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PANDEMIC

Hospitalizations are plummeting

By Don Thompson
The Associated Press

SACRAMENTO » Coronavirus infections and hospitalizations in California are plummeting weeks after it appeared some hospitals were so overwhelmed they might have to start rationing care, and the state's top health official said Tuesday if the trends continue by early March the number of hospital patients will fall by half.

When cases were surging at an unprecedented rate in early December state officials used plunging intensive care unit capacities to issue stay-home orders for most of California. The situation was the most dire in Southern California and the San Joaquin Valley regions, which exhausted all their regular ICU beds and stayed at 0% capacity through January.

But the capacity now has reached 9% in Southern California and 11% in the San Joaquin Valley and in four weeks the state projects the rates

will increase to 44% and 35%, respectively. The other three regions of the state are in even better shape.

All stay-home orders have been lifted, though all but four rural counties continue to be in the strictest of four tiers for reopening.

In just over three weeks, the number of statewide ICU patients has fallen from a record high of just under 4,900 to about 3,800, while overall hospitalizations have dropped by a third. State models project that at this rate, the number of hospitalizations will fall from about 14,000 to around 6,500 a month from now.

In the last week, the state's rate of positive tests has dropped to 6.4%, which Health and Human Services Secretary Dr. Mark Ghaly termed another "positive sign about the trajectory of transmission across the state."

The number of new virus cases reported Tuesday was just over 12,000, the lowest daily figure since November. In early January, daily

counts routinely were above 40,000. The record pace of deaths may also be starting to fall. After averaging 544 per day last week, the last three daily counts have averaged 371. The state's total is now above 41,000, the second highest level in the country after New York.

Ghaly urged residents to continue their vigilance and cautioned that another surge is possible if people gather irresponsibly for Super Bowl celebrations or if mutations of the virus become prevalent.

VACAVILLE

A HIKE AFTER THE STORM



JOEL ROSENBAUM — THE REPORTER

A couple hikes the loop around the reservoir at Lagoon Valley Park Tuesday in Vacaville. Rainfall totals of about one-tenth of an inch were reported at the Ulatis Cultural Center following the early morning storm. The National Weather Service is predicting a 30 percent chance of showers after 10 a.m. today under mostly sunny skies and temperatures near 55.

PANDEMIC

Biden boosting vaccine allotments

By Ricardo Alonso-Zaldivar and Zeke Miller
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON » President Joe Biden's administration announced Tuesday that it is moving to expand access to COVID-19 vaccines, freeing up more doses for states and beginning to distribute them to retail pharmacies next week. The push comes amid new urgency to speed vaccinations to prevent the spread of potentially more serious strains of the virus that has killed more than 445,000 Americans.

Starting next week, 1 million doses will be distributed to some 6,500 pharmacies across the country, the White House said. The administration is also boosting by 500,000 the weekly allocation of vaccines sent directly to states and territories for the coming weeks, up to 10.5 million. It is allowing state and local govern-

VACCINE » PAGE 2

POLITICS

Biden signs immigration orders as Congress awaits more

By Elliot Spagat and Josh Boak
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON » President Joe Biden on Tuesday signed a second spate of orders to undo his predecessor's immigration policies, demonstrating the powers of the White House and its limitations without support from Congress.

His orders on family separation, border security and legal immigration bring to nine the number of executive actions on immigration during his first two weeks in office. With proposed legislation to give legal status and a path to citizenship to all of the estimated 11 million people in the country who don't have it, Biden has quickly taken aim at many of former President Donald Trump's sweeping changes to deter immigration, both legal and illegal, and established a vi-

sion that is likely to far outlast his tenure if he's able to muster enough support in a deeply divided Congress.

The latest batch of orders are light on immediate changes, though White House spokeswoman Jen Psaki said Biden will have more to share in the future and shifts will take time.

"I'm not making new law. I'm eliminating bad policy," Biden said during a signing ceremony without taking questions.

Alejandro Mayorkas, whose nomination as Homeland Security secretary was confirmed Tuesday by the Senate, will lead a task force on family separation, focused largely on reuniting parents and children who remain apart. It is unclear exactly how many, but about 5,500 children have been identified in court documents as having been separated during Trump's presidency, including about



MEG KINNARD — THE ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE

Joe Biden talks with a protester objecting to his stance on deportations during a town hall at Lander University in Greenwood, S.C.

600 whose parents have yet to be found by a court-appointed committee.

The American Civil Liberties Union, which sued to reunite families, has asked the administration for legal status

in the United States for families that have been separated, as well as financial compensation for those families and attorneys at government expense. ACLU attorney Lee Gelernt said

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SOLANO

Community College hosting Black History Month events

By Nick Sestanovich
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For decades, Solano Community College has dedicated February to Black History Month with a series of events and discussions centered around the issues Black people have faced and continued to face.

Past events have all been on campus and included film screenings, panel discussions and speeches from Tuskegee Airman and icons like Olympic runner Tommie Smith, whose raised fist during the national anthem at the 1968 summer games has become one of the defining images of the Civil Rights era.

However, due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, this year's slate of events will not be held in person but rather presented virtually over Zoom. Shirley Lewis,

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COVID-19 UPDATE

Solano has 28,290 confirmed cases, 22% ICU Beds Available, 127 deaths, as of Feb 2.

- Vacaville, 7,482; Benicia, 805;
- Fairfield, 7,755; Rio Vista, 268;
- Dixon, 1,679; Vallejo, 8,305;
- Suisun City, 1,910; unincorporated Solano, 86

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WHAT'S HAPPENING

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