



FROM:	Bose Public Affairs Group
DATE:	May 8, 2020
RE:	Weekly COVID-19 Update

BIG PICTURE

The number of confirmed coronavirus infections continues to increase to more than 3.9 million people worldwide. The global death toll is up nearly 40,000 from last week to now more than 272,000. The U.S. death toll reached 76,500. The case load in the United States far surpasses that of any other country, with more than 1.25 million confirmed cases. That is more confirmed cases than Spain, Italy, United Kingdom, Russia, France, and Germany combined, the next 6 countries on the list.

[Here is where all 50 states stand on reopening](#)

[CDC COVID-19 Forecasts](#)

[List of federal agency resources in response to COVID-19](#)

[Institutional and Agency Guidance Specific to Federal Award Impact on COVID-19](#)

[COVID-19 School Closure Map](#)

ADMINISTRATION

[White House Announces Intent to Wind Down Coronavirus Task Force](#)

The White House is planning to wind down its coronavirus task force in the coming weeks, shifting control back to agencies to manage the federal government's response efforts. "We're having a conversation about that and about what the proper time is for the task force to complete its work," Vice President Mike Pence said at a briefing for reporters on Tuesday. At that point, he added, the work would be moved to agencies like the Federal Emergency Management Agency.



The closing down of the task force comes as President Trump has shifted his focus toward reopening the economy with more than a dozen states allowing people to slowly return to work along with the re-opening of businesses like hair salons and restaurants. The administration said they are seeing a decrease in the number of hospitalizations and have already received reopening plans from 41 states. All these developments are being taken into account, officials said, as they determine the necessity of the task force moving forward. The future of the task force will be based on the health conditions, aides said. Pence has characterized the discussion of dissolving the task force as “preliminary.”

USDA to Increase Relief Payment Caps to Farmers and Ranchers

Following bipartisan backlash from Congress and industry groups representing farmers and ranchers, Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue on Friday announced that the Department of Agriculture (USDA) will increase limits on the amount of coronavirus relief checks paid out to farmers and ranchers to offset their losses caused by the pandemic. This means producers will be able to receive additional money from USDA as a part of the \$19 billion aid package the agency announced in mid-April, which limited payments to \$125,000 per commodity and \$250,000 per farmer, matching the caps approved by Congress in the 2018 farm bill.

Additional guidance on the payment plan will be published following the Office of Management and Budget’s approval. Secretary Perdue said he hopes to start sending checks to producers by the end of May.

CONGRESS

Phase 4 Package

With the Senate back in session and House Democratic leadership focused on their chamber’s intent to consider additional legislation responding to the pandemic, development around the next relief package was top of mind on Capitol Hill this week.

On Thursday, Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) and Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) announced plans to unveil their version of a fifth package as early as this weekend. Realistically, however, it is now looking more like this will not happen until next week as Speaker Pelosi continues to manage the broad expectations from the Democratic caucus. Initial intelligence reports on the House process indicate that the priorities forwarded by House committee chairs resulted in a package that was just too expensive and unwieldy. Ultimately a final bill will have to be negotiated with Senate Republicans as well as the White House and so some restraint is necessary.



The bill will first be considered and voted on in the House, either late next week or the week after, where it is unlikely to receive any Republican support. Democrats hope the bill will help jumpstart negotiations with Republicans, who have urged Congress to wait on additional aid as implementation of the CARES Act passed at the March continues to play out. House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer told members on Thursday that the House “will vote when it’s ready” and that members would have a 72 hour notice to return to Washington to vote on the bill. The Senate will be in session next week.

According to most press reports, the centerpiece of the Democratic package will include significant resources to assist state, local and Tribal governments, many of which are reeling from significant budget shortfalls caused by the pandemic. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) has stated that any amount of aid for state and local governments in the bill will be dependent on Democrats accepting his proposal to include liability protections for businesses and employees, which Pelosi has strongly opposed.

Other issues advocates will be keeping a close eye on include: a payroll tax cut championed by President Trump; aid to support low-income renters; additional funding and programmatic changes to allow for more flexibility for the small business Paycheck Protection Program (PPP); expanded unemployment benefits; another round of direct payments to individuals; funding for additional food aid; and additional relief funding for school districts and higher education institutions.

Congressional Committees Examine COVID-19 Response

This week featured two separate committee hearings to examine the nation’s response to the pandemic and efforts to bolster the ability to prevent and better respond to future public health crises. Both hearings underscored the abnormal environment Congress is conducting its business in during the pandemic, with several empty chairs placed in between each member on the dias, facemasks being worn, and taped-off squares on the floor to ensure audience members, witnesses, and staff maintain their distance.

On Wednesday, the House Appropriations Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Subcommittee [held a hearing](#) focused on the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, with medical experts testifying on the complex nature of the coronavirus and urging local, state, and federal officials to prioritize public health and data as the country approaches the second phase of pandemic response.

On Thursday, the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee [held a hearing](#) focusing on ending the pandemic and efforts to better prepare for future public health threats. Committee Chairman Lamar Alexander (R-TN) and Ranking Member Patty Murray (D-



WA) agreed that a significant lack of testing remains and more tests are needed before the country can safely reopen. Alexander stated, "Testing will help Americans traumatized by daily reports of the virus gain the confidence to go back to work and back to school." Senator Murray also noted the need to "rapidly recruit, train, and sustain a workforce to assist with contact tracing, quarantine, and isolation, and using data to surveil and track the disease within communities." Other issues the Committee will examine will include efforts to bolster the supply chain to help combat the current and future public health crises.

BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY

Unemployment continues to rise as the rate shot up to 14.7% by the end of April, the highest unemployment rate since the Great Depression. U.S. employers have cut more than 20 million jobs and the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office predicts the unemployment rate will be 11.4% by the end of year, and will not fall below 10% until 2022.

Even with the devastating jobs figures released on Friday, all three major U.S. stock indexes grew at least 2% over the week. Analysts attribute this growth to cooled tensions between the U.S. and China over trade disputes that helped drive the past two weeks of market losses. They also note that the recent unemployment data classifies about 80% of lost jobs as "temporary", fueling hope that those jobs will return as businesses begin to reopen and other restrictions are lifted.

Economic Development Administration Accepting Applications for Local Relief Funding

U.S. Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross on Thursday announced that the Department's Economic Development Administration (EDA) is now accepting applications from eligible grantees for supplemental funds under the CARES Act to help communities prevent, prepare for, and respond to the pandemic. Under this announcement, EDA will make CARES Act Recovery Assistance grants under the authority of its Economic Adjustment Assistance (EAA) program, which is intended to support the economic development needs and priorities of local and regional stakeholders. Eligible stakeholders include state and local governmental entities, institutions of higher education, not-for-profit entities, and federally recognized Tribes. More information [here](#).

Treasury Department Announces New 20-Year Bond

The Treasury Department is launching a new 20-year bond later this month to help fund the record-setting levels of borrowing the government anticipates to do to support the economy through the pandemic. The Treasury Department said it will introduce a 20-year coupon bond as part of its quarterly refunding at an auction on May 20th. The bond comes as the Treasury



Department recently announced that it anticipates borrowing at least \$3 trillion dollars in the current quarter. The 20-year bond will contribute to the Department's effort to extend the duration of the government's borrowing rate as the pandemic continues to unfold.

HEALTH CARE

Gilead Sciences Seeking Partners to Scale Manufacturing of COVID-19 Treatment Drug

On Tuesday, Gilead Sciences announced plans to partner with other drug makers to manufacture and sell its COVID-19 treatment, remdesivir, outside of the U.S. in order to meet global demand for patients seeking treatment. Gilead said it is in discussions with manufacturing companies in Europe and Asia to license the drug for mass manufacturing through at least 2022. More [here](#).

Roche Antibody Test Approved for Emergency Use

On Sunday, Roche [announced](#) it had received emergency use authorization from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for its antibody test for COVID-19. The company's automated testing machines make the tests more rapidly available and offer test providers the ability to test in higher quantities to help determine if a patient has been exposed and if they have developed antibodies against the virus. The machines have already been installed in more than 100 U.S. labs, so the company can scale availability immediately.

Moderna Vaccine Trial Moves to Phase 2

On Thursday, Moderna [announced](#) it received approval from the FDA to advance to a phase 2 trial for its vaccine to combat the coronavirus. The approval comes after completion of its phase 1 test with 45 volunteers in Seattle Washington, which produced "positive results," according to the company. The vaccine (mRNA-1273) was the first Coronavirus vaccine to enter phase 1 human trials. The phase 2 trial will include 600 volunteers and is expected to begin next week.

Moderna's vaccine was created based on the genetic sequence of the novel coronavirus and uses synthetic messenger RNA to inoculate against the virus. Previous research indicates that such treatments help the body immunize against a virus and can potentially be developed and manufactured more quickly than traditional vaccines.

OTHER NEWS

[5-year-old is first child death from COVID-19-related inflammatory syndrome reported in U.S](#)

NBC News (May 8, 2020)

["Alarming" spike in deadly unintentional shootings by kids as gun sales soar during lockdowns](#)

CBS News (May 8, 2020)



[After Recovery From the Coronavirus, Most People Carry Antibodies](#)

New York Times (May 7, 2020)

[The Atlantic Daily: What's Safe to Do During the Pandemic's Next Phase?](#)

The Atlantic (May 7, 2020)

CONCLUSION

The Bose Public Affairs Group team will continue to monitor all relevant developments over the weekend and will be providing ongoing updates as they develop.

