



DAILY COVID-19 UPDATE

March 17, 2021

WHAT HAPPENED TODAY

Today, the Biden Administration announced it will invest \$10 billion from the American Rescue Plan for COVID-19 testing to accelerate the reopening of schools. The funding is expected to be disbursed next month and will be awarded to states in proportion to their population. The Administration is also allocating \$2.25 billion to address health disparities among vulnerable populations, including those living in rural areas as well as racial and ethnic groups. Additionally, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is designating \$150 million to enhance access to monoclonal antibodies for underserved communities.

Yesterday, the House overwhelmingly passed legislation, by a vote of 415 to 3, to extend the Paycheck Protection Program's (PPP) loan application deadline from March 31 to May 31. Additionally, the bill would allow the Small Business Administration 30 days after the proposed May 31 deadline to process pending applications. As of March 7, the PPP still had \$119 billion in unspent funds still available. Senate Majority Leader Chuck

LATEST STATISTICS

147,590,615 COVID-19 vaccines have been distributed in the U.S and **73,669,956** Americans have received the first dose.

There are a total of **120,991,457** confirmed cases worldwide, **2,675,301** deaths and **68,620,517** people have recovered.

There are **29,585,015** confirmed cases of the coronavirus in the U.S. and **537,583** deaths.

LATEST PMJ RESOURCES

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

[Coronavirus State Reopening Tracker](#)

Schumer (D-NY) stated the Senate will take up the bill before its spring recess.

Additionally, the Federal Reserve expects the unemployment rate to fall to 4.5% by the end of the year, and inflation to rise past the Fed's 2% target to 2.4%. According to the Fed, "economic activity and employment have turned up recently," although the sectors "most adversely affected by the pandemic remain weak."

Notably, after some pushback, the Treasury defended a provision in the American Rescue Plan that requires states to pay back aid if they decide to cut taxes. A Treasury spokesperson **clarified** the provision does not prohibit states from cutting taxes at all, rather "it simply instructs them not to use [stimulus] money to offset net revenues lost if the state chooses to cut taxes."

Since our last update, the Department of Labor has released guidance related to the coronavirus pandemic. Please see below for more details.

We have updated our Biden Administration Transition Tracker. It is linked under Latest PMJ Resources.

[Biden Administration Transition Tracker](#)

[President Biden EO Tracker](#)

[Policy Outlook for the Biden Administration and 117th Congress](#)

ECONOMIC UPDATE

Congressional

HOUSE

- House Small Business Committee Chairwoman Nydia Velázquez (D-NY) and Ranking Member Blaine Luetkemeyer (R-MO) **applauded passage** of the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) Extension Act.

SENATE

- Senate Finance Committee Ranking Member Mike Crapo (R-ID) **urged the Internal Revenue Service (IRS)** to "strongly consider" extending the tax filing deadline.
- Senator Susan Collins (R-ME) **questioned** Deputy Secretary of Labor nominee Julie Su on unemployment insurance fraud.

Administration

FEDERAL RESERVE ("FED")

- The Federal Reserve Board and Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) **released economic projections** from the March 16 to 17 FOMC meeting.

- The Federal Reserve issued its [FOMC statement](#).

TREASURY

- Treasury and the IRS [announced](#) they have disbursed approximately 90 million Economic Impact Payments from the American Rescue Plan.

CONSUMER FINANCIAL PROTECTION BUREAU (CFPB)

- Consumer Financial Protection Bureau Acting Director Dave Uejio [issued a statement](#) regarding consumers' access to Economic Impact Payment funds.

Articles of Interest

- 3/17 The Wall Street Journal published an article titled, ["IRS said to delay tax-filing deadline until mid-May."](#)
- 3/17 The Wall Street Journal published an article titled, ["Fed holds steady on interest rates, bond purchases."](#)
- 3/17 The Wall Street Journal published an article titled, ["Treasury Department says it has issued 90 million stimulus payments."](#)

PUBLIC HEALTH UPDATE

Congressional

SENATE

- Sens. Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) and Rep. Barbara Lee (D-CA) reintroduced the COVID Community Care Act, [legislation](#) that provides emergency funding for community organizations in medically underserved communities that suffer from health disparities to take action as part of the larger public health effort to contain COVID-19.
- Sens. Ted Cruz (R-TX) and John Cornyn (R-TX) sent a [letter](#) to CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky urging the department to use updated Texas population data for the number of vaccine doses sent to the state in order to account for the state's population growth.

Administration

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

- HHS [announced](#) it will invest \$10 billion from the American Rescue Plan to boost testing to reopen schools, \$2.25 billion to increase testing in underserved communities, and issue new guidance on asymptomatic testing in schools, workplaces, and congregate settings.
- HHS [announced](#) it is investing \$150 million to increase access to COVID-19 monoclonal antibody therapeutic treatments for patients in vulnerable communities across the country.

FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION

- Jeff Shuren, M.D., Director of the FDA's Center for Devices and Radiological Health issued a [statement](#) outlining information for test developers about a streamlined path to emergency use authorization for COVID-19 screening tools as well as information to help developers as they set up testing programs.

CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION

- CDC published a [web page](#) titled, "SARS-CoV-2 Variants," outlining variant classifications, variants of interest, variants of concern, and variants of high consequence.

Articles of Interest

- 3/17 CNN published an article titled, "[The race between variants and vaccines in US will be a close call, expert warns, and eased restrictions aren't helping.](#)"
 - 3/17 USA Today published an article titled, "['It's easy to scare people': Europe's decision to pull AstraZeneca-Oxford vaccine threatens global COVID-19 recovery efforts, US experts say.](#)"
 - 3/17 CNN published an article titled, "[Coronavirus strains first detected in California are officially 'variants of concern,' CDC says.](#)"
 - 3/16 The Washington Post published an article titled, "[Some long-haul covid-19 patients say their symptoms are subsiding after getting vaccines.](#)"
 - 3/16 The New York Times published an article titled, "[Three Feet or Six? Distancing Guideline for Schools Stirs Debate.](#)"
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LABOR UPDATE

Administration

DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

- DOL's Employment and Training Administration has published [guidance](#) to state workforce agencies regarding implementation of the ARPA provisions.