



DAILY COVID-19 UPDATE

November 30, 2020

WHAT HAPPENED TODAY

Today, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) [released a report](#) that examined the country's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The report includes a number of recommendations to federal agencies and Congress to increase the efficacy of the pandemic response, including designating any additional COVID-related aid over \$100 million in payments as "susceptible to significant improper payments."

As Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) and Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) continue to remain far apart on coronavirus relief, a bipartisan group of Senators are [holding discussions](#) to try and move a stimulus package forward. The group, including Senators Mitt Romney (R-UT), Rob Portman (R-OH), Mark Warner (D-VA), and Dick Durbin (D-IL), among others, are eyeing the upcoming government funding package as a possible vehicle to provide support. Any proposal from the group would be targeted towards the most popular CARES Act provisions that are set to expire at the end of the year, such as eviction moratoriums, boosted unemployment benefits, and

LATEST PMJ RESOURCES

[Lame Duck Preview Memo](#)

[Drug Shortage and Medical Supply Chain Tracker](#)

[Coronavirus State Reopening Tracker](#)

[President Trump EO Tracker](#)

[COVID-19 Legislative Outlook](#)

[State Responses to EO on Unemployment Insurance](#)

[Healthcare Chart on COVID Legislation](#)

[Liability Reform State of Play](#)

[CARES Act State Funding](#)

another round of the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) funding.

Despite the formation of this bipartisan group, passage of a standalone stimulus seems somewhat unlikely given where the respective party leaderships are. The more likely scenario is adding component parts of a relief package to either the continuing resolution (CR) or an omnibus appropriations bill.

Yesterday, NIAID Director Dr. Fauci warned that the U.S. could see "a surge superimposed upon the surge that we're already in" as COVID-19 cases are expected to rise after millions of Americans traveled over Thanksgiving weekend. Dr. Fauci also urged anyone who traveled over the holiday to quarantine and get tested if possible.

U.S. Surgeon General Adams stated, "...it's going to get worse over the next several weeks, but the actions that we take in the next several days will determine how bad it is..."

Dr. Fauci and Surgeon General Adams indicated that the first COVID-19 vaccine for at-risk populations and healthcare professionals could be available by mid-to-late December. In the meantime, they pleaded with the American public to continue to wear masks, social distance, and wash their hands.

Since our last update, the Food and Drug Administration and the Federal Reserve published additional guidance related to the pandemic. Please see below for more details.

We have updated our Drug Shortage and Medical Supply Chain Tracker. It is linked under Latest PMJ Resources.

[State and Local Funding Bills](#)

[COVID Legislative Tracker](#)

[Global COVID-19 Export Controls](#)

[Memo - Federal Reserve COVID-19 Announcements](#)

[Federal Reserve Lending Facilities Deck](#)

ECONOMIC UPDATE

Administration

FEDERAL RESERVE

- The Federal Reserve [announced an extension](#) through March 31, 2021, for several of its lending facilities that were generally scheduled to expire on or around December 31.
- The Fed [released results of a survey](#) of senior financial officers at banks about their strategies and practices for managing reserve balances.

TREASURY

- Secretary Mnuchin [sent a letter](#) to Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell approving the extension of four of its credit facilities until March 31, 2021.

Articles of Interest

- 11/30 The Wall Street Journal published an article titled, [“Federal Reserve Extends Four Emergency Lending Programs.”](#)
- 11/30 The Washington Post published an article titled, [“Unemployment statistics during the pandemic have been inflated by backlogs, according to GAO report.”](#)

PUBLIC HEALTH UPDATE

Congressional

SENATE

- Sen. Chris Murphy (D-CT) penned an [op-ed](#) in which he urged Republican lawmakers to come to the table and work with Democrats to pass a coronavirus relief package. He added that "at the very least, any agreement should include additional money for small businesses to pay their staff and keep customers and employees safe."

Administration

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

- HHS and the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) have jointly [awarded](#) an \$11.6 million contract to Puritan Medical Products Company, LLC, to expand domestic production capacity of Cue Sample Wands, the nasal swabs used exclusively with the COVID-19 cartridge-based molecular testing system developed and manufactured by Cue Health, Inc. The test generates results in about 20 minutes at the point-of-care (POC).

CENTERS FOR MEDICARE & MEDICAID SERVICES

- CMS [announced](#) steps to increase the capacity of the American health care system to provide care to patients outside a traditional hospital setting amid a rising number of COVID-19 hospitalizations across the country. These flexibilities include allowances for safe hospital care for eligible patients in their homes and updated staffing flexibility designed to allow ambulatory surgical centers (ASCs) to provide greater inpatient care when needed.

FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION

- The FDA issued [guidance](#) on the use of dry heat to help support the single-user reuse of certain particulate filtering facepiece respirators (FFRs), such as N95 respirators, by health care personnel when there is a limited supply of respirators during the COVID-19 public health emergency.
- The FDA published [Face Masks, Including Surgical Masks, and Respirators for COVID-19](#), a comprehensive new page on FDA.gov with answers to frequently asked questions about face masks, surgical masks, and respirators.

NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH

- The National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) **announced** that the fourth iteration of the Adaptive COVID-19 Treatment Trial (ACTT-4) has begun to enroll hospitalized adults with COVID-19 who require supplemental oxygen. The NIAID-sponsored trial will enroll up to 1,500 patients at approximately 100 sites in the United States and other countries.

Articles of Interest

- 11/29 AP News published an article titled, **“Fauci: US may see ‘surge upon surge’ of virus in weeks ahead.”**
- 11/29 Former FDA Commissioners Scott Gottlieb and Mark McClellan penned an op-ed in the Wall Street Journal titled, **“Deploying Big Data to Determine How Well Vaccines Work.”**
- 11/29 The Washington Post published an article titled, **“Mass vaccinations against COVID-19 will be ‘mind-blowing’ challenge for Alabama, other poor, rural states.”**
- 11/30 The New York Times published an article titled, **“Moderna Applies for Emergency FDA Approval for Its Coronavirus Vaccine.”**
- 11/30 KHN published an article titled, **“Thousands of Doctors’ Offices Buckle Under Financial Stress of COVID.”**