VOA NEWS

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This is VOA news. Reporting by remote, I'm David Byrd.

Seven police officers involved in the suffocation death of a Black man, Daniel Prude, last spring in Rochester, New York, were suspended Thursday by the city's mayor who said she was misled for months about the circumstances of the fatal encounter.

Rochester Mayor Lovely Warren announced the suspensions at a news conference amid criticism that the city kept quiet about Prude's death for months.

"Mr. Daniel Prude was failed by our police department, our mental health care system, our society and he was failed by me."

The 41-year-old Prude died when he was taken off life support March 30. That was seven days after officers who encountered him running naked through the street put a hood over his head to stop him from spitting, then held him down for about two minutes until he stopped breathing.

Former Vice President and Democratic Party nominee Joe Biden met with the family of Jacob Blake, a Black man shot by a white police officer in Kenosha, Wisconsin. AP's Sagar Meghani reports.

In Kenosha, Wisconsin, which is still reeling after protests over Jacob Blake's shooting, Biden said the country is finally getting ready for change.

"This is not who we are."

Biden says he spoke on the phone with Blake who is hospitalized and met with his family. Later telling a community meeting, he wants to find common ground contrasting his visit with that of President Trump, who was in Kenosha two days ago and did not mention Blake.

Biden heard from activist Porsche Bennett, who says Black people have been shown for years they just don't matter.

"I see it. I live it."

Biden says he'll fight for change

"There's certain things worth losing over and this is something worth losing over if you have to - but we're not going to lose."

Sagar Meghani, Washington.

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Seventy-six wealthy nations are now committed to joining a global COVID-19 vaccine allocation plan co-led by the World Health Organization that aims to buy and fairly distribute the shots. Reuters Joe Davies reports.

The plan is called COVAX and is designed to discourage national governments from hoarding vaccines and to focus first on vaccinating the most high-risk people in every country.

Its backers say it should lead to lower vaccine costs for everyone and a swifter end to the pandemic.

Financing comes out of national budgets and 92 poorer nations are contributing voluntary donations.

Participating wealthy countries are also free to procure vaccines through bilateral deals and other plans.

The United States has said this week that it would not join COVAX due to the Trump administration's objection to the involvement of the World Health Organization. It's also said the U.S. won't be paying some of the $80 million it owes the World Health Organization as it plans to leave the agency next year.

Instead, it'll direct the money to help pay Washington's U.N. membership bill in New York.

That's Reuters Joe Davies.

Congressional aides report a deal has been reached between Democrats and Congress and the White House on moving forward with a bill to avert a U.S. government shutdown at the end of the month. AP's Jackie Quinn reports.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and the Trump administration have agreed to keep a stopgap government funding bill free of controversy or conflict. That's according to aides who demanded anonymity who were briefed on the conversation between Pelosi and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin.

Both sides are trying to keep any possibility of a government shutdown off the table despite ongoing battles over a virus relief package and other spending priorities.

The goal is to avert a shutdown at the end of September, which would bring unwanted tensions during the run-up to the November election.

Jackie Quinn, Washington.

Work on a major motion picture has been suspended because of the coronavirus. AP's Oscar Wells Gabriel has the story.

The latest Batman movie was one of the first to resume filming in the UK during the ongoing coronavirus crisis and just like that, production has now been stopped after someone working on the movie tested positive for COVID-19.

A representative for Warner Brothers says the person infected is currently in isolation. Production of the Batman, starring Robert Pattinson, had been on hold for nearly six months because of the pandemic which shut down Hollywood movie and TV productions both here in the U.S. and elsewhere.

I'm Oscar Wells Gabriel.

Wall Street's main indexes closed sharply lower Thursday marking their deepest one-day dives in months. The Dow Jones Industrials dropped more than two and three quarters percent while the S&P lost more than three and a half percent. The NASDAQ fell almost five percent.

Reporting by remote, I'm David Byrd, VOA news.