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Chicken Soup
for the Soul.



"SELF-CARE IS NEVER A SELFISH ACT - IT IS SIMPLY GOOD STEWARDSHIP OF THE ONLY GIFT I HAVE. THE GIFT I WAS PUT ON EARTH TO OFFER OTHERS."

- PARKER PALMER



Munger 80th Birthday

The family of Helen Munger would like you to join us in honoring her on her 80th birthday. Greetings may be sent to 2517 S. Melgaard Road, Aberdeen SD 57401.



OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

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United Methodist Church

Groton and Conde

Sunday, May 23, 2021

Conde Worship 9:00 AM
Groton Worship 11:00 AM

Tuesday, May 25, 2021

Bible Study 10:00 AM

Emmanuel Lutheran Church

Groton

Sunday, May 23

9 a.m.: Worship with Communion

Monday, May 24

6:30 a.m.: Bible Study

Sunday, May 30

9 a.m.: Worship with Communion

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton &

St. Joseph Catholic

Groton and Turton

Weekend Mass Schedule

Saturday 4:30pm Groton

Sunday 8:30am Groton & 11:00am Turton

Weekday

Tues 5:00pm Turton, W-F 8:30am Groton

Sat 10am Newman Center

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament

Each morning before Weekday Mass at 7:15am

Tues 3:45pm Turton

Confessions:

Sat. 3:45-4:15pm & Sun. 7:45am to 8:15am (G)

Sun. 10:30-10:45am (T)

St. John's Lutheran Church

Groton

Sunday, May 23, 2021

Bible Study, 8 a.m.

St. John's Worship, 9 a.m.

Zion Lutheran Worship 11 a.m.

Monday through Thursday: Vacation Bible School,
9 a.m. to 11 a.m.

Sunday, May 30, 2021

Bible Study, 8 a.m.

St. John's Worship, 9 a.m.

Zion Lutheran Worship 11 a.m.

Heaven Bound Ministries

Pierpont

Buffalo Lake Lutheran

Rural Eden

Sunday, May 24: Worship at Buffalo Lake 10:30 a.m.

Saturday, May 29: Worship at Pierpont, 5:30 p.m.

Sunday, May 30: Worship at Buffalo Lake 10:30 a.m.

To submit your monthly or weekly church calendar, email to
news@grotonsd.net

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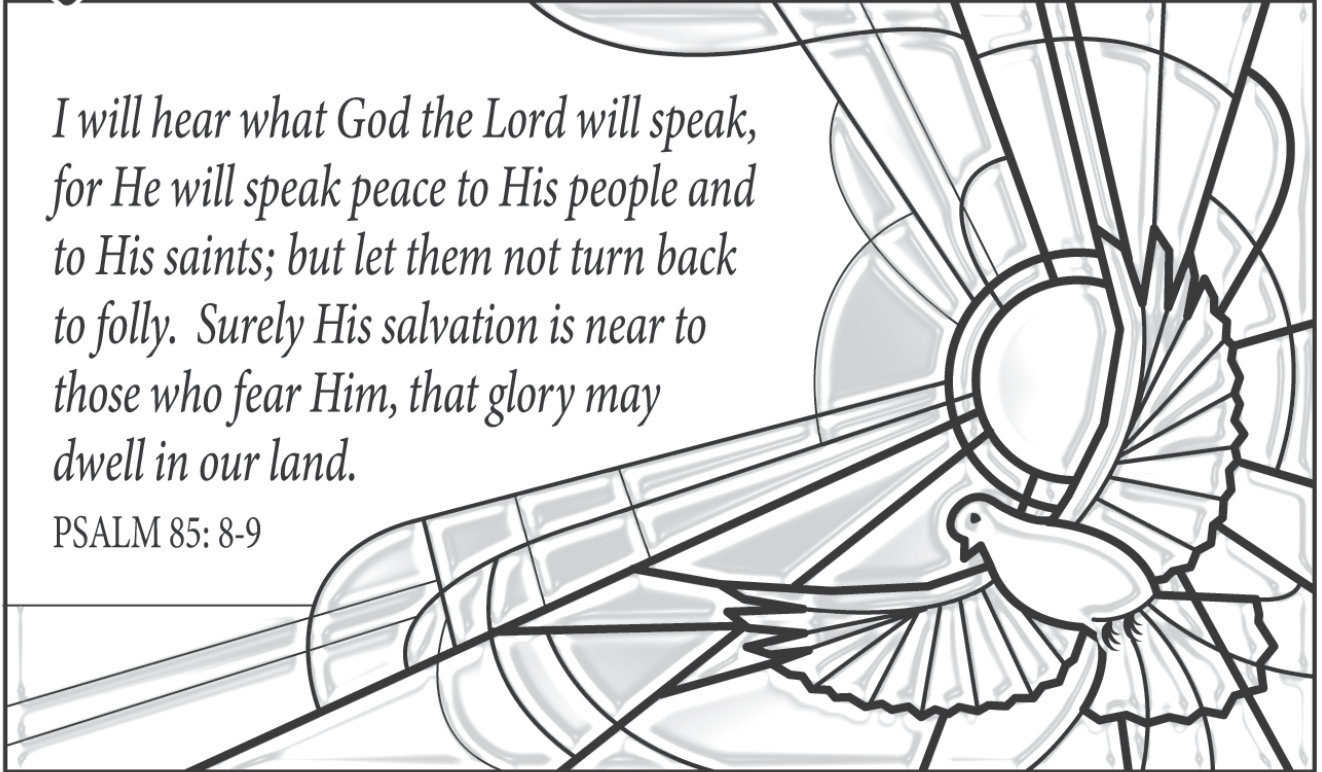
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THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE

*I will hear what God the Lord will speak,
for He will speak peace to His people and
to His saints; but let them not turn back
to folly. Surely His salvation is near to
those who fear Him, that glory may
dwell in our land.*

PSALM 85: 8-9

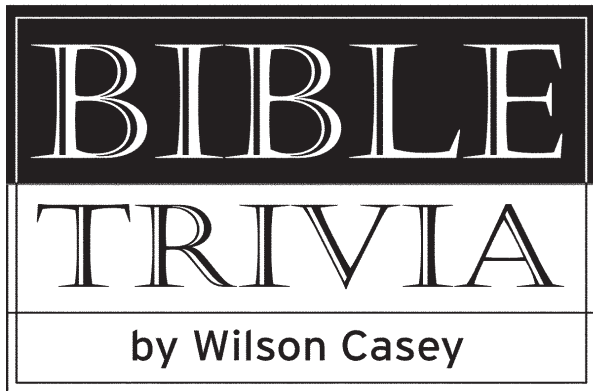


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MARGULIES
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GRADUATION 2021



1. Is the book of Lydia in the Old or New Testament or neither?

2. From 1 Corinthians 11, Paul said women should have a symbol of authority because of ___? *Life, Trust, Love, Angels*

3. In Acts 10, who said, "Not so, Lord, for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean"? *Herod, Peter, Thomas, John the Baptist*

4. From Hebrews 7, who was the only king said to have neither mother nor father? *Solomon, David, Melchizedek, Sargon*

5. Whose four daughters were considered prophetesses? *Gad, Philip, Jonah, Noah*

6. Which biblical name means, "God has helped"? *Solomon, Paul, Lazarus, Amos*

ANSWERS: 1) Neither; 2) Angels; 3) Peter; 4) Melchizedek; 5) Philip; 6) Lazarus

Hardcore trivia fan? Visit Wilson Casey's subscriber site at www.patreon.com/triviaguy.

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Velvety Chicken and Rice Soup

We've always been partial to a hearty bowl of soup. Maybe it's because it's just so comforting and cozy. Whatever the reason, we hope you enjoy it!

- 1/2 cup chopped onion
- 1 (16-ounce) can fat-free chicken soup
- 3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1 cup hot cooked rice
- 1 (2.5-ounce) jar sliced mushrooms, drained
- 1 1/2 cups diced cooked chicken breast
- 1 teaspoon dried parsley flakes
- 1/2 cup fat-free sour cream

1. In a large saucepan sprayed with butter-flavored cooking spray, saute onion for 5 minutes or until tender.

2. In a covered jar, combine chicken broth and flour. Shake well to blend. Add broth mixture to onion. Mix well to combine. Cook over medium heat until mixture starts to thicken, stirring often.

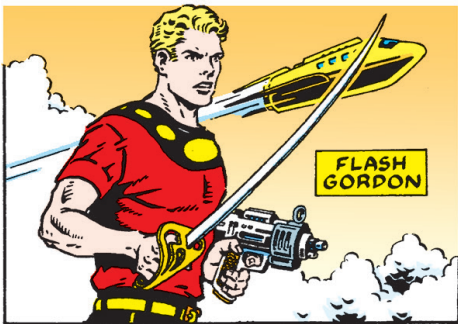
3. Stir in rice, mushrooms, chicken and parsley flakes. Add sour cream. Mix well to combine. Lower heat and simmer for 5 minutes or until mixture is heated through, stirring occasionally. Makes 4 (1 cup) servings.

* Each serving equals: 194 calories, 2g fat, 22g protein, 22g carb., 407mg sodium, 1g fiber; Diabetic Exchanges: 2 Meat, 1 1/2 Starch, 1/2 vegetable.

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FLASH GORDON

5-16
By JIM KEEFE

VULTAN'S SCOUTING PARTY IS ATTACKED!

IT'S TOO FAST... CAN'T OUTRUN IT!

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WHAT THE...?!

ZASK!

ZASK!

ZASK!

IT'S FLASH!

PAYLOAD BAY DOORS OPEN, VULTAN. GET YOUR MEN BACK INSIDE.

GET CRACKLE BACK INSIDE.

WE'RE ON OUR WAY!

I'LL COVER YOU.

YOU HAVE THOSE MONSTERS ON THE RUN, M'BOY. THEY'RE HEADING BACK TO THE MOUNTAINS... BACK TO THEIR NESTS.

LET'S JUST HOPE THEY STAY THERE.

TO BE CONT'D~

Play Better Golf with JACK NICKLAUS

IF YOU'RE A HIGH-HANDICAPPER, YOUR TOP GOAL WHEN BUNKERED SHOULD BE SIMPLY GETTING OUT IN ONE STROKE. YOU'LL DO SO WHEN YOU SLIDE THE CLUBHEAD THROUGH THE SAND BENEATH THE BALL.

JN

GETTING CLOSE RATHER THAN JUST OUT REQUIRES EXPERIMENTATION AND PRACTICE WITH VARIOUS TECHNIQUES TO MEET THE ENDLESS CHALLENGES PRESENTED BY BUNKERS. IN OTHER WORDS, STUDY AND WORK.

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Meniscal Tear in Knee Might Not Need Surgery

DEAR DR. ROACH: While chasing my cat, I dove to the ground and both my knees took a beating. They were bruised but felt fine. A few days after this, my left knee started to bother me. I put on a brace to see if that would help (as it usually does), but it didn't. I went to my chiropractor a few days later and had an adjustment and deep tissue massage. The next day, I was walking my dog and had to stop, as I couldn't move my knee. About 13 years ago, I had a torn meniscus in the same knee, and it healed without surgery with the assistance of my chiropractor, massage therapist and acupuncture.

I called my doctor's office, and he was out of town. His nurse suggested that I go to an urgent care facility to have an X-ray of my knee, which I did. The doctor said that nothing was broken but that I should follow up with an MRI. I saw my doctor a few days later and brought my X-ray, etc. He said I don't need an MRI. I am not looking for knee surgery, but wouldn't an MRI indicate if it is a torn meniscus, pulled ligament, osteoarthritis, etc., so I could get the proper treatment? What would that be? -- R.Z.

ANSWER: The menisci are ring-shaped cartilage structures that sit on top of the tibia and provide stability and shock absorption to the knee. Given the mechanism of injury and your prior history, a meniscal tear is a very likely possibility. Symptoms that support a tear in the meniscus would include a locking of the knee or a giving sensation while walking, often associated with pain.

A careful physical exam can usually make the diagnosis of a meniscal tear. A suspected meniscal tear does not usually require an MRI, as most will heal with conservative management. (I refer nearly all to physical therapy rather than the treatments you used, but I won't argue with your success.) I reserve the MRI for people in whom surgery would be contemplated. Since surgery is no better than placebo for many people with a torn meniscus (based on a fascinating 2017 study from Finland), I am particularly careful to refer only people who have not gotten better with a good trial of conservative management.

DEAR DR. ROACH: I have an affected nerve in my back causing long-term, persistent pain. Years ago, I damaged a sacroiliac nerve in a fall. This was treated by steroid injection. Could this nerve also be injected with a steroid? -- J.D.

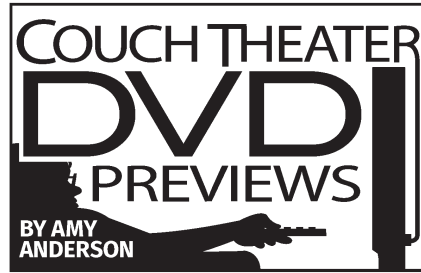
ANSWER: Injection of local anesthetics and steroids are done for several different types of back pain syndromes. However, the nerves themselves are not injected with steroids: It's the area around a nerve that is injected. That area may be inflamed, and the shot is given with the hope of reducing inflammation and thus reducing compression on the nerve and therefore pain. It does not always work, and when it does, the pain relief usually lasts a matter of months. The injections can be repeated if helpful; however, injecting steroids has its own risk of complications. Serious complications are rare, but infection and bleeding are possible. All injected steroids can predispose to osteoporosis.

Injection for back pain is done most often by pain management specialists when appropriate.

Dr. Roach regrets that he is unable to answer individual questions, but will incorporate them in the column whenever possible. Readers may email questions to ToYourGoodHealth@med.cornell.edu.

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The last Monday in May might mark the unofficial beginning of summer, but Memorial Day is not about barbecues or furniture sales; it's a very special day set aside to honor those truest of Americans who gave their lives in wartime service. Its roots are in Decoration Day, a time when people would set aside their day-to-day lives, visit cemeteries and decorate the gravesites of soldiers and seamen who died in the Civil War. After the tragic losses of World War I, and the conflicts that followed, Decoration Day slowly evolved to Memorial Day, cemented as a national holiday in 1971 by an act of Congress. Here are eight movies that honor the bravery and sacrifice of our fallen military heroes.

Glory — Matthew Broderick stars alongside Morgan Freeman and Denzel Washington in this Civil War story of the first all-African-American regiment, the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry. Under the command of Col. Robert Gould Shaw (Broderick), the unit is formed, trained and fights for equality, both in the broader context of the Civil War and within the Union Army itself.

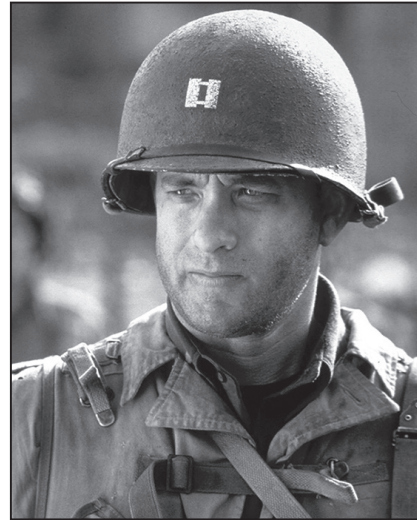
1917 (R) — A riveting first-person war story by celebrated director Sam Mendes, "1917" centers around two British lance corporals who are sent across enemy territory to stop a division of British soldiers from advancing into a German ambush.

The Longest Day (1962) — With a legendary cast — John Wayne, Robert Mitchum, Henry Fonda, Rod Steiger and more — the story of the Allied landing at Normandy Beach plays out, from early reports of bad weather to the tremendous loss of life and eventually the tide-turning influence of the largest seaborne invasion in history.

Flags of Our Fathers — From

director Clint Eastwood, an iconic moment — the raising of the American flag on Mount Suribachi on Iwo Jima — is reflected on in flashback by three servicemen involved.

Saving Private Ryan — From the opening sequence on Omaha Beach, to the sniper fire faced at every turn, Capt. Miller (Tom Hanks) leads a squad across France through questionable territory looking for the last survivor of four brothers to bring him home. The first 24 minutes are gut-wrenching and visceral.



DreamWorks/Paramount

Tom Hanks in "Saving Private Ryan"

Apocalypse Now — A Special Forces colonel gone mad (Marlon Brando), a burned-out captain brought in to seek out and reckon with him (Martin Sheen), a squadron commander who uses napalm to clear the way for surfing, this dark tale by Francis Coppola is on most major top-film lists.

Platoon — Written and directed by Oliver Stone — a Vietnam veteran himself — this film follows a volunteer soldier (Charlie Sheen) as he moves through his experience of combat and the jading of his idealism.

American Sniper — A biographical drama centered around the life of Chris Kyle, whose service in the Iraq War led to him being the deadliest marksman in U.S. military history.

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1. Where was Jackie Wilson when he suffered a heart attack?

2. Name the Simon and Garfunkel song that was used in the soundtrack for the 1967 film "The Graduate"?

3. In which Hollies song does the name of the girl rhyme with "freckles"?

4. Which group released "Natural High" and "Outside Woman"?

5. Name the song that contains this lyric: "Come right back I just can't bear it, I've got this love and I long to share it."

Answers

1. He was on "Dick Clark's Good Ol' Rock and Roll Revue," singing "Lonely Teardrops." Wilson had a

habit of taking lots of salt pills and water to create sweating, which he thought looked great onstage. Unfortunately, that combination also causes very high blood pressure. He never sang again.

2. "Mrs. Robinson." The following year it won a Grammy for Record of the Year.

3. "Jennifer Eccles." The name came from the wife of one of the writers and the maiden name of the other writer's wife.

4. Bloodstone, in 1973 and 1974.

5. "Have I the Right?" by The Honeycombs in 1964. The pounding drums were enhanced in the recording by the group stomping their feet on the wooden stairs at the studio, recorded by five microphones.

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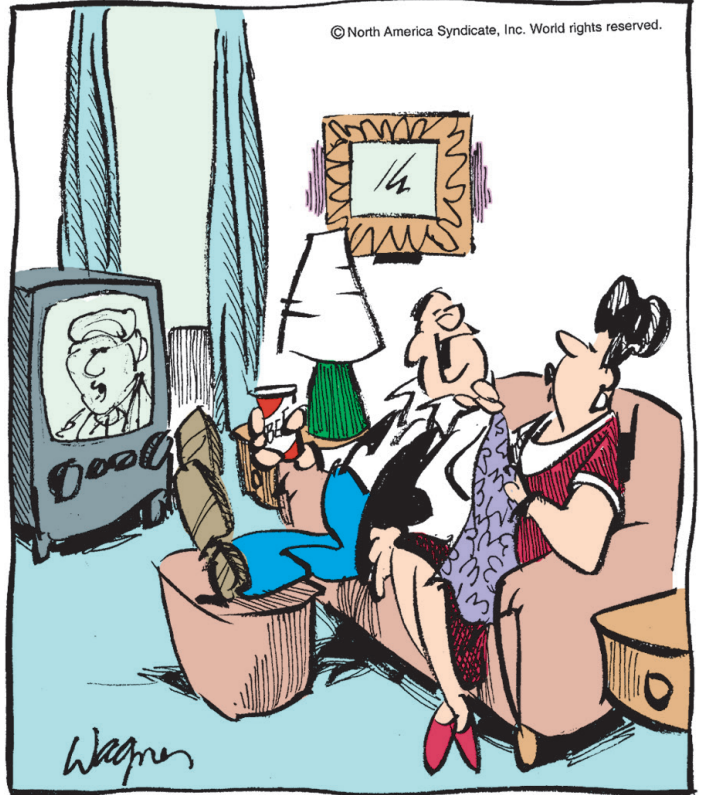
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Just Like Cats & Dogs by Dave T. Phipps



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GRIN and BEAR IT ^{by Wagner}

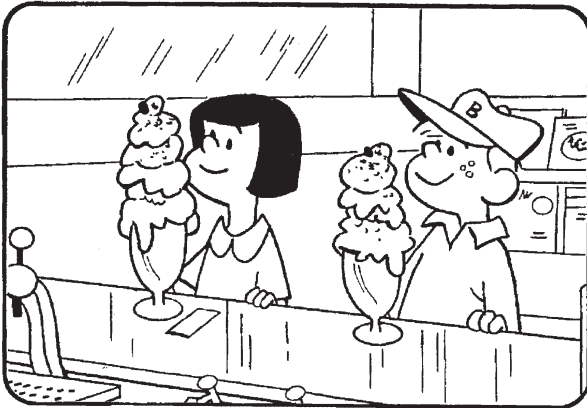


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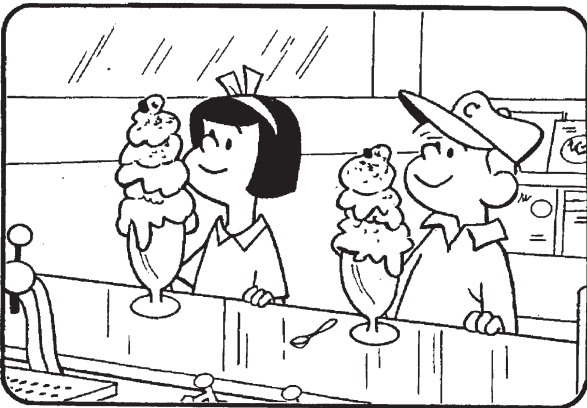
"With a little luck, I could have been fired by Donald Trump!"

HOCUS-FOCUS

BY HENRY BOLTINOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.



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Differences: 1. Cap is different. 2. Collar is different. 3. Spoon is added. 4. Napkin is missing. 5. Freckles are missing. 6. Bow is added.



- With the start of barbeque season, here are two tips straight from my local butcher about grilling meat: First, let meats come to room temperature before cooking. It allows the meat to cook more evenly, and you won't end up with a cold center and a burnt outside. Secondly, when your meat comes off the grill, give it time to rest before serving. This allows the juiced to redistribute throughout the cut of meat, and you'll end up with juicy goodness in every bite. — *JoAnn*

- “Bring a distinctive towel to a pool party so that you will know where your towel is. You can make an extra-large towel by sewing two smaller towels together, too.” — *U.A. in New York*

- “For a really fun take on kebabs, use fruit instead of meat. The kids especially love fruit on a stick. If you have some neat cookie cutters, use them to cut watermelon into different shapes.” — *M.M. in Michigan*

- The best outdoor tablecloths, especially on a windy day, are fitted single sheets. Simply fit the sheet over a standard picnic table, and it's in place and ready. The elastic at the corners keeps it from flying away. You can look at thrift and discount stores for fun patterns or just plain colors!

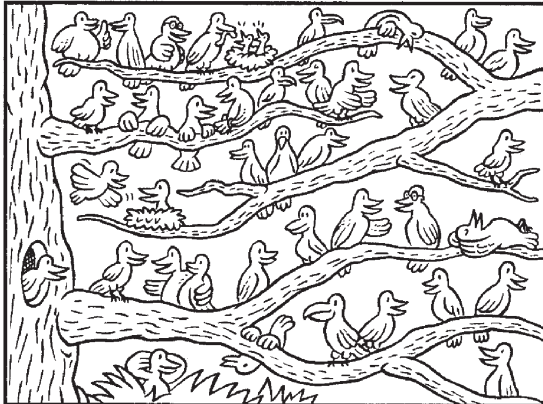
- To keep ants from invading your patio, draw a thick line of chalk (sidewalk chalk works great!) as a boundary. Ants don't like to cross a chalk line and will leave your patio party alone.

- “Frozen grapes are the best summer snack for the kids, plus they are the perfect wine ice cube ever.” — *J.R. in Oregon*

Send your tips to Now Here's a Tip, 628 Virginia Drive, Orlando, FL 32803.

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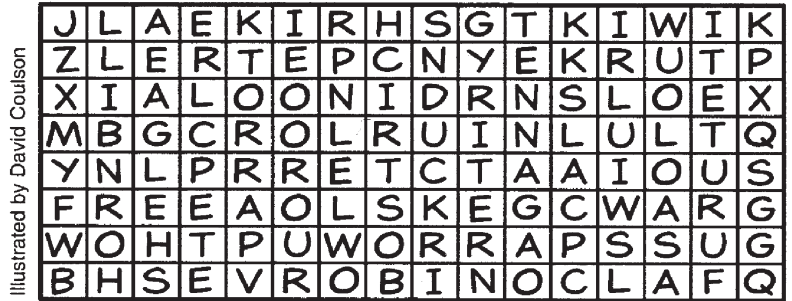
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Junior Whirl

by Charles Barry Townsend

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Illustrated by David Coulson

CHECK YOUR PEEPERS! Our artist says there are 40 birds pictured above. You have just one minute to find them all.

LUNCH BEAK! If six birds can eat six worms in six minutes, how many birds will be needed to eat 100 worms in 100 minutes at the same rate?

Answer: 100 birds.



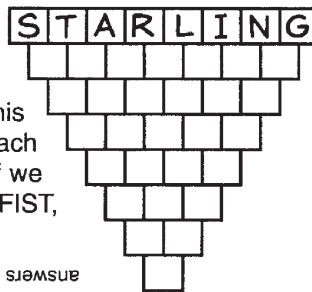
BIRDS OF A FEATHER! Hidden in the diagram above are the common names of 25 birds or families of birds. They can be found by reading up or down, left to right, or right to left. You'll even find them diagonally going

up or down. Letters can be used more than once. Listed below are the 25 birds you're looking for:

- | | | |
|--------|----------|----------|
| Crow | Hornbill | Shrike |
| Duck | Kiwi | Sparrow |
| Eagle | Loon | Starling |
| Falcon | Ostrich | Stork |
| Gannet | Parrot | Swan |
| Grouse | Pelican | Tern |
| Gull | Petrel | Turkey |
| Heron | Quail | Vulture |
| | Robin | |

ANOTHER STARLING

Starting with the word STARLING, try dropping one letter so that the remaining letters, in their original order, spell out a new word. Continue in this manner, dropping one letter at a time, until you reach the bottom of our word pyramid. As an example, if we started with the word FIRST we could get FIRST, FIST, FIT, IT, I. You have two minutes to solve this one.

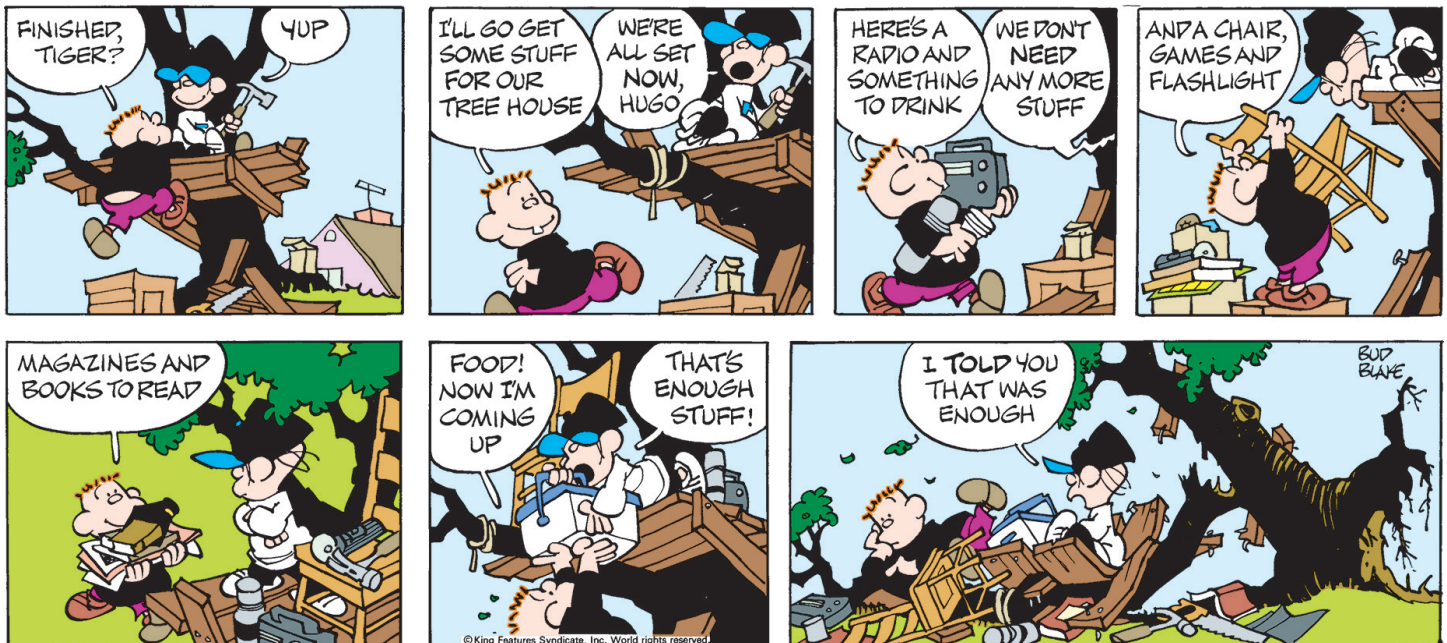


Answers may be possible.

Answer: STARLING, STARING, STRING, STING, SING, SIN, IN, I. Other

TIGER

by BUD BLAKE



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King Crossword

ACROSS

- 1 Met melody
- 5 "CSI" settings
- 9 Apply cream
- 12 Fender bend-er
- 13 Gumbo need
- 14 Mode lead-in
- 15 Instrument panel
- 17 Homer's neighbor
- 18 Thread hold-ers
- 19 "Tiny Alice" playwright
- 21 "Heavens!"
- 22 Spud
- 24 Green gem
- 27 Church seat
- 28 Ken or Barbie
- 31 Glamorous Gardner
- 32 Shoe width
- 33 Teeny
- 34 Baseball glove
- 36 British "Inc."
- 37 — B'rith
- 38 Soil
- 40 Opposite of nyet
- 41 "Yippee!"
- 43 Vile
- 47 Ghostly greet-ing
- 48 Music group at a New Year's Eve party

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8		9	10	11
12					13					14		
15				16						17		
18								19	20			
			21			22	23					
24	25	26			27				28		29	30
31					32					33		
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		38		39				40				
41	42						43			44	45	46
47				48	49	50						
51				52					53			
54				55						56		

- 51 Wall St. debut
 - 52 Jacob's twin
 - 53 Author Ferber
 - 54 "A mouse!"
 - 55 Peel
 - 56 Optimistic
- DOWN**
- 1 Tosses in
 - 2 Harvest
 - 3 Not — many words
 - 4 Not on the road
 - 5 Novelist Anita
 - 6 Alias letters
 - 7 "It's c-c-cold!"
 - 8 Nasser's suc-cessor
 - 9 "The Da Vinci Code" author
 - 10 Out of the storm
 - 11 Ordered
 - 16 Journalist Nellie
 - 20 Started
 - 22 Pearly whites
 - 23 Dumbstruck
 - 24 Bread spread
 - 25 Bird (Pref.)
 - 26 Appointment tracker
 - 27 Hide
 - 29 Meadow
 - 30 Tiki bar neck-lace
 - 35 Eastern path
 - 37 Sweeney Todd, for one
 - 39 Actress Winona
 - 40 Female hare
 - 41 Theater award
 - 42 Aspiration
 - 43 Gulf War mis-sile
 - 44 Pedestal part
 - 45 Hostels
 - 46 Crucial time
 - 49 "— was say-ing ..."
 - 50 Indian bread

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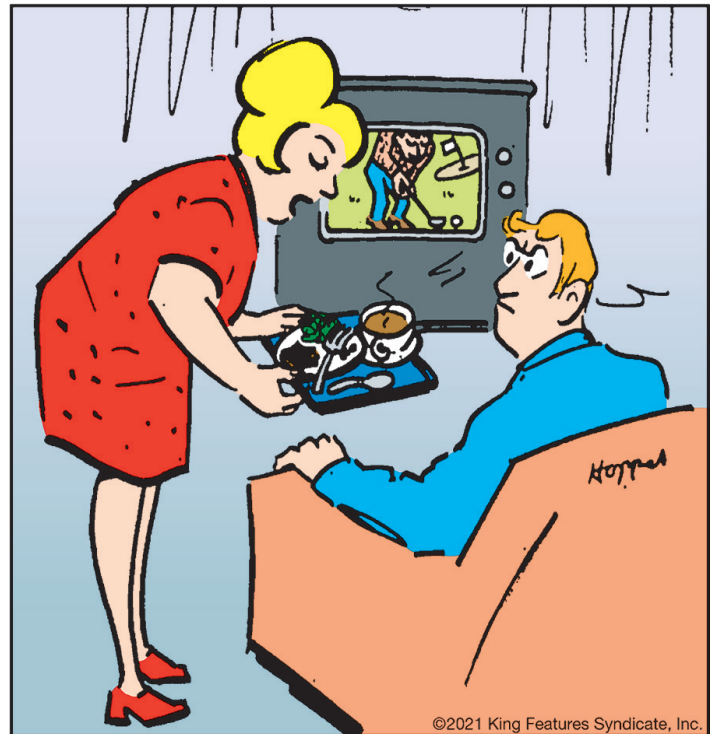
— King Crossword —

Answers

Solution time: 25 mins.

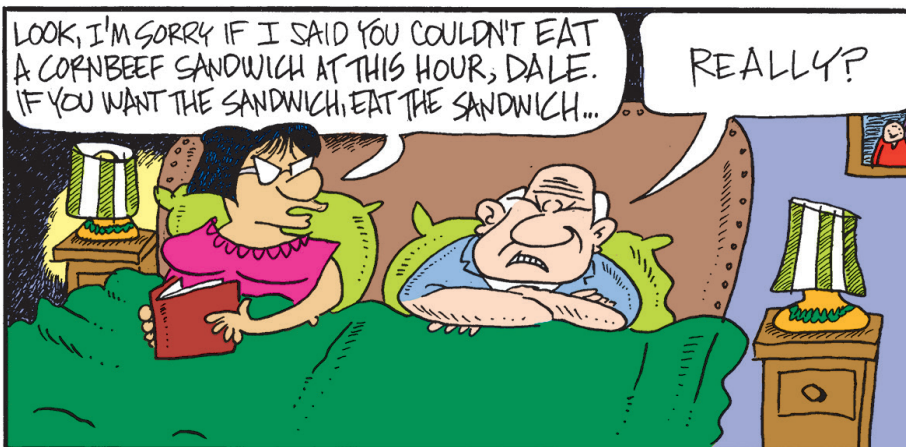
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			M	Y		T	A	T	E	R			
J	A	D	E		P	E	W		D	O	L	L	
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B	O	O			D	A	N	C	E	B	A	N	D
I	P	O			E	S	A	U		E	D	N	A
E	E	K			R	I	N	D		R	O	S	Y

LAFF - A - DAY



"Don't think of it as leftovers.
Think of it as a replay."

Out on a Limb

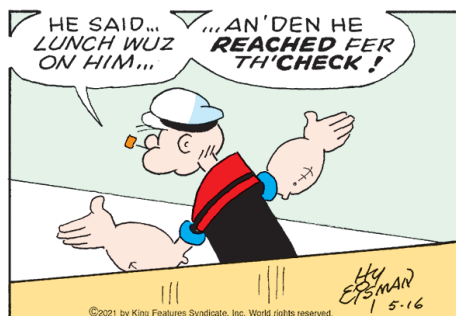
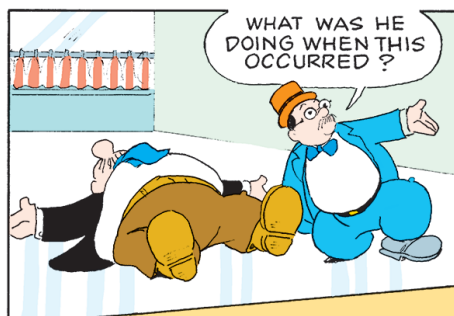
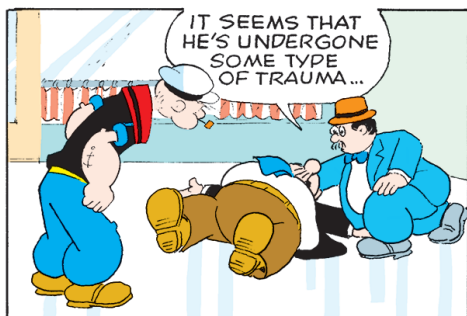
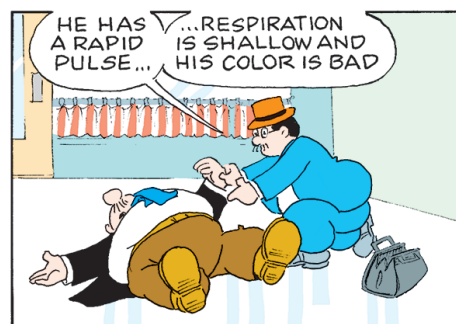
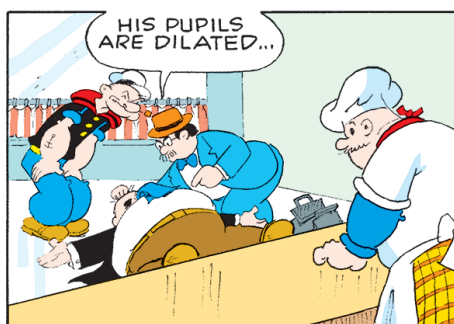
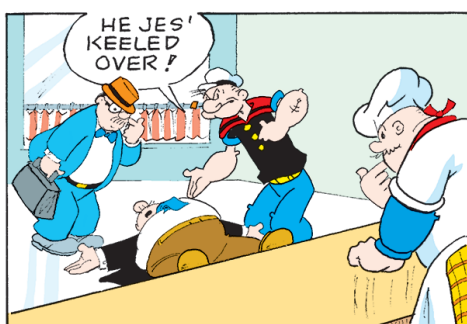
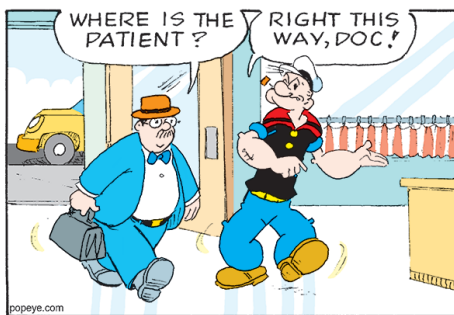
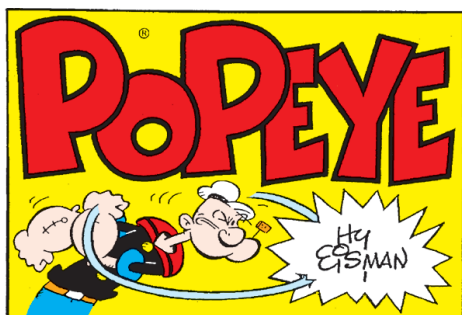


by Gary Koperas



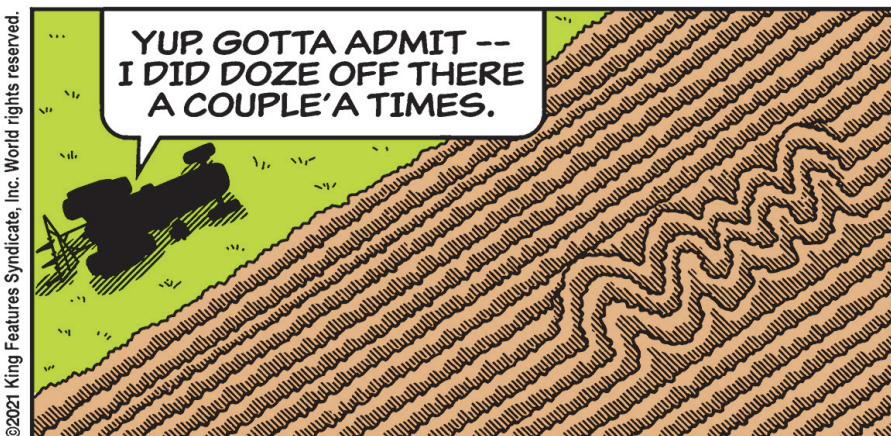
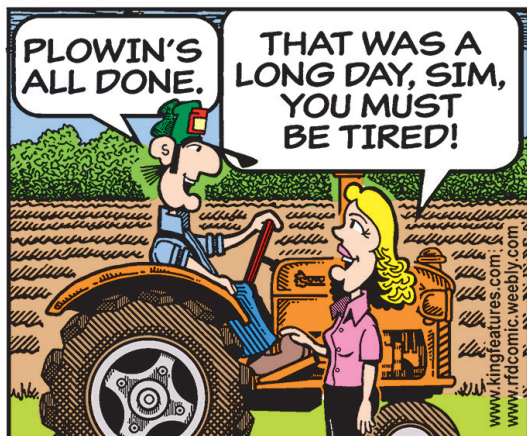
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R.F.D.

by Mike Marland



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Hal Foster's
Prince Valiant
BY GIANNI AND SCHULTZ

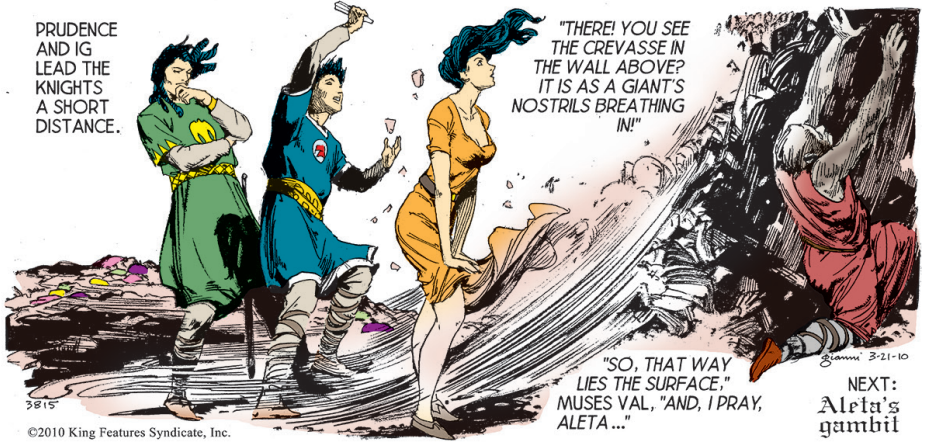
PRUDENCE'S CONFIDENT MANNER CONVINCES VAL: "I SPEAK FROM EXPERIENCE - AN UPDRAFT IN THE UNDERWORLD MEANS A WAY OUT!"



GAWAIN IS NOT PLEASED. "IT IS UNSEEMLY AND MOST UNNATURAL WHEN A GIRL GOES ADVENTURING, LEAVING TWO OF ARTHUR'S FINEST TO HARVEST MUSHROOMS. PHOOEY!"



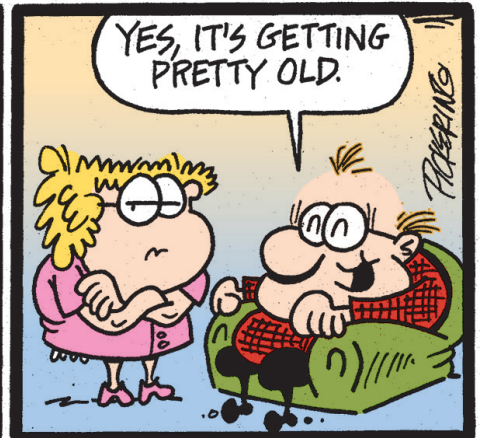
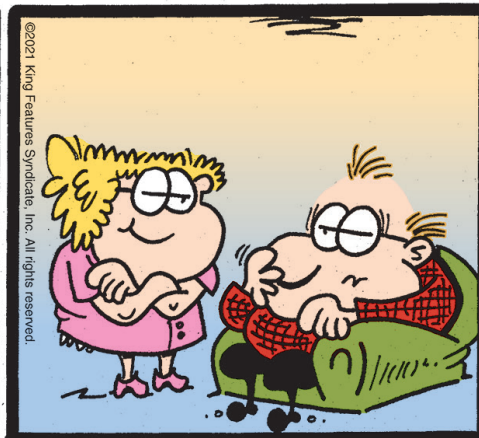
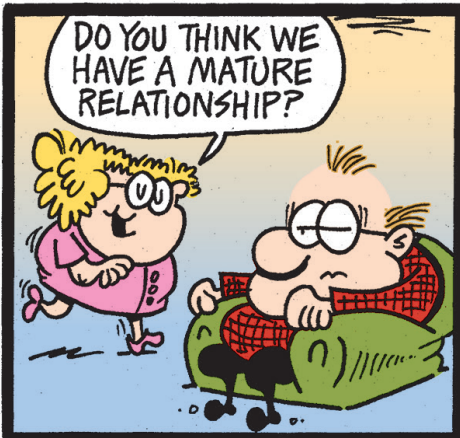
BUT GAWAIN'S TESTY DEMEANOR IS CUT SHORT BY THE SURVEY TEAM'S EXCITED RETURN: "COME QUICK! I WAS RIGHT!"



Gianni 3-21-10
NEXT:
Aleta's gambit

The Spats

by Jeff Pickering



SENIOR NEWS LINE

by Matilda Charles

Help With COVID Funeral Expenses

No one wants to think about it, but it's a fact of life. People are dying of COVID. They're leaving behind families that, in many cases, are already struggling with financial worries. Add in the cost of a funeral, and many will need help.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency is stepping in with funding. Under the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2021 and the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, FEMA is offering financial assistance for funeral expenses incurred after Jan. 20, 2020.

FEMA has started an assistance phone line (844-684-6333) that's open Monday-Friday, 9am-9pm ET. Its representatives will help get applications completed. The call will take about 20 minutes, so they can get all the details right. Have all your information in front of you before you call.

Once you're given an application number, you'll need to send supporting documentation to FEMA, typical-

ly by fax or mail.

To learn more, go to the FEMA website: www.fema.gov. Scroll down the front page to the item dated April 12, 2021, Funeral Assistance FAQ.

There are a number of criteria to see if you're qualified for help. You must be a U.S. citizen, noncitizen national or qualified alien. You must be the one who paid the funeral expenses. Funeral homes cannot call for you. If several of you contributed to the expenses, tell them at FEMA, but typically there needs to be one application.

There are a number of categories of funeral expense that might be covered, including headstone, casket, clergy services and more.

A warning: Scammers are always looking for the next way to con people out of money. Now they're calling people (possibly those who were listed in funeral notices) and offering to help fill out the applications for assistance. Don't fall for it. FEMA is not going to call you.

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1. Name the quarterback who started for the San Diego Chargers in their 49-26 loss to the San Francisco 49ers in Super Bowl XXIX.

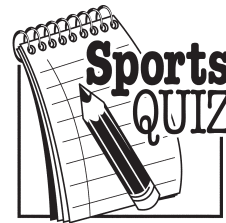
2. What Baseball Hall of Famer, nicknamed "Double X," became the second player in Major League Baseball history to hit 500 career home runs when he achieved the milestone in 1940?

3. Reality TV star Kendra Wilkinson ("The Girls Next Door," "Kendra") was married to what NFL wide receiver from 2009-18?

4. What golf equipment manufacturer introduced its Big Bertha line of stainless-steel drivers in 1991?

5. During the Korean War, Boston Red Sox legend Ted Williams flew fighter jets and was wingman for what future astronaut/politician?

6. Shannon O'Keefe, Dasha Kovalova, Danielle McEwan and Bryanna



by Ryan A. Berenz

Cote are athletes in what professional sports league?

7. For what Apple TV+ series did Jason Sudeikis win a Golden Globe award for portraying a backwoods American football coach who takes a job as manager of an English Premier League soccer club?

Answers

1. Stan Humphries.
2. Jimmie Foxx.
3. Hank Baskett.
4. Callaway Golf Company.
5. John Glenn.
6. The Professional Women's Bowl-

Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps



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Are Coyotes Really a Threat in Suburbs?

DEAR PAW'S CORNER: I bought a house in the suburbs last month. My next-door neighbor warned me that there is a coyote in the area and not to let my cat outside. I've read that coyotes are very shy and won't bother dogs, and they aren't fast enough to catch a cat. Should I just ignore the warning? — *Pet Dad in Marlborough, Massachusetts*

DEAR PET DAD: Coyotes have made a comeback in the U.S. and are present in many suburbs and even in the city. While coyotes are less likely to attack larger dogs, they've been known to go after smaller dogs. And cats are not necessarily fast enough to escape, either. So, if the neighbors are reporting a coyote in the area, take heed. Don't let your cat or dog out in the backyard unsupervised.

Even if you have a fence around the yard, unless it's over 6 feet tall (and not all municipalities allow that height) it may not discourage a coyote from hopping it and nosing around.

Coyotes are mostly looking for food. They're opportunists. If there is cat or dog food left outside, for example, they'll eat it — and probably come back later, looking for more. This is one way that conflicts with coyotes (and other local wildlife) can start. If they have a reason to come onto your property to begin with, and then start to see your pets as another food source — you've got a problem.

To sum up:

- Supervise pets when they're outside. Stay out there with them.
- Don't leave their food or water outside unattended; bring it in each evening.
- Consider wildlife-resistant fencing to keep coyotes and other unwanted critters out of your yard.

Send your tips, comments and questions to ask@pawscorner.com.

Strange BUT TRUE

By Lucie Winborne

* Sir Isaac Newton invented the cat flap. Newton was experimenting in a pitch-black room when Spithead, one of his cats, kept opening the door and wrecking his experiment. The flap kept both human and feline happy.

* "Brave New World" author Aldous Huxley became almost completely blind as a teenager. He regained much of his sight later in life, crediting an unorthodox treatment known as "The Bates Method," which recommends never using eyeglasses and exposing one's eyes regularly to sunlight.

* The ancient Greeks believed that redheads would turn into vampires after they died.

* Walt Disney's "The Three Little Pigs," released in 1933, was seen as symbolic of the Great Depression, with the wolf representing the Depression and the three little pigs representing average citizens who eventually succeeded by working together.

* In Japan, Domino's started testing pizza delivery via reindeer in 2016.

* James Barry, the Inspector General of the British Army in 1858 during a period when women were not respected in the medical field, had a highly successful career in surgery for more than 50 years. During an autopsy after Barry's death, he was discovered to be a woman in disguise. To avoid embarrassment, the war department and medical association arranged for the doctor to be interred as a man.

* The average office chair with wheels travels about 8 miles per year.

* Chicago Cubs outfielder Rick Monday became a national hero when he rescued an American flag from two men trying to set it on fire at Dodger Stadium during a game on April 25, 1976. The 25,167 fans gave him a standing ovation and started singing "God Bless America."

Thought for the Day: "First find a path, and a little light to see by. Then push up your sleeves and start helping." -- Anne Lamott

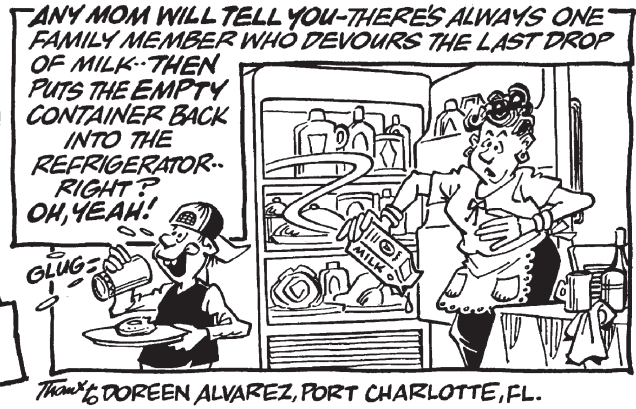
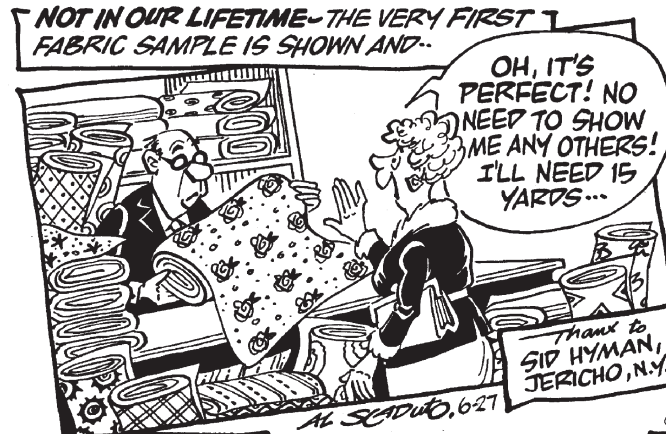
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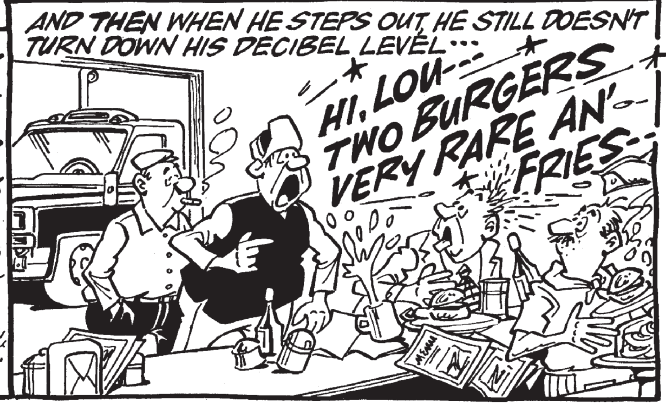
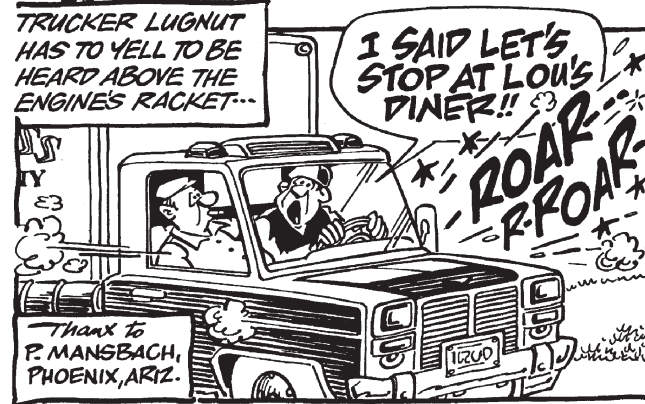
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THEY'LL DO IT EVERY TIME

BY AL SCADUTO



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The Garden Bug

All parts of the dandelion are edible and healthful. Its roots contain inulin and levulin (which balance blood sugar) and taraxacin (which helps digestion) and can be eaten raw or cooked. Its leaves are rich in potassium, antioxidants, and vitamins A and C, and can be eaten raw, steamed, boiled, sautéed or braised. The flowers can be added to salads, made into jellies or used to make wine.

Dandelion - Brenda Weaver

Source: www.motherearthnews.com



by Freddy Groves

Homeless Vets Study

A recent Department of Veterans Affairs press release about a study of homelessness among veterans said it found “issues related to financial strain are significant risk factors for becoming homeless.” Those types of financial strain, it said, are debt, unemployment, lower income and financial crisis.

Color me confused. A study was done that concluded those four types of financial woe could lead to homelessness? I think that anyone who’s paying for their first apartment could have come up with those same reasons.

The press release went on say that the study recommended the VA integrate financial education with VA services for housing crisis help. Job retraining, financial support services, debt management and vocational rehab all can help to reduce the risk of future homelessness, the study said.

homeless, the study said.

Most of the press release, however, touted the VA’s National Center on Homelessness Among Veterans, tasked with finding solutions to veteran homelessness and assessing programs. It should be noted that the head of the center also happens to be the lead researcher on the quoted study.

Nowhere in the press release did it mention the main focus of the study: the link between mental illness, financial strain and homelessness, and the author’s call for a national longitudinal study into whether those three are tied together.

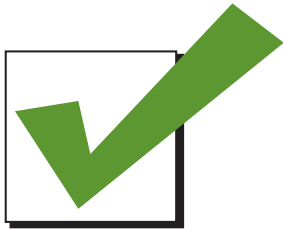
Days later, another press release popped up, this one a joint communique between the VA and the Department of Housing and Urban Development announcing that they are aligning their efforts, thanks to the \$10 billion American Rescue Plan. Ending veteran homelessness will be their first priority, and information and materials will be analyzed during their quarterly meetings.

If you’re in danger of becoming homeless, call the National Call Center for Homeless Veterans at (877) 4AID-VET (877-424-3838) for help. Or call your closest regional VA medical center, but don’t go there unless you’re actually homeless (or at risk of it), they’re careful to warn, due to the problems of COVID. Call in advance.

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CONGRESSMAN
DUSTY JOHNSON
Representing **SOUTH DAKOTA** at large



Serving Our Heroes

On the last Monday of every May, our nation pays special tribute to those who gave the ultimate sacrifice while serving in the United States Armed Forces.

Our celebration of Memorial Day dates back to the Civil War, when fellow Americans began honoring the countless soldiers who lost their lives in battle. Memorial Day is often filled with picnics and parades, but it's important to take a moment to truly reflect on the solemnity of the day.

While Memorial Day is set aside to honor the American heroes who never made it home, since coming to Congress, it's been a priority of mine to support our servicemembers who did.

This past week the U.S. House passed the Native VetSuccess at Tribal Colleges and Universities Pilot Program Act, a bill I led along with Representative Gallego of Arizona.

The VetSuccess on Campus (VSOC) program currently provides services to thousands of veterans at 104 institutions across the country – our bill extends this program to Tribal Colleges and Universities – including those located in South Dakota.

The VSOC program provides veterans with access to many services including educational and career counseling, adjustment counseling, vocational training, expedited veteran readiness and employment services, and referrals through the Veteran's Affairs medical centers.

For the tremendous sacrifices our veterans have made, they deserve resources and services that best prepare them to complete their education, secure employment, and make the adjustment back into civilian life. The VSOC program has been critical to the long-term success of our veterans, and I am grateful to extend this program to Native veterans attending Tribal Colleges.

I'm proud our bill passed the House and look forward to the day our Native veterans can take full advantage of the services they've earned.

As we collectively mourn the loss of those servicemembers who have died this Memorial Day, I will continue to be a strong advocate for our veterans who have fought to protect our nation's freedoms.

South Dakota Governor

Kristi Noem



South Dakota: *Under God, the People Rule*

Triumphs and Mistakes: Learning from Our History

The United States of America has a truly unique and wonderful history. Our nation was the first to be founded on an ideal: that "all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness."

In pursuit of this ideal, our nation has seen many triumphs. Along the way, we've also made some terrible mistakes. Our triumphs have occurred when we lived up to this ideal. Our mistakes have come when we fell short.

As our children and grandchildren grow and learn, they should be taught the full picture of our nation's history – our fundamental values, our greatest achievements, and the long struggles to overcome injustice as well. Our young people must understand the mistakes as well as the triumphs, of course. But those mistakes must be put in proper context, and right now I am concerned that this is not the case nationally.

Across the nation, we've seen a different, misinformed version of American history take root. The so-called 1619 Project (a creation of the New York Times) is being promoted by the Biden Administration as a recommended resource for their K-12 American History and Civics Education programs. The 1619 Project claims that America was founded on racism and slavery, not on an ideal of equality. It seeks to incorrectly re-frame the nation as a story of "us versus them" rather than "We the People." Moreover, the 1619 Project relies upon the concept of Critical Race Theory to further divide students based on the color of their skin.

This is inappropriate and un-American. It has no place in South Dakota, and it certainly has no place in South Dakota classrooms. According to many historians, this 1619 Project's version of American history is full of errors and misstatements that should be avoided, not embraced. That is why this week, South Dakota's Department of Education Secretary Tiffany Sanderson and State Historian Dr. Ben Jones pushed back on the Biden Administration's support for the 1619 Project and Critical Race Theory in our schools.

Similarly, a few weeks ago I signed the "1776 Pledge to Save Our Schools" as a commitment that I will work to make patriotic education a priority in South Dakota classrooms. I will be working with the South Dakota Board of Regents to ensure honest, patriotic education in our institutions of higher education. And my Department of Education will not apply for any federal civics or history grants that are tied to Critical Race Theory or the 1619 Project.

This past legislative session, I worked with the legislature to pass funding for robust civics education that helps our students to learn America's history and everything that makes our country special. As part of that education, they'll learn about the history of our state. They'll learn the history of our tribes as well. And they will learn about America's mistakes – the times that we fell short of our ideal of equality – so that we can learn from those mistakes. But they'll learn of our triumphs as well. They'll learn about the leaders who made those triumphs possible. As a result, I'm hopeful that our students will better be able to emulate those triumphs into the future.

Our nation's history shouldn't be political. "All men are created equal" shouldn't be controversial. I look forward to continuing to promote a patriotic education throughout South Dakota that cultivates in our next generation a profound love for our country.

Medicare has changed. Find out how it can affect you.

Important changes to the federal Medicare program became effective at the beginning of the year. As a result, retirees in your state may be eligible for coverage with new options.

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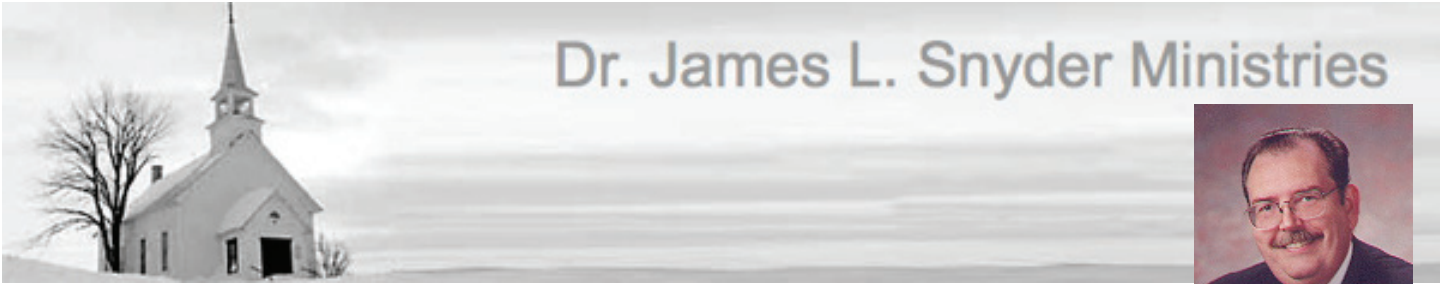
Information will be provided by Physicians Life Insurance Company

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To Scam or Not to Scam That Is the Phone Call

One day this past week, I decided to stay home and catch up on a little bit of reading. It's not often that I take a day and not go to the office and just pander around the house. Sometimes it's necessary to do such a thing, and I don't do it often enough.

The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage had a day planned of shopping as well as an appointment at her doctor. She would be gone the whole day, and so I would have the entire day to myself. I was looking forward to it. Who wouldn't?

I really was mistaken about this idea. For me to have a day by myself is a wonderful idea, but it's still back in Kansas.

The wife just left the building, I had settled down with a stack of books I needed to go through and, of course, a hot cup of coffee to the left of me. I was looking forward to a wonderful day. I sighed a deep sigh and opened up the first book.

Then I got a phone call. I wasn't prepared for the phone call, so I answered, expecting to talk to someone.

It was a reminder that my car warranty had expired, and if I press number 1, I would be transferred to someone who could renew it. They also said that this is the last opportunity I have to renew my warranty.

I want to get the definition of the word "last." If this is the last opportunity I have, why have I received hundreds of these phone calls?

A few moments later, another phone call came.

I wrestle with the idea of, is it okay to lie to someone who is lying to you?

The lady on the phone congratulated me on winning two round-trip tickets to anywhere I wanted to go. All I needed to do was come to their headquarters and they would put us up for three days and two nights, and the food was included.

I don't know how ideas dance into my head, but this one did.

I responded to the lady, "I'm sorry, but my religion does not allow me to fly on airplanes."

The crickets on the other end did a little concert and then she got back to me and told me that I could give those tickets to anybody I wanted to. All I had to do was to come over to their headquarters, and everything would be fine.

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"My religion," I explained, "not only does not permit me to fly on airplanes but does not allow me to give airplane tickets to anybody. I appreciate your offer, but I cannot do it."

Sometimes religion can come in handy. I chuckled to myself the rest of the day. When I'm through chuckling, I will confess my sin.

There were a few other phone calls, and I responded quite similarly to all of them. If anybody can harass a telemarketer, it is my wife's favorite husband.

Then I got a phone call I wasn't prepared for. This phone call was from Duke Energy.

According to the person on the phone, they sent me four notifications that my account was delinquent and that my electricity would be cut off today.

This sort of rocked my afternoon. If I'm without electricity, what do I do? And you know what it's like to have your electricity reinstated with all the fees.

According to the person on the other end of the phone, I owed Duke energy \$998.59 for the last eight months that I have not paid.

If you want to get my attention just tell me you want my money.

"What can I do," I asked in desperation, "to keep from having my electricity cut off?"

Then I told him I did not have that much money to pay. He was asking for a credit card number so I could get up to date on my account.

"I can help you here," he said, "by lowering your payment to \$698.59."

He could tell I was hesitating here, and so he responded by saying, "If there is anything wrong, we will be able to refund your payment, so there's no risk."

Then, I heard in my head, "ding dong, the witch is dead."

I began to realize I was in the middle of a scam, and I didn't know it. As soon as I thought that, I knew I was in trouble but not the kind of trouble he was telling me.

He gave me a number that I could call, and I knew it wasn't the right number. After I hung up, I looked up my Duke Energy account and called them, and much to my relief, they told me that it was a scam and that my account was up-to-date.

I thought about this, and perhaps this scam was a payment for lying about the airplane tickets. I could have really been had.

Thinking about what I really could have been involved in brought a little spirit of repentance to my heart. I thought about a verse in the Bible. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Galatians 6:7).

When I do negative things, I will reap negative things. And I was about to reap something very negative. But the thing that makes the difference is recognizing it and then repenting.

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Part 2: Why some South Dakotans are pessimistic about the future

Bart Pfankuch

South Dakota News Watch

Long-standing economic hardships have prevented a sizable segment of the South Dakota population from achieving financial stability and prosperity, and those hurdles have resulted in a sense of pessimism for what awaits future generations, according to two experts who study the state economy.

State and federal data routinely show that:

- South Dakota employers pay some of the lowest wages in the nation.
- A high number of families pay an excessive portion of their income on housing.
- The state has a regressive system of taxation.
- Many workers are not seeing their pay cover the rising cost of living in the state.
- Meanwhile, the state is seeing a sharp spike in the cost of housing and health care, two

critical components of living a happy life.

Those factors, the two experts said, may help explain why a recent survey of 500 South Dakotans showed that nearly half of respondents felt they were not doing as well as their parents at the current stage of their lives, and that 72% said they expected life will be the same or worse for their children or future generations of South Dakotans.

The telephone poll was commissioned in late April by South Dakota News Watch and the Chiesman Center for Democracy at the University of South Dakota. The 500 respondents came from all counties in the state and were fairly representative of the overall state in terms of age, gender and political party. The median income of the respondents was about 30% higher than the overall state average, and Native Americans were included but were underrepresented compared with the entire state.

News Watch provided the answers to some poll questions to three South Dakota economists before interviewing them.

While two professors pointed mostly to financial challenges among state residents as the reason for the apparent pessimism, one economist said the negativity is more likely the result of political division and overall uncertainty in the state caused in part by the COVID-19 pandemic.

All three experts said the pandemic and the loss of jobs and reduced income it caused either brought to the surface or exacerbated pessimism among South Dakotans.

Yet Kathryn Birkeland, an economics and labor professor at USD, said the pessimism in the poll results did not surprise her because South Dakota has long faced a set of consistent economic challenges, including low wages, a high burden of housing costs and a lack of upward mobility.

"Some people are being left behind and some people are really struggling and it's a long-term trend," Birkeland said. "Combined with rents and housing prices that have risen faster than wages, those people who are stuck in low- to medium-wage jobs are likely to feel that life is not improving now or into the future."

The poll results contained some positive economic signs for South Dakotans:

- Nearly three in five respondents said they were doing better now than five years ago.
- 64% said they have three months' worth of expenses in savings.
- Nearly 70% said they feel very secure or somewhat secure about how much money they

have set aside for retirement.

One economist said he doubts the pessimism showed by some poll respondents was driven by economic

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concerns.

Jared McEntaffer, president and CEO of Benchmark Data, a Rapid City non-profit consulting firm, said the relatively high median income of poll respondents points to more political or social unease for the pessimism.

The 500 respondents in the News Watch/Chiesman Center poll had a median annual household income of \$75,000, about 30% higher than the overall statewide median income of \$58,000.

The strong political polarization in the country and in South Dakota, coupled with an emotional hangover from the stress of the pandemic, likely led poll respondents to express some negativity, McEntaffer said.

"There's just a lot of uncertainty, fear and frustration out there, so those emotions are probably running strong through the population right now more than they were a few years ago," he said. "It makes me think it's more of a political milieu, a general mood of the country rather than being driven by the economic realities."

McEntaffer said his interpretation was not meant to downplay the real financial problems facing many South Dakotans, such as access to affordable housing or the ability to earn a livable wage. However, McEntaffer pointed out that the South Dakota economy fared better than most states' during the pandemic and the rebound has come more quickly.

"That's not to dismiss the real concerns weighing on people," said McEntaffer, who has a doctorate in economics from the University of Nebraska. "I just think the bulk of it is coming from a different direction than the economy. It's hard to see the justification for such pessimism in terms of the economic health of this state."

Poll respondents were harsh in their view of the current state of democratic institutions in the U.S., and the political divide among poll respondents was stark in some cases.

Overall, almost 65% of respondents said they were very or somewhat dissatisfied with how democracy is working in the United States. Compared with Independents or Democrats, Republicans showed far less confidence in the effectiveness of some democratic institutions, including the executive branch, the Congress, the courts, colleges and universities and the press. Republicans were far more likely than Independents or Democrats to answer that life will be worse for future generations, with 60% of Republicans answering "worse off" compared with 52% of Independents and only 41% of Democrats.

Costs of housing and health care rising

The inability to afford or maintain good-quality housing likely led some poll respondents to express some pessimism about the future, Birkeland said.

A recent U.S. Census survey showed that 32.7 percent of all South Dakota renters pay 35 percent or more of their gross income in rent, making the state one of the worst in the nation for its "rent-burdened" population.

"The same faction of people have been housing-burdened for the last decade ... so, even though your wages have gone up, if your housing costs have gone up as well, it doesn't feel like you're ever going to get ahead and your children are never going to get ahead," Birkeland said. "Looking out into the world, if you're a person who hasn't had a raise in your job for a few years, and you're just happy to keep your job, and your rent just keeps going up, life doesn't feel great."

The increasing cost of health care is another economic factor that weighs heavily on many people's outlook for future generations, Birkeland said.

"It would seem that we are most pessimistic about what the world is going to look like for our children and there's some pretty big structural changes that will come about in our lifetimes," Birkeland said. "The entire health-care aspect of our economy and how that's funded and what it looks like cannot be ignored; those higher costs will be on the shoulders of those who are still working in 30 years."

Birkeland said a sense of foreboding may exist among people 35 and older who have recently endured two major national financial interruptions — the Great Recession of 2008 and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

"It's great for some of us," she said of the economy. "It's great for those who are able to sell their house or who produce things in an industry that is in high demand at the moment, but it's not great for everybody."

Low wages holding many back

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The historically low wages paid to thousands of South Dakotans are likely the most determinant factor in the pessimism shown in the poll, said Evert Van der Sluis, a professor in the Ness School of Management and Economics at South Dakota State University.

The South Dakota unemployment rate was only 2.9% in April 2021, but state officials still implemented a multi-agency effort this spring to lure thousands of job-seekers to the state to fill a wide range of open positions. But most open jobs are low-wage positions.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, South Dakota was 45th in the nation and worst among all Great Plains states, with a median annual wage of \$36,820 in 2020.

State labor department data from April 2021 showed that nearly 22% of non-farm jobs in the state were in the retail and leisure/hospitality fields, both traditionally low-paying fields.

An analysis of federal wage data from 2017 showed that about 21 percent of employed South Dakota residents, about 87,000 people, made under \$30,000 a year; 41 percent of employed South Dakota residents, about 169,400 people, made under \$35,000 a year.

Van der Sluis said pay rates that start low and do not rise as fast as the cost of living in South Dakota are preventing some people from attaining wealth or prosperity.

"It was always said that a job is a job is a job, but in economic terms that doesn't really hold true," he said. "Low-wage jobs may look nice, but they aren't sufficient."

Van der Sluis said employers and policymakers in South Dakota have long used the lack of a state income tax and the perception of a low cost of living in the state as justification to offer low wages to workers.

"It makes for an easy message," Van der Sluis said. "But it goes to the question of income distribution and the fact that a group of people in South Dakota are not seeing their lives improved as much as some other people."

With a sales tax-based revenue structure, South Dakota also has a very regressive system of taxation that over time reduces the opportunity for low-wage workers to improve their lives or the lives of their children.

"That [sales-tax] burden falls disproportionately on the lower-income people," he said.

Birkeland said politicians and policymakers in South Dakota often point to intangible benefits that make the state a great place to live, such as wide-open spaces, abundant outdoor recreation and a relaxed pace of life.

But she said South Dakota's economy doesn't stack up well against those in neighboring states.

One example is the state's over-reliance on the agriculture industry and continued taxation benefits for farming and ranching, to the detriment of industries such as finance, banking and insurance, which could create more and better-paying jobs, she said.

"There are some pretty significant issues facing workers that don't seem to appear in states that are close to us," she said. "If you have the ability to work in Minnesota or Iowa or Nebraska, and do almost the same thing you do here, people are choosing to do that even with the supposedly higher tax rate in other states."

Educational attainment a factor in health

Van der Sluis took note of the poll results showing that the highest percentage of respondents who feel life will be worse for future generations were in the age range of 45-64 and that South Dakota men were significantly more pessimistic than women about the future.

Those findings dovetail with recent findings by researchers at Princeton University who coined the term "Deaths of Despair" to identify a phenomenon in which non-college-educated, working-class people, especially middle-aged males, are dying at high rates from alcoholism, drug abuse and suicide.

This group of people, whom Van der Sluis referred to as "displaced" from the overall economic growth in America and in South Dakota, have not progressed as much as they would hope in terms of financial wealth or lifestyle advancement. A lack of educational attainment has been tied to a number of negative financial and health outcomes, he said.

"We have a large group of people who don't have any assets and they are sort of left behind," he said. "Real earnings haven't really increased since the 1970s for that group, and they are not coming along in the economic boom that to some degree we are observing. Sooner or later, that is going to catch up to

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people in their psyche.”

Van der Sluis also noted that more than half of poll respondents ages 18-34 felt that life will be worse off for future generations of South Dakotans. Some of that pessimism may be due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its interruption of their lives, but the data also show that even younger residents of South Dakota have concerns that they are not progressing in life as much as they desire.

“That’s not surprising given the COVID world, yet this is very disconcerting that young people feel a little more pessimistic about their future,” Van der Sluis said. “That reflects the fact that they’re not moving up in a way they think they should.”

Van der Sluis said South Dakota faces major challenges in reversing the growing income and educational gap due in part to its rural nature and reliance on agriculture. Diversifying the economy and trying to develop conglomerations, or geographical pockets, of new industry within the state can create opportunities for more people to get good jobs and to attain prosperity.

He said it is important for policymakers to be aware of the recent poll results in order to better understand the stress some South Dakotans are feeling.

“If a large group of people feel left behind to some degree, we surely should know about this,” he said.

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Wage Memorial Library opens up for Story Time

The Wage Memorial Library, now located at 120 N Main, has opened up at its new location. Thursday are now Story Telling Time. This past week, Becca Johnson and her son, Jace, assisted with the Story Time. (Photos by Hope Block)

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The Wage Memorial Library is slowly making progress. The children's section is all ready to go, but more shelves are needed for the adult books. People have been donating their good used books to the library as it continues to expand with a larger book selection. (Photo by Hope Block)

City Hall to open Monday morning at its new location

The Groton City Hall was closed on Friday as the final transition was made to its new location. The baseball workers along with Aaron Severson moved the final batch of boxes on Friday while Landon Johnson and Paul Kosel got the technology infrastructure up and going for the computers and copiers. It should be noted that City Hall will utilize the drive-through option. Payments can be dropped off any time in the drop box on the west side of the building and during business hours, you can use the drive-up to ask questions or make payments without having to go inside. Hope Block, April Abeln and Kellie Locke will be continuing to unpack the many boxes.

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EARTHTALK ™

From the Editors of E - The Environmental Magazine

Dear EarthTalk: What are some of the most common contaminants our pets are exposed to and how can we avoid them?

-- Maria R., Chicago, IL

This issue grabbed headlines when it was revealed in the May 2021 that domestic dogs and horses were suffering from health issues and premature death from exposure through drinking water to chemicals emitted by the Chemours Fayetteville Works chemical plant in Bladen County, North Carolina.

The offending chemicals—perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) that are added to everyday products to make them water, grease and stain-resistant—fall to the ground with rain. They then permeate soils and the water table for some 18 miles in every direction. Most residents of this rural area get their drinking water from private wells that do not benefit from community clean water filtration systems or standards. A court challenge by local clean water advocates prompted a local judge to order Chemours Fayetteville Works to provide local residents with water filtration systems to filter out offending chemicals. But many locals say they can't rest easy until the factory closes altogether.

If you do live within the pollution radius of a factory, you'll want to get your drinking water (and air quality) tested for contaminants on a regular basis to make sure you, your family members and pets aren't getting poisoned. If the results aren't good, it may be time to see if any neighbors are experiencing issues and start asking some questions to get to the bottom of where the pollution might be coming from.

There are of course many other threats to pets even if you don't live near a pollution "point source." In one study, researchers found that the brains of dogs exposed to the heavy and constant air pollution of Mexico City had significantly elevated inflammation and pathology profiles (including neurofibrillary tangles that cause Alzheimer's in humans) compared to dogs from more rural, less polluted regions.

Since our pets spend lots of time walking and running through—not to mention rolling around in and even nibbling on—the grass, it's not surprising that they are much more likely to pick up and ingest contaminants than their owners. If your dog or cat develops a skin rash, vomiting, diarrhea, excessive salivation, dilated pupils, lack of coordination, or respiratory difficulties, it may be related to chemical exposure. Regarding longer-term effects, one study in Massachusetts showed that dogs whose owners used pesticides in their own yards had a 70 percent higher chance of developing malignant lymphoma. Indeed, one-third of the 700 dogs in the study were diagnosed with this typically terminal canine cancer.

If your dog or cat wants to run free in a neighbor's yard or at the park, wait 24-72 hours after the lawn in question has been treated with chemicals of any kind (fertilizers, herbicides, pesticides) to minimize exposure to and ingestion of potentially hazardous substances. You can also lobby your neighbors and local officials to give up the harsh synthetic chemicals; some will be more open to the idea than others, so make sure you have a good way to protect your pets even if your requests aren't complied with.

EarthTalk® is produced by Roddy Scheer & Doug Moss for the 501(c)3 nonprofit EarthTalk. See more at <https://emagazine.com>. To donate, visit <https://earthtalk.org>. Send questions to: question@earthtalk.org.



It's hard to know how to keep dogs and cats safe from all the chemicals in the environment around your neighborhood. Credit: Roddy Scheer.

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County	Total Cases	Recovered Cases	Negative Persons	Deceased Among Cases	Community Spread	% PCR Test Positivity Rate (Weekly)
Aurora	474	457	958	15	Minimal	8.3%
Beadle	2960	2909	6605	40	Moderate	4.2%
Bennett	391	382	1261	9	Minimal	0.0%
Bon Homme	1551	1520	2322	27	Minimal	12.8%
Brookings	4221	4161	13833	37	Moderate	1.2%
Brown	5608	5471	14090	92	Moderate	11.1%
Brule	717	706	2098	10	Minimal	0.0%
Buffalo	426	413	928	13	Minimal	8.3%
Butte	1066	1037	3593	20	Moderate	5.7%
Campbell	131	127	283	4	None	0.0%
Charles Mix	1378	1352	4403	22	Minimal	2.2%
Clark	462	454	1055	5	Minimal	8.3%
Clay	1925	1904	6053	15	Minimal	1.4%
Codington	4646	4537	10840	82	Moderate	5.0%
Corson	480	467	1146	12	Minimal	0.0%
Custer	871	839	2966	12	Substantial	23.2%
Davison	3239	3162	7489	66	Moderate	3.2%
Day	708	677	1987	29	Minimal	10.7%
Deuel	529	517	1323	9	Minimal	0.0%
Dewey	1474	1446	4155	28	Minimal	0.0%
Douglas	455	446	1036	9	Minimal	0.0%
Edmunds	513	499	1168	14	Minimal	0.0%
Fall River	597	580	2936	16	Minimal	5.8%
Faulk	371	358	756	13	Minimal	0.0%
Grant	1054	1002	2508	42	Moderate	10.2%
Gregory	579	547	1430	30	Minimal	4.5%
Haakon	264	253	589	10	None	0.0%
Hamlin	797	757	2025	39	Minimal	2.4%
Hand	362	356	944	6	Minimal	0.0%
Hanson	388	383	802	4	Minimal	11.1%
Harding	97	95	211	1	Minimal	0.0%
Hughes	2513	2454	7450	40	Moderate	3.2%
Hutchinson	919	885	2695	28	Minimal	11.4%

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Hyde	141	140	464	1	None	0.0%
Jackson	289	275	983	14	None	0.0%
Jerauld	278	261	617	16	Minimal	11.1%
Jones	93	93	267	0	None	0.0%
Kingsbury	817	798	1896	18	Minimal	0.0%
Lake	1378	1346	3873	20	Moderate	9.1%
Lawrence	2996	2928	9149	47	Moderate	5.3%
Lincoln	8696	8592	22998	77	Moderate	4.9%
Lyman	656	640	2061	11	Moderate	5.3%
Marshall	374	365	1374	6	Minimal	2.5%
McCook	809	782	1888	25	Minimal	0.0%
McPherson	246	242	626	4	Minimal	0.0%
Meade	2777	2729	8500	31	Moderate	5.1%
Mellette	261	258	821	2	Minimal	0.0%
Miner	304	292	651	10	Minimal	0.0%
Minnehaha	31658	31164	89640	360	Moderate	3.4%
Moody	664	638	1959	18	Moderate	12.5%
Oglala Lakota	2114	2062	7259	49	Minimal	0.6%
Pennington	13791	13520	43249	196	Moderate	6.7%
Perkins	359	345	881	14	Minimal	4.5%
Potter	391	386	927	4	None	0.0%
Roberts	1372	1325	4637	39	Moderate	6.8%
Sanborn	344	341	768	3	Minimal	9.1%
Spink	843	816	2320	26	Minimal	0.0%
Stanley	350	345	1080	2	Minimal	0.0%
Sully	142	139	344	3	None	0.0%
Todd	1231	1196	4522	32	Minimal	2.7%
Tripp	755	738	1646	17	None	0.0%
Turner	1174	1116	3019	56	Minimal	3.3%
Union	2225	2175	7078	43	Moderate	5.5%
Walworth	771	751	1979	15	Minimal	5.4%
Yankton	3102	3056	10500	34	Moderate	5.8%
Ziebach	344	335	950	9	None	0.0%
Unassigned	0	0	1822	0		

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South Dakota



AGE GROUP OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Age Range with Years	# of Cases	# of Deaths Among Cases
0-9 years	5407	0
10-19 years	14643	0
20-29 years	21882	8
30-39 years	20471	20
40-49 years	17722	42
50-59 years	17290	119
60-69 years	13979	277
70-79 years	7278	461
80+ years	5239	1074

VARIANT CASES OF COVID-19 IN SOUTH DAKOTA

COVID-19 Variant	# of Cases
B.1.1.7	154
B.1.429	15
P.1	3
B.1.351	2
B.1.427	1

RACE/ETHNICITY OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Race/Ethnicity	# of Cases	% of Cases
White	93060	75%
Native American	14253	12%
Unknown	5587	5%
Hispanic	4698	4%
Black	2846	2%
Other	1768	1%
Asian / Pacific Islander	1699	1%

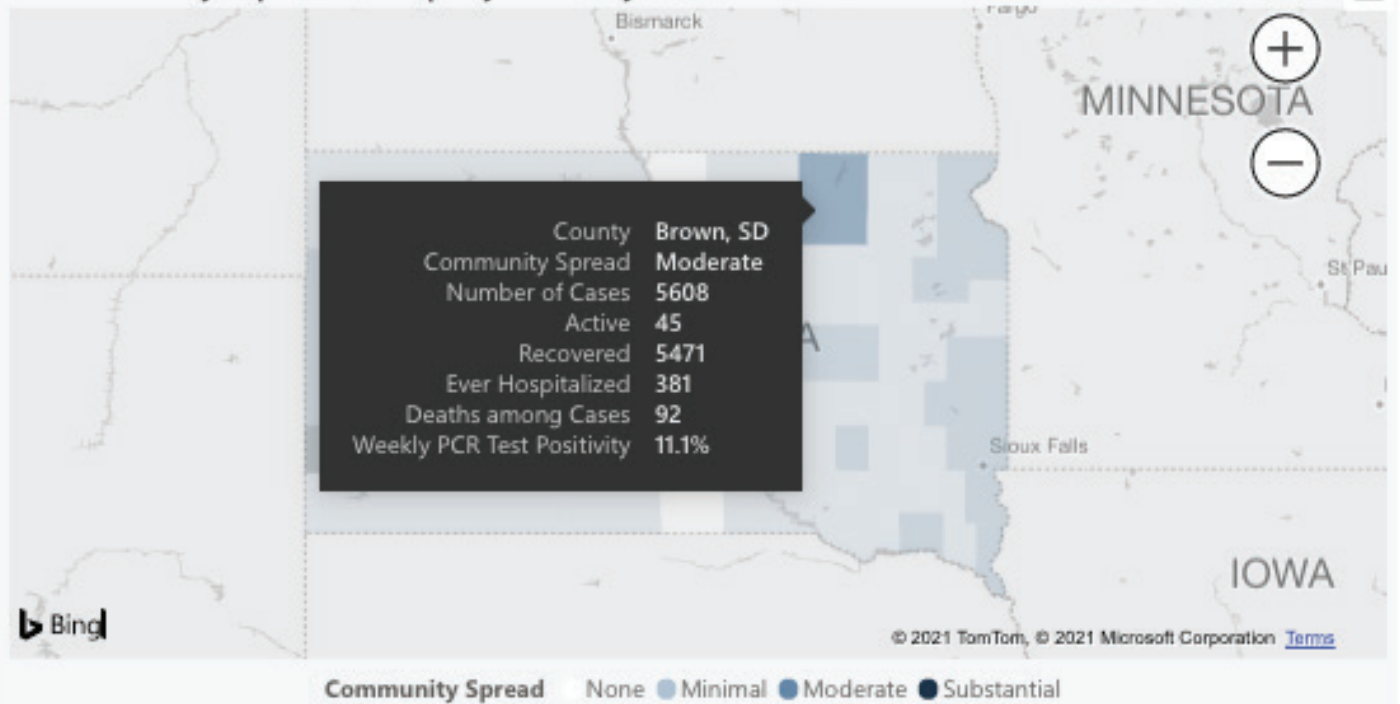
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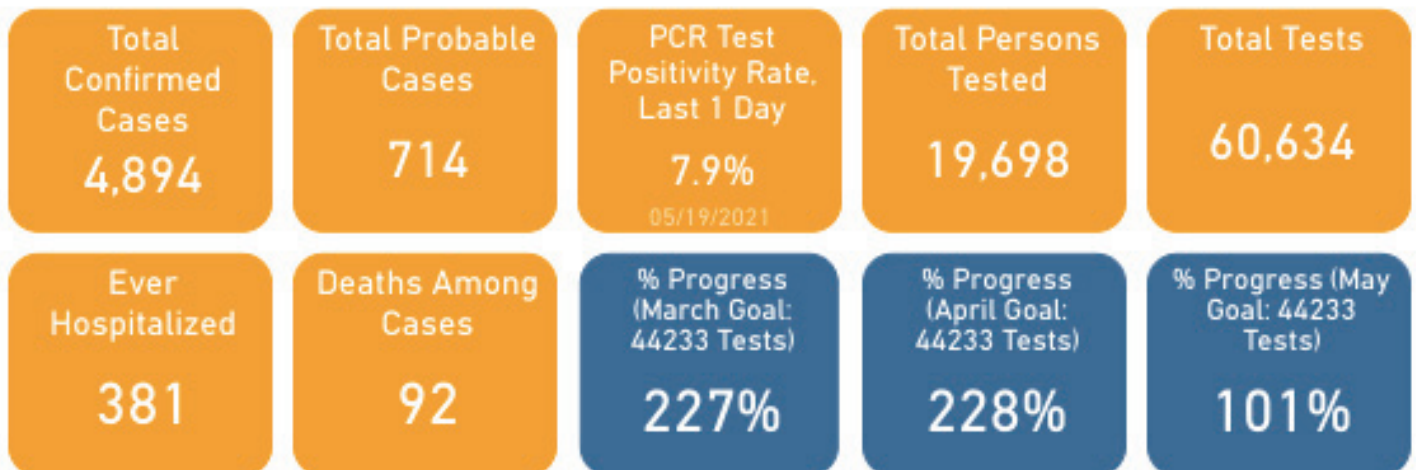
Brown County



Community Spread Map by County of Residence



Hover over a county to see its details, or click county to update the orange boxes.



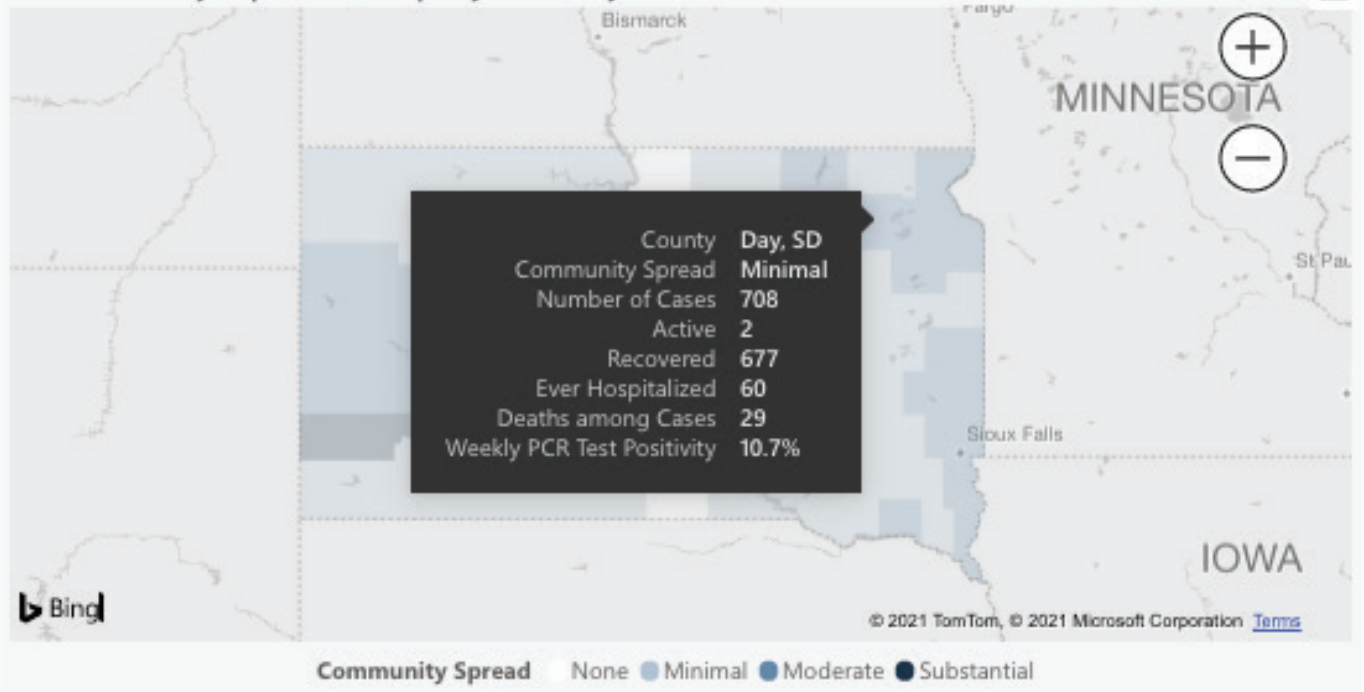
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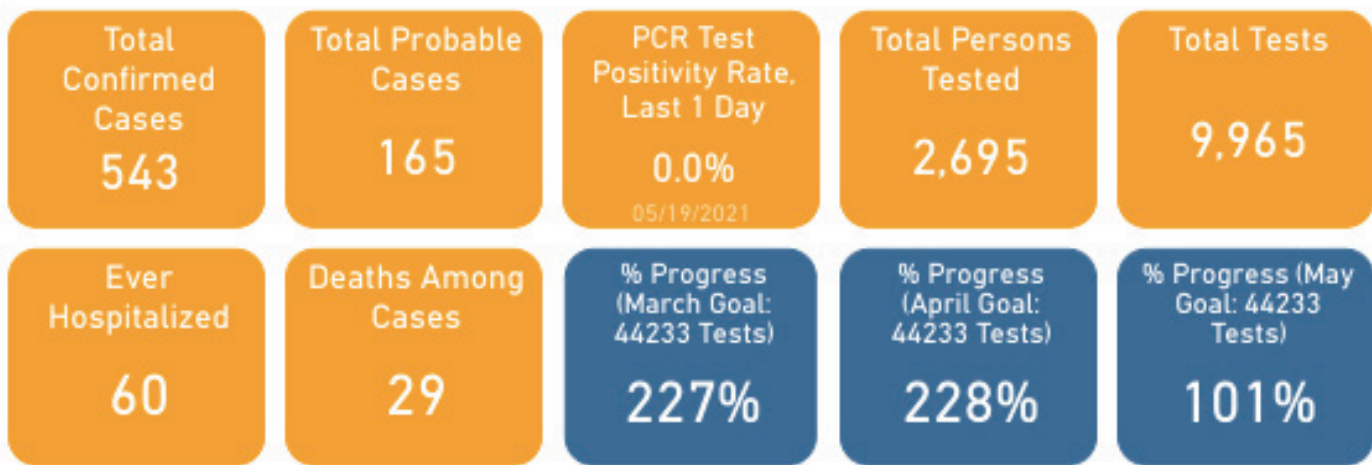
Day County



Community Spread Map by County of Residence



Hover over a county to see its details, or click county to update the orange boxes.



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Vaccinations

Total Doses Administered*

641,019

Total Persons Administered a Vaccine*

344,820

Percent of State Population with at least 1 Dose**

54%

Manufacturer	# of Doses
Janssen	19,305
Moderna	283,387
Pfizer	338,327

Doses	# of Recipients
Janssen - Series Complete	19,305
Moderna - 1 dose	13,319
Moderna - Series Complete	135,034
Pfizer - 1 dose	16,013
Pfizer - Series Complete	161,157

Doses	% of Pop.
1 dose	53.55%
Series Complete	48.41%

Based on 2019 Census Estimate for those aged 12+ years.

County	# Doses	# Persons (1 dose)	# Persons (2 doses)	Total # Persons
Aurora	2,075	103	986	1,089
Beadle	13,364	1,037	6,163	7,200
Bennett*	764	114	325	439
Bon Homme*	5,961	223	2,869	3,092
Brookings	25,602	2,272	11,665	13,937
Brown	31,285	1,837	14,724	16,561
Brule*	3,029	303	1,363	1,666
Buffalo*	205	87	59	146
Butte	4,689	549	2,070	2,619
Campbell	1,666	78	794	872
Charles Mix*	5,525	621	2,452	3,073
Clark	2,656	398	1,129	1,527
Clay	11,094	1,216	4,939	6,155
Codington*	21,340	1,452	9,944	11,396
Corson*	477	53	212	265
Custer*	5,637	573	2,532	3,105
Davison	16,625	1,039	7,793	8,832
Day*	4,806	342	2,232	2,574
Deuel	2,962	230	1,366	1,596
Dewey*	533	65	234	299
Douglas*	2,180	104	1,038	1,142
Edmunds	2,699	131	1,284	1,415
Fall River*	4,587	357	2,115	2,472
Faulk	1,967	75	946	1,021
Grant*	5,701	261	2,720	2,981
Gregory*	2,975	177	1,399	1,576

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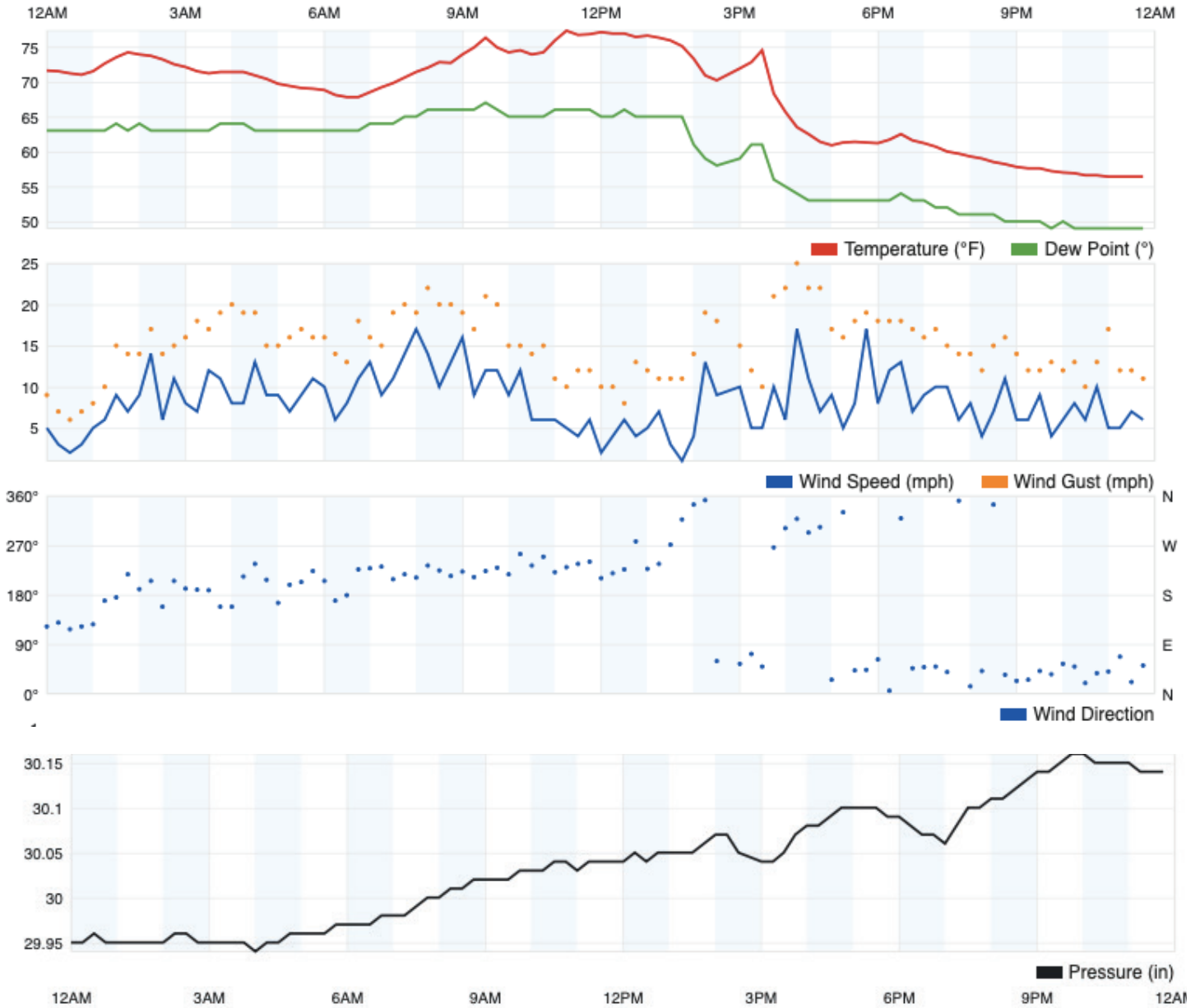
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Haakon*	884	44	420	464
Hamlin	3,720	384	1,668	2,052
Hand	2,715	93	1,311	1,404
Hanson	1,175	75	550	625
Harding	286	34	126	160
Hughes*	16,454	948	7,753	8,701
Hutchinson*	6,720	277	3,221	3,498
Hyde*	910	44	433	477
Jackson*	690	52	319	371
Jerauld	1,623	63	780	843
Jones*	1,116	68	524	592
Kingsbury	4,944	362	2,291	2,653
Lake	9,278	922	4,178	5,100
Lawrence	17,421	1,495	7,963	9,458
Lincoln	51,528	2,979	24,274	27,253
Lyman*	1,493	171	661	832
Marshall*	3,753	213	1,770	1,983
McCook	4,290	538	1,876	2,414
McPherson	534	32	251	283
Meade*	12,600	1,062	5,769	6,831
Mellette*	84	2	41	43
Miner	1,618	242	688	930
Minnehaha*	169,101	11,764	78,666	90,430
Moody*	3,633	195	1,719	1,914
Oglala Lakota*	358	78	140	218
Pennington*	67,943	6,187	30,878	37,065
Perkins*	1,239	87	576	663
Potter	1,916	84	916	1,000
Roberts*	7,039	595	3,222	3,817
Sanborn	2,005	133	936	1,069
Spink	5,326	276	2,525	2,801
Stanley*	2,444	134	1,155	1,289
Sully	838	40	399	439
Todd*	300	50	125	175
Tripp*	3,370	178	1,596	1,774
Turner	6,334	410	2,962	3,372
Union	7,381	617	3,382	3,999
Walworth*	3,079	305	1,387	1,692
Yankton	20,030	1,044	9,493	10,537
Ziebach*	98	20	39	59
Other	14,345	2,635	5,855	8,490

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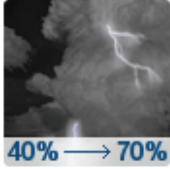



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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today	Tonight	Monday	Monday Night	Tuesday
				
Chance T-storms then Partly Sunny	Breezy. Chance T-storms then T-storms Likely	Mostly Sunny then Sunny and Breezy	Clear and Breezy then Clear	Sunny and Breezy
High: 85 °F	Low: 57 °F	High: 87 °F	Low: 54 °F	High: 78 °F



Severe Risk This Afternoon & Evening

May 23, 2021
3:00 AM

Timing



Severe storms developing this afternoon out west and moving east tonight.

Actions



Be weather aware and ready to act. Have multiple ways to receive warning information!

Severe Threats



Few Tornadoes

Mainly over Enhanced Risk area



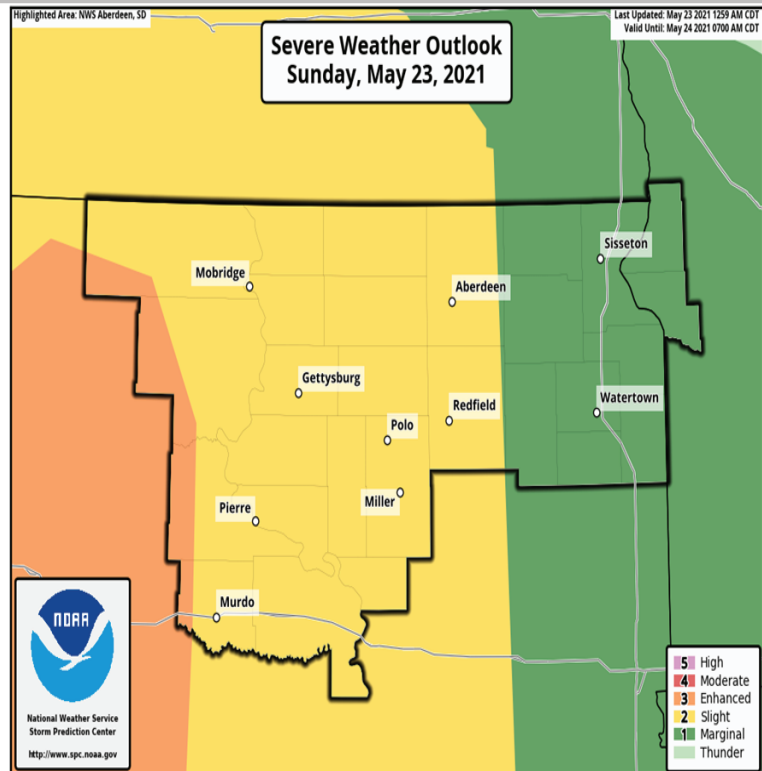
Large Hail

Golf ball or larger possible west river area



Damaging Wind

60-80 mph possible, mainly west James valley



NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE
OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

Aberdeen, South Dakota





A cold front will bring storms to the region this afternoon and tonight. The highest probabilities for severe weather will be west river where large hail, strong winds and even isolated tornadoes are possible this afternoon and evening. #sdwx #mnwx

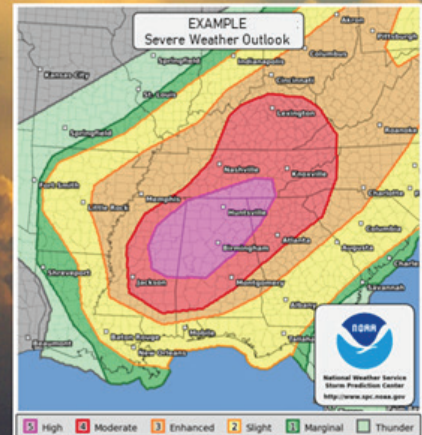
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We frequently talk about severe weather, but...

What do we mean by the risk for Severe Storms?

THUNDERSTORMS (no label)	1 - MARGINAL (MRGL)	2 - SLIGHT (SLGT)	3 - ENHANCED (ENH)	4 - MODERATE (MDT)	5 - HIGH (HIGH)
No severe* thunderstorms expected	Isolated severe thunderstorms possible	Scattered severe storms possible	Numerous severe storms possible	Widespread severe storms likely	Widespread severe storms expected
Lightning/flooding threats exist with all thunderstorms	Limited in duration and/or coverage and/or intensity	Short-lived and/or not widespread, isolated intense storms possible	More persistent and/or widespread, a few intense	Long-lived, widespread and intense	Long-lived, very widespread and particularly intense
					
• Winds to 40 mph • Small hail	• Winds 40-60 mph • Hail up to 1" • Low tornado risk	• One or two tornadoes • Reports of strong winds/wind damage • Hail ~1", isolated 2"	• A few tornadoes • Several reports of wind damage • Damaging hail, 1 - 2"	• Strong tornadoes • Widespread wind damage • Destructive hail, 2" +	• Tornado outbreak • Derecho



The Storm Prediction Center creates daily Severe Weather Outlook graphics:

<https://www.spc.noaa.gov>

NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE
OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION
Aberdeen SD 9/1/2019 11:42 AM

You'll frequently see us talk about the risk for Severe Storms. Here's a little explanation of what we mean... The risk graphics range in intensity from general thunderstorms (light green color) where there could be gusty winds or small hail, to high (purple/pink color) which indicates the potential for widespread severe storms. The National Weather Service Storm Prediction Center in Norman, Oklahoma issues Convective Outlooks for the continuous U.S. for the next week. Take a look at their current outlooks here, <https://www.spc.noaa.gov/products/outlook/>

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Today in Weather History

May 23, 1989: A complex of thunderstorms moved from southwest Minnesota through Iowa. One small tornado touched down briefly in Lyon County. But the main story with this complex was high winds and hail. Baseball size hail fell north of George in Lyon, County. Also, two-inch hail occurred in Sac County in Schaller and Odebolt, and golf ball size hail fell in Carroll, Iowa. The hail caused a lot of damage to vehicles, trees, and roofs. Thunderstorm winds of 60 miles an hour were also common across all of northwest Iowa with these storms.

1968: One of the costliest hailstorms in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma history pummeled the city on this date. Hail the size of baseballs fell over much of the city, resulting in more than 40,000 insurance claims over the 90,000 square mile path of the storm. The final cost was more than \$20 million. The parent thunderstorm also caused flash flooding that left 2 to 4 feet of water in some underpasses and a lightning strike that started a fire that killed two people.

1960: A massive earthquake in Chile the previous day produced a tsunami that killed 61 people in Hilo, Hawaii. An additional 180 people died on the islands of Honshu and Hokkaido in Japan.

1882 - An unusual late season snow blanketed eastern Iowa, with four to six inches reported around Washington. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1953 - The temperature at Hollis OK soared from a morning low of 70 degrees to an afternoon high of 110 degrees to establish a state record for the month of May. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - It was a busy day for thunderstorms in the central U.S. Thunderstorms produced wind gusts to 65 mph at Shreveport LA and golf ball size hail at Marfa, TX. Hobart, OK, received 3.55 inches of rain in the morning, and another 4.03 inches of rain that evening. Thunderstorms in Nebraska produced 8.5 inches of rain in two hours north of Potter, and 7.5 inches of rain in ninety minutes north of Minatare. Thunderstorms in Colorado produced five inches of hail at Greeley. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather across much of the eastern U.S. Golf ball size hail was reported in Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina and Ohio. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Severe thunderstorms developing along a cold front resulted in 98 reports of large hail and damaging winds in the Northern Plains and Upper Mississippi Valley. Golf ball size hail caused a million dollars damage around Buffalo City, WI, baseball size hail was reported at Northfield and Randolph, MN, and thunderstorm winds gusted to 95 mph at Dunkerton, IA. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Unseasonably hot weather continued in the south central U.S. Pueblo, CO, equalled their May record with a high of 98 degrees, and the high of 106 degrees at Midland, TX, marked a record six straight days of 100 degree heat. (The National Weather Summary)

1990 - A cold front crossing the western U.S. produced snow over parts of Oregon, California, Nevada, Idaho and Utah, with five inches reported at Austin NV, and four inches at Crater Lake National Park in Oregon. Strong winds behind the cold front sharply reduced visibilities in blowing dust over central California, and two multi-vehicle accidents resulted in one death and eighteen injuries. In northern Idaho, a cloud-burst washed tons of topsoil, and rocks as large as footballs, into the valley town of Culdesac. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1997: David McWilliams Ludlum was born 1910 in East Orange, NJ - He is responsible for researching and publishing much of the early history of weather at the beginning of America. David died May 23, 1997, in Princeton, New Jersey. He was an American historian, meteorologist, entrepreneur, and author.

2010: A rare tropical cyclone dubbed Bandu brings high winds and heavy rains to Somalia. The storm then moved into the Gulf of Aden where it quickly weakens and dissipates on the 23rd as it passes between Yemen and Somalia.

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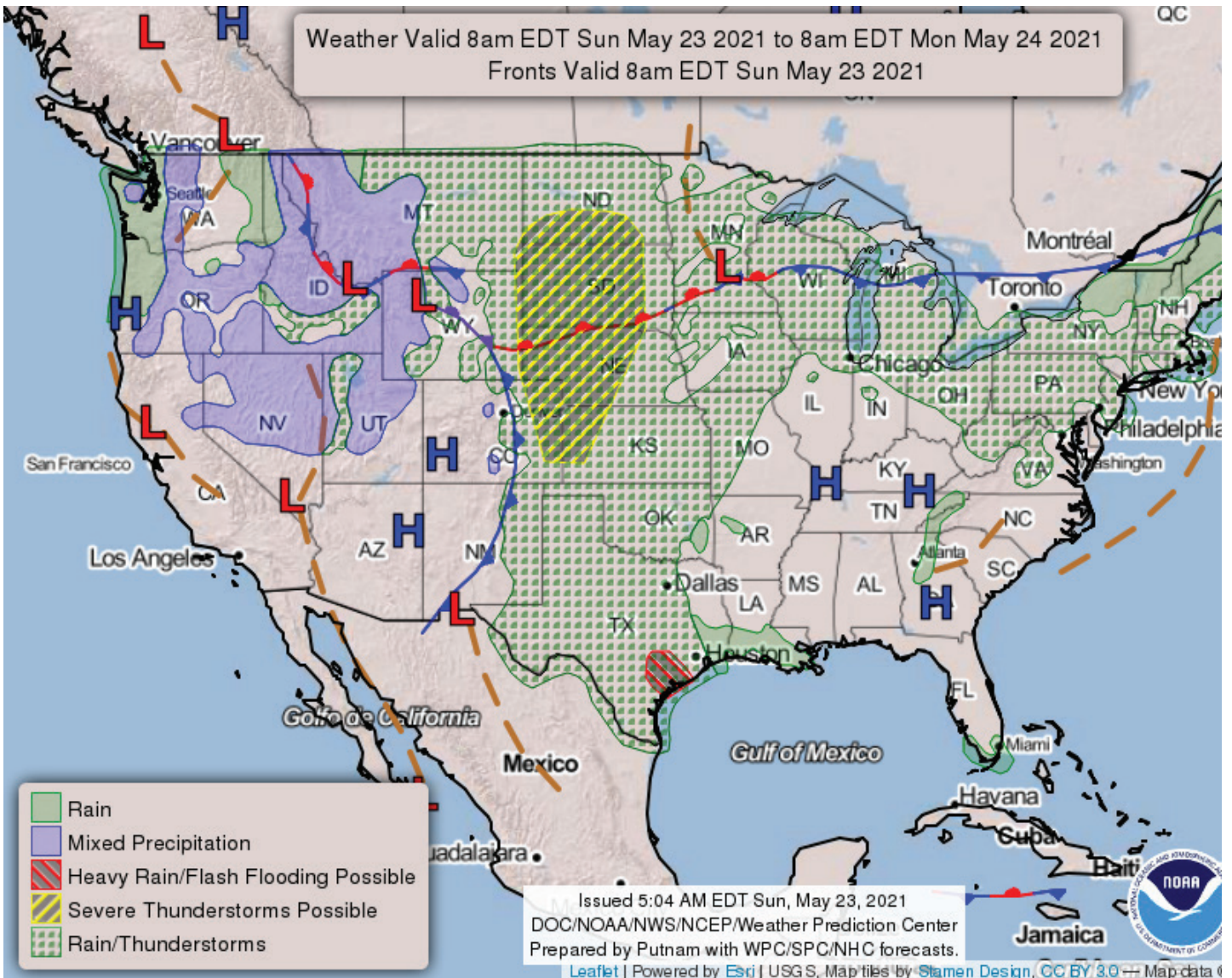
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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 78 °F at 11:17 AM
Low Temp: 56 °F at 11:33 PM
Wind: 25 mph at 4:09 PM
Precip: .00

Today's Info

Record High: 94° in 1950
Record Low: 26° in 1897
Average High: 73°F
Average Low: 47°F
Average Precip in May.: 2.42
Precip to date in May.: 0.27
Average Precip to date: 6.39
Precip Year to Date: 3.04
Sunset Tonight: 9:07 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:54 a.m.



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FIGHT OR FLIGHT?

All of us seem to have similar responses when we face common events in our lives. There are certain scenes that bring emotions of sadness to most of us – especially when we see a child suffer or face starvation. We tend to shrivel inside when we see a person suffering from an incurable illness. We want to lift the fallen or protect the vulnerable from abusive individuals. God planted a common thread of mutual concern in all of us that links us together to care for each other – even those we do not know.

He also gave us “common sense” when we face threatening conditions in our lives. We all seem to have two immediate reactions to life-threatening situations: we want immediate relief. We either want to “fight” or take “flight.” Psychologists would have us to think they discovered the “fight or flight” syndrome – or if we want to be more scientific – the “general adaptation syndrome.” This means we want things to return to a normal state when we are threatened. We want stability to return to our lives so we can be calm once again.

Although David did not use such “scientific language,” he knew what to do when it looked like things were about to threaten his well-being: he looked to the Lord. When faced with his destruction, he asked God to “let death take my enemies by surprise.” He believed God would destroy those who wanted to destroy him. He also asked God for “the wings of a dove” so he could “fly away and be at rest.” He knew that God would always rescue him.

It is natural and normal to want to live a life that is peaceful and calm. It is God-promised. Whenever we face threats and trials, we are to turn first to God in faith believing that He can and always will rescue us.

Prayer: How precious is Your Word, Father that has promised us hope, help and happiness in difficult times. Thank You for Your promise that “I will never leave you nor forsake you!” In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: I said, “Oh, that I had the wings of a dove! I would fly away and be at rest. Psalm 55:6-7

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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
06/19/2021 U8 Baseball Tournament
06/17/2021 Groton Transit Fundraiser, 4-7 p.m.
06/18/2021 SDSU Alumni & Friends Golf Tournament at Olive Grove
06/19/2021 Lions Crazy Golf Fest at Olive Grove Golf Course, Noon
06/26/2021 U10 Baseball Tournament
06/27/2021 U12 Baseball Tournament
07/04/2021 Firecracker Golf Tournament at Olive Grove
07/11/2021 Lions Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 10am-4pm (Sunday Mid-July)
07/22/2021 Pro-Am Golf Tournament at Olive Grove Golf Course
07/30/2021-08/03/2021 State "B" American Legion Baseball Tournament in Groton
08/06/2021 Wine on Nine at Olive Grove Golf Course
09/11/2021 Lions Club Fall City-Wide Rummage Sales 8am-3pm (1st Saturday after Labor Day)
09/12/2021 Sunflower Classic Golf Tournament at Olive Grove
09/18-19 Groton Fly-In/Drive-In, Groton Municipal Airport
10/08/2021 Lake Region Marching Band Festival (2nd Friday in October)
10/09/2021 Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm (Saturday before Columbus Day)
10/29/2021 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm
10/31/2021 Groton United Methodist Trunk or Treat (Halloween)
11/13/2021 Legion Post #39 Turkey Party (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)
11/25/2021 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm (Thanksgiving)
12/11/2021 Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services 9am-Noon

News from the Associated Press

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Dakota Cash

05-11-21-26-32

(five, eleven, twenty-one, twenty-six, thirty-two)

Estimated jackpot: \$25,000

Lotto America

26-36-47-48-52, Star Ball: 5, ASB: 3

(twenty-six, thirty-six, forty-seven, forty-eight, fifty-two; Star Ball: five; ASB: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$6.35 million

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$20 million

Powerball

03-19-27-37-40, Powerball: 8, Power Play: 2

(three, nineteen, twenty-seven, thirty-seven, forty; Powerball: eight; Power Play: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$218 million

Judge rejects state's argument in Black Hawk sinkhole case

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A judge has rejected the state of South Dakota's argument that homeowners in a Black Hawk neighborhood lack legal standing to seek damages due to a sinkhole.

The Rapid City Journal reports Judge Kevin Krull's May 14 ruling may now proceed with class-action status, which would include any resident affected by the sinkhole that exposed an abandoned gypsum mine in April 2020.

More than 40 people from 15 homes were forced to evacuate due to the sinkhole and mine.

Thirty Hideaway Hills residents signed onto the lawsuit against the state in Meade County in October. The complaint says the state should compensate residents with money from the South Dakota Cement Plant Trust, which had a more than \$333 million balance as of Sept. 30, 2020.

A second lawsuit is on hold as plaintiffs wait for the South Dakota Supreme Court to decide whether to overturn a Meade County judge's decision to dismiss the county and former commissioners from the lawsuit.

Hideaway Hills residents are also seeking answers to a potential loss of sewage service due to the mine.

Israeli police allow Jews to visit flashpoint Jerusalem site

By JOSEPH KRAUSS Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israeli police on Sunday escorted more than 120 Jewish visitors to a flashpoint holy site in Jerusalem where police actions in recent weeks had ignited protests and violence that triggered war in Gaza, according to the Islamic authority overseeing the site.

The Waqf said police cleared young Palestinians out of the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound and barred entry to Muslims under the age of 45. Muslims who entered were required to leave their IDs with police at the entrance. It said six Palestinians were detained, with four later released.

Israeli police denied there was any age restriction and said they arrested five suspects who "violated the public order."

Israeli police spokesman Micky Rosenfeld said the site was open for "regular visits" and that police had secured the area to prevent "incidents."

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Israeli police had briefly clashed with Palestinian protesters after Friday prayers in an early test for the truce, which had taken effect hours earlier.

The Waqf said Sunday it was the first time Jews had been allowed to visit the site since May 4, a week before the war broke out.

The Al-Aqsa Mosque is the third holiest site in Islam. It sits on a sprawling hilltop in Jerusalem's Old City that is revered by Jews as their holiest site because it was the location of the biblical temples. The site has often been the scene of Israeli-Palestinian violence and was the epicenter of the 2000 Palestinian intifada, or uprising.

Israeli police repeatedly clashed with Palestinian protesters in the days leading up to May 10, when Gaza's militant Hamas rulers fired long-range rockets at Jerusalem. The threatened eviction of dozens of Palestinian families from a nearby Jerusalem neighborhood was cited as another major trigger of the 11-day war, which was halted by a cease-fire on Friday.

In recent years, increasing numbers of religious and nationalist Jews have visited the site. Palestinians fear Israel plans to eventually take over the compound or partition it. The Israeli government has repeatedly said it has no intention of changing the status quo, under which the Waqf oversees the site under Jordanian custodianship.

The Gaza war saw Israel unleash hundreds of airstrikes across Gaza at what it said were militant targets, while Hamas and other armed groups fired more than 4,000 rockets toward Israel. More than 250 people were killed, the vast majority of them Palestinians.

The Israeli strikes leveled a number of large buildings in the impoverished coastal territory, which is home to more than 2 million Palestinians. Gaza has been under a crippling Israeli-Egyptian blockade since Hamas, an Islamic militant group, seized power from forces loyal to the internationally backed Palestinian Authority in 2007.

The International Committee of the Red Cross said Friday an estimated 700,000 Palestinians are affected by damage to power and electricity infrastructure, with the water supply decreased by 40%. The group said thousands of people have lost their homes, businesses and places of work in Gaza from the bombardment.

The war also may have left hundreds of unexploded munitions across the territory, the ICRC said.

On Sunday morning, hundreds of municipal workers and volunteers started a one-week campaign to clear rubble from Gaza's streets. The work began outside a high-rise building that was flattened by Israeli warplanes during the early days of airstrikes on Gaza, with workers loading rubble into donkey carts and small pickup trucks.

Coates gets backlash saying Olympics are on, no matter virus

By STEPHEN WADE and YURI KAGEYAMA Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — If John Coates was trying to stir controversy, he succeeded.

An International Olympic Committee vice president, Coates was asked a few days ago by a Japanese reporter at an online news conference if the Tokyo Olympics would go ahead, even if a state of emergency were in force in Japan.

Coates replied: "Absolutely, yes."

Coates said what the IOC and local organizers have been trying to persuade the Japanese public about for months: The postponed Olympics with 11,000 athletes from 200 nations and territories will open on July 23 and will be "safe and secure."

But his defiant tone has stirred a backlash in Japan where 60-80% in polls say they do not want the Olympics to open in two months in the midst of a pandemic.

Just over 12,000 deaths in Japan — good by global standards, but poor in Asia — have been attributed to COVID-19. But Tokyo and Osaka and several other areas are under a state of emergency until May 31. And it's likely to be extended.

There is fear of new variants spreading with only a tiny percentage of Japanese vaccinated. Estimates

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range between 2% and 4%.

"Right now, more than 80% of the nation's people want the Olympics postponed or canceled," Japanese billionaire businessman Masayoshi Son said over the weekend. He is the founder and CEO of SoftBank Group Corp. He also owns the SoftBank Hawks baseball team.

"Who is forcing this to go ahead, and under what rights?" Son added.

Technically, the games belong to the International Olympic Committee and only it has the power to cancel. Of course, any move would have to be negotiated with Japanese organizers.

There is no suggestion this will happen.

Social media criticized Coates, and also went after IOC President Thomas Bach who has said repeatedly that everyone must "sacrifice" to pull off these Olympics, which have already banned fans from abroad. A decision on local fans attending — if any — will be made next month.

The IOC relies on selling television rights for 75% of its income, and Japan has officially spent \$15.4 billion to prepare the games. Government audits suggest the figure is much higher. All but \$6.7 billion is public money.

The Shukan Post magazine said in its latest issue that organizers have booked all the rooms during the Olympics in at least four of Tokyo's most expensive hotels. The magazine called the accommodations "fitting or royalty" for the IOC and others.

Tokyo organizing committee president Seiko Hashimoto said Friday the "Olympic family, IOC and international federations" would amount to 23,000 visitors.

The magazine said the IOC would pay up to \$400 per night for rooms, with local organizers making up any difference.

Many of Japan's newspapers are among more than 60 local Olympic sponsors that have contributed more than \$3 billion to local organizers. They have been restrained in their criticism, although one of them — the Hokkaido Shimbun — did call for unspecified action from Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga. Suga has said it's the IOC that must determine the fate of the Olympics.

"That inaction itself is forfeiting the responsibility over people's lives and health. Those in charge should take that to heart."

The Shinano Mainichi Shimbun, which is not a sponsor, called for a cancellation in an editorial on Sunday.

"We are in no mood to celebrate an event filled with fear and anxiety," the newspaper said. "The Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics should be canceled ... The government must make the decision to protect the lives and livelihood of the people."

Organizers and the IOC say that the games will be safe because of extensive testing and building a bubble around the athletes. It says more than 80% of the residents in the Olympics Village, located on Tokyo Bay, will be vaccinated.

The comments of Atsuko Saitoh, who identifies herself as midwife and former university professor, are representative of the criticism on social media. She has run unsuccessfully for Japan's upper house and is running in the next lower house election.

"Bach and Coates do not value the lives of the athletes, others involved or the people of the host nation. It's tantamount to predicting terrorism to say that the games will be held under an emergency, despite the overwhelming opposition in public opinion."

Lillard leads 3-point barrage, Blazers beat Nuggets 123-109

By ARNIE STAPLETON AP Sports Writer

DENVER (AP) — What had Damian Lillard so excited wasn't his 34 points or 13 assists or how he led Portland's 3-point barrage that sparked the Trail Blazers' win over the undermanned Denver Nuggets in their playoff opener Saturday night.

It was holding NBA MVP front-runner Nikola Jokic to a single assist. That's something no opponent had done all year against the Nuggets superstar center who averaged a career-best 8.3 assists this season.

"It was huge," Lillard said after Portland's 123-109 victory. "We know when they're at their best, he's set-

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ting the table, he's dominating the game as a playmaker and he's scoring and he's kind of having his way.

"A guy as good as he is, an MVP candidate — the MVP in my opinion — you know that he's going to play well," Lillard added. "You know he's going to do what he does but you got to try to take something away."

Jokic matched Lillard's scoring output, but wasn't nearly the same facilitator.

"I couldn't get the other guys involved," Jokic lamented. "They made me work for it on every possession."

The Blazers hit 19 of 40 shots from beyond the arc, and Lillard, sporting silver sneakers that were a fitting choice for his sterling performance, had five of them.

Subs Carmelo Anthony and Anfernee Simons added four each as the Blazers outscored Denver by 24 points from beyond the arc.

"To be honest, I think we could've shot the ball even better," Portland coach Terry Stotts said.

They were plenty good on this night.

"I talked about it quite a lot during the week, can we guard the 3-point line?" Nuggets coach Michael Malone said. "Too many breakdowns."

CJ McCollum added 21 points and Anthony scored 18 in his first playoff game against the team that drafted him 18 years ago.

Anthony, who forced his way out of Denver a decade ago, learned in the locker room afterward that this marked his first win as a visitor at Ball Arena, which used to be called the Pepsi Center.

"Great time to make it happen," Anthony said.

Michael Porter Jr. chipped in 25 points for Denver but was just 1-for-10 from long range, and Aaron Gordon added 16 points.

Game 2 in the series is Monday night.

Anthony provided an early spark for Portland with 12 points in the first quarter.

"He gave us the boost that we needed," Stotts said.

And the boos that fueled 'Melo.

"This will always be a special place for me regardless of the boos," Anthony said.

It was Lillard who took over after halftime, scoring 15 points in the third quarter when he sparked a 32-13 run by the Blazers that turned a nine-point deficit into a 96-86 lead.

"For the last week, this is all I've been thinking about," Lillard said. "We've had a whole week to prepare for this and get ready for Game 1. We prepared hard. I wanted to win the game. I want to win the series."

TIP-INS

Trail Blazers: The teams hadn't played in six days, since Portland's 132-116 home win over Denver on May 16 allowed the Blazers to avoid the play-ins. ... Anthony made four of his first five 3-point attempts. ... Portland outshot Denver 19-8 from the foul line and hit 18 free throws to Denver's four.

Nuggets: The crowd of 7,732 was the largest of the season. Previously, crowds at Ball Arena were capped at 4,050 during COVID-19 restrictions. ... Porter shot 44.5% from 3-point range this season. "They just weren't falling tonight," he said.

COACH MURRAY

Jamal Murray returned from L.A., where he's been rehabbing from his ACL surgery, to cheer on his Nuggets teammates.

"Jamal's a leader of this team whether he is playing or not," Malone said. "He can't score a point for us, but he can provide a lot of other things."

After shooting baskets before the game, Murray took the mic and addressed the crowd before tip-off.

"Man, I wish I was hooping," he said as he fired up the crowd at the Nuggets' first home playoff game since May 12, 2019, when they lost Game 7 of their second-round series to Portland.

Also out for the Nuggets were Will Barton (hamstring) and PJ Dozier (hip).

FAMILIAR FACES

Although the Nuggets lost that classic seven-game series two years ago that included a historic 140-137 four-overtime loss to Portland in Game 3, there's no payback vibe in Denver.

"It can't be a rallying cry when a bunch of your guys weren't here for it," Malone said. "Remember the

Alamo! The Alamo? I wasn't here for that."

Croatia ready to welcome foreign tourists, hoping they come

By DUSAN STOJANOVIC Associated Press

ROVINJ, Croatia (AP) — Sun loungers are out, beach bars are open and rave music is pumping. Hotels and restaurants are greeting visitors hoping to get a head start on summer after more than a year of coronavirus lockdowns and travel restrictions.

Croatia has widely reopened its stunning Adriatic coastline for foreign tourists, becoming one of the first European countries to drop most of its pandemic measures. Now, the ability of people to go there depends on each country's travel rules.

The mood is relaxed in the Istria region, the northernmost part of the Croatian coast famous for its pebble beaches, thick pine forests, wine and delicacies such as truffles, olive oil, goat cheese and prosciutto.

Hardly anyone wears masks on the streets or in restaurants in the picturesque town of Rovinj. Still-standing limits on indoor dining and rules requiring a set amount of distance between tables are rarely observed.

"People are fed up with lockdowns," said Nikola Sandic, a waiter at a seafood restaurant located in a small boat harbor. "They have a glass of wine, watch the sea, and that's all they need."

Virus cases are dropping in Croatia, and after a slow start to the country's vaccine rollout, inoculations are picking up. Officials predict that some 50% of the population of 4 million will be fully vaccinated by mid-summer.

Croatia, a European Union member and a popular vacation destination on the continent, is letting in tourists from the United States, most of Europe and beyond who hold a vaccination certificate, or proof of a negative test or having recovered from COVID-19. Health officials set those measures weeks before the EU moved Wednesday to soon allow fully vaccinated foreign travelers from countries deemed safe into the 27-nation bloc.

Croatian tourism officials expect a swell of American visitors, who will be spared the hassle of airport transfers when direct New York-Dubrovnik flights start up, expected in July.

Tourism Minister Nikolina Brnjac said her country is applying strict health measures to avoid a repeat of what happened last year, when visitors ignored social distancing on the beaches and in bars, and the tourist season abruptly ended with Croatia facing a surge in coronavirus cases.

The country's some 80,000 tourism workers have priority for getting COVID-19 vaccines, and several PCR testing stations will be installed to make it easier for travelers to obtain results they might need to provide when they return home.

"It is our duty to provide all the prerequisites for a safe and comfortable trip, as well as predictable vacation planning," she said during a recent webinar on travel safety, "In that sense, Croatia is among the first, if not the first, European destination that already applies broader criteria for tourist visits, the same ones that should soon be applied at the EU."

Croatia heavily depends on tourism; some 20% of its revenue comes from foreign visitors during the summer. Adriatic resorts like the medieval walled city of Dubrovnik and Rovinj, with its narrow cobble streets and small squares, almost completely depend on tourists.

Goran Pavlovic, manager at the tourist board in the seaside resort of Opatija, said that Croatia is ready but the success of its summer season will largely depend on the regulations in other countries, especially if travelers must quarantine once they go home.

"It will definitively be a challenging year in front of us because of the pandemic situation," Pavlovic said.

Croatia's tourism workers are optimistic.

"We finally want to see the smile of the guests without their masks," said Maja Segon, a receptionist at the Hotel Savoy in Opatija.

Iran says inspectors may no longer get nuclear sites images

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By NASSER KARIMI and JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — Iran's parliament speaker said Sunday that international inspectors may no longer access surveillance images of the Islamic Republic's nuclear sites, escalating tensions amid diplomatic efforts in Vienna to save Tehran's atomic accord with world powers.

The comments by Iran's parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf, aired by state TV, further underscored the narrowing window for the U.S. and others to reach terms with Iran. The Islamic Republic is already enriching and stockpiling uranium at levels far beyond those allowed by its 2015 nuclear deal.

"Regarding this, and based on the expiration of the three-month deadline, definitely the International Atomic Energy Agency will not have the right to access images from May 22," Qalibaf said. May 22 was Saturday.

The International Atomic Energy Agency had said its director-general would brief reporters later Sunday in Vienna. The United Nations agency did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Under what is called an "Additional Protocol" with Iran, the IAEA "collects and analyzes hundreds of thousands of images captured daily by its sophisticated surveillance cameras," the agency said in 2017. The agency also said then that it had placed "2,000 tamper-proof seals on nuclear material and equipment."

Iran's hard-line parliament in December approved a bill that would suspend part of U.N. inspections of its nuclear facilities if European signatories did not provide relief from oil and banking sanctions by February. The IAEA struck a three-month deal with Iran to have it hold the surveillance images, with Tehran threatening to delete them afterward if no deal had been reached.

It wasn't immediately clear if the images from February had been deleted. Before Qalibaf's remarks, lawmaker Ali Reza Salimi urged an open session of parliament to ensure Iran's civilian nuclear arm "erased" the images. The Atomic Energy Organization of Iran did not immediately comment on the decision.

"Order the head of the Atomic Energy Organization to avoid delay," said Salimi, a cleric from Iran's central city of Delijan. The "recorded images in the cameras should be eliminated."

It also wasn't clear what this meant for in-person inspections by the IAEA. There are 18 nuclear facilities and nine other locations in Iran under IAEA safeguards.

Qalibaf said Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who has final say on all matters of state, supported the decision.

In 2018, then-President Donald Trump pulled the U.S. unilaterally out of the nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. An escalating series of incidents since Trump's withdrawal has threatened the wider Mideast.

Over a year ago, a U.S. drone strike killed a top Iranian general, causing Tehran to later launch ballistic missiles that wounded dozens of American troops in Iraq.

A mysterious explosion also struck Iran's Natanz nuclear facility, which Iran has described as sabotage. In November, Iranian scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, who founded the country's military nuclear program some two decades earlier, was killed in an attack Tehran blames on Israel.

India battles fatal fungal threat as virus deaths near 300K

By SHEIKH SAALIQ Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — Doctors in India are fighting a fatal fungal infection affecting COVID-19 patients or those who have recovered from the disease amid a coronavirus surge that has driven the country's fatalities to nearly 300,000.

The life-threatening condition, known as mucormycosis, is relatively rare but doctors suspect that the sudden increase in the infection could further complicate India's fight against the pandemic.

India has reported more than 26 million confirmed cases of the coronavirus since the pandemic began, with almost half occurring in the past two months. On Sunday, the Health Ministry reported 3,741 new deaths, driving India's confirmed fatalities to 299,266.

It also reported 240,842 new infections, as daily cases remained below 300,000 for a week. The numbers are almost certainly undercounts, with many cases likely being missed due to limited testing.

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Experts say new infections in India, which had been rising steeply, may finally be slowing. But there are some early indications that mucormycosis, also known as "black fungus," is fast becoming a cause of worry.

Mucormycosis is caused by exposure to mucor mold, which is commonly found in soil, air and even in the nose and mucus of humans. It spreads through the respiratory tract and erodes facial structures. Sometimes, doctors have to surgically remove the eye to stop the infection from reaching the brain.

On Saturday, federal minister Sadananda Gowda said nearly 9,000 cases had been reported in India so far, leading to a shortage of Amphotericin B, the drug used to treat the condition.

Gowda didn't share the number of fatalities, but local media have said more than 250 have died because of the disease.

Health officials were working to alleviate the drug shortage, which comes at a time when the country is already short on supplies of oxygen and other health care needs, Gowda said.

Mucormycosis has a high mortality rate and was already present in India before the pandemic. It is not contagious but its frequency in the last month has left doctors shocked.

"It is a new challenge and things are looking bleak," said Ambrish Mithal, the chairman and head of the endocrinology and diabetes department at Max Healthcare, a chain of private hospitals in India.

Mithal said the fungal infection preys on patients with weakened immune systems and underlying conditions, particularly diabetes, and irrational usage of steroids. Uncontrolled blood sugar can put immunocompromised people at a higher risk of contracting the disease.

"Earlier I used to come across just a few cases every year but the current infection rate is frightening," said Mithal.

The latest surge of coronavirus infections in rural India has already taken a toll. Now health experts are worried that over-the-counter medication, including steroids, can increase the prevalence of mucormycosis.

SK Pandey, a medical officer at Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital in Uttar Pradesh state's Lucknow city, said that unqualified doctors were giving steroids to patients in many rural areas without giving a thought whether they require it or not.

"This has led to increase in black fungus cases in smaller cities where the patient has not even been hospitalized," he said.

India's Health Ministry on Thursday asked states to track the spread of the condition and declare it an epidemic, making it mandatory for all medical facilities to report the cases to a federal surveillance network.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday called the disease a "new challenge."

The poor, the rich: In a sick India, all are on their own

By ANIRUDDHA GHOSAL, AIJAZ HUSSAIN and TIM SULLIVAN Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — For the family of the retired diplomat, the terror struck as they tried desperately to get him past the entrance doors of a private hospital. For the New Delhi family, it came when they had to create a hospital room in their ground-floor apartment. For the son of an illiterate woman who raised her three children by scavenging human hair, it came as his mother waited days for an ICU bed, insisting she'd be fine.

Three families in a nation of 1.3 billion. Seven cases of COVID-19 in a country facing an unparalleled surge, with more than 300,000 people testing positive every day.

When the pandemic exploded here in early April, each of these families found themselves struggling to keep relatives alive as the medical system neared collapse and the government was left unprepared.

Across India, families scour cities for coronavirus tests, medicine, ambulances, oxygen and hospital beds. When none of that works, some have to deal with loved ones zippered into body bags.

The desperation comes in waves. New Delhi was hit at the start of April, with the the worst coming near the end of the month. The southern city of Bengaluru was hit about two weeks later. The surge is at its peak now in many small towns and villages, and just reaching others.

But when a pandemic wave hits, everyone is on their own. The poor. The rich. The well-connected bureaucrats who hold immense sway here, and the people who clean the sewers. Wealthy businessmen

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fight for hospital beds, and powerful government officials send tweets begging for oxygen. Middle-class families scrounge wood for funeral pyres, and in places where there's no wood to be found, hundreds of families have been forced to dump their relatives' bodies into the Ganges River.

The rich and well-connected, of course, still have money and contacts to smooth the search for ICU beds and oxygen tanks. But rich and poor alike have been left gasping for breath outside overflowing hospitals.

"This has now become normal," said Abhimanyu Chakravorty, 34, whose extended New Delhi family frantically tried to arrange his father's medical care at home. "Everyone is running helter-skelter, doing whatever they can to save their loved ones."

But every day, thousands more people die.

The Chakravorty family, New Delhi

COVID-19 tests. That's all the family wanted after a niggling cough had spread from relative to relative. But in a city where the virus had descended like a whirlwind, even that had become difficult.

First they called the city's top diagnostic labs. Then the smaller ones. They called for days.

The ground-floor apartment, in an affluent neighborhood with a tiny, well-tended garden and a spreading hibiscus tree in bloom, has been home to the Chakravorty family for more than 40 years. There's 73-year-old Prabir, the family patriarch and widower, a construction executive who has long ignored his family's pleas to stop working, and his two sons, Prateek and Abhimanyu. Prateek, who runs an air-conditioning company, shares a room with his wife, Shweta, and their seven-year-old son Agastya. Rounding out the clan is Prabir's sister, Taposhi, and her adult son, Protim.

They tried to isolate as best they could, seven of them retreating to various corners of the three-bedroom apartment, and kept calling testing centers.

It wasn't supposed to be like this.

In January, Prime Minister Narendra Modi declared victory over COVID-19. In March, the health minister claimed the country was in the pandemic's "endgame."

By then, medical experts had been warning for weeks of an approaching viral wave. The government ignored the warnings, allowing the immense Kumbh Mela religious festival to go forward, with millions of Hindu devotees gathering shoulder-to-shoulder along the Ganges River. Hundreds of thousands also turned out for state election rallies.

The Chakravorty family, like most Indians, hadn't expected things to grow so bad. Certainly not in the capital, which has much better medical care than most of the country, and where those with money have access to private hospitals.

Finally, Shweta found a lab to administer tests. A man arrived in head-to-toe in protective clothing to swab everyone. It seemed, he told them wearily, as if everyone in this city of 29 million people needed coronavirus tests.

The family had their first scare the next day, when a weakened Prabir nearly fell and his sons had to carry him to bed. Stomach problems and a raging fever kept him there.

"He was visibly shaking," said Abhimanyu, a 34-year-old news editor.

They got the results three days later. Four members of the family tested positive, with a few losing their senses of taste and smell. But it was far worse for Prabir.

Prateek struggled to find a doctor for his father. One wouldn't answer the phone, another had his own emergency. Finally, a relative in Thailand contacted a friend, a New Delhi doctor, who said the 73-year-old needed a chest CT scan.

Prateek ventured out on April 28 to find a lab in a scarred city, with roads empty except for ambulances and oxygen tankers. The scan confirmed their fears: Prabir had pneumonia. Doctors warned the family to be very watchful.

Their worries deepened every night, when Prabir coughed relentlessly and his blood oxygen levels dropped dangerously.

"It was an alarm bell," said Abhimanyu.

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Padmavathi's Family, Bengaluru

In a small community of homemade huts, a short walk from one of Bengaluru's wealthiest neighborhoods, one woman's sore throat was turning into breathing problems.

The people here are at the bottom of India's caste ladder, "rag pickers" who support themselves by collecting the city's waste and selling it to recyclers.

Shunned by most Indians, they are an informal - but pivotal - part of the urban infrastructure. India is among the world's largest waste producers, and a city like Bengaluru, the Silicon Valley of India, would drown in its own trash if not for them. Yet when vaccines began to be distributed, with essential workers at the front of the line, they were left off that list.

Some people collect newspapers in the little community. Some pick through dumps. Some specialize in metal. Padmavathi, who uses one name, collected hair, taking it from women's combs and hairbrushes to later be used for wigs. She earned about \$50 a month.

It's a life along the fringes, but Padmavathi, who never went to school and whose name translates from Sanskrit as "She who emerged from the lotus," made it work.

"She was very pushy about our education," said her son, Gangaiah, a community health worker for a non-profit group.

But her oldest daughter had to drop out in sixth grade, when Padmavathi ran out of money. Gangaiah only made it to seventh. She succeeded with her youngest, a seventh-grade daughter who earned a scholarship and now lives in a private school dormitory across town.

Padmavathi shares a one-room hut made from bamboo and plastic sheeting with Gangaiah, his wife and their two children.

Gangaiah's work meant he could quickly get Padmavathi tested when her symptoms started May 1. It meant he had access to an oximeter to test his mother's blood oxygen level.

But when those levels began to drop, he couldn't get her into a hospital. Working with colleagues in the non-profit, he began calling. Again and again he was told every bed was taken.

By the fifth day, with Padmavathi's oxygen levels dangerously low and her breathing sometimes coming in gasps, Gangaiah's colleagues finally found a bed.

She left the neighborhood unworried.

"I'll be back soon. Don't worry," she told her neighbors.

The hospital had oxygen, but everyone said she needed to be in an ICU on a ventilator. That was impossible.

"It was sheer helplessness," said Gangaiah.

The Amrohi Family, Gurgaon

Ashok Amrohi thought it was just a cold when he began coughing on April 21. After all, the retired diplomat and his wife had both been fully vaccinated against coronavirus.

A medical doctor before joining the diplomatic corps, Ashok had traveled the world. He'd been ambassador to Algeria, Mozambique and Brunei, and had retired to Gurgaon, a city just outside the capital, and a life of golf and piano lessons. He was a respected, highly educated member of the upper-middle class.

He was someone who, in normal times, could easily get a bed in the best hospitals.

His fever soon disappeared. But his breathing became labored and his oxygen levels dropped. It appeared to be COVID-19. His wife, Yamini, reached out for help. A sister who lived nearby found an oxygen cylinder.

The situation seemed manageable at first, and they treated Ashok at home.

"I was always with him," said Yamini.

But his oxygen levels kept dropping.

If things worsened even a little more, his family would have no idea how to respond.

The Chakravorty Family, New Delhi

Reluctantly, as Prabir's condition also worsened, the Chakravorty family decided he needed to be hos-

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pitalized.

First, they tried a government-run mobile app showing the city's available beds. It wasn't functioning. So Prateek went searching.

The first three hospitals he visited -- private, costly hospitals, built for India's growing population of new money -- were full.

Then he went to the massive 1,200-bed public field hospital built last June in a leafy New Delhi neighborhood. The hospital had been closed in February when cases fell in north India, and frantically reopened in late April as cases surged.

Outside the hospital entrance, Prateek found dozens of people begging staff to admit sick family members. Some were openly offering bribes to cut the line, others slumped on the floor breathing from oxygen bottles.

Worried families were waiting under a nearby canopy for news - any news - about loved ones inside. Some hadn't seen their relatives in weeks.

"You know nothing," one person told him.

The army doctors running the facility, who were refusing the bribes, were working frantically. They had little time for patient comfort, let alone worried relatives.

Prateek was stunned at the scene: "My body trembled."

Beneath the canopy, he met a sobbing young man whose father had died and been taken away for cremation. But in the chaos, ID numbers attached to some corpses had been mixed up, and the wrong body was carted off for cremation.

His father's body was now lost inside the complex, where death had become mundane.

At that moment, Prateek decided: "We will do what we can at home, this wasn't an option."

Padmavathi's Family, Bengaluru

Late on the night of May 5, an ICU bed finally opened up for Padmavathi, whose condition was clearly deteriorating.

"She kept telling other people that she'd soon be fine," said Gangaiah.

Padmavathi was a fighter, and knew how hard India could be on the least fortunate. She'd grown up in a family so poor they often didn't have enough food, and was a traveling laborer by the time she was seven. She married at 14, and raised three children alone after her husband abandoned her.

"She was a sad person, but she would hide her melancholy from us," said Gangaiah. She buried her sadness in more work: "She sacrificed everything she had for us. Her struggle to feed us and raise us consumed all her time."

Joy only came when her oldest daughter and Gangaiah had children.

"She was so happy. Perhaps the only time we saw her happy in a real sense," he said.

She was also a force in the neighborhood, helping other women with their troubles, and fighting to ban the cheap and sometimes poisonous home-made liquor that kills hundreds of India's poor every year.

But in the hospital that night, none of that mattered.

A few hours after being transferred to the ICU, amid the noise of medical machinery, Padmavathi died. She was 48 years old.

Gangaiah was waiting outside when it happened.

"I cried bitterly," he said. "I had hardly seen my father's love and care. She was both my parents."

He is furious.

"We also knew from experience that the government is for rich people and the upper castes. But we always nurtured this belief that at least hospitals will cater to us in our time of need," he said. "It turned out to be an utterly fake belief, a lie."

The Amrohi Family, Gurgaon

At the Amrohi apartment, the former ambassador's family was calling his medical school classmates for help. One eventually arranged a bed at a nearby hospital.

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It was April 26. The brutal north Indian summer was coming on. Temperatures that day reached nearly 105 degrees Fahrenheit (40 degrees Celsius).

His wife, Yamini, and their adult son Anupam put him into the family's compact SUV.

They arrived about 7:30 p.m. and parked in front of the main doors, thinking Ashok would be rushed inside. They were wrong. Admission paperwork had to be completed first, and the staff was swamped.

So they waited.

Anupam stood in line while Yamini stayed in the car with Ashok, who was breathing bottled oxygen. She blasted the air-conditioning, trying to keep him cool.

An hour passed. Two hours. Someone came to swab Ashok for a coronavirus test. It came back positive. His breathing had grown difficult.

"I went thrice to the hospital reception for help. I begged, pleaded and shouted at the officials," she said. "But nobody budged."

At one point, their daughter called from London, where she lives with her family. With everyone on a video call, their four-year-old grandson asked to talk to Ashok.

"I love you, Poppy," he said.

Ashok pulled off his oxygen mask: "Hello. Poppy loves you too."

Three hours.

Four hours.

Anupam returned regularly to the car to check on his father.

"It's almost done," he would tell him each time. "Everything is going to be alright. Please stay with us!"

Five hours.

A little after midnight, Ashok grew agitated, pulling off the oxygen mask and gasping. His chest heaved. Then he went still.

"In a second he was no more," Yamini said. "He was dead in my arms."

Yamini went to the reception desk: "You are murderers," she told them.

The Chakravorty Family, New Delhi

Prateek Chakravorty returned from the field hospital and told his family about the nightmare there. All agreed Prabir would be treated at home.

The brothers grew up in this pink three-story building. It's where they returned to after evenings playing soccer. It's where they spent India's harsh, months-long lockdown last year, glad to be together.

Now it was where they had to help their father breathe.

For rich countries, oxygen is a basic medical need, like running water. Last year, Indian authorities ordered most of the country's industrial oxygen production to switch to medical oxygen.

But it was nowhere near enough for the surge's ferocity. Hospitals went on social media, begging the federal government for more oxygen. The government responded to social media criticism by ordering Twitter to take down dozens of tweets.

The Chakravorty family decided their best bet was an oxygen concentrator. Unaffordable to most Indians, with prices reaching \$5,500, concentrators remove nitrogen from the air and deliver a stream of concentrated oxygen.

They reached out to friends, relatives, business colleagues - anyone they could think of - trying to find one.

It's how things work now in India. With the formal medical system barely functioning, tight networks of family, friends and colleagues, and sometimes the generosity of complete strangers, would save many. Informal volunteer networks have germinated to reuse medical equipment and look for hospital beds. The black market thrives, charging astronomical prices.

A friend responded to their SOS. Sougata Roy knew someone in Chandigarh, a city in the Himalayan foothills about a five-hour drive away, who had a machine and wasn't using it. He offered to get it.

Roy arrived April 27 with the machine and instructions.

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On April 29, the family found someone to care for their father. He wasn't a trained nurse, but had experience treating COVID-19 patients at home.

Prabir's signs of improvement were slow, but the family grasped at them, overjoyed when he could eat a little boiled chicken. They celebrated quietly each time his oxygen levels were good, knowing they were lucky to have the resources to treat him at home.

"It was hell," said Prateek, remembering the worst two weeks. Slowly, though, their optimism grew.

May 7 was Prateek's birthday. Prabir looked brighter, and the relieved family decided to celebrate. They ordered chocolate cake from a nearby bakery.

Prabir didn't want any. But for the first time in weeks, he was craving something sweet.

He settled for a cookie.

The Amrohi Family, Gurgaon

The horror didn't end with the ambassador's death.

Ashok's body, sealed in a plastic bag, was taken by ambulance the next morning to an outdoor cremation ground.

Cremations are deeply important in Hinduism, a way to free a person's soul so it can be reborn elsewhere. A priest normally oversees the rites. Family and friends gather. The eldest son traditionally lights the funeral pyre.

But when the Amrohis got to the cremation ground, a long line of ambulances was in front of them. Beyond the gate, nine funeral pyres were blazing.

Finally, Anupam was called to light his father's pyre.

Normally, families wait as the fire burns down, paying their respects and waiting for the ashes. But immense fires burned around the Amrohi family. The heat was crushing. Ashes filled the air.

"I have never seen a scene like that," said Yamini. "We couldn't stand it."

They returned to their car, waited until they were told the body had been cremated, and drove away.

Anupam returned the next morning to collect his father's ashes.

Drake, The Weeknd poised for big night at Billboard Awards

By MESFIN FEKADU AP Music Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Some of the Grammys' biggest critics, who felt they've been overlooked at the famed awards show, will take center stage at another event: the 2021 Billboard Music Awards.

The Weeknd called out the Grammys last year when he didn't earn a single nomination for its 2021 show, despite having the year's biggest song with "Blinding Lights" and a multi-platinum, multi-hit album with "After Hours." But at Sunday's Billboard Awards, he's the top nominee competing for an impressive 16 awards.

With 27 wins, Drake is the most decorated artist in the history of the Billboard Awards. He's up for seven honors this year and will receive the Artist of the Decade Award.

Drake has won four Grammys and The Weeknd has earned three — though they've been restricted to wins in the rap and R&B categories, instead of winning prizes like album, song or record of the year.

But the Canadian performers will battle for the top prize at the Billboard Awards — top artist — where competition includes Taylor Swift and late rappers Juice WRLD and Pop Smoke.

Despite dominating the charts and streaming services, Juice WRLD was also snubbed at the Grammys, held in March. Pop Smoke was restricted to a single nomination — best rap performance for the hit "Dior." However, Swift won album of the year for a third time with "evermore."

The Weeknd, Swift, Juice WRLD and Pop Smoke will compete for top Billboard 200 album, along with Lil Baby.

For top Hot 100 song, nominees include The Weeknd's "Blinding Lights," DaBaby and Roddy Ricch's "Rockstar," Chris Brown and Young Thug's "Go Crazy," Gabby Barrett and Charlie Puth's "I Hope," and 24kGoldn and iann dior's "Mood."

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Unlike other awards shows where committees determine nominees, the Billboard Awards' finalists are based on album and digital sales, streaming, radio airplay and social engagement. The nominees for the 51 categories are based on the chart period of March 21, 2020, through April 3, 2021.

It's the reason why controversial country singer Morgan Wallen is nominated for six awards. Because Wallen was caught on camera using a racial slur earlier this year, he wasn't allowed to compete at the Academy of Country Music Awards or CMT Music Awards. But despite the fallout, he's had major success on the country and pop charts with multiple songs from his sophomore album, "Dangerous: The Double Album."

Billboard Awards producer Dick Clark Productions did ban Wallen from participating in the show.

But Sunday will be jam-packed with other A-listers: Performers include The Weeknd, BTS, Bad Bunny, Doja Cat and SZA, twenty one pilots, DJ Khaled with H.E.R. and Migos, Karol G, Alicia Keys, Duran Duran, Jonas Brothers with Marshmello, and Pink, who will earn the ICON Award.

Presenters include Cynthia Erivo, Chelsea Handler, Swizz Beatz, Tina Knowles-Lawson, Gabrielle Union, Henry Golding, Leslie Odom Jr., Lil Rel Howery, Padma Lakshmi, Renée Elise Goldsberry, Lena Waithe and Dixie D'Amelio.

Following The Weeknd, DaBaby is the second most nominated act with 11. Pop Smoke earned 10 post-humorous nominations, while Barrett is the leading female nominee with nine.

Others who scored multiple nominations include Bad Bunny, BTS, Megan Thee Stallion, Doja Cat and Justin Bieber.

AJR, Glass Animals, Jimmy Jam & Terry Lewis with Sounds of Blackness and Ann Nesby will also perform Sunday, where rapper-activist Trae Tha Truth will receive the Change Maker Award.

A wild ride for Mickelson and 18 holes away from history

By DOUG FERGUSON AP Golf Writer

KIAWAH ISLAND, S.C. (AP) — Phil Mickelson could have done without the thrills Saturday in the PGA Championship.

Losing a five-shot lead in a span of five holes on the back nine. One tee shot into the water, another that ended up under a cart tire. It was all part of a wildly entertaining day at Kiawah Island that ended with Mickelson nearly holing a flop shot that can test the nerves of just about any 50-year-old but him.

That brought Mickelson to the cusp of history not many could have seen coming.

That par save for a 2-under 70 gave him a one-shot lead over Brooks Koepka and left him 18 holes away from becoming the oldest champion in the 161 years of the majors.

When he curled in the 4-foot putt for par on the 18th hole, Mickelson became the oldest player with a 54-hole lead in a major since 59-year-old Tom Watson at Turnberry in 2009.

That didn't end well for Watson, who lost that British Open in a playoff to Stewart Cink. For Mickelson, it's an opportunity to become the oldest major champion. Julius Boros was 48 when he won the 1968 PGA Championship.

Asked to describe such an occasion, Mickelson was too busy glancing at his watch. Sunlight was fading and he wanted to practice. These opportunities don't come along as often as they once did.

"I'm not really dwelling back on what took place today," he said.

Sunday should get his attention, starting with the guy who joins him in the final group. Koepka survived what he called the worst putting of his career. Statistically, he was middle of the pack, but he missed a 6-foot par on the final hole for a 70 that cost him a share of the lead.

No matter. At stake for Koepka is a shot at his third Wanamaker Trophy in four years. No one has won the PGA Championship so often so quickly since it switched to stroke play in 1958.

"I'm in the final group," Koepka said. "That's what you want."

Mickelson was at 7-under 209. For all his success in the majors — five victories, runner-up finishes in all four of them — this is only the third time he has held the 54-hole lead.

Koepka, shaking off effects from ligament surgery on his right knee that has limited him to two tourna-

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ments in three months before arriving at Kiawah, wasn't surprised to have another shot at a major. He already has four of them in the last five years.

"It just feels good, feels normal. It's what you're supposed to do, what you practice for," he said. "I'm right where I want to be, and we'll see how tomorrow goes."

Louis Oosthuizen started the third round tied with Mickelson and had a long three-putt bogey. The South African never caught up, though he had his chances until missing a 4-foot birdie putt on the par-5 16th and a 5-foot par putt on the par-3 17th.

He wound up with a 72 and was two shots behind.

"Probably the worst I've played in a while," Oosthuizen said. "I was just sort of fighting to stay in it and at the end there, started judging the greens wrong and everything just fell apart. All in all, two behind going into Sunday, I've got to take a lot of positives out of that."

At least they have a chance.

Mickelson broke away quickly with four birdies in seven holes, and he even managed to avoid losing his focus. One distraction came from the fourth fairway, when Mickelson saw a drone in the air left of the green and said to a CBS spotter, "Can you radio to the TV guys to get the drone out of the flight of my shot?" He saved par from a back bunker.

He went out in 32 — Mickelson played the front nine on Friday in 31 — and was five shots clear when he walked off the 10th green. Five holes later, the lead was gone.

Mickelson badly missed a 7-foot birdie attempt on No. 11. He pulled his tee shot into a bunker on No. 12 and had to play back to the fairway, leading to his first bogey of the round.

And then he drove into the water on the 13th with his 2-wood, had to hit his third shot from the tee because of where he thought it crossed the hazard line, and missed a 12-footer to take double bogey. Ahead of him, Koepka rattled off three birdies.

Mickelson, without so much as a top 20 the last 10 months, is going after his first major since the 2013 British Open, and the final hour made it clear that this might not be easy.

But it will be loud. The gallery is the largest at a major since the pandemic — the PGA of America has said there would be 10,000 people, a number that felt far greater — and Mickelson was the object of their raucous shouting.

Kevin Streelman bogeyed the 18th for a 70 and was alone in fourth at 4-under 212, followed by Branden Grace and Christiaan Bezuidenhout of South Africa, each with a 72.

Jordan Spieth matched the low round of the day with a 68, still seven shots behind and most likely too far back to contend with a dozen players ahead of him.

Spieth was headed back to his rental home to flip on the TV, a rarity for him.

But it's Phil. It's theater.

"I don't watch golf but I promise you I'm going to turn it on to watch him today," Spieth said. "It's pretty incredible. I have no way to relate to it, right? But I also don't think it's necessarily that special because didn't he win a World Golf Championships in the last couple years?"

"The guy's got four good rounds on any golf course in him, and no one would bet against that."

Mickelson has had three good ones at Kiawah Island.

One more for history.

Virgin Galactic rocket ship ascends from New Mexico

By MORGAN LEE Associated Press

SANTA FE, N.M. (AP) — Virgin Galactic on Saturday made its first rocket-powered flight from New Mexico to the fringe of space in a manned shuttle, as the company forges toward offering tourist flights to the edge of the Earth's atmosphere.

High above the desert in a cloudless sky, the VSS Unity ignited its rocket to hurtle the ship and two pilots toward space. A live feed by NASASpaceFlight.com showed the ship accelerating upward and confirmed a landing later via radar.

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Virgin Galactic announced that its VSS Unity shuttle accelerated to three times the speed of sound and reached an altitude of just over 55 miles (89 kilometers) above sea level before making its gliding return through the atmosphere.

British billionaire and Virgin Galactic founder Sir Richard Branson said the flight and landing bring the roughly 15-year-old venture tantalizingly close to commercial flights for tourists. Virgin Galactic says those flights could begin next year.

"Today was just an incredible step in the right direction," Branson told The Associated Press shortly after the flight landings. "It tested a lot of new systems that the teams have been building and they all worked."

Virgin Galactic CEO Michael Colglazier said at least two more undated test flights lie ahead — the next with four mission specialist passengers in the cabin. Pending trials also include a flight that will take Branson to the edge of space.

"The flight today was elegant, beautiful," Colglazier said. "We're going to analyze all the data that we gather on these flights. But watching from the ground and speaking with our pilots, it was magnificent. So now it's time for us to do this again."

Virgin Galactic said the flight provided an assessment of upgrades to a horizontal stabilizer, other flight controls and a suite of cabin cameras designed to provide live images of the flight to people on the ground. The shuttle also carried a scientific payload in cooperation with NASA's Flight Opportunities Program.

Preparations for the latest flight included a maintenance review of the special carrier plane that flies the six-passenger spacecraft to a high altitude, where it is released so it can fire its rocket motor and make the final push to space.

The first powered test of the rocket ship in New Mexico from Spaceport America was delayed repeatedly before Saturday's launch. In December 2020, computer trouble caused by electromagnetic interference prevented the spaceship's rocket from firing properly. Instead of soaring toward space, the ship and its two pilots were forced to make an immediate landing.

While Virgin Galactic's stock price ticked up this week with the announcement of the latest test being scheduled for Saturday, it wasn't enough to overcome the losses seen since a peak in February. Some analysts have cautioned that it could be a while before the company sees profits as the exact start of commercial operations is still up in the air.

Virgin Galactic is one of a few companies looking to cash in on customers with an interest in space.

Elon Musk's SpaceX will launch a billionaire and his sweepstakes winners in September. That is expected to be followed in January 2022 by a flight by three businessmen to the International Space Station.

Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin launched a new capsule in January as part of testing as it aims to get its program for tourists, scientists and professional astronauts off the ground. It's planning for liftoff of its first crewed flight on July 20, the date of the Apollo 11 moon landing.

Virgin Galactic has reached space twice before. The first time was from California in December 2018.

The flights are designed to reach an altitude of at least 50 miles (80 kilometers) as the rocket motor is turned off and the crew prepares to reenter the atmosphere and glide to a landing.

As part of the return trip, a feathering system slows and stabilizes the craft as it re-enters the atmosphere.

New Mexico taxpayers have invested over \$200 million in the Spaceport America hangar and launch facility, near Truth or Consequences, after Branson and then-Gov. Bill Richardson, a Democrat, pitched the plan for the facility, with Virgin Galactic as the anchor tenant.

Richardson watched Saturday's flight from the ground below and later thanked the residents of local counties who committed early on to a sales tax increase to support the venture.

"It's finally a great day after all of us taking a lot of heat — mainly me — over a period of time," Richardson said. "But it's happened. It's successful."

Rock band Maneskin wins Eurovision Song Contest for Italy

By MIKE CORDER Associated Press

ROTTERDAM, Netherlands (AP) — A four-piece band of Italian rockers won the Eurovision Song Con-

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test in the early hours of Sunday, giving one of the countries hit hardest in Europe by the coronavirus pandemic reason to cheer.

Maneskin's win was only Italy's third victory in the immensely popular contest and the first since Toto Cutugno took the honor in 1990.

The music festival was cancelled last year amid the pandemic but this year's event in Rotterdam's Ahoy arena with its regime of testing and strict hygiene protocols was seen as a step toward a post-COVID-19 return to live entertainment.

"We think that the whole event was a relief. We think that we were really thankful ... to have had the chance to be part of this huge event," Maneskin lead singer Damiano David said.

"This Eurovision means a lot, I think, to the whole of Europe. It's going to be a lighthouse. So thank you, everybody. Really," he added.

Italy, the bookmakers' favorite, trailed Switzerland, France and Malta after the national juries delivered their votes but were propelled to victory by votes from the viewing public.

"The audience is the most important thing, of course," said bassist Victoria De Angelis.

"So the fact that so many people vote for us, it's the most meaningful, because that means that those people are coming to our gigs, they are listening to our music. And this has much more value than a jury"

A crowd of 3,500 fans, who all tested negative for the coronavirus, watched the finalists perform live.

Maneskin is Danish for moonlight, a tribute to De Angelis' home country. The band, which honed its musical style busking in Rome, won with a total of 529 points from second-placed France. Switzerland, which led after national juries had voted, finished third.

United Kingdom singer James Newman's song, "Embers," failed to ignite any love at all and did not score a single point, finishing last, just as the U.K. did at the previous Eurovision two years ago.

U.S. rapper Flo Rida didn't manage to translate his star power into points for tiny San Marino's entry that was sung by Senhit. They finished with just 50 points.

For lovers of kitsch, German singer Jendrik played a sparkling ukulele and danced with a woman dressed in a giant hand costume optimistically showing the victory sign. He finished close to last.

Lithuanian band The Roop danced in bright yellow costumes in a tongue-in-cheek homage to 1980s synth pop.

Pravi's song. "Voilà," was a restrained ballad that built to a swirling crescendo on a largely darkened stage, but there was still plenty of the over-the-top spectacle that has become Eurovision's trademark.

Norwegian singer Andreas Haukeland, whose stage name TIX is a reference to growing up with Tourette syndrome, sang "Fallen Angel" in a pair of giant white wings while chained to four prancing devils.

At the other end of the spectrum -- Finland's hard-rocking Blind Channel played their song "Dark Side" amid bursts of pyrotechnics and Ukraine's Go_A performed surrounded by skeletal white trees.

Ahead of the show, crowds gathered outside the arena in the Dutch city of Rotterdam. Drag queens mingled with families as a man in a gold suit waited to get into the venue.

Milo Mateo and Carlo Sossa, wearing matching sequin-covered hats and draped in Italian flags, came from Italy for the show and were hoping for a Maneskin victory since that would bring next year's contest to Italy.

"If we win, it will be very, very nice, because the next year will be in Italy. That's very good. Let's hope. Fingers crossed," Mateo said as he waited to get into the arena.

The popular Icelandic band Dadi og Gagnamagnid, known for its kitsch dance moves and green leisure-wear costumes, could not perform live because one member tested positive for the virus earlier in the week. Instead, viewers saw a recording of one of the band's dress rehearsals.

"The point was to go and actually experience how it was to compete in Eurovision, and that's just really not happening," lead singer Dadi Freyr said from isolation in Rotterdam.

Maneskin lead singer David said the victory was a vindication of the band's career trajectory that started with them busking on the streets of Rome.

"We feel like everything we did since the day we met and since the day we started playing and playing

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on the streets is really making sense and it's worth it," he said.

US again extending temporary protected status for Haitians

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Biden administration is allowing eligible Haitian nationals residing in the U.S. to apply for a new 18-month designation for temporary protected status, reversing a Trump administration effort that had sought to end the special consideration.

In a statement Saturday, Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas cited security concerns, social unrest, an increase in human rights abuses, crippling poverty and other problems in Haiti for the decision.

"After careful consideration, we determined that we must do what we can to support Haitian nationals in the United States until conditions in Haiti improve so they may safely return home," Mayorkas said.

DHS says a foreign country may be designated for temporary protected status, or TPS, because of conditions that temporarily prevent the country's nationals from returning safely or because the country is unable to handle the return of its nationals adequately. While a person with TPS cannot be removed from the U.S., DHS notes that it is a temporary benefit that doesn't lead to lawful permanent resident status or give any other immigration status.

DHS initially designated Haiti for TPS in January 2010 in the aftermath of the 7.0-magnitude earthquake that devastated the country. The designation was extended several times until the Trump administration announced in January 2018 that Haiti's TPS designation would end effective July 22, 2019. Several lawsuits challenging the termination have allowed the designation to remain in effect.

"Today, the Biden administration affirmed America's commitment to its humanitarian values," Murad Awawdeh, executive director for the New York Immigration Coalition, said in a statement. "Haitian New Yorkers can now rest easier knowing that their families can stay together and in their communities as a vital part of our economic and social fabric."

The NYIC, an umbrella group for policy and advocacy organizations in the state, estimates that 5,200 Haitian recipients of TPS reside in New York. Saturday's renewal of TPS affects more than the 50,000 Haitians living in the U.S. while redesignating TPS for Haitians who arrived in the U.S. after 2010 could benefit up to 100,000 more, according to the NYIC.

Among lawmakers applauding the decision was Sen. Bob Menendez, D-N.J. "The last thing our country should be doing is forcing an entire community in the U.S. to decide between packing up their lives and tearing their families apart by self-deporting, or becoming undocumented and forced into the shadows of our society," Menendez said.

DHS said the new TPS designation enables Haitian nationals residing in the U.S. as of Friday — as well as individuals without nationality who last resided in Haiti — to file initial applications for TPS, so long as they meet eligibility requirements. Those who attempt to travel to the U.S. after the announcement will not be eligible for TPS and may be sent home, the agency said.

Haiti's 18-month designation will go into effect on the publication date of the Federal Register notice, which DHS said will come shortly and provide instructions for applying.

Individuals eligible for TPS under the new designation must file an application for TPS with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services within the registration period, DHS said. Current beneficiaries under Haiti's TPS designation also must apply, the agency said.

Police say 1 arrested in attack on Jewish men in Los Angeles

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Los Angeles police on Saturday announced the arrest of a suspect in an alleged attack by a pro-Palestinian group on Jewish men outside a restaurant earlier in the week.

A police statement, which did not identify the man, said he was arrested on suspicion of assault with a deadly weapon late Friday at a residence outside the city of Los Angeles with assistance from a U.S. Marshals Service task force.

Increased bail was requested "due to the crime being motivated by hatred," the statement said.

"The male is one of the primary suspects in the assault and beating of several men who were outside of

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a restaurant in the evening hours in the Mid-City area of Los Angeles on Tuesday May 18, 2021," it said. The violence, recorded on video, occurred when a car caravan flying Palestinian flags stopped near a restaurant where diners were eating at outdoor tables.

Witnesses told news media that people in the caravan threw bottles and chanted "death to Jews" and "free Palestine," and men got out of the vehicles and began asking who was Jewish. A brawl erupted when two diners said they were Jewish.

Civic and faith leaders have condemned the incident.

Leaving home: West Virginia population drop is largest in US

By JOHN RABY Associated Press

CHARLESTON, W.Va. (AP) — After her company told employees in 2017 to start working remotely, customer service representative Haley Miller decided to break from her lifelong home of West Virginia.

The beaches of St. Petersburg, Florida, provide a far different view than the mountains of her native state. There are palm trees, a vivacious arts and restaurant scene — and fewer potholes.

"There are tons of things to do," said Miller, now 29, who still works for the retail company. "It's a very welcoming and inclusive town."

She is not alone. According to newly released data from the U.S. Census Bureau, West Virginia lost a higher percentage of its residents than any other state in the nation. From 2010 to 2020, the population dropped 3.2%, or about 59,000 people. Because of that, West Virginia was one of only seven states to lose a congressional seat following the 2020 census.

Reasons for leaving vary, but common themes emerge: a lack of opportunity or low pay; not enough to do; a political climate that some find oppressive, and poor cellphone and internet service. According to the Census Bureau, only 79% of West Virginian households have a broadband internet subscription, the fifth-smallest rate in the country.

The population has suffered from changing demographics, with deaths outpacing births for the past two decades, according to the National Center for Health Statistics.

In an effort to reverse the population losses, West Virginia started encouraging remote workers to move to the state of 1.79 million residents through a program that will pay them \$12,000 cash along with free passes for a year's worth of whitewater rafting, golf, rock climbing and other outdoor activities.

Miller wants no part of it. The energy poured into luring out-of-staters, she said, should be spent "helping people there who are suffering the most." About 16% of West Virginia's residents live in poverty, surpassed only by Arkansas, Kentucky, New Mexico, Louisiana and Mississippi.

The nation's second-largest coal producer, West Virginia has lost 56% of its mining jobs since 2009 as power plants turn toward renewable energy sources.

Teachers are leaving for better-paying jobs, especially in bordering states. Despite winning 5% raises following a lengthy strike in 2018, West Virginia teachers remain 48th in the nation in average salaries, according to the National Education Association.

Because of that, many West Virginia county school districts rely heavily on substitute teachers.

When Rebecca Recco left Belle, West Virginia, in 2017, she was making \$42,000 as an art teacher. She now earns \$68,000 teaching middle school art in Oakland, California.

Moving was about more than just better pay. She described an anti-union, anti-teacher sentiment, including new laws passed by the Legislature creating charter schools and withholding teacher pay during labor strikes.

"West Virginia reminds me of a drunk cousin," Recco said. "It's like this cousin that you have that can't get itself together. I love West Virginia. I love it. It's where my roots are from. (But) I couldn't with that state anymore."

Except for the occasional gift shop, Recco said, West Virginia is merely a passing thought for motorists on the interstates.

"Everybody I've met out here has said, 'Oh yeah, I drove through West Virginia. I don't remember it. Was

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there anything there to do?" Recco said. "That's the sad thing. That's the perfect place to put something to draw people from D.C., Columbus or Pittsburgh. Give them a reason to stop."

Andrew Snyder is looking for a reason to come back permanently.

Snyder, 25, moved out of Charleston when he was a college freshman in 2016 to join the Army because he and his then-pregnant wife wanted to provide for their family. After leaving the Army, he found work as a defense contractor in Alabama.

Snyder, whose relatives still live in West Virginia, dreams of moving to Morgantown one day to earn a master's degree.

Still, he's concerned about poor broadband and spotty cell service in his native state. Coming back has "got to be the right opportunity," Snyder said. "I make good money down here doing what I do."

Affordability and retirement were two reasons why Susan Mazur-Stommen jumped at the chance to move to West Virginia from Washington, D.C., in 2019. The 54-year-old cultural anthropologist and her husband bought a 110-year-old house in Hinton for \$47,000.

"West Virginia people are very independent-minded. You don't get that conformity you see in other places. I think that's really important," she said "There is sort of a live-and-let-live attitude. You can create your own future and your own reality here in some ways that you cannot in places that are restricted, more conformist."

For many if not most of the people who have left, the conflict between the things that led them to leave and their fondness for sweeping mountain vistas, a manageable pace and having family close at hand never really goes away.

Snyder's grandparents are getting older. His wife has family in West Virginia, too. He loves to hunt and fish, and says they are "typical West Virginians."

"Nothing's ever home," he says, "unless you're home."

New COVID-19 cases plummet to lowest levels since last June

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

New coronavirus cases across the United States have tumbled to rates not seen in more than 11 months, sparking optimism that vaccination campaigns are stemming both severe COVID-19 cases and the spread of the virus.

As cases, hospitalizations and deaths steadily dropped this week, pre-pandemic life in America has largely resumed. Hugs and unmasked crowds returned to the White House, a Mardi Gras-style parade marched through Alabama's port city of Mobile, and even states that have stuck to pandemic-related restrictions readied to drop them. However, health experts also cautioned that not enough Americans have been vaccinated to completely extinguish the virus, leaving the potential for new variants that could extend the pandemic.

As the seven-day average for new cases dropped below 30,000 per day this week, Rochelle Walensky, the director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, pointed out cases have not been this low since June 18, 2020. The average number of deaths over the last seven days also dropped to 552 — a rate not seen since July last year. It's a dramatic drop since the pandemic hit a devastating crescendo in January.

"As each week passes and as we continue to see progress, these data give me hope," Walensky said Friday at a news conference.

Health experts credit an efficient rollout of vaccines for the turnaround. More than 60% of people over 18 have received at least one shot, and almost half are fully vaccinated, according to the CDC. But demand for vaccines has dropped across much of the country. President Joe Biden's administration is trying to convince other Americans to sign up for shots, using an upbeat message that vaccines offer a return to normal life.

White House health officials on Friday even waded into offering dating advice. They are teaming up with dating apps to offer a new reason to "swipe right" by featuring vaccination badges on profiles and

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in-app bonuses for people who have gotten their shots.

Ohio, New York, Oregon and other states are enticing people to get vaccinated through lottery prizes of up to \$5 million.

Across the country, venues and events reopened after shuttering for much of the last year.

On Saturday, Karen Stetz readied to welcome what she hoped would be a good crowd to the Grosse Pointe Art Fair on Michigan's Lake St. Clair.

With natural ventilation from the lake and mask and capacity restrictions easing, Stetz was optimistic that artists who make their living traveling a show circuit that ground to a halt last year would begin to bounce back. The event usually draws from 5,000 to 10,000 people.

"I feel like most people are ready to get out," Stetz said by phone shortly before opening the fair. "It seems like people are eager, but it's hard to know still. I'm sure there's a percentage of people that are going to wait until they're comfortable."

In Mobile, thousands of joyful revelers, many without masks, competed for plastic beads and trinkets tossed from floats Friday night as Alabama's port city threw a Mardi Gras-style parade. But only about a quarter of the county's population is fully vaccinated. Many went without masks, though health officials had urged personal responsibility.

Alabama's vaccination rate — 34% of people have received at least one dose — is one of the lowest in the country. It's part of a swath of Southern states where vaccine uptake has been slow. Health experts worry that areas with low vaccination rates could give rise to new virus variants that are more resistant to vaccinations.

"My biggest concern is new strains of the virus and the need to remain vigilant in the months ahead," said Boston College public health expert Dr. Philip J. Landrigan.

A medical center in Louisiana reported Friday it has identified the state's first two cases of a COVID-19 variant that has spread widely since being identified in India. The COVID-19 variant has been classified as a "variant of concern" by Britain and the World Health Organization, meaning there is some evidence that it spreads more easily between people, causes more severe disease, or might be less responsive to treatments and vaccines. The variant has also been reported in several other states, including Tennessee, Nebraska and Nevada.

Though Landrigan said the big drop in cases nationwide was "the best news we've had on the pandemic" and showed that vaccines are working, he warned that people should remain vigilant for local flare-ups of new cases.

Many states have largely dropped orders to wear masks and stay distanced from other people. Meanwhile, even places such as California — the first state to issue a statewide shutdown as the virus emerged in March 2020 — prepared to remove restrictions on social distancing and business capacity next month.

State health director Dr. Mark Ghaly said Friday the decision was based on dramatically lower virus cases and increased vaccinations.

But in Vermont — the state with the highest percentage of people who have received one shot — Gov. Phil Scott has tied the lifting of restrictions to the vaccination rate. He offered to lift all remaining restrictions before a July 4 deadline if 80% of those eligible get vaccinated.

Landrigan figured it will take a nationwide vaccination rate of at least 85% to snuff out the virus. But for now, the steep drop in cases gave him hope that pandemic-level infection rates will soon be a thing of the past.

"It is getting to the point to where by the Fourth of July we might be able to declare this thing over," he said.

CNN cuts ties with Rick Santorum over disparaging comments

By MARK KENNEDY Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — CNN is cutting ties with former Republican senator and current TV analyst Rick Santorum over disparaging comments he made about Native American culture.

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On CNN, Santorum was a senior political commentator who was often tasked with giving the Republican point of view during campaign coverage. His parting ways with the network was confirmed Saturday by Alison Rudnick, vice president of HLN Communications and CNN Diversity and Inclusion.

He sparked controversy in an April 23 speech before the Young America's Foundation, a conservative youth organization. Santorum said immigrants created a nation based on the Judeo-Christian ethic from a blank slate.

"We birthed a nation from nothing," he said. "Yes, there were Native Americans, but there isn't much Native American culture in American culture."

The comment prompted Fawn Sharp, president of the National Congress of American Indians, to call him "an unhinged and embarrassing racist who disgraces CNN and any other media company that provides him a platform."

"To correct the record, what European colonizers found in the Americas were thousands of complex, sophisticated, and sovereign tribal nations, each with millennia of distinct cultural, spiritual and technological development," she wrote in a statement.

Sharp called on CNN to fire Santorum or potentially face a boycott from more than 500 tribal nations and its allies worldwide.

Santorum later said on Chris Cuomo's CNN show that he "misspoke" in the sense that it wasn't clear that he was speaking in the context of the founding of the United States government.

"People say I'm trying to dismiss what happened to the Native Americans," he said. "Far from it. The way we treated Native Americans was horrific. It goes against every bone and everything I've ever fought for as a leader in the Congress."

Santorum's comments have garnered blowback before, especially his views on gay marriage and homosexuality. In 2003, he infuriated gay rights advocates by appearing to compare homosexuality to pedophilia and bestiality

Hamas defiant with military parade, appearance of top leader

By WAFAA SHURAFI and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip (AP) — Hundreds of masked Hamas fighters brandishing assault rifles paraded in Gaza City and the group's top leader made his first public appearance on Saturday, in a defiant show of strength after the militants' 11-day war with Israel.

Saturday marked the first full day of a cease-fire, and Egyptian mediators held talks to firm up the truce which ended the fourth Israel-Hamas war in just over a decade.

In the fighting, Israel unleashed hundreds of airstrikes against militant targets in Gaza, while Hamas and other militants fired more than 4,000 rockets toward Israel. More than 250 people were killed, the vast majority of them Palestinians.

In Gaza City, residents began assessing damage.

One of Gaza City's busiest commercial areas, Omar al-Mukhtar Street, was covered in debris, smashed cars and twisted metal after a 13-floor building in its center was flattened in an Israeli airstrike. Merchandise was covered in soot and strewn inside smashed stores and on the pavement. Municipal workers swept broken glass and twisted metal from streets and sidewalks.

"We really didn't expect this amount of damage," said Ashour Subeih, who sells baby clothes. "We thought the strike was a bit further from us. But as you can see not an area of the shop is intact." Having been in business for one year, Subeih estimated his losses were double what he has made so far.

Drone video and photos showed some city blocks reduced to rubble, in between homes and businesses left standing.

Both Israel and Hamas have claimed victory.

On Saturday, hundreds of Hamas fighters wearing military camouflage paraded past the mourning tent for Bassem Issa, a senior commander killed in the fighting. The top Hamas leader in Gaza, Yehiyeh Sinwar, paid his respects in his first public appearance since the war began.

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Israel bombed the house of Sinwar, along with that of other senior Hamas figures, as part of its attack on what it said was the group's military infrastructure. Israel's defense minister, Benny Gantz, has said Israel delivered a punishing blow to Hamas, and that top Hamas figures remained targets.

Still, there was a widespread expectation that the cease-fire would stick for now, even if another round of fighting at some point seems inevitable. Underlying issues remain unresolved, including an Israeli-Egyptian border blockade, now in its 14th year, that is choking Gaza's more than 2 million residents and a refusal by the Islamic militant Hamas to disarm.

The U.N. Security Council released a statement Saturday, welcoming the cease-fire and stressing "the immediate need for humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian civilian population, particularly in Gaza."

Thousands rallied in the Israeli city of Tel Aviv, calling for coexistence between Jews and Arabs.

The fighting began on May 10, when Hamas militants in Gaza fired long-range rockets toward Jerusalem. The barrage came after days of clashes between Palestinian protesters and Israeli police at the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound. Heavy-handed police tactics at the compound and the threatened eviction of dozens of Palestinian families by Jewish settlers had inflamed tensions.

The war has further sidelined Hamas' main political rival, the internationally backed Palestinian Authority, which oversees autonomous enclaves in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. Hamas' popularity seemed to be growing as it positioned itself as a defender of Palestinian claims to Jerusalem.

On Friday, hours after the cease-fire took effect, thousands of Palestinians in the Al-Aqsa compound chanted against Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and his self-rule government. "Dogs of the Palestinian Authority, out, out," they shouted, and "The people want the president to leave."

It was an unprecedented display of anger against Abbas. The conflict also brought to the surface deep frustration among Palestinians, whether in the occupied West Bank, Gaza or within Israel, over the status quo, with the Israeli-Palestinian peace process all but abandoned for years.

Despite his weakened status, Abbas will be the point of contact for any renewed U.S. diplomacy, since Israel and the West, including the United States, consider Hamas a terrorist organization.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken is to meet with Abbas and Israeli leaders when he visits in the coming week. Abbas is expected to raise demands that any Gaza reconstruction plans go through the Palestinian Authority to avoid strengthening Hamas.

Abbas met Saturday with Egyptian mediators, discussing the rebuilding of Gaza and internal Palestinian relations, according to the official Palestinian news agency Wafa.

An Egyptian diplomat said that two teams of mediators were in Israel and the Palestinian territories to continue talks on firming up a cease-fire deal and securing long-term calm.

The diplomat said discussions include implementing agreed-on measures in Gaza and Jerusalem, including ways to prevent practices that led to the latest fighting. He did not elaborate. He was apparently referring to violence at the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the planned eviction of Palestinian families from the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood in east Jerusalem.

The diplomat spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss behind-the-scenes deliberations.

Separately, a 130-truck convoy with humanitarian aid and medical supplies reached the Gaza border from Egypt on Saturday, according to a senior Egyptian official at the border crossing. He spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to reporters.

Across Gaza, an assessment of the damage to the territory's already decrepit infrastructure began.

The ministry of public works and housing said that 769 housing and commercial units were rendered uninhabitable, at least 1,042 units in 258 buildings were destroyed and just over 14,500 units suffered minor damage.

The United Nations said about 800,000 people in Gaza do not have regular access to clean piped water, as nearly 50% of the water network was damaged in the fighting.

Israel has said it was targeting Hamas' military infrastructure, including a vast tunnel system running under roads and homes, as well as command centers, rocket launchers and the homes of commanders. The Israeli military has said it was trying to minimize harm to civilians and accused Hamas of using civilians as human shields.

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The Gaza Health Ministry says at least 248 Palestinians were killed, including 66 children and 39 women, with 1,910 people wounded. It does not differentiate between fighters and civilians. Twelve people were killed in Israel, all but one of them civilians, including a 5-year-old boy and 16-year-old girl.

Israel has accused Hamas and the smaller militant group of Islamic Jihad of hiding the actual number of fighters killed in the war. Prime Minister Netanyahu said Friday that more than 200 militants were killed, including 25 senior commanders.

Islamic Jihad on Saturday gave a first account of deaths within its ranks, saying that 19 of its commanders and fighters were killed, including the head of the rocket unit in northern Gaza.

Mississippi's last abortion clinic at center of US debate

By EMILY WAGSTER PETTUS Associated Press

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) — The bright pink building in an eclectic neighborhood of Mississippi's capital goes by different names. To the anti-abortion protesters whose demonstrations have sparked a noise ordinance, it is an "abortion mill." To those who work and volunteer there, the facility known as the "pink house" provides the last safe haven in Mississippi for women who choose to have an abortion.

Now, the only abortion clinic in Mississippi is facing what could be its biggest challenge. The U.S. Supreme Court said Monday that it will hear arguments this fall over a Mississippi law that would limit abortions after 15 weeks of pregnancy — a case designed to test how far a court remade under former President Donald Trump is willing to go to restrict the right to an abortion.

The 2018 Mississippi law has been on hold because of the court fight. If justices allow it to take effect, that wouldn't have a huge impact on who can get an abortion in Mississippi. Health care providers at Jackson Women's Health Organization don't perform abortions after 16 weeks. But clinic director Shannon Brewer said upholding the ban would prompt lawmakers in conservative states to push to more restrictions.

"They'll steadily chip away at it. And then once they know they can, they're going to constantly do it," Brewer said Tuesday.

As states have enacted stricter laws and the number of clinics has declined, thousands of women have crossed state lines for abortion. A 2019 analysis by The Associated Press found at least 276,000 women terminated pregnancies outside their home state between 2012 and 2017. In pockets of the Midwest, South and Mountain West, the number of women terminating a pregnancy in another state rose considerably, particularly where a lack of clinics meant the closest provider was in another state or where less restrictive policies made it easier and quicker to have an abortion there.

With no doctors in Mississippi willing to do abortions, five out-of-state doctors rotate through Jackson. Some patients travel hours from small towns in one of the poorest states of the country — first for counseling and then 24 hours later for the abortion.

One woman who has ended two pregnancies at the clinic said she has never had a moment's regret over those decisions. At the time, she was in her 30s and did what was best for herself and her young child, she said.

While at the clinic, she and the other women talked to each other as they waited. She recalled their stories: One had been raped by her own father; another had been raped by her boss; another was in medical school.

"I want women to understand that it's OK and it's not something that you have to feel guilty about," she said. She spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because she's in a court dispute with her child's father and she believes speaking publicly about her abortions could hurt her in that case.

Outside the clinic, anti-abortion protesters face off against volunteer escorts. Demonstrators often try to block cars from entering the clinic parking lot. Some pray, sing or hold posters with graphic photos of aborted fetuses. Others climb ladders to look over a fence that surrounds the clinic, yelling at the volunteer escorts who call themselves "pink house defenders" and the patients they accompany inside.

Doug Lane, president of Pastors for Life, is a frequent presence in front of the pink building where he tries to persuade women and girls to forgo abortion. He said he and other protesters are exercising their

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free-speech rights and they sometimes change women's minds, directing them to a nearby crisis pregnancy center that offers ultrasounds and baby clothing.

"We have a right to be heard, even by people who disagree with us and object to us," Lane said.

The protests outside the clinic have become a flashpoint in its Jackson neighborhood.

Two restaurants sit directly across a street from the building. Some days, protesters are silent or pray quietly to themselves. Other times, they use bullhorns that can be heard inside the restaurants, even with doors closed. Cars driving by honk in support or admonishment.

On a recent day, families at one of the restaurants ate outside at a cluster of tables no more than 20 feet (6 meters) from two children sitting silently holding signs saying, "We are ambassadors of Jesus Christ." A woman passed back and forth praying under her breath and holding a sign: "Pray to end abortion."

In 2019, the Jackson City Council enacted an ordinance to limit noise outside medical facilities. Some council members said their action was in response to complaints about activity outside the abortion clinic, but the city backed down and repealed the ordinance a year later after a lawsuit challenged the rule.

Nathan Glenn co-owns the two restaurants across from the clinic. He said his family has been in business there about 20 years, and when the restaurants opened he didn't know they were near an abortion clinic. He said he respects people's right to protest but they block the entrance to the restaurants and yell at diners.

Clinic director Brewer said all the restrictions and protests aren't going to stop abortions in Mississippi — they just serve to make it more dangerous. She said the people who oppose abortion pretend to care about the women and their future children but if they really cared, they'd spend more time taking care of children once they're born by paying for things like better health care or child care.

"It's not going to stop abortions in Mississippi. Abortions were going on in Mississippi before Roe v. Wade," Brewer said. "So I think that they're not thinking it through, or they just really don't care."

Las Vegas officials hold pop-up vaccine clinic at strip club

By MICHELLE L. PRICE Associated Press

LAS VEGAS (AP) — Wearing a French maid-inspired lingerie costume and high heels, dancer JoJo Hamner waited patiently to get her COVID-19 vaccine in a line that snaked past a glittery hostess stand under a red-light chandelier.

When it was her turn, Hamner sat in a chair and held onto a small feather duster that completed her costume while a nurse administered the shot into her already-exposed arm.

Hamner then waited nearby for the required 15 minutes of observation, sitting with other vaccine recipients in leather chairs between plush purple booths, vacant stages and empty poles at this strip club in Las Vegas.

"This is just the most Vegas thing I've ever seen," she said of the experience.

Larry Flynt's Hustler Club, with a spinning disco ball casting rainbow colors on the walls but more lights turned on than usual, was an unconventional site for a walk-in vaccination clinic. But as government officials and health workers try to address the slowing demand for COVID-19 vaccines, they're increasingly turning to creative ways to incentivize people to show up and get a shot.

"This is just another way to access our population," said JoAnn Rupiper, the chief nurse of the Southern Nevada Health District, who monitored the walk-in clinic. "It might attract some people who like the novelty of it, I suppose."

The clinic opened for several hours Friday night, administering shots to about 100 people before the strip club opened for its usual business. Several workers at the club, including Hamner, a dancer at a topless revenue, got their shots at the clinic along with members of the public.

Some people who showed up to get shots admitted they were reluctant to get the vaccine but decided to go for it if it meant visiting a strip club.

Roberto Montti, who lives near the club, said he had been putting off getting his shot but realized he should get it in order to resume his love of traveling.

Montti said he probably would have gotten his shot at a more humdrum venue but decided to go to the

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Hustler Club because it felt familiar.

"I've been here so many — I've been here a few times. ... Maybe 10 times, give or take," he said with a laugh.

"I was going to wait, I tell you that," said Las Vegas resident Michael Myers as he stood between a full-length picture of a naked woman and a sign promoting social distancing and other behaviors to mitigate the virus spread.

Myers' wife, Lisa Harper, said he changed his mind when she told him they could both get it at the Hustler club.

"I said, 'Flynt's Hustler?' She said 'Yeah.' I said, 'Oh! Let me consider,'" Myers said with a laugh.

"A lot of people that wouldn't ordinarily do it, a lot of guys, they said, they came here because it's Hustler," his wife Harper said. "To take away the stodginess of it, to make it Hustler, it's very clever."

"Nothing says vaccinations like a stripper pole," said the couple's friend George Stoecklin, who joined them to get his shot.

Myers, 70, said he was reluctant to get the shot and worried about how fast it had been available. But he noted his age and said he was concerned about his ability to spread the virus and infect others, including his wife.

Myers said he was disappointed there were no dancers on the stage while he got his shot but said, "at least I got the scope of it."

More than 46% of the state's population age 12 and over has received at least one shot of the vaccine, but Nevada health officials said this week that a steep drop-off in demand for shots may make it impossible for the state to reach a goal of vaccinating 75% of the eligible population.

Nevada officials have been increasingly turning to pop-up clinics in places like churches, schools and senior centers -- and now strip clubs -- to try to get more shots in arms.

As demand has slowed across the country, governments and businesses are turning to other creative ways to get shots in arms. Marijuana dispensaries have offered "joints for jabs," breweries have offered "shots and a chaser," and Ohio next week plans to debut a lottery system for residents who get vaccinated with a \$1 million prize and five full-ride college scholarships.

Las Vegas officials said the Hustler Club approached them about holding the clinic after hosting in a similar vaccination site at the company's New Orleans location. The club offered its own incentives to those who show proof of vaccination: a membership card giving them and five friends free admission, a complimentary bottle of alcohol, dances from "a vaccinated entertainer" and other perks.

Ralph James, the general manager, said the business thought it would be a good chance to help the community and get back to normal faster. He acknowledged people may not typically think of the strip club as a public health partner but said, "this gives everyone a chance to see how clean it is and it's a normal business just like any other business."

New vibe at White House: Hugs are in; masks are (mostly) out

BY JONATHAN LEMIRE and DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A smiling crowd of unmasked people filling the largest room in the White House. A visiting head of state welcomed with pomp, circumstance and handshakes. A 94-year old Medal of Honor recipient receiving a joyous hug from Vice President Kamala Harris.

The White House is springing back to life.

Thanks to growing availability of the coronavirus vaccine and a recent relaxation of federal guidance on masks and distancing, the Biden administration is embracing the look and feel of pre-pandemic days on Pennsylvania Avenue. More West Wing staffers are turning up there for work and more reporters will be doing so as well, as the White House spreads the message that a return to normal is possible with vaccinations.

There are lingering concerns about safety and mixed messaging — the same contradictions and confusions that are popping up across a nation that is gingerly re-opening. But the images of a reopened, relaxed White House stand in striking contrast to the days when it was the site of several COVID-19

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outbreaks last year, a sign of just how far the pandemic has begun to recede in the United States.

"We're back," White House press secretary Jen Psaki declared at Friday's daily briefing. "I can confirm we're a warm and fuzzy crew and we like to hug around here."

The changes within the White House over the past week were swift and sweeping. Hugs were in, masks were (mostly) out. There was no need to stand six feet apart. And no one seemed to enjoy the shift more than Biden, the most back-slapping and tactile of politicians.

The president had been happy to announce the relaxed mask guidance when he appeared in the Rose Garden on May 13 without a mask, just hours after the CDC said those who are fully vaccinated don't need to wear masks in most settings. That cheerfulness carried over this past week into a series of larger public events that would have been out of bounds earlier in Biden's presidency.

For the second straight day, the White House on Friday opened the East Room -- the executive mansion's largest room -- to scores of outside guests. Smiling broadly, Biden awarded the Medal of Honor for the first time as commander in chief, giving it to 94-year-old retired Col. Ralph Puckett Jr. for acts of bravery during the Korean War some 70 years ago.

The White House timed Friday's ceremony to coincide with the visit of South Korea's president, Moon Jae-in, who joined Biden at the event before their policy meetings. Both world leaders repeatedly clasped Puckett's hands and crowded in for a photo with the war hero's extended family.

A day earlier, an even larger group of lawmakers and other guests were on hand to witness Biden sign legislation to counter an alarming spike in crimes against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., and Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine, were among the lawmakers trading hugs and kisses.

"The nicest part is being able to shake hands again and to see people's smiles," Collins marveled at one point.

Afterward, lawmakers who helped shepherd the legislation through Congress surrounded Biden as he signed the measure into law. The president also engaged in an act that had largely disappeared from official Washington during the pandemic: He shook hands with a few guests before leaving.

Earlier that day, he had welcomed the newest Kennedy Center honorees to the White House for a visit that marked the return of celebrity wattage to the property.

By multiple accounts from Kennedy Center Honors recipients, the White House event was high-spirited, with Biden seemingly thrilled to have visitors.

Debbie Allen called the president, "so engaging and open. He spent a lot more time with us than I expected."

Joan Baez said the official visit "turned into a jolly romp," included a tour of the Rose Garden and culminated in Baez singing for Biden.

Due to social distancing guidelines, the number of journalists allowed inside the White House shrunk once the pandemic hit, with the briefing room only about a quarter full for Psaki's daily question-and-answer sessions.

Capacity is slated to go to 50 percent soon, with the goal of a full return by summer. The daily COVID-19 testing requirement for staff and most journalists was also expected to soon be waived for the fully vaccinated. And the parking spaces around the West Wing and Eisenhower Executive Office Building have been fuller as of late.

Psaki said the effort to return to a more normal vibe was part of "continuing to open the White House up, the people's house up to the American people."

But questions remain about protocol.

Abiding by the safety guidelines is a matter of the honor system. And Psaki acknowledged Friday that the White House did not have plans to verify vaccination status. Members of the administration and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have continued, at times, to offer confusing guidance on exactly when, and by whom, a mask should still be worn.

Yet in most ways, the mood has changed dramatically.

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The first image that Americans saw of Biden at the White House as president was on Inauguration Day, as he sat behind the Resolute Desk in the Oval Office wearing a mask. Aiming to draw a stark contrast with the Trump White House, which took a cavalier attitude toward the virus within the building, the Democratic administration consistently erred on the side of caution, at times exceeding precautions recommended by the CDC.

For months, Biden had privately groused that the pandemic prevented him from having face-to-face meetings with lawmakers and world leaders alike, and he chafed at having to conduct diplomacy by Zoom.

On Friday, the White House unfurled all of its traditional in-person pageantry for Moon's visit and the two men were able to sit across from each other in the State Dining Room and, later, answer questions before a mask-free audience of diplomats, officials and reporters.

Moon had opened his day with a visit to Harris' office in the White House complex, where the two stepped out on a balcony for a quick wave. The sun was shining. Smiles were everywhere. There wasn't a cicada in sight.

Oregon among blue states slow at lifting COVID restrictions

By SARA CLINE Associated Press/Report for America

CANNON BEACH, Ore. (AP) — The sand was packed on a recent sunny day at this upscale beach town on Oregon's coast, but signs of the state's cautious approach to the pandemic were still everywhere. Almost all the beachgoers wore masks — those that didn't got nasty looks — and lines for a seat at the many local cafes and restaurants snaked down the sidewalk because of rules limiting capacity to 25%.

It was a sharp contrast to places such as Florida or Texas, where many COVID-19 restrictions have been lifted for weeks. But even as the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention moved earlier this month to ease indoor mask-wearing guidance for fully vaccinated people, some blue states like Oregon and Washington are still holding on to some longtime coronavirus restrictions.

After public pressure, Gov. Kate Brown, a Democrat, last week lifted a requirement for masks outdoors and put the onus on businesses to decide if fully vaccinated patrons would be required to mask up inside.

But enforcement of business capacity limits, publicized cases of student athletes passing out while competing or practicing in a mask and a widespread shut-down of indoor dining earlier this month continue to stoke resentment among those who feel Brown's rules go too far as the rest of the U.S. returns to normal.

In Oregon, pushback has been particularly strong in rural areas — which is much of the state outside Portland — and has included an effort by at least one county to become a "vaccine sanctuary" where people wouldn't have to mask up regardless of their vaccine status.

"We are just so done with this," said Tootie Smith, chairwoman of the Clackamas County Board of Supervisors and a former Republican Oregon State House Representative. "There's a huge amount of frustration that people have."

Smith made national news when she said on Twitter that she would host a large Thanksgiving dinner despite capacity rules on indoor gatherings in place at the time — and now she says she's astonished when she travels outside Oregon and sees what it looks like to live with fewer public COVID-19 restrictions.

Texas Rangers' fans recently returned to Globe Life Field that was open for 100% capacity, droves of college students crowded Florida beaches for spring break and Walt Disney World has reopened its gates.

"Everything was open. People were happy, because they had the freedom to go out to restaurants (without a mask)," said Smith, who cited Florida, South Dakota and Idaho as examples. "Some of the businesses wanted you to wear a mask. And it might have been mandated indoors at certain points -- but the attitude was different. You weren't shamed for not wearing a mask."

Those who support the Northwest's more cautious approach, however, point out the region has had lower infection rates throughout the pandemic — likely because of the stricter rules over the past 14 months.

"The benefit of 50 different states is you sort of get a natural experiment of what happens when states take a different approach," said Dr. Jennifer Vines, the health officer for Multnomah County, the state's most populous county and home to Portland.

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"I've watched as some (states) have had various surges or rejected certain restrictions. I think for the most part Oregon got it right," Vines said. "Even though it may seem like there's no problem, it's those same restrictions that are preventing the problem."

In Oregon and Washington, state health authorities have recently rescinded requirements to wear masks outside but are mostly maintaining indoor capacity restrictions, likely through the end of June.

Most of Oregon's counties still have limits on capacity for businesses and as of this week, businesses that want to let customers enter their stores without a mask must ask the customer to prove they've been fully vaccinated. State health authorities this week said young athletes no longer have to wear masks while competing in outdoor settings, but students must still mask up while playing close-contact sports indoors, such as basketball and wrestling.

And earlier this month, state workforce safety regulators extended indefinitely a rule requiring employees to wear masks at all times, regardless of their inoculation status.

As the state crested its fourth COVID-19 surge this month, Brown announced a reopening plan: State-wide restrictions on capacity and masking will be lifted when 70% of Oregon residents 16 and older have at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine.

Currently, more than half of Oregon's eligible population has received a first vaccine and health officials say they believe the state will reach the governor's vaccination goal by the end of June — although many individual counties are lagging far behind.

Washington Gov. Jay Inslee made a similar reopening announcement, saying his state is on track to fully reopen by June 30, and a full reopening could happen even sooner if 70% or more of residents ages 16 and older have gotten at least one dose of vaccine by then.

It is time to begin "the next chapter of post-pandemic life," Brown said — something Republicans have been asking for since last year, from reopening the economy and lifting mask mandates completely to students returning to in-person learning full time.

"What happens if we get another virus?" Smith said. "We can't keep shutting down our society for months,"

But even once restrictions are lifted in Oregon, not everyone may opt to return to a pre-coronavirus life.

"We all have kind of different levels of risk tolerance," Vines said. "I think for people who are really intolerant of risk they may choose to continue to mask and I think that is okay."

Ex-BBC head quits gallery job amid Diana interview fallout

By PAN PYLAS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Tony Hall, who was director of BBC news and current affairs at the time of the public broadcaster's explosive 1995 interview with Princess Diana, resigned Saturday as board chairman of Britain's National Gallery.

Hall, who subsequently rose to the top job at the BBC, was heavily criticized in a report this week for a botched inquiry into how journalist Martin Bashir obtained the blockbuster interview.

In a statement, the 70-year-old said his continued presence at the gallery would be a "distraction to an institution I care deeply about."

"As I said two days ago, I am very sorry for the events of 25 years ago and I believe leadership means taking responsibility," said Hall, who served as the BBC's director-general from 2013 until 2020.

John Kingman, the deputy chair of the National Gallery's board of trustees, will assume Hall's role for the time being. He said the gallery is "extremely sorry" to lose Hall but that "we entirely understand and respect his decision."

The 126-page report by retired Judge John Dyson, published Thursday, found the internal BBC investigation had covered up "deceitful behavior" by Bashir, who was little-known as a journalist when he interviewed Diana.

The BBC also has faced questions about why Bashir was rehired in 2016 as the broadcaster's religious affairs correspondent.

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Diana's sons, Princes William and Harry, have excoriated the BBC since the report's publication, saying there was a direct link between the 1995 interview and their mother's death in a traffic accident two years later as she and a companion were being pursued by paparazzi.

The BBC commissioned the report after Diana's brother, Charles Spencer, complained that Bashir used false documents and other dishonest tactics to persuade Diana to grant the interview.

In the interview, Diana said her marriage to Prince Charles had failed because he was still in love with former lover Camilla Parker Bowles, whom Charles would go on to marry a decade later.

Diana, then 34, said she was devastated when she found out in 1986 — five years after her marriage — that Charles had renewed his relationship with Camilla. Diana said she was so depressed that she deliberately hurt herself in a desperate bid for help.

"There were three of us in this marriage, so it was a bit crowded," Diana famously remarked.

The fallout from the report has raised serious doubts about the BBC's integrity, while the British government has said it would review the rules governing the oversight of the editorially independent national broadcaster.

The BBC, which was founded in 1922, is funded by a license fee payable by everyone. The rules governing its operations are set out in a royal charter that requires the corporation to be impartial, act in the public interest and be open, transparent and accountable. A mid-term review of the BBC's governance is scheduled to begin next year.

China's Mars rover touches ground on red planet

BEIJING (AP) — China's first Mars rover has driven down from its landing platform and is now roaming the surface of the red planet, China's space administration said Saturday.

The solar-powered rover touched Martian soil at 10:40 a.m. Saturday Beijing time (0240 GMT), the China National Space Administration said.

China landed the spacecraft carrying the rover on Mars last Saturday, a technically challenging feat more difficult than a moon landing, in a first for the country. It is the second country to land and operate a spacecraft on Mars, after the United States.

Named after the Chinese god of fire, Zhurong, the rover has been running diagnostics tests for several days before it began its exploration Saturday. It is expected to be deployed for 90 days to search for evidence of life.

The U.S. also has an ongoing Mars mission, with the Perseverance rover and a tiny helicopter exploring the planet. NASA expects the rover to collect its first sample in July for return to Earth as early as 2031.

China has ambitious space plans that include launching a crewed orbital station and landing a human on the moon. China in 2019 became the first country to land a space probe on the little-explored far side of the moon, and in December returned lunar rocks to Earth for the first time since the 1970s.

With more border crossers, US groups seek to stem deaths

By EUGENE GARCIA and ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON Associated Press

FALFURRIAS, Texas (AP) — Every week, migrant rights activist Eduardo Canales fills up blue water drums that are spread throughout a vast valley of Texas ranchlands and brush. They are there for migrants who venture into the rough terrain to avoid being caught and sent back to Mexico.

The stretch of land 70 miles (113 kilometers) north of the U.S.-Mexico border is dangerous, and many have died. But some migrants — usually single adults — are willing to take the risk, walking through the shrub-invaded grasslands on the sprawling ranches, seeking dirt paths to circumvent a U.S. Border Patrol checkpoint on a major highway where agents verify people's immigration status.

"People die here. People get lost. People are never heard of again. They go missing," said Canales, director of the South Texas Human Rights Center.

The Biden administration is dealing with a growing number of single adult migrants crossing the border; they made up nearly two of every three encounters in April. This elusive group is less likely to surrender

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to U.S. authorities to seek asylum than families and children, often choosing risky routes away from Border Patrol checkpoints and intake sites, where agents process families and children traveling alone.

Of the Border Patrol's 173,460 total encounters with migrants last month, 108,301 were single adults, with more than half of them Mexican. The numbers were the highest since April 2000, but most were quickly expelled from the country under federal pandemic-related powers invoked last year by then-President Donald Trump and kept in place by President Joe Biden.

Unlike deportations, expulsions carry no legal consequences, and many migrants try crossing multiple times. The Border Patrol says 29% of people expelled in April had been expelled before.

In Brooks County in the Rio Grande Valley, the busiest corridor for illegal crossings, local officials have recovered 40 bodies of migrants in the brush so far this year. In all of 2020, they found 34 bodies, though the coronavirus pandemic vastly reduced the numbers of people coming to the United States.

The Border Patrol keeps its own statistics, which tend to be lower than those tracked by aid groups and local officials because it only counts the remains of migrants it comes across.

Officials this year have found the decomposing body of a Honduran woman with a document identifying her as a fruit packer for the banana company Chiquita as well as a Mexican man who appeared to have worked at a factory. Sometimes, sheriff's deputies only find skeletal remains.

Brooks County sheriff's Patrol Deputy Roberto Castanon said he thinks this year has been particularly busy for migrants walking this treacherous stretch to elude capture.

While agents try to count how many people avoid apprehension, it's difficult to do in the Rio Grande Valley. Its often thick brush has traditionally not had many sensors. The Border Patrol's most trusted method of counting how many people get away relies on observing tiny human traces: dusty footprints, torn cobwebs, broken twigs, overturned pebbles.

Castanon says the Border Patrol used to have a heavier enforcement presence around the highway checkpoint, but they appear to have been deployed to help with the increasing numbers of families and children crossing the Rio Grande and surrendering to agents to claim asylum. The Border Patrol did not immediately respond to a question on the staffing changes.

"I believe people were taking advantage of that," Castanon said.

But it's not that simple. Smugglers can leave migrants to walk long distances in this dangerous area, anywhere from 15 to 50 miles (24 to 80 kilometers), with temperatures sometimes reaching above 100 degrees (38 Celsius). Some migrants have been able to make emergency calls to aid groups, which coordinate with local officials or the Border Patrol on rescues.

This month, a woman near Van Horn, Texas, felt she was close to dying because of a lack of water but was able to call an aid group tied to Canales that alerted officials. They were able to trace the coordinates to the call and find her.

"Some don't even make it. They die of lack of water, food, health, collapse and stay there until somebody stumbles upon their bodies, and that's when they call us to pick them up," said Castanon, the deputy.

Canales' aid group and others have worked to build trust with the community of ranchers to get access to some of this land along the path north of the border.

"People have a humanitarian nature in them. They may have very conservative politics, but they don't want to see people die," Canales said.

The advocate compared the region full of ranches with the desert in Arizona, where deaths of migrants have long been a problem. Last summer's record heat and dry weather in Arizona were the main causes behind the 227 deaths counted by a migrant aid group, the highest in a decade.

Local officials are expecting to find more bodies as summer nears, temperatures rise and expulsions continue.

"We've got a large group of volunteers coming in to build more water stations," Canales said. "We need to figure that out because a lot of people are dying."

After an absence, New England's ticks are back — and hungry

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PORTLAND, Maine (AP) — A late-summer drought virtually eliminated ticks in parts of New England but they're back with a vengeance this spring.

Dog ticks, which do not carry Lyme disease like deer ticks do, have been especially active since early spring in Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont.

And people who've been getting outdoors because of the pandemic are discovering the arachnids on themselves and on pets.

"People are outdoors a lot more because of COVID so we've all discovered this newfound love relationship with nature, which is really cool and I'm really happy about. So there's just a lot more chances for ... human interactions with ticks," said Patti Casey, environmental surveillance program manager for the Vermont Agency of Agriculture.

It's a far cry, so far, from last summer. Much of New England was in a drought, and there were fewer biting insects.

In Maine, the number of Lyme disease cases was nearly halved last year, dipping from a record high of 2,167 in 2019 to 1,115 in 2020, according to state data. One caveat, officials said, is that some people may have been reluctant to seek medical care during the pandemic.

The busy spring for ticks has been sending more people to the emergency room in Maine. Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention reported 176 tick-related emergency department visits for the week that ended May 16. Last year, there were 91 tick-related ER visits in the same week.

Maine CDC reported nearly 100 cases of Lyme disease from Jan. 1 to May 18 of this year. The agency is asking anyone who spends time outside to take preventive measures such as using repellent and wearing light-colored clothing that covers arms and legs.

The state of New Hampshire has recorded just 10 cases of Lyme disease so far this year.

How severe of a Lyme disease burden the state will have depends heavily on the conditions this summer. Rain, moisture and humidity are helpful for ticks.

"Tickborne diseases remain a serious threat in Maine," Maine CDC said in a statement.

Biden betting on wage growth, while GOP warns of inflation

By JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Biden administration recently gave a bit of simple advice to businesses that are unable to find workers: Offer them more money.

This recommendation, included in a White House memo about the state of the economy, gets at a fundamental tension in an economy that is returning to full health after the coronavirus pandemic. Businesses are coping with spiking prices for goods such as steel, plywood, plastics and asphalt. Yet workers, after enduring a year of job losses, business closures and social distancing, are no longer interested in accepting low wages.

Administration officials say the White House is not trying to target a specific wage level for workers. But officials say higher wages are a goal of President Joe Biden and a byproduct of his \$1.9 trillion relief package and at least \$3.5 trillion in additional spending being proposed for infrastructure and education.

Boosting wages gets at the central promise of the Biden presidency to improve the lives of everyday Americans and restore the country's competitive edge in the world. Republicans say that Biden's policies have already let loose a torrent of inflation that will hurt the economy. The outcome of these competing forces could decide the trajectory of the U.S. economy as well as the factors weighing on voters in next year's elections.

White House economic adviser Jared Bernstein said the goal is "to pull forward a robust, inclusive recovery that provides good employment opportunities to people who have been the heroes of this pandemic, folks who are in the bottom half, who went to work, often in unsafe conditions, or had to stay home to take care of their families and deal with school closures and childcare constraints."

The New York Federal Reserve reported this month that there has been a 26% increase over the past year in wage expectations by noncollege graduates. The lowest average salary they expect for a new job

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is \$61,483, up more than \$12,700 from a year ago.

The wage pressures feeds into some anxiety about inflation. The Biden team sees the 0.8% month-over-month jump in consumer prices in April as temporary, a sign of consumer demand and the bottlenecks that naturally occur when an economy restarts. But newly released minutes from the Fed's April meeting suggest the U.S. central bank could possibly raise interest rates earlier than previously indicated to stamp down inflation and potentially limit economic growth.

The monthly jobs and inflation data can be volatile as the economy restarts, such that a single month could be an outlier instead of an underlying trend. Biden's aides are choosing to look at moving three-month averages on economic data and they see the situation as positive. They also said more people will accept jobs as vaccinations increase.

The Senate's Republican leader, Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, says he has seen enough from the data so far. He has told voters that Biden's decision to provide an additional \$300 a week in unemployment benefits and the spending in his relief package are hurting the economy.

He said Thursday on Fox Business that the package "Democrats jammed through on a party-line vote" is "producing both people not wanting to work and raging inflation."

What makes the current situation unique is that wage pressures generally build when the unemployment rate is low. But the rate is 6.1% and the country is 8.2 million jobs below its pre-pandemic levels, historically the kind of numbers that might lead workers to settle for lower earnings.

The difference this time is that the government spent a combined \$6 trillion over the past year, including relief packages passed under President Donald Trump, to minimize the economic damage from the pandemic. Biden's own relief package was geared toward helping to boost wages, with enhanced unemployment benefits, new monthly payments to parents, aid to restaurants and money for state and local governments to increase pay for essential workers.

"We're in uncharted waters across the board," said Tyler Goodspeed, an economic adviser for Trump who is now a fellow at the Hoover Institution. "We've never had a recession like this. We've never had a recovery like this."

Goodspeed said the best way to raise wages is to reduce the unemployment rate closer to its pre-pandemic level of 3.5%, which would signal a genuine shortage of available workers that would then lead employers to pay more.

Part of the dispute between Biden and Republicans is a more fundamental one on how economies grow. The administration has embraced a philosophy of investing in workers and providing them with benefits to make it easier for them to juggle life responsibilities and jobs.

By contrast, Republicans believe the key is to minimize taxes and other barriers for employers so that lower operating costs lead them to invest and hire. The Republican National Committee issued an analysis Friday saying that the GOP's principles for growth were superior because the average unemployment rate in states led by party officials is 4.6%, while Democratic states have an average unemployment rate of 6.3%.

Republicans see the \$300-a-week federal unemployment payment as discouraging people from working because they can earn more money by staying unemployed. Their view is that this limits how many jobs can be created and how high wages will ultimately rise.

It's not clear how much of a deterrent the added payments are, but there are early indications that the impact might be modest so far on people accepting jobs.

An analysis this month by economists at the San Francisco Fed found that "each month in early 2021, about seven out of 28 unemployed individuals receive job offers that they would normally accept, but one of the seven decides to decline the offer due to the availability of the extra \$300 per week" in unemployment benefits.

There are 23 states — all with Republican governors and GOP-controlled legislatures — that plan to block the enhanced federal benefits in June, under the belief that the loss of income will cause people to take jobs.

Aaron Sojourner, a labor economist at the University of Minnesota, warned that scrapping the benefits could reduce families' incomes and possibly encourage employers to pay less such that workers' incomes might be depressed.

"Lower wages is exactly the premise of the Republican position," Sojourner said.

Floyd legislation reveals divide in police-reform movement

By AARON MORRISON and EMILY SWANSON Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Monifa Bandele became a community organizer in the late 1990s, after New York City police fatally shot a young, unarmed Black immigrant named Amadou Diallo in the Bronx.

In the two decades since, she repeatedly witnessed police reforms that failed to stop Black people from dying at the hands of officers. Some of those reforms are now part of federal legislation being negotiated in the name of George Floyd, the Black man whose murder under the knee of a white Minneapolis officer last year sparked worldwide protests.

For instance, the legislation calls for banning chokeholds, a step already taken by New York City prior to the 2014 death of Eric Garner, who in an encounter with the NYPD uttered the same last words as Floyd: "I can't breathe."

As the anniversary of Floyd's death approaches, some reform supporters say the best way to honor him would be for Congress to pass the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act. But many activists warn that some of the proposed reforms have not been enough to stop past police abuses, reflecting a divide within the movement over what would constitute real progress.

"What we've come to realize over the past decades is that police departments, with their oversized budgets and their outsized political power, are able to rise above reformist policies," said Bandele, an organizer with the Movement for Black Lives, a coalition of over 150 Black-led advocacy organizations that opposes the Floyd legislation because it does not hit hard enough at systemic racism.

The bill also includes prohibitions on no-knock police raids like the one in Louisville, Kentucky, that killed Breonna Taylor, a young Black front-line worker. It would create a national registry for officers who are disciplined for serious misconduct, among other proposals.

Although Bandele thinks the bill is well-meaning, now is not the time to settle for the same old ideas, she said.

"Our duty is that we have to make a bigger demand," she said.

In Congress, hopes of passing a package by the May 25 anniversary have faded as negotiations between the House and Senate grind on. But top negotiator Rep. Karen Bass, a California Democrat, said she remains hopeful of an eventual compromise.

The House approved the sweeping police overhaul earlier this year, but it faces stiff resistance from Republicans in the closely divided Senate. Republican Sen. Tim Scott of South Carolina has a more modest alternative, and the parties have been engaged in long, private negotiations over a potential compromise.

"It is more important that we get it right, and that we have a substantive bill, versus do something ceremonial because of the date," Bass told reporters Wednesday on Capitol Hill.

One key debate has been whether to allow individual police officers to be sued over their actions, changing the so-called qualified immunity protections for law enforcement. Republicans largely object to that approach and prefer to hold the officers' employers responsible.

One top Democrat, Rep. James Clyburn of South Carolina, the highest-ranking Black lawmaker in Congress, has suggested he would be open to a compromise, and Bass said she agreed with his broader point that it's not worth walking away from a deal if Democrats cannot include every priority.

"I also agree that the day that President Biden signs this bill, the next day, we keep working," Bass said. "Because this bill, I think, will be significant. But in no way, shape or form do I think it's going to be enough."

Police have killed roughly 1,000 people in the U.S. each year since 2015, and a disproportionate number of the victims have been Black. Studies of criminal justice data show Black Americans are far more likely than

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white Americans to be pulled over by police and are as much as three times more likely to be searched. Black men were about 2.5 times more likely than white men to be killed by police between 2013 and 2018, according to a 2019 study published by the National Academy of Sciences. Black women were 1.4 more times likely than white women to be killed by police, according to the same study.

A new poll from the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research shows most Americans think big changes are necessary to reform the criminal justice system. Overall, 25% think it needs a complete overhaul, while another 43% think it needs major changes. Twenty-seven percent think it needs minor changes, while just 4% think no changes are needed.

The poll finds a majority of Americans support specific reforms such as requiring officers to wear body cameras, establishing clear standards for use of force, mandating that officers report misconduct, penalizing officers who engage in racially biased policing and requiring that law enforcement agencies have independent review boards.

A majority — 58% — say they also oppose reducing funding for law enforcement agencies.

The level of support for reform varies along racial and party lines. The poll shows majorities of Black, white, Hispanic and Asian Americans think major changes or an overhaul are needed, though Black Americans are especially likely to call for the most drastic changes, with 48% saying a complete overhaul is needed and another 36% saying the justice system needs major changes.

By comparison, among white Americans, 20% think the system needs a complete overhaul, 44% think it needs major changes and 32% think it needs minor changes, with 3% saying no changes are needed.

Close to 9 in 10 Democrats think the justice system needs either major changes or a complete overhaul. Republicans are more likely to say only modest reform is necessary, with 13% saying an overhaul is needed and 32% wanting major changes, but 47% saying only minor changes are needed and 7% saying none are.

Jim Burch, president of the nonpartisan National Police Foundation, which supports the advancement and reform of policing through science and innovation, said he is encouraged by the focus on policing reforms at the federal level.

The legislation named after Floyd “offers many worthy proposals, as well as some requiring further analysis and clarity in order to make a positive impact in the manner intended,” Burch said in an email.

Last July, the Movement for Black Lives sought support in Congress for its BREATHE Act, which would, among other proposals, eliminate the Drug Enforcement Administration and ban the use of surveillance technology on communities that activists say are over-policed.

“It’s not that we want less safety. We are often criticized when we say defund (the police) or when we promote the BREATHE Act. We actually want more safety than the police can deliver,” Bandle said.

Selwyn Jones, an uncle of George Floyd on his mother’s side of the family, told the AP that he was disappointed that Congress would not pass the Floyd legislation next week.

“We don’t live in a perfect world,” he said Friday. “We, as Black people, have been fighting a battle for 400 years.”

EXPLAINER: Much about US pullout from Afghanistan is unclear

By ROBERT BURNS AP National Security Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — When he pulled the plug on the American war in Afghanistan, President Joe Biden said the reasons for staying, 10 years after the death of al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden, had become “increasingly unclear.” Now that a final departure is in sight, questions about clarity have shifted to Biden’s post-withdrawal plan.

What would the United States do, for example, if the Taliban took advantage of the U.S. military departure by seizing power? And, can the United States and the international community, through diplomacy and financial aid alone, prevent a worsening of the instability in Afghanistan that kept American and coalition troops there for two decades?

The Biden administration acknowledges that a full U.S. troop withdrawal is not without risks, but it ar-

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gues that waiting for a better time to end U.S. involvement in the war is a recipe for never leaving, while extremist threats fester elsewhere.

"We cannot continue the cycle of extending or expanding our military presence in Afghanistan, hoping to create ideal conditions for the withdrawal, and expecting a different result," Biden said April 14 in announcing that "it's time to end America's longest war."

A look at some of the unanswered questions about Biden's approach to the withdrawal:

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE TROOPS ARE GONE?

Predictions range from the disastrous to the merely difficult. Officials don't rule out an intensified civil war that creates a humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan which could spill over to other Central Asian nations, including nuclear-armed Pakistan. A more hopeful scenario is that the Kabul government makes peace with the Taliban insurgents.

At a Senate hearing Thursday, a senior Pentagon policy official, David Helvey, was asked how he could remain optimistic when, in just the first few weeks of the U.S. withdrawal, hundreds of Afghans were killed.

"I wouldn't say that I'm optimistic," Helvey replied, adding that a peace agreement is still possible.

HOW WILL AFGHAN FORCES HOLD UP?

The administration says it will urge Congress to continue authorizing billions of dollars in aid to the Afghan military and police, and the Pentagon says it is working on ways to provide aircraft maintenance support and advice from afar. Much of that work had been done by U.S. contractors, who are departing along with U.S. troops. The U.S. military also might offer to fly some Afghan security forces to a third country for training.

But none of those things — the training, the advising or the financial backing — are assured.

Also unclear is whether the U.S. will provide air power in support of Afghan ground forces from bases outside the country.

The Afghan air force is central to the ongoing conflict, yet it remains dependent on U.S. contractors and technology. The Afghans, for example, have drones but not the kind that are armed, making them less effective in battle.

WILL THE TALIBAN ENLIST OR ASSIST AL-QAIDA?

In a February 2020 agreement with the Trump administration, the Taliban pledged to disavow al-Qaida, but that promise is yet to be tested. This is important in light of the Taliban's willingness during their years in power in the 1990s to provide haven for bin Laden and his al-Qaida colleagues.

Joseph J. Collins, a retired Army colonel who has studied the U.S. war in Afghanistan since it began, notes that as recently as two years ago the Pentagon was alerting Congress to enduring links between al-Qaida and the Taliban. In a June 2019 report, the Pentagon said al-Qaida and its Pakistan-based affiliate, al-Qaida in the Indian Subcontinent, "routinely support, train, work, and operate with Taliban fighters and commanders."

Collins is skeptical that the Taliban have genuinely renounced ties to al-Qaida.

"I don't think that leopard has changed its spots at all," he said in an interview.

Earlier this month, the U.S. government watchdog for Afghanistan reported to Congress that al-Qaida relies on the Taliban for protection. The report, citing information provided by the Defense Intelligence Agency in April, said, "the two groups have reinforced ties over the past decades, likely making it difficult for an organizational split to occur."

WHAT BECOMES OF U.S. COUNTERTERRORIST EFFORTS?

The Pentagon says that all U.S. special operations forces will leave no later than Sept. 11. That will make counterterrorism operations in Afghanistan, including the collecting of intelligence on al-Qaida and other extremist groups, more difficult but not impossible.

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The administration's answer to this problem is to continue the fight from "over the horizon." This is a concept familiar to the military, whose geographic reach has expanded with the advent of armed drones and other technologies.

But will it work? The administration has yet to make any basing or access agreements with countries bordering Afghanistan, such as Uzbekistan. So it might have to rely, at least at the start, on forces positioned in and around the Persian Gulf, meaning response times will be much longer.

WHAT ABOUT DIPLOMACY?

The administration says it will retain a U.S. Embassy presence, but that will become more difficult if the military's departure leads to a collapse of Afghan governance.

Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told reporters this past week that securing access to the Kabul international airport will be key to enabling the United States and other nations to maintain embassies. He said the U.S. and NATO allies are considering an international effort to secure that airport.

A related problem is the fate of Afghan civilians who might be targeted by the Taliban or other groups for aiding the U.S. war effort. Interpreters and others who worked for the U.S. government or NATO can get what is known as a special immigrant visa, or SIV, but the application process can take years.

Washington's special envoy to Afghanistan, Zalmay Khalilzad, has told Congress the administration wants to protect those civilians, but that it is trying to avoid the panic that might erupt if it appeared the United States was encouraging "the departure of all educated Afghans" in a way that undermined the morale of Afghan security forces.

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Sunday, May 23, the 143rd day of 2021. There are 222 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On May 23, 1934, bank robbers Clyde Barrow and Bonnie Parker were shot to death in a police ambush in Bienville Parish, Louisiana.

On this date:

In 1430, Joan of Arc was captured by the Burgundians, who sold her to the English.

In 1533, the marriage of England's King Henry VIII to Catherine of Aragon was declared null and void by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer.

In 1911, the newly completed New York Public Library was dedicated by President William Howard Taft, Gov. John Alden Dix and Mayor William Jay Gaynor.

In 1915, Italy declared war on Austria-Hungary during World War I.

In 1939, the Navy submarine USS Squalus sank during a test dive off the New England coast. Thirty-two crew members and one civilian were rescued, but 26 others died; the sub was salvaged and recommissioned the USS Sailfish.

In 1944, during World War II, Allied forces bogged down in Anzio began a major breakout offensive.

In 1945, Nazi official Heinrich Himmler committed suicide by biting into a cyanide capsule while in British custody in Luneburg, Germany.

In 1967, Egypt closed the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping, an action which helped precipitate war between Israel and its Arab neighbors the following month.

In 1977, Moluccan extremists seized a train and a primary school in the Netherlands; the hostage drama ended June 11 as Dutch marines stormed the train, resulting in the deaths of six out of nine hijackers and two hostages, while the school siege ended peacefully.

In 1984, Surgeon General C. Everett Koop issued a report saying there was "very solid" evidence linking cigarette smoke to lung disease in non-smokers. "Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom," starring Harrison Ford, was released by Paramount Pictures.

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In 1994, funeral services were held at Arlington National Cemetery for former first lady Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis.

In 2007, President George W. Bush, speaking at the U.S. Coast Guard commencement, portrayed the Iraq war as a battle between the U.S. and al-Qaida and said Osama bin Laden was setting up a terrorist cell in Iraq to strike targets in America.

Ten years ago: President Barack Obama opened a six-day European tour in Ireland, where he paid tribute to his Irish ancestors before heading to Britain. The European Union imposed sanctions on Syrian President Bashar Assad over the continuing crackdown on antigovernment protesters. Pakistani commandos recaptured a major naval base from Taliban attackers after a bloody 18-hour standoff.

Five years ago: During his visit to Asia, President Barack Obama, eager to banish lingering shadows of the Vietnam War, lifted the U.S. embargo on selling arms to America's former enemy. Prosecutors failed for the second time in their bid to hold Baltimore police accountable for the arrest and death of Freddie Gray, as an officer was acquitted in the racially charged case that triggered riots a year earlier. The Supreme Court upended the conviction and death sentence of a Black Georgia man because prosecutors had improperly excluded African-Americans from his all-white jury. Dr. Henry Heimlich, the 96-year-old retired chest surgeon credited with developing the namesake Heimlich maneuver, used it to save a woman choking on food at his senior living center in Cincinnati.

One year ago: For the first time since he declared the coronavirus pandemic a national emergency more than two months earlier, President Donald Trump played golf at one of his courses at the start of the Memorial Day weekend, as he pushed for state and local leaders to fully reopen after months of closures and tight restrictions. China reported no new confirmed coronavirus cases for the first time since it started announcing infections in January.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Barbara Barrie is 90. Actor Joan Collins is 88. Actor Charles Kimbrough is 85. International Tennis Hall of Famer John Newcombe is 77. Actor Lauren Chapin is 76. Country singer Judy Rodman is 70. Chess grandmaster Anatoly Karpov is 70. Singer Luka Bloom is 66. Former baseball manager Buck Showalter is 65. Actor-comedian-game show host Drew Carey is 63. Actor Lea DeLaria is 63. Country singer Shelly West is 63. Author Mitch Albom is 63. Actor Linden Ashby is 61. Actor-model Karen Duffy is 60. Actor Melissa McBride is 56. Rock musician Phil Selway (Radiohead) is 54. Actor Laurel Holloman is 53. Rock musician Matt Flynn (Maroon 5) is 51. Country singer Brian McComas is 49. Actor John Pollono is 49. Singer Maxwell is 48. Singer Jewel is 47. Game show contestant Ken Jennings is 47. Actor LaMonica Garrett is 46. Actor D.J. Cotrona is 41. Actor Lane Garrison is 41. Actor-comedian Tim Robinson is 40. Actor Adam Wylie is 37. Movie writer-director Ryan Coogler is 35. Golfer Morgan Pressel is 33. Actor Alberto Frezza is 32. Folk/pop singer/songwriter Sarah Jarosz (juh-ROHZ') is 30.