



## DAILY COVID-19 UPDATE

March 18, 2021

### WHAT HAPPENED TODAY

Today, during a White House briefing, Press Secretary Jen Psaki **announced** that the Biden Administration is working to finalize plans to send 2.5 million doses of AstraZeneca's COVID-19 vaccine to Mexico and 1.5 million doses to Canada. Currently, the U.S. has millions of doses of AstraZeneca's vaccine stockpiled as it is still going through clinical trials before the company can apply for FDA's emergency use authorization.

Additionally, the Senate voted 50-49 to **confirm** California Attorney General Xavier Becerra as the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Mr. Becerra will play a key role in the federal response to the COVID-19 pandemic, working to facilitate the rollout of coronavirus vaccines, implement the American Rescue Plan, and develop a national testing strategy, among other things.

Notably, the Department of Education **announced** additional details regarding its virtual National Safe School Reopening Summit scheduled for next week. Education Secretary Miguel Cardona and Centers for Disease Control and

### LATEST STATISTICS

**151,108,445** COVID-19 vaccines have been distributed in the U.S and **75,495,716** Americans have received the first dose.

There are a total of **121,585,388** confirmed cases worldwide, **2,685,770** deaths and **68,888,923** people have recovered.

There are **29,651,206** confirmed cases of the coronavirus in the U.S. and **538,779** deaths.

### LATEST PMJ RESOURCES

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

[Coronavirus State Reopening Tracker](#)

Prevention (CDC) Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky will participate in the summit. Secretary Cardona stated the summit will focus on best practices and "finding creative solutions to support our students and bring them back to in-person learning."

Since our last update, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has released guidance related to the coronavirus pandemic. Please see below for more details.

[Biden Administration Transition Tracker](#)

[President Biden EO Tracker](#)

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

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## ECONOMIC UPDATE

### *Congressional*

#### SENATE

- Senate Finance Committee Chairman Ron Wyden (D-OR), along with Senators Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Michael Bennet (D-CO), and Cory Booker (D-NJ), [introduced legislation](#) to "jumpstart the economic recovery" by financing six months of wages and supportive services for eligible jobless workers.
- Senate Banking Committee Chairman Sherrod Brown (D-OH), along with Senators Ron Wyden (D-OR), Bob Menendez (D-NJ), and Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), [introduced a bill](#) to protect the stimulus checks from the American Rescue Plan from garnishment by private debt collectors.

### *Administration*

#### WHITE HOUSE

- [Statement](#) by President Biden applauding House passage of the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) extension.

#### TREASURY

- Treasury and the Internal Revenue Service [announced](#) the federal income tax filing due date for individuals for the 2020 tax year will be automatically extended from April 15, 2021 to May 17, 2021.
- Secretary Yellen [spoke](#) with the co-chairs of the National Governors Association's Bipartisan Economic Recovery and Revitalization Task Force.

### Articles of Interest

- 3/18 The Wall Street Journal published an article titled, ["Federal Covid-19 aid aims to help cities, states avoid cutting jobs and services."](#)
- 3/18 The Wall Street Journal published an article titled, ["U.S. jobless claims hover near pandemic lows."](#)
- 3/17 The New York Times published an article titled, ["Biden Administration faces legal fight over state aid restrictions on tax cuts."](#)

## **PUBLIC HEALTH UPDATE**

### ***Congressional***

#### **HOUSE**

- Reps. Bill Pascrell (D-NJ), Mike Kelly (R-PA), Anna Eshoo (D-CA), and David McKinley (R-WV) introduced the Nursing Home Reform Modernization Act. This [legislation](#) will expand the Special Focus Facility (SFF) program in nursing homes and ensure that all facilities nominated for the program receive additional oversight, enforcement, and technical assistance.

#### **SENATE**

- Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-OH) reintroduced [legislation](#) to ensure more Americans can receive all necessary vaccines at no out-of-pocket cost. The Helping Adults Protect Immunity Act (HAPI) Act would create parity in vaccine coverage between traditional Medicaid and Medicaid expansion programs. The bill would also provide enhanced federal matching funds for states to better reach at-risk and vulnerable patient populations.

### ***Administration***

#### **THE WHITE HOUSE**

- The White House released a transcript of yesterday's [press briefing](#) by the COVID-19 Response Team and public health officials.
- The White House released a transcript of yesterday's [press briefing](#) by Press Secretary Jen Psaki and Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona on utilizing testing, vaccines, and reduced three-foot distance to reopen schools.

#### **FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION**

- The FDA [granted](#) marketing authorization of the BioFire Respiratory Panel 2.1 (RP2.1), a diagnostic test for the detection and identification of multiple respiratory viral and bacterial nucleic acids in nasopharyngeal swabs obtained from individuals suspected of COVID-19 and other respiratory tract infections.

#### **NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH**

- NIH Director Dr. Francis Collins penned a [blog post](#) titled, "Finding New Ways to Study Coronavirus...From Studying Bats."

#### **CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION**

- CDC issued interim [guidance](#) for COVID-19 testing and screening at institutions of higher education.
- CDC issued interim [guidance](#) for COVID-19 testing and screening in homeless shelters and encampments.
- CDC published a [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#) titled, "County-Level COVID-19 Vaccination Coverage and Social Vulnerability — United States, December 14, 2020–March 1, 2021."

#### **Articles of Interest**

- 3/18 CNN published an article titled, "[US could be on the cusp of a surge in Covid-19 infections, but vaccinations will limit the damage.](#)"

- 3/18 The Washington Post published an article titled, "[Fauci warns that we're in 'a race between the vaccine and the virus.'](#)"
  - 3/18 Reuters published an article titled, "[U.S. plans to send four million doses of AstraZeneca vaccine to Mexico, Canada.](#)"
  - 3/17 The Washington Post published an article titled, "[CDC set to revisit advice on spacing between students amid new evidence.](#)"
  - 3/17 CNBC published an article titled, "[Covid reinfection is rare — but you're more at risk if you're over 65, study finds.](#)"
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## LABOR UPDATE

### *Administration*

#### DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

- DOL released its [Unemployment Insurance Weekly Claims](#) report for the week ending March 13.