

With more shots, virus battle nears tipping point

Vaccines may soon calm pandemic, but concerns about variants persist

By David Abel
GLOBE STAFF

Here's the rosy scenario: By Labor Day, if all goes well, nearly every adult in the United States who wants a COVID-19 vaccine will have received one. Deaths and hospitalizations from the coronavirus will have fallen sharply; transmission will have plummeted as the population reaches herd immunity. Everything from schools to restaurants will have fully reopened, allowing for something approximating pre-pandemic life to resume.

► For more vaccine coverage, visit bostonglobe.com/vaccine.

There is also, regrettably, a far bleaker scenario for the coming months: The virus remains implacable, mutating in ways that either end-run the protection of vaccines or keep it contagious enough to sicken a large portion of the population, including younger people at lower risk from previous strains and the millions who refuse to be vaccinated. As drug makers race to tailor vaccines to the variants, the country might remain trapped in a

VIRUS, Page A4

Lax review undermined police pick

Walsh missed incident in new police boss's past

By Milton J. Valencia, Andrew Ryan,
and Dugan Arnett
GLOBE STAFF

On the morning of Friday, Jan. 22, Mayor Martin J. Walsh pulled together a small circle of aides to hear some very big news: Police Commissioner

William Gross, who made history just over two years ago as the first Black officer to lead the Boston force, abruptly wanted out.

Gross had quietly confided to Walsh that he had suffered a significant health concern. With Walsh likely to decamp within weeks for Washington, D.C., and a post in President Biden's Cabinet, Gross decided it was time to retire.

And Gross had a clear idea of who should succeed him. The Walsh aides heard that morning that Gross had recommended that his chief of staff and close confidante, Superintendent Dennis



Dennis White

COMMISSIONER, Page A2

Two, cold

Sunday: Cloudy, snowy.
High: 31-36. Low: 27-32.
Monday: Cloudy, snowy.
High: 32-37. Low: 30-35.

Complete report, B14.

Deaths, A16-28.

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tion violations.
Sports, C1.

Acquitted, again



ALEX EDELMAN/APP VIA GETTY IMAGES

Judgment aside,
images of riot will be
seared into history

YVONNE ABRAHAM

COMMENTARY

We needn't dwell long on the inevitable vote to acquit, as it merely and predictably completes the long line of indecencies that define the Trump era.

But the images — those we must never forget. They record one of the nation's darkest moments, joining and enlarging our heavy historic catalog.

See them again: The photograph of the secessionist carrying the Confederate flag through the hallowed halls of the US Capitol, the banner of hate casually slung over his shoulder, enacting a desecration unmatched even during the Civil War.

The shot-from-above video of the Blue Lives Matter crowd dragging a police officer face-first down the Capitol steps and beating him, one bearded rioter bludgeoning the officer with a pole to which an American flag was attached, getting in four hits before the crowd moved his prey out of reach.

ABRAHAM, Page A13

GOP ties to Trump affirmed

Acquittal offers more evidence the party is not ready to remove past the former president. A12.



JACQUELYN MARTIN/ASSOCIATED PRESS/FILE

Lawyer Michael van der Veen (second from left) celebrated after former president Donald Trump's acquittal. The impeachment followed the attack on the Capitol after Trump's Jan. 6 rally (left).

Democrats joined by 7 GOP senators,
but Trump survives 2nd impeachment

By Nicholas Fandos
NEW YORK TIMES

WASHINGTON — A Senate still bruised from the most violent attack on the Capitol in two centuries acquitted former president Donald Trump on Saturday in his second impeachment trial, as all but a few Republicans locked arms to reject a case that he incited the Jan. 6 rampage in a last-ditch attempt to cling to power.

Under the watch of National Guard troops still patrolling the historic building, a bipartisan majority voted to find Trump guilty of the House's single charge of incitement of insurrection. They included seven Republicans, more members of a president's party than have ever returned an adverse verdict in an im-

peachment trial.

But with most of Trump's party coalescing around him, the 57-43 tally fell 10 votes short of the two-thirds majority needed to convict him and to allow the Senate to move to disqualify him from holding future office.

The Republicans breaking ranks to convict the man who led their party for four tumultuous years, demanding absolute loyalty, were Senators Richard Burr of North Carolina, Bill Cassidy of Louisiana, Susan Collins of Maine, Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, Mitt Romney of Utah, Ben Sasse of Nebraska, and Patrick Toomey of Pennsylvania.

The verdict brought an abrupt end to the fourth presidential im-

TRUMP, Page A12

Bullish run: Brockton's champion stock picker

Keith Gill's GameStop bet made him a cult hero — and very rich

By Mark Shanahan and Andy Rosen
GLOBE STAFF

Keith Gill could have been the next great athlete from Brockton, the "City of Champions" whose native sons include legendary boxers Rocky Marciano and "Marvelous" Marvin Hagler.

A track star at Brockton High School, Gill raced into the record books at nearby Stonehill College, nearly clocking a 4-minute mile — the Holy Grail of running — before an Achilles injury forced him to stop.

Or, he could have been a world champion card player. In his 20s, Gill traveled around Europe competing in tournaments of the obscure game Wizard, becoming just the second person to be inducted into the Wizard Hall of Fame.

Instead, Gill channeled his energy into another passion: Pick-

ROARING KITTY, Page A8



Keith Gill, shown in 2003, was a standout cross-country runner at Brockton High School. That tenacity now drives his investing.

TOM HERDE/GLOBE STAFF/FILE

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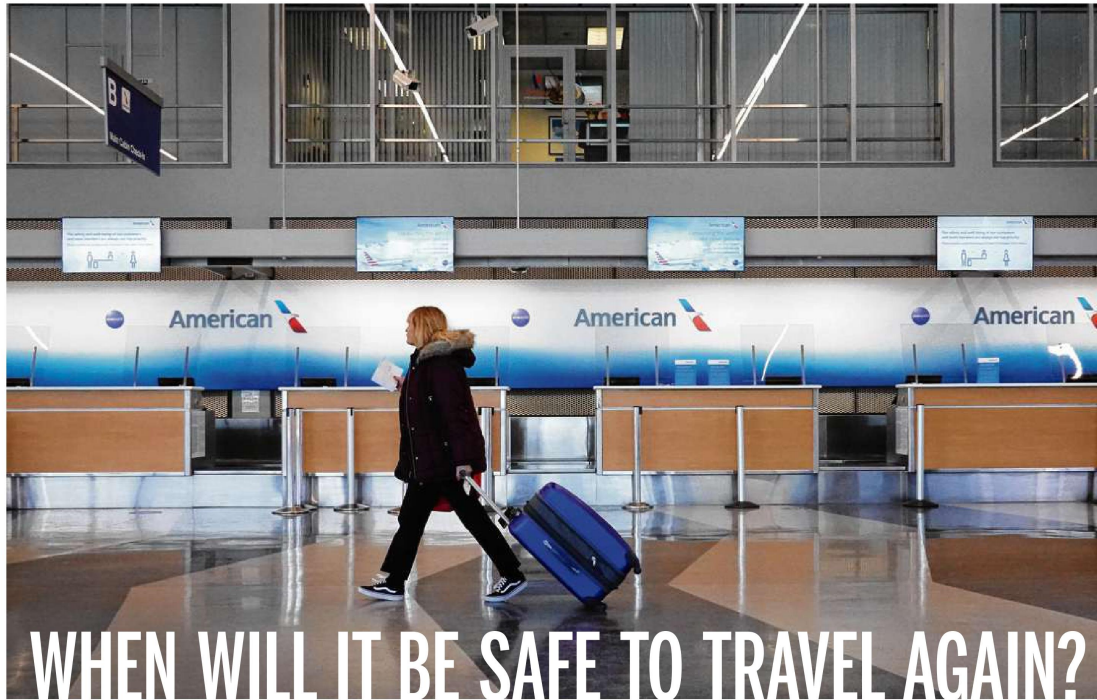
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WHEN WILL IT BE SAFE TO TRAVEL AGAIN?

SCOTT OLSON/GETTY IMAGES



The temptation is real. Airlines are offering incredible deals on flights and vacation packages. Vaccinations have begun, and the COVID-19 positivity rate is slowly dipping. A fatigued country wants to know: Could it possibly be time to think about booking travel? Is spring break or summer vacation within our grasp?

Epidemiologists and infectious disease doctors are urging people to hold off, while those who represent the travel industry say that with proper precautions travel is safe.

In other words, the answer is as elusive as the virus itself. But the prevailing school of thought from the medical experts we spoke with is that some form of travel might return this summer. Perhaps. Maybe. Possibly.

"The first thing people really have to understand is that science is a dynamic of change, and this pandemic

CHRISTOPHER
MUTHER

It comes down to the behavior of the people, the behavior of the virus, and the pace of vaccinations.

is a dynamic of change as well," said Dr. Daniel Fagbui, an ER physician and Obama administration bio-defense appointee. "Yes, we have the vaccines, the cavalry is coming. However, the enemy is changing and shifting and mutating. We have these multiple variants, and if we're not wearing masks, washing our hands, and social distancing, the more the variants will spread. Then we'll need another set of boosters."

It is, as Fagbui says, a shape-shifting logistical nightmare. The behavior of people, the behavior of the virus, and the pace of vaccinations will determine when we can return to travel.

"So when would be a reasonable time to start traveling safely?" he said. "It's probably no time soon."

Those words sting for a populace aching to dust off its suitcases and flee from the cold and omnipresent February snow. Especially when those people are filled with COVID fatigue and, at the same time, being bom-

RESTART, Page N14



Visiting Venice, without leaving home

By Emily Wright

GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

After being cooped up for almost a year, a friend of mine and I decided to visit Venice in December — but we didn't do it the conventional way.

We skipped the plane, train, and gondola rides to get to the lagoon in the middle of the Adriatic.

I visited from my dining room, she visited from her office, and we were giv-

ing a tour of the city by a charismatic, engaging guide who was born and raised in Venice.

Luca Fornasier has been giving tours since he was a teenager, but now offers them (complete with stops at "secret places") almost exclusively via Airbnb Experiences because of COVID-19.

"I started to welcome clients in my city when I was only 16 years old," Fornasier said in an e-mail. "During the trip, even if I was very young, I was al-

ways preparing a map for my clients with all the best local suggestions and secret places to visit to skip the tourists traps and the crowds!"

That attention to detail wasn't lost on the Zoom virtual tour.

He quizzed us (we guessed using the chat function), promised prizes to create a competitive atmosphere, answered questions, and somehow managed to keep the names of all tour attendees straight (there were about 20 of

VENICE, Page N14

Luca Fornasier has been giving tours since he was a teenager, but now offers them (complete with stops at "secret places") almost exclusively via Airbnb Experiences because of COVID-19.

Independent hotels are pushing back against high online travel agency commissions

By Jon Marcus
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

The expensive renovation had barely been completed when the COVID-19 pandemic hit. The brand new indoor pool and hot tub and the breakfast room overlooking the Atlantic Ocean from the coast of Maine were empty. So were most of the guest rooms. The adjacent events center was closed.

All of this may have helped explain the reaction of the hotel's front desk clerk when a departing guest requested a receipt. Sure, the clerk said disdainfully — but the bill would show only what the independently owned hotel got after a commission was deducted by Expedia, through which the room had been booked.

The huge financial toll that the pandemic has taken on the travel industry, which the World Travel and Tourism Council estimates lost \$5.5 trillion last year, is renewing complaints from hotels, airlines, and tour providers about the largely

OTA, Page N14



Inside

THE VIP LOUNGE
MUSIC SENDS HIM
Venues, here and there, are a big attraction for Club Passim's managing director

N12

The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD



Matt Smith and Abby Altman on Three Mile Island on Lake Winnepesaukee.

THE VIP LOUNGE | MATT SMITH

Club Passim's managing director is about to hit the airwaves and grew up hitting the road

Anyone who's anyone in the New England music scene knows Matt Smith, longtime managing director of Club Passim. When he's not at the iconic Cambridge music venue, he can be found at other establishments catching live music. "I've been around music my whole life, and one of my passions is developing new talent and finding stage time for new talent," Smith said. "There's nothing like putting together an artist and an audience and seeing that magic happen." Smith, 51, said he "cannot wait" for live music to return to his and other venues, but in the meantime, he's making sure that Club Passim offers nightly live music. He has also picked up a new part-time gig: host of MYRADIO's "The Local Music Café," which airs at 9 p.m. on Tuesdays (and rebroadcasts at 8 p.m. on Sundays). Smith, who is on the board of Folk Alliance International and teaches at Berklee College of Music (online), is taking over at the Martha's Vineyard-based radio station for longtime host Alison Hammer. "There is so much about the New England music scene — and the different pockets of it — that I love," Smith said. "So when [the folks at MYRADIO] reached out to me, I was very excited

about the prospect of it and having another way of getting the word about these great artists out into the world." We caught up with the Marshfield native, who lives in Somerville, to talk about all things travel.

Favorite vacation destination?

I love going to Three Mile Island on Lake Winnepesaukee in New Hampshire. During most years I work there for a week in the spring at the Miles of Music Camp — but then my partner and I like to go in the fall and just unplug and relax.

Favorite food or drink while vacationing?

Wherever I go I do like to get a bit of the local flavor. Not the touristy spots, but the places where the locals go.

Where would you like to travel to but haven't?

So many places. Top three in my mind — today — are Sweden, Scotland, and Australia. There's so much great music from those places and I would love to check out the local venues.

One item you can't leave home without when traveling?

Like so many of us, the iPhone is key. It is

my external brain that keeps travel plans in documents in one place so I don't have to worry about it. Also, podcasts. But tethered to that iPhone is an external charging battery in case I'm without power for a while.

Aisle or window?

Aisle. Makes it easier to get up and around and stretch when I need to.

Favorite childhood travel memory?

So many. We'd go on little day or weekend trips. All drivable (and) all over the Northeast — some nature, some just fun. We used to have a yearly summer trip to Lincoln Park in Dartmouth, and that was always something I looked forward to.

Guilty pleasure when traveling?

I don't believe in guilty pleasures. I'll take pride in any of the pleasures of traveling. Whether it is podcast bingeing while en route or missing the "must see" things to just have some relaxing time. No guilt!

Best travel tip?

Pack the day before. That way you've got 24 hours to remember all of the things you inevitably forget.

JULIET PENNINGTON

TRAVEL TROUBLESHOOTER

Can she get a refund if she cancels her passport application?

By Christopher Elliott

GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Q. I lost my passport recently. I sent an application for a passport renewal to the US Department of State and paid \$116. Yesterday, I got a letter back saying that I already had a passport (which I found in the meantime) but that they have already cashed my check.

When I contacted their office, a representative told me they would refund the money. Now they are saying they won't refund me. How can they keep my money if I didn't need to renew?

WENDY TAYLOR,
Park Ridge, Ill.

A. When you lose your passport, you have to report it as lost or stolen to the State Department (travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/passports.html). You can't just apply for a new one. When you do that, the State Department checks to

see if you have an active passport. If you do, it sends your application back. But the government also cashes your check and gets to keep your money.

Why? According to Title 22 of the Code of Federal Regulations 51.51 and 51.55, passport execution fees are nonrefundable. It doesn't matter what an official representative told you; the State Department is going to keep your money.

But something about your case wasn't right. No, it's not that the government can take your money and give you nothing in return (I pay my taxes, so I know what that feels like). It's that someone told you that you could get a refund but was wrong.

I run into this issue all the time. Travel companies

and government agencies expect consumers to have read every contract and regulation, which is unreasonable. I checked the State Department website, and I can see how you might think you can order up a new passport and that the government would automatically invalidate your old one. Unfortunately, that's not how it works. The burden should be on the State Department to clearly state the need to first report your passport as lost or stolen before applying for a replacement.

Still, if you want to be an informed consumer, you should read the fine print carefully. That's especially true when you're dealing with a large bureaucracy like the federal government. Leave nothing to chance. You rushed through the process of applying for a replacement passport before ensuring that your passport was indeed lost.

Passport execution fees are nonrefundable.

I checked with the State Department. I'm afraid you won't be getting a refund. But the State Department did the next best thing, extending your passport by three years. It's not the solution you wanted, but at least you'll get something for your money.

My advice? Keep that passport in a safe place. If you need help with a coronavirus-related refund, please contact me. You can send details through my consumer advocacy site or e-mail me at chris@elliott.org.

Christopher Elliott is the chief advocacy officer of Elliott Advocacy, a nonprofit organization that helps consumers resolve their problems. Contact him at elliott.org/help or chris@elliott.org.

HERE

BLACK HISTORY TOUR IN RHODE ISLAND

Take a self-guided tour that explores Providence's Black history from the early days of the Rhode Island colony to today. The city's Early Black History Walking Tour provides insight into the city's role in the trans-Atlantic slave trade, racially motivated riots, and the contributions of local Black farmers and other residents. The tour takes you to the North Burial Ground where you'll find the tombstone of Patience Borden, who donated all of her money in 1811 "to the relief of poor people of color"; the Snowtown Riot Plaque, which recalls the 19th-century riots in which white mobs destroyed Black-owned homes and businesses; and the Old Brick School House, a reminder of the days of segregation in schools. Also stop at the Mount Hope Sharing Garden, a community garden in a historically Black neighborhood, to honor the contributions of the state's Black farmers. Download a printable map from the Go Providence website. www.goprovidence.com

BOSTON'S SCIENCE MUSEUM REOPENS

Discover the Arctic in a new permanent exhibit, revisit "The Science Behind Pixar," and learn about trains at the Museum of Science, Boston, which just reopened to the public. After a two-month closure, the museum has opened its doors to visitors, offering timed tickets to exhibit halls and theaters. In the museum's newest exhibit, "Arctic Adventure: Exploring With Technology," see a 20-foot wall of ice and interact with the tools and technol-



ogies researchers use to understand human impact on the Earth's climate and landscapes. Also enjoy the Pixar exhibit, which has 50 interactive elements that teach you about the filmmaking process, and a train exhibit that showcases powered model trains of all sizes. Tickets free for under 3 to \$29 for 12 and older. 617-723-2500, www.mos.org

THERE

ENJOY A WOMEN'S WELLNESS RETREAT

This June, head to a 2,700-acre historic ranch on Oahu's North Shore for a new Women's Wellness Retreat. The Coconut Traveler, one of the island's luxury tour operators, launches Journeys of Renewal and Transformation June 19-25 for up to 10 participants. Mornings start with guided meditation, mindfulness practices led by a specialist from the University of Hawaii, and yoga. Then enjoy a variety of guided activities including Shirin-Yoku (forest bathing); yoga at a private lake; hiking on ranch trails to a waterfall; and a paddle or kayak to an island for swim-

ming and hiking. For the adventurous, choose from several add-on activities, such as skydiving, a circle-island helicopter tour, or swimming with sharks with a renowned conservationist. Also learn about Hawaiian cultural and medical practices, including the practice of forgiveness and traditional methods for treating, healing, or curing ailments and injuries. Rates start at \$11,295 per person, which includes accommodations, meals, and activities. www.theococonutraveler.com

DINE IN A GONDOLA OR YURT

Heading to Colorado ski country this year? You can still eat "out" at many ski areas thanks to creative new dining op-

tions. Mountain Village near Telluride has opened 20 dining cabins made from refurbished gondola cars (complete with heating and ventilation systems) and 20-foot yurts and pavilions, while Mountain Tap Brewery in Steamboat Springs offers private dining in three heated bright-purple gondola cars. Aurum Food & Wine has also set up private yurts outside its restaurants in Breckenridge and Steamboat Springs; enjoy duck confit and a Manhattan with up to seven other friends in one of these cozy, heated yurts. Bin 707 Foodbar in Grand Junction (near Powderhorn Resort) set up small greenhouses with heat lamps to accommodate private parties. Other ski towns, such as Vail, have added outdoor fire pits, warming igloos, or heated outdoor tents so you can enjoy après outside with friends. www.colorado.com

EVERYWHERE

SLEEP WELL ON THE ROAD

Finding a comfy travel pillow for your adventures can prove challenging. HEST's new pillow works well whether you're going car camping, on a long-haul flight, or to a vacation cottage or hotel. The pillow, made of temperature-regulated memory foam and polyester, packs down and stores in an attached zippered stuff sack but springs back to a traditional rectangular pillow shape when unpacked. The memory foam pillow cradles your head and makes for a great night sleep. It measures 22-by-15-by-8

inches when unfolded and packs down to 14-by-9-by-7 inches so you can toss it in a suitcase or the car without taking up precious space. The removable dirt- and water-resistant cover can be machine washed. \$79. hest.com

A VERSATILE LAPTOP YOU'LL LOVE

Computers blend work and life more than ever these days, meaning one device that can handle multiple demands works best. Lenovo's new Yoga 9i 14-inch laptop proves robust enough to tackle work needs while offering features you'll appreciate for home school, travel, or keeping entertained. The Yoga 9i has a fingerprint reader for quick and easy log-in, a night light to dim the display (great for planes or working at night), built-in Alexa for voice commands, and a nesting pen that works well on the responsive touchscreen. It offers stunning screen resolution (choose from 1920x1080 or 4K) and a fast 11th Generation Intel Core i7 processor. The standard model comes with 16GB of RAM (plenty for multitasking), Windows 10 Home or Pro operating system, and a 512GB solid state hard drive. The 720-pixel high-definition camera works great for video calls, but you'll really appreciate the rotating soundbar, which spans the length of the laptop and distributes more even sound when you're enjoying music or movies. Add to that Thunderbolt 4 USB ports for high-speed data transfer, Wi-Fi 6 capability, and a battery that lasts up to 15 hours. My favorite feature: The versatile laptop can be configured in laptop, tent, or tablet mode — perfect for travel. Prices start at \$1,109.99. www.lenovo.com

KARI BODNARCHUK

