



DAILY COVID-19 UPDATE

February 16, 2021

WHAT HAPPENED TODAY

Today, White House press secretary Jen Psaki **announced** that the U.S. will increase its weekly supply of COVID-19 vaccines to states, territories, and tribes by providing 13.6 million doses per week as of this week, up from 11 million doses last week. This boosts the total vaccine supply to states by 57% since January 20. Also, the federal government is doubling the vaccine supply for retail pharmacies, with 2 million doses set to be delivered this week in an effort to "expand access in neighborhoods across the country."

This week, the House Budget Committee will continue compiling various components of the Biden administration's \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan into a single bill, with plans to mark up the legislation on Thursday. In a call today with House Democrats, Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-MD) indicated that the chamber could vote on a coronavirus relief proposal on February 26.

Meanwhile, the Senate committees with jurisdiction over the relief package are expected to forgo markups and bring the bill directly to the Senate floor.

LATEST STATISTICS

71,657,975 COVID-19 vaccines have been distributed in the U.S and **39,670,551** Americans have received the first dose.

There are a total of **109,386,022** confirmed cases worldwide, 2,414,646 deaths and 61,520,300 people have recovered.

There are **27,739,873** confirmed cases of the coronavirus in the U.S. and 487,564 deaths.

LATEST PMJ RESOURCES

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

[Coronavirus State Reopening Tracker](#)

The top Republicans on the 12 Senate committees sent a letter to Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) and Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) protesting the decision. The senators cited concerns of “partisan reconciliation bills” being passed “without thorough analysis, proper debate, or even the input of some of their own Democratic members.”

Since our last update, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Food and Drug Administration have released guidance related to the coronavirus pandemic.

We have updated our Coronavirus State Reopening Tracker. It is linked under Latest PMJ Resources.

[President Biden EO Tracker](#)

[Lame Duck Preview Memo](#)

ECONOMIC UPDATE

Congressional

SENATE

- Senators Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) and Maggie Hassan (D-NH) **introduced** the Family and Medical Insurance Leave (FAMILY) Act to create a permanent, national paid family and medical leave program.

Administration

WHITE HOUSE

- The Biden Administration **announced** an extension of COVID-19 forbearance and foreclosure protections for homeowners.

FEDERAL RESERVE ("FED")

- The Federal Reserve Board **released** the hypothetical scenarios for its 2021 bank stress tests.

SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION (SBA)

- The Small Business Administration **announced** the Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) program has provided \$200 billion in emergency funding.

INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE (IRS)

- The IRS **announced** all legally permitted first and second round of Economic Impact Payments have been issued.

Articles of Interest

- 2/16 The Washington Post published an article titled, **“Focus on Capitol Hill turns to passing Biden’s \$1.9 trillion coronavirus relief bill.”**
- 2/16 The Wall Street Journal published an article titled, **“Biden Administration extends Covid-19 mortgage relief.”**

- 2/12 The Wall Street Journal published an article titled, ["Limit on U.S. debt, untouched in Democrats' Covid aid bill, looms later in the year."](#)

PUBLIC HEALTH UPDATE

Congressional

HOUSE

- Reps. Suzan DelBene (D-WA) and Pramila Jayapal (D-WA) led 25 members of Congress today in a [letter](#) to HHS Acting Secretary Norris Cochran, demanding that the Department ban preferential access to COVID-19 vaccines while establishing greater accountability measures. They also requested responses to three questions related to preferential access and the inequitable distribution of the COVID-19 vaccines.

Administration

THE WHITE HOUSE

- President Joe Biden [issued](#) a statement on the 2021 special health insurance enrollment period through HealthCare.gov.

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

- HHS [announced](#) additional Biden-Harris Administration appointments.
- HHS and the Department of Defense (DOD) [purchased](#) an additional 100 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines from both Pfizer Inc. and Moderna Inc. to help meet demand for COVID-19 vaccines in the U.S. The orders placed Friday bring the vaccine purchased by the U.S. government from these two companies to a total of 600 million doses, enough to vaccinate 300 million people. Each company is delivering 300 million doses in regular increments through the end of July 2021.
- In accordance with the [Executive Order](#) signed by President Biden, CMS [announced](#) that the Special Enrollment Period (SEP) for the Health Insurance Marketplace is officially be available to consumers in the 36 states that use the HealthCare.gov platform from February 15 through May 15. At least 13 States plus the District of Columbia, which operate their own Marketplace platforms, have decided to offer a similar opportunity.

NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH

- NIH Director Dr. Francis Collins [penned](#) a blog post titled, "ACTIV Update: Making Major Strides in COVID-19 Therapeutic Development."
- A study led by researchers in the NIH's National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK), [found](#) that face masks substantially increase the humidity in the air that the mask-wearer breathes in. This higher level of humidity in inhaled air, the researchers suggest, could help explain why wearing masks has been linked to lower disease severity in people infected with SARS-CoV-2, because hydration of the respiratory tract is known to benefit the immune system.
- A new study has [identified](#) early risk factors that predicted heightened anxiety in young adults during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The findings from the study, supported by NIH and published in the Journal of the American

Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, could help predict who is at greatest risk of developing anxiety during stressful life events in early adulthood and inform prevention and intervention efforts.

- In an editorial published Friday in JAMA: The Journal of the American Medical Association, experts from NIAID, [outlined](#) how COVID-19 variants have arisen, concerns about whether vaccines currently authorized for use will continue to protect against new variants, and the need for a global approach to fighting SARS-CoV-2 as it spreads and acquires additional mutations.

FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION

- The FDA revised its [guidance](#), Investigational COVID-19 Convalescent Plasma and associated web page, to reflect the reissued [emergency use authorization](#) for COVID-19 convalescent plasma. Specifically, the guidance provides recommendations to blood establishments on the collection and labeling of high titer COVID-19 convalescent plasma under the EUA. In addition, the revisions address when individuals who have received an investigational COVID-19 monoclonal therapy as a participant in a clinical trial, or received an authorized or licensed COVID-19 monoclonal antibody therapy, qualify as convalescent plasma donors.

CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION

- CDC [released](#) interim guidance on testing healthcare personnel for COVID-19.
- CDC [released](#) interim guidance on the discontinuation of transmission-based precautions and disposition of patients with SARS-CoV-2 infection in healthcare settings.
- CDC [published](#) a webpage titled, "Customizable COVID-19 Vaccine Content for Essential Workers."
- CDC [released](#) updated COVID-19 guidance for reopening schools and child care programs.
- CDC [released](#) its Operational Strategy for K-12 Schools through Phased Mitigation.
- CDC [released](#) a transcript of Friday's media telebriefing on new science-based resources and tools to help schools safely reopen and stay open for in-person learning.
- CDC [published](#) a science brief titled, "Transmission of SARS-CoV-2 in K-12 schools."

Articles of Interest

- 2/12 The New York Times published an article titled, ["After a Sluggish Start, Vaccine Rollout Is Improving in Every State."](#)
- 2/15 CNN published an article titled, ["Governors tell Biden in letter some vaccine efforts are creating confusion and inefficiency."](#)
- 2/15 The Wall Street Journal published an article titled, ["The U.S. Bought Rapid Covid-19 Tests to Help Control the Virus. Now Many Are Unused."](#)
- 2/15 The Hill published an article titled, ["Seven coronavirus variants potentially similar to UK type have been detected in US: study."](#)
- 2/16 The Washington Post published an article titled, ["Which vaccine should you get? Whichever one you can."](#)

LABOR UPDATE

Administration

DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

- DOL **announced** the award of \$49 million in grants to support 28 states and territories as they continue their efforts to combat fraud in the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance and Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation programs. The department is making these awards from \$100 million in funding announced Jan. 15, 2021 for states to combat fraud in these programs.