



WEEKLY DIGEST  
FEBRUARY 28, 2020



**BLOSSOM TRAIL IS BLOOMING.  
LET US HELP YOU PLAN A TRIP. »**

**CA CORONAVIRUS CASE MAY BE  
1ST FROM UNKNOWN ORIGIN »**

**SANDERS' RISE FUELS DEMS' ANGST  
OVER KEEPING HOUSE CONTROL »**





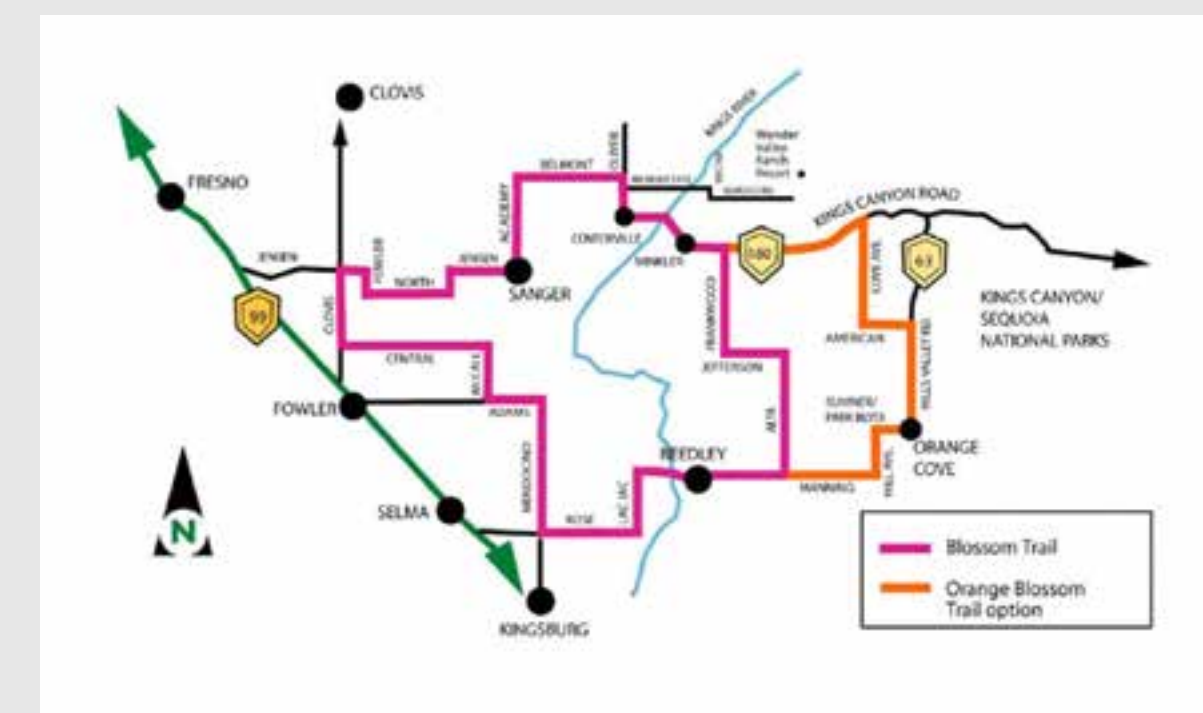
# BLOSSOM TRAIL IS BLOOMING. LET US HELP YOU PLAN A TRIP.

February 21, 2020 | GV Wire

It's time to soak in the Fresno County Blossom Trail, a resplendent self-guided 60-mile scenic loop east of Fresno. The views are drop-dead beautiful and inspiring. You can't help but marvel at nature's canvas. Just like spring itself, it's the perfect antidote for the blahs or a case of weekend don't-know-what-to-do.

Thousands of people drive or bicycle a route lined with meticulously groomed orchards featuring millions of almond and fruit buds.

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(Fresno County Office of Tourism)

## White, Pink Blossoms Are Showing

This week, the almond orchards are coming into full bloom (white blossoms) and there have been several sightings of apricot and early peach blooms (pink), [goblossomtrail.com](http://goblossomtrail.com) reports. Eastside communities use the blossom season to showcase their restaurants, cafes, and other businesses. In addition, several events provide the option of combining blossom viewing with a favorite activity such as cycling or wine tasting. This weekend's weather forecast calls for a passing morning sprinkle Saturday followed by sunshine and temperatures in the 60s.

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## Links to Help You Plan

You can get tips on planning your trip and recommendations for where to eat at [Cassie's Compass travel blog](#). Blossom Trail updates are on Twitter, [@GoBlossomTrail](#).

[Click here to view a list of Blossom Trail farm stores and wineries.](#)



(Fresno County Office of Tourism)





# WORK STARTS ON \$38M AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROJECT. SUPPORTERS SEE IT AS A MODEL.

GV Wire/Janez Tello

February 26, 2020 | AP News

The groundbreaking for a \$38 million dollar Fresno mixed-used affordable housing development included the usual elements of a celebratory affair — shovels, speeches, and building demolition. City leaders hope that the Blackstone & McKinley Transit Oriented Development (the builders promise a rebranded name) is the first of many more to come that will change the landscape of a blighted portion of the city.

“We hope this project proves to be a catalyst,” said developer Jake Lingo, senior vice president of Integrated Community Development. “It’s a first step towards a future of a revived and vivid transportation corridor.” Mayor Lee Brand echoed those words, saying the project will transform an underutilized site into a robust development. A collection of deteriorating retail and industrial buildings are being razed to make way for

the project. As a housing crisis continues to plague California, lawmakers in Sacramento have pushed legislation promoting affordable housing construction, especially along transit corridors. Meanwhile, Fresno’s general plan, approved in 2014, strongly encourages infill development. The Blackstone project advances both of those goals.

It sits next to Fresno’s Bus Rapid Transit route, adjacent to a fully built-out neighborhood, across the street from Fresno City College. “This project is the future of Fresno,” District 7 Councilman Nelson Esparza told the audience on hand for the groundbreaking. “This is going to be the anchor project that propels us forward.” District 1 Councilwoman Esmeralda Soria celebrated the 88 units of affordable housing the project will bring. The apartments, which will occupy the top three...

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## LEMOORE SURF RANCH TECH TO POWER WORLD’S LARGEST MAN-MADE WAVE IN COACHELLA

February 25, 2020 | AP News

Kelly Slater is planning to build the world’s largest man-made wave in the desert. The legendary surfer is the developer and owner of the \$30 million Surf Ranch complex in Lemoore that features 7 foot waves in a 2,000 foot long pool. The facility has hosted several pro surfing events since beginning operations in 2017.

[Related Story: At Surf Ranch in Lemoore, Celebrities Pay \\$10K an Hour to Ride Waves](#)

Plans for Coral Mountain, announced on Tuesday, feature the largest rideable open-barrel human-made wave in the world with technology from Kelly Slater Wave Company, a division of the World Surf League. The 11-time world champion surfer is teaming with private real estate investment and development firm Meriwether Companies and Big Sky Wave Developments, founded by Michael B. Schwab, son of brokerage pioneer Charles Schwab. Construction is expected to begin in...

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## ‘NELLIE’ THE STUFFED SWAMP RAT SELLS CONGRESS ON WIPING OUT NUTRIA

February 27, 2020 | GV Wire

Rep. Josh Harder brought a stuffed swamp rat nicknamed “Nellie” to the congressional floor Wednesday. And, the Turlock Democrat’s show-and-tell presentation worked to perfection. The House, on a voice vote, passed Harder’s legislation to make \$12 million available each year until 2025 to battle an invasion of nutria. “Especially on agriculture issues, the biggest problem we have in Congress is getting awareness and understanding, so Nellie has been a great spokesperson,” [Harder told The Modesto Bee](#). “Having something people can see and look at and know the scale of the problem is hugely helpful.”

[Related Story: Voracious Rodents in Central Valley Set Off Alarms](#)

**Big Nutria Populations in Louisiana, California**  
Rep. Garret Graves, a Louisiana Republican, co-sponsored the legislation, About a dozen states are battling the rapidly reproducing voracious rodents. “Nearly 4.5 million people live in Louisiana, yet we have an estimated 20 million nutria,” Graves...

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# CALIFORNIA CORONAVIRUS CASE MAY BE 1ST FROM UNKNOWN ORIGIN

February 27, 2020 | AP News

LOS ANGELES — A new coronavirus case in California could be the first in the U.S. that has no known connection to travel abroad or another known case, a possible sign the virus is spreading in a U.S. community, health officials said. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported the case Wednesday. California officials said the person is a resident of Solano County, northeast of San Francisco, and is getting medical care in Sacramento County. They said they have begun the process of tracking down people who the patient has been in contact with, a process known as contact tracing. The patient was brought to UC Davis Medical Center from another Northern California hospital on Feb. 19 but it was four days before the CDC heeded a request to test the patient for COVID-19, according to

California officials said the person is a resident of Solano County, northeast of San Francisco, and is getting medical care in Sacramento County. They said they have begun the process of tracking down people who the patient has been in contact with, a process known as contact tracing.

an email sent to employees Wednesday by the hospital's interim CEO, Brad Simmons, and David Lubarsky, CEO of UC Davis Health. The patient arrived on a ventilator and special protection orders were issued "because of an undiagnosed and suspected viral condition," according to the email, which was

sent to employees. The hospital asked the CDC to test for the coronavirus but testing was delayed until Sunday "since the patient did not fit the existing CDC criteria for COVID-19," the email said.

**Related Story: COVID-19 Vaccine Shipped, Trials Start**

**Health Officials Have Been on High Alert for So-Called Community Spread**

The hospital, which has treated other coronavirus patients, has been taking infection prevention precautions since the patient arrived. The email said officials believe

there was only a small chance that others at the facility were exposed to the virus. "Nevertheless, a small number of medical center employees have been asked to stay home and monitor their temperatures," the email said. Messages to the CDC seeking comment on the email were not immediately returned Wednesday night. All of the 59 other cases in the U.S. had traveled from abroad or had been in close contact with those who traveled. Health officials have been on high alert for so-called community

spread. Earlier U.S. cases included 14 in people who traveled back from outbreak areas in China, or their spouses; three people who were evacuated from the central China city of Wuhan; and 42 American passengers on the Diamond Princess cruise ship who were evacuated by the federal government to the U.S. from where the ship was docked in Japan. Some of those evacuated were taken to Travis Air Force Base, which is in Solano County. A number of the earlier cases have been in California, including among some of the people taken to Travis and one in which a traveler who returned to San Benito County spread it to a spouse.

**The Virus Can Cause Fever, Coughing, Wheezing and Pneumonia**

California officials have been preparing for the possibility that community spread of the virus might first surface there. "We have been anticipating the potential for such a case in the U.S., and given our close familial, social and business relationships with China, it is not unexpected that the first case in the U.S. would be in California," said Dr. Sonia Angell, Director of the...

**"We have been anticipating the potential for such a case in the U.S., and given our close familial, social and business relationships with China, it is not unexpected that the first case in the U.S. would be in California." — Dr. Sonia Angell, Director of the California Department of Public Health and State Public Health Officer**

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# BORGEAS TARGETS CONTROVERSIAL AB 5 WITH TOWN HALL, LEGISLATION

February 24, 2020 | Bill McEwen

Count state Sen. Andreas Borgeas of Fresno among many Republican lawmakers seeking to modify or repeal Assembly Bill 5, the controversial law reclassifying independent contractors. Borgeas recently introduced Senate Bill 967, which would exempt franchisors and franchisees from AB 5.

And, he is hosting a town hall meeting Thursday evening at Clovis Community College titled “The Future of Our Gig Economy: What to Expect from AB 5.” “Nearly two million Californians working as freelancers and independent contractors have lost their jobs due to AB 5,” Borgeas said. “This haphazard law has negatively impacted dozens of industries

in our state and limits those who want to maintain a flexible work schedule. ... This is a very real threat to the fifth-largest economy in the world.” Borgeas said the franchisor-franchisee relationship often used by fast-food and convenience-store chains must be protected.

“Under AB 5, franchisors could be exposed to liability for labor laws violated by their franchisees,” said Senator Borgeas. “SB 967 would ensure that franchisees would not be considered an employee of the franchisor but instead an independent contractor.” Three panelists will take part in the town hall: Ian Wieland, an attorney for Sagaser, Watkins...

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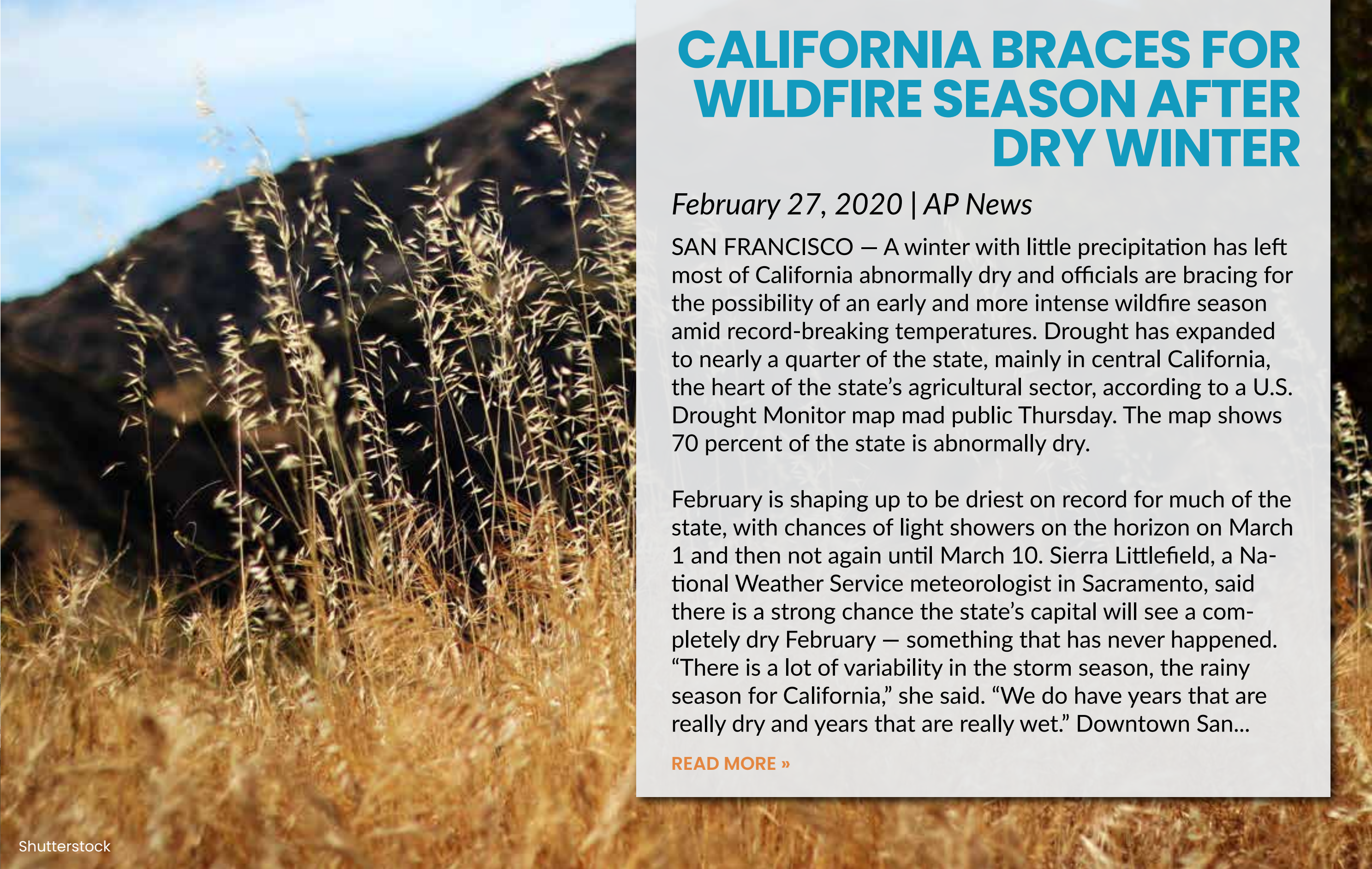
## CALIFORNIA BRACES FOR WILDFIRE SEASON AFTER DRY WINTER

February 27, 2020 | AP News

SAN FRANCISCO — A winter with little precipitation has left most of California abnormally dry and officials are bracing for the possibility of an early and more intense wildfire season amid record-breaking temperatures. Drought has expanded to nearly a quarter of the state, mainly in central California, the heart of the state’s agricultural sector, according to a U.S. Drought Monitor map mad public Thursday. The map shows 70 percent of the state is abnormally dry.

February is shaping up to be driest on record for much of the state, with chances of light showers on the horizon on March 1 and then not again until March 10. Sierra Littlefield, a National Weather Service meteorologist in Sacramento, said there is a strong chance the state’s capital will see a completely dry February — something that has never happened. “There is a lot of variability in the storm season, the rainy season for California,” she said. “We do have years that are really dry and years that are really wet.” Downtown San...

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## VIRGIN GALACTIC REPORTS HIGH INTEREST IN ITS SPACE FLIGHTS

February 25, 2020 | AP News

LOS ANGELES — Virgin Galactic has received nearly 8,000 online reservations of interest since its first successful test flight into space 14 months ago, the company said Tuesday as it nears commercial operation and prepares to reopen ticket sales. Virgin Galactic already had more than 600 firm reservations that were taken from customers in 60 countries until the December 2018 flight, when it closed down ticket sales.

The company said that on Wednesday it will begin a process called “One Small Step” that will allow those online registrants who are serious about becoming passenger astronauts to register online for a firm reservation by paying a fully refundable deposit of \$1,000. Confirming a spaceflight reservation will be a process called “One Giant Leap,” echoing the words of Apollo 11 astronaut Neil Armstrong when he became the first person to set foot on the moon in 1969. The company did not say when the new set of seats would be released or the actual cost. The initial seats were sold at \$250,000 apiece. After...

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AP File





AP File

# SANDERS' RISE FUELS DEMS' ANGST OVER KEEPING HOUSE CONTROL

February 27, 2020 | AP News

WASHINGTON — Sen. Bernie Sanders' ascendancy as Democrats' leading presidential hopeful fueled growing unease as lawmakers openly expressed anxiety that the self-proclaimed democratic socialist could cost them House control and questions abounded over what party leaders should do. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., projected calm — and neutrality — on Wednesday as she batted away reporters' queries about whether it was time for her to try thwarting Sanders to protect her party's majority. "We're not going to lose the House," she said.

"We're going to be united by whomever is the candidate for president. But we are taking responsibility for winning the House, and we're not assuming anything. But we feel very confident." She delivered a similar message to colleagues at a closed-door meeting Wednesday morning, when she told them, "We cannot show any division. This has to be about unity, unity, unity."

**"We're not going to lose the House. We're going to be united by whomever is the candidate for president. But we are taking responsibility for winning the House, and we're not assuming anything. But we feel very confident."**  
— House Speaker Nancy Pelosi

Her remarks were described by a Democratic aide on the condition of anonymity to relay private comments. Yet with Sanders, I-Vt., riding high after early nominating contest wins in New Hampshire and Nevada and a virtual first-place tie in Iowa, other House Democrats were less sanguine. Time was growing short to head Sanders off. South Carolina holds its primary Saturday, followed three days later by Super Tuesday, when contests in 14 states and one territory will decide one-third of the delegates to this summer's Democratic convention. Rep. Tom Malinowski, a freshman from a closely divided New Jersey district, said Democrats have "a simple path" to defeating President Donald Trump by focusing on health care, the economy and a promise that their

presidential candidate won't lie. "I don't want to squander that opportunity" by nominating a contender who divides Democrats, he said in an unspoken reference to Sanders.

## Republicans Will Need to Gain 18 Seats to Win House Control

Freshman Rep. Elaine Luria, D-Va., who defeated an incumbent Republican in 2018 in a swing district in coastal Virginia, said a Sanders candidacy would be "incredibly divisive" and endanger more centrist lawmakers like herself. The former Navy commander said of GOP efforts to paint all Democrats as socialists, "Bernie Sanders just adds fuel to that fire." Rep. Scott Peters, D-Calif., a leader of his party's House moderates, said there is widespread concern among lawmakers from competitive districts "that a Sanders candidacy would sink their reelections." Peters, whose San Diego district is safely Democratic, said Sanders would complicate moderates' reelection bids because "the face of the Democratic Party might be spouting things that are absolutely anathema to your voters."

**"They're going to have to win the votes for their own leadership positions within the caucus, and I think that weighing in would not be appropriate for the speaker." — Rep. Pramila Jayapal**

Sanders advocacy for "Medicare for All," the Green New Deal and student loan forgiveness has alienated many moderates. Of the 42 House seats Democrats gained in 2018 when they captured the majority, 29 are from districts that Trump either won in 2016 or lost by a narrow 5 percentage points or less. Most of them are moderates. Republicans will need to gain 18 seats in November's elections to win House control, assuming they retain three vacant seats held previously by the GOP. Asked what Pelosi was doing about Sanders, Peters said, "I hope that we do have a conversation as a...

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# HARVEY WEINSTEIN FOUND GUILTY IN LANDMARK #METOO MOMENT

AP File/John Minchillo

February 24, 2020 | AP News

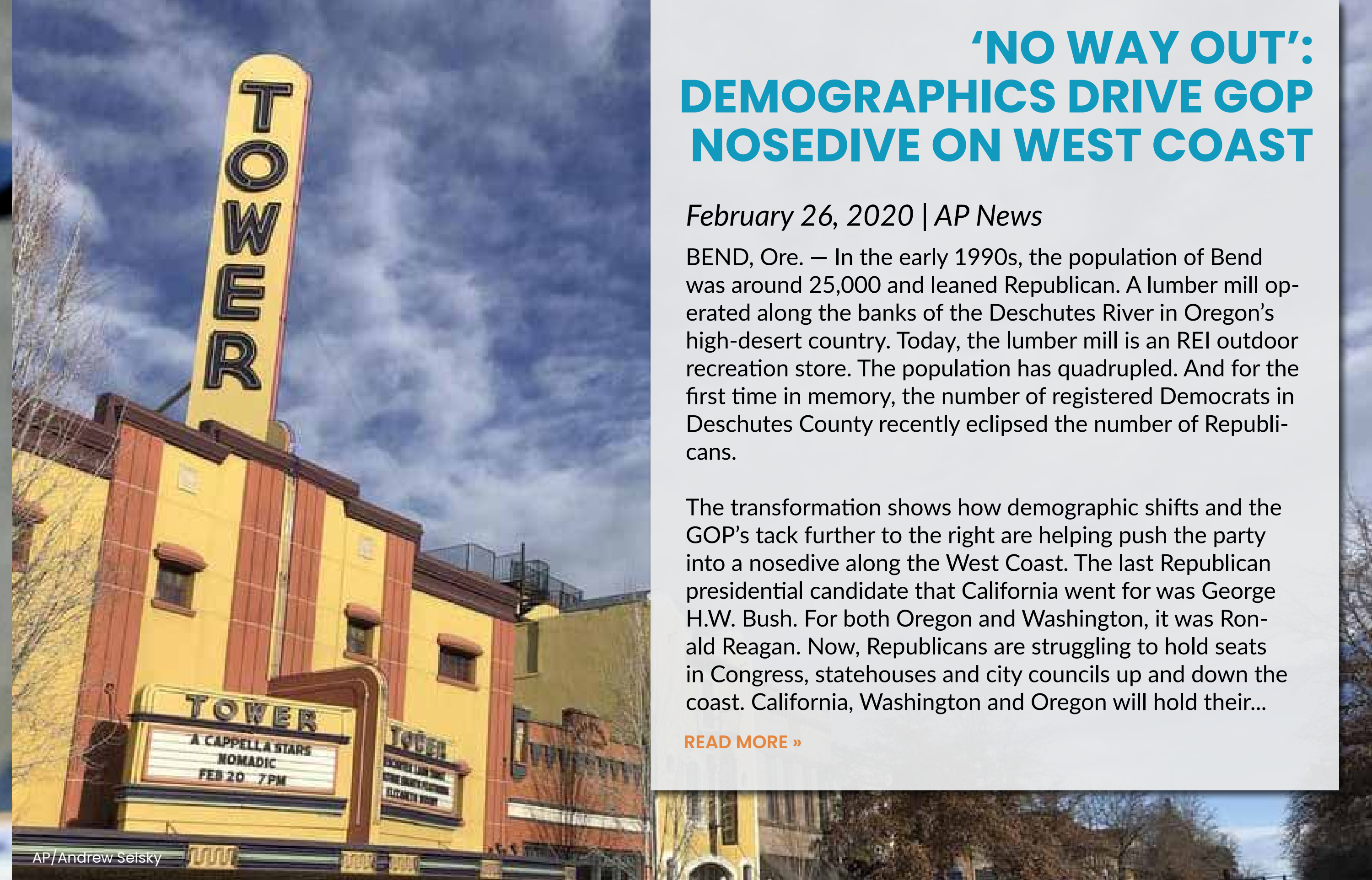
NEW YORK — Harvey Weinstein was convicted Monday of rape and sexual assault against two women and could be sent to prison for decades, sealing his dizzying fall from powerful Hollywood studio boss to archvillain of the #MeToo movement.

He was convicted on charges stemming from a 2006 sexual assault and a 2013 rape. The jury found Weinstein not guilty on the most serious charge, predatory sexual assault, that could have resulted in a life sentence. The most damaging conviction, for the sexual assault of production assistant

Mimi Haley, would carry a maximum sentence of 25 years. Weinstein, 67, had a look of resignation as the verdict came in, and was seen talking to his lawyers shortly after. A judge ordered him to go to jail immediately. Court officers surrounded Weinstein, handcuffed him and led him out of the courtroom.

The judge said he will request that Weinstein be held in the infirmary after his lawyers said he needs medical attention following an unsuccessful back surgery. The verdict followed weeks of often harrowing and excruciatingly graphic...

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AP/Andrew Selsky

## ‘NO WAY OUT’: DEMOGRAPHICS DRIVE GOP NOSEDIVE ON WEST COAST

February 26, 2020 | AP News

BEND, Ore. — In the early 1990s, the population of Bend was around 25,000 and leaned Republican. A lumber mill operated along the banks of the Deschutes River in Oregon’s high-desert country. Today, the lumber mill is an REI outdoor recreation store. The population has quadrupled. And for the first time in memory, the number of registered Democrats in Deschutes County recently eclipsed the number of Republicans.

The transformation shows how demographic shifts and the GOP’s tack further to the right are helping push the party into a nosedive along the West Coast. The last Republican presidential candidate that California went for was George H.W. Bush. For both Oregon and Washington, it was Ronald Reagan. Now, Republicans are struggling to hold seats in Congress, statehouses and city councils up and down the coast. California, Washington and Oregon will hold their...

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## MARS LANDER CONFIRMS QUAKES, AFTERSHOCKS ON RED PLANET

February 24, 2020 | AP News

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — NASA’s newest Mars lander has confirmed that quakes and even aftershocks are regularly jolting the red planet. Scientists reported Monday that the seismometer from the InSight spacecraft has detected scores of marsquakes. A series of research papers focus on the 174 marsquakes noted through last September. Twenty-four were relatively strong — magnitude 3 to 4 — and apparently stemmed from distant underground triggers.

The rest were smaller, with uncertain magnitude and origin. Even the stronger quakes would not have posed a hazard to anybody on the planet’s surface, researchers said in a press conference. The overall tally has since jumped to more than 450 marsquakes, most of them small, InSight’s lead scientist, Bruce Banerdt of NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory, said in an email. The basic cause of Martian quakes is a long-term cooling of the planet, which makes it contract, fracturing...

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NASA/JPL-Caltech via AP





AP/Lee Jin-man

# WORLD

## DESPERATE TO STOP CORONAVIRUS' SPREAD, COUNTRIES LIMIT TRAVEL

February 25, 2020 | AP News

SEOUL, South Korea — Police manned checkpoints in quarantined towns, guests were confined to their rooms in a hotel in the Canary Islands, governments issued travel warnings and more flights were suspended Tuesday as officials desperately sought to stop the seemingly inevitable spread of a new virus. Clusters of

**"It's a matter of speed and time: We must create a clear turning point within this week." — South Korean President Moon Jae-in**

the illness continued to balloon outside mainland China, fueling apprehension across the globe that was reflected in sagging financial markets. The crisis pushed into areas seen as among the worst-equipped to deal with an outbreak as well as some of the world's richest nations, including South Korea and Italy. As it proliferates, the virus is bringing a sense of urgency for local officials determined to contain it but often unsure how. "It's a matter of speed and time: We must create a clear turning point within this week," said President Moon Jae-in of South Korea, where the caseload grew by 144, with a total of 977 people sickened.

Cases of people who could have infected many others spurred fears. Korean Air said one of its crew members tested positive, but the airline didn't disclose the flights the employee had worked on. On a U.S. military base in Daegu, the center of infections in South Korea, officials said the spouse of a late servicemember had also been infected. And in the tiny Persian Gulf nation of Bahrain, one of those infected was a school bus driver who had transported students as recently as Sunday.

**Related Story: Poll: More Americans Worry About Flu Than New Virus**

**Two Neighbors of Italy — Croatia and Austria — Reported Their First Cases of the Virus**  
Also testing positive was the head of Iran's virus task

force, who just a day earlier gave a news conference in Tehran in which he tried to minimize the danger posed by the outbreak. In Italy's north, where more than 200 people were sickened, a dozen towns were sealed off and police wearing face masks patrolled. Two neighbors of Italy — Croatia and Austria — reported their first cases of the virus. And an Italian doctor staying at a hotel in the Canary Islands tested positive for the virus, prompting the quarantine of hundreds of guests. Croatia, Hungary and Ireland advised against traveling to Italy's affected area, one of a number of governmental moves seeking to limit further exposure. Bahrain suspended flights to Dubai while the United States' Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued its highest travel alert on South Korea, advising citizens to avoid nonessential trips. Japan urged citizens to avoid unessential trips to South Korea's hardest-hit areas. A culture of long days at the office in Japan came to terms with the outbreak, with the government urging employers to allow workers to telecommute and have more flexible hours, simple moves Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe expressed hope could help control the spread. "We are at an extremely important time in ending the spread of infection at an early stage," Abe said at a meeting of a task force on the outbreak.

**"We don't close borders because we would not be able to, we don't do it because it would be meaningless. Should we ban gatherings? Should we stop the Fashion Week? Should we suspend matches? Should we close universities? The answer is no." — French health minister Olivier Veran**

**Italy Had Taken Europe's Most Stringent Preventative Measures Against COVID-19**

Even in places where no cases have sprouted up, leaders kept a wary eye, such as Denmark, where two former military barracks were being prepared as quarantine centers. Still, uncertainty remained about how to...

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# SYRIAN FATHER TEACHES DAUGHTER TO LAUGH WHEN THE BOMBS FALL

AP/Ghaith Alsayed

February 25, 2020 | AP News

BEIRUT — Abdullah Mohammed would do anything for his daughter, even forcing himself to laugh with her at the sound of bombs to help her overcome her fear. In Idlib, that's a lot of laughter.

The province in northwestern Syria is the last opposition-held stronghold in the war-ravaged country. It has been the subject of a ferocious military campaign and relentless bombardment by Russia-backed Syrian government troops since early December. More than 900,000 civilians have been on the move since then, displaced from their homes. Many now live in tents, abandoned buildings, makeshift shel-

ters and in open fields near the Turkish border. As the advancing troops neared his hometown of Saraqeb two months ago, Mohammed fled with his wife and daughter further north to the town of Sarmada, where they are now staying in an abandoned house offered to him by a friend.

Mohammed and his daughter, 3-year-old Salwa, became overnight celebrities after a video they shot was shared widely on social media — a reminder of the horrors faced by children in Syria. In the video, Salwa, wearing a pink dress, stands on a sofa next to her father. Mohammed asks his daughter: "Is that a plane or a shell?" "A shell, and when it...

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AP File

## SAUDI ARABIA HALTS PILGRIMAGE; IRAN VICE PRESIDENT HAS VIRUS

February 27, 2020 | AP News

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Saudi Arabia on Thursday banned foreign pilgrims from entering the kingdom to visit Islam's holiest sites over the new coronavirus, potentially disrupting the plans of millions of faithful ahead of the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan and as the annual hajj pilgrimage looms. The decision showed the growing worry across the Mideast about the virus as Iran confirmed that infected cases in the country spiked by over 100, to 254 now.

Those with the virus in the Islamic Republic now include Iranian vice president Masoumeh Ebtekar, better known as the English-language spokeswoman "Mary" for the 1979 hostage-takers who seized the U.S. Embassy in Tehran and sparked the 444-day diplomatic crisis, state media reported. A total of 26 people have died so far in Iran, the world's highest death toll outside of China, where the outbreak began. Saudi Arabia's barring of pilgrims from Mecca, home to the cube-shaped Kaaba that the world's 1.8 billion Muslims...

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## ISRAEL'S LIEBERMAN STILLS HOLDS KEYS TO FUTURE GOVERNMENT

February 24, 2020 | AP News

JERUSALEM — Israel finds itself in a familiar place after a tumultuous election campaign — with maverick politician Avigdor Lieberman still seemingly in control of the country's fate. The run-up to Israel's third election in less than a year saw criminal charges filed against the prime minister, an American Mideast plan unveiled and various party mergers and machinations.

Yet once again, opinion polls suggest that neither Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu nor his chief challenger Benny Gantz will be able to form a coalition without Lieberman. Lieberman remains cagey about his intentions, raising the possibility his brinkmanship could end up forcing yet another election. Lieberman's nationalist Yisrael Beiteinu party bolted from Netanyahu's right-wing camp last year to spark the unprecedented stalemate in Israeli politics. Though Lieberman has all but ruled out sitting in a government led by his...

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