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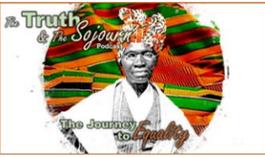

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GA. ATTORNEY GENERAL APPOINTS 4TH PROSECUTOR IN ARBERY MURDER CASE DISTRICT ATTORNEY HOLMES TO LEAD HOMICIDE CASE



Cobb District Attorney Joyette Holmes said Monday she has accepted to lead the prosecution in the killing of Ahmaud Arbery. Photo courtesy of Cobb County District Attorney's Office/Facebook

By Darryl Coote
UPI

Georgia Attorney General Chris Carr appointed Monday a fourth district attorney to lead the prosecution against two white men charged with the murder of Ahmaud Arbery.

In a statement, Carr said he appointed District Attorney Joyette Holmes to lead the homicide case against Gregory McMichael, 64, and his son, Travis McMichael, 34, who have been charged with killing Arbery, a 25-year-old black man who was shot to death while jogging in broad daylight.

"District Attorney Holmes is a respected attorney with experience, both as a lawyer and a judge, and the Cobb County District Attorney's Office has the

See **HOLMES**, page 3

Cuomo says N.Y. entering 'exciting new phase' of recovery

By Don Jacobson & Jean Lotus
UPI

New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo said Monday his state will reopen on Friday when his shutdown order expires, adding that New Yorkers are entering an "exciting new phase" of the coronavirus recovery.

Cuomo made the declaration at his daily briefing after noting the state's latest counts have fallen to just under 500 cases and 161 deaths, the lowest daily metrics since the middle of March.

The "Pause" declaration, which closed all non-essential businesses, will expire on Friday and it will be replaced by a system in which officials in 10 New York regions will make reopening decisions based on health criteria.

"A new chapter starts today," he said. "This is the next big step of this historic journey."

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See **PHASE**, page 3



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OPINION Going viral: Politicizing this pandemic gets us nowhere

Donald Trump is turning American presidency into a dictatorship

By Tom Coleman
UPI

Since taking office more than three years ago, President Donald Trump has consistently shown a complete lack of understanding of the fundamental precepts of our constitutional system.

He doesn't fathom the doctrine of separation of powers, the limitations placed on a president through the Constitution's checks and balances. And he doesn't comprehend the foundation upon which all of it rests -- the rule of law. All of which raises the question: Will Trump become an unaccountable dictator?

Last year, Trump asserted he could personally take over special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation into possible Russian influence in the 2016 election and his own role in it "if I wanted to." Emboldened after being acquitted by the Senate on the House's impeachment charges, he said, "I'm actually, I guess, the chief law enforcement officer of the country." And he has claimed that, as president, the Constitution gives him "the right to do whatever I want."

Most Americans had never considered an American president would speak such words. They are the musings of a monarch from centuries ago, or a dictator ruling in a banana republic.

It's doubtful the president came up with these constitutional perversions by himself. Assistance was surely provided by his White House counsel, Patrick Cipollone, and Attorney General William Barr. Both are leading proponents of what's known as the unitary theory of the executive, an extreme doctrine of presidential power that has no legal boundaries. It is radical, wrong, undemocratic -- and dangerous.

This theory is as obscure as it is controversial. It is a viewpoint that proponents argue is found in Article II of the Constitution: "The executive power shall be vested in a president of the United States of America." Those words have been variously interpreted to theoretically invalidate any statute passed by Congress that denies the president "exclusive control" over a "purely executive" power -- and thus violating the principle of the separation of powers in the Constitution.

Other supporters of the theory take a more extreme view. They consider independent federal regulatory agencies as illegitimate, since they are structured to be insulated from presidential control.

They believe Congress has no power to demand information from any part of the executive branch. And they assert that executive authority, under the Constitution, gives a president whatever powers are left specifically unchecked by either Congress or the courts.

Advocates of the theory posit that Congress cannot compel executive branch personnel to appear on Capitol Hill, even under subpoena.

Not surprising, these were the same arguments put forth by Trump's lawyers in several court cases brought by the House against the president. They also served as a cornerstone of Trump's defense in the Senate impeachment trial.

While not the first presidential proponent of the theory -- George W. Bush referred to it in more than 161 bill-signing statements -- Trump has taken it to a significantly higher level.

Consider if Trump really has all the powers he thinks he should have. If only the president could determine what presidential powers exist, then a president could do more than act whenever Congress had not set specific parameters on a given topic.

Under this extreme theory, his unilateral actions, even in the face of explicit congressional opposition, would be nonetheless constitutional.

This is precisely the issue now before the federal Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit. Is it appropriate for the House to challenge Trump's decision to build a wall on the southern border with funds not appropriated for that purpose?

The massive economic destruction being wrought by the COVID-19 epidemic and the government's attempt to mitigate the impact on American families and businesses raises a fundamental question: is the sum total of America's greatness measured by its markets or by its people?

Americans have served the world, and particularly the developing world, as the largest consumers of goods and services of any nation on earth. Entire civilizations have risen from the dust -- notably China -- on the back of the American consumer. In return for opening its markets to foreign goods and services, America has been able to consistently borrow money from abroad to finance its insatiable appetite for more stuff. Most Americans, in fact, equate consumerism with the American way of life.

To put the notion of America as a market in some historical perspective, it bears mentioning that today's America started out as a group of mercantile colonies of England, France, the Netherlands and Spain. Traders, in search of foreign markets for resources and labor engaged in a triangular trade for slaves, sugar and rum -- as well as textiles, spices and other staples of the time.

The mercantile class became so successful in colonial-era Europe, in fact, that they ultimately supplanted the royal classes in both wealth and power. Modern America and modern Europe are the direct results of the rise of global commerce.

Over the past decades, American politicians have declared that "free markets" are synonymous with "freedom." In fact, the two have become so intermingled in the American lexicon, that one tends to conflate capitalism with democracy. Both the Republican and Democratic parties alike championed "free trade" as a global wealth builder, with America's free markets leading the way.

But there has been a growing disconnect between the notion of nation and markets. Donald Trump's election marks the first time in over a generation that a Republican president has urged trade protectionism rather than global expansion as a cure for stagnant domestic growth.

To many, Trump's call to close the borders and cut off trade seemed weirdly alarmist given America's interdependence with both its immediate neighbors, notably Mexico, and its distant trading partners, notably China.

As if to further illustrate the problem with confusing capitalism with democracy, China has become increasingly more capitalist over the past 30 years, while also becoming increasingly autocratic.

When President Nixon initiated the Cold War detente with China, his primary aim was to reduce the Soviet Union's influence

on Asia.

But in opening up relations with the world's most populous country, he was also seeking markets for America's goods and services, assuming that the U.S. would be free and fair. However, China has proven to be a tough market for U.S. businesses to enter, while on the contrary, the U.S. is flooded with Chinese goods --including those most critical during the COVID crisis, medicine and medical supplies.

While America became the world's largest consumer, China became its largest producer. In 2002, China's middle class constituted a mere 4 percent of its population.

In 2020, more than 30 percent of its citizens -- some 420 million people -- enjoy middle-class incomes. Over the same time period, America's middle class has declined. Real wages in the U.S. have stagnated, labor force participation contracted, and the wealth gap has widened to the largest it has ever been.

While it is convenient to blame China's predation for America's woes, the real culprits lie much closer to home. Americans consume far more than we produce and because we have the world's biggest credit card -- dollar-backed U.S. treasuries -- we have believed that we could consume our way out of persistent economic stagnation. This has proven to be a false narrative and the chickens are finally coming home to roost.

As the U.S. government

prepares to take on massive amounts of debt to try and stave off the economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, the problem becomes even more stark.

That debt is not being taken on to fund productive projects -- such as sorely needed national infrastructure. Nor is it being invested in plants and equipment that fuel industrial production. Rather, it is being placed directly in the hands of the consumer, who is being urged to go out and spend their newly minted government cash on -- you guessed it -- imported goods that have been produced in China and other foreign nations.

If this state of affairs seems counterintuitive, and perhaps counterproductive, that's because it is. Americans might be far better off if instead of trying to spend our way out of a looming recession we attempted to revive our productive capacity and work our way out.

It will take time to do this, but if we can manage to secure just a modicum of the self-initiative and industriousness that made our nation great in the first place, it will be well worth the sacrifice. Just ask the Chinese.

Armstrong Williams is manager and sole owner of Howard Stirk Holdings I & II Broadcast Television Stations and Executive Editor of American Current See online magazine. Watch our Right Side Forum every Saturday on NewsChannel 8 TV 28, 10:30 a.m. to 11 a.m., with repeats at 6:30 p.m. EST.

No honor among thieves at head of Iran and Venezuela

By Struan Stevenson
UPI

When the disintegrating socialist state of Venezuela, where the people are starving, starts flying planeloads of gold to the collapsing theocratic regime of Iran, the world should sit up and take notice.

Due to their status as international pariahs, both of these oil-producing nations are under U.S. sanctions, banning their ability to export oil. Now the plummeting value of crude, down to less than \$1 a barrel due to the coronavirus pandemic, has deepened their respective economic woes.

The Venezuelan dictator Nicolás Maduro, through a combination of scandalous maladministration and venal corruption, has crushed his once prosperous country, leading to the mass exodus of Venezuela's professional class, fleeing from the crisis-plagued nation that now faces severe poverty.

Maduro and his predecessor, Hugo Chávez, became international cheerleaders for the hard left, expropriating private companies, firing expert workers and managers, slashing spending on repairs and basic maintenance and milking the profits for their personal enrichment. Their version of Bolivarian Bolshevism has resulted in Venezu-

ela's economy shrinking by more than 65 percent, a record-breaking recession, with inflation climbing to around 3,500 percent. The population now faces famine in a country that was once the richest in South America.

Desperate to restore one of his decaying oil refineries on Venezuela's northwestern coast, to prevent Venezuela from running out of gasoline altogether, Maduro sought help from his allies and dictatorial collaborators in Tehran. In exchange for sending expert engineers and much-needed gasoline additives, the mullahs demanded gold. In the last week of April alone, six planes from the sanctioned Iranian carrier Mahan Air, were seen flying in and out of Simón Bolívar International Airport near Caracas.

Iran's Mahan Air is run by the regime's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, a listed terrorist organization. With the Venezuelan currency virtually worthless, Maduro had to loot his country's last gold reserves to pay his terrorist friends. Around 9 tons of gold worth an estimated \$500 million has been shipped to Tehran, leaving Venezuela with hardly any remaining hard currency reserves.

In early May, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo

said: "These flights must stop and countries should do their part to deny overflights just as many have already denied landing rights to this sanctioned airline." Pompeo is right to be angry.

The unholy alliance between Venezuela and Iran, as the mullahs seek to prop up their most strategic partner in the West, poses a threat to world peace. Since the 1979 revolution that brought them to power, the Iranian regime has sponsored global terrorism and financed regional conflict. The world can rest assured that none of the gold will find its way toward helping the 80 million Iranians, 70 percent of whom are trying to survive with income levels below the international poverty line, against the background of a COVID-19 contagion that has spiraled out of control, accounting for more than 40,000 deaths.

Instead, the mullahs will continue to divert vital resources to propping up Bashar al-Assad's bloody civil war in Syria, backing the Houthis rebels in Yemen, the vicious Shi'ia militia in Iraq and the terrorist groups Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Gaza. Anything left will find its way into the pockets of the ayatollahs, who match their Venezuelan chums for unprincipled corruption.

There is certainly no honor among thieves.

Pompeo has repeatedly accused the mullahs of being the godfathers of international terror. There is a mountain of evidence to back up his claim. In June 2018, Assadollah Assadi, a diplomat from the Iranian Embassy in Vienna handed over 500 grams of high explosives and a detonator to an Iranian couple from Antwerp, Belgium.

He ordered them to drive to Paris and detonate the bomb at a major rally organized by the National Council for Resistance in Iran and attended by over 100,000 people.

A combined operation by the German, French and Belgian intelligence services led to the arrest of Assadi and the other conspirators, all of whom are in prison in Belgium, awaiting trial on charges of terrorism.

In America, the United States Department of Justice on Aug. 9, 2018, announced that two Ministry of Intelligence (MOIS) agents of the mullahs' regime, Ahmadreza Mohammadi Doostdar and Majid Ghorbani, had been arrested and charged with spying on and plotting to assassinate supporters of the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI/MEK), the main democratic opposition movement.



Daily Drum Media Group
PO Box 965
Greenville, NC 27835
www.dailydrummedia.com
dailydrum@cmghost.net

Roger Johnson.....Publisher
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Alishia Brooks.....Sales Consultant
George Ayino.....Sales Consultant
Ben Ayino.....Sales Consultant
Data Group.....Web Host
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Sioux nations reject S.D. Gov. Noem’s demand to remove checkpoints

By Jean Lotus
UPI

South Dakota leaders from the Cheyenne River and Oglala Sioux nations pushed back against threats of legal action from Republican Gov. Kristi Noem if they did not remove nine COVID-19 checkpoints on roads leading onto reservation land.

“Gov. Noem miscalculates our dedication to protect our most vulnerable people,” said Oglala Sioux President Julian Bear Runner on a Facebook video posted over the weekend. “We are not moved by threats, as they come from a position of weakness.”

Bear Runner called threats of legal action “un-

helpful.”

“Many have been inconvenienced by the current situation but the virus does not differentiate between members and non members,” said a statement from Cheyenne River Chairman Harold Frazier.

“We will not apologize for being an island of safety in a sea of uncertainty and death.”

Frazier accused Noem’s office of potentially provoking violence over the checkpoints.

“Ignorant statements and fiery rhetoric encourage individuals already under stress from this situation to carry out irrational actions,” Frazier added. “The purpose of our actions

is to ‘save lives rather than save face.’”

Meanwhile, 17 South Dakota lawmakers with tribal land within their districts sent a letter over the weekend to the governor’s office protesting the order and saying a lawsuit would cost taxpayer dollars, the West River Eagle reported.

“We do not wish to be party of another lawsuit that will ultimately cost the people of South Dakota more money,” the lawmakers wrote.

“We wish to work with all parties involved for a reasonable, legal, and appropriate solution that address the concerns of all sovereigns involved.”



Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe Chairman Harold Frazier said his tribe would not remove COVID-19 checkpoints on reservation land near Timber Lake in spite of threats of legal action from South Dakota Gov. Kristin Noem. Photo courtesy of Chairman Harold Frazier official Facebook page/UPI

Phase

continued from page 1

requiring face coverings for riders

“We’re on the other side of the mountain. It’s an exciting new phase we’re all anxious to get back to work.”

Several of New York’s upstate regions, including the Finger Lakes region around Rochester, will partly reopen this weekend.

The relaxation will allow for limited amounts of manufacturing, construction and curbside retail. Recreational outdoor activities and low-risk business like landscaping, gardening and drive-in movie theaters will also be allowed.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said in a report Monday that New York City’s figures have likely been under reported.

The report shows 5,293 other related deaths between March 11 and May 2 that were not identified as COVID-19-related deaths, but may have been attributable to the virus.

In the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, the CDC blamed inadequate testing, possible false negatives and underlying

chronic health conditions for 22 percent of the other deaths.

The report came just hours after New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio said key coronavirus figures are still declining in the city. As of Friday, the latest data available, hospitalizations fell to 55 and those in intensive care was down to 537, he said. De Blasio also announced an initiative to supply 1,000 community clinics with protective equipment, and said schools are on track to be open for the next academic year in September. Nationally, there have been 1.3 million COVID-19 cases since the start of the pandemic and 79,000 deaths, according to Johns Hopkins University.

In Seattle, a closely-watched model maintained by University of Washington slightly raised its prediction for the number of U.S. deaths to just over 137,000 by early August.

The Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation said it raised last week’s forecast of 134,475 deaths as more states “continue to ease social distancing mandates” and new data is acquired on people’s movements.

“The increase is explained primarily by people’s movements, as

captured in anonymous mobility data from cell phones,” IHME Director Dr. Christopher Murray said. “We’re also seeing fewer deaths expected in some states; however, we’re now forecasting slower downward trajectories in deaths after states hit their peaks in daily deaths.”

In Florida, the state marked a fourth straight week with at least 300 deaths. Figures compiled by the Department of Health showed 342 deaths for the week ending Sunday, pushing the state’s total to 1,735.

Florida’s number of new cases have declined for the fifth consecutive week. South Florida has been the state epicenter, with about 58 percent of new cases.

In Pennsylvania, Gov. Tom Wolf threatened Monday to withhold relief funding from counties that reopen their economies earlier than allowed.

During an online news conference, Wolf criticized a growing number of local officials who’ve said they will move from “red” to the less-restrictive “yellow” designations on their own.

“They need to understand the consequences of their cowardly act,” Wolf said. “They are engaging in



Abortion rights supporters demonstrate during the “Stop Abortion Bans Day of Action” rally at the Supreme Court on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., on May 21, 2019. Photo by Kevin Dietsch/UPI | License Photo

behavior that is both selfish and unsafe.”

Under Wolf’s declaration, 24 counties moved into the first (yellow) phase of reopening on Friday. Others, including those containing the state’s largest cities of Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, remain under the strictest “red” designation. In Massachusetts, Gov. Charlie Baker announced Monday in a press briefing that the state’s economy would open in four phases.

Phase one, which could begin as soon as May 18 was dubbed “Start” in which limited businesses with few face-to-face interactions will re-open with severe restrictions.

Phases “Cautious” and “Vigilant” are expected to proceed over the next months with more businesses and industries opening with restrictions and capacity limits, but only if the data continues to show downward trends of corona-

virus cases, Baker said.

Finally phase four, “The New Normal” will proceed when a new vaccine or treatment is developed for COVID-19, Baker said.

“We all know life will be different, but as the medical and life science communities make progress in developing treatments or vaccines, we can really begin to put this virus into the rearview mirror,” Baker said. “But none of that is going to happen overnight.”

Holmes

continued from page 1

resources personnel and experience to lead this prosecution and ensure justice is done,” Carr said.

Holmes said she accepted the request. “Our office will immediately gather all materials related to the investigation thus far and continue to seek additional information to move this case forward,” she said in a statement. “We appreciate the confidence that Attorney General Carr has in our office’s ability to bring to light the justice that this case deserves.” Holmes is the fourth prosecutor in a case that has garnered national attention and anger and has seen two previous prosecutors recuse themselves due to conflicts of interest.

Benjamin Crump, a lawyer representing the Arbery family, said in a statement it

is “imperative” any special prosecutor appointed must have no affiliation with South Georgia legal or law enforcement communities to ensure justice is appropriately carried out.

“We implore District Attorney Joyette Holmes to be zealous in her search for justice, as she works to hold all of those responsible for the unjustifiable execution of an unarmed young black man in broad daylight,” Crump said. Carr said he appointed Holmes, the first black district attorney in Cobb County history, as the case has “grown in size and magnitude” since District Attorney Tom Durden accepted it in mid-April. The McMichaels were arrested by the Georgia Bureau of Investigation late last week and charged with murder and aggravated assault nearly 80 days after Arbery was killed. The arrests followed video of the shooting

released online showing the two armed men confronting Arbery, sparking national outrage and demands from civil rights groups and the

public for answers over the case’s handling and why it took nearly two months for the McMichaels to be arrested.



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Schools Firsts

By Mia Eley
The Daily Drum

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The new SCHOOL FIRSTS program promises to deliver active engagement from teachers, students and parents. Set to launch May 30, 2020, SCHOOL FIRSTS offers an online school system, in your home, that ensures student retention and comprehension.

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The Johnson Statewide Family Engagement Learning Center (SFEC) is promoting this education project

in hopes of establishing a better infrastructure for North Carolina's school's system and beyond.

The Daily Drum had the opportunity to sit down via podcast and learn more about the SCHOOL FIRSTS initiative from Constance Lav Johnson, School Firsts' President and Government/Education Consultant.

Visit The Truth and The Sojourn Podcast (<https://youtu.be/yi5tHRpra6Q>) to learn more; or logon to www.schoolfirsts.org or www.johnsonsfec.com to register for this program.

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Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker in isolation after staffer gets coronavirus

By Clyde Hughes & Daniel Uriah
UPI

Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker and his Chicago staff will be working from home after a senior staff member tested positive for the coronavirus, his office said Monday.

An asymptomatic staff member tested positive late last week and had been in close contact with Pritzker and other staff members, his office said. Pritzker tested negative for COVID-19 on Sunday.

"Approximately 20 staff members have been regularly reporting in person to work in the James R. Thompson Center during this crisis, while the remainder of governor's office staff work from home," a statement from Pritzker's office said.

"Staff members have followed all [Illinois Department of Public Health] safety protocols, including daily temperature checks, wearing face coverings, social distancing and strict hygiene procedures. The office will undergo deep



Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker gives an update to reporters on the statewide response to the coronavirus in Belleville, Ill., on March 1. File Photo by Bill Greenblatt/UPI | License Photo

cleaning, and staff are monitoring themselves for symptoms," the statement said.

State Public Health Director Dr. Ngozi Ezike, who is the point person for Illi-

nois' COVID-19 response, is among the staff members staying home.

Another person on Pritzker's Chicago office staff tested positive for the coronavirus last month. Pritzker

at the time said he did not have "regular, close contact" with that staffer, who became ill in late March.

Pritzker said Sunday he is pushing the state to reach 64,000 returned tests per

day to relax shelter-in-place restrictions further.

Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds announced Monday that she will follow a "modified quarantine plan" after meeting with Vice Presi-

dent Mike Pence and his staff after one of Pence's staffers tested positive for COVID-19.

Reynolds said she did not come in direct contact with the staffer and tested negative for the virus on Monday, stating that the modified quarantine is an exercise of an abundance of caution.

She said she will be tested and have her temperature checked daily, will wear a mask around others and practice social distancing, while most of her staff will work from home.

"If I begin experiencing symptoms, of course, I will stay home," Reynolds said. Pence's press secretary, Katie Miller confirmed on Friday that she tested positive for COVID-19. A Pence spokesman said Sunday that he stayed away from the White House over the weekend, while three other members of the coronavirus task force remained in self-quarantine.

Sen Lamar Alexander, R-Texas, also said he will self-quarantine after a member of his staff tested positive for the coronavirus.

2,000 former DOJ prosecutors, FBI officials demand Barr resign over Flynn case

By Jean Lotus
UPI

Almost 2,000 former federal prosecutors and members of the Federal Bureau of Investigation published an open letter Monday calling for the resignation of Attorney General William P. Barr over the dropping of the Michael Flynn case in federal court.

Former U.S. Department of Justice and FBI officials, identifying themselves as both Republicans and Democrats, said Barr's decision to drop prosecution of Flynn, President Donald Trump's first national security advisor, was a case of using "the Department as a tool to further President Trump's personal and political interests," the letter said.

"Make no mistake: The Department's action is extraordinarily rare, if not unprecedented," the letter added.

"If any of us, or anyone reading this statement who is not a friend of the President, were to lie to federal investigators in the course of a properly predicated counterintelligence investigation, and admit we did so under oath, we would be prosecuted for it."

Last week, Barr's prosecutors asked a U.S. District judge to dismiss the charge of making false statements to the FBI with



Almost 2,000 former federal prosecutors and FBI officials called for the resignation of United States Attorney General William P. Barr after his decision to drop the case against former Trump Security Advisor Michael Flynn. File photo by Chris Kleponis/UPI | License Photo

prejudice against Flynn, a retired U.S. Army lieutenant general.

Co-signers of the letter said Barr earlier overruled sentencing recommendations to seek favorable treatment for President Trump's close associate, Roger Stone, showing that Barr was doing the president's bidding as Attorney General.

"[Barr's actions flout]

the core principle that politics must never enter into the Department's law enforcement decisions and undermined its mission to ensure equal justice under the law," the letter said.

Co-signers included former federal prosecutors and some former presidential appointees.

The highest-ranking signee was Stuart Ger-

son, who served during the Clinton administration as acting attorney general, NBC News reported.

The letter urged District Court Judge Emmet Sullivan, who's in charge of the Flynn case, to examine the DOJ's rationale for dismissing the charges, and to hold hearings with witnesses if necessary, then to "deny the motion and proceed with sentencing if appropriate."

Along with urging Barr's resignation, the group urged Congress to reschedule a House Judiciary Committee meeting to censure Barr, "and demand that he answer for his abuses of power."

In 2017, Flynn pleaded guilty to lying to the FBI during special counsel Robert Mueller's probe into Russian meddling in the 2016 election. Flynn admitted he made false statements regarding meetings with Russian Ambassador Sergey Kislyak.

In January, Barr's Justice Department changed its sentencing recommendation from probation for Flynn to six months in

prison, saying Flynn was unrepentant.

A week later, Flynn asked to withdraw his guilty plea, saying prosecutors broke the plea agreement when they requested jail time.

In withdrawing the prosecution, Barr and conservative supporters said FBI handwritten notes, released last month, by a federal judge, suggested that he "goal" was "to get [Flynn] to lie, so we can prosecute him or get him fired."

Trump said in March that he was "strongly considering" pardoning Flynn, suggesting that the FBI and DOJ mishandled records related to the case.



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Democrats to weigh letting delegates remotely vote for nominee

By Don Jacobson
UPI

A panel of the Democratic National Committee will vote Tuesday on a resolution that would allow delegates to participate remotely at the nominating convention this summer.

The measure will be considered by the DNC's rules and bylaws committee, and is the first time party leaders will look at an alternative to staging the traditional convention.

The Democratic National Convention, scheduled for Aug. 17-20 in Milwaukee, was originally set for July but the party postponed it by a month due to the health crisis.

If passed, the measure will go before the full DNC and its final decision will be made in the coming

weeks.

Former Vice President Joe Biden became the presumptive Democratic nominee when Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders exited the race in March.

Biden said last month Democrats may have to settle for a "virtual convention."

If the party approves the resolution, a small group of Democratic leaders could meet in Milwaukee while most of the 5,000 voting delegates attend remotely.

The new rules would also grant organizers wide latitude to alter arrangements to stay in compliance with changing health safety conditions.

The Republican National Convention, scheduled for Charlotte, N.C., in late August, is still planned as a full-scale event.



Then-Vice President Joe Biden reacts to the crowd on day three of the Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia, Pa., on July 27, 2016. Democratic organizers will vote Tuesday on a resolution allowing delegates to nominate the party's presidential candidate remotely at this year's convention in Milwaukee. File Photo by Ray Stubblebine/UPI | License Photo

Eleven students named to ECC Honor Society

Edgecombe Community College's Alpha Omega Phi Nu chapter of Phi Theta Kappa welcomed eleven new members into its membership this spring.

Phi Theta Kappa is an honor society for students attending two-year schools. Though the organization was unable to hold an induction ceremony due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the College celebrates the newest honor society members. Spring 2020 Phi Theta Kappa inductees are: Diego Alonso-Galindo, Brooke Clark, Heather Etheridge, Quantira Farmer, Janice Kornegay, Nikita Purvis, Nahdia Sharp, Kymberly Sisk, Yasheeka Spruill, Jonah Ussery, Erica Vincent

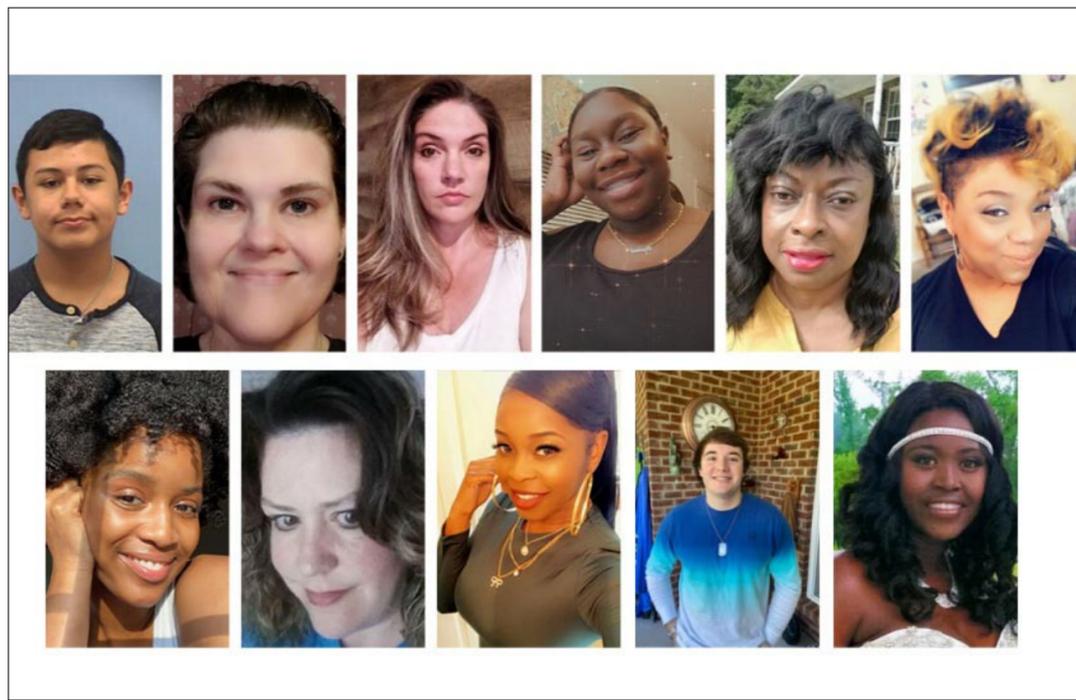
Tamara Frank-Pourvady, a professional tutor at the College, serves as advisor

to the honor society.

To be a member of Phi Theta Kappa, students must have completed 12 credit hours in an associate degree program and have a cumulative grade point average of 3.5 or higher.

Students must then maintain at least a 3.25 grade point average to remain in the group.

From left, new Phi Theta Kappa honor society members at Edgecombe Community College are (top row) Diego Alonso-Galindo, Brooke Clark, Heather Etheridge, Quantira Farmer, Janice Kornegay, Nikita Purvis, (bottom row) Nahdia Sharp, Kymberly Sisk, Yasheeka Spruill, Jonah Ussery, and Erica Vincent.



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<https://connect.ncdot.gov/letting/Pages/Central.aspx>. For more information, please call 252-261-3336, ask for Jay. RPC Contracting is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

White House directs officials to wear face masks in West Wing

By Daniel Uria
UPI

The White House mandated on Monday that staffers wear masks while moving about the West Wing, officials said.

The mandate directs staffers to wear masks while not sitting at their desks and avoid visits to the White House unless necessary. During a press briefing on Monday, President Donald Trump and Adm. Brett Giroir, assistant secretary for health, addressed media from separate podiums but



did not wear masks.

Trump pointed out that other White House staffers in attendance were wearing

masks adding that staffers wear masks when within a certain distance of him and each other.

He indicated, however, he would not wear a mask, saying he is "not close to anybody." A copy of the memo announcing the mandate obtained by The Wall Street Journal cites the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines encouraging the use of facial coverings but made no mention of whether Trump or Vice President Mike Pence will be required to abide by the guidelines.

The mandate comes after Pence's, press secretary Katie Miller, as well as one of Trump's personal valets recently tested positive for COVID-19. On Sunday, Pence said he stayed away from the White House for the weekend, while Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases and Dr. Robert Redfield, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said they would be working from home. Food And Drug Administration commissioner Stephen Hahn announced he had already gone into quarantine on Friday.

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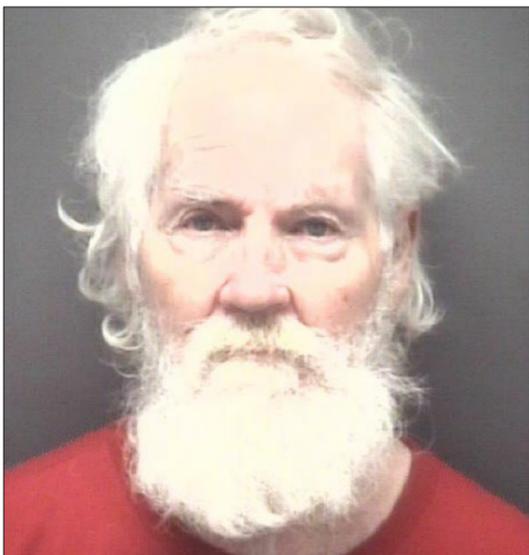
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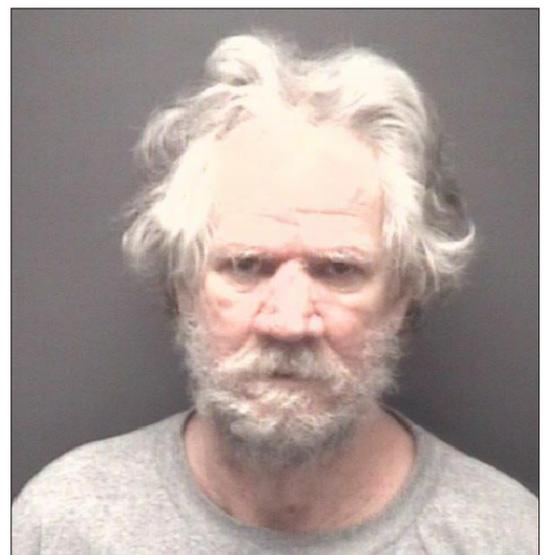
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NFL lays out protocols for reopening of team facilities

By Alex Butler
UPI

The NFL outlined protocols Wednesday for the gradual reopening of team facilities amid the coronavirus pandemic.

According to a memo NFL commissioner Roger Goodell sent to all 32 teams, the league wants clubs to be ready to implement the first phase of protocols by May 15.

Team facilities have been closed since March because of the virus.

"The protocols are intended to allow for a safe and phased reopening," Goodell wrote.

"The first phase would involve a number of non-player personnel. ... No players would be permitted in the facility except to continue a course of therapy and rehabilitation that was underway when facilities were initially closed.

"Clubs should take steps to have these protocols in place by Friday, May 15 in anticipation of being advised when club facilities will formally reopen."

The previous NFL policy that said no team facilities



In a memo Wednesday, NFL commissioner Roger Goodell said teams should have the protocols in place by May 15. File Photo by Kevin Dietsch/UPI | License Photo

could reopen until all 32 teams are eligible to do so remains in place, according to NFL spokesman Brian McCarthy. League

owners are expected to discuss the reopening of facilities during their May 19 virtual meeting.

"That principle remains

intact," McCarthy said in a statement. "This memo outlines the actions clubs will take to have the protocols in place by May 15. After that time, clubs will be advised when facilities could formally reopen.

These steps include the clubs reviewing their plans with the appropriate state and local officials.

"It's anticipated there will be further discussion on the reopening of facilities at the May 19 league

owners virtual meeting."

Among the league's protocols are wearing face coverings, maintaining a distance of at least six feet from other employees and daily screenings of employees and visitors.

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Brett Favre to pay Mississippi \$1.1M he owes for no-show speeches

By Sommer Brokaw
UPI

Former NFL quarterback Brett Favre on Thursday repaid the state of Mississippi \$500,000 of the \$1.1 million he owed for speeches he never delivered and committed to paying the remainder in coming months.

Favre agreed to "repay the remainder in installments over the next few months," Mississippi State Auditor Shad White said in a statement. The repayment comes after White's office released Monday a 424-page audit that found state officials misused nearly \$100 million of funds intended for the poor in the state. The federally funded Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program provided officials \$98 million over three years to help the state's poor, but nearly all of it was misused, the audit showed. Instead of being distributed to help the poor,



Former Green Bay Packers quarterback Brett Favre committed Thursday to repay the state \$1.1 million for paid speeches he never delivered. File Photo by Frank Polich/UPI | License Photo

the money was funneled to the Mississippi Community Education Center and the Family Resource Center of North Mississippi. These two nonprofit groups spent the money on advertising, lobbyists, expensive meals, airfare, luxury hotels, cars and Favre's no-show speeches. "I want to applaud Mr. Favre for his good faith effort to make this right and make the tax-

payers and TANF families whole," White said in a statement.

"To date, we have seen no records indicating Mr. Favre knew that TANF was the program that served as the source of the money he was paid," Favre said Wednesday in a Facebook post he had no idea he had been paid out of funds intended to be used for the poor.

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Miami Dolphins' Tua Tagovailoa signing rookie deal as jersey sales skyrocket

By Conner Grot UPI

Miami Dolphins quarterback Tua Tagovailoa agreed to terms on his rookie contract as his jersey sales climbed to the top spot in the league since the 2020 NFL Draft.

League sources told ESPN and NFL Media on Monday that Tagovailoa reached an agreement on a four-year deal worth about \$30.28 million.

According to NFL Media, the pact, which includes a fifth-year option, is fully guaranteed and has a signing bonus of \$19.6 million.

Earlier Monday, an NFL spokesman said Tagovailoa has the NFL's two highest-selling jerseys on the league's official merchandise shop since last month's draft.

His top sellers were the Dolphins' aqua-colored

home jersey, followed by the team's white away jersey.

Tagovailoa topped new Tampa Bay Buccaneers quarterback Tom Brady, who ranks third through sixth in jersey sales on the league's official site since the draft.

Brady's new teammate Rob Gronkowski ranks seventh.

No. 1 overall pick Joe Burrow is second on the rookie selling charts during that period, with his black Cincinnati Bengals jersey ranking eighth.

His orange jersey ranks 11th and his white jersey is 15th. Los Angeles Chargers rookie signal-caller Justin Herbert ranks No. 12 since the draft.

The Dolphins selected Tagovailoa with the No. 5 overall pick in this year's draft.

He announced last week that he will wear No. 1 this



Former Alabama Crimson Tide quarterback Tua Tagovailoa was selected with the No. 5 overall pick in last month's NFL Draft. File Photo by Terry Schmitt/UPI | License Photo

season, becoming the first quarterback in franchise history to don that jersey number.

Tom Brady denies rift with Patriots' Josh McDaniels: 'Please stop this nonsense'



Former Patriots quarterback Tom Brady (12) and offensive coordinator Josh McDaniels (R) worked together for almost two decades in New England. File Photo by Kevin Dietsch/UPI | License Photo

By Conner Grot UPI

Tampa Bay Buccaneers star quarterback Tom Brady

refuted a report that claimed he left the New England Patriots because of a "deteriorating" relationship with offensive coordinator Josh

McDaniels. NFL columnist Gary Myers reported Monday that Brady was "worn out" by McDaniels after the duo

spent nearly two decades together in New England. Brady took a screenshot of the report and posted it on his Instagram story.

"Please stop this nonsense!" Brady wrote.

"Please be more responsible with reporting. 19 years together and brothers for life."

The Patriots selected Brady in the sixth round of the 2000 NFL Draft out of

Michigan.

He played in New England for 20 seasons and captured six Super Bowl titles with the franchise before signing a two-year contract with the Buccaneers this off-season.

McDaniels arrived in New England as a personnel assistant in 2001 before becoming a defensive assistant from 2002-03.

He was promoted to

quarterbacks coach in 2004 and began serving as the Patriots' offensive coordinator in 2005.

After a brief head-coaching stint with the Denver Broncos (2009-10) and one year as an offensive coordinator with the then-St. Louis Rams, McDaniels returned to the Patriots' offensive coaching staff in 2012.

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- Mayor P. J. Connelly, Greenville, NC

"Now is the time for us to come together as a community. We must put all of our wisdom, all of our experiences, and all of our knowledge together and remember that we are stronger when we stand and act together -- Our resilience and perseverance will get us through this."
- Rep. Kandie Smith, NC House District 8

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- Chairman Melvin McLawhorn, Pitt County Board of Commissioners

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- Chairman Charles L. McLawhorn, Jr., Pitt County Democratic Party

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Announcers Booger McFarland, Joe Tessitore pulled from 'Monday Night Football'

By Alex Butler UPI

ESPN plans to make changes to its Monday Night Football booth for the 2020 season, with Joe Tessitore and Booger McFarland out as broadcasters for the games.

Sources informed The Athletic, the New York Post and the Miami Herald of the move on Saturday. ESPN plans to choose their replacements from a field of applicants who already work at the network.

Steve Levy, Dan Orlovsky, Louis Riddick and Brian Griese are among those being considered.

Former star quarterbacks Peyton Manning and Tony Romo have also been linked to the roles.

McFarland was hired as a Monday Night Football analyst in 2018.

He moved into a larger



role inside the broadcast booth when Jason Witten decided to leave the network and rejoin the Dallas Cowboys before the 2019 season.

Tessitore was named the play-by-play voice for the broadcast in 2018 after he rose to prominence as a college football commentator for nearly two decades.

Tessitore is expected

to keep his role as ESPN's lead boxing announcer and on the ABC show Holey Moley and could also return to the college football broadcast booth. McFarland is also slated to remain at the network with an NFL studio role.

The new Monday Night Football crew will be the fourth broadcast lineup in the last five years.

La Voz Latina

U.S. border agents intercept shipment of phony Super Bowl rings

By Sommer Brokaw
UPI

U.S. authorities said Monday agents have confiscated nearly three dozen counterfeit NFL championship rings in a shipment from overseas.

U.S. Customs and Border Patrol said the phony championship rings were intercepted on April 27 when screeners noticed inconsistencies inside a package from China that was on its way to Chicago.

The customs declaration listed a ring valued at \$10, but when officers opened the package they found 35 counterfeit Super Bowl rings inside. Officials said they'd be worth about \$350,000 if they were genuine NFL championship rings. Officials declared the rings counterfeit due to "poor quality, poor packaging and low value," the agency said.

The rings denoted NFL Championships and Super Bowls won by the New York Jets, New York Giants, Pittsburgh Steelers, San Francisco 49ers, Dallas Cowboys, Washington Redskins, Green Bay Packers and Denver Broncos.

CBP said scam artists are trying to capitalize on the popularity of sports memorabilia right now while all sports are on coronavirus hiatus.

"Preventing counterfeit items from entering the United States is crucial to protecting consumers and our nation's economy," Acting CBP Assistant Area Port Director Ralph Piccirilli said. "This most recent intercept of counterfeit NFL rings is a great example of how our CBP officers stand ready to serve the United States in support the CBP mission as the world battles this unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic."



The phony championship rings were found in a package from China headed for Chicago, authorities said. Photo courtesy CBP/UPI

Premier League soccer allowed to resume after June 1

By Alex Butler
UPI

The United Kingdom announced Monday that Premier League soccer can restart with no spectators present as early as June 1.

The return was announced in a 60-page document titled "Our Plan to Rebuild: The UK Government's COVID-19 recovery strategy." Premier League games have been suspended since mid-March.

Step one of the document includes a step-by-step guide for lifted restrictions on work, schools, travel, face coverings, public spaces, protection for the clinically vulnerable, enforcement, British Parliament and international travel.

The second step of the plan includes social and family contact.

"The content and timing of the second stage of adjustments will depend on the most up-to-date assessment of the risk posed by the virus," the document says.

The plan permits cultural and sporting events to take place "behind closed doors for broadcast, while avoiding the risk of large-scale social contact."

The German Bundesliga was the first of Europe's five major soccer leagues to announce a return.

The Bundesliga season will return Saturday with a slate of six games, and games are scheduled through June 27.

France's Ligue 1 has canceled the remainder of its 2019-2020 season due to the pandemic.

Players from Italy's Serie A and Spain's La Liga were allowed to train last week.



Mohamed Salah (C) and Liverpool could return to the field as early as June 1 after the Premier League season was suspended in March due to the coronavirus pandemic. Photo by Peter Powell/EPA-EFE

Soccer: Real Madrid wins La Liga tourney, \$152K to fight coronavirus in 'FIFA 20'

By Alex Butler
UPI

Spanish midfielder Marco Asensio led Real Madrid to a championship and helped raise \$152,000 to fight the coronavirus by winning a tournament on the FIFA 20 soccer video game.

Asensio was one of 18 players who represented their respective teams in Spain's top soccer league during the tournament, called the La Liga Santander Challenge.

La Liga has suspended play indefinitely amid the coronavirus outbreak. Spanish video game streamer Ibai Llanos invited the players to participate in the tournament.

Asensio, who has been sidelined from play in 2019-2020 due to a knee injury, beat Leganes' Aitor Ruibal 4-2 in the final

match of the virtual tournament on Sunday. Proceeds from the tournament were donated to UNICEF.

"It has been a spectacular tournament," Asensio tweeted. "The goal was to have a good time, laugh, entertain ourselves in these difficult times for everyone, and donate in the fight against COVID-19. And we have succeeded."

There are 20 teams in La Liga, but Barcelona and Mallorca both had to forfeit their games in the FIFA 20 tournament because they have licensing contracts with the game Pro Soccer Evolution, made by Japanese video game producer Konami.

Pro Soccer Evolution is a FIFA 20 competitor. Sergi Roberto was set to represent Barcelona while Alex Pozo planned to represent Mallorca before the squads were disqualified.



Real Madrid midfielder Marco Asensio was one of 18 players who represented their respective Spanish soccer teams in the La Liga Santander Challenge FIFA 20 video game tournament. Photo by Ronald Wittek/EPA-EFE