

# Groton Daily Independent

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## 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.

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Groton is hosting a music contest today at the GHS Gym and Arena. Wieser, Kelly Wieser, Langford Area music director, and Sharon Schwan, retired music director from Warner, were the judges.

In the photo above, Shaylee Peterson is doing her solo with Desiree Yeigh as the accompanist and Wieser being the judge.

In the left photo, Wieser gives a critique of the Julianna Kosel's performance.

(Photo by Paul Kosel)

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The trumpet solos were the last ones to perform at the music contest held in Groton. In years past, area schools have gone to Webster for the music contest. However, due to COVID-19 and Groton Area getting off school prior to the contest in Webster, it was opted to have the contest in Groton this year. Other schools have done the same thing which makes it nice for parents and students not to make the journey to another school. Those closing out the day were Logan Warring (top left), Ben Hoeft (top right) and Jayden Schwan (bottom photo). Desiree Yeigh was the accompanists for all of the solo events. (Photos by Paul Kosel)



**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!**

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## Service Notice: Dolores Bailey

Mass of Christian Burial for Dolores (Dee) Baily, 91, of Groton will be 10:30 a.m. Thursday, May 6, 2021 at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church, Groton. Father Tom Hartman will officiate. Inurnment will follow on Friday at the Mayfield Cemetery, rural Irene at 1:30 p.m. Services will be live streamed at GDILIVE.COM Dolores passed away Monday, March 23rd, 2020 at Avantara Groton.



**Saturday was rummage sale day in Groton. The weather was perfect for the many city-wide rummage sales going on.** (Photo by Paul Kosel)



**A motorcycle rally stopped in Groton early Saturday afternoon, with many motorcycles lining up on Main Street and in the Legion parking lot.**

(Photos by Paul Kosel)



## #432 in a series

### Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

I'm going to try to keep this short(ish); the last two days, I've buried you in words, so I'm taking a shot at giving us all a break, likely for a couple of days. At the moment, I still do not have updated numbers for the day. I'm going to post this and then edit them in if I see them before midnight.

I have gathered updated numbers and am adding this in at 9:00 pm; I am seeing a steady decline all around. I've been burned often enough to be cautious about predictions, but maybe we're getting past this thing. Today there were 56,837 new cases reported, bringing us up 0.2% to 32,373,177. Average hospitalizations is down a bit again to 42, 878. And we're up to 575,623, which is 0.1% more than yesterday. There were 832 new deaths reported.

On April 30, 2020, one year ago today, we were up to 1,073,700 cases and 63,007 deaths. One modeler was predicting we could have as many as 72,000 deaths by early August. The model "assumes many people will continue to practice social distancing until the end of May." It also did not account for the reopenings that proceeded apace from that very moment. So what happened? I just had a look. Do you even want to know? August 3: 156,000. Ugh. One prediction that was cheerier was that we might have a vaccine on the market by January "if everything falls into place," according to Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases. You already know how that one turned out. The WHO said there were 102 vaccines in development worldwide, eight of those approved for clinical trials. One day I'll try to figure out how many of those are currently in production. I think I'm aware of most of them, but I'm pretty hazy on how many of the Chinese vaccines are out there at the moment. Worldwide, there had been more than 3.2 million cases and over 233,000 deaths.

I feel as though we're getting somewhere. Over half of states are showing new-case declines of 15 percent or more over the past 14 days; nationwide, the daily new-case average has declined 26 percent in that time. We're about where we were last October before that terrible winter wave, only this time with a lot of people vaccinated and summer's outdoor activities coming. The 14-day average deaths report is at the lowest point this year. Because this pandemic has taught me some harsh lessons about unbounded optimism, I need to point out that, with 43 percent of the population (almost 145 million) having received at least one dose of vaccine and 101 million fully vaccinated, we've fallen off our peak rates of administration to around 2.5 million doses per day as demand seems to be plateauing. I trust you all understand the risks ahead, depending how this thing goes in coming weeks.

Dr. Rochelle Walensky, director of the CDC, said in today's White House Covid-19 press briefing that, "if we can continue at this pace, case rates are coming down, vaccinations going up, then I think July 1 would be a reasonable target" for a reopening plan. She did point out that we've been blindsided by this virus before, so we need to see how things go, but looking at summer is promising. Please be careful in coming weeks—and get vaccinated. We are collectively in control of what happens next, and we've all waited long enough, right?

Meanwhile, there are two parts of the world in serious trouble. We've discussed both recently, but I don't want us to forget that, as things continue to improve here, the virus is raging out of control in India and its neighbors and in Latin America. We need to get support, supplies, and vaccines to these areas. I'll mention also that Japan is having something of a spike in cases; with the Tokyo Olympics coming up in July, that is not happy news. Lots of work to do all over the world. We want to remember that no one is safe until we are all safe.

On the good-news front, over 100 colleges and universities are requiring vaccination for in-person class attendance this fall. Others are requiring vaccination for athletes or people living on campus. Many are offering incentives to students who get vaccinated. Some are waiting until the vaccines have licenses, not just emergency use authorizations; that seems likely before fall. We can hope those numbers go up. There have been over 660,000 cases linked to these post-secondary institutions during this pandemic; a third of those have occurred since the beginning of the year.

We have another test event planned for tonight in the UK as part of the government's Events Research

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Program (ERP). You may recall our earlier discussions of test concerts, one in Germany and a couple in Barcelona; there's a round-up with links to further details in my Update #400 posted March 29 at <https://www.facebook.com/marie.schwabmiller/posts/4571300852886285>. This is the same sort of thing. It will be held in a converted warehouse in Liverpool, England, with live music and dancing. Entrants will need a negative test and are advised to have another in five days. There will be no mask or social distancing requirements once people have entered the venue. There is a live outdoor music event in a park in the city on Sunday as well. Currently, the BRIT awards, scheduled for May 11, are planning for a live audience too. I hope this works safely. We'll have reports as time goes on.

I do have—sigh—one more piece of stupid vaccine bushwah. You've probably heard about the private academy in Florida that has told teachers they can't return to work in the fall if they get vaccinated for Covid-19. The school's spokesperson has explained this is a rule to protect their students from the harmful physical effects of being around vaccinated persons. What?

This one's a little complicated to sort out because it involves a misinformation technique we'll call layering: It's where you take one lie and embellish it to create a second one and then further embellish that to construct a third—and so on. So here's how this story goes: (1) The mRNA vaccines cause you to make spike proteins, (2) you shed these proteins into your surroundings, (3) other people (by means that remain mysterious to me) "pick up" this protein, (4) it gets into their bodies, (5) they have an immune response to this "foreign" spike protein, and (6) the antibodies thus generated cause menstrual cycle irregularities, miscarriage, sterility, and early puberty. Let's take this one at a time:

(1) The mRNA vaccines cause you to make spike proteins. Turns out there is one true statement in amongst the bullshit, and this is it. That is exactly what the mRNA vaccines do; it is precisely what they are designed to do. Remember that we want you to make antibodies to spike protein now before you see the actual virus so that, when you do encounter it, you'll be ready. For the record, all of that protein-manufacturing takes place in the first 24 to 48 hours after vaccination because that's about as long as we can expect the mRNA to last before it degrades—we've talked all along about how fragile this stuff is.

(2) You shed these proteins into your surroundings. No one's explaining exactly by what mechanism these proteins are "shed." Here's the difficulty with it: For that to happen, the protein has to make its way to some location in your body that "gives off" things into the environment. There aren't many choices: your mouth and nose, your urinary or intestinal tract, your reproductive tract, maybe some sweat or sebaceous glands in your skin. But the spike protein is being produced in your deltoid muscle—that's the one high in your arm where the needle went in. It never gets out of that muscle because it's too big to make its way into your blood stream—the little holes in your capillaries (those tiny blood vessels that serve individual muscle cells) aren't big enough to let this gigantic molecule through to the inside of the vessel where it then could float around freely in your bloodstream. It also can't "seep" through the muscle to a sweat gland—at least, if it could, there would be something very, very wrong with that muscle; things don't seep through intact muscle. At all. So we have a problem—no way to get that protein to a location from which it could "shed." This is a deal-breaker. So we're already busted, but in the interest of thoroughness, let's look on.

(3) Other people "pick up" this protein. So, supposing you did shed this protein, how would someone else pick it up? We're not talking about people you're kissing or hugging or having sex with (I hope, since we're talking here about teachers and their students); we're talking about people you walk past in the hallway at school—presumably also in the grocery store, etc. I'm going to guess it would have to be airborne spread or in droplets from a cough or speaking or just breathing, sort of the way this virus spreads. Let's go with that.

(4) It gets into their bodies. OK, easy one. They're going to inhale it, right? That is, supposing it's floating around for them to inhale. Moving on.

(5) They have an immune response to this "foreign" spike protein. I'm going to say that would definitely happen—supposing the protein was shed in the first place and managed to make its way into a new "victim." So the unwitting recipient of this shed protein would make antibodies to it—the same way someone who was vaccinated does—and with the same effect, right? Right??? Do you see the possibilities here?

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We could bag the needles and manufacturing problems and shipping doses of vaccine all over the world. We wouldn't need to tie up all those health care workers giving shots day after day. All we'd need is a bunch of vaccinated volunteers to go breathe while walking by unvaccinated people. We should be able to vaccinate the world for the cost of a lot of airplane flights and trips out into the cities and countryside in every country on Earth—cut Big Pharma out of the picture entirely. You could afford to pay your “vaccinators” generously and still have money left over. You could afford to provide them with security. In fact, once they'd “vaccinated” some folks in country, they could go home, leaving “distribution” to the locals. No more supply chain problems, no need for freezers, just comfortable hotel rooms and nice meals, right? What? You think that's silly? Well, don't say I didn't warn you.

(6) The antibodies thus generated cause menstrual cycle irregularities, miscarriage, sterility, and early puberty. It should come as no surprise to you that we are—again!—talking about syncytin. We've been beating that horse so long, all that's left is a pile of horsey hamburger. Can we please, please come up with a new line? For the record, here's the link to the debunking of the syncytin myth: Update #287 posted December 6 at <https://www.facebook.com/marie.schwabmiller/posts/4237138519635855>. And yes, this link is probably getting tired; it was just a couple of days ago it last had a workout. I'm sorry.

I'm just going to add that, in the US alone, the CDC estimates 35 percent of the population has been infected with SARS-CoV-2, the original owner of the spike protein; that's (using the Census Bureau's new population figures) around 116 million people, roughly half of them female. This virus has been among us for some 15 months. With this protein and its dangerous antibodies going around, isn't it curious that there has been no rash of menstrual cycle irregularities, of miscarriages, of sterility, or of premature puberty? It's almost like this whole line of argument is hokum, isn't it?

So what we have here is a variation on the syncytin lie layered with some what-if-that-could-happen fantasizing, some nebulous talk about “shedding” that's vague enough to fool folks who don't understand a lot about exactly how human bodies work and designed to misdirect, all of it couched in ominous assertions about things “they” don't want us to know and the sinister machinations of Big Pharma and Bill Gates and maybe “The Jews” because, wherever you find money, you find Jews, right? (And yes, I've heard that last appalling thing in conjunction with all the anti-vaxxing.) This one has it all: fake experts (Sherri TenPenny again, that former ER doctor with no credentials at all in immunology or vaccinology), conspiracy thinking, layers of misinformation. Hope this helps you deal with it when you encounter it. Good luck.

We have had the great good fortune here in the US, with all of our tragic missteps and catastrophic failures throughout this pandemic, to have an ample supply of vaccines to meet our demand. In places where vaccine hesitance is high, rural places like the state I live in and our neighbor to the north, North Dakota, there are more than plenty of doses for the folks lining up to receive them; they find themselves with surplus doses. Canada has not been as fortunate in that regard; they have surplus demand. Well, something kind of cool has arisen from that disparity: sharing.

That's right, North Dakota has worked out a vaccine-sharing agreement with Manitoba, its neighbor to the north. It started a little over a week ago with clinics open to Manitoba truck drivers just south of a highly-traveled border crossing. Up to 4000 Canadian truck drivers who regularly cross the border have been able to come in on Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays for vaccinations at no cost.

And now it was announced yesterday that the same sort of sharing agreement has been worked out for teachers in Manitoba. While the details are still being worked out, educators will receive special permission to cross the border, something that hasn't been allowed for months now, to visit a vaccination site on the US side before returning home. The goal is to make Manitoba's schools safer for all concerned. These are also being offered at no cost. Because that's what neighbors do—or should. A glimmer of hope? I think so.

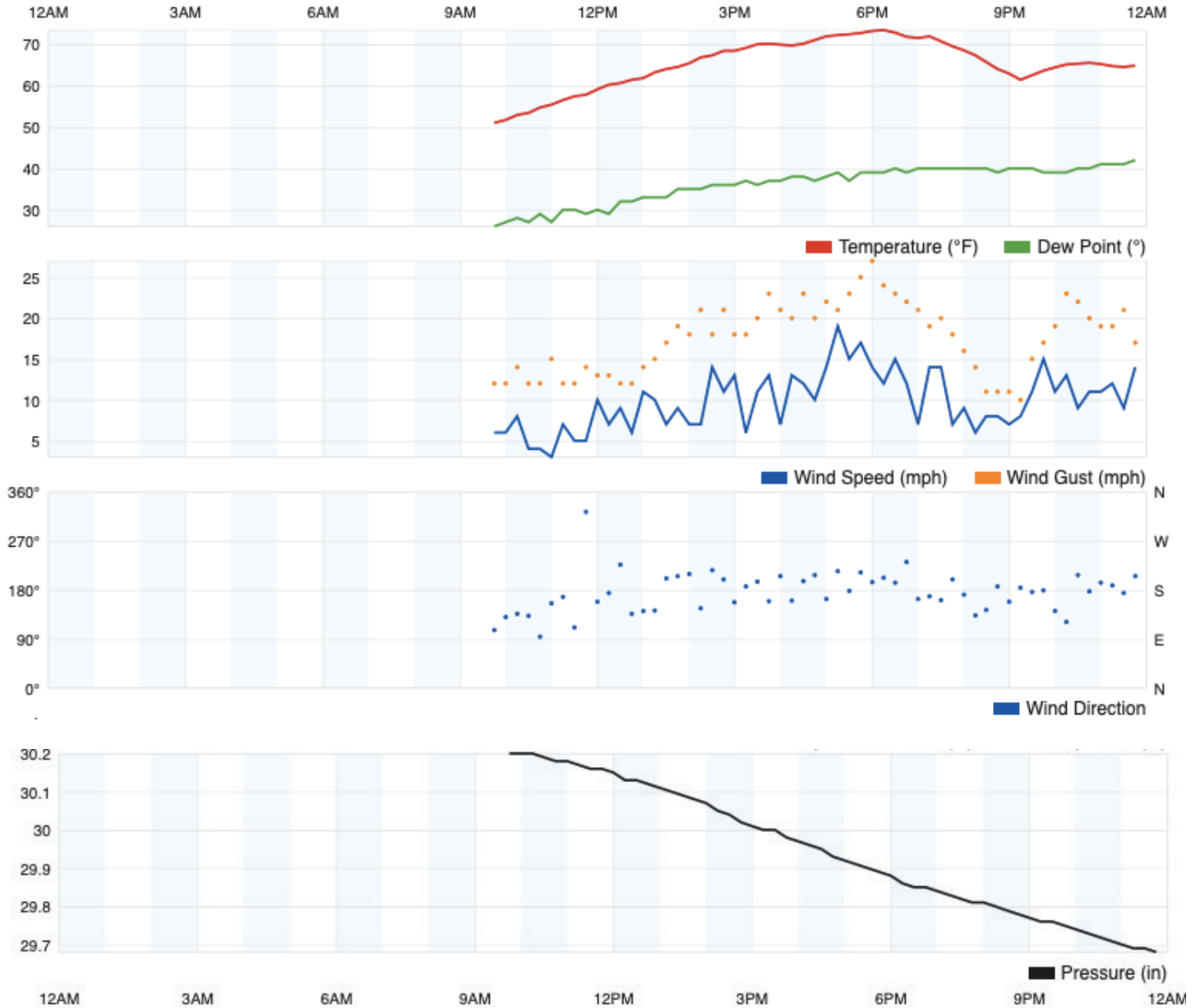
Be well. We'll talk again.



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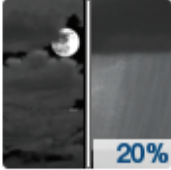

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graph



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Today	Tonight	Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday
				
Mostly Sunny then Mostly Sunny and Breezy	Partly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny	Mostly Cloudy then Slight Chance Showers	Chance Showers
High: 73 °F	Low: 49 °F	High: 87 °F	Low: 53 °F	High: 70 °F

## Today, Sat May 1<sup>st</sup>: High to Very High Fire Danger

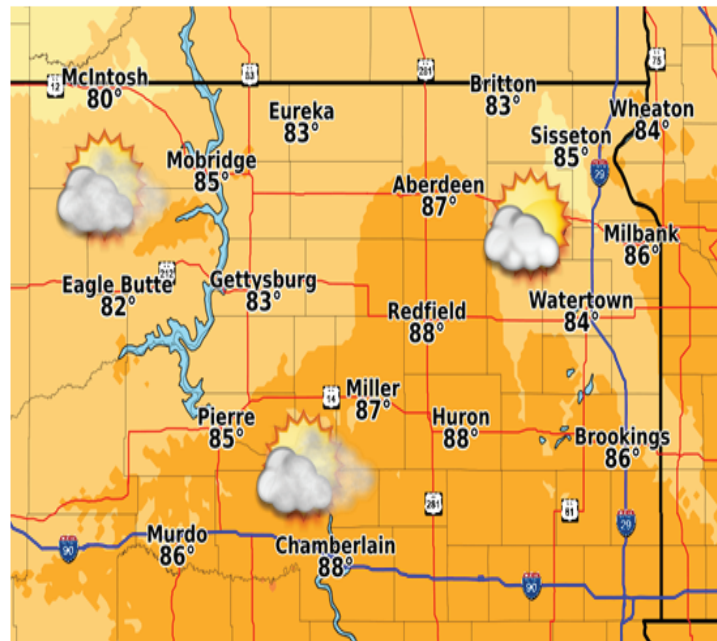
### Forecast

- High temps of 15 to 25 F above average
- Low relative humidity and dry fuels
- Northwesterly breezes, strongest across northern SD (10-20mph with 35mph gusts)
- Increasing cloudiness this afternoon/evening
- **Red Flag Warning across north central and portions of northeastern South Dakota from noon to 8 pm**

### Impacts

- Fires may easily ignite from any spark, cigarette, or flying ember (including from burning barrels/pits)
- Any fire that begins will spread easily

### High Temperature Forecast Saturday



National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD



Updated: 5/1/2021 5:52 AM Central

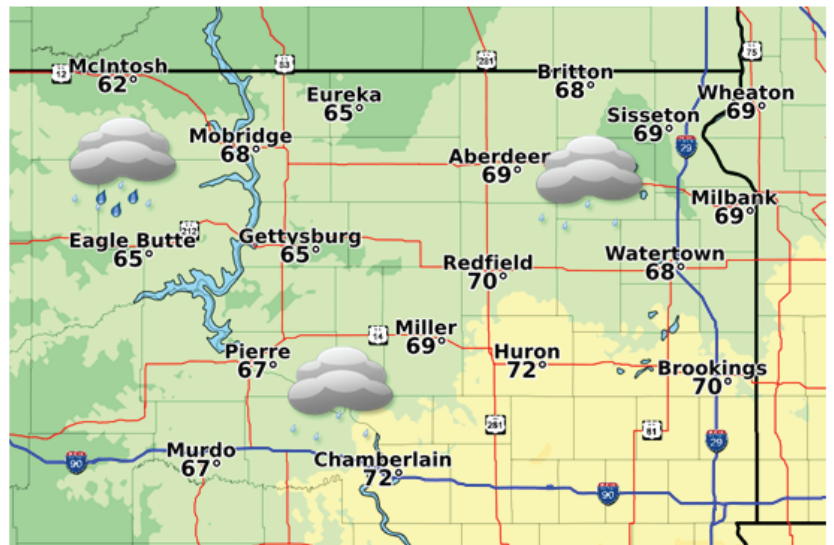
Warm, dry and breezy conditions will lead to elevated grassland fire danger today, particularly across north central and portions of northeastern South Dakota where a Red Flag Warning will be in effect this afternoon and evening.

## Tomorrow, Sun May 2<sup>nd</sup>: Cooler, Cloudy... & Wet?

### Forecast

- High temperatures will be about 15 degrees cooler Sunday vs Saturday.
- Generally **light rain showers** are possible Saturday night through Sunday afternoon
  - Amounts of 0.10 to 0.25" are possible across portions of north central South Dakota, with a trace to 0.10" is most likely elsewhere.
- A rumble or two of thunder can't be ruled out

### High Temperature Forecast Sunday



National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD



Updated: 5/1/2021 5:54 AM Central

The potential for generally light rain showers moves in Saturday night and lasts through Sunday afternoon across the area. Cooler yet and slightly below average temperatures are anticipated on Monday and through the first half of the work-week.

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## Today in Weather History

May 1, 1959: Aberdeen recorded a high temperature of 102, which is the earliest date that Aberdeen reached 100 degrees.

May 1, 1967: One of the latest blizzards on records for South Dakota ended on this day. Snowfall amounts in the west were 5 to 12 inches with a 16-inch report in Lemmon and 30 inches in the northern Black Hills. Winds of 40 to 50 mph caused blowing snow which occasionally reduced visibility to near zero and snow drifts of 4 to 5 feet. Other snowfall amounts include 5 inches in Murdo and 6 miles SE of McIntosh; and 4 inches in Timber Lake.

May 1, 1997: Torrential rains of 1.5 to 2.5 inches with a separate 4.5-inch report fell over central South Dakota and caused flooding to several creeks, streams, low-lying areas, and roads. This early May rain only aggravated the areas flooded in March and April. Lyman County experienced the most significant flooding where 4.5 inches of rain fell, north of Vivian. Part of a golf course was flooded, and some personal property was flooded along with the KOA campground near Kennebec. Some rainfall amounts include 2.5 inches 7 miles NW of Presho and 2.01 inches near Stephan.

1857: The Washington Evening Star publishes the first US national weather summary using observations from volunteers to the Smithsonian Institution's cooperative network.

1933: An estimated F4 tornado struck Minden, Louisiana, killing 28 people and injuring 400 others. 500 homes were damaged or destroyed with \$1.3 million in damage.

1999: Record, low temperatures for the date, were broken in the Deep South. Mobile, Alabama dropped to 46 degrees. Miami fell to 58; Miami Beach bottomed out at 61, and Vero Beach dropped to 47 degrees, all new records. Other stations in Florida also set record cold maximums for the date, including 61 at Jacksonville and Daytona Beach with 66 degrees.

2003: A record-setting 516 tornadoes occurred during May 2003. In particular, during the period May 4-10, 2003, an unprecedented number of tornadoes, 393 total, affected the central and the southern United States. The tornadoes resulted in 39 deaths across four states. Six of these tornadoes were classified as violent (F4) on the Fujita Tornado Intensity Scale.

1854 - The Connecticut River reached a level of nearly twenty-nine feet at Hartford (the highest level of record up until that time). The record height was reached in the midst of a great New England flood which followed sixty-six hours of steady rain. (David Ludlum)

1935 - Snow, ice and sleet brought winter back to parts of southeast Minnesota. Minneapolis received three inches of snow to tie their May record which was established in 1892. (1st-2nd) (The Weather Channel)

1954 - The temperature at Polebridge MT dipped to 5 degrees below zero to establish a state record for the month of May. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Thunderstorms produced large hail and heavy rain in Texas. Baseball size hail pounded Dublin, and 3.75 inches of rain soaked Brady. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Strong southerly winds ahead of a cold front crossing the Rocky Mountain Region gusted to 90 mph at Lamar CO. High winds created blinding dust storms in eastern Colorado, closing roads around Limon. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Thunderstorms produced heavy rain in the southeastern U.S. Rainfall totals of 1.84 inches at Charlotte NC and 2.86 inches at Atlanta GA were records for the date. Strong thunderstorm winds uprooted trees in Twiggs County GA. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather from northern Alabama to North Carolina. There were sixty-three reports of large hail or damaging winds, with hail four inches in diameter reported near Cartersville GA. Ten cities in the southeastern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date as readings warmed into the 90s. Jacksonville FL reported a record high of 96 degrees. Late night thunderstorms over central Texas produced up to ten inches of rain in southern Kimble County and northern Edwards County. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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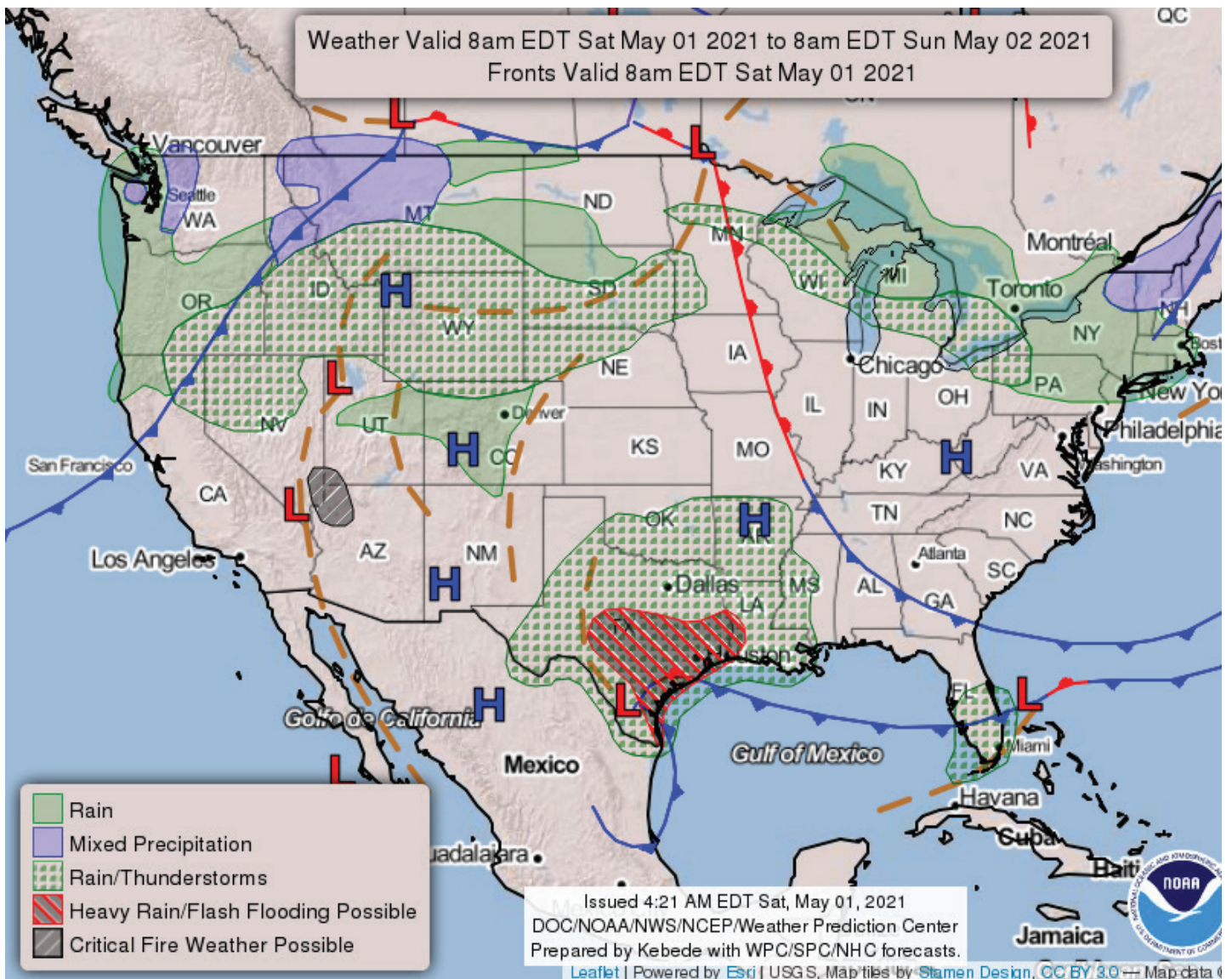
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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 74 °F at 6:11 PM**  
**Low Temp: 38 °F at 6:55 AM**  
**Wind: 27 mph at 5:53 PM**  
**Precip: .00**

## Today's Info

**Record High: 102° in 1959**  
**Record Low: 19° in 1961**  
**Average High: 64°F**  
**Average Low: 38°F**  
**Average Precip in Apr.: 1.85**  
**Precip to date in Apr.: 2.59**  
**Average Precip to date: 4.03**  
**Precip Year to Date: 2.77**  
**Sunset Tonight: 8:41 p.m.**  
**Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:20 a.m.**



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## A KING FOR GOD'S KINGDOM?

A leading scientist at a convention of scientists was asked, "Is there anyone anywhere whom you know who could solve all of the problems of illness and famine, poverty and killing?"

"Indeed I do," came his quick reply.

Astonished, the chairman of the committee asked, "Who?"

"A King!" came the quick, confident response.

In utter disbelief, the chairman replied, "A king? Where can we find such a king? Where has he been hiding?"

"Oh, He is not hiding," replied the scientist. "He has made Himself well known. It is just that people refuse to recognize Him. You see, this Man is incapable of making any mistakes, knows the power of healing – both physical healing and mental healing and He knows how to feed thousands and have food left over to feed many more. He can also take care of those without water and solve other problems that people bring to him."

In disbelief, the chairman asked, "Who is this person you have described and where can we find him?"

"You can find Him in the Bible. He is known as Jesus. In His life on earth, He did all of the things I have mentioned. And He is capable of doing many more miraculous things," he said.

The audience was stunned as the scientist took his seat.

The Psalmist wrote, "Your throne, O God, will last forever and ever; a scepter of justice will be the scepter of Your Kingdom." The "throne" described in this Psalm is Christ's throne in heaven and will last through eternity. From this throne, He will rule the world in love, justice, and righteousness – and all problems will finally be solved.

Prayer: Father, we look forward to that day of days when You will rule the world with Your peace, grace, and justice that we all desire. But until then, may we do our best to represent Your love. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Your throne, O God, will last forever and ever; a scepter of justice will be the scepter of Your Kingdom. Psalm 45:6

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## 2021 Community Events

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

## News from the Associated Press

### **Mining company moving ahead with South Dakota project**

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A Canadian corporation looking to open a uranium mine in South Dakota is resuming the permit process with the state, while opponents say the project will ruin the area.

Powertech Industries Inc., a subsidiary of Azarga Uranium based in British Columbia, Canada, first began applying for permits and licensing for the project in the southwestern part of the state in 2013, the Rapid City Journal reported Saturday.

The proposed project would use a mining process similar to fracking in which injection wells are used to pump groundwater fortified with oxygen and carbon dioxide into the ore deposits to dissolve uranium. That type of mining, known as in situ, requires large amounts of water, which Powertech needs permission from the state to use.

The company plans to use about 9,000 gallons per minute of water from two underground aquifers that also supply water to communities in Fall River and Custer counties, including Edgemont and Hot Springs. In comparison, the entire city of Rapid City uses around 6,500 gallons of water per minute.

Over the 16 years the project is proposed to last, the company will use over 52 million gallons of water. The project is anticipated to produce over 14 million pounds of uranium.

Opponents say the project will destroy the water supply for the southwestern portion of the state, where water scarcity is already an issue.

Susan Henderson, a rancher from Edgemont, said the project won't benefit anyone in South Dakota and will "probably destroy" Fall River County. Henderson said no mining company has ever sufficiently restored an aquifer's water quality after contaminating it and she does not have faith that Powertech would be the first.

The mining company is seeking a water rights permit from the state Water Management Board — the next step in the permitting process. The company did not respond to requests for comment from the Rapid City Journal.

### **Western South Dakota benefits from film's success**

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Tourist attractions in western South Dakota that appeared in the Academy Award-winning film "Nomadland" are seeing an increase in visitors credited to the film's success.

Reptile Gardens and Wall Drug Store are both reporting an early bump in tourist traffic, the Rapid City Journal reported Saturday. Both were in "Nomadland," which won best picture, best director and best actress Academy Awards.

The movie follows Fern, who after her husband dies of cancer, embarks on a road trip that highlights Badlands National Park, Wall Drug and the hands of Reptile Gardens' curator Terry Phillips.

Wall Drug Store chairman Rick Husted said the store has seen a 114% increase in sales over 2019 while year-to-date for 2020 showed a 92% increase.

"If it was up 10% we'd be happy, but these are extraordinary numbers," he said. "I think we're going into a huge season."

Husted said the family was approached in 2018 for the movie.

"It was amazing," he said.

Reptile Gardens curator Terry Phillip said he spent an entire day filming with the crew. He believes the film will boost tourism for the whole state.

"You can't go wrong with that in any way, shape or form," he said.

The state tourism department is also anticipating a large amount of tourists to the state with the film's awards.

"Overall, what you'll find is we certainly noticed that film drives a great amount of inspiration for consumers," said Katlyn Svendsen, global media and public relations director for the department.



## Missouri latest state to thwart voter-approved policies

By SUMMER BALLENTINE Associated Press

COLUMBIA, Mo. (AP) — Missouri lawmakers recently shut down attempts to pay for Medicaid expansion, in what is the latest example of a statehouse fighting to undo voter-enacted policies.

Critics argued during a contentious debate in the state Senate on Thursday that voters didn't understand the potential cost of the federal health insurance program. Supporters, including Democrats and some Republicans, said lawmakers were going against the will of voters who amended the Missouri Constitution last year to make thousands more low-income adults eligible for government health insurance.

"The people voted for this. We put it in the Missouri Constitution. That's what they voted to do," Democratic Sen. Jill Schupp said. "Now we have people who took an oath to uphold the constitutions of the United States and the state of Missouri, and here we are with people turning their backs."

It's unclear how the decision will impact access to Medicaid once new eligibility rules take effect in July. Republican Gov. Mike Parson on Thursday tweeted that his administration will assess its options once the budget is finalized. Lawmakers expect a court battle.

Missouri is among 16 states that allow voters to enact policies by putting them on the ballot, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures. South Dakota, Utah, Montana, Arizona and Florida are all states where lawmakers recently sought to undermine voter-approved measures.

In voting against funding Missouri's Medicaid expansion, the Senate's top budgeter, Republican Dan Hege- man, said: "If the voters had all the information we do, I think they would have made a different decision."

Craig Burnett, a political scientist and direct democracy expert at Hofstra University, said gaps between lawmaker and voter priorities can occur when there's an oversaturation of Democrats in urban areas or due to gerrymandering — when legislative districts are drawn to give one party an oversized advantage in elections. He said the conflict is particularly acute when it comes to social issues.

"You only get this kind of mismatch when the legislature is pretty significantly out of step with average voter," Burnett said.

South Dakota was the first state to adopt direct democracy in 1898. There's been pushback from law- makers since then.

Recently, voters there legalized medical marijuana, raised the minimum wage and expanded casino gam- bling. The GOP-led Legislature responded by trying to make it harder to put initiative petitions on the ballot.

In Montana, voters last year approved a recreational marijuana program that sends a significant portion of tax revenues to conservation purposes. But a Republican-backed legislative plan seeks instead to put up to \$6 million toward an addiction treatment program before directing a third of what's left to wildlife habitat, parks and recreational facilities.

After Utah voters passed Medicaid expansion in 2018, conservative lawmakers delayed its full implemen- tation before adding work requirements. In Arizona, Republicans are looking to eliminate about a third of the revenue from a voter-approved tax increase on the wealthy to fund education.

While Florida voters in 2018 overwhelmingly approved a measure allowing most felons to vote once they complete their sentences, the Republican-led Legislature undercut that by requiring them to pay off fines and court costs first.

Missouri's fight over Medicaid expansion isn't the first time the Legislature and voters have bumped heads over ballot measures in recent years.

Voters in 2018 repealed a law that ended mandatory union dues for non-union members, a longtime goal for Republicans.

That same year — as Republican Josh Hawley defeated Democratic former U.S. Sen. Claire McCaskill and the GOP kept overwhelming control of the Legislature — voters legalized medical marijuana, raised the minimum wage and adopted a redistricting measure opposed by top Republicans.

After the success of primarily Democratic-backed policies at the polls, Republicans have sought to undo them and make it harder for voters to put issues on the ballot.

Several pending bills would increase the cost to file initiative petitions, require petitioners to go to greater lengths to gather signatures, and raise the vote threshold needed to amend the Missouri Constitution.

Burnett said that while recent tensions have primarily involved Republican statehouses and more liberal voters, it's also happened with Democratic-led legislatures. He cited California voters' 2008 decision to ban same-sex marriage, which was later overturned in court.

"It's very frustrating for all of those voters who voted for this," he said. "The whole point of the initiative petition is actually supposed to be to get around the legislature and enact policies that they're unwilling to do, or maybe they're too politically toxic."

## Wait is over: Man has double lung transplant after COVID-19

By STEPHEN PEREZ Sioux Falls Argus Leader

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) —

A Sioux Falls man has received a double lung transplant after complications in October with COVID-19.

Nathan Foote, 42, went through a severe case of pneumonia after contracting COVID-19 that caused his lungs to become 80% scarred and shrink in size. Following that diagnosis, he was faced with two choices: get a double lung transplant or go into hospice until he dies.

On Jan. 17 he was transported to the University of Minnesota Medical Center in Minneapolis to undergo testing to get placed on the list.

After being placed on the transplant list in February, Foote waited through two potential matches before finally getting the procedure April 10.

"I didn't think I'd ever make it this far," he said. "I did my part even when they told me I was going to die, because I wasn't going to believe that."

The two previous matches fell through because of changes in the health status of the potential donors, the Sioux Falls Argus Leader reported.

Nathan and Angie Foote, his wife, tried to downplay the third call to not get too excited, but the morning of the procedure when the ball started rolling, the reality sank in for them.

"Come Saturday morning, we were in his room and the doctors were coming up to take him to the operating room," Angie Foote said. "That was probably the defining moment for both of us."

The surgery lasted eight hours, and with each passing minute, Angie Foote felt like her heart was going to jump out of her chest.

The signs of relief she received were two brief phone calls from nurses two hours apart, updating her that everything was operating smoothly.

"Every time the phone rang, my heart jumped a little bit. Am I getting a phone call saying there were complications? Am I getting a call saying he didn't make it?" she said. "To hear everything was going well, I could actually breathe a sigh of relief."

Post-procedure, Nathan Foote is feeling as well as expected. Everything regarding the health of the newly transplanted lungs is positive, but pain and tiredness remain.

A milestone moment occurred a few days after the procedure, though. He took his first breath on his own in six months.

"We had to remind him to breathe," Angie Foote said. "It was amazing to finally see him take that first breath, and he was elated to realize he could breathe again."

But, recovery is a long road. Eating food following the procedure has been tough for him.

"It has been a struggle. You also have this feeding tube that goes down your throat and into your stomach," he said. "So they feed you with that, and when you eat, that food is getting caught and it feels like you are choking."

Angie Foote said her husband's first taste of solid food following the procedure was as if everything tasted better than before.

His biggest craving?

"Citrus," Angie Foote chuckled. "Pineapple and oranges. Out of all the things, but that is what he wanted

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and was excited about.”

Right now, he is teaching himself to do everything over again. The hardest concept to learn: walking. “Your body has the strength to do it, so your body wants to go, but your lungs aren’t strong,” he said. “I can walk a few feet and will be gasping for air like I ran a marathon or something.”

The next three months, the couple will stay in the Minneapolis area to be monitored daily, go to the clinic, attend physical therapy and make sure he is progressing.

The couple and family have showed nothing but love and gratitude for the support they have received from friends, family, neighbors and complete strangers, they said.

“People we didn’t even know would lend financial or emotional support,” Angie Foote said. “Saying we heard your story and want you to know that we are rooting for you – that has really touched us.”

## SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Mega Millions

08-19-26-48-49, Mega Ball: 5, Megaplier: 3

(eight, nineteen, twenty-six, forty-eight, forty-nine; Mega Ball: five; Megaplier: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$319 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$129 million

## South Dakota governor sues for fireworks at Mount Rushmore

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem sued the U.S. Department of Interior on Friday in an effort to see fireworks shot over Mount Rushmore National Monument on Independence Day.

The Republican governor successfully pushed last year for a return of the pyrotechnic display after a decadelong hiatus. The event drew national attention when former President Donald Trump joined Noem on July 3 to give a fiery speech. But the state’s application to hold fireworks this year was denied by the National Park Service, which cited safety concerns and objections from local Native American tribes.

Noem’s lawsuit, filed in the U.S. District Court for South Dakota, argues that the decision was “arbitrary and capricious” and violated the powers granted to the agency in the Constitution. The state last year signed an agreement with the Trump administration and the Department of the Interior to work towards returning the pyrotechnic display this year.

Mount Rushmore is a huge tourism draw for the state, but it has also been a source of tension between the state and local Lakota tribes. Local activists have called for the monument to be returned to tribal control, pointing out the surrounding Black Hills were taken from the tribes in violation of treaties.

Last year’s event drew concerns about wildfires set off by the fireworks, as well as protests from Lakota activists. Fireworks were canceled after 2009 because of fire danger from a pine beetle infestation.

Noem’s attorneys argue in the lawsuit that the surrounding forest has sufficiently recovered from the pine beetle infestation. But last month the park service had to close the monument for several days as firefighters battled wildfires within the park grounds. The wildfires in part prompted Noem to declare a state of emergency until June, citing “widespread drought conditions, low humidity, high wind and high temperatures that create serious peril for our state.”

But the governor in court filings invoked a spirit of patriotism to argue the show should go on, quoting former presidents from John Adams to George H.W. Bush.

“Mount Rushmore is the very best place to celebrate America’s birthday and all that makes our country special,” Noem said in a statement. “After telling us they’d ‘circle back,’ the Biden administration has not responded to our request to uphold the Memorandum of Agreement ... to host a safe and responsible national celebration and fireworks show.”

The governor, closely allied to Trump, has headlined conservative events around the nation and is considered to be a potential name on the 2024 GOP presidential ticket. Last year's Mount Rushmore event gave Noem an opportunity to enter Trump's orbit as she joined him on the flight back to Washington.

## **Tractor Supply Company Partners With Make-A-Wish on World Wish Day to Grant Boy's Wish to Teach Kids About Farming**

BRENTWOOD, Tenn.--(BUSINESS WIRE)--Apr 30, 2021--

In conjunction with World Wish Day 2021 on April 29, Tractor Supply Company partnered with Make-A-Wish South Dakota & Montana to grant a boy's wish that will help other children for years to come. Koen, a 7-year-old farm kid from rural South Dakota, wished to teach kids about farming and farm safety while they receive medical care. The Tractor Supply Company Foundation donated \$25,000 to bring an interactive farming exhibit to life in the waiting room of Avera Medical Group Pediatric Specialists in Sioux Falls, S.D., in addition to outfitting Koen with his own farm supplies.

This press release features multimedia. View the full release here: <https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20210430005438/en/>

Make-A-Wish wish recipient Koen poses for a picture with Sioux Falls Tractor Supply Store Manager, Randy Schall, while exploring "Koen's Farm", an interactive farming exhibit in the waiting room at Avera Medical Group Pediatric Specialists in Sioux Falls, S.D. Photo credit: Danny Eisenhauer Photo.

Koen is described by his family as "an extreme extrovert who loves life on the farm" and riding with his dad in the tractor. He has been diagnosed with a respiratory disorder, which qualified him for a wish. Koen's own medical appointments inspired his wish, and he hopes to bring a little bit of "magic" to other kids on their appointment days, which are otherwise exhausting and stressful.

"As part of our desire to give back to the communities we call home, the Tractor Supply Company Foundation is committed to supporting today's youth and agriculture education initiatives. When we heard about Koen's wish, we were so inspired by his generosity and desire to share his passion for farming and tractors with other children receiving care at Avera Medical Group Pediatric Specialists. We knew immediately this was something we wanted to be a part of, and we are glad to help sponsor bringing Koen's Farm to life," said Mary Winn Pilkington, Tractor Supply Company's Senior Vice President of Investor Relations and Public Relations and President of the Tractor Supply Company Foundation.

Koen's wish includes three elements: the transformation of the waiting room into "Koen's Farm", an activity book and crayons for pediatric patients to color in once in their exam room and toy tractors to fill the treasure chest kids visit after their appointment. The Tractor Supply Company Foundation donation includes two years' worth of toy tractors for the treasure chest and cash to support the interactive educational displays in the waiting room.

"The wish journey gives children with critical illnesses a piece of their childhood back, and every child deserves a childhood," said Sue Salter, President and CEO of Make-A-Wish South Dakota & Montana. "We have the ability to restore hope and bring joy back into a family's life through the life-changing power of a wish. Koen's kind and generous heart shines through in his wish to give and to brighten the lives of other kids experiencing fear, isolation and uncertainty."

Although Koen did not ask for anything himself, Tractor Supply and vendors outfitted him with a few special gifts: his very own John Deere Ground Force Tractor and Trailer Ride-On Toy from Peg Perego, custom workwear from Carhartt, farm toys from Schleich and ERTL, and Tractor Supply goodies. The surprise gifts were presented by Sioux Falls Tractor Supply Store Manager, Randy Schall, at the unveiling of Koen's Farm on April 29, World Wish Day.

Koen's wish is also made possible by several local donors, each with a strong connection to Make-A-Wish and Avera: Jeff and Julie (Norton) Lutt; Kathleen Kunkel and her daughters Megan, Katie and Carly, in loving memory of their husband and father Shawn; and the Ty Eschenbaum Foundation – In Honor of Autumn. Several other corporate partners also contributed to bring Koen's wish to life: HenkinSchultz,

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Nanonation, Avera, Journey Construction, Thompson Electric, Sioux Falls Interiors, Audio Fish, Elo Touch Solutions, Dell Computers, Peerless-AV and Sisson Printing.

## About Tractor Supply Company

Tractor Supply Company (NASDAQ: TSCO), the largest rural lifestyle retailer in the United States, has been passionate about serving its unique niche, as a one-stop shop for recreational farmers, ranchers and all those who enjoy living the rural lifestyle, for more than 80 years. Tractor Supply offers an extensive mix of products necessary to care for home, land, pets and animals with a focus on product localization, exclusive brands and legendary customer service that addresses the needs of the Out Here lifestyle. With more than 42,000 Team Members, the Company leverages its physical store assets with digital capabilities to offer customers the convenience of purchasing products they need anytime, anywhere and any way they choose at the everyday low prices they deserve. At March 27, 2021, the Company operated 1,944 Tractor Supply stores in 49 states and an e-commerce website at [www.TractorSupply.com](http://www.TractorSupply.com).

Tractor Supply Company also owns and operates Petsense, a small-box pet specialty supply retailer focused on meeting the needs of pet owners, primarily in small and mid-size communities, and offering a variety of pet products and services. At March 27, 2021, the Company operated 177 Petsense stores in 23 states. For more information on Petsense, visit [www.Petsense.com](http://www.Petsense.com).

To stay up to date on all things for Life Out Here, follow Tractor Supply on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

## About the Tractor Supply Company Foundation

The Tractor Supply Company Foundation was established in 2020 and is committed to supporting vibrant rural communities for all by investing in the future of the Out Here Lifestyle through today's youth, helping close the rural digital divide and being a good neighbor in the communities Tractor Supply calls home. The Foundation's priority areas include agriculture education initiatives, broadband connectivity for rural America, caring for pets and animals and preserving land for future generations. The Foundation expands upon the charitable work of Tractor Supply Company, supporting causes that are important to customers and Team Members. In 2020, the Company donated over \$12 million to charitable causes through direct giving, sponsorships, fundraisers and more. To learn more about The Tractor Supply Company Foundation, visit [Corporate.TractorSupply.com/Community](http://Corporate.TractorSupply.com/Community).

## About Make-A-Wish® South Dakota & Montana

Make-A-Wish South Dakota & Montana creates life-changing wishes for children with critical illnesses. Research shows children who have wishes granted can build the physical and emotional strength they need to fight their illness. Our chapter has granted more than 2,200 wishes for children in the local community. Together with generous donors, supporters, staff and more than 30,000 volunteers, Make-A-Wish South Dakota & Montana and 58 other chapters throughout the U.S. have granted more than 340,000 wishes nationwide. For more information about Make-A-Wish South Dakota & Montana, visit [wish.org/sdmt](http://wish.org/sdmt).

## About World Wish Day

On April 29, 1980, Department of Public Safety officers and members of the community in Phoenix, Arizona, came together to grant the wish of Chris Greicius, a 7-year-old boy battling leukemia who wished to be a police officer. Chris' wish inspired six of the people involved to form a foundation that would grant life-changing wishes for other children with critical illnesses. The organization known as Make-A-Wish® has since granted more than 500,000 wishes worldwide, operating in every community in the U.S. and in nearly 50 countries worldwide. Make-A-Wish South Dakota & Montana was founded in 1984 and has granted more than 2,200 wishes that deliver hope and joy back into the lives of children with critical illnesses in South Dakota and Montana. April 29 is celebrated as World Wish Day in recognition of the anniversary of Chris Greicius' wish that inspired the founding of Make-A-Wish, and subsequently, Make-A-Wish South Dakota & Montana and the global wish-granting movement.

## Hospital fire kills 18 virus patients as India steps up jabs

By ASHOK SHARMA Associated Press

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NEW DELHI (AP) — A fire in a COVID-19 hospital ward in western India killed 18 patients early Saturday, as the country grappling with the worst outbreak yet stepped up a vaccination drive for all adults even as some states said they don't have enough jabs.

India on Saturday set yet another daily global record with 401,993 new cases, taking its tally to more than 19.1 million. Another 3,523 people died in the past 24 hours, raising the overall fatalities to 211,853, according to the Health Ministry. Experts believe both figures are an undercount.

The fire broke out in a COVID-19 ward on the ground floor of the Welfare Hospital in Bharuch, a town in Gujarat state, and was extinguished within an hour, police said. The cause is being investigated.

Thirty-one other patients were rescued from the blaze by hospital workers and firefighters and their condition was stable, said police officer B.M Parmar. Late last month, a fire in an intensive care unit killed 13 COVID-19 patients in the Virar area on the outskirts of Mumbai.

India's government on Saturday shifted its faltering vaccination campaign into high gear by saying all adults 18 and over could get shots. Since January, nearly 10% of Indians have received one dose, but only around 1.5% have received both, although India is one of the world's biggest producers of vaccines.

Some states have already said they don't have enough doses for everyone, and even the ongoing effort to inoculate people above 45 is sputtering.

The state of Maharashtra has said it won't be able to start the expanded vaccinations on Saturday. The health minister for the capital New Delhi, Satyender Jain, said earlier this week that the city doesn't have enough doses to vaccinate people between the ages of 18 and 44.

India's capital also extended its week-old lockdown by another week to curb the explosive surge in virus cases, tweeted Arvind Kejriwal, a top elected official.

All shops and factories will remain closed until May 9, except for those that provide essential services such as grocery stores. People are not supposed to leave their homes, except for a handful of reasons like seeking medical care or going to the airport or railroad stations. Daily wage earners and small businesses are expected to suffer a further blow to their livelihoods.

Separately, 12 COVID-19 patients, including a doctor, on high-flow oxygen died Saturday at a hospital in New Delhi after it ran out of the supply for 80 minutes, said S.C.L. Gupta, director of Batra Hospital.

Gupta said the hospital has been facing irregular oxygen supply from manufacturers for more than a week, but it exhausted it completely for the first time.

He said the hospital tank was refilled with enough oxygen for 12 hours and it will again be looking for replenishment.

The New Delhi television news channel also said an attorney for the Batra hospital complained to a New Delhi court that is hearing petitions by several hospitals on the issue.

Hospitals in the Indian capital have been complaining of emergencies caused by irregular oxygen supplies from manufacturers due to the sudden rise in demand caused by the massive spike in infections.

Faced with an unprecedented COVID-19 surge that has filled hospitals and crematoriums, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government described the pandemic as a "once-in-a-century crisis." Modi held a Cabinet meeting Friday that discussed steps to save the country's crumbling health system by adding hospital beds, resolving issues in production, storage and transport of oxygen and tackling the shortage of essential medicines.

In a now-familiar scene, television images showed a woman gasping for breath in her car while her family looked for a hospital bed on the outskirts of New Delhi. The 33-year-old woman couldn't find room at three hospitals and died in the car on Friday, The Times of India newspaper reported.

Opposition Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said the Modi government completely failed to understand how to tackle the pandemic, right from the very beginning, despite repeated warnings from scientists and experts.

"They continuously ignored rising cases and were busy instead with election campaigns. They encouraged super-spreader events," Gandhi said in an interview with the Press Trust of India news agency.

The U.S. meanwhile joined a growing list of countries restricting travel from India, the White House said,

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citing the devastating rise in COVID-19 cases and the emergence of potentially dangerous variants.

President Joe Biden spoke Monday with Modi about the growing health crisis and pledged to immediately send assistance. This week, the U.S. began delivering therapeutics, rapid virus tests and oxygen to India, along with some materials needed for India to boost its domestic production of COVID-19 vaccines.

Additionally, a CDC team of public health experts was expected to be on the ground soon to help Indian health officials move to slow the spread of the virus.

Other nations have also sent assistance, and the Indian air force airlifted oxygen containers from Singapore, Dubai and Bangkok.

A German military aircraft with 120 ventilators departed for India on Saturday morning, and plans were being made for other flights with more supplies. Also on board was a team of 13 that will help prepare to set up a mobile oxygen production unit that will be flown to India next week, German news agency dpa said.

## Deputy shooting becomes part of city's long history on race

By BEN FINLEY Associated Press

ELIZABETH CITY, N.C. (AP) — The murder trial of former Minneapolis police Officer Derek Chauvin was wrapping up when Dakwon Gibbs told a friend that George Floyd's killing — and others like it — would never happen in Elizabeth City, North Carolina.

"I said, 'We live in a city that's too small; we're a small community,'" said Gibbs, 22. "And two days later it happened. I thought wrong. I thought very wrong."

The fatal shooting of Andrew Brown Jr. by sheriff's deputies has sent shock waves through this small, majority Black city in the state's rural northeastern corner. Despite holding an important place in African American history in the 19th and 20th centuries, Elizabeth City seemed too close-knit and too out-of-the-way to become a flashpoint in the 21st, some residents say.

That changed when Brown, 42, was shot by Pasquotank County sheriff's deputies serving drug-related search and arrest warrants at his house on April 21. Brown, who was Black, was behind the wheel of his car when he was shot five times, including in the back of the head, according to an independent autopsy commissioned by his family.

Police camera footage has yet to be made public or shown in its entirety to Brown's family. And the shooting has sparked peaceful protests each night, with marchers demanding release of the video and police reform. Throngs of police and television camera crews have descended onto the city's riverfront downtown.

"We see all this stuff happening all over the world, but we never thought that something like this would happen in our town," City Council member Gabriel Adkins said during an emergency meeting called after the shooting.

"And people are afraid. ... They are afraid that, you know, the riots are going to start," Adkins said.

Surrounded by miles of ocean-flat farmland, Elizabeth City is a quaint-looking urban hub for a relatively isolated region. The economy is anchored in large part by a large U.S. Coast Guard base, which often deploys rescue missions into the nearby Atlantic Ocean. It is also home to Elizabeth City State University, a historically Black university founded in 1891. Still, more than one in five people live in poverty in the city.

The city is about an hour drive from Virginia's Hampton Roads region as well as North Carolina's touristy Outer Banks. But it's not a place many people drive through — or have heard of.

"I'm sorry that this is the first time many folks are hearing about Elizabeth City," said Melissa Stuckey, a history professor at the university. "Because it's a place where Black freedom struggles have happened over many decades."

The city sits on the Pasquotank River and sprang up in the 19th century because of its proximity to the Great Dismal Swamp. Cypress and cedar trees were logged for their rot-proof lumber and turned into ship masts and fence posts. Enslaved Americans were put to work there. But the swamp was also a place where they sought refuge after escaping bondage.

During the Civil War, Black troops marched to Elizabeth City after President Abraham Lincoln allowed African Americans to enlist. They participated in raids that liberated nearby plantations.

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By the 1940s, the city boasted a strong Black business community. And in the 1960s, residents of Elizabeth City — and students at its university — worked to desegregate the region's businesses, with many getting arrested.

"In a lot of ways, I see what is happening on our streets today as a part of a longer history of Black freedom struggles in the region and in the United States," Stuckey said. "And it's a difficult moment. But it's a moment that we can draw from the past to kind of take heart in what it is that people are doing right now on the streets."

Linwood Gallop, 52, an electrician, has marched in every single protest since the day Brown was killed. He grew up in the same neighborhood where Brown was shot, catching the school bus on the corner and buying nickel candies from a nearby store.

Although Gallop only knew Brown in passing, he dismisses any suggestion by authorities that the shooting was justified. The city is galvanized, he said, because it's so close knit.

"They're trying to criminalize us. But we know each other. It's too personal," Gallop said. "That's why it's not working here."

Gallop also pointed out that it was county sheriff's deputies working as part of a drug task force who shot Brown — not the city's police force.

"I cannot think of a police officer shooting somebody in 30 years here — we're not used to that happening here," Gallop said. "If we don't know you, we know somebody who knows you. We can literally call someone up and be like, 'Hey man, the police are looking for you. Go downtown.'"

Ernest Banks, 65, who owns a shoe repair shop downtown, has also participated in many of the protest marches.

"We can still keep this going," he said. "This is not going to die."

## Over 800 migrants rescued at sea head to Italy

By FRANCES D'EMILIO Associated Press

ROME (AP) — Two Italian ports faced an influx of hundreds of migrants on Saturday, as a charity ship sailed toward a Sicilian port with 236 people rescued in the Mediterranean from traffickers' boats, while Italian coast guard and border police brought 532 others to a tiny island.

The maritime rescue group SOS Mediterranee said a ship it operates, Ocean Viking, pulled the migrants to safety four days ago from two rubber dinghies. Upon instructions from Italian authorities, the Ocean Viking was sailing to Augusta, Sicily, with its passengers, who it said included 119 unaccompanied minors.

SOS Mediterranee said some passengers told rescuers they were beaten by smugglers based in Libya and forced to embark on the unseaworthy dinghies despite high waves.

On Italy's southern island of Lampedusa, which is closer to North Africa than to the Italian mainland, Mayor Salvatore Martello said migrants from four boats that needed rescue stepped ashore overnight. They were brought to safety by Italian coast guard and customs police boats.

Separately, an Italian navy vessel rescued 49 migrants, Italian state TV reported.

Still in the central Mediterranean Sea on Saturday was another charity boat, Sea-Watch 4, which with 308 people aboard who had been rescued in four separate operations from trafficker-launched vessels, Sea-Watch said in a statement. The first rescue, of 44 people, took place on Thursday, it said.

Sea-Watch 4 has requested a port to disembark the migrants from both Italy and Malta.

"The fact that we, as a civil rescue ship, saved so many people from distress at sea in such a short time again demonstrates the fundamental rescue gap European states have created at the world's most dangerous maritime border," said Hannah Wallace Bowman, the head of mission for Sea-Watch 4.

Warmer weather in the spring often increases the number of vessels launched toward Europe by Libya-based migrant traffickers.

Last month, SOS Mediterranean personnel and a merchant ship spotted several bodies from a shipwrecked dinghy, believed to have been carrying 130 migrants. People on the boat had appealed for help



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in the waters off Libya, but no coast guard vessels from Libya, Italy or Malta came to their aid, the group said. No survivors were found.

Humanitarian groups have been urging European Union nations to resume the deployment of military vessels on rescue patrols in the Mediterranean. After hundreds of thousands of rescued migrants, many of them ineligible for asylum, were brought to Italy by ships from the coast guard, navy, border police and other nations, large-scale rescue operations in the sea north of Libya were ended.

Italy has been equipping and training the Libyan coast guard to rescue migrants in their search-and-rescue area and to discourage traffickers.

Human rights groups and U.N. agencies have denounced inhumane treatment at Libyan detention centers, where migrants rescued or intercepted by the Libyan coast guard are taken. They say migrants endure beatings, rapes and insufficient rations.

On Friday, the United Nation's child welfare agency said a total of 125 Europe-bound children were among those intercepted at sea earlier in the week by Libyan authorities off the Mediterranean coast. UNICEF said most of those rescued were sent to overcrowded detention centers with no or limited access to water.

"Europe can no longer remain passive in the face of recurring shipwrecks while consciously upholding a system of unspeakable abuse by supporting forced returns to Libya," SOS Mediterranee said.

The risk migrants run of perishing at sea is high. UNICEF says at least 350 people, including children and women, have drowned or gone missing in the Mediterranean since January.

According to the Italian Interior Ministry, as of Friday, 9,000 migrants had reached Italy by sea this year.

Both Italian and Maltese governments in recent years have claimed that private charity boats effectively facilitate trafficking by rescuing migrants at sea. At times, rescue vessels, including commercial ones, have been kept waiting for long stretches before a safe port was assigned.

## Formal start of final phase of Afghan pullout by US, NATO

By KATHY GANNON Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — The final phase of ending America's "forever war" in Afghanistan after 20 years formally began Saturday, with the withdrawal of the last U.S. and NATO troops by the end of summer.

President Joe Biden had set May 1 as the official start of the withdrawal of the remaining forces — about 2,500-3,500 U.S. troops and about 7,000 NATO soldiers.

Even before Saturday, the herculean task of packing up had begun.

The military has been taking inventory, deciding what is shipped back to the U.S., what is handed to the Afghan security forces and what is sold as junk in Afghanistan's markets. In recent weeks, the military has been flying out equipment on massive C-17 cargo planes.

The U.S. is estimated to have spent more than \$2 trillion in Afghanistan in the past two decades, according to the Costs of War project at Brown University, which documents the hidden costs of the U.S. military engagement.

Defense department officials and diplomats told The Associated Press the withdrawal has involved closing smaller bases over the last year. They said that since Biden announced the end-of-summer withdrawal date in mid-April, only roughly 60 military personnel had left the country.

The U.S. and its NATO allies went into Afghanistan together on Oct. 7, 2001 to hunt the al-Qaida perpetrators of the 9/11 terrorist attacks who lived under the protection of the country's Taliban rulers. Two months later, the Taliban had been defeated and al-Qaida fighters and their leader, Osama bin Laden, were on the run.

In his withdrawal announcement last month, Biden said the initial mission was accomplished a decade ago when U.S. Navy SEALs killed bin Laden in his hideout in neighboring Pakistan. Since then, al-Qaida has been degraded, while the terrorist threat has "metastasized" into a global phenomenon that is not contained by keeping thousands of troops in one country, he said.

Until now the U.S. and NATO have received no promises from the Taliban that they won't attack troops during the pullout. In a response to AP questions, Taliban spokesman Suhail Shaheen said the Taliban

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leadership was still mulling over its strategy.

U.S. military spokesman Col. Sonny Leggett tweeted late Saturday that there was some ineffective firing in the area of southern Kandahar air base, one of the U.S. military's largest bases. He also said U.S. forces had conducted "precision strikes" against missiles found aimed at the airfield in Kandahar.

"Kandahar Airfield received ineffective indirect fire this afternoon; no injury to personnel or damage to equipment," he tweeted, without attaching blame.

However, he also posted a video clip of Gen. Austin Miller, head of the U.S.-led coalition in Afghanistan, speaking to an Afghan journalist in which he said "a return to violence would be one senseless and tragic," but that coalition troops "have the military means to respond forcefully to any type of attacks."

The insurgent group continues to accuse Washington of breaching the deal it signed with Biden's predecessor more than a year ago. In that agreement, the U.S. said it would have all troops out by May 1.

In a statement Saturday, Taliban military spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said the passing of the May 1 deadline for a complete withdrawal "opened the way for (Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan) mujahidin to take every counteraction it deems appropriate against the occupying forces."

However, he said fighters on the battlefield will wait for a decision from the leadership before launching any attacks and that decision will be based on "the sovereignty, values and higher interests of the country."

Violence has spiked in Afghanistan since the February 2020 deal was signed. Peace talks between the Taliban and Afghan government, which were part of the agreement, quickly bogged down. On Friday, a truck bomb in eastern Logar province killed 21 people, many of them police and students.

Afghans have paid the highest price since 2001, with 47,245 civilians killed, according to the Costs of War project. Millions more have been displaced inside Afghanistan or have fled to Pakistan, Iran and Europe.

Afghanistan's security forces are expected to come under increasing pressure from the Taliban after the withdrawal if no peace agreement is reached in the interim, according to Afghan watchers.

Since the start of the war they have taken heavy losses, with estimates ranging from 66,000 to 69,000 Afghan troops killed. The Afghan military has been battered by corruption. The U.S. and NATO pay \$4 billion a year to sustain the force.

Some 300,000 Afghan troops are on the books, although the actual number is believed to be lower. Commanders have been found to inflate the numbers to collect paychecks of so-called "ghost soldiers," according to the U.S. watchdog monitoring Washington's spending in Afghanistan.

Still, the Afghan defense ministry and presidential palace in separate statements have said that Afghanistan's security forces are in good shape to defend against Taliban advances.

Last year was the only year U.S. and NATO troops did not suffer a loss. The Defense Department says 2,442 U.S. troops have been killed and 20,666 wounded since 2001. It is estimated that over 3,800 U.S. private security contractors have been killed. The Pentagon does not track their deaths.

The conflict also has killed 1,144 personnel from NATO countries.

The Taliban, meanwhile, are at their strongest since being ousted in 2001. While mapping their gains and territorial holds is difficult, they are believed to hold sway or outright control over nearly half of Afghanistan.

"We are telling the departing Americans ... you fought a meaningless war and paid a cost for that and we also offered huge sacrifices for our liberation," Shaheen told the AP on Friday.

Striking a more conciliatory tone, he added: "If you ... open a new chapter of helping Afghans in reconstruction and rehabilitation of the country, the Afghans will appreciate that."

In announcing the departure, Biden said waiting for ideal conditions to leave would consign America to an indefinite stay.

In the Afghan capital and throughout the country, there is a growing fear that chaos will follow the departure of the last foreign troops. After billions of dollars and decades of war, many Afghans wonder at whether it was worth it.

"Violence has been at its peak ever since the coming of foreigners. Every day we witnessed suicide attacks and explosions," said Hashmat Ullah, an Afghan browsing a marketplace in central Kabul Saturday. He welcomed the final withdrawal.

## May Day protesters demand more job protections amid pandemic

By NICHOLAS GARRIGA, NINIEK KARMINI and JOHN LEICESTER undefined

PARIS (AP) — Workers and union leaders dusted off bullhorns and flags that had stayed furled during coronavirus lockdowns for slimmed down but still boisterous — and at times violent — May Day marches on Saturday, demanding more labor protections amid a pandemic that has turned economies and workplaces upside down.

In countries that mark May 1 as International Labor Day, the annual celebration of workers' rights produced a rare sight during the pandemic: large and closely packed crowds, with marchers striding shoulder-to-shoulder with clenched fists behind banners.

In Turkey and the Philippines, police prevented the May Day protests, enforcing virus lockdowns and making hundreds of arrests. In France, some marchers battled with riot police.

For labor leaders, the day was a test of their ability to mobilize workers in the face of the profound economic disruptions.

In France, thousands took to the streets with union banners and flags, hemmed in by and sometimes scuffling with riot police. The face masks worn by many marchers were a reminder of how much life has changed since the last traditional May Day celebrations — in 2019, before the spreading coronavirus wrecked lives and livelihoods and eroded civil liberties, often including the right to demonstrate.

Riot police clashed with some demonstrators in Paris and the southern city of Lyon, while burning roadblocks threw clouds of smoke into the Paris air. Police charged crowds to catch suspected troublemakers and fired small amounts of tear gas. Police in Paris said they made 34 arrests. Authorities also reported five arrests and 27 police officers injured in Lyon. But most of the dozens of marches across France passed off without incident.

Some demonstrations, constricted by coronavirus restrictions, were markedly less well-attended than those before the pandemic. Russia saw just a fraction of its usual May Day activities amid a coronavirus ban on gatherings. The Russian Communist Party drew only a few hundred people to lay wreaths in Moscow. For a second straight year in Italy, May Day passed without the usual large marches and rock concerts.

But in France, Germany and other places where rallies were allowed, workers vented their concerns over jobs and protections. In Bosnia, coal miner Turni Kadric said he and his colleagues are "barely surviving."

In Indonesia, Southeast Asia's largest economy, thousands voiced anger at a new jobs law that critics fear will reduce severance pay, lessen restrictions for foreign workers and increase outsourcing as the nation seeks to attract more investment. Protesters in the capital of Jakarta laid mock graves on the street to symbolize hopelessness and marches were being held in some 200 cities.

In the Philippine capital of Manila, where a monthlong coronavirus lockdown has been extended by two weeks amid a surge in infections, police prevented hundreds of workers from demonstrating at a public plaza, protest leader Renato Reyes said. But protesters did gather briefly at a busy Manila boulevard, demanding pandemic cash aid, wage subsidies and COVID-19 vaccines amid rising unemployment and hunger.

"Workers were largely left to fend for themselves while being locked down," labor leader Josua Mata said.

In Turkey, a few labor leaders were allowed to lay wreaths in Istanbul's Taksim Square but riot police stopped many others from reaching the plaza. The Istanbul governor's office said 212 people were taken into custody for breaching coronavirus restrictions. Turks are barred from leaving home, except to collect essential food and medicine, under a lockdown until May 17 that aims to halt a surge in infections.

In Germany, where previous May Day demonstrations have often turned violent, police deployed thousands of officers and warned that rallies would be halted if marchers failed to follow coronavirus restrictions. Protests in Berlin called for lower rents, higher wages and voiced other concerns. Also marching were far-right coronavirus deniers and opponents of anti-virus measures, police said.

In Italy, police faced off against a few hundred demonstrators in the northern city of Turin. In Rome, Italy's head of state paid tribute to workers and health care workers.

"Particularly heavy has been the impact from the crisis on female labor and on the access of young

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people to jobs," Italian President Sergio Mattarella said.

Across the Atlantic in Brazil, thousands of demonstrators backing President Jair Bolsonaro's anti-lockdown stance rallied at Rio de Janeiro's iconic Copacabana beach — one of several such gatherings across the country. There were also protests in Brasilia and other cities to denounce Bolsonaro's handling of the pandemic. Brazil has seen over 400,000 confirmed COVID-19 deaths, a toll second only to the United States.

## Season of the Slump: Baseball keeps swinging and missing

By RONALD BLUM AP Baseball Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Don Mattingly starred in the action-packed 1980s.

Now the Miami Marlins manager, Donnie Baseball worries about a record lack of hits -- and not just from his team's bats.

"I don't think it's cyclical at this point," he said. "There's so much swing and miss, it's kind of off the charts. I think it's something that we have to address."

It's the Season of the Slump, even for All-Stars like Marcell Ozuna (.202), Charlie Blackmon (.184) and Francisco Lindor (.189). Miguel Cabrera, the only Triple Crown winner in a half-century, is batting .140.

Major league batters are hitting just .232 overall through April, down from .252 two years ago and under the record low of .237 set in the infamous 1968 season that resulted in a lower pitcher's mound.

The Mendoza line may not mean what it used to.

Strikeouts have averaged 9.06 per team per game, on pace to set a record for the 13th consecutive full season — up from 8.81 two years ago and nearly double the 4.77 in 1979. Strikeouts already are 1,092 ahead of hits, just three years after exceeding hits for the first time over a full season.

Hits are averaging a record-low 7.63 after fluctuating from 8 to 10 from 1937 through last year, excepting 1968's dip to a then-alarming 7.91.

While it's a bear market for batters, pitchers are on bull runs.

Joe Musgrove of San Diego and Carlos Rodón of the Chicago White Sox became the second pair of pitchers in a half-century to throw April no-hitters, the first since Atlanta's Kent Mercker and Minnesota's Scott Erickson in 1994. Arizona's Madison Bumgarner pitched another, but the shortened seven-inning gem in a doubleheader was not recognized by MLB.

Mattingly, a six-time All-Star, never struck out more than 43 times in a season during a career from 1982-92.

Texas slugger Joey Gallo already has whiffed 40 times, as has Cincinnati's Eugenio Suárez.

"Pitching has always been further ahead in the analytical world, and applying information to the competition has been much faster on the run-prevention side than the run-production side," said Detroit Tigers manager A.J. Hinch, a former big league catcher.

"I have great concern that our sport has turned into a lack of offense and the strikeout-homer-walk Three True Outcomes is not our best entertainment product. ... We're trending in the wrong direction. It doesn't mean we can just snap our fingers and make a rule change or do one simple thing and all of a sudden we're going to turn into a more balanced sport."

Detroit finished April with a .199 batting average, on track to shatter the low of .211 set by the 1910 Chicago White Sox.

Just 16.6% of pitches have been put in play this season through midweek, according to MLB Statcast, matching last year and down from 18.6% in 2015.

Perhaps it's the Rawlings baseballs, which were slightly deadened this year in a change MLB said an independent lab found would cause balls to fly 1 to 2 feet shorter when hit over 375 feet. Or maybe it's the five teams that added humidors to their stadiums, raising the total to 10 of 30 with humidity-controlled storage spaces.

Home runs have dropped from a record 1.39 per team per game in 2019 to 1.28 in 2020's shortened season to 1.14 this year, the lowest since 2015.

Data shows pitchers are throwing harder in the analytic age, where many big leaguers have had their

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mechanics analyzed at Driveline Baseball, Cressey Sports Performance or the American Sports Medicine Institute in an effort to gain velocity, efficiency and durability.

The average four-seam fastball velocity was 93.5 mph, according to Statcast, up from 93.4 mph last year and 92.9 mph in 2015.

And batters have refined their swing paths in an effort to hit home runs, less distressed about strikeouts than Ruth & Gehrig or even Willie, Mickey & the Duke.

Baseball Commissioner Rob Manfred declined comment, saying it was only one month. Union head Tony Clark, a former All-Star first baseman, also declined comment.

Many baseball veterans try not to draw conclusions from Aprils, when cold and blustery weather can hold down offense. Still, a comparison to previous seasons through April is startling.

The batting average was the lowest through April since .230 in 1968, according to the Elias Sports Bureau. The .309 on-base percentage was the lowest since .294 in 1968 and the .3894 slugging percentage a mark not seen since 2014's .3389, Elias said.

"It's an inconsistent weather month, which tends to depress offense a little bit. I tend to kind of hold off judgment until we get into the summer months," New York Yankees manager Aaron Boone said.

"I would say pitching now is as good as it's been and as specific as it been? I think people really know better than ever what makes a pitcher really good and what their true strengths are other than what you think their strengths are and how you can target different matchups."

Jacob deGrom of the Mets has a 0.51 ERA, on track to break the post dead-ball era record of 1.12 set by the St. Louis Cardinals' Bob Gibson in 1968.

"You see deGrom -- you can see guys go out and punch out 14, 15, you're like, OK, it's not like not that big of a deal anymore," Mattingly said. "It seems like teams are striking out 12, 15 times a night, and that's just normal."

MLB instituted a new rule in 2020 requiring a pitcher to face three batters or complete a half-inning. Among the experiments in the minor leagues that start Tuesday are requiring Double-A infielders to keep both feet in the infield at the start of every play; expanding bases from 15-by-15 inches to 18-by-18 at Triple-A. In the independent Atlantic League starting Aug. 3, the pitching rubber will be moved back 12 inches to 61 feet, 6 inches.

In a sign of pitching dominance, there have been 69 team shutouts this season, a pace that would total 439 and smash the record of 359 in 1915. Even accounting for additional games caused by expansion, the percentage of games in which a team failed to score would trail only 1972 and 1968 since the end of the dead-ball era in 1919.

"I think the big thing nobody talks about is the proliferation of the breaking ball," Los Angeles Angels manager Joe Maddon said. "Everybody's worried about velocity. It's about the breaking ball to me. That's where a lot of the numbers have gone to. Hitters normally could catch up to the velocity, if that's all they're going to see."

Maddon is against rules changes to boost batters.

"I don't like legislating hardly anything," Maddon said. "I'm much more that things change based on people making adaptations and adjustments based on what they're seeing."

## More perilous phase ahead for Biden after his 1st 100 days

By JONATHAN LEMIRE, JOSH BOAK and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Joe Biden's presidency is entering a new and more perilous phase where he is almost certain to face stiffer Republican opposition and also have difficulty keeping Democrats united as he pushes for \$4 trillion in additional spending on programs that have echoes of the New Deal and the Great Society.

Past the 100-day mark, with positive approval ratings and a far-reaching, nearly \$2 trillion COVID-19 relief bill to show for it, Biden is now facing far more uncertain terrain. The president is racing against the calendar, governing with the most slender of majorities on Capitol Hill while knowing that historically the

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party that holds the White House loses seats in midterm elections, which would cost Democrats control of Congress after the 2022 vote.

His next 100 days will feature his first foreign trip but will be dominated by his push to pass his expansive plans on infrastructure and children, families and education, which would expand the social safety net for children, increase taxes on the wealthy and fund projects that his critics say are infrastructure in name only.

Overall, his approach is less about stimulating the economy than stabilizing it over the long term with middle-class jobs, and proving that a democracy, even a bitterly divided one, remains capable of doing big things.

"In another era when our democracy was tested, Franklin Roosevelt reminded us: In America, we do our part," Biden said in his address to Congress on Wednesday night. "That's all I'm asking. That we all do our part. And if we do, then we will meet the central challenge of the age by proving that democracy is durable and strong."

Biden has made personal overtures to Republicans in Congress, but the efforts were aimed at least as much at Republican voters, who have been far more supportive of his plans. A nod to bipartisanship is also important to reassure moderate Democrats such as Sen. Joe Manchin of West Virginia that the president is at least trying to win over Republicans, even if in the end he might push ahead without them.

His task may be easier given the hopeful signs of a strong economic recovery, with an annualized growth rate of 6.4% during the first three months of the year. With the relief bill passed, Biden's economic team is now able to focus on structural issues such as income inequality, systemic racism and shortfalls in public investment.

"These were ideas that were germinating pre-pandemic," said Heather Boushey, a member of the White House Council of Economic Advisers. "It feels like these are things that we've known we needed to do."

Several aides are now focused on distributing billions of dollars from the relief package for housing assistance, school upgrades and state and local government aid.

The administration also wants to measure the results of the spending to show Congress that its relief programs are succeeding.

One example: The expanded child tax credit is of critical importance because Biden has proposed extending the one-year increase through 2025 as part of his families plan.

"We know that implementing the enhanced child tax credit right is critical not just to cutting child poverty this year but to showing it can be done well so that it builds support for extending it on and on," said Gene Sperling, named by Biden to oversee the relief programs.

With such expensive and wide-ranging programs, Biden has not shied away from comparisons between his own ambitious legislative agenda and those championed by a pair of his Democratic predecessors, Franklin D. Roosevelt and Lyndon B. Johnson. When the \$1.9 trillion COVID relief bill was passed in March, Biden gathered with Harris and a few senior staff members in the Roosevelt Room to watch the vote.

Biden recalled that it was in that room where, as vice president, he and President Barack Obama watched the final passage of the Affordable Care Act some 11 years earlier. But he remembered that room being packed with people, something impossible to do during the pandemic.

"If we didn't have COVID, we'd probably all be raising a glass together but instead this is what we are doing," Biden said, according to two White House officials who were not authorized to speak publicly about private moments.

The meaning was clear: Even in a moment of triumph, the pandemic was ever-present. But now, with virus cases falling and vaccinations spreading, Biden must guide the nation toward reopening from COVID-19 lockdowns.

He took a cautious step Tuesday by highlighting changing guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on outdoor mask-wearing. More fundamental steps are ahead as Biden tries to guide the country toward resuming normal activities, fully reopening offices and schools and safely fulfilling pent-up demand for travel, dining and entertainment.

To this point, the public has largely gone along. Gallup polling shows Biden's average approval rating

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over his first three months in office is 56%, higher than Donald Trump's at 41% but slightly lower than Barack Obama's at 63%.

But Biden fares less well on some specific issues such as immigration and the border. West Wing officials were caught off guard by the rise in the number of migrants, many of them children, streaming across the U.S.-Mexico border, creating a humanitarian upheaval and handing Republicans a political cudgel.

"The border and immigration has been a huge challenge, and it will continue to be in the next 100 days and beyond," said David Axelrod, who was a senior advisor to Obama. "The president's desire to confront issues like gun violence and voting rights may continue to outstrip the capacity a bare Senate majority allows, which may anger his progressive base."

Biden has counseled patience to some of the left, stressing the importance of sequencing legislation, prioritizing the infrastructure plan before turning to thornier issues such as immigration, voting rights, guns and policing. The president blitzed through executive actions on those issues but will likely need cooperation with Congress for any meaningful action.

That won't be easy. The Senate Republican leader, Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, derided Biden's agenda as a "multitrillion-dollar shopping list that was neither designed nor intended to earn bipartisan buy-in, a blueprint for giving Washington even more money and even more power to micromanage American families."

There has been some bipartisan momentum on policing after the guilty verdict in the killing of George Floyd, a Black Man, who died under the knee of Derek Chauvin, a former Minneapolis police officer. But gridlock threatens other issues, with rising chatter from Democrats on Capitol Hill that a change to the filibuster may be needed.

"Things will begin to percolate on parallel tracks," said White House senior adviser Steve Ricchetti. "There is a lot of work on immigration and police reform and criminal justice reform being done in the committees and in the White House, we're engaged in serious, healthy dialogue. And then we'll see what's ready to go and when."

But Biden will also have to turn his focus to international affairs.

The defining relationship will be with China, which Biden invokes as an economic rival that can only be defeated if democracy is repaired at home. He has so far largely continued Trump's tough approach and maintained most tariffs.

He has ordered urgent help to India, a nation reeling from COVID-19. In a jam on Iran sanctions, the president will be forced to choose which Trump-era sanctions to lift in a bid to coax Tehran back into compliance with the its nuclear deal.

In June, he is scheduled to make his first trip overseas as commander in chief, heading to Britain for an economic summit and then to Brussels to pledge support to NATO, the military alliance built as a bulwark to Moscow's aggression.

And, while not finalized, negotiations are being held to add a third stop: a summit, elsewhere in Europe, with Russia's Vladimir Putin.

## India launches effort to inoculate all adults against COVID

By ANIRUDDHA GHOSAL and MARIA CHENG Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — In hopes of taming a monstrous spike in COVID-19 infections, India opened vaccinations to all adults Saturday, launching a huge inoculation effort that was sure to tax the limits of the federal government, the country's vaccine factories and the patience of its 1.4 billion people.

The world's largest maker of vaccines was still short of critical supplies — the result of lagging manufacturing and raw material shortages that delayed the rollout in several states. And even in places where the shots were in stock, the country's wide economic disparities made access to the vaccine inconsistent.

The country's ambitious effort was also partly overshadowed Saturday by a fire in a COVID-19 ward in western India that killed 18 patients, and the reported deaths of eight patients at a New Delhi hospital after it ran short of oxygen supplies. That report, from the Press Trust of India news agency, could not be immediately confirmed with hospital authorities.

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Also Saturday, the country received its first batch of Sputnik V vaccines, which it is importing from Russia. Moscow has signed a deal with an Indian pharmaceutical company to distribute 125 million doses.

Only a fraction of India's population will be able to afford the prices charged by private hospitals for vaccines, experts said, meaning that states will be saddled with immunizing the 600 million Indian adults younger than 45, while the federal government gives shots to 300 million health care and front-line workers and people older than 45.

So far, government vaccines have been free, and private hospitals have been permitted to sell shots at a price capped at 250 rupees, or around \$3. That practice will now change: Prices for state governments and private hospitals will be determined by vaccine companies. Some states might not be able to provide vaccines for free since they are paying twice as much as the federal government for the same shot, and prices at private hospitals could rise.

Since state governments and private players compete for shots in the same marketplace, and states pay less for the doses, vaccine makers can reap more profit by selling to the private sector, said Chandrakant Lahariya, a health policy expert. That cost can then be passed on to people receiving the shots, increasing inequity.

"There is no logic that two different governments should be paying two prices," he said.

Concerns that pricing issues could deepen inequities are only the most recent hitch in India's sluggish immunization efforts. Less than 2% of the population has been fully immunized against COVID-19 and around 10% has received a single dose. Immunization rates have also fallen. The average number of shots per day dipped from over 3.6 million in early April to less than 2.5 million right now.

In the worst-hit state of Maharashtra, the health minister promised free vaccines for those ages 18 to 44, but he also acknowledged that the shortage of doses meant immunization would not start as planned on Saturday. States say the paucity of shots is one reason why immunizations have declined.

India thought the worst was over when cases ebbed in September. But mass gatherings such as political rallies and religious events were allowed to continue, and relaxed attitudes on the risks fueled a major humanitarian crisis, according to health experts. New variants of the coronavirus have partly led the surge.

The country's shortage of shots has global implications because, in addition to its own inoculation efforts, India has promised to ship vaccines abroad as part of a United Nations vaccine-sharing program that is dependent on its supply.

Indian vaccine makers produce an estimated 70 million doses each month of the two approved shots — the AstraZeneca vaccine made by the Serum Institute of India and another one made by Bharat Biotech.

The federal government is buying half of those vaccines to give to states. The remaining half can then be bought by states and private hospitals to be given to anyone over 18, but at prices set by the companies.

The federal government is buying shots at 150 rupees each, or \$2. The Serum Institute will sell the shots to states at 300 rupees each, or \$4, and to private players at 600 rupees each, or \$8. Bharat Biotech said it will charge states 400 rupees, or less than \$5.50 for a shot, and private players 1,200 rupees, or more than \$16.

By comparison, the European Union paid \$2.15 per dose for the AstraZeneca vaccine. The company says that price is discounted because the EU contributed to the vaccine's development.

The strain is mounting on the Serum Institute, which in addition to being India's main supplier is also a critical supplier of the U.N.-backed initiative known as COVAX, which more than 90 countries are depending on. The institute paused exports in March.

"The urgent demand for vaccines in India is bad for the rest of the world," said Ravi Gupta, a professor of clinical microbiology at Cambridge University.

Some experts warned that conducting a massive inoculation effort now could worsen the surge in a country that is second only to the United States in its number of infections — more than 19.1 million.

"There's ample evidence that having people wait in a long, crowded, disorderly queue could itself be a source of infection," said Dr. Bharat Pankhania, a senior clinical lecturer specializing in infectious diseases at Britain's University of Exeter. He urged India to first stop the circulation of the virus by imposing "a long, sustained, strictly enforced lockdown."



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Pankhania cautioned that immunization efforts alone would not help immediately stem the current spike of COVID-19, since shots “only start to bear fruit in about three months’ time.” Vaccination would help prevent future waves of infection, he said.

Given the urgent need for vaccines, some experts said rationing available doses is critical.

“Vaccines need to be delivered to the areas with the most intense transmission,” Gupta said, explaining that vaccines should be used as “emergency control measures” in specific regions of India rather than offering doses to all adults across the subcontinent.

Pankhania said the widely seen images of Indian virus patients gasping for air and smoke billowing from makeshift funeral pyres should spur rich countries to share their vaccines more freely. He criticized the approach taken by many Western countries that are attempting to vaccinate all citizens, including younger people at low risk, before sharing any doses.

“It is better globally to immunize all the (vulnerable) people that need to be protected rather than to immunize entire populations in only some countries,” Pankhania said.

## Progress noted at diplomats’ talks on Iran nuclear deal

By PHILIPP JENNE and KIRSTEN GRIESHABER Associated Press

VIENNA (AP) — High-ranking diplomats from China, Germany, France, Russia and Britain made progress at talks Saturday focused on bringing the United States back into their landmark nuclear deal with Iran, but said they need more work and time to bring about a future agreement.

After the meeting, Russia’s top representative, Mikhail Ulyanov, tweeted that members of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA, “noted today the indisputable progress made at the Vienna talks on restoration of the nuclear deal.”

“The Joint Commission will reconvene at the end of the next week,” Ulyanov wrote. “In the meantime, experts will continue to draft elements of future agreement.”

The U.S. did not have a representative at the table when the diplomats met in Vienna because former President Donald Trump unilaterally pulled the country out of the deal in 2018. Trump also restored and augmented sanctions to try to force Iran into renegotiating the pact with more concessions.

U.S. President Joe Biden wants to rejoin the deal, however, and a U.S. delegation in Vienna was taking part in indirect talks with Iran, with diplomats from the other world powers acting as go-betweens.

The Biden administration is considering a rollback of some of the most stringent Trump-era sanctions in a bid to get Iran to come back into compliance with the nuclear agreement, according to information from current and former U.S. officials and others familiar with the matter.

Ahead of the main talks, Ulyanov said JCPOA members met on the side with officials from the U.S. delegation but that the Iranian delegation was not ready to meet with U.S. diplomats.

The nuclear deal promised Iran economic incentives in exchange for curbs on its nuclear program. The reimposition of U.S. sanctions has left the Islamic Republic’s economy reeling. Tehran has responded by steadily increasing its violations of the restrictions of the deal, such as increasing the purity of uranium it enriches and its stockpiles, in a thus-far unsuccessful effort to pressure the other countries to provide relief from the sanctions.

The ultimate goal of the deal is to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear bomb, something it insists it doesn’t want to do. Iran now has enough enriched uranium to make a bomb, but nowhere near the amount it had before the nuclear deal was signed.

The Vienna talks began in early April and have included several rounds of high-level discussions. Expert groups also have been working on how to resolve the issues around the American sanctions and Iranian compliance, as well as the “possible sequencing” of the U.S. return.

Outside the talks in Vienna, other challenges remain.

An attack suspected to have been carried out by Israel recently struck Iran’s Natanz nuclear site, causing an unknown amount of damage. Tehran retaliated by beginning to enrich a small amount of uranium up to 60% purity, its highest level ever.

## **Powell's high-stakes bet: More jobs but only mild inflation**

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — With employers hiring, consumers spending and companies raising some prices, Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell is embarking on a high-stakes gamble.

Powell's bet is that the Fed can keep rates ultra-low even as the U.S. economic recovery kicks into high gear — and that it won't have to quickly raise rates to stop runaway inflation.

It's just the kind of gamble that in the past led some of Powell's predecessors to miscalculate and inadvertently derail the economy.

Powell and the rest of the Fed's policymaking committee plan to keep rates near zero until nearly everyone who wants a job has one, even after inflation has crept above their 2% annual target level. Faster growth raises the risk that the Fed will eventually have to respond quickly and aggressively to a sudden acceleration of prices — and potentially cause a slump, even another recession.

Getting the timing right on interest rate policy is a tricky task that has bedeviled Fed chairs for decades. Arthur Burns, who led the central bank in the 1970s, is widely blamed for allowing inflation to get out of hand after yielding to pressure from President Richard Nixon to forgo further rate hikes. Critics also argue that Alan Greenspan, whose long tenure as Fed chair ended in 2006, failed to lift rates quickly or sharply enough to prevent the housing bubble that ignited the 2008 financial crisis and the Great Recession.

Even Chair Janet Yellen's decision in December 2015 to slightly raise the Fed's key short-term rate after it had sat near zero for seven years is now seen by most economists as having been premature. The economy slowed partly as a result.

But in many ways, Powell's gamble is unique. For one thing, it's based on fundamental changes to the way the Fed pursues its goals. The central bank has always sought a delicate balance between its two mandates: Keeping prices stable and maximizing employment.

But Powell has placed a much greater emphasis on jobs than his predecessors generally did. He has also defined the Fed's goal of maximum employment more broadly: He has underscored that it includes addressing the particular challenges of low-income workers, non-college grads and people of color — something previous Fed chairs seldom mentioned.

And the Powell Fed is now aiming to fulfill its mandate for price stability by seeking higher inflation, after decades in which the Fed fought to hold it down. That's because inflation has now remained persistently below 2% for nearly the entire decade since the Fed adopted that target. Too-low inflation can morph into deflation, a prolonged drop in prices and wages that typically makes people and companies reluctant to spend.

"The Volcker era started the war on inflation," said Tim Duy, chief economist at SGH Macro Advisers, referring to Paul Volcker, whose sky-high rates during his Fed chairmanship in the early 1980s choked off double-digit inflation yet caused a destructive recession in the process. "The Powell era starts the war on unemployment and inequality. It is a dramatic change from past policies."

Recent economic reports have depicted a surging recovery from the pandemic recession: Americans' incomes soared in March by the most on record, boosted by \$1,400 stimulus checks, and spending rose at a healthy pace. The number of Americans seeking unemployment aid fell for a third straight week. Consumer confidence has reached a pandemic high. And the economy expanded at a vigorous annual rate of 6.4% in the first three months of the year.

In March, employers added nearly 1 million jobs, a figure unheard-of before the pandemic. The unemployment rate dipped to 6%; a year ago, it was 14.8%.

All of which has raised concerns about inflation pressures. Many companies, caught off guard by the speed of the rebound, are short of raw materials and parts. Procter & Gamble, 3M and Coca-Cola have said they plan to raise prices to offset the higher cost of commodities like lumber, sugar and grains. Supply bottlenecks are forcing up the prices of factory components.

Yet at a news conference Wednesday, Powell showed no sign of wavering from his bet. He acknowl-

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edged that economic prospects are brightening. But he also stressed that the job market's recovery is far from complete, with 8.4 million jobs still lost to the pandemic. And he reiterated that the Fed wants to keep nurturing the job market, in part to support people whose jobs are gone — waiters at shuttered restaurants, for instance, or people whose factory jobs are now automated — and who may need to look to new occupations.

Yet it can take months or more for the unemployed to switch careers. And that means the Fed may choose to keep borrowing rates ultra-low longer than it otherwise would have.

"We want to get them back to work as quickly as possible," Powell said. "That's really one of the things we're trying to achieve with our policy."

Downplaying the risk of long-term high inflation, Powell suggested that recent price hikes reflect mainly supply bottlenecks that will work themselves out as companies find alternative suppliers or raw material producers increase output.

"An episode of one-time price increases as the economy reopens," Powell said, "is not likely to lead to persistently higher year-over-year inflation into the future."

Some economists, notably former Treasury Secretary Larry Summers, have warned that the Fed's low rates, along with the \$4 trillion in proposed additional spending by the Biden administration, on top of roughly \$5 trillion already approved by Congress, risk accelerating inflation.

On Wednesday, Powell said that if inflation got out of hand, the Fed could raise its short-term rate in time to rein it back in. Higher rates tend to cool inflation by slowing borrowing and spending.

But the Fed chair clearly doesn't think a sharp surge in prices is likely. Powell is banking on the notion that Americans no longer anticipate high inflation as they did during, say, the 1970s. If consumers and businesses expect inflation to stay low, they don't usually act in ways that elevate it, like pushing for higher pay or charging customers more to offset higher supply costs. With inflation expectations in check, Powell's thinking goes, supply bottlenecks should have just a temporary effect.

So far, anyway, the evidence suggests that Powell's bet is working: According to the latest University of Michigan consumer sentiment survey, while consumers expect higher inflation over the next 12 months, they consider it only temporary. Over the next five years, they expect inflation to average 2.7%, little changed from a year earlier.

On Friday, the government said prices rose 2.3% in March from a year ago, according to the Fed's preferred gauge, but most of that increase reflected a jump in volatile energy costs. By contrast, "core" prices rose just 1.8%.

The Powell Fed has said it wants inflation to top 2% for "some time," to make up for the years when inflation remained chronically below that target level. Accordingly, the Fed has jettisoned a decades-old approach in which it adjusted rates based on forecasts of inflation and unemployment. Now, the Fed wants to see evidence that inflation is accelerating before it lifts rates, rather than acting early in anticipation of it.

That change is crucial, Duy noted. Previously, when the jobless rate fell to a point that Fed officials worried would spur inflation, they would hike rates and sometimes prevent or delay further job gains.

In December 2015, for example, when the Fed raised its benchmark rate by a quarter-point, the unemployment rate was 5.1% and inflation was just 1.3%. Yellen had explained in a September 2015 speech why she planned to do so.

"Why not hold off raising the rate until the economy has reached full employment and inflation is actually back at 2 percent?" Yellen asked, essentially previewing Powell's current approach. "The difficulty with this strategy is that monetary policy affects real activity and inflation with a substantial lag."

If the Fed were to wait, she warned, it might have to raise rates "relatively abruptly" to slow inflation, potentially threatening the economy.

Yet unemployment continued to fall for roughly four more years — all the way to a 50-year low of 3.5%. Even then, inflation barely budged. Powell was a member of the Fed's Board of Governors during that time.

"The result was very positive," said Harry Holzer, an economist at Georgetown University. "Jay Powell took away a strong lesson from that experience."

## States see potential federal windfall, go slow on road taxes

By DAVID A. LIEB Associated Press

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (AP) — Raising state taxes to improve roads and bridges is one of the few things many Republican and Democratic lawmakers have agreed on in recent years.

Those efforts have slowed this year, even as lawmakers acknowledge a widening gap between needed work and the money to pay for it. One reason: the federal response to the coronavirus pandemic.

Some states are “waiting to see what direction the federal government is going to be taking,” said Carolyn Kramer, an advocacy director with the American Road & Transportation Builders Association.

State lawmakers across the country have proposed fewer than 170 transportation funding bills this year — barely half the amount proposed during the last post-election year of 2019, according to the association. So far, not a single transportation tax increase has passed, though several are pending.

Kramer said states are still assessing the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on their economies, but also are watching for a potential gusher of federal money. Numerous avenues exist for new federal road funding:

— President Joe Biden signed a coronavirus relief package that includes \$350 billion for state and local governments. Some states such as Indiana and Maryland already are planning to spend part of that on transportation projects; others are awaiting federal guidance on using the money.

— Biden also has proposed at least \$135 billion for roads and bridges as part of a \$2.3 trillion infrastructure plan. Senate Republicans have countered with an infrastructure proposal that would dedicate \$299 billion to roads and bridges.

— Congress is working on a long-term renewal of the nation’s main highway program that could direct billions more annually to states.

The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials has urged Congress to essentially double existing funding, with a \$200 billion road-and-bridge stimulus, plus an additional \$487 billion in a five-year highway program.

The proposals could add up to more federal road-and-bridge aid than at any time in years.

“It looks like a cruise ship sitting in a pond — that’s how much money we’re getting flowing into the state of Colorado from the federal government,” said Colorado state Sen. Ray Scott, a Republican. “If Biden does get this pushed through and we have additional funding coming our way, why would we go after the taxpayer when we have ways we can handle it right now?”

While Scott wants to base any transportation plan on an influx of federal money, Democratic Gov. Jared Polis and the state’s Democratic legislative leaders want to raise fees on gasoline sales, electric and hybrid vehicles, ride-sharing companies and retail delivery services.

“Colorado’s transportation system is so far behind that we need federal investment and we need state-level investment,” said Democratic state Sen. Faith Winter.

Colorado’s gas tax has remained unchanged since 1991 while per capita spending on transportation has fallen by almost half. The new funding plan has yet to receive a legislative hearing, though Democratic lawmakers could still speed it through if they desire.

Bills to raise gas taxes already have failed this year in Arizona, Kentucky, Mississippi and Wyoming.

After the North Dakota House passed a 3-cent gas tax increase, the Senate solidly defeated it. The Legislature instead passed a \$680 million infrastructure bonding plan aimed primarily at flood-control projects that also includes \$70 million for roads and bridges. The bonds will be repaid with earnings from the state’s oil tax savings account.

North Dakota Senate Majority Leader Rich Wardner said the lucrative oil fund makes a gas tax increase unnecessary. He said the state’s road and bridge spending could be supplemented with federal COVID-19 relief money and, if passed, a federal infrastructure bill.

“That money is frosting on the cake,” Wardner said.

Louisiana state Rep. Jack McFarland, who spent months traveling the state to pitch a gradual 22-cent gas tax increase, decided to drop the idea in the face of opposition from fellow Republicans. He said it

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was hard to persuade people to support a gas tax when the state is getting several billion dollars from the federal coronavirus relief package.

Economic restrictions ordered by governors to slow the virus' spread provided an initial hit to state revenues. But some states have rebounded to post budget surpluses buoyed by stronger-than-expected income tax revenue and federal aid.

"You cannot sell a tax increase to the public at a time when you've got something like \$4 billion sitting in your checkbook. That's just not going to happen," said Minnesota state Sen. Tom Bakk, an independent who is a former Democratic majority leader.

The Democrat-controlled Minnesota House passed a transportation funding measure that would raise the vehicle sales tax and link the gas tax rate to inflation. But the Republican-led Senate scrapped all tax hikes while passing its own transportation bill.

Unlike many types of taxes, gas tax hikes for roads and bridges had garnered bipartisan support in recent years. Since 2013, at least 29 states — some led by Republicans, others by Democrats — have raised fuel taxes. But none have done so since Virginia lawmakers passed a gas tax increase in March 2020, shortly before the coronavirus shutdowns.

Washington state lawmakers gave themselves a nudge toward a future gas tax hike. The Democrat-led Legislature recently passed an environmental plan capping carbon pollution that will take effect in 2023 only if lawmakers pass a new transportation spending plan that raises gas taxes by at least 5 cents a gallon.

Fuel tax increases also have been proposed this year in Alaska and Missouri, which have the nation's lowest gas taxes. A bill to double Alaska's 8-cent-per-gallon gas tax advanced from a House committee in March but has not gone further.

Republican state Rep. Kevin McCabe, who opposes the increase, cited an economy still struggling from the pandemic and Alaska's high cost of living.

"Adding another almost 10 cents a gallon to the price of their commute, they just wouldn't be able to handle it," he said.

A proposal to phase in a 12.5-cent-a-gallon gas tax hike passed the Missouri Senate with bipartisan support and is pending in the House, where the top Republican has expressed resistance. The state's 17-cent-a-gallon rate hasn't changed since 1996.

At a recent House hearing, a lobbyist for Missouri gas stations highlighted Biden's infrastructure plan while suggesting lawmakers could pare back the proposed gas tax.

Missouri Senate President Pro Tem Dave Schatz, who is sponsoring the bill, said he doesn't want to wait for a potential federal windfall to start closing Missouri's estimated \$745 million annual funding gap for roads and bridges.

"I don't think there is a program or plan coming from Washington, D.C., that will address the kind of shortfalls that we've seen," Schatz said.

## **Black Freedmen struggle for recognition as tribal citizens**

By SEAN MURPHY Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) — As the U.S. faces a reckoning over its history of racism, some Native American tribal nations that once owned slaves also are grappling with their own mistreatment of Black people.

When Native American tribes were forced from their ancestral homelands in the southeastern United States to what is now Oklahoma in the 1800s — known as the Trail of Tears — thousands of Black slaves owned by tribal members also were removed and forced to provide manual labor along the way. Once in Oklahoma, slaves often toiled on plantation-style farms or were servants in tribal members' homes.

Nearly 200 years later, many of the thousands of descendants of those Black slaves, known as Freedmen, are still fighting to be recognized by the tribes that once owned their ancestors. The fight has continued since the killing of George Floyd last year by a Minneapolis police officer spurred a reexamination of the vestiges of slavery in the U.S.

CHEROKEE NATION FREEDMEN

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The Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Muscogee (Creek) and Seminole nations were referred to historically as the Five Civilized Tribes, or Five Tribes, by European settlers because they often assimilated into the settlers' culture, adopting their style of dress and religion, and even owning slaves. Each tribe also has a unique history with Freedmen, whose rights were ultimately spelled out in separate treaties with the U.S.

Today, the Cherokee Nation is the only tribe that fully recognizes the Freedmen as full citizens, a decision that came in 2017 following years of legal wrangling.

"I think that we are a better tribe for having not only embraced the federal court decision but embraced the concept of equality," said Cherokee Nation Chief Chuck Hoskin Jr., a longtime supporter of citizenship rights for the Freedmen.

The Cherokee Nation, among the largest Native American tribes, has about 5,800 Freedmen citizens who have traced an ancestor on the tribe's original Freedmen rolls in the late 19th century.

When the federal government sought to break up tribal reservations into individual allotments after the Civil War, they created two separate tribal rolls — one for members with American Indian blood and one for Freedmen. In many cases, tribal citizens who appeared Black were placed on the Freedmen rolls, even if they had blood ties to the tribe.

Of the Five Tribes, only the Chickasaw Nation never agreed to adopt the Freedmen as citizens, according to the Oklahoma Historical Society.

## SEMINOLE NATION CONTROVERSY

The Wewoka-based Seminole Nation in particular faces fierce criticism after several Black tribal citizens were denied COVID-19 vaccines at a federally operated American Indian health clinic.

LeEtta Sampson-Osborn, a Seminole Freedman who has a tribal identification card and serves on the tribe's governing council, said she sought a vaccine in February at a clinic operated by the Indian Health Service, an agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. She said a worker told her the Seminole Nation doesn't recognize Freedmen for health services. When she asked for additional explanation, the worker called over a tribal police officer, she said.

"So, I left," said Osborne-Sampson. "Even the worst person would try to help when there's a pandemic all over the world, but they don't care about the Freedmen. I feel like they want us to die."

Three other Seminole Freedmen shared similar experiences with The Associated Press about the same clinic.

The Seminole Nation says the decision about whether to provide vaccines to Seminole Freedmen rests with the IHS, not the tribe.

"To be clear, the Seminole Nation does not operate the Wewoka Indian Health Services clinic, has absolutely no policy oversight and was in no way involved with administering COVID-19 vaccines," Seminole Nation Chief Greg Chilcoat said in a statement.

The agency said in a statement that it was reviewing eligibility of Seminole Freedmen and will be working with the tribe to determine what services IHS will provide.

## FIGHTING FOR CITIZENSHIP

Seminole Freedmen say they are unable to receive services other tribal citizens get, including health care, tribal license plates and housing subsidies. The Seminole Freedmen have been fighting for years to be recognized as full tribal citizens in legal battles that underscore the systemic racism that Freedmen from all Oklahoma-based tribes say they have experienced from tribal governments and their members.

Many Seminole Freedmen are descendants of freed Black slaves who joined the Seminoles in Florida during their wars against the U.S. government.

"We fought in three wars with them to get where we're at, and now they've turned against us," said Anthony Conley, who also said he was denied a vaccine at the clinic.

Conley said he believes racism and an unwillingness of tribal citizens to share tribal funds is at the core of the tribe's decision to exclude Freedmen from full citizenship, a claim that Chilcoat disputes.

## TRIBAL SOVEREIGNTY

The Muscogee (Creek) and Choctaw nations have cited tribal sovereignty as reasons for their opposition

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to citizenship for Freedmen. When Democratic U.S. Rep. Maxine Waters of California last year attempted to force the tribes to reconcile the Freedmen issue by inserting language into a housing bill, Choctaw Nation Chief Gary Batton said the U.S. government is responsible for the Freedmen's plight, not the Choctaw Nation.

"There is no more fundamental element of tribal self-governance than the authority of a Tribe like the Choctaw Nation to determine our own citizenship," Batton wrote in a letter to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

Ultimately, it might be a decision for the federal courts to make. Osborne-Sampson said she and other Freedmen are consulting with an attorney on how to proceed.

## 'The Captain' challenges impoverished youth to love France

By ELAINE GANLEY Associated Press

PIERREFITTE-SUR-SEINE, France (AP) — The man they call "the Captain" runs a tight ship, reaching into his years of military service to inculcate confidence, courage and a love of France in his proteges, youths from poor French suburbs.

But first they must learn how to wake up on time and brush their teeth, says Nourouddine Abdoulhousen, a former member of the 8th Marine Infantry Parachute Regiment, who heads an association called Laissez Les Servir (Let Them Serve) with a unique approach to integration.

In his own way, the white-bearded, 53-year-old Abdoulhousen is working to uplift some of France's battalions of impoverished youth, often from heavily immigrant housing projects known for unemployment and delinquency, and to restore French values to create "the citizens of tomorrow."

Abdoulhousen, a Muslim originally from India, has no sympathy for complainers.

"I, too, have a background," he said. "I crossed the seas to come here. I lived the problem of integration. I know how it feels to have people stare at you because you behave differently. Or people look at you because you look different."

A group of young troops snaps to attention on command. They sing the French national anthem, then move to their assigned stations in a gymnasium in Pierrefitte-Sur-Seine, north of Paris. In a minutely calibrated, military-style operation, they prepare and pack at least 400 meals daily for delivery to the poor during Ramadan, the Muslim holy month. Instructions are spelled out in lists on the wall at the gymnasium that is their "command post."

Around the corner, residents of Les Fauvettes, a decrepit housing project with holes in the walls and mailboxes torn apart, hang from windows awaiting their meals, delivered by a group of Abdoulhousen's troops.

During a recent visit, 639 pieces of chicken, cut by the youth, were cooked along with vegetables in huge pots in a tent outside. During the year, the young people take kettles of soup into Paris train stations.

Other values are taught during outside expeditions, including military games in different parts of France. Donning camouflage uniforms, they learn about overcoming challenges in rugged terrain, discipline and working as a team.

"I took drugs, did some pretty stupid things....I had no dreams," said a 29-year-old originally from Senegal who goes by the nickname Biline. Without the group "I could have ended differently."

Two years ago, Abdoulhousen bused 50 youths to the royal domain in Normandy of the pretender to the non-existent French throne for a lesson in etiquette. They sang the "Marseillaise," the French anthem, to Prince Jean. That visit sparked Rayen Benayed, 19, into becoming a full-time association member, one of about 300 around France.

The more than two dozen youths helping to prepare the Ramadan meals came from backgrounds as mixed as the French suburbs: French-Afghan, Ivory Coast, Senegal, Gabon, Algeria, some born in France, others still hoping for residence papers. Many are students, others are still searching for a foothold in life. One woman who took up boxing to fend off her abusive husband is among the group's female members.

"I consider myself French," Biline said, "because I think that becoming French is not just papers. It's behavior, knowing how to live and also speaking the language....For me, racism is now just ignorant people."

Abdoulhousen says the youths must work to overcome both their own bad habits and the rejection that

often plagues people with different names, looks or addresses.

"These youth who don't know how to wake up at 7 a.m.," he said. "Why do we have to teach youth to brush their teeth?"

He claims the French government wastes time and money by throwing new programs into its troubled suburbs to cure problems. What must be done is "go to the bottom of the project stairwells, wake them up, make them work ... to go produce what will make them feel valuable."

Let Them Serve was founded in 2007 under a different name. It's annual budget is only 120,000 euros (\$144,000), money that comes from donations.

"I want to imprint in their minds, love of country," he said. "You know, many of these teenagers' minds are from abroad, so they think this country doesn't belong to them ... We don't want to break their heritage, their past. We want to make them rich twice."

Those are lessons learned for Ophelie Voisin, 25, a French-Afghan woman from Amiens, north of Paris. She is proud of her nine years in the association.

"Singing 'La Marseillaise' in the morning, it's not a shame. It's really a joy," she said. "We should be proud of that because we're in France."

## Charged in Jan. 6 riot? Yes, but prison may be another story

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER and COLLEEN LONG Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — More than 400 people have been charged with federal crimes in the Jan. 6 attack on the Capitol. But prison time may be another story.

With new defendants still flooding into Washington's federal court, the Justice Department is under pressure to quickly resolve the least serious of cases. While defendants charged with crimes such as conspiracy and assaulting officers during the insurrection could be looking at hefty sentences, some members of the mob who weren't caught joining in the violence or destruction could see little to no time behind bars.

"The people who were just there for the ride and somewhat clueless, I think for most of them they probably will not get prison time. And for what it's worth, I think that's appropriate," said Rachel Barkow, a professor at the New York University School of Law. "Having a misdemeanor on their record, going through all this is probably a pretty big wake-up call for most of the folks," she said.

The siege was like nothing the country had ever seen, as the mob of supporters of then-President Donald Trump descended on the Capitol to stop the congressional certification of Joe Biden's election victory. But in the months since, Trump loyalists have worked to minimize the assault, while Democrats and others want justice for what they saw as a crime against democracy and the rule of law.

After Trump's impeachment by the House resulted in an acquittal by the Senate, these criminal cases are one possible route for justice.

It's a formidable task for lawyers and judges alike to determine the appropriate punishment to seek and hand down. Many defendants had steady jobs and no criminal records, factors typically rewarded with leniency in the criminal justice system.

As plea negotiations ramp up, the Justice Department must work to differentiate between the varying actions of the members of the mob that day without making it seem like some are getting away with mere slaps on the wrist.

"The greatest country in the world, the most powerful country in the world, was turned on its head for a very scary period of time. And that is not a small matter," said Lenese Herbert, who used to work as a federal prosecutor in Washington.

Of the more than 400 federal defendants so far, at least 100 are facing only lower-level crimes such as disorderly conduct and entering a restricted area that do not typically result in time behind bars for first-time offenders. Hundreds more were also charged with more serious offenses — like conspiracy, assault or obstruction of an official proceeding — that carry hefty prison time of years behind bars, but these defendants could take pleas that would wipe those charges from their cases. Prosecutors have said they expect to charge at least 100 more people.

It's going to be a test of racial fairness. The majority of the defendants are white. Black and Latino



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defendants tend to face harsher sentences for the same crimes, and from the moment the mob marched on the Capitol, there were questions about whether the law enforcement response would have been different had the rioters been people of color.

"If we can't treat white criminality as white criminality and crime that deserves a response, a punishment, a reckoning ... if we don't see it as punishing that kind of criminality as legitimate, then that's how we paint ourselves into a corner," said Herbert, now a professor at Howard University School of Law.

Only one defendant — a heavy metal band guitarist and member of the Oath Keepers extremist group — has pleaded guilty so far. Prosecutors have said more plea offers are coming.

Jon Ryan Schaffer, who authorities have described as a "founding lifetime member" of the militia group, has agreed to cooperate with investigators, and in return the the Justice Department has promised to consider putting him in the federal witness security program. Schaffer may prove useful to prosecutors in perhaps their most serious case against 12 members and associates of the Oath Keepers accused of conspiring with one another to block the certification of Biden's victory.

Schaffer, the front man of the band Iced Earth, pleaded guilty to obstruction of an official proceeding and entering and remaining in a restricted building with a dangerous or deadly weapon. The first carries up to 20 years in prison, but federal sentencing guidelines call for about three years to 4 1/4 years, the judge said. Prosecutors may ask for an even lighter sentence in exchange for his cooperation against other defendants.

In New York this past week, a 37-year-old man who wasn't part of the insurrection but admitted posting videos and other materials expressing support for the violent mob was convicted of federal charges of threatening to kill members of Congress. Prosecutors have said Brendan Hunt faces up to 10 years in prison.

If prosecutors seek stiff sentences for the lowest level Capitol riot defendants, they could lose their credibility with judges, said Laurie Levenson, a former federal prosecutor who now teaches at Loyola Law School. And if they set the standard too high, they'll be juggling hundreds of cases going to trial instead of focusing on the major offenders. Those most serious cases are where prosecutors can and should send a strong message, Levenson said.

"If there's any pressure on the Justice Department, it's to deal with these cases in a way so that you never have to see them again," she said. "And if people think that the price isn't too high, who knows?"

At least one judge has expressed frustration at the pace of the prosecutions, which have overwhelmed the federal court already backlogged because of pandemic-related delays. On Tuesday, U.S. District Judge Christopher Cooper ordered the pretrial release of a man who was photographed sitting with his feet on a desk in House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's office. The judge expressed concern that the case is moving too slowly.

Cooper noted that Richard Barnett has been jailed for nearly four months and questioned whether his time behind bars while the case is ongoing could exceed a possible sentence should Barnett plead guilty. The prosecutor estimated that the government would recommend a prison term ranging from nearly six years to 7 1/4 years if Barnett is convicted, though he could get credit for accepting responsibility if he pleads guilty.

In at least one instance, however, prosecutors have indicated they aren't willing — at least yet — to let the defendant plead guilty to lesser charges.

A lawyer for Jenny Cudd, a West Texas flower shop owner who posted a video on Facebook bragging about the riot, told a judge during a hearing this week that prosecutors did not provide the defense with a plea offer.

"We inquired as to why, in response the government stated that we're free to plead to a felony," Cudd's lawyer said. "To which we responded: 'Is that a joke?'"

## How the Gaetz probe grew from sex trafficking to medical pot

By MICHELLE L. PRICE and MICHAEL BALSAMO Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) — When Rep. Matt Gaetz vacationed in the Bahamas in 2018, he was joined by a

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doctor who donated to his campaign and a former colleague in the Florida Legislature.

The Republican congressman, Dr. Jason Pirozzolo and Halsey Beshears were united in their enjoyment of politics, fancy travel and the company of beautiful women. They also had another mutual interest: Florida's \$1.2 billion medical marijuana industry.

The Bahamas trip is a central element of a federal investigation surrounding Gaetz that has suddenly endangered his political career. What began as an inquiry into sex trafficking and whether Gaetz paid women and an underage girl in exchange for sex has grown into a larger review of public corruption, according to people familiar with the investigation.

Investigators are looking at whether Gaetz and his associates tried to secure government jobs for some of the women, the people said. They are also scrutinizing Gaetz's connections to the medical marijuana sector, including whether Pirozzolo and others sought to influence legislation Gaetz sponsored. The investigation includes legislation from 2018, when Gaetz was in Congress, and earlier work in the Legislature, according to one of the people.

Pressure on the congressman could build in the coming weeks as Joel Greenberg, a Gaetz associate who has been accused of trafficking a minor for sex, faces a May 15 deadline to strike a plea deal with prosecutors. If he does, Greenberg may be pressed to cooperate with federal investigators and deliver damaging information against Gaetz.

None of the people on the trip to the Bahamas has been charged with a crime. Gaetz has vehemently denied any wrongdoing and has retained high-powered lawyers. The congressman and his representative did not respond to a message seeking comment for this story.

Beshears and a lawyer for Pirozzolo declined to comment for this story.

The Associated Press spoke with more than 10 people familiar with the dynamic among Gaetz, Pirozzolo and Beshears. Three of the people had knowledge of the investigation. They all spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not allowed to publicly discuss the ongoing investigation.

Gaetz's interest in medical marijuana dates back nearly a decade, when he was a member of the Florida House of Representatives. Well before he would gain national attention for his steadfast support of Donald Trump, Gaetz would carve out an unusual reputation in Tallahassee as a Republican who wanted to liberalize marijuana laws.

In February 2014, Gaetz co-sponsored the first state effort to allow marijuana for medical use. His proposal allowing the use of a nonhallucinogenic marijuana extract was limited to patients with cancer or a severe form of epilepsy and slowly earned the support of his father, Don Gaetz, who was then serving as president of the Florida Senate and said he was "being pummeled" by his son about supporting it.

Gaetz cast his proposal as a pared-down alternative to a statewide ballot measure that would have broadly legalized medical marijuana. Gaetz's law was approved with broad bipartisan support and signed into law by Republican Gov. Rick Scott in June 2014, while the statewide measure narrowly failed at the ballot box that November.

The day Gaetz's measure was up for a final debate and vote in the Florida House, both Pirozzolo and Beshears were on the floor.

Beshears was a fellow Republican member of the Legislature who joined Gaetz to support the legislation. Pirozzolo, an Orlando hand doctor and pilot, was there serving as the physician of the day for the lawmakers — a role he would frequently take on by flying his own plane to Tallahassee.

Once the legislation passed, it created lucrative new opportunities for Beshears' family and Pirozzolo.

The long-standing nursery owned by Beshears' family was awarded one of five highly coveted licenses to cultivate and dispense medical marijuana.

The legislation was written to specify — and restrict — who could win such a license. An amendment added by another lawmaker in the state House limited the pool of applicants to nurseries that had been in continuous business for 30 years and had an inventory of 400,000 or more plants.

The Beshears family nursery, joining with two other growers, met that standard.

The Tampa Bay Times reported in 2014 that Beshears had failed to file a conflict of interest report when

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he voted on the bill, and the lawmaker who sponsored the amendment wanted to “err on the side of limiting who could qualify now” when embarking on such a new industry. More licenses have since been awarded, but the industry is still tightly controlled.

Another amendment added to the 2014 legislation the day Pirozzolo watched in the state House required dispensary applicants to employ a doctor as a medical director.

Eight days later, Pirozzolo started a consulting firm connecting marijuana businesses with medical directors, the Orlando Sentinel reported. He later co-founded a group called the American Medical Marijuana Physicians Association, which advocates for doctors who recommend medical cannabis.

Gaetz has spoken at least twice at the association’s annual conferences, including an appearance with longtime Trump confidant Roger Stone, according to the group’s social media posts and the recollections of a member.

With recommendations from Gaetz and Beshears in 2018, Pirozzolo was appointed by the current governor, Republican Ron DeSantis, to serve on a board that runs Orlando International Airport. In 2019, he stood next to DeSantis on an airport tarmac and greeted Trump as he arrived in Orlando to kick off his reelection campaign, according to video posted online by a Sentinel reporter.

Two years after Gaetz’s first medical marijuana law, he sponsored another measure in the Legislature to expand on it, allowing near-death patients to use nonsmokable marijuana of all strengths and doses.

The day it came up for a vote in the state House, Beshears voted for it, and Pirozzolo witnessed it, again serving as the doctor of the day.

By the time Gaetz was in Congress in 2018, he introduced legislation that would increase the number of entities that would conduct cannabis research. The legislation included provisions similar to what Pirozzolo’s group was pushing to also expand research.

Nearly five months later, the men would meet in the Bahamas.

## Momentum grows for closing gaps in US vaccine requirements

By DAVE COLLINS, DAVID CRARY and MICHAEL MELIA Associated Press

HARTFORD, Conn. (AP) — A law adopted this week in Connecticut adds momentum to the push to strengthen vaccination requirements for schoolchildren, but efforts to give families more leeway are brewing in statehouses around the country in debates that go back more than a century.

The arguments over mandates, and when to allow exceptions, are expected to become more heated as authorities decide what expectations should be for COVID-19 vaccinations once they are approved for young children.

Religious exemptions like the one eliminated by Connecticut’s new law are facing particular scrutiny amid fears of new measles outbreaks and concerns the growing number of families claiming religious exemptions for their children are opposed because of scientifically discredited claims about the dangers of vaccines. Leaders of Islam, Judaism and major Christian religions say vaccination is consistent with their belief systems.

“The truth is there is no major religion that prohibits vaccinations,” said Peter Hotez, dean of the National School of Tropical Medicine at Baylor College of Medicine. “The argument has really very little to do with religion and everything to do with the anti-vaccine, vaccine choice movement.”

Proposals to expand or limit immunization exemptions pop up every year in state legislatures, although it’s rare for any to win passage. Nationwide, the National Conference of State Legislatures, or NCSL, is currently tracking about 270 bills related to childhood immunizations.

They include a bill in West Virginia, one of the six states that ended religious exemptions, to allow students with “conscientious or personal” objections to opt out. A bill in Minnesota would add religious reasons to existing exemptions, and Vermont lawmakers have proposed a bill to end the state’s religious exemption.

The debates often do not break down along traditional political divides, according to Robert Bednarczyk, a professor at Emory University’s Rollins School of Public Health.

“I do think when you see vaccine refusal, it really does run across the population,” he said. “Regardless

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of the reason, the endpoint is always the same. It's children that are being left unprotected from infectious diseases."

For as long as there have been vaccination requirements, there has been pushback.

In Massachusetts, a Lutheran minister in 1902 refused to comply with a mandate by the Cambridge Board of Health for all adults to get smallpox vaccinations. The U.S. Supreme Court in 1905 upheld the state's mandatory policy, and in 1922 upheld a school system's power to refuse admission to students who failed to heed a vaccination order.

Gradually, statewide vaccination mandates took hold in every state. In 1966, however, as New York lawmakers were considering a vaccination requirement for schoolchildren, it became the first state to include a religious exemption in its law. Christian Scientists were among the main advocates of the exemption, arguing that the requirement violated their belief in prayer rather than medical treatment.

Other states followed New York's example; before long there were only two states that didn't provide a religious exemption. Some state laws said the exemptions could be claimed only by people who belonged to an organized or established religion. Other policies were looser, allowing a child to be exempt based on the individual family's religious beliefs.

In recent years, the momentum has shifted. California decided in 2015 to get rid of its religious exemption following a measles outbreak in Disneyland. Maine and New York have taken similar steps, joining West Virginia and Mississippi. Connecticut Gov. Ned Lamont, a Democrat, signed his state's new law eliminating the religious exemption on Wednesday.

Forty-four states and the District of Columbia currently allow religious exemptions to immunizations, while 15 states also permit philosophical exemptions for children whose parents object due to personal, moral or other beliefs, according to the NCSL.

A spokesperson for the Christian Science church in Connecticut, Linda Ross, testified against the measure that scrapped the state's exemption. She suggested the exemption could be left in place, but with stricter policies allowed temporarily for schools with worryingly low vaccination rates.

"Christian Scientists don't view vaccination as something to fear or get out of, but generally prefer the greater sense of health, protection and well-being they find through their Bible-based religious practice," she said in written testimony.

Two groups that oppose the new Connecticut law are planning to challenge it in court.

"The notion that somehow the state government gets the right to cram its version of virtue down the throats of every citizen in this state is and ought to be offensive to every Connecticut resident," said Norm Pattis, an attorney representing the organizations.

The pandemic is having an influence on the vaccine debate. In Kentucky, which already has religious and other exemptions to childhood vaccinations, state lawmakers approved a bill that would bar health officials during pandemics from requiring vaccinations for the pandemic diseases. The legislation was signed by the governor in March.

Kentucky state Sen. Mike Wilson, a Republican from Bowling Green who sponsored the bill, said his office received many phone calls and emails from constituents who were leery of the COVID-19 vaccines and didn't want state officials to order them to get vaccinated.

"It's enough to make you stop and say, 'You know what? We have exemptions for other areas. We don't have one for this,'" Wilson said. "They don't want to be mandated to take it."

Bednarczyk said discussions around coronavirus vaccinations for children likely will follow familiar contours.

"I don't think it's necessarily going to be a different set of issues or circumstances," he said. "But I think that it probably will get a lot more attention because everything around COVID-19 has garnered more attention."

## Workers protest Indonesia's labor law in May Day rallies

By NINIEK KARMINI and ANDI JATMIKO Associated Press

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP) — Workers in Indonesia marked international labor day on Saturday with sig-

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nificantly less-attended marches due to coronavirus restrictions, but thousands still vented their anger at a new law they say harms their rights and welfare.

About 50,000 workers from 3,000 companies and factories were expected to take part in traditional May Day marches in 200 cities and districts in Southeast Asia's largest economy, said Said Iqbal, the president of the Confederation of Indonesian Trade Unions. However, most rallies are held outside factories or company compounds with strict health protocols, Iqbal said.

Elsewhere in the region, police in the Philippine capital of Manila prevented hundreds of workers belonging to left-wing groups from holding a May Day rally at a public plaza, said protest leader Renato Reyes. A monthlong coronavirus lockdown there has been extended by two weeks amid an alarming surge.

In Taipei City in Taiwan, hundreds of protesters marched in the streets to ask for better salaries and more secure pensions. Most protesters wore face masks to protect themselves from the virus.

In Indonesia's capital of Jakarta, the epicenter of the national epidemic, authorities have warned labor groups to adhere to social distancing and other health measures, which would significantly reduce crowds, said Jakarta Police spokesperson Yusri Yunus. He added that more than 6,300 police personnel were deployed to secure the capital.

Enraged over the new Job Creation Law, several hundred workers gathered near the national monument, waving colorful flags of labor groups and banners with demands. Others laid tomb effigies on the street to symbolize their hopeless and uncertain future under the new law.

"The Job Creation Law has incredibly buried our hope of a better future," said Riden Hatam Aziz, one of the organizers. They later marched to the Constitutional Court and near the presidential palace compound to demand the repeal of the legislation.

The demonstrators say the law will hurt workers by reducing severance pay, removing restrictions on manual labor by foreign workers, increasing the use of outsourcing, and converting monthly salaries to hourly wages.

President Joko Widodo signed the law in November despite days of protests in many Indonesian cities that turned violent weeks earlier. The act amended 77 previous laws and was intended to improve bureaucratic efficiency as part of efforts by Widodo's administration to attract more investment.

The Confederation of Indonesian Trade Unions and dozens of other organizations have filed a legal challenge against the Job Creation Law with the Constitutional Court.

"The difficult situation could lead to more strikes and protests this year," Iqbal, the president of the trade union group, said.

Television reports showed hundreds of workers rallying in several other cities, including Makassar. They shouted demands for a raise in minimum wage and relaxed outsourcing rules.

In Manila, protesters gathered briefly at a busy boulevard demanding pandemic cash aid, wage subsidies and COVID-19 vaccines amid rising unemployment and hunger. Some opted to stage protest motorcades to avoid infections.

"Workers were largely left to fend for themselves while being locked down," labor leader Josua Mata said. When workers protest the government's mishandling of the pandemic that led to a massive loss of jobs and income, authorities suppress their basic right, Mata said.

Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello III separately led a ceremony in Manila, where about 5,000 workers got their jobs for COVID-19.

In Taiwan, labor conditions and welfare for food deliverymen have become a major issue this year, as the companies they represent are not covering their pensions, nor guaranteeing any minimum salary for them.

A food delivery driver present at Saturday's protest said the pay per delivery had been cut several times, with some platforms even offering fluctuating rates, making it hard to make money. One supermarket employee said she had not seen a pay raise for several consecutive years, even though sales have been growing.

The protest lasted about two hours and led the marchers to the parliament.

## Giuliani search warrant resolved Justice Department dispute

By ERIC TUCKER and MICHAEL BALSAMO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The question of whether to serve a search warrant for Rudy Giuliani's records simmered inside the Justice Department in the waning months of the Trump administration, dividing officials in New York and Washington and remaining unresolved for a new leadership team to sort out.

The new crowd resolved it this week in dramatic fashion. On Wednesday, federal agents raided the home and office of former President Donald Trump's personal attorney, collecting phones and computers as part of their probe into whether he broke U.S. lobbying laws by failing to register as a foreign agent related to his work.

It's not clear exactly why Justice Department officials chose this particular moment to strike, but it wasn't out of character for the agency under new Attorney General Merrick Garland. The move was just one in a series of headline-making decisions by a department moving quickly to assert itself in investigations and policy setting.

In the past two weeks, President Joe Biden's attorney general has also made good on a promise to amplify the department's civil rights focus, announcing sweeping investigations into police departments in Minneapolis and Louisville as well as hate crime charges against three Georgia men in connection with the killing of Ahmaud Arbery.

The FBI action in New York on Wednesday was especially notable both because of the high-profile nature of the Giuliani investigation and because of the vigorous debate the search warrant question had produced inside the Trump-era Justice Department.

Prosecutors in New York wanted last fall to serve a warrant on Giuliani as part of an investigation into whether he had failed to register as a foreign agent over his dealings with Ukrainian officials. But that request was rebuffed by officials in the deputy attorney general's office in Washington. In a dispute over investigative tactics, they raised concerns both before and after the election and did not sign off on a warrant, multiple people familiar with the matter have said.

A new leadership team under Garland apparently reached a different conclusion, though it is not clear on what grounds. The new deputy attorney general, Lisa Monaco, and John Carlin, her top deputy, have both previously led the department's national security division — which is responsible for enforcing the Foreign Agents Registration Act, or FARA — and will presumably be engaged in the investigation as it moves forward.

Former Justice Department official David Laufman said it would be reasonable for the new leadership team to reassess how legal actions were made, especially if they believed the previous administration reached an incorrect decision "on an important investigative action in a matter of considerable importance."

Stuart Gerson, who served as acting attorney general in the first weeks of the Clinton administration before Janet Reno was confirmed, said it is common for new leaders to make big decisions when they take their positions.

"You've got a briefing book on your desk of issues — if you didn't know them before, you know them now," Gerson said. "Whatever your philosophy is, you see some of these things as directly important to satisfying a public need."

To obtain the warrants from a judge, prosecutors would need to present probable cause that Giuliani had broken the law. He has denied all wrongdoing and sought Thursday to discredit the investigation.

Investigators specified that they were conducting a FARA investigation, said Giuliani's lawyer, Robert Costello. At least one warrant also seeks information related to Marie Yovanovitch, the former U.S. ambassador to Ukraine who was ousted from her job two years ago on Trump's orders.

Yovanovitch was a central player in the first impeachment case against Trump and detailed a smear campaign by Giuliani and other Trump allies that preceded her 2019 removal from the job.

The fact that the warrant makes mention of Yovanovitch, and that it seeks communication between Giuliani and several Ukrainians, suggests authorities are attempting to determine whether Giuliani's efforts to remove the ambassador were at the behest of Trump or of Ukrainians. That distinction matters

because federal law requires anyone lobbying the U.S. on behalf of a foreign country or entity to register their work with the Justice Department.

Giuliani, the 76-year-old former New York City mayor once celebrated for his leadership after 9/11, has been a staunch supporter of Trump, and fronted his failed legal effort to overturn the election, falsely claiming it had been a massive effort by Democrats to rig the results, even though election officials of both political parties and Trump Attorney General William Barr said there was no widespread election fraud.

Giuliani was also deeply involved in efforts to encourage Ukraine to find damaging information about Biden in the run-up to the 2020 election, meeting with a Ukrainian lawmaker whom U.S. officials have described as an active Russian agent and who released audio recordings during the 2020 presidential campaign in an effort to discredit Biden's candidacy.

Giuliani also pushed hard for the ouster of Yovanovitch, whose departure was one of the pivotal issues of the first Trump impeachment case. Yovanovitch, a career diplomat who served for decades under both Republican and Democratic presidents and was first appointed by Ronald Reagan, testified in chilling detail during the impeachment proceeding about a "smear campaign" against her by Giuliani and others.

Major decisions still await at the Justice Department in other high-profile but unrelated investigations that Garland inherited from the Trump administration, including a tax probe into President Joe Biden's son, Hunter, and a investigation into potential sex trafficking and public corruption by Florida Rep. Matt Gaetz.

## **Eli Broad, billionaire entrepreneur who reshaped LA, dies**

By ALEX VEIGA AP Business Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Eli Broad, the billionaire philanthropist, contemporary art collector and entrepreneur who co-founded homebuilding pioneer Kaufman and Broad Inc. and launched financial services giant SunAmerica Inc., died Friday in Los Angeles. He was 87.

Suzi Emmerling, a spokeswoman for the Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation, confirmed his death to The Associated Press. Emmerling said Broad died at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center after a long illness. No services have been announced.

The New York Times first reported his death.

"As a businessman Eli saw around corners, as a philanthropist he saw the problems in the world and tried to fix them, as a citizen he saw the possibility in our shared community, and as a husband, father and friend he saw the potential in each of us," Gerun Riley, president of The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation, said in a statement Friday.

It was Broad (pronounced brohd) who provided much of the money and willpower used to reshape Los Angeles' once moribund downtown into a burgeoning area of expensive lofts, fancy dining establishments and civic structures like the landmark Walt Disney Concert Hall. He opened his own eponymous contemporary art museum and art lending library, the Broad, in 2015 in the city's downtown next to Disney Hall.

"Eli Broad, simply put, was L.A.'s most influential private citizen of his generation," Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti said on Twitter. "He loved this city as deeply as anyone I have ever known."

As a young accountant in the 1950s, Broad saw opportunity in the booming real estate market. He quit his job and partnered with developer Donald Kaufman and began building starter homes for first-time buyers eager to claim their slice of the American Dream. The company eventually became KB Home, one of the most successful home developers in the nation.

Nearly 30 years later, Broad spotted opportunity once more and transformed the company's insurance arm into a retirement savings conglomerate that catered to the financial needs of aging baby boomers.

In the process, Broad became one of the nation's wealthiest men, with a financial net worth estimated by Forbes magazine Friday at \$6.9 billion.

He also gained a reputation for being a driven, tenacious dealmaker.

"If you play it safe all of the time, you don't get very far," Broad told Investor's Business Daily in 2005.

Outside work, Broad used his wealth and status to bring about civic, educational, scientific and cultural improvement projects, particularly in Los Angeles. The New York native had moved to the city's tony

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Brentwood section in 1963. His charitable foundations donated millions to such projects, particularly those aimed at improving public education, and established endowments at several universities across the nation.

In the 1990s, Broad led the campaign to help raise money to build the Frank Gehry-designed Walt Disney Concert Hall and was a major underwriter of Los Angeles' Museum of Contemporary Art, among other institutions. An avid art hound since the 1960s, Broad had a collection estimated to be worth \$500 million in 2003.

In 1984, he established the Broad Art Foundation to lend works from his collection for public viewing.

A decade later, he famously purchased Roy Lichtenstein's "I ... I'm Sorry" for \$2.5 million at an auction with a credit card and donated the more than 2 million frequent flier points he racked up to students at the California Institute for the Arts. In 2008, with his money, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art opened its new Broad Contemporary Art Museum featuring works from Broad's collection.

Broad also exercised considerable political muscle. A Democrat, he led the push to lure the party's national convention in 2000 to Los Angeles. He sometimes split with his party, however, most notably in 1972 when, disillusioned with Sen. George McGovern's campaign, he served as co-chair of Democrats for Nixon.

Years after Nixon resigned the presidency in disgrace, Broad told Los Angeles Magazine that his efforts on Nixon's behalf were something "I hate to admit to." But it wasn't the last time he would support a Republican. He also backed his close friend, former Los Angeles Mayor Richard Riordan, with whom he shared a mutual vision of public school reform.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-California) lauded Broad and his wife, Edythe, for their philanthropic efforts.

"Their leadership to support our schools, advance scientific and medical research and ensure that all have access to the arts leaves a lasting and remarkable legacy," Pelosi said in a statement. "Our entire nation is particularly indebted to the Broads for their commitment to supporting the arts, which they knew to be an essential, unifying force in the world."

The son of Lithuanian immigrants, Broad was born June 6, 1933, in New York City but raised in Detroit. His father was a house painter and small business owner.

Broad earned his undergraduate degree from Michigan State University in 1954. In 1991, he endowed the university's Eli Broad College of Business and Eli Broad Graduate School of Management.

At 20, he passed Michigan's certified public accountant exam, becoming the youngest person at the time to do so. The following year, he married his hometown sweetheart, Edythe. The couple had two sons, Jeffrey and Gary. His wife and sons survive him, according to The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation.

Eager to leave school and start his career, Broad began working for several clients, including Kaufman. Soon Broad took note of the real estate market and began studying the field, reading industry journals and using his accounting know-how to analyze the business. He gradually became convinced there was money to be made.

In 1957, at the age of 23, he went into business with Kaufman, selling homes in the suburbs of Detroit. The first homes sold for about \$12,000, about 10 percent less than competitors because they were built without customary basements and in about half the time.

Kaufman and Broad took their approach West, first to Arizona then California. They relocated the company's corporate headquarters to Los Angeles in 1963, two years after it became the first homebuilder to go public.

In 1971, Broad bought an insurance company as a hedge against the boom and bust cycles of the housing market. As he had done prior to venturing into real estate, Broad began doing research on the insurance market and saw financial planning for retirees as a better business. He began shifting the subsidiary's focus toward selling annuities and other retirement savings products.

The company was renamed SunAmerica in 1989, with Broad as its chairman and chief executive. In 1998, New York-based American International Group acquired SunAmerica for \$16.5 billion.

Two years later, Broad stepped down as chief, but retained the title of chairman.

"I will do the things that I enjoy doing and things that I could have the most value with rather than doing the day-to-day things," Broad told The Associated Press at the time. "I like to work. Right now I probably



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work 80 hours a week. ... I still see myself working close to 40 hours at SunAmerica/AIG and maybe 40 hours at other things.”

In recent years, Broad spent much of his time engaged in philanthropic work through his foundations, advocating for public education reform, promoting the rebirth of Los Angeles’ downtown as a commercial and residential center and other causes.

In 1999, the Broads founded the Broad Education Foundation, with the goal of improving urban public education. The foundation committed more than \$500 million toward the cause in its first five years.

Broad took a CEO’s approach, believing that troubled schools often could be vastly improved if they were better managed by their principals.

“These are huge enterprises,” Broad said of urban school districts in an interview with Forbes magazine in 2003. “You don’t start at the bottom. You start at the top.”

## Texas voters head back to polls after congressman’s death

By PAUL J. WEBER Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — The widow of a Texas congressman who died after contracting COVID-19 carried Donald Trump’s endorsement into a special election Saturday, while Democrats and GOP critics of the former president hoped voters would instead send a surprising message to the rest of the U.S.

The race has drawn only modest attention beyond Texas’ 6th Congressional District, which includes the booming corridor between Dallas and Fort Worth. Still, it poses an early test of suburban voters since Trump left office.

Trump waited until just days before the election to endorse Susan Wright, a GOP activist and widow of the late Rep. Ron Wright, who in February became the first sitting member of Congress to die after being diagnosed with COVID-19. Susan Wright had already been seen as a favorite in a crowded race to fill the seat of her late husband, who won the district by 9 points in November.

Nearly two dozen other candidates are on the ballot, making it likely that Saturday’s top two finishers will advance to a runoff if no one captures more than half of the vote.

Most of the Republicans in the running have made flagrant appeals to Trump and his supporters in a race that at times has resembled a typical Texas GOP primary. The lone exception is Michael Wood, a combat veteran whose campaign has become an early test for Republican Rep. Adam Kinzinger of Illinois, who is trying to lead a revolt in his party away from Trump.

For Democrats, the district is one they ambitiously considered a target in 2020. Ten Democrats are on the ballot, but nationally, the party and its allies have steered clear of the race after their massive expectations for Texas last year again ended in a demoralizing showing.

In Louisiana, a special election in March ended with Republican Julia Letlow easily winning a race to fill a U.S. House seat that her husband, Luke, couldn’t fill because of his death from complications related to COVID-19.

## FedEx shooting victims to be remembered at big ceremony

By CASEY SMITH Associated Press/Report for America

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — The eight people killed in a mass shooting at a FedEx warehouse will be remembered Saturday during a public ceremony at the downtown football stadium where the Indianapolis Colts play.

The three-hour event, expected to draw thousands to Lucas Oil Stadium, comes two weeks after a former FedEx employee fatally shot the eight people, including four members of Indianapolis’ Sikh community.

Indiana Republican Gov. Eric Holcomb, along with other elected officials, law enforcement representatives, interfaith leaders and Sikh community leaders are scheduled to speak.

While the Sikh community is hosting the event, the hope is that people from across the state will join to support the affected families “as Indianapolis begins the journey of healing together and helping each other during this excruciatingly difficult time,” said Rajanpreet Kaur, a spokesperson for the Sikh Coalition.

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Private services for victims from the Sikh community are also expected to take place in the coming week. Their families are seeking roughly two-dozen fast-tracked visas so relatives overseas may travel for funeral rites. The proceedings will begin with cremation and then be followed by up to 20 days of reading of the 1,400-page Guru Granth Sahib scripture.

Police said Brandon Scott Hole, 19, a former worker at the Indianapolis FedEx facility, killed eight people there on April 15 before killing himself. Authorities have not released a motive. They said Hole had two rifles.

Hole was able to purchase the guns legally, even after his mother called police last year to say her son might undertake "suicide by cop." Marion County Prosecutor Ryan Mears has faced sharp criticism for choosing not to pursue court hearings that could have prevented Hole from accessing the guns.

## Venezuela gives US oilmen house arrest in gesture to Biden

By JOSHUA GOODMAN Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — Six American oil executives jailed in Venezuela more than three years ago on corruption charges were granted house arrest on Friday in a gesture of goodwill toward the Biden administration as it reviews its policy toward the politically turbulent South American country.

The partial release of the six employees of Houston-based Citgo was confirmed to The Associated Press by family members of the men.

Tomeu Vadell, Jose Luis Zambrano, Alirio Zambrano, Jorge Toledo, Gustavo Cardenas and Jose Pereira were hauled away by masked security agents while at a meeting in Caracas just before Thanksgiving in 2017. They had been lured to Venezuela in order to attend a meeting at the headquarters of Citgo's parent, state-run oil giant PDVSA.

The so-called Citgo 6 were granted house arrest once before — in December 2019 — only to be re-jailed two months later on the same day that President Donald Trump welcomed opposition leader Juan Guaidó to the White House.

In releasing the men, Maduro could be betting he'll receive a better hearing from President Joe Biden, who on the campaign trail called Trump's policy of regime change an "abject failure" that has served only to strengthen the socialist leader.

Earlier this week, senior Biden officials from several federal agencies were scheduled to meet to weigh U.S. options, including whether to ease up on crippling oil sanctions it inherited and take steps to support an uncertain attempt at dialogue between Maduro and his opponents, according to two people familiar with the plans.

The meeting, which was to be attended by Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman, followed a series of moves by Maduro in recent days to grab Biden's attention including yielding to longstanding U.S. demands that the World Food Program be allowed to operate in the country at a time of growing hunger.

In recent days Maduro's allies have also quietly discussed with opponents the makeup of a new electoral council, joint efforts to combat the coronavirus and met with diplomats from Norway trying to revive negotiations to end the country's never-ending political crisis.

However, the continued imprisonment of Americans was seen as a formidable obstacle to any outreach.

Juan Gonzalez, the National Security Council's senior director for the Western Hemisphere, told the AP in an interview Friday that to gauge Maduro's seriousness about any eventual negotiations he wanted to see "concrete steps by the regime, not words."

In recent weeks, former New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson was among those working behind the scenes to press Maduro's government to release the men, all but one of them dual Venezuelan-U.S. nationals.

"This is a positive and important step that should help secure their wellbeing during the COVID-19 outbreak in Venezuela," said Richardson in a statement.

Richardson, who has opened back channels to hostile governments in Iran, Cuba and North Korea to win the release of some 40 Americans, vowed to work tirelessly to bring the men back home.

He also called for the release of Luke Denman and Airan Berry — two former Green Berets who participated in a failed raid last year staged from neighboring Colombia — and former U.S. Marine Matthew

Heath, who is being held on unrelated allegations.

The six men were convicted of embezzlement last year in a trial marred by delays and irregularities. They were sentenced to between 8 and 13 years of prison for a never-executed proposal to refinance some \$4 billion in Citgo bonds by offering a 50% stake in the company as collateral. Maduro at the time accused them of "treason." They all pleaded innocence.

Also pushing for the men's release was Pope Francis. Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the Vatican's Secretary of State, sent a letter sent last fall to then U.S. Ambassador to the Vatican Callista Gingrich mentioning a letter by the Holy See's representative in Caracas to Venezuelan authorities urging clemency.

Parolin was scheduled to travel to Venezuela, where he previously serves as the Vatican's ambassador, to attend Friday's beatification of Jose Gregorio Hernandez, a 19th century Venezuelan MD dubbed "the doctor of the poor." But the Vatican No. 2 cancelled the trip at the last minute, citing the coronavirus pandemic.

"We wish our loved one Tomeu were on a plane to the USA with unconditional freedom but are very grateful for this positive step made possible by Gov. Richardson & his team, Secretary of State Antony Blinken & the State Department, the Vatican, and other allies around the world," the family of Tomeu Vadell said in a statement.

## **Biden helps his Amtrak family celebrate its 50th anniversary**

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — President Joe Biden didn't want to be anywhere else Friday than helping his Amtrak family celebrate 50 years on the rails.

"I wouldn't have missed this for the world," he said at Amtrak's station in Philadelphia, where he used the occasion to plug his \$2.3 trillion infrastructure proposal.

Biden rode Amtrak almost daily between Washington and his home in Wilmington, Delaware, during his 36 years as a U.S. senator. As vice president, he went home by train most weekends to visit his mother, who was ill, before she passed away.

"In the process, Amtrak became my family," Biden said.

He told of how Amtrak once helped him get out of trouble with his daughter Ashley. It was his birthday and the 6-year-old had made him a cake, but was upset that he was in Washington because the Senate was voting and wouldn't get home for it.

Biden said he arranged to slip out between votes to catch an evening train home, where he quickly crossed the station platform to get on the next train back to Washington.

"I got off the train. My wife, Jill, was standing there, and my daughter had the cake, candle lit," Biden said. "I blew them out. Gave me a kiss. Walked across and got on the southbound."

"So, it has been part of my life. I've been riding an Amtrak for almost as long as there's been an Amtrak," he said.

"He knew just about everybody that worked in the station and the conductors and other people and Amtrak folks who were on the train for those many, many years that he rode the rail," Amtrak CEO Bill Flynn told reporters Thursday.

Flynn described Biden at Friday's event as one of the rail service's "most loyal customers." Biden said he held annual Christmas parties for Amtrak employees and attended weddings, christenings and funerals for some of the workers he came to know over the years.

The Amtrak party was Biden's latest stop on a tour to sell the infrastructure, jobs and families plans he detailed in a nationally televised speech to Congress on Wednesday. He campaigned in Atlanta on Thursday and plans a stop in Yorktown, Virginia, on Monday.

The \$2.3 trillion infrastructure proposal would devote \$621 billion to improving roads, bridges, public transit and other transportation infrastructure. Of that, \$80 billion would go toward tackling Amtrak's repair backlog, improving service along the Northeast Corridor and expanding service across the U.S. Biden said the Northeast Corridor is a critical part of the U.S. economy.

After Biden announced the plan, Amtrak said it would upgrade and expand service, including by adding

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30 new routes and adding trains on 20 existing routes across the U.S. by 2035. New service would begin in portions of northeast Pennsylvania including Scranton, where Biden was born, as well as Nashville, Tennessee; Columbus, Ohio; Phoenix; Las Vegas; Houston; Dallas; and Austin, Texas, if approved by Congress.

Biden's lifelong association with Amtrak began soon after rail service launched in May 1971.

His first wife and baby daughter were killed in a car accident in Delaware, weeks after he was elected to the Senate in 1972. His young sons Beau and Hunter were seriously injured.

Biden considered not taking his Senate seat. But he ultimately took office and decided to go home every night to be with his sons — and Amtrak was the vehicle. He made the round trip every day the Senate was in session, for the 36 years he held the seat.

After he and Obama were elected, they rode an Amtrak train together into Washington for the inauguration in 2009. Biden rode it home in 2017 after their administration ended.

Biden also rode Amtrak during the 2020 campaign. He had wanted to recreate the 2009 train ride for his own inauguration in January, but those plans were shelved after the insurrection at the Capitol by supporters of President Donald Trump.

When he returned to Delaware in 2017, Biden estimated to CNN that he had taken more than 8,200 round trips and had traveled more than 2 million miles on Amtrak.

Amtrak renamed its Wilmington, Delaware, train station after Biden in 2011.

## Giuliani search warrant resolved Justice Department dispute

By ERIC TUCKER and MICHAEL BALSAMO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The question of whether to serve a search warrant for Rudy Giuliani's records simmered inside the Justice Department in the waning months of the Trump administration, dividing officials in New York and Washington and remaining unresolved for a new leadership team to sort out.

The new crowd resolved it this week in dramatic fashion. On Wednesday, federal agents raided the home and office of former President Donald Trump's personal attorney, collecting phones and computers as part of their probe into whether he broke U.S. lobbying laws by failing to register as a foreign agent related to his work.

It's not clear exactly why Justice Department officials chose this particular moment to strike, but it wasn't out of character for the agency under new Attorney General Merrick Garland. The move was just one in a series of headline-making decisions by a department moving quickly to assert itself in investigations and policy setting.

In the past two weeks, President Joe Biden's attorney general has also made good on a promise to amplify the department's civil rights focus, announcing sweeping investigations into police departments in Minneapolis and Louisville as well as hate crime charges against three Georgia men in connection with the killing of Ahmaud Arbery.

The FBI action in New York on Wednesday was especially notable both because of the high-profile nature of the Giuliani investigation and because of the vigorous debate the search warrant question had produced inside the Trump-era Justice Department.

Prosecutors in New York wanted last fall to serve a warrant on Giuliani as part of an investigation into whether he had failed to register as a foreign agent over his dealings with Ukrainian officials. But that request was rebuffed by officials in the deputy attorney general's office in Washington. In a dispute over investigative tactics, they raised concerns both before and after the election and did not sign off on a warrant, multiple people familiar with the matter have said.

A new leadership team under Garland apparently reached a different conclusion, though it is not clear on what grounds. The new deputy attorney general, Lisa Monaco, and John Carlin, her top deputy, have both previously led the department's national security division — which is responsible for enforcing the Foreign Agents Registration Act, or FARA — and will presumably be engaged in the investigation as it moves forward.

Former Justice Department official David Laufman said it would be reasonable for the new leadership team to reassess how legal actions were made, especially if they believed the previous administration

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reached an incorrect decision "on an important investigative action in a matter of considerable importance."

Stuart Gerson, who served as acting attorney general in the first weeks of the Clinton administration before Janet Reno was confirmed, said it is common for new leaders to make big decisions when they take their positions.

"You've got a briefing book on your desk of issues — if you didn't know them before, you know them now," Gerson said. "Whatever your philosophy is, you see some of these things as directly important to satisfying a public need."

To obtain the warrants from a judge, prosecutors would need to present probable cause that Giuliani had broken the law. He has denied all wrongdoing and sought Thursday to discredit the investigation.

Investigators specified that they were conducting a FARA investigation, said Giuliani's lawyer, Robert Costello. At least one warrant also seeks information related to Marie Yovanovitch, the former U.S. ambassador to Ukraine who was ousted from her job two years ago on Trump's orders.

Yovanovitch was a central player in the first impeachment case against Trump and detailed a smear campaign by Giuliani and other Trump allies that preceded her 2019 removal from the job.

The fact that the warrant makes mention of Yovanovitch, and that it seeks communication between Giuliani and several Ukrainians, suggests authorities are attempting to determine whether Giuliani's efforts to remove the ambassador were at the behest of Trump or of Ukrainians. That distinction matters because federal law requires anyone lobbying the U.S. on behalf of a foreign country or entity to register their work with the Justice Department.

Giuliani, the 76-year-old former New York City mayor once celebrated for his leadership after 9/11, has been a staunch supporter of Trump, and fronted his failed legal effort to overturn the election, falsely claiming it had been a massive effort by Democrats to rig the results, even though election officials of both political parties and Trump Attorney General William Barr said there was no widespread election fraud.

Giuliani was also deeply involved in efforts to encourage Ukraine to find damaging information about Biden in the run-up to the 2020 election, meeting with a Ukrainian lawmaker whom U.S. officials have described as an active Russian agent and who released audio recordings during the 2020 presidential campaign in an effort to discredit Biden's candidacy.

Giuliani also pushed hard for the ouster of Yovanovitch, whose departure was one of the pivotal issues of the first Trump impeachment case. Yovanovitch, a career diplomat who served for decades under both Republican and Democratic presidents and was first appointed by Ronald Reagan, testified in chilling detail during the impeachment proceeding about a "smear campaign" against her by Giuliani and others.

Major decisions still await at the Justice Department in other high-profile but unrelated investigations that Garland inherited from the Trump administration, including a tax probe into President Joe Biden's son, Hunter, and a investigation into potential sex trafficking and public corruption by Florida Rep. Matt Gaetz.

## Manchin pans DC statehood bill in another break with Dems

By KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A long-shot bid to pass legislation that would make the District of Columbia the nation's 51st state got a little longer on Friday.

Democratic Sen. Joe Manchin of West Virginia said that he opposes unilateral action by Congress to make the nation's capital a state and that he believes it needs to be done through a constitutional amendment. He said prior Republican and Democratic administrations thought the same thing.

"They all came to the same conclusion. If Congress wants to make D.C. a state, it should propose a constitutional amendment," Manchin said in an interview with the West Virginia MetroNews radio network. "It should propose a constitutional amendment and let the people of America vote."

Earlier this month, the House approved a bill strictly along party lines to make the District of Columbia a state with one representative and two senators, while a tiny sliver of land including the White House, the U.S. Capitol and the National Mall would remain a federal district.

An identical statehood bill passed the House in 2020, but it died in the then-Republican-controlled Sen-

ate. Now, with the 2020 elections having given Democrats control of both chambers of Congress and the White House, some have been pushing to eliminate the filibuster so that only a simple majority in the Senate would be needed to get legislation passed. The D.C. statehood bid would be one of the initiatives that could conceivably pass under such a scenario.

Still, such a tactic would require total Democratic unity, and Friday's radio interview with Manchin demonstrated anew that they don't have it.

Manchin has also stated unequivocally that he will not vote to eliminate or weaken the filibuster. He is among a handful of Democratic senators who have not openly supported the D.C. statehood initiative.

Republicans argued during the House vote that the measure wouldn't withstand judicial scrutiny. Manchin said he would "tell his friends" that if they pursued statehood through legislation, "you know it's going to go to the Supreme Court."

"Every legal scholar has told us that, so why not do it the right way and let the people vote and see if they want a change," Manchin said.

Such an amendment would not go up for an election. Rather, a proposed amendment to the Constitution would have to be approved by a two-thirds majority of both chambers of Congress, and then legislatures in 38 states must ratify the language adopted by Congress in order for the amendment to become valid.

D.C. has long chafed under its relationship with Congress, which has the power to essentially veto or alter any local laws. Its population is larger than that of Wyoming or Vermont and its estimated 690,000 residents pay federal taxes, vote for president and serve in the armed forces, but they have no voting representation in Congress.

Del. Eleanor Holmes Norton, the District of Columbia's nonvoting member of Congress, did not mention Manchin by name in a statement her office released Friday. But it was clearly intended as a rebuttal to his comments.

"First, no new state was admitted by constitutional amendment," Norton said. "All 37 new states were admitted by Congress, and there has never been a successful constitutional challenge to the admission of a state. The Constitution commits admission decisions solely to Congress."

Campbell Wallace, a spokesperson for Sen. Tom Carper, D-Del., and sponsor of the Senate's statehood bill, said the Constitution does not prohibit the granting of statehood to Washington, D.C. It does lay out the process by which states are admitted, though, "and D.C. is now taking those same steps that 37 other states have taken since 1791."

## Prosecutors seek higher sentence for Chauvin in Floyd death

By AMY FORLITI Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Prosecutors are asking a judge to give Derek Chauvin a more severe penalty than state guidelines call for when he is sentenced in June for George Floyd's death, arguing in court documents filed Friday that Floyd was particularly vulnerable and that Chauvin abused his authority as a police officer.

Defense attorney Eric Nelson is opposing a tougher sentence, saying the state has failed to prove that those aggravating factors, among others, existed when Chauvin arrested Floyd on May 25.

Chauvin, who is white, was convicted last week of second-degree unintentional murder, third-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter for pressing his knee against Floyd's neck for 9 1/2 minutes as the Black man said he couldn't breathe and went motionless.

Even though he was found guilty of three counts, under Minnesota statutes he'll only be sentenced on the most serious one — second-degree murder. While that count carries a maximum sentence of 40 years, experts say he won't get that much.

Prosecutors did not specify how much time they would seek for Chauvin.

Under Minnesota sentencing guidelines, the presumptive sentence for second-degree unintentional murder for someone with no criminal record like Chauvin would be 12 1/2 years. Judges can sentence someone to as little as 10 years and eight months or as much as 15 years and still be within the advisory guideline range. To go above that, Judge Peter Cahill would have to find that there were "aggravating factors," and

even if those are found, legal experts have said Chauvin would likely not face more than 30 years.

In legal briefs filed Friday, prosecutors said Chauvin should be sentenced above the guideline range because Floyd was particularly vulnerable with his hands cuffed behind his back as he was face-down on the ground, and that he was intoxicated. They noted that Chauvin held his position even after Floyd became unresponsive and officers knew he had no pulse.

Prosecutors also said Chauvin treated Floyd with particular cruelty during the lengthy restraint, saying Chauvin inflicted gratuitous pain and caused psychological distress to Floyd and to bystanders.

"Defendant continued to maintain his position atop Mr. Floyd even as Mr. Floyd cried out that he was in pain, even as Mr. Floyd exclaimed 27 times that he could not breathe, and even as Mr. Floyd said that Defendant's actions were killing him," prosecutors wrote. They added that he stayed in position as Floyd cried out for his mother, stopped speaking and lost consciousness.

"Defendant thus did not just inflict physical pain. He caused Mr. Floyd psychological distress during the final moments of his life, leaving Mr. Floyd helpless as he squeezed the last vestiges of life out of Mr. Floyd's body," prosecutors wrote.

They also said that Chauvin abused his position of authority as a police officer, committed his crime as part of a group of three or more people, and that he pinned Floyd down in the presence of children — including a 9-year-old girl who testified at trial that watching the restraint made her "sad and kind of mad."

Nelson disagreed, writing that "Mr. Chauvin entered into the officers' encounter with Mr. Floyd with legal authority to assist in effecting the lawful arrest of an actively-resisting criminal suspect. Mr. Chauvin was authorized, under Minnesota law, to use reasonable force to do so."

Nelson said Floyd was not particularly vulnerable, saying he was a large man who was struggling with officers. He wrote that courts have typically found particular vulnerability if the victims are young, or perhaps sleeping, when a crime occurs.

Nelson also said Floyd was not treated with particular cruelty, saying that there is no evidence that the assault perpetrated by Chauvin involved gratuitous pain that's not usually associated with second-degree murder.

"The assault of Mr. Floyd occurred in the course of a very short time, involved no threats or taunting, such as putting a gun to his head and pulling the trigger ... and ended when EMS finally responded to officers' calls," Nelson wrote.

He also said the state hasn't proven that any of the other officers actively participated in the crime for which Chauvin was convicted. Those officers are scheduled to face trial on aiding and abetting charges in August. He also wrote that the presence of children in this case is different from cases in which children might be witnessing a crime in a home and unable to leave.

And, he said, the state failed to prove that Chauvin's role as a police officer was an aggravating factor, saying that Floyd's struggle with officers showed that Chauvin's authority was irrelevant to Floyd.

Cahill has said he will review the attorneys' written arguments before determining whether aggravating factors exist that would warrant a tougher sentence.

No matter what sentence Chauvin gets, in Minnesota it's presumed that a defendant with good behavior will serve two-thirds of the penalty in prison and the rest on supervised release, commonly known as parole.

## Mars helicopter aces 4th flight, gets extra month of flying

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — NASA's little Mars helicopter has gotten a reprieve.

Instead of wrapping up flight tests at the beginning of May, NASA is giving its Ingenuity helicopter at least an extra month to tackle tough new terrain and serve as a scout for its companion rover, Perseverance.

Officials announced the flight extension Friday, following three short flights in under two weeks for the \$85 million tech demo. Soon afterward, there was more good news: Ingenuity — the first powered aircraft to soar at another planet — had aced its fourth flight at Mars.

For Friday's trip, Ingenuity traveled 872 feet (266 meters) at a height of 16 feet (5 meters) for two min-

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utes — considerably farther and longer than before. An attempt Thursday had failed because of a known software error.

On its fifth flight in another week or so, the 4-pound (1.8-kilogram) chopper will move to a new airfield on Mars, allowing the rover to finally start focusing on its own rock-sampling mission. The rover is seeking signs of ancient life at Jezero Crater, home to a lush lakebed and river delta billions of years ago.

The helicopter team at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California, expects to chalk up a sixth and seventh flight in May. The previous limit had been five. If all goes well, the helicopter mission could go even longer.

"Ingenuity loves Mars," project manager MiMi Aung told reporters. "It takes off and I almost feel the freedom that it feels."

Now Perseverance will take priority, scoping out the rocks around the Feb. 18 landing site. Ingenuity hitched a ride to Mars on the rover's belly, launching from Cape Canaveral last summer. Managers expect the rover to collect its first sample in July for return to Earth in a decade.

The rover will continue to relay data and pictures from the helicopter, but stop taking its own chopper shots. The two spacecraft must be within a half-mile (1 kilometer) of one another, for communication relay.

Designed to operate on Mars for 30 days, Ingenuity probably can survive the freezing Martian nights — and repeated flights in the extremely thin atmosphere — for at least another few months.

"We really do expect some finite life," Aung said, "and so it will be a race between how long these parts surprise us in surviving."

## US to restrict travel from India over COVID starting Tuesday

By ZEKE MILLER, DARLENE SUPERVILLE and MATTHEW LEE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. will restrict travel from India starting Tuesday, the White House said Friday, citing a devastating rise in COVID-19 cases in the country and the emergence of potentially dangerous variants of the coronavirus.

White House press secretary Jen Psaki said President Joe Biden's administration made the determination on the advice of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Biden signed a proclamation barring entry to most foreigners who have been in India in the past 14 days, with exceptions for legal permanent residents, spouses and close family members of U.S. citizens, and some others. He cited the spread of the virus and its variants.

"The CDC advises, based on work by public health and scientific experts, that these variants have characteristics of concern, which may make them more easily transmitted and have the potential for reduced protection afforded by some vaccines," Biden said in the proclamation.

He said the CDC has concluded that "proactive measures" are needed to protect public health from travelers from India.

With 386,452 new cases, India now has reported more than 18.7 million since the pandemic began, second only to the United States. The Health Ministry on Friday also reported 3,498 deaths in the last 24 hours, bringing the total to 208,330. Experts believe both figures are an undercount.

Biden spoke Monday with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi about the growing health crisis and pledged to immediately send assistance. This week, the U.S. began delivering therapeutics, rapid virus tests and oxygen to India, along with some materials needed for India to boost its domestic production of COVID-19 vaccines. Additionally, a CDC team of public health experts was expected to be on the ground soon to help Indian health officials move to slow the spread of the virus.

Vice President Kamala Harris, who is of Indian descent, called the situation in India a "great tragedy" and said she hadn't spoken to any of her relatives still living there since the news of the travel ban was made public. She emphasized America's "longstanding, decades-long relationship" with the country in speaking about the U.S. aid to help alleviate some of the crisis there.

"We have a responsibility as the United States, and particularly with people we have partnered with over the years, to step up when people are in a time of need," she said.



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The White House waited on the CDC recommendation before moving to restrict travel, noting that the U.S. already requires negative tests and quarantines for all international travelers. Other restrictions are in place on travel from China, Iran, the European Union, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Brazil and South Africa, which are or have been hotspots for the coronavirus.

There was no immediate comment on the new limits from the State Department, which on Thursday reissued a warning to Americans against traveling to India and said those already in the country should consider leaving by commercial means. That warning was accompanied by a notice that the department was telling the families of all U.S. government employees at its embassy in New Delhi and four consulates in India that they could leave the country at government expense.

U.S. diplomatic facilities in India have not been immune from the pandemic and a handful of local staff have perished from the virus. Several dozen other local and U.S. staffers have been sickened by COVID-19, according to officials who were not authorized to discuss personal matters publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity. The State Department has declined to comment on the number of staff affected, citing security and privacy concerns.

But even as the U.S. boosts pandemic assistance to India and allows some of its diplomatic families to come home, other aspects of the relationship continue unhampered.

Just minutes after the White House released the new travel restrictions, the State Department said it had approved more than \$2.4 billion in arms sales to India, which the U.S. believes will be a critical counterbalance to China in the Indo-Pacific region.

The sale includes six Boeing P-8I patrol aircraft and related technology to be used for surveillance. The department said the deal "will support the foreign policy and national security of the United States by helping to strengthen the U.S.-Indian strategic relationship and to improve the security of a major defensive partner, which continues to be an important force for political stability, peace, and economic progress in the Indo-Pacific and South Asia region."

## Number of Americans fully vaccinated tops 100 million

By DAVID KOENIG, AMY TAXIN and MAE ANDERSON Associated Press

DALLAS (AP) — Disneyland reopened on Friday and cruise lines welcomed the news that they could be sailing again in the U.S. by midsummer, as the number of Americans fully vaccinated against COVID-19 reached another milestone: 100 million.

Visitors cheered and screamed with delight as the Southern California theme park swung open its gates for the first time in 13 months in a powerful symbol of the U.S. rebound, even though the self-proclaimed Happiest Place on Earth is allowing only in-state guests for now and operating at just 25% capacity.

The reopening and similar steps elsewhere around the country reflect increasing optimism as COVID-19 deaths tumble and the ranks of the vaccinated grow — a stark contrast to the worsening disaster in India and Brazil and the scant availability of vaccines in many poor parts of the world.

In fact, the U.S. announced Friday it will restrict travel from India starting Tuesday, citing the devastating rise in COVID-19 cases in the country and the emergence of potentially dangerous variants of the coronavirus.

While the overall number of lives lost to COVID-19 in the U.S. has eclipsed 575,000, deaths have plummeted to an average of about 670 per day from a peak of around 3,400 in mid-January.

Thirty-nine percent of the nation's adult population has been fully vaccinated, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Over 55% of adults have received at least one dose, up from 30% a month ago.

However, about 8% of those who have gotten one dose of either the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine have not returned for their second shot, officials said. Dr. Anthony Fauci, the nation's top infectious disease expert, said it is important to complete the course to gain maximum protection against the virus.

"Make sure you get that second dose," he said at a White House briefing.

Dr. Leana Wen, former Baltimore health commissioner and a visiting professor of health policy at George

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Washington University, said fully vaccinating about 40% of American adults is a great achievement but not enough.

"The hardest part is ahead of us," she said. "I'm very concerned that we are not going to come anywhere close to reaching herd immunity in 2021."

Wen noted that Fauci has estimated 70% to 85% of the U.S. population needs to be vaccinated to achieve herd immunity.

The immunization drive has slowed in recent weeks, even as shots have been thrown open to all adults. Wen said better weather and falling case counts will make it harder to reach people who have not been vaccinated yet.

"Those people who are on the fence about getting a vaccine may have less reason to get one now because they don't see coronavirus as an existential crisis anymore," she said.

CDC officials also reported Friday that it was anxiety — not a problem with the shots — that caused fainting, dizziness and other reactions reported in 64 people at vaccine clinics in five states in early April. None got seriously ill.

Cruise lines, meanwhile, cheered the news that the CDC is committed to resuming sailing in the U.S. by midsummer and is adjusting some of the rules to speed the process.

The CDC said in a letter to the industry this week that it will let ships cruise without going through practice trips first if 98% of the crew and 95% of the passengers are fully vaccinated.

"The voices of community leaders and the wider cruise community are being heard — and we are very grateful for that," said Laziza Lambert, spokeswoman for the Cruise Lines International Association.

U.S. cruises have been shut down by the pandemic since March 2020.

In other travel news, the Transportation Security Administration extended a requirement that passengers on planes, trains and buses wear masks. The rule was set to expire May 11 but will now run through Sept. 13. Airlines and their unions had pushed for an extension, saying masks help keep passengers and workers safe.

In Michigan, which in recent weeks became the worst hot spot in the U.S., the numbers are finally showing improvement, and Gov. Gretchen Whitmer announced a plan to tie the lifting of restrictions to the state's vaccination rate.

In New York, Mayor Bill de Blasio said Thursday he expects to see preventive measures lifted and the city "fully reopen" by July 1. "We are ready for stores to open, for businesses to open, offices, theaters, full strength," he said on MSNBC.

But New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo has maintained throughout the crisis that such decisions are his alone, and he said Thursday he would like to end restrictions even sooner.

"I don't want to wait that long. I think if we do what we have to do, we can be reopened earlier," he said.

Cuomo said on Friday that New York City can increase indoor dining to 75% of capacity starting May 7.

## 3 officers resign in rough arrest of woman with dementia

By COLLEEN SLEVIN Associated Press

DENVER (AP) — Three Colorado police officers involved in the rough arrest of a 73-year-old woman with dementia — and later seen on video talking about her arrest, laughing and joking at times — have resigned, police said Friday.

Loveland Police Chief Robert Ticer announced the departures of Officers Austin Hopp and Daria Jalali and Community Services Officer Tyler Blackett in connection to the arrest of Karen Garner at a news conference, without providing details about how they left. Department spokesman Tom Hacker later confirmed they had resigned.

Ticer noted that last year's treatment of Garner in the city about 50 miles (80 kilometers) north of Denver, revealed by the filing of a federal lawsuit this month, had led to an outpouring of concern and anger in the community, the country and around the world and apologized.

"Our goal at the Loveland Police Department has always been to make our community proud. We failed

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and we are very sorry for that," he said.

The officers could not be reached for comment on Friday.

Hopp arrested Garner in June 2020 after she left a store without paying for about \$14 worth of items. His body camera footage shows him catching up to her as she walked through a field along a road. She shrugged and turned away from him and he quickly grabbed her arm and pushed her 80-pound (36-kilogram) body to the ground. A federal lawsuit filed on Garner's behalf, which included images from the body camera footage, claims Hopp dislocated her shoulder by shoving her handcuffed left arm forward onto the hood of his patrol car and that she was denied medical treatment for about six hours.

In response to the lawsuit, the department announced it was putting Hopp, the arresting officer, on leave. Jalali, who arrived to help Hopp shortly after Garner was handcuffed, and Blackett, who helped transport Garner to the police station, were put on leave later, as was a supervisory sergeant who stopped by the arrest scene. Hopp, Jalali and Blackett were also captured on surveillance video with enhanced audio released by the lawyer representing Garner and her family this week that shows them watching Hopp's body camera footage and talking about the arrest as Garner was handcuffed in a holding cell a few feet away. At one point, Hopp refers to hearing a "pop" sound as he recounts repeatedly pushing Garner, suggesting that he was aware that he had injured her.

Sarah Schielke, the lawyer representing Garner and her family, said the department has a toxic culture that goes beyond the three officers who resigned and she thinks Ticer should have also stepped down to take responsibility for it.

"It's this attitude of arrogance and entitlement, and frivolity taken in the use of force on its citizens and complete disregard for the people they're policing," she said.

She also faulted the department for not firing the supervisory sergeant and another sergeant who approved of Hopp's use of force report.

Ticer said he did not know of Garner's serious injuries until the lawsuit but he declined to say how many people in his chain of command knew about her injuries, saying that would be looked at by a city investigation into whether police policies were followed in the arrest. That probe will not start until after an investigation to determine whether any criminal charges are warranted that is being conducted by police in nearby Fort Collins. They are part of a team of area law enforcement agencies that investigates other departments' uses of force resulting in serious injuries in coordination with the district attorney.

## Grammys overhaul process for picking nominees for top awards

By MESFIN FEKADU AP Music Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The Grammy Awards have changed its tune and voted to remove its anonymous nomination review committees — groups that determined the contenders for key awards at the coveted music show.

The Recording Academy made the announcement Friday after the board of trustees met and approved the change. The decision came hours after The Associated Press reported that the academy was planning to discuss its nomination review committees and whether it was time to eliminate them.

"It's been a year of unprecedented, transformational change for the Recording Academy, and I'm immensely proud to be able to continue our journey of growth with these latest updates to our awards process," Harvey Mason Jr., the academy's interim president and CEO, said in a statement Friday.

"This is a new Academy, one that is driven to action and that has doubled down on the commitment to meeting the needs of the music community. While change and progress are key drivers of our actions, one thing will always remain — the Grammy Award is the only peer-driven and peer-voted recognition in music," he continued. "We are honored to work alongside the music community year-round to further refine and protect the integrity of the awards process."

The major change comes months after The Weeknd blasted the Grammys and called them "corrupt" after he earned zero nominations for the 2021 show despite having the year's biggest single with "Blinding Lights." Nominees will now be based purely on votes made by the academy's 11,000+ voting members,

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and the academy said that "more than 90 percent of its members will have gone through the requalification process by the end of this year, ensuring that the voting body is actively engaged in music creation."

For the Grammys' top four awards — album, song and record of the year, along with best new artist — a nomination review committee of at least 20 music generalists in past years selected the top eight nominees from those voted into the top 20.

The majority of the 80-plus Grammy categories were voted by nomination review committees, which were intended to safeguard a specific genre's integrity and to serve as additional checks and balances. While nominees for some categories like best pop vocal album and best pop solo performance were based purely on votes, a number of genre categories had nomination review committees. Those included the rap, rock, R&B, country, dance/electronic music, American Roots, Latin, jazz and gospel/Christian music fields. Nomination review committees for those groups consisted of 13 to 17 voting members who selected five nominees from the top 15.

But questions have loomed for years around the nominations process with music industry players calling for more transparency because the selection of finalists happens behind closed doors. Others have claimed that members of key nominating committees promote projects they worked on or projects they favor based on personal relationships.

Last year the academy announced that musicians invited to participate in a nomination review committee would have to agree to the terms of a conflict of interest disclosure form and reveal if they would benefit from an artist's nomination for that category, whether the ties are financial, familial or creative.

That seemed like a response to former Recording Academy CEO Deborah Dugan, who was fired only months into her job and days before the 2020 Grammys. Dugan had said the awards show was rigged and muddled with conflicts of interest.

Doubts about the Grammys voting process reached greater heights when The Weeknd — who topped the charts with "Blinding Lights" and "Heartless," launched an uber-successful album with "After Hours" and even performed at the Super Bowl — was severely snubbed at this year's show, held last month. The Grammys contrasted most of the other music awards shows, where The Weeknd was a key nominee (he earned 16 Billboard Music Award nominations Thursday), and he vowed to boycott the show.

Change has been a center of conversation at the Grammys for years. The organization has been criticized over the diversity in its top prizes, which rarely go to rap and contemporary R&B stars, including heavyweights like Beyoncé, Kanye West, Kendrick Lamar, Eminem, Drake, Jay-Z, Mariah Carey and John Legend. While those acts have won in the rap and R&B categories, when it comes to major prizes such as album, song and record of the year, the winners tend to be in the pop, rock, jazz or country genres. The organization has also been targeted for its lack of female winners in the top categories.

While there is some negativity linked to nomination review committees, some members preferred them so they can protect who is allowed to be part of a specific genre. For instance, the rap field at the Grammys added a nomination review committee three years after Macklemore & Ryan Lewis won three rap Grammys in 2014 over Kendrick Lamar, a decision that was heavily criticized by the music community and public, and even Macklemore himself.

Other changes announced Friday include limiting how many genre categories voters can vote in, which has been reduced from 15 to 10. The academy said that "those 10 categories must be within no more than three (genre) fields." All voters can vote for the top four awards.

The academy also introduced two new awards, bringing its total to 86: best global music performance and best música urbana album.

The 64th annual Grammy Awards will air live on January 31, 2022. Nominees will be announced later this year, and eligible songs and albums must be released between Sept. 1, 2020 and Sept. 30, 2021.

## With Idaho case, AP counts 109 statehouse #MeToo allegations

By DAVID A. LIEB and KEITH RIDLER Associated Press

An Idaho lawmaker was accused of raping an intern; a Missouri lawmaker of abusing his children. In North Dakota and Oregon, a pair lawmakers faced claims of a pattern of sexual harassment.

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All are now out of office — either resigning under pressure or getting expelled by colleagues within the past two months. Three other lawmakers accused this year remain in their jobs.

The flurry of sexual misconduct claims in state capitols comes three-and-a-half years after the #MeToo movement sparked a public reckoning for people in power accused of sexual wrongdoing and an overhaul of many state policies. The continued incidents highlight both that problems persist and that some legislatures are responding more assertively.

"These institutions don't change overnight," said Kelly Dittmar, research director at the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University. "Part of what the #MeToo movement did was shed a spotlight on the problem, but fixing that problem that has been so deep-seeded is going to take longer."

Since 2017, at least 109 state lawmakers in 40 states have faced public allegations of sexual misconduct or harassment, according to an Associated Press tally. Of those, 43 have resigned or been expelled and 42 have faced other repercussions such as the loss of committee chair or party leadership positions.

Idaho Rep. Aaron von Ehlinger was the most recent to resign. The 38-year-old Republican stepped down Thursday after a legislative ethics committee recommended he be suspended without pay over allegations that he raped a 19-year-old intern in his apartment after the two had dinner at a Boise restaurant.

Von Ehlinger denied wrongdoing, insisted the sexual contact was consensual and wrote in his resignation letter that he was quitting because he could not effectively represent his constituents.

The decision came the day after the committee heard testimony, including from the young woman who brought the allegations. She was shielded from public view by a black screen and used the name Jane Doe during the proceedings. But a TV reporter attempted to film her as she left, and at least one lawmaker revealed her identify on social media. The Associated Press generally does not identify people who say they have been sexually assaulted.

Republican Senate President Pro Tem Chuck Winder on Friday praised the woman for "the courage to come forward."

"Anyone and everyone who comes here and works here, including yourselves, should feel safe here. It needs to be a respectful place to work," Winder told colleagues.

In January 2020, an AP review found that states had enacted more than 75 laws and resolutions targeting sexual harassment, abuse and assault within government or the private sector over the previous two years. The review also found that nearly all legislative chambers required sexual harassment training for members, up significantly from about one-third of the chambers during a 2018 AP review.

The Idaho House and Senate required lawmakers to attend a "respectful workplace training" that started in 2018 and which von Ehlinger attended this year. But the House never formally adopted the respectful workplace policy, which von Ehlinger's attorney noted during his hearing.

House Minority Leader Ilana Rubel, a Democrat, said Friday that if the chamber would officially enact the policy, it would "make it clear that lawmakers should not be asking staffers out on dates."

Von Ehlinger's resignation came just a week after the Missouri House expelled Republican Rep. Rick Roeber after a bipartisan ethics committee investigation concluded there were credible allegations he had physically and sexually abused his children years ago.

Roeber attempted to resign shortly before the panel's report was publicly released, citing his plans to move out of state to be closer to family. But the House refused to accept his resignation. House Ethics Committee Vice Chairman Richard Brown, a Democrat, said it wouldn't be right to let him "escape without us giving full recognition to what has taken place."

The House instead voted overwhelmingly to kick Roeber out of office, marking the first time since the Civil War era that a Missouri House member had been expelled.

"I don't think it is appropriate for him to walk away on his own terms," said Republican House Speaker Rob Vescovo.

In March, the North Dakota House expelled Republican Rep. Luke Simons for allegedly threatening and sexually harassing women at the Capitol in a pattern of behavior that lawmakers said stretched back to soon after Simons took office in 2017.

After the expulsion vote, legislative leaders vowed to again overhaul the policy crafted less than three

years ago regarding workplace and sexual harassment at the Capitol. Some want to remove a requirement that could eventually make a victim's identity public, which they said may have kept some women from coming forward.

Oregon state Rep. Diego Hernandez, a Democrat, resigned in March after a judge rejected his attempt to stop a planned expulsion vote following an investigation into claims that he had sexually harassed or created a hostile workplace for several women. He said he stepped down "so my colleagues may focus on serving Oregonians and so I can move forward with my life and focus on my health and family."

Dittmar, of Rutgers University, said lawmakers who resign under pressure, rather than being expelled, could potentially find an easier path to a political comeback.

"If you've resigned, then you get to frame the narrative about why you left," she said.

"If somebody is punished and expelled, then hopefully what that does is send a message to other members currently or future members that this institution will not tolerate this type of behavior."

## Venezuela's 'doctor of the poor' beatified in small ceremony

By JORGE RUEDA Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — A man revered by millions of Venezuelans as the "doctor of the poor" is one step away from sainthood after being beatified Friday in the South American country's capital.

Dr. Jose Gregorio Hernández, who died in 1919, was beatified in a simple and emotional ceremony, culminating decades of efforts by Venezuela's Catholics. Mass celebrations were postponed indefinitely due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Apostolic Nuncio Aldo Giordano, representing the Vatican, said during the ceremony that Hernández "will be called blessed and celebrated every year."

"It seems providential to celebrate the beatification of a doctor in the midst of a pandemic that affects all of humanity," Giordano said. "In the figure of Blessed Dr. José Gregorio, the church today pays a tribute of recognition, gratitude and prayer to medical and health professionals."

He added that Hernández is capable of uniting Venezuelans, despite their differences, even religious and ideological. Both government and opposition figures sent tweets Friday celebrating the first Venezuelan layman to be beatified. The other three are female members of religious orders.

Fewer than 300 people, almost entirely priests and nuns, attended the event in the small chapel of a Catholic school on the edge of a mountainous national park north of the capital of Caracas. The ritual was carried live on television.

Hernández, born on Oct. 26, 1864, was convinced that science was one of the main ways to get the country out of misery. He founded two research institutions and several classes at the Central University of Venezuela, the oldest and largest in the country.

"He believed that medicine was a priesthood of human pain," Luis Razetti, a prominent Venezuelan doctor and friend of Hernández, once said.

Hernández, who never married, graduated as a doctor in Caracas in 1888. He traveled to Europe to study and then to become a Catholic monk, but his fragile health was affected by Italy's cold and humid weather. He returned to Venezuela to recover and stayed permanently.

On June 29, 1919, he was killed while crossing a street shortly after picking up medicines at a pharmacy to take to an impoverished woman. An estimated 20,000 people participated in his funeral procession, about a quarter of the population of Caracas at the time.

In 1986, the Vatican declared Hernández "venerable," which means that he led an exemplary Christian life. But to achieve sanctity, teams of doctors, theologians and cardinals must approve two miracles attributed to him.

He was beatified after the church certified a miracle in the case of Yaxury Solorzano, a girl who completely recovered after being shot in the head.

Beatification is the third and penultimate step toward canonization. Hernández could become a saint if he is credited with another miracle.

Many of the people who have been beatified never went on to be declared saints, while others were

canonized, often centuries later. Among the more than 10,000 saints recognized by the Roman Catholic Church, fewer than 100 were laypeople.

But in the hearts of many Venezuelans, Hernández is already a saint.

"José Gregorio was a healer, he would not have wanted us to risk going out on the street for him," said María Delgado, a 68-year-old retiree, who on Friday bought candles to light at home before a statuette of the doctor.

Pope Francis signed the decree for the beatification in June. In a video message Thursday, he noted that the beatification will take place at a challenging time for Venezuelans, saying, "I am aware that these prolonged hardships and anguish have been aggravated by the terrible pandemic of COVID-19 that affects us all."

"I have very present today so many dead, so many infected by the coronavirus who have paid with their lives. ... I also have in mind all those who have left the country in search of better living conditions, and also those who are deprived of freedom and those who lack what is most necessary."

The Friday celebration was to be led by the Vatican Secretary of State, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, but his trip was canceled largely due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Vatican said this week.

## Former reality TV star Josh Duggar faces child porn charges

FAYETTEVILLE, Ark. (AP) — Former reality TV star Josh Duggar faces charges of downloading and possessing child pornography under a federal indictment unsealed Friday.

Federal prosecutors announced the indictment a day after Duggar was arrested by U.S. Marshals in northwest Arkansas. Prosecutors said Duggar possessed the material, some of which depicts the sexual abuse of children under the age of 12, in May 2019.

Duggar, 33, pleaded not guilty at a hearing Friday. His attorneys said they planned to defend his case "aggressively and thoroughly."

"In this country, no one can stop prosecutors from charging a crime," the attorneys said in a statement. "But when you're accused, you can fight back in the courtroom — and that is exactly what Josh intends to do."

A federal judge set a May 5 detention hearing and a July 6 trial date.

Duggar starred on TLC's "19 Kids and Counting" until it was pulled from the network in 2015 over revelations Duggar had molested four of his sisters and a babysitter. Duggar's parents said he had confessed to the fondling and apologized.

Duggar previously apologized for a pornography addiction and cheating on his wife.

If convicted, Duggar faces up to 20 years of imprisonment and fines up to \$250,000 on each count.

## Israel mourns deaths of 45 in stampede at religious festival

By JOSEF FEDERMAN and ISAAC SCHARF Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — The holiday of Lag BaOmer is one of the happiest days on the calendar for Israel's ultra-Orthodox community — a time of mass celebrations in honor of a revered sage. But in a split second Friday, the festive gathering in northern Israel turned into one of the country's worst-ever tragedies, with at least 45 people crushed to death and dozens injured in a stampede.

The disaster prompted a national outpouring of grief as devastated families rushed to identify their dead relatives and bury them ahead of the Jewish Sabbath. There was also anger toward authorities over an accident that experts had long feared, further clouding Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's hopes of remaining in office.

Netanyahu, who briefly visited Mount Meron at midday, offered his condolences. "In these moments our people unite and that is what we are doing at this moment as well," he said.

He announced Sunday would be a day of national mourning and said he had joined the masses of people who donated blood for the victims. Israel's President Reuven Rivlin lit 45 candles in honor of the dead. Messages of condolences poured in from around the world.

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President Joe Biden said he was heartbroken and had called Netanyahu to offer support. "The people of the United States and Israel are bound together by our families, our faiths, and our histories, and we will stand with our friends," he said.

The stampede erupted around 1 a.m. as people began to leave and thronged a narrow, tunnel-like passage. According to witnesses, people began to fall on a slippery ramp, causing others to trip and sparking panic.

Avigdor Hayut, who survived the stampede, described slipping on the ramp and getting trapped in the crowd with his two sons, ages 10 and 13.

"My son screamed, 'I'm dying,'" he told Israel's public TV station Kan. A policeman tried to pull him and his younger son out of the crowd but couldn't move them.

"The policeman threw up and started crying, and I understood what he was looking at, what I couldn't see," said Hayut, 36, who suffered a broken ankle and ribs. "I thought this was the end." He said he began to pray and "simply waited."

Hours later, in hospital with Shmuel, his 10-year-old, they learned that his other son, Yedidya, had died.

Lag BaOmer is very popular with Israel's ultra-Orthodox community. The main event takes place each year at Mount Meron. Tens of thousands, mostly ultra-Orthodox, celebrate to honor Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, a 2nd-century sage and mystic who is believed to be buried there. This year, authorities said some 100,000 people attended.

The crowds light bonfires, dance and have large festive meals as part of the celebrations. Across the country, even in secular areas, smaller groups gather in parks and forests for barbecues and bonfires.

Video footage from the scene of the disaster showed large numbers of people, most of them black-clad ultra-Orthodox men, squeezed in the tunnel. Witnesses complained that police barricades had prevented people from exiting properly.

"The officers who were there couldn't care less," said Velvel Brevda, a rabbi who witnessed the stampede. He blamed the government for the deaths of "beautiful holy Jews that were killed here for no reason whatsoever."

At least 45 people were killed, according to the Israeli Health Ministry, with four people remaining in critical condition and dozens more hospitalized.

Bodies were later taken to Israel's central forensic institute for identification, where distraught families waited to identify their loved ones. Israel's Army Radio said some 40 people remained unaccounted for.

By Friday night, 32 victims had been identified. Israeli media earlier published a partial list of the victims, including a 9-year-old boy, a pair of brothers, 12 and 14, and a father of 11 children. An unknown number of American citizens, two Canadians and an Argentinian were also among the dead.

In a race against time, a number of funerals were held before sundown Friday, the start of the Jewish Sabbath when burials do not take place. The death toll at Mount Meron exceeded the 44 people killed in a 2010 forest fire, previously believed to be Israel's deadliest civilian tragedy.

The Justice Ministry said the police were launching a probe into possible criminal misconduct by officers.

Experts have long warned that the Mount Meron celebrations were ripe for disaster due to the crowded conditions, large fires and hot weather. In a 2008 report, the state comptroller, a watchdog government office, warned conditions at the site, including escape routes, "endanger the public."

Last year, the celebrations were greatly scaled back due to coronavirus restrictions. But this year's event marked the first religious gathering to be held legally since Israel lifted most restrictions in the wake of its successful vaccination program.

According to Health Ministry guidelines, public gatherings continue to be limited to no more than 500 people. But Israeli media said that Netanyahu assured ultra-Orthodox leaders that the celebrations would take place, despite objections from public health officials. Netanyahu's office did not respond to requests for comment.

The deadly stampede was bound to have political reverberations at a time of great uncertainty following an inconclusive March election, the fourth in two years.

Netanyahu has so far been unsuccessful in forming a governing coalition. His time to do so runs out on



Tuesday. If he fails, his political rivals will get a chance to try to cobble together an alliance.

Netanyahu has long relied on powerful ultra-Orthodox parties as allies and will need their support if he wants to keep faint hopes alive of staying in power.

During Friday's visit to Mount Meron, Netanyahu was jeered by dozens of religious protesters. If such sentiments spread, it could further hurt Netanyahu's prospects.

The stampede also threatened to deepen a broad public backlash against the ultra-Orthodox.

Netanyahu came under heavy criticism over the past year for allowing ultra-Orthodox communities to flout safety guidelines by opening schools and synagogues and holding mass funerals. The ultra-Orthodox communities were among the country's hardest hit by COVID-19.

Gideon Rahat, a political scientist at the Hebrew University and fellow at the Israel Democracy Institute, said the coming days would see a battle over "framing" of the event. Netanyahu will call for national healing and unity, while his opponents will say he is unfit to remain in office and its time for change.

"There is a battle on the framing, who is to blame, not to blame," he said. "Already we see the signs of it."

## US officials: Anxiety drove vaccine reactions in 5 states

By MIKE STOBBE AP Medical Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — It was anxiety — and not a problem with the shots — that caused fainting, dizziness and other short-term reactions in dozens of people at coronavirus vaccine clinics in five states, U.S. health officials have concluded.

Experts say the clusters detailed Friday by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are an example of a phenomenon that's been chronicled for decades from a variety of different vaccines. Basically, some people get so freaked out by injections that their anxiety spurs a physical reaction.

"We knew we were going to see this" as mass COVID-19 vaccine clinics were set up around the world, said Dr. Noni MacDonald, a Canadian researcher who has studied similar incidents.

The CDC authors said the reports came in over three days, April 7 to 9, from clinics in California, Colorado, Georgia, Iowa and North Carolina. The investigation was based on interviews with, and reports by, clinic staff.

Many of the 64 people affected either fainted or reported dizziness. Some got nauseous or vomited, and a few had racing hearts, chest pain or other symptoms. None got seriously ill.

All received the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, and four of the the five clinics temporarily shut down as officials tried to sort out what was happening. Health officials at the time said they had no reason to suspect a problem with the vaccine itself.

Of the three COVID-19 vaccines authorized in the U.S., only J&J's requires just one dose. That probably makes it more appealing to people who are nervous about shots and might leave them "more highly predisposed to anxiety-related events," the CDC report said.

Some of the sites advertised they were giving J&J shots, noted Dr. Tom Shimabukuro, who leads the CDC's COVID-19 vaccine safety monitoring work and is one of the study's authors.

The CDC found that about a quarter of the people reporting side effects had similar things happen following past vaccinations.

The post-shot reactions differ from a very rare kind of side effect that led to a pause in administration of the J&J vaccine. At least 17 vaccine recipients have developed an uncommon kind of blood clot that developed in unusual places, such as veins that drain blood from the brain, along with abnormally low levels of the platelets that form clots.

Other types of side effects from the coronavirus vaccines are not unusual. Another CDC report released Friday looked at side effects reported by more than 300,000 J&J vaccine recipients. More than half said they experienced a sore arm, fatigue or headache. A third reported fever or chills, and about a fifth said they were nauseous.

But the clusters at the five clinics are believed to be stress-related.

MacDonald, a professor of pediatrics at Dalhousie University in Nova Scotia, said studies have indicated

that 10% to 15% of adults are afraid of injections.

Many people who experience stress-related symptoms are younger, and past clusters from other shots have involved school students. Some hyperventilate, some experience nausea, some reported headaches. And some had what at first appears to be more severe, neurological symptoms, she said.

One cluster that MacDonald reviewed involved 14 U.S. military reservists who developed symptoms after getting flu shots in 2009. The first was a 23-year-old man who one day later reported progressive weakness in his arms and legs but fully recovered.

"Everybody thinks this is (only) young teenage girls" who experience this, MacDonald said. "Well, it isn't."

It can start with one person fainting that can set off a chain reaction of symptoms in anxious people who see or hear about that first person. These days, people also react to things they read or watch in Facebook posts or on other sites.

Some doctors have referred to the phenomenon as a form of mass hysteria, but MacDonald rejected the term.

"These people are not crazy," but rather are experiencing real physical responses to psychological stress, she said.

## **Brazil backs away from the virus brink as deaths top 400,000**

By DAVID BILLER Associated Press

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — For most of this month, intensive care units across Brazil were at or near capacity amid a crush of COVID-19 patients, and sedatives needed to intubate patients dwindled. The nation's biggest cemetery had so many corpses to bury that gravediggers worked hours past sundown.

But Brazil has stepped back from the edge — at least for now — as burial and hospital services no longer face collapse. It has ceased to be the virus' global epicenter, as its death toll ebbed and was overtaken by India's surge. Experts warn, however, that the situation remains precarious, and caution is warranted.

The number of states with ICU capacity above 90% has slipped to 10, from 17 a month ago, according to data from the state-run Fiocruz medical research institute. And nighttime burials at Vila Formosa and three other cemeteries in Sao Paulo were suspended Thursday, after two weeks of declining deaths.

That comes as cold comfort in a country where some 2,500 people died every day over the past week, more than triple the number in the U.S. Brazil surpassed the grim milestone of 400,000 confirmed deaths on Thursday — a number considered by experts to be an undercount, in part because lack of testing meant many cases were overlooked, especially early in the pandemic. The seven-day average has retreated from more than 3,100 deaths in mid-April, but Fiocruz warned in a bulletin Wednesday that it may plateau — and at an even higher level than it did last year.

"Our goal now is to make the numbers keep going down instead of stabilizing. That's the most crucial thing," said Pedro Hallal, an epidemiologist and coordinator of Brazil's largest COVID-19 testing program. "It's good that they're going down, but let's not assume that this will be the last wave. There is hope that it will be the last wave, because of the vaccine, but that needs to be confirmed."

Given slow vaccine rollout, there are millions more Brazilians vulnerable to infection, Hallal added, and the threshold scientists believe is needed to stop uncontrolled spread — 70% or higher of the population with immunity through vaccination or past infection — remains distant.

Brazil's death toll of 401,186 is the world's second-highest, with the majority recorded in just the last four months as a more contagious variant swept the nation. Friday morning, demonstrators laid rows of body bags on the sand of Rio de Janeiro's Copacabana beach to represent the dead.

Throughout the thick of the Southern Hemisphere's summer, crowds gathered and people boarded public transport in droves as mayors and governors relaxed the restrictions on activity that Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro fervently opposes.

Some mayors and governors tightened such measures over the last month, helping to revert the surge of infections, Fiocruz said. However, they have begun reopening again amid the early, encouraging data.

Valter Gomes, a 33-year-old textile worker in central Sao Paulo, has noted more people riding trains and

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reopening shops.

"Often the pandemic gets worse because a lot of people who have the opportunity to stay home don't. They go out instead," he said. "If everyone contributed, I don't think there would be such a big crisis of having to stop work, having these lockdowns."

Researchers at Imperial College London this week said Brazil's transmission rate has reached its lowest rate in months.

But the rate remains high, said Domingos Alves, an epidemiologist tracking COVID-19 data, and he argues it's too soon to roll back restrictions. Brazil risks repeating the errors of European countries that have seen third surges, because the country's decline in infections isn't yet sustained, he said.

"The situation in all Brazilian states requires adoption of more drastic measures to contain the virus," said Alves, an adjunct professor of social medicine at the University of Sao Paulo. "The number of cases is very high and we aren't doing anything to contain the virus."

Brazil's number of confirmed cases is widely believed to be an undercount, and the virus is also gaining ground among its neighbors. The ICUs in Argentina's capital, Buenos Aires, have been pushed to critical levels. Peru, Venezuela, Uruguay and Colombia have seen cases jump in recent weeks. Health experts have cited the circulation of variants, including a strain believed to have originated in Brazil's Amazon, as a contributing factor.

"It's no surprise that many countries in our region have tightened public health measures by extending curfews, limiting re-openings and imposing new stay-at-home orders," said Carissa Etienne, director of the Pan American Health Organization. "These decisions are never easy, but based on how infections are surging, this is exactly what needs to happen."

Such recommendations remain anathema to Bolsonaro; last weekend he called lockdown measures "absurd" and suggested he could order the army into the streets to restore order.

The president has consistently downplayed the disease and dispensed false hope by touting unproven drugs, which critics say only added to the nation's death toll. This week the Senate began an investigation into the government's alleged failures in managing the pandemic.

The troubled response has been reflected in health minister turnover; the fourth man to occupy the post during the pandemic, Dr. Marcelo Queiroga, took over last month. He has spoken of the need to boost vaccine supply, personally consults with scientists and has so far displayed the autonomy to promote mask use and social distancing. That marks something of a shift from his predecessor, an active-duty general who made explicit his deference to Bolsonaro's wishes on health policy.

Queiroga told reporters this week that the decrease in hospitalizations has eased demand for oxygen and sedatives for intubation. Stopgap donations from big businesses and the governments of Canada and Spain also shored up supply. The Health Ministry is also preparing a tender for the acquisition of more sedatives.

The minister has stopped short of embracing public health experts' calls for lockdowns and restrictions on activity, and hasn't ruled out use of drugs that rigorous testing has shown to be ineffective. But he showed recognition that Brazil isn't yet free and clear, and remains in "a very serious moment of the pandemic."

Queiroga joined the World Health Organization's Friday news briefing, and didn't comment on Brazil's grim milestone of 400,000 deaths.

The WHO's director-general, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, said the pandemic still threatens to unravel gains Brazil's health care system achieved over decades, but commemorated the recent decline in COVID-19 hospitalizations, cases and deaths.

"We hope this trend continues," Tedros said, "but the pandemic has taught us that no country can ever let down its guard."

## **Kinzinger goes to Texas in search of anti-Trump Republicans**

By STEVE PEOPLES and PAUL WEBER Associated Press

MANSFIELD, Texas (AP) — Adam Kinzinger came to Texas this week to hunt unicorns.

The Illinois congressman was looking for Republicans who, like him, see former President Donald Trump

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as a scourge on their party and a threat to democracy. Kinzinger met privately with one sympathetic Republican, former President George W. Bush, on his first day in the state. And on the second, he had lunch with Michael Wood, the only openly anti-Trump Republican competing on Saturday in a crowded special election for a seat in Congress.

Kinzinger, a 43-year-old Air Force pilot who flew missions in Iraq and Afghanistan, is positioning himself as a leading antagonist to Trump in a party that is largely refusing to move on from the former president. The congressman's nascent political organization, Country First, has endorsed every House Republican who voted to impeach Trump for inciting the deadly Jan. 6 riot at the U.S. Capitol. And as Kinzinger eyes a potential run for higher office himself, he came to Texas to test how many other Republicans share his outlook.

Kinzinger's hope lies in Wood, another fresh-faced combat veteran, who is fighting to stand out in a field of 23. If none of the candidates on Saturday's ballot earns 50% of the vote, the top two will compete in a runoff election later in the spring.

"The Trump thing, it's got nowhere to go but down. It's not growing," Kinzinger said during his lunch with Wood at the Fork in the Road cafe in the Dallas suburbs. "But it took a lot of time for the Republican Party to be what it is today. It may take a lot of time to bring it back."

The contest to replace Republican Rep. Ron Wright, who died of COVID-19 in February, has gone virtually unnoticed outside this north Texas district. But it offers a window into the forces tearing at the fabric of today's GOP. There are 10 Republicans among 23 candidates on the ballot, and with the exception of Wood, they are all desperate to win over Trump and his supporters.

Republican Brian Harrison, former chief of staff of the Department of Health and Human Services, has played up his role in the Trump administration. So, too, has Sery Kim, who worked in the Small Business Administration and directly implored Trump for his endorsement during an appearance on Newsmax, where she gave out her phone number. Dan Rodimer, a former professional wrestler, has flashed the endorsement Trump gave him last year during a failed run for a congressional seat in Nevada. His new slogan: "Make America Texas Again."

Trump waited until five days before Election Day to give his formal endorsement to the congressman's widow, Susan Wright, who is widely seen as a favorite.

Trump's team scoffed at Wood's chances and Kinzinger's broader ambitions.

In his campaign to reject Trumpism, the Illinois congressman is outmatched by every measurable metric. Polls suggest that as many as 8 in 10 Republicans continue to support Trump. And while Kinzinger's political team celebrated raising \$2.2 million last quarter, Trump's political operation is sitting on at least \$85 million.

When asked about Kinzinger, Trump spokesperson Jason Miller dismissed him as "a future MSNBC contributor."

Yet Wood has also drawn financial and moral support from a handful of other Trump critics in Congress, including Reps. Liz Cheney, R-Wyo.; David Valadao, R-Calif.; and Peter Meijer, R-Mich. Like Kinzinger, all three voted to impeach Trump.

Kinzinger said he was drawn to Wood by the 34-year-old former Marine infantry officer's political courage. Wood has been booed at Republican campaign events for saying that the GOP has devolved into a "cult of personality." The first line of campaign literature he hands to voters declares, "The Republican Party has lost its way..."

In an interview, Wood, who earned two Purple Hearts for his service in Afghanistan and now runs a small business, compared Trump to a "less intelligent, lazy and disorganized" autocrat like Roman emperor Julius Caesar. He warned that freedom itself is at risk if Trump and what he stands for aren't soundly rejected.

"I don't want to go to Congress if I have to lick Donald Trump's boots to get there," he said.

Still, Kinzinger knows more than most just how difficult it will be to persuade Republican voters anywhere — never mind Texas — to turn against Trump. The congressman's political operation recently commissioned polling that found the most sympathetic voters are what one aide called "unicorns" — Republicans who are moderate politically, don't regularly watch Fox News, reject conspiracy theories and are highly educated.

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It's a pool of voters Kinzinger needs to grow if his effort will be successful in Texas and beyond as he eyes an aggressive role in the 2022 midterms.

Wood estimated that such voters may represent as many as 35% of those who decide Saturday's special election. Sympathetic strategists suggest the number is probably much lower.

That's not to say there aren't warning signs for Trump and his supporters.

Trump won the north Texas district by double digits in 2016, but by just 3 points last fall, reflecting the trend of Texas' booming suburbs shifting to purple and, in some places, outright blue.

But outside the Mansfield Municipal Courthouse this week, there was little sign of support for Wood among the Republicans waiting in line to cast early ballots. One said Wood was betraying his country; another called him an embarrassment.

"There's no such thing as an anti-Trump Republican. He should find another party," said 71-year-old white retiree Gordon Powell of Mansfield. "I doubt that he could run for dog catcher as a Republican and get elected around here."

Yvette Williams, a 54-year-old African American transplant from California, said she'd consider Wood if she didn't vote for a Democrat. She applauded his effort regardless.

"I'm like, 'Who in the Republican Party can stand up to Trump?' It takes one person to make a difference," she said.

For their part, there are 10 Democrats running in the special election. But after high expectations and heavy spending failed to produce a single significant victory last year, the national party is largely steering clear of the race.

And while many rank-and-file Texas Republicans remain loyal to Trump, Kinzinger has won the respect of one of Texas' most prominent Republican officials.

Kinzinger and his wife met privately with former President Bush and former first lady Laura Bush for roughly an hour Monday evening at Bush's office at Southern Methodist University. Kinzinger said they discussed foreign policy, the support among evangelical Christians for Trump and shared concerns about the direction of the party.

"He's obviously, as he's expressed, concerned with where we're at and knows it's a slog to kind of bring it back," Kinzinger said of Bush. "But it's like, if you don't fight, it's done."

A Bush spokesperson declined to comment on the meeting.

Meanwhile, Wood said it's past time for more people in his party's leadership to stand up to Trump publicly.

"I hope that, win or lose, I at least show the rest of the country there are people willing to stand up and say these things. Frankly, I'm a little upset it's someone like me who's saying them. It should be shouted from the rooftop by leaders in the House, Republicans in Senate, Republicans across the country."

## Germany to return Benin Bronzes looted during colonial era

By FRANK JORDANS Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — Germany is returning hundreds of artifacts known as the Benin Bronzes that were mostly looted from West Africa by a British colonial expedition and subsequently sold to collections around the world, including German museums, authorities said Friday.

Foreign Minister Heiko Maas welcomed a deal reached with museums and authorities in Nigeria to work on a restitution plan for a substantial number of artifacts, calling it a "turning point in dealing with our colonial history."

Germany's minister for culture, Monika Gruetters, said the Benin Bronzes were a key test for the way the country deals with its colonial past.

"We are confronting our historic and moral responsibility," she said.

Gruetters said the goal is to contribute to "understanding and reconciliation" with the descendants of those whose cultural treasures were stolen in colonial times. The first returns are planned for next year, she said.

A historian welcomed the plans, but said they don't go far enough.

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"Sadly, there is neither a precise time plan nor an unconditional commitment to retribute all looted artifacts," said Juergen Zimmerer, professor of global history at the University of Hamburg.

He also noted it's not yet clear how many objects will be returned, or whether there will be any recognition of the efforts by civil society groups that had called for the restitution.

A British colonial expedition looted vast numbers of treasures from the royal palace of the Kingdom of Benin in 1897, including numerous bas-reliefs and sculptures.

While hundreds of artifacts ended up in the British Museum, hundreds were also sold to other collections such as the Ethnological Museum in Berlin, which has one of the world's largest collection of historical objects from the Kingdom of Benin, estimated to include about 530 items, including 440 bronzes.

The British Museum doesn't currently have plans to return parts of its collection.

"The devastation and plunder wreaked upon Benin City during the British military expedition in 1897 is fully acknowledged," the British Museum said in a statement, adding that the circumstances around the acquisition of Benin objects is explained in gallery panels and on its website.

"We believe the strength of the British Museum collection resides in its breadth and depth, allowing millions of visitors an understanding of the cultures of the world and how they interconnect over time — whether through trade, migration, conquest or peaceful exchange," it said.

But Zimmerer, who has done extensive historical research on the Benin Bronzes, said the decision by Germany would likely affect the wider debate about how institutions in former colonial countries should handle such artifacts.

"The pressure will grow, because the British position of simply not addressing the issue of restitution is no longer sustainable," he said.

## **Biden's corporate tax plan takes aim at income inequality**

By PAUL WISEMAN AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — From John Kennedy to Ronald Reagan to Donald Trump, American presidents have taken aim at corporate America's tax-avoidance schemes before — and mostly missed.

Now, President Joe Biden is training the government's sights again on the loopholes, shelters and international havens that have long allowed multinational companies to dodge taxes in ways that ordinary households cannot.

The idea is twofold: First, to help pay for Biden's trillions in proposed spending — for everything from roads and bridges and green energy to internet access, job training, preschool and sick leave. And second, to shift more of the federal tax load onto companies and narrow America's vast income inequality. Affluent investors reap the biggest windfalls when after-tax corporate profits accelerate.

"The burden," said Thornton Matheson, senior fellow at the Tax Policy Center, would "fall predominately on wealthier individuals."

Biden, in effect, wants to swing the pendulum back. At one time — the early-to-mid-1950s — corporations accounted for 30% of federal tax collections. Last year, their share barely topped 7%.

As corporations have generated an ever-smaller share of federal tax revenue, the burden has fallen more heavily on individuals, through the income tax and the levies that pay for Social Security and Medicare.

The president wants to stop companies from stashing profits in countries with low tax rates. To do so, he's proposed a 21% minimum tax on multinationals' foreign earnings and is urging other countries to follow suit. His plan would also rescind what the administration sees as international loopholes in Trump's 2017 tax legislation.

To strengthen its ability to root out tax cheating, the administration has proposed adding \$80 billion to the IRS budget over a decade to bolster the agency's underfunded enforcement team. As part of his effort to reduce America's wealth gap, he's also proposed raising the tax rate on long-term capital gains for Americans who earn over \$1 million a year.

Many analysts see Biden's corporate tax plan as a gamechanger — if Congress embraces it.

If adopted, the 21% minimum global tax "effectively spells the end of the tax haven as we have come

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to know it," said Alexander Arnon, an analyst at the nonpartisan Penn Wharton Budget Model, a research organization associated with the University of Pennsylvania.

Penn Wharton's analysts estimate that a 21% minimum global tax and other international provisions of Biden's tax plan would raise \$987 billion from 2022 through 2031 — nearly half as much as Biden's overall corporate tax plan would produce. Biden would collect an additional \$892 billion from the centerpiece of his plan: an increase in the overall corporate tax rate to 28% from the 21% Trump slashed it to in 2017, the Penn Wharton analysis finds.

"It's a terrific plan," said Matthew Gardner, senior fellow at the left-leaning Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy. "We cannot have a sustainable corporate tax system until we solve this problem of companies shifting their intangible assets around. This plan should stop that dead."

Republicans and business groups are already lining up in opposition. The Business Roundtable, an association of CEOs, reported that 76% of the top executives it surveyed said the 21% minimum global tax would weaken their company's competitiveness by making them pay more tax on global earnings than their international rivals do. Biden's tax hikes, the roundtable warned, could also limit corporate investment and hiring.

The Chamber of Commerce's chief policy officer, Neil Bradley, argued that the Biden plan would "slow the economic recovery and make the U.S. less competitive globally."

In defense of Biden's tax plan, his Treasury Department says it would target "excess" corporate profits — unnaturally high earnings that can result from a company's near-monopoly power. Such companies already have so much cash available for investment that higher taxes wouldn't dissuade them from, say, building a plant or hiring more workers, Treasury and some academic economists contend.

In the end, many analysts say they think that any agreement on a higher corporate tax rate could settle on around 25% — less than Biden would like but higher than the current rate.

Governments have long been vexed by how hard it is to collect taxes from corporations that run operations in multiple countries. The goal sounds straightforward: "What they're trying to do is tax where the economic activity takes place," said Ronald Graziano, managing director of accounting and tax research at Credit Suisse.

But the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development estimates that governments lose up to \$240 billion a year to companies that shift earnings among countries to lower their tax bills.

The Biden plan would strengthen provisions aimed at preventing companies from gaming the system — by, say, having their U.S. operations buy supplies from an affiliate in a tax haven, thereby creating a deductible expense in the higher-tax United States while putting profits in a low-tax jurisdiction.

Existing law also lumps all foreign earnings together, giving companies the ability to shift earnings and tax credits among countries to minimize their U.S. tax bill.

"Right now, it's like a blender approach," Gardner said. "Companies are allowed to throw all their foreign income into one big bucket in calculating this stuff. And that leaves room for a company that has a bunch of assets in a high tax-rate jurisdiction to throw stuff into the Caymans just for the hell of it."

The Biden plan seeks to end that by assessing taxes on a country-by-country basis: If a company pays zero tax in a tax haven, its earnings in that country would be subject to the full 21% U.S. global minimum tax.

Overall, corporations would face a tax hike. Among big multinationals, Credit Suisse estimates, the effective tax rate — what companies actually pay — would rise from 14% to 18% for Apple, 17% to 22% for Microsoft, 16% to 22% for Google parent Alphabet and 12% to 17% for Facebook. Part of the higher tax burden would ultimately fall on wealthy individuals, who disproportionately own shares in corporate stock: New York University economist Edward Wolff has found that the richest 10% of Americans own about 85% of stock wealth.

The Biden administration is endorsing an OECD push to get countries to sign on to a minimum global tax like the one it's proposing for U.S. companies. The idea is to stop countries from slashing corporate tax rates to outbid each other for multinational corporations — at the cost of losing revenue that could

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help finance public works projects and social spending.

For the United States, though, international cooperation is "not strictly necessary to make the Biden plan work," Gardner said. "If we put this into place unilaterally and gave the IRS the tools it needs to enforce the laws — that's all you need."

As early as 1962, the Kennedy administration sought to collect more tax from multinationals. But history suggests that corporate giants — and their armies of accountants, tax lawyers and lobbyists — are endlessly creative at finding ways to keep earnings away from the IRS.

"Just as there is no limit to the ingenuity of 12-year-old boys getting into trouble," Gardner said, "there is no limit on the ingenuity of companies finding their way around these regulations."

## Beyond the pandemic: London votes for a mayor during crisis

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Not long ago, London was booming. Now it fears a bust.

Brexit and the coronavirus pandemic have hit Britain's capital in a perfect storm. In 2021, the city has fewer people, fewer businesses, starker divisions and tougher choices than anyone could have expected.

On May 6, Londoners will elect a mayor whose performance will help determine whether this is a period of decline for Europe's biggest city — or a chance to do things better.

"It's going to be rough, definitely," said Jack Brown, lecturer in London studies at King's College London. "Those two quite seismic changes" — Brexit and the virus — "will be a lot to cope with."

Plagues, fires, war — London has survived them all. But it has never had a year like this. The coronavirus has killed more than 15,000 Londoners and shaken the foundations of one of the world's great cities. As a fast-moving mass vaccination campaign holds the promise of a wider reopening, The Associated Press looks at the pandemic's impact on London's people and institutions and asks what the future might hold.

London's newly elected mayor will lead a city of more than 8 million that is facing the usual big-city troubles — too little affordable housing and transit, too much crime and pollution — as well as a host of unprecedented problems.

A year of coronavirus lockdowns and travel restrictions have emptied the city's office towers, shut down its nightlife, shuttered its pubs and restaurants and banished international tourists. Returning to normal will take a long time.

"We've lost about 300,000 jobs already, and more than a million Londoners are currently furloughed," said Mayor Sadiq Khan, who is seeking re-election. "So the challenge is how we avoid (the) mass unemployment of the 1980s.

"It's really important to have the same ambition that our forefathers and foremothers had after the Second World War, because that's scale of the challenge," said Khan, whose priorities include coaxing people back into the city center and easing the economic inequalities exacerbated by the pandemic.

If opinion polls are right, Khan, 50, is likely to win a second term in Thursday's election, which has been delayed a year because of the pandemic. Both he and his main challenger are made-in-London success stories.

Khan, a lawyer and member of the center-left Labour Party, is the son of Pakistani immigrants. His father was a bus driver, his mother a seamstress.

Conservative candidate Shaun Bailey's grandparents, meanwhile, are part of the "Windrush generation" of post-World War II immigrants to Britain from the Caribbean. He was raised by a single mother in public housing in Ladbroke Grove, an area where pricey Victorian houses sit near run-down social housing blocks.

The 49-year-old former youth worker is a passionate advocate of the city that he says gave him chances to thrive.

"More than any other place in the world, if you come from a working-class background, London offers opportunities like no other," said Bailey, who believes London's biggest challenge is crime.



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Bailey wants to see more youth workers, more police officers on the beat and greater use of stop-and-search powers to take knives and other weapons off the street. Stop-and-search is a hugely contentious policy because young Black men have been disproportionately targeted but Bailey says it's essential.

"The thing that's making the Black community angry above all things is the rate at which our young people are dying," he said.

Both Khan and Bailey — and more than a dozen other candidates, from Liberal Democrat and Green contenders to anti-lockdown activists, YouTube prankster Niko Omilana and a bucket-headed comedian called Count Binface — know they are running in a city transformed by the virus and by Britain's exit from the now 27-nation European Union.

Brexit poses a challenge to London by ending the free flow of people from the continent and imperiling the city's status as Europe's financial hub. The pandemic has challenged the very existence of megacities and the crowded spaces in which people live, work and travel.

After three decades of growth, London's population fell in 2020 as people moved out in search of more space during lockdown or returned to their regions or home countries. It remains to be seen whether they will ever come back.

Three lockdowns, now gradually being lifted, kept office workers at home and turned central London into a ghost town. Millions no longer commute downtown to work or play, as coronavirus restrictions forced people to stay local.

Across London — a "city of villages" whose neighborhoods retain distinct characters — the pandemic has led people to reassess their priorities.

"If you go into central London ... there's nobody there, almost," said Mark Burton, who runs a community arts venue in Walthamstow, a once-gritty, now-gentrifying area in the city's northeast. "Whereas out here, there's a vibrancy around the cafes."

Burton thinks Khan has done a pretty good job as mayor, though he wants more support for cycling and community ventures.

Across town in Ladbroke Grove, Nicholas Olajide likes Bailey's pledge to cut crime. He, too, thinks the pandemic has given the city a new sense of itself.

"I think it has awakened a sense of community in people," Olajide said. "Before, London was going the way whereby we were no longer a community, no longer our neighbors' keeper. But I think that has brought us back together. People staying home and caring about their neighbors, working from home — it has brought families closer together."

Sian Berry, the Green Party candidate for mayor, says the pandemic has exposed the yawning gaps in London society and left people wanting "a new start."

"It's a very exciting place to live, London, but it's polluted, it can be a strain, and living costs are far too high," she said. "Each neighborhood in London has its own spirit, too, and we need to be nurturing that."

Brown, the historian, is optimistic about London's ability to bounce back, noting that it has been through tough times before in its 2,000 years of existence.

"London's ancient history really is one of getting set on fire every now and then — the whole city burns down — and then everybody gets the plague," he said. "This happens in a cycle for years and years and people keep coming back."

"The very long history of London is one of incredible resilience. It's even a little uncaring sometimes. It doesn't always take everyone with it. But the place itself, its economy, its appeal, kind of endures," he said.

## With Idaho case, AP counts 109 statehouse #MeToo allegations

By DAVID A. LIEB and KEITH RIDLER Associated Press

An Idaho lawmaker was accused of raping an intern; a Missouri lawmaker of abusing his children. In North Dakota and Oregon, a pair lawmakers faced claims of a pattern of sexual harassment.

All are now out of office — either resigning under pressure or getting expelled by colleagues within the past two months. Three other lawmakers accused this year remain in their jobs.

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The flurry of sexual misconduct claims in state capitols comes three-and-a-half years after the #MeToo movement sparked a public reckoning for people in power accused of sexual wrongdoing and an overhaul of many state policies. The continued incidents highlight both that problems persist and that some legislatures are responding more assertively.

"These institutions don't change overnight," said Kelly Dittmar, research director at the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University. "Part of what the #MeToo movement did was shed a spotlight on the problem, but fixing that problem that has been so deep-seeded is going to take longer."

Since 2017, at least 109 state lawmakers in 40 states have faced public allegations of sexual misconduct or harassment, according to an Associated Press tally. Of those, 43 have resigned or been expelled and 42 have faced other repercussions such as the loss of committee chair or party leadership positions.

Idaho Rep. Aaron von Ehlinger was the most recent to resign. The 38-year-old Republican stepped down Thursday after a legislative ethics committee recommended he be suspended without pay over allegations that he raped a 19-year-old intern in his apartment after the two had dinner at a Boise restaurant.

Von Ehlinger denied wrongdoing, insisted the sexual contact was consensual and wrote in his resignation letter that he was quitting because he could not effectively represent his constituents.

The decision came the day after the committee heard testimony, including from the young woman who brought the allegations. She was shielded from public view by a black screen and used the name Jane Doe during the proceedings. But a TV reporter attempted to film her as she left, and at least one lawmaker revealed her identity on social media. The Associated Press generally does not identify people who say they have been sexually assaulted.

Republican Senate President Pro Tem Chuck Winder on Friday praised the woman for "the courage to come forward."

"Anyone and everyone who comes here and works here, including yourselves, should feel safe here. It needs to be a respectful place to work," Winder told colleagues.

In January 2020, an AP review found that states had enacted more than 75 laws and resolutions targeting sexual harassment, abuse and assault within government or the private sector over the previous two years. The review also found that nearly all legislative chambers required sexual harassment training for members, up significantly from about one-third of the chambers during a 2018 AP review.

The Idaho House and Senate required lawmakers to attend a "respectful workplace training" that started in 2018 and which von Ehlinger attended this year. But the House never formally adopted the respectful workplace policy, which von Ehlinger's attorney noted during his hearing.

House Minority Leader Ilana Rubel, a Democrat, said Friday that if the chamber would officially enact the policy, it would "make it clear that lawmakers should not be asking staffers out on dates."

Von Ehlinger's resignation came just a week after the Missouri House expelled Republican Rep. Rick Roeber after a bipartisan ethics committee investigation concluded there were credible allegations he had physically and sexually abused his children years ago.

Roeber attempted to resign shortly before the panel's report was publicly released, citing his plans to move out of state to be closer to family. But the House refused to accept his resignation. House Ethics Committee Vice Chairman Richard Brown, a Democrat, said it wouldn't be right to let him "escape without us giving full recognition to what has taken place."

The House instead voted overwhelmingly to kick Roeber out of office, marking the first time since the Civil War era that a Missouri House member had been expelled.

"I don't think it is appropriate for him to walk away on his own terms," said Republican House Speaker Rob Vescovo.

In March, the North Dakota House expelled Republican Rep. Luke Simons for allegedly threatening and sexually harassing women at the Capitol in a pattern of behavior that lawmakers said stretched back to soon after Simons took office in 2017.

After the expulsion vote, legislative leaders vowed to again overhaul the policy crafted less than three years ago regarding workplace and sexual harassment at the Capitol. Some want to remove a requirement that could eventually make a victim's identity public, which they said may have kept some women

from coming forward.

Oregon state Rep. Diego Hernandez, a Democrat, resigned in March after a judge rejected his attempt to stop a planned expulsion vote following an investigation into claims that he had sexually harassed or created a hostile workplace for several women. He said he stepped down "so my colleagues may focus on serving Oregonians and so I can move forward with my life and focus on my health and family."

Dittmar, of Rutgers University, said lawmakers who resign under pressure, rather than being expelled, could potentially find an easier path to a political comeback.

"If you've resigned, then you get to frame the narrative about why you left," she said.

"If somebody is punished and expelled, then hopefully what that does is send a message to other members currently or future members that this institution will not tolerate this type of behavior."

## Judge: Kushner's apartment company violated consumer laws

BALTIMORE (AP) — A judge in Maryland has ruled that an apartment company co-owned by Jared Kushner, former President Donald Trump's son-in-law, repeatedly violated state consumer protection laws by collecting debts without required licenses, charging tenants improper fees and misrepresenting the condition of rental units.

Administrative Law Judge Emily Daneker said in her 252-page decision Thursday that violations by Westminster Management and the company JK2 were "widespread and numerous," the Baltimore Sun reports.

Kushner and his brother, Joshua, each held 50% interest in JK2. Westminster is the company's successor.

Maryland Attorney General Brian Frosh, a Democrat, sued Westminster and 25 related companies in 2019, claiming they took advantage of financially vulnerable consumers in the Baltimore area.

The judge ruled tenants often were misled about apartment conditions and were not allowed to see their actual apartments until their move-in days.

Daneker found Westminster charged illegal fees thousands of times over the course of more than two years, such as wrongly charging more than \$332,000 in agent fees.

"These circumstances do not support a finding that this was the result of isolated or inadvertent mistakes," the judge wrote.

The judge also concluded that Frosh's office did not establish that the companies illegally misrepresented their ability to provide maintenance services and were not violating consumer protection laws during the entire period alleged by the attorney general.

The Kushner Cos., which owns Westminster, characterized the judge's decision as a victory for the company.

"Kushner respects the thoughtful depth of the Judge's decision, which vindicates Westminster with respect to many of the Attorney General's overreaching allegations," Kushner Cos. general counsel Christopher W. Smith said in a statement.

Westminster has repeatedly alleged that Frosh's case was politically motivated, but the judge said the evidence does not support that claim.

Frosh's office declined to comment on the ruling, citing the ongoing litigation.

Both sides have 30 days to file responses to the judge's ruling.

Most of the properties involved in the case are in Baltimore County, but some are in Baltimore City and Prince George's County.

## Eyeing 2024, Pence says he'll push back on 'liberal agenda'

By MEG KINNARD Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) — Former Vice President Mike Pence, positioning himself for a possible return to elected office, told an audience in early-voting South Carolina that he will spend the coming months "pushing back on the liberal agenda" he says is wrong for the country.

"We've got to guard our values ... by offering a positive agenda to the American people, grounded in our

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highest ideals," Pence told an audience of several hundred on Thursday at a Columbia dinner sponsored by a conservative Christian nonprofit. "Now, over the coming months, I'll have more to say about all of that."

Pence, whose relationship with President Donald Trump frayed as Trump pressured Pence to block certification of the presidential election results, praised Trump's tenure as "four years of promises made, promises, kept."

The choice of South Carolina for Pence's first public address since the end of the Trump administration has definite political overtones, helping him develop exposure for a potential 2024 presidential bid. The state holds the first presidential primaries in the South, and candidates of both major parties typically spend more than a year in South Carolina ahead of those votes, introducing themselves and trying to secure support.

Republican candidates use South Carolina as a proving ground to test their "pro-life" mettle. Thursday's event, hosted by Palmetto Family Council, also gave Pence a backdrop for some of the issues for which he long advocated as an Indiana congressman-turned-governor, such as restrictions on abortion and support for the overturn of *Roe v. Wade*.

Palmetto Family — which lobbies for what it considers to be "biblical values," such as heterosexual marriage — most recently helped push through a ban on most South Carolina abortions, a law now being challenged in federal court.

"We will stand with the right of every American, of every faith, to live, to work, to speak and to worship according to the dictates of their conscience," Pence said.

Pence, who since leaving office has been doing work with the Heritage Foundation and Young America's Foundation, has not indicated if he plans a future run. As vice president, he made numerous trips to South Carolina, meeting several times with Gov. Henry McMaster for coronavirus-related forums and campaigning in the state for U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham and U.S. Rep. Nancy Mace.

But the question of whether Pence's former boss will run again still looms large for the possible Republican field. Trump has not explicitly stated his plans but has teased a possible bid, saying Thursday on Fox Business that he's "100%" thinking about running in 2024 — and would even possibly consider Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis as his running mate.

Earlier this month, another possible GOP contender, former U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley, said when asked about 2024 by The Associated Press that she would stand down if Trump opted to run again. Former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has launched an aggressive schedule, visiting states that will play a pivotal role in the 2024 primaries and signing a contract with Fox News Channel. DeSantis has been courting donors, including in Trump's backyard, with a prominent speaking slot before the former president at a GOP fundraising retreat dinner at Mar-a-Lago, the Florida resort where Trump now lives.

On Thursday, Pence highlighted accomplishments of the Trump administration, including three successful confirmations of U.S. Supreme Court justices, withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal and relocation of the U.S. Embassy in Israel to Jerusalem.

He also recalled fondly their 2016 campaign, saying that Trump told him at the close of that year's GOP convention in Cleveland that the two of them would campaign hard, "and then he looked over at me, and he hit me in the shoulder, and he said, 'And then it's going to be great.'"

"And I've got to tell you, it was," Pence went on. "It was four years of consequences, four years of results, and four years of promises made, promises kept."

Earlier this month, Trump told Republican donors he was "disappointed" in Pence.

South Carolina Democratic Chair Trav Robertson said Pence was coming to the state to "try and salvage his relationship" with Trump supporters irked that Pence didn't support efforts to block certification of the 2020 presidential election.

On Thursday, Pence pledged to reveal more of his ideas soon, promising that he would be challenging the Biden administration's "avalanche of liberal policies" as he ramps up speaking engagements around the country.

"We have the winning agenda," Pence said. "And now it's incumbent upon us to take that winning agenda to the American people."

## 'We did it!': Minnesota exults at Census win at NY's expense

By MOHAMED IBRAHIM and STEVE KARNOWSKI Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Minnesotans spent 18 months worrying over whether the 2020 census would finally cost them a precious seat in Congress, expecting to lose one to faster-growing competitors in the South and West even if they found and counted every last soul in the state.

Turns out they could have spared the concern. In Minnesota — a state that's long seen itself as above average — residents voluntarily returned their census forms at the highest rate in the nation. Their dedication likely saved the day.

Even sweeter for some here: Mighty New York was the state on the outs, clipped by Minnesota for the 435th and final House seat by a mind-bogglingly narrow margin. If Minnesota had counted 26 fewer people — or New York just 89 more — the seat would have switched states.

"Census nerds! We did it!" Lt. Gov. Peggy Flanagan tweeted. Others took to Twitter to exult in the news: "Minnesota finally beats New York at something," one user said, alluding to the Twins' recent years of postseason baseball futility against the Yankees.

Just over 75% of Minnesotans responded to the census questionnaire, tops in the nation but also in step with generally strong participation rates in the Midwest. Wisconsin, Iowa, Illinois and Michigan all made the top 10 in self-response rates — boasting rates of more than 71% — but slow population growth in the latter two states still cost them a congressional seat.

Minnesota has a history of seat stealing. It took the 435th seat from North Carolina during the last census in 2010.

Minnesota's embrace of the census is in line with strong civic engagement in elections, where the state every two years ranks at or near the top in turnout, including 80% in last fall's general election.

"We vote more, we volunteer more, we donate more," said Morgan Baum, a small-business owner in Hutchinson who was among those responding to the questionnaire without prodding.

"I think we're just a really participatory community. All Minnesotans are and that comes across again in the census."

Minneapolis social worker Jennifer Bertram calls herself a "census nerd," in part because of a previous job for a nonprofit whose programs depended on census data for funding. She felt so strongly about the census' importance that she took a job doing the door-knocking necessary to get non-respondents.

"To me, it's almost more important than voting because of the billions of dollars that get allocated by the federal government back to Minnesota every year," she said.

She estimated she recorded at least 26 people who wouldn't have been counted otherwise. She recalled one home in particular — a group of six or seven Spanish-speaking brothers living in a duplex — and working across a language barrier to get them counted.

Several states lost a congressional seat due to the census, including California despite spending \$187 million on census outreach, according to data from the National Council of State Legislatures.

The state of New York allotted up to \$60 million on census outreach — though critics say it didn't spend the full amount — on top of New York City's \$40 million effort, dwarfing Minnesota's \$2.1 million. New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo said this week that he is considering "legal options" to challenge the state's narrow loss, though the governor didn't specify what legal actions.

Texas was the lone state to gain two seats. Colorado, Florida, Montana, North Carolina and Oregon gained one seat each.

Census figures showed Minnesota's overall growth rate was 7.6% — a shade higher than the overall nationwide rate of 7.4% as its population grew to 5.7 million from 5.3 million a decade ago.

In addition to keeping all eight U.S. House seats and 10 electoral votes, Minnesota's high response rate may affect the state's share in federal aid. Census Bureau data play a role in determining how to allot hundreds of billions of dollars annually through Medicaid, food stamps and about 130 other federal programs.

Brett Buckner, 49, of Minneapolis, a former president of the Minneapolis NAACP in the early 2000s, worked

for the Census Bureau on the 2010 count. This time around, he was active in groups working together to get people of color to respond to the census — something they combined with voter turnout efforts.

"We said we need you to count both ways," Buckner said, describing door-knocking, phone calls, Zoom meetings and more.

"We got lucky here in Minnesota," he said.

Some of the people who joined in the victory lap on Twitter, however, said the win involved more than luck.

Explained one: "Never try and defeat Minnesota in a paperwork contest."

## US wages and benefits jump as economy reopens

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Wages and benefits grew quickly for U.S. workers in the first three months of the year, a sign that businesses are starting to offer higher pay to fill newly-opened jobs.

U.S. workers' total compensation rose 0.9% in the January-March quarter, the largest gain in more than 13 years, the Labor Department said Friday. That's up from 0.7% in the final three months of last year. Still, the increase is just barely above 0.8% gains in two quarters in 2018.

The solid rise comes after weaker increases during the pandemic, when the unemployment rate initially shot to nearly 15% before declining steadily to 6% in March. As a result, workers' pay and benefits rose just 2.6% in the year ending in March, down from 2.8% a year earlier.

The data comes from the Labor Department's Employment Cost Index, which measures pay changes for workers that keep their jobs. Unlike some other measures of Americans' paychecks, it isn't directly affected by mass layoffs such as the pandemic job losses that occurred last spring.

The figures suggest that as the economy is reopening and more Americans are willing to venture out to restaurants, bars, and shops, businesses are having to provide higher pay and benefits to pull workers back into the job market. Many businesses have struggled to find people to take jobs, despite still-high unemployment.

Some Americans are reluctant to take jobs in industries like restaurants, hotels and bars for fear of contracting the coronavirus. Others, particularly women, are constrained by child care obligations. And a generous federal supplement to unemployment benefits of \$300 a week may also be keeping some unemployed on the sidelines. That benefit ends Sept. 6.

Overall incomes grew by a record amount in March, according to a separate report Friday, bolstered by \$1,400 government stimulus checks and unemployment aid to roughly 18 million Americans. Incomes soared 21.1%, while spending rose 4.2%, a sign that much of the income was saved and may be spent in coming months.

Wages and salaries rose 1% in the first three months of the year, the Employment Cost Index showed, while benefits such as health insurance increased 0.6% in value.

Hotels and restaurants boosted pay and benefits by 1.5% in the first quarter, as many businesses in those industries have had a hard time finding workers. Total compensation jumped 3.6% in the financial services industry.

## 'I'm still exhaling': Swing-state voters on Biden's 100 days

By THOMAS BEAUMONT Associated Press

ELM GROVE, Wis. (AP) — Standing on the sidelines of her son's soccer practice in this upscale suburb, Laura Hahn looked skyward for answers when asked how she would rate President Joe Biden's first 100 days in office.

Overall, Biden is doing well, she said after a few minutes of thought. But she acknowledged her judgment is as much a feeling of relief as an analysis of accomplishments.

"I'm still exhaling," Hahn said, referencing the tumultuous tenure of President Donald Trump. "It's been

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exhausting.”

At the 100-day marker, polls show most Americans are like Hahn, giving the new president positive marks for his early performance.

But in this pocket of swing-state Wisconsin, where a surge in suburban Milwaukee helped put Biden in the White House, interviews with voters show that support for the Democratic president often falls short of adulation. Biden continues to get credit for bringing stability to the coronavirus crisis — and for not being Trump — but there are signs that goodwill only goes so far.

As voters here start to look past the pandemic, some worry about Biden’s tax proposals to pay for massive spending plans and their impact on the economy. Some Democrats are disappointed Biden has not yet taken action on social priorities such as a policing overhaul. There are scant signs that Republicans were won over; several accused Biden of using a public health crisis to push a liberal agenda.

Despite these concerns, many voters said they were just enjoying the reprieve from the jaw-dropping headlines of the Trump era, now that Biden is in the White House.

“I’m not surprised or shocked by anything he’s done,” said Jana Elkadri, a 40-year-old chief financial officer for a nonprofit group, as she watched the soccer practice from the parking lot.

Biden’s handling of the pandemic has been strong, she said, although she worries he’s a tad optimistic. She supports his proposed big spending on social programs, but wishes he had have pressed for universal health care. All in all, she said. “So far, OK.”

This village of about 6,000 is hardly representative of America. It is whiter and wealthier than most communities and has a larger population of residents with college degrees. But it is places like this where Biden found a swell of support that helped him carry the pivotal trio of Wisconsin, Michigan and Pennsylvania. This suburban lift is something Democrats will need to continue if they want to hold control of the U.S. House next year or the White House in 2024.

Women such as Hahn and Elkadri were an important part of Biden’s strength in the suburbs. Hahn is a full-time financial consultant and married mother of two young children who lives in adjacent Brookfield. She said she keeps up with headlines, but has had little time to thoroughly process all of Biden’s earliest moves.

Hahn, 39, was particularly pleased by Biden’s plans to withdraw U.S. forces from Afghanistan. When she read the news, she was floored at the reminder that troops were deployed there the year after she graduated high school. “If we haven’t fixed anything in 20 years, bring them home,” she said.

Hahn isn’t the only one having trouble keeping track of Biden’s initiatives, which include a barrage of executive actions revoking many of his predecessor’s policies on immigration and the environment. In February, the narrowly Democratic-controlled Congress passed Biden’s \$1.9 trillion COVID-19 relief package, with its \$1,400 checks for millions of Americans.

Biden has since proposed an additional \$4-plus trillion in spending, including a \$2.3 trillion infrastructure plan to upgrade highways, bridges and tunnels, as well as energy systems to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and a \$1.8 trillion proposal for free preschool, family leave, child tax credits and other family and education programs.

For some in Elm Grove, particularly Republicans, Biden’s “go-big” approach wasn’t expected.

“The November election wasn’t a mandate for this kind of sweeping change,” said former state Rep. Rob Hutton, a Republican who lost his seat representing Elm Grove and Brookfield in November.

Yet for some Democrats, Biden isn’t thinking big enough, particularly on some issues that were fundamental to his candidacy.

Chris Alexander, a Democrat moved with his wife to nearby Wauwatosa two years ago, said Biden “is doing an OK job,” but hasn’t been aggressive enough about action on stemming police violence against Black people.

Biden declared in a speech to Congress on Wednesday night that “we have to come together” to root out systemic racism in policing. It was an echo of his remarks last week after ex-Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin’s murder conviction in the death of George Floyd. Although he has not endorsed a specific policing plan, the president called on Congress to pass one by May 25, the one-year anniversary

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of Floyd's death.

"Nothing's still been done," Alexander said of Biden's new goal. "We can talk about what we want until we're blue in the face. But if nothing is put in place, what happens in the weeks leading up, when people continue to go through police brutality? I still feel as if he hasn't done anything on that front."

Alexander is part of a political shift sweeping through the once Republican-dominant suburbs of Milwaukee, including the village of Elm Grove. Families have poured across the Milwaukee County line seeking its enviable schools and stately homes, many done in Milwaukee's signature "Cream City" limestone brick.

Health care professionals and medical business representatives have replaced executives with the Milwaukee area's once-thriving farm machinery sector. The economic draw, a mile away, is the state's largest medical complex, anchored by Froedtert Hospital, Milwaukee Children's Hospital and the Medical College of Wisconsin.

Elkadri and her husband, who are of Lebanese descent, are among the increasing number of Muslims in the area. Many attend a mosque built four years ago, not far from a Sikh temple that once housed Wisconsin's largest evangelical megachurch in Brookfield.

Just blocks from Elm Grove's quiet downtown — once a train stop, now shops and an upscale grocery store — sits a park where purebreds vastly outnumber mutts on the walking trail. The police station keeps watch on one end.

No Democrat has come close to winning Waukesha County. President Barack Obama won just 32% of the vote here in 2012, when he was reelected. But Biden received almost 40%, more than any of his party's predecessors. He even nearly tied Trump in the village of Elm Grove, where Obama won just 30% of the vote eight years ago.

In all, Biden pulled 7,500 more votes out of Waukesha County than Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton did in 2016. That was a good chunk of his 20,682-vote winning margin in Wisconsin last year.

Biden's Wisconsin victory was also powered by overwhelming turnout in liberal Madison and a strong performance in Democratic-heavy Milwaukee. Similar boosts over 2016 in Detroit and Atlanta helped carry Biden over the line in Michigan and Georgia.

In the 2022 fight for control of the U.S. House, these suburban areas will be critical. Of the 47 Democratic seats Republicans are targeting, more than two-thirds are in suburban districts.

In a late March Associated Press-NORC poll, 65% percent of Americans living in suburban areas approved of Biden's job performance, a figure on par with Biden's approval with Americans overall. The poll found only one-quarter of Republicans approve of his early days in office.

Republican Neil Palmer, Elm Grove's longtime village president, counts himself among the disapprovers. He's frustrated by Biden's moves on immigration and called the increase of migrants trying to cross the U.S.-Mexico border a "self-inflicted crisis."

Like many other Republicans, Palmer chafed at the price tag on the spending Biden has proposed, and predicted higher taxes would slow an economic rebound.

"I not only have children, but grandchildren and they can't afford this government," the 70-year-old said. Yet as the area changes, Palmer's view on government's role is less dominant.

On a quiet cul-de-sac, 35-year-old lawyer Patrick Proctor Brown applauded Biden's infrastructure plan, not simply as overdue, but as a potential economic boon akin to the interstate highway system enacted in 1956.

The married father of three wanted Biden to be just as bold on taxes and was disappointed when the Democrat walked away from a proposal to tax fortunes greater than \$50 million.

"Billionaires who have doubled their wealth in the last year, they are not going to have to pay for that at some point?" Brown asked.

Several parents who rate Biden positively said they wish he would have already confronted more directly gun violence.

Katie Rasoul, a 38-year-old leadership coach in Brookfield with two children, said she is "pleased, all things considered" with Biden, but would like him to press harder for a gun control bill.

"We've had so many things happen around gun violence," Rasoul said. "It cannot be ignored."



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The White House says it is working with congressional leaders behind the scenes on a gun measure. While Biden's supporters here say they are relieved with what they call decency returning to the White House, Elkadri said it will take more for Biden to be viewed as a successful president. When her son recently asked whether she thought Biden was doing a good job, she said it was too soon to know. "I told him it would be up to his generation to judge," she said.

## Europe's economy shrinks in first quarter as US rolls ahead

By DAVID McHUGH AP Business Writer

FRANKFURT, Germany (AP) — Europe's economy shrank 0.6% in the first three months of the year as slow vaccine rollouts and extended lockdowns delayed a hoped-for recovery - and underlined how the region is lagging other major economies in rebounding from the coronavirus pandemic.

The fall in output for the 19 countries that use the euro currency was smaller than the 1% contraction expected by economists but still far short of the rebound underway in the United States and China, two other pillars of the global economy.

Figures announced Thursday showed the U.S. economy grew 1.6% during the first quarter, with business supported by strong consumer demand. On an annualized basis, the U.S. grew 6.4%.

In Europe, it was the second straight quarter of falling output, meaning the region fell back into a recession despite a rebound in growth from July to September of last year. The latest data covers the quarter that ended March 31 and economists say the economy is on the verge of an upswing.

France showed unexpected growth of 0.4% compared to the quarter before, while the main negative surprise came in Germany, the continent's largest economy. Activity there shrank by a larger-than-expected 1.7% as the manufacturing sector was hit by disruption of parts supplies on top of the hit to services and travel from pandemic-related restrictions on activity.

French authorities are anticipating the COVID-19 outlook in the country to be better next month, when a greater proportion of the population will be vaccinated. The government is slowly starting to lift partial lockdowns, despite still-high numbers of coronavirus cases and hospitalized COVID-19 patients. President Emmanuel Macron said Thursday that the outdoor terraces of France's cafes and restaurants will be allowed to reopen on May 19 along with museums, cinemas, theaters and concert halls under certain conditions.

Worry about a potential second straight lost vacation season has clouded the outlook for Mediterranean countries Italy, Spain and Greece, which rely heavily on tourism. Greece has lifted quarantine restrictions on visitors from EU countries and will allow restaurants and cafes to reopen for outdoor service from May 3. Travel receipts there sank 75% last year.

Economists said they expected an upturn in the coming weeks as vaccinations accelerate. The International Monetary Fund forecasts growth of 4.4% for the eurozone for all of this year.

"Today's GDP data for the first quarter suggests a fair resilience of the bloc's economy and sends encouraging signs surrounding the near-term outlook," said economist Maddalena Martini at Oxford Economics.

Katerina Grapsa, owner of a decorative items shop in Athens, expressed optimism as she arranged her wares including candles for Orthodox Easter, which is Sunday.

"From now on, we hope that things will get better, because of the vaccines, because of the measures," she said. "If tourism comes and they don't bring us COVID but leave us money, it will be much better."

Andreas Iosifidis, egg vendor at the Athens produce market, said that "it is better because last year was unprecedented. This year, it is coming to an end a little, and we are used to it, and we get out shopping."

Thus far, Europe's unemployment rate has increased only gradually to 8.1% in March, thanks to extensive furlough support programs that help companies keep workers on. The US saw its jobless rate fall to 6.0% after spiking as high as 14.8% during the worst of the pandemic.

A major factor holding back the recovery in Europe is the slow vaccine rollout, which has led to prolonged lockdowns. Another is less fiscal support for the economy from new government spending. U.S. President Joe Biden's \$1.9 billion relief package, coupled with spending from earlier support efforts, will mean additional cash support of about 11-12% of annual economic output for this year, according to economists at

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UniCredit bank. By contrast, the European fiscal stimulus amounts to about 6% of gross domestic product, even after Europe's more extensive social safety net is factored in.

China was hit first by the pandemic but got it under control through strict public health measures and was the only major economy to grow in 2020. The U.S. was hard hit by the virus but has rolled out vaccinations at a rapid pace.

## Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Saturday, May 1, the 121st day of 2021. There are 244 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On May 1, 2011, President Barack Obama announced the death of Osama bin Laden during a U.S. commando operation (because of the time difference, it was early May 2 in Pakistan, where the al-Qaida leader met his end).

On this date:

In 1707, the Kingdom of Great Britain was created as a treaty merging England and Scotland took effect.

In 1915, the RMS Lusitania set sail from New York, headed for Liverpool, England (it was torpedoed and sunk by Germany off the coast of Ireland six days later).

In 1941, the Orson Welles motion picture "Citizen Kane" premiered in New York.

In 1945, a day after Adolf Hitler took his own life, Admiral Karl Doenitz effectively became sole leader of the Third Reich with the suicide of Hitler's propaganda minister, Josef Goebbels.

In 1960, the Soviet Union shot down an American U-2 reconnaissance plane over Sverdlovsk and captured its pilot, Francis Gary Powers.

In 1963, James W. Whittaker became the first American to conquer Mount Everest as he and Sherpa guide Nawang Gombu reached the summit.

In 1971, the intercity passenger rail service Amtrak went into operation.

In 1975, Hank Aaron of the Milwaukee Brewers broke baseball's all-time RBI record previously held by Babe Ruth during a game against the Detroit Tigers (Milwaukee won, 17-3).

In 1992, on the third day of the Los Angeles riots, a visibly shaken Rodney King appeared in public to appeal for calm, pleading, "Can we all get along?"

In 1998, Eldridge Cleaver, the fiery Black Panther leader who later renounced his past and became a Republican, died in Pomona, California, at age 62.

In 2009, Supreme Court Justice David Souter announced his retirement effective at the end of the court's term in late June. (President Barack Obama chose federal judge Sonia Sotomayor to succeed him.)

In 2015, Baltimore's top prosecutor charged six police officers with felonies ranging from assault to murder in the death of Freddie Gray, who'd suffered a spinal injury while riding in a police van.

Ten years ago: Pope Benedict XVI beatified Pope John Paul II, moving his predecessor a step closer to sainthood in a Vatican Mass attended by some 1.5 million pilgrims.

Five years ago: A wildfire broke out near Fort McMurray, Alberta, Canada; in the days that followed, the blaze destroyed 2,400 homes and other buildings and forced more than 80,000 people to evacuate. After a half-century of waiting, Cuban-born passengers set sail from Miami on a historic cruise to Havana, the first such trip from the U.S. since recent policy changes. Elephants performed for the last time at the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus in Providence, Rhode Island.

One year ago: A security guard at a Family Dollar store in Flint, Michigan, was shot and killed after a confrontation with the family of a woman he had told to leave the store because she wasn't wearing a face mask. (Three people, including the woman's mother, were charged with first-degree murder.) Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer said the state's stay-at-home order would remain in place for two more weeks; her statement came on the same day that President Donald Trump tweeted that she should "make a deal" with protesters who gathered at the state Capitol a day earlier, some carrying assault weapons.

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U.S. regulators allowed emergency use of remdesivir, the first drug that appeared to help some COVID-19 patients recover faster. Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden emphatically denied allegations from a former Senate staffer that he sexually assaulted her in the early 1990s, declaring flatly that "this never happened." Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced a ban on the sale and use of assault-style weapons in Canada, two weeks after a gunman killed 22 people in Nova Scotia.

Today's Birthdays: Singer Judy Collins is 82. Actor Stephen Macht is 79. Singer Rita Coolidge is 76. Pop singer Nick Fortuna (The Buckingham) is 75. Actor-director Douglas Barr is 72. Actor Dann Florek is 70. Singer-songwriter Ray Parker Jr. is 67. Actor Byron Stewart is 65. Hall of Fame jockey Steve Cauthen is 61. Actor Maia Morgenstern is 59. Actor Scott Coffey is 57. Country singer Wayne Hancock is 56. Actor Charlie Schlatter is 55. Country singer Tim McGraw is 54. Rock musician Johnny Colt is 53. Rock musician D'Arcy Wretzky is 53. Movie director Wes Anderson is 52. Actor Julie Benz is 49. Actor Bailey Chase is 49. Country singer Cory Morrow is 49. Gospel/rhythm-and-blues singer Tina Campbell (Mary Mary) is 47. Actor Darius McCrary is 45. Actor Jamie Dornan is 39. Actor Kerry Bishe is 37. TV personality Abby Huntsman is 35. Actor Lizzy Greene is 18.