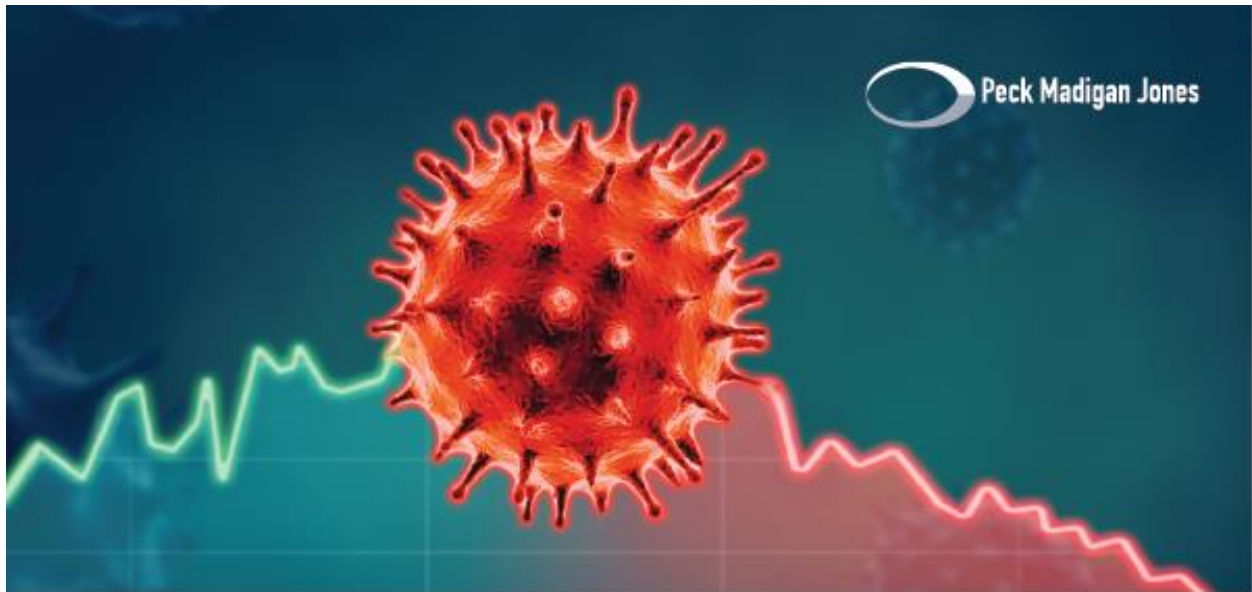




DAILY COVID-19 UPDATE

February 23, 2021

WHAT HAPPENED TODAY

Today, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) held a meeting with the Democratic Caucus during which he discussed the need to prioritize passage of the upcoming COVID-19 relief package. He told members that "job number one is to pass the bill" and expressed confidence this will occur.

Yesterday, the House Budget Committee voted 19-16 on a largely party-line vote to advance President Joe Biden's \$1.9 trillion coronavirus relief package. The legislation will now be marked up by the House Rules Committee before it is sent to the floor on Friday or Saturday for consideration by the full House.

However, the minimum wage increase currently included in the House's version of the legislation could be a sticking point for centrist Democrats such as Senators Joe Manchin (D-WV) and Krysten Sinema (D-AZ). Senator Manchin has stated he supports an \$11 an hour minimum wage increase, but the current proposal is set at \$15 an hour.

LATEST STATISTICS

82,114,370 COVID-19 vaccines have been distributed in the U.S and **44,544,969** Americans have received the first dose.

There are a total of **111,974,905** confirmed cases worldwide, 2,481,140 deaths and 63,201,288 people have recovered.

There are **28,239,571** confirmed cases of the coronavirus in the U.S. and 502,005 deaths.

LATEST PMJ RESOURCES

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

[Coronavirus State Reopening Tracker](#)

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

[President Biden EO Tracker](#)

[Lame Duck Preview Memo](#)

ECONOMIC UPDATE

Congressional

SENATE

- Senate Banking Committee Chairman Sherrod Brown's (D-OH) [opening statement](#) and Ranking Member Pat Toomey's (R-PA) [opening statement](#) at the committee's hearing on the Federal Reserve's Semiannual Monetary Policy Report.
- Senate Small Business Committee Chairman Ben Cardin (D-MD) [lauded](#) the Biden-Harris Administration's actions to increase relief to underserved and underbanked small businesses.

Administration

FEDERAL RESERVE ("FED")

- Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell's [testimony](#) before the Senate Banking Committee hearing on the Semiannual Monetary Policy Report to the Congress.

Articles of Interest

- 2/23 The Washington Post published an article titled, "[Powell to lawmakers: Economic recovery still has a long way to go.](#)"
- 2/22 Bloomberg published an article titled, "[Yellen and Powell wary of financial froth while they push stimulus.](#)"
- 2/22 The New York Times published an article titled, "[Fraud checks and errors slow small-business relief loans.](#)"

PUBLIC HEALTH UPDATE

Congressional

HOUSE

- Reps. Kevin Brady (R-TX), Devin Nunes (R-CA), and Tom Reed (R-NY) sent a [letter](#) to Ways and Means Committee Chairman Richard Neal (D-MA) requesting a hearing and investigation into the COVID-19 nursing home deaths reported by New York.

SENATE

- 75 members of Congress sent a [letter](#) to President Joe Biden expressing concern regarding Xavier Becerra's nomination for the position of HHS Secretary. Among other things, the lawmakers urged President Biden to

"withdraw Mr. Becerra's nomination" and offer a "nominee equipped to successfully combat the COVID-19 pandemic and safely reopen our country."

- Sen. Chris Murphy (D-CT) sent a [letter](#) to the Biden administration's COVID-19 Taskforce to request that federal contracts to produce critical medical supplies include small and medium businesses.
- Sens. Rob Portman (R-OH) and Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) introduced [legislation](#) to support the expansion of telehealth services for substance use disorder treatment. The bill builds upon the Trump Administration's actions to waive regulatory restrictions for accessing care in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The bill extends these telehealth flexibilities by making permanent key waivers, including the ability to prescribe Medication Assisted Therapies (MAT) and other necessary drugs without needing a prior in-person visit and the ability to bill Medicare for audio-only telehealth services.

Administration

THE WHITE HOUSE

- The White House released a [transcript](#) of President Joe Biden's remarks on the milestone of more than 500,000 COVID-19 deaths in the U.S.
- The White House released a [transcript](#) of yesterday's press briefing by the Administration's COVID-19 Response Team as well as public health officials.

NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH

- NIH Director Dr. Francis Collins penned a [blog post](#) titled, "Is One Vaccine Dose Enough After COVID-19 Infection?"

CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION

- CDC published a [webpage](#) titled, "Vaccinate with Confidence COVID-19 Vaccines Strategy."
- CDC published a [webpage](#) titled, "Operational Considerations for the Identification of Healthcare Workers and Inpatients with Suspected COVID-19 in non-US Healthcare Settings."
- CDC [published](#) a Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR) titled, "Clusters of SARS-CoV-2 Infection Among Elementary School Educators and Students in One School District — Georgia, December 2020–January 2021."
- CDC [published](#) a Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR) titled, "First Month of COVID-19 Vaccine Safety Monitoring — United States, December 14, 2020–January 13, 2021."

Articles of Interest

- 2/22 The New York Times published an article titled, [“The Pandemic Is Receding in the Worst Hotspots. Will It Last?”](#)
- 2/22 The Hill published an article titled, [“FDA recommends shorter trials for updated coronavirus vaccines.”](#)
- 2/22 Stat published an article titled, [“New pledges boost COVAX, but critics say more is needed to ensure global vaccine access.”](#)
- 2/22 The Washington Post published an article titled, [“Can COVID herd immunity be reached without vaccinating kids? It’s complicated.”](#)
- 2/23 KHN published an article titled, [“Calling All Vaccinators: Closing the Next Gap in Covid Supply and Demand.”](#)