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Governor eases virus school restrictions

SALEM (AP) — Gov. Kate Brown has set a target date of Feb. 15, 2021, for when more Oregon students, especially elementary level, will return to in-person learning.

The governor also announced Wednesday that beginning Jan. 1, 2021, the current statewide mandatory metrics for schools to reopen to students will be advisory and that “decisions to resume in-person instruction must be made locally, district by district, school by school.”

“As 2021 approaches and we look to the remaining school

year just over the horizon, it is clear that the greatest gift we can give to Oregon’s children this holiday season is to redouble our efforts to act responsibly and reduce the spread of COVID-19 in our communities,” Brown said. “Our students’ learning, resilience, and future well-being depend on all of us.”

In an attempt to meet the target date the governor has directed the Oregon Department of Education and the Oregon Health Authority to implement several new policy initiatives,

which include on-site rapid testing and prioritizing teachers and school staff in the state’s next round of COVID-19 vaccinations.

“As we continue to work toward stemming the spread of COVID-19 in our communities, getting our teachers and school staff vaccinated will help ensure we are making learning environments as safe as possible,” Brown said during a press conference Tuesday.

Earlier this week lawmakers also played a part in the step towards students’ returning to

in-person learning by voting in favor of a bill that protects schools from some coronavirus-related lawsuits.

“This bill is a needed first step to get schools reopened. Education for Oregon kids needs to be prioritized,” Senate Republican Leader Fred Girod said.

The health authority and Department of Education will review the current metrics and announce updated guidelines before Jan. 19, 2021.

Based on data from the state’s education department, in early

December around 9% of Oregon public school students have returned for in-person school or a hybrid schedule, a result largely of stringent metrics set by Brown, for school reopening.

Initially, schools weren’t eligible to reopen their buildings, with some exceptions, unless the state’s positivity rate remained for three consecutive weeks below 5% — a number the state has not met since early July.

New reopening metrics were announced in October, allowing counties to transition toward

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Zack Demars, The World

City leaders are considering a proposal to put a managed campground on the site of the city’s former wastewater treatment plant.

CB considers campground proposal

ZACK DEMARS
The World

COOS BAY — Coos Bay city officials may soon move forward with a plan to give some individuals experiencing homelessness a place to get back on their feet.

At a city council work session Tuesday, leaders from the Nancy Devereux Center shared a proposal they say could be the next step in helping the city’s homeless residents: A staffed, referral-only community campground.

The proposal asks the city council to allow the center to use a piece of city property for the campground, as well as set up water, electricity and possibly sewer service to the site. Operations would start with 12 managed campsites, and increase every three months, if successful, to up to 72 campsites at most.

“We would provide 24-7 on-site security. Our admission would only be through the De-

vereux Center, with referrals from law enforcement and community partners,” said Tara Johnson, the center’s director. “We would provide on-site case management, and our clients would be required to participate in that case management.”

After-hours admission wouldn’t be allowed, and residents would be required to commit to community expectations like remaining nonviolent and a prohibition on drugs and alcohol.

Council members were supportive of the idea, but raised concerns about the proposed location. At the end of Fulton Avenue at the site of the city’s former wastewater treatment plant, the space is both near a bay access point and adjacent to the bay on one side.

“The only thing about the location is that I know that’s utilized a lot by locals and tourists who access the bay for different activities, whether that’s clamming

or whatever it may be,” Mayor Joe Benetti said during Tuesday’s work session. “And so that would prohibit that activity, and I think that we would have some push back on that. So I would like to find a place that would be more accommodating, maybe.”

Councilor Stephanie Kilmer shared those concerns about the nearby waterfront access point, and mentioned the site’s exposure to wind from the bay.

“There’s a variety of issues I see with that site,” Kilmer said. “It is exposed to the elements almost every day of the year just because of where it’s located.”

“I think we have to look for a better location,” she added.

Johnson told the city council the Devereux Center picked the site for the proposal because it’s not in the middle of a neighborhood, it’s already fully fenced to provide a limited access point and is relatively close to the shower and laundry resources at the

center. Plus, she wasn’t able to find any other suitable city-owned properties, she said.

“Again, I’m not set on any location, I’m set on doing it,” Johnson said. “If we can find a different location, a better location, great. I just have not yet been able to.”

Councilor Drew Farmer held a different perspective than most others on the council, saying the proposed site has benefits.

“I do like that site, I would feel that there’s a way we could make an access point for the community down to the area that we do use,” Farmer said. “It’s a lot easier to establish a controlled point of entry (to the campground) at that location.”

Councilors Carmen Matthews and Phil Marler expressed support for the project, but said another location might be a better fit.

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Republicans block Trump's request for \$2,000 checks

WASHINGTON (AP) — House Republicans shot down a Democratic bid on Thursday to pass President Donald Trump’s longshot, end-of-session demand for \$2,000 direct payments to most Americans as he ponders whether to sign a long-overdue COVID-19 relief bill.

The made-for-TV clash came as the Democratic-controlled chamber convened for a pro forma session scheduled in anticipation of a smooth Washington landing for the massive, year-end legislative package, which folds together a \$1.4 trillion governmentwide spending with the hard-fought COVID-19 package and dozens of unrelated but bipartisan bills.

Instead, Thursday’s unusual 12-minute House session morphed into unconvincing theater in response to Trump’s veto musings about the package, which was negotiated by Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin on Trump’s behalf. House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, the No. 2 House Democrat, sought the unanimous approval of all House members to pass the bill, but GOP leader Kevin McCarthy, who was not present in the nearly-empty chamber, denied his approval and the effort fizzled.

If Trump were to follow through on his implied veto threat, delivered via video clip on Tuesday, the government would likely experience a brief, partial shutdown starting on Dec. 29. It would also delay delivery of the \$600 direct payments that the bill does contain.

The optics appear terrible for Republicans, who had lobbied praise at the hard-fought COVID-19 relief package, which passed on Monday by sweeping votes after the White House assured GOP leaders that Trump supported the bill.

The path forward, including efforts to avert a government shutdown or perhaps even pass a last-ditch extension of soon-to-expire jobless checks, remained unclear. Any shutdown would probably be brief, but nothing is certain.

“We’re not gonna let the government shut down, nor are we going to let the American people down,” Hoyer said. “There are continuing discussions going on between the speaker, and the secretary of the Treasury and the administration.”

Senate Republicans, led by Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, have opposed larger \$2,000 checks as too costly and poorly targeted. Democrats are supportive of the direct payments and now plan to vote on the \$2,000 check proposal on Monday.

That measure would be lobbied to the GOP-controlled Senate, where it would likely die and create more Trump-related headaches for Georgia GOP Sens. Kelly Loeffler and David Perdue, who are fighting for their political lives — and for continued GOP control of the Senate — in a pair of Jan. 5 Georgia run-off elections.

Rather than take the victory of the sweeping aid package, among the biggest in history,

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Trump pardons Manafort and Charles Kushner

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump pardoned more than two dozen people, including former campaign chairman Paul Manafort and Charles Kushner, the father of his son-in-law, in the latest wave of clemency to benefit longtime associates and supporters.

The actions, in Trump’s waning time at the White House, bring to nearly 50 the number of people whom the president has granted clemency in the last week. The list from the last two days includes not only multiple people convicted in the investigation into the Trump campaign’s ties to Russia but also allies from Congress and other felons whose causes were championed by friends.

Pardons are common in the final stretch of a president’s tenure, the recipients largely dependent on the individual whims of the nation’s chief executive. Trump throughout his administration has shucked aside the conventions of the Obama administration, when pardons were largely reserved for drug offenders not known to the general public, and instead bestowed clemency on high-profile contacts and associates who were key figures in an investigation that directly concerned him.

Even members of the president’s own party raised eyebrows, with Republican Sen. Ben Sasse of Nebraska issuing a brief statement that said: “This is

rotten to the core.”

The pardons Wednesday of Manafort and Roger Stone, who months earlier had his sentence commuted by Trump, were particularly notable, underscoring the president’s desire to chip away at the results and legacy of special counsel Robert Mueller’s Russia investigation. He has now pardoned five people convicted in that investigation, four of them associates like former national security adviser Michael Flynn and campaign adviser George Papadopoulos, both of whom pleaded guilty to lying to the FBI.

“The pardons from this President are what you would expect to get if you gave the pardon power to a mob boss,” tweeted

Andrew Weissmann, a Mueller team member who helped prosecute Manafort.

Manafort, who led Trump’s campaign during a pivotal period in 2016 before being ousted over his ties to Ukraine, was among the first people charged as part of Mueller’s investigation into ties between the Trump campaign and Russia. He was later sentenced to more than seven years in prison for financial crimes related to his political consulting work in Ukraine, but was released to home confinement last spring because of coronavirus concerns in the federal prison system.

Though the charges against Manafort did not concern the

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Oregon goes over 105,000 total COVID-19 cases

THE WORLD

Oregon reported 1,000 new confirmed and presumptive coronavirus cases Wednesday, bringing the total since the start of the pandemic to 105,970.

The Oregon Health Authority also reported another 21 deaths, leaving the state's death toll at 1,403.

Weekly report

The state had a slight drop in weekly cases from the previous week, but also

a record number of deaths.

OHA reported 8,745 new cases from Dec. 14-20, a 5% decrease from the previous week. It was the second straight week with a decrease in new cases.

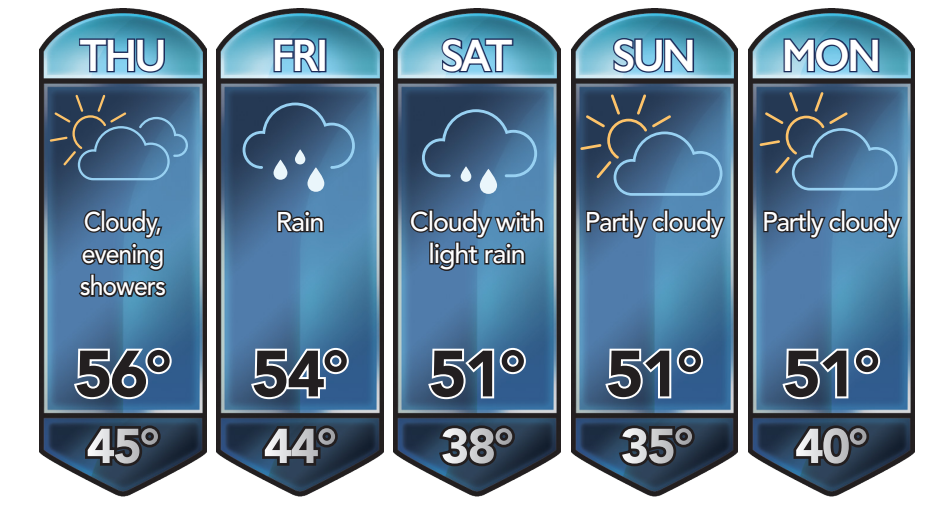
There also was an 11% drop in the number of people hospitalized by the virus and the percentage of positive tests dropped by 6.3 percent. In all, 167,335 tests were conducted in the state during the week.

But the number of deaths was 186, a new high for the pandemic.

People age 20 to 49 have accounted for 55% of the total cases, while people 70 and over have accounted for 76% of the deaths. The state's COVID-19 Outbreak Report shows 4,567 active COVID-19 outbreaks in care facilities, living communities and long-term care facilities, with 296 deaths.

Cases

The new cases Wednesday were in the following counties: Baker (5), Benton (16), Clackamas (64),



Clatsop (18), Columbia (10), Coos (7), Crook (3), Deschutes (41), Douglas (10), Grant (1), Hood River (5), Jackson (48), Jefferson

(8), Josephine (17), Klamath (30), Lane (73), Lincoln (5), Linn (48), Malheur (20), Marion (127), Morrow (1), Multnomah (209),

Polk (28), Sherman (1), Tillamook (4), Umatilla (33), Union (2), Wasco (14), Washington (117), Wheeler (3) and Yamhill (32).

California at 2 million cases and rising

LOS ANGELES (AP) — California became the first state to record 2 million confirmed coronavirus cases, reaching the milestone on Christmas Eve as close to the entire state was under a strict stay-at-home order and hospitals were flooded with the largest crush of cases since the pandemic began.

A tally by Johns Hopkins University showed the nation's most populated state has recorded 2,010,157 infections since January. More than 23,000 people have died from the virus.

California's infection rate — in terms of the number of cases per 100,000 people — is lower than the U.S. average but its nearly 40 million residents mean the outbreak outpaces other states in sheer numbers.

The grim milestone comes as a COVID-19 crisis that health officials say stems from Thanksgiving gatherings strains the state's medical system. More than 18,000 people

are hospitalized and many of the state's intensive care units are filled.

The state has seen its number of cases climb exponentially in recent weeks, fueled largely by people who ignored warnings and held traditional Thanksgiving gatherings, health officials say. Soaring rates of hospitalizations and deaths have overwhelmed intensive care units and prompted hospitals to put emergency room patients in tents and treat others in offices and auditoriums.

Nearly the entire state is under a stay-home order that imposed an overnight curfew, shuttered many businesses and restricted most retail to 20% capacity. Restaurants may only serve takeout.

Pleas to avoid social gatherings for the Christmas and New Year's rang with special desperation in Southern California. Los Angeles County is leading the surge, accounting for one-third of the state's

COVID-19 cases and nearly 40% of deaths.

"We know that this emergency is our darkest day, maybe the darkest day in our city's history," Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti said Wednesday, when the county reported its highest death toll and hospitalizations in a single day since the pandemic began — 145 deaths and more than 6,000 people in hospitals.

More than 9,000 people have died from the coronavirus in the county.

If LA County continues to see the same growth in COVID-19 infections in the next two weeks, hospitals may find themselves having to ration care because of a lack of medical staff, Garcetti said.

"That means the doctors will be forced to determine who lives and who dies," he said.

Medical workers are discouraged and outraged over scenes of crowded outdoor malls, packed parking lots,

and parents and children walking around without masks, county Health Services Director Dr. Christina Ghaly said.

Santa Clara County near San Francisco was down to 35 ICU beds, putting hospitals dangerously close to rationing care, said Dr. Ahmad Kamal, the county's director of health care preparedness.

"We are talking about people in gurneys without a bed to go to. We are talking about people not getting hospital care; we are talking about rationing what scarce resources our exhausted health system has left to those who would benefit the most," he said.

Overall, California on Wednesday recorded the second-highest number of deaths, at 361. The number of coronavirus patients in intensive care units nearly doubled in just three weeks, to 3,827 cases, while the state's ICU capacity fell to 1.1%, down from 2.5% just two days ago. The number

of hospitalizations jumped to 18,828 patients, more than double since Dec. 1, with 605 new patients in one day.

Yet there were slight but encouraging signs of hope.

The transmission rate — the number of people that one infected person will in turn infect — has been slowing for nearly two weeks. The rate of positive cases reached a new high of 12.3% over a two-week period, but was starting to trend downward over the last seven days from a peak of 13.3% to 12.6%.

The state also has nearly 1,000 health workers assisting at 91 facilities in 25 of the state's 58 counties, and is opening a fifth alternative care site in San Diego County.

The California National Guard was setting up about 200 beds on vacant floors of the Palomar Health Center near San Diego, within the existing hospital complex, said Brian Ferguson, a spokesman for the Gover-

nor's Office of Emergency Services. It could begin accepting patients Christmas Day, relieving overburdened hospitals particularly in nearby Imperial County.

California expects more federal medical workers to arrive by the weekend, and Gov. Gavin Newsom said he expects more of the 3,000 contract health care workers the state is seeking to arrive after the holidays.

The governor also said more than 128,000 doses of vaccines had been administered as of Tuesday, in another encouraging sign beyond the modest decline in the transmission rate.

But Newsom also warned that any progress could dissipate quickly, leading to the nearly 100,000 hospitalizations some models project in one month if people don't heed calls to avoid holiday gatherings, particularly indoors.

"This virus loves social events," Newsom said. "This virus thrives in that atmosphere."

Camp

From Page 1

"I'd like to see this council do everything in our power to help you move this project along. It's a great idea. I'm not totally sold on it either," Marler told Johnson. "One of my bigger concerns is the elevation that it sits at. If we have a natural disaster, if there's a flood or a tsunami or an earthquake, those are going to be the first people in peril."

Still, finding another location could be a challenge.

"Currently, we don't own other properties, really, that are suitable for this," City Manager Roger Craddock told Johnson and the council.

Instead, Craddock said city staff would look into state grants that might allow the city to purchase a piece of industrial property for the site, and come back

to the council with options for making it work.

Councilors asked that the plan go through the city's homeless workgroup, which has been on hold since the pandemic began. That could happen as soon as January, and Johnson hopes the campsite could be up and running by April.

"I don't think there's anyone on this council that doesn't want this to happen. I think this is one step out of others that need to happen," Benetti said Tuesday.

The idea isn't a new one: Officials in Medford established a similar campground in July, and have already seen some successes. Johnson said she's toured that campground and has been using it to model the Devereux Center's proposal for Coos Bay.

Using Medford as a model

In Medford, that camp-

ground is operated by Rogue Retreat, a nonprofit that also operates several group housing, rent subsidy and tiny home programs for individuals facing housing challenges in the community.

The campground started over the summer, in response to an increasing number of people camping along the Greenway, a popular wooded biking trail, and the need for those individuals to have a place to stay healthy during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"When they're out there along the Greenway or wherever they may be, they didn't have that sense of security," Justin Hon, who manages the campground, said in an interview Tuesday.

To live in the campground, people have to be referred by Medford's Livability Team, a group of police officers and city staff who help resolve quality of life problems

and housing challenges. After committing to a few community rules, residents receive a tent site and safe place to store their belongings.

Then, they meet with a case manager, who works with residents to navigate whatever barriers an individual might be facing. Those can be different for everybody, but Hon said it could include waiting for a housing benefit payment, accessing addiction treatment or finding mental health services.

The important part is meeting residents where they're at, Hon said.

"You don't want to overwhelm them, you don't want to push them into something they're not comfortable with," he said.

In just the few months that it's been up and running, Hon said the campground's seen success. 228 people have lived in its now 51 campsites, and area residents have seen

some reductions in crime.

"This campground is a godsend for a lot of people," Hon said. "It's not a handout, it's a hand-up."

Still, it took work to get there. Dealing with changing weather in an exposed setting and establishing and operating the campground required the collaboration of a number of different agencies, as well as some support from community members, Hon said.

Take the campground's meals, for example: The sheriff's office has been providing breakfasts, while dinners are cooked by a local mission. For lunch, Rogue Retreat sometimes cooks, but often asks residents to go out to local churches or nonprofits.

"I've never seen such collaboration between organizations to support people," Hon said. "I'm very thankful for the community that we've got here."

One of the key differences between the Devereux Center's proposal and the system in place in Medford is referrals to the program. Coos Bay only has one officer assigned to the kind of work the Medford Livability team does, meaning there's not enough manpower to make referrals. So, the proposal calls on the Devereux Center to be the gateway to a spot in the campground.

In Medford, the Rogue Retreat campground isn't a permanent place to live, and residents stay anywhere between a few weeks to several months, depending on their needs to get into stable housing.

That'd be the same in the Coos Bay plan, Johnson said.

"The community campground is not their new home," Johnson said in an interview Monday. "It's a temporary place for case management to help get them to their next spot."

Governor

From Page 1

in-person learning once they have fewer than 200 new infections per 100,000 residents. But still, state officials said only about 20% of Oregon students would be eligible for in-person learning.

Since the start of the school year there has been a state statewide movement of parents calling for children to return to school in Oregon, which is one of only a handful

of states that has required at least a partial closure of schools as long as local coronavirus infections remain above certain levels.

The movement gained substantial traction as parents organized protests across the state, including one at the state Capitol in October that drew hundreds of people. They have submitted petitions with thousands of signatures, posted anecdotes on social media and written to state officials.

Most recently the coalition of parent groups

demanding that Oregon officials remove statewide barriers to in-person learning by Jan. 6 — the 300th day since the vast majority of students were last in a classroom.

On Wednesday Brown said while schools must continue to adhere to required health and safety protocols — when it comes to the local decision making process on whether or not schools reopen, teachers, school staff, parents and students should be engaged in this decision-making process.

NORTHWEST STOCKS

Closing and 8:30 a.m. quotes		
Stock	Close	8:30
Intel	46.54	46.74
Kroger	31.40	31.59
Microsoft	221.02	221.96
Nike	141.78	141.87

NW Natural	45.46	45.52
Skywest	40.61	40.01
Starbucks	102.06	101.73
Umpqua Hldgs	15.19	14.98
Weyerhaeuser	33.60	33.55
Xerox	22.77	22.58

Levi Strauss	21.13	20.78
Dow Jones closed at	30,128.22	
NASDAQ closed at	12,771.64	
S&P 500 closed at	3,689.72	
Provided by Coos Bay Edward Jones		

LOTTERY

MegaMillions	
Dec. 22	
29-53-56-59-67	
Megaball: 21	
Multiplier: x2	
Jackpot: \$352 million	

Powerball	
Dec. 23	
6-13-38-39-53	
Powerball: 6	
Multiplier: x3	
Jackpot: \$341 million	

Megabucks	
Dec. 23	
4-14-17-30-32-42	
Jackpot: \$6.2 Million	

Win For Life	
Dec. 23	
2-34-59-71	

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Trump vetoes defense bill, setting up possible override vote

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump on Wednesday vetoed the annual defense policy bill, following through on threats to veto a measure that has broad bipartisan support in Congress and potentially setting up the first override vote of his presidency.

The bill affirms 3% pay raises for U.S. troops and authorizes more than \$740 billion in military programs and construction.

The action came while Trump was holed up at the White House, stewing about his election loss and escalating his standoff with Republicans as he pushed fraudulent conspiracy theories and tried to pressure them to back his efforts to overturn the results.

The House was poised to return Monday, and

the Senate on Tuesday, to consider votes to override the president’s veto of the National Defense Authorization Act, or NDAA.

Trump’s move provoked swift condemnation, with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi calling it “an act of staggering recklessness that harms our troops, endangers our security and undermines the will of the bipartisan Congress.”

Sen. Jim Inhofe, R-Okla., chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, avoided any criticism of Trump, but called the NDAA “absolutely vital to our national security and our troops. ... Our men and women who volunteer to wear the uniform shouldn’t be denied what they need — ever.”

Long before issuing the veto, Trump offered

a series of rationales for rejecting it. He has called for lawmakers to include limits on social media companies he claimed are biased against him — and to strip out language that allows for the renaming of military bases such as Fort Benning and Fort Hood that honor Confederate leaders. Without going into detail, he has claimed the biggest winner from the defense bill would be China.

In his veto message to the House, Trump cited those objections and stated that the measure “fails to include critical national security measures, includes provisions that fail to respect our veterans and our military’s history, and contradicts efforts by my Administration to put America first in our na-

tional security and foreign policy actions. It is a ‘gift’ to China and Russia.”

He also wrote: “Numerous provisions of the Act directly contradict my Administration’s foreign policy, particularly my efforts to bring our troops home.

Both the House and Senate passed the measure by margins large enough to override a veto from the president. Trump had vetoed eight bills previously, but those vetoes were sustained because supporters did not gain the two-thirds vote needed in each chamber for the bill to become law without Trump’s signature.

Sen. Mark Warner, D-Va., called Trump’s veto “unconscionable” and said he would “look forward to overriding” it.

In advance of the veto, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., has said the bill would help deter Chinese aggression. Other GOP backers of the measure, including Sen. John Thune of South Dakota, the second-ranking Senate leader, and Rep. Mike Gallagher of Wisconsin, a member of the House Armed Services Committee, have tweeted that the bill would counter threats from countries such as China.

Sen. Jack Reed of Rhode Island, the top Democrat on the Armed Services Committee, said Trump’s declaration that China was the biggest winner in the defense bill was false. Reed also noted the shifting explanations Trump had given for the veto.

“President Trump clear-

ly hasn’t read the bill, nor does he understand what’s in it,” Reed said. “There are several bipartisan provisions in here that get tougher on China than the Trump Administration has ever been.”

The measure guides Pentagon policy and cements decisions about troop levels, new weapons systems and military readiness, military personnel policy and other military goals. Many programs can only go into effect if the bill is approved, including military construction.

McConnell, in a rare break with Trump, had urged passage despite Trump’s threat to veto it. McConnell said it was important for Congress to continue its nearly six-decade-long streak of passing the defense policy bill.

Child, grandparents stranded in national forest are rescued

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Authorities have found a 4-year-old girl and her grandparents who became stranded while looking for a Christmas tree in the Willamette National Forest

in Oregon.

The Coast Guard said the child and her grandparents were found Wednesday after venturing into the forest on Monday.

The girl’s mother reported them missing on

Tuesday when she went to the grandparents’ home in Eugene and found no sign of the group.

Investigators picked up cellphone signals indicating they were last in the area of Fall Creek and a Coast

Guard helicopter crew began searching early Wednesday. After several hours, the crew spotted their vehicle, which the Coast Guard said was more easily seen because a blue tarp had been covering it. The aircrew

notified search and rescue teams on the ground, who found the family unharmed.

“After getting the family into a warm place with some food and water, we learned that their car got stuck in an area with downed trees

and snow,” the Lane County Sheriff’s Office said later Wednesday on Facebook. “Thankfully, they had a blanket, some water, a tarp and snacks in the car, and were all wearing warm clothing.”

Relief bill

From Page 1

Trump is lashing out at GOP leaders over the presidential election — for acknowledging Joe Biden as president-elect and rebuffing his campaign to dispute the Electoral College results when they are tallied in Congress on Jan. 6.

“It is Christmas Eve, but it is not a silent night. All is not calm. For too many, nothing is bright. And for too many, they are not sleeping peacefully,” said Rep. Debbie Dingell, D-Mich. “I did a town hall last night that had people crying, people terrified of what is going to happen.”

The president’s push to increase direct payments for most Americans

from \$600 to \$2,000 for individuals and \$4,000 for couples splits the party with a politically painful loyalty test.

Republican lawmakers traditionally balk at big spending and many never fully embraced Trump’s populist approach. Their political DNA tells them to oppose a costlier relief package. But now they’re being asked to stand with the president.

On a conference call Wednesday House Republican lawmakers complained that Trump threw them under the bus, according to one Republican on the private call and granted anonymity to discuss it. Most had voted for the package and they urged leaders to hit the cable news shows to explain its benefits, the person said.

Democrats were taking advantage of the Republican disarray to apply pressure for a priority. Jon Ossoff, Perdue’s Democratic opponent, tweeted simply on Tuesday night: “\$2,000 checks now.”

The relief bill Trump is criticizing would establish a temporary \$300 per week supplemental jobless benefit, along with a new round of subsidies for hard-hit businesses, restaurants and theaters and money for schools, health care providers and renters facing eviction.

Even though Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin represented the White House in negotiations, Trump assailed the bipartisan effort in a video he tweeted out Tuesday night, suggesting he may not sign the legislation.

Railing against a range of provisions in the broader government funding package, including foreign aid mainstays included each year, Trump called the bill a “disgrace.”

Trump did not specifically vow to use his veto power, and there may be enough support in Congress to override him if he does. But the consequences would be severe if Trump upends the legislation. It would mean no federal aid to struggling Americans and small businesses, and no additional resources to help with vaccine distribution. To top it off, because lawmakers linked the pandemic relief bill to an overarching funding measure, the government would shut down on Dec. 29.

The final text of the more than 5,000-page bill

was still being prepared by Congress and was not expected to be sent to the White House for Trump’s signature before Thursday or Friday, an aide said.

That complicates the schedule ahead. If Trump vetoes the package, or allows it to expire with a “pocket veto” at the end of the year, Americans will go without massive amounts of COVID aid.

A resolution could be forced Monday. That’s when a stopgap funding bill Congress approved to keep the government funded while the paperwork was being compiled expires, risking a federal shutdown.

The House is already set to return Monday, and the Senate Tuesday, for a vote to override Trump’s veto of the must-pass defense bill.

Democrats announced they will force a roll call vote to pass Trump’s proposal for \$2,000 checks, as well as a temporary government funding measure to avert a shutdown, Hoyer said Thursday.

The push for bigger payments to Americans drew rare common cause between Trump and some of the most liberal members of Congress. Pelosi and Democrats said they fought for the higher stipends during protracted negotiations only to settle on the lower number when Republicans refused.

The Senate cleared the huge relief package by a 92-6 vote after the House approved it by 359-53. Those votes totals would be enough to override a veto should Trump decide to take that step.

Pardons

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central thrust of Mueller’s mandate — whether the Trump campaign and Russia colluded to tip the election — he was nonetheless a pivotal figure in the investigation.

His close relationship to a man U.S. officials have linked to Russian intelligence, and with whom he shared internal campaign polling data, attracted particular scrutiny during the investigation, though Mueller never charged Manafort or any other Trump associate with conspiring with Russia.

Manafort, in a series of tweets, thanked Trump and lavished praise on the outgoing president, declaring that history would show he had accomplished more than any of his predecessors.

Trump did not pardon Manafort’s deputy, Rick Gates, who was sentenced last year to 45 days in prison after extensively cooperating with prosecutors, or former Trump lawyer Michael Cohen, who pleaded guilty to campaign finance crimes related to his efforts to buy the silence of women who said they had sexual relationships with Trump. Both were also convicted in the Mueller probe.

New York City prosecutors, meanwhile, have been seeking to have the state’s highest court revive state mortgage fraud charges against Manafort after a lower court dismissed them on double jeopardy

grounds. A spokesman for District Attorney Cy Vance said the pardon “underscores the urgent need to hold Mr. Manafort accountable for his crimes against the People of New York.”

Manafort and Stone are hardly conventional pardon recipients, in part because both were scolded by judges for effectively thumbing their nose at the criminal justice system as their cases were pending. Manafort was accused of witness tampering even after he was indicted and was accused by prosecutors of lying while trying to earn credit for cooperation.

Stone, who was convicted of lying to Congress about his efforts to gain inside information about the release by WikiLeaks of Russia-hacked Democratic emails during the 2016 campaign, was similarly censured by a judge because of his social media posts.

In a statement Wednesday, Stone thanked Trump and alleged that he had been subjected to a “Soviet-style show trial on politically-motivated charges”

Kushner is the father of Trump’s son-in-law, Jared Kushner, and a wealthy real estate executive who pleaded guilty years ago to tax evasion and making illegal campaign donations. Trump and the elder Kushner knew each other from real estate circles and their children were married in 2009.

Prosecutors allege that after Kushner discovered that his brother-in-law was cooperating with authori-

ties, he hatched a revenge and intimidation scheme. They say he hired a prostitute to lure his brother-in-law, then arranged to have a secret recording of the encounter in a New Jersey motel room sent to his own sister, the man’s wife.

Former New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie has called it “one of the most loathsome, disgusting crimes” he ever prosecuted as U.S. attorney.

Trump’s legally troubled allies were not the only recipients of clemency. The list of 29 recipients included people whose pleas for forgiveness have been promoted by people supporting the president throughout his term in office, among them former Florida Attorney General Pam Bondi, Newsmax CEO Christopher Ruddy and Sen. Rand Paul of Kentucky.

One recipient was Topeka Sam, whose case was promoted by Alice Johnson, a criminal justice advocate whom Trump pardoned and who appeared in a Super Bowl ad for him and at the Republican National Convention.

“Ms. Sam’s life is a story of redemption,” the White House said in its release, praising her for helping other women in need.

Others granted clemency included a former county commissioner in Florida who was convicted of taking gifts from people doing business with the county and a community leader in Kentucky who was convicted of federal drug offenses.

DEAR ABBY

By Abigail Van Buren

MOM FEELS BETRAYED BY FRIEND WHO SNITCHED ON HER DAUGHTER

DEAR ABBY: I have recently found out that someone I thought was a good friend is the person who snitched and got my daughter in serious trouble at school. Our daughters attended the same preschool, middle school and high school. Although they were friends, the friendship was more between us moms.

Before middle school graduation, the students had an outing at the beach. Some of the girls, my daughter included, decided to bring vodka and orange juice. A few days later, my daughter was called to the principal’s office where she was thoroughly reprimanded. Any awards she was to receive were rescinded. I learned from one of the teachers that this “friend” is the person who turned her in.

Why didn’t she come to me and tell me? I almost feel like she wanted my daughter to get in trouble. I have run into her a couple of times and have been cold and distant, but I want to confront her. I was going to write and tell her why. Do you think this is a good idea? -- FURIOUS IN FLORIDA

DEAR FURIOUS: I don’t blame you for being upset, but an eighth-grader bringing alcohol to a school celebration is wrong on many levels. I do NOT advise putting anything in writing. Convey your message and get the answer you want by doing it directly, face to face.

DEAR ABBY: Thirty years ago, I dated a guy I’ll call Allen. We had a child together. Our relationship ended when I found out I was pregnant. He married a woman he chose over me. I later married someone else, whose name is on my child’s birth certificate.

Fast-forward 30 years. We are now back in each other’s lives. I told my son about his biological father, and they

are getting to know each other. Allen has children from his marriage, which lasted about 25 years. His wife is now deceased.

Allen’s two other children and his parents and extended family know nothing about our son. He’s afraid to tell them, although it was before they were born and before he was married. Do you think he should tell everyone? -- SECRET KEEPER IN CALIFORNIA

DEAR SECRET KEEPER: Yes, I do. As you stated, this happened before his marriage to his late wife, and your (and his) son should not be regarded as a shameful secret. However, I cannot make this decision FOR Allen, and neither should you. If he isn’t strong enough to stand up and stand by his first child, then you should reconsider your relationship with him.

DEAR ABBY: My wife and I have been married 50-some years. While we were discussing sex and the pandemic, she revealed that she could imagine having sex with someone while both of them were masked. I said no, the masks would become superfluous and would go just before the clothes. Who is right? -- HYPOTHETICALLY SPEAKING

DEAR H.S.: Are you serious? Your wife gave you some valuable information that you are ignoring. Where is your sense of humor? Try it. You might like it and discover the masks stay on until, in the heat of passion, they slip off (or not).

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