

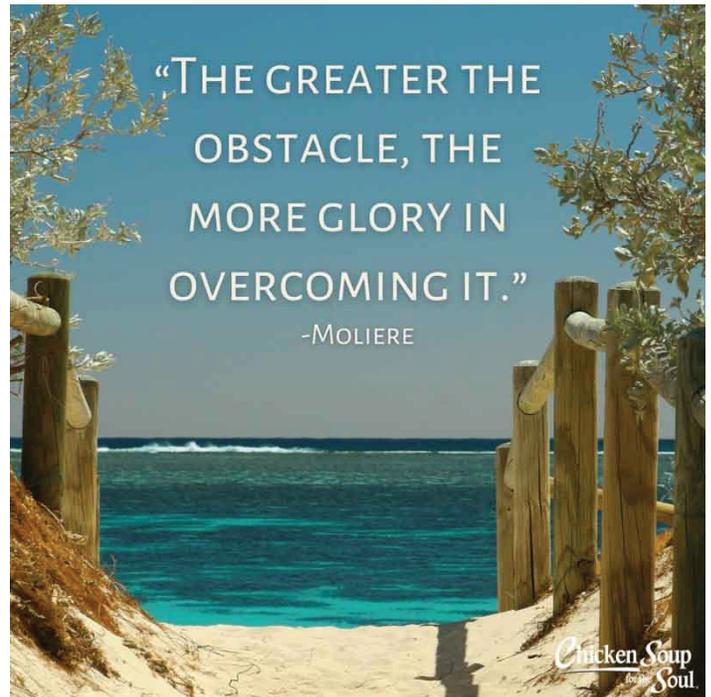
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Temperature averages are increasing

Just for kicks and giggles, I pulled up the June 30, 2012 edition of the GDI to compare the average high and low. Back then, the average daily high was 82 degrees. Today it is set at 84 degrees. The average low has also increased from 57 degrees in 2012 to 58 degrees this year.



John Sieh Insurance Agency 702 S Main, Aberdeen SD is hiring a Personal Lines Sales & Customer Service Representative, full benefits, competitive wage, full time-40 hours per week, licensing necessary but not required to apply. Proficiency in Excel and Microsoft Office programs, phone skills with professional etiquette required. Primary job responsibility is to service & sell personal lines policy for the agency and assist other producers in the office with quoting and new applications, claims, payments and helping customers with questions or concerns. Self-motivated and team player are required for this position. Please email resume to kathy@jsains.com or drop off at 702 S Main, Aberdeen, SD 57401. (0629.0713)



OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

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Groton Post #39 Defeats Sisseton Despite Allowing 3-Run Inning

Despite allowing three runs in the fifth inning, Groton Legion Post #39 defeated Sisseton 13-3 on Tuesday. Ty Peterson and Levi Greseth powered the big inning with RBIs.

Groton Legion Post #39 secured the victory thanks to seven runs in the third inning. Groton Legion Post #39 big bats were led by Peyton Johnson, Brodyn DeHoet, Jayden Zak, Jonathan Doeden, and Alex Morris, all sending runners across the plate with RBIs in the inning.

Groton Legion Post #39 tallied seven runs in the third inning. Johnson, DeHoet, Zak, Doeden, and Morris all moved runners across the plate with RBIs in the inning.

Morris earned the win for Groton Legion Post #39. The righthander surrendered three runs on five hits over five and two-thirds innings, striking out 12. Evin Nehls threw one-third of an inning in relief out of the bullpen.

Isaiah Grimm took the loss for Sisseton. Grimm went four and two-thirds innings, allowing 11 runs on ten hits and striking out three.

Groton Legion Post #39 collected ten hits. Darien Shabazz, Zak, and Jackson Cogley each racked up multiple hits for Groton Legion Post #39. Shabazz led Groton Legion Post #39 with three hits in five at bats. Benicio Morales went 2-for-2 at the plate to lead Sisseton in hits.

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Britton





Boys and Girls Golf Awards.

The girls awards are pictured above. Emma Schinkel as most improved, Carly Guthmiller as top medalist and Shaylee Peterson as most improved, and Coach Joel Guthmiller.

Pictured below is Brevin Flihs as top medalist with Coach Joel Guthmiller. Not pictured is Lucas Simon as most improved.

(Courtesy Photos)



Jenifer Fjelstad Named to Augustana University's Dean's List

Augustana University announced that Jenifer Fjelstad of Groton has been named to the Dean's List for the spring semester of the 2020-21 academic year.

The Dean's List recognizes full-time students who have a minimum of 12 credit hours with grade-point averages at 3.5 or above.

AVERA ST. LUKE'S VACCINATION CLINICS CONTINUE WITH NEW LOCATION, SCHEDULING PROCESS

ABERDEEN, S.D. – Avera St. Luke's continues to host COVID-19 vaccination clinics multiple times per week. Due to changes in demand, clinics now operate on a much smaller basis in State Street Medical Square, 105 South State Street.

"We offer around 30 appointments per clinic, and they have been filling up," said Alvin Haugen, vaccine coordinator. Prior to the move, hundreds of vaccinations would be administered per larger clinic. In fact, since the end of December 2020, Avera St. Luke's Hospital has completed approximately 85 first and second dose clinics, administering more than 19,000 doses of the COVID-19 vaccine.

With the change, online self-scheduling is no longer available. Rather, those seeking a vaccine should call 605-622-5273 or email ascovidvaccine@avera.org.

Both the Pfizer and Johnson & Johnson vaccines are available. The Pfizer vaccine is approved for those 12 and older. People who get the Pfizer vaccine will receive the second shot in three weeks. The Johnson & Johnson vaccine, for those 18 and older, is a single dose.

Those being vaccinated will complete a form that is also available here. Those under 18 need parental or guardian consent. Because of changes with state funding, staff will also ask for insurance cards. Vaccines remain free, and insurance is not needed in order to get vaccinated.

Everyone getting vaccinated takes part in a 15-minute observation period. Those that have had a prior reaction to any vaccine will need to be observed for a half hour. Most people are in, vaccinated and out the door in less than a half hour.

Masks are required, as in an Avera facility.

Avera St. Luke's employees and volunteers have also began outreach vaccination events, including at Arts in the Park. The Johnson & Johnson vaccine will also be available at The Brown County Fair.

Anyone experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 should call Avera St. Luke's local hotline at 622-8960. The system-wide hotline closed June 25. This milestone in Avera's COVID-19 journey is a reflection of reduced volumes into the hotline.

You can learn more about Avera's vaccination efforts, including information on other vaccination clinics, at Avera.org/covid19.

Governor Noem Signs Executive Order to Increase Producers' Access to Hay

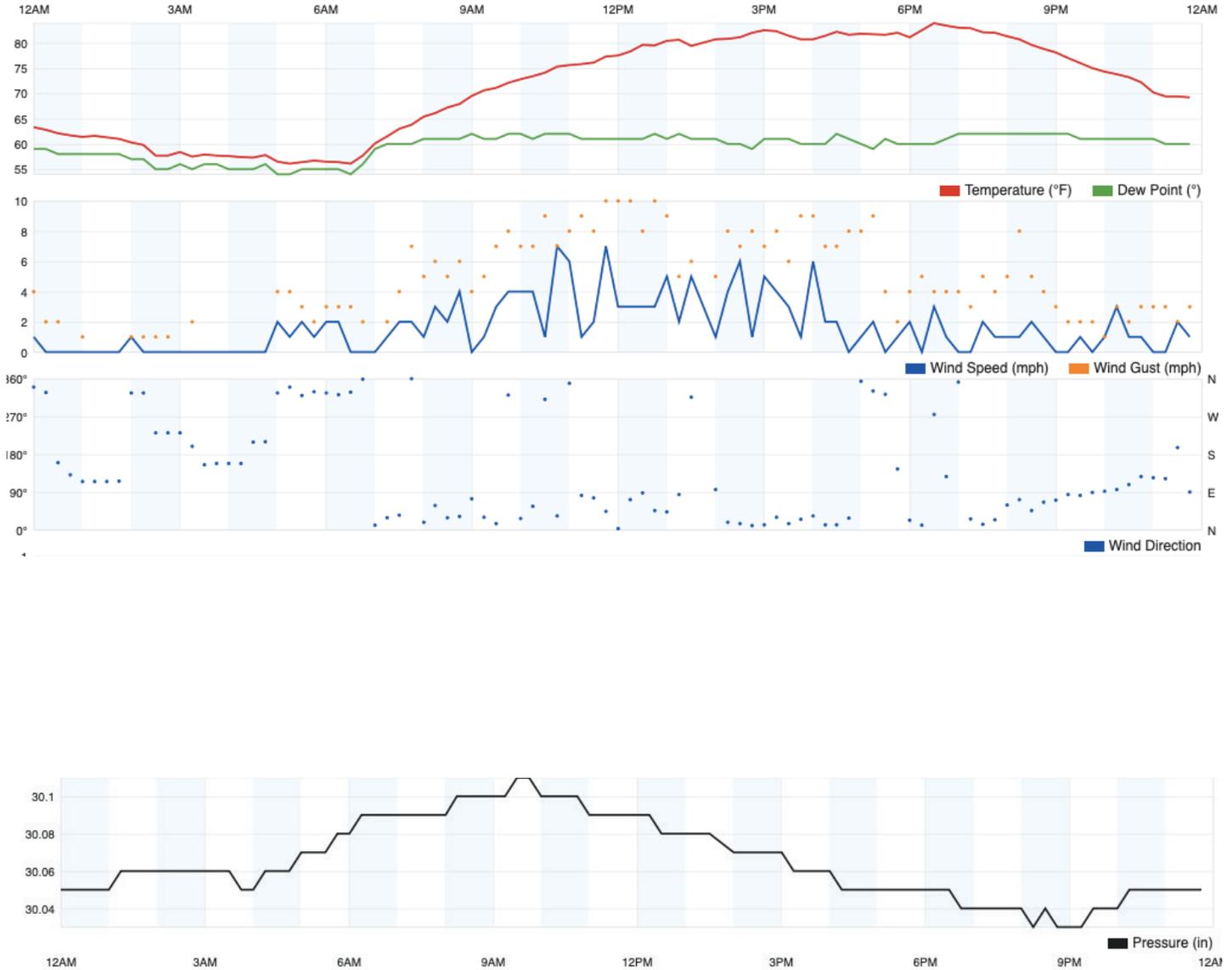
PIERRE, S.D. – Today, Governor Kristi Noem signed an executive order declaring a statewide state of emergency for drought conditions and allowing ditch mowing in Eastern South Dakota to begin effective immediately. As drought conditions continue to negatively impact feed availability for livestock across South Dakota, this order will increase access to hay for farmers and ranchers.

"Growing up on the family ranch, I know how difficult it can be to feed cattle during dry times," said Governor Kristi Noem. "This increased flexibility will allow producers to immediately gain access to hay for their livestock. With a mild winter and early spring, most of the pheasant hatch is well behind us, and we do not expect this move to affect pheasant numbers. Reports from the field look fantastic for the upcoming pheasant hunting season."

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today	Tonight	Thursday	Thursday Night	Friday
				
Hot	Mostly Clear	Hot	Mostly Clear	Hot
High: 91 °F	Low: 58 °F	High: 93 °F	Low: 63 °F	High: 96 °F



A ridge of high pressure aloft will provide for dry conditions and warming temperatures over the forecast area for the rest of the work week. #sdwx #mnwx

Today in Weather History

June 30, 1991: Thunderstorms dropped over 2 inches of rain over Brown, Marshall, and Roberts County. The rain washed out many county roads and flooded low-lying areas. Several streets were impassable in Aberdeen. Officially, Aberdeen recorded 1.91 inches of rain.

June 30, 1992: An F2 tornado lifted a roof off a house 18 miles east of Pierre. A barn was destroyed, and power lines and trees were downed. Also, an estimated wind gust of 61 mph was observed 5 miles west of Miller in Hand County.

1792: The first recorded tornado in Canadian history struck the Niagara Peninsula between Foothill and Port Robinson, leveling some houses and uprooting trees between the communities.

1886 - The second destructive hurricane in nine days hit the Apalachicola-Tallahassee area. (David Ludlum)

1900: The combination of high winds and the presence of wooded fuel-filled cargo helped to spread fire on the Hoboken Docks in New Jersey. The fire began when cotton bales caught fire and spread to nearby volatile liquids. The fire killed at least 300 people and was seen in New York City.

1912: An estimated F4 tornado ripped through Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada on this day. The storm became the deadliest tornado in Canada's history as it killed 28 people along a rare, 18.5-mile track from south to north.

1942 - The temperature at Portland, OR, hit 102 degrees, an all-time record for that location. (The Weather Channel)

1972 - The entire state of Pennsylvania was declared a disaster area as a result of the catastrophic flooding caused by Hurricane Agnes, which claimed 48 lives, and caused 2.1 billion dollars damage. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Hot weather prevailed in the Pacific Northwest, with readings above 100 degrees reported as far north as southern British Columbia. Yakima, WA, reported a record high of 100 degrees, while temperatures near the Washington coast hovered near 60 degrees all day. Thunderstorms prevailed from southwest Texas to New England. Thunderstorm winds gusting to 100 mph at Gettysburg, PA, killed one person. High winds and large hail caused more than five million dollars damage to property and crops in Lancaster County, PA. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Thunderstorms in eastern Kansas drenched Worden with 12.21 inches of rain, and a wall of water two to four feet deep swept through Lone Star, KS, flooding every home in the town. Up to ten inches of rain was reported southeast of Callaway, NE. Thunderstorm winds gusted to 75 mph at Winfield, KS. Seventeen cities in the north central and northeastern U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date, including Duluth, MN, with a reading of 36 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Winnfield, LA, reported 22.52 inches of rain in three days, and more than thirty inches for the month, a record for June. Shreveport LA received a record 17.11 inches in June, with a total for the first six months of the year of 45.55 inches. Thunderstorms also helped produce record rainfall totals for the month of June of 13.12 inches at Birmingham AL, 14.66 inches at Oklahoma City, OK, 17.41 inches at Tallahassee FL, 9.97 inches at Lynchburg, VA, and more than 10.25 inches at Pittsburgh, PA. Pittsburgh had also experienced a record wet month of May. (The National Weather Summary)

1999: Mount Baker, Washington closed out a record snowfall season both for the United States and the verifiable world record as the seasonal total from July 1, 1998, to June 30, 1999, finished with 1,140 inches.

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GROWING WITH GOD

Miss Sims taught the third grade Sunday school class. One morning she was struggling to teach them the importance of cleanliness – personal cleanliness and Godly cleanliness. She spent a considerable amount of time in her effort to compare germs and bacteria to disobedience and sin.

After going to great lengths to make what she thought was a good comparison she asked her class, "Cleanliness is next to what?"

"Impossible!" shouted Blair.

What an honest answer! So many of us seem to have a difficult time trying to survive the temptations of life. We read God's Word, understand His expectations, and ask Him to keep us from sin. Then, just when we think we have life under control – it happens once again. The power of temptation is greater than our faith in God and we fall into sin. Living a godly life does seem next to impossible.

In Psalm 71 the author writes, "You will restore my life once again." Though we fail He will not forsake us. If we fall, He will lift us. Any time and every time. There is no limit to the grace of God for those who love Him, seek His guidance and look to Him for His cleansing.

God offers us the presence and power of the risen Christ to face the temptations of life. And He offers us His strength – which can never be exhausted. He offers us His love – which endures forever. He offers us His salvation – which can never be taken from us. And He offers us His forgiveness – which continually restores us.

Prayer: How grateful we are, Father, that Your mercy does not depend on our goodness but on Your love and grace. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: In your righteousness, rescue me and deliver me; turn your ear to me and save me. Psalm 71:2

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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 **Postponed to Aug. 28th:** 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
08/13/2021 Groton Basketball Golf Tournament
08/28/2021 Lions Club Crazy Golf Fest 9am Olive Grove Golf Course
09/11/2021 Lions Club Fall City-Wide Rummage Sales 8am-3pm (1st Saturday after Labor Day)
09/12/2021 Sunflower Classic Golf Tournament at Olive Grove
09/18-19 Groton Fly-In/Drive-In, Groton Municipal Airport
10/08/2021 Lake Region Marching Band Festival (2nd Friday in October)
10/09/2021 Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm (Saturday before Columbus Day)
10/29/2021 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm
10/31/2021 Groton United Methodist Trunk or Treat (Halloween)
11/13/2021 Legion Post #39 Turkey Party (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)
11/25/2021 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm (Thanksgiving)
12/11/2021 Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services 9am-Noon

News from the Associated Press

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Mega Millions

07-38-50-52-69, Mega Ball: 21, Megaplier: 3

(seven, thirty-eight, fifty, fifty-two, sixty-nine; Mega Ball: twenty-one; Megaplier: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$61 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$88 million

GOP donor funds South Dakota National Guard troops in Texas

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem said Tuesday she will use a donation from a Republican donor to fund a deployment of up to 50 South Dakota National Guard troops to the U.S. border with Mexico.

Noem joined a growing list of Republican governors promising to send law enforcement officers to Texas as the GOP ramps up a political fight with President Joe Biden over border security. The issue has drawn a host of prominent GOP figures: Former President Donald Trump was expected to travel to the border this week and Republican governors from Arkansas, Florida, Nebraska and Iowa have all committed to sending law enforcement officers for border security.

Noem's spokesman Ian Fury said the governor decided to fund the deployment with a private donation "to help alleviate the cost to South Dakota taxpayers," but declined to provide estimates on the cost of the deployment, citing "security reasons."

Willis and Reba Johnson's Foundation made the donation directly to the state, Fury said. Willis Johnson, a Tennessee-based billionaire, is the founder of an online used-car auction called Copart. He regularly makes large contributions to Republicans, including \$200,000 to the Trump Victory Committee last year.

Johnson said he approached Noem about making a donation after hearing about Texas Gov. Greg Abbott's border barrier push. He figured Texas "has plenty of money" so he decided to help Noem, who governs a state with a significantly smaller budget. He also said he had no plans to donate to other states to send law enforcement officers to the border.

Johnson added that he would have preferred to stay anonymous but that Noem's office told him they had to at least disclose his name. He declined to say how much he was giving.

"America gave a lot of money to get that border wall done," Johnson said. "It takes private individuals now."

Noem, a potential presidential contender, drew a distinction between her decision to send the National Guard and other governors who are sending state police officers.

"The border is a national security crisis that requires the kind of sustained response only the National Guard can provide," she said in a statement. "We should not be making our own communities less safe by sending our police or Highway Patrol to fix a long-term problem President Biden's Administration seems unable or unwilling to solve."

But Democratic state Sen. Reynold Nesiba said the fact Noem is using a donor to pay for the deployment shows it is not a "real priority" for the state, but instead gives her "political cover." He said he was looking into whether using a private donation to fund the deployment is legal.

"This could set a dangerous precedent to allow anonymous political donors to call the governor and dispatch the Guard whenever they want," he said.

The federal government usually pays for National Guard deployments to other states. When troops

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respond to an in-state emergency, they are paid from state government funds, according to Duke Doering, a historian with the South Dakota National Guard Museum. He said he had never heard of a private donor funding a deployment.

"This kind of floors me, when you're talking about a private donor sending the Guard, that doesn't even make sense to me," Doering said.

The South Dakota National Guard is expected to deploy for 30 to 60 days, Noem said, while the other states involved are sending law enforcement officers for roughly two-week stints.

Abbott this month announced plans to build more barriers along the border. Abbott's new push has been criticized as political theater, but he defended the plan, saying the number of border crossers remains high. The governor said he will use \$250 million in state money and crowdsourced financing for the barriers, although the timeline and cost for the push are unclear. It also faces potential court challenges from the federal government.

Meanwhile, Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson on Tuesday authorized a 90-day deployment of up to 40 National Guard troops to the border. His office said the deployment is not being paid for by a private donor.

Iowa has sent about 25 State Patrol officers to the border under a national interstate mutual aid network called an Emergency Management Assistance Compact. Under the compact, Texas has agreed to reimburse Iowa for the expense of the state troopers, though Iowa is paying expenses for the state troopers initially. The Iowa National Guard also has 24 soldiers providing assistance to law enforcement at the border under a federally-funded activation in response to a Trump administration request in October 2020.

A spokesman for the Nebraska State Patrol, which has sent 25 troopers to Texas, said it has not received any private donations for the deployment.

Large numbers of migrants have been showing up at the U.S. border with Mexico, with many turning themselves over to U.S. Border Patrol agents in seeking legal asylum status. But the numbers of families and children traveling without their parents crossing into the U.S. have dropped sharply since March and April, while the encounters with single adults have remained high.

Drought relief: Noem signs order allowing mowing in ditches

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A state of emergency order signed Tuesday by South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem will allow producers to begin mowing ditches for hay.

A Department of Transportation rule prohibits mowing ditches in eastern South Dakota until mid-summer primarily to provide cover for pheasant chicks. Noem said the mild winter and early spring has put most of the pheasant hatch "well behind us."

Reports for the upcoming pheasant hunting season "look fantastic," Noem said.

"Growing up on the family ranch, I know how difficult it can be to feed cattle during dry times," Noem said "This increased flexibility will allow producers to immediately gain access to hay for their livestock."

Thailand bets on 'Phuket sandbox' program to save tourism

By TASSANEE VEJPONGSA and DAVID RISING Associated Press

PHUKET, Thailand (AP) — Somsak Betlao covered the outboard motor on his traditional wooden longtail boat with a tarp, wrapping up another day on Phuket's Patong beach where not a single tourist needed his services shuttling them to nearby islands.

Since Thailand's pandemic restrictions on travel were imposed in early 2020, tourism has fallen off a cliff, and nowhere has it been felt more than the resort island off the country's southern coast, where nearly 95% of the economy is related to the industry.

So, despite spiking coronavirus numbers elsewhere in the country, the government is forging ahead with a program known as the "Phuket sandbox" to reopen the island to fully vaccinated visitors. It hopes it will revive tourism — a sector that accounted for 20% of the country's economy before the pandemic.

Instead of the hotel quarantines required elsewhere in Thailand, tourists on Phuket will be able to roam the entire island, but not travel to other parts of the country for 14 days. Skeptics question whether people

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will be willing to accept multiple restrictions including repeated virus tests and mandatory tracking apps, but officials hope the allure of the island's famous beaches — and the idea of a beach holiday following lengthy lockdowns — will be enough.

For islanders like Somsak, there is a lot riding on the tourists' return.

Once he could count on earning more than \$100 a day taking them out on his boat, but this month he has taken home only \$40 from a single customer and has been forced to do odd jobs, pawn family belongings and fish for food to put dinner on the table for his wife and two young children.

"If it does not work we will just have to try and stay alive," Somsak said.

The first two months of 2020, before travel restrictions were put in place, were among Phuket's best ever, and the island saw more than 3 million visitors in the first five months of the year, including more than 2 million foreigners. For the first five months of 2021, there have been fewer than a half million visitors, and all but about 5,000 were domestic travelers.

Under the sandbox plan, visitors to Phuket will be subject to most of the same controls faced by those to the rest of the country, but instead of being quarantined in a carefully monitored hotel room for 14 days they'll be restricted to Thailand's largest island, where they can lounge on the white beaches, jet ski off the coast, and enjoy evenings eating out in restaurants.

"For people who have been closeted up in their apartments for 16 months, the idea to fly to Thailand where there's a beach and you're a normal guest, yes you're being quarantined here but this is more than 500 square kilometers of quarantine and you've got national parks, golf courses, you can go diving — it's really not a quarantine," said Anthony Lark, president of the Phuket Hotels Association.

There is already some international interest, with the first flight arriving from Qatar, followed by one from Israel and then Singapore.

Still, some hotels and other businesses have decided to wait to see whether the tourists appear before they reopen, and there is skepticism in Thailand that they will.

The Bangkok Post newspaper wondered in an editorial this week headlined "Welcome to your prison vacation?" whether tourists would bother going through all the hoops for a holiday, especially after the government's announcement that it would impose additional restrictions if more than 90 new virus cases are reported per week in Phuket.

Lark said he anticipates a lot of travelers will take a wait-and-see approach and that his expectations are "tepid."

"The floodgates are not opening," he said.

To visit, adult foreign visitors must provide proof of two vaccinations, a negative COVID-19 test no more than 72 hours before departure, and proof of an insurance policy that covers treatment for the virus of at least \$100,000, among other things. Once on the island, visitors have to follow mask and distancing regulations and take three COVID-19 tests at their own expense — about \$300 total — and show negative results.

They also have to come from countries considered no higher than "low" or "medium" risk — a list currently including most of Europe, the U.S. and Canada — and fly directly to Phuket, though plans are in the works to allow carefully controlled transfers through Bangkok's airport.

After 14 days, visitors are free to travel further in Thailand without other restrictions.

In preparation, some 70% of the island's approximately 450,000 residents have had at least one vaccine dose, and the hospitality industry reports that all front-line workers in restaurants, hotels and elsewhere have been fully vaccinated.

Bars and clubs remain closed, but visitors will be able to go to restaurants and take in shows — once they're up and running again.

At the Phuket Simon Cabaret, a 600-seat venue that has been closed for more than a year, some crew returned this week to start checking lighting and other systems, while workers spruced up the dresses worn by its transgender dancers, sewing on new glitter and colorful feathers.

"We are entering into this fight wanting to win," owner Pornthep Rouyrin said defiantly, adding that the

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cabaret would not open immediately and that its dancers might start with smaller shows in hotels and restaurants until larger numbers of tourists start to arrive.

The Phuket sandbox is broadly part of Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha's plan announced earlier this month to have Thailand completely reopened within 120 days.

Polls suggest about 75% of Thais find that too ambitious, and in recent days coronavirus numbers have been spiking in Bangkok and elsewhere, underlining concerns just as Phuket is to be opened back up.

Other Thai destinations are watching Phuket closely, with their own plans to open later in the year or sooner, but with some degree of initial hotel room quarantine. Regionally, popular tourist destinations such as Bali are also keeping an eye on the sandbox as they mull over when they might be able to welcome outside visitors.

Nationally, the hotel industry had hoped the sandbox would provide a springboard to other destinations in Thailand when early discussions involved a shorter mandatory stay, but now that it's 14 days the industry concedes few are likely to have the vacation time to carry further on.

At the same time, there's concern that Thai residents returning home will route through Phuket to take advantage of the more lax rules, putting further stress on the hotels in Bangkok, which have relied on the two-week mandatory quarantines for much of their income during the pandemic, said Marisa Sukosol, president of the Thai Hotel Association.

About half of Thailand's 16,000 hotels are still closed and occupancy rates averaged only 6% in May, she said.

"We are on survival mode, and hanging by a thread — literally," she said earlier this month.

Though there are restrictions and it might take time to work out the kinks of reopening, the upside is that visitors will be greeted by a Phuket not seen for decades, thanks to the lack of people over the past year, Lark said.

"I've even seen sea otters on the beach and I didn't even know there were sea otters here. I've seen pods of dolphins, we've noticed an increased diversity of bird species, the coral reefs have not had boats over them — the island has never looked better," he said. "And the room rates are about half of 2019 and you never have to make a reservation to get a restaurant seat. It is a great time to come."

Putin: US aircraft involved in Black Sea UK incident

By DARIA LITVINOVA and VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — Russian President Vladimir Putin said Wednesday that a U.S. reconnaissance aircraft was operating in sync with a British destroyer during last week's Black Sea incident in what he described as a "provocation" to test Moscow's response.

Moscow said one of its warships fired warning shots and a warplane dropped bombs in the path of British destroyer Defender on June 23 to force it out of an area near the Crimean Peninsula, which Russia annexed in 2014. Britain denied that account, insisted its ship wasn't fired upon and said it was sailing in Ukrainian waters.

Asked if the incident could have triggered World War III, Putin said that it was hardly possible even if Russia had sunk the British warship because Western powers knew they couldn't emerge as winners in a global conflict.

Speaking during a live call-in show, Putin said that the U.S. aircraft's apparent mission was to monitor the Russian military's response to the British destroyer. He added that Moscow was aware of the U.S. intentions and responded accordingly to avoid revealing sensitive data.

In Wednesday's incident, Britain insisted the Defender had been making a routine journey through an internationally recognized travel lane and remained in Ukrainian waters near Crimea. The U.K., like most of the world, recognizes Crimea as part of Ukraine despite the peninsula's 2014 annexation by Russia.

Russia denounced the Defender's move as a provocation and warned that next time it could fire to hit intruding warships if they again try to test Russian military resolve.

Responding to a question about Russia's tug-of-war with Ukraine, Putin emphasized his long-held claim

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of close kinship between the Russian and Ukrainian peoples, but accused the Ukrainian leadership of maintaining a hostile course toward Russia.

The Russian president spent most of the marathon call-in show speaking on domestic issues.

He voiced hope that the country could avoid a nationwide lockdown amid a surge of new infections. Putin argued that decisions by local authorities in a number of regions who made vaccination mandatory for some workers should help contain the new wave of infections and avoid a lockdown.

The "actions of our colleagues in certain regions are aimed at avoiding the need for a lockdown, when entire enterprises shut down and people are left without their jobs, without their salaries," Putin said.

He also revealed that he chose Sputnik V — the domestically developed coronavirus vaccine Russia hailed as the first in the world to be authorized for use — for his vaccination. Putin got his first coronavirus shot in late March out of the public eye, and has remained tight-lipped about which vaccine out of three domestically developed ones available at the time he chose.

The Russian president said he wasn't consulting with his doctors about this, but rather looked at choices his acquaintances made, and went for Sputnik V, as it provided the longest protection against the virus. He added that he initially didn't name the vaccine he took to avoid offering an advantage to its maker.

Russia gave Spuntik V regulatory approval last August and faced criticism both at home and abroad, as the shot had only been tested on a few dozen people at the time. However, the criticism has been blunted by a report in the prestigious British medical journal *The Lancet* this year that said large-scale testing showed it to be safe, with an efficacy rate of 91% against the virus.

Russia has struggled to cope with a surge in infections and deaths in recent weeks that comes amid rather slow vaccination rates. Coronavirus deaths in Russia hit a new daily record Wednesday, with the authorities reporting 669 new deaths.

Russia has been registering over 20,000 new coronavirus cases and around 600 deaths every day since last Thursday. On Wednesday, 21,042 new infections were recorded.

Russian officials have blamed the surge, which started in early June, on Russians' lax attitude toward taking necessary precautions, the growing prevalence of more infectious variants and low vaccine uptake, which experts attribute to widespread vaccine hesitancy and limited production capacity. Although Russia was among the first countries to announce and deploy a coronavirus vaccine, just over 15% of the population has received at least one shot.

Russia's coronavirus task force has reported more than 5.5 million confirmed coronavirus cases in the pandemic and 135,214 deaths.

Amid the surge, about 20 Russian regions — from Moscow and St. Petersburg to the remote far-eastern region of Sakhalin — have made vaccinations mandatory this month for employees in certain sectors, such as government offices, retail, health care, education, restaurants and other services. The move has helped speed up the pace of vaccinations.

While reaffirming his position that vaccination should be voluntary, Putin emphasized that the decisions by local authorities were based on law and necessary to prevent tougher measures.

Putin noted that some people still get infected with COVID-19 even after being immunized, but emphasized that the disease takes a milder course.

Along with his annual marathon news conference, carefully choreographed call-in shows are intended to cast Putin as a strong leader caring about people's daily needs and attentive to their problems. Most of the questions asked related to the pandemic, social payments, rising consumer prices and other domestic issues. Overall, more than 2 million questions were sent to the show's hotline.

As COVID recedes in prisons, will any lessons learned stick?

By KATIE PARK and KERI BLAKINGER of The Marshall Project and CLAUDIA LAUER of The Associated Press undefined

Derrick Johnson had a makeshift mask. He had the spray bottle of bleach and extra soap that corrections officers provided. But he still spent every day crammed in a unit with 63 other men in a Florida prison,

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crowding into hallways on their way to meals and sleeping feet from one another at night.

As the coronavirus ravaged the Everglades Correctional Institution, Johnson was surrounded by the sounds of coughing and requests for Tylenol. And while he thought a lot of the prison's policies were ineffective at protecting prisoners, he also wondered if that was the best the facility could do.

"Prison is not built to compete with a pandemic," said Johnson, who was released in December. "The pandemic's gonna win every time."

For 15 months, The Marshall Project and The Associated Press tracked the spread of COVID-19 through prisons nationwide. We counted more than a half-million people living and working in prisons who got sick from the coronavirus. Prisons were forced to adapt to unusual and deadly circumstances. But now, as new cases are declining and facilities are loosening restrictions, there's little evidence to suggest enough substantive changes have been made to handle future waves of infection.

With crowded conditions, notoriously substandard medical care and constantly shifting populations, prisons were ill-equipped to handle the highly contagious virus, which killed nearly 3,000 prisoners and staff.

Corrections systems responded with inconsistent policies, struggling to contain the virus amid understaffing and overcrowding. At its peak in mid-December, more than 25,000 prisoners tested positive in a single week.

But in recent months, infections behind bars nationwide have slowed to a few hundred new cases each week, and many prisons have eased what restrictions they had in place, including mask-wearing, visitors and other movement in and out, going back to business as usual.

It's a critical moment, with new coronavirus cases low but the threat of infection looming as new variants spread around the world, said Dr. David Sears, an infectious-disease specialist and correctional health consultant.

"The medical community, prison leadership and society at large have learned so much about COVID in a short period of time," Sears said. "We need to take these lessons and make sure that the things we've learned after a lot of real human suffering are not in vain."

This story is a collaboration between The Associated Press and The Marshall Project exploring the state of the prison system in the coronavirus pandemic. Additional reporting by Peter Buffo and Tom Meagher of The Marshall Project, and Colleen Slevin and Michael Balsamo of The Associated Press.

According to the data collected by The Marshall Project and The Associated Press, about 3 in 10 people in state and federal prisons were infected with the virus. But correctional health experts widely agree that this number is an undercount.

"A great many of the people who ever had COVID, they were never tested," said Dr. Homer Venters, a former chief medical officer of the New York City jail system who has inspected health conditions in prisons around the country over the last year. "In most prisons it ran through these places like wildfire. People were never tested."

One man housed at a low-security federal prison compared the Bureau of Prisons' public data to what he was seeing inside. At least half of his unit fell ill, he said, but the bureau's data didn't reflect that. He spoke on condition of anonymity because he is still incarcerated and afraid of retribution.

"For the first year of the COVID, they never tested anybody in my institution unless they had a fever," he said in a call from prison. "The easiest way to not have a positive at your institution is to not test anybody. ... It's like, hello, we're dying from this s—. Can you test us?"

In the early days of the pandemic, testing within the Bureau of Prisons was limited, and staff at some prisons were told there was no need to test inmates and they should just assume everyone had the coronavirus. The Justice Department's inspector general found that at some facilities, like FCC Oakdale in Louisiana, which emerged as an early hotspot, inmates who tested positive for the virus were left in their housing units for days without being isolated.

The Bureau of Prisons said it follows guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and that any inmate who is symptomatic or tests positive for the virus is placed in medical isolation until they

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recover.

Even when state and federal prisons did conduct tests, they still allowed prisoners who tested positive to come in contact with others.

Texas prison officials transferred more than 100 infected prisoners in East Texas to prisons just outside Houston in the first months of the pandemic. Officials said the move would bring the men closer to medical resources, but other prisoners worried it would just bring the virus closer. A few days after a group of the sick arrived to his unit, Jason Duncan fell ill.

"The unit nurse came around to take temperatures, mine was checked at 102," he wrote in a letter at the time. A few hours after having his temperature taken, he fainted. "When I came to, my body was so hot I could not stand at all. I could not breathe, it felt like the life was being (sucked) out of me. I was also covered in sweat — all my clothes wet."

Eventually, he ended up in a hospital and "hooked up to a breathing machine." Finally, he got a COVID-19 test. "I was given no medication at all," he wrote, adding that he was instead sent back to the prison and housed in the wing with the sick prisoners who'd been transferred in.

Scott Medlock, an attorney who represented prisoners in a class-action lawsuit accusing Texas of inadequately protecting them from the virus, said the failure to properly quarantine prisoners was key to the spread of COVID-19 at Texas' Pack Unit. While staff would isolate those who tested positive for two weeks, they considered prisoners "recovered" when the quarantine period ended, regardless of whether prisoners were showing symptoms.

"They were moving people who had quote-unquote recovered, who were still having symptoms, sometimes into dormitories where there would be people who have not tested positive yet," Medlock said.

But many prisons simply lack the space needed to adequately isolate sick prisoners. There are structural and logistical changes prisons could make, such as upgrading ventilation systems and creating surge capacity for staff and health care workers. But the most effective approach, Sears said, is to drastically reduce prison populations.

"When you're filled to the max and you have two people in an 8-by-10 cell right next to two more people in an 8-by-10 cell and on and on, it's impossible to create any form of physical distancing," Sears said. "We have to get people out of prisons so we have that space."

While many jails emptied out during the pandemic and prison populations declined, the criminal justice system has not fundamentally changed. Lauren Brinkley-Rubinstein, who leads the COVID Prison Project, said she hasn't seen the systemic change needed to address the next pandemic.

"What we're seeing over the past couple weeks and months is a real return to status quo, which makes me worry that prisons and jails didn't learn much at all," Brinkley-Rubinstein said. "I see incarcerated populations returning to what they were before."

Staffing is also a massive problem. Employee shortages plague many prisons. The federal system is at critically low levels and has been forced to make teachers and others watch prisoners. The Nebraska prison system recently declared a staffing emergency at a fourth facility, and Texas prisons are struggling with more than 5,000 correctional officer vacancies and the lowest staffing levels in recent memory.

In Pennsylvania, transfers and insufficient quarantine policies contributed to spreading the virus between prison facilities, said John Eckenrode, president of the Pennsylvania State Corrections Officers Association. Once there were active cases throughout the state's prisons, including among staff, the department became lax with quarantining and actively contact-tracing staff after someone tested positive.

A few months into the pandemic, Eckenrode believes, a lot of supervisors were tired of quarantining officers and calling in overtime.

"There were definitely officers who went weeks without a day off and sometimes working all 16-hour shifts," he said. "It takes a toll on you, your home life, your time with family, your mental and physical exhaustion."

The Pennsylvania Prison Society, a group that advocates for humane prison and jail conditions, found at one point during the pandemic 1 in 6 corrections officers was out sick or in quarantine. Prisoners contacted

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the society to say their medical request slips were piling up.

"Because so many staff members were out sick during COVID-19, what we found was people had an even harder time getting access to medical care," said Anton Andrew, the society's education and advocacy fellow.

The strain of understaffing and working in a high-risk environment has led to corrections staff leaving their jobs, Venters said. These staffing shortages will have long-term consequences, especially as prison populations rise.

"Understaffing means people don't get to their health care appointments and certainly don't go outside," Venters said. "It's unlikely when they have an emergency that anybody is going to see it or respond to it."

Like life on the outside, the immediate risk to prisoners in many states has largely receded. Twenty states have administered at least one dose of the vaccine to two-thirds of their prison population, and new cases in prisons nationwide have stayed below 500 a week for more than a month. Prisoners who spent more than a year without family visits, educational programs and outdoor recreation are eager to regain more social interaction and activity. Despite these promising signs, however, doctors and advocates for the incarcerated fear that prisons are letting their guard down too quickly.

New variants of the coronavirus are more contagious, which Sears said may call for higher vaccine rates to bring about herd immunity. Maryland, Michigan and Colorado found variants within their prisons earlier this year, though case numbers remained low.

In Hawaii, one of the few states where cases have risen in prisons in recent weeks, state authorities attribute the outbreak to overcrowding and transfers into its facilities. Unlike most states, Hawaii's correctional system houses both sentenced prisoners and people awaiting trial, a more transient population with lower vaccination levels.

"Our jails have all been burdened by extreme overcrowding for decades, and now added to that are the unique challenges posed by the COVID pandemic," Toni Schwartz, a spokesperson for the Hawaii Department of Public Safety, said in an email.

While vaccine acceptance among prisoners has been higher than anticipated, most systems have seen staff vaccination rates lagging behind.

"We know that COVID doesn't just spring up from the ground within a prison. COVID is introduced by people coming into and out of a prison," Sears said. "Ninety-nine percent of that movement is staff ... so creating that ring of protection around a prison with higher staff vaccination rates is vital."

In Colorado, where 55% of corrections workers are fully vaccinated, unvaccinated staff are tested daily with rapid tests, said Brandalynn Anderson, spokesperson for the Colorado Department of Corrections. Both vaccinated and unvaccinated staff take weekly PCR tests.

Not all prisons take as thorough of an approach. In some states, such as Wisconsin and South Carolina, staff are tested every two weeks. Others only mandate testing when employees are suspected to have been exposed to the virus.

As prison coronavirus cases have slowed, so, too, has the release of data from state and federal agencies. Michele Deitch, a law professor at the University of Texas at Austin who has researched prison data transparency during the pandemic, said this is a troubling sign that prisons are prematurely moving beyond the pandemic.

"There's a sense that COVID is over, that the pandemic is behind us, and that is just not the case," Deitch said. "We have to remember that prisons and jails were hit so much harder than the outside communities were, and in many jurisdictions, they were late to provide vaccinations to incarcerated people."

EXPLAINER: How bad is the pandemic in North Korea

By KIM TONG-HYUNG and HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — After saying for months that it kept the coronavirus at bay, North Korea on Wednesday came closest to admitting that its anti-virus campaign has been less than perfect.

Kim Jong Un's mention of a "great crisis" created by a "crucial" failure in national pandemic measures

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during a ruling party meeting has triggered outside speculation about how bad the situation in North Korea really is.

A look at some of the clues:

EXPERTS DIVIDED OVER EPIDEMIC

Du Hyeogn Cha, an analyst at Seoul's Asan Institute for Policy Studies, said the North could be dealing with a huge COVID-19 outbreak that has spread beyond border towns and rural areas and is now reaching urban centers, possibly including capital Pyongyang.

While North Korea has told the World Health Organization it has not found a single coronavirus infection after testing more than 30,000 people, experts widely doubt its claim considering its poor health infrastructure. Cha said North Korea has no other way to deal with outbreaks than quarantining people and locking down entire areas until transmissions subside.

Other experts, including Park Won Gon, a professor of North Korea studies at Seoul's Ewha Womans University, said the large Politburo meeting attended by party officials from across the country would have been planned in advance and may have not taken place if the virus was circulating aggressively.

In case of large outbreaks, the North would deploy extreme measures to seal off affected regions, something outside monitoring groups haven't detected, said Ahn Kyung-su, the head of the Seoul-based Research Center of DPRK Health and Welfare.

IS IT ABOUT POWER SHAKEUP?

Most analysts agree that Kim's remarks indicate a development that's significant enough to warrant a shakeup of Pyongyang's leadership.

The North's state media said Kim berated senior party and government officials for neglecting "important decisions of the party on taking organizational, institutional, material, scientific and technological measures as required by the prolonged state emergency epidemic prevention campaign."

The report also said that the party during the meeting recalled an unidentified member of the Politburo's powerful Presidium, which consists of Kim and four other top officials. It's possible that Kim could be sacking his Cabinet Premier Kim Tok Hun, his top economic official, or Jo Yong Won, a secretary of the party's Central Committee who had been seen as a fast-riser in Pyongyang's power circle.

CALL FOR OUTSIDE HELP?

Even if it was dealing with an alarming rise in infections, it's highly unlikely that the North would admit it. Still, Kim's decision to publicly address a major setback in the fight against the pandemic could also be an appeal for outside help.

Cha said the North could request stronger assistance from China, its main ally and economic lifeline, as they approach the 60th anniversary of their friendship treaty next month.

Leif-Eric Easley, professor of international studies at Ewha Womans University, said Kim's efforts to find the scapegoats for the outbreak could also be in preparation for accepting vaccines from abroad.

COVAX, the U.N.-backed program to distribute vaccines worldwide, said in February that the North could receive 1.9 million doses in the first half of the year. But the plans have been delayed due to global shortages.

Kim Sin-gon, a professor at Seoul's Korea University College of Medicine, said that Kim Jong Un likely aimed to raise international awareness of the North's pandemic-related difficulties.

Kim berates North Korean officials for 'crucial' virus lapse

By KIM TONG-HYUNG Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un berated top officials for failures in coronavirus prevention that caused a "great crisis," using strong language that raised the specter of a mass

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outbreak in a country that would be scarcely able to handle it.

The state media report Wednesday did not specify what "crucial" lapse had prompted Kim to call the Politburo meeting of the ruling Workers' Party, but experts said North Korea could be wrestling with a significant setback in its pandemic fight.

So far, North Korea has claimed to have had no coronavirus infections, despite testing thousands of people and sharing a porous border with China. Experts widely doubt the claim and are concerned about any potential outbreak, given the country's poor health infrastructure.

At the Politburo meeting, Kim criticized the senior officials for supposed incompetence, irresponsibility and passiveness in planning and executing anti-virus measures amid the lengthening pandemic, the North's official Korean Central News Agency said.

Kim said "senior officials in charge of important state affairs neglected the implementation of the important decisions of the party on taking organizational, institutional, material, scientific and technological measures as required by the prolonged state emergency epidemic prevention campaign," according to KCNA. This "caused a crucial case of creating a great crisis in ensuring the security of the state and safety of the people and entailed grave consequences."

The report also said the party recalled an unspecified member of the Politburo's powerful Presidium, which consists of Kim and four other top officials.

The reference indicated Kim may replace his Cabinet Premier Kim Tok Hun, who would be held responsible for failures in the government's anti-epidemic work, said Hong Min, a senior analyst at Seoul's Korea Institute for National Unification.

"There is no possibility that North Korea will ever admit to an infection — even if there were mass transmissions, the North will definitely not reveal such developments and will continue to push forward an anti-virus campaign it has claimed to be the greatest," Hong said.

"But it's also clear that something significant happened and it was big enough to warrant a reprimanding of senior officials. This could mean mass infections or some sort of situation where a lot of people were put at direct risk of infections."

Cheong Seong-Chang, an analyst at South Korea's private Sejong Institute, expressed a similar view, saying North Korea is potentially dealing with huge virus-related problems in border towns near China, such as Sinuiju or Hyesan. He said the Presidium member Kim Jong Un sacked could possibly be Jo Yong Won, a secretary of the Workers' Party's Central Committee who had been seen as a fast-rising figure in the leadership circle.

But other experts said Kim could be responding to illicit border trade that defied his lockdown measures or setting the stage for a political shakeup or purge to solidify his grip on power as he navigates perhaps the toughest time of his nine-year rule.

South Korea's Unification Ministry, which deals with inter-Korean affairs, said it had no immediate information to share about the North Korean report and that it wouldn't make prejudgments about the country's virus situation.

Wang Wenbin, spokesperson of China's Foreign Ministry, raised the possibility of helping North Korea in the event of a major outbreak of COVID-19.

"China and the DPRK have a long tradition of helping each other when they encounter difficulties," Wang said, referring to North Korea by its official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

"If necessary, China will actively consider providing assistance to the DPRK."

From the start of the pandemic, North Korea described its anti-virus efforts as a "matter of national existence," banned tourists, jettied out diplomats and severely curtailed cross-border traffic and trade. The lockdown has further strained an economy already battered by decades of mismanagement and crippling U.S.-led sanctions over the country's nuclear weapons program.

Kim during a political conference earlier this month called for officials to brace for prolonged COVID-19 restrictions, indicating that the country isn't ready to open its borders despite its economic woes.

North Korea has told the World Health Organization it has not found a single coronavirus infection after testing more than 30,000 people, including many described as having fevers or respiratory symptoms.

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North Korea's extended border controls come amid uncertainties over the country's vaccination prospects. COVAX, the U.N.-backed program to ship COVID-19 vaccines worldwide, said in February that North Korea could receive 1.9 million doses in the first half of the year, but the plans have been delayed due to global shortages.

Economic crisis, severe shortages make Lebanon 'unlivable'

By BASSEM MROUE Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Ibrahim Arab waits in line several hours a day in the hot summer sun to buy gas for his taxi.

When he's not working, the 37-year-old father of two drives from one Beirut pharmacy to another, looking for baby formula for his 7-month-old son — any he can find — even though the infant got severe diarrhea and vomiting from an unfamiliar brand.

He worries what would happen if his children got really sick. Once among the best in the region, Lebanon's hospitals are struggling amid the country's economic and financial crisis that has led to daily power outages that last for hours, shortages of diesel fuel for backup generators, and a lack of medical equipment and drugs.

After 20 months of suffering with no end in sight, a new reality is setting in for most of Lebanon's estimated 6 million people: Days filled with severe shortages — from spare parts for cars to medicine, fuel and other basic goods in the import-dependent country.

"My life was already difficult, and now the gasoline crisis only made things worse," Arab said on a recent day. To survive, he works a second job at a Beirut grocery store, but his monthly income in Lebanese pounds has lost 95% of its purchase power.

The crisis, which began in late 2019, is rooted in decades of corruption and mismanagement by a post-civil war political class that has accumulated debt and done little to encourage local industries, forcing the country to rely on imports for almost everything.

The Lebanese pound has nose-dived, banks have clamped down on withdrawals and transfers, and hyperinflation has flared.

The liquidity crunch is crippling the government's ability to provide fuel, electricity and basic services. A shortage of dollars is gutting imports of medical supplies and energy.

The fuel shortage has especially raised fears that the country could become paralyzed. Even private generators, used by the Lebanese for decades, have to be switched off for hours to conserve diesel.

"We are really in hell," tweeted Firas Abiad, director general of Rafik Hariri University Hospital, which leads the country's coronavirus fight. Despite a heat wave, the hospital decided Monday to turn off the air conditioning, except in medical departments.

Electricity cuts have affected internet connections in various cities, while bakeries warn they might have to close due to fuel shortages.

The situation has become critical in recent weeks, with scuffles and shootings at gas pumps, including one in the northern city of Tripoli, where the son of one station's owner was killed.

Many Lebanese decry their leaders' inability or unwillingness to work together to resolve the crisis.

The country has been without a working government since Prime Minister Hassan Diab's Cabinet resigned days after the massive explosion at Beirut's port on Aug. 4, 2020, that killed 211 people and injured more than 6,000. The catastrophic blast was caused by nearly 3,000 tons of highly explosive ammonium nitrate that had been improperly stored there for years.

Residents expect the economy to get even worse, so they look for ways to adapt and cope.

To avoid waiting for hours, some pay people to fill their car for them. Others take their laptops and work from inside their vehicles in the lines that stretch for blocks and are known as "the queues of humiliation."

Many rely on relatives and friends abroad to send medicine and baby formula. Those who can afford it fly to nearby countries for a day or two to stock up for months.

A man who works in solar energy said business is booming, with people fed up with decades of govern-

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ment promises to fix Lebanon's power grid.

Last week, Diab approved financing energy imports at a rate higher than the official exchange rate, effectively reducing fuel subsidies amid the worsening shortages. The move that took effect Tuesday is expected to start easing the crisis temporarily, although prices shot up 35%.

Some people have been hoarding fuel out of fear that prices will nearly double, and this has added to its scarcity. Such an increase in prices will put the cost of fuel out of reach of many in a country where more than half the population lives in poverty.

Others smuggle it to neighboring Syria, which has its own fuel crisis and where the price of gasoline is five times higher than in Lebanon. But that also adds to the shortage in Lebanon.

The crisis has led angry residents across the country to block roads in protest.

They seized several tanker trucks in northern Lebanon and distributed gasoline for free to passersby. Another group confiscated a truck carrying powdered milk and also distributed its contents.

"Our business has become a job of mass destruction," said Ahed Makarem, 24, who works at a gas station in the coastal village of Damour, south of Beirut.

As he spoke, a line of hundreds of cars moved slowly along the highway. Dozens of workers activated the station's 12 pumps to fill vehicles and scooters. Motorists were limited to 20 liters (about 5 1/4 gallons).

Makarem said his 13-hour shift starts at 6 a.m. and he hardly has time to eat or sit. Fistfights have broken out in recent weeks as some people try to cut in line, he said, adding that when the station closes at 7 p.m., police sometimes have to intervene to turn away angry customers who waited in vain.

Many fear things will only get worse in the coming months, with the central bank's reserves dropping and no solution in sight. Lawmakers are working on a ration card system that would give about 500,000 poor families between \$93 and \$137 a month. If approved, it would lead to even smaller subsidies and skyrocketing prices.

Arab, the taxi driver, is bracing for when the temporary solutions fall away and the crisis worsens.

He recently had to fix the brakes on his car, and his engine needed a spare part. That cost him more than twice the minimum monthly wage in Lebanon.

"I wish I had the opportunity to leave. This country is unlivable," Arab said.

Thousands of EU citizens may lose legal status to live in UK

By SYLVIA HUI Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Marlies Haselton has called Britain home for more than 30 years. The Dutch national married a Briton, had her children there, and considers herself "part and parcel" of the U.K. Until Britain's divorce from the European Union, she had never given a thought to her immigration status in the U.K.

Haselton, 55, is among the millions of Europeans who have freely lived, worked and studied in the U.K. for decades, but whose rights are no longer automatically granted due to Brexit. Britain's government introduced a "settlement" plan for the country's large European migrant community in 2019, and the deadline for applications is Wednesday.

From Thursday, any European migrant who hasn't applied will lose their legal right to work, rent housing and access some hospital treatments or welfare benefits in the U.K. They may even be subject to deportation.

Meanwhile, the freedom of movement that over 1 million Britons have long enjoyed in EU countries is also ending. Those applying for post-Brexit residency permits in France also face a deadline on Wednesday.

Campaigners in the U.K. are worried that tens or even hundreds of thousands of Europeans may not have applied by the deadline. Many older people who have lived in the U.K. for decades are not aware they have to apply, and official figures show that only 2% of applicants were 65 years old or older. Many parents also don't realize they have to apply for their children, migrants rights' groups say.

Other vulnerable people, such as an estimated 2,000 children in social care, also risk falling through the cracks and ending up with no legal status.

For Haselton and many others, it's a moment that drives home the impact of Britain's referendum to

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leave the EU five years ago. Although Haselton successfully received her "settled" status, meaning she can reside permanently in the U.K., she said the whole process has made her feel insecure about the life she built in Britain.

"I don't feel settled," she said. "I'm concerned about the future. I just don't have a safe feeling about growing old here as a foreigner. The sense of home I used to have is gone."

Britain's government says some 5.6 million people — the majority from Poland and Romania — have applied, far more than the initial estimates. While about half were granted settled status, some 2 million migrants who haven't lived in the U.K. long enough were told they have to put in the paperwork again when they have completed five years of residency in the country.

And about 400,000 people are still in limbo because they're waiting to hear a decision, said Lara Parizotto, a campaigner for The3million, a group set up after the Brexit referendum to lobby for the rights of EU citizens in the U.K.

"These are the people we're hearing from a lot," she said. "You want to be secure and safe, you want to continue making plans for your future ... you can imagine how complex it is not to have that certainty in your life right now when things are about to change so much."

Daria Riabchikova, a Russian woman who applied in February as the partner of a Belgian citizen living in the U.K., said it's been "incredibly frustrating" waiting four months for her paperwork to be processed. She fears the delay will affect a new job she is about to start.

"I feel like a third-rate citizen, despite working here and paying taxes with my partner and living here, and contributing to the past year of struggle with the pandemic," she said. "Now I can't even have my straightforward application processed on time."

Figures are not available to show exactly how many people will have missed the deadline. But even a small percentage of the European population in the U.K. would total tens of thousands of people, Parizotto said. In recent weeks, the 25-year-old Brazilian-Italian has travelled with other volunteers across England to urge European communities working in rural farms and warehouses to sign up before it's too late.

One key concern is that the immigration policy could leave a disastrous legacy similar to Britain's "Windrush" scandal, when many from the Caribbean who legally settled in the U.K. decades ago were wrongly caught up in tough new government rules to crack down on illegal immigration.

Many in the "Windrush generation" — named after the ship that carried the first post-war migrants from the West Indies — lost their homes and jobs or were even deported simply because they couldn't produce paperwork proving their residency rights.

Many Europeans, especially young people whose parents failed to apply, "won't necessarily realize they have lost their status right away," said Madeleine Sumption, director of Oxford University's Migration Observatory.

"For some, it will only become clear later on — for example, when they get a new job or need to be treated in hospital," she said. "It may be many more years before the legal, political, economic and social consequences start to emerge."

Britain's government has conceded that it will give the benefit of the doubt to people who have "reasonable grounds" for applying late, but that hasn't eased campaigners' worries. Many, including those who secured settled status, no longer feel confident in their future in Britain.

Elena Remigi, a translator originally from Milan who founded "In Limbo," a project to record the voices of EU nationals in the U.K. since the Brexit referendum, said many Europeans say they still feel betrayed by how their adopted country treated them.

"It is really sad that people who were living here before are now made to feel unwelcome and have to leave," she said. "That's really hard for some people to forgive."

Haselton, the Dutch migrant, said her British husband is mulling moving the family to the Netherlands as a direct consequence of Brexit. She is torn.

"I still love this country, it would break my heart if I had to move," she said. "At the same time I'm not sure I want to stay. When it comes to a sense of feeling that you belong, that isn't something that you

can do with a piece of paper.”

Virus infections surging in Africa’s vulnerable rural areas

By FARAI MUTSAKA Associated Press

ZVIMBA, Zimbabwe (AP) — For Pelagia Bvukura, who lives in a rural part of north-central Zimbabwe, COVID-19 had always been a “city disease,” affecting those in the capital, Harare, or other, distant big towns.

“There was no virus for us. We only used to hear it was in Harare or other towns or when city people died and we buried them here,” she said recently, referring to the custom in Zimbabwe where those who move to the city often are buried at their family’s rural home.

That is changing now. A new surge of the virus is finally penetrating Africa’s rural areas, where most of the continent’s people live, spreading to areas that once had been viewed as safe havens from infections that hit cities particularly hard.

With facilities in the countryside ill-prepared to fight the coronavirus, residents like Bvukura worry that the next graves being dug could be for their neighbors — or even themselves.

Her village of Zvimba, 110 kilometers (68 miles) from Harare, has yet to record a major spike in infections, but it sits in a province that is the current epicenter of the virus.

“It is now on our doorsteps. It’s scary. We don’t know how to protect ourselves. We have never dealt with such a problem before,” she said.

Like many here, she wasn’t wearing a mask and is yet to be vaccinated.

Africa has recorded over 5.3 million cases and is experiencing the worst of a wave driven by more contagious and deadlier variants. The continent recorded a 39% increase in new cases in the week from June 14-20, according to the World Health Organization.

With homesteads spaced far apart, few visitors and rare public gatherings, rural areas appeared so insulated that they drew some people from cities to escape both infection and economic hardship.

“It was a dangerous, false sense of security. Now a tragedy is unfolding,” said Dr. Johannes Marisa, president of the Medical and Dental Private Practitioners of Zimbabwe Association in Harare.

The delta variant that has devastated India has been detected in at least 14 African countries including Congo, Mozambique, Namibia, Uganda, South Africa and Zimbabwe, and not just in the cities.

“We are starting to see an upward trend in the rural and marginalized areas,” said Edward Simiyu, Uganda country director of the charity group Mercy Corps, in a statement earlier in June.

In Zimbabwe, three of the four districts under strict lockdown and declared as epicenters of the outbreak are in the predominantly rural Mashonaland West province, which recorded over half of the 801 cases reported last weekend. Other hot spots also are largely rural, a first for this country.

“We are going to see a lot of deaths, especially arising from rural areas. COVID-19 is now coming from the rural areas,” said Marisa, attributing the spike to “a high degree of complacency,” a lack of information and few vaccinations, with urban areas prioritized.

The virus can also spread at funerals when city dwellers return to visit rural relatives.

“I was at a funeral in a rural area recently and people were surprised to see me wearing a mask,” he said.

Rural areas are ill-equipped to deal with the surge, and urban health care facilities are under strain in treating an increasing number of people from the countryside. Zimbabwe’s major referral hospital, Parirenyatwa in Harare, is prioritizing beds for COVID-19 patients.

“Parirenyatwa is almost full. These are not people from Harare. Health facilities in rural areas are miserable, so all those people are being referred to city hospitals,” Marisa said.

In Mozambique’s remote Tete province, a hotbed of infections where the delta variant was recorded, President Filipe Nyusi expressed worry.

“We don’t have many beds. ... We don’t have many health staff in Tete either,” Nyusi said.

Because health care facilities in the countryside in places like Uganda are more poorly staffed than those in urban areas, “a penetration of COVID-19 infections in these rural and vulnerable regions is likely to be devastating, ... risking more people slipping deeper into poverty, further worsening social inequities, divi-

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sions, and conflict," said Simiyu of Mercy Corps.

Rural residents are finding it difficult to get vaccinated because of weak public health systems and vaccine distribution problems. Only 1% of Africa's 1.3 billion people have been vaccinated, according to the WHO and the Africa Centers for Disease Control.

The Zvimba Rural District hospital only had just a small number of coronavirus vaccines, reserved for second doses, its staff said.

But even after the vaccine becomes available, "the ability of health systems to absorb those doses and get them distributed — particularly in rural communities — is the next huge problem on the horizon," said Sean Granville-Ross, Africa regional director for Mercy Corps, in an interview with The Associated Press.

"There's a risk vaccines could sit spoiling in warehouses across African capitals if countries aren't ready to hit the ground running with mass vaccination campaigns, including in the hardest-to-reach rural areas where health infrastructure is already weak, as is trust in public health systems," Granville-Ross said.

Those in rural areas who are desperate for the vaccines, including the elderly, live far from hospitals and clinics.

Matrida Tendayi, who is 100 years old, said she is too frail to walk to the nearest clinic in Dema, a rural area about 50 kilometers (30 miles) from Harare, even if a vaccine was available.

"I have been waiting and waiting," she said. "But they are not coming."

Condo searchers eye tropical forecast as effort stretches on

By RUSS BYNUM Associated Press

SURFSIDE, Florida (AP) — Florida authorities asked the federal government for an additional rescue team to comb the rubble of a collapsed condo tower, underscoring the strenuous nature of the open-ended search for survivors in an area prone to tropical weather.

The possibility that severe weather in coming days could further stretch Florida's search and rescue resources prompted state officials to ask the federal government for the additional team, Kevin Guthrie of the Florida Division of Emergency Management said Tuesday. Already, intermittent bad weather has caused temporary delays in the search.

Guthrie said the new team, which would likely come from Virginia, would be on hand if severe weather hits the area in coming days and allow crews that have been working at the site for days to rotate out. Authorities said it's still a search-and-rescue operation, but no one has been found alive since hours after the collapse on Thursday.

"There are two areas of (possible storm) development out in the Atlantic, heading to the Caribbean. We have eight urban rescue teams in Florida. We talked about doing a relief," Guthrie said at a news conference Tuesday night. "We have all the resources we need but we're going to bring in another team. We want to rotate those out so we can get more resources out."

The National Hurricane Center says two disorganized storm systems in the Atlantic have a chance of becoming tropical systems in the coming days, but it is unclear at this point whether they would pose a threat to the U.S.

Charles Cyrille of the Miami-Dade County Office of Emergency said 900 workers from 50 federal, state and local agencies were working seamlessly on the search.

Elected officials have pledged to conduct multiple investigations into the sudden collapse of the 12-story Champlain Towers South in Surfside last week. Another victim was recovered Tuesday, bringing the confirmed death toll to 12, with 149 people still unaccounted for.

Miami-Dade County Mayor Daniella Levine Cava said that she and her staff will meet with engineering, construction and geology experts, among others, to review building safety issues and develop recommendations "to ensure a tragedy like this will never, ever happen again."

State Attorney Katherine Fernandez Rundle said she will pursue a grand jury investigation to examine factors and decisions that led to the collapse.

Gov. Ron DeSantis evoked a well-known military commitment to leave no one behind on the battlefield

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and pledged to do the same for the people still missing in the rubble.

"The way I look at it, as an old Navy guy, is when somebody is missing in action, in the military, you're missing until you're found. We don't stop the search," DeSantis said at a news conference Tuesday.

Also Tuesday, the White House announced that President Joe Biden and first lady Jill Biden would travel to Surfside on Thursday.

Work at the site has been deliberate and treacherous. The pancake collapse of the building left layer upon layer of intertwined debris, frustrating efforts to reach anyone who may have survived in a pocket of space.

Several members of an Israeli rescue team worked partly on hands and knees Tuesday over a small section of the rubble, digging with shovels, pickaxes and saws. They removed debris into buckets that were dumped into a metal construction bin, which was periodically lifted away by a crane. The crane then delivered an empty bin.

Late in the afternoon, rescue officials sounded a horn for a second time during the day's work, signaling an approaching storm with lightning. Workers temporarily evacuated.

Miami-Dade Fire Chief Alan Cominsky said the work has been extremely difficult, but "we're out here 110%."

"These are the times that are the most difficult," Cominsky said. "We are here to do a job. We are here with a passion. Hopefully, we have some success."

Widower seeking new start in Florida is missing in collapse

By ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON Associated Press

SURFSIDE, Florida (AP) — On a recent morning before communal prayers at a synagogue, Harry Rosenberg told a friend that his new beachfront condo in Florida offered a much-needed change of scenery after an awful year in which he lost his wife to cancer and both parents to COVID-19 in New York.

The home in Surfside was to be a gathering spot for visiting children and grandchildren, and his daughter and son-in-law were doing just that when they traveled to the condo last week from New Jersey to join him for the Sabbath.

Hours later, the building collapsed, and all three family members are missing in the rubble.

Their cascading tragedies — cancer, COVID-19 and now the flattening of the building — are reminders of the excruciating toll the collapse has taken on families after what was already a grief-filled year.

Elsewhere in the building, a woman also sought a fresh start in Florida after falling ill and recovering from COVID-19. Another man was visiting Florida to attend the funeral of an old friend who died after being infected, and a Colombian family was in Miami to get the vaccine.

"He told me, 'It is the next chapter of my life.' He went through hell. His parents passed away. His wife passed away," said Steve Eisenberg, who saw the 52-year-old asset manager last week at the synagogue.

Rosenberg "came to Florida to breathe a little bit," said Rabbi Sholom D. Lipskar, founder of the Shul of Bal Harbour, the synagogue he joined.

When the building tumbled to the ground, Rosenberg's daughter, Malky Weisz, 27, and her husband, Benny Weisz, 32, had just arrived for their visit on the second floor of Champlain Towers South. So far, 12 bodies have been recovered. Almost 150 people are still unaccounted for.

Described as a family man and observant Jew, Rosenberg had launched a young adult center for mental healing at a hospital in Israel in memory of his late wife, Anna Rosenberg.

Before his wife died last summer of a brain tumor, he spent three years taking care of her, a close friend said.

"He put his life on hold," said Maurice Wachsmann, a friend of Rosenberg's for more than 30 years.

Months after her death came more heartache. His father died of COVID-19 in January, and weeks later his mother died of the same.

"It was extremely difficult," Wachsmann said. "He did everything for his parents. Family first, before everything."

Rosenberg decided to move to Florida, first renting smaller apartments and finally buying last month the larger condo in Surfside, north of Miami Beach.

Last week, Rosenberg traveled to New York for the baby-naming ceremony of his second grandchild and rushed back to Miami to prepare for his daughter and son-in-law's visit. She works as an auditor at a branch of the Roth & Co accounting firm in Farmington, New Jersey. Her Austrian-born husband works in finance.

In his short time in Florida, he was already known by people in the community. Fellow members of the synagogue and his family are now anxiously awaiting any news from the scene. In the pile of rubble, family and friends have spotted one remnant of his life at Surfside from afar: a white couch.

Error mars vote count in NYC mayoral primary

By KAREN MATTHEWS and DEEPTI HAJELA Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The Democratic primary for mayor of New York City was thrown into a state of confusion Tuesday when election officials retracted their latest report on the vote count after realizing it had been corrupted by test data never cleared from a computer system.

The bungle was a black mark on New York City's first major foray into ranked choice voting and seemed to confirm worries that the city's Board of Elections, which is jointly run by Democrats and Republicans, was unprepared to implement the new system.

The disarray began as evening fell, when the board abruptly withdrew data it had released earlier in the day purporting to be a first round of results from the ranked choice system.

That data had indicated that Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams, a former police captain who would be the city's second Black mayor, had lost much of his lead and was ahead of former sanitation commissioner Kathryn Garcia by fewer than 16,000 votes.

Then the Board of Elections tweeted that it was aware of "a discrepancy" in its report on ranked choice voting results. It didn't initially explain what that discrepancy was, even as it pulled the data from its website.

Just before 10:30 p.m. it released a statement saying that 135,000 ballot images it had put into its computer system for testing purposes had never been cleared.

"The Board apologizes for the error and has taken immediate measures to ensure the most accurate up to date results are reported," it said in a statement.

The results initially released Tuesday, and then withdrawn, were incomplete to begin with because they didn't include any of the nearly 125,000 absentee ballots cast in the Democratic primary.

The Associated Press removed Tuesday's vote update from its published vote count after the board pulled the results.

Adams' campaign, which had publicly pointed out the vote discrepancy shortly after the faulty count was released, said in a statement that it remained confident he would ultimately prevail.

The publicized vote totals had included an unexpected jump in the number of ballots counted Tuesday compared to the number counted on the day of the primary.

Garcia said in a late afternoon news conference, before the numbers were withdrawn, that she was confident she had a path to victory, but wasn't "counting any chickens before they've hatched."

Later, her campaign issued a statement saying "The BOE's release of incorrect ranked choice votes is deeply troubling and requires a much more transparent and complete explanation. Every ranked choice and absentee vote must be counted accurately so that all New Yorkers have faith in our democracy and our government."

Elections officials had planned on conducting another round of ranked choice analysis on July 6 that would include absentee ballots. A note posted on the Board of Elections website indicated it would try posting accurate results without absentee ballots Wednesday.

New York City's primary went into a state of suspended animation a week ago while officials prepared to give the public its first look at results from the city's new ranked choice voting system.

Under the system, voters could rank up to five candidates in order of preference.

Since no candidate was the first choice of more than 50% of voters, a computer on Tuesday tabulated

ballots in a series of rounds that worked like instant run-offs.

In each round, the candidate in last place was eliminated. Votes cast for that person were then redistributed to the surviving candidates, based on whoever voters put next on their ranking list. That process repeated until only two candidates were left.

Besides Adams and Garcia, civil rights lawyer Maya Wiley was also still within striking distance of victory.

When voting ended June 22, elections officials only released results showing who voters put down as their first choice for the job. In that count, Adams had a lead of around 75,000 votes over Wiley with Garcia close behind in third.

Wiley was critical of the BOE, saying the chaos Tuesday "is not just failure to count votes properly today, it is the result of generations of failures that have gone unaddressed."

New York City's Board of Elections, which operates independently from City Hall, has long had a reputation for mistakes and mismanagement.

Ahead of the 2016 election, it mistakenly purged tens of thousands of voters from voting rolls. In 2018, voters had to wait in line for several hours at some polling places over equipment issues.

In 2020, it struggled to process applications for absentee ballots and initially sent many voters ballots with return envelopes printed with the wrong people's names on them.

The Democratic primary winner will be the prohibitive favorite in the general election against Curtis Sliwa, the Republican founder of the Guardian Angels.

Either Adams or Wiley would be the second Black mayor of New York City, and either Garcia or Wiley would be the first woman mayor.

Adams, 60, is a moderate Democrat who opposed the "defund the police" movement and said that under his leadership, the city could find a way to fight crime while also combating a legacy of racial injustice in policing.

He was previously a state senator before becoming Brooklyn's borough president, a job in which he lacks lawmaking power, but handles some constituent services and discretionary city spending.

Garcia, 51, is a city government veteran who ran as a nonideological crisis manager well-suited to guiding New York out of a once-in-a-century pandemic.

Garcia ran the department of sanitation from 2014 until leaving last September to explore a run for mayor. De Blasio also tapped Garcia to run an emergency food distribution program during the coronavirus pandemic after earlier appointing her interim chair of the city's embattled public housing system.

She earlier served as chief operating officer of the city's department of environmental protection, responsible for water and sewer systems.

Wiley, 57, served as counsel to Mayor Bill de Blasio and previously chaired a civilian panel that investigates complaints of police misconduct. A former legal analyst for MSNBC, she ran as a progressive who would cut \$1 billion from the police budget and divert it to other city agencies.

A traveler's checklist for Thailand's Phuket sandbox program

PHUKET, Thailand (AP) — Starting Thursday, Thailand will welcome back international visitors - as long as they are vaccinated - to its famous southern resort island of Phuket without having to be cooped up on arrival in a hotel room for a 14-day quarantine.

For a minimum of two weeks they will be free to roam the island, whose preparations include having a major proportion of the local population inoculated for COVID-19.

The icing on the cake is that after that initial 14 days, visitors will be able to travel relatively freely elsewhere in Thailand -- subject to the same restrictions as Thai travelers.

The "Phuket sandbox" program is open to visitors from 63 countries and three territories rated by Thailand as low or medium risk for COVID-19. Requirements beyond nationality are more complicated and involve a fair amount of paperwork, in addition to being subject to changes.

The most up-to-date and detailed information will generally be available from the website of the Tourism Authority of Thailand, at www.tatnews.org, or from the nearest Thai Embassy.

Visas for stays of up to 30 days are not necessary for many nationalities. Airlines with direct flights to Phuket include Emirates, Etihad Airways, Qatar Airways, El Al and Singapore Airlines.

The basic requirements before departure for Phuket include:

- Must have been staying in approved home country for at least 21 days before departure.
- Must obtain a Certificate of Entry — COE — from a Thai Embassy or consulate.
- Must be fully vaccinated at least 14 days before departure. (Children under six years old are exempted.)
- Must have a negative RT-PCR test for COVID-19 within 72 hours of departure.
- Must have a minimum \$100,000 medical insurance policy covering COVID-19 treatment.

Upon arrival:

-Must have an RT-PCR test for COVID-19 on the day of arrival, the sixth or seventh day of stay and the 12th or 13th day.

-Must stay for 14 days at approved "SHA+" hotels in order to travel onwards in Thailand. The booking must be confirmed before arrival. SHA+ certifies safety and health standards including having at least 70% of staff vaccinated for COVID-19.

-Must install Thailand Plus and Morchana apps, to track health and location, respectively.

-Must have evidence of negative COVID-19 test results over the 14-day stay for onward travel to other parts of Thailand.

Youth of the pandemic revisited: Hopeful, resilient, nervous

By MARTHA IRVINE AP National Writer

A young woman in California, newly vaccinated, flashes a smile and a peace sign as she poses for a prom photo with her pals. She feels strange but elated without her mask.

In Australia, a girl still clings to the fluffy border collie that her family got to comfort them in the depths of lockdown last year. Just recently, she had to shelter at home again because of a COVID-19 outbreak near her.

A boy in remote northern Canada, now a young teen, feels relief when he lifts his T-shirt sleeve for the first of two vaccine shots.

A baby-faced teen in Rwanda who wanted to be a soldier has changed his mind. The pandemic, he says, has showed him a different way to help the world.

They are among a group of young people who first spoke with The Associated Press last year, just as the pandemic started to grip the world. The AP recently checked in with them again to see how they're doing — and how the global crisis has molded them.

They've missed their friends, desperately. They've struggled at times to stay motivated and to focus on school done in various ways from home, if access to their studies was even available. Most are still awaiting their chance to get vaccinated, but want to do so.

They are anxious and happy and frustrated and hopeful, seemingly all at once. But they say the pandemic also has given them newfound resilience and an appreciation for even little things.

"I'm realizing that ... if there's an opportunity for memory making, you have to like go for it because there could be a chance that that opportunity will disappear," said Michaela Seah, the young woman in California.

In March 2020, Michaela was isolating in her bedroom in Palo Alto, just south of San Francisco. Sick with a fever, she stayed there for two weeks as a precaution to protect her family. It felt lonely, she said. But no one else got sick.

Little more than a year later, she walked across the stage at Palo Alto High School to receive her diploma. In early 2022, she will begin her freshman year at NYU with a semester in Paris.

"It's a big jump," the 18-year-old said. She's nervous, but also excited to begin this new chapter.

The joy of rejoining the world -- and especially reuniting with friends and extended family -- has been a universal theme for the young participants who've been able to do so. "Being with them, hugging them," Elena Maria Moretti, a 12-year-old in Rome, said. Last year, she was dancing hip hop alone in her bedroom and spraying disinfectant on packages the family received. Italy was among the first to experience huge

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death counts because of COVID-19.

Now wearing masks, she and her friends have been able to walk to school together and to study and visit in one another's homes. Being separated from them – stuck in her family's apartment for so long -- was "ugly," she said.

Not everyone is feeling so free. While cases and deaths are dropping in some parts of the world, the pandemic continues to rage in others, especially those with bigger populations and with less access to vaccines.

In New Delhi, India, young brothers Advait and Uddhav Sanweria have sheltered at home for months. This year alone, a second wave of COVID left more than 230,000 Indians dead in a four-month period.

"We thought that the entire human population will be finished," 10-year-old Advait said in a video interview recently filmed for the AP by the boys' parents. "And Earth will remain nothing but an empty sphere with dead bodies."

Uddhav, 9, still fears for their family, particularly his grandparents, who've managed to stay well so far.

The boys, a jovial pair who wrestle together and play cricket in their living room, talked about their hope for free vaccines, even if they are too young to get them themselves. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has since announced a plan to distribute free shots, in a bid to fully vaccinate the country by end of the year.

In Brazil, where COVID cases are still surging, 16-year-old Manuela Salomão, expressed frustration with her country's president, Jair Bolsonaro, whose government repeatedly ignored opportunities to buy vaccines.

"The pandemic was not easy for a lot of people in Brazil. Many lost their jobs and could not socially distance because they needed to survive," said Manuela, who lives in Sao Paulo.

"To die of hunger or of COVID? That's still very hard."

The pandemic has caused her to grow up more quickly, she said – to become more empathetic, to think more critically and to study even harder.

In Melbourne, Australia, Niki Jolene Berghamre-Davis, who's 12, just finished two weeks in lockdown. She's relied on her family and their new dog, Bailey, to keep her company and learned to play the clarinet. She says online school helped her become more independent.

Niki tries not to be annoyed by the shutdowns and Australia's restrictions on international travel. She's knows other countries have had it much worse – and is grateful that Australia has made it through the pandemic relatively unscathed.

"I would be really happy to spend time away," she said, wistfully. Sweden, where her family has relatives, would be her first destination. She misses them terribly.

In some ways, life as he knew it has returned for Tresor Ndizihwe, a 13-year-old in Kigali, Rwanda. He can play soccer with his friends again. He can now help his mother carry home food from the local markets -- plantains, sweet potatoes and other staples.

But returning to school was not so easy. First, he learned how much worse COVID had been and how his mother had tried to protect him from the realities. He'd also fallen behind on his studies because he had no computer or TV to access classes during lockdown.

Tresor is determined to catch up, and also spends time helping his younger siblings practice reading. When the AP first spoke to him in April 2020, he said he wanted to be a soldier.

Now the boy, a top student in his class before the pandemic, plans to be a doctor, "so if another pandemic arises, I can help."

He is glad that his mother, a teacher, got vaccinated. He will patiently wait for his own.

In Nunavut, a territory in far-north Canada, Owen Watson, another 13-year-old, had hoped the remoteness of his homeland would help keep everyone there safe.

Last year, he recorded a video for the AP, wearing a parka and NASA cap as he showed his closed school and playground, still with a bit of snow in late spring. For months, partly due to the occasional lockdowns

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and strict travel bans, the small capital city where he lives, Iqaluit, had no documented cases of Covid. That changed this April.

"It got pretty scary," Owen said. Health officials there worried the virus would spread quickly, since Inuit communities can be more vulnerable.

Owen breathed easier when his parents got vaccinated. Then this month, still wearing the NASA cap, he got the first of two Pfizer shots, newly approved for his age group in some countries.

"I'm feeling a bit more calm now," he said. But there's always that underlying fear that it won't stay that way.

That, too, was a common sentiment among the young people who spoke with the AP.

It's not just the fear of another pandemic. For Freddie Golden, a 17-year-old in Chicago, the state of the world is overwhelming in many ways. As young Black man, for instance, he watched last year's news about the police killings of George Floyd and others with a heavy heart.

"I want to live life in a good way, not where bad things are continuously thrown at me," said Freddie, who'll begin his senior year at North Lawndale College Preparatory High School on Chicago's West side in a few weeks.

His mom, Wilonda Cannon, watched as her son struggled emotionally last year – but also as he grew into a man, with broad, muscular shoulders and deepened voice. It was a reminder, she said, that even when life came to a halt in many ways, time marched on.

"My family, especially my mom, helped pull me through," said Freddie, who now feels more ready to take on the world.

His big goal is to become an engineer – "to change the world with technology" -- and to play basketball in college. He has his sights set on Howard University in Washington.

"I feel like for kids my age ... all across the world, it's been a tough, stressful situation," Freddie said. "But I feel like we all can push through. We all can do it. We just got to stay the course.

"I feel like we deserve happiness."

House poised to launch new probe of Jan. 6 insurrection

By MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House is poised to launch a new investigation of the Jan. 6 Capitol insurrection on Wednesday with expected approval of a 13-person select committee to probe the violent attack.

The panel would be led by Democrats, with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi appointing a chairperson and at least eight of the committee's members. The resolution up for a vote gives Pelosi a possible say in the appointment of the other five members as well, directing that they will be named "after consultation" with House Republican leader Kevin McCarthy.

In a memo to all House Republicans late Tuesday, No. 2 House Republican Steve Scalise urged his members to vote against the resolution, saying the select panel "is likely to pursue a partisan agenda" in investigating the siege by former President Donald Trump's supporters. Scalise and McCarthy have so far declined to say whether Republicans will even participate.

Pelosi is moving to form the select committee after Senate Republicans blocked the creation of a separate independent and bipartisan panel that would have been evenly split between the parties and modeled after a commission that investigated the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Republicans ready to move on from the insurrection — and Trump's role in it — argued against that as well, claiming it would be duplicative and partisan.

The speaker has said that it was her preference to have an independent panel lead the inquiry, but that Congress could not wait any longer to begin a deeper look at the insurrection.

The GOP role in the probe, and the appointments to the panel, could help determine whether the committee becomes a bipartisan effort or a tool of further division. Two Senate committees issued a bipartisan report with security recommendations earlier this month, but it did not examine the origins of the siege, leaving many unanswered questions about the events of the day.

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McCarthy is facing pressure to take the investigation seriously from police officers who responded to the attack, Democrats and even some of his fellow Republicans. Pelosi has invited representatives of the Metropolitan Police Department of the District of Columbia and the U.S. Capitol Police to sit in the gallery and watch Wednesday's vote, according to a person familiar with the plan who wasn't authorized to discuss it and spoke on condition of anonymity. Dozens of those officers were brutally beaten and suffered injuries as Trump's supporters pushed past them and broke into the building to interrupt the certification of President Joe Biden's victory.

Two of the officers who responded, Metropolitan Police Officer Michael Fanone and Capitol Police Officer Harry Dunn, met with McCarthy on Friday and asked him to take the House investigation seriously.

Fanone, who has described being dragged down the Capitol steps by rioters who shocked him with a stun gun and beat him, said he asked McCarthy for a commitment not to put "the wrong people" on the panel, a reference to those in the GOP who have downplayed the violence and defended the insurrectionists. Fanone said McCarthy told him he would take his request seriously.

Sen. Mitt Romney, R-Utah, has also publicly pressured McCarthy. "I hope he appoints people who are seen as being credible," he said Sunday on CNN.

Ohio Rep. Jim Jordan, a close Trump ally, said that he doesn't know what McCarthy is going to do but that it's possible Republicans will just choose not to be involved.

"I know I've got real concerns, I know he does, that this is all just political, and that this is impeachment three against President Trump," Jordan said.

Trump was twice impeached by the House and twice acquitted by the Senate, the second time for telling his supporters just before the insurrection to "fight like hell" to overturn his defeat to Biden.

Pelosi has not yet said who will lead the panel, but one possibility is House Homeland Security Committee Chair Bennie Thompson, D-Miss. Thompson said Tuesday that it would be an "honor" to serve as chair and that it's Pelosi's call if she wants to have a say on the Republican members.

"They had an opportunity to really engage," Thompson said of Republicans who voted against the bipartisan commission. "And they didn't. So they can't now come back and say, 'Oh, that's not fair.'"

Many Republicans have expressed concerns about a partisan probe, since majority Democrats are likely to investigate Trump's role in the siege and the right-wing groups that participated in it. Almost three dozen House Republicans voted last month for the legislation to create an independent commission, and seven Republicans in the Senate have also supported moving forward on that bill. But that was short of the 10 Senate Republicans who would be necessary to pass it.

Many Republicans have made clear that they want to move on from the Jan. 6 attack. But some have gone further, including Rep. Andrew Clyde of Georgia, who suggested that video of the rioters looked like a "tourist visit." Rep. Paul Gosar of Arizona insisted that a Trump supporter named Ashli Babbitt, who was shot and killed that day while trying to break into the House chamber, was "executed." Others have defended the rioters as they have been charged with federal crimes.

In their meeting with McCarthy, Fanone and Dunn asked the GOP leader to publicly denounce those comments downplaying the violence, as well as the 21 Republicans who recently voted against giving medals of honor to the U.S. Capitol Police and the Metropolitan Police to thank them for their service. They said McCarthy, who voted for the measure, told them he would only deal with those members privately.

Seven people died during and after the rioting, including Babbitt and three other Trump supporters who suffered medical emergencies. Two police officers died by suicide in the days that followed, and a third officer, Capitol Police Officer Brian Sicknick, collapsed and later died after engaging with the protesters. A medical examiner later determined he died of natural causes.

More deaths reported in intense US Northwest heat wave

By NICHOLAS K. GERANIOS and ANDREW SELSKY Associated Press

SPOKANE, Wash. (AP) — About a dozen deaths in Washington and Oregon may be tied to an intense heat wave that brought scorching temperatures to the Northwest and caused one power utility to impose

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rolling blackouts amid heavy demand.

The dangerous weather that gave Seattle and Portland consecutive days of record high temperatures exceeding 100 degrees Fahrenheit (37.7 degrees Celsius) eased in those cities on Tuesday. But inland Spokane, towns in eastern Oregon and cities in Idaho saw temperatures spike.

The National Weather Service said the mercury reached 109 F (42.2 C) in Tuesday in Spokane — the highest temperature ever recorded there.

About 9,300 Avista Utilities customers in Spokane lost power on Monday and the company said more planned blackouts began on Tuesday afternoon in the city of about 220,000 people.

"We try to limit outages to one hour per customer," said Heather Rosentrater, an Avista vice president for energy delivery.

She said about 2,400 customers were without power as of shortly after 2 p.m. Tuesday, mostly on the north side of the city, and those customers had been alerted about the planned outage. About 21,000 customers were warned Tuesday morning that they might experience an outage, she said.

Rosentrater said the outages were a distribution problem, and did not stem from a lack of electricity in the system.

Meanwhile, authorities said multiple recent deaths in the region were possibly related to the scorching weather.

The King County Medical Examiner's office said two people died due to hyperthermia, meaning their bodies had become dangerously overheated. The Seattle Times reported they were a 65-year-old Seattle woman and a 68-year-old Enumclaw, Washington, woman.

And the Snohomish County Medical Examiner's Office on Tuesday told the Daily Herald in Everett, Washington, that three men — ages 51, 75 and 77 — died after experiencing heat stroke in their homes. They were from Everett, Granite Falls and Marysville in Washington.

The heat may have claimed the life of a worker on a nursery in Oregon, the state's worker safety agency, known as Oregon OSHA, said on Tuesday.

The man who died was from Guatemala and had apparently arrived in the United States only a few months ago, said Andres Pablo Lucas, owner of Brother Farm Labor Contractor that provided workers for the nursery, including the man who died.

The man, whose name was not disclosed, died at Ernst Nursery and Farms, a wholesale supplier in St. Paul, 20 miles (32 kilometers) north of Salem, on Saturday amid sweltering temperatures. An Oregon OSHA database listed the death as heat-related.

"The employee was working on a crew moving irrigation lines. At the end of the shift he was found unresponsive in the field," said agency spokesman Aaron Corvin.

Speaking in Spanish, Pablo Lucas said when workers gathered together shortly after noon Saturday, they noticed one of them was missing. They began searching and found his body. Pablo Lucas said he didn't remember the man's name.

Pablo Lucas said the laborers often have the option to start working near sunrise when it is cooler and can stop around midday, but some want to stay regardless of the heat.

"The people want to work, to fight to succeed," he said. "For that reason, they stay."

Officials in Bremerton, Washington, said heat may have contributed to four deaths in that Puget Sound city. But Vince Hlavaty, Bremerton's medical officer, told the Kitsap Sun that firefighters cannot say definitively whether the heat was the cause of death.

In Bend, Oregon, authorities said the deaths of two homeless people in extreme heat may have been weather-related.

The United Farm Workers urged Washington Gov. Jay Inslee to immediately issue emergency heat standards protecting all farm and other outdoor workers in the state with a strong agricultural sector.

Several cities in Idaho also topped 100 F (37.7 C) on Tuesday with the hottest spot in Lewiston where the temperature reached 115 F (46.1 C).

President Joe Biden, during an infrastructure speech in Wisconsin, took note of the Northwest as he

spoke about the need to be prepared for extreme weather.

"Anybody ever believe you'd turn on the news and see it's 116 degrees in Portland, Oregon? 116 degrees," the president said, working in a dig at those who cast doubt on the reality of climate change. "But don't worry -- there is no global warming because it's just a figment of our imaginations."

The heat wave was caused by what meteorologists described as a dome of high pressure over the Northwest and worsened by human-caused climate change, which is making such extreme weather events more likely and more intense.

Tuskegee relatives promote COVID-19 vaccines in ad campaign

By LINDSEY TANNER AP Medical Writer

Tuskegee is the one-word answer some people give as a reason they're avoiding COVID-19 vaccines. A new ad campaign launched Wednesday with relatives of men who unwittingly became part of the infamous experiment wants to change minds.

Omar Neal, 63, a former mayor of the Alabama town, said he was hesitant at first about the shots. Neal is a nephew of Freddie Lee Tyson, a family man who was among several hundred Black men who decades ago became involved without their consent in the federally backed syphilis study.

Neal said he agreed to appear in the national campaign after doing research to gain confidence in the vaccines.

"I want to save lives," Neal told The Associated Press. "I didn't want people to use Tuskegee and what transpired there as a reason for not taking the vaccine."

In 1932 and over 40 years, Black men in Tuskegee, Alabama, were subjected to experimentation without their knowledge. Most of the 600 men had syphilis — including Tyson, who got infected before birth — but they were left untreated so researchers could study the natural history of the disease.

Tyson died from unrelated causes in 1988, 16 years after the study ended. But many others died from a disease that can be cured with penicillin.

Neal and other Tyson relatives are among half a dozen Tuskegee descendants involved in the ads, which focus on vaccine hesitancy among Black Americans. They say vaccination is needed to help communities of color and curb a disease that has disproportionately affected Black Americans.

"Don't deny ourselves the opportunity the men were denied," Tyson's 76-year-old daughter, Lillie Tyson Head, said in one of the ads.

"It's really up to us to take ownership of our health and this story," Carmen Head Thornton, the granddaughter Tyson called his "Carmen girl," said in another ad.

Vaccines are highly effective against COVID-19. Yet U.S. vaccination rates are lower than government goals, with 46% fully vaccinated while 54% have received one dose. People of color have lagged behind white Americans in getting the shots.

Authorities are concerned about the slowing pace of new vaccinations amid persistent pockets of resistance. Limited access is an issue for some Black people, but so is mistrust of the medical system.

Thornton, a director at the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, was a young girl when she learned what had happened to her grandfather. The two were extremely close; she recalls catching her first fish with him and watching mesmerized while he stitched quilts by hand.

She pledged to devote her life to fighting health inequities and injustice, and sees COVID-19 vaccines as a way to address disparities the pandemic laid bare.

The campaign includes a minidocumentary and shorter 60-second versions made for TV and online use. They are part of the Ad Council's ongoing multimillion-dollar education campaign aiming to encourage confidence in the shots, paid for by donations from media corporations.

Condo board boss warned of worsening damage before collapse

By CURT ANDERSON and BERNARD CONDON Associated Press

Weeks before a Florida condo building collapsed, the president of its board wrote that structural prob-

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lems identified in a 2018 inspection had "gotten significantly worse" and owners needed to pay a hefty price to get them fixed.

The April 9 "Dear Neighbors" letter from Champlain Towers South Condominium President Jean Wodnicki hinted at an ongoing debate over the repairs and a reluctance by some condo owners to pay for major work that would cost at least \$15.5 million.

"A lot of this work could have been done or planned for in years gone by. But this is where we are now," she wrote in the letter, which was confirmed to The Associated Press by a spokesman for the condo board.

Wodnicki noted costs had increased since an October 2018 report by engineering firm Morabito Consultants first identified key issues with weakening concrete, and she predicted they would only grow more if put off any longer.

"Indeed the observable damage such as in the garage has gotten significantly worse since the initial inspection," Wodnicki wrote. "The concrete deterioration is accelerating."

"It is impossible to know the extent of the damage to the underlying rebar until the concrete is opened up. Oftentimes the damage is more extensive than can be determined by inspection of the surface," she wrote.

She added, "I acknowledge that we are talking about a huge project and a very large assessment. The longer we wait, the higher the bids will be."

Wodnicki did not immediately respond to phone, email and text messages seeking comment about the letter, which was first reported by USA Today and The Wall Street Journal.

Just over two months later and with bids for the work still pending, the 12-story Champlain Towers South building in Surfside came tumbling down early last Thursday. While the structural problems from the 2018 inspection have come under intense scrutiny, no definitive cause has been identified for the collapse that has left at least 11 people confirmed dead and more than 150 unaccounted for.

The Morabito report focused attention on the pool deck, which was found to have waterproofing underneath that had failed and had been laid flat instead of sloping to drain off water. This threatened not only the concrete slab under the pool but also other concrete structural areas.

The inspection was an early part of a process mandated by Miami-Dade County that all buildings undergo recertification — which would include any necessary repairs — once they reach 40 years of age. Champlain Towers South was completed in 1981.

Just a month after Morabito presented his findings in 2018, a Surfside building official assured board members that the building was "in very good shape," according to minutes from that meeting.

The condominium association pegged the total repair and restoration cost at \$16.2 million — counting items added since the 2018 Morabito inspection — that would be defrayed in part with about \$707,000 the association had in cash on hand. That left the owners with a bill of \$15.5 million, with individual assessments ranging from \$80,000 for a one-bedroom unit to more than \$300,000 for a penthouse.

"For those who believe we are assessing too much, this shows that we are actually under-assessing a bit, according to estimates," Wodnicki wrote.

The letter also shows that, in April, a bid package for the major concrete and waterproofing work was still being discussed. The plan was to open those bids on June 8, but it's not clear from documents released to date whether that happened.

The bill for the repairs was a big topic of conversation among residents.

"A lot of people were complaining, especially the old people living there," said condo owner Rosalia Cordaro, who was in New York when the building collapsed. "It was a lot of money. I was complaining."

Another owner said the assessment was the talk of the pool when she last visited a week before the collapse.

"It was the theme of most of our conversations," said Nieves Aguero. "Are you going to pay it? Are you going to refinance?"

"The number kept getting bigger, bigger and bigger," said owner Alfredo Lopez, adding that the board did a good job of communicating and keeping the process transparent.

"A lot of people were unhappy with the upcoming assessment, but we all had the same goal of protect-

ing our building, protecting our investment," Lopez said.

Sweltering heat wave linked to sudden deaths in Vancouver

VANCOUVER, British Columbia (AP) — A sweltering heat wave that has settled over western Canada for several days is believed to be a contributing factor in dozens of sudden-death calls received by police in the Vancouver area, authorities said Tuesday.

Cpl. Mike Kalanj of Burnaby Royal Canadian Mounted Police said the detachment responded to 25 sudden-death calls in a 24-hour period starting Monday. The deaths are still under investigation and many of the deceased were seniors, he said.

Temperatures in the Vancouver area reached just under 90 degrees Fahrenheit (32 Celsius) Monday, but the humidity made it feel close to 104 degrees (40 Celsius) in areas that aren't near water, Environment Canada said.

The record-breaking heat wave could ease over parts of British Columbia, Yukon and the Northwest Territories by Wednesday, but any reprieve for the Prairie provinces is further off.

In Vancouver, the police department said it had redeployed dozens of officers and asked the public to call 911 only for emergencies because heat-related deaths had depleted front-line resources and delayed response times.

"Vancouver has never experienced heat like this, and sadly dozens of people are dying because of it," Sgt. Steve Addison said in a news release. "Our officers are stretched thin, but we're still doing everything we can to keep people safe."

As of mid-afternoon Tuesday, he said, police had responded to more than 65 sudden deaths since the heat wave began Friday.

"The vast majority of these cases are related to the heat," Addison said, adding that on a typical day, Vancouver police respond to between three and four sudden-death calls.

Ingrid Jarrett, CEO of the British Columbia Hotel Association, said residents in parts of the Lower Mainland, Victoria and the Okanagan region have been booking air-conditioned rooms so they can continue working and also get some sleep.

Environment Canada said the weather system shattered 103 heat records across British Columbia, Alberta, Yukon and Northwest Territories on Monday. Those records include a new Canadian high temperature of 118 degrees (47.9 Celsius) set in Lytton, British Columbia, smashing the previous record of 116 degrees (46.6 Celsius) set in the same village a day earlier.

Blackouts in US Northwest due to heat wave, deaths reported

By NICHOLAS K. GERANIOS and ANDREW SELSKY Associated Press

SPOKANE, Wash. (AP) — The unprecedented Northwest U.S. heat wave that slammed Seattle and Portland, Oregon, moved inland Tuesday — prompting a electrical utility in Spokane, Washington, to resume rolling blackouts amid heavy power demand.

Officials said a dozen deaths in Washington and Oregon may be tied to the intense heat that began late last week.

The dangerous weather that gave Seattle and Portland consecutive days of record high temperatures exceeding 100 degrees Fahrenheit (37.7 degrees Celcius) was expected to ease in those cities. But inland Spokane saw temperatures spike.

The National Weather Service said the mercury reached 109 F (42.2 C) in Spokane— the highest temperature ever recorded there.

About 9,300 Avista Utilities customers in Spokane lost power on Monday and the company said more planned blackouts began on Tuesday afternoon in the city of about 220,000 people.

"We try to limit outages to one hour per customer," said Heather Rosentrater, an Avista vice president for energy delivery.

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She said about 2,400 customers were without power as of shortly after 2 p.m. Tuesday, mostly on the north side of the city, and those customers had been alerted about the planned outage. About 21,000 customers were warned Tuesday morning that they might experience an outage, she said.

Avista had to implement deliberate blackouts on Monday because "the electric system experienced a new peak demand, and the strain of the high temperatures impacted the system in a way that required us to proactively turn off power for some customers," said company president and chief executive Dennis Vermillion. "This happened faster than anticipated."

Rosentrater said the outages were a distribution problem, and did not stem from a lack of electricity in the system

Meanwhile, authorities said multiple recent deaths in the region were possibly related to the scorching weather.

The King County Medical Examiner's office said two people died due to hyperthermia, meaning their bodies had become dangerously overheated. The Seattle Times reported they were a 65-year-old Seattle woman and a 68-year-old Enumclaw, Washington, woman.

And the Snohomish County Medical Examiner's Office on Tuesday told the Daily Herald in Everett, Washington, that three men — ages 51, 75 and 77 — died after experiencing heat stroke in their homes. They were from Everett, Granite Falls and Marysville in Washington.

The heat may have also claimed the life of a worker on a nursery in Oregon, the state's worker safety agency, known as Oregon OSHA, said on Tuesday.

The man who died was from Guatemala and had apparently arrived in the United States only a few months ago, said Andres Pablo Lucas, owner of Brother Farm Labor Contractor that provided workers for the nursery, including the man who died.

The man, whose name was not disclosed, died at Ernst Nursery and Farms, a wholesale supplier in St. Paul, 20 miles (32 kilometers) north of Salem, on Saturday amid sweltering temperatures. An Oregon OSHA database listed the death as heat-related.

"The employee was working on a crew moving irrigation lines. At the end of the shift he was found unresponsive in the field," said agency spokesman Aaron Corvin.

Speaking in Spanish, Pablo Lucas said when workers gathered together shortly after noon on Saturday, they noticed one of them was missing. They began searching and found his body. Pablo Lucas said he didn't remember the man's name.

Pablo Lucas said the laborers often have the option to start working near sunrise when it is cooler and can stop around midday, but some want to stay regardless of the heat.

"The people want to work, to fight to succeed," he said. "For that reason, they stay."

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In Bend, Oregon, authorities said the deaths of two homeless people in extreme heat may have been weather-related.

The United Farm Workers urged Washington Gov. Jay Inslee to immediately issue emergency heat standards protecting all farm and other outdoor workers in the state with a strong agricultural sector. The state's current heat standards fall short of safeguards the UFW first won in California in 2005 that have prevented deaths and illnesses from heat stroke, the union said in a statement.

Unlike workers in California, Washington state farm workers do not have the right to work shade and breaks amid extreme temperatures.

"I was off today so I was helping distribute water and information to the cherry harvesters," said Martha Acevedo, a wine grape worker from Sunnyside, Washington, said in a union statement. "They were struggling. No shade, not even cold water."

Seattle was cooler Tuesday with temperatures expected to reach about 90 F (32.2 C) after registering 108 degrees F (42 Celsius) on Monday — well above Sunday's all-time high of 104 F (40 C). Portland, Oregon,

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reached 116 F (46.6 C) after hitting records of 108 F (42 C) on Saturday and 112 F (44 C) on Sunday.

President Joe Biden, during an infrastructure speech in Wisconsin, took note of the Northwest as he spoke about the need to be prepared for extreme weather.

"Anybody ever believe you'd turn on the news and see it's 116 degrees in Portland Oregon? 116 degrees," the president said, working in a dig at those who cast doubt on the reality of climate change. "But don't worry -- there is no global warming because it's just a figment of our imaginations."

The heat wave was caused by what meteorologists described as a dome of high pressure over the Northwest and worsened by human-caused climate change, which is making such extreme weather events more likely and more extreme.

At 100, China's Communist Party looks to cement its future

By KEN MORITSUGU Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — For China's Communist Party, celebrating its 100th birthday on Thursday is not just about glorifying its past. It's also about cementing its future and that of its leader, Chinese President Xi Jinping.

In the build-up to the July 1 anniversary, Xi and the party have exhorted its members and the nation to remember the early days of struggle in the hills of the inland city of Yan'an, where Mao Zedong established himself as party leader in the 1930s.

Dug into earthen cliffs, the primitive homes where Mao and his followers lived are now tourist sites for the party faithful and schoolteachers encouraged to spread the word. The cave-like rooms feel far removed from Beijing, the modern capital where national festivities are being held, and the skyscrapers of Shenzhen and other high-tech centers on the coast that are more readily associated with today's China.

Yet in marking its centenary, the Communist Party is using this past — selectively — to try to ensure its future and that of Xi, who may be eyeing, as Mao did, ruling for life.

"By linking the party to all of China's accomplishments of the past century, and none of its failures, Xi is trying to bolster support for his vision, his right to lead the party and the party's right to govern the country," said Elizabeth Economy, a senior fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution.

This week's celebrations focus on two distinct eras — the early struggles and recent achievements — glossing over the nearly three decades under Mao from the 1950s to 1970s, when mostly disastrous social and economic policies left millions dead and the country impoverished.

To that end, a spectacular outdoor gala attended by Xi in Beijing on Monday night relived the Long March of the 1930s — a retreat to Yan'an that has become of party lore — before moving on to singing men holding giant wrenches and women with bushels of wheat. But it also focused on the present, with representations of special forces climbing a mountain and medical workers battling COVID-19 in protective gear.

The party has long invoked its history to justify its right to rule, said Joseph Fewsmith, a professor of Chinese politics at Boston University.

Shoring up its legitimacy is critical since the party has run China single-handedly for more than 70 years — through the chaotic years under Mao, through the collapse of the Soviet Union and through the unexpected adoption of market-style reforms that over time have built an economic powerhouse, though millions remain in poverty.

Many Western policymakers and analysts believed that capitalism would transform China into a democracy as its people prospered, following the pattern of former dictatorships such as South Korea and Taiwan.

The Communist Party has confounded that thinking, taking a decisive turn against democracy when it cracked down on large-scale protests in Beijing's Tiananmen Square in 1989 and quashing any challenges to single-party rule in the ensuing decades — most recently all but extinguishing dissent in Hong Kong after anti-government protests shook the city in 2019.

Its leaders have learned the lesson of the Soviet Union, where the communists lost power after opening the door to pluralism, said Zhang Shiyi of the Institute of Party History and Literature.

Instead, China's newfound wealth gave the party the means to build a high-speed rail network and

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other infrastructure to modernize at home and project power abroad with a strong military and a space program that has landed on the moon and Mars. China is still a middle-income country, but its very size makes it the world's second-largest economy and puts it on a trajectory to rival the U.S. as a superpower.

In the meantime, it has doubled down on its repressive tactics, stamping out dissent from critics of its policies and pushing the assimilation of ethnic minorities seeking to preserve their customs and language in areas such as Tibet and the heavily Muslim Xinjiang region. While it is difficult to gauge public support for the party, it has likely been boosted at least in some quarters by China's relative success at controlling the COVID-19 pandemic and its standing up to criticism from the United States and others.

"We have never been so confident about our future," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying told journalists on a recent trip to the party's historic sites in Yan'an.

Tiananmen Square, where Mao proclaimed the founding of communist China in 1949, is no longer a home for student protesters with democratic dreams. On Thursday, the plaza in the center of Beijing will host the nation's major celebration of party rule. While most details remain under wraps, authorities have said that Xi will give an important speech.

The anniversary marks a meeting of about a dozen people in Shanghai in 1921 that is considered the first congress of the Chinese Communist Party — though it actually started in late July. The festivities will likely convey the message that the party has brought China this far, and that it alone can lift the nation to greatness — arguing in essence that it must remain in power.

Xi also appears to be considering a third five-year term that would start in 2022, after the party scrapped term limits.

The centennial is at once a benchmark to measure how far the country has come and a moment for Xi and the party to move toward their goals for 2049, which would mark the 100th year of communist rule, said Alexander Huang, a professor at Tamkang University in Taiwan. By then, Xi has said, the aim is basic prosperity for the entire population and for China to be a global leader with national strength and international influence.

"Whether they can achieve that goal is the biggest challenge for the Chinese leadership today," he said, noting growing tensions with other countries, an aging population and a young generation that, as elsewhere, is rejecting the grueling rat race for the traditional markers of success.

Still, the party's ability to evolve and rule for so long, albeit in part by suppressing dissent, suggests it may remain in control well into its second century. The party insists it has no intention of exporting its model to other countries, but if China continues to rise, it could well challenge the western democratic model that won the Cold War and has dominated the post-World War II era.

"In the United States, you only talk, talk, talk," said Hua of the Foreign Ministry. "You try to win votes. But after four years, the other people can overthrow your policies. How can you ensure the people's living standards, that their demands can be satisfied?"

Facebook message leads to warrant in years-old rape claim

By MARYCLAIRE DALE Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — While she pleaded for prosecutors to take up her college rape complaint, Shannon Keeler studied in Spain, won a national championship in lacrosse, earned a bachelor's degree and fell in love.

All the while, she gathered evidence from the freshman year attack and passed it on to investigators. Here are the names of people who saw the upperclassman stalk me at the frat party in 2013. Here's the phone number of the friend who saw him follow me home. Here's the name of the hospital where my coach took me for a rape kit.

And then, just last year: Here's a recent message from his Facebook account that says, "So I raped you."

After verifying the account, and after Keeler told her story to The Associated Press, a new team of police and prosecutors on Tuesday obtained an arrest warrant, charging Ian Cleary, 28, of Saratoga, California, with sexually assaulting Keeler when they were students at Gettysburg College in 2013. Police say they

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had not yet located him, and aren't sure where he is. So it's still not clear whether Keeler will see the case go to trial.

"While I am moved to tears by this result, which I have waited for (for) over seven years, I am mindful that this moment came because I went public with my story, which no survivor should have to do in order to obtain justice," Keeler, now 26, said in a statement issued through her lawyer.

Keeler had discussed her experience in the AP story that detailed the frequent reluctance among prosecutors to file charges in campus rape cases. Authorities had told Keeler it was difficult to prosecute cases when the victim had been drinking, she said. The rape kit was later lost or destroyed.

The affidavit filed along with the warrant accuses Cleary, then a junior and a goalie on the ice hockey team, of following Keeler home from the party, sneaking into her room and sexually assaulting her. Keeler did not even know his name. As he apologized and fled, Keeler texted friends on campus "OMG please Help me," the documents said.

The Gettysburg Police Department had reopened the case last year after Keeler showed them a flurry of messages that appeared to come from Cleary's Facebook account. Police got a search warrant for the account, and matched it to Cleary through the cellphone number, according to the affidavit. Adams County District Attorney Brian Sinnett, whose office had filed few rape cases involving adult victims since 2013, supported the charges.

Washington lawyer Laura Dunn, who represents Keeler, said she hopes the case inspires authorities to be more responsive to sex assault victims. She wonders what's next.

"Are we going to be able to find him? Are we going to be able to have an arrest? Is there going to be a plea deal or successful prosecution?" she said. "I remain hopeful, but I do have a serious concern with the fact that he has not yet been arrested, not yet been located."

A cellphone linked to Cleary rang unanswered Tuesday and did not have voice mail. Messages left at phone numbers associated with his father in California and his mother in Maryland were not immediately returned.

The AP previously did not name Cleary because he had not been charged, and had not been able to reach him for comment. Now that the arrest warrant has been issued, The AP is using his name.

The alleged assault occurred on the final night of Keeler's first semester at Gettysburg, when few students were still on campus. Victim advocates say that campus sexual assaults frequently occur during a student's first year, when they are perhaps most vulnerable.

Keeler had stayed an extra day because a snowstorm had delayed her last exam until that Saturday. Cleary never returned to campus after that semester, ending the school's Title IX investigation, she said. He appears to have later graduated from a university in northern California.

Keeler always felt she had a strong case. The witnesses include a friend who escorted her home from the party to keep her safe — and says Cleary followed them and offered \$20 to leave him alone with Keeler.

"It has bothered me over the years that I was never able to do anything," Keeler told the AP this spring. "If you're not going to help me, who are you going to help? Because I do have evidence."

Only one in five college sex assault victims report to police. And when they do, experts say, prosecutors often hesitate to take cases where victims had been drinking or knew the accused.

Cleary appears to have lived in Europe in recent years. The efforts to locate him could stretch across the country and overseas, officials said.

Supreme Court leaves CDC eviction moratorium in place

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court is leaving a pandemic-inspired nationwide ban on evictions in place, over the votes of four objecting conservative justices.

The court on Tuesday rejected a plea by landlords to end the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention moratorium on evicting millions of tenants who aren't paying rent during the coronavirus pandemic. Last week, the Biden administration extended the moratorium by a month, until the end of July. It said then it did not expect another extension.

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U.S. Judge Dabney Friedrich in Washington had struck down the moratorium as exceeding the CDC's authority, but put her ruling on hold. The high court voted 5-4 to keep the ban in place until the end of July.

In a brief opinion, Justice Brett Kavanaugh said he agreed with Friedrich's ruling, but voted to leave the ban on evictions in place because it's due to end in a month and "because those few weeks will allow for additional and more orderly distribution of the congressionally appropriated rental assistance funds."

Also last week, the Treasury Department issued new guidance encouraging states and local governments to streamline distribution of the nearly \$47 billion in available emergency rental assistance funding

Chief Justice John Roberts and the court's three liberal members also voted to keep the moratorium in place.

Justices Samuel Alito, Amy Coney Barrett, Neil Gorsuch and Clarence Thomas said they would have ended it.

The eviction ban was initially put in place last year to provide protection for renters out of concern that having families lose their homes and move into shelters or share crowded conditions with relatives or friends during the pandemic would further spread the highly contagious virus.

By the end of March, 6.4 million American households were behind on their rent, according to the Department of Housing and Urban Development. As of June 7, roughly 3.2 million people in the U.S. said they faced eviction in the next two months, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's Household Pulse Survey.

Florida officials pledge multiple probes into condo collapse

By TERRY SPENCER Associated Press

SURFSIDE, Florida (AP) — Elected officials pledged Tuesday to conduct multiple investigations into the collapse of an oceanfront Florida condo tower, vowing to convene a grand jury and to look closely "at every possible angle" to prevent any other building from experiencing such a catastrophic failure.

Miami-Dade County Mayor Daniella Levine Cava said she and her staff will meet with engineering, construction and geology experts, among others, to review building safety issues and develop recommendations "to ensure a tragedy like this will never, ever happen again."

State Attorney Katherine Fernandez Rundle said she will pursue a grand jury investigation to examine factors and decisions that led to Thursday's collapse of the 12-story Champlain Towers South in Surfside. Another victim was recovered Tuesday, bringing the confirmed death toll to 12, with 149 people unaccounted for.

Even as officials looked to the future to determine the cause of the collapse, they were resolute in vowing to continue the effort to find survivors.

On the sixth day of a painstaking search, Gov. Ron DeSantis evoked a well-known military commitment to leave no one behind on the battlefield and pledged to do the same for the people still missing in the rubble.

"The way I look at it, as an old Navy guy, is when somebody is missing in action, in the military, you're missing until you're found. We don't stop the search," DeSantis said at a news conference.

"I think that's what is happening. Those first responders are breaking their backs trying to find anybody they can. I think they are going to continue to do that. They've been very selfless. They've put themselves at risk to do it."

Surfside Mayor Charles Burkett cited the case of a woman who was found alive 17 days after a garment factory collapsed in 2013, killing more than 1,000 people in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

"No one is giving up hope here. ... We are dedicated to getting everyone out of that pile of rubble," Burkett said.

Also Tuesday, the White House announced that President Joe Biden and first lady Jill Biden would travel to Surfside on Thursday.

Martin Langesfeld, whose sister, 26-year-old Nicole Langesfeld, is missing in the collapse, also expressed hope that there are still survivors.

"We're not alone in this. There's hope. I really believe miracles do happen. Things like this have hap-

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pened around the world," he said during a vigil Monday night on the beach near the collapsed building. The collapse has drawn scrutiny of the safety of older high-rise buildings throughout South Florida. Cava ordered a 30-day audit on whether buildings 40 years old or older are complying with a required recertification of their structural integrity, and that any issues raised by inspections are being addressed. On Tuesday, the mayor said building inspections have found four balconies in one building in Miami-Dade County that "must be immediately closed due to safety concerns."

Previous grand juries in South Florida have examined other large-scale disasters, such as the 2018 collapse of a pedestrian bridge at Florida International University, which killed six people. That investigation is ongoing.

Criminal charges in such matters are possible, such as the third-degree felony murder and manslaughter charges brought in the 1996 crash of ValuJet Flight 592, which killed 110 people in the Everglades.

Work at the site has been deliberate and treacherous. Debris fell onto the search area overnight from the shattered edge of the part of the building that still stands. That forced rescuers to mark a "don't go beyond here" line and focus their efforts on parts of the debris pile that are farther from the structure, Burkett told Miami television station WSVN.

Kevin Guthrie of the Florida Division of Emergency Management said his agency requested an additional search team. He said state officials want to rotate some of their teams out so they can be on hand in case of severe weather in the coming days.

Several members of an Israeli rescue team worked partly on hands and knees Tuesday over a small section of the rubble, digging with shovels, pickaxes and saws. They removed debris into buckets that were dumped into a metal construction bin, which was periodically lifted away by a crane. The crane then delivered an empty bin.

Late in the afternoon, rescue officials sounded a horn for a second time during the day's work, signaling an approaching storm with lightning. Workers temporarily evacuated.

Authorities said it's still a search-and-rescue operation, but no one has been found alive since hours after the collapse on Thursday.

The pancake collapse of the building left layer upon layer of intertwined debris, frustrating efforts to reach anyone who may have survived in a pocket of space.

Authorities meet frequently with families to explain what they're doing and to answer questions. They have discussed how DNA matches are made to help identify the dead, how next-of-kin will be contacted and explained in "extreme detail" how they are searching the mound, the mayor said.

With that knowledge, Cava said, families are coming to their own conclusions.

"Some are feeling more hopeful, some less hopeful, because we do not have definitive answers. We give them the facts. We take them to the site," she said. "They have seen the operation. They understand now how it works, and they are preparing themselves for news, one way or the other."

Rachel Spiegel, whose 66-year-old mother, Judy Spiegel, is missing, said Tuesday that she was hoping for a miracle, but she also wrote about looking beyond the tragedy.

"Our mom Judy was the glue that kept our family together. All of the family mementos, photos, clothing and heirlooms our father and mother have collected over the past 65 years were lost in a matter of seconds," Spiegel wrote in a message about setting up a fund for charities on behalf of her mother. "As we continue to search for meaning in this catastrophe, we must also look to the future and rebuild."

In a text message exchange with The Associated Press, she added, "Please keep praying for a miracle."

'Our backyard': Tragedy strikes home for Miami-Dade rescuers

By BOBBY CAINA CALVAN and RUSS BYNUM Associated Press

SURFSIDE, Fla. (AP) — Search and rescue teams from Miami-Dade are considered among the best and most experienced in the world, dispatched to epic disaster scenes far beyond Florida — from the rubble of the World Trade Center to earthquake-ravaged Haiti, Mexico and the Philippines.

This time disaster struck at home.

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The rescuers are searching urgently for the scores of souls buried beneath the fallen 12-story wing of the Champlain Towers condo building. As of Tuesday afternoon, more than five days after the collapse, the death toll stood at 12, with 149 people unaccounted for.

"It's personal," said Miami-Dade County's former fire chief, Dave Downey, a 37-year veteran of the department who retired two years ago but joined the search.

"I'd much rather be giving help than asking for help, but right now it's in our own backyard," he said from a command trailer near the pile of broken concrete and twisted metal.

Crews from across Florida and from Mexico and Israel have descended on Surfside to join the effort. More than 400 rescue workers are at the scene, rotating in and out from the rubble every 45 minutes during 12-hour shifts. At any given time, six or seven squads — each with six members — tramp over the mountain of debris or tunnel into it.

The search for survivors continued amid anguished pleas from family for rescuers to work more quickly. On-and-off downpours have not stopped the crews. Nor did a smoky fire smoldering deep within the ruins. The oppressive Florida heat hasn't helped either.

The current fire chief, Alan Cominsky, grew emotional as he talked about the first hours after emergency crews arrived at the horrifying scene early Thursday.

"Wow, wow. The rescue efforts that we did, what we went through, going on those initial first hours in this environment at 1:30 in the morning," he said. "So, I'm just trying to emphasize the magnitude of what we're encountering, what we're seeing. And we still keep pushing forward."

Joseph A. Barbera, an expert at George Washington University on search and rescue, crossed paths with a team from Miami-Dade in 1990 while advising rescuers in the Philippines.

"They have a very strong reputation," said Barbera, noting that the Miami-Dade search and rescue task force predates many of the other teams put in place in the United States and internationally. "I'm very confident that they will continue to do a great job."

They've had lots of practice.

In 1985, a Miami-Dade team rushed to Mexico City, where an 8.1-magnitude earthquake crumbled homes and buildings, killing some 5,000 people. A decade later, the department sent personnel to Oklahoma City after the truck bombing at a federal building that killed 168 people.

Then on to earthquakes in Turkey, Taiwan and Colombia.

The 9/11 terrorist attacks in 2001 sent Florida crews to the World Trade Center, an especially emotional assignment. Many of the dead pulled from the debris were first responders who had rushed in to save lives.

But there were episodes of hope in Port-au-Prince, Haiti — devastated by an earthquake in 2010 — whenever rescuers pulled out a survivor. A reporter for the Christian Science Monitor recounted witnessing a Miami-Dade crew going into a collapsed building to save three children, ages 5, 7 and 14, while a frantic mother looked on from the street.

There have been other tragedies at home, including the collapse in 2012 of a parking structure under construction at Miami Dade College that killed four workers. But perhaps nothing has hit as hard as this most recent disaster.

No one has been pulled out alive from the ruins since the first hours after the building fell. Rescue workers have had to move cautiously amid the precarious pile of debris.

"Those first responders are breaking their backs trying to find anybody they can," Gov. Ron DeSantis said Tuesday.

Alfredo Lopez, who lived on the sixth floor of the condominium complex, in a portion that remained standing, bristled at complaints that crews weren't working hard enough or fast enough.

"When we got out there that night, I could see nothing but ambulances and fire trucks and police cars," he said. "Perhaps they didn't get in there soon enough because they didn't know what the hell was going on, like none of us."

A seven-member search and rescue team from Mexico's Jewish community is using for the first time a \$23,000 suitcase-size device that uses microwave radar to see through 40 feet of shattered concrete and

can detect signs of breathing and heartbeats. The team has also used dogs to sniff for victims.

"We are hopeful for a miracle," said Ricardo Aizenman, one of the rescuers from Cadena International. It's happened before, he said. "People can live up to 15, 16 days with only water, drops of water."

Dr. Howard Lieberman also believes survivors might still be found.

"As a trauma surgeon, the one thing that I've learned is never count someone out. I've made that mistake once or twice," Lieberman said. "And you know what? They proved me wrong."

Lieberman was on the scene hours after Thursday's collapse and now leads a five-person medical team attached to Miami-Dade's search and rescue unit. He has found himself treating rescue workers for blisters and injured feet, heat exhaustion and fatigue from toiling in heat approaching 90 degrees.

"These guys work 12-hour cycles. I see them coming off the pile at 12 noon and they are spent, and they're working their way back down to their tents," said Downey, the former Miami-Dade fire chief who now chairs the Urban Search and Rescue Committee of the International Association of Fire Chiefs

"They get cleaned up. They get a little bit of food. A few hours later, I'm talking to my guys. They say, 'We're ready to go, chief. Put us in. We want to get to work.'"

House GOP leaders won't support probe of Jan. 6 Capitol riot

By MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — House Republican leaders say they will oppose the creation of a select committee to investigate the Jan. 6 insurrection at the Capitol — and have so far declined to say whether they will even participate in the probe.

In a memo to all House Republicans late Tuesday, No. 2 House Republican Steve Scalise said the House panel "is likely to pursue a partisan agenda" in investigating the violent attack by former President Donald Trump's supporters, and he encouraged Republicans to vote against it. A vote on a resolution that would create the panel is scheduled for Wednesday.

Earlier in the day, Scalise declined to say whether members of his party would even agree to sit on the committee, telling reporters at a news conference that "I can't answer that question." House Republican leader Kevin McCarthy also declined to say whether Republicans would participate.

The Republican opposition comes as McCarthy is facing pressure to take the investigation seriously from police officers who responded to the attack, Democrats and even some of his fellow Republicans. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has invited representatives of the Metropolitan Police Department of the District of Columbia and the U.S. Capitol Police to sit in the gallery and watch Wednesday's vote, according to a person familiar with the plan who wasn't authorized to discuss it and spoke on condition of anonymity. Dozens of those officers were brutally beaten and suffered injuries as Trump's supporters pushed past them and broke into the building to interrupt the certification of President Joe Biden's victory.

The resolution introduced by the House speaker on Monday would have eight members on the committee appointed by Pelosi and five appointed "after consultation" with McCarthy — meaning Pelosi could potentially have veto power over every appointment to the panel.

Republican participation in the investigation, and the appointments to the panel, could help determine whether the committee becomes a bipartisan effort or instead a hotbed of division. Two Senate committees issued a bipartisan report with security recommendations earlier this month, but it did not examine the origins of the siege, leaving many unanswered questions about the events of the day.

Two of the officers who responded to the attack, Metropolitan Police Officer Michael Fanone and Capitol Police Officer Harry Dunn, met with McCarthy on Friday and asked him to take the House investigation seriously.

Fanone, who has described being dragged down the Capitol steps by rioters who shocked him with a stun gun and beat him, said he asked McCarthy for a commitment not to put "the wrong people" on the panel, a reference to those in the GOP who have downplayed the violence and defended the insurrectionists. Fanone said McCarthy told him he would take his request seriously.

Sen. Mitt Romney, R-Utah, has also publicly pressured McCarthy. "I hope he appoints people who are

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seen as being credible," he said Sunday on CNN.

Ohio Rep. Jim Jordan, a close Trump ally, said that he doesn't know what McCarthy is going to do but that it's possible Republicans will just choose not to be involved.

"I know I've got real concerns — I know he does — that this is all just political, and that this is impeachment three against President Trump," Jordan said.

Trump was twice impeached by the House and twice acquitted by the Senate, the second time after telling his supporters just before the insurrection to "fight like hell" to overturn his defeat to Biden.

Pelosi moved to form the committee after Senate Republicans blocked an independent, bipartisan panel that would have been modeled after the commission that investigated the 9/11 terrorist attacks. She said it was her preference to have an independent panel lead the inquiry, but Congress could not wait any longer to begin a deeper look at the insurrection.

Pelosi has not yet said who will lead the panel, but one possibility is House Homeland Security Committee Chair Bennie Thompson, D-Miss. Thompson said Tuesday that it would be an "honor" to serve as chair and that it's Pelosi's call if she wants to have a say on the Republican members.

"They had an opportunity to really engage," Thompson said of Republicans who voted against the bipartisan commission. "And they didn't. So they can't now come back and say, 'Oh, that's not fair.'"

Many Republicans have expressed concerns about a partisan probe, since majority Democrats are likely to investigate Trump's role in the siege and the right-wing groups that participated in it. Almost three dozen House Republicans voted last month for the legislation to create an independent commission, which would have had an even partisan split among members. Seven Republicans in the Senate have also supported moving forward on that bill, but that was short of the 10 Senate Republicans who would be necessary to pass it.

Many Republicans have made clear that they want to move on from the Jan. 6 attack and Trump's role in it. But others have gone even further, with Rep. Andrew Clyde of Georgia suggesting video of the rioters looked like a "tourist visit" and Rep. Paul Gosar of Arizona insisting that a Trump supporter named Ashli Babbitt, who was shot and killed that day while trying to break into the House chamber, was "executed." Others have defended the rioters as they have been charged with federal crimes.

In their meeting with McCarthy, Fanone and Dunn asked the GOP leader to publicly denounce the comments downplaying the violence as well as the 21 Republicans who recently voted against giving medals of honor to the U.S. Capitol Police and the Metropolitan Police to thank them for their service. They said McCarthy, who voted for the measure, told them he would deal with those members privately.

Seven people died during and after the rioting, including Babbitt and three other Trump supporters who suffered medical emergencies. Two police officers died by suicide in the days that followed, and a third officer, Capitol Police Officer Brian Sicknick, collapsed and later died after engaging with the protesters. A medical examiner later determined he died of natural causes.

Brazil's Bolsonaro under fire after vaccine deal allegations

By DÉBORA ÁLVARES Associated Press

BRASILIA, Brazil (AP) — Accusations that Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro turned a blind eye to possible corruption in a deal to purchase coronavirus vaccines have heightened threats to his presidency, including a move to recommend slapping him with a criminal charge.

The claims have added impetus to the opposition's impeachment drive and left the Brazilian leader's allies in Congress evaluating the costs of their support.

Bolsonaro, who has been targeted by nationwide street protests in recent weeks, has called the Senate committee investigating the government's COVID-19 response a "national shame" aimed at undermining his administration. For two months, the nationally televised hearings have largely focused on why his Health Ministry ignored opportunities to buy vaccines while Bolsonaro relentlessly pushed hydroxychloroquine, the malaria drug that rigorous studies have shown to be ineffective in treating COVID-19.

Testimony before the Senate committee last week from Luis Ricardo Miranda, the chief of the Health

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Ministry's import division, and his brother Luis Miranda, a lawmaker until recently allied with Bolsonaro, has turned up the heat even more.

The Health Ministry official said he faced pressure to greenlight the import of Indian pharmaceutical Bharat Biotech's Covaxin vaccine and that there were irregularities in the invoices — particularly a \$45 million upfront payment to a Singapore-based company.

In March, the brothers brought their concerns to Bolsonaro, who they said promised to send the case to the Federal Police and mentioned the government's leader in Congress's lower house, a top Bolsonaro ally, as being involved.

However, the Federal Police never received any request to investigate, neither from Bolsonaro nor his Health Ministry, according to a Federal Police source with knowledge of investigations who wasn't authorized to speak publicly and declined to be named.

The secretary-general of the presidency, Onyx Lorenzoni, told reporters last week that Bolsonaro did meet with the Mirandas but claimed they presented fraudulent documents. Bolsonaro ordered the brothers investigated, he said.

Bharat Biotech has denied any allegation of wrongdoing with respect to vaccine supply, saying in an emailed statement that it adheres to the highest standards of compliance. The company's press representative didn't respond when asked why a payment would be routed through a Singapore-based company.

The case has galvanized Bolsonaro's opponents and prompted protest organizers to move up their next nationwide demonstration to Saturday. The percentage of people rating Bolsonaro's government bad or terrible has reached an all-time high, according to pollster Datafolha.

Seven of the 11 members of the Senate committee investigating Bolsonaro's COVID-19 response told The Associated Press that, once their inquest concludes, in August at earliest, they will vote to approve recommending Bolsonaro be indicted on the charge of prevarication. The crime entails delaying or refraining from action required as part of a public official's duty for reasons of personal interest.

Sen. Randolfe Rodrigues and Sen. Humberto Costa spoke on record with AP. Five senators spoke on condition of anonymity due to concerns that detailing plans will expose the committee to attacks from the government and its allies.

Bolsonaro on Saturday said the committee has "seven scoundrels" among its members. He has denied all wrongdoing and knowledge of possible corruption.

Any committee recommendation for indictment would need to be accepted by the prosecutor-general, a Bolsonaro appointee, then approved by Congress before an investigation could begin.

The committee is "a big threat to Bolsonaro, but one step at a time," said Thiago de Aragão, director of strategy at political risk consultancy Arko Advice, who added the accusations have increased the pressure.

"But it's only a gamechanger if you have an important portion of congressmen ... shifting sides and endorsing this kind of action against him."

Last year, Bolsonaro began drawing close to the large "Centrao" bloc in Congress to shore up his legislative agenda and stave off risks of impeachment. In the wake of the allegations against Bolsonaro, its lawmakers have begun reevaluating the risks of backing him, according to Cláudio Couto, a political scientist at the Getulio Vargas Foundation, a university.

"It's still in their interest to follow the government at this moment," Couto said. But, he added, "Defending a president who is very compromised is difficult for anyone. Politicians and parties won't want to associate their image with a president like that. There's a limit to everything."

The opposition has filed more than 100 impeachment requests, but House Speaker Arthur Lira, a Centrao member, reiterated in an interview Friday with local media Jota that there aren't sufficient reasons for him to greenlight proceedings.

The Miranda brothers' Senate committee testimony "fundamentally changes the debate, because at that moment the president had the duty to take some sort of measure" or explain why their claims were baseless, said Davi Tangerino, a professor of criminal law at the Getulio Vargas Foundation.

The Health Ministry signed a contract for 20 million Covaxin doses in February. However, the government hadn't yet made any payments nor were any vaccines provided due to obstacles in the health regulator's

approval process.

On Tuesday, the health ministry announced that the government is “temporarily suspending” the Covaxin contract. Comptroller-general Wagner Rosário said his office will evaluate the process by which it was signed.

Even before the Miranda brothers’ testimony last week, federal prosecutors were already investigating possible irregularities in the contract, which committed the Health Ministry to pay \$320 million — at a cost of \$15 per vaccine dose, the most expensive of all vaccines Brazil purchased — to Bharat Biotech’s representative in Brazil, according to a document sent to the AP by the prosecutor-general’s press office.

The political dust has yet to settle, but the case is a sign that Bolsonaro will face additional headwinds with his reelection bid next year.

“The extent of the political damage remains uncertain,” newspaper O Globo wrote in an editorial published Tuesday. “Concretely, the only thing one can say is the government is cornered and ever more hostage to allies.”

Mental health toll from isolation affecting kids on reentry

By LINDSEY TANNER AP Medical Writer

After two suicidal crises during pandemic isolation, 16-year-old Zach Sampson feels stronger but worries his social skills have gone stale.

Amara Bhatia has overcome her pandemic depression but the teen feels worn down, in a state of “neutrality.” Virginia Shipp is adjusting but says returning to normal “is kind of unnatural for me.”

After relentless months of social distancing, online schooling and other restrictions, many kids are feeling the pandemic’s toll or facing new challenges navigating reentry.

A surge in teen suicide attempts and other mental health crises prompted Children’s Hospital Colorado to declare a state of emergency in late May, when emergency department and hospital inpatient beds were overrun with suicidal kids and those struggling with other psychiatric problems. Typical emergency-department waiting times for psychiatric treatment doubled in May to about 20 hours, said Jason Williams, a pediatric psychologist at the hospital in Aurora.

Other children’s hospitals are facing similar challenges.

In typical times, the activities that come as the school year ends — finals, prom, graduations, summer job-seeking — can be stressful even for the most resilient kids. But after more than a year of dealing with pandemic restrictions, many are worn down and simply don’t “have enough in the tank of resilience” to handle stresses that previously would have been manageable, Williams said.

“When the pandemic first hit, we saw a rise in severe cases in crisis evaluation,” as kids struggled with “their whole world shutting down,” said Christine Certain, a mental health counselor who works with Orlando Health’s Arnold Palmer Hospital for Children. “Now, as we see the world opening back up, ... it’s asking these kids to make a huge shift again.”

At some children’s hospitals, psychiatric cases have remained high throughout the pandemic; others have seen a more recent surge.

At Wolfson Children’s Hospital in Jacksonville, Florida, behavioral unit admissions for kids in crisis aged 13 and younger have been soaring since 2020 and are on pace to reach 230 this year, more than four times higher than in 2019, said hospital psychologist Terrie Andrews. For older teens, admissions were up to five times higher than usual last year and remained elevated as of last month.

At Dayton Children’s Hospital in Ohio, admissions to the mental health unit increased by 30% from July 2020 through May, totaling almost 1,300. The hospital doubled the number of available beds to 24 and dropped the minimum age for treatment to 9 years from 12 years, said Dr. John DUBY, a hospital vice president.

“The overwhelming demand for pediatric mental health services is putting an unprecedented strain on pediatric facilities, primary care, schools and community-based organizations that support kids’ well-being,” said Amy Knight, president of the Children’s Hospital Association.

Dr. Alison Tothy, medical director of the pediatric emergency department at the University of Chicago’s Comer Children’s Hospital, said her ER has seen kids in crisis daily since last year, struggling with suicidal

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thoughts, cutting and other self-harm behaviors, depression and aggressive outbursts. Kids are stabilized and referred elsewhere for treatment.

"Families are coming to us because we are, in some cases, the last resort. Outpatient resources are scarce," and parents say they can't get an appointment for two months, she said.

In Florida, waits for outpatient treatment are even longer and many therapists don't accept kids insured through Medicaid, Andrews said.

At Children's Hospital Colorado, emergency department visits for behavioral health problems were up 90% in April 2021 over April 2019 and remained high in May. Though the pace slowed in June, hospital authorities are concerned about another spike when school resumes.

Williams said issues the hospital is treating are "across the board," from children with previous mental health issues that have worsened to those who never struggled before the pandemic.

Like many states, Colorado doesn't have enough child and teen mental health therapists to meet demand, an issue even before the pandemic, Williams said.

Children who need outpatient treatment are finding it takes six to nine months for an appointment. And many therapists don't accept health insurance, leaving struggling families with few options. Delays in treatment can lead to crises that land kids in the ER.

Those who improve after inpatient psychiatric care but aren't well enough to go home are being sent out of state because there aren't enough facilities in Colorado, Williams said.

Sampson says "just a lot of stuff" triggered his first crisis last August. The Jacksonville, Florida, teen struggled with online education and spent hours in his room alone playing video games and scrolling the internet, drawn to dark sites that "made my brain hurt."

He revealed his suicidal thoughts to a friend, who called the police. He spent a week in the hospital under psychiatric care.

Both his parents have worked in mental health jobs but had no idea how he was struggling.

"We had realized he had been spending more time isolating, not really tending to showering and that type of stuff, but we were in the middle of a pandemic. No one was really doing those things," said his mother, Jennifer Sampson.

The teen started virtual psychotherapy but in March his self-destructive thoughts resurfaced. Hospital psychiatric beds were full so he waited a week in a holding area to receive treatment, his mother recalled.

Now on mood stabilizers, he's continuing therapist visits, has finished sophomore year and is looking forward to returning to in-person school this fall. Still, he says it's hard motivating himself to leave the house to go to the gym or hang out with friends.

"I definitely find my social skills are rusty," Sampson said.

"I feel that this is going to be something that we're dealing with for quite a while," his mother said.

That's likely true, too, for those who haven't reached a crisis point.

Bhatia, a 17-year-old self-described "stereotypical introvert" with clinical anxiety, also worries about returning to the classroom for senior year.

The Oakland, California, teen says the pandemic began as almost a welcome change. Being social takes effort, and isolation allowed her to recharge. Still, she had bouts of depression, got frustrated with virtual school and missed her friends.

She used to be a hugger but has become "a bit more of a germaphobe" and says the few times she's been hugged since social distancing restrictions lifted, she froze.

The pandemic has left her worn down, "like running a marathon, and I'm finally reaching the end and I'm just getting so tired at this point."

"I think I don't have the energy for happiness," she said.

For 18-year-old Shipp, also of Oakland, the pandemic hit in her senior year as she was planning a trip to Europe and anticipating college in the fall. Neither happened and she described 2020 as a year of negative thinking, stuck in her room alone with her thoughts.

"I felt depressed and anxious and very scared for the future," she said.

As a Black woman, she wanted to join marchers protesting George Floyd's murder but decided close contact with strangers was too risky.

She doesn't know anyone who got very sick or died, but says she worried about COVID-19 "every single day." Shipp used meditation to help relieve stress.

She recently got vaccinated and learned college at Cal Poly in Pomona will be in person in the fall. But she's not sure she's completely ready.

"It's still a little weird because now, all of a sudden ... you don't need to wear the mask? It's like jumping into the water too fast," Shipp said. "The normalcy is kind of unnatural for me."

'Sad story': An injured Serena Williams is out of Wimbledon

By CHRIS LEHOURITES AP Sports Writer

WIMBLEDON, England (AP) — Serena Williams bit her upper lip. She held her left hand over her mouth and tried to hold back tears while getting ready to serve.

It was the first set of her first-round match Tuesday at Wimbledon, and Williams knew this stay at a tournament where she has won seven of her 23 Grand Slam singles titles was about to end because she hurt her right leg when she lost her footing behind a baseline.

Moments later, her legs buckled as she tried to change directions to chase a shot by her opponent, 100th-ranked Aliaksandra Sasnovich of Belarus. Williams dropped to her knees, her head down on the grass. She used her racket to help her stand, but only so she could limp to the net to concede — just the second mid-match retirement at any Grand Slam tournament of her career and first since 1998.

"I was heartbroken to have to withdraw today," Williams said in a statement released by the tournament.

"Feeling the extraordinary warmth and support of the crowd today when I walked on — and off — the court," she said, "meant the world to me."

Said Sasnovich: "She's a great champion, and it's (a) sad story."

Roger Federer surely articulated a common sentiment when told by a reporter what happened to Williams.

"Oh, my God," he said. "I can't believe it."

Williams was serving while leading 3-1 at Centre Court — where the retractable roof was shut because of rain that forced the postponement of two dozen matches until Wednesday — when her left shoe seemed to lose its traction while she was hitting a forehand.

Williams winced and stepped gingerly between points, clearly troubled. After dropping that game, she asked to visit with a trainer and took a medical timeout.

She tried to continue playing. The crowd tried to offer support and encouragement. Eventually, the 39-year-old American couldn't continue. The chair umpire climbed down to check on her, and they walked together up to the net; the score was 3-all, 15-30 when Williams stopped.

Williams, who began the match with her right thigh heavily taped, raised her racket with right arm and put her left palm on her chest. Then she waved to the spectators.

Officially, this goes in the books as only the second first-round Grand Slam exit of Williams' career. The other came at the 2012 French Open, where she was beaten by Virginie Razzano. Shortly after that, Williams teamed up with coach Patrick Mouratoglou and began accumulating majors to eclipse Steffi Graf's professional era record of 22 and move within one of Margaret Court's all-era mark of 24.

"All the best for her," said Sasnovich, who reached the fourth round at Wimbledon in 2018 for her best Grand Slam result.

Williams' departure makes a wide-open women's draw even more so. As it was, defending champion Simona Halep and four-time major champ Naomi Osaka withdrew before the tournament started.

And so, even as her 40th birthday approaches in September, Williams was among the top contenders. With her best-in-the-game serve and stinging groundstrokes, she had made it to the past four finals when she entered Wimbledon — winning in 2015 and 2016, missing the tournament while pregnant in 2017, then finishing as the runner-up in 2018 and 2019 (it was canceled last year because of the pandemic).

Williams was hardly the first player to find it difficult to deal with the slick grass over the first two days

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of main-draw play.

In the match that preceded hers in the main stadium, eight-time Wimbledon champion Federer advanced when his opponent, Adrian Mannarino, injured his right knee late in the fourth set when he tumbled near the same spot Williams did.

Federer was trailing two sets to one, but ahead 4-2 in the fourth, when Mannarino fell. He tried to continue but dropped eight of nine points when they resumed and called it quits.

"Obviously," Federer acknowledged, "he was the better player."

Novak Djokovic fell twice in the first set of his first-round victory Monday at Centre Court, too.

"I do feel it feels a tad more slippery, maybe, under the roof. I don't know if it's just a gut feeling. You do have to move very, very carefully out there. If you push too hard in the wrong moments, you do go down," Federer said. "I do feel it's drier during the day. With the wind and all that stuff, it takes the moist out of the grass. But this is obviously terrible."

It was, by far, the most significant development Tuesday, when the winners included Williams' older sister, 41-year-old Venus, 17-year-old Coco Gauff, reigning French Open champion Barbora Krejčíková and No. 1 seed Ash Barty in the women's bracket, and No. 2 Daniil Medvedev, No. 4 Alexander Zverev and No. 10 Denis Shapovalov in the men's.

Sebastian Korda — a 20-year-old American whose father, Petr, won the 1998 Australian Open and whose sisters, No. 1-ranked Nelly and No. 13 Jessica, are on the LPGA Tour — made a successful Wimbledon debut, eliminating No. 15 seed Alex de Minaur 6-3, 6-4, 6-7 (5), 7-6 (5).

Venus Williams accumulated 10 aces by smacking serves at up to 114 mph — not quite like the old days, but not too shabby, either. She drove forehands to corners. She made her way to the net for crisp volleys.

And when it was all over, she celebrated her first Wimbledon match win since 2018 by raising her arms and yelling "Come on!" before reprising her familiar smile-and-twirl wave at No. 3 Court.

A five-time singles champion at the All England Club who is making her 23rd appearance here, the elder Williams sister began her record-extending 90th Grand Slam tournament with her 90th career victory at Wimbledon, beating Mihaela Buzărnescu of Romania 7-5, 4-6, 6-3.

Venus Williams is a former No. 1-ranked player who came into this week ranked 111th and having lost in the first or second round at the past eight majors. That included a first-round exit in 2019 at the All England Club against a then-15-year-old Gauff.

"You can't win them all. Life is about how you handle challenges. Each point is a challenge on the court. No one gives you anything," said Venus Williams, who was diagnosed a decade ago with Sjögren's syndrome, an autoimmune disease that can cause fatigue and joint pain. "I like to think I handle my challenges well."

Tigray fighters in Ethiopia reject cease-fire as 'sick joke'

By CARA ANNA Associated Press

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) — The fighters now retaking parts of Ethiopia's Tigray region will pursue soldiers from neighboring Eritrea back into their country and chase Ethiopian forces to Addis Ababa "if that's what it takes" to weaken their military powers, their spokesman said Tuesday, as a conflict that has killed thousands of civilians looked certain to continue.

In an interview with The Associated Press, Getachew Reda said that "we'll stop at nothing to liberate every square inch" of the Tigray region of 6 million people, nearly eight months after fighting erupted between the Tigray forces and Ethiopian soldiers backed by Eritrea.

He rejected the unilateral cease-fire Ethiopia's government declared Monday as a "sick joke" and accused Ethiopia of long denying humanitarian aid to the Tigrayans it now "pretends to care about." Ethiopia declared the unilateral cease-fire as its soldiers and hand-picked regional interim administration fled the Tigray regional capital following some of the fiercest fighting of the war.

"We want to stop the war as quickly as we can," the Tigray spokesman said.

But he said liberating the region is not just about territory. "If there is still a menace next door," whether it be in Eritrea, "extremists" from the neighboring Amhara region who have occupied western Tigray or

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Ethiopian forces, it's about assuring Tigrayans' security, he said.

The comments were sure to bring new alarm from the United States, United Nations and others who have pressed for an end to the fighting in Africa's second most populous country that has sent hundreds of thousands of Tigrayans into the world's worst famine crisis in a decade.

This week's swift turn in the war has left people scrambling to understand the implications for Tigray, as communications links remained largely cut.

Eritrean soldiers, accused by witnesses of some of the war's worst atrocities against Tigrayans, left the towns of Shire, Axum and Adwa, witnesses said, but it was not clear whether the retreat was temporary. The information ministry of Eritrea, a longtime enemy of Tigray's former leaders and described by human rights groups as one of the world's most repressive countries, did not immediately respond to questions.

"We don't yet know if they are withdrawing" from Tigray altogether, acting U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Robert Godec told the House Committee on Foreign Affairs. He said the U.S. had seen no statement from Eritrea saying it was committed to the cease-fire after "what appears to be a significant withdrawal of Ethiopian national defense forces from Tigray."

The Tigray leaders have waged a guerrilla war since November after a political falling out with the government of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, who had sidelined them from influential roles in Ethiopia's government and military. An Ethiopian military spokesman did not answer the phone Tuesday.

The arrival of Tigray forces in the regional capital, Mekele, on Monday was met with cheers. The fighters on Tuesday moved into Axum and Shire, a town that in recent months saw the arrival of hundreds of thousands of people fleeing intimidation in western Tigray and is a key staging area for humanitarian aid.

Tigray forces are now in control of much of the region after a major counteroffensive with mass popular support, International Crisis Group analyst William Davison said in a statement. They are "now in a position to facilitate access to many previously hard to reach areas," he said, urging Ethiopia's government not to sabotage the urgent humanitarian efforts.

But the Tigray forces' talk "indicates how distrustful they are of the cease-fire," Aly Verjee, a senior adviser at the United States Institute of Peace, told AP. "Of course, I think it's highly irresponsible for them to say such things. It doesn't do anything for people on the brink of famine. At the same time, I understand they're motivated by deep suspicion of Eritrean forces in particular."

Major questions remained about the fate of the more than 1 million civilians that the United Nations has said remain in parts of Tigray that have been hard, if not impossible, to reach with aid. The United States has said up to 900,000 people now face famine conditions, in the world's worst hunger crisis in a decade.

That famine "is entirely man-made," the acting U.S. assistant secretary of state said.

Sarah Charles, assistant to the administrator for the United States Agency for International Development, told the Washington hearing that the next week or two will be consequential. She urged Ethiopia to lift a "communications blackout" on Tigray and said forces from the Amhara region must lift checkpoints on key roads for aid delivery.

U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric told reporters that "the impact of the current situation on the humanitarian operations in the region remains unknown right now." Operations have been "constrained for the past few days due to the ongoing fighting." The airport in Mekele was closed, and routes to deliver aid were not open, he said.

Ethiopia has said the cease-fire is in part for the delivery of aid but will last only until the end of the crucial planting season in Tigray — which is in September.

In Ethiopia's capital, Addis Ababa, people said they weren't sure who to believe amid the battlefield claims, and hoped for peace.

"It's the innocent children, farmers and the poor people that are at the front of the war and are suffering," resident Biruk Dessalegn said.

EXPLAINER: Why and when are companies criminally charged?

By The Associated Press undefined

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NEW YORK (AP) — Lawyers representing former president Donald Trump's company say they believe the Manhattan district attorney plans to ask a state grand jury to indict the Trump Organization in an investigation that involves fringe benefits paid to employees.

They don't expect Trump himself to face charges at this stage.

Charging a corporate entity, rather than its top executives, isn't unprecedented. State and federal prosecutors have a long history of filing criminal charges against corporations for mostly the same reasons prosecutions are brought against individuals.

Criminal charges can result in fines and penalties — sometimes in the billions of dollars — and changes to the way a company operates. And in some instances, they can result in the destruction of the business.

They can also be used to encourage cooperation by the company against individuals who have broken the law or to send a message to an industry that corporate crimes will not be tolerated.

WHAT CHARGES ARE BEING CONSIDERED?

Grand jury proceedings are secret and the Manhattan district attorney's office has declined to comment. But Trump Organization lawyer Ron Fischetti told The Associated Press that prosecutors are interested in fringe benefits paid to some company executives, like free use of cars or apartments and help with school tuition payments.

It isn't unusual, or illegal, for companies to give such perks to valued executives, but in some instances those benefits can count as income for tax purposes.

If an employee didn't pay income tax on those benefits and the company was aware of it, and took steps to help the person evade taxes, that could be illegal.

The former Republican president says he's done nothing wrong and is being unfairly targeted by Democrats out to undermine him politically.

The Trump Organization is a sprawling corporate entity with executives who oversee hundreds of companies and partnerships controlling real estate, licensing and hospitality enterprises worldwide. These range from golf clubs to the luxury Trump Hotel Washington.

WHY CHARGE A COMPANY, RATHER THAN THE PEOPLE WHO RUN IT?

Often, pursuing individuals is the priority for prosecutors seeking to shut down illegal activity within a business.

Sometimes, however, prosecuting a company can hasten change within an industry and force the kind of cooperation that can help prosecutors pursue specific people.

Prosecutors might also find that other companies and businesses, their employees and the public at large are harmed by the illegal actions of one entity.

WHY AREN'T CORPORATIONS PROSECUTED MORE FREQUENTLY?

Prosecutors sometimes hesitate to do so because it could harm innocent employees as well as other businesses.

For instance, merely announcing charges against a corporation could prompt it to shut down and cause people to lose jobs.

HOW DO PROSECUTORS DECIDE WHETHER TO CHARGE A CORPORATION?

One of the biggest reasons to charge a corporation is a finding that illegal behavior is widespread and so pervasive that it would be hard to cure, short of criminal charges.

Also a consideration: how long have people been behaving badly and what has the corporation done to stop it.

Often, companies decide to cooperate to avoid being prosecuted, helping to identify and oust those who have committed crimes and proposing ways to prevent future criminal behavior.

Prosecutors would likely bring charges if a company decided not to cooperate and resisted making changes.

ARE COMPANIES PROSECUTED OFTEN?

Not as much as people. But being prosecuted can be costly, if not devastating, to a business.

In 2013, BP pleaded guilty to manslaughter, agreeing to pay a record \$4 billion in criminal fines and penalties related to a deadly 2010 explosion on the Deepwater Horizon drilling rig. The blast killed 11 workers and dumped 134 million gallons of oil into the Gulf of Mexico. The spill, in turn, fouled beaches, killed

hundreds of thousands of marine animals and spoiled tourism-based economies from Louisiana to Florida.

In 2016, a federal judge approved a settlement of civil charges that cost the company over \$20 billion. The Justice Department called it the largest environmental settlement in U.S. history and the largest-ever civil settlement with a single entity.

The BP prosecution occurred after corporate prosecutions seemed to steadily decline after 85,000 workers lost their jobs when the Chicago-based accounting firm Arthur Andersen was convicted criminally in 2002. Eventually, the U.S. Supreme Court overturned Arthur Andersen's conviction.

In a 2014 speech, then-Manhattan U.S. Attorney Preet Bharara cited outcomes in corporate prosecutions including a jury verdict against Bank of America for reckless mortgage lending practices, deferred criminal charges against JPMorgan Chase & Co. in connection with Bernard Madoff's massive fraud, deferred charges against Toyota Motor Corp. in connection with how it dealt with a rapid acceleration problem in some vehicles and a guilty plea by SAC Capital in a case of unprecedented insider trading.

"We view with more and more skepticism and with more and more doubt all the breathless claims of catastrophic consequences made by companies both large and small," Bharara said. "Effective deterrence sometimes requires that institutions be punished, because sometimes it is the institution that has failed."

Rental assistance fell victim to politics, bureaucracy

By SARAH KLEINER and TAYLOR JOHNSTON of the Center for Public Integrity and MICHAEL CASEY of The Associated Press undefined

Before the pandemic hit, Jacqueline Bartley, a mother of two girls and a boy, had a comfortable life. Then the 41-year-old lost her job at American Airlines, quickly spent her savings and found herself months behind on the \$1,350-a-month home she rented. Until then she had never missed a rent payment.

Bartley, of Durham, North Carolina, turned to the state's rental assistance program and was relieved in January to be awarded \$8,100. But she says her landlord refused the money after she rejected his request to amend her two-year lease to a shorter period. The program required landlords to honor leases, among other conditions, to get the money.

She turned to a second program launched this month by the state and again was approved. Last week, she learned her landlord had accepted nearly \$20,000 for back rent and three months of future payments, and agreed to dismiss his eviction lawsuit.

The news means she won't be forced from her home after the federal eviction moratorium ends July 31. But the waiting and uncertainty meant months of stress.

"It's been crazy especially when you have children in school," Bartley said. "It's pretty much been going by a whim. OK, am I going to have somewhere to go each month?"

Millions have found themselves in situations similar to Bartley's, facing possible eviction despite bold promises by governors to help renters after Congress passed the sweeping CARES Act in March 2020.

Nationwide, state leaders set aside at least \$2.6 billion from the CARES Act's Coronavirus Relief Fund to prop up struggling renters, but a year later more than \$425 million of that — or 16% — hadn't made it into the pockets of tenants or their landlords, according to an investigation by the Center for Public Integrity and The Associated Press.

"It's mind-boggling," said Anne Kat Alexander, a project manager with Princeton University's Eviction Lab. "I knew there were problems but that's a huge amount of money not to be disbursed in a timely manner."

Like many state leaders, North Carolina's Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper pledged to roll out an ambitious program last year offering tens of millions of dollars in federal aid that would help cover unpaid rent.

But it took months to get up and running and stopped accepting applications just weeks after it finally opened in October due to overwhelming demand. The 20 nonprofits designated to distribute the money often lacked the capacity to get it out quickly.

Then, faced with the Republican-controlled Legislature's takeover of CARES Act spending in January, the state had less money to award applicants. It eventually spent \$133 million of a promised \$167 million — far short of what some housing advocates say is needed.

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"We knew the money would not be enough. There were too many people who needed rental assistance," said Pamela Atwood, director of housing policy at the North Carolina Housing Coalition. "There was a lot of poor execution in rolling out that first program and it caused a lot of inefficiency."

Tens of billions of dollars more in rental assistance have been delivered to states from the federal government in 2021, but that has been slow to be disbursed, too.

With the first round of funds in 2020, bureaucracy was not the only problem. Politics also played a role, with a handful of states, many led by Republicans and with a history of weak tenant protections, offering little to no assistance.

Then, there was the often onerous application process and an end-of-the-year federal deadline for spending the money, extended so late that some states had already pulled funding to use on other expenses. Some landlords refused to participate over restrictions that meant they could not evict a tenant who fell behind again after the assistance. Tenants sometimes short-changed themselves by filing incomplete applications.

Congress' sweeping 2020 CARES Act sent billions of dollars to states and some local governments. But it didn't mandate that any money be spent on rental assistance, leaving it to states to create their own programs and set the rules.

According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition's database of rent relief programs in 2020, Georgia, West Virginia and Tennessee, all run by Republican governors, chose not to set up statewide rent-relief programs that year, despite having higher than average historic eviction rates. South Carolina allocated less than \$14 per renter-occupied household.

Georgia's Department of Community Affairs tried to set up a rental assistance program with funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in the fall of 2020, but when it became clear that a separate, larger amount of money would be coming from the U.S. Department of Treasury in 2021, the program stalled, said Susan Reif, housing unit director for Georgia Legal Services Program and director of the Eviction Prevention Project.

Still, many states did scramble into action, creating massive programs to keep families in their homes — the safest place to shelter during the coronavirus pandemic. By the summer of 2020, state and local government officials launched about 530 rental assistance programs, setting aside at least \$4.3 billion from various sources.

Several states were praised for programs that ran well. Illinois, Indiana, Oregon and Washington state were among more than a dozen that reported distributing every dollar of the rental assistance set aside from the Coronavirus Relief Fund by March 31.

The Center for Public Integrity surveyed about 70 state and local agencies that the National Low Income Housing Coalition identified as having set aside Coronavirus Relief Fund money for rent help in 2020. About \$1 out of every \$6 of that \$2.6 billion wound up getting spent on other COVID-19-related expenses, such as protective equipment, police officers' salaries and small-business loans.

Some states also spent millions of dollars setting up their programs, including North Carolina, which allocated around \$20 million on administrative costs, and Hawaii, which spent \$8 million. In the case of Hawaii, much of that went to help nonprofits scale up and rent space. The state also spent money on a software system in an effort to prevent fraud.

Diane Yentel, executive director of the National Low Income Housing Coalition, said last year's funding challenges led Congress to earmark nearly \$47 billion specifically for emergency rental assistance in December and March.

"The previous funds, the vast majority of them, were very flexible and had a broad set of allowable uses," of which eviction prevention was just one, said Yentel, whose group has been tracking rental assistance programs.

"Some states and cities carved out some of those funds for eviction prevention and to create emergency rental assistance programs," she said. "But many didn't or many didn't set aside enough."

Among the biggest challenges was states' failure to spend what they had allocated.

The Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency received \$150 million to help renters, but returned about \$96

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million to the state treasury, which plugged holes in the state's public safety budget. The Florida Housing Finance Corporation earmarked \$250 million for rental assistance but returned about \$99 million to the state treasury to be spent on other programs. Eighty-three percent of Montana's \$50 million set aside for rental assistance went back to the state. New York ended up spending only \$47.5 million of the \$100 million promised for rental assistance.

New York's 2020 rent-relief program "was set up to fail," said Ellen Davidson, a staff attorney at Legal Aid Society in New York. "It was a program that really punished people. There was a real intention to make sure people didn't do better in being hurt by COVID, so if they were struggling before, they should be struggling after."

Tenants had to prove they were "rent-burdened" before the pandemic to qualify for rent relief in 2020, though eventually that stipulation was removed.

Hawaii spent around \$71 million of the \$100 million initially promised, though an analysis by the Hawaii Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice found the state spent the most per capita, at \$44.50. Still, the Legislature set a late December deadline for the spending, which meant the remaining \$29 million had to be redirected to the state's unemployment insurance trust fund.

"It would have been better to base the ending of the program on the CARES Act spending deadline with whatever extensions were enacted, because ultimately the deadline was extended," said Gavin Thornton, the center's executive director. "If that had been done, the program would have continued, and landlords and tenants would have been able to continue to access those funds, which were certainly needed."

Smaller cities and counties were affected too. In Marion County, Florida, none of the \$1 million set aside for renters from the Coronavirus Relief Fund ever made it to people who needed it because the United Way of Marion County, which administered the funds, didn't have enough workers to process applications, said Scot Quintel, the organization's president. The United Way was able to distribute rent assistance from another source, but the Coronavirus Relief Fund money went back to the city for other COVID-19-related expenses.

"It's just horrifying how ill-prepared some states were," said Alexander, of the Eviction Lab. "Some places made it work and some places didn't, which demonstrates that the places that didn't probably could have."

In Athens, Georgia, Delyn Price said she got about \$5,800 in rental assistance but that may not prevent her from losing her home. After her pay and hours at a fast food restaurant were cut, eviction notices started arriving in early 2020. They haven't let up.

Price received rental assistance from the Ark, a nonprofit administering funds from the CARES Act on behalf of the city of Athens, but the assistance ended earlier this year. Price's landlord has refused to renew her lease after it expires Wednesday.

She fears having to live, once again, in a homeless shelter with her 14-year-old son.

"It's a very nauseating and uncomfortable situation to be in," Price said.

Congressional leaders urge FCC to perform equity audit

By KAT STAFFORD Associated Press

Congressional leaders and a media advocacy group are urging the Federal Communications Commission to examine how policy decisions and programs have disparately harmed Black Americans and other communities of color, according to a letter sent Tuesday to the acting FCC chair.

In the letter, first shared with The Associated Press, Democratic Reps. Jamaal Bowman of New York, Yvette Clarke of New York, and Brenda Lawrence of Michigan along with Media 2070 said the FCC should conduct an assessment to "address and redress" the harm the agency's policies and programs have caused Black and brown communities and identify the "affirmative steps the agency commits to taking to break down barriers to just media and telecommunication practices."

The FCC is an independent governmental agency that is responsible for regulating the nation's communications by radio, television, wire, satellite and cable. In total, 25 members of Congress signed onto the letter, including Congresswomen Karen Bass of California, Ilhan Omar of Minnesota and Rashida Tlaib of Michigan.

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A lack of diversity and representation has long been a concern for media advocates and experts who argue that racism permeates the nation's media industry, partly because of historical exclusionary policies and regulations that have made it hard for Black Americans and others to control and shape news coverage and other forms of media in communities across the nation.

Media 2070, an initiative created by the Black caucus of the nonpartisan organization Free Press, has called for media reparations for the Black community and the FCC letter is part of its efforts. Earlier this month it delivered a petition to 3,000 newsrooms across the country, urging news outlets to "dismantle anti-Black racism in the media, trust Black journalists and care for Black communities."

"Although many journalists and artists of color have used their talent to ensure critical stories about their communities are being told, our nation's big media companies nevertheless continue to stereotypically depict people of color as being a threat or a burden to society," the lawmakers wrote in their joint letter to Acting FCC Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel. "Historic federal policies are a primary reason why structural inequities exist in our nation's media and telecommunication systems today. FCC policies, license decisions and inaction have had the result of effectively excluding people of color from media ownership opportunities."

The lawmakers noted the nation's first radio and TV licenses were awarded by the Federal Radio Commission and then its successor, the FCC, during an era of Jim Crow segregation.

"The (Trump administration's) efforts to consolidate the media marketplace limited ownership opportunities for people of color and women," the letter stated.

President Joe Biden signed an executive order in January, directing executive agencies to assess how federal policies have exacted harm upon communities of color. Each agency was tasked with identifying potential barriers that underserved communities and individuals face in trying to access contracting opportunities and also whether new policies, regulations or guidance documents may be necessary to advance equity.

The order also "strongly encouraged" independent agencies, which would include the FCC, to conduct an assessment.

In a statement to the AP, an FCC spokesperson said Rosenworcel is "committed to ensuring that FCC policies are equitable, fair, and transparent." Rosenworcel announced last week a plan to expand the work of the recently renamed Communications Equity and Diversity Council. The council's mission will expand from its initial focus on the "media ecosystem to review more broadly critical diversity and equity issues across the tech sector."

"She believes that we must prioritize diversity and expand opportunities for communities that have for too long been overlooked and underserved," the statement said. "While the FCC is an independent agency, it has been working diligently under her leadership to follow President Biden's executive order. But more work remains to be done. We are committed to working with those who sent this letter to do so."

People of color own and control just 6% of our nation's full-power TV stations, 7% of commercial FM radio stations and 12% of commercial AM radio stations despite making up more than 40% of the U.S. population. As of 2017, Black Americans owned or controlled less than 1% of television stations, the group said, citing a 2020 FCC, Media Bureau, Industry Analysis Division report.

Bowman said he supports a full racial equity audit of the FCC.

"Dismantling structural racism is a priority of our office," Bowman said. "Media controls our narrative and controls our consciousness and if people of color aren't owning those spaces and are strategically and just purposely excluded from those spaces, we have to do something about that."

A 2011 FCC report on the changing media landscape found that broadcast owners of color and advocates "largely attribute low minority broadcast ownership levels to the Telecommunications Act of 1996, which relaxed the local broadcast ownership rules and led to increased consolidation in broadcast media." The newspaper and radio industries have also faced rapid consolidation.

The FCC report noted that several studies have concluded that mainstream media outlets don't adequately cover Black Americans and other communities of color. The famous Kerner Commission report, which was commissioned by President Lyndon B. Johnson and released in 1968, found that the majority-white

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owned media outlets failed to cover the 1967 uprisings in Detroit and elsewhere from the perspective of Black Americans in a nuanced and accurate manner.

"By and large, news organizations have failed to communicate to both their Black and white audiences a sense of the problems America faces and the sources of potential solutions. The media report and write from the standpoint of a white man's world," the 1968 Kerner Commission report stated.

And more than 50 years later, media organizations across the nation continue to grapple with a lack of people of color in newsrooms and media ownership. Efforts have been made to democratize the nation's media system. But some of those changes were eventually rolled back.

In 1978, the FCC created the minority tax-certificate program, which allowed broadcasters to receive a tax break if they sold their stations to people of color. But in 1995, the Republican-controlled Congress passed legislation that ended the program, which had increased broadcast ownership by people of color from less than 1% to 3%.

Mark Lloyd, a former associate general counsel and chief diversity officer at the FCC, said there have been efforts over the years to address diversity and the agency is required by Congress to review its "policies and determine whether or not those policies are in the public interest."

"That's the law, and having Congress reassert that I think has some utility," Lloyd said. "I would also say that it is important for the Federal Communications Commission to focus its concerns on whether or not the public is getting the critical information that it needs."

Congresswoman Lawrence said she has had previous conversations with the FCC about representation and she said she's hopeful the agency will conduct an audit.

"President Biden made that commitment that he is going to really strive to have racial equality, and that includes the FCC because we know some of the policies have been more roadblocks and barriers, instead of being inclusive," Lawrence said.

Media 2070 leaders said the goal of the letter is to not only push the FCC to address its history and shift the public conversation but also outline tangible steps to repair harm, including fixing the ongoing consolidation of media and directing financial resources into Black-owned platforms.

The nation's demographics are changing and the "media system has to change if it is going to survive," said Collette Watson, co-creator of the Media 2070: Media Reparations consortium and the Free Press' vice president of cultural strategy.

"It's not just a matter of being diverse or being inclusive, it's really about completely upending the structure that exists so that we can have something that looks more truthful to who we are and how we're going to exist together as a multiracial society," Watson said. "If we can't have a media system that tells the truth of Black lives, the truth of all, and one that is safe for Black people to exist in and have our stories told in, then we aren't going to have a media system. It will become obsolete."

Millions skipped church during pandemic. Will they return?

By DAVID SHARP Associated Press

WALDOBORO, Maine (AP) — With millions of people having stayed home from places of worship during the coronavirus pandemic, struggling congregations have one key question: How many of them will return?

As the pandemic recedes in the United States and in-person services resume, worries of a deepening slide in attendance are universal.

Some houses of worship won't make it.

Smaller organizations with older congregations that struggled to adapt during the pandemic are in the greatest danger of a downward spiral from which they can't recover, said the Rev. Gloria E. White-Hammond, lecturer at the Harvard Divinity School and co-pastor of a church in Boston.

On the Maine coast, the pandemic proved to be the last straw for the 164-year-old Waldoboro United Methodist Church.

Even before COVID-19 swept the world, weekly attendance had dipped to 25 or 30 at the white-clapboard New England church that could hold several hundred worshippers. The number further dwindled to five or six before the final service was held Sunday, said the Rev. Gregory Foster.

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The remaining congregants realized they couldn't continue to maintain the structure, and decided to fold the tent, Foster said.

"We can't entirely blame everything on COVID. But that was just the final blow. Some people have not been back at all," he said.

In Virginia, the Mount Clifton United Methodist Church experienced a similar fate. The church can seat more than 100 but the number of weekly worshippers dwindled to 10 to 15, even before the pandemic.

The small white church built on a hill in the Shenandoah Valley in the 1880s may be rented to another congregation, or it may be put up for sale.

"It's a complicated picture overall, but the pandemic was the straw that broke the camel's back," said the Rev. Darlene Wilkins, who oversaw Mount Clifton. "It just became next to impossible to sustain."

In the United States, the latest challenge for places of worship comes against a backdrop of a decades-long trend of a smaller share of the population identifying as religious.

It's too early to know the full impact of the pandemic. Surveys do show signs of hopefulness — and also cause for concern.

About three-quarters of Americans who attended religious services in person at least monthly before the pandemic say they are likely to do so again in the next few weeks, according to a recent AP-NORC poll. That's up slightly from the about two-thirds who said in May 2020 that they would if they were allowed to do so. But 7% said they definitely won't be attending.

Those findings are in line with a Pew Research Center survey of U.S. residents last summer. It found that 92% of people who regularly attend religious services expected to continue at the same or higher rate, while 7% say they will attend in-person services less often.

Nashville, Tennessee-based Lifeway Research, an evangelical research firm, says many churches lost steam when in-person services shut down. A small but concerning number of churchgoers are coming out of the pandemic in limbo without a church home, said Scott McConnell, Lifeway's executive director.

"That's a lot of momentum to lose and a lot of people stepping out of the habit" of weekly worship, McConnell said.

Those that are successful in reemerging from the COVID-19 lockdowns will likely be those that did a better job adapting to the pandemic, said White-Hammond. Eight in 10 congregants in the U.S. reported that their services were being streamed online, Pew said.

Those that kept a connection with congregants and relied less on the physical passing of the plate for donations stand a better chance of emerging unscathed, White-Hammond said.

In Charlotte, North Carolina, Temple Beth El was closed during the pandemic but kept congregants in touch through events like "challah day." Volunteers baked over 900 loaves of the bread, which were delivered to homes so worshippers could share them over a Shabbat meal.

There will be no returning to "normal" after the pandemic, said Rabbi Dusty Klass. "There were people who went home and may never come back to the sanctuary. They may just pray from their couch. It's up to us to make sure they have the opportunity."

The All Dulles Area Muslim Society, whose main campus is in Sterling, Virginia, said some of its 11 locations have reopened to worshippers with safety measures.

"If COVID is gone 100%, I firmly believe our community would be fully back because people crave ... to be together," said Rizwan Jaka, chair of interfaith and media relations.

In San Francisco, the historic Old St. Mary's Cathedral survived when members rebuilt after a fire following the 1906 earthquake but it has struggled mightily during the pandemic to stay open.

The 160-year-old Roman Catholic church, which is heavily dependent on older worshippers and tourists, lost most of its revenue after parishes closed during the pandemic. During those "dark hours," the Rev. John Ardis had to dismiss most of the lay staff, cut the salary of a priest and close the parish preschool.

The plaster is crumbling, the paint is peeling off the walls and dozens of its stained-glass windows need to be replaced.

"But those are secondary at the moment," Ardis said. "Because I'm just basically trying to trying to keep the doors open."

Here in New England, any slide could be more acute since a smaller proportion of residents identify as religious.

In Maine, Judy Grant, 77, was a newcomer to Waldoboro who started watching the services online and then began attending in person.

She's upset by the closure.

"I'm extremely disappointed," she said. "A lot of churches are closing. I think COVID had a big part in this latest shrinkage, but they were shrinking even before that," she said.

The final service on Sunday was emotional, with both smiles and tears, as nearly 60 gathered in the sanctuary. Foster preached about new beginnings and encouraged people to continue their faith.

Afterward, people began removing some of the church's contents, including religious paintings, some furniture, and other items.

Grant said some hope the building will come alive again with a new congregation: "We have to be positive — and pray."

Fears aside, no mass exodus from collapsed building's twin

By TERRY SPENCER and RUSS BYNUM Associated Press

SURFSIDE, Fla. (AP) — About a block from the Miami-area beachfront condominium tower that collapsed sits its sister building, erected a year later by the same company, using the same materials and a similar design. It has faced the same tides and salty air.

This has made some residents of Champlain Towers North worried enough to leave, though many have remained, saying they are confident their almost 40-year-old, 12-story building is better maintained. They say their building doesn't have the same problems with cracking in support beams and in the pool area that 2018 engineering reports show the south tower had.

The collapse of Champlain Towers South in the town of Surfside on Thursday has drawn attention to older high-rise buildings throughout South Florida and prompted Miami-Dade Mayor Daniella Levine Cava to order a 30-day audit of whether such buildings under her jurisdiction are complying with a required recertification of structural integrity at 40 years. She said she wants any issues raised by inspections to be immediately addressed. She's also urged municipalities within the county to follow suit. Miami, for example, has launched a 45-day audit of buildings six stories and higher that are 40 years old or older.

Inspectors performed a quick-hit examination of the north building and Surfside Mayor Charles Burkett said nothing was found that indicates the tower is in danger of collapse.

That didn't reassure everyone.

"I'm petrified of returning," said Rebecca Weinstock, a snowbird who bought a sixth-floor condo in the north building four years ago with her husband. She is in New York, where she was when the south tower collapsed early Thursday, killing at least 11 people and leaving 150 missing.

While she agrees the north building is well maintained, she said that's not enough to satisfy her that it's completely safe. It was completed in 1982, one year after the south tower, and built by the same developer, Nathan Reiber, through his firm, Nattel Construction. The possibility that the collapse was caused by a design or construction flaw means she won't be returning anytime soon.

"I am out my investment, I am out my apartment, I am out my future, but we are talking about lives here," she said. The only way she'll return, she said, is if two independent engineers — not from South Florida — agree it's safe.

North tower residents who want to temporarily relocate are being offered private assistance from Support Surfside, a charity group helping victims of the collapse. The group did a survey of the building's full-time residents and found about half are staying and half have left. Overall, about half the units are owned by snowbirds like Weinstock and those residents left before the collapse, the group's survey showed. Overall, 28 of the 113 units are currently occupied, the group found.

Most residents who are staying took the position of Philip and Nora Zyne, who remain in their fifth-floor condo. The Zynes bought their condo 12 years ago, and have lived there full time for six. They have several

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friends and acquaintances who lived in the south tower and remain missing.

Zyne said Monday that he's seen numerous inspectors in his building since the collapse.

"I've never seen any major structural issues" in the north building, said Philip Zyne, an attorney. "I'm not worried at all right now. I do want to get a full structural engineering and forensic examination done."

Salomon Gold, who spent 10 years as the condo association president for the north tower and 20 on the board, is convinced the building is safe, saying he and the other board members never skimped on maintenance. He compared the building collapse to airplanes: Just because one crashes doesn't mean others of that same make and model will.

"We are in good shape," said Gold, 89. The current condo association president, Naum Lusky, declined comment Monday.

Surfside Mayor Burkett said a deep-dive inspection of the north tower will be conducted Tuesday by an engineering firm hired by the residents. The town will inspect other older buildings soon. Given the results of the preliminary examination of the north tower, he said he doesn't see a reason to order an evacuation. Still, he said, he's not sure he would stay there.

"If you asked me if I wanted to spend the night in that building, I'd be a little ... I wouldn't be willing to do that until we went through it," he said.

Esther Drachman and her husband aren't taking any chances. Drachman's 91-year-old mother-in-law lives in the north tower.

"My mother-in-law is bedridden, so we took her out and brought her to our house," Drachman said. "We just felt like we couldn't get her out in five minutes" if a rapid evacuation became necessary.

Drachman said her mother-in-law wasn't worried or very aware of the details of the disaster. She said she and her husband are waiting to see if a thorough inspection turns up any problems.

"We'll see if that building's fine," Drachman said. "And if it is, we'll put her back in."

US Catholic school association seeks rebound from grim year

By DAVID CRARY AP National Writer

The organization overseeing Catholic schools in the United States gets a new chief executive this week as it seeks to rebound from its biggest one-year enrollment drop since the 1970s.

Amid the pandemic, more than 200 schools closed permanently, and enrollment at the 5,981 remaining schools fell by 6.4% -- or more than 111,000 students -- for the 2020-2021 academic year, according to the National Catholic Educational Association.

Total enrollment was about 1.63 million, down from a peak of more than 5.2 million in the early 1960s.

On Wednesday, the NCEA installs a new president and CEO, Lincoln Snyder, who served as superintendent of schools for the Diocese of Sacramento, California, since 2015. Based on trends in that diocese, where enrollment is up 3% from September 2019, Snyder is cautiously optimistic that many Catholic schools nationwide can slow or stop the enrollment decline in the coming year.

Economic hardships caused by the pandemic forced some families to pull their children out of Catholic schools because they couldn't afford the tuition, Snyder said. But in Sacramento, he said, those losses were offset by an influx of families new to Catholic schools who were attracted by the system's educational strengths and its handling of the pandemic.

"We had low infection rates... very few documented cases (of COVID-19) on site," he said. "We showed we could have kids in class and still be safe -- and that seems to have been respected by parents."

Of the 209 Catholic schools that closed or were consolidated last year, the biggest impact was felt by urban communities and non-Catholic families, the NCEA said. In its latest annual report, it expressed regret, saying the closure of Catholic schools in underserved areas eliminates "pathways of opportunity" for the affected families.

To curtail such closures, the NCEA will need the help of philanthropic donors, Snyder said.

Among dioceses in major cities, Las Vegas was the only one where enrollment in Catholic schools increased by more than 2% last year, the NCEA said.

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Conversely, Catholic school enrollment decreased by more than 8% in New York, Los Angeles and Chicago. The overall enrollment drop was 8.1% at the 4,812 Catholic elementary schools, and 2.5% at the 1,169 secondary schools.

The reduction in school staffing – including teachers and administrators – was relatively modest at 2.3%, due in part to the availability of the federal Paycheck Protection Program in the spring of 2020.

Snyder said the NCEA wouldn't know until September whether Catholic schools collectively have been able to halt the enrollment decline.

"I believe it's possible," he said. "I'm optimistic that with the right resources and people, Catholic schools can grow."

Cosmic gulp: Astronomers see black hole swallow neutron star

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

Talk about a heavy snack. For the first time, astronomers have witnessed a black hole swallowing a neutron star, the most dense object in the universe — all in a split-second gulp.

Ten days later they saw the same thing, on the other side of the universe. In both cases, a neutron star — a teaspoon of which would weigh a billion tons — orbits ever closer to that ultimate point of no return, a black hole, until they finally crash together and the neutron star is gone in a gobble.

Astronomers witnessed the last 500 orbits before the neutron stars were swallowed, a process that took far less than a minute and briefly generated as much energy as all the visible light in the observable universe.

"It was just a big quick (gulp), gone," said study co-author Patrick Brady, an astrophysicist at the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee. The black hole "gets a nice dinner of a neutron star and makes itself just a little bit more massive."

The bursts of energy from the collisions were discovered when detectors on Earth spotted the mergers' gravitational waves, cosmic energetic ripples soaring through space and time as first theorized by Albert Einstein. They each came from more than one billion light-years away. The waves were detected in January of 2020, but the study analyzing and interpreting the data by more than 100 scientists was published Tuesday in *Astrophysical Journal Letters*.

While astronomers had seen gravitational waves from two black holes colliding with each other and two neutron stars colliding with each other, this is the first time they saw one of each crashing together.

Neutron stars are corpses of massive stars, what's leftover after a big star dies in a supernova explosion. They are so dense that they have about 1.5 to two times the mass of our sun, but condensed to about 6 miles (10 kilometers) wide, Brady said. Some black holes, known as stellar black holes, are created when an even bigger star collapses into itself creating something with such powerful gravity that not even light can escape.

Scientists think there should be many of these neutron star and black hole pairings, but they've yet to find one in our own galaxy.

"This is very cool," said Johns Hopkins University astrophysicist Marc Kamionkowski, who wasn't part of the research. He said this will help astronomers predict how abundant these pairings are.

'It definitely feels early': GOP's long race to 2024 begins

By JILL COLVIN and THOMAS BEAUMONT Associated Press

WEST DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — In the past week alone, Nikki Haley regaled activists in Iowa, Mike Pence courted donors in California and Donald Trump returned to the rally stage, teasing a third campaign for the White House.

The midterms are more than a year away, and there are 1,225 days until the next presidential election. But Republicans eyeing a White House run are wasting no time in jockeying for a strong position in what could emerge as an extremely crowded field of contenders.

The politicking will only intensify in the coming weeks, particularly in Iowa, home to the nation's leadoff

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presidential caucuses and a state where conservative evangelicals play a significant role in steering the direction of the GOP. Sen. Tom Cotton of Arkansas is slated to visit on Tuesday, and others, including Pence, South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem and former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo are expected to appear in July.

The flurry of activity is a sign that there is no clear frontrunner to lead the GOP if Trump opts against a 2024 campaign.

"It definitely feels early, but it doesn't feel like it's a bad idea based on the situation," said Mike DuHaime, a longtime Republican strategist. "The party has changed, the voters are changing and I think the process has changed. And I think many of the candidates have realized that."

For now, a central question in Republican politics is whether Trump, who continues to advance lies about his loss last year to Joe Biden, will run again. The former president has said he will make a decision after next year's midterms.

In the meantime, he faces mounting legal vulnerabilities, including the potential that prosecutors in Manhattan may file criminal charges against his company as soon as this week. Trump is also under investigation by a district attorney in Georgia for attempting to pressure elections officials to change results in his favor.

Still, Trump, who left office in January under the cloud of impeachment for inciting a riot at the U.S. Capitol, is flirting with a political future. Returning to the rally stage last weekend for the first time as a private citizen, Trump looked every bit the candidate as an enthusiastic crowd of thousands in Ohio chanted, "Four more years!"

"We won the election twice," he said. "And it's possible we'll have to win it a third time."

The specter of Trump has been especially challenging for Republicans like Pence. As a conservative evangelical Christian who was Trump's unflinchingly loyal vice president, Pence would seem appealing to many of the party's activists. But his decision to follow the constitutional process and certify Biden's win angered many in the GOP.

Though he still heaps praise on Trump's accomplishments, Pence has worked more recently to forge his own identity, splitting with his former boss in particular over the severity of the deadly Jan. 6 riot, which forced him into hiding but which many Republicans have sought to minimize.

That balancing act came into sharp relief Thursday as Pence delivered a speech at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library in front of a sold-out crowd of more than 800 people during a swing through California that included meetings with donors and a headline speech at a Republican National Committee dinner.

After being booed and jeered the week before at a conservative conference in Florida, Pence appeared to have a newfound sense of swagger as he delivered his strongest rebuttal to date of Trump's continued insistence that he could have unilaterally overturned the results of the last election. Many of Trump's supporters continue to blame Pence for Trump's loss, even though he had no power to overturn the results.

"The truth is, there's almost no idea more un-American than the notion that any one person could choose the American president," Pence said, adding that he would "always be proud that we did our part, on that tragic day, to reconvene the Congress and fulfill our duty under the Constitution and the laws of the United States."

It's been a similar tightrope act for Haley, Trump's former ambassador to the United Nations and a former governor of South Carolina, who sharply criticized Trump after the Jan. 6 Capitol riot but has since largely avoided the subject.

At a Thursday dinner during a three-day swing across Iowa, Haley presented herself to about 500 Republican activists as a next-generation conservative figure.

Like Pence, Haley spent much of her speech praising Trump's time in office and sharing anecdotes of her work with him that lit chuckles throughout the hall, while ignoring the deadly siege at the Capitol as well as Trump's monthslong campaign to cast doubt on the outcome of the 2020 election, even though there is no evidence of the widespread fraud he alleges.

"I saw firsthand as ambassador to the United Nations that Donald Trump put America first, sometimes in the most interesting of ways," she said.

Haley was also the guest on a popular conservative radio talk show Friday and headlined fundraisers for

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statehouse and county leaders, including Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds.

"There are a lot of reasons why I love Iowa," she said. "But maybe the biggest reason is that Iowa loves to elect badass Republican women."

The activity is not surprising to activists in the states that will ultimately have first say in picking their party's candidates.

"It takes a while to court states like New Hampshire and Iowa," said Greg Moore, the New Hampshire state director of Americans for Prosperity, a conservative political advocacy group founded by the Koch brothers. "And it's fine and dandy if you're President Trump and you have a prebuilt infrastructure in the state and just have to turn the key. But for everyone else, you have to build that."

So far, polls and interviews suggest voters are a long way from picking favorites, though Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis is frequently mentioned as a possible Trump successor. He is notably one of the few leading Republicans who has yet to visit Iowa this year.

At last week's GOP event in California, retiree Bob Egbert, 75, praised Trump but doubted a third run would be good for the party. Egbert likes what he sees in DeSantis and considered Pence's low-key personality as a liability with voters.

"I think he would be a nice, bland candidate," said Egbert, a Republican. "I don't think that's what we need."

Former California Gov. Pete Wilson, a Republican, predicted a "spirited contest" in 2024, but declined to identify a favorite among the emerging candidates.

As for Trump?

"It is, after all ... his decision. It's a decision he shares with his family," Wilson said. "He is much admired. It's obvious from what has occurred he is much feared and demonized by this (Biden) administration."

Supreme Court says no right to hearing for some immigrants

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court ruled Tuesday that the government can indefinitely detain certain immigrants who say they will face persecution or torture if they are deported to their native countries.

Over the dissent of three liberal justices, the court held 6-3 that the immigrants are not entitled to a hearing about whether they should be released while the government evaluates their claims.

Justice Samuel Alito wrote for the court that "those aliens are not entitled to a bond hearing."

The case involves people who had been previously deported and, when detained after re-entering the United States illegally, claimed that they would be persecuted or tortured if sent back. One man is a citizen of El Salvador who said he was immediately threatened by a gang after being deported from the U.S.

An immigration officer determined that the immigrants had a "reasonable fear" for their safety if returned to their countries, setting in motion an evaluation process that can take months or years.

The issue for the court was whether the government could hold the immigrants without having an immigration judge weigh in. The immigrants and the Trump administration, which briefed and argued the case before President Joe Biden's inauguration in January, pointed to different provisions of immigration law to make their respective cases.

Alito, in his opinion for the court, wrote that the administration's argument that the relevant provision does not provide for a bond hearing was more persuasive.

In dissent, Justice Stephen Breyer saw it differently. "But why would Congress want to deny a bond hearing to individuals who reasonably fear persecution or torture, and who, as a result, face proceedings that may last for many months or years...? I can find no satisfactory answer to this question," Breyer wrote.

The federal appeals court in Richmond, Virginia, had ruled in the immigrants' favor, but other appellate courts had sided with the government. Tuesday's decision sets a nationwide rule, but one that affects what lawyers for the immigrants called a relatively small subset of noncitizens.

Diana legacy lingers as fans mark late royal's 60th birthday

By DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Most people wouldn't volunteer to walk through a minefield. Princess Diana did it twice. On Jan. 15, 1997, Diana walked gingerly down a narrow path cleared through an Angolan minefield, wearing a protective visor and flak jacket emblazoned with the name of The HALO Trust, a group devoted to removing mines from former war zones. When she realized some of the photographers accompanying her didn't get the shot, she turned around and did it again.

Later, she met with a group of landmine victims. A young girl who had lost her left leg perched on the princess's lap.

The images of that day appeared in newspapers and on TV sets around the globe, focusing international attention on the then-languishing campaign to rid the world of devices that lurk underground for decades after conflicts end. Today, a treaty banning landmines has 164 signatories.

Those touched by the life of the preschool teacher turned princess remembered her ahead of what would have been her 60th birthday on Thursday, recalling the complicated royal rebel who left an enduring imprint on the House of Windsor.

Diana had the "emotional intelligence that allowed her to see that bigger picture ... but also to bring it right down to individual human beings," said James Cowan, a retired major general who is now CEO of The HALO Trust. "She knew that she could reach their hearts in a way that would outmaneuver those who would only be an influence through the head."

Diana's walk among the landmines seven months before she died in a Paris car crash is just one example of how she helped make the monarchy more accessible, changing the way the royal family related to people. By interacting more intimately with the public — kneeling to the level of a child, sitting on the edge of a patient's hospital bed, writing personal notes to her fans — she connected with people in a way that inspired other royals, including her sons, Princes William and Harry, as the monarchy worked to become more human and remain relevant in the 21st century.

Diana didn't invent the idea of royals visiting the poor, destitute or downtrodden. Queen Elizabeth II herself visited a Nigerian leper colony in 1956. But Diana touched them — literally.

"Diana was a real hugger in the royal family," said Sally Bedell Smith, author of "Diana in Search of Herself." "She was much more visibly tactile in the way she interacted with people. It was not something the queen was comfortable with and still is not."

Critically, she also knew that those interactions could bring attention to her causes since she was followed everywhere by photographers and TV crews.

Ten years before she embraced landmine victims in Angola, she shook hands with a young AIDS patient in London during the early days of the epidemic, showing people that the disease couldn't be transmitted through touch.

As her marriage to Prince Charles deteriorated, Diana used the same techniques to tell her side of the story. Embracing her children with open arms to show her love for her sons. Sitting alone in front of the Taj Mahal on a royal trip to India. Walking through that minefield as she was starting a new life after her divorce.

"Diana understood the power of imagery — and she knew that a photograph was worth a hundred words," said Ingrid Seward, editor-in-chief of Majesty magazine and author of "Diana: An Intimate Portrait." "She wasn't an intellectual. She wasn't ever going to be the one to give the right words. But she gave the right image."

And that began on the day the 20-year-old Lady Diana Spencer married Prince Charles, the heir to throne, on July 29, 1981, at St. Paul's Cathedral.

Elizabeth Emanuel, who co-designed her wedding dress, describes an event comparable to the transformation of a chrysalis into a butterfly, or in this case a nursery school teacher in cardigans and sensible skirts into a fairytale princess.

"We thought, right, let's do the biggest, most dramatic dress possible, the ultimate fairytale dress. Let's

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make it big. Let's have big sleeves. Let's have ruffles," Emanuel said. "And St. Paul's was so huge. We knew that we needed to do something that was a statement. And Diana was completely up for that. She loved that idea."

But Emanuel said Diana also had a simplicity that made her more accessible to people.

"She had this vulnerability about her, I think, so that ordinary people could relate to her. She wasn't perfect. And none of us are perfect, and I think that's why there is this thing, you know, people think of her almost like family. They felt they knew her."

Diana's sons learned from their mother's example, making more personal connections with the public during their charitable work, including supporting efforts to destigmatize mental health problems and treat young AIDS patients in Lesotho and Botswana.

William, who is second in line to the throne, worked as an air ambulance pilot before taking on full-time royal duties. Harry retraced Diana's footsteps through the minefield for The HALO Trust.

Her influence can be seen in other royals as well. Sophie, the Countess of Wessex and the wife of Charles' brother Prince Edward, grew teary, for example, in a television interview as she told the nation about her feelings on the death of her father-in-law, Prince Philip.

The public even began to see a different side of the queen, including her turn as a Bond girl during the 2012 London Olympics in which she starred in a mini-movie with Daniel Craig to open the games.

More recently, the monarch has reached out in Zoom calls, joking with school children about her meeting with Russian cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin. What was he like, ma'am?

"Russian," she said flatly. The Zoom filled with chuckles.

Cowan, of HALO, said the attention that Diana, and now Harry, have brought to the landmine issue helped attract the funding that made it possible for thousands of workers to continue the slow process of ridding the world of the devices.

Sixty countries and territories are still contaminated with landmines, which killed or injured more than 5,500 people in 2019, according to Landmine Monitor.

"She had that capacity to reach out and inspire people. Their imaginations were fired up by this work," Cowan said. "And they like it and they want to fund it. And that's why she's had such a profound legacy for us."

It's imminent: After nearly 20 years US to leave Bagram

By KATHY GANNON Associated Press

BAGRAM, Afghanistan (AP) — For nearly 20 years, Bagram Airfield was the heart of American military power in Afghanistan, a sprawling mini-city behind fences and blast walls just an hour's drive north of Kabul. Initially, it was a symbol of the U.S. drive to avenge the 9/11 attacks, then of its struggle for a way through the ensuing war with the Taliban.

In just a matter of days, the last U.S. soldiers will depart Bagram. They are leaving what probably everyone connected to the base, whether American or Afghan, considers a mixed legacy.

"Bagram grew into such a massive military installation that, as with few other bases in Afghanistan and even Iraq, it came to symbolize and epitomize the phrase 'mission creep,'" said Andrew Watkins, Afghanistan senior analyst for the Brussels-based International Crisis Group.

U.S. Central Command said last week that it's well past 50% done packing up Bagram, and the rest is going fast. American officials have said the entire pullout of U.S. troops will most likely be completely finished by July 4. The Afghan military will then take over Bagram as part of its continuing fight against the Taliban — and against what many in the country fear will be a new eruption of chaos.

The departure is rife with symbolism. Not least, it's the second time that an invader of Afghanistan has come and gone through Bagram.

The Soviet Union built the airfield in the 1950s. When it invaded Afghanistan in 1979 to back a communist government, it turned it into its main base from which it would defend its occupation of the country. For 10 years, the Soviets fought the U.S.-backed mujahedeen, dubbed freedom fighters by President Ronald

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Reagan, who saw them as a front-line force in one of the last Cold War battles.

The Soviet Union negotiated its withdrawal in 1989. Three years later, the pro-Moscow government collapsed, and the mujahedeen took power, only to turn their weapons on each other and kill thousands of civilians. That turmoil brought to power the Taliban who overran Kabul in 1996.

When the U.S. and NATO inherited Bagram in 2001, they found it in ruins, a collection of crumbling buildings, gouged by rockets and shells, most of its perimeter fence wrecked. It had been abandoned after being battered in the battles between the Taliban and rival mujahedeen warlords fleeing to their northern enclaves.

After dislodging the Taliban from Kabul, the U.S.-led coalition began working with their warlord allies to rebuild Bagram, first with temporary structures that then turned permanent. Its growth was explosive, eventually swallowing up roughly 30 square miles.

"The closure of Bagram is a major symbolic and strategic victory for the Taliban," said Bill Roggio, senior fellow at the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies.

"If the Taliban is able to take control of the base, it will serve as anti-U.S. propaganda fodder for years to come," said Roggio who is also editor of the foundation's Long War Journal.

It would also be a military windfall.

The enormous base has two runways. The most recent, at 12,000 feet long, was built in 2006 at a cost of \$96 million. There are 110 revetments, which are basically parking spots for aircraft, protected by blast walls. GlobalSecurity, a security think tank, says Bagram includes three large hangars, a control tower and numerous support buildings. The base has a 50-bed hospital with a trauma bay, three operating theaters and a modern dental clinic. There are also fitness centers and fast food restaurants. Another section houses a prison, notorious and feared among Afghans.

Jonathan Schroden, of the U.S.-based research and analysis organization CNA, estimates that well over 100,000 people spent significant time at Bagram over the past two decades. "Bagram formed a foundation for the wartime experience of a large fraction of U.S. military members and contractors who served in Afghanistan," said Schroden, director of CNA's Center for Stability and Development.

"The departure of the last U.S. troops from there will likely serve as the final turn of the page for many of these folks with respect to their time in that country," he said.

For Afghans in Bagram district, a region of more than 100 villages supported by orchards and farming fields, the base has been a major supplier of employment. The U.S. withdrawal effects nearly every household, said Darwaish Raufi, district governor.

The Americans have been giving the Afghan military some weaponry and other material. Anything else that they are not taking, they are destroying and selling it to scrap dealers around Bagram. U.S. officials say they must ensure nothing usable can ever fall into Taliban hands.

Last week, the U.S. Central Command said it had junked 14,790 pieces of equipment and sent 763 C-17 aircraft loaded with material out of Afghanistan. Bagram villagers say they hear explosions from inside the base, apparently the Americans destroying buildings and material.

Raufi said many villagers have complained to him about the U.S. leaving just their junk behind.

"There's something sadly symbolic about how the U.S. has gone about leaving Bagram. The decision to take so much away and destroy so much of what is left speaks to the U.S. urgency to get out quickly," said Michael Kugelman, deputy director of the Asia Program at the U.S.-based Wilson Center.

"It's not the kindest parting gift for Afghans, including those taking over the base," he said.

Inevitably, comparisons to the former Soviet Union have arisen.

Retired Afghan Gen. Saifullah Safi, who worked alongside U.S. forces at Bagram, said the Soviets left all their equipment when they withdrew. They "didn't take much with them, just the vehicles they needed to transport their soldiers back to Russia," he said.

The prison in the base was handed over to the Afghans in 2012, and they will continue to operate it. In the early years of the war, for many Afghans, Bagram became synonymous with fear, next only to Guantanamo Bay. Parents would threaten their crying children with the prison.

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In the early years of the invasion, Afghans often disappeared for months without any reports of their whereabouts until the International Committee of the Red Cross located them in Bagram. Some returned home with tales of torture.

"When someone mentions even the word Bagram I hear the screams of pain from the prison," said Zabihullah, who spent six years in Bagram, accused of belonging to the faction of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, a warlord designated a terrorist by the U.S. At the time of his arrest it was an offense to belong to Hekmatyar's party.

Zabihullah, who goes by one name, was released in 2020, four years after President Ashraf Ghani signed a peace deal with Hekmatyar.

Roggio says the status of the prison is a "major concern," noting that many of its prisoners are known Taliban leaders or members of militant groups, including al-Qaida and the Islamic State group. It's believed about 7,000 prisoners are still in the prison.

"If the base falls and the prison is overrun, these detainees can bolster the ranks of these terror groups," Roggio said.

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, June 30, the 181st day of 2021. There are 184 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On June 30, 1971, the Supreme Court ruled, 6-3, that the government could not prevent The New York Times or The Washington Post from publishing the Pentagon Papers.

On this date:

In 1865, eight people, including Mary Surratt and Dr. Samuel Mudd, were convicted by a military commission of conspiring with John Wilkes Booth, the assassin of President Abraham Lincoln. (Four defendants, including Surratt, were executed; Mudd was sentenced to life in prison, but was pardoned by President Andrew Johnson in 1869.)

In 1908, the Tunguska Event took place in Russia as an asteroid exploded above Siberia, leaving 800 square miles of scorched or blown-down trees.

In 1917, singer, actor and activist Lena Horne was born in Brooklyn, New York.

In 1918, labor activist and socialist Eugene V. Debs was arrested in Cleveland, charged under the Espionage Act of 1917 for a speech he'd made two weeks earlier denouncing U.S. involvement in World War I. (Debs was sentenced to prison and disenfranchised for life.)

In 1934, Adolf Hitler launched his "blood purge" of political and military rivals in Germany in what came to be known as "The Night of the Long Knives."

In 1958, the U.S. Senate passed the Alaska statehood bill by a vote of 64-20.

In 1971, a Soviet space mission ended in tragedy when three cosmonauts aboard Soyuz 11 were found dead of asphyxiation inside their capsule after it had returned to Earth.

In 1982, the proposed Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution expired, having failed to receive the required number of ratifications for its adoption, despite having its seven-year deadline extended by three years.

In 1985, 39 American hostages from a hijacked TWA jetliner were freed in Beirut after being held 17 days.

In 1986, the Supreme Court, in *Bowers v. Hardwick*, ruled 5-4 that states could outlaw homosexual acts between consenting adults (however, the nation's highest court effectively reversed this decision in 2003 in *Lawrence v. Texas*).

In 2009, American soldier Pfc. Bowe R. Bergdahl went missing from his base in eastern Afghanistan, and was later confirmed to have been captured by insurgents. (Bergdahl was released on May 31, 2014 in exchange for five Taliban detainees.)

In 2013, 19 elite firefighters known as members of the Granite Mountain Hotshots were killed battling a

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wildfire northwest of Phoenix after a change in wind direction pushed the flames back toward their position.

Ten years ago: The U.N.-backed Special Tribunal for Lebanon issued an indictment naming four suspects in the assassination of Lebanon's former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri (rah-FEEK' hah-REER'-ee), including a high-ranking Hezbollah militant linked to the 1983 truck bombings at the U.S. and French embassies in Kuwait. Conservative TV commentator Glenn Beck said goodbye to Fox News Channel, airing his final show before going into business for himself.

Five years ago: Saying it was the right thing to do, Defense Secretary Ash Carter announced that transgender people would be allowed to serve openly in the U.S. military, ending one of the last bans on service in the armed forces. President Barack Obama signed a rescue package for financially strapped Puerto Rico, which was facing more than \$70 billion in debt and a major payment due the next day. Rodrigo Duterte (doo-TEHR'-tay) was sworn as president of the Philippines.

One year ago: An international disaster relief organization reported the first confirmed case of COVID-19 among migrants in a tent encampment of asylum seekers at the U.S.-Mexico border. Sen. Lamar Alexander, a Tennessee Republican, bluntly called on President Donald Trump to start wearing a mask, at least some of the time, to set a good example. Trump came under growing pressure to respond to allegations that Russia had offered bounties for killing U.S. troops in Afghanistan; the White House said the allegations hadn't been confirmed. Mississippi Gov. Tate Reeves signed a landmark bill retiring the last state flag bearing the Confederate battle emblem. Boston's arts commission voted unanimously to remove a statue depicting a freed slave kneeling at Abraham Lincoln's feet. Baseball's minor leagues canceled their season because of the pandemic; more than half of the 160 teams were said to be in danger of failing.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Lea Massari is 88. Actor Nancy Dussault (doo-SOH') is 85. Songwriter Tony Hatch is 82. Singer Glenn Shorrock is 77. Actor Leonard Whiting is 71. Jazz musician Stanley Clarke is 70. Actor David Garrison is 69. Rock musician Hal Lindes (Dire Straits) is 68. Actor-comedian David Alan Grier is 65. Actor Vincent D'Onofrio is 62. Actor Deirdre Lovejoy is 59. Actor Rupert Graves is 58. Former boxer Mike Tyson is 55. Actor Peter Outerbridge is 55. Rock musician Tom Drummond (Better Than Ezra) is 52. Actor-comedian Tony Rock (TV: "Living Biblically") is 52. Actor Brian Bloom is 51. Actor Monica Potter is 50. Actor Molly Parker is 49. Actor Rick Gonzalez is 42. Actor Tom Burke is 40. Actor Lizzy Caplan is 39. Actor Susannah Flood is 39. Rock musician James Adam Shelley (American Authors) is 38. Country singer Cole Swindell is 38. R&B singer Fantasia is 37. Olympic gold medal swimmer Michael Phelps is 36. Actor Sean Marquette (TV: "The Goldbergs") is 33.