



COVID-19 UPDATE August 24, 2020

Global

Total cases – 23,507,852

Total deaths – 809,958

United States

Total cases – 5,719,124

Total deaths – 176,978

Total # tests – 71,700,264

As of Monday afternoon, coronavirus cases in the U.S. increased by 0.6% to 5.72 million, as compared to the same time yesterday, according to data collected by Johns Hopkins University and Bloomberg News. California had the largest number of confirmed cases at 672,652, a 0.8% increase from the same time the previous day, and Texas saw the largest number of deaths reported in the last 24 hours, with 127 lives lost.

Trump Administration

- The Trump administration released new details on the Paycheck Protection Program, including information on almost 379,000 new loans that were approved in July and August. The new data from the Small Business Administration and Treasury Department, which cover loans approved after Congress extended the PPP in July, can be found [here](#). Last month, the agencies had released data for almost 4.9 million loans approved from April 3 through June 30.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention updated its guidance for reopening schools to include advice on what to do with students who come down with Covid-19, filling in a gap that left administrators on their own to determine the best approach. The guidelines are largely common-sense, although noteworthy after a week in which several large colleges have reversed plans for in-person learning after coronavirus outbreaks among students. In addition, a report published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention suggests child-care centers may reopen safely in areas where the virus is low.
- The Federal Reserve has tapped only a fraction of the \$600 billion that is in an emergency lending program for small and medium businesses struggling during the pandemic, said the Congressional Oversight Commission, the commission created by the CARES Act to conduct oversight over its implementation. The program “has seen modest initial activity thus far,” according to a monthly report from the Commission.

Congress

- The House on Saturday voted to pass a bill that would bar the U.S. Postal Service from making any changes to its operations amid the coronavirus pandemic and would give the agency \$25 billion in additional funding.
- Senate Republicans are circulating a slimmed-down Covid-19 stimulus package that would provide \$300 a week in unemployment benefits and funding for schools, while also changing the terms of funding provided earlier this year to the U.S. Postal Service. The proposal could be used as a counteroffer to the \$25 billion Postal Service funding bill the House passed on Saturday. The “skinny” plan doesn’t include the \$1,200 checks included in a roughly \$1 trillion Republican proposal known as the “HEALS Act.” The text also omits the assistance to state and local governments that Democrats have sought, such as the \$1 trillion proposed in the “Heroes Act” ([H.R. 6800](#)) passed in May by the House.
- Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) said it’d be bad strategy to pass a standalone bill favored by some House Democrats to extend the \$600 weekly unemployment benefits with an extension linked to jobless rates. Pelosi did suggest, however, that Democrats might be willing to meet Republicans in the middle over new coronavirus relief funds, as stimulus talks with the White House remain stalled.
- Sens. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.), Chris Murphy (D-Conn.) and Tina Smith (D-Minn.) want the Department of Health and Human Services and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to gather data on coronavirus cases tied to universities in a standardized format to monitor disparities among school staff and students. The senators said a lack of guidance will lead to a poor patchwork of inconsistent information.
- House Democrats want a Government Accountability Office investigation into HHS’s changes to hospital capacity reporting systems and requirements. In a letter requesting the review, House Energy and Commerce Chairman Frank Pallone Jr. (D-N.J.) and others said they were “concerned that these reporting changes undermine the nation’s COVID-19 response efforts.”
- House Ways and Means Chairman Richard Neal (D-Mass.) asked the Internal Revenue Service to stop sending Americans notices of taxes due until the agency gets through a queue of unopened mail. Many taxpayers receiving these notices “already have made the payments that the IRS seeks,” he said. Due to IRS office closures amid the pandemic, the IRS amassed up to 12 million pieces of unopened mail.

COVID-19 Vaccines and Treatment

- The Trump administration is mulling the possibility of issuing an emergency use authorization before the presidential election for a coronavirus vaccine being developed by AstraZeneca and Oxford University, the Financial Times reported.
- The FDA may update its emergency use authorization for Gilead’s remdesivir drug to include patients hospitalized with moderate Covid-19 cases, despite mixed trial results, the company’s top research executive said Friday. The agency in May approved remdesivir on an emergency basis for patients hospitalized with severe virus cases.
- After President Trump said at a press conference last week that a coronavirus treatment involving blood plasma donated by people who have recovered from Covid-19 will be expanded to more sick Americans, the US Food and Drug Administration on Sunday issued an emergency use authorization for convalescent plasma to treat Covid-19, saying the “known and potential benefits of the product outweigh the known and potential risks of the product.” The FDA said more than 70,000 patients had been treated with convalescent plasma, which is made using the blood of people who have recovered from coronavirus infections.

