BY ZEKE MILLER
AND MIKE STOBBE
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration is formalizing new guidance to recommend that many Americans wear face coverings in an effort to slow the spread of the new coronavirus as the president defends his response to the crisis.

"Because of some recent information that the virus can actually be spread even when people just speak as opposed to coughing and sneezing — the better part of valor is that when you’re out, when you can’t maintain that 6-foot distance, to wear some sort of facial covering," the top U.S. infectious disease official said Friday on “Fox & Friends.”

But Dr. Anthony Fauci also made clear that the aim is not to "take away from the availability of masks that are needed for the health care providers who are in real and present danger of getting infected from the people that they’re taking care of."

The recommendations were expected to apply to those who live in areas hard hit by community transmission of the virus that causes COVID-19. A person familiar with the White House coronavirus task force’s discussion said officials would suggest that nonmedical masks, T-shirts or bandannas be used to cover the nose and mouth people go outside — for instance, at the grocery store.

SEE MASKS ON PAGE 4

■ Virus deaths strain funeral homes in NY

Page 8

Read the latest news on the virus outbreak at stripes.com/coronavirus

VIRUS OUTBREAK

White House to promote face masks to slow spread of virus

Hero’s sendoff

Sailors cheer ousted Navy captain who raised alarm about virus on USS Roosevelt

On Friday, a cheering and applauding crowd of sailors aboard the aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt wished farewell to their captain, whom the Navy relieved of command after he raised concerns about the spreading coronavirus on his ship in a letter that was leaked to the media.

Capt. Brett Crozier was dismissed Thursday due to a loss of confidence in his ability to command and for not using his chain of command to make service leaders aware of his concerns about the virus outbreak that had infected more than 100 sailors on the ship, acting Navy Secretary Thomas Modly said at the Pentagon.

Another video shows the career naval officer walk to the brow of the ship. He waves to the crowd, salutes and waves again before turning and walking down the gangway — alone — to the pier.

Crozier’s pained letter, which was leaked to the San Francisco Chronicle and published Tuesday, “created a ... little bit of panic on the ship,” Modly said.

Part of the issue was the use of unclassified email and a wide distribution list, including some recipients not in the chain of command, Modly said.

SEE CAPTAIN ON PAGE 4
Boeing offers buyouts to pare staff

Bloomberg

Boeing offered voluntary buyouts to eligible employees, in a bid to quickly shed costs and adjust its work force of 161,000 to the coronavirus crisis that’s quickly undermined the outlook for air travel. About 44% of the world have slashed schedules, with some parking their entire fleets as the coronavirus pandemic guts travel. About 44% of aircraft across the globe are in storage, according to an estimate by Cirium, and with virus cases approaching 1 million worldwide, there’s no telling when carriers will return to normal schedules, no less buying planes.

As it pares back its staff, another challenge for Boeing will be maintaining essential skills that will be needed when the market bounces back, Cunningham said. “But you have to actually survive to come back again.”

INTEREST RATES

Prime rate ................................. 3.25
Discount rate ............................. 0.25
Federal funds market rate .......... 0.00
3-month bill ............................... 0.00
3-year bond ............................... 1.25

STARS AND STRIPES

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European Rates

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Military rates are those available to customers at military banking facilities in the United States. Commercial rates are interbank rates provided for reference when buying nonlocal currency exchange rates (i.e., purchasing British pounds in Germany), which is represented in dollars-to-pound, to one dollar, except for the British pound, which is represented in dollars-to-euro, and the euro, which is dollars-to-euro.)
Guard launches digital personnel system

By Cory Dickstein
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — All 332,000 soldiers in the Army National Guard for the first time are using one personnel system — a modern digital pay and human resources platform that last week replaced 54 separate paper-based programs, service officials said Thursday.

The Army on Mar. 24 moved the final 11 National Guard programs in its 54 states and U.S. territories onto its new Integrated Personnel and Pay System-Army, or IPPS-A, said Roy Wallace, the Army’s assistant deputy chief of staff for personnel. By the end of 2021, all of the Army’s more than 1 million soldiers will use the new system for their personnel management when the regular Army and reserves begin using it, he said.

Wallace called the program a “game changer.” IPPS-A allows soldiers to access their personnel information via a new smart phone app to make changes after life events such as marriages or the birth of a child, which impact what kind of benefits that they receive. It has shortened the time the Army takes to make changes in soldiers’ personnel files in some cases from several months to mere hours, he said.

For example, soldiers who are promoted based almost solely on time in uniform — such as from second to first lieutenant or from private to private first class — should have that promotion automatically reflected in IPPS-A on their promotion day, Wallace said. In the past, it required a series of documents and approvals for paychecks to reflect that automatic promotion.

IPPS-A replaces the paper-based Standard Installation and Division Personnel Reporting System, or SIDPERS, which the Army has used since the 1980s and officials called as clunky as its name. That system collected soldiers’ personnel information largely in old-fashioned manila folders held separately by each state and territory.

To make changes in that system, soldiers filled out a paper DA-4187 form and submitted it.

After sending the form, soldiers had no way to know the status of their request, said Col. Gregory S. Johnson, one of the leaders of the team that has spent years developing IPPS-A.

Today, National Guard soldiers can view the status of such requests on the smart phone app from anywhere with internet access.

“IPPS-A is designed to seamlessly serve the Army and to convey a modern portrait of the Army to the public,” Johnson said Thursday during a phone call with reporters.

Johnson said the system has already proven valuable for the Army as it manages thousands of Guard members activated across the United States amid the spreading coronavirus pandemic.

The Army and top National Guard leadership can find data about what units are deployed and where in a single place. In the past, they would have to compile information after requesting it from each state and territory.

That caused problems at times, said Lt. Col. June S. Copeland, the National Guard’s top liaison with the IPPS-A developers.

Copeland said the Army would become “even more powerful” for the National Guard when it fields an updated version in December 2021. That update will add personal information not previously officially tracked by the military to soldiers’ records such as past civilian jobs or specific hobbies or talents that they want their commanders to know about, Johnson said.

That update will include a 25-point profile designed to allow commanders to know who in their unit has specific skills or expertise, such as medical experience or language abilities.

“It will capture many additional talents in a much more holistic manner,” Johnson said. “We’re really going to be looking at the other individual talents a person has — do they have regional expertise? Are they a [computer] coder, or do they have knowledge in certain areas that could help us? The operational impacts are obvious.”

A study of the IPPS-A developers.

Members of the Massachusetts National Guard erect a field hospital at the DCU Center in Worcester, Mass., on Wednesday for an expected influx of patients due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Officials: US, S. Korea fail to seal defense cost-sharing deal

By Kim Gamel
and Yoo Kyong Chang
Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — The United States and South Korea failed to reach a defense cost-sharing deal this week but will keep trying, officials said after thousands of South Korean employees at U.S. military bases went on unpaid leave because funds ran out.

Their statements dashed hopes that a conclusion was imminent as the clock ran out for about half the local workforce of USFK.

“South Korea and the U.S. have yet to reach a defense cost-sharing agreement despite continuous consultations between high-level authorities,” South Korea’s Foreign Ministry said Thursday in a statement.

“They’ll continue discussions in an effort to conclude negotiations as soon as possible,” it added.

U.S. Forces Korea, which commands some 28,500 service members on the peninsula, on Wednesday furloughed about 4,500 South Korean employees, about half the local national workforce, due to the lack of a Special Measures Agreement.

The military was able to keep the other half at work because those employees were deemed essential to maintain “life, health, safety and minimum readiness.”

The furlough has raised concerns about military readiness and delivery of services, which already have been disrupted by heavy restrictions on bases to prevent the coronavirus’ spread.

USFK had been making up the difference with programmed funds, but those ran out on March 31.

Defense Secretary Mark Esper and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo went to the White House on Tuesday to try to prevent the furlough, NBC News reported.

The previous Special Measures Agreement expired Dec. 31 as the longtime allies deadlocked over U.S. demands that South Korea sharply increase the amount it pays to offset the costs for stationing American troops in the country.

President Donald Trump had demanded a fivefold increase to about $5 billion per year, although U.S. negotiators have said they reduced that demand to an unannounced amount.

Seoul, meanwhile, is believed to have offered to go as high as 10% more but wants to maintain the framework of the agreement, which covers most of the South Korean workers’ salaries as well as other logistical and construction costs.

South Korean officials blamed the American side, saying they had offered compromises including a way to isolate the labor issue while continuing to negotiate on other items.

On the eve of the furlough, chief South Korean negotiator Jeong Eun-bo said the two sides just needed more time.

“South Korea and the U.S. are in the last stages for sealing a deal and have continued to hold close discussions even after the seventh round of talks in mid-March,” he told reporters on Tuesday evening.

The Yonhap News Agency also reported Wednesday that a deal appeared to be
**VIRUS OUTBREAK**

**Military personnel to treat virus patients**

BY CAITLIN M. KENNEY
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Medical support from the Defense Department to help battle the coronavirus pandemic will be expanded in three states to treat patients with the illness, a day after the captains of the Navy’s hospital ships reported receiving less than two dozen patients during the past week.

The Defense Department announced Friday that it had received a request from the Federal Emergency Management Agency to provide medical support to patients with the coronavirus at three federal medical stations: the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center in New York City; the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center in New Orleans; and the Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center in Dallas.

The Javits center has soldiers from Fort Campbell's 313th Hospital Center and Fort Hood's 9th Hospital Center providing support, while the Texas and Louisiana locations are expecting medical personnel from the Navy who are based out of Jacksonville, Fla.

Previously, the Pentagon said they would not provide care to coronavirus patients, but only treat non-coronavirus patients in order to free up beds at local hospitals for people with the virus.

Now, military medical staff will treat coronavirus patients who are recovering from the virus and “low-acuity” patients such as people experiencing non-traumatic injuries and mild pain.

The increase in patient care comes a day after the captains of the USNS Mercy, in port in Los Angeles, and the USNS Comfort, in port in New York City, said in a Pentagon briefing that they had only received less than 20 patients between them since they started accepting patients.

The Comfort had only started to take patients Wednesday and the Mercy has been accepting patients for almost a week. Each ship has the capacity to accept 1,000 adult patients.

Both captains said they were being referred non-coronavirus hospital patients by local health facilities. The patients had to be screened, tested and found negative for the virus before being transferred aboard the ships.

The USNS Comfort will now screen patients for coronavirus in its pier instead of waiting for a negative test in order to help relieve New York City hospital backlogs, according to the Pentagon statement. The statement did not say whether the Mercy would also start screening patients for coronavirus.

The expanded support will allow local hospitals to treat more serious coronavirus patients, the Pentagon said, and they will work with local officials to implement the new details.

Captain: Some question removal of Crozier, others see his letter as unprofessional

FROM FRONT PAGE

The letter had warned that the outbreak could kill sailors, saying that “if we do not act now, we are failing to properly take care of our most trusted asset — our sailors.”

The ship, now docked in Guam, was on a Pacific deployment before it was forced to divert to the island after several initial virus cases were reported aboard the carrier last week. Crozier’s letter criticized an “inappropriate focus on testing” for the disease and, given the close quarters of the warship, recommended most of the crew be evacuated to better slow the virus’s spread.

The Navy moved some 1,000 sailors off the ship by Thursday and was working to remove another 2,700 by Friday.

Capt. Daniel Keeler, the ship’s executive officer, will serve as acting commander until Capt. Carlos Sardiello, from whom Crozier had assumed command of the aircraft carrier in November, arrives in Guam to take the helm again, Modly said.

Adm. Robert Burke, vice chief of naval operations, would investigate the matter and the Pacific Fleet’s entire command climate, Modly said.

“Crozier, for his part, had allowed the outbreak to ‘overwhelm his ability to act professionally,’” Modly said. “It creates a panic and creates the perception that the Navy is not on the job, the government’s not on the job, and it’s just not true.”

Before the letter, the service had been directing resources to assist the ship, Modly said, which he said Crozier acknowledged in a phone call with Pentagon officials the same day as the document’s date. In the call, Crozier had asked to speed up the evacuation, he said.

Carrier strike group commander Rear Adm. Stuart Baker, who is embarked on the ship and “right down the passageway” from Crozier, didn’t know about the letter in advance, Modly said.

But some observers questioned Crozier’s dismissal, which retired rear admiral and former Navy, Pentagon and State Department spokesman John Kirby said was poorly timed.

“I understand the ‘trust & confidence’ argument. It’s sacrosanct in the Navy,” Kirby said Thursday night on Twitter. “But based on justification put forth by acting SECNAV for why he lost trust & confidence … hard to see it as anything other than an over-reaction & unwarranted at a vital time for the ship.”

In the hours since Crozier was fired, the backlash online has been swift, with more than 85,000 people signing a Change.org petition calling for his reinstatement.

On the Reddit social media site, memes began to pop up in the 1992 graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy, Crozier has amassed more than 3,000 flight hours piloting SH-60B Seahawk helicopters and later F/A-18 Hornet fighter jets. His career includes two tours aboard the carrier USS Nimitz in support of the Iraq War in 2003 and 2005.

**Masks:** CDC urged covering for nearly all

FROM FRONT PAGE

store or pharmacy. Medical-grade masks, particularly short-in-supply N95 masks, would be reserved for those dealing directly with the sick.

The person spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the proposed guidance before its public release.

President Donald Trump, who was tested again for coronavirus Thursday using a rapid test, indicated he would support such a recommendation. The White House said Trump’s latest test returned a negative result in 15 minutes and Trump was “healthy and without symptoms.”

Dr. Deborah Birx, the task force’s coordinator, told reporters that the White House was concerned the mask guidance would lead to a “false sense of security” for Americans. She said new data shows the administration’s social distancing guidelines were not being followed to the extent necessary to keep virus-related deaths to a minimum.

The emerging guidance on masks appeared to be more limited than Centers for Disease Control and Prevention draft that suggested the recommendation apply to nearly all Americans, according to a federal official who has seen the draft but was not authorized to discuss it on the record.

Officials were expected to limit the geographic scope to just those areas where the virus was spreading rapidly, the official said. An announcement was expected as soon as Friday.

Under the previous guidance, only the sick or those at high risk of complications from the respiratory illness were advised to wear masks.

The new proposal was driven by research showing that some infections are being spread by people who seem to be healthy.
States are demanding ventilators as fed's ration a limited supply

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Two weeks ago, the Pentagon promised to make as many as 2,000 military ventilators available as the federal government strains to contain the coronavirus pandemic. As of Wednesday, less than half had been allocated, despite a desperate need across the country.

At the Federal Emergency Management Agency, tasked with coordinating the federal response to the outbreak, about 9,000 additional ventilators are also on hold as officials seek to determine where they are needed most urgently.

The combination of scarce supply and high need has sent many states onto the open market, where they are bidding for ventilators from private manufacturers. Their competition in that bidding process: both the federal government and other states.

“It’s like being on eBay with 50 other states bidding on a ventilator,” said New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo, whose state is the epicenter of the pandemic in the United States. He urged FEMA to step in and act as a single purchaser of the vital machines.

The slow deployment of ventilators underscores the ways the sprawling federal bureaucracy has fallen short in the crisis. Demand for medical equipment far outpaces the current supply, and the stockpiles that do exist aren’t enough for the hardest-hit areas. That undercuts the air of confidence projected by President Donald Trump at his daily briefings.

Cuomo, whose state has more than 92,000 cases of COVID-19, warned Thursday that New York has only 2,200 ventilators in its own stockpile after shipping out 600 to New York City, Westchester and Long Island. He would run out in six days at this rate.

FEMA has sent 4,400 ventilators to New York, where officials have said they likely need 20,000 to 40,000 during the crisis.

It’s not just ventilators. FEMA has been able to fill only a fraction of the requests for protective equipment and medical supplies requested by the five Mid-Atlantic states and the District of Columbia, according to documents released by Rep. Carolyn B. Maloney, D-N.Y., who chairs the Oversight and Reform committee.

The shortcomings include less than 10% of the requested number of N95 protective masks and none of 15,000 body bags requested.

But ventilators have emerged as crucial medical tools in treating patients. The machines pump air to a person’s lungs through a tube inserted in the windpipe and can be lifesaving for seriously ill patients.

The government had 9,961 ventilators as of Thursday, including 9,054 in the stockpile and 907 from the Department of Defense, according to FEMA.

The Health and Human Services Department, which manages the stockpile, said Thursday that “within two weeks the first money will all the maintenance by April 30.

US sheds more than 700K jobs

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A record-long streak of U.S. job growth ended suddenly in March after nearly a decade as employers cut 701,000 jobs, the government said Thursday, reflecting the crush of the viral outbreak that’s all but shut down the U.S. economy. The unemployment rate jumped to 4.4% from a 50-year low of 3.5%.

The monthly job loss reported Friday by the government, the worst since the depths of the Great Recession in 2009, is still just a small indication of what’s to come. Last month’s actual layoffs were likely even larger because the government surveyed employers before the heaviest hits hit in the past two weeks.

Nearly 10 million Americans applied for unemployment benefits in the final two weeks of March, far exceeding the figure for the corresponding period on record.

Virus-induced shutdowns will have forced widespread layoffs throughout the economy, from hotels, restaurants and movie theaters to auto factories, department store and administrative offices. The nearly full point increase in the unemployment rate from February to March was the sharpest monthly rise since 1975.

One sign of how painfully deep the job losses are likely to prove to be: During its nearly decade-long hiring streak, the U.S. economy added 22.8 million jobs. Economists now forecast the report being released in early May to show that nearly all those jobs will have been lost last month. Roughly two-thirds of the job cuts during March were at restaurants, hotels and casinos, according to Labor Department data.

As recently as February, U.S. employers had added 273,000 jobs. Some economists now forecast the unemployment rate could go as high as 15% with in the next month. That rate would be the worst since the 1930s. During the Great Recession, unemployment peaked at 10%.

More than 90% of the U.S. population is now living under some version of a shutdown order, with the closures of bars, restaurants, movie theaters, factories, gyms and most other businesses. Some hospitals are closed; others are largely empty. Fast-food chains are either closed or providing only drive-through service, costing thousands of jobs.

With business activity tightly restricted, analysts expect a stomach-churning recession. Economists at Goldman Sachs have forecast that the economy will shrivel at an annual rate of 34% in the April-June quarter — the worse fall on records dating to World War II. Goldman expects the rebound to be limited to 2% growth in the third quarter. But even by the end of next year, the economists say, the U.S. will not have fully recovered from the damage, Goldman projects.

Robert Kaplan, president of the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas, said Thursday on CNBC that he expects the unemployment rate to rise to the mid-teens soon, before falling to about 8% by year’s end.

A key determinant of the economy’s future will be whether businesses can survive the shutdown and rehire many of the workers they laid off. If so, that would help the economy snap back and avoid the type of weak recovery that followed the past three downturns.

But it’s far from clear that large and small businesses are still paying for health care benefits and keeping in touch with their newly laid-off workers. But if the coronavirus outbreak forces businesses to stay closed into the late summer, many argue that they won’t have the money to rehire their old employees.

That would keep unemployment elevated, depriving potentially millions of people of a paycheck and slowing the recovery.

Memo: Some in US may not get stimulus checks until August

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The federal government expects to begin making payments to millions of Americans under the new stimulus law in mid-April, but some people without direct deposit information may not get checks until mid-August or later, according to a memo obtained by The Associated Press.

The document from the House Ways and Means Committee says the IRS will make about 60 million payment to Americans through direct deposit in mid-April, likely the week of April 13. The IRS has direct deposit information for these individuals from their 2018 or 2019 tax returns.

Then, starting the week of May 4, the IRS will begin issuing paper checks to individuals, says the memo obtained by AP on Thursday. The paper checks will be issued at a rate of about 5 million per week, which means it could take up to 20 weeks to get all the checks out. That timeline would delay some checks until the week of Aug. 17.

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said Thursday that while he initially pledged to get payments started within three weeks of the law’s adoption, “I’m now committing to two weeks. We’re delivering on our commitments.”

The IRS, which he oversees, will ensure that “within two weeks the first money will be in people’s accounts,” Mnuchin said during a White House briefing.

“This money does people no good if it shows up in four months,” he added.

The memo from the committee’s Democratic majority says the timeline it made public Thursday was based on “extensive conversations with the IRS and the Department of Treasury.” The timeline is subject to change, given ongoing discussions between Congress and the Trump administration.

“The Committee remains focused on ensuring all eligible Americans receive their payment as quickly as possible,” the memo says.

The payments are part of the $2.2 trillion rescue package signed into law March 27 by President Donald Trump aimed at combating the economic ravages of the coronavirus outbreak.

Most people don’t need to do anything to get the money.

Reversing an earlier position, the govern- ment said this week that Social Security recipients who are not required to file a tax return will not need to file a very simplified tax return to receive their government stimulus payments. Treasury Secretary Mnuchin said Wednesday that the IRS will use the information on the Form SSA-1099 and Form RRB-1099 to generate its 12,200 checks to Social Security recipients who did not file tax returns in 2018 or 2019.

The checks will be issued in reverse order of adjusted gross income, meaning that people with the lowest income will get payments first.
View still grim in Europe but hope emerging

Associated Press

NEW YORK — U.S. and European medical workers struggling to save ailing patients Friday watched supplies of medicine, protective equipment and breathing machines dwindle by the hour.

Worldwide, confirmed infections topped 12 million and deaths topped 54,000, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University.

Experts say both numbers are seriously undercounted because of the lack of testing, mild cases that were missed and governments that are underplaying the extent of the crisis.

Europe's three worst-hit countries — Italy, Spain and France — surpassed 30,000 dead, or over half of the global toll. From those countries, the view remained almost unrelentingly grim, a frightening portent for places like New York, the epicenter of the U.S. outbreak, where bodies are being loaded by forklift into refrigerated trucks outside overwhelmed hospitals.

Shortages of critical equipment led to fierce competition among buyers from Europe, the U.S. and elsewhere.

A regional leader in Paris described the scramble to find masks a “worldwide treasure hunt.” Gov. Andrew Cuomo warned that New York could run out of ventilators in six days.

With more than 245,000 people infected in the U.S., and the death toll topping 6,000, sobering preparations were underway. The Federal Emergency Management Agency asked the Pentagon for 100,000 more body bags.

One Spanish hospital turned its library into a morgue, and a French hospital is using its banquet hall. In France, space was set aside for bodies in a vast food market.

French prime minister said he is “fighting hour by hour” to ward off shortages of essential drugs used to keep COVID-19 patients alive.

Philippe Montravers, an anesthesiologist in Paris, said medicines are preparing to fall back on older drugs such as the opiates fentanyl and morphine that had fallen out of favor, because newer painkillers are in short supply.

“The work is extremely tough and heavy,” he said. “We’ve had doctors, nurses, caregivers who got sick, infected ... but who have come back after recovering.”

France canceled its high-school exit exam known as the Bacalaureat, a first in the 212-year history of the test.

Some gnomes of hope emerged that Italy, with nearly 14,000 dead, as well as Spain and France might be flattening their infection curves and nearing even passing their peaks in daily deaths.

Spain on Friday reported 932 new deaths, down slightly from the record 1,000 hit a day earlier. The carnage most certainly included large numbers of elderly who authorities admit are not getting access to the country’s limited breathing machines, which are used first on healthier, younger patients. More than half of Spain’s nearly 11,000 deaths have come in the last seven days alone.

In a vast exhibition center in Madrid that was hastily converted into a 1,300-bed field hospital, bed No. 01.30 held patient Esteban Pinaredo, age 87.

“I’m good, I love you,” Pinaredo told his family via Skype. “I will run away as soon as I can.”

The facility’s organizer, Antonio Zapatero, said Spain’s nationwide lockdown must be maintained.

“Otherwise, this is what you are facing,” he said, pointing at the rows of beds.

Elsewhere in Europe, officials began talking tentatively about how to lift lockdowns that have staved off the total collapse of strained health systems but also battered economies.

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Elsewhere in Europe, officials began talking tentatively about how to lift lockdowns that have staved off the total collapse of strained health systems but also battered economies. The pandemic will cost the world economy as much as $8.1 trillion, or nearly 5% of all economic activity, the Asian Development Bank said.

Austria said it will set out a timetable next week for what could be a “slow startup” of closed parts of the economy. The head of Germany’s national disease control center said he expects that any easing of the country’s lockdown, which this week was extended to April 19, will be staggered.

Even in Spain, still in the thick of a fight so intense that authorities have suggested that medics can withhold life-support from elderly patients, talk turned toward possibly relaxing the lockdown in place since March 13.

Other countries went in the opposite direction. Singapore said it will close schools and most workplaces for a month. Thailand banned public gatherings and imposed a curfew.

French Prime Minister Edouard Philippe said European neighbors must coordinate when the time comes to ease lockdowns and that restrictions must be lifted “progressively” to prevent new waves of fresh infections.

With spring weather likely to tempt stir-crazy families out of lockdown this weekend, the firm message across the continent remained: “Stay home.” Paris police set up roadblocks out of the city to stop those trying to escape for Easter vacation.

In Britain, which locked down later than its European neighbors, the infection peak is still ahead. On Friday, the National Health Service with the biggest test in its 72-year history after austerity cuts that have strained the institution and its promise of quality care for all.

Meanwhile, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who tested positive last week, said in a video message on Twitter that he is feeling better but still has a fever and will remain in isolation.

Beyond Europe, coronavirus deaths mounted with alarming speed in New York City, the epicenter of the U.S. outbreak, and were reported in all 50 states, including Florida, which has seen at least 1,500 deaths.

Passengers from ill-fated cruise disembark in Fla.

Associated Press

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. — Passengers from an ill-fated cruise were carefully freed from their cabins and allowed to touch dry land on Friday for the first time in weeks, following the removal of 14 critically ill people who were wheeled off to Florida hospitals bracing for an onslaught of coronavirus patients.

The exodus from the Zaandam and its sister ship the Rotterdam was expected to continue throughout the day.

Floridians were getting off first, followed by other passengers. Those leaving were taking people healthy enough to travel directly to the airport, where they’d board chartered flights home without going through the quarantine zone.

At least four buses brought the first small waves of fresh infections.

The U.S. Coast Guard has directed that hundreds of crew members should remain on the dozens of cruise ships that are either docked in South American ports, or have been allowed to sail again.

Providing a contained disembarkation operation is the top priority is the Port Everglades terminal on Saturday with more than 1,000 passengers who have been isolating in their cabins, including 12 confirmed cases of COVID-19 on board.

Passengers that came off the cruise ship Rotterdam board a charter plane at Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport on Friday in Florida.

Corps., said its last ship carrying passengers to a U.S. port since the pandemic was declared. The Coral Princess is expected to arrive at the Port Everglades terminal on Saturday with more than 1,000 passengers who have been isolating in their cabins, including 12 confirmed cases of COVID-19 on board.

Princess Cruises, a line owned by the larger corporation, had already announced a “higher-than-normal” number of people with flu-like symptoms aboard the Coral Princess.

“This is a humanitarian situation, and the County Commission’s top priority is protecting our 1.9 million residents while providing a contained disembarkation option for people on board who need to get safely home,” Broward County Mayor Dale Holness said in a statement late Thursday.

It was unclear when the bodies of four passengers who died on the Zaandam would be removed from the ship, which set sail on March 7, the day before the State Department warned people against cruising during the pandemic, and was thereafter barred from South American ports.

The U.S. Coast Guard has directed that hundreds of crew members should remain on the dozens of cruise ships that are either docked in South American ports, or have been allowed to sail again.

Already, crew members are getting sick.

One has died on the Celebrity Infinity and two others were medically evacuated from the Oasis of the Seas, according to an email Friday from their company, the Miami-based Royal Caribbean cruise line.

The Infinity is waiting off Florida’s west coast, and the Oasis of the Seas is positioned off Broward County’s shores.
The competition was canceled and Spivey, desperate to get stateside before he found himself trapped, shelled out extra money to change his flights and eventually made it Colorado, where he spends each winter training. With training suspended, he returned home to California, and he and his wife, Kris Spivey, learned that the resort where she works as a massage therapist would be closing — most likely until June.

Though Michael Spivey receives medical and retirement benefits from his service, his wife’s job is their main source of income, leaving them in a difficult financial situation and stuck at home without much else to do but worry.

About that time, Michael Spivey’s case manager from the Semper Fi Fund called to check on the couple. The nonprofit, which focuses on providing immediate financial assistance and lifelong support to combat wounded service members and veterans, listened to their situation and sent a grant for $500 to help the couple buy groceries and make ends meet.

“They’ve done a phenomenal job of reaching out during this pandemic,” said Kris Spivey. “Also, with the depression and anxiety.”

In the wake of the pandemic, as Americans are isolated in their homes, many are struggling with a loss of income, with school closures and child-care issues and with the anxiety of how long the pandemic could last. About 3.3 million American workers have filed for unemployment as the U.S. economy shut down.

Charities that cater to veterans and service members are reaching out to see how they can help those in need.

“We want to be there for our veterans and just make sure they know they are not alone in getting through this,” said Susan Rocco, vice president of case management for the Semper Fi Fund.

Her team of case managers has been getting a lot of calls from veterans and their spouses who have been laid off or had their hours cut. Many worked in restaurants or salons and now have no income. Other veterans are medically vulnerable and afraid to go out and put themselves at risk.

Case managers began reaching out to veterans to see whether they needed help.

“We’re helping by sending them food. We sent some boxes of food directly to their house, especially those in compromised situations, a lot of that is to ease their anxiety,” Rocco said. For others, they’ve sent gift cards to order food online and even helped to walk them through ordering using delivery services or curbside pickup. The nonprofit is also sending education and craft supplies to families with children now home from school.

Last week, the organization provided nearly $400,000 to nearly 600 service members and families with coronavirus-related needs.

Operation Homefront, a non-profit offering financial relief for military families as well as programs and resiliency training, is seeking $10,000 to help families deal with the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic.

“Operation Homefront wants all to know that despite this change and those that may follow, we stand ready to support our military families during this national crisis,” said John G. Pray, president and CEO of the nonprofit, in a statement. “Working together, as we have done for so many years, I know we will be able to help our military families — and each other — as we deal with this crisis.”

Team Rubicon, a nonprofit that trains mostly veteran volunteers to respond to disasters, is able to help our military families and those who could have been exposed to the virus.

“Team Rubicon has two ‘high-risk’ operations, he said. They’ve established a medical station in Santa Clara County, Calif., to serve as a 250-bed surge medical facility to support non-acute coronavirus patients who need hospitalization.

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“We’re all in right now,” said Marine Corps veteran Jake Wood, president and CEO of Team Rubicon. “We have pivoted the entire organization into this response and launched 70 operations nationwide.”

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On Thursday, it had tracked 1,921 deaths from six deaths one week ago.

The veterans ranged in age from their 50s to their 90s.

New York-area VA hospitals have been among the busiest of facilities across the department. The VA operates 172 medical centers and is responsible for treating more than 9 million veterans. As of Thursday, it had tracked 1,921 cases of the coronavirus among VA patients.

VA Secretary Robert Wilkie took steps to help non-veterans in the New York area. In accordance with the VA’s “fourth mission” to serve as backup for America’s medical system, Wilkie opened 50 beds last week in Manhattan and Brooklyn to civilian, non-coronavirus patients.

On Wednesday, Wilkie announced he opened 15 beds at the East Orange VA Medical Center in New Jersey to civilian patients who tested positive for the coronavirus.

The patients who were transferred had critical and non-critical cases, the VA said.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency asked the VA for help after the state of New Jersey requested federal assistance. Wilkie said it would not affect veteran care.

The New Orleans VA Medical Center has the most cases out of any department-run medical facility.

On Thursday, New Orleans reported 324 cases, and 35 of those veterans had been hospitalized.

Sixteen veterans have died there in the past week.

VA staff have also been affected. According to department data, 523 employees across 79 VA medical facilities have tested positive for the virus.

VA Press Secretary Christina Mandreucci said additional information, such as their job titles, could not be publicly shared because of privacy concerns.
Pat Marmo, owner of the Daniel J. Schaefer Funeral Home, walks through his body-holding facility Thursday in the Brooklyn borough of New York. The company is equipped to handle 40-60 cases at a time. But amid the coronavirus pandemic, it was taking care of 185 Thursday morning.

“Pat Marmo said he’s hardly sleeping from the stress, worried he’ll forget a small but critical task, like removing someone’s ring before they’re sent for cremation.

He was set to host a funeral Friday for a 36-year-old New York City subway driver who died last week helping riders evacuate a burning train. In his main chapel, he had 10 chairs, lined in two rows with 6 feet (2 meters) between each—the best he could do while respecting "social distancing" guidelines.

"The guy deserves a funeral down the Canyon of Heroes," Marmo said, referring to a stretch of Broadway in lower Manhattan where ticker tape parades are traditionally held. "Is he going to get that? He's not going to get that. And it's horrible."
Kansas’ use of GPS data raises concerns

Associated Press

TOPEKA, Kan. — Kansas Gov. Laura Kelly faced questions Thursday about the state’s monitoring of GPS data gleaned from people’s cellphones to track how residents have cut down on travel during the coronavirus pandemic.

But Kelly defended the state Department of Health and Environment’s use of the data. She said its compilation was “harmless” to individuals and that it helped Kansas focus efforts to promote social distancing where they’re needed.

“Right now, the only thing that we are thinking about, really, is how to protect the health and safety of Kansans,” Kelly said during a daily COVID-19 briefing. “We know that the less people are moving around, the flatter that curve will be and — not trying to be histrionic here — will save lives.”

Dr. Lee Norman, the health department’s head, has cited the data in at least two briefings and has used it to publicly scold Kansas residents for not taking social distancing seriously enough. The information is provided by data-analyst site Unacast on a publicly accessible website that grades states and counties on social distancing based on how much they’ve reduced their travel.

A public-interest law firm, the Kansas Justice Institute, is demanding that the Democratic governor provide more information about how the information is collected and used, expressing concerns about privacy and other civil liberties.

Unacast said in a statement Thursday that it uses data from tens of millions of devices, but that the “data is always in aggregate or anonymized and never shows individuals’ behavior.”

The data measures how much people collectively have reduced travel from normal and gives each state and county a letter grade, with A being the best and F the worst.

Kelly urged Kansas residents to check out the website, calling it “a simple visual tool.”

“You will see how harmless it really is, but how it can be to the state as we are trying to message,” Kelly said. “That’s how we’re going to use that data. There’s nothing else that we can or would do with it.”

Kansas is ramping up testing for the virus even as a backlog of 59,000 pending tests is growing, delaying the collection of data on how residents have cut down on travel during the coronavirus pandemic.

A jogger runs by a mural inspired by the pandemic Thursday, in Los Angeles.

VIRUS OUTBREAK ROUNDPUP

California

LOS ANGELES — California is ramping up testing for the coronavirus even as a backlog of 59,000 pending tests is growing, delaying the collection of data on how residents have cut down on travel during the pandemic.

A jury did not return a verdict in the trial of former Los Angeles County Sheriff Jim McDonnell, who was charged with bribery and other crimes.

Los Angeles County is five to six days after some results have taken 10 or 12 days, said Barbara Ferrer, the county health director. The county uses a mix of privately and publicly run labs.

The state may be able to fast-track test results as more people receive blood-based tests, Newsom said. Testing that relies on taking nasal swabs, the most prominent initial testing measure, is primarily responsible for delays.

The average wait time in Los Angeles County is five to six days, said Barbara Ferrer, the county health director. The county uses a mix of privately and publicly run labs.

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Israel to help Christians share ‘holy fire’

BY JOSEF FEDERMAN
Associated Press

JERUSALEM — Israel is working with foreign governments and Orthodox Christian leaders in the Holy Land to make sure that one of their most ancient and mysterious rituals — the Holy Fire ceremony — is not extinguished by the coronavirus outbreak, officials said Friday.

Each year, thousands of worshippers flock to Jerusalem’s Old City and pack into the Church of the Holy Sepulcher — built on the site where Christian tradition holds that Jesus was crucified, buried and resurrected — for the pre-Easter ceremony.

Top Eastern Orthodox clerics enter the Edicule, the small chamber marking the site of Jesus’ tomb, and exit with candles said to be miraculously lit with “holy fire” as a message to the faithful. The flame is normally shared with candle-holding pilgrims and even sent in special containers to Orthodox Christian communities around the world.

Details of the flame’s source are a closely guarded secret.

Due to a ban on large public gatherings this year because of the virus pandemic, Israeli officials say the April 18 ceremony will be limited to about 10 religious leaders from various Orthodox denominations. They have also developed a creative way to deliver the flame to overseas communities.

Because anyone entering Israel must go into quarantine, foreign dignitaries coming to pick up the flame will receive it on their plane and immediately return home.

The coronavirus causes mild to moderate symptoms in most patients, who recover within a few weeks. But it is highly contagious and can be spread by people showing no symptoms. It can cause serious illness and death in some patients, particularly the elderly and those with underlying health issues.

Israel has reported more than 7,000 confirmed cases and at least 36 deaths.

Akiva Tor, who heads the Israeli Foreign Ministry’s department for world religions, said the arrangement has been discussed with local church leaders and coordinated with several foreign countries with large Orthodox populations, including Greece, Russia, Georgia and Ukraine.

Tor said church officials have been understanding. “We have the same goal in mind, which is to enable the continuation of this miraculous event while being respectful of the medical emergency which is taking place,” he said.

Mosques stay open in Pakistan even as death toll climbs

ISLAMABAD — Mosques were allowed to remain open in Pakistan on Friday, when Muslims gather for weekly prayers, even as the coronavirus pandemic spread and much of the country had shut down.

Prime Minister Imran Khan is relying on restricting the size of congregations attending mosques and advice to stay at home from religious groups like the country’s Islamic Ideology Council.

However, some provinces have issued their own lockdown orders to prevent Muslims from gathering for Friday prayers. In southern Sindh province, a complete lockdown is being enforced from noon until 3 p.m., the time when the faithful gather for prayers. Anyone found on the streets will be arrested, according to the provincial local government minister in a statement.

In eastern Punjab province, where 60% of Pakistan’s 220 million people live, checkpoints have been set up in major cities stopping people from congregating.

Still, mosques remain open in Pakistan, even as they have been shut down across much of the Middle East and elsewhere. The Middle East has confirmed over 85,000 cases of the virus and over 3,700 deaths, most of them in Iran.

Iran state TV reported Friday the virus killed another 134 people, pushing the country’s death toll to nearly 3,300 amid more than 33,000 confirmed cases. Iran’s parliament speaker is among those who have contracted the disease.

Pakistan, with 2,450 confirmed cases and 35 deaths, has been sharply criticized for moving too slow to curb large gatherings, including a gathering of tens of thousands of Muslims from several Islamic countries in March. The gathering of Tableeghi Jamaat missionaries is blamed for several outbreaks of the new virus elsewhere in the world. The first confirmed cases that emerged in Gaza were traced to the gathering.

Entire neighborhoods, including outside the capital Islamabad, have been shut down because clerics who had attended the gathering tested positive for the virus.

Despite this, some religious leaders in Pakistan still urge the faithful to defy restrictions and gather at mosques. Mufti Muneeb-ur-Rehman, head of a committee tasked with spotting the new moon in Pakistan marking the beginning of holy months such as Ramadan, went on television telling people their faith would protect them and they should attend the mosque.

Police officers restrict a rickshaw driver defying the nation-wide lockdown in Hyderabad, Pakistan, on Friday.

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VIRUS OUTBREAK

A worker disinfects the doors of the closed Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem’s Old City, as general public movements are limited to prevent the spread of coronavirus Monday.
Gun background checks increase amid virus fears

By Lisa Marie Pane
Associated Press

Background checks required to buy firearms have spiked to record numbers in the past month, fueled by a run on guns from Americans worried about their safety during the coronavirus crisis.

According to figures from the FBI, 3.7 million background checks were done in March — the most for a single month since the system began in 1998. It eclipsed the previous record, set in December 2015, when 3.3 million checks were conducted.

Background checks are the key barometer of gun sales, but the FBI’s monthly figures also incorporate checks for firearm permits that are required in some states. Each background check could also be for the sale of more than one gun.

The rush has inflated tensions between Second Amendment advocates and gun control supporters. Pro-gun groups say the long lines seen at gun stores affirm a widespread belief about the right to bear arms. Opponents complain about the additional stress and fear that comes with a lockdown and the panicked buying.

“This is overwhelming evidence that Americans value their ability to take responsibility for their own safety in times of uncertainty,” said Mark Oliva, spokesman for the National Shooting Sports Foundation, which represents gunmakers. “The figures are simply eye-popping.”

The FBI numbers show that March had five of the top 10 days ever for background checks, including the day with the most, March 16-22, when nearly 1.2 million checks were done.

In comparison, 2.64 million checks were conducted in March 2019, more than a million fewer than last month.

The spikes followed key moments in the U.S. trajectory of the pandemic, starting with the nation’s first recorded death on Feb. 29 and ramping up as a flurry of schools and businesses and, then, gun stores reopened.

In mid-March, President Donald Trump urged Americans to practice social distancing and warned of a potential recession.

Of the 3.7 million background checks done last month, about 2.5 million represented firearm sales, an increase of about 35% over March 2019, according to estimates from Small Arms Analytics and Forecasting, which analyzes data on the firearms industry. Handgun sales increased by about 91%, while sales of long guns were up nearly 74%, it said in a news release.

Gun retailers reported that the overwhelming majority of buyers are first-time gun owners. The FBI has been first-time gun owners, the National Shooting Sports Foundation said. That worries gun-control advocates, who fear first-time buyers will not be able to get the training to safely handle and store the weapons.

“We need to prepare for the increased risk of more firearms in untrained hands,” said David Chipman, a retired agent with the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, who’s now senior policy adviser with the Giffords gun control group.

“If you didn’t think you needed a gun prior to March of this year, you certainly don’t need to rush out and get one now.”

Last year already proved to be busy for the background check system, with a record 28.4 million conducted in 2019. That trend continued in January and February, with experts saying the numbers have been fueled by a typical election year — that a potential Democratic president would institute to greater restrictions.

The soaring numbers come amid debate in cities and states about whether gun shops should be considered essential businesses that can remain open during lockdown orders meant to reduce the spread of the virus. Over the weekend, the Trump administration issued an advisory that gun stores are essential but did not mandate that states keep them open.

The gun lobby has pushed back vigorously in places that determined federally licensed gun dealers are not essential during the outbreak and should close. The industry says the shops are critical to allowing Americans to exercise their constitutional rights.

The Texas attorney general issued a legal opinion saying emergency orders shuttering gun shops are unconstitutional. That’s in contrast to some cities, such as New Orleans, where the mayor has issued an emergency proclamation declaring the authority to restrict sales of firearms and ammunition.

In Los Angeles, Sheriff Alex Villanueva has twice ordered gun shops in the nation’s most populous county to close, leading to legal challenges from gun lobbying groups, including the National Rifle Association, National Shooting Sports Foundation, Second Amendment Foundation and Gun Owners of America.

Porn warning labels now required in Utah despite protest

By Lindsay Whiting
Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY — Pornography will now have to come with a warning label in Utah after Gov. Gary Herbert allowed the measure to become law over protest from the adult-entertainment industry.

If producers don’t include a one-sentence warning label on obscene materials about potential harm to minors, they could face a $2,500 penalty per violation. Herbert allowed the measure to become law without his signature on Wednesday.

The measure is aimed at helping people warned about the widespread availability of porn online, Republican sponsor Rep. Brady Brammer has said.

After criticism that the measure could be unconstitutional, it was aimed at porn deemed legally obscene. Most porn doesn’t qualify, but hardcore material declared obscene doesn’t have constitutional protections.

The Free Speech Coalition, an adult-entertainment trade group, has said the law could still unfairly force porn producers to defend themselves in court because it allows private citizens as well as the state to file complaints.

A judge would have to decide if the porn qualifies as obscene. Producers could avoid the penalty by showing that they have included the label most of the time.

Utah also declared it a public health crisis in 2016. More than a dozen states have advanced similar resolutions since then.

Lawmakers to probe whether SD leader was drunk during meeting

By Stephen Groves
Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. — South Dakota legislators decided Thursday to investigate allegations that Senate Majority Leader Kris Langer was drunk during a meeting earlier this week that involved legislation related to the coronavirus outbreak.

Both Langer, a Dell Rapids Republican, and Senate Pro Tempore Brock Greenfield, a Clark Republican, will be under investigation for their conduct during a marathon session that stretched from Monday night into the early hours of Tuesday morning.

Langer and Greenfield oversaw the Senate proceedings from a conference room in the Capitol as lawmakers convened through teleconference to decide on a series of emergency bills for the coronavirus outbreak. As the Senate prepared to adjourn Tuesday morning, Sen. Phil Jensen, a Rapid City Republican, said he had heard Langer was intoxicated and had interrupted meetings in the House and Senate. He then attempted to move to create a disciplinr committee.

Jensen declined to tell The Associated Press who had told him about Langer’s behavior, but said he noticed on a video broadcast of the meeting room that both Langer and Greenfield’s speech was slurred. He did not make an accusation regarding Greenfield on Tuesday morning.

Greenfield told his colleagues on the phone that he had not seen Langer drinking. The Senate decided that Jensen could not move to immediately establish the committee due to a technicality, but Senators suggested he could bring it up to the Executive Board, a committee of senior legislators from the House and Senate that decides on legislative proceedings.

Langer and Greenfield did not immediately respond to attempts to reach them for comment.
Trump and Pelosi remain at odds amid virus crisis

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Two of the most powerful people in Washington have not spoken in five months at a time when the nation is battling its worst health crisis in a century, one that has already killed more than 6,000 Americans and put 10 million others out of work.

President Donald Trump and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi last talked on Oct. 16, when Pelosi said in a statement that she would not invite Trump to debate as the two leaders’ relationship is key to cooperation, "Whatever communications we do have require the time of the speaker and the president, both of whom are very busy people."

The speaker also announced Thursday the formation of a House select committee on the coronavirus crisis, a bipartisan panel chaired by Majority Whip Steve Scalise, R-La., and ranked Democrat James Clyburn, D-S.C. Trump lashed out at the panel as a “witch hunt” and said it would ultimately help "build up his poll numbers."

"I want to remind everyone here in our nation's capital, especially in Congress, that this is not the time for politics, endless partisan investigations," Trump said during the White House coronavirus task force briefing.

The pandemic is a time when Americans may have less tolerance for the usual partisan bickering or brinkmanship, "That's not casual. It isn't, 'Let's just do nothing because we disagree for the sake of politics," said Democratic Rep. Ben McAdams of Utah, who is recovering from the coronavirus and is one of several lawmakers who have isolated themselves to avoid spreading it. "Really, we have to come together and work together to save lives, and that is the only thing that matters right now."

According to a new poll by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, 44% of Americans approve of how Trump is handling the coronavirus outbreak, closely mirroring his overall approval rating.

And fewer Americans, 38%, approve of the federal government’s job of handling the virus’ spread throughout the country, compared with larger shares approving of how their state and local governments are doing (57% and 54%, respectively).

Just 33% of Americans approve of how leaders in Congress are addressing the coronavirus, while 41% disapprove.

Trump campaign calls Sessions ‘delusional’

Montgomery, Ala. — President Donald Trump’s campaign has sent a letter to Jeff Sessions, his former attorney general now running for a U.S. Senate seat, objecting to Sessions’ portrayal of himself as a Trump supporter in a campaign mailer.

A March 31 letter sent by Michael S. Glassner, chief operating officer of Donald J. Trump for President, accused the three-term senator of attempting to “misleadingly promote your connections to and support of Trump” in the campaign mailer that mentioned Trump’s name 22 times.

“The letter even makes the delusional assertion that you are President Trump’s #1 Supporter,” Glassner wrote.

“We only assume your campaign is leveraging this to disseminate President Trump’s loyal supporters in Alabama into believing the President supports your candidacy in the upcoming Senate runoff election. Nothing could be further from the truth,” Glassner wrote.

Before becoming attorney general, Sessions was the first U.S. senator to endorse Trump, donating a Make America Great Again hat at an Alabama rally. But in a political twist of irony, his public falling out with Trump has threatened to upend his hopes of recapturing his former seat.

Sessions relinquished the Senate seat he held for 20 years when he was appointed Trump’s attorney general, a position he was forced to resign after his 2017 recusal from the Russia inquiry sparked blistering criticism from Trump. Sessions is now seeking to return to the seat.

Wounded by the fallout of that sour relationship in the Trump-loving state, Sessions was forced into a runoff with former Auburn University football coach Tommy Tuberville in the Republican primary. Tuberville led Sessions in the first round of voting. The winner will face incumbent Sen. Doug Jones in November in the once reliably red state.

The letter from the Trump campaign read: “We want to be absolutely clear about it: President Trump and the Trump Campaign have never endorsed Tommy Tuberville.” The letter was first reported by The New York Times.

According to the Sessions campaign, the mailer in question that drew the objections of the Trump campaign, was sent several days before Trump made his March 10 endorsement of Tuberville.

Greitens’ re-emergence fuels speculation of a comeback

O’FALLON, Mo. — Former Missouri Gov. Eric Greitens has re-emerged after nearly two years out of the public eye, fueling speculation that his resignation after a tawdry scandal didn’t kill his political aspirations.

He won’t run for governor this year, at least not as a Republican.

The filing deadline was Tuesday. But Greitens could still run as an independent, which would require 10,000 petition signatures by July 27. Local media have suggested he could be a candidate for the U.S. Senate in 2022 if incumbent Republican Roy Blunt retires.

Greitens, who turns 46 next week, hasn’t said if he’ll seek political office again, but he hasn’t said he won’t. In February, he told St. Louis radio host Jamie Allman: “Anything is possible.”

Greitens did not respond to a Facebook message seeking comment, and his phone number and email are not publicly listed. Phone messages left with his attorney and a public relations specialist who recently worked with him were not returned.

He certainly has the look of a politician once again.

Twice this week, Greitens made public appearances drop- ping off protective masks to ease the shortage caused by the corona-virus — on Monday at a fire house in St. Louis and on Tuesday with the police in suburban St. Louis City. He has done some recent interviews, been increasingly active on social media and emailed a commentary on Fox News on March 10, the day of the Missouri presidential primary.

University political scientist Ken Warren said Greitens is clearly “testing the waters.” But Warren doubts if the former governor can ever win support from the Republican establishment or big-money donors.

“I don’t think he can make a comeback,” Warren said. “Not that some people haven’t overcome these things, but he was portrayed as a real dark character.”

Greitens was a rising GOP star after his 2016 election, a charismatic former Navy SEAL officer and Rhodes Scholar, founder of a non-profit benefiting veterans. He didn’t hide his ambitions, serving as chairman of the Missouri Republican Party and running for the Republican nomination for president.

Those ambitions seemingly came crashing down over the course of a few months, after Greitens was indicted on an invasion-of-privacy charge in February 2018 in St. Louis, accused of taking a compromising photo of a woman without her consent during a 2015 extramarital affair.
A love letter to video games

BY TODD MARTENS
Los Angeles Times

My favorite childhood bedtime stories were not “Charlotte’s Web” or “The Hobbit.” No, my most treasured night-time texts were “King’s Quest” and “The Secret of Monkey Island.”

Garius Threepwood, the hero of “Monkey Island,” would never be mistaken for a creation of Robert Louis Stevenson, but he was perhaps the first pirate to come equipped with a rubber chicken—a rubber chicken that could be used with an aerial cable as a sort of makeshift zip line. It was an early lesson in looking at every object that surrounds us as an item of potential discovery.

Of course, “King’s Quest” and “The Secret of Monkey Island” are not books at all. They’re early attempts at merging storytelling, animation-worthy visuals and gameplay. So yes, they’re games. But even today, when games are arguably the largest entertainment medium and the industry best equipped for a stay-inside, work-from-home lifestyle, that word carries a stigma, a symbol of a childish medium not on par with the literature of books or the authorship of cinema.

Sometimes when I mention this as an adult, I receive a look of sadness. Shouldn’t, says someone’s quick glance, an adult, I receive a look of sadness. Sometimes when I mention this as an adult, I receive a look of sadness. Sometimes when I mention this as an adult, I receive a look of sadness. Sometimes when I mention this as an adult, I receive a look of sadness. Sometimes when I mention this as an adult, I receive a look of sadness. Sometimes when I mention this as an adult, I receive a look of sadness.

Sure, they did that too, but I just talk about that.

Games are a playground, a place to see what happens when we do what we aren’t told, and a world in which failure is embraced — welcomed, even — as a way to learn. I won’t say “Dungeons & Dragons” is Shakespearean, but that doesn’t mean it can’t be a formative text.

In fact, the defining stories of my life were interactive ones. So much so that since childhood I’ve been chasing the high of joy and the play. Play has shaped all of my interests, from theater to punk rock to theme parks, all of which have elements of make-believe and idealism as well as an anyone-can-take-part ethos. And of late, drowned in the stress of life in 2020 and the fear of contracting a vicious virus while living half a country away from all my family and loved ones, play provided not just comfort but a sense of normalcy.

Active play

More important, at a time in which my mind is restless and unable to avoid drifting to a negative space, games have given me the only sort of engagement capable of keeping me occupied. New releases just this month, including “Animal Crossing: New Horizons,” “Doom Eternal” and “Ori and the Will of the Wisps,” all drastically different, have provided various forms of self-care.

“Animal Crossing” offers stability, a place to check in daily and complete simple tasks, while “Ori and the Will of the Wisps” is a modern fairy tale that allows one to power through fear. “Doom Eternal,” though full of grotesque demons and cartoonish violence, is the requisite hero’s journey/power fantasy, only its brazenly complex level design keeps me leaning forward to figure out how to navigate the world.

I’ve tried, every night since March 20, to watch the movie “Onward,” which Disney released for purchase after it became clear we wouldn’t be gathering in movie theaters anytime soon, but I can’t get past five or 10 minutes without wanting to text a friend or a family member, or read that article on symptoms of COVID-19 or triple-check if it’s OK for me to hug my cat (I’ve been told it is — for now). While I have long believed that all art requires a form of interactivity, be it attempting to connect with an artist’s vision or the ability to activate our own imagination, in times of high anxiety what I need to regain a sense of peace is to actively participate — to play.

I cringe any time I see the words “escapism” or “frivolity” associated with videogames, that al- lowed me to wander, explore and talk to digital creations to try and figure out ways to get them to do what I needed. If you could get out of the boat on Disney- land’s Pirates of the Caribbean and role-play, it would be sort of like “Monkey Island.”

And thus, more than providing a sense of goals or tasks, games demand that I be fully present. Much has already been written about the potential social aspects of games, and in the past week alone social media has been filled with images of players sharing fruit and bugs with one another in the latest “Animal Crossing” (it makes sense in the game). But games also provide a kind of illusion of social interaction, a living-it-as-it-happens sensation that’s present even when playing alone. Whether it’s “Death Stranding,” the latest in the “Super Mario Bros.” series or even a highly literate work such as “Astrologaster,” a comedic take on astrologer-expert Shakespearian-era plague that can be played with no game knowledge, whatever happens in a game exists as a moment, one that, even in strictly narrative-driven games, likely won’t be repeated exactly as it just occurred. Like live music or live theater, we have just participated in an experience.

Getting topical

I sometimes joke that I’m out of step, pop-culture-wise, among my non-gamer peers. Playing games and writing about them doesn’t allow me much time to take in many movies or a full television series. But I’ve never felt as if I’m missing something or am out of touch. Many of today’s best games, with winding narratives that allow you to explore a place from differing points of view, are relatively akin to modern television. They are also just as topical. “Mutazione,” for instance, a game about family, traditions and healing the Earth, rewards only if we take the time to get to know each and every one of the game’s lovingly crafted weirdos. While there’s an underlying theme of climate change, there’s also personal drama and family histories to discover. Though leading to one conclusion, “there’s a great deal of choice into which A, B and C plot you dig deeper down into, and who you make deeper connections with, and how much of the complex a signifier that can do. We certainly need more of that in the world and its inhabitants (among the primary influences cited by Nicklin was “Star-Trek: Deep Space Nine”). But we also lean in, and decide whose stories we explore most, or how we respond to them.

The early adventure games I played with my father — “The Secret of Monkey Island,” “King’s Quest” — were far more linear and also loaded with some rather obtuse puzzles, but the underlying framework was there. We didn’t watch a world or even connect with one; we play it like an instrument, attempting to unravel the hidden tunes laid out by developers.

Games then were not just a way to learn about people and life, but a way to practice understanding.

Or, in the words of USC’s Gotis, play is “a way to rehearse emotions, and to learn how to do things. If nothing else, play is a way to test yourself and see what you can do. We certainly need more of that in younger ages, but you need it pervasively in order to survive an evolutionary need for it, and an existential need for it, and people are discovering the value of it right now.”

Todd Martens covers a mix of interactive entertainment (video games) and pop music for the Los Angeles Times.

In times of high anxiety, what I need to regain a sense of peace is to actively participate — TO PLAY.
If Animal Crossing: New Horizons is one of the hottest games around, Nintendo can probably thank COVID-19. The game was released just as restrictions were starting in my area. When I went to pick up a copy, all that was left was downloadable code — not my preference for a game on Nintendo's Switch, since the console has relatively little memory for game storage. I soon discovered that Switches were even more difficult to find than physical copies of Animal Crossing. In fact, a check of my usual online sources revealed that Switch consoles had doubled in price over the previous few weeks. When I asked one retailer the reason, he said, “As soon as the governor closed schools, parents bought them up to keep their kids quiet.” However, I suspect there’s more to the game’s popularity than that. The franchise has droves of loyal followers and gains new converts all the time. On its face, it’s a cute and friendly game about building a community. But it’s actually a deeply engaging game that’s adept at camouflaging the fact that all you do is grind for resources. The challenges are fun and the rewards are dealt out slowly but surely to guarantee that you want to keep going. The last installment of Animal Crossing I reviewed was 2008’s City Folk on the old Wii console. I’ll admit that my shunning of the franchise probably has something to do with the fact that it contains absolutely no assault rifles, swords, lasers, aliens or zombies. So, I decided I might need a refresher before getting my hands on the new edition. I broke out the old game with its motion-sensitive controls and sat down to play for about an hour. Then my wife arrived and took control — literally — for the next few hours. She ended up with soreness from the motion controls, but she was hooked again. Within days, my house became an animal crossing of sorts, with my wife, my sons and their girlfriends gathering to play together — thanks to a second Switch. I have to admit that I had as much fun watching them as playing myself. The game begins with your character — looking like an 8-year-old human — joining an effort to colonize a deserted island. Unless you play with friends, everyone else on the island is an animal. They are led by Tom Nook, a raccoon and a dedicated capitalist. You quickly discover that you’re in debt to Tom and need to pay off your loans by gathering and selling resources. This launches your career of fishing, wood-cutting, fruit-picking, bug-catching and fossil hunting. You can sell these items to pay off your debt or to buy new items, or you can use them to craft tools and furniture for your home. Since you’re a pioneer at the beginning of the game, you start in a tent. However, you’ll soon want to build a house, and then expand it, and then add a room, and then add a room, and then more and more. All of which lands you deeper in debt ...
Broader Horizons

Nintendo explains philosophy behind Animal Crossing’s big changes, like gender expression and terraforming

By Elise Favis

Special to The Washington Post

Animal Crossing: New Horizons comes with large-scale changes like terraforming, crafting and more customization. Through that, Nintendo has been careful not to sacrifice the soul of the long-running franchise, bringing a careful balance of old and new.

The Washington Post spoke to the game’s director, Aya Kyogoku, and producer, Hisashi Nogami, to better understand the motivations behind these significant changes.

Along the way, the conversation also touched on their thoughts on eliminating gender restrictions for character customization and how their team in Japan is bracing for coronavirus-related hurdles in post-launch development.

New Horizons’ deserted island concept can be traced back to right after the Japanese release of Animal Crossing: New Leaf in 2012. Early development began shortly after, even before the team launched down to produce New Leaf Welcome Amiibo, the upgraded version from 2016.

Kyogoku said the development cycle for New Horizons kick-started before the team even began “thinking or knowing about Nintendo Switch hardware.”

The unknowns around future hardware didn’t stop the team from being ambitious. With the introduction of crafting and terraforming, players wield more control over the aesthetic of their town than ever before. Nogami and Kyogoku explained they wanted to make the game welcoming to veteran players and accessible to newcomers, by keeping much of the core gameplay true to the series and sprinkling in new elements to make the experience still feel fresh.

Adding crafting was also a way to avoid players from running out of things to do during off hours when shops close, an issue in previous Animal Crossing games.

“Because the Animal Crossing series is tied to the real-time clock, there are users who want to play late at night or who want to play early in the morning,” Kyogoku said. “By giving those users an option to craft, we thought this would be a new way for them to play and to acquire [craftable] items.”

Terraforming was also a way to address unanticipated player behavior from past games. Kyogoku explained that, looking at earlier entries in the series, users would repeatedly reset and start over to choose the town layout they wanted.

In New Horizons, your island is completely malleable, even after that decision, bringing more flexibility to the gameplay.

“Some may have thought that, ‘Oh, this would have been a perfect layout if there was a river here or if the river wasn’t there,’” Kyogoku said. “Well, for users like that, we were able to give them what they weren’t able to achieve before.”

New Horizon’s flexible nature extends to character customization too. Clothing items and hairstyles aren’t restricted by gender, giving players more options on how to represent themselves in the game. This level of fine-tuning your character is “not just about gender,” Kyogoku said, but relates to the team’s overall feeling that “society is shifting to valuing a lot of people’s different identities.”

“We basically wanted to create a game where users didn’t really have to think about gender or if they wanted to think about gender, they’re also able to,” she said.

In another shift, the developers sought to make time traveling (the controversial act of jumping into the past or future by tweaking the system clock, which some fans think is the wrong way to play) less impactful in terms of in-game features. Traveling has been used as a shortcut in previous Animal Crossing games, so you don’t have to wait overnight to see progress.

Terraforming and crafting are gameplay systems that aren’t tied to your system clock, so players can continue those activities into the long hours of the night.

Consequences for time travel still exist: turnips go rotten if you jump ahead to the following week. Time traveling is discouraged, but Kyogoku and Nogami don’t consider it cheating.

“We think that in order for the players to play for a very long time, and also for players to share the experience with their friends or family, we do think that playing without traveling would probably be the ideal way,” Nogami said.

As Animal Crossing is a game that can be played for a number of years, its designers are keeping the long-term in mind. Kyogoku and Nogami’s plan for New Horizons includes seasonal events slated to appear in the game in the form of DLC. Players won’t be able to simply fast-forward through time to experience them.

“Adding all the seasonal events by updates wasn’t our way to shun away time travel by any means,” Kyogoku said. “But Animal Crossing is a game that users are able to play and enjoy throughout the year.”

Japan, like much of the world today, has been facing a coronavirus outbreak. The country has recorded more than 1,000 cases, and supply has slowed for Animal Crossing-themed Nintendo Switches in Japan due to Chinese factories shutting their doors, but Nintendo said this is a problem specifically for that region and not for North America.

Kyogoku and Nogami, who both work out of Nintendo’s Kyoto office in Japan, are paying close attention to the global pandemic’s potential impact on post-launch content. Development for these updates “is still going,” Kyogoku said, but the team may need to adjust internally moving forward should the coronavirus crisis worsen.

“We’re not sure if we have to shift anything, but I think we have to be flexible,” she said.

At this time, the Japanese development team is working in the office every day, but the team’s hours have changed so employees can avoid rush hour traffic.

“In terms of the development team, I do have to think about their health and well-being as well,” Nogami said.
Infectious health

The COVID-19 pandemic has inspired many to make better choices

BY DAPHNE MILLER

A s unemployment and gun sales spike and Quarantini recipes circulate on the internet, it’s easy for me, a family physician, to focus on the noninfectious ways that the novel coronavirus is attacking our health. “I’m as worried about losing control of my diabetes, as I am about the virus,” one of my patients told me last month during a video medical visit, describing how sedentary she had become since the lockdown went into effect in California’s Bay Area.

“Since I’m working from home, I ...” replied: “Since I’m working from home, I ...”

“I’ve heard grumbles about health care, but I’ve been encouraged by a video of a yoga session online,” she added. “I didn’t realize that I was so out of shape.”

Ronin DeVamas, who describes himself as “an obese (240 pounds) introvert with a desk job,” replied: “Since I’m working from home, I ...”

“Can get up and lift my weights whenever I please, without feeling embarrassed.”

“Lost 5 pounds from not dining out.”

“Started drawing more often.”

“Take noon naps to re-energize for afternoon work.”

“Wake up early more regularly.”

People in the fitness industry are seeing indications that physical activity might increase, despite the fact that gyms are closed and many of us are being told to stay home. In the past week, our subscriber numbers have tripled,” said Brandon Copeland, co-founder of Khepera Wellness in Washington, D.C., a yoga studio without walls, which he founded to serve the black community.

“My mission all along has been to help people have a wellness lifestyle, and now people are at home and suddenly have the time to take care of themselves.”

While Khepera has always offered virtual classes, brick-and-mortar fitness businesses are also refashioning themselves as online community centers, offering both workouts and the opportunity to connect.

In my neighborhood, a new sight has become commonplace: households exercising together. Yesterday, one clan emerged from their home and started doing wind sprints up and down my block. I’ve heard grumbles about “groups of people out exercising and not respecting the 6-foot rule.” But those groups might be made up of roommates or family members.

More time in nature

Reports from around the country indicate that plenty of Americans are partaking in “forest bathing,” or time in nature, as a way to counteract the inactivity and isolation of shelter-in-place orders. Normally this would be registered as a positive health trend, but in this moment many park and public health officials are worried that the risk of transmitting the virus in overcrowded parks might outweigh the health benefits.

While witnessing a record number of visitors this past weekend, some parks are shutting down parking lots and access roads while others are staying open but reminding visitors to comply with social distancing. Hopefully we can up our daily dose of “green medicine” without getting each other sick or overwhelming park facilities.

More home cooking

Home cooking from scratch, an activity generally considered to be a good indicator of healthful eating, also appears to be on the upswing. Slow cooker liners, Instapot and Lodge cast iron skillets are high on Amazon’s “Home & Kitchen” bestseller list. Kelsey Burrow, public relations representative for the popular recipe site FOOD52, reports that traffic increased 25% in the past week.

“That’s the kind of week-over-week growth we saw leading up to Thanksgiving last year (usually our biggest week of the year),” she said in an email. And the No. 1 dish this week is not a Quarantini or a gooey dessert, it is Charles Phan’s Vietnamese Chicken recipe, which falls squarely in the healthy comfort food category.

More gardening

Another Amazon bestseller right now is the 40 variety of non-GMO seed survival vegetable packet. It’s hard to think of a more healthful pursuit than growing one’s own food; it guarantees you a dependable supply of nutrient-rich ingredients and a workout that might replace going to the gym (you can expend 200 to 400 calories per hour in the garden).

More mindfulness

Meanwhile, Apple’s App Store is showing a dramatic bump in downloads for mental health apps — top picks include Calm and Headspace — to help with guided meditation, conscious breathing and mindfulness. Of course, this is a sad reflection of our collective distress. Still, it’s hopeful that so many are relying on effective and safe coping tools to get through this disaster.

Mindful breathing, for example, has been shown to regulate sleep and lower blood pressure and cortisol levels.

More healthful activities mentioned by people responding to my Twitter query were drinking less alcohol, trying to quit smoking and vaping, driving less and spending quality time with housemates, family and pets.

Clearer air

From a public health standpoint, one of the most hopeful fallouts from this pandemic has been its effect on our atmosphere. As we close factories, take vehicles off the road and airplanes out of the sky, air pollutants and greenhouse gas levels have plummeted. While it’s difficult not to view these dramatic improvements as ill-gotten gains, they do give us a glimpse of how much healthier our environment would be if we reduced the emissions from manufacturing, mining, transportation and agriculture.

Perhaps, if we protect what nature we have left, we can prevent the next pandemic.

While it feels wrong to talk about silver linings, I cannot help but wonder: Will we sustain these changes post-COVID-19? If so, what kind of impact might they have on our long-term health as a nation?
Man playing with gun shoots pregnant woman

VA KING GEORGE — A Virginia man shot a pregnant woman while playing with a gun, authorities said.

William Noble Brown IV, 27, was charged with multiple felonies after he called police Monday to report a woman he lived with was shot in the arm, The Free Lance Star reported.

As of Wednesday, the 25-year-old victim was being hospitalized for her injuries.

Police said other children were in the home when Brown fired the gun he thought to be unloaded.

Coyote in pack attacks 5-year-old girl in park

CA DUBLIN — A 5-year-old girl was hospitalized after a coyote attacked her in a San Francisco Bay Area park, officials said.

The girl was walking with her family when a pack of five or six coyotes approached and one of them bit her. The girl's family quickly intervened and the animals fled, park officials said.

The Dublin Hills Regional Park was closed to visitors after the child was attacked Wednesday, the East Bay Times reported.

The girl was taken to UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital Oakland for treatment of non-life-threatening injuries.

The park was closed to visitors while parks staff coordinates with California Department of Fish and Wildlife officials to locate, trap and remove the coyotes, parks spokesman Dave Mason said.

Tractor-trailer hauling toilet paper catches fire

TX HUTCHINS — A tractor-trailer hauling toilet paper crashed and caught fire near Dallas early Wednesday, spilling the hot commodity all over an interstate.

Police said that a caller reported a man with a gun in a dispute over the return of a Microsoft Xbox on Monday afternoon, the Columbus Dispatch reported.

The man faces a parole violation and a felony weapons charge.

Officers said they found the 3 to 4 feet alligator in an aquarium in a closet while searching the home.

The woman who lived in the apartment where the altercation took place admitted to authorities that the alligator was hers and that she did not have the proper permit or insurance.

An officer handled the reptile until Ohio Department of Agriculture officials took custody of the alligator.

There were three toddlers and several children in the apartment, police said.

Officers find alligator during robbery response

OH COLUMBUS — Columbus Police discovered a live alligator while responding to an alleged robbery involving a gun and an Xbox.

Police said that a caller reported a man with a gun in a dispute over the return of a Microsoft Xbox on Monday afternoon, the Columbus Dispatch reported.

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Soaking it all in

A girl gets a close look at a waterfall Wednesday in Chagrin Falls, Ohio.

The fire shut down westbound lanes of Interstate 20 near Interstate 45 in Hutchins, the Texas Department of Transportation said.

The driver of the truck is OK, officials said.

The toilet paper appeared to be large rolls typically used in stores, restaurants and other businesses. Texas Department of Transportation officials said the load of toilet paper “burned extensively,” according to Dallas TV station WFAA.

Toilet paper has been in high demand amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Investigators: Fire at church ruled arson

LA BATON ROUGE — A fire just after midnight Wednesday at a Louisiana church was deliberately set, investigators said.

The Baton Rouge Fire Department, in a news release, said it happened at Broadmoor United Methodist Church in Baton Rouge around 12:15 a.m.

When firefighters arrived, authorities said they found the church's detached meeting room, which is used as a Boy Scout and Girl Scout location, engulfed in flames, news outlets reported.

The blaze was contained within 15 minutes.

When firefighters arrived, authorities said they found the church's detached meeting room, which is used as a Boy Scout and Girl Scout location, engulfed in flames, news outlets reported.

The fire didn't spread to the church’s main building, but the meeting room was destroyed.

There were no reports of injuries.

Police: Man hit officer with shirt after stop

NM HOBBY — A New Mexico man is facing charges after police say he was arrested for drunken driving and threw his clothes at an officer.

The Hobbs News-Sun reports Alonso Martinez, of Eunice, was taken into custody following a traffic stop in Hobbs over suspicion of driving while intoxicated.

According to police, an officer found an open container of Michelob Ultra in the car’s center console. When asked how many beers Martinez had, a report said he told the officer he had about “50-70” beers.

Martinez then allegedly told the officer in Spanish that if he had a weapon, he would have killed him already.

Police say Martinez was taken to Hobbs City Jail to detox when, during a clothing exchange, he threw his shirt in the face of the officer.

The report says Martinez then kicked one of his shoes at the officer's leg.

Martinez was charged with battery upon a peace officer and aggravated DWI.

7 mountain lions killed in season, officials say

NE LINCOLN — Hunters have killed seven mountain lions in northwest Nebraska’s Pine Ridge area, state officials said as the third season since 2014 closed Tuesday.

They took the limit of three males and one female in the area’s south subunit, ending its season Feb. 5, the Lincoln Journal Star reported. But hunters needed an extended season in the north subunit to take two males and one female.

Some of the lions wore ear tags or radio collars from an earlier research project, said Sam Wilson, furbearer and big-game manager for the state Game and Parks Commission.

The largest lion taken was a male weighing 171 pounds.

Fire officials save cold kitten stuck on a roof

GA MARIETTA — A kitten stuck on a roof in the cold was saved by firefighters in Georgia.

The 6-week-old kitten was nursed back to health Wednesday after her rescue, Cobb County Fire and Emergency Services said in a post on Facebook.

The female kitten quickly recovered after she was given milk, cat food, and was warmed in towels, a fire official told the Marietta Daily Journal.

The department decided to name the kitten “Shingles” after asking followers on social media to help name the feline, a fire official said.

Man exposes himself after hacking into class

FL ORLANDO — A man exposed himself to students after hacking into an online class being held by a public school in Florida, school officials said Thursday.

The man gained unauthorized access to the Zoom video conferencing instructional lesson on Wednesday and exposed himself to the class, Orange County Public Schools said in a letter to teachers.

The letter encouraged teachers to use the “waiting room” function in Zoom, which allows the host to control when a participant joins a meeting.

The letter said the case was being handled by law enforcement. Orange County Public School officials didn't provide further details, but said that Zoom wasn’t a district-supported application for teachers video conferencing needs.

From wire reports
Start preparing National Guard to police

BY JOHN ALLEN, JOHN DONOHUE, RICK FUENTES and MICHAEL O’HANLON
Special to The Washington Post

A
grily, the U.S. armed forces are preparing in important ways to help home in the struggle against the coronavirus. Well over 10,000 military personnel, including 15,000 Air Force National Guard have been mobilized to help with setting up more hospital capacity, transporting supplies and providing medical care. In addition, Air Force have “Individual Ready Reserve” status are being activated to take advantage of their particular skills in medicine or other crucial fields. They are typically doing so under Title 32 of the U.S. code, whereby they are controlled by their states’ governors but remain controlled by the federal government.

The national Guard is much larger, and more formidable, role for the armed forces in this crisis: They might need to backstop and reinforce local and state police forces for a week or two. With 15,000 New York City Police Department recently reporting sick due to illness or self-quarantine, and even higher absentee rates reported elsewhere, the city might soon need major assistance with patrolling streets, enforcing restrictions on movement, and other police tasks. Such police work is legal for the National Guard, though not the active-duty military, and many cities and states are using the Guard. It might be the most prudent thing we can do to reduce the risk of deteriorating social stability and security.

Clearly, this step will be momentous. If not handled well, it could jeopardize not only the military’s mission but also the standing of the military in society. Conspiracy theorists falsely predicting martial law would have a field day. Beyond these intangibles, there will be concrete, difficult situations to manage. The National Guard, if deployed under Title 32, must be able to monitor individuals crossing the border from Mexico, report on those with symptoms, and enforce social distancing to the degree we are now doing that.

The national Guard and the Guard Reserve now number nearly 1 mil-

We can’t afford to let the virus decide the timeline

BY GARY ABERNATHY
Special to The Washington Post

HILLSBORO, Ohio

Those of us who disagree with re-

We often hear about two scenarios — los-

As Americans, we can’t be satisfied with

Gary Abernathy, a contributing columnist for The Washington Post, is a freelance writer in Ohio.

Saturday, April 4, 2020

Page 18
Eugene Sheffer Crossword

**ACROSS**
1. Part of DJIA
4. Get ready, briefly
8. Probability
12. Somewhat (Suff.)
13. Memory method
14. Simple
15. Inventor Whitney
16. Actor Cumming
17. Oodles
18. Snack served with salsa
21. Donkey
22. Actress Long
23. Feather in one’s cap
26. HDTV brand
27. Marry
30. Seniors’ org.
31. Haw predecesor
32. Vatican VIP
33. Victory
34. Physique
35. Hawkeyes
36. “Ben—”
37. Yoko of music
38. Inadvertently revealing comments
45. Meander
46. Letter after epsilon
47. Fan’s cry
48. Thomas Edison
49. North African port
50. Hot temper
51. Adolescent
52. “Uh-uh”
53. Reggae relative

**DOWN**
1. Food regimen
2. Norwegian seaport
3. Blender sound
4. Laud
5. Bakery buys
6. And others (Lat.)
7. Act of contortion
8. Nebraska city
9. Sandwich shop
10. Let fall
11. Match parts
12. Pack (down)
23. Dog’s foot
24. Chou En-
25. Samovar
26. Flushed
27. Dazzle
28. Ecc. watchdog
29. Lair
31. Where earth meets sky
32. Motel amenity
34. Future flower
35. Wacky
36. Mortal
37. Like draft beer
38. Dorm alternative
39. Actor’s part
40. Roof overhang
41. Prefix with dynamic
42. Rainbow
43. Picnic spot
44. The Mels’ old home

**CANDORVILLE**

**CRUXMOTHORPE?! THINK I’VE DISCOVERED A RHINOCEROS-LIKE PLANET!**

**CARPE DIEM**

**BEEF BAILEY**

**BITZO**

**CRYPTOQUIP**

SKRUD-ZTL BUPSNAPSQ
NFZPYOPC FL JNHTZ CYKOKSR
DPABNYQYL YPBHQXPAPSD
XQYZ: HNQSPY PXHKBZPZ

Yesterday’s Cryptoquip: WHEN SOME PLAYGROUND APPARATUSES NO LONGER HAVE RELEVANCE, YOU MIGHT CALL THEM MOOT SWINGS.

Today’s Cryptoquip Clue: Z equals S
Every controversial topic has two sides. We look into the ones that matter to you.

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Japan’s baseball, soccer seasons again delayed amid pandemic

TOKYO — The Japanese professional baseball and soccer seasons will be further delayed as the country grapples with the outbreak of the coronavirus.

Japanese professional baseball had aimed to open its season on April 24 after previously pushing it back from March 20.

After a meeting Friday of a jointcoronavirus task force established by the NPB and soccer’s J-League, Japanese baseball commissioner Atsushi Saito said there was no option but to postpone opening day again.

"Unfortunately things are getting worse now," Saito said. "We'll have a meeting with all 12 teams, but it appears like we'll have to be prepared for an extension to our (postponement)."

Early last month, in February, the J-League’s first and second divisions suspended play after the month’s J-League chairman Mitsuru Murai said it would be difficult to go ahead with the planned re-start of the division on March 7.

"I think it’s unrealistic to say that we can hold the games as scheduled," Murai said.

A number of NPB and J-League players have been infected with the new virus.

On Tuesday, Japan and Vissel Kobe defender Gotoku Sakai became the first player from the J-League to test positive for COVID-19. That followed last week’s announcement that three players from the Hanshin Tigers, of Japan’s professional baseball league, had also tested positive.

The new coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms for most people. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness or death.

Tokyo confirmed 97 more cases on Thursday, the largest single-day number of infections yet in the capital. Japan has recorded more than 2,600 cases of COVID-19 and 63 deaths from the disease.

Associated Press

The Dallas Cowboys are taking a chance on suspended defensive end Aldon Smith, Smith, whose playing status with the league remains uncertain, last played in 2015, when he was suspended for violating the league’s substance-abuse policy while with the Oakland Raiders.

The Cowboys now have two suspended pass rushers under contract in Smith and Randy Gregory.

"It’s not really clear where Smith stands in the reinstatement process. Gregory is seeking reinstatement," Smith said.

Smith, 30, has several legal issues as a player with San Francisco and Oakland. He was first suspended with the 49ers in 2014 before receiving his reinstatement.

Wilson voiced his support of Smith. "I think you have to be thorough in this process because we have the time and the opportunity," he added. "And when you have time like this you need to utilize it."

Wilson was pleased with the improved style of play and structure he saw in the Sharks in 37 games under Boughner, who took over after Peter DeBoer was fired on Dec. 11.

Wilson, however, stressed there is plenty he wants to evaluate regarding a team that will likely miss the playoffs for only the second time in 16 seasons, and was last in the Western Conference when play stopped on March 12.

It’s unclear when play will resume, and whether the NHL will complete the final month of the regular season or go directly into the playoffs.

The Sharks (29-36-5) went 14-20-3 under Boughner. The record was mostly a reflection of a rash of injuries sideling San Jose’s top stars.

Wilson was more definitive in providing injury updates, saying forward Tomas Hertl

The Associated Press

By JOHN WAWROW

San Jose Sharks general manager Doug Wilson isn’t ready to remove the interim head coach tag from Bob Boughner’s title yet.

But Boughner’s job is not officially over with the NHL on hiatus due to the coronavirus, Wilson voiced his support by saying Boughner has the edge in taking over next season on a permanent basis.

"Does Bob know our needs and what we’re doing in this process? Absolutely," Wilson said during a conference call Thursday.

"But I think you have to be thorough in this process because we have the time and the opportunity," he added. "And when you have time like this you need to utilize it."

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Wilson also addressed the status of Joe Thornton, who is playing on a one-year contract and completing his 22nd NHL season, and 15th in San Jose.

"Everybody knows how we feel about Joe," Wilson said, adding he has regular discussions with 40-year-old forward.

Wilson was non-committal when asked if there’s a place in next year’s lineup for Thornton, saying only: "He’s a special man."
Comeback Pack stun Cougars

Charles’ putback completes N.C. State’s improbable run in 1983

**By Dick Joyce**

*Associated Press*

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — Lorenzo Charles’ dunk shot with one second remaining fulfilled North Carolina State’s improbable dream Monday night, giving the Wolfpack a 54-52 victory over top-ranked Houston for the NCAA basketball championship.

Charles, a 6-foot-7 sophomore, grabbed a 30-foot shot by Dereck Whittenburg with four seconds remaining that fell short, and stuff it home. The Wolfpack, champions of the Atlantic Coast Conference, became the first team to win the national championship in a season in which it lost 10 games. The old mark was won by Indiana in 1981.

North Carolina State had taken time out with 44 seconds left and stalled to get the last shot. The Wolfpack won their 10th game in a row to finish the season 26-10, with six of those season-ending victories by four points or less. Houston, known for its shot-blocking and explosive dunking ability, had its 26-game winning streak snapped. The Cougars finished with a 31-3 record, suffering its 26-game winning streak snapped. The Cougars finished with a 31-3 record, suffering its 26-game winning streak snapped.

As Charles stufled the ball through the basket and the final second ticked off, N.C. State players leaped into the air, while Houston’s players slumped to the floor in disbelief.

North Carolina then was designed for Lorenzo Charles, and I told him to be ready for it.”

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Spartans AD defends Izzo after ESPN allegations

Associated Press

EAST LANSING, Mich. — Michigan State athletic director Bill Beekman defended basketball coach Tom Izzo on Thursday after Izzo was accused in an ESPN report of contacting a witness who was part of a 2017 criminal sexual conduct investigation involving one of his players.

According to a police report obtained by ESPN, Michigan State student Brayden Smith — son of former Spartans player Steve Smith — was with basketball player Brock Washington on the night a female student said Washington forcibly groped her. When police interviewed Smith, he said he had already been contacted by Izzo and assistant coaches Dwayne Stephens and Mike Garland. They “asked (Smith) if he was OK and if there was anything that he felt they could prove their case to a jury,” ESPN reported.

Said Beekman: “My routine is checking after dinner, going-stir-crazy crowd to demonstrate his philosophy. And Los Angeles Lakers coach Frank Vogel is spending some of his time watching old games, binging on Netflix and watching movies and playing some of his time watching old games, binging on Netflix and watching movies and playing

Dallas coach Rick Carlisle also went the video-message route, doing one for the going-stir-crazy crowd to demonstrate his “Balance, Balance, Shot Drill” that allows players to work on their shooting form even when they don’t have access to a court or a rim.

[End of article]
MIAMI — Orlando’s Steve Clifford figures he’s like every other NBA coach right now: Wake up, go to whatever now serves as the office, study his own team, maybe think about possible opponents, and resume planning.

Of course, nobody knows what they’re planning for — or when these plans will get used.

A stoppage in play doesn’t mean vacation time has arrived for NBA coaches, especially those like Clifford in position to take their teams to the postseason — assuming this pandemic-interrupted season is able to resume. They’re all spending more time at home, not able to run practices, but none seem to be sitting idly.

“Not knowing the restart date is the toughest challenge professionally,” Clifford said. “Obviously, we’re all limited in what we can do, and basketball takes a back seat right now to family and health. But I will say this: When I talk to our guys, the one common question that comes up is ‘When do you think we can start again?’”

And that’s a question with no answer.

Coaches spending shutdown studying rosters and preparing for playoffs that may never start

BY TIM REYNOLDS
Associated Press

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TO OUR READERS

As the sports world pauses to join the rest of the world in fighting the coronavirus pandemic, you will see fewer sports stories in Stars and Stripes. We look forward to resuming our normal coverage when the leagues and governing bodies determine it is safe for athletes and fans to return to competition.