

Biden urges government expansion

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — In his first address to Congress, President Joe Biden called for an expansion of federal programs to drive the economy past the coronavirus pandemic and broadly extend the social safety net on a scale not seen in decades.

Biden's nationally televised address raised the stakes for his ability to sell his plans to voters of both parties, even if Republican lawmakers prove resistant. The Democratic president is following Wednesday night's speech by pushing his plans in person, beginning in Georgia on Thursday and then on to Pennsylvania and Virginia in the days ahead.

In the address, Biden pointed optimistically to the nation's emergence from the coronavirus scourge as a moment for America to prove that its democracy can still work and maintain primacy in the world.

Speaking in highly personal terms while demanding massive structural changes, the president marked his first 100 days in office by proposing a \$1.8 trillion investment in children, families and education to help rebuild an economy devastated by the virus and compete with rising global competitors.

His speech represented both an audacious vision and a considerable gamble. He is governing with the most slender of majorities in Congress, and even some in his own party have blanched at the price tag of his proposals.

At the same time, the speech highlighted Biden's fundamental belief in the power of government as a force for good, even at a time when it is so often the object of scorn.

"I can report to the nation: America is on the move again," he said. "Turning peril into possibility. Crisis into opportunity. Set-back into strength."

While the ceremonial setting of the Capitol was the same as usual, the visual images were unlike any previous presidential address. Members of Congress wore masks and were seated apart because of pandemic restrictions. Outside the grounds were still surrounded by fencing after insurrectionists in January protesting Biden's election stormed to the doors of the House chamber where he gave his address.

"America is ready for takeoff. We are working again. Dreaming again. Discovering again. Leading the world again. We have shown each other and the world: There is no quit in America," Biden said.

This year's scene at the front of the House chamber also had a historic look: For the first time, a female vice president, Kamala Harris, was seated behind the chief executive. She was next to another woman, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

The first ovation came as Biden greeted "Madam Vice President." He added, "No president has ever said those words from this podium, and it's about time."

The chamber was so sparsely populated

that individual claps could be heard echoing off the walls.

Yet Biden said, "I have never been more confident or more optimistic about America. We have stared into an abyss of insurrection and autocracy — of pandemic and pain — and 'We the People' did not flinch."

At times, the president plainly made his case for democracy itself.

Biden demanded that the government take care of its own as a powerful symbol to the world of an America willing to forcefully follow its ideals and people.

He confronted an issue rarely faced by an American president, namely that in order to compete with autocracies like China, the nation needs "to prove that democracy still works" after his predecessor's baseless claims of election fraud and the ensuing attack on the U.S. Capitol.

"Can our democracy overcome the lies, anger, hate and fears that have pulled us apart?" he asked. "America's adversaries — the autocrats of the world — are betting it can't. They believe we are too full of anger and division and rage. They look at the images of the mob that assaulted this Capitol as proof that the sun is setting on American democracy. They are wrong. And we have to prove them wrong."

Biden repeatedly hammered home that his plans would put Americans back to work, restoring the millions of jobs lost to the virus.

GOP's Scott suggests Dems use race as political weapon

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Sen. Tim Scott accused Democrats on Wednesday of dividing the country and suggested they're wielding race as "a political weapon," using the official Republican response to President Joe Biden's maiden speech to Congress to credit the GOP for leading the country out of its pandemic struggles and toward a hopeful future.

Scott, R-S.C., in his nationally televised rebuttal of Biden's address, belittled the new president's initial priorities — aimed at combating the deadly coronavirus and spurring the economy — as wasteful expansions of big

government.

"We should be expanding options and opportunities for all families," said Scott, who preaches a message of optimism while remaining a loyal supporter of former President Donald Trump, "not throwing money at certain issues because Democrats think they know best."

Citing the partisan battle over Biden's \$1.9 trillion COVID-19 relief bill, which Congress approved over unanimous GOP opposition, Scott said: "We need policies and progress that bring us closer together. But three months in, the actions of the president and his party

are pulling us further apart."

But the Senate's only Black Republican saved some of his sharpest comments for the fraught subject of race. Scott recounted his rise from a low-income family and "the pain" of repeatedly being pulled over by police while driving but said, "Hear me clearly: America is not a racist country."

Asked Thursday about Scott's comment, Vice President Kamala Harris told ABC's "Good Morning America," "No, I don't think America is a racist country but we also do have to speak truth about the history of racism in our country."

China: US directs raised military activity toward us

Associated Press

BEIJING — Activity by U.S. military ships and surveillance planes directed at China has increased significantly under President Joe Biden's administration, a spokesperson for the Chinese Defense Ministry said Thursday.

As an example, Wu Qian said the Navy destroyer USS Mustin recently conducted close-in observation of the Chinese aircraft carrier Liaoning and its battle group.

That had "seriously interfered with the Chinese side's training activities and seriously threatened the safety of navigation and personnel on the both sides," Wu said. The ship was warned to leave and a formal protest was filed with the United States, he said.

Activity by U.S. military ships was up 20% and by planes 40% in Chinese-claimed areas since Biden took office in January over the same period last year, Wu said.

"The U.S. frequently dispatches ships and planes to operate in seas and airspace

near China, promoting regional militarization and threatening regional peace and stability," Wu said at a monthly briefing held virtually.

China routinely objects to the U.S. military presence in the South China Sea, which it claims almost in its entirety, as well as the passage of Navy ships through the Taiwan Strait.

The country recently marked the 20th anniversary of the collision between a U.S. surveillance plane and a Chinese navy fighter near the Chinese island province of Hainan that resulted in the Chinese pilot's death. He was called a hero who sacrificed himself for the defense of the motherland. The U.S. says its plane was in international airspace and the accident was the result of reckless flying by the Chinese side.

Wu also blasted moves to beef up monitoring of Chinese aircraft movements by Taiwan, the self-governing island democracy claimed by China as its own territory, to be annexed by force if necessary.

Senior admiral: Readiness must be No.1 priority

BY CAITLIN DOORNBOS

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A 355-ship fleet remains the Navy's North Star, though military readiness must come first amid growing threats from adversaries such as China, Adm. Mike Gilday, chief of naval operations, said Tuesday.

Gilday said he won't sacrifice capability and readiness in exchange for a larger fleet.

"I think that we need a fleet that's more ready, more capable and more lethal more than we need a bigger fleet that's less ready and less capable and less lethal," the admiral said during a webinar with the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, a Washington think tank.

Speaking a day after the USS Firebolt fired warning shots at three Iranian Revolutionary Guard ships that came within 68 yards of the Navy patrol boat and a Coast Guard patrol boat, Gilday said investments in service members and "new training frameworks" must be a priority as strategic threats grow.

"I truly feel that if we do get in a scrap with an adversary that our fleet and its commanders are likely not to meet all of our expectations, but will certainly fall to the level to which we have trained and prepared them for the fight," Gilday said ahead of the service's 2022 budget hearing before the House Appropriations Committee on Thursday.

Still, the Navy's top officer said shipbuilding remains a priority for the service, which has publicly sought a 355-ship fleet since 2016. The Navy has 296 manned ships, according to an April 22 Congressional Research Service report.

"Every single assessment that has been done on our force structure since 2015 has called for a larger, more capable Navy in this era of great-power competition that not only deter but also to be able to respond if required," Gilday said.

Whether growing to a 355-ship fleet is still possible remains to be seen. Gilday said recent projections indicated the Navy would need a 4.1% boost in its budget to achieve a 355-ship fleet within the next decade.

Hawaii Navy commander relieved for 'command climate' problems

BY WYATT OLSON

Stars and Stripes

FORT SHAFTER, Hawaii — The commander of the Pearl Harbor-based submarine USS Charlotte was relieved Tuesday in the wake of a command investigation sparked in part by a sailor's suicide last month, the Navy said Wednesday.

Cmdr. Joseph Lautenslager was dismissed from the fast-attack sub by Capt. Michael Majewski, who heads Submarine Squadron 7, after losing confidence in his ability to command, the Navy said in a news release.

Majewski took the action after an investigation "revealed leadership and command climate problems," the Navy said.

Lautenslager took command of the Charlotte in March 2019. He has been temporarily assigned to the staff of Commander, Submarine Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet,

the Navy said.

The submarine is undergoing maintenance at the Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard.

On March 17, a 23-year-old torpedoman's mate third class died from a self-inflicted gunshot while on nighttime watch aboard the Charlotte, according to the Navy.

Majewski ordered the command investigation as the result of both the suicide and the command climate and leadership issues, Pacific Fleet Submarine Force spokeswoman Cmdr. Cindy Fields told Stars and Stripes in a statement.

"Morale of the crew played a large factor in the decision to remove him from command," she said.

The deputy commander of Squadron 7, Cmdr. Christopher Hedrick, has assumed command of the Charlotte until a permanent replacement is named, the Navy said.

US officials head to Mideast to reassure allies

Bloomberg News

WASHINGTON — The Biden administration is sending a team of senior officials to the Middle East this week as the president seeks to ease allies' concerns over Iranian nuclear talks and address issues involving the United Arab Emirates' planned purchase of the F-35 joint strike fighter.

The team of officials from the State Department, National Security Council and Defense Department will be led by NSC Middle East policy coordinator Brett McGurk and State Department counselor Derek Chollet, according to several people familiar with the plans. Tentative plans call for visiting Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt and Jordan, according to the people, who asked not to be identified because the trip isn't public.

The group's visit comes amid

deepening unease among American allies in the region that President Joe Biden will neglect them as he looks to reorient U.S. foreign policy toward countering China. They're also worried by his bid to bring the U.S. back into the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran that former President Donald Trump abandoned.

An administration official, who asked not to be identified discussing diplomatic matters, said the delegation will discuss important issues tied to U.S. national security and continuing efforts to de-escalate tensions in the Middle East.

Other members of the U.S. delegation include Joey Hood, the acting assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs, and Dana Stroul, the deputy assistant secretary of defense for the Middle East, according to the people.

Another element of the Mid-

east trip is tied to the Biden administration's decision to proceed with the sale of the next-generation F-35 jet to the UAE.

Upon taking office in January, the administration announced a review of the potential \$10.4 billion, 50-jet sale approved in the final days of the Trump administration, after the UAE and Israel reached a historic peace accord.

The administration is allowing the sale to go forward even though it has questions about the UAE's ties with China.

Specifically, one official said the U.S. has concerns about UAE technology security assurances that need to be addressed or clarified before the jet sale is completed.

The stealthy F-35 is the most visible part of a potential \$23 billion arms package that could take years to complete.

In a sign of the importance of

the issue, Biden aide and former Ambassador to the UAE Barbara Leaf is planning a separate trip to the Gulf nation to discuss concern that China could obtain U.S. technology once the Emirati military acquires the jet built by Lockheed Martin. Leaf has overseen Middle East affairs at the NSC and is Biden's nominee to become assistant secretary of state for the region.

The issue of the UAE's China ties and its security guarantees regarding the F-35 is one that has been flagged by several American senators.

"I am very concerned about the Emirates' burgeoning military R&D relationship" with China, "and there is a lot we should be paying close attention to," Sen. Bob Menendez, D-N.J., chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, said in a statement to Bloomberg News.

Australia commits to upgrade bases utilized by US Marines

By **SETH ROBSON**
Stars and Stripes

Australia will invest \$582 million to improve bases and training areas in its Northern Territory that are used by a rotational force of U.S. Marines, the country's Defence Department announced Wednesday.

Upgrades will be made to Robertson Barracks, home to Marine Rotational Force—Darwin during annual six-month deployments, as well as ranges at Kangaroo Flats, Mount Bunday and Bradshaw, where the Marines train, the department said in a statement.

The Marines' rotation Down Under will be back at nearly full strength this year, with 2,200 Marines in the Northern Territory by June, according to Australia's defense department. The onset of the coronavirus pandemic meant last year's force was cut by more than half, well short of the 2,500 Marines

who traveled there in 2019.

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison said, in the statement, that the base and range upgrades are part of nearly \$6.2 billion in defense infrastructure work in the Northern Territory over the next decade.

The announcement comes amid deteriorating relations between Australia and its largest trading partner, China. The country's defense minister, Peter Dutton, said Sunday that a conflict between China and Taiwan "should not be discounted" and Australian Home Affairs Department Secretary Michael Pezzullo warned, the same day, that the "drums of war are beating" and that Australia must be prepared "to send off, yet again, our warriors to fight."

Subject to parliamentary approvals, construction is expected to commence later this year with completion expected by mid-2026, the statement said.

US jobless claims drop to 553K as economy heals

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The number of Americans applying for unemployment benefits dropped by 13,000 last week to 553,000, the lowest level since the pandemic hit last March and another sign the economy is recovering from the coronavirus recession.

The Labor Department reported Thursday that jobless claims were down from 566,000 a week earlier. They have fallen sharply over the past year but remain well above the 230,000 weekly figure typical before the pandemic struck the economy in March 2020.

The four-week moving average, which smooths out weekly gyrations, fell 44,000 to 611,750.

Nearly 3.7 million people were receiving traditional state unemployment benefits the week of April 17. Including federal program designed to ease economic

pain from the health crisis, 16.6 million were receiving some type of jobless aid the week of April 10.

"Layoffs are elevated but are gradually easing, consistent with an economy that is reopening," said Rubeela Farooqi, chief U.S. economist at High Frequency Economics. "We expect further declines in filings as businesses move closer towards normal capacity which will boost job growth over coming months."

The job market has been bounding back in recent months. Employers added an impressive 916,000 jobs in March, and the Labor Department is expected to report next week that they hired another 875,000 in April, according to a survey from the data firm FactSet. The unemployment rate has dropped to 6% from a peak of 14.8% in April 2020. (Before the pandemic, unemployment was just 3.5% in February 2020.)

US pushes nuclear plans despite concerns

Associated Press

The Biden administration appears to be picking up where former President Donald Trump left off, as the federal agency that oversees U.S. nuclear research and bomb-making has approved the first design phase for a multibillion-dollar project to manufacture key components for the nation's nuclear arsenal.

The National Nuclear Security Administration in a decision announced Wednesday stated that planning and construction could cost upward of \$4 billion initially.

The agency did not articulate what exactly that money would be spent on, nor does it include the cost of other preparations that would be needed for Los Alamos National Laboratory to begin producing 30 plutonium cores per year.

The push to resume production of the nuclear triggers has spanned multiple presidential administrations, with supporters arguing

that the United States needs to ensure the stability and reliance of its arsenal given growing global security concerns. The nuclear agency has also said most of the cores in the stockpile date back to the 1970s and 1980s.

Democratic members of New Mexico's congressional delegation have supported production at Los Alamos because of the billions of dollars in federal funding and thousands of jobs that are at stake. But watchdog groups have been sounding alarms over the potential for more security and safety lapses at the northern New Mexico lab and the potential for environmental contamination.

Another concern is the nuclear waste that would be generated by the work.

Watchdog groups have said that the cost estimate outlined by the agency in its decision is about double the projections made just last year.

Greg Mello with the Los Alamos Study

Group said the ballooning budget and uncertainty over whether the lab can meet the federal government's mandated production schedule "throw further doubt on the wisdom of proceeding with industrial pit production" at Los Alamos.

"LANL's facilities are simply too old and inherently unsafe, its location too impractical," he said. "Even with a much smaller stockpile, LANL could not undertake this mission successfully."

Some groups have threatened to sue the U.S. Energy Department and the National Nuclear Security Administration, saying a more comprehensive review should have been done on the plans to produce plutonium cores at Los Alamos and at the Savannah River Site in South Carolina. They have argued that nearby communities have already been saddled with legacy contamination from previous defense work.

Feds raid Giuliani's home and office, escalating criminal probe

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Federal agents raided Rudy Giuliani's Manhattan home and office Wednesday, seizing computers and cell-phones in a major escalation of the Justice Department's investigation into the business dealings of former President Donald Trump's personal lawyer.

Giuliani, the 76-year-old former New York City mayor once celebrated for his leadership after 9/11, has been under federal scrutiny for several years over his ties to Ukraine. The dual searches sent the strongest signal yet that he could eventually face federal charges.

Agents searched Giuliani's Madison Avenue apartment and Park Avenue office, people familiar with the investigation told The Associated Press. The warrants, which required approval from the top levels of the Justice Department, signify that prosecutors believe they have probable cause that Giuliani committed a federal crime — though they do not guarantee that charges will materialize.

A third search warrant was served on a phone belonging to Washington lawyer Victoria Toensing, a former federal prosecutor and close ally of Giuliani and Trump. Her law firm issued a statement saying she was informed that she is not a target of the investigation.

The full scope of the investigation is unclear, but it at least partly involves Giuliani's dealings in Ukraine, law enforcement officials have told the AP.

In a statement issued through his lawyer, Giuliani accused federal authorities of a "corrupt double standard," invoking allegations he's pushed against prominent Democrats, and said the Justice Department was "running rough shod over the constitutional rights of anyone involved in, or legally defending, former President Donald J. Trump."

"Mr. Giuliani respects the law, and he can demonstrate that his conduct as a lawyer and a citizen was absolutely legal and ethical," the statement said.

Trump told Fox Business on Thursday that Giuliani was "the greatest mayor in the history of New York" and "a great patriot."

"It's very, very unfair," he said of what happened Wednesday. "Rudy loves this country so much, it is so terrible when you see things that are going on in our country with the corruption and the problems and then they go after Rudy Giuliani."

White House press secretary Jen Psaki said Thursday on CNN that the White House was given no heads' up on the fact the raid was coming. The Justice Department, she said, "is independent now. They're gonna make their own decisions, take their own actions. That's how the president wants it."

US eyes significant sanction rollback on Iran for nuclear deal

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Biden administration is considering a near wholesale rollback of some of the most stringent Trump-era sanctions imposed on Iran in a bid to get the Islamic Republic to return to compliance with a landmark 2015 nuclear accord, according to current and former U.S. officials and others familiar with the matter.

As indirect talks continue this week in Vienna to explore the possibility of reviving the nuclear deal, American officials have become increasingly expansive about what they might be prepared to offer Iran, which has been driving a hard line on sanctions relief, demanding that all U.S. penalties be removed, according to these people.

American officials have refused to discuss which sanctions are being considered for removal. But they have said they are open to lifting any sanctions that are inconsistent with the nuclear deal or that deny Iran the relief it would be entitled to should it return to compliance with the accord. Because of the complex nature of the sanctions architecture, that could include non-nuclear sanctions, such as those tied to terrorism, missile development and human rights.

Administration officials have denied they will remove all non-nuclear sanctions, but declined to identify those which they believe former President Donald Trump improperly imposed on grounds of terrorism, among others.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Man dies after attack by aggressive bee swarm

TX BRECKENRIDGE — A Texas man died after going into cardiac arrest when he was attacked by an aggressive swarm of bees outside his home, authorities said.

Thomas Hicks, 70, was mowing his lawn Monday when he was repeatedly stung by the bees outside his home in Breckenridge, about 130 miles west of Dallas, authorities said.

The Breckenridge Fire Department said first responders faced “very aggressive bee activity” when they arrived at the home. Medics and firefighters attempted emergency care but Hicks died, the fire department said.

Hicks’ wife, Zoni Hicks, told TV station KTAB that she had been out grocery shopping when she returned to find her husband screaming and covered in bees. Zoni Hicks was also stung repeatedly and she was treated and released from a hospital.

Island’s only house at 0 Patience Way for sale

RI PORTSMOUTH — Zero patience for the company of others? Anyone who’s ever wanted their own private island getaway now has a chance — and it might be less expensive than you’d think.

The only house on a small island in Rhode Island’s Narragansett Bay — with the address 0 Patience Way — has hit the market for an asking price of \$399,900, The Newport Daily News reported Monday.

The seasonal cottage on Patience Island is off the electrical

grid, but comes with just under a half-acre of land and approximately 600 square feet of living area. A single solar panel does provide some electrical services. According to property records, the cottage was built in 1972 and has been owned by the same family since.

Plastic surgeon pleads guilty to sexual assault

OH TOLEDO — An Ohio plastic surgeon accused of drugging and sexually abusing more than 20 women and recording the assaults has pleaded guilty to federal charges in one of those cases.

Manish Gupta, 50, of Sylvania, pleaded guilty Monday to single counts of sex trafficking by force, fraud or coercion and illegally distributing a controlled substance. He faces at least 15 years in prison when he’s sentenced Aug. 25.

The charges are related to the assault of a woman in September 2016. Prosecutors said Gupta shipped medical supplies to a hotel in California and then drugged, raped and recorded a sexual encounter with a woman while he was in Los Angeles for a medical conference.

Man arrested after kids give note to bus driver

NM LAS CRUCES — A Las Cruces man was arrested on suspicion of domestic violence-related charges after his girlfriend asked her children to give their school bus driver a note which said that she was in danger, police said Tuesday.

The bus driver called 911 after being handed the note Fri-

day morning and police then found the woman with multiple cuts, bruises and scrapes “consistent with her claims of physical abuse,” a police statement said.

Police later located Erik Alvarado, 40, and he was arrested on suspicion of three counts of aggravated battery against a household member — two for suffocation and one for strangulation — and other charges, the statement said.

The woman secretly wrote the note after Alvarado abused her overnight and took away her cellphone, the statement said. “Much of the abuse was done in the presence of the couple’s toddler and their two school-age children.”

Police: Parent run over in school parking lot

KS KANSAS CITY — A fight involving students and parents at a Kansas middle school became a police matter when one parent was run over and critically injured in the school’s parking lot, police in Kansas City said.

The incident happened Tuesday afternoon and started with a fight between two girls at Carl Bruce Middle School, station WDAF reported. School officials broke up the fight and called the girls’ parents, who showed up and made matters worse, police said. As the mother of one of the girls walked away to leave, a family member of the other girl ran over the woman with her car and dragged her, police said. No students were hurt in the altercation.

The woman who was hit was taken to an area hospital with

serious injuries. Police said the driver who hit her fled the scene.

Turtle-sniffing dogs aiding zoo researchers

MO ST. LOUIS — The three-toed box turtles, Missouri’s state reptile, crawled and rested somewhere in the woods and under the brush.

The pack of floppy-eared, chocolate brown Boykin spaniels, here all the way from central Montana, wriggled and snuffled inside kennels in a white Ford box van, ready to find the turtles for St. Louis Zoo researchers.

One by one, the dogs — Skeeter, Scamp, Ruger, Yogi and Lazarus — scurried out of the van, jumping up on researchers and wriggling around in the grass. “You want to find turtles? I want turtles,” their human, John Rucker, said. A dog let out a bark, and Rucker chuckled.

The researchers with the St. Louis Zoo’s Institute for Conservation Medicine wanted to find turtles, too. They’re at the zoo’s WildCare Park, a 425-acre piece of property in north St. Louis County the zoo will eventually turn into a breeding and research facility and tourist attraction, doing a series of biodiversity studies on the property to see who exactly lives on the land, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported.

The turtle count is also part of the larger St. Louis Box Turtle Project, a nine-year effort to count and assess the two types of box turtles native to Missouri: the three-toed box turtle and ornate box turtles.

— From wire reports

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Suns beat Clippers, clinch playoff berth

Associated Press

PHOENIX — Chris Paul scored 28 points, Devin Booker added 21 and the Phoenix Suns beat the Los Angeles Clippers 109-101 on Wednesday night to clinch a spot in the playoffs for the first time in 11 years.

The Suns finally figured out a way to beat the Clippers, who won the first two games of the season series. Phoenix didn't trail the entire game but needed a fourth-quarter push to turn back a Los Angeles rally.

The Suns took an 86-80 lead into the final quarter. The Clippers pulled within 93-92 midway though the fourth but Paul scored three consecutive tough baskets to give Phoenix some space.

The 35-year-old Paul shot 10 of 15 from the field and dished 10 assists.

Paul George led the Clippers with 25 points and 10 rebounds, while Marcus Morris Sr. added 16 points.

76ers 127, Hawks 83: Seth Curry scored 20 points, Tobias Harris and Joel Embiid each added 17 and host Philadelphia built a big early lead and cruised past Atlanta to clinch an Eastern Conference playoff berth.

Shake Milton and Furkan Korkmaz scored 12 apiece and Tyrese Maxey added 11 for the Sixers, who became the second team in the Eastern Conference to secure a postseason spot. The Sixers are currently second in the East, a game behind Brooklyn and 2½ games ahead of third-place Milwaukee with 10 games to play.

Atlanta was missing star guard Trae Young, who missed his fourth game since spraining his left ankle on April 21 against New York. John Collins scored 21 points and Solomon Hill added 14 for Atlanta.

Heat 116, Spurs 111: Erik Spoelstra got a milestone win, Jimmy Butler scored 29 points, Bam Adebayo scored 21 and Miami went on a 17-0 run in the second half before hanging on late to beat visiting San Antonio.

It was the 600th regular-season win for Spoelstra, making him the 27th coach in NBA history to win that many and just the sixth coach to do so with one franchise.

Magic 109, Cavaliers 104: Cole Anthony made the tie-breaking layup with 45 seconds left, and Orlando squandered a 23-point lead before edging host Cleveland and snapping a six-

game losing streak.

Gary Harris had 19 points, six rebounds and seven assists for Orlando, which won for the second time in 14 games and pulled into a tie with Detroit for the worst record in the East. Chuma Okeke had 18 points before exiting with a twisted ankle.

Kevin Love missed his first eight shots, seven of them three-pointers, and finished with six points on 2 of 11 from the field. He added 10 rebounds, six assists and three steals.

Celtics 120, Hornets 111: Jaylen Brown scored 38 points, Jayson Tatum added 35, and Boston rebounded from an embarrassing loss a night earlier with a win over visiting Charlotte.

Tristan Thompson chipped in with 12 points and 13 rebounds for Boston, which had lost four of its last five following a six-game winning streak.

Knicks 113, Bulls 94: Julius Randle scored 34 points and host New York beat Chicago for its 10th win in 11 games.

RJ Barrett added 22 points as New York bounced back from its loss to Phoenix that snapped a nine-game winning streak. Immanuel Quickley and Reggie Bullock each scored 13 points as

the Knicks regained sole possession of fourth place in the Eastern Conference.

Trail Blazers 130, Grizzlies 109: CJ McCollum had 26 points and six assists, and Norman Powell added 24 points, helping visiting Portland solidify its hold on seventh place in the West with a victory over Memphis.

Damian Lillard finished with 23 points and Carmelo Anthony scored 18 as Portland moved two games ahead of Memphis and San Antonio.

Nuggets 114, Pelicans 112: Nikola Jokic scored 32 points and blocked Zion Williamson's shot from behind with 2.2 seconds remaining as host Denver held off New Orleans.

Denver improved to 7-1 since Jamal Murray was lost for the season with a torn ACL.

Jazz 154, Kings 105: Bojan Bogdanovic scored 24 points, Utah made 24 three-pointers, and the short-handed Jazz bounced back from consecutive losses and set a franchise scoring record in a win over host Sacramento.

Utah's previous record for points in a game was 153, set in 1977-78 when the franchise was in New Orleans.

Beal, Westbrook lead Wizards past LeBron-less Lakers

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — When the Washington Wizards started 0-5, or when they were in the midst of a COVID-19 outbreak, or when they lost two starters to season-ending injuries, who would have thought they'd find themselves beating the reigning NBA champion Los Angeles Lakers on national TV in late April to sweep the two-game season series?

And who would have thought the Wizards would own a two-game lead for the Eastern Conference's 10th spot and the inside track for a play-in berth with 10 games left in the regular season?

Bradley Beal and Russell Westbrook certainly did not give up on the season, and their performances Wednesday night — Beal's 27 points and Westbrook's league-re-

cord 13th triple-double of the month — lifted the Wizards past the no-LeBron Lakers 116-107, handing Los Angeles its fourth loss in five games.

"We had a bad season," said Alex Len, who had 18 points and nine rebounds as part of Washington's three-man center rotation, "but if we finish strong and make the playoffs, people are going to remember the end of the season."

LeBron James has been sidelined for more than a month with a sprained right ankle, a 20-game absence during which the Lakers are 8-12 and have dropped to fifth in the Western Conference standings. He sat near LA's subs, a mask covering his nose and mouth.

The good news for the visitors: Anthony Davis scored 26 — 14 in the fourth quarter

— his highest output in four games back since sitting for 30 with a strained right calf. The bad news: By the time Davis got going, the deficit was too big to overcome.

"He's obviously in this phase of trying to get his legs back under him," Lakers coach Frank Vogel said. "Trying to get his rhythm and timing."

Washington, meanwhile, has won nine of 10 games to improve to 28-34.

Beal entered the day leading the NBA in scoring average at 31.4 points, just ahead of Golden State's Stephen Curry, while Westbrook is tops in assists at 11 per game. They were, as usual, a big part of why Washington won, including Westbrook's 18 points, 18 rebounds and 14 assists.

"He's a monster," Lakers guard Dennis Schröder said.

Dodgers hammer Reds

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Clayton Kershaw yielded four hits in seven innings, Justin Turner homered and the Los Angeles Dodgers ended their three-game losing streak with an 8-0 victory over the Cincinnati Reds on Wednesday.

Kershaw (4-2) struck out eight and walked one, never allowing Cincinnati to get a runner to third base.

Matt Beaty drove in two runs with a pinch single on his 28th birthday during a six-run eighth.

Nick Senzel matched his career high with four hits as the Reds were shut out for the fourth time.

Sonny Gray (0-2) pitched four-hit ball into the sixth while striking out 11 and allowing four hits and three walks.

Cardinals 5, Phillies 3: Andrew McCutchen returned to the lineup and drove in the go-ahead run, helping visiting Philadelphia beat St. Louis after Bryce Harper was hit in the face by a pitch.

Harper left the game in the sixth inning after getting hit in his left cheek on a 96.9 mph fastball from left-handed reliever Génesis Cabrera (0-1).

Cabrera hit the next batter, Didi Gregorius, with a 94 mph fastball. Phillies manager Joe Girardi came out of the dugout to argue with plate umpire Chris Segal and was ejected.

Giants 7, Rockies 3: Mike Tauchman had three hits in his first game with his new team, Alex Wood struck out nine in six innings and host San Francisco beat Colorado.

Tauchman, acquired from the Yankees on Tuesday, started in center field and went 3-for-4 with a run and an RBI. A backup in New York's star-studded outfield, the 30-year-old Tauchman is hoping to establish himself as an everyday player.

Wood (3-0) held the Rockies hitless through 5½ innings and won his third consecutive start to begin his Giants career. He allowed two runs, four hits and two walks.

Padres 12, Diamondbacks 3: Manny Machado hit a bases-loaded triple during a six-run fifth inning, Fernando Tatis Jr. and Kim Ha-Seong each had two hits and two RBIs, and visiting San Diego overcame starter Ryan Weathers' early injury in a win over Arizona.

Machado's triple capped a string of seven straight hits for the Padres, who got only one runner as far as second base in the first four innings against Arizona emergency

starter Riley Smith (1-1).

Kim and Tatis had RBI singles in the fifth, Kim had his first career two-RBI game and Jake Cronenworth hit a pinch-homer for San Diego, which broke an 11-game losing streak at Chase Field. Jorge Mateo added a two-run homer in the ninth, his first in the majors.

Marlins 6, Brewers 2: Jesús Aguilar homered for the fifth time in six games, a tiebreaking three-run shot off Eric Yardley in the fourth, to lead visiting Miami past Milwaukee.

Sandy Alcántara (1-2) gave up two runs and five hits in seven innings.

Twins 10, Indians 2: Byron Buxton homered on the second pitch from Logan Allen (1-4) and went 5-for-5, Mitch Garver homered twice and visiting Minnesota connected six times to end a four-game skid and win for the second time in 10 games.

Nationals 8, Blue Jays 2: At Dunedin, Fla., Erick Fedde (2-2) allowed one run and two hits in six innings and Josh Harrison hit a three-run homer as Washington won in George Springer's debut with Toronto.

Red Sox 1, Mets 0: Christian Vázquez hit an early RBI double, producing the only run required for visiting Boston to beat Jacob deGrom (2-2).

Yankees 7, Orioles 0: Domingo Germán (2-2) won his second straight start, allowing three hits in seven innings and combining with Michael King on a four-hitter as visiting New York blanked Baltimore.

Rays 2, Athletics 0: Tyler Glasnow (3-1) struck out 10 and gave up five hits in seven innings, dealing visiting Oakland its third loss in four games after a 13-game winning streak.

Braves 10, Cubs 0: Marcell Ozuna homered in a four-run first inning, and Huascar Ynoa (2-1) gave up four hits and struck out nine in 5½ innings as host Atlanta beat Chicago.

Royals 9, Pirates 6: Jorge Soler had two doubles among his three hits and drove in three runs as visiting Kansas City improved to a major league-best 15-8.

Angels 4, Rangers 3: Rookie Chris Rodriguez pitched 3½ shutout innings for the win, and Anthony Rendon and Jose Iglesias hit two-run singles in the first off Dane Dunning (1-1) to lead visiting Los Angeles past Texas.

Astros 7, Mariners 5: Pinch-hitter Jason Castro drew a bases-loaded walk to put host Houston in front during an eighth-inning rally past Seattle.

Denver trades for Carolina QB Bridgewater

Associated Press

ENGLEWOOD, Colo. — Drew Lock didn't have to wait around for the NFL Draft to get the serious competition for his starting job that new general manager George Paton has been promising for months.

Paton traded a sixth-round pick in this weekend's draft to the Carolina Panthers in exchange for veteran QB Teddy Bridgewater on Wednesday.

"Acquiring Teddy Bridgewater adds competition, experience and a strong veteran presence to our quarterback room," Paton said. "He's a talented player and leader who's had success in this league in a number of different situations. Being familiar with Teddy from Minnesota, he's going to compete and do everything he can to help us win."

Paton might not be done, either.

The Broncos own the ninth overall selection Thursday night and have had their eyes on several of the quarterback prospects rated a notch or two below Clemson's Trevor Lawrence and BYU's Zach Wilson, who are expected to go 1-2 to the Jaguars and Jets, respectively.

"We're really high on Drew," Paton said at his pre-draft news conference last week. "I like seeing Drew here every morning when I come in. He's working hard and trending in the right direction."

Bridgewater became available when the Panthers traded for former Jets QB Sam Darnold three weeks ago.

Bridgewater went 4-11 as the Panthers' starter last year and struggled to win close games down the stretch. He completed 69.1% of his passes, throwing 15 touchdown passes and 11 interceptions.

Those numbers are better than Lock's.

The third-year pro from Missouri tied for the league lead with 15 interceptions in 13 starts and his passer rating ranked 32nd in the NFL last season. He was 4-9 overall with 16 touchdown throws and is 8-10 in two years as Denver's starter.

After missing most of his rookie season with a thumb injury on his throwing hand, Lock missed 2½ games with a rotator cuff injury to his throwing shoulder and another for COVID-19 tracing in 2020.

Bridgewater has a 26-23 career record as a starter over his six seasons in Minnesota, New Orleans and Carolina.

Thomas caps Blues' rally against Wild

Associated Press

ST. PAUL, Minn. — The Minnesota Wild recently became the third West Division team to clinch a spot in the playoffs.

The St. Louis Blues made quite the case to join them with this comeback.

Robert Thomas tracked down a skipping puck and snapped it into the top of the net with 23 seconds left, capping a three-goal third-period rally by the Blues for a 4-3 victory on Wednesday night to stop the Wild's seven-game winning streak.

"It's a mindset for me more than anything. It's staying on our toes and being aggressive," said coach Craig Berube, whose team won its third straight game to improve to 22-19-6 and take another step toward fending off Arizona, San Jose and Los Angeles for the fourth and final playoff spot in the division.

Mike Hoffman's second power play goal of the game, both assisted by David Perron, brought the Blues within one early in the third period follow-

ing a hooking call on Matt Dumba. Jordan Kyrout tied the game about four minutes later after a turnover by Dumba.

Cam Talbot, who stopped 28 shots for the Wild, had his five-start winning streak snapped.

"When games were on the line and we needed big saves in the past few weeks, I've been making those saves. Tonight I didn't make the save that I need to make down the stretch there," he said.

Jordan Binnington had 25 stops for the Blues to improve to 5-1 in six career starts against the Wild, the only loss coming here in a 2-0 decision on March 25 to Talbot.

Maple Leafs 4, Canadiens 1: Auston Matthews got his NHL-best 35th goal of the season and visiting Toronto clinched a playoff spot.

William Nylander, Jake Muzzin and Adam Brooks also scored for Toronto, and Morgan Rielly and Jason Spezza each had two assists. Jack Campbell had 32 saves as the North Division-leading Maple Leafs beat the Canadiens for the fifth time

in seven meetings this season.

Spezza is now tied with Canadiens legend Maurice "Rocket" Richard for 99th on the NHL's all-time scoring list with 966 points. Joe Thornton helped set up Muzzin's goal to become just the seventh player in league history to register 1,100 career assists.

Golden Knights 5, Avalanche 2: Max Pacioretty scored twice to lead host Vegas to its franchise-best 10th straight win.

The Golden Knights now lead Colorado by six points, with the Avalanche having a game in hand. Vegas has outscored teams 45-17 during its win streak.

Sharks 4, Coyotes 2: Evander Kane reached the 20-goal mark for the sixth straight season, Josef Korenar made 28 saves to win his second straight start and host San Jose beat Arizona.

Kane's goal started a three-goal barrage for San Jose in the first period with Rudolfs Balcers and Kevin Labanc following up to help San Jose sweep the two-game series against

Arizona.

With the back-to-back losses the Coyotes fell three points behind St. Louis for the final playoff spot in the West Division with the Blues holding three games in hand. Arizona has lost nine of 11 games overall.

Oilers 3, Jets 1: Tyson Barrie and Ryan Nugent-Hopkins each had a goal and an assist as visiting Edmonton beat Winnipeg.

Leon Draisaitl added a late empty-netter, and Connor McDavid had assists on all three goals for the Oilers, who have won four of their last five games.

Edmonton won seven of nine in the season series and sits in second place in the North Division — seven points behind Toronto. Winnipeg is third, three points behind the Oilers.

Ducks 3, Kings 2: Cam Fowler scored with 1:01 remaining and visiting Anaheim ended a five-game losing streak.

Senators 6, Canucks 3: Brady Tkachuk had a goal and an assist to lead host Ottawa to a victory over Vancouver.

New rule bans Lasix for Kentucky Derby horses

Associated Press

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — The Kentucky Derby is steeped in tradition: a blanket of red roses to the winner, fancy hats worn by mint julep-sipping spectators and its first-Saturday-in-May date on the calendar.

There's a major change coming to the 147th Derby.

It will be run for the first time this weekend without horses using the anti-bleeding drug Lasix as part of the sport's plodding attempt to move toward the elimination of race-day medication.

The drug is already widely banned on race days in the rest of the world.

Lasix has long been the third-

rail in North American racing, with people on both sides of the issue disagreeing about its use.

Formally known as furosemide, it's given as a \$20 injection about four hours before a race to prevent or reduce the severity of exercise-induced bleeding in the lungs. It also works as a diuretic that causes horses to urinate and lose 20 to 30 pounds of fluid, thus increasing their ability to run faster. Humans use Lasix to control blood pressure.

"I've never had a fan come up to me and say, 'Geez, Lasix is bad,'" said California-based trainer John Sadler, who saddles Rock Your World in the Derby. "People want to go to

the races and have fun and watch good horses run."

Kiaran McLaughlin trained for 10 years in Dubai and achieved major success for Godolphin Racing without race-day medication. However, he was initially concerned about not having it.

"Once you get there and realize they are fine without medication and they can run without being treated, you learn quick it's somewhat overrated with medications," he said.

Tracks from New York to California and Maryland to Florida have recently eliminated Lasix on race days after decades of use. This year, the ban extends for the first time to lu-

crative and prestigious stakes races, including the Derby, Preakness and Belmont.

The goal is a complete elimination of Lasix by July 1, 2022, when the Horseracing Integrity and Safety Act is set to take effect. It will enact national rules on medication and doping that would replace the patchwork that exists in 38 racing jurisdictions around the country.

Beginning last year, Kentucky banned the use of race-day Lasix for 2-year-olds. Those horses are now 3 and eligible for the Triple Crown series.

The last horse to win the Derby without Lasix was Grindstone in 1996.