

JOB LOSSES SOAR; U.S. VIRUS CASES TOP WORLD



VICTOR J. BLUE FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Since the coronavirus descended on Brooklyn Hospital Center three weeks ago, the staff has handled over 800 potential cases.

Under Trump, Unfilled Posts Hinder Action

By JENNIFER STEINHAUER and ZOLAN KANNO-YOUNGS

WASHINGTON — Of the 75 senior positions at the Department of Homeland Security, 20 are either vacant or filled by acting officials, including Chad F. Wolf, the acting secretary who recently was unable to tell a Senate committee how many respirators and protective face masks were available in the United States.

The National Park Service, which like many federal agencies is full of vacancies in key posts, tried this week to fill the job of a director for the national capital region after hordes of visitors flocked to see the cherry blossoms near the National Mall, creating a potential public health hazard as the coronavirus continues to spread.

At the Department of Veterans Affairs, workers are scrambling to order medical supplies on Amazon after its leaders, lacking experience in disaster responses, failed to prepare for the onslaught of patients at its medical centers.

Ever since President Trump came into office, a record high turnover and unfilled jobs have emptied offices across wide sections of the federal bureaucracy. Now, current and former administration officials and disaster experts say the coronavirus has exposed those failings as never before.

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Online Class With No Way To Get There

By NIKITA STEWART

Allia Phillips was excited about picking up an iPad from her school in Harlem last week. She did not want to miss any classes and hoped to land on the fourth-grade honor roll again.

On Monday, the first day that New York City public schools began remote learning, the 10-year-old placed her iPad on a tray she set up over her pillow on a twin bed in a studio that she shares with her mother and grandmother inside a homeless shelter on the Upper West Side.

And then, Allia saw nothing. “I went downstairs to find out that they don’t have any internet,” said Kasha Phillips-Lewis, Allia’s mother. “You’re screwing up my daughter’s education. You want to screw me up? Fine. But not my daughter’s education.”

The Department of Education, which runs the largest school system in the country with more than 1.1 million students, began attempting to teach all students through remote learning this week because schools were closed to slow the spread of the coronavirus.

Shuttering the vast system, which includes 1,800 schools, was a serious challenge for the city, and the large-scale, indefinite school closures are uncharted territory, altering the lives and routines of millions of students.

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Courage at a Brooklyn Hospital, At the Front of an Invisible War

By SHERI FINK

It was not even 9 in the morning and Dr. Sylvie de Souza’s green N95 mask, which was supposed to form a seal against her face, was already askew.

In freezing rain on Monday, she trudged in clogs between the emergency department she chairs at the Brooklyn Hospital Center and a tent outside, keeping a sharp eye on the trainee doctors, nurses and other staff members who would screen nearly 100 walk-in patients for the coronavirus that day.

Inside her E.R., more than a dozen people showing signs of infection waited for evaluation in an area used just a few weeks ago for stitches and casts. Another dozen

With Supplies Waning, Workers Soldier On

lay on gurneys arranged one in front of the next, like a New York City car park. One man on a ventilator was waiting for space in the intensive care unit.

Minutes before paramedics wheeled in a heart attack patient, Dr. de Souza pointed to beds reserved for serious emergencies, separated by a newly constructed wall from the suspected virus cases. “This is our safe area,” she told a reporter. Then she corrected herself: “This is thought to be safe.” There was really no way

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No Crowd, but I’ll Take You Out to the Ballgame

By DAN BARRY

Professional baseball greeted a new season this afternoon with an Opening Day game for the ages, an extra-inning masterpiece that vividly unfolded on the sun-dappled field of the imagination. The crack of the bat could almost be heard, the blur of white almost seen, the communal joy nearly felt.

A Fan Writes a Fantasy for Opening Day

From the moment the first batter tipped his helmet — and a bird flew out — to the walk-off home run by a faltering pinch-hitter, this 11-inning affair redefined what constitutes a perfect game. No one cared about the outcome; the distraction was reward enough. Don’t misunderstand: This

New Data Shows Staggering Toll of Outbreak

This article is by Ben Casselman, Patricia Cohen and Tiffany Hsu.

More than three million people filed for unemployment benefits last week, sending a collective shudder throughout the economy that is unlike anything Americans have experienced.

The alarming numbers, in a report released by the Labor Department on Thursday, provide some of the first hard data on the economic toll of the coronavirus pandemic, which has shut down whole swaths of American life faster than government statistics can keep track.

Just three weeks ago, barely 200,000 people applied for jobless benefits, a historically low number. In the half-century that the government has tracked applications, the worst week ever, with 695,000 so-called initial claims, had been in 1982.

Thursday’s figure of nearly 3.3 million set a grim record. “A large part of the economy just collapsed,” said Ben Herzon, executive director of IHS Markit, a business data and analytics firm.

The numbers provided only the first hint of the economic cataclysm in progress. Even comparatively optimistic forecasters expect millions more lost jobs, and with them foreclosures, evictions and bankruptcies. Thousands of businesses have closed in response to the pandemic, and many will never reopen. Some economists say the decline in gross domestic product this year could rival the worst years of the Great Depression.

And there was fresh evidence on Thursday of the relentless course of the virus itself. Cases in the United States now exceed 80,000, the most of any nation, even China and Italy, according to a New York Times database. More than 1,000 deaths across the country have been linked to the virus.

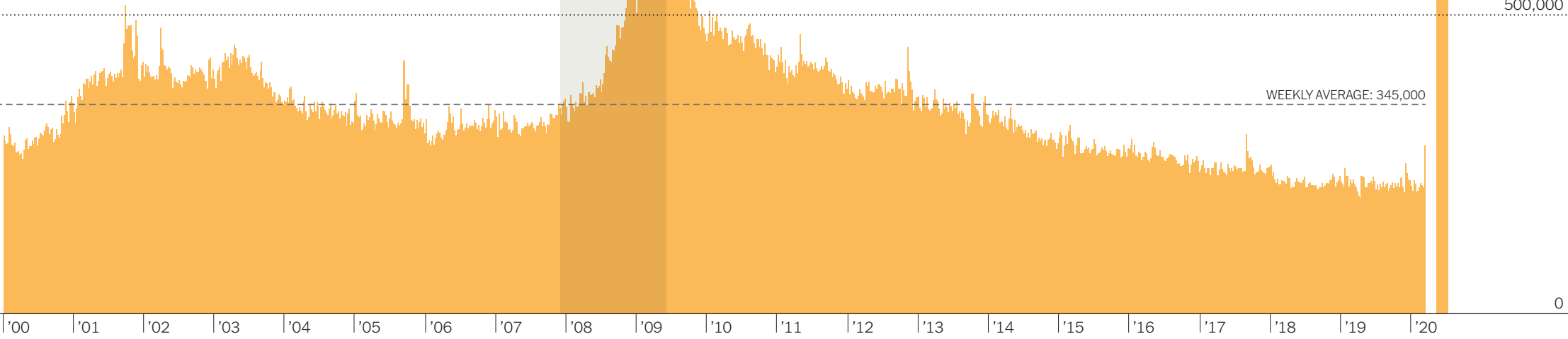
At least 160 million people nationwide have been infected.

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Labeling Regions by Risk

President Trump told governors he planned to classify counties according to the danger of coronavirus infection. Page A11.

Weekly unemployment claims



Note: Official figures are seasonally adjusted. Source: Department of Labor

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Armed With Sewing Machines

With hospitals desperate for masks, people are pulling out their sewing machines to fill the void. PAGE B4

A Gusher Can’t Be Contained

A chaotic mismatch between supply and demand for oil means the world is running out of places to store it. PAGE B9



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Maduro Is Indicted in U.S.

Federal prosecutors accused the Venezuelan president, whom the U.S. no longer recognizes, of participating in a narco-terrorism conspiracy. PAGE A20

Netanyahu Rival Relents

The Israeli prime minister was set to maintain power after his rival reversed course, citing the pandemic. PAGE A19

Brushing Aside a Slaughter

Russia and China, which often revel in grudges against other countries, are employing selective memory to address a massacre that occurred on their border in 1900. PAGE A18

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New Focus on Health System

The pandemic gives added urgency to a central issue that was already a main talking point for Joseph R. Biden Jr. and other Democrats. PAGE A21

Starting Over on Foster Care

A lawsuit led New Mexico to remake its failing system into one advocates hope will serve as a national model. PAGE A22

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Slow to Embrace a Delay

Athletes question why U.S. Olympic leaders took so long to join calls to postpone the Tokyo Games. PAGE B11

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For Pint-Size Paleontologists

Like dinosaurs? Have crayons? Take a peek at two pages reprinted from The New York Times for Kids. PAGE C8

It’s Virtually Perfect

Donald Judd’s installation, below, at the Gagosian Gallery is impressive, in person or, for now, online. PAGE C13



OBITUARIES A24-25

Chronicler of U.S. History

Richard Reeves’s books on Nixon, Clinton and others could be as unsparing as his column. He was 83. PAGE A24

Globetrotters’ Dean of Dribble

Fred “Curly” Neal dazzled fans with his ball-handling wizardry in more than 6,000 games. He was 77. PAGE A25

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Paul Krugman

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