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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.

**Weber
Landscaping
Greenhouse
IS NOW
OPEN!**



**We have a full greenhouse of
beautiful annuals and vegetables!!**

Open

M-F: 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Saturday: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Sunday: Noon to 4 p.m.

602 West Third Ave., Groton

LET US HELP YOU BRIGHTEN UP YOUR YARD!

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Minnesota Vikings' general manager Rick Spielman has earned the nickname Trader Rick because of his ability to move up and down in the draft, and he was at it once again Thursday night. With the Vikings on the clock at pick number 14 and the top two offensive tackles off the board, Spielman traded down nine spots and added two third-round picks in the process. With the 23rd pick in the 2021 NFL draft, the Vikings selected Christian Darrisaw, an offensive tackle from Virginia Tech.



By Jordan Wright

Darrisaw was widely regarded as the third-best offensive lineman in the draft and would have been a great pick had the Vikings stayed at 14. Getting him, plus the draft picks, is an absolute win for the Vikings. He should be able to step in and start at left tackle on day one. At 6'5", 322 pounds, Darrisaw brings some much-needed size and strength to the Vikings' offensive line. My favorite stat: Christian Darrisaw did not allow a single sack or QB pressure in 2020. Grade = A.

"Love this move for the Vikings. Had they grabbed him in their original spot I would have liked it" – Jason La Canfora, NFL Network

"Darrisaw was my #1 offensive tackle. #Vikings got a plug-and-play guy" – Emory Hunt, Football Gameplan

"Steal by the Vikings. That would've been a good pick at 14." – Dan Kadar, Mocking the Draft

Heading into day two, Spielman and the Vikings had plenty of ammo to move around and get their guys. So it was a surprise when the Vikings elected to stand pat with their four third-round picks.

With the second pick in the third round, the Vikings drafted Kellen Mond, quarterback, Texas A&M. Mond is an athletic QB who has all the tools to be a solid pro, he just needs a year or two before he'll be ready to start. Cousin's job is still safe for now, but with only two years left on his contract, it's possible the Vikings just drafted his eventual replacement. Evaluators were all over the place when it comes to Mond, but some believed he could have been a surprise first-round pick, and all agree he has good potential. This was a solid pick. Grade = A.

Thirteen picks later, the Vikings were back on the clock. With Eric Wilson departing this offseason, the Vikings needed to add a linebacker at some point in the draft. Enter Chazz Surratt, linebacker, North Carolina. Surratt was recruited by the Tarheels to be a quarterback, before making the shift to linebacker a couple of years ago. He figures to come in and compete for playing time along with last year's draft pick Troy Dye, but his biggest contribution to the 2021 season will likely be on special teams. This pick wasn't a home run, but it's possible he develops into a solid starting linebacker within a year or two. Grade = B.

With the 23rd pick in the third round, the Vikings went back to the offensive line, drafting Wyatt Davis from Ohio State. Had Davis entered the draft last year, it's likely he would have been a first-round pick. However, he dealt with injuries in 2020 which caused his draft stock to dip. He is a feisty blocker who has the strength to dominate defensive tackles and won't stop blocking until either the whistle blows, or his opponent has been driven into the ground. Assuming Davis earns a starting role this season, the Vikings will move Ezra Cleveland to left guard and keep Wyatt at his college position of right guard. The Vikings needed to come out of the draft with two starting-caliber offensive linemen, and it appears they succeeded. Grade = A.

With the offensive line set, the Vikings turned their attention to the defensive line with their final pick of day two, selecting Patrick Jones II, defensive end from Pitt. Jones is a speedy lineman who already has a plethora of pass-rushing moves but will need to develop a dominant mindset and prove he can give 100 percent effort on every play. He is another playmaker for defensive line coach Andre Patterson to mold and will compete with D.J. Wonnum and Stephen Weatherly for playing time. Grade = B.

What did you think of the Vikings' draft haul through day two? Reach out to me on Twitter and let me know (@JordanWrightNFL). And make sure to check out next week's article, which will cover all the Vikings' draft picks from day three. Skol!

Dear Moms, I See You

This has been an exhausting year for moms. Last spring, we had no idea we would still be dealing with this pandemic a year later. It presented difficult decisions, such as in-person school or remote learning, how to work from home while caring for children, or how to pay the bills without work, when to let children visit their grandparents, what to do for birthdays and holidays. Regardless of the decision made, it seemed someone somewhere was judging our choice. But I want you to know, I see you every day doing the best you can.

To all the new moms, I see you when the OB floor was empty of friends and family to celebrate the new life you brought into the world. If you were COVID positive, I see you with your beaming smile behind a mask as you hold your new baby.

Mothers of toddlers, I see you trying to keep little fingers out of mouths as you teach them to wash their hands. I see you attempting to be professional on a Zoom meeting with toddlers giggling and playing in the background.

I see you moms of elementary and middle school children as you took on the role of teacher to keep your kids learning during the shutdown. I see you search for answers to big questions from your children about when things will be "normal" again.

Mothers with high school children, I see you consoling your Juniors and Seniors who missed out on sports seasons, proms and graduation ceremonies that were altered, cut short, or cancelled. I see you advertising prom dresses for sale captioned "only worn once for pictures."

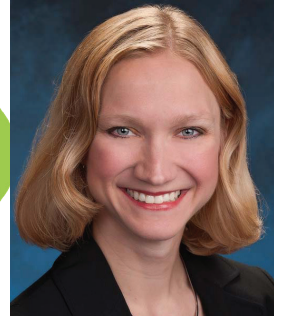
I see you moms of college age children, yes, they are still your babies, as they prepare to leave the nest for school or a job. This new world experience will not be the same as you remember, yet I see you helping to make the most of it.

Grandmothers, I see you, too! You have two sets of babies to think about, your adult children and your grandchildren. I see you longing for their visits and hugs. And I see you when your family could not be with you in the hospital or nursing home.

Moms, I see you for the force of nature you are as you nurture your family through this pandemic. To quote A.A Milne, "You are braver than you believe, stronger than you seem and smarter than you think. But the most important thing is, even if we're apart...I'll always be with you."

With much compassion and love, Tyler and Allie's mom (a.k.a. Dr. Kruse).

Jill Kruse, D.O. is part of The Prairie Doc® team of physicians and currently practices family medicine in Brookings, South Dakota. For free and easy access to the entire Prairie Doc® library, visit www.prairiedoc.org and follow Prairie Doc® on Facebook featuring On Call with the Prairie Doc® a medical Q&A show streaming on Facebook and broadcast on SDPB most Thursdays at 7 p.m. central.



By Jill Kruse, DO ~ Prairie Doc® Perspectives

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Upcoming Events

Monday, May 3

4 p.m.: Track: 7th/8th vs. Webster Area High School at Webster

6:30 p.m.: FFA Banquet, GHS Gym

Tuesday, May 4

1 p.m.: Track: Varsity at Milbank

7 p.m.: Elementary Spring Concert, GHS Gym

Wednesday, May 5

Noon: Groton Chamber Meeting at Groton Community Center

7 p.m.: City Council Meeting at New City Hall (120 N Main)

Thursday, May 6

Elementary Track and Field Day

10 a.m.: 5th Grade DARE Graduation, GHS Arena

10:30 a.m.: Funeral Service for Dolores Baily at SEAS Church

7 p.m.: High School Spring Concert & Awards Night

Friday, May 7

Last Day of School

3 p.m.: Track: Varsity at Sisseton

Monday, May 10

4 p.m.: Track: 7th/8th at Aberdeen Roncalli (Swisher Field)

7 p.m.: School Board Meeting

Thursday, May 13

11 a.m.: Track: Northeast Conference Meet in Groton

12:30 p.m.: Scholarship Meet and Greet, GHS Library

Friday, May 14

3:30 p.m.: Track: 7th/8th @ Groton

Sunday, May 16

2 p.m.: GHS Graduation, GHS Arena

Monday, May 17

10 a.m.: Track: 7th/8th Northeast Conference Track Meet at Swisher Field

Thursday, May 20

Noon: Region 1A Track Meet at Sisseton

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#434 in a series

Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

I have the Sunday weekly summary for you, and the news, overall, continues to look better, although the slow-down has, well, slowed down. We're down to 6 from 11 states and territories in the red zone, up to 38 from 34 in orange, and have 11 in yellow. The one-week increase in total cases was 379,158 last week and is slightly down to 378,665 this week. Two-week increase was 855,458 last week and is down to 757,823 this week. The fact that the two-week increase has declined by so much more than the one-week increase tells us we're not making progress as fast as we were. I have us at a one-week daily average new-case number of 54,095.04, which is barely below last week. I still think we've turned a corner here, but there are flare-ups that are keeping us from making further progress. It is a concern, but it's too soon to panic.

We are up to 32,448,723 total cases, 0.1% more than yesterday. There were 29,673 new cases reported today. I suspect we have some weekend effect operating here; but nonetheless, the last time we were below 30,000 new cases in a day was June 21, 2020, almost 10 and a half months ago. Highest per capita rates of increase are in Michigan, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Delaware, and Florida. We have a 14-day average of 42,752 people hospitalized, slightly more than yesterday, but well below last week. There have been 576,638 deaths in the US in this pandemic, 0.1% more than we had yesterday. I'm not sure what's operating there; we do have younger people getting sick, so deaths shouldn't be going up. There were just 301 deaths reported today. Average daily deaths are up this week by 71.4 to 738.1. States with the most per capita deaths this week were Michigan, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Georgia, and New Mexico.

On May 2, 2020, one year ago today, we were at 1,137,900 cases and 66,424 deaths. Worldwide, we were at 3.3 million cases and 241,000 deaths. I wrote, "It is a bit difficult to accept that this is the ninth weekend we've been getting together to talk viruses. There are a hundred old jokes about how we have to stop meeting like this; I'm hoping the day comes when we don't need to. It's a way off, I think." It is much more difficult to consider we've now been getting together to talk a virus for 61 weekends; I did not see that coming last May. I was right that the day we quit was a way off; but I feel as though we're getting closer today. We'll see what the future brings.

India has now reported more than 400,000 new cases in a single day with over 300,000 for 11 consecutive days; they're running close to 4000 deaths per day with a total loss of life well over 200,000. Their case total is approaching 20 million. The crisis continues to deepen with no signs at all that things will get better any time soon. The health care system has collapsed, supplies are in critically short supply, and the economy has been crippled. Aid has begun to pour in at long last from other countries with a focus on oxygen cylinders, oxygen concentrators, and oxygen generators, all items in particular and critical shortage since you can't keep many of the patients alive long enough to recover without supplemental oxygen. The situation is still desperate.

We've talked before about the denialist phenomenon—where patients going on vents were still angrily denying that they had Covid-19 or were at risk of death almost as they were being intubated. We're seeing something of that again in Alaska in the Fairbanks metro area. New-case reports have more than doubled over 14 days, and test positivity has doubled too, with hospitalizations at Fairbanks Memorial Hospital at record levels, and the system strained because mortality rates are lower; that means people are being hospitalized longer, leaving less room for the new cases coming in. Vaccination in the area is low except among the elderly, and as is true throughout much of the country, the folks being hospitalized now run younger. More hostile too. Doctors report those receiving care during the winter wave, primarily older people, were mostly grateful for the care they received; but Shelley Ebenal, chief executive of Foundation Health Partners, told the New York Times, "Some of these folks are folks that are anti-vaxxers, anti-maskers, and they don't believe they have Covid or are sick because of it, and our staff is getting pretty angry folks," adding, "We are not out of Covid, and our staff in particular is not out of Covid. Our morale is really low." You think?

Our vaccination numbers are now up to 243,463,471 doses administered in the US out of 312,508,205 doses delivered. Our seven-day average is down, but still hanging there around 2.5 million doses, which

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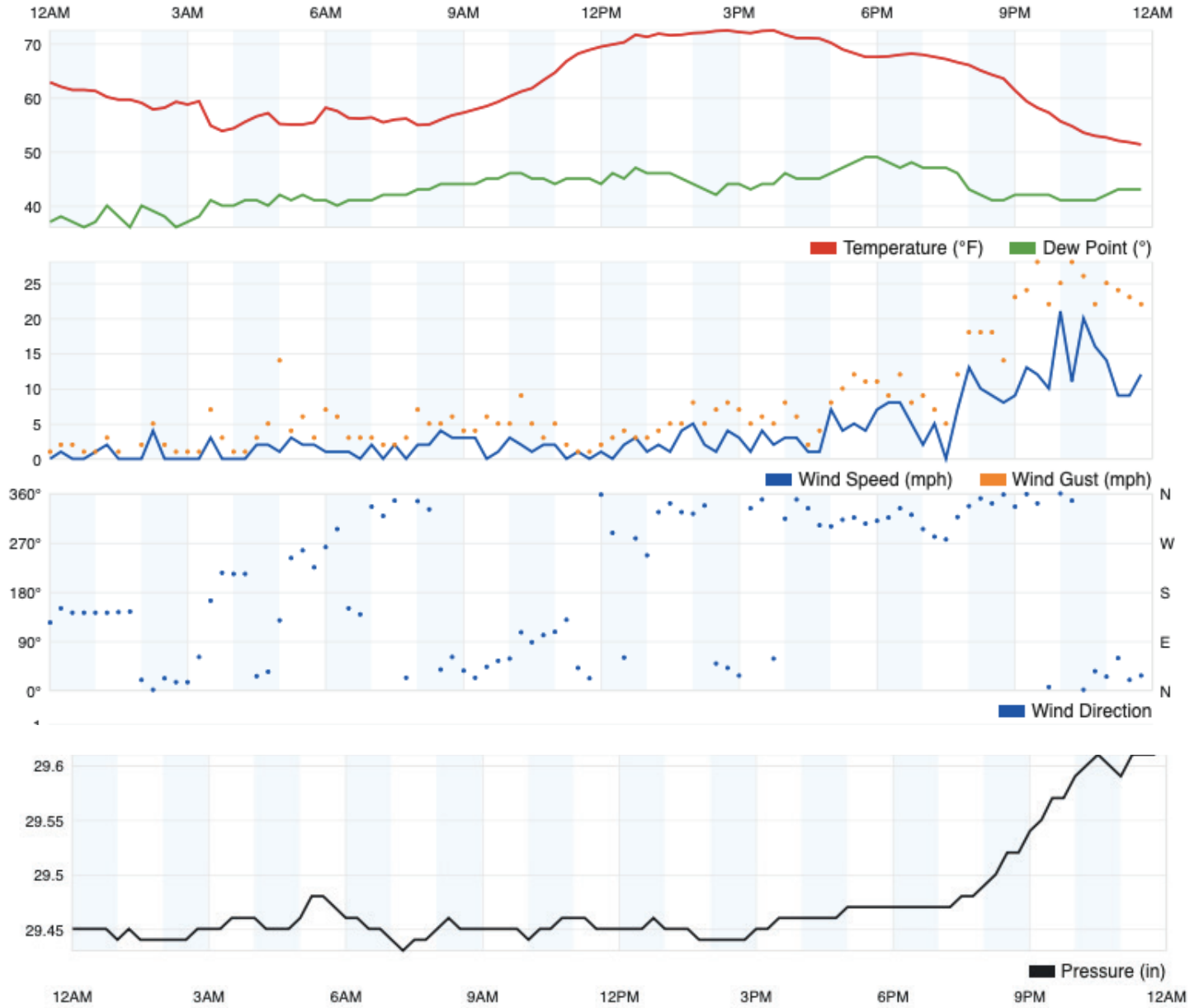
is a whole lot. We have more than 146 million people (over 43 percent) with at least one dose and over 103 million (30 percent) fully vaccinated. A bit of good news on that front; it appears some of that eight percent who have missed their second dose of a two-dose vaccine may not have missed it at all. Turns out it could be a matter that all of the data bases aren't meshing well yet and so the record of a second dose taken at a different location from the first might not be attaching itself to the person's first dose record. Meanwhile, work continues to educate the public that a first dose alone is insufficiently protective and must really be followed by a second one; there is also an effort being made to reach out to allow easier access to follow-up appointments.

That's it for the day. Take care. I'll be back.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today	Tonight	Tuesday	Tuesday Night	Wednesday
Mostly Sunny and Breezy	Mostly Clear	Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Chance Showers
High: 60 °F	Low: 30 °F	High: 59 °F	Low: 35 °F	High: 53 °F

Cooler than it should be This Week

Today's Highs

McIntosh	56°	Eureka	59°	Britton	57°	Wheaton	59°
Mobridge	62°	Aberdeen	60°	Sisseton	59°	Milbank	59°
Eagle Butte	58°	Gettysburg	58°	Redfield	61°	Watertown	58°
Pierre	60°	Miller	61°	Huron	61°	Brookings	59°
Murdo	60°	Chamberlain	64°				

TUE	WED	THU	FRI
May 4, 2021	May 5, 2021	May 6, 2021	May 7, 2021
55-65°	50-60°	60-65°	60-70°

Today, breezy north winds (gusts up to 35mph) and dry conditions lead to **Elevated Fire Danger**

Light rain showers possible Wednesday. A bit of snow mixing in?

NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE
OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

Temperatures will be up to around 10 degrees below average throughout the next 7 days. Nevertheless, elevated fire danger is expected today given the breezy and dry conditions. The next best chance for rain arrives on Wednesday, though amounts will be light.

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Today in Weather History

May 3, 1895: A tornado moved northeast from 3 miles northwest of Redfield through Ashton. It was estimated to be on the ground for about 5 miles. Several homes were unroofed and barns destroyed. Tornadoes were spotted in Minnehaha and Bon Homme Counties in South Dakota.

May 3, 1907: The low temperature at Watertown fell to 16 degrees, making this coldest May temperature ever recorded Watertown.

May 3, 1960: Late season snowfall of 3 to 7 inches covered Perkins, Corson, and Campbell Counties. Lemmon reported 7 inches, and 6 miles SE of McIntosh had 6.5 inches. Main roads were very slippery and some rural roads impassable for about one day.

May 3, 1999: Two to four inches of rain fell across southeastern Dewey County causing flash flooding south of La Plant, mainly on Willow Creek. As a result of the flash flooding, several roads were underwater. Highway 212 south of La Plant was flooded for a few hours along with Highway 8, 15 miles south of La Plant. The flash flooding resulted in some road and bridge damage.

May 3, 2002: With low humidity, dry vegetation, and increasing South winds, embers from a day old controlled burn initiated a large grassland fire in the early afternoon hours west of Claremont. South winds of 30 to 40 mph gusting to 50 mph caused the fire to spread quickly. The fire extended to 4 miles wide and spread 4 miles north before it was contained late in the evening. Many trees along with a mobile home, an abandoned house, and an old barn burned. Seven miles of road had to be closed due to poor visibility from smoke. Eleven fire departments with nearly 150 firefighters extinguished the fire. The fire was completely put out during the afternoon hours of the 4th. This fire was one of the largest grassland fires in Brown County history.

1761: Large tornadoes swept through the harbor at Charleston, South Carolina when a British fleet of 40 sails was at anchor. The tornadoes raised a wave 12 feet high, leaving many vessels on their beam ends. Four people drowned.

1868: A tornado traveled 15 miles across Warren and Knox Counties, northwest of Galesburg, Illinois. The small town of Ionia, in Warren County, was destroyed. 16 homes and two churches in the city were leveled, along with 30 homes elsewhere. The tornado killed six people and injured 40 others. Many of the casualties occurred during a church service when the church roof was torn off and dropped onto the congregation.

1895: In Sioux County, Iowa an exceptionally violent tornado, at times 1,000 yards wide packing winds estimated at over 250 mph moved from three miles north of Ireton to two miles southwest of Hull hitting four schools. Two school houses several miles apart were leveled, killing teachers and students. Sibling teachers were killed at two different schools. Adjoining farms were also destroyed with several deaths in homes.

1999: There were 63 tornadoes in Oklahoma, making this the worst outbreak ever to strike the state. In Central Oklahoma alone, eight individual supercell thunderstorms produced 57 tornadoes. Bridge Creek, Moore and southern parts of the Oklahoma City Metro area were hit the hardest. When it was near Moore, Oklahoma, a truck-mounted Doppler radar measured a wind speed of 318 mph, the highest ever observed in a tornado. Forecasters at the Storm Prediction Center in Norman, OK were faced with the unprecedented situation of a major tornado on the ground threatening their location. As a major F5 tornado was approaching the Oklahoma City metro area from the southwest, the SPC notified its backup, the Air Force Weather Agency at Offutt AFB in Omaha, Nebraska that they might have to assume operational responsibility if the tornado approached Norman. The storm remained several miles west of the facility but was visible from the SPC roof. Damage from this single tornado was around one billion dollars, making it the most costly tornado in history. Estimated damage from the entire tornado outbreak was \$1.485 billion, making this the most expensive tornado outbreak ever. 2,314 homes were destroyed, and another 7,428 were damaged. To the north in Kansas, an F4 tornado tracked 24 miles through Sumner and Sedgwick Counties, killing 6, injuring 154, and causing \$146 million in damages. Haysville and Wichita suffered severe damage. A total of 8,480 buildings and homes were damaged or destroyed with, 109 destroyed.

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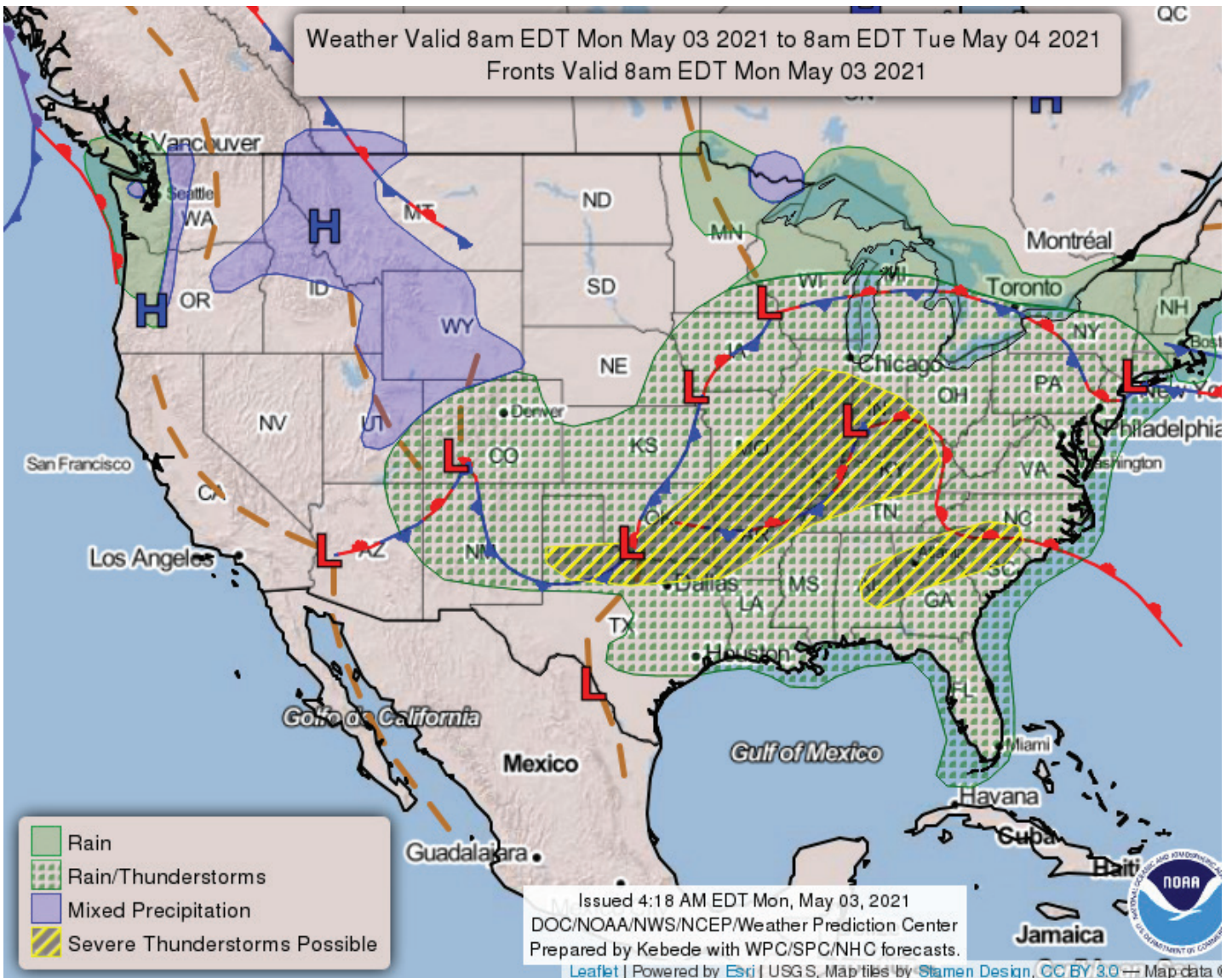
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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 73 °F at 3:38 PM
Low Temp: 51 °F at 11:52 PM
Wind: 28 mph at 9:03 PM
Precip: .00

Today's Info

Record High: 90° in 1952
Record Low: 13° in 2005
Average High: 65°F
Average Low: 39°F
Average Precip in May.: 0.20
Precip to date in May.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 5.23
Precip Year to Date: 2.77
Sunset Tonight: 8:44 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:17 a.m.



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RECOGNIZING REALITY

"People do not learn from mistakes," said the professor. The class was confused. Most of them had been taught all of their lives that the best way to learn was from one's mistakes.

As he looked into their puzzled faces, he continued his lecture by asking a question, "How many of you have made the same mistake twice?" Hands went up all over the classroom. "That is precisely my point. If we learned from our mistakes, we would never make the same mistake twice. We seem to learn best when someone provides us feedback. We are not honest enough with ourselves to point out our own mistakes or failures. We do not want to admit them – especially to ourselves even if we recognize them."

The author of this Psalm recalled two important facts: When the Israelites acknowledged God as their leader and followed Him, they were victorious. "Our fathers advised us," they said, "that it was not our swords or plans that brought victory." God spoke to them and they realized what brought about their defeat: they trusted in their own strength! It was their defeat that caused them to be open to God's "feedback."

When "we pushed back our enemies in Your name," he continued, "we trampled on our foes!" What a testimony to the power and victory that is available to us through our God!

Like Israel, we must come to the same conclusion and make the same confession with the same amount of conviction: "In Your name, Heavenly Father, we can trample on our foes." When we read God's Word and use it as the standard for our lives, He will give us His "feedback" and provide a path for us to renew our relationship with Him. If we allow His Word to do its work, we will discover our failings and can call on Him for His grace and forgiveness, courage and restoration.

Prayer: We pray, Almighty Lord, for a willingness to realize that apart from You there is no victory over our foes. Lead us in Your strength! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Only by your power can we push back our enemies; only in your name can we trample our foes. Psalm 44:5

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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

Black Hills forest management plan tries to strike balance

By ALEX PORTAL Black Hills Pioneer

SPEARFISH, S.D. (AP) — The question isn't, "should commercial timber sales take place in the Black Hills," the question is, "how many commercial timber sales should take place in the Black Hills."

That is the crux of a conversation currently taking place among: forest officials from the National Forest Service, which regulates and manages the Black Hills National Forest; the Black Hills National Forest Advisory Board, a 32-member committee made up of stakeholders with specific interest in the Black Hills; and the Black Hills Forest Resource Association, which advocates for the forest products industry.

"Our actions today don't just play out today, but they play out long term and you have to be able to think long term," said Ben Wudtke, executive director of the Black Hills Forest Resources Association.

This comes after the March 22 announcement that the Hill City sawmill would close this spring. It has operated for 33 years and employs 120 people and 12 contract crews.

To talk about long-term thinking moving forward, one must first go back to 2010. The management plan for the Black Hills National Forest had set an allowable sale quantity (ASQ) for timber sales in the forest at 181,000 centum cubic feet, or CCF, (100 cubic feet = 1 CCF); however, due to the mountain pine beetle epidemic that was taking place, the actual number of CCFs sold was consistently higher than that over the past decade.

"We worked hard with industry and private land owners and state departments of forestry to try to thin ahead of the mountain pine beetle," explained Scott Jacobson, public affairs officer for the Black Hills National Forest. "Because the stands were so densely thick, the bugs were just kind of spreading and going everywhere so we started thinning aggressively and we were cutting a lot more timber out just to get ahead of the beetle to save the forest."

The total volume of timber sales sold averaged well above 200,000 CCF during that time. That deliberate over harvesting came to an abrupt halt after 2017 when the mountain pine beetle epidemic was declared officially over with total sales dropping to 125,416 CCF in 2020. That rapid decline in timber sales was a major factor in Neiman Enterprises' difficult decision to close its Hill City sawmill. Neiman's has had to seek timber sales from as far away as Montana, Nebraska, and the Bighorn National Forest, near Buffalo and Sheridan, Wyoming, in order to meet production figures at its Hill City facility; an action that was never meant to be a long-term solution.

"That has largely been the result of a declining timber program (in the Black Hills)," said Marcus Neiman, vice president of Neiman Enterprises.

In the middle of all this, in 2014, at the peak of the pine beetle epidemic, the Black Hills National Forest and the Black Hills Forest resource Association, formed a taskforce to examine, among other things, the sustainability of timber harvesting in the Black Hills as a result of the pine beetle's devastating effect, the Black Hills Pioneer reported.

The epidemic lasted for a total of 20 years and impacted 448,000 acres to some extent. Much of that area was devastated, according to a 2016 forest health report.

Through years of re-evaluating and re-assessing methodologies and gathering new raw data, a more precise forest inventory analysis (FIA) was established. That analysis was used by forestry scientists at the Rocky Mountain Research Station to create a general technical report (GTR), which was submitted to the National Forest Service in February 2020.

In it, silviculturists Mike Battaglia, Theresa Jain, and the late Russell Graham concluded that the current rate of 181,000 CCF in timber sales would not be sustainable for the well-being of the forest. They recommend harvest levels between 72,400 and 90,500 CCF. Silviculturists study the science of planting and the development of forests.

During a presentation of findings, on April 7 by the scientists themselves, Jain surmised that rather than

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attempting to mitigate natural disturbances through human involvement like the over harvesting of the past decade, land managers should allow for such disturbances in their forest management plans.

"For example, the Black Hills has experienced mountain pine beetle epidemics periodically somewhere on the forest approximately every 20 years. Beetles are a part of this ecosystem and will continue to be a part of this forest," Jain said.

Jain also pointed to climate change as a factor to consider.

"Since 2000 South Dakota's annual average temperature has increased by 2 degrees F," Jain said. "Projections suggest that by mid 21st century, mean annual temperatures will exceed those of the past 100 years. If we get increased temperatures, evapotranspiration (the process by which water escapes for the soil into the atmosphere through plants) from the trees will also increase potentially drying the soil and favoring drought conditions."

Jain said cold temperatures kill mountain pine beetle larvae, so warmer winters could have less of an impact on infestations and lengthen fire seasons.

The conclusion drawn from the silviculturists in the GTR is that in order to keep the Black Hills well-stocked with healthy trees, forest managers should plan for catastrophic natural events such as insect infestation and wildfires by keeping more trees on stand-by and greatly reducing the amount of trees harvested.

Timber industry experts say managing the forest through harvesting could help lessen the impact of those events to begin with.

"That's why you have two different disciplines; that's why you have a research station and management. What our forest managers are going to have to balance is just that," Neiman said. "I understand the researchers' argument from the standpoint of, 'you can't tell me not to factor it when it happened.' But for a manager ... to intentionally plan to have fires and intentionally plan on allowing pine beetle outbreaks is mismanagement."

Neiman was adamant that work done by the FIA team and the researchers who assembled the GTR represented solid science and that historic data should absolutely be factored into the Forest Service's management plan moving forward; however, he objected to the conclusion of the report based on the parameters set by the GTR.

"A comprehensive management plan does not look at the Black Hills National Forest through such a narrow scope as the GTR was asked to do by past leadership of the Black Hills National Forest," he said.

Neiman explained that the Black Hills National Forest has always used timber sales as a method of managing the forest dating back to Case No. 1 in 1899, the very first federal timber sale ever sold in the entire United States. He stipulates that while the sustainability needs of the forest change, adjustments in industry must follow suit, but the sustainability of the industry – has to count for something as well. As allowable timber sales dwindle, sawmills will have to close and the industry will disappear from the forest all together, and the Forest Service will lose a major management tool.

Jeff Tomac, forest supervisor for the Black Hills National Forest, echoed that sentiment.

"We need industry and sustainable industry on the Black Hills National Forest in order to manage the Black Hills," Tomac said. "My overall goal would be that we find a balance between economics and sustainability of timber on the Black Hills National Forest."

Evidence of how detrimental it can be to not maintain that balance, even for a short time, can be found by looking at the historic data compiled in the GTR itself.

"At the beginning of the 21st century, standing live ponderosa pine volume was at its highest levels in recorded time," the report states. "These high volumes provided forested stand and landscape conditions that were classified at moderate to high hazard for MPB (mountain pine beetle) and wildfire. In addition, results from long-term and recent studies across the BBNF showed that current high stand densities were susceptible to MPB and needed to be lowered across the landscape. During this same time period, the BBNF started to experience an MPB epidemic and several large mixed severity wildfires.

"Within the wildfire perimeters, areas with low stand densities burned less severely. This local information combined with the incorporation of reducing surface fuel loads, increasing height to live crown, decreasing crown density, and maintaining large fire-resistant trees provided additional science-based guidance for

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forest management that would help reduce MPB and wildfire hazard," the report said.

Neiman offered some context for those findings based on what was going on in the industry at the same time.

"There was an injunction that literally froze management on the forest for a year. So 2000 was the Y2K event, we managed the forest for a century and then stopped. No one told the trees. All of our catastrophic fires have been in the last 20 years," he said. "Without a deliberate management plan (the forest) is going to repeat the cycle of fire and bug."

Upon reviewing the GTR, the Black Hills Forest Research Association commissioned its own report extrapolated from the data in the government's FIA. In July 2020, the association's report was submitted to the Black Hills National Forest Advisory Board, citing several discrepancies with the initial GTR including an inaccurate amount of acreage of suitable timberland estimated and conflicting growth/mortality rates. Based on the findings of that report, the advisory board recommended no change in the ASQ to the National Forest.

"Numerous issues, concerns, and uncertainties were uncovered during the course of the analysis which, taken together, cast doubt on the accuracy of the reported inventory results," the association's report read.

Both reports rely heavily on two main factors to derive their conclusions – live standing volume on suitable timberland base, as well as the growth and mortality rates for saw timber trees (trees that are eligible for harvesting).

The Black Hills National Forest is made up of approximately 1.2 million acres. The GTR estimated 765,733 acres of suitable timberland, while the BHFRFA report claims that number should be 865,890 based on the Black Hills National Forest Plan Phase II Amendment from 2006.

Charles Perry, soil scientist for the FIA research team, explained the reason the area of suitable timberland looked at by the GTR was so much smaller than the forest plan's estimation was because the GTR was only looking at suitable ponderosa pine timberland. Ponderosa pines make up the vast majority of trees used in the local timber industry.

"The challenge is that when our crews went out and walked the ground, not all of the land that's labeled suitable base, is ponderosa pine timberland," Perry explained. "That's why when you do estimates of area against the suitable base you differentiate between just trying to estimate suitable base and then trying to estimate how much area is actually ponderosa pine timberland."

Perry said the FIA team was given a geographical information system (GIS) measurement of suitable base in the Black Hills National Forest of around 837,000 acres, which was already less than the estimation mentioned in the original forest plan.

"That's the conundrum, is that between the fires and other activities, the amount of ground actually growing ponderosa pine right now has changed from the original map of suitable base," Perry said.

The GTR also estimates forest growth rates at 2.5% based on snapshot statistics taken from 1962, 1984, 1999, 2011, and 2019. The association's report came up with a growth estimate of 3.14% basing it's information on past FIA data collected each year from 2016 through 2019.

During the pine beetle epidemic, mortality rates were far greater than in more recent years. Additionally, because the Forest Service was using the timber industry to remove not only living trees to thin the forest, but also dead trees that had already been infected by the bugs, the metrics used to estimate harvest numbers were skewed as well during that time.

"Every log that came off the forest, we ran it across the scale and measured it and tallied it in essence. What we didn't tally is how many of those logs that came across the scale had already been hit by bugs," Neiman said.

Neiman explained that once a ponderosa pine tree dies, whether it be from being harvested, or disease, or devoured by bugs, it only has a merchantable shelf life measured in months, not years, like with other species of tree. So not every log pulled off of the forest is usable for industry, but every log pulled off the forest, by forest product professionals, is counted in the harvesting numbers.

Both reports conclude that as the forest continues to grow mitigating events will need to take place to

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maintain it at a desired level.

"Disturbances are critical because they are part of the growth and development of these forests. ... They also provide growing space for the trees that are left, and they also provide opportunities for other types of vegetation to establish and grow. Human activity such as prescribed fire and harvesting also play a similar role as natural disturbances as they are important particularly since we cannot allow for fires to burn as they did in the past because people live throughout the Black Hills," Jain said.

"When you break it all down we have a choice – we can let mountain pine beetles and wildfires run their course, which have both immediate and very long-term implications ... or we can choose to mimic mother nature and do that through a science-based process and harvest trees," Wudtke added.

The Black Hills National Forest Service has currently set a goal of 175,000 CCF in timber sales by the end of the 2021 fiscal year in September, while working to create a new long-term forest management plan. As it does, officials will need to consider both reports and recommendations for all stakeholders to determine the best course for preserving the Black Hills forest as well as balancing what's best for the people who live, work, and play in this unique and ever-changing landscape.

"The information in the GTR (is) going to be used to help inform forest management decisions and forest planning efforts, as well as other information, the National Forest Advisory Board made a recommendation ... we're going to look at that information as we move forward with forest planning and management of the Black Hills," Tomac said. "I think it's a balance. I don't know that we can always be reactive so the goal of looking at the GTR information and moving to forest planning on the Black Hills National Forest is an attempt to be proactive... to set ourselves up for success on the management of the Black Hills."

South Dakota St. tops S. Illinois 31-26 in FCS quarterfinals

BROOKINGS, S.D. (AP) — Mark Gronowski threw two touchdown passes to Jadon Janke and ran 67 yards for the go-ahead score to help South Dakota State rally from a 13-point deficit and beat Southern Illinois 31-26 on Sunday night in the FCS playoffs.

Top-seeded South Dakota State (7-1), which No. 3 in the STATS FCS poll, will host fifth-ranked Delaware in the semifinals Saturday.

Nico Gualdoni made a 33-yard field goal to give Southern Illinois (6-4) a 20-7 lead with 22 seconds left in the second quarter, but the Jackrabbits scored the next 24 points to take the lead for good.

Isaiah Davis returned the ensuing kickoff 50 yards to set up a 34-yard field goal by Cole Frahm as time expired in the first half.

Janke, whose 23-yard touchdown reception in the first quarter opened the scoring, caught a 26-yard TD pass midway through the third to trim SDSU's deficit to 20-17.

The Salukis were stopped at the 1 on a fourth-and-goal play on their ensuing drive before Gronowski pulled the handoff on a zone-read play and raced down the left sideline to put the Jackrabbits in front early in the fourth. Davis scored on a 4-yard run that made it 31-20 with 7:11 to play.

Landon Lenoir had six receptions for 129 yards, including a 31-yard touchdown, for SIU.

Gronowski finished 9 of 16 for 183 yards and had 142 yards rushing on 13 carries.

Aberdeen student qualifies for international science fair

ABERDEEN, S.D. (AP) — An Aberdeen high school student's science fair project that looks at creating a collagen protein so it could be used to make replacement ligaments has earned him a trip to an international contest.

Roncalli senior Simon Bickford set out with the goal of taking a gene from a sample of DNA, amplify it and place it into a plasmid vector (an extra piece of DNA that bacteria use) and induce the bacteria to make the protein with that gene. With enough of that protein, he said, ligaments can be grown, which can then be used for replacements in humans.

With limited time available to work on the project, Bickford didn't get all the way to the creation of a ligament. But he did find success, the Aberdeen American News reported.

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"The data suggests I did successfully make a part of it (the protein)," he said.

His next step is to create the entire protein, then look at the creation of a ligament. Northern State professor Jon Mitchell supervised the research and said that to his knowledge, something like this hasn't been done.

"He came to me with the idea," Mitchell said. "It's a really brilliant idea. We were both totally shocked that it worked."

Bickford will give virtual presentations this week at the Regeneron International Science and Engineering Fair, with additional events planned May 16-21.

Tornadoes cause damage in Mississippi; Tupelo hit at night

Multiple tornadoes were reported across Mississippi on Sunday, causing some damage but no immediate word of injuries.

A line of severe storms rolled through the state Sunday afternoon and into the nighttime hours. Late Sunday, a "tornado emergency" was declared for Tupelo and surrounding areas. Meteorologists urged residents to take cover.

"Damage has been reported in the City of Tupelo," the mayor's office said in a Facebook post just before 11 p.m. "Emergency crews are currently assessing the degree of damage. Please do not get out and drive."

Photos retweeted by the National Weather Service in Memphis showed several downed trees and power lines. Tupelo Middle School sustained some damage, as well as houses and businesses.

Calhoun County Sheriff Greg Pollan said Calhoun City also "was hit hard tonight."

"Light poles have been snapped off. Trees in a few homes. Trees on vehicles. Damage to several businesses. Fortunately we have had no reports at this time of injuries," Pollan posted on Facebook, asking people to stay off the roads. "Emergency personnel are working feverishly to open the roads as quickly as possible."

News outlets also reported tornados near Yazoo City, Byram and Tchula earlier in the day. The National Weather Service in Jackson shared several images of funnel clouds across different parts of the state.

UN program inks Moderna deal on 500M doses, starting in Q4

By JAMEY KEATEN Associated Press

GENEVA (AP) — Moderna and vaccine promoter Gavi have announced a deal by which the pharmaceutical company will provide up to 500 million doses for the U.N.-backed program to ship coronavirus vaccines to needy people in low- and middle-income countries by the end of 2022.

The advance purchase agreement announced Monday comes just days after the World Health Organization, after weeks of delays, announced emergency approval for the Moderna vaccine that will pave the way for its rollout in the U.N.-backed COVAX program.

However, deliveries are not set to begin until the fourth quarter of this year, and the vast majority of the doses in the deal — 466 million — are planned for next year. The remaining 34 million are expected this year.

Stephane Bancel, the Moderna CEO, expressed support for the COVAX mission and called the deal "an important milestone" to ensure access to its vaccine worldwide.

"We recognize that many countries have limited resources to access COVID-19 vaccines," Bancel said in a statement. "We remain committed to doing everything that we can to ending this ongoing pandemic with our mRNA COVID-19 vaccine."

The company said the doses were offered "at Moderna's lowest tiered price, in line with the company's global access commitments," without specifying. Gavi didn't provide financial terms, but has said the per-dose prices of vaccines for COVAX will eventually be made public.

Many experts say the COVID-19 crisis is acute now, with India in particular facing an unprecedented surge in cases. The Moderna vaccine has generally been considered among the most effective so far in

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combating new variants, like the one that is spreading in India.

Seth Berkley, CEO of Gavi, which is a public-private partnership, hailed the access to “yet another efficacious vaccine.”

“Expanding and having a diverse portfolio has always been a core goal for COVAX, and to remain adaptable in the face of this continually evolving pandemic – including the rising threat posed by new variants,” he said. “This agreement is a further step in that direction.”

The arrangement means that Cambridge, Mass.-based Moderna can join the COVAX rollout that already includes vaccines from Oxford-AstraZeneca, which has the biggest role so far in the program, and Pfizer-BioNTech, which has committed far fewer doses to it.

Supplies of the AstraZeneca vaccine for COVAX that are being produced in India have been limited in recent month as the New Delhi government and the Indian subcontractor divert much of that production to combating the devastating at home.

The Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness and Innovation, a public-private partnership that co-manages COVAX with Gavi and WHO, made an early investment into the Moderna vaccine as the pandemic arose — and the first official link-up between the company and the program has come nearly 18 months into the pandemic.

The WHO go-ahead for an emergency use listing for Moderna’s vaccine, announced late Friday, took many months because of delays that WHO faced in getting data from the manufacturer.

Many countries without their own advanced medical regulatory and assessment offices rely on the WHO listing to decide whether to use vaccines. U.N. children’s agency UNICEF also uses the listing to deploy vaccines in an emergency like the pandemic.

Moderna has struck supply agreements with many rich countries, which will have already received millions of doses of the vaccine.

Also Monday, Gavi announced that Sweden’s government has committed to donate 1 million doses of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine “to help COVAX urgently address immediate-term supply delays.”

Democrats seek narrow path to rein in cost of medicines

By RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden’s call for authorizing Medicare to negotiate lower prescription drug prices has energized Democrats on a politically popular idea they’ve been pushing for nearly 20 years only to encounter frustration.

But they still lack a clear path to enact legislation. That’s because a small number of Democrats remain uneasy over government price curbs on pharmaceutical companies.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer will need every Democratic vote in a narrowly divided Congress. Otherwise Democrats may have to settle for a compromise that stops short of their goal. Or they could take the issue into the 2022 midterm elections.

“There is a path,” said Rep. Peter Welch, D-Vt., one of Pelosi’s lieutenants. “But there’s also a challenge, and the challenge is we’ve got razor-thin margins.”

“This is not a done deal,” continued Welch. “We’ve got a president and a speaker, but ‘pharma’ is very powerful.” Pharma is a nickname for the industry and for its main lobbying group, the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America, or PhRMA.

The industry thwarted President Donald Trump’s multi-pronged efforts to constrain its pricing power. Even though Trump came into office accusing drugmakers of “getting away with murder” and vowing he’d put a stop to it, the companies emerged from his term with just a few nicks and cuts.

The industry lobbying group PhRMA is considered one of the most skilled operators in Washington. Its mission: to preserve a clause in the 2003 law that created Medicare’s pharmacy benefit barring the government from interfering in price negotiations among drugmakers and insurers. That was enacted before \$1,000 pills became old hat.

PhRMA CEO Stephen Uhl served notice after Biden’s speech to Congress last week that the industry

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stands ready to defend its prerogative. "Giving the government the power to arbitrarily determine the price of medicines is not the right approach," he said in a statement arguing that it would stifle innovation. Such measured language belies the group's clout. It's usually among the top five spenders on Washington lobbying and networks with allied groups in the states.

"I don't think anybody is fully prepared for the onslaught we expect from PhRMA," said Margarida Jorge, campaign director for Lower Drug Prices Now, a coalition backing Medicare negotiations. "We are going to see a much bigger stepped-up game."

Pelosi put Medicare negotiations back in play with the reintroduction of an ambitious bill she powered through the House in 2019. Medicare would use an average of lower prices in other economically advanced countries to negotiate on top drugs. Companies that refused to deal would be hit with a steep tax. Drugmakers who hike prices above the rate of inflation would owe rebates to Medicare. Hundreds of billions of dollars potentially saved through the legislation would be plowed back into other health care programs. Private insurers covering working-age people would be able to secure Medicare's lower prices.

In his speech to a joint session of Congress, Biden invited lawmakers to imagine the possibilities. "The money we save, which is billions of dollars, can go to strengthening the Affordable Care Act and expand Medicare benefits without costing taxpayers an additional penny," the president said. "It is within our power to do it. Let's do it now. We've talked about it long enough."

But Republican Sen. Chuck Grassley of Iowa is urging Biden to lower his sights a bit. Grassley opposes negotiating authority for Medicare but supports requiring drugmakers to pay rebates for price hikes above the inflation rate — a potential compromise. "I hope the president reconsiders the liberal pipe dream in favor of the big bipartisan win," said Grassley.

Polls have consistently shown strong public support for authorizing Medicare to negotiate. "This is very high among the concerns of voters, and also heavily promised by Biden in the campaign," said policy expert John Rother, a longtime advocate of drug price curbs. The House Energy and Commerce Committee will hold a hearing Tuesday on the issue.

One option for Pelosi and Schumer would be to splice the Medicare legislation into a mammoth bill delivering Biden's "American Jobs Plan" promises on social programs and infrastructure. Such a vehicle would seem to offer the greatest chance to pass drug pricing curbs. But the political dynamics are different in each chamber. What might work in the House may get nowhere in the Senate.

With its 50-50 split, the Senate is looking like the choke point. The overwhelming majority of Democrats are in favor of Medicare negotiations, but a few are undeclared.

Among them is Sen. Bob Menendez of New Jersey, whose office says he believes "any drug pricing bill must deliver real savings for consumers at the pharmacy counter, not just achieve savings to the government or overall system."

"It's going to be a heavy lift," said policy expert Rother. "But I don't think you know for sure until you try it."

Prince Harry, Jennifer Lopez make voices heard at Vax Live

By JONATHAN LANDRUM Jr. AP Entertainment Writer

INGLEWOOD, Calif. (AP) — President Joe Biden spoke about the COVID-19 vaccination being safe, Prince Harry urged for the vaccine distribution everywhere and Jennifer Lopez embraced her fully-vaccinated mother on stage during one of the largest concert gatherings in Southern California since the pandemic rocked the world more than a year ago.

Celebrities and political leaders gathered Sunday night to talk about the importance of vaccine equity at Global Citizen's "Vax Live: The Concert to Reunite the World" at SoFi Stadium in Inglewood, California. The taped fundraising event will air May 8 on ABC, ABC News Live, CBS, YouTube and iHeartMedia broadcast radio stations.

The concert included performances by Lopez, Eddie Vedder, Foo Fighters, J Balvin and H.E.R.

Ben Affleck, Chrissy Teigen, Jimmy Kimmel, Sean Penn and David Letterman appeared as special guest

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speakers.

Everyone in the audience was fully vaccinated. Media and production staff needed to show a negative COVID test before entering the stadium.

"The vaccines are safe. I promise you. They work," said Biden, who was accompanied in a video message with first lady Jill Biden. Both appeared as part of the "We Can Do This" initiative to increase confidence in COVID-19 vaccines.

"We're working with leaders around the world to share more vaccines and boost production to make sure every country has the vaccines they need," the president continued. "If we get this done, we won't have to miss another moment."

The event was part of a growing chorus seeking wider, more equitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccines. Global Citizen said \$53.8 million in philanthropic and corporate commitments helped procure nearly 10.3 million doses, exceeding the goal for the Vax Live campaign.

Prince Harry said providing vaccines across the globe is imperative, particularly those in the poorest countries. He said that he is standing solidarity with India, who is experiencing a "devastating" second wave of the virus.

"The vaccine must be distributed to everyone everywhere," the Duke of Sussex said. He along with his wife Meghan are leading an effort to raise money for the vaccine-sharing program COVAX, which hopes to produce \$19 billion to pay for the vaccines for medical workers.

"We cannot rest or truly recover until there is fair distribution to every corner of the world," he said. "The virus does not respect borders and access to the vaccine cannot be determined by geography."

The event also highlighted first responders and health care workers efforts during the pandemic. Selena Gomez, the show's host, called essential and frontline workers "reliable" and "brave."

"Many of us had to stay home, but you all didn't have a choice," the singer said. "You set an example for all of us, both in how you stayed on the job and that we need to get vaccinated as soon as possible."

Each musical performance made things seem almost like normal with attendees standing at their seats side-by-side while others danced with their masks on. Some hugged each other with enthusiasm.

H.E.R. performed on a small stage outside the stadium with a group of people playing their guitars.

Before Lopez's performance, she told the audience that she was unable to spend Christmas with her mother. The singer went on to invite her fully-vaccinated mom on stage, then the two sang their rendition of Neil Diamond's "Sweet Caroline."

"When I was thinking about what song to sing tonight, I remembered the song she used to sing to me as a baby," said Lopez, who later performed her 2016 hit single "Ain't Your Mama."

Eddie Vedder said the concert was the first "taste of the life we've all been missing" for more than a year.

"This is a feeling we have not had in some time," he said. "There's a microphone, a crowd. It feels good."

Foo Fighters rocked on with AC/DC frontman Brian Johnson during a performance of the rock anthem "Back In Black."

"We ain't out the woods yet. But let me tell you, I'm a firm believer and idea that music should be shared with people," Foo Fighters frontman Dave Grohl said. "Let's work as hard as we can to make sure we can do this every night."

Hugh Evans, founder and CEO of Global Citizen, said he wants to keep the momentum going.

"What were trying to highlight is the obvious that we should be fighting for equity," he said. "It's something that shouldn't require any arithmetic. It is absolutely bleeding obvious."

Impact of devastating Indian virus surge spreads to politics

NEW DELHI (AP) — India recorded 368,147 new coronavirus cases on Monday and 3,417 deaths as a catastrophic surge sweeps through the country.

The latest numbers came after leaders of 13 opposition parties urged the government to launch a free vaccination drive and ensure uninterrupted flow of oxygen to all hospitals. Several hospital authorities over the weekend sought court intervention over oxygen supplies in New Delhi, where a lockdown has been

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extended by a week in an attempt to contain the wave of infections.

"Water has gone above the head. Enough is enough," said the New Delhi High Court, adding it would start punishing government officials if supplies of oxygen allocated to hospitals are not delivered.

On Monday, 24 COVID-19 patients died at a government-run hospital in the southern state of Karnataka amid reports of an oxygen shortage. It was unclear how many died due to a lack of oxygen, but the chief minister ordered a probe into the incident.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government has been severely criticized over its handling of the surge, which has pushed India's already fragile and underfunded health system to the brink. Massive election rallies organized by his Bharatiya Janata Party and other parties as well as a giant Hindu festival on the banks of the Ganges may have exacerbated the spread, experts said, adding that new variants could also be increasing cases.

Modi's party on Sunday suffered a resounding election defeat in a key state, West Bengal, failing to dislodge its firebrand chief minister, Mamata Banerjee. It retained power in northeastern Assam state but lost in two southern states.

While the four states were already stiff election challenges for Modi's party apart from the pandemic, analysts said the results weaken Modi's position as surging infections cripple the already fragile health system.

Meanwhile, the world's biggest cricket tournament, the Indian Premier League, said Monday's match between the Royal Challengers Bangalore and Kolkata Knight Riders would be rescheduled after two players tested positive for the coronavirus. The two players have self-isolated and medical personnel were tracing their contacts.

Despite rising cases, the league has held matches every evening behind closed doors since it kicked off in April.

India has confirmed 19.9 million COVID-19 cases since the start of the pandemic, behind only the U.S., which has counted more than 32.4 million. More than 218,000 people in India have died, according to the health ministry. Both figures are thought to be vast undercounts.

India opened its vaccination campaign to people ages 18-44 on Saturday, a mammoth task undermined by limited supplies. India is the world's biggest producer of vaccines, but even the ongoing effort to inoculate people above 45 is stuttering. Since January, 10% of Indians have received one dose but only around 1.5% have received both required doses.

US begins reuniting some families separated at Mexico border

By ELLIOT SPAGAT Associated Press

SAN DIEGO (AP) — The Biden administration said Monday that four families that were separated at the Mexico border during Donald Trump's presidency will be reunited in the United States this week in what Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas calls "just the beginning" of a broader effort.

Two of the four families include mothers who were separated from their children in late 2017, one Honduran and another Mexican, Mayorkas said, declining to detail their identities. He described them as children who were 3 years old at the time and "teenagers who have had to live without their parent during their most formative years"

Parents will return to the United States on humanitarian parole while authorities consider other longer-term forms of legal status, said Michelle Brane, executive director of the administration's Family Reunification Task Force. The children are already in the U.S.

Exactly how many families will reunite in the United States and in what order is linked to negotiations with the American Civil Liberties Union to settle a federal lawsuit in San Diego, but Mayorkas said there were more to come.

"We continue to work tirelessly to reunite many more children with their parents in the weeks and months ahead," Mayorkas told reporters ahead of the announcement. "We have a lot of work still to do, but I am

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proud of the progress we have made and the reunifications that we have helped to achieve this week.”

More than 5,000 children were separated from their parents during the Trump administration going back to July 1, 2017, many of them under a “zero-tolerance” policy to criminally prosecute any adult who entered the country illegally, according to court filings. The Biden administration is doing its own count going back to Trump’s inauguration in January 2017 and, according to Brane, believes more than 1,000 families remain separated.

While family separation under “zero-tolerance” ended in June 2018 under court order and shortly after Trump reversed course, Biden has repeatedly assailed the practice as an act of cruelty. An executive order on his first day in office pledged to reunite families that were still separated “to the greatest extent possible.”

The reunifications begin as the Biden administration confronts the third major increase in unaccompanied children arriving at the border in seven years. It has made strides moving children from grossly overcrowded Border Patrol facilities to U.S. Department of Health and Human Services shelters, which are more suited to longer-term stays until children are placed with sponsors in the United States, typically parents or close relatives.

The average stay for an unaccompanied child in Border Patrol custody has plummeted to about 20 hours, below the legal limit of 72 hours and down from 133 hours in late March, Mayorkas said. There are 677 unaccompanied children in Border Patrol custody, down from more than 5,700 in late March.

Health and Human Services opened 14 emergency intake centers, raising capacity to nearly 20,000 beds from 952 when the Federal Emergency Management Agency was dispatched March 13, Mayorkas said. About 400 asylum officers from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services have been assigned as case managers to speed the release of children to sponsors. As of Thursday, Health and Human Services had 22,557 children in its care.

3 killed, 27 hospitalized after boat capsizes off San Diego

By ELLIOT SPAGAT and CHRISTOPHER WEBER Associated Press

SAN DIEGO (AP) — A packed boat being used in a suspected human smuggling operation capsized Sunday and broke apart in powerful surf along the rocky San Diego coast, killing three people and injuring more than two dozen others, authorities said.

Lifeguards, the U.S. Coast Guard and other agencies responded around 10:30 a.m. following reports of an overturned vessel in the waves near the rugged peninsula of Point Loma, according to the San Diego Fire-Rescue Department.

The original call was for a handful of people overboard but as rescuers arrived in boats and jet skis they quickly realized “it was going to be a bigger situation with more people,” said San Diego Lifeguard Services Lt. Rick Romero.

“There are people in the water, drowning, getting sucked out the rip current there,” he said.

Seven people were pulled from the waves, including three who drowned, said Romero. One person was rescued from a cliff and 22 others managed to make it to shore on their own, he said.

“Once we arrived on scene, the boat had basically been broken apart,” Romero said. “Conditions were pretty rough: 5 to 6 feet of surf, windy, cold.”

A total of 27 people were transported to hospitals with “a wide variety of injuries” including hypothermia, Romero said. Most of the victims were able to walk themselves to ambulances, he said.

Officials said the group was overcrowded on a 40-foot (12-meter) cabin cruiser that is larger than the typical open-top wooden panga-style boats often used by smugglers to bring people illegally into the U.S. from Mexico.

“Every indication from our perspective was this was a smuggling vessel. We haven’t confirmed their nationality,” said Jeff Stephenson, a supervising agent with U.S. Border Patrol.

Under a pandemic-related order in effect since March 2020, migrants from Mexico and people from Central American countries of Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras picked up at the border are immediately expelled to Mexico without an opportunity to seek asylum. President Joe Biden has exempted unaccom-

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panied children from expulsions but the vast majority of adults are quickly sent back without facing any consequences.

Border Patrol agents went to hospitals to interview survivors of the capsizing, including the boat's captain who Stephenson described as a "suspected smuggler." Smugglers typically face federal charges and those being smuggled are usually deported.

San Diego Fire-Rescue Department spokesman Jose Ysea said when he arrived on scene near the Cabrillo National Monument there was a "large debris field" of splintered wood and other items in the choppy waters.

"In that area of Point Loma it's very rocky. It's likely the waves just kept pounding the boat, breaking it apart," he said.

There were life preservers on board, but it wasn't known how many or whether any passengers were wearing them, officials said.

Among the rescuers was an unnamed Navy sailor who was in the area with his family and jumped in the water to assist someone in an effort described by Romero as a "huge help."

Officials believed everyone on board was accounted for right away, but crews in boats and aircraft continued to search the area for several hours for other possible survivors, Ysea said.

On Thursday, border officials intercepted a panga-type vessel traveling without navigation lights 11 miles (18 kilometers) off the coast of Point Loma with 21 people on board. The crew took all 15 men and six women into custody. Agents determined all were Mexican citizens with no legal status to enter the U.S., according to a statement released by Customs and Border Protection. Two of the people on the boat, the suspected smugglers, will face charges, it said.

Border Patrol on Friday said law enforcement officials would be ramping up operations to disrupt maritime smuggling off the coast of San Diego this weekend.

As warmer weather comes to San Diego, there is a misperception that it will make illegal crossings safer or easier, the agency said in a statement.

In early March, an SUV packed with migrants collided with a tractor-trailer in the farming community of Holtville, California, about 125 miles (200 kilometers) east of San Diego. The crash killed 13 of 25 people inside 1997 Ford Expedition, including the driver, in one of the deadliest border-related crashes in U.S. history.

Latin America looks to space, despite limitations on ground

By CHRISTOPHER TORCHIA Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Mars missions, astronauts coming and going at the International Space Station, China's increasingly ambitious space program. Space-related news is flowing, and not just from the world's richest, biggest nations. Take Latin America.

On Feb. 17, the congress in Nicaragua, one of the region's poorest, most conflict-prone nations, approved a law creating a space agency. Costa Rica, known for relative growth and stability, did the same on Feb. 18, the day that the NASA rover Perseverance landed on Mars to look for signs of ancient life.

The potential benefits of space are tantalizing for many countries with scarce resources. Satellite technology, international partnerships, national pride and local development all beckon. Inevitably, critics suspect a boondoggle, a vanity project, a diversion from pressing problems on the ground.

"The truth is, the type of eyebrow raised regarding the announcement of a Nicaragua space program is similar to whenever an African country announces a space program. People always question why it makes sense, especially since these countries are battling several socioeconomic problems," Temidayo Oniosun, managing director of Space in Africa, wrote in an email to The Associated Press.

"First of all, most developing countries are primarily interested" in space technologies to address developmental challenges, Oniosun said. Some want a communications satellite "because it brings an excellent investment return and helps close the digital divide challenges. It is why you rarely see a developing country say they are doing space explorations (Moon, Mars, etc.) and stuff," he said.

The growth of the commercial space industry and prospects for global internet access from satellite con-

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stellations could increasingly help countries that lack coverage. Satellite data can also guide crop-growing, help industry and natural disaster management and track weather and other conditions linked to disease.

Nicaragua, whose government cracked down hard on the political opposition, isn't a newcomer to space ambitions. An old deal with China years ago for the deployment of a communications satellite is delayed. In 2017, Russia opened a facility in Nicaragua as part of a satellite navigation system; Nicaragua denied it was for spying on the region or the United States.

Nicaragua seems aware of skepticism about its new, military-run "National Secretariat for the Affairs of Outer Space, the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies."

"It's not how they have wanted to manipulate it," pro-government legislator Jenny Martínez said in congress, without elaborating on critics' comments. She said more than 50 countries have agencies dedicated to space matters. Nicaragua has been a member since 1994 of the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, which oversees treaties governing space law.

"I don't think Nicaragua needs to send something into space to be a part of the forum," said Carlos Arturo Vélez, an Ecuadorian lawyer studying at the International Institute of Air and Space Law at Leiden University in the Netherlands.

"Doing something wrong in outer space could affect any country in the world," for example if satellite debris crashes to Earth and causes damage and casualties, Vélez said.

Ecuador launched a satellite, Pegaso, in 2013 with fanfare and Chinese help, but it was damaged a month later. Some accounts said the cause was debris from an old Russian rocket.

Supporters of Costa Rica's space ambitions say its new agency can contribute to technologies used on Earth, as well as give Costa Rica a say in international space policy and agreements.

"A lot of people criticized the creation of NASA in 1958 when the United States was struggling with the worst economic recession of the postwar era," Franklin Chang Díaz, a Costa Rica-born U.S. citizen who became a NASA astronaut, said in a statement.

The incredible feat of putting a person on the moon, he said, "sometimes eclipses the most significant" thing about NASA's creation: The enormous technological and economic benefits that followed. Chang Díaz is the chairman and CEO of the Ad Astra Rocket Company, based in Texas.

Last week, California-based LeoLabs, Inc. announced that a new radar site was operational in Costa Rica to track objects in low Earth orbit and deliver data. The country's first satellite, Irazú, was launched with help from a SpaceX rocket in 2018 to monitor its tropical forests and climate change. It was partly funded with a Kickstarter campaign.

"It's not surprising" that Costa Rica passed a space agency law and hopefully Guatemala will do the same, said Katherinne Herrera, a biochemistry and microbiology student at the University of the Valley of Guatemala who heads a university club dedicated to space science and engineering.

A country needs "public policies that support space initiatives" and "help achieve different objectives in the area of research," Herrera wrote in an email.

Guatemala's first satellite, Quetzal-1, was deployed by Japan last year and was operated by a team from the university where Herrera is studying. The project unfolded in a country whose problems have compelled many citizens to look for a better life elsewhere.

Bolivia's space agency got caught up in the country's recent political turmoil. The new government accused its interim predecessor of hobbling operations at the agency, which was set up in 2010 by then-President Evo Morales.

Brazil's science and technology minister, Marcos Pontes, is a former astronaut who trained with NASA, and Chile is home to giant telescopes. Now Mexico and Argentina are leading efforts to form a regional space agency. The African Union also plans a space agency, to be based in Egypt. The European Space Agency, which uses a rocket launch site in French Guiana on South America's northeast coast, was established in 1975.

Mexico's Congress on Monday hosted an international panel on the outlook for a "new space race" and what it can do for health, education and other fields. Sen. Beatriz Paredes Rangel put it in existential

terms, saying it was time to stop dwelling on Earth-bound debates of the past.

"The future is in our hands and if we're not a part of it, we will disappear or waste the opportunity to play a relevant role in the construction of the future," she said.

EXPLAINER: COVID-19, far-right are top themes in Madrid vote

By ARITZ PARRA Associated Press

MADRID (AP) — Residents in Madrid, one of Europe's worst-hit regions in the pandemic, are voting Tuesday for a new regional assembly in an election that tests the depths of resistance to lockdown measures.

The early election was called by a conservative regional chief who is trying to cling to power after her center-right coalition crumbled. Isabel Díaz Ayuso has made a name for herself by resisting the strictest measures against the virus and criticizing the national government's handling of the pandemic.

Here's what's at stake during the May 4 vote:

WHY IS MADRID'S LOCAL ELECTION IMPORTANT?

By keeping Madrid's bars, restaurants, museums and concert halls open, Díaz Ayuso has invigorated support for her conservative Popular Party. She has also made inroads among voters recently seduced by the patriotic populism of Vox, an upstart far-right party.

Restaurateurs have come up with dishes and menus with her name and her portrait is ubiquitous on the city's billboards and on mail-in ballots. Díaz Ayuso says the election is about choosing between her promise of "freedom" and the left's "socialism" and "communism," in reference to her two rivals who are part of the ruling national coalition.

Her resistance to sweeping coronavirus closures has constantly pitched the 42-year-old conservative against Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez of the Socialists and the anti-austerity United We Can Party leader, Pablo Iglesias. Iglesias quit his Cabinet position last month to run against Díaz Ayuso in the regional vote.

WHAT DOES THE HEALTH DATA SAY?

The virus ravaged the Madrid region's nursing homes, especially last year. More than 5,000 elderly died before they could be taken in by a hospital system that buckled amid the first wave of infections.

Since then, keeping the country's economic engine up and running has become key goal for Díaz Ayuso, even if that meant having to add hospitals and more beds to treat COVID-19 patients.

Díaz Ayuso has firmly resisted curbing travel in and out of Madrid. Instead she has relied on mass screenings with coronavirus antigen tests and setting up large venues to speed up vaccinations.

As a result, the region that is home to 14% of the country's 47 million people has seen more than 19% of the country's 3.5 million infections and of a national confirmed death toll of over 78,000.

The 14-day accumulated caseload on Friday stood at 384 new infections per 100,000 residents, way beyond the national average of 229 new cases per 100,000.

WHAT DO THE POLLS SAY?

Although a few pollsters are predicting that an absolute majority of the regional assembly's seats will go to Díaz Ayuso's conservatives, most estimates hint at a win of over 40% of the vote. That would potentially double the number of Popular Party lawmakers since the last election in 2019.

The polls also place the far-right Vox party as the most likely choice for an alliance that would allow Díaz Ayuso to form a government.

A smaller possibility is that the center-left camp, fragmented into three parties, will clinch enough votes to form a governing alliance.

WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES?

Most political analysts agree that any solid victory for Díaz Ayuso will pave the way for more antagonism between the Socialist-led national government and the conservative party that has dominated Spain's

political landscape until recently.

It would also mean a rebuke of the recent strategy by the Popular Party's national leader, Pablo Casado, who has tried to distance his party from Vox's far-right ideology.

Whatever emerges from the ballot, the winner will have the challenge of putting Madrid back on its feet after a tough year with COVID-19 that included a winter blizzard which paralyzed the city for days.

The region, rampant with inequality, has been a stronghold of the Popular Party since 1991.

The left-wing parties want more investment to solve the social and economic crisis, especially propping up the region's public education and health systems following years of austerity and privatization.

Díaz Ayuso has promised to lower taxes to attract more companies and boost consumption, as well as building more than 6,000 units of social housing.

Russia lags behind others in its COVID-19 vaccination drive

By DARIA LITVINOVA Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — While at the Park House shopping mall in northern Moscow, Vladimir Makarov saw it was offering the coronavirus vaccine to customers, so he asked how long it would take.

"It turned out it's simple here — 10 minutes," he said of his experience last month.

But Makarov, like many Muscovites, still decided to put off getting the Sputnik V shot.

Russia boasted last year of being first in the world to authorize a coronavirus vaccine, but it now finds itself lagging in getting its population immunized. That has cast doubt on whether authorities will reach their ambitious goal of vaccinating more than 30 million of country's 146 million people by mid-June and nearly 69 million by August.

The vaccine reluctance comes as shots are readily available in the capital to anyone 18 or older at more than 200 state and private clinics, shopping malls, food courts, hospitals — even a theater.

As of mid-April, over 1 million of Moscow's 12.7 million residents, or about 8%, have received at least one shot, even though the campaign began in December.

That percentage is similar for Russia as a whole. Through April 27, only 12.1 million people have gotten at least one shot and only 7.7 million, or 5%, have been fully vaccinated. That puts Russia far behind the U.S., where 43% have gotten at least one shot, and the European Union with nearly 27%.

Data analyst Alexander Dragan, who tracks vaccinations across Russia, said last week the country was giving shots to 200,000-205,000 people a day. In order to hit the mid-June target, it needs to be nearly double that.

"We need to start vaccinating 370,000 people a day, like, beginning tomorrow," Dragan told The Associated Press.

To boost demand, Moscow officials began offering coupons worth 1,000 rubles (\$13) to those over 60 who get vaccinated — not a small sum for those receiving monthly pensions of about 20,000 rubles (\$260).

Still, it hasn't generated much enthusiasm. Some elderly Muscovites told AP it was difficult to register online for the coupons or find grocery stores that accepted them.

Other regions also are offering incentives. Authorities in Chukotka, across the Bering Strait from Alaska, promised seniors 2,000 rubles for getting vaccinated, while the neighboring Magadan region offered 1,000 rubles. A theater in St. Petersburg offered discounted tickets for those presenting a vaccination certificate.

Russia's lagging vaccination rates hinge on several factors, including supply. Russian drug makers have been slow to ramp up mass production, and there were shortages in March in many regions.

So far, only 28 million two-dose sets of all three vaccines available in Russia have been produced, with Sputnik V accounting for most of them, and only 17.4 million have been released into circulation after undergoing quality control.

Waiting lists for the shot remain long in places. In the Sverdlovsk region, the fifth most-populous in Russia, 178,000 people were on a wait list by mid-April, regional Deputy Health Minister Yekaterina Yutyayeva told AP.

On April 28, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said there are enough vaccines available in Russia, add-

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ing that demand was the defining factor in the country's vaccination rate.

Another factor in Russians' reluctance over Sputnik V was the fact that it was rolled out even as large-scale testing to ensure its safety and efficacy was still ongoing. But a study published in February in the British medical journal *The Lancet* said the vaccine appeared safe and highly effective against COVID-19, according to a trial involving about 20,000 people in Russia.

A poll in February by Russia's top independent pollster, the Levada Center, showed that only 30% of respondents were willing to get Sputnik V, one of three domestically produced vaccines available. The poll had a margin of error of 3.4 percentage points.

Dragan, the data analyst, says one possible explanation for the reluctance is the narrative from authorities that they have tamed the outbreak, even if that assessment might be premature.

With most virus restrictions lifted and government officials praising the Kremlin's pandemic response, few have motivation to get the shot, he said, citing an attitude of, "If the outbreak is over, why would I get vaccinated?"

Vasily Vlassov, a public health expert at the Higher School of Economics in Moscow, echoed Dragan's sentiment and also pointed to inconsistent signals from officials and media.

"Russians in 2020 were bombarded with contradictory messages — first about (the coronavirus) not being dangerous and being just a cold, then that it was a deadly infection," he told AP. "Then they were banned from leaving their homes."

Another narrative, he said, was that foreign vaccines were dangerous but Russian-produced ones were not. State TV reported adverse reactions linked to Western vaccines while celebrating Sputnik V's international success.

A proper media campaign promoting vaccinations didn't begin on state TV until late March, observers and news reports note. Videos on the Channel 1 national network featured celebrities and other public figures talking about their experience but didn't show them getting injected. President Vladimir Putin said he received the shot about the same time, but not on camera.

"Fruitful ground for conspiracy theorists," said Dragan, who also works in marketing.

Rumors about the alleged dangers of vaccines actually surged on social media in December, when Russia began administering the shots, and have continued steadily since then, said social anthropologist Alexandra Arkhipova.

The rumors combined with other factors — the pseudoscience on Russian TV, vaccine distribution problems and an uneven rollout of the promotional campaign — to hamper the immunization drive, Arkhipova told AP.

Vlassov, meanwhile, noted the outbreak in Russia is far from over, and there even are signs it is growing.

"Roughly the same number of people get infected every day in Russia now as last May, at the peak of the outbreak," he said, adding that twice as many people are dying every day than a year ago.

Government statistics say infections have stayed at about 8,000-9,000 per day nationwide, with 300-400 deaths recorded daily. But new cases have been steadily increasing in Moscow in the past month, exceeding 3,000 last week for the first time since January.

Infection rates are growing in seven regions, Deputy Prime Minister Tatyana Golikova said on April 23, without identifying them. She blamed "insufficient vaccination rates" in some places.

And yet, the abundance of vaccines in Moscow has attracted foreigners who can't get the shot at home. A group of Germans got their first jab at their hotel last month.

Uwe Keim, 46-year-old software developer from Stuttgart, told AP he believes "there are more vaccines available here in Russia than is demanded by the people here."

At Tehran garage, Iranian woman polishes cars and her dreams

By MOHAMMAD NASIRI Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — It's a men's-only club in the tangle of auto repair shops on the traffic-clogged streets of Iran's capital, Tehran. Among them, workers toil in dim garages, welding and wrenching, fab-

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ricating and painting.

That's until Maryam Roohani, 34, pops up from under a car's hood at a maintenance shop in northeastern Tehran, her dirt- and grease-stained uniform pulled over black jeans and long hair tucked into a baseball cap — which in her work, replaces Iran's compulsory Islamic headscarf for women, or hijab.

Buffing a blue BMW sedan in the shop until it shines, she couldn't be farther from the farms of her childhood. In the rural, tribal village of Agh Mazar near Iran's northeastern border with Turkmenistan, girls get married after hitting puberty and devote their lives to raising children.

"I have sort of broken taboos," Roohani said at the garage, where she carefully coats cars with attention-getting gleams and scrapes sludge from their engines. "I faced opposition when I chose this path."

The auto industry remains male-dominated around the world, let alone in the tradition-bound Islamic Republic. Still Iranian women, especially in the cities, have made inroads over the years. They now make up over half of all college graduates and a sizable part of the workforce.

A farmer's daughter, Roohani grew up laboring on the land like most other children in Agh Mazar. But unlike her five siblings, she had her eyes on her father's tractor, and developed an uncanny knack for driving it at an early age.

Even as she worked as a hairdresser and studied to become a makeup artist in Bojnurd, the provincial capital, a greater passion pulled her in: applying finishes to cars.

To the scorn of villagers and some family members, she traded used cars for extra cash and dreamed of working as a car polisher and detailer. Although relatives turned against her and cut off contact, her father had a more liberal attitude, supporting her despite the pushback and letting her postpone marriage to pursue her love of polishing.

There were no international car polish training programs she could find in the rolling wheat and barley fields of North Khorasan province, nor elsewhere in the country at the time. So she flew to Turkey, where she battled male skeptics to earn her car polishing certificate.

Armed with credentials, she set up shop in a small, rented space at a Tehran garage. Customers flocked to marvel at the area's first female car detailer, snapping photos and sharing footage on social media. Her Instagram account and online persona as Iran's "Miss Detailer" grew.

But her initial successes drew resentment from male colleagues — and at times, even sabotage.

Some tainted her polishing pads with acid to burn the paint of her customers' cars, she recounted. Others tampered with her machines and tore up the costly pads that she purchased with her life's savings, she said. Complaints to the garage's owner went nowhere and without hard evidence, the police couldn't help either.

Roohani wanted to cut and run after that. But her reputation had grabbed the attention of a prominent Tehran auto shop, which suddenly offered her a job. For the past few years, she has lived out her dream as a professional car polisher, detailer and washer.

Roohani even now trains and inspires other women to do the same despite the obstacles. Her online videos include her hard at work polishing a vintage Chevrolet Chevelle or smiling over the hood of a freshly detailed jet-black BMW, so smooth that a plastic cup slides down it.

"I got excited the first time I saw (Roohani) because in Iran, with its limitations for women, we are not usually trusted to do such jobs," said Farahnaz Deravi, one of Roohani's trainees.

Interest in auto repair work has exploded in Iran since former President Donald Trump withdrew from Tehran's landmark nuclear deal with world powers and imposed biting sanctions. To preserve its foreign currency, Iran banned the import of Asian and European-made cars, causing prices of the vehicles to quadruple. Iranians with the means to own expensive cars cherish them more than ever and pay hefty sums to maintain the status symbol.

Although Roohani's business is brisk, Iran's economy is struggling with a series of mounting crises, including international isolation and a raging pandemic. Roohani now imagines her future as a professional detailer abroad, and hopes to start her own business somewhere in Europe one day.

"The Iranian 'Miss Detailer' must shine out there," she said, smiling.

Apple's app store goes on trial in threat to 'walled garden'

By MICHAEL LIEDTKE AP Technology Writer

SAN RAMON, Calif. (AP) — On Monday, Apple faces one of its most serious legal threats in recent years: A trial that threatens to upend its iron control over its app store, which brings in billions of dollars each year while feeding more than 1.6 billion iPhones, iPads, and other devices.

The federal court case is being brought by Epic Games, maker of the popular video game Fortnite. Epic wants to topple the so-called "walled garden" of the app store, which Apple started building 13 years ago as part of a strategy masterminded by co-founder Steve Jobs.

Epic charges that Apple has transformed a once-tiny digital storefront into an illegal monopoly that squeezes mobile apps for a significant slice of their earnings. Apple takes a commission of 15% to 30% on purchases made within apps, including everything from digital items in games to subscriptions. Apple denies Epic's claims.

Apple's highly successful formula has helped turn the iPhone maker into one of the world's most profitable companies, one with a market value that now tops \$2.2 trillion.

Privately held Epic is puny by comparison, with an estimated market value of \$30 billion. Its aspirations to get bigger hinge in part on its plan to offer an alternative app store on the iPhone. The North Carolina company also wants to break free of Apple's commissions. Epic says it forked over hundreds of millions of dollars to Apple before it expelled Fortnite from its app store last August, after Epic added a payment system that bypassed Apple.

Epic then sued Apple, prompting a courtroom drama that could shed new light on Apple's management of its app store. Both Apple CEO Tim Cook and Epic CEO Tim Sweeney will testify in a Oakland, California federal courtroom that will be set up to allow for social distancing and will require masks at all times.

Neither side wanted a jury trial, leaving the decision to U.S. District Judge Yvonne Gonzalez Rogers, who already seems to know her ruling will probably be appealed, given the stakes in the case.

Much of the evidence will revolve around arcane but crucial arguments about market definitions.

Epic contends the iPhone has become so ingrained in society that the device and its ecosystem have turned into a monopoly Apple can exploit to unfairly enrich itself and thwart competition.

Apple claims it faces significant competition from various alternatives to video games on iPhones. For instance, it points out that about 2 billion other smartphones don't run iPhone software or work with its app store — primarily those relying on Google's Android system. Epic has filed a separate case against Google, accusing it of illegally gouging apps through its own app store for Android devices.

Apple will also depict Epic as a desperate company hungry for sources of revenue beyond the aging Fortnite. It claims Epic merely wants to freeload off an iPhone ecosystem in which Apple has invested more than \$100 billion over the past 15 years.

Estimates of Apple's app store revenue range from \$15 billion to \$18 billion annually. Apple disputes those estimates, although it hasn't publicly disclosed its own figures. Instead, it has emphasized that it doesn't collect a cent from 85% of the apps in its store.

The commissions it pockets, Apple says, are a reasonable way for the company to recoup its investment while financing an app review process it calls essential to preserving the security of apps and their users. About 40% of the roughly 100,000 apps submitted for review each week are rejected for some sort of problem, according to Kyle Andeer, Apple's chief compliance officer.

Epic will try to prove that Apple uses the security issue to disguise its true motivation — maintaining a monopoly that wrings more profits from app makers who can't afford not to be available on the iPhone.

But the smaller company may face an uphill battle. Last fall, the judge expressed some skepticism in court before denying Epic's request to reinstate Fortnite on Apple's app store pending the outcome of the trial. At that time, Gonzalez Rogers asserted that Epic's claims were "at the frontier edges of antitrust law."

The trial is expected to last most of May, with a decision to come in the ensuing weeks.

Russia, facing lags, turns to China to produce Sputnik shots

By HUIZHONG WU and DARIA LITVINOVA Associated Press

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP) — Russia is turning to multiple Chinese firms to manufacture the Sputnik V coronavirus vaccine in an effort to speed up production as demand soars for its shot.

Russia has announced three deals totaling 260 million doses with Chinese vaccine companies in recent weeks. It's a decision that could mean quicker access to a shot for countries in Latin America, the Middle East, and Africa that have ordered Russia's vaccine, as the U.S. and the European Union focus mainly on domestic vaccination needs.

Earlier criticism about Russia's vaccine have been largely quieted by data published in the British medical journal *The Lancet* that said large-scale testing showed it to be safe, with an efficacy rate of 91%.

Yet, experts have questioned whether Russia can fulfill its pledge to countries across the world. While pledging hundreds of millions of doses, it has only delivered a fraction.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov has said demand for Sputnik V significantly exceeds Russia's domestic production capacity.

To boost production, the Russian Direct Investment Fund, which bankrolled Sputnik V, has signed agreements with multiple drug makers in other countries, such as India, South Korea, Brazil, Serbia, Turkey, Italy and others. There are few indications, however, that manufacturers abroad, except for those in Belarus and Kazakhstan, have made any large amounts of the vaccine so far.

Airfinity, a London-based science analytics company, estimates Russia agreed to supply some 630 million doses of Sputnik V to over 100 countries, with only 11.5 million doses exported so far.

RDIF declined to disclose how many doses are going to other countries. Through April 27, less than 27 million two-dose sets of Sputnik V have been reportedly produced in Russia.

The Russian Direct Investment Fund, which has been in charge of international cooperation for Sputnik V, said in April it would produce 100 million doses in collaboration with Hualan Biological Bacterin Inc., in addition to an earlier deal announced in March for 60 million doses with Shenzhen Yuanxin Gene tech Co.

The two deals are in addition to a deal announced last November with Tibet Rhodiola Pharmaceutical Holding Co, which had paid \$9 million to manufacture and sell the Sputnik V vaccine in China. RDIF said in April the terms of the deal were for 100 million doses with a subsidiary company belonging to Tibet Rhodiola.

Russia is "very ambitious and unlikely to meet their full targets," said Rasmus Bech Hansen, founder and CEO of Airfinity. Working with China to produce Sputnik V could be a win-win situation for both Russia and China, he added.

In recent years, Chinese vaccine companies have turned from largely making products for use domestically to supplying the global market, with individual firms gaining WHO preapproval for specific vaccines — seen as a seal of quality. With the pandemic, Chinese vaccine companies have exported hundreds of millions of doses abroad.

Chinese vaccine makers have been quick to expand capacity and say they can meet China's domestic need by the end of the year.

"This is an acknowledgment of the Chinese vaccine manufacturers who can produce at volume," said Helen Chen, head of pharmaceuticals LEK Consulting, strategy consultancy firm in Shanghai, in an email.

However, none of the three Chinese companies have yet to start manufacturing Sputnik V.

Tibet Rhodiola started constructing a factory in Shanghai at the end of last year and expects production to start in September, the company said at an annual meeting for investors last month. Tibet Rhodiola's chairman Chen Dalin also said that after the successful technology transfer, they will start with an order of 80 million doses to sell back to Russia. An employee at the company declined to transfer a phone call request to the company's media department for comment.

The timeline for the newest deals are also unclear. Hualan Bio was among the 10 largest vaccines manufacturers in China in 2019. Phone calls to Hualan Bio went unanswered.

A spokeswoman for Shenzhen Yuanxing declined to say when the company will start production but said

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their order would not be for sale within China. RDIF had said the production will start this month.

In spite of the delays, Russia's vaccine diplomacy has made gains.

From the outset, Russia, the first country to approve a coronavirus vaccine, aimed to distribute it globally. Within weeks of giving Sputnik V regulatory approval, RDIF started actively marketing it abroad, announcing multiple deals to supply the shot to other countries. It is so far winning the "public relations" battle, analysts said in a new report examining Russia and China's vaccine diplomacy from the Economist Intelligence Unit.

"Russia has been able to build stronger diplomatic ties and in areas where it hasn't been able to," before, said Imogen Page-Jarrett, an analyst at EIU. "They have this window of opportunity while the US, E.U. and India are focusing on domestic and the rest of the world is crying out for a vaccine supply."

Mourners gathering Monday for funeral of Andrew Brown Jr.

ELIZABETH CITY, N.C. (AP) — Mourners will gather on Monday for the funeral of Andrew Brown Jr., a Black man shot and killed by deputies in North Carolina, with eulogists planning to celebrate his legacy and reflect on his life.

The invite-only service at noon in a church in Elizabeth City follows public viewings the previous day. The Rev. Al Sharpton will deliver the eulogy, and other speakers will include Brown's relatives as well as civil rights attorney Ben Crump, who's representing Brown's family, and the Rev. William Barber II, leader of the Poor People's campaign.

Brown, 42, was shot and killed on April 21 by deputies attempting to serve drug-related search and arrest warrants, sparking days of protests in the city in rural northeastern North Carolina. An independent autopsy commissioned by his family said that he was shot five times, including once in the back of the head.

Family members have said that Brown was a proud father of seven, who was known for entertaining relatives with his stories and jokes.

Brown's family asked Sharpton to deliver the eulogy because they felt the civil rights leader would properly honor his legacy. Sharpton recently delivered the eulogy for Daunte Wright, who was shot and killed by a police officer in Minnesota.

Sharpton told The Associated Press that he wants to both celebrate Brown's life and help call attention to larger problems with policing that need to be addressed.

"I would want to get across that this is a human being. And for us, it's part of a continual abuse of police power," he said.

US denies Iran claims of prisoner deal; UK plays it down

By MATTHEW LEE and ERIC TUCKER. Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The United States and Iran are in active talks over the release of prisoners, a person familiar with the discussions said Sunday as Washington denied a report by Iranian state-run television that deals had been struck.

Prisoner swaps between the U.S. and Iran are not uncommon and both countries in recent years have routinely sought the release of detainees. But any movement between the two countries is particularly sensitive as the Biden administration looks to restart nuclear talks. A 2015 atomic accord between the nations included prisoner exchanges.

The issue burst into public view with a report in Iran of a deal for the Islamic Republic to release U.S. and British prisoners in exchange for Tehran receiving billions of dollars. U.S. officials immediately denied the report, though a person with knowledge of the discussions who was not authorized to discuss them publicly said talks are active, with messages passed between intermediaries.

It wasn't immediately clear if the report represented a move by the hard-liners running the Iranian broadcaster to disrupt negotiations with the West amid talks in Vienna on Tehran's tattered nuclear deal.

Even after an initial American denial, an anchorwoman on Iranian state TV still repeated the announce-

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ment.

"Some sources say four Iranian prisoners are to be released and \$7 billion are to be received by Iran in exchange for releasing four American spies," the anchorwoman said. She described the claimed deal as coming due to congressional pressure on President Joe Biden and "his urgent need to show progress made in the Iran case."

But Iran's ambassador to the United Nations, Majid Takht-e Ravanchi, later denied the report of the prisoner swap, saying that it's "not confirmed," according to the Telegram channel of state-run IRNA news agency.

"Iran has always emphasized the comprehensive exchange of prisoners between the two countries," he said, without elaborating.

State TV did not identify the Iranians that Tehran sought to be freed.

State Department spokesman Ned Price immediately denied the Iranian state TV report.

"Reports that a prisoner swap deal has been reached are not true," Price said. "As we have said, we always raise the cases of Americans detained or missing in Iran. We will not stop until we are able to reunite them with their families."

Biden's chief of staff Ron Klain told CBS' "Face the Nation" that "unfortunately, that report is untrue. There is no agreement to release these four Americans."

"We're working very hard to get them released," Klain said. "We raise this with Iran and our interlocutors all the time, but so far there's no agreement."

Tehran holds four known Americans now in prison: Baquer and Siamak Namazi, environmentalist Morad Tahbaz and Iranian-American businessman Emad Shargi. Iran long has been accused of holding those with Western ties prisoners to be later used as bargaining chips in negotiations.

Despite the American denials, there have been signs that a deal on prisoners may be in the works based on Iranian officials' remarks in recent weeks.

Although no formal proposal for a swap has yet been presented to officials in Washington, let alone been signed off on by the White House, the specificity of the reports from Iran suggested that working-level consideration of a deal is at least underway.

State TV also quoted sources as saying a deal had been reached for the United Kingdom to pay 400 million pounds (\$552 million) to see the release of British-Iranian woman Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe.

British officials played down the report. The Foreign Office said the country continues "to explore options to resolve this 40-year-old case and we will not comment further as legal discussions are ongoing."

Aside from Zaghari-Ratcliffe's case, the U.K. and Iran also are negotiating a British debt to Tehran from before the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Last week, Zaghari-Ratcliffe was sentenced to an additional year in prison, her lawyer said, on charges of spreading "propaganda against the system" for participating in a protest in front of the Iranian Embassy in London in 2009.

That came after she completed a five-year prison sentence in the Islamic Republic after being convicted of plotting the overthrow of Iran's government, a charge that she, her supporters and rights groups deny.

While employed at the Thomson Reuters Foundation, the charitable arm of the news agency, she was taken into custody at the Tehran airport in April 2016 as she was returning home to Britain after visiting family.

Richard Ratcliffe, the husband of Zaghari-Ratcliffe, told The Associated Press he was not aware of any swap in the works.

"We haven't heard anything," he said. "Of course, we probably wouldn't, but my instinct is to be skeptical at present."

Earlier Sunday, U.K. Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab told the BBC that he believed Zaghari-Ratcliffe was being held "unlawfully" by Iran.

"I think she's been treated in the most abusive, tortuous way," Raab said. "I think it amounts to torture the way she's been treated and there is a very clear, unequivocal obligation on the Iranians to release her

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and all of those who are being held as leverage immediately and without condition.”

The announcement by state TV comes amid a wider power struggle between hard-liners and the relatively moderate government of Iranian President Hassan Rouhani. That conflict only has grown sharper as Iran approaches its June 18 presidential election.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, who pushed for the 2015 nuclear deal under Rouhani, has seen himself embroiled in a scandal over frank comments he made in a leaked recording. Zarif’s name has been floated as a possible candidate in the election, something that now seems unlikely as even Iran’s supreme leader has apparently criticized him.

Tehran is now negotiating with world powers over both it and the U.S. returning to the nuclear deal, which saw it limit its uranium enrichment in exchange for the lifting of economic sanctions. Iran has not held direct negotiations with the U.S. during the talks, however.

As the negotiations continue, Iranian diplomats there have offered encouraging comments, while state TV quoted anonymous sources striking maximalist positions contradicting them. That even saw Abbas Araghchi, the Iranian deputy foreign minister leading the talks, offer a rebuke on Twitter last week to Iranian state television’s English-language arm, Press TV.

“I don’t know who the ‘informed source’ of Press TV in Vienna is, but s/he is certainly not ‘informed,’” Araghchi wrote.

Mourners attend viewing for man shot by N. Carolina deputies

ELIZABETH CITY, N.C. (AP) — Hundreds of mourners paid their respects to a North Carolina man whose shooting at the hands of sheriff’s deputies has triggered a wave of protests.

Public viewings were held Sunday for Andrew Brown Jr. in Hertford and then in Elizabeth City, where Brown was shot by Pasquotank County sheriff’s deputies serving search and arrest warrants.

An autopsy conducted by Brown’s family found he was shot in the back of his head. His family and protesters are demanding release of police camera footage.

News outlets report that dozens of people attended the viewing in Hertford and hundreds attended the Elizabeth City viewing.

Terrell Green, Brown’s cousin, said he was playing cards and hanging out with Brown on April 21, a few hours before he was killed.

“I just feel like they’re trying to hide something,” Green said.

Protesters have gathered daily in Elizabeth City to demand accountability: Green said he has attended the protests as well.

“They declare a state of emergency, bring in all these officers from all over the place, set a curfew. We haven’t even broken a glass bottle,” he said. “We just want the truth.”

Mourner Kenyatta Swain said he also knew Brown and described him as “always pleasant, willing to help anyone. Just a good guy, always for the community.”

An invitation-only funeral is scheduled for Monday.

Police fatally shoot gunman who killed 2 at Wisconsin casino

By TODD RICHMOND Associated Press

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — Tribal leaders in northeastern Wisconsin were in shock Sunday hours after a gunman opened fire at their casino complex, killing two people and wounding another in what witnesses described as a hailstorm of bullets.

Brown County Sheriff’s Lt. Kevin Pawlak said the shooting at the Oneida Casino in Green Bay on Saturday night didn’t appear to be a random attack.

“He was targeting a specific victim who was not there, but he decided to still shoot some of the victim’s friends or co-workers, it appears,” Pawlak said at a news conference early Sunday. Police responding to the scene shot the gunman to death.

Oneida Chairman Tehassi Hill told WLUK-TV on Sunday that he was in “disbelief” and called the shoot-

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ing "scary." He said the tribe prohibits firearms on its properties but that "(mass shootings are) kind of a regular thing in this country."

Authorities have not released the identities of the gunman or his victims. The wounded person was being treated at a Milwaukee hospital, Pawlak said.

The attack happened around 7:30 p.m. in the restaurant at the casino complex operated by the Oneida Nation, whose reservation is located on the western side of Green Bay about 4 miles (6.4 kilometers) from Lambeau Field, home of the Green Bay Packers. The complex includes a casino, conference center, hotel and restaurant. Between 150 and 200 people work there, tribal leaders said.

Jawad Yatim, a witness, said he saw at least two people shot.

"I know for sure two, because it happened right next to us, literally right next to us," Yatim said. "But he was shooting pretty aggressively in the building, so I wouldn't doubt him hitting other people. We got the hell out of there. Thank God we're OK, but obviously we wish the best for everybody who's been shot."

Pawlak, the sheriff's department lieutenant, wasn't sure if the shooter was a former restaurant employee but said "it appears there's some relationship that had to do with employment."

"Whether or not they all worked there, we're still working on," he said.

Gambler Max Westphal said he was standing outside after being evacuated from the building for what he thought was a minor issue.

"All of a sudden we hear a massive flurry of gunshots — 20 to 30 gunshots for sure," Westphal told WBAY-TV. "We took off running towards the highway. ... There had to have been 50 cop cars that came by on the highway. It was honestly insane."

Pawlak said authorities called for a "tactical alert" after receiving the report of an active shooter. That "brings every agency from around the area to the casino, to the Radisson," he said of the large law enforcement presence.

Hill, the tribal chairman, told WLUK-TV that he feels security is tight in the casino but that the tribe may have to consider tougher protocols for the complex depending on investigators' findings.

Packers head coach Matt LaFleur tweeted condolences Sunday to everyone affected by the shooting.

"We have the smallest and closest community in professional sports," LaFleur said. "It's unfortunate anytime events like this occur & sad when it hits so close to home."

Gov. Tony Evers issued a statement late Saturday saying he was "devastated" to hear about the shooting.

"Our hearts, thoughts, and support go out to the Oneida Nation, the Ashwaubenon and Green Bay communities, and all those affected by this tragedy."

Evers, a Democrat, called a special legislative session on gun control in the fall of 2019. He proposed a so-called "red flag" law that would have allowed judges to take guns away from people deemed to be a danger, and a bill requiring a background check for almost all gun purchases. Republicans who control the Legislature refused to consider either measure.

Sen. Rob Cowles, a Republican who represents the Green Bay area, issued a statement saying the community has suffered a "traumatic event."

"My heart goes out to those impacted by the shooting, to the Oneida Nation and to all of Northeast Wisconsin as we continue coping with this senseless violence," he said. "Those victims and families of those killed and injured will remain in my thoughts and prayers."

The Oneida is one of 11 tribes that operate casinos in Wisconsin under agreements with the state called compacts. Essentially, the tribes pledge a percentage of their gaming revenue to the state in exchange for the exclusive right to offer casino gambling.

Tribal gaming in Wisconsin generated nearly \$1.3 billion in gross revenue in the 2018-2019 fiscal year but suffered deep losses in 2020 due to COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns.

Oneida leaders said at a news conference Sunday afternoon they were "devastated" by the shooting. They declined to discuss any specifics about the investigation but said law enforcement authorities planned to release identities of those involved on Monday morning. Hill reiterated that the tribe will conduct a security review at the casino complex.

"We'll try to get a measurement of how we can improve," he said. "(But) things like this are pretty hard

to stop.”

Behind Hill stood a placard that read “We are Oneida. People of peace.”

Yellen: Biden’s phased-in spending plan won’t fuel inflation

By MARCY GORDON AP Business Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden’s massive proposed spending on infrastructure, families and education will not fuel inflation because the plans would be phased in gradually over 10 years, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said Sunday.

New economic reports have portrayed a surging recovery from the recession unleashed by the coronavirus pandemic. Americans’ incomes soared in March by the most on record, boosted by \$1,400 federal stimulus checks, and the economy expanded at a vigorous annual rate of 6.4% in the first three months of the year, leading to concern over inflationary pressures.

Some economists, notably former Treasury Secretary Larry Summers, have warned that the Federal Reserve’s current ultra-low interest rates, along with the Biden administration’s proposed \$4 trillion in new spending, atop about \$5 trillion already approved by Congress, risk accelerating inflation.

Biden laid out his expansive plans in an address to Congress last week. They would expand the social safety net for children, increase taxes on the wealthy and fund projects that take an ambitious definition of infrastructure, with an eye to stabilizing the economy over the long term with middle-class jobs.

Addressing fears about inflation, Yellen said on NBC’s “Meet the Press” that the proposed spending “comes into effect once the economy is back on track.”

“It’s spread out quite evenly over eight to 10 years. So the boost to demand is moderate,” she said. “I don’t believe that inflation will be an issue, but if it becomes an issue, we have tools to address it.”

Yellen, a former Fed chair, said the central bank “has the tools to redress inflation should it arise.”

Fed Chairman Jay Powell has clearly indicated that he does not believe a sharp surge in prices is likely. Powell is betting that the Fed can keep interest rates low even as the economic recovery intensifies, and will not have to quickly raise rates to stop runaway inflation.

Yellen called the Biden plans “historic investments that we need to make our economy productive and fair.”

She noted that the administration is proposing that the spending be paid for by raising the tax rate on corporations above the current level of 21% and closing loopholes to encourage U.S. corporations to shift their income abroad to tax havens. People earning more than a million dollars annually would see a tax increase on their capital gains and dividends to 39.6%, the same rate as income for families making over \$400,000 a year before the 2017 Trump tax law.

The administration is pledging that under its plan, no family earning less than \$400,000 would pay a penny more in taxes.

Like the spending plans, the tax changes must be enacted by Congress, and the White House’s negotiations with Republican lawmakers, and some Democrats, who staunchly oppose tax increases promise to be strenuous.

“Anybody that says this is going to be just on the 1 percent or big corporations -- I mean, that’s just phony math,” Sen. John Barrasso, R-Wyo., said on ABC’s “This Week.”

Man United fans storm stadium, force game to be called off

By ROB HARRIS AP Global Soccer Writer

MANCHESTER, England (AP) — Anti-ownership protests by Manchester United fans forced the postponement of a Premier League game on Sunday against Liverpool after the stadium was stormed and thousands more supporters blocked access into Old Trafford as they demanded the Glazer family sell the club.

The unprecedented cancelation of a game in the world’s richest soccer league due to fan protests is the culmination of long-running anger against the American owners that began with a 2005 leveraged takeover that loaded debt onto the club. But the wrath of supporters has boiled over in the two weeks since the New York Stock Exchange listed club was part of the failed European Super League breakaway

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that collapsed amid a groundswell of condemnation.

Supporters gaining access to the pitch — before the two teams even traveled to Old Trafford — was even more startling given the strict coronavirus measures in place around the stadium that keep games closed to any spectators. One of the flares set off by fans was launched into the stands where the Sky Sports television team was already broadcasting more than two hours ahead of the scheduled kickoff.

Although the protest had been announced in advance, the stadium forecourt on Sir Matt Busby Way was still able to be accessed by thousands of fans — many chanting “We want Glazers out” as flares were set off.

The crowd was only dispersed after baton-wielding police and officers on horseback charged fans as clashes erupted under a shower of flying glass bottles about 20 minutes before the game was due to have started. Two police officers were injured and one required emergency treatment for a “significant slash wound to his face” after being attacked with a bottle, the Manchester force said.

United said the game was postponed “due to safety and security considerations around the protest” after discussions with police, authorities and the league.

“Our fans are passionate about Manchester United, and we completely acknowledge the right to free expression and peaceful protest,” United said in a statement. “However, we regret the disruption to the team and actions which put other fans, staff, and the police in danger. We thank the police for their support and will assist them in any subsequent investigations.”

The Premier League, which has yet to announce a new date for the match, expressed concern about the disorder. Protesters had also gathered outside the United team hotel in central Manchester.

“The security and safety of everyone at Old Trafford remains of paramount importance,” the Premier League said in a statement. “We understand and respect the strength of feeling but condemn all acts of violence, criminal damage and trespass, especially given the associated COVID-19 breaches. Fans have many channels by which to make their views known, but the actions of a minority seen today have no justification.

“We sympathize with the police and stewards who had to deal with a dangerous situation that should have no place in football.”

Supporters wore green-and-gold scarves and also set off flares in the colors of the club’s 1878 formation. It was a club without any debt until the Glazers arrived and the latest half-year accounts showed it had soared 16% year-on-year to 455.5 million pounds (around \$630 million). Payments on interest, debt and dividends to the Glazers have cost United more than 1 billion pounds.

The Glazers, who also own the NFL’s Tampa Bay Buccaneers, have declined to engage with fans or media since buying United in 2005.

Former Manchester United defender Gary Neville, who was inside Old Trafford preparing to commentate on the game for Sky Sports, called on the Glazers to put the club up for sale.

“There’s huge discontent, not just across Manchester United fans, but I think for football fans up and down the country and I think they are just saying enough is enough,” Neville said. “The Glazer family have been resilient and stubborn for many, many years. I think they are struggling to meet the financial demands that this club needs and have done for some time.

“This stadium, if you go behind the scenes, is rusty and rotting. The training ground is probably not even in the top five in this country.”

Although co-owner Joel Glazer pledged on the club website two weeks ago that he was “committed to rebuilding trust with our fans,” there is no sign of that happening yet.

“They have never met the fans once,” 33-year-old fan Jack Evans said. “It’s time for them to go.”

United and Liverpool were among six Premier League clubs that tried to form an exclusive European Super League along with three clubs each from Spain and Italy. Widespread opposition quickly ended the project, with all six English teams backing out within 48 hours of the announcement.

The “Big Six” clubs have been in damage control since, offering various forms of apologies and statements of regret, while fans long frustrated with billionaire owners have called for wholesale changes.

“This could be an important moment to change football for the better,” Greater Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham said. “We should all condemn violence of any kind and keep the focus on the behavior of those

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at the top of the game.”

United fans’ protests against the Glazers have been sporadic as United became the record 20-time champions of England. While they erupted in 2010, the dissent lessened as Alex Ferguson delivered more trophies.

But the last Premier League title was won as he retired in 2013 and since then neighbor Manchester City has become the dominant force in England — funded by an owner in Sheikh Mansour who is concerned about prestige and image for Abu Dhabi rather than draining cash from the club.

If United had lost the planned game against Liverpool, City would have won the Premier League title for the third time in four seasons.

House runoff in Texas set between GOP’s Wright, Ellzey

ARLINGTON, Texas (AP) — A runoff for a U.S. House seat in Texas is set between Republican Susan Wright, whose husband was the first member of Congress to die after being diagnosed with COVID-19, and Republican Jake Ellzey.

Democrat Jana Lynne Sanchez was narrowly locked out of the runoff in Texas’ 6th Congressional District, which has long been GOP territory. With nearly all votes counted, Sanchez had trailed Ellzey by 354 votes. She said in a statement Sunday that her campaign “came up short.”

“Democrats have come a long way toward competing in Texas but we still have a long way to go,” Sanchez said in a statement.

Ellzey is a state lawmaker who narrowly lost the GOP nomination for the seat in 2018 and carried the backing of former Texas Gov. Rick Perry. Susan Wright had already been seen as a favorite in a crowded race to fill the seat of her late husband, who died in February after being diagnosed with COVID-19. He was 67.

The date of the runoff has not yet been set.

Wright will enter the runoff with the backing of former President Donald Trump, who waited until just days before the election to endorse Wright.

US to launch trade talks on COVID-19 vaccine distribution

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

WILMINGTON, Del. (AP) — The U.S. top trade negotiator will begin talks with the World Trade Organization on ways to overcome intellectual property issues that are keeping critically needed COVID-19 vaccines from being more widely distributed worldwide, two White House officials said Sunday.

The White House has been under pressure from lawmakers at home and governments abroad to join an effort to waive patent rules for the vaccines so that poorer countries can begin to produce their own generic versions of the shots to vaccinate their populations.

The U.S. has been criticized for focusing first on vaccinating Americans, particularly as its vaccine supply begins to outpace demand and doses approved for use elsewhere in the world but not in the U.S. sit idle.

U.S. Trade Representative Katherine Tai will be starting talks with the trade organization “on how we can get this vaccine more widely distributed, more widely licensed, more widely shared,” said White House chief of staff Ron Klain.

Klain and national security adviser Jake Sullivan said the administration will have more to say on the matter in the coming days.

Sullivan said the administration believes pharmaceutical companies “should be supplying at scale and at cost to the entire world so that there is no barrier to everyone getting vaccinated.”

Klain said the U.S. has sent India enough of the raw materials it needs to make 20 million vaccine doses immediately. India is battling a deadly new surge in coronavirus infections and deaths.

Tai’s office did not respond Sunday to an emailed request for additional detail after Klain’s and Sullivan’s comments.

Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., who is among a group of Democratic senators who are pressuring the White

House on the issue, said the situation is "morally objectionable."

Sanders said that, when millions of lives are at stake, the drug companies must be told to "allow other countries to have these intellectual property rights so that they can produce the vaccines that are desperately needed in poor countries."

"There is something morally objectionable about rich countries being able to get that vaccine, and yet millions and billions of people in poor countries are unable to afford it," Sanders said.

Klain appeared on CBS' "Face the Nation," Sullivan on ABC's "This Week" and Sanders on NBC's "Meet the Press."

High jinx: New Portuguese bridge not for the faint-hearted

AROUCA, Portugal (AP) — It's probably best if you gird yourself before you look down from the Arouca Bridge.

The narrow footbridge suspended across a river canyon in northern Portugal claims to be the world's longest pedestrian bridge and was officially inaugurated Sunday.

The Arouca Bridge offers a half-kilometer (almost 1,700-foot) walk across its span, along a metal walkway suspended from cables. Some 175 meters (574 feet) below, the Paiva River flows through a waterfall.

Arouca lies 300 kilometers (186 miles) north of Lisbon, the Portuguese capital. Local residents got a first walk on the bridge last week. Many were thrilled — even as some admitted it was a little unnerving to feel so high up and exposed.

Guinness World Records says on its website that the world's longest suspension bridge for pedestrians is Japan's Kokonoe Yume Bridge, which opened in 2006 and spans 390 meters (1,280 feet). But the Charles Kuonen Suspension Bridge, which opened in the Swiss Alps in 2017, challenges that mark at 494 meters (1,621 feet).

The Arouca Bridge cost 2.3 million euros (\$2.8 million) to build. Children under age 6 are not allowed on it and all visits will be accompanied by guides.

Adviser suggests Biden still wears mask outside out of habit

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

WILMINGTON, Del. (AP) — One of President Joe Biden's top White House advisers suggested Sunday that he's still wearing a mask outdoors out of habit although the latest public health guidance says he doesn't need it.

Questioned about Biden's practice, senior adviser Anita Dunn told CNN's "State of the Union" that she realized that she was also still wearing her mask outdoors even after the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said fully vaccinated people like her and Biden can stop wearing masks outside when they're alone or not among strangers.

"I myself found that I was still wearing my mask outdoors this week, because it has become such a matter of habit," Dunn said. "I think the president takes the CDC guidelines very seriously. And he's always taken his role as sending a signal to follow the science very seriously, as well."

Biden wore a mask outdoors several times last week as he approached microphones to give speeches, including an appearance on the White House lawn last Tuesday to discuss the CDC's relaxed mask guidance.

Asked afterward about the message he was sending by wearing a mask outside as he stood alone, Biden replied: "By watching me take it off and not put it back on until I get inside."

The CDC recently said Americans fully vaccinated against COVID-19 don't need to cover their faces anymore unless they're in a large crowd of strangers.

Some public health experts have questioned Biden's continued mask-wearing outdoors.

Dunn said some extra precautions are taken with Biden since he is president. She urged people to follow CDC guidelines and to get fully vaccinated because that will mean they can go mask-free outside as summer approaches.

Wyoming backs coal with \$1.2M threat to sue other states

By MEAD GRUVER Associated Press

CHEYENNE, Wyo. (AP) — While most states pursue ways to boost renewable energy, Wyoming is doing the opposite with a new program aimed at propping up the dwindling coal industry by suing other states that block exports of Wyoming coal and cause Wyoming coal-fired power plants to shut down.

The law signed April 6 by Republican Gov. Mark Gordon creates a \$1.2 million fund for an initiative that marks the latest attempt by state leaders to help coal in the state that accounts for the bulk of U.S. coal production, which is down by half since 2008.

“Wyoming is sending a message that it is prepared to bring litigation to protect her interests,” Gordon spokesman Michael Pearlman said of the fund signed into law April 6.

The law puts West Coast states and Colorado on notice — all seek to get a large share of their electricity from renewables but still get juice from aging Wyoming coal-fired power plants. The approach may run into legal troubles, though, according to one constitutional expert.

Lawsuits between states aren’t unusual and often involve natural resources, such as water rights. Such cases can go directly to the U.S. Supreme Court, if the justices agree to hear them.

Last year, Wyoming and Montana — another major coal state — asked the Supreme Court to override a decision by Washington state to deny a permit to build a coal export dock on the Columbia River. The interstate lawsuit followed years of unsuccessful attempts by the dock’s developer, Utah-based Lighthouse Resources, to contest the permit denial in federal court.

The Supreme Court hasn’t said yet if it will hear the case but the new legal fund approved resoundingly by the Wyoming Legislature and overseen by Gordon could help cover the cost of that litigation, Pearlman said.

All the while, prospects for Wyoming’s coal industry are as dim as ever, even after then-President Donald Trump rolled back regulations on mining and burning the fossil fuel.

Wyoming coal production, which accounts for about 40% of the nation’s total, has been in decline as utilities switch to gas, which is cheaper to burn to generate electricity. Solar and wind power also are on the rise as coal’s share of the U.S. power market shrinks from about half in the early 2000s to less than 20% now.

Hope that other countries will use more U.S. coal, meanwhile, are fading fast. Lighthouse Resources filed for bankruptcy in December, further setting back the coal dock proposal.

So can state vs. state lawsuits help the coal industry?

“We’re supportive of all the efforts of the state right now to protect and defend the industry,” Wyoming Mining Association Executive Director Travis Deti said.

Wyoming could waste a lot of money trying to convince courts to help coal, countered University of Maryland environmental law professor Robert Percival.

“I don’t think they have a legal leg to stand on,” Percival said.

The Constitution’s Commerce Clause prohibits states from barring goods and services based on their state of origin. States are free, however, to regulate or outright prohibit certain goods and services — coal and coal-fired electricity included — as long as they don’t intentionally target other states, Percival said.

Who might be targets of future Wyoming coal litigation isn’t yet known. Pearlman declined to speculate, saying Gordon and Attorney General Bridget Hill would need to study their chances of success, but they could include West Coast states including, again, Washington.

Portland, Oregon-based utility PacifiCorp plans to reduce its coal-fired generation by two-thirds by 2030, partly by retiring generators at two southwestern Wyoming power plants starting in 2023, as much as five years sooner than envisioned just a few years ago. The utility serves four states with renewable energy standards or goals — California, Oregon, Utah and Washington — and two that don’t: Idaho and Wyoming.

PacifiCorp has been meeting renewable standards by getting electricity from the lowest cost and least risky sources like it has always done, so the standards haven’t factored into its decisions to retire coal-fired

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power, company spokesman David Eskelsen said.

PacifiCorp has no position on the legal fund but the Wyoming Rural Electric Association supports the message it sends to states such as Colorado, which has renewable energy standards and gets coal-fired electricity from southeastern Wyoming, Executive Director Shawn Taylor said.

"It's just kind of part and parcel of folks feeling that states and state agencies and entities outside Wyoming are having more of an impact on our energy resources than we do," Taylor said.

The coal litigation fund followed a 2020 bill that established a \$1 million fund to promote Wyoming coal. Wyoming is paying a nonprofit, the Energy Policy Network, \$250,000 a year from the fund to contest plans in other states to shut down coal-fired power.

"I will not waver in my efforts to protect our industries, particularly our coal industry. The use of coal is under assault from all directions. And we have stood firm in our support of it throughout," Gordon said in his state of the state address in March.

He called for Wyoming to be carbon negative — capturing more of the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide than it emits — by investing in technology and infrastructure to trap carbon dioxide at power plants and keep the gas out of the atmosphere.

Carbon capture remains economically unproven on a scale needed to meaningfully reduce current carbon dioxide emissions. Wyoming has been funding research into the technology, however, including \$10 million in a just-approved bill that slashed Wyoming's budget by over 10% amid weak revenue from oil, gas and coal extraction.

Connie Wilbert, director of the Sierra Club's Wyoming chapter, said the state should put its tight budget to more productive use than coal lawsuits.

"Coal is on the way out," Wilbert said. "The sooner our elected leadership acknowledges that and starts looking for things the state can do to actually help us through the transition, the better."

UK rushes to increase aid to India's health care system

By DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Britain rushed to increase aid for India's teetering health care system on Sunday, promising more ventilators and expert advice as doctors grapple with a surge in coronavirus infections that is killing thousands of people a day.

The U.K. government said it will send an additional 1,000 ventilators to India. In addition, England's National Health Service, which has battled one of the worst COVID-19 outbreaks in Europe, is creating an advisory group to share its expertise with Indian authorities.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson plans a video meeting with his Indian counterpart, Narendra Modi, on Tuesday to discuss further cooperation between the two countries, the U.K. government said in statement.

India recorded 392,488 new infections, down from a high of more than 400,000 in the previous 24 hours. It also reported 3,689 deaths, raising overall virus fatalities to 215,542. Experts believe both figures are undercounts.

The new round of government aid comes in addition to the 200 ventilators, 495 oxygen concentrators and three oxygen generation units the U.K. said it was sending to India last week.

Private fundraising efforts are also taking place throughout Britain, where 1.4 million people have Indian roots.

"The terrible images we have seen in India in recent weeks are all the more powerful because of the close and enduring connection between the people of the U.K. and India," Johnson said.

"I am deeply moved by the surge of support the British people have provided to the people of India and am pleased the U.K. government has been able to play our part in providing life-saving assistance."

At the U.K.'s largest Hindu temple, volunteers are trying to raise 500,000 pounds (\$690,000) by racking up 7,600 kilometers (4,722 miles) on stationary bikes — roughly the distance from London to Delhi — in 48 hours.

The British Asian Trust, a charity founded by Prince Charles, raised 1.5 million pounds to buy oxygen

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concentrators, which extract oxygen from the air. Sikh group Khalsa Aid raised money to buy 200 boxes of oxygen concentrators that Virgin Atlantic flew to Delhi free of charge on Saturday.

US general: Afghan forces could face 'bad possible outcomes'

By ROBERT BURNS AP National Security Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Afghan government forces face an uncertain future and, in a worst-case scenario, some "bad possible outcomes" against Taliban insurgents as the withdrawal of American and coalition troops accelerates in the coming weeks, the top U.S. military officer said Sunday.

Gen. Mark Milley described the Afghan military and police as "reasonably well equipped, reasonably well trained, reasonably well led." He cited Afghan troops' years of experience against a resilient insurgency, but he declined to say they are fully ready to stand up to the Taliban without direct international backing during a potential Taliban offensive.

The chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, a veteran of the war in Afghanistan, spoke in an interview with Associated Press and CNN reporters flying with him from Hawaii to Washington just hours after the formal kickoff of the withdrawal.

Asked whether he believes the Afghan forces can hold up under increased strain, Milley was noncommittal.

"Your question: The Afghan army, do they stay together and remain a cohesive fighting force or do they fall apart? I think there's a range of scenarios here, a range of outcomes, a range of possibilities," he said. "On the one hand you get some really dramatic, bad possible outcomes. On the other hand, you get a military that stays together and a government that stays together."

"Which one of these options obtains and becomes reality at the end of the day? We frankly don't know yet. We have to wait and see how things develop over the summer."

He said there is "at least still the possibility" of a negotiated political settlement between the government in Kabul and the Taliban. This, he said, would avoid the "massive civil war" that some fear could happen.

Within about two months of the U.S.-led invasion in October 2001, the country's Taliban rulers were removed from power and militarily defeated. But within several years, they had regrouped, rearmed and reasserted themselves, taking advantage of sanctuary in neighboring Pakistan. In recent years the Taliban achieved a battlefield stalemate with U.S.-supported Afghan government forces.

Milley noted that the Afghan military has operated in recent years with less reliance on U.S. and coalition advisers. Among the key exceptions are special operations commandos and the defense ministry.

"But for the most part, there's no advisers out there anyway," he said in one of his few interviews since President Joe Biden announced April 14 that all U.S. military personnel will withdraw this summer. Milley said the commonly cited total of 2,500 troops rises to 3,300 if special operations forces are counted. "We're taking it down to zero," he said.

After the withdrawal is over, the United States will provide unspecified "capabilities" to the Afghan military from other locations, Milley said. He did not elaborate on this, but other officials have said those "over-the-horizon" arrangements for supporting the Afghan military have yet to be solidified.

Milley said it is possible that the withdrawal will be finished before the Sept. 11 target date announced by the White House. He said that date reflects the estimated maximum amount of time needed to move all U.S. and coalition troops, as well as large amounts of equipment, out of the country.

"I don't want to put precise dates on it," he said.

Over 90 German police injured in May Day riots

BERLIN (AP) — At least 93 police officers were injured and 354 protesters were detained after traditional May Day rallies in Berlin turned violent, the city's top security official said Sunday.

More than 20 different rallies took place in the German capital on Saturday and the vast majority of them were peaceful. However, a leftist march of 8,000 people through the city's Neukoelln and Kreuzberg neighborhood, which has seen clashes in past decades, turned violent. Protesters threw bottles and rocks at officers, and burned garbage cans and wooden pallets in the streets.

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"Violence against police officers and a blind, destructive rage has nothing to do with political protest," Berlin state interior minister Andreas Geisel said.

Geisel condemned the throwing of bottles and rocks, the burning barricades on the streets and especially the violence toward police.

"The high number of injured officer leaves me stunned. I wish all of those who were injured in the line of duty a quick recovery," he said.

There's a nightly curfew in most parts of Germany because of the high number of coronavirus infections, but political protests and religious gatherings are exempt from the curfew.

In France, May Day marches in Paris and the southern city of Lyon were also marred by scattered violence, with riot officers targeted by small groups of violent demonstrators who tossed projectiles and trash bins. Police made 56 arrests — 46 of them in Paris, the Interior Ministry said Sunday. It said six officers suffered injuries, three of them in Paris.

The CGT labor union that organized the main Paris march said violent demonstrators also targeted its marchers at the end of the rally, showering them with projectiles, blows and homophobic, sexist and racist insults. The union said 21 of its participants were injured, four seriously.

Virus, technology, unrest make stressful year for teachers

By ACACIA CORONADO and KANTELE FRANKO Associated Press

MANOR, Texas (AP) — The school bell rings, and about a dozen masked first-graders turn to the monitor and wave hello to their classmates — each a tiny Zoom square representing the other half of the class. The teacher — standing behind a plexiglass wall — shares her screen, grabs a pointer, juggles a laptop, projector, marker and board and embarks on another act of her one-woman show.

Ana Saul Romero has seen many changes in teaching methods, testing and technology during her four decades as a teacher. But the past year packed in a lifetime's worth of tumult.

"It's difficult for me — I am a baby boomer — it is difficult with the technology, and I have learned more, but it is not enough, it is never enough," Romero said as she reminisced on the personal connections she made with students when she could see them every day in-person.

This spring marks a year since the coronavirus pandemic shut down schools across the U.S., forcing many students, parents and teachers into virtual classrooms. As scientists learned more about the virus and states eased restrictions on gathering, some students returned to school while others kept learning at home — but they all had to be taught. Many classrooms became a simultaneous combination of virtual and in-person instruction, like Romero's class in the Austin suburb of Manor.

There was a learning curve for teachers, and inequalities in Wi-Fi and technology access added to the stresses, as did social and political unrest that gripped the nation over that period. Now districts everywhere are grappling with exhausted educators wondering if this academic year will be their last.

Educators have coped with their own personal and family impacts of the pandemic, while trying to support students dealing with academic struggles, food insecurity, trauma and social isolation, said Antoinette Miranda, an Ohio State University professor of school psychology who is also on her state's school board and married to a high school teacher.

"We talk a lot about the stress on students," Miranda said, "but I think there's a tremendous amount of stress on teachers."

As they raised health and safety concerns about resuming in-person classes, some people blamed them for holding up reopenings that could ease pressure on parents.

"I think there's kind of a backlash against teachers," Miranda said. "But I think there's also a renewed respect for teachers — you know, especially parents that had to start teaching their kids at home."

Andre Spencer, superintendent of Manor Independent School District where Romero works, said the district's pandemic response has focused on students and teachers. It spent millions to ensure every student and teacher has the technology necessary for virtual learning, including distributing mobile Wi-Fi hotspots for those without internet access. He also gathered a team to examine the resources and compensation

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his district provides teachers to ensure it stays competitive with others in the growing Austin area.

"I would say to teachers: 'Don't beat yourselves up too bad because this was a shift for everyone and it was a shift in a direction that none of us were expecting,'" Spencer said.

First-year teacher Cindy Hipps, Romero's mentee and teaching partner, said she was told she "was introduced to the ring of fire of teaching."

"I feel like a superwoman now, like I can take on anything," she added.

Even before this school year began, district leaders worried about shortages of instructors, support staff and substitutes. More than a quarter of respondents to one poll by the nation's largest teachers union, the National Education Association, felt the pandemic increased the likelihood they would retire early or leave the profession. And some already did.

With only piecemeal data from districts and states, it's tough to tell how the pandemic impacted turnover nationwide. Some places report more educators retiring, quitting or taking extended absences, but others say the exodus they worried about didn't happen.

American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten anticipates a big uptick in retirements in the coming months, after a year of perpetual uncertainty and change and more strain for educators than she's ever seen.

"They love teaching. They know how important it is to engage kids. But this year has been unsustainable," especially for educators simultaneously teaching students in person and online, Weingarten said.

The union started providing a free trauma counseling program for members, including for those who had COVID-19 or were traumatized by it.

National conversations around racial injustice, the presidential election and the Capitol riot impacted the job too, especially for teachers of color.

Travis Bristol, a University of California, Berkeley professor who researches teacher workplace experiences and focuses on educators of color, recommends that schools intentionally set up opportunities for employees to talk about what they have been through and grieve if needed. Teachers who are supported in addressing their own challenges, stresses and mental health concerns from the past year will be better positioned to help students do the same, he said.

To boost retention and address challenges weighing on educators, some districts are considering spending some of their federal COVID-19 relief funding on professional development, equipping and training teachers for virtual instruction, and increasing mental and emotional health support for teachers and students. They can also use the money for expenses such as providing extra compensation for pandemic-related duties or recruiting to address staffing shortages.

Romero, the teacher in Texas, was considering retiring. But even after such a challenging year, at her core, teaching is who she is.

"Let's just hope that in September, if it is not gone, at least we will be able to do a better job," Romero said. "We will have the experience of an entire year of trying to be above the water, but we will make it — that's what educators do. We try and we fail and we get up and we shake it off and we do it again."

'Black America's attorney general' seems to be everywhere

By AARON MORRISON and JOHN SEEWER Associated Press

Ben Crump, the Rev. Al Sharpton says, is "Black America's attorney general."

In less than a decade, the Florida-based attorney has become the voice for the families of Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, Breonna Taylor and George Floyd -- Black people whose deaths at the hands of police and vigilantes sparked a movement.

He has won multimillion-dollar settlements in police brutality cases. He's pushed cities to ban no-knock warrants. He has told a congressional committee that reform is needed because "it's become painfully obvious we have two systems of justice; one for white Americans and one for Black Americans."

And he's stood with Black farmers taking on an agribusiness giant, and families exposed to lead-contaminated water in Flint, Michigan.

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"He's a real believer in what he's doing. He has taken the attacks. He has taken the cases that others wouldn't take," Sharpton said, adding, "People can go to him. The reason I trust him is because he has never misled me. Good or bad, he'll tell me the truth about a client."

These days, he seems to be everywhere. In April, he joined with George Floyd's family in celebrating the conviction of ex-cop Derek Chauvin. Then he was among the mourners at the funeral for Daunte Wright, who was shot during a traffic stop in suburban Minneapolis in the week leading up to Chauvin's verdict — a juxtaposition he finds incredible.

"If ever there was a time for police to be on their best behavior, if ever there was a time for them to use the greatest standard of care, if ever there was a time for them to de-escalate, it was during this trial, which I believe was one of the most consequential police (and) civil rights cases in our history," Crump told The Associated Press.

After Wright's funeral, he was back in Florida to call for a federal investigation of a deputy who fatally shot two Black teenagers. And he began this past week demanding that police in North Carolina be more transparent after deputies fatally shot a Black man outside of his house.

Critics see him as an opportunist who never fails to show up amid another tragedy. But those who know Crump say he's been fighting for fairness long before his name was in headlines.

"Where there's injustice, that's where he wants to be," said Ronald Haley, a Louisiana attorney, who's among a wide network of lawyers Crump works with on lawsuits. "He understands he's needed everywhere, but he also understands he can't be everywhere."

Crump, 51, is a tireless worker who mixes Southern charm, a talent for attracting media attention to his cases and a firm belief that racism afflicts the nation, and the courts are the place to take it on.

He has an uncanny way of making his clients feel like kin, they say.

"He has never missed a Thanksgiving to check in on me, he calls on Christmas," said Allisa Findley, who first met Crump three days after her brother, Botham Jean, was fatally shot in his apartment by a white Dallas police officer who mistook the Black man's apartment for her own.

"Even the little things, he makes time for it, when there are no cameras rolling," she said. "He does feel like family. I consider Ben family."

Terrence Floyd, the 42-year-old brother of George Floyd, said Crump's attention and care for his family over the last year has bonded them beyond the attorney-client relationship.

"It feels like it's more family-based than business," he said. "After a while, I went from calling him 'Mr. Crump' to calling him 'Unc,' like he was one of my uncles."

Crump keeps up a dizzying schedule that takes him all over, but he makes sure he's home for Sunday services at Bethel Missionary Baptist Church. He lives in Tallahassee with his wife and their 8-year-old daughter, Brooklyn; he also helped raise two cousins and became their legal guardian.

"I look at my daughter," Crump said, "I look in her eyes, and then I look in the eyes of my nieces and nephews, and my little cousins — all these little Black and brown children. You see so much hope, so much optimism in their eyes. We've got to give them a better world."

He added: "What I'm trying to do, as much as I can, even sometimes singlehandedly, is increase the value of Black life."

Crump's path to becoming a lawyer and advocate began while growing up in Lumberton, North Carolina, where he was the oldest of nine siblings and step-siblings.

In his book "Open Season: Legalized Genocide of Colored People," he described learning in elementary school that a white classmate's weekly allowance was as much as what his mother made in a week working two jobs at a shoe factory and a hotel laundry.

"I wanted to understand why people on the white side of the tracks had it so good and Black people on our side of the tracks had it so bad," he wrote.

He often recounts how he learned about the world by reading the newspaper to his grandmother and how his mother taught him the story of famed civil rights lawyer Thurgood Marshall, who became his hero.

"He has always gravitated toward leadership and being the answer to injustice," said Sean Pittman, an

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attorney who has been his friend for 30 years, since they met at Florida State University. There, Crump was president of the Black Student Union and led protests to bring attention to how the school recruited and treated Black students.

But his rise from personal injury attorney to a voice of Black America began in 2013 when he represented the family of Trayvon Martin, a teenager killed by a neighborhood watch volunteer in Florida. He then took on the case for the family of Michael Brown who was fatally shot by a white officer near St. Louis.

Crump organized marches and brought media attention to both of their deaths — each happening during the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement.

He has gone on to win financial settlements in about 200 police brutality cases. In March, the city of Minneapolis agreed to pay \$27 million to settle a civil lawsuit from George Floyd's family, which Crump said is the largest pretrial civil rights lawsuit settlement ever.

"I keep hoping and believing, if we can make them pay multimillions of dollars every time they shoot a Black person in the back, that there will be less Black people shot in the back," Crump said. "That's my theory, but it remains unanswered because they keep killing us."

In recent years he has produced and hosted an A&E documentary "Who Killed Tupac?" and launched a production company to make shows about injustice and civil rights.

Crump even had a brief role in the 2017 film "Marshall," which tells of the early life of his hero, who became the first Black U.S. Supreme Court justice.

His higher profile has brought more scrutiny and turned him into a frequent target. Conservative author Candace Owens in April accused Crump of trying to profit from police shootings and encouraging violent protests.

"Keeping racial issues alive has become a business in America," she told Fox News Channel's Laura Ingraham. "It's Al Sharpton yesterday, Jesse Jackson tomorrow, Ben Crump today."

It doesn't really bother Crump: "You can't care what the enemies of equality think of you," he said. "It would be the height of arrogance to think that everybody is going to love you. It's not a popularity contest."

It's fitting that he is now mentioned among the giants of civil rights, said John Bowman, who has known him since Michael Brown's killing and is now president of the St. Louis County NAACP.

"I can't get in his head and say he charted out this course, and said, 'I'm going to be the next strongest voice for injustice,'" Bowman said. "I do know that when the call was made, he didn't shy away or step back from it."

But Crump says he eventually would like to step back from it all.

"I literally pray for the day when I can close down the police brutality division of my law firm," he said, "because I am so tired of seeing Black people killed by the police unjustifiably. I'd like to tell my staff that we no longer have to fight in the courts, or be counselors to so many grieving mothers and fathers."

Asian Americans see generational split on confronting racism

By SUDHIN THANAWALA Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — The fatal shootings of eight people — six of them women of Asian descent — at Georgia massage businesses in March propelled Claire Xu into action.

Within days, she helped organize a rally condemning violence against Asian Americans that drew support from a broad group of activists, elected officials and community members. But her parents objected.

"We don't want you to do this," Xu, 31, recalled their telling her afterward. "You can write about stuff, but don't get your face out there."

The shootings and other recent attacks on Asian Americans have exposed a generational divide in the community. Many young activists say their parents and other elders are saddened by the violence but question the value of protests or worry about their consequences. They've also found the older generations tend to identify more closely with their ethnic groups — Chinese or Vietnamese, for example — and appear reluctant to acknowledge racism.

That divide makes it harder to forge a collective Asian American constituency that can wield political

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power and draw attention to the wave of assaults against people of Asian descent in the U.S. since the coronavirus pandemic began, community leaders say.

"In our original countries, where our ancestors came from, they wouldn't even imagine that someone from Bangladesh would be lumped in the same group as someone from Laos," said Angela Hsu, president of the Georgia Asian Pacific American Bar Association.

But those differences obscure a shared experience of "feeling like we're constantly thought of as being foreign in our own country," said U.S. Rep. Andy Kim, of New Jersey.

Much of the recent violence against Asian Americans has targeted the elderly, and some seniors have attended rallies to condemn it. But Cora McDonnell, 79, said she did not want to speak out, though she is now scared to walk to the church blocks from her Seattle home.

She emigrated to the U.S. from the Philippines in 1985 and said her culture was "more respectful."

"You talk maybe in your family, but not really publicly," she said. "You don't really blurt out things."

Lani Wong, 73, said she understood that feeling, though she does not adhere to it.

"Just don't stir the pot, don't get involved," said Wong, chairwoman of the National Association of Chinese Americans. "I think that was the mentality of the older generation."

Some young Asian Americans said they were frustrated by family members' reactions to the shootings.

E. Lim said it was "infuriating and really sad" to hear her parents cast aspersions on the massage work done by some of the Georgia shooting victims.

"It's almost like this desperation for denial so that they don't have to recognize that there is a world that hates them," said Lim, organizing and civic engagement director for Asian Americans Advancing Justice-Atlanta.

A pastor in the Atlanta area, Tae Chin, said his Korean mother-in-law also questioned the victims' line of work while urging him not to focus on race. Four of the slain women were of Korean descent.

"Just work hard. Just live. Just be a good person, and they'll see someday," Chin, 41, recalled her saying on a phone call after the March 16 attack. "I'm like, 'That's why we have this problem to begin with, because that's exactly what we do.'"

Allison Wang's parents were similarly inclined and thought she was wasting her time protesting the shootings.

"I think they believe that it's more important to focus on your career and family and don't really feel like we can make a difference," said Wang, who helped Xu put together the rally in downtown Atlanta.

For Raymond Tran's family, the political history of one of their home countries played a role in opposing his involvement in any organizations. The attorney raised in Los Angeles said that when he was growing up, his parents told him about an uncle imprisoned and tortured by Vietnamese communists after joining a student group.

Racist policies in the U.S. strictly limited immigrants from Asia until the 1960s, so many Asian families have been in the country for only a generation or two. It's not unusual for new immigrants to focus on providing for their families, avoiding attention in favor of assimilation.

Asian immigrants face the added burden of the "model minority" stereotype that portrays them as industrious, law-abiding and uncomplaining, and ascribes their achievements to those traits, historians and advocates say.

"It divides generations," said Maki Hsieh, CEO of the Asian Hall of Fame, a program that honors Asian leaders. "It divides Asians from each other, and ultimately it divides them from other groups."

Xu said her parents worried about her safety, but she thinks their objections to her activism also stemmed in part from a desire to avoid trouble. They understood the need to speak out against anti-Asian violence but didn't want her to do it, she said.

"I wholeheartedly believe if this is the way everybody thinks, then there won't be any progress," she said.

The younger generation is also coming of age during a period of renewed racial awareness — reflected in last year's Black Lives Matter protests — that makes it impossible for Asians in the U.S. to "fly under the racial radar anymore," said Nitasha Tamar Sharma, director of the Asian American Studies program at Northwestern University.

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In addition to holding rallies and vigils across the country in the wake of the Georgia shootings, young organizers have shared stories of racist encounters and used the hashtag #StopAsianHate to raise awareness about the dangers Asian Americans face.

"In America, we are all one," said Hsu, the bar association president. "We are viewed in a similar way."

Use-of-force cases prompt state debates over officer records

By COLLEEN SLEVIN Associated Press

DENVER (AP) — Lawmakers in more than 20 states have considered bills this year to make the disciplinary records of police officers public or to share them with other agencies, a push that comes amid high-profile deaths at the hands of law enforcement. About 20 states still largely prohibit their release, however.

Supporters of greater transparency say it could help improve police accountability, build trust with the community and prevent officers with disciplinary problems who leave one department from being hired by another.

Opponents say the release of such records could harm the reputations of officers with only minor infractions or even put them in danger. They also argue that disciplinary actions are part of personnel records, which are exempt from state open records laws.

But amid growing nationwide protests against alleged excessive force by police officers, at least 16 states have contemplated measures to release such records, or summaries of them, publicly. Another eight have discussed making the records accessible to other law enforcement agencies.

In Utah, Republican Gov. Spencer Cox signed a bill in March providing legal immunity to law enforcement agencies that share background information about former employees with other agencies looking to hire. State Sen. Jani Iwamoto, a Democrat in the GOP-dominated Legislature, introduced the legislation in response to the case of a University of Utah officer who resigned while being investigated for allegedly sharing explicit photographs of a victim in an alleged extortion case who was later killed. The officer was later hired by police in Logan, Utah, who did not know about the probe.

"We want people to feel that they can report a bad cop," said Iwamoto, who also successfully sponsored another bill to ensure that police disciplinary investigations are completed even if an officer resigns while one is in progress.

Without legislation in place, lawyers advised police departments not to share disciplinary records lest they be sued, Iwamoto said.

In North Carolina's Republican-controlled legislature, lawmakers want to create a confidential database from which law enforcement agencies in the state can track all disciplinary actions to prevent officers from hiding past problems when looking for a new job.

"We enable agencies to better screen individuals ... so that we can weed out who the bad apples are," said Republican state Sen. Danny Britt.

Under an expansive police reform bill Britt is sponsoring, authorities also would track all use of force by officers resulting in serious injury or death. And the legislation would create an "early warning system" to collect data on citizens' complaints and any transgressions with the aim of correcting an officer's behavior before it leads to a deadly outcome.

Maryland has gone further, approving the release of records related to formal misconduct complaints. The Democrat-controlled Legislature overrode a veto by Republican Gov. Larry Hogan, who objected to the public release of complaints that haven't been substantiated. Supporters contend the public has a right to see how police departments investigate complaints against officers.

The proposals come amid a national reckoning over the killings of Black people at the hands of police. Efforts to get access to police disciplinary records have increased along with public awareness of the issue, which has grown since the 2014 shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, said Rachel Moran, an associate professor and founder of the Criminal and Juvenile Defense Clinic at the University of St. Thomas School of Law in Minneapolis.

In Maryland, the move is part of a sweeping police reform package that was prompted by the 2018 death

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of Anton Black, a 19-year-old African American who died in a rural Maryland town after officers pinned him to the ground for more than five minutes as they handcuffed him and shackled his legs.

One of the officers, Thomas Webster, had nearly 30 use-of-force complaints lodged against him while previously working in neighboring Delaware. Webster also had been charged with second-degree assault in that state for allegedly kicking a Black man in the head, but was acquitted in 2015.

Anton Black's sister, LaToya Holley, said she hopes the new law translates into quicker answers for the families of anyone who dies at the hands of police.

"They need to work on trust," she said of law enforcement. "There isn't that much trust in the community."

Other states seeking to address policing problems had already taken action before this year.

In 2018, California lawmakers voted to allow public access to records of officer shootings and other major uses of force. New York lawmakers last year repealed a law that had blocked public disclosure of disciplinary records for police officers, firefighters and correctional officers. Hawaii took similar action, allowing the public to learn the details of more than 80 cases of unwarranted assault and more than 100 cases of officers filing false reports or covering up infractions.

In New Jersey last year, state Attorney General Gurbir Grewal, without waiting for legislation, ordered local and state police to release the names and summaries of disciplinary records of officers who had been fired, demoted or suspended for more than five days. Grewal said the information was needed to promote community trust and police accountability amid protests against the death of George Floyd in Minnesota.

For their part, members of New Jersey's Democrat-controlled legislature considered but have failed to pass a bill this year to make police records public, though an early warning system of the kind being considered by North Carolina is already in place.

Meanwhile, nothing has come of Grewal's order yet because of a legal challenge by law enforcement unions. They argue that personnel records are exempt under state open records laws, and that officers and their families could be put at risk if they are made public. They also object to releasing information about past confidential disciplinary agreements for problems such as drinking and domestic violence.

Pat Colligan, president of the New Jersey State Policemen's Benevolent Association, said many officers who have dealt with problems like that have gone on to have good careers. Colligan said he would support the release of records only for major infractions, such as excessive force and civil rights violations, from now on.

He also would like to see the state's early warning system be given a chance to provide officers with help or weed out those not meant to wear a badge.

"People have to stop assuming every officer is a problem officer," he said.

Public transit hopes to win back riders after crushing year

By HOPE YEN, CHRISTOPHER WEBER, SOPHIA TAREEN and DAVID PORTER Associated Press
WASHINGTON (AP) — Taking the Los Angeles Metro for his first trip in months, Brad Hudson felt a moment of normalcy when the train rolled into the South Pasadena, California, station, harkening back to his daily commute into LA before the coronavirus pandemic.

Then Hudson boarded the train, and reality set in.

Not everyone wore masks. Metro staffing levels appeared much lighter, with more trash on the trains. "I don't feel at risk for COVID, because I'm vaccinated and I mask," said Hudson, a child psychologist. But he felt security was worse now — he said a passenger shouted at him for no apparent reason and, on a subsequent ride, a man entered a train car with a large knife strapped to his leg.

As President Joe Biden urges more federal spending for public transportation, transit agencies decimated by COVID-19 are struggling with a new uncertainty: how to win passengers back.

It's made more urgent as the United States confronts the climate change crisis. Biden has pledged to cut U.S. greenhouse gas emissions at least in half by the end of the decade, an aggressive target that will require car-loving Americans to transform the way they travel, ditching gas-guzzling cars for electric vehicles or embracing mass transit.

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"We have a huge opportunity here to provide fast, safe, reliable, clean transportation in this country, and transit is part of the infrastructure," Biden said at an event Friday to promote rail and public transportation.

With fewer transportation alternatives, lower-income people are more reliant on public transportation for commuting and their daily lives. Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti promises free transit fares for them and for students.

The city's Metro ridership has fallen to about half its peak of 1.2 million, and Garcetti said getting more people on board would accelerate economic recovery "for our most vulnerable" and reduce the city's traffic and emissions.

In Washington D.C., where many federal employees now telework due to COVID-19 restrictions, transit officials are mulling lowering fares to draw back riders. New York City has deployed several hundred additional police officers in recent months after a spate of subway attacks that included several stabbings and one person pushed onto the tracks. The Chicago area is looking at rejiggering train schedules to accommodate more passengers traveling throughout the day, rather than during rush-hour peaks, part of a pandemic shift from traditional 9-to-5 work days.

Houston is pledging improvements to 17 of its higher-frequency bus routes, with the motto, "A better walk, a better stop, and a better ride," featuring improved sidewalks, brightly lit sheltered stops with digital arrival information, and faster trip times.

Biden's \$2.3 trillion infrastructure plan would provide \$85 billion over eight years to update and replace subway cars and repair aging tracks and stations, in effect doubling the federal investment each year. It is the biggest increase in money for public transit in generations.

Of that amount, \$25 billion would be devoted to expanding bus routes and rail lines to coax more people out of automobiles, a ten-fold one-time boost over current funding levels for new capital projects.

An additional \$25 billion would be devoted to converting gasoline- and diesel-powered mass transit buses to zero-emission electric vehicles.

"It's a major upgrade," said Jeff Davis, a senior fellow at the Eno Center for Transportation, who describes the amount of proposed investment in particular for electric buses as "phenomenal."

"It's a huge dent in the backlog, so you'll be able to see almost immediately in places like New York, more reliable service and fewer breakdowns because of the upgrades to existing systems," he said.

"In other cities, people will get more frequent bus service. And then years down the road, passengers will see benefits from a couple dozen expanded subway and rapid transit bus lines and new light rail systems, from San Jose, California, to Las Vegas and Charleston, South Carolina."

The American Society of Civil Engineers recently gave public transit a dismal D-minus grade for its crumbling network, citing 1 in 5 transit vehicles in "poor" condition and a repair backlog of over \$100 billion.

Still, congressional Republicans are balking at the price tag, as well as Biden's plan to increase corporate taxes to pay for it. The Republican National Committee has argued that just 7% of the money in Biden's \$2.3 trillion plan covers infrastructure as they define it, leaving public transit out of the mix. A Senate GOP counteroffer proposes \$568 billion for infrastructure, resulting in cuts to public transit funding by several billion dollars, according to an Eno analysis.

"Biden's plan is not about infrastructure — it is a plan to levy a job-destroying \$2 trillion tax hike while forcing through a far-left, Green New Deal-style agenda," the RNC wrote on its blog.

Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg says while commuting patterns may be shifting, now is the time to boost public transportation, not downsize it.

"Today, Americans who rely on public transportation to get to work spend twice as long commuting as those who drive. And it's not as reliable as it should be," Buttigieg told The Associated Press. "A lot of this is because of the age of our transit infrastructure — across the country there are systems in urgent need of upgrade and modernization. Every American should have access to good options for affordable, fast, safe and reliable public transit — particularly those for whom transit is the only viable option."

A year ago, transit ridership nationwide drained to almost nothing as tens of millions of Americans hunkered at home due to the raging virus, shunning travel in trains and buses. To stay afloat, transit agencies cut payroll and slashed services.

Three rounds totaling nearly \$70 billion in federal COVID-19 emergency assistance, including \$30.5

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billion that Biden signed into law in March, pulled transit agencies from the brink of financial collapse. That federal aid is now expected to cover operating deficits from declining passenger revenue and costly COVID-19 cleaning and safety protocols through at least 2022.

Still, even as vaccinations become more widespread, it's uncertain how many riders will come back.

Work-from-home arrangements initially seen as temporary appear to be a more durable trend. Transportation alternatives such as Uber and Lyft ride-share programs — and bike shares and scooters, not to mention driverless cars — threaten to eat away at transit ridership. Some city-dwellers, weary of staying in crammed quarters, have left for wide open spaces with less access to transit.

To date, about 50% of transit riders nationwide have returned compared to pre-pandemic times, according to the American Public Transportation Association. The biggest losses — about 65.6 % — are in commuter rail systems serving white-collar suburbanites traveling to downtown workplaces.

Transportation officials say a key to increasing ridership will be employers reopening offices. Even so, it could take years to get riders 100% back, if ever, putting lower-income workers at a greater disadvantage if service levels drop off.

"It's a huge challenge," acknowledges Paul Skoutelas, CEO of the transportation association, who points to once-bustling downtowns that turned overnight into ghost towns due to COVID-19. "Transit agencies will have to pivot to what this new future might be. Essential workers continue to be transported. But we need to get the larger workforce back on public transit, not only for our own survival but also to revitalize cities."

From coast to coast, the changed ridership is striking.

In the Chicago area, transit ridership was down 71% in March compared with the same time in 2020, according to the Regional Transportation Authority. Pre-pandemic the system saw nearly 2 million riders weekdays on Chicago Transit Authority trains and buses, Metra commuter rail and suburban Pace buses.

Those who continue to rely on public transportation are mostly Black, Latino and low-income workers. For that reason, the CTA, which runs 24 hours, didn't cut routes or service even as ridership plunged to 200,000 at the lowest.

"We recognized that we're carrying primarily essential workers who relied on and needed to use public transit to carry out their functions on a daily basis," said CTA President Dorval Carter.

Although empty train cars are common in some parts of the city, Chicago's Green Line trains connecting the south and west sides to downtown remain busy, says 34-year-old Ryan Patrick Thomas. Some days it's standing room only.

He commutes daily from the predominantly Black Austin neighborhood to work downtown at a company that operates senior living centers. Thomas, who is Black, says trains that used to have mixed crowds are now mostly Black, noting the virus has disproportionately hit people of color.

"These trains seem to be just as full of people in more vulnerable demographics," he said.

New York's subway system lost billions in revenue and more than 90% of its riders at the height of the pandemic, not to mention about 150 employees who died of COVID-19. The Metropolitan Transportation Authority has spent hundreds of millions on disinfecting train cars and nearly 500 stations, even taking the unprecedented move of shutting the system down overnight; it remains closed between 2 a.m. and 4 a.m.

Subway ridership remains down close to 70%, though it continues to rise gradually. There's a slower recovery on the Metro-North and Long Island Rail Road lines that serve the suburbs, where many white-collar workers have the option of working from home.

More than \$14 billion in federal aid has put the agency on sound fiscal footing until mid-2024, MTA Chairman Patrick Foye said. How quickly riders return will dictate what happens after that. Current predictions have roughly 85% of riders coming back by the end of 2024.

"As offices open in Manhattan and the rest of the city, we're confident we're going to see increased ridership," Foye said. But, he added: "There could be a robust recovery that could still leave agencies like the MTA with deficits."

After recent highly publicized cases of subway assaults, New York City police sent in additional officers to help patrol stations, and the MTA has requested more. Still, the NYPD says data shows overall subway

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crime is down significantly compared to the same time last year.

But MTA officials point to a recent survey in which nearly 90% of lapsed subway riders said crime and harassment were important factors in determining whether they return to the system.

"No one is saying crime is rampant and out of control in the subways," said Sarah Feinberg, interim head of New York City Transit, which runs subways and buses. "What we're saying is we have a huge number of customers who are worried about it. ... We've got to get this into a better place in the coming months. If we can't get people back in the next couple of months, it's going to be harder to get them back in the future."

New Jersey Transit, the nation's largest statewide system, lost more than 90% of its riders at the height of the pandemic. Rail ridership currently is about 25% to 30% of pre-pandemic levels, and bus ridership is about 50%. Fares that normally fund more than 40% of operating costs currently account for about 12% amid projections ridership won't fully return until 2026.

The Biden plan would invest \$621 billion to modernize transportation infrastructure, putting an emphasis on public transit and rail needs over roads by a ratio of 1.43 to 1, according to Urban Institute researcher Yonah Freemark. That signals a big shift in how the nation moves goods and people.

Projects already in the pipeline likely stand to gain the most, including a planned extension of the Bay Area Rapid Transit rail system to San Jose and Santa Clara, California; bus rapid transit lines in St. Paul, Minnesota, Charleston, South Carolina, and Las Vegas; and New York City's long-awaited Second Avenue subway line.

There's also Atlanta's proposed \$5 billion upgrade of its transit system, including light rail for its Beltline; and a \$7.1 billion transit expansion in Austin, Texas, approved by voters in November, featuring new rail and rapid bus routes connecting downtown to suburbs, an all-electric bus fleet, on-demand shuttles and park-and-ride facilities.

Biden's proposal would also offer federal aid to cities developing projects that relieve congestion, boost access to underserved populations and help the environment, even if construction is several years away.

"If you're a city that has not developed a plan and identified local revenues to support transit improvements, you may actually lose out," Freemark said.

Biden's ambitious plan is a bet on reluctant riders returning such as Chicago resident Patrick Monaghan, who avoided public transportation for more than a year. The 55-year-old has multiple sclerosis and waited until he got fully vaccinated before making his first trip, to a Cubs game.

Boarding the familiar trains on the city's North Side gave him anxiety, even though there weren't many people on board. Afterward, though, he realized how he missed it.

"Sitting in my living room being away from people has made me nervous being around them. At the same time, I was excited to do something," said Monaghan, who now sees brighter days ahead riding transit to go places.

"It's like having anxiety before a birthday party — like you know you will have fun, but don't know how it's going to go."

Celebrity politicians test voter interest in post-Trump era

By JILL COLVIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — From Ronald Reagan and Arnold Schwarzenegger to Al Franken and Donald Trump, there's a rich history of celebrities trying out new careers in politics.

The list could soon grow.

In California, former Olympian Caitlyn Jenner is running for governor. In Texas, Oscar-winning actor Matthew McConaughey has said he is considering a run for governor. In New York City, Andrew Yang, a businessman who gained fame during his quixotic 2020 presidential run, is a leading contender for the Democratic mayoral nomination.

Each has the type of name recognition that other political newcomers would envy. But as they consider running some of the nation's largest and most complicated governments, their lack of experience in public

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office could be a vulnerability. That's especially true after the tumult of the Trump era, when the reality television star-turned-president often spent more time raging about his media coverage than managing the federal bureaucracy.

"I do think it definitely makes it slightly harder," said Daniel Ketchell, who was chief of staff to Schwarzenegger, the bodybuilder-turned-Hollywood star who won a California recall election in 2003 and became a two-term governor. "I think people are looking at you and that narrative of: We just elected an outsider celebrity and it didn't work out for the country, we didn't get much done for the country, we all were stressed out all the time."

Jenner, a gold medal-winning decathlete and transgender rights activists perhaps best known for being part of the Kardashian family, launched her campaign last week challenging Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom in his likely recall race. Bolstered by her 3.5 million Twitter followers and nearly 11 million on Instagram, the Jenner campaign believes that name recognition — will make her a strong competitor in a race they see as a referendum on Newsom's leadership.

But Rob Stutzman, a GOP consultant in the state who advised Schwarzenegger's winning recall campaign, said there are key differences between Jenner and Schwarzenegger, who was then arguably the biggest movie star in the world.

"There's famous and then there's Arnold Schwarzenegger famous," he said, rejecting the idea that Trump had turned voters against celebrities.

"People will say they don't like celebrity candidates until there's a celebrity candidate they like," he said. "A lot of Democrats hated Donald Trump, but they might be pretty enthralled with Matthew McConaughey. ... It's still about winning and likability."

Much else is also different this time around.

California has grown even more Democratic over the past 20 years, making it harder for a Republican, especially one who openly backed Trump, to gain traction.

Schwarzenegger, strategists note, was already well known in the state as a champion of after-school programs, and had a history of civic engagement, having served as chair of President George H.W. Bush's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports. It also didn't hurt that he was married to Maria Shriver, a member of the Kennedy family dynasty.

Reagan was also well versed in politics before running a campaign of his own by virtue of leading the Screen Actors Guild.

While Jenner has advocated for transgender people since coming out in 2015 and experience in the business world, it is unclear where she stands on a slew of other policy questions. Indeed, her current website offers only a vague 68-word statement, along with a fundraising portal and online store selling stemless wine glasses and yard signs. (Her campaign says policy plans are coming soon.)

She has already faced backlash after mistakenly suggesting in a tweet that district attorneys in the state were appointed, not elected. (She later said she knew that was the case.)

"Also, do you know how a bill becomes a law?" quipped Rep. Ted Lieu, D-Calif., offering a link to the famous "Schoolhouse Rock" animation. "Do you know what 'veto' means? Or 'budget'?"

Celebrities-turned-politicians have long recognized the extra work they must do to counteract a dearth of governing experience. When Schwarzenegger ran, aides created what they called "Schwarzenegger University" to get up to speed on issues.

Franken, the "Saturday Night Live" star who later became a Democratic senator from Minnesota, largely avoided the national press during his first years in office as he tried to redefine himself as a serious lawmaker. Jesse Ventura, the professional wrestler who became Minnesota's governor, surrounded himself with experienced aides.

"No question that there was, I think, a preconceived notion that he might have some trouble engaging others to his administration," John Wodele, who served as Ventura's spokesman in office. "However, the actions that he took right after the election to bring people into his administration with experience and knowledge and impeccable reputations quickly dispelled that."

Wodele added: "I think coming out of the wrestling environment and celerity, a lot of people misjudged

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him in terms of his intellect. He was underestimated in terms of his ability to understand and reason.”

In New York, Yang has ridden his losing presidential bid to a leading slot in the crowded mayoral race, which some of his rivals have sought to turn against him. In his first ad of the race, City Comptroller Scott Stringer, who has faced calls to drop out after a former volunteer accused him of sexual misconduct, stressed his experience in an implicit slap at Yang. “He’s not a celebrity. He doesn’t govern by Tweet or TikTok,” the Stringer ad began.

Yang’s campaign manager, Chris Coffey, rejected the characterization of the candidate as a celebrity, comparing Yang instead with Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, the Democratic congresswoman from New York who has become a household name because of her progressive politics.

“There’s a pretty big difference between starting a reality show and starting a political movement based on raising people out of poverty and giving people cash,” Coffey said of Yang.

But star power, argued Democratic strategist Hank Sheinkopf, is what voters want.

“We live in a culture of gossip and entertainment. That’s how Trump became president. That’s one of the reasons why Yang is at the front of the pack,” said Democratic strategist Hank Sheinkopf. He said that with New York having gone through so much during the pandemic, many voters may simply long for a smiling face and a cheerleader.

“The city, like other cities, is in the dumps,” Sheinkopf said. “With his celebrity, he’s interesting.”

Puerto Rico groans under pandemic as health, economy suffer

By DÁNICA COTO Associated Press

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP) — Puerto Rico seemed to be sprinting toward herd immunity this spring before people began letting their guard down against COVID-19 and new variants started spreading across the U.S. territory.

Now, a spike in cases and hospitalizations has put medical experts at odds with the government, which is struggling to protect people’s health while also trying to prevent an economic implosion on an island battered by hurricanes, earthquakes and a prolonged financial crisis.

“The difficulty here is how do you find a Solomonic decision ... to give people the opportunity to work and be responsible and also maintain health as a priority,” said Ramón Leal, former president of Puerto Rico’s Restaurant Association. “These are hard conversations.”

It’s a delicate balance for an island that imposed a lockdown and mask mandates ahead of any U.S. state and has some of the strictest entry requirements of any American jurisdiction — measures that helped contain infections before the latest surge.

Overall, the land of 3.3 million people has reported more than 115,000 confirmed coronavirus cases, over 115,000 suspected ones and more than 2,000 deaths, with transmission rates inching up the last week of April to 28 cases per 100,000 people a day, compared with 17 per 100,000 on the U.S. mainland.

The pandemic has unleashed the second-biggest economic drop Puerto Rico has seen since record-keeping began in 1980, according to José Caraballo, a Puerto Rico economist. The biggest was caused by Hurricane Maria, which inflicted more than \$100 billion in damage in 2017, with nearly 3,000 people dying in its sweltering aftermath.

More than 30,000 jobs have been lost because of the COVID-19 outbreak, and at least 1,400 businesses have closed, Caraballo said — this on an island that saw nearly 12% of its population flee in the past decade and whose government is struggling with crushing debt that led it to file for the biggest municipal bankruptcy in U.S. history in 2017.

“I’m taken aback by what the people of Puerto Rico have had to endure,” Caraballo said.

Many of those who remain are mourning over lost homes, jobs, businesses or loved ones.

Luis Ángel Sánchez has two close friends in the intensive care unit and lost his father and son to COVID-19 in April 2020 less than two weeks apart. Sánchez got vaccinated in mid-March.

“The vaccine will not erase the scars or heal my broken heart,” he wrote on Facebook that day. “It will not bring back my son. It will not bring back my father. They, along with the others who have succumbed

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to this monster will not have died in vain if we continue to do the right thing.”

Sánchez said people should keep their guard up and exhorted the government to impose stricter sanctions on those not following COVID-19 measures.

“It’s not over yet,” he said.

Gov. Pedro Pierluisi has resisted tighter restrictions, saying that another lockdown would be too extreme and that things will keep improving and the island could achieve herd immunity by August: “The solution is vaccination.”

More than 2 million doses have been administered on the island, with a robust 55% having received at least one shot and 27% two.

While health authorities say they are relieved many are eager to get vaccinated, they note that some people who are not yet fully protected are disregarding restrictions that include a more than yearlong curfew.

That and the presence of at least seven COVID-19 variants on the island are believed to be contributing to the rise in cases. Another factor, experts say, is a drop in testing from an average of around 7,000 tests a day to 2,000, a trend blamed on people becoming fixated on getting vaccinated.

The fight against COVID-19 has also been complicated by a drain of medical talent to the U.S. mainland.

The number of doctors in Puerto Rico is down to 9,000 from 14,000 in 2006, said Dr. Víctor Ramos, a pediatrician and president of the island’s Association of Surgeons. Similar drops have been seen among nurses and technicians.

“Health professionals are exhausted, and they’re scarce,” said Daniel Colón-Ramos, who presides over a scientific coalition that advises Puerto Rico’s governor.

Ramos and other health experts say the governor should temporarily ban indoor dining, a measure imposed last year. Currently, restaurants and other places are restricted to 30% capacity, but officials say the limit is hard to gauge and question whether it is even being followed.

It’s an issue the government and business owners have clashed over repeatedly, with the industry insisting that it’s safer to eat at a restaurant indoors, given all the safety protocols, than in someone’s house.

Mateo Cidre, the owner of four restaurants and bakeries, said the industry has not recovered from the nine weeks last year in which restaurants could only do delivery, carryout or curbside pickup. He suffered heavy losses and applied for a suspension of car and home payments.

He criticized the government for not further loosening restrictions even when there has been a drop in cases.

“They’ve never been flexible with us,” he said. “It’s been a very tiresome road.”

Other industries also have been hit hard, with a \$2 billion drop in retail sales last year, said Jorge Argüelles, former president of Puerto Rico’s Retail Association.

Those being squeezed by the restrictions say the governor should impose tighter restrictions at the airports, where only about 30% of those arriving carry the required negative COVID-19 test. Several tourists have been arrested for lashing out at authorities after refusing to follow health instructions.

A voluntary, 14-day confinement option was lifted on Wednesday, and those who don’t have a negative test face a \$300 fine if they don’t present one within 48 hours. However, there is no system to fine them on arrival; it is up to people to voluntarily fill out a document online later so that they can be fined.

“The thing I’m most anxious about,” said Colón-Ramos, who oversees the scientific council, “is thinking that there are people alive today who can be saved or can die depending on how Puerto Ricans behave.”

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Monday, May 3, the 123rd day of 2021. There are 242 days left in the year.

Today’s Highlights in History:

On May 3, 1948, the Supreme Court, in *Shelley v. Kraemer*, ruled that covenants prohibiting the sale of real estate to Blacks or members of other racial groups were legally unenforceable.

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On this date:

In 1765, the first school of medicine in the American colonies, the Medical School of the College of Philadelphia (now the Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania), was founded.

In 1802, Washington, D.C. was incorporated as a city.

In 1916, Irish nationalists Padraic Pearse, Thomas Clarke and Thomas MacDonagh were executed by a British firing squad; they were among 16 people put to death for their roles in the Easter Rising.

In 1937, Margaret Mitchell won the Pulitzer Prize for her novel, "Gone with the Wind."

In 1979, Conservative Party leader Margaret Thatcher was chosen to become Britain's first female prime minister as the Tories ousted the incumbent Labour government in parliamentary elections.

In 1984, Michael Dell founded Dell Computer Corp. while a student at the University of Texas in Austin.

In 1987, The Miami Herald said its reporters had observed a young woman spending "Friday night and most of Saturday" at a Washington townhouse belonging to Democratic presidential candidate Gary Hart. (The woman was later identified as Donna Rice; the resulting controversy torpedoed Hart's presidential bid.)

In 1999, some 70 tornadoes roared across Oklahoma and Kansas, killing 46 people and injuring hundreds.

In 2006, a federal jury in Alexandria, Virginia, rejected the death penalty for al-Qaida conspirator Zacarias Moussaoui (zak-uh-REE'-uhs moo-SOW'-ee), deciding he should spend life in prison for his role in 9/11; as he was led from the courtroom, Moussaoui taunted, "America, you lost."

In 2007, Britain's Queen Elizabeth II arrived in Virginia for the commemoration of Jamestown's 400th anniversary.

In 2009, Mexican President Felipe Calderon told state television that a nationwide shutdown and an aggressive informational campaign appeared to have helped curtail an outbreak of swine flu in Mexico.

In 2015, two gunmen were shot and killed by a police officer in Garland, Texas, after they opened fire outside a purposely provocative contest for cartoon depictions of the Prophet Muhammad.

Ten years ago: The White House said that Osama bin Laden was unarmed when Navy SEALs burst into his room at his Pakistan compound and shot him to death, a change in the official account that raised questions about whether the U.S. ever planned to capture the terrorist leader alive. Chicago's Derrick Rose became at age 22 the NBA's youngest MVP. Actor-director Jackie Cooper died in Santa Monica, California, at age 88.

Five years ago: In a stunning triumph for a political outsider, Donald Trump all but clinched the Republican presidential nomination with a resounding victory in Indiana that knocked rival Ted Cruz out of the race.

One year ago: In a televised town hall, President Donald Trump increased his projection for the total U.S. coronavirus death toll to as many as 100,000, but insisted that states could gradually lift lockdowns and still protect people from the pandemic. An incursion by a few dozen Venezuelan military deserters hoping to overthrow the country's socialist leadership, backed by a former U.S. Green Beret, ended in failure on a Venezuelan beach with six insurgents dead and two former U.S. Special Forces soldiers behind bars.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Alex Cord is 88. Singer Frankie Valli is 87. Sen. Jim Risch, R-Idaho, is 78. Sports announcer Greg Gumbel is 75. Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., is 72. Pop singer Mary Hopkin is 71. Singer Christopher Cross is 70. Rock musician David Ball (Soft Cell) is 62. Country singer Shane Minor is 53. Actor Amy Ryan is 53. Actor Bobby Cannavale (ka-nuh-VAL'-ee) is 51. Music and film producer-actor Damon Dash is 50. Country musician John Driskell Hopkins (Zac Brown Band) is 50. Country-rock musician John Neff is 50. Country singer Brad Martin is 48. Actor Marsha Stephanie-Blake is 46. TV personality Willie Geist (TV: "Today") is 46. Actor Christina Hendricks is 46. Actor Dule (doo-LAY') Hill is 46. Country singer Eric Church is 44. Actor Tanya Wright is 43. Dancer Cheryl Burke is 37. Soul singer Michael Kiwanuka is 34. Actor Zoe De Grand Maison is 26. Rapper Designer (cq) is 24.