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# Brown optimistic virus spread is slowing

**MAX KIRKENDALL**  
Country Media

Oregon recently exceeded 100,000 cases of COVID-19 and recorded over 1,300 virus related deaths. Despite the consistent increase, Gov. Kate Brown and the Oregon Health Authority remain optimistic the coronavirus spread is slowing.

During a Dec. 22 press conference, Brown was joined by OHA Director Pat Allen to update Oregonians on COVID-19 vaccine distribution, financial relief and more.

"It's really, really tough to be heading into a time where tradi-

tional celebrations are once again hindered by the virus," Brown said. "Every single family that has lost a loved one to this virus and every Oregonian that has suffered emotionally, financially or physically from COVID-19, I want you to know that you are in my thoughts."

Brown said there is light at the end of the tunnel however, and nearly 4,500 healthcare workers in Oregon have received the COVID-19 vaccine so far. Oregon received the full 35,100 doses of the Pfizer vaccine allocated by the federal government and distributed doses to 16 hospitals across the state last week.

"I'm grateful for the healthcare workers who have been heroes throughout this pandemic," Allen said. "It's fitting, truly, that they are the ones among the first to be vaccinated who will light the path for all of us to follow out of this dark terrible forest that is the coronavirus pandemic."

In addition to the Pfizer vaccine, Allen said the Western States Scientific Safety Review Workgroup now recommends the Moderna vaccine after confirming it as safe and effective. An issue with distributing the Pfizer vaccine is the need to store in freezing temperatures. But

according to OHA, the Moderna vaccine does not need to be stored at those temperatures. Allen feels this gives the state an advantage to easier distribution, especially to more rural areas.

More than 12,000 doses of the Moderna vaccine arrived in Oregon this week and the state is expecting an additional 25,000 doses of the Pfizer vaccine. Later in the week, Allen said over 72,000 doses of the Moderna vaccine are due to arrive in Oregon.

By the end of the month, OHA expects to have received over 92,000 doses of the Pfizer vaccine and 97,000 doses of

the Moderna vaccine. However, Allen said these allocations are often ever-changing due to supply and demand across the United States.

"That means we have to be prepared for months of limited supplies and the need to prioritize who gets the vaccine and when," Allen said.

Oregon has also begun administering the vaccine to residents and staff of long-term care facilities. OHA reported that 10,000 doses of the Pfizer vaccine have been distributed so far statewide as Brown noted the care facilities have been among the hardest hit

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Zack Demars, The World

Mary Knutson, a BAH nurse, administers a COVID-19 vaccine to Dr. Leah Cely on Tuesday. Knutson had given out around 10 shots by the time Cely got hers.

# Trump issues 20 pardons, commutes

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump has pardoned 15 people, including a pair of congressional Republicans who were strong and early supporters, a 2016 campaign official ensnared in the Russia probe and former government contractors convicted in a 2007 massacre in Baghdad.

Trump's actions in his final weeks in office show a president who is wielding his executive power to reward loyalists and others who he believes have been wronged by a legal system he sees as biased against him and his allies. On Tuesday, Trump issued the pardons — not an unusual act for an outgoing president — even as he refused to publicly acknowledge his election loss to Democrat Joe Biden, who will be sworn in on Jan. 20.

Trump is likely to issue more pardons before then. He and his allies have discussed a range of other possibilities, including members of Trump's family and his personal attorney Rudy Giuliani.

Those pardoned on Tuesday included former Republican Reps. Duncan Hunter of California and Chris Collins of New York, two of the earliest GOP lawmakers to back Trump's 2016 presidential campaign. Trump also commuted the sentences of five people, including former Rep. Steve Stockman of Texas.

Collins, the first member of Congress to endorse Trump to be president, was sentenced to two years and two months in federal prison after admitting he helped his son and others dodge \$800,000 in stock market losses when he learned that a drug trial by a small pharmaceutical company had failed.

Hunter was sentenced to 11 months in prison after pleading guilty to stealing campaign funds and spending the money on everything from outings with friends to his daughter's birthday party.

White House press secretary Kayleigh McEnany said the pardons for Hunter and Collins were granted after "the request of many members of Congress." She noted that Hunter served the nation in the U.S. Marines and saw combat in both Iraq and Afghanistan.

In the group announced Tuesday night were four former government contractors convicted in a 2007 massacre in Baghdad that left more than a dozen Iraqi civilians dead and caused an international uproar over the use of private security guards in a war zone.

Supporters of Nicholas Slaten, Paul Slough, Evan Liberty and Dustin Heard, the former contractors at Blackwater Worldwide, had lobbied for pardons, arguing that the men had been excessively punished in an

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# Health workers get vaccinated

**ZACK DEMARS**  
The World

COOS BAY — The announcement in a lobby of Bay Area Hospital was long awaited, and met with applause Tuesday afternoon.

"We have COVID vaccine here at Bay Area Hospital," hospital CEO Brian Moore told a masked and socially distanced crowd of hospital staff.

After a countdown by the group, it was official: The hospital's COVID-19 vaccination clinic was open. Moments later, nurses stationed around the room began preparing doses of the vaccine from red-topped vials and administering them to hospital employees in freshly opened needles.

"I started tearing up a little bit when we started counting down," said Steve Wilson, a registered nurse at the hospital who was tasked to set up the clinic.

"We've finally been given the advantage."

The shots administered Tues-



Zack Demars, The World

Dr. Ian Cely, an emergency room physician at Bay Area Hospital, looks on as Mary Knutson prepares a dose of the COVID-19 vaccine for him.

day were the first of the 1,300 doses of the Moderna vaccine the hospital had received the day before, reserved for hospital employees and other front-line health care workers in the region.

Sandra Lucatero, a charge nurse in the hospital's emergency room, received one of those first shots.

"It's a day to help protect family and the community," Lucatero said.

Often in contact with COVID-19 patients, Lucatero said she worried about how her job could impact her family if she got the virus.

"We're on the front lines, so we're exposed to it more than

anybody else is," she said.

But with the first doses of the vaccine, Lucatero's more confident about her safety and that of her family.

She hasn't always been so excited about the vaccine, though.

"Honestly at first, I was on the fence about getting the vaccine," Lucatero said, adding she worried about the vaccine's shorter-than-usual development and testing period. "When I had the right teachings about it, I was ready."

The additional information Lucatero learned about the vaccine came in part from conversations with her hospital colleagues about the results of the studies required to authorize the vaccine. Once the shipment had hit the hospital, she was convinced of the dose's safety, and she got her shot Tuesday.

Dr. Leah Cely, an emergency room physician, was in a similar situation.

At first, she was hesitant about the vaccine when she

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# Trump threatens to torpedo COVID relief bill

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump has threatened to torpedo Congress' massive COVID-19 relief package in the midst of a raging pandemic and deep economic uncertainty, suddenly demanding changes fellow Republicans have opposed.

Trump assailed the bipartisan \$900 billion package in a video he tweeted out Tuesday night and suggested he may not sign the legislation. He called on lawmakers to increase direct payments for most Americans from \$600 to \$2,000 for individuals and \$4,000 for couples.

Railing against a range of

provisions in the bill, including for foreign aid, he told lawmakers to "get rid of the wasteful and unnecessary items from this legislation and to send me a suitable bill."

Trump did not specifically vow to veto the bill, and there may be enough support for the legislation in Congress to override him if he does. But if Trump were to upend the sprawling legislation, the consequences would be severe, including no federal aid to struggling Americans and small businesses, and no additional resources to help with vaccine distribution. In addition, because lawmakers

linked the pandemic relief bill to an overarching funding measure, the government would shut down on Dec. 29.

The relief package was part of a hard-fought compromise bill that includes \$1.4 trillion to fund government agencies through September and contains other end-of-session priorities such as money for cash-starved transit systems, an increase in food stamp benefits and about \$4 billion to help other nations provide a COVID-19 vaccine for their people.

Lawmakers spent months in a stalemate over pandemic relief funds, even as COVID-19

cases soared across the country. Democrats had pushed for higher payments to Americans, but compromised with Republicans to allow a deal to proceed.

Following Trump's interjection, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi all but dared Trump's Republican allies in Congress to meet the president's demand for far higher payments.

"At last, the President has agreed to \$2,000. Democrats are ready to bring this to the Floor this week by unanimous consent. Let's do it!" Pelosi said in a tweet. An aide said she would put the proposal forward Thurs-

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# U.S. jobless claims remain elevated

WASHINGTON (AP) — The number of Americans seeking unemployment benefits fell by 89,000 last week to a still-elevated 803,000, evidence that the job market remains under stress nine months after the coronavirus outbreak sent the U.S. economy into recession and caused millions of layoffs.

The latest figure, released Wednesday by the Labor Department, shows that many employers are still cutting jobs as the pandemic tightens business restrictions and leads many consumers to stay home. Before the virus struck, jobless claims typically numbered around 225,000 a week before shooting up to 6.9 million in early spring when the virus — and efforts to contain it — flattened the economy. The pace of layoffs has since declined but remains historically high in the face of the resurgence of COVID-19 cases.

“The fact that more than nine months into the crisis, initial claims are still run-

ning at such a high level is, in absolute terms, bad news,” Joshua Shapiro, chief U.S. economist at the economic consulting firm Maria Fiorini Ramirez Inc., wrote in a research note. “With the pandemic again worsening, it is likely that claims will remain quite elevated for some time to come.”

The total number of people who are receiving traditional state unemployment benefits fell to 5.3 million for the week that ended Dec. 12 from a week earlier. That figure had peaked in early May at nearly 23 million. The steady decline since then means that some unemployed Americans are finding work and no longer receiving aid. But it also indicates that many of the unemployed have used up their state benefits, which typically expire after six months.

Millions more jobless Americans are now collecting checks under two federal programs that were created in March to ease the economic pain

inflicted by the pandemic. Those programs had been set to expire the day after Christmas. On Monday, Congress agreed to extend them as part of a \$900 billion pandemic rescue package.

On Tuesday night, though, President Donald Trump suddenly raised doubts about that aid and other federal money by attacking Congress’ rescue package as inadequate and suggesting that he might not sign it into law.

The supplemental federal jobless benefit in Congress’ new measure has been set at \$300 a week — only half the amount provided in March — and will expire in 11 weeks. A separate benefits program for jobless people who have exhausted their regular state aid and another benefits program for self-employed and gig workers will also be extended only until early spring, well before the economy will likely have fully recovered.

A tentative economic recovery from the springtime

collapse has been faltering in the face of a resurgence of COVID-19 cases: An average of more than 200,000 confirmed cases a day, up from fewer than 35,000 in early September. Hiring in November slowed for a fifth straight month, with employers adding the fewest jobs since April. Nearly 10 million of the 22 million people who lost jobs when the pandemic hit in the spring are still unemployed.

According to the data firm Womply, closings are rising in some hard-hit businesses. For example, 42% of bars were closed as of Dec. 16, up from 33% at the start of November. Over the same period, closures rose from 25% to 29% at restaurants and from 27% to 35% at salons and other health and beauty shops.

The number of jobless people who are collecting aid from one of the two federal extended-benefit programs — the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance program, which offers coverage to gig workers and

others who don’t qualify for traditional benefits — rose by nearly 27,000 to 9.3 million in the week that ended Dec. 5.

The number of people receiving aid under the second program — the Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation program, which provides federal jobless benefits to people who have exhausted their state aid — fell by nearly 8,200 to 4.8 million.

All told, 20.4 million people are now receiving some type of unemployment benefits. (Figures for the two pandemic-related programs aren’t adjusted for seasonal variations.)

States and cities have been increasingly issuing mask mandates, limiting the size of gatherings, restricting or banning restaurant dining, closing gyms or reducing the hours and capacity of bars, stores and other businesses, all of which has slowed economic activity. With vaccines now beginning to be gradually distributed, though, optimism is rising

about 2021.

Months from now, economists say, the widespread distribution and use of the vaccines could potentially unleash a robust economic rebound as the virus is quashed, businesses reopen, hiring picks up and consumers spend freely again.

Until then, the limited aid Congress has agreed to won’t likely be sufficient to stave off hardships for many households and small companies, especially if lawmakers balk at enacting further aid early next year. And a widening financial gap between the affluent and disadvantaged households will likely worsen.

“Recession risks are very high,” said Mark Zandi, chief economist at Moody’s Analytics. “I do think the economy’s going to start losing some jobs here. Unemployment will probably go higher. The only thing that will save us from recession is that \$900 billion fiscal rescue package.”

# Feds sue Walmart over role in opioid crisis

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Justice Department sued Walmart on Tuesday, accusing it of fueling the nation’s opioid crisis by pressuring its pharmacies to fill even potentially suspicious prescriptions for the powerful painkillers.

The civil complaint filed points to the role Walmart’s pharmacies may have played in the crisis by filling opioid prescriptions and Walmart’s own responsibility for the allegedly illegal distribution of controlled substances to the pharmacies at the height of the opioid crisis. Walmart operates more than 5,000 pharmacies in its stores around the country.

The Justice Department alleges Walmart violated federal law by selling thousands of prescriptions for controlled substances that its pharmacists “knew were invalid,” said Jeffrey Clark, the acting assistant attorney general in charge of the Justice Department’s civil division.

Federal law required

Walmart to spot suspicious orders for controlled substances and report those to the Drug Enforcement Administration, but prosecutors charge the company didn’t do that.

“Walmart knew that its distribution centers were using an inadequate system for detecting and reporting suspicious orders,” said Jason Dunn, the U.S. attorney in Colorado. “For years, Walmart reported virtually no suspicious orders at all. In other words, Walmart’s pharmacies ordered opioids in a way that went essentially unmonitored and unregulated.”

The 160-page suit alleges that Walmart made it difficult for its pharmacists to follow the rules, putting “enormous pressure” on them to fill a high volume of prescriptions as fast as possible, while at the same time denying them the authority to categorically refuse to fill prescriptions issued by prescribers the pharmacists knew were continually issuing invalid prescriptions.

The suit highlighted alleged problems in Walmart’s compliance department, which oversaw the dispensing nationwide of controlled substance prescriptions. In particular, even after Walmart pharmacists informed the compliance unit about “pill-mill” prescribers whose practices raised egregious red flags, Walmart allegedly continued to fill invalid prescriptions issued by those prescribers, according to the suit. The suit said that only later did Walmart allow pharmacists to do blanket refusals for these suspect practices.

Walmart fought back in an emailed statement to The Associated Press, saying that the Justice Department’s investigation is “tainted by historical ethics violations.” It said the “lawsuit invents a legal theory that unlawfully forces pharmacists to come between patients and their doctors, and is riddled with factual inaccuracies and cherry-picked documents taken out of context.”

Walmart noted it always empowered its pharmacists to refuse to fill problematic opioids prescriptions, and said they refused to fill hundreds of thousands of such prescriptions. Walmart also noted it sent the Drug Enforcement Administration tens of thousands of investigative leads, and it blocked thousands of questionable doctors from having their opioid prescriptions filled at its pharmacies.

In a corporate blog post published late Tuesday, Walmart argued that many health regulators, medical groups, doctors and patients criticize the company for going too far in refusing to fill opioid prescriptions. Some even say Walmart is improperly interfering in the doctor-patient relationship, the company said.

AP reported the news of the lawsuit ahead of the Justice Department’s public announcement, citing a person who could not discuss the matter publicly before the announced

move. The person spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity.

Walmart filed its own preemptive suit against the Justice Department, Attorney General William Barr and the Drug Enforcement Administration nearly two months ago.

In its lawsuit, Walmart said the Justice Department’s investigation — launched in 2016 — had identified hundreds of doctors who wrote problematic prescriptions that Walmart’s pharmacists should not have filled. But the lawsuit charged that nearly 70% of the doctors still have active registrations with the DEA.

“Blaming pharmacists for not second-guessing the very doctors the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) approved to prescribe opioids is a transparent attempt to shift blame from DEA’s well-documented failures in keeping bad doctors from prescribing opioids in the first place,” the company said in its state-

ment.

Walmart’s lawsuit alleged the government was blaming it for the lack of regulatory and enforcement policies to stem the crisis. The company is asking a federal judge to declare that the government’s suit has no basis to seek civil damages. That suit remains ongoing.

The initial investigation was the subject of a ProPublica story published in March. ProPublica reported that Joe Brown, then U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of Texas office, spent years pursuing a criminal case against Walmart for its opioid prescription practices, only to have it stymied after the retail giant’s lawyers appealed to senior officials in the Justice Department.

Two months later, Brown resigned. He didn’t give a reason for his departure except to say he would be “pursuing opportunities in the private and public sectors.” Brown went into private practice in the Dallas area.

# Newsom appoints Padilla to replace Harris in Senate

LOS ANGELES (AP) — California is getting its first Latino U.S. senator. For Gov. Gavin Newsom, it’s a political gamble.

The Democratic governor Tuesday named Secretary of State Alex Padilla, the son of Mexican immigrants, to fill the U.S. Senate seat being vacated by Vice President-elect Kamala Harris. When Padilla goes to Washington, the former state legislator will become California’s first Latino senator since the state’s founding 170 years ago.

In picking a personal friend and fellow Democrat, Newsom had his eye

on history and pragmatism — he turned to someone he could trust with a year of uncertainty looming, including a possible recall election targeting the governor while the pandemic rages unabated.

Newsom also rejected pleas from a host of prominent Black leaders to replace Harris, the Senate’s only Black woman, with another African American woman, such as U.S. Reps. Karen Bass or Barbara Lee.

About six hours after the Padilla announcement, Newsom’s office said he would nominate Assemblywoman Shirley Weber, who

is Black, to be the next secretary of state. If confirmed, she would become the first Black woman to hold the office, giving Newsom two history-making picks in one day.

Given the timing, however, it appeared the choice was intended at least partly to quell criticism for not choosing a Black woman to replace Harris.

“Many people believe the governor will pay a political price,” Kerman Maddox, a Democratic consultant and fundraiser who is Black, said in an email. “It’s a terribly insensitive decision” with the nation in the midst of

a reckoning over racial injustice.

“If Governor Newsom thinks our disappointment with the Kamala Harris replacement will be tempered by appointing an African American woman to be California secretary of state, he clearly does not know this constituency,” Maddox added. “When I heard the news about the secretary of state appointment, my anger meter went from disappointment to being downright angry.”

Black San Francisco Mayor London Breed called the Senate decision “a real blow to the African American community.”

The hectic day of political maneuvers only underscored the risks that came with them.

The mannerly, soft-spoken Padilla will begin his truncated term facing the prospect of a tough reelection fight in 2022, when he is likely to see challengers from within his own party in the heavily Democratic state. Padilla’s current job was also being eyed by other possible contenders, who could challenge Weber if she is confirmed by the Legislature. Beyond a possible recall, Newsom is expected to seek a second term in 2022.

Padilla quickly formed a

political committee to begin raising money and released a campaign-style ad introducing himself as the new senator.

It frames him as the epitome of the American dream, the son of immigrant parents — a short-order cook who never went to high school and a housekeeper — who earned an engineering degree from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He became a political prodigy of sorts when he was elevated to president of Los Angeles City Council president at 28, the youngest ever, before being elected to the Legislature and then secretary of state.

# Columbus mayor: officer did not activate body cam before shooting

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — A police officer who shot and killed a Black man holding a cell phone in Ohio’s capital city early Tuesday did not activate his body camera beforehand, and dash cameras on the officers’ cruiser were also not activated, city officials said.

Because of an automatic “look back” feature on the body camera, the shooting was captured on video but without audio, said Columbus Mayor Andrew Ginther and the city’s department of public safety. As a result, there’s no way to hear what the 47-year-old man or the officer said during the interaction,

Ginther said.

Neither the man nor the officer has been publicly identified.

Body camera footage from immediately after the shooting indicated “a delay in rendering of first-aid to the man,” the public safety department said in a news release.

“It is unacceptable to me and the community that officers did not turn on their cameras,” Ginther said during a news conference. Columbus Police Chief Thomas Quinlan echoed the sentiment in a statement a few minutes later.

“The Division invested millions of dollars in these cameras for the express

purpose of creating a video and audio record of these kinds of encounters,” Quinlan said. “They provide transparency and accountability, and protect the public, as well as officers, when the facts are in question.”

Officers activated their body cameras immediately after the shooting, Quinlan said.

Police aren’t releasing the victim’s name until his family is notified and until they have a chance to view the video of the shooting, Ginther said.

Police said officers were responding to a neighbor’s non-emergency call at 1:37 a.m. about a man sitting in

a vehicle for a long time, repeatedly turning the vehicle on and off. Because it was a non-emergency call, the cruiser dash cam wasn’t activated.

On arrival, officers arrived to find a garage door open and a man inside.

In the body camera video, “the man walked toward the officer with a cell phone in his left hand,” police said. “His right hand was not visible.”

One officer fired and hit the man, who died just under an hour later at a local hospital. There was no weapon recovered at the scene, police said.

The man was visiting someone at the home at the

time, police said.

Quinlan relieved the officer of duty, ordered him to turn in his gun and badge and stripped him of police powers pending the outcome of investigations into the shooting. By union contract the officer will still be paid. A message was left with the union representing Columbus officers.

The look-back function, known as “buffering,” is a common technology on body cameras, and is meant to address this exact situation, said Charles Katz, an Arizona State University criminal justice professor.

Although the camer-

as’ video is perpetually running, they only begin recording once they’re activated, saving whatever they’re set to, such as 30 seconds or a minute, Katz said.

“In a technical sense it’s always recording but it’s not saved until it’s activated, and then it only saves the prior 60 seconds,” Katz said.

The city council issued a statement describing members as “beyond frustrated” at the news.

“We are impatient for answers but insist on a thorough, professional, and complete investigation that ensures justice is done,” the statement said.



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## Clippers spoil Lakers' ring night in opener

LOS ANGELES (AP) — After the Los Angeles Lakers got their championship rings, the Los Angeles Clippers gave a performance that showed this retooled team is determined to contend for its own jewelry several months from now.

Paul George scored 26 of his 33 points in the second half, Kawhi Leonard added 26 points and the Los Angeles Clippers rallied past the Los Angeles Lakers on the NBA champions' ring ceremony night for a 116-109 victory Tuesday.

George went 13 of 18 with five 3-pointers in an outstanding first game since agreeing to add four years and \$190 million to his contract with the Clippers, who never trailed in the latest meeting of Southern California's two NBA powerhouses. The Clippers beat the Lakers in the season opener for the second

straight year while winning coach Tyrone Lue's debut.

The Clippers stayed in their locker room while the Lakers received their rings, but they emerged with purpose and determined play — from their two superstars in particular.

"Our focus was on us," Lue said. "The Lakers, they deserved that ring. They had a great year, and you can't take nothing away from them. Our focus wasn't really on the Lakers. They were the best team last year, so congratulations to them again, but now we're moving on."

LeBron James scored 22 points and Anthony Davis had 18 for the Lakers just 72 days after they finished off the Miami Heat in the NBA bubble. James said he turned his ankle "pretty good" in the second half, leading him to play just 28 minutes.

"I'm happy today is over with

and we can focus on the season, but it's just a lot to process," James said. "It felt weird having a basketball game today."

The Lakers returned from the shortest offseason in league history and celebrated the franchise's 17th title, but they couldn't keep up with George and Leonard down the stretch. Lakers coach Frank Vogel also limited James' playing time and kept Davis to 31 minutes, anticipating the long grind ahead on his veterans after a 10-week offseason.

"It's not ideal, but I do feel it's necessary to manage those guys' minutes the right way," Vogel said. "Getting through this stretch healthy is a priority, and evaluating how our new guys fit is a priority when we haven't had a normal amount of time to do that. The five guys on the floor have got to be better than they were tonight."

Serge Ibaka scored 15 points in his debut for the Clippers, who hadn't played since blowing a 3-1 playoff series lead to Denver and ruining a much-anticipated conference final showdown with the waiting Lakers in the bubble. The collapse led to coach Doc Rivers' departure, and Lue moved down the bench to take over a star-studded team with several new additions.

The Lakers fell behind by 22 points under the ring hangover in the first quarter, but they erased all but two points of the deficit in the second. The Clippers pulled away late in the third with George scorching a series of one-on-one defenders. He scored 11 more points in the fourth to seal it.

"We're not thinking about last year," Leonard said. "It's a different team. I'm just happy that we kept playing basketball

the right way. Even if we lost the lead, we turned around and kept playing our basketball. We ran our offense, and that's what we take pride in tonight. Everybody had each other's back and was staying positive."

**NETS 125, WARRIORS 99:** Kevin Durant shook off 18 months of rust and finished with 22 points in 25 minutes, Kyrie Irving was even better and Brooklyn kicked off the Steve Nash era with a win over Golden State in the NBA's season opener.

Durant was competing in his first official game since rupturing his Achilles tendon while playing for Golden State in Game 5 of the 2019 NBA Finals.

Irving led Brooklyn with 26 points and Caris LeVert scored 20 as the Nets led by as many as 38 points.

Stephen Curry had 20 points and 10 assists for the Warriors.

## BYU rolls up 49 points in Boca Raton Bowl victory

BOCA RATON, Fla. (AP) — The NFL will have to wait for BYU's Zach Wilson — for a few days, at least.

Wilson threw for 425 yards with three touchdown passes and two rushing scores as No. 13 BYU routed UCF 49-23 in the Boca Raton Bowl on Tuesday night.

Wilson, considered a top prospect, completed 26 of 34 passes in what might be his final college game.

"I don't know yet," Wilson said when asked about his plans. "I'm probably going to enjoy the Christmas break and discuss with coaches, discuss with my family and figure out what's best. Obviously, (a decision) probably has to be before the new year."

The Cougars (11-1) led 35-10 at halftime and finished with 655 yards of offense to UCF's 411.

Tyler Allgeier carried 19 times for 177 yards and a score. Isaac Rex had five catches for 96 yards and two touchdowns as BYU earned its first victory in nine games it has played in the Sunshine State.

"The excitement we had to play this game was special," Wilson said. "Just looking around and soaking it all in was the coolest part."

Dillon Gabriel was 21 of 45

## Nevada gets win over Tulane in Potato Bowl

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — Nevada coach Jay Norvell had plenty of reasons to be emotional as he challenged his team before it took the field in the Famous Idaho Potato Bowl. And his players responded.

Carson Strong threw for 271 yards and five touchdowns, Devonte Lee and Toa Taua each rushed for over 100 yards, and Nevada's defense recorded eight sacks for the first time in 17 years as the Wolf Pack beat Tulane 38-27 on Tuesday.

Nevada (7-2) finished 2020 the same way it started the year — by playing in the same bowl game, which the Wolf Pack lost 30-21 to Ohio on Jan. 3.

Nevada got stuffed at the goal line on its first possession and turned the ball over on downs. Then the Wolf Pack defense got things rolling with an interception by Christian Swint. Two plays later, Strong hit Turner for an 11-yard touchdown, the first of three quick

scores for Nevada.

"We needed to score early to put pressure on them," Norvell said. "And I'm really happy and satisfied with what our guys did. We talked about playing our best football game and a lot of ways we did that."

Cameron Carroll rushed for 120 yards — more than half on a meaningless late touchdown — for Tulane (6-6), which was one of 19 schools to play 11 regular-season games amid the coronavirus pandemic. The Green Wave failed in their bid to win three consecutive bowl games for the first time in program history.

"Our margin for error is very slim," Tulane coach Willie Fritz said. "We've got to do the little things every game in order to win. We didn't do that the whole ballgame and didn't execute today."

Nevada built a 19-0 lead early in the second quarter, but the Green Wave rallied, pulling

within 26-20 midway through the third quarter.

Then Nevada's dominant ground game took over, imposing its will on a Tulane defensive line thinned by injuries and absences, and Strong put the game away with two fourth-quarter TD passes.

Lee rushed for 105 yards and Toa had 102 yards rushing with a touchdown to go along with 77 yards receiving.

**ONLY IN THE POTATO BOWL:** With 17 seconds left in the game, Nevada received an unusual unsportsmanlike conduct penalty. Celebrating players dumped a bucket of French fries on Norvell's head near the sideline, and the fries spilled onto the playing surface, resulting in the penalty.

Players and coaches had to rake the deep-fried potatoes to the side before play could resume. When it did, Carroll ripped off a 65-yard scoring run for Tulane.

for 217 yards and two TDs for the Knights (6-4). He had a stretch of nine straight incom-

pletions bridging the second and third quarters.

BYU dominated the first half,

outgaining UCF 434 yards to 227 despite running 11 fewer plays.

The Cougars led 14-0 less than

## Auburn hires Boise State coach Harsin

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Auburn hired Boise State's Bryan Harsin as its head coach on Tuesday, luring him away from his alma mater and into the powerful Southeastern Conference.

The 44-year-old Harsin is 69-19 with three Mountain West titles in seven seasons at Boise State, but winning in the SEC affords greater chances for play-off berths and national titles.

The Auburn job is also sure to bring a major pay raise, though contract details for Harsin weren't immediately available.

"I'm incredibly excited and humbled for the opportunity to be at a place like Auburn University," Harsin said in a statement. "I knew it would take a special opportunity to get me out of Boise and Auburn is exactly that, the chance to compete at the highest level for one of the greatest programs in college football."

"I have a tremendous amount of respect for the coaches and players in the Southeastern Conference, but am ready to help build a foundation at Auburn where we can consistently compete for championships."

That has been easier said than done in the brutal SEC West, presided over by in-state rival Alabama.

Auburn fired Gus Malzahn earlier this month after he went 6-4 in his eighth season — a move that cost the school more than \$21 million to buy out the former coach's contract.

Auburn has been an up-and-

down program, winning the national championship under Gene Chizik before going on a rapid decline.

The Tigers turned to Malzahn, the offensive coordinator for that Cam Newton-led team. Malzahn led Auburn to the Southeastern Conference championship and into the national championship game in his first season, 2013. But the Tigers have lost at least four games in each of the seven seasons since.

Meanwhile, Auburn's chief rivals have thrived. Alabama has been a perennial contender and Georgia has also emerged as a national power, making it even harder for Auburn to make headway on the field and on the recruiting trail.

The Tigers sought out their next coach from more than 2,100 miles away.

"He's a proven winner whose record speaks for itself," Auburn athletic director Allen Greene said. "Coach Harsin impressed me with his detailed plan to lead Auburn to consistently compete for championships in the Southeastern Conference."

Harsin also replaced Malzahn at Arkansas State in 2013, winning a share of the Sun Belt Conference title in his lone season before returning to his alma mater.

His name was scarcely mentioned as reports cycled between potential candidates, from Alabama offensive coordinator Steve Sarkisian to Oregon's Mario Cristobal, Louisiana's Billy Napier and UAB's Bill Clark.

"Our search was diligent and thoughtful, and it is unfortunate that so much misinformation was spread in recent days about the process," Auburn President Jay Gogue said, though it wasn't clear precisely what he was referring to.

Harsin has a proven track record as a head coach, more so than any Auburn coach in recent memory. Malzahn only had one season as a college head coach. Chizik had a losing record at Iowa State.

Tommy Tuberville was 12-20 in the SEC at Mississippi. Then there's Harsin, who sustained the success of one of college football's top Group of Five programs.

A victory in the 2014 Mountain West Championship game marked Boise State's first outright league title since joining the conference in 2011, and its first overall since 2009. The only alumnus to coach the Broncos in their history, Harsin has won conference championships as a player, assistant coach and head coach.

Boise State won at least nine games in each of his first six seasons. The Broncos finished 5-2 this year, losing to No. 19 San Jose State in the league title game. Boise State opted not to participate in a bowl game.

Boise State President Marlene Tromp praised Harsin's contributions to the program but expressed confidence the winning would continue under his successor, for whom she said the school would conduct a national search.

## OSU men hold off Portland State rally for 67-62 victory

CORVALLIS (AP) — Zach Reichle and Jarod Lucas each scored a season-high 15 points and Oregon State held off Portland State for a 67-62 victory on Tuesday night.

Warith Alatishe added 13 points and 11 rebounds for Oregon State (4-3), his second double-double of the season.

Khalid Thomas split a pair of free throws to give Portland State a 62-61 lead with 2:13 remaining. Rodrigue Andela made a layup for the Beavers with 24 seconds to play. Reichle and Alatishe each made two free throws to end it.

James Scott scored 16 points to lead the Vikings (2-4). Paris Dawson had 13 points and Thomas 11.

Ethan Thompson, who hasn't

missed a start for the Beavers in 101 games, had just seven points on 2-of-11 shooting, snapping his 15-game streak scoring in double figures, dating to last season.

Portland State opened the second half on a 24-9 run to pull to 45-43, and then a 12-2 surge gave the Vikings their first lead, 58-57 with 4:00 remaining.

The Beavers beat Portland State 81-76 last season and lead the series 15-0.

Oregon State, which had Sunday's game against Southern California postponed due to COVID-19 issues within the Trojans' program, is scheduled to host Stanford on Dec. 31.

Portland State is scheduled to play at Eastern Washington on Dec. 31.

## Gasparilla Bowl canceled after South Carolina pulls out

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) — The Gasparilla Bowl was canceled Tuesday after South Carolina withdrew because of COVID-19 issues within the program.

Gasparilla Bowl executive director Scott Glaser said organizers tried to find an opponent for UAB for Saturday's game at Raymond James Stadium in Tampa, Florida, but came up empty.

"The current environment has presented many challenges,"

Glaser said.

The Gamecocks, who finished 2-8, opted out due to positive COVID-19 tests and contact tracing within the program.

"Until next year, Blazer Nation!" UAB football tweeted shortly after ESPN Events' called off the game.

UAB (6-3) won its second consecutive Conference USA championship over the weekend.

The Gasparilla Bowl becomes the 17th bowl to be canceled amid the coronavirus pandemic.