testimony from onlookers who said the police kept them back when they protested what was happening.

Eighteen-year-old Darnella Frazier, who shot the crucial video, said Chauvin gave the bystanders a "cold" and "heartless" stare. She and others said they felt a sense of helplessness and lingering guilt from witnessing Floyd's slow-motion death.

"It's been nights I stayed up, apologizing and apologizing to George Floyd for not doing more, and not physically interacting and not saving his life," she testified.

For George Floyd, a complicated life and consequential death

By LUIS ANDRES HENAO, NOMAAN MERCHANT, JUAN LOZANO and ADAM GELLER Associated Press

HOUSTON (AP) — Years before a bystander's video of George Floyd's last moments turned his name into a global cry for justice, Floyd trained a camera on himself.

"I just want to speak to you all real quick," Floyd says in one video, addressing the young men in his neighborhood who looked up to him. His 6-foot-7 frame crowds the picture.

"I've got my shortcomings and my flaws and I ain't better than nobody else," he says. "But, man, the shootings that's going on, I don't care what 'hood you're from, where you're at, man. I love you and God loves you. Put them guns down."

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EDITOR'S NOTE: The Associated Press initially published this profile of George Floyd on June 10, 2020. Former Minneapolis police Officer Derek Chauvin was convicted by a jury on April 20, 2021, of murder and

manslaughter in the death of George Floyd.

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At the time, Floyd was respected as a man who spoke from hard, but hardly extraordinary, experience. He had nothing remotely like the stature he has gained in death, embraced as a universal symbol of the need to overhaul policing and held up as a heroic everyman.

But the reality of his 46 years on Earth, including sharp edges and setbacks Floyd himself acknowledged, was both much fuller and more complicated.

Once a star athlete with dreams of turning pro and enough talent to win a partial scholarship, Floyd returned home only to bounce between jobs before serving nearly five years in prison. Intensely proud of his roots in Houston's Third Ward and admired as a mentor in a public housing project beset by poverty, he decided the only way forward was to leave it behind.

"He had made some mistakes that cost him some years of his life," said Ronnie Lillard, a friend and rapper who performs under the name Reconcile. "And when he got out of that, I think the Lord greatly impacted his heart."

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Floyd was born in North Carolina. But his mother, a single parent, moved the family to Houston when he was 2, so she could search for work. They settled in the Cuney Homes, a low-slung warren of more than 500 apartments south of downtown nicknamed "The Bricks."

The neighborhood, for decades a cornerstone of Houston's black community, has gentrified in recent years. Texas Southern University, a historically black campus directly across the street from the projects, has long held itself out as a launchpad for those willing to strive. But many residents struggle, with incomes about half the city average and unemployment nearly four times higher, even before the recent economic collapse.

Yeura Hall, who grew up next door to Floyd, said even in the Third Ward other kids looked down on those who lived in public housing. To deflect the teasing, he, Floyd and other boys made up a song about themselves: "I don't want to grow up, I'm a Cuney Homes kid. They got so many rats and roaches I can play with."

Larcenia Floyd invested her hopes in her son, who as a second-grader wrote that he dreamed of being a U.S. Supreme Court justice.

"She thought that he would be the one that would bring them out of poverty and struggle," said Travis Cains, a longtime friend.

Floyd was a star tight end for the football team at Jack Yates High School, playing for the losing side in the 1992 state championship game at Texas Memorial Stadium in Austin.

He was an atypical football player. "We used to call him 'Big Friendly,'" said Cervaanz Williams, a former teammate.

"If you said something to him, his head would drop," said Maurice McGowan, his football coach. "He just wasn't going to ball up and act like he wanted to fight you."

On the basketball court, Floyd's height and strength won attention from George Walker, a former assistant coach at the University of Houston hired for the head job at what is now South Florida State College. The school was a 17-hour drive away, in a small town, but high school administrators and Floyd's mother urged him to go, Walker said.

"They wanted George to really get out of the neighborhood, to do something, be something," Walker said.

In Avon Park, Florida, Floyd and a few other players from Houston stood out for their size, accents and city cool. They lived in the Jacaranda Hotel, a historic lodge used as a dormitory, and were known as the "Jac Boys."

"He was always telling me about the Third Ward of Houston, how rough it was, but how much he loved it," said Robert Caldwell, a friend and fellow student who frequently traveled with the basketball team. "He said people know how to grind, as hard as it is, people know how to love."

After two years in Avon Park, Floyd spent a year at Texas A&M University in Kingsville before returning to Houston and his mother's apartment to find jobs in construction and security.

Larcenia Floyd, known throughout the neighborhood as Ms. Cissy, welcomed her son's friends from childhood, offering their apartment as refuge when their lives grew stressful. When a neighbor went to prison on drug charges, Ms. Cissy took in the woman's pre-teen son, Cal Wayne, deputizing George to play older brother for the next 2½ years.

"We would steal his jerseys and put his jerseys on and run around the house, go outside, jerseys all the way down to our ankles because he was so big and we were little," said Wayne, now a well-known rapper who credits Floyd with encouraging him to pursue music.

George Floyd, he said, "was like a superhero."

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Floyd, too, dabbled in music, occasionally invited to rap with Robert Earl Davis Jr. -- better known as DJ Screw, whose mixtapes have since been recognized as influential in charting Houston's place as a hotbed of hip-hop.

But then, the man known throughout Cuney as "Big Floyd," started finding trouble.

Between 1997 and 2005, Floyd was arrested several times on drug and theft charges, spending months in jail. Around that time, Wayne's mother, Sheila Masters, recalled running into Floyd in the street and learning he was homeless.

"He's so tall he'd pat me on my head ... and say, 'Mama you know it's going to be all right,'" Masters said.

In August 2007, Floyd was arrested and charged with aggravated robbery with a deadly weapon. Investigators said he and five other men barged into a woman's apartment, and Floyd pushed a pistol into her abdomen before searching for items to steal. Floyd pleaded guilty in 2009 and was sentenced to five years in prison. By the time he was paroled, in January 2013, he was nearing 40.

"He came home with his head on right," said friend Travis Cains.

At a Christian rap concert in the Third Ward, Floyd met Lillard and pastor Patrick "PT" Ngwolo, whose ministry was looking for ways to reach residents in Cuney Homes. Floyd, who seemed to know everyone in the project, volunteered to be their guide.

Soon Floyd was setting up a washtub on the Cuney basketball courts for baptisms by Ngwolo's newly formed Resurrection Houston congregation. He joined three-on-three basketball tournaments and barbecues, organized by the ministry. He knocked on doors with Ngwolo, introducing residents as candidates for grocery deliveries or Bible study.

Another pastor, Christopher Johnson, recalled Floyd stopping by his office while Johnson's mother was visiting. Decades had passed since Johnson's mother had been a teacher at Floyd's high school. It didn't matter. He wrapped her in a bear hug.

"I don't think he ever thought of himself as being big," Johnson said. "There's a lot of big dudes here, but he was a gentleman and a diplomat and I'm not putting any sauce on it."

On the streets of Cuney, Floyd was increasingly embraced as an O.G. -- literally "original gangster," but bestowed as a title of respect for a mentor who'd learned from life experience.

In Tiffany Cofield's classroom at a neighborhood charter school, some of her male students -- many of whom had already had brushes with the law -- told her to talk to "Big Floyd" if she wanted to understand.

Floyd would listen patiently as she voiced her frustrations with students' bad behavior, she said. And he would try to explain the life of a young man in the projects.

After school, Floyd often met up with her students outside a corner store.

"How's school going?" he'd ask. "Are you being respectful? How's your mom? How's your grandma?"

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In 2014, Floyd began exploring the possibility of leaving the neighborhood.

As the father of five children from several relationships, he had bills to pay. And despite his stature in Cuney, everyday life could be trying. More than once, Floyd ended up in handcuffs when police came through the projects and detained a large number of men, Cofield said.

"He would show by example: 'Yes, officer. No, officer.' Very respectful. Very calm tone," she said.

A friend of Floyd's had already moved to the Twin Cities as part of a church discipleship program that offered men a route to self-sufficiency by changing their environment and helping them find jobs.

"He was looking to start over fresh, a new beginning," said Christopher Harris, who preceded Floyd to Minneapolis. Friends provided Floyd with money and clothing to ease the transition.

In Minneapolis, Floyd found a job as a security guard at the Salvation Army's Harbor Light Center -- the city's largest homeless shelter.

"He would regularly walk a couple of female co-workers out ... at night and make sure they got to their cars safely and securely," said Brian Molohon, director of development for the Army's Minnesota office. "Just a big strong guy, but with a very tender side."

Floyd left after a little over a year, training to drive trucks while working as a bouncer at a club called Conga Latin Bistro.

"He would dance badly to make people laugh," said the owner, Jovanni Thunstrom. "I tried to teach him how to dance because he loved Latin music, but I couldn't because he was too tall for me."

Floyd kept his connection to Houston, regularly returning to Cuney.

When Houston hosted the Super Bowl in 2017, Floyd was back in town, hosting a party at the church with music and free AIDS testing. He came back again for his mother's funeral the next year. And when Cains spoke with him last, a few weeks ago, Floyd was planning another trip for this summer.

By then, Floyd was out of work. Early this spring, Thunstrom cut Floyd's job when the COVID-19 pandemic forced the club to close.

On the evening of Memorial Day, Floyd was with two others when convenience store employees accused him of paying for cigarettes with a counterfeit $20 bill, then called the police. Less than an hour later, Floyd breathed his last.

Those who knew him search for meaning in his death.

"I've come to the belief that he was chosen," said Cofield, the teacher. "Only this could have happened to him because of who he was and the amount of love that he had for people, people had for him."

It's a small comfort, she admits. But, then, in Big Floyd's neighborhood, people have long made do with less.

Biden to America after Floyd verdict: 'We can't stop here'

By JONATHAN LEMIRE, ZEKE MILLER and MICHAEL BALSAMO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden said Tuesday the conviction of former Minneapolis Police Officer Derek Chauvin in the killing of George Floyd "can be a giant step forward" for the nation in the fight against systemic racism. But he declared that "it's not enough."

Biden spoke from the White House hours after the verdict alongside Vice President Kamala Harris, with the pair saying the country's work is far from finished with the verdict.

"We can't stop here," Biden declared.

Biden and Harris called on Congress to act swiftly to address policing reform, including by approving a bill named for Floyd, who died with his neck under Chauvin's knee last May. Beyond that, the president said, the entire country must confront hatred to "change hearts and minds as well as laws and policies."

"'I can't breathe.' Those were George Floyd's last words," Biden said. "We can't let those words die with him. We have to keep hearing those words. We must not turn away. We can't turn away."

Harris, the first Black woman to serve as vice president, said racism was keeping the country from fulfilling its founding promise of "liberty and justice for all."

"It is not just a Black America problem or a people of color problem. it is a problem for every American," she said. "It is holding our nation back from reaching our full potential."

"A measure of justice isn't the same as equal justice," she said.

Biden addressed the nation after telephoning Floyd's family following the verdict, telling them, "We're all so relieved." He added later that he sought to comfort Floyd's young daughter Gianna, telling her, "Daddy did change the world."

After about 10 hours of deliberations over two days, the jury convicted Chauvin of two counts of murder and one of manslaughte r.

The verdict — and the aftermath — will be a continuing test for Biden. He has pledged to help combat racism in policing, helping African Americans who supported him in large numbers in last year's election 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.

Earlier Tuesday, Biden broke his administration's silence on the trial, which has set the nation on edge for weeks, saying he was praying for "the right verdict."

Speaking from the Oval Office while the jury was deliberating in Minneapolis, Biden said, "I'm praying the verdict is the right verdict. I think it's overwhelming, in my view. I wouldn't say that unless the jury was sequestered now."

The president had repeatedly denounced Floyd's death but had previously stopped short of weighing in on Chauvin's trial, with White House officials saying it would be improper to speak out during active judicial proceedings. On Tuesday, White House press secretary Jen Psaki repeatedly refused to explain Biden's comments, doing nothing to dispel the impression that he thought Chauvin should be found guilty.

The White House had been privately weighing how to handle the verdict, dispatching specially trained community facilitators from the Justice Department in anticipation of potential protests, officials said. With word that a verdict had been reached Tuesday afternoon, Biden postponed planned remarks at the White House on his infrastructure package.

On Monday, Judge Peter Cahill, who presided over the trial, admonished public officials about speaking out while the trial was ongoing.

"I wish elected officials would stop talking about this case, especially in a manner that's disrespectful to the rule of law and to the judicial branch and our function," he said shortly after sending the jury to begin deliberations.

Defense attorneys often cite remarks made by public officials as a reason to appeal a verdict, in part because they could poison the jury against the defendant.

Cahill delivered his rebuke after rejecting 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. He conceded to Chauvin's attorneys that Waters' comments could potentially be grounds for an appeal.

On Monday, Cahill ordered that jurors be sequestered in an undisclosed hotel during their deliberations and instructed them to avoid all news about the case.

Despite Cahill's remarks, Brock Hunter, a criminal defense attorney and past president of the Minnesota Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, said he considered a successful appeal over remarks like Waters' and Biden's extremely unlikely.

"It's inevitable that public officials are going to comment on a case and its impacts on communities," he said. "Unless there is direct evidence that statements by a public official directly impacted a juror or jurors, I don't think this even gets off the ground."

On Capitol Hill, Republicans as well as Democrats said they were relived at the verdict and predicted it could give momentum to policing reform legislation that has been proposed in both the House and Senate.

"I think the verdict just reinforces that our justice system continues to become more just," said Tim Scott of South Carolina, the only Black Republican senator. "This is a monumental day in many ways, in my opinion."

The Congressional Black Caucus watched the verdict together in the Capitol, and members hugged and fist pumped after the verdict was read.

"The room was filled with emotion and gratitude," said Georgia Rep. Hank Johnson. "Black lives mattered to this jury. And I'm very gratified at the verdict, very happy at the swiftness of the verdict. … It's a vindication of justice in America."

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi joined the Black Caucus shortly afterward at a news conference outside, where she said she had spoken to Floyd's family just before the verdict. She said she called "to say to

them, 'Thank you, God bless you, for your grace and your dignity, for the model that you are appealing for justice in the most dignified way.'"

Maxine Waters' bold words echo civil rights, draw criticism

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — When Rep. Maxine Waters urged people to "stay on the street" in the pursuit of justice for George Floyd, advocates for racial equity and an end to police violence heard a leading Black voice in the nation's long march toward civil rights.

But detractors, including the judge in the case against Derek Chauvin, criticized Waters' push for a guilty verdict as incendiary, momentarily diverting attention away from the white police officer accused in the death of Floyd, who was Black, and onto the words of the congresswoman. Chauvin was found guilty Tuesday of murder and manslaughter.

As the action and reaction ricocheted around social media, and on endless cable television loops as the jury deliberated, it was an all-too-familiar call and response, a politically fraught exchange that has played out throughout much of America's troubled racial history.

"People are concentrating their fire on Maxine Waters in a moment where a police officer is on trial for murdering a man," said Leah Wright Rigueur, the Harry Truman professor of history at Brandeis University.

They're calling for law and order, she said, "but the whole idea of what people are rebelling against — and historically have rebelled against — is the idea of law and order when it is applied unfairly and unjustly."

Waters, a Democrat from California, has long been a galvanizing figure, speaking boldly for racial justice in communities across the country and showing up, just as she did at the suburban Minneapolis police station ahead of jury deliberations in Chauvin's trial.

Waters told the crowd Saturday night that she wanted to see a murder conviction against Chauvin for Floyd's death.

When asked what should happen if Chauvin wasn't convicted on murder charges, she replied, "We got to stay on the street, we've got to get more active, we've got to get more confrontational."

Chauvin's attorney swiftly moved for a mistrial in light of Waters' comments.

Judge Peter Cahill denied the defense motion Monday, but he called it "disrespectful to the rule of law and to the judicial branch" for elected officials to comment on the outcome of the case. "Abhorrent," he said.

The term "Maxine Waters" skyrocketed on Facebook and Instagram after her comments, according to data from CrowdTangle, a Facebook-owned tool that tracks public insights on the social media platforms.

On Monday and Tuesday, as the jury deliberated, public Facebook posts naming the congresswoman received several million more total interactions than posts naming Chauvin. Posts about Waters also appeared frequently in Facebook discourse about the trial in general. In a public search Tuesday, videos shared by conservative commentators were among those with the most interactions.

Leading Republicans on Capitol Hill criticized Waters' remarks, some taking to Fox News and social media themselves as debate churned. Some particularly criticized her call for confrontation.

The House Republican leader, Kevin McCarthy, introduced a resolution to censure Waters "for these dangerous comments." It failed to advance Tuesday on a party-line vote.

Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell said, "It's harder to imagine anything more inappropriate than a member of Congress flying in from California to inform local leaders, not so subtly, that this defendant had better be found guilty."

GOP leaders fended off questions about their party's own incendiary rhetoric, namely Donald Trump urging his supporters to "fight like hell" for his presidency before they stormed the Capitol in the deadly Jan. 6 riot to overturn Joe Biden's election.

Democrats rose to defend Waters, with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi saying the comments should be viewed in the context of the long struggle toward civil rights.

"Maxine talked about confrontation in the manner of the civil rights movement," Pelosi told reporters Monday at the Capitol.

Asked if Waters should apologize, Pelosi said no.

At the White House, press secretary Jen Psaki said, "It's important to provide a space and an opportunity for peaceful protest. But protesting should be peaceful."

House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, D-Md., said in a speech, "Chairwoman Waters' remarks reflect the very profound anger and sense of hopelessness that she and so many others, myself included, feel when we see African Americans being killed during encounters with our law enforcement and their families not seeing justice."

Rep. Hakeem Jeffries of New York, the Democratic Caucus chair, said that with House Republicans scrambling to tamp down a movement within their ranks to form a white-focused "Anglo-Saxon" caucus, the GOP leaders criticizing Waters should "sit this one out."

The comments Waters made do carry some legal risk in the former officer's trial. Public officials usually avoid speaking out about cases because their words are easy fodder for appealing a conviction — evidence of a possible effort to poison a jury pool and to determine guilt without a trial.

After the verdict Tuesday, Waters told reporters at the Capitol, "You know, someone said it better than me: I'm not celebrating, I'm relieved."

Known as "Auntie Maxine" on Capitol Hill, Waters has become a role model to a younger generation of leaders for her unswerving style in a decades long career focused on racial and economic justice.

With the deaths in recent years of Rep. John Lewis and other top Black leaders in Congress, Waters is a bridge to that earlier era of civil rights leadership.

"Auntie Maxine is not an easy target for anybody, and I commend her for her leadership," said Rep. Adriano Espaillat, D-N.Y.

Waters began focusing on policing issues in 1979 after the police shooting of a Black woman during a confrontation in Los Angeles over an unpaid gas bill. Joining Congress in 1991, she swiftly became a leading advocate for policing changes after the videotaped beating of Rodney King by Los Angeles police officers.

"In some ways, this is exactly why we have representative government," said professor Ravi Perry, chair of Howard University's political science department.

"It's so that folks who go to the halls of power can use that lived experience to inform others who don't have that lived experience how it might be to walk in those shoes," he said, "and how we might want to change our laws to better reflect that diverse lived experience."

Rashad Robinson, president of the advocacy group Color of Change, dismissed the "manufactured outrage" of critics of Waters as a distraction.

"The history of civil rights — a history that is celebrated in this country, even while being undermined — is a history of Black people having to raise their voices, of having to speak out, of having to show up," he said.

"What are bus boycotts, what are the lunch counter sit-ins, if not people showing up?" he said. "And now people are acting outraged."

AP sources: Biden to pledge halving greenhouse gases by 2030

By MATTHEW DALY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden will pledge to cut U.S. greenhouse gas emissions at least in half by 2030 as he convenes a virtual climate summit with 40 world leaders, according to three people with knowledge of the White House plans.

The 50% target would nearly double the nation's previous commitment and help the Biden administration prod other countries for ambitious emissions cuts as well. The proposal would require dramatic changes in the power and transportation sectors, including significant increases in renewable energy such as wind and solar power and steep cuts in emissions from fossil fuels such as coal and oil.

The nonbinding but symbolically important pledge is a key element of the two-day summit, which begins Thursday as world leaders gather online to share strategies to combat climate change.

The emissions target has been eagerly awaited by all sides of the climate debate. It will signal how ag-

gressively Biden wants to move on global warming, a divisive and expensive issue that has riled Republicans to complain about job-killing government overreach even as some on the left worry Biden has not gone far enough to address a profound threat to the planet.

The three people who know about the White House plans spoke on condition of anonymity on Tuesday because they were not authorized to discuss the pledge ahead of Biden's announcement.

Biden has sought to ensure that the 2030 goal, known as a Nationally Determined Contribution, or NDC, is aggressive enough to have a tangible impact on climate change efforts — not only in the U.S. but throughout the world — while also being achievable under a closely divided Congress.

The climate target is a key requirement of the 2015 Paris climate agreement, which Biden rejoined on his first day in office. It's also an important marker as Biden moves toward his ultimate goal of net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.

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

"Wow. That's ambition with a capital A," Georgia Tech climate scientist Kim Cobb said Tuesday after learning of Biden's plans. "That target would put us roughly in line with the most ambitious emissions reductions targets" projected by scientists and environmentalists.

Cobb, like other experts, said details of Biden's strategy will be crucial, "because those details will likely determine whether this ambitious new goal can be translated into policy. The clock is ticking fast, environmentally and politically."

Pennsylvania State University climate scientist Michael Mann said the 50% goal "is precisely what is needed ... an actionable goal within the next decade that puts us on the path toward limiting warming below a catastrophic 1.5 degrees Celsius" globally.

The climate summit that Biden is hosting is among his first international actions since the United States officially returned to the Paris accord. The U.S. withdrawal from the global pact under former President Donald Trump was part of Trump's effort to step away from global allegiances in general and his oft-stated but false view that global warming was a hoax or at least an overstated claim by the world's scientists.

Biden, by contrast, has made action on climate change a centerpiece of his presidency. He has also paused new oil and gas drilling on federal lands and proposed a $2.3 trillion infrastructure plan that would remake the U.S. power grid and add 500,000 charging stations for electric vehicles, among other actions intended to sharply cut fossil fuel pollution that contributes to global warming.

The summit is "the starting gun for climate diplomacy" after a four-year "hiatus" under Trump, said Larsen, now a director at the Rhodium Group, an independent research firm.

Former Secretary of State John Kerry, Biden's top climate envoy, has been pressing global leaders, including his counterpart in China, for commitments and alliances on climate efforts.

Sen. Ed Markey, a Massachusetts Democrat who reintroduced the Green New Deal on Tuesday with Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-N.Y., said the 50% target was appropriate to meet the scope and scale of the climate crisis.

"The United States must be an undeniable global leader in climate action," Markey said Tuesday. "We cannot preach temperance from a barstool and not pay our fair share when approximately 40% of all the excess carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is red, white and blue."

A 50% reduction by 2030 is "technically feasible and well within our reach," Markey added. "We can and should fight to pass legislation and deploy funding that will allow us to exceed that target."

Sen. John Barrasso, R-Wyo., the top Republican on the Senate Energy Committee, said Biden's pledge would set "punishing targets" for the U.S. even as adversaries such as China and Russia "continue to increase emissions at will. The last thing the economy needs is higher energy prices and fewer jobs, but that's exactly what we're going to get."

Like other nations, the U.S. goal includes methane and some hydrofluorocarbon gases that trap more heat but don't last as long as carbon dioxide.

The 50% pledge was first reported by The Washington Post.

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In Minneapolis, city fortified after Chauvin guilty 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, 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."

The jury of six white people and six Black or multiracial ones came back with its verdict Tuesday after about 10 hours of deliberations over two days. Chauvin was found guilty on all charges: second-degree unintentional murder, third-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter.

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 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 demon-

strations 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.

Brazil COVID cases still soaring among unprotected majority

By MAURICIO SAVARESE and TATIANA POLLASTRI Associated Press

SAO PAULO (AP) — Brazil's slowly unfolding vaccination program appears to have slowed the pace of deaths among the nation's elderly, according to death certificate data, but COVID-19 is still taking a rising toll as unprotected younger people get sick.

People 80 and over accounted for a quarter of the nation's COVID-19 deaths in February, but less than a fifth in March, according to data provided to The Associated Press on Tuesday by Arpen-Brasil, an association which represents thousands of the notaries who record death certificates in Brazil.

But relatively few beyond the elderly have been protected: Less than 9 million of Brazil's 210 million residents have been fully vaccinated against COVID-19, according to Our World in Data, an online research site.

Confirmed new infections from the virus among all age groups jumped about 70 percent between December and March: Reported cases rose from 1.3 million in December to 1.5 million in January, to 1.36 million in February and to 2.25 million in March.

But among people aged 20 to 59 the death toll tripled from February to March, hitting 23,366, according to the notaries.

Gustavo Renato Fiscarelly, the president of Arpen-Brasil, said the figures show the importance of vaccines as well as the danger of people letting down their guard. "There needs to be precaution by younger people, who have been proportionally more affected by the number of deaths."

Heath experts blame that lack of caution for a similar pattern across the continent.

"We are not acting like a region in the midst of a worsening outbreak," Dr. Carissa F. Etienne, head of the Pan-American Health Organization, said last week, complaining that the regional weekly death toll was

higher than at any point in 2020.

"Despite ongoing transmission in many places, restrictions have been relaxed. Crowds are back, and people are gathering indoors and taking public transportation, often without masks," she said.

Experts complain that even Brazilians who want to isolate are often forced to go to work because government welfare payments meant to let people stay home were sharply reduced in the first months of this year.

Brazil's vaccine program has suffered repeated delays, but President Jair Bolsonaro has disregarded calls from health experts and some governors to impose a nationwide lockdown to slow the virus' spread.

In the absence of countrywide restrictions, unvaccinated people remain vulnerable to the so-called Brazilian variant that has rapidly spread across the country — and Latin America as a whole.

"The new P.1 variant is much more transmissible, and very probably it is also much more aggressive. And it is contaminating a lot of young people," said Margareth Dalcolmo, a pneumologist and researcher at the state-run Fiocruz Institute.

Local leaders have found it hard to enforce restrictions while Bolsonaro is urging people to ignore them.

Sao Paulo state's government imposed limited hours for bars and restaurants, but they were widely violated. In the seven weeks through April 19, more than 500 establishments were fined for violating the rules and police have detained thousands of fun-seekers.

Eduardo Brotero, who helps head a police task force targeting clandestine parties, described one April 11 raid to The Associated Press:

"There were almost 100 people drinking and smoking hookahs. There was even a barbecue inside, with no security measures, even in this period in which every day we face these enormous death figures."

Brazil has seen almost 375,000 deaths from the virus, a toll second only to that of the United States. Nearly half that total has come so far in 2021 . The seven-day average death toll surged to above 3,000, though the figure has retreated slightly over the last few days.

Everton Godoy, 34, is among these younger COVID-19 patients. He was laid up in a field hospital's infirmary April 13 in the small city of Ribeirao Pires on Sao Paulo's outskirts and said he believes he was infected while working at a produce shop.

"This disease has no age, and it's a very sad disease," Godoy said with labored breaths. "From one day to the next, unfortunately, it takes people away."

Sikh group wants probe of gunman's possible supremacist link

By RICK CALLAHAN Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — A Sikh civil rights organization called on law enforcement Tuesday to investigate whether a former FedEx employee who fatally shot eight people — four of them Sikhs — at a FedEx facility in Indianapolis last week had any ties to hate groups.

The Sikh Coalition's request came a day after Indianapolis police released a report from last year stating that an officer who seized a shotgun from Brandon Scott Hole's home after his arrest in March 2020 saw what he identified as white supremacist websites on Hole's computer.

The coalition, which identifies itself as the largest Sikh civil rights organization in the U.S., said it has sent letters to law enforcement and state and federal lawmakers "clearly expressing the continuing and urgent need to investigate the possibility of a bias motivation" in last Thursday's mass shooting.

Hole was arrested last year at his family's home after his mother told police her son might commit "suicide by cop." A prosecutor said Monday that after his arrest, Hole never appeared before a judge under Indiana's "red flag" law, which allows police or courts to seize guns from people who show warning signs of violence.

Hole, 19, used two rifles to kill eight FedEx workers and wound several others inside and outside the facility and then fatally shot himself before police entered the building, authorities have said.

A police report from Hole's March 2020 arrest states that he became anxious while being handcuffed and asked his arresting officers to cut the power to his computer, saying, "I don't want anyone to see what's on it." The report adds that while securing the shotgun, an officer saw "what through his training

and experience" were white supremacist websites on the computer.

"A complete and thorough investigation — including determining the motives behind this attack and any connection Mr. Hole has to hate and white supremacy groups — is essential to providing justice and building trust between the Sikh community and local and federal law enforcement," the Sikh Coalition's legal director, Amrith Kaur, said in Tuesday's statement.

Kaur added that the police report released Monday stood in "stark contrast" to a statement a day after the shooting from Paul Keenan, special agent in charge of the FBI's Indianapolis field office. At that time, Keenan said the FBI had interviewed Hole after last year's arrest, "based on items observed in the suspect's bedroom at that time" by Indianapolis police. He did not say what items were found, but said agents who interviewed Hole in April 2020 found no evidence of a crime and did not identify Hole as espousing a racially motivated ideology.

On Tuesday, Keenan said that "no probable cause was found to initiate any type of legal federal process" against Hole, adding that, "The FBI takes great care to distinguish between constitutionally protected activities and illegal activities undertaken to further an ideological agenda."

In response to the Sikh Coalition's comments, he said that the FBI is "not ruling out any motive at this time, including one based on hate/bias." He said the agency "will be meticulous and thorough in our investigation and devote as much time as needed to find answers for the victims' families."

Indianapolis police said in a news release Monday that FedEx fired Hole in October 2020 when he failed to return to work at a facility on the city's southwest side. Indianapolis Police Chief Randal Taylor said Friday that the vast majority of the facility's workers are members of the local Sikh community.

Last week's shooting was the deadliest outbreak of violence collectively in the United States' Sikh community since 2012, when a white supremacist burst into a Sikh temple in Wisconsin and shot 10 people, killing seven.

Archaeologists: Site of Harriet Tubman's father's home found

By BRIAN WITTE Associated Press

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (AP) — Archaeologists in Maryland say they believe they have found the homesite of famed abolitionist Harriet Tubman's father.

The homesite of Ben Ross was found on property acquired last year by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as an addition to Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge, officials said Tuesday. An archaeology team led by the State Highway Administration conducted research that led to the find.

Archaeologist Julie Schablitsky described the finding as a connection to Tubman.

"She would've spent time here as a child, but also she would've come back and been living here with her father in her teenage years, working alongside him," Schablitsky said in a news release. "This was the opportunity she had to learn about how to navigate and survive in the wetlands and the woods. We believe this experience was able to benefit her when she began to move people to freedom."

Tubman was born Araminta Ross in March 1822 on the Thompson Farm near Cambridge, Maryland, on Maryland's Eastern Shore. She escaped from slavery to become a leading abolitionist who helped slaves escape through the Underground Railroad.

"This discovery adds another puzzle piece to the story of Harriet Tubman, the state of Maryland, and our nation," said Lt. Gov. Boyd Rutherford, who attended a news conference at the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Visitor Center at Church Creek, Maryland.

The archaeology team began searching for evidence linked to her father in November. When they returned in March to continue their search, Schablitsky and her team found artifacts dating to the 1800s, including nails, glass, dish fragments and even a button. On Tuesday, they announced confirmation that the artifacts were evidence of Ross's cabin.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service bought the 2,600-acre Peter's Neck property for $6 million last year. The property contains 10 acres bequeathed to Ross by Anthony Thompson in the 1800s. As outlined in Thompson's will, Ross was to be freed five years after Thompson's death in 1836. Ben Ross was freed

from slavery and received the land in the early 1840s.

"When we protect vulnerable habitats, we help preserve the stories of those who came before us, like Harriet Tubman's father, Ben Ross," said USFWS Chief of the National Wildlife Refuge System Cynthia Martinez. "Acquiring Peter's Neck last year was a critical addition to Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge, as the area is predicted to naturally convert to marsh by 2100 because of sea-level rise."

The Ben Ross home site will be highlighted on the historic Thompson Farm, where Ross and his family were enslaved. It will be added as a new point of interest to the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway. The byway is a 125-mile, self-guided scenic drive that includes more than 30 sites related to Harriet Tubman's life and legacy.

Navalny's doctors prevented from seeing him at prison clinic

By VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — Several doctors were prevented Tuesday from seeing Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny in a prison hospital amid his three-week hunger strike, and authorities stepped up actions against his supporters on the eve of protests called by his team.

Navalny was transferred Sunday from a penal colony east of Moscow to a hospital unit at a prison in Vladimir, a city 180 kilometers (110 miles) east of the capital after his lawyers and associates said his condition has dramatically worsened.

In a post on his Instagram account, Navalny said he underwent a grueling physical search that lasted for several hours before and after his transfer and wryly described his condition.

"You would laugh if you see me now — a skeleton staggers around his cell," the post read. "They can use me to scare children who refuse to eat: 'If you don't eat porridge, you will be like that man with big ears, shaven head and hollow eyes.'"

Navalny added a serious note that he was glad to hear from his lawyer about broad sympathy and support for him in Russia and abroad.

His personal physician, Dr. Anastasia Vasilyeva, led three other medical experts to try to visit Navalny at the prison clinic and the IK-3 prison in the city of Vladimir. They were denied entry after waiting for hours outside the gates.

"It's a show of disrespect and mockery of the doctors," Vasilyeva tweeted, adding that Navalny's "life and health are clearly in danger."

His lawyers visited him Tuesday at the hospital unit, which usually treats tuberculosis patients.

One of them, Olga Mikhailovna, said Navalny had been given an IV drip of glucose on Sunday but none since then because paramedics apparently weren't skilled enough to find a vein.

Navalny looked "extremely exhausted," she said. "He's very thin, he must have lost about 20 kilograms (44 pounds). He is very weak and appears to have difficulty speaking and sitting."

Reports about Navalny's rapidly deteriorating health have drawn international outrage and concern.

U.S. State Department spokesman Ned Price emphasized that Russia is responsible for Navalny's deteriorating condition and urged Moscow to "allow for access to necessary and independent medical care immediately."

Navalny, who is Russian President Vladimir Putin's most adamant opponent, has been on a hunger strike since March 31 to protest the refusal by prison officials to let his doctors visit him and provide adequate treatment for back pains and numbness in his legs.

Russia's penitentiary service insists that Navalny was getting all the medical help he needs.

Navalny was arrested in January upon his return from Germany, where he had spent five months convalescing from the Novichok nerve agent poisoning he blames on the Kremlin — an accusation Russian officials have rejected. His arrest triggered the biggest protests seen across Russia in recent years. In February, a Moscow court ordered him to serve 2 1/2 years in prison on a 2014 embezzlement conviction that the European Court of Human Rights deemed to be "arbitrary and manifestly unreasonable."

The prison service said in a statement Monday that Navalny's condition was deemed "satisfactory," but

another of his physicians, Dr. Yaroslav Ashikhmin, said over the weekend that test results provided by his family show Navalny has sharply elevated levels of potassium, which can bring on cardiac arrest, as well as heightened creatinine levels that indicate impaired kidney function.

Despite his worsening condition, Navalny still showed his sardonic humor.

"I laughed when I saw medical luminaries' comments that with such a level of potassium that I had in my tests, I should have been either in emergency care or in a coffin," he went on. "No, they wouldn't get me that easily. I wouldn't be scared with potassium after Novichok."

In response to Navalny's deteriorating health, his associates have called for a nationwide rally Wednesday, the same day that Putin is scheduled to deliver his annual state of the nation address.

Russian authorities, meanwhile, escalated their crackdown on Navalny's allies and supporters, with the Moscow prosecutor's office asking a court to brand Navalny's Foundation for Fighting Corruption and his network of regional offices as extremist organizations.

Human rights activists say such a move would paralyze their activities and expose their members and donors to prison sentences of up to 10 years.

The Moscow prosecutor's office on Tuesday detailed the accusations against Navalny's organizations, saying it has collected proof of their alleged efforts to "destabilize social and political situation in the country by calls for violence, extremist activities and mass riots" on behalf of unspecified "foreign centers" seeking to overthrow the Russian government.

Navalny's associates rejected and derided the charges. They also criticized the decision by the Moscow City Court to close the hearings on the grounds that the case contained sensitive information. The court is due to open the hearings on Monday.

Police: 1 killed, 2 wounded in shooting at NY grocery store

By MARY ALTAFFER and MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

WEST HEMPSTEAD, N.Y. (AP) — An employee suspected of shooting three workers at an office inside a Long Island grocery store Tuesday, killing a manager, was arrested hours after fleeing, police said.

Gabriel DeWitt Wilson, 31, was taken into custody around 3:15 p.m. at an apartment building about 2 miles (3 kilometers) from the store, Nassau County Police Commissioner Patrick Ryder said. Information on charges and a lawyer who could speak on Wilson's behalf wasn't immediately available.

The shooting happened around 11:15 a.m. inside offices upstairs from the shopping floor at the Stop & Shop supermarket in West Hempstead, Ryder said.

Wilson, a shopping cart wrangler at the store, went to the offices immediately after arriving for work, wounding a man and a woman in one room before going down the hall and killing a 49-year-old store manager, Ryder said.

There were about a "couple hundred" shoppers inside the store at the time, he said.

"They told us to just run and get out, and that's what we did," shopper Laura Catanese told News 12 Long Island.

Barbara Butterman told Newsday she heard four or five shots while shopping for produce, initially thinking the sound was something falling in the back storeroom.

"Everyone was running around upstairs where offices were," Butterman told the newspaper.

The name of the victims have not been made public. The two wounded were hospitalized and were conscious and alert.

Wilson has a criminal record and had been taken into custody previously in Nassau County for a mental health evaluation, Ryder said.

Wilson was involved in a shooting in Baltimore seven years to the day before Tuesday's supermarket shooting, records show. According to police, Wilson and another man fired shots at each other and were hospitalized with lower body wounds. Attempted murder charges against Wilson in that case were later dropped, records show.

Wilson was wearing all black and carrying a small handgun as he fled westbound on Hempstead Turnpike,

Ryder told reporters at a news conference. He was arrested after officers — many in tactical gear and carrying long guns — converged on a neighborhood in nearby Hempstead, which is east of the grocery store.

Nassau County Executive Laura Curran told News that the shooting was "one of the most serious incidents we've had in a very, very long time."

The shooting in West Hempstead followed a rash of recent mass shootings across the county, including one on March 22 that left 10 people dead at a supermarket in Boulder, Colorado.

Video of the aftermath of the shooting showed police cars and ambulances parked in front of the store, officers with long guns and yellow crime scene tape draped across the entrance.

Curran said nearby schools have been told not to admit visitors and residents were asked to remain indoors.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo said he was directing state police to assist local police.

"I'm praying for the victims, and my heart breaks for their families and loved ones," Cuomo said in a statement.

West Hempstead is near the New York City-Nassau County border and about 30 miles (50 kilometers) east of midtown Manhattan.

Stop & Shop President Gordon Reid said in a statement that the company is "shocked and heartbroken by this act of violence" and that the West Hempstead store will remain closed until further notice.

"Our hearts go out to the families of the victims, our associates, customers and the first responders who have responded heroically to this tragic situation," Reid said.

Stop & Shop is a grocery chain in the northeastern U.S. owned by the Dutch company Ahold Delhaize.

Wealthy Latin Americans flock to US in search of vaccines

By OLGA R. RODRIGUEZ and MARCOS MARTINEZ CHACON Associated Press

MONTERREY, Mexico (AP) — They travel thousands of miles by plane from Latin America to the U.S., in some places taking a shuttle directly from the airport to COVID-19 vaccine sites. Their ranks include politicians, TV personalities, business executives and a soccer team.

People of means from Latin America are chartering planes, booking commercial flights, buying bus tickets and renting cars to get the vaccine in the United States due to lack of supply at home.

Virginia Gónzalez and her husband flew from Mexico to Texas and then boarded a bus to a vaccination site. They made the trip again for a second dose. The couple from Monterrey, Mexico, acted on the advice of the doctor treating the husband for prostate cancer. In all, they logged 1,400 miles (2,200 kilometers) for two round trips.

"It's a matter of survival," Gónzalez said of getting a COVID-19 vaccine in the United States. "In Mexico, officials didn't buy enough vaccines. It's like they don't care about their citizens."

With a population of nearly 130 million people, Mexico has secured more vaccines than many Latin American nations — about 18 million doses as of Monday from the U.S., China, Russia and India. Most of those have been given to health care workers, people over 60 and some teachers, who so far are the only ones eligible. Most other Latin American countries, except for Chile, are in the same situation or worse.

So vaccine seekers who can afford to travel are coming to the United States to avoid the long wait, including people from as far as Paraguay. Those who make the trip must obtain a tourist visa and have enough money to pay for required coronavirus tests, plane tickets, hotel rooms, rental cars and other expenses.

In Mexico, business is booming for chartered flights to Texas.

Gónzalez and her husband were inoculated in Edinburg, Texas, a city about 160 miles (254 kilometers) from their home. But with land entry points closed to nonessential travel, the couple decided to take a commercial flight to Houston and then travel by bus.

Earlier this month, 19 players with Monterrey's professional soccer team known as Rayados flew to Dallas to get the vaccine, local media reported. In Peru, Hernando De Soto, an economist running for president, faced a backlash after he admitted he traveled to the U.S. to get vaccinated.

Television personalities have posted on social media about their trips, attracting the scorn of many viewers who accused them of flaunting their privilege. Juan José Origel, a Mexican television host, tweeted

a photo of himself receiving the shot in January in Miami. Argentinian TV personality Yanina Latorre also traveled to Miami for her elderly mother to receive a vaccine and posted a video to Instagram. Shortly after, Florida officials began requiring proof of residency for those seeking a vaccine.

But about half of U.S. states, including Texas, Arizona, and California, have no such requirement and will accept any official form of identification with a photograph.

Many of those traveling have friends or relatives who live in the U.S. and can help them navigate the appointments system or seek a leftover shot. Some have second homes in the U.S., but others borrow a U.S. address. Some said they have read that many Americans do not plan to get vaccinated.

Alejandra, a dentist who also lives in Monterrey, said she decided to seek a vaccine in the U.S. shortly after losing her mother to COVID-19 in February. She registered online at a CVS pharmacy in Texas by using the address of a friend who lives there.

This past weekend, she flew to Houston and on Monday drove to receive her second Moderna shot in Pasadena, Texas. She asked that her full name not be published because she is afraid of retribution after seeing reports that those who traveled to get vaccines in the U.S. could lose their visas.

Alejandra said she felt a sense of calm after receiving the booster shot and thought of her mom.

"What would have been if only my mom had had the opportunity to get the vaccine in the U.S.," she said.

She knows there is criticism that foreigners like her are taking advantage of American taxpayers by getting inoculated in the United States, but she said she is trying to protect herself and her family.

"The pharmacies are saying that it doesn't matter if you don't have documents ... and they are saying it because they are seeking the common good of society," she said.

The U.S. government is paying for the vaccines and for the cost of giving the shots to anyone who does not have insurance.

Chris Van Deusen, a spokesman for the Texas Department of Health Services, said the vaccine in Texas is "intended for people who live in, work in or spend a significant amount of time in Texas," and that more than 99% of people vaccinated were state residents.

Wealthy countries around the globe have been able to acquire the largest vaccine supplies, including the U.S., which has been criticized for not doing more to help poorer countries.

Inequality fuels vaccine tourism, said Ernesto Ortiz, senior manager of programs at Duke University's Global Health Innovation Center, in North Carolina, which keeps track of distribution of coronavirus vaccines worldwide. In Peru, for instance, only 2% of the country's 32 million people have received a dose.

"I don't blame them at all, they are desperate," the Peruvian-American scientist said in an email.

Geovanny Vazquez said he and a friend plan to take a commercial flight on May 3 from Guatemala City to Dallas, where another friend offered to help them find a coronavirus shot.

They were seeking the immunization to feel safe while working in their home country, where they manage apartment buildings that they rent out to visitors, Vazquez said.

He said he can spend up to 20 days in the United States to try to get a shot. If he cannot get inoculated in Texas, he plans travel to other states such as Louisiana or Arizona.

If he were to get infected with COVID-19, Vazquez is confident that he would recover. "But I also work with people, and that is the main reason why I would like to seek the chance" to get the vaccine in the U.S., he said.

Rebels vow to take capital after Chadian president killed

By EDOUARD TAKADJI and KRISTA LARSON Associated Press

N'DJAMENA, Chad (AP) — Chad's president of three decades died of wounds suffered during a visit to front-line troops battling a shadowy rebel group, the military announced Tuesday, as the insurgents vowed to take the capital in what could become a violent battle for control of the oil-rich Central African nation.

The military quickly named President Idriss Deby Itno's son as the country's interim leader, capping a series of stunning announcements that came just hours after the 68-year-old Deby had been declared winner of an election that would have given him another six years in power.

"Chad is not a monarchy. There can be no dynastic devolution of power in our country," the rebels said in a statement late Tuesday, vowing to press their fight for the capital. "The forces of the Front for Change and Concord are heading toward N'Djaména at this very moment. With confidence, but above all with courage and determination."

The circumstances of Deby's death remained murky and some observers immediately questioned the events leading up to Tuesday's announcement, raising the question of whether the military handing over power to Deby's son instead of following the constitutional provisions in place amounted to a coup. Others raised fears of violence in the days to come.

"There is a great deal of uncertainty around how events in Chad will unfold: Whether the army will stay loyal to Deby's son and continue the effort to repel the advancing rebels?" said Cameron Hudson with the Africa Center at the Atlantic Council.

Chadians fed up after 30 years of Deby's rule could also align with the calls for change, he said.

"Either scenario presents a high risk of civilian casualties and a likelihood that fleeing civilians or soldiers could export Chad's instability to neighboring states."

Deby's 37-year-old son, Mahamat, is best known as a top commander of the Chadian forces aiding a U.N. peacekeeping mission in northern Mali. The military said Tuesday he now will head an 18-month transitional council following his father's death.

However, Chad's constitution calls for the National Assembly to step in when a president dies while in office.

The military called for calm, instituting a 6 p.m. curfew and closing the country's land and air borders as panic kept many inside their homes in the capital, N'Djamena.

"In the face of this worrying situation, the people of Chad must show their commitment to peace, to stability, and to national cohesion," Gen. Azem Bermandoa Agouma said.

The circumstances of Deby's death could not immediately be independently confirmed due to the remote location of the fighting.

The government has released few details of its efforts to put down the rebellion in northern Chad, though it did announce Saturday that it had "totally decimated" one rebel column of fighters.

The rebel group later put out a statement saying fierce battles had erupted Sunday and Monday. It released a list of five high-ranking military officials who it said were killed, and 10 others it said were wounded, including Chad's president.

The army only said Tuesday that Deby had fought heroically but was wounded in a battle. He was then taken to the capital where he died of unspecified wounds.

The United Nations has about 1,800 staffers in Chad and spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said in New York that the U.N. was "watching the situation hour by hour."

Some residents of the capital said they feared there was more to the story of Deby's demise.

"The rumors that are going around about the transitional council give me the impression that some information is false," Thierry Djikoloum said. "They are already talking about dissolving parliament ... So for me, I'd say it was a coup d'etat. He was killed."

Some foreign observers also questioned how a head of state could have been killed, saying it cast doubt on his protective guard. The Chadian military has only acknowledged five deaths in weekend fighting in which it said it killed 300 rebels.

"We still don't have the whole story," Laith Alkhouri, a global intelligence adviser, told The Associated Press. "It raises concerns regarding the security forces' assessment of the clashes and their intelligence regarding the severity of the situation."

Deby, former army commander-in-chief, was a major French ally in the fight against Islamic extremism in Africa, hosting the base for the French military's Operation Barkhane and supplying critical troops to the peacekeeping effort in northern Mali.

French Defense Minister Florence Parly expressed her condolences to the Chadian people, in a news conference with her German counterpart in Paris.

"What's central to us now is that a process of democratic transition can be implemented and the stability of Chad preserved," she said.

"For the rest, she added, French authorities need "a bit more time" to analyze the situation.

Earlier, the French presidency called Deby "a courageous friend."

Chad is losing "a great soldier and a president who worked non-stop for the security of the country and the stability of the region for three decades," it said in a statement.

Deby first came to power in 1990 when his rebel forces overthrew then-President Hissene Habre, who was later convicted of human rights abuses at an international tribunal in Senegal.

Over the years Deby had survived numerous armed rebellions and managed to stay in power until this latest insurgency led by the Front for Change and Concord in Chad.

The rebels are believed to have armed and trained in neighboring Libya before crossing into northern Chad on April 11. Their arrival came on the same day that Chad's president sought a sixth term in an election several top opposition candidates boycotted.

EXPLAINER: Why 1 murder count against Chauvin may not stick

By STEVE KARNOWSKI Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Prosecutors fought hard to add a third-degree murder charge against former police Officer Derek Chauvin in the death of George Floyd, but a conviction on that charge alone could set up a problematic scenario for them.

That's because another fired Minneapolis officer found guilty of third-degree murder has a pending appeal before the state Supreme Court — and if his conviction is overturned, it could mean a Chauvin conviction would fall, too.

Jury deliberations in the Chauvin case entered their second day Tuesday.

Chauvin is charged with second- and third-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter. The white former officer pinned the Black man to the pavement last May for up to 9 minutes, 29 seconds. The jury can convict Chauvin of some, none or all three of the charges.

The risk is that if the jury acquits him of second-degree murder but agrees he is guilty of third-degree murder, a murder conviction might not ultimately stick.

The interpretation of Minnesota's third-degree murder statute is being challenged in the case of former Minneapolis Officer Mohamed Noor. He was convicted in the 2017 shooting death of Justine Ruszczyk Damond, a dual citizen of Australia and the U.S. who was killed after she called 911 to report a potential sexual assault behind her home.

At issue is a short phrase in the statute: that the defendant's conduct must be found to be "eminently dangerous to others."

The original charges against Chauvin included third-degree murder. But Hennepin County Judge Peter Cahill threw out that count in October, citing the word "others" — plural — in that phrase. Cahill said there was no evidence Chauvin's actions endangered anyone beyond Floyd.

But then a Minnesota appeals court in February rejected similar legal reasoning in Noor's case, ruling that a third-degree murder conviction can be sustained even if the action that caused a death was directed at just one person. Cahill then reinstated the charge against Chauvin.

However, Noor has taken his case to the Minnesota Supreme Court, which will hear arguments in June.

If the jury in the Chauvin case were to come back with a conviction on third-degree murder only, Chauvin "obviously could never be tried again on the other charges" because of his protection against double jeopardy, said Mike Brandt, a local defense attorney who has been closely following Chauvin's trial.

And if the Minnesota Supreme Court rules in Noor's favor, that could help Chauvin get his own conviction thrown out, and then Chauvin "would basically walk," according to Brandt.

Ted Sampsell-Jones, a professor at the Mitchell Hamline School of Law in St. Paul, Minnesota, agreed it would be a "nightmare scenario" if Chauvin were acquitted of second-degree murder and convicted of third-degree, and the Supreme Court then reversed Noor's conviction.

"If the Minnesota Supreme Court were to reverse Noor's third-degree murder conviction, that would almost certainly invalidate Chauvin's as well," Sampsell-Jones said. "But — that is quite unlikely all around."

A conviction on one or both of the murder counts but an acquittal on the manslaughter charge would be "weird," he said.

Sentencing guidelines call for four years in prison on the manslaughter charge versus 12 1/2 years on each of the murder counts.

Arizona third-grader holds food drives to help in pandemic

By CHEYANNE MUMPHREY Associated Press

CHANDLER, Ariz. (AP) — Neighbors walked by during their morning stroll, passing families waved from their bikes and drivers slowed down long enough to read the hand-drawn sign — "Dylan's Food Drive."

The poster was taped to two PVC pipes that were stuck inside construction cones for support.

It was a typical scene for 8-year-old Dylan Pfeifer, who has been staging food drives from his home in metro Phoenix in response to the pandemic.

"It started because I wanted to give internet to people," he said, explaining that he had transitioned into virtual learning at Chandler Traditional Academy's Independence Campus in Chandler. He heard on the news that some students around the U.S. were having a hard time taking advantage of virtual learning because they didn't have internet.

"My mom said it was going to be hard to provide internet, so we decided to do food drives," he said.

Each drive is the culmination of hours of work that involves drawing posters, going door-to-door to hand out flyers and working with his mother to post information on Facebook.

Dylan has hosted three drives from his home in Chandler, about 20 miles (32 kilometers) southeast of Phoenix. He said he is planning his next one in June, when summer vacation begins.

"I would plan one every day if I could," he said.

Dylan says he has collected more than 1,000 cans and boxes of nonperishable food and more than $900 in donations. On its website, St. Mary's Food Bank in Phoenix says it can convert $1 into seven meals, meaning Dylan has been able to provide more than 6,500 meals on just monetary donations.

"It's rare that you see kids at Dylan's age who have a handle on what the problem is in their community, the people around them who are affected by it, and have the courage to do something about it," said Jerry Brown, director of media relations at St. Mary's Food Bank Alliance.

Erin Pfeifer said the best part for her, as his mother, has been watching Dylan grow despite the isolation caused by the pandemic.

"It's been hard to interact with people, especially now, so this provides a safe way to do that. I just wanted to provide him a way to make an impact," she said.

His father, Nick Pfeifer, agreed, saying it has been wonderful watching Dylan grow. Younger sister Evelyn Pfeifer also loves to be around the drives. The parents said she spends most of her time playing outside with the neighbor's children during the efforts.

After the first two drives, Erin and Dylan Pfeifer have spent time volunteering at St. Mary's Food Bank. They attended a couple of food-packing events at the facility where community donations are sorted and packed for residents and families in need.

"I volunteer because it helps the community," Dylan said. "The hardest part is setting up and waiting. As cars come I always think — does that one have food?"

Dylan could be doing lots of things with his time but chooses to be outside in the sunny Phoenix spring weather waiting for people to stop by, said Denise Sandy-Sanchez, who was Dylan's second-grade teacher last year.

"It is inspiring because he is just an 8-year-old boy," Sandy-Sanchez said after donating boxes of food at his most recent drive.

"I hope you have room in your chest for that growing heart of yours," she told him.

His grandmother Janice McGrew, who volunteered at Habitat for Humanity for more than 10 years, said

Dylan comes from a giving family.

"I would tell other kids who wanted to host food drives, to just do it!" he said.

US takes steps to protect electric system from cyberattacks

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Biden administration is taking steps to protect the country's electricity system from cyberattacks through a new 100-day initiative combining federal government agencies and private industry.

The initiative, announced Tuesday by the Energy Department, encourages owners and operators of power plants and electric utilities to improve their capabilities for identifying cyber threats to their networks. It includes concrete milestones for them to put technologies into use so they can spot and respond to intrusions in real time.

The department is also soliciting recommendations from electric utilities, energy companies, government agencies and others for how to safeguard the energy system supply chain.

"Innovative partnerships like these are essential to addressing the urgent cybersecurity challenge because much of our critical infrastructure is owned and operated by the private sector," Emily Horne, a spokeswoman for the White House's National Security Council, said in a statement.

The effort, which also involves the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, underscores the heightened concern about the prospects for cyberattacks that disrupt the power supply. Anne Neuberger, the deputy national security adviser for cyber and emerging technology, said in an interview with The Associated Press this month that the administration was undertaking a new effort to help electric utilities, water districts and other critical industries protect against potentially damaging cyberattacks.

A Government Accountability Office report last month found that the U.S. grid's distribution systems, which transport electricity from transmission systems to consumers, are increasingly at risk. It said hackers can use multiple techniques to gain access, including compromising the supply chain by manipulating software or hardware or exploiting virtual private network connections.

The report recommended that the Energy Department, the primary federal agency for the energy sector, do more to address those risks.

Perhaps the most notable cyberattack on an electric supply in recent years was attributed to Russia and knocked parts of Ukraine's power grid offline in 2015 and 2016. The Justice Department last October charged six Russian hackers, all suspected military intelligence officers, in connection with that attack and a spate of others.

The U.S., meanwhile, "faces a well-documented and increasing cyber threat from malicious actors seeking to disrupt the electricity Americans rely on to power our homes and businesses," Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm said in a statement announcing the new effort.

"It's up to both government and industry to prevent possible harms — that's why we're working together to take these decisive measures so Americans can rely on a resilient, secure, and clean energy system," she added.

First woman ever applies to run for president of Syria

By SARAH EL DEEB Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — A woman from the capital Damascus has applied to run for president of Syria, the parliament speaker said Tuesday, making her the first female to make a bid for the country's top job. The largely symbolic election is certain to be won by President Bashar Assad.

The presidential election, the second since the country's civil war broke out 10 years ago, is to be held May 26. Syrians abroad will vote on May 20.

Speaker Hammoud Sabbagh said Faten Ali Nahar, a 50-year-old Damascus resident, has nominated herself for the post. Little is known about her. The parliament speaker provided her age, place of birth and her mother's name in the announcement. There were no reports on who she is on social media.

Two other candidates have submitted their names, including a businessman who ran against Assad in 2014. Assad won nearly 90% of the votes in that contest.

Although Assad has not yet applied, he is widely expected to run and win a fourth seven-year term. He has held power since 2000, when he took over after the death of his father, who ran the country for 30 years.

Syria only began allowing multi-candidate voting in the 2014 elections. Competition with Assad was symbolic and seen by opposition and Western countries as a sham aimed to give the incumbent president a veneer of legitimacy.

The international community is unlikely to recognize the legitimacy of the upcoming elections. According to the U.N. resolution for a political resolution of the conflict in Syria, a new constitution is supposed to be drafted and approved in a public referendum before U.N.-monitored presidential elections are to take place. But little progress has been made on the drafting committee and Assad continues to have the backing of Russia and Iran.

Last month, the Biden administration said it will not recognize the result of Syria's presidential election unless the voting is free, fair, supervised by the United Nations and represents all of Syrian society.

Syria has been in the throes of civil war since 2011, when Arab Spring-inspired protests against the Assad family rule turned into an armed insurgence in response to a brutal military crackdown.

Separately, Assad appointed a new governor to the Central Bank on Tuesday days after sacking his predecessor amid a crushing currency crisis.

Mohammad Issam Hazimeh was named the bank's new governor, replacing Hazem Qarfoul, who has been in the post since 2018. Hazimeh was Qarfoul's deputy and is a graduate of economic law from a French university.

The Syrian pound set a record in March trading on the black market at 4,600 pounds to the dollar. At the start of the conflict, the U.S. dollar was worth 47 Syrian pounds. Last week, the central back set the official rate at 2,512 pounds, down from 1,256 since June, to the dollar.

Years of corruption and mismanagement, followed by a decade of war and escalating Western sanctions against Assad's government have deepened the hardship for Syrians. The U.N. estimates that 80% of Syrians live in poverty.

UEFA president urges Super League owners to reverse decision

By GRAHAM DUNBAR AP Sports Writer

MONTREUX, Switzerland (AP) — Seeking a weak link in the unity of 12 rebel clubs in the Super League, UEFA on Tuesday targeted owners in England who signed up to the project that threatens to tear apart soccer's traditional structure including the Champions League.

UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin made a direct appeal to "owners of some English clubs" to change their minds out of respect for soccer fans.

Ceferin both cajoled and criticized the six-club group — including American billionaires, Abu Dhabi royalty and a Russian oligarch — less than 48 hours after the Super League was launched in alliance with three clubs from each of Italy and Spain.

"Gentlemen, you made a huge mistake," Ceferin said in a speech to European soccer leaders at the UEFA annual meeting. "Some will say it is greed, others (will say) disdain arrogance, flippancy or complete ignorance of England's football culture. It does not matter.

"What does matter is that there is still time to change your mind. Everyone makes mistakes," said Ceferin, who did not specify which clubs he thought might be flipped.

The American owners of Manchester United, Arsenal and Liverpool seem most committed to bringing a closed league structure to European soccer. The Glazer family, Stan Kroenke and Fenway Sports Group own major league franchises including, respectively, the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, Los Angeles Rams and Boston Red Sox.

The other owners are Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan at Manchester City, Roman Abramovich at

Chelsea and English currency trader Joe Lewis at Tottenham.

Ceferin urged the six club ownerships to turn back out of respect for fans in England, aiming another barb at what he earlier called "a few selfish people."

"Come to your senses," he said. "Not out of love for football because I imagine some of you don't have much of that."

Ceferin also lavished praise on UEFA executive committee colleague Nasser al-Khelaifi, the president of French champion Paris Saint-Germain. PSG has so far resisted offers to be one of the 15 founding Super League members. Bayern Munich and Borussia Dortmund have also stayed out.

"Nasser, thank you from the bottom of my heart. You showed that you are a great man," Ceferin told the Qatari official before also citing Bayern chief executive Karl-Heinz Rummenigge.

Al-Khelaifi also heads Doha-based broadcaster beIN Sports Group which is a major UEFA customer, currently holding Champions League rights in the Middle East, North Africa, Turkey, Malaysia and Singapore.

"I'm hear to stand with the people who love football," Al-Khelaifi told reporters upon leaving the meeting which confirmed his seat on UEFA's top committee through 2024.

The UEFA president also spoke about an email he received from a Tottenham fan he identified only as Trevor expressing disappointment with his club's conduct.

"If you read the email you would be close to crying," Ceferin said of the English fan who he gave two tickets to the 2019 Champions League final, which Tottenham lost to Liverpool, after writing to his law firm in Slovenia.

Ceferin said fans and governments support UEFA in resisting the proposed 20-team Super League, which is being underwritten by American bank JP Morgan Chase. The clubs have not said when their planned breakaway would kick off.

"We cannot lose this match," said Ceferin, who said Monday he wanted Super League clubs and their players banned from all UEFA competitions "as soon as possible."

It is unclear if UEFA's legal statutes and Champions League rules will allow that before Real Madrid, Chelsea and Man City play in the semifinals next week. Man United and Arsenal also play next week in the Europa League semifinals.

The other Super League teams are Barcelona, Atlético Madrid, AC Milan, Inter Milan and Juventus.

"We hear day and night about owners, owners, owners. What or whom do they own?" Ceferin said, suggesting soccer was part of society and everyone's heritage.

Earlier Tuesday in a speech that seemed also to blame the club owners and absolve players, FIFA president Gianni Infantino said he can only "strongly disapprove" of the Super League.

"If some elect to go their own way, then they must live with the consequences of their choice," Infantino said. "They are responsible for their choice."

UEFA could try to ban players at Super League teams representing national teams at the European Championships in June.

However, a blanket ban is less likely as it would affect South America's Copa America in June, including Barcelona star Lionel Messi playing for Argentina, and FIFA-run qualifying games worldwide for the 2022 World Cup in Qatar.

EU agency links J&J shot to rare clots, says odds favor use

By MARIA CHENG AP Medical Writer

LONDON (AP) — The European Union's drug regulatory agency said Tuesday that it found a "possible link" between Johnson & Johnson's COVID-19 vaccine and extremely rare blood clots and recommended a warning be added to the label. But experts at the agency reiterated that the vaccine's benefits outweigh the risks.

The European Medicines Agency made its determination after examining a small number of clot cases in people vaccinated in the U.S. It said these problems should be considered "very rare side effects of the vaccine."

J&J immediately announced it will revise its label as requested and resume vaccine shipments to the EU, Norway and Iceland. In a statement, it said: "The safety and well-being of the people who use our products is our number one priority."

Following the EMA's decision, EU Health and Food Safety Commissioner Stella Kyriakides tweeted that vaccinations save lives and added: "I urge Member States to follow the opinion of our experts."

Dutch health minister Hugo de Jonge said the Netherlands would start immunizing with the J&J vaccine on Wednesday.

In March, the EMA, which oversees the use of pharmaceutical products in 27 countries across the continent with a combined population of about 448 million, likewise recommended a label change for AstraZeneca's vaccine after finding a link between it and rare blood clots.

In both cases, the agency said the benefits of being immunized against COVID-19 outweigh the very small risks of developing the unusual clots.

"There is untold human suffering behind all of these (coronavirus) cases," said Emer Cooke, the EMA's executive director, noting that 3 million people worldwide have died in the outbreak. "These vaccines play an immensely important role in combating this pandemic."

Last week, J&J halted its European rollout of the vaccine after U.S. officials recommended a pause in its use because of six cases of a very rare type of blood clot among nearly 7 million Americans vaccinated with the formula.

European officials said they considered all available evidence from the U.S., which ultimately consisted of eight cases, including one death. All occurred in people under 60, but the EMA said that it hadn't been able to identify any specific risk factors.

The EMA's Cooke said that no unusual blood clot cases connected to the J&J vaccine had been reported in Europe and that the agency will require further studies from the company as its vaccine is rolled out.

Last week, Johnson & Johnson advised European governments to store their doses until the EU drug regulator issued guidance on their use. Widespread use of the shot in Europe has not yet started.

The delay was a further blow to vaccination efforts in the EU, which have been plagued by supply shortages, logistical problems and the persistent concerns over clots.

Last week, South Africa suspended use of the J&J vaccine in the wake of the U.S. pause, and countries including Italy, Romania, the Netherlands, Denmark and Croatia put their doses into storage. But other countries, including Poland, France and Hungary, said they would move forward with their J&J immunization plans.

The blood clots linked to the J&J vaccine are occurring in unusual parts of the body, such as veins that drain blood from the brain. These patients also have abnormally low levels of blood platelets, a condition normally linked to bleeding, not clotting.

In its statement, the EMA said the cases it reviewed in recipients of the J&J shot were very similar to those seen in people who had gotten the AstraZeneca vaccine.

With the AstraZeneca vaccine, scientists in Norway and Germany have suggested that some people are experiencing an abnormal immune system response in which they form antibodies that attack their own platelets.

It's not yet clear if there might be a similar mechanism with the Johnson & Johnson vaccine. But both the J&J and AstraZeneca vaccines, as well as a Russian one and from China, are made with the same technology.

They all train the immune system to recognize the spike protein that coats the coronavirus. To do that, they use a cold virus, called an adenovirus, to carry the spike gene into the body.

"Suspicion is rising that these rare cases may be triggered by the adenovirus component of the AstraZeneca and J&J vaccines," said Eleanor Riley, a professor of immunology and infectious diseases at the University of Edinburgh.

The EMA said last month that the risk of rare clots associated with the AstraZeneca vaccine is lower than the blood clot risk that healthy women face from birth control pills.

The EU ordered 200 million doses of the J& vaccine for 2021. EU officials had hoped the one-shot vaccine

could be used to boost the continent's lagging vaccination rates and also protect hard-to-reach groups such as migrant workers and the homeless.

Johnson & Johnson also has a deal to supply up to 500 million doses to the U.N.-backed COVAX program, which is trying to get vaccines to billions of the world's poor.

Any concerns about the J&J vaccine would be another unwelcome complication for COVAX. COVAX's biggest supplier, the Serum Institute of India, announced recently it would delay shipments of the Astra-Zeneca vaccine for several months because of a surge of cases in India.

'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 to find an open bed at six hospitals in India's sprawling capital. 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 resident of Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh can't get to it. "There is no ambulance to take me to the hospital," he said.

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

"The surge in infections has come like a storm and a big battle lies ahead," Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in an address to the nation Tuesday night.

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 cost millions of migrant workers their jobs in cities and forced many to walk to their home villages or risk starvation.

In his speech, Prime Minister Modi urged states to avoid lockdowns by creating micro-containment zones to control outbreaks instead.

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 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 have been greenlit by the World Health Organization or regulators in the United States, Europe, Britain or Japan. On Monday, it said it would soon expand vaccinations to include every adult in the country, an estimated 900 million people. But with vaccines 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 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."

Climate change creates migrants. Biden considers protections

By JULIE WATSON Associated Press

SAN DIEGO (AP) — Ioane Teitiota and his wife fought for years to stay in New Zealand as refugees, arguing that rising sea levels caused by climate change threaten the very existence of the tiny Pacific island nation they fled, one of the lowest-lying countries on Earth.

While New Zealand's courts didn't dispute high tides pose a risk to Kiribati, about halfway between Hawaii and Australia, laws dealing with refugees didn't address the danger so the government deported them.

No nation offers asylum or other legal protections to people displaced specifically because of climate change. President Joe Biden's administration is studying the idea, and climate migration is expected to be discussed at his first climate summit, held virtually Thursday and Friday.

The day the summit starts, Democratic Sen. Edward Markey of Massachusetts plans to reintroduce legislation to address the lack of protections for those who don't fit the narrow definition of "refugees" under international law. It failed in 2019.

"We have a greater chance now than ever before to get this done," Markey said in a statement to The Associated Press, citing Biden's climate diplomacy and greater awareness of the problem.

The idea still faces monumental challenges, including how to define a climate refugee when natural disasters, drought and violence are often intertwined in regions people are fleeing, such as Central America.

If the U.S. defined a climate refugee, it could mark a major shift in global refugee policy.

Biden has ordered national security adviser Jake Sullivan to see how to identify and resettle people displaced directly or indirectly by climate change. A report is due in August.

It makes sense for the United States to lead the way, being a principal producer of greenhouse gases, advocates say.

"No nation in the world has taken the leadership to address this reality, which we face today," said Krish Vignarajah, head of Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service. "It's not an issue that we can punt to 20, 30 years from now. Our hope is the U.S. can take strong action that will produce a domino effect on other nations."

The United Nations says there may be as many as 200 million climate-displaced people worldwide by 2050.

A World Meteorological Organization report released Monday showed it's already happening, with an average of 23 million climate refugees a year since 2010 and nearly 10 million recorded in the first six months of last year, especially in Asia and East Africa. Most moved within their own country.

The 1951 Convention on Refugees defines "refugee" as a person who has crossed an international border "owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion."

Some argue that's outdated, but few expect changes to the international accord to account for those fleeing rising sea levels, drought or other effects of climate change.

The U.S. may define the displaced as climate migrants instead of refugees and offer them humanitarian visas or other protections.

Biden ordered the idea to be studied after a landmark ruling last year from the U.N. Human Rights Committee on a complaint Teitiota filed against New Zealand.

Teitiota argued his 2015 deportation violated his right to life. He said saltwater from rising seas destroyed land and contaminated the water supply on the island of Tarawa in Kiribati. Scientists say the impoverished string of 33 atolls with about 103,000 people is among the nations most vulnerable to climate change.

The committee said Teitiota was not in imminent danger at the time of his asylum claim, rejecting his case. But it said it may be unlawful for governments to send people back to countries where the effects of climate change expose them to life-threatening risks — from hurricanes to land degradation.

"This ruling sets forth new standards that could facilitate the success of future climate change-related asylum claims," committee expert Yuval Shany said.

Even so, identifying climate refugees is not easy, especially in regions rife with violence. In Central America, for example, thousands initially leave their villages because of crop failure from drought or flooding, often end up in cities where they become victims of gangs and ultimately flee their countries.

"It's a threat multiplier, and so creating a status or category would have to address this complexity rather than to ignore it or to seek 'pure' climate refugees," said Caroline Zickgraf, who studies how climate change affects migration at Belgium's University of Liège. "Does someone have to prove they were displaced by climate change? That's an extraordinary, if not impossible, thing to ask of someone."

Carlos Enrique Linga traveled to the U.S. border with his 5-year-old daughter after rains from back-to-back hurricanes caused landslides and flooding that destroyed more than 60,000 houses in Guatemala alone, including Linga's farm and home.

He said he took the dangerous trip north because he needed to feed and clothe his children, including 2-year-old twins who stayed behind with his wife.

"To come here, we had to sell whatever harvest we had" to pay a smuggler, said Linga, who stayed at a Texas shelter last month after U.S. immigration authorities released him and his daughter.

He hoped to find work in Tennessee, where a friend lives, and send money back to Guatemala.

Global warming is shifting the migrant population from men seeking economic opportunities to families uprooted by hunger, according to Duke University and University of Virginia researchers studying migration out of Central America.

Researchers reviewing data for about 320,000 Hondurans apprehended at the U.S.-Mexico border from 2012 to 2019 found they were largely from violent, agricultural regions also experiencing their lowest

rainfall in 20 years.

According to the study released in March, even when homicide rates in the regions dipped, if the drought worsened that year, apprehensions of families from there jumped at the U.S. border.

Climate change is a driving force, but there's little political will to help climate migrants, said David Leblang, a professor of politics and policy at the University of Virginia who co-wrote the study.

"As a political scientist, I would say the chances of this happening right now are close to zero," he said.

Some fear political pressure may lead Biden to back off after the number of people stopped by the Border Patrol last month hit a 20-year high.

He faced similar criticism Friday for expanding refugee eligibility but not lifting his predecessor's record-low admissions cap of 15,000. Hours later, the White House said Biden would raise it by May 15, without saying how much.

Climate migrants should be treated separately from those resettled under the 41-year-old U.S. refugee program, experts say, to not take spots from traditional refugees.

In New Zealand, a new government in 2017 tried offering humanitarian visas to Pacific Islanders affected by climate change, aiming to let in about 100 people a year.

Six months later, the plan was quietly dropped.

New Zealand Climate Change Minister James Shaw said the government is focusing on reducing emissions so people are not displaced.

"Right now, Pacific nations want us to help safeguard their future by focusing on mitigating climate change and supporting them to adapt," he said. "And so that's what we're doing."

Oscar predictions: Can anything beat 'Nomadland'?

By JAKE COYLE and LINDSEY BAHR AP Film Writers

Ahead of Sunday's 93rd Academy Awards, Associated Press Film Writers Jake Coyle and Lindsey Bahr share their predictions for a ceremony that is forging on in the midst of the pandemic.

BEST PICTURE

The Nominees: "The Father,""Judas and the Black Messiah,""Mank,""Minari,""Nomadland,""Promising Young Woman,""Sound of Metal,""The Trial of the Chicago 7."

COYLE: A contemplative character study made for $5 million and populated by non-professional actors, Chloé Zhao's "Nomadland" is not your typical Oscar heavyweight. And yet it's overwhelming the favorite, a roundly acclaimed movie from an exciting auteur that has already ruled at the Golden Globes, the BAFTAs and, most crucially, the producers and directors' guilds. The weirdness of this unending pandemic awards season adds a drop of uncertainty to everything. But as much as I'd like to see "Sound of Metal,""Promising Young Woman" or "Minari" sneak in for an upset, "Nomadland" is a near-lock, and an eminently worthy winner. But it's udder madness that Kelly Reichardt's lyrical "First Cow" never contended here. And how much better would the season have been if Steve McQueen's explosive "Small Axe" film anthology (which instead will vie at the Emmys) had somehow been in the mix? Old Oscar traditions are eroding, but not quickly enough.

BAHR: You had to bring up "Small Axe," didn't you? I would have liked to see "Never Rarely Sometimes Always" go the distance too, but I guess this year there was only room for one contemplative character study made for under $5 million — and the one about the rural Pennsylvania teens on a bleak road trip wasn't it. But it would still be "Nomadland's" year and that's only cause for celebration.

BEST ACTRESS

The Nominees: Carey Mulligan, "Promising Young Woman"; Frances McDormand, "Nomadland"; Viola Davis, "Ma Rainey's Black Bottom"; Vanessa Kirby, "Pieces of a Woman"; Andra Day, "The United States vs. Billie Holiday."

BAHR: The best actress race is perhaps the biggest wild card of the night. Viola Davis won the Screen Actors Guild Award, Andra Day won the Golden Globe and Frances McDormand won the BAFTA. It's chaos! Day still seems like a long shot and McDormand's last win still seems fresh enough that it might push vot-

ers who would've otherwise went for her Fern elsewhere. This year I'm inclined to believe that Davis will walk away with the trophy for her raw portrayal of blues singer Ma Rainey, but I can't help but think that perhaps Mulligan should win for "Promising Young Woman." As for who should've been a contender, there are so many but two of my favorites include Aubrey Plaza in the criminally underseen "Black Bear" and Han Ye-ri, who gave my favorite performance in "Minari" as the long-suffering, steadfast mother Monica.

COYLE: Chaos indeed! I think this is a toss up between Davis and Mulligan, with the edge going to Davis after her SAG win. Davis has won before, for her titanic performance in "Fences." But that came (somewhat debatably) as supporting actress. And there is justice in Davis — very possibly the greatest actor alive — taking the top award, especially when you factor in the category's history. Just once before has a Black woman (Halle Berry in 2002 for "Monster's Ball") won best actress. Still, the race would have been all the more interesting if it hadn't overlooked two of the year's best performances: Radha Blank ("The Forty-Year-Old Version") and Carrie Coon ("The Nest").

BEST ACTOR

The nominees: Riz Ahmed, "Sound of Metal"; Chadwick Boseman, "Ma Rainey's Black Bottom"; Anthony Hopkins, "The Father"; Gary Oldman, "Mank"; Steven Yeun, "Minari."

COYLE: After some ho-hum years, the best actor category is really strong this time around. I loved all of these performances. Still, this award has — rightly — belonged to Boseman throughout an award season that has doubled as tribute and wake for the late "Ma Rainey" actor. His greatest performance was his last. Some see a chance of Hopkins (who won at the BAFTAs) pulling off an upset for his devastating portrait of a man stricken with dementia. But I don't. Expect Boseman to become the third actor to win an Oscar posthumously, following Heath Ledger ("The Dark Knight") and Peter Finch ("Network"). I wouldn't swap any of these nominees out, but Sacha Baron Cohen's high-wire guerilla performance in "Borat Subsequent Moviefilm" is in a category by itself.

BAHR: Could you imagine if Boseman didn't win? The grit and commitment in all these performances are worth singing about, though. There were so many others that could have fit in here too, like Delroy Lindo for "Da 5 Bloods," Mads Mikkelsen for "Another Round" or, while we're bending categories, even Hugh Jackman for "Bad Education."

BEST SUPPORTING ACTRESS

The Nominees: Maria Bakalova, "Borat Subsequent Moviefilm"; Glenn Close, "Hillbilly Elegy"; Olivia Colman, "The Father"; Amanda Seyfried, "Mank"; Yuh-Jung Youn, "Minari."

BAHR: In a category where Amanda Seyfried started out seeming like a lock, it certainly seems like the tide has shifted toward Yuh-Jung Youn for her performance as the unconventional grandmother Soonja in "Minari." It's a difficult task to be both the comic relief and the heart of a film, but she pulls it off effortlessly which is why she probably will and should win (although Maria Bakalova could sweep in with a possible upset). Both women elevated their respective films and deserve all the attention they're getting. And Seyfried will absolutely get her Oscar somewhere down the line. I would have also liked to see Talia Ryder advance to this stage for "Never Rarely Sometimes Always."

COYLE: This has been a shape-shifting race but Youn is definitely in the lead. I'd like to see more love all around for "Minari," but it's kind of fitting that Lee Isaac Chung's film be celebrated through the minari-growing matriarch of the movie. Two other names that I wish were here, both for disarmingly funny, natural performances: Cristin Milioti, MVP of "Palm Springs," and Dylan Gelula of the indie college romance "S—-house.

BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR

The Nominees: Sacha Baron Cohen, "The Trial of the Chicago 7"; Daniel Kaluuya, "Judas and the Black Messiah"; Leslie Odom Jr., "One Night in Miami"; Paul Raci, "Sound of Metal"; LaKeith Stanfield, "Judas and the Black Messiah."

COYLE: This seems certain to go to Daniel Kaluuya. For his mighty performance as Black Panther leader Fred Hampton, Kaluuya (a nominee for "Get Out") has racked up wins at the SAGs, Globes and BAFTAs. A little wrinkle came when Stanfield was unexpectedly nominated here despite being campaigned for as a leading actor — and that could split some of the vote between the two "Judas and the Black Messiah"

stars. Stanfield, for me, is the best actor in this bunch. But this is Kaluuya's year. Stanfield will be back, as will some of the performers who missed out, like Kingsley Ben-Adir, terrific as Malcolm X in "One Night in Miami."

BAHR: Oh, Kingsley Ben-Adir! If I'm being perfectly honest, I would have been happy if the supporting slate was simply the cast of "One Night in Miami," plus Kaluuya. I do think Paul Raci has a shot as the Cinderella story of awards season, but it also feels like it's time to get Kaluuya up on that stage.

DIRECTOR

The Nominees: Chloé Zhao, "Nomadland"; Lee Isaac Chung, "Minari"; David Fincher, "Mank"; Emerald Fennell, "Promising Young Woman"; Thomas Vinterberg, "Another Round."

BAHR: The directing category is Chloé Zhao's to lose and I think she both will win and should win for the transcendent "Nomadland," even if it's become a forgone conclusion at this point. In an awards season as endless as this one it's hard not to be skeptical of any film and filmmaker that has thus far swept most awards. But that this tiny movie has had such an ascent is something of a miracle and well deserved. The bonus is that (hopefully) we'll finally have more than one best director-winner who is a woman. That said, it would have been nice had Miranda July ("Kajillionaire") been among the contenders as well.

COYLE: I like imaging the Dynes of "Kajillionaire" getting all dressed up and taking multiple bus transfers to the Oscars. But Zhao will win, and it should be a great moment. Not just because she'll be only the second woman to ever win the award but because she's an exceptional — and exceptionally humble — filmmaker with a lot of movies ahead of her. More often this award goes to someone who's been around a while. Pretty soon, we'll be wondering how it's possible that David Fincher — maybe the very best Hollywood director of his era — hasn't ever won.

DOCUMENTARY

The Nominees: "Collective," "Crip Camp," "The Mole Agent," "My Octopus Teacher," "Time"

COYLE: With increasing frequency, this is the best Oscar category, and it's the one with the most snubs. Some of the very best movies of the year — including "Dick Johnson Is Dead" and "The Truffle Hunters" — didn't make it through the crowded shortlist stage. And still the films that did get nominated are sensational. Probably the only one that I wouldn't pick — "My Octopus Teacher" — is going to win. Little noticed at its debut last fall, the film's audience swelled on Netflix, turning it into an out-of-the-blue Academy Awards contender. I would cheer loudest, though, if "Crip Camp" were to win. It would be a triumph for a warm-hearted film, and for the disability community.

BAHR: Even the shortlist itself was brutal, leaving out "The Dissident" and "Acasa, My Home" but the documentary category has long left out some of the medium's best work (hi "Hoop Dreams"). It is odd that a late-game Netflix sensation like "My Octopus Teacher" somehow became the frontrunner, but I'm trying not to judge what people connect to this year even if I would prefer an urgent piece like "Collective" take the prize.

INTERNATIONAL FEATURE

The Nominees: "Quo Vadis, Aida?", Bosnia and Herzegovina; "Another Round," Denmark; "Better Days," Hong Kong; "Collective," Romania; "The Man Who Sold His Skin," Tunisia.

BAHR: This category seems to be a race between Denmark's "Another Round" and Romania's "Collective," both of which were nominated in other prominent categories (director and documentary, respectively). I think this one will veer towards "Another Round" simply because its directing nod gave it a brighter spotlight and a bigger audience and voters have a chance to honor "Collective" in another category. Another film that would have been a worthy contender here is Italy's "Martin Eden."

COYLE: "Another Round" is a lock. But "Quo Vadis, Aida?" is really good, too. Jasmila Žbanić dramatizes the lead-up to the 1995 massacre of Bosnian Muslim men and boys by the Bosnian Serb army in Srebrenica. Following a fictional translator (Jasna Đuričić) working for the United Nations, the film devastatingly probes a human rights tragedy.

ANIMATED FEATURE

The Nominees: "Onward," "Over the Moon," "A Shaun the Sheep Movie: Farmageddon," "Soul," "Wolf-

walkers."

COYLE: Pixar, like always, seems to have this in the bag. The studio's "Soul" is the clear favorite. There's so much that's wondrous in Pete Docter's film that its Oscar victory is hardly something to lament. But you couldn't find a better underdog than the plucky Irish animation studio Cartoon Saloon, which last year released their most enchanting and ambitious film yet. Tomm Moore and Ross Stewart's "Wolfwalkers," the culmination of a triptych of Irish folklore, is impossibly stunning. Every hand-drawn frame is a work of art. It's the Kilkenny-based studio's fifth Oscar nomination, and it's time they won one.

BAHR: Disney and Pixar are so hard to beat. Since 2010, they've won eight times and the other two were not exactly indie underdogs ("Rango" and "Spider-Verse"). I'm rooting for "Wolfwalkers" but I'm betting on "Soul."

Pandemic puts tulips, bluebells, cherry blossoms in hiding

By RAF CASERT Associated Press

HALLE, Belgium (AP) — There is no stopping flowers when they bloom, blossoms when they burst. Unfortunately, people have been stopped from enjoying them these days.

In pandemic times, when so much goes against the grain, some beauties of nature are no longer embraced but kept at bay.

From Japan's cherry blossom trees, to the endless Keukenhof tulip fields in the Netherlands, to the riot of purple bluebells in the Hallerbos south of Brussels, everything looks its best this spring when conditions are at its worst.

"The flowers are there. Nature refuses to be stopped by anyone," said Halle mayor Marc Snoeck, who for the second year in a row needs to keep people away from the municipality's famed woods instead of inviting them in.

Across the world, authorities are seeking to stave off a new surge of COVID-19 infections to contain a death toll which already exceeds 3 million. Crowds are anathema to health. Yet at the same time, the soothing glories of nature are said to be an ideal balm against the psychological burdens of loneliness, disorientation and fear that the pandemic has wrought.

When those two concepts clash however, caution beats joy by a long stretch these days.

"The weather is great and there is beauty to enjoy," Snoeck said. "But on the other hand we have to watch it. Safety trumps everything. And even though it is good to enjoy this nice time and the beauty of the purple bluebells, we absolutely don't want anyone to get sick."

Normally, more than 100,000 visitors spread over three weekends come to gaze at Halle's fields of purple. Last spring, when Europe was already grappling with the first surge of infections, Snoeck already closed off the woods as much as possible.

Since it is an open forest, a full ban is out of the question, so Snoeck has canceled special bus shuttles, and issued parking bans to discourage people from coming.

"If they all had to show up in these three weekends, then there really would be too many people and safe distancing couldn't be respected. Not everyone wears a mask at a moment like this, and it is of course necessary," Snoeck said.

Keeping the masses away is a counterintuitive reaction seen in many places. For Snoeck and the Hallerbos, it is easy, even though tourism income hurts badly. With the bluebells, nature gives and little needs to be done but enjoy.

For the Keukenhof tulip fields 300 milometers (180 miles) north of Halle though, the tulip fields are very much a man-made creation with planting starting already in September. Two years ago, 1.5 million people visit in its eight-week run, but now, it took a special anti-virus pilot scheme to allow just a few thousands in on the rescheduled opening day.

"Every year we make the most beautiful possible Keukenhof. We don't think about visitors not coming. We always do it for visitors — if necessary. digitally — but there's nothing better than having visitors," Keukenhof gardening foreman Stefan Slobbe said.

Like Belgium, the Netherlands is struggling to stifle a third surge of COVID-19 and is still limiting public events, while the whole process of blooming and wilting takes no heed.

It was no different in Japan when the cherry blossoms were in full bloom last month. The blossoms, known as sakura, have deeply influenced Japanese culture for centuries and regularly been used in poetry and literature with their fragility seen as a symbol of life, death and rebirth.

Yet, this year, like last year too, the pandemic had its impact. "Please refrain from gathering to enjoy the cherry blossoms," signs in Tokyo said, putting a dampener on the usually exuberant atmosphere.

Some, however, couldn't be restrained.

"Last year I couldn't come here due to the state of emergency. This year I wanted to come again, so here I am," 21-year-old university student Miyu Obata said.

The lack of mass tourism flocking to the Hallerbos will have its beneficial side too. Any flower that gets trampled won't reshoot the year after, Snoeck said. So once the pandemic is contained, the bluebell fields might even look better.

"Fewer visitors will make nature even more beautiful," Snoeck said.

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 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.

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."

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.

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.

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.

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 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 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 expectations 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 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 Bastyur, 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.

"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 Bastyur, 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," Bastyur 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 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 program-

ming 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.

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."

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, April 21, the 111th day of 2021. There are 254 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On April 21, 1836, an army of Texans led by Sam Houston defeated the Mexicans at San Jacinto, assuring Texas independence.

On this date:

In 1649, the Maryland Toleration Act, providing for freedom of worship for all Christians, was passed by the Maryland assembly.

In 1789, John Adams was sworn in as the first vice president of the United States.

In 1816, Charlotte Bronte, author of "Jane Eyre," was born in Thornton, England.

In 1910, author Samuel Langhorne Clemens, better known as Mark Twain, died in Redding, Connecticut, at age 74.

In 1918, Manfred von Richthofen, 25, the German ace known as the "Red Baron" who was believed to have downed 80 enemy aircraft during World War I, was himself shot down and killed while in action over France.

In 1926, Britain's Queen Elizabeth II was born in Mayfair, London; she was the first child of The Duke and Duchess of York, who later became King George VI and the Queen Mother.

In 1930, fire broke out inside the overcrowded Ohio Penitentiary in Columbus, killing 332 inmates.

In 1975, with Communist forces closing in, South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu resigned after nearly 10 years in office and fled the country.

In 1976, clinical trials of the swine flu vaccine began in Washington, D.C.

In 1977, the musical play "Annie," based on the "Little Orphan Annie" comic strip, opened on Broadway, beginning a run of 2,377 performances.

In 1980, Rosie Ruiz was the first woman to cross the finish line at the Boston Marathon; however, she was later exposed as a fraud. (Canadian Jacqueline Gareau was named the actual winner of the women's race.)

In 2015, an Egyptian criminal court sentenced ousted Islamist President Mohammed Morsi to 20 years in prison over the killing of protesters in 2012.

Ten years ago: President Barack Obama announced the Justice Department was assembling a team to "root out any cases of fraud or manipulation" in oil markets that might be contributing to $4 a gallon-plus gasoline prices. Sen. John Ensign, R-Nev., announced he would step down amid a developing ethics probe over how he'd handled an admitted extramarital affair with a former staffer and whether he tried to illegally cover it up. (The Senate Ethics Committee referred the case to the Justice Department, which decided not to prosecute Ensign.)

Five years ago: Prince, one of the most inventive and influential musicians of modern times, was found dead at his home in suburban Minneapolis; he was 57. Queen Elizabeth II, Britain's oldest and longest-reigning monarch, drew crowds of well-wishers and floods of tributes on the occasion of her 90th birthday. Jake Arrieta of the Chicago Cubs pitched his second no-hitter in a span of 11 regular-season starts, shutting down the Cincinnati Reds in a 16-0 rout.

One year ago: The coroner's office in California's Santa Clara County received autopsy results showing that a woman who died there on Feb. 6 and a man who died on Feb. 17 had the coronavirus. (It wasn't until Feb. 29 that the first known U.S. death from the virus was reported in Kirkland, Washington; officials later attributed two Feb. 26 deaths to the virus.) Researchers reported that a malaria drug that had been widely touted by President Donald Trump for treating the coronavirus showed no benefit in large study of its use in U.S. veterans hospitals. In its first-quarter earnings report, Netflix revealed that it had added nearly 16 million global subscribers during the first three months of the year, as stay-at-home orders went into effect.

Today's Birthdays: Britain's Queen Elizabeth II is 95. Actor-comedian-writer Elaine May is 89. Actor Charles Grodin is 86. Anti-death penalty activist Sister Helen Prejean is 82. Singer-musician Iggy Pop is 74. Actor Patti LuPone is 72. Actor Tony Danza is 70. Actor James Morrison is 67. Actor Andie MacDowell is 63. Rock singer Robert Smith (The Cure) is 62. Rock musician Michael Timmins (Cowboy Junkies) is 62. Actor-director John Cameron Mitchell is 58. Rapper Michael Franti (Spearhead) is 55. Actor Leslie Silva is 53. Actor Toby Stephens is 52. Rock singer-musician Glen Hansard (The Frames) is 51. Actor Rob Riggle is 51. Comedian Nicole Sullivan is 51. Football player-turned-actor Brian White is 48. Olympic gold medal

pairs figure skater Jamie Sale (sah-LAY') is 44. Rock musician David Brenner (Theory of a Deadman) is 43. Actor James McAvoy is 42. Former NFL quarterback Tony Romo is 41. Actor Terrence J is 39. Actor Gugu Mbatha-Raw is 38. Actor Christoph (cq) Sanders is 33. Actor Frank Dillane is 30. Rock singer Sydney Sierota (Echosmith) is 24.