



3,900 in 1 day

US registering highest deaths yet from COVID/B1



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Trump finally faces reality – amid talk of early ouster

ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON – With 13 days left in his term, President Donald Trump finally bent to reality Thursday amid growing talk of trying to force him out early, acknowledging he'll peacefully leave after Congress affirmed his defeat.

Trump led off a video from the White House by condemning the violence carried out in his name a day earlier at the Capitol. Then, for the first time on camera, he admitted his presidency would soon end – though he declined to mention President-elect Joe Biden by name or explicitly state he had lost.

"A new administration will be inaugurated on Jan. 20," Trump said in the video. "My focus now turns to ensuring a smooth, orderly

and seamless transition of power. This moment calls for healing and reconciliation."

The address, which appeared designed to stave off talk of a forced early eviction, came at the end of a day when the cornered president stayed out of sight in the White House. Silenced on some of his favorite internet lines of communication, he watched the resignations of several top aides, including two Cabinet secretaries.

And as officials sifted through the aftermath of the pro-Trump mob's siege of the U.S. Capitol, there was growing discussion of impeaching him a second time or invoking the 25th Amendment to oust him from the Oval Office.

SEE TRUMP/A4



ASSOCIATED PRESS

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP SPEAKS DURING A RALLY protesting the electoral college certification of Joe Biden as President in Washington on Wednesday.

Challenge to Ariz.'s electoral votes is rejected

BY HOWARD FISCHER
CAPITOL MEDIA SERVICES

PHOENIX – Arizona finally got its 11 electoral votes for Joe Biden counted late Wednesday after Congress reconvened – and after a majority of federal lawmakers rejected claims on how the tally here was unreliable.

The ratification of the 10,457-vote victory for the president elect came after just six senators refused to accept the results.

In the House, the number of foes was larger at 121. But that that compares with 303 who found the objection led by Arizona Republican Reps. Paul Gosar and Andy Biggs to be not credible.

Foes raised a series of arguments about what went wrong. But the story behind each of them is more complex.

Biggs in particular cited what he said were 32,000 illegal votes.

What actually happened is a federal judge agreed with two groups who said the pandemic interfered with their ability to register to vote by the Oct. 5 deadline. He gave them – and everyone else – until Oct. 23.

That decisions was overturned by the 9th Circuit of Appeals. But a majority of the three-judge panel said anyone who had registered in the interim could vote in the general election.

Biggs said that was "without justification" and that the inclusion of those voters makes the results of the entire election suspect.

The actual tally of people registered in that period according to the secretary of state's office was 35,134.

But what Biggs did not say is that more member of his own Republican Party signed up during that period than Democrats: 10,922 versus 8,292. There also were 15,422 independents and 498 Libertarians.

Federal lawmakers seeking to disallow the results and demand an audit

SEE CHALLENGE/A4



ASSOCIATED PRESS

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA NATIONAL GUARD stand outside the Capitol on Wednesday night after a day of rioting protesters.

State announces \$500K in funding for area COVID-19 wastewater testing

Ducey praises 'innovative' partnership between Yuma County, ADHS

BY MARA KNAUB
SUN STAFF WRITER

A Yuma pilot project that provides early detection of COVID-19 has gotten the stamp of approval from Gov. Doug Ducey.

The governor announced on Wednesday that the state will fund a wastewater testing pilot project in Yuma County with \$500,000 in federal coronavirus relief dollars.

"The wastewater testing pilot project in Yuma is a crucial step to expand an innovative technology that may help with early detection of COVID-19," Ducey said. "This initiative will help local public health officials make fact-based, community-driven decisions and best mitigate COVID-19

spread during the pandemic."

The project is a partnership with Yuma County Public Health Services District, University of Arizona, including the university's Yuma Center of Excellence for Desert Agriculture, and Arizona Department of Health Services.

"I'm thrilled. We've been working on it for a little while," said Paul Brierley, YCEDA executive director.

He noted that state officials liked the project's two-prong approach: monitoring COVID-19 in the entire county and informing public health authorities so they can respond appropriately to keep it from spreading further.

Brierley said ADHS Director Dr. Cara Christ

LOCATION	TOTAL CASES		DIFFERENCE	DEATHS
	JAN. 7	JAN. 6		
Yuma County	29,712	29,391	+321	565
Arizona	584,593	574,680	+9,913	9,741
United States	21,574,073	21,299,340	+274,733	365,174
Worldwide	88,024,120	87,186,540	+837,580	1,898,259

- Sources: Yuma County, Arizona Department of Health Services, Johns Hopkins University

YUMA COUNTY CASES BY THE NUMBERS

Yuma County's total number of positive COVID-19 cases here is 29,712, according to the county's Jan. 7 update, and there have been 565 deaths. There were 321 new cases reported.

Here's a look at Yuma County Cases by the numbers:

- Female: 15,214
- Male: 14,496
- Deaths in Yuma County: 565
- AGE GROUP
 - Ages 0-19:.....4,352
 - Ages 20-44:.....13,127
 - Ages 45-54:.....4,610
 - Ages 55-64:.....3,830
 - Ages 65+:.....3,793

- Reported by YRMC as of 8 a.m. Jan. 7

Numbers Tested: 117,615
Total Confirmed Positive: 29,712

showed a lot of interest during a one-hour conversation. "She really liked the concept, she liked the data they would get back."

YCEDA will collect wastewater samples twice a week in locations across Yuma County and test for COVID-19. The Yuma lab will analyze the samples and share data with public health officials.

The pilot project will help determine whether community wastewater testing is a helpful early warning indicator for COVID-19 in rural areas, and how the testing

technology may be applied to best identify potential hotspots for COVID-19 spread.

"This approach has shown promise at identifying COVID-19 transmission quickly and enabling a targeted public health response to mitigate the spread," Christ said. "We're eager to see the results when it's applied in greater Arizona and applaud the collaboration that's making it possible."

The program will begin after completion of a joint plan between the Universi-

ty of Arizona and the Yuma County Public Health Services District. Yuma joins Tempe, which has used wastewater testing to detect COVID-19 in partnership with Arizona State University's Biondesign Institute.

SUCCESS IN YUMA

The pilot project started last summer with a request from Jesus Tovar of the Somerton-based T&P Farms, who made a donation to YCEDA and asked that it be used to help the Yuma agricultural labor force return to work.

SEE TESTING/A4

City council reallocates \$680,000 to rental assistance

BY MARA KNAUB
SUN STAFF WRITER

The Yuma City Council on Wednesday reallocated \$680,146 in federal grant funds to a cost-shared rental assistance program.

Following notification by the Housing America Corporation that it would be declining HOME grant awards from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Yuma County HOME Consortium saw an opportunity for the creation of a new program.

The consortium agreed that the rental assistance program was a high priority given the housing uncertainty created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The consortium had awarded Housing America Corporation \$162,489 in

SEE RENTAL/A4

TESTING

FROM PAGE A1

“His basic question was, what can we do to get Yuma County back to work safely? Especially with vegetable season starting up,” Brierley said. “We didn’t want what happened in the meat-packing industry to happen here.”

YCEDA staff knew that the UofA was using wastewater testing to detect COVID-19 in Tucson dormitories. They figured they could use the same testing in Yuma to protect the labor force. Ideally they would have a lab in Yuma to avoid sending samples to Tucson, which would add time and cost.

“The key thing here is the early warning,” Brierley said, noting that infected people shed the virus in their stool a week before

showing symptoms.

Yuma County stepped up with the funding needed to set up a local lab in August. YCEDA initially struggled with securing lab supplies due to the demand created by COVID-19 testing.

But, in early November, YCEDA had the lab operational and soon had its first success story. The center started testing at Datepac, a company with several date-packing facilities in Yuma. One of the packing facilities with 200 workers had been testing negative before Thanksgiving. After the holiday break, the sewer testing came back positive.

YCEDA contacted Diana Gomez, director of the Yuma County Public Health Services District, who connected the center with Amanda Aguirre of the Regional Center for Border Health. That same

afternoon, RCFBH set up a mobile testing site in the Datepac parking lot. The health center tested all employees and found four asymptomatic but positive employees as well as a positive spouse. Datepac continued to pay the infected employees while they were isolated at home.

The following week, YCEDA tested the wastewater again, and it came out negative.

“It stopped an outbreak in their workforce. It worked like it was supposed to work. It was so nice to have that happen,” Brierley said.

Datepac reported that employees were happy with the sewer testing. “Employees felt really good about the fact that they are being taken care of and being protected,” Brierley noted. “Datepac is very pleased with how it’s working for them.”

WHAT’S NEXT?

The project has evolved over time. It started with a request to keep the agricultural workforce safe. Now the testing is expanding to schools and the community.

This month, Arizona Western College will be using and paying for testing in their dormitories, which house 200 students. “They can use that as an indicator when they need to do clinical testing. It can avoid some of the need for clinical testing until you know they have a problem,” Brierley explained.

Yuma County also funded the pilot project in schools. That will kick off as soon as students go back to in-person learning. YCEDA will test sewage in the “School Alley” along 24th Street between Araby Road and South Avenue 9E. The participating schools will be Otondo Elementary School,

Castle Dome Middle School, Gila Ridge High School and AWC with cooperation from the Yuma Jackrabbit Mesa Lift Station.

The state funding will push the project into the “next evolution, if you will. We’re pretty excited about it,” Brierley said.

The next phase is community-wide monitoring. YCEDA will work with each municipality to conduct twice-weekly testing throughout the county, covering most of the zip codes. The first goal is to track COVID-19 trends. The center has brought in a researcher who will be doing municipal modeling to analyze what the trends mean.

“When we see a rapid increase of disease or a high level of disease, then we will work with public health officials and the municipal authorities and come up with a response plan so we

can have a targeted, localized response to the area,” Brierley explained.

If testing shows a rise in positive results in an area, then Yuma Regional Medical Center can prepare for an increase in COVID-19 patients and municipalities can target resources to those areas, perhaps with a public informational campaign asking residents to do a better job of social distancing or by mobilizing test units in those locations. YCEDA can do more localized testing when there’s a high incidence of cases in a particular area, such as a prison or nursing facility.

Brierley is happy to see the state, the municipalities and public health officials working together, and that the project is making a difference.

“We’ve had some wins,” he noted.

RENTAL

FROM PAGE A1

2018; \$277,657 in 2019 and \$240,000 in 2020 in HOME grants. In September, the agency notified the consortium that it was canceling the grant agreements and returning the funds. City staff did not say why the agency declined the awards.

The Consortium Board met to consider how to reallocate the funds and agreed on the rental assistance program. According to a

staff report, this program furthers the council’s strategic outcome for a “safe and prosperous” city. Staff noted that “the provision of rental assistance prevents or eliminates homelessness, creating a safe living environment for our lowest-income residents.”

Because of the pandemic, HUD is allowing Community Housing Development Organization funds to be reprogrammed into other eligible affordable housing activities if necessary.

The key elements of program include:

Rental assistance for Yuma County residents who are low-income, as defined by HUD. The assistance would be for a maximum of 12 months.

Distribution of the assistance throughout the county on a population basis.

Cost-sharing of rent. The tenant will pay 30% of the rent, and the program will pay the balance directly to the landlord on behalf of the tenant. Security and utility deposits would be allowable, when applicable, and rents must comply with HUD’s allowable rents

for Yuma County.

Participant selection prioritizes people who are currently homeless or have a pending eviction notice. Secondary priority is for people paying more than 40% of their income for housing and people who can demonstrate a continuing financial impact from COVID-19.

The council also authorized an agreement with the Housing Authority of the City of Yuma to administer the program. HACY has agreed to administer the program in close coord-

ination with other housing providers in the county to ensure an equitable distribution of the assistance throughout the county.

This program is closely modeled after the Section 8/Housing Choice Voucher program that HACY currently administers and has trained staff, existing protocols and expertise to oversee the technical elements of the program, staff noted.

In other action, the council adopted an ordinance that amends the 2021 budget to authorize a transfer

of funds due to proceeds expected from the sale of bonds to pay off the debt owed for police and firefighter pensions.

The city plans to make two payments to the Arizona Public Safety Personnel Retirement System, with the first payment of \$35 million in February. Since Arizona law prohibits the city from spending more than its current annual budget, the council needs to authorize a transfer of the funds to make the payment possible.

TRUMP

FROM PAGE A1

The invasion of the Capitol building, a powerful symbol of the nation’s democracy, rattled Republicans and Democrats alike. They struggled with how best to contain the impulses of a president deemed too dangerous to control his own social media accounts but who remains commander in chief of the world’s greatest military.

“I’m not worried about the next election, I’m worried about getting through the next 14 days,” said Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina, one of Trump’s staunchest allies. He condemned the president’s role in Wednesday’s riots and said, “If something else happens, all options would be on the table.”

Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi declared that “the president of the United States incited an armed insurrection against America.” She called him “a very dangerous person who should not continue in office. This is urgent, an emergency of the highest magnitude.”

Neither option to remove Trump seemed likely, with little time left in his term to draft the Cabinet members needed to invoke the amendment or to organize the hearings and trial mandated for an impeachment. But the fact that the dramatic options were even the subject of discussion in Washington’s corridors of power served as a warning to Trump.

Fears of what a desperate president could do in his final days spread in the nation’s capital and beyond, including speculation Trump could incite more violence, make rash appointments, issue ill-conceived pardons – including for himself and his family – or even trigger a destabilizing international incident.

The president’s video Thursday – which was released upon his return to Twitter after his account was restored – was a com-

plete reversal from the one he put out just 24 hours earlier in which he said to the violent mob: “We love you. You’re very special.” His refusal to condemn the violence sparked a firestorm of criticism and, in the new video, he at last denounced the demonstrators’ “lawlessness and mayhem.”

As for his feelings on leaving office, he told the nation that “serving as your president has been the honor of my lifetime” while hinting at a return to the public arena. He told supporters “our incredible journey is only just beginning.”

Just a day earlier, Trump unleashed the destructive forces at the Capitol with his baseless claims of election fraud at a rally that prompted supporters to disrupt the congressional certification of Biden’s victory. After the storming of the Capitol and the eventual wee-hours certification of Biden’s win by members of Congress, Trump released a statement that acknowledged he would abide by a peaceful transfer of power on Jan. 20.

The statement was posted by an aide and did not originate from the president’s own Twitter account, which has 88 million followers and for four years has been wielded as a political weapon that dictates policy and sows division and conspiracy.

Trump couldn’t tweet it himself because, for the first time, the social media platform suspended his account, stating that the president had violated its rules of service by inciting violence. Facebook adopted a broader ban, saying Trump’s account would be offline until after Biden’s inauguration.

Deprived of that social media lifeblood, Trump remained silent and ensconced in the executive mansion until Thursday evening. But around him, loyalists headed for the exits, their departures – which were coming in two weeks anyway – moved up to protest the president’s handling of the riot.

Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao became the first Cabinet member to resign. Chao, married to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, one of the lawmakers trapped at the Capitol on Wednesday, said in a message to staff that the attack “has deeply troubled me in a way that I simply cannot set aside.”

Education Secretary Betsy DeVos followed. In her resignation letter Thursday, DeVos blamed Trump for inflaming tensions in the violent assault on the seat of the nation’s democracy. “There is no mistaking the impact your rhetoric had on the situation, and it is the inflection point for me,” she wrote.

Others who resigned in the wake of the riot: Deputy National Security Advisor Matthew Pottinger; Ryan Tully, senior director for European and Russian affairs at the National Security Council; and first lady Melania Trump’s chief of staff Stephanie Grisham, a former White House press secretary.

Mick Mulvaney, Trump’s former chief of staff-turned-special envoy to Northern Ireland, told CNBC that he had called Secretary of State Mike Pompeo “to let him know I was resigning. ... I can’t do it. I can’t stay.”

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Mulvaney said others who work for Trump had decided to remain in their posts in an effort to provide some sort of guardrails for the president during his final days in office.

“Those who choose to stay, and I have talked with some of them, are choosing to stay because they’re worried the president might put someone worse in,” Mulvaney said.

Mulvaney’s predecessor in the chief of staff job, retired U.S. Marine Corps general John Kelly, told CNN that “I think the Cabinet should meet and have a discussion” about Section 4 of the 25th Amendment – allowing the forceful removal of Trump by his own Cabinet.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer joined

Pelosi in declaring that Trump “should not hold office one day longer” and urged Vice President Mike Pence and the Cabinet to act. But Chao’s departure may stall nascent efforts to invoke the amendment.

Staff-level discussions on the matter took place across multiple departments and even in parts of the White House, according to two people briefed on the talks. But no member of the Cabinet has publicly expressed support for the move – which would make Pence the acting president – though several were believed to be sympathetic to the notion, believing Trump is too volatile in his waning days in office.

In the West Wing, shellshocked aides were packing up, acting on a delayed

directive to begin offboarding their posts ahead of the Biden team’s arrival. The slowdown before now was due to Trump’s single-minded focus on his defeat since Election Day at the expense of the other responsibilities of his office.

Few aides had any sense of the president’s plans, with some wondering if Trump would largely remain out of sight until he left the White House. White House press secretary Kayleigh McEnany read a brief statement in which she declared that the Capitol siege was “appalling, reprehensible and antithetical to the American way.”

But her words carried little weight. Trump has long made clear that only he speaks for his presidency.

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CHALLENGE

FROM PAGE A1

argued that it’s irrelevant that state and federal judges had rejected various claims of fraud and irregularity. They said these lawsuits were tossed on technical grounds and that courts never actually addressed the merits of the allegations.

But that fails to tell the whole story. Consider the claim of the Arizona Republican Party over the audit procedures used in Maricopa County.

Party lawyers argued the Arizona law requires the sampling of ballots of 2% of precincts to compare the machine tally with a hand count. Instead, the county – and some others – audited the ballots of 2% of vote centers, centralized locations

where anyone could cast a ballot rather than going to his or her own home precinct.

Maricopa County Superior Court John Hannah said the party waited far too long to bring its suit.

He pointed out that Maricopa County used voting centers in the presidential preference election in March and in the state’s primary in August – and that the party didn’t object to the audit procedures in either case. In fact, Hannah said, the state GOP did not raise any concerns ahead of the Nov. 3 general election even though the county informed Republican and Democratic party officials about the upcoming audit process.

But even if that were not the case, Hannah said the challengers were misreading the law.

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