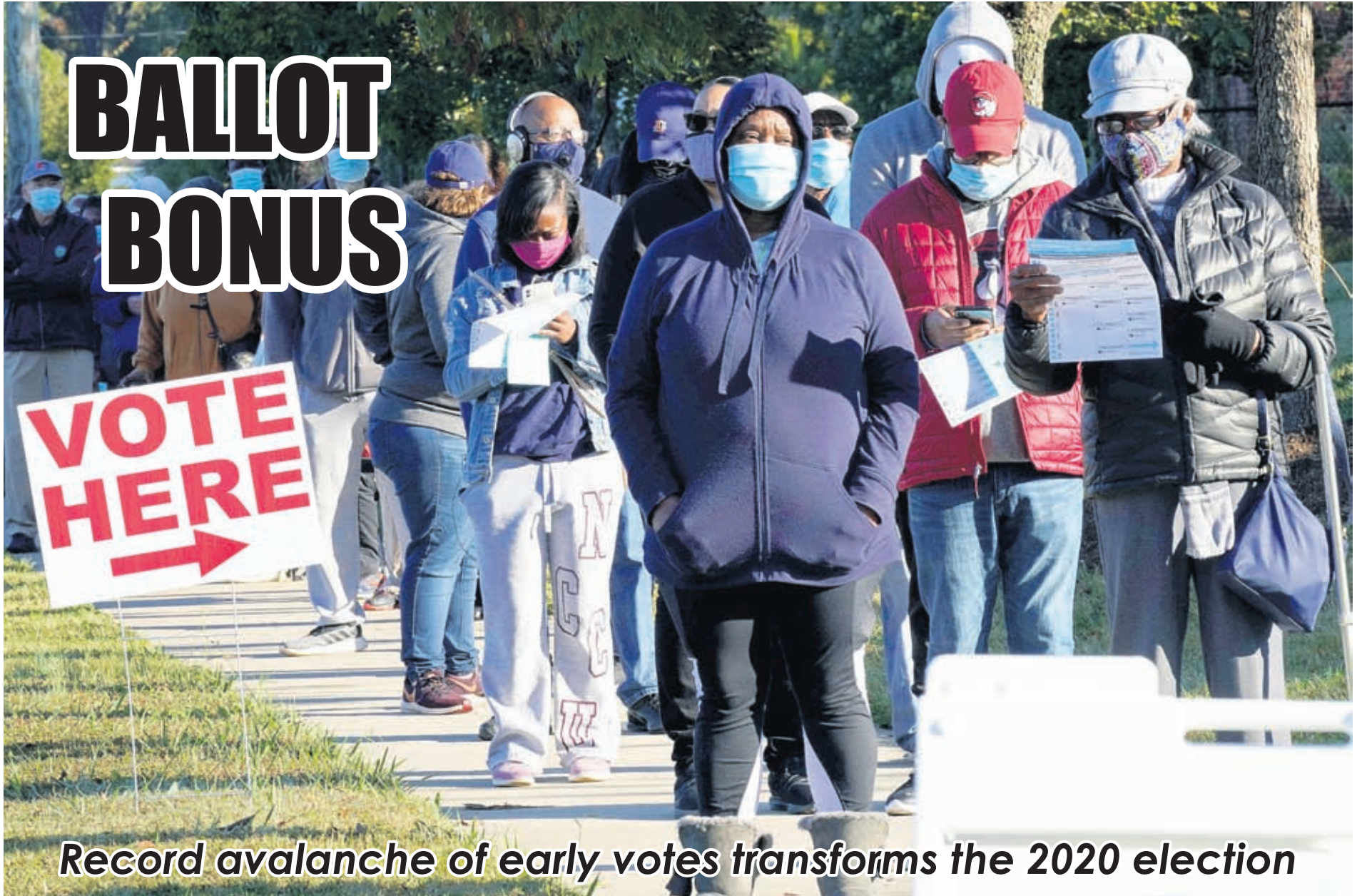




## BALLOT BONUS



### Record avalanche of early votes transforms the 2020 election

Early voters line up to cast their ballots at the South Regional Library polling location in Durham, N.C., Thursday, Oct. 15, 2020.

Associated Press

By **NICHOLAS RICCARDI and ANGELIKI KASTANIS**

Associated Press

Nearly 21 million Americans have already cast ballots in the 2020 election, a record-shattering avalanche of early votes driven both by Democratic enthusiasm and a pandemic that has transformed the way the nation votes.

The 20.8 million ballots submitted as of Friday afternoon represents 15% of all the votes cast in the 2016

presidential election, even as eight states are not yet reporting their totals and voters still have more than two weeks to cast ballots. Americans' rush to vote is leading election experts to predict that a record 150 million votes may be cast and turnout rates could be higher than in any presidential election since 1908.

"It's crazy," said Michael McDonald, a University of Florida political scientist who has long tracked vot-

ing for his site ElectProject.org. McDonald's analysis shows roughly 10 times as many people have voted compared with this point in 2016.

"We can be certain this will be a high-turnout election," McDonald said.

So far the turnout has been lopsided, with Democrats outvoting Republicans by a 2-1 ratio in the 42 states included in The Associated Press count. Republicans have been bracing themselves for this

early Democratic advantage for months, as they've watched President Donald Trump rail against mail-in ballots and raise unfounded worries about fraud. Polling, and now early voting, suggest the rhetoric has turned his party's rank and file away from a method of voting that, traditionally, they dominated in the weeks before Election Day.

Continued on Page 2

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# Record avalanche of early votes transforms the 2020 election

Continued from Front

That gives Democrats a tactical advantage in the final stretch of the campaign. In many critical battleground states, Democrats have "banked" a chunk of their voters and can turn their time and money toward harder-to-find infrequent voters.

But it does not necessarily mean Democrats will lead in votes by the time ballots are counted. Both parties anticipate a swell of Republican votes on Election Day that could, in a matter of hours, dramatically shift the dynamic.

"The Republican numbers are going to pick up," said John Couvillon, a GOP pollster who is tracking early voting. "The question is at what velocity, and when?" Couvillon said Democrats cannot rest on their voting lead, but Republicans are themselves making a big gamble. A number of factors, from rising virus infections to the weather, can impact in-person turnout on Election Day. "If you're putting all your faith into one day of voting, that's really high risk," Couvillon said.

That's why, despite Trump's rhetoric, his campaign and party are encouraging their own voters to cast ballots by mail or early and in-person. The campaign, which has been sending volunteers and staffers into the field for months despite the pandemic, touts a swell in voter registration in key swing states like Florida and



People wait in a long line to cast ballots for the general election at an early voting location at the Renaissance Austin Hotel on Tuesday, Oct. 13, 2020, in Austin, Texas.

Associated Press

Pennsylvania — a sharp reversal from the usual pattern as a presidential election looms.

But it's had limited success in selling absentee voting. In key swing states, Republicans remain far less interested in voting by mail.

In Pennsylvania, more than three-quarters of the more than 437,000 ballots sent through the mail so far have been from Democrats. In Florida, half of all ballots sent through the mail so far have been from Democrats and less than a third of them from Republicans. Even in Colorado, a state where every voter is mailed a ballot and Republicans usually dominate the first week of voting, only 19% of ballots returned have been from Republicans.

"This is all encouraging, but three weeks is a lifetime," Democratic data strategist Tom Bonier said of the early vote numbers. "We may be midway through the first quarter and Democrats have put a couple of points on the board."

The massive amount of voting has occurred without any of the violent skirmishes at polling places that some activists and law enforcement officials feared. It has featured high-profile errors — 100,000 faulty mail ballots sent out in New York, 50,000 in Columbus, Ohio, and a vendor supplying that state and Pennsylvania blaming delays in sending ballots on overwhelming demand. But there's little evidence of the mass disruption that some feared as election of-

fices had to abruptly shift to deal with the influx of early voting.

But there have been extraordinary lines and hours-long wait times in Georgia, Texas and North Carolina as they've opened in-person early voting. The delays were largely a result of insufficient resources to handle the surge, something advocates contend is a form of voter suppression. Republicans argue that these signs of enthusiasm are meaningless — Democratic early voters are people who would have voted anyway, they say. But an AP analysis of the early vote shows 8% of early voters had never cast a ballot before, and 13.8% had voted in half or fewer of previous elections for which they

were eligible.

The data also show voters embracing mail voting, which health officials say is the safest way to avoid coronavirus infection while voting. Of the early voters, 82% cast ballots through the mail and 18% in person. Black voters cast 10% of the ballots cast, about the same as their share of the national electorate, according to the AP analysis of data from L2, a political data firm. That's a sign that those voters, who have been less likely to vote by mail than white people and Latinos, have warmed to the method.

Mail ballots so far have skewed toward older voters, with half coming from voters over age 64. Traditionally, younger and minority voters send their mail ballots in closer to Election Day or vote in person.

The mail ballots already returned in several states dwarf the entire total in prior elections. In Wisconsin, more than five times as many mail ballots have been cast compared with the entire number in 2016. North Carolina has seen nearly triple the number so far. In-person early voting began this week in several major states and also broke records, particularly in crowded, Democratic-leaning metropolitan areas. In Texas, Houston's Harris County saw a record 125,000 ballots cast. In Georgia, hourslong lines threaded from election offices through much of the state's urban areas. □

## Pfizer: Mid-November earliest it can seek virus vaccine OK



In this Feb. 26, 2019 file photo, Albert Bourla, chief executive officer of Pfizer, prepares to testify before the Senate Finance Committee hearing on drug prices, on Capitol Hill in Washington.

Associated Press

**NEW YORK (AP)** — Pfizer Inc. cannot request emergency authorization of its COVID-19 vaccine before the third week of November — and that's if everything goes well, the company's CEO announced Friday. Despite President Donald Trump's repeated promises of a vaccine before Election Day, scientists have been cautioning that it's unlikely data showing a leading shot actually works would come until Novem-

ber or December.

Another leading U.S. contender, Moderna Inc., previously announced the earliest it could seek authorization of its own vaccine would be Nov. 25. Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla has long said it's possible testing might reveal by the end of October if his company's vaccine actually protects against the coronavirus. But in Friday's announcement, he made clear that effectiveness is only part of

the equation.

The vaccine also must be proven safe. And to qualify for an "emergency use authorization," any COVID-19 vaccine must track at least half the participants in large-scale studies for two months after their second dose, the time period in which side effects are likely to appear.

Bourla estimated Pfizer's 44,000-person study will reach that milestone in the third week of November. □



# White House rejects Putin response to U.S. arms control offer

By **ROBERT BURNS** and **DEB RIECHMANN**

**Associated Press**

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — The U.S. and Russia on Friday rejected each other's proposals for potentially salvaging the last remaining legal constraint on their strategic nuclear forces. President Vladimir Putin called for an unconditional extension of the soon-to-expire New START treaty, and the White House called that a "non-starter."

Adding an edginess to the diplomatic clash, President Donald Trump's national security adviser, Robert O'Brien, suggested the Russians rethink their stance "before a costly arms race ensues." Administration officials have previously alluded to building up nuclear forces if the treaty is abandoned, although the Pentagon has its hands full paying for a one-for-one replacement of older nuclear weapons.

In the closing days of his reelection bid, Trump has looked for ways to boost his foreign policy record, and although he says he favors nuclear arms control, he has called New START flawed and unfavorable to the U.S. Last year he withdrew the U.S. from a separate nuclear arms treaty with Russia, and he waited until this year to begin engaging the Russians on the future of the New START deal.

Democrat Joe Biden, who was vice president when



**Russian President Vladimir Putin chairs a Security Council meeting via video conference in Moscow, Russia, Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2020.**

New START was negotiated during the Obama administration and ratified by the Senate, has said he would not hesitate to agree to Putin's original proposal for a five-year extension of New START. That would be followed by negotiation of a follow-on deal.

The Trump administration recently proposed a one-year extension of the 2010 treaty, which is set to expire in February 2021, but it said this must be coupled with the imposition of a broader cap on U.S. and Russian nuclear warheads. The cap would cover warheads not limited by the New START treaty. Putin said Friday a one-year extension was okay but should not be conditioned on a wider

cap on warheads.

Trump's lead arms control negotiator, Marshall Billingslea, blamed the Russians for missing what he called an historic opportunity. "The United States made every effort," he wrote on Twitter Friday, but the Russians "backtracked on an agreement" to cap the number of nuclear warheads of all kinds. Russian officials have denied they made any such agreement.

The Trump administration's talk of a cap, or freeze, on all categories of warheads has puzzled some U.S. analysts, in part because the number of those weapons has held steady over the past decade or so. William J. Perry, who served as defense secretary under Presi-

dent Bill Clinton, said Thursday, prior to Putin's latest remarks, that the U.S. freeze idea may be a "domestic political gambit" ahead of the Nov. 3 election.

"I see no real significance to it," he said. "I can't see any rationale for it." The arms control effort is hampered in part by deteriorating trust between Washington and Moscow. Washington accuses Moscow of cheating and of aspiring to a nuclear buildup. The Defense Intelligence Agency last year projected that Russia's overall stockpile of nuclear weapons would "grow significantly" over the next decade, driven by an increase in short-range, or non-strategic, weapons that are not gov-

erned by the New START treaty.

For its part, Moscow is suspicious of U.S. missile defenses, which it believes could undermine the credibility of its strategic missiles.

Speaking in Moscow on Friday, Putin offered to extend New START "without any conditions for at least one year" to allow time for talks with Washington on a follow-on treaty. He said Russia is agreeable to including its newest nuclear weapons, some of which are now being deployed, in future arms talks with the United States. But he made clear that an extension must be unconditional.

"All those years, the New START has worked, playing its fundamental role of limiting and containing an arms race," Putin said.

Just a few hours later, O'Brien issued a written statement regretting Moscow's position and touting the U.S. approach, which he said "would have been a win for both sides." He said he had thought the Russians were willing to accept the American proposal when he met with them in Geneva on Oct. 2.

"President Putin's response today to extend New START without freezing nuclear warheads is a non-starter," O'Brien said. "The United States is serious about arms control that will keep the entire world safe. We hope that Russia will reevaluate its position before a costly arms race ensues." □

# FBI probing if Russia involved in Hunter Biden email story

By **ERIC TUCKER**

**Associated Press**

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — The FBI is investigating whether emails that were published by the New York Post related to Joe Biden's son, Hunter, are connected to a possible Russian influence operation to spread disinformation, according to a person familiar with the matter.

The newspaper said in its story Wednesday that it had obtained a hard drive from Rudy Giuliani containing the emails, and that the messages were found

on a laptop that had been left last year at a Delaware computer repair shop for service but never retrieved. The unlikely account of how the emails surfaced raised immediate questions about Russian involvement, particularly because U.S. officials have warned that Russia — which backed Trump's 2016 campaign through hacking and a covert social media campaign — is interfering again this year.

The episode is being investigated as part of a possible Russian influence opera-

tion, according to a person familiar with the matter who spoke on condition of anonymity to The Associated Press to discuss an ongoing matter. It underscores the extent to which Giuliani, through his activities, is a risk to a White House that spent years shadowed by a federal investigation into whether Trump associates had coordinated with Russia.

The authenticity of the emails remained unclear as of Friday, including whether they were hacked or possibly forged or both. Giuliani



**Former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani pauses while addressing supporters of President Donald Trump supporters Monday, Oct. 12, 2020 during a Columbus Day gathering at a Trump campaign field office in Philadelphia.**

**Associated Press**

did not respond to an Associated Press request for comment, but he said in a

Fox News interview Friday that the material was "authentic as hell." □



## EPA letting some hazardous coal ash ponds stay open longer

By TRAVIS LOLLER

Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) —

The Trump administration will let some leaking or otherwise dangerous coal ash storage ponds stay in operation for years more and some unlined ponds stay open indefinitely under a rule change announced Friday.

The move by the Environmental Protection Agency is the administration's latest rollback of environmental and public health regulations governing operators of coal-fired power plants, which are taking hits financially as cheaper natural gas, solar and wind power make dirtier-burning coal plants less competitive.

Friday's move weakens an Obama-era rule in which the EPA regulated the storage and disposal of toxic coal ash for the first time, including closing coal-ash dumping ponds that were unstable or contaminating groundwater.

The looser strictures announced Friday are "important to power-producing utilities that Americans in a number of states rely on every day," EPA assistant administrator Peter Wright said in a statement.

Coal ash is a byproduct of burning coal for power and contains arsenic, mercury,



In this Aug. 7, 2019, photo, the Kingston Fossil Plant stands near a waterway in Kingston, Tenn.

Associated Press

lead and other hazardous heavy metals. U.S. coal plants produce about 100 million tons (90 million metric tonnes) annually of ash and other waste.

Data released by utilities in March 2018, after the Obama administration required groundwater monitoring around coal ash storage sites, showed widespread evidence of contamination at coal plants from Virginia to Alaska.

For decades, utilities largely disposed of coal ash by sluicing it into huge open pits. In 2008, the six-story-

tall dike on a massive coal ash pond at a Tennessee plant collapsed, releasing more than a billion gallons of coal ash into the Swan Pond community. It remains the largest industrial spill in modern U.S. history and prompted the 2015 regulations that were intended to increase oversight of the industry.

But the change in administrations brought a change in priorities, with President Donald Trump vowing to boost the struggling coal industry by rolling back regulations and appointing for-

mer coal lobbyist Andrew Wheeler to lead the EPA.

The latest rollbacks will allow some coal plants to keep their storage ponds open for years longer than envisioned in the 2015 rule. "The reason the utilities are arguing to keep the ponds is because they have put in these unlined pits out the back door of the power plant that act as a catchall for their toxic waste," said Lisa Evans, an attorney for the environmental group Earthjustice. "They don't want to get rid of them because they are cheap."

The 2015 rule required the most dangerous ponds to close by April 2019, but that deadline has been repeatedly pushed back, Evans said. Her group sued over the original rule, arguing that it didn't go far enough. One of their victories came in 2018 when the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit ruled that all unlined ponds (called "clay-lined" by the EPA) needed to close. The court stated simply, "Clay-lined units are dangerous."

The revised rule tries to get around the court order by letting utilities demonstrate that their unlined ponds "pose no reasonable probability of adverse effects on human health or the environment." The agency reasoned that all sites are different, and some unlined ponds might be safe.

But Evans said the process for determining safety could keep ponds that were scheduled to close open for many years longer.

"The Trump EPA is flouting the court's decision," she said. "I've never seen anything like this before."

All the changes together are expected to save the industry between \$41 million and \$138 million per year, according to EPA estimates. □

## GM to run robot cars in San Francisco without human backups



In this Jan. 16, 2019, file photo, Cruise AV, General Motor's autonomous electric Bolt EV is displayed in Detroit.

Associated Press

By TOM KRISHER

AP Auto Writer

DETROIT (AP) — General Motors' Cruise autonomous vehicle unit says it will pull the human backup driv-

ers from its vehicles in San Francisco by the end of the year.

Cruise CEO Dan Ammann said in a statement that the company got a permit

Thursday from California's Department of Motor Vehicles to let the cars travel on their own.

The move follows last week's announcement from Waymo that it would open its autonomous ride-hailing service to the public in the Phoenix area in vehicles without human drivers. Waymo, a unit of Google parent Alphabet Inc., is hoping to eventually expand the service into California, where it already has a permit to run without human backups.

Cruise has reached the point where it's confident that it can safely operate without humans in the cars, spokesman Ray Wert said. There's no date for starting

a ride service, which would require further government permission, he said.

Cruise will go neighborhood-by-neighborhood in San Francisco and launch the driverless vehicles slowly before spreading to the entire city, he said. It will hold neighborhood meetings to answer people's questions, he said.

"We understand that this is a trust race as much as it is a technology race," Wert said. "This is absolutely about making sure that we're doing this with San Francisco."

The moves by Waymo and Cruise, which are considered among the leaders in autonomous vehicle technology, are important steps

in the march toward proliferation of self-driving cars. Progress toward autonomous vehicles slowed markedly after an Uber autonomous test SUV ran down a pedestrian in Tempe, Arizona, in 2018.

Steven Shladover, a research engineer at the University of California, Berkeley, who has studied autonomous driving for 40 years, said the moves are the next logical steps by both companies in a gradual progression.

"I don't see them as revolutionary steps, but they're part of this step-by-step progress toward getting the technology to be able to work under a wider range of conditions," he said. □



## Taliban to suspend assault after U.S. pledges to halt strikes

By KATHY GANNON

Associated Press

**ISLAMABAD (AP)** — The Taliban said on Friday they have agreed to suspend attacks in southern Afghanistan that have displaced thousands this week — but only after the Americans promised to halt all strikes and night raids in keeping with the peace agreement the U.S. signed with the insurgents in February.

The U.S. has been conducting air strikes in support of Afghan forces trying to repel week-long Taliban assaults in southern Helmand province that threatened to derail efforts to end Afghanistan's 19-year war.

The Taliban pledge came after a meeting with U.S. peace envoy Zalmay Khalilzad and Gen. Austin Miller, commander of U.S. troops in Afghanistan, a Taliban figure familiar with the discussions said. He spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the media.

The Taliban agreed to suspend their operations after the Americans said they would end drone strikes on insurgent positions, as well as night raids and air assaults, the Taliban figure said. Helmand has been the scene of a blistering Taliban assault since last



**Afghan families leave their houses after fighting between the Afghan military and Taliban insurgents in Helmand province, southern of Afghanistan, Tuesday, Oct. 13, 2020.**

week, with rocket attacks from the Taliban and retaliatory airstrikes from U.S. and Afghan aircraft forcing more than 5,600 families to flee their homes, seeking refuge in the provincial capital of Lashkar Gah and Nad Ali and Marja districts. Over the past few years, a resurgent Taliban have gained control of roughly 80% of the province, mainly the rural areas, while the district centers are still under government control.

The flareup came even as Afghan government repre-

sentatives and the Taliban are holding peace talks in the Middle Eastern state of Qatar, where the Taliban have for years maintained a political office. The negotiations, envisaged under a U.S. deal signed with the insurgents on Feb. 29, are seen as the country's best chance at peace.

In a series of tweets Thursday, Khalilzad said he and Gen. Austin Miller, the commander of U.S. forces in Afghanistan, held talks with the Taliban and then, after several rounds, he

said both sides agreed to a "reset" which will result in a "reduced numbers of operations." "Following several meetings Gen. Miller and I had with the Taliban we agreed to re-set actions by strictly adhering to implementation of all elements of the U.S.-Taliban agreement and all commitments made," he said. The negotiations in Qatar between the Taliban and Afghan government negotiators began in September but after a ceremonious start became bogged down,

mainly in the minutiae of Islamic jurisprudence.

While successful negotiations are seen as critical to an end to decades of war in Afghanistan, the withdrawal of American troops relies on the Taliban honoring their commitments from the February accord to not support terror groups and fight all militants, most specifically the region's Islamic State affiliate.

Khalilzad tweeted that recent attacks have been "threatening the peace process and alarming the Afghan people and their regional and international supporters." The Taliban official told The Associated Press that in the meetings, the Americans were told "their military is carrying drone strikes on our positions, conducting night raids and using fighter jets to bomb our mujahedeen," or holy warriors.

"We told them, 'You had promised not to carry out attacks. We react to your attacks,'" he said.

The Taliban official also said that after both sides agreed to strictly implement the U.S.-Taliban deal signed in February. "We have directed our mujahedeen in Helmand to stop their advance. We hope the U.S. will stop further bombing," he said. □

Associated Press

## Israel settlement plans draw international condemnation

By FARES AKRAM

Associated Press

**JERUSALEM (AP)** — Israeli plans to advance the building of thousands of settlement units in the occupied West Bank drew European condemnation on Friday as approvals for constructions hit a record high in 2020.

The European countries warned the building perpetuates the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and further threatens the viability of a two-state solution. The warning came after Israel on Thursday pressed forward on plans for more than 3,000 West Bank settlement homes.

The Palestinians claim all of the West Bank, captured by Israel in the 1967 Mideast war, as part of a future in-

dependent state. They say the growing settler population, approaching 500,000 in the West Bank, has made it increasingly difficult to achieve their dream of independence.

"We are deeply concerned by the decision taken by the Israeli authorities to advance more than 4,900 settlement building units in the occupied West Bank," said a joint statement by foreign ministry spokespersons of Britain, France, Germany, Italy, and Spain.

"It is also a counterproductive move in light of the positive developments of normalization agreements reached between Israel, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain," it added, referring to the recent historic

agreements between Israel and the two Gulf Arab countries. Ayman al-Safadi, Jordan's foreign minister, called for international pressure on Israel to stop the building of new settlements. On Thursday, the top diplomat of the European Union also condemned the latest Israeli decision.

"Settlements are illegal under international law. As stated consistently, the EU will not recognize any changes to the pre-1967 borders, including with regard to Jerusalem, other than those agreed by the parties," the bloc's foreign relations chief Josep Borrell said.

The latest Israeli approvals are part of a building boom that has gained steam dur-



**Jewish settlers fight fire in olive groves near their outpost that was caused by Israeli police's teargas canisters, used to disperse Palestinian farmers going to their groves, in the West Bank village of Burqa, East of Ramallah, Friday, Oct. 16, 2020.**

Associated Press

ing the presidency of Donald Trump. It also comes months after Israel promised to put on hold plans

to annex parts of the West Bank in exchange for a U.S.-brokered normalization deal with the UAE. □



## French leader decries terrorist beheading of teacher

By ELAINE GANLEY

Associated Press

**PARIS (AP)** — French President Emmanuel Macron denounced what he called an "Islamist terrorist attack" against a history teacher decapitated in a Paris suburb Friday, urging the nation to stand united against extremism.

The teacher had discussed caricatures of Islam's Prophet Muhammad with his class, authorities said. The suspected attacker was shot to death by police after Friday's beheading.

The French anti-terrorism prosecutor opened an investigation concerning murder with a suspected terrorist motive, the prosecutor's office said.

Macron visited the school where the teacher worked in the town of Conflans-Saint-Honorine and met with staff after the slaying. An Associated Press reporter saw three ambulances arrive at the scene, and heavily armed police surrounding the area and police vans lining leafy nearby streets.

"One of our compatriots was murdered today because he taught ... the freedom of expression, the freedom to believe or not believe," Macron said.

He said the attack shouldn't divide France because that's what the extremists want. "We must stand all to-



French police officers gather outside a high school after a history teacher who opened a discussion with students on caricatures of Islam's Prophet Muhammad was beheaded, Friday, Oct. 16, 2020 in Conflans-Saint-Honorine, north of Paris. Police have shot the suspected killer dead.

Associated Press

gether as citizens," he said. The gruesome killing of the teacher occurred in the town of Conflans-Sainte-Honorine while the suspect was killed by police in adjoining Eragry.

A police official said the suspect, armed with a knife and an airsoft gun — which fires plastic pellets — was shot dead about 600 meters (yards) from where the male teacher was killed after he failed to respond to orders to put down his arms, and acted in a threatening manner.

The teacher had received

threats after opening a discussion "for a debate" about the caricatures about 10 days ago, the police official told The Associated Press. The parent of a student had filed a complaint against the teacher, another police official said, adding that the suspected killer did not have a child at the school. The suspect's identity was not made public.

The suspect's identity was not made public. French media reported that the suspect was an 18-year-old Chechen, born in Moscow.

That information could not be immediately confirmed. The two officials could not be named because they were not authorized to discuss ongoing investigations.

France has offered asylum to many Chechens since the Russian military waged war against Islamist separatists in Chechnya in the 1990s and early 2000s, and there are Chechen communities scattered around France.

France has seen occasional violence involving its Chechen community in

recent months, in the Dijon region, the Mediterranean city of Nice, and the western town of Saint-Dizier, believed linked to local criminal activity.

The attack came as Macron is pushing for a new law against what he calls domestic "separatism," notably by Islamic radicals accused of indoctrinating vulnerable people through home schools, extremist preaching and other activities.

France has the largest Muslim population in Western Europe with up to 5 million members, and Islam is the country's No. 2 religion.

"We didn't see this coming," Conflans resident Remi Tell said on CNews TV station. He described the town as peaceful.

It was the second terrorism-related incident since the opening of an ongoing trial on the newsroom massacre in Jan. 2015 at the satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo after the publication of caricatures of the prophet of Islam. As the trial opened, the paper republished caricatures of the prophet to underscore the right of freedom of expression. Exactly three weeks ago, a young man from Pakistan was arrested after stabbing, outside the newspaper's former offices, two people who suffered non life-threatening injuries. □

## Canadian FM sees exiled Belarus opposition figure in Vilnius



Belarusian opposition figure Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya speaks as Canadian Foreign Minister Francois-Philippe Champagne looks on during a press conference in Vilnius, Lithuania, Friday, Oct. 16, 2020.

Associated Press

By LIUDAS DAPKUS

Associated Press

**VILNIUS, Lithuania (AP)** — Canada's foreign minister pledged support for top Belarusian opposition figure

Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, who is in exile in Lithuania, during a meeting Friday.

Francois-Philippe Champagne told Tsikhanouskaya that Canada "will always

be on your side."

"In fact I believe you can expect that (the) entire international community will be together with you and the people of Belarus for the democratic future of your country," Champagne said after the meeting, on the last leg of his European tour. Champagne has said the result of the Aug. 9 presidential elections in Belarus, which gave the country's long-standing strongman, President Alexander Lukashenko, a landslide victory strongly disputed by the opposition, was "fraudulent." Champagne's visit to the Baltic country follows Tsikhanouskaya's meetings

with European leaders including French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Angela Merkel.

The United States and the European Union have denounced Belarus' election as neither free nor fair and introduced sanctions against Belarusian officials responsible for alleged vote-rigging and a crackdown on protests.

"This is a very clear sign to the criminals in Belarus that the international community is watching them and they should think twice before (unleashing) another wave of violence against their own people," Tsikha-

nouskaya said after her talks with Champagne.

Tsikhanouskaya has warned the government in Minsk that she will call a nationwide strike in Belarus later this month unless Lukashenko, who got a sixth term in office in August, resigns, releases political prisoners and stops the violent crackdown on protesters. Earlier Friday, Belarusian authorities announced that they have issued an arrest warrant for Tsikhanouskaya, who fled to neighboring Lithuania after the election, accusing her of "attempts to overthrow constitutional order" and of being a threat to national security. □



## Ex-Mexico army chief arrested in LA on drugs, money charges

By E. EDUARDO CASTILLO  
and STEFANIE DAZIO  
Associated Press

**MEXICO CITY (AP)** — Former Mexican defense secretary Gen. Salvador Cienfuegos, who led the country's army for six years under ex-President Enrique Peña Nieto, has been arrested on drug trafficking and money laundering charges at Los Angeles International Airport, U.S. and Mexican sources said Thursday.

Two people with knowledge of the arrest said Cienfuegos was taken into custody on a U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration warrant. One of the people said the warrant was for drug trafficking and money laundering charges. Both spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the case publicly.

The DEA declined to comment Thursday night.

Mexico's Foreign Minister, Marcelo Ebrard, wrote on his Twitter account that U.S. Ambassador Christopher Landau had informed him of the retired general's arrest and that Cienfuegos had a right to receive consular assistance.

A senior Mexican official,



In this Sept. 16, 2016 file photo, Defense Secretary Gen. Salvador Cienfuegos, left, and Mexico's President Enrique Peña Nieto, salute during the annual Independence Day military parade in Mexico City's main square.

who also spoke on the condition of anonymity because he wasn't authorized to give details of the case, said Cienfuegos was arrested when he arrived at the Los Angeles airport with his family. His family members were released and he was taken to the Metropolitan Detention Center.

Cienfuegos served from 2012 to 2018 as secretary of defense under Peña

Nieto. He is the highest-ranking former Cabinet official arrested since the top Mexican security official Genaro Garcia Luna was arrested in Texas in 2019. Garcia Luna, who served under former President Felipe Calderón, has pleaded not guilty to drug trafficking charges.

Cienfuegos is 72 years old and has retired from active duty. Mexico's Defense De-

partment had no immediate reaction to the arrest.

Mike Vigil, the DEA's former chief of international operations, said when he was in Mexico in 2012 he heard corruption allegations about Cienfuegos.

"There were always allegations of corruption, nothing we could sink our teeth into. That was kind of unheard of because Mexico has always put the military on a

pedestal," said Vigil, author of the book "The Land of Enchantment Cartel."

"The corruption is just coming to roost, because individuals who were once untouchable are now getting arrested," Vigil said. "If they cooperate (with U.S. prosecutors) there are others who are going to be falling, noting U.S. officials 'usually don't want to trade down, they usually trade up,' seeking evidence against equal or higher-ranking officials. 'It's really a precarious situation for Mexico to have two Cabinet-level officials arrested in the U.S.'"

Whatever the charges, it will be a tough blow for Mexico, where the army and navy are some of the few remaining respected public institutions.

While current President Andrés Manuel López Obrador has vowed to go after corruption and lawbreaking under past administrations, he has also relied more heavily on the army — and charged it with more tasks, ranging from building infrastructure projects to distributing medical supplies — than any other president in recent history. □

Associated Press

## Racial tensions rise in South Africa over farm killing

By MOGOMOTSI MAGOME  
Associated Press

**SENEKAL, South Africa (AP)** — A tense standoff between white farmers and Black activists gripped the South African town of Senekal Friday, as two men accused of killing a white farm manager were to appear in court.

More than 100 police patrolled the area in front of the courthouse in the Free State province and used barbed wire to separate the rival groups.

Sekwetjie Mahlamba and Sekola Matlaletsa appeared in the magistrates' court on charges of killing Brendin Horner, 21, on Oct. 1. Their request for bail was postponed until Oct. 20.

About 250 white farmers gathered to protest the killing, charging that police do not adequately protect

white farmers. In an earlier court hearing last week, a group of white farmers stormed the court and burned a police vehicle.

The country's leftist opposition party, the Economic Freedom Fighters, mobilized about 1,000 of its supporters to challenge the white farmers in front of the court.

They sang songs and shouted slogans calling for South Africa's land to be returned to Black residents. Many were dressed in the EFF party's red uniforms and berets.

EFF leader Julius Malema came to Senekal Friday was expected to speak to his supporters after the court hearing.

While most white farmers and organizations representing them have called for farm killings to be made

a priority crime, the government insists that white farmers are not being targeted, saying the violence is a result of South Africa's relatively high crime rate. South Africa has one of the highest crime statistics in the world, with a murder rate of just over 58 deaths a day.

The country's official crime statistics indicate there were 49 farm killings in the 2019/2020 financial year.

President Cyril Ramaphosa, in his weekly letter to the nation Monday, condemned Horner's killing, but said the farm killings were part of the bigger crime problem.

"Those people who think that farm attacks affect just a small part of our population are wrong. The farming community is an integral part of our economy," wrote Ramaphosa.

The Senekal murder has



A white protester against farm murders stands near the magistrates court in Senekal, South Africa, Friday, Oct. 16, 2020 where two suspects were to appear on charges of killing a white farmer in the area.

Associated Press

also raised the controversial issue of land ownership in the country.

A great deal of South Africa's best farmland is owned by white farmers, as a result of the eviction of Black farmers when the country was ruled by a white mi-

nority. Although South Africa now has majority rule, land ownership remains a contentious issue, with parties like the EFF urging the government to seize white-owned land without compensation and return it to Black families. □



# LOCAL



## Aruba Tourism Authority (A.T.A): Seize opportunities for high season

**ORANEJSTAD** — There are certainly opportunities for Aruba in the high season, which runs from November to March, said Aruba Tourism Authority CEO, Ronella Tjin Asjoe-Croes during a recent press conference. Market research indicates that travelers are currently most interested in beach holidays.

The CEO of A.T.A repeated the tourism figures she previously presented to parliament. In July and August, visitor numbers were high and in line with the projections of the most optimistic scenario, but then there was a decline in September. "I think we could have seen better results in September. It is a good illustration of the impact that the amount of positive corona cases has on our tourism, our work and our daily bread. Everyone will agree that we do not want to see this trend again in the coming months and what we should avoid at all costs for the coming season."

### Beach vacation

We know there is a high interest in travelling and the most popular destinations are beach vacations with 60% which is a very high score and a great chance for Aruba. We also see that the interest in traveling is greater among the young than among the elderly and we have also noticed this trend in our own results. In the first three months after the opening of our borders, the majority of travelers were people between 23 and 29 years old, namely 34%. These millennials were in 2019 only 28.5 % of the total visitors. This group has also caused an increase in the number of visitors who came to Aruba for the first time, which is now 61%. Perhaps this is because the older people have visited Aruba before and are now in the minority group. But it may also be that the younger generation is more adventurous and dares to travel in the current Covid-19 situation.

### More seat capacity

There are also signs that various American airlines want to expand the seat capacity to Aruba and also several Latin American airlines have indicated that they want to fly back to Aruba. A.T.A is still in dialogue with the medical cluster of the crisis team on the reopening date of the borders of Latin America. In addition, several airlines are considering offering corona tests before getting on the plane and A.T.A is in dialogue to see if this could be an option for travelers to Aruba. That would be a big step forward and make travel conditions easier for tourists. A.T.A is also in dialogue with the insurance companies to possibly offer a cheaper package because there are few positively tested tourists. It is important for A.T.A and the companies in Aruba to normalize the situation as quickly as possible. We all face the same challenges that we need to solve together to accelerate the economic reboot. "We must take advantage of the opportunities that are available during the high season," said A.T.A CEO. □

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## Business aviation, women and the Caribbean

By Cdr. Bud Slabbaert  
PHILIPSBURG, ST. MAARTEN — CARIBAVIA has announced that it will hold its annual Caribbean Aviation Meetup conference in June 2021. It is not that a Caribbean conference is just for the stakeholders in the region. On the contrary. A Canadian company is involved in infrastructure improvements at several international airports in the region. French and Canadian companies are providing radar and electronic safety systems. The aircraft that are needed to provide airlift in the region are built in North- and South-America as well as in Europe. The largest executive ground handling provider present in the region is an Anglo-American company.

When acquainted with the economy dynamics and the culture of the region, there are definitely opportunities for foreign investment in the region that

could be explored and especially in the high-end segment of both aviation and travel industry. It is not wise to judge the region by statistics for "Latin America AND the Caribbean". The Caribbean has to be seen as a sub-region of its own. Depending on the selected island or territory, there may be a variety of opportunities. That applies to industrial, commercial and private investment occasions as well.

After Europe, the Caribbean is the second-most popular getaway for the wealthiest six percent of all travelers in North America. These are private aviation clients. The region needs to increase this number. On the other side, providers abroad need to reach out and help the region to accommodate this clientele and encourage the growth. If both find each other and cooperate, it will be a win-win situation.

Every passenger arriving on a private aircraft, is a potential investor in the region.

In 2021, special attention at the conference will be given to female aviation and travel professionals. Equality in the industry deserves extraordinary consideration. The industry has brilliant female experts that are outstanding performers. CARIBAVIA intends to highlight these specialists by letting them take the stage and make a presentation for the companies that they work for, or for their own independent activities.

In a spontaneous response from one of the 'Ladies in Aviation' who were approached regarding the formatting of the conference, she expressed, "I say go super radical and let us girls take the lead in chairing all the sessions that you do. Plan around our ex-



pertise. Any of us who are journalists (or ex journalists) can pretty much research ahead and chair a panel as that is in our DNA. You have pilots, expert marketers and amazing women who run FBOs included in this list. That way if there is another woman or two on the panels so be it. Visibility is key. Even go super-super radical and have all the chairs be women of color, preferably local and get the rest of us to speak across your panels. We have good stuff to say and

to offer."

The conference may not be created quite as super-radical as is called for. CARIBAVIA tends to be a trend setting initiative where it is recognized that many Executive Assistants who are relied upon by executives are female, and often their discrete advice behind the scenes is followed.

Continued on Page 10



## Sunset Grille announces continued Wine Dinner Series Four-Course Pairing Dinner with Duckhorn Vineyards



eye Pinot Noir; and Rack of Lamb Figs, Cassis Thyme Cocoa Demi-glace, paired with Canvasback Cabernet. A Rich Dark Chocolate Pot de Crème, will be served for dessert paired with Decoy Zinfandel.

"We are staging a truly interesting four-course menu featuring the finest Lobster, Veal & Lamb and the freshest ingredients," says Executive Chef, Matt Boland, "we're highlighting the contemporary flair of the of Sunset Grille, and each course will be expertly prepared and artfully paired with Duckhorn Vineyards' wines," Boland concludes. □

The dinner is priced at \$109 per person, excluding 18% service charge. There are only 35 seats available for this unique event. Tickets may be reserved at 526 6612 or [HiltonConcierge@depalmtours.com](mailto:HiltonConcierge@depalmtours.com).

**PALM BEACH — Sunset Grille at Hilton Aruba Caribbean Resort & Casino launched a series of wine dinners last year, highlighting the resort's six decades of culinary excellence.**

The wine dinners showcase the Sunset Grille's elevated cuisine in collaboration with top-tier local wine purveyors.

This time, Sunset Grille is teaming up with Pepia Est and Duckhorn Vineyards to host a wine dinner on Saturday, October 24th. The upcoming event will start at 6:30pm with a welcome cocktail

reception at Mira Solo Lobby Bar, followed by a four-course wine dinner at Sunset Grille.

Created by Executive Cheff Matt Boland and the Sunset Grille culinary brigade, the pairing dinner and the wines selected, complement each other to perfection serving one appetizers, two main courses, and dessert.

The evening takes off with Caribbean Lobster Salad, Mango Citrus and Herbs paired with Duckhorn Sauvignon Blanc; then continues with Veal Chop Autumn Spices and Apples paired with Golden-



## Business aviation, women and the Caribbean



**Continued from Page 9**

Women are very often the frontline workers in the aviation, travel and tourism industries who make things happen. Empowered women are enthusiastic, mindful, purposeful, optimistic, willful, encouraging, respectful, enlightened and dedicated. They have the needed typical characteristics in dealing with matters varying from customer services to management: sensitivity, assertiveness, care, empathy, passion, faith, adaptability, courage, and they have

the ability of multi-tasking. The 2021 CARIBAVIA conference will be unique because of giving special attention to the combination of private and business aviation, courting a high-end clientele, and highlighting the outstanding performance of women.

CARIBAVIA is a serious communication platform for aviation and travel professionals that is held in the exotic tropical setting of the Caribbean. For the Caribbean, airlift to the various island destinations is crucial. A relaxing atmosphere just

makes it easier for people to communicate. That is why this is the ideal location to discuss all issues around aviation, travel and airlift. To reach the attractive island destinations, flight connections and aircraft charter services are important; airport, FBO, maintenance, fuel supply and other aviation related services are essential.

Some participants may even want to spend an extra weekend in the Caribbean. CARIBAVIA will take place June 15-17, 2021 on St. Maarten. □



# Awash in red ink: US posts record \$3.1T 2020 budget deficit

By **MARTIN CRUTSINGER AP**  
**Economics Writer**

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — The federal budget deficit hit an all-time high of \$3.1 trillion in the 2020 budget year, more than double the previous record, as the coronavirus pandemic shrank revenues and sent spending soaring.

The Trump administration reported Friday that the deficit for the budget year that ended on Sept. 30 was three times the size of last year's deficit of \$984 billion. It was also \$2 trillion higher than the administration had estimated in February, before the pandemic hit.

It was the government's largest annual shortfall in dollar terms, surpassing the previous record of \$1.4 trillion set in 2009. At that time, the Obama administration was spending heavily to shore up the nation's banking system and limit the economic damage from the 2008 financial crisis.

The 2020 deficit, in terms of its relationship to the economy, represented 15.2% of total gross domestic product, the sum of all the goods and services produced by the country. That was the highest level since 1945, when the U.S. was borrowing heavily to finance World War II.

The administration's final accounting of the 2020



In this Sept. 1, 2020 file photo, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin testifies before the House Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis, during a hybrid hearing on Capitol Hill in Washington. Associated Press

budget year shows that revenues fell by 1.2% to \$3.42 trillion, while government spending surged 47.3% to \$6.55 trillion. That spending reflects the relief programs Congress passed in the spring to support the economy as millions of Americans were losing their jobs.

Many of the benefit programs expired in late July or early August, and so far Democrats and Republicans have been unable to agree on legislation to reinstate them. Republicans have balked at the level of spending sought by Demo-

crats, who warn that without significant support the country could be facing a double-dip recession.

While about half of the 22 million jobs lost in March and April have been recovered, the concern is that without more government support, those still without work will be unable to make their rent or mortgage payments and buy food. In addition to the human toll, the result would be a significant drag on U.S. economic growth.

President Donald Trump has said he is willing to compromise with Demo-

crats on a new relief package but Senate Republicans have indicated they don't support the spending levels being put forward by Democrats.

"The administration remains fully committed to supporting American workers, families and businesses and to ensuring that our robust rebound continues," Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said in a statement released with the budget report.

The joint report from Treasury and the Office of Management and Budget showed that total govern-

ment receipts of \$1.61 trillion were \$286 billion lower than the administration had projected in February. That reflected a drop of \$203 billion in individual income taxes from the February forecast and a decline of \$51.8 billion in corporate income taxes from the February projection.

The \$6.55 trillion in spending — \$1.76 trillion higher than the administration's February estimate — includes the coronavirus relief programs passed by Congress, such as individual economic impact payments of \$1,200, expanded weekly unemployment benefits of \$600 per week and the Paycheck Protection Program to provide support to small businesses.

Despite all the borrowing required to finance the surging deficit, interest payments on the debt actually came in \$53.8 billion below the administration's February projection. That was due to interest rates being lower than expected this year because of the recession that began in February. The low interest rates are a key reason economists are not as concerned about the rising debt burden caused by the deficit. The federal deficit is approaching 100% of GDP and is projected to top that amount in 2021. □

## U.S. retail sales grow for 5th month in a row

By **JOSEPH PISANI**  
**AP Retail Writer**

**NEW YORK (AP)** — Retail sales rose strongly in September, the fifth straight month of growth, as Americans spent more on clothing, cars and sporting goods.

U.S. retail sales jumped 1.9% last month, the U.S. Commerce Department said Friday. That's more than double what was expected. And it's up from the 0.6% increase in August.

"Americans raced to the stores in September," said BMO Capital Markets analyst Sal Guatieri, in a note to investors, adding that they were "buying just about ev-

erything in sight, especially clothing."

Sales at clothing stores rose 11%, accounting for much of September's overall growth. Even sales at department stores, which have been falling out of fashion with shoppers for years, rose 9.7% last month. At auto dealerships and auto part shops, sales were up 3.6%. And those looking to go camping or buy exercise equipment for their homes sent sales at sporting goods stores 5.7% higher.

Consumer spending makes up two-thirds of all U.S. economic activity, and is watched closely to gauge the country's economic

health.

Retail sales have been recovering since plunging in the spring as stores and malls were ordered closed to help prevent the spread of the coronavirus. And spending has continued even after more than 20 million unemployed Americans lost a \$600 boost in their weekly unemployment checks at the end of July.

Friday's retail sales report covers only about a third of overall consumer spending. Services such as haircuts and hotel stays are not included in the report. All of those types of businesses have been badly hurt by the pandemic.



Passers-by examine a storefront window, Tuesday, Sept. 15, 2020, in Boston's fashionable Newbury Street shopping district. Associated Press

Whether people will keep shopping remains to be seen. The unemployment rate is still high, at 7.8% last month. Some economists say more federal checks

for out-of-work Americans are needed to sustain spending. And some say rising COVID-19 cases could keep people away from stores. □



## AP Explains: The promise of 5G wireless - speed, hype, risk

By MAE ANDERSON and  
TALI ARBEL

Associated Press

A much-hyped network upgrade called "5G" means different things to different people.

To industry proponents, it's the next huge innovation in wireless internet. To the U.S. government, it's the backbone technology of a future that America will wrestle with China to control. To many average people, it's simply a mystery.

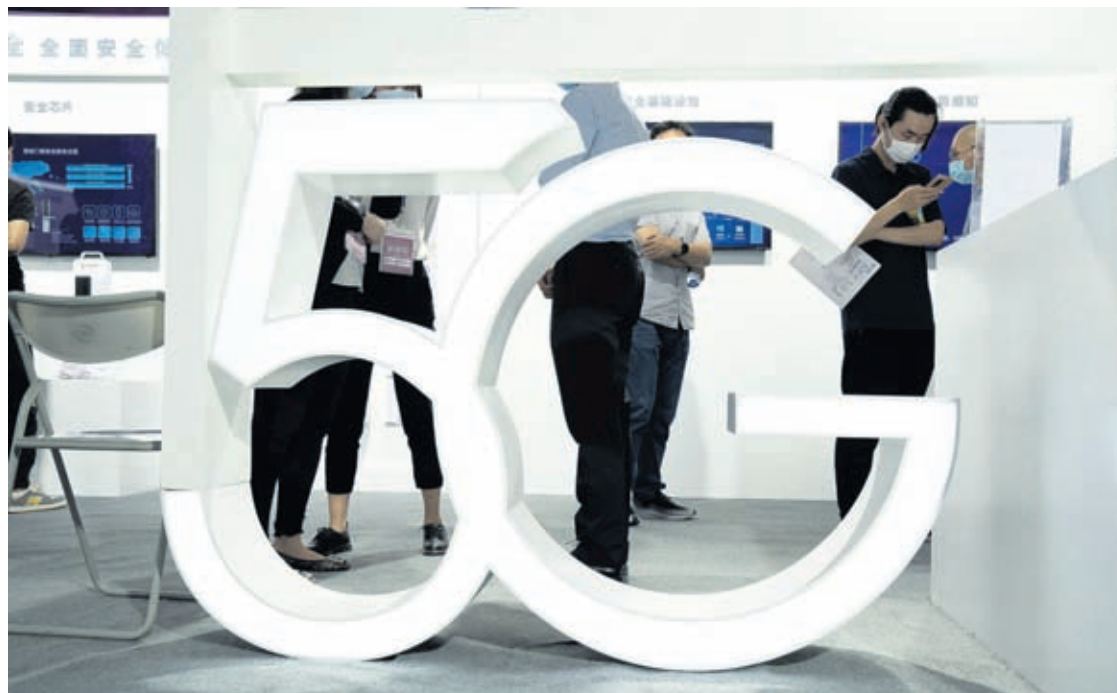
What, exactly, is 5G wireless — and will you even notice when it comes online?

### WHAT IS 5G?

5G is a new technical standard for wireless networks — the fifth, naturally — that promises faster speeds; less lag, or "latency," when connecting to the network; and the ability to connect many devices to the internet without bogging it down. 5G networks will ideally be better able to handle more users, lots of sensors and heavy traffic.

Before we can all use it, wireless companies and phone makers have to upgrade. Phones need new chips and radio antennas to work with the new network.

Wireless companies have been getting ready. They've been revamping their network equipment, buying up chunks of radio



In this Sept. 17, 2020 file photo, visitors wearing mask to protect from the coronavirus walk past a 5G sign at the China Beijing International High Tech Expo in Beijing, China.

spectrum for carrying 5G signals, and installing new 5G antennas on cellphone towers, utility poles and streetlights. Wireless providers will invest \$275 billion in 5G-related networks in the U.S., according to CTIA, an industry trade group.

### WHEN WILL IT BE AVAILABLE?

A true U.S. mobile rollout began in 2019, but significantly faster networks are still sparse. It will take a few years to go national, and even then more rural areas of the country will not be covered in the "millimeter wave" frequencies that promise the highest data

speeds and capacities, said Michael Thelander, CEO of wireless consultancy Signals Research Group. Beware of confusion, though. Wireless carriers have a history of rushing to slap the latest-and-greatest label on their networks, and this time is no different. AT&T has already applied the name 5G on a service that's not really 5G.

Once the network is ready, you'll need a 5G-enabled phone to connect to it. Android versions have been out for a while, and on Tuesday Apple launched its first 5G iPhone. But you can keep using 4G phones.

They just won't connect to 5G speeds where those are available.

### WHAT CAN 5G DO?

There's a considerable amount of hype over the promise of 5G. Industry groups say it will promote smart cities by connecting sensor networks that could manage traffic and quickly identify streetlight outages. 5G could connect self-driving cars and fuel new applications in virtual and augmented reality. Its high-speed connections could enable better remote surgery and other telemedicine, help companies automate their factories and

offer businesses dedicated high-speed internet lanes.

"5G speeds, and ever-faster home broadband, will mean that existing applications will get richer, and also that new applications will emerge — new Flickr's, YouTube's or Snapchat's. We don't know what yet," Benedict Evans, a partner at Silicon Valley venture capital firm Andreessen Horowitz, wrote in a 2019 blog post.

The most immediate impact on consumers is far smaller. There will be faster download speeds for movies and other video. The lander says your phone's internet will work better in crowded locations such as stadiums.

### WHAT ARE THE SECURITY CONCERNS?

The 5G network is one front in rising tensions between the U.S. and China. The U.S. government is rooting out Chinese telecom technology in communications networks due to security concerns, and has pressed other countries to ban Huawei, a Chinese telecom company, from 5G network buildouts.

U.S. officials have suspected for years that the Chinese government could use Huawei network equipment to help it spy. Huawei has rejected such accusations. □

## U.K. says Instagram to crack down on hidden influencer ads



In this June 20, 2013 file photo, a journalist makes a video of the Instagram logo using the new video feature at Facebook headquarters in Menlo Park, Calif.

Associated Press

**LONDON (AP)** — British regulators said Friday that Instagram will clamp down on "hidden advertising" by social media influencers.

The Competition and Markets Authority said Instagram's owner Facebook has committed to tightening policies to restrict influ-

encers who don't disclose they're being paid to promote businesses on its platform.

It's part of an investigation into the influencer industry the watchdog launched two years ago.

Regulators are concerned that Instagram wasn't doing enough under consumer protection laws to stop hidden advertising, which is illegal in the U.K.

They want to make it harder to mislead people with posts that aren't labeled as ads.

Influencers are online personalities with thousands of followers who can earn hefty fees from brands for endorsing or reviewing their

products or services.

"These changes mean there will be no excuse for businesses to overlook how their brands are being advertised either — making life a lot harder for those who are not upfront and honest with their followers," CMA Chief Executive Andrea Coscelli said.

Under the new policy, Instagram will ask users to confirm if they're getting a reward for promoting a product or service and if they are, make them disclose it clearly.

The company will also start using technology and algorithms to spot users who haven't clearly revealed that their posts are adver-

tisements, and then report those users to the businesses they're promoting.

Instagram is also opening up its "paid partnership" tool, so that any user can display a label at the top of a post.

The changes apply to all U.K.-based users as well as anyone globally who is targeting Instagram users in the U.K.

As part of its investigation, the competition authority last year secured formal commitments from 16 celebrities, including singers Ellie Goulding and Rita Ora, to label any posts that involved payments for or gifts of products they were pitching. □



## Study: Health systems, govt responses linked to virus tolls

By FRANK JORDANS

Associated Press

**BERLIN (AP)** — Scientists say a comparison of 21 developed countries during the start of the coronavirus pandemic shows that those with early lockdowns and well-prepared national health systems avoided large numbers of additional deaths due to the outbreak.

In a study published Wednesday by the journal *Nature Medicine*, researchers used the number of weekly deaths in 19 European countries, New Zealand and Australia over the past decade to estimate how many people would have died from mid-February to May 2020 had the pandemic not happened.

The authors, led by Majid Ezzati of Imperial College London, then compared the predicted number of deaths to the actual reported figure during that period to determine how many likely occurred due to the pandemic. Such models of 'excess mortality' are commonly used by public health officials to better understand disease outbreaks and the effectiveness of counter-measures.

The study found there were about 206,000 excess deaths across the 21 countries during the period, a figure that conforms to independent estimates. In Spain, the number of deaths was 38% higher than would have been expected without the pandemic, while in England and Wales it was 37% higher.

Italy, Scotland and Belgium also had significant excess deaths, while in some countries such as New Zealand there was no marked change or even — as in the case of Bulgaria — a decrease.

While the authors note that there are differences in the compositions of populations, such as age and the prevalence of pre-existing conditions that contribute to mortality rates, government efforts to suppress transmission of the virus

and the ability of national health systems to cope with the pandemic also played a role.

Amitava Banerjee, a professor of clinical data science at University College London who wasn't involved in the study, said it was well designed and had used standardized methods.

He noted that the comparison between death rates in the United Kingdom and New Zealand, where the age of the population and the rates of pre-existing conditions such as obesity are similar, supports the argument that other factors contributed to the differing mortality figures.

"Even if vaccines and bet-



A man wearing a face mask walks past an entrance to Belfast City Hospital, Northern Ireland, Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2020.

Associated Press

ter treatments for severe (COVID-19) infection are developed, the way to minimise excess deaths is to reduce the infection rate through population level

measures," said Banerjee. □

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# For grateful NBC, Savannah Guthrie changes the subject

By DAVID BAUDER

AP Media Writer

**NEW YORK (AP)** — Savannah Guthrie did more than just display her journalistic chops at NBC News' town hall with President Donald Trump. She changed the subject for her bosses.

NBC was reeling heading into Thursday's event, under widespread criticism for scheduling it at the same time as ABC's town hall with Democratic opponent Joe Biden. NBC was accused of rewarding Trump for rejecting the debate commission's plan to do the second debate virtually.

That was quickly forgotten when the president sat opposite Guthrie, who questioned him specifically on when he last tested positive for COVID-19 (he said he didn't remember), whether he had pneumonia (didn't say) and his personal finances.

The Georgetown Law School graduate had clearly done her homework, seemingly prepared for each response. When the president recited a statistic from a study on the effectiveness of masks in spreading COVID-19, Guthrie had read it, too, and countered him.

As host of the "Today" show, Guthrie knows the importance of time and how to stop an interview sub-



Moderator Savannah Guthrie speaks during an NBC News Town Hall with President Donald Trump at Perez Art Museum Miami, Thursday, Oct. 15, 2020, in Miami.

Associated Press

ject from filibustering. That background also teaches how to crystallize what an audience is thinking in a plain-spoken way, as evidenced in her most-quoted moment.

She was incredulous when, after asking why Trump had retweeted a false conspiracy theory that American special forces didn't really kill Osama bin Laden, he said that he "just put it out there" to let people decide for themselves.

"I don't get that," Guthrie said. "You're the president. You're not like you're some-

body's crazy uncle who can just retweet anything." Similarly, Guthrie described the theory promoted online by QAnon that Democrats are running a satanic pedophile ring and that Trump was the savior meant to stop them, and asked why he didn't denounce it. Trump said he knew nothing about it.

"I just told you," she said. Just because she says something doesn't mean it's true, the president retorted.

"There's not a satanic pedophile cult," she said. "You

don't know that?" Trump is "hands down" the most difficult public figure to interview, said Axios reporter Jonathan Swan, who with Fox News' Chris Wallace and now Guthrie have received the most praise of any TV journalists to take him on this election cycle.

"The biggest challenge with President Trump is that it's never a linear conversation," Swan said. "It's like riding a bronco. The crafting of the questions doesn't really matter because he responds to topics."

It requires enormous homework, both to know the facts and anticipate how Trump will respond, he said. Even then, it's possible to become so absorbed in fact-checking that it disrupts the flow of conversation, he said.

When Guthrie asked Trump about his personal finances and taxes, the president tried to cut off the conversation by saying what he has since 2016, that he couldn't talk about it because he was under audit. Guthrie said there was no law that prevented someone being audited from discussing his taxes, and pressed on: "Who do you owe \$421 million to?" she asked.

She jumped in when, during a discussion about White House events where masks were not worn, the president mentioned how he was touched by people at a reception for relatives of military members killed in service. She took an unusual amount of time for head-to-head questioning, given that the format called for questions from the audience to dominate the event. She followed up audience questions, too: When Trump talked about health care and maintaining protection for preexisting conditions, Guthrie pointed out that his administration was trying in court to eliminate that.

One look online provided an illustration of Guthrie's effectiveness. Words like "condescending," "badgering," "argumentative" and "bully" were used on social media by supporters of the president. Memes popped up with Guthrie's face made to seem like a vampire or devil. □

## SOLUTION SUDOKU

7	4	3	6	8	5	2	9	1
1	9	5	2	4	3	7	6	8
6	8	1	7	9	1	3	5	4
5	6	1	4	3	2	9	8	7
4	2	7	8	6	9	5	1	3
9	3	8	1	5	7	6	2	4
8	5	4	3	2	6	1	7	9
3	7	9	5	1	8	4	2	6
2	1	6	9	4	7	8	3	5

Puzzle on Page 13

## New book will include final thoughts from Justice Ginsburg



Members of the Philadelphia National Council of Jewish Women gather in prayer to honor the late Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg at the Constitution Center in Philadelphia, Friday, Oct. 2, 2020.

Associated Press

By HILLEL ITALIE  
AP National Writer

**NEW YORK (AP)** — Some final thoughts from Su-

preme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg and some previously unreleased materials have been gathered by one of her former clerks and will appear in a book coming out in March.

The University of California Press announced Thursday that it will publish "Justice, Justice Thou Shalt Pursue: A Life's Work Fighting for a More Perfect Union," on which Ginsburg worked in collaboration with Amanda Tyler. The book was in production at the time Ginsburg died, on Sept. 18 at age 87, and was originally scheduled for next fall.

"Over the spring and summer of this year, as Justice Ginsburg and I assembled this book, I had the special privilege of working closely with her one last time," said Tyler, now a professor of law at the University of California, Berkeley, in a statement. "As we exchanged drafts of various parts of this book, the Justice was every bit as rigorous an editor as she had been 20 years ago when I clerked for her. Right up until the end, she was still teaching me about the craft of writing, how important precision is, and to never use four words when three will do." □



## World Cup skiing heads quietly into season full of questions

By ERIC WILLEMSSEN

Associated Press

**VIENNA (AP)** — The usual jitters before Alpine skiing's World Cup season opener won't be limited to the racers this weekend.

Organizers, sponsors and fans will be just as anxious about the 2020-21 campaign, which starts amid rising numbers of coronavirus cases across Europe.

Even before its traditional start in Soelden, Austria, on Saturday, the season is surrounded by many questions — and they are not just about who will win the races.

The American and Canadian swing in November and December was canceled and partly replaced by events in Europe, and the men's and women's circuits have been kept apart as much as possible.

But can all 38 men's and 34 women's races on the current calendar take place as scheduled?

What about the Feb. 8-21 world championships in Cortina d'Ampezzo? Or the Feb. 24-28 Olympic test event in Yanqing, China? There are questions about travel restrictions, testing, and how racers will perform after their mostly hampered off-season preparations.

At least the start in Soelden has a familiar touch because the competition program of the traditional kick-off event has not changed, with a women's giant slalom Saturday and a men's



In this Sunday, Jan. 26, 2020 file photo, United States' Mikaela Shiffrin smiles on the podium after winning the alpine ski, women's World Cup super-G, in Bansko, Bulgaria.

Associated Press

race Sunday.

In previous seasons, around 15,000 fans per race would travel up to the Rettenbach glacier, but this weekend no visitors, apart from 200 invited guests, are allowed on the hill when Federica Brignone and Aleksander Aamodt Kilde start the defense of their overall World Cup titles.

The event was brought forward by one week to avoid tourist crowds and shield World Cup teams and officials from the outside world. Virus testing will take place upon arrival in Soelden before participants are allocated to one of the four "bubbles" separating teams and officials from workers,

media and invited guests.

A similar protocol will be applied to the next races in Lech/Zuers in Austria on Nov. 13-14, and in the remote resort of Levi in Finland the following week.

After its rather quiet start, however, the World Cup in December is scheduled to travel to crowded winter sport hot spots like Sankt Moritz in Switzerland and Val d'Isere in France.

The Swiss Ski Federation on Friday announced fans will be banned from all its races in the entire winter.

While the International Ski Federation has set guidelines concerning virus risk management, local organizers also have their own

rules.

A racer who has tested positive won't be able to compete, but there is no general rule, for instance, that after two positive tests an entire team will be withdrawn from a race.

"The Expert for Testing and Hygiene is responsible to review the situation and will suggest further action," one of the FIS guidelines reads. Also, at least seven out of the top-10 ranked nations must be able to travel to a venue, otherwise no World Cup points can be awarded at that race.

However, according to FIS, a race will not be automatically canceled if too many teams cannot reach a ven-

ue, and FIS in cooperation with local organizers and health authorities "will be in close touch and monitor the development of the situation."

The staging of races is crucial to the World Cup and its participants from a competitive perspective, as qualification events are needed for the season's marquee event — the worlds in Italy.

It's also important from a financial perspective. The loss of ticket revenue means greater reliance on income from TV broadcast rights and sponsorships to help the sport survive an unusual winter.

### SHIFFRIN'S COMEBACK

The women's World Cup season starts Saturday without a string of familiar names, including Mikaela Shiffrin, Viktoria Rebensburg, Tina Weirather and Anna Veith.

But while the latter three have all retired, Shiffrin is out with a back injury. The American three-time overall champion stayed in Soelden for training earlier this week.

Brignone, who dethroned Shiffrin last season to become the first women's overall champion from Italy, won Soelden five years ago. Other pre-race favorites are Petra Vlhova, Marta Bassino and last year's surprise winner, 18-year-old Alice Robinson from New Zealand. □

## Ulissi sprints to win Giro Stage 13; Almeida still in pink

**MONSELICE, Italy (AP)** — Diego Ulissi sprinted to victory at the end of the 13th stage of the Giro d'Italia on Friday, and João Almeida held on to the pink jersey.

Ulissi, an Italian rider with UAE Team Emirates, launched his sprint with about 600 meters to go and edged Almeida and Patrick Konrad at the end of the mainly flat 192-kilometer (119-mile) leg from Cervia to Monselice.

There were two categorized climbs towards the end of the route. Two of the top sprinters, Peter Sagan

and Arnaud Démare, were dropped on the final climb. It was Ulissi's second win in this Giro and eighth overall. He beat Sagan to win Stage 2. "We did a great job on the last climb to drop the sprinters and arrive with a small group," Ulissi said. "(Brandon) McNulty was very good in the final, how nice to get another success in the Giro!"

Almeida, a Portuguese rider with Deceuninck-Quick Step, moved 40 seconds ahead of Wilco Kelderman and 49 seconds ahead of Pello Bilbao overall.

Saturday's 14th stage is a 34-kilometer (21-mile) individual time trial through the Prosecco vineyards from Conegliano to Valdobbiadene.

"I am a bit disappointed with my second place, I wanted a stage win," Almeida said. "I was really close but not close enough. Tomorrow will be a hard time trial."

The Giro was rescheduled from its usual May slot because of the coronavirus pandemic. The race ends in nine days with an individual time trial in Milan. □



Italy's Diego Ulissi, right, sprints ahead of Portugal's Joao Almeida to win the 13th stage of the Giro d'Italia, tour of Italy cycling race, from Cervia to Monselice, Italy, Friday, Oct. 16, 2020.

Associated Press



## Pitt-iful: Browns try to end 16-game losing streak at Heinz

By TOM WITHERS

AP Sports Writer

**CLEVELAND (AP)** — The Browns have been pitiful in Pittsburgh — for half a century.

Whether playing in old Three Rivers Stadium or at Heinz Field, with its tricky winds and rowdy, towel-twirling fans, most of Cleveland's trips down the Turnpike and across the Pennsylvania state line over the past five decades have not ended well.

The Browns are 6-41 in visits to the Steel City since 1970. That haunted history of failure isn't scaring Baker Mayfield. "We are not worried about the past," said the Browns quarterback, who is dealing with bruised ribs.

"We are worried about right now." Off to their best start in 26 years, the Browns (4-1) carry a 16-game losing streak into Pittsburgh for Sunday's matchup against the unbeaten Steelers (4-0), who will be seeing sensational defensive end Myles Garrett in person for the first time since he clobbered quarterback Mason Rudolph over the head with a swung helmet last November. Garrett's appearance only adds spice to a rivalry not needing any extra salt. Although it's been lopsided for a while, there's plenty of history and bad blood between the cities and their fans. The Browns are one of the NFL's surprise teams this season. The Steelers are, well, the Steelers. They're 4-0



In this Nov. 14 2019, file photo, Cleveland Browns defensive end Myles Garrett (95) hits Pittsburgh Steelers quarterback Mason Rudolph (2) with a helmet during the second half of an NFL football game in Cleveland.

Associated Press

for the first time since 1979. Although he's an absurd 23-2-1 in his career against Cleveland, Pittsburgh quarterback Ben Roethlisberger knows better than to overlook the Browns.

"A lot of those guys — I looked at their roster today, they only have two guys that have 10 years of experience in the league," Roethlisberger said. "It's not like these guys have been playing us for years and years and years and worrying about how many times the Steelers have won."

"That's not what it's about. It's a new season, new teams, and they're a really good football team."

This will be the first taste of Browns-Steelers for tight

end Austin Hooper after coming to Cleveland from Atlanta, where he experienced another of the NFL's nastier rivalries.

"Falcons-Saints," he said. "That would be a good one. You get all the fans in New Orleans fresh off Bourbon Street in there."

Of course, there will be only 5,500 fans — and not the usual 68,000 — on hand on Sunday because of COVID-19 restrictions, and Browns coach Kevin Stefanski wasn't sure if that would benefit Garrett and his teammates.

"It is hard for me to say," he said. "I do know this: in our building, I heard all 12,000 of them."

The Browns' long losing skid

at Heinz extends back to 2003, when quarterback Tim Couch had one of his finest moments in an orange helmet while leading Cleveland to a 33-13 win. It's been putrid in Pittsburgh since as the Browns have dropped 16 straight and gone 2-18 overall in their archrival's hostile home since returning as an expansion team in 1999. Surprisingly, one of that awful Cleveland team's two wins that season was a last-second, 16-15 victory at Pittsburgh. They've had plenty of close calls, with three of Cleveland's past five losses at Heinz coming by four points or fewer.

There could be plenty of reasons why the Browns

have struggled in Pittsburgh, but Pro Bowl guard Joel Bitonio said there's a basic bottom line.

"No. 1 is that they are a good team," Bitonio said. "They have good players, they have a great defense, Big Ben and company on offense. And it is just a different atmosphere. You go down there and the fans do a good job of getting loud. It is kind of on the river right there, you get the wind coming in."

"I think kickers kind of think about that kind of stuff. But from a player's perspective, it is just another game. I think the No. 1 thing for home-field advantage is, is your team good? And then they have a pretty good team over there."

Before their horrors at Heinz began 17 years ago, the Browns had a 16-game losing streak from 1970 to 1986 at Pittsburgh. Once they finally ended a slide many Cleveland fans viewed as a jinx, the Browns won three in a row at Three Rivers, capped by a 51-0 blowout in the 1989 season opener. A win this week could do wonders for these Browns.

"Obviously, division games are always meaningful for us, but they are undefeated and we are 4-1," Mayfield said. "It is an extremely important game, but that is because it is the next one. We have to handle it that way, and we are on the road in somebody else's house." □

## Ex-Angels employee indicted in Tyler Skaggs' fatal overdose



In this July 17, 2019, file photo, an image and logo for memorializing former Los Angeles Angels pitcher Tyler Skaggs is displayed on the outfield wall in Anaheim, Calif.

Associated Press

**FORT WORTH, Texas (AP)**

— A federal grand jury indicted a former Los Angeles Angels employee on drug charges for allegedly providing Angels pitcher Tyler Skaggs with the drugs that caused his overdose death.

Eric Prescott Kay was charged Thursday with drug distribution and drug conspiracy in Skaggs' overdose death, according to the indictment in Fort Worth, Texas. The charges carry a maximum of a life sentence and 20 years in prison, respectively.

Kay remained free on his own recognizance. A message seeking comment from Kay's attorney, Reagan Wynn, was not immediately returned.

Skaggs, 27, was found dead in his suburban Dallas hotel room on July 1, 2019, before the start of what was supposed to be a four-game series against the Texas Rangers.

The first game was postponed.

A coroner's report said Skaggs had choked to death on his vomit with a toxic mix of alcohol and

the drugs fentanyl and oxycodone in his system, which Kay was accused of providing.

Kay was the Angels' director of communications, and he served as their public relations contact on many road trips.

He was placed on leave shortly after Skaggs' death, and he never returned to the team.

Team officials said they had not been aware that Skaggs was an opioids user and didn't know any employees were providing drugs to players. □