

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 28, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 1 of 72

- [1- MJ's is Hiring](#)
- [2- Groton Invite Track Meet Results](#)
- [3- Weber Landscaping Greenhouse Ad](#)
- [4- Spotlight on Groton Area Staff: Shaun Wanner](#)
- [5- South Dakota News Watch wins national journalism awards;](#)
- [7- Covid-19 Update by Marie Miller](#)
- [9- Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs](#)
- [10- Weather Pages](#)
- [13- Daily Devotional](#)
- [14- 2021 Community Events](#)
- [15- News from the Associated Press](#)

“Learn to be quiet enough to hear the genuine within yourself so that you can hear it in others.”

-MARIAN WRIGHT EDELMAN

Chicken Soup
for the Soul

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.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 28, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 2 of 72

Groton Invite Track Meet Results

The Groton Invitational Track Meet was held Tuesday. Top finishers for Groton Area were Faith Traphagen with a second place finish in the 800m run, Isaac Smith finished second in both the 1600m run and the 3200m run, Kenzie McInerney placed second in the long jump, Maddie Bjerke placed second in the shot put, and the girls 800m relay team placed second.

- Girls 100m High Hurdles: 7, Jayla Jones, 21.21.
Boys 110m High Hurdles: 9, Paxton Bonn, 20.56.
Girls 300m Low Hurdles: 8, Jayla Jones, 1:02.25.
Boys 300m Low Hurdles: 6, Jackson Cogley, 49.47.
Girls 100m Dash: 8, Karsyn Jangula, 14.24; 19, Camryn Kurtz, 14.79.
Boys 100m Dash: 4, Andrew Marzahn, 11.41.
Girls 200m Dash: 16, Kenzie McInerney, 31.86; 17, Jayla Jones, 31.88; 24, Camryn Kurtz, 32.96.
Boys 200m Dash: 5, Andrew Marzahn, 34.98.
Girls 400m Dash: 5, Faith Traphagen, 1:09.43; 17, Camryn Kurtz, 1:18.48.
Boys 400m Dash: 6, Cole Simon, 59.46; 28, Douglas Heminger, 1:07.52.
Boys 800m Run: 15, Douglas Heminger, 2:46.51.
Girls 800m Run: 2, Faith Traphagen, 2:41.34; Mia Crank, 3:15.99.
Boys 1600m Run: 2, Isaac Smith, 5:11.38; 5, Jacob Lewandowski, 5:21.78.
Boys 3200m Run: 2, Isaac Smith, 11:41.92.
Girls High Jump: 6, Kenzie McInerney, 4-5; 10, Trista Keith, 3-11; 12, Emilie Thurston, 3-9.
Boys High Jump: 10, Jackson Cogley, 5-1.
Girls Long Jump: 2, Kenzie McInerney, 14-11; 7, Aspen Johnson, 14-1; 9, Trista Keith, 13-5.5; 13, Emilie Thurston, 12-9.5.
Boys Long Jump: 15, Jackson Cogley, 15-10.5; 16, Tate Larson, 15-10; 18, Paxton Bonn, 15-3.
Girls Triple Jump: 10, Aspen Johnson, 29-1; 12, Kenzie McInerney, 32-3; 13, Trista Keith, 25-1;
Boys Triple Jump: 7, Jackson Cogley, 34-4.5; 9, Paxton Bonn, 32-7.5;
Girls Discus: 7, Chloe Daly, 88-8.
Boys Discus: 24, Caleb Furney, 92-9; 25, Caleb Hanten, 92-7; 28, Kaleb Antonsen, 89-8; 38, Holden Sippel, 71-1.5; 42, Kannon Coats, 69-3; 43, Seth Johnson, 66-8.
Girls Shot Put: 2, Maddie Bjerke, 31-2.0; 6, Chloe Daly, 29-6; 16, Faith Fliehs, 25-4; 35, Tina Zoellner, 19-0; 38, Ava Kramer, 17-10.5.
Boys Shot Put: 9, Caleb Furney, 37-0; 23, Holden Sippel, 32-0; 29, Caleb Hanten, 30-0; 30, Seth Johnson, 29-4; 33, Kaleb Antonsen, 28-7; 39, Kannon Coats, 25-2.
Boys 400m Relay: 6, Groton (Andrew Marzahn, Colby Dunker, Ethan Gengerke, Teylor Diegel), 49.41.
Girls 400m Relay: 4, Groton (Jerica Locke, Aspen Johnson, Karsyn Jangula, Laila Roberts), 57.21.
Boys 800m Relay: 5, Groton (Andrew Marzahn, Colby Dunker, Ethan Gengerke, Teylor Diegel), 1:41.08.
Girls 800m Relay: 2, Groton (Jerica Locke, Aspen Johnson, Jayla Jones, Laila Roberts), 1:59.54.
Girls 1600m Relay: 5, Groton (Jerica Locke, Rylee Dunker, Laila Roberts, Faith Traphagen), 4:45.75.
Boys 1600m Sprint Relay: 5, Groton (Ethan Gengerke, Colby Dunker, Tate Larson, Jacob Lewandowski), 4:22.04.
Girls 1600m Sprint Relay: 4, Groton (Emilie Thurston, Trista Keith, Karsyn Jangula, Anna Fjeldheim), 5:46.24)
Boys 3200m Relay: 3, Groton (Isaac Smith, Cole Simon, Tate Larson, Jacob Lewandowski), 9:31.44.
Girls 3200m Relay: 4, Groton (Rylee Dunker, Mia Crank, Anna Fjeldheim, Faith Traphagen), 11:54.37.

**Weber
Landscaping
Greenhouse
opening this
Spring!**



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

Opening First Week of May!

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

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

Spotlight on Groton Area Staff



Name: Shaun Wanner

Occupation: High School Social Studies Teacher/Head Football Coach

Length of Employment at Groton Area: 2001-Present

It was Martin Luther King Jr. who once said, "We are not makers of history. We are made by history." This statement, made by a man who became an integral figure in American History, rings true today. Some would argue that the ability to not only archive, but also comprehend the nature of our past is part of what distinguishes humans as a species. Although this preface may be grandiose, it exemplifies the importance of historians and the teachers who distribute the wisdom they keep. Such is the job

of Shaun Wanner, the resident Social Studies teacher and Football Coach at Groton Area High School.

Mr. Wanner attributes his passion for history and sociology to the various social studies teachers he learned under before he graduated from Eureka High School. He loved to learn about history from his mentors but wanted to work in the field of business by the time he had started studying at Northern State University. However, he soon changed paths to teaching and graduated from NSU in 1987 with a Major in Social Studies and a Minor in Physical Education.

After graduating from Northern State University, Mr. Wanner began his teaching career by teaching Social Studies at Langford High School for five years. Then, he taught for nine years in Ipswich in a similar capacity, but also served as the Athletic Director. After spending fourteen years teaching at relatively smaller school, Mr. Wanner began to set his sights on a bigger school. Mr. Wanner is a firm believer that by working at a more populated school, you can reach out to more students at a time. And so, he began to work at Groton Area High School, where he has continued to work for a period of over twenty years.

From his perspective, Mr. Wanner sees himself as being a teacher first, and a coach second. He sees the study of history and sociology as being important subjects for students to learn while they are in high school. He enjoys teaching students about the time periods in between various wars, including the period of American history between the Civil War and World War I. He has also been teaching students about the Civil Rights Movement and how the events that took place during it affect American culture and politics to this day. In addition to his teaching work, Mr. Wanner has served as a coach for a variety of sports, including football and boy's and girls' basketball, and will begin coaching track and field this coming year.

Shaun Wanner has held many positions over the course of his thirty-four yearlong teaching career. In each position, he has worked to push his students forward and better themselves and the community they live in. And as he continues his work as both a teacher and sports coach, he is always pushing both himself and his students to excel at what they do best.

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

South Dakota News Watch wins national journalism awards; Pfankuch named top agricultural writer second year in a row South Dakota News Watch

South Dakota News Watch won three national agricultural journalism awards in the 2021 annual contest sponsored by the North American Agricultural Journalism Association.

In results released on April 26, News Watch won the top awards in the Technical Writing and Ongoing Coverage contest categories for work written in 2020 by Content Director Bart Pfankuch and former reporter Nick Lowrey.

The material submitted in the Ongoing Coverage category was then selected as the best among the winning entries from all 10 contest categories, earning Pfankuch and Lowrey the title of Glenn Cunningham Agriculture Journalist(s) of the Year.

The winning entry for the Cunningham award was selected as best from a combined 239 entries that were submitted in the 2021 contest held by the journalism organization that since 1952 has sought to "to promote the highest ideals of journalism and agricultural coverage" among media outlets in the U.S. and Canada.

This marks the second year in a row that Pfankuch has won the Cunningham award, making him the first repeat winner in consecutive years since the award was launched in 1960. Past winners have come from news outlets such as the Washington Post, Wall Street Journal, Bloomberg News, Congressional Quarterly, Reuters, Dallas Morning News, Minneapolis Star-Tribune and the Des Moines Register, where Cunningham was a longtime journalist.

"We are very pleased and proud to be honored for our work, particularly when it comes to in-depth coverage of South Dakota's largest industry," said Randell Beck, co-chair of the News Watch Board of Directors. "This is a reflection of our continuing commitment to excellence at South Dakota News Watch."

Veteran journalists from the U.S. and Canada are independent judges of the submitted work.

The Technical Writing entry from News Watch was composed of two stories related to COVID-19 outbreaks in U.S. meatpacking plants, including at the Smithfield Foods plant in Sioux Falls. One investigative article examined how lax federal regulation and a failure to properly respond to previous outbreaks of infections at meatpacking plants allowed the virus to flourish and sicken many plant workers in 2020. The second article revealed that a report by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on the outbreak at the Smithfield plant in Sioux Falls was released, then pulled back and re-released with watered-down safety recommendations that reduced protections for workers.

The entry was ranked best among 32 entries in that category, and prompted the judge to write: "Clearly exploring a regulatory topic is difficult under the best of circumstances. Doing that while the news continues to break all around you is nothing short of impressive. The reporters told a compelling story, laying out a history of regulatory failures that helped enable a virus to shut down the the majority of the nation's meat packing plants. Well-organized, well-sourced, well-researched and exceptionally well-written, this story rolls like a freight train from beginning to conclusion."

The Ongoing Coverage winning entry, named best among 26 entries in that category, examined the many ways that the COVID-19 pandemic affected agriculture in South Dakota and was comprised of nine separate articles. The winning entry included articles on how the pandemic upended the beef, ethanol, pork and sheep farming industries in South Dakota, and also featured articles on how the pandemic was reshaping small towns and rural healthcare systems across the state.



Bart Pfankuch

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 28, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 6 of 72

Other winning category entries considered for the Cunningham award came from USA Today, the Midwest Center for Investigative Reporting, the Center for Public Integrity and DTN/Progressive Farmer among others.

The breadth and depth of material in the Ongoing Coverage entry from News Watch stood out to the judge of the Cunningham award, who noted that, "All the entries were well done ... but in the end, I was most impressed with the work of Bart Pfankuch and Nick Lowrey of South Dakota News Watch. They approached the topic of COVID's impact on their state's agricultural industry from so many angles that might not have been readily apparent at first. They got on top of the story from the beginning. I feel like they did their readers a huge public service, looking at everything from how beef producers, sheep farmers, and corn growers were being affected to the impact on small towns and healthcare systems."

The judge concluded: "If anyone in South Dakota was tempted to think that this [COVID-19] was an urban problem that would not profoundly impact rural lives, reading Pfankuch's and Lowrey's stories would quickly disabuse them of that notion."

Rob Joyce, executive director of News Watch, said the recognition for the work in 2020 was "richly deserved."

Added Joyce: "This shows the level of journalism that South Dakota News Watch strives to achieve every week of the year."



South Dakota News Watch won awards for its 2020 coverage of agriculture that featured an examination of the fortunes of small farming towns across the state, including in Faith, S.D. Photo: News Watch file

#429 in a series

Covid-19 Update: By Marie Miller

This will be brief; there's not much news. No real change in numbers. We're up to 32,203,090 cases, 0.2 percent more than yesterday's total. We had 51,938 reported cases today. The 14-day average hospitalization is 44, 171, not much different from yesterday's. There were 764 new deaths reported today, bringing us to 573,001, which is 0.1 percent more than yesterday.

On April 27, 2020, one year ago today, we had 987,689 cases and 50,819 deaths. States were reopening, most without having met any of the benchmarks set by the White House coronavirus task force for safe reopening, a theme we've seen play out again and again, every time before the next wave. Of course now, a year later, we've stopped pretending to have benchmarks; we're just doing whatever feels good at the time. More meat packing plants were closing.

Worldwide, we were over three million cases and 210,000 deaths. The last hospitalized patients in Wuhan, China, had been released. The city wasn't entirely out of the woods, but this was a milestone. The conspiracy theories were already running rampant, and they were not exclusive to the US. One circulating on social media in China placed the start of the pandemic at the door of a US Army reservist, claiming she had brought the disease to China in the first place. Many platforms were alive with the rumor, her address was published online, and her family's social media accounts were overrun with abuse.

Each day I've been reading my updates from a year ago, and I am struck by the number of potential treatments we'd talked about by this time. Someone said to me early on, "They're throwing the kitchen sink at this, aren't they?" Answer: Yes. Here's a list of the possibilities we had discussed here by this point: lopinavir and ritonavir (Kaletra), an HIV treatment; hydroxychloroquine/chloroquine, malaria and rheumatoid arthritis treatments, with and without azithromycin, an antibiotic; convalescent serum; specially designed monoclonal antibodies; losartan, a blood pressure medication; Remdesivir, a failed Ebola drug; tocilizumab, a monoclonal developed for cancer therapy; corticosteroids, anti-inflammatories; Halo spray, an antiseptic; favipiravir, an Ebola drug; ivermectin, an anthelmintic (parasite treatment); nitric oxide, used to relax blood vessels in newborns; ruxolitinib, a treatment for myelofibrosis and polycythemia vera; baricitinib, and anti-inflammatory used for rheumatoid arthritis; placental cells; melatonin; mesenchymal stem cells, immunomodulatory therapy for chronic diseases; famotidine, an antihistamine and antacid; and leronlimab, a monoclonal antibody being investigated for HIV therapy. One of these days, I'll take some time to sort out which ones ended up working (not very many), which ones have been discarded (most), and which ones are still being tested (a few); then I'll report back to the class.

We have more news from Pfizer, the company that collaborated with the German company, BioNTech, to produce one of the early Covid-19 vaccines and was the first to request an amendment to its emergency use authorization (EUA)—just a week or so ago—to include vaccinating children down to the age of 12. They also have an oral therapeutic intended to be taken at the first symptoms. The drug is a protease inhibitor. Proteases are enzymes that cut proteins into pieces; these viruses need these enzymes more than many organisms because their RNA is in a circular structure, so the proteins that get made from it tend to be one long protein-like molecule that doesn't function at all. It needs to be snipped apart in just the right places to yield several functional proteins; this is the job of viral proteases. If you can inhibit the work of these proteases, you can shut down viral replication pretty definitively. Handy. This protease inhibitor is in early trials; it works in the lab, so it remains to be seen how it works in real life. That's what these early-stage trials are for. If it works and there are no hitches along the way, the drug could be on the market by the end of the year. Given we're likely to continue to have outbreaks since too few people are signing up for vaccinations, it would be good to have an effective therapeutic available for early-stage disease, especially one in the form of a pill that can be taken at home. Let's hope this one works out.

We have that new CDC guidance for vaccinated people, just as promised. The news is regarding masking outdoors: The CDC says it is no longer necessary for fully vaccinated people to wear masks outdoors in settings that are not crowded. So walking down the street, exercising outdoors, and such may be done unmasked, even though you may encounter and pass other people along the way. You should still wear a

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 28, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 8 of 72

mask in crowded outdoor venues—concerts, parades, and festivals where risks of transmission increase. Decreased transmission rates and increasing vaccination numbers make it safe to be outdoors with others. Air currents tend to move virus away from a particular location, sunlight is hard on virus, and it's easier to distance, which makes outdoor settings much safer. So you can run or bike without a mask, have small outdoor gatherings, eat at an outdoor restaurant. That's progress.

There have been two more reports of the rare blood clotting condition, thrombosis with thrombocytopenia syndrome (TTS) after receiving the Janssen/Johnson & Johnson vaccine. One case was a male, the other a female, both under 60 years of age. This represents our first case in a male. That brings the total to 17 cases in the US, still exceedingly rare. Monitoring will continue.

We have now fully vaccinated two-thirds of senior citizens in the US; over 80 percent of that age group has received at least one dose of vaccine. We have seen deaths decline among seniors by 80 percent, likely due to that vaccination rate. Thirty million doses of vaccine will go out to states this week; this is an increase over recent weeks.

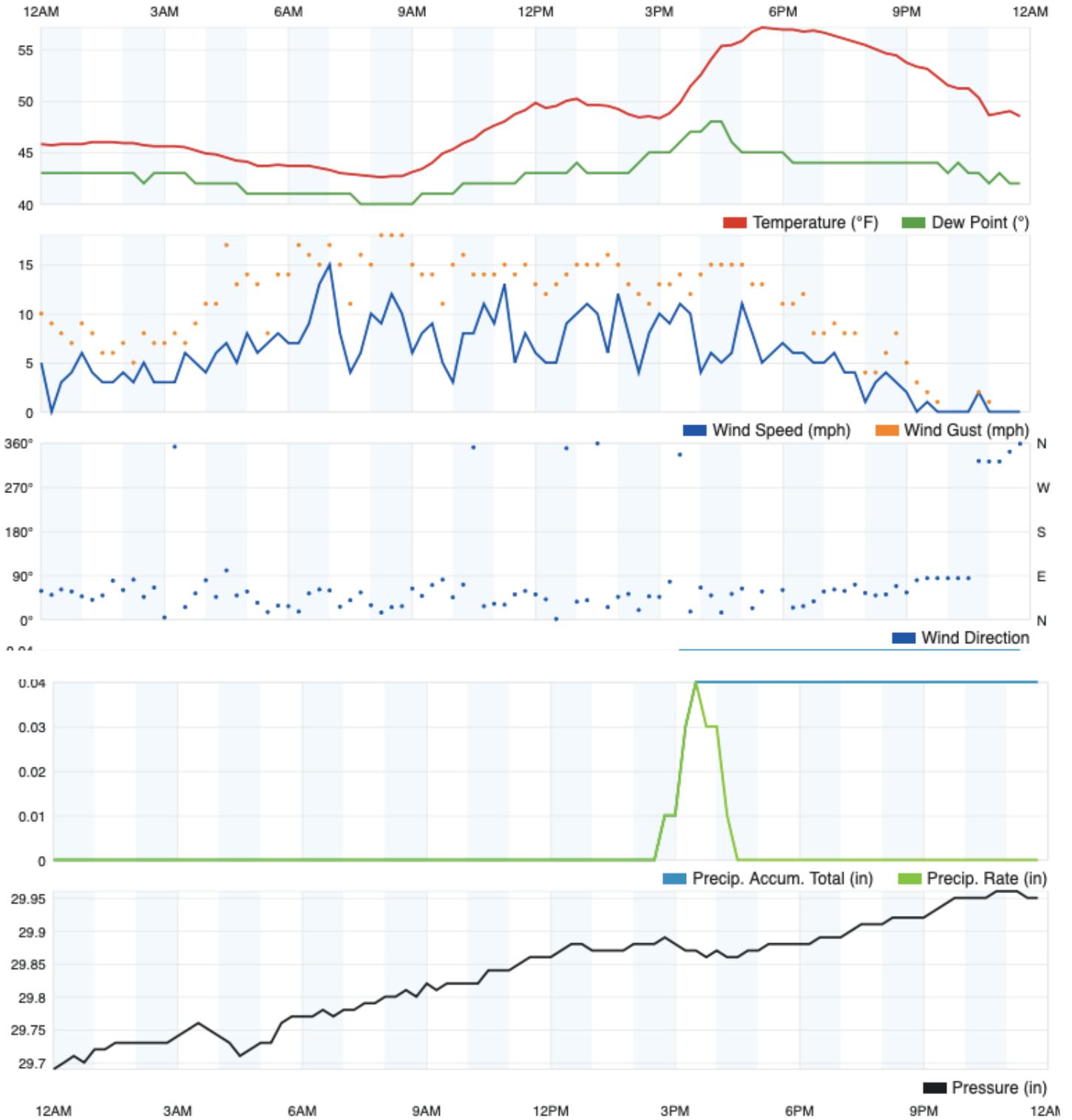
And that is all I have for you tonight.

Be well. We'll talk again.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 28, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 9 of 72

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



Broton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 28, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 10 of 72

Today



Areas Fog
then Mostly
Sunny

High: 70 °F

Tonight



Decreasing
Clouds

Low: 38 °F

Thursday



Sunny

High: 66 °F

Thursday
Night



Partly Cloudy

Low: 40 °F

Friday



Mostly Sunny

High: 76 °F

Today

Wednesday, April 28th 2021



Patchy AM fog, then partly
cloudy skies. Dry, Mild.



Elevated fire danger across
north central SD.



H: 66-72°

L: 35-40°

Heads up for some potential morning fog if venturing out. Partly cloudy skies and dry conditions otherwise. The rest of the week stays dry as well, and much above average temperatures are expected Friday and Saturday.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 28, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 11 of 72

Today in Weather History

April 28, 1994: Snow accumulated 5 to 12 inches over most of the eastern half of South Dakota, with the 12-inch report from Winner. Ten to eleven inches of snow was reported at numerous places including Sioux Falls and Platte in the southeast, and Summit in the northeast. Numerous accidents were caused by snow and ice, including one which killed a man and injured two women on Highway 12 near Bath, South Dakota. There was some undetermined crop damage, and livestock loss was feared as the late season cold and snow lowered resistance to disease.

1893: A half-mile wide estimated F4 tornado killed 23 people and injured 150 as it tore a path of devastation through Cisco, Texas. Every building in the town was either destroyed or severely damaged.

1973: The record crest of the Mississippi River at St. Louis, Missouri was registered at 43.23 feet on this day. This level exceeded the previous 1785 mark by 1.23 feet. This record was broken during the 1993 Flood when the Mississippi River crested at 49.58 feet on August 1st. At Memphis, Tennessee, the Mississippi was over flood stage for 63 days, more than that of the historic 1927 flood, and the river was above flood stage for an even longer 107 days at upstream Cairo, Illinois. Out of the seven largest floods on the Mississippi between 1927 and 1997, the 1973 event ranked third in both volume discharged and duration but only sixth in flood height. Over \$250 million of damages were incurred mainly in the Mississippi Valley states of Missouri, Arkansas, Tennessee, Mississippi, and Louisiana.

1991: Memphis, Tennessee recorded their wettest April ever with 15.03 inches, breaking their previous record of 13.90 inches in 1872.

2002: During the evening hours, a violent F4 tornado carved a 64-mile path across southeast Maryland. The La Plata, Maryland tornado was part of a larger severe weather outbreak that began in the mid-Mississippi Valley early on that day and spread across portions of the Ohio Valley and the Mid-Atlantic States. In Maryland, three deaths and 122 injuries were a direct result of the storm. Property damage exceeded \$100 million. Tornadoes along the Atlantic coast are not frequent, and tornadoes of this magnitude are extremely rare. Only six F4 tornadoes have occurred farther north and east of the La Plata storm: Worcester, Massachusetts - 1953; New York/Massachusetts - 1973; Windsor Locks, Connecticut - 1979; five counties in New York - 1989; New Haven, Connecticut - 1989; North Egremont, Massachusetts - 1995. None was as close to the coast. The tornado traveled across the Chesapeake Bay almost to the Atlantic.

1921 - A severe hailstorm in Anson County, NC, produced hail the size of baseballs. Gardens, grain fields and trees were destroyed. Pine trees in the storm's path had to be cut for lumber because of the hail damage. (The Weather Channel)

1928 - A coastal storm produced tremendous late season snows in the Central Appalachians, including 35 inches at Bayard WV, 31 inches at Somerset PA, and 30 inches at Grantsville MD. High winds accompanying the heavy wet snow uprooted trees and unroofed a number of homes. The storm caused great damage to fruit trees and wild life. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Twenty cities in the western and central U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. Highs of 95 degrees at Houston TX, 95 degrees at Lake Charles LA, and 94 degrees at Port Arthur TX, were April records. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Miami, FL, hit 92 degrees, marking a record eight days of 90 degree heat in the month of April. Squalls produced snow in the Washington D.C. area. Belvoir VA reported a temperature reading of 57 degrees at the time the snow began. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Strong northerly winds and heavy snow ushered cold air into the north central U.S. Snowfall totals in Montana ranged up to 20 inches at Miles City. Thunderstorms produced severe weather from eastern Texas to the Southern Appalachians and the southern Ohio Valley. Hail four and a half inches in diameter was reported at Keller TX and White Settlement TX. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

Groton Daily Independent

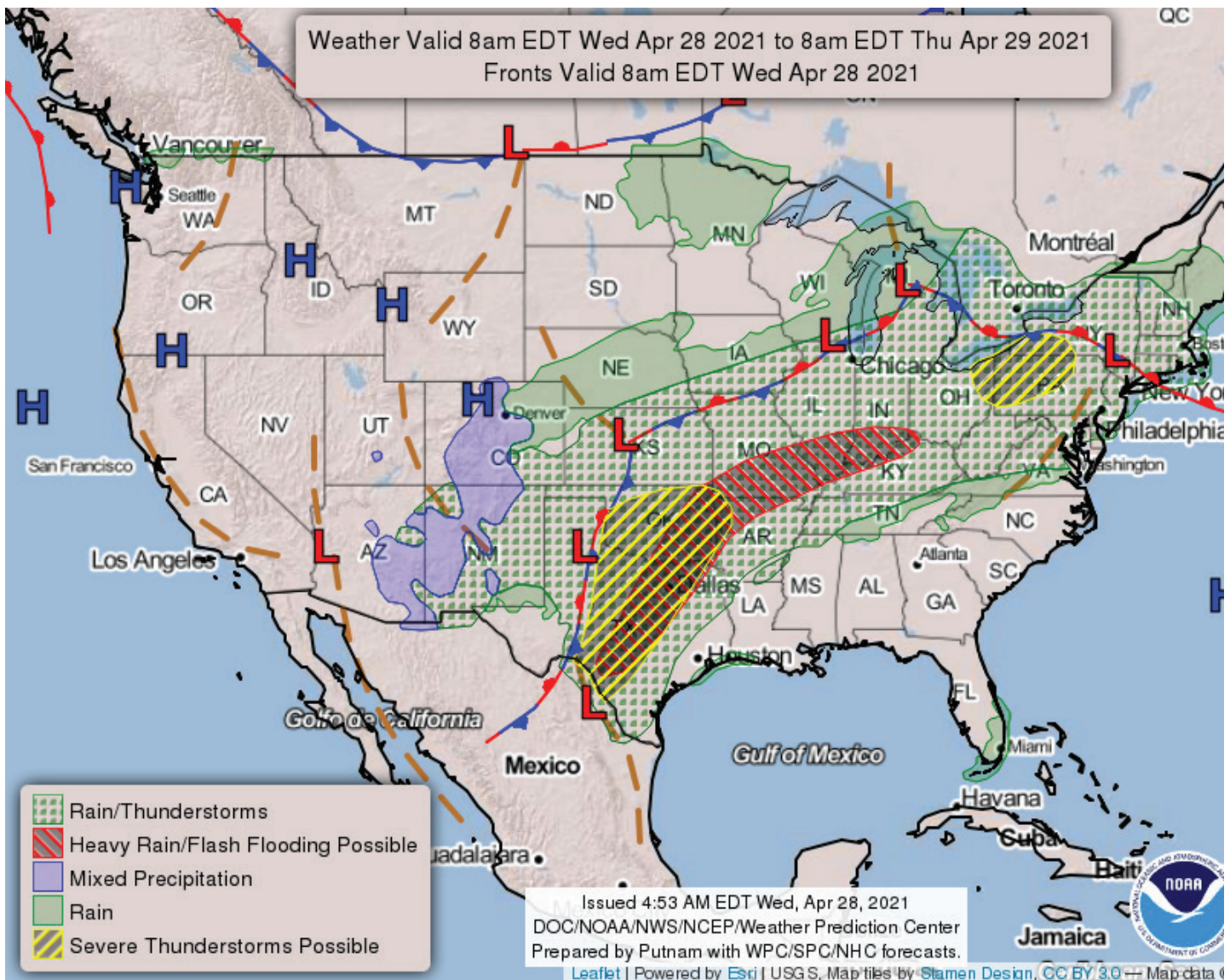
Wednesday, April 28, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 12 of 72

Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 57 °F at 5:35 PM
Low Temp: 42 °F at 8:18 AM
Wind: 19 mph at 8:21 AM
Precip: .04

Today's Info

Record High: 90° in 1934
Record Low: 19° in 2008
Average High: 63°F
Average Low: 37°F
Average Precip in Apr.: 1.59
Precip to date in Apr.: 2.59
Average Precip to date: 3.77
Precip Year to Date: 2.77
Sunset Tonight: 8:37 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:25 a.m.



Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 28, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 13 of 72



FACTS FROM OUR FATHERS

A family was seated together watching a science program on television that described the marvels of the rain forest. Shortly after the beginning of the program, a biologist began a lecture on evolution. Mark, a bright freshman in high school, turned to his father and asked, "What do you think of that, Dad?"

"It's not what I think, Mark," he replied. "It's what I know. It's quite simple. Something cannot come from nothing. So there had to be Someone somewhere who somehow brought life into existence. It had to be Someone with wisdom and a plan. It had to be Someone with the power to create and control everything. It had to be a God who designed what we see and know."

Without any doubt, the home was chosen by God to be the greatest center on the planet for teaching and learning. The most formative years of a child's life are those early years of dependency when they expect and deserve unconditional love and look to a parent for the essentials of life. In the wisdom of God, He planned for the child to be open and filled with trust as their needs for the basics of life unfold and must be met.

One of those needs is to come to know the goodness, greatness, and grace of God. Children are blessed when parents know the book of Books, its message and meaning, its plan and purpose, and are willing and able to share it with their gift from God.

The writer of Psalm 44 in verse one makes this clear: "We have heard with our ears, O God, and our fathers have told us what you did..." How blest children are when they can say with the children of the writer of this Psalm those wonderful words: God is the Lord.

Today most children are left to discover the important lessons of life from teachers who do not believe in our God, the Creator God, the Forgiving, Saving, and Redeeming God. Unfortunately, if children are not taught the truth, they cannot learn the truth. What then?

Prayer: Father, we pray for children who have no one to love them or teach them Your truth. May someone, somewhere, somehow, reach them today. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: O God, we have heard it with our own ears - our ancestors have told us of all you did in their day, in days long ago. Psalm 44:1

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 28, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 14 of 72

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

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — These South Dakota lotteries were drawn Tuesday:

Mega Millions

15-22-30-41-42, Mega Ball: 25, Megaplier: 4

(fifteen, twenty-two, thirty, forty-one, forty-two; Mega Ball: twenty-five; Megaplier: four)

Estimated jackpot: \$297 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$116 million

Hawaii close to honoring Juneteenth, leaving 1 state holdout

By AUDREY McAVOY Associated Press

HONOLULU (AP) — Hawaii was poised to become the 49th state to recognize Juneteenth after the House and Senate on Tuesday passed legislation designating June 19 as a day to commemorate the end of slavery in the United States.

If Hawaii's governor signs the bill, South Dakota would be the only remaining state that doesn't recognize the day as either a state holiday or a day of observance. South Dakota's Senate passed a measure earlier this year that would observe the day, but the bill didn't make it through the House. In North Dakota, the governor on April 12 signed legislation designating it a ceremonial holiday.

Hawaii Gov. David Ige hasn't indicated his plans for the bill, which will not make the day a state holiday.

Akiemi Glenn, the founder and executive director of the Popolo Project, said the legislation is a way of honoring the ancestors of Hawaii's Black people.

"There's a recognition that we're here and that we're part of Hawaii," Glenn said.

Popolo is the Hawaiian word for a plant with dark purple or black berries. The word has also come to refer to Black people. The Popolo Project is a community organization that aims to help redefine what it means to be Black in Hawaii and to help Black community members connect with one another and the larger community.

The Emancipation Proclamation freed slaves in the South in 1863. But it wasn't enforced in many places until after the end of the Civil War two years later. Word of the Confederacy's surrender didn't reach the last enslaved Black people until June 19, when Union soldiers brought news of freedom to Galveston, Texas.

Glenn said the end of slavery didn't solve the issues Black people continue to face in the United States, but it's still a reminder of how an economy built on the exploitation of people can change.

She suspects Hawaii has been slow to recognize the day in part because the state's Black population is relatively small. U.S. Census Bureau data has Black people at 3.6% of the population.

In addition, she noted Hawaii was an independent kingdom in 1865 and retains a strong identity from its history as its own nation. Finally, she said there's a tendency for Black people to be treated as "perpetual foreigners" in Hawaii despite their presence dating back to the 18th century.

But there has been a shift in the aftermath of the death of George Floyd, both in Honolulu, which recognized the holiday last year, and at the state Legislature this year. Floyd, a Black man, was killed last year by a white officer in Minnesota, and his death sparked nationwide protests in a reckoning over racial injustice and police brutality.

"There's been tremendous momentum building around recognizing the humanity of Black people around the world, and certainly here in Hawaii, and listening to our voices," Glenn said.

She hopes official acknowledgement of Juneteenth by the state will prompt people to learn more about the day's history and how it has been observed.

State Rep. Cedric Gates, one of the lawmakers who pushed for the bill, said he hoped its passage showed,

as the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. told the Hawaii Legislature in 1959, that the islands were an example for others when it comes to "racial harmony and racial justice."

"I think it's a good time and place — in terms of the landscape of politics and where we're at right now as a society — to do things like this, to double down on our commitment to seeing this change come to fruition," said Gates, who identifies as African American and Samoan or afakasi, which is a Samoan word meaning of mixed Samoan heritage.

Native American lawmakers seek federal help on Montana bison

By MATTHEW BROWN Associated Press

BILLINGS, Mont. (AP) — Native American lawmakers in Montana on Tuesday called on the Biden administration to help craft a plan to reintroduce wild bison to the landscape in and around Glacier National Park and the Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge.

The request was made by eight members of the Legislature's American Indian Caucus in a letter to Interior Secretary Deb Haaland. It comes after Gov. Greg Gianforte and his fellow Republicans in the Legislature have sought to make it harder to reintroduce bison to areas of the state that the burly animals once roamed.

American bison, also called buffalo, carry cultural significance for Plains Indians and were depended on by many tribes for food, clothing and other necessities until the huge herds that once populated the U.S. West were wiped out in the late 1800s.

State Rep. Tyson Running Wolf said the American Indian Caucus members decided the administration of President Joe Biden would be more willing to help bring back bison than Gianforte, who last week cited the need to protect the agriculture industry when he canceled a bison reintroduction plan adopted by his predecessor.

"It feels like during this legislative session, Native concerns and even buffalo as part of Native culture have just been invisible," said Running Wolf, a Democrat from Browning and member of the Blackfeet tribe. "Americans tribes in Montana have a deep-rooted connection with the buffalo, from commerce to religion to cultural values."

But ranchers in Montana have long opposed efforts to restore the large animals to the landscape, fearing they could compete with livestock for public grazing space and spread the disease brucellosis. That's an infectious disease carried by Yellowstone National Park bison that can cause animals to prematurely abort their young.

Haaland's office did not have an immediate response to Tuesday's letter. Last year her predecessor, David Bernhardt, announced a 10-year initiative to advance bison restoration efforts that had languished.

As many as 30 million to 60 million bison once inhabited most of North America, according to federal wildlife officials. Mass slaughters drove them to near extinction, and today there are roughly 11,000 wild bison on public lands in 12 states.

Federal officials have talked about restoring bison to more areas of the U.S. West for decades. But they have been brought back only to isolated areas such as the grasslands of the Rosebud Sioux Indian Reservation in South Dakota, where 100 bison from nearby national parks were released last year with plans to increase the herd size eventually to 1,500 animals.

The Blackfeet tribe along the Montana-Canada border has its own herd and wants to expand the animals' range into Canada and onto adjacent federal lands, including Glacier National Park and the adjacent Rocky Mountain Front.

A conservation group, the American Prairie Reserve, has a large herd in central Montana near the 1.1 million-acre (445,150-hectare) Charles M. Russell refuge. But it's faced strong pushback from the local agricultural community over ambitions to establish a larger area for bison to roam.

Gianforte's decision to cancel the state bison management plan was announced as part of a settlement of a lawsuit with a property rights group. The group raised worries that state officials under Bullock had schemed to establish a free-roaming herd within the refuge along the Missouri River.

"How could you possibly keep those animals from wandering onto neighboring property? I don't imag-

ine you would plan to fence the entire" refuge, said Chuck Denowh, policy director for the group, United Property Owners of Montana.

Bison have been successfully restored to some Native American reservations, and that's where they should largely remain, he added.

"They manage them well, and they don't pose a significant threat to neighboring landowners," Denowh said. "The tribes are ultimately responsible for those animals. That's working in Montana, and we don't see that we should deviate from that."

Yellowstone National Park is home to one of the largest remnant populations of the animals, and park administrators have been trying for years to expand a program to send portions of those bison herds to tribes or public lands. Most bison that leave the park during their winter migration to feeding grounds outside the park are shot by hunters or shipped to slaughter because of worries about brucellosis.

Hundreds of thousands of domestic bison that have been interbred with cattle are raised on private ranches in the U.S. and Canada for their meat.

Some push to kill off PA regulations halted during pandemic

By MARK SCOLFORO Associated Press

HARRISBURG, Pa. (AP) — Pennsylvania put on ice hundreds of state government regulations during the pandemic, but policymakers are starting to weigh whether any of the suspended or revised rules should be jettisoned for good.

They are also examining whether it's time to reinstate some of the suspended rules on a list that runs 139 pages, covering everything from training and inspections to the rights and living standards of people in group homes and children in foster care.

House Republicans issued a set of letters to Democratic Gov. Tom Wolf a month ago that identified dozens of suspended regulations that they want more information about, including whether some are still needed and if others can be put back in force.

"The governor's been making these decisions for a year, on his own, without consulting with the Legislature," said Rep. Martin Causer, R-McKean, chairman of a House committee that gathered details about suspended regulations during a meeting on Tuesday. "We all have a focus on safety and want to make sure we're focused on safety in dealing with these regulations. But it will require cooperation between the executive and legislative branch."

Wolf issued an April 7 order directing agencies to see which ones may be "unnecessary or counterproductive," giving them until next week to report back. His spokesperson said Monday that process is continuing.

As vaccines have become widely available and people are looking for a return to pre-pandemic lives, several other states have moved to make permanent some of the regulatory changes that COVID-19 brought.

South Carolina's governor suspended legal prohibitions against home delivery of beer and wine and restaurants including alcohol with meals outside their buildings. The results were so popular that bills permanently removing the laws have easily passed the South Carolina House.

South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem, a Republican, pushed new laws through this year that began as executive orders to suspend health care regulations. As a result, health care providers can meet with patients through video conferencing and doctors and nurses with licenses in other states can provide health care in the state.

Montana lawmakers are advancing a bill to create a 14-member COVID-19 Response Study Commission to review all statutes, administrative rules and other regulations that were temporarily suspended or revised. If the suspensions are deemed to have been beneficial, the commission will work up legislation to adopt them permanently. A new Montana law also loosened restrictions on telehealth services.

In Pennsylvania, the suspended regulations cover a wide swath of government.

The Department of Military and Veterans Affairs got a waiver so that National Guard members could use state-owned vehicles to help get passengers home after being stranded aboard a cruise ship off the California coast.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 28, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 18 of 72

Agency spokesperson Joan Nissley said Tuesday members of the National Guard are not state employees and have authority to use state-owned vehicles to provide security at military sites and other facilities. But other uses of state-owned vehicles by Guard members raise insurance issues, so when they must do so, it requires a waiver.

The Health Department granted medical marijuana dispensaries the ability to fulfill orders with curbside delivery.

The Department of State gave funeral directors more time to process corpses in case of COVID-19-related surge.

There were multiple waivers that made more people eligible to administer vaccines.

At the Department of Labor and Industry, regulations were suspended related to boiler inspections, asbestos removal and the safety of stuffed animal toys.

The Human Services regulations that were revised or suspended are numerous, addressing living conditions and medical services for people with severe medical conditions, children in foster care and older people in group homes.

Those waivers ranged from the use of plastic cups and paper plates instead of glassware and dishes, the frequency of fire drills and minimum staffing levels.

"In certain contexts, minimum staffing levels were suspended to allow service providers to continue operating and providing critical services when workers had to quarantine due to COVID-19 exposure or transmission," said Human Services spokesperson Erin James. "None of these decisions were easy to make, but all were made to protect Pennsylvanians from a deadly and contagious virus whenever and however possible."

GOP lawmakers asked Wolf whether Human Services plans to reopen county offices for in-person interviews of those seeking financial assistance, and how they are verifying that applicants on the phone are who they say they are.

James said the department is considering reopening county offices but does not have a timetable. She said recipients must prove their identity, a rule that has not changed during the pandemic.

Republican lawmakers want to know why there is a three-day period in which to report "unusual incidents" at adult day living centers, whether banks should be allowed to do more reporting online, and if the use of telehealth at programs regulated by the Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs had an effect on patients' health.

The Health Department was asked if allowing a 90-day supply of medical marijuana resulted in cases of the drug being misdirected or mishandled, and what made patients eligible for the 90-day supply.

Health spokesperson Maggi Barton said the extra supply lets "residents who may not have access to reliable transportation and other resources access to the medication without requiring a more frequent exchange."

Many of the changes are linked to the governor's declaration of disaster emergency, and could soon end. That's if voters approve two proposed constitutional amendments next month that would require legislative approval to extend such declarations beyond three weeks.

Judge gives Corps 2nd chance to offer oil pipeline opinion

By DAVE KOLPACK Associated Press

FARGO, N.D. (AP) — A federal judge faced with a motion on whether the Dakota Access oil pipeline north of the Standing Rock Indian Reservation should be shut down during an environmental review is giving the Biden administration another chance to weigh in on the issue.

U.S. District Judge James Boasberg held a hearing earlier this month to give the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers an opportunity to explain whether oil should continue to flow during its study, after an appeals panel upheld Boasberg's ruling that the pipeline was operating without a key federal permit. The Corps instead told the judge it wasn't sure if it should be shut down.

The decision not to intervene came as a bitter disappointment to Standing Rock, other tribes involved

in the lawsuit and environmental groups. Even the judge appeared to be taken aback when the Corps opted to shrug its shoulders.

"I too am a little surprised that this is where things stand 60 days later," Boasberg said at the hearing, referring to the three months he gave the Biden administration to catch up on proceedings. "I would have thought there would be a decision one way or another at this point."

Boasberg said in a one sentence order filed late Monday that the Corps has until May 3 to tell him when it expects the environmental review to be completed and give "its position, if it has one," on whether the pipeline should be shut down. The Corps said earlier it expected the review to be done by March 2022.

Attorneys for the pipeline's Texas-based owner, Energy Transfer, have argued that shuttering the pipeline now that economic conditions are improving would cause a major financial hit to several entities, including North Dakota, and the Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara Nation located in the state's oil patch.

Attorneys for Standing Rock, which straddles the North and South Dakota border, and other tribes said in court documents that Dakota Access is exaggerating the economic losses. And no matter what the true figure is, Standing Rock said, it should not come at the expense of other tribes "especially when the law has not been followed."

The \$3.8 billion, 1,172-mile (1,886-kilometer) pipeline was the subject of months of protests in 2016 and 2017, sometimes violent, during its construction. Standing Rock continued to press legal challenges against the pipeline even after it began carrying oil from North Dakota across South Dakota and Iowa to a shipping point in Illinois in June 2017.

Request for proposals on implementing medical marijuana

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota is getting ready for the arrival of medical marijuana.

The Department of Health has issued a request for proposals on setting up a patient registry, verification and licensing system to help implement the medical marijuana program in the state, the Rapid City Journal reported.

Medical marijuana will become legal July 1.

"This is just one of many steps our department will take to fulfill its commitment of implementing a responsible medical marijuana program that will ensure both patient and public safety," Secretary of Health Kim Malsam-Rysdon said in a news release.

The state Health Department is responsible for implementing a secure web-based patient verification system by Oct. 29 and a patient registry system by Nov. 18.

The patient verification system will give South Dakota law enforcement officials the tools to accurately identify medical marijuana patients and caregivers they may encounter. A state licensing system will accept applications for medical marijuana establishments.

Noem joins lawsuit challenging social cost of climate change

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota is joining a multi-state lawsuit aimed at stopping federal regulators from making decisions that factor in the social cost that carbon and greenhouse gases have on the environment.

The monetary figure factors into a wide variety of federal policy decisions, including Environmental Protection Agency regulations and government spending.

Gov. Kristi Noem said South Dakota will join a legal challenge to an executive order signed by President Joe Biden in January that established a working group to further examine the financial cost of climate change on society.

The panel issued a report in February that set the social cost of carbon, or SCC, at \$52 a ton.

Noem and other Republican attorneys general argue that Biden's order amounts to an unconstitutional overreach that would slow the economy and impose a burden on the American people.

"After a year of misguided lockdowns in response to the COVID pandemic, the last thing that America

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 28, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 20 of 72

needs is more burdensome regulation that will cripple our economy," Noem said in a news release. "President Biden's attempt to implement a 'social cost of greenhouse gases' value will result in government sticking their hands into virtually every aspect of our day-to-day lives."

Although critics of the SCC approach, which began under President Barack Obama but was abandoned under President Donald Trump, say applying damage values associated with carbon production to American industry could hurt countless businesses, including in agriculture, others say it's a matter of perspective.

Mark Winegar, co-chair of Sierra Club's South Dakota chapter, told the Argus-Leader that depending on how the SCC values are applied, they could be used for an agricultural advantage.

With a financial value of the cost of carbon determined, policymakers could use it to create incentives for farmers rather than penalties, he said. But the industry as a whole won't shift to more environmentally sustainable methods without being prompted by government action, he said.

"We need that carrot," Winegar said. "We need to say, 'You can do it however you want to do it, but if you do it this way, we're gonna help.'"

The other parties in the federal lawsuit are Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas, West Virginia Wyoming and Louisiana.

No big backlash for states passing anti-transgender laws

By DAVID CRARY AP National Writer

Five states have passed laws or implemented executive orders this year limiting the ability of transgender youths to play sports or receive certain medical treatment. There's been a vehement outcry from supporters of transgender rights – but little in the way of tangible repercussions for those states.

It's a striking contrast to the fate of North Carolina a few years ago. When its Legislature passed a bill in March 2016 limiting which public restrooms transgender people could use, there was a swift and powerful backlash. The NBA and NCAA relocated events; some companies scrapped expansion plans. By March 2017, the bill's bathroom provisions were repealed.

So far this year, there's been nothing comparable. Not even lawsuits, although activists predict some of the measures eventually will be challenged in court.

Rodrigo Heng-Lehtinen, deputy executive director of the National Center for Transgender Equality, says he's surprised by the lack of backlash, but believes it will materialize as more people learn details about the legislation being approved.

"A lot of Americans are still getting to know trans people and they're learning about these issues for the first time," he said. "Over time, they get to know their trans neighbors, they get outraged by these bans, and corporations respond ... It's just a matter of time."

The president of a major national LGBTQ-rights organizations, Alphonso David of the Human Rights Campaign, attributed the lack of backlash to lack of awareness about the potential harm that these laws could cause to transgender young people.

"Some people in this country have not come to terms with treating trans people like human beings," David said. "It's now coming to a head."

One batch of bills seeks to ban transgender girls from competing on girls' sports teams in public schools. Such measures have been enacted in Alabama, Arkansas, Tennessee and Mississippi, and implemented by an executive order from Gov. Kristi Noem in South Dakota.

Another batch of bills seeks to ban gender-affirming medical treatments for trans minors – including the use of puberty blockers and hormone therapy. Arkansas legislators approved such a measure over the veto of Republican Gov. Asa Hutchinson, and similar measures are pending in Alabama, Tennessee and Texas.

Echoing concerns of major medical associations, Dr. Michele Hutchison – who runs a transgender medicine clinic at Arkansas Children's hospital -- says the ban in her state is raising the risk of suicide among some of her patients and forcing some families to wonder if they should move to another state.

More than 400 companies __ including Tesla, Pfizer, Delta Air Lines and Amazon __ have signed on to support civil rights legislation for LGBTQ people that is moving through Congress, advocates said Tuesday.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 28, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 21 of 72

And last week, the Human Rights Campaign took out a full-page ad in the New York Times appealing to corporations to denounce the anti-trans bills that have proliferated in Republican-controlled legislatures.

The letter, signed by David, urged corporate leaders "to take action now by publicly denouncing state legislation that discriminates against people, refusing to advance new business in states that are hostile to corporate values and refusing to support sporting events where transgender athletes are banned."

More than 85 companies have signed a statement drafted by the HRC -- including Amazon, American Airlines, Apple, AT&T, Facebook, IBM, Microsoft, PepsiCo, Pfizer and Union Pacific. In polite language, the statement implies a threat: "As we make complex decisions about where to invest and grow, these issues can influence our decisions."

Overall, the corporate response remains "insufficient," David said. "But I think we are seeing a turning of the tide as we put more pressure on companies."

One of the companies signing the HRC statement is the technology giant Oracle Corp., which is planning to bring 8,500 jobs and a \$1.2 billion investment to Nashville, Tennessee, over the coming decade. Joe Woolley, who heads the Nashville LGBT Chamber of Commerce, has expressed hope that Oracle — which has not threatened to cancel its plans — might use its leverage to prompt reconsideration of Tennessee's anti-transgender legislation.

Woolley also says organizers of at least three conventions are considering pulling those events out of Nashville because of the bills, though he has declined to identify them.

Thus far, Tennessee Gov, Bill Lee has signaled that any criticism from the business community won't sway him.

"Organizations have opportunities to weigh in on the legislative process but ultimately, Tennesseans, through their elected representatives, determine the law in our state," said Casey Black, a spokesperson for Lee.

In Texas, a coalition called Texas Competes released a letter April 19 signed by more than 40 businesses and chambers of commerce in the state denouncing a batch of pending bills as "divisive, unnecessary and economically dangerous."

Specifically, the letter denounced "efforts to exclude transgender youth from full participation in their communities."

In Montana, where a transgender sports ban has won initial approval in the Republican-controlled House and Senate, lawmakers added an amendment stipulating that the measure would be nullified if the federal government withheld education funding from the state because of the policy.

The concern stems from an executive order signed by President Joe Biden banning discrimination based on gender. Montana universities receive around \$350 million annually in federal funding, of which \$250 million goes towards student loans and grants to cover tuition costs — money that university officials say could be at risk if the administration deemed the sports ban to be unacceptable discrimination.

The extent of any emerging backlash to the anti-trans laws will hinge in part on the NCAA, which played a pivotal role in the North Carolina case.

The NCAA's Board of Governors issued a statement April 12 expressing strong support for the inclusion of transgender athletes.

"When determining where championships are held, NCAA policy directs that only locations where hosts can commit to providing an environment that is safe, healthy and free of discrimination should be selected," the statement said. "We will continue to closely monitor these situations to determine whether NCAA championships can be conducted in ways that are welcoming and respectful of all participants."

Alphonso David said the Human Rights Campaign welcomed the statement, but wanted an even tougher stance from the NCAA, with explicit warnings that events would not be held in states with anti-trans laws.

"The time for concrete actions is now," David said Monday in a letter to NCAA leaders. "This is a national crisis, and one that necessitates united action, including from the NCAA."

Biden to pitch sweeping 'family plan' in speech to Congress

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 28, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 22 of 72

By JONATHAN LEMIRE and JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Marking his first 100 days in office, President Joe Biden will use his first joint address to Congress to pitch a \$1.8 trillion investment in children, families and education that would fundamentally transform the role government plays in American life.

Biden will make his case Wednesday night before a pared-down gathering of mask-wearing legislators due to coronavirus restrictions and in a U.S. Capitol still surrounded by black fencing after insurrectionists protesting his election occupied the very dais where he will stand.

In the nationally televised ritual of a president standing before Congress, Biden will lay out a sweeping proposal for universal preschool, two years of free community college, \$225 billion for child care and monthly payments of at least \$250 to parents. His ideas reflect the frailties that were uncovered last year by the pandemic, and he will make the case that economic growth would best come from taxing the rich to help the middle class and the poor.

His speech will also provide an update on progress in combating the COVID-19 crisis he was elected to tame, showcasing hundreds of millions of vaccinations and relief checks delivered to help offset the devastation wrought by a virus that has killed more than 573,000 people in the United States. He will also champion his \$2.3 trillion infrastructure plan, a staggering figure to be financed solely by higher taxes on corporations.

Seizing an opportunity born of generational calamity, Biden has embraced momentous action over incremental progress, with the goal of making the economy fairer and stronger. But he will be forced to thread the needle between Republicans who cry government overreach and some Democrats who fear he won't go big enough.

The Democratic president's strategy is to sidestep the polarization and make his appeal directly to voters. His prime-time speech will underscore a trio of central campaign promises: to manage the deadly pandemic, to turn down the tension in Washington and to restore faith in government as an effective force for good.

"He is a big-government Democrat, and he has not been at all reluctant to propose big initiatives in a response to a national crisis," said Julian Zelizer, a Princeton University presidential historian.

No American politician has more familiarity with the presidential address to Congress than Biden. He spent three decades in the audience as a senator and another eight years seated behind President Barack Obama during the annual address when he was vice president.

For the first time on Wednesday, a female vice president, Kamala Harris, will be seated behind the chief executive for the speech.

Biden also knows that most of those seated before him have, like he did, looked at the president and envisioned themselves one day in his place. He has heard the memorable phrases and the long list of promises — often unmet — and seen the partisan reactions intensify as the years have hurried by.

He chose to delay this speech, typically given in the afterglow of a presidential inaugural. In doing so, he gave himself the chance to not simply speak of the pain of the COVID-19 crisis but also to talk about tangible progress in beating it back.

The setting will be unlike for any of his predecessors, with members of Congress spread out and socially distanced and many Republicans citing "scheduling conflicts" to explain their absence. Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell said Tuesday that Biden's presidency "can best be described as the Biden bait and switch."

"President Biden ran as a moderate, but I'm hard pressed to think of anything at all that he's done so far that would indicate some degree of moderation," McConnell said.

Yet the desire for swift action is born from political necessity. Biden understands that the time for passing his agenda could be perilously short given that president's parties historically lose congressional seats in the midterm elections, less than two years away. The Democrats' margins are already razor-thin.

Biden will talk to Congress amid the start of a potentially booming recovery, one that could determine whether the U.S. economy can once again fire on all cylinders after a morale-crushing pandemic and a humbling financial crisis with shock waves that linger a dozen years later. He will also use his address to touch on the national reckoning over race in America, and to call on Congress to act on policing reform,

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 28, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 23 of 72

gun control and modernizing the nation's immigration system.

In his first three months in office, Biden signed a \$1.9 trillion COVID-19 relief bill — passed without a single GOP vote — and has shepherded direct payments of \$1,400 per person to more than 160 million households. Hundreds of billions of dollars in aid will soon arrive for state and local governments, enough money that overall U.S. growth this year could eclipse 6% — a level not seen since 1984. Administration officials are betting that it will be enough to bring back all 8.4 million jobs lost to the pandemic by next year.

Biden's speech Wednesday is about how to sustain those gains once the debt-financed boost fades. Federal Reserve estimates suggest that the economy will slip to more modest 1.8% growth after at least two years of robust gains, potentially leaving the Biden era with some happy memories but few enduring legacies.

New in his Wednesday speech is a "families" plan that could cement his legacy with \$1.8 trillion worth of spending over 10 years.

A significant amount of the proposal would ensure that eligible families receive at least \$250 monthly per child through 2025, extending the enhanced tax credit that was part of Biden's COVID-19 aid. There would be \$200 billion for free preschool for all 3- and 4-year-olds. Another \$225 billion would pay for subsidized child care and invest in child care workers.

A national paid family and medical leave program would be started at a cost of \$225 billion. Another \$200 billion would go to permanently reduce health insurance premiums for people who receive coverage through the Affordable Care Act.

For \$109 billion, people could attend community college tuition-free for two years. There would be \$85 billion for Pell Grants to help more people afford higher education. Historically Black and tribal institutions would be eligible to receive \$46 billion.

Funding all of this would be a series of tax increases on the wealthy that would raise about \$1.5 trillion over a decade.

Biden wants to boost IRS enforcement and require disclosures by financial institutions, specifically targeting the rich. The White House estimates that would bring in \$700 billion over 10 years. He would raise the top tax rate on the most affluent families from 37% to 39.6%. People earning in excess of \$1 million a year would see their rate on capital gains — the profits from a sale of a stock or home — nearly double from 20% to 39.6%, which would mean the wealthiest Americans could no longer pay at a lower rate than many families who identify as middle class.

Republican lawmakers in Congress so far have balked at the price tag of both the "families" plan and infrastructure package, complicating the chances of passage in a deeply divided Washington.

The president has drawn a firm red line that no household earning less than \$400,000 a year will pay more in taxes, a move that both broadened the definition of the middle class and clearly delineated just how extreme inequality has become.

Economist Owen Zidar, whose research suggested that capital gains tax hikes could raise meaningful revenues, said the programs funded by the proceeds might allow poorer children to become inventors and entrepreneurs, positions that are increasingly reserved for the offspring of wealthy parents.

"There are many missing Einsteins and Elon Musks," Zidar said.

What to watch during Biden's 1st big speech to Congress

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden is putting the finishing touches on his first address to a joint session of Congress, a prime-time speech on Wednesday night on the eve of his 100th day in office. Biden will use the speech before lawmakers and a broader viewing audience to talk about what he's accomplished in the opening months of his presidency and to lay out his other domestic and foreign policy priorities.

WHEN AND WHERE CAN I WATCH OR LISTEN TO BIDEN?

The speech is set for 9 p.m. EDT and will be broadcast by the major networks and cable news TV chan-

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 28, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 24 of 72

nels. The White House plans to stream it at WH.gov/live, as well as on its YouTube, Facebook and Twitter pages. Live coverage will also be provided by C-SPAN, C-SPAN Radio and C-SPAN.org. NPR is streaming the speech on its website, npr.org, and on its app, in addition to offering live coverage to its member radio stations.

HOW WILL THE SETTING BE DIFFERENT BECAUSE OF THE PANDEMIC?

Attendance is limited to allow for social distancing, meaning there won't be any visuals of lawmakers and others sitting shoulder to shoulder during the address. Just about 200 of the 535 members of Congress received tickets to attend and they aren't allowed to bring guests.

With the House out of session, many Republicans from that chamber are expected to skip the event, making it more likely that Biden will end up addressing a mostly friendly Democratic audience. Senators are in town, but some Republicans from that chamber are expected to skip the speech, too. Sen. John Cornyn, a member of the GOP leadership from Texas, said he plans to watch from his couch. Louisiana Rep. Steve Scalise, a member of House GOP leadership, said he was giving his ticket to a freshman lawmaker.

The majority of Biden's Cabinet members will listen from home. Just Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin will be on hand to represent the executive branch of government. Chief Justice John Roberts will represent the judicial branch, with other Supreme Court justices similarly staying away.

With guests banned this year, some lawmakers — House Speaker Nancy Pelosi among them — have invited "virtual" guests.

Everyone will wear a mask, a current requirement for the House chamber. Biden will wear one for the president's traditional walk down the center aisle to the rostrum, but he'll take it off to deliver the speech, the White House said.

WHAT WILL WE LEARN ABOUT BIDEN'S PRIORITIES?

Biden is expected to outline details of his American Families Plan, another big piece of legislation he wants Congress to pass.

The plan is expected to focus on so-called human infrastructure — child care, health care, education and other ways to support households. Biden wants to pay for it by hiking taxes on very high-income households.

The president is also expected to discuss his ideas for getting the pandemic under control and putting people back to work. He'll also talk about changes to policing in America, immigration and gun safety, among other topics, in addition to his foreign policy vision. Legislators are waiting to hear how Biden prioritizes his goals.

WHAT ABOUT THE FIRST LADY?

First lady Jill Biden will attend, but don't expect the president to look toward her box in the gallery and give shout-outs to special guests seated with her to help humanize particular policies. That tradition has been set aside due to limits on the number of people who can be in the House chamber.

Instead, Jill Biden's guests — all with personal ties to her husband's policies or plans — will be watching remotely after being honored in the afternoon with a virtual reception. The White House will livestream that event at 4 p.m. EDT.

Doug Emhoff, the spouse of Vice President Kamala Harris, will also attend Biden's speech.

WILL THERE BE ANY ANTICS?

Partisan tensions have deepened at the Capitol since the Jan. 6 insurrection, but it's impossible to know who might throw decorum to the wind and misbehave.

Who expected Republican Rep. Joe Wilson of South Carolina to shout "you lie!" at Democratic President Barack Obama during a 2009 speech to a joint session of Congress? Or Pelosi to tear up her copy of President Donald Trump's State of the Union speech after he finished last year and she stood behind him on the rostrum?

SPEAKING OF THE ROSTRUM ...

History will be made there when, for the first time, two women will form the backdrop for a presidential address to Congress.

Pelosi will return to her seat on the rostrum. Joining her will be another California Democrat — Harris in her role as president of the Senate. Harris is the first woman, Black person and Indian American to be vice president.

WHICH REPUBLICAN DELIVERS A REBUTTAL TO BIDEN?

The task was assigned to South Carolina Sen. Tim Scott, the Senate's only Black Republican. Scott, 55, who joined the Senate in 2013, has become a leading GOP voice on race and criminal justice reform issues, two issues Biden is expected to discuss.

Harris takes on 'hard work' in 100 days as vice president

By ALEXANDRA JAFFE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — When President Joe Biden named Kamala Harris as his running mate, there were whispers about her ambition — would a former rival be a loyal soldier to a president she so sharply criticized on the campaign trail?

Fueling those whispers was their relationship — while cordial, it was initially not particularly close.

But 100 days into Biden's term, things look very different. Harris has become one of the administration's most prominent advocates for Biden's agenda, standing alongside him at most of his major announcements and building a relationship that aides say is closer than most presidents had with their seconds-in-command.

Harris has taken on one of the administration's toughest tasks — addressing the root causes of migration to the U.S. from Mexico and Central America. The problem has bedeviled presidents from both parties for years and has no easy solutions.

Tina Flournoy, Harris' chief of staff, said the vice president has "taken it on with gusto."

"She has said to me, 'When you decide you're going to run for office and your name is on the ballot, next to it are not two boxes that say, 'easy work' and 'hard work,'" Flournoy said.

Of the hard problems, Flournoy added: "Are we supposed to ignore them because they're hard? Or are we supposed to really dig in and try to fix them?"

The COVID-19 pandemic has been the administration's greatest challenge during its first 100 days. The public health and economic crisis of historic proportions has forced the White House to work differently from Day One of Biden's tenure.

The pandemic sharply limited travel by the president and the vice president, which has had at least one silver lining: Because Harris hasn't been on the move as much as past vice presidents early on, she's spent more time with Biden, helping to cement their relationship. The two have had lunch every Friday, and on a typical day may spend four to five hours in meetings together, which ensures that her voice is heard and her fingerprints are left on major policy decisions, aides say. They point to the expansion of the child tax credit and child care funding as examples of her priorities.

Harris had a role in developing Biden's agenda and "the strategy of selling it, both to the American people, and on the Hill," Flournoy said.

Aides say Harris has also shown enthusiasm for some less-glamorous aspects of the administration's \$2.3 trillion infrastructure plan as she's been promoting it — such as water issues, with which she had experience during her time as a U.S. senator for California, broadband access and provisions expanding electric vehicle use.

Being the nation's first Black, South Asian and female vice president informs her office in ways both big and small. And she will have a prominent place behind Biden on Wednesday as he addresses a joint session of Congress for the first time.

Harris has chosen to champion issues that have been top priorities for much of her career and reflect her own lived experience. She told aides on her first day in office that she wanted to focus on relief to small businesses. She's also focused on policies that affect women and children, including Black maternal mortality. And she has homed in on the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and sluggish economy on women and people of color.

Harris has decorated her office with small nods to her historic role: a bust of abolitionist Frederick Dou-

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 28, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 26 of 72

glass, donated by her alma mater, Howard University, along with the shoulder bars from the first Black female brigade commander at the U.S. Naval Academy.

Her support for the president and his agenda may have strengthened their relationship, but it's left some advocates wanting more from her on two major issues — criminal justice reform and immigration.

On criminal justice reform — one of her campaign priorities — Harris has hardly been out front. While she's spoken alongside Biden in response to recent mass shootings, and at an event announcing his executive orders on guns, the administration as a whole hasn't made a significant public push on the issue.

Andrea James, executive director and founder of the National Council for Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women & Girls, said that considering Harris is "a woman of color, her history, her pride and speaking about her mom who was a brave and courageous woman and fought obstacles because of the color of her skin," they expected to see more from her speaking out on the issue.

Aides say Harris is making calls to Capitol Hill and working on the criminal justice issue behind the scenes.

On immigration, Harris has been hammered from the left and right as she's taken on her new role addressing the root causes of migration at the southern border.

While Republicans have criticized Biden and Harris as absent on the issue because they haven't visited the border yet, progressive immigration groups complain the administration hasn't done enough to push for a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants.

Lorella Praeli, president of Community Change Action, said Harris was a "true champion for immigrants" as a senator and it was important that she now "lean in and she help to carry this issue."

Some of Harris' allies have expressed concerns that the problem is so amorphous and intractable that there's no clear solution, and that Harris will be judged harshly even if she makes progress.

The concern arises in part from a desire to protect Harris' political future. While Biden insists he plans on running for reelection, many political observers believe he'll decide against it, clearing a path for Harris.

Experts and advocates focused on immigration say it's too early to judge the outcome of her work there. Harris has thus far had conversations with the leaders of Mexico and Guatemala, and is planning her first trip to the region in June.

Dan Restrepo, a senior fellow at the Center for American Progress who's been in meetings on the issue with Harris, said "she asks very good questions" and her early move to bring together experts on the migrant crisis "is a really encouraging sign." He also pushed back against criticism that Harris doesn't have the experience to tackle the issue.

"I think the skill set that she brings to the table, as a successful politician and somebody who gets people, is probably the most important translatable skill," he said.

That human approach, aides say, shapes her approach to everything from policy to diplomacy.

"She will emphasize that we need to speak directly with the American people, that she doesn't want to just give rhetoric," said Rohini Kosoglu, Harris' domestic policy adviser.

When Harris is briefed before calling or meeting a foreign leader, she wants more than just the political topline, asking about the leader's hobbies and interests, "so she has a real sense of the person," Flournoy said. When she spoke with the Japanese prime minister earlier this month, she wanted to know about his love of baseball.

And when she swears in new Cabinet members at her ceremonial office in the executive office building across from the White House, Flournoy says, Harris asks them to take a moment to be present, and tells them to think about "all the reasons you're here and all the work you're going to do."

Then she brings them out on her balcony to look at the American flag flying high over the West Wing.

Immigration groups launch \$50 million effort for citizenship

By ALEXANDRA JAFFE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A coalition of immigration advocacy groups is launching a \$50 million effort aimed at defending President Joe Biden on immigration and pressuring lawmakers from both parties to pass a pathway to citizenship.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 28, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 27 of 72

The effort, the details of which were shared first with The Associated Press on Wednesday, is aimed in part at making sure Democrats “actually deliver concrete change in people’s lives,” according to Lorella Praeli, the president of Community Change Action.

“People can no longer wait. And people are not going to absolve either party from delivering in this moment,” Praeli said. “We will not be shy about holding both or either accountable, particularly as we walk into next year, 2022 and beyond.”

The effort includes a \$30 million commitment from a group of advocacy organizations calling themselves We Are Home, in addition to a \$20 million commitment from a handful of other immigration groups, including the Mark Zuckerberg-backed FWD.us.

It kicks off with a \$1.5 million television and digital ad campaign from We Are Home launching across five states and Washington, D.C., starting Saturday, and digital ads running in six more states.

The coalition of groups, which includes Community Change Action, the Service Employees International Union and the United Farm Workers, among others, is also planning nearly 60 events on May 1 for May Day. And it’s launching a paid field effort aimed at defending Democrats in difficult seats and supporting pro-immigrant “champions” in the House and the Senate to make sure they maintain strong support for a pathway to citizenship.

Praeli said that the groups are investing \$2.5 million to \$5 million over the next week on their field effort in key states and that part of the focus will be pressuring Democrats to embrace the use of reconciliation — an obscure parliamentary tool that allows lawmakers to pass some policy with 51 votes in the 100-member Senate rather than the 60 votes typically needed — to pass a pathway to citizenship.

“Our people delivered at the ballot box, and now it’s their time to use every tool available to them,” Praeli said. “Reconciliation is one of those tools.”

The Biden administration has signaled, however, it’s not interested in pursuing immigration reform through reconciliation and would prefer to pass legislation with bipartisan support — an unlikely goal, considering the sharp political polarization around immigration in the evenly divided Senate.

The campaign also features a \$1 million ad buy launching later this week from America’s Voice and Care in Action to air a series of ads across Washington, D.C., Arizona and California defending Biden from GOP attacks that he hasn’t done enough to address the spike in immigration at the U.S. southern border.

One ad, shared first with the AP, accuses the GOP of hypocrisy on the issue and declares that “Republicans don’t care about children at the border” while Biden “has a plan to fix the mess Republicans left at the border.”

The ad is aimed at mitigating an issue that’s fast become one of Biden’s biggest political challenges — the sharp increase in migration, including record-breaking numbers of unaccompanied minors attempting to cross the border.

An Associated Press-NORC survey conducted earlier this month found that 40% of Americans disapprove of Biden’s handling of children reaching the nation’s southern border without their parents, compared with just 24% who approve. Thirty-five percent don’t have an opinion either way.

Facing \$11B tax bill, Samsung heirs donate massive art trove

By KIM TONG-HYUNG Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — Samsung’s founding family will donate tens of thousands of rare artworks, including Picassos and Dalis, to help them pay a massive inheritance tax bill following last year’s death of company chairman Lee Kun-Hee.

They will also give hundreds of millions of dollars to medical projects and research in an apparent attempt to improve their public image as they proceed with a multiyear plan to inherit both the wealth and corporate power of South Korea’s richest-ever businessman.

The Lee family, including his widow and three children, expects to pay more than 12 trillion won (\$10.8 billion) in inheritance taxes, which is more than half the wealth Lee held in stocks and real estate, Samsung said Wednesday. This would be the largest amount in South Korea and more than three times the

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 28, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 28 of 72

country's total estate tax revenue for last year.

Giving away the late chairman's vast collection of art masterpieces would reduce the taxable portions of his estate.

The family plans to divide the payment in six installments over five years, while making the first payment this month.

"It is our civic duty and responsibility to pay all taxes," the Lee family said in a statement. They had until Friday to report the extent of the inheritance and payment plans to tax authorities.

Raising cash for the tax payment is crucial for the Lee family to extend its control over Samsung's business empire, which extends from semiconductors, smartphones and TVs to construction, shipbuilding and insurance. Some analysts say the process could result in a shakeup across the group.

The late Lee owned 4.18% of Samsung Electronics, which is one of the world's biggest makers of computer memory chips and smartphones, but also held stakes in Samsung affiliates that collectively owned a larger share than his in the crown jewel electronics company. The complex shareholding structure has allowed Lee and his family to exert broad control over the group.

In Wednesday's statement, Samsung did not mention how Lee's widow and children would split his assets, and there's speculation they haven't reached a final agreement.

Most market analysts believe Lee's shares will be distributed in a way that would strengthen the leadership of his only son and corporate heir, Lee Jae-yong, the de facto chief of Samsung Electronics who is currently imprisoned for bribery and other crimes. Lee's other children are Lee Boo-jin, CEO of Samsung's Shilla luxury hotel chain, and Lee Seo-hyun, who heads the Samsung Welfare Foundation.

The family plans to donate 23,000 art pieces from Lee's personal collection to two state-run museums. They include old Korean paintings, books and other cultural assets designated as national treasures, and modern Korean painters such as Park Soo-keun and Lee Jung-seop. There are also the works of Marc Chagall, Pablo Picasso, Paul Gauguin, Claude Monet, Joan Miro and Salvador Dali, Samsung said.

The National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art said the 1,488 pieces it received from the Lee family was its biggest private donation. The works included Lee Jung-seop's "Bull," Dali's "Family of Marsupial Centaurs," Monet's "Water Lily Pond (Le Bassin Aux Nymphaes)," and Chagall's "Red Bouquet With Lovers (Les Amoureux Aux Bouquets Rouges)."

The National Museum of Korea will receive around 21,000 pieces from Lee's collection of Korean traditional art, including paintings, ceramics and sculptures.

Hwang Hee, South Korea's culture minister, said some of the art donated by Lee will be displayed for the public starting in June. He expressed "deep gratitude" to the Lee family for "enriching" the country's cultural assets, but he sidestepped questions on whether he thought Samsung was trying to create a positive atmosphere for Lee Jae-yong to get pardoned.

Lee family will also donate 1 trillion won (\$900 million) to help fund infectious disease research and treatment for children with cancer and rare illnesses.

About half of that money will be used to help finance the establishment of a 150-bed hospital providing specialized treatment for infectious diseases. Experts had raised the need for such facilities equipped with negative pressure rooms and other advanced systems following the emergence of COVID-19.

About 300 billion (\$267 million) of the funds will go into a decadelong program with the Seoul National University Children's Hospital to help families pay for the treatment of children with cancer and rare diseases and support clinical trials and drug development.

"Members of the (Lee family) hope to honor the life of the late Chairman Lee and his commitment to corporate citizenship and co-prosperity by giving back to communities," Samsung said.

Before his death in October, Lee was credited for transforming Samsung Electronics from a small television maker into a global giant in semiconductors and consumer electronics. But his leadership was also marred by corruption convictions that highlighted the traditionally murky ties between the country's family-owned conglomerates and politicians. He had been hospitalized for years following a heart attack in 2014.

Lee Jae-yong, who has since helmed the group in his capacity as vice chairman of Samsung Electronics, is currently serving a 2 1/2-year sentence for bribing then-President Park Geun-hye and her close confi-

dante to win government support for a 2015 merger between two Samsung affiliates. The deal helped strengthen Lee's control over the Samsung group, but the revelations about his corrupt ties with the Park government fueled a 2016 corruption scandal that spurred huge protests and ousted Park from office.

The younger Lee has vowed to improve Samsung's corporate culture, declaring that heredity transfers at the group would end and that he wouldn't pass the management rights he inherited to his children. He also said Samsung would stop suppressing employee attempts to organize unions, although labor activists have questioned his sincerity.

A growing number of politicians, religious and business leaders have been calling for President Moon Jae-in to pardon Lee. They say it would help Lee strengthen Samsung's global leadership in semiconductors and he could possibly use his business reach to help the country secure more coronavirus vaccines.

Critics point out that Samsung didn't show signs of trouble when Lee was in jail in 2017 and 2018, and that prison terms have never really stopped corporate leaders from relaying their management decisions from behind bars.

India tops 200,000 dead as virus surge breaks health system

By SHEIKH SAALIQ Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — India crossed a grim milestone Wednesday of 200,000 people lost to the coronavirus as a devastating surge of new infections tears through dense cities and rural areas alike and overwhelms health care systems on the brink of collapse.

The health ministry reported a single-day record 3,293 COVID-19 deaths in the last 24 hours, bringing India's total fatalities to 201,187, as the world's second most populous country endures its darkest chapter of the pandemic yet.

The country also reported 362,757 new infections, a new global record, which raised the overall total past 17.9 million. The previous high of 350,000 on Monday had capped a five-day streak of recording the largest single-day increases in any country throughout the pandemic.

India, a country of nearly 1.4 billion people, is the fourth to cross 200,000 deaths, behind the United States, Brazil and Mexico. And as in many nations, experts believe the coronavirus infections and fatalities in India are severe undercounts.

The first known COVID-19 death in India happened on March 12, 2020, in southern Karnataka state. It took five months to reach the first 50,000 dead. The toll hit 100,000 deaths in the next two months in October 2020 and 150,000 three months later in January this year. Deaths slowed until mid-March, only to sharply rise again.

For the past week, more than 2,000 Indians have died every day.

India thought it had weathered the worst of the pandemic last year, but the virus is now racing through its population and systems are beginning to collapse.

Hospitalizations and deaths have reached record highs, overwhelming health care workers. Patients are suffocating because hospitals' oxygen supplies have run out. Desperate family members are sending SOS messages on social media, hoping someone would help them find oxygen cylinders, empty hospital beds and critical drugs for their loved ones. Crematoriums have spilled over into parking lots, lighting up night skies in some cities.

With its health care system sinking fast, India is now looking at other nations to pull it out of the record surge that is barreling through one state and then another.

Many countries have offered assistance, including the U.S., which has promised to help with personal protective equipment, tests and oxygen supplies. The U.S. will also send raw materials for vaccine production, strengthening India's capacity to manufacture more AstraZeneca doses.

Health experts say huge gatherings during Hindu festivals and mammoth election rallies in some states have accelerated the unprecedented surge India is seeing now.

They also say the government's mixed messaging and its premature declarations of victory over the virus encouraged people to relax when they should have continued strict adherence to physical distancing,

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 28, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 30 of 72

wearing masks and avoiding large crowds.

The national capital New Delhi is in lockdown, as are the southern states of Maharashtra and Karnataka. Some other states, too, have enforced restrictions in an attempt to curb the spread of the virus.

India has also called on its armed forces to help fight the devastating crisis. India's chief of Defense Staff, General Bipin Rawat, said late Monday that oxygen supplies would be released from armed forces reserves and its retired medical personnel would join health facilities to ease the pressure on doctors.

Meanwhile, India's vaccination program appears to be struggling. So far nearly 10% of the country's population have received one jab, but just over 1.5% have received both vaccines.

Indians 18 and older will be eligible for a vaccine from Saturday.

Meanwhile, the loss of lives is accelerating.

Radha Gobindo Pramanik is among the countless Indians who lost a family member to the virus. His daughter, Navanita Paramanik Rajput, died on April 18.

At first, Rajput complained of colds and fever. But when the 37-year-old's oxygen levels started to drop, her father and husband decided to take her to a government hospital.

Pramanik said she came out of the ambulance smiling but by the time her husband finished filling the hospital registration form, her daughter was gasping for breath.

"Before I could understand anything, she collapsed in the arms of her husband," Pramanik said, sobbing.

In Jaffa, gentrification stokes discord as Arabs pushed out

By ILAN BEN ZION Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — A turreted former Catholic girl's school in Jaffa is being transformed into an exclusive Soho House club. Around the corner, a historic ex-convent is now a five-star hotel. Across the street, the glittering towers of the Andromeda Hill luxury residences overlook the Mediterranean.

But farther down Yefet Street, working class Arabs of Jaffa's Ajami neighborhood face a starkly different reality. With housing prices out of reach, discontent over the city's rapid transformation into a bastion for Israel's ultra-wealthy is reaching a boiling point. The crisis has taken on nationalistic overtones, with some Arab residents accusing the government of trying to push them out to make way for Jews.

"Ninety percent of people here barely make a living, from hand to mouth, they don't have enough to eat," said Jaffa resident Ibrahim Tartir. "For a young man looking to get married, it's 5,000, 6,000 shekels (\$1,800) for rent, not including water and electricity and the rest. How much does he earn? 6,000 a month. How can he live?"

Jaffa, the historic port at the core of the greater Tel Aviv metropolis, is home to around 20,000 Arab residents, remnants of the Palestinian population that lived there before Israel's establishment in 1948. The district has undergone extensive gentrification in recent decades with government encouragement.

That trend has accelerated in the past several years as real estate prices have skyrocketed amid surging demand. As wealthy Israelis and foreigners move from other areas of Tel Aviv into Jaffa, its mostly working-class Arab residents have been pushed out. This has added ethnic tensions to an economic phenomenon familiar in other cities around the world.

"We're reaching a point where Arab people can't buy houses unless they are very rich," said Youssef Masharawi, a Jaffa native and professor of physical therapy at Tel Aviv University. He said young Arabs in Jaffa have nowhere to go, unable to afford to start families in their hometown and facing discrimination in nearby Israeli cities with overwhelmingly Jewish populations.

The stress is starting to reach a breaking point.

Long smoldering tensions erupted last week after the rabbi and director of a pre-military religious seminary in the predominantly Arab neighborhood of Ajami were assaulted by two Arab residents while visiting an apartment for sale.

Moshe Schendowich, chief executive of the Meirim B'Yafo seminary, was injured in the incident. He said that while there have been some disagreements with Arab neighbors, those conflicts "should be solved with speech, with talking, not with violence."

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 28, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 31 of 72

Although the seminary says it isn't out to push anyone out, some residents view it with suspicion. Its head rabbi is a former West Bank settler and was formally affiliated with Ateret Cohanim, a group that takes over Arab properties in Jerusalem to make way for Jewish settlers. The yeshiva's website says its aim is to "strengthen Jewish identity and the voice of the Torah, (and) strengthen communities" in Jaffa.

The incident ignited an already flammable situation. In the days following, Arab residents and Jewish supporters faced off against Jewish nationalist counter-protesters. The demonstrations devolved into clashes with police.

Tel Aviv-Jaffa Mayor Ron Huldai condemned the violence but insisted "what we are seeing is not a nationalist conflict between Jews and Arabs."

"It is the product of ongoing frustration of a whole generation of Jaffans that can't continue to live there," he said.

But in Israel, nationalist conflict is never far away.

Before Israel's establishment in 1948, Jaffa was a predominantly Arab city of some 100,000 people. During the war surrounding Israel's creation, tens of thousands of Palestinian residents fled or were forced from their homes.

Under a 1950 absentee property law, the new Israeli government confiscated thousands of empty properties and handed them to state-run public housing companies. Many of the Palestinians who remained in Jaffa ended up in these properties.

Since 2011, the Israeli government has pushed to sell off these properties to develop more housing. Although occupants are given an opportunity to buy these homes, the prices are often too high, forcing many longtime residents to move out.

Amidar, a public housing company that manages the buildings, said there is no intention to expel people. "The properties are offered for sale first to tenants at a significant discount and with professional guidance" and most are purchased by residents, it said.

Even with generous terms, however, many low-income residents cannot afford to buy their homes. Many properties have been bought up by developers, resulting in low-income Arab residents being forced out.

Ravit Hananel, a professor of urban policy at Tel Aviv University, said the Israeli government has been ridding itself of public housing since the 1980s as it abandoned the country's socialist roots and adopted neo-liberal, capitalist policies.

She said the government pledged to address housing issues after mass social justice protests in 2011. But she said the response has been to push for more privatization, further hurting the disadvantaged.

While this is the case across the country, Jaffa's rapid gentrification is not simply a case of rich against poor, said Abed Abou Shhadeh, a Tel Aviv city councilman from Jaffa.

"It has a national background behind it, and it's part of the conflict," said Abou Shhadeh.

While some try to depoliticize the issue, he said "it's more than a class war. There's a very deep rooted political tension happening at the same time, which makes it much more difficult to come with a fair and equal solution."

Organizers of a recent protest wrote on Facebook that the "economic expulsion and gentrification that's pushing the Arab community — and also poor Jewish residents — out of the city for the sake of real estate deals continues what was started in 1948." Graffiti on city walls say in Hebrew and Arabic: "Jaffa is not for sale."

Masharawi, the Jaffa-born professor, called for the construction of affordable housing for young Arabs in Jaffa. He said he was determined to stand his ground against the rising tide of change.

"I will never leave Jaffa even if I am going to die within a small room in the end," he said. "This is my home, my house, my way of life."

Carmouche to be 1st Black jockey in Kentucky Derby since '13

By STEPHEN WHYNO AP Sports Writer

Long before Kendrick Carmouche started riding horses growing up in Louisiana, Black jockeys were

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 28, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 32 of 72

synonymous with the sport.

Black riders were atop 13 of the 15 horses in the first Kentucky Derby in 1875 and won 15 of the first 28 editions of the race. Everything has changed since: Carmouche on Saturday will be the first Black jockey in the Kentucky Derby since 2013 and is just one of a handful over the past century.

Carmouche is now one of the few remaining Black jockeys in the U.S. Much like Marlon St. Julien in 2000, Patrick Husbands in 2006 and Kevin Krigger in 2013, his presence in horse racing's biggest event is a reminder of how the industry marginalized Black jockeys to the point they all but disappeared from the sport.

"As a Black rider getting to the Kentucky Derby, I hope it inspires a lot of people because my road wasn't easy to get there and I never quit," Carmouche said. "What I've been wanting all my career is to inspire people and make people know that it's not about color. It's about how successful you are in life and how far you can fight to get to that point."

Carmouche is a success story in his own right. He is the son of a jockey who has won more than 3,400 races and earned \$118 million since beginning to ride professionally in 2000. He came back from a broken leg three years ago and set himself up for his first Kentucky Derby mount by riding 72-1 long shot Bourbonic to victory in the Wood Memorial on April 3. Bourbonic will leave from the 20th post in Saturday's race at Churchill Downs.

He's also a rarity in a sport now dominated by jockeys from Latin America.

"Obviously there haven't been many in recent decades, but if you go back to the early years of the Derby, the late 1800s, early 1900s, Black jockeys dominated the Kentucky Derby," NBC Sports analyst Randy Moss said. "Guys like Isaac Murphy and Jimmy Winkfield."

Carmouche joins St. Julien as the only U.S.-born Black jockeys in the Derby since 1921, which was even then long after the era dominated by Murphy, Winkfield and others.

Chris Goodlett, a historian at the Kentucky Derby Museum, cited a combination of Jim Crow laws and segregation in the U.S., intimidation by white riders and decisions by racing officials, owners and trainers for the decline of Black jockeys in the early 20th century. One example was white counterparts riding Winfield into the rail at Harlem Race Track outside Chicago and injuring him and his horse.

"Consequently, white trainers and owners would be (more) reluctant to ride Black jockeys on their horses due to instances like that," Goodlett said. "We see it also just from an administrative point of view, as well: fewer licenses being issued to Black jockeys, sometimes not issued at all."

Brien Bouyea, communications director for the National Museum of Racing and Hall of Fame, said many Black jockeys left for Europe because of better working conditions and never returned. Manny Ycaza came from Panama and blazed a trail for Latin American jockeys, who used riding schools and other factors that changed on-track demographics.

Along the way, participation by Black people in the Kentucky Derby ebbed and flowed with significant contributions along the way, including grooms Will Harbut with Man O'War in 1920 and Eddie Sweat with Secretariat in 1973 and trainer Hank Allen with Northern Wolf in 1989. Harbut's great grandson, Greg Harbut, co-owned 2020 Derby runner Neckar Island and helped found the Ed Brown Society, named after the 19th century Black jockey and trainer to further diversify racing.

Husbands was well-aware of his unique place in history when he rode Seaside Retreat in the 2006 Derby and feels a connection to Carmouche this year because "the stepping stone that he's doing for his culture is the same stuff I was trying to do for my culture."

Knowing the history of Black jockeys, Husbands is inspired by Carmouche's journey.

"When I saw the interview with him two years ago, it bring water to my eyes in terms of how his wife is white, he's Black and he's a little bit scared of his kids on his streets," Husbands said. "It brought me home because he said in this interview that no racetrack was being prejudiced to him. ... Now he's coming in to ride in the Kentucky Derby. It's like he's shining a light out there."

Husbands said Carmouche becoming the first Black jockey to win the Kentucky Derby since 1902 "would be a blessing. It would bring tears to a lot of people's eyes."

The usually talkative and confident Carmouche paused several times trying to put into words what it would mean to follow the footsteps of jockeys like first Derby winner Oliver Lewis, Winkfield and Murphy.

"From my perspective, if I win this race, man, it would touch a lot of people," Carmouche said. "A lot of people will be crying, a lot of people will be happy and a lot of happy tears."

Tim Scott, only Black GOP senator, set to respond to Biden

By ALAN FRAM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Tim Scott, the only Black Republican senator, is often happy to dart past Capitol Hill reporters without saying much. This time, he and the spotlight have found each other.

Brought up by a single mother who worked back-breaking hours as a nursing assistant, Scott, 55, has spent a decade in Congress representing South Carolina. Now, the lawmaker who combines a willingness to address racial questions with an advocacy of conservative causes is giving his party's nationally televised response to President Joe Biden's Wednesday night address to Congress.

He's also the lead GOP negotiator as the two parties seek an accord on legislation overhauling police procedures. The issue has long eluded compromise despite national attention fanned by last year's killing of George Floyd, a Black man, and this month's conviction of a former Minneapolis police officer in his slaying.

"You figure out who your audience is, you figure out what you want to say and you try and find a way to say it well," Scott told reporters Tuesday about his speech preparations. "And you lean into who you are."

GOP leaders' choice of Scott to answer Biden comes at a fraught political moment.

Demands for social justice are reverberating even as killings of Black people by white police officers continue. Following years of nativist appeals by President Donald Trump and others, out-of-power Republicans are trying to broaden their appeal before 2022 elections that they hope will deliver them control of Congress.

Scott, among only 11 Black senators in history, has used riveting Senate speeches to detail his own distressing encounters with the law. He's described being pulled over 18 times while driving since 2000, and being halted by a U.S. Capitol security officer who didn't recognize him as recently as 2019, despite wearing a senator's lapel pin.

"While I thank God I have not endured bodily harm, I have, however, felt the pressure applied by the scales of justice when they are slanted," he said during a 2016 Senate speech. "I have felt the anger, the frustration, the sadness and the humiliation that comes with feeling like you're being targeted for nothing more than being just yourself."

Days before Democrats derailed a GOP policing overhaul effort he led last June, Scott bristled over one opponent who'd derided the measure as a "token, halfhearted approach."

"On the other side, they are wanting to race bait on tokenism," he fumed. No. 2 Senate Democratic leader Dick Durbin of Illinois quickly apologized for the remark.

Scott, from North Charleston, South Carolina, nearly dropped out of high school. He tells of a life-changing turnabout after befriending a businessman who became a mentor who stressed the value of hard work.

After graduating college, he entered the insurance and real estate businesses and was elected to the Charleston County Council. He was a co-chairman of the 1996 reelection campaign of Sen. Strom Thurmond, R-S.C., an overt segregationist decades earlier. When Scott was elected to the House in 2010, his closest GOP primary rival was Thurmond's son Paul.

Gov. Nikki Haley appointed Scott to the Senate in 2013 when Sen. Jim DeMint resigned. Scott was easily elected to complete DeMint's term in 2014 and to his own six-year term in 2016, and is a favorite for reelection next year.

Scott's background and willingness to discuss racial disparities, a subject infrequently emphasized by the GOP, made him a natural choice for Wednesday's speech.

"He's got a great personal story," said No. 2 Senate GOP leader John Thune of South Dakota. "He's very articulate at laying out kind of the Republican message, principles, agenda. I think he's a great voice for our party."

"I've never been stopped from driving while Black. He has multiple times," said Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas. "And he's sort of opened my eyes to some of the lack of trust" between minority communities and

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 28, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 34 of 72

law enforcement.

Scott joined Haley in 2015 when she announced the removal of the Confederate flag from the State House following the 2015 Charleston church massacre, a decision that infuriated some conservatives. A white supremacist killed nine Black parishioners in that shooting.

Scott spoke out against some of Trump's racially offensive remarks and actions. He said the president's "moral authority" was compromised when Trump described "very fine people on both sides" after violence erupted between neo-Nazis and counter-demonstrators in Charlottesville, Virginia, in 2017.

Some Democrats say he doesn't nearly use his unique perch in the GOP often or vigorously enough.

"It's one thing to speak out on issues of race," said Antjuan Seawright, a South Carolina-based Democratic consultant. "But when you have the opportunity to do something about it, I think that you should take advantage of that, particularly when you are at the table."

Seawright also said GOP leaders "seem to come to" Scott when racial issues arise. "A Black man from the South. So you get those three things, that's like a political trifecta for Republicans."

No. 3 House Democratic leader James Clyburn of South Carolina told reporters last fall that Scott and the House's one Black Republican at the time "sounds like tokenism."

But Tuesday, Clyburn told reporters that Scott's selection to deliver the GOP response was a compliment and was good for their state, "irrespective of whether or not I agree with him."

Scott has long championed vintage conservative ideas like tax breaks for companies investing in poor communities and federal aid that families could use for private schools. He has a solidly conservative voting record, backing Trump's Supreme Court nominees and the failed drive to repeal President Barack Obama's health care law.

Now, he's in the middle of talks on legislation revamping police procedures that have drawn intense public attention. The House approved a Democratic package in March ending protections individual police officers have against civil lawsuits, which Republicans are resisting.

Both sides express optimism that they can resolve disputes soon. "History has its eyes on this moment," one negotiator, Sen. Cory Booker, D-N.J., told reporters.

"He's a good-faith actor, and he's also a Black man in America and knows a lot of these issues, personally," Booker said of Scott. "So if anybody can get it done on his side, he's the right person to be negotiating."

Outdoor mask guidance echoes what many Americans already do

By CARLA K. JOHNSON and JOSH FUNK and MIKE STOBBE Associated Press

In the small Nebraska town of Oxford, the school district dropped its mask mandate last month in what was a fairly straight-forward decision: Cases were down dramatically, and it didn't bother local officials that their move flouted Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines.

Those federal mask guidelines just didn't seem to fit local conditions well in the town of about 800 people where hardly anyone wears a mask.

"We haven't paid a whole lot of attention to what is going on at the federal level — mainly what is coming out through the state," Southern Valley Superintendent Bryce Jorgensen said. "You just can't compare Chicago to Oxford, Nebraska. Things are just different."

On Tuesday, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention eased its guidelines on the wearing of masks outdoors, saying fully vaccinated Americans don't need to cover their faces anymore unless they are in a big crowd of strangers. And those who are unvaccinated can go outside without masks in some situations, too.

For most of the past year, the CDC had been advising Americans to wear masks outdoors if they are within 6 feet of one another.

The decision marked the U.S. government's latest step toward normalcy, but came as much of the country already had moved on from mask rules. The CDC essentially endorsed what many Americans have already been doing.

On the same day the CDC updated its guidance, Louisiana's governor partially lifted the state's mask

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 28, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 35 of 72

mandate, the first Democratic governor to make such a move during Joe Biden's presidency. Elsewhere, local government leaders have been doing away with mask rules, and in many states, face coverings are an infrequent sight indoors, let alone outside.

In Montgomery, Alabama, 73-year-old Judy Adams said she hasn't worn a mask outside since the early days of the pandemic a year ago and only puts them on inside when stores mandate them. Alabama had a statewide mask mandate until earlier this month, when the governor let it expire.

"I think it's ridiculous, because it's not helping," she said of mask rules. "This is about control and fear. It ain't about nothing but control and fear."

Since the start of the pandemic, the federal government has struggled to accomplish consistency in public health measures from state to state. The CDC has issued guidelines on masks, social distancing, travel and other activities but it's up to governors on whether to adhere to the measures. Some states never had mask mandates, while others still have them on the books.

"Today, I hope, is a day when we can take another step back to the normalcy of before," CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky said Tuesday. "Over the past year, we have spent a lot of time telling Americans what you can't do. Today, I am going to tell you some of the things you can do, if you are fully vaccinated."

The CDC says that, whether they are fully vaccinated or not, people do not have to wear masks outdoors when they walk, bike or run alone or with members of their household. An unvaccinated person can also go maskless to a small outdoor gathering with fully vaccinated people.

But unvaccinated people — defined as those who have yet to receive both doses of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine or the one-shot Johnson & Johnson formula — should wear masks at small outdoor gatherings that include other unvaccinated people, the CDC says. They also should keep their faces covered when dining at outdoor restaurants with friends from multiple households.

And everyone, fully vaccinated or not, should keep wearing masks at crowded outdoor events such as concerts or sporting events, the CDC says.

The agency continues to recommend masks at indoor public places, such as hair salons, restaurants, shopping centers, gyms, museums and movie theaters, saying that is still the safer course even for vaccinated people.

The change comes as more than half of U.S. adults — or about 140 million people — have received at least one dose of vaccine, and more than a third have been fully vaccinated.

Walensky said the decision was driven by rising vaccination numbers; declines in COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations and deaths; and research showing that less than 10% of documented instances of transmission of the virus happened outdoors.

The new guidance represents another carefully calibrated step on the road back to normal from the coronavirus outbreak that has killed over 570,000 people in U.S.

In Plano, Texas, Rob Webster, a 49-year-old church employee, said the new guidelines sound "reasonable" but he has some reservations.

"My only concern is that there are so many people who want to buck the system anyway," said Webster, communications director at Custer Road United Methodist Church, which requires masks on church property, including for outdoor youth group meetings.

"So I don't know if I was around a group of people who weren't wearing masks, are they really vaccinated? ... It makes me maybe a little more fearful and less trusting of the people around me."

In the Nebraska school district, Superintendent Jorgensen said the district decided to eliminate its mask rule based on conditions in the area and in the state, which never had a statewide mask mandate.

The district did see an elevated risk of the virus last fall when cases statewide were peaking, but there hasn't been a single case in the district since January and fewer than a dozen cases had been reported in the two counties around the district when they made the decision.

Jorgensen said the district is still being careful and will require students to quarantine for 10 days if they test positive for the virus, but the mask mandate didn't seem necessary anymore.

"It's not like we've totally thrown everything out the window. We still are closely watching it and monitoring every situation we can. But it just seems that those seem a little bit extreme," Jorgensen said of the

federal mask recommendations. "I think we have people here who can make some good local decisions, so that's why we did it the way we did it."

Navy SEALs to shift from counterterrorism to global threats

By LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Ten years after they found and killed Osama bin Laden, U.S. Navy SEALs are undergoing a major transition to improve leadership and expand their commando capabilities to better battle threats from global powers like China and Russia.

The new plan cuts the number of SEAL platoons by as much as 30% and increases their size to make the teams more lethal and able to counter sophisticated maritime and undersea adversaries. And there will be a new, intensive screening process for the Navy's elite warriors, to get higher-quality leaders after scandals that rocked the force and involved charges of murder, sexual assault and drug use.

Rear Adm. Hugh Howard, top commander for the SEALs, laid out his plans in an exclusive interview with The Associated Press. He said the Navy's special operations forces have been focused on counterterrorism operations but now must begin to evolve beyond those missions. For the past two decades, many have been fighting in the deserts of Iraq and mountains of Afghanistan. Now they are focused on going back to sea.

That decision reflects the broader Pentagon strategy to prioritize China and Russia, which are rapidly growing their militaries and trying to expand their influence around the globe. U.S. defense leaders believe that two decades of war against militants and extremists have drained resources, causing America to lose ground against Moscow and Beijing.

The counterterrorism fight had its benefits, allowing the SEALs to sharpen their skills in developing intelligence networks and finding and hitting targets, said Howard, who heads Naval Special Warfare Command, which includes the SEALs and the special warfare combatant-craft crewmen. "Many of these things are transferable, but now we need to put pressure on ourselves to operate against peer threats."

As a result, Howard is adding personnel to the SEAL platoons to beef up capabilities in cyber and electronic warfare and unmanned systems, honing their skills to collect intelligence and deceive and defeat the enemy.

"We are putting pressure on ourselves to evolve and understand our gaps in capability and what our true survivability is against these threats" posed by global competitors, he said.

Adm. Mike Gilday, the chief of naval operations, said the goal is to better integrate the SEALs into the Navy's missions at sea.

"As the Navy Special Warfare community returns more and more to its maritime roots, their increased integration across the Fleet — above, under, and on the sea — will unequivocally enhance our unique maritime capabilities to help us compete and win against any adversary," Gilday said in a statement to the AP.

Increasing the size of the SEAL platoons will add high-tech capabilities. And decreasing the number of units will allow Howard to rid the force of toxic leaders and be more selective in choosing commanders. That decision is a direct result of the erosion in character that Navy officials have seen within the force.

In recent years, SEALs have been involved in a number of high-profile scandals. One of the most well-known was the arrest of Navy Special Operations Chief Edward Gallagher on war crimes charges that included murder of an Islamic State militant captive and attempted murder in the shootings of civilians during a 2017 deployment to Iraq.

Gallagher was acquitted of all charges except one, posing in photos with the dead captive. A jury recommended his rank be reduced, cutting his pension and benefits as he was about to retire. But President Donald Trump intervened and ordered that Gallagher be allowed to retire without losing his SEAL status.

More recently, a SEAL team platoon was pulled out of Iraq in 2019 amid allegations of sexual assault. Members of SEAL Team 10 were involved in cocaine use and tampering with drug tests. And Navy SEAL Adam Matthews was sentenced to a year in military prison for his role in the 2017 hazing-related death of an Army Green Beret in Africa.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 28, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 37 of 72

Navy leaders also chafed as Navy SEALs broke away from their "quiet professional" ethos, publicizing their participation in the raid into Pakistan that killed bin Laden, the al-Qaida leader responsible for plotting the 9/11 attacks. Two SEALs wrote books about the mission, prompting a rebuke from the Naval Special Warfare commander at the time, Rear Adm. Brian Losey.

"A critical tenant of our ethos is 'I do not advertise the nature of my work, nor seek recognition for my actions,'" he said.

Since taking over last September, Howard reached out to the Army and the Marine Corps for ideas on how to better screen his commando forces and assess them as they move through the ranks. Almost immediately, he instituted a "double blind" process for candidate interviews that was being used by the Army, so that neither side is influenced by actually seeing the other.

In addition, he is intensifying the screening process with more psychological assessments to evaluate personality traits. And he is expanding other assessments done by the subordinates and peers of candidates up for review. The increased scrutiny, said Howard, will extend through all the ranks and will help leaders get a better understanding of each service member's character. The process, he said, will provide more feedback for individuals so they can improve and will also help top leaders pair commanders with the right teams.

In some cases, Howard said, sailors who already had gone through the initial SEAL screening had to do it again under the new process. Not all did as well the second time.

"We learned that some of the officers that scored in the midrange are officers that I thought would have scored much higher," he said.

The Hamburglar? How a story about meat limits fell apart

By DAVID BAUDER and ALI SWENSON Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — President Joe Biden spent only a weekend as the "Hamburglar" in the conservative media world.

But while the false story lasted, it moved with a damaging speed and breadth, another example of a closed ecosystem of information affecting public opinion.

An academic study published a year before Biden became president was used to speculate that he would place limits on how much red meat Americans can consume as part of his stated goal to sharply reduce greenhouse gas pollution.

It was a potentially potent, visceral argument with punchy cable TV octane, namely that Biden was trying to limit people to eating one hamburger a month — an allegation that could seriously undermine his climate change plan before he even announced it.

There was one main problem: He's said no such thing.

Yet two days after the Daily Mail brought up the topic in a report last Thursday, Rep. Lauren Boebert, a Colorado Republican, was tweeting, "Why doesn't Joe stay out of my kitchen?"

The Mail's story, by Emily Crane, was headlined "How Biden's climate plan could limit you to eat just one burger a MONTH, cost \$3.5K a year per person in taxes, force you to spend \$55K on an electric car and 'crush' American jobs."

Crane cited a January 2020 study by the University of Michigan's Center for Sustainable Systems, which discussed how a transition to a more plant-based diet by Americans could cut down on greenhouse gas emissions. The paper estimated the environmental impact of a 90% reduction in beef consumption.

Martin Heller, a research specialist at Michigan and one of the study's authors, said there was no connection between the research and Biden's plans.

"The conversation so quickly gets pushed to these extremes and I think that's an effort at poking at people's fears," Heller said. "That's the frustrating part to me — that we can't have a conversation about how to get creative in this sort of middle space."

The Britain-based Daily Mail defended its story while criticizing others in the media.

"President Biden has announced an extremely ambitious target for carbon emissions reduction that will

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 28, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 38 of 72

have a massive effect on the American economy and way of life without giving a single detail of how he expects to achieve it," a newspaper spokesperson said.

"Unlike the rest of the overwhelmingly White House-whipped American media, the Mail attempted to explore this gaping hole at the center of the president's announcement," the representative said.

In fact, Biden has discussed several initiatives to help reach his climate goals, including increasing the use of wind and solar power and slashing emissions from fossil fuels such as coal and oil.

The newspaper's spokesperson said that "we made it very clear these were steps that MIGHT have to be taken."

But as the story spread, the qualifiers were deemphasized or disappeared entirely.

The conservative website Gateway Pundit ran a story Friday with the headline "Biden's climate requirements: cut 90 percent of red meat from diet; Americans can only eat one burger per month."

The body of the story itself was less incendiary, quoting the Daily Mail and using the qualifier "could."

While a graphic on Friday's "Fox & Friends" talked about what will be required to meet Biden's green targets, host Ainsley Earhardt said, "He wants to cut out 90% of the red meat that you all eat."

Later, Fox News anchor John Roberts said: "Say goodbye to your burgers if you want to sign up for the Biden climate agenda. That's the finding of one study."

A graphic onscreen, with a picture of a cheeseburger, read: "Up in your grill. Biden's climate requirements: cut 90 percent of red meat from diet, max 4 lbs. per year, one burger per month."

The story spread rapidly on social media. Texas Gov. Greg Abbott tweeted Fox's "Up in your grill" graphic, adding, "Not gonna happen in Texas!" Idaho Gov. Brad Little retweeted Abbott, adding, "Idahoans also have beef with this agenda and for dinner!"

It was Republican Georgia Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene who dubbed Biden "The Hamburglar," a reference to a character in McDonald's commercials.

There were some 23,000 examples of terms like Biden's climate plan, requirements or mandates appearing together with "meat consumption" in the context of political conversations online between Thursday and Monday, according to the media intelligence firm Signal Labs. "Red meat" also had some 59,000 mentions in political chatter.

"This is pure propaganda," said Jennifer Grygiel, a Syracuse University communications professor who specializes in disinformation.

There is little incentive for politicians and others to check their facts before posting on popular social media platforms, and those platforms aren't doing it for them, Grygiel said.

Once the false claim gets into people's heads, it's hard to dislodge. Many targets of the story are unlikely to see fact-checks, said John Cook, a research fellow at the Monash Climate Change Communication Research Hub.

Republicans have been frustrated in trying to find lines of attack that will stick against Biden in his first 100 days in office. Many in the conservative media world have also continued to spread lies about widespread fraud in the 2020 election.

Also this past weekend, the New York Post reported that migrant children entering the United States across the southern border were getting copies of a book from Vice President Kamala Harris in a welcome kit. The Post has since corrected the story to say there has been only one known time that a migrant child got Harris' book.

On Sunday, Biden spokesman Mike Gwin posted on Twitter a photo of a smiling Biden grilling steaks at a campaign stop, and linked to a CNN fact-checker who called claims about the president proposing limits on meat consumption "completely imaginary."

The Daily Mail on Monday updated its story on Biden's climate control plans without saying what was done. The headline did not change, and a spokesperson said it was for "minor cosmetic reasons."

On Fox, meanwhile, Roberts told viewers that while the network correctly presented data from the Michigan study, "a graphic and the script incorrectly implied it was part of Biden's plan for dealing with climate change. That is not the case."

A Fox spokeswoman on Tuesday would not discuss the network's editorial decision-making, including

whether a journalist checked with the Biden administration before reporting on the issue.

Fear, lack of funding hurt census in Sun Belt, advocates say

By ACACIA CORONADO, NICHOLAS RICCARDI and MIKE SCHNEIDER Associated Press
AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — According to the new census, the booming Sun Belt isn't booming quite like the experts thought.

Population counts released Monday came as a shock to many demographers and politicians who expected to see growth that could add numerous congressional seats to a region that's apparently been gaining people rapidly all decade. Instead, the census found more modest growth that added only three seats total in Florida and Texas. Arizona, the second-fastest growing state in 2010, didn't add a seat at all.

The questions that advocacy groups and officials are now asking are whether all the new subdivisions and shopping centers are a mirage; whether those states erred in not investing more in encouraging residents to fill out census forms — and whether Latinos in particular were reluctant to trust the Trump administration with their information.

Many demographers caution it's too early to conclude that the nation's once-a-decade count missed any specific population groups. That won't be known until more local data is released later this year and the Census Bureau has completed an independent survey measuring the accuracy of the 2020 head count.

But one thing is indisputable — when compared to the most recent population estimates, the three Sun Belt states underperformed during the count used for determining how many congressional seats and Electoral College votes each state gets. Texas got two extra seats instead of three; Florida added only a single new seat instead of two, and Arizona failed to gain the seat it was expecting to add.

All three states are led by Republican governors who devoted less resources than other states to encouraging participation in the 2020 census. And in all three states, Hispanics have accounted for about half of the population growth over the decade, according to American Community Survey data.

In Arizona, activists blamed Gov. Doug Ducey for supporting the Trump administration's failed effort to add a citizenship question to the 2020 census questionnaire. Those efforts intimidated Latinos and kept them from fully participating in the census, they said.

"What we saw from the government, Ducey and the Trump administration, was intimidation from Day One on the census," said Eduardo Sainz, national field director for Mi Familia Vota, a political advocacy group. "Because of this narrative of fear, and this narrative of not funding, we lost that seat."

The Ducey administration released a statement from the state demographer saying that more data is needed to determine why the count fell short of estimates of Arizona's growth.

During outreach efforts to get people to fill out their census forms, Hispanic residents would ask Adonias Arevalo about Trump's push on citizenship. Arevalo, state director for Poder Latinx in Phoenix, said, "Despite the fact that we said a citizenship question will not be present, folks didn't trust the Trump administration."

He said Arizona's undercount is partly the legacy of Republican leaders, including former Sheriff Joe Arpaio, and anti-immigration laws.

"For years, people have distrusted the system," Arevalo said. "People fear to participate in these processes due to years of criminalization."

Arizona, Florida and Texas were laggards compared to other states in efforts to form statewide committees aimed at driving census participation. Arizona only named members to its committee in August 2019, and Florida set one up in January 2020, just weeks before the national head count began in a rural Alaska village. Texas never even set up a statewide committee, which some census activists attributed to Texas lawmakers not wanting to take a stand on the citizenship question by promoting the census.

Democrats slammed the GOP for those moves.

"From the very beginning, we knew our state was particularly at risk of undercounting our neighbors," state Rep. Chris Turner, the Texas House's Democratic Caucus Chair, said in a statement. "A concerted, organized outreach effort is essential to ensuring maximum participation in the census and getting the most accurate count," he added in an interview.

But state demographer Lloyd Potter in an interview contended there's little evidence that massive state

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 28, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 40 of 72

spending increases census accuracy. Instead, he said, Texas has a lot of the types of people who routinely get undercounted — rural citizens and African-Americans and Latinos.

“Those are factors for all states and may have been more of a factor for Texas,” Potter said. “We have a lot of rural areas in Texas, we have a very significant and growing Latino population.”

Texas Republicans released a statement after the census count that said: “Representation in Texas must be based upon citizenship, and strategically we can ascertain why the left wants to flood Texas with thousands of illegals.”

In Florida, a spokeswoman for Gov. Ron DeSantis didn’t respond to an email inquiry.

Paul Mitchell, a redistricting expert in California, a state that spent \$187 million on census outreach, said there was a clear pattern in the numbers. States that funded major census-participation campaigns did well, while Republican-led ones, who viewed efforts like that as criticisms of then-President Donald Trump, did not, he said.

“Texas, Florida, Arizona, they didn’t do big outreach efforts to improve the count,” Mitchell said. “In Texas, particularly, it was anathema to say anything in the Legislature that could be seen as critical of Trump.”

Mitchell said the dynamic with Latinos seems clear given the populations of the underperforming states. He noted that some states that did comparatively better, like his own California, promised to protect their immigrants while low-spending GOP ones did not.

“It does just kind of stare you in the face,” Mitchell said of the pattern.

The actual population count from the 2020 census for Arizona was 3.3% short of what previous population estimates had shown. Florida and Texas were short by 0.7% and 0.5%, respectively.

On the flipside, the population counts in two states that had been expected to lose seats, Alabama and Rhode Island, exceeded their estimates by 2% or more.

During this census cycle, Rhode Island for the first time devoted \$1.5 million in public and private money on census outreach efforts. That, along with the fact that Rhode Island hosted the only test run of the census in 2018, helped keep the head count in the public eye, said John Marion, executive director of Common Cause Rhode Island.

“There was this constant drumbeat that we could lose our second seat,” Marion said.

If New York had counted 89 more residents, and all other states stayed the same, the state would have kept its seat. New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo on Tuesday said the state was exploring its legal options.

“Because when you’re talking about 89, that could be a minor mistake in counting,” Cuomo said.

The narrow margins by which New York narrowly lost a seat, Alabama and Rhode Island hung onto theirs and the three Sun Belt states underperformed have aroused suspicions that something “doesn’t seem quite right,” said Arturo Vargas, CEO of NALEO Educational Fund, a Hispanic advocacy group.

“I smell smoke,” Vargas said. “We will have to wait a few months to see what kind of fire there is.”

Nobel Laureate Elie Wiesel gets seat at National Cathedral

By ASHRAF KHALIL Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Washington National Cathedral, the massive Episcopal house of worship that prides itself on being an unfinished work-in-progress whose stones and stained glass tell the story of the 20th and 21st centuries, is unveiling its newest addition: a carving of iconic author, human rights campaigner and Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel.

The carving completes a quartet of heads of prominent figures sprouting from the four corners of an alcove known as the Human Rights Porch, joining Mother Teresa, Rosa Parks and Jonathan Myrick Daniels, a young Episcopal theologian and civil rights crusader who was shot to death in Alabama in 1965, giving his life to protect a 17-year-old Black woman.

“This is the space where we celebrate human aspiration,” cathedral spokesman Kevin Eckstrom said.

Wiesel, who died in 2016, was the author of 57 books including “Night,” which is based on his experiences as a Jewish prisoner in the Auschwitz and Buchenwald concentration camps. He became an outspoken advocate for human rights causes around the world, helped found the United States Holocaust Memorial

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 28, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 41 of 72

Museum and was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1986.

The Rev. Randy Hollerith, the cathedral's dean, chose Wiesel for the alcove's final corner, calling him "the living embodiment of resilience in the face of hatred." Wiesel's inclusion is particularly important as the number of living Holocaust survivors dwindles, he added.

"We have to make sure that we keep that reality in front of people," Hollerith said. "Those who stood for human rights and human dignity ought to be part of this sacred space."

Artist Chas Fagan, who created all the sculptures in the Human Rights Porch, worked off photos and videos provided by Wiesel's family to fashion a clay image of Wiesel's head that cathedral stone carver Sean Callahan and head stonemason Joe Alonso used to make a plaster model. Then Callahan, using specialized calibration equipment, painstakingly carved the image into a small slab of rock that has been sticking out of the wall for years awaiting a fourth face.

During an early April visit to the cathedral by The Associated Press, Callahan was putting the finishing touches on the carving about 10 feet (3 meters) above the floor.

"We're about 95 percent of the way there," said Callahan, who also did the other three faces. "But this last 5 percent takes forever because there's a lot of precise detail work."

He was able to complete the job about twice as quickly as the previous ones because the cathedral was closed due to the coronavirus pandemic, meaning he didn't have to work around sermons and other events.

Before it was permanently etched into stone, the image of Wiesel was approved by his widow, Marion. The Holocaust Museum and the Elie Wiesel Foundation for Humanity will partner with the cathedral for a series of events and programs later in the year.

Conceived in the 1990s, the Human Rights Porch also includes small statues of former first lady Eleanor Roosevelt and Óscar Romero, the Roman Catholic archbishop of El Salvador who was assassinated in 1980 and was later canonized as a saint by Pope Francis, in 2018.

Wiesel's addition highlights Washington National's unusual nature as a living canvas — unlike other Gothic cathedrals which are, by definition, somewhat frozen in time.

Alongside traditional figures like the Apostles St. Paul and St. Peter, there are dozens of modern features: a carving of Helen Keller, who is buried there; a statue of Martin Luther King Jr., who delivered his final Sunday sermon at the cathedral in 1968 before his assassination in Memphis; and a stained glass window dedicated to scientific achievements that includes a piece of moon rock.

Another modern, and whimsical, touch is the so-called businessman or yuppie gargoyle, depicting a Gothic creature with sideburns and holding a briefcase.

"One of the wonderful things about having a 20th century cathedral," Hollerith said, "is that you can have 20th century iconography in it."

Australian who filmed 4 dead and dying police sent to prison

By ROD McGUIRK Associated Press

CANBERRA, Australia (AP) — A speeding driver in Australia was sentenced to 10 months in prison on Wednesday for offenses including what a judge described as the "heartless, cruel and disgraceful" filming of four dead and dying police officers who had just been hit by a truck on a freeway.

Richard Pusey, a 42-year-old mortgage broker, had earlier pleaded guilty in the Victoria state County Court to a rarely-prosecuted charge of outraging public decency over his commentary in crash scene videos shot with his phone. It was the first time the charge had been prosecuted in the state since 1963.

The most serious charge he admitted was reckless conduct endangering persons, which carries a potential maximum of five years in prison.

Judge Trevor Wraight sentenced Pusey to 10 months in prison, backdated to when he was taken into custody 296 days ago.

Police had pulled Pusey over for driving his Porsche at 149 kilometers (93 miles) per hour on Melbourne's Eastern Freeway in April last year.

Police were considering impounding the sports car because Pusey had far exceeded the 100 kph (62

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 28, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 42 of 72

mph) speed limit when a truck crashed into the officers, Porche and two police cars in an emergency stopping lane.

Pusey, who avoided injury because he had been urinating behind roadside bushes at the time, did not help but instead filmed the scene.

His profanity-laden commentary while filming included "he's smashed," "justice," "absolutely amazing" and "beautiful."

"I think everyone got cleaned up," Pusey said. "I guess I'll be getting a ... Uber home, huh."

When one of five bystanders who came to the aid of the stricken officers asked Pusey to help, he replied: "They're dead," and continued filming.

Wright described Pusey's conduct as "callous and reprehensible."

"Your conduct ... was heartless, cruel and disgraceful," the judge said.

Wright told Pusey that ongoing media coverage of the case showed that the "public has demonized you."

The judge said while Pusey's personality disorder might go some way to explain his behavior, it was a serious case of conduct that outraged public decency.

Stuart Schulze, whose wife Lynette Taylor was one of the officers killed, described the sentence as "too lenient" and "totally inappropriate."

Wayne Gatt, secretary of the Victoria Police Association, the police union, described Pusey as a "worthless individual."

"Each and every one of us will face our mortality one day. When his day comes, I hope that he faces the same coldness and the same callousness with which he provided my members when they faced theirs," Gatt told reporters, referring to the police union members killed.

Pusey had also pleaded guilty to speeding offences and possessing the illicit drug ecstasy, which he tested positive to using along with cannabis in roadside saliva testing after he was pulled over. He was fined 1,000 Australian dollars (\$773) and was disqualified from driving for two years.

While his sentence is almost completed, he is likely to remain in custody for unrelated charges.

Two weeks ago, Mohinder Singh, the truck driver who killed the four officers, was sentenced to 22 years in prison.

He had been drug-effected and sleep-deprived when he struck the officers and pleaded guilty to four counts of culpable driving causing death, three charges of drug trafficking and one of possessing illicit drugs.

US Navy fires warning shots in new tense encounter with Iran

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — An American warship fired warning shots when vessels of Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard came too close to a patrol in the Persian Gulf, the U.S. Navy said Wednesday.

The Navy released black-and-white footage of the encounter Monday night in international waters of the northern reaches of the Persian Gulf. In it, lights can be seen in the distance and what appears to be a single gunshot can be heard, with a tracer round racing across the top of the water.

Iran did not immediately acknowledge the incident.

The Navy said the USS Firebolt fired the warning shots after three fast-attack Guard vessels came within 68 yards (62 meters) of it and the U.S. Coast Guard patrol boat USCGC Baranoff.

"The U.S. crews issued multiple warnings via bridge-to-bridge radio and loud-hailer devices, but the (Guard) vessels continued their close range maneuvers," said Cmdr. Rebecca Rebarich, a spokeswoman for the Mideast-based 5th Fleet. "The crew of Firebolt then fired warning shots, and the (Guard) vessels moved away to a safe distance from the U.S. vessels."

She called on the Guard to "operate with due regard for the safety of all vessels as required by international law."

"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," she said.

The incident Monday marked the second time the Navy accused the Guard of operating in an "unsafe

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 28, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 43 of 72

and unprofessional" manner this month alone after tense encounters between the forces had dropped in recent years.

Footage released Tuesday by the Navy showed a ship commanded by the 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, Rebarich said. Such close passes risk collisions.

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.

The incident comes as Iran negotiates with world powers in Vienna over Tehran and Washington returning to the 2015 nuclear deal. 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.

Biden to propose free preschool, as speech details emerge

By LISA MASCARO and JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden will call for free preschool for all three- and four-year-old children, a \$200 billion investment to be rolled out as part of his sweeping American Families Plan being unveiled Wednesday in an address to Congress.

The administration said the historic investment would benefit 5 million children and save the average family \$13,000. It calls for providing federal funds to help the states offer preschool, with teachers and other employees earning \$15 an hour.

"These investments will give American children a head start and pave the way for the best-educated generation in U.S. history," the administration said.

The new details are part of Biden's \$1 trillion-plus package, an ambitious next phase of his massive infrastructure investment program, this one focused on so-called human infrastructure — child care, health care, education and other core aspects of the household architecture that undergird everyday life for countless Americans.

Together with Biden's American Jobs Plan, a \$2.3 trillion infrastructure investment to be funded by a corporate tax hike, they add up a whopping \$4 trillion effort to fulfill his campaign vow to Build Back Better. The American Families Plan would be paid for by hiking taxes on the wealthiest 1% of Americans, in keeping with the president's vow not to raise taxes on those making less than \$400,000 a year.

Ahead of Wednesday's speech, lawmakers have been pushing to make sure key priorities are included.

A group of leading centrist and progressive Democrats met late Tuesday with the White House to discuss its priority of making permanent the Child Tax Credit, which was increased to as much as \$300 a month as part of a COVID-19 relief package. Right now, that benefit expires in 2022 and Biden has suggested extending it to 2025.

"We're hopeful," said Sen. Sherrod Brown, D-Ohio, the chairman of the Banking Committee and advocate for a permanent child tax credit. "We want it to be permanent because it's so important for so many people's lives."

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 28, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 44 of 72

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi appears to have secured one top priority for Democrats, lowering the cost of buying health insurance under the Affordable Care Act.

Biden's plan is expected to extend the enhanced health insurance subsidies that had been approved as part of COVID-19 relief, rather than allowing them to expire in 2022, according to a Democratic aide granted anonymity to discuss private conversations.

But another key priority of Pelosi and Democrats — lowering prescription drug costs — is not expected to be in the package, the aide said.

Also unlikely to make the final draft is a push from progressives led by Sen. Bernie Sanders of Vermont to reduce the Medicare eligibility age, which is now set at 65, and expand Medicare's benefits to include access to dental, vision and hearing aid care for seniors.

Sanders vowed Tuesday to add those provisions once Congress begins drafting the legislation.

"The bill that we're going to be writing will include negotiations with pharmaceutical industry to lower drug prices raising substantial sums of money, and using that to expand Medicare," Sanders said at the Capitol.

The president's speech and the rollout of the American Families Plan come as Biden is marking his first 100 days in the White House, a rare moment for congressional action. Democrats narrowly control the House and Senate, giving the president's party the full sweep of power for the first time in a decade.

While Biden is determined to reach out for bipartisanship, Republicans in Congress have largely panned his proposals as big government spending and vowed to oppose them.

Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell called Biden's administration the "bait and switch" presidency for talking up bipartisanship but then leaving Republicans behind to negotiate legislation only with Democrats.

"President Biden ran as a moderate but I'm hard pressed to think of anything at all that he's done so far that would indicate some degree of moderation," McConnell said Tuesday.

But Biden's Democratic allies in Congress are just as determined to ensure to seize this rare alignment of political power to deliver on long-sought priorities.

"What I'd like to hear him talk about is the importance of investing in the American people and in our infrastructure," said Sen. Michael Bennet, D-Colo. "It's been decades since we've done that as a country."

Republicans complain that the White House is stretching the traditional definition of infrastructure beyond roads and bridges to include electric vehicle charging stations, veterans hospitals, child care centers and other developments.

But Democrats counter that times have changed. "Childcare is infrastructure," Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., said at a press conference. "Infrastructure is all about people being able to get to work — roads, bridges, communications — and childcare is part of that."

The White House has portrayed its plan as a Robin Hood-style effort to tax the rich in order to spend on benefits for the middle class and poor.

It's an argument that the hundreds of billions of dollars controlled by the wealthiest sliver of the country would lead to better results for the country if they were distributed instead to families.

In addition to free preschool, the American Families Plan would extend an expanded child tax credit through 2025, giving parents monthly payments of at least \$250 per child.

The plan would also provide free community college and paid family leave, among other benefits.

Funding the initiative would be a tax increase on the extremely rich, most notably a near doubling of the capital gains tax rate on incomes above \$1 million to 39.6%.

Similarly, the top income tax bracket for those households earning beyond \$400,000 is expected to revert to 39.6%, according to a Democratic aide granted anonymity to discuss the planning. That had been the top rate before the 2017 GOP tax overhaul approved by Donald Trump.

Brian Deese, director of the White House National Economic Council, said revenue from the capital gains tax "would help invest directly in our kids and our families and our future economic competitiveness."

Republican leaders have said they are unwilling to undo the 2017 tax law, their signature achievement of the Trump presidency, to pay for what they view as big spending by Democrats.

No Republicans voted for Biden's coronavirus rescue plan, which was signed into law last month. Last week, Republican senators proposed an alternative infrastructure plan focused on more traditional highway and bridge investments that would be one-fourth the cost, paid for by tolls and other user fees.

Judge has doubts on voter privacy in Arizona recount

By BOB CHRISTIE Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — A judge hearing a challenge to voter privacy policies during the Republican-controlled Arizona Senate's recount of 2.1 million 2020 election ballots in the county that includes metro Phoenix said Tuesday he is not convinced voter secrecy is being upheld.

The comment from Maricopa County Superior Court Judge Daniel Martin came at the end of a lengthy hearing where he also declined to extend a previous judge's order that auditors hired by the Senate comply with state voter privacy laws -- at least until he hears more at a hearing on Wednesday.

"I will share with you all, I am not yet persuaded that there has been a showing that the rights of the voters in Maricopa County are being protected," Martin said. "And I think we will touch on this tomorrow when we address the policies and procedures and whether or not they can be withheld from public view."

The Arizona Democratic Party and the lone Democrat on the GOP-controlled Maricopa County Board of Supervisors sued the state Senate and the contractor overseeing the election audit, Cyber Ninjas, Thursday. They want the recount of the 2020 presidential election won by President Joe Biden halted unless they get guarantees that voter privacy and ballot secrecy is ensured.

A judge who has since stepped aside from the contentious case on Friday ordered the recount halted if Democrats posted a \$1 million bond, which the party declined to do. He also ordered the Senate and private election auditors to follow state law on voter and ballot secrecy and for Cyber Ninjas to produce its recount policies and procedures in court.

Cyber Ninjas is a Florida firm with no election experience run by Doug Logan, who has shared unfounded conspiracy theories claiming the official 2020 presidential election results are illegitimate. His attorney is seeking to have its policies and procedures for protecting voter privacy kept secret, arguing that they are trade secrets.

Martin plans to take testimony on the company's request to keep the material secret at a hearing Wednesday. He also said he plans to consider whether to again order the recount halted or renew the previous judge's orders on ballot secrecy rules.

He started Tuesday's hearing by rejecting the Senate lawyers' arguments that they are not required to follow state elections law outlining how voters' constitutional rights are protected.

"The Arizona Senate has the constitutional authority to conduct the audit as part of its legislative function," Martin said. "However, the manner in which that audit is conducted must be balanced against the constitutional rights of the voters in Maricopa County, including the rights to secrecy and confidentiality of information."

The recount is continuing at Veterans Memorial Coliseum at the state fairgrounds. Dozens of workers on Friday began a hand count of all the Maricopa County ballots, with little transparency and the press barred from the site, unless they signed up as official observers and agreed to sit for six-hour shifts.

Roopali Desai, the Democrats' attorney, told Martin that the audit has been beset by issues from the start, and the refusal to release information on who is doing the counting and how ballot secrecy is being protected are troubling.

"They say they have an earnest desire to comply with the law. Well, what steps are they taking to make sure their desire is a reality?" Desai told the judge. "They say there are many procedures in place to protect the integrity of ballots and the machines. Where are those procedures? Why have the people of Maricopa County not seen them?"

Republican Senate President Karen Fann's attorney, Kory Langhofer, said the auditors will absolutely follow the law, but he noted that the previous judge's order lacked clarity and that many laws do not apply to an audit that is not an official recount that can change the election outcome.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 28, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 46 of 72

He also said the ballots are anonymous and no voter could be identified.

"Which voter is having their right to vote thrown away?" Langhofer said. "Joe Biden is going to be the president at the end of this audit. Mark Kelly is going to be a senator at the end of this audit. This isn't changing the effect of anyone's vote."

The Senate audit can't overturn the results of the election, but Republicans who control the state Senate say it is needed to restore voter confidence and help them craft changes to state election laws. Senate Democrats call the audit an effort to perpetuate "The Big Lie," which is what they call former President Donald Trump's insistence that he only lost the election because of election fraud.

The Republican-dominated Maricopa County Board of Supervisors stands by the election results, which showed Biden won the county by just over 45,100 votes and Trump lost the state by nearly 10,500 votes. Numerous audits and a hand recount of a sample of ballots were done.

Fann, the Senate president, blamed the media for the need for increased security after a television reporter entered the facility and walked right up to the ballots without being challenged last week. She also said in an interview Tuesday on KTAR radio that the media is getting regular briefings and is allowed some access.

That's not accurate. Former Arizona Secretary of State Ken Bennett, who is serving as the Senate's liaison to the private auditors and charged with talking to the media, had not briefed the media since Thursday before holding a media briefing on Tuesday evening. And media access to the counting site was only allowed with major restrictions on Friday, but Bennett agreed to allow media to return Monday. He said reporters will now be allowed in for each counting shift.

Bennett vowed Tuesday to ensure that the recount would be done fairly, even while dodging questions about the contractor's lack of openness about its procedures.

"We are going to be able to tell every Arizonan in a few weeks that they can have complete integrity and trust in their elections, or we have some parts of the election that need to be improved," Bennett said.

Bennett only had an estimate of how many of the 2.1 million ballots have been hand counted since the recount began on Friday, putting the number at less than 100,000. The Senate has the facility until May 14.

"We're on track to get the job done in the time we have," Bennett said.

Houston-area sheriff is named to lead immigration agency

By JUAN A. LOZANO and ELLIOT SPAGAT Associated Press

HOUSTON (AP) — President Joe Biden on Tuesday nominated the sheriff of one of the nation's most populous counties to lead the agency that deports people in the country illegally, picking a seasoned law enforcement official who sharply criticized Donald Trump's hardline immigration policies.

Harris County Sheriff Ed Gonzalez, whose jurisdiction includes the Houston metropolitan area, was nominated director of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, an agency that has been without a Senate-confirmed leader since 2017.

After his election in 2016, Gonzalez fulfilled a campaign promise to withdraw Harris County from a federal partnership that authorizes sheriff's deputies to enforce immigration laws, ending an agreement that had been in place since 2008. Such agreements grew from 35 to 150 during Trump's presidency, with many of those additions in Texas and Florida.

At the time of the withdrawal, Gonzalez said his decision was financially motivated. Deputies trained under the program needed to be reassigned to other law enforcement duties.

Gonzalez, who rose to sergeant during an 18-year run at the Houston Police Department, pointedly criticized Trump's policies when the then-president vowed to deport millions of people.

"I do not support ICE raids that threaten to deport millions of undocumented immigrants, the vast majority of whom do not represent a threat to the U.S.," he wrote on Facebook in July 2019. "The focus should always be on clear & immediate safety threats. Not others who are not threats."

Gonzalez expressed concern then about driving "undocumented families further into the shadows," discouraging them from reporting crimes to authorities.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 28, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 47 of 72

The nomination was announced shortly after ICE said it was limiting arrests at courthouses, replacing a Trump policy that gave immigration authorities wider latitude.

The Biden administration is expected to soon announce priorities and guidelines on who to deport. They are certain to be narrower than those of Trump, who said anyone in the country illegally was subject to removal, and perhaps those of Barack Obama, who angered allies with record-high deportations before easing up considerably in his second term.

Deportations have already fallen sharply under Biden's watch. There were 2,214 immigration arrests in March, down 67% from 6,679 in December, Trump's last full month in office.

If confirmed, Gonzalez will oversee an agency with more than 20,000 employees and an annual budget of \$8 billion. It manages the world's largest network of immigration jails and includes Homeland Security Investigations, which looks at a wide range of international crimes including money laundering, antiquity theft, child pornography and human smuggling.

Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas called on the Senate to quickly confirm Gonzalez.

"With a distinguished career in law enforcement and public service, Sheriff Gonzalez is well-suited to lead ICE as the agency advances our public safety and homeland security mission," Mayorkas said.

In accordance with Texas law, Gonzalez honored ICE requests to hold suspects up to 48 hours. The Harris County Jail honored more requests than any other facility in the country during the 12-month period that ended in September 2019, according to Syracuse University's Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse.

Biden recently announced two other nominations for key immigration-related positions in the Homeland Security Department: Chris Magnus, police chief of Tucson, Arizona, to lead U.S. Customs and Border Protection; and Ur Jaddou, an immigration lawyer who served in the Obama administration, for U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

Reaction to Gonzalez's nomination was predictably more favorable among immigration advocates than opponents. Ali Noorani, president of the National Immigration Forum, said Gonzalez was "an excellent choice that would bring much-needed permanent leadership — and a risk-based, more humane, measured approach — to our nation's immigration enforcement."

Dan Stein, president of the Federation for American Immigration Reform, a group that advocates for stiff restrictions, called Gonzalez "a staunch opponent of our interior immigration enforcement" and said his nomination was part of Biden's "unrelenting assault on the integrity of our immigration enforcement system."

'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.

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.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 28, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 48 of 72

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.

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

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 28, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 49 of 72

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.

Q&A: Michael B. Jordan on protest, power & 'Without Remorse'

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Michael B. Jordan's power on screen has taken many forms. His heavyweight force in "Creed." His capacity to inspire change as Bryan Stevenson in "Just Mercy." His raw fury in "Black Panther."

But Jordan's potency reaches new, muscular heights in "Without Remorse" a Tom Clancy adaptation that recasts Jordan as a globe-trotting action star. The film (which debuts Friday on Amazon Prime Video) is an updated origin story of Navy SEAL John Clark, Clancy's best-known character outside of Jack Ryan. Jordan is hoping it spawns a franchise.

The project has been around Hollywood for decades; Keanu Reeves and Tom Hardy are among those who have previously flirted with it. But Jordan saw the possibility to not only do a big-budget action thriller and perform a lot of his own stunts, but to retailor the film to today. He's a producer on the film via his company, Outlier Society Productions, a leading force in making Hollywood more inclusive.

Jordan spent much of the past year quarantined with his family and friends, a time he says has that has been reflective.

"The last few years I've been blessed to have a kind of non-stop career," says Jordan, speaking by phone from Los Angeles. "I kind of had a moment to look at myself and family, spend time with my nephew — things that I probably wouldn't have had as much time to do if I was running from one production to another."

But after the pandemic put a slight pause on one of the movies' biggest stars, Jordan is eager to embark on a new chapter. He recently filmed Denzel Washington's "A Journal for Jordan." He's prepping his directorial debut with "Creed III."

The 34-year-old spoke with The Associated Press the day after the verdict in the Derek Chauvin trial. Remarks have been edited for brevity and clarity.

AP: Last summer at protests following the death of George Floyd, you challenged Hollywood to commit to Black hiring. Have you seen any progress?

Jordan: From the projects that I've been involved with, I've seen a response to that. I'm not in the weeds with every production across Hollywood but I think there was a significant or meaningful response

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 28, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 50 of 72

from the industry on certain levels to be held accountable. But there's a lot of work to be done. We're not content with things we have or things that we see at the moment.

AP: Has anything about the past year changed your priorities?

Jordan: I went through a rollercoaster of emotions. The pandemic, the protests, this steady increase of police brutality and murders — it's been tough, man. You have a moment where things went our way yesterday and then hours later, you have another one. This past year has seen so much of that. Recharging my batteries was something that I didn't know I needed as much as I did. After taking that break, I feel more energized and prepared for the work to come — and that's in all areas. When it comes to being present for my community, my culture, for my business; in front of the camera, behind the camera; in the streets, in my home. It's given me an opportunity to be a better version of myself moving forward. I'm motivated. I'm recharged. I'm ready for all tasks at hand.

AP: In "Fruitvale Station," playing Oscar Grant, you acted out a version of a scene that keeps replaying.

Jordan: When you're Black and brown, it's something that can become a reality any day. Yeah, I had an opportunity to shine a light on a story, on a young man who had his life taken away from him by the hands of law enforcement. When we shot that movie, I guess it wasn't being seen as much as it is right now. The volume of what's been reported has increased, it's more a part of the popular conversation. But it's a lot. I think solidarity amongst our community and culture is at the highest point that I've experienced. It's driving us closer together. And people unified is a powerful thing.

AP: Do you ever find it difficult to balance any responsibility you feel and your own interests? Do you sometimes just want to make a movie without worrying about larger issues?

Jordan: I just made one! "Without Remorse" and "Journal for Jordan." I like all types of movies. From action thrillers to movies with a purpose. I got "Creed" coming up. I've been blessed to have a healthy balance. It allows me to have that comfortable balance between entertainment and activism. That's life, right? Trying to find a balance. You have moments in your life where you've got to do things for yourself, you've got to do things that feed your soul. And you've got to do things that feed your community, so you know the person looking at you in the morning in the mirror. If you can find a way to balance all those things and be successful and leave an impact — and leave the world a better place. I think making people think is the power of cinema.

AP: "Without Remorse" had been in development hell for years. What drew you to it?

Jordan: I'm a gamer. I love playing videogames. I grew up playing (Tom Clancy adaptations) "Rainbow Six" and "Ghost Recon" before I even got introduced to the films. Man, I got an opportunity to play a character I used to envision myself playing, that I spent hours upon hours (laughs) in my room playing. Being able to step into the Tom Clancy universe and do an action movie where I do my own stunts. I was a kid in the candy store.

AP: You've talked about injecting yourself into a role like a Trojan horse. Was there anything especially that you wanted to bring to "Without Remorse"?

Jordan: It was a great collaboration between the studio, the producers, the director to create an origin story. It was cool to see a character that just is. There's no extra "This character is Black because of this and that." It's a movie about a guy, know what I mean?

AP: Like another upcoming film of yours, a new "Thomas Crown Affair," your character wasn't originally written as Black and had previously been played by white actors (Willem Dafoe and Liev Schreiber). Do you give any significance to that?

Jordan: There's a business behind this, as well. A lot of people don't understand the nuances of how movies get made — what (intellectual property) is at what studio, what IP is available, the value of a reboot versus doing something without that title. There's a lot of different factors to consider when you remake a movie or you do a movie. People would be surprised that race is very low on the totem pole when it comes to making some of those decisions. A lot of people speculate on these movie choices but what I pay attention to is: I really like the movie. The character's interesting. It's entertaining and I'm going to have fun making it. And representation is important. Somebody like myself playing a character like that in a world like that is also very progressive and entertaining. It's a nuanced decision to develop movies like

that. Sometimes it's not that simple. Other times, it's not that complicated, either.

Fear, lack of funding hurt census in Sun Belt, advocates say

By ACACIA CORONADO, NICHOLAS RICCARDI and MIKE SCHNEIDER Associated Press
AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — According to the new census, the booming Sun Belt isn't booming quite like the experts thought.

Population counts released Monday came as a shock to many demographers and politicians who expected to see growth that could add numerous congressional seats to a region that's apparently been gaining people rapidly all decade. Instead, the census found more modest growth that added only three seats total in Florida and Texas. Arizona, the second-fastest growing state in 2010, didn't add a seat at all.

The questions that advocacy groups and officials are now asking are whether all the new subdivisions and shopping centers are a mirage; whether those states erred in not investing more in encouraging residents to fill out census forms — and whether Latinos in particular were reluctant to trust the Trump administration with their information.

Many demographers caution it's too early to conclude that the nation's once-a-decade count missed any specific population groups. That won't be known until more local data is released later this year and the Census Bureau has completed an independent survey measuring the accuracy of the 2020 head count.

But one thing is indisputable — when compared to the most recent population estimates, the three Sun Belt states underperformed during the count used for determining how many congressional seats and Electoral College votes each state gets. Texas got two extra seats instead of three; Florida added only a single new seat instead of two, and Arizona failed to gain the seat it was expecting to add.

All three states are led by Republican governors who devoted less resources than other states to encouraging participation in the 2020 census. And in all three states, Hispanics have accounted for about half of the population growth over the decade, according to American Community Survey data.

In Arizona, activists blamed Gov. Doug Ducey for supporting the Trump administration's failed effort to add a citizenship question to the 2020 census questionnaire. Those efforts intimidated Latinos and kept them from fully participating in the census, they said.

"What we saw from the government, Ducey and the Trump administration, was intimidation from Day 1 on the census," said Eduardo Sainz, national field director for Mi Familia Vota, a political advocacy group. "Because of this narrative of fear, and this narrative of not funding, we lost that seat."

The Ducey administration released a statement from the state demographer saying that more data is needed to determine why the count fell short of estimates of Arizona's growth.

During outreach efforts to get people to fill out their census forms, Hispanic residents would ask Adonias Arevalo about Trump's push on citizenship. Arevalo, state director for Poder Latinx in Phoenix, said, "Despite the fact that we said a citizenship question will not be present, folks didn't trust the Trump administration."

He said Arizona's undercount is partly the legacy of Republican leaders, including former Sheriff Joe Arpaio, and anti-immigration laws.

"For years, people have distrusted the system," Arevalo said. "People fear to participate in these processes due to years of criminalization."

Arizona, Florida and Texas were laggards compared to other states in efforts to form statewide committees aimed at driving census participation. Arizona only named members to its committee in August 2019, and Florida set one up in January 2020, just weeks before the national head count began in a rural Alaska village. Texas never even set up a statewide committee, which some census activists attributed to Texas lawmakers not wanting to take a stand on the citizenship question by promoting the census.

Democrats slammed the GOP for those moves.

"From the very beginning, we knew our state was particularly at risk of undercounting our neighbors," State Rep. Chris Turner, the Texas House's Democratic Caucus Chair, said in a statement. "A concerted, organized outreach effort is essential to ensuring maximum participation in the census and getting the most accurate count," he added in an interview.

But state demographer Lloyd Potter in an interview contended there's little evidence that massive state

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 28, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 52 of 72

spending increases census accuracy. Instead, he said, Texas has a lot of the types of people who routinely get undercounted — rural citizens and African-Americans and Latinos.

“Those are factors for all states and may have been more of a factor for Texas,” Potter said. “We have a lot of rural areas in Texas, we have a very significant and growing Latino population.”

Texas Republicans released a statement after the census count that said: “Representation in Texas must be based upon citizenship, and strategically we can ascertain why the left wants to flood Texas with thousands of illegals.”

In Florida, a spokeswoman for Gov. Ron DeSantis didn’t respond to an email inquiry.

Paul Mitchell, a redistricting expert in California, a state that spent \$187 million on census outreach, said there was a clear pattern in the numbers. States that funded major census-participation campaigns did well, while Republican-led ones, who viewed efforts like that as criticisms of then-President Donald Trump, did not, he said.

“Texas, Florida, Arizona, they didn’t do big outreach efforts to improve the count,” Mitchell said. “In Texas, particularly, it was anathema to say anything in the Legislature that could be seen as critical of Trump.”

Mitchell said the dynamic with Latinos seems clear given the populations of the underperforming states. He noted that some states that did comparatively better, like his own California, promised to protect their immigrants while low-spending GOP ones did not.

“It does just kind of stare you in the face,” Mitchell said of the pattern.

The actual population count from the 2020 census for Arizona was 3.3% short of what previous population estimates had shown. Florida and Texas were short by 0.7% and 0.5%, respectively.

On the flipside, the population counts in two states that had been expected to lose seats, Alabama and Rhode Island, exceeded their estimates by 2% or more.

During this census cycle, Rhode Island for the first time devoted \$1.5 million in public and private money on census outreach efforts. That, along with the fact that Rhode Island hosted the only test run of the census in 2018, helped keep the head count in the public eye, said John Marion, executive director of Common Cause Rhode Island.

“There was this constant drumbeat that we could lose our second seat,” Marion said.

If New York had counted 89 more residents, and all other states stayed the same, the state would have kept its seat. New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo on Tuesday said the state was exploring its legal options.

“Because when you’re talking about 89, that could be a minor mistake in counting,” Cuomo said.

The narrow margins by which New York narrowly lost a seat, Alabama and Rhode Island hung onto theirs and the three Sun Belt states underperformed have aroused suspicions that something “doesn’t seem quite right,” said Arturo Vargas, CEO of NALEO Educational Fund, a Hispanic advocacy group.

“I smell smoke,” Vargas said. “We will have to wait a few months to see what kind of fire there is.”

CDC says many Americans can now go outside without a mask

By MIKE STOBBE AP Medical Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention eased its guidelines Tuesday on the wearing of masks outdoors, saying fully vaccinated Americans don’t need to cover their faces anymore unless they are in a big crowd of strangers.

And those who are unvaccinated can go outside without masks in some situations, too.

The new guidance represents another carefully calibrated step on the road back to normal from the coronavirus outbreak that has killed over 570,000 people in U.S.

For most of the past year, the CDC had been advising Americans to wear masks outdoors if they are within 6 feet of one another.

“Today, I hope, is a day when we can take another step back to the normalcy of before,” CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky said. “Over the past year, we have spent a lot of time telling Americans what you can’t do. Today, I am going to tell you some of the things you can do, if you are fully vaccinated.”

The change comes as more than half of U.S. adults — or about 140 million people — have received at

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 28, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 53 of 72

least one dose of vaccine, and more than a third have been fully vaccinated.

Walensky said the decision was driven by rising vaccination numbers; declines in COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations and deaths; and research showing that less than 10% of documented instances of transmission of the virus happened outdoors.

Dr. Mike Saag, an infectious disease expert at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, welcomed the change.

"It's the return of freedom," Saag said. "It's the return of us being able to do normal activities again. We're not there yet, but we're on the exit ramp. And that's a beautiful thing."

Some experts portrayed the relaxed guidance as a reward and a motivator for more people to get vaccinated — a message President Joe Biden sounded, too.

"The bottom line is clear: If you're vaccinated, you can do more things, more safely, both outdoors as well as indoors," Biden said. "So for those who haven't gotten their vaccinations yet, especially if you're younger or thinking you don't need it, this is another great reason to go get vaccinated now."

The CDC, which has been cautious in its guidance during the crisis, essentially endorsed what many Americans have already been doing over the past several weeks.

The CDC says that whether they are fully vaccinated or not, people do not have to wear masks outdoors when they walk, bike or run alone or with members of their household. They can also go maskless in small outdoor gatherings with fully vaccinated people.

But unvaccinated people — defined as those who have yet to receive both doses of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine or the one-shot Johnson & Johnson formula — should wear masks at small outdoor gatherings that include other unvaccinated people, the CDC says. They also should keep their faces covered when dining at outdoor restaurants with friends from multiple households.

And everyone, fully vaccinated or not, should keep wearing masks at crowded outdoor events such as concerts or sporting events, the CDC says.

The agency continues to recommend masks at indoor public places, such as hair salons, restaurants, shopping centers, gyms, museums and movie theaters, saying that is still the safer course even for vaccinated people.

"Right now it's very hard to tease apart who is vaccinated," Walensky explained.

She said the CDC guidance should be a model for states in setting their mask-wearing requirements.

The advice to the unvaccinated applies to adults and children alike, according to the CDC. None of the COVID-19 vaccines in use in the U.S. is authorized for children under 16.

"The biggest thing that it helps us is our mental health," said Tim Stephens, a 52-year-old software salesman in Birmingham, Alabama, who suffered a bout of COVID-19 and has since gotten vaccinated.

"To be able to feel like we're turning the corner and can confidently go out and experience life and do a lot of the things that we did before COVID became an acronym in our world. It's one more step in the process of moving beyond this."

In Oxford, Nebraska, population 800, hardly anyone wears a mask, and the school district dropped its mask mandate last month. Superintendent Bryce Jorgensen said maybe 10 of the 370 students are still covering their faces.

"What goes on in other states is what goes on in other states," Jorgensen said. "You just can't compare Chicago to Oxford, Nebraska. Things are just different."

Dr. Babak Javid, a physician-scientist at the University of California, San Francisco, said the new CDC guidance is sensible.

"In the vast majority of outdoor scenarios, transmission risk is low," Javid said.

Javid has favored outdoor mask-wearing requirements because he believes they increase indoor mask-wearing, but he said Americans can understand the relative risks and make good decisions.

He added: "I'm looking forward to mask-free existence."

"The timing is right because we now have a fair amount of data about the scenarios where transmission occurs," said Mercedes Carnethon, a professor and vice chair of preventive medicine at Northwestern

University's Feinberg School of Medicine in Chicago.

What's more, she said, "the additional freedoms may serve as a motivator" for people to get vaccinated.

Where's Caitlyn? So far, Jenner's campaign is virtual

By MICHAEL R. BLOOD Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — In her five days as a Republican candidate for California governor, Caitlyn Jenner had a Twitter spat with a Democratic congressman, unveiled a website to sell T-shirts and other campaign swag and posted a photograph of herself with a startup business owner.

But she hasn't spoken a word in public.

Jenner's written statement last week that she would enter a likely recall election that could oust Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom generated international publicity. But so far the political newcomer's campaign exists in the virtual realm, a string of tweets and vaguely worded posts with no specifics about what she might do if elected.

Jenner, a 71-year-old transgender and former Olympic decathlon gold medalist, has tweeted: "Formal announcement to come soon." Each day inevitably builds more expectation about her initial appearance, which would give many voters a first glimpse at the reality TV personality through a political lens.

There is a risk if the silence continues too long.

"That will become the first impression, that she doesn't have anything to say," said Rob Stutzman, a veteran Republican consultant who advised Arnold Schwarzenegger in the 2003 California recall election in which the former bodybuilder claimed the governorship.

"People will move on and become dismissive," Stutzman warned, noting Jenner must overcome natural skepticism that comes with her first-time candidacy.

"That first impression as a candidate is important, even if they are famous," he added. "So far, I don't think she's made any impression."

Still, she has Newsom's attention. His campaign sent out fundraising appeals hooked to Jenner's candidacy. "We're going to need help keeping up with Caitlyn's personal wealth and ability to raise money from right-wing donors," one said.

Jenner announced Friday that she would enter the race, posting a statement online saying she was joining the growing list of candidates seeking to oust Newsom before the end of his first term.

Jenner has sketched only a vague outline of what her agenda might look like: Cutting taxes. Repairing the economy. Providing a counterweight to California's Democratic-dominated politics.

The risks for a candidate emerging on the political stage can be seen in the 2008 presidential campaign, when Republican vice-presidential nominee Sarah Palin, who was then largely unknown, stumbled in interviews with then-CBS Evening News anchor Katie Couric. Her appearance went on to be widely parodied on late-night TV.

So far, Jenner's words have been few, though they can reach a large audience. She has nearly 11 million Instagram followers and 3.5 million followers on Twitter.

In a tweet exchange last weekend, California Democratic U.S. Rep. Ted Lieu schooled Jenner in how district attorneys are elected, after she suggested in a tweet that they were appointed by Newsom. He also asked if she understood basic functions of government and sent her a link to a "Schoolhouse Rock" cartoon video on how bills become laws.

Jenner pushed back, calling his remarks "condescending." She said she knew district attorneys are elected, but "the buck stops with Newsom."

A candidate can use social media to start a campaign, "but you can't win it that way," Claremont McKenna College political scientist Jack Pitney said.

To reach an electorate as large as California, she will need to do more traditional campaigning, including getting on TV.

"Other candidates are going to scoop up support. If she waits too long, there might not be many votes left on the table," Pitney added. "She's got to prove she ought to be taken seriously."

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 28, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 55 of 72

For now, Jenner's website is mostly a vehicle for soliciting donations and selling coffee mugs, wine glasses and other commemorative items for her campaign. There are no detailed policy positions.

She tweeted Monday that the recall election had been certified, which is not technically true. A preliminary count of petition signatures showed it had enough support to qualify for the ballot, but it will not be certified by the Secretary of State until later.

Among other statements, she wrote on Twitter that "Banning fracking only increases our dependence on foreign oil," criticized Newsom for sending out fundraising appeals after her announcement and described herself as fiscally conservative and socially liberal. On Instagram, she can be seen holding up a campaign coffee mug, which sells for \$25.

Other Republicans running to replace Newsom include former San Diego Mayor Kevin Faulconer, businessman John Cox, who lost to Newsom in a 2018 landslide, and former Congressman Doug Ose. Dozens of other candidates, serious and not, are expected to enter the race.

When Schwarzenegger ran, he surrounded himself with an impressive brain trust, including former Secretary of State George Schultz and billionaire Warren Buffett, to confer seriousness about his campaign. The team advising Jenner has included ex-President Donald Trump's former campaign manager, Brad Parscale and GOP fundraiser Caroline Wren, who also worked for Trump's campaign.

Schwarzenegger appeared Monday on ABC's "Jimmy Kimmel Live!" He said he is good friends with Jenner and indicated he had advised her about running — "just about everyone that's thinking about running has called me," though he declined to discuss any specifics about Jenner.

He said anyone could win in a recall, given the unhappy mood among the public. But Schwarzenegger is not picking a favorite in the race and said he also is good friends with Newsom.

The California secretary of state's office said that more than 1.6 million recall signatures had been deemed valid, about 100,000 more than required to put the question to voters. People who signed petitions now have 30 days to withdraw their signatures, though it's unlikely enough will do so to stop the election.

In a recall election, voters would be asked two questions: First, should Newsom be recalled? The second question would include a list of replacement candidates to choose from, but the results only would matter if a majority of voters cast ballots to remove Newsom.

Juvenile lifer who set precedent sentenced to life again

By KIM CHANDLER Associated Press

MOULTON, Ala. (AP) — Evan Miller was just 14 when he committed the slaying that sent him to prison.

In reviewing his case, the U.S. Supreme Court banned mandatory life without parole sentences for juveniles — saying judges and juries should consider the special factors of youth — a decision that eventually led to inmates across the country getting a chance at release.

But Miller will not get that chance. A judge on Tuesday handed down a second life sentence without possibility of parole.

Lawrence Circuit Judge Mark Craig ruled that Evan Miller, despite being a young teen when he committed his crime, met the legal criteria to be sentenced to life in prison without the chance of parole. Craig said the severity of Miller's crime outweighed the mitigating factors of Miller's age and his abuse-filled childhood that the defense argued made him deserving of an opportunity of a chance to get out of prison some day.

Craig said a sentence of life without the possibility of parole was the "only just sentence" over the lesser punishment of life with a chance of parole after 30 years.

Miller was 14 in 2003 when he and another teen beat Cole Cannon with a baseball bat before setting fire to his trailer, a crime for which he was originally sentenced to a mandatory life sentence.

Before handing down the sentence, Craig repeated the line that Miller was attributed with saying before he delivered a final blow to Cannon: "I am God. I've come to take your life." Craig said those were some of "the most chilling words I have heard."

Craig said he was not convinced Miller could be rehabilitated and noted that Miller was the primary aggressor in the slaying.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 28, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 56 of 72

"Had you not made the decisions that night, Mr. Cannon, in my view, would still be alive," Craig said. "You showed cunning, not clumsy, rash thinking."

Miller, now 32, appeared during the hearing, which was conducted virtually, by video link from an office at the Alabama prison where he is incarcerated. He did not visibly react as the sentence was read.

The Supreme Court in 2012 ruled in Miller's case that mandatory life without parole for those under the age of 18 at the time of their crimes violates the Eighth Amendment's prohibition on cruel and unusual punishment. In the 2012 opinion in Miller's case, justices ordered that judges and juries should consider "children's diminished culpability, and heightened capacity for change" should make such sentences "uncommon."

"Miller's stepfather physically abused him; his alcoholic and drug-addicted mother neglected him; he had been in and out of foster care as a result; and he had tried to kill himself four times, the first when he should have been in kindergarten," the court wrote in the majority opinion.

While other juvenile lifers across the country have seen their sentences reduced because of Miller's case and a later ruling that made the decision retroactive, his own case had lingered without a decision until Tuesday.

At an earlier resentencing hearing, Miller's lawyers cited his childhood of physical abuse and neglect and argued that at 14, his brain was not fully developed.

The Equal Justice Initiative, which has represented Miller, did not immediately comment on the decision.

Alabama Attorney General Steve Marshall said the judge, "restored the punishment that is fitting for Evan Miller's wicked actions."

"When Evan Miller robbed and savagely beat his neighbor, setting fire to the man's trailer and leaving his incapacitated victim to die a horrible death, he earned a well-deserved sentence of life in prison without parole," Marshall said in a statement.

Cannon's daughter, Candy Cheatham, had previously called Miller's apology for the slaying "empty words."

The Supreme Court had been moving toward greater mercy for juveniles over more than a decade, first ending the death penalty for people under 18 and then reducing the universe of people who could get life without parole sentences for crimes they committed as juveniles. But in a departure from that trend, the court last week held that judges do not have to determine that a juvenile offender is beyond hope of rehabilitation before ruling that he should spend the rest of his life in prison.

With pools closed, Peruvians turn to open-water swimming

By FRANKLIN BRICEÑO Associated Press

LIMA, Peru (AP) — The swimmers began gathering even before dawn glimmers on Pescadores beach, plunging into the Pacific surf for one of the few athletic endeavors permitted under Peru's strict pandemic restrictions.

Swimming pools have been closed for more than a year, but government has since Oct. 30 allowed open-water swimming, even if relaxing on the beach is banned to prevent mass gatherings.

Forty-three-year-old Lorena Choy said swimming "relaxes me, unstresses me. ... It helps a lot psychologically."

Swimming coach Víctor Solís, 47, said he estimated that the number of swimmers out each morning has multiplied fivefold recently.

Peru is one of the countries hardest hit, per capita, by COVID-19. Hospitals remain overwhelmed and oxygen remains in short supply.

"We don't stop hearing bad news all day long, and that's a little bit of the reason why we need to escape," said José Echeandía, a 54-year-old lawyer, after swimming more than an hour in the chilly waters.

Robert Yatto, 56, has been swimming at the beach for more than three decades, and lately uses a Captain America wetsuit.

Before the pandemic, the beach alongside the capital was a favorite for the working classes, but the swimmers tend to be wealthier people with access to cars or those living nearby.

Peru, with nearly 32 million people, has reported more than 1.7 million cases of the new coronavirus and more than 60,000 deaths.

US orders big drawdown at Kabul embassy as troops leave

By MATTHEW LEE AP Diplomatic Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The State Department on Tuesday ordered a significant number of its remaining staff at the U.S. Embassy in Kabul to leave Afghanistan as the military steps up the pullout of American troops from the country.

The order came as the U.S. special envoy for Afghanistan told lawmakers that it no longer made sense to continue the 20-year deployment of American troops there. At the same time, Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad said he shared lawmakers' concerns that the rights of women and minorities could be jeopardized after the withdrawal is complete.

"We should all remain concerned that those rights could suffer," Khalilzad told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Asked if the U.S. would retain any leverage to protect those rights once its troops are gone, Khalilzad was circumspect. He said aid and other types of diplomatic support "would be not available if they did not respect the human rights of Afghan women or others."

Shortly before he spoke, the State Department said it had instructed all personnel to depart unless their jobs require them to be physically located in Afghanistan. The order was not specific as to the number of people affected, but it went well beyond the usual curtailment of staffers for security and safety reasons. Such orders normally apply only to non-essential personnel.

In an updated travel advisory for Afghanistan, the department said it had ordered the departure of all U.S. government employees "whose functions can be performed elsewhere." It also said American citizens should not travel to Afghanistan and those there who want to depart "should leave as soon as possible on available commercial flights."

The embassy in Kabul is heavily dependent on the U.S. military for security, and staff drawdowns had been underway since the Trump administration had announced last year that American troops would be withdrawn from Afghanistan by May 1.

The Biden administration extended that deadline until Sept. 11, the 20th anniversary of the 2001 terrorist attacks, but has accelerated the pullout.

The top U.S. diplomat in Kabul said the departure order was issued "due to increasing violence and threat reports," would affect only a relatively small number of employees, and there would be no reduction in services offered. Charge d'affaires Ross Wilson said it "ensures that American diplomacy and support for Afghanistan will be sustainable, robust, and effective."

Gen. Kenneth McKenzie, head of the U.S. Central Command, said Tuesday the administration remains committed to keeping a functioning embassy in Kabul. "It is our intention to maintain an embassy in Afghanistan going forward. But we'll have a very, very minimal military presence there — that which is strictly necessary to defend the embassy," he said in remarks to the American Enterprise Institute.

The State Department order came just two days after Gen. Austin Miller, America's top general in Afghanistan, said the U.S. military had begun closing down operations in the country and that Afghanistan's security forces had to be ready to take over.

While the official start to the withdrawal of Washington's 2,500 to 3,500 troops and NATO's 7,000 allied forces is May 1, Miller said the pullout had already begun.

In February last year, the U.S. military began closing its smaller bases. In mid-April, the Biden administration announced that the final phase of the withdrawal would begin May 1 and be completed before Sept. 11.

The pullout of American troops and their NATO coalition colleagues is proceeding even in the absence of a peace deal between the Afghan government and the Taliban, whose harboring of Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida network prompted the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan after 9/11.

Negotiations between the Taliban and the government have been at a standstill for some time and talks

won't resume until next month, raising fears that the withdrawal of foreign forces may lead to a resumption in all-out civil war.

In his testimony, Khalilzad echoed President Joe Biden and other administration officials in saying the U.S. would remain committed to Afghanistan and its development and human rights gains made since 2001 despite the withdrawal.

Khalilzad said he did not believe the withdrawal would precipitate an "imminent" collapse of the Afghan government or reversal of the progress the country has made.

NHL reaches 7-year deal with Turner Sports, ending NBC run

By JOE REEDY AP Sports Writer

The NHL and Turner Sports on Tuesday formally announced a seven-year agreement that begins next season and will put three Stanley Cup Finals on the TNT cable network.

The world's top hockey league is eager to replicate the success found on Turner by the NBA.

"From our standpoint, we looked at the strength of the Turner Sports portfolio, which is outstanding," NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman said. "They put a fun and innovative factor into all of what they do, and we're excited to have that same treatment for our sports, and for our fans."

Turner and corporate owner WarnerMedia surprised many with the acquisition. Longtime NHL partner NBC and Fox were seen as the favorites to get the second package after the league reached an agreement with ESPN last month.

NBC's run of covering the league since 2005 ends after after this season's playoffs. It is in the final season of a 10-year contract.

WarnerMedia News & Sports Chairman Jeff Zucker said Turner's style and approach to covering the NBA and baseball will translate well to hockey. Whether it has the same vibe as its NBA coverage, which includes the successful "Inside the NBA" studio show, remains to be seen.

"Obviously I think that there's a style to Turner Sports, but you can't just copy 'Inside the NBA' on Thursday nights," he said. "We're going to bring that same approach to the NHL but also one that I think is innovative, fun and dynamic."

Zucker said there haven't been any decisions about studio talent or announcers. Charles Barkley is a big hockey fan, so it wouldn't be a surprise if he made an occasional appearance.

The deal includes up to 72 regular-season games per season, half of the first- and second-round playoff games on TNT and TBS as well as a conference final series. One of the regular-season games will be the NHL Winter Classic, which is played on New Year's Day.

There are also live streaming and digital rights across WarnerMedia properties, including HBO Max and Bleacher Report. Zucker said there is the possibility that live games could be streamed only on HBO Max, but that isn't likely until the 2022-23 season at the earliest.

Zucker also said it remains to be determined what days regular-season games will appear on TNT. The network has NBA games on Tuesday and Thursday as well as a successful wrestling show on Wednesday. The NHL has used Wednesday to air showcase games in the United States and Canada.

When the Stanley Cup Finals are shown on TNT in 2023, it will mark the first time since 1994 the NHL championship round will be only on cable. Bettman noted that TNT is available in 90 million homes and that content of major properties is not just confined to broadcast networks.

The agreement with Turner will give the NHL two network partners in the United States for the first time since 1998-99.

The NHL received \$350 million in broadcast revenue from NBC (\$250 million) and Disney Streaming Services (\$100 million for digital rights) this season. The upcoming deals will average \$635 million a year (\$410 million from Disney and \$225 million from Turner).

The league reached an agreement with Walt Disney Corp. last month that includes four Stanley Cup Finals, 25 regular-season games on ESPN and ABC, the NHL All-Star game and comprehensive streaming rights. That includes 75 regular-season games that will stream exclusively on both ESPN+ and Hulu.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 28, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 59 of 72

It marks the first time since Turner broadcast Atlanta Flames games in the late 1970's that the cable giant will air hockey. It also gives Turner its second championship property (it alternates the men's Final Four with CBS).

Turner now has the rights to three of the four major North American sports with NBA games on TNT and baseball on TBS.

Even though NBC is losing the NHL after the playoffs, the network said in a statement that it would take the same approach as prior seasons, which includes every playoff game being aired.

"Despite a lot of speculation to the contrary we remain friends, and we look forward to the future, each of us understanding why we made the decisions that we both made to reach this point." Bettman said.

Bettman also said moving away from NBC — which holds U.S. broadcast rights for the Olympics — will not play a role in deciding whether to allow players to participate in the 2022 Beijing Games. The NHL did not allow its players to participate three years ago in South Korea, ending a run of five consecutive Winter Olympics with NHL players.

Moscow court restricts Navalny's anti-corruption foundation

By DARIA LITVINOVA Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — A Moscow court on Tuesday restricted the activities of an organization founded by imprisoned opposition leader Alexei Navalny, pending a decision on whether it and his offices across Russia should be outlawed as extremist groups.

The ruling on the Foundation for Fighting Corruption by the Moscow City Court was another step in the sweeping crackdown on Navalny, his allies and his political infrastructure.

The Moscow prosecutor's office had petitioned the court to label the foundation and Navalny's network of regional offices as extremist groups and effectively outlaw their activities. Such a move would expose members and supporters to lengthy prison terms.

If the court grants the request, it would be a crippling blow to the beleaguered team of Navalny, who is President Vladimir Putin's most prominent critic. Navalny has been behind bars since January, and many of his aides and associates were arrested or face criminal charges.

On Monday, the prosecutor's office issued an injunction ordering Navalny's offices in dozens of Russian regions to suspend their activities, after which they effectively shut down. Tuesday's court ruling on the foundation barred it from performing certain activities, and Navalny's allies argued it wouldn't affect the foundation's work.

Ivan Pavlov, a lawyer for the foundation, said it is no longer allowed to use the media or the internet to distribute content or to organize rallies and public events, participate in elections or use bank deposits.

Such restrictions won't disrupt the foundation's work, said director Ivan Zhdanov, arguing that most of the restrictions don't apply to the anti-corruption organization's activities.

"Some nonsense," Zhdanov tweeted. "(These) aren't going to influence our work in any way."

Still, Pavlov said he will appeal the court's decision to impose the restrictions.

"It seems to me that the court hastily considered and sustained this motion of the prosecutor's office," Pavlov told The Associated Press, referring to the motion that was filed Monday.

Navalny's foundation started 10 years ago and has alleged high-ranking government officials are corrupt by posting colorful and widely watched videos on social media platforms such as YouTube.

One of its latest posts, 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 network of regional offices in dozens of 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.

The regional sites began their own investigations of graft by local officials and recruited activists, some of whom later ran for public office themselves. The locations also were instrumental in organizing nationwide rallies in support of Navalny this year.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 28, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 60 of 72

Navalny was arrested in January upon returning from Germany, where he spent five months recovering from a nerve agent poisoning that he blames on the Kremlin — accusations that Russian officials reject.

His arrest triggered protests across Russia that proved to be the biggest show of defiance in years. But they didn't stop authorities from putting Navalny on trial for violating the terms of a suspended sentence while he was in Germany. The sentence stemmed from a 2014 embezzlement conviction that Navalny has characterized as 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.

Navalny said he developed severe back pain and numbness in his limbs and began a hunger strike in order to get authorities to have his doctor see him at the penal colony. Instead, they moved him to another prison with a hospital ward. According to his physicians, his health had deteriorated significantly after he refused food for more than three weeks. He ended the fast after undergoing tests and examinations in a civilian hospital and getting a warning from his doctors that his life was at risk.

In an emotional message posted to his Instagram account Tuesday, Navalny thanked all the medical workers he has encountered in the past year — from those who treated him after the poisoning to nurses in the prison hospital. "After all, I understand they're (acting) within limits imposed by their superiors, and in turn by the Kremlin. But I am seeing now that people are genuinely trying to help," he said.

The foundation and the regional offices have been targeted regularly with raids, fines and detentions of activists before, but Navalny's allies say the extremism petition takes the pressure to a new level.

It remains unclear what evidence the prosecutor's office has against Navalny's organizations because all court proceedings are taking place behind closed doors, and some of the case files have been classified as secret.

The defense team has been reviewing the files since Monday, and Pavlov told the AP they have not yet figured out exactly what implicates Navalny's groups.

"So far (the authorities) have been trying to impress us with the quantity and not the quality of the evidence the prosecutor's office uses to substantiate its demand to liquidate and ban the activities of these organizations," he said.

Authorities in Moscow, meanwhile, continued their clampdown on people in connection with the April 21 demonstration in support of Navalny. Police didn't interfere with thousands of protesters who marched in the central streets of the capital, but they arrested people in the days that followed instead.

Sergei Davidis, member of the Memorial human rights group, was ordered jailed for 10 days by a Moscow court on Tuesday for retweeting a post ahead of the protest. Davidis was detained Sunday.

Police also briefly detained two reporters who covered the Moscow protest who had to give statements about their work. Officers visited two other journalists to discuss what they did at the rally.

Some reports have suggested Moscow authorities used facial recognition technology to identify and detain those who attended the demonstration. Amnesty International condemned the reported use of facial recognition to target protesters.

"Previously the protesters' main risk was being beaten and arbitrarily detained by police at a rally," said Natalia Zviagina, Amnesty International's Moscow office director. "As of now, avoiding this fate does not mean that you can feel safe — the repressive state knows who you are and can come for you at any point."

She added that "the risk of attempting to exercise your right to freedom of peaceful assembly has never been so high in Russia."

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.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 28, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 61 of 72

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 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."

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."

No big backlash for states passing anti-transgender laws

By DAVID CRARY AP National Writer

Five states have passed laws or implemented executive orders this year limiting the ability of transgender youths to play sports or receive certain medical treatment. There's been a vehement outcry from supporters of transgender rights – but little in the way of tangible repercussions for those states.

It's a striking contrast to the fate of North Carolina a few years ago. When its Legislature passed a bill in March 2016 limiting which public restrooms transgender people could use, there was a swift and powerful backlash. The NBA and NCAA relocated events; some companies scrapped expansion plans. By March 2017, the bill's bathroom provisions were repealed.

So far this year, there's been nothing comparable. Not even lawsuits, although activists predict some of the measures eventually will be challenged in court.

Rodrigo Heng-Lehtinen, deputy executive director of the National Center for Transgender Equality, says he's surprised by the lack of backlash, but believes it will materialize as more people learn details about the legislation being approved.

"A lot of Americans are still getting to know trans people and they're learning about these issues for the first time," he said. "Over time, they get to know their trans neighbors, they get outraged by these bans, and corporations respond ... It's just a matter of time."

The president of a major national LGBTQ-rights organizations, Alphonso David of the Human Rights Campaign, attributed the lack of backlash to lack of awareness about the potential harm that these laws could cause to transgender young people.

"Some people in this country have not come to terms with treating trans people like human beings," David said. "It's now coming to a head."

One batch of bills seeks to ban transgender girls from competing on girls' sports teams in public schools. Such measures have been enacted in Alabama, Arkansas, Tennessee and Mississippi, and implemented by an executive order from Gov. Kristi Noem in South Dakota.

Another batch of bills seeks to ban gender-affirming medical treatments for trans minors – including the use of puberty blockers and hormone therapy. Arkansas legislators approved such a measure over the veto of Republican Gov. Asa Hutchinson, and similar measures are pending in Alabama, Tennessee and Texas.

Echoing concerns of major medical associations, Dr. Michele Hutchison – who runs a transgender medicine clinic at Arkansas Children's hospital -- says the ban in her state is raising the risk of suicide among some of her patients and forcing some families to wonder if they should move to another state.

More than 400 companies __ including Tesla, Pfizer, Delta Air Lines and Amazon __ have signed on to support civil rights legislation for LGBTQ people that is moving through Congress, advocates said Tuesday.

And last week, the Human Rights Campaign took out a full-page ad in the New York Times appealing to

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 28, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 63 of 72

corporations to denounce the anti-trans bills that have proliferated in Republican-controlled legislatures.

The letter, signed by David, urged corporate leaders "to take action now by publicly denouncing state legislation that discriminates against people, refusing to advance new business in states that are hostile to corporate values and refusing to support sporting events where transgender athletes are banned."

More than 85 companies have signed a statement drafted by the HRC -- including Amazon, American Airlines, Apple, AT&T, Facebook, IBM, Microsoft, PepsiCo, Pfizer and Union Pacific. In polite language, the statement implies a threat: "As we make complex decisions about where to invest and grow, these issues can influence our decisions."

Overall, the corporate response remains "insufficient," David said. "But I think we are seeing a turning of the tide as we put more pressure on companies."

One of the companies signing the HRC statement is the technology giant Oracle Corp., which is planning to bring 8,500 jobs and a \$1.2 billion investment to Nashville, Tennessee, over the coming decade. Joe Woolley, who heads the Nashville LGBT Chamber of Commerce, has expressed hope that Oracle — which has not threatened to cancel its plans — might use its leverage to prompt reconsideration of Tennessee's anti-transgender legislation.

Woolley also says organizers of at least three conventions are considering pulling those events out of Nashville because of the bills, though he has declined to identify them.

Thus far, Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee has signaled that any criticism from the business community won't sway him.

"Organizations have opportunities to weigh in on the legislative process but ultimately, Tennesseans, through their elected representatives, determine the law in our state," said Casey Black, a spokesperson for Lee.

In Texas, a coalition called Texas Competes released a letter April 19 signed by more than 40 businesses and chambers of commerce in the state denouncing a batch of pending bills as "divisive, unnecessary and economically dangerous."

Specifically, the letter denounced "efforts to exclude transgender youth from full participation in their communities."

In Montana, where a transgender sports ban has won initial approval in the Republican-controlled House and Senate, lawmakers added an amendment stipulating that the measure would be nullified if the federal government withheld education funding from the state because of the policy.

The concern stems from an executive order signed by President Joe Biden banning discrimination based on gender. Montana universities receive around \$350 million annually in federal funding, of which \$250 million goes towards student loans and grants to cover tuition costs — money that university officials say could be at risk if the administration deemed the sports ban to be unacceptable discrimination.

The extent of any emerging backlash to the anti-trans laws will hinge in part on the NCAA, which played a pivotal role in the North Carolina case.

The NCAA's Board of Governors issued a statement April 12 expressing strong support for the inclusion of transgender athletes.

"When determining where championships are held, NCAA policy directs that only locations where hosts can commit to providing an environment that is safe, healthy and free of discrimination should be selected," the statement said. "We will continue to closely monitor these situations to determine whether NCAA championships can be conducted in ways that are welcoming and respectful of all participants."

Alphonso David said the Human Rights Campaign welcomed the statement, but wanted an even tougher stance from the NCAA, with explicit warnings that events would not be held in states with anti-trans laws.

"The time for concrete actions is now," David said Monday in a letter to NCAA leaders. "This is a national crisis, and one that necessitates united action, including from the NCAA."

Harry and Meghan to lead 'Vax Live' fundraising concert

By GLENN GAMBOA AP Business Writer

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 28, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 64 of 72

Prince Harry and Meghan will serve as the campaign chairs of Global Citizen's effort to deliver COVID-19 vaccines to medical workers in the world's poorest countries.

The Duke and Duchess of Sussex will appear at "Vax Live: The Concert to Reunite the World," to be taped Sunday at SoFi Stadium in Los Angeles and air on ABC, CBS, FOX, YouTube and iHeartMedia broadcast radio stations on May 8, Global Citizen, the anti-poverty nonprofit, announced Tuesday.

Harry and Meghan are also leading an effort to raise money for the vaccine-sharing program COVAX, which hopes to produce \$19 billion to pay for the vaccines for medical workers.

President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris will also appear during the broadcast as part of the "We Can Do This" initiative to increase confidence in COVID-19 vaccines. French President Emmanuel Macron, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, and Croatian Prime Minister Andrej Plenković will also appear at the concert, which will be hosted by Selena Gomez and headlined by Jennifer Lopez.

Foo Fighters, Eddie Vedder, J Balvin and H.E.R. are also set to perform at the concert, with hosts Chrissy Teigen, David Letterman, Gayle King and Jimmy Kimmel and actors Ben Affleck, Nomzamo Mbatha, Olivia Munn and Sean Penn now also set to appear. The event is part of a growing chorus seeking wider, more equitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccines. As of April, 60 nations had still not yet received any COVID-19 vaccines, Global Citizen CEO Hugh Evans told the Associated Press.

"Last autumn, I called for the sharing of the doses ordered by our countries, to ensure both solidarity and health security," Macron said in a statement. "With the European vaccine sharing mechanism via the COVAX initiative that France is inaugurating, we are in concrete solidarity in the fight against the virus, which does not care about borders. Today I call on all my colleagues to join this momentum and make a commitment at Vax Live."

After sad Mother's Day 2020, vaccines offer sweet reunions

By LEANNE ITALIE Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — When Leland Stein heads to his 93-year-old mother's senior living facility for Mother's Day, he'll have flowers in hand, a bottle of bubbly and a year's worth of hugs.

"I miss Leland's visits very much," said Sondra Green, a retired Vassar College drama professor who counts Meryl Streep among her former students. "I'm just very grateful for his presence."

Many moms, grandmothers and their offspring around the U.S. will be equally thrilled. They were forced to hold off on the physical joys of Mother's Day last year amid pandemic fears and restrictions. This time around, vaccinations and abiding by post-shot waiting periods have brought more security and comfort to bring on the hugs and kisses for sweet in-person — and indoor — reunions.

Of course, not everyone will feel that joy. There are those mourning for mothers lost to COVID-19, and others who are refraining from socializing in person until they, too, can get vaccinated.

During the pandemic, the 64-year-old Stein and his elegant mom have met just once, about six months ago outside of her Brookdale Senior Living location in downtown Manhattan. He couldn't keep away, particularly since Green lost her husband just months before the pandemic took hold, but it was a long trip from his home in Arlington, Massachusetts, for a brief visit on the lawn.

Green's three other sons live in the West, too far to make a Mother's Day trip.

Stein, too, has been feeling the separation and the sting of isolation. At the start of the pandemic in mid-March 2020, the performance space he manages, the Regent Theatre in Arlington, was shut down as the world headed into emergency mode.

"It was Friday the 13th," he recalled. "We had a sold-out show at the theater and the rug was pulled out from under us. I had just lost a relationship, so I lost my relationship, my community, my family. That was a lot to deal with and I have to say, having my mom still around was very helpful. My mom was cool, calm and collected."

Raising four boys, Green joked, "you have to stay calm."

Heather Krug, 49, in Los Angeles hasn't seen her extrovert of a mother, Brenda Krug, in a year and a half. Brenda, too, lives in a senior living community, on the other side of the country in the Long Island

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 28, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 65 of 72

hamlet of Woodbury, New York.

"She's been pretty much without family throughout this," said Krug, who has a sister in the Boston area. "I knew as soon as I was able to get the vaccine I would feel more comfortable about flying but also that I wouldn't be bringing COVID to her or anybody in her community. It's been pretty tough."

The two will mark Mother's Day and the 81-year-old Brenda's June birthday at the same time. And, bonus, Heather will meet Brenda's boyfriend for the first time after Heather's dad died a couple years ago.

"They met during COVID, which is a good thing because it's kept her spirits up. It's the first person she's dated since my father passed," Heather said. "I'm sure she has a list of things she needs me to do. One is get her on Zoom because that's been an issue, but she's handling everything much better than me."

Heather's sister managed a two-hour rendezvous with their mom over the summer for a restaurant meal outdoors, but she has also kept her distance to be safe. A high school friend of Heather's on Long Island assisted Brenda, who still works as an interior designer, when she came down with COVID-19 in the chaotic early days of the pandemic.

Brenda, who is also missing her recently departed dog, was excited for her up-close Mother's Day.

"I only saw my girls and grandchildren on FaceTime. It's not the same, you know," she said. "We're definitely a hugging kind of family."

Maricela Waugh, a 30-something relationship consultant in Los Angeles known professionally as Spicy Mari, has a huge Mother's Day surprise for her mom, Marta. Marta, who has been on the job in San Diego as an essential worker for FedEx throughout the pandemic, has wanted a grandchild for years.

She's about to get her wish. Waugh is pregnant.

"She's going to be flabbergasted," said Waugh, the oldest of three siblings and the first to be expanding her family.

"It's the ultimate gift," Waugh said. "We're extremely close. I tell my mother everything and it's been really hard because I don't really know what to do. I've been asking her a lot of hypothetical questions like, 'When did you start getting stretchmarks?'"

The two haven't seen each other since April last year, when they got together for a quick meal out.

"We've done a few FaceTimes and only from the chest up as this baby bump has grown. But she's been like, oh you must be gaining the quarantine 15," Waugh said.

One thing's for certain, she said: "I know she's going to cry. My mom is such a crier."

Mari, who has chosen not to get vaccinated during her pregnancy, plans a brunch outdoors at a Malibu restaurant with mom and other vaccinated loved ones to announce her son's upcoming arrival.

"I've missed everyone so I'm super excited to bring everyone together for Mother's Day," she said.

For months, the pandemic kept Janice Shear, 67, from her 41-year-old daughter, Meredith, who has Down syndrome and lives just 15 miles away in a group home run by the nonprofit AHRC Nassau in Rockville Centre, New York.

Meredith's 40th birthday party, with more than 100 guests, was canceled in March last year and the home barred visitors, while Janice's senior living community asked residents to isolate. Janice would make drive-by visits in the car and wave, rather than their usual twice-a-week visits and weekends home for Meredith pre-pandemic.

Last July, restrictions loosened slightly and they managed regular meetups. Now, both are vaccinated, along with other family members. They plan a Mother's Day barbecue at the nearby home of Meredith's sister and her family.

"Last year it was sad. Meredith was my first child. She made me a mother, and pulling up in my car and just seeing her on the front step and then driving away, it was hard," Janice said.

Mother's Day came early for Vanessa Gordon, a Sag Harbor, New York, mom of a 3-year-old son and 7-year-old daughter.

Gordon, 32, and her husband have been vaccinated, along with her 87-year-old grandmother and an aunt. She hadn't seen her grandmother in three years, so decided on a trip to The Villages, near Orlando, Florida, to combine her husband's birthday, Mother's Day and Easter on March 28. Gordon sees her mother

regularly; she wasn't fully vaccinated and didn't make the trip.

The group dined out at a country club and caught up with some old friends, all of whom had been vaccinated. They visited Disney World, organized Easter baskets for the kids, baked a birthday cake and cooked meals together.

"I was thrilled," Gordon said. "It was wonderful. When you don't see somebody for such a long time, it's almost as if time never went by. That three years, in a way, disappeared."

Iraqi medics recount horrors from Baghdad's hospital inferno

By SAMYA KULLAB and ABDULRAHMAN ZEYAD Associated Press

BAGHDAD (AP) — It was a night of unimaginable horror as flames engulfed the intensive care unit of a Baghdad hospital: deafening screams, a patient jumping to his death to escape the inferno and relatives staying by their loved ones, refusing to abandon coronavirus patients tethered to ventilators.

Iraqi doctors, medical staff and rescue workers who witnessed the first moments of the catastrophic blaze described the scenes to The Associated Press, many overcome by trauma and saying that night is forever seared in their memory.

The fire, which erupted late Saturday at the Ibn al-Khatib hospital's coronavirus ward, raged for hours before claiming 82 lives and injuring 110 people. The death toll could still climb, with many of those hurt listed in serious condition.

Officials said the blaze was set off by exploding oxygen cylinders; days later, speculation has run rampant about what caused them to explode. Authorities have yet to issue the results of an official investigation.

Iraq, a nation toughened by decades of dictatorship, war and sectarian conflict — and now struggling to cope with the pandemic — remains in shock. Senior health officials have been fired or suspended amid allegations of negligence.

Doctors have warned of systemic mismanagement, describing Iraqi hospitals as ticking bombs because of lax safety rules, especially around oxygen cylinders. They say hospitals often lack smoke detectors and that visitors routinely smoke cigarettes around oxygen cylinders or bring in electric stoves to cook for the patients.

Sabah Samer, a doctor, and Yousif Hussein, a paramedic, were among the first to charge toward the blaze to try and help the victims. They say the hospital was a firetrap, especially the COVID-19 ward.

"The fire spread so quickly because of the combustible oxygen cylinders," said Samer. "The walls of the rooms were padded with plastic and nylon, which fed the fire."

He said he remembers the cylinders exploding one after another for almost every minute that he was inside, with flames shooting through the hospital windows. He said he counted at least 20 explosions.

Samer and other rescuers said it was impossible to reach many of the patients — they could hear screams and pleas for help from the second floor of the hospital.

One patient, a nurse with COVID-19, jumped through the window to his death, his body in flames. His charred remains were retrieved from the hospital courtyard later, Samer said.

Many have since pointed to blatant shortcomings in the hospital's safety measures. Fire extinguishers did not work and emergency exits were inexplicably shut.

Dr. Kamal al-Rubaie, 28, was on the hospital's second floor ICU ward, filled with COVID-19 patients on oxygen when the fire started. He was about to offer condolences to the family after one of his patients had died when he saw the first spark.

He said he had feared the oxygen cylinders ever since his first rotation at the ward last October. Each room inside the respiratory care unit typically stored over a dozen cylinders, with each patient needing between two to three a day. There were 30 patients in the unit at the time, he said.

In the day-to-day patient care, there weren't enough hospital staff to check that each cylinder was functioning properly. The task often fell on untrained relatives of patients, al-Rubaie said. Other doctors who have worked at the hospital said the same.

Given the risks in storing oxygen cylinders, which have to be kept far from combustible materials, modern

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 28, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 67 of 72

hospitals have adopted centralized oxygen supply systems. These were even established in Iraqi hospitals in the 1980s under Sadaam Hussein but fell into disrepair during the embargo years, when U.N. sanctions prevented Iraq from trading oil and crippled the economy, and also after the 2003 U.S.-led invasion.

With Iraqi health facilities aging, oxygen cylinders have become the norm. And though Ibn al-Khatib did have a functioning centralized oxygen system, patients preferred the cylinders, seeing them as better for individual care.

What triggered the first cylinder to explode remains unclear — some speculate a patient's visiting relative was using a little electric stove or another heat source next to a cylinder.

Al-Rubaie doesn't remember seeing a heat source and also, just the presence of a stove cannot explain how it might have sparked the fire, he said. Oxygen can only strengthen a fire that is already burning, he added.

Samer described how he rushed to a virus patient hooked up to a ventilator in one of the hospital rooms that was surrounded by fire, grabbed the man and his cylinder to carry him out. Every moment he carried them were filled with terror.

"The cylinder could explode at any moment," he said.

As Hussein, the paramedic, moved patients outside, crowds of volunteers turned up, adding to the chaos. Some came running out of the burning hospital and told him the three fire extinguishers on the second floor were empty. They had tried to put out the flames with blankets.

Maj. Gen. Khalid Bohan, the head of Iraq's civil defense, recounted the many letters sent over the years to various ministries, urging them to install or update safety systems — only to be told "there are no financial allocations." A smoke detector and a fire system must be in place and hospital administrators bear this responsibility, he told Iraqi state TV after the fire.

Fire safety systems are included in the design and cost breakdown of most hospitals, doctors said. But in practice, they are seldom put in place, raising new questions about corruption among officials.

Samer said a fire safety system could have contained the blaze and saved lives.

His last memory from that night were the deafening cries of those who could not be reached inside the hospital.

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 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 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

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 28, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 68 of 72

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 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 immigrants or people in the country

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 28, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 69 of 72

illegally 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.

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. 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

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 28, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 70 of 72

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.

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

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 28, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 71 of 72

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.

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, April 28, the 118th day of 2021. There are 247 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On April 28, 1967, heavyweight boxing champion Muhammad Ali was stripped of his title after he refused to be inducted into the armed forces.

On this date:

In 1788, Maryland became the seventh state to ratify the Constitution of the United States.

In 1945, Italian dictator Benito Mussolini and his mistress, Clara Petacci, were executed by Italian partisans as they attempted to flee the country.

In 1952, war with Japan officially ended as a treaty signed in San Francisco the year before took effect. Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower resigned as Supreme Allied commander in Europe; he was succeeded by Gen. Matthew B. Ridgway.

In 1958, the United States conducted the first of 35 nuclear test explosions in the Pacific Proving Ground as part of Operation Hardtack I. Vice President Richard Nixon and his wife, Pat, began a goodwill tour of Latin America that was marred by hostile mobs in Lima, Peru, and Caracas, Venezuela.

In 1980, President Jimmy Carter accepted the resignation of Secretary of State Cyrus R. Vance, who had opposed the failed rescue mission aimed at freeing American hostages in Iran. (Vance was succeeded by Edmund Muskie.)

In 1986, the Soviet Union informed the world of the nuclear disaster at Chernobyl.

In 1988, a flight attendant was killed and more than 60 persons injured when part of the roof of an Aloha Airlines Boeing 737 tore off during a flight from Hilo (HEE'-loh) to Honolulu.

In 1994, former CIA official Aldrich Ames, who had passed U.S. secrets to the Soviet Union and then Russia, pleaded guilty to espionage and tax evasion, and was sentenced to life in prison without parole.

In 2001, a Russian rocket lifted off from Central Asia bearing the first space tourist, California businessman Dennis Tito, and two cosmonauts on a journey to the international space station.

In 2010, Coast Guard Rear Adm. Mary Landry said a massive oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico was worse than officials had believed, and that the federal government was offering to help industry giant BP contain the slick threatening the U.S. shoreline.

In 2015, urging Americans to "do some soul-searching," President Barack Obama expressed deep frustration over recurring black deaths at the hands of police, rioters who responded with senseless violence and a society that would only "feign concern" without addressing the root causes.

In 2019, former Republican Sen. Richard Lugar of Indiana, a leading voice on foreign policy during his 36 years in the Senate, died at a hospital in Virginia at the age of 87. "Avengers: Endgame" shattered the record for biggest opening weekend with an estimated \$350 million in ticket sales domestically and \$1.2 billion globally.

Ten years ago: President Barack Obama reshuffled his national security team, with CIA Director Leon Panetta succeeding Defense Secretary Robert Gates and Gen. David Petraeus replacing Panetta at the CIA. Convicted sex offender Phillip Garrido and his wife, Nancy, pleaded guilty to kidnapping and raping a California girl, Jaycee Dugard, who was abducted in 1991 at the age of 11 and rescued 18 years later. (Phillip Garrido was sentenced to 431 years to life in prison; Nancy Garrido was sentenced to 36 years to life in prison.) Canada's Patrick Chan won the world figure skating championships in Moscow.

Five years ago: Vice President Joe Biden pressed Iraq during an unannounced visit not to let its crippling political crisis upend hard-fought gains against the Islamic State group.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 28, 2021 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 296 ~ 72 of 72

One year ago: President Donald Trump signed an executive order under the Defense Production Act to keep meat packing plants open; it classified meat processing as critical infrastructure. The Navy said the number of sailors aboard the USS Kidd who had tested positive for the coronavirus had risen to 64, or about one-fifth of the destroyer's crew. Joe Biden won Ohio's presidential primary, the first major test of statewide elections via mail amid the virus outbreak. Hillary Clinton became the latest Democrat to endorse Biden as the party continued its unification efforts. Democrat Kweisi Mfume easily won a special election to complete the term of the late Maryland Rep. Elijah Cummings.

Today's Birthdays: Former Secretary of State James A. Baker III is 91. Actor-singer Ann-Margret is 80. Actor Paul Guilfoyle is 72. Former "Tonight Show" host Jay Leno is 71. Rock musician Chuck Leavell is 69. Actor Mary McDonnell is 69. Rock singer-musician Kim Gordon (Sonic Youth) is 68. Actor Nancy Lee Grahn is 65. Supreme Court Justice Elena Kagan is 61. Rapper Too Short is 55. Actor Bridget Moynahan is 50. Actor Chris Young is 50. Rapper Big Gipp is 49. Actor Jorge Garcia is 48. Actor Elisabeth Rohm is 48. Actor Penelope Cruz is 47. Actor Nate Richert is 43. TV personalities Drew and Jonathan Scott are 43. Actor Jessica Alba is 40. Actor Harry Shum Jr. is 39. Actor Jenna Ushkowitz is 35. Actor Aleisha Allen is 30.