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Chicken Soup
for the Soul

“The willingness of America’s veterans to sacrifice for our country has earned them our lasting gratitude.”

-Jeff Miller

MEMORIAL DAY
Honoring All Who Served

The Groton American Legion Post #39 will perform Military Honors at the following times and cemeteries:

7:30	Huffton
8:15	James
8:45	Verdon
9:15	Bates/Scotland
10:00	Ferney
11:00	Andover Protestant Cemetery
12:00	Groton

A program will be held at Groton starting at 12:00 with the speaker being a 1960 Groton graduate Brig. Gen. Ronald W Mielke (ret). After the Groton service a meal will be served at the Legion Post.

MEMORIAL DAY
Honoring All Who Served

Coming up on GDILIVE.COM
Groton’s Memorial Day Program
Monday, May 31, 2021, Noon
Groton Union Cemetery
Will also be broadcast locally on 89.3 FM



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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The draft is over, training camp is underway, and before you know it, August will be here and the Vikings will be playing their first preseason game. To get you ready for the 2021 season, we'll break down the Vikings' roster position by position. The Minnesota Vikings' roster will look quite a bit different than it did last season. Between free agents who were brought in, rookies who were drafted, and injured players returning, there will be plenty of new faces in purple and gold this year.

This week, we begin our roster breakdown with the quarterbacks.

Kirk Cousins – there is little doubt Cousins will be the starting quarterback for the Minnesota Vikings entering week one of this season. Last season, Cousins started all 16 games for the Vikings. He completed 349 out of 516 passes (67.6%) for 4,265 yards, 35 touchdowns and 13 interceptions. The Vikings' poor defense led to added pressure on Cousins' shoulders, but the veteran responded with career highs in touchdown passes and yards per attempt (since 2015 when he became a full-time starter for Washington).

Cousins' stats are consistently some of the best in the NFL, and he has overcome the narrative that he can't win big games. Add that to the fact he is only 32 years old, it would seem like he would be locked in as the Vikings' starter for the next 5-8 years. However, the Vikings made waves this offseason when they drafted a QB in the third round of the draft. The reason? Money. Cousins will count \$31 million against the cap this season, and an astronomical \$45 million next season (both years are fully guaranteed). The Vikings feel like Cousins is good but not great – he can put up stats but is unable to overcome deficiencies around him. This has led the team to search for his replacement, and while they tried and failed to move up in the draft to get Justin Fields, they eventually drafted...

Kellen Mond – the former No. 1 dual-threat recruit in the country, Mond had a great career at Texas A&M. After finishing 9-1 in a shortened 2020 season, Mond was invited to the Senior Bowl where he was named MVP of the game. Early in his career, there was a lot placed on Mond's shoulders and his play was inconsistent as a result. However, the Aggies added more play-action in 2020 to go along with a strong run game, and he flourished. He won't be asked to contribute much this season, and could potentially sit next season as well if he isn't ready to start or the Vikings aren't able to find a trade partner for Cousins.

The Vikings will likely enter the 2021 season with Cousins and Mond as the only two QBs on the roster, leaving Jake Browning and Nate Stanley to battle it out for a spot on the Vikings' practice squad.

Jake Browning – a second-year player, Browning was an undrafted free agent out of Washington. While he put up big numbers in college, he had multiple shoulder injuries during his career which put a damper on his arm strength. He excels in a pro-style offense and has nice touch on his throws, but because of his limitations he doesn't strike fear in any opposing defenses.

Nate Stanley – another second-year player who is a former undrafted free agent, Stanley has the arm strength Jake Browning lacks but has never been able to put it all together. Stanley's lack of mobility and field vision led to him having a sub-60% completion percentage in college. While he has more potential than Browning, he wouldn't be the ideal candidate to start in an emergency.



By Jordan Wright

Grandpa Was at Peace

My last conversation with Grandpa was over the phone. He was sick and dying. I was 1,200 miles away in residency, learning how to be a family physician. I was not going to make it home in time to see him one last time.



By Andrew Ellsworth, MD ~ Prairie Doc® Perspectives

We did not know exactly what was wrong. Sure, he could have had more tests and been admitted into the hospital, but that was not what he wanted. Thankfully, a family friend and physician had talked to my grandparents about their end-of-life goals. This discussion helped Grandpa realize what was important to him, like his faith and being with Grandma, and what was not, like spending time in doctor's offices and hospitals.

Even though I was a physician in training, I supported his choice. He was in a peaceful place, listening to music, talking with Grandma and other friends and family.

Most people want to die at home. However, only 20 percent do. When it comes to dying, some advance planning may make a world of difference.

It does not require an official document or appointment with a lawyer to make plans for how you would like to spend your final days. It does not even necessitate a visit with your doctor, although all the above may help. The most important thing is talking to your loved ones about your wishes and goals of care.

How do you know when to have this talk, how to bring up the topic, and what to say during the conversation? How and when do you say "enough is enough" when it comes to searching for a cure, a surgery, a treatment, or spending a few more nights in the hospital? Discussing these questions may not be easy, but it is more productive and less stressful to have the conversation now rather than during a crisis.

Start with scheduling an appointment with your doctor for the sole purpose of talking about your end-of-life goals, expectations, and values. Then, together, adjust your care plan accordingly. Revisit these discussions periodically with your family and your healthcare providers.

It was tough not being there with Grandpa, but he was at peace, so I was at peace. This past year, many others have had to say goodbye remotely or did not even have the chance. This is a reminder for us all to have meaningful conversations, to tell our loved ones how much they mean to us, and to cherish the time we do have together.

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

Groton Transit

FUNDRAISER

Thursday, June 17, 2021

4 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Groton Community Transit

Downtown Groton

Tables will be set up outside

as in previous years!

We will be offering DRIVE-THRU

Service again on the

south side of the transit.

*Please join us and help
support Groton Transit!*

FREE WILL OFFERING!

*** Food * Fun * Door Prizes ***

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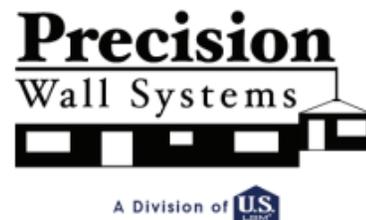


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and night
shift
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**Competitive starting wage
with monthly tier increases!
Full benefit package!**

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www.uslbm.com/careers or
call Diane at 605-448-2929**

Britton



Help Wanted at Groton Area

The Groton Area School District is seeking qualified and motivated individuals for the following position for the 2021-2022 school year.

Transportation Director. The Groton Area School District has an opening for the position of Transportation Director. This position is full-time year round with a comprehensive benefits package and salary dependent on education and experience. Criminal background check and pre-employment drug test required. Applicant must hold valid South Dakota Commercial Driver License with School Bus and Passengers endorsements and clean driving record. Interested parties should complete and submit the auxiliary staff application form. Open until filled.

Elementary Special Education Paraprofessional. The Groton Area School District is seeking applicants for the position of Special Education Paraprofessional. Starting salary is \$12.10/hour and position includes comprehensive benefits package. Criminal background check required. Interested parties should complete and submit the auxiliary staff application form. Open until filled.

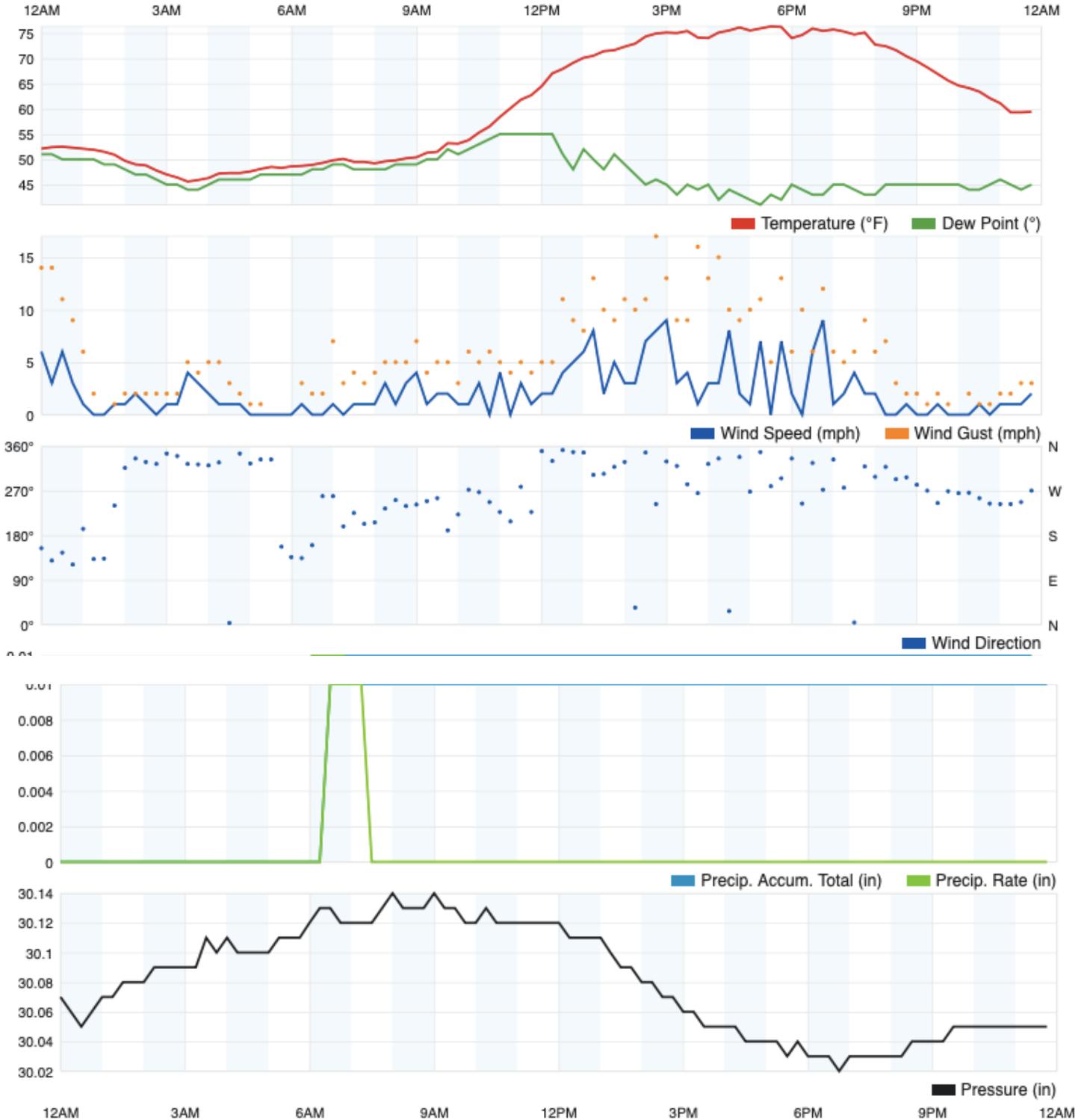
MS/HS Special Education Paraprofessional. The Groton Area School District is seeking applicants for the position of Special Education Paraprofessional. Starting salary is \$12.10/hour and position includes comprehensive benefits package. Criminal background check required. Interested parties should complete and submit the auxiliary staff application form. Open until filled.

Applications are available at www.grotonarea.com or at the district office – 502 N 2nd Street, Groton.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Memorial
Day



Sunny

High: 76 °F

Tonight



Mostly Clear

Low: 46 °F

Tuesday



Mostly Sunny

High: 81 °F

Tuesday
Night



Slight Chance
T-storms

Low: 52 °F

Wednesday



Sunny

High: 82 °F

Warm & Dry Today!

Highs in mid to upper 70s

Light Winds

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD



weather.gov/abr

It will be a warm and dry Memorial Day with light winds as temperatures rise into the mid to upper 70s. While isolated showers return to central South Dakota Tuesday, mainly dry weather will persist through the week, along with a significant warming trend. Expect highs in the 90s by Friday and Saturday.

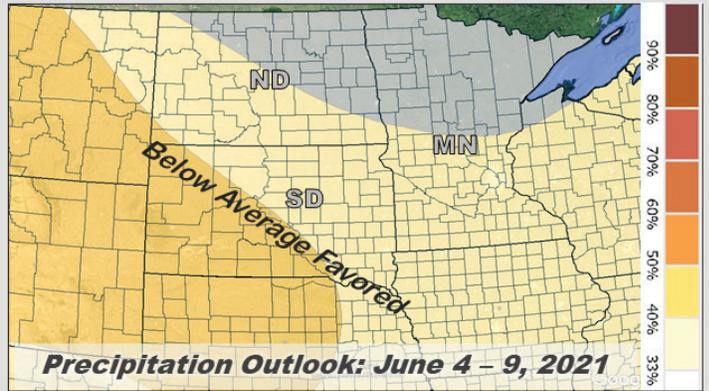
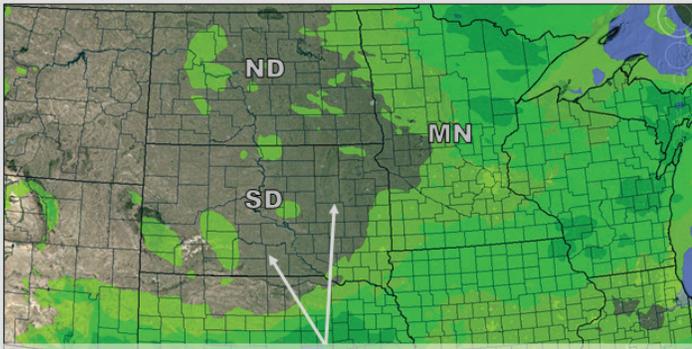
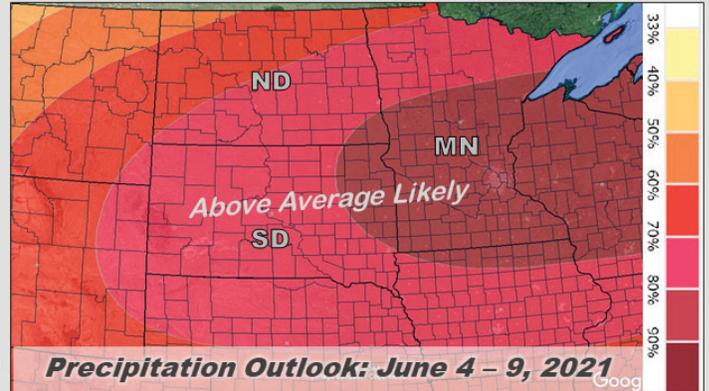
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Looking Ahead

The next 10 days should be largely dry and increasingly hot across all of central & northeastern South Dakota and west central Minnesota.

NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE
OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION



While we've received some rain as of late, it hasn't been enough to alter overall drought conditions much, considering May is climatologically one of the wettest months of the year. The next 10 days should be largely dry and increasingly hot across all of central and northeastern South Dakota and west central Minnesota.

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Today in Weather History

May 31, 1960: A late evening thunderstorm cut a path of destruction, principally from high winds from Beadle County, northeast to Roberts and Grant Counties. Twelve head of cattle electrocuted for a downed high tensions wire occurred at Wolsey. Winds with gusts of 65 to 75 mph were observed at Huron and Watertown. A grain elevator tipped over, and a windmill was destroyed near Willow Lake. A Steel corn crib was blown over at Hayti and damaged occurred to other farm buildings and implements.

1830: Shelbyville, Tennessee was turned into "a heap of ruins" as a tornado moved east through the center of the town. This tornado destroyed 15 homes and 38 businesses along with churches and other public buildings. Losses were estimated to be as high as \$100,000. A book was said to be carried seven miles away.

1889: The Johnstown, Pennsylvania disaster occurred, the worst flood tragedy in U.S. history. Heavy rains collapsed the South Fork Dam sending a thirty-foot wall of water rushing down the already flooded Conemaugh Valley. The wall of water, traveling as fast as twenty-two feet per second, swept away all structures, objects, and people. The flood killed around 2100 people.

1941 - Thunderstorms deluged Burlington KS with 12.59 inches of rain to establish a 24 hour rainfall record for the state. (The Weather Channel)

1985 - Severe thunderstorms spawned forty-one tornadoes across the Lower Great Lakes Region and southeastern Ontario which killed 74 persons. (Storm Data)

1987 - Thunderstorms in New England produced wind gusts up to 90 mph at Worcester, MA, and Northboro, MA, and hail an inch and a half in diameter at Williston, VT. Unseasonably hot weather prevailed in the northeastern U.S. The afternoon high of 94 degrees at Portland, ME, was a record for the month of May. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Hot and humid weather prevailed in the eastern U.S. Thirteen cities reported record high temperatures for the date. Cape Hatteras, NC, reported their first ninety degree day in May in 115 years of records. "Dust buster" thunderstorms in northwest Texas drenched Amarillo with more than three inches of rain. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather and torrential rains in northern Indiana, northern Ohio and southern Lower Michigan. Saint John IND was drenched with four inches of rain in two hours, and Woodland MI was deluged with two inches in twenty minutes. Pittsburgh PA reported a record 6.55 inches of rain for the month of May, with measurable rain reported on twenty-five days during the month. (The National Weather Summary)

1990 - Afternoon and evening thunderstorms developing along a warm front produced severe weather from northwest Texas to southeastern Louisiana. The thunderstorms spawned sixteen tornadoes, including thirteen in northwest Texas. One tornado hit the town of Spearman, TX, causing more than a million dollars damage, and seven other tornadoes were reported within twenty-five miles of Spearman. Thunderstorms over northwest Texas also produced baseball size hail at Monahans, and wind gusts to 80 mph at Paducah. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2013: The 2nd of the top 10 weather events for 2013 was EL Reno, Oklahoma tornado of May 31, 2013. Part of the multi-day storm outbreak caused \$2 billion in damage. The EF3 that traveled through the western suburbs of Oklahoma City was the largest tornado ever observed with a width of 2.6 miles. It took eight lives including four tornado chasers.

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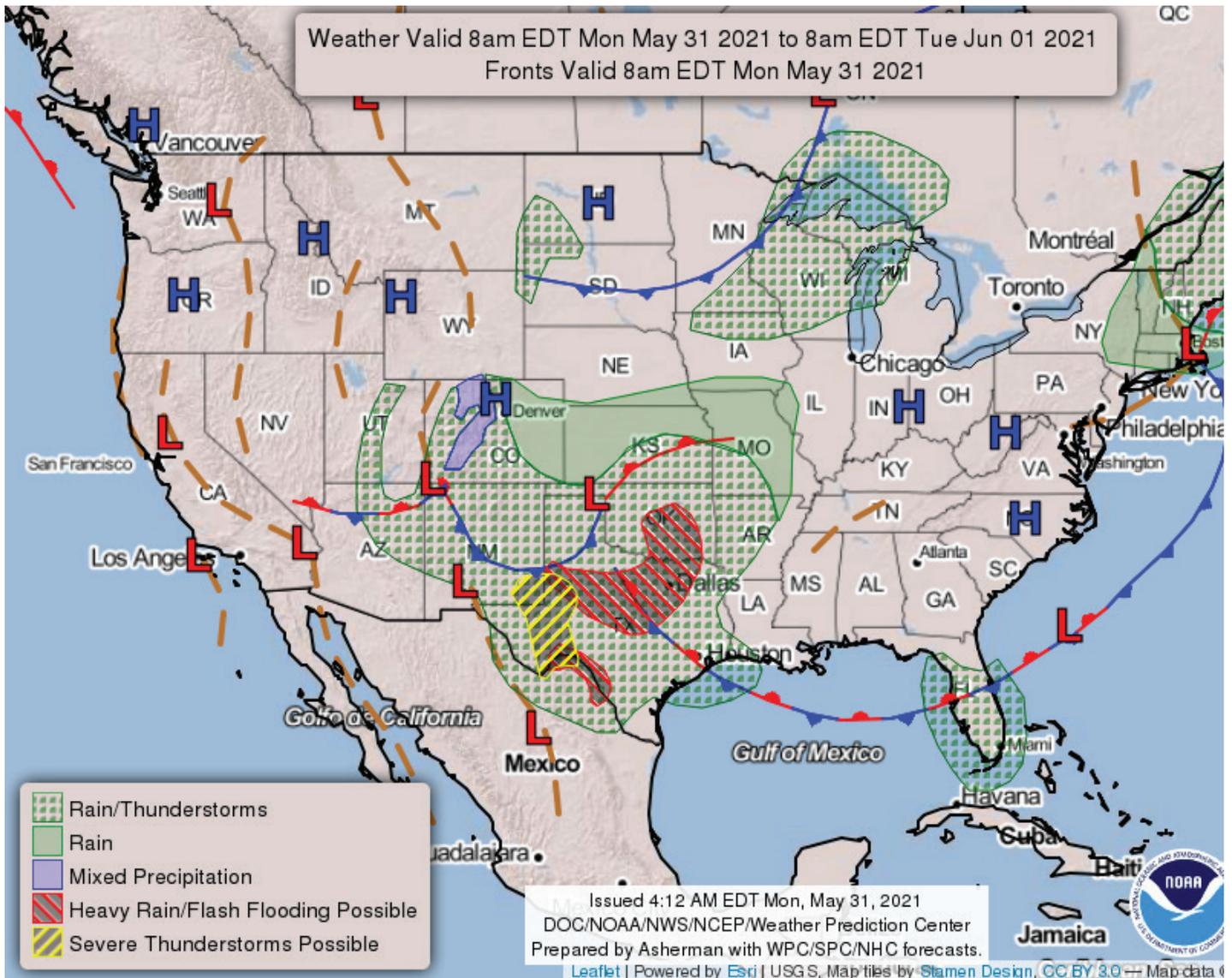
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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 76.3 °F
Low Temp: 45.6 °F
Wind: 17 mph
Precip: .00

Today's Info

Record High: 100° in 1934
Record Low: 23° in 1897
Average High: 76°F
Average Low: 51°F
Average Precip in May.: 3.17
Precip to date in May.: 1.20
Average Precip to date: 7.14
Precip Year to Date: 3.97
Sunset Tonight: 9:14 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:48 a.m.



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IT'S EITHER – OR

It's been wisely said that "If He is not Lord of all He is not Lord at all. If we do not value Him above all, we do not really value Him at all." What does it mean when we say, "Jesus Christ, Savior and Lord?" There is a natural progression that begins with Jesus as our Savior and ends with Him as our Lord.

Shouting in a loud voice with words that came from the bottom of his heart, David proclaimed, "Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let Your glory be over all the earth."

With God being Who He is and What He is and you and I being who we are and what we are, establishes a clearly and carefully defined relationship. It declares His role and our role: He is our Sovereign. And as our Sovereign we are to be submissive to Him. All that we are or ever will be and all that we have or ever will have is a result of the grace and mercy that comes from Him, our Sovereign Lord.

If God were not Sovereign, He would have no authority to dispense grace and mercy. That is what sovereigns do: they rule over their subjects and choose who will receive their favor. And the more power that any sovereign has the more important and precious is the grace and mercy they bestow upon their subjects.

Our Sovereign said, "Whoever chooses me to be their Savior and Lord will receive my love, mercy and grace and will have eternal life with me." He also said, "Remember: I am with you every step of life's journey to protect you and empower you to complete the plans I have for you " No wonder David said, "Be exalted, O God."

Prayer: How grateful we are, Father, for the plans You have designed for our lives. We bow before You in gratitude and ask that You will guide and guard us in our journey through life. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let Your glory be over all the earth. Psalm 57:5

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2021 Community Events

- Cancelled** Legion Post #39 Spring Fundraiser (Sunday closest to St. Patrick's Day, every other year)
03/27/2021 Lions Club Easter Egg Hunt 10am Sharp at the City Park (Saturday a week before Easter Weekend)
04/10/2021 Dueling Pianos Baseball Fundraiser at the American Legion Post #39 6-11:30pm
04/24/2021 Firemen's Spring Social at the Fire Station 7pm-12:30am (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)
04/25/2021 Princess Prom (Sunday after GHS Prom)
05/01/2021 Lions Club Spring City-Wide Rummage Sales 8am-3pm (1st Saturday in May)
05/31/2021 Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services (Memorial Day)
6/7-9/2021 St. John's Lutheran Church VBS
06/17/2021 Groton Transit Fundraiser, 4-7 p.m.
06/18/2021 SDSU Alumni & Friends Golf Tournament at Olive Grove
06/19/2021 U8 Baseball Tournament
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

Dentist donates care, helps college students during pandemic

By MAX HOFER KELO-TV

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A Sioux Falls dental practice is helping students take a bite out of their college expenses.

Rebecca Tjeerdsma is a junior working toward her engineering degree at Dordt University. She says the pandemic has brought on some financial burdens, but through a new program through a local dental clinic, she's getting by.

It's fair to say that the COVID-19 pandemic took a bite out of Rebecca Tjeerdsma's college experience.

"It has taken something from everyone: whether that is financially or even, like, a relative," Tjeerdsma said.

About 13% percent of South Dakotans have student loan debt and more than one thousand residents with unpaid student loans. Siouxland Oral wants to help ease that burden, KELO-TV reported.

"We know that our local students have had to shoulder an impossible task of remote learning and affording school during the pandemic, so these folks are also worried about paying for a necessary dental procedure," George said.

Dr. Lou George says they started their "Wisdom for Wisdom" initiative a year ago. They seek applications from students asking them what being chosen would do for them and their parents during these trying times.

"Everything changed around us last year, and every dollar counts even more so," George said.

Students also get their wisdom teeth removed at no cost. Tjeerdsma was one of their recipients last year.

"Their team was super nice, and I didn't have any nightmare stories like some other people have had with their wisdom teeth; it went very smooth," Tjeerdsma said.

Dr. George says that 85% of all wisdom teeth do, eventually, need to come out.

"By doing it before the age of 20, lowers the risks of complications and delayed healing and so fourth," George said.

"It definitely saved me from thousands of dollars that definitely went toward my college education," Tjeerdsma said.

"If we can help a patient alleviate some financial stress – particularly with these trying times, then we'd be very happy knowing we made a difference," George said.

Police arrest suspect after 2 stabbed in Sioux Falls bar

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Police are investigating an early morning stabbing at a bar in downtown Sioux Falls.

Officers responded to a call about 2 a.m. Sunday at Tommy Jack's. Authorities say two people were stabbed. Their wounds are not believed to be life-threatening, KELO-TV reported.

Police arrested a suspect at the scene. No further details were immediately available.

Biden commemorates war dead at Arlington National Cemetery

By CALVIN WOODWARD Associated Press

ARLINGTON, Va. (AP) — President Joe Biden honored America's war dead at Arlington National Cemetery on Memorial Day by laying a wreath at the hallowed burial ground.

The president was joined on Monday by first lady Jill Biden, Vice President Kamala Harris and second gentleman Doug Emhoff in a somber ceremony at the Virginia cemetery's Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, which is dedicated to the fallen U.S. service members whose remains have not been identified.

After approaching the wreath, Biden bowed his head before the wreath and made the sign of the cross. Later, he delivered a Memorial Day address and called on Americans to honor their fallen heroes by re-

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membering their sacrifices.

"All those we honor today gave their lives for the country, but they live forever in our hearts," he said.

On Sunday, Biden addressed a crowd of Gold Star military families and other veterans in a ceremony at War Memorial Plaza in New Castle, Delaware. Earlier in the day, he and other family members attended a memorial Mass for his son Beau Biden, a veteran who died of brain cancer six years ago to the day.

Last year, Biden, then a presidential candidate, chose Memorial Day to make his first public appearance in the two months after the coronavirus pandemic closed down the nation.

Asia Today: Vietnam to test all 9M residents in largest city

HANOI, Vietnam (AP) — Vietnam plans to test all 9 million people in its largest city for the coronavirus and imposed more restrictions Monday to deal with a growing COVID-19 outbreak.

People in Ho Chi Minh city are only allowed to leave home for necessary activities and public gatherings of more than 10 people are banned for the next two weeks, the government announced. Prior to the order, the city, also Vietnam's economic hub, shut down non-essential business last Thursday when cases started to increase.

State newspaper Vietnam News said the city authority is planning to test its entire population with a testing capacity of 100,000 samples a day.

The newspaper also said police had filed a case Sunday against the couple who head a Protestant church mission for "spreading dangerous infectious diseases," citing poor health protocols applied at the premises.

At least 145 cases of coronavirus infection have been reported with links to the Revival Ekklesia Mission, a Protestant sect, and the city district of Go Vap, where the church is based, has been locked down. Vietnam has since banned all religious events nationwide.

The newspaper said church followers gathered in small space for singing and chanting without proper distancing and mask wearing. Ho Chi Minh city police said the mission has 48 registered members.

The report said the husband and wife accused in the case were responsible for leading and organizing activities at the church. They were not identified and are not under arrest.

Since the end of April, a surge in COVID-19 has spread to 31 municipalities and provinces in Vietnam with over 4,000 cases, almost double the total number that the country reported since the beginning of the pandemic.

Some recent patients in Vietnam were infected with a hybrid of the virus variants first found in India and the U.K., the health minister said Saturday. Nguyen Thanh Long said the hybrid might spread more easily and could be responsible for Vietnam's recent surge.

Viruses often develop small genetic changes as they reproduce, and new variants of the coronavirus have been seen almost since it was first detected in China in late 2019. The World Health Organization categorized the U.K. and the Indian variants, along with two others first found in South Africa and Brazil, as "variants of concern" because they appear to be more contagious.

Vietnam has vaccinated 1 million people with AstraZeneca shots. It has a deal with Pfizer for 30 million doses to be delivered later this year. It is also in talks with Moderna that would give it enough shots to fully vaccinate 80% of its 96 million people.

Elsewhere in Asia and the Pacific:

— Thailand is redoubling efforts to stop the spread of the coronavirus in labor camps, factories and markets as the number of new reported cases surged Monday to the highest level so far. A government spokesman said public health authorities met with labor and industry officials to discuss better ways to curb infections that are concentrated in crowded, high-risk places. The government reported a record 5,485 new cases on Monday, with nearly 2,000 in prisons. Confirmed deaths increased by 19, bringing the total to 1,031 since the pandemic began. Concern over the rising numbers prompted the government to overrule a plan by Bangkok's governor to ease some pandemic restrictions in the capital, including the re-opening of parks. The plan, which was to take effect on Tuesday, will be postponed 14 days. Thailand had managed to keep outbreaks largely under control, at great economic cost especially for tourism, because

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foreign visitors were largely banned from entering the country. That changed in early April, when a cluster of cases centered on Bangkok bars and clubs spread as many people traveled during the weeklong Thai New Year holiday. The total number of confirmed cases has now risen to 159,792, of which 82% occurred during the latest surge.

— Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said Monday that controls to lower coronavirus infections were working, while announcing a move to vaccinate students after a spate of transmissions in schools and learning centers. Lee said controls banning dining out and severely limiting social gatherings were "on track" to be relaxed after June 13. He urged the public to remain vigilant and only leave home if they must. The government imposed the tighter controls this month after a number of local coronavirus cases were linked to malls, hospitals and the airport, up from virtually none earlier in the year. Nearly three quarters of the city-state's 760,000 seniors have received at least one dose of the vaccine or booked their appointments. Now the jabs – which have been offered to those aged 40 and older – will be extended to students 12 and older from Tuesday.

— Malaysia opened its first mega vaccination center on Monday as the government sought to accelerate inoculations amid a worsening outbreak. Located in an exhibition center in the biggest city Kuala Lumpur, the center can vaccinate up to 8,000 people a day. Officials say more such mega centers will be opened nationwide but some critics urged the government to instead set up smaller centers at district levels to improve its outreach. Malaysia begins a near total lockdown starting Tuesday, the second time in over a year. Most social and economic activities, except for 17 essential sectors, will be shut down for at least two weeks as the government struggles to contain a worsening pandemic. Daily virus cases hit a record high of 9,020 on Saturday before easing to 6,824 Monday. Malaysia's total infections have surged to 572,357 while deaths are more than 2,600, both rising five-fold compared to the whole of last year. Science Minister Khairy Jamaluddin said Monday the government is assessing the suitability of the Johnson and Johnson vaccine. So far Malaysia has only approved the use of Pfizer, AstraZeneca and Sinovac vaccines. More than 12 million people have registered but less than 10% of the country's 33 million population have been vaccinated so far.

— Hong Kong authorities on Monday appealed to the private sector to offer incentives to help ease COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy, and warned that those who do not get vaccinated may face more stringent restrictions should the city face a new outbreak. Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam said at a news conference that she has written letters to over a hundred real estate developers and retail outlets, urging them to offer incentives that could boost the city's vaccination campaign. The move comes as Hong Kong faces vaccine hesitancy, with just 20% of its population vaccinated since the end of February despite widespread access to inoculations. Vaccine registrations surged over the weekend after a real estate developer put a \$1.4 million apartment up as a grand prize in a lucky draw, together with other prizes, open to all Hong Kong permanent residents who have been vaccinated. "Although it's been a very short period of a couple of days, but we have seen some positive results," Lam said. On Sunday, about 26,900 people made online bookings to receive the vaccinations, more than double the 12,600 on Friday, the day that the lucky draw was announced.

Houston seethes over being frozen out of federal flood funds

By JUAN A. LOZANO Associated Press

HOUSTON (AP) — Residents of the East Aldine neighborhood of Houston are tired of their homes flooding during hurricanes and of worrying every time it rains because their streets and waterways don't drain well.

Like the rest of the Houston area, East Aldine was hammered in 2017 by Hurricane Harvey, which caused an estimated \$125 billion in damage throughout the state but nowhere more than in the nation's fourth-largest city and surrounding Harris County. East Aldine residents had to flee their homes through chest-high water, many carrying their children on their shoulders as they sought higher ground. The working class, predominantly Latino neighborhood that straddles Houston and unincorporated parts of the county was flooded again two years later during Tropical Storm Imelda.

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"Whether you flooded or not, whether you had to evacuate or not, you are traumatized by the fact that rain is coming and you don't know what's going to happen and you don't know how it's going to impact your family," Shirley Ronquillo, a community activist who grew up in East Aldine, said Thursday.

That's why she and many other Houston residents were outraged when a state agency recently announced that Houston wouldn't get a cent of the initial \$1 billion in federal funding that was promised to Texas following Harvey to help pay for flood mitigation projects, including drainage improvements and the widening of bayous. The Harris County government was also iced out, though four smaller cities in the county were awarded a total of \$90 million.

The awarding of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development funding led to a rare show of solidarity by local Democratic and Republican officials, who condemned how the Texas General Land Office, or GLO, picked its winners and losers. Ronquillo called it a "slap in the face" to communities of color who have historically been denied assistance.

Some officials and residents accused the GLO of playing politics, given that Houston and Harris County are Democratic strongholds in a state controlled by the GOP and have been at odds with the state's Republican leaders since Harvey over issues related to recovery funding.

The land office said the competition for the initial distribution of funding was fair and not political, and that it used scoring criteria based on HUD guidance. But a HUD spokesman, Michael Burns, said the federal agency didn't require the criteria used by Texas and that it believes "all areas of the state, including Houston and Harris County, should receive the resources they need to recover from Hurricane Harvey."

Faced with the criticism, Land Commissioner George P. Bush — a Republican grandson of former President George H.W. Bush — said he would ask HUD to approve \$750 million for Harris County, though none of it would be given directly to Houston and it's unknown if HUD would approve that outlay.

Bush suggested that "red tape requirements and complex regulations" under President Joe Biden's administration were responsible for Houston and Harris County not being awarded any of the funds. During a news conference Thursday, some Democratic members of Houston's congressional delegation accused Bush of politicizing the awards process by criticizing the Biden administration even though delays in establishing rules to use the funding and the creation of criteria for awarding it happened during the Trump administration.

The lack of flood mitigation funding has left many Houstonians seething.

During a meeting of the Harris County Commissioners Court last week, Pastor Rick Martinez, with Bethel Community Church in the East Aldine area, said residents were "being used as political pawns" and he asked GLO officials to visit his community after the next storm.

"Drive on past as our children are wading in disgusting flood waters, all because not a dime was spent to improve our drainage systems," said Martinez, a lifelong Republican whose church has flooded during four hurricanes and tropical storms in the last 20 years.

The lack of flood mitigation funding is also aggravating a \$1.4 billion shortfall Harris County faces in fully funding flood control projects that Houston-area voters approved in 2018 in response to Harvey.

During a tour of East Aldine and surrounding neighborhoods, Ronquillo, 42, highlighted the streets that flood when it simply rains and how the bottom of her SUV is rusting because she keeps having to drive through high water.

Standing along Halls Bayou, a few blocks from her home, she said the lack of funding would likely endanger the families who live along the waterway, which has experienced major flooding 14 times since 1989. Many of these families can't afford flood insurance and have little savings because they're focused on day-to-day survival, said Ronquillo, who co-founded the community group Houston Department of Transformation.

In the Allen Field subdivision north of East Aldine, houses and mobile homes are raised 6 to 8 feet (1.8 to 2.4 meters) off the ground because of perpetual flooding. But many residents, including Dolores Mendoza, are being forced to move because of a mandatory flood buyout program.

Six generations of Mendoza's family have lived in the subdivision and she would rather stay, but the

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flooding is "getting a lot worse."

Her home is near Greens Bayou, and the open drainage ditches that line her street are often clogged by debris and do little to remove water when it floods. Heavy rainfall last week made the roads leading to her home impassable.

Mendoza, a 34-year-old accountant, said the GLO's funding decision was frustrating but not surprising because "people don't really understand what it really is like out here."

"With the lack of support from the state, the fear is that once again, we're not going to get the funding that we need and therefore we will continue to flood," Ronquillo said.

UK offers mass jabs in rugby arena to counter virus variant

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — British health authorities were aiming to vaccinate 15,000 people at London's Twickenham rugby stadium on Monday as part of a race to contain a fast-spreading coronavirus variant.

The strain, first identified in India, accounts for a majority of new cases in the U.K., which is seeing a rise in infections after weeks of decline. Scientists say the variant is more transmissible than the U.K.'s previously dominant strain, but current vaccines appear to be effective against it.

Many scientists are urging the U.K. government to delay plans to lift social distancing rules and other remaining restrictions on June 21, arguing that more people need to be vaccinated before measures can be eased safely.

The government says it will announce on June 14 whether the relaxation will be delayed.

The U.K. has recorded almost 128,000 coronavirus deaths, the highest toll in Europe, but a mass vaccination campaign that started in December has brought confirmed new infections and daily deaths down sharply. Three-quarters of U.K. adults have had one dose of a coronavirus vaccine, and almost half have had both doses.

Ravi Gupta, a member of a committee that advises the government on respiratory diseases, said it would be wise to delay the June 21 reopening "by a few weeks."

"We are not too far from reaching the sort of levels of vaccination that would help us contain the virus," he told the BBC. "If you look at the costs and benefits of getting it wrong, I think it is heavily in favor of delay."

The walk-in vaccination center at Twickenham — home of England's national rugby team — was offering first jabs without an appointment on Monday to people from northwest London, a hotspot for the variant first found in India.

Health officials in the northwest England town of Bolton, which had the highest rates of the new variant, say infections are starting to fall after a mass testing and "surge vaccination" campaign there.

Dems walk, stop Texas GOP's sweeping voting restrictions

By PAUL J. WEBER and ACACIA CORONADO Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Texas Democrats pulled off a dramatic, last-ditch walkout in the state House of Representatives on Sunday night to block passage of one of the most restrictive voting bills in the U.S., leaving Republicans with no choice but to abandon a midnight deadline and declare the legislative session essentially over.

The revolt is one of Democrats' biggest protests to date against GOP efforts nationwide to impose stricter election laws, and they used the spotlight to urge President Joe Biden to act on voting rights.

But the victory may be fleeting: Republican Gov. Greg Abbott, who had declared new voting laws a priority in Texas, quickly announced he would order a special session to finish the job. He called the failure of the bill "deeply disappointing" but did not say when he would drag lawmakers back to work.

"We've said for so many years that we want more people to participate in our democracy. And it just seems that's not the case," Democratic state Rep. Carl Sherman said.

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One by one, Democrats left the House chamber until there was no longer the 100-member quorum needed to pass Senate Bill 7, which would have reduced polling hours, empowered poll watchers and scaled back ways to vote in Texas, which already has some of the nation's strictest voting laws.

They gathered later outside a Black church, driving home their anger over a last-minute change to the Texas bill that would have prohibited Sunday voting before 1 p.m., when many Black worshippers go to the polls. Democrats said they did not go into the House vote intending to break quorum, but instead became fed-up after Republicans repeatedly refused to take their questions while racing to pass the bill.

It was a stunning turnabout from just 24 hours earlier, when the bill seemed all but guaranteed to reach Abbott's desk. The Texas Senate had signed off before sunrise earlier Sunday after Republicans, who hold an 18-13 majority in the chamber, used a bare-knuckle procedural move to suspend the rules and take up the measure in the middle of the night.

But as the day wore on in the House, the GOP's chances wobbled. State Rep. Chris Turner, the Democratic House leader, said he sent a text message to members of his caucus at 10:35 p.m. telling them to leave the chamber. But by that point, the exodus was already well underway.

"We knew today, with the eyes of the nation watching actions in Austin, that we needed to send a message, and that message is very, very clear: Mr. President, we need a national response to federal voting rights," Democratic state Rep. Trey Martinez Fischer said.

Republicans showed restraint in criticizing Democrats for the move.

"I am disappointed that some members decided to break quorum," said Republican state Rep. Briscoe Cain, who carried the bill in the House. "We all know what that meant. I understand why they were doing it, but we all took an oath to Texans that we would be here to do our jobs."

Texas is the last big battleground in Republicans' campaign to tighten voting laws, driven by former President Donald Trump's false claims that the 2020 election was stolen from him. Georgia and Florida have also passed new voting restrictions, and Biden on Saturday had unfavorably compared Texas' bill to election changes in those states as "an assault on democracy."

Under revisions during closed-door negotiations, Republicans added language to the 67-page measure that could have made it easier for a judge to overturn an election. The bill would have also eliminated drive-thru voting and 24-hour polling centers, both of which Harris County introduced last year. Houston is in Harris County, the state's largest Democratic stronghold.

Major corporations joined the backlash, including Texas-based American Airlines and Dell, warning that the efforts could harm democracy and the economic climate. But Republicans shrugged off their objections, and in some cases, ripped business leaders for speaking out. By the time the Texas bill was poised to pass over the Memorial Day weekend, the opposition from businesses had grown faint.

Since Trump's defeat, at least 14 states have enacted more restrictive voting laws, according to the New York-based Brennan Center for Justice. It has counted nearly 400 bills filed this year nationwide that would restrict voting.

It was not the first time Texas Democrats — who have been out of power in the state Capitol for decades — have been able to block contentious legislation despite being outnumbered.

They twice broke quorum in 2003 to stop Republican efforts to redraw voting maps, at one point leaving the state for Oklahoma. A decade later, former state Sen. Wendy Davis ran out the clock on a sweeping anti-abortion bill with a filibuster that lasted more than 11 hours, propelling her to a failed run for governor.

But in each instance, Republicans ultimately prevailed.

"We may have won the war tonight but the battle is not over," Democratic state Rep. Nicole Collier said. "We will continue to fight and speak out against those measures that attempt to silence our voices."

The Latest: UK surge vaccinations fight variant from India

By The Associated Press undefined

LONDON — British health authorities are aiming to vaccinate 15,000 people in one day at London's Twickenham rugby stadium as part of a race to contain a fast-spreading coronavirus variant.

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The strain, first identified in India, accounts for a majority of new cases in the U.K., which is seeing a rise in infections after weeks of decline. Scientists say the variant is more transmissible than even the previously dominant strain first found in the U.K. but current vaccines are effective against it.

Many scientists are urging the Conservative government to delay plans to lift social distancing and other restrictions on June 21, arguing that more people need to be vaccinated before measures can be eased safely. The government will announce its decision on June 14.

Three-quarters of U.K. adults have had one dose of a coronavirus vaccine, and almost half have had both doses.

The Twickenham walk-in vaccination center is offering jabs without an appointment on Monday to people from northwest London, a hotspot for the Indian-identified variant.

Health officials in the northwest England town of Bolton, which had the highest rates of the new variant, say infections are starting to fall after a mass testing and "surge vaccination" campaign.

MORE ON THE VIRUS OUTBREAK:

- American veterans return to Memorial Day traditions as pandemic eases
- China re-imposes travel curbs on southern province after fresh virus cases
- Vietnam to test all 9 million residents of Ho Chi Minh city amid outbreak

Follow more of AP's pandemic coverage at <https://apnews.com/hub/coronavirus-pandemic> and <https://apnews.com/hub/coronavirus-vaccine>

HERE'S WHAT ELSE IS HAPPENING:

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia — Malaysia opened its first mass vaccination center on Monday as the government sought to accelerate inoculations amid a worsening outbreak.

Located in an exhibition center in Kuala Lumpur, the center can vaccinate up to 8,000 people a day. Officials say more such mass centers will be opened nationwide but some critics urged the government to instead set up smaller centers at district levels to improve its outreach.

Malaysia begins a near total lockdown starting Tuesday, the second time in over a year. Most social and economic activities, except for 17 essential sectors, will be shut down for at least two weeks as the government struggles to contain a worsening pandemic.

Daily virus cases hit a record high of 9,020 on Saturday before easing to 6,824 Monday. Malaysia's total infections have surged to 572,357 while deaths are more than 2,600, both rising five-fold compared to the whole of last year.

Less than 10% of the country's 33 million people have been vaccinated so far.

HONG KONG — Hong Kong authorities on Monday appealed to the private sector to offer incentives to help ease COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy, and warned that those who do not get vaccinated may face more stringent restrictions should the city face a new outbreak.

Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam said at a news conference Monday that she has written letters to over 100 real estate developers and retail outlets, urging them to offer incentives to boost the city's vaccination campaign.

The move comes as Hong Kong faces vaccine hesitancy in its population, with just 20% of its population vaccinated despite widespread access.

Vaccine registrations surged over the weekend, after a real estate developer put a \$1.4 million apartment up as a grand prize in a lucky draw, together with other prizes, open to all Hong Kong permanent residents who have been vaccinated.

Authorities also said while social distancing restrictions would be relaxed for vaccinated residents, those who do not receive the vaccine and are not exempt medically could face longer quarantine periods if they are designated as a close contact of someone infected and could face more frequent testing.

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BANGKOK — Thailand was redoubling efforts to stop the spread of coronavirus in labor camps, factories and markets as the number of new reported cases surged Monday to the highest level so far.

A government spokesman said public health officials were meeting with labor and industry officials to discuss better ways to curb infections that are clustered in crowded, high-risk places.

The government reported a record 5,485 new cases on Monday, with nearly 2,000 in prisons. Confirmed deaths increased by 19, bringing the total to 1,031.

Still, Bangkok's governor said the city would ease some pandemic restrictions, reopening parks, massage parlors and beauty salons, though with precautions such as mandatory masks. Other limits remain, such as closures of bars and entertainment venues and a ban on serving alcohol in restaurants.

ROME — The head of Italy's central bank said Monday the eurozone's third-largest economy could grow 4% this year, after shedding 9% during the pandemic year of 2020.

In the Bank of Italy governor's annual report on the economy, Ignazio Visco cited indications of industrial production regaining momentum and plans for fresh investments by companies alongside progress in the vaccination plans, which together could help accelerate the recovery.

He noted that Italian firms were in better shape going into the pandemic than the financial crisis more than a decade ago, and that significant European and government support measures were helping to spur the economy.

Italy is slated to be the largest single recipient of EU recovery funds, which Visco said "offers us the chance to improve how the public sector works, and to stimulate private enterprise and modernize the economy."

MELBOURNE, Australia — Authorities say a COVID-19 cluster in Australia's second-largest city has spread into nursing homes.

Victoria state began a seven-day lockdown on Friday due to a cluster in its capital Melbourne.

State health authorities on Monday announced 11 new cases.

A second staff member and a 90-year-old resident of the Arcare Maidstone Aged Care facility in Melbourne were among the new infections. The first infected staff member was reported on Sunday.

The second staff member had also worked at the BlueCross Western Gardens nursing home in Melbourne last week and had not been vaccinated.

The BlueCross facility has gone into lockdown after the news.

Health Minister Martin Foley described the cluster spreading into aged care homes as a "very great concern to the Victorian government."

The vast majority of Victoria's 820 coronavirus deaths have been in nursing homes.

BEIJING — China on Monday re-imposed anti-coronavirus travel controls on its southern province of Guangdong, announcing anyone leaving the populous region must be tested for the virus following a spike in infections that has alarmed authorities.

Guangdong, which borders Hong Kong, recorded 20 new confirmed cases, all contracted locally, in the 24 hours through midnight Sunday. Guangdong's numbers are low compared with many places in the world, but the rise has rattled Chinese leaders who thought they had the disease under control.

People leaving Guangdong by plane, train, bus or private car after 10 p.m. on Monday must present results of a nucleic acid test within the past 72 hours, the provincial government announced. It said testing stations for truck drivers would be set up on major roads.

The government of the provincial capital, Guangzhou, a business center of 15 million people, ordered mass testing after locally acquired infections were found beginning May 21. The government said 700,000 people had been tested through last Wednesday.

HANOI, Vietnam — Vietnam plans to test all 9 million people in its largest city for the coronavirus and imposed more restrictions Monday to deal with a growing COVID-19 outbreak.

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People in Ho Chi Minh city are only allowed to leave home for necessary activities and public gatherings of more than 10 people are banned, the government announced. Prior to the order, the city, also Vietnam's economic hub, shut down non-essential business last Thursday when cases started to increase.

State newspaper Vietnam News said the city authority is planning to test its entire population with a testing capacity of 100,000 samples a day.

The newspaper also said police had filed a case Sunday against the head of a Protestant church mission for "spreading dangerous infectious diseases" citing poor health protocols applied at the premises.

ISLAMABAD — Pakistan's health ministry says a 39-year-old Pakistani who recently tested positive for an Indian variant of coronavirus got infected in a Gulf country, ending speculations the man might have travelled from neighboring India.

The timely detection of the case helped in preventing the spread of secondary infections of Indian variant, the ministry said.

The announcement comes as Pakistan on Monday reported 43 new deaths from COVID-19, one of the lowest daily fatalities in recent months.

BERLIN — The German government is following up on media reports that coronavirus test centers across the country have overbilled authorities for the number of tests taken.

Germans are allowed one free "citizen's test" per week to check if they are negative for coronavirus. They can use the result to be able to dine at outside restaurants, go shopping or visit cultural institutions.

In recent weeks, thousands of antigen tests centers for have popped up everywhere in cities and towns in empty store fronts, closed dance clubs or community centers. Several media have reported that test center operators are illegally billing for more tests than they actually take.

German Health Minister Jens Spahn tweeted Saturday that "anybody who uses the pandemic to enrich himself should be ashamed." He noted that prosecutors in the western city of Bochum were investigating some suspected cases of fraud, but said that most providers were doing a professional job.

Black women's next targets: Governorships and Senate seats

By BILL BARROW Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Jennifer McClellan remembers her parents' recounting life as Black Virginians enduring segregation and the trauma and triumph of the civil rights movement.

It showed her that government can be "a powerful force for improving people's lives" but also one "that oppresses some, ignores others."

A generation later, despite her interest in public office, there was no obvious pathway for someone like her. "There weren't a lot of role models ... examples of Black women" in power, said McClellan in an interview. Now, she's a 48-year-old state senator running for governor herself: "We're in a very different Virginia."

McClellan's candidacy alongside fellow primary candidate Jennifer Carroll Foy demonstrates the rising political power of Black women, long a foundation of Democratic victories, and more recently, as candidates and officeholders, from Vice President Kamala Harris to mayors in Atlanta, Chicago and San Francisco.

McClellan and Carroll Foy, a 39-year-old former legislator, are trying to break another barrier by becoming the first Black woman to win a governor's race in any state. They are decided underdogs to former Gov. Terry McAuliffe in Virginia's June 8 primary. Yet they're nonetheless part of a surge in candidacies by Black women not just for local and legislative posts but also statewide offices that are still new ground for Black women.

"We are normalizing Black women's leadership (and) seeing Black women on every ballot so that it's second nature for voters," said Glynda Carr, co-founder of Higher Heights for America, which backs Black female candidates.

In addition to Virginia, two Black women are running for U.S. Senate from North Carolina in 2022: former

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state Supreme Court Chief Justice Cheri Beasley and former legislator Erica Smith. In Florida, U.S. Rep. Val Demings is running for Republican Sen. Marco Rubio's seat. In Georgia, voting rights activist and former legislative leader Stacey Abrams is expected to make a second run for governor in 2022.

Steve Schale, a white strategist who helped President Barack Obama win Florida twice, said it's a developing consensus that Black women can assemble Democrats' ideal alliance for statewide elections: older Black voters, younger voters across racial and ethnic lines, urban white liberals and enough white moderates, especially women, in metro areas.

"This is the next step post-Obama," Schale said. "They can rebuild that coalition as well as anyone."

Both Virginia candidates say Black women are right for the moment.

"I am tired of fighting the same fights that my parents, my grandparents and my great-grandparents fought, and I cannot leave that to my children," McClellan recalled thinking when she watched the video of George Floyd, a Black man, dying under the knee of a white police officer in Minnesota last year.

Carroll Foy ties her biography — graduating from Virginia Military Institute and working in low-wage jobs and as a public defender — to her political strategy. "There's intersectionality ... coming from one of the poorest communities in Virginia" and selling policy ideas to all working- and middle-class voters, she said in an interview.

In addition to no Black woman serving as governor, only two have been elected to the U.S. Senate, and the chamber has none now. The next goal, Carr said, is for Black women to match their voting power to their representation.

Congress began this year with a record 25 Black women out of 435 House members. Black women are mayors in seven of the 100 most populous U.S. cities, up from one less than a decade ago. The number of Black women in state legislatures has nearly doubled in two decades, to more than 4%.

"We can celebrate," Carr said, "but still recognize the work that needs to be done."

At the least, strong campaigns from Black women so early in the midterm cycle stand out compared to previous years.

In 2017, as Georgia's Abrams was preparing for her first bid for governor, white power brokers in the state party recruited one of her fellow state lawmakers, a white woman, to run against her.

"They should have been ashamed," said Karen Finney, a prominent Black Democratic consultant and Abrams ally. "She proved them all wrong."

Abrams trounced her hand-picked primary opponent and came within 55,000 votes out of 4 million cast of defeating Republican Brian Kemp. Soon after, Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer courted her to run for Senate. She declined but recruited the Rev. Raphael Warnock. Warnock, a Black man, won his January runoff by 2 points, a wider margin than his white colleague, Democratic Sen. Jon Ossoff, managed in a parallel contest.

Heading into 2022, Georgia Democrats are uniformly ceding the top of the ticket to Abrams, who is publicly mum but expected to run.

"She proved you don't have to follow conventional wisdom," McClellan said.

National Democrats have followed suit in Senate recruitment and endorsements. Senate Democrats' campaign arm appears intent on being much more deliberate about endorsements in the 2022 cycle, rather than publicly anointing preferred candidates early.

Going into 2020, the committee backed North Carolina Democrat Cal Cunningham, a white moderate, over other contenders, including Smith. Cunningham, who admitted to an extramarital affair in the campaign's final month, lost by 1.8 points, or nearly 100,000 votes. Beasley, then the sitting Supreme Court chief justice, lost her reelection bid in the same general election by just more than 400 votes.

Finney cited her focus group research that found white women becoming more open to backing Black women. Black female candidates, she said, can leverage public frustration with dysfunction. Voters "see women as collaborative leaders, and women of color are not seen as part of what's already broken," Finney said, even if they've held office already, because they are "natural outsiders."

Beasley and Demings, Finney added, carry potential advantages hailing from the criminal justice establishment: Beasley as part of the judiciary, Demings as a former Orlando police chief. So, Finney said, it'd

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be harder for Republicans to caricature either as "extremist" or "radical."

In Virginia, McClellan and Carroll Foy describe their candidacies as progress, with caveats.

Carroll Foy has endorsements from Higher Heights and EMILY's List, which champions abortion rights. She's raised in the millions, though not at pace with McAuliffe, a prodigious fundraiser since his days as President Bill Clinton's 1996 reelection co-chair.

"It's obvious the structures in place aren't made to have a woman of color run for and win the executive position," Carroll Foy said.

McClellan said voters beyond the political class are "ready for someone with that different perspective," while many insiders still believe "if there's a white man in the race, you have to wait your turn."

Indeed, McAuliffe is running with plenty of Black support. Among his campaign co-chairs is the highest-ranking Black member of the General Assembly, Senate President Pro Tem Louise Lucas.

She credited McAuliffe with genuine outreach to nonwhite communities and said she "goes back three decades" with the 64-year-old Democrat.

"I'm excited about all of the Black and brown women running for offices all over this nation," Lucas said. "This is no slight to any of my sisters."

Still, the 77-year-old senator implicitly questioned whether Black women can win a general election in Virginia. "Rather than speculate," Lucas said, "I would prefer to say I believe Terry is best situated and suited to win."

China easing birth limits further to cope with aging society

By JOE McDONALD Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — China's ruling Communist Party said Monday it will ease birth limits to allow all couples to have three children instead of two in hopes of slowing the rapid aging of its population, which is adding to strains on the economy and society.

The ruling party has enforced birth limits since 1980 to restrain population growth but worries the number of working-age people is falling too fast while the share over age 65 is rising. That threatens to disrupt its ambitions to transform China into a prosperous consumer society and global technology leader.

A ruling party meeting led by President Xi Jinping decided to introduce "measures to actively deal with the aging population," the official Xinhua News Agency said. It said leaders agreed "implementing the policy of one couple can have three children and supporting measures are conducive to improving China's population structure."

Leaders also agreed China needs to raise its retirement age to keep more people in the workforce and improve pension and health services for the elderly, Xinhua said.

Restrictions that limited most couples to one child were eased in 2015 to allow two, but the total number of births fell further, suggesting rule changes on their own have little impact on the trend.

Couples say they are put off by high costs of raising a child, disruption to their jobs and the need to look after elderly parents.

Comments on social media Monday complained the change does nothing to help young parents with medical bills, low incomes and grueling work schedules known popularly as "996," or 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. six days a week.

"Every stage of the problem hasn't been solved," said a post on the popular Sina Weibo blog service signed Tchaikovsky. "Who will raise the baby? Do you have time? I go out early and get back late. Kids don't know what their parents look like."

Another, signed Hyeongmok, joked bitterly: "Don't worry about aging. Our generation won't live long."

China, along with Thailand and some other Asian economies, faces what economists call the challenge of whether they can get rich before they get old.

The Chinese population of 1.4 billion already was expected to peak later this decade and start to decline. Census data released May 11 suggest that is happening faster than expected, adding to burdens on underfunded pension and health systems and cutting the number of future workers available to support

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a growing retiree group.

The share of working-age people 15 to 59 in the population fell to 63.3% last year from 70.1% a decade earlier. The group aged 65 and older grew to 13.5% from 8.9%.

The 12 million births reported last year was down nearly one-fifth from 2019.

About 40% were second children, down from 50% in 2017, according to Ning Jizhe, a statistics official who announced the data on May 11.

Chinese researchers and the Labor Ministry say the share of working-age people might fall to half the population by 2050. That increases the "dependency ratio," or the number of retirees who rely on each worker to generate income for pension funds and to pay taxes for health and other public services.

Leaders at Monday's meeting agreed it is "necessary to steadily implement the gradual postponement of the legal retirement age," Xinhua said.

It gave no details, but the government has been debating raising the official retirement ages of 60 for men, 55 for white-collar female workers and 50 for blue-collar female workers.

The potential change is politically fraught. Some female professionals welcome a chance to stay in satisfying careers, but others whose bodies are worn out from decades of manual labor resent being required to work longer.

The fertility rate, or the average number of births per mother, stood at 1.3 in 2020, well below the 2.1 that would maintain the size of the population.

China's birth rate, paralleling trends in other Asian economies, already was falling before the one-child rule. The average number of children per Chinese mother tumbled from above six in the 1960s to below three by 1980, according to the World Bank.

Demographers say official birth limits concealed what would have been a further fall in the number of children per family without the restrictions.

The ruling party says it prevented as many as 400 million potential births, averting shortages of food and water. But demographers say if China followed trends in Thailand, parts of India and other countries, the number of additional babies might have been as low as a few million.

Johnson & Johnson asks high court to void \$2B talc verdict

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Johnson & Johnson is asking for Supreme Court review of a \$2 billion verdict in favor of women who claim they developed ovarian cancer from using the company's talc products.

The case features an array of high-profile attorneys, some in unusual alliances, including former independent counsel Kenneth Starr, who is representing the women who sued Johnson & Johnson. The nation's largest business groups are backing the company, and a justice's father also makes an appearance because of his long association with the trade group for cosmetics and personal care products.

The court could say as soon as Tuesday whether it will get involved.

At the root, Johnson & Johnson argues that the company didn't get a fair shake in a trial in state court in Missouri that resulted in an initial \$4.7 billion verdict in favor of 22 women who used talc products and developed ovarian cancer.

A state appeals court cut more than half the money out of the verdict and eliminated two of the plaintiffs but otherwise upheld the outcome in a trial in which lawyers for both sides presented dueling expert testimony about whether the company's talc products contain asbestos and asbestos-laced talc can cause ovarian cancer.

The jury found for the women on both points, after which Judge Rex M. Burlison wrote that evidence at the trial showed "particularly reprehensible conduct on the part of Defendants."

The evidence, Burlison wrote, included that the company knew there was asbestos in products aimed at mothers and babies, knew of the potential harm and "misrepresented the safety of these products for decades."

Nine of the women have died from ovarian cancer, lawyers for the plaintiffs said

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Johnson & Johnson denies that its talc products cause cancer and it called the verdict in the Missouri trial "at odds with decades of independent scientific evaluations confirming Johnson's Baby Powder is safe, is not contaminated by asbestos and does not cause cancer." The company also is the maker of one of three COVID-19 vaccines approved for use in the United States.

Health concerns about talcum powders have prompted thousands of U.S. lawsuits by women who claim asbestos in the powder caused their cancer. Talc is a mineral similar in structure to asbestos, which is known to cause cancer, and they are sometimes obtained from the same mines. The cosmetics industry in 1976 agreed to make sure its talc products do not contain detectable amounts of asbestos.

Last year, a U.S. government-led analysis of 250,000 women found no strong evidence linking baby powder with ovarian cancer in the largest analysis to look at the question, though the study's lead author called the results "very ambiguous."

The findings were called "overall reassuring" in an editorial published with the study in January 2020 in the Journal of the American Medical Association. The study wasn't definitive but more conclusive research probably isn't feasible because a dwindling number of women use powder for personal hygiene, the editorial said.

A few months later, the company announced it would stop selling its iconic talc-based Johnson's Baby Powder in the U.S. and Canada, citing declining demand driven by what it called misinformation about health concerns.

The disputed link between cancer and talc is not really a part of the high court case. Instead, the company said it should have not been forced to defend itself in one trial against claims by women from 12 states, differing backgrounds and with varying histories of using Johnson & Johnson products containing talc.

The \$1.6 billion in punitive damages is out of line and should be reduced, the company also argued in a brief that was written by Neal Katyal, a Washington lawyer who aligns with progressive causes and also represents corporate clients. Katyal, who was the acting top Supreme Court lawyer for a time in the Obama administration, declined an on-the-record interview.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce and trade associations for manufacturers, insurers and the pharmaceutical industry are among the business organizations backing Johnson & Johnson's appeal.

Tiger Joyce, president of the American Tort Reform Association, pointed to how long it took the trial judge to read the jury its instructions as an indication of how unfair the trial was to Johnson & Johnson.

"When a defendant is facing a case where it takes over five hours for the judge to read the jury instructions to the jury, you just have to ask yourself what are we doing here," said Joyce, whose group generally backs limits on liability lawsuits.

Starr said in an interview with The Associated Press that none of Johnson & Johnson's legal arguments is worth the court's time. "As the jury found and as every judge to review this six-week trial record has concluded, Johnson & Johnson's conduct over decades was reprehensible," Starr said.

In addition to Starr, other members of the women's legal team are former Attorney General John Ashcroft and Washington lawyers David Frederick and Tom Goldstein, frequent advocates before the Supreme Court.

Justice Brett Kavanaugh worked for Starr when he investigated the affair between President Bill Clinton and Monica Lewinsky, which led to Clinton's impeachment.

Another name that pops up in some documents in the case is E. Edward Kavanaugh, who was the long-time president of the Cosmetic, Toiletry and Fragrance Association and is the justice's father.

Kavanaugh's group fought efforts to list talc as a carcinogen or attach warning labels to talc products. Kavanaugh is retired and the group now is called the Personal Care Products Council.

Ethicists contacted by the AP said they haven't seen anything that would warrant the justice having to step aside from the case.

Already, one justice almost certainly won't take part. Justice Samuel Alito reported last year that he owned \$15,000 to \$50,000 in Johnson & Johnson stock. Federal law prohibits judges from sitting on cases in which they have financial interest.

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Australian softball squad flies to Japan for Olympic camp

SYDNEY (AP) — Australia's Olympic softball squad left Sydney bound for Japan on Monday and will be among the earliest arrivals for the Tokyo Games.

The so-called Aussie Spirit will be in camp in Ota City, north of Tokyo, and will narrow the squad down from 23 to 15 ahead of their opening Olympic game against host Japan on July 21 — two days before the official opening ceremony.

The softball squad will be arriving at a time of mounting pressure on Japanese organizers, with polls in Japan showing a majority of people want the Olympics delayed again or canceled because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Fans from abroad have already been barred from attending the Olympics, and there's increasing speculation that games will be held in empty stadiums.

A state of emergency in Tokyo, Osaka and other prefectures was last week extended until June 20 as COVID-19 cases continue to put the medical system under strain.

Cancellation pressure grows daily on Tokyo organizers and the International Olympic Committee as more questions arise about the risks of bringing 15,000 Olympic and Paralympic athletes from more than 200 countries and territories into Japan.

The IOC says more than 80% of athletes and staff staying in the Olympic Village on Tokyo Bay will be vaccinated. They are expected to remain largely in a bubble at the village and at venues.

Softball Australia chief executive David Pryles said the squad, which hasn't played international opposition since February 2020, would be taking the "utmost care" in terms of keeping themselves and the public safe.

"All staff and players heading to Japan today are fully vaccinated thanks to the Australian Olympic Committee," Pryles said. "They'll also be undergoing stringent testing and checks as soon as they land at the airport and throughout their camp and (the) Olympics."

Pryles said player movements would be restricted to one level of the team hotel in Ota, which would include meals, meetings and gym work, and the stadium where they'll play a series of games against local professional teams and two games against Japan's national team.

"We're incredibly grateful the people of Ota City and their government for hosting the squad who will respect the restrictions placed upon us," he said.

Ian Chesterman, the head of Australia's Olympic contingent, said athletes and officials were "very comfortable" with the precautions being put in place for the Tokyo Games.

"These athletes . . . are committed to not only look after themselves but do the right thing by the Japanese population as well, and be ready for the games," Chesterman said. "And I think we're very comfortable with the protocols that have been put in place to manage not only this group of athletes but the Australian team when we get there."

Australia is targeting its first Olympic softball gold medal, having collected either silver or bronze in 1996, 2000, 2004 and 2008 before the sport was cut from the program for the 2012 and 2016.

"It's certainly a giant challenge that they face but they are up for that challenge, they want that challenge, and they want to get over there and represent their country and continue the very proud tradition that this team has in Olympic games," Chesterman said. "It's an exciting time for all of us involved with the Olympic team because it really is another key milestone that we pass, just have our first athletes heading off to Japan, ready in preparation for the games."

In post-pandemic Europe, migrants will face digital fortress

By DEREK GATOPOULOS and COSTAS KANTOURIS Associated Press

PEPLO, Greece (AP) — As the world begins to travel again, Europe is sending migrants a loud message: Stay away!

Greek border police are firing bursts of deafening noise from an armored truck over the frontier into Turkey. Mounted on the vehicle, the long-range acoustic device, or "sound cannon," is the size of a small TV set but can match the volume of a jet engine.

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It's part of a vast array of physical and experimental new digital barriers being installed and tested during the quiet months of the coronavirus pandemic at the 200-kilometer (125-mile) Greek border with Turkey to stop people entering the European Union illegally.

A new steel wall, similar to recent construction on the U.S.-Mexico border, blocks commonly-used crossing points along the Evros River that separates the two countries.

Nearby observation towers are being fitted with long-range cameras, night vision, and multiple sensors. The data will be sent to control centers to flag suspicious movement using artificial intelligence analysis.

"We will have a clear 'pre-border' picture of what's happening," Police Maj. Dimonsthenis Kamargios, head of the region's border guard authority, told the Associated Press.

The EU has poured 3 billion euros (\$3.7 billion) into security tech research following the refugee crisis in 2015-16, when more than 1 million people — many escaping wars in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan — fled to Greece and on to other EU countries.

The automated surveillance network being built on the Greek-Turkish border is aimed at detecting migrants early and deterring them from crossing, with river and land patrols using searchlights and long-range acoustic devices.

Key elements of the network will be launched by the end of the year, Kamargios said. "Our task is to prevent migrants from entering the country illegally. We need modern equipment and tools to do that."

Researchers at universities around Europe, working with private firms, have developed futuristic surveillance and verification technology, and tested more than a dozen projects at Greek borders.

AI-powered lie detectors and virtual border-guard interview bots have been piloted, as well as efforts to integrate satellite data with footage from drones on land, air, sea and underwater. Palm scanners record the unique vein pattern in a person's hand to use as a biometric identifier, and the makers of live camera reconstruction technology promise to erase foliage virtually, exposing people hiding near border areas.

Testing has also been conducted in Hungary, Latvia and elsewhere along the eastern EU perimeter.

The more aggressive migration strategy has been advanced by European policymakers over the past five years, funding deals with Mediterranean countries outside the bloc to hold migrants back and transforming the EU border protection agency, Frontex, from a coordination mechanism to a full-fledged multinational security force.

But regional migration deals have left the EU exposed to political pressure from neighbors.

Earlier this month, several thousand migrants crossed from Morocco into the Spanish enclave of Ceuta in a single day, prompting Spain to deploy the army. A similar crisis unfolded on the Greek-Turkish border and lasted three weeks last year.

Greece is pressing the EU to let Frontex patrol outside its territorial waters to stop migrants reaching Lesbos and other Greek islands, the most common route in Europe for illegal crossing in recent years.

Armed with new tech tools, European law enforcement authorities are leaning further outside borders.

Not all the surveillance programs being tested will be included in the new detection system, but human rights groups say the emerging technology will make it even harder for refugees fleeing wars and extreme hardship to find safety.

Patrick Breyer, a European lawmaker from Germany, has taken an EU research authority to court, demanding that details of the AI-powered lie detection program be made public.

"What we are seeing at the borders, and in treating foreign nationals generally, is that it's often a testing field for technologies that are later used on Europeans as well. And that's why everybody should care, in their own self-interest," Breyer of the German Pirates Party told the AP.

He urged authorities to allow broad oversight of border surveillance methods to review ethical concerns and prevent the sale of the technology through private partners to authoritarian regimes outside the EU.

Ella Jakubowska, of the digital rights group EDRi, argued that EU officials were adopting "techno-solutionism" to sideline moral considerations in dealing with the complex issue of migration.

"It is deeply troubling that, time and again, EU funds are poured into expensive technologies which are used in ways that criminalize, experiment with and dehumanize people on the move," she said.

Migration flows have slowed in many parts of Europe during the pandemic, interrupting an increase recorded over years. In Greece, for example, the number of arrivals dropped from nearly 75,000 in 2019 to 15,700 in 2020, a 78% decrease.

But the pressure is sure to return. Between 2000 and 2020, the world's migrant population rose by more than 80% to reach 272 million, according to United Nations data, fast outpacing international population growth.

At the Greek border village of Poros, the breakfast discussion at a cafe was about the recent crisis on the Spanish-Moroccan border.

Many of the houses in the area are abandoned and in a gradual state of collapse, and life is adjusting to that reality.

Cows use the steel wall as a barrier for the wind and rest nearby.

Panagiotis Kyrgiannis, a Poros resident, says the wall and other preventive measures have brought migrant crossings to a dead stop.

"We are used to seeing them cross over and come through the village in groups of 80 or a 100," he said. "We were not afraid. ... They don't want to settle here. All of this that's happening around us is not about us."

Irving dodges bottle in Boston in another ugly NBA incident

By JIMMY GOLEN AP Sports Writer

BOSTON (AP) — Kyrie Irving says banning fans who mistreat NBA players won't solve the problem.

It goes much deeper than that.

"(It's) just underlying racism, and treating people like they're in a human zoo," Irving said after a water bottle was thrown at him following Brooklyn's 141-126 victory over the Celtics on Sunday night.

"Throwing stuff at people, saying things. There's a certain point where it gets to be too much," said the Nets guard, who spent two years playing in Boston and revealed last week he was the victim of racism during his time in the city. "You see people just feel very entitled out here. ... As a Black man playing in the NBA, dealing with a lot of this stuff, it's fairly difficult. You never know what's going to happen."

Irving had 39 points and 11 rebounds to quiet the first post-pandemic full house at the TD Garden and lead the Nets to victory in Game 4 of their first-round playoff series. The win gave Brooklyn a 3-1 lead and a chance to clinch at home on Tuesday.

As Irving walked off the court, he was nearly hit by a bottle thrown from the stands. Irving and Nets guard Tyler Johnson turned toward the stands and pointed. Police surrounded a man in a Kevin Garnett jersey in the stands before leading him out in handcuffs.

A spokeswoman for the TD Garden said Boston Police arrested one person Sunday night "for throwing an object."

"We have zero tolerance for violations of our guest code of conduct," spokeswoman Tricia McCorkle said. "And the guest is subject to a lifetime ban from TD Garden."

The incident mirrored bad behavior at other NBA games in the past week as arenas began lifting capacity limits set during the pandemic.

In Philadelphia, a fan threw popcorn at Wizards star Russell Westbrook; in New York, one spit at Atlanta's Trae Young as he prepared to inbound the ball. They were banned, as were three fans in Utah who Grizzlies guard Ja Morant said "just went too far" with him or his family.

"Fans have got to grow up at some point," Nets forward Kevin Durant said. "I know that being in the house for a year and a half with the pandemic has got a lot of people on edge, has got a lot of people stressed out. But when you come to these games you've got to realize: These men are human. We're not animals. We're not in the circus."

"You coming to the game is not all about you as a fan. So have some respect for the game. Have some respect for the human beings. And have some respect for yourself. Your mother wouldn't be proud of you throwing water bottles at basketball players, or spitting on players or tossing popcorn. So grow the

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(expletive) up and enjoy the game," Durant said. "It's bigger than you."

Durant scored 42 and James Harden added 23 points and a career postseason-high 18 assists to help Brooklyn move within one win of their first playoff series victory since 2014. Jayson Tatum scored 40 points for the Celtics, who were playing at home for the first time since Massachusetts lifted its COVID-19 capacity restrictions.

One night after the Boston Bruins beat the New York Islanders 5-2 in front of the largest crowd to see an NHL game since before the pandemic, the Celtics were hoping for a similar boost. And the sellout crowd of 17,226 came ready to let Irving know they hadn't forgotten how he professed his love for the city before opting out of his contract.

They booed every time he touched the ball, showering him and Durant with obscene chants.

But that was eclipsed by the postgame incident.

"We know how these people here are in Boston. We know how passionate they are about Kyrie in particular — they're still upset at him," Durant said. "That's no reason for them to act childish. Glad we got the 'W.' Hopefully, we don't have to come back here this year."

Politics still pack a punch(line) for Iranian-American comic

By MALAK HARB Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — For Iranian-American Maz Jobrani, a stand-up show in Dubai marked the first time he's been in front of a major live audience overseas since the start of the coronavirus pandemic — and he feels it.

"Doing stand-up comedy is kind of like going to the gym — you have to get up on stage five, 10 times a week," said Jobrani, sitting in a Dubai hotel overlooking Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest building. "You have to keep going or the muscles are going to be rusty."

Jobrani had a calm demeanor during a recent interview with The Associated Press. It was a far cry from the exaggerated expressions and dancing he's known for in his performance.

Taking to the stage at the recent Dubai Comedy Festival, Jobrani broke into an Iranian dance routine to one of Dua Lipa's hit pop songs, drawing laughter from an audience eager to be out as the coronavirus pandemic still rages across much of the world. The United Arab Emirates has one of the world's highest per-capita vaccination rates and its economy largely has reopened.

Being on stage has become a luxury for comedians, Jobrani said, with some not being able to perform for over a year. After venues shut down last year, extra creativity was required. First, Jobrani started doing shows on Instagram, updating his fans on what he did daily during the lockdown, or doing workouts using random objects.

Then he tried drive-in shows, which posed the same problem for stand-up comedy as online video calls: "You don't hear their laughter," he said. "You need to remind them: 'If you like what I'm saying, if you like the joke, please honk,'" he recounted. "So people would honk at you, you tell a joke (and) they would honk at you."

In some U.S. states, he performed at outdoor venues to a limited capacity audience. At others he performed indoors. In Arizona and Florida he performed in comedy clubs, where he said he felt nervous because it was before the vaccine was rolled out.

"Comedians need interaction — we're best in a room, with an audience, laughing, talking," he said. "And this remote world took that away from us but again I think we adapted, a lot of people adapted."

Jobrani, originally from Iran, moved to California at age 6 with his family. Like many Iranians they had fled the country's 1979 Islamic Revolution. He grew up in the San Francisco area.

His acting credits begin just after the Sept. 11 attacks with a major role in the American action series "24," in which he played a member of an Afghan militant group hoping to detonate a nuclear bomb in Los Angeles.

Later he stopped taking such roles, but still played with the theme, setting up the "Axis of Evil" comedy tour. He wrote a book entitled "I'm Not a Terrorist, But I've Played One On TV." His comedy is largely fu-

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eled by that and his background. During Donald Trump's term in office, he focused on the U.S. president. "You know in the past four years, I was very political, constantly with the Trump stuff, Trump, Trump, Trump," he said. "You know the Muslim ban, you know kids in cages, you know the mishandling of coronavirus."

Jobrani's visit to Dubai came at an edgy moment for the wider Middle East. Tensions still remain high between his native Iran and the U.S. as negotiations continue over Tehran's tattered nuclear deal with world powers as a hard-liner appears poised to take the presidency.

The day of his set, Israel and the Gaza Strip's Hamas rulers agreed to a truce after an 11-day war killed more than 250 people, mostly Palestinians in Gaza, and caused heavy destruction in the impoverished coastal territory.

While Jobrani discussed the conflict and the region's politics in an interview with the AP, he didn't mention it in his set.

"It's interesting because what you do as a comedian, you know, your job is to make people laugh," Jobrani said. "If I lived here and if ... I felt there was some injustice and I really wanted to speak up about it, I'd probably find the right way to do that within this society."

The UAE only last year reached a diplomatic recognition deal with Israel and signed the accords at the White House with Trump — but Jobrani thinks Trump shouldn't be praised for the accord.

"There had not been a will to solve that problem, the Israeli-Palestinian" issue, he said. "I feel again maybe governments, especially America, did not prioritize it, even under Obama and then especially under Trump."

"It was laughable that a lot of conservatives in America were like, 'Well, Trump made peace in the Middle East,'" he said. "I go: 'They weren't at war, what are you talking about?'"

Life doesn't seem to be slowing down for the comedian. He is continuing to tour, creating his podcast "Back To School With Maz Jobrani," spending time with his wife and two kids and taking care of a dog they adopted during the pandemic.

But even as his jokes touch on politics, he says he feels whiplash from what he described as all the material — and chaos — of the Trump presidency.

"I will say I'm almost exhausted from it, it's almost we're suffering a PTSD from the past four years," Jobrani said. "But the problem is, what I feel is injustice in the world has not stopped, it continues. So sometimes I'm like, 'Oh God, I've got to get back on that roller coaster.'"

For Biden, a deeply personal Memorial Day weekend observance

By JONATHAN LEMIRE Associated Press

NEW CASTLE, Del. (AP) — President Joe Biden marked his first Memorial Day weekend as commander in chief by honoring the nation's sacrifices in a deeply personal manner as he paid tribute Sunday to those lost while remembering his late son Beau, a veteran who died six years ago to the day.

As a cold rain fell, Biden made his annual appearance at the commemoration in New Castle, not far from his Wilmington home, a day before he planned to do the same at Arlington National Cemetery on the official observance.

The death of his son from brain cancer at age 46 is ever-present for the elder Biden, with the loss defining so much of his worldview, dotting his speeches and stirring his empathy for others in pain.

The Memorial Day weekend, long an important moment for Biden, took on added poignancy this year as the president spoke frequently and emotionally of his own loss while expressing the gratitude of a nation for the sacrifices of others.

"I can't thank you enough for the continued service for the country," said Biden, addressing a crowd of Gold Star military families and other veterans in a ceremony at War Memorial Plaza in the shadow of the Delaware Memorial Bridge. "I know how much the loss hurts."

"They're the guardians of us and we're the guardians of their legacy," Biden said of those who served in the armed forces. "Despite all the pain, I know the pride you feel in the loved one you have lost."

Though a tent was overhead, the cold wind whipped the rain onto the guests as they watched a lone

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military trumpeter play taps at a memorial to Delaware's fallen troops. Biden appeared to pay the chill no mind, remaining for the entirety of the 75-minute ceremony and mouthing the words to the closing rendition of "God Bless America." When it was time, he snapped a salute to the wreath laid at the memorial.

Biden had attended the ceremony nearly every year for decades, and it was at last year's event when he emerged for the first time since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, spotted with a mask while laying a wreath.

Hours before Sunday's ceremony, the president, first lady Jill Biden and other family members attended a memorial Mass for Beau Biden at their local church. After the service, the Bidens greeted well-wishers outside the church and, for the first time in more than a year, were able to receive warm hugs and handshakes at their home parish.

The Bidens walked to Beau's grave, which is on the property of St. Joseph's on the Brandywine, and left flowers amid several American flags that had been placed on the well-manicured lawn next to the marker.

Beau Biden served two terms as Delaware's attorney general before declaring a run for governor, and many saw in him the same aspirations that brought his father to the White House. Beau Biden also served in Delaware's National Guard and, when sent to Iraq, received permission to wear a uniform emblazoned with a different last name so as not to receive special treatment.

That story, which Biden told Friday at a Virginia air force base, was one of the many moments in which Biden's son defined the Memorial Day weekend. After beginning with an emotional remembrance of his late son, Biden acknowledged the unheralded sacrifices made by the service members and their families.

"You are the very best of what America has to offer," Biden said then.

Biden also underscored his recent decision to pull troops out of Afghanistan later this year, expressing gratitude to service members who took multiple tours of duty in America's longest war.

He largely avoided the particulars of international affairs on Sunday, though he pledged to press Russia's Vladimir Putin on human rights during their summit in Geneva next month and said that the moment was right to show the world, and namely China, that the United States was ready to lead again after four years of a largely inward-looking foreign policy under President Donald Trump.

"It's time to remind everybody who we are," he said.

North accuses US of hostility for S. Korean missile decision

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korea said Monday the U.S. allowing South Korea to build more powerful missiles was an example of the U.S.'s hostile policy against the North, warning that it could lead to an "acute and instable situation" on the Korean Peninsula.

It's North Korea's first response to the May 21 summit between the leaders of the United States and South Korea, during which the U.S. ended decades-long restrictions that capped South Korea's missile development and allowed its ally to develop weapons with unlimited ranges.

The accusation of U.S. policy being hostile to North Korea matters because it said it won't return to talks and would enlarge its nuclear arsenal as long as U.S. hostility persists. But the latest statement was still attributed to an individual commentator, not a government body, suggesting North Korea may still want to leave room for potential diplomacy with the Biden administration.

"The termination step is a stark reminder of the U.S. hostile policy toward (North Korea) and its shameful double-dealing," Kim Myong Chol, an international affairs critic, said, according to the official Korean Central News Agency. "It is engrossed in confrontation despite its lip-service to dialogue."

"The U.S. is mistaken, however. It is a serious blunder for it to pressurize (North Korea) by creating asymmetric imbalance in and around the Korean Peninsula as this may lead to the acute and instable situation on the Korean Peninsula now technically at war," he said.

The United States had previously barred South Korea from developing a missile with a range of longer than 800 kilometers (500 miles) out of concerns about a regional arms race. The range is enough for a South Korean weapon to strike all of North Korea but is short of hitting potential key targets in other

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neighbors like China and Japan.

Some South Korean observers hailed the end of the restrictions as restoring military sovereignty, but others suspected the U.S. intent was to boost its ally's military capability amid a rivalry with China.

The commentator Kim accused Washington of trying to spark an arms race, thwart North Korean development and deploy intermediate-range missiles targeting countries near North Korea.

The South Korean government said it "prudently watches" North Korea's reaction, but Unification Ministry spokeswoman Lee Jong-joo wouldn't comment otherwise, since the remarks were attributed to an individual, not an official statement from the North Korean government.

The North Korean statement comes as the Biden administration shapes a new approach on North Korea amid long-dormant talks over the North's nuclear program. During their summit, Biden and South Korean President Moon Jae-in said a new U.S. policy review on North Korea "takes a calibrated and practical approach that is open to and will explore diplomacy" with the North.

U.S. officials have suggested Biden would adopt a middle ground policy between his predecessors — Donald Trump's direct dealings with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and Barack Obama's "strategic patience." Some experts say Biden won't likely provide North Korea with major sanctions relief unless it takes concrete denuclearization steps first.

The North Korean statement criticized the Biden administration's review indirectly, saying the new policy was viewed by other countries "as just trickery."

Egypt bets on ancient finds to pull tourism out of pandemic

By SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — Workers dig and ferry wheelbarrows laden with sand to open a new shaft at a bustling archaeological site outside of Cairo, while a handful of Egyptian archaeologists supervise from garden chairs. The dig is at the foot of the Step Pyramid of Djoser, arguably the world's oldest pyramid, and is one of many recent excavations that are yielding troves of ancient artifacts from the country's largest archaeological site.

As some European countries reopen to international tourists, Egypt has already been trying for months to attract them to its archaeological sites and museums. Officials are betting that the new ancient discoveries will set it apart on the mid- and post-pandemic tourism market. They need visitors to come back in force to inject cash into the tourism industry, a pillar of the economy.

But like countries elsewhere, Egypt continues to battle the coronavirus, and is struggling to get its people vaccinated. The country has, up until now, received only 5 million vaccines for its population of 100 million people, according to its Health Ministry. In early May, the government announced that 1 million people had been vaccinated, though that number is believed to be higher now.

In the meantime, authorities have kept the publicity machine running, focused on the new discoveries.

In November, archaeologists announced the discovery of at least 100 ancient coffins dating back to the Pharaonic Late Period and Greco-Ptolemaic era, along with 40 gilded statues found 2,500 years after they were first buried. That came a month after the discovery of 57 other coffins at the same site, the necropolis of Saqqara that includes the step pyramid.

"Saqqara is a treasure," said Tourism and Antiquities Minister Khaled el-Anany while announcing the November discovery, estimating that only 1% of what the site contains has been unearthed so far.

"Our problem now is that we don't know how we can possibly wow the world after this," he said.

If they don't, it certainly won't be for lack of trying.

In April, Zahi Hawass, Egypt's best-known archaeologist, announced the discovery of a 3,000-year-old lost city in southern Luxor, complete with mud brick houses, artifacts and tools from pharaonic times. It dates back to Amenhotep III of the 18th dynasty, whose reign (1390–1353 B.C.) is considered a golden era for ancient Egypt.

That discovery was followed by a made-for-TV parade celebrating the transport of 22 of the country's prized royal mummies from central Cairo to their new resting place in a massive facility farther south in

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the capital, the National Museum of Egyptian Civilization.

The Red Sea resort of Sharm el-Sheikh is now home to an archaeological museum, as is Cairo's International Airport, both opened in recent months. And officials have also said they still plan to open the massive new Grand Egyptian Museum next to the Giza Pyramids by January, after years of delays. Entrance fees for archeological sites have been lowered, as has the cost of tourist visas.

The government has for years played up its ancient history as a selling point, as part of a yearslong effort to revive the country's battered tourism industry. It was badly hit during and after the popular uprising that toppled longtime autocrat Hosni Mubarak and the ensuing unrest. The coronavirus dealt it a similar blow, just as it was getting back on its feet.

In 2019, foreign tourism's revenue stood at \$13 billion. Egypt received some 13.1 million foreign tourists — reaching pre-2011 levels for the first time. But in 2020, it greeted only 3.5 million foreign tourists, according to the minister el-Anany.

At the newly opened National Museum of Egyptian Civilization, Mahmoud el-Rays, a tour guide, was leading a small group of European tourists at the hall housing the royal mummies.

"2019 was a fantastic year," he said. "But corona reversed everything. It is a massive blow."

Tourism traffic strengthened in the first months of 2021, el-Anany, the minister, told The Associated Press in a recent interview, though he did not give specific figures. He was optimistic that more would continue to come year-round.

"Egypt is a perfect destination for post-COVID in that our tourism is really an open-air tourism," he said.

But it remains to be seen if the country truly has the virus under control. It has recorded a total of 14,950 deaths from the virus and is still seeing more than a thousand new cases daily. Like other countries, the real numbers are believed to be much higher. In Egypt, though, authorities have arrested doctors and silenced critics who questioned the government's response, so there are fears that information on the true cost of the virus may have been suppressed from the beginning.

Egypt also had a trying experience early on in the pandemic, when it saw a coronavirus outbreak on one of its Nile River cruise boats. It first closed its borders completely until the summer of 2020, but later welcomed tourists back, first to Red-Sea resort towns and now to the heart of the country — Cairo and the Nile River Valley that hosts most of its famous archaeological sites. Visitors still require a negative COVID-19 test result to enter the country.

In a further cause for optimism, Russia said in April that it plans to resume direct flights to Egypt's Red Sea resort towns. Moscow stopped the flights after the local Islamic State affiliate bombed a Russian airliner over the Sinai Peninsula in October 2015, killing all on board.

Amanda, a 36-year-old engineer from Austria, returned to Egypt in May. It was her second visit in four years. She visited the Egyptian Museum, the National Museum of Egyptian Civilization and Islamic Cairo, in the capital's historic center.

She had planned to come last year, but the pandemic interfered.

"Once they opened, I came," she said. "It was my dream to see the Pyramids again."

El-Rays, the tour guide, says that while he's seeing tourists starting to come in larger numbers, he knows a full recovery will not happen overnight.

"It will take some time to return to before corona," he said.

Good company: Helio Castroneves wins Indy 500 for 4th time

By JENNA FRYER AP Auto Racing Writer

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — The Indianapolis 500 was meant to mark the return of some sort of normalcy, at least for the marquee sporting events that Americans find so meaningful.

For Helio Castroneves, Indy provided a professional rebirth that pushed him into an elite club that last welcomed a new member 30 years ago. He became just the fourth four-time winner of the Indy 500 on Sunday in front of 135,000 fans at Indianapolis Motor Speedway, easily the largest and loudest sporting event since the start of the pandemic.

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The race was postponed to August a year ago and held without spectators for the only time in its 105-year history. Given permission to open 40% of the grandstands this year, the exuberant crowd came in droves and went wild for Castroneves' historic win for the old guys.

Biding his time until the moment was right, the veteran passed 24-year-old Alex Palou with two laps remaining and the frenzied crowd roared its approval. When the Brazilian took the checkered flag, he rushed to the fence for his traditional "Spiderman" climb that belied his 46 years.

Castroneves had been trying since 2009 to join A.J. Foyt, Al Unser Sr. and Rick Mears, his former mentor at Team Penske, as the only four-time winners of "The Greatest Spectacle in Racing." Mears was the last driver to join the club in 1991.

Castroneves became the fourth-oldest winner in Indianapolis 500 history, behind Al Unser (47, 1987), Bobby Unser (47, 1981) and Emerson Fittipaldi (46, 1993).

After climbing down the fence, Castroneves ran nearly a mile down the frontstretch for a victory lap on foot. He pumped his arms in the air and waved to the ecstatic crowd, his explosion of emotional energy stopped every few feet by a flood of rivals who rushed onto the track to congratulate him.

"I was drawn by the positive energy of everyone. For a long time these people want to see a four-time winner," he said. "I say that because they tell me. Every time we sign the autographs, they are like, 'I've never seen a four-time winner. I want to see it.' That's what probably made me thank all of them because they made this place special."

Almost every member of Team Penske rushed out to meet Castroneves, including former teammate Will Power, who saw the final scoring pylon and had no idea his longtime friend won.

"I was looking up and down 'Who is the 06?'" Power told Castroneves in a victory hug. "You're a legend."

Castroneves spent more than two decades driving for Team Penske and won three Indy 500s with the team. But he was eventually phased over to the sports car program, where he won the IMSA championship last season before Roger Penske shuttered the team and made the business decision to cut Castroneves loose.

Penske, now the owner of the speedway, embraced Castroneves in victory lane. Foyt welcomed the new member to the four-time winners club.

"He deserved it, he worked hard to get it and he finally got it," said Foyt, who was celebrating the 60th anniversary of his first Indy 500 victory. "It wasn't given to him and when someone works as hard as he did, I'm glad it happened for him."

After Castroneves, still the last driver to win consecutive Indianapolis 500s in 2001 and 2002, was cut loose by Penske, he insisted he was not done racing yet.

Michael Shank agreed.

Shank hired Castroneves for the Indy 500 to complement the one-car Meyer Shank Racing team. Maybe Castroneves would have a shot to win, but he'd also boost a team that needed some veteran leadership at one of the most challenging tracks in the world.

Castroneves was also part of the winning Rolex 24 Daytona sports car team in January, taking the prestigious sports car event for the first time.

"I've run two races this year and won two races, I'd say that's pretty good," said Castroneves, who noted this might be the year for aging veterans.

"I don't know if this is a good comparison, but Tom Brady won the Super Bowl and Phil Mickelson won the golf so here you go. The older guys are still kicking the younger guys' butts."

Brady, a seven-time Super Bowl champion, capped his first season with Tampa Bay by leading the Bucs to their first championship in 18 years at 43 years old. Mickelson at 50 became the oldest major winner last week.

Castroneves' win was a stark contrast to the recent theme of young drivers taking over IndyCar, which now has six different winners through six races this season. Three of them have been first-time winners and four are drivers aged 24 or younger.

Castroneves found himself in a closing duel with one of the young stars, but he passed Palou for good with two laps remaining and beat him by 0.4928 seconds for the victory.

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When he finally made it to the real victory lane — after a kiss from Mario Andretti, a hug from Johnny Rutherford, well wishes from just about every Indy 500 great — Castroneves sipped from his bottle of 2% milk and then dumped the rest over his head.

When he climbed into the back of a convertible for his true victory lap around the 2.5-mile speedway, most of the fans were still in the stands cheering Castroneves. The lap took more than 20 minutes to complete and the fans who stayed in the stands climbed the fence to cheer him as he passed.

"I thought the neatest thing riding around in that Camaro convertible with him was all the fans stayed, no one left. The place was packed," Shank said. "I got to physically see the history-in-the-making type of thing. I saw a thousand people climbing the fence all around the track. It was just so cool to be a part of. I believe Helio deserves to go for a fifth Indianapolis win. We're going to do everything we can to make that happen for him."

Former Penske teammate Simon Pagenaud, the 2019 Indy winner, was third, followed by Pato O'Ward, the 21-year-old budding IndyCar star.

Tulsa pastors honor 'holy ground' 100 years after massacre

By PETER SMITH Associated Press

TULSA, Okla. (AP) — When white attackers destroyed the prosperous Black neighborhood of Greenwood 100 years ago this week, they bypassed the original sanctuary of the First Baptist Church of North Tulsa.

By the church's own account, the attackers thought the brick veneer structure was too fine for a Black-owned church. The mob destroyed at least a half-dozen other churches while burning and leveling a 35-square-block neighborhood in one of the nation's deadliest spasms of racist violence. Estimates of the death toll range from dozens to 300.

On Sunday, First Baptist's current sanctuary throbbed with a high-decibel service as six congregations gathered to mark the centennial of the massacre and to honor the persistence of the Black church tradition in Greenwood, as shown in the pulsing worship, call-and-response preaching and heavy emphasis on social justice.

Greenwood is "holy ground," said the Rev. John Faison of Nashville, Tennessee, who preached at the service and is assistant to the bishop of social action for the Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship.

He said the centennial both honors the victims of the massacre and "celebrates the resilience and the resurgence of an amazing people of God."

Similar commemorations took place at many houses of worship throughout Tulsa and across Oklahoma on Sunday, a day ahead of the official centennial dates. More civic activities are planned for Monday and Tuesday, including a candlelight vigil and a visit by President Joe Biden.

The commission that organized the centennial designated Sunday as Unity Faith Day and provided a suggested worship guide that each congregation could adapt, including scriptures, prayers and the singing of "Amazing Grace."

Particularly at historically Black churches, speakers emphasized a call for financial reparations — both for the few centenarian survivors of the massacre and for the wider, economically struggling North Tulsa area, where the city's Black population is largely concentrated.

"The main problem is that our nation is always trying to have reconciliation without doing justice," Faison said. "Until repentance and repair are seen as inseparable, any attempt to reconcile will fail miserably."

The Rev. Robert Turner, pastor of nearby Vernon African Methodist Episcopal Church, which also traces its roots to before the massacre, echoed that sentiment in an interview before his own church's service.

"It's not a tragedy that's left in 1921. It's a tragedy that continues to live each day that lacks justice," said Turner, who protests weekly outside Tulsa City Hall, calling both for reparations and for a posthumous criminal investigation of the massacre's perpetrators.

Some churches on Sunday recognized 13 still-active congregations that operated in Greenwood in 1921, including many that had to rebuild their destroyed sanctuaries. Lists of the 13, under the heading "Faith Still Standing," are being distributed on posters and other merchandise.

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"We don't want it ever to happen again anywhere," said the Rev. Donna Jackson, an organizer of the recognition.

Some historically white churches also observed the centennial.

Pastor Deron Spoo of First Baptist Church of Tulsa, a Southern Baptist church less than two miles from the similarly named North Tulsa church, told his congregation that the massacre has been "a scar" on the city.

The church has a prayer room with an exhibit on the massacre, accompanied by prayers against racism. It includes quotations from white pastors in 1921 who faulted the Black community rather than the white attackers for the devastation and declared racial inequality to be "divinely ordained."

Spoo told congregants on Sunday: "While we don't know what the pastor 100 years ago at First Baptist Tulsa said, I want to be very clear: Racism has no place in the life of a Jesus follower."

Also recognizing the massacre was South Tulsa Baptist Church, a Southern Baptist congregation in a predominately white suburban part of Tulsa.

Pastor Eric Costanzo grew up in Tulsa but didn't learn of the massacre until attending seminary out of state. When he later saw an exhibit on the massacre at the Greenwood Cultural Center, he recognized its enormity. He later got involved with centennial planning, arranging for presentations at the church about the massacre and visits by church members to Greenwood.

In an interview, he said he hoped that the "bridge we created between our communities" remains active after the centennial to confront "a lot of the hard topics our city and culture faces."

The Rev. Zenobia Mayo, a retired educator and an ordained minister in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), is also working to continue those conversations after the centennial. She said her family never used to talk about the massacre, even though her great-great-uncle, renowned surgeon A.C. Jackson, was among its most prominent victims.

Elders in the family sought to protect their children from the trauma of racist violence, she said. "They felt not talking about it was the way to deal with it."

But now Mayo hopes to host discussions on racism at her home with mixed groups of white and Black guests.

"If it's going to be, let it begin with me," she said.

Texas GOP's strict voting bill on the verge of final vote

By PAUL J. WEBER and ACACIA CORONADO Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — The Texas Legislature was on the verge Sunday of signing off on some of the most restrictive voting measures in the U.S., putting the GOP on the brink of a major victory in their nationwide effort to tighten voting access following the 2020 election.

A vote in the state House expected later Sunday is the last barrier to sending Republican Gov. Greg Abbott a raft of election changes that would eliminate drive-thru voting, empower partisan poll watchers and impose new requirements in order to cast a ballot by mail in Texas, which already has some of toughest voting laws in the nation.

Democrats dug in for one last and longshot challenge on the House floor but had little means of stopping the bill. Hours earlier on Sunday, the Texas Senate muscled the bill through shortly after sunrise after bringing it up for a vote in the middle of the night on a Memorial Day weekend, when the state Capitol was all but empty.

Even before the final House vote, Democrats said they would try to block the measure in court.

"It's an awful bill," said Democratic state Rep. Jessica Gonzalez, the vice chairwoman of the House Elections Committee. "But I'm hopeful that this underhanded behavior, the way they undercut the process, will help us when we litigate this."

Under revisions during closed-door negotiations, Republicans added language that could make it easier for a judge to overturn an election and pushed back the start of Sunday voting, when many Black churchgoers head to the polls. The 67-page measure would also eliminate drive-thru voting and 24-hour polling centers, both of which Harris County, the state's largest Democratic stronghold, introduced last year.

Texas is the last big battleground in the GOP's nationwide efforts to tighten voting laws, driven by former

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President Donald Trump's false claims that the 2020 election was stolen from him. Georgia and Florida have also passed new voting restrictions, and President Joe Biden on Saturday unfavorably compared Texas' bill to election changes in those states as "an assault on democracy."

The vote in the Texas Senate came just a short time after a final version of the bill had been made public Saturday. Around midnight, Republicans wielded their majority to suspend rules that would normally prohibit taking a vote on a bill that had not been posted for 24 hours, which Democrats protested as a breach of protocol that denied them and the public time to review the language first.

The bill would newly empower partisan poll watchers by allowing them more access inside polling places and threatening criminal penalties against elections officials who restrict their movement. Republicans originally proposed giving poll watchers the right to take photos, but that language was removed from the final bill that lawmakers were set to vote on this weekend.

Another new provision could also make it easier to overturn an election in Texas, allowing for a judge to void an outcome if the number of fraudulent votes cast could change the result, regardless of whether it was proved that fraud affected the outcome.

Election officials would also face new criminal penalties, including felony charges for sending mail voting applications to people who did not request one. The Texas District and County Attorneys Association tweeted that it had counted in the bill at least 16 new, expanded or enhanced crimes related to elections.

GOP legislators are also moving to prohibit Sunday voting before 1 p.m., which critics called an attack on what is commonly known as "souls to the polls" — a get-out-the-vote campaign used by Black church congregations nationwide. The idea traces back to the civil rights movement. Democratic state Rep. Nicole Collier, chairwoman of the Texas Legislative Black Caucus, said the change is "going to disengage, disenfranchise those who use the souls to the polls opportunity."

Pressed on the Senate floor over why Sunday voting couldn't begin sooner, Republican Sen. Bryan Hughes said, "Election workers want to go to church, too."

Collier was one of three Democrats picked to negotiate the final version, none of whom signed their name to it. She said she saw a draft of the bill around 11 p.m. Friday — which was different than one she had received earlier that day — and was asked for her signature the next morning.

Major corporations, including Texas-based American Airlines and Dell, have warned that the measures could harm democracy and the economic climate. But Republicans shrugged off their objections, and in some cases, ripped business leaders for speaking out.

Texas already has some of the country's tightest voting restrictions and is regularly cited by nonpartisan groups as a state where it is especially hard to vote. It was one of the few states that did not make it easier to vote by mail during the pandemic.

The top Republican negotiators, Hughes and state Rep. Briscoe Cain, called the bill "one of the most comprehensive and sensible election reform bills" in Texas' history.

"Even as the national media minimizes the importance of election integrity, the Texas Legislature has not bent to headlines or corporate virtue signaling," they said in a joint statement.

Since Trump's defeat, at least 14 states have enacted more restrictive voting laws, according to the New York-based Brennan Center for Justice. It has also counted nearly 400 bills filed this year nationwide that would restrict voting.

Republican lawmakers in Texas have insisted that the changes are not a response to Trump's false claims of widespread fraud but are needed to restore confidence in the voting process. But doubts about the election's outcome have been fanned by some of the state's top GOP leaders, including Attorney General Ken Paxton, who led a failed lawsuit at the U.S. Supreme Court to try to overturn the election.

Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick, who chaired Trump's presidential campaign in Texas, offered a \$1 million reward to anyone who could produce evidence of voter fraud. Nonpartisan investigations of previous elections have found that voter fraud is exceedingly rare. State officials from both parties, including in Texas, as well as international observers have also said the 2020 election went well.

Canada lowers flags after discovery of bodies at school site

By ROB GILLIES Associated Press

TORONTO (AP) — Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau asked Sunday that flags at all federal buildings be flown at half-staff to honor more than 200 children whose remains have been found buried at what was once Canada's largest Indigenous residential school — one of the institutions that held children taken from families across the nation.

The Peace Tower flag on Parliament Hill in the nation's capital of Ottawa was among those lowered to half-staff.

"To honor the 215 children whose lives were taken at the former Kamloops residential school and all Indigenous children who never made it home, the survivors, and their families, I have asked that the Peace Tower and all federal buildings be flown at half-mast," Trudeau tweeted.

Mayors of communities across Ontario, including Toronto, Ottawa, Mississauga and Brampton, also ordered flags lowered to honor the children.

Chief Rosanne Casimir of the Tk'emlups te Secwepemc First Nation in British Columbia said the remains of 215 children, some as young as 3 years old, were confirmed last weekend with the help of ground-penetrating radar.

She described the discovery as "an unthinkable loss that was spoken about but never documented at the Kamloops Indian Residential School."

From the 19th century until the 1970s, more than 150,000 First Nations children were required to attend state-funded Christian schools as part of a program to assimilate them into Canadian society. They were forced to convert to Christianity and not allowed to speak their native languages. Many were beaten and verbally abused, and up to 6,000 are said to have died.

The Canadian government apologized in Parliament in 2008 and admitted that physical and sexual abuse in the schools was rampant. Many students recalled being beaten for speaking their native languages. They also lost touch with their parents and customs.

Indigenous leaders have cited that legacy of abuse and isolation as the root cause of epidemic rates of alcoholism and drug addiction on reservations.

Plans are underway to bring in forensics experts to identify and repatriate the remains of the children found buried on the site.

The Kamloops school operated between 1890 and 1969, when the federal government took over operations from the Catholic Church and operated it as a day school until it closed in 1978.

The National Truth and Reconciliation Commission has records of at least 51 children dying at the school between 1915 and 1963.

Perry Bellegarde, chief of the Assembly of First Nations, said while it is not new to find graves at former residential schools, it's always crushing to have that chapter's wounds exposed.

The chief of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, R. Stacey LaForme, wrote Trudeau on Saturday to ask the government to lower the flags and declare a national day of mourning.

"There is a lot more to be done but first and foremost, we need to do this to show love and respect to the 215 children, all of the children, and their families," LaForme said in a statement. "This should be a moment that the country never forgets."

Sol Mamakwa, an Indigenous opposition legislator who represents the Ontario riding of Kiiwetinoong, called on the province and Canadian government to work with all First Nations to look for remains at other defunct residential schools.

"It is a great open secret that our children lie on the properties of the former schools — an open secret that Canadians can no longer look away from," Mamakwa said. "In keeping with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Missing Children Projects, every school site must be searched for the graves of our ancestors."

Toronto Mayor John Tory said city flags would stay lowered for nine days — 215 hours — to represent each life.

"This sad story is shocking but not surprising to students of history, I don't think we know yet when these deaths occurred," said Nelson Wiseman, a political science professor at the University of Toronto. "Canada of yesteryear is not the Canada of today," he said.

Netanyahu could lose PM job as rivals attempt to join forces

By JOSEF FEDERMAN Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — A former ally of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Sunday said he would seek to form a coalition government with the Israeli leader's opponents, taking a major step toward ending the rule of the longtime premier.

The dramatic announcement by Naftali Bennett, leader of the small hardline Yamina party, set the stage for a series of steps that could push Netanyahu and his dominant Likud party into the opposition in the coming week.

While Bennett and his new partners, headed by opposition leader Yair Lapid, still face some obstacles, the sides appeared to be serious about reaching a deal and ending the deadlock that has plunged the country into four elections in the past two years.

"It's my intention to do my utmost in order to form a national unity government along with my friend Yair Lapid, so that, God willing, together we can save the country from a tailspin and return Israel to its course," Bennett said.

The pair have until Wednesday to complete a deal in which each is expected to serve two years as prime minister in a rotation deal, with Bennett holding the job first. Lapid's Yesh Atid party said negotiating teams were to meet later Sunday.

Bennett, a former top aide to Netanyahu who has held senior Cabinet posts, shares the prime minister's hard-line ideology. He is a former leader of the West Bank settlement movement and heads a small party whose base includes religious and nationalist Jews. Yet he has had a strained and complicated relationship with his one-time mentor due to personal differences.

Bennett said there was no feasible way after the deadlocked March 23 election to form a right-wing government favored by Netanyahu. He said another election would yield the same results and said it was time to end the cycle.

"A government like this will succeed only if we work together as a group," he said. He said everyone "will need to postpone fulfilling part of their dreams. We will focus on what can be done, instead of fighting all day on what's impossible."

If Bennett and Lapid and their other partners can wrap up a deal, it would end, at least for the time being, the record-setting tenure of Netanyahu, the most dominant figure in Israeli politics over the past three decades. Netanyahu has served as prime minister for the past 12 years and also held an earlier term in the late 1990s.

In his own televised statement, Netanyahu accused Bennett of betraying the Israeli right wing and urged nationalist politicians not to join what he called a "leftist government."

"A government like this is a danger to the security of Israel, and is also a danger to the future of the state," he said.

Despite his electoral dominance, Netanyahu has become a polarizing figure since he was indicted on charges of fraud, breach of trust and accepting bribes in late 2019. Each of the past four elections was seen as a referendum on Netanyahu's fitness to rule, and each ended in deadlock.

Netanyahu is desperate to stay in power while he is on trial. He has used his office as a stage to rally his base and lash out against police, prosecutors and the media.

In order to form a government, a party leader must secure the support of a 61-seat majority in the 120-seat Knesset, or parliament. Because no single party controls a majority on its own, coalitions are usually built with smaller partners. Thirteen parties of various sizes are in the current parliament.

As leader of the largest party, Netanyahu was given the first opportunity by the country's figurehead president to form a coalition. But he was unable to secure a majority with his traditional religious and

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nationalist allies.

Netanyahu even attempted to court a small Islamist Arab party but was thwarted by a small ultranationalist party with a racist anti-Arab agenda. Although Arabs make up some 20% of Israel's population, an Arab party has never before sat in an Israeli coalition government.

After Netanyahu's failure to form a government, Lapid was then given four weeks to cobble together a coalition. He has until Wednesday to complete the task.

While Bennett's Yamina party controls just seven seats in parliament, he has emerged as a kingmaker of sorts by providing the necessary support to secure a majority. If he is successful, his party would be the smallest to lead an Israeli government.

Lapid already faced a difficult challenge, given the broad range of parties in the anti-Netanyahu bloc that have little in common. They include dovish left-wing parties, a pair of right-wing nationalist parties, including Bennett's Yamina, and most likely the Islamist United Arab List.

Lapid's task was made even more difficult after war broke out with Hamas militants in the Gaza Strip on May 10. His coalition talks were put on hold during the 11 days of fighting.

But with Wednesday's deadline looming, negotiations have kicked into high gear. Lapid has reached coalition deals with three other parties so far. If he finalizes a deal with Bennett, the remaining partners are expected to quickly fall into place.

They would then have roughly one week to present their coalition to parliament for a formal vote of confidence allowing it to take office.

Yohanan Plesner, president of the Israel Democracy Institute, said Netanyahu will try to undermine those efforts until the end.

Netanyahu's main strategy, he said, would be to try to appeal to hard-liners in both Bennett's party and New Hope, another hard-line party led by a former Netanyahu confidant, to withdraw their support for the new coalition. A defection of just one or two lawmakers could prevent Lapid from mustering a majority and force another election.

"Anything might happen," Plesner said. "I would wait for the final vote to go through."

Even if Lapid and Bennett manage to put together a government, Netanyahu is unlikely to disappear, Plesner said.

Netanyahu could remain as opposition leader, working to exploit the deep ideological differences among his opponents to cause the coalition to fracture.

"History teaches us it would be unwise to write him off," he said.

EXPLAINER: How Texas Republicans aim to make voting harder

By ACACIA CORONADO Report for America/Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Texas took a major step Sunday toward becoming the nation's largest state where the GOP is making voting harder following the 2020 elections, with the Senate approving a bill that would empower poll watchers, create criminal penalties and add new restrictions on where, when and how to vote.

Advocates say the changes would disproportionately affect minorities and people with disabilities.

The legislation still has two remaining steps before it becomes the law in Texas: a final vote of approval in the GOP-controlled House that was expected Sunday, which would send the bill to Republican Gov. Greg Abbott, who is expected to sign off.

America's largest red state already has some of the tightest voting restrictions in the country and is regularly cited by nonpartisan groups as a state where voting is especially difficult. It was one of the few states that did not make it easier to vote by mail during the coronavirus pandemic, instead sending droves of voters to the polls to cast their ballots in-person.

Senate approval of the wide-ranging legislation happened at 6 a.m. Sunday, hours after a final version of the 67-page bill was released from private negotiations on Saturday. Democrats questioned Republicans about the legislation for eight hours in their final attempts to block the changes from becoming law.

The timing gives the public little time to review — or protest — the overhaul during the Memorial Day

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holiday weekend, and the legislative session ends by law Monday.

So what's included in the planned changes and how did they come about? Here are some details:

WHAT THE LEGISLATION MEANS FOR VOTERS AND ELECTION OFFICIALS

The GOP legislation — known as Senate Bill 7 — proposes cutting back on early voting, banning drive-thru voting and making it a felony for elected voting officials who send unsolicited mail ballot applications to Texas voters. Harris County — which includes Houston, the nation's fourth-largest city, and is a Democratic stronghold — introduced drive-thru voting for November's election but courts blocked election officials from sending mail voting applications to all registered voters.

Final wording of the legislation also adds a voter ID requirement to mail ballot applications, requiring voters to submit a driver's license or social security number.

Early voting on Sundays also could not begin before 1 p.m., which Democrats say would depress turnout among Black churchgoers who cast their ballot after morning worship services in "souls to the polls" efforts.

Additionally, the bill would require people who are helping voters to disclose their relationship to the voter, whether they were paid to help and whether the voter is eligible to receive assistance and could face a state jail felony for violations

But partisan poll watchers — looking to raise concerns to their political party — would have more access and election workers could be charged with a crime if they block a poll watcher's view.

"It is a solution in search of a problem," said Democratic state Rep. Nicole Collier, chairwoman of the Texas Legislative Black Caucus. "I don't know what they are trying to address. They won the election, I don't know where the voter fraud is occurring."

The answer from Republican state Rep. Briscoe Cain, one of the lead authors of the bills: "We don't need to wait for bad things to happen to protect the security of the election."

HOW DID THE LEGISLATION GET HERE?

Republican lawmakers in Texas are looking to add restrictions similar to those their GOP colleagues in Florida, Georgia and Arizona made into law using former President Donald Trump's unsubstantiated claims of election fraud to justify new rules in the name of election security. (Elections experts say election fraud is exceedingly rare.)

In Texas, the GOP has insisted that the changes are needed to restore confidence in the voting process, and not a response to Trump's false assertions. Republicans in Texas continued seeing their margins of victory shrink in November but still won up and down the ballot.

Originally, GOP members of each chamber had submitted their own omnibus voting legislation just before the state's filing deadline. Sunday's combined legislation added 12 additional pages of new restrictions. The latest version also deleted language that would allow election officials to have poll watchers removed if they breach the peace.

PROBLEMS WITH TRANSPARENCY

The final version of the bill was hashed out behind closed doors by a 10-person, bipartisan committee of lawmakers from both chambers before it was sent back to the full House and Senate for final votes. Known as a conference committee, the panel is majority Republican, so the party that proposed the restrictions remained in control.

Voting rights advocates were alarmed that the committee met without making its negotiations public. And some Democratic members of the committee said they had little to no input on the final contents of the bill.

Risky, impatient climbers bring danger to US highest peak

By JEFFREY COLLINS Associated Press

Rangers who keep an eye on North America's highest mountain peak say impatient and inexperienced climbers are taking more risks and endangering themselves and other climbers after a year off because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Denali in southern Alaska is 20,310 feet (6,190 meters) above sea level and requires a level of expertise

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and acclimation to high altitudes not needed for climbing most peaks in the U.S.

"We have seen a disturbing amount of overconfidence paired with inexperience in the Alaska Range," the National Park Service wrote in a statement issued Thursday. The remoteness and extreme weather in Alaska pose extra risks, even for climbers may have a good deal of experience at elevations up to 14,000 feet in the Lower 48.

After reporting no deaths in 2018 and 2019, at least two people have already died on the mountain in 2021. Two others were seriously injured, authorities said.

Earlier this month, a skier from Colorado died after falling into a crevasse. A climber from Idaho was killed by a falling block of glacier ice, rangers reported.

The rangers issued their statement after a Canadian climber was seriously injured in a nearly 1,000-foot (305 meters) fall. He was not wearing ropes. Other climbers reported the fall, and a nearby helicopter doing glacier surveys was able to rescue the man, park officials said.

In recent years, rangers said they have seen more climbers try to make Denali's summit by climbing the 7,000 feet (2,134 meters) from the final base camp to the top in one day, which is almost impossible except for the most experienced climbers.

"Exhaustion, untested physiological response to high altitude, rapidly changing weather and insufficient gear on such a long push are all factors we have seen contribute to injuries and deaths," the Park Service statement said.

Experts recommend taking 17 to 21 days to climb Denali. That includes rest days and extra days to wait out extreme weather. Many expeditions get "desperation, impatience and summit fever" when they are running out of days and take risks, rangers said.

Officials at Denali also are seeing people leave their original climbing groups after reaching the final base camp at 14,000 feet (4,267 meters) when the groups are reluctant to go for the summit. Instead, the climbers join other groups or individuals they just met.

Sometimes those people get too sick to keep going and are crammed into tents with other more prepared climbers, using their water and fuel. "A number of climbing teams have had their own summit bids disrupted or ruined by the need to care for these climbers," the statement said.

The statement also reminded climbers that the National Park Service rescues people only when their lives, limbs or eyesight are at risk.

"Anything that we deem falls outside these categories, we will leave you to figure out on your own, and this year we have already turned down rescue requests that don't meet these criteria," they said.

The Park Service limits the number of people who can climb Denali to less than 1,500 per year. In 2019, 726 people made the summit, according to the agency.

The busiest time for climbing Denali is May and June. The cold weather is a problem in the spring, and storms become more frequent in the summer.

The forecast for the summit Sunday called for a 40% chance of snow with temperatures from minus 10 to 0 Fahrenheit (-23 to -18 Celsius) and winds up to 35 mph (56 kph), according to the National Weather Service.

Fueling box office rebound, 'Quiet Place' opens with \$58.5M

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Moviegoing increasingly looks like it didn't die during the pandemic. It just went into hibernation.

John Krasinski's thriller sequel "A Quiet Place Part II" opened over the Memorial Day weekend to a pandemic-best \$48.4 million, according to studio estimates Sunday. Including the Monday holiday, the studio forecasts the film will gross \$58.5 million in North America. It added another \$22 million in ticket sales overseas.

The film's performance cheered a movie industry that has been punished and transformed by the pandemic. Paramount Pictures' "A Quiet Place Part II," which was on the cusp of opening in March 2021 before

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theaters shut, was the first big film this year — and one of the only larger budget COVID-era releases beside Christopher Nolan's "Tenet" — to open exclusively in theaters.

Chris Aronson, distribution chief for Paramount, called the opening "an unqualified success."

"It's a huge sigh of a relief and a sense of optimism for sure," Aronson said. "Movies, moviegoing, movie theaters aren't dead. Yes, they've been threatened but they're proving once again that they're resilient and that people do want to have that communal experience."

Many studios have trotted out hybrid release plans during the pandemic, debuting films simultaneously in the home. The Walt Disney Co. did that this weekend with its live-action PG-13 Cruella De Vil prequel, "Cruella," making it available to Disney+ subscribers for \$30. In theaters, it grossed \$21.3 million, Disney said, and an estimated \$26.4 million over the four-day weekend. "Cruella" also added \$16.1 million in 29 international territories. Disney didn't say how much the film made on the company's streaming platform.

"A Quiet Place II" will also turn to streaming after 45 days in theaters when it becomes available on Paramount+. One clear result of the pandemic is that the theatrical window has shrunk, probably permanently. Three months was once the customary length of a movie's run in theaters. The year's previous best debut belonged to Warner Bros.' "Godzilla vs. Kong," which opened with \$32.2 million, or \$48.5 million over its first five days, while simultaneously streaming on HBO Max.

The contrasting release strategies between "A Quiet Place Part II" and "Cruella" offered a test case for Hollywood. How much does a day-and-date release cost a movie like "Cruella" in ticket sales? Is it worth it? Without knowing how much "Cruella" benefitted Disney+, a true comparison isn't possible. But the strong returns for the theater-only "A Quiet Place Part II" are telling, says Paul Dergarabedian, senior media analyst for data firm Comscore. He called it a "pivotal weekend" for the movie industry that proved predictions of the movie theater's demise "flat-out wrong."

"That 'Quiet Place Part II' did so well makes a strong case that a theatrical-first release for a big movie is the way to go," Dergarabedian said. "This is the best possible news for an industry that's been dealing with probably the most profoundly challenging chapter in the history of the movie theater."

The debut of "A Quiet Place Part II" was much watched throughout Hollywood as the kickoff to its delayed summer movie season. After largely sitting out the pandemic, or diverting to streaming platforms, a lineup of blockbusters are again queuing up. On tap are Warner Bros.' "In the Heights," Universals' "F9" and Disney's "Black Widow."

Last week, Universal Pictures' ninth installment in the "Fast & Furious" franchise, "F9," opened with \$162 million in ticket sales in eight international markets, and \$135 million in China alone. In its second weekend, "F9," which opens in North America on June 25, raced toward \$230 million worldwide.

"A Quiet Place Part II" had already had its red-carpet premiere in March last year, and spent some of its marketing budget. But it opened remarkably in line with predictions of how many tickets it would sell before the onset of the pandemic. In the intervening months, Paramount sold off many of its films to streamers — "Coming 2 America," "The Trial of the Chicago 7" — but Krasinski and the studio felt strongly that the hushed intensity of "A Quiet Place Part II" worked best on the big screen.

In an interview ahead of the film's release, Krasinski said a theatrical release was "non-negotiable." And Krasinski worked hard to stoke excitement, traveling the country in the week leading up to release to surprise moviegoers. Still, given the circumstances, he had little idea whether audiences would come out.

"As bizarre as the entire year has been is how bizarre whatever opening weekend is," Krasinski said. "I don't really know what it is anymore."

In the end, "A Quiet Place Part II" performed a lot like how the first one did. That 2018 hit, which ultimately grossed \$340 million globally on a \$17 million budget, launched with \$50.2 million in North American ticket sales. Sequels usually do better than the original but "Part II" had far more challenges due to pandemic.

Rich Gelfond, chief executive of IMAX, where "A Quiet Place Part II" earned \$4.1 million domestically, called the film "the first domestic release this year to cross the threshold from 'great opening weekend given the pandemic' to 'great opening weekend, period.'"

Memorial Day weekend, usually one of the busiest for theaters, still didn't look like it normally does at

the movies. Total box office exceeded \$80 million but that's about a third of the holiday weekend's normal business. Last Memorial Day, when nearly all operating theaters were drive-ins, ticket sales amounted to \$842,000, according to Comscore.

Many theaters, particularly in New York and Los Angeles, are still operating with social distancing measures. But guidelines are thawing. Last week, the nation's top theater chains — AMC, Regal, Cinemark — said they would no longer require vaccinated moviegoers to wear face masks.

Ex-'Tarzan' actor among 7 plane crash victims in Tennessee

SMYRNA, Tenn. (AP) — Investigators on Sunday continued searching for the bodies of seven people believed killed in the crash a day earlier of a small jet into a Tennessee lake, including an actor who portrayed Tarzan in a 1990s television series.

Rutherford County Fire Rescue Capt. John Ingle said in a statement Sunday that recovery efforts were ongoing at Percy Priest Lake near Smyrna. He said efforts also were focused on examining a half mile-wide debris field in the lake.

County officials identified the victims in a news release late Saturday as Brandon Hannah, Gwen S. Lara, William J. Lara, David L. Martin, Jennifer J. Martin, Jessica Walters and Jonathan Walters, all of Brentwood, Tennessee. Their names were released after family members had been notified.

Gwen Shamblin Lara founded the Remnant Fellowship Church in Brentwood in 1999 and wrote a faith-based weight loss book. Her husband of nearly three years, known as Joe Lara, was an actor featured in the TV series "Tarzan: The Epic Adventures."

The Federal Aviation Administration said the Cessna C501 plane was heading from nearby Smyrna Rutherford County Airport to Palm Beach International Airport when it crashed Saturday morning. Authorities did not release registration information for the plane.

Smyrna is located about 20 miles (32 kilometers) southeast of Nashville. Percy Priest Lake is a reservoir created by the J. Percy Priest Dam. It is a popular spot for boating and fishing.

"With dive teams in the water, we are strongly urging civilian boaters to stay away from the public safety boats," Ingle said.

The National Transportation Safety Board had a lead investigator at the site.

South Africa returns to stricter lockdown, virus 'surging'

By GERALD IMRAY Associated Press

CAPE TOWN, South Africa (AP) — South African President Cyril Ramaphosa announced Sunday that his country will return to stricter lockdown measures in the face of a sharp rise in COVID-19 cases that indicate the virus is "surging again" in Africa's worst-affected nation.

Positive cases in South Africa in the past seven days were 31% higher than the week before, and 66% higher than the week before that, Ramaphosa said in a live TV address. He said some parts of the country, including the commercial hub Johannesburg and the capital city Pretoria, were now in "a third wave."

"We do not yet know how severe this wave will be or for how long it will last," Ramaphosa said.

In response, Ramaphosa said that from Monday the nighttime curfew would be extended by an hour to start at 11 p.m. until 4 a.m. A maximum of 100 people would be allowed at indoor social gatherings and no more than 250 at an outdoors gathering. The number of people attending funerals will be limited to 100 people and after-funeral gatherings were banned completely, Ramaphosa said. Nonessential businesses must close by 10 p.m.

"We have tended to become complacent," Ramaphosa said, warning virus infections were "surging again" at a time when the country moves into its winter months and people were more likely to gather together indoors, likely further increasing infections.

South Africa's decision to go back to a stricter lockdown reinforces — as the crisis in India has already done so starkly — how the global pandemic is far from over.

"We have seen in other countries the tragic consequences of leaving the virus to spread unchecked,"

Ramaphosa said. "We cannot let our guard down."

South Africa has more than 1.6 million confirmed COVID-19 cases and more than 56,000 deaths, more than 30% of the cases and 40% of the deaths recorded by all of Africa's 54 countries, according to the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. South Africa recorded 4,515 new cases over the past 24 hours and Ramaphosa said the "positivity rate" among tests conducted was now "a cause for concern."

South Africa had been under lockdown level one, the lowest of its five levels, but was now reverting to an "adjusted level two," Ramaphosa announced. Authorities did stop short of reimposing the strict measures like limits on people's movements during the day and a ban on the sales of alcohol and tobacco products that were in place at times last year.

South Africa has seen two previous surges in infections, the first in the middle of last year and a second, much worse wave in December and January, when the emergence of a variant pushed infections and deaths to higher levels than the first surge. The virus was currently following "the same trajectory" as those waves, Ramaphosa said.

Experts have warned that this wave, arriving with the Southern Hemisphere winter, might be even worse.

The surge in cases also cast more attention on South Africa's lagging vaccine rollout. Only around 1.5% of the country's 60 million people have received a vaccine. Health workers were the No. 1 priority but less than 500,000 of the 1.2 million health workers have been vaccinated with the Johnson & Johnson one-dose shot. South Africa only began vaccinating its elderly citizens two weeks ago. In total, 963,000 South Africans had received a vaccine by Sunday, the government said, although half of those have only received the first of two required doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine.

South Africa has "secured" more than 50 million vaccines, Ramaphosa said, but currently has only 1.3 million doses in the country that are ready to be rolled out. More Pfizer-BioNTech doses are expected to arrive next week, and weekly after that, he said. South Africa hopes to vaccinate around 40 million people by the end of the year, a target that looks increasingly unlikely.

Swiss motorcyclist Dupasquier dies following Moto3 crash

FLORENCE, Italy (AP) — Swiss motorcycle rider Jason Dupasquier has died following a crash during Moto3 qualifying for the Italian Grand Prix, the Careggi Hospital in Florence announced Sunday. He was 19.

"Despite the best efforts of circuit medical staff and all those subsequently attending to the Swiss rider, the hospital has announced that Dupasquier has sadly succumbed to his injuries," MotoGP said in a statement.

Dupasquier was involved in an accident with Ayumu Sasaki and Jeremy Alcoba toward the end of Saturday's session, which was immediately red-flagged.

Dupasquier appeared to fall and was then hit by his own motorbike and that of Sasaki, while a visibly shocked Alcoba later said on television that he thought he had also gone over the Swiss rider's legs.

He was treated on the track for approximately 30 minutes before a helicopter landed and airlifted him to a hospital in Florence.

Dupasquier's team, Prustel GP, did not take part in Sunday's race, while his fellow Swiss rider Tom Luthi pulled out of the Moto2 contest.

Dupasquier was in his second season in MotoGP's lightweight class and was in the top 10 in the overall standings heading into the weekend.

The MotoGP grid staged a one-minute silence ahead of Sunday's 23-lap race, which was won by world championship leader Fabio Quartararo.

Following his victory, the French rider stopped at the scene of Dupasquier's accident before pointing to the sky. He then waved a Swiss flag on the podium in Dupasquier's honour.

"It was tough because when you do the one-minute silence, the emotion is coming really quick and it is difficult to stay focused," said the 22-year-old Quartararo. "We got the win and that one was for Jason and his family."

Tributes flooded in from other riders, as well as from across the world of motorsport.

Formula One tweeted: "No words can ever describe the pain of such a loss. Our thoughts are with Jason's

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family, friends and the entire MotoGP community.”

Many F1 teams and drivers also took to social media to express their condolences.

Ferrari's Charles Leclerc, who secured pole position at last weekend's Monaco Grand Prix, tweeted: "Rest in peace, Jason."

Tulsa Race Massacre centennial events proceed amid hiccups

By AARON MORRISON Associated Press

TULSA, Okla. (AP) — Joi McCondichie is a native of this city, but her life and career in public education kept her away from home for decades. When she returned to Tulsa from Los Angeles with her then-teenage son, she moved into a home just off of the Osage Prairie Trail on the city's north side.

It was on this trail that thousands of Black Tulsans fled the white mob that leveled their community on May 31-June 1, 1921, in the calamity that came to be known as the Tulsa Race Massacre.

"I believe God led me here because he had a task for me," McCondichie said.

McCondichie planned a march this weekend to memorialize those who ran from what is considered one of the worst and deadliest acts of racial violence in American history.

That march is just one of an array of events, culminating Tuesday with a visit by President Joe Biden, who is expected to join local leaders in marking the occasion.

The weekend was to include a keynote speech from former Georgia gubernatorial candidate and voting rights advocate Stacey Abrams and a performance by singer John Legend at Tulsa's ONEOK Field in the historic Greenwood district. But organizers canceled the event on Thursday, citing "unexpected circumstances with entertainers and speakers."

Representatives for Abrams and Legend did not respond to requests for comment.

Law enforcement organizations around the U.S. received a bulletin this week from the Department of Homeland Security warning of the potential for targeted violence at the commemoration of the Tulsa massacre, according to a federal law enforcement official.

The official, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss a bulletin that was not publicly released, said authorities don't have credible intelligence about any specific plot to target the Tulsa events. But the alert was issued given the nature of the commemoration and the "volatile threat environment."

McCondichie said her late grandmother, Eldoris McCondichie, was among the survivors in 1921 who streaming out of Greenwood, also known as Black Wall Street, the bustling city within a city that was the picture of Black wealth and entrepreneurial success.

On Tuesday morning, Joi McCondichie's "A Century Walk" will retrace Greenwood residents' escape. The walk will start along a 1.5 mile stretch of abandoned railroad tracks near Greenwood and Archer avenues. And then the walkers will move north onto Osage Prairie Trail until they reach 56th Street, between Peoria Avenue and Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, where a community celebration awaits.

"I thought this would be a beautiful way to commemorate the ancestors by having or attempting to walk a mile in their shoes," Joi McCondichie said.

Other events plan to feature the last three known living massacre survivors -- 106-year-old Lessie Benningfield Randle, 107-year-old Viola Fletcher, and 100-year-old Hughes Van Ellis. Last week, the three gave testimony in a panel about the massacre in the U.S. House of Representatives.

"They will come down Black Wall Street, the historic Black Wall Street, in a horse and carriage," said Tiffany Crutcher, organizer of the Black Wall Street Legacy Festival, which is independent of the city's official commemorations.

"They'll lead us into what we feel will be a very powerful, powerful weekend to show deference and honor to the lives that were lost and the descendants and survivors who were still living," Crutcher said.

Other commemoration programs include a Greenwood Art Project art installation and the dedication of a prayer wall at Vernon AME Church, one of the few Greenwood structures that survived the massacre.

Following the official massacre commemorations, the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre Centennial Commission on Wednesday will open Greenwood Rising, a \$30 million history center and museum. The commission

says it honors the legacy of Black Wall Street with exhibits depicting the Greenwood district before and after the massacre.

"When you go into Greenwood Rising, we will actually have railroad tracks that you walk across" to remember that Black and white Tulsa used to be divided by railroad tracks, said state Sen. Kevin Matthews, who chairs the massacre centennial commission. The history center is located in his legislative district, at Greenwood and Archer avenues.

Republican Mayor G.T. Bynum, who is white, said the weekend's events are critical to a reconciliation process sorely needed in the city.

"I think the greatest mistake that could come out of this centennial commemoration is if people look at it and think, 'Well, that's just something that happened a hundred years ago,' and not think about how it relates to America today," Bynum said.

Vets return to Memorial Day traditions as pandemic eases

By PHILIP MARCELO Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — A pair of military vets navigate the hilly, meandering paths in a historic cemetery in Boston, searching out soldiers' graves and planting American flags in front of them.

About 10 miles away, scores of other vets and volunteers do the same, placing more than 37,000 small flags on the downtown Boston Common — a sea of red, white and blue meant to symbolize all the Massachusetts soldiers killed in battle since the Revolutionary War. It's an annual tradition that returns in full this year after being significantly scaled back in 2020 because of the pandemic.

In Boston and elsewhere, this holiday weekend will feel something closer to Memorial Days of old, as COVID-19 restrictions are fully lifted in many places.

"This Memorial Day almost has a different, better feeling to it," said Craig DeOld, a 50-year-old retired captain in the Army Reserve, as he took a breather from his flag duties at the Fairview Cemetery earlier this week. "We're breathing a sigh of relief that we've overcome another struggle, but we're also now able to return to what this holiday is all about — remembering our fallen comrades."

Around the nation, Americans will be able to pay tribute to fallen troops in ways that were impossible last year, when virus restrictions were in effect in many places. It will also be a time to remember the tens of thousands of veterans who died from COVID-19 and recommit to vaccinating those who remain reluctant.

Art delaCruz, a 53-year-old retired Navy commander in Los Angeles leads the Veterans Coalition for Vaccination, said his group has been encouraging inoculated veterans to volunteer at vaccine sites to dispel myths and help assuage concerns, many of which are also shared by current service members.

"We understand it's a personal choice, so we try to meet people where they are," said delaCruz, who is also president of Team Rubicon, a disaster-response nonprofit made up of military veterans.

There's no definitive tally for coronavirus deaths or vaccinations among American military vets, but Department of Veterans Affairs data shows more than 12,000 have died and more than 2.5 million have been inoculated against COVID-19 out of the roughly 9 million veterans enrolled in the agency's programs.

The isolation of the pandemic has also been particularly hard on veterans, many of whom depend on kinship with fellow service members to cope with wartime trauma, says Jeremy Butler, a 47-year-old Navy Reserve officer in New York who heads the advocacy group Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America.

"We're reuniting now, but it's been an extremely challenging year," he said. "To have those connections cut off — the counseling sessions, the VA appointments, social events with other vets — those are so important to maintaining mental health."

But for the families of veterans who survived the horrors of war, only to be felled by COVID-19, Memorial Day can reopen barely healed wounds.

In western Massachusetts, Susan Kenney says the death of her 78-year-old father last April from the virus still remains raw.

Charles Lowell, an Air Force veteran who served during the Vietnam War, was among 76 residents of the Holyoke Soldiers' Home who died in one of America's deadliest coronavirus outbreaks last year in

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a long-term care facility. A memorial service was held at the home earlier this week, and the names of residents who died over the past calendar year were read aloud.

Kenney, who has been a vocal advocate for reforming the troubled home, says there are still lingering questions about who else should be held accountable, even as top officials at the state-run facility face criminal negligence and abuse charges and federal and state agencies launch investigations.

"I've been reliving this for a whole year," she said. "At every milestone. Veterans Day. His birthday. His death anniversary. Everything is a constant reminder of what happened. It's so painful to think about."

For other families, Memorial Day will be as it ever was, a day to remember loved ones killed in war.

In Virginia, Willie Ransom, a 74-year-old Vietnam War vet, said his family will hold a modest service at the grave of his youngest son.

Air Force Maj. Charles Ransom was among eight U.S. airmen killed in Afghanistan when an Afghan military pilot opened fire at the Kabul airport in 2011. The American Legion post in Midlothian, Virginia, that the elder Ransom once helped lead is now named in his honor.

The Powhatan resident says a silver lining this year is that the country is poised to end the war that claimed his 31-year-old son and the lives of more than 2,200 other American fighters. President Joe Biden has promised to end the nation's longest conflict by Sept. 11, the anniversary of the 2001 terror attacks that launched the war.

"It's the best decision we could make," Ransom said. "It's become like Vietnam. They don't want us there. We should have been out of there years ago."

Back in Boston, DeOld will be thinking about his father, an Army vet wounded in a grenade attack in Vietnam.

Louis DeOld returned home with a Purple Heart and went on to become a police officer in New Jersey, but the physical and mental scars of war persisted long after, his son said. He died in 2017 at the age of 70.

On Memorial Day, DeOld will gather with fellow vets at the VFW post in the city's Dorchester neighborhood that he commands.

They will lay a wreath by the American flag out front and then grill burgers out back. It will be the first large social event hosted by the post since the pandemic virtually shuttered the hall more than a year ago.

"I hope it's nice," DeOld said. "I hope folks linger. Families and friends gather. Good camaraderie. The way it should be."

White House gives GOP 1 week to reach deal on infrastructure

By HOPE YEN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg said Sunday time is running short for a bipartisan deal on infrastructure, indicating that President Joe Biden will look to act without Republican support if there is no consensus when Congress returns from its Memorial Day break.

"By the time that they return, which is June 7, just a week from tomorrow, we need a clear direction," Buttigieg said. "The president keeps saying inaction is not an option. And time is not unlimited here." He said the American people "expect us to do something."

Biden plans to meet with lead Republican negotiator, Sen. Shelley Moore Capito of West Virginia, this coming week and says he remains open to hearing from other GOP senators who are working on different proposals. But Biden has been eying the dwindling timeline for a deal, with an early June hearing scheduled on a House transportation bill that is widely seen as a building block for the big package he favors.

Democratic senators also plan on moving forward on a sweeping infrastructure package "with or without the support of Republican senators," Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., wrote to Democrats on Friday. Biden had originally set a Memorial Day deadline for reaching a deal before he let that deadline slip back.

The two sides remain far apart. Republican senators last week outlined a \$928 billion infrastructure proposal as a counteroffer to Biden's \$1.7 trillion proposal, and they said they would not go along with his plans to raise the corporate tax from 21% to 28% to pay for new spending.

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Republicans want to shift unspent COVID-19 relief dollars to help cover the costs, a nonstarter for many Democrats and a proposal that Biden is finding unworkable, a White House adviser told The Associated Press on Friday.

On Sunday, Capito said she remained hopeful the two sides can move closer to agreement.

"I think we can get to real compromise, absolutely, because we're both still in the game," she said. "I think the president told me himself that let's get this done. We realize this is not easy. I think we bring every idea that's on the table into the negotiations to see how we can achieve this and get it across the threshold."

Capito said Republicans still disagree with Biden on what should be considered "infrastructure," saying it should focus on the "physical core idea" such as roads, bridges, ports and even newer things such as broadband, but not elder care as Biden proposes. But Capito said that she believes his "heart" is in the bipartisan talks, and that there remains a "hunger for bipartisanship."

"I think that's what we see and, in fact, we are inching towards one another," she insisted.

Buttigieg said while Republicans "philosophically seem to agree that trillion-dollar investments are the kind of thing we need to be doing right now," there is "a lot of daylight" between the two sides, such as investments to boost the electric vehicle market to shift Americans away from gas-powered cars to stem greenhouse gas emissions.

The GOP plan amounts to about \$250 billion in new spending, far from the president's approach. Biden reduced his \$2.3 trillion opening bid to \$1.7 trillion in earlier negotiations.

"I think we are getting pretty close to a fish-or-cut-bait moment," Buttigieg said Sunday. "We believe in this process, but also very much agree that this can't go on forever."

Buttigieg appeared on CNN's "State of the Union," ABC's "This Week," and "Fox News Sunday." Capito also appeared on Fox.

Conservatives aim at Census' method for uncounted households

By MIKE SCHNEIDER and NICHOLAS RICCARDI Associated Press

When U.S. Census Bureau workers couldn't find out any information about some households after repeatedly mailing them questionnaire reminders and sending census takers to knock on their doors, the statisticians turned to an obscure, last-resort statistical technique known as "imputation."

Less than 1% of households were counted using the technique during the 2020 census. But some conservative political groups are questioning it, potentially laying a foundation for legal challenges to the data that will ultimately be used for drawing congressional and legislative districts.

Imputation involves using information about neighbors with similar characteristics to fill in head counts or demographic characteristics for households lacking data. For instance, a rowhouse with no information may be counted as having two people if a neighboring rowhouse is occupied by two people. The technique tends to be utilized in hard-to-count places, often with racial and ethnic minorities, where people haven't answered the census questionnaire and could otherwise go uncounted.

"It makes the overall dataset — or census in this case — more accurate than leaving the gaps blank," Pat Cantwell, a bureau official, said in a blog post earlier this year. "By using imputation, we fill in what we don't know, using information we do know."

The focus for conservatives is on how this technique was applied to college dorms, nursing homes, prisons and other places where people live in groups. These residents were particularly difficult to count during the 2020 census because the pandemic sent college students fleeing campuses and put nursing homes in lockdown. In response, the Census Bureau unexpectedly decided to use the technique for group housing, where about 3% of the U.S. population lives.

In a recent essay, Adam Korzeniewski, a controversial former political appointee assigned to a top position at the Census Bureau during the Trump administration, speculated that the technique favors liberal states over conservative states.

As applied to group housing, it favored the Northeast with its density of college campuses and stricter lockdowns during the pandemic, at the expense of states like Arizona, Florida and Texas, he said in an

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essay for The Claremont Institute, a conservative think tank.

Korzeniewski called the technique "the most grievous" issue involving the 2020 census, which determines how many congressional seats and Electoral College votes each state gets, as well as the distribution of \$1.5 trillion in federal funding each year. He urged states and courts to take action on it "immediately."

Saying Korzeniewski's essay cherry-picked facts and misrepresented the technique, demographer Bill O'Hare said he doubted any challenge would succeed.

Census expert Terri Ann Lowenthal said there's a risk of undermining confidence in the census by planting seeds of doubt without any proof of inaccuracies caused by the method, which has been scrutinized by nonpartisan experts for decades.

"If you say, 'We don't trust the Census Bureau to produce objective numbers that are as accurate as possible,' you could be signaling to your own constituents and followers that they ought not to bother participating in the future," said Lowenthal, a former congressional staffer who specializes in census issues.

The Census Bureau has been using the technique on households since the 1960 census, and it was challenged and upheld in courts after censuses in 1980 and 2000. The Supreme Court has ruled that the Census Bureau can't use sampling — a method of using a subset of people to estimate characteristics of the whole population — but the justices have said that imputation is different from sampling.

Now that the Supreme Court has a solid conservative majority, Korzeniewski said it's possible the court could reverse itself.

"Given the change in the Supreme Court balance, it is possible for the court to limit imputation precisely because of its disparate impact," Korzeniewski said.

Separately, a Republican-oriented redistricting advocacy group sued the Census Bureau two weeks ago under the Freedom of Information Act to get records dealing with the group-housing count, saying it had "significant implications for our nation's redistricting and electoral process."

Fair Lines America Foundation attorney Jason Torchinsky said he didn't know how the group-housing count records would be used, but he added, "I am concerned this is a backdoor way of slowly using sampling in the count."

The initial batch of Fair Lines documents included a slideshow that indicated the Census used the statistical technique to get a head count in 43,000 separate group housing facilities. That included 5,500 college housing units, which Torchinsky said were a special concern given the number of students who relocated last year. They could have been double-counted at their parents' homes and in the dorms through imputation, he said, though the Census Bureau says it eliminates duplicate responses during the numbers-crunching phase of the 2020 census.

Still, Torchinsky said he wasn't sure if the use of the technique skewed to favor some areas more than others.

"We don't know exactly what they did yet, because they're being less than transparent about it, but I'm not ready to conclude it helps or hurts one set of states because we just don't know what they did," he said.

During their brief tenure at the Census Bureau, the statistical technique was on the minds of Nathaniel Cogley, whom the Trump administration named as the agency's deputy director for policy, and Korzeniewski, Cogley's senior advisor.

Both appointments last summer were widely seen as political and were met with withering criticism from demographers, statisticians and lawmakers because they lacked experience and expertise with the Census Bureau. Both men resigned along with other Trump administration political appointees last January before President Joe Biden took office.

The Washington Post noted in an article last July that Census Bureau employees had raised concerns about Cogley and Korzeniewski's questioning the need for imputation.

The subject of imputation was on Cogley's mind during a call a few days later with top officials at the Census Bureau and the Commerce Department, which oversees the statistical agency. Cogley pushed to have the bureau put out a statement refuting the implication that he was trying to suppress participation in the census in hard-to-count communities by questioning the purpose of the statistical technique. A

recording of the call was given to the The Associated Press.

"The irony is if you don't like count imputation, you actually want more responses," Cogley said in the recording. "You want more evidence. You want more evidence so you don't get in imputation mode."

Judge: Blame in Italy cable car deaths rests with technician

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

ROME (AP) — The three suspects in Italy's cable car disaster that killed 14 people were allowed to leave prison Sunday after a judge indicated that for now blame fell on just one: a service technician who intentionally disabled the car's emergency brake because it kept locking spontaneously.

Judge Donatella Banci Buonamici said there wasn't sufficient evidence suggesting the owner of the Mottarone cable car company, Luigi Nerini, or the maintenance chief, Enrico Perocchio, knew that the technician had deactivated the brake on several occasions even before the May 23 disaster.

After evaluating prosecutors' request for continued detention of the three, Buonamici determined there was no flight risk, ordered the managers freed while allowing the technician, Gabriele Tadini, to leave under house arrest. The three men, who remain under investigation, left Verbania prison early Sunday, accompanied by their lawyers.

Fourteen people were killed when the lead cable of the Mottarone funicular overlooking Lake Maggiore in northern Italy snapped and the emergency brake failed to prevent the cable car from reeling at high speed backward down the support line. The cable car pulled off the line entirely after passing the support pylon, crashed to the ground and then rolled down the mountain until it was stopped by a stand of trees.

The lone survivor, 5-year-old Eitan Biran, remains hospitalized but conscious, with his aunt looking after him. Eitan's Israeli-born parents, his younger brother and his great-grandparents were killed in the disaster and their remains were sent back to Israel.

It isn't known why the pulling cable snapped.

The Vipiteno, Italy-based company that maintains the lift, Leitner SpA, has said "no irregularities were detected" during the November 2020 magnetic testing of the lead cable, and that every other annual check hadn't turned up problems either.

Tadini admitted during questioning that he had left a fork-shaped bracket on the cable car's emergency brake to disable it because it kept locking on its own while the car was in service, said his lawyer, Marcello Perillo.

Speaking to reporters outside Verbania prison, Perillo said Tadini never would have left the bracket in place if he thought doing so might endanger passengers.

"He is not a criminal and would never have let people go up with the braking system blocked had he known that there was even a possibility that the cable would have broken," Perillo said. "He can't even begin to get his head around the fact that the cable broke."

Based on Tadini's testimony, prosecutors had hypothesized that the managers knew about the jerry-rigged brake and had an economic reason in using it to keep the funicular running. Prosecutor Olimpia Bossi said the owner would have had to have taken the whole lift out of service for the more extensive, "radical" repairs that were necessary.

The lift, which features four large tram cars bringing passengers up and down the mountain, only reopened on April 26 after a lengthy COVID-19 shutdown and was gearing up for the summer tourist season in a picturesque part of northern Italy.

But lawyers for Nerini and Perocchio said the two denied knowing anything about Tadini's maneuver and said they had no reason to let a cable car without a brake system operate. The judge concurred, noting that neither they nor Leitner, the maintenance company, would have had an interest in doing so.

Nerini's attorney, Pasquale Patano, said the owner "had no interest in not repairing the cable car" since he paid a flat fee of 150,000 euros (\$183,000) a year for unlimited maintenance from Leitner to keep the funicular safe and operational.

Perocchio similarly denied any knowledge of Tadini's maneuver, according to his lawyer Andrea Da Prato,

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who suggested his client had been arrested because the prosecutor felt pressure to produce quick results in the investigation into the tragedy.

As he left the prison, Perocchio said he was "desperately sad" for the victims and never would have authorized disabling the emergency brake.

"I've been working in cable cars for 21 years and I know there's no reason in the world to do that," he told reporters.

The judge's ruling noted that Tadini had called Perocchio twice to send in repair crews since the lift reopened because of the brake problem, but that the problem persisted after the crews left. Even though Tadini insisted that Perocchio and Nerini knew about his patchwork repair, the judge said he likely was trying to share the blame on the people who could afford to pay damages, and wasn't a credible enough witness to warrant their continued detention.

Leitner, the maintenance company of which Perocchio is an employee, has said that using the fork-shaped brackets was "expressly forbidden" when passengers were in the cabin. The brackets are meant to be used when the cabin — part of a transport system known as an aerial tram — is parked in the station for the night or to do repair work.

Leitner has provided investigators with documentation of the lift's maintenance record and declared itself an injured party in the case, saying it plans to donate any awarded damages to the families of the victims.

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Monday, May 31, the 151st day of 2021. There are 214 days left in the year. This is Memorial Day.

Today's Highlight in History:

On May 31, 1921, a race riot erupted in Tulsa, Oklahoma, as white mobs began looting and leveling the affluent Black district of Greenwood over reports a Black man had assaulted a white woman in an elevator; hundreds are believed to have died.

On this date:

In 1578, the Christian catacombs of ancient Rome were accidentally discovered by workers digging in a vineyard along the Via Salaria.

In 1790, President George Washington signed into law the first U.S. copyright act.

In 1859, the Big Ben clock tower in London went into operation, chiming for the first time.

In 1889, some 2,200 people in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, perished when the South Fork Dam collapsed, sending 20 million tons of water rushing through the town.

In 1935, movie studio 20th Century Fox was created through a merger of the Fox Film Corp. and Twentieth Century Pictures.

In 1962, former Nazi official Adolf Eichmann was hanged in Israel a few minutes before midnight for his role in the Holocaust.

In 1970, a magnitude 7.9 earthquake in Peru claimed an estimated 67,000 lives.

In 1977, the Trans-Alaska oil pipeline, three years in the making despite objections from environmentalists and Alaska Natives, was completed. (The first oil began flowing through the pipeline 20 days later.)

In 1989, House Speaker Jim Wright, dogged by questions about his ethics, announced he would resign. (Tom Foley later succeeded him.)

In 2009, Dr. George Tiller, a rare provider of late-term abortions, was shot and killed in a Wichita, Kansas, church. (Gunman Scott Roeder was later convicted of first-degree murder and sentenced to life in prison with no possibility of parole for 50 years.) Millvina Dean, the last survivor of the 1912 sinking of the RMS Titanic, died in Southampton, England at 97.

In 2014, Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl, the only American soldier held prisoner in Afghanistan, was freed by the Taliban in exchange for five Afghan detainees from the U.S. prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. (Bergdahl, who'd gone missing in June 2009, later pleaded guilty to endangering his comrades by walking away from

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his post in Afghanistan; his sentence included a dishonorable discharge, a reduction in rank and a fine, but no prison time.)

In 2019, a longtime city employee opened fire in a municipal building in Virginia Beach, Virginia, killing 12 people on three floors before police shot and killed him; officials said DeWayne Craddock had resigned by email hours before the shooting.

Ten years ago: Angered by civilian casualties, Afghan President Hamid Karzai said he would no longer allow NATO airstrikes on houses. Former Bosnian Serb military commander Ratko Mladic (RAHT'-koh MLAH'-dich) was placed in a U.N. detention unit in the Netherlands to await trial on genocide charges.

Five years ago: A jury found former suburban Chicago police officer Drew Peterson guilty of trying to hire someone to kill the prosecutor who helped to convict him in the killing of his third wife, Kathleen Savio.

One year ago: Tens of thousands of protesters again took to the streets across America, with peaceful demonstrations against police killings overshadowed by unrest; officials deployed thousands of National Guard soldiers and enacted strict curfews in major cities. Protesters in Washington, D.C., started fires near the White House amid increasing tensions with police, who fired tear gas and stun grenades. In tweets, President Donald Trump blamed anarchists and the media for fueling violence. The White House said it had sent to Brazil more than 2 million doses of a malaria drug touted by Trump as potentially protecting against the coronavirus; scientific evidence had not backed up those uses of the drug. The privately-owned spacecraft SpaceX delivered two NASA astronauts to the International Space Station. Artist Christo, known for massive public arts projects that often involved wrapping large structures in fabric, died in New York at 84.

Today's Birthdays: Actor-director Clint Eastwood is 91. Singer Peter Yarrow is 83. Humanitarian and author Terry Waite is 82. Singer-musician Augie Meyers is 81. Actor Sharon Gless is 78. Football Hall of Famer Joe Namath is 78. Broadcast journalist/commentator Bernard Goldberg is 76. Actor Tom Berenger is 71. Actor Gregory Harrison is 71. Actor Kyle Secor is 64. Actor Roma Maffia (ma-FEE'-uh) is 63. Actor/comedian Chris Elliott is 61. Actor Lea Thompson is 60. Singer Corey Hart is 59. Actor Hugh Dillon is 58. Rapper DMC is 57. Actor Brooke Shields is 56. Country musician Ed Adkins (The Derailers) is 54. TV host Phil Keoghan is 54. Jazz musician Christian McBride is 49. Actor Archie Panjabi is 49. Actor Merle Dandridge (TV: "Greenleaf") is 46. Actor Colin Farrell is 45. Rock musician Scott Klopfenstein (Reel Big Fish) is 44. Actor Eric Christian Olsen is 44. Rock musician Andy Hurley (Fall Out Boy) is 41. Country singer Casey James (TV: "American Idol") is 39. Actor Jonathan Tucker is 39. Rapper Waka Flocka Flame is 35. Actor Curtis Williams Jr. is 34. Pop singer Normani Hamilton (Fifth Harmony) is 25.