

Groton Daily Independent

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"Challenges make you discover things about yourself that you never really knew."

-Cicely Tyson



Chicken Soup
for the Soul

Girls Soccer Team goes 3-0 with win over St. Thomas More

Groton Area Girl's golf team went 3-0 Saturday with a 3-0 win over St. Thomas More. The game was played Saturday in Groton.

Laila Roberts scored the first goal with 29:46 left in the first half. Kennedy Hanson added the second goal with 38:01 left in the game and Carly Gilbert scored with 15:44 left in the game. Groton Area had a dozen other opportunities to score while St. Thomas More only threatened Groton's goal three times.

BRIDAL SHOWER

OPEN HOUSE BRIDAL Shower for Melynda Sletten, bride-to-be of Lance Larsen, will be held Sunday, Aug. 29, 2021, 1 p.m. to 3 p.m., Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Groton. No RSVP needed. Hosted by aunts of the groom. They are registered at Amazon, Target, Wayfair and Menards Gift Cards.



OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

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United Methodist Church

Groton and Conde

Sunday, August 22, 2021

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

Tuesday, August 24, 2021

Bible Study Video of Bad Girls of the Bible All are
Welcome! 10:00 AM

Wednesday, August 25, 2021

Community Coffee Hour 9:30 AM
Groton Ad Council 7:00 PM

Thursday, August 26, 2021

Newsletter Items Due

Sunday, August 29, 2021

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

Emmanuel Lutheran Church

Groton

Sunday, Aug. 22, 2021

9 a.m.: Worship

Monday, Aug. 23, 2021

6:30 a.m.: Bible Study

Wednesday, Aug. 25, 2021

6:30 p.m.: Healthy Return Task Force meets

Friday, Aug. 20, 2021

Newsletter Deadline.

Sunday, Aug. 29, 2021

9 a.m.: Worship/Communion/
Blessings of the backpacks

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton &

St. Joseph Catholic

Groton and Turton

Weekend Mass Schedule

Saturday 4:30pm Groton
Sunday 8:30am Groton & 11:00am Turton

Weekday

Tues 5:00pm Turton, W-F 8:30am Groton
Sat 10am Newman Center

Confessions:

Sat. 3:45-4:15pm & Sun. 7:45am to 8:15am (G)
Sun. 10:30-10:45am (T)

St. John's Lutheran Church

Groton

Sunday, Aug. 22, 2021

8 a.m.: Bible Study
9 a.m.: St. John's Worship
11 a.m.: Zion's Worship

Sunday, Aug. 29, 2021

8 a.m.: Bible Study
9 a.m.: St. John's Worship
11 a.m.: Zion's Worship

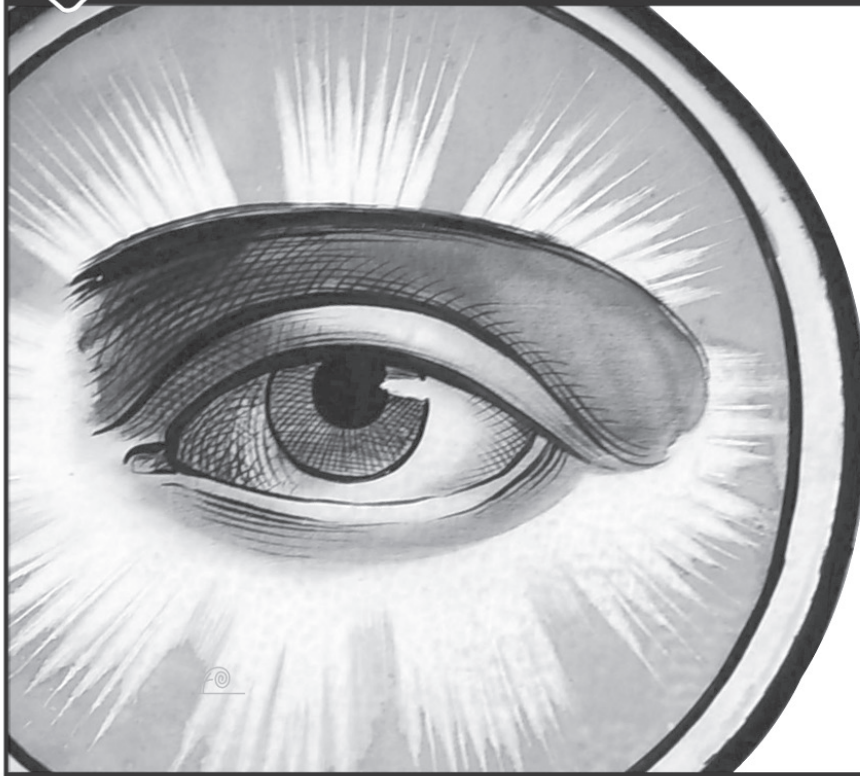
To submit your monthly or weekly church calendar, email to
news@grotonsd.net

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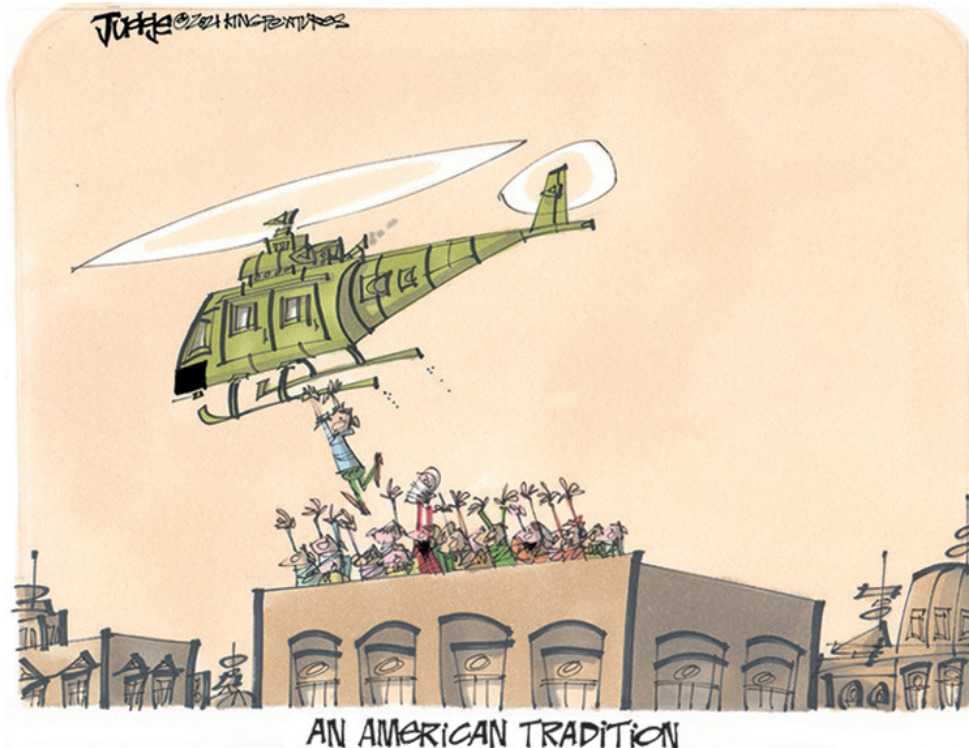
THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE



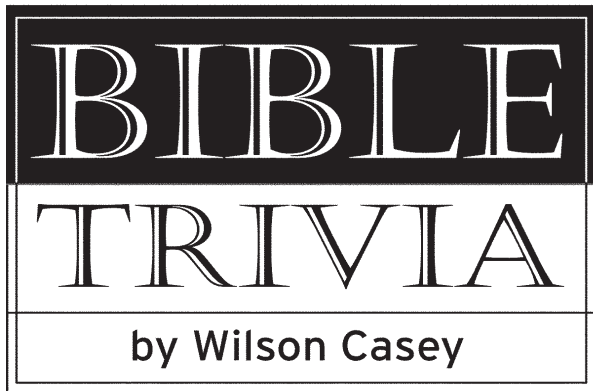
*The eyes of the
Lord are in every
place, keeping
watch on the evil
and the good.*

PROVERBS 15:3

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AN AMERICAN TRADITION



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

2. Whose last words were, "God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence"? *Moses, Noah, Joseph, Adam*

3. From 1 Chronicles 29, who said, "All things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee"? *Jacob, David, Paul, Job*

4. Where were many men slain for looking into the Ark of the Covenant? *Succoth, Troas, Sychar, Beth-shemesh*

5. What sorcerer in Samaria became a believer? *Hiel, Simon, Rehoboam, Omri*

6. Which is the last word of the New Testament? *Amen, Holy, Life, Throne*

ANSWERS: 1) New; 2) Joseph; 3) David; 4) Beth-shemesh; 5) Simon; 6) Amen (Revelation 22:21)

Sharpen your understanding of scripture with Wilson's Casey's latest book, "Test Your Bible Knowledge," available in bookstores and online.

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Grilled Southwestern Chicken Bundles

You don't have to sleep in a tent in the woods to enjoy a campfire cookout. Just gather everyone in the backyard with plenty of blankets to sit on, a telescope to watch the falling stars and a table filled with tasty "outdoor" foods. This main dish just might be the "star" of the menu!

16 ounces skinned and boned chicken breast, cut into 4 pieces

1 cup chopped green bell pepper

1 cup chopped red bell pepper

1 cup chopped onion

2 cups frozen whole-kernel corn, thawed

1/2 cup fat-free Catalina dressing

1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley or 1 teaspoon dried parsley flakes

1 1/2 teaspoons chili seasoning

1. Cut 4 (24-inch) pieces of heavy-duty aluminum foil. Lightly spray each piece with butter-flavored cooking spray. Arrange 1 chicken piece in center of each. In a medium bowl, combine green pepper, red pepper and onion. Spoon 3/4 cup vegetable mixture over each chicken piece. Sprinkle 1/2 cup corn over top of each.

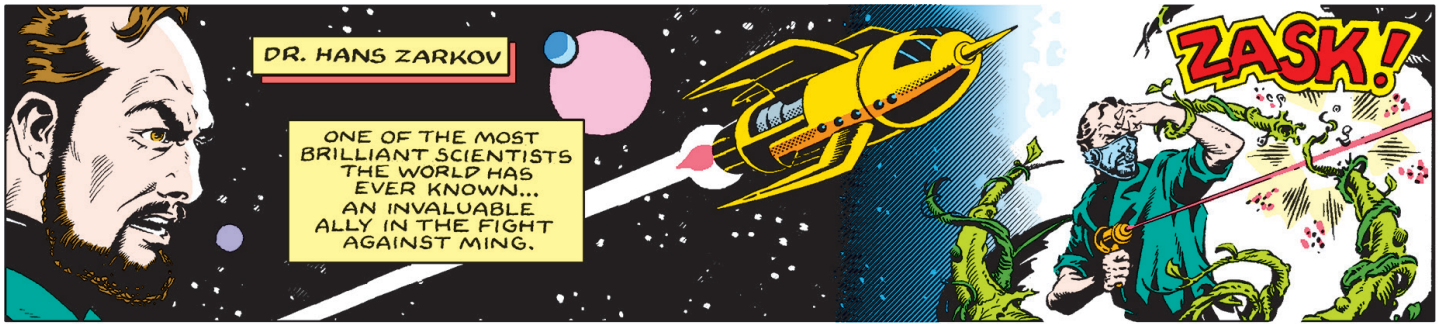
2. In small bowl, combine dressing, parsley and chili seasoning. Drizzle about 2 tablespoons dressing mixture over top of each bundle. Wrap and double seal each. Place packets over grill at medium heat. Grill for 18 to 20 minutes, turning occasionally. Makes 4 servings.

* Each serving equals: 270 calories, 3g fat, 26g protein, 35g carb., 431mg sodium, 5g fiber; Diabetic Exchanges: 3 Meat, 1 1/2 Starch, 1 1/2 Vegetable.

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DR. HANS ZARKOV

ONE OF THE MOST BRILLIANT SCIENTISTS THE WORLD HAS EVER KNOWN... AN INVALUABLE ALLY IN THE FIGHT AGAINST MING.

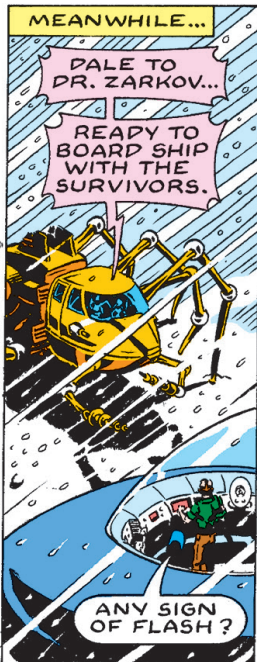
FLASH GORDON

8-15 By JIM KEEFE

STRUCK BY A NEURO-BLAST, FLASH WRITHES IN AGONY BEFORE HIS CAPTORS.



DON'T MAKE ME DO THAT AGAIN. I HATE THE TASTE OF CHARRED MEAT.



MEANWHILE...

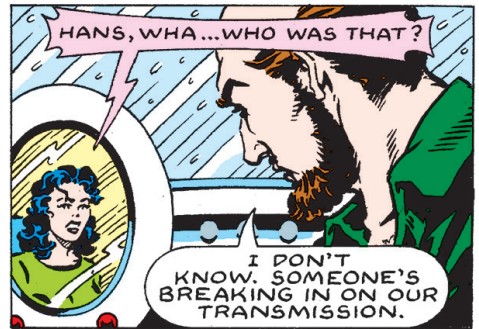
DALE TO DR. ZARKOV... REARY TO BOARD SHIP WITH THE SURVIVORS.



NO... NO SIGN...

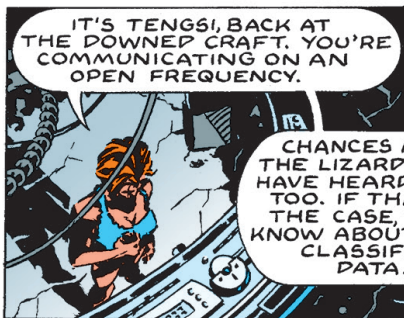
KRACKLE

IT'S NOT TOO LATE!



HANS, WHA... WHO WAS THAT?

I DON'T KNOW. SOMEONE'S BREAKING IN ON OUR TRANSMISSION.



IT'S TENGSI, BACK AT THE DOWNED CRAFT. YOU'RE COMMUNICATING ON AN OPEN FREQUENCY.

CHANCES ARE THE LIZARD-MEN HAVE HEARD YOU TOO. IF THAT'S THE CASE, THEY KNOW ABOUT THE CLASSIFIED DATA...

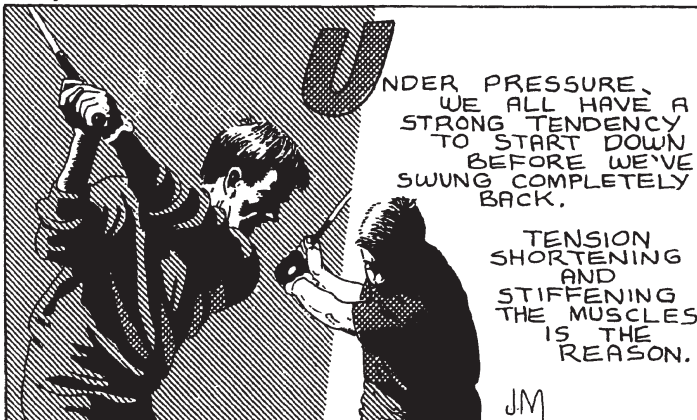


THEY'LL NEED TO KEEP SOMEONE ALIVE TO RETRIEVE THAT INFORMATION.

IT'S NOT TOO LATE!

TO BE CONT'D

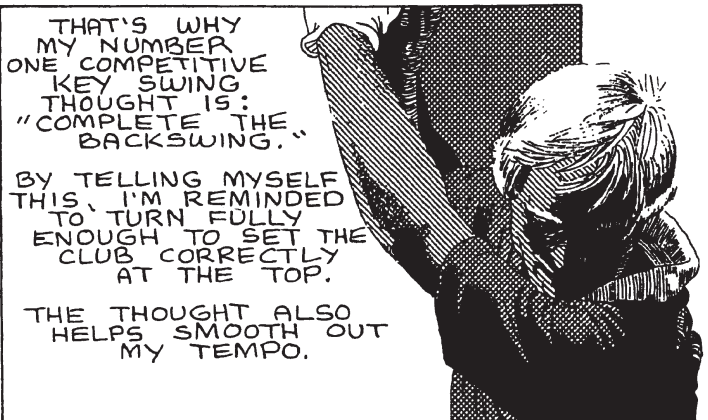
Play Better Golf with JACK NICKLAUS



UNDER PRESSURE, WE ALL HAVE A STRONG TENDENCY TO START DOWN BEFORE WE'VE SWUNG COMPLETELY BACK.

TENSION SHORTENING AND STIFFENING THE MUSCLES IS THE REASON.

JM



THAT'S WHY MY NUMBER ONE COMPETITIVE KEY SWING THOUGHT IS: "COMPLETE THE BACKSWING."

BY TELLING MYSELF THIS, I'M REMINDED TO TURN FULLY ENOUGH TO SET THE CLUB CORRECTLY AT THE TOP.

THE THOUGHT ALSO HELPS SMOOTH OUT MY TEMPO.

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Reader Seeks Alternative to Rx Antidepressant

DEAR DR. ROACH: I suffer from depression. It comes and goes, but I've been feeling sad, worried and angry, as well as irritable, for the past four months or so. I force myself to function. My family doctor prescribed a 37.5 mg dose of Effexor once a day to start and after one week, twice a day. I looked up the side effects and what I read scared me. Instead, I've been taking 1,000 mg of St. John's wort daily for almost three weeks, and have noticed no discernible effect.

I told my doctor I would take the Effexor after three weeks if the St. John's wort hasn't helped. Should I take his advice? Are there better alternatives? I am middle age and take zero prescription drugs. -- S.M.

ANSWER: St. John's wort, *Hypericum perforatum*, is a yellow flower that has been medicinally used for centuries. Initial studies suggested benefit in people with mild to moderate depression, and several substances in the flower have been shown to have pharmacologic effects on serotonin receptors, among other effects. However, other trials have shown it to be no better than placebo.

It does have important drug interactions, fortunately not an issue for you (as long as you let the St. John's wort wear off before starting Effexor), but for some people the potential interactions are dangerous. Side effects are not common, but include gastrointestinal upset, dizziness and confusion, fatigue, dry mouth and sexual side effects. It can make people more sensitive to sunlight, and may decrease fertility.

The studies that did show a benefit lasted four to 12 weeks. It is possible you might not have had benefit from it yet, and waiting a little longer -- say another week -- wouldn't be unreasonable to really give the St. John's wort a chance. However, I seldom recommend this herb due to lack of consistent benefit in trials, the potential for drug interactions and a concern about poor regulation of supplements in terms of amount and purity of the ingredients. For people who want to avoid prescription medicine, I have often recommended S-adenosyl methionine (SAME). The evidence is better and the side effects and drug interactions fewer.

Effexor may be a good choice for you. Prescription antidepressants have been shown to be better than placebo, but they certainly do not work for everybody. If Effexor isn't a good choice, there are several others. However, I would strongly recommend you consider nonpharmacologic treatment for depression whether or not you decide to take additional medication treatment.

DEAR DR. ROACH: Whenever I take 325 mg of aspirin for pain, I sleep very well. I dream of things that happened 60 years ago as though they just happened. I see people I knew then, and I am with them like it was yesterday. -- S.C.

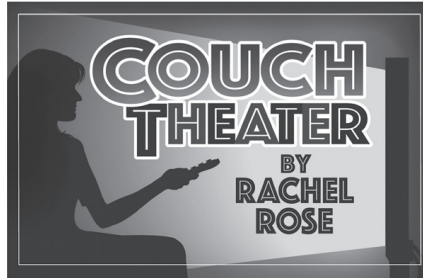
ANSWER: Odd dreams can be a side effect of aspirin. It sounds like yours have been pleasant, but if they aren't, you should avoid taking aspirin in the afternoon if possible, as most of the aspirin (and the active component, salicylate) will be gone after six or so hours.

The effect on platelets, which is how aspirin prevents heart attacks, is unique because aspirin blocks an enzyme in platelets irreversibly. That's why aspirin can increase bleeding risk for days after taking it.

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

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Motel Makeover — Like almost every other real estate-flipping show out there, someone in this Netflix original series exclaims, “We are over budget and behind schedule!” This time, the renovation team is a duo of women taking on their second hotel total-gut job, located in the resort town of Sauble Beach in Toronto, Canada. Everything that could go wrong, does (ya don’t say?!). And of course, the pandemic happened during filming. The sad-face selfie videos lamenting the difficulties of working and finding contractors and materials during the pandemic are tiring and overused, but it’s still cool to see the ultimate transformation that the hotel takes throughout the process. No spoilers on whether or not subway tile was used. (Netflix)

Four Good Days (R) — Here’s your emotional purge of the week. In this based-on-a-true-story film, Mila Kunis plays Molly, an opioid-addicted young mother who has failed repeatedly in her attempts to stop using. A new medical option aiding sobriety requires her to stay clean for a full week before being given it, so her mother vows to help her through the remaining four days of physical and mental agony. Glenn Close as Molly’s mother, Deb, is amazingly talented, able to make the audience alternately love her for her devotion to her daughter, while at the same time blame her for Molly’s failures. It’s refreshing to see Kunis stretch her acting ability beyond the cute girlfriend roles for which she is typically known. (Hulu)

Guy: Hawaiian Style — And now for a palate cleanser. It seems that the Mayor of Flavortown has packed up the moving truck and headed to the islands. Instead of hitting up small-town diners, barbecues and lunch counters doing their thing, Food Network mainstay

Guy Fieri hits up locally owned food establishments all over Hawaii ... each doing their thing (now with pineapple!). Incorporating Hawaiian culture and tradition into the commentary — and not just biting into giant portions of poke tuna while exclaiming “yowza!” — Fieri brings his two sons along on these educational gastronomic adventures. (Discovery+)

Val— You don’t have to be a huge Val Kilmer fan to enjoy this self-produced documentary on the actor’s life. In fact, it might even be better if you’re not entirely familiar with his library of work. Ever since his teen years, Kilmer has filmed both his personal and professional lives, starting with amateur productions made with



Vertical Entertainment

Glenn Close, Mila Kunis in “Four Good Days”

his two brothers. This current documentary features old selfie-type commentary, on-set joking with co-stars, screen tests and even conversations with his mom. After chronicling his training at Juilliard, his debut on the New York City stage and his rise to Hollywood stardom, it delves much deeper into his spiritual beliefs and some truly touching personal family stories. After losing his voice due to throat cancer, Val enlisted his son, Jack, to narrate the film in the voice of his father. Self-described as “a sensitive, intelligent being with the soul of a clown”, Val is introspective, playful, humble and unapologetic. (Amazon Prime Video)

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1. Who wrote and released "Suzanne"?
2. Which solo artist got a start with Humble Pie and the Herd?
3. Where did the Orlons get their name?
4. Who wrote and released "Swingtown"?
5. Name the song that contains these lyrics: "You think you're gonna take me and put me on the shelf, Girl, I'd rather die than see you with somebody else."

Answers

1. Leonard Cohen, in 1967. Cohen eventually lost the rights to the song because of signing a document he didn't read.

2. Peter Frampton. His material and master tapes were lost in the Universal Studios fire in 2008, along with hundreds of other artists.

3. It was a nod to a competitor, the Cashmeres.

4. Steve Miller of the Steve Miller Band. The song is the basis for a particularly controversial chant at the University of Wisconsin-Madison between sections O and P in the stadium during football games. The college has been unable to curtail use of the song or the chant.

5. "Never Give You Up," by Jerry Butler in 1968. The song stayed on the Hot 20 for 14 weeks and was later covered by numerous artists, including Rod Stewart in 2009.

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Just Like Cats & Dogs by Dave T. Phipps



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GRIN and BEAR IT ^{by Wagner}

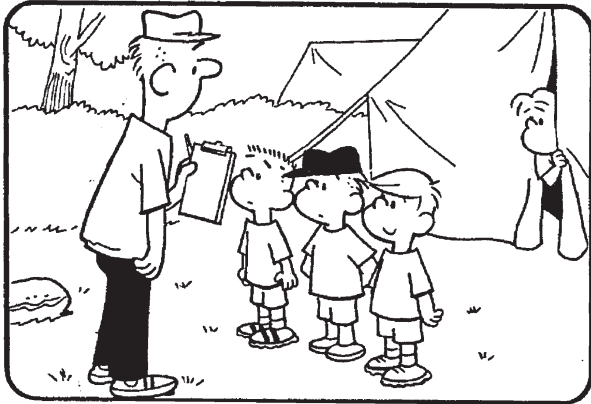


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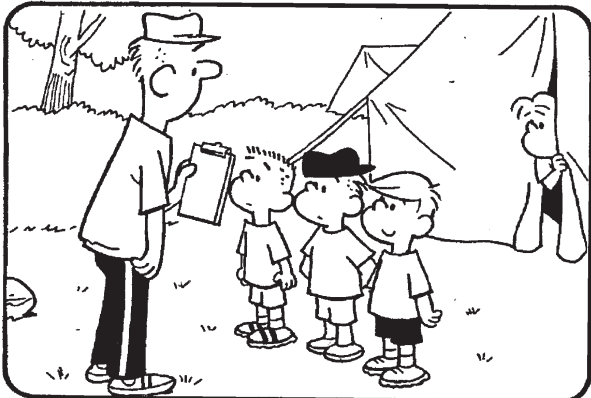
"Our flowers don't talk like that, sir!"

HOCUS-FOCUS

BY HENRY BOLTIHOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.



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Differences: 1. Stripe is added. 2. Pencil is removed. 3. Tent is smaller. 4. Shorts are different. 5. Rock is moved. 6. Cap is reversed.

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- If you keep a couple of crackers in your sugar jar, they'll keep the sugar from caking.

- Cucumber is a speedy diuretic. Try snacking on slices for a cool treat. Or deseed slices and slip a few in your glass of cold water.

- “When we go to the doctor with our youngest, we bring a few crayons. She'll lie down on the exam table paper, and we draw her outline. Then she can fill in her face and other details. This usually calms her while she is waiting. The doctor even has used the outline to talk about her body to her.” — *E.S. in Georgia*

- “In older houses, you might have a problem with cracking drywall when trying to hang pictures. You can solve

this by placing a bit of clear tape over the spot where you're going to drive a nail. It goes right in. If you're nailing into wood, drag your nail through some soap (bar soap is fine) before striking. It does the same thing, keeping the wood from splitting.” — *P.K. in New Jersey*

- To prevent garbage cans from filling with water during rainstorms, drill several holes in the bottom, near the sides. This also will help bags to come out of the can easier.

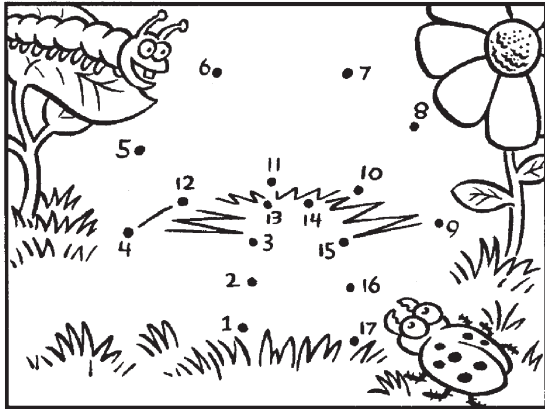
- Boost your metabolism by drinking green tea ... hot or cold. Try it over ice with honey and a sprig of mint.

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

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CONNECT the dots to find out: "What is the smallest room in the world?"
A mushroom.

Junior Whirl

by Charles Barry Townsend

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| | | | | | | |
|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | P | | | | | N |
| 2. | | P | | | | N |
| 3. | | | P | | N | |
| 4. | | | | P | N | |
| 5. | | | N | | P | |
| 6. | | N | | | | P |
| 7. | N | | | | | P |

FIND THE BIG WORDS

Using the definitions and anagrams below, find the seven eight-letter words that fit into the framework pictured on the left. You can do this by unscrambling the letters in the two anagrams.

Definitions:

- Italian cheese
- Driving too fast
- Young trees
- Moisture in the air
- Very old photos
- A container for a letter
- It was worn in bed

Anagrams:

- earn + maps
- seed + ping
- slap + sign
- dams + pens
- nest + pity
- pole + even
- gnat + chip

Time limit: 1 min. each.

1. Parmesan, 2. Speeding, 3. Saplings, 4. Dampness, 5. Tintypes, 6. Envelope, 7. Nightcap.

A QUICKIE! How would you add four 2s together so that they total 5? Be careful; it's tricky!

Answer: $2 + 2 + 2/2 = 5$.

DOUBLE TROUBLE! Below are six partially spelled words. Four letters are missing from each word. In each case you must find a two-letter word that can be used to fill in the missing letters. Below you'll find some hints.

- A garden vegetable.
- Type of movie.
- Type of candy.
- A keepsake.
- A freight barge.
- An annoying problem.



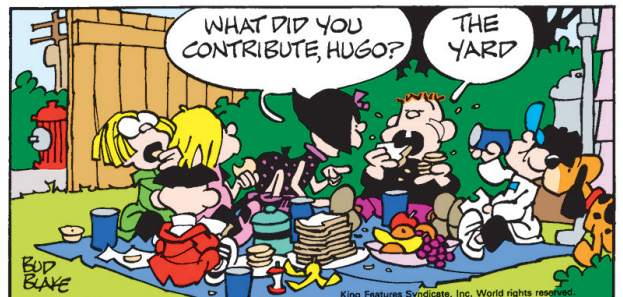
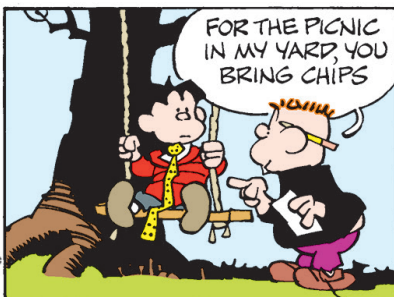
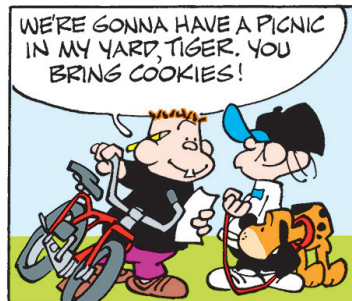
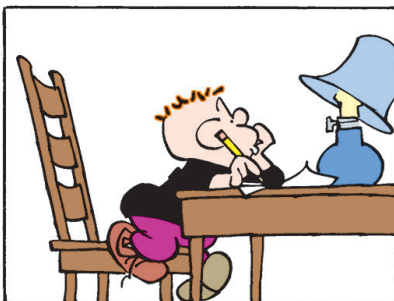
- __ MA __
- H __ R __
- B __ B __
- __ __ N T O
- FL __ BO __
- __ AD AC __

Illustrated by David Coulson

1. (TO) Tomato, 2. (OR) Horror, 3. (ON) Bonbon, 4. (ME) Memento, 5. (AT) Flatboat, 6. (HE) Headache.

TIGER

by BUD BLAKE



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King Crossword

ACROSS

- 1 Josh
- 4 Reggae relative
- 7 Paper packs
- 12 NYC airport
- 13 Stetson, e.g.
- 14 DeGeneres of talk TV
- 15 Einstein's birthplace
- 16 Everybody
- 18 As well
- 19 Orange variety
- 20 Region
- 22 I love (Lat.)
- 23 Mimicked
- 27 Billboards
- 29 Chipmunk's kin
- 31 "That's it!"
- 34 The Ram
- 35 Chaperones, usually
- 37 Ring decision
- 38 Vanished
- 39 Pot brew
- 41 Tree home
- 45 Belly button type
- 47 Conk out
- 48 Fluctuating
- 52 Mil. bigwig
- 53 Craze
- 54 Rebel Turner
- 55 Swelled head
- 56 Fake
- 57 — -cone

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | | 4 | 5 | 6 | | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 |
| 12 | | | | 13 | | | | 14 | | | | |
| 15 | | | | 16 | | | 17 | | | | | |
| 18 | | | | 19 | | | | | | | | |
| 20 | | | 21 | | 22 | | | | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 |
| | | | 27 | 28 | | | 29 | 30 | | | | |
| 31 | 32 | 33 | | | | | | 34 | | | | |
| 35 | | | | | 36 | | 37 | | | | | |
| 38 | | | | | 39 | 40 | | | 41 | 42 | 43 | 44 |
| | | | | 45 | | | | 46 | | 47 | | |
| 48 | 49 | 50 | 51 | | | | | | | 52 | | |
| 53 | | | | | | | | | | 55 | | |
| 56 | | | | | | | | | | 58 | | |

- 58 Aachen article
- 11 NBC show since 1975
- 17 Awestruck
- 21 National symbol
- 23 Chef's garb
- 24 Greek consonant
- 25 Shoe width
- 26 Hosp. workers
- 28 Speck
- 30 Sturdy tree
- 31 Satchel
- 32 Altar promise
- 33 Sister
- 36 Poker variety
- 37 Formosa, today
- 40 Short jackets
- 42 Moved sideways
- 43 Prolonged attack
- 44 Choir member
- 45 Singer Anita
- 46 Within (Pref.)
- 48 Ref
- 49 Oom- —
- 50 Year in Acapulco
- 51 French diarist Anais

DOWN

- 1 Clumsy one
- 2 Nome dome home
- 3 Matt of Hollywood
- 4 "Scram!"
- 5 Sunflower State
- 6 Top players
- 7 Actress Russo
- 8 Days of yore
- 9 Carte lead-in
- 10 Actor Gibson

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— King Crossword —

Answers

Solution time: 26 mins.

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| K | I | D | | S | K | A | | R | E | A | M | S | |
| L | G | A | | H | A | T | | E | L | L | E | N | |
| U | L | M | | O | N | E | A | N | D | A | L | L | |
| T | O | O | | O | S | A | G | E | | | | | |
| Z | O | N | E | | A | M | O | | A | P | E | D | |
| | | | | A | D | S | | G | O | P | H | E | R |
| B | I | N | G | O | | | | A | R | I | E | S | |
| A | D | U | L | T | S | | | T | K | O | | | |
| G | O | N | E | | T | E | A | | N | E | S | T | |
| | | | | O | U | T | I | E | | | D | I | E |
| U | P | A | N | D | D | O | W | N | | | G | E | N |
| M | A | N | I | A | | | N | A | T | | E | G | O |
| P | H | O | N | Y | | S | N | O | | | D | E | R |

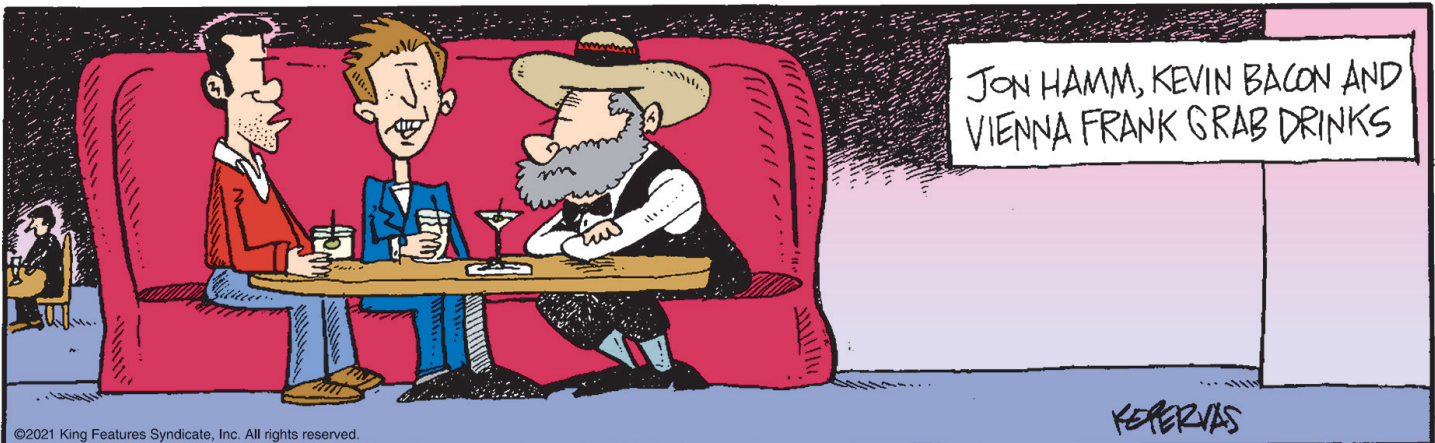
LAFF - A - DAY



"Would you mind not crowding the plate so much?
I'm on TV, too, you know!"

Out on a Limb

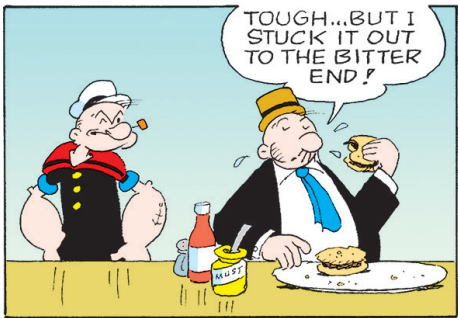
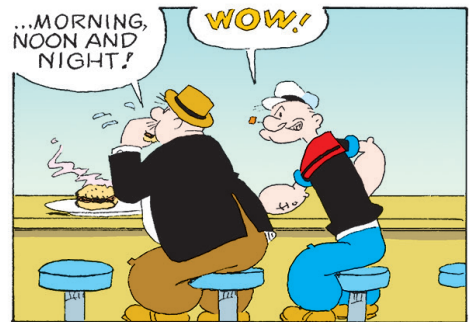
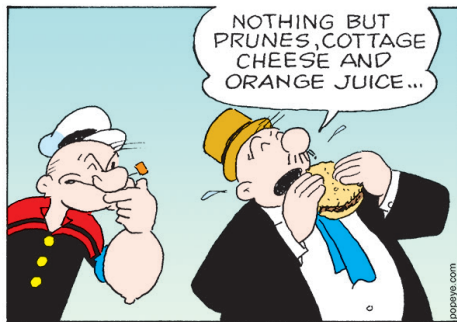
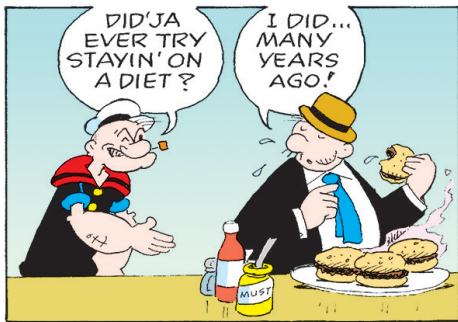
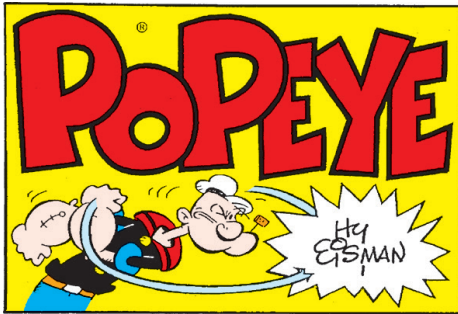
by Gary Kopervas



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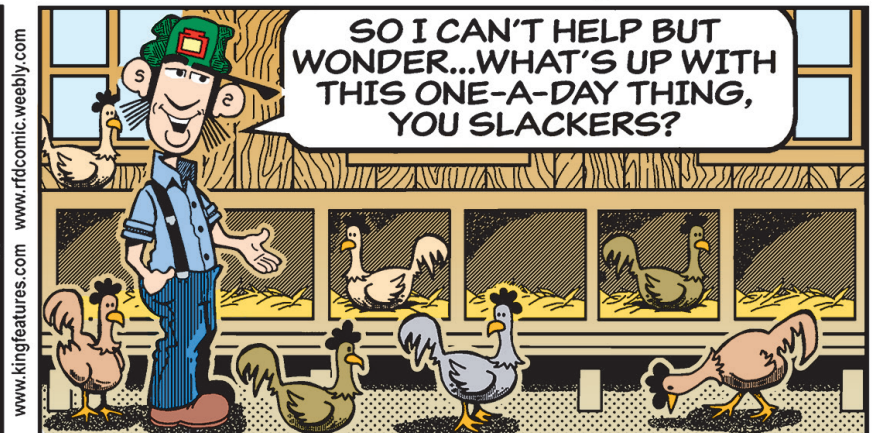
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R.F.D.

by Mike Marland



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MARLAND

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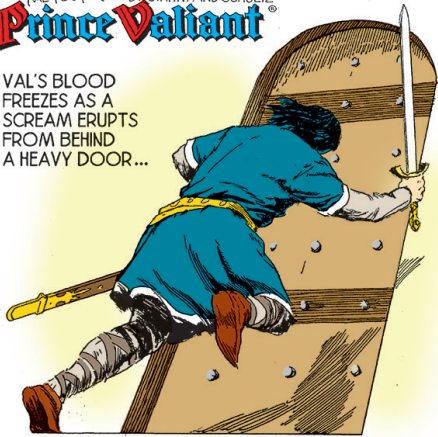
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HAL FOSTER'S BY GIANNI AND SCHULTZ
Prince Valiant

VAL'S BLOOD FREEZES AS A SCREAM ERUPTS FROM BEHIND A HEAVY DOOR...



... AT WHICH THE KNIGHT THROWS HIS FULL WEIGHT.



HIS WORST FEARS, HOWEVER, ARE NOT REALIZED. QUITE THE OPPOSITE, ACTUALLY. HORRIDUS HAS DRAWN HIS LAST BREATH.

"A PROPER LADY IN DISTRESS WOULD HAVE PATIENTLY AWAITED RESCUE," SCOLDS VAL, CONCEALING HIS CONCERN.

"THEN I SUPPOSE I AM NOT A PROPER LADY," RESPONDS A COY ALETA.

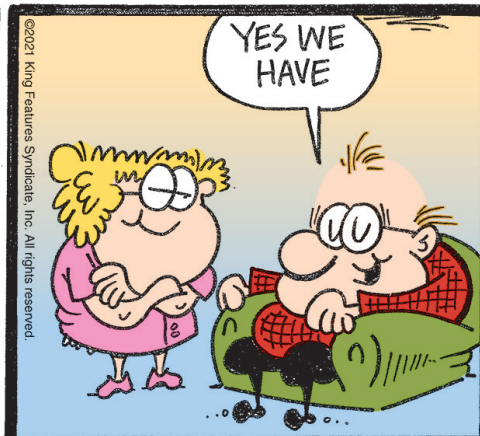
NEXT:
Aftermath



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The Spats

by Jeff Pickering



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PICKERING

SENIOR NEWS LINE

by Matilda Charles

Biggest Raise in Decades for Social Security?

Don't count your money before it's in hand, of course. But word is that the Social Security increase we see in January could be as much as 6.1%, the largest since 1983.

For the average benefit recipient, currently receiving \$1,543, that could amount to \$94 per month. It's a few years too late for a serious increase, but certainly better than the 1.3% bump we saw for 2021 and the 1.6% the year before.

Social Security is calculated by the cost-of-living adjustment in the third quarter each year. For 2021, they calculated that a 1.3% increase should be plenty. We know that was wrong, as prices of everything had climbed. It's all in how and what they calculate. They use the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W), which measures prices on certain goods and services.

But we're not wage earners, and we don't work in offices. We spend our money on different things. We won-

der why they don't use the index for the elderly (CPI-E), which takes into consideration the things we do buy, such as medical care, medical services, housing and health insurance. (There's a bill in the House of Representatives — H.R.4315 — to do that very thing.) We spend less than the CPI-W group on transportation, food, clothing, entertainment, education and communication.

The Federal Reserve Bank did a mid-summer survey on what consumers are expecting for the rest of 2021. The expectation of responders is that we'll see a 4.8% increase on top of what we've already seen this year.

Keep an eye on the news in October, when the rate of next year's Social Security increase is finalized.

Meanwhile start planning for next year as soon as you can. Look for savings everywhere you can find them.

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1. Jacksonville Jaguars owner Sahid Khan was a lead investor in what pro wrestling promotion that was founded in 2019?

2. What sporting event for people with disabilities was created by German-British neurologist Ludwig Guttmann and first held in 1948?

3. John Salley was the first NBA player to win championships with three different teams. What were they?

4. The football term for a blocker pushing an opponent to the ground is named after what popular breakfast food?

5. What member of the 1996 Olympic USA gymnastics "Magnificent Seven" team published a memoir called "Off Balance" in 2012?

6. The second-shortest (5 feet, 5 inches) goaltender in NHL history played three seasons with the Chicago Blackhawks and went on to a broad-



casting career. Who is he?

7. What Finnish driver, known as "The Iceman," won the 2007 Formula One Drivers' Championship?

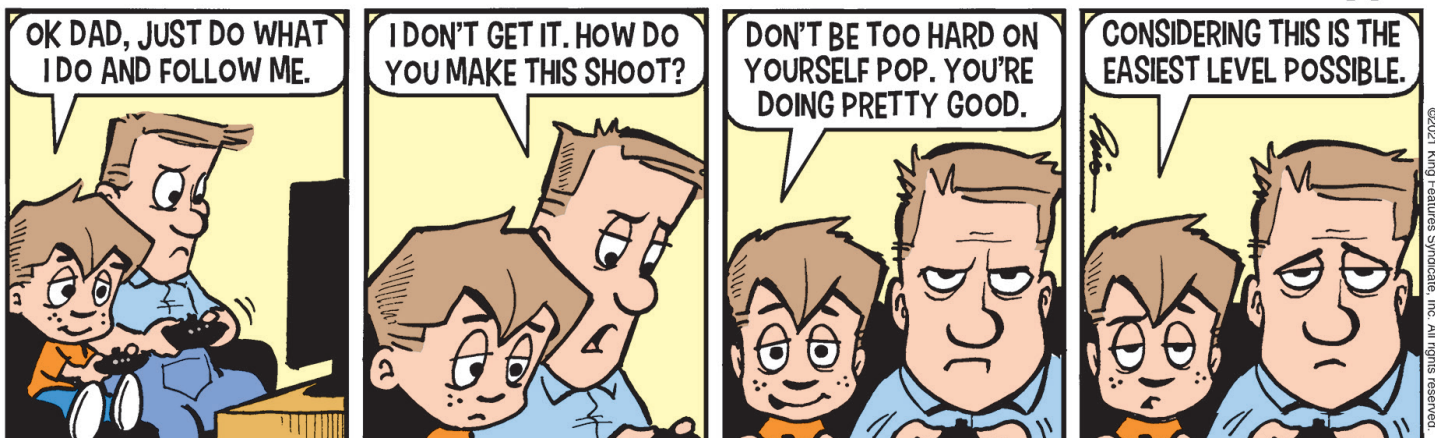
Answers

1. All Elite Wrestling (AEW).
2. The Stoke Mandeville Games.
3. The Detroit Pistons (1989-90), Chicago Bulls (1996) and Los Angeles Lakers (2000).
4. Pancake.
5. Dominique Moceanu.
6. Darren Pang.
7. Kimi Raikkonen.

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Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps





Do Cats, Goldfish Mix?

DEAR PAW'S CORNER: My daughter received a goldfish for her last birthday, and true to her word, she has kept the fish healthy and happy. Now, for her 9th birthday, she wants a kitten. I feel that she's old enough to care for a cat, but am worried that the cat will stress her goldfish. What are your thoughts?
— *Judy G., Seattle*

DEAR JUDY: As a parent, your instincts are important and this one is worth thinking about. Cats are fascinated with fish tanks and can often be found watching the fish inside with rapt attention — if not actively trying to get a paw into the water.

Discuss your concerns with your daughter. At age 9, she's old enough to consider this problem as well. Is there a way for her goldfish to remain healthy and stress-free while bringing a kitten into your home? There are

strategies for doing this successfully, including training that diverts a cat's attention from the tank and placing the tank out of sight or reach of the cat.

Caring for pets is a way to help children develop empathy for all living things. It can help them learn about responsibility, too — but only when parents are actively involved in the process. You're doing a great job of helping your daughter understand the importance of caring for pets of all kinds.

Having second thoughts about bringing another pet into the house is exactly the kind of thinking parents should do. But you also have the opportunity to guide your daughter and have her be part of the decision as to whether a kitten is a good idea at this point, or whether she should wait another year.

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

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Strange BUT TRUE

By Lucie Winborne

* Autism is more common than childhood cancer, diabetes and AIDS combined.

* A bizarre dream in which cannibals surrounded him and prepared to cook him as they waved spears helped inspire Elias Howe's invention of the sewing machine. When he awoke, he remembered that the spears had holes in their shafts and moved up and down.

* "Bhang lassi" is an Indian milkshake whose main ingredient is marijuana.

* According to British law, any unclaimed swan swimming in the open waters of England and Wales belongs to the queen. The law originated in medieval times when swans were a delicacy for the wealthy.

* "Gingerphobia" is a fear of redheads.

* The Russians arrived 12 days late to the 1908 Olympics because they were using the wrong (i.e., Julian) calendar.

* In 1995 a woman in Sweden lost her wedding ring while cooking for Christmas. Understandably distraught, she looked everywhere for it and even pulled up her kitchen floor, but didn't see it again until 16 years later, when, while gardening, she discovered it encircling a carrot that had sprouted in the middle of it.

* The amount of copper on the Arizona capitol building roof is equivalent to nearly 5 million pennies.

* Bumblebees can fly higher than Mt. Everest.

* Because he got a 25% profit share of merchandise, Elvis Presley manager Colonel Tom Parker was always in search of new ways to get fans to lay down some cash. One of the most notable was marketing to Presley's haters with badges that read "I Hate Elvis" and "Elvis is a Jerk."

Thought for the Day: "The mark of the immature man is that he wants to die nobly for a cause, while the mark of the mature man is that he wants to live humbly for one." -- J.D. Salinger

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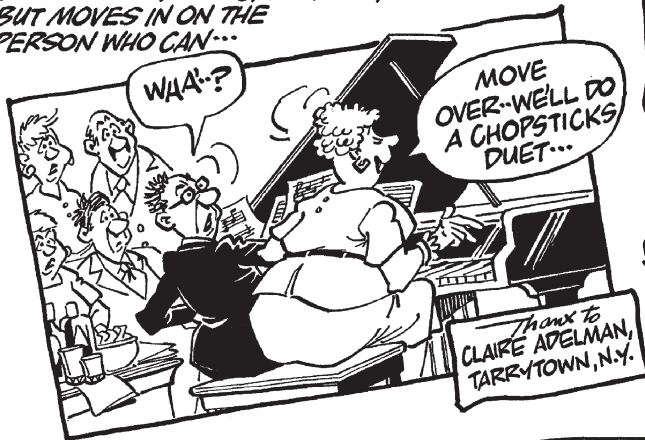
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THEY'LL DO IT EVERY TIME

BY AL SCADUTO

PARTY PESTS WE CAN DO WITHOUT--
THE NERVY TYPE...CAN'T PLAY,
BUT MOVES IN ON THE
PERSON WHO CAN...





The Garden Bug

This plant features flower colors ranging from pure white through all shades of pink, lavender and red. Some cultivars produce double flowers, and others have a thin white edge on the petals, stripes, or ruffled edges. It is often given as a gift during the winter months, as it flowers beautifully during cool weather. It naturally becomes dormant during the summer and ceases flowering. - Brenda Weaver

Cyclamen

Sources: hort.extension.wisc.edu, www.extension.umn, www.backyardgardener.com

VETERANS ★ POST ★

by Freddy Groves

VA Tells Health Staff They Must Get Vaccine

The Department of Veterans Affairs recently announced that they will require their frontline medical staff to get the COVID vaccine. Specifically, they listed “physicians, dentists, podiatrists, optometrists, registered nurses, physician assistants, expanded-function dental auxiliaries and chiropractors who work in Veterans Health Administration facilities, visit VHA facilities or provide direct care to those the VA serves.”

In other words, anyone who touches you in a VA medical setting, breathes on you or handles something they’re about to put in your mouth has to get the vaccine.

Thank you, VA.

It was unnerving going to the VA and asking whatever medical person was about to touch me or breathe on me, “So, which vaccine did you get?” only to be told they hadn’t had the vaccine

and didn’t intend to get it.

Even waiting for the vaccine was difficult. When my age group finally came along, I ended up at a civilian pharmacy because it was faster. Nobody there had gotten the vaccine either.

And now, unfortunately, we discover that the vaccines don’t work as we thought they would. There are breakthrough cases where fully vaccinated people are still getting the virus, the variants have gained strength, and we’re likely going back to Step One, complete with masks.

If you need to go to a VA facility for health care, call ahead or use the VA health appointment app. You’ll no doubt be met at the door, asked COVID screening questions and have your temperature taken. Have your vaccination card with you and wear a mask. You also might be able to get a telehealth appointment.

Meanwhile, if you’ve gotten lax about safety, get smart again. Do one full minute scrubbing your hands under warm water with an antibacterial soap, including your nails. Hang a mask on the front doorknob so you’ll see it each time you go out.

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



BACK TO SCHOOL

Summer is coming to an end and students across South Dakota are heading back to school. I was home to see my three boys off to start the 2021-2022 school year this week.

While many schools in our state remained open during this past year, the same cannot be said about school districts across the country.

According to UNESCO, American schools were closed either fully or partially for 58 weeks. In comparison, Canadian schools were closed 51 weeks and schools in the United Kingdom 27 weeks.

How has over a year of school closures impacted students? Study after study is showing significant learning loss for students participating in distance learning. Additionally, truancy rates are up and attainment rates in core subjects like math and reading are down.

The impacts that loss of instruction time, student to teacher interaction, and peer collaboration will have on our kids cannot be minimized. While the effects of school closures on the mental, emotional, and social well-being of our children cannot be fully realized, even the CDC has published a survey suggesting that virtual instruction presents more risks to a student's mental and emotional health than in-person learning.

These datapoints are not to downplay the effort and creativity of teachers and administrators alike in trying to make remote learning as engaging and effective as possible. But when we are dealing with something as transformative and significant as educating the next generation, we must stop and think about the impact a decision to keep schools closed will have on our youth in the short and long term.

Back in March 2021, a year after COVID-19 began, only half of American schoolchildren were in person partially or full. I am grateful for the school administrators and teachers who went above and beyond to ensure South Dakota schools were safely open to students last school year.

To date, Congress has authorized an unprecedented \$190.5 billion to the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund to provide financial assistance to state and local educational agencies to ensure that schools can reopen safely. Teacher health and student welfare do not have to be at odds.

I firmly believe that a good education opens doors and sets a child up for success. The data is clear that it is best for students to be in the classroom learning.

The Biden Administration has assured me it's their top priority to keep schools open as our nation continues to deal with COVID-19 – it's imperative they follow through on that promise. It's time to reopen and keep open our schools.

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South Dakota Governor

Kristi Noem



South Dakota: *Under God, the People Rule*

South Dakota is a Rising Star as a Recovery Leader

It may not surprise many here at home, but South Dakota is leading the nation in recovery! Moody's Analytics and CNN track how far along the nation's economy is at getting "Back to Normal," and they say that the US is only 92 percent recovered. But South Dakota is the top-ranked state in this metric at 113 percent, meaning we've more than recovered and are growing substantially! Second-place Idaho is far behind us at just 103 percent. Obviously, CNN is no friend to me or my policies, but even they can admit that South Dakota's economy is thriving.

For four of the last five years, a separate ranking firm named Sioux Falls the top city in the nation for young professionals based on affordability, demographics, and entertainment options. And thanks to our scenic parks in West River, the undeniable draw of Mount Rushmore, and our respect for freedom, the state is leading the nation in tourism, according to the U.S. Travel Association.

Well before these rankings were published, I was working with lawmakers to build on the popularity of our state as businesses and Americans, in general, started looking for a place to land amid pandemic shutdowns. From January to March this year, the legislature succeeded in delivering key solutions to priority issues. Those include access to high-speed internet, investing in health care recruitment, and providing new programs to strengthen our public school system.

We delivered \$100 million this past session for rural broadband access, which will continue to open doors of opportunity for small businesses looking to expand via e-commerce. The legislature appropriated nearly \$1 million for recruiting healthcare professionals to the state, with a strong focus on rural health care providers. Additionally, the state expanded the ability of Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists to work with dentists and other non-physician practitioners. We even streamlined a process to allow licensed out-of-state healthcare professionals to work in South Dakota.

We also addressed the need for more access to mental health services with a combined \$7.6 million appropriated for crisis stabilization facilities in Rapid City and Sioux Falls. As we look to expand access to high-speed internet statewide, we also authorized more telehealth services to allow South Dakotans to access the care they need.

No plan for our state's future would be complete without an investment in schools and educators. That's why I fought to deliver a salary increase for teachers, and expanded the ability of school districts to raise local tax dollar investments. For high school seniors looking at colleges and universities, we established

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the South Dakota Freedom Scholarship with an initial state investment of \$50 million. When partnered with donations from PREMIER Bank, T. Denny Sanford, Sanford Health, and Avera Health, the scholarship endowment will start at \$175 million!

To ensure we continue to be a recovery leader and a friendly environment for people to start and grow their businesses, I fought to pass House Bill 1259. The bill creates incentives that encourage more businesses to construct facilities in cities and counties throughout the state. I also cut red tape that prevented South Dakotans from being able to start small businesses in their homes.

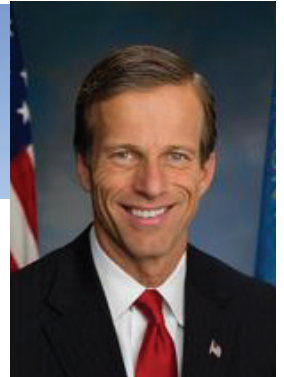
Speaking of homes, we secured \$3 million for the Housing Opportunity Fund to develop more workforce housing as the state continues to grow its population and businesses relocate their employees here.

For our veterans returning home, we invested \$400,000 for the veterans' bonus program and modified tuition requirements for veterans, armed forces personnel, and their families. We want to continue our record of being the number one state in the nation for veterans to live and work. And for our aging veteran population, I helped secure more than \$300,000 for improvements to our State Veterans Home.

The data is still pouring in on how our policies are creating one of the best business environments for entrepreneurs and existing business owners. A WalletHub survey in July found that South Dakota was in the Top 10 for health care. And just this week, the Inc. 5000 fastest-growing companies in the country included 10 South Dakota-based businesses. These are good indications that our future is bright.

As we look ahead to the 2022 legislative session, I am committed to working hard for you so that employers and employees can continue to grow and thrive in South Dakota.

John Thune
U.S. SENATOR - SOUTH DAKOTA



Bridging the Digital Divide

“Bridging the digital divide” is something that’s often discussed in the halls of Congress. While there are plenty of divisions in Washington, a digital divide isn’t one of them. You have to leave the Beltway and travel to places across America where you actually have to think twice about whether or not you’re going to have an internet connection – places like rural South Dakota where certain connectivity challenges can remain frustratingly unresolved. It’s 2021, and private companies have developed technology to send customers into outer space, yet we’re still talking about the importance of connecting rural America with reliable, high-speed internet. That needs to change.

As a member and former chairman of the Senate Commerce Committee, which has jurisdiction over the internet and everything from planes, trains, and automobiles to the depths of the ocean to the heights of outer space, expanding mobile and fixed broadband access in rural America and to tribal communities has long been a priority of mine. And as a senator from a rural state, I’ve always looked for opportunities for South Dakota to help lead the nation in its deployment.

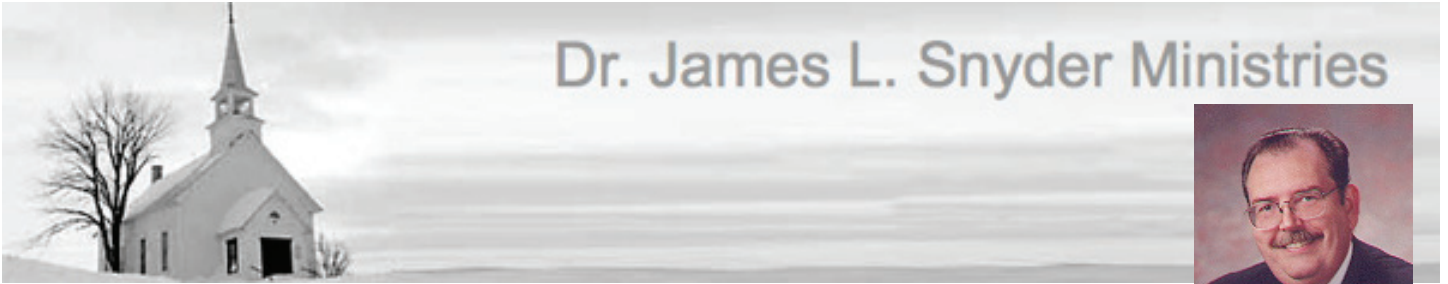
The good news is that things have come a long way over the last few years because of the sustained investments made by telecommunication providers across South Dakota and the rest of the country. In 2019, Sioux Falls became one of the first communities in America to become 5G-enabled. As we continue to lay the groundwork and pave the way for future development and deployment, South Dakota has frequently attracted the attention of, and visits from, leaders at the Federal Communications Commission, the federal agency where the majority of the government’s broadband expertise resides. We’re doing the right things, and we’re heading in the right direction.

The bad news is that there are still corners of our state that don’t have the benefits of reliable broadband services. A strong internet connection is critical for small businesses to connect with customers, for farmers who rely on precision agriculture technology to maximize crop yields, and for patients who depend on telemedicine to get the care they need when a hospital or medical professional is physically out of reach. For many, it can mean the difference between success and failure or potentially life and death.

I’m glad broadband is now being recognized as vital infrastructure. We need to continue investing in its success, but we have to do it wisely. We must prioritize our needs and identify the appropriate partners, both in and out of government, to help reach our goal of fully connecting every South Dakotan who wants it. But simply dumping more federal funds into a pot and spinning the acronym wheel to see which federal government agency it lands on is not the way to do it.

I fully support using targeted government funds to help meet these needs, but the federal government cannot solve this problem on its own. It certainly can’t just spend its way out of it. We must be effective with our planning and efficient with our investment as we look for a holistic approach that continues to move broadband from luxury to necessity – that leverages available government resources and incentivizes private sector innovation to push the boundaries of this effort toward success.

For too long we’ve talked about bridging the digital divide. It’s time to actually do it. Access to reliable broadband has the potential to connect South Dakotans to a larger marketplace, to increase the quality of education for students, and to continue enhancing parts of our everyday lives. I’ll continue to support smart investments that use taxpayer dollars responsibly – because government waste won’t help anyone.



Dr. James L. Snyder Ministries



And Then There Were Four

Over a year ago, I got out of bed, went to the kitchen for my morning cup of coffee and then I went to the back porch to see if I had any visitors.

I have foxes, possums, cats, and raccoons (who are politically correct and wear masks when they come). I put food out for them, and they help themselves. Every morning the food dishes are empty and waiting to be filled.

It's great at night to look out and see some of these critters coming in for their evening snack.

This morning, as I looked out, I saw a little kitty on the porch. I had no idea where this little kitty came from or how it got to our back porch.

I opened the door, stepped out, and the little kitty ran and hid. She thought she was hiding, but I could see exactly where she was so I left her alone and went and got some food for her. I put it in the dish and stood there waiting for her to come over, instead, she sat there, looked at me, then looked at the dish and then looked back at me.

I knew what she was doing, and so I had to get out of the way so she could come and eat her breakfast.

I tried keeping this information from my wife because she does not like animal pets. At least that's what she says. According to her, all of these animals have fleas, and she hates fleas.

Trying to keep something secret from her is way above my pay scale. She knows exactly what I'm thinking three days before actually thinking it. If I was smart, and I ain't, I would have her pick the winning horse in the next horserace.

In time she became aware of my porch friend, and in no uncertain terms, she wanted it gone.

Contrary to her expectations, I kept feeding the little kitty, and like all little kitties, it grew into an adult, and I noticed that the older she got, the more she attracted other cats. But, of course, at the time, I thought nothing of it and just kept feeding her and her friends as they came.

"We must," my wife said most emphatically, "get rid of that little kitty because it can't stay here."

"Well," I said as patiently as possible, "I'll get rid of it when it's old enough to leave."

"When will that be?"

I couldn't tell her because I didn't have an exit plan for the kitty.

A few months past and I noticed the little kitty was growing, and her belly seemed to be expanding. I just thought she was well fed.

It was my wife who noticed what was happening at the time.

"That kitty better not be pregnant," my wife stated most alarmingly.

She looked at me and said, "Stop that smiling. I can see it."

It was a very exciting day for me to realize that my little kitty would have another little kitty. This meant we could not get rid of the little kitty until she had her little kitties.

In due time Miss Kitty had her little kittens. She had four, only one survived. That one was white and very cute.

"If you are going to keep it, it will have to be neutered. I will make the arrangements."

When my wife makes arrangements, you can be sure those arrangements are made.

We had to wait until this little kitty had grown to the place where she could eat for itself. Then, finally,

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we found someone who wanted the kitty and so we gave it to them.

The appointment for the neutering had been made.

I went along with it, after all, what else could I do.

Several days before the appointment, I looked at Miss Kitty and noticed that her belly was expanding like before. Of course, I kept this as quiet as possible, but you know how that works.

Looking out onto the porch, my wife said, "Oh, no, it can't be so."

Not knowing what she was talking about, I inquired, and was informed she thought Miss Kitty was pregnant again.

After a few days of observation, she concluded that she was pregnant. Then she had to call the neutering service and cancel the appointment. You can't neuter a pregnant kitty.

She looked at me with a sour grimace and said, "You better not be laughing."

I often laugh on the inside and try to keep it from the outside. So I was, and I wasn't going to tell her, very happy that we will have some more little kitties.

In due time she did have her kitties, and this time she had four kitties, and all of them lived. It must be the same father because one of them was all white.

What we're going to do with all those little kitties, I'm not quite sure. But I'm going to enjoy them while we have them.

As I was watching Miss Kitty nurse her little kitties, I thought of a Bible verse. "When a man's ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him" (Proverbs 16:7).

Watching Miss Kitty and her little ones brought peace to me. I can forget what's going on out in the world and concentrate on the peace right here with Miss Kitty and her little ones.

EARTHTALK ™

Dear EarthTalk: How did Toyota go from being the leader in mass-produced greener cars to being a laggard in the sector?

-- P. Brooks, Demarest, NJ



It's hard to believe that Toyota, the automaker behind the hugely successful hybrid-electric Prius, is no longer viewed as a leader in greener cars. According to Danny Magill, an analyst at the London-based think tank InfluenceMap, Toyota has gone from a leading position to an "industry laggard" in clean-car policy as other automakers push ahead with ambitious electric vehicle (EV) plans.

InfluenceMap gives Toyota a "D-" grade—the worst among automakers—saying it exerts policy influence to undermine public climate goals. While companies like Tesla have produced fully electric cars that are all the rage now on the American road, Toyota, focusing on gas-electric hybrids and futuristic fuel cell vehicles, has started to lose market share. Records show that the Prius hybrid reached its peak in 2012 as the world's third best-selling car line with 247,230 sales; sales declined to 69,718 in 2019, and 2020 was certainly much worse (given the pandemic's pull on the economy at large).

Toyota officials have publicly argued that too aggressive a transition to fully electric vehicles could have negative setbacks. Instead, Toyota believes that hybrid and plug-in hybrid vehicles are more realistic in our transition away from gasoline-powered cars to reduce emissions. "Too little attention is being paid to what happens between today, when 98 percent of the cars and trucks sold are powered at least in part by gasoline, and that fully electrified future," says Toyota spokesperson Eric Booth.

Toyota's renewed focus on hybrid-electric vehicles may be attributable their forward-looking hydrogen-fueled automobiles having been a bust as to marketplace success. These zero-emission cars contain hydrogen tanks and fuel cells that can convert hydrogen into electricity, unlike other electric vehicles that are battery-powered. Toyota's hydrogen models can travel hundreds of miles on a tank, and emit only water vapor. But the expense of hydrogen fuel and the lack of refueling infrastructure has kept the technology from going mainstream. Given these setbacks, Toyota has advocated for their hybrid technology as a logical transition to greener transportation when hydrogen becomes more accessible.

Over the past few years, the company has also sued the Mexican government in an attempt to block fuel efficiency standards there. Toyota has also supported the former Trump administration's court battle with California over revamping Clean Air Act emissions standards. Also, Toyota is rumored to be part of a collaborative lobbying effort with the Washington, D.C.-based Alliance for Automobile Innovation to fight new regulations calling for zero-emissions vehicles. Moreover, Toyota's Political Action Committee was the top donor to Republicans in Congress who opposed the results of the 2020 presidential election.

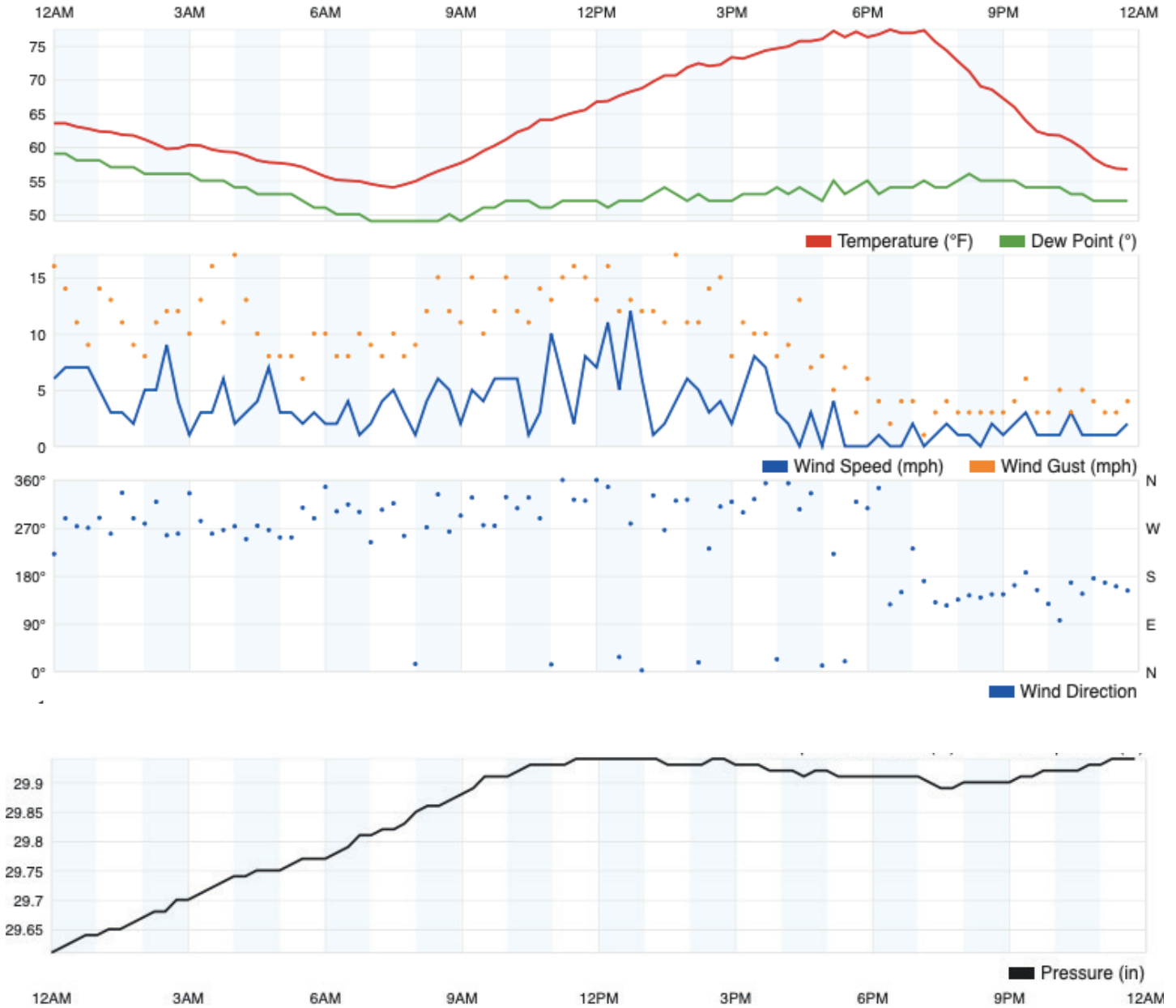
While Toyota continues its opposition to true EVs, major markets like China have begun an aggressive shift towards EV production and can ultimately force the company's hand. Environmentalists and economists agree that in order for Toyota to increase its profit margins and remain viable into the future, it needs to rethink its vision—and prepare for a battery-electric future.

Once upon a time the Prius was the king of the green cars, but nowadays electric vehicles are all the rage with consumers. Credit: Prescott Pym, Flickr-CC.

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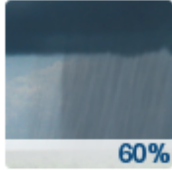




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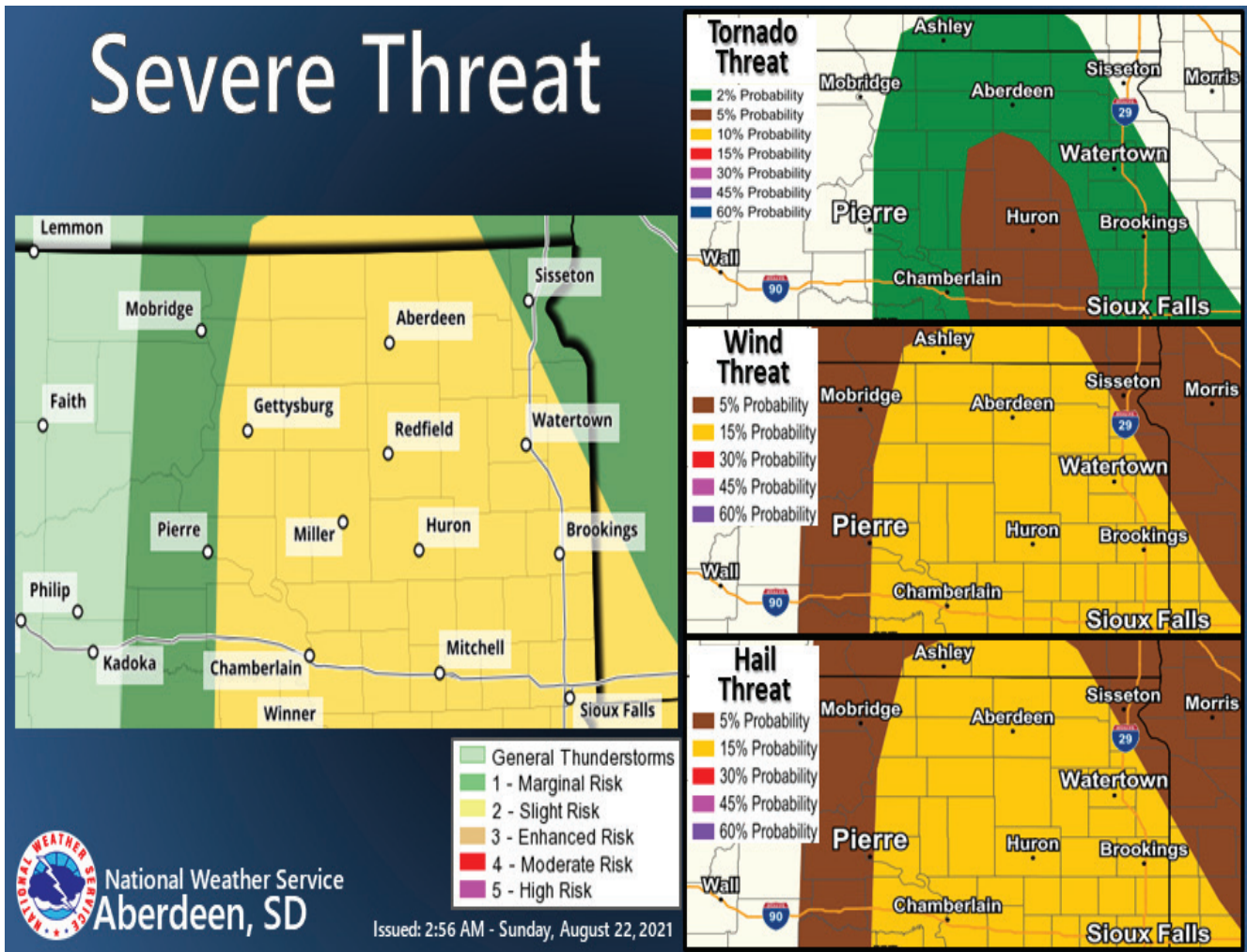
Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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| Today | Tonight | Monday | Monday Night | Tuesday |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  |  |  |  |  |
| 60% | 30% | | 20% | 20% |
| Showers Likely and Breezy | Chance T-storms then Partly Cloudy | Becoming Sunny | Mostly Clear then Slight Chance T-storms | Slight Chance T-storms |
| High: 80 °F | Low: 55 °F | High: 88 °F | Low: 64 °F | High: 86 °F |



Today's severe weather threat. Storms are expected to develop along and east of the Missouri valley this afternoon and move rapidly eastwards, into western Minnesota this evening.

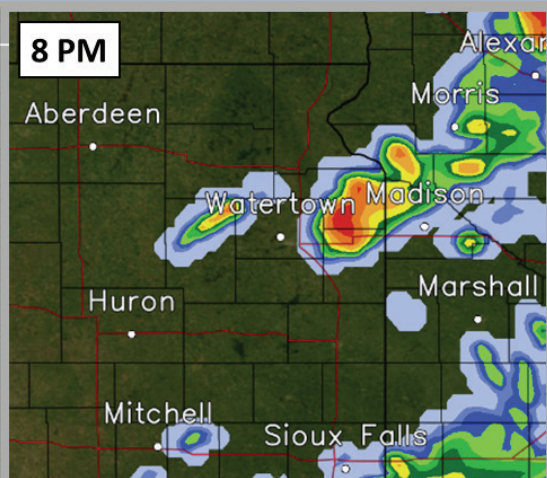
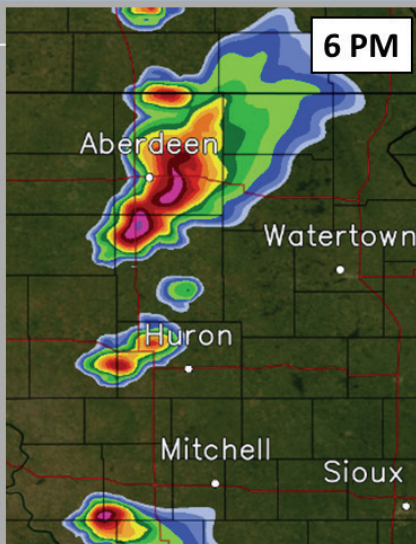
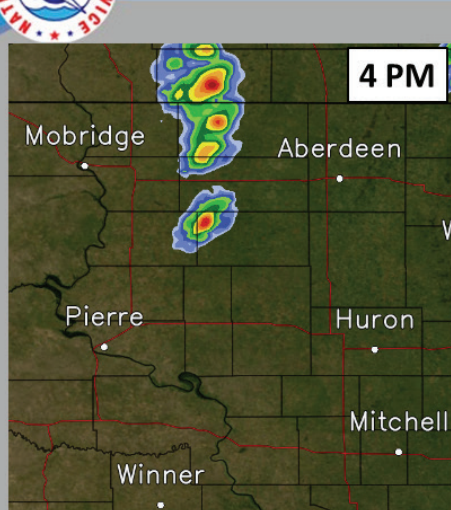
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ISSUED: 3:38 AM - Sunday,
August 22, 2021

Thunderstorm Timing



Model radar - timing and locations of storms should not be taken as exact



National Oceanic and
Atmospheric Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce

National Weather Service
Aberdeen South Dakota

Models suggest thunderstorm threat timing starts around mid afternoon east of the Missouri valley and spreads rapidly to the east. Threats include hail, strong winds and an isolated tornado or two.

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Today in Weather History

August 22, 1985: Intense thunderstorms moved from near Shadehill Reservoir in northwest South Dakota late in the evening of the 21st, to northern Brown County after sunrise on the 22nd. These thunderstorms produced high winds, large hail, rain, and lightning. Considerable crop and property damage were caused mainly by the strong winds and hail. Winds gusts ranged from 55 mph at Mobridge to 60 mph in and around Akaska. Winds of 70 mph were reported at Onaka and Faulkton. The strongest wind gust was reported in Hoven with a peak gust of 72 mph. Widespread damage was reported throughout the area. Many mobile homes, storage sheds, silos, and roofs were damaged or destroyed. Nine miles south and four miles west of Keldron, over two inches in diameter hail fell for 40 minutes, breaking windows and piling in ditches to a depth of four feet. These intense thunderstorms also produced brief heavy rainfall ranging from three-quarters of an inch to over four inches.

August 21, 2011: The Missouri River at Pierre, Fort Pierre, and Chamberlain/Oacoma fell throughout August as releases on the Oahe Dam were slowly decreased. The Missouri River at Chamberlain/Oacoma fell below flood stage on August 22nd. The extensive damage to homes and roads began to surface as the water receded. The river continued to fall into September.

1893: Four hurricanes are observed in the Atlantic Ocean at the same time. Over a century would pass, 1998 before four hurricanes would again rage together in the Atlantic.

1994: Hurricane John, about 345 miles south of Hilo, Hawaii had winds of 175 mph and pressure at 920 millibars or 27.17 inches of mercury, making it one of the strongest hurricanes ever in the Central Pacific. The 31-day existence made John the longest-lasting tropical cyclone recorded in both the Pacific Ocean and worldwide, surpassing both Hurricane Tina's previous record in the Pacific of 24 days in the 1992 season and the 1899 San Ciriaco hurricane's previous world record of 28 days in the 1899 Atlantic season. John was also the farthest-traveling tropical cyclone in both Pacific Ocean and worldwide, with distance traveled of 7,165 miles, out-distancing previous record holders Hurricane Fico in the Pacific of 4,700 miles in the 1978 season and Hurricane Faith worldwide of 6,850 miles in the 1966 Atlantic season.

2003: The Okanagan Mountain fire reaches its destructive peak, destroying 250 homes. Nearly 40,000 residents have been evacuated or are on evacuation alert. The Okanagan Mountain Park Fire is estimated to be 17,000 hectares and continues to grow.

1816 - The growing season for corn was cut short as damaging frosts were reported from North Carolina to interior New England. (David Ludlum)

1923 - The temperature at Anchorage, AK, reached 82 degrees, a record for August for the location which was later tied on the 2nd in 1978. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A cold front lowered temperatures 20 to 40 degrees across the north central U.S., and produced severe thunderstorms in Ohio and Lower Michigan. An early morning thunderstorm near Sydney MI produced high winds which spun a car around 180 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Afternoon highs of 88 degrees at Astoria, OR, and 104 degrees at Medford, OR, were records for the date, and the number of daily record highs across the nation since the first of June topped the 2000 mark. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Evening thunderstorms in the central U.S. produced golf ball size hail at May City IA, and wind gusts to 66 mph at Balltown IA. Lightning struck a barn in Fayette County IA killing 750 hogs. Evening thunderstorms in Montana produced wind gusts to 70 mph at Havre. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1992 - Hurricane Andrew makes landfall in Southern Florida as a Category 5 storm with wind gusts estimated in excess of 175 m.p.h. Estimated damages exceeded \$20 billion, more than 60 people were killed and approximately 2 million people were evacuated from their homes. (University of Illinois WW2010)

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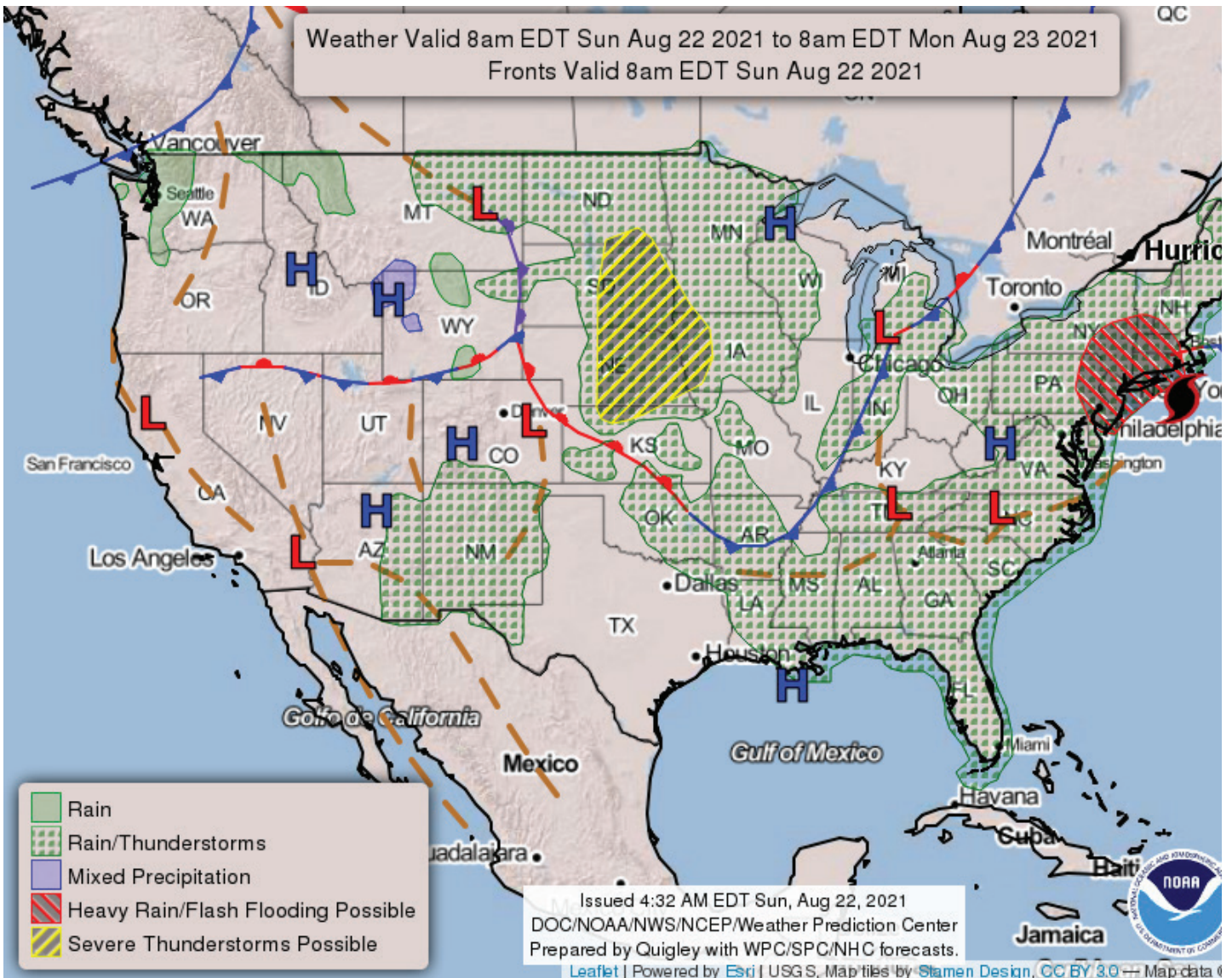
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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 77.4 °F at 6:30 PM
Low Temp: 54.0 °F at 7:30 AM
Wind: 17 mph at 1:45 PM
Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 105° in 1971
Record Low: 36° in 1904
Average High: 82°F
Average Low: 55°F
Average Precip in Aug.: 1.52
Precip to date in Aug.: 1.23
Average Precip to date: 15.62
Sunset Tonight: 8:29 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:45 a.m.



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WORKING FOR GOD'S FAVOR

Not long ago a student came into my office and asked, "Dr. Guido, will you do a favor for me?"

Without knowing what favor the student wanted, it was obvious that I had a certain amount of power over him and could do something for him that he could not do for himself. He literally was at my mercy.

Moses concluded Psalm 90 with a gracious reminder of God's power and our need to work for His favor. "May the favor of the Lord our God rest upon us," he wrote. And then he described how we could know that God's favor was on our work: God Himself would establish the work of our hands. "Establish the work of our hands for us - yes, establish the work of our hands." When Moses added the "for us" he underlined the fact that God Himself is the one who established our work, not us. Whatever we do is temporary. Whatever God does through us is eternal.

How, then, can we work with God to establish works that are eternal? Paul gives us a clear answer: "Stand firm. Let nothing disturb you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain."

But just what is "the work of the Lord?" we ask.

Jesus answered that: "Love the Lord Your God with all your heart - and love your neighbor as yourself." And "who is my neighbor" someone asked? His answer: "Anyone who has a spiritual, emotional or physical need."

It is difficult to go from one place to another without seeing someone who has some need. Our work? Meet it.

Prayer: Father, open our eyes to see the needs of others, our ears to hear their cries and use our hands to give help. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Psalm 90:17: Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish the work of our hands upon us; yes, establish the work of our hands!

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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
08/29/2021 Groton Firemen Summer Splash Day at GHS Parking Lot (4-5 p.m.)
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
10/29/2021 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)
12/04/2021 Olive Grove Tour of Homes
12/11/2021 Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services 9am-Noon

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News from the Associated Press

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Dakota Cash

10-14-22-28-31

(ten, fourteen, twenty-two, twenty-eight, thirty-one)

Estimated jackpot: \$54,000

Lotto America

05-10-19-22-35, Star Ball: 5, ASB: 2

(five, ten, nineteen, twenty-two, thirty-five; Star Ball: five; ASB: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$2.5 million

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$270 million

Powerball

16-28-36-39-59, Powerball: 4, Power Play: 2

(sixteen, twenty-eight, thirty-six, thirty-nine, fifty-nine; Powerball: four; Power Play: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$290 million

Three arrested following Pierre standoff

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Three people are in custody following a standoff in Pierre.

Law enforcement was following up on leads Friday that a 33-year-old man wanted for a violating a court-ordered furlough release was at an apartment complex in Pierre.

Authorities arrested the man following a brief standoff. He could face new charges of obstructing a law enforcement officer and second-degree escape.

Two others are facing charges. A 36-year-old suspect is accused of obstructing a law enforcement officer, KELO-TV reported.

The Hughes County Sheriff's Department says a 27-year-old man jumped from a second-story window at the apartment as officers entered. He is being held on unrelated outstanding warrants.

Saturday's Scores

By The Associated Press

PREP FOOTBALL=

Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 50, Rapid City Christian 0

Wagner 50, Lakota Tech 0

Some high school football scores provided by Scorestream.com, <https://scorestream.com/>

Little League: New life for US squads with no foreign teams

ADAM BABETSKI Associated Press

SOUTH WILLIAMSPORT, Pa. (AP) — Look out for the underdogs.

With no international bracket at the Little League World Series this year because of COVID-19 travel restrictions, runners-up in the U.S. regional tournaments have filled half the 16 available slots. They're noted on the schedule as B teams, while the regional winners are the A's.

So far, the B's are having some fun. In the first round, they won five of the eight games played.

Each of those winners -- Ohio, California, Oregon, South Dakota and Texas -- had a different and en-

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teraining path to victory. While California dominated New Hampshire 10-2, South Dakota starter Gavin Weir struck out 15 batters before hitting the pitch count limit in a 2-0 combined no-hitter over Louisiana.

Ella Bruning of Abilene, Texas, just the 20th girl to play in the LLWS, got the game's first hit and run in a 6-0 win over Washington. Noah Davidson of Hamilton, Ohio, knocked a hard ground ball just past the first baseman, sending the winning run home in a 1-0 victory in eight innings against Tennessee.

And the Lake Oswego, Oregon, team defeated Pennsylvania 8-2, behind a strong performance from starting pitcher Ben Robertson, who also launched a crucial three-run homer into the bushes in left field of Volunteer Stadium.

So why are all the runners-up playing so well? Simple, said Oregon manager Chris Kelly. When it comes down to it, these teams aren't that different whether they are A's or B's.

"These guys are 12-year-olds, they're not superheroes," he said Friday after Oregon's win over Oaks, Pennsylvania. "They make mistakes, whether they're on the mound or at the plate. If we're able to execute and take advantage of some of those mistakes, we can beat those guys."

Kelly's son, Chase, a first baseman and pitcher, said he wasn't bothered by playing an A team.

"I wasn't nervous at all," he said. "Obviously I wanted to win, but if we lost, I wouldn't have cared that much. I was just trying to have fun out there."

While Hawaii defeated California in the West region championship, both teams won their games in the first round of the Little League World Series.

Javier Chavez, the manager of the Torrence, California, team was excited by the possibility of a rematch with Hawaii -- not something that usually happens between teams from the same region at the LLWS.

"We cheered them on when we played today, and we're actually bunking right next to them," Chavez said. "It's good to be on this journey with them. I feel that both of our clubs are equally matched. The West produces pretty good powerhouses."

All the first-round winners are scheduled to play Sunday. California will face Ohio, and Oregon will play South Dakota, both matchups of exclusively "B" teams, while Texas will face Michigan.

Water supply a concern as Sioux Falls area demand increases

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — An economic development group has concerned about the water supply in the Sioux Falls area as demand increases.

The Sioux Metro Growth Alliance serves 13 municipalities along with Lincoln and Minnehaha counties.

Jesse Fonkert, the alliance's president and CEO, said discussions about the future supply and demand for water in the area need to start now.

"We've been talking about the three W's that are our challenges — water, wastewater and workforce," Fonkert told KELO-TV. "I put water first because we're an ag state. We've got a great supply of corn and beans. If you want to take the grains and add value to them, you need water."

The tri-state Lewis & Clark Regional Water System that serves nearly 350,000 people reached its max capacity at 32 million gallons a day in June.

Soon the system will expand capacity to 45 million gallons of Missouri River water treated daily and distributed to 15 different cities and other water systems. Five more sites are expected to be added when the project is 100% finished.

Fonkert said the demand for water has risen as a concern as developers searching for future sites.

"If we want to attract more jobs and more projects that have a positive impact on farmers in our region, we need a stable long term supply of water," Fonkert said.

Troy Larson, the Executive Director of the Lewis & Clark Regional Water System, acknowledges the system's capacity has been pushed to the max this year, but additional wells will provide additional capacity.

"Water is taken for granted and that's what we're seeing with the drought. People are realizing they can't take it for granted," Larson said. "Water is the new oil and people really haven't believed it, but I think they're believing it this year."

The Latest: Pentagon asks airlines for help moving evacuees

The Associated Press undefined

The Pentagon said Sunday that it is formally seeking airlift help from commercial airlines to relocate evacuees from Afghanistan once they have gotten out of their country.

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin has activated the initial stage of the Civil Reserve Air Fleet program, asking for 18 aircraft: three each from American Airlines, Atlas Air, Delta Air Lines and Omni Air; two from Hawaiian Airlines; and four from United Airlines.

Pentagon Press Secretary John Kirby said the Department does not anticipate a major impact to commercial flights from this activation.

According to Kirby, those aircraft will not fly into Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul. They will be used to move passengers from way stations once they leave Kabul, allowing the U.S. military to focus on the Afghanistan portion of the evacuation.

LONDON — Britain's Ministry of Defense says the country's armed forces have evacuated nearly 4,000 people from Afghanistan since Aug. 13.

Though it did not provide further details, it's clear that the majority of those evacuated by British troops are Afghans who have helped Britain over the past 20 years.

In addition to 4,000 or so U.K. citizens, there are thought to be around 5,000 Afghan allies, such as translators and drivers, who are earmarked for a seat on a plane. As of last Wednesday, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said Britain had managed to get out over 2,000 Afghans and 300 or so U.K. citizens.

"Our Armed Forces continue to work tirelessly at Kabul Airport to ensure the safe evacuation of British nationals and Afghan civilians," the ministry said in a statement on Twitter.

MORE ON THE CRISIS IN AFGHANISTAN:

- British military: 7 Afghans killed in chaos at Kabul airport
- China both worries and hopes as US departs Afghanistan
- Europe fears Afghan refugee crisis after Taliban takeover
- AP PHOTOS: Two decades of war, and daily life in Afghanistan
- Biden vows to evacuate all Americans — and Afghan helpers

— Find more AP coverage at <https://apnews.com/hub/afghanistan>

HERE'S WHAT ELSE IS HAPPENING:

KYIV, Ukraine -- A Ukrainian military plane evacuated 83 more people out of Kabul on Sunday, according to Ukraine's foreign minister.

Dmytro Kuleba tweeted that the plane carried 31 Ukrainians back to Kyiv, as well as "foreigners — Afghan women and children, human rights activists, journalists working with Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty, The Wall Street Journal, USA Today.

"They're safe in Kyiv," Kuleba said in the tweet. "We don't abandon our people and help others," he said, adding that Ukrainian authorities were working on "further evacuations." Last week, a Ukrainian plane evacuated some 80 people out of Kabul.

Thousands of people in Afghanistan have been looking for ways to leave the country after the Taliban took control of Kabul in a swift power grab, seeking to escape what they see as a return of a ruthless fundamentalist rule.

BERLIN — The U.S. military says an Afghan woman gave birth aboard an Air Force C-17 that flew from the Middle East to Ramstein Air Base in Germany. The base is being used as a transit post for people being evacuated from Afghanistan.

The military's Air Mobility Command tweeted that the mother began having complications during the

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flight Saturday. It says: "The aircraft commander decided to descend in altitude to increase air pressure in the aircraft, which helped stabilize and save the mother's life."

On arrival at Ramstein, U.S. medical personnel came aboard and delivered the child in the aircraft's cargo bay. "The baby girl and mother were transported to a nearby medical facility and are in good condition," the military said.

THE HAGUE, Netherlands — The Dutch government is donating 10 million euros to fund aid such as food, clean drinking water and medical supplies for Afghans.

The foreign ministry said Sunday the money will go to the Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund that can be tapped by United Nations organizations and NGOs working in Afghanistan.

Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation Tom De Bruijn says "we want to support the Afghan population under these difficult circumstances."

Meanwhile, the Dutch defense ministry said a plane it chartered arrived in the Netherlands on Sunday carrying 160 passengers from Afghanistan. It did not disclose the nationalities of the evacuees.

MADRID — Spain's government says that U.S. President Joe Biden and Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez have agreed that the Rota and Morón military bases in Spain used by U.S. forces will temporarily take in Afghans who worked for the Americans and fear Taliban reprisals.

One Spanish plane carrying 64 people who worked for the U.S. landed late Saturday at Spain's Torrejón air base near Madrid.

Additionally, Spain has received another 230 evacuees this week from Kabul, mostly Afghans who worked for Spain and for the European Union. Fifty-five of these evacuees have already flown on to other EU countries.

LONDON — Tony Blair, the British prime minister who deployed troops to Afghanistan 20 years ago after the 9/11 attacks, says the U.S. decision to leave has "every Jihadist group round the world cheering."

In a lengthy essay posted on his website late Saturday, Blair said the decision to withdraw troops was "tragic, dangerous, unnecessary." He added that Britain has a "moral obligation" to stay until "all those who need to be are evacuated."

He said the exit was not in the West or Afghanistan's interest, with the Taliban reasserting itself across most of the country.

He also warned that the decision by the U.S. to keep Britain largely in the dark about the withdrawal risks relegating the country to "the second division of global powers."

Blair accused U.S. President Joe Biden of making the decision on the back of "an imbecilic political slogan about ending 'the forever wars'."

KABUL, Afghanistan — The British military says seven Afghan civilians have been killed in the crowds near Kabul's international airport amid the chaos of those fleeing the Taliban takeover of the country.

The Defense Ministry said in a statement Sunday that "conditions on the ground remain extremely challenging but we are doing everything we can to manage the situation as safely and securely as possible."

The airport has been the focal point for thousands trying to flee the Taliban, who swept into Kabul a week ago after their lightning advance seized the country.

ISLAMABAD — The spokesman for Pakistan International Airlines says the airline has suspended flights from Kabul and is not evacuating anyone at the moment.

Abdullah Hafeez Khan says Sunday that the airline has no on-ground arrangements and lacks appropriate facilities at Kabul international airport to operate evacuation flights.

Khan said the suspension is temporary and the airline will resume its operations once the required arrangements are made there.

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NEW DELHI — An Indian official says an air force transport plane has left Kabul for New Delhi carrying 168 people on board.

Arindam Bagchi, the External Affairs Ministry spokesperson, says the plane took off from Kabul on Sunday morning and the passengers include 107 Indian nationals. He didn't give the nationalities of 61 others evacuated from the Afghan capital.

Meanwhile, another group of 87 Indians who were evacuated from Kabul to Tajikistan on Saturday in an Indian air force plane are being flown to New Delhi on Sunday, Bagchi said in a tweet. Two Nepalese nationals also were evacuated on that flight.

India began evacuating its nationals last Sunday after the Taliban swept into Kabul.

The Press Trust of India news agency said around 400 Indians were believed to be stranded in Afghanistan. No official figure was available.

Veterans are prized recruits as congressional candidates

By WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

NORFOLK, Va. (AP) — With midterm election season rapidly approaching, Republicans and Democrats have something in common when it comes to recruiting candidates they hope will deliver majorities in Congress: military veterans.

Both parties anticipate a significant number of races where veterans will be opposing each other, using their military service as a foundation of their appeal even as they hold widely diverging views on issues.

Democrats are clinging to threadbare advantages in both the House and Senate, so the success of these candidates could determine the balance of power.

The chaotic winding down of the U.S. war effort in Afghanistan — combined with President Joe Biden's blaming his predecessor's policies for much of what occurred — could resonate with voters in ways not seen since opposition to the Iraq War helped Democrats retake the House in 2006.

"When the U.S. suffers a very public defeat ... historically, that's the kind of thing that does become an issue in the next election," said Aubrey Jewett, a political science professor at the University of Central Florida.

In few places are military matters more likely to dominate the debate than in Norfolk, Virginia, and the surrounding area. It's a swing congressional district along the Atlantic coast and home to the world's largest naval base. One in 5 residents are active military personnel, veterans or their relatives.

Rep. Elaine Luria, a Democrat, served as naval commander, including on aircraft carriers that once helped stage Afghanistan bombing runs. She defeated an incumbent Republican, Scott Taylor, a former Navy SEAL, in 2018 and again in a rematch in 2020.

Veteran candidates can be seen as more willing to put country above self, which often plays best among moderate voters and in swing districts without a dominant political ideology.

"One of the reasons you see veterans on veterans is because the thought process is that just neutralizes that advantage," Taylor said. "Both parties are looking for that."

This year, among those hoping to capture the Republican nomination and challenge Luria is another veteran, ex-Navy helicopter pilot Jen Kiggans, a state senator.

Luria, who sits on the House Armed Services, Homeland Security, and Veterans' Affairs Committees, said that in her district, someone who has served "instantly goes into this with a level of credibility and connection."

Kiggans believes that, too: "Understanding the nuances of military life and being a military family member, a military spouse, I think those are really all very important to representing the district well."

"There should be more of us," Kiggans, who deployed to the Middle East during her 10-year naval career, said of running against a fellow female veteran in Luria. "I think veterans truly understand a lot of issues that are important to the country and we love the country, we've fought for the country, we've sacrificed

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for the country.”

The number of veterans who may face other veterans for congressional seats in 2022 won't be known until after next summer's primary season. In 2020, 17 House and Senate general election races featured two candidates' having military experience, according to With Honor Action, a nonpartisan organization that promotes veterans for elective office.

Similar veteran-against-veteran races occurred 21 times two years before that.

During that 2018 cycle, Democrats stressed recruiting candidates with military experience to appeal to swing voters — and ultimately won House control.

Now candidates will be addressing issues such as the mob attack on the U.S. Capitol in January and the fractious evacuation of Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan, with their military backgrounds seen as giving them added credibility.

Roughly two-thirds of Americans said they did not think America's longest war was worth fighting, according to a poll released this past week from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. It also shows that scenes of chaos and violence in Afghanistan have not much hurt Biden's standing so far. Some 52% said they approve of the president on national security.

Republicans nearly took control of the House in 2020, when all 15 seats they flipped featured women, minority or veteran candidates.

Illinois Republican Rep. Adam Kinzinger, an Air Force veteran, said serving in Afghanistan “makes me believe in a cause bigger than myself,” even though what's occurring there now has left him “very bitter.”

None of Kinzinger's major challengers so far is a veteran. Still, veteran-on-veteran races are taking shape around the country.

Oregon Democratic Rep. Peter DeFazio is his state's longest-serving member of Congress and an Air Force Reserve veteran. He's gearing up for a possible second consecutive race against Republican Alek Skarlatos, a former Army National Guardsman who, along with four others, stopped a gunman during a 2015 terrorist attack on a Paris-bound train.

In suburban Houston, Democrat Matt Berg, who served in the Air Force, is hoping to unseat first-term Rep. Troy Nehls, an Army veteran who served combat tours in Iraq and Afghanistan.

“It brings a more broad base appeal as a candidate,” said Berg who noted that the district saw about a 5-percentage point drop between its 2020 support for Biden and its nonveteran Democrat who ran for Congress. “We do feel it will help us reach out to voters who felt that Nehls' military background was a pivotal factor.”

The move into politics is not always smooth for veterans, considering that the military consistently polls as among the nation's most-respected, most trusted institutions — and Congress decidedly does not.

Rye Barcott, a former Marine who is co-founder and CEO of With Honor, said his group advises veterans considering a run that “it is a hardship post.” He added: “It's going to be painful but you're doing it as a service to something larger than yourself.”

The number of female veterans running for Congress as major party nominees has increased even more sharply from 14 in 2018 to 28 vying for seats in the House or Senate last year.

Still, Seth Lynn, executive director of Veterans Campaign, a nonprofit which helps make it easier for veterans to seek public office, said that since 2000, fewer than 25 House races pitting veterans against veterans featured at least one female candidate from a major party. None had two women running against each other.

That makes the potential Luria-Kiggans race something that hasn't happened in at least a generation.

Rebecca Burgess, founder of the advocacy group the CivMil Project, said she expects to see more congressional races involving matchups of female veterans. But a potentially even more potent reason is “the power of example” where more female veterans in Congress means mentors for those looking to emulate them.

Luria may have gotten a firsthand glimpse of that when she addressed a recent luncheon at Naval Station Norfolk. Navy Lt. Courtney Janowicz posed for a picture with the congresswoman and chatted about the pairs' shared experiences, having both worked on ships in shipyards.

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Asked if she could eventually see herself following Luria's path into politics, Janowicz beamed before proclaiming, "I can see it now."

Associated Press writer Padmananda Rama in Washington contributed to this report.

Henri weakens to tropical storm ahead of Northeast landfall

By MICHAEL HILL Associated Press

Henri weakened slightly to a tropical storm early Sunday as it was slated to pummel a long stretch of northeastern coastline, where millions on New York's Long Island and in southern New England braced for the possibility of flooding, toppled trees and extended power outages.

With the center of the storm projected to pass just off the eastern tip of Long Island by midday, hurricane warnings extended from coastal Connecticut and Rhode Island to the luxurious oceanfront estates of New York's Hamptons.

The storm had top winds of 70 mph (110 kph) in a 7 a.m. EDT update from the U.S. National Hurricane Center, just shy of hurricane status.

The first thunderstorms bringing what could be up to half a foot (15 centimeters) of rain arrived late Saturday, and flash flooding began in some areas overnight. Bands of heavy rain overwhelmed storm drains and drivers plowed through foot-deep water in a few spots in New York City, and Newark and Hoboken, New Jersey.

Tropical storm-intensity winds were beginning to strike the coast Sunday morning. Rising tide threatened to produce dangerous storm surge.

People in the projected path spent Saturday scrambling to stock up on groceries and gasoline. Those close to the coast boarded up windows and, in some cases, evacuated.

Residents and visitors on Fire Island, a narrow strip of sandy villages barely above sea level off Long Island's southern coast, were urged to evacuate. The last boats out left before 11 p.m. Saturday and officials warned there might be no way to reach people left behind.

The evacuation threw a wrench into Kristen Pavese's planned Fire Island bachelorette party. The group of 10 had intended to celebrate Saturday night, but ended up leaving on the ferry just a day after arriving. They had planned to stay until Monday.

"I'm upset about it, but it's the weather. It's nothing I can control," said Pavese, a Long Island resident. "I've been going to Fire Island for a long time, so I'm sort of familiar with this happening."

Approaching severe weather Saturday night also cut short a superstar-laden concert in Central Park. The show headlined by Bruce Springsteen, Paul Simon and Jennifer Hudson was meant to celebrate New York City's recovery from the coronavirus. But officials asked concertgoers to leave the park during Barry Manilow's set amid the threat of lightning.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo, set to leave office Monday after resigning over a sexual harassment scandal, emerged Saturday to plead with New York residents to make last-minute preparations, warning that heavy rain, wind and storm surge from Henri could be as devastating as Superstorm Sandy back in 2012.

"We have short notice," Cuomo said in one of his final forays before TV cameras, a setting that shot him to fame during the worst of the pandemic last year.

Gov. Ned Lamont warned Connecticut residents they should prepare to "shelter in place" from Sunday afternoon through at least Monday morning as the state braces for the first possible direct hit from a hurricane in decades. Rhode Island Gov. Dan McKee issued a similar warning.

Some gas stations from Cape Cod to Long Island sold out of fuel. Southampton Town Supervisor Jay Schneiderman described a run on supplies like batteries and flashlights as people "are starting to wake up" as weather models showed the storm's center would run "smack on the town of Southampton."

Major airports in the region remained open as the storm approached, though hundreds of Sunday's flights were canceled. Service on some branches of New York City's commuter rail system was suspended through Sunday, as was Amtrak service between New York and Boston.

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The White House said President Joe Biden discussed preparations with northeastern governors and that New York Lt. Gov. Kathy Hochul, who succeeds Cuomo on Tuesday, also participated.

Biden later began approving emergency declarations with Rhode Island.

New York hasn't had a direct hit from a powerful cyclone since Superstorm Sandy wreaked havoc in 2012. Some of the most important repairs from that storm have been completed, but many projects designed to protect against future storms remain unfinished.

Regardless of its exact landfall, broad impacts were expected across a large swath of the Northeast, extending inland to Hartford, Connecticut, and Albany, New York, and eastward to Cape Cod, which is teeming with tens of thousands of summer tourists.

Storm surge between 3 and 5 feet (1 to 1.5 meters) was possible in much of Long Island Sound all the way to Chatham, Massachusetts, and slightly less on Long Island's Atlantic coast, the hurricane center said. Flash flooding was possible in inland areas already saturated by recent rain.

Hill reported from Albany, New York. Associated Press writers Mallika Sen and Larry Neumeister in New York, Mike Melia in Hartford, Connecticut, and Mark Pratt in Waltham, Massachusetts, contributed to this report.

The Latest: Iran reports new record for daily COVID deaths

By The Associated Press undefined

TEHRAN — Iran has reported its highest single-day COVID-19 death toll of the pandemic, according to state media.

The official IRNA news agency said Sunday that 684 people had died of the disease since Saturday, while more than 36,400 new cases were confirmed over the same 24-hour period.

Iran's previous daily record for COVID-19 deaths was recorded Aug. 16. The country reported its highest number of daily cases the next day, with more than 50,000.

A five-day lockdown in the country ended on Saturday.

The current wave of infections is Iran's fifth of the pandemic and fueled by the highly contagious delta variant. The country also is struggling to vaccinate its population against the coronavirus. Some 7% of Iranians have been fully vaccinated.

MORE ON THE PANDEMIC:

- Lockdowns or vaccines? 3 Pacific nations try diverging paths
- U.S. mask, vaccine conflicts descend into violence and harassment
- The Rev. Jesse Jackson, wife Jacqueline, hospitalized for COVID
- Hurricane Henri thwarts Central Park concert hailing NYC virus rebound

Find more AP coverage at <https://apnews.com/hub/coronavirus-pandemic> and <https://apnews.com/hub/coronavirus-vaccine>

HERE'S WHAT ELSE IS HAPPENING:

WELLINGTON, New Zealand — Japan, Australia and New Zealand all got through the first year of the coronavirus pandemic in relatively good shape but are taking diverging paths in dealing with new outbreaks of the fast-spreading delta variant.

The discovery of a single local COVID-19 case in New Zealand was enough for the government to put the entire country into strict lockdown this past week.

Elsewhere around the Pacific, though, Japan is resisting such measures in the face of a record-breaking surge, instead emphasizing its accelerating vaccine program. And Australia has fallen somewhere in the middle.

The different approaches could have far-reaching consequences for the economies of those nations and

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the health of their citizens.

Professor Michael Baker, an epidemiologist at New Zealand's University of Otago, said countries around the world are struggling to adapt to the highly contagious variant.

"With the delta variant, the old rules just don't work," he said.

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — A conservative talk radio host from Tennessee who had been a vaccine skeptic until he was hospitalized from COVID-19 has died. He was 61.

Nashville radio station SuperTalk 99.7 WTN confirmed Phil Valentine's death in a tweet on Saturday.

Valentine had been a skeptic of coronavirus vaccines. But after he tested positive for COVID-19, and prior to his hospitalization, he told his listeners to consider, "If I get this COVID thing, do I have a chance of dying from it?" If so, he advised them to get vaccinated. He said he chose not to get vaccinated because he thought he probably wouldn't die.

After Valentine was moved into a critical care unit, his brother Mark said the talk radio host regretted that "he wasn't a more vocal advocate of the vaccination."

"I know if he were able to tell you this, he would tell you, 'Go get vaccinated. Quit worrying about the politics. Quit worrying about all the conspiracy theories,'" Mark Valentine told The Tennessean on July 25.

"He regrets not being more adamant about getting the vaccine. Look at the dadgum data," Mark Valentine said.

CHICAGO — Civil rights leader and two-time presidential candidate Jesse Jackson and his wife, Jacqueline, have been hospitalized after testing positive for COVID-19, according to a statement Saturday.

The Rev. Jackson, 79, is vaccinated against the coronavirus and received his first dose in January during a publicized event as he urged others to receive the inoculation as soon as possible. He and his wife, 77, are being treated at Northwestern Memorial Hospital in Chicago.

"Doctors are currently monitoring the condition of both," according to the statement from Jesse Jackson's nonprofit, the Rainbow/PUSH Coalition.

"There are no further updates at this time," the statement said. "We will provide updates as they become available."

A protégé of the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jackson was key in guiding the modern civil rights movement on numerous issues, including voting rights.

Despite having been diagnosed for Parkinson's disease, he has remained active and has advocated for COVID-19 vaccines for Black people, who lag behind white people in the United States' vaccination drive.

FRANKFORT, Ky. — The Kentucky governor's efforts to combat COVID-19 have suffered a landmark legal defeat.

The state's high court on Saturday cleared the way for laws reining in his emergency powers to take effect. The state Supreme Court ordered a lower court to dissolve an injunction blocking the new Republican-backed laws limiting Democratic Gov. Andy Beshear's emergency powers.

The ruling revolves around a dispute between Beshear and the GOP-led legislature over the scope of the governor's executive authority in times of emergencies. It comes as COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations are surging in Kentucky.

The governor lifted most of his pandemic restrictions in June. But with COVID-19 cases spiking due to the delta variant, he signed a recent executive order imposing an indoor mask mandate in K-12 schools, child care and pre-kindergarten programs across Kentucky.

One of the contested laws limits the governor's executive orders in times of emergency to 30 days unless extended by lawmakers.

PARIS — Thousands of protesters marched again in cities and towns across France against a COVID-19 health pass required to enter restaurants and cafes, cultural and sports venues.

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For a sixth straight Saturday, opponents denounced what they see as a restriction of their freedom. Many have criticized the measure, claiming the French government was implicitly making vaccines obligatory.

In Paris, four demonstrations were organized by different groups. Elsewhere in the country, over 200 protests were taking place.

Despite the protests, polls have shown the majority of French people support the health pass. More than 40.5 million people in France, or 60%, are fully vaccinated.

Since last month, France is registering a high number of infections — about 22,000 each day.

Henri cuts short Manilow set at NYC virus recovery concert

By JOHN CARUCCI Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — This time, Barry Manilow didn't make it through the rain.

Unlike the Grammy-winning recording artist's 1980 hit, "I Made It Through Rain," the superstar-laden "Homecoming Concert" in New York City's Central Park was canceled because of dangerous weather as Hurricane Henri approached the Northeast on Saturday.

Manilow began performing "Can't Smile Without You," as part of a medley of his hits when the announcement interrupted his performance, ordering concertgoers to immediately leave the park and seek shelter. The singer continued on, not realizing at first what was happening.

Organizers repeated over public address for concertgoers to "calmly move to the nearest exits and proceed to areas outside of the park."

The five-hour concert, intended to celebrate New York City's recovery from the coronavirus pandemic, was about halfway through when the weather became an issue. Heavy rain and lightning filled the sky.

As the crowd — estimated at more than 60,000 — began leaving the concert area, there was a moment of optimism that the show might resume once the weather cleared. But a few minutes later, another announcement said it was canceled as the downpour intensified.

Mayor Bill de Blasio later tweeted, "While it's disappointing that tonight's concert had to end early, the safety of everyone in attendance had to come first."

The highly promoted mega-concert featured Bruce Springsteen, Paul Simon, Jennifer Hudson, Carlos Santana, LL Cool J and Andrea Bocelli among the performers.

Fans intent of seeing Springsteen, Simon, and The Killers — who had not yet hit the stage — expressed disappointment as they were leaving. One man could be overheard belligerently yelling that he paid to see Springsteen. The majority of tickets for the show were handed out for free, providing you could show proof of vaccination. But high-priced VIP tickets that ranged from \$399 to around \$5,000 were also sold. There was no word on whether there would be refunds.

While the headliners were not able to perform, the abruptly-ended show still provided some standout performances.

Jennifer Hudson, backed by the New York Philharmonic, performed a spine-tingling version of "Nessun Dorma" from the Italian opera "Turandot." Equally impressive was that her performance followed Italian tenor Andrea Bocelli. Afterward, Hudson told Gayle King that the performance felt like "an out of body experience."

The famed New York Philharmonic opened the show with many New York themed pieces, including George Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue," Leonard Bernstein's "New York, New York," and Billy Joel's "New York State of Mind." The orchestra also backed Bocelli.

Earth, Wind & Fire was joined by Kenneth "Babyface" Edmonds for a two-song set. And Santana with Wyclef Jean performed "Maria Maria," before Rob Thomas reprised "Smooth," and their new collaboration, "Move."

The eclectic lineup also featured some "old school" hip hop with Melle Mel dusting off the Grandmaster Flash classic "The Message." Busta Rhymes performed "Put Your Hands Where My Eyes Could See."

In one of the evening's most spirited performances, a group of backup singers hummed the iconic opening of "Mama Said Knock You Out" as a lively LL Cool J wearing mint green sweats and yellow kicks emerged

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through them with a rousing version of the song that sent the crowd in hyperdrive. He was then joined by Rev. Run of Run DMC for a snippet of "It's Tricky."

Special guest speakers included Stephen Colbert, Gayle King, Clive Davis, and New York Sen. Chuck Schumer.

Schumer praised New York City's resilience for coming back after hard times, citing the Sept. 11 terror attacks, Superstorm Sandy, the financial crisis, and now, COVID-19.

"After COVID, New York is bigger, better, and stronger than before," he told the crowd.

He then thanked front-line workers, saying the city came back because of them.

Organized early in the summer, the concert was intended as a celebration of New York City overcoming the COVID-19 pandemic. But on Saturday, the concert kicked off amid worries about the highly contagious delta variant of the virus.

Matt Schweikert, who came to the show from New Jersey, expressed concern about the uptick in cases, but wasn't particularly worried about his health at the concert.

"They were great taking the proper precautions having you got through multiple checkpoints. I'm confident that everyone here is vaccinated. They're sober too, so that's great, and I think we're headed in the right direction," Schweikert said.

Native New Yorker Imani Duckette was "excited" to have the energy back in public.

"Everybody seems pretty safe, and I feel pretty comfortable," Duckette said.

New York City over the past week has averaged just under 2,000 new COVID-19 cases a day, according to state statistics. That's up from just under 200 cases per day in late June. Only about 54% of all city residents are fully vaccinated against the virus.

Before the concert on the grass, audience members were mainly socially distant. And while many were wearing masks, some ditched the face coverings as the concert progressed.

Israel strikes Gaza after violent protests along border

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel's military bombed Palestinian militant weapons sites in the Gaza Strip early Sunday in response to a violent demonstration on the perimeter fence that left an Israeli police officer critically injured, the army said.

Saturday's violence erupted after hundreds of Palestinians took part in a demonstration organized by Gaza's Hamas rulers to draw attention to the Israeli-Egyptian blockade of the territory. The demonstration grew violent after dozens of people approached the fortified border fence and threw rocks and explosives toward Israeli soldiers from behind a black smoke screen billowing from burning tires.

At least 24 Palestinians, including a 13-year-old, were injured by Israeli gunfire, according to the Gaza health ministry. An Israeli Border Police officer was shot and critically injured.

The army said in a statement that in response to the violent demonstrations, fighter planes hit "four weapons and storage manufacturing sites" belonging to Gaza's Hamas rulers, and that the military deployed additional troops to the region near the border with the Palestinian enclave. There were no immediate reports of injuries in the airstrikes.

Addressing the Cabinet on Sunday, Prime Minister Naftali Bennett said that Israel "will settle the score with those who harm our soldiers and Israeli civilians," adding that the military is "ready for any scenario."

Israel and Hamas are bitter enemies that have fought four wars and countless skirmishes since the Islamic militant group seized control of Gaza in a 2007 coup, a year after winning a Palestinian election.

May's most recent round of fighting, an 11-day war fought to an inconclusive cease-fire, killed at least 254 people in Gaza, including 67 children and 39 women, according to the Gaza health ministry. Hamas has acknowledged the deaths of 80 militants. Twelve civilians, including two children, were killed in Israel, along with one soldier.

Greece: Forest fire destroys jobs of pine resin collectors

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By ELENA BECATOROS Associated Press

AGDINES, Greece (AP) — For generations, residents in the north of the Greek island of Evia have made their living from the dense pine forests surrounding their villages. Tapping the ubiquitous Aleppo pines for their resin, the viscous, sticky substance the trees use to protect themselves from insects and disease, provided a key source of income for hundreds of families.

But now, hardly any forest is left. A devastating wildfire, one of Greece's most destructive single blazes in decades, rampaged across northern Evia for days earlier this month, swallowing woodland, homes and businesses and sending thousands fleeing.

The damage won't just affect this year's crop, resin collectors and beekeepers say, but for generations to come.

"It's all over. Everything has turned to ash," said Christos Livas, a 48-year-old resin collector and father of four.

Resin has been used by humans since antiquity and is found today in a dizzyingly broad array of products, from paint and solvents to pharmaceuticals, plastics and cosmetics. The north of Evia, Greece's second-largest island, accounted for around 80% of the pine resin produced in Greece, and about 70% of the pine honey, locals say.

Satellite imagery shows the wildfire destroyed most of the island's north. The devastation is breathtaking. Tens of thousands of hectares of forests and farmland were reduced to a dystopian landscape of skeletal, blackened trees silhouetted against a smoke-filled sky.

For trees to grow back to the point where resin can be extracted will take more than two decades, and probably twice as long for the production of pine honey.

"In 10 years, the forest will become green again," Livas said. "But for tapping, it will take 20, 25 years. For me, it's all over. Even for a 30-year-old - what's he going to do, find a job and then come back when he's 50, 60 to tap pines? His legs won't even hold him."

Livas walked through the still smoldering remnants of the forest on the outskirts of his mountain village of Agdines, puffs of white and grey ash rising from beneath his boots as he surveyed the damage.

"This one, I remember since I was a young boy, from 15 years old," he said, pointing to a blackened pine, the strip of peeled bark where resin had been extracted still visible. "This must have been tapped for 32, 33 years."

Most of his livelihood has literally gone up in smoke, lost in a horrifying roar as the giant wildfire raced toward the village.

"You could hear a rumble....It was like an earthquake," Livas said.

The flames moved fast, leaving no time to collect the thousands of plastic bags pinned to the trees to gather the precious resin. Instead, local residents turned their attention to the village, ignoring an evacuation order and staying to save their homes.

They managed. But they couldn't save the forest. And the villagers' anger - at the government for not sending more firefighters sooner, for ordering evacuations when they say locals could have helped fight the flames - is palpable.

Livas had been extracting resin from about 3,000 trees, producing about 9-10 tons per year at 27 euro cents (32 cents) per kilogram. Of all the trees he was tapping, just one survived.

He supplemented his income by farming olive trees, raising animals and occasionally logging. But there are no trees to log now, and most of the olive trees are gone too.

"I have nowhere left. Everywhere I've been, everything is burnt," he said.

With four young children to support, the eldest just 13, Livas said he'd look for new kinds of work. But with only a primary school education and unable to read or write, he seemed overwhelmed by the thought. The forest, farming, and collecting resin, which he's been doing since he was 15, are all he's ever known.

"What will I do now?" he said, stumbling for words. "I'll look for a job. What will I do? Do I know what to do now?"

Others were even worse off, he said. Some had several family members collecting resin, gathering around

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30-40 tons a year. There were entire villages in northern Evia working almost exclusively in resin collection.

Fellow villager Antonis Natsios felt the same. He started collecting resin at the age of 12, learning the technique from his father, who had learned it from his father before him.

Now 51 and with three children, two of them in college, Natsios is unsure how he'll make ends meet. Some of his fig trees were singed but would probably survive and produce a new crop, he said, and about 20% of his olive trees remained. But of the pine trees, his main source of income, "zero. Not even a branch."

He sees few options. "Either the state, or God, if he helps. Or migration," Natsios said.

The government has vowed to compensate all those affected by the fire. But nothing can make up for the loss of the source of their livelihoods for decades to come, the residents of north Evia say.

"We've lost everything for the next 30-40 years," said beekeeper Makis Balalas, 44, who relied on Evia's forests for pine honey each year. The forest's destruction, he said, was far worse than the loss of any beehives.

"I can create new beehives," he said. "But this that has been lost, you can't create that again."

For Natsios, it's the loss of the forest he grew up in that pains him the most.

"It's not the future, it's what we see. When you've been living something for 50 years and now you see this thing, this charcoal..." he trails off. "Now I, who was born in this forest, I have to breathe this blackness."

Follow AP's coverage of climate change issues at <https://apnews.com/hub/climate-change>

At least 10 killed in Tennessee flash floods; dozens missing

By R.J. RICO Associated Press

Catastrophic flooding in Middle Tennessee left at least ten people dead and dozens missing Saturday as record-shattering rainfall washed away homes and rural roads, authorities said.

Business owner Kansas Klein watched in horror from a bridge Saturday morning as cars and entire houses were swept down a road in Waverly, a town of about 4,500 people that Klein, 48, has called home for more than half his life. Two girls who were holding on to a puppy and clinging to a wooden board swept past, far too fast for Klein and other onlookers to go down and grab hold of them.

After being told by authorities to go back, Klein returned a couple hours later, shocked that the floodwaters had almost entirely receded and aghast at the destruction that was left behind.

"It was amazing how quick it came and how quick it left," Klein said.

Klein said his restaurant, a decade-old New York-style pizzeria, was still standing, but the morning deluge of between 10 and 12 inches (25 to 30 centimeters) of rain in Humphreys County had caused floodwaters to reach 7 feet (2.1 meters) inside the eatery, rendering it a total loss.

After leaving his restaurant, Klein walked to the nearby public housing homes and heard yelling. A man had just recovered a baby's body from one of the homes. Other bodies would soon follow.

"I'm looking at my restaurant, thinking how horrible it was that I lost my restaurant and then I walk around the corner and see someone's baby dead — my restaurant doesn't mean a whole lot right now," Klein told the Associated Press in a phone interview Saturday night, still in shock as he watched a local news channel air footage he had recorded on his phone hours ago.

The low-income homes — dozens of block buildings known as Brookside — appeared to have borne the brunt of the flash flood, Klein said.

"It was devastating: buildings were knocked down, half of them were destroyed," Klein said. "People were pulling out bodies of people who had drowned and didn't make it out."

Humphreys County Sheriff Chris Davis told news outlets more than 30 people have been reported missing. It was not immediately clear how many had lived at Brookside, located about 60 miles (96 kilometers) west of Nashville.

Two of the bodies recovered were toddlers who had been swept away from their father, Davis told WSMV-TV.

Waverly couple Cindy Dunn, 48, and her husband Jimmy, 49, were rescued from their attic by a crew

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who used a bulldozer to reach them.

"Hell. That's what we had to go through," Cindy Dunn told The Tennessean.

She said her husband woke her up Saturday, telling her that floodwaters had pushed her car to their backyard. Eventually the water in their house rose to at least 6 feet (1.8 meters) high, forcing them to the attic. Dunn said the rooftop wasn't an option.

"My husband is dealing with cancer. He's going through chemotherapy. And I am an amputee. So there was no going anywhere besides the attic," Dunn said.

Dunn said their home and neighboring houses "are gone."

Just to the east of Waverly, the town of McEwen was pummeled with about 17 inches (43 centimeters) of rain in less than a day, prompting water rescues, road closures, and communications disruptions. That rainfall total smashed the state's 24-hour record of 13.6 inches (34.5 centimeters) from 1982, according to the National Weather Service Nashville, though Saturday's numbers would have to be confirmed.

Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee tweeted on Saturday, "Tennesseans, please stay cautious of rising floodwaters caused by heavy rainfall in parts of Middle TN. We are actively working with emergency response officials & first responders as they support Tennesseans in flooded areas."

The Tennessee Emergency Management Agency activated its emergency operations center and said agencies that include the Tennessee National Guard, the state Highway Patrol, and Fire Mutual Aid were responding to the flooding. In a bulletin, TEMA called the situation "dangerous and evolving" and urged people to avoid travel in the affected counties.

Klein isn't sure for what the future holds for his family or his town.

He also isn't sure what happened to the two girls and the puppy he witnessed who had been clinging on to the board. He heard that a girl and a puppy had been rescued downstream, and that the other girl was also saved, but he wasn't sure it was them.

"This is the third 100-hundred year flood that we've had in about 10 years," referencing 2010 and 2019 floods. "But this is 100 times worse than either one of them was. ... The last report I saw was there were 31 missing. This is a small town so the odds are I know most of those people."

Rico reported from Atlanta.

New round of winds fuel fury of Northern California wildfire

PLACERVILLE, Calif. (AP) — Crews were digging in and burning out fire lines amid another round of high winds that contributed to the fury to a Northern California wildfire.

"We have a firefight ahead of us and the wind today is going to make it very challenging," said Keith Wade, a spokesman with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, or Cal Fire, on Saturday.

The Caldor Fire in the northern Sierra Nevada already destroyed dozens of homes, and authorities on Friday closed down a 46-mile (74-kilometer) stretch of Interstate 50, the main route between the state capital of Sacramento and Lake Tahoe on the Nevada state line.

The highway was closed after debris from the blaze fell onto the roadway and because of red flag warnings for 20- to 30-mph (32- to 48-kph) winds that by Saturday evening "combined with continued extremely dry fuels will result in critical fire weather conditions in the vicinity of the Caldor Fire," the National Weather Service said.

The winds could gust to 40 mph (65 kph) Saturday.

The road is a key checkpoint as crews struggle against the fire, which erupted earlier this week and grew to 10 times its size in a few days, fueled by winds.

"We're going to invest everything we can into holding the fire south" of the road, said Eric Schwab, an operations section chief with Cal Fire.

Firefighters made progress on the fire's western side and burned vegetation to starve it of fuel and prevent the flames from heading into the evacuated community of Pollock Pines. On the northeast side, crews were protecting cabins in the dense forest area, fire officials said.

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The Caldor Fire had now devoured about 130 square miles (310 square kilometers) as of Saturday and more than 1,500 firefighters were battling it amid heavy timber and rugged terrain.

The blaze was one of about a dozen large California wildfires that have scorched Northern California, incinerating at least 700 homes alone in and around the Sierra Nevada communities of Greenville and Grizzly Flats.

The fires, mainly in the northern part of the state, have burned nearly 1.5 million acres, or roughly 2,300 square miles (6,000 square kilometers) and have sent smoke as far as the East Coast. They were burning in grass, brush and forest that is exceptionally dry from two years of drought likely exacerbated by climate change.

Thousands of homes remained under threat in communities tucked away in scenic forests and tens of thousands of people remain under evacuation orders.

Nine national forests in the region have been closed because of the fire threat.

To the northwest of the Caldor Fire, the massive Dixie Fire kept expanding and new evacuations were ordered, including the tiny hamlet of Taylorsville. In five weeks, the fire about 175 miles (282 kilometers) northeast of San Francisco has become the second-largest in state history and blackened an area twice the size of Los Angeles.

Weather forecasts call for a storm system that will bring winds but little rain through Northern California into early next week. With it will come increased risks of fires. Dozens have erupted in recent days but were quickly stamped out.

An exception was the Cache Fire, a small but fast-moving grass blaze that ravaged at least 56 homes and virtually annihilated a mobile home park.

Some of those forced to flee the flames had to leave their pets behind.

Emily Crum, an animal control officer with North Bay Animal Services, got a surprise as she searched for abandoned pets in the Clearlake area.

She spotted a black dog in a charred lot.

"I saw her laying there. I thought she was dead," Crum said. "Then she started wagging her tail."

Despite being chained to a boat trailer, the mutt named Sammy had not been injured, Crum said.

Cats, goats and chickens also were rescued.

California is one of a dozen mostly Western states where 99 large, active fires were burning as of Friday, according to the National Interagency Fire Center.

Fires have intensified across the entire West, creating a nearly year-round season that has taxed firefighters. Fire patterns used to migrate in seasons from the Southwest to the Rockies, to the Pacific Northwest and then California, allowing fire crews to move from one place to the next, said Anthony Scardina, deputy regional forester for the U.S. Forest Service.

"But the problem is all of those seasons are starting to overlap," Scardina said.

Lockdowns or vaccines? 3 Pacific nations try diverging paths

By NICK PERRY, MARI YAMAGUCHI and ROD McGUIRK Associated Press

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (AP) — Cheryl Simpson was supposed to be celebrating her 60th birthday over lunch with friends but instead found herself confined to her Auckland home.

The discovery of a single local COVID-19 case in New Zealand was enough for the government to put the entire country into strict lockdown this past week. While others might see that as draconian, New Zealanders generally support such measures because they worked so well in the past.

"I'm happy to go into lockdown, even though I don't like it," said Simpson, owner of a day care center for dogs that is now closed because of the precautions. She said she wants the country to crush the latest outbreak: "I'd like to knock the bloody thing on the head."

Elsewhere around the Pacific, though, Japan is resisting such measures in the face of a record-breaking surge, instead emphasizing its accelerating vaccine program. And Australia has fallen somewhere in the middle.

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All three countries got through the first year of the pandemic in relatively good shape but are now taking diverging paths in dealing with outbreaks of the delta variant, the highly contagious form that has contributed to a growing sense that the coronavirus cannot be stamped out, just managed.

Professor Michael Baker, an epidemiologist at New Zealand's University of Otago, said countries around the world are struggling to adapt to the latest threat: "With the delta variant, the old rules just don't work."

The differing emphasis on lockdowns versus vaccines — and how effective such strategies prove to be in beating back the delta variant — could have far-reaching consequences for the three countries' economies and the health of their citizens.

Japan has never imposed lockdowns against the coronavirus. The public is wary of government overreach after the country's fascist period before and during World War II, and Japan's postwar constitution lays out strict protections for civil liberties.

Before the delta variant, the country managed to keep a lid on coronavirus outbreaks in part because many people in Japan were already used to wearing surgical masks for protection from spring allergies or when they caught colds.

Now, almost everyone on public transportation wears a mask during commuting hours. But late at night, people tend to uncover in restaurants and bars, which has allowed the variant to spread. Hosting the Tokyo Olympic Games didn't help either.

While strict protocols kept infections inside the games to a minimum, experts such as Dr. Shigeru Omi, a key medical adviser to the government, say the Olympics created a festive air that led people in Japan to lower their guard.

New cases in Japan have this month leaped to 25,000 each day, more than triple the highest previous peak. Omi considers that a disaster.

Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga on Friday expanded and extended a state of emergency covering Tokyo and other areas until at least mid-September, though most of the restrictions aren't legally enforceable.

Many governors are urging the prime minister to consider much tougher restrictions. But Suga said lockdowns have been flouted around the world, and vaccines are "the way to go."

Daily vaccinations in Japan increased tenfold from May to June as thousands of worksites and colleges began offering shots, but a slow start has left the nation playing catch-up. Only about 40% of people are fully vaccinated.

In Australia, a delta outbreak hit Sydney in June, after an unvaccinated limousine driver became infected while transporting a U.S. cargo air crew from the Sydney Airport. State authorities hesitated for 10 days before imposing lockdown measures across Sydney that have now dragged on for two months.

Early in the pandemic, Australia's federal government imposed just one nationwide lockdown. Now, amid the delta outbreak, it is pursuing a strategy it calls aggressive suppression — including strict controls on Australians leaving the country and foreigners entering — but is essentially letting state leaders call the shots.

New infections in Sydney have climbed from just a few each week before the latest outbreak to more than 800 a day.

"It's not possible to eliminate it completely. We have to learn to live with it," Gladys Berejiklian, premier of Sydney's New South Wales state, said in what many interpreted as a significant retreat from the determination state leaders have previously shown to crush outbreaks entirely.

"That is why we have a dual strategy in New South Wales," Berejiklian said. "Get those case numbers down, vaccination rates up. We have to achieve both in order for us to live freely into the future."

The outbreak in Sydney has spilled over into the capital, Canberra, which has also gone into lockdown. Government worker Matina Carbone wore a mask while shopping on Friday.

"I don't know that anyone's ever going to really beat delta," she said. "I think we just have to try and increase our rates of vaccinations and slowly open things up when we think it's safe to do so."

But Australia lags far behind even Japan in getting people inoculated, with just 23% of people fully vaccinated.

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Last year, soon after the pandemic first hit, neighboring New Zealand imposed a strict, nationwide lockdown and closed its border to non-residents. That wiped out the virus completely. The country of 5 million has been able to vanquish each outbreak since, recording just 26 virus deaths.

It went six months without a single locally spread case, allowing people to go about their daily lives much as they had before the pandemic.

But this month, the Sydney outbreak spread to New Zealand, carried by a returning traveler.

New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern promptly imposed the strictest form of lockdown.

By Sunday, the number of locally spread cases in New Zealand had grown to 72, and the virus had reached the capital, Wellington. Officials raced to track 10,000 more people who might have been exposed.

Ardern has been steadfast.

"We have been here before. We know the elimination strategy works. Cases rise, and then they fall, until we have none," she said. "It's tried and true. We just need to stick it out."

Baker, the epidemiologist, said he believes it is still possible for New Zealand to wipe out the virus again by pursuing the "burning ember" approach of taking drastic measures to stamp out the first sign of an outbreak.

That remains to be seen.

New Zealand doesn't have much of a Plan B. A recent report by expert advisers to the government noted the nation has comparatively few intensive care hospital beds and said an outbreak could quickly overwhelm the health system.

And New Zealand has been the slowest developed nation to put shots in arms, with just 20% of people fully vaccinated.

Yamaguchi reported from Tokyo and McGuirk from Canberra, Australia.

Henri thwarts Central Park concert hailing NYC virus rebound

NEW YORK (AP) — A superstar-laden Central Park concert meant to celebrate New York City's recovery from the coronavirus was cut short because of severe weather as Hurricane Henri approached.

Officials asked concert-goers to leave the park during Barry Manilow's set amid the threat of lightning. New York City police on Saturday night told concertgoers via Twitter to "calmly move to the nearest exits and proceed to areas outside of the park. This is NOT an emergency."

After some confusion over whether the concert might resume, Mayor Bill de Blasio tweeted, "While it's disappointing that tonight's concert had to end early, the safety of everyone in attendance had to come first."

The highly promoted "Homecoming Concert" featured Bruce Springsteen, Paul Simon, Jennifer Hudson, Carlos Santana, LL Cool J and Andrea Bocelli among the performers.

Saturday's event came after a series of hip-hop concerts in the last week at outdoor venues around the city.

The concert kicked off amid worries about the contagious delta variant of COVID-19.

New York City over the past week has averaged just under 2,000 new cases of COVID-19 a day, according to state statistics. That's up from just under 200 cases per day in late June. Only about 54% of all city residents are fully vaccinated against the virus.

Those who attended the concert, the majority of tickets for which were handed out for free, had to show proof of vaccination.

Mask, vaccine conflicts descend into violence and harassment

By JENNIFER SINCO KELLEHER, TERRY TANG and OLGA R. RODRIGUEZ Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — The Hawaii lieutenant governor watched in horror as protesters showed up outside his condo, yelled at him through bullhorns and beamed strobe lights into the building to harass him over vaccine requirements.

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A parent in Northern California barged into his daughter's elementary school and punched a teacher in the face over mask rules. At a school in Texas, a parent ripped a mask off a teacher's face during a "Meet the Teacher" event.

A Missouri hospital leader was approached in a parking garage this week by a man from Alabama who handed him papers accusing him of "crimes against humanity," and it was not the only in-your-face encounter over vaccines and masks. School board members, county commissioners, doctors and local leaders are regularly confronted at meetings and in public with angry taunts that compare them to the Taliban, Nazis, Marxists and the leaders of Japanese internment camps.

Across the country, anti-vaccine and anti-mask demonstrations are taking scary and violent turns, and educators, medical professionals and public figures have been stunned at the level at which they have been vilified for even stating their opinion. And they have been terrified over how far protesters will go in confronting leaders outside their homes and in their workplaces.

"The heat definitely got turned up this week," said Shannon Portillo, a county commissioner in Kansas who was berated at a meeting Wednesday in which the board mandated masks indoors for unvaccinated children. "It got much more hostile than anything I had seen."

The pandemic rage has coincided with a surge in COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations, a growing movement to require vaccines and a new round of mask requirements, most notably in schools where exhausted families had hoped the worst days of the virus were over. Now, the country is averaging nearly 1,000 coronavirus deaths a day.

Anger from parents over masks has been simmering in rural Amador County in Northern California, and it reached a peak earlier this month when for the first time a teacher was attacked. A father became irate when he saw his daughter come out of school wearing a mask but teachers in a lounge were unmasked. Vaccinated staff are allowed to take off their masks if students aren't present, said Amador County Unified School District Superintendent Torie Gibson. The father was told this and left, but returned later to speak with the principal.

A concerned male teacher went to the principal's office. An argument ensued and the father struck the teacher.

"The teacher had some lacerations and bruising on his face and a knot on the back of his head," Gibson said.

He was treated at a hospital and returned to work the following day. Still, the incident has shaken teachers and the community.

"The teachers have definitely been on edge. They are fearful because the last thing they want is to have an issue with a parent," Gibson said. "They definitely looked over their shoulder for quite a few days, but I think things are now a little bit more calm."

Meanwhile, the father is prohibited from entering the school and could face prosecution.

Since Hawaii announced a mandate earlier this month that state and county workers would have to show proof of vaccination or face weekly tests, 50 to 100 unmasked vaccine opponents have gathered almost nightly outside the downtown Honolulu condominium building where Lt. Gov. Josh Green lives with his wife and two children, ages 14 and 10.

Some yell into bullhorns and shine strobe lights into apartment units, Green said. Flyers with his photo and the words "Jew" and "fraud" have been plastered around the neighborhood. Green, who is Jewish, has been tearing them down and turning them over to the state attorney general's office.

He understands the right to protest, but not why demonstrators subject bystanders to such rage.

"They should protest me at my place of work, where I'm the lieutenant governor," Green said. "But it's different than flashing a strobe light into a 90-year-old woman's apartment or a strobe light into a family's apartment, where they have two kids under age 4."

Ironically, Green wasn't home during a recent intense weekend of protests. He was on the Big Island working on his other job as an emergency room doctor and treating mostly COVID-19 patients during a record surge in coronavirus hospitalizations in the state.

"I will personally be taking care of these individuals in the hospital as their doctor when they get sick

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from refusing to wear masks and refusing to be vaccinated," he said.

In Kansas, commissioners in Douglas County in the Lawrence area were confronted with an angry, mostly unmasked crowd Wednesday before they mandated indoor public masks for 2- to- 12-year-olds who are too young to be vaccinated. During four hours of public comment, opponents invoked the Holocaust, the Taliban and Japanese internment camps.

As the granddaughter of a Holocaust survivor, Portillo was outraged at the comparisons.

"It is really insulting to families all over who lost loved ones in genocides," she said.

Researchers, professors and political experts have varying opinions about how and why discourse seems to keep plunging to new lows over the pandemic, but many agree that social media is a big factor.

Barbara Rosenwein, professor emerita at Loyola University Chicago and author of "Anger: The Conflicted History of an Emotion," said social media can make minority views look more like the majority. On the many social media platforms, people validate each other's anger as being from a just and righteous place.

"Over time the possibility of feeling righteous anger has become democratized. Everybody feels almost obligated to feel it," Rosenwein said. "That locks you into a position that will allow for no compromise, which is terrible for our country."

That anger also makes it seem OK to buck authority such as teachers and government at a time of heightened culture wars on topics like education. Getting punished or even arrested might feel like "a badge of courage," she said.

"I don't think these people are running into old-age homes and telling granny she better not get vaccinated," Rosenwein said. "I think they're telling the school teachers because teachers represent an elite that's teaching their kids."

Rosenwein said there's no grand, one-size-fits-all solution to talking to a friend or family member who may be taking an anti-mask and anti-vaccine stance to extreme levels.

"You have to start where they are ... 'Let's hear your reasons and try to go from there,'" Rosenwein said.

Dr. Cadey Harrel, who practices family medicine in Tucson, Arizona, was among four health care workers who testified in favor of mask mandates earlier this month at a local school board meeting. She recently transferred her children out of that school district over the issue but still felt compelled to speak. An anti-mask group of four or five followed them out of the building after the meeting.

"They started saying things along the lines of we were paid actors, we were paid to be there, that masks don't work," Harrel said. "They were getting right in our face."

Harrel was unnerved but felt better after a few teachers thanked them for talking. And that motivated her to keep testifying at public meetings to provide a voice of science and reason amid all the outrage from mask and vaccine opponents.

"The thing is that somebody's got to speak up," she said.

Kelleher reported from Honolulu, Tang from Phoenix and Rodriguez from San Francisco. Associated Press writer Heather Hollingsworth contributed from Mission, Kan.

Coastal evacuations urged as Hurricane Henri heads north

By MICHAEL HILL Associated Press

People evacuated popular beach communities and made last-minute runs on batteries and gasoline as Hurricane Henri churned closer to Long Island and southern New England, while officials pleaded with the millions of people in the storm's path to brace themselves for torrential rain and storm surges.

Hurricane Henri was on course to collide Sunday in the late morning or afternoon with a long stretch of coastline, as hurricane warnings extended from near the old whaling port of New Bedford, Massachusetts, across the luxurious oceanfront estates of New York's Hamptons, to the summer getaway of Fire Island.

Intense winds and potentially dangerous tidal surges were expected as far east as Cape Cod and as far west as the New Jersey shore, and utilities warned ensuing power outages could last a week or even more. Governors urged people to stay home during the brunt of the storm.

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Henri was veering a bit further west than originally expected, placing eastern Long Island in its bull's-eye rather than New England. That gave people directly in the storm's path less time to prepare.

A mandatory evacuation order was issued for some residents closest to the water in Madison, Connecticut. First Selectwoman Peggy Lyons wrote in a public notice, that any "residents who do not leave the evacuation zone by 9 p.m. tonight are putting their lives at risk and public safety crews will not be able to respond to you once winds exceed 50 mph."

Residents and visitors on Fire Island, a narrow strip of sandy villages barely above sea level off Long Island's southern coast, were urged to evacuate. The last boats out will leave at 10:40 p.m. Saturday; after that, officials said, there may be no way out for people who decide to ride out the storm.

The evacuation threw a wrench into Kristen Pavese's planned Fire Island bachelorette party. The group of 10 had intended to celebrate out on Saturday night, but ended up leaving on the ferry just a day after arriving. They had planned to stay until Monday.

"I'm upset about it, but it's the weather. It's nothing I can control," said Pavese, a Long Island resident. "I've been going to Fire Island for a long time, so I'm sort of familiar with this happening."

The group made alternate Saturday night plans at a Long Island winery, and Pavese said she was happy to still be with her friends.

Approaching severe weather Saturday night also halted a superstar-laden concert in Manhattan's Central Park. The show headlined by Bruce Springsteen, Paul Simon and Jennifer Hudson was meant to celebrate New York City's recovery from the coronavirus. But officials asked concert-goers to leave the park during Barry Manilow's set amid the threat of lightning. Mayor Bill de Blasio ultimately said the event had to be called off and urged attendees to go home.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo pleaded with New York residents to make last-minute preparations, warning that heavy rain, winds and storm surges from Henri could be as devastating as Superstorm Sandy in parts of the state. The governor, who will leave office in two days following a sexual harassment scandal, warned that heavy rains were expected to create problems far up into the Hudson River Valley.

"We have short notice. We're talking about tomorrow," Cuomo said. "So if you have to move, if you have to stock up, if you have to get to higher ground, it has to be today. Please."

Gov. Ned Lamont warned Connecticut residents they should prepare to "shelter in place" from Sunday afternoon through at least Monday morning as the state braces for the first possible direct hit from a hurricane in decades. In Rhode Island, Gov. Dan McKee similarly urged state residents stay at home Sunday and into Monday morning.

"We consider this a serious matter," McKee said at a news conference.

Officials said Logan International Airport in Boston was expected to remain open, but that some flights likely would be canceled. And service on some branches of New York City's commuter rail system will be suspended Sunday. Amtrak service Sunday between New York and Boston was cancelled.

Massachusetts Gov. Charlie Baker expressed relief Saturday that the latest models suggest Henri won't make a direct hit on the state.

But Baker and McKee at separate briefings warned that high winds and heavy rains still could lead to widespread and lengthy power outages.

The White House said President Joe Biden discussed preparations with northeastern governors and that New York Lt. Gov. Kathy Hochul, who succeeds Cuomo on Tuesday, also participated.

Biden later began approving emergency declarations with Rhode Island.

New York hasn't had a direct hit from a powerful cyclone since Superstorm Sandy wreaked havoc in 2012. Some of the most important repairs from that storm have been completed, but many projects designed to protect against future storms remain unfinished.

With a top wind speed of 75 mph (120 kph) Saturday, Henri sped up to move north at 21 mph (33 kph) as of Saturday night. It was about 180 miles (290 kilometers) south-southeast of Montauk Point on Long Island.

Southampton Town Supervisor Jay Schneiderman said the town was considering issuing a voluntary

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evacuation advisory for about 6,000 people. He said storm models showed that the storm's center would run "smack on the town of Southampton." He described a run on supplies like batteries and flashlights as people "are starting to wake up."

Regardless of its exact landfall, broad impacts were expected across a large swath of the Northeast, extending inland to Hartford, Connecticut, and Albany, New York, and eastward to Cape Cod, which is teeming with tens of thousands of summer tourists.

Storm surge between 3 and 5 feet (1 to 1.5 meters) is possible from Flushing, New York, to Chatham, Massachusetts, and for parts of the North Shore and South Shore of Long Island, the hurricane center said.

Rainfall between 3 to 6 inches (7.5 to 15 centimeters) is expected Sunday through Monday.

Officials in Massachusetts, Connecticut and New York cautioned that people could lose power for days. Authorities advised people to secure their boats, fuel up their vehicles and stock up on canned goods.

In the Hamptons, the celebrity playground on Long Island's east end, officials warned of dangerous rip currents and flooding that's likely to turn streets like the mansion-lined Dune Road into lagoons.

"We have a lot of wealthy people. There's no doubt that we do, but everybody pulls together in an emergency," Schneiderman said. "So, you know, yeah, there are people hanging out on their yachts at the moment drinking martinis, but they're also starting to talk about this storm and I'm sure they're going to want to be helpful."

Hill reported from Albany, New York. Associated Press writers Mallika Sen and Larry Neumeister in New York, Mike Melia in Hartford, Connecticut, and Mark Pratt in Waltham, Massachusetts, contributed to this report.

Winds threaten to fan destructive California wildfire

PLACERVILLE, Calif. (AP) — Crews were digging in and burning out fire lines amid another round of high winds Saturday contributed to the fury to a Northern California wildfire.

"We have a firefight ahead of us and the wind today is going to make it very challenging," said Keith Wade, a spokesman with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, or Cal Fire.

The Caldor Fire in the northern Sierra Nevada already destroyed dozens of homes, and authorities on Friday closed down a 46-mile (74-kilometer) stretch of Interstate 50, the main route between the state capital of Sacramento and Lake Tahoe on the Nevada state line.

The highway was closed after debris from the blaze fell onto the roadway and because of red flag warnings for 20- to 30-mph (32- to 48-kph) winds that by Saturday evening "combined with continued extremely dry fuels will result in critical fire weather conditions in the vicinity of the Caldor Fire," the National Weather Service said.

The winds could gust to 40 mph (65 kph) Saturday.

The road is a key checkpoint as crews struggle against the fire, which erupted earlier this week and grew to 10 times its size in a few days, fueled by winds.

"We're going to invest everything we can into holding the fire south" of the road, said Eric Schwab, an operations section chief with Cal Fire.

Firefighters made progress on the fire's western side and burned vegetation to starve it of fuel and prevent the flames from heading into the evacuated community of Pollock Pines. On the northeast side, crews were protecting cabins in the dense forest area, fire officials said.

The Caldor Fire had now devoured about 130 square miles (310 square kilometers) as of Saturday and more than 1,500 firefighters were battling it amid heavy timber and rugged terrain.

The blaze was one of about a dozen large California wildfires that have scorched Northern California, incinerating at least 700 homes alone in and around the Sierra Nevada communities of Greenville and Grizzly Flats.

The fires, mainly in the northern part of the state, have burned nearly 1.5 million acres, or roughly 2,300 square miles (6,000 square kilometers) and have sent smoke as far as the East Coast. They were

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burning in grass, brush and forest that is exceptionally dry from two years of drought likely exacerbated by climate change.

Thousands of homes remained under threat in communities tucked away in scenic forests and tens of thousands of people remain under evacuation orders.

Nine national forests in the region have been closed because of the fire threat.

To the northwest of the Caldor Fire, the massive Dixie Fire kept expanding and new evacuations were ordered, including the tiny hamlet of Taylorsville. In five weeks, the fire about 175 miles (282 kilometers) northeast of San Francisco has become the second-largest in state history and blackened an area twice the size of Los Angeles.

Weather forecasts call for a storm system that will bring winds but little rain through Northern California into early next week. With it will come increased risks of fires. Dozens have erupted in recent days but were quickly stamped out.

An exception was the Cache Fire, a small but fast-moving grass blaze that ravaged at least 56 homes and virtually annihilated a mobile home park.

Some of those forced to flee the flames had to leave their pets behind.

Emily Crum, an animal control officer with North Bay Animal Services, got a surprise as she searched for abandoned pets in the Clearlake area.

She spotted a black dog in a charred lot.

"I saw her laying there. I thought she was dead," Crum said. "Then she started wagging her tail."

Despite being chained to a boat trailer, the mutt named Sammy had not been injured, Crum said.

Cats, goats and chickens also were rescued.

California is one of a dozen mostly Western states where 99 large, active fires were burning as of Friday, according to the National Interagency Fire Center.

Fires have intensified across the entire West, creating a nearly year-round season that has taxed firefighters. Fire patterns used to migrate in seasons from the Southwest to the Rockies, to the Pacific Northwest and then California, allowing fire crews to move from one place to the next, said Anthony Scardina, deputy regional forester for the U.S. Forest Service.

"But the problem is all of those seasons are starting to overlap," Scardina said.

IS threat forces US changes to evacuations at Kabul airport

By AHMAD SEIR, RAHIM FAIEZ, KATHY GANNON and LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — Potential Islamic State threats against Americans in Afghanistan are forcing the U.S. military to develop new ways to get evacuees to the airport in Kabul, a senior U.S. official said Saturday, adding a new complication to the already chaotic efforts to get people out of the country after its swift fall to the Taliban.

The official said that small groups of Americans and possibly other civilians will be given specific instructions on what to do, including movement to transit points where they can be gathered up by the military. The official spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss military operations.

The changes come as the U.S. Embassy issued a new security warning Saturday telling citizens not to travel to the Kabul airport without individual instruction from a U.S. government representative. Officials declined to provide more specifics about the IS threat but described it as significant. They said there have been no confirmed attacks as yet.

Time is running out ahead of President Joe Biden's Aug. 31 deadline to withdraw most remaining U.S. troops. In his remarks on the situation Friday, he did not commit to extending it, though he did issue a new pledge to evacuate not only all Americans in Afghanistan, but also the tens of thousands of Afghans who have aided the war effort since Sept. 11, 2001. That promise would dramatically expand the number of people the U.S. evacuates.

Biden faces growing criticism as videos depict pandemonium and occasional violence outside the airport, and as vulnerable Afghans who fear the Taliban's retaliation send desperate pleas not to be left behind.

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The Islamic State group — which has long declared a desire to attack America and U.S. interests abroad — has been active in Afghanistan for a number of years, carrying out waves of horrific attacks, mostly on the Shiite minority. The group has been repeatedly targeted by U.S. airstrikes in recent years, as well as Taliban attacks. But officials say fragments of the group are still active in Afghanistan, and the U.S. is concerned about it reconstituting in a larger way as the country comes under divisive Taliban rule.

Despite the U.S. Embassy warning, crowds remain outside the Kabul airport's concrete barriers, clutching documents and sometimes stunned-looking children, blocked from flight by coils of razor wire.

Meanwhile, the Taliban's top political leader arrived in Kabul for talks on forming a new government. The presence of Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, who returned to Kandahar earlier this week from Qatar, was confirmed by a Taliban official who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to talk to the news media. Baradar negotiated the religious movement's 2020 peace deal with the U.S., and he is now expected to play a key role in negotiations between the Taliban and officials from the Afghan government that the militant group deposed.

Afghan officials familiar with talks held in the capital say the Taliban have said they will not make announcements on their government until the Aug. 31 deadline for the troop withdrawal passes.

Abdullah Abdullah, a senior official in the ousted government, tweeted that he and ex-President Hamid Karzai met Saturday with Taliban's acting governor for Kabul, who "assured us that he would do everything possible for the security of the people" of the city.

Evacuations continued, though some outgoing flights were far from full because of the airport chaos. The German military said in a tweet that one plane left Kabul on Saturday with 205 evacuees, while a second aircraft carried only 20. The Italian Defense Ministry announced the evacuation Saturday of 211 Afghans, which it said brought to 2,100 the number of Afghan workers at Italian missions and their families who have been safely evacuated.

On Friday, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said around 1,000 people a day were being evacuated amid a "stabilization" at the airport. But on Saturday, a former Royal Marine-turned charity director in Afghanistan said the situation was getting worse, not better.

"We can't leave the country because we can't get into the airport without putting our lives at risk," Paul Farthing told BBC radio.

Army Maj. Gen. Hank Taylor, Joint Staff deputy director for regional operations, told Pentagon reporters Saturday that the U.S. has evacuated 17,000 people through the Kabul airport since Aug. 15. About 2,500 have been Americans, he said. U.S. officials have estimated there are as many as 15,000 Americans in Afghanistan, but acknowledge they don't have solid numbers. In the past day, about 3,800 civilians were evacuated from Afghanistan through a combination of U.S. military and charter flights, Taylor said. Three flights of Afghan evacuees have arrived at Dulles International Airport outside Washington, D.C.

The evacuations have been hampered by screening and logistical strains at way stations such as al-Udeid Air Base in Qatar. U.S. officials said they have limited numbers of screeners, and they are struggling to work through glitches in the vetting systems.

Taylor said that the Kabul airport remains open, and that Americans continue to be processed if they get to the gates, but he and Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said the threat picture changes by the hour.

"We know that we're fighting against both time and space," Kirby said. "That's the race we're in right now."

The Biden administration was considering calling on U.S. commercial airlines to provide planes and crews to assist in transporting Afghan refugees once they were evacuated from their country by military aircraft. Under the voluntary Civil Reserve Air Fleet program, civilian airlines add to military aircraft capability during a crisis related to national defense.

The U.S. Transportation Command said Saturday it had issued a warning order to U.S. carriers Friday night on the possible activation of the program. If called upon, commercial airlines would transport evacuees from way stations outside Afghanistan to another country or from Virginia's Dulles International Airport to U.S. military bases.

So far, 13 countries have agreed to host at-risk Afghans at least temporarily, U.S. Secretary of State

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Antony Blinken said. Another 12 have agreed to serve as transit points for evacuees, including Americans and others.

"We are tired. We are happy. We are now in a safe country," one Afghan man said upon arrival in Italy with 79 fellow citizens, speaking in a video distributed by that country's defense ministry.

But the growing question for many other Afghans is, where will they finally call home? Already, European leaders who fear a repeat of the 2015 migration crisis are signaling that fleeing Afghans who didn't help Western forces during the war should stay in neighboring countries instead.

Remaining in Afghanistan means adapting to life under the Taliban, who say they seek an "inclusive, Islamic" government, will offer full amnesty to those who worked for the U.S. and the Western-backed government and have become more moderate since they last held power from 1996 to 2001. They also have said — without elaborating — that they will honor women's rights within the norms of Islamic law.

But many Afghans fear a return to the Taliban's harsh rule in the late 1990s, when the group barred women from attending school or working outside the home, banned television and music, chopped off the hands of suspected thieves and held public executions.

"Today, some of my friends went to work at the court and the Taliban didn't let them into their offices. They showed their guns and said, 'You're not eligible to work in this government if you worked in the past one,'" one women's activist in Kabul told The Associated Press on Saturday. She spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of retaliation.

With a Turkish visa but no way to safely reach the airport, the activist described the gap between the Taliban's words and actions "very alarming."

Faiez reported from Istanbul, Gannon from Islamabad, and Baldor from Washington. Associated Press writer Jon Gambrell in Dubai, United Arab Emirates; Colleen Barry in Milan, Italy; Matt Lee in Washington; and Geir Moulson in Berlin contributed to this report.

Afghanistan coverage: <https://apnews.com/hub/afghanistan>

Europe fears Afghan refugee crisis after Taliban takeover

By KARL RITTER and MEHMET GUZEL Associated Press

HANGEDIGI, Turkey (AP) — From above, the new border wall separating Turkey from Iran looks like a white snake winding through the barren hills. So far it only covers a third of the 540-kilometer (335-mile) border, leaving plenty of gaps for migrants to slip across in the dead of night.

Traffic on this key migration route from central Asia to Europe has remained relatively stable compared to previous years. But European countries, as well as Turkey, fear the sudden return of Taliban rule in Afghanistan could change that.

Haunted by a 2015 migration crisis fueled by the Syrian war, European leaders desperately want to avoid another large-scale influx of refugees and migrants from Afghanistan. Except for those who helped Western forces in the country's two-decade war, the message to Afghans considering fleeing to Europe is: If you must leave, go to neighboring countries, but don't come here.

"It must be our goal to keep the majority of the people in the region," Austrian Interior Minister Karl Nehammer said this week, echoing what many European leaders say.

European Union officials told a meeting of interior ministers this week that the most important lesson from 2015 was not to leave Afghans to their own devices, and that without urgent humanitarian help they will start moving, according to a confidential German diplomatic memo obtained by The Associated Press

Austria, among the EU's migration hard-liners, suggested setting up "deportation centers" in countries neighboring Afghanistan so that EU countries can deport Afghans who have been denied asylum even if they cannot be sent back to their homeland.

The desperate scenes of people clinging to aircraft taking off from Kabul's airport have only deepened Europe's anxiety over a potential refugee crisis. The U.S. and its NATO allies are scrambling to evacuate thousands of Afghans who fear they'll be punished by the Taliban for having worked with Western forces.

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But other Afghans are unlikely to get the same welcome.

Even Germany, which since 2015 has admitted more Syrians than any other Western nation, is sending a different signal today.

Several German politicians, including Armin Laschet, the center-right Union bloc's candidate to succeed Angela Merkel as chancellor, warned last week that there must be "no repeat" of the migration crisis of 2015.

French President Emmanuel Macron stressed that "Europe alone cannot shoulder the consequences" of the situation in Afghanistan and "must anticipate and protect ourselves against significant irregular migratory flows."

Britain, which left the EU in 2020, said it would welcome 5,000 Afghan refugees this year and resettle 20,000 Afghans in coming years.

Besides that, there have been few concrete offers from European countries, which besides evacuating their own citizens and Afghan collaborators, say they're focusing on helping Afghans inside their country and in neighboring countries such as Iran and Pakistan.

Europe "should not wait until people stand at our external border," EU Home Affairs Commissioner Ylva Johanson said.

EU Council President Charles Michel acknowledged the challenges facing Europe when he visited Madrid on Saturday to tour Spain's emergency hub for Afghan refugees.

"Partnerships with third-party countries will be at the heart of our discussion in the European Union. We have to adopt strategies that ensure migration is possible in an orderly and consistent fashion," he said. "We need to find that balance between the dignity of the European Union and the capacity to defend European Union interests."

Greece, whose scenic islands facing the Turkish coast were the European point of entry for hundreds of thousands of Syrians, Iraqis, Afghans and others six years ago, has made clear it doesn't want to relive that crisis.

Migration Minister Notis Mitarachi said Greece won't accept being the "gateway for irregular flows into the EU," and that it considers Turkey to be a safe place for Afghans.

Such talk makes Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan see red. His country already hosts 3.6 million Syrians and hundreds of thousands of Afghans, and he has used the threat of sending them to Europe for political leverage.

"Turkey has no duty, responsibility or obligation to be Europe's refugee warehouse," Erdogan warned in a speech Thursday.

The Turkish president talked about migration from Afghanistan in a rare phone call with Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis on Friday, and also is discussing the issue with Iran.

Attitudes toward migrants have hardened in Europe following the 2015 crisis, fueling the rise of far-right parties like the Alternative for Germany, the biggest opposition party in parliament ahead of Germany's parliamentary election next month.

Even in Turkey, migrants from Syria and Afghanistan, once treated like Muslim brethren, are increasingly viewed with suspicion as the country grapples with rising inflation and unemployment.

Acknowledging the public's "unease" about migration, Erdogan noted how his government has reinforced the eastern border with Iran with military, gendarmerie, police and the new wall, which has been under construction since 2017.

AP journalists near the Turkish border with Iran encountered dozens of Afghans this week, mostly young men, but also some women and children. Smuggled across the border at night in small groups, they said they left their country to escape the Taliban, violence and poverty.

"The situation in Afghanistan was intense," said one young man, Hassan Khan. "The Taliban captured the whole of Afghanistan. But there is no work in Afghanistan, we were compelled to come here."

Observers say there are no indications yet of any mass movement across the border. Turkish authorities say they have intercepted 35,000 Afghans entering the country illegally so far this year, compared with over 50,000 in all of 2020 and more than 200,000 in 2019.

UNCHR estimates that 90% of the 2.6 million Afghan refugees outside of the country live in neighboring Iran and Pakistan. Both countries also host large numbers of Afghans who left in search of better economic opportunities.

By comparison, about 630,000 Afghans have applied for asylum in EU countries in the past 10 years, with the highest numbers in Germany, Hungary, Greece and Sweden, according to the EU statistics agency.

Jan Egeland, secretary-general of the Norwegian Refugee Council, said it's not a forgone conclusion that the Taliban takeover will result in a new refugee crisis.

"I would warn against a self-fulfilling prophecy," he told AP. Afghans are "scared, bewildered but also hopeful that a long, long war will be over and maybe now they can avoid the crossfire."

He said much depends on the Taliban allowing development and humanitarian work to continue.

"If you would have a collapse of public services and if there would be a major food crisis, there will be, for sure, a mass movement of people," Egeland said.

Ritter reported from Rome. AP reporters Suzan Fraser in Ankara, Turkey; Renata Brito in Barcelona, Spain; Lorne Cook in Brussels; Frank Jordans in Berlin; Elena Becatoros in Athens, Greece, and Angela Charlton in Paris contributed to this report.

Follow AP's coverage of Afghanistan at <https://apnews.com/hub/afghanistan> and of migration at <https://apnews.com/hub/migration>

Hurricane Grace hits Mexico's Gulf coast, dissipates; 8 dead

By FÉLIX MÁRQUEZ and FABIOLA SÁNCHEZ Associated Press

VERACRUZ, Mexico (AP) — Hurricane Grace swept onto Mexico's Gulf coast as a major Category 3 storm and moved inland Saturday, drenching coastal and inland areas in its second landfall in the country in two days. At least eight people died, authorities said.

The storm had lost power while crossing over the Yucatan Peninsula on Thursday, swirling through Mexico's main tourist strip, but it rapidly drew strength from the relatively warm Gulf of Mexico before reaching the Mexican coast again late Friday.

At least eight people, including children, died and three were missing after mudslides and flooding, said Cuitláhuac García, governor of Mexico's Veracruz state. García said 330,000 people lost power in the storm but it was gradually being restored.

The U.S. National Hurricane Center said Grace quickly weakened to a tropical storm as it churned over mountainous areas in central Mexico east of Mexico City and then dissipated at midafternoon.

The storm caused rivers to overflow and landslides in places and some evacuations were needed, Veracruz authorities said.

In the coastal town of Tecolutla, Esteban Dominguez examined the wreckage of his home. He said the family home had withstood a previous hurricane, but this time the walls couldn't stand up to the battering.

"The night was shocking, very shocking, and worrying because it went so beyond normal," Dominguez said.

Hours before nearing shore on Friday, Grace caused strong winds, high waves and rain in the Veracruz communities of Tuxpan, Poza Rica, Xalapa and Veracruz city as well as in coastal towns in the states of Tabasco and Tamaulipas, Mexico's meteorological agency said.

Fishermen pulled their boats out of the water and carried them inside harbors to prevent damage as the storm's leading edge whipped at the coast. Merchants boarded up the windows of their businesses to protect them.

The hurricane hit early Thursday near Tulum, a Yucatan resort town famed for its Mayan ruins. Some families passed harrowing hours sheltering from cracking trees and flying debris.

Associated Press writer Felix Marquez reported this story in Veracruz and AP writer Fabiola Sanchez

reported from Tulum.

Boundary Waters wilderness in Minnesota closed due to fire

FINLAND, Minn. (AP) — The U.S. Forest Service on Saturday closed the popular Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness in northeastern Minnesota as the largest active wildfire in the state threatens the 1-million-acre property.

The Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness stopped issuing entry permits Saturday, closing all land, water, trails, portages, campsites, canoe routes and wilderness entry points until Aug. 27.

The Boundary Waters in the Superior National Forest is one of the most visited federally designated wilderness areas.

The Greenwood fire in the forest remained uncontrolled Saturday and had spread to about 14 square miles (36 square kilometers). About 250 firefighters were battling the blaze.

Efforts are now underway to reach paddlers and hikers across the vast wilderness, said Superior National Forest spokesperson Joanna Gilkeson.

"Currently we have wilderness rangers paddling in the Boundary Waters to sweep people from the areas, and we're trying to do a systematic sweep," Gilkeson told Minnesota Public Radio.

Rangers are beginning on the east side of the BWCA and moving to western areas where a large closure order has been in place for more than a month due to concerns about wildfires just across the border in Ontario's Quetico Provincial Park. That means there are fewer visitors in the western reaches of the wilderness.

The Lake County Sheriff's Office had ordered residents of about 245 homes and cabins to evacuate in areas around McDougal Lake, Sand Lake, the Highway 2 corridor, and north of Highway 1 in the vicinity of East and West Chub Lakes, Jackpot Lake and Slate Lake.

No structures have been damaged and no injuries have been reported, officials said.

Temperatures were lower Saturday, humidity was higher and skies were cloudy — all factors that can help moderate fire behavior by blocking the sun from the forest floor, aid Clark McCreedy, a spokesperson for the multiagency team fighting the blaze.

"Nonetheless, it's already dry because we didn't get enough precipitation out of that weather last night," he told the Star Tribune.

Sprinkles of precipitation Friday and Saturday did little to help firefighting efforts.

"Enough to settle the dust, little more than that," McCreedy said. "With fire, we're always at the mercy of the weather."

Drought conditions in western states, which extend as far east as Minnesota, are fueling around 100 wildfires. California has already surpassed the acreage burned at this point last year, which ended up setting the record. In northeastern Minnesota, heat, low humidity and a tinder-dry forest have fueled the Greenwood Lake fire, one of several burning inside and outside the Boundary Waters.

Gaza border clashes wound 24 Palestinians, Israeli policeman

By WAFAA SHURAFU Associated Press

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip (AP) — Israeli gunfire on Saturday wounded 24 Palestinians, including a 13-year-old boy who was shot in the head, health officials said. An Israeli policeman was critically wounded by Palestinian gunfire during the clashes along Gaza's border with Israel.

The violence erupted after hundreds of Palestinians took part in a demonstration Saturday organized by Gaza's Hamas rulers to draw attention to a stifling Israeli blockade of the territory. The demonstration grew violent after dozens of people approached the fortified border fence and threw rocks and explosives toward Israeli soldiers from behind a black smoke screen spewing from burning tires.

The Israeli military said that hundreds of demonstrators approached one area of the fence in northern Gaza and attempted to climb over while throwing explosives at troops. It said that troops fired tear gas and live rounds toward the protesters.

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It also said a member of the paramilitary border police was hospitalized in grave condition after being shot. Amateur video from the Palestinian side showed a protester running up to the concrete barrier and firing a pistol into a hole used by an Israeli sniper.

In Gaza, the Hamas-run Health Ministry said 24 Palestinians were wounded by Israeli fire. Two of them, including the 13-year-old boy, were in critical condition.

The violent confrontations were reminiscent of the weekly border demonstrations organized by Gaza's Hamas rulers in 2018 and 2019 to draw attention to Israel's stifling blockade over the tiny seaside territory.

Israel and Hamas are bitter enemies that have fought four wars and countless skirmishes since the Islamic militant group seized control of Gaza in 2007, a year after winning a Palestinian election. The most recent war, in May, ended in an inconclusive cease-fire after 11 days of fighting.

Khalil al-Haya, a senior Hamas official, told protesters that the confrontation with Israel "was still open."

There has been growing tension in recent weeks, with Hamas calling for Israel to ease the blockade, which greatly restricts movement of people and goods in and out of the territory. Israel has imposed the blockade with Egyptian help since 2007, saying it is needed to prevent Hamas from arming itself.

In a statement, the Israeli army said troops responded with live rounds after hundreds of Palestinians demonstrated at the Gaza-Israeli border.

During the border protests in 2018 and 2019, over 350 Palestinians were killed by Israeli fire. The protests ground to a halt after mediators, including Egypt, Qatar and the United Nations brokered an unofficial deal in which Israel eased some of its economic restrictions on Gaza and allowed Qatar to deliver tens of millions of dollars in monthly payments to needy Gaza families and Hamas salaries.

Since the May war, the new Israeli government, headed by Naftali Bennet, has blocked the Qatari aid, calling for a mechanism to ensure Hamas doesn't benefit from the cash. It also has blocked the import of key reconstruction materials while demanding that Hamas first return the remains of two soldiers killed in a 2014 war and two Israeli civilians believed to be alive.

Running out of patience, Hamas called for Saturday's protest to signal its frustration with Israel delaying the Qatari cash injections.

On Thursday, however, Israel announced an agreement with the Gulf Arab country to resume aid payments to thousands of families in the Gaza Strip step aimed at easing tensions with the Palestinian territory in the wake of the war. Under the new arrangement, the funds are to be transferred by the United Nations directly to Gaza families, while giving Israel oversight over the the list of recipients. The payments are expected to begin in the coming weeks.

Hamas made the call for the protest at Gaza-Israel frontier before the new agreement on the resumption of Qatari aid was reached. It also said the protest was meant to mark the anniversary of a 1969 arson attack at Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa mosque by an Australian tourist later found to be mentally ill.

At least 254 people were killed during May's Gaza-Israel war, including 67 children and 39 women, according to the Gaza health ministry. Hamas has acknowledged the deaths of 80 militants. Twelve civilians, including two children, were killed in Israel, along with one soldier.

The Latest: Kentucky Supreme Court reins in Gov. Beshear

By The Associated Press undefined

FRANKFORT, Ky. — The Kentucky governor's efforts to combat COVID-19 have suffered a landmark legal defeat.

The state's high court on Saturday cleared the way for laws reining in his emergency powers to take effect. The state Supreme Court ordered a lower court to dissolve an injunction blocking the new Republican-backed laws limiting Democratic Gov. Andy Beshear's emergency powers.

The ruling revolves around a dispute between Beshear and the GOP-led legislature over the scope of the governor's executive authority in times of emergencies. It comes as COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations are surging in Kentucky.

The governor lifted most of his pandemic restrictions in June. But with COVID-19 cases spiking due to

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the delta variant, he signed a recent executive order imposing an indoor mask mandate in K-12 schools, child care and pre-kindergarten programs across Kentucky.

One of the contested laws limits the governor's executive orders in times of emergency to 30 days unless extended by lawmakers.

MORE ON THE PANDEMIC:

- AP-NORC poll: Biden sees dip in support amid new COVID-19 cases
- French virus health pass in full use but protests keep going on Saturdays
- Though young and healthy, more unvaccinated in U.S. die of COVID-19
- Central Park concert in NYC expected to draw thousands despite virus

Find more AP coverage at <https://apnews.com/hub/coronavirus-pandemic> and <https://apnews.com/hub/coronavirus-vaccine>

HERE'S WHAT ELSE IS HAPPENING:

LA CROSSE, Wis. — A high-ranking Roman Catholic cardinal is off a ventilator and moving out of intensive care, according to officials at a Wisconsin shrine founded.

Cardinal Raymond Burke was to return to a regular hospital room Saturday at an undisclosed location, the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in La Crosse said in a statement.

Burke, 73, one of the Catholic Church's most outspoken conservatives and a vaccine skeptic, had been sedated and on a ventilator following his tweet Aug. 10 that he had contracted the coronavirus.

He spoke out against mandatory vaccinations in May 2020, and said some in society want to implant microchips in people.

PARIS — Thousands of protesters are marching again in cities and towns across France against a COVID-19 health pass required to enter restaurants and cafes, cultural and sports venues.

For a sixth straight Saturday, opponents denounced what they see as a restriction of their freedom. Many have criticized the measure, claiming the French government was implicitly making vaccines obligatory.

In Paris, four demonstrations were organized by different groups. Elsewhere in the country, over 200 protests were taking place.

Despite the protests, polls have shown the majority of French people support the health pass. More than 40.5 million people in France, or 60%, are fully vaccinated.

Since last month, France is registering a high number of infections -- about 22,000 each day.

MONTGOMERY, Ala. — U.S. Rep. Barry Moore of Alabama says he and his wife have been diagnosed with the coronavirus. The congressman disclosed the diagnosis in a post on social media. He says he'll continue to work virtually as much as he can while recovering in quarantine.

The Republican congressman encouraged people to discuss vaccines and treatments with their medical providers. Alabama is seeing a surge in virus cases and hospitalizations that medical officials say is fueled by the highly contagious delta variant and low vaccination rates in the state.

BERLIN — Austria's government says it may limit access to nightclubs to people who have been vaccinated against COVID-19 if infections rise in the fall.

Like many other European countries, Austria is seeing coronavirus infections increase as the delta variant takes hold, particularly among younger people who haven't been fully vaccinated.

Currently, people need to have been vaccinated or have a recent negative PCR test to enter nightclubs.

A joint statement Saturday from the chancellery and the health ministry says a vaccinated-only approach may be necessary in the fall if infection rates continue to rise and the number of vaccinated young people remains relatively low. It pointed to a "particular risk of so-called superspreader events" as social life

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moves indoors after the summer.

WASHINGTON -- President Joe Biden's job approval rating has ticked down and Americans are taking a less positive view of his handling of the coronavirus pandemic.

That's according to a new poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. The survey shows Biden's overall job approval rating dipping from 59% last month to 54%. The public's assessment of his handling of the pandemic has fallen even further, down from 66% support in July to 54%.

That coincides with increased COVID-19 cases in the United States and stalled vaccination rates. Jeanette Ellis-Carter, 69, wants to see Biden push for more vaccine mandates across the nation. Despite being fully vaccinated, the Cincinnati resident recently contracted COVID-19 and worries that without vaccine requirements, more Americans will be at risk of getting sick.

"When I was a child in school, we were mandated to get the polio shot, measles. What's any different about this?" she said.

Republican officials have led the opposition to the vaccine and mask measures the Biden administration has put in place this summer. Some Republican governors are opposing masks in schools.

MONTGOMERY, Ala. — Health officials in Alabama say they are seeing a spike in cases among young adults and children as the highly contagious delta variant sweeps through unvaccinated populations.

Christina Tidmore urged people to get vaccinated after losing her husband to COVID-19. Her 36-year-old spouse was young and healthy but succumbed to the disease within three weeks. The couple didn't get vaccinated after hearing conflicting messages.

In the past month, people between ages 25 to 49 made up 14% of all COVID deaths in the state. Some 29% of deaths are ages 50 to 64.

"There is no question that the average age of people who are being hospitalized is going down," State Health Officer Scott Harris said. The Alabama Hospital Association said this week 85% of hospitalized COVID-19 patients are unvaccinated.

EUGENE, Ore. — Oregon and Oregon State became the first Power Five schools to announce they will require proof of vaccination or a negative coronavirus test for people over age 12 to attend football games.

Oregon says the decision was made with public health authorities and "peer institutions in the state." The mandate goes into effect Monday and comes at the end of a week when state officials warned of rapidly filling hospitals as daily reported cases reached record numbers.

The Oregon football team opens its season at 54,000-seat Autzen Stadium in Eugene on Sept. 4 against Fresno State. Oregon State begins its home schedule at Reser Stadium on Sept. 11 against Hawaii.

NEW YORK — The sounds of song will be ringing out from Central Park, with thousands expected for a superstar-laden concert meant to celebrate New York City's recovery from the coronavirus.

Bruce Springsteen, Paul Simon, Jennifer Hudson, Carlos Santana, LL Cool J and Andrea Bocelli are among the performers at what is being billed as the "Homecoming Concert."

Despite the joyful intention, the concert is taking place when there are worries over the contagious delta variant of COVID-19. According to state statistics, New York City has averaged just under 2,000 new cases of coronavirus a day over the past week. Those who attend the concert must show proof of vaccination.

ORLANDO, Fla. — The mayor of Orlando is asking residents to stop watering their lawns and washing their cars for at least a week.

Mayor Buddy Dyer says water usage needed to be cut back because of the recent surge of COVID-19 hospitalizations. The Orlando Utility Commission treats the city's water with liquid oxygen and supplies that ordinarily go toward water treatment have been diverted to hospitals for patients suffering from the virus.

The city-owned utility typically goes through 10 trucks of liquid oxygen a week, but its supplier recently

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says that could be cut back to five to seven trucks a week to accommodate hospitals.

Officials at one of the Orlando area's largest health care systems said this week they had 1,620 patients hospitalized with COVID-19, twice what it was during last winter's peak high for AdventHealth.

SYDNEY — Authorities in Australia say more than 250 people have been arrested while protesting coronavirus lockdowns in the country. Many faced fines for defying health orders.

The protests took place Saturday in several cities nationwide, with the largest and most violent protest in Melbourne. At least seven police officers were treated for injuries after skirmishes broke out at some of the protests.

Sydney has been in lockdown for two months, while Melbourne and Australia's capital, Canberra, went into lockdown earlier this month. Under the rules of the lockdown, people are mostly confined to their homes and have limits placed on their social interactions.

Protestors say the lockdowns should end, but authorities say they are necessary to suppress the spread of the virus and save lives.

Despite the restrictions, Sydney's New South Wales state reported a record 825 new daily community infections on Saturday. Several cities are battling outbreaks of the highly contagious delta variant.

BERLIN — New coronavirus infections in Germany have reached their highest level in nearly three months amid a steady rise powered by the delta variant.

The national disease control center, the Robert Koch Institute, says Saturday that 51.6 new cases per 100,000 residents were reported over the last seven days. It's the first time since May 25 that the infection rate has been above 50, but it has been increasing since hitting a low of 4.9 in early July.

The disease control center says 8,092 new cases were reported over the past 24 hours -- up from 5,644 a week earlier. More cases are getting detected as summer vacations end and children return to schools in some parts of Germany.

German authorities have been trying to reinvigorate the country's vaccination drive, which has slowed considerably. Official figures showed that 63% of Germany's population had received at least one vaccine dose as of Thursday and 58% was fully vaccinated.

HANOI, Vietnam — Vietnam's government says it is sending troops to Ho Chi Minh City to help deliver food and aid to households as it further tightens restrictions on people's movements amid a worsening surge of the coronavirus.

The army personnel will be deployed to help with logistics as the city of 10 million people asks residents to "stay put" for two weeks starting from Monday, a report on the government website said Friday.

The move comes as Vietnam, which weathered much the pandemic with very few cases, recorded more than 10,000 new infections and 390 deaths on Friday. Ho Chi Minh City accounted for 3,500 of those infections.

Ho Chi Minh City has had strict coronavirus measures in place since June, including banning gatherings of more than two people in public and only allowing people to leave home for essential matters like buying food or going to work in certain permitted businesses. Under the new measures, people in high risk areas cannot leave home at all.

HONOLULU — A hospital serving a Honolulu suburb has filled up as the community faces a surge of COVID-19 cases.

All 104 beds at The Queen's Medical Center-West Oahu are full, said Jason Chang, the CEO of The Queen's Health Systems.

The Ewa Beach hospital has sent some patients to its sibling facility in downtown Honolulu. It's also asked staff from other parts of the Queen's system to come help.

The city has set up a triage tent outside the hospital that has 25 cots. The hospital may add beds in

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hallways and other makeshift areas but not all patients will get rooms.

Chang says the hospital had 63 patients in its emergency room at one time, which is a crisis given the hospital only has 24 ER beds. Twenty-six of those in the ER were there with possible COVID-19 infections.

Silenced by COVID, mariachi Mass returns to Tucson cathedral

By GIOVANNA DELL'ORTO Associated Press

TUCSON, Ariz. (AP) — A blast of festive trumpet flourishes and guitarrón bass breaks the solemn hush of Mass on a torrid August desert morning. Decked out in gold-embroidered suits, nine musicians pick, strum and trumpet the entrance hymn under tall stained-glass windows.

After more than a year of silence due to the pandemic, mariachis are back playing Sunday services at Tucson's St. Augustine Cathedral, where the colorful and sonorous tradition dates back a half-century and fuses Roman Catholicism with Mexican American pride.

For the hundreds of worshippers gathered in this Spanish colonial church, and other congregations across the Southwest, the unique sound of mariachi liturgy is more than just another version of choir. It evokes a borderlands identity where spirituality and folk music have blended for centuries.

"Syncretism is the reality of this land, the 'ambos' reality," said the Rev. Alan Valencia, the cathedral's rector, who grew up attending mariachi Mass in "ambos Nogales," or "both Nogales," as locals refer to the two cities of the same name straddling the U.S.-Mexican border about 60 miles (100 kilometers) to the south.

"And that's what we see in these mariachi Masses," he added. "Faith and culture come together and grow."

Mariachi forms the soundtrack to daily life here in the borderlands, accompanying everything from backyard barbecues and quinceañera coming-of-age parties to weddings and funerals.

Yet while mariachi is a popular genre at its core, musicians and parishioners alike say its emotional interplay between trumpet, violin, guitar, vihuela and guitarrón is a natural complement to the holy rites of Mass.

"The Mass itself is a reminder that you don't just have mariachis you tip at tableside in a cantina," said Alberto Ranjel, who has been playing at the cathedral since he was 9 and now leads the ensemble his father founded, Mariachi Tapatio. "It is a representation of my culture."

Worshipper Leilani Gomez echoed that sentiment, saying, "They bring to Mass culture and art, together with the presence of God. They make you feel the presence of God."

The first canon of mariachi Mass was composed in Cuernavaca, Mexico, after the Vatican encouraged the incorporation of regional musical traditions into services in the 1960s. Called the Misa Panamericana, or Pan-American Mass, it features a specific order of instrumental arrangements, sung prayers and hymns, according to Dan Sheehy, director and curator of the Smithsonian Folkways Recordings.

At that time in the United States, the Chicano civil rights movement was blossoming, and mariachi musicians morphed from folksy troubadours to cultural heroes, "symbols of Mexican identity heightened here because of multiculturalism," Sheehy added.

Hundreds of mariachi school programs followed in the 1970s, when the music began to be written down instead of taught by lyrical training, said George Bejarano, who in 1973 started playing with the youth group Los Changuitos Feos, or "the ugly little monkeys," and whose family has been in the borderlands "since before there were borders." Also, female musicians began joining the traditionally male ensembles.

Mainstays of mariachi Mass include the joyful "Pescador de Hombres," or "fisher of men" — the Spanish-speaking faithful's equivalent to "Amazing Grace" for its popularity and ubiquity — and a thrilling rendition of Franz Schubert's 19th-century classic, "Ave Maria."

During performances of the latter at the cathedral, Ranjel turns to face a painting of the Virgin of Guadalupe, patroness of Mexico and the Americas, and intones the Latin version of the lyrics.

"The prayer aspect of it is what I'm respecting by singing it in Latin," he said.

Four ensembles take turns performing the 8 a.m. Spanish-language Mass at the cathedral in central Tucson, one Sunday apiece per month. All volunteers, they typically spend at least two hours a week in rehearsal and on Mass day rise before dawn to prepare their trajes de charro, elaborately festooned suits

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that originated in Mexico and are commonly worn by mariachi groups.

For musicians like Daniel Rodriguez, the leader of Mariachi Herencia de Cuco Del Cid, a 20-year fixture at the cathedral and also Most Holy Trinity Church in the city's northwest, performing is a way to give back to the community.

"When you sing or there's music offered up to God, it's like praying but it's more powerful," Rodriguez said. "For us to be a driving force through our music, to inspire people to come back and stay at Mass, that's really powerful."

On Sept. 18 Los Changuitos will feature at a special Mass honoring victims of the coronavirus pandemic, which has killed nearly 2,500 people in Tucson's Pima County and silenced the mariachi services from spring 2020 until they resumed late last month.

On a recent Sunday, the show kept going even after Mass was over, with musicians serenading worshippers on the palm-lined patio outside the cathedral. Wearing face masks against the resurgent virus, people held up smartphones to record the sights and sounds of a shared heritage they had sorely missed.

"They bring unity to the church. It's more spiritual," said Diana Pacheco, who has attended mariachi Mass since childhood. "Without them, it was very empty-feeling for us here."

Victor Soltero, who has been worshipping at the cathedral for some 50 years, also rejoiced at their return. "It makes you happy," Soltero said, "and what better way to come over and honor the good Lord than having some beautiful music that picks you up."

Associated Press religion coverage receives support from the Lilly Endowment through The Conversation U.S. The AP is solely responsible for this content.

Parents get coached on how to escape mask and vaccine rules

By GILLIAN FLACCUS, JANIE HAR and SARA CLINE Associated Press

ALSEA, Ore. (AP) — An Oregon school superintendent is telling parents they can get their children out of wearing masks by citing federal disability law. A pastor at a California megachurch is offering religious exemptions for anyone morally conflicted over vaccine requirements.

And Louisiana's attorney general has posted sample letters on his office's Facebook page for those seeking to get around the governor's mask rules.

Across the U.S., religious figures, doctors, public officials and other community leaders are trying to help people circumvent COVID-19 precautions.

While proponents of these workarounds say they are looking out for children's health and parents' rights, others say such stratagems are dishonest and irresponsible and could undermine efforts to beat back the highly contagious delta variant.

Mask and vaccine requirements vary from state to state but often allow exemptions for certain medical conditions or religious or philosophical objections.

In Oregon, Superintendent Marc Thielman of the rural Alsea School District told parents they can side-step the governor's school mask requirement by applying for an accommodation for their children under federal disabilities law.

Thielman said he hit upon the idea after the governor's mandate generated "huge, huge pushback" from parents.

"The majority of my parents are skeptical and are no longer believing what they're told" about COVID-19, said Thielman, whose district in the state's coastal mountains begins classes Monday. "I've got a majority of my parents saying, 'Are there any options?'"

In a letter to educators this past week, Democratic Gov. Kate Brown said she was shocked that Thielman was undermining her policies by "instructing students to lie" about having a disability.

Brown has mandated masks in schools and vaccinations for all school staff amid a surge in infections that is clobbering Oregon. The state has broken its record for COVID-19 hospitalizations day after day, and cases among children have increased dramatically.

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Thielman, who is planning to run for governor next year, when Brown can't seek reelection because of term limits, said he is not anti-mask but is sensitive to parents' concerns that face coverings can cause anxiety and headaches in children.

In some cases, he said, he believes those problems justify an exemption under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 because they interfere with learning.

But Laurie VanderPloeg, an associate executive director at the Council for Exceptional Children, an advocacy group, cautioned that under the federal law, children would not be allowed to go maskless simply because they asked.

Under the law, she said, school districts would have to go through a formal process to establish whether a child does, in fact, have a particular mental or physical disability, such as a respiratory condition, that would warrant an exception to the mask rule.

In Kansas, the Spring Hill school board is allowing parents to claim a medical or mental health exemption from the county's requirement that elementary school students mask up. They do not need a medical provider to sign off.

Board member Ali Seeling said the idea is to give parents "the freedom to make health decisions for their own children."

Louisiana Attorney General Jeff Landry, a Republican who regularly spars with Democratic Gov. John Bel Edwards, posted sample letters that would allow parents to seek a philosophical or religious exemption from Edwards' mask rule at schools — or from a vaccine requirement, if one is enacted.

The letters have been shared by GOP lawmakers and thousands of others.

"Louisiana is not governed by a dictatorship. The question is: 'who gets to determine the healthcare choices for you and your child?' In a free society, the answer is the citizen — not the state," Landry wrote on Facebook.

Edwards accused the attorney general of creating confusion and defended his policy on face coverings.

"By adopting these measures — and ignoring those that are unwilling to acknowledge the current crisis — we can keep our kids in school this year and keep them safe," the governor said.

In California, the state medical board is investigating a doctor who critics say is handing out dozens of one-sentence mask exemptions for children in an attempt to evade the statewide school mask requirement.

Dr. Michael Huang, who has a practice in the Sacramento suburb of Roseville, declined to answer questions from The Associated Press but told other news outlets that he examines each child and issues exemptions appropriately. The California Medical Association issued a statement condemning "rogue physicians" selling "bogus" exemptions.

In a neighboring suburb, Pastor Greg Fairrington of Rocklin's Destiny Christian Church has issued at least 3,000 religious exemptions to people with objections to the vaccine, which is becoming mandatory in an increasing number of places in California.

He said in a statement that his church has received thousands of calls from doctors, nurses, teachers and first responders terrified of losing their jobs because they don't want to get vaccinated. His office declined to share the exemption letter.

"We are not anti-vaccine," he said. "At the same time, we believe in the freedom of conscience and freedom of religion. The vaccine poses a morally compromising situation for many people of faith."

Health experts such as Dr. Peter Chin-Hong, an infectious disease specialist at the University of California, San Francisco, warned that such stratagems will sow confusion about masks and vaccinations.

The virus is "looking for fractures in the system," he said, "and we have plenty of fractures in the system."

Oregon resident Jenny Jonak, who has an 11-year-old daughter with autism and health problems that make her more susceptible to COVID-19, said wearing masks is a "very small inconvenience" to protect vulnerable students.

"If a child really has a genuine reason, if there's some sort of breathing or respiratory problem, then that should be respected," she said. "But if not, then I don't know what we're teaching our children if we're teaching them basically that something as simple as wearing a mask is something that they should bend the rules for."

Har reported from San Francisco and Cline from Portland, Oregon. Associated Press writers Melinda Deslatte in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and John Hanna in Topeka, Kansas, contributed to this report.

Not giving up: Afghan relatives in UK reach out for help

By JO KEARNEY and PAN PYLAS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — For people with family members trying to get out of Afghanistan, recent days have brought a frantic mix of fear and frustration.

In west London, many relatives are doing what they can: seeking advice and information from the Afghanistan & Central Asian Association. The organization was set up to support refugees 20 years ago, the same year a U.S.-led international force drove the Taliban from power after the 9/11 attacks.

Shah Hamdam, a 52-year-old who arrived in the U.K. in 1998 via Pakistan after fleeing Afghanistan when the Taliban were in control of the country, said he would do anything to get his sister, a television journalist, out of Kabul.

"She is begging," Hamdam said. "She says, 'Find a solution, find a way for me to get out of this situation at the moment.' I try, I try, I knock every door to find a way to bring her over if possible."

Hamdam hasn't seen his sister since 2013 when he returned to Afghanistan for their mother's funeral.

"I love her so much and I will do anything to bring her back with her family," the father of four said.

With the U.S. still planning to have all its troops withdrawn from Afghanistan by Aug. 31, there's a mad scramble to get out — and a corresponding sense of dread among Afghan families already abroad. Crowds of people clutching documents and sometimes stunned-looking children on Saturday were outside the gates of the international airport in Kabul, blocked by coils of razor wire.

The relatives of those who don't make it out on a flight will be hoping that the Taliban prove true to their word and do not target those who assisted Western troops over the past 20 years.

Nilufar Nasrti, 47, is worried about her family because some members worked for the Afghan government. They are afraid to sleep at night, she said.

"Dangerous," Nasrti said from London. "If the Taliban come into the house, they will kill you."

Like other nations, Britain is trying to evacuate Afghan allies as well as its own citizens from Afghanistan, but with the U.S.-imposed deadline hovering into view, it's a race against time. In addition to the 4,000 or so U.K. citizens, there are thought to be around 5,000 Afghan allies, such as translators and drivers, who are earmarked for a seat on a plane.

As of Wednesday, Britain had managed to get out over 2,000 Afghans and 300 or so U.K. citizens. Since then, Prime Minister Boris Johnson says the U.K. government has evacuated around 1,000 people a day, a lot of them Afghan citizens "to whom we owe debts of gratitude and honor."

The British government has also announced a refugee settlement program that would allow up to 20,000 vulnerable Afghans, primarily women and children, to seek sanctuary in the U.K. in the next few years, including 5,000 this year. The total for this year is in addition to the Afghan allies who Britain is trying to evacuate now.

Critics argue the plan is not bold enough and does not come close to matching Britain's share of the responsibility for Afghan workers.

Dr. Nooralhaq Nasimi, founder and director of the Afghanistan & Central Asian Association, is one of those who thinks Britain should be more ambitious. He said his group has received hundreds of emotional telephone calls from people in Afghanistan, including vacationing British Afghans caught up in the chaotic turn of events.

"Those people will face a serious humiliation, persecution and torture by the Taliban just because they were working with Western organizations," Nasimi said.

He knows exactly what they are experiencing since he left Afghanistan with his young family when the Taliban were in charge in 1999.

For Qadria Saeedi, a 38-year-old outreach worker who has helped Afghan women settle in the U.K., the

fall of Afghanistan to the Taliban conjures up particularly awful memories. She remembers the horrors of life under the Taliban's first incarnation in the 1990s before she left the country at 19.

"I'm fully stressed right now," said Saeedi, who is particularly worried about her brother and sister in Afghanistan. "Because it is really hard when I remember their faces (of Taliban fighters) and the way they dress up. It's really scary, it's horrible."

Saeedi had promised her father that she would go and visit him in Afghanistan this year.

"Unfortunately, I don't think I will see him again," she said.

Follow all AP stories on developments in Afghanistan at <https://apnews.com/hub/Afghanistan>.

EU warns Taliban it has not recognized their regime

By ALICIA LEÓN and JOSEPH WILSON Associated Press

MADRID (AP) — The European Union's top officials warned the Taliban on Saturday that the current conversations being held to secure the exit of as many Afghan evacuees as possible do not mean the bloc is prepared to recognize the new regime.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen acknowledged the necessity of continuing to engage with the Taliban during her visit, along with EU Council President Charles Michel, to a reception center for evacuees established by Spain near Madrid.

"We do have operational contacts with the Taliban in this moment of crisis, because we need to discuss in these difficult times how we can facilitate it for people in Kabul to come to the airport," the EU leader said. "But this is completely distinct and separated from political talks. There are no political talks with the Taliban and there is no recognition of the Taliban."

She also said the continuance of European humanitarian aid to Afghanistan will hinge on the Taliban respecting human rights, especially for women and girls.

"We hear the Taliban statement that stresses that women will have their right place in society and have the right to study and work, within the framework of Islam, whatever that means. But we also hear more and more reports of people being hunted down for their past work or opinions, and we hear of women being turned away when they show up at their usual workplace," she said. "The 1 billion euros set aside by the European Union for the next seven years for development aid is tied to strict conditions: respect for human rights, good treatment of minorities, and respect for the rights of women and girls."

The EU's top officials toured the facility at the Torrejón military airbase along with Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez, who said it can hold 800 people.

Two planes sent by Spain to Kabul have already arrived at the air base. One brought back five Spaniards and 48 Afghans who had worked for Spain and their families. A second arrived late Friday with 110 more Afghans. A third flight with another 110 passengers has left Kabul for Dubai, which Spain is using as a stop-off point before the evacuees are flown to Madrid.

The air base is also receiving flights from the European Union with other Afghan evacuees. All are expected to spend up to three days there before moving to welcome centers elsewhere in Spain or going to other European countries.

Sánchez said the response from other EU members has been positive and that some Afghan evacuees have already left for other EU countries.

But the United States and NATO allies are struggling to help Afghans who worked for their forces and now fear reprisals from the Taliban to even reach and enter the Kabul airport. Von der Leyen said EU staff is talking with American and NATO officials on the problem but also working "on the ground" in Kabul.

"It is a very difficult situation, it is changing by the minute, but there is intense work being done to make the best of a very difficult situation," she said.

Von der Leyen, however, also urged international community to help those Afghans who will remain. She said the collapse of the NATO-backed democracy and the return of the Taliban to power has provoked the displacement of almost 3.7 million people. Many European nations also fear another wave of migration

similar to the one in 2015 provoked by Syrian's civil war.

"We must help ensure that displaced Afghans can return to their homes or at least have a prospect, whether they are currently in Afghanistan or in neighboring countries," she said.

Von der Leyen said the Afghan migration issue must be a central concern of next week's G-7 meeting to help create "legal and safe routes globally, organized by us, the international community, for those who need protection."

"This resettlement of vulnerable people is of utmost importance," she said. "It is our moral duty."

Joseph Wilson wrote from Barcelona.

Follow all AP stories on Afghanistan at <https://apnews.com/hub/afghanistan>

EXPLAINER: Why it takes months to subdue some wildfires

By KEITH RIDLER Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — At nearly every community meeting on firefighting efforts in the U.S. West, residents want to know why crews don't simply put out the flames to save their homes and the valuable forests surrounding them.

It's not that simple, wildfire managers say, and the reasons are many, some of them decades in the making and tied to climate change. The cumulative result has been an increase in gigantic wildfires with extreme and unpredictable behavior threatening communities that in some instances didn't exist a few decades ago.

"How do we balance that risk to allow firefighters to be successful without transferring too much of that risk to the public?" said Evans Kuo, a "Type 1" incident commander assigned to the nation's biggest and most dangerous wildfires. "I wish it wasn't the case, but it's a zero-sum game."

More than 20,000 wildland firefighters are battling some 100 large wildfires in the U.S. West. Their goal is "containment," meaning a fuel break has been built around the entire fire using natural barriers or manmade lines, often created with bulldozers or ground crews with hand tools.

Estimated containment dates for some wildfires now burning aren't until October or November.

WHY SO LONG?

A big concern is safety. Kuo said residents sometimes plead with him to send firefighters into areas where he knows they could get killed.

"That's a deal-breaker," he said on a day off after 18 straight days of 5 a.m. to 10 p.m. shifts on a wildfire in Washington state. "I'm not putting people at risk."

Actually putting out these large fires, or labeling them "controlled," will require cold weather combined with rain or snow, weeks away for many states.

"I'd say pray for rain because that's the only thing that's going to get us out of this fire season," Idaho's state forester, Craig Foss, told Republican Gov. Brad Little and other state officials this week during a discussion of the wildfire season.

HAVE WILDFIRES CHANGED?

Kuo has been fighting wildfires for 30 years with the U.S. Forest Service, spending the first part of his career as a frontline firefighter with groundcrews, the backbone of any effort to stop a wildfire. At the time, wildfires of 150 square miles (390 square kilometers) were uncommon. Now blazes reach five times that size and more, getting large enough to create their own weather.

"That's kind of redefining what the new normal is," said Kuo. "We get these megafires."

IS WILDFIRE SUPPRESSION IN THE PAST PLAYING A ROLE NOW?

For much of the last century, firefighters had been mostly successful at suppressing wildfires in ecosystems that evolved to rely on wildfire. Early on, firefighters benefitted from forests that had already

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been periodically cleared of brush and debris by wildfires that could move through every couple decades. But with fire suppression, experts say, that brush and debris accumulated to where now, wildfires can ladder up into the branches and into the crowns of large trees, creating the giant wildfires that kill entire swatches of a forest.

HOW HAS DROUGHT IMPACTED WILDFIRE SUPPRESSION?

On top of fire suppression have been several decades of drought that studies link to human-caused climate change. That's exacerbated by this year's hot and dry weather, leading to historically low moisture contents in forests that have become tinder-dry.

"Our protection districts are seeing far warmer and dryer than normal conditions creating historically dry fuels," said Dustin Miller, director of the Idaho Department of Lands.

Those dry fuels allow wildfires to spread more quickly. On big fires, embers can shoot out to start spot fires on the other sides of natural barriers such as rivers. Sometimes spot fires can put firefighters at risk of being trapped by flames in front and behind them.

Miller said the state is likely facing \$100 million in costs to fight fires this year on land the state is responsible for protecting, which is mostly state forests but also includes some federal and private forests.

WHAT ABOUT DISEASE AND INSECT INFESTATION?

Disease and bug infestations in trees whose defenses have been weakened by drought have led to forest-wide epidemics that have killed millions of trees in the U.S. West. Those dead trees, called snags, become fuel for wildfires while at the same time posing increased danger to firefighters who can be hit by falling branches or the unstable trees themselves.

ARE MORE HOMES IN WILD AREAS AN ISSUE?

Homes built in what firefighters call the wildland-urban interface pose special problems for firefighters, typically tying up many firefighters on structure protection rather than have them actively engaging a wildfire.

"We base our strategy and tactics on protecting values at risk," Kuo said. "Homes, subdivisions, communications towers, gas pipelines, railways and roadways, transmission lines."

He said homes built with defensible space helps. More people in forested areas, as well as people recreating, has led to more human-caused wildfires. The National Interagency Fire Center in Boise says humans cause about 87% of all wildfires each year.

ARE THERE ENOUGH FIREFIGHTERS?

The nation has just more than 20 Type 1 response teams to handle the nation's biggest wildfires fires, and Kuo and his colleagues on those teams, like just about every other firefighting position this year, are in short supply.

He and his crew agreed to work longer than their 14-day shift on the Washington fire to make sure another Type 1 crew would be available.

Another problem is lengthening wildfire seasons mean many seasonal firefighters leave for school well before wildfire season ends.

Josh Harvey, fire management bureau chief for the Lands Department, said about 30% of the state's firefighters head back to school. Overall, Harvey said there have been widespread shortages of firefighters, fire engines and logistical support, and the state can no longer rely on help from neighboring states or federal partners.

There have even been occasional shortages of jet fuel for retardant bombers in some states.

"We've never seen anything like it before," Harvey said. "We are living and making fire history right now."

For US military leaders, Afghan news strikes personal chord

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By LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — For senior military and Pentagon leaders, this week's news was profoundly personal. The photos and videos pouring out of Afghanistan hit a nerve, and triggered searingly vivid flashbacks to battles fought, troops lost and tears shed during their own deployments there. And in a response shaped by their memories and experiences in the war, they urged troops to check in on their buddies, talk to each other and seek help and solace if they need it.

The top two Pentagon leaders made it clear that the scenes unfolding in Afghanistan, as citizens frantically tried to get out of the country and escape the new Taliban rule, were tough for them to watch. And they knew that the visions of Afghans struggling to get on flights — so desperate that some clung to an aircraft as it lifted off — were painful for troops to see.

"All of this is very personal for me. This is a war that I fought in and led. I know the country, I know the people, and I know those who fought alongside me," said Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, a retired four-star Army general who served as a commander in Afghanistan in the early years and then led U.S. Central Command overseeing the Middle East wars as his final post from 2013-16. "We have a moral obligation to help those who helped us. And I feel the urgency deeply."

Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, commanded troops in Afghanistan and has talked often about how deeply he felt the loss of each soldier under his watch.

"For more than 20 years, we have prevented an attack on the U.S. homeland. 2,448 lost our lives, 20,722 were wounded in action, and many others suffered the unseen wounds of war. To each of them, I want you to know, personally, that your service matters," said Milley. "As the Secretary said, for both he and I, this is personal. And I know it's personal for each and every one of you."

Austin said troops have a wide range of views on the issue and he urged them to work through it in their own way. "We need to respect that and we need to give one another the time and space to help do it," he said.

Across the military, many senior officers have done tours in Afghanistan. They led troops in battle. They trained Afghan forces. And they relied heavily on the Afghan interpreters now at risk of violence from the Taliban, and begging for help to leave the country.

In recent days, those leaders have talked privately with their staffs and sent heartfelt public messages to their forces who they know are struggling with a range of emotions: frustration with the Taliban takeover after two decades of blood and loss; fears that Afghans they worked with won't get out safely; and questions about whether their time in the country mattered.

On Friday morning, Gen. Richard Clarke, head of U.S. Special Operations Command, addressed his entire headquarters staff about the situation in Afghanistan. Clarke, who has deployed to Afghanistan several times, has commandos who have done multiple tours in the last two decades and he noted this is an emotional time for them. Speaking over the intercom, he pressed them to reach out to their battle buddies and seek other resources if they need someone to talk to.

In a blunt letter to his force this week, Gen. David Berger, the Marine Corps commandant, said now is the time to come together. "You should take pride in your service — it gives meaning to the sacrifice of all Marines who served, including those whose sacrifice was ultimate," said the letter, co-signed by Marine Sgt. Maj. Troy Black.

Berger, who deployed to Afghanistan in 2012 as commander of the 1st Marine Division, has also made sure his Marines have information to give interpreters they worked with in Afghanistan who are asking for help evacuating.

And he noted in his message that Marines may be struggling with a simple question: "Was it all worth it?" The answer, he and Black said, is yes.

Lt. Gen. Jim Slife, commander of Air Force Special Operations Command, went to his Facebook page to post a note to his commando forces who have gone in and out of Afghanistan for the past 20 years. And he recalled the first troops he lost in battle.

"From the very beginning to the very present, I have been responsible for sending countless Airmen into

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harm's way there, not all of whom returned to their families," said Slife. "In November 2003, I sent home the remains of my teammates and friends in the aftermath of the first fatalities I experienced as a commander. In May of 2011, we killed Osama bin Laden. Highs and lows ... lows and highs ... I've felt it all."

He warned of many hard days and years ahead as troops reflect on their Afghanistan experiences while dealing with physical, psychological and moral wounds.

"If, like me, you find yourself trying to put your own experiences into some context which will allow you to move forward positively and productively, I urge you to talk about it," and seek out a wide range of resources for help, he said.

Gen. James McConville, chief of staff of the Army, wrote a letter to his personnel offering solace. Their sacrifices, he said, will be a lasting legacy of honor. And he also pleaded with troops to seek help and reach out to their comrades.

"I'd ask that you check in on your teammates as well as our Soldiers for Life, who may be struggling with the unfolding events," said McConville, who commanded troops in Afghanistan. At the bottom of the letter he scrawled in marker, "Proud to serve with you!"

Adm. Mike Gilday, chief of naval operations, sent a message to sailors with a similar request.

"Reach out to those who may be struggling, and remember those who made the ultimate sacrifice in service to a grateful nation," he said. "I want to be very clear, your service was not in vain, and it made a difference."

More than 50 organizations signed a letter offering help to those in need, and said people can call the Veterans Crisis Line and Military Crisis Line at 1-800-273-8255.

Biden sees dip in support amid new COVID cases: AP-NORC poll

By JULIE PACE and HANNAH FINGERHUT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden is facing a summer slump, with Americans taking a notably less positive view of his handling of the coronavirus pandemic and his job approval rating ticking down.

A new poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research finds that 54% of Americans approve of Biden's job performance, down slightly from 59% last month. While that's still a relatively solid rating for a president during his first year in office, particularly given the nation's deep political polarization, it's a worrying sign for Biden as he faces the greatest domestic and foreign policy challenges of his presidency so far.

The biggest warning sign for the president in the survey centers on his handling of the pandemic. Last month, 66% of Americans approved of his stewardship of the public health crisis; now, that number has fallen to 54%, driven by a drop in support from Republicans and independents.

That decline in support coincides with other storm clouds gathering over Biden's presidency, most notably the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan as U.S. troops withdraw and the Taliban cement their control of the country.

The poll, conducted August 12-16, as news of the Taliban's movement into Kabul was widely reported in the United States, shows Americans about evenly divided over Biden's handling of foreign policy (47% approve, 51% disapprove) and national security (52% approve, 46% disapprove).

Biden's domestic policy agenda also faces an uncertain future on Capitol Hill, with Democratic leaders trying to mend party divisions over a pair of infrastructure bills and few signs of progress on voting rights or police overhaul legislation.

Still, Biden's advisers believe his presidency is likely to rise or fall on his handling of the pandemic. As recently as early summer, the White House was all but declaring victory over the virus, backing the lifting of public health restrictions and encouraging vaccinated Americans to enjoy a return to normalcy this summer. Polling showed Biden winning plaudits for his approach to the pandemic not only from nearly all Democrats, but also a healthy share of Republicans.

Some of that support has eroded as a dangerous new strain of COVID-19 takes hold, worries about the virus grow and vaccination rates in the U.S. stall, leading more communities, businesses and schools to

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reinstate restrictions such as mask mandates that were lifted earlier this year when trends were heading in a more positive direction.

Biden has implored Americans to get vaccinated and has put in place vaccine requirements where he can, for federal workers and the military. But resistance to the vaccine has proven stubborn, largely in more conservative parts of the country that are now experiencing startling increases in COVID-19 cases.

"I think a lot of that is out of his hands," said Judy Kunzman, 75, a Democrat from Middletown, Pennsylvania. "If he gets too dictatorial, there will be a lot more blowback."

But Jeanette Ellis-Carter, 69, wants to see Biden push for more vaccine mandates across the nation. Despite being fully vaccinated, the Cincinnati resident recently contracted COVID-19 and worries that without vaccine requirements, more Americans will be at risk of getting sick.

"When I was a child in school, we were mandated to get the polio shot, measles. What's any different about this?" she said.

Republican officials have led the opposition to the vaccine and mask measures that the Biden administration has put in place this summer. The August AP-NORC poll shows just 21% of Republicans approve of Biden on COVID-19, down from 32% last month and 43% in June. Among independents, 44% now support his handling of the pandemic, down from 72% last month.

Those shifts bring Biden's approval rating on the pandemic more in line with the public's views of his handling of other major issues, which largely split along partisan lines.

For example, the poll shows 49% approve of Biden's handling of the economy and 49% disapprove. That's down from 57% approval in April.

The White House is hoping that fall will bring final passage of a pair of sweeping bills that would pump money into the economy for infrastructure projects, as well as spending on health care, education and family services.

Biden cheered Senate passage of a hard-won, \$1 trillion infrastructure bill that passed with bipartisan support. But that measure and a \$3.5 trillion budget bill muscled through the Senate by Democrats face uncertain futures in the House. Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., is trying to navigate between moderates who balk at the bigger bill's price tag and progressives who insist it's the price to be paid for their support of the bipartisan measure.

Another metric to watch for the White House: Americans have soured somewhat on the direction of the country, with 39% saying the nation is headed in the right direction, while 61% say it's the wrong direction. Last month, 44% said the nation is headed the right way.

The AP-NORC poll of 1,729 adults was conducted Aug. 12-16 using a sample drawn from NORC's probability-based AmeriSpeak Panel, which is designed to be representative of the U.S. population. The margin of sampling error for all respondents is plus or minus 3.2 percentage points.

'Unmute us': Marchers demand return of Dutch music festivals

By MIKE CORDER Associated Press

AMSTERDAM (AP) — Dutch music fans have been banned for months from going to large-scale festivals due to coronavirus restrictions. On Saturday, the festivals came to them.

Hundreds of performers and festival organizers held marches through six Dutch cities on Saturday to protest what they argue are unfair restrictions that have forced the cancellation of summer music festivals and other events.

Thousands of people attended one of the "Unmute Us" marches in Amsterdam, walking and dancing behind a convoy of trucks carrying DJs and sound systems pumping out music.

Leonie der Verkleij, a freelancer who works in hospitality services at events, was among those marching in Amsterdam.

"The festival industry feels like an unwanted child," she said. "It feels like all sectors are important except ours."

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Amsterdam municipality appealed mid-afternoon for no more people to join the march as it was too crowded.

The Dutch government has banned large-scale events such as festivals until at least Sept. 19 amid fears over the spread of the highly infectious delta variant. One-day events with a maximum of 750 visitors are allowed for people with a COVID-19 app showing they have been vaccinated, have recently tested negative or have recovered from a case in the past six months.

Organizers of Saturday's protest want the ban lifted on Sept. 1. They point to overseas events and the return of crowds to soccer stadiums — with proof of vaccination, recovery from COVID-19 or a negative test — as evidence that people can congregate in large numbers without infection numbers surging.

Jasper Goossen of Apenkooi Events, which organizes dance festivals, said hundreds of festivals have been canceled due to the pandemic, crippling an industry that employs 100,000 people.

"There are so many passionate people working in this industry and they are all having a tough time. We want to move forward, not stand still," he said.

Dutch organizers point to festivals in other countries that have not turned into superspreader events, such as the summer's Lollapalooza music festival in Chicago. Authorities in Chicago said they had linked 203 COVID-19 cases to the four-day event that drew 385,000 people.

Marchers carried home-made banners reading: "Music = Medicine" and "Don't Cancel Culture."

Festivals are a traditional feature of the European summer, but many have been canceled or postponed this year. In England, many of the biggest events, such as Glastonbury in southwest England and BST Hyde Park in London, were cancelled for the second year running because of the pandemic.

But the lifting of all remaining restrictions on social contact in England on July 19 has at least allowed some to take place. However, organizers of the Notting Hill Carnival in west London, which is billed as Europe's biggest street fair, decided before those restrictions were lifted to cancel the two-day event in late August because of the "ongoing uncertainty and risk" posed by COVID-19.

In France, festivals are allowed for people with a virus pass showing they are fully vaccinated, recently tested negative or recently recovered from the virus. Yet many organizers have reduced the maximum number of people per day. The country's biggest festival, the Vieilles Charrues, set a limit of 5,000 spectators each day.

The 7-day rolling average of daily new cases in Netherlands eased slightly over the past two weeks, going from 16.45 new cases per 100,000 people on Aug. 6 to 15.05 new cases per 100,000 people on Aug. 20. Nearly 18,000 people have died in the Netherlands of COVID-19.

Melvin van Pelt, a DJ and producer who works under the name Tahko, said he's worked in government testing and vaccination centers to help pay his rent and agrees with many coronavirus measures, but he's had enough of the festival ban.

"I am sick of it. I'm angry. I no longer feel represented by my own government," he said.

Associated Press writers Pan Pylas in London and Sylvie Corbet in Paris contributed.

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

Biden's view of job comes into focus after Afghan collapse

By JONATHAN LEMIRE and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden made up his mind about Afghanistan months — really years — ago.

For more than a decade, Biden advocated for an end to American involvement in Afghanistan. But he did so as something of an outsider, a senator whose ultimate power came in the form of a single vote on Capitol Hill or a vice president who advised another president.

But authority over America's longest war finally fell into Biden's hands this year and he insisted that the

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U.S. withdraw from Afghanistan, settling on an Aug. 31 deadline. And despite the rapid collapse of the Afghan government, spurring a humanitarian crisis and searing criticism at home and from traditional allies, he was resolute, at times defiant. He took responsibility and in turns leveled blame at his predecessor.

After months of largely focusing on quelling the pandemic and stimulating the economy, the chaos in Afghanistan triggered the first foreign policy crisis of Biden's presidency, temporarily drowning out his other priorities. His response offers a fuller picture of how Biden approaches his job, relying on a political sensibility he built as a veteran of the Senate who has weathered decades of Washington tumult and scandal.

How Biden is handling the weight of his decision to end the war is a product of his nearly 50 years in public life, many of them spent studying the world. He sold voters on his experience and this is the first time he is offering decisions, not mere opinions in a Senate hearing — and he will be judged by the outcome, which is far from clear at this point. Americans are seeing a different side of Biden during this crisis, a sterner, sometimes testy man known much better for his empathy.

In the face of setbacks that would prompt most politicians to step back and offer some level of contrition, Biden has only grown firmer in his position this week. He has acknowledged that the Taliban advanced faster than expected but has said, both privately to aides and in a pair of public addresses to the American people, that the swift collapse of the Afghan government proved correct his longstanding skepticism of the war effort.

"If anything, the developments of the past week reinforced that ending U.S. military involvement in Afghanistan now was the right decision," he said Monday, as he sought to sidestep blame for the disorderly withdrawal.

Biden's decision laid bare a cold realism in his view of American military power: American forces shouldn't be used to promote the nation's ideals abroad.

Troops, in Biden's estimation, should be focused more narrowly on threats to the homeland, and the nation's diplomatic and economic might are the proper tools to uphold its values overseas. It's a sentiment the White House believes Americans agree with after nearly two decades of endless conflicts, but one that comes with painful cost for tens of thousands of Afghans who assisted the U.S. occupation or thrived under it.

To advisers, he's reiterated that his opposition to the 2009 surge in Afghanistan ordered by President Barack Obama was one of his proudest moments in government.

That confidence, which even some allies say sometimes borders on obstinance, has been a defining force in Biden's political life and now his presidency. When he believes he is in the right, current and former aides say, there is little talking him out of it.

His commitment to causes has been evident throughout his career, according to his former Senate colleague Trent Lott, underscored even by the length of his speeches.

"He was prone to making long speeches on the Senate and I used to joke, 'We can go get something to eat, this is going to be a while,' but they were good speeches and it's what he believed in," Lott, a Mississippi Republican, said.

That sense of clarity, sometimes bordering on rigidity, helped Biden overcome a childhood stutter and sustained his sagging third presidential campaign through the doldrums of 2019 to an upset nomination a year ago. In the White House, it was his own zeal to reach a bipartisan infrastructure accord that propelled the legislation through the divided Senate earlier this month.

It was on display again Friday as Biden insisted, despite a mounting chorus of condemnation from allies abroad, that the haphazard American withdrawal from Afghanistan was improving the country's stature overseas.

"The fact of the matter is I have not seen that," Biden maintained when asked about allies from the United Kingdom to Germany that have publicly questioned America's credibility. "Matter of fact, the exact opposite. I've got the exact opposite thing as we're acting with dispatch, we're acting, committing to what we said we would do."

Biden acknowledged for the first time at length the heart-wrenching scenes of confusion as Americans, allies and Afghans struggle to flee the Taliban. But he was adamant that his decision was the right one,

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saying he always envisioned some amount of chaos in the pullout.

"There's no way in which you'd be able to leave Afghanistan without there being some of what you're seeing now," Biden said.

Despite Biden's confidence, the administration's initial public response was faltering.

The president was at Camp David as part of his summer vacation but scrambled back to the White House on Monday, the day after Kabul fell. In his first public remarks on the situation, he admitted no fault for the chaotic drawdown.

Subsequent briefings at the White House, Pentagon and State Department raised as many questions as they answered, with officials being unable to say how many Americans remained in Afghanistan and how they, and their Afghan allies, would be lifted to safety. An image released of Biden sitting alone at a Camp David situation room was widely panned and later regretted within the White House, the officials said.

In a televised interview Wednesday, Biden said flatly "no" when asked if it could have been handled better or if the administration made any mistakes.

"The idea that somehow there's a way to have gotten out without chaos ensuing, I don't know how that happens," he told ABC.

The moment has created a political opportunity for his opponents, who have otherwise struggled to find much of an opening to hit Biden since he took office.

Republicans sought to use the blundered withdrawal to deem Biden weak and ineffective. Some Democrats questioned the evacuation process and worried that it could damage the party's chances of holding onto its congressional majorities next year. Lawmakers in both parties promised to launch investigations of the failures that led to the chaotic exit.

The White House has pointed to public polling that consistently shows that the majority of American people were in favor of ending the nation's presence in Afghanistan. Roughly two-thirds of Americans said they did not think the war in Afghanistan was worth fighting, according to a poll released this week by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

Aides believe that, particularly if the evacuation process at the airport improves, the story will fade from the headlines and Biden will eventually get credit for ending the war, something his predecessors could not do.

Southern Democrats aim to export Georgia's 2020 success

By BILL BARROW Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Stacey Abrams spent years telling donors that Democrats could win in Georgia if they would provide the money to build a statewide political operation. In 2020, Georgia finally delivered its 16 presidential electoral votes to a Democrat, Joe Biden, and sent two Democrats to the U.S. Senate.

Other Southern states are now trying to follow, and Georgia is eager to help.

The Georgia Democratic Party is combining forces with other state parties in the region for joint fund-raising appeals, aiming to help those states make earlier-than-usual investments in voter registration and field organizing going into the 2022 midterms. Abrams' Fair Fight organization, which has raised more than \$100 million since its inception after her 2018 loss in the Georgia governor's race, is readying for another round of spending as well.

It's the latest example of Abrams' ripple effect on Democratic politics as she considers whether to run for Georgia governor again in 2022. Democrats pitch the investment in state parties — a relatively modest step, given the billions in political spending each cycle — as an important part of the larger effort to export Georgia's successes across Southern Sun Belt states that Republicans have dominated for decades.

That's true from burgeoning battlegrounds such as Texas, where Democrats have reduced their deficits in recent statewide losses, to deeply Republican strongholds like Alabama, where swaths of Black voters and young, urban voters could at least dent Republican majorities in the Legislature.

"If there's a way to partner with our friends in the South, then it's a great opportunity for everybody," said Scott Hogan, executive director of the Georgia Democratic Party.

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But party officials in the South agree that any future victories require a deliberate, long-term approach, and there's plenty of realism in a region where national Democrats once-ballyhooed "50-state strategy" in the mid-2000s yielded few lasting shifts.

"If Georgia had a 10-year rebuild," said the Alabama Democrats' executive director, Wade Perry, "then we're in about year three."

Texas Democratic Chairman Gilberto Hinojosa said the decade of work by Abrams and others in Georgia provides the blueprint.

"Every state is different," Hinojosa said. "It's not so much that Georgia is a step-by-step model, but they showed the impact that you can have with a significant campaign funded over a period of time."

Perry's and Hinojosa's state parties recently sent joint fundraising pitches with Georgia Democrats, email solicitations to the parties' existing donor lists, splitting the proceeds. Separately, Georgia has joined several state parties -- in Arizona, North Carolina and Virginia -- in an ongoing joint fundraising agreement with multiple digital efforts partnering some or all of the states in the agreement.

For Texas and Alabama, specifically, it's part of building party infrastructure early an election cycle. Both states, along with Georgia, are eying elections next year for governor, other statewide offices, the state legislature and the U.S. House. Georgia and Alabama also each has a U.S. Senate contest.

After a disappointing November, when President Donald Trump won Texas by more than 630,000 votes and Democrats failed to dent the GOP's legislative majorities, Hinojosa's organization launched a \$12.5 million voter registration campaign targeting rural Hispanics and young urban liberals.

"We know \$12 million won't cover the whole state, not even close," Hinojosa said. But drawing on one lesson from Georgia, he added: "We have to have a targeted approach to do what we can execute in the time that we have."

Hinojosa said he has enough financial commitments to have begun hiring voter registration organizers.

Separately, the Texas party has created jobs for seven rural regional coordinators. Three of those are filled, Hinojosa said, bringing his total staff to about 30. That's roughly where Texas was at the same point in 2019, a year before the presidential election, but well ahead of its 2017 pace, Hinojosa said.

Alabama has nine full-time staff members, Perry said, a high mark for a nonelection year. It comes after a decade of Democratic infighting that often left the state party unable to pay rent and utilities, much less hire field workers and organizers.

Party staff in every state are supported in part by monthly infusions of at least \$12,500 from the national party. But the state leaders agreed that a sustainable, winning model requires state parties to cultivate their own donors and support voter outreach operations that are never completely dismantled after an election.

"So much of our success over the past cycle is because of investment in specific areas of need, and the pace of that investment matters," Hogan said.

He noted that Georgia has had at least 25 employees through the early stages of this midterm cycle and will only grow. A year ahead of the 2018 governor's race, the party had about a half-dozen workers in its Atlanta headquarters.

The fundraising teamwork is intended to help the state parties attract more long-term donors. The parties don't share their full donor databases with each other. Rather, each sends out the same fundraising pitch to its respective donor lists. Any donor who responds ends up on the lists of all participating parties going forward.

Hogan and his counterparts said it's not just Georgia bringing substantial donor lists to the table.

Texas was awash in small donors in 2018 when Democrat Beto O'Rourke made a serious challenge to GOP Sen. Ted Cruz but fell short. Alabama got its boost in 2017, when Democrat Doug Jones upset Republican Roy Moore in a Senate special election. Jones lost by a landslide in his bid for a full-term last November, but Perry said the state party is left with a list of past donors "donors from all 50 states."

Beyond the organizing that early party hires do, there's an underappreciated benefit: leveraging what comes next.

High-profile candidates such as O'Rourke and Abrams, both of whom could run statewide again next year, draw considerably more money than state parties ever could. Likewise, Fair Fight's national fundrais-

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ing footprint in 2022 will dwarf state parties.

But in each case, candidates for governor and outside groups such as Fair Fight can mean an injection of cash or other coordination with party staff. But only if the party has built an operation already.

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Sunday, Aug. 22, the 234th day of 2021. There are 131 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On August 22, 1996, President Bill Clinton signed welfare legislation ending guaranteed cash payments to the poor and demanding work from recipients.

On this date:

In 1485, England's King Richard III was killed in the Battle of Bosworth Field, effectively ending the War of the Roses.

In 1846, Gen. Stephen W. Kearny proclaimed all of New Mexico a territory of the United States.

In 1851, the schooner America outraced more than a dozen British vessels off the English coast to win a trophy that came to be known as the America's Cup.

In 1910, Japan annexed Korea, which remained under Japanese control until the end of World War II.

In 1914, Austria-Hungary declared war against Belgium.

In 1922, Irish revolutionary Michael Collins was shot to death, apparently by Irish Republican Army members opposed to the Anglo-Irish Treaty that Collins had co-signed.

In 1968, Pope Paul VI arrived in Bogota, Colombia, for the start of the first papal visit to South America.

In 1972, President Richard Nixon was nominated for a second term of office by the Republican National Convention in Miami Beach.

In 1989, Black Panthers co-founder Huey P. Newton was shot to death in Oakland, California. (Gunman Tyrone Robinson was later sentenced to 32 years to life in prison.)

In 1992, on the second day of the Ruby Ridge siege in Idaho, an FBI sharpshooter killed Vicki Weaver, the wife of white separatist Randy Weaver (the sharpshooter later said he was targeting the couple's friend Kevin Harris, and didn't see Vicki Weaver).

In 2003, Alabama's chief justice, Roy Moore, was suspended for his refusal to obey a federal court order to remove his Ten Commandments monument from the rotunda of his courthouse.

In 2007, A Black Hawk helicopter crashed in Iraq, killing all 14 U.S. soldiers. Hurricane Dean slammed into Mexico for the second time in as many days.

Ten years ago: Hurricane Irene cut a destructive path through the Caribbean, raking Puerto Rico with strong winds and rain and then spinning just north of the Dominican Republic. Nick Ashford, one-half of the legendary Motown songwriting duo Ashford & Simpson, died in New York at age 70. Lyricist Jerry Leiber, who with composer Mike Stoller wrote "Hound Dog," "Jailhouse Rock," "Yakety Yak" and other hits, died in Los Angeles at age 78.

Five years ago: Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton, appearing on ABC's "Jimmy Kimmel Live," pushed back against charges that she was physically unfit for the White House, saying the accusations were part of a "wacky strategy" by GOP rival Donald Trump and an "alternative reality" that was not focused on the kinds of issues that were most important to voters.

One year ago: Dueling demonstrations in Portland, Oregon by right-wing and left-wing protesters turned violent; federal authorities forced demonstrators away from a plaza near a federal building. Russian dissident Alexei Navalny, who was in a coma after a suspected poisoning, was flown from Siberia to Germany, where he would be treated at a hospital. (After five months recovering in Germany, Navalny returned to Russia, where he was arrested.) Officials in Peru said 13 people died in a stampede at a disco after a police raid to enforce the country's lockdown during the coronavirus pandemic.

Today's Birthdays: Broadcast journalist Morton Dean is 86. Author Annie Proulx (proo) is 86. Baseball

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Hall of Famer Carl Yastrzemski (yah-STREM'-skee) is 82. Pro Football Hall of Fame coach Bill Parcells is 80. Writer-producer David Chase is 76. CBS newsman Steve Kroft is 76. Actor Cindy Williams is 74. Pop musician David Marks is 73. International Swimming Hall of Famer Diana Nyad (NY'-ad) is 72. Baseball Hall of Famer Paul Molitor is 65. Rock musician Vernon Reid is 63. Country singer Ricky Lynn Gregg is 62. Country singer Collin Raye is 61. Actor Regina Taylor is 61. Rock singer Roland Orzabal (Tears For Fears) is 60. Rock musician Debbi Peterson (The Bangles) is 60. Rock musician Gary Lee Conner (Screaming Trees) is 59. Singer Tori Amos is 58. Country singer Mila Mason is 58. R&B musician James DeBarge is 58. International Tennis Hall of Famer Mats Wilander (VEE'-luhn-dur) is 57. Actor Brooke Dillman is 55. Rapper GZA (JIHZ'-ah)/The Genius is 55. Actor Adewale Akinnuoye-Agbaje (ah-day-WAH'-lay ah-kih-NOY'-yay ah-BAH'-jay) is 54. Actor Ty Burrell is 54. Celebrity chef Giada De Laurentiis is 51. Actor Melinda Page Hamilton is 50. Actor Rick Yune is 50. Rock musician Paul Doucette (DOO'-set) (Matchbox Twenty) is 49. Rap-reggae singer Beenie Man is 48. Singer Howie Dorough (Backstreet Boys) is 48. Comedian-actor Kristen Wiig is 48. Actor Jenna Leigh Green is 47. Rock musician Bo Koster is 47. Rock musician Dean Back (Theory of a Deadman) is 46. Talk show host James Corden is 43. Rock musician Jeff Stinco (Simple Plan) is 43. Actor Brandon Adams is 42. Actor Aya Sumika is 41. Actor Ari Stidham is 29.