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Southern DAILY

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U.S. postal chaos prompts Democrats to reassess mail-ballot plan



FILE PHOTO: An individual deposits letters into a U.S. Postal Service (USPS) collection mailbox in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, U.S., August 14, 2020. REUTERS/Rachel Wisniewski

(Reuters) - Turmoil at the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) is causing some Democrats and local election officials to rethink their vote-by-mail strategies for November's presidential election, shifting emphasis to drop boxes and early voting that bypass the post office.

The 2020 contest promises to be the nation's largest test of voting by mail. But U.S. President Donald Trump's relentless, unsubstantiated attacks on mail balloting, along with cost-cutting that has delayed mail service nationwide, have sown worry and confusion among many voters.

Democratic officials who just weeks ago were touting their dominance in mail balloting during a recent rash of primaries are now cautioning supporters of presidential challenger Joe Biden to be wary. Operatives in battleground states, including Pennsylvania, are particularly concerned about ballots arriving too late to count for the Nov. 3 election.

"We are considering telling voters that if they haven't mailed out their complete ballot by Oct. 15, don't bother. Instead, vote in person or drop off the ballot" at an elections office, said Joe Foster, the chairman of the Democratic Party in Montgomery County, the most populous of Philadelphia's suburban counties. "We want to make sure every vote counts."

Other local Democratic leaders, from states like Florida and North Carolina, told Reuters they also are weighing urging voters to submit mail ballots weeks ahead of the election or else vote in person.

On Tuesday, Postmaster General Louis DeJoy announced he was suspending cost-cutting measures he had put in place in recent weeks that had led to widespread service disruptions. Those changes included limits on employee overtime, orders for trucks to depart on schedule even if

there was mail still to be loaded, and the removal of some mail sorting machines.

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Bipartisan majority of Americans want more money for Postal Service: Reuters/Ipsos Poll

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"The Postal Service is ready today to handle whatever volume of election mail it receives this fall," DeJoy said in a statement. He also promised to deploy "standby resources" beginning Oct. 1 to satisfy any unforeseen demand.

But some Democrats said the damage is already done. Many don't trust DeJoy - who was a major Trump campaign donor before becoming postal chief - to restore service at the independent government agency amid a presidential race that polls say Biden is leading.

"Return the mailboxes you removed," Rep. David Cicilline of Rhode Island said on Twitter. "Return the sorting machines you took out. Restore the regular hours of post offices you cut short. Return postal vehicles you took. The list goes on."

A USPS spokesman declined to comment. DeJoy is expected to provide more detail on his plans in testimony before the Senate on Friday and the House of Representatives on Monday.

White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows said Tuesday that Trump never told the Postal Service to change its operations.

Democrats asked for \$25 billion to shore up the balance sheet of the USPS in a massive virus aid package that passed the House of Representatives in May. Republicans have balked at that figure, and Trump last week said he opposed that funding because it might be used to encourage mail voting. But administration officials in recent days have said they are open

to additional funding as public outrage over the USPS drama has grown.

Local Democratic officials, operatives and campaign workers said they are not waiting for a Washington solution.

In the competitive state of Michigan, Democratic voter outreach volunteer Karen McJimpson, 64, is phoning voters to encourage them to hand-deliver their absentee ballots directly to specified drop boxes or elections offices in light of concerns about mail delivery. She said Tuesday's news about restored service gave her no comfort. "I don't trust it," said McJimpson, who volunteers with a nonprofit called Michigan United. "There has been too much noise around this, and someone is clearly pulling the strings. We are going to proceed as planned: drop the ballots off."

Upheaval at the USPS has reshuffled some Democrats' plans for other types of election mail as well.

Brad Crone, a Democratic strategist in North Carolina, plans to send up to two million mailers between now and Election Day supporting various state and congressional candidates. The campaign flyers are mailed directly from his printer, who last week sent him a notice: If Crone wants to mail anything beyond Oct. 19, he must sign a waiver acknowledging that it might not get there before Election Day. Crone said he will now stop his mailings by Oct. 4, three weeks earlier than he had originally planned. "It's alarming," Crone said. "Americans are witnessing major system breakdowns, whether it's the postal system, COVID testing or their local schools. The average voter is seeing this and is just floored."

DROP BOX BATTLE

Mail voting has grown steadily since the turn of the century. In the 2016 presidential election, mail ballots accounted for 23.6% of all ballots cast, up from 19.2% in 2008, according to the U.S. Election Assistance Commission.

HOUSTON 休斯顿

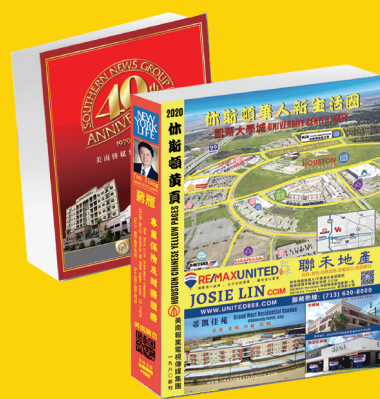
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CORONAVIRUS DIARY

A Political Virus In The Coronavirus Pandemic

White House health advisor Dr. Anthony Fauci said that his family now requires continued security in the face of harassment and death threats from people who are angry over his guidance on the coronavirus pandemic.

According to medical experts, by the next month of September, more than 200,000 people will lose their lives. This is a horrible number for all of us.

After the coronavirus attacked, we have witnessed so many political dramas in the nation' s capital. Politicians have been using the virus to take advantage of their political future. They don' t

agree on many of the suggestions from medical experts to control the virus because they want to keep the businesses open.

Today if you look at the most serious areas in big cities like New York, Los Angeles and Houston, because most of the poor people living in urban areas are mostly African and Latino working class groups, they are less fortunate compared with other people living away and out of the city areas.

In Washington, Democrats and Republicans have very different views on how to manage the virus. Most of the



politicians talking on television shows do not understand what is going on with the local problems because they really don't care about it. The only thing they want is to be re-elected for the next term.

Two hundred thousand lives that will be lost represents so many families — their parents, brothers, sisters and friends. We are now really in a national crisis.



Publisher Southern Daily Wea H. Lee

Stay Home!

BUSINESS

Wear Mask!

Texas Coronavirus Death Toll Now Over 10,000



A volunteer loads school supplies and supplies to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, including masks and hand sanitizer, into a car at Mendez Middle School in Southeast Austin on Aug. 8. [Sergio Flores for STATESMAN]

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

Texas surpassed 10,000 coronavirus deaths Monday, a staggering figure health experts say likely undercounts the actual toll of the virus in the Lone Star state. Only New York, New Jersey and California rank above Texas in total COVID-19 deaths.

“It’s a tough milestone, but I’m glad to see the state making progress in many areas,” Dr. Mark McClellan, one of Gov. Greg Abbott’s medical advisers on reopening the state’s economy, told the American-Statesman on Monday.

“There’s still a long way to go, though.”

He added that state officials should increase access to COVID-19 testing and work to further decrease new cases to help health care professionals manage the virus. The Texas Department of State Health Services reported 51 new COVID-19 fatalities Monday, bringing the death toll of the virus to 10,034. The latest deaths likely occurred over the past week or more because of a new method to collect death data.

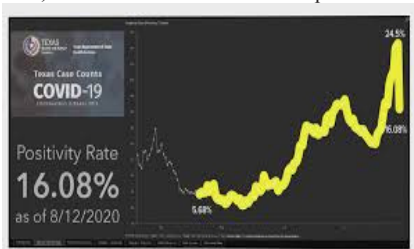
The state’s largest counties — Harris, Bexar and Dallas — are the hardest hit, with two smaller Rio Grande Valley counties following closely behind. The health agency reported 809 COVID-19 deaths for Hidalgo County and 565 deaths for Cameron County.

The South Texas area became a hot spot for the coronavirus last month. Hospitals were

overwhelmed with patients, prompting local leaders to issue stay-at-home orders. Abbott declined to allow the local officials to enforce the orders, however, instead urging them to enforce statewide orders on masks, restaurant occupancy limits and outdoor gatherings.

"I'm still very concerned about the significant outbreaks in some parts of the state, especially in the Rio Grande Valley," McClellan said.

Toll likely higher When comparing coronavirus fatalities by population, Texas ranks roughly 22nd among U.S. states and territories, with 35 deaths per 100,000 residents, according to data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. McClellan said the Texas death rate has declined since the beginning of the pandemic, likely because those testing positive have skewed younger and more healthy during the summer compared to the spring. At the same time, COVID-19 treatments have improved.



Texas coronavirus positivity rate.

“On the other hand, it’s hard for hospitals and health care systems to maintain this high level of intensity treatment for a long period,” he said. “It’s good that the death rate is (lower), but we need to make more progress on getting cases down to keep the deaths from continuing to rise.”

In Texas and across the country, health experts say that the total number of COVID-19 deaths is likely higher than reported figures show. A New York Times analysis of CDC data found that the actual number of COVID-19 deaths nationally has surpassed 200,000, higher than health officials have reported. A similar study published by JAMA Internal Medicine came to the same conclusion. The death toll in Texas quickly increased after state health officials changed their methodology for counting COVID-19 deaths, using death certificates instead of reports from the local health officials.

Promising signs

There are some promising signs that the disease is slowing in Texas, which Gov. Greg Abbott has attributed to his mask order and more residents following social distancing guidelines. Hospitalizations and new cases have trended downward in recent weeks. On Monday, state health officials reported 6,200 coronavirus patients in Texas hospitals, the fewest since the end of June. And the health agency reported 2,713 new cases Monday. Although that number often is lower on Mondays, the seven-day average of new cases has declined since its peak in mid-July. Democrats criticized Abbott on Monday, blaming the governor for the rising death toll.

“Under Abbott’s failed leadership, mismanagement of the pandemic, hoarding federal aid, and misinformation, the state has seen its highest death toll related to a disaster, which continues to climb,” Abhi Rahman, a spokesman for the Texas Democratic party, said in a statement. A spokesman for Abbott did not return a request for comment Monday. (Courtesy statesman.com)

Related

Abbott: Texas health officials investigating high coronavirus positivity rate



Gov. Greg Abbott puts on a mask during a news conference in Dallas on Aug. 6. Abbott on Thursday urged Texans not to let their guard down despite “COVID fatigue,” noting that the state saw a spike in cases after Memorial Day weekend. [Photo/LM Otero/The Associated Press]

Gov. Greg Abbott said state health officials are investigating why the percentage of Texans testing positive for COVID-19 has increased so much in recent weeks. In a Lubbock news conference Thursday, Abbott noted that COVID-19 testing has decreased in the state while the positivity rate of the virus has increased. The governor said some of the testing decline can be attributed to temporary “surge testing” in certain hard-hit regions, nursing homes, prisons and other facilities, which increased statewide testing numbers in July. The seven-day average positivity rate had continued to climb since July 31, when the percentage of those testing positive hovered around 12%. The number surpassed 20% for the first time on Aug. 8. “We are working on strategies as we speak that will be easy pathways to increase more people being tested,” he said, adding that recent surge testing in Harris County also will increase testing numbers. “You can expect those test numbers to go up in the coming days.” Hours later, state health officials reported an increase in tests and that the rolling seven-day positivity rate dropped from 24.5% to 16% Wednesday, the latest data available from the Texas Department of State Health Services. But Abbott has set as a goal a positivity rate below 10%; the World Health Organization advised governments that before allowing businesses to reopen, the number should remain at 5% or lower for at least 14 days. A high positivity rate can indicate that a state is only testing the sickest people and not casting a wide enough net to know where the virus is spreading, according to the Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource



Center.

Meanwhile, the Department of State Health Services reported declines in COVID-19 hospitalizations and new cases Thursday. The health agency said 6,879 patients were in Texas hospitals, the lowest number in more than a month, and announced 6,755 new coronavirus cases.

The death toll of the virus has continued to rise. The state health agency reported 255 new deaths Thursday, although they occurred over the past week or more, as the state is now relying on death certificates instead of local health reports to tally deaths. The latest increase brings the virus death toll to 9,289 in Texas. When asked in Lubbock about reopening businesses, especially bars, Abbott said future decisions would be based on data. “We do need to see the positivity rate go back below 10% for a sustained period of time,” he said. “We do need to see more hospital rooms come available.”

He urged Texans not to let their guard down despite “COVID fatigue,” noting that the state saw a spike in cases after Memorial Day weekend. “It’s so important for people to not let their guard down during the Labor Day holiday like they did during Memorial Day,” he said. “There are lines open. There are tests available,” he said.

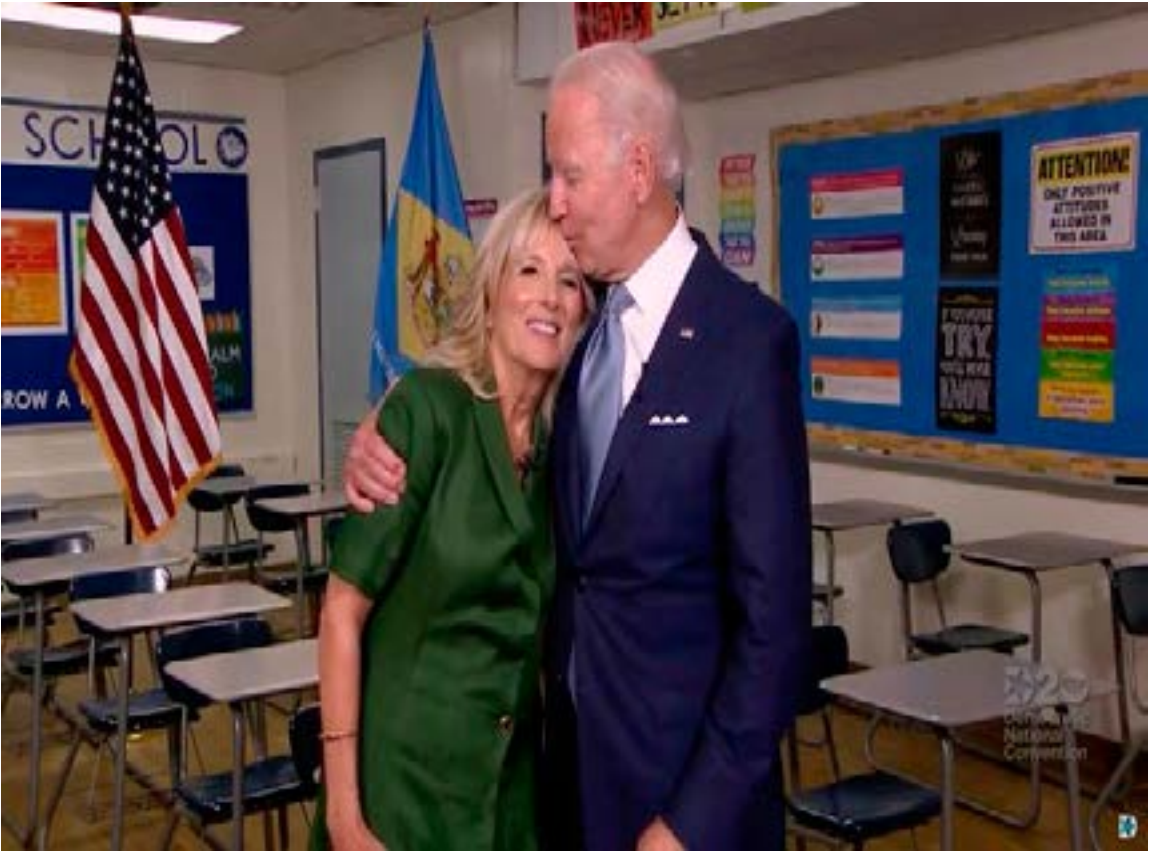
Abbott later met with local officials in El Paso. (Courtney statesman.com)



Editor's Choice



A child plays in a fountain in Washington Square Park as a pigeon flies past in Manhattan. REUTERS/Carlo Allegri



U.S. Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden kisses his wife Jill Biden at Brandywine High School, where she taught English from 1991 to 1993, during the virtual 2020 Democratic National Convention. 2020 Democratic National Convention/Pool via REUTERS



Jeepney passengers seated in between plastic barriers, wear face masks and face shields mandatory in public transportation in Quezon City, Metro Manila, Philippines. REUTERS/Eloisa Lopez



People enjoy a music party inside a swimming pool at the Wuhan Maya Beach Park, in Wuhan, China. REUTERS/Stringer



A police officer investigates the scene of a series of allegedly deliberate car crashes on highway A100 in Berlin, Germany. REUTERS/Fabrizio Bensch



A satellite image shows tug boats and the broken-up Japanese bulk carrier MV Wakashio, that ran aground on a reef on July 25 causing an oil spill, off the coast of Pointe d'Esny, Mauritius. Maxar Technologies/via REUTERS



People wear protective masks as they wait in line at a testing site for the coronavirus set up for returning students, faculty and staff on the main campus of New York University (NYU) in Manhattan. REUTERS/Mike Segar



Steve Krofchik of Las Vegas keeps cool with a bottle of ice on his head as the thermometer reads 130 degrees Fahrenheit (54.4 Celsius) at the Furnace Creek Visitors Center in Death Valley, California. REUTERS/David Becker

Coronavirus Dashboard 08/20/20

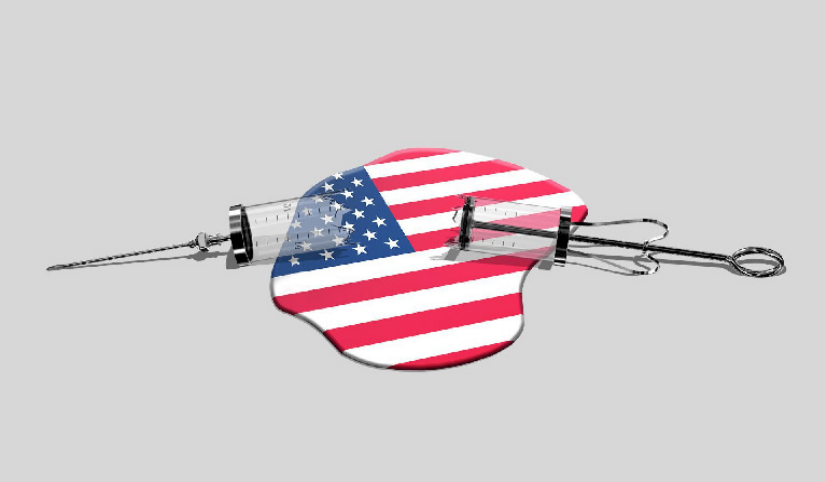


Illustration: Aida Amer/Axios

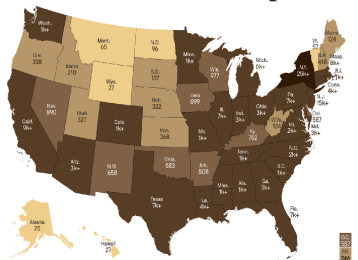
Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

The number of deaths from COVID-19 surpassed 170,000 and cases rose past 5.4 million in the U.S. on Sunday evening, Johns Hopkins data shows. More than 1.8 million have recovered.

The big picture: Six states set new highs last week for novel coronavirus infections recorded in a single day. However, dramatic single-day rises have become less frequent as the country’s outbreak begins to slow down. But some states are still facing serious spikes and rising hospitalizations.

1. **Global:** Total confirmed cases as of 10:30 a.m. ET: 21,918,920 — Total deaths: 774,769 — Total recoveries: 13,916,722 .
2. **U.S.:** Total confirmed cases as of 10:30 a.m. ET: 5,444,554 — Total deaths: 170,564 — Total recoveries: 1,865,580 — Total tests: 68,056,780 .
3. **Axios-Ipsos poll:** Democrats fear in-person campaigning, voting.
4. **Politics:** Gov. Andrew Cuomo pens book on New York’s COVID-19 response.
5. **Health:** America’s failed coronavirus response hurts people of color most — The U.S. didn’t learn its lesson on nursing homes.
6. **Business:** Amazon bucks remote work trend with office expansions in major cities — Pandemic-driven relocations could drive the next phase of the real estate market.

U.S. Coronavirus Updates



Data: The COVID Tracking Project;
Note: Does not include probable deaths from New York City; Map: Andrew Witherspoon/Axios

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What’s happening: White House senior adviser Jared Kushner defended the Trump administration’s response to the coronavirus pandemic on Sunday, telling CBS News the current rate of deaths is “still below” the May peak of 2,500 per day, adding “we know a lot more than we

did five months ago.”

- The U.S. is far behind other rich countries in its coronavirus response, data shows.
- The Food and Drug Administration issued an emergency use authorization to Yale School of Public Health for its SalivaDirect COVID-19 diagnostic test on Saturday.
- New York will allow museums, gyms and bowling alleys across the state to reopen with capacity restrictions, mandated face coverings and social distancing requirements starting August 24, Gov. Andrew Cuomo announced Friday.
- As millions of students are about to start the school year virtually, at least in part, experts fear students may fall off an educational cliff — missing key academic milestones, falling behind grade level and in some cases dropping out of the educational system altogether. (Courtesy axios.com)

Related
New research reveals the most common pattern of COVID-19 symptoms come in fall and winter when flu season begins to peak

Coronavirus Symptoms Tend To Begin In Certain Order: Fever First, Then Cough, Muscle Pain



(© ijeab - stock.adobe.com)

LOS ANGELES -- COVID-19 patients can have symptoms that are very similar to other viral illnesses. This makes it difficult to know when to seek medical care. It also poses a diagnostic challenge for doctors. As cold and flu season approaches, it’s even more important to be able to differentiate COVID-19 from other respiratory diseases. A new study by scientists at the University of Southern California offers valuable guidance when it comes to the onset of coronavirus symptoms. The study, published in *Frontiers in Public Health*, finds that a distinguishing feature of COVID-19 is the order in which symptoms first appear. Typically, patients will experience fever, cough, muscle pain and then nausea, and/or vomiting, and diarrhea. To reach this conclusion, the USC researchers studied the rates of symptom incidence in two datasets

of COVID-19 patients. The main dataset includes more than 55,000 confirmed coronavirus cases in China collected between February 16 and February 24, 2020 by the World Health Organization. The team also looked at a smaller dataset of about 1,100 cases from December and January in order to confirm their findings.”

Using these data, the scientists created a model that predicts the probability of COVID-19 symptoms occurring in a specific order. They then compared their results to the likely order of symptoms in patients with other respiratory diseases. The other diseases included in the study are influenza, Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). MERS and SARS are both closely related to the coronavirus that causes COVID-19.



“The order of the symptoms matter. Knowing that each illness progresses differently means that doctors can identify sooner whether someone likely has COVID-19, or another illness, which can help them make better treatment decisions,” explains Joseph Larsen, the study’s lead author, in a statement.

How coronavirus symptoms differ from flu symptoms

The study finds that fever and cough are frequently associated with all four diseases studied. For influenza, the first symptom is more likely to be cough. In the three coronavirus infections, the most common initial symptom is fever. Scientists report that it is the timing of gastrointestinal symptoms that sets COVID-19 patients apart from MERS and SARS patients. In COVID-19 patients, upper tract GI symptoms like nausea and vomiting seem to appear before lower GI tract symptoms like diarrhea. This is the reverse for patients with MERS and SARS. “This order is especially important to know when we have overlapping cycles of ill-

nesses like the flu that coincide with infections of COVID-19,” says study co-author Peter Kuhn. “Doctors can determine what steps to take to care for the patient, and they may prevent the patient’s condition from worsening.”

Identifying symptoms earlier can help slow spread of virus

According to the authors, early identification of whether someone likely has COVID-19 or another illness is also important. That’s because of the great need to stop the spread of coronavirus. Compared to influenza, COVID-19 is two to three times more transmissible. However, the authors caution that the identification of symptom order should not be used in place of testing. Instead, it should be taken as a possible sign to get tested.

“Given that there are now better approaches to treatments for COVID-19, identifying patients earlier could reduce hospitalization time,” concludes Larsen. (Courtesy studyfinds.org)



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