From: Goins, Anthony
To: Tony Goins (ag@tbo2.com)
Subject: FW: Governor"s Office Daily Update - 9-25-20
Date: Friday, September 25, 2020 1:41:00 PM
Attachments: image001.png

Anthony Goins "Tony"
Director

Nebraska Department of Economic Development
301 Centennial Mall South
Lincoln, NE 68509-4666
OFFICE 402-471-3125
anthony.goins@nebraska.gov
opportunity.nebraska.gov | **Facebook** | **Twitter**

From: Kopsa, Ryan <Ryan.Kopsa@nebraska.gov>
Sent: Friday, September 25, 2020 8:35 AM
To: Kopsa, Ryan <Ryan.Kopsa@nebraska.gov>
Cc: Pinkerman, Justin <Justin.Pinkerman@nebraska.gov>
Subject: Governor's Office Daily Update - 9-25-20

Ag Valley Co-op
Eustis, NE

Commodity	Delivery	Price	Basis	Date (as of)
Corn	Sep 2020	3.40	-25.00	08:23
Corn	Dec 2020	3.37	-28.00	08:23
Milo	Sep 2020	4.30	65.00	08:23
Milo	Dec 2020	4.30	65.00	08:23
Soybeans	Sep 2020	9.32	-69.00	08:23
Soybeans	Dec 2020	9.32	-69.00	08:23
Wheat	Sep 2020	4.26	-54.00	08:22
Wheat	Jul 2021	4.44	-60.00	07:59

Cubs: Kuhl makes statement in final '20 outing
Cubs – 0
Pirates – 7

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NTV: Gov. Ricketts signs bill expanding tuition benefits for National Guard
KTIV: Gov. Ricketts signs bill providing tuition assistance to Nebraska National Guard

Governor

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OWH: Scurlock's dad, attorney slam Kleine; 'the community deserves better than to dehumanize the victim'

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OWH Editorial: We need to know more about the Gardner-Scurlock investigation
OWH Courtney Allen-Gentry: Drinking, despair behind epidemic of early death among white Nebraskans
OWH Public Pulse

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3. Unfair prosecutor
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LJS Guest column: Be patient with vote count

LJS Letters

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2. Remember, then vote

Daily Nebraskan: FINAN: Reassessing balance of Nebraska courts, executive and the people

National/Federal

LJS: Bolz says Fortenberry is waging a negative campaign

OWH: 'He says crazy stuff': Sasse, other Republicans dismiss Trump comments on transfer of power

Iowa Capital Dispatch: COVID-19 outbreaks increase in Iowa nursing homes; deaths climb to 671

AP: COVID-19 outbreaks are linked to choir practice, hair salon

Bloomberg: Pay cuts become permanent for many Americans during pandemic

LJS: Ricketts hails new tuition benefits for Nebraska National Guard members

Gov. Pete Ricketts saluted the Nebraska National Guard on Thursday at a news conference celebrating legislative enactment of a bill that increases and expands tuition assistance for Guard members in state-supported colleges and universities.

"What a cool organization they are," the governor said in citing the Guard's vital role in providing assistance during recent record flooding in Nebraska and in response to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

The Guard, with its 4,500 soldiers and airmen, is "an amazing resource for the state of Nebraska," Ricketts said.

The legislation (LB450), sponsored by Sen. Anna Wishart of Lincoln, increases undergraduate tuition assistance from 75% to 100% and expands the program to include 50% tuition assistance for graduate programs.

Estimated cost for fiscal 2021-22 has been pegged at $268,000, according to the bill's accompanying fiscal note.

Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac, adjutant general of the Nebraska National Guard, described the legislation as "a game-changer" in terms of support that can have an impact on recruitment and retention of Guard members.

This change has elevated Nebraska's ongoing effort to become identified as "the most friendly military and veteran state in the country," Bohac said.

Wishart said the bill will make Nebraska "one of the best states in terms of National Guard tuition assistance, if not the best."

Sen. Tom Brewer of Gordon, who served 36 years in uniform during a military career centered in the Nebraska National Guard and was wounded in Afghanistan, said "we are investing in the people who are protecting us."

By Don Walton

AP: Ricketts hails new tuition benefits for Nebraska Guard

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Gov. Pete Ricketts on Thursday lauded a new law that will help Nebraska National Guard members save some money when they attend a state university of college.

The law passed earlier this year will increase the amount of undergraduate tuition assistance for Guard members from 75% to 100% of the cost. It also will expand the program to include 50% tuition assistance for graduate programs.

Ricketts praised the work of the Guard during a ceremonial bill signing at the Capitol. He pointed to the Guard's response to last year's record floods in Nebraska and its help this year in testing residents for the coronavirus.
Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac, the adjutant general of the Nebraska National Guard, called the law as "a game-changer" that will help recruit and retain new members.

WJAG: Neb. National Guard members to now get all college tuition payed for

LINCOLN - Current and future Nebraska National Guard members wanting to attend college will now have all of their tuition payed for thanks to LB 450 passed by the Nebraska Legislature this past session and signed by Governor Pete Ricketts.
The bill was sponsored by Senator Anna Wishart and co-sponsored by Senators Tom Brewer, John Lowe, and Megan Hunt.
During a ceremonial signing event at the Capitol Thursday Ricketts said the bill will take in-state tuition reimbursement up for 75 percent to 100 percent and provide a 50 percent tuition reimbursement for graduate school.
Ricketts said expanding the tuition benefits is a good idea because they're investing in the people who are protecting Nebraskans.
"Our National Guard men and women do such a fantastic job protecting us and we've really seen that the past 18 months with the flood and coronavirus pandemic. We want to encourage people to develop themselves further so they can continue to serve the people of Nebraska and I think this also helps attract people into the National Guard so we can continue to have even more people step up and protect our fellow citizens. I think this is an important investment."
Senator Wishart said the bill makes Nebraska one of the best states in terms of National Guard tuition.
By Cody Ronnfeldt

NCN: Nebraska Increases National Guard Tuition Assistance

BEATRICE – Nebraska Governor Pete Ricketts held a ceremonial signing of a bill Thursday, that will increase tuition assistance to Nebraska National Guard members.

LB 450 was sponsored by Senator Anna Wishart and increases the level of tuition assistance to guard members from 75-percent, to 100-percent. It also provides up to 50% tuition assistance to guard members for graduate-level study.

"We've had some pretty tough budget cycles, so it took us over two years to finally get this through. I can't thank the General enough and all of my colleagues who supported this issue. This does make Nebraska one of the best states in terms of National Guard tuition assistance in the country, if not the best state. That's a big deal for us. I like it when Nebraska does something first and best, so today is a really good day to celebrate."

Major General Daryl Bohac, the Nebraska Adjutant General, called it an incredible moment that began with a guard member who as a constituent, brought the idea to their state lawmaker.
"And that's only been possible not just because of the last two years, but the consistent and dedicated performance by the men and women of the Nebraska National Guard....and what they do not only for this state, but also for our nation. Because of that performance, we enjoy a good place with the legislature and with Governor Ricketts. That's because we endeavor each and every day to go out and

earn that respect....to be in that relationship."

The original tuition assistance program started years ago, but LB 450 increases the levels of that assistance. Bohac said the increased level of support is part of an overall move that makes Nebraska one of the most military and veteran-friendly states.

Governor Pete Ricketts said not only have Nebraska Guard members served their country overseas but have also done exceptional work during recovery from the 2019 flooding and during this year's coronavirus pandemic.

"I just cannot tell you how proud I am of the Nebraska National Guard. You just do such fantastic, wonderful work. You protect our citizens...you are an amazing resource for the citizens of Nebraska and we are so proud."

There are about 4,500 members of the Nebraska Army and Air National Guard. It's estimated the budget impact of the additional tuition assistance will be about $350,000 annually.
By Doug Kennedy

OWH: National Guard to kick off $62 million Camp Ashland flood reconstruction project

Nebraska National Guard leaders will turn the ceremonial first shovel of dirt Friday on a major rebuilding project at their Camp Ashland training site after two disastrous floods in the past five years.
The Guard recently awarded a $35 million contract to replace 28 single-story buildings that were inundated in 2015, rebuilt, and then destroyed again when floodwaters from the Platte River and its Salt Creek tributary filled the base like a saucer with up to 8 feet of water during the Great Nebraska Flood of March 2019.
They'll be replaced with seven new classroom, barracks and administrative buildings, all built on stilt pilings that National Guard Col. Shane Martin said he hopes will place them above any future floods at the 1,184-acre site on the Platte River. It's the centerpiece project of a $62 million restoration effort at the camp that is expected to take until the fall of 2022.
"The new buildings are approximately 12 feet off the ground," said Martin, the Guard's construction and facilities management officer. "We don't want to have the same problem recur again."
At the same time, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is embarking on an $8.5 million project to extend a 7-foot concrete bulkhead that currently runs inside the Platte River levee. Now it will cover the full length of the camp. No fortifications are planned at this time on the south side of the base, Martin said.
Both the 2015 and 2019 floods started when Salt Creek spilled over into the camp.
Gov. Pete Ricketts and Sen. Deb Fischer will receive a tour of the site before the ceremony Friday afternoon. Guard officials credit Fischer, as well as the rest of the state's congressional delegation, with securing the money to rebuild Camp Ashland. In total, Congress provided $62.3 million. Other elements of the project include:

- $4.9 million for design work.
- $8.1 million to repair existing buildings and infrastructure.
- $3.6 million for a new maintenance building and a new gym.
- $2.2 million to replace furniture and equipment.

Camp Ashland, 30 miles southwest of Omaha, is a regional training center used by as many as 100,000 National Guard, Army and Army Reserve members from Nebraska and nearby states.
It gained a national profile when 57 Americans were quarantined in one of the surviving buildings there

in February after being evacuated from Wuhan, China, the earliest hot spot in the COVID-19 pandemic.
The destructive flood began March 13, 2019, after Salt Creek, which borders Camp Ashland on the south, spilled over into the camp. For the next three days, the swollen Platte clawed away at the earthen levee protecting the base on the east.
Eventually, the river ripped a wide gash in the levee and sent a torrent of water through the abandoned camp. It overtopped by 2 to 4 feet floodgates that had been installed after the 2015 flood — which at the time was called a once-in-1,000-years storm. Every building was damaged except for a few that had been built on stilts in the 1990s.
Martin said sand, trees and roots that covered the camp at depths of up to 5 feet have been removed. Much of it was used to help plug holes in the levee and replace about 7 acres of land that was washed away.
"Most all the sand stayed on the site and replaced what was lost," he said.
Some experts question whether it makes sense to rebuild in a spot that's experienced two similar off-the-charts floods in such a short time.
Elizabeth Chalecki, an assistant professor of political science at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, focuses her research on climate change and defense policy. Because of climate change, she said, once-rare weather events such as the ones that hit Camp Ashland in the past decade can be expected as often as every two or three years.
"They can rebuild to protect against the last flood, but what about the next one?" said Chalecki, who this month started a research fellowship at the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington, D.C. "This isn't a one-off. It's going to keep happening."
But Martin said the National Guard can't easily replace Camp Ashland.
The base is large and conveniently located near Interstate 80. It's been in use for at least 100 years and is home to Memorial Hall, a large auditorium built in 1929 with small donations from National Guard soldiers of that era. The state has a lot of money invested in roads, electricity and other infrastructure that would be very costly to rebuild someplace else — if they could even find a site.
"The history we have, the location we have — to find 1,100 acres between Lincoln and Omaha, it's just not possible," Martin said. "The cost to replace that would be astronomical."
Chalecki said the extreme weather events and rising oceans brought on by climate change are going to force the Defense Department to shore up or abandon hundreds of its facilities in the U.S. and around the world.
Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, and Tyndall Air Force Base, Florida, suffered damage totaling $6.6 billion from major hurricanes in 2018. Damage at Offutt Air Force Base from the same 2019 flood that wrecked Camp Ashland amounted to at least $790 million and could reach $1 billion, Air Force engineers estimate.
"It's going to compromise readiness at facilities all across the country," Chalecki said. "They are going to have to consider how much money they want to keep spending to rebuild these bases."
Martin believes the improvements will keep the buildings at Camp Ashland above any future floods.
"This is a small investment and a smart investment," he said.
Chalecki is wary but will keep her fingers crossed.
"I hope the stilts work," she said. "It's my tax dollars, too."
By Steve Liewer

OWH: Laurie Smith Camp, 1st female federal judge in Nebraska, remembered for professionalism, compassion

LINCOLN — Senior U.S. District Judge Laurie Smith Camp broke new ground in Nebraska's legal

community throughout her life while winning respect and admiration from both sides of the political aisle.

Smith Camp was the first woman appointed as U.S. district judge in the state and, before that, the state's first female deputy attorney general in charge of criminal matters.

But it was her professionalism, leadership and grace that colleagues cited Thursday, as news spread about her death Wednesday night. Chief U.S. District Judge John Gerrard said she died unexpectedly and peacefully at her home. She was 66.

Gerrard compared her to U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, whose death last week ended a trailblazing career.

"Judge Smith Camp was not just an outstanding judge and a true leader on our Court, but she was a gracious mentor, friend, and confidante to so many individuals in both the courthouse and the community," he wrote. "She truly was the Ruth Bader Ginsburg of the Nebraska legal community.

"Like Justice Ginsburg, Judge Smith Camp was a pioneer and advocate of women's rights, a wonderful mother, and she did it all with a quiet grace, compassion and leading by example," he said. "Her legacy is profound and her historical mark on Nebraska's federal court is permanent."

An Omaha native, Smith Camp was named to the federal court by President George W. Bush in 2001. Her nomination won support from both Republicans and Democrats in Nebraska, including then-U.S. Sen. Ben Nelson, and she was confirmed by a unanimous vote of the Senate.

She became the chief judge for the District of Nebraska in 2011 and held that position until assuming senior judge status in 2018. As a senior judge, she continued to carry an active caseload. On the bench, she ruled in some high-profile cases, including challenges to state laws limiting picketing of funerals and requiring women to undergo extensive health screenings before abortions.

Sen. Deb Fischer described Smith Camp on Thursday as a friend, a well-respected jurist and one of Nebraska's "finest citizens." Two years ago, when Smith Camp took senior status, Fischer called her a role model for Nebraskans.

"Her professionalism leaves a legacy for all jurists who will succeed her to follow," she said.

Smith Camp graduated with distinction from Stanford University in 1974 and earned her law degree in 1977 from the University of Nebraska College of Law, where she served as editor-in-chief of the Nebraska Law Review.

Before being appointed to the bench, she was in private practice in Nebraska and Kansas and spent 24 years working in state government. She served as general counsel to the State Corrections Department from 1980 to 1991 and headed the Nebraska Attorney General's civil rights section from 1991 to 1995.

Former Attorney General Don Stenberg named her the chief deputy attorney general for criminal matters in 1995, a job she held until being named to the federal bench. Stenberg recalled her Thursday as being a very smart lawyer and a very nice person.

"It's a real loss for Nebraska, and frankly it's quite a shock," he said.

Gov. Pete Ricketts also expressed shock and sadness at her death. Outside her legal career, he said, she was a friend to the arts and a deeply involved member of the community.

"We celebrate her work and will long remember her contributions to the Good Life," he said.

Omaha Mayor Jean Stothert, the city's first female mayor, was sworn in by Smith Camp when she took office.

"She was a role model for all women in leadership, displaying expertise in her courtroom, strength, grace and poise — qualities I admire," Stothert said Thursday.

Last year, Smith Camp was elected as the 2020-21 president of the Omaha Bar Association.

By Martha Stoddard

LJS: Senior district judge described as 'Ginsburg of the Nebraska legal community' dies

unexpectedly

A longtime federal court judge, described as a pioneer and advocate of women's rights and the "Ruth Bader Ginsburg of the Nebraska legal community," died unexpectedly and peacefully at her home overnight, Nebraska's chief district judge said.

"The entire federal court family is devastated by the sudden and unexpected loss of Senior Judge Laurie Smith Camp," Judge John M. Gerrard said Thursday.

Smith Camp was 66.

Judge orders injunction preventing NPPD from ending power contracts with 3 wind farms

In 2001, she was appointed to the District Court by then-President George W. Bush and confirmed by a unanimous vote of the Senate. She was the first woman appointed as a U.S. district judge in Nebraska.

Smith Camp transitioned to senior status in December 2018, but continued to carry an active caseload.

Gerrard said not only was she an outstanding judge and a true leader on the court, but also a gracious mentor, friend and confidante to so many in the courthouse and the community.

"She truly was the Ruth Bader Ginsburg of the Nebraska legal community," he said, referring to the U.S. Supreme Court Justice who died last week.

Gerrard said, like Justice Ginsburg, Smith Camp was a pioneer and advocate of women's rights, a wonderful mother, and she did it all with a quiet grace, compassion and leading by example.

"Her legacy is profound, and her historical mark on Nebraska's federal court is permanent," he said.

Joe Kelly, United States Attorney for Nebraska, described Smith Camp as an exceptional attorney and judge.

"She was the consummate professional and made so many positive, lasting impacts on our state and federal legal systems," he said.

Gov. Pete Ricketts said he and his wife, Susanne, were shocked and saddened by the news.

"Before becoming a federal judge, she was a highly respected attorney in both private practice and public service. Outside of her legal career, she was a friend to the arts and a deeply involved member of the community. We celebrate her work and will long remember her contributions to the Good Life," he said.

Smith Camp was born in Omaha and graduated with distinction from Stanford University in 1974. She earned her law degree from the University of Nebraska College of Law in 1977, where she served as editor-in-chief of the Nebraska Law Review.

Before being appointed to the bench, she was in private practice in Nebraska and Kansas between 1977 and 1980, served as General Counsel to Nebraska's Department of Corrections from 1980 to 1991, headed the Nebraska Attorney General's Civil Rights Section from 1991 to 1995, and was Chief Deputy Attorney General for Criminal Matters from 1995 to 2001.

In 2019, Smith Camp was elected to serve as the 2020-2021 president of the Omaha Bar Association.

She, along with her three business partners, helped to initiate and sustain the development of Lincoln's historic Haymarket district from 1982 to 2001.

Judge Smith Camp, the former wife of former Lincoln City Councilman Jon Camp, is survived by two children, Jonathan and Abby.

In a news release, U.S. Sen. Deb Fischer said: "Today Nebraska lost one of its finest citizens. Judge Smith Camp was a friend and a well-respected jurist. I appreciated her counsel on the three vacancies on Nebraska's federal courts we worked to fill. I am saddened by her passing and send my deepest condolences to her family."

Sen. Ben Sasse said Smith Camp was a "smart, well-respected jurist who committed her life to serving her community and upholding the rule of law."

"She served her community for years and was an impeccable jurist who paved the way for women in the

legal field in Nebraska. Melissa and I mourn her death. We pray tonight for her family and loved ones," he said.
Nebraska has three active federal district judgeships — two in Omaha, and one in Lincoln — as well as two other judges currently on senior status and four magistrate judges.
Judgeships are filled by presidential nomination and U.S. Senate confirmation.
By Lori Pilger

NTV: Advocacy organizations want equal access to education for students with disabilities

LINCOLN, Neb. — The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Nebraska and Education Rights Counsel sent a cosigned letter to Gov. Pete Ricketts and Commissioner of Education Matt Blomstedt on Sept. 23. The advocacy organizations are concerned with students with disabilities receiving equal access to education. They said that these students must receive equal access even though distance learning presents challenges.
ACLU said that more than 55,000 children with disabilities live in Nebraska.
The ACLU said the letter notes the compounding challenges that came with the COVID-19 pandemic for these children and their families, including a loss of access to federally mandated services and support programs, such as occupational therapy or one-to-one aides.
“Under ordinary circumstances, disabled students are a vulnerable population. However, the challenges they face have multiplied during the pandemic,” the letter reads in part. “We urge you to act now—quickly, decisively, and with every resource at your disposal— to ensure our students receive the equal access to education to which they are entitled.”
The letter includes a detailed list of specific recommendations to enhance in-person and distance learning for students with disabilities, such as diversifying schedules to meet family needs. It also recommends extending access to special education and related services during school breaks and next summer.
The letter in full is available for download online.
In response to the ACLU letter, the following is a statement from Commissioner Matthew Blomstedt on behalf of the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE):
"The disruption to our education system created by the pandemic earlier this year caused the Department to focus diligently on our extremely vulnerable population of children with disabilities. Special education issues resulting from the pandemic are complex and layered as schools continue to comply with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), corresponding regulations, and Nebraska State Statutes. These laws require individualized protections for students and thus each student’s specific abilities and needs must be considered and assessed and therefore there is no one-size-fits-all solution for these students.
In light of the complications created by the global pandemic, the Department has provided extensive guidance to ensure a meaningful educational experience for all students including students with disabilities. Beginning with our Early Development Network, public and nonpublic school districts, alternative educational settings, and multiple educational partners, we have focused our attention and energy in the implementation of technical assistance and guidance that all need to provide quality services and support to our children with disabilities. For the 2020/21 school year, we will continue our efforts to ensure that students with disabilities receive the free appropriate public education (FAPE) services and supports that they are individually entitled. The NDE is seeking to work collaboratively with partners on the state and local level to minimize disruption for our students. This is a heavy lift, one that the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) and state departments across the country do not take lightly and will continue to ensure all students continue to receive a meaningful and appropriate

education," Bloomstedt said.

Kearney Hub: What's the difference between hemp and marijuana?

KEARNEY — The first thing to know about commercial hemp is it's not marijuana.
Hemp's products include fiber and cannabinoids such as CBD and CBG, which early research shows may have medicinal benefits. They don't have high levels of THC, the psychoactive ingredient in marijuana.
"This stuff basically doesn't have the stuff marijuana has ... commercial hemp and marijuana are not the same thing," said Tom Schwarz, whose family has state-licensed hemp production this year as part of an organic farming business southeast of Smithfield.
"The last thing you want is someone near you growing marijuana," he added, for the same reason growers of any specialty crops or seeds want to avoid cross-pollination.
The path toward legal cultivation of hemp in Nebraska started when the 2018 Agriculture Improvement Act (Farm Bill) was signed into law by President Trump on Dec. 20, 2018.
Among changes made by federal authorities related to hemp production and marketing was removing it from the list of controlled substances. That means cannabis plants and derivatives that contain no more than 0.3% THC no longer are controlled substances under federal law.
The Farm Bill explicitly preserved the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's authority to regulate cannabis or cannabis-related substances.
A hemp bill was introduced in the Nebraska Legislature in 2018. Among those who testified in support of the bill at a Feb. 6, 2018, hearing of the Nebraska Legislature's Agriculture Committee were University of Nebraska at Kearney professor of economics Allan Jenkins and Tom Schwarz's daughter, Becky, who spoke on behalf of Nebraska Farm Bureau.
The measure was postponed indefinitely.
A new bill was introduced in 2019. The Nebraska Hemp Farming Act, LB657, was approved by the Legislature and signed into law by Gov. Pete Ricketts in May 2019.
The U.S. Department of Agriculture approved the Nebraska State Hemp Plan on Jan. 27, 2020. The Nebraska Department of Agriculture began accepting grower and processor license applications on Feb. 3.
The licenses require that hemp grown for fiber, CBD or CBG cannot have THC levels higher than 0.3% in lab tests done on crop samples gathered by the state ag department before harvest.

Ancient partner

Jenkins is a longtime advocate of allowing legal production and processing of hemp, and edited a 2016 book, "The Return of an Ancient Partner," that describes hemp's history and uses.
He told the Hub no one had heard of CBD (cannabinol) 10 years ago until it was discovered by hemp growers in Colorado as part of search to help a child suffering from seizures.
"We have all this ditch weed in Nebraska and we don't know much about the chemical makeup," Jenkins said about wild hemp. "...We know hemp is well-suited to this climate and these soils."
Although it can be sensitive to dry conditions, especially when it's time to germinate, he said, "It will grow right through a snowbank. If it sprouts, it grows."
Jenkins said a lot of hemp was grown in Iowa during World War II because its fiber stands up better to seawater than other fibers.
Allison Dering-Anderson, clinical associate professor of pharmacy in the Department of Pharmacy Practice and Science at the University of Nebraska College of Pharmacy in Omaha, said the benefits of cannabis-based fibers and medical therapies appear in ancient writings more than 4,000 years ago.
"The British used cannabis-based fibers to make ropes and sails for ships because these fibers were resistant to saltwater breakdown. Cannabis-based paper was very popular in the colonial days of our

country because it was cheaper than wood-based papers and more durable than animal-hide based papers," Dering-Anderson said.

Tapping the surface

She said there now are more than 150 potential biologically active cannabis compounds identified, including 120 known cannabinoids.

"It is unlikely that we will ever know all there is to know about each of these compounds, but there are certainly avenues of research that haven't been tapped yet," Dering-Anderson said. "... As far as medical uses, the literature seems to grow every day."

She added that cannabis products can be consumed orally and contained in food, although there is no information to date that it's useful in human food.

"There is high-quality data that CBD is useful in helping patients to fall asleep," Dering-Anderson said.

She cautioned that since it changes liver enzymes, it can cause significant drug-to-drug interactions, even if used as a topical product.

Tom Schwarz said CBD's anti-inflammatory properties are a big part of its value.

Other anticipated benefits include its use as a muscle relaxer. Research is being done on its possible use to treat cancer, glaucoma and other diseases and ailments.

Learning curve

The first 10 legal Nebraska hemp growers were licensed in 2019 as part of a pilot project. Jenkins was one of them, but he said it was mid-July that year by the time he finished the paperwork.

"In that first year, I told everybody to not think you're going to plant 10 acres to start and then be a millionaire," he said with a smile, partly because it grows all over and also because of the learning curve. This year, he's a licensed processor.

In addition to CBD, about half of the Schwarz family's 2020 hemp crop has genetics for another cannabinoid, CBG. Tom's son, Alex, calls it the "mother molecule" from which CBD and other products can be developed.

Jenkins said the CBD supply chain is starting to be saturated, so CBG could be the next big item.

Another issue for consumers is that only three cannabis products are FDA-approved for specific uses by prescription, including a few specific types of seizures.

It's not legal to market any other cannabis products to treat any other disease or condition.

By Lori Potter

GII: Governor details state's anti-COVID strategy

At Thursday night's Grand Island Chamber of Commerce's annual meeting, Gov. Pete Ricketts talked about the ways in which Nebraska has managed the coronavirus.

Ricketts commended Grand Island for its response to COVID-19. "It really was a model for the rest of the nation in how well this community pulled together to be able to combat this virus," he said.

Nebraska's economy has been less affected by the virus than any other state, he said.

Right now, the state's unemployment level is basically normal. "Nebraskans love to work," he said, and they want to get back to work.

Early on, experts from the University of Nebraska Medical Center told state officials it was impossible to stop the virus. "But what you can do is slow it down enough to make sure you don't overwhelm your hospital capacity," he said.

Hospital capacity, therefore, became the state's focus, to make sure acute care was available for those who need it, Ricketts said.

Anti-COVID toolkit

He talked about the tools Nebraska has used to manage the virus.

Among other things, the state wants to hire an additional 1,000 contact tracers to supplement the 218 who work at local public health departments. “And we’re very close to reaching that goal right now, as a matter of fact,” he said.
Why is that important?
“Well, managing any outbreak is about testing and contact tracing.” It’s like blocking and tackling in football, he said.
Ricketts noted that the Trump administration is providing rapid test kits to 188 nursing home facilities in the state.
Ricketts discussed other steps that have been taken to protect the state’s most vulnerable residents.
“Now, we have had about 198 deaths in our long-term care facilities. And, of course, that’s a tragedy for each and every one of those people and each and every one of those families,” he said.
But those numbers should be looked at in context, he said.
New Jersey has had more than 6,600 deaths in its long-term care facilities.
That state’s population is four times the size of Nebraska. “But that’s 38 times the number of deaths in their long-term care facilities,” he said.
The difference, he said, reflects some of the precautions Nebraska has taken, as well as other factors.
For one thing, the virus arrived in some states earlier than Nebraska. “We had the benefit of learning from other states to be able to make these adjustments.”

G.I. workers draw praise

Nebraska never ordered its residents to stay at home. He shares the philosophy of South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem, he said. They don’t want to tell anyone that their business is not essential. All businesses are essential, he said.
To stay ahead of the virus, he said, Nebraskans need to continue to wash their hands and wear masks when they shop.
Cindy Johnson, president of the Grand Island Chamber, talked about 2020 and plans for 2021.
She saluted essential workers, “who are the epitome of grit and perseverance.”
She praised the work of local bankers, who were busy processing important loans during the pandemic.
The CARES Act and Paycheck Protection Program kept businesses open, she said.
Restaurants developed creative ways to stay in business.
The Chamber assisted local business people “who, frankly, didn’t know which way to turn,” Johnson said.
She thanked businesses for showing mental toughness, perseverance and the ability to navigate the pandemic.
Johnson talked about Chamber programs that she said she believes will help the community.
She also mentioned the importance of livestock shows to Grand Island. Those shows bring in many people who spend a lot of money. “And folks, that’s outside money coming in to our community,” she said. “That’s new money.”
The lack of livestock shows this summer was devastating to the local hospitality industry, she said.

Mustion lauds voters, officials

The audience also heard from Brian Mustion of Central Nebraska Bobcat, who was the 2020 Chamber of Commerce board chairman.
Mustion said it’s been a long year, and everyone is looking forward to turning the calendar to 2021. But all of us, he said, have “a lot to be thankful for.” We live in a state with clean air, clean water and is filled with hard-working and honest people.
Voters in Nebraska and Grand Island, he said, had the insight to elect very grounded and principled leaders who have an “abundance of common sense” and the ability to negotiate the pandemic.
Mustion asked local banking professionals to stand up, recognizing them for the way they helped their

customers during the early months of the pandemic.
Five businesses were honored during the evening:
— Credit Management Services, Middleton Electric and Holiday Express Bus were named Businesses of the Year.
—The Richard Good Distinguished Service Award was presented to Tom and Sue Pirnie of Grand Island Express.
— Hope Harbor was the recipient of the Outlier Award.
By Jeff Bahr

AP: Ricketts stands by decision to discontinue emergency SNAP

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Gov. Pete Ricketts doubled down Thursday on his decision to leave Nebraska as the only state that has discontinued emergency food assistance benefits that were made available under the federal coronavirus relief package, despite pleas from advocates for the poor.
Ricketts argued that Nebraska's economy has fared far better than others hit by the coronavirus, and that other forms of assistance are still available to those who need it.
His comments came after advocates for low-income Nebraskans called on the Republican governor to reinstate the emergency aid, which ended in July. A group of state lawmakers has made a similar request.
"Our friends, our family members, and our neighbors are being told they should face an unprecedented global pandemic without emergency support for which they are eligible," said Eric Savaino, who works on food-access issues for the advocacy group Nebraska Appleseed.
The Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program, commonly known as food stamps, was temporarily expanded during the pandemic to help low-income Americans who took a financial hit due to the coronavirus and subsequent business closures and layoffs. SNAP benefits are financed by the federal government, with the state covering half of the administrative costs.
"The reality for thousands of Nebraska families who are still in crisis, disabled, or working but at reduced hours or at lower paying jobs, is that these benefits were essential and are still sorely needed," Savaino said.
Advocates said they've heard from hundreds of Nebraska residents who relied on the additional aid to pay for food during the pandemic. The Food Bank of the Heartland, based in Omaha, reported a 40% increase in calls to its hotline since March.
"The SNAP program reaches across communities, urban, suburban and rural, to improve access to healthy food for families in need," said Shelley Mann, an assistant director at the food bank. "Neither the charitable food system, nor SNAP can do it alone."
Ricketts argued that the extra assistance isn't needed because Nebraska had the nation's lowest unemployment rate as of last month. The state's unemployment rate was 4% in August, compared to 8.4% nationally, and the current numbers are comparable to Nebraska's jobless rates before the pandemic.
He said Nebraska's economy also took a small hit relative to other states, based on federal data. Nebraska's gross domestic product shrank 1.2% in the first three months of 2020, a smaller decrease than any other state, according to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis.
Additionally, Ricketts said that the number of applications for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program has returned to normal levels after a sudden increase. Nebraska had roughly 70,000 people enrolled in the program in February, and the number rose to a high of 78,000 during the pandemic. It has since dropped to around 71,000.
"Here in Nebraska, being the least impacted the state, we have a way to show the rest of the country

how to get back to normal," Ricketts said at a news conference on an unrelated issue.
A group of 20 state lawmakers sent a letter to Ricketts earlier this month, asking that he extend the emergency benefits. The effort was led by state Sen. John McCollister, a Republican in the officially nonpartisan Legislature who his often at odds with his party.
"Nebraska should not withhold this life-sustaining aid to those residents who remain food insecure," the senators wrote in the letter.
By Grant Schulte

Scottsbluff SH: COVID-19 cases continue to increase in Box Butte, with 15 new cases

An update from Unified Command on Thursday confirmed 35 new COVID-19 diagnoses along with 27 recoveries since Monday.
Of the new cases, three are 19 or under with one case in Box Butte, Dawes and Scotts Bluff counties. All were determined to be close contacts.
In Box Butte County, there have been four close contact cases, nine listed as community spread and three cases that are still under investigation. Cheyenne and Sheridan County each have one case determined to be community spread. Morrill County has one that was determined to be close contact. Dawes County has one new close contact case and five attributed to community spread. Scotts Bluff County has seven new cases, two are close contact and five are community spread.
Since March 2, there have been 13,882 tests conducted with 845 coming back positive, leading to a cumulative positivity rate of 6.1 percent.
There are 93 active cases and three active hospitalizations. In total, 82 people have been hospitalized. Nine have died.
During Thursday's briefing, assistant director of the Panhandle Public Health, Jessica Davies, reminded the community that while we may need to keep our distance, it is important to support one another. When someone is isolated at home, she said, they are trying to prevent the spread of coronavirus and heal.
"When someone has been confirmed COVID positive, it doesn't mean we can't still help with their healing," she said. "They need our critical support to recover physically and mentally."
Small things such as phone calls, leaving encouraging notes on their door or window or sending someone a text to let them know you care can make a big difference, she said.
Offering to run errands, such as grocery shopping, or dropping off books, puzzles and other ways to pass the time can also be a huge help, she said.
Deputy director Tabi Prochazka addressed a myth that once a person quarantines, they won't have to do it again. Unfortunately, that's not the case.
If a person has been a close contact to a positive person and neither were wearing masks, the individual would need to quarantine, she said.
The exception, she added, is that an individual who has had COVID and has been deemed recovered would be exempt from quarantine for 90 days.
By Kamie Stephen

NTV: South Heartland and North Central District risk dials increased

HASTINGS, Neb. — **South Heartland District Health Department**
On Sept. 23, the SHDHD officials updated their COVID-19 Risk Dial.
The dial moved from 2.0 to 2.1, which is considered an "elevated risk", according to SHDHD executive director Michele Bever.

SHDHD reported the 14-day average of new daily cases per hundred thousand was 10.3, up from 8.6 the week before. “We are very concerned about the continuing upward trend in weekly case numbers in the past six weeks,” Bever said. “There were 53 positive results reported to us last week – which is a 61% increase over the previous week - and second only to the week ending May 2, when 85 positive tests were reported to the health department.”

As for health care system capacity, Bever said South Heartland area hospitals were averaging 45 percent ICU bed availability as of Monday (9/21). At that point in time, there were six patients hospitalized due to COVID-19, including one in critical care and no ventilators were in use.

Bever also reported COVID-19 impact on PreK-12 schools in Adams, Clay, Nuckolls and Webster counties. On Sept. 22, there were 98 students and staff out, including 77 students and 12 staff in quarantine due to exposure to COVID-19, and nine individuals (four students, five staff) in isolation due to testing positive for COVID-19. “An additional 31 students are self-monitoring and required to wear masks, following the Governor’s new directed health measures that went into effect on September 21,” Bever said.

“When people experience any symptoms of COVID, they should stay home from work, school and other activities and get tested,” Bever said. Symptoms include fever and/or new onset of cough, shortness of breath, and new loss of taste or smell. Other symptoms can include muscle aches, head ache, chills, sore throat, nausea/vomiting, diarrhea, congestion and/or runny nose. “We were glad to see the testing turnaround time improve last week,” Bever said. “Seventy percent of the results were back within two days, which helps get people back to work and school, and improves the effectiveness of the contact tracing process,” she said.

The levels of risk for COVID-19 spread are indicated on the risk dial as low (0-1.0, green), moderate (1.0-2.0, yellow), elevated (2.0-3.0, orange) and severe (3.0-4.0, red). The COVID Risk Dial & Community Guidance can be found on SHDHD webpages at www.southheartlandhealth.org. South Heartland District case counts and trends can be found on SHDHD’s dashboard of local COVID-19 case statistics. This dashboard, along with updates, guidance, news releases and other COVID-19 information and links can be found on the SHDHD website: www.southheartlandhealth.org. The Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) provides daily updates to Nebraska's coronavirus COVID-19 cases on their Data Dashboard at http://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Coronavirus.

North Central District Health Department

On Sept. 23, the NCDHD reported its weekly risk dial update.

The dial still remains in the yellow, moderate level.

Their risk dial increased over the past week, bringing it to 1.50.

The previous week, the dial was at 1.19.

Find more information on the NCDHD website.

Scottsbluff SH: Gering, Alliance schools see outbreaks of COVID-19 affect activities

Around 70 people at Gering High School are under quarantine this week after an outbreak at the high school, according to Gering Public Schools spokeswomen Jennifer Sibal.

In response, Gering Public Schools temporarily ended the “opt-out” policy for masks inside its high school and on school buses. Administrators also postponed the Homecoming dance until Oct. 17.

As of Sept. 22, Gering lists four active cases of COVID-19. All four cases were among staff or students from the high school, according to GPS’s dashboard.

The quarantine orders did not come from the district. Instead, quarantine orders are issued by the Panhandle Public Health Department, according to a letter sent to parents about the outbreak.

The letter also said that absent alerts sent to parents whose students are under quarantine should be

disregarded.
“Due to the large number of students impacted, we ask for your patience as these excused absences are added to the system. Public health officials will provide GHS administration with the official list of quarantines,” the letter read.
Alliance Public Schools has also seen COVID-19 affect extracurricular activities after an increase in cases in that community.
The Alliance Bulldogs varsity football game scheduled for Sept. 19 was canceled after members of the football team were put under quarantine orders, according to Alliance Public Schools Superintendent Troy Unzicker.
Administrators called off the game after a student tested positive and several football players had close contact with that student, Unzicker said.
He said the district doesn’t need to change any of its policies regarding COVID-19. Over the summer, the district opted to recommend mask-wearing if social distancing couldn’t be maintained. Other Panhandle districts made masks a requirement.
“I think the plan right now is to play Friday, but they have a week to practice and put some new kids in positions,” Unzicker said.
Alliance is scheduled to play in Gering on Friday.
As of Sept. 22, the Alliance High School has 67 staff or students under isolation, according to the district’s dashboard. The district’s had five cases across its buildings and a total of 94 quarantines since school started.
“I know a bunch of those are coming off (of isolation) next week,” Unzicker said.
In a news conference on Monday, Gov. Pete Ricketts said that students wearing masks in a classroom that had a sick student had to self-monitor for symptoms — but the class did not have to quarantine. However, that only applies if the sick student had been wearing a mask. The sick student does have to isolate.
“If either party is unmasked, then they are going to have to quarantine,” Ricketts said.
The new round of Directed Health Measures issued Friday also stipulated that those in quarantine must isolate for at least 10 days, have no symptoms and have no fever.
Neighboring Scottsbluff Public Schools has had nine confirmed cases and 113 quarantines across its buildings. According to SBPS’s COVID-19 dashboard, all nine cases have recovered. Of the 113 quarantines, 56 have returned from their isolation.
An increase in cases in Box Butte has also lead to other effects in the community, with the Alliance library announcing closures last week due to COVID-19 exposure. On Tuesday, library staff notified the public that the library would remain closed, planning to reopen Oct. 1.
By Justin Garcia

AP: Western Nebraska schools plagued by virus outbreaks

GERING, Neb. (AP) — Several western Nebraska schools are scrambling to deal with outbreaks of new coronavirus cases.
About 70 students and staff at Gering High School were under quarantine this week after an outbreak, the Scottsbluff Star-Herald reported. That came after at least four cases were confirmed last week in the school. School officials have since temporarily ended a policy allowing people to opt-out of wearing masks inside its high school and on school buses, and officials postponed the homecoming dance until Oct. 17.
Neighboring Scottsbluff Public Schools has had nine confirmed cases and 113 quarantines across its buildings, the Star-Herald reported. And in Alliance, the high school football game was canceled last

week after a student tested positive and several team members were quarantined.
The state's online virus tracker shows 42,278 in Nebraska have tested positive for the virus and 462 people have died since the outbreak began. Those numbers include nearly 500 new cases on Wednesday alone.
The seven-day rolling average of daily new cases in Nebraska has soared over the past two weeks, to 402 new cases per day in the last week from nearly 272 cases per day the week prior, according to an Associated Press analysis of data from Johns Hopkins University's COVID-19 tracking project.

LJS: 10 attendees at event at Lincoln Eagles Club got COVID-19, officials say

At least 10 attendees of a Sept. 11 event at the Lincoln Eagles Club contracted coronavirus, Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department officials said in a news release Thursday.
The outbreak prompted health officials to publicize the cluster of cases stemming from the event at 500 W. Industrial Lake Drive that drew 75 people and included dancing and little mask wearing, the release said.
The club's Facebook page advertised the gathering as a "9/11 Never Forget" event featuring a local country music band.
One of the attendees who contracted COVID-19 has been hospitalized, the release said.
Many of the attendees could be at greater risk of severe illness, Scott Holmes of the Health Department said in a news release.
Event attendees included people who live outside the county, and everyone who went to the event should contact the Health Department Communicable Disease Program immediately for guidance on how to get tested and further ways to protect themselves and others.
Anyone who attended and is experiencing symptoms consistent with COVID-19 should seek testing immediately, the release said. These symptoms include a temperature above 100.4 degrees, dry cough, difficulty breathing, shortness of breath and loss of taste or smell.
And those with symptoms should also notify anyone they have been in close, direct contact with while they were symptomatic to disclose the possible exposure, Holmes said.
The Lincoln Eagles Club closed this week "due to unforeseen circumstances," according to its Facebook page.
The current directed health measure permits dancing only at private events and requires mask wearing indoors except when bar or restaurant patrons are seated or eating or drinking.
Overall on Thursday, the Health Department reported 80 new coronavirus cases in Lancaster County but no new deaths.
The county has confirmed 6,018 cases since the beginning of the pandemic and documented 2,284 recoveries.
The University of Nebraska-Lincoln recorded single-digit cases for the third straight day, though tests have also fallen to fewer than 100 each of those days. The six new cases reported Thursday brought the campus' total to 745 since Aug. 12.
Statewide, there have been 42,731 cases and 462 deaths linked to the disease.
By Riley Johnson

LJS: State penitentiary COVID-19 cases among staff lead to modified lockdown

The Nebraska State Penitentiary went on modified lockdown Thursday, limiting inmate movement due to staff absences because of COVID-19 cases.
The prison implemented the lockdown to maintain safe operations, said Laura Strimple, Department of

Correctional Services Chief of Staff.
Two more staff members at the penitentiary tested positive Wednesday for the virus, bringing the total staff with the virus at the prison to 74 since April 4. Systemwide, 141 staff have contracted coronavirus, and more than half work at the penitentiary.
Numbers at the Lincoln prison began to ramp up around Sept. 10. Forty-seven penitentiary staff have been diagnosed since that date.
As of Friday, 121 inmates at the prison had an active case of COVID-19, meaning they had tested positive and were medically isolated. Fourteen percent of those tested have been positive, according to numbers made public on Friday.
Staff cases have been reported at other Nebraska prisons, including Lincoln Correctional Center, the Diagnostic and Evaluation Center, Tecumseh State Correctional Institution and the Omaha Correctional Center.
"We continue to monitor and respond to the staffing situation daily," Strimple said Thursday. "As staff members are cleared to return from quarantine or medical isolation, they are able to return to work."
Correctional staff are considered essential workers, she said.
"Since the onset of COVID-19, they have stepped up tremendously," Strimple said. The department "could not have managed the last seven months without that level of dedication."
It is only recently, she said, that the coronavirus has more significantly impacted staff, as well as inmates, particularly at the state penitentiary.
By JoAnne Young

OWH: UNL officials lift group quarantines at Greek houses, housing facility

University of Nebraska-Lincoln officials have lifted group quarantines at Greek houses and a campus residence hall.
The fraternities and sororities were in quarantine after having coronavirus clusters.
As of Wednesday, officials had lifted quarantines for 11 Greek houses and for the third floor of the Eastside Suites residence hall. Other Greek houses were suspended for failing to heed university coronavirus rules such as mask-wearing and avoiding large gatherings.
In a press release, UNL Chancellor Ronnie Green thanked students for successfully following public health guidance by quarantining.
“There is no negativity associated with a quarantine. Your honesty in getting tested and reporting your status with the virus has helped limit the spread and protect your fellow students, faculty, staff and the greater Lincoln community,” Green said.
Group quarantine notices for campus are issued by the Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department based on various factors, including the number of cases that occur in close proximity within a campus facility. Each quarantine lasts for 14 days.
Officials are asking the university community to continue following public health protocols, including wearing masks, hand-washing and practicing social distancing. If a member of a quarantined area tests positive for COVID-19 during the 14 days, the timeline resets.
By Kelsey Stewart

OWH: What the Fremont schools, among the first to close in U.S., are doing to stay open

Mark Shepard recalls the phone call that shook up his school district.
It was 7:40 a.m., Saturday, March 7.
On the other end was Terra Uhing, executive director of the Three Rivers Public Health Department,

which serves Fremont.
“We have a little bit of a problem,” Uhing told the Fremont Public Schools superintendent.
Officials of various local and Nebraska agencies and schools were holding an urgent conference call, and he needed to be on it.
The COVID-19 crisis had arrived in Nebraska, by way of Fremont.
That afternoon, the Fremont Public Schools became the first Nebraska district to announce that it would close because of COVID-19. The March 9 closure, one of the first in the country, even before the Seattle Public Schools, was only supposed to last three days. But the schools would not open again for five months.
Fast forward to today.
Fremont schools are open. Kids are in the buildings. Teachers and staff are pitching in to keep them there — as long as they can.
District officials agreed to allow a World-Herald reporter inside schools to observe what a school day looks like as teachers and students cope with COVID-19.
Fremont’s closure was tied to the state’s first confirmed case of a person with COVID-19. A 36-year-old Omaha woman had the disease. She had played in a Special Olympics basketball tournament a week earlier at the Fremont YMCA.
Little was known about the disease at the time, and fears were running high.
“Basically, what you were seeing on television or online or in the newspaper was what you knew,” Shepard said. “You were seeing New York being overwhelmed. You were seeing Seattle being overwhelmed.”
Shepard joined the conference call with Uhing and a host of local and state government, health and education officials to discuss what came next.
According to Shepard, Gary Anthone, the state’s chief medical officer, asked if Shepard would be willing to close the schools.
“I said absolutely,” Shepard said.
It made sense, Shepard said. Students were already scheduled to start spring break the following Thursday and be out through March 22. So students would only lose three days, Monday through Wednesday, he thought. It would buy time, well beyond a 14-day quarantine period and enough to deep-clean schools and prepare for when students returned.
“Little did we know, that within two weeks, three weeks, four weeks out, the entire state would be closed as far as K-12 education goes,” Shepard said.
The Fremont district, like every other Nebraska district, finished the year in remote learning. And officials started laying plans to reopen.
Officials developed options, including a 50-50 plan, full-remote learning and a delayed start, but over the summer they gained confidence that they could open to in-person learning, Shepard said.
People questioned why the district allowed students back for summer weights and conditioning, but Shepard said it was an opportunity to test protocols.
“‘Let’s put our toe in the water and see how this is going to work,” he said.
They took students’ temperatures and put them into smaller groups, and it paid off, he said.
When a student in conditioning tested positive, only two other students had to quarantine.
Confidence grew as Fremont successfully opened up summer school and summer camps, he said.
The new school year started Aug. 11 About 4,100 students are attending school in person and 700 in remote classes.
The district requires masks, though at first Shepard wasn’t a big fan.
“Not because I didn’t think they work. But because I thought all we’d be doing is policing masks. It hasn’t happened. It’s amazing.”

The district uses thermal scanners to take students' temperatures as they enter schools, an idea borrowed from the Lincoln Premium Poultry plant in Fremont, where the devices are used to scan arriving workers. Every school has them.

For example, the fifth and sixth graders at the district's Johnson Crossing Academic Center are checked again for fever before lunch, and then again at 3:30 p.m. if they are participating in after-school activities.

"In the past, parents would give their kid Tylenol, bring that fever down and send them to school," Principal Brent Harrill said. "Ten-thirty or 11 o'clock that starts wearing off, so we're scanning them again at lunch. Teachers included."

At Johnson Crossing, the students start the day assembling in the gymnasium, sitting apart from one another on the floor and bleachers. That way they don't loiter around lockers.

They wait to be dismissed by row.

"All right, next row, you may go," a staff member announces.

The kids file out.

Once students vacate the gym, Harrill straps a tank sprayer to his back. He walks the bleachers end to end, spraying them with sanitizer.

Some classes are held in open areas inside the school to enable social distancing. Classes meet outside, too, weather permitting.

On this day, a music teacher took her class outdoors. She played a small xylophone to test kids' knowledge of the musical scale.

The kids sat in rows of set-up chairs, while she tapped out a pattern of notes — do, re, mi, fa, so, so, so — and teams of students tried to name them.

Receiving a correct answer, she said: "Yaaay, nicely done."

In a band room, band teacher Jill Murman worked with several students playing trumpet through slit masks that kept their noses covered.

"Ready, go," she said.

The players delivered a version of "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star."

At the end of class, students departed, and Murman rapidly circled the room spraying sanitizer on chairs and music stands, and wiping them down.

Doug Sheppard, a Johnson Crossing sixth grade math teacher and Fremont Education Association president, worked on division with his class.

He posed a problem: 196 and eight-tenths divided by 32.

"What's that first digit going to be?" he asked as the kids mulled it over.

Sheppard walked the room, peering over shoulders, checking the work.

Sheppard said he believes the district is doing as much as it can to keep staff and students safe.

"I ask my kids almost every day, 'How do you feel? Do you feel safe? Do you feel like this is the place where you should be?' And 99% of them say, 'Yes, I love being here.' They want to be in school."

Sheppard said students needed to be back in school for academics but also their social well-being.

Johnson Crossing fifth grade teacher Tammy Rensch said she was "super hesitant" to return in person. Now she has "no worries," she said.

"This is where we need to be," she said.

She wipes down the surfaces in her classroom every hour when they switch students.

"The students are doing a great job; they want to be here," she said.

At Linden Elementary, serving prekindergarten through fourth grade students, Principal Diane Beninato told her staff the year could be defined by "the restrictions or the possibilities."

They needed to be problem-solvers, she said.

For first grade teacher Angie Willnerd, that meant figuring out how to teach reading with her already

soft voice muffled behind a mask.
The solution: ordering a microphone with amplifier and battery pack from Amazon.
Wearing it makes her look “like a rock star,” she said.
But it was necessary in order to teach phonics and phonemic awareness, which involves sounding out letters and letter combinations, she said.
On this day, wearing a leopard pattern mask, she guided students through reading the words “led” and “yet.”
“Everybody put your finger underneath the letter L,” she said. “What sounds does it make?”
She said the kids do well with the masks.
“We take our mask breaks sometimes,” she said. “They like to take them off, but sometimes they even forget to take them off. I think they’re just so used to keeping them on.”
She hopes the district won’t have to revert to remote teaching again.
Her principal, Beninato, said the district has begun testing that will reveal how much learning was lost by going remote last spring.
She said she doesn’t expect a large gap.
By the time it shut down last spring, the district had taught students all the state standards in preparation for state testing, she said.
“We were at a point of just continuing to enrich and deepen those, but we had to have addressed all of them by that time because we were going to be assessed over them,” she said.
In addition, she said, kids “really do catch right up.”
Fourth grader Jet Wolsleben said she’s happy to be in school. But the masks and distancing are a big change, and her mask falls down sometimes, she said.
“We get to take off our masks at recess. I like that.”
Jeancarlos Magana, another fourth grader, said he’s happy as well, and glad to see friends and teachers.
“Sometimes it gets hard because you want to talk to your friends, but we have to be 6 feet apart,” he said.
Over at Fremont Middle School, students eat lunch at desks spaced apart in long lines inside the gym.
There’s not the usual lively chatter, but some students twist around in their desks to converse with friends.
When one group of students clears out, a cleaning crew of adults jumps into action. One person sprays the desks with sanitizer, while several others follow briskly behind wiping them. In a few minutes, the job is done.
As of Thursday, the district had not experienced any COVID-19 spread within the schools since reopening, Shepard said.
Because of what the community experienced back in March, each step on the road back has been very intentional, he said.
Uhing, the Health Department executive director, said the thing that worries her most is the possibility of a surge in cases, and not having the medical capacity to handle them, particularly involving children.
She said masking has been the key to avoiding spread in schools. She doesn’t see masks going away anytime soon, even as hopes rise for a vaccine.
“I would say, for the rest of this school year, I would probably plan on masking through next May, for sure,” she said.
“We have a fall and a winter to get through, and we haven’t necessarily seen that before.”
By Joe Dejka

LJS: People seeking COVID-19 tests at Bryan urgent care locations will need to see a doctor

Bryan Health said Thursday that it has made some changes to its protocols for seeing and testing people with suspected cases of COVID-19 at its urgent care locations.
Bryan had been giving people who showed up at its urgent care centers COVID-19 tests, sending them home and following up later. However, it is now requiring people to either see their own doctor first and get an order for a test or see a provider at the urgent care centers after getting a test.
All testing will now be done in patients' cars. If they need to see a provider, the testing will be done first and then they will go directly into a patient room in the facility, said Kevin Hejtmanek, practice manager for Bryan Urgent Care.
People also may be given other tests, such as a flu test or strep test, depending on their symptoms, Hejtmanek said. Those test results should be available by the end of the visit, while the average time to get COVID-19 test results is three to four days.
Bryan Urgent Care does have rapid COVID-19 tests available for police and fire department members.
Hejtmanek said Bryan made the change in procedure at its urgent care centers because it had essentially been treating all suspected cases of COVID-19 as if that's what the person had. That meant people were getting a test and then being sent home, and if they actually had another illness, care for that illness was being delayed, which was leading to "more emergent situations."
"We wanted to address these (illnesses) right away," he said.
People can still go to the drive-thru testing site at Bryan LifePointe near 27th Street and Pine Lake Road to just get a COVID-19 test. Bob Ravenscroft, Bryan's vice president of advancement, said there has been increased traffic at the site, with 117 people getting tested there Thursday.
Lincoln has seen an increased number of COVID-19 cases recently, recording its three highest weekly totals in the past three weeks. That has led to more hospitalizations.
Bryan as of Thursday morning had 42 COVID-19 patients hospitalized, its most ever, with 23 of those patients from Lancaster County. Those numbers have more than doubled since Friday.
Overall, the hospital system had 507 patients as of Thursday, one of its highest totals during the pandemic.
Ravenscroft said Bryan has adequate personal protective equipment and plenty of bed space to deal with the increase in COVID-19 patients.
What is becoming a concern, however, is the availability of health care workers.
Ravenscoft noted that there has been a nursing shortage in the state for several years and, "It is tight, not just for Bryan, but everybody in the state."
"You might be able to increase your facility capacity, but getting the workers or the employees in place to staff those are challenges," he said.
By Matt Olberding

NET: Black Nebraskans Disproportionately Impacted By Pandemic Unemployment

About 134,000 Nebraskans have been paid unemployment benefits since the start of the coronavirus pandemic.
That amounts to more than $1.1 billion, mostly from the temporary federal benefit of an extra $600 a week.
Data from the state Department of Labor shows Black Nebraskans make up about 26% of claims for the past four weeks, despite being only 5.2% of the state population.
Other minority populations are not as disproportionately impacted. White Nebraskans are 88% of the population and made up 58.9% of unemployment claims over the past four weeks.
By Becca Costello

LJS: Carter finds coming to the helm as NU's president a good fit

Ironically, academics and an educational mission had not been part of the career path for Walter "Ted" Carter Jr. through much of his 38 years of service in the U.S. Navy.

His naval career included rising from ensign to vice admiral, from light officer to commander of a carrier strike group, and finally to his leadership role as superintendent of the U.S. Naval Academy, his alma mater.

Carter "fell in love" with both academics and the educational mission after the Navy asked him to run the Naval War College, then the Naval Academy for five years. Involved in most facets of the education spectrum, he prized the energy of the college campus and its students.

"That's why we exist," he says. "It was a place I felt very comfortable, and I enjoyed being part of the team."

The job of University of Nebraska president was not on his radar. Despite achievements at the Academy during his tenure, he wasn't sure the academic world was interested in him. While on a post-retirement vacation with his wife, Lynda, he received a phone call about the Nebraska job. Convinced by the search team that he was a viable candidate, Carter applied and did a lot of research before his first interview.

NU's eighth president since 1968

The rest is history. In January Carter, now 60, became the eighth new president at NU since 1968.

"I feel like I fit right in here in Nebraska. I'm in the right place," he says, sincerely.

Carter's earliest introduction to Nebraska came from his flight school roommate Randy Duhrkopf, whom he'd known at the Academy. Duhrkopf was once a pole vaulter at Bellevue High School who talked nonstop about Nebraska and the Cornhuskers.

Carter remembered that enthusiasm during his early weeks on the job spent visiting Nebraska communities and campuses, and meeting with state legislators. With help from a transition team, he promised to develop a strategy for NU's next five years and beyond, and deliver it to the Board of Regents within his first 100 days [paused until August due to the pandemic].

"I came into this job under the idea the university is one of the top economic engines for the state," Carter says. "And, that we want to grow not just the student body, but its reputation as a partner with communities to help fill some of those high-impact, high-need jobs out there in the state."

Carter believes in the good. His is a collaborative, player-coach leadership style with a bias for action, doubly useful when a pandemic transforms the world we know. As early as February, NU was watching the pandemic carefully, and as it became apparent it was coming here, "we shifted plans and gears significantly."

NU was one of few university systems in the country not sued by any of its students for the quality of the education. That's a good indication of how well the faculty and staff did remote education.

"The focus is always going to be on students, but the shift in gears was to make sure we focus on Nebraskans," Carter explains.

Published in April, the Nebraska Promise includes freezing tuition rates for years 2022 and 2023. Without it, models showed a 10% drop in enrollment taking 10 years to recover. Carter is optimistic about fall enrollment. Nebraska was one of the first major universities in the country to declare it would be open for the fall semester, a decision not made on a whim but based on advice, science and logic.

Raised in Rhode Island

Born and raised in a small Rhode Island city, Carter was active in band, science and sports, and a good student. Beyond an out-of-state hockey tournament and science fair, he was not well traveled. His role models were teachers and coaches, some of whom he's still in contact with, and his mother, who taught high school English.

He applied to the service academy just to see if he could qualify for admission.

The Naval Academy was unlike anything he'd known before. It was hard, and like many others, he thought about leaving. Being picked for the hockey team saved him that rough first year. "And then I just fell in love with the place."

His second year, he met Lynda, a college freshman, on a cold January night. Their first dance that night was to the disco hit, "Le Freak." He was smitten. She promised to attend his home hockey games, though secretly she didn't like hockey. The couple just celebrated their 38th wedding anniversary.

The Carters have moved 20 times, often with two kids. Their son Christopher was born in Japan in 1985. He attended first grade in three different schools. Daughter Brittany was born in 1988.

Carter wasn't sure about making the Navy a career, especially when a failed eye test meant he wouldn't be in the front seat of a jet. "Then I found that flying as part of the team was exceptional, and I loved it." Slapshot (Carter's callsign) went to Top Gun before the movie made it famous.

Life with Lynda

"Lynda and I both found that the military lifestyle suited us," he says. "She's incredibly strong and smart. I always joked that minus the nuclear engineering part, she'd be better at my naval profession than I was. She did a lot to make our family work, and she did most of it on her own, because I was at sea."

Their kids have taken different paths. Christopher's first attempt at college didn't take, so he enlisted in the Army and did a combat tour in Iraq. He's since finished college and is a cyber analyst living in Denver. Brittany went on through George Mason University in Virginia right after high school, then graduate studies in Colorado. She's a licensed professional counselor in Oregon.

"I do think Lincoln is one of the most interesting cities I've lived in," Carter says. He has already noticed distinct differences between Lincoln and Omaha. Kearney offers another perspective, and he's heard about the two time zones. There's no doubt that farther west, people feel more disconnected from the university. What surprised him was that sports at UNL seem to be the tie that binds most Nebraskans.

The job and mission brought Carter to the middle of the country, but the people are going to be what keeps him here.

"What I've seen thus far is the people in Nebraska are exactly what I hoped they would be," he says. "They're welcoming and warm. They're genuine and hardworking, common sense people."

By Cynthia S. Peterson

LJS: Drought tightens grip on Nebraska as hot, dry spell looms

After a one-week reprieve, drought conditions strengthened their hold on Nebraska last week. According to the latest U.S. Drought Monitor released Thursday morning by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, the state now has its highest percentage of drought conditions this year.

About 57% of the state is in some level of drought, and 29% is in severe drought or worse. Also, the portion of the state in extreme drought rose to more than 6%. Nebraska has not seen those levels of drought since June 2014.

Some timely rains after Labor Day had caused drought conditions to recede somewhat last week, but most areas of the state have seen little or any precipitation over the past week.

The Panhandle is the hardest-hit area, with more than half a dozen counties touched by extreme drought, including nearly all of Morrill County and most of Sioux County. Most of Cuming County in northeast Nebraska also is in extreme drought.

According to the National Weather Service, Sidney's June-August rain total this year was more than 6 inches below average, while Alliance, Chadron and Scottsbluff all were more than 4 inches below average.

August rain totals for the state as a whole were the lowest ever recorded.

Despite going 12 straight days without any rain, Lincoln is not experiencing any drought conditions. In

fact, Lancaster County is one of the areas least affected, with no drought conditions present and only a small portion of the northern part of the county experiencing abnormally dry conditions.
The coming forecast does not look promising, with dry conditions and potentially record heat in some areas. North Platte on Wednesday broke a 99-year-old record with a high of 95 degrees, and many areas of the state could be looking at near-record heat in the coming days.
Chadron, Scottsbluff and Sidney were all areas forecast to see record or near-record temperatures on Thursday.
The forecast for Lincoln is highs of 91 degrees both Friday and Saturday, which would be close to the record highs for those dates of 93 and 95. While temperatures are forecast to fall into the 70s by Sunday and the 60s later next week, there is no rain in the seven-day forecast.
The 14-day forecast from the weather service does not look any better. It shows a strong chance that Nebraska will see drier-than-normal conditions.
State climatologist Martha Shulski said the good news for Nebraska is that because of heavy rains last year, this year started off with "pretty good" soil moisture reserves.
However, she said, a hot and dry summer has depleted those reserves, and now 53% of the state is in the short to very short category for subsoil moisture levels.
Whether this year's drought conditions will have long-term effects will be determined by winter and early spring conditions, Shulski said. There is a La Nina weather pattern this year and wetter-than-normal conditions are likely in the northern U.S. and drier-than-normal conditions are likely in the south.
"Not a lot of guidance for us right in the middle, unfortunately," she said. "Our precipitation trends for fall and winter, therefore, will be dependent on storm track."
Shulski did say that longer-term forecasts show chances for a wetter-than-normal spring in Nebraska.
"In essence, this situation is something we will have to monitor as we go into winter and spring, which is typically our drier time of year, climatologically speaking. Then late spring is our wet season," she said.
"Long-term impacts will depend on how much recharge we will get over the next few months."
By Matt Olberding

LJS: Nebraskans again file more initial claims for unemployment

Initial unemployment claims continued to climb in Nebraska last week, reaching their highest level in more than a month.
According to data released Thursday by the U.S. Department of Labor, there were 3,045 initial unemployment claims filed in the state in the week that ended Saturday, 318 more than the previous week.
That was the highest number of claims and the first time the number topped 3,000, since the week that ended Aug. 8.
Continuing unemployment claims, which lag initial claims by a week, continued to drop, falling by more than 2,000 to 20,331 for the week ending Sept. 19.
Nationally, initial claims were essentially steady, rising by 4,000 last week to 870,000. Continuing claims for the nation as a whole were 12,580,000, which was down by 167,000 from the previous week.
By Matt Olberding

OWH: Six Nebraska schools receive National Blue Ribbon honor

The U.S. Department of Education on Thursday recognized six Nebraska schools, including Creighton Prep and Marian Catholic High School, as National Blue Ribbon Schools.
Also receiving the annual honor were Standing Bear Elementary School in Omaha, Pyrtle Elementary

School in Lincoln, David City Elementary School in David City and Concordia Academy in Omaha.
They are among 367 schools in 46 states, the District of Columbia and Department of Defense Education Activity schools in Alabama, North Carolina, Germany and Japan recognized for achievement.
Schools can be honored for overall academic excellence or their progress in closing academic achievement gaps among student subgroups.
All six Nebraska schools were selected based on high performance on state assessments or nationally normed tests.
By Joe Dejka

OWH: Nebraska Medicine says normal operations should resume 'in days' after cyberattack

Normal operations at Nebraska Medicine should resume "in days" following a cyberattack that shut down computer systems early Sunday, health system officials said Thursday evening.
The outage, which officials described in a statement as a "significant information technology system downtime event," led to the postponement of patient appointments this week and required staff in the system's hospitals and clinics to chart by hand.
Staff have continued to see patients, officials said, but appointments for patients with elective procedures and appointments that were not critical have been rescheduled. The health system's emergency rooms have remained open, and no patients were diverted to other hospitals, according to the statement, which was provided by Dr. James Linder, Nebraska Medicine's CEO.
"People have done a yeoman's job in making sure we deliver good patient care," Linder said in a brief interview.
No patients' electronic medical records were deleted or destroyed, according to the statement, thanks to the system's "back-up and recovery processes." But when asked whether patients' medical or financial information had been exposed, a Nebraska Medicine spokesman said the statement contained all the information officials could provide.
The statement did not include any further information about the attack's nature, extent or origins .
Officials noted in the statement that attacks on health care organizations are "rapidly increasing, and we are constantly assessing our security measures to help prevent cyber security incidents."
With the advent of electronic health records, health systems collect and store a significant amount of information about patients.
Other hospital systems have had to deal with computer security problems. In February 2019, a device brought into a CHI Health location by a third-party vendor introduced a virus, also known as malware, into the health system's network.
In 2018, Anthem Inc., the nation's second-largest health insurer, agreed to pay the federal government what was then a record $16 million to settle potential privacy violations in what was labeled at the time as the biggest known health care hack in U.S. history, the Associated Press reported.
The statement said officials notified law enforcement after discovering the attack. When asked whether the FBI was assisting with the investigation, a spokeswoman for the FBI's Omaha office said the agency was aware of the situation at Nebraska Medicine and had offered assistance.
Patients have expressed frustration, with some saying they had not been notified of canceled appointments.
Patients were also unable to access their online medical and billing information.
In the statement, officials said "the patience and professionalism that has been demonstrated by our staff and providers during this difficult time has been remarkable, and we cannot thank them enough."
The health system, officials said, remains "committed to providing extraordinary care, and will do everything we can to minimize any further disruption to our patients."

By Julie Anderson

OWH: Scurlock's dad, attorney slam Kleine; 'the community deserves better than to dehumanize the victim'

The attorney for James Scurlock's family expressed dismay.
The father of James Scurlock expressed doubts.
James Scurlock II, father of the 22-year-old Omahan who was killed May 30 amid unrest in Omaha's Old Market, said he won't believe that the man who took his son's life killed himself until he sees an autopsy or a report.
The elder Scurlock questioned how Jake Gardner, 38, could have killed himself, alleging that he had a police escort when he left Omaha after May 30. Law enforcement officials say that's not true.
"I will not believe that suicide until I see documentation," Scurlock said.
Hillsboro, Oregon, police have refused a World-Herald request for Gardner's autopsy results. They also refused a request by Omaha attorney Justin Wayne, who represents the Scurlock family. The reason given to the newspaper was vague. The reason given to the family: Oregon law precludes police from releasing autopsy information on a suspect.
Wayne said he accepts that Gardner is dead because Fred Franklin, the special prosecutor in the case, told him so. Franklin is seeking a death certificate and will dismiss the case against Gardner after he obtains one.
Hillsboro police sent out a press release Sunday afternoon announcing Gardner's death. They said no foul play was suspected, which is typically code for either a suicide or an accidental death.
Gardner's attorneys, Stu Dornan and Tom Monaghan, told reporters Sunday evening that their client had died "by his own hand" and that he did not leave a note. Dispatch chatter obtained by the Omaha Scanner Twitter account records a police officer and dispatcher talking about Gardner's dad calling police because he checked his son's bedroom and both his son and a handgun were gone. A bit later in the same radio transmission, a woman can be heard weeping in the background.
That some are not yet convinced that Gardner is dead goes to "the heart of distrust between our (Black) community and the government," Wayne said Thursday at a press conference with the elder Scurlock.
While he doesn't doubt Gardner's death, Wayne, who is Black, did express dismay about the way Douglas County Attorney Don Kleine has spoken in the aftermath of Gardner's suicide and Franklin's Wednesday press conference.
Kleine criticized Franklin, saying he thought the former federal prosecutor went in with an agenda on what he wanted grand jurors to conclude. After investigating for five days, grand jurors charged Gardner with manslaughter, terroristic threats, attempted first-degree assault and weapon use.
Kleine said that in asserting self-defense, Gardner's attorneys would have tried to establish Scurlock's propensity for violence. In turn, Kleine questioned whether Franklin presented evidence that Scurlock had been "terrorizing" others that night.
Kleine didn't specify what that meant, but a law enforcement official told the newspaper that Scurlock and a friend had been pushing a skateboarder before a bystander intervened. No video has been found to prove that allegation. Kleine also alluded to vandalism committed by Scurlock that night and to prior assault convictions.
Wayne noted that grand jurors rejected Gardner's claims of self-defense and said they classified Scurlock as "what he was: the victim in this case." Wayne said he has never denied that the younger Scurlock had been seen in a downtown building that night toppling computer monitors or that he had brushes with the law in his past.
But such property damage doesn't amount to committing acts of terror, Wayne said.

Kleine's "ethics and morals are very, very questionable," the elder Scurlock said. "Never have we had a prosecutor so cowardly dehumanize and demoralize a victim."
Said Wayne: "The victim deserves better. More importantly, the community deserves better than to dehumanize the victim over and over again."
Kleine fired back Thursday afternoon. He said he doesn't consider Scurlock a victim.
"I wasn't giving opinions about him," Kleine said. "I was giving facts."
Asked if characterizing Scurlock's behavior as "terrorizing" was opinion or fact, Kleine said: "I don't know for what other purpose that is, to destroy property and create mayhem."
Wayne said the facts about the younger Scurlock are that he was the father of an infant girl, a volunteer with his sister's volleyball club and a young man who was beloved by his family and was the life of their gatherings.
Gardner had his own record, having been cited on suspicion of misdemeanor assault at least three times. In a 2013 case near his downtown bars, Gardner reached in his waistband (where police would later find a gun) and threatened to shoot a parking garage employee. He never served jail time.
At the Wednesday press conference, Franklin suggested that Gardner and Gardner's father, David, were the aggressors. He said the two and others were armed and waiting inside his darkened bar that night for a looter to break through the bar's window so they could "light him up."
That didn't happen.
After Scurlock and his friend Tucker Randall apparently threw objects — Scurlock had a rock, and Randall had a signpost — at the bars' windows, Gardner, his father and a bouncer emerged from the bar, not knowing whom they were looking for.
David Gardner twice pushed a young man who was filming another would-be vandal at a neighboring business. Randall then decked David Gardner. Jake Gardner ran to find out who had pushed his father down. And the 90-second confrontation between Jake Gardner and James Scurlock ensued.
Walking backward, Jake Gardner told Scurlock and another man to "keep the (expletive) away" and lifted up his shirt to show a gun in his waistband. Holding a knife in his right hand, David Gardner shoved Scurlock to the side with his left hand. Scurlock pushed a bystander next to Jake Gardner. A woman tackled Jake Gardner from behind, and Randall hovered over the two as they wrestled in a puddle. Jake Gardner fired what he described as two warning shots.
Randall and the woman fled, and Jake Gardner started to get up off the ground.
Scurlock then jumped on Jake Gardner. Scurlock's supporters have long suggested that he pounced on Gardner because Gardner was an "active shooter." Eighteen seconds later, Jake Gardner, having yelled "get off me" several times, switched his gun to his left hand and fired over his shoulder, killing Scurlock.
In recent months, Wayne said, Scurlock's relatives held off on sponsoring rallies or gatherings because they didn't want to influence witnesses in the case. An online fundraiser has netted almost $276,000. Some of that money is being used for a college fund for Scurlock's daughter. More of it will be used to set up a scholarship fund in connection with the volleyball club, Wayne said.
Wayne said his investigation is continuing. He said he wouldn't comment on what his inquiry has found because the case might end up in civil court. Asked if his clients planned to sue Gardner's estate or others, Wayne declined to comment. "We have not exhausted all remedies," he said.
One thing he won't do, Wayne said: second-guess the grand jury.
"We have to respect our legal system," he said. "If we don't, it's anarchy."
By Todd Cooper

OWH Editorial: We need to know more about the Gardner-Scurlock investigation

The public needs and deserves the fullest possible accounting of what happened May 30 between Jake

Gardner and James Scurlock. Nebraska law creates an obstacle, but special prosecutor Fred Franklin and the Omaha police can step up.

The fault line continues to widen between those who believe that Gardner defended himself by shooting and killing a marauding attacker amid protesting and vandalism and those who believe Gardner was a racist predator. We are among those who believe that the truth is more complex — which is almost always the case in human events.

As much information and transparency as possible is critical to building whatever slim bridge is possible toward civic understanding of this tragedy. It's also important to create a reasonably complete record in light of sudden national attention and politicization of the incident.

This much we know: As a second night of Omaha protests over the police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis moved downtown and turned to vandalism in the Old Market, Scurlock and a friend started breaking things. They smashed windows and computers at RDG Planning & Design, about half a block from Gardner's bars, The Hive and Gatsby. Scurlock's friend told The World-Herald's Todd Cooper that they dropped a traffic cone onto a police car from a parking garage on Harney Street. Surveillance images show them holding or hurling objects and facing Gardner's bars.

Meanwhile, Gardner, his father and others waited inside The Hive, armed and prepared to "light up" — special prosecutor Franklin's words — any looter who might break in.

The bar's windows were smashed, ultimately leading to the confrontation on Harney widely seen on video that ended with Scurlock's death.

There remains much that we don't know. We had hoped that this would be sorted out by the grand jury process, either in the full report that was promised if Gardner was not indicted or, because he was indicted, in his criminal trial.

Just last week, we wrote, "Gardner, of course, is presumed innocent, but the community is now assured of the fullest possible evaluation to determine whether and how he might be held accountable."

Then Jake Gardner died by his own hand in Oregon.

Now the evidence is sealed under Nebraska law governing grand juries.

The law provides for release of grand jury proceedings and a transcript of testimony only in the case of a person's death while in custody. Scurlock was not in custody.

Franklin provided some narration Wednesday that he said was from the police investigation. His comments, unfortunately, were scattershot and did more to cast doubt on the indictment than add clarity. His needless reference to a tweet from President Donald Trump the day before the shooting was exactly the wrong thing the community needed.

So we call on him to provide a written report on the grand jury's findings, carefully organizing his comments from two press conferences and filling gaps to create a permanent record.

And we call on the Omaha police to release the results of their investigation, which guided the grand jury. These findings are needed, and this transparency is needed, to provide what clarity remains possible to help us move ahead in the quest for greater equality.

OWH Courtney Allen-Gentry: Drinking, despair behind epidemic of early death among white Nebraskans

Are you a white person between 25 and 64? Then I imagine you have lost a family member, work associate or friend from an alcohol-related suicide, traffic accident, unintentional injury or chronic health condition like liver disease.

Let's also acknowledge many of you are struggling with alcohol addiction since nearly 1 out of every 4 white Nebraskans drinks excessively, according to the 2019 America's Health Rankings.

Excessive drinking is defined as eight or more drinks per week for women or 15 or more drinks per week

for men. Binge drinking is four or more drinks for women and five or more for men on any one occasion in the past 30 days.

According to the 2019 America's Health Rankings, Nebraska men drink more excessively than women, while urban adults 25-44 and those making $75,000 or more lead all other populations. Although the early death rate has declined for all other races nationwide, including Black males, rates have increased by 30% in whites over the past 20 years.

"Rising morbidity and mortality in midlife among white non-Hispanic Americans in the 21st century" in 2015, from the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, first documented the trend of growing death rates in middle-aged white people and the link to the underlying events described as "causes of despair."

Medical researchers think lower-wage job opportunities relative to the previous generation, political polarization and fear of losing the white majority because of immigration fuel this despair, which is marked by increased addiction, suicide and unintentional poisoning deaths.

The article "Independent Relationship of Changes in Death Rates with Changes in US Presidential Voting" in the Journal of General Internal Medicine suggests that "dissatisfaction, discouragement, hopelessness and fear of cultural displacement … contributed to President Donald Trump's appeal, especially to the non-urban, white working class."

Rural counties with a 15% higher age-adjusted death rate from alcohol, other drugs and suicide in 2015 voted for Trump 2.5 times higher than counties that saw Democratic gains in 2016 compared with 2008. The analysis indicates that President Trump won by receiving more votes from whites who felt economically left behind and powerless — especially older, less-educated, rural white voters.

The bad news is that drinking and despair have grown among every class of white people and continues to dramatically increase, while other health indicators have declined for people overall.

Highlights from the 2019 America's Health Rankings for Nebraska:

- Food insecurity increased by 48% since 2013 for adults age 60 and older.
- Multiple chronic conditions of Medicare enrollees age 65 and up increased 9%.
- Suicide per 100,000 adults age 65-plus increased 24% in the past three years.
- Obesity in adults increased by 20%.
- Low birth weight of live births increased 42%.
- Diabetes in adults increased 20%.

Nebraska, once considered the "Heartland of America," is now missing heart. It's now a place where white people are drinking themselves to early death in epidemic proportions while voting for politicians and policies that deny 25% of Nebraska children federal emergency food benefits. Rich or poor, black, brown, or white, rural or urban, we are all in decline.

In the words of Lutheran pastor and Nazi resistance fighter Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "Christian virtue is not only an internal condition; it is also politically and socially a source of hope in the pursuit of freedom and justice."

Can anyone who supports political ideologies allowing 90,000 children each day to go hungry call themselves "good Christians" while so many others are on an unhealthy life course toward early death?

We all need to make sure everyone has a fair chance to live a healthy life, therefore as an advocate for all the citizens of Nebraska, I ask all of you to "take heart" and remember we are all in this together. Many of us are suffering — you are not alone. Reach out and connect with your community; it may actually save a life or help a child in need.

Courtney Allen-Genty, an RN with a master's in nursing, is a board-certified advanced holistic nurse, nurse educator and coach specializing in the integration of science, spirit and plant medicine into public health.

LJS Edtiorial, 9/25: Haverty's contributions to local business development will be missed

Pat Haverty's unconventional path to overseeing Lincoln's economic development is something out of a storybook.

From college football player to Buffalo County Sheriff's deputy to a city administrator, Haverty took a circuitous route to eventually becoming vice president of the Lincoln Partnership for Economic Development.

In seven years on the job, Haverty, who died last week at the age of 58 during heart surgery, became a beloved fixture in the city offices.

His death leaves a void in an office that has been forced to deal with the ills -- from businesses shuttering to an abbreviated and delayed Big Ten football season that will be played without fans and the revenue they bring to town -- of the COVID-19 pandemic that has wreaked havoc on Lincoln's economic development this year.

He was a quiet and unassuming man who went about his work without arrogance or bravado. What he lacked in flash, he more than made up for with hard work, tenacity and enthusiasm for the mission of improving the business climate in Lincoln.

Haverty was instrumental in a number of initiatives aimed at fostering entrepreneurship and developing the local workforce.

He was a key player in the partnership with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to create and fund the NMotion Accelerator program for startups and also oversaw the creation of two grant programs for early-stage businesses.

In addition, Haverty, according to Wendy Birdsall, president of the Lincoln Chamber of Commerce, was a champion for workforce development, and his work was instrumental in Lincoln winning $300,000 in grants earlier this year for its New Americans Task Force.

"His leadership at LPED and within many different communities will be recognized for years to come and missed dearly," Birdsall said.

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2 solid candidates in county race

The battle for a seat on the Lancaster County Board of Commissioners in District 2 (northwest Lancaster County) features two candidates with different political philosophies.

However, after speaking with both and vetting them, we're confident that either could do the job.

Democrat Christa Yoakum, the incumbent, has done nothing to put her job in jeopardy. She has the ability to draw on that experience if reelected. With a mind toward environmental issues and bringing high-speed internet to everyone in Lancaster County, she has been a solid steward of taxpayer funds in her first term.

Meanwhile, Republican Eric Underwood is a Lincoln restaurateur with a working knowledge of budgetary constraints and the responsibility needed to run a thriving business, especially in this most challenging of years. He's a fiscal conservative who plans to emphasize property taxes, affordable housing, the infrastructure of bridges and roads and public safety.

At the risk of sounding wishy-washy, we like both of them. We believe either of them would be good for the citizens of Lancaster County, depending on the issues that matter to you.

LJS Guest column: Be patient with vote count

Like many, I have often gathered with family and friends on election night to watch the results, celebrate when they're good and commiserate when they're bad. But this year, my tradition won't be the same, and not just because the Centers for Disease Control warns against large gatherings.

What will be different this election night? The big difference is that it is unlikely we'll have a final tally of votes on election night.

Nearly 75% of the electorate can vote remotely this year, and many are more likely to do so because of the pandemic. This means the count will be slower.

In some states, poll workers can't begin to count ballots before election day regardless of when they're received, while in others, ballots need only be mailed by Election Day and of course can't be counted until they're received. A slow count simply reflects our unusual times. It has nothing to do with the legitimacy of the process.

President Trump has falsely claimed that mail-in voting will produce "the most INACCURATE & FRAUDULENT Election in history," but voting by mail is common, and voter fraud is very rare.

In 2016, roughly one out of every four votes was mailed, including President Trump's. Every member of the U.S. military and their families stationed overseas votes by mail. My family and I have used mail-in voting for years, including my daughter who lives overseas. Some states, such as California, send a mail-in ballot to every registered voter. Five states conduct their elections entirely by mail.

As United States attorney for Nebraska from 2009 to 2017, our office coordinated with the Nebraska Secretary of State's office to ensure that there were no voting issues or snags during the voting process. We never had a problem with mail ballots or in-person voting.

Voting by mail is common because it is safe. States have extra security protocols for mail-in ballots — such as bar codes, audits and signature verification. These are paper ballots not susceptible to security flaws and hackers. Ballots are delivered through the U.S. Postal Service, the same entity we trust to deliver Social Security checks, passports and prescription medications.

So what can we do? Make a plan to vote, and do so early. Mail your ballot early or drop it off at the official ballot boxes. If you'd rather vote in person, be prepared to wait. The lines may be long for this election. If you have any worries about issues such as signature verification, consider voting in person if you can do so safely. Show up early, bring a mask and gloves, as well as water, food, folding chair and comfortable shoes. Lines this year may be long, so be patient.

And finally, prepare to wait. Reported "results" on election night are often actually media projections based on exit polling, which will be less useful now with more people voting by mail. You won't likely know anything before you go to bed. This year on election night find a good movie on Netflix and just relax.

Will it be frustrating? Will some call elections early, hoping that disappointed people in swing states like Colorado, Nevada and Wisconsin won't bother going to the polls? Will the delay provide an opportunity for some candidates to criticize the delay and claim the delay means there is fraud?

The reality is the count this year will take time – don't let it frustrate you, and don't let it deter you. A slow count means a careful, accurate count. It also means that many, many citizens have chosen to exercise their right to vote in a way that's safe for themselves and their communities. That's exactly how we want our elections to work. Getting it right is more important than getting it fast.

If we vote, and if we're patient, we will make a difference.

Deborah R. Gilg served as United States attorney for Nebraska from 2009-2017. She is currently an adjunct law professor at the Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law at Arizona State University.

LJS: No more excuses on overcrowding

I am appalled that the overcrowding issue in Nebraska's prisons is no longer a problem for our state's government officials.

As I recall, the Department of Corrections had been given five years to correct the problem. Well, the five years has come and gone, and the overcrowding remains. Nothing has been done to alleviate the

problem.
Now COVID-19 has now been introduced into the equation.
Inmates in Nebraska are people. They have families who care about them.
What is happening to keep them healthy in a prison that is overrun with people on top of people?
Gov. Pete Ricketts, Director Scott Frakes and the Legislature need to be held accountable. They have taken no real action in five years to alleviate the problem, and there are no answers for the near future.
COVID-19 deaths are unavoidable under the present conditions.
As Nebraskans, we need to demand the state take immediate action to remedy the overcrowded, unsafe and inhumane conditions in our prisons. No more time, no more excuses.
Laurie Petracek, Lincoln

Daily Nebraskan: FINAN: Reassessing balance of Nebraska courts, executive and the people

In a time of increasing populism, Nebraskans must ask themselves if judicial review plays too large a role in the course of state politics. On Sept. 10, the Nebraska Supreme Court handed down a 5-2 decision ordering that an amendment to the state constitution about medical marijuana be struck from the 2020 state ballot.
While the supreme court is intended as a safeguard of minority rights and against unconstitutional actions, too often the will of the people is subverted by the rulings of appointed judges and justices.
Four of the seven justices on the Nebraska Supreme Court were appointed by staunchly anti-marijuana governor Pete Ricketts. Of those four justices, only one voted in favor of keeping medical marijuana on the ballot.
While three-fourths of Rickett's appointees voting to take the decision about medical marijuana out of the hands of the people is hardly evidence of undue anti-marijuana bias, the perception of the governor's hand-picked men taking the decision about medical marijuana out of the people's hands is not a huge leap of logic.
The case for striking down the ballot initiative is flimsy at best, as the proposed amendment was narrow and pertained only to the use, production, possession and sale of cannabis, cannabis products and equipment. The justification for striking down the initiative was that subsections six, seven and eight were not naturally or necessarily connected to subsections one and two.
Subsections six, seven and eight deal with when, where and how cannabis could and should be used or sold. Without these subsections, no regulation would exist pertaining to working or driving while high, and no regulation would exist regarding the public use of cannabis. If medical marijuana is made legal, it would naturally follow that similar restrictions would be placed on its use as other legal drugs.
The use of a flimsy pretext to take a decision from the hands of the people is antidemocratic and un-American. By striking down the whole initiative rather than striking the last three subsections from the amendment, the courts have circumvented the right of the people to decide on this issue.
The challenge to this initiative was brought forward by Lancaster County Sheriff Terry Wagner. Between 2013 and 2015, Wagner's department seized over $4.7 million in cash through civil asset forfeiture. By maintaining total drug prohibition it is far easier for law enforcement to justify the seizure of citizen's property. In removing the medical cannabis amendment from the 2020 ballot, the court has placed Sheriff Wagner's financial interest above the public health interests of ordinary Nebraskans.
In 29 states, the supreme courts are filled via appointment. In 27 of those states the governor appoints justices, in 17 of those 27 states, supreme court judges are subject to retention elections. A retention election is when the people vote not for one of a number of candidates but simply vote whether or not a candidate, or in this case justice, should retain their seat.
In Nebraska, the governor appoints a judge to the supreme court and that judge is only subject to a

retention election after three years.
In three years, an immense amount of damage can be done to our democracy and civil liberties if a sufficiently undemocratic judge is on the court. The potential of such a threat to the democratic framework of the nation should be concerning regardless of your politics.
To ensure a greater degree of accountability without totally reinventing the system, a useful first step would be to hold a retention election on the soonest possible election day for newly appointed judges.
Another concern with executive appointments is that the appointees may feel partisan pressure to work on behalf of the executive rather than on behalf of the law. The partisan nature of our highest courts is of the utmost concern as it takes power from the people and hands it over to partisan elites.
Some who disagree might say that a court beholden to the masses is likely to vote based on public opinion. While this may be true, what is more likely is that justices will be more conscious of the effects a ruling might have on ordinary people rather than worrying about what the party bosses responsible for their appointments think. It is my belief that the role of the courts should be not simply to interpret the Constitution but to do so in a manner that benefits the most amount of people while also reducing the amount of harm done to other groups.
The immense power wielded by both the courts and the executives, be they governors or presidents, runs counter to the American traditions of democracy as well as the populist sentiment sweeping the nation. Power left unchecked by the people is a tyranny greater than that which the Continental Army fought to liberate itself from.
Nick Finan is a sophomore secondary social science education major. Reach him at nickfinan@dailynebraskan.com.

LJS: Bolz says Fortenberry is waging a negative campaign

Democratic congressional nominee Kate Bolz fired back Thursday at negative radio campaign ads directed at her by Republican Rep. Jeff Fortenberry, suggesting that the choice to go negative "reflects the values he has learned in Washington."
The decision for candidates in the 1st District House contest to make is to "scare voters or focus on the issues that matter to Nebraskans," she said.
Fortenberry, Bolz said, has decided to "run a campaign built on misinformation and misdirection."
Bolz, a Lincoln state senator, said Fortenberry's campaign ads are "a distraction from the real issue, which is health care" and its direct tie to the current challenges raised by the coronavirus pandemic.
Fortenberry's radio ads claim that Bolz missed 30% of the votes recorded in the Legislature during the last two years.
Those commercials follow a TV ad that was "a flat-out lie stating that I said nothing about recent racial protests," Bolz said.
In fact, she responded on a blog post, the senator said, and then attended a post-event cleanup in Lincoln following a protest demonstration, a community event at the Malone Center and a subsequent hearing on the issue conducted by the Legislature's Judiciary Committee.
At a time when Nebraskans are focused on health care, Bolz said, they should be aware that Fortenberry has "voted numerous times to repeal the Affordable Care Act with no better plans" to replace it.
Responding to Bolz, Fortenberry campaign spokesperson Alessandra Stooks said: "It is ironic that Kate Bolz has the time for a misleading campaign press conference in her pursuit of a promotion to Congress but didn't show up for work in the Legislature."
Bolz said she and Fortenberry are scheduled to debate twice next month: Oct. 11 on KETV at 7 p.m., and Oct. 12 on NET at 8 p.m.
By Don Walton

OWH: 'He says crazy stuff': Sasse, other Republicans dismiss Trump comments on transfer of power

WASHINGTON — Republican lawmakers on Thursday downplayed the prospect of President Donald Trump fighting to stay in power if he loses the coming election.

Trump has repeatedly cast doubt on the legitimacy of the election even before it happens, denouncing in particular the scale of some states' mail-in balloting.

On Wednesday, the president declined to commit to a peaceful transfer of power if he loses at the polls. But those comments drew mostly shrugs from Republicans, some of whom seemed to view them as just the latest White House exercise in trolling.

"He says crazy stuff," Sen. Ben Sasse of Nebraska said about the president's comments. "We've always had a peaceful transition of power. It's not going to change."

Sasse cited the transition from John Adams to Thomas Jefferson in 1801, which followed a contentious presidential campaign.

"Adams peacefully left office and Jefferson became president, and it blew the world's mind — and it still blows the world's mind that that's how we do it, and we're going to keep doing it that way," Sasse said. "Nothing is going to change."

On Thursday, Trump again declined to say that he would accept the election results if they show that he lost.

"We want to make sure the election is honest, and I'm not sure that it can be," he said. "I don't know that it can be with this whole situation — unsolicited ballots."

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., took to Twitter in an effort to reassure the public that Republicans will accept the election outcome whichever way it goes.

"The winner of the November 3rd election will be inaugurated on January 20th," he wrote. "There will be an orderly transition just as there has been every four years since 1792."

GOP Rep. Don Bacon took issue with the president's statements.

"I think it's wrong," he said. "We shouldn't be lighthearted, or we shouldn't be ambiguous at all about respecting the election results."

But the Omaha-area congressman said Democrats have also been out of line at times in questioning election outcomes. He pointed to comments by Hillary Clinton that Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden should not concede under any circumstances.

"Both sides should have zero ambiguity that we respect our election results," he said.

Other Republicans, including Sen. Deb Fischer and Rep. Jeff Fortenberry, expressed general support for accepting the election results but avoided criticizing the president over his statements.

"An enduring hallmark of America is the peaceful and timely transfer of power," Fortenberry said. "It would be good if we all reflected on this, including those burning down buildings."

Reporters pressed Sen. Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa, about whether the president's comments were concerning, and he indicated that they're irrelevant because the Constitution is clear on the matter.

"I don't have to be concerned by anything," he said. "I'm for the Constitution, and the Constitution rules. It doesn't matter what anybody else said."

Iowa's other Republican senator, Joni Ernst, took a similar approach.

"The Constitution is clear on this: on Jan. 20 the winner of the November election will be sworn in as president of the United States, and the transition — or continuation — of power will be peaceful," said Ernst, who is in a tight reelection contest.

Like Bacon, Rep. Adrian Smith of Nebraska's 3rd District cited Clinton's comments when he was asked about Trump's.

Smith also told reporters that many Americans have been frustrated at attempts to undermine the legitimacy of Trump's 2016 election.
"I would certainly urge the president to respect the will of the voters, and ultimately I think he will," he said.
By Joseph Morton

Iowa Capital Dispatch: COVID-19 outbreaks increase in Iowa nursing homes; deaths climb to 671

The number of COVID-19 outbreaks and infections is continuing to climb in Iowa nursing homes, nearly doubling the levels set in July.
In late July, there were 502 infections tied to 20 active nursing home outbreaks in Iowa, the Iowa Capital Dispatch reported. Over the next month, the number of COVID-19 infections associated with active outbreaks increased 66% to 835. Since August, the cumulative total of COVID-19-related deaths in Iowa nursing homes has climbed from 508 to 671.
On Sept. 13, the White House coronavirus task force recommended that Iowa impose a statewide mask mandate to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in the state's nursing homes. The report noted that "COVID-19 is being brought into nursing homes through community transmission."
Gov. Kim Reynolds has resisted calls for a statewide mask mandate, saying she trusts Iowans to act responsibly.
The Iowa Department of Public Health reported Tuesday there were 41 active COVID-19 outbreaks in Iowa nursing homes, up slightly from the 39 reported five days earlier. The department reported 939 staff and resident infections associated with those 41 outbreaks.
The Iowa nursing home with the most infections associated with a current outbreak is the Good Samaritan home in Ottumwa, with 84 infections, the same number that was reported at the facility one week ago.
There were six Polk County nursing homes with active outbreaks in recent days, and the number of staff and resident infections at those homes totaled 100.
By Clark Kauffman

AP: COVID-19 outbreaks are linked to choir practice, hair salon

MADRID (AP) — At least 30 of 41 members of a gospel choir in northeastern Spain have contracted coronavirus following a rehearsal indoors with little air circulation, local authorities and the chorus say.
The River Troupe Gospel, a volunteer gospel group, rehearsed on Sept. 11 ahead of an open-air performance two days later.
After one member of the chorus tested positive following the Sept. 13 performance, more than 40 other members and their close contacts went into isolation. Since then, at least 30 singers have tested positive, the Sallent municipal government said.
Experts have acknowledged that in certain circumstances, like when people are in close indoor spaces singing or shouting, COVID-19 can spread in the air. Choir practices in the U.S., for example, have been identified as superspreading events.
Amid a surge of infections in Spain, authorities in Madrid asked the central government to relax regulations so it can hire 300 additional doctors from outside the European Union.
In another outbreak, the number of coronavirus infections tied to a North Carolina hair salon has grown to more than a dozen. At least 18 positive COVID-19 cases have been linked toEnchanting Hair Fashions, a Haywood County spokesperson told McClatchy News.

They include employees and customers and close contacts of those groups.

BEEF PLANT FINED

Iowa regulators have issued their first citation to a meatpacking plant with a large coronavirus outbreak that sickened its workforce — a $957 fine for a minor record-keeping violation.

The outbreak at the Iowa Premium Beef Plant in Tama in April resulted in 338 of the plant's 850 workers testing positive for the virus, 80 more than the state previously acknowledged, according to inspection records released Thursday.

The Iowa Occupational Safety and Health Administration said on June 1 that it had launched inspections at the Tama plant and four other meatpacking plants where thousands of workers had tested positive. Records show that the inspections did not lead to any citations at the four other plants, where at least nine workers have died after contracting the COVID-19 virus. They are the Tyson Foods plants in Waterloo, Columbus Junction and Perry and the JBS plant in Marshalltown.

The agency cited Iowa Premium Beef in August for failing to keep a required log of workplace-related injuries and illnesses.

MISSOURI GOVERNOR

Missouri is dealing with a surge in new coronavirus cases, bringing the total to 116,946 since the pandemic began. More than 100,000 of those cases have been reported since the state reopened for business in midJune.

Among those new cases are Gov. Mike Parson and his wife, Teresa. Parson's office said he had no symptoms and that his wife's were mild.

Hospitals in Missouri's third-largest city, Springfield, are approaching capacity.

Officials at Springfield's two major hospital systems, CoxHealth and Mercy, told the city council that they were running out of staff.

As of Monday, 89 Mercy caregivers were in quarantine, hospital officials said.

Bloomberg: Pay cuts become permanent for many Americans during pandemic

Pay cuts introduced by U.S. employers in the early days of the coronavirus pandemic — meant to stave off layoffs and retain key employees — have proved less temporary than perhaps originally envisioned. The majority of workers who took a reduction as the virus brought the economy to a halt are still earning less than they were prior to the outbreak, according to a Pew Research Center study released Thursday, a sign of fragility in the labor market as the recovery slowly takes shape.

The extent of outright job losses brought on by efforts to contain the virus has been well-documented: Half of adults who say they lost a job due to the pandemic remain unemployed, according to the study, a finding consistent with government statistics showing the U.S. has regained about half of the 22 million positions lost in the early spring.

But shifts in earnings and pay structure have been harder to track, with average hourly wage data skewed higher by the disappearance of low-paid service-industry jobs and with overall income figures inflated by expanded government benefits that gave Americans a temporary boost.

Nearly one-third of adults surveyed by researchers say either they or someone in their household had to reduce their hours or accept a pay cut because of the outbreak, with 21% saying this happened to them personally. Among that subsegment of adults, 60% say they are currently earning less than before the outbreak, with 34% making about the same amount of money and 6% earning more than before the spread of the virus.

The nationally representative survey of 13,200 U.S. adults was conducted from Aug. 3 to Aug. 16.

Separately, survey results highlight the racial divides in Americans' economic wellbeing.

Some 44% of Hispanic Americans say they or someone else in their household have taken a pay cut

because of the virus. That compares with 29% of White, 32% of Black, and 41% of Asian adults who say the same.
While about 40% of Black and 43% of Hispanic adults say they have used money from a savings or retirement account to pay their bills since the outbreak began, 29% of White adults and 33% of Asian adults say the same, the survey results showed.

Ryan Kopsa
Digital Communications Manager

Office of Governor Pete Ricketts
OFFICE 402-471-1974
CELL 402-890-2467
ryan.kopsa@nebraska.gov
governor.nebraska.gov | **Facebook** | **Twitter**