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LOCAL

HOW MUCH YOU DRIVE SOON WILL DICTATE THE PRICE OF A NEW HOME

April 30, 2020 | Jim Jakobs

If you dream of buying a new house in the suburbs — or anywhere outside the urban core — the cost is going way, way up because of a California law taking effect July 1. Critics say the law will price new

**“The intent is to shift people out of their cars into some alternative mode.”
— Tony Boren, executive director of the Fresno Council of Governments**

homes beyond the reach of middle-class families at a time that Gov. Gavin Newsom wants to increase the housing supply in all price ranges. Others are concerned that the law will prevent hardworking Californians, many of them immigrants or minorities, from buying a home and improving their families’ economic status for generations. But proponents say Senate Bill 743, which was passed back in 2013 and signed by then-Gov. Jerry Brown, is the best way to cut greenhouse gas emissions. Both sides agree on this: The law’s intent is to force people out of their cars and trucks and into buses, carpools, and other alternative forms of transportation.

Forcing People Out of Their Cars

For many, it could mean the end of the dream that has helped power California’s economy since the end of World War II: a new home and a car taking you where you want to go. “The intent is to shift people out of their cars into some alternative mode,” says Tony Boren, executive director of the Fresno Council of Governments, which is charged with transportation planning and programming in Fresno County. The law’s tool to do that is Vehicle Miles Traveled, commonly called VMT by builders, planners, and government officials. Effective July 1, projects will no longer be assessed a fee by how much traffic congestion is created. Instead, VMT is applied to new developments. For instance, if a person drives to multiple places a day — work, store, soccer practice, etc. — all of those miles are counted up. Then the VMT fee is calculated for the development. If you drive a lot, your number will escalate the price of a new house —

or even rent for a newly built apartment. Some cities — Pasadena, San Luis Obispo, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Oakland, for example — already are using VMT. But Valley planners are now racing to beat the end of June deadline.

Law Is Aimed at Regions Like the Valley

People in Los Angeles, San Francisco, and San Diego won’t have to worry as much, the experts say. This law really is aimed at places like the San Joaquin Valley, where people often have to drive farther for work, play, and life in general. “It’ll make housing more expensive,” said Mike Prandini of the Building Industry of Fresno-Madera Counties. “The problem is that they want to force residents into higher density living.” For rural communities, said Kristine Cai, deputy director of Fresno COG, the law will create a roadblock to bettering the quality of life. “For smaller communities, to have to build more housing to have more jobs coming in, they have to pay more, it means it’s harder for them to grow down the road,” Cai said.

“It’ll make housing more expensive. The problem is that they want to force residents into higher density living.” — Mike Prandini, president/CEO, Building Industry of Fresno-Madera Counties

“So, based on my conversations with a lot of stakeholders in the state, this is something that has unintended consequences.” Keith Bergthold is a former Fresno assistant planning director who oversaw the city’s 2035 general plan update. Now the executive director of Fresno Metro Ministry, he is part of the “Better Blackstone” initiative seeking to rebuild Fresno’s central commercial corridor. “SB 743 would help a Better Blackstone. It helps with inter-modal and mixed-used transit on the corridor. We’re privileged in that way with SB743, but that doesn’t tell the whole story,” Bergthold said. “It has some unintended consequences and uneven impacts. I feel like delaying it a bit, and giving it a little more balanced input from our rural regions would be appropriate and...

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April 29, 2020 | Nancy Price

Bagieng Keophimphone was in middle school when his father suffered his first stroke and was hospitalized. There were no doctors who could speak Laotian, so Keophimphone helped translate for his father and saw firsthand how language can be a barrier for health care. Today, there are still very few doctors in the Valley who speak Laotian, but Keophimphone hopes to change that.

The 22-year-old Fresno State senior, who majored in biochemistry and is graduating with a 3.93 grade-point average, has his eye on medical school. He is one of nine undergraduates at Fresno State who are Deans' Medalists for the Class of 2020, recognized as the university's top students for achievements that include academic excellence and community involvement. He represents the College of Science and Mathematics.

Community Involvement

His extracurricular activities include volunteering with the Laotian American Community of Fresno, where he has talked with younger students about the importance of higher education, and serving as president of the American Chemical Society Fresno Chapter. Keophimphone also was involved with the UCSF-Fresno Academic Research program, Tzu Chi Clinic, and the Community Care Clinic, where he worked with a Laotian-American physician, Dr. Khampha Thephavong.

Thephavong, a Fresno State alumna, is director of medical services at the campus Student Health and Counseling Center. The university will announce in mid-May the name of the President's Medalist, the university's top academic honor for an undergraduate student and chosen from the...

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FRESNO RESTAURANT BILLED \$1,149 TO OFFSET EMPLOYEES' 'ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT'

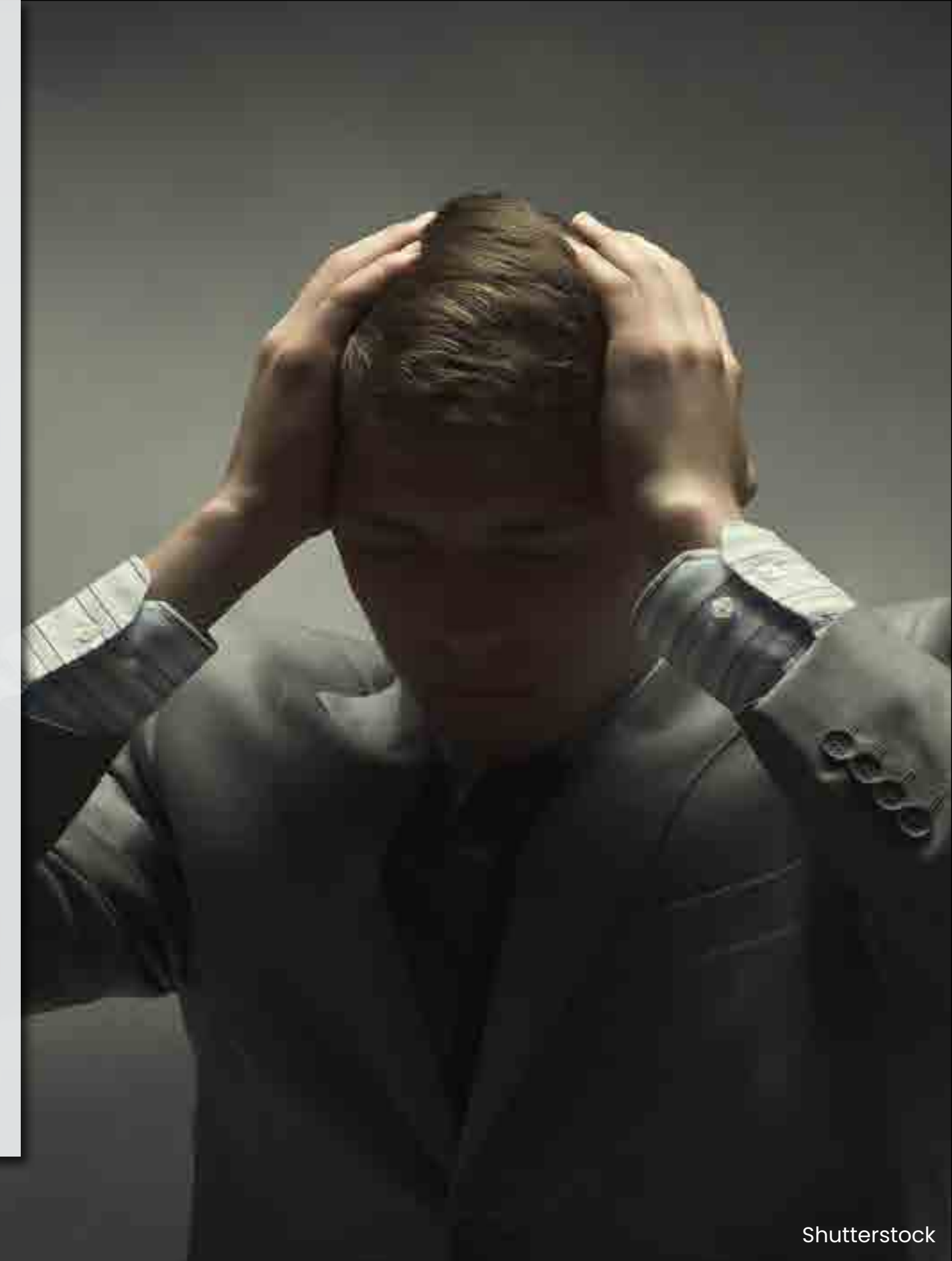
April 27, 2020 | Jim Jakobs

"It's a strange thing to be taxed for being an employer." Mad Duck Craft Brewing Company owner Alexa Costa shared a copy of the bill he received from the state of California because he has more than 50 employees. "I thought that that was a good thing that we had employees," Costa said to GV Wire via Zoom. The first time he saw the bill was after opening his third Mad Duck Craft Brewery location, at Herndon and Marks avenues. Because of the flurry of "to-do's" he had to get a new restaurant up and running, he paid the fee.

Related Story: Taxpayers Will Pay Restaurants to Feed Seniors in California

"We realized that it wasn't going to be just you know a little \$300 fee anymore. It's going to be almost \$1,200, which in the aftermath of having our sales slashed by nearly 75% (because of COVID-19), it's something we really do need to account for," said Costa. Costa asked the California Department of Tax and...

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PISMO'S TAKES YOU INTO THE FUTURE OF RESTAURANTS WITH NEW VIDEO

April 28, 2020 | Jim Jakobs

Face shields will greet you. Social distancing will be in force as they seat you. Online pre-screening will ask you about your temperature reading, your guests' temperature readings, and whether you've been in contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19. These are just some of the things local restaurants are trying to get people to warm up to as they prepare to re-open.

Pismo's Coastal Grill

Dave Fansler, president of the Fansler Restaurant Group, is using social media to draw attention to the safety precautions he's putting in place at Pismo's. "We're going to make a video for the public and the Fresno County Health Department showing the safety standards that we're going to be using with social distancing and sanitary conditions at Pismo's," Fansler said in an Instagram post. To stagger the number of people inside the restaurant at one time, Pismo's only plans on taking five reservations over any 15 minute period. And, the restaurant will...

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SLO COUNTY DOESN'T WANT 'OUT-OF-TOWNERS' ON ITS BEACHES

April 28, 2020 | Jim Jakobs

Call it the COVID-19 version of coastal protection. San Luis Obispo County is sending a message to people in neighboring counties: Stay away from our beaches. "We are considering anyone who is not a San Luis Obispo County resident to be an out-of-towner," said county health officer Dr. Penny Borenstein on Monday. "We don't want to see people coming into our county at this moment."

Beaches for Residents Only

San Luis Obispo County's shelter-in-place orders remain in place. It limits group activity and business to the most essential needs while requiring social distancing of at least six feet. But, said Borenstein, "Using the term shelter at home does not literally mean that people

San Luis Obispo County is sending a message to people in neighboring counties: Stay away from our beaches.

should not leave their homes for essential activities or fresh air and exercise." There's a challenge, however. "So if someone wants to drive, you know, a short distance across the county to a beach and can find a parking spot — go," Borenstein said. But even for "our own residents, how do we maintain that social distancing? How do we maintain not seeing great numbers of people flocking to our beaches, even from within the county?"

Related Story: Newsom Limiting Beach Access to Slow Virus

Phased Reopening

The city and county of San Luis Obispo are working together on a phased reopening. A joint news release included a statement that is echoed throughout California: "Remember, it's a dimmer, not a light switch." Ultimately, the decisions will be "based on scientific guidance and data, in coordination with public and private partners, to ensure the community reopens and the lo-

cal workforce gets back to work as safely as possible," the county said.

Newsom Chides Those Who Crowd Beaches

Gov. Gavin Newsom said Monday that progress toward reopening will be jeopardized if people do things like crowd beaches, which occurred over the weekend. "This virus doesn't take the weekends off, this virus doesn't go home because it's a beautiful sunny day around our coasts," Newsom said. The governor targeted beachgoers in Orange and Ventura counties, calling them an example of "what not to do."

The city and county of San Luis Obispo are working together on a phased reopening. A joint news release included a statement that is echoed throughout California: "Remember, it's a dimmer, not a light switch."

But Orange County officials pushed back, saying people did their best to keep a safe distance while enjoying themselves. Huntington Beach, known as "Surf City USA," and Newport Beach were the Orange County locations with the largest crowds. Newport officials plan to meet Tuesday to consider shutting beaches for the next three weekends or closing roads leading to popular locations along the shore.

(The Associated Press contributed to this story.)

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NEWSOM OUTLINES STEPS FOR LOOSENING CALIFORNIA'S PANDEMIC LOCKDOWN

April 28, 2020 | AP News

SACRAMENTO— Gov. Gavin Newsom outlined plans for a gradual reopening of businesses, schools and public spaces across California during his daily news briefing on Tuesday. Newsom said additional businesses in some sectors, such as retail and manufacturing, may be able to resume operations within weeks, while other businesses such as hair and nail salons will take longer.

Large gatherings such as concerts still remain out of reach, he said. The governor said modifications to California's stay at home order would be made at the state level. Changes will occur when certain data thresholds are met, such as the

stabilization of hospitalization rates related to coronavirus infections, he said. Newsom issued a statewide order on March 19, which aimed to slow the spread of COVID-19 by keeping most people at home and closing all but essential businesses. Health officials have said the efforts have helped flatten the curve of the virus outbreak but they also have caused massive unemployment and economic upheaval.

Newsom: Lockdown Changes 'A Few Weeks Away'
On Monday, Newsom said the state is "a few weeks away, not months away" from making meaningful changes in the order — his most optimistic timeline yet. Still, it was a...

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AP File

CALIFORNIA SCALES UP 1ST-IN-US ELECTRIC TRUCK SALE PROPOSAL

April 29, 2020 | AP News

SACRAMENTO — California regulators on Tuesday strengthened a proposed first-in-the-nation rule that would force auto makers to sell more electric delivery vans and work trucks in a state with the country's worst air quality. The updated rule proposed by the California Air Resources Board would require auto makers to sell a certain percentage of zero-emission trucks each year. By 2035, the board estimates at least 20% of these trucks on the road would be electric.

"This will be transformative," said Paul Cort, an attorney for Earthjustice's Right to Zero campaign. "At some point, these manufacturers are going to kind of realize it doesn't make sense to be making zero emission trucks and combustion trucks to serve the same market." The new rule is a big jump from the one the board had previously proposed, which would have ensured at least 4% of these trucks on the road were electric. Environmental groups complained the rule was not strong enough, and board members heard them...

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CALIFORNIA MARITIME ACADEMY GETS OK TO START LIMITED CLASSES

April 28, 2020 | AP News

VALLEJO — California Maritime State University Academy has received permission to resume limited in-person classes this semester and hopes to send 350 students and staff on its annual summer training cruise — a graduation requirement for cadets, the San Francisco Chronicle reported. Cal Maritime is a specialized campus of California State University offering licensed and non-licensed degree programs serving the maritime industry, including training ships' officers. The move to reopen it comes as California's other public colleges remain in remote learning mode.

Cal Maritime President Thomas Cropper said in a letter to the Vallejo campus Friday that the approval is for "a limited re-opening of our campus to resume face-to-face instruction" for completion of the spring 2020 semester. "This decision was run through the Chancellor's Office and various internal entities of the governor's office, including the State Department of Public Health, who provided additional guidance..."

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U.S. TRUMP SAYS HE WON'T EXTEND SOCIAL DISTANCING GUIDELINES

April 29, 2020 | AP News

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump said Wednesday the federal government will not be extending its coronavirus social distancing guidelines once they expire Thursday, and his son-in-law and adviser, Jared Kushner, predicted that by July the country will be “really rocking again.” Putting a positive face on the latest grim numbers — the U.S. death toll has now surpassed the Vietnam War — Trump delivered his daily upbeat update and Kushner described the administration’s much-criticized response to the pandemic as “a great success story.” Trump also talked up the good news the day provided: Hopeful results for a possible COVID-19 treatment. But the government announced dismal new economic numbers as the pandemic took hold and shut down much of the country. The U.S. economy shrank at a 4.8% annual rate in first quarter of the year — a precursor to far grimmer reports that are expected this summer from the severe recession triggered by the pandemic. The White House has been trying

Putting a positive face on the latest grim numbers — the U.S. death toll has now surpassed the Vietnam War — Trump delivered his daily upbeat update and Kushner described the administration’s much-criticized response to the pandemic as “a great success story.”

to pivot to a new stage of the crisis, focused on efforts to reopen the nation’s economy state-by-state amid concerns that lifting restrictions too quickly and without sufficient testing and contact tracing will spur a resurgence.

As part of that effort, Trump, who has both threatened to force states to reopen and said decisions will be left to them, said the White House will not be extending its “30 Days to Slow the Spread” guidelines when they expire Thursday. “They’ll be fading out because now the governors are doing it,” Trump told reporters in the Oval Office as he met with John Bel Edwards, the Democratic governor of Louisiana. Those guidelines — which were originally supposed to last 15 days and were then extended an

additional 30 — encouraged Americans to work from home and avoid restaurants and discretionary travel and advised older Americans and those with serious underlying health conditions to isolate themselves.

The White House Was Pointing to the Prospect of an Experimental Drug

Vice President Mike Pence said the guidelines have been incorporated into the new guidance issued by the White House earlier this month that lays out how states can gradually ease restrictions and begin to reopen as the rate of new cases slows. Edwards, who recently extended Louisiana’s stay-at-home order through May 15, is currently under fire from Republican lawmakers in his state after he extended Louisiana’s stay-at-home order through May 15. As he was in Washington, some GOP legislators were trying to rally support to take the extraordinary step of trying to override the governor’s emergency decision-making about the state’s outbreak.

The U.S. has dramatically increased its testing after a slow and rocky start, but many health experts say the country still must do more — as many as 5 million a day — to safely reopen the economy. Otherwise, they warn, cases will skyrocket as Americans return to work, creating another deadly spike.

But Trump commended Edwards on the job he’s done after New Orleans became one of the nation’s coronavirus hot spots. “I just wanted to congratulate you,” Trump said. The White House on Wednesday was also pointing to the prospect of an experimental drug, Remdesivir, which proved effective against the virus in a major new study run by the National Institutes of Health, shortening the time it takes for patients to recover by four days on average. Dr. Anthony Fauci, the nation’s top infectious diseases expert, said the drug reduced the time it takes patients to recover by 31% — 11 days on average versus 15 days for those just...

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FAUCI CALLS EXPERIMENTAL COVID-19 DRUG TREATMENT 'STANDARD OF CARE' AFTER PROMISING RESULTS

April 29, 2020 | AP News

Scientists on Wednesday announced the first effective treatment against the coronavirus — an experimental drug that can speed the recovery of COVID-19 patients — in a major medical advance that came as the economic gloom caused by the scourge deepened in the U.S. and Europe.

The U.S. government said it is working to make the antiviral medication remdesivir available to patients as quickly as possible. Stocks surged around the world on the news, with the Dow Jones Industrial average climbing more than 550 points, or over 2%, in the afternoon. “What it has proven is that a

drug can block this virus,” said Dr. Anthony Fauci, the U.S. government’s top infectious-disease expert. “This will be the standard of care.”

The news came as the U.S. government reported that American output is shriveling at an alarming rate in the biggest and fastest collapse since the Depression. The virus has killed over 220,000 people worldwide since December, including about 60,000 confirmed deaths in the U.S., and led to lockdowns and other restrictions that have closed factories and other businesses around the world. Amid the shutdowns...

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DOGS ARE BEING TRAINED TO SNIFF OUT CORONAVIRUS CASES

April 29, 2020 | [SF Gate](#)

As some states move to reopen after weeks of shutdowns, infectious disease experts say the prevention of future coronavirus outbreaks will depend on scaling up testing and identifying asymptomatic carriers.

Now, eight Labrador retrievers – and their powerful noses – have been enlisted to help. The dogs are the first trainees in a University of Pennsylvania research project to determine whether canines can detect an odor associated with the virus that causes covid-19.

If so, they might eventually be used in a sort of “canine surveillance” corps, the university said – offering a noninvasive, four-legged method to screen people in airports, businesses or hospitals. It would not be surprising if the dogs prove adept at detecting SARS-CoV-2. In addition to drugs, explosives and contraband food items, dogs are able to sniff...

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JOE BIDEN PICKS VETTING TEAM AS HE SEARCHES FOR RUNNING MATE

April 30, 2020 | AP News

WASHINGTON — Joe Biden announced Thursday the four co-chairs of his vice presidential vetting team, starting the search for his running mate in earnest. Former Connecticut Sen. Chris Dodd, Delaware Rep. Lisa Blunt Rochester, Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti and Apple executive and long-time Biden aide Cynthia Hogan will serve as co-chairs on the committee.

They’ll work with vetting teams led by former White House counsel Bob Bauer, campaign general counsel Dana Remus and former homeland security adviser Lisa Monaco to evaluate Biden’s options and collect information on each candidate to help him make his decision. “Selecting a vice presidential candidate is one of the most important decisions in a presidential campaign and no one knows this more than Joe Biden,” Biden campaign manager Jen O’Malley Dillon said in a statement. “These four co-chairs reflect the strength and...

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WORLD

US INTEL: CORONAVIRUS NOT MANMADE, STILL STUDYING LAB THEORY

April 30, 2020 | AP News

WASHINGTON — U.S. intelligence agencies have concluded that the new coronavirus was “not manmade or genetically modified” but say they are still examining whether the origins of the pandemic trace to contact with infected animals or an accident at a Chinese lab. The statement from the Office of the Director of

In recent days the Trump administration has sharpened its rhetoric on China, accusing the geopolitical foe and vital trading partner of failing to act swiftly enough to sound the alarm to the world about the outbreak or to stop the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19.

National Intelligence, the clearinghouse for the web of U.S. spy agencies, comes as President Donald Trump and his allies have touted the as-yet-unproven theory that an infectious disease lab in Wuhan, the epicenter of the Chinese outbreak, was the source of the global pandemic, which has killed more than

220,000 people worldwide. In recent days the Trump administration has sharpened its rhetoric on China, accusing the geopolitical foe and vital trading partner of failing to act swiftly enough to sound the alarm to the world about the outbreak or to stop the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19. The new statement says, “The Intelligence Community also concurs with the wide scientific consensus that the COVID-19 virus was not manmade or genetically modified.” “The IC will continue to rigorously examine emerging information and intelligence to determine whether the outbreak began through contact with infected animals or if it was the result of an accident at a laboratory in Wuhan.” Trump addressed the theory earlier this month, saying, “More and more, we’re hearing the story.” Secretary of State Mike Pompeo added, “The mere fact that we don’t know the answers — that China hasn’t shared the answers — I think is very, very telling.”

Pompeo also pressed China to let outside experts into the lab “so that we can determine precisely where this virus began.”

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Scientists Say the Virus Arose Naturally in Bats

While Trump and Pompeo have made public statements speculating about the lab, a U.S. intelligence official disputed the notion that there was any pressure on agencies to bolster a particular theory. The intelligence official was not authorized to publicly discuss the issue and spoke only on condition of anonymity. Scientists say the virus arose naturally in bats. Even so, Pompeo and others have pointed fingers at an institute that is run by the Chinese Academy of Sciences. It has done groundbreaking research tracing the likely origins of the SARS virus, finding new bat viruses and discovering how they could jump to people.

“We know that there is the Wuhan Institute of Virology just a handful of miles away from where the wet market was,” Pompeo said two weeks ago. The institute has an address 8 miles, or 13 kilometers, from the market that is considered a possible source. U.S. officials say the American Embassy in Beijing flagged concerns about potential safety issues at the lab in Wuhan in 2018, but they have yet to find any evidence the virus originated there nearly two years later.

The Chinese government said Thursday that any claims that the coronavirus was released from a laboratory are “unfounded and purely fabricated out of nothing.” Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang cited the institute’s director, Yuan Zhiming, as saying the lab strictly implements bio-security procedures that would prevent the release of any pathogen. “I would like to point out again that the origin of the virus is a complex scientific issue, and it should...

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NATIONS, US STATES EACH CHART THEIR OWN PATH ON REOPENING

April 27, 2020 | AP News

LONDON — A thinner-looking British Prime Minister Boris Johnson returned to work Monday after a bout with the coronavirus and warned strongly against easing the country's lockdown, even as other European countries and U.S. states began lifting restrictions to get their economies going again.

The shutdowns are being eased piecemeal, with governments charting their own path as they seek to reopen for business without triggering a second wave of infections. Hair salons, restaurants and beaches, for example, are opening in some states, while elsewhere such steps are weeks away. Johnson, recovering from an infection that nearly cost the

55-year-old his life, said Britain is starting to “turn the tide” on the outbreak but added that this is “the moment of maximum risk.” The country's lockdowns runs through at least May 7.

“I refuse to throw away all the effort and the sacrifice of the British people and to risk a second major outbreak and huge loss of life and the overwhelming of the NHS,” or National Health Service, he said. “I ask you to contain your impatience.” The official death toll topped 200,000 worldwide, with about 3 million confirmed infections, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University. The true toll is believed to be...

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AP File

WUHAN SHOWS THE WORLD THAT THE END OF LOCKDOWN IS JUST THE BEGINNING OF THE COVID-19 CRISIS

April 30, 2020 | CNN

All around the world, people are waiting for the announcement that the coronavirus pandemic is contained and they can return to normal life. But the Chinese city at the center of the pandemic has shown that normal might still be a long way off. When Wuhan officials eased outgoing travel restrictions on April 8, effectively ending the city's 76-day lockdown, residents and local businesses soon learned that city's actual reopening would be painfully slow.

Despite the lifting of most strict lockdown laws, many stores are still shut, restaurants are restricted to takeaway and even when citizens go outside they still wear protective equipment and try to avoid each other. The mood on the ground is very different to the official statements. At a press conference on April 8, Luo Ping, an epidemic control official in Wuhan said that some sectors of the city were already back to 100% resumption rate. In a meeting of the Wuhan government on April 25, they promised a “double victory” of...

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Q&A: WITH ROCK-BOTTOM PRICES, WILL THE OIL INDUSTRY RECOVER?

April 29, 2020 | AP News

NEW YORK — With a barrel of crude oil costing less than a New York pizza, many U.S. shale producers are being pushed to the brink of bankruptcy and experts are wondering when, and if, the oil industry will recover. The price of benchmark U.S. crude oil closed at \$12.34 a barrel Tuesday. At the start of the year, the price was around \$60. Demand for oil has been decimated by the coronavirus pandemic, especially as shelter-in-place orders reverberated around the globe.

“International travel, certainly by air, has essentially ceased, and that's shocking,” said Jim Burkhard, vice president, IHS Markit. The Energy Information Administration expects jet fuel use to fall 34% in the second quarter. In addition, the agency expects gasoline use to drop by 25% from April to June as drivers stay home instead of hitting the road during warmer weather. Oil prices were declining even before the pandemic hit as producers flooded the market with more...

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