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US jobless aid applications near 10 million

Associated Press

WASHINGTON—More than 6.6 million Americans applied for unemployment benefits last week — doubling a record set just one week earlier — a sign that layoffs are accelerating in the midst of the coronavirus.

The stunning report Thursday from the Labor Department showed mounting job cuts against the backdrop of economies in the U.S. and abroad that have almost certainly sunk into a severe recession as businesses close across the world.

Applications for unemployment benefits generally reflect the pace of layoffs. Combined with last week's report that 3.3 million people sought unemployment aid two weeks ago, the U.S. economy has now suffered nearly 10 million layoffs in the past few weeks — far exceeding the figure for any corresponding period on record.

"This kind of upending of the labor market in such a short time is unheard of," said Heidi Shierholz, an economist at the Economic Policy Institute, a progressive think tank.

Some of last week's jobless claims are likely delayed filings from the previous week, when state offices that handle unemployment benefits were overwhelmed by a surge of online and telephone claims. Yet many of those offices are still struggling to process all the claims they have received. As a result, applications for benefits will likely remain extraordinarily high over the coming weeks.

The magnitude of the layoffs has led many economists to envision as many as 20 million lost jobs by the end of April. That would be more than double the 8.7 million jobs lost during the Great Recession. The unemployment rate could spike

to as high as 15% this month, above the previous record of 10.8% set during a deep recession in 1982.

Employers are slashing their payrolls to try to stay afloat because their revenue has collapsed, especially at restaurants, hotels, gyms, movie theaters and other venues that depend on face-to-face interaction. Auto sales have sunk, and factories have closed.

More than two-thirds of the U.S. population are under stay-at-home orders, imposed by most states. That has intensified pressure on businesses, most of which face rent, loans and other bills that must be paid.

The White House and Congress expanded the unemployment benefits system in last week's \$2.2 trillion economic rescue package. That legislation added \$600 a week in jobless aid, on top of what re-

cipients receive from their states. This will enable many lower-income workers to manage their expenses, increase their purchasing power and support the economy.

It also makes many more people eligible for jobless aid, including the self-employed, contractors and so-called "gig economy" workers such as Uber and Lyft drivers.

Kathryn Lickteig, a cook in Kansas City, signed up for unemployment compensation last week after the city shut down dine-in restaurants. She is hopeful that the extra \$600 will help her ride out the shutdown instead of having to look for an interim job.

"It has eased my mind so much," she said. "I do not have to actively go out and expose myself to the public and possibly get sick. I can stay home now and do my part in social distancing."

Marines who lose jobs in force plan will have options

By CAITLIN M. KENNEY
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Tank crews, military police or bridge builders in the Marines who saw their jobs eliminated in the new 10-year plan to restructure the force will not be kicked out of the service right away, the commandant said Wednesday.

"No one's getting a pink slip saying, 'Time to go home,'" Gen. David Berger told reporters. "And we deliberately, intentionally set a timeframe a decade out."

Last year, Berger initiated a review of how the Marine Corps needs to transform into a force that will be needed in 10 years. The new plan released last week lays out what Berger

and naval officials and civilians concluded are the needed units and capabilities for the Marine Corps.

During the next 10 years, the force plan has the Marines getting rid of all their tanks, bridge building companies and law enforcement battalions, as well as a reduction of about 12,000 troops. Also, the number of artillery and helicopter units will be reduced.

"They can choose another military specialty to go into. They can, in some instances, make a transfer to another service. We are fielding new capabilities that we don't have right now, so we will need Marines in specialties that we ... either don't have at all or we don't have nearly in the numbers that

we're going to need," he said.

Berger said that the cuts are designed to reduce duplication of abilities across the military.

"Going forward, we need to do less duplication of a second sort of a land force and more provide the nation the unique capabilities that an amphibious maritime and expeditionary crisis response force provides," he said.

In the next 10 years, the Marines will invest more in rocket artillery and unmanned systems, and work to make infantry battalions smaller and more mobile.

These changes stem from the Pentagon's 2018 National Defense Strategy, which shifts the military's focus from counterterrorism operations to "great-

power competition" with China and Russia. The economic policies of China and its militarization of the South China Sea, and Russia's efforts to undermine NATO and its nuclear arsenal are major concerns for the U.S. military, according to the National Defense Strategy.

The new force plan was the first step in the process toward change, Berger said.

"So this isn't the final report, the end state," he said. "I think the second part is great feedback from Marines, from writers, a lot of people that have really informed the direction we're headed. When you're really trying to fundamentally change an organization, an open dialogue is very helpful."

DOD steps up counternarcotics effort

BY CAITLIN M. KENNEY
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon has deployed several ships, aircraft and thousands of troops to strengthen counternarcotics operations in the Caribbean Sea and eastern Pacific Ocean and help prevent drugs from coming into the United States, Defense Secretary Mark Esper announced Wednesday.

Esper made the announcement at the White House alongside President Donald Trump, Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Adm. Michael Gilday, the chief of naval operations, and Adm. Karl Schultz, the Coast Guard commandant.

The operation, which started Wednesday, is being conducted as part of the U.S. government's efforts to stop the flow of drugs

into the country, Esper said.

"We came upon some intelligence some time ago that the drug cartels, as a result of [the coronavirus pandemic], were going to try to take advantage of the situation and try to infiltrate additional drugs into our country," Milley said.

Thousands of personnel from the Navy, Marines, Air Force, Army, and Coast Guard are now under the leadership of Adm. Craig Faller, the commander of U.S. Southern Command, for the operation, Milley said. Ships and aircraft involved in the operation include several Navy destroyers, littoral combat ships, Coast Guard cutters and P-8 Poseidon patrol aircraft. Some of the personnel, ships, and aircraft have already arrived in the Caribbean.

"This is the United States military, you will not penetrate this country, you will not get

past Jump Street, you're not going to come in here and kill additional Americans and we will marshal whatever assets are required to prevent your entry into this country to kill Americans," Milley said.

Esper pointed to Venezuelan leader Nicolás Maduro's government for using the illicit drug trade to keep hold of its power.

"These enhanced counternarcotic operations that are now underway will further disrupt the flow of illicit drugs to America, deny our adversaries the financial resources they depend on and build the capacity of our partner nations throughout the region," he said.

The operation also involves 22 partner nations who are assisting the United States with stopping the drug cartel organizations, Esper said, without naming the countries.

Drug cartels are taking advantage of the United States' focus on responding to the coronavirus outbreak, Trump said, and America needs to return to stopping the flow of drugs.

"I don't think we're losing ground, but we don't want to lose ground. That's why we're doing it. I don't want to lose ground. It's a big fight," Trump said.

Esper would not say how long the operation would last, only that it would be run "for some matter of time."

The enhanced mission has been months in the making but has taken on greater urgency following last week's indictment of Maduro, Venezuela's embattled socialist leader, and members of his inner circle and military.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

More troops sent to Mexico border to aid amid outbreak

BY ROSE L. THAYER
Stars and Stripes

AUSTIN, Texas — An additional 540 troops will deploy to the U.S.-Mexico border to back up Border Patrol agents capturing and deporting unlawful migrants during the coronavirus pandemic, Lt. Gen. Laura Richardson said Wednesday.

The additional troops were approved for deployment Monday by Defense Secretary Mark Esper, said Lt. Col. Chris Mitchell, a Pentagon spokesman. They will join roughly 5,200 service members — about 2,500 National Guard and 2,700 active-duty troops — already deployed to support U.S. Customs and Border Protection agents in states along the southern border.

The new troops will provide more military support to Border Patrol agents given new authority in the fight against

the coronavirus pandemic, said Richardson, who commands Army North.

To help stop the spread of the coronavirus, the Department of Homeland Security announced U.S. Customs and Border Protection agents are now authorized to apprehend migrants who illegally enter the United States and return them immediately to the country from which they entered, either Canada or Mexico.

The authority was granted March 21 and is in place for 30 days. Prior to the order, agents would detain people and place them in holding facilities.

"We want to make sure we are supporting that [new authority]," and approving more troops "adequately supports them and their mission to further protect our country," Richardson said during a phone call with reporters.

Woman sues Navy secretary alleging 'unequal conditions'

Orlando (Fla.) Sentinel

ORLANDO, Fla. — An Orlando woman has sued a top U.S. Navy official, alleging that inaction on sexual harassment allegations fostered a workplace that "permeated with unequal conditions for women, particularly assertive women in leadership positions."

Gloria Tuck, who filed the lawsuit in an Orlando federal court, says acting Navy Secretary Thomas B. Modly should have known about the harassment and, once discovered, should have reprimanded the accused supervisor.

Instead, she claims in the lawsuit, she faced repercussions in the workplace because of Modly's failure to address the allegations.

The investigation for the administrative complaint, which was filed in 2014, ended this

past December with an undisclosed action shared with Tuck.

That ruling opened a 90-day window during which she could file a follow-up lawsuit, which she did Monday.

Tuck, a supervisory logistics management specialist in the U.S. Navy's Orlando field office, was the assistant program manager for logistics in the Marine Corps Systems Command.

The lawsuit claimed Daniel Torgler, who oversaw Tuck as a supervisory program manager of its civilian workforce, made repeated sexual advances toward Tuck, including unwanted physical contact while in his office and at department social functions.

Tuck says she received negative performance reviews in retaliation after filing her complaint.

DOD is asked for 100,000 body bags for civilians

Bloomberg News

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon is seeking to provide as many as 100,000 military-style body bags for potential civilian use as the U.S. warns that deaths could soar in the coming weeks from the coronavirus pandemic.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency has requested 100,000 body bags, known as Human Remains Pouches, through an interagency group that directed it to the Defense Department.

The Defense Logistics Agency “is currently responding to FEMA’s prudent planning efforts for 100,000 pouches to address mortuary contingencies on behalf of state health agencies,” Lt. Col. Mike Andrews, a Pentagon spokesman, said in a statement Thursday confirming a Bloomberg News report.

He said “the Department of Defense and the Defense Logistics Agency have a long-standing arrangement with FEMA to procure key commodities from DLA’s industrial partners during crisis response operations.”

While the Pentagon works to buy more bags, it will draw initially from a stockpile of 50,000 it maintains, according to two people familiar with the request.

The DLA’s Troop Support unit manages the Pentagon’s stockpile of the green nylon, 94-inch by 38-inch body bags that are typically distributed to war zones. The unit has been in contact with the current contractor to assess its manufacturing capabilities but hasn’t yet placed a formal order, according to one of the people familiar with the request.

As many as 240,000 Americans are projected to die in the U.S. coronavirus outbreak, a top White House official said Tuesday, even with another 30 days of the most stringent public health restrictions in place.

Some Japan-based sailors told to move from barracks

BY CAITLIN DOORNBOS
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — Some sailors were ordered out of their barracks and onto their assigned ships to make room for quarantined sailors as the base battles a coronavirus outbreak, a base spokesman confirmed Wednesday.

The goal is to “free up space to create separation from quarantined or restriction-of-movement sailors,” Randall Baucom told Stars and Stripes.

“Some barracks on base are being used to quarantine and isolate sailors that are being tested for or have tested positive for COVID-19,” he said.

Yokosuka has been under a shelter-at-home order since March 27, a day after the base

became the first U.S. installation in Japan to have a service member test positive for the virus. Two more cases were reported at Yokosuka on March 27, but the Navy has since declined to release the number of additional cases at specific installations.

Sailors assigned to the guided-missile cruiser USS Chancellorsville were ordered out of their barracks rooms Sunday “for [their] protection and to assist with Yokosuka preventative measures,” their commander, Capt. Marc Boran, said in a post on the ship’s official Facebook post Saturday. Sailors assigned to warships such as cruisers and destroyers often live in barracks while those ships are in their homeports.

“We are not operating business as usual, and our number

one priority is to fight COVID-19 while executing our daily responsibilities,” Boran said.

Additionally, some Yokosuka-based sailors undergoing restriction of movement were taken to Naval Air Facility Atsugi to wait out their 14 days of limited movement, Baucom said. Restriction of movement is an observation period that the Navy required last month for all personnel coming to Japan from other countries.

While not naming Yokosuka specifically, “Navy personnel from other bases in Japan” came to Atsugi late Tuesday to wait out their 14-day restricted movement, Atsugi commander Capt. Lloyd Mack said in a post on the base’s official Facebook page Wednesday.

Stars and Stripes reporter James Bolinger contributed to this report.

2,700 USS Theodore Roosevelt sailors being moved to shore on Guam as virus spreads

BY COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Navy is working to remove some 2,700 sailors from the USS Theodore Roosevelt by Friday in an attempt to slow a spreading coronavirus outbreak on the aircraft carrier now docked off the coast of Guam, senior service officials said Wednesday.

The Navy has already moved about 1,000 sailors off the ship, of which 93 sailors had tested positive for the fast-spreading virus as of Wednesday, acting Navy Secretary Thomas Modly said. The scramble to quickly test and remove troops from the ship comes one day after a letter to top Navy officials penned by the Roosevelt’s top officer surfaced in the media.

In the letter, Capt. Brett Crozier warned that the outbreak could kill some sailors, and that “if we do not act now, we are failing to properly take care of

our most trusted asset — our sailors.”

Modly and Adm. Michael Gilday, chief of naval operations, told reporters Wednesday that they agreed with Crozier’s assessment and his decision to send the letter up the chain of command. They blamed any slowed response to the crisis on miscommunication and indicated the captain would not face punishment unless it was determined that he had leaked the letter to the media.

The contents of Crozier’s letter were first published Tuesday by the San Francisco Chronicle, which reported that 150 to 200 Roosevelt sailors had been sickened by the virus, citing an unnamed senior officer aboard the ship.

“We need a lot of transparency in this process and we want information to flow up through the chain of command, and that’s what [Crozier] did,” Modly said in a briefing at the

Pentagon. “He submitted this letter to his chain of command. How it got out to the media, I don’t know. I don’t think anyone will ever know. We’d certainly prefer that it didn’t.”

The Navy is working with Guam’s governor to find additional space to place sailors in isolation, including hotel rooms left empty amid the pandemic. But the ship cannot be fully evacuated, Modly said, estimating that about 1,000 sailors would have to remain aboard at all times. He said that the service had yet to establish a timeline for removing as many as 4,000 sailors from ship.

“Our plan has always been to remove as much of the crew as we can while maintaining the ship’s safety,” he said. “Just because it is big and it floats and it has a lot of people on it — the comparison of the T.R. to a cruise ship pretty much ends there.”

Feds: Train intentionally derailed near ship

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — A train engineer intentionally drove a speeding locomotive off a track at the Port of Los Angeles because he was suspicious about the presence of a Navy hospital ship docked there to help during the coronavirus crisis, federal prosecutors said Wednesday.

The locomotive crashed through a series of barriers and fences before coming to rest more than 250 yards from the U.S. Navy Hospital Ship Mercy on Tuesday, the U.S. Department of Justice said in a release.

Nobody was hurt.

Eduardo Moreno, 44, was charged with one count of train wrecking, prosecutors said.

Moreno acknowledged in two separate interviews with law enforcement that he intentionally derailed and crashed the train near the Mercy, according to the criminal complaint.

"You only get this chance once. The whole world is watching. I had to," Moreno

told investigators, according to the complaint. "People don't know what's going on here. Now they will."

Moreno said he was suspicious of the Mercy and believed it had an alternate purpose related to COVID-19 or a government takeover, an affidavit states. Moreno stated that he acted alone and had not pre-planned the attempted attack.

In an interview with FBI agents, Moreno stated that "he did it out of the desire to 'wake people up,'" according to an affidavit.

"Moreno stated that he thought that the USNS Mercy was suspicious and did not believe 'the ship is what they say it's for,'" the complaint said.

The Mercy arrived in port this week to provide a thousand hospital beds for non-coronavirus cases to take the load of regional medical centers expecting a surge of COVID-19 patients.

Cellphone video showed the locomotive upright in a patch of dirt. It apparently smashed through a concrete barrier at the

end of the track, slid across pavement and gravel, and hit a chain-link fence before coming to a rest.

Phillip Sanfield, spokesman for the Port of Los Angeles, said the locomotive never came close to the Mercy.

"It would have had to have gone several hundred yards through a parking lot and cross a water channel to reach the ship," Sanfield said. "The tracks are nowhere near the Mercy."

The engineer wasn't a port employee but apparently was working for Pacific Harbor Line Inc., a train company that handles cargo in the port and connects to major railroad lines, Sanfield said. The company didn't immediately return a phone call seeking comment.

A small fuel leak was quickly controlled and port operations weren't seriously affected, Sanfield said.

Moreno was arrested by a California Highway Patrol officer who witnessed the crash and captured him as he fled the scene.

Spain reports record number of deaths in 24 hours

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Spain on Thursday set a record in virus-related fatalities, with 950 deaths in 24 hours, even as its infection rate appeared to ease.

New coronavirus infections rose nearly 8% overnight to 110,238, placing Spain close to Italy, the country that so far has the worst outbreak in Europe.

Health authorities say contagion in Spain has dropped from a daily average of 20% on March 25 to less than 12% after that date, more than 10 days after Spaniards were ordered to stay home. The government has acknowledged that the real number of infections could be much higher due to limited testing.

Meanwhile, the worldwide race to protect people against unwitting coronavirus carriers intensified, pitting governments against each other in the race to buy protective gear and prompting new questions about who should wear masks, get temperature checks or even be permitted to go outside.

In the Chinese city of Wuhan,

where the pandemic began in December, a green symbol on their smartphones dictates the movements of residents. Green is the "health code" that says a user is symptom-free and it's required to board a subway, check into a hotel or enter the central city of 11 million. Serious travel restrictions still exist for those who have yellow or red symbols.

In northern Italy, the country with the most virus deaths in the world at over 13,000, guards armed with thermometer guns decide who can enter supermarkets.

And a top health official in France's hard-hit eastern region said Americans swooped in at a Chinese airport to spirit away a planeload of masks that France had already ordered.

"On the tarmac, the Americans arrive, take out cash and pay three or four times more for our orders, so we really have to fight," Jean Rottner, an emergency room doctor in Mulhouse told RTL radio.

A study by researchers in Singapore on Wednesday estimated that around 10% of new

infections may be sparked by people who carry the virus but have not yet suffered its flulike symptoms.

In response, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention changed how it defined the risks of infection, saying essentially that anyone may be a carrier, whether they have symptoms or not. It is yet to change its guidance against having everyone wearing masks.

In Greece, authorities placed an entire refugee camp under quarantine Thursday after discovering that a third of the 63 contacts of an infected woman tested positive for the virus — and none showed symptoms.

Altogether, more than 980,000 people around the world have contracted the virus, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University. More than 47,000 have died from the virus and another 195,000 have recovered.

The real figures are believed to be much higher because of testing shortages, differences in counting the dead and large numbers of mild cases that have gone unreported. Critics

say some governments have been deliberately under-reporting cases in order to avoid public criticism.

For most people, the coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. But for others, especially older adults and people with health problems, it can cause severe symptoms like pneumonia and lead to death.

Asian stocks meandered Thursday after a White House warning that as many as 240,000 Americans might die in the pandemic sent Wall Street tumbling. The Dow Jones Industrial Average lost more than 970 points, or over 4%.

Many countries are now modeling their response to the virus in part after China, which in January closed off an entire province of over 70 million people. The government says the measures have been a success and reports that nearly all new cases of the virus have been imported from abroad.

People in Wuhan, once the epicenter of the crisis, are starting to return to work.

Los Angeles mayor tells 4M to wear masks

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES—The mayor of Los Angeles urged 4 million residents to wear masks to combat the coronavirus when they walk out in public, even as state health officials shied away from requiring a cover-up.

Homemade cloth masks, or even a “tucked-in bandana,” will help reduce the spread of the COVID-19 virus in the nation’s second-largest city and remind people to practice safe social distancing, Mayor Eric Garcetti said Wednesday as he donned a black cloth mask to make his point.

“I know this looks surreal,” Garcetti said. “We’re going to have to get used to seeing each other like this ... This will be the look.”

But he urged people against using medical-grade masks, such as N95 or surgical masks, which are in short supply and needed for health care workers and first responders.

Arizona

PHOENIX — Arizona’s governor on Wednesday asked President Donald Trump to issue a major disaster declaration for the state as it braces for a surge of coronavirus cases.

Gov. Doug Ducey said the move is needed to trigger higher federal aid and resources. A declaration would add funding for more mental health care, unemployment, food assistance, the tribal health response and other state efforts.

Ducey also urged understanding as people and small businesses face due dates for bills such as mortgages, rent and utilities with the start of a new month.

Arkansas

LITTLE ROCK — A member of the Arkansas House said Wednesday that he’s tested positive for COVID-19, and state health officials reported two more people have died from the outbreak.

State Rep. Reginald Murdock is the first Arkansas legislator to test positive for the corona-

virus. He said that he’s in isolation at his Marianna home and doesn’t currently have any symptoms.

Arkansas lawmakers met last week for a marathon session and approved a \$173 million fund for the coronavirus outbreak.

Florida

TALLAHASSEE — Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis issued a statewide stay-at-home order Wednesday as federal and local pressure mounted on him to abandon the county-by-county approach he had implemented to combat the coronavirus pandemic, a position he had defended for weeks.

DeSantis told reporters that he decided to issue the order after consulting with President Donald Trump and White House advisers, who have said Americans need to stay home through April. His order goes into effect Friday and will last at least 30 days.

Iowa

DES MOINES — Iowa abortion providers and the state reached an agreement Wednesday whereby a recent order by Gov. Kim Reynolds to temporarily halt elective medical procedures as part of her coronavirus response will not apply to all abortions.

When Reynolds was asked last week if her order stopping elective procedures through April 16 included abortions, she replied that it did. State attorneys representing Reynolds, however, said Wednesday that there are exceptions, including women who are approaching the state’s deadline after which most pregnancies must be carried to term.

Kentucky

FRANKFORT — The Kentucky Supreme Court issued a new order closing judicial facilities to in-person services and postponing eviction filings.

The changes strengthen the court’s order a couple of weeks ago and restrict dockets, jury

trials and jury service during the coronavirus pandemic, the court said in a news release.

The new order said that all parties to proceedings and attorneys must be allowed to participate remotely.

Missouri

COLUMBIA — Missouri Gov. Mike Parson said Wednesday that he’s expecting a \$500 million revenue shortfall this year because of the coronavirus pandemic, and he announced he’s cutting roughly \$175 million in spending to make up for it.

Parson projected significant drops in tax revenue that “may be larger than those experienced during the Great Recession.”

Many of the cuts affected public colleges and universities. Parson blocked more than \$61 million intended for public four-year colleges and another close to \$12 million for community colleges.

More budget restrictions might be needed if the toll on the economy is even worse than expected, Parson said.

Nevada

LAS VEGAS — Gov. Steve Sisolak activated the National Guard Wednesday to lead Nevada’s fight against the coronavirus, and extended his order closing the state’s casinos, schools and nonessential businesses by an additional two weeks through April.

Unlike similar directives issued by governors in some other states, the order does not include penalties for violations. He said that it “merely reinforces and strengthens” requests he’s been making publicly since mid-March.

Sisolak said that activating the National Guard will speed up and make logistical planning and delivery of medical supplies more efficient, as well as provide additional resources for the state’s labor force.

Washington

OLYMPIA — Gov. Jay Inslee said Wednesday that he is ask-

ing Washington manufacturers to start producing personal protective equipment, saying the federal government has not been able to supply the state fast enough to meet the growing need amid the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak.

Inslee said that while more than 1 million pieces of personal protective equipment — from the federal and state supply, hospitals and donations — have already been delivered across the state, it is not enough.

Wisconsin

MADISON — A federal judge signaled Wednesday that he won’t postpone or make any major changes to Wisconsin’s presidential primary to alleviate concerns that voters and poll workers could contract the coronavirus.

U.S. District Judge William Conley told attorneys for the Democratic National Committee and a host of liberal-leaning groups that they haven’t shown how the pandemic has truly hampered people’s voting rights. He said that infections look ready to spike in Wisconsin, but Democratic Gov. Tony Evers and Republican legislative leaders don’t feel the crisis is severe enough to stop the election.

West Virginia

CHARLESTON — Gov. Jim Justice rescheduled West Virginia’s May 12 primary election to June 9 on Wednesday, citing fears about the coronavirus spreading at polling places.

Justice said medical experts told him that having the primary on its originally scheduled date would be unsafe for voters and poll workers, since health officials have warned of a surge in the coming weeks.

“There is no question moving this date is the right thing to do,” said Justice, a Republican.

Justice said that he had wanted to preserve the May primary date, but he has been “bombarded” with requests to postpone the election.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Gender reveal party sparks 10-acre fire

FL TITUSVILLE — A recent gender reveal party mixed with explosives sparked a 10-acre fire in Florida.

Brevard County has prohibited open burning because of an increase in fires, and officials are urging people to follow the rules and avoid calls that can strain medical resources during the coronavirus pandemic.

“Something as seemingly innocent as a gender reveal can turn into a large-scale disaster,” said Mark Schollmeyer, the county’s Fire Rescue Chief.

Thoroughbred retirement farm offers virtual tours

KY GEORGETOWN — A popular thoroughbred retirement farm in Kentucky is reaching out to its supporters through virtual farm tours that showcase its equine retirees.

The series is called “Monday Mornings with Michael” and is hosted by Old Friends founder Michael Blowen. Each week, he will offer short visits with a few equine residents of the Georgetown farm.

The farm says its virtual tours will be posted on Old Friends’ social media platforms Monday mornings. The tours will enable fans to continue having access to the farm’s retirees during the coronavirus outbreak.

Police: Coughing led to parking lot assault

PA JOHNSTOWN — A confrontation that apparently began over coughing in a convenience store parking lot resulted in gunfire, Johnstown Police said in court documents.

Two men were charged with aggravated assault.

The police affidavit used to support charges against Guillermo Diaz Alvarez said the other defendant, William Suaro, said he told Alvarez “to cover when he coughed because of the virus that is going around.”

Suaro told police a confrontation ensued and Alvarez fired into the front windshield and toward a tire on Suaro’s car.

But police said the store’s surveillance video showed a confrontation occurred as Alvarez walked past Suaro’s car, after which Suaro got out. Both men were seen with hands in the air, then Suaro got back into his vehicle and drove it into Alvarez, police said. Alvarez was then seen pulling out a concealed .45 handgun and firing it at Suaro’s vehicle, police said.

Suaro, 53, was charged with assault and reckless endangerment. Alvarez, 56, was also charged with assault and reckless endangerment, and a firearms violation.

Replica of Pilgrim tall ship sinks at dock

CA DANA POINT — A replica of the sailing vessel Pilgrim that Richard Henry Dana Jr. wrote about in “Two Years Before the Mast” sunk at its dock in Dana Point where it served as a classroom for marine science and maritime history programs.

The 130-foot-long tall ship keeled over in its slip and is likely beyond repair, the Ocean Institute said in a social media post. Work was underway to refloat the Pilgrim and determine what caused it to sink.

The ship was a re-creation of the original Pilgrim, the vessel that Dana sailed on from Boston in 1834, carrying New England goods to California for sale or trade and in return carry back a load of cattle hides obtained from Spanish colonial missions and ranchos.

Police say they nabbed wanted serial flasher

MI CASCADE TOWNSHIP — A western Michigan man suspected of exposing himself to people for nearly two decades was arrested on sexual delinquency charges, police said.

Police say Steven Todd Pastoor, 56, confessed to exposing himself from the waist down to residents while standing on their decks or porches. Court documents show he confessed to indecent exposure crimes dating back to the late 1990s.

“We believe him to be responsible for several dozen indecent exposures over the last almost 20 years,” Kent County Sheriff’s Department Lt. Joel Roon told WOOD-TV.

Known as the Cascade Flasher, Pastoor routinely kept his shirt and hat on but was nude from the waist down when he stood on porches and decks of homes in and around Cascade, police said. He knocked on windows to ensure he gathered an audience before exposing himself and masturbating in front of people, authorities allege.

Authorities caught Pastoor after he started targeting one woman who later installed cameras around her home.

Rare Pacific snake eel found in northern waters

OR ASTORIA — A Pacific snake eel, a species rarely seen in waters as far north as Oregon, was found in the sand near Astoria recently.

A man happened on the creature, which appeared to be in distress, The Oregonian/OregonLive reported. He called the Seaside Aquarium to report what he thought was a sea snake. The aquarium is closed because of coronavirus social distancing protocols, but staff were there to care for the

animals.

“As soon as he said, sea snake we knew that it was most likely a Pacific Snake Eel,” the aquarium said in a Facebook post.

Staff took the animal to the aquarium to care for it.

Gorilla matriarch at zoo dies at age 50

OH CINCINNATI — A gorilla named Samantha, the oldest mammal at the Cincinnati Zoo, died at age 50.

Samantha, who was nicknamed “The Grand Old Lady of the Cincinnati Zoo,” was one of the first two gorillas born at the zoo. She was euthanized due to “age-related health issues” and heart problems, according to zoo officials.

Samantha celebrated her 50th birthday on Jan. 31 and exceeded her species’ life expectancy by more than 10 years. She gave birth to six offspring during her life.

Moose that trampled woman is euthanized

CO BRECKENRIDGE — A moose that trampled a woman in her yard in Breckenridge was euthanized after showing aggression, Colorado Parks and Wildlife officials said.

The woman suffered broken bones in the attack, KCNC-TV reported.

Two bull moose spent most of the day in a yard on Saturday. That evening, the woman tried to “guide the moose away” so other people could leave the area, investigators said.

A young bull moose turned on the woman and trampled her, officials said. The encounter is still being investigated and it’s not clear if the woman would be cited for approaching the animal.

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UFC lightweight champ calls off fight

Associated Press

UFC lightweight champion Khabib Nurmagomedov says he won't leave quarantine in Russia to fight, dealing another blow to UFC President Dana White's determination to hold UFC 249 on April 18 amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Nurmagomedov made his announcement Wednesday on Instagram, telling the mixed martial arts world to "take care of yourself and put yourself in my shoes."

Nurmagomedov (28-0) was scheduled to fight top contender Tony Ferguson (25-3) in the main event of UFC 249 in two weeks. The show was initially slated for Barclays Center in Brooklyn before the pandemic threw the UFC's schedule into upheaval.

Nurmagomedov is in his native Dagestan, and his Instagram post made it clear he isn't leaving for the fight even if White is able to find a location to stage it. Nurmagomedov left California to return home when the UFC had tentative plans to stage UFC 249 in the United Arab Emirates, but the champion first revealed Monday that he probably wouldn't be allowed to leave the country again due to travel restrictions.

"I understand everything and I'm definitely more upset than you to cancel the fight," Nurmagomedov said. "Probably

like all others, I had many plans after the fight, but I can't control it all."

White and the UFC didn't immediately comment on Nurmagomedov's decision, which had been expected for several days since the MMA world learned Nurmagomedov was in Dagestan instead of California, where he typically finishes his training for his fights.

Nurmagomedov also expressed anger at forces attempting to compel him to fight, although he didn't make it clear whether he was referring to fans or to White.

"It turns out that the whole world should be in quarantine," Nurmagomedov said. "Governments of all countries, famous people around the world urge people to follow all safety requirements in order to limit the spread of the disease, to save people, and Khabib is the only one relieved of all obligations and must demonstrate free will and train flying around the world, for the sake of fight?"

Ferguson still wants to fight on April 18, and he called on the UFC to strip Nurmagomedov of his lightweight title in an interview with UFC broadcast partner ESPN.

"He obviously knew what he could do to help save this card," said Ferguson, who hasn't lost a fight since 2012. "He didn't

want to take any of those chances. Everybody is taking risks trying to do it. He bailed out, man."

White has repeatedly vowed to find a safe way to hold UFC 249, the biggest pay-per-view event on the promotion's spring calendar. White has claimed to have a venue selected where he will hold the show without fans, although he hasn't disclosed the location.

The UFC held a show without fans in Brazil on March 14, but has postponed its ensuing three events. White had planned to hold two of those events without fans at the UFC's training complex in Las Vegas, but the Nevada State Athletic Commission's decision to suspend combat sports competition in the state prevented him from doing it.

While Nurmagomedov has ruled himself out, several fighters have been campaigning for the main slot on the UFC 249 card.

Brawler Justin Gaethje has been proposed as a potential opponent for Ferguson, who said he hasn't officially accepted a new matchup because it's still unclear whether UFC 249 will go forward. Welterweight champion Kamaru Usman also volunteered to fight on short notice against veteran Jorge Masvidal.

In era of prolific scorers, Irish's Carr was among best

Associated Press

Austin Carr played for Notre Dame in an era when prolific scorers dominated college basketball.

LSU's Pete Maravich was scoring 40 a night and still No. 1 on the points list. Niagara's Calvin Murphy, Purdue's Rick Mount and St. Bonaventure's Bob Lanier, along with Carr, were others putting up eye-popping numbers.

It wasn't until Carr scored a still-standing NCAA Tournament-record 61 points against Ohio in the first round in 1970 that, in his mind, he started to separate himself.

"At the time, it gave me a different status in the basketball world," he told The Associated Press this week. "It gave me an opportunity to be put on the radar, to be in the top three or four players in the draft. A whole lot of things happened because of that."

Carr averaged 34.6 points over 74 college games, a figure that still ranks No. 2 behind Maravich's 44.4. In the 1971 NBA draft, Carr was taken No. 1 overall by the Cleveland Cavaliers.

Carr played nine of his 11 pro seasons with the Cavs and averaged better than 15 points a game, a figure that would have been higher had it not been for injuries. Now 72, he's the team's television analyst and director of community and business development.

Carr said he didn't expect his single-game tournament scoring record to last so long. At the same time, he laments the magnitude of the accomplishment has faded over 50 years, perhaps because he never made it past a regional semifinal when he played for the Irish.

"It's there but it doesn't really ring a lot of bells until this time of year because people don't talk about it," he said.

"Recently, I'm starting to hear more about it as a record that might not be broken. So that's starting to travel around. But the one thing about this generation, we don't really worry too much about the past. They're more about the future. I've just resigned myself to that."

Notre Dame, like most teams back then, relied heavily on one or two players to carry the scoring load. Carr was comfortable shooting from anywhere on the floor, and point guard Jack Meehan was adept at feeding him the ball.

Carr's 61-point game really wasn't out of character. He averaged 41.3 points over seven NCAA tournament games from 1968-71, including games of 52, 52, 47 and 45 points.

Film of the game against Ohio showed nine of his baskets came from behind what would have been today's three-point arc, meaning he would have scored 70 in this era.

The game in Dayton, Ohio, didn't begin well for Carr. Ohio's John Canine, the man he was assigned to guard, made his first six shots. Assistant coach Gene Sullivan approached Carr on the bench and said, "Are you going to play defense tonight or let this guy kill you?"

That moment changed the game. Canine cooled off and Carr went on a tear. The junior shooting guard was 25 -for-44 from the field and 11-for-14 from the line, and the Irish won 112-82.

During Carr's career, Notre Dame made three straight NCAA Tournament appearances for the first time in school history.

"It helped put a football school on the basketball map, and that's what I really enjoyed about that whole time at Notre Dame," Carr said. "To give it some type of a basketball reputation, I was really proud of that."

iRacing won't carry teams for long

Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Virtual racing has been the small saving grace for motorsports since the coronavirus pandemic brought nearly everything to a halt.

Timmy Hill's iRacing victory on national television gave the journeyman driver and his sponsors exposure they would never receive during a normal NASCAR weekend.

"What I'll gain from this is recognition. It's hard to get that recognition because of the level of competition that we (have) in real life," said Hill, who at 27 has bounced around NASCAR's three national series since 2011 before making his first Daytona 500 this year.

"We just don't have the money, the dollars, to compete at a high level. Every once in a while, we'll get that big payday and we can really reinvest in our race team," he said. "This win will hopefully gain some recognition and attract more sponsors for us, maybe in the real world when we get back racing. Hopefully it will help me in the real world."

The real world looks grim right now: Racing and revenue have come to a halt and it is unknown what the landscape will even look like when the crisis ends.

IndyCar suspended its season 48 hours before it was set to open, and last week new series owner Roger Penske made the unprecedented decision to delay the Indianapolis 500 from Memorial Day weekend

for the first time in its long and storied history.

Penske's transportation business has been hit and he informed Penske Corp.'s 60,000 employees over the weekend that both he and the company president would forgo their salaries while senior leadership would be paid less. Roughly 50 employees from IndyCar and Indianapolis Motor Speedway were laid off.

NASCAR has so far cut salaries for its executives by 25% — that includes the presidents of tracks owned by NASCAR — and 20% for all other employees. Behind the scenes, NASCAR has crafted a schedule to accommodate the seven races already postponed, but series leaders have been hesitant to release details because everything is so fluid. NASCAR has officially suspended the season until May 9 at Martinsville Speedway in Virginia — a state that on Monday issued a stay-at-home order until June 10 or it is rescinded by executive order.

Senior NASCAR executives have consistently checked in with teams and discussed future scenarios, including the development of the Next Gen car that had been scheduled for a 2021 debut. A car meant to revolutionize the sport by improving the racing while cutting costs — a project the entire industry is deeply tied to — could be pushed back a year.

Teams are caught in financial limbo.

Sponsors unsure when their logos will be seen at a race are withholding money needed to make payroll and meet operating expenses. Stay-at-home orders have left little to no work for race teams.

"Are we concerned about teams broadly and their financial health? Of course we are," NASCAR President Steve Phelps has said.

There are very few team owners like Penske or Rick Hendrick, who have other businesses larger than their racing hobby. The bulk of the sport is composed of racers.

Chip Ganassi owns race teams that supply the bulk of his revenue, and when his sports car program ended last year, he moved those employees to a third IndyCar team to avoid layoffs. Now he has five cars idled in two series. It's the same all the way down the grid, for owners such as Jay Robinson, Carl Long, Rick Ware and The Gaunt Brothers, all teams who rely on racing as their primary business.

All the uncertainty has teams reluctant to speak publicly.

Penske put IndyCar's team owners at ease by ensuring the first three payments from the series' bonus program will be paid. He acknowledges revenue will be down and was hopeful race teams might qualify for assistance from the \$2.2 trillion coronavirus relief bill.

NFLPA disputes Reid's claim of a major CBA change

Associated Press

The NFL players' union says changes made to the labor agreement players narrowly approved last month "reflects no substantive difference whatsoever," a claim the lawyers for free-agent safety Eric Reid dispute.

The NFLPA added that Reid's claim that the CBA isn't valid is "completely false."

Ben Meiselas, who represents Reid, believes the changes regarding filing for Social Security disability payments should invalidate the collective bargaining agreement set to run through 2030. And he points to the last paragraph of a memo sent to the players Wednesday that describes the alterations made as proof the

CBA now in force is not the full document the players voted on.

"It is correct that the final version of the 456-page CBA includes an additional subparagraph with a cross-reference to a section of the Disability Plan that the parties had inadvertently omitted in an earlier version," the NFL Players Association memo says. "The final CBA corrected the omission, as the bargaining parties were required to do based on their agreement that 'if any typographical errors or incorrect cross-references are found in the 2020-2030 Agreement, the parties will act in good faith to correct them' (just as the parties had similarly agreed when finalizing the 2011 CBA). ... This correction did not, how-

ever, change what had been agreed to with the NFL, what information had been provided to players, or what players had voted upon."

Meiselas vehemently disagrees, saying the change could affect thousands of former players.

"Sad NFLPA puts more work into memo deceiving players than negotiating," he said in a text message and social media posting. "They now claim change to CBA after vote was 'cross-reference ... inadvertently omitted in a earlier version,' and such a change is OK based on secret side deals and oral understandings w/ NFL. Complete trash."

Hall of Fame tight end Shannon Sharpe also questioned the

validity of the new CBA, tweeting: "Nothing substantive, but changes were made? WOW. Why is D. Smith still running the NFLPA?"

Reid has called for an investigation and a re-vote on the labor agreement, which passed by a mere 60 votes.

A letter from Meiselas and law firm partner Ray Genco to the union highlighted a difference in wording in the section about the league's disability plan that affects hundreds, and potentially thousands, of ex-players who applied for Social Security disability insurance payments before Jan. 1, 2015. In the version the players received and approved, those offsets applied only to players who applied after Jan. 1, 2015.