



WEEKLY DIGEST  
MAY 22, 2020



**CITY OF FRESNO ENDS  
SHELTER-IN-PLACE  
EFFECTIVE TUESDAY »  
PANDEMIC FOOD STAMPS  
OFFER UP TO \$365 PER CHILD »  
AP-NORC POLL: AMERICANS  
HARBOR STRONG FEAR OF  
NEW INFECTIONS »**





# LOCAL

## CITY OF FRESNO ENDS SHELTER-IN-PLACE EFFECTIVE TUESDAY

May 21, 2020 | David Taub

Calling it a dramatic change in policy, Fresno Mayor Lee Brand announced in a Thursday news conference the end of the city's shelter-in-place order effective 12:01 a.m. Tuesday, May 26. The new COVID-19

**The new COVID-19 rules also ended a requirement that people wear a face mask in public, making it voluntary. Enforcement of the rule to wear a mask when shopping up will be left up to businesses.**

rules also ended a requirement that people wear a face mask in public, making it voluntary. Enforcement of the rule to wear a mask when shopping up will be left up to businesses. Restaurants can

open Tuesday — provided Fresno County receives approval to further reopen the economy from Gov. Gavin Newsom. "We hope that will be any day now," Brand said.

The mayor said that the new plan would protect residents vulnerable to the coronavirus while "getting our people back to work." Brand also said the new policies would create "the framework" for the opening of hair salons, barbershops, gyms, and tattoo parlors. "And we are doing our best to help people return to church."

(This story will be updated.)

**Related Story: Will Fresno County Reopen Under Newsom's New Guidelines?**

### Chavez's Proposal

Fresno City Councilman Luis Chavez floated a five-point plan this week to reopen the city, which would encourage only those vulnerable populations to shelter-in-place, and ease restrictions on businesses opening. Chavez's plan has not been placed on today's city council agenda, so it would need to come through an emergency meeting, a method council has used several times during the pandemic. In a late add to the agenda, the city council will consider exempt-

ing outdoor dining from environmental review laws. As Chavez will appear at the mayor's news conference, it's likely that some of his ideas have been incorporated into Brand's plan. Also scheduled to appear with Brand at the announcement are city council president Miguel Arias, District 2 councilman Mike Karbassi, and mayor-elect Jerry Dyer.

**Related Story: Clovis Won't Enforce State Nonessential Business Ban**

Other Counties Move to Advance Reopen  
Madera, Kings, Merced, and Kern counties were all given a green light from the state Wednesday to immediately reopen dine-in restaurants, retail stores, and other businesses shuttered by the pandemic. Fresno has been under a shelter-in-place order since March 19, the same day the state issued a similar order. The city has slowly eased restrictions on businesses. This week, all retail businesses were allowed to operate at some level, either with curbside pickup or restricted customer access for stores considered "low-traffic." Masks are required to shop, but enforcement is left up to the businesses.

### Council Refuses to Hear Alternate Proposal

The Fresno City Council was scheduled to hear an alternate plan at 10:15 a.m. from councilman Garry Bredefeld that would rescind 16 emergency orders enacted since March 16. In a procedural move, Arias removed the item from the agenda. Bredefeld asked for the hearing to be re-added. He did not receive a second to his motion. During his council report time, Bredefeld criticized the council and Brand for their handling of the pandemic.

**Brand also said the new policies would create "the framework" for the opening of hair salons, barbershops, gyms, and tattoo parlors.**

**Related Story: As COVID Cases Surge, Tulare County Reopens 'Effective Immediately'**

[READ MORE »](#)





## KINGS, MADERA, AND MERCED COUNTIES OK'D FOR RESTAURANT OPENINGS & MORE

May 20, 2020 | Randy Reed

More Valley communities are lifting COVID-19 restrictions as the state approves their plans for containing the deadly coronavirus. Madera, Kings, Merced and Kern counties were all given a green light from the state Wednesday to immediately reopen dine-in restaurants, retail stores and other local businesses shuttered by the pandemic.

Two counties were approved for “Expanded Stage 2” reopenings Wednesday morning under California Department of Public Health pandemic guidelines. Kings and Kern counties were granted permission to widen business activity later in the day. Fresno County submitted its reopening plan to the state health department on Tuesday and is waiting for review by the state. “The county submitted documentation to the state on Tuesday, May 19th confirming the county’s ability to meet the

readiness criteria set by the Governor and it was approved by the state this morning,” Madera County officials announced in a news release.

### Restaurants, Malls and Outdoor Spaces Can Reopen

The news that Merced County has been approved for wider reopenings was welcomed by Supervisor Lloyd Pareira, though he said it should have come earlier. “My dad always said, ‘Hindsight is 20/20’ and here we are in 2020, looking back I think we should have started reopening 4 or 5 weeks ago.” Pareira said in an email to GV Wire. Still, he acknowledged that lifting shelter in place restrictions brings risks. “We know that as we reopen our commerce the number of Covid-19 cases are going to increase, that’s why we are opening cautiously,” Pareira said. “We don’t want to overwhelm our system’s...

[READ MORE »](#)

## VOHRA MAKES FACE MASKS VOLUNTARY AFTER SUPERVISORS PUSH BACK

May 20, 2020 | Jim Jakobs and Bill McEwen

Dr. Rais Vohra, interim Fresno County health officer, is amending his early order requiring all residents to wear cloth face masks while shopping or indoors at work. Instead, county residents are encouraged to wear face coverings in those situations. Vohra’s original order, which was signed Monday but didn’t become public until today, generated pushback from Fresno County District 2 Supervisor Steve Brandau and other supervisors.

Brandau vowed to fight the original order — and succeeded. “Please note that the masking guidance in the updated Health Officer Order is a recommendation, NOT a mandate. We are in the process of clarifying the language ... from ‘All residents shall use cloth masks ...’ to ‘All residents should use cloth masks,’ ” Fresno County spokesman Jordan Scott said in a news release. “While this masking guidance is not a mandate, we continue to urge the public to voluntarily comply with the masking recommendations in the interests of public health and safety and...

[READ MORE »](#)



Shutterstock



Clovis Community Hospital

## AFTER FIGHTING FOR HER LIFE, CLOVIS COMMUNITY COVID PATIENT GOES HOME

May 20, 2020 | Jim Jakobs

After 35 days on a ventilator battling COVID-19, Karen Parker-Bryant is resting comfortably at home. Parker-Bryant was admitted to Clovis Community Medical Center on April 2. She missed her 64th birthday on April 16th because she was in a battle for her life. As her condition got worse, hope arrived in the form of a promising new drug that may have saved her life.

The drug — remdesivir from Gilead Sciences Inc. — marked a turning point for Parker-Bryant. When she left the hospital on Tuesday, she had one thing on her mind. “I’m going to find me a piece of chicken,” Parker-Bryant said before getting in a car to finally leave the campus.

### Initial Symptoms

Parker-Bryant says she woke up one morning and felt freezing cold. “I was stiff as a board, I couldn’t move, and I could barely breathe,” says Parker-Bryant. “That’s when I realized that I was really really sick, but I had no idea that I was this sick.” Parker...

[READ MORE »](#)





# STATE PANDEMIC FOOD STAMPS OFFER UP TO \$365 PER CHILD

May 20, 2020 | CalMatters

Families with children who qualify for free or reduced-price meals at their schools — regardless of immigration status — may notice something in the mail to help them buy groceries. California is issuing one-time food stamps with credits of up to \$365 per child to help qualifying families get through the coronavirus outbreak. The Pandemic-Electronic Benefit Transfer card, or P-EBT, from the Department of Social Services is an emergency disaster benefit that can be used to buy

food and groceries, including online at Walmart and Amazon.

**The timing of this extra boost comes as many families struggle to provide nutritious meals for their children while schools are closed in response to the novel coronavirus.**

The first cards arrived last week for families receiving CalFresh, Medi-Cal or foster care benefits as a supplement to their EBT card. The

second phase, which starts Friday, requires low-income families to apply at <https://ca.p-ebt.org/>. The deadline to apply is June 30. The timing of this extra boost comes as many families struggle to provide nutritious meals for their children while schools are closed in response to the novel coronavirus.

Betzabe Castillo, who has a 9-year-old son at a public school in Stockton was among the first to receive the P-EBT cards. She welcomes the help since her husband is the only one bringing in an income. Their rent is nearly \$2,000 a month. "It is very difficult because rent does not wait, the bills do not either," Castillo said. "We are surviving day to day." Berenice Burgos, who has two children, ages 9 and 4, also received a P-EBT card last week. She wasn't aware of the extra help but was grateful when it arrived in the mail. "Right now I am not working and my husband, who is a mechanic, got his hours cut," said Burgos, who lives in Concord. "It is very good help, especially for my children — to buy their milk, cereal and fruit because they want to eat all day."

## Much Needed Help While Schools Are Closed

Jason Montiel, a spokesman for the social services department, said the state is offering additional assistance to children who are eligible for free or reduced price meals while school is closed. The cards are distributed in two phases. The first batch of about 2 million went to families who enrolled in CalFresh, Medi-Cal, or foster care. "

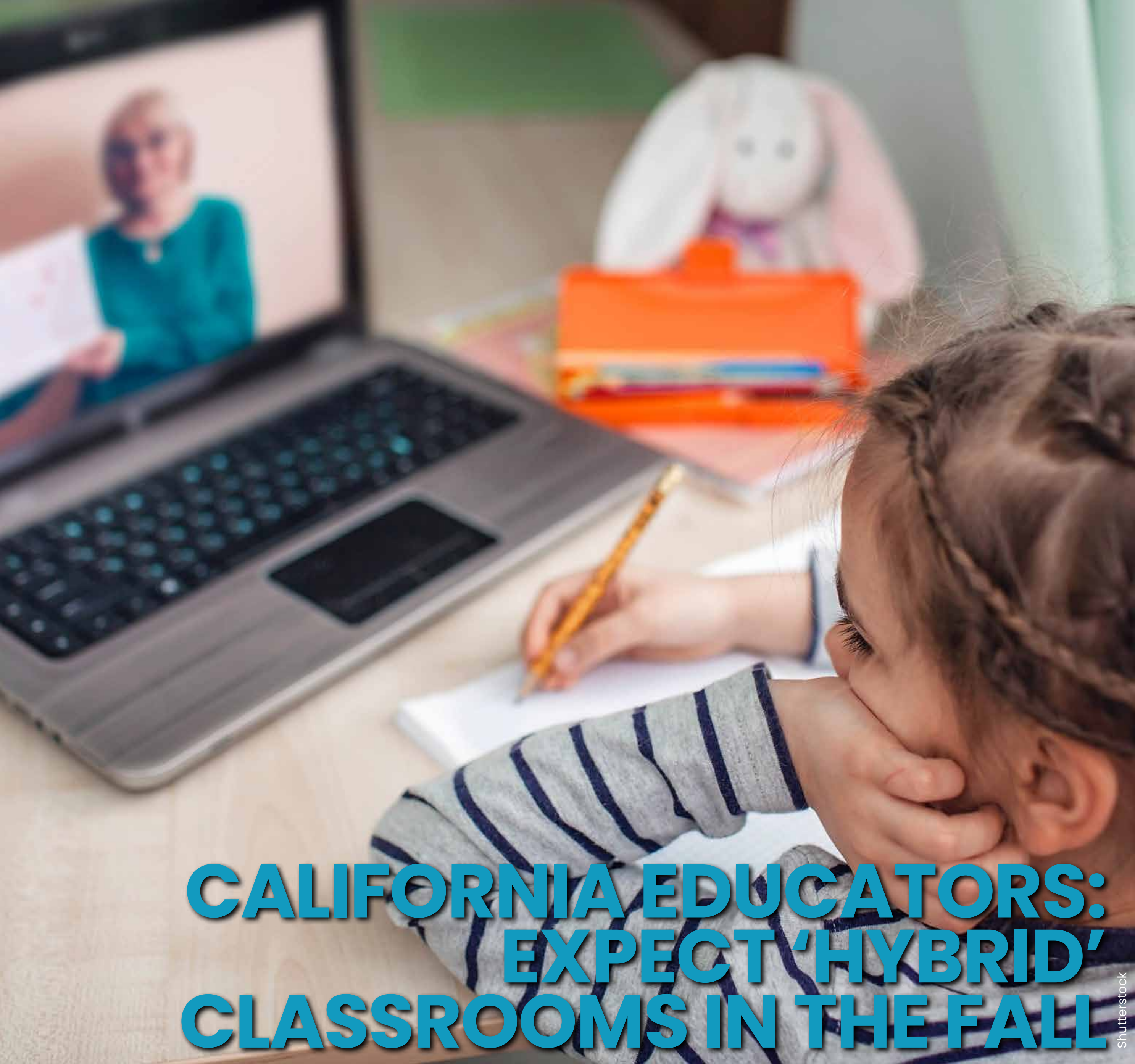
**Jason Montiel, a spokesman for the social services department, said the state is offering additional assistance to children who are eligible for free or reduced price meals while school is closed.**

For this phase, the beneficiaries do not have to do anything and the card will be mailed to them," Montiel said. The second phase requires residents to apply. The state projects an additional 1.8 million more children are eligible. State officials say the card is available to eligible families regardless of a student's immigration status or their parents' status. It also doesn't impact whether children are picking up grab-and-go meals from schools.

The food card isn't considered a public charge by the Department of Homeland Security. However, the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services may consider several factors under its public charge test. Those who have questions should seek legal advice. State officials also want recipients to be on alert for scams. Since the P-EBT cards began arriving in the mail, some recipients have received calls from people posing as social service representatives seeking personal information. "The Department of Social Services will not contact clients or ask for personal information," said Montiel. "We will not request a Social Security Number or any document that is shared with us." For more information about the P-EBT card visit: <https://ca.p-ebt.org/en/info>. Those interested should apply between May 22 and June 30: <https://ca.p-ebt.org/>. If you have...

[READ MORE »](#)





## CALIFORNIA EDUCATORS: EXPECT 'HYBRID' CLASSROOMS IN THE FALL

May 21, 2020 | AP News

SAN FRANCISCO — The California schools superintendent said Wednesday he expects school for the state's 6 million students to resume as usual in late August or September but with classes that look radically different to maintain social distancing standards.

Superintendent Tony Thurmond said he expects a mix of in-person and distance learning with fewer children in classes, hallways and other common areas as campuses try to halt the spread of the coronavirus. Students will likely wear masks, as will teachers and staff. University of California President Janet Napolitano gave a similar forecast Wednesday.

day for how the system's 10 campuses may look come fall, telling a Board of Regents meeting she expects "most if not all of our campuses will operate in some kind of hybrid mode." Campuses are still making decisions on their fall scenarios, which may be finalized in June, she said.

News that K-12 school districts were planning to open as usual in late summer is likely a relief to parents, although the changes required to welcome back students appear daunting. Thurmond said there's no way schools can open safely without enough masks, sanitizer and wash stations. He made his remarks in advance of a virtual meeting Thursday with...

[READ MORE »](#)



GV Wire File

## 1,200 CALIFORNIA PASTORS SAY THEY'LL REOPEN CHURCHES MAY 31

May 21, 2020 | AP News

SACRAMENTO — More than 1,200 California pastors say they will resume in-person services on May 31 in defiance of Gov. Gavin Newsom's stay-at-home order to slow the spread of the new coronavirus. Newsom has gradually allowed some businesses to reopen as the state's number of virus-related hospitalizations has flattened. But churches are still banned, along with hair salons and sporting events. Newsom said Monday churches could reopen in weeks, not months.

But many churches are tired of waiting. Wednesday, a lawyer representing a church in Lodi that has sued Newsom said more than 1,200 pastors have signed a "declaration of essentiality" that announces their plan to reopen on May 31 while observing physical distancing and other precautions. Attorney Robert Tyler said some pastors represent multiple churches. He expects as many as 3,000 churches across California could have in-person services on May 31. "This letter was not sent for the purposes of asking for permission..."

[READ MORE »](#)

## TINY BUGS CAN BE VALLEY DRINKING WATER HEROES, BUT AT WHAT PRICE?

May 21, 2020 | SJV Water

If you have a small, drinking water system in the Central Valley that's full of nitrates, and there are plenty, a company has some bugs to sell you. Specifically, a company called Microvi is looking for a demonstration project in the Valley to show that its "biological denitrification" process is feasible for small systems. Bio denitrification runs water through media embedded with microbes that "eat" nitrates and convert the chemical to nitrogen gas.

Unlike other nitrate removal processes, bio denitrification doesn't leave a pile of expensive hazardous waste. Clean water, no waste stream. What's the catch? The cost. Microvi has a grant to cover the cost of its equipment, but the water system has to pay the cost of the ongoing operation. There are nearly 700 community water systems in the San Joaquin Valley, according to a 2018 UC Davis study, "The Struggle for Water Justice." Most serve fewer than 200 connections each. That means there aren't many customers to help pay...

[READ MORE »](#)







# POLL: AMERICANS HARBOR STRONG FEAR OF NEW INFECTIONS

May 21, 2020 | AP News

DES MOINES, Iowa — Strong concern about a second wave of coronavirus infections is reinforcing widespread opposition among Americans to reopening public places, a new poll finds, even as many state leaders step up efforts to return to life before the pandemic. Yet support for public health restrictions imposed to control the virus's spread is no longer overwhelming. It has been eroded over the past month by a widening partisan divide, with Democrats more cautious and Republicans less anxious as President Donald Trump urges states to "open up our country," according to the new survey from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

The poll finds that 83% of Americans are at least somewhat concerned that lifting restrictions in their area will lead to additional infections, with 54% saying they are very or extremely concerned that such steps will result in a spike of COVID-19 cases. "Oh, I'd like to get my

**The poll finds that 83% of Americans are at least somewhat concerned that lifting restrictions in their area will lead to additional infections, with 54% saying they are very or extremely concerned that such steps will result in a spike of COVID-19 cases.**

hair and nails done. It's one of those little pleasures you take for granted," said Kathy Bishop, a 59-year-old billing specialist who had pneumonia two years ago. "But I'm just going to suck it up. It's not worth the risk." Bishop lives in the western suburbs of Columbus, Ohio, a state where Republican Gov. Mike

DeWine is among the state chief executives leading a gradual reopening of businesses such as salons, barber-shops, restaurants and bars. But even after nine weeks spent at home, Bishop is among the solid majority of Americans who support rigorous criteria for economic reopening that goes beyond wearing masks in public places and continued social distancing. About 8 in 10 Americans say that it's essential to reopening for people

to return to self-quarantine if they are exposed to the virus. Roughly 6 in 10 also say having widespread testing for the coronavirus in their area is essential to reestablishing public activities, along with requiring people to keep 6 feet apart in most places and to wear face masks when they're near others outside their homes.

**While Some Americans Are Anxious to Get Back to Business as Usual, Most Don't See the Country Returning Anytime Soon**

Nearly as telling as the public's appetite for rigorous precaution: Close to half say it is essential that a vaccine be available before public life resumes. A third say that's important but not essential. Taken together, the findings suggest that while some Americans are anxious to get back to business as usual, most don't see the country returning anytime soon to what once was considered normal. Instead, Americans largely envision a protracted period of physical distancing, covered faces and intermittent quarantines ahead, perhaps until a vaccine is available.

Joe Yeskewicz, of Middleboro, Massachusetts, said he believes a vaccine is a must for his town of 23,000 south of Boston to fully reopen. He's among the nearly 8 in 10 Americans who don't expect one to be ready before the end of the year. "It is so novel, so unpredictable and so terribly, terribly contagious," the 76-year-old retired teacher and college professor said of the virus. "The vaccine predictably could take years because it has to undergo a vigorous testing program for it to be effective and safe. Regardless of the optimism, this is going to take a while." The latest AP-NORC survey...

**While still resolute, support for such measures to contain the coronavirus has slipped in the past month — 80% were in favor of stay-at-home orders in April. The new survey found that 69% now favor restricting gatherings to 10 people or fewer, down from 82% in April.**

[READ MORE »](#)





## ASTRONAUTS ARRIVE FOR NASA'S 1ST HOME LAUNCH IN DECADE

AP/John Raoux

May 21, 2020 | AP News

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — The two astronauts who will end a nine-year launch drought for NASA arrived at Kennedy Space Center on Wednesday, exactly one week before their historic SpaceX flight. It will be the first time a private company, rather than a national government, sends astronauts into orbit.

NASA test pilots Doug Hurley and Bob Behnken flew to Florida from their home base in Houston aboard one of the space agency's jets. "It's an incredible time for NASA and the space program, once again launching U.S. crews from Florida

and hopefully in just a week from about right now," Hurley told reporters minutes after arriving. Hurley was one of the four astronauts who arrived at Kennedy on July 4, 2011, for the final space shuttle flight, "so it's incredibly humbling to be here to start out the next launch from the United States."

"We feel it as an opportunity but also a responsibility for the American people, for the SpaceX team, for all of NASA," Behnken added. The two are scheduled to blast off next Wednesday afternoon atop a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket, bound for the International Space Station. They'll soar from the...

[READ MORE »](#)



Shutterstock

## TRUMP ADMINISTRATION CUTS ROYALTY RATES FOR OIL AND GAS

May 21, 2020 | AP News

BILLINGS, Mont. — The Trump administration has started giving energy companies temporary breaks on royalties and rent they pay to extract oil and gas from leases on public lands because of the coronavirus pandemic. The move drew quick criticism as a handout to industry that will mean less money for state governments. A Democratic lawmaker called for an investigation into whether the breaks were justified.

Government data shows companies in Utah receiving steep cuts in the standard 12.5% royalty rate, to as low as 2.5% of the value of the oil and gas they produce. More reductions are expected in the coming days in other states with oil and gas activity on federal lands, primarily in the western U.S. The Interior Department's Bureau of Land Management said last month that royalty-rate cuts were possible if companies could show they could not successfully operate public energy leases economically or can't maintain enough employees...

[READ MORE »](#)

## APPLE, GOOGLE RELEASE TECHNOLOGY FOR PANDEMIC APPS

May 21, 2020 | AP News

Apple and Google on Wednesday released long-awaited smartphone technology to automatically notify people if they might have been exposed to the coronavirus. The companies said 22 countries and several U.S. states are already planning to build voluntary phone apps using their software. It relies on Bluetooth wireless technology to detect when someone who downloaded the app has spent time near another app user who later tests positive for the virus.

Many governments have already tried, mostly unsuccessfully, to roll out their own phone apps to fight the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many of those apps have encountered technical problems on Apple and Android phones and haven't been widely adopted. They often use GPS to track people's location, which Apple and Google are banning from their new tool because of privacy and accuracy concerns. Public health agencies from Germany to the states of...

[READ MORE »](#)







# WORLD

## OFFICIAL: FBI FINDS LINK BETWEEN PENSACOLA GUNMAN, AL-QAIDA

May 18, 2020 | AP News

The FBI has found a link between the gunman in a deadly attack at a military base last December and an al-Qaida operative, a U.S. official said Monday.

Attorney General William Barr and FBI Director Chris Wray were set to hold a news conference to announce developments in the shooting late last year at the Pensacola Naval Air Station, in which a Saudi Air Force officer killed three U.S. sailors and injured eight other people. The FBI declined to comment ahead of the news conference.

The contacts between the shooter, Mohammed Alshamrani, and the al-Qaida operative were discovered on the shooter's phone, according to the official, who was not authorized to discuss the case by name and spoke on the condition of anonymity.

Alshamrani, who was killed by a sheriff's deputy during the rampage at a classroom building, was undergoing flight training at Pensacola, where members of foreign militaries routinely receive instruction.

The Justice Department had previously asked Apple to help extract data from two iPhones that belonged to the gunman, including one that authorities say Alshamrani damaged with a bullet after being confronted by law enforcement. It was not immediately clear how the FBI and Justice Department were able to ultimately access the phone. In January, U.S. Officials Announced That They Were Sending Home 21 Saudi Military Students

Law enforcement officials left no doubt that Alshamrani was motivated by jihadist ideology, saying he visited

a New York City memorial to the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, over the Thanksgiving holiday weekend and posted anti-American and anti-Israeli messages on social media just two hours before the shooting.

Separately, al-Qaida's branch in Yemen, released a video claiming the attack. The branch, al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula, or AQAP, has long been considered the global network's most dangerous branch and has attempted to carry out attacks on the U.S. mainland.

In January, U.S. officials announced that they were sending home 21 Saudi military students after an investigation revealed that they had had jihadist or anti-American sentiments on social media pages or had "contact with child pornography."

Barr said at the time that Saudi Arabia had agreed to review the conduct of all 21 to see if they should face military discipline and to send back anyone the U.S. later determines should face charges.

**Law enforcement officials left no doubt that Alshamrani was motivated by jihadist ideology, saying he visited a New York City memorial to the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, over the Thanksgiving holiday weekend and posted anti-American and anti-Israeli messages on social media just two hours before the shooting.**

[READ MORE »](#)





May 20, 2020 | AP News

FAIRLESS HILLS, Pa. — Johnson & Johnson is ending sales of its iconic talc-based Johnson’s Baby Powder in the U.S. and Canada, where demand has dwindled amid thousands of lawsuits claiming it has caused cancer.

The world’s biggest maker of health care products said Tuesday the talc-based powder will still be sold outside the U.S. and Canada. “Demand for talc-based Johnson’s Baby Powder in North America has been declining due in large part to changes in consumer habits and fueled by misinformation around the safety of the product and a constant barrage of litigation advertising,” the company said.

J&J faces about 19,400 cases alleging its talcum powder caused users to develop ovarian cancer, through use for feminine hygiene, or mesothelioma, a cancer that strikes the lungs and other organs. Of the cases that have been tried, J&J has had 12 wins, 15 losses, and seven mistrials. All of the losses have either been overturned on appeal or are still being appealed.

The company insists, and the overwhelming majority of medical research on talc indicates, that the talc baby powder is safe and doesn’t cause cancer. “Whether or not the powder actually causes cancer, people became hesitant to use...

[READ MORE »](#)



## SEN. FEINSTEIN: ANNEXATION WILL HAVE CONSEQUENCES FOR ISRAEL’S SECURITY

May 18, 2020 | [The Jerusalem Post](#)

WASHINGTON – Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-California) sent a letter earlier this month to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, warning him that annexing parts of the West Bank “will result in long-term costs to Israel’s national security and diplomatic relationships.”

Feinstein sent the letter to Netanyahu on May 6, and her office posted it on her website over the weekend. She congratulated the prime minister for forming a unity government, before moving to discuss the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. “I also want to express my concern about the implications of Israel unilaterally annexing territory in the West Bank,” the letter read.

“As you know, the security of Israel and the US-Israeli relationship are both deeply important and personal for me,” the senator continued. “America’s relationship with Israel is founded upon a shared set of democratic values, including...

[READ MORE »](#)



## WHY BOMBS MADE IN AMERICA HAVE BEEN KILLING CIVILIANS IN YEMEN

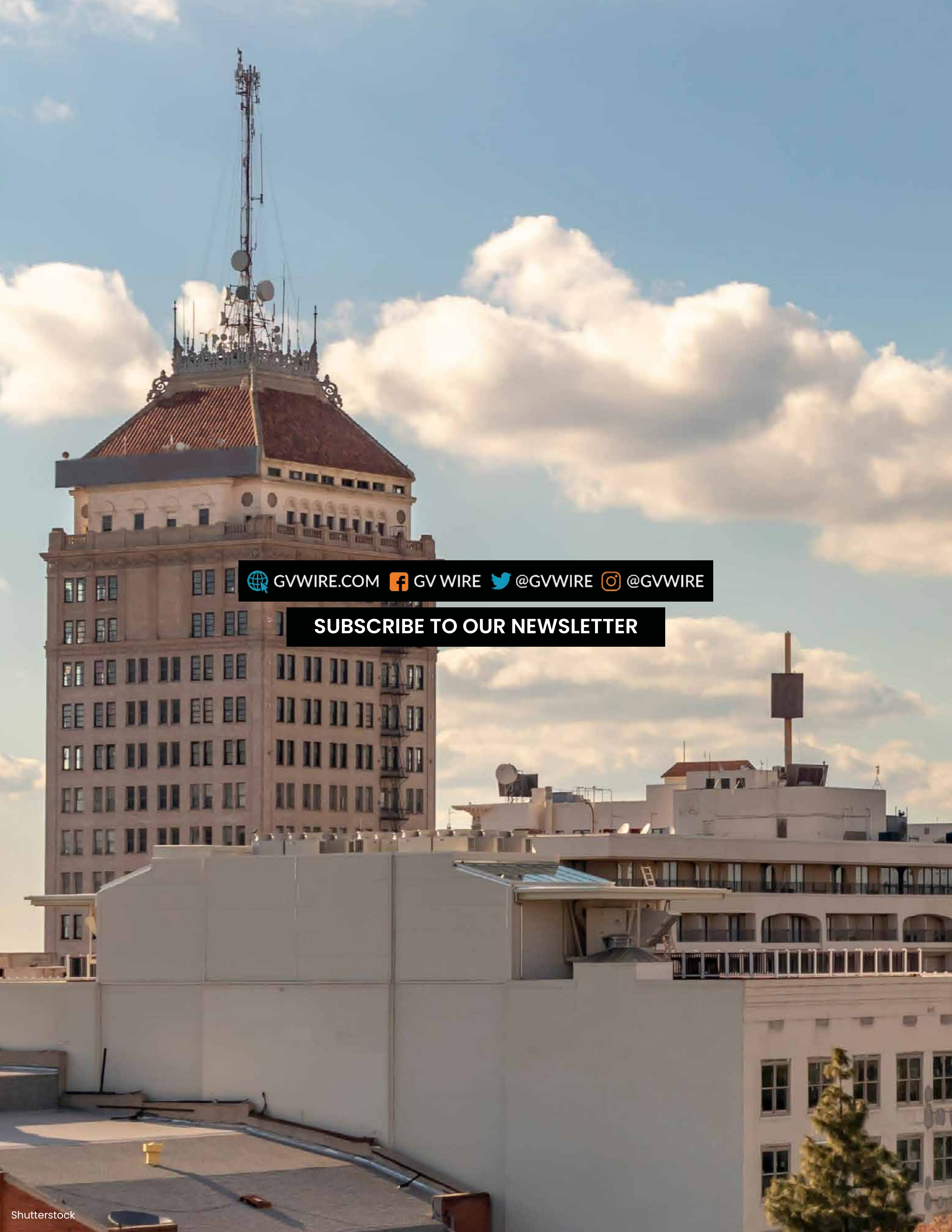
May 18, 2020 | [The New York Times](#)

Year after year, the bombs fell — on wedding tents, funeral halls, fishing boats and a school bus, killing thousands of civilians and helping turn Yemen into the world’s worst humanitarian crisis. Weapons supplied by American companies, approved by American officials, allowed Saudi Arabia to pursue the reckless campaign. But in June 2017, an influential Republican senator decided to cut them off, by withholding approval for new sales. It was a moment that might have stopped the slaughter.

Not under President Trump. With billions at stake, one of the president’s favored aides, the combative trade adviser Peter Navarro, made it his mission to reverse the senator. Mr. Navarro, after consulting with American arms makers, wrote a memo to Jared Kushner and other top White House officials calling for an intervention, possibly by Mr. Trump himself. He titled it “Trump Mideast arms sales deal in extreme...

[READ MORE »](#)





GVWIRE.COM



GV WIRE



@GVWIRE



@GVWIRE

**SUBSCRIBE TO OUR NEWSLETTER**