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Biden targets virus as his transition begins

WILMINGTON, Delaware (AP) — President-elect Joe Biden signaled strongly on Monday that fighting the raging pandemic will be the immediate priority of his new administration, an abrupt shift from President Donald Trump's more unworried approach to the virus, as the nation surpassed 10 million COVID-19 cases.

Biden began with a direct appeal to all Americans to wear masks, a departure from Trump, who has mocked Biden and others who make a point of always wearing protective face coverings when around others. In an official move, the president-elect formed a coronavirus advisory board dominated by scientists and doctors, while Trump has had a falling out with the medical

experts on his own virus task force.

The swift actions come at a critical moment in the U.S. effort to combat the coronavirus. Pharmaceutical giant Pfizer announced progress with its vaccine trial, helping send financial markets soaring. But surging caseloads, including new infections among leading figures in Trump's administration, offered a fresh reminder that the nation is still in the grip of the worst pandemic in more than a century.

"The challenge before us right now is still immense and growing, and so is the need for bold action to fight this pandemic," Biden said after being briefed on the virus. "We are still facing a dark winter."

He called on Americans to separate politics from the virus and embrace mask-wearing.

"We could save tens of thousands of lives if everyone would just wear a mask for the next few months. Not Democratic or Republican lives, American lives," Biden said. "Please, I implore you, wear a mask."

Over the past two weeks, the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases has risen nearly 65%. The 7-day rolling average for daily new cases in the U.S. went from 66,294 on Oct. 25 to 108,736.7 on Sunday. In the past week, one of every 433 Americans was diagnosed with COVID-19, and hospitals in several states are running out of space and staff.

Biden noted the pandemic's disproportionate toll on people of

color as he called on Americans to separate politics from the virus and embrace mask-wearing.

"Focusing on these communities is one of our priorities, not an afterthought," Biden said.

Pfizer said Monday that its COVID-19 vaccine may be a remarkable 90% effective, based on early and incomplete test results. The drugmaker said it was on track to file an emergency use request with regulators later this month.

Throughout his ultimately unsuccessful campaign, Trump insisted the nation was "rounding the corner" on the coronavirus and that a vaccine was imminent even as infection rates grew. The president, who has yet to publicly acknowledge Biden's victory, seized on Pfizer's announcement

and the positive reaction in financial markets.

"STOCK MARKET UP BIG, VACCINE COMING SOON. REPORT 90% EFFECTIVE. SUCH GREAT NEWS!" he tweeted.

Vice President Mike Pence held a meeting of the White House coronavirus task force on Monday. He tweeted that Pfizer's reported progress was "HUGE NEWS" and suggested it was the result of a "public-private partnership forged" by Trump.

In fact, Pfizer has funded all its own research. It has a contract to sell doses to the U.S. government if a vaccine is approved but has insisted on handling its own shipping.

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Soccer teams back in action



John Gunther, The World

Marshfield's Isabella Garcia pushes the ball up the pitch as a Brookings-Harbor player tries to keep up during their jamboree match Monday at North Bend High School. The girls and boys teams from Marshfield, Brookings-Harbor and the host Bulldogs met in the first of a series of jamborees planned for the next several weeks as part of the fall season of sports on the South Coast. The current season also includes seven-on-seven football and basketball skills competitions. The regular sports seasons under the guidelines of the Oregon School Activities Association start at the end of the calendar year.

Oregon elections director fired

SALEM (AP) — Oregon's elections director was abruptly fired in a text message by the secretary of state after he pointed out serious issues with the state's aging and vulnerable technology for running elections.

Elections Director Stephen Trout learned in a text message Thursday night — as his department and county elections officials were still counting votes from the Nov. 3 election — that he was out.

On Friday, Secretary of State Bev Clarno, a Republican appointed to the position by Democratic Gov. Kate Brown, announced to county clerks and other elections officials in Oregon's 36 counties that "today is also Steve Trout's last day with the Agency."

Election officials in the state were stunned.

Steve Druckenmiller, the veteran Linn County clerk, said Clarno's action was "dangerous and so ignorant."

"We are still in the election process right now. We are reconciling, we're dealing with problems right now as far as your signatures and communicating with voters who didn't sign the ballots," Druckenmiller said. "We're going to have to do recounts, all of these things. She doesn't understand elections."

Clarno spokeswoman Andrea Chiapella said Trout was "a knowledgeable advocate for the democratic process on our team" and that he planned to leave on Dec. 15 anyway. Deputy Director Michelle Teed has been named acting elections director, Chiapella said.

Trout said in an email to The Associated Press that although he had already planned to seek a new job, he did not want to go this soon.

"I will never leave in the middle of an election," Trout said. "This is the toughest part of the election behind the scenes with the canvass, manual audit, electoral college, and recounts. I would not abandon my staff or the counties before the election is over."

Trout, in a Nov. 2 letter to the Republican and Democratic candidates to replace Clarno, described problems with the internet technology side of the secretary of state's office and indicated he'd be looking for another job.

He also said \$5.7 million in federal virus relief allocations must be returned by Dec. 31 because the Legislature did not authorize it to be spent.

GOP backs Trump as he fights election results

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration threw the presidential transition into tumult, with President Donald Trump blocking government officials from cooperating with President-elect Joe Biden's team and Attorney General William Barr authorizing the Justice Department to probe unsubstantiated allegations of voter fraud.

Some Republicans, including Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, rallied behind Trump's efforts to fight the election results. Few in the GOP acknowledged Biden's victory or condemned Trump's other concerning move on Monday: his firing of Defense Secretary Mark Esper.

The developments cast doubt on whether the nation would witness the same kind of smooth transition of power that has long anchored its democracy. The Electoral College is slated to formally confirm Biden's victory on Dec. 14, and the Democrat will be sworn into office in late January.

On Monday, Barr authorized U.S. attorneys to probe "substantial" allegations of voter irregularities and election fraud, though no widespread instances of that type of trouble in the 2020 election exist. In fact, election officials from both political parties have publicly stated that voting went well and international observers also confirmed that there were no serious irregularities.

Biden campaign lawyer Bob Bauer said Barr's memorandum

authorizing investigations "will only fuel the 'specious, speculative, fanciful or far-fetched claims' he professes to guard against."

Biden pressed forward with plans to build out his administration, assembling a team of experts to face the surging pandemic. But the federal agency that needs to greenlight the beginnings of the transition of power held off on taking that step. And the White House moved to crack down on those not deemed sufficiently loyal as Trump continued to refuse to concede the race.

Trump remained out of sight at the White House, with conversations ongoing about how the defeated president would spend the coming days and weeks as he challenged the people's verdict. Trump is not expected to formally concede but is likely to grudgingly vacate the White House at the end of his term, according to several people around him.

Also being discussed: the possibility of more campaign-style rallies as he tries to keep his supporters fired up despite his defeat. It was possible they would feature his family and top supporters but not the president himself.

The ouster of Esper, the Pentagon chief, was expected by some aides to be the first of several firings by Trump, now freed from having to face voters again and angry at those in his administration perceived to be insufficiently loyal. Others believed to be vulnerable: FBI Director Chris-

topher Wray, CIA head Gina Haspel and infectious disease expert Dr. Anthony Fauci.

The president was given cover to keep fighting by McConnell, seen by many in the GOP as the one who may eventually need to nudge Trump to the exit.

"Our institutions are actually built for this," McConnell said as he opened the Senate on Monday. "We have the system in place to consider concerns and President Trump is 100% within his rights to look into allegations of irregularities and weigh his legal options."

Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer countered that the Republicans' refusal to accept the election results was "extremely dangerous, extremely poisonous to our democracy."

"Joe Biden won the election fair and square," Schumer said.

A few other GOP senators sent tepid nods toward a transition. Sen. Ben Sasse of Nebraska offered congratulations to Biden, and Sen. Susan Collins of Maine noted the Democrat's "apparent victory." But many Republican lawmakers were reluctant to speak up about the election, seeing little political incentive to take a firm stance on Trump's transition from the White House.

Republicans on Capitol Hill have been hesitant to push Trump to concede to Biden, knowing it would anger their base of Trump's most devoted supporters. Most were also not overtly encouraging the president's unfounded claims of

fraud, while allowing baseless questions about the election process to linger.

Adding to the sense of uncertainty, the General Services Administration held off on formally beginning the transition, preventing Biden's teams from gaining access to federal agencies. An agency spokesperson said late Monday that an "ascertainment" on the winner of the election had not yet been made. Citing what the agency did during the extended 2000 electoral recount, it signaled that it may not do so until Trump concedes or the Electoral College meets next month.

That Florida recount involved a margin of just 537 votes in the one state that would have determined which candidate reached 270 electoral votes. Biden's leads across Wisconsin, Pennsylvania and Michigan, which pushed him over the threshold to win the White House, are far more substantial — and greater than Trump's leads in the same states in 2016.

On a call Monday night with reporters, a transition official said the Biden team believes it is time for the GSA administrator to ascertain that Biden is president-elect. The official, who spoke only on anonymity as a ground rule for the call, said legal action is "certainly a possibility" if that doesn't happen, though there are also other options being considered.

Across government, there were signs of a slowdown.

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Oregon has 725 more coronavirus cases

THE WORLD

Oregon has 725 new cases, the fourth day in a row with more than 700 confirmed and presumptive cases, the Oregon Health Authority reported Monday. In addition, four more people have died in the state, leaving the state's death toll at 734. The new cases, including six in Coos County, left the state's total at 51,555 as of 12:01 a.m. Monday, OHA reported. The cases reported Monday were in the following counties: Baker (1), Benton (8), Clackamas (68), Clatsop (2), Columbia (4), Coos (6), Crook (2), De-

schutes (25), Douglas (21), Grant (4), Jackson (41), Jefferson (5), Josephine (2), Klamath (10), Lane (36), Linn (17), Malheur (7), Marion (79), Morrow (1), Multnomah (204), Polk (16), Tillamook (2), Umatilla (11), Union (13), Wasco (1), Washington (119), and Yamhill (18). Oregon's 731st COVID-19 death is an 84-year-old man in Lane County who tested positive on Oct. 17 and died on Nov. 7, at PeaceHealth Sacred Heart Medical Center Riverbend. He had underlying conditions. Oregon's 732nd COVID-19 death is a 79-year-old woman in

Lane County who tested positive on Oct. 17 and died on Nov. 7, at PeaceHealth Sacred Heart Medical Center Riverbend. She had underlying conditions. Oregon's 733rd COVID-19 death is an 86-year-old woman in Marion County who tested positive on Oct. 30 and died on Nov. 8, at Salem Hospital. She had underlying conditions. Oregon's 734th COVID-19 death is a 50-year-old man in Lane County who tested positive on Oct. 17 and died on Nov. 8, at PeaceHealth Sacred Heart Medical Center Riverbend. He had underlying conditions.

Florida cities mop up after Eta

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. (AP) — Tropical Storm Eta was squatting off western Cuba on Tuesday after drifting away from South Florida, where it unleashed a deluge that flooded entire neighborhoods and filled some homes with rising water. The 28th named storm of a record hurricane season was the first this year to make landfall in Florida. And now a 29th named storm has formed over the northern Atlantic: Theta took shape Monday night, eclipsing the record set in 2005, when Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma struck the Gulf Coast. After striking Nicaragua as a Category 4 hurricane and killing more than 100 people from Mexico to Panama, Eta delivered torrential rains to Cuba and South Florida before moving into the Gulf of Mexico. With no powerful steering winds to guide its way, the storm drifted west again in an unusual reverse S-curve pattern. By Tuesday morning, it was lingering just north of the Yucatan Channel between Cuba and Mexico, with top winds of 50 mph

(85 kmh). Forecasters said it would remain nearly stationary through the day before moving north later in the week, but they had little confidence on where it might land again. Eta continued to swell rivers and flood coastal zones in Cuba. Some 25,000 people were evacuated with no reports of deaths, but rainfall continued, with total accumulations of up to 25 inches (63 centimeters) predicted. The rain also kept falling Tuesday in South Florida, where as much as 23 inches were expected to accumulate. Eta barely hit land late Sunday as it blew over Lower Matecumbe Key on its way into the Gulf of Mexico, but dumped water over densely populated neighborhoods from Monroe to Palm Beach counties. People in Florida are very familiar with the heavy tropical rain that falls like clockwork on summer afternoons. This was something else — a 100-year rain event, Fort Lauderdale Mayor Dean Trantalis called it. "Once the ground becomes saturated, there's really no

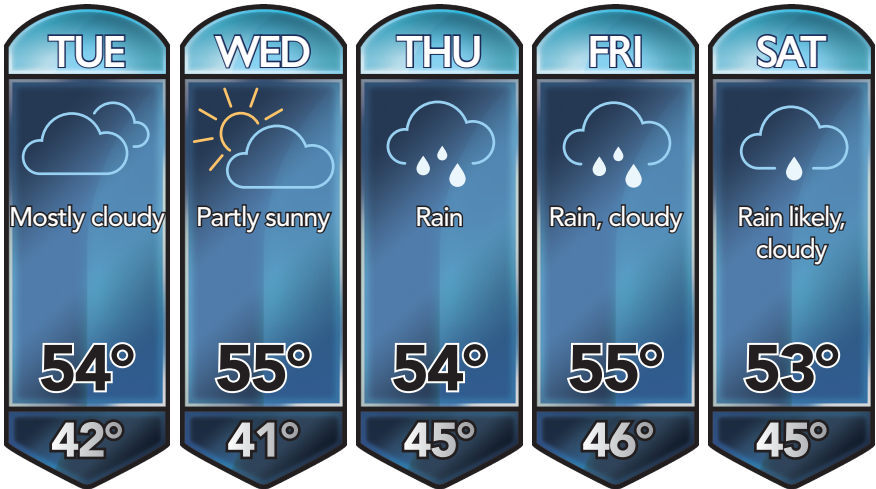
place for the water to go," Trantalis said. "I looked outside and said oh my God, it's coming up, it's coming up!" said Cynthia Rowe in Miami Gardens. "Now I have fish in my yard and everything, it's rough," Davie resident Troy Rodriguez said, with some irony. There were no reported deaths in Florida, unlike in Central America and Mexico, where the toll was rising. Nearly a week after Eta crashed ashore in Nicaragua, authorities from Panama to Guatemala have reported more than 100 dead and an even higher number of missing. Extensive flooding and landslides have affected hundreds of thousands of people in countries already struggling with the economic fallout of the pandemic. In Florida, the rain damaged one of the state's largest COVID-19 testing sites, at Miami-Dade County's Hard Rock Stadium, officials said. Throughout the pandemic, it has been one of the busiest places for people to get a coronavirus diagnosis.

Groups fight to keep gray wolf protections for most of United States

BILLINGS, Mont. (AP) — Wildlife advocates and environmental groups have announced that they are challenging the removal of federal protections for gray wolves across most of the U.S. Two coalitions of groups filed formal notices over the past several days that they plan to sue the U.S. Interior Department in federal court unless protections are restored. The notices are required as a precursor to lawsuits brought under the Endan-

gered Species Act. The Trump administration last week finalized a decision that ends longstanding federal safeguards for gray wolves in the Lower 48 states except for a small population of Mexican gray wolves in the Southwest. The move puts states and tribes in charge of overseeing the predators and could allow hunting to resume in Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin. Gray wolves have recovered from near extinction in parts of the country

with thousands now roaming the northern Rocky Mountains and western Great Lakes region and growing numbers of the animals in the Pacific Northwest. But they remain absent from much of their historical range and wildlife advocates have said protections still are needed. Colorado wildlife officials say they are planning to reintroduce wolves in the state in coming years under a voter-approved ballot initiative.



Judge tosses out restrictions for federal officers at protests

The order the same judge had previously put in place involved crowd control

PORTLAND (AP) — A federal judge Monday tossed a restriction he placed on federal officers' actions in response to protests near the federal courthouse in Portland. "I find that the foundation for the injunction has simply fallen apart," U.S. District Judge Michael W. Mosman said, ruling from the bench. "It has been erased by a change on the ground - a change that, without trying to get into the heads of the plaintiffs, by all appearances is their victory." On Election Day, lawyers for the U.S. Depart-

ment of Homeland Security urged the judge and the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals to put an emergency hold on Mosman's Nov. 2 order, arguing it would put federal officers in danger and wasn't justified. The Homeland Security department also filed a formal appeal. A three-judge panel of the appellate court declined. During a status hearing Monday, Mosman said there was no further need for the order, The Oregonian/OregonLive reported. The order had restricted federal officers from engaging in crowd control activities beyond a one-block radius around the downtown courthouse. The judge pointed out the lack of recent protests immediately outside or near the federal courthouse that have resulted in any response from

federal officers. Two state lawmakers, Portland lawyer and legal observer Sara D. Eddie, the First Unitarian Church of Portland and the Portland-based Western States Center, an organization that monitors right-wing extremism, filed the lawsuit. They alleged the aggressive dispersal of protesters by federal agents outside the federal courthouse this summer encroached on state powers and breached the First Amendment by interfering with the right to protest. Attorney Andrew Jacobs, for the plaintiffs, argued Monday that the judge's order should remain "in the event" of future protests at the federal courthouse, to prevent federal officers from engaging in "prophylactic multi-block patrols away from the courthouse."

Elections

From Page 1

Danny Moran, spokesman for Oregon House Speaker Tina Kotek, said those funds were restricted to addressing additional costs to election offices caused by the coronavirus, and required a 20% state match. Chiapella said the funds could not have been used to replace the antiquated Oregon Centralized Voter Registration system. Microsoft no longer supports the Windows Server 2008 system that it operates on, Trout and county election officials said. There is also no multifactor identification to protect it from hackers. To Druckenmiller, the most critical security issue is "the vulnerability of running on software that is no longer even supported." "I wouldn't do that even on my home laptop and multifactor identification is a no brainer," he said. The secretary of state's office was going to take bids — known as a request for proposal, or RFP — in October for a new voter registration system, but Clarno paused it without consulting with the county

clerks or Trout, the ousted election director said. Harney County Clerk Derrin "Dag" Robinson expressed frustration Monday. "We went through a lot of work to develop an RFP and then to have the secretary pull the plug on that, and then not even mention it to us," Robinson said. "We were led to believe that there was going to be an RFP going out because there was some funding to help with it. And then, nothing." Chiapella told AP the project management team raised numerous red flags that required the agency to slow down and ensure a successful procurement process and outcome. Trout said the delay was apparently caused because the purchasing team could not meet a timeline even though the team had been provided with funds for a full-time employee to work exclusively on the request for proposal. "The person did not work exclusively on the RFP which means federal funds were inappropriately used and may need to be returned after an audit," Trout said. Chiapella denied any

wrongdoing, saying time not spent on the project is not charged to federal funds. There have been numerous secretaries of state in recent years, and that did not help the situation, county election officials noted. In 2018, then-Secretary of State Dennis Richardson earmarked \$100,000 in federal funds to install multi-factor authentication for people accessing election systems. But Richardson, a Republican, died of cancer in February 2019. Clarno was appointed by Brown to replace him. A multi-factor authentication system never happened. Of the six other projects that Richardson had intended to use \$3.2 million in federal funds in 2018 for, only one was accomplished: the hiring of two internet technology security staffers, Trout said, adding that he's seen no benefit from hiring the staffers, who are under the secretary of state's internet technology department, as is the state elections office. State Sen. Shemia Fagan, a Democrat, won the election to replace Clarno, beating Republican state Sen. Kim Thatcher.

NORTHWEST STOCKS

Closing and 8:30 a.m. quotes			
Stock	Close	8:30	
Intel	45.59	46.34	
Kroger	30.98	31.59	
Microsoft	218.13	212.67	
Nike	128.99	128.47	
NW Natural	46.91	49.57	
Skywest	36.32	36.24	
Starbucks	95.90	93.58	
Umpqua Hldgs	13.85	14.23	
Weyerhaeuser	28.11	27.83	
Xerox	21.50	21.77	
Levi Straus	16.50	17.35	
Dow Jones closed at 29,150.14			
NASDAQ closed at 11,708.71			
S&P 500 closed at 3,550.66			
Provided by Coos Bay Edward Jones			

LOTTERY

MegaMillions Nov. 6 18-24-27-34-60 MegaBall: 2 Multiplier: x2 Jackpot: \$152 million	Powerball Nov. 7 14-16-37-48-58 Powerball: 18 Multiplier: x2 Jackpot: \$158 million	Megabucks Nov. 9 1-11-14-19-21-22 Jackpot: \$4.3 Million	Win For Life Nov. 9 44-63-66-68
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Barr tells DOJ it can probe election fraud cases

WASHINGTON (AP) — Attorney General William Barr has authorized federal prosecutors across the U.S. to pursue “substantial allegations” of voting irregularities, if they exist, before the 2020 presidential election is certified, despite no evidence of widespread fraud.

Barr’s action comes days after Democrat Joe Biden defeated President Donald Trump and raises the prospect that Trump will use the Justice Department to try to challenge the outcome. It gives prosecutors the ability to go around longstanding Justice Department policy that normally would prohibit such overt actions before the election is certified.

Trump has not conceded the election and is instead claiming without evidence that there has been a widespread, multi-state conspiracy by Democrats to skew the vote tally in Biden’s favor.

Biden holds a sizable lead in multiple battleground states and there has been no indication of

enough improperly counted or illegally cast votes that would shift the outcome. In fact, election officials from both political parties have publicly stated the election went well, though there have been minor issues that are typical in elections, including voting machines breaking and ballots that were miscast and lost.

In a memo to U.S. attorneys, obtained by The Associated Press, Barr wrote that investigations “may be conducted if there are clear and apparently-credible allegations of irregularities that, if true, could potentially impact the outcome of a federal election in an individual State.”

He said any allegations that would “clearly not impact the outcome of a federal election” should be delayed until after those elections are certified and prosecutors should likely open so-called preliminary inquiries, which would allow investigators and prosecutors to see if there is evidence that would allow them to take further investigative

measures.

Barr does not identify any specific instances of purported fraud in the memo.

“While it is imperative that credible allegations be addressed in a timely and effective manner, it is equally imperative that Department personnel exercise appropriate caution and maintain the Department’s absolute commitment to fairness, neutrality and non-partisanship,” Barr wrote.

States have until Dec. 8 to resolve election disputes, including recounts and court contests over the results. Members of the Electoral College meet Dec. 14 to finalize the outcome.

On Monday night, the Justice Department’s top prosecutor for election crimes, Richard Pilger, said he would step down from that post in response to the attorney general’s memo, according to an email he sent to colleagues and obtained by the AP. He is still expected to remain as an attorney within the Justice Department’s criminal division.

Barr, a loyal ally of President Donald Trump, helped broadcast Trump’s claims of voter fraud before the election, attacking mail-in voting as prone to undue influence and coercion, despite multiple studies debunking the notion of pervasive voter fraud in general and in the vote-by-mail process.

Generally, Justice Department policy is “not to conduct overt investigations, including interviews with individual voters, until after the outcome of the election allegedly affected by the fraud is certified.”

But Barr argues in the memo that concerns such acts could inadvertently impact an election are minimized once voting has concluded and that, in some cases, investigations could not be delayed until the election is certified.

A Justice Department official said Barr had not been asked by Trump, anyone else at the White House or any lawmakers to issue the memo. The official could not

discuss the matter publicly and spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity.

Barr was in Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell’s office on Capitol Hill on Monday afternoon and refused to answer questions from reporters when he left. Earlier Monday, McConnell threw his support behind Trump after a period of post-election silence.

Biden campaign attorney Bob Bauer said in a statement that it is “deeply unfortunate that Attorney General Barr chose to issue a memorandum that will only fuel the ‘specious, speculative, fanciful or far-fetched claims’ he professes to guard against.”

“Those are the very kind of claims that the president and his lawyers are making unsuccessfully every day, as their lawsuits are laughed out of one court after another,” Bauer said. “But, in the end, American democracy is stronger than any clumsy and cynical partisan political scheme.”

Trump fires defense secretary

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump fired Defense Secretary Mark Esper on Monday, an unprecedented move by a president struggling to accept election defeat and angry at a Pentagon leader he believes wasn’t loyal enough.

The decision was widely expected as Trump had grown increasingly unhappy with Esper over the summer, including sharp differences between them over the use of the military during the civil unrest in June. But the move could unsettle international allies and Pentagon leadership and injects another element of uncertainty to a rocky transition period as Joe Biden prepares to assume the presidency.

Presidents who win reelection often replace Cabinet members, but losing presidents have kept their Pentagon chiefs in place until Inauguration Day to preserve stability in the name of national security.

Trump announced the news in a tweet, saying that “effective immediately” Christopher Miller, the director of the National Counterterrorism Center, will serve as acting secretary, sidestepping the department’s No.2-ranking official, Deputy Defense Secretary David Norquist.

“Chris will do a GREAT job!” Trump tweeted. “Mark Esper has been terminated. I would like to thank him for his service.”

In a letter to Trump, Esper referred to his efforts to keep the Pentagon apolitical -- a resistance that often angered Trump. Esper said he served as defense secretary and Army secretary “in full faith to my sworn oath to support and defend the Constitution, and to safeguard the country and its

interests, while keeping the Department out of politics and abiding by the values Americans hold dear.” The Associated Press obtained a copy of the letter.

Esper didn’t thank Trump, but he also didn’t openly criticize the president or his policies. He said he accepts Trump’s decision to replace him, adding, “I step aside knowing there is much we achieved at the Defense Department over the last eighteen months to protect the nation and improve the readiness, capabilities, and professionalism of the joint force, while fundamentally transforming and preparing the military for the future.”

U.S. defense officials said Miller arrived at the Pentagon in the early afternoon to take over the job, and that White House chief of staff Mark Meadows informed Esper of the firing before Trump announced the move on Twitter. Esper and Miller were in the building at the same time for a while, but Esper left by the end of the day, said defense officials who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal matters.

Trump’s abrupt move to dump Esper triggers questions about what the president may try to do before he leaves office, including adjustments in troop presence overseas or other national security changes.

More broadly, the U.S. military continued to operate as usual. U.S. officials said Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, met with Miller on Monday and also gathered the top military commanders and chiefs for a secure meeting.

Officials said Miller’s message so far is that he won’t make immediate changes and the department will stay the course.

Military leaders, meanwhile, were calling top officials in their various geographic regions to assure them that the U.S. military is maintaining a stable presence around the world.

In a separate message to the force, Esper expressed a twinge of disappointment, saying “I step aside knowing that there is much more we could accomplish together to advance America’s national security.” He said much was achieved, and “through thick and thin, however, we have always put People and Country first,” he said.

Trump’s decision brings to five the number of men who have held the job of defense chief under Trump — either in an acting capacity or confirmed by the Senate. The move was quickly condemned by Democratic members of Congress.

“Dismissing politically appointed national security leaders during a transition is a destabilizing move that will only embolden our adversaries and put our country at greater risk,” said Rep. Adam Smith, D-Wash., chairman of the House Armed Services Committee. “President Trump’s decision to fire Secretary Esper out of spite is not just childish, it’s also reckless.”

Former military leaders weighed in. Jim Stavridis, a retired four-star Navy admiral, wrote on Twitter that, “Things are already unstable internationally, and this does not help.”

Republicans praised Esper but largely avoided criticizing Trump. GOP Sen. Jim Inhofe, the Senate Armed Services Committee chairman, told reporters it was Trump’s decision and said, “I learned a long time ago I don’t tell the president not to do anything.”

High Court again considers Obamacare

WASHINGTON (AP) — A week after the 2020 election, Republican elected officials and the Trump administration are advancing their latest arguments to get rid of the Affordable Care Act, a long-held GOP goal that has repeatedly failed in Congress and the courts.

In arguments scheduled for Tuesday, the Supreme Court will hear its third major fight over the 10-year-old law, popularly known as “Obamacare.” Republican attorneys general in 18 states and the administration want the whole law to be struck down, which would threaten coverage for more than 23 million people.

It would wipe away protections for people with preexisting medical conditions, subsidized insurance premiums that make coverage affordable for millions of Americans and an expansion of the Medicaid program that is available to low-income people in most states.

California is leading a group of Democratic-controlled states that is urging the court to

leave the law in place.

The case comes to a court that now has three justices appointed by President Donald Trump: Neil Gorsuch, Brett Kavanaugh and Amy Coney Barrett, who joined the court late last month following her hurried nomination and confirmation to replace the late Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

The three Trump appointees have never ruled on the substance of the health care law. Barrett, though, has been critical of the court’s earlier major health care decisions sustaining the law, both written by Chief Justice John Roberts.

The Supreme Court could have heard the case before the election, but set arguments for a week after. The timing could add a wrinkle to the case since President-elect Joe Biden strongly supports the health care law.

The case turns on a change made by the Republican-controlled Congress in 2017 that reduced the penalty for not

having health insurance to zero. Without the penalty, the law’s mandate to have health insurance is unconstitutional, the GOP-led states argue.

If the mandate goes, they say, the rest of the law should go with it because the mandate was central to the law’s passage.

But enrollment in the law’s insurance markets stayed relatively stable at more than 11 million people, even after the effective date of the penalty’s elimination in 2019. According to the nonpartisan Kaiser Family Foundation, enrollment dropped by about 300,000 people from 2018 to 2019. Kaiser estimates 11.4 million people have coverage this year.

Another 12 million people have coverage through the law’s Medicaid expansion.

The legal argument could well turn on the legal doctrine of severability, the idea that the court can excise a problematic provision from a law and allow the rest of it to remain in force.

Family files lawsuit in millworker death

KLAMATH FALLS (AP) — The family of a Klamath Falls man who died while working at the Columbia Forest Products mill has filed a wrongful death lawsuit.

The mother of Francis “Frankie” Crispin, Kay Moyette, is suing the mill for nearly \$5.5 million after Crispin fell into a vat of scalding, corrosive liquid on Nov. 17, 2017 while he was repairing an electrical cord that operates a motor at the mill. The complaint alleges Columbia failed to install the

proper safety equipment, such as guard rails or other fall protection, that could have prevented Crispin’s death, The Herald and News reported.

An OSHA investigation into his death completed in May 2018 led to \$17,500 in fines for Columbia after finding safety violations including holes in the vat cover and not providing safer access to the area. Columbia has since installed improved guardrails around the vat, according to the OSHA report.

An email has been sent by The Associated Press to the company seeking comment on the lawsuit.

The complaint states Crispin’s family has incurred economic losses of almost \$3 million, from things like funeral expenses and loss of income, and noneconomic losses totaling \$2.5 million.

Crispin was an apprentice electrician and was on his way to taking the test to become a journeyman.

The wrongful death suit was filed last week in Multnomah County.

Biden

From Page 1

The White House task force, which includes the federal government’s leading infectious disease expert, Dr. Anthony Fauci, has been diminished in recent months as Trump grew impatient with efforts to slow the virus that were having a deleterious impact on the economy.

A top Trump administration health official delivered much the same message as Biden, although the timing was coincidental and the occasion apolitical.

Brett Giroir, assistant secretary for health administration, said that Americans must “double down” on the “3 W’s” -- watching their distance from others, wearing masks when that’s not possible, and washing their hands frequently. He also said states and local communities must ramp up testing.

The advisory board that Biden announced on Monday includes doctors and scientists who have served in previous administrations, many of them experts in public health, vaccines and infectious disease.

It will be led by former Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy, former Food and Drug Administration Commissioner David Kessler and Yale University public health care expert Dr. Marcella Nunez-Smith.

Rick Bright, a vaccine expert and former head of the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority, is also on the board. He had filed a whistleblower complaint alleging he was reassigned to a lesser job because he resisted political pressure to allow widespread use of hydroxychloroquine, a malaria drug pushed by Trump as a COVID-19 treatment.

Trump

From Page 1

White House officials and Trump political appointees informed career government staffers they were not to begin acting on transition planning until GSA approved it, according to officials familiar with the matter.

In weekly Monday morning all-hands phone calls for Midwest-based employees of the Environmental Protection Agency, mid-level administrators responded to questions about the transition by telling staffers they had no information yet, said Nicole Cantello, an agency employee and president of the Chicago local of a union representing EPA workers.

A senior administration official said presidential personnel director John McEntee, the president’s former personal aide, has

sent word to departments that they should terminate any political appointees seeking new work for now. Another official said the warning was not seen as likely to result in any firings but rather meant to reinforce to staff that they should not act counter to Trump while he refuses to concede. Those officials and others who were not authorized to discuss internal policies or describe private discussions requested anonymity.

But some elements of the federal government already were mobilizing to prepare for Biden to assume power. The U.S. Secret Service and Federal Aviation Administration extended a flight restriction over Biden’s Wilmington, Delaware, home through Inauguration Day. Biden’s security detail has been bolstered with agents from the Presidential Protective Division.

And despite Trump’s public stance, there was a growing realization in his inner circle that the election result would be impossible to overturn. Some senior officials have tried to make the case that Trump should turn his efforts to cementing his legacy, but they are wary of being labeled disloyal for even thinking it.

Legal challenges already have been dismissed in battleground states like Georgia and Wisconsin. And Trump’s legal efforts were dealt another blow Monday when campaign adviser David Bossie, tasked with leading the effort, tested positive for the coronavirus.

Bossie had been at the indoor White House election night party now being perceived as a possible superspreader event after other attendees — including chief of staff Mark Meadows, Secretary of

Housing and Urban Development Ben Carson and other aides — contracted the virus.

At the White House, attendance among aides had dropped off since election night — partly because of the result and partly because a number are in quarantine after contracting or being exposed to people who came down with COVID-19. Vice President Mike Pence was slated to depart Tuesday for a vacation in Florida after a visit to Capitol Hill.

Trump’s public schedule hasn’t included an intelligence briefing since Oct. 1. The White House hasn’t provided a “readout” of any call between the president and a foreign leader in weeks. He hasn’t met with members of the White House coronavirus task force in months. He also offered no public comment on Tropical Storm Eta lashing the Florida Keys.

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Patriots rally to beat Jets on field goal

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. (AP) — Cam Newton and the New England Patriots appeared headed to a fifth straight loss — this one against the winless New York Jets, of all teams.

Then came the fourth quarter, and potential embarrassment turned into big-time relief.

Nick Folk kicked a 51-yard field goal as time expired to win it 30-27 on Monday night after Newton rallied the Patriots from a 10-point deficit to avoid the franchise’s first five-game skid since 1995.

“It shows the character of this team,” said Rex Burkhead, who had a 1-yard touchdown run in the third quarter. “Just battling,

fighting. It shows the strength we have. We’re not going to quit. We’re not going to lay down.”

Newton had two touchdown runs, with the second tying it at 27 with 1:57 remaining. He also brushed off his struggles of the past few weeks, including a fumble against Buffalo last week that sealed a loss.

“I’m getting tired of sucking,” said Newton, who was 27 of 35 for 274 yards passing. “It’s simple. As a competitor, you know what your standard is. Taking pride in your work, that’s what it comes down to.”

After the Jets (0-9) went three-and-out for the first time all night, the Patriots (3-5) got

the ball back with 47 seconds left and went to work.

Newton had a 5-yard run on third-and-1 from the New England 42 and then spiked the ball with 8 seconds remaining. He followed with a 20-yard pass to Jakobi Meyers to put Folk — who made several big kicks for the Jets from 2010-16 — in position for the winning field goal.

“I had a lot of good memories here at MetLife (Stadium),” said Folk, who had been dealing with a back injury. “I just added one to the other sideline tonight.”

Meanwhile, the Jets dropped to 0-9 for the first time in franchise history, and this was one was particularly agonizing.

“It’s a tough pill to swallow,” said wide receiver Jamison Crowder, whose 20-yard TD catch shortly before halftime gave the Jets a 20-10 lead. “That was a tough loss right there. That was a game we should’ve won.”

After Folk’s 29-yarder with 6:04 left cut the Patriots’ deficit to 27-20, quarterback Joe Flacco — having a solid night until that point while starting for an injured Sam Darnold — tried to put the game away.

Instead, he swayed the momentum in New England’s favor.

Flacco’s deep pass down the middle for Denzel Mims was picked off by J.C. Jackson. That set up Newton’s tying TD — and

deflated the Jets, who couldn’t recover.

“I don’t think I would’ve made a different decision in the moment,” Flacco said. “But, obviously, I’d like to have that one back.”

Flacco was 18 of 25 for 262 yards and three touchdown passes — two to Breshad Perriman and one to Crowder — but had the game-changing interception.

Flacco also passed Pro Football Hall of Famer Joe Montana (40,551) for 20th on the NFL’s career yards passing list on his first TD pass to Perriman, a 50-yarder in the second quarter that put the Jets up 13-7. Flacco has thrown for 40,726 yards.

Masters honors Elder with scholarship, tee shot

AUGUSTA, Ga. (AP) — In a year marked by racial injustice, Augusta National announced Monday it would honor Lee Elder with two scholarships in his name at Paine College and an honorary tee shot next year for the first Black player in the Masters.

“It’s mind-boggling every time I think about it,” said Elder, who made his barrier-breaking debut in 1975.

It was about time, according to Masters Chairman Fred Ridley, who said racial injustice and equality have been at the forefront of the nation this year.

“Our question was not so much what we can say but what we can do,” Ridley said.

The Masters for some two decades has provided scholarship money for Paine College, a private, historically Black college in Augusta. The Lee Elder Scholarship will be endowed for one man and one woman on the golf team. The fact Paine doesn’t have a women’s golf program was not a problem. Ridley said Augusta National would pay to start one.

Elder already was looking ahead to next April when he returns to the first tee, this time with a shot that doesn’t count toward a score but is more meaningful to him than when he first played the tournament.

“That is one thing that’s going to be significant to me, because 1975 was just an ordinary shot playing a golf tournament, even though it was the Masters,” Elder said. “It’s not as significant as this shot will be come April 8, 2021. Because my heart and soul will be into this shot.”

The criteria have changed over the years at the Masters, and when the club began issuing invitations to PGA Tour winners, Elder qualified by winning the 1974 Pensacola Open. That made him

Garcia withdraws after positive test

ap-

AUGUSTA, Ga. (AP) — Sergio Garcia pulled out of the Masters on Monday after informing Augusta National he tested positive for the coronavirus, making him the second player to withdraw following a positive test.

Garcia won his only major at the Masters three years ago in his 19th appearance, the most of any player before winning a green jacket.

“After 21 years of not missing a major championship, I will sadly miss the Masters this week,” he tweeted. “The important thing is that my family and I are feeling good. We’ll come back stronger and give the green jacket a go next April.”

Joaquin Niemann of Chile announced last week that he tested positive and withdrew.

The field was down to 92 players, with two other former champions not playing. Angel Cabrera, who won in 2009, had surgery on his left arm and is not expected to return until January. Trevor Immelman, the 2008 winner, had his name listed on the board as not playing. He is working the CBS

broadcast this week. Immelman did not immediately respond to a text message from The Associated Press seeking comment.

Garcia played last week in the Houston Open, which sold 2,000 tickets each day. It was the first domestic PGA Tour event that allowed limited spectators on the course. Garcia, who won the Sanderson Farms Championship last month for his first U.S. victory since his Masters win, missed the cut in Houston.

He said on Twitter he was driving back to his home in Austin, Texas, on Saturday night when he started feeling a sore throat and a cough.

“The symptoms stayed with me on Sunday morning so I decided to get tested for COVID-19 and so did my wife Angela. Thankfully she tested negative, but I didn’t,” he wrote.

He brings to 15 the number of PGA Tour players who have tested positive since golf returned in June from the COVID-19 pandemic-caused shutdown. That includes Dustin Johnson, the world’s No. 1 player, who sat out two events last month.

eligible for the 1975 Masters. He missed the cut, though Ridley said the moment was historic because of the message it sent that “I belong.”

Next April, he will join Jack Nicklaus and Gary Player as the honorary starters. Ridley referred to it as a “special moment in time,” suggesting it will be a one-time

pearance as honorary starter.

Elder ended his career with four PGA Tour victories. He played five more times in the Masters, with his best finish a tie for 17th in 1979.

“To know that I would be hitting a shot off the first tee alongside the great

Jack Nicklaus and Gary Player, you have to think about where you’re at and what you’ve accomplished and why you’re there,” Elder said. “A young man from the ghetto of Dallas, Texas, man, you’ve achieved world fame. The whole world will be watching and looking.

“For the chairman to present me with that opportunity is something I’ll never forget. Never forget.”

The connection to Paine College goes beyond it being an HBCU.

Elder arrived in Augusta more than 45 years ago to much fanfare as the first Black competitor in a tournament that for four decades only included Blacks as caddies or in catering.

Finding a place to eat dinner was difficult — Elder said that was more because he had some 15 people with him than “being segregated against.” Julius Scott, in his first year as president of Paine College, handled the catering for Elder all week.

From that week, Elder began a relationship with the college.

“Look at old yearbooks and you’ll see pictures of him with the golf team,” said Cheryl Evans Jones, the president of Paine College. “He’s made a lot of contributions to the sport.”

Ridley said he did not know how much it would cost to start a women’s golf program and that was irrelevant. He said Augusta National would pay for everything.

“The times I have visited, a lot of the ladies came out to watch the men play,” Elder said. “I heard quite a number of times, ‘Gee, I wish we had a team so we could play.’ By Augusta National making that decision, it’s now going to give them a chance to fulfill that dream of being able to come to college, get a four-year scholarship plus compete on the golf team.”

NBA returns Dec. 22 for 72-game season

TIM REYNOLDS
Associated Press

It’s official: The NBA is coming back Dec. 22.

The NBA and the National Basketball Players Association announced Monday night that they’ve struck a deal on rules for this coming season, setting the stage for what will be a frenzied few weeks before games resume.

Teams will play a 72-game schedule, which will be revealed in the coming weeks. The league said a new system will be used to ensure that the split of basketball-related income continues, one of the many details that had to be collectively bargained with the union because the current agreement between the sides had a great deal of language that needed reworking because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Negotiations with free agents will be allowed to begin at 6 p.m. on Nov. 20, with signings permitted starting at 12:01 p.m. on Nov. 22 — an extraordinarily fast window for the NBA, which typically has about a week spanning the start of talks and the beginning of signings. But with training camps this year beginning Dec. 1, both sides evidently feel there isn’t a need to draw out the process any longer than necessary.

Many rosters could be considerably reshaped by then, with trades likely to be permissible again in the coming days — the

exact details there still being worked out — and the NBA draft set to take place Nov. 18. Player and team options likely will be settled around that same time. Free agency starts two days after the draft, with around 100 players set for unrestricted status.

The salary cap and tax level will remain unchanged. The cap was \$109.14 million this past season, with the tax level at \$132,627,000. The real numbers will be affected by the shortened schedule — last year’s numbers were based on the standard 82-game season, a threshold that won’t be reached this year.

The salary cap for 2021-22 is guaranteed to rise somewhere between 3% and 10%, the league said, which means it’ll be somewhere between \$112.4 million and \$120.1 million.

The league’s board of governors will vote to finalize the deal, which is a formality. NBA general managers also have a meeting Tuesday afternoon to discuss matters.

Meyers Leonard, a free-agent-to-be who spent this past season with the Miami Heat and served as the team’s player rep to the NBPA, said he had some concerns about getting all the logistical matters completed in time for a Dec. 22 opening night. He resumed his offseason workouts Monday after he and his wife took a 4,000-mile tour-bus trip arranged by Coors Light from Miami to Los Angeles with

many stops along the way.

“Without knowing all the ins and outs, Dec. 22nd, from a money standpoint, you play more games, you play your Christmas games, it probably makes sense,” Leonard said. “But there’s a lot of logistical things that I know cannot be easy. And the discussions that are being had are very dynamic and very difficult conversations.”

There are countless other issues to work out, such as all the health and safety protocols now that games won’t be played in the safety of a bubble and teams will be traveling to various cities once again.

Players were tested daily in the bubble, and nobody tested positive because of the very strict protocols. It’ll be much tougher to avoid a COVID-related issue with the league back to some sort of normalcy this season.

“There’s going to be people testing positive,” Leonard said. “I don’t know about left and right, but it’s going to happen. And then what happens? It’s a tough time we’re all dealing with. The disease is very strange. It’s going to be interesting to see how the league rolls with the punches, so to speak.”

For the NBA champion Los Angeles Lakers and Eastern Conference champion Heat, it will be the shortest offseason in NBA history — with seven weeks separating the end of the NBA Finals and the planned Dec. 1 start of training camp.

Williams, Lewis named baseball’s top rookies

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Much like one of his lofty leaps at the wall, Kyle Lewis soared above the field.

The center fielder for the Seattle Mariners won the AL Rookie of the Year award Monday night, and Milwaukee Brewers reliever Devin Williams took home the NL honor.

The 25-year-old Lewis received all 30 first-place votes in balloting by the Baseball Writers’ Association of America. He is the 12th unanimous winner of the AL award, joining a prestigious list that includes Carlton Fisk, Derek Jeter, Mike Trout and Aaron Judge.

“It’s just a great first step for me and being in that category, it’s just really special,” Lewis said.

Williams made his own history, becoming the first pitcher to win Rookie of the Year without recording a save or making a start during his award-winning season — reflecting the increased importance of the bullpen in today’s game. He is the first Rookie of the Year for Milwaukee since Ryan Braun in 2007.

“I don’t really think that saves are the end-all be-all,” Williams said on a conference call during a vacation in Jamaica. “If I come up in the seventh inning and I go through one through five, I think that that

can be pretty valuable as well.”

The 25-year-old Lewis was one of baseball’s breakout stars during the pandemic-shortened season, batting .262 with 11 homers and 28 RBIs in 58 games. He led big league rookies with 37 runs, 90 total bases and a .364 on-base percentage.

Lewis also made a couple of memorable plays in center, robbing Oakland’s Ram3n Laureano of a grand slam on Sept. 14. He is the first player to win the award for Seattle since Ichiro Suzuki in 2001.

San Diego Padres second baseman Jake Cronenworth and Philadelphia Phillies infielder Alec Bohm tied for second in NL balloting by the Baseball Writers’ Association of America. Chicago White Sox center fielder Luis Robert finished second in the AL race, followed by Houston Astros right-hander Cristian Javier.

Lewis and Robert had similar seasons, with fast starts followed by slow finishes. Lewis batted just .147 in September, and Robert hit .136 with 32 strikeouts in 23 games in the final month.

Lewis was selected by Seattle with the No. 11 overall pick in the 2016 amateur draft out of Mercer University. He broke into the majors last year, appearing in 18 September games with the Mariners.