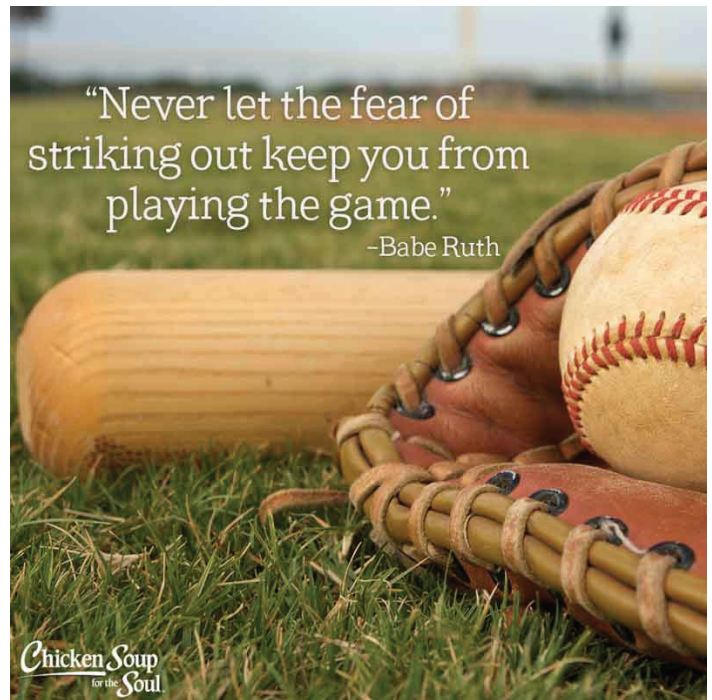


# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 295 ~ 1 of 62

- [1- MJ's is Hiring](#)
- [2- Door opens up for possible co-op with Langford Area](#)
- [3- Weber Landscaping Greenhouse Ad](#)
- [4- Larson granddaughter receives appointment to U.S. Naval Academy](#)
- [5- Climate change a threat to Great Plains bison sustainability](#)
- [6- Johnson & Johnson Vaccine Administration To Resume This Week in South Dakota](#)
- [7- Covid-19 Update by Marie Miller](#)
- [11- Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs](#)
- [12- Weather Pages](#)
- [15- Daily Devotional](#)
- [16- 2021 Community Events](#)
- [17- News from the Associated Press](#)



## NOW HIRING

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



**OPEN:** Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

## Door opens up for possible co-op with Langford Area

Langford is now looking for a long-term partner with football and possibly wrestling. Langford will be playing nine-man football this year with its 14 players. Superintendent Joe Schwan reported it was a very cordial conversation that representatives from the two school districts had. "It was a good conversation with neighbors." Langford would like to have a homecoming game and Groton replied that it would be okay as long as the field is in playable condition. Practices would be in Groton. Cheerleaders - set a number - both schools would have students try out with a third party doing the judging. Langford is also looking at two other districts to see what direction they want to go. They will make a decision after the football season this fall. Schwan said a positive thing is that a junior high and junior varsity schedule could be made up if the two districts could co-op in football.

The board approved a request from Groton Youth Football for the use of a school bus on May 17 and May 18 to attend a NSU Youth Football Camp.

Becky Hubsch was hired as a MS/HS Business/Computer Teacher for the upcoming school year. Jodi Schwan was advanced in the staff lane change from BS to BS+15 and Travis Kurth was advanced from BS+15 to BS+30.

The board accepted the resignation of Andrea Brunson as an elementary paraprofessional. The family is moving to Leola.

The board accepted the 2021-22 GTA negotiated agreement and teaching contracts and off-staff extra-curricular agreements were issued with a return date of May 7.

Adam Franken and Lindsey Tietz each talked about the CTE programs that they oversee.

Destination Imagination presentation was given by Joni Groeblichhoff and Julie Milbrandt. All three middle school DI teams can participate in the Global Virtual DI Tournament.

The middle/high school enrollment is up by 19 from last year. This year's seventh grade class has seen an increase of two students from last year, the eighth grade class has increased by nine, the freshman class has increased by one, the sophomore class has increased by three, the junior class has increased by two and the senior class remains unchanged. The numbers are 45 students in sixth grade, 49 in seventh grade, 51 in eighth grade, 45 freshmen, 48 sophomores, 46 juniors and 51 seniors.

**Weber  
Landscaping  
Greenhouse  
opening this  
Spring!**



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

**Opening First Week of May!**

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

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



## Larson granddaughter receives appointment to U.S. Naval Academy

Senator Mike Rounds announced that Grace Blote, a senior at St. Thomas More High School, has received a fully qualified offer of appointment to the U.S. Naval Academy (USNA). Grace was nominated to the USNA by Senator Rounds. She is the daughter of Steve and LaRae Blote of Rapid City, South Dakota, and the granddaughter of Dennis and Shirley Larson, Groton. South Dakota.

Grace has served in various leadership positions, including student council president, principal cellist in orchestra, and the varsity team captain for the St. Thomas More Cavaliers soccer team. She previously participated in the first virtual seminar for the Naval Academy.

"I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity to represent South Dakota at the United States Naval Academy through Senator Rounds' nomination," said Grace. "I'm looking forward to being a part of a community of young people that are driven to excellence in all things. My gratitude extends to all who have supported me throughout my endeavors."

Each year, Sen. Rounds is able to nominate a select group of qualified students from South Dakota to attend our nation's four service academies: The U.S. Air Force Academy, U.S. Merchant Marine Academy, U.S. Military Academy at West Point and the U.S. Naval Academy.



**Grace Blote  
Granddaughter of  
Dennis & Shirley Larson**

## Climate change a threat to Great Plains bison sustainability

BROOKINGS, S.D. - Accelerating climate change throughout the Great Plains may present the next major challenge to bison sustainability.

That is the main point the director of research for the Center of Excellence for Bison Studies at South Dakota State University, Dr. Jeff Martin, made in his article recently published in the *People and Nature* journal, titled "Vulnerability assessment of the multi-sector North American bison (Bison bison) management system to climate change."

"Climate change directly affects bison by increasing thermal stress and decreasing forage and water availability, issues that also challenge range beef cattle," Martin says. "Indirect consequences of climate change include increasing distribution and intensity of parasites and several diseases that are known to reduce reproductive success. These stresses have been estimated to collectively reduce bison body size by 50% if global temperature warms by 4°C near the end of the 21st century."

Furthermore, warming and drought may also result in declining productivity of the remaining grasslands of the Great Plains, which are the preferred habitat for both bison and cattle.

"Currently, 90% of grasslands and 85% of bison are privately owned, which justifies the need for robust private land conservation strategies to maintain this iconic species and its grassland habitats," Martin says.

The current bison population of North America is approximately 400,000 animals and is maintained by a self-assembled bison management system (BMS). Martin and his team coined the term 'bison management system' as a way to describe the whole system of bison managers that represent a multi-sector interest in the conservation and production of bison across private, public, Tribal and non-governmental organization (NGO) sectors. It is a unique animal management system in the world.

Martin conducted a vulnerability assessment of the bison management system to increasing climate variability and change to further clarify the challenges that bison conservation and production may face in future climates. He surveyed 132 bison managers within the private, public and NGO sectors located in North America, who mostly reside in the northern and central mixed-grass prairies and manage bison herds averaging 51-100 animals. He collected data on the exposure, sensitivity and adaptive capacity of the managers to climate change.

"Results from the survey revealed that the bison management system is vulnerable to climate change and is susceptible to losing sustainability without preparing adaptation strategies for impending climate change issues such as warming, increasing drought and a resulting decline in productivity of grasslands," Martin says.

The study showed that access to grazing leases, varied external income, use of management plans and information exchange are variables that present stumbling blocks for bison managers across the private, public and NGO sectors to advance their adaptation to climate change and sustainability.

"The experiences and shared environmental values and attitudes of bison managers across the bison management system are foundational to enhanced collaboration across sectors," Martin says. "We believe it would be beneficial for the bison management system to form a bison coalition to instigate enhanced coordination of knowledge sharing."

## **Johnson & Johnson Vaccine Administration To Resume This Week in South Dakota**

PIERRE, S.D. – The South Dakota Department of Health (SD-DOH) announced health systems and federal retail pharmacies across the state will resume the use and administration of the Johnson & Johnson (J&J) vaccine starting today. This decision was made following the announcement last Friday by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that it has satisfactorily studied and approved the use of the vaccine for those 18 years of age and older, lifting the pause it had implemented on April 13, 2021.

“The pause and restart of this vaccine should be one more example of our commitment in ensuring vaccine safety and prove that transparent and rigorous established safety standards work,” said Kim Malsam-Rysdon, Secretary of Health. “We know all available vaccines have been proven effective against hospitalization and death from COVID-19, further highlighting the importance of getting your shot scheduled today.”

The pause, announced by the CDC on April 13, came after six reports of U.S. cases among women of rare and severe type of blood clots after receiving the vaccine. To date, 16,295 South Dakotans have received the one-dose series vaccine, and over 6.8 million J&J shots have been administered nationwide and no serious adverse reactions to the vaccine have been reported in South Dakota.

The SD-DOH would like to remind the public that while the side effects of concern are extremely rare, the FDA and CDC have recommended those who develop the following symptoms: severe headache, abdominal pain, leg pain, or shortness of breath within three weeks of receiving to J&J vaccine, to immediately contact their healthcare provider.

South Dakotans can find vaccine access points near them by clicking [here](#). For the most up-to-date state vaccine information, including vaccination numbers across the state, visit the SD-DOH Dashboard.

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 295 ~ 7 of 62

**#428 in a series**

## **Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller**

We're up a bit today; probably due to weekend effect. If this would continue, we'd worry, but it's too soon for that. We had 81,084 reported cases today, bringing us up to 32,151,152 total cases, which is 0.3% more than yesterday. The 14-day average hospitalization is down a bit to 44,793. And we're up to 572,237 deaths, 0.1% more than yesterday. There were 766 deaths reported today. I should note that a first-grader in Minnesota has died of Covid-19; this was a child with no underlying conditions. No one can afford to take this virus lightly.

On April 26, 2020, one year ago today, the US had 964,888 reported cases and 49,437 deaths, both big declines from the previous day. New York and much of the Northeast was talking about reopening. We were still trying to figure out just what antibodies in recovered patients meant.

Sadly, the US no longer holds the world record for one-day new-case reports, not by a long shot. I have our biggest day as January 7 with 322,200 new cases, and India has eclipsed this—for five consecutive days. Today they reported 352,991 new cases; they've added more than one million cases in just three days—worst we ever did was four days. They have four times our population, so per capita, we've still had many more, but no one wishes for them to match us on that. It's awful enough there; every system is stretched beyond breaking, and that's what it's doing—breaking. Badly. Patients are dying in Delhi hospitals because they've run out of oxygen to administer. Brazil is in bad shape too—huge new-case numbers, a surge in variants, few or no restrictive measures to slow transmission, very slow rate of vaccination, and lack of coordination of a response. More people have died from Covid-19 in Brazil this year than in all of last year. Iran is in deep trouble as well. Even when we get things sorted out here, we will not be out of things to worry about.

Almost 54 percent of US adults (nearly 141 million people) have received at least one dose of vaccine, and in 10 states, over 60 percent of adults have. These states are New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Vermont, New Mexico, Maine, New Jersey, Hawaii, Rhode Island, and California. (For the record, the 10 states doing worst at 45 percent or less of adults are Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana, Tennessee, Wyoming, West Virginia, Georgia, Idaho, Arkansas, and South Carolina.) So far, 230,768,454 doses have been given out of 290,692,005 doses delivered. Just 2.1 million doses were given in the past 24 hours; the seven-day average is staying below three million, currently at 2.7 million. That's a concern.

Worse, for 10 of the past 11 days, we have had more people receiving their second doses of vaccine than getting their first. We can spot this by comparing the change in numbers who are fully vaccinated against the change in numbers with at least one dose. Hard telling what's behind this, but one natural conclusion would be that the number of people willing to be vaccinated is diminishing. This is not a good sign: We're not close to where we need to be. No one thinks every single person who wants, but has not yet received, vaccine has had that first dose, but the current estimates are that within the next two to four weeks, we'll be there. Terrifying.

We are expecting new guidance for fully vaccinated people within a day or two. Word is it will be more than just the expected news that we no longer need to be masked in all situations outdoors.

We have the new guidance from the CDC on side effects to watch for after receipt of the Janssen/Johnson & Johnson vaccine. It is important to remember the risk for blood clots is extremely low, on the order of one in a half-million doses, and the condition is treatable; but key to successful treatment is spotting this adverse effect as soon as it appears. Here's the list of symptoms: persistent severe headache or blurred vision, shortness of breath, chest pain, leg swelling, persistent abdominal pain or unusual bruising within three weeks of receiving the vaccine. It will be particularly important for women younger than 50 years to be alert for these symptoms. Fact sheets handed out to patients have been updated accordingly. So, supposing I was under 50 (a ship that sailed some years ago), would I get this vaccine if it was offered to me? Yes, if it was the only one available to me. Also yes if I fit into any other category of human besides woman under 50. I would opt for vaccination now over vaccination later every time. That's because the risk of this adverse effect is tiny, and the alternative to vaccination is awful; also the blood clotting condi-

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 295 ~ 8 of 62

tion TTS, or thrombosis with thrombocytopenia syndrome, can be treated if identified expeditiously. If I fit into this risk category (women under 50) and I had a choice, I would elect for a different vaccine because less risk is less risk. I'm in favor of vaccination, but I'm not dumb.

I read a study conducted at the Statens Serum Institut in Copenhagen, Denmark, in *The Lancet* today that looked at millions of RT-PCR diagnostic test results in that country. Denmark's first wave of infections occurred from last March to May, and their second wave was between September and December. The researchers compared infection rates in the second wave in people who had been infected in the first wave and people who had not been infected in the first wave. The idea here was to see whether people with a prior infection were less likely to get infected during the second wave, that is, whether any immunity resulting from that first infection was still protective in real life three to six months later. What they saw was that, six months after infection, people younger than 65 had about 80 percent protection against reinfection; that's getting close to what a vaccine can do. However, this was not true in older individuals; people 65 or over had only about 47 percent protection from that prior natural infection. Given that we see as good a response to vaccine in this older age group as we see in younger people, that's all the more reason to get the elderly vaccinated forthwith.

I also read a study by a collaboration between Maccabi Healthcare Services in Tel Aviv and the Technion-Israel Institute of Technology in Haifa, Israel, in preprint (so not yet peer-reviewed) of vaccination effects on children in Israel, where over 50 percent of the population is vaccinated, but no children under 16. They looked at diagnostic test results between January and March of this year in 233 communities, examining the relationship between adult vaccination rates and the rate of positive tests in children 35 days later. Interestingly, they found that "rates of vaccination in each community are highly correlated with a later decline in infections among a cohort of under 16 years old which are unvaccinated." They saw a drop in infection rates in children which was proportional to the drop in infection rates in adults in the same community, even though the children were not vaccinated. As they said, "These results provide observational evidence that vaccination not only protects individual vaccinees but also provides cross-protection to unvaccinated individuals in the community." We know it will be a while before we can get appreciable numbers of children vaccinated; it would be nice if adult vaccination protects them even in the short run, wouldn't it?

And as long as we're talking about studies, let's talk about one that's made quite a splash in some circles, one with a publication date of April 27 (we're seeing the future) in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science* (or, in the excited tones of someone who finally, at long last, has the goods on the so-called experts, "*Proceedings of the National Academy of Science of the United States of America*," which is a lot more official, you know). If you've been looking at news at all today, you have heard variously that we've been lied to for months, that the "so-called experts" wanted to shut our economy down to gain control of us, that social distancing is useless, etc. You may have heard all of these things before (in fact, I'm betting on it), but now they have SCIENCE to back them up.

Or not.

Let's start with the study—what it showed, what it didn't, what assumptions it rests on, how you draw conclusions from that, what the authors actually said in it, what it means. The authors are a pair of mathematicians at MIT, perfectly reputable sorts. They were looking, as their title states, for "A guideline to limit indoor airborne transmission of COVID-19." Their purpose was to develop a tool for identifying cumulative exposure time (CET) based on a particular indoor situation.

They did this by using a procedure called modeling, that is, a theoretical computation of risk based on certain assumptions about this virus, how infected people expel it, airflow, how susceptible people acquire it, etc. So you feed all of these assumptions into your model, use what we know about how air moves in a room and ventilation and all that, tell the model how big your room is and how high the ceilings, then come up with projections about how likely infection in susceptible people is if they spend varying amounts of time in this theoretical room with varying numbers of other people, when introducing an infected person. And then your model takes into account the probabilities and tells you what a safe CET would be. This is a legitimate way to figure out problems like this as long as you are starting out with solid assumptions and



# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 295 ~ 9 of 62

recognize the limitations those assumptions impose on interpreting your results, as well as using computations that account for the parameters you're including and recognize the limitations excluded parameters impose on interpreting your results. Honestly, their equations and computations are above my pay grade, but since this is a peer-reviewed publication, I think it's safe to assume there was nothing hinky there at all. So this is solid work.

Essentially, they started out with the concept of what they're calling a "well-mixed room," that is one in which expelled respiratory particles "are mixed uniformly throughout an indoor space." They examined air exchange rates (the number of times per hour the air in the room is turned over with outside air by a ventilation system), vigorous respiratory activities which would increase infected people's expulsion of virus, and use of face masks as factors. One of their assumptions was that it takes 10 airborne virions (virus particles) to establish infection; I haven't the slightest whether this is reasonable, but it got past the peer reviewers, so there's that. Another is that the room meets American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) standards for ventilation. They concerned themselves just with the smaller, lighter droplet nuclei (dehydrated droplets) that would spread via the airborne route, with some side mentions of heavier respiratory droplets expelled in a plume from a cough or loud speaking and such. And they operated with the assumption that "the prevalence of infection in the population,  $p_i$ , is relatively low." They accounted for how long virions would remain infectious under normal room conditions. And then they let their model tell them the likelihood of people getting infected by being in this theoretical room for varying periods of time. This produced a spreadsheet on which you could specify the "room geometry, ventilation rate, and respiratory activity" to derive maximum CET that is "safe." In their words, "Our theoretical model quantifies the extent to which transmission risk is reduced in large rooms with high air exchange rates, increased for more vigorous respiratory activities, and dramatically reduced by the use of face masks."

The thing in this paper that is exciting all the commentary is a massive misinterpretation of something I've been saying to folks for a while. I frequently get questions from people about attending meetings or being in classrooms or having people over for dinner or going to church services during this pandemic. Now, you're likely all well aware by now that I am not a public health expert or an epidemiologist or a respiratory diseases specialist, but simply a person with a background in microbiology and a knack for explaining things. (And if you were not aware of that, you must be new here, and welcome.) Advice I pass along is based on what I'm hearing from folks who are experts in these fields, but something that keeps coming up, one way or another, is, "Why can't I go to this indoor event as long as we all stay six feet apart?"

And here's the thing: That six-foot distance, while there's nothing magic about exactly 72 inches, provides a good margin of safety for brief encounters—another shopper or the cashier at the grocery store, passing someone in the hallway of your apartment building, going into a restaurant to pick up your take-out order. That's because, if the other guy isn't wearing a mask—a pretty good bet if you live where I do because just about nobody's wearing a mask these days, any large droplets he expels with a sneeze or a shout will drop to the ground before they travel six feet from his mouth, and if he is, whatever tiny airborne particles he might expel aren't going to have time to travel six feet in the air before you or he has moved on.

On the other hand, if you go and sit at church for an hour or longer or in a classroom for several hours, those same particles have all kinds of time to spread throughout the indoor air until everyone in the room, however distant from the infected person, has exposure—these researchers' "well-mixed room." My answer to those, "Can I go somewhere where I'll be indoors with other people for a long time?" questions has consistently been, "Not as long as infection rates are as high as they are." That's still my answer. And this is basically what these researchers found out in a more scientific way than asking Marie: Social distancing loses its effect when the duration of exposure is prolonged, more so when infection rates are high (remember they operated from a model where those rates were low). There's a reason for that 15-minute exposure limit the CDC's been selling from the start.

An analysis I read by Bruce Y. Lee in Forbes put it well: "Based on their equations, the researchers concluded that staying six feet apart alone would not prevent the virus from spreading person-to-person

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 295 ~ 10 of 62

because the virus-laden small respiratory droplets would already be everywhere in the air." Now that's assuming the room was "well-mixed," which may or may not be so, depending on several factors; but the longer you stay in one room, the more time it has to become "well-mixed." This doesn't mean social distancing doesn't work; it only means social distancing is not, by itself, enough.

So one other thing they did find is that face masks are a critically important way to protect against transmission indoors. They also mentioned the benefit of masking several times throughout. I'm going to guess, given who the folks are that are trumpeting the "scientists have been lying to us" narrative, that they're not going to be trumpeting this part of the findings as loudly because they don't want to wear masks either: They just want to pretend this thing isn't a thing and we can all live our best pre-pandemic lives. (Honestly, I would like to pretend that too; I just don't want a bunch more people to die, so I'm not going to do it.) The findings also support limiting how many people can be in a room at one time and the importance of good ventilation and filtration, things we've also talked about one time and another.

Something this study missed is the numbers of folks going around without masks in vast swaths of our country. They pay lip service to the respiratory plume set up by mask-less people, especially if they cough, sneeze, speak loudly, or sing, but no serious attention to the scenario we are increasingly facing where a fair proportion of people just doesn't wear them. These droplets are nearly completely stymied by the six-foot distance, so distancing is very relevant in these scenarios.

At any rate, it is important to recognize that this paper did not say we shouldn't do social distancing. It says, as the press release at the time of publication puts it, "the '6-foot rule' . . . doesn't adequately address airborne transmission in indoor spaces." So they say we need to do more than just distancing, not that we shouldn't do it at all. The authors, after all the social-media hoopla, issued a statement, saying, "We would like to clarify the scientific findings of our study, which have been mischaracterized by some on social media and in the news. . . . The value of social distancing in limiting COVID-19 transmission by respiratory jets is made clear in the last section of our paper [where] we propose a modified guideline, Eq. [7], through consideration of respiratory jets, as may lead to significantly elevated risk, especially when face masks are not worn. . . . Our study highlights that face masks can be an extremely effective indoor safety measure."

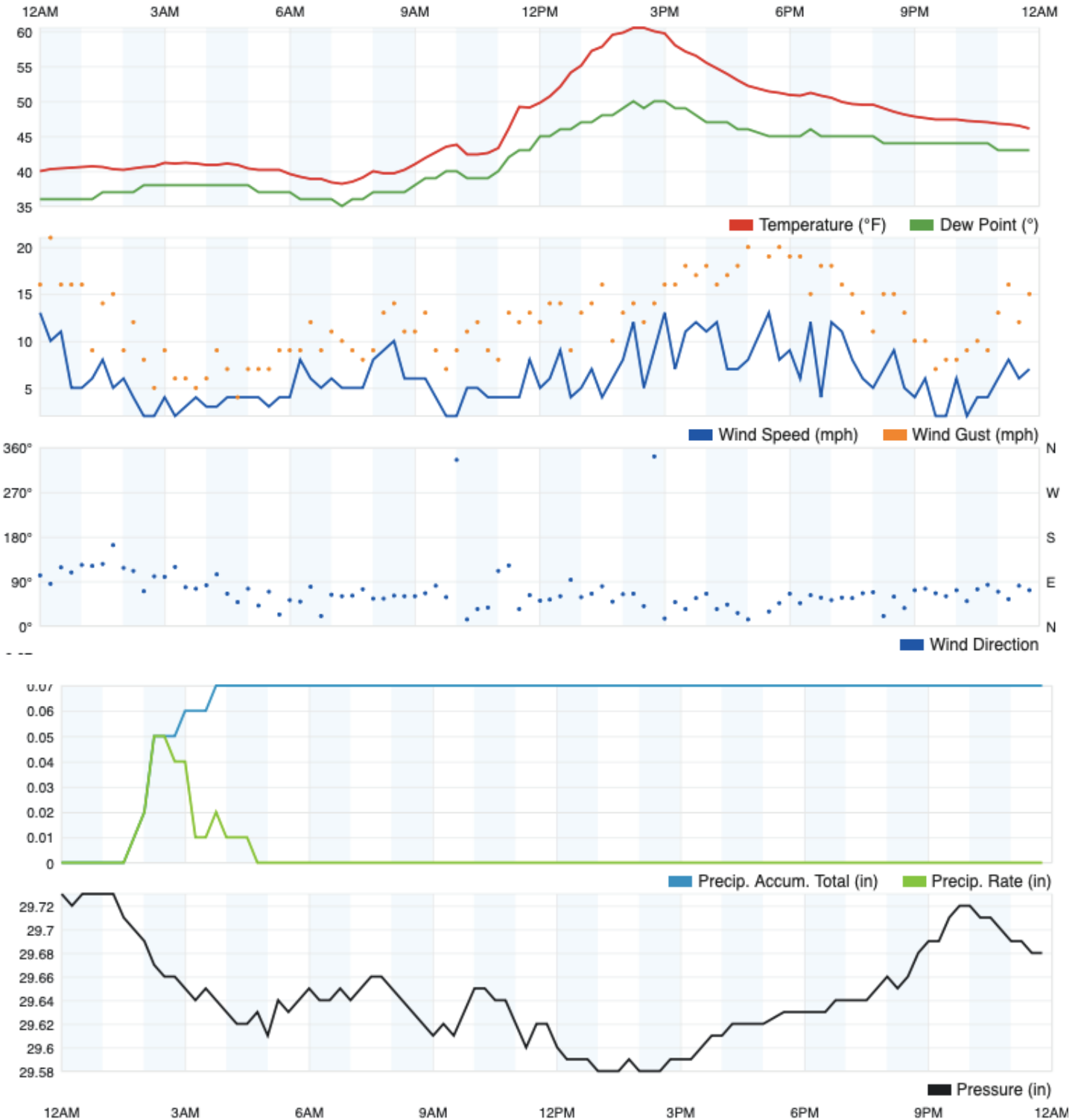
So there. I guess you can't believe everything you read on social media. And yes, I do realize I'm telling you this on social media. That means you should be checking out what I'm telling you too.

Take care. I'll be back tomorrow.

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 295 ~ 11 of 62

## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 295 ~ 12 of 62

Tuesday



Chance  
Showers and  
Patchy Fog

High: 57 °F

Tuesday  
Night



Mostly Cloudy

Low: 36 °F

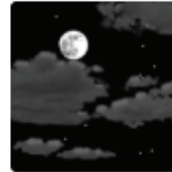
Wednesday



Sunny

High: 66 °F

Wednesday  
Night



Partly Cloudy

Low: 36 °F

Thursday



Sunny

High: 60 °F



**A Few April  
Showers  
Today**

**Today, April 27<sup>th</sup>**  
AM fog, occasional rain  
showers possible.  
*Highs 55-60°F*

**Wednesday**  
Warmer, dry, partly  
cloudy skies.  
*Highs 62-70°F*

**Thursday**  
Breezy, generally  
seasonable temperatures.  
*Highs 56-68°F*

Completed 5:30AM CDT 4-27-2021 -- NWS Aberdeen SD

Heads up for areas of fog this morning as you venture out. Roads may be a little wet too, especially across portions of north central and south central SD. A slow-moving system will keep the clouds around today, as well as the chance for a rain shower. The rest of the work-week will be predominantly dry and a bit warmer as well.



# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 295 ~ 13 of 62

## Today in Weather History

April 27, 1968: A significant snowstorm raged over the northern Black Hills blocking many highways near Gillette and Moorcroft with an estimated three to four feet of snow. Winds in the Sturgis area were nearly 90 mph.

1898: The first Weather Bureau kite was launched in Topeka, Kansas to report daily, early morning, atmospheric observations. By year's end, 16 additional launch sites would be in operation.

1899 - A tornado struck Kirksville, MO, killing 34 persons and destroying 300 buildings. (David Ludlum)

1912: The April 27-28, 1912 outbreak was the climax of a wild, week-long period of severe weather that occurred in Oklahoma. Strong to violent tornadoes struck portions of central and north-central Oklahoma on April 20, 1912. Also, a violent tornado hit Ponca City, OK on April 25, 1912. From the 27 through the 28th, 16 tornadoes rated F2 or greater touched down in the state with 6 of them rated F4. About 40 people were killed, and the storms injured 120 people.

1931 - The temperature at Pahala, located on the main island of Hawaii, soared to 100 degrees to establish a state record. (The Weather Channel)

1942 - A destructive tornado swept across Rogers County and Mayes County in Oklahoma. The tornado struck the town of Pryor killing 52 persons and causing two million dollars damage. (David Ludlum)

1987 - Forty-two cities in the western and south central U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. The afternoon high of 87 degrees at Olympia WA was an April record, and highs of 92 degrees at Boise ID, 95 degrees at Monroe LA, and 96 degrees at Sacramento CA tied April records. (The National Weather Summary) More than 300 daily temperature records fell by the wayside during a two week long heat wave across thirty-four states in the southern and western U.S. Thirteen cities established records for the month of April. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders - 1987)

1988 - Mount Washington NH reported seven feet of snow in ten days, pushing their snowfall total for the month past the previous record of 89.3 inches set in 1975. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather from the Lower and Middle Mississippi Valley to Virginia and the Carolinas. Hail up to four and a half inches in diameter caused five million dollars damage around Omaha NE. Thunderstorms spawned eleven tornadoes, and there were 160 other reports of large hail and damaging winds. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather in eastern Texas and the Lower Mississippi Valley. Severe thunderstorms spawned thirteen tornadoes in Texas and twelve in Louisiana. A tornado southwest of Coolidge TX injured eight persons and caused more than five million dollars damage. There were also eighty-five reports of large hail and damaging winds, with baseball size hail reported at Mexia TX and Shreveport LA. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data) Forty-three cities in the eastern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. Records highs included 94 degrees at Charleston WV, 95 degrees at Baltimore MD and 96 degrees at Richmond VA. (The National Weather Summary)

2003: For only the 11th time since records began in 1871, hail was observed in Key West Florida. A severe thunderstorm produced hail to 1.75 inches in diameter which easily broke the previous record of a half an inch in diameter which was set on May 10, 1961.

2011: April 27 was the single deadliest day for tornadoes since records began in 1950. The death toll from Wednesday's 199 tornadoes surpassed 300. The worst day in recorded history for storm fatalities is March 18, 1925, with 747 deaths. Of the 316 deaths reported, 313 were associated with the afternoon/evening tornadoes. In all, 31 of these tornadoes were rated as EF3 or stronger. Eleven tornadoes were rated EF4, and four were rated EF5. The average EF4 and EF5 tornado path length were 66 miles.

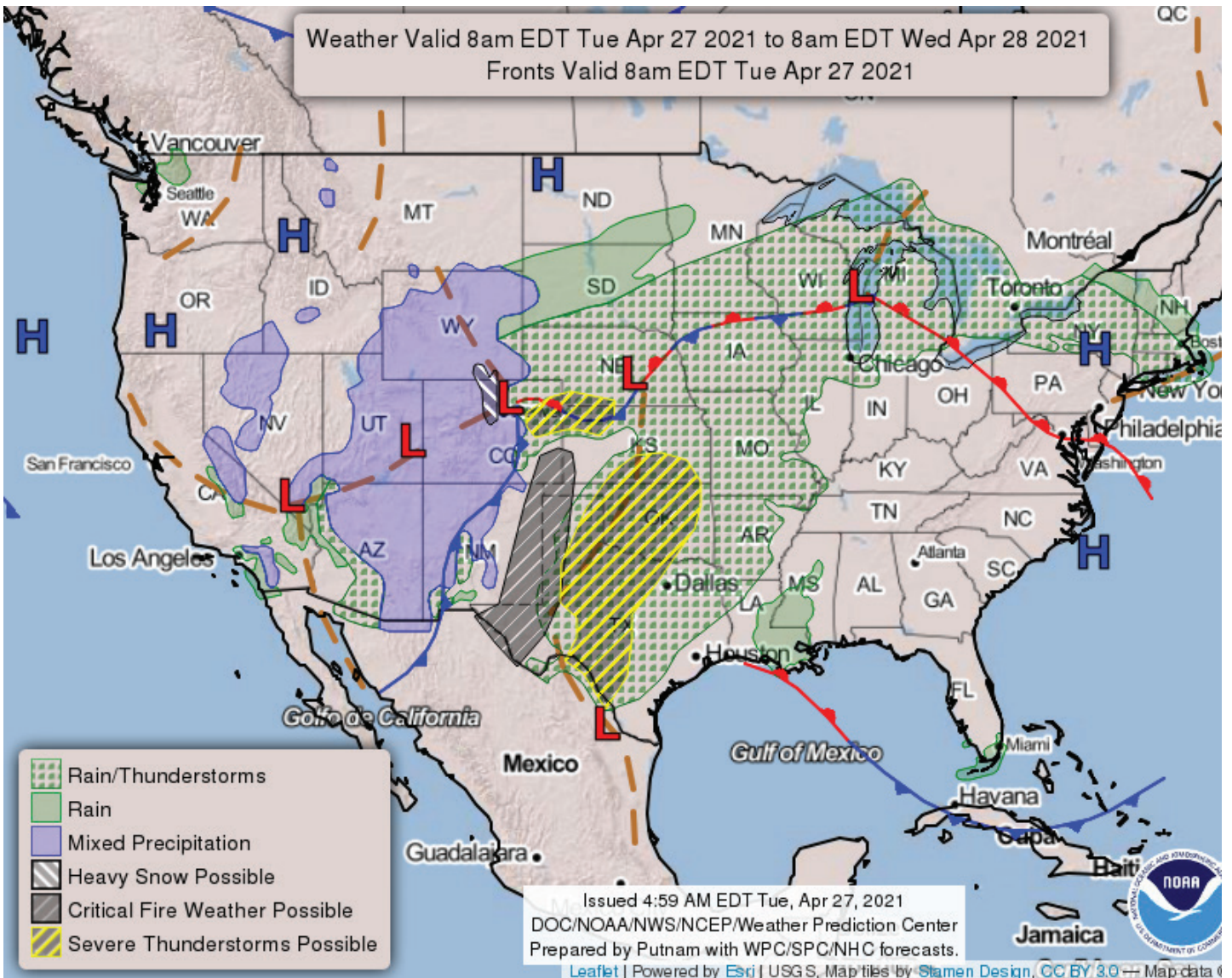
# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 295 ~ 14 of 62

## Yesterday's Groton Weather      Today's Info

**High Temp: 60.5 °F at 2:30 PM**  
**Low Temp: 38.2 °F at 7:15 AM**  
**Wind: 21 mph at 12:15 AM**  
**Precip: .07**

**Record High: 91° in 1897**  
**Record Low: 17° in 2005**  
**Average High: 63°F**  
**Average Low: 37°F**  
**Average Precip in Apr.: 1.50**  
**Precip to date in Apr.: 2.55**  
**Average Precip to date: 3.68**  
**Precip Year to Date: 2.73**  
**Sunset Tonight: 8:36 p.m.**  
**Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:26 a.m.**



# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 295 ~ 15 of 62



## LOOKING FOR GUIDANCE?

Chris came home from school with a note describing his involvement in a fight with his best friend, Will. They had a major disagreement over whose turn it was at bat and ended up in the principal's office.

Embarrassed, his mother decided to lecture him about the importance of settling disagreements without fighting. "I want you to be good!" she demanded.

Looking her in the eye, he said defiantly, "But I don't want to be good if I can't have my way! That's being a sissy!"

Many have an attitude like Chris'. It's my way or no way. But there was one man who chose to be different. "Send forth Your light and Your truth, and let them guide me...to the place where you dwell."

The Psalmist who wrote these words was in a difficult situation. He had strayed from God and was well aware of his need for restoration. He had lost his close and personal relationship with God who had been his stronghold. He was struggling in a life filled with darkness. He was well aware that the "light" that guided him was gone from his life, and he was wandering aimlessly, desperately seeking forgiveness and direction. No matter what he possessed or who he knew, there was only One who could help him.

In his heart of hearts, he knew that he needed God's light to be his guiding light and His truth to be the truth that would lead him to his Redeemer. Without His light to lead him and His truth to transform and restore him, he had no hope. Finally, in desperation, He asked God to give him His light and His truth, knowing and believing that it would lead him into His presence and that he would once again enjoy His salvation.

This Psalm begins with "O God" – a God who seems far and distant. It ends with "My God" – one who personal, powerful, and present in his heart!

Prayer: Thank You, Lord, for being the light of our life and for the gift of Your truth that leads us in times of doubt and despair. May we learn to trust. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Send out your light and your truth; let them guide me. Let them lead me to your holy mountain, to the place where you live. Psalm 43:3



# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 295 ~ 16 of 62

## 2021 Community Events

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



## News from the Associated Press

### **Census: South Dakota population grew 8.9%**

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota's population increase of 8.9% since 2010 ranked the 16th-highest in the nation, but it was outpaced by its neighbor to the north, according to the U.S. Census Bureau figures released Monday.

The state saw its population increase by 72,487 people since 2010, bringing the total to 886,667. It remained the fifth-least populated state in the United States, according to the Census Bureau's first release of data from its 2020 headcount.

South Dakota's growth rate outpaced neighboring states like Nebraska, Iowa and Minnesota, while northern neighbor North Dakota recorded the region's highest percentage growth of 15.8%.

Altogether, the U.S. population rose to 331,449,281, the Census Bureau said, a 7.4 increase that was the second-slowest ever.

Montana, which recorded 9.6% population growth, gained a congressional seat. The Census Bureau reported 1,084,225 people living there. South Dakota, meanwhile, remains the possessor of a single U.S. House seat.

The census release marks the official beginning of once-a-decade redistricting battles in states across the country. In South Dakota, a committee of lawmakers will determine new state legislative districts based on detailed census data set to be released later this year. The Legislature has until Dec. 1 to approve the new districts.

### **South Dakota resumes using J&J COVID vaccinations**

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota resumed using Johnson & Johnson's COVID-19 vaccinations Monday, state health officials announced.

U.S. health officials on Friday had lifted an 11-day pause on using J&J's single-dose shot, after scientific advisers decided its benefits outweigh a rare risk of blood clot. The government had uncovered 15 vaccine recipients who developed a highly unusual kind of blood clot out of nearly 8 million people given the J&J shot. All were women, most under age 50. Three died, and seven remain hospitalized.

No serious reactions have been reported among over 16,000 South Dakotans who received the J&J vaccine, the Department of Health said.

"The pause and restart of this vaccine should be one more example of our commitment in ensuring vaccine safety and prove that transparent and rigorous established safety standards work," Secretary of Health Kim Malsam-Rysdon said in a statement.

Over 44% of the state's population has received at least one dose of a vaccine for COVID-19, with over 390,000 people getting a shot so far.

The state reported Monday 97 more people had tested positive for the virus and two people had died. The rolling average of daily new cases has decreased by 31% over the last two weeks, according to Johns Hopkins researchers.

### **Woman struck and killed along interstate near Colman**

COLMAN, S.D. (AP) — A woman walking along the interstate near Colman was struck and killed by a passing SUV, according to the South Dakota Highway Patrol.

The crash happened on Interstate 29 about 10 p.m. Saturday when the GMC Yukon struck the 34-year-old woman who was walking in the traffic lane, according to the patrol.

The woman was pronounced dead at the scene, said Highway Patrol spokesman Tony Mangan.

Both male occupants of the SUV were not injured. The names of those involved are not yet being released. The Highway Patrol continues to investigate.

## **Biden to sign \$15 minimum wage for federal contract workers**

By JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden is set to sign an executive order to increase the minimum wage to \$15 an hour for federal contractors, providing a pay bump to hundreds of thousands of workers.

Biden administration officials said ahead of Tuesday's signing that the higher wages would lead to greater worker productivity, offsetting any additional costs to taxpayers.

"This executive order will promote economy and efficiency in federal contracting, providing value for taxpayers by enhancing worker productivity and generating higher-quality work by boosting workers' health, morale, and effort," the White House said in a statement.

The officials could not provide an exact figure on how many workers for federal contractors would receive a raise, only that it would be hundreds of thousands. There are an estimated 5 million contract workers in the federal government, according to a posting last year for the Brookings Institution by Paul Light, a public policy professor at New York University.

The increase could be dramatic for workers who earn the current minimum of \$10.95 an hour. Those workers would receive a 37% pay hike, though the increase would be rolled out gradually, according to the terms of the order.

The White House said the workers would include cleaning professionals and maintenance workers, nursing assistants who care for veterans, cafeteria workers providing for the military and laborers who build and repair federal infrastructure.

All federal agencies would need to include the higher wage in new contract offerings by Jan. 30 of next year. By March 30, agencies would need to implement the higher wage into new contracts. The increase would also be in existing contracts that are extended.

The wage would be indexed to inflation, so it would automatically increase with each year to reflect changes in prices. The tipped minimum wage of \$7.65 an hour for federal contractors would be replaced by the standard minimum by 2024.

Biden has pushed to establish a \$15 hourly minimum wage nationwide for all workers, making it a part of his coronavirus relief package. But the Senate parliamentarian said the wage hike did not follow the budgetary rules that allowed the \$1.9 trillion plan to pass with a simple majority, so it was not included in the bill that became law in March.

## **Myanmar guerrillas capture gov't base; airstrikes follow**

By GRANT PECK Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — Ethnic Karen guerrillas said they captured a Myanmar army base Tuesday near the border with Thailand, representing a morale-boosting action for those opposing the military's takeover of the country's civilian government in February.

Myanmar's military staged airstrikes several hours later on villages in territory controlled by the Karen forces, said a guerrilla spokesman, a senior Thai official and a relief worker.

A spokesman for the Karen National Union, the minority's main political group seeking greater autonomy from Myanmar's central government, said its armed wing attacked the base at 5 a.m. and burned it down just after dawn.

Casualty figures were not yet known, the KNU's head of foreign affairs, Padoh Saw Taw Nee, said in a text message. There was no immediate comment from Myanmar's military government.

The KNU, which controls territory in eastern Myanmar near the Thai border, is a close ally of the resistance movement against the military takeover that ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi. Its armed wing is called the Karen National Liberation Army.

Video shot from the Thai side of the border showed flames rising from the government position on the banks of the Salween River, amid the sound of heavy gunfire. The river marks the border with Thailand.

A report by the Karen Information Center, an online news site, quoted an unnamed villager on the Thai

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 295 ~ 19 of 62

side of the river saying he saw seven government soldiers trying to flee the camp, which is opposite Thailand's Mae Sam Laep village.

Padoh Man Man of the KNLA's 5th Brigade, which launched the morning's attack, said Myanmar's military carried out airstrikes in the early afternoon, but he did not know how many casualties there were. He described the air raids to The Associated Press as a "heinous war crime" and called for the international community to pressure the junta to stop them.

Sithichai Jindaluang, the governor of Thailand's Mae Hong Son province, confirmed at a news conference that Karen guerrillas had overrun the Myanmar base and said a woman on Thai soil was wounded by a stray bullet during the morning's fighting. He said about 450 villagers have been evacuated from Mae Sam Lap for their own safety.

Sithichai also said a Myanmar military aircraft later bombed a Karen village.

Dave Eubank of the Free Burma Rangers, a humanitarian aid group with extensive experience in the area, said he could confirm that there had been airstrikes on Karen villages in two townships in Papun district. He said Myanmar's army was also staging ground attacks in the area. Neither he nor the governor had casualty figures available.

Fighting between the KNU's armed wing and Myanmar's military has been intense since February. Government airstrikes began on March 27.

Myanmar jets have bombed and strafed Karen villages, and its army has deployed fresh battalions to the area, in possible preparation for a large-scale offensive.

Up to 25,000 villagers have fled their homes and are hiding in jungles and caves, according to Eubank.

In response, the KNLA has kept up guerrilla attacks on Myanmar patrols and bases. The KNU has also given shelter to activists against military rule who have fled the government's crackdown on the resistance movement in the cities.

There is a similar situation in northern Myanmar, where the Kachin minority claims to have captured several government outposts and been the target of air attacks.

The Karen and the Kachin are two of the bigger minority groups that have been seeking greater autonomy for decades, during which there have been periods of armed conflict punctuated by ceasefires.

The city-based resistance movement against the current ruling junta has wooed the ethnic guerrilla groups in hopes that they can form a federal army as a counterweight to the government's armed forces. A parallel National Unity Government established by elected lawmakers prevented from taking their seats by the army has appointed representatives of several minority groups to ministerial posts.

## What's behind the growth slump? Takeaways from census data

By NICHOLAS RICCARDI and MIKE SCHNEIDER Associated Press

The first batch of once-every-decade data from the U.S. Census Bureau shows a United States that is growing less quickly and but still seeing its population shift to the South and the West.

The data released Monday was relatively basic — containing national and state-level population figures and details of how they affect states' representation in Congress. Still, it contained some surprises and pointed to some consequential trends.

Five takeaways from the new census data:

### MORE SLUGGISH GROWTH AHEAD?

The U.S. population grew to 331 million, a 7.4% growth rate from the last time the Census Bureau counted every person in the country, in 2010. Those may sound like big numbers, but it's actually the second slowest rate of population growth the census has ever recorded, just behind the 7.3% growth in the 1930s.

That decade's slowed growth was rooted in the Great Depression. Our past decade's sluggish rate had similar beginnings in the long shadow of the Great Recession. The drawn-out recovery saw many young adults struggling to enter the job market, delaying marriage and starting a family. That dealt a blow to the nation's birthrate. Then the pandemic hit last year and made matters worse.

But while U.S. population growth recovered after the Great Depression, demographers are not optimistic

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 295 ~ 20 of 62

it will pick up anytime soon. Most forecast even slower population growth in the decades to come. Americans are getting older — the median age in the U.S. is 38, up one year from 37 in 2010. Immigration had been dropping even before the pandemic effectively shut it down. And many Republicans have largely turned against the idea of immigration, legal or illegal, a new political barrier to the country adding more population quickly.

“Unlike the Great Depression, it’s part of a process where we’re likely to keep having slow growth,” said William Frey, a demographer at the Brookings Institution in Washington, D.C.

That has potentially grim consequences for the nation’s future. “The big demographic advantage the U.S. once enjoyed over other rich nations has evaporated,” John Lettieri, president of the Economic Innovation Group, tweeted after the census data release. “Now there are more Americans 80 and older than 2 or younger.”

## THE GREAT MIGRATION CONTINUES

The U.S. population may be growing more slowly, but it continued its 80-year-long trend of shifting to the South and the West.

Florida, Montana and North Carolina each saw enough growth to add a congressional seat, while booming Texas gained two. Colorado and Oregon also gained new seats, while Michigan, New York and Pennsylvania lost seats.

The snapshot tells a familiar story: Americans have moved out of the industrial Midwest and Northeast, chasing jobs, more affordable housing, growing new suburbs and vibrant cities.

But, strikingly, the longtime symbol of Americans’ search for the new and the next wasn’t part of that story. California’s growth rate wasn’t enough to retain its 53-seat delegation in the House. The nation’s most populous state lost a congressional seat for the first time in its history, a fact that is already forcing debate over whether Democrats’ control of state government is to blame.

## GOOD NEWS FOR THE GOP — FOR NOW

Those population changes will be quickly translated into political shifts. The census data officially kicked off the redistricting process, in which states will redraw congressional and statehouse districts to adjust for the new headcounts.

The news Monday was generally good for Republicans. They control the redistricting process in Florida, North Carolina and Texas, which account for four of the seven new seats.

The two Democratic states that gain seats — Colorado and Oregon — won’t give that power to their Democratically controlled legislatures. In Oregon, Democrats have agreed to give GOP lawmakers equal say in exchange for a pledge not to hold up other legislation. And Colorado’s voters took the drawing of district lines away from state lawmakers and gave it to a nonpartisan commission.

The new seats are only part of the often cutthroat redistricting fight. As soon as August, the Census Bureau is expected to release detailed information showing, down to the block, where almost every person lives. New legislative maps will be redrawn in each state to ensure equal representation. But one party can gain advantage by packing rivals into a single district, or spreading them out so that they can never win an election.

Right now, the GOP controls more statehouses overall and has an edge in growing states. Republicans only need to net a handful of seats to win control of the U.S. House.

“I think Republicans, when all this is done, will be in great shape to retake the House majority in 2022,” said Adam Kincaid, executive director of the National Republican Redistricting Trust, which is coordinating the GOP redistricting push.

But there will be limits. Many of the new residents of those states are young and voters of color, groups that lean strongly Democratic. It may be hard for Republicans to maintain their edge for much of the decade, regardless of how they draw their lines.

## TROUBLE COUNTING LATINOS?

In fact, the process was expected to go even better for the GOP. Texas had been predicted to gain three seats, Florida two and Arizona one. Those shortfalls were a shocker for demographers, and there were



# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 295 ~ 21 of 62

so few details in the data it was hard to understand what happened.

One possibility is that Latinos weren't properly counted. Latinos make up a large segment of the population in the three states that didn't gain expected seats. Trump unsuccessfully pushed to add a citizenship question to the census, sparking allegations that he hoped to intimidate Latinos from participating in the process. The actual count started during the coronavirus pandemic when it was especially hard to reach certain populations.

It may be that the gap between expected gains and actual ones is the first sign of a Hispanic undercount. But it's too soon to tell without the more detailed data due out in the fall.

"The initial results are surprising enough that once more details are released, we will be able to better determine to what extent the Latino population was fairly and accurately counted," said Arturo Vargas, president of the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials.

Thomas Saenz, president of the Mexican-American Legal Defense and Education Fund, said he wasn't ready to "sound the alarm" about an undercount yet, noting that growth among Latinos may have helped New York avoid losing a second House seat.

## A GAME OF INCHES

This census count was a tough one for New York. Growth has been slowing for years and there's been a particular exodus of people from its upstate region north and west of New York City. But, during a Monday news conference, Census Bureau officials revealed the state was 89 people short of dodging the demographic bullet of losing a congressional seat.

Congressional reapportionment is a zero-sum game, with states divvying up the 435 House seats based on population. Minnesota barely edged out New York to avoid being the last state to lose a seat. If New York had counted 89 more residents, and all other states stayed the same, the state would have kept its seat and Minnesota would have lost one.

Minnesota, which had the nation's highest self-response rate, also secured the last House seat in 2010.

## Court to hear appeal of Dallas officer who killed neighbor

DALLAS (AP) — A Texas court is scheduled to hear arguments Tuesday on overturning the conviction of a former Dallas police officer who was sentenced to prison for fatally shooting her neighbor in his home.

An attorney for Amber Guyger and prosecutors are set to clash before an appeals court over whether the evidence was sufficient to prove that her 2018 shooting of Botham Jean was murder.

The hearing before a panel of judges will examine a Dallas County jury's 2019 decision to sentence Guyger to 10 years in prison for murder. It comes as a jury's finding that a former Minneapolis police officer was guilty of murdering George Floyd has again focused national attention on police killing people of color.

More than two years before Floyd's death set off protests across the country, Guyger's killing of Jean drew national attention because of the strange circumstances and because it was one in a string of shootings of Black men by white police officers.

The basic facts of the case were not in dispute. Guyger, returning home from a long shift, mistook Jean's apartment for her own, which was on the floor directly below his. Finding the door ajar, she entered and shot him, later testifying that she thought he was a burglar.

Jean, a 26-year-old accountant, had been eating a bowl of ice cream before Guyger shot him. She was later fired from the Dallas Police Department.

The appeal from Guyger, now 32, hangs on the contention that her mistaking Jean's apartment for her own was reasonable and, therefore, so too was the shooting. Her lawyers have asked the appeals court to acquit her of murder or to substitute in a conviction for criminally negligent homicide, which carries a lesser sentence.

In court filings, Dallas County prosecutors countered that Guyger's error doesn't negate "her culpable mental state." They wrote, "murder is a result-oriented offense."

## Explosive-laden 'drone' boat targets Saudi port of Yanbu

By JON GAMBRELL and ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — A remotely piloted boat packed with explosives targeted the Saudi port of Yanbu in the Red Sea on Tuesday, the kingdom said, with the blast sending black smoke into the sky off the coast.

Saudi Arabia claimed to have intercepted and destroyed the attack boat. However, private security firms suggested commercial traffic near the port may have been hit in the assault.

Details remained scarce, but the incident comes after a series of attacks on shipping in the wider Mideast region amid a shadow war between Iran and Israel and against the backdrop of ongoing negotiations between Tehran and world powers over Iran's tattered nuclear deal.

The incident also comes amid the kingdom's yearslong war against Yemen's Houthi rebels. The Houthis have in the past used bomb-laden drones and explosive-packed boats in attacks targeting the kingdom. However, the rebels did not immediately claim any assaults on Tuesday and did not respond to a request for comment.

The state-run Saudi Press Agency quoted Saudi military spokesman Col. Turki al-Maliki saying the port was targeted by the drone boat.

"The booby-trapped boat was dealt and destroyed according to the rules of engagement," the report quoted al-Maliki as saying, without providing evidence to support his claim.

The United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations, run by the British navy, simply said it was "aware of reports of an incident" and that investigations were ongoing. Private maritime security firm Dryad Global said it had reports that a ship had been "attacked," without elaborating.

Maritime security firm Neptune P2P Group reported that black smoke was seen billowing near the south entrance of the Yanbu port.

British maritime security firm Ambrey reported an "incident" off western Saudi Arabia, between the ports of Yanbu and Rabigh. Earlier Tuesday morning, smoke was seen rising from a vessel off the Saudi oil-shipping port of Yanbu, the firm said. Multiple tankers remain anchored or drifting in the area.

Yanbu port control broadcast a message by marine VHF radio, warning vessels to increase their level of alertness and monitor for any suspicious activity, Ambrey said.

The U.S. Navy's Mideast-based 5th Fleet declined to immediately comment on the incident.

Yanbu, 870 kilometers (540 miles) west of Riyadh, serves as the end point of the kingdom's crucial East-West Pipeline. It allows crude oil pumped in its eastern fields to be shipped directly via the Red Sea, avoiding the Persian Gulf's chokepoint at the Strait of Hormuz. Yanbu is also home to an oil refinery that can process 400,000 barrels of crude per day.

In May 2019, then-U.S. National Security Adviser John Bolton claimed that Yanbu had been targeted in an attack never acknowledged by the kingdom.

Meanwhile, American and Iranian warships had a tense encounter in the Persian Gulf earlier this month, the first such incident in about a year, the U.S. Navy said Tuesday.

Footage released by the Navy showed a ship commanded by Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard cut in front of the USCGC Monomoy, causing the Coast Guard vessel to come to an abrupt stop with its engine smoking on April 2.

The Guard also did the same with another Coast Guard vessel, the USCGC Wrangell, said Cmdr. Rebecca Rebarich, a 5th Fleet spokeswoman. Such close passes risk the ships colliding at sea.

Iran did not immediately acknowledge the incident in the southern reaches of the Persian Gulf, which resulted in no injuries or damage.

"The U.S. crews issued multiple warnings via bridge-to-bridge radio, five short blasts from the ships' horns, and while the (Iranian) Harth 55 responded to the bridge-to-bridge radio queries, they continued the unsafe maneuvers," Rebarich said. "After approximately three hour of the U.S. issuing warning and conducting defensive maneuvers, the (Iranian) vessels maneuvered away from the U.S. ships and opened distance between them."

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 295 ~ 23 of 62

The Wall Street Journal first reported on the incident, which involved the Iranian Harth support ship and three Iranian fast-attack craft. The Coast Guard units operate out of Bahrain as part of Patrol Forces Southwest Asia, its biggest unit overseas.

The interaction marked the first "unsafe and unprofessional" incident involving the Iranians since April 15, 2020, Rebarich said. However, Iran had largely stopped such incidents in 2018 and nearly in the entirety of 2019, she said.

In 2017, the Navy recorded 14 instances of what it describes as "unsafe and or unprofessional" interactions with Iranian forces. It recorded 35 in 2016, and 23 in 2015.

The incidents at sea almost always involve the Revolutionary Guard, which reports only to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Typically, they involve Iranian speedboats armed with deck-mounted machine guns and rocket launchers test-firing weapons or shadowing American aircraft carriers passing through the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow mouth of the Persian Gulf through which 20% of all oil passes.

Some analysts believe the incidents are meant in part to squeeze President Hassan Rouhani's administration after the 2015 nuclear deal. They include a 2016 incident in which Iranian forces captured and held overnight 10 U.S. sailors who strayed into the Islamic Republic's territorial waters.

"U.S. naval forces continue to remain vigilant and are trained to act in a professional manner, while our commanding officers retain the inherent right to act in self-defense," Rebarich said.

The incident comes as Iran negotiates with world powers in Vienna over Tehran and Washington returning to the 2015 nuclear deal, talks due to resume Tuesday. It also follows a series of incidents across the Mideast attributed to a shadow war between Iran and Israel, which includes attacks on regional shipping and sabotage at Iran's Natanz nuclear facility.

## Cooling the temperature: Biden faces fractious Congress

By MARY CLARE JALONICK and JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Can lawmakers all just listen to the president — even for one night?

Recent history is not assuring. Republican Rep. Joe Wilson shouted "you lie!" at President Barack Obama when he was giving a joint speech to Congress in 2009. Eleven years later, Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi ripped up a copy of President Donald Trump's State of the Union speech as she stood behind him on the House rostrum.

Partisan tensions have only deepened on Capitol Hill since Pelosi's defiant act last year, which came days before the Senate acquitted Trump in his first impeachment trial. Since then, the U.S. Capitol has been through the Jan. 6 insurrection, a second impeachment of Trump and another acquittal.

Trust between the parties, and between members themselves, has cratered as Joe Biden prepares to address the House and the Senate for the first time in his presidency.

While Trump often added a reality TV star's drama to his congressional addresses, Biden — who has spent most of his adult life in government service — has the chance to play the elder statesman. Lawmakers in both parties say Wednesday's address to Congress presents an opportunity for him to push past some of the antics and anger, for a few hours at least.

"I think the tension is high, but the one person who can cool the temperature in the room is Joe Biden," especially if he reaches across the aisle, said former Rep. Tom Rooney of Florida, a Republican who retired two years ago and has expressed frustration about the decline of congressional decorum and civility.

Biden's first speech to Congress — called an "address to a joint session of Congress" instead of a "State of the Union," as is customary in a president's first year — will already be unlike any other, as attendance will be limited due to COVID-19 safety protocols.

With the the House out of session for the week, many, if not most, House Republicans are expected to skip the event, increasing the chances that Biden will be speaking to a mostly friendly audience of Democrats. The Senate is in session, but some Republicans from that chamber are expected to skip as well — Texas Sen. John Cornyn said Monday that he's thinking of watching the speech on TV because "it sounds like Speaker Pelosi doesn't want us to attend."

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 295 ~ 24 of 62

Other traditions have also been jettisoned for the address. Lawmakers can't bring guests, removing one source of drama and speculation. Nor will there be guests of the first lady in the gallery, depriving Biden of the ability to humanize his policy proposals and manufacture feel-good moments.

Even if there is bad behavior in the room, the White House says the president's goal is to focus on the voters outside the Capitol.

"It'll look different, but from his vantage point it still is an opportunity to speak directly to the American people," press secretary Jen Psaki told reporters Monday. "We are looking for ways to engage with the American public, whether it's through viewing parties or ways to communicate about what the president is proposing. But it won't look or feel or sound like it has in the past."

Members of the Biden team have made no secret of their strategy to bypass GOP lawmakers and seek a solid foothold of support from Republican voters. They note that their policies are generally popular, and the result, so far, appears to be less resistance from GOP supporters. An AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs poll in March found that 60% of people approve of Biden's performance on the economy, including a relatively strong 25% of Republicans. About half of Republicans approve of how Biden has handled the pandemic.

Because Biden's team believes the policies are popular, they've been more willing to invite public debate with Republicans. It can feel like a return to greater civility, even if Republicans are still grumbling about his proposals.

David Barker, director of American University's Center for Congressional and Presidential Studies, said Biden's speech may not move policy, but "it may help him with a few voters around the edges, putting Republicans in swing districts in a bit of a squeeze" to explain why they are voting against his plans.

Louisiana Rep. Steve Scalise, the No. 2 House Republican, said he plans to skip the event and give his spot to a freshman lawmaker. But "in the end, what he says is going to be important, and I hope his speech is more focused on unifying as opposed to just having a go-it-alone strategy."

Even Joe Wilson, who is still in Congress, is encouraging Biden to reach out across party lines.

"Working across the aisle is essential for Congress in order to do what is best for American families," Wilson said in a statement. He noted that he apologized to Obama's White House after his 2009 outburst and has proposed bipartisan legislation since.

Still, Wilson's words a decade ago were a harbinger of a more partisan era on Capitol Hill, which increasingly attracts politicians more concerned with fame than legislation. Rude or outspoken behavior is often rewarded with popularity, TV appearances and fundraising dollars.

Rooney, who was elected the year before Wilson interrupted Obama's speech, said that respectfully listening to the president, no matter the party, used to be the norm. He recalled that he would follow party leaders' signals, not even standing up to clap unless they did.

"We've gone from extended standing applause to outbursts where people might be able to make news in the room themselves, and then raise money off that," Rooney said.

Rep. Jim Himes, D-Conn., said the scene on the floor can feel tense, and "you sort of wonder who's going to do what next." But he predicted this year's speech will be calmer, not only because of the reduced numbers, but because Biden is different than his predecessors.

While Trump was combative and Obama was often cerebral, Himes said, Biden connects well with others in a way that could potentially "transcend partisanship and calm tempers" in Congress.

"I honestly believe the best thing Joe Biden can do is to do what Joe Biden usually does, which is to speak from his heart," Himes said.

And his advice to colleagues? "Tone down the Oscar-winning performances."

## In fight against virus, Biden looks for path back to normal

By ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden spent his first 100 days in office encouraging Americans to mask up and stay home to slow the spread of the coronavirus. His task for the next 100 days will be to



# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 295 ~ 25 of 62

lay out the path back to normal.

When he entered office, Biden moved swiftly to overcome vaccine supply issues and more than tripled the country's ability to administer them. But ending the coronavirus pandemic, the central challenge of his presidency, will require more than putting shots into arms — a task now growing more difficult as demand sags — but also a robust plan to help the nation emerge from a year of isolation, disruption and confusion.

If Biden launched the nation onto a war footing against a virus that infected nearly 200,000 Americans in January and killed about 3,000 of them per day, the next months will be tantamount to winning the peace. Already, deaths are down to fewer than 700 per day and average daily cases are below 60,000. U.S. officials insist there is a long way to go before the country can be fully at ease, but the progress is marked.

Going forward, success will mean finishing the nation's herculean vaccination campaign — to date 43% of Americans have received at least one shot — overcoming lagging demand and communicating in clear terms what activities can be safely resumed by those who are vaccinated. Key milestones include Biden's July Fourth pledge that Americans can safely gather with friends and family, and the start of the new school year, when the president hopes to have all schools open safely.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention was expected to unveil new guidance on outdoor mask-wearing for unvaccinated people on Tuesday, ahead of a planned speech by Biden later in the day on the state of the pandemic response. Officials said a focus in the coming weeks will be on easing guidance for vaccinated people, both in recognition of their lower risk and to provide an incentive to get shots.

"We're excited about the progress we've made, and the opportunity ahead of us, and because of the vaccination program we built we're further along than almost anyone predicted," said White House COVID-19 coordinator Jeff Zients in a Monday interview. "It means we're closer to returning to normal."

On Inauguration Day, the notion of COVID-19 supply eclipsing demand seemed fanciful, with only priority groups eligible for shots and an underground economy emerging for "extra doses" for everyone else. Now, shots are so plentiful in many places that the Biden administration is encouraging states and pharmacy partners to set up walk-in sites for doses without appointments.

This "new phase," as Biden's team calls it, has been the subject of intense preparation since even before the president's inauguration. Wary of wasting a moment, Zients and other officials drafted a mountain of emails to launch the federal bureaucracy into action to be sent in the first minutes after their government email accounts were activated. Even as more Americans get vaccinated, Zients said, the White House wasn't letting up its urgency just yet.

"I think this exact same approach that served us well the first 100 days will serve us well for the next 100 days," he said.

One of Biden's first actions in office was to increase the federal government's orders for the vaccines to ensure supply for all Americans by early summer. Now the U.S. is able to turn to sharing some of the precious supply with the world, as the White House announced Monday it would do with roughly 60 million doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine produced in the U.S. but not yet authorized for use there. At the same time, the White House was instrumental in an agreement reached with drugmaker Sanofi on Monday to help scale up production through next year of Moderna's two-dose shot, which makes up more than 40 percent of doses administered in the U.S.

Believing most Americans who have yet to get a shot would do so if it were easier, the White House has deployed billions of dollars toward ads encouraging shots, community programs to bring doses to the hardest to reach Americans, and tax credits to encourage employers to give their workers paid time off to get protected.

"In this next phase we'll focus on increasing accessibility, building confidence, continuing to put equity at the center of everything we do," Zients said of the push to maximize the number of Americans vaccinated in coming months. "It's not going to be easy, but neither was getting to 200 million shots in less than 100 days, and we did that."

To date Biden and his advisers have hewed to caution, even overcaution. Officials expressed reluctance about loosening travel guidance for vaccinated individuals not because of concerns about their risk — but

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 295 ~ 26 of 62

because they worried unvaccinated individuals would travel with them.

"The president's been very clear that he'll shoot straight with the American people at all times and that's consistent with the wartime effort in his leadership," said Zients, who echoed Biden's call that the administration would be "leading with science and facts."

In March, Biden predicted a return to small, in-person gatherings of vaccinated people for the July Fourth holiday, and aides later clarified that he believed that would be possible without masks. To many, it was viewed as an overly conservative reflection of what much of the nation was already doing. But it also reflected the lingering unknowns about how to reboot a nation that for a year has been living in a state of partial hibernation.

"The country has gotten tired of lockdowns," said Robert Blendon, a Harvard professor of health policy and political analysis.

"I think there's tension within the administration," Blendon said. "Anybody tracking public mood knows that the more you could lay out a firm road map, the better people in this country will feel."

He added that while experts are telling Biden "we can't predict it's going to play out exactly that way," people's lives would be better if the administration "could lay out, by September you'll do this, by November you'll do this. But there are these unknowns."

It's those variables that keep White House officials up at night — the spread of "mutant" strains of the virus, dropping demand for the vaccines and the public's growing eagerness to return to normal.

"It's a race against time," Mark Schlesinger, a Yale professor of health policy, said of the dash to get more people vaccinated while they still cooperate with measures meant to slow the spread of the virus and before potentially dangerous variants develop.

In an awkward shift of public messaging, Biden's next 100 days will require him to encourage many of the pre-pandemic behaviors that he's been discouraging for the last year while at the same time monitoring for variants and pockets of infection.

For the broader economy, federal relief dollars and pent-up demand will stimulate growth. But the future of key sectors of the U.S. economy that employ millions, particularly travel and hospitality, depends on how Biden manages the nation's emergence from the pandemic.

"The challenge for the Biden administration is, as they try to present a national portrait of how America is as a whole, how do they responsibly deal with that variation and bring those more laggard states and areas where vaccine hesitancy is still high and lots of vulnerable people still uncovered," Schlesinger said. "That's the million-dollar question."

For Biden, who was elected to bring an end to the pandemic but has a far broader legislative agenda, the politics of getting the virus response right can't be ignored. "If the president's able to get people back to some normal life, the relief will be unbelievable," Blendon said. "And he'll get enormous credit."

## 'Cannon fodder': Medical students in India feel betrayed

By NEHA MEHROTRA and ANIRUDDHA GHOSAL Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — Since the beginning of the week, Dr. Siddharth Tara, a postgraduate medical student at New Delhi's government-run Hindu Rao Hospital, has had a fever and persistent headache. He took a COVID-19 test, but the results have been delayed as the country's health system implodes.

His hospital, overburdened and understaffed, wants him to keep working until the testing laboratory confirms he has COVID-19.

On Tuesday, India reported 323,144 new infections for a total of more than 17.6 million cases, behind only the United States. India's Health Ministry also reported another 2,771 deaths in the past 24 hours, with 115 Indians succumbing to the disease every hour. Experts say those figures are likely an undercount.

"I am not able to breathe. In fact, I'm more symptomatic than my patients. So how can they make me work?" asked Tara.

The challenges facing India today, as cases rise faster than anywhere else in the world, are being compounded by the fragility of its health system and its doctors.

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 295 ~ 27 of 62

There are 541 medical colleges in India with 36,000 post-graduate medical students, and according to doctors' unions constitute the majority at any government hospitals — they are the bulwark of the India's COVID-19 response. But for over a year, they have been subjected to mammoth workloads, lack of pay, rampant exposure to the virus and complete academic neglect.

"We're cannon fodder, that's all," said Tara.

In five states that are being hit hardest by the surge, postgraduate doctors have held protests against what they view as administrators' callous attitude toward students like them, who urged authorities to prepare for a second wave but were ignored.

Jignesh Gengadiya, a 26-year-old postgraduate medical student, knew he'd be working 24 hours a day, seven days a week when he signed up for a residency at the Government Medical College in the city of Surat in Gujarat state. What he didn't expect was to be the only doctor taking care of 60 patients in normal circumstances, and 20 patients on duty in the intensive care unit.

"ICU patients require constant attention. If more than one patient starts collapsing, who do I attend to?" asked Gengadiya.

Hindu Rao Hospital, where Tara works, provides a snapshot of the country's dire situation. It has increased beds for virus patients, but hasn't hired any additional doctors, quadrupling the workload, Tara said. To make matters worse, senior doctors are refusing to treat virus patients.

"I get that senior doctors are older and more susceptible to the virus. But as we have seen in this wave, the virus affects old and young alike," said Tara, who suffers from asthma but has been doing regular COVID-19 duty.

The hospital has gone from zero to 200 beds for virus patients amid the surge. Two doctors used to take care of 15 beds — now they're handling 60.

Staff numbers are also falling, as students test positive at an alarming rate. Nearly 75% of postgraduate medical students in the surgery department tested positive for the virus in the last month, said a student from the department who spoke anonymously out of fear of retribution.

Tara, who's part of the postgraduate doctors association at Hindu Rao, said students receive each month's wages two months late. Last year, students were given four months' pending wages only after going on hunger strike in the midst of the pandemic.

Dr. Rakesh Dogra, senior specialist at Hindu Rao, said the brunt of coronavirus care inevitably falls on postgraduate students. But he stressed they have different roles, with postgraduate students treating patients and senior doctors supervising.

Although Hindu Rao hasn't hired any additional doctors during the second wave, Dogra said doctors from nearby municipal hospitals were temporarily posted there to help with the increased workload.

India — which spends 1.3% of its GDP on healthcare, less than all major economies — was initially seen as a success story in weathering the pandemic. However, in the succeeding months, few arrangements were made.

A year later, Dr. Subarna Sarkar says she feels betrayed by how her hospital in the city of Pune was caught completely off guard.

"Why weren't more people hired? Why wasn't infrastructure ramped up? It's like we learnt nothing from the first wave," she said.

Belatedly, the administration at Sassoon Hospital said last Wednesday it would hire 66 doctors to bolster capacity, and this month increased COVID-19 beds from 525 to 700.

But only 11 new doctors have been hired so far, according to Dr. Murlidhar Tambe, the hospital's dean.

"We're just not getting more doctors," Tambe said, adding that they're struggling to find new technicians and nurses too.

In response to last year's surge, the hospital hired 200 nurses on a contractual basis but fired them in October after cases receded. Tambe said the contract allowed the hospital to terminate their services as it saw fit.

"Our primary responsibility is towards patients, not staff," the dean said.

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 295 ~ 28 of 62

Cases in Pune city have nearly doubled in the last month, from 5,741 to 10,193. To deal with the surge, authorities are promising more beds.

Sarkar, the medical student at Sassoon Hospital, says that's not enough.

"Increased beds without manpower are just beds. It's a smokescreen," she said.

To handle the deluge, students at Sassoon said authorities had weakened rules meant to keep them and patients safe. For instance, students work with COVID-19 patients one week and then go straight to working with patients in the general ward.

This increases the risk of spreading infections, said Dr. T. Sundararaman of the University of Pennsylvania's National Health Systems Resource Center.

Students want Sassoon's administration to institute a mandatory quarantine period between duty in the COVID-19 and general wards.

Over the last month, 80 of the hospital's 450 postgraduate students have tested positive, but they only get a maximum of seven days of convalescence leave.

"COVID ruins your immunity, so there are people who are testing positive two, three times because their immunity is just so shot, and they're not being allowed to recover," said Sarkar.

And after a year of processing COVID-19 tests, she says she knows everything there is to know about the virus, but little else. Nationwide, diverting postgraduate students to take care of virus patients has come at a cost.

At a government medical college in the city of Surat, students said they haven't had a single academic lecture. The hospital has been admitting virus patients since March of last year, and postgraduate medical students spend almost all their time taking care of them. The city is now reporting more than 2,000 cases and 22 deaths a day.

Having to focus so heavily on the pandemic has left many medical students anxious about their future.

Students studying to be surgeons don't know how to remove an appendix, lung specialists haven't learned the first thing about lung cancer and biochemists are spending all their time doing PCR tests.

"What kind of doctors is this one year going to produce?" said Dr. Shraddha Subramanian, a resident doctor in the department of surgery at Sassoon Hospital.

## Islamic State degraded in Afghanistan but still poses threat

By KATHY GANNON Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — Tribal elder Dawlat Khan still has nightmares about fighters from the local affiliate of the global Islamic State terror network who swept across his and other villages in eastern Afghanistan five years ago.

The extremists, including Afghans, Pakistanis, Arabs and men from Central Asia, quickly imposed a reign of terror. They kidnapped some locals who worked for the Afghan government, later dropping off their decapitated corpses in public places. In one instance, villagers were summoned to a beheading where some fainted while others froze as they watched in horror.

Militants of the Islamic State group have since been driven back into the mountains by blistering U.S. and Afghan bombing raids and a fierce ground campaign by the Taliban, Afghanistan's homegrown insurgents. The Taliban, eager to expand their domestic political power, pledged to the Trump administration last year they would prevent any attacks on the West from Afghan soil after foreign troops leave.

Recent success in containing IS is central to the calculus of President Joe Biden, who decided earlier this month to pull all remaining U.S. troops out of Afghanistan by the summer. Biden argues that threats to the West, whether by IS or remnants of the al-Qaida network, can be defused from a distance.

Yet there are concerns that in the potential chaos of a post-withdrawal Afghanistan, IS "will be able to find additional space to operate," said Seth Jones, senior vice-president at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington.

Some note that it took more than three years to dislodge and degrade IS fighters, many of them ethnic Pashtuns from Pakistan's tribal regions and Afghans from the northeastern Nangarhar and Kunar provinces.



# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 295 ~ 29 of 62

The retreating militants left behind mined roads and fields.

Khan, the tribal leader, fled his village of Pananzai with his six brothers and their families at the height of the battles against IS. They're not rushing home, even though the family of 63 people is crammed into nine small rooms in Nangarhar's provincial capital of Jalalabad.

"We are afraid they will return," Khan, a father of 12, said of IS fighters.

Biden has said he will hold the Taliban accountable for their commitment not to allow terror threats against the U.S. or its allies from Afghan soil. The U.S. invaded Afghanistan 20 years ago after al-Qaida militants, hosted by the Taliban, staged the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

In recent years, Washington has come to see the Taliban as a national force, with no ambitions beyond their borders, according to a U.S. defense official who spoke on condition of anonymity in line with regulations.

The Taliban, familiar with mountain caves and dirt paths in remote terrain, are a useful ally against IS, which is viewed by the U.S. as the greatest threat emanating from Afghanistan, the official said.

In justifying his withdrawal decision, Biden noted that terror threats are "metastasizing around the globe" and that "keeping thousands of troops grounded and concentrated in just one country, at the cost of billions each year, makes little sense to me and our leaders."

The withdrawal is under way, with the final phase starting Saturday. By Sept. 11, America will have withdrawn its last 2,500 to 3,500 troops, and about 7,000 allied forces from NATO are following the same timetable.

But there are concerns about IS re-emerging, particularly if the Taliban and the Afghan government can't reach a power-sharing deal. Intra-Afghan peace talks remain stalled, despite U.S. efforts to jump start them.

Ongoing fighting between the Taliban and the government could further erode the morale of Afghanistan's 300,000-plus security forces who sustain heavy casualties daily and are plagued by widespread corruption. It's unclear how the troops can be a bulwark against new terrorist threats.

At the same time, IS continues to recruit among radicalized university students and disgruntled Taliban, said a former Afghan security official who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to talk to reporters.

IS has also resumed a campaign of targeted killings of minority Shiite Muslims, many of them ethnic Hazaras, as well as women's rights activists and media workers. They claimed attacks last year on two educational facilities, including Kabul University, that killed more than 50 students. Washington blamed IS for a brutal assault last year on a maternity hospital in a largely Hazara neighborhood of Kabul. Infants and pregnant women were killed.

In March, seven Hazaras who worked in a stucco factory in the eastern city of Jalalabad were killed in an attack claimed by IS. The assailants tied their victims' hands behind their backs and shot each with a single bullet to the back of the head.

Some residents there are afraid to point the finger at IS, fearing they might be targeted next.

IS operatives are said to occupy an entire neighborhood near the central Talashi roundabout. They have infiltrated the motorized rickshaw business and use the vehicles for targeted killings, said taxi driver Saida Jan.

Evan Kohlmann, a terrorism consultant, said for a while it appeared the IS presence in Afghanistan and surrounding regions "was all but dead," but the group's operations "have since resumed in earnest."

"They represent a significant terrorist threat, but their tactics remain in the realm of assassination and sabotage," said Kohlmann, who has worked with the FBI and the Nine Eleven Finding Answers Foundation that emerged following the assaults on America.

"They don't seem to be in a strong position of conquering and holding territory," or of threatening the U.S., he said.

The Taliban say they have made good on promises to the U.S. by ordering fighters to keep non-Afghans from their ranks, and telling al-Qaida to leave the region. Some analysts say they're not convinced the Taliban have distanced themselves from groups like al-Qaida.

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 295 ~ 30 of 62

U.S. officials, meanwhile, acknowledge the withdrawal will reduce Washington's intelligence gathering capacities, even if IS and al-Qaida aren't in a position to attack U.S. targets from Afghanistan.

Asfandyar Mir at Stanford University's Center for International Security and Cooperation said the U.S. will be able to continue technical eaves-dropping from a distance, while on-the-ground intelligence gathering will weaken further.

"The U.S. campaign in Afghanistan has been notoriously poor at getting good information and being played by rent-seeking actors, the cost of which is borne by innocent civilians in raids and strikes gone wrong," said Mir.

"With U.S. forces out, and unable to provide security to potential informers, existing sources will dwindle and opportunities for bad actors to dupe the U.S. will grow," he said.

## In Africa, vaccine hesitancy adds to slow rollout of doses

By RODNEY MUHUMUZA Associated Press

KAMPALA, Uganda (AP) — Some Africans are hesitating to get COVID-19 vaccines amid concerns about their safety, alarming public health officials as some countries start to destroy thousands of doses that expired before use.

Malawi and South Sudan in recent days have said they will destroy some of their doses, a concerning development on a continent where health officials have been outspoken about the need for vaccine equity as the world's rich nations hold the bulk of shots.

Africa, whose 1.3 billion people represent 16% of the world's population, has received less than 2% of the COVID-19 vaccine doses administered around the world, according to the World Health Organization.

The continent has confirmed more than 4.5 million COVID-19 cases, including 120,000 deaths, a tiny fraction of the global fatalities and caseload. But some experts worry that the 54-nation continent will suffer in the long term if it takes longer than expected to meet the threshold scientists believe is needed to stop uncontrolled spread of COVID-19 — 70% or higher of the population having immunity through vaccination or past infection.

Africa seeks to vaccinate up to 60% of its people by the end of 2022.

Achieving that goal will require about 1.5 billion vaccine doses for Africa if the two-shot AstraZeneca vaccine continues to be widely used. But safety concerns relating to that vaccine, often the main shot available under the donor-backed COVAX program to ensure access for developing countries, have left some Africans worried.

Vaccine-related suspicions have been spread widely on social media, driven partly by a general lack of trust in authorities. Uganda's health minister had to refute allegations she faked receiving a shot, even posting a video of herself getting the jab on Twitter, along with the admonition: "Please stop spreading fake news!"

Some have raised the untrue claim that the shots can cause infertility on sites such as WhatsApp. Others openly question the speed with which COVID-19 vaccines have been developed.

"The world has failed to find a vaccine for AIDS all these years, but they quickly found a vaccine for COVID? I am not going to go for that vaccine," said Richard Bbale, an electrician in the Ugandan capital, Kampala, voicing fear that an experimental vaccine could be harmful. "Even if the government forces us to get the vaccine as if it's a national ID, I will not go."

Austin Demby, Sierra Leone's health minister, told reporters last week that a third of the 96,000 doses the country received in March will likely not be used before they expire, citing a lack of urgency among some people who decided that COVID-19 is "not as bad as Ebola," which ravaged the country several years ago.

"People are worried this is another public experiment they want to make on our people," he said.

The World Health Organization and the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have urged African governments to continue rolling out the AstraZeneca vaccine, saying its benefits outweigh any risks after European countries limited its use over concerns about rare blood clots in a small number of recipients.

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 295 ~ 31 of 62

"Anything you take has a risk. Any medication," Africa CDC director John Nkengasong told a briefing last week, citing some essential drugs that can cause blood clots in rare cases. "That's the way we should be looking at these vaccines."

The Africa CDC said in a statement last week it had received guidance from the Serum Institute of India recommending a three-month "shelf life extension" on the April 13 expiration date of at least a million AstraZeneca shots delivered to Africa.

Africa nations "don't have a choice," Nkengasong said, urging Malawi to use all its shots after authorities in the southern African nation said they would burn 16,000 AstraZeneca doses that expired earlier in April. It is unclear if Malawi will follow that advice.

The country has administered less than half of more than 500,000 doses it received via COVAX, leading Victor Mithi, head of the Society of Medical Doctors in Malawi, to blame vaccine misconceptions.

"We are continuously assuring Malawians that the vaccine is safe and that once they feel anything abnormal beyond the usual post-vaccination symptoms, they can always come to the hospital and report," he said.

An additional 1.26 million doses expected from COVAX at the end of May may be wasted if people continue shunning the vaccine, said Shouts Simeza, president of the National Organization of Nurses and Midwives in Malawi, adding that a possible solution is making vaccinations mandatory for all who are eligible.

Trying to increase coverage, Malawi's government has relaxed vaccine eligibility rules to include everyone aged 18 and older after initially focusing on priority groups such as health workers.

The East African nation of Uganda, which also is struggling to increase vaccine rollout among priority groups, may soon act similarly, said Emmanuel Ainebyoona, spokesman for the Ministry of Health. Ugandans under age 50 have shown interest in getting vaccinated, raising hope that doses will not expire unused, he said.

Uganda has received 964,000 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine, the only one available in the country. But just over 230,000 doses have been administered since March 10.

Health authorities had planned to give at least 500,000 people their first shot in a first round of vaccinations targeting front-line workers, people with underlying health conditions and those 50 and older.

But, amid a slow rollout, they are now reaching out to popular "influencers," celebrities such as a kickboxer who was photographed getting a shot last week.

"The uptake is gradually improving," Ainebyoona said, noting that "communications interventions" have proved necessary to get more Ugandans to embrace the vaccination campaign.

A few thousand people are inoculated daily at centers put up across the country, including inside regional hospitals. The local Daily Monitor newspaper recently reported that more than 280,000 doses will likely expire by July at the current average of about 6,000 shots used each day.

Vaccination teams, lacking official records of eligible residents, simply sit and wait for people who may not show up.

## Global rights group accuses Israel of apartheid, persecution

By JOSEPH KRAUSS Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — One of the world's best-known human rights groups said Tuesday that Israel is guilty of the international crimes of apartheid and persecution because of discriminatory policies toward Palestinians within its own borders and in the occupied territories.

In a sweeping, 213-page report, the New York-based Human Rights Watch joins a growing number of commentators and rights groups who view the conflict not primarily as a land dispute but as a single regime in which Palestinians — who make up roughly half the population of Israel, the West Bank and Gaza — are systematically denied basic rights granted to Jews.

Israel adamantly rejects that characterization, saying its Arab minority enjoys full civil rights. It views Gaza, from which it withdrew soldiers and settlers in 2005, as a hostile entity ruled by the Islamic militant group Hamas, and it considers the West Bank to be disputed territory subject to peace negotiations —

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 295 ~ 32 of 62

which collapsed more than a decade ago.

Human Rights Watch focused its report on the definitions of apartheid and persecution used by the International Criminal Court, which launched a probe into possible Israeli war crimes last month. Israel rejects the court as biased.

Citing public statements by Israeli leaders and official policies, HRW argued that Israel has "demonstrated an intent to maintain the domination of Jewish Israelis over Palestinians" in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza, coupled with "systematic oppression" and "inhumane acts."

"When these three elements occur together, they amount to the crime of apartheid," it said.

As to the charge of persecution, the group cited "grave abuses" in the occupied territories, including land confiscation, the systematic denial of building permits, home demolitions and "sweeping, decades-long restrictions on freedom of movement and basic human rights."

The report cites a range of policies it says are aimed at ensuring a Jewish majority in Israel and lands it intends to keep, while largely confining Palestinians to scattered enclaves under overarching Israeli control, with policies that encourage Palestinians to leave.

While such policies are far more severe in the occupied territories, HRW said they can also be found in Israel itself, where Palestinian citizens, who make up roughly 20% of the population, face widespread discrimination when it comes to housing, land access and basic services.

Omar Shakir, the author of the report, said that from the heady early days of the peace process in the 1990s up until the Obama years, "there was enough there to question whether there was an intent for permanent domination."

But with the demise of the peace process; Israel's plans to annex up to a third of the West Bank, which were put on hold but never abandoned; its massive expansion of settlements and infrastructure linking them to Israel; and the passing of a controversial nation-state law favoring Jews — many say it's no longer possible to view the current situation as temporary.

"Prominent voices have for years warned that Israeli conduct risked turning into apartheid," Shakir said. "This 213-page report finds that the threshold has been crossed."

Israel rejected the report. Human Rights Watch "is known to have a long-standing anti-Israel agenda," the Foreign Ministry said. "The fictional claims that HRW concocted are both preposterous and false."

Israel's supporters reject allegations of apartheid, pointing to the existence of the internationally recognized Palestinian Authority, which administers scattered West Bank enclaves under agreements signed in the 1990s.

Israel and the Palestinians have held several rounds of peace talks since then that included discussions of Palestinian independence but were unable to reach a final agreement.

Eugene Kontorovich, director of international law at the Kohelet Policy Forum, a conservative Israeli think tank, said the Palestinians were responsible for their fate. "They have chosen it by rejecting alternatives," he said.

HRW and other rights groups say that despite the existence of the Palestinian Authority, Israel maintains overarching control over nearly every aspect of Palestinian lives in both the West Bank and Gaza.

Israel has exclusive control over 60% of the West Bank, its borders and airspace, and imposes restrictions on movement and residency. The nearly 500,000 Jewish settlers living in the West Bank have full Israeli citizenship, while the territory's 2.5 million Palestinians live under military rule.

The disparity could be seen in Israel's successful coronavirus vaccination campaign, with shots freely offered to settlers but largely denied to their Palestinian neighbors.

In Gaza, an Israeli blockade imposed after Hamas seized power has largely confined 2 million Palestinians to the coastal strip and decimated the economy. Israel imposes heavy restrictions on the movement of people and goods in and out of Gaza, as does neighboring Egypt.

The agreements reached in the 1990s were intended to be temporary, pending an historic peace accord that would establish a Palestinian state in most of the West Bank, Gaza and east Jerusalem, territories Israel captured in the 1967 war. But that kind of agreement appears farther out of reach than at any point



# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 295 ~ 33 of 62

in the last three decades.

Israel is dominated by right-wing parties opposed to the creation of a Palestinian state. Neither of the rival Palestinian governments in the West Bank or Gaza commands a national movement that could make major concessions, even if Israel were willing to do the same.

Many have concluded that a negotiated two-state solution — still widely seen internationally as the only way of resolving the conflict — will never happen.

Instead of focusing on maps and borders, they call for equal rights for Jews and Palestinians in one binational state, a confederation or some other arrangement.

Kontorovich, voicing a common Israeli criticism, accused HRW of unfairly singling Israel out and trying to delegitimize it.

“Why say it’s apartheid? Why not just say Israel has some discriminatory policies that we don’t like?” he said. “Because for discriminatory policies, what do you do? You change the policies. ... What do you do with an apartheid regime? You have to replace it.”

Human Rights Watch does not adopt a position on what a final agreement should look like, but says any attempt to resolve the conflict must recognize the reality on the ground.

“The underlying issue is structural repression and discrimination,” Shakir said. “You need to address rights abuse and then create a context in which there can be a political solution that all parties reach.”

## **EXPLAINER: What was with that weird Oscar ending?**

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

The 93rd annual Academy Awards were always going to be a bit surreal this year.

The pandemic changed many of the usual rhythms and traditions of the Oscars on Sunday night. There was a glamour-filled red carpet but no onlookers or teams of publicists. There were in-person, mask-less winners but not in the usual order, and the speeches were never drowned out with play-off music.

Compounding the differences this year was a telecast, steered by producers Steven Soderbergh, Jesse Collins and Stacy Sher, that wanted a new look and feel to an often stodgy, persistently unchanging ceremony.

But what was with that ending? How staged was Glenn Close’s dance? And where, oh where, was the play-off music? Here’s my best try to answer some of the night’s befuddlements.

**THE ENDING — WHY?**

The Oscars have known more dramatic and more shambolic endings (“Envelopegate” was a mere four years ago) but this may have set a new bar for anti-climactic. You would swear someone even played a sad trombone.

Going into Sunday, the show’s producers had said they wanted to take “some big swings” in the telecast. One turned out to be switching the normal awards order. Best director, usually one of the final awards, was handed out mid-show. Best picture was third-to-last and the night’s final two awards were best actress and best actor. Presumably, the thinking was that best actor would go to Chadwick Boseman (he won virtually every best-actor trophy leading up to the Oscars), and thus end the ceremony on a meaningful note of tribute.

But there had been hints of an upset. Two weeks earlier, Anthony Hopkins won at the BAFTAs, an award he was also absent for — though the show managed to track him down in his native Wales to talk to the BAFTA press. The Oscars had pressed nominees to attend, if possible, or join from a remote location. But the 83-year-old Hopkins ( who became the oldest actor to win an Oscar, his second ) elected not to travel to Los Angeles or the hub in London. Knighted living legends who adore the Welsh countryside get to do that. Only the next morning did Sir Anthony, with a bucolic vista behind him, post an Instagram video of thanks, and a few words on the late Boseman. “At 83 years of age, I did not expect to get his award, I really didn’t,” he said.

Posthumous Oscars are also hard to come by. There’s a reason it’s only happened twice before among actors (Peter Finch and Heath Ledger). For some voters, it can seem like a wasted vote, since the honoree

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 295 ~ 34 of 62

isn't there to accept it. And one of the longest Oscar seasons ever (the ceremony was postponed two months) may have sapped some of the momentum for Boseman, who died last August; some may have felt he had been already honored by previous awards like at the Golden Globes and the Screen Actors Guild Awards. Perhaps the Independent Spirit Awards on Thursday supplied foreshadowing when Riz Ahmed ("Sound of Metal") was chosen over Boseman.

The Oscars haven't always ended with best picture, but it's been more than 40 years since another category was last. Even the best-picture winners — who usually conclude the telecast with trophies raised — weren't expecting it.

"It surely was a surprise," said "Nomadland" producer Dan Janvey backstage to reporters. "I think a lot of us grew up watching the Oscars and I've gotten used to it being last."

But on Sunday, the category switcheroo culminated in an absent winner and a strange empty-stage finale — a fitting end to a thoroughly strange movie year.

## WHERE WAS THE PLAY-OFF MUSIC?

No snark was part of the mandate of this year's Oscars, Sher said. From top to bottom, the show was a sincere celebration of cinema and the night's nominees. Introductions were lengthy and detailed. And when winners clutched their Oscars, they were given wide latitude to speak. Not once did music director Questlove turn up the music. This was partly because the show had more time. Performances of the best song nominees were pre-taped and aired during the red-carpet preshow, meaning the broadcast — which also had few comedy bits — wasn't in a race. That went with the overall tone of the show: To earnestly celebrate the artistry and craft of moviemaking. On-camera talent, Soderbergh noted before the show, only accounts for a fraction of a film set.

## WHY DID FRANCES MCDORMAND HOWL?

"We give this one to our wolf," McDormand said while accepting the best picture award for "Nomadland." McDormand, a producer as well as star of Chloé Zhao's film, let a howl that could have been a reference to her nomadic, lone wolf character in a melancholic open-road tale about the primal necessities of life. But McDormand's howl was more pointedly poignant than that. It was a way to honor Michael Wolf Snyder, the film's production sound mixer, who died in March at the age of 35. "That howling to the moon is for Wolf," Zhao explained to members of the press. McDormand earlier said of Snyder in a statement to Variety: "Wolf recorded our heartbeats. Our every breath. For me, he is 'Nomadland.'"

## WHY DID THE SHOW LOOK DIFFERENT?

Soderbergh conceived of the telecast a movie, complete with opening credits (presenters were the cast), a sleek opening tracking shot with Regina King and all the technical aspects of film. That included a more letterbox format, a frame rate of 24 instead of the more typical television rates of 30 or 60. Whatever you thought of the show, it had to be the best looking Oscars in ages.

## WAS CLOSE'S DANCE REHEARSED?

Well of course it was. Close did her best to suggest her knowledge of Experience Unlimited's "Da Butt" (featured in Spike Lee's "School Daze") was completely off the cuff, but Lil Rel Howery acknowledged during the post-show that their music trivia bit had been discussed beforehand. Still, credit the 74-year-old Close for being willing to boogie shortly after losing out on an Oscar for the eighth time — a record among living performers.

## 'Red Tourism' draws Chinese on centennial of Communist Party

By EMILY WANG FUJIYAMA Associated Press

JINGGANGSHAN, China (AP) — On the 100th anniversary of the Chinese Communist Party, tourists are flocking to historic sites and making pilgrimages to party landmarks.

On a street where the Red Army once roamed, a group of retirees in historic pastel-blue army uniforms belt out tunes made famous through countless movies, television shows and other forms of propaganda. Historic locations in Jiangxi and Guizhou provinces — the sites of revolutionary leader Mao Zedong's early battles, his escape from Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist forces in the Long March and the cementing of his

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 295 ~ 35 of 62

leadership in Zunyi — are experiencing an influx of tourists this year as post-pandemic travel returns to China.

In Guizhou, tourism in the first quarter of 2021 has already recovered to 2019 levels, local official Lu Yongzheng said. The province, among China's top tourist destinations, received millions of tourists who brought in billions of dollars in revenue.

On a recent government-organized tour, descendants of the Red Army told stories of their forefathers at the Zunyi Memorial Museum, which houses artifacts from the period and hologram recreations of a key meeting at which Mao established his dominance.

Kong Xia grew up listening to stories of hardships and toil and the arduous Long March, a military retreat in which her grandfather, Kong Xianquan, participated. In the epic journey, the Communists traveled over treacherous terrain to eventually establish their World War II capital in the dry northern province of Shaanxi, from which they would expand and eventually triumph over their Nationalist rivals in 1949.

Kong Xia describes her grandfather's life to pass down stories of the Communist Party's humble beginnings, especially to younger generations who she worries may be losing interest in history.

"They should understand (the history) but may not be interested" Kong said. "I think this kind of suffering will inspire us to cherish our happy and peaceful lives today and do our jobs well."

In 2016, the Zunyi museum launched a traveling exhibit that tours colleges and universities throughout China. And to spur interest among younger visitors, it trained over 100 "young curators" in primary or middle school to tell fellow students about the period of history.

"They aroused a very good response especially among the visitors of their age," said the museum's deputy curator, Zhang Xiaoling.

Crowds of tourists also visit the mountain ranges of Jinggangshan in Jiangxi province, known as the "cradle of the Chinese Revolution," where Mao fought his early battles and the revolutionary army was formed.

The rise in tourism is also spurred by a campaign announced by President Xi Jinping in February to educate the Communist Party's 91 million-plus members on its history and ideology.

True to the campaign, Bi Qiumei, who is in her early 70s, says she came to the museum "to pay homage to the revolutionary martyrs and Mao Zedong, and to see how China's revolution succeeded." She has been a party member since 1983.

"We are very excited," she chuckles, with old friends and classmates in tow.

Villages around the historic sites are anticipating an influx of tourists marking the centennial.

Enveloped by the mountain ranges is Mayuan, an idyllic village of just over 1,000 people. Flowers adorn newly paved concrete roads lined with rows of guest houses in an area where Mao's forces once trained for guerrilla warfare.

Government poverty alleviation programs and arrivals of tourists prompted one villager, Xie Xiaomin, to return to Mayuan to build his own guest house in 2017.

Now, the guest house has over 30 rooms with 80 beds. Each room costs around 100 RMB (\$15) per night.

The village itself, Xie says, can now host up to 1,000 guests.

"I'm full of confidence about this year" because of the centennial, Xie said.

Xie's grandfather, Yuan Wencai, helped establish a revolutionary base in the village and fought with Mao's army.

Photographs of his grandfather in his youth and of his grandmother posing with Mao and revolutionary General Zhu De decorate the guesthouse's entranceway.

Such personal stories will become part of the tourists' Mayuan experience.

"I would like to speak as long as there's a need and they're willing to listen to me." Xie said.

Events are being scheduled nationwide to mark the anniversary, including exhibitions, films, plays, concerts and awards for long-serving party members. A ceremony is also expected on July 1, the day the nation marks the centennial, with a speech by President Xi Jinping.

**US weighs policy on Venezuela as Maduro signals flexibility**

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 295 ~ 36 of 62

By JOSHUA GOODMAN Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro's government is intensifying efforts to court the Biden administration as the new U.S. president weighs whether to risk a political backlash in Florida and ease up on sanctions seeking to isolate the socialist leader.

In the past two weeks, Maduro conceded to longstanding U.S. demands that the World Food Program be allowed to establish a foothold in the country at a time of growing hunger. His allies also vowed to work with the U.S.-backed opposition to vaccinate Venezuelans against the coronavirus and have met with diplomats from Norway trying to revive negotiations to end the country's never-ceasing political strife.

The frenzy of activity comes as senior U.S. officials are reviewing policy toward Venezuela. An inter-agency meeting, which was originally scheduled to take place Monday and include Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman but was postponed at the last minute, will focus on whether the U.S. should take steps to support an uncertain attempt at dialogue between Maduro and his opponents, said two people who insisted on anonymity to discuss classified diplomatic matters.

"All these recent movement points to Maduro trying to get Washington's attention," said Geoffrey Ramsey, a Venezuela watcher at the Washington Office on Latin America. "The question is whether the White House is ready to commit to a full-fledged negotiations strategy, or whether it will continue to play it safe and keep the policy on the back burner."

Venezuelan Foreign Minister Jorge Arreaza and Jorge Rodriguez, the head of the pro-Maduro congress and a key promoter of dialogue, wouldn't comment when asked about the recent moves by Maduro.

Ramsey said even more goodwill gestures could be on the horizon.

Tuesday is the deadline for a committee in the Maduro-controlled congress to present a list of candidates for the National Electoral Council. Behind the scenes, moderates aligned with former presidential candidate Henrique Capriles have been meeting with Maduro representatives to push for the inclusion of two opposition rectors on the five-member board. If the demand is met, it could pave the way for Maduro's opponents to participate in mayoral and gubernatorial elections later this year.

Also in the mix is future of several American citizens jailed in Venezuela. In recent months, former New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson has pressed Maduro and senior aides to release six former executives at Houston-based CITGO who U.S. officials believe are unjustly imprisoned as well as two former Green Berets who participated in a failed raid last year staged from neighboring Colombia and a former U.S. Marine being held on unrelated allegations.

So far, the posturing by Maduro has failed to impress officials in Washington.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken has described Maduro as a "brutal dictator" and vowed to continue recognizing opposition leader Juan Guaidó as Venezuela's rightful leader — a position shared by more than 50 nations.

Other than promising to work more with U.S. allies and support the delivery of more humanitarian aid to Venezuela, the Biden administration has done little to unwind Trump's "maximum pressure" campaign to unseat Maduro.

The politics of engaging with Maduro are treacherous. Past attempts at dialogue have failed to produce a breakthrough and ended up strengthening Maduro, whose grip on power relies on support from the military as well as allies Iran, China and Russia — all of whom have seen their influence expand since Guaidó, with U.S. support, tried to ignite protests by declaring himself president in 2019 after Maduro was re-elected in a vote boycotted by the opposition when several of its leaders were barred from running.

That hasn't stopped others from trying to bring the two sides together, however. This week, the Vatican's secretary of state, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, is traveling to Venezuela in what many observers see as an effort by the Holy See to test the waters for another attempt at negotiations like the ones it mediated with former Spanish President Jose Luiz Rodriguez Zapatero in 2016.

While the trip's stated purpose is to attend the April 30 beatification of Jose Gregorio Hernandez, known as the "doctor of the poor" for his caring of the sick in the 1800s, Parolin is the Vatican's former ambassador to Venezuela and his highly unusual trip suggests more than just saint-making is on the agenda.



# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 295 ~ 37 of 62

But both supporters and opponents of more active U.S. engagement agree that the biggest obstacle is Florida. Trump comfortably carried the battleground state in part due to hardline policies preferred by immigrant voters fleeing Cuba, Venezuela and other authoritarian governments. With Democrats holding a slim six-seat majority in the House of Representatives, betting on Maduro to follow through on his word could end up hurting their chances in midterm elections.

"As of today, there is simply no reason to believe the Maduro regime is acting in good faith," said Elliott Abrams, who served as Trump's special envoy to Venezuela and Iran. He cited Maduro's failure to honor an agreement last year brokered by the World Health Organization's regional arm to combat the coronavirus pandemic as just one example.

"Every engagement by Biden with the Maduro regime undermines the democratic opposition," said Abrams, now a senior fellow at the Council of Foreign Relations. "If the US is going to engage at any point, it should only be done in the context of serious negotiations between the regime and the opposition, to help those negotiations succeed."

The planned U.S. policy meeting is unlikely to produce any immediate shift and follows at least one previous high-level meeting by senior Biden officials at several agencies — the Treasury, Justice, Commerce and State Departments as well as the White House — to discuss Venezuela.

However, it could provide a roadmap for future U.S. actions should momentum toward negotiations build, the two people said, including the lifting of a Trump-era ban on diesel fuel swaps that even some of Maduro's opponents say is worsening hunger by making it harder to move food supplies to market in diesel-powered trucks.

The U.S. must also decide by June whether to allow Chevron to resume limited drilling and oil shipments — a potential lifeline to Maduro, who is desperate for every dollar as oil production under his watch has fallen to its lowest level since the 1930s despite abundant crude reserves. As part of a waiver from sanctions granted last year, the U.S. oil giant and its American partners were ordered to cease all operations except those strictly necessary to maintain its assets in the country.

The State Department wouldn't comment on Monday's meeting or the status of the review of U.S. policy. However, a spokesperson for the Bureau of Western Hemisphere said the U.S. welcomes efforts to relieve the suffering of the Venezuelan people and bring the country's humanitarian crisis to an end through effective international cooperation.

To be sure, not all of the signals coming from Caracas are encouraging.

Last week, when the State Department celebrated the World Food Program's announcement it would begin providing emergency food assistance to 1.5 million Venezuelan children, Foreign Minister Arreaza took to Twitter to accuse the U.S. of "kidnapping" Venezuela's resources in international banks through "criminal sanctions."

That triggered a bitter exchange which ended with Arreaza vowing to present as evidence of blackmail to the International Criminal Court a tweet by a senior State Department official conditioning sanctions relief on the release of political prisoners and the organizing of free and fair elections.

"If Washington's responses remain exclusively public — via Twitter or television □— without a counterpart in a private diplomatic channel, progress or any sort of thaw or transition will be painful and full of mistrust," said Phil Gunson, a Caracas-based analyst for the Brussels-based International Crisis Group.

While Gunson said Maduro's limited willingness to engage in partial agreements should be reciprocated wherever possible to encourage further opening, overcoming the inertia of the Trump years will be difficult.

"There is no quick fix in Venezuela," said Gunson. "A solution is going to require subtlety and long-term engagement."

## SOS messages, panic as virus breaks India's health system

By SHEIKH SAALIQ Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — Dr. Gautam Singh dreads the daily advent of the ventilator beeps, signaling that oxygen levels are critically low, and hearing his desperately ill patients start gasping for air in the New

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 295 ~ 38 of 62

Delhi emergency ward where he works.

Like other doctors across India, which on Monday set another record for new coronavirus infections for a fifth day in a row at more than 350,000, the cardiologist has taken to begging and borrowing cylinders of oxygen just to keep patients alive for one more day.

On Sunday evening, when the oxygen supplies of other nearby hospitals were also near empty, the desperate 43-year-old took to social media, posting an impassioned video plea on Twitter.

"Please send oxygen to us," he said in a choked voice. "My patients are dying."

India was initially seen as a success story in weathering the pandemic, but the virus is now racing through its population of nearly 1.4 billion, and systems are beginning to collapse.

SOS messages like the one Singh sent reveal the extent of the panic.

In addition to oxygen running out, intensive care units are operating at full capacity and nearly all ventilators are in use. As the death toll mounts, the night skies in some Indian cities glow from the funeral pyres, as crematories are overwhelmed and bodies are burned in the open air.

On Monday, the country reported 2,812 more deaths, with roughly 117 Indians succumbing to the disease every hour — and experts say even those figures are probably an undercount. The new infections brought India's total to more than 17.3 million, behind only the United States.

The deepening crisis stands in contrast to the improving picture in wealthier nations like the U.S., Britain and Israel, which have vaccinated relatively large shares of their population and have seen deaths and infections plummet since winter. India has four times the population of the U.S. but on Monday had 11 times as many new infections.

Doctors like Singh are on the front lines, trying to get the supplies they need to keep their patients alive.

Singh received 20 oxygen cylinders on Monday, only enough to enable the hospital to limp through the day until the ventilators start sending out their warning beeps again.

"I feel helpless because my patients are surviving hour to hour," Singh said in a telephone interview. "I will beg again and hope someone sends oxygen that will keep my patients alive for just another day."

As bad as the situation is, experts warn it is likely to get worse.

Krishna Udayakumar, founding director of the Duke Global Health Innovation Center at Duke University, said it would be impossible for the country to keep up over the coming days as things stand.

"The situation in India is tragic and likely to get worse for some weeks to months," he said, adding that a "concerted, global effort to help India at this time of crisis" is desperately needed.

The U.S. said Monday that it is working to relieve the suffering in India by supplying oxygen, diagnostic tests, treatments, ventilators and protective gear.

The White House has also said it would make available sources of raw materials urgently needed for India to manufacture the AstraZeneca vaccine.

"Just as India sent assistance to the United States as our hospitals were strained early in the pandemic, we are determined to help India in its time of need," President Joe Biden tweeted on Sunday.

Help and support were also offered from archrival Pakistan, which said it could provide relief including ventilators, oxygen supply kits, digital X-ray machines, protective equipment and related items.

Germany's Health Ministry said it is urgently working to put together an aid package for India consisting of ventilators, monoclonal antibodies, the drug remdesivir, as well as surgical and N95 protective masks.

But many say the aid is too late — the breakdown a stark failure for a country that boasted of being a model for other developing nations.

Only three months ago, India's leaders were boisterous, delivering messages that the worst was over.

In January, Prime Minister Narendra Modi declared victory over the coronavirus, telling a virtual gathering of the World Economic Forum that India's success couldn't be compared with that of anywhere else.

A little less than a month later, his Bharatiya Janata Party passed a resolution hailing Modi as a "visionary leader" who had already "defeated" the virus.

By the second week of March, India's health minister declared that the country was "in the endgame" of the pandemic.

At the same time, the patients arriving at India's hospitals were far sicker and younger than previously

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 295 ~ 39 of 62

seen, prompting warnings by health experts that India was sitting on a ticking time bomb.

Millions of Hindu devotees celebrated the festival of Holi across the country at the end of March, disregarding social distancing guidelines and masks. Modi and other politicians spearheaded mammoth election rallies where tens of thousands participated without masks. And millions more gathered by the Ganges River for special Hindu prayers as recently as last week.

Now it's suspected all these events might have accelerated the unprecedented surge India is seeing now. "Many people across India are paying with their lives for that shameful behavior by political leaders," Udayakumar said.

In a radio address on Sunday, Modi sought to deflect the criticism over what he called a "storm" of infections that had left the country "shaken."

"It is true that many people are getting infected with corona," he said. "But the number of people recovering from corona is equally high."

India's government said last week it would expand its vaccination program to make all adults eligible, something long urged by health experts.

But vaccinations take time to show their effect on the numbers of new infections, and there are questions of whether manufacturers will be able to keep up with the demand. The pace of vaccination across the country also appears to be struggling.

Ordinary citizens are taking matters into their own hands, doing what they say the government should have done a long time ago.

Volunteers, from students to technology professionals, nonprofit organizations and journalists, are circulating information on the availability of hospital beds, critical drugs and oxygen cylinders.

Like Dr. Singh, many have taken to social media, particularly Twitter, to crowdsource lists of plasma donors and oxygen supplies.

The system is imperfect, but some are getting badly needed help.

Rashmi Kumar, a New Delhi homemaker, spent her Sunday scouring Twitter, posting desperate pleas for an oxygen cylinder for her critically ill father. At the same time, she made countless calls to hospitals and government help line numbers, to no avail.

By evening her 63-year-old father was gasping for breath.

"I was prepared for the worst," Kumar said.

But out of nowhere, a fellow Twitter user reported an available oxygen cylinder some 60 kilometers (37 miles) away. Kumar drove to the person's house, where a man handed over the cylinder.

"I was helped by a stranger when my own government continues to fail thousands like me," she said. "Unfortunately, everyone is on their own now."

## More patrols, fewer boaters for SpaceX splashdown Saturday

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — The astronauts flying SpaceX back to Earth this weekend urged boaters to stay safe by staying away from their capsule's splashdown in the Gulf of Mexico.

NASA and SpaceX are promising more Coast Guard patrols and fewer pleasure boaters for Saturday morning's planned splashdown off the Florida coast — the company's second return of a crew. The trip home for the four astronauts was delayed from Wednesday because of high winds forecast for the area.

Last August, pleasure boaters swarmed the Dragon capsule carrying two astronauts. NASA astronaut Mike Hopkins said everyone is putting "a lot of emphasis" on keeping the area clear this time.

"I don't think any of us are too worried in terms of landing on a boat," he said during a news conference Monday from the International Space Station.

Leaking fuel from the capsule's thrusters could endanger people outside the capsule. A crowd could also hamper SpaceX's recovery effort.

Hopkins is winding up a six-month mission, along with U.S. crewmates Victor Glover and Shannon Walker, and Japan's Soichi Noguchi. Their replacements arrived Saturday on their own SpaceX capsule.

When Hopkins and his crew launched last November, they hoped to return to a world where COVID-19 held less of a grip than it does. They will go into semi-quarantine for a while, Walker said, to give their space-weakened immune systems time to bounce back.

They'll roll up their sleeves for their first vaccine shot seven to 10 days after splashdown.

"We definitely have enjoyed not wearing masks up here," Walker said. "And having to go back and wear masks — well, it's what we will do because that is the right thing to do."

## Scientists: Up to 25,000 barrels at DDT dump site in Pacific

By JULIE WATSON Associated Press

SAN DIEGO (AP) — Marine scientists say they have found what they believe to be as many as 25,000 barrels that possibly contain DDT dumped off the Southern California coast near Catalina Island, where a massive underwater toxic waste site dating back to World War II has long been suspected.

The 27,345 "barrel-like" images were captured by researchers at the University of California San Diego's Scripps Institution of Oceanography. They mapped more than 36,000 acres of seafloor between Santa Catalina Island and the Los Angeles coast in a region previously found to contain high levels of the toxic chemical in sediments and in the ecosystem.

Historical shipping logs show that industrial companies in Southern California used the basin as a dumping ground until 1972, when the Marine Protection, Research and Sanctuaries Act, also known as the Ocean Dumping Act, was enacted.

Resting deep in the ocean, the exact location and extent of the dumping was not known until now.

The territory covered was "staggering," said Eric Terrill, chief scientist of the expedition and director of the Marine Physical Laboratory at Scripps Institution of Oceanography.

Underwater drones using sonar technology captured high-resolution images of barrels resting 3,000 feet (900 meters) below the surface all along the steep seafloor that was surveyed. They also were seen beyond the dumpsite limits.

"It really was a surprise to everybody who's worked with the data and who sailed at sea," he told reporters Monday.

The survey provides "a wide-area map" of the barrels, though it will be up to others to confirm through sediment sampling that the containers hold DDT, Terrill said. It's estimated between 350 and 700 tons of DDT were dumped in the area, 12 miles (20 kilometers) from Los Angeles, and 8 miles (12 kilometers) from Catalina Island.

The long-term impact on marine life and humans is still unknown, said Scripps chemical oceanographer and professor of geosciences Lihini Aluwihare, who in 2015 co-authored a study that found high amounts of DDT and other man-made chemicals in the blubber of bottlenose dolphins that died of natural causes.

"These results also raise questions about the continued exposure and potential impacts on marine mammal health, especially in light of how DDT has been shown to have multi-generational impacts in humans," said Aluwihare, who was not part of the survey expedition.

Diana Aga, a chemistry professor at University at Buffalo who is not affiliated with the study, said the findings were shocking if the barrels are proven to contain the toxic chemical. "That's a lot of DDT at the bottom of the ocean," she said.

If the barrels haven't leaked, they could be moved to a place where disposal is safer, Aga said. If they leaked, scientists could take samples from the water, sediment and other marine life to gauge the damage.

Scientists conducted the survey from March 10-24 following a Los Angeles Times report last year about evidence that DDT was dumped into the ocean.

"Unfortunately, the basin offshore Los Angeles had been a dumping ground for industrial waste for several decades, beginning in the 1930s. We found an extensive debris field in the wide area survey," Terrill said.

Scientists started the search where University of California Santa Barbara professor David Valentine had discovered concentrated accumulations of DDT in the sediments and spotted 60 barrels about a decade ago.

High levels of DDT have been detected in the area's marine mammals, and the chemical has been linked to cancer in sea lions.



# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 295 ~ 41 of 62

The Los Angeles Times reviewed shipping logs from a disposal company supporting Montrose Chemical Corp. of California, a DDT-producing company. The logs showed 2,000 barrels of DDT-laced sludge were dumped in the deep ocean each month from 1947 to 1961 off Catalina, and other companies also dumped there until 1972.

Scripps researchers say they hope their survey will support clean-up efforts.

The expedition on the Sally Ride research vessel included a team of 31 scientists, engineers, and crew conducting 24-hour operations and two autonomous underwater vehicles.

## California recall has enough signatures to make ballot

By KATHLEEN RONAYNE Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — Organizers of the recall effort against California Gov. Gavin Newsom collected enough valid signatures to qualify for the ballot, state election officials said Monday, likely triggering just the second such election in state history.

"The people of California have done what the politicians thought would be impossible," said Orrin Heatlie, the retired county sheriff's sergeant who launched the recall effort last year. "Our work is just beginning. Now the real campaign is about to commence."

Heatlie spearheaded the signature collection effort that began last June and then picked up momentum in the fall as frustration grew over Newsom's coronavirus-related actions. The California secretary of state's office said more than 1.6 million signatures had been deemed valid as of Monday, about 100,000 more than required.

People who signed petitions now have 30 days to withdraw their signatures, though it's unlikely enough will do so to stop the question from going to voters.

The recall against Newsom, a first-term Democrat seen as a possible White House hopeful someday, will be among the highest-profile political races in the country this year. He launched a campaign to fight the effort in March alongside endorsements from Democrats including U.S. Sens. Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders. So far no other Democrats have jumped in to run against him.

"I am not going to take this fight lying down," read a fundraising appeal sent by Newsom shortly after Monday's announcement about the signatures. "There is too much at stake, and I intend to win."

His campaign manager, Juan Rodriguez, repeated criticism that the campaign is a partisan effort by pro-Trump Republicans that "seeks to undo the important progress we've made under Governor Newsom - fighting COVID, supporting families who are struggling, protecting our environment, common-sense gun safety laws."

An election is likely in the fall and voters would face two questions: Should Newsom be recalled and who should replace him? The votes on the second question will only be counted if more than half say yes to the first.

If Newsom survives the recall he will be up for reelection in 2022.

Republicans running to replace Newsom include former San Diego Mayor Kevin Faulconer and reality TV star and former Olympic decathlon champion Caitlyn Jenner, who has never run for elected office. Businessman John Cox, who lost badly to Newsom in 2018, and former Congressman Doug Ose, also are running.

"Californians from all walks of life are seizing this historic opportunity to demand change," Faulconer said in a statement. "As the only candidate who's won tough elections and enacted real reform, I am ready to lead this movement."

Dozens of other candidates, serious and not, are expected to enter the race.

The only other time a governor has faced a recall election was in 2003, when Democrat Gray Davis was voted out and replaced with Republican Arnold Schwarzenegger. Democrats believe Davis was hurt politically when Lt. Gov. Cruz Bustamante, a fellow Democrat, entered the race.

Newsom won election in 2018 with support from more than 60% of the voters. Recalling him will be a tough sell in the heavily Democratic state where just a quarter of the state's registered voters are Republicans, about the same number as those who identify as "no party preference."

But organizers see an opening with voters of all political stripes who were angered by Newsom's han-

ding of the pandemic and those frustrated by one-party rule in Sacramento. Republicans have not won statewide office since 2006, when voters gave Schwarzenegger a second term. Organizers say about 30% of the petition signers were Democrats or independents.

Newsom's pandemic actions tipped the recall effort over the edge, especially after he was caught last fall dining at a fancy restaurant for a lobbyist's birthday while urging residents to stay home.

Heatlie decided to pursue a recall in early 2020, motivated not by Newsom's pandemic policies but by his support for immigrants in the country illegally and other liberal policies.

## **Cop accused of hurting woman's arm: 'Ready for the pop?'**

By COLLEEN SLEVIN Associated Press

DENVER (AP) — A Colorado police officer accused of dislocating the shoulder of a 73-year-old woman with dementia while arresting her seemed to be aware he had injured her. He told fellow officers "ready for the pop?" as he showed them his body camera footage, according to police station surveillance video with enhanced audio that was made public Monday by the woman's lawyer.

Officer Austin Hopp made the comment while showing the other officers the part of the arrest that shows Karen Garner being held against the hood of a patrol car in Loveland, about 50 miles (80 kilometers) north of Denver last year, her handcuffed left arm bent up behind her head. The body camera footage, which can be heard but not seen on the surveillance video, was also previously released by Garner's lawyer.

The videos plus a lawsuit filed against Hopp, other officers and the city and investigations into the arrest came this month amid a national reckoning over the use of force by police against people — including those with mental and physical health conditions.

The surveillance video captured in the Loveland police station shows two other officers, one male and female, watching the footage with Hopp as he makes the "pop" comment. The female officer, who helped during the arrest and says "I hate this."

The video then shows her pull her hat over her eyes while another male officer says, "I love it."

Earlier in the surveillance video, before the officers watch the body camera footage, Hopp says Garner is "flexible" and says something else that's inaudible. He then makes another reference to the popping sound, telling the female officer that "I was pushing, pushing, pushing. I hear — pop. I was like 'oh no,'" he said. The female officer puts her head in her hands.

At the time, Garner was in a holding cell a few feet away, handcuffed to a bench. The federal lawsuit filed on her behalf earlier this month said she received no medical care for about six hours after she was taken to jail.

Later in the surveillance video, Hopp and the other male officer fist bump at the part of the body camera footage where Hopp dismisses the concerns of a man passing by the arrest scene who stops to object to how Hopp treated what the man thought was a child.

After watching that part of the body cam video a second time, the second officer who is recorded on the surveillance video reacts to the man who stopped at the arrest scene by saying: "What are you doing? Get out of here. This is none of your business."

Hopp arrested Garner in June 2020 after she allegedly left a store without paying for about \$14 worth of items. His body camera footage shows Hopp catching up to her as she walks through a field along a road. She shrugs and turns away from him and he quickly grabs her arm and pushes her 80-pound (36-kilogram) body to the ground. She looks confused and repeatedly says, "I am going home."

On the police station video, Hopp says he is a little worried that Garner is "like senile and stuff." Several times, he and the other officers say she fought with police and Hopp says she got her handcuffs halfway off.

Police put Hopp on leave after the lawsuit was filed and announced they would conduct an internal investigation. Soon after that, the district attorney's office announced the arrest of Garner would be investigated by a team of outside law enforcement agencies. The city of Loveland has also said it will conduct a review.

Loveland police declined to comment on the new video footage from the police station, citing the criminal investigation being conducted at the district attorney's request.

"Independent comment from the Loveland Police Department would not be appropriate at this time. LPD has faith in the due process that this investigation allows for," it said in a statement.

Hopp could not be located for comment. The Loveland Fraternal Order of Police, the union representing city police officers, did not return an email asking whether he had a lawyer who could speak for him.

The lawyer representing Garner and her family, Sarah Schielke, said the latest video footage needed to be released to force the department to change.

"If I didn't release this, the Loveland Police's toxic culture of arrogance and entitlement, along with their horrific abuse of the vulnerable and powerless, would carry on, business as usual. I won't be a part of that," she said.

A sergeant who signed off on the paperwork the officers were filling out while they watched the body camera footage was also added as defendants in Garner's lawsuit as was the second male officer watching the footage.

## Student's Snapchat profanity leads to high court speech case

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Fourteen-year-old Brandi Levy was having that kind of day where she just wanted to scream. So she did, in a profanity-laced posting on Snapchat that has, improbably, ended up before the Supreme Court in the most significant case on student speech in more than 50 years.

At issue is whether public schools can discipline students over something they say off-campus. The topic is especially meaningful in a time of remote learning because of the coronavirus pandemic and a rising awareness of the pernicious effects of online bullying.

Arguments are on Wednesday, via telephone because of the pandemic, before a court on which several justices have school-age children or recently did.

The case has its roots in the Vietnam-era case of a high school in Des Moines, Iowa, that suspended students who wore armbands to protest the war. In a landmark ruling, the Supreme Court sided with the students, declaring students don't "shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate."

Ever since, courts have wrestled with the contours of the decision in *Tinker v. Des Moines* in 1969.

Levy's case has none of the lofty motives of *Tinker* and more than its share of teenage angst.

Levy and a friend were at a convenience store in her hometown of Mahanoy City, Pennsylvania, when she took to social media to express her frustration at being kept on her high school's junior varsity cheerleading squad for another year.

"F—— school f—— softball f—— cheer f—— everything," Levy wrote, in a post that also contained a photo in which she and a classmate raised their middle fingers.

The post was brought to the attention of the team's coaches, who suspended Levy from the cheerleading team for a year.

Levy, now 18, is finishing her freshman year in college. "I was a 14-year-old kid. I was upset, I was angry. Everyone, every 14-year-old kid speaks like that at one point," she said in an interview with The Associated Press.

Her parents knew nothing about the Snapchat post until she was suspended, she said. "My parents were more concerned on how I was feeling," Levy said, adding she wasn't grounded or otherwise punished for what she did.

Instead, her parents filed a federal lawsuit, claiming the suspension violated their daughter's constitutional speech rights.

Lower courts agreed and restored her to the cheerleading team. The 3rd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Philadelphia held that "*Tinker* does not apply to off-campus speech." The court said it was leaving for another day "the First Amendment implications of off-campus student speech that threatens violence or harasses others."

But the school district, education groups, the Biden administration and anti-bullying organizations said

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 295 ~ 44 of 62

in court filings that the appeals court went too far.

"The First Amendment does not categorically prohibit public schools from disciplining students for speech that occurs off campus," acting Solicitor General Elizabeth Prelogar wrote on behalf of the administration.

Philip Lee, a University of District of Columbia law professor who has written about regulation of cyberbullying, said it makes no sense to draw the line on policing students' speech at the edge of campus.

"Most cyberbullying content is created off campus on computers, iPads, all kinds of electronic devices," said Lee, who joined a legal brief with other education scholars that calls for a nuanced approach to regulating student speech in the Internet age.

"But at same time, you don't want situation where schools are monitoring everyone's speech at home," he said.

The Mahanoy Area School District declined to comment on the case, its lawyer, Lisa Blatt, said.

But in her brief for the district, Blatt wrote, "This case is about how schools address the bad days."

Schools should not be forced "to ignore speech that disrupts the school environment or invades other students' rights just because students launched that speech from five feet outside the schoolhouse gate," Blatt wrote.

The school's approach would allow educators to police what students say round the clock, said Witold "Vic" Walczak of the American Civil Liberties Union, which is representing Levy.

"And that is super dangerous. Not only would students like Brandi not be able to express non-threatening, non-harassing bursts of frustration, but it would give schools the possibility of regulating important political and religious speech," Walczak said.

An unusual alliance of conservative and liberal interest groups has formed behind Levy, all pointing to the dangers of expanding school regulation of students speech.

The Alliance Defending Freedom and Christian Legal Society urged the court to affirm the appellate ruling because of "the perils of schools regulating off-campus speech. Religious speech, in particular, provokes debate and inflames passions."

Mary Beth and John Tinker, the siblings at the center of the 1969 case, also are on Levy's side. Their protest, updated for the digital age, would have included a social media component, perhaps a black armband digitally imposed on their school's logo, they wrote in a high-court brief.

The outcome proposed by the school district would have left them subject to discipline, the Tinkers wrote.

Walczak, the ACLU lawyer, acknowledged that the "speech here is not the most important in the world. This isn't political or religious speech."

But Levy's outburst has made her a potential successor to the Tinkers and their antiwar protest from the 1960s.

"I'm just trying to prove a point that young students and adults like me shouldn't be punished for them expressing their own feelings and letting others know how they feel," Levy said.

## **Biden plan for cleaner power system faces daunting obstacles**

By CATHY BUSSEWITZ AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — If the nation is to meet President Joe Biden's goal of cutting America's greenhouse gas emissions in half by the end of the decade, it will have to undertake a vast transformation toward renewable energy.

And to achieve that, the near-impossible will be required: A broad network of transmission lines will have to be built to carry solar and wind power across the continent to deliver electricity to homes and businesses — something the administration envisions accomplishing by 2035.

What's more, utility-scale batteries on a widespread scale, to store renewable energy for peak-use periods, would be needed.

The financial and technological tasks of linking cleaner power sources to an aging electric grid pummeled by climate change are daunting enough. Add to them the legal fights that states and localities will likely mount to fight the build-outs of transmission lines in their areas, and the challenges become extraordinary.



# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 295 ~ 45 of 62

It normally takes years to win authorization to build new transmission lines. Because many such decisions are made at the local level, critics across the country who oppose having wires strung through their landscapes could further prolong the battles.

"I'm very worried," said Larry Gasteiger, executive director of the transmission industry trade group WIRES. "Given the timeframes we're looking at, it's almost hard to see how we meet them. We really need to have everyone pulling on the oars at the same time and in the same direction, and unfortunately, we're not seeing that, to be honest."

The idea behind the Biden plan for cleaner power transmission is to transform the fuel for America's power grid from mostly coal and natural gas to wind, solar and hydroelectric power. The U.S. electricity system relies on about 600,000 miles of transmission lines that carry electricity from power plants or dams to communities and 5.5 million miles of local distribution lines, according to the American Society of Civil Engineers.

Some of the consequences of climate change — more frequent storms, wildfires and other extreme weather — include damage to the nation's electric grid. Severe weather was determined to be the predominant cause of more than 300 transmission outage events from 2014 to 2018, according to the American Society of Civil Engineers. An additional 200 outages were caused by transmission disruptions or interruptions, which are essentially unexpected failures. Most of the nation's transmission lines were strung in the mid-20th century with just a 50-year life expectancy, the group said.

That reality hit hard in February. Severe snowstorms in Texas caused deadly power outages that lasted days, killing more than 100 people. In California, Pacific Gas & Electric's crumbling equipment sparked a series of deadly wildfires in recent years, and the worst, in the town of Paradise, California, killed 85 people in 2018. Residents throughout California frequently lose power as utilities shut it off to reduce the chance that their old equipment could start a wildfire.

Even while extreme weather erodes the nation's existing infrastructure, the need for reliable electricity to power an ever-growing number of electronic devices and vehicles is sure to surge. Given the state of the electric grid and the ambitious nature of the goals, Gasteiger calls Biden's emissions goal, with its dependence on transmission lines, a "moonshot effort."

To reach the president's goal of a 50% reduction in overall greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, the nation would have to stop using coal entirely by then and let consumption of oil and gas decline by 2% every year, according to Philip Verleger, a longtime energy analyst. Yet to meet the nation's energy demand, he said, the United States would have to double the amount of energy that's produced annually by wind and solar.

"I doubt that's practical," Verleger said. "You just can't put up that many windmills that fast. And there may not be that many places to put windmills."

The electric power generated by wind and solar has been growing at impressive clips, with wind power generation rising at a 14% annual rate from 2010 to 2020, and solar growing at a rate of 54%, Verleger said. But he doubts that the pace for solar growth can be maintained.

The nation obtained about 21% of its electricity from renewable sources in 2020, a share is expected to grow to 42% by 2050, according to an estimate made by the U.S. Energy Information Administration in February, before Biden's accelerated goal was announced.

But it can take years to get high-voltage transmission lines approved, let alone built. Many plans will face resistance from landowners or communities in the path.

Those battles have killed ambitious projects before, including the Clean Line — a quest to build a 700-mile transmission line to deliver wind energy from Oklahoma to Tennessee. The project had obtained federal approval. But given opposition from landowners and politicians in Arkansas and Tennessee, it couldn't win all the rights of way. After a decade of planning, investing and efforts for approvals, the firm that was developing the transmission line accepted defeat and shut down.

Even projects that ultimately succeed tend to take far longer than expected. A 730-mile transmission line to carry wind energy from turbines in Wyoming to the electricity-hungry Southwest, begun in 2005, took 15 years to gain all the required federal and local permitting. Final approval ultimately paved the way

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 295 ~ 46 of 62

for the construction of the TransWest Express Transmission Project to begin.

"It's mostly local, not federal, authority," Verleger said. "Is this administration going to issue rules that override the states? Will the Supreme Court approve them? How many years will that take?"

A fossil fuel power plant can be built near the populations that will use its energy. By contrast, wind and solar power is often developed in the Great Plains. Wind turbines in Texas, Iowa, Oklahoma, Kansas and Illinois provide more than half of the nation's wind-generated electricity, according to the Energy Information Administration. Yet that power is most needed by bustling cities along the coasts.

"You have to build a lot of transmission lines, and people have made that very, very difficult," said Michael Lynch, president of Strategic Energy and Economic Research. "You've got the 'Nimby' (Not In My Back Yard), the 'Numby' (Not Under My Back Yard), and 'Banana' (Build Absolutely Nothing Anywhere Near Anyone). Those are still very powerful political drivers around the country."

Many steps and players are involved in building inter-regional transmission lines. The transmission system, which includes high-voltage lines that bring electricity from power sources to communities, is regulated by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. It approves rates for transmission lines.

But permitting and siting for transmission is typically approved at the state and local level, Gasteiger said. The distribution system, which strings power within communities, is regulated by a myriad collection of state and local agencies.

"It's the nature of transmission that it takes an awfully long time to get it from start to finish to get it built and put into service," Gasteiger said.

The cost of decarbonizing the power sector is yet another hurdle. Using the technology available then, Wood Mackenzie estimated in 2019 that to fully decarbonize the U.S. power grid, including eliminating all fossil fuels and building the new generation and transmission sources, would cost \$4.5 trillion. That would cost every U.S. household about \$35,000, or \$2,000 a year for 20 years.

The expense of building or repairing transmission lines is often borne by utilities, which, in turn, generally pass the costs on to customers. Thousands of utilities dot the country. Building transmission lines requires coordination among those companies and the cities, states and private properties where the lines must cross.

To spur investment in transmission, Congress directed the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission in 2005 to begin providing incentives for transmission projects. The commission, though, began scaling back those incentives in 2012.

"I'm hearing a lot of happy talk," Gasteiger said. "I'm not seeing actions that match up with the talk about how much transmission is needed."

Analysts have been running scenarios to estimate whether Biden's goal of slashing greenhouse gas emissions by roughly half over the next nine years is realistic. In S&P Global Platts Analytics' most-likely-case scenario, which envisions a widespread adoption of electric vehicles, increased penetration of renewables and declines in coal generation, the United States would reduce its carbon dioxide emissions by about 27% by 2030 compared with 2005 levels.

Under that scenario, even if all remaining coal burning were eliminated by 2030, that would still account for only about a quarter of the reductions needed. The remaining cuts that would be needed to achieve a 50% reduction would be nearly equivalent to the total emissions that are expected from gasoline in 2030, said Roman Kramarchuk, head of future energy analytics at S&P.

Yet the goal isn't necessarily impossible, Verleger said. Back in the 1970's, he noted, there was concern that a lack of copper to string phone wires across Africa would prevent many Africans from attaining telephone service. Yet over time, most people obtained service via cellphones instead of from landlines. So what was imagined as a logistical hurdle evaporated.

The White House has also signaled that it may institute a carbon tax. That would make it harder for emitters to continue at their current rate, further speeding the transition.

"It's achievable," Verleger said. "Probably it's going to take couple technological breakthroughs, like the cellphone and the personal computer. I'm not going to say it's not going to happen."

## Attorney: Black man killed by deputies shot in back of head

By BEN FINLEY and JONATHAN DREW Associated Press

ELIZABETH CITY, N.C. (AP) — A Black man killed by deputies in North Carolina was shot in the back of the head and had his hands on his car steering wheel when they opened fire, attorneys for his family said Monday after relatives viewed body camera footage.

The account was the first description of the shooting of Andrew Brown Jr., who was killed by deputies serving drug-related search and arrest warrants. His death last Wednesday led to nightly protests and demands for justice in the town of Elizabeth City. Authorities have released few details, and the video has not been made public.

Attorney Chantel Cherry-Lassiter watched a 20-second portion of body camera video with Brown's family. Lassiter said Brown did not appear to be a threat to officers as he backed his vehicle out of his driveway and tried to drive away from deputies with guns drawn.

"There was no time in the 20 seconds that we saw where he was threatening the officers in any kind of way," she told reporters at a news conference.

When asked whether Brown was shot in the back, attorney Harry Daniels said, "Yes, back of the head."

An eyewitness account and emergency scanner traffic had previously indicated Brown was shot in the back as he tried to drive away.

"My dad got executed just by trying to save his own life," said Brown's adult son Khalil Ferebee, who watched the video.

Lassiter, who watched the video multiple times and took notes, said the shooting started as soon as the video began and that she lost count of the number of gunshots fired by law enforcement officers armed with rifles and handguns. She said she counted as many as eight deputies in the video, some wearing tactical uniforms and some in plainclothes.

"They're shooting and saying 'Let me see your hands' at the same time," she said. She added: "Let's be clear. This was an execution."

The family's lawyers were also angry about what they described as rude treatment by Pasquotank County Attorney R. Michael Cox, to whom they attributed the decision to limit the amount of footage shown. They criticized authorities for sharing only 20 seconds of video from a single body camera.

"They're trying to hide something," attorney Benjamin Crump said.

Attorney Bakari Sellers said Cox used profanity toward him. "I've never been talked to like I was talked to in there," Sellers said.

Cox did not immediately respond to an email seeking comment.

Pasquotank County Sheriff Tommy Wooten II has said that multiple deputies fired shots. Seven deputies are on leave pending a probe by the State Bureau of Investigation.

In a video statement, the sheriff said Monday that Cox had filed a request to have the video released, which in North Carolina must be authorized by a judge. He asked for patience while the State Bureau of Investigation probes the case.

"This tragic incident was quick and over in less than 30 seconds, and body cameras are shaky and sometimes hard to decipher. They only tell part of the story," he said.

Earlier Monday, a search warrant was released that indicated investigators had recorded Brown selling small amounts of cocaine and methamphetamine to an informant. Crump argued that authorities were trying to release negative information about Brown while shielding themselves by holding back the video.

The warrant was sought by Wooten's office and signed by a judge to allow the search of Brown's Elizabeth City home. It said that an investigator in nearby Dare County was told by the informant that the person had been purchasing crack cocaine and other drugs from Brown for over a year. The informant described purchasing drugs at the house that was the target of the search.

In March, narcotics officers used the informant to conduct controlled purchases of methamphetamine and cocaine from Brown on two separate occasions, according to the warrant, which said both drug

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 295 ~ 48 of 62

transactions were recorded using audio and video equipment.

The search warrant said investigators believed Brown was storing drugs in the home or two vehicles. The document, which indicated the search was not completed, did not list anything found.

Two arrest warrants released last week charged him with possession with intent to sell and deliver 3 grams of each of the drugs.

Calls have been growing to release the body camera footage. A coalition of media organizations have sought the footage, and city officials plan to do so as well.

Short of releasing it publicly, state law allows law enforcement to show body camera video privately to a victim's family.

Also Monday, Elizabeth City officials declared a state of emergency amid concerns about how demonstrators would react to a possible video release. Protests since the shooting in the eastern North Carolina town of about 18,000 have generally been peaceful.

Danielle McCalla, who grew up in Elizabeth City before recently moving to Virginia, joined demonstrators who came to watch the news conference by the family attorneys. She said it left her in tears.

"As soon as they started going into details, I started crying," she said. McCalla, 30, said she met Brown and had several conversations with him, making her sad about what's happening in her hometown and about police shootings elsewhere.

"It's the same thing that keeps happening," she said. "It's a bigger monster than we think it is."

## More action, less talk, distinguish Biden's 100-day sprint

By JONATHAN LEMIRE and CALVIN WOODWARD Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The card tucked in President Joe Biden's right jacket pocket must weigh a ton. You can see the weight of it on his face when he digs it out, squints and ever-so-slowly reads aloud the latest tally of COVID-19 dead.

Sometimes he'll stumble on a digit — after all, flubs come with the man. But the message is always clear: The toll of the virus weighs on him constantly, a millstone that helps explain why the typically garrulous politician with the megawatt smile has often seemed downright dour.

For any new leader, a lingering pandemic that has killed more than a half-million citizens would be plenty for a first 100 days. But it has been far from the sole preoccupation for the now 78-year-old Biden.

The oldest person ever elected president is tugging the United States in many new directions at once, right down to its literal foundations — the concrete of its neglected bridges — as well as the racial inequities and partisan poisons tearing at the civil society. Add to that list: a call for dramatic action to combat climate change.

He's doing it without the abrasive noise of the last president or the charisma of the last two. Biden's spontaneity, once a hallmark and sometimes a headache, is rarely seen. Some say he is a leader for this time: more action, less talk and something for the history books.

"This has been a really terrible year," said Matt Delmont, who teaches civil rights history at Dartmouth College in New Hampshire. "There's so much. We want a new president to be a light forward. From that perspective, it makes sense that you want to get out of the box fast."

Biden "sees the virtue of going bigger and bolder," Delmont said. "It so strongly echoes FDR."

Few would have bet Joe Biden would ever be uttered in the same breath as Franklin D. Roosevelt. It's too soon to know whether he deserves to be.

But the scope of what Biden wants to do would — if he succeeds — put him in the company of that New Deal president, whose burst of consequential actions set the 100-day marker by which all successors have been informally measured since.

A reported 4,380 people in the U.S. died from the virus on the day Biden became president on Jan. 20. COVID-19 is killing about 700 people a day now. For Biden, much of the struggle is about "getting people some peace of mind so they can go to bed at night and not stare at the ceiling."

It's not all been smooth. Biden has struggled to change course on immigration practices he railed against



# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 295 ~ 49 of 62

in the campaign. He's earned rare rebukes from some Democrats and shown that a president's famously empathetic nature does not necessarily mean empathetic treatment of the world's dispossessed.

## THE ZIGZAG NATION

Already, Biden has achieved a pandemic relief package of historic breadth and taken executive actions to wrestle the country away from the legacy and agitations of President Donald Trump.

The U.S. has pivoted on the environment. The government has created payments that independent analysts say should halve child poverty in a year. It has embraced international alliances Trump shunned. It has elevated the health insurance program Trump and fellow Republicans tried to kill, making the Affordable Care Act more affordable than it ever was under President Barack Obama.

When Trump won the 2016 election, Obama said the day after that he saw something very American in the outcome, as unhappy as he was about the result. "The path that this country has taken has never been a straight line," Obama said. "We zig and we zag."

It's Biden's zigzag now. The temperature is lower. The drama is less. And the persona is fundamentally different.

"He ran as the antithesis of Trump — empathetic, decent and experienced, and he is delivering on that promise," said former Obama adviser David Axelrod.

Biden's first months in office were, in many ways, a rejection of what came before.

He evoked his bipartisan deal-making track record of 36 years in the Senate as the example he sought to bring back, though there's been little bipartisanship in what he's achieved as president.

Gone are the out-of-control news conferences. Gone are the sudden firings and impulsive policy declarations — both often in the form of a tweet — of the Trump years. Twitter is irrelevant for Biden's presidential musings; he has yet to tweet by his own hand and what appears under his name is White House boilerplate.

## THE CARD

Americans are getting something more organized and methodical. Like the index card in his suit jacket pocket. Printed in black and white, it shows his schedule, the daily numbers of vaccine doses administered, the previous day's virus deaths, daily hospitalizations and the cumulative death toll.

It lists daily numbers of troops killed and wounded in war, a tally he started keeping in his pocket years ago, through the wars that spanned his two-term vice presidency. He says he will bring the last U.S. troops home from Afghanistan on Sept. 11, the 20th anniversary of the terrorist attacks that sparked America's longest war.

Biden has appeared in public far less than his predecessors and given the public fewer set pieces. That's in part due to COVID-19 safety concerns, but also because of a sense among his advisers that people were simply worn out from four years of the Trump show.

Biden wanted to occupy less of the American consciousness than did Trump, who dominated the discourse like no one else had done, while achieving almost nothing legislatively in his 100-day debut. The new president turned virus briefings over to the scientists and administration officials and didn't gag them.

## NO FIREBRANDS HERE

He filled his staff with policy experts and old administration hands, not provocateurs. He achieved more diversity in the administration's top levels than any president before him.

If there is a consistent through line to Biden's term so far, it is his attempt to respond to age-old racial inequalities, in corners of public policy where most Americans might not expect to see it.

Biden's massive infrastructure plan, for example, contains measures to address harms inflicted generations ago when governments built urban highways through Black neighborhoods, fracturing communities.

"That's something most Americans don't think about if they don't have a direct experience of it," Delmont said. "People hear infrastructure and think it's a race-neutral set of policies."

But without knowing about the destruction of Black neighborhoods from the bulldozer or reckoning with the heavy pandemic toll on minority communities, he said, "It's hard to know what systemic racism looks like. These are civil rights issues. That's where people want to see actions and resources."

Biden's agenda has been more activist than expected, unabashedly liberal and defined by anti-poverty

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 295 ~ 50 of 62

measures and a far-reaching expansion of government.

## WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY

For the most part, he's actually doing more than he promised in his campaign. The election dealt him a hand that makes bigger things possible, thanks to majorities so thin in Congress that he needs Vice President Kamala Harris to cast tiebreaking votes in a 50-50 Senate.

If the pace seems breakneck, there may be a good reason: Time with real power may be perilously short. First-term presidents historically see their party lose big in the midterms and Republicans have shown no inclination to support his policies.

Even within his party, cohesion is not a given, with constant tension between centrists and those on the activist left. So far, Biden has managed to avoid a revolt from either faction.

But liberals were far from pleased when Biden, citing a "crisis" at the U.S.-Mexico border from a wave of migrants seeking asylum, balked at keeping his campaign promise to restore Obama-era refugee admissions worldwide and go even higher, after Trump's drastic cuts. Thousands of refugees who had been cleared to come to the U.S. have been stranded abroad as a result.

"This cruel policy is no more acceptable now than it was during the Trump administration," said Sen. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn., adding that Biden was "caving to the politics of fear."

## THE UNEXPECTED

Though the West Wing attempted to script the first 100 days, Biden faced vivid reminders that presidents are often measured more by how they respond to events they cannot control.

A surge of mass shootings confronted him, as did a rise in hate crimes against Asian Americans. The record number of unaccompanied children who tried to cross the border from Mexico — 18,890 in March alone — strained the administration's capacity to hold them humanely. China, Russia, Iran and North Korea are testing him.

Yet to Axelrod, Biden has moved swiftly and efficiently on the two issues that dominate public concerns — the virus and the economy.

"His team has been competent and focused, a marked contrast to the chaos of the Trump years," he said. "But, as important, he's restored a sense of calm and equilibrium to a capital that lived on the jagged edge for four years of Trump.

"Biden is measured. He does not personally vilify his opponents or divide the country. He does not insist on constantly making himself the center of attention."

Biden was deprived of an orderly transition by Trump's false claims of election fraud, explosive charges that animated the Jan. 6 insurrection at the Capitol and brought a second Trump impeachment trial.

## THE VACCINE

This meant delays up and down the federal bureaucracy. In the case of vaccines, it meant the Trump administration had done little to facilitate their distribution before Biden took office, prompting his complaint in late February about "the mess we inherited."

A distribution mess, perhaps, but the Trump administration and Congress had made a huge investment in the development of vaccines. Not only that, but the administration took action to lock in early supplies for the U.S. while many other developed countries still face crucial shortages of doses.

As the number of vaccines manufactured swelled, so did the number that reached Americans' arms, with more than 4 million shots administered one day in mid-April. The president became fond of the political trope of underpromising but overdelivering, repeatedly blowing past benchmarks and timelines.

The improved vaccine deployment was a significant early achievement, in part made possible by Biden's first legislative success: passing a \$1.9 trillion COVID relief bill into law within two months.

Not a single Republican lawmaker voted for the measure, though the White House was quick to claim that it was a bipartisan bill because it polled well with GOP voters.

Republican opposition to Biden's next cornerstone legislation, a \$2.3 trillion infrastructure and jobs program, also initially seemed firm. Yet some Republicans worry they will be left defending politically unpopular decisions — like opposing a corporate tax rate increase — while the Democrats may be able to simply pass the mega-package along party lines.

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 295 ~ 51 of 62

## UP IN POLLS

To this point, Republican criticism of Biden has failed to land, as he enjoys healthy poll numbers. A Pew Research approval rating of 59% this month put him in league with Obama (61%) and President George W. Bush (55%). Trump trailed all modern presidents at 39% at this point.

In large measure Republicans have tried to score points by focusing on wedge issues of the kind that mostly interest Twitter users who argue over racial stereotypes in Dr. Seuss books, gender issues raised by Mr. Potato Head and excesses of cancel culture.

Meanwhile a longtime Republican argument — we're spending way too much on government programs — has lost much of its potency, at least for now, thanks to cheap borrowing costs and low inflation.

Biden press secretary Jen Psaki looked back at the Obama stimulus package that helped lift the U.S. from the Great Recession and said it wasn't so big that "people would be talking about it at their dinner tables." This one got everyone's attention.

Biden's package featured \$1,400 payments to most people, on top of \$1,800 from Trump's two waves of pandemic relief, which steered nearly \$3 trillion to the economy.

But Biden's package was much more geared to lower-income Americans and broader in its sweep. It focused on barriers to returning to work and sustaining people as they look for jobs, instead of subsidizing employers. It offers the prospect of slashing poverty by one-third with the stroke of his pen. The aid is to expire; Democrats will try to extend it.

## THE MAN

Few people have tried longer to be president than Biden, who also had formed a clear vision of the job. "He really knew how he saw the presidency before he got here," said White House senior adviser Steve Ricchetti.

Biden talks more quietly now, moves a little slower and has lost weight. Mindful of his age, and his own life touched by immense tragedy, Biden has told confidants that he knows tomorrow is never a given.

He speaks of all he wants to do, "God willing."

"I'm just going to move forward and take these things as they come," he said at his only formal news conference. "I'm a great respecter of fate."

The schedule on his card is full. The virus death tally inches up, more slowly now. So far, he's played golf once.

## Cuomo on sex harassment claims: 'I didn't do anything wrong'

By MARINA VILLENEUVE Associated Press

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) — In his first face-to-face encounter with journalists in months, Gov. Andrew Cuomo on Monday flatly denied he had done anything inappropriate with any of the women who have accused him of sexual misconduct and harassment.

Speaking to reporters at the New York State Fairgrounds in Syracuse, the Democrat abandoned his past approach of expressing contrition for some past behavior while declining to address whether specific allegations were true.

"You were in those rooms. You know the truth. So can you tell the people of the state of New York yes or no? Did you do the things you were accused of?" asked New York Times reporter Jesse McKinley.

"To put it very simply, no." Cuomo said.

"All the groping, the sexual harassment, you deny all of that?" McKinley said.

"That's right. Yes," Cuomo said.

Several current and former state employees and other women have accused Cuomo of making unwanted sexual remarks and advances, giving them unwanted kisses or touching them inappropriately.

One female aide said Cuomo groped her breasts after summoning her to his official residence.

Before Monday, Cuomo had repeatedly denied he touched anyone inappropriately. He's said "sorry" for making some people uncomfortable with comments or gestures he claimed were playful.

Cuomo's said he likes to hug and kiss people because of his Italian-American heritage.

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 295 ~ 52 of 62

Asked if he would consider disciplining himself or resigning if the state attorney general, who is investigating the claims, reports he did harass women, Cuomo dismissed that possibility.

"The report can't say anything different because I didn't do anything wrong," Cuomo said.

This was the first time Cuomo has allowed a group of journalists to question him in person since sexual harassment allegations surfaced in December.

For months, citing COVID-19 precautions, he has taken questions only via telephone or internet conference calls — forums where his staff can control who asks questions and journalists often aren't allowed to ask follow-up queries.

A lawyer for Charlotte Bennett, a former aide who accused Cuomo of hitting on her while they worked together, said the governor's new claim he did nothing wrong was "revisionist history."

"Just weeks ago he admitted numerous times to making 'jokes' and other inappropriate comments to Ms. Bennett, which are defined as sexual harassment under the very policies he enacted," the attorney, Debra Katz, said.

"Does he really not understand that sexually propositioning a 25 year-old staffer after making inappropriate comments of a sexual nature is illegal?" she asked.

Cuomo has defied calls for his resignation from many of New York's most influential Democrats, including most members of the state's congressional delegation and a majority of state lawmakers.

He has urged the public to await the results of investigations being conducted by Attorney General Letitia James and the state Assembly's judiciary committee, which is exploring whether there are grounds to impeach him.

James and the legislative committee are also investigating whether Cuomo used state resources for his book on pandemic leadership. And the Assembly committee and federal prosecutors are scrutinizing his administration's months-long refusal to release how many nursing home residents died of COVID-19 in all.

## US to share AstraZeneca shots with world after safety check

By ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. will begin sharing its entire stock of AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccines with the world once it clears federal safety reviews, the White House said Monday, with as many as 60 million doses expected to be available for export in the coming months.

The move greatly expands on the Biden administration's action last month to share about 4 million doses of the vaccine with Mexico and Canada. The AstraZeneca vaccine is widely in use around the world but has not yet been authorized by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

The White House is increasingly feeling assured about the supply of the three vaccines being administered in the U.S., particularly following the restart of the single-dose Johnson & Johnson shot over the weekend. The U.S. has also been under mounting pressure in recent weeks to share more of its vaccine supply with the world, as countries like India experience devastating surges of the virus and others struggle to access doses needed to protect their most vulnerable populations.

"Given the strong portfolio of vaccines that the U.S. already has and that have been authorized by the FDA, and given that the AstraZeneca vaccine is not authorized for use in the U.S., we do not need to use the AstraZeneca vaccine here during the next several months," said White House COVID-19 coordinator Jeff Zients. "Therefore the U.S. is looking at options to share the AstraZeneca doses with other countries as they become available."

More than 3 million people worldwide have died of COVID-19, including more than 572,000 in the U.S. The U.S. has vaccinated more than 53% of its adult population with at least one dose of its three authorized vaccines from Pfizer, Moderna and J&J, and it expects to have enough supply for its entire population by early summer.

About 10 million doses of AstraZeneca vaccine have been produced but have yet to pass review by the FDA to "meet its expectations for product quality," Zients said, noting the U.S. regulator is recognized as the "gold standard" for safety around the world. That process could be completed in the next several



# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 295 ~ 53 of 62

weeks. About 50 million more doses are in various stages of production and could be available to ship in May and June pending FDA sign-off.

The U.S. has yet to finalize where the AstraZeneca doses will go, Zients said. Neighbors Mexico and Canada have asked the Biden administration to share more doses, while dozens of other countries are looking to access supplies of the vaccine.

"We're in the planning process at this point in time," said White House press secretary Jen Psaki, when asked where the doses would go.

The AstraZeneca doses will be donated by the U.S. government, which has contracted with the company for a total of 300 million doses — though the company has faced production issues.

The administration's move to share vaccines drew praise from nongovernmental aid groups, who encouraged the White House to develop plans to share even more doses.

"The Biden administration's decision to begin sharing AstraZeneca vaccines is welcome news and an important first step towards the US sharing more of its massive vaccine stockpile," said Tom Hart, acting CEO at The ONE Campaign. "The Biden administration should build on this welcome first step and start sharing more vaccines as soon as possible."

In part because the AstraZeneca vaccine is not expected to play a significant factor in the U.S. virus response, the White House was also moving to share raw materials for the production of the AstraZeneca vaccine with India, which has emerged as a global hotspot for the virus, by diverting some of its orders to the vaccine manufacturer Serum Institute of India.

Zients told the AP that the Biden administration was working to satisfy other "key requests" from the Indian government, namely for personal protective equipment, tests, therapeutics and supplies of oxygen and respiratory assistance devices.

"The administration's identified U.S. commercial suppliers of therapeutics that are immediately available to help relieve the suffering of the COVID-19 patients in India," said Zients. "We've identified rapid diagnostic tests and supplies and PPE, and additional ventilators that are available to transferred to India."

Epidemiologists from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention were also expected to soon travel to India to assist the country with its virus response.

The additional quality review before the U.S. shares the AstraZeneca doses were in order because of issues at the facility that produced them, White House officials said.

AstraZeneca's doses in the U.S. were produced at an Emergent BioSolutions plant in Baltimore that has come under increased regulatory and public scrutiny after botching batches of the J&J vaccine. The U.S. pressed J&J to take over the plant and, as part of the effort to ensure the quality of newly produced vaccines, directed the facility to stop making the AstraZeneca shot. AstraZeneca is still looking to identify a new U.S. production facility for its future doses.

The U.S. government ordered enough for 150 million Americans before issues with the vaccine's clinical trial held up clearance. The company's 30,000-person U.S. trial didn't complete enrollment until January, and it still has not filed for an emergency-use authorization with the FDA.

## Supreme Court to take up right to carry gun for self-defense

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court agreed on Monday to hear an appeal to expand gun rights in the United States in a New York case over the right to carry a firearm in public for self-defense.

The case marks the court's first foray into gun rights since Justice Amy Coney Barrett came on board in October, making a 6-3 conservative majority.

The justices said Monday that they will review a lower-court ruling that upheld New York's restrictive gun permit law. The court's decision to take on the case follows mass shootings in recent weeks in Indiana, Georgia, Colorado and California and comes amid congressional efforts to tighten gun laws. President Joe Biden also has announced several executive actions to combat what he called an "epidemic and an international embarrassment" of gun violence in America.

The case is especially significant during the coronavirus pandemic, said Eric Tirschwell, the legal director

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 295 ~ 54 of 62

of Everytown for Gun Safety, a gun control group backed by former New York Mayor Mike Bloomberg. "Gun violence has only worsened during the pandemic, and a ruling that opened the door to weakening our gun laws could make it even harder for cities and states to grapple with this public health crisis," Tirschwell said.

The court had turned down review of the issue in June, before Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg's death.

New York is among eight states that limit who has the right to carry a weapon in public. The others are California, Delaware, Hawaii, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey and Rhode Island.

In the rest of the country, gun owners have little trouble legally carrying their weapons when they go out.

Paul Clement, representing challengers to New York's permit law, said the court should use the case to settle the issue once and for all. "Thus, the nation is split, with the Second Amendment alive and well in the vast middle of the nation, and those same rights disregarded near the coasts," Clement wrote on behalf of the New York State Rifle & Pistol Association and two New York residents.

Calling on the court to reject the appeal, the state said its law promotes public safety and crime reduction and neither bans people from carrying guns nor allows everyone to do so.

New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo said that gun laws have made New York the "safest big state in the country" and that the "NRA-backed case is a massive threat to that security. Imagine someone carrying a gun through Times Square, onto the subway, or to a tailgate outside of a Bills game."

Federal courts have largely upheld the permit limits. Last month, an 11-judge panel of the federal appeals court in San Francisco rejected a challenge to Hawaii's permit regulations in an opinion written by a conservative judge, Jay Bybee.

"Our review of more than 700 years of English and American legal history reveals a strong theme: government has the power to regulate arms in the public square," Bybee wrote in a 7-4 decision for the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

The issue of carrying a gun for self-defense has been seen for several years as the next major step for gun rights at the Supreme Court, following decisions in 2008 and 2010 that established a nationwide right to keep a gun at home for self-defense.

In June, Justice Clarence Thomas, joined by Justice Brett Kavanaugh, complained that rather than take on the constitutional issue, "the Court simply looks the other way."

But Barrett has a more expansive view of gun rights than Ginsburg. She wrote a dissent in 2019, when she was a judge on the federal appeals court in Chicago, that argued that a conviction for a nonviolent felony — in this case, mail fraud — shouldn't automatically disqualify someone from owning a gun.

She said that her colleagues in the majority were treating the Second Amendment as a "second-class right, subject to an entirely different body of rules than the other Bill of Rights guarantees."

## Italy opens again amid hopes for real economic relaunch

By COLLEEN BARRY Associated Press

MILAN (AP) — Lunch-time diners filled tables on Milan's landmark Piazza Duomo even on a cloudy, wind-swept Monday, proof of the pent-up demand for eating out as Italy begins its second, and many hope last, reopening of the COVID-19 pandemic.

After six months of rotating on-again, off-again closures, restaurants, bars, museums and cinemas opened to the public in most of the country under a gradual reopening plan that is seen as too cautious for some, too hasty for others.

The nation's weary virologists and health care workers fear that even the tentative reopening laid out by Premier Mario Draghi's government will invite a free-or-all, signs of which were seen over the weekend with parks and squares filling up in cities from Rome to Turin, Milan to Naples.

"It is illusory to think that you give a sign of opening, and you don't see people around. Perfection doesn't exist," Milan Mayor Giuseppe Sala said Monday. "You also have to be a little tolerant, and also a little careful."

For restaurant owners struggling to survive, the return of outdoor dining is too little, too late, and the continued 10 p.m. curfew puts a damper on theater re-openings and sends a bad public relations message for international tourism heading into the second pandemic summer.

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 295 ~ 55 of 62

Pizzeria Pino was granted rare permission by Milan officials to set up tables along the porticoes lining Piazza Duomo, some compensation for the lost indoor seating, as it served seated customers for the first time since February. The permit will last through the summer.

"We can only be happy," waiter Antonio Carullo said. "Because we have many friends who have restaurants who don't have a lot of space outside, or none at all, and they are still at home, out of work."

The government's vision is that the renewed economic activity of the gradual reopening — continuing with outdoor pools next month, gyms after that and larger events and fairs from mid-June — will be turbocharged by 200 billion euros (\$241 billion) in EU and Italian recovery funds that was outlined in parliament on Monday.

"I am sure that honesty, intelligence and the taste for the future will prevail over corruption, stupidity and vested interests," Draghi told lawmakers in Rome.

Under pressure from right-wing partners, the government moved the openings a week earlier than initially planned, allowing free travel for the first time in months among 15 of Italy's 21 regions and autonomous provinces under the lowest levels of coronavirus restrictions. The number of people who can visit friends and family at any one time was doubled from two to four. Restaurants and bars can seat people for open-air dining. Contact sports resumed outdoors.

In Rome's Campo dei Fiori, restaurant owners set up tables outside and swept the cobblestones to welcome customers for sit-down service for the first time since mid-March. Venice remained empty of its usual throngs of tourists, but café owners wiped tables and chairs and placed them outside hoping for the local customers.

"It's a bit of a rebirth," said café owner Stefano Baldan in Campo Santa Margherita

The reopenings come even as Italy's intensive care wards remain above the 30% threshold for alarm. Italy's vaccine campaign is also still well shy of its 500,000-shots-a-day goal and is only now moving to protect people in the 70-79 age bracket. The World Health Organization says people over 65 have accounted for the vast majority of COVID-19 deaths in Europe.

That has caused concern among virologists who note that the virus has been adept at transforming itself with deadly variants, and that in Italy the curve has only recently come under control, and could easily spike back up.

The Italian island of Sardinia — the only region that was entirely free of restrictions for a period this winter — has become a cautionary tale. It was plunged into the red zone in mid-April after the all-clear signal resulted in a surge of new infections.

Dr. Massimo Puoti, chief of infectious diseases at Milan's Niguarda hospitals, said he believes Italy's monitoring system would allow enough warning if the virus delivered another blow. Right now, he said the focus needs to remain on vaccinations, not so much to contain contagions, but to keep pressure off hospitals.

"That will allow us to return to our usual activity, because we have many patients who don't have COVID in need of treatment," Dr. Puoti said, treatments that cannot be scheduled as long as the intensive care wards are under pressure. "Even if a cancer patient can wait for treatment, they are not waiting with serenity."

Despite the difficulties, the decision to open was understandable, Dr. Puoti said.

"After all it's hard to restrain people, and also to cope with a serious economic crisis. There were important reasons behind this political decision," he said.

In Milan, one movie house, Cinema Beltrade, organized an all-day film marathon, from 6 a.m. until 9:30 p.m. to celebrate with "a little craziness," owner Monica Baldi said.

A socially distanced capacity crowd of 82 filled the cinema for the sunrise showing of Nanni Moretti's 1993 film "Dear Diary," a reprisal of the last film showing before shutdown in November that seemed only appropriate for the relaunch, Baldi said.

While Lombardy's 500 live-performance theaters are permitted to open, the reality is more complicated. Distancing rules allow a maximum 500 spectators, even in large theaters like La Scala, which seats more than 2,000 people.

La Scala plans a symbolic reopening concert next month conducted by Riccardo Muti. But a relaunch of

the season with full calendar is not expected before September, when management hopes the orchestra and chorus can be fully vaccinated, and distancing rules more relaxed. In the meantime, it is planning a series of open-air concerts around the city in the coming months.

"The important thing is that there will be occasions to have the audience return, and recreate the unique emotions of concerts," general manager Dominique Meyer said.

## Apple's iPhone privacy clampdown arrives after 7-month delay

By MICHAEL LIEDTKE AP Technology Writer

SAN RAMON, Calif. (AP) — Apple is following through on its pledge to crack down on Facebook and other snoopy apps that secretly shadow people on their iPhones in order to target more advertising at users.

The new privacy feature, dubbed "App Tracking Transparency," rolled out Monday as part of an update to the operating system powering the iPhone and iPad. The anti-tracking shield included in iOS 14.5 arrives after a seven-month delay during which Apple and Facebook attacked each other's business models and motives for decisions that affect billions of people around the world.

"What this feud demonstrates more than anything is that Facebook and Apple have tremendous gate-keeping powers over the market," said Elizabeth Renieris, founding director of the Technology Ethics Lab at the University of Notre Dame.

But Apple says it is just looking out for the best interests of the more than 1 billion people currently using iPhones.

"Now is a good time to bring this out, both because of because of the increasing amount of data they have on their devices, and their sensitivity (about the privacy risks) is increasing, too," Erik Neuenschwander, Apple's chief privacy engineer, told The Associated Press in an interview.

Once the software update is installed -- something most iPhone users do -- even existing apps already on the device will be required to ask and receive consent to track online activities. That's a shift Facebook fiercely resisted, most prominently in a series of full-page newspaper ads blasting Apple.

Until now, Facebook and other apps have been able to automatically conduct their surveillance on iPhones unless users took the time and trouble to go into their settings to prevent it -- a process that few people bother to navigate.

"This is an important step toward consumers getting the transparency and the controls they have clearly been looking for," said Daniel Barber, CEO of DataGrail, a firm that helps companies manage personal privacy.

In its attacks on Apple's anti-tracking controls, Facebook blasted the move as an abuse of power designed to force more apps to charge for their services instead of relying on ads. Apple takes a 15% to 30% cut on most payments processed through an iPhone app.

Online tracking has long helped Facebook and thousands of other apps accumulate information about their user's interests and habits so they can show customized ads. Although Facebook executives initially acknowledged Apple's changes would probably reduce its revenue by billions of dollars annually, the social networking company has framed most of its public criticism as a defense of small businesses that rely on online ads to stay alive.

Apple, in turn, has pilloried Facebook and other apps for prying so deeply into people's lives that it has created a societal crisis.

In a speech given a few weeks after the Jan. 6 attacks on the U.S. Capitol, Apple CEO Tim Cook pointed out how personal information collected through tracking by Facebook and other social media can sometimes push people toward more misinformation and hate speech as part of the efforts to show more ads.

"What are the consequences of not just tolerating but rewarding content that undermines public trust in life-saving vaccinations?" Cook asked. "What are the consequences of seeing thousands of users join extremist groups and then perpetuating an algorithm that recommends more?"

It's part of Apple's attempt to use the privacy issue to its competitive advantage, Barber said, a tactic he now expects more major brands to embrace if the new anti-tracking controls prove popular among



most consumers.

In a change of tone, Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg recently suggested that Apple's new privacy controls could actually help his company in the long run. His rationale: The inability to automatically track iPhone users may prod more companies to sell their products directly on Facebook and affiliated services such as Instagram if they can't collect enough personal information to effectively target ads within their own apps.

"It's possible that we may even be in a stronger position if Apple's changes encourage more businesses to conduct more commerce on our platforms by making it harder for them to use their data in order to find the customers that would want to use their products outside of our platforms," Zuckerberg said last month during a discussion held on the audio chat app Clubhouse.

In the same interview, Zuckerberg also asserted most people realize that advertising is a "time-tested model" that enables them to get more services for free or at extremely low prices.

"People get for the most part that if they are going to see ads, they want them to be relevant ads," Zuckerberg said. He didn't say whether he believes most iPhone users will consent to tracking in exchange for ads tailored to their interests.

Google also depends on personal information to fuel a digital ad network even bigger than Facebook's, but it has said it would be able to adjust to the iPhone's new privacy controls. Unlike Facebook, Google has close business ties with Apple. Google pays Apple an estimated \$9 billion to \$12 billion annually to be the preferred search engine on iPhone and iPad. That arrangement is currently one element of an antitrust case filed last year by the U.S. Justice Department.

Facebook is also defending itself against a federal antitrust lawsuit seeking to break the company apart. Meanwhile, Apple is being scrutinized by lawmakers and regulators around the world for the commissions it collects on purchases made through iPhone apps and its ability to shake up markets through new rules that are turning it into a de facto regulator.

"Even if Apple's business model and side in this battle is more rights protective and better for consumer privacy, there is still a question of whether we want a large corporation like Apple effectively 'legislating' through the app store," Renieris said.

## Protests reveal generational divide in immigrant communities

By STEPHEN GROVES and MOHAMED IBRAHIM Associated Press

BROOKLYN CENTER, Minn. (AP) — When protests began in a Minneapolis suburb after a white police officer fatally shot a Black man, 21-year-old Fatumata Kromah took to the street, pushing for change she says is essential to her Liberian immigrant community.

Meanwhile, 40-year-old Matilda Kromah feared stepping outside her home as trauma associated with the Liberian civil war suddenly rushed back into her life, two decades after she escaped the conflict.

The two women, whose shared last name is common among Liberians, have seen their lives changed amid the unrest that has sometimes engulfed Minneapolis in the months since George Floyd's death. Their behavior also reflects a generational split: While Fatumata has been drawn into the protests, Matilda has tried to avoid them, focusing instead on running a dress shop and hair-braiding salon that is essential to sending her children to college.

The same divide has played out across the Twin Cities' burgeoning Somali, Ethiopian, Liberian and Kenyan communities. Young people have thrust themselves into movements for racial justice, often embracing the identity of being Black in America. Older generations have been more likely to concentrate on carving out new lives rather than protesting racial issues in their adopted homeland.

When Fatumata visited Matilda's shop this past week in the Minneapolis suburb of Brooklyn Center, the topic was unavoidable. Matilda's strip-mall storefront — Humu Boutique and Neat Braids — was vandalized in the aftermath of the April 11 death of Black motorist Daunte Wright. Thieves smashed windows and doors and took nearly everything of value, even stripping mannequins of their African dresses.

Tears formed in the elder woman's eyes, and her hands shook as she spoke. Memories of the atrocities she had fled during the Liberian civil war had returned.

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 295 ~ 58 of 62

"Maybe war is starting again," Matilda said of the demonstrations. "I was traumatized. For three days, I didn't want to go out of my house. I was hiding in my room."

But she needed to figure out a way to pay for her son's college tuition, so she posted an "open" sign on the plywood covering the shop's broken windows and began accepting customers. She did not have insurance to cover the losses, she said.

Fatumata, who chanted and yelled at protests, grew quiet as Matilda spoke. She agreed that the United States offered opportunities for education and a "better life," but she had also made up her mind that such a life would not be complete without justice for Black people.

After moving to Brooklyn Center from Liberia in 2015, she said she was treated differently as a Black person. People commented on the color of her skin, disapproved of the clothes she wore and once called the police on her and a friend for being too "loud."

"I started to realize like, 'Oh, America is not what it says on TV,'" she said.

Then Floyd's death sparked protests, and she decided that "this was not the American dream I was promised."

Kromah is not alone. Young people in the city's East African communities came out to protest in droves following Floyd's death. Despite tension, at times, between Black immigrants from Africa and Black people whose long history in the U.S. began with slavery, protesters united around decrying police brutality they said plagued their communities.

The verse "Somali lives, they matter here," often followed the protest refrain of "Black lives, they matter here." And one of the most widely shared images of last year's protests was a video posted on social media showing a protester in a hijab and a long skirt kicking a tear gas cannister back toward law enforcement officers in riot gear.

"I am Somali, I am Black American, I am Muslim," 21-year-old Aki Abdi said. "If a cop pulls me over, he don't know if I'm Somali or Black. They go hand in hand."

When former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin was convicted of murder in Floyd's death, celebrations broke out across the city, and Abdi and two friends made their way to George Floyd Square.

On the sidewalk down the street from where Floyd took his last breath, they scrawled the names of two Somali men — Dolal Idd and Isak Aden — who were fatally shot by Minnesota police in recent years. They hoped some people in the crowd would search those names on the internet. Police defended their actions in both shootings, saying the men had guns, but the men's families have pressed for more thorough investigations.

Many older immigrants grew up in countries where speaking out against the government resulted in punishment, and some are so focused on making a living after escaping war-torn countries that they do not have time or energy for anything besides their families' immediate well-being, said Jaylani Hussein, executive director of the Minnesota chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations.

Younger Black immigrants who were born in America or came at a young age often know firsthand both their parents' struggles and America's history of racial injustice, Hussein said.

"By being squeezed by these two pressures, they have no option but to fight and to try to change the system," he said. "The younger generation is propelled by this legacy of the fight that is happening in the country that they've adopted, but also the fight that their parents have been teaching them about in the country that they left."

Fatumata Kromah's mother, Rebecca Williams Sonyah, said parents like her fear for their children's safety both in interactions with police and at demonstrations, all while trying to stay focused on the jobs and businesses essential to their livelihoods.

"Our children should have freedom. They should have equal rights," Williams Sonyah said. "They shouldn't judge our children because of their color or because of where their parents are from."

She recognized her daughter's activism as important to those goals but still pleaded with her to stay home after Wright's death, knowing that destruction was likely. They compromised by agreeing that Kromah would return home before the curfews set by city authorities.

Williams Sonyah's job in medical home care prevented her from joining in the marches in front of the

police department. But she seemed sympathetic to the movement.

"If I had a way to go protest," she said, "I would protest."

## Russian authorities suspend operations of Navalny's offices

By DARIA LITVINOVA Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — Russian authorities on Monday ordered the offices of imprisoned opposition leader Alexei Navalny to halt their activities pending what would be a landmark court ruling on whether they should be outlawed as an extremist group.

The injunction from the Moscow prosecutor's office was another step in a sweeping crackdown on Navalny, President Vladimir Putin's fiercest critic, and his organizations. The prosecutor's office petitioned a court this month to label Navalny's Foundation for Fighting Corruption and network of regional offices as extremist groups.

It is a major challenge for Navalny's embattled team, with its leader in prison and dozens of its members under arrest, targeted for raids by law enforcement, or facing criminal charges. Such a label would outlaw their activities and expose members and supporters to lengthy prison terms, according to human rights advocates.

"Tens of thousands of peaceful activists and the staff of Alexei Navalny's organizations are in grave danger — if their organizations are deemed 'extremist,' they will be at imminent risk of criminal prosecution," said Natalia Zviagina, Amnesty International's Moscow Office Director, in a statement on April 17. She called the possible move "one of the most serious blows for the rights to freedom of expression and association in Russia's post-Soviet history."

The prosecutors also asked a Moscow court to restrict the activities of the foundation by banning it from spreading information in the media, taking part in elections, using banks or organizing public events, according to Ivan Pavlov, a lawyer representing the Foundation. The ruling on the motion is expected later on Monday.

The injunction from the prosecutor's office was posted on social media by Navalny's allies, who reject the accusations and insist the actions are politically motivated.

"It's a total travesty of justice and lawlessness once again in Putin's Russia," said top Navalny associate Lyubov Sobol.

The prosecutor's office said Monday it resorted to these measures because "leaders and members" of the foundation and Navalny's offices "continue to carry out unlawful activities, for instance, hold unlawful mass public events. ... for example, on April 21" — a reference to a wave of nationwide rallies that day supporting Navalny.

"They're just screaming here: We're scared of your activities, we're scared of your protests, we're scared of your Smart Voting," tweeted Ivan Zhdanov, Navalny's top ally and director of the Foundation for Fighting Corruption.

The Smart Voting project is designed to support candidates who are most likely to beat those backed by United Russia, the party backed by the Kremlin, in various local elections. That plan was successful in some of last year's regional balloting.

Navalny's foundation opened 10 years ago and has since targeted high-ranking Russian officials with exposes on corruption, many in the form of colorful and widely watched YouTube videos. One of the latest postings, which has received 116 million views alleges that a lavish palace on the Black Sea shore was built for Putin through an elaborate corruption scheme. The Kremlin has denied there are any links to Putin.

Along with the foundation, Navalny set up a vast network of regional offices in dozens of Russian regions when he was campaigning to run against Putin in the 2018 presidential election. He eventually was barred from running but kept the infrastructure in place.

Soon, these regional "headquarters" began their own investigations of graft by local officials and recruited activists, some of whom would later run for office. The regional offices also were instrumental in organizing nationwide rallies in support of Navalny this year.

# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 295 ~ 60 of 62

Navalny himself was arrested in January upon his return from Germany, where he had spent five months recovering from a nerve agent poisoning that he blames on the Kremlin — accusations that Russian officials reject.

The arrest triggered protests at the time across Russia that proved to be the biggest show of defiance in years. However, they didn't stop authorities from putting Navalny on trial for the violating terms of a suspended sentence stemming from a 2014 embezzlement conviction widely believed to be politically motivated. He was ordered to serve 2½ years in prison and last month was transferred to a penal colony notorious for its harsh conditions.

On Wednesday, another wave of protests in support of Navalny swept across cities in all of the country's 11 time zones. Unlike the past, police in many cities didn't interfere with the demonstrations. But Navalny's aides in many regions were detained both before and after protests. Over the weekend, several other opposition activists were arrested.

Sobol, who was detained in Moscow hours before the protest started, was fined the equivalent of \$4,000 on the charge of repeatedly violating protest regulations.

In light of Monday's injunction, Navalny's offices posted announcements on social media saying they're suspending their activities. "It's foolish to get involved in a battle that can't be won," Sergei Boiko, head of Navalny's office in Siberia's Novosibirsk, wrote on Facebook.

Navalny's top strategist and head of the regional network Leonid Volkov told the media that all offices have halted their operation.

Both the foundation and the regional offices have been targeted regularly with raids, fines and detentions of activists before. But the extremism lawsuit takes the pressure to a new level, Sobol told The Associated Press on Friday.

"Labeling us as extremists — contrary to the common sense and to the laws of this country, because obviously we're not involved in any extremism — is quite a serious attack on our organization. We will have to survive in completely different conditions," Sobol said. "But I am sure our work won't stop."

The case against Navalny's foundation and regional offices will heard by the Moscow City Court behind closed doors. It remains unclear what evidence the authorities have against the organizations, because some of the case files contain state secrets, according to Navalny's allies.

Navalny's team said they prepared a motion at his behest to allow him to participate in the court proceedings. "To carry out these court proceedings without the public is absurd. But to ban the work of Navalny's headquarters without Navalny is even more absurd. And it's not just absurd, it's illegal," the team said in a statement on Navalny's blog, promising to file the motion "shortly."

## Hundreds show up in Nebraska for fight over name Josh

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — A fight over the name of Josh drew a crowd from around the country to a Nebraska park Saturday for a heated pool-noodle brawl.

It all started a year ago when pandemic boredom set in and Josh Swain, a 22-year-old college student from Tucson, Arizona, messaged others who shared his name on social media and challenged them to a duel.

Hundreds showed up at Air Park in Lincoln — a location chosen at random — to participate in the silliness.

The festivities started with a "grueling and righteous battle of Rock, Paper, Scissors" between the Josh Swain from Arizona and another Josh Swain from Omaha. KLKN-TV reports that the Arizona student won that competition, allowing him to claim the title of the true Josh Swain.

The pool-noodle competition that followed was open to anyone with the first name of Josh. The victor of that competition was a 4-year-old boy, who was coronated with a Burger King crown.

Swain, the organizer, said he is a little surprised about how the whole thing blew up: "I did not expect people to be as adamant about this as they are right now."

**Today in History**



# Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 295 ~ 61 of 62

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, April 27, the 117th day of 2021. There are 248 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On April 27, 1978, 51 construction workers plunged to their deaths when a scaffold inside a cooling tower at the Pleasants Power Station site in West Virginia fell 168 feet to the ground.

On this date:

In 1521, Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan was killed by natives in the Philippines.

In 1791, the inventor of the telegraph, Samuel Morse, was born in Charlestown, Massachusetts.

In 1810, Ludwig van Beethoven wrote one of his most famous piano compositions, the Bagatelle in A-minor.

In 1822, the 18th president of the United States, Ulysses S. Grant, was born in Point Pleasant, Ohio.

In 1865, the steamer Sultana, carrying freed Union prisoners of war, exploded on the Mississippi River near Memphis, Tennessee; death toll estimates vary from 1,500 to 2,000.

In 1941, German forces occupied Athens during World War II.

In 1973, acting FBI Director L. Patrick Gray resigned after it was revealed that he'd destroyed files removed from the safe of Watergate conspirator E. Howard Hunt.

In 1982, the trial of John W. Hinckley Jr., who shot four people, including President Ronald Reagan, began in Washington. (The trial ended with Hinckley's acquittal by reason of insanity.)

In 1994, former President Richard M. Nixon was remembered at an outdoor funeral service attended by all five of his successors at the Nixon presidential library in Yorba Linda, California.

In 2009, a 23-month-old Mexico City toddler died at Texas Children's Hospital in Houston, becoming the first swine-flu death on U.S. soil.

In 2010, former Panamanian dictator Manuel Noriega was extradited from the United States to France, where he was later convicted of laundering drug money and received a seven-year sentence.

In 2015, rioters plunged part of Baltimore into chaos, torching a pharmacy, setting police cars ablaze and throwing bricks at officers hours after thousands attended a funeral for Freddie Gray, a Black man who died from a severe spinal injury he'd suffered in police custody; the Baltimore Orioles' home game against the Chicago White Sox was postponed because of safety concerns.

Ten years ago: Powerful tornadoes raked the South and Midwest; according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, more than 120 twisters resulted in 316 deaths. An Afghan officer, Col. Ahmed Gul, killed eight U.S. airmen and one U.S. civilian during a routine meeting at an Afghan air force headquarters compound in Kabul; Gul died in an exchange of fire that followed his attack. Responding to critics' relentless claims, President Barack Obama produced a detailed Hawaii birth certificate in an extraordinary attempt to bury the issue of where he'd been born and confirm his legitimacy to hold office.

Five years ago: Former House Speaker Dennis Hastert was sentenced in Chicago to more than a year in prison in a hush-money case that revealed accusations he'd sexually abused teenagers while coaching high school wrestling. Tennessee Gov. Bill Haslam signed a bill allowing mental health counselors to refuse to treat patients based on the therapist's religious or personal beliefs.

One year ago: In a call with governors, President Donald Trump said states should "seriously consider" reopening public schools before the end of the academic year. Attorney General William Barr told federal prosecutors to "be on the lookout" for state and local coronavirus-related restrictions that could be unconstitutional. New York canceled its June Democratic presidential primary because of the pandemic. The family of Breonna Taylor, a Black woman who was shot to death in her home by officers serving a narcotics warrant, filed a wrongful death lawsuit against the city of Louisville, Kentucky and its police department. (The suit would be settled in September.) Former New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin, sentenced to 10 years in prison in a corruption case in 2014, was released early because of the coronavirus.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Anouk Aimee is 89. Rock musician Jim Keltner is 79. Rock singer Kate Pierson (The B-52's) is 73. R&B singer Herb Murrell (The Stylistics) is 72. Actor Douglas Sheehan is 72. Rock musician Ace Frehley is 70. West Virginia Gov. Jim Justice is 70. Pop singer Sheena Easton is 62. Actor

# Groton Daily Independent

**Tuesday, April 27, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 295 ~ 62 of 62**

James Le Gros (groh) is 59. Rock musician Rob Squires (Big Head Todd and the Monsters) is 56. Singer Mica (MEE'-shah) Paris is 52. Sen. Cory Booker, D-N.J., is 52. Actor David Lascher is 49. Actor Maura West is 49. Actor Sally Hawkins is 45. Rock singer Jim James (My Morning Jacket) is 43. Rock musician Patrick Hallahan (My Morning Jacket) is 43. Rock singer-musician Travis Meeks (Days of the New) is 42. Country musician John Osborne (Brothers Osborne) is 39. Actor Francis Capra is 38. Actor Ari Graynor is 38. Rock singer-musician Patrick Stump (Fall Out Boy) is 37. Actor Sheila Vand is 36. Actor Jenna Coleman is 35. Actor William Moseley is 34. Singer Lizzo is 33. Actor Emily Rios is 32. Singer Allison Iraheta is 29.