



President Donald Trump speaks before Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas administers the Constitutional Oath to Amy Coney Barrett on the South Lawn of the White House in Washington on Oct 26, 2020, after Barrett was confirmed to be a Supreme Court justice by the Senate earlier in the evening. (AP)

Britain

COVID fuels hunger

UK doctors demand 'free meals' for kids

LONDON, Oct 27, (AP) — Pediatricians are urging the British government to reverse course and provide free meals for poor children during school holidays as the COVID-19 pandemic pushes more families into poverty.

Some 2,200 members of the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health have written an open letter to Conservative Prime Minister Boris Johnson, saying they were shocked by his "refusal" to back down on the issue. The House of Commons last week rejected legislation that would have provided free meals during all school holidays from October through the Easter break.

The doctors say some 4 million children live in poverty, and a third rely on free school meals. Many parents in Britain have lost their jobs or are working reduced hours during the pandemic, making it imperative to make it possible for poor children over the holidays get at least one nutritious meal a day, the doctors argue.

"Families who were previously managing are now struggling to make ends meet because of the impact of COVID-19," the doctors wrote. "It is not good enough to send them into the holiday period hoping for the best, while knowing that many will simply go hungry."

Most schools in England begin a one-week holiday on Monday.

The doctors heaped praise on Marcus Rashford, a 22-year-old star soccer player for Manchester United who has used his celebrity to highlight the issue. Rashford's campaign helped pressure Johnson's government into providing free meals during a nationwide coronavirus lockdown earlier this year, and he has gathered more than 800,000 signatures on a petition to extend the program.

Rashford has spoken movingly about depending on free school lunches as a child and was recently honored by the queen for his dedication to the issue of child hunger.

Northern Ireland Secretary Brandon Lewis, who spoke for the government on Britain's Sunday morning news programs, claimed that lawmakers were taking a broader approach. He said the government has increased welfare benefits nationwide and has provided 63 million pounds (\$82 million) to local communities to help people.

"What we are looking to do is ensure that we deal with child poverty at the core, putting the structure in place that means even in school holidays, children can get access to the food that they need," he told Sky News on Sunday.

The opposition Labour Party has warned it will bring the issue back to the House of Commons if ministers do not change course in time for Christmas.

Advocates for children have been shocked by the political stalemate. The Children's Commissioner for England, Anne Longfield, said she has been both horrified and disappointed by the debate.

Wealthy

"We're a wealthy country, it's 2020," she told Sky News. "To have a debate about whether we should make sure that hungry and vulnerable children have enough to eat is something that is strikingly similar to something we'd expect to see in chapters of 'Oliver Twist' — a novel published in the 19th century."

Meanwhile, seven stowaways seized when British naval special forces stormed an oil tanker in the English Channel have been arrested on suspicion of hijacking, police said Monday.

Hampshire Police said the men, believed to be from Nigeria, were being held at several police stations on suspicion of "seizing or exercising control of a ship by use of threats or force." They have not been charged.

Police said the 22 crew members of the Nave Andromeda were "safe and well" after the raid, which unfolded after darkness fell on Sunday. Special Boat Service commandos were lowered by rope from helicopters onto the tanker, whose crew had locked themselves in a secure part of the ship known as the citadel. Within minutes, the stowaways were in custody.

Maritime tracking websites showed the ship reached port in Southampton, on England's south coast, early Monday.

Police said officers were speaking to crew members to determine exactly what had happened.

The ship had left Lagos, Nigeria, on Oct 6 and had been due to dock in Southampton on Sunday morning.

Navios Tanker Management, which operates the Liberian-registered vessel, said the ship's master became "concerned for the safety of the crew due to the increasingly hostile behavior of the stowaways." A 10-hour standoff ensued as the tanker circled an area a few miles southeast of the Isle of Wight, south of Southampton.



Democratic vice-presidential candidate Sen Kamala Harris, D-Calif., speaks during a campaign event on Oct 25, 2020, in Detroit. (AP)



Paxton



Abbott

America

Gloves worth \$1m stolen: Thieves have stolen over 6 million gloves, worth \$1 million, meant for first responders at Florida hospitals.

Medglu, a supplier of medical gloves to the national health care industry, said it received the shipment at its office in Coral Springs on Friday night. On Sunday night, surveillance video shows thieves backing a truck up to the shipping container and hauling off the personal protective equipment. It took only a few minutes.

"We've had hospitals asking for this product on a daily basis waiting for this to arrive," said Rick Grimes, Medglu's vice president of sales and marketing. "It's heartbreaking in so many different ways."

He did not elaborate on whether the company thought the theft was lucky timing or an inside job. (AP)

Another lawyer leaving: Another top deputy to Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton is leaving his agency, continuing the exodus of lawyers who earlier this month accused the Republican of crimes including bribery and abuse of office. Darren McCarty, the deputy attorney general over civil litigation, confirmed his resignation Monday but declined to comment further. He's set to depart the attorney general's office next week.

McCarty's resignation comes as Texas is involved in a landmark antitrust lawsuit brought with other states and the U.S. Department of Justice against Google.

Paxton's office did not immediately respond to questions about the resignation or how the top civil lawyer's departure might affect the case against the online search giant. (AP)

Man charged in drop box fire: A man was charged with setting a Boston ballot drop box on fire and damaging dozens of ballots, police said Monday.

Worldly Armand, a 39-year-old Boston resident, was taken into custody late Sunday, hours after he started a fire inside a drop box outside the Boston Public Library in the city's Back Bay neighborhood, authorities said. The box contained more than 120 ballots.

Armand faces a charge of willful and malicious burning, police said. It was not immediately clear whether he has an attorney to speak for him.

The FBI had said Sunday that it's investigating. Federal authorities urged members of the public to "remain vigilant and immediately report any suspicious, election-related activity." (AP)

El Paso imposes curfew: Residents in the Texas border city of El Paso have

Coronavirus

Trump faces Midwest virus spike

'Worst place, worst time'

OSHKOSH, Wis., Oct 27, (AP) — Gabe Lioacono is the kind of voter President Donald Trump can ill afford to lose. He lives in a pivotal county of a swing state that is among a handful that will decide the presidency.

A college history professor who last cast a ballot for a Democrat more than 20 years ago, Lioacono is voting for Democrat Joe Biden because he thinks Trump has utterly failed in his handling of the coronavirus pandemic.

"President Trump still does not seem to be taking the pandemic seriously enough. I wish he would," said Lioacono. He said he never thought of Trump as "all bad" but added, "There is still too much wishful thinking and not enough clear guidance."

And now the virus is getting worse in states that the Republican president needs the most, at the least opportune time. New infections are raging in Wisconsin and elsewhere in the upper Midwest. In Iowa, polls suggest Trump is in a toss-up race with Biden after carrying the state by 9.4 percentage points four years ago.

Trump's pandemic response threatens his hold on Wisconsin, where he won by fewer than 23,000 votes in 2016, said Marquette University Law School poll director Charles Franklin.

"Approval of his handling of COVID is the next-strongest predictor of vote choice," behind voters' party affiliation and their overall approval of Trump's performance as president, Franklin said. "And it's not just a fluke of a single survey."

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported Sunday that among U.S. states, Wisconsin had the third highest rate of new cases for the previous seven days. Iowa was 10th.

Trump won Wisconsin's heavily blue-collar Winnebago County, which includes Oshkosh, in 2016, after Democratic nominee Barack Obama had carried it in 2012. Today, Winnebago is among the top 10 counties where new Wisconsin COVID cases are being re-

ported, according to data collected by Johns Hopkins University and compiled by The Associated Press.

The race is similar in Iowa. Blue-collar Dubuque County was among the state's 10 counties with the fastest-growing number of cases per capita over the past two weeks. Trump won the county narrowly after Democrats had carried it since the 1950s.

In Wisconsin, where polling has shown Biden with a slight but consistent advantage, approval of Trump's handling of the pandemic dropped from 51% in March to 41% in October, according to a Marquette University Law School poll. That's a noteworthy decline considering Trump's overall approval has fluctuated little and remained in the mid-40s.

Iowans' view of Trump's handling of the pandemic is also more negative than positive, according to The Des Moines Register's Iowa Poll and Monmouth University polls.

The race in Iowa remains very close, though Monmouth poll director Patrick Murray said Trump's poor rating in Iowa on handling the pandemic "suggests in the decision-making process, the coronavirus is top of mind and decisive." As Trump enters a frenzied final week of campaigning, he continues to hold mass rallies that often defy local public health rules. The campaign says supporters are merely exercising their First Amendment rights.

The president also continues to insist the country is "rounding the turn" on the virus, an assertion that has drawn rebukes from public health experts, including Dr. Anthony Fauci, the nation's leading infectious disease specialist. He also blames news media coverage of the outbreak.

"ALL THE FAKE NEWS MEDIA WANTS TO TALK ABOUT IS COVID, COVID, COVID," Trump tweeted Tuesday. "ON NOVEMBER 4th, YOU WON'T BE HEARING SO MUCH ABOUT IT ANYMORE. WE ARE ROUNDING THE TURN!!!"

been urged to stay home for two weeks as a spike in coronavirus cases overwhelmed hospitals, prompting the state to dedicate part of the city's civic center as a makeshift care center for the ill.

Earlier Sunday, Texas Gov. Greg Abbott said 50 hospital beds will be set up in the convention center and another 50 beds could be added if needed.

Abbott ordered the alternate care site to expand hospital capacity in the El Paso area in response to the coronavirus surge, he said. The site, scheduled to open this week, will provide additional medical equipment and medical personnel. (AP)

200-pound tortoise is back: A 200-pound tortoise named Sparkplug that



Eric Trump, son of President Donald Trump, speaks with supporters at a campaign rally on Oct 26, in Phoenix. (AP)

escaped from a pen in Alabama is back home after a journey across two counties and at least one soybean field.

Sparkplug, a 60-year-old African spurred tortoise that lived in an enclosure in Etowah County, pushed its way out of the fenced pen on Thursday. A motorist who spotted the animal on the side of the road took it to his 200-acre (81-hectare) spread in Marshall County, owner Ty Harris told The Gadsden Times in a story Monday.

Harris found out what had happened after using social media to spread the word about Sparkplug, but there was still the matter of finding the tortoise on the land where he'd been released. (AP)

Court Judge Juan dies: Judge Juan Torruella, the first Puerto Rican to sit on a US federal appeals court, died Monday at the age of 87, the Boston-based 1st US Circuit Court of Appeals said.

Torruella served nearly four decades on 1st Circuit and took part in such high-profile rulings as the tossing of Boston Marathon bomber Dzhokhar Tsarnaev's death sentence this year.

First Circuit Chief Judge Jeffrey Howard called him "a wise decision-maker, a brilliant scholar, and a passionate participant in the pursuit of justice." "As a judge, his judicial legacy in the First Circuit and Puerto Rico will remain unsurpassed," Howard said in a statement.

He was appointed to the court in 1984 by President Ronald Reagan. A decade later, he replaced Judge Stephen Breyer as chief judge of the 1st Circuit when Breyer was elevated to the Supreme Court. Torruella served as chief until 2001. (AP)

Lat/Am

Maduro foe joins family in Spain: After more than six years in confinement, Venezuela's opposition leader Leopoldo López is a free man and has been reunited with his family in Madrid.

López arrived Sunday in the Spanish capital following what aides described as a whirlwind escape from the Spanish ambassador's residence in Caracas where he had been holed up since leading a failed U.S.-backed military putsch against Nicolas Maduro in April 2019.

Two people close to López said he fled Venezuela by sea, arriving in the nearby Caribbean island of Aruba on Friday. They spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to discuss the details of the getaway, which followed months of planning.

Aides insisted the departure wasn't the result of negotiations with the government, as many supporters and even opponents of the socialist government have speculated.

President Nicolás López Maduro's government had yet to comment, though on Sunday the president removed his interior minister, Gen. Nestor Reverol, who oversees the SEBIN intelligence police that had a heavily armed contingent outside the ambassador's residence. (AP)



Chileans to re-draft constitution: Amid a year of contagion and turmoil, Chileans turned out Sunday to vote overwhelmingly in favor of having a constitutional convention draft a new charter to replace guiding principles imposed four decades ago under the military dictatorship of Gen. Augusto Pinochet.

The country's conservative government had agreed with the center-left opposition to allow the plebiscite after the outbreak of vast street protests that erupted a year ago in frustration over inequality in pensions, education and health care in what has long been one of South America's most developed nations.

The Electoral Service said Sunday night that with nearly all polling stations reporting, about 78% of the 7.4 million votes counted favored drawing up a new constitution, while just under 22% were opposed. About 79% supported having the charter be drafted by a convention of 155 elected citizens rather than a convention with half its members elected citizens and half members of congress. (AP)

Indigenous group to ban masks: A cultural body for the Guna Yala people in Panama voted Monday to ban the wearing of face masks used to combat coronavirus infections, arguing "it is not a custom of our people."

The measure would drop a requirement for masks in schools and forbid government officials visiting the territories of the Guna Yala from wearing them. About 34,000 Guna Yala people, the second-largest of seven Indigenous groups in Panama, live mainly on the Caribbean coast. Although Indigenous territories in Panama have significant autonomy, the possible effects of the vote by the General Congress of the Guna Yala Culture were unclear. Panama's government said that the cultural assembly does not have the authority to decide public health matters and that such a move would be up to the Indigenous territory's official law-making congress. (AP)

Africa

Upset in Seychelles presidential polls: The Seychelles presidential election has seen an upset, with the electoral commission on Sunday declaring longtime opposition contender Wavel Ramkalawan the winner over incumbent Danny Faure. The ruling party has been knocked from power for the first time since 1977.

Opposition leader Ramkalawan, a 59-year-old priest who has largely devoted himself to politics, received 54% of the vote in the Indian Ocean island nation while Faure received 43%, the commission chair Danny Lucas said, calling the race "hotly contested." (AP)

Genocide suspect sent to The Hague: An 87-year-old Rwandan arrested in France was transferred to the custody of a United Nations court in the Netherlands on Monday, nearly 23 years after he was first indicted for his alleged involvement in the 1994 genocide in his country, the court announced.

Félicien Kabuga is charged with offenses including genocide, complicity in genocide, incitement to commit genocide and the crimes against humanity of extermination and persecution, the U.N.'s International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals said in a statement. He faces a maximum sentence of life imprisonment if convicted. (AP)

Guinean president wins a 3rd term: Guinea's electoral commission on Saturday declared that President Alpha Conde had easily won a third term with 59% of the vote, setting the stage for potential clashes with the opposition whose candidate claimed victory days ago. The opposition quickly announced it would contest the results in court but offered no immediate evidence of fraud.

Some opposition supporters immediately went to the streets to protest after the announcement, while the opposition's statement accused Conde of trying to "impose an electoral coup" and called on the population "to mobilize to defend, by all legal means, the truth of the ballot boxes." (AP)

Police kill 9 ahead of vote: A major opposition party in Tanzania is accusing police of shooting dead at least nine citizens amid unrest over alleged fraud on the eve of the country's presidential election.

The ACT Wazalendo party on Tuesday also said police in the semi-autonomous island region arrested its Zanzibar presidential candidate, Maalim Seif Sharif Hamad. A police official in Zanzibar city, Mohammed Hassan Haji, confirmed the arrest to The Associated Press but gave no details.

Police in Pemba city, however, did not comment on the ACT Wazalendo allegation that police opened fire on citizens there Monday evening on the eve of advance voting in the region. Tanzania's inspector general of police, Simon Sirro, later denied any deaths to reporters and said some residents had been throwing rocks and 42 were arrested. (AP)