



Avista Corp.

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April 9, 2020

Public Utility Commission of Oregon
Attn: Filing Center
201 High St SE, Suite 100
Salem, OR 97301

Via Electronic Submission

RE: Docket No. UG-389, Avista's 2020 Natural Gas General Rate Case

Pursuant to OAR 860-022-0017, "Announcement of Utility Tariff Changes", the Company hereby confirms that notice to customers of Avista's General Rate Case filing via newspaper advertisement as described in Part 2 (a) has been performed within the 15 day statutory notice period. Ads have been placed in the following dates and newspapers where Avista provides natural gas service:

<u>City:</u>	<u>Publication:</u>	<u>Date:</u>
Ashland	Mail Tribune	Saturday, March 21, 2020
Grants Pass	Daily Courier	Sunday, March 22, 2020
Klamath Falls	Herald and News	Sunday, March 22, 2020
Medford	Mail Tribune	Sunday, March 22, 2020
Roseburg	News-Review	Sunday, March 22, 2020
LaGrande	Observer	Saturday, March 21, 2020

Due to the circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 virus and the State of Washington's "Shelter in Place" Order, we are unable to obtain formal attestation at this time, as notary services are not designated as an essential service. Once this order is lifted, we will file the formal attestation at that time, attesting that the newspaper ads did run as represented above. Please direct any questions regarding this filing to Annette Brandon at (509) 495-4324 or myself at (509) 495-4316.

Sincerely,

/s/ David J. Meyer

David J. Meyer
Vice President and Chief Counsel for
Regulatory & Governmental Affairs

FROM PAGE ONE

ASANTE

From Page A2

For people who have mild symptoms and think they might have COVID-19, Asante has established a COVID-19 hotline at 541-789-2813 to help answer questions, and ensure those with symptoms of COVID-19 can be appropriately evaluated and receive the right level of care, Asante officials said.

Symptoms include coughing, a fever and in some cases, diarrhea. People with symptoms are urged to call ahead to doctors' office and hospital emergency departments before visiting so health care workers can prepare to see them. Some doctors are using telemedicine and phone calls to reduce unnecessary direct contact with patients.

Continue to call 911 if you are experiencing a true medical emergency.

On March 7, Jackson County Public Health officials announced two cases of people with COVID-19 in Jackson County. The county has not announced any new cases since then and there have been no deaths.

Jackson County officials said there are likely more cases of COVID-19 in the community that have not been diagnosed yet. Labs nationwide are racing to ramp up their testing capabilities, but there is a backlog of tests.

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners and the Josephine County Board of Commissioners both declared states of emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic Thursday. County officials said the declarations are not a cause for panic. But making the declarations allows both county governments to expedite their responses to the pandemic.

As of Friday, 114 people in Oregon have tested positive for COVID-19, according to the Oregon Health Authority.

Across America, 15,219 people have tested positive for COVID-19, and there have been 201 deaths since Jan. 21.

DELIVERY

From Page A1

Malarkey said delivery isn't available at her Gold Hill store because many of the customers are from rural areas, such as from Sams Valley.

But Gold Hill customers can place an online order and pick it up at the front door of the store.

Home delivery of cannabis isn't a new thing in the industry.

Diamond Cannabis in Grants Pass and Emerald Triangle Dispensary in Medford both offer home delivery.

Since the pandemic began, Malarkey said she's seen a decline in orders for her manufacturing business, Sun God Medicinals. But the direct-to-consumer sales through her website have increased.

OBITUARIES

Martha Anne Dube

Martha Anne Dube, 98, of Jacksonville, Oregon, passed away March 20, 2020, at her home in Jacksonville, Oregon. Arrangements will be handled by Perl Funeral home 541-772-5488.

www.perlfuneralhome.com

Sympathy
penny and lulu
studio florist & events

541-779-1112
pennyandlulu.com
18 Stewart Avenue,
Medford

PEACE

From Page A2

We have to pray to god to get things.

If god is unconditional love, then, again, it is the nature of god (love) to give unconditionally. All we have to do is accept god in the form of greater good in our lives.

If our idea of god is not based on the limiting concepts above and we dismiss the idea of humanness, then we open the doors to a different concept of god: God is a conscious presence in everybody and in all things.

It is the very nature of God to love unconditionally; god is unconditional love. Love is god seeing itself in its own creation.

It is the very nature of god to create, expand and grow. God does not have a choice to do so or not. God creates by becoming the creation — this is the universal creative process.

God created us by becoming us, and the same creative abilities are in our nature too. This means that the ability to create our own lives is in every one of us.

It is the very nature of god to be intelligent. God does not have to decide or figure out anything, it simply knows.

It is the very nature of god to be everywhere present, all the time.

It is the very nature of god to be aware of our wants, needs and desires.

We do not have to ask for anything, we only have to accept that everything we want is already provided. All is given all of the time.

God does not choose to give; it is its very nature to give all.

The key here is to realize that the actions of god are its nature; they are not based on a conscious decision to do or be something or not. The following examples may help to clarify this:

Water does not decide to have the properties of liquidity, it simply is liquid.

A flower does not decide to bloom, it simply blooms.

A dog does not decide to be a dog because someone asks or prays to it to be a dog, it is simply a dog and it cannot be anything else.

Inner peace is found when we can release the idea that someone or something is judging us or keeping score of our lives, and when we can stop worrying about doing the right thing and/or trying to appease the ego of a false deity.

Inner peace is found when we move more toward the idea of the true nature of god and what god really is.

The world is not broken, be in peace.

Jim Hatton is the author (under the name James Apollonius Alan) of "A Spiritual Master's Guide to Life." Email 600-700-7000 word articles on all aspects of inner peace to Sally McKirgan at innerpeaceforyou@outlook.com.

STUDENTS

From Page A2

"They were calm and polite in Canada," says Avalon.

"If you're going to be stuck in another country, Canada is where you want to be stuck. But everything started to close, like wildfire accelerating."

AJ and his fellow seniors held their own spontaneous graduation ceremony, wearing whatever graduation hats they could find and throwing them up in the air, then they packed and left, though

his roommate, from Turkey, couldn't get a flight home and was stranded in Toronto.

"I was watching the news constantly," says AJ. "I was scared to be stuck in Canada, though they were well organized compared to here in the U.S."

So on TV they were debating whether to let people from the U.S., where it's less safe, enter Canada".

He is self-quarantining for three weeks at his parents' Ashland home, "playing 'Monopoly,'" says his mom, "and waiting for this fire to pass over us."

OBITUARY



Margaret Ruth Skerry

May 28, 1921 - March 9, 2020

Maggie Skerry, 98, passed away Monday, March 9th in Ashland, Oregon. She was born in Burns, Oregon to Virgil and Ruth Bolton. Maggie moved to Medford in 1924 and attended Medford schools, graduating from High School in 1939. She then attended and graduated from Southern Oregon College with a teaching credential in 1942, and graduated with a Degree in Education from University of Oregon in 1945, where she was a member of the Chi Omega Sorority. She taught for one year in Ashland, at what used to be Washington School. Then she taught in Medford at Lincoln School, before becoming the Assistant Dean of Women and the Director of Dormitories at Southern Oregon College.

In 1949, she married Harry A Skerry, and were married 60 years before his passing in 2009. They both loved Ashland and were active in many service organizations throughout their lives. They enjoyed family, traveling and dancing!

Maggie was a member of Chapter BN P.E.O since 1950. A member of Ashland Study Club for over 50 years, helped with the Red Cross Blood Mobile for 25 years, and was a member of the Trinity Episcopal Church. She was a past member of the Republican Women and was its first President. Maggie was on the regional Advisory Board at SOU from 1973-2000. She was a former Past President of AAUW in 1953, and AAUW Woman of the Year in 1962. In 1964, she was Zanta's Woman of the Year. Maggie was one of the founding women of the Auxiliary at Ashland Community Hospital. She was also a past President of ACH Board, and past Secretary of ACH Foundation. In 1992, she received the Distinguished Service Award from Ashland Community Hospital.

Maggie joined the Tudor Guild at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival in 1950, and was a member for over 50 years. She was there from the beginning, and helped get it started. She volunteered for years, before becoming an actual paid employee, and gave many teenagers their first job selling Programs, Pecan Tarts, and boxes of candy. In the early days, Tudor Guild had a counter at the back of the Elizabethan Theatre from which they sold souvenirs.

Maggie is survived by her daughters, Cindy Dunn (Steve) of Sherwood Oregon, and Meg Wright (Kyle) of Ashland Oregon. Grandsons, Zachary Dunn (Jessica), Jacob Dunn, Ben Wright (Kelsy) and Jordan Wright. Great Granddaughter Genevieve Dunn, and Great Grandsons, Henry and Charlie Dunn.

Maggie's family would like to give a Big Thank You to Ashwood Senior Home, and the wonderful care they gave our mom. They always treated her with kindness and love! We Thank You so much.

In lieu of flowers, donations in her name may be made to the Tudor Guild, at 15 S. Pioneer St. Ashland Oregon.

A public funeral service will not be held due to the current health crisis.

NEIGHBORLY

From Page A1

Some coronaviruses that cause the common cold die on surfaces in a few hours after being sneezed or coughed out of the safe harbor of our bodies. But the COVID-19 virus can live under laboratory conditions for three days on plastic and steel and one day on cardboard, the new research found.

Being isolated will create loneliness for many of us, public health workers acknowledge.

They suggest using technology to be "together." For older adults who may not be comfortable with technology, set up options for them to use Facetime, Skype or other video-calling options.

Practice social distancing during the set-up process, wash your hands before and after being with the person and sanitize the device.

Buy or download a free audiobook or podcast for a person, and offer help to navigate the technology if needed. Call on them to see how they like the book or podcast. Get creative and have a virtual book club with neighbors, friends and family.

You can also help people set up grocery store pick-up and curbside pick-up services. Again, use social distancing and good hygiene practices if you visit in person and touch a device.

Volunteer for meal delivery services. Agencies that provide meals to senior citizens may need extra help to deliver meals.

Run errands for those who are housebound because they are ill or belong to vulnerable populations, such as the frail elderly, people with compromised immune systems or health conditions such as diabetes, heart disease and lung problems. But

consolidate errands into one trip to reduce exposure, public health workers advise.

Everyone, no matter how healthy, should stay away from others as much as possible, they warn.

Practice social distancing at work and when visiting essential locations like grocery stores and pharmacies.

Never visit a hospital or long-term care facility if you have a fever or cough. Check before visiting about safety guidelines and any visitation restrictions that are in effect.

Cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze.

Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after coughing and sneezing, using the bathroom, before eating, after helping someone else and when you come home from work or a store trip.

Regularly clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces such as bathrooms, desks, countertops, doorknobs, computer keyboards, faucet handles, toys and cellphones.

Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.

Meanwhile, pay attention

to rapidly changing guidelines from cities, counties, the state of Oregon and the federal government about social distancing and any sheltering-in-place restrictions that are put in place during the pandemic.

Jackson County is posting regular updates about local conditions at jacksoncounty.org.

So far, the county has two confirmed cases of coronavirus and no deaths.

Updates and information about COVID-19 in Oregon are on a special Oregon Health Authority website at govstatus.egov.com/OR-OHA-COVID-19.

For health and medical advice and updates on rapidly changing conditions nationally, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at cdc.gov.

People can call 211 for with general questions.

Call your doctor's office or a hospital emergency room before visiting if you have COVID-19 symptoms such as coughing, a fever and possibly diarrhea.

Call 911 if you are experiencing a medical emergency.

Reach Mail Tribune reporter Vickie Aldous at 541-776-4486 or valdous@rosebudmedia.com.



Milo Shubat
B.A. Architecture /
General Contractor
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541-488-4603

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MF-00118200

Avista Customer Notice

Recently, Avista requested an increase in natural gas rates for our customers in Oregon. We know you care about your energy costs, so we think it's important to share this news with you.

On March 16, 2020, Avista filed a General Rate Case (GRC) request with the Public Utility Commission of Oregon (PUC) asking for an overall increase of 6.8 percent in natural gas billed revenue. If this increase is approved, Avista's natural gas revenues would increase by approximately \$6.8 million. The GRC is based on a proposed rate of return of 7.50 percent with a common equity ratio of 50 percent and a 9.9 percent return on equity. The Company would expect a final decision from the PUC by January 15, 2021.

The primary driver of the Company's request is continued investment in our natural gas projects that support the safe, reliable delivery of natural gas to our customers. This includes upgrades and maintenance of natural gas pipe and distribution equipment as well as other information technology upgrades. Major capital investments included in the filing are:

- The continuation of a major project to replace portions of natural gas distribution pipe. The project is replacing hundreds of miles of natural gas pipeline that was installed prior to 1987.
- Replacement and expansion of natural gas pipe to improve the operation of the natural gas system and accommodate growth, development, and construction projects.
- Implementation and upgrades of technology systems that make it easier for customers to do business with Avista and that allow employees to perform their jobs and serve customers in a safe, reliable and efficient manner.

We understand that this requested increase can be challenging. We continue our focus on maximizing efficiencies throughout the company and minimizing costs where possible.

Customer Bills

If approved by the PUC, a residential customer using an average of 47 therms per month would see a \$3.94 per month increase, or 7.0 percent, for a revised monthly bill of \$60.34 (inclusive of a proposed \$1.00 per month increase in the basic charge).

For more information

Copies of our filings are available at www.myavista.com/rates, or you can review the filings by visiting our headquarters at: **1411 E. Mission, Spokane, WA 99202, (800) 227-9187**

You can also view copies of the filing at one of our district offices located at:

580 Business Park Drive, Medford, OR 97504
2825 Dakota Court, Klamath Falls, OR 97603
10201 "F" Street, La Grande, OR 97850
1404 Green Siding Road, Roseburg, OR 97471

This announcement is to provide you with general information about Avista's rate request and its effect on customers. The calculations and statements in this announcement are not binding on the PUC. For more information about the filing or for information about the time and place of any hearing, contact the PUC at: **Public Utility Commission of Oregon, 201 High Street SE, Ste. 100, Salem, OR 97301, (800) 522-2404, www.puc.state.or.us**

Customer Resources

To assist customers in managing their energy bills, Avista offers services for customers such as comfort level billing, payment arrangements, and Customer Assistance Referral and Evaluation Services (CARES), which provide assistance to customers through referrals to area organizations for help with housing, utilities, medical assistance and other needs. Avista also provides support to customer assistance funds such as Project Share. In addition, Avista provides energy efficiency and outreach programs, including rebates and incentives, which help customers manage their energy use. Since 2017 we have partnered with the Energy Trust of Oregon for these programs. To learn more, visit www.myavista.com.

This notice contains forward-looking statements regarding the company's current expectations. Forward-looking statements are all statements other than historical facts. Such statements speak only as of the date of the news release and are subject to a variety of risks and uncertainties, many of which are beyond the company's control, which could cause actual results to differ materially from the expectations. These risks and uncertainties include, in addition to those discussed herein, all of the factors discussed in the company's Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended Dec. 31, 2019.



Blossom Tree boutique features hand-painted jackets

New boutique clothing shop Blossom Tree, at 940 S.W. Sixth St., is planning on bringing its personal brand of creative fashion to Grants Pass, with exotic clothing from around the world, and its specialty — hand-painted jackets.

Owner Maria Nikitchenko, a newcomer to Josephine County, said that she picked up the idea of painting clothes while living in Los Angeles, and now wants to take it to the next level.

"The building I lived in back in Los Angeles was pretty interesting, and filled with all kinds of artistic people like actors, rappers, directors, writers — that sort of thing," Nikitchenko said.

"One day I was commissioned to do a painting on the wall of the building, and one of the people there saw it, liked it, and requested that I do a painting on her jacket. I did it, then after people saw her wearing it, the orders started coming in."

Things are still in the works at the shop, with signage, decoration and inventory still in need of attention.

Businesses of all kinds are practically at a standstill due to the COVID-19 pandemic, so she has time to get things moving.

"It's really interesting timing how this all worked out," Nikitchenko said. "Oh well."

In addition to clothing, Nikitchenko will also be exercising her creative muscles by making and selling a variety of sewn items, as well as hand-crafted jewelry made with natural, uncut stones.

This is an artistic outlet



Business Buzz
Jason McMillen
of the Daily Courier

more than anything else — her day job is helping to manage her family's real estate company — so Nikitchenko is excited to get her artistic side motivated again.

"I have a few stations set up in the back room, which is where I plan on working on my products," Nikitchenko said. "I'm just going to have fun and go for it."

Visit Blossom Tree on Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., and Fridays and Saturdays from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

DISASTER LOANS. The U.S. Small Business Administration recently announced that businesses in Josephine County qualify for SBA disaster loans due to the coronavirus.

For more information, visit disasterloan.sba.gov.

DISASTER DONATION. The Rockwell Real Estate Group announced Friday that it is dedicating \$5,000 in funds to assist local businesses that have suffered directly through mandated closures in Jackson and Josephine County.

The 10 selected businesses will be supported by a large



JASON McMILLEN/Daily Courier

Maria Nikitchenko, owner of new boutique apparel shop Blossom Tree in downtown Grants Pass, shows off one of her hand-painted jackets.

purchase of gift cards, which will then be distributed to families in need.

To vouch for a business, visit the company's Facebook page at facebook.com/rockwell-grouprealestate.

SPRING BREAK MEALS. In response to the coronavirus, and because of the discontinuation of emergency meal service provided by schools over spring break, the Grants Pass location of the Boys & Girls Club of the Rogue Valley, 203 S.E. Ninth

Street, will be offering sack lunch meals Monday through March 28.

Pickup time for breakfast is from 9-10 a.m., while lunch is noon to 1 p.m.

Reach Daily Courier business reporter Jason McMillen at 541-474-3718 or

jmcmillen@thedailycourier.com. To submit business news online, go to thedailycourier.com, click at lower left on "online forms" and then click on "Business Buzz."

Briefly

School board meeting to be done by phone

In an effort to reduce the spread of the coronavirus, the Grants Pass School Board will be holding its regular meeting by phone Tuesday. Members of the public can call into the meeting at noon by dialing 1-253-215-8782. The meeting ID is 929175635.

The board is scheduled to discuss the district's response to the virus and what online education options it could offer while schools are closed until at least April 28.

It is also scheduled to approve its plan for how it will use \$4.9 million in new money from a \$1 billion state school funding package, which includes building new classrooms at North Middle School and adding modular classrooms at South Middle School.

Woman gets 60 days in jail in head-on case

A Grants Pass woman was sentenced Thursday to 60 days in jail for causing a head-on wreck while high on inhalants.

Kimberly Dawn Day, 51, also was placed on three years of supervised probation for her plea in Josephine County Circuit Court to charges of DUI, third-degree assault, second-degree criminal mischief and reckless endangerment.

The conviction stems from a Feb. 11 arrest, when Day collided with two other vehicles while going more than 50 mph on the Grants Pass Parkway.

Police said she was under the influence of inhalants at the time.

Day, described as having a minimal criminal record, also was fined \$1,000 and ordered to enroll in the Josephine County

Second Chance Employment Program.

Man gets 13 months in prison for child porn

A man accused of downloading child pornography on his cellphone was sentenced Thursday to 13 months in prison.

Colton Andrew Leach, 30, of Grants Pass also was placed on three years of post-prison supervision per the terms of a plea agreement in Josephine County Circuit Court.

Leach pleaded guilty to three counts of first-degree encouraging child sexual abuse. He must also register in the future as a sex offender.

Police said Leach had at least 15 images of explicit child porn on his cellphone involving children as young as an infant.

For videos, photo galleries and more, visit thedailycourier.com

Josephine County Jail functioning normally, but with precautions

By Jeff Duewel
of the Daily Courier

The staff at the Josephine County Jail is screening inmates, doing a lot more cleaning than usual, and talking to other lockups around the state about future precautions surrounding the coronavirus outbreak.

"We're staying on top of hygiene stuff, and closely monitoring our population for anybody who exhibits flu symptoms," said Ed Vincent, the jail's commander. "Last week we talked about things we could do in the event this gets to the more serious stage."

In Southern California, the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department released over 600 inmates, and similar moves to help prevent the spread of the virus have been discussed around the country.

Vincent said there were 178 inmates mid-week, with a capacity for 185. Up to 12 employees are working at any one time in the jail building at 1901 N.E. F St., behind the Grants Pass Walmart.

Sheriff Dave Daniel said it's unlikely any inmates would be released here.

"That's the last thing we would do, but it's a possibility," he said. "I wouldn't create a danger to the public."

If it does come to that, the more dangerous criminals, charged with Measure 11-type crimes, would stay in.

Daniel and Vincent said they're looking at ways to create a quarantine inside the jail, shuffling inmates so anyone infected would be isolated.

If there was an outbreak of flu, everyone in the jail would have to be tested, Vincent said.

"We're staying on top of hygiene stuff, and closely monitoring our population for anybody who exhibits flu symptoms."

ED VINCENT

Josephine County Jail commander

"It's unfortunate, the times we live in," he said.

Every inmate coming into the jail has had his or her temperature taken over the past week and a half. For inmates coming from a distance, they also have a medical questionnaire.

One inmate from out of county showed up with a fever, but that person came in on a warrant, and the county where the warrant originated elected to cite the person to appear in court, and the person was released, Vincent said.

The inmate "didn't make it out of our booking area," Vincent said.

The jail just received its

quarterly shipment of sanitizer, protective equipment and gloves, so the facility is in good shape there.

"This is something to take seriously," Vincent said. "We're lucky we're as prepared as we are."

Daniel said one casualty of the outbreak is training at the academy for the Oregon Department of Public Safety Standards and Training — six weeks for corrections training and 16 weeks for patrol.

"I have five people coming back as we speak," Daniel said.

Reach reporter Jeff Duewel at 541-474-3720 or jduewel@thedailycourier.com.

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SALE ENDS MARCH 28TH

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AVISTA

WORLD NEWS BRIEFS

FDA approves first rapid coronavirus test

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has approved the first rapid coronavirus test, which produces results in about 45 minutes. An FDA spokeswoman confirmed the approval after an announcement from Cepheid, a Silicon Valley molecular diagnostics company. It can take at least a few days to get

results from current coronavirus tests, which typically are sent in batches to reference labs, said Dr. David Persing, the company's chief medical and technology officer. "What's really needed is a test that can rapidly determine status of infection on site when patients are being seen," he said on a company video. Cepheid said it will begin shipping its tests next week.

Moderates may decide Trump's political fate in wake of virus

LARGO, Fla. (AP) — As restaurants across the country stacked chairs on tables and shut their doors to try to contain the deadly coronavirus, what would be the final visitors streamed into the Conservative Grounds coffee shop in Largo, Florida. Fox News played on the televisions. Patrons posed for photos in a replica of the Oval Office. An 80-year-old man, defying officials' advice to stay home, beamed near a life-sized cutout of a grinning President Donald Trump. This Trump-themed coffee shop embodies the right edge of the country's political divide. Outside its walls, state officials put in place an unprecedented shutdown of public life and Trump scrambled to fight a virus that he had accused political opponents and the media of pushing as a "new hoax." Criticism of the president's preparedness was rampant.

throughout Trump's presidency, his approval rating has hovered between 42% and 46%, with little change despite the endless cycle of controversy and chaos. Recent polling shows that has remained steady. "Attitudes about the president, both pro and con, are deeply ingrained and almost impervious to the effect of news," he said. "Now, we've never had an event quite like this one." For most people, the new virus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia. The vast majority recover. Globally, there have been more than 11,000 deaths from over 275,000 confirmed cases, according to a running tally by Johns Hopkins University. More than 200 deaths have been recorded in the U.S.

At another time, a president might have expected to see his popularity rise. Past presidents have seen their approval ratings jump in times of crisis, disaster or war. President Jimmy Carter's approval rating skyrocketed in the weeks after Americans were taken hostage at the U.S. Embassy in Iran. President George W. Bush was hailed for his unifying voice after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. Trump this week abruptly turned to talking about the virus as a significant threat, and himself as a steady "wartime" leader. He shifted the blame to China and tried to rebrand Covid-19 as the "China virus." But presidential historian Douglas Brinkley said the shift from skeptic to wartime president may be difficult for Trump. He compared the president's response with that of Republican President Herbert Hoover, who oversaw the Great Depression and dismissed the collapse of the stock market as exaggerated. When it proved disastrous, shantytowns came to be known as Hoovervilles. He was trounced in the next election by the Democratic governor of New York, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who then steered the nation through the depression and World War II. "He started off a Herbert Hoover and he done a 180 trying to be FDR," Brinkley said. Voters in November will judge which one he is closer to being, he said, and some of that will be based on things now largely out of his control: how many die, how painful the economic fallout proves to be. If the virus lingers through the summer, "he's going to be left holding the

China marks fourth day with no new cases

BEIJING — The Chinese city of Wuhan, where the global pandemic was first detected, went a fourth consecutive day on Sunday without reporting any new or suspected cases of the virus. Elsewhere, the country reported 46 new cases over the previous 24 hours, 45 of them coming from overseas. The health ministry did not say where the domestic case was found. Another six deaths were also reported, one in Wuhan, four in the surrounding province of Hubei and one elsewhere. China now recorded a total of 81,054 cases and 3,261 deaths. A total of 72,244 people have been declared cured and released from hospital.

Wuhan must go 14 straight days without a new case in order for draconian travel restrictions to be lifted and the city remains isolated from the rest of the province, which is itself closed off to the rest of the country. Even while social distancing and quarantines for new arrivals remain the norm, China is striving to restore activity in the world's

second-largest economy.

Russia ready to send supplies to Italy

MOSCOW — The Russian Defense Ministry says it is ready to fly its mobile medical teams and disinfection equipment to Italy to help it deal with the new coronavirus.

The ministry's statement followed Saturday's phone call between Russian President Vladimir Putin and Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte in which the Russian leader offered to send military medical personnel and equipment to help Italy contain the outbreak of the new coronavirus. The Russian Defense Ministry says its transport planes stand ready to airlift eight mobile medical teams along with various medical equipment and aerosol disinfection trucks to Italy.

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu had a call with his Italian counterpart Lorenzo Guerini, who said Italy was ready to receive Russian planes with medical personnel and equipment starting Sunday.

Update/ from A1

There are now known coronavirus cases linked to 17 of Oregon's 36 counties: 42 in Washington County; 19 each in Linn County and Marion Counties; 18 in Multnomah County; 11 in Clackamas County; nine in Deschutes County; four in Yamhill County; three in Lane County; two each in Benton, Jackson and Umatilla counties; and one each in Douglas, Grant, Josephine, Klamath, Polk and Union counties.

People older than 55 account for 75 of the confirmed cases in Oregon, 41 are between 35 and 54, 13 are between 25 and 34, four are between 18 and 24 and four

others are under 17, state figures show. At least 42 of the state's coronavirus patients, or 31%, have been hospitalized at some point during their illness, according to the Oregon Health Authority. In the last day, 335 more people in Oregon tested negative for coronavirus, while another 437 are awaiting results, according to figures published on the health authority's website, which now includes a breakdown of testing by county. To date, 2,912 people in Oregon have undergone testing, up from 2,550 on Friday, including at least 516 Multnomah County residents, 372 Washington County residents and 267 Clackamas County residents.

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Customer Bills

If approved by the PUC, a residential customer using an average of 47 therms per month would see a \$3.94 per month increase, or 7.0 percent, for a revised monthly bill of \$60.34 (inclusive of a proposed \$1.00 per month increase in the basic charge).

For more information

Copies of our filings are available at www.myavista.com/rates, or you can review the filings by visiting our headquarters at: **1411 E. Mission, Spokane, WA 99202, (800) 227-9187**

You can also view copies of the filing at one of our district offices located at:

- 580 Business Park Drive, Medford, OR 97504
- 2825 Dakota Court, Klamath Falls, OR 97603
- 10201 "F" Street, La Grande, OR 97850
- 1404 Green Siding Road, Roseburg, OR 97471

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Herald & News Sunday Savings Coupon
 Improving the community | heraldandnews.com

Big 5	\$1,079.00
Dollar General	\$23.50
Parade	\$189.20
Retail Me Not	\$205.50
Rite Aid	\$47.00
Smart Source	\$25.75
Ulta Beauty	\$3.50
Total Savings.....	\$1,573.45

Whit Ayres, a Republican pollster, noted

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SATURDAY, MARCH 21, 2020

NEWS

THE OBSERVER — 5A

CHURCHES

Continued from Page 1A

social distancing to slow COVID-19. "We feel that it is important to respect that and try to slow down the spread of the virus," said Bud Duncan, elder at Imbler Christian Church, pointing to the recommendation of 10 in a group as the number they are going by.

Duncan said about 80 people attend Imbler Christian Church on Sundays. The church posts its sermons as podcasts, he said, and considered streaming the service online. Instead, church leaders will hold smaller studies Sunday morning to comply with the government recommendation.

"What we've done is basically on Sunday worship we're going to have small groups. The five elders in the church will each host a small group, and if need be others can help out," Duncan said, noting the group meetings will be the same 10 a.m. time of their regular service.

Several churches will be videotaping either their worship session and/or sermon live as they take place Sunday or prerecording them for worshippers to take in whenever they want during the week.

For the La Grande Church of the Nazarene and La Grande First Baptist Church, videotaping their messages is a new venture.

Kevin Goss, pastor of La Grande Nazarene — which typically has around 130-140 attendees — said his church made a late decision to stream its sermon last Sunday on Facebook Live



Staff photo by Ronald Bond
The La Grande Church of the Nazarene pastor, Ken Goss holds the camera the church will use starting Sunday to livestream its services, which it is doing in response to government moves to reduce gathering sizes during the COVID-19 outbreak.

using a phone, then decided to take a further step and upgrade its gear to better stream upcoming sermons on YouTube.

"The service will go online," Goss said. "We're being very intentional in using language that 'Church is not canceled, it's gone digital.'"

Sharon Binder, secretary at First Baptist, said the church also is entering uncharted waters getting the sermon to their 200 attendees — and anyone else who wants to watch. The church has, though, done audio recordings of its sermons.

"We've been working on livestreaming, which we are doing this Sunday," she said. "This is our first Sunday livestreaming ever."

Faith Center in Island City is among churches that already stream their services, and it will continue to do so.

Cameron Hefner, pastor at Faith Center, said the staff was working on plans to alter Sunday mornings as

typically around a total of 400-500 attend the church's two services.

Hefner said the church recorded the March 15 service and was "promoting watch parties where people could be invited over" to view the recording and worship together at one another's homes. With the new mandates on group sizes, smaller watch parties are being recommended. Now in their second week of recording worship, this week Hefner said the sermon will be recorded from a home rather than from the church building's stage.

"We're hoping that will help translate to a more personal level," Hefner said. In Union, the Baptist Church will meet Sunday but in a different capacity while also developing a plan to allow for a small-group setup.

Nick Ham, associate pastor, said the church will admit up to 25 attendees in the sanctuary and will use its youth group room to house an additional 25 who would watch off a feed from

"We told them if they need younger people to do their shopping so they don't have to go into town (we would help). We would do that for anybody, not just people in our congregation."

— Bud Duncan, elder at Imbler Christian Church, on help older or at-risk individuals during the outbreak

the sanctuary. "We will have a separate gathering that goes on at the same time for overflow purposes. That way we'll be able to function," Ham said.

The church typically has around 65-70 people attend Sunday services. In addition to the new format, there will be two Sunday services, at 9:30 a.m. and at 11 a.m., which will accommodate as many as 100 people.

In anticipation of the cap of 10 being soon required rather than recommended, Ham said the church has "a plan where we will go to a home church model. We will have a prerecorded sermon and meet with small groups in their houses."

The recording would be on DVD. Churches also are taking a range of approaches for various mid-week activities, such as Bible studies, youth groups and small gatherings. Some are suspending the activities altogether, some, if they don't exceed the gathering limit, are continuing. And others are leaving the meeting of small groups to the discretion of the group leaders.

"We have Celebrate Recovery that meets at our downtown campus," Hefner said. "They're going to continue to meet," because the group is under the 25-person limit.

With the caps limiting fellowship — an important

aspect of church gatherings — the various congregations also are finding creative ways to stay in community and connected. Binder said one of First Baptist's pastors, Matt Carpenter, is beginning a weekly blog.

"He is going to be starting that this Sunday," she said. "He's going to be encouraging that way."

Duncan said for older congregants or those at high risk of contracting coronavirus, his church is offering help in getting groceries or other supplies.

"We told them if they need younger people to do their shopping so they don't have to go into town (we would help)," he said, adding, "We would do that for anybody, not just people in our congregation."

Hefner said he had put together a daily devotional to go along with the church's focus of study and are "right in the middle of that right now." The devotional has proved beneficial as the church changed the way it operates amid the coronavirus outbreak.

"People are engaging that way," Hefner said of using the daily devotional. "We're facing people's devotional time, that time they spend with Jesus on their own."

up phone lists for people to remain in contact. Other congregations using email and social media to maintain a sense of connection during this time of "social distancing."

The goal, Goss said, is "to still keep people in community, but obviously not as much face-to-face. We're not going to stop anyone from getting together, but we're going to utilize technology."

This year, Easter is on April 12, and as the day approaches, believers are offering up hope and prayers they will be able to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ together.

Faith Center was planning to meet on Easter at McKenzie Theatre on the Eastern Oregon University campus, which Hefner said the church did a year ago and drew about 800 people.

He said it's unlikely the service at McKenzie will happen this year, though it hasn't been taken off the table.

Ham said in Union, the leaders are "hopeful and prayerful we'll be able to do our Easter services at least in this restricted sense."

Churches will have to wait — in the region and nation — before setting their Easter plans.

"That is still being developed," said Binder of La Grande's First Baptist, "but we are planning to celebrate the resurrection."

COVID-19

Continued from Page 1A

addition to advising people on how to do the same.

"We understand how to use our personal protective equipment, which includes goggles, gloves, gowns, masks of various types," Ford said. "Right now, we are doing OK with our supplies, but we are all concerned the suppliers and stockpiles we draw from could dwindle if the virus spreads. That being said, in order to best protect the community we need our healthcare workforce to stay healthy and strong for as long as this takes."

According to Dr. Inski Yu, an Infectious Disease doctor at Grande Ronde Hospital, home management through isolation is the best course of treatment at this time. The focus should be on preventing transmission to others and monitoring for symptom, which could lead to a need for hospitalization. Yu said it is best to try and resolve fever symptoms without medication to prevent masking the true status of the fever and improvements in respiratory function.

The Oregon Association of Hospitals and Health Systems has called on Gov. Kate Brown to

issue an order to shelter in place. This order requires those who are non-essential employees in the workforce to stay home except to get food and medical care.

Ford said Grande Ronde Hospital supports this call to action. Brown has yet to issue that order.

The La Grande hospital and its clinics remain open for non-coronavirus medical issues. The hospital encouraged anyone who may feel ill with symptoms of the novel coronavirus (coughing, sore throat, difficulty breathing and other flu symptoms) to call their primary care provider for a preliminary screening before coming in.

NUMBERS

Continued from Page 1A

dismissed temporarily.

•Communicate with others by phone, email or social media. If you have a chronic medical condition and live alone, ask family, friends and health care providers to check on you during an outbreak. Stay in touch with family and friends, especially those at increased risk of developing severe illness, such as older adults and people with chronic medical conditions.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

Reported illnesses have ranged from mild symptoms to severe illness and death for confirmed coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) cases. Fever, cough and shortness of breath may appear 2-14 days after exposure.

IF I FEEL I HAVE COVID-19 SYMPTOMS, WHAT DO I DO?

If you have been exposed to COVID-19 and develop a fever and symptoms such as cough or difficulty breathing, call your health care provider. **WHERE CAN I GET THE TEST FOR COVID-19?** Call your health care provider. Your doctor will determine whether you should be tested.

UPDATES

Continued from Page 1A

Monday will close all field offices to the public except by appointment. Offices will remain open and available by phone. Call the La Grande Union Office at 541-963-3168.

LA GRANDE

•La Grande Parks and Recreation rescheduled Pee Wee soccer for May. Meet Your Coach Day will be May 2.

•Veterans' Memorial Pool is now closed to the public. The April 10 Easter Egg Swim at the pool is canceled.

•The EOU Small Business Development Center is not holding in-person client meetings; but is available to offer assistance by phone (541-962-1532) or email (eousbdc@gmail.com).

•Union County Family Law Advisory Committee canceled the April 2 "Helping Children Cope with Divorce and Separation" workshop.

•The Social Security

office is closed. •Grande Ronde Fitness Club is closed.

ISLAND CITY

•Island City City Hall is closed to the public. Staff is available via telephone (541-963-5017) and email (karen@islandcityhall.com). The drive-through remains open Monday-Thursday from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and Friday from 9 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Water/sewer payments can be made at the drive-through window, via telephone with the use of debit/credit cards, or at www.islandcityoregon.com (all fees apply). Late notices and disconnections will be suspended for the month of March.

UNION

•Union City Hall, Union Carnegie Library, Union Public Works and the Union Treatment Plant are closed to the public. City operations will continue.

Call City Hall at 541-562-5197 to make an appointment or other arrangements.

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NATION & WORLD

IN BRIEF

Magnitude 5.0 quake hits near Carson City

A magnitude 5.0 earthquake struck just southeast of Nevada's state capital of Carson City, according to the U.S. Geological Survey. The earthquake produced strong shaking in the Carson City area at an intensity estimated by the USGS that would frighten many people but produce slight damage. Nevada has been largely quiet of destructive earthquakes since the 1960s, except for the magnitude 6 Wells earthquake of 2008, which caused an abandoned two-story building to collapse and two more buildings to partially collapse, and damaged about 30 others. Officials reported \$19 million in damage.

Multiple bomb threats reported in Pa. city

ALLENTOWN, Pa. — A man was taken into custody Friday night at Lehigh Valley Mall after claiming various bombs were in place around Allentown. Multiple agencies including the Allentown Fire Department Bomb Squad, Lehigh County Field Communications, HAZMAT and Whitehall Township police responded and confronted the man at the Firestone area at the mall, according to reports relayed through the Lehigh County Communication Center. He told emergency responders the bombs were in the area of the Eighth Street bridge, Martin Luther King Jr. Drive at Lehigh Street and North Second Street at Turner Street, near Harrison-Morton Middle School, according to reports. Mall entrances off MacArthur Road and Grape Street were closed, until the man was taken into custody, and have since been reopened. Police have not released his identity.

Country-pop hitmaker Kenny Rogers, 81, dies

Country music legend Kenny Rogers, the congenial, silver-bearded crooner of "The Gambler," "Islands in the Stream" and "Lady," has died of natural causes at age 81. Rogers' verified Twitter account announced the news in a statement late Friday. "The Rogers family is sad to announce that Kenny Rogers passed away last night at 10:25 p.m. at the age of 81," it read. "Rogers passed away peacefully at home from natural causes under the care of hospice and surrounded by his family." The musical storyteller racked up an impressive catalog of hits — initially as a member of the First Edition starting in the late 1960s and later as a solo artist and duet partner with Dolly Parton — and earned three Grammy Awards, 19 nominations and a slew of accolades from country-music awards shows. The singer-songwriter, often credited with (and sometimes criticized for) helping to blur the lines between country and pop, was belatedly inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame in 2013.

Columbus Day will be Cabrini Day in Colorado

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. — The first Monday next October will be Frances Xavier Cabrini Day in Colorado, not Columbus Day. Gov. Jared Polis on Friday signed into law House Bill 1031, which renames the holiday after the Catholic nun who started several charitable organizations in Colorado, including the Queen of Heaven orphanage in Denver and a summer camp for girls that is now the home of the Mother Cabrini Shrine. Cabrini Day will be the first paid holiday in the state named after a woman. Eleven states have already changed their Columbus Day holidays. Mother Cabrini died in 1917 and was canonized by Pope Pius XII in 1946.

ELECTION 2020

Outbreak upends U.S. primaries

By Christina A. Cassidy
The Associated Press

ATLANTA — U.S. elections have been upended by the coronavirus pandemic. At least 13 states have postponed voting and more delays are possible as health officials warn that social distancing and other measures to contain the virus might be in place for weeks, if not months.

The states that have yet to hold their primaries find themselves in a seemingly impossible situation as they look to balance public health concerns with the need to hold elections. While election officials routinely prepare for natural disasters such as hurricanes and wildfires, the virus outbreak poses a unique challenge.

"Usually when we are dealing with a crisis in elections, it's something that happens and then it's done," said Chris Harvey, Georgia's director of elections. "The difference now is that it's a spreading threat, a fast-growing threat. We don't know where, when or how it is going to end."

Primaries scheduled for Georgia, Ohio, Maryland, Indiana, Louisiana, Connecticut and Kentucky have all been postponed to May or June. The Rhode Island Board of Elections has recommended the primary be delayed to June, while officials in Wisconsin are debating what to do.

Wisconsin Gov. Tony Evers has insisted the April 7 primary be held as scheduled, but a state elections commissioner said this past week that doing so would put people at risk. The state's chief elections official cited a host of problems Wisconsin could face if it moved forward with the election: a poll worker shortage, lack of polling places and potential disruption of absentee voting if mail service in the U.S. were to shut down.

All this comes at the worst possible time for election officials, in the middle of a major election year. The virus outbreak erupted halfway through the presidential primary season. Voters in 23 states have yet to cast their ballots.

While Arizona, Florida and Illinois held their elections as scheduled last Tuesday, Ohio halted voting over public health



THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Early voters cast their ballots March 18 at the Frank P. Zeidler Municipal Building in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

concerns after federal officials encouraged people over age 65 to stay home.

"We cannot tell people to stay inside, but also tell them to go out and vote," Gov. Mike DeWine, R-Ohio, said on Twitter, in announcing plans to delay.

The states that have opted to press ahead have found themselves dealing with what one Chicago elections official called a "tsunami" of cancellations by poll workers, who tend to be older, and a last-minute scramble to relocate polling places away from nursing homes and senior living communities. Severe illness and death associated with coronavirus has been most common in people 65 and older, especially those who have heart disease or other chronic conditions.

In addition to the presidential race, dozens of congressional and local primaries are in limbo. Primaries play an important role in deciding which party candidates will appear on the ballot for the November general election.

Runoff elections in Alabama, Texas and Mississippi were also delayed, as were local elections in Oklahoma, Missouri and New Jersey.

There's no indication May or June will be any better to hold elections, but officials say postponing voting even for a few weeks gives them

an opportunity to put in place plans to keep the public safe while voting. This includes moving polling places, recruiting backup poll workers and acquiring enough cleaning supplies for voting sites.

"At some point, we have to execute an election," Harvey said, adding Georgia planned a major push to expand absentee voting for the May primary.

There have been calls, including from Democratic National Committee Chairman Tom Perez, for elections

to be held mostly by mail. But making this switch will be difficult for some and impossible for others.

In several states, it would take legislation or even a constitutional amendment to allow. Even then, election experts say there would be costs and logistical hurdles.

For instance, states would have to decide whether taxpayers or individual voters would be responsible for return postage. It would require new machines and software in many

places to track ballots in the mail and process and count them when they're returned. All of that could cost billions of dollars, at a time when state revenues are likely to drop amid increased unemployment and decreased tax collections.

Further, advocates say not all voters can fill out ballots by hand and that sending ballots could miss some voters, such as Native Americans who live on reservations where mail isn't delivered to every home.

Meanwhile, steps taken — or not taken — to change aspects of the voting process are being met with lawsuits from political parties and voting rights advocates.

In Ohio, voting rights groups are suing the state for refusing to reopen the voter registration window for the state primary, now scheduled for June 2. Under Ohio law, voters can register up to 30 days before an election. Advocates say the other states with postponed primaries are allowing voter registration ahead of rescheduled elections.

In Wisconsin, the Democratic Party has sued to force the state to make it easier to register to vote and request an absentee ballot.

They also have asked for mailed ballots to count if they are postmarked by Election Day and received within 10 days after voting.

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AVISTA

S. Korea claims North fires pair of ballistic short-range missiles

The Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korea fired two ballistic short-range missiles toward the East Sea on Saturday, the South Korean military's Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) confirmed in Seoul.

The JCS said that two presumed short-range ballistic missiles flew over the country Saturday after their successive launch in the west of North Korea and then plunged into the water off its eastern coast.

They flew about 250 miles at an altitude of up to 30 miles, according to the JCS.

Pyongyang previously launched projectiles March 2 and 9.

The launches mark a return to missile testing for North Korea after a three-month pause.

South Korea's military leadership called the actions "very inappropriate" and urged North Korea to stop its military actions "immediately."

The rogue nuclear nation is banned from testing ballistic missiles by UN resolutions, and has been slapped with tough international sanctions to deter it from continuing to develop rockets that could be equipped with nuclear warheads.

Global concerns over North

Korea intensified late in 2019 after Pyongyang imposed a year-end deadline for the United States to offer sanctions relief and threatened to send a "Christmas gift," widely interpreted to mean a weapons test, if their demands were not met.

North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un said the world would see a "new strategic weapon" from the country in the near future, in a message Jan. 1.

The Trump administration is demanding that North Korea give up all its nuclear weapons and production facilities in exchange for the lifting of crippling sanctions.

Trump famously said in 2018 that he and Kim "fell in love" and that the North Korean letter wrote him "beautiful letters."

But after two high-profile one-on-one summits and a meeting last year on the Demilitarized Zone, relations have soured with the nuclear talks near-frozen and Pyongyang once again referring to Trump as a "dotard," among other insults.

Relations between North and South Korea which had warmed significantly in the run-up to the two summits between Trump and Kim, have also cooled again recently.

NATION

Economic deal moves closer to reality

JONATHAN LEMIRE,
LISA MASCARO
AND ANDREW TAYLOR
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Top-level negotiations between Congress and the White House pushed toward resolution late Saturday on a ballooning \$1 trillion-plus economic rescue package, as President Donald Trump urged a deal to steady a nation shuttered by the coronavirus pandemic.

With a population on edge and financial markets teetering, all sides indicated a deal is within reach. At issue is how best to keep paychecks flowing for millions of workers abruptly sidelined by the crisis.

Talks also narrowed on a so-called Marshall Plan for hospitals as well as industry loans to airlines and others all but grounded by the virus outbreak and national shutdown. The post-World War II Marshall Plan helped to rebuild Western Europe.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell announced late Saturday all sides were “very close” to a bipartisan resolution.

McConnell instructed committee chairmen to assemble draft legislation. Officials put the price tag at nearly \$1.4 trillion and said that with other measures from the Federal Reserve it could



ANDREW HARNIK/AP

From left, Labor Secretary Eugene Scalia, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, Senate Minority Leader Sen. Chuck Schumer, and White House chief economic adviser Larry Kudlow attend a meeting to discuss the coronavirus relief bill on Capitol Hill on Friday in Washington.

pump \$2 trillion into the U.S. economy.

“We are poised to deliver the significant relief that Americans need with the speed that this crisis demands,” McConnell said.

Talks will resume Sunday morning when the top four congressional leaders of both parties are set to confer privately at the Capitol with Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin in hopes of striking a final accord.

A spokesman for Senate

Democratic leader Chuck Schumer said there is “not yet an agreement.” Spokesman Justin Goodman said Democrats look forward to reading the draft and further negotiations.

“Everybody’s working hard and they want to get to a solution that’s the right solution, I think we’re very close,” Trump said at Saturday’s briefing, striking a confident tone about the nation’s ability to defeat the pandemic soon.

On Capitol Hill, the Senate convened the rare weekend session as negotiators raced to complete the package. The Senate’s goal is to hold an initial vote Sunday and win Senate passage on Monday.

The urgency to act is mounting, as jobless claims skyrocket, businesses shutter and the financial markets are set to re-open Monday eager for signs that Washington can soften the blow of the healthcare crisis and what experts say is a

looming recession.

Trump has largely stayed out of the details, but said Saturday that he would be lobbying the lead negotiators.

On one topic, Trump appears to be agreeing with Democrats as Washington tries to steer clear of the politically toxic bailouts from the last economic crises.

Trump expressed a clear distaste for any industry, including the airlines, that would use federal assistance to buy

back its own stock in an effort to increase profits. Banning stock buy-backs is one of Democrats’ top business priorities in the emerging package.

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and other top White House officials were on Capitol Hill for a second day of non-stop negotiations. But no announcement was expected.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who has been in talks with Mnuchin, returned to Washington on Saturday and was scheduled to join Sunday’s meeting.

Negotiations are focused on providing direct relief to Americans, with one-time checks of \$1,200, as well as ongoing payroll support and enhanced unemployment benefits for the newly out of work.

Talks are also focused on loans to airlines and other industries blindsided by the crisis, as well as possible aid to the states and billions for hospitals and healthcare providers on the front lines of the outbreak.

The emerging package builds on a GOP proposal but Democrats push for add-ons, including food security aid, small business loans and other measures for workers.

“We’re making very good progress,” Schumer said late Saturday.

N Korea says Trump sent letter to Kim, offers cooperation

HYUNG-JIN KIM
The Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — President Donald Trump sent a personal letter to North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, seeking to maintain good relations and offering cooperation in fighting the viral pandemic, Kim’s sister said Sunday.

The latest correspondence came as Kim observed the firing of tactical guided weapons over the weekend, drawing criticism from South Korea, as the nuclear talks remain deadlocked.

In a statement carried by the Korean Central News Agency, Kim’s sister and senior ruling party official, Kim Yo Jong, praised Trump for sending the letter at a time when “big difficulties and challenges lie ahead in the way of developing ties” between the countries.

In the letter, she said Trump explained his plan to “propel the relations between the two countries ... and expressed his intent to render cooperation in the anti-epidemic work” in an apparent reference to the global coronavirus outbreak.

North Korea has repeatedly said there hasn’t been a single case of the coronavirus on its soil. Some foreign experts question that claim and say an outbreak in the North could cause a humanitarian disaster because of its poor medical infrastructure.

There was no immediate comment from the White House.

Kim Yo Jong said Trump’s letter is “a good example showing the special and firm personal relations” between the North Korean and U.S.

leaders. But she said it’s not a good idea to “make hasty conclusion or be optimistic about” the prospect for bilateral relations.

“In my personal opinion, I think that the bilateral relations and dialogue for them would be thinkable only when the equilibrium is kept dynamically and morally and justice ensured between the two countries,” she said. “Even at this moment we are working hard to develop and defend ourselves on our own under the cruel environment which the U.S. is keen to ‘provide.’”

Kim and Trump have met three times and exchanged letters and envoys on many occasions since 2018, when they launched talks on the fate of Kim’s advancing nuclear arsenal. The two leaders have avoided harsh language against each other and Trump once said he and Kim “fell in love.”

But their diplomacy has largely come to a standstill since the breakdown of their second summit in Vietnam in February 2019, when Trump rejected Kim’s demands for broad sanctions relief in return for a partial disarmament step.

Kim pressed Trump to come up with new

proposals to salvage the negotiations by the end of last year. Kim later vowed to bolster his nuclear deterrent, unveil “a new strategic weapon” and warned he would no longer be bound by a major weapons test moratorium.

In recent weeks, North Korea has fired a slew of artillery and other rockets into the sea in what experts say is an attempt to improve its military capabilities. The weapons were all short range and did not pose a direct threat to the U.S. mainland. A resumption of long-range or nuclear weapons tests by Kim would likely completely scuttle diplomacy with Trump, experts say.

KCNA said Kim watched the test firing of tactical guided weapons on Saturday with Kim Yo Jong and other top officials. South Korea’s military called the demonstration “very inappropriate” at a time when the world is struggling with the coronavirus pandemic.

South Korea’s military said Saturday it detected two presumed short-range ballistic missiles that flew from a site in western North Korea across the country and landed in the waters off the east coast.

Avista Customer Notice

Recently, Avista requested an increase in natural gas rates for our customers in Oregon. We know you care about your energy costs, so we think it’s important to share this news with you.

On March 16, 2020, Avista filed a General Rate Case (GRC) request with the Public Utility Commission of Oregon (PUC) asking for an overall increase of 6.8 percent in natural gas billed revenue. If this increase is approved, Avista’s natural gas revenues would increase by approximately \$6.8 million. The GRC is based on a proposed rate of return of 7.50 percent with a common equity ratio of 50 percent and a 9.9 percent return on equity. The Company would expect a final decision from the PUC by January 15, 2021.

The primary driver of the Company’s request is continued investment in our natural gas projects that support the safe, reliable delivery of natural gas to our customers. This includes upgrades and maintenance of natural gas pipe and distribution equipment as well as other information technology upgrades. Major capital investments included in the filing are:

- The continuation of a major project to replace portions of natural gas distribution pipe. The project is replacing hundreds of miles of natural gas pipeline that was installed prior to 1987.
- Replacement and expansion of natural gas pipe to improve the operation of the natural gas system and accommodate growth, development, and construction projects.
- Implementation and upgrades of technology systems that make it easier for customers to do business with Avista and that allow employees to perform their jobs and serve customers in a safe, reliable and efficient manner.

We understand that this requested increase can be challenging. We continue our focus on maximizing efficiencies throughout the company and minimizing costs where possible.

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