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WEEKLY DIGEST
AUGUST 21, 2020

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INJURED HIKERS BRING OUT BEST IN MADERA SHERIFF'S SAR TEAM

August 27, 2020 | Bill McEwen

Injured hikers are keeping the search-and-rescue team at the Madera County Sheriff's Office busy. Last Saturday, 20 members res-

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dent then was carried on a litter.

Aug. 15: A Day to Remember for Rescuers

On Saturday, Aug. 15, crew members pulled off three Sierra rescues in back-to-back-to-back fashion:

— A 40-year-old woman who suffered major injuries on the Willow Creek Trail between Angel Falls and Devil's Slide was reached and taken to a Fresno hospital.

— Another 40-year-old woman experienced a medical issue on Lewis Creek Trail. Rescue crews brought her to family members, who took over care.

— A 40-year-old man was injured on Big Rainier Creek bear Fish Camp. Sierra Ambulance transported him to John C. Fremont Hospital in Mariposa for treatment.

Then, on Tuesday, Aug. 18, a 43-year-old man suffered serious injuries at Angel Falls. After

an extended rescue effort, he was transported by SkyLife to a Community Regional Medical Center in Fresno.

What's Causing All These Rescues?

Madera County isn't alone in being called in for more rescues than normal. Orange County officials report that their sheriff's and fire rescue teams have answered 225% more calls the past two months than in 2018-19. "With gyms closed (by the coronavirus) and options for exercise limited, many people have been recreating outdoors on local hiking trails," said Orange County Sheriff Don Barnes. "While this is a great alternative for staying active, the combination of an increase in the number of hikers and the excessive heat we have been experiencing has led to a record number of search-and-rescue calls."

The Keys to Hiking Safety

While in the mountains, the Madera County Sheriff's Office asks that hikers STOP and think:

S – Stay together. Most search-and-rescue emergencies happen when parties split up. Stay with your partners until you return to the trailhead.

**"Without the participation of volunteers, the highly effective and professional Search and Rescue teams that make up the unit would not be possible."
— Madera County Sheriff's Office**

T – Turn around before it's too late. The only cure for altitude sickness is a rapid descent. If you feel sick, turn around. With the increased temperatures, a slight elevation change...

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'I HAVE TO FIGHT': FRESNO SALON OWNER OPENS DOORS IN DEFIANCE OF STATE

August 26, 2020 | Bill McEwen

Even as local leaders marshal more resources and team up to tackle homelessness, the number of people living on the streets of Fresno has climbed 45%. That's the big takeaway from Wednesday's announcement of the point-in-time homeless count conducted in late January in Fresno and Madera counties.

This year's snapshot of homelessness indicated there were 3,641 homeless people, including 960 in shelters. That compares to 2,508 homeless people — 439 in shelters — in 2019. "We did experience a significant increase" in homelessness, said Laura Moreno, chair of the Fresno Madera Continuum of Care,

during a Zoom news conference.

738 People Obtain Permanent Housing

But the count mandated by HUD doesn't tell the whole story. By adding emergency beds and permanent housing, and expanding outreach to homeless people, local agencies enabled 738 people to move into permanent housing. Another 246 residents moved off the streets into

temporary arrangements such as living with friends. Last year, the Fresno-Madera homeless population rose by about 350. In good news, the city of Madera...

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COMMUNITY REGIONAL OFFERS HOPE AND 'BRIDGE' TO RELIEF FROM OPIOIDS

August 23, 2020 | Sponsored by Community Medical Centers

Tremors would tip him off. Then anxiety would creep in, tightening his stomach and making his heart pound. Then, Paul Yopez said, he felt like he was going to explode with pain and he'd usually drop to the ground twitching and moaning. For a decade the 54-year-old former hospital...

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FLU SHOTS ARE HERE, BUT IS IT TOO EARLY TO GET ONE?

August 21, 2020 | Jim Jakobs

Pharmacies have already started their ad campaigns urging you to get a flu shot. And, CVS and Walgreens began giving shots this week in Fresno and Clovis. Health officials in California are concerned about the confluence of the coronavirus and flu, noting a substantial decline in child vaccination rates since the pandemic. But, is it too early to get a seasonal flu shot since it's only effective for about six months?

Fresno County Department of Public Health

Local public health officials say that everyone should get the flu vaccine this year. "There's no excuse not to," interim Fresno County health officer Dr. Rais Vohra told reporters on a Zoom call Friday afternoon. "It's not too early for people to start thinking about it..."

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STATE

LAWMAKERS PROPOSE RATEPAYER FEE EXTENSION FOR FIGHTING WILDFIRES

August 27, 2020 | CalMatters

Facing another catastrophic wildfire season, state lawmakers are proposing last-minute legislation to tap into a utility-bill fee to free up \$500 million for training firefighters and other immediate steps. The proposed legislation also sets aside \$2.5 billion for future projects relat-

The bill would extend a fee until 2045 that has been added to electrical customers' bills since last year to create a \$21 billion insurance fund to pay for utility-caused fire damage.

ed to handling wildfires and adapting to climate change. The bill would extend a fee until 2045 that has been added to electrical customers' bills since last year to create a \$21 billion

insurance fund to pay for utility-caused fire damage. Lawmakers say the cost to ratepayers would be less than \$1 dollar a month.

The bill was introduced Tuesday night and authored by Assemblymembers Kevin Mullin, a Democrat from San Francisco, and Richard Bloom, a Democrat from Santa Monica, against the backdrop of more than two-dozen major wildfires burning across the state. "It would be negligent for the Legislature to end our session without taking immediate action to generate more resources for battling wildfires across California and mitigating the resulting environmental damage," Mullin said in a statement. "It is also imperative that we better prepare our state for longer and more dangerous fire seasons to come." Despite the urgency of the fire siege, the proposal faces potential headwinds: It's coming in the midst of a busy legislative moment when

a rush of bills must be considered before the end of session on Monday. Because it involves extending an existing fee, the measure requires a two-thirds vote of both chambers to be approved.

The Proposal Envisions Immediate and Longer-Term Uses for the Funds

"I'm not naive, a two-thirds vote is difficult to achieve," Bloom said. "The clock is ticking, and that adds an added dimension. But this is a priority that everyone understands. We are all looking for ways to be responsive." The proposal envisions immediate and longer-term uses for the funds. At first, \$500 million would be borrowed from a state surplus to pay for training new firefighters and projects that reduce wildfire risk, to begin a month after the bill is signed into law.

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Proponents say the money would be paid back at the end of the fiscal year with the proceeds of a revenue bond. The second step, to be developed in six months, allocates funds for a long list of priorities, including home-hardening strategies such as fire-resistant roofs, clearing trees and brush to create defensible space around buildings. The bill prioritizes public safety projects in low-income communities...

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NEWSOM ANNOUNCES DEAL TO BOOST COVID TESTING AND LOWER COSTS

August 26, 2020 | By AP File

SACRAMENTO — California has signed a contract worth up to \$1.4 billion with a company to provide a significantly cheaper coronavirus test that will allow the state to eventually more than double the number of people tested to 250,000 per day, Gov. Gavin Newsom announced Wednesday.

California now averages about 100,000 tests per day, with the state paying \$100 per test and results taking between five and seven business days. Newsom said the state's contract with Massachu-

setts-based PerkinElmer will increase the state's testing capacity to a quarter-million per day with each test costing about \$31. Results would come within two days.

The contract will initially cost the state \$100 million, with a maximum amount of \$1.4 billion, according to the Newsom administration. The goal is to begin processing tens of thousands of new tests by November and reach at full capacity by March. "Supply chains across the country have slowed as demand...

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CAN MOSQUITOES SPREAD THE CORONAVIRUS?

August 26, 2020 | AP News

Can mosquitoes spread the coronavirus? No. While mosquitoes can spread some diseases, most notably malaria and West Nile, experts say COVID-19 is not among them. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says it has no data to suggest the coronavirus is spread by either mosquitoes or ticks.

COVID-19 is mainly spread from person to person through droplets people spray when they talk, cough, or sneeze. And, the World Health Organization says a mosquito bite won't give you the virus. But why not, if mosquitoes can transmit other diseases? A recent study offers an explanation. Researchers say the virus would have to infect the mosquito and multiply inside of it in order for the...

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AP Illustration

MAN CHARGED WITH SHOOTING ELEPHANT SEAL NEAR SAN SIMEON

August 26, 2020 | AP News

LOS ANGELES — A 30-year-old-man was charged Tuesday with shooting and killing a protected northern elephant seal on a California beach, federal prosecutors said. Jordan Gerbich, of Santa Maria, faces one count of taking a marine mammal, according to a statement from the U.S. Attorney's Office. It wasn't immediately known if Gerbich has an attorney. Investigators did not describe a motive.

The elephant seal was found dead from a gunshot to the head on a beach near San Simeon last September. The area is popular viewing area along the central coast where visitors can observe the enormous seals, which can weigh more than 1,000 pounds. The animals are a protected species under the Marine...

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U.S. OFFICIALS CHANGE VIRUS TESTING ADVICE, BEWILDERING EXPERTS

August 26, 2020 | AP News

NEW YORK — U.S. health officials have sparked a wave of confusion after posting guidelines that coronavirus testing is not necessary for people who have been in close contact with infected people. The new guidance was posted earlier this week on the website of a federal agency, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The CDC previously had advised local health departments to test people who have been within 6 feet of an infected person for more than 15 minutes. But on Monday a CDC testing overview page was changed to say that testing is no longer recommended for symptom-less people who were in close contact situations.

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questions to the agency's parent organization, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in Washington, D.C. That suggests that HHS ordered the change, not CDC, said Jennifer Nuzzo, a Johns Hopkins University public health researcher. After twitter lit up with

head-scratching and alarm about the change, HHS officials sent an email Wednesday saying the guidance was revised "to reflect current evidence and the best public health interventions," but did not detail what the new evidence was. The officials also said they wanted to emphasize that people should follow measures designed to help stop spread of the virus, like wearing a mask, staying at least 6 feet apart from others and washing hands.

Across the country, public health experts called the change bizarre. They noted that testing contacts of infected people is a core element of public health efforts to keep outbreaks in check, and that a large percentage of infected people — the CDC has said as many as 40% — exhibit no symptoms.

Across the Country, Public Health Experts Called the Change Bizarre

The decision came out of meetings of a White House coronavirus task force, the email said. HHS officials also scheduled a briefing for Wednesday afternoon to answer questions. Across the country, public health experts called the change bizarre. They noted that testing contacts of infected people is a core element of public health efforts to keep outbreaks in check, and that a large percentage of infected people — the CDC has said as many as 40% — exhibit no symptoms. "I was taken aback and didn't know that it was under consideration," said John Auerbach, president of Trust for America's Health, a nonprofit that works to improve U.S. preparedness against disease. "The...

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TRUMP LASHES BIDEN, DEFIES PANDEMIC ON WHITE HOUSE STAGE

August 28, 2020 | AP News

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump blasted Joe Biden as a hapless career politician who will endanger Americans’ safety as he accepted his party’s renomination on the South Lawn of the White House.

While the coronavirus kills 1,000 Americans each day, Trump defied his own administration’s pandemic guidelines to speak for more than an hour to a tightly packed, largely maskless crowd. Facing a mo-

ment fraught with racial turmoil, economic collapse and a national health emergency, Trump delivered a triumphant, optimistic vision of America’s future Thursday. But he said that brighter horizon could only be secured if he defeated his Democratic foe, who currently has an advantage in most national and battleground state polls.

“We have spent the last four years reversing the damage Joe Biden inflicted over the last 47...

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AP File

POLL: MANY IN US SHORING UP FINANCES AMID DOWNTURN

August 25, 2020 | AP News

WASHINGTON — It’s the paradox of a pandemic that has crushed the U.S. economy: 12.9 million lost jobs and a dangerous rash of businesses closing, yet the personal finances of many Americans have remained strong — and in some ways have even improved.

A new poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research finds that 45% of Americans say they’re setting aside more money than usual. Twenty-six percent are paying down debt faster than they were before the coronavirus pandemic. In total, about half of Americans say they’ve either saved more or paid down debt since the outbreak began. The findings highlight the unique nature...

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REVVED BY STURGIS RALLY, COVID-19 INFECTIONS MOVE FAST

August 25, 2020 | AP News

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. — The hundreds of thousands of bikers who attended the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally may have departed western South Dakota, but public health departments in multiple states are trying to measure how much and how quickly the coronavirus spread in bars, tattoo shops and gatherings before people traveled home to nearly every state in the country.

From the city of Sturgis, which is conducting mass testing for its roughly 7,000 residents, to health departments in at least eight states, health officials are trying to track outbreaks from the 10-day rally which ended on Aug. 16. They face the task of tracking an invisible virus that spread among...

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AP File



WORLD

PUTIN TOUTS RUSSIA'S COVID-19 VACCINE AS EFFECTIVE AND SAFE

August 19, 2020 | AP News

MOSCOW — The Russian president on Thursday praised a coronavirus vaccine that Russia approved for use earlier this month as effective and safe, a clear bid to address international skepticism about the shots that have only been studied for two months in a few dozen people. In an interview with the state Russia 24 TV channel released Thursday, President Vladimir

The claim comes after scientists around the world sounded the alarm about the fast-tracked approval and Russia's failure to share any data supporting claims of the vaccine's efficacy, saying it was a major breach of scientific protocol.

Putin insisted that the world's first vaccine against coronavirus to receive a government go-ahead was approved "in strict accordance with Russian laws" that are in line with "international practice and regulations." The claim comes after scientists around the world sounded the alarm about the fast-tracked approval and Russia's failure to share any data supporting claims of the vaccine's efficacy, saying it was a major breach of scientific protocol.

"It is completely obvious for our specialists today that this vaccine forms lasting immunity ... and it is safe," Putin said. He said one of his daughters has already been vaccinated, developed antibodies and is feeling well, but Russian authorities offered no scientific evidence to prove these claims. International experts say any widely-used vaccine should first be tested in advanced trials involving tens of thousands of people to prove it is safe and effective before

being licensed. Scientists at the World Health Organization said that although they have begun discussions with Russia about its vaccine, they had not yet received any detailed data about it.

Russian Authorities Have Repeatedly Promised That Advanced Trials of the Vaccine Will Continue

Experts warn that using an untested vaccine that has not yet proven to be safe or effective could ultimately undermine the response to the pandemic and cause more distrust among people about whether or not to be vaccinated. The Russian vaccine named Sputnik-V — a reference to the Soviet Union's launch of the world's first satellite in 1957 — has so far been tested on two groups of 38 volunteers each, according to Russia's Health Ministry. Russian authorities have repeatedly promised that advanced trials of the vaccine will continue after it's approved and will involve 1,600 volunteers. But following a wave of international criticism, Russian health officials have issued permission to start advanced trials with 40,000 volunteers. Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin on Wednesday invited residents of the Russian capital to sign up for the study, calling it "a unique...

Putin has repeatedly praised Russia's effective response to the outbreak in televised addresses, while some of Moscow's top officials — including the country's prime minister and Putin's own spokesperson — became some of the country's over 970,000 confirmed cases.

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GREECE BATTLES CORONA VIRUS RESURGENCE AFTER EARLY SUCCESS

August 26, 2020 | AP News

PIRAEUS, Greece — Workers in bright yellow vests stand on the dock in Greece's main port of Piraeus, greeting hundreds of masked ferry passengers with fliers and the occasional temperature check.

"Would you like a coronavirus test? Yes, it's free. Right over there, in the white structure, you'll see the signs," they tell disembarking passengers. Free on-the-spot tests for travelers returning from Greek islands where outbreaks have occurred is the latest in an arsenal of measures authorities are using to

tackle a resurgence of COVID-19 in a country that has so far managed to dodge the worst of the pandemic. New localized restrictions, including a mid-night curfew for bars, restaurants and cafes and a ban on large gatherings have been imposed, mainly in popular tourist destinations such as the Aegean Sea island of Mykonos,

Maria Skopeliti, whose husband and son work on Mykonos, was one of a handful of people opting for the voluntary coronavirus test in Piraeus on a...

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON STATUS OF TRUMP'S BORDER WALL

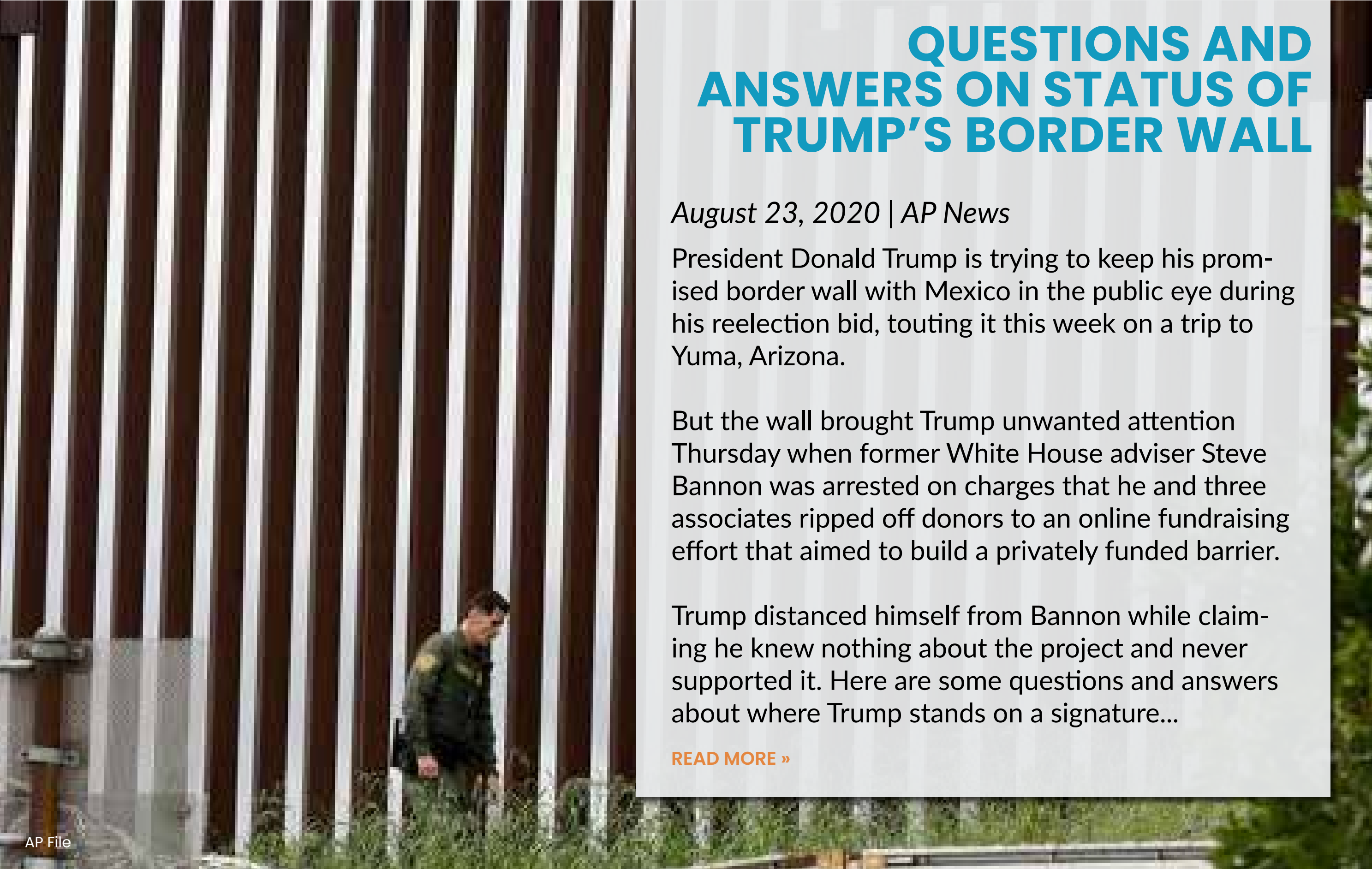
August 23, 2020 | AP News

President Donald Trump is trying to keep his promised border wall with Mexico in the public eye during his reelection bid, touting it this week on a trip to Yuma, Arizona.

But the wall brought Trump unwanted attention Thursday when former White House adviser Steve Bannon was arrested on charges that he and three associates ripped off donors to an online fundraising effort that aimed to build a privately funded barrier.

Trump distanced himself from Bannon while claiming he knew nothing about the project and never supported it. Here are some questions and answers about where Trump stands on a signature...

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A GENETIC STUDY REVEALS WHICH ANIMALS CAN CONTRACT CORONAVIRUS


August 26, 2020 | Salon

Researchers at the University of California, Davis, figured out a clever way to deduce which animals are susceptible to the novel coronavirus — without putting any of our animal friends at risk by intentionally infecting them.

According to the study, which was published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America (PNAS), any animal that has the same enzyme which SARS-CoV-2 uses to infect human beings is also at risk of infection from the novel coronavirus. The enzyme in question, ACE2, is found in a number of different cells in the human body, including the epithelial cells (a type of surface cell) on the lungs, nose and mouth. In...

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A photograph of a forest floor covered in fallen leaves and twigs, with several tree trunks visible in the background.

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