



COVID-19 UPDATE September 21, 2020

Global

Total cases – 31,092,895

Total deaths – 961,301

United States

Total cases – 6,812,470

Total deaths – 199,517

Total # tests – 103,274,314

Trump Administration

- The **U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** removed from its website what it said was draft guidance posted late last week stating that the coronavirus could spread through the air in small particles at distances of more than six feet.
 - On Friday, the CDC had said in an update to its website that in addition to spreading between people in close contact, the novel coronavirus could spread through airborne particles that can linger in the air and travel more than six feet, in settings such as restaurants, fitness classes, and choir practices.
 - The posting appeared to confirm emerging research that suggests tiny particles can transport the virus some distance, especially in indoor or poorly ventilated environments.
 - By Monday, however, the new guidance had been taken down. At the top of the webpage, the agency said that a draft version had been published “in error” and [that](#) it was in the process of updating its recommendations about airborne transmission.
- On Friday, the **CDC** reversed its recommendation that people without COVID-19 symptoms do not need to be tested, even if they were exposed to someone infected with the virus. The controversial recommendation drew widespread criticism from public health experts concerned about asymptomatic carriers of coronavirus, but the CDC now explicitly instructs people who have come into contact with the virus to take a test regardless of their symptoms.
- **Trump administration officials** pulled \$700 million from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the key health agency involved in protecting the public from infection, to fund the Operation Warp Speed effort to develop drugs and vaccines.
- The **U.S.** has spent \$1.5 trillion of the \$2.6 trillion that **Congress** has allocated to confront the health and economic fallout from the pandemic. Key issues, including the potential for fraudulent small business loans and testing problems continue to be a concern, the **GAO** said in a report released Monday.
 - The report also pointed out new problems that have arisen, including inconsistent school re-opening guidelines and the possibility that millions of people have missed out on the \$1,200 stimulus payments.

Congress

- **House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.)** said she is willing to negotiate on some Democratic priorities for a stimulus to include aid for industries such as airlines and restaurants that are continuing to struggle amid the pandemic.
 - Pelosi said in an interview that she's not backing off from the \$2.2 trillion package she and **Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.)** proposed before discussions with the White House broke off last month. But since the House passed its stimulus in May, "other issues have emerged" as the virus has continued to disrupt lives that need to be addressed in any new plan, Pelosi said.
 - She didn't give any specifics about how much aid should go to airlines and other businesses, like restaurants, or what other priorities might have to be dropped or scaled back.
 - Republicans have scoffed at the \$2.2 trillion plan, but Trump has signaled that he may support a bigger stimulus package than a \$1.1 trillion proposal his administration had previously backed. "It will get done when they come to the table," Pelosi said of Senate Republicans. "The ball is in their court."
- **Pelosi** also said the standoff on the stimulus won't interfere with passage of a stopgap funding bill to keep the government running after the fiscal year ends on Sept. 30.
- Passenger air carriers, cargo air carriers, and airline contractors would receive an additional \$28 billion in pandemic aid under a [bill](#) announced by Republican senators **Roger Wicker** and **Susan Collins**.
 - Bill would tap unused loan money marked for national security businesses under March coronavirus legislation
 - Airlines who accept aid under the bill would be generally barred from laying off workers until March 31
 - Previous ban on involuntary furloughs expires Sept. 30
- The **bipartisan Problem Solvers Caucus** introduced a \$2 trillion [framework](#) that includes aid to small businesses and schools, a new round of \$1,200 stimulus checks, more unemployment benefits, and funding to help with the November elections.
 - White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows said that the bill "provides a foundation" for a potential deal, and that he was "encouraged" by the legislation and Pelosi's promise to keep the House in session until a compromise is reached. President Trump also expressed support for the proposal, saying that he agrees "with a lot of it."
 - **Eight Democratic House committee chairs** released a joint statement saying the framework "falls short of what is needed to save lives and boost the economy." Rep. Max Rose (D-NY-11) voiced his frustration that Democrats rejected the proposal so quickly, telling CNN that they are "rejecting a bold bipartisan measure outright and insinuating things are not in there when they actually are and just continuing to kick the can down the road over and over and over again."

COVID-19 Vaccines and Treatment

- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention director Dr. Robert Redfield** said during a Senate Appropriations subcommittee hearing that a vaccine will likely not be generally available to the American public until **the late second quarter or third quarter of 2021**. He said he believed that a vaccine would be available in a very limited supply in November or December, but that first

responders and at-risk individuals will be prioritized. Redfield also said that wearing a mask could be more effective than a vaccine at preventing the spread of the virus.

- The federal government needs an additional \$5.5 billion to \$6 billion to distribute a Covid-19 vaccine once one is approved, **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Director Robert Redfield** told a Senate panel. “We do not have the resources to support 64 jurisdictions to get this plan operational. To me, it’s an urgency that we get that,” Redfield told the Senate Labor-HHS appropriations subcommittee.
- On Friday during a White House press briefing, **President Trump** said there will be enough doses of the coronavirus vaccine for every American by **April**.
- **Three drug companies, AstraZeneca, Moderna, and Pfizer**, have disclosed blueprints for their coronavirus vaccine trials. It is unusual for companies to reveal their protocols while trials are still underway, but the move is likely intended to address concern among Americans that regulators, under pressure from President Trump to release a vaccine before Election Day, may approve an unsafe or ineffective vaccine.
- Preparations are underway to ensure that vaccines against Covid-19 will be shipped to administration sites within 24 hours of clearance by U.S. regulators, **health officials** said.
 - Federal officials issued guidance to states Wednesday that are designed to speed the path of coronavirus shots to the population, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Robert Redfield said in a press conference.
- The **Trump administration** should set up a time frame to document and share a plan to distribute and give a potential Covid-19 vaccine to Americans, the **Government Accountability Office** [says](#).
 - HHS Secretary Alex Azar should work with Defense Secretary Mark Esper on the plan, GAO says in a [third report](#) on the administration’s pandemic response
 - HHS neither agreed or disagreed with the recommendation but noted factors that might complicate publication of a plan, while DOD partially agreed with GAO and clarified it is helping HHS with distribution
 - “GAO maintains that a time frame is necessary so all relevant stakeholders will be best positioned to begin their planning,” the government’s auditing agency said, adding it will review two documents released Sept. 16 by HHS and DOD that outline a strategy for a potential vaccine

Other

- **73 countries** around the world are seeing surges in newly detected cases. India alone is reporting 90,000 new cases each day.
- Today, **New York City schools** reopened for 90,000 pre-K students and children with advanced disabilities. The remaining 1.1 million students in the city will begin the school year remotely, but will have the option of attending class in person over the next several weeks.
- **Wisconsin** surpassed 100,000 cases, reflecting an increase in infections around the Midwest. The state [reported](#) 1,665 new cases on Sunday for a total of 101,227, though the increase dropped to less than 2,000 for the first time in four days.
- **Texas Governor Greg Abbott** relaxed some virus restrictions across most of the state, citing plummeting hospital admissions.
 - Restaurants, retail stores, office buildings, factories, gyms, and museums will be allowed to operate at 75% of capacity starting Sept. 21, Abbott said during a media briefing on Thursday. That’s up from the 50% limit in place since late June, when a resurgence in Covid-19 cases prompted him to reverse an earlier opening order.
- The governments of **Canada, United States, and Mexico** announced that they have decided to extend the border closure to all non-essential travel until at least October 21. The strict border ban, which was introduced in mid-March to help stop the spread of the coronavirus, was set to

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expire on September 21, 2020. The ban only covers non-essential travel, and health-care workers, truck drivers transporting essential goods, temporary foreign workers and more continue to remain exempt.

