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Subject: FW: Governor"s Office Daily Update - 9-10-20
Date: Thursday, September 10, 2020 10:49:00 AM
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Subject: Governor's Office Daily Update - 9-10-20

Ag Valley Co-op
Eustis, NE

Commodity	Delivery	Price	Basis	Date (as of)
Corn	Sep 2020	3.32	-30.00	08:27
Corn	Dec 2020	3.29	-33.00	08:27
Milo	Sep 2020	3.82	20.00	08:27
Milo	Dec 2020	3.82	20.00	08:27
Soybeans	Sep 2020	9.02	-77.00	08:27
Soybeans	Dec 2020	9.02	-77.00	08:27
Wheat	Sep 2020	4.24	-54.00	08:26
Wheat	Jul 2021	4.38	-65.00	08:25

Cubs: Bauer outduels Yu in scoreless 10-K gem
Reds – 4
Cubs – 0

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KTIV: Gov. Ricketts: Counties to move to less-restricted health measures on Sept. 14
NTV: Most of Neb. will head to Phase 4 on Monday

10/11: Gov. Ricketts will not reapply for Supplemental SNAP
KETV: Gov stands by decision not to extend extra food stamp benefits
NET: Ricketts: Not Taking Extra SNAP Benefits Sign Of Returning To Normal
KSCJ: Ricketts Won't Close Lincoln Bars After U-N-L Suspensions
KSCJ: Nebraska Creates Hazard Incident Management Team
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KETV: Douglas County confident in COVID-19 case reporting, despite state reporting glitch

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AP: Teacher deaths from COVID raise alarms

LJS: New team to coordinate state's response to wildfires, floods

It took more than two dozen agencies to fight the Hubbard Gap Fire that burned 4,000 acres in the Wildcat Hills in Banner County last month.

Officials on the ground said the fire could have been much worse — up to 10,000 acres, possibly — had it not been for the teamwork between local and state agencies to contain the blaze on the ground and from the air.

Gov. Pete Ricketts said the response illustrates the capabilities of a new incident management team, which he highlighted Wednesday during a weekly news conference. The new state disaster response team will be responsible for coordinating efforts in the wake of wildfires, floods and other disasters.

The team includes representatives from the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency, the Nebraska National Guard, State Fire Marshal and Nebraska State Forester, as well as personnel assigned to command, operations, finance and logistics who will support local agencies and take over the response if needed.

"This is really a capacity we've not had before in the state that will help us really fill in the gap for those emergencies, when managing the emergencies is going to be bigger than the local resources can handle," Ricketts said. "They are all going to still be supporting the local resources."

Ricketts said the team has its origins in the after-action reports from the 2012 wildfires that raged across the Niobrara River valley and the Pine Ridge, burning more than a half- million acres in the process.

Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac, the adjutant general of the Nebraska National Guard, said the incident management team adds "a layer of coordination" between local and state entities, and engages individuals with specialized training for a quicker response.

Before the team was formed, Bohac said, responses "were more of a pickup game," with one to two people being called upon as needed instead of bringing in a whole team.

"I see this as a way to be more effective with local resources and to actually respond faster than we might have otherwise," he said.

By Chris Dunker

AP: Nebraska creates new team to help respond to disasters

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Nebraska has created a new state disaster response team to help local governments that are overwhelmed with massive wildfires and other disasters, Gov. Pete Ricketts said Wednesday.

The incident management team includes the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency, the state fire marshal and the Nebraska state forester.
The team is designed to help organize state resources that are already in place and allow for faster response times. It will only respond if local governments request it, Ricketts said.
Western Nebraska saw a major wildfire in Banner County last month that burned more than 4,000 acres.

KFOR: Governor And State Agencies Announce Creation Of Incident Management Team

(KFOR NEWS September 10, 2020) On Wednesday, Governor Pete Ricketts and Major General Daryl Bohac, Director of the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), announced that, for the first time in its history, the State of Nebraska has a fully operational Type 3, All-Hazards Incident Management Team (IMT).
NEMA Assistant Director Bryan Tuma, State Fire Marshal Chris Cantrell, and Nebraska Forest Service Director John Erixson joined the Governor and Maj. Gen. Bohac for the announcement.
"This new Incident Management Team is helping better coordinate Nebraskans to provide leadership during extended emergencies including wildfires, floods, and other disasters," said Gov. Ricketts. "When communities face challenges beyond the capabilities of local responders, Nebraska's qualified Incident Management Team can provide support to help protect communities and bring in additional resources."
An IMT works at the scene of a disaster to coordinate a response along with the State Emergency Operations Center at NEMA and federal partners, if needed, to secure resources and personnel that exceed a local jurisdiction's capabilities to respond to a wildfire or other disaster.
"The IMT demonstrates our continued commitment to building and maintaining strong partnerships for the benefit of the people of Nebraska," Maj. Gen. Bohac said. "Development of partnerships from the federal, state, to local level are an effective and efficient way to respond to all disasters."
Once a local jurisdiction declares an emergency, a state declaration must be approved by Gov. Ricketts to allow state resources to be made available to aid in the response. Previously, state resources would provide assistance to local emergency managers during a disaster. With the new IMT in place, local jurisdictions can now request for the State to directly manage the disaster response.
A Type 3 IMT includes a minimum of eight command and general staff members who manage an incident after being delegated authority by a local jurisdiction faced with a disaster that exceeds its capabilities and resources. An Incident Management Assistance Team (IMAT) includes credentialed members who deploy as needed to integrate with local responders to assist them in managing their incident.
Team members can include trained command, operations, planning, logistics, and finance/administration personnel from different state agencies, fire departments, and local emergency management who work together within the confines of the Incident Command System (ICS). ICS is part of the National Incident Management System which allows the whole community to work together to manage all threats and hazards regardless of cause, size, location, or complexity.
Team activation is requested through local emergency managers to the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency. Under the Nebraska Emergency Management Act, an IMT or IMAT in Nebraska deploys as a State Emergency Response Team (SERT) under the authority of The Adjutant General of the Nebraska Military Department.
State Fire Marshal Chris Cantrell said the State made the choice to support responders and citizens of Nebraska with development of an IMT/IMAT because of lessons learned from previous large wildland fires.

“The support this team brings to firefighters, emergency management, local jurisdictions, and the citizens of this state is essential,” Cantrell said. “A Type 3 team can provide relief to local jurisdictions when an incident increases in complexity, and can also help to get control of an incident before it becomes too complex, such as a Type 2 or Type 1 incident. The transition from a local incident management to a mid-level management has never been an option in our state before. This is a major milestone towards Nebraska being capable of assisting its citizens in their greatest time of need.”
“Fires are just one of the reasons an IMT or IMAT would be deployed,” NEMA Assistant Director Bryan Tuma said. “The team can assist with incident management activities during all-hazards events, including natural and human-caused events, as well as planned events.”
“Having a state IMT is a cost-effective way to respond to incidents,” State Forester John Erixson said. “Cost of a national Type 1 and Type 2 team is considerably higher than that of a Type 3 team.”
Nationally, there are five types of IMTs:
Type 5: A local village and township team composed primarily of fire officers from neighboring departments trained to serve in command and general staff positions during the first 6–12 hours of an incident.
Type 4: A city, county, or fire district including fire, EMS, and law enforcement officers from a larger and generally more populated area during the first 6–12 hours of an incident.
Type 3: A state or metropolitan area team comprised of several entities within a state or region, activated to support incident management at incidents of extended duration.
Type 2: National and state teams used on smaller-scale national or state incidents.
Type 1: The most robust IMT with the most training and experience. These teams operate through interagency cooperation of federal, state, and local land and emergency management agencies.

Seward Co Independent: New economic era: Petsource holds first ribbon cutting

The multi-decade project created to further Seward's economic future came rushing to fruition as Mayor Josh Eickmeier stood in a line involving a CEO and other elected officials, all staring down with scissors. The Seward Rail Campus' landmark first tenant, Petsource by Scoular, officially arrived.
Gov. Pete Ricketts gleefully cut through a massive strip of ceremonial blue tape that Scoular CEO Paul Maass held. PetSource General Manager Amy Patterson and Nebraska Congressman Don Bacon shared an oversized pair of scissors to make a separate cut. Ceremony complete.
The Sept. 1 afternoon ceremony brought out all those local and elected officials, as well as the current 44 Petsource employees and those from Gray Construction – tasked with raising the facility into what it's become since its groundbreaking just over a year ago.
“At the end of the day, that's what economic development means,” Gov. Ricketts said in his speech from the podium in front of the building. “It's companies like Scoular investing in cities in our state. Investing in places like Seward and allowing Nebraskan families to enjoy that good life.”
The ceremony served as a ceremonial landmark for not only the rail campus, but for its flagship tenant. Scoular, founded in Superior in 1892, operates in Omaha and boasts its Nebraska heritage. Scoular first approached Seward about a plot at its new rail campus under the pseudonym Project Superior.
“Knowing that Scoular was founded over 125 years ago eased any concerns that I had that they may be a fly-by-night operation,” Eickmeier joked in his speech. “Finding out it was a Nebraska company built a sense of familiarity, comfort level and trust to move the project forward.”
Congressman Bacon, who represents the Omaha district where Scoular is based, spoke of the company's heritage. Scoular posted $4 billion in sales during its last fiscal year while operating 49 different sales and storage locations. Bacon reiterated the addition of Petsource – the company's first

facility completely dedicated to developing pet food – and the impact a $60 billion project and an eventual 100 employees would do for the local economy.
“Expanding the Scoular family right here in Seward, it's a tremendous addition,” Bacon said.
In the rounds of congratulations and thank yous sent during speeches, Ricketts and Eickmeier both took time to note State Senator and Seward resident Mark Kolterman for his role in the project that Patterson said included driving Scoular officials around Seward County in a Suburban. There were also thanks to the Seward County Chamber and Development Partnership and its President and CEO Jonathan Jank. Eickmeier and Patterson both pointed out city council members, as well as City Administrator Greg Butcher for their roles in the project's development.
After all the congratulatory handshakes were made, Petsource and Gray Construction employees showed their 15 months of effort in a full tour of the 6,000-square foot facility.
Those invited to the event were split into several different tour groups to adhere to social distancing. Steven Moore, director of food safety, quality and innovation guided one of those groups through a detail-oriented tour showing the UV sanitation plans that were installed even before the onset of the coronavirus pandemic. Moore also showed his group through each of the color-coded floors and walls meant to differentiate the facility's departments. He showed how quickly freeze-dried packages can move throughout the facility by its weight reduction and myriad machinery.
Freezer points in the facility dropped to as low as negative-25 degrees to ensure the pet food safety. There are also research and development rooms in the facility where employees create new flavors and varieties of Petsource food. Amy Tesinsky in the research lab showed visitors how the frozen assortments that move through the facility quickly turn into treats replicating beef liver or a beef, apple and antioxidant combination.
And, in order to maintain consistency, boxing and bagging machinery in the facility use a “checkware” system that rejects items under or over a desired movement weight.
“We needed a state-of-the-art facility for our plans and we're thrilled to pick Seward and operate here,” Maass said before getting jokingly ambitious. “We're already confident enough to think about what expansion looks like down on that next plot.”
Eickmeier pointed out that such a massive operation doesn't typically approach a city of Seward's size. “In fact,” he said, “Petsource represents the single largest, most significant economic development project in decades.”
The mayor, and local representatives, thanked Scoular and Petsource members for their commitment before welcoming them into the community.
By Brady Oltmans

WJAG: State moving into phase four of DHM, new Incident Management Team created

LINCOLN - Nebraska counties currently in phase three of the statewide directed health measure will be moving into phase four.
Governor Pete Ricketts announced that during a press conference at the Capitol Wednesday and said the only county not moving into phase four will be Lancaster County.
Ricketts said phase four will begin on Monday.
"Outdoor venues will be able to go to 100 percent capacity and indoor venues will be at 75 percent capacity. If you're going to have a large event of 500 people or more, you'll still have to check with your local public health director and put together a plan."
Also during the press conference Ricketts announced a new statewide Incident Management Team that will be used when emergencies are bigger than local authorities can handle.

Ricketts said the team will only respond if local authorities request it.
By Cody Ronnfeldt

OWH: Ricketts eases coronavirus restrictions for most of Nebraska

LINCOLN — Gov. Pete Ricketts announced steps Wednesday that should allow a return to near normal across most of Nebraska.

The governor said all counties, except Lancaster, will be in a Phase 4 directed health measure as of Monday. Twenty-seven were already in that phase.

That phase limits the size of indoor gatherings but drops all other state-imposed mandates, including restrictions on restaurants, bars, gyms, child care centers, salons, weddings and funerals. Those entities are encouraged to follow voluntary guidelines to reduce the risk of spreading the coronavirus.

Locally imposed mask mandates in Omaha and Lincoln will remain in place, however. Both require people to wear face coverings in most indoor public spaces where they are not able to maintain 6 feet of social distance. There are several exceptions.

Ricketts did not elaborate about his reasons for the change at a press conference. His spokesman, Taylor Gage, pointed to the governor's past comments about taking steps to slow the spread of the coronavirus in order to keep enough hospital beds and ventilators available for those who need them.

"Protecting hospital capacity has always been the goal," Gage said. "Hospital capacity remains very stable."

State numbers show that 38% of hospital beds, 34% of intensive care unit beds and 83% of ventilators were available as of Tuesday evening. At the same time, Nebraska ranks 19th highest in the rate of coronavirus cases among states, according to data collected by Johns Hopkins University.

Neither Douglas County Health Director Adi Pour nor Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Director Pat Lopez was available to comment about the change on Wednesday.

Last week, Pour said Omaha is still struggling with infections. She said communities with the coronavirus under control have a positive test rate below 5% and no more than 10 new cases per day per million people based on a seven-day rolling average, the equivalent of 6 cases in Omaha.

Instead, the county's positivity rate was about 9.6% for the week that ended Saturday and the county has been seeing about 90 to 100 new daily cases. Lancaster County's positivity rate was 13.3% for the same week.

In earlier comments, Lopez said Lancaster County will not move into Phase 4 this month, noting that the numbers of cases have increased with the return of college students and the reopening of schools. She said some "adjustments" to the local restrictions will be announced later.

"This is the time not only to stay the course, but also to redouble our efforts in Lancaster County," Lopez said. "We need to do what is best for our community to overcome the impacts of this virus."

The state began imposing directed health measures in March, when the coronavirus first began spreading in the state. Initial restrictions, which included closing sit-down service at restaurants and bars, have been gradually relaxed as the need for hospital beds and ventilators has declined.

In phase 4, indoor gatherings will be limited to 75% of capacity at a time. Facilities that hold more than 500 people, or, in Douglas County, more than 1,000 people, must have their reopening plans reviewed by health officials. Outdoor gatherings can go up to 100% of an area's capacity.

Testing glitch Ricketts said that a technical problem with TestNebraska slowed the reporting of coronavirus test results leading up to and through the Labor Day weekend. The glitch was discovered because the state public health data system was not receiving results, even though the laboratory had continued to process tests.

State Medical Officer Dr. Gary Anthone said the problem could not be fixed until Tuesday morning. The results have since been transmitted to the state system, producing a spike in the number of tests reported. He said the problem delayed people from getting test results for three to four days but did not affect the lab results.
Ricketts said the issue was unrelated to the weekend closure of TestNebraska sites in Omaha. He said testing was shut down to give workers time off.
By Martha Stoddard

OWH: Nebraska still only state holding out on federal food program but will pursue another, Ricketts says

LINCOLN — Gov. Pete Ricketts remained adamant Wednesday about refusing emergency supplemental food aid, despite a letter from 20 state senators urging him to change his mind.
But the state is pursuing other federal food assistance aimed at families of children who are missing out on free or reduced-price lunches at school.
Nebraska is the only state not to continue the pandemic-driven emergency supplemental assistance beyond July. The program, authorized by a federal coronavirus relief bill, boosted Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program benefits, formerly known as food stamps, to the maximum level for all recipients.
"We're going back to the program as it existed before the pandemic," Ricketts said. "We want people to get used to the idea that, hey, we're going back to a more normal life."
Nebraska accepted the aid for March through July.
On Wednesday, the governor said the regular SNAP benefits are income-based so those in the most need get the maximum benefits and pointed to other resources available to help feed people, such as food banks, private donations and other federally funded food programs.
Ricketts also said he has heard concerns about a "cliff effect" with the special coronavirus aid, in which people would face a sharp drop-off in assistance. He said the decision not to continue supplemental assistance will ease the cutback.
Also on Wednesday, Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services officials announced plans to apply for a second round of the pandemic electronic benefit transfer program. The program provides money on electronic cards to offset the cost of replacement meals that have to be provided by families.
Nebraska offered the pandemic EBT program from June 22 through July 19. Officials said the state issued more than $50 million in assistance to 86,589 children during that time. The new application would provide benefits for August and September.
Both the pandemic EBT and programs at issue are part of the federal response to the economic upheavals caused by the coronavirus, which has shuttered business and thrown people out of work.
By Martha Stoddard

KLIN: Nebraska Won't Extend SNAP Benefits, 20 State Senators Disagree

Nebraska is the only state who won't extend emergency food benefits related to the COVID-19 pandemic.
The extra money for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, also known as SNAP, comes from a federal coronavirus relief bill. Under the expanded program, all recipients can receive the maximum allowable amount.
Governor Pete Ricketts says 40-percent of the people on the benefit will continue to receive them since it's based on income level.

“We are taking advantage of other federal programs. The system works well, we already have a good system in place in SNAP benefits,” he said at a Wednesday press conference.
Twenty state senators led by John McCollister of Omaha have written a letter to Ricketts asking him to extend the benefits.
Ricketts says other programs can help bridge the gap.
“There are a variety of other programs being extended.”
He referenced WIC, Women Infants and Children programs, and food banks as a solution.
By Kellan Heavican

OWH: Nebraska education chief urges schools to keep pressure on coronavirus

Nebraska Commissioner of Education Matt Blomstedt on Wednesday cautioned local school officials against rolling back COVID-19 health protocols after an encouraging start to the school year.
The state has seen “very few” cases of spread so far in schools that opened their doors to in-person learning, he said, but the pandemic has not gone away.
Blomstedt said school officials should “stay the course” on masking, social distancing and other protocols, because those actions will keep the schools open.
“I sometimes hear from certain areas of the state, ‘Oh, it’s going really well, can we loosen up restrictions?’ No. This is not the time to be doing that,” Blomstedt said.
He made the comments during a press conference with Nebraska Gov. Pete Ricketts.
Nebraska districts are experiencing scattered cases of students and teachers bringing the disease into schools, triggering heavy quarantining in some instances. But the schools have remained open, so far, without the spiking community case counts that were feared.
Health experts say, however, that it’s early yet, and there’s reason to be cautious, including that young people could be asymptomatic and spreading the disease, and therefore underrepresented in counts.
The average daily counts in Douglas County are still above what some experts recommended for bringing kids back.
Blomstedt encouraged officials to act decisively when they identify a student or teacher with COVID-19.
He said it’s important that parents, teachers and students understand that if a student without a mask is within 6 feet of someone who tested positive, that’s going to be treated as a close contact, triggering a quarantine.
He said that by following the protocols, the state should continue to have a successful school year.
Blomstedt said it was important that the state last week provided flexibility to local health departments in deciding whether to quarantine a teacher who had close contact.
Asked by a reporter if that change, made through a directed health measure, was inconsistent with staying the course, he said the quarantine rules have made it hard for some schools to maintain their teacher workforce. The change will help alleviate the problem, he said.
The change allows a teacher to stay in the classroom after a close COVID-19 contact instead of quarantining, as long as the teacher takes certain precautions.
Under the measure, teachers could remain on the job as long as they have no symptoms, wear a face covering or mask for 14 days, practice social distancing and self-monitor twice daily for fever and other symptoms.
The change also applied to paraprofessionals and other staffers at schools and educational service units.
By Joe Dejka

LJS: Technical glitch again delays results for COVID tests done through Test Nebraska

A technical glitch prevented results from coronavirus tests collected through Test Nebraska sites late last week from being reported over the weekend.
Gov. Pete Ricketts said Wednesday the snag occurred Friday, leaving tests to go unreported through the Labor Day weekend.
The error was resolved late Monday, and results were sent to those awaiting COVID-19 test results Tuesday, Ricketts said.
According to the state's coronavirus dashboard, more than 7,100 tests were reported Tuesday — the biggest number since May 16, when more than 5,700 test results were entered — including 502 positives.
That's a big increase over the weekend, when about 1,300 tests were reported Saturday; 649 Sunday; and 854 Monday.
In late August, the state said the data system for Qualtrics, one of three Utah-based companies hired by the state to boost Nebraska's coronavirus testing capabilities, had stopped pushing results to a second system.
During that glitch, hundreds of people who had been tested at Test Nebraska sites waited days to even be informed that their tests had reached the lab, leaving a call center to wrongly tell some their tests had been lost.
The problem was later resolved, and several days' worth of tests were reported Aug. 23.
By Chris Dunker

KMTV: Nebraska approved for Lost Wages Assistance program

OMAHA, Neb. (KMTV) — FEMA announced Wednesday that Nebraska is approved for the Lost Wages Assistance program, which will allow the state to provide an extra $300 per week on top of regular unemployment benefits to those unemployed due to COVID-19.
FEMA says they will work with Gov. Pete Ricketts to implement a system to make this funding available for residents.
On August 8, President Trump made up to $44 billion available from FEMA's Disaster Relief Fund to provide financial help to those who have lost wages due to the pandemic.
To learn more about the Lost Wages Assistance program, click here.
By Danielle Meadows

Washington Post: How Trump squandered February, despite knowing the risk posed by the coronavirus

It was a rare moment in which President Trump appears to have understood the threat posed by the coronavirus that emerged in China last year.
“You just breathe the air, and that’s how it’s passed,” he told The Washington Post’s Bob Woodward in a phone call. “And so that’s a very tricky one. That’s a very delicate one. It’s also more deadly than even your strenuous flu."
The virus, Trump said, was “deadly stuff.”
That call was Feb. 7, more than two weeks after the United States had confirmed its first infection in someone who had traveled to China. Three days later, Trump held a rally at an indoor arena in New Hampshire.
It has been obvious since April that the month of February represented a lost opportunity for

addressing the threat of the virus. What wasn't known, though, was that even as he repeatedly played down the threat, Trump privately understood the risk. Even as he tried to maintain a business-as-usual presidency, he knew that the virus was transmissible by air and often deadly.

"I always wanted to play it down," Trump told Woodward in March.

In light of the revelation that Trump was well aware of the risk posed by the virus as early as Jan. 28, it's worth revisiting how he and his administration approached the virus in that crucial first month. (Much of this timeline appeared in an article published April 20.)

On Jan. 31, 10 days after the first reported case in the United States, Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar said during a briefing at the White House that the coronavirus presented a public health emergency, announcing new limits on travel from China to the United States. Among the stipulations was a ban on the entry of noncitizens who had traveled in China in the preceding two weeks. Tens of thousands of people traveled to the United States from China after the restrictions were put in place.

Trump didn't attend the briefing. Half an hour after it ended, he boarded Marine One on his way to Mar-a-Lago, his private resort in Palm Beach, Fla.

A timeline of the administration's actions produced by Trump's reelection campaign indicates that on Feb. 2, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) "expanded enhanced entry screening to eight major airports across the nation."

Trump, meanwhile, was playing golf at his private club in Florida. After his round, he sat for an interview with Fox News's Sean Hannity.

Hannity asked how concerned Trump was about the virus.

"Well, we pretty much shut it down coming in from China," Trump said. (The travel restrictions hadn't yet taken effect when Trump and Hannity spoke.)

Trump boasted about his relationship with Chinese President Xi Jinping and said that the United States was offering China help — including sending large amounts of protective equipment there.

"We have the best in the world for that," Trump said. "We've done a tremendous job in many other instances also on that even recently."

That evening, Trump attended a Super Bowl watch party at Mar-a-Lago before heading back to the White House.

The campaign's timeline indicates that on Feb. 3, "the CDC had a team ready to travel to China to obtain critical information on the novel coronavirus, but were in the U.S. awaiting permission to enter by the Chinese government."

During his State of the Union address on Feb. 4, Trump mentioned the outbreak.

"We are coordinating with the Chinese government and working closely together on the coronavirus outbreak in China," he said. "My administration will take all necessary steps to safeguard our citizens from this threat."

It was part of a long section focused on health care, beginning with a promise to protect preexisting conditions (despite the administration supporting a lawsuit that would end that protection) and ending with his awarding the Presidential Medal of Freedom to conservative radio host Rush Limbaugh. Limbaugh would go on to repeatedly play down the threat posed by the virus on his radio program and to spread misinformation about it.

On Feb. 5, the administration briefed Capitol Hill on its response to the coronavirus.

Here was the reaction of Sen. Chris Murphy (D-Conn.) to that briefing:

In a meeting at the White House, Azar asked that $2 billion be allocated to buy protective equipment aimed at refilling a federal stockpile. A dispute about Azar's approach led to a shouting match, and his request wasn't granted.

The Trump campaign's timeline indicates that on Feb. 6, the CDC began shipping coronavirus test kits to labs in the United States. Those tests, though, were flawed, delaying the ability to track the virus.
That same morning, Trump attended a National Prayer Breakfast, attacking the "very dishonest and corrupt people" who had supported his impeachment. (The Senate had acquitted him the prior day.) Later in the day, he held a lengthy event in which he similarly criticized his political opponents. He didn't mention the virus.
That afternoon, he had a scheduled meeting with his coronavirus task force in the Oval Office. It was the only such meeting on his public schedule in February.
That evening, he spoke with Xi by phone and, on the morning of Feb. 7, summarized the call in a tweet:
On his way to North Carolina for an event, Trump told reporters about the conversation.
"We talked about — mostly about the coronavirus. They're working really hard, and I think they are doing a very professional job," he said. "They're in touch with World — the World Organization. CDC also. We're working together."
He reiterated that he thought China was "doing a very good job."
Asked about the potential effect on the global economy, Trump replied, "I think that China will do a very good job."
At the event in North Carolina, Trump again described his call with Xi.
"I just spoke to President Xi last night, and, you know, we're working on the — the problem, the virus," he said. "It's a — it's a very tough situation. But I think he's going to handle it. I think he's handled it really well. We're helping wherever we can."
This was the day on which he told Woodward that the virus was deadly and transmissible through the air. It was also the day on which Secretary of State Mike Pompeo celebrated the sending of protective equipment to China.
On Feb. 10, Trump hosted a number of governors at the White House. (The governors had been briefed by the coronavirus task force the previous day.) Gov. Pete Ricketts (R-Neb.) asked him what was next on his trade agenda.
"We've done great on the trade. It's going to have a tremendous impact," Trump said as part of his response. "Now, the virus that we're talking about having to do — you know, a lot of people think that goes away in April with the heat — as the heat comes in. Typically, that will go away in April. We're in great shape, though. We have 12 cases — 11 cases, and many of them are in good shape now."
In response to a later question, Trump revealed the source of the April assertion: Xi.
The Chinese leader "feels very confident," Trump said. "And he feels that, again, as I mentioned, by April or during the month of April, the heat, generally speaking, kills this kind of virus. So that would be a good thing."
He added: "But we're in great shape in our country. We have 11 [cases], and the 11 are getting better."
That evening, Trump traveled to New Hampshire for a campaign rally — timed to step on the Democratic primary the following day.
"Looks like by April, you know, in theory, when it gets a little warmer, it miraculously goes away," he said to the audience of thousands of people. "I hope that's true. But we're doing great in our country. China, I spoke with President Xi, and they're working very, very hard. And I think it's going to all work out fine. Rough stuff, I tell you, rough, rough stuff. But I think it's going to work out good. We only have 11 cases, and they're all getting better."
While in New Hampshire, Trump spoke with Trish Regan, then a host on Fox Business.
"I really believe they are going to have it under control fairly soon," he said of China. "You know in April, supposedly, it dies with the hotter weather. And that's a beautiful date to look forward to. But China, I can tell you, is working very hard."

“We’re working with them. You know, we just sent some of our best people over there, World Health Organization and a lot of them are composed of our people. They’re fantastic,” he added. “And they’re now in China, and we’re helping them out. We’re in very good shape. We have 11 cases, and most of them are getting better very rapidly.”

He offered an assurance to viewers.

“I think the virus is going to be — it’s going to be fine,” he added later. “They’re working very hard, and we are in communication with them.”

The campaign’s timeline indicates that on Feb. 11, “the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) expanded a partnership with Janssen Research & Development to ‘expedite the development’ of a coronavirus vaccine.”

The next day, the timeline says that the United States “shipped test kits for the 2019 novel coronavirus to approximately 30 countries who lacked the necessary reagents and other materials.” It also reiterated the item from Feb. 2 that CDC officials were awaiting approval to travel to China — something Trump apparently didn’t resolve in his conversation with Xi.

Fox News’s Geraldo Rivera interviewed Trump on Feb. 13 for a radio program.

“Mr. President, are you worried that the stock market and the big economic boom are in peril because of this coronavirus spreading epidemic?” Rivera asked, pointing to the lockdown then underway in China.

“Well, we’re working on it very closely. I spoke to President Xi two days ago. They’re working on it very professionally. It’s a problem, we think and we hope, based on all signs that the problem goes away in April because — which is not too far down the road, because heat kills this virus,” Trump said. He added that the United States was “sending a lot of people and CDC has been great, but it is — it’s a problem in China. Has not been spreading very much. In our country, we only have, basically, 12 cases, and most of those people are recovering and some cases fully recovered. So it’s actually less.”

At an event with the Border Patrol Council on Feb. 14, Trump touted what he described as his successes — including on the virus.

“Sixty-one percent of the voters approve of Trump’s handling of the coronavirus,” Trump said, pointing to a poll from the Morning Consult. (His approval is now at 39 percent.) “And, you know, we did a very early move on that. We did a — I was criticized by a lot of people at the beginning because we were the first. We’d never done it before. We closed our borders through certain areas. It’s never happened before where we did that. We never closed our borders. But we did it, and we actually did it early, and we took some criticism. Now everyone is saying we did a good job.”

He again said that only 12 people in the country had been infected, praised Xi and suggested that the virus would fade in April.

Later that day, he left for Mar-a-Lago again. That weekend, he played golf and attended the Daytona 500 before heading back to his D.C. hotel for the wedding of his adviser Stephen Miller — another large indoor event.

Trump traveled to the West Coast that week, including attending a briefing on the 2020 Olympics (which would be canceled a month later). He attended several events in California while staying at his hotel in Las Vegas.

It’s likely that there were at least 2,000 cases in the United States by this point, including big clusters in California and New York — many of the latter of which arrived from Europe.

On Feb. 18, “HHS announced it would engage with Sanofi Pasteur in an effort to quickly develop a coronavirus vaccine and to develop treatment for coronavirus infections,” the campaign’s timeline reads.

The next night, Trump held a rally in Phoenix. He participated in an interview with a local television

station while there.
“How confident are you that China is being 100 percent honest with us when it comes to this scary virus?” a reporter asked.
“I’m confident that they’re trying very hard,” Trump replied. “I mean, I know President Xi — I get along with him very well. We’ve just made a great trade deal, which is going to be a lot of business for Arizona and every other place. But, they are trying very, very hard, and I think the numbers are going to get progressively better as we go along.”
He reiterated his assumption that the virus would recede in April.
On Feb. 20 and 21, he held additional rallies in Colorado and Las Vegas. He didn’t mention the virus at either. Two days later, after returning to D.C., Trump departed for a multiday trip to India.
While he was away, stock markets began to stumble over concern about the pandemic’s spread. Trump tried to calm investors with a tweet:
The campaign’s timeline indicates that the administration on Feb. 24 “sent a letter to Congress requesting at least $2.5 billion to help combat the spread of the coronavirus.” That included $500 million dedicated to protective equipment, a quarter of the $2 billion Azar had sought more than two weeks previously. The next day, Trump disparaged Senate Minority Leader Charles E. Schumer (D-N.Y.) for suggesting that the amount of requested aid was too low.
Speaking to reporters from India on Feb. 25, Trump offered comments about the virus.
“You may ask about the coronavirus, which is very well under control in our country,” Trump said. “We have very few people with it, and the people that have it are — in all cases, I have not heard anything other. Maybe there's something new, because for two days, I haven't been seeing too much of that news, of very much news, because [the India trip] has been very all-encompassing.”
He was later asked whether his decision to allow a number of Americans infected with the virus to return to the United States conflicted with his 2014 criticism of President Barack Obama for allowing Ebola patients into the United States. Trump said that it wasn’t contradictory, given the comparative mortality rates from the two viruses.
He returned to the subject a bit later.
Xi “is working very hard. He is very capable. The country is very capable. And it snuck up on him, but I think he’s going to do well,” Trump said. “Now you see it’s going to South Korea, it’s going to Italy and it’s going to other places. But I spoke to all of them. They’re all working very, very hard on it.”
The known cases were “fully quarantined,” Trump insisted. “So, you know, we did the right thing.”
While en route back to the United States later that day, Trump tweeted:
Hours after returning from India on Feb. 26, Trump participated in the first of his regular daily briefings about the virus. Much of the briefing was centered on providing political support for him.
After beginning by praising his limits on travel from China, Trump and his team articulated that the risk posed by the virus was small. He claimed that the government was screening people from affected areas such as South Korea and Italy but that no additional travel restrictions were being imposed. He held up a graph identifying the United States as one of the best-prepared countries for an epidemic.
At several points, he compared the threat to the seasonal flu, which, he had been told, kills tens of thousands of people a year. (“That was shocking to me,” Trump said.)
“It is a little bit different, but in some ways it's easier and in some ways it's a little bit tougher,” he said of the coronavirus relative to the flu. “But we have it so well under control. I mean, we really have done a very good job.”
This, of course, should be contrasted with what he told Woodward: that the virus was “more deadly than even your strenuous flu.”
During this briefing, Trump offered one of the defining lines of his administration’s handling of the

outbreak.
“When you have 15 people, and the 15 within a couple of days is going to be down to close to zero, that's a pretty good job we've done,” Trump said.
As of writing, 6.3 million coronavirus cases have been confirmed in the United States and at least 187,000 people have died of covid-19, the disease caused by the virus.
The president was asked to respond to an assertion by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) that he “didn’t know what he was talking about” in regard to the virus. Trump called Pelosi incompetent.
Trump didn’t mention that the government was already aware that the virus was uncontained and that there were confirmed cases of new infections not related to international travel. The Post broke that story as Trump’s briefing was underway.
The Post reported that the first case of “community spread” of the virus had been confirmed — that is, the first case of an infection that was not immediately attributable to contact with someone who had traveled overseas.
On Feb. 27, he participated in an African American History Month event. complained about criticism about the administration’s handling of the virus.
“We have a situation with the virus. We’ve done a great job,” he said. “The press won’t give us credit for it. We have — in a world that has some big problems — you look at China and you look at industry between the two countries. And I did something that had never been done before — because it had never been done before: I closed our borders to certain areas of the world.”
He again touted his efforts a bit later.
“We have done an incredible job. We’re going to continue,” he said. “It’s going to disappear. One day — it’s like a miracle — it will disappear. And from our shores, we — you know, it could get worse before it gets better. It could maybe go away. We’ll see what happens.”
At the second event, Trump said that the virus was unexpected.
“I will say that things happen in life that are — if they would have said, ‘What are — give me 10 bad things that you think could happen,’ that wouldn’t have been on the list, right?” Trump said. “But you never know. But it’s working out very professionally. We’re doing a tremendous job and our people are doing a tremendous job.”
Trump was warned repeatedly about the threat of a pandemic. According to Woodward, that includes a briefing a month previously in which Trump was told that the pandemic would “be the biggest national security threat you face in your presidency.”
The next day, Feb. 28, Trump held another rally in Charleston, S.C.
“Now the Democrats are politicizing the coronavirus,” he told the audience. “You know that, right? Coronavirus. They’re politicizing it. We did one of the great jobs.”
“One of my people came up to me and said, 'Mr. President, they tried to beat you on Russia, Russia, Russia.' That didn't work out too well. They couldn't do it,” he added a bit later. “They tried the impeachment hoax. That was on a perfect conversation. … And this is their new hoax.”
“But you know we did something that’s been pretty amazing,” he continued. “We have 15 people in this massive country, and because of the fact that we went early, we went early, we could have had a lot more than that.
“We're doing great,” he added. “Our country is doing so great.”
At a coronavirus news briefing Feb. 29, Trump was asked about his “hoax” comments. He insisted that he was “referring to the action that they take to try and pin this on somebody, because we’ve done such a good job.”
He acknowledged that the number of cases was likely to increase.
“Additional cases in the United States are likely, but healthy individuals should be able to fully recover,”

Trump said. “And we think that will be a statement that we can make with great surety now that we’ve gotten familiar with this problem. They should be able to recover should they contract the virus. So, healthy people, if you’re healthy, you will probably go through a process and you’ll be fine.”
He then returned to his administration’s response.
“Since the early stages of the foreign outbreak, my administration has taken the most aggressive action in modern history to confront the spread of this disease,” he said. As evidence, he pointed to the previous month’s travel restrictions.
“Whatever the circumstance is, we’re prepared,” he said later.
By Philip Bump

Albion News: Boone County has higher COVID-19 numbers

After only a handful of positive COVID-19 diagnoses over the previous five months, Boone County’s case total has been rising.
As of Monday, Sept. 7, the county was listed at 33 positive tests since the pandemic began in April. That’s an increase of seven cases (nearly 27 percent) since Sept. 1.
Nearly half of those cases (15) were diagnosed within the past 14 days, according to the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).
Still, Boone County remained in the “yellow” or moderate risk category early this week.
Nebraska’s statewide coronavirus cases increased by about 1,700 in the past week to 35,975 total throughout the pandemic, and the state listed 404 deaths through Monday.
Cases reported by DHHS from the start of the pandemic in surrounding counties were: Antelope (28 with one death), Greeley (13, no deaths), Nance (14, no deaths), Platte (901, three deaths), Madison (643, five deaths), and Wheeler (one case, no deaths).

KNEB: PPHD: Higher Positive COVID Test Results Possible after Move to Phase 4

Panhandle Public Health officials say they wouldn’t be surprised if there’s a rise in COVID cases following the move into Phase 4 Directed Health Measures that takes effect this Friday.
During the COVID Unified Command update Tuesday afternoon, Panhandle Public Health District Director Kim Engel said it has to do with how everyone reacts once nearly all restrictions that have the threat of misdemeanor citation move to guidance-only. “It increases because the restrictions being put on the public are being lifted, so we’re able to do more,” said Engel. “So, if people are able to do more and don’t follow basic safety, the risk could increase.”
Under Phase 4, the only restriction still subject to enforcement under penalty of law is the limits on gatherings, to be set at 100% capacity for outdoor venues and 75% for indoor locations. Plans for events and/or venues with 500 or more people will still be required to be submitted to PPHD for approval.
Unified Command confirms 28 more cases of COVID in the Panhandle since last reporting on Thursday, September 3, 22 adults and six juveniles, as well as 212 recoveries.
The remainder of the state’s Public Health districts, with the exception of Lincoln-Lancaster County, will move into Phase 4 Sept. 14.

LJS: Sharp uptick in Lancaster County COVID-19 cases following test reporting glitches

Lancaster County health officials confirmed another death from COVID-19 on Wednesday, a day when the county also reported 158 new coronavirus cases.

The sharp uptick in cases followed a surge in tests returned after technical difficulties prevented results from Test Nebraska swabs collected through late last week from being reported over the weekend.
In addressing the technical issues, local officials stressed that results released Wednesday did not reflect a "spike in cases" nor a record-high number of daily cases.
With the new positive tests, Lancaster County has confirmed 4,700 COVID-19 cases since the beginning of the pandemic, including 21 deaths.
In a news release, city officials said the woman who died was in her 50s and had been hospitalized with COVID-19.
The number of deaths announced by health departments statewide also jumped sharply Wednesday.
At least 12 deaths were reported in eight different counties, the most by the Journal Star's count since 12 on April 29.
As of Wednesday evening, the Nebraska Department of Health Human Services reported 36,917 cases, 28,175 recoveries and 421 deaths, including the first in Butler County.
With the technical glitch, the seven-day average of new cases in Nebraska is 275, slightly below the average of 324 cases a day in the previous seven-day span.
In Lancaster County, more than 58% of the new cases reported Wednesday are among those ages 18-22, officials said.
The University of Nebraska-Lincoln reported 101 new cases Wednesday, which also includes a number of delayed test results. To date, the campus has reported 652 positive tests.
Lincoln Public Schools reported six new cases, in seven schools. A person who tested positive was at both North Star and Northeast high schools. Southeast High School had two positive cases, and Lincoln High, Lincoln East High and Eastridge Elementary School each reported one positive case. That brings the number of LPS cases to 54 since the start of school.
On Wednesday, Lincoln hospitals reported 32 coronavirus patients, but with only one on a ventilator. Nine of the patients are from Lancaster County, officials said.
Statewide, hospitalizations reached their highest point since June 9, with 182 COVID-19 patients.
By Riley Johnson

LJS: Madsen's employees, patrons found maskless by Lincoln police during compliance check

Police caught patrons and employees not wearing masks inside Madsen's Bowling & Billiards during a coronavirus restriction compliance check Sunday, a Lincoln police spokeswoman said Wednesday.
An officer entered the bowling alley at 4700 Dudley St. at 10 p.m. and observed those inside violating the local directed health measure's mask mandate, Officer Erin Spilker said.
Neither the patrons nor the employees were ticketed, but a criminal charge will be filed by the City Attorney's Office, she said.
City Attorney Yohance Christie did not respond to a question Wednesday about whether further action will be taken by the city.
Madsen's was the first business to defy the Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department's order to shut down over directed health measure violations and the only business ticketed thus far under it.
After a court fight over the order, a judge forced the city to use police to enforce the shutdown, and Madsen's reopened with the health department's permission after closing for three days.
Already, a misdemeanor charge accusing Madsen's of violating an order of the health director remains pending in Lancaster County Court.
An attorney for Madsen's will seek to have the charge thrown out at a hearing later this month.
By Riley Johnson

NTV: NSP will perform 33rd annual International Roadcheck operation

LINCOLN, Neb. — The 33rd annual International Roadcheck operation will run Sept.9-11 by troopers with the Nebraska State Patrol (NSP) Carrier Enforcement Division.

The International Roadcheck is a campaign promoted by the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance (CVSA). NSP said this year's campaign was previously scheduled for earlier this summer but was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Travel patterns have changed this year, but our partners in the trucking industry have remained hard at work to keep food, cleaning products, medical supplies, and more moving across the country," said Lieutenant Dan Doggett, Commander of NSP Carrier Enforcement. "International Roadcheck is a great opportunity for industry leaders and law enforcement to come together to place an emphasis on safety."

The troopers will perform high-visibility, high-volume inspections of large trucks and other commercial vehicles throughout the state during the 72-hour operation.

The troopers will be checking overall commercial vehicle safety with a focus on Level 1 inspections. NSP said Level 1 inspections include a comprehensive check of the vehicle and the driver.

International Roadcheck brings together dozens of law enforcement agencies across North America in the effort to keep road safe.

OWH: Nebraska lawmakers ask Big Ten to 'reconsider' postponement vote

LINCOLN — Though Nebraska Athletic Director Bill Moos said via text Wednesday he wasn't aware of any vote being scheduled over the next five days, a Chicago Tribune report said the Big Ten Council of Presidents and Chancellors may vote this weekend on a potential return-to-competition date for college football.

The news comes as the ACC and Big 12 are set to start play this weekend. The SEC will start play Sept. 26. The Big Ten and Pac-12 chose to postpone their seasons Aug. 11 and have been waiting on a return since then.

Speaking to Lincoln radio station KLIN, University of Nebraska President Ted Carter said a vote could happen "very soon," though he didn't specify how soon the Big Ten COP/C might choose to reconsider its 11-3 vote to postpone. A source has confirmed Nebraska, Iowa and Ohio State were the schools to vote for playing football Aug. 11. On Aug. 19, Big Ten Commissioner Kevin Warren wrote in a letter that the decision wouldn't be revisited, but through the Big Ten's Return to Competition Task Force, it clearly is being revisited. Moos said last week that the earliest date the Big Ten is considering a return to football is Thanksgiving week. He rebuffed reports of an Oct. 10 start date as "just a rumor."

It hasn't stopped lawmakers from around the Big Ten footprint in writing letters to the COP/C and Warren.

A bipartisan group of 28 Nebraska lawmakers sent a letter Wednesday to Big Ten presidents and chancellors, plus Warren, to "transparently reconsider" their Aug. 11 vote to postpone fall sports.

The letter, written by State Sen. Julie Slama of Peru, says the conference "disregarded" the success of Big Ten schools managing the spread of COVID-19 throughout their athletic programs.

"The Big Ten's cancellation of fall sports has been devastating for our student athletes, athletic department and local businesses," Slama said in a press release. "Other conferences have shown that football and other fall sports can be conducted safely."

The letter asks the conference to reconsider its decision in a "more transparent manner."

The lack of transparency recently prompted a lawsuit against the conference by eight Nebraska football players, seeking more explanation for the Big Ten's decision.
Though the unicameral Legislature is officially nonpartisan, senators who identify with either the Democratic or Republican parties have signed the letter. One, Sen. Mike Moser of Columbus, contracted COVID-19 and spent more than a month in the University of Nebraska Medical Center receiving treatment.
Slama, who represents District 1, is running for re-election this fall. Her letter comes on the heels of Republican lawmakers in six Big Ten states asking for the Big Ten to reconsider its vote.
The Big Ten responded to the Republicans' letter on Wednesday with a statement of its own.
"The letter reflects that we all want the same thing, which is 'continue sports safely.' The conference will continue to work with the COP/C, as it has always done, to identify opportunities to resume competition as it is safe to do so."
Late Wednesday night, Wisconsin Athletic Director Barry Alvarez said the football program would be taking a two-week break from on campus activities in concordance with the university's decision to stop in-person classes due to the rise of coronavirus cases on campus. The two-week break would mean Wisconsin returns to team activity Sept. 23.
By Sam McKewon and Paul Hammel

OWH: 'We are in a pandemic': OPS board members support suspension of fall sports

Omaha Public Schools board member Nancy Kratky said she's getting a lot of mail these days from parents and athletes who want to play sports this fall.
The notes say OPS was being careless when it suspended sports while all 54,000 students do remote learning because of concerns about the coronavirus. Other notes say OPS is being too cautious.
According to Kratky, in one note a mom advocating for sports to resume wrote, "If another kid gets COVID, so what?"
"And that is why we are here tonight," Kratky said of the note. "So what. That's what we need to think about."
Facing criticism from athletes and parents, several members of the OPS board on Tuesday said they support the district's decision not to play sports. Only one board member, Lou Ann Goding, said she wanted to see kids play this fall.
The OPS board met on Tuesday night for a special meeting to discuss remote learning, plans to get students back in the classroom for the second quarter of the school year and athletics.
OPS students have been doing remote learning since school started in August. While the students do remote learning, the district has suspended all sports and activities.
Last week, dozens of athletes and parents gathered outside OPS headquarters at 30th and Cuming Streets to demand that OPS officials let them play.
Steve Eubanks, OPS supervisor of athletics, told the school board he is working with the district's high school athletic directors on a proposal to submit to the Nebraska School Activities Association for fall student-athletes to participate this spring. The proposal would request dual participation for athletes to participate in fall and spring sports.
Athletic directors have met multiple times to look at the feasibility of playing fall sports this spring, Eubanks said. He said it's not an easy solution, and when coaches were surveyed about the idea, there was both negative and positive feedback.
Some fall coaches also coach in the spring. There are more club opportunities for sports like volleyball and softball in the spring. And there are facility conflicts over field space.

Eubanks said he has reached out to the NSAA and was asked if OPS would be willing to play other teams that might not be able to finish seasons because of cases of COVID-19. The district also might look to play teams in other states that did not have a fall season this year, Eubanks said.
“Every athletic director and coach that I’ve talked to feels the same way that our athletes feel,” Eubanks said of the suspended season. “They’re disappointed. They’re heartbroken. They want to be out there working with kids.”
Eubanks said the district is working on guidelines for a safe and responsible return of winter sports and activities as conditions permit. Winter sports are scheduled to begin Nov. 16.
OPS officials are also working on plans to get students back in classrooms for the second quarter of this school year under the Family 3/2 Model. The model divides students into two groups, each of which would attend school in person part of the week.
If students return to school under the Family 3/2 Model, Eubanks said, student-athletes would have to be allowed to attend practices and contests on the days they are not doing in-person learning.
“If that is allowed, athletics at the high school level can be successful and can be done safely,” Eubanks said. “But without that we cannot compete at the NSAA level with students only coming partially or competing on the days they’re present.”
Goding said she would like to see OPS athletes playing all fall sports. She asked if athletes in more individual and socially distanced sports like tennis and cross country could compete.
“I would like to see us try to do something to help these students,” Goding said. “And if we’re not going to allow athletics, I just want us to be able to communicate that out so they can make choices.”
Several athletes have chosen to transfer out of OPS so they can play sports this fall in other school districts.
Board member Ricky Smith said he used to coach in the district, so he knows the importance of sports, but he feels just as strongly about keeping kids alive. He said he’s more worried about the 54,000 students in OPS schools than the 11 kids in the huddle.
Board member Tracy Casady said it’s easy to suggest that one sport, like cross county, be allowed, even if a close-contact sport like football can’t be played, but she said that would go against OPS’s commitment to equality and fairness.
She said she is disappointed that other metro area districts have not joined OPS in not playing sports this fall.
“We do not want to be doing this, but we are in a pandemic,” Casady said. “And that is what I think people are losing sight of.”
“We are doing the best we can to make the decisions to keep 54,000 children from spreading this disease, this virus, throughout our city,” she said. “We have 9,000 teachers that we are trying to keep safe. Sports are huge, but we are trying to keep our eye on the bigger picture.”
By Emily Nitcher

LJS: Family of fallen police Investigator Mario Herrera offers statement, asks for privacy

The violent death of a police officer in the line of duty is one that shocks the family, the community, law enforcement everywhere and their supporters.
The family of LPD Investigator Mario Herrera — including his wife Carrie and children Juan Carlos, Olivia, Adelina and Celia — has asked for privacy in its time of mourning and deep grief and Wednesday afternoon issued a statement to the community.
"On September 7, 2020, we did not simply lose a family member — we lost part of our family’s heart," the family said. "Life without Mario leaves a hole that can never be filled, and our family will never be

the same."
The word repeated by friends, Lincoln law enforcement and Herrera's church community over the days since his death, in the early morning hours Monday, is "devastated."
The Lincoln Police Department released this statement on Wednesday from Mario Herrera's fami…
He was shot Aug. 26 as members of the Metro Area Fugitive Task Force, the Lincoln Police Department's gang unit and the criminal division were serving a warrant at a house near 33rd and Vine streets.
Officers were seeking a 17-year-old, Felipe Vazquez, wanted in connection with a stabbing death in March. He and Orion Ross, 19, were said to be escaping from the house when Vazquez allegedly fired the shot that led to Herrera's death 12 days later.
"In the days after the shooting, we remained optimistic that Mario would recover and return to us as a husband and a father," the family said in a message passed to the media from the Lincoln Police Department.
"When it became clear that it was not God’s will, we felt our church community lifting us in prayer," family members said. "When we felt weak, they filled us with strength and courage. We could have never imagined the outpouring of support we would see across Nebraska and the country."
As a result, they knew they were not struggling with their loss alone, they said.
"We are surrounded by our family and friends, comforted by our faith, and embraced by the entire Lincoln community. We know Mario’s spirit of service and sacrifice will live on in the heart of every Lincoln police officer."
They said the sheer number of blood donations that were given the day following Herrera's shooting "was astounding. We knew right then that Mario’s reach was far greater than we had ever imagined."
He was, at heart, a servant in every aspect of his life, the family said, from serving his country in the U.S. Army, to his stint with the Nebraska State Patrol and his community as investigator with the Lincoln Police Department.
Herrera attended the Nebraska State Patrol Camp in 1995, at age 25, and graduated as a carrier enforcement officer. At that time, carrier enforcement officers were not troopers, but went through camp alongside trooper recruits. Herrera worked at the Greenwood weigh station on Interstate 80, said Capt. Sean Caradori, who attended training camp alongside him.
Herrera was a class leader, Caradori said, one of those who people are drawn to because they are so positive.
"We both talked about (how) we wanted to go out and try to make a difference in the world and protect those that couldn't protect themselves," he said. "I guarantee you he made a lot of difference in people's lives over the years."
He was always patient, even with someone uncooperative, he said. "I think that's what made him such a good investigator."
Herrera left the State Patrol two years later to join the Lincoln Police Department. Former Lincoln Police Chief Tom Casady hired the bilingual officer, who at 27 was a little older than other recruits and was calm and composed.
"Of course, we were thrilled to get him," Casady said.
"He was just a good, mature person to have on board, both in training and in the field," he said. "He developed a reputation in the department as being a good head kind of person that you want to work with. You know he's not going to inflame matters. He's going to calm matters.
"I don't think the guy had a single enemy. I just think everyone recognized him as being low-key and just exactly what you want in a police officer."
He was a man, family members said, who poured himself into the service of his family, friends,

neighbors and community.
"He was profoundly committed to his family, his faith and his profession," they said. "We felt the strength of the bonds that he created holding us together while we grieved for him."
His legacy is one of self-sacrifice, humility and kindness, the key traits of any family man, public servant and community pillar, they said.
"Many have asked what made Mario so special and how he was able to reach so many lives," the family said in its message. "Mario was there for anyone that needed help. He was patient and understanding no matter what road you were on. His smile and lighthearted jokes were trademarks that he will be remembered for."
Members of the family thanked people for allowing them privacy to grieve "our beloved Mario" as a family, and they left people with this Bible verse from Joshua 1:9.
“Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”
Herrera, 50, died surrounded by his family at Nebraska Medicine in Omaha.
According to his obituary, he was born in Inglewood, California, in 1970 to Raúl and María (Quijada) Herrera. The family lived in California eight years after his birth and then moved to Faucett, Missouri.
He earned a degree in political science with a minor in Spanish at the University of Missouri-Columbia.
He served in the U.S. Army before moving to Lincoln in 1995.
He was preceded in death by his parents.
A Mass of Christian Burial will be Saturday at 10 a.m. at Pinnacle Bank Arena. Burial will follow at Calvary Cemetery.
Visitation will be 4-7 p.m. Friday at St. Teresa’s Catholic Church, at 36th and Randolph streets, followed by a rosary, with limited seating, as COVID-19 restrictions apply.
By JoAnne Young

Beatrice DS: Gage County board approves wind turbine setback

BEATRICE — After several hours of debate, the Gage County Board of Supervisors voted Wednesday to tighten restrictions on commercial wind turbines.
The amendment increases setback requirements from nonparticipating residences from 3/8ths of a mile to 1 mile. Nonparticipating residents are those who do not have contracts in place with a company placing the turbines.
The Gage County Planning and Zoning committee first approved the resolution on a 6-1 vote.
While the changes would apply to all future commercial turbines, the push for change has been largely driven by a proposal from NextEra Energy Resources to build a wind farm in northern Gage County.
During a meeting of the Gage County Board on Wednesday morning, several board members discussed the feedback they’ve heard from residents since the Planning and Zoning vote.
Dennis Byars, Eddie Dorn and John Hill all said they’ve primarily heard from people in favor of the amendment.
“Our intent is not to try and ban wind (energy),” Hill said, noting that the amendment will force developers to work more closely with landowners and residents.
"There’s wind farms developed and landowners don’t get contacted about it, and then they’ve got turbines all around them, and that needs to change,” Hill said.
Hill said he would like to see Gage County take an additional step and adopt wind turbine noise limits similar to those in place in Lancaster County. The Planning and Zoning committee will review possible changes.

Board member Gary Lytle pointed to the unknown long-term health impacts of wind turbines as his reason for supporting the 1-mile setback provision.
“My concern is that we err on safety and caution,” Lytle said.
The amendment was approved in a 6-1 vote, with member Terry Jurgens of Odell voting against the increased setback. He said he’s voting according to the feedback he’s received from his district in southwest Gage County, where a number of wind turbines are already in place.
By Monica Brich

OWH Editorial: Nebraska Legislature must break free of narrow partisanship

The Nebraska Legislature has a problem: Too many of its members show a lack of respect for the Legislature as an institution. An institution, that is, where the priority should be constructive negotiation and careful legislative crafting rather than a focus on party politics and stopping the “other team” from gaining any “wins.”
Nebraska is the only state whose constitution mandates that a nonpartisan ballot be used to elect candidates to its legislature. Nebraskans approved that requirement for an important reason — to focus state lawmakers’ minds on serious legislating rather than on shortsighted political game-playing.
Our current political culture unfortunately undermines that approach. The ideological divide between staunch conservatives and fervent progressives is wide. Insulting language in American political debate is all too common. So is the insistence that one’s political opponents don’t play fair and that they pose a fundamental threat to the nation.
Term limits worsen the problem. At the Nebraska Legislature, it’s two terms maximum and you’re out. This constant reshuffling undercuts the ability to help state senators understand and safeguard the principles for constructive lawmaking. Many new members begin service at the Capitol by defining themselves by party and adopting the take-no-prisoners attitude of talk radio and political social media — a mindset that translates poorly into the legislative arena. Such an attitude makes for colorful debate — but also for hard feelings and legislative stalemate.
State senators certainly should feel free to stand up for their key principles and to debate strongly. Honest disagreement is to be expected. But successful lawmakers also understand that in a Legislature as philosophically diverse as ours, demonstrations of respect and a focus on negotiation and compromise are imperative if legislation is to move forward. That’s especially the case since the political left or right can usually summon enough votes for a committed filibuster.
If this problem isn’t remedied, the Legislature will be in peril of falling fully into the habits of Congress, where division, rancor and playing to the camera too often crowd out the serious work of legislating.
The Legislature needs bridge-builders who work beyond party considerations to promote consensus on key issues where possible.
This is a message that must be appreciated not just within the Legislature itself but also by the Governor’s Office, which carries great sway among its set of legislative loyalists.
A new group called Nonpartisan Nebraska has formed to combat “eroding civility and increased partisanship” in the Legislature. Nebraskans will have to see exactly how the group pursues that goal, but its central point is correct.
It’s time for lawmakers to break free of narrow partisanship. Through a renewed commitment to work responsibly, state senators can help the Legislature operate more efficiently and constructively so that the public interest, rather than party interest, is served.

OWH Lance Morgan: What to learn from Winnebago Tribe's response to the coronavirus

As the CEO of Ho-Chunk, Inc., a tribal corporation owned by the Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska, I want to share how the tribe has viewed and attacked the COVID-19 crisis — because there just might be a few things we all could learn from taking a tribal approach.

When COVID-19 was first being discussed in January, it seemed far away and remote. It was something you saw on television, but you really did not have to worry about it. However, when it became clear it was coming, the Winnebago Tribe did not waste any time reacting. Tribes have a lot of traumatic experience with disease. Smallpox, influenza and measles each has had a turn ravaging tribal communities and killing off large portions of our population in the last few hundred years.

What was frightening was that not only do we have a traumatic history with disease, we also had a perfect storm of factors that could allow the virus to run wild in our community. A lot of our people have preexisting conditions related to diabetes and substance abuse. We also have large numbers of people in service sector jobs, which increases the chance of exposure.

And we have a severe housing shortage on our reservation. Many families have three generations living in the same small house. At this moment, I am aware of 12 people living in a tiny two-bedroom house with one bathroom. This family has three generations of adults and children sleeping in the bedrooms, the living room and in tents in the yard. Social distancing is obviously not possible under such conditions.

The above factors and how they impact communities of color are common knowledge now, but we had no intention of waiting for a study telling us after the fact that we were at a higher risk of exposure. A tribe has a lot of disadvantages in the modern world, but one of the things we do control is our own territory, and we can craft an immediate response. We do not have issues to hash out between political parties about whether to wear a mask or not. We can develop our own plan and implement it immediately across the board in our community, which is exactly what we did.

In March, our tribal government formed a task force made up of the some of the leaders of the largest community institutions: the tribal government, the gaming operation, Ho-Chunk Inc. and the tribal health care system. This task force immediately formed subcommittees and filled each with experts across all fields in our community. We had committees on food security, physical security, business and employment, funding sources, IT and communications, education, and community utilities and infrastructure.

Each committee developed a plan, which was promptly approved by our tribal government. We did hundreds of small things to prepare ourselves for what was coming. Our businesses all implemented mask orders and social distancing. Some closed. Our health care system implemented a broad array of initiatives. We implemented weekly live updates to our community. We purchased hundreds of computers for remote learning. We started dozens of community gardens. We predicted the possibility of a meat shortage and bought a small herd of cattle. We expanded a grassroots food bank effort that was already underway. We identified emergency isolation housing and are building more new quarantine housing. We even developed our business support program to retain tribal employment.

Our COVID-19 story is still being written. Our rural Nebraska community has about 2,000 residents. We have had 102 cases of COVID-19, but we only have two active cases. Sadly, three of our tribal members have passed from COVID-19, but we are hopeful that our unique status combined with a tribal mindset has saved us from revisiting some of the historical trauma of the past. I think everyone could probably learn a lesson or two about how acting as a single tribe can save lives in a pandemic, or any other crisis.

Lance Morgan is a member of the Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska and the CEO of Ho-Chunk Inc. He is a graduate of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and Harvard Law School.

LJS Editorial, 9/10: Cutting programs at UNL could have long-term dire effects

Football has been called the front porch to a university -- that comforting entry point that enthusiastically welcomes newcomers and keeps everyone else coming back.

Nowhere is that more apt than the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, where the psyche of an entire state hangs in the balance each Saturday in the fall.

It's like that at any number of places, particularly in a Big Ten Conference that prides itself on being competitive in everything its schools do -- be it on the athletic fields or in the classrooms.

No, football isn't the only venue of competition in the Big Ten. And so when UNL announced last week a number of proposed cuts -- caused by a 2020 calendar year that has been a kick in the collective shin to all of us -- we have to ask if there is another way.

We urge the Academic Planning Committee to find a way to make ends meet without cutting programs, as Nebraska desperately needs to keep its college-educated students in the state after graduation.

We need to remember that we are competing against other schools for recruits and the tuition dollars they spend to major in a variety of programs, including dance, textiles and hospitality.

Chancellor Ronnie Green announced last week that the undergraduate dance program in the Glenn Korff School of Music in the Hixson-Lied College of Fine and Performing Arts was on the chopping blocks. So, too, are the textile and hospitality programs, which draw students from all over the region.

Cutting a program like, say, dance is a decision that could have calamitous ramifications. Anytime a unique program is eliminated, it has dire long-term effects because it costs more to start and stop a program than it does to simply maintain.

That said, when a program goes away, it's difficult for it to ever come back -- and those students who gravitate toward those kind of programs will end up spending their education dollars elsewhere.

It's hard to ignore the difficult situation in which UNL finds itself. The COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with the decision to scrap the football season this fall, has left the university on the short end of a budget deficit.

Eliminating $18.9 million in faculty and staff positions over the next three years, while also proposing program cuts in textiles, dance and hospitality, is one way of closing a $38.2 million budget gap.

In November, the committee will report its final recommendations back to the chancellor's office.

"I know for many of you, this is yet another impact you are being asked to shoulder," Green said. "For our university, the only way to face this is head-on, together. While very difficult, I am confident we can do so and emerge stronger on the other side."

It's hard to imagine UNL emerging stronger and more well-rounded without the programs currently attracting a wide variety of students.

We hope the planning committee will keep searching for another way. We urge it to exhaust all alternatives before chopping programs.

LJS: Democrats may promote Black write-in Senate candidate

Nebraska Democrats may be poised to encourage voters to support a Black write-in candidate for the U.S. Senate this November at a time when the national political spotlight shines on issues of racial injustice and separation.

State party leaders have scheduled a 2 p.m. event Thursday in Omaha to announce their support for a specific write-in candidate to oppose Republican Sen. Ben Sasse and Democratic nominee Chris Janicek.

The party abandoned Janicek after he sent a sexually charged text message to members of his campaign team and subsequently refused a demand from party leaders that he withdraw from the race.

Preston Love Jr., who was campaign manager for the Rev. Jesse Jackson's ground-breaking presidential bid and who has worked with other key Black political figures, including Atlanta Mayor Andrew Young and Chicago Mayor Harold Washington, is one name on a short speculative list of Democratic write-in prospects.

Another name is Gladys Harrison, who finished third in last May's Democratic congressional primary contest in the 2nd District. Thursday's party event will be at Big Mama's Kitchen, a restaurant owned by Harrison.

Love, a community and political activist, teaches Black studies at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. He graduated from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, where he played football for Coach Bob Devaney.

By Don Walton

OWH: Sasse proposes ending direct election of U.S. senators

WASHINGTON — Sen. Ben Sasse proposed a slew of major changes to the Senate this week — including a repeal of the Constitutional amendment that provided for direct election of its members.

The Nebraska Republican said in an interview that he recognizes it could take many years to implement the major overhaul he has in mind.

“So we’re going to need to tell the truth about the fact that the Senate is a dysfunctional institution to be able to get enough ideas on the menu that you can start to figure out where you’d forge consensus,” Sasse told The World-Herald.

He unveiled his ideas in a Wall Street Journal opinion piece, writing that the founding fathers would be shocked at the current state of affairs.

“The Congress they envisioned is all but dead,” Sasse wrote. “The Senate in particular is supposed to be the place where Americans hammer out our biggest challenges with debate. That hasn’t happened for decades — and the rot is bipartisan.”

Sasse has made the biggest headlines over the years for his willingness to publicly criticize President Donald Trump, but he also has repeatedly directed rhetorical fire at the very institution in which he serves.

His debut address on the Senate floor, for example, was a scathing, bipartisan takedown of the chamber in which he declared that “the people despise us all.”

Since then he has continued to decry how the Senate functions, characterizing committee hearings as pointless exercises dominated by members mugging for the cameras.

Among his proposals is removing those cameras from committee hearings, while still providing transcripts and real-time audio of the proceedings.

He would dissolve standing committees and replace them with temporary panels devoted to specific issues. And he would give those committees some control of the Senate floor to bring more members into debate — in contrast to the current routine of senators delivering their speeches to an often empty chamber.

Sasse also suggested doubling the current six-year Senate term to 12 years and limiting senators to one term so they aren’t focused on reelection.

“Senators who don’t have to worry about short-term popularity can work instead on long-term challenges,” Sasse wrote.

He also would pull back legislative authorities granted to the executive branch over the years and overhaul the budgeting process.

But the biggest change would be repealing the 17th Amendment, which provides for the direct election

of senators rather than having them selected by state legislatures.
“The old saying used to be that all politics is local, but today — thanks to the internet, 24/7 cable news and a cottage industry dedicated to political addiction — politics is polarized and national,” Sasse wrote. “That would change if state legislatures had direct control over who serves in the Senate.”
Asked about Sasse’s ideas on Wednesday, Sen. Chuck Grassley of Iowa said he supports term limits and agreed that the congressional budgeting process has broken down.
But the seven-term senator rejected rolling back the 17th Amendment, saying it’s better for senators to represent the people directly rather than a majority of their state legislators.
He noted that the current system has been in place for more than a century.
“I think it’s worked perfectly,” Grassley said.
Sasse’s piece prompted plenty of discussion on social media, with some suggesting that his changes would undermine transparency and accountability, particularly the repeal of the 17th Amendment.
“Truly amazed that someone could look at Washington today and conclude that the problem with the Senate is that it’s *too responsive* to voters,” former Democratic presidential contender Pete Buttigieg wrote on Twitter.
In the interview, Sasse pushed back on the idea that going back to the old process of selecting senators would make them less responsive. States are handicapped now by how little influence they have over federal actions, he said.
“Coercive federalism means that we still pretend to the American people that the Unicameral matters, but really huge, huge shares of what the Nebraska state Legislature wrestles with every year is a Medicaid program that they don’t really have much power to reform,” Sasse said.
Another piece of Sasse’s proposal is that senators live, eat and meet in dormitories when the Senate is in session in order to foster more cooperation and less demonization.
He cited two colleagues, Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., and Sen. Jerry Moran, R-Kan., who have worked across the aisle on a major declassification bill.
Sasse said the two work well together in part because of the relationship they built through the Senate gym.
“They like each other because they work out next to each other and they both make fun of themselves being old dudes whose joints are breaking down,” Sasse said.
By Joseph Morton

AP: Teacher deaths from COVID raise alarms

O'FALLON, Mo. (AP) — Teachers in at least three states have died after bouts with the coronavirus since the dawn of the new school year, and a teachers' union leader worries that the return to in-person classes will have a deadly impact across the U.S. if proper precautions aren't taken.
AshLee DeMarinis was just 34 when she died Sunday after three weeks in the hospital. She taught social skills and special education at John Evans Middle School in Potosi, Missouri, about 70 miles southwest of St. Louis.
A third-grade teacher died Monday in South Carolina, and two other educators died recently in Mississippi. It's unclear how many teachers in the U.S. have become ill with COVID-19 since the new school year began, but Mississippi alone has reported hundreds of cases among school teachers and staff.
Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers, said schools need guidelines such as mandatory face coverings and strict social distancing rules to reopen safely.
"If community spread is too high as it is in Missouri andMississippi, if you don't have the infrastructure

of testing, and if you don't have the safeguards that prevent the spread of viruses in the school, we believe that you cannot reopen in person," Weingarten said.

Johnny Dunlap, a 39-year-old drama and forensics teacher at Dodge City High School in Kansas, said he considered quitting before the district made masks mandatory for teachers and students. Still, his history of bladder cancer and high blood pressure have left him with some angst about being around so many people. Existing health conditions can put people at higher risk for severe illness and death from the virus.

The early phase of the pandemic claimed the lives of dozens of teachers. The New York City Department of Education alone lost 31 teachers among 75 employees whose deaths were blamed on the coronavirus.

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