



## COVID-19 UPDATE December 28, 2020

### *Global*

Total cases – 81,146,264

Total deaths – 1,771,161

### *United States*

Total cases – 19,248,978

Total deaths – 334,361

Global cases have crossed the 80 million mark as vaccine distribution efforts have begun worldwide. About 1.9 million people across the U.S. have received the first dose of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines, and states have received shipments of about 9.5 million doses of the vaccine total. The U.S. currently averages about 200,000 new cases per day, and public health experts are concerned about this increasing due to holiday travelers.

### **Trump Administration**

- On Sunday night, **President Trump** signed a bill with \$900 billion in pandemic relief, as well as \$1.4 trillion in government spending to fund federal agencies through the end of the fiscal year in September, averting a partial government shut down and backing down from his demand for Americans to be provided with \$2,000 stimulus checks.
  - Because of the delay in Trump’s signing of the coronavirus relief bill, the unemployment benefits Americans will receive may be reduced to 10 weeks, instead of 11.
  - President Trump stated that he signed the bill with promises from Senate Republicans that they would begin the process of voting on the \$2,000 checks.
- The **U.S. Treasury Department** intends to start issuing \$600 direct payments from the bill President Donald Trump signed Sunday beginning this week.
- **President Trump** has stated that he will not be receiving the coronavirus vaccine until it is recommended by the White House medical team, as he is still getting benefits from the experimental monoclonal antibody cocktail he was treated with during his COVID recovery.
- The **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** now requires air passengers arriving from the U.K. to the U.S. to get a negative COVID test no more than 72 hours before leaving.

### **Biden Presidential Transition**

- **President-elect Joe Biden**, along with Dr. Jill Biden, has received the first dose of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine. Vice President-elect Kamala Harris, along with her husband Doug Emhoff, is slated to receive the first dose of the vaccine this week.
- When in office, **Biden** will likely invoke the **Defense Production Act**, which gives the President broad authority to increase manufacturing output of critical items, according to Celine Gounder,

a member of Biden's COVID-19 advisory team. Biden is expected to utilize the Act to ensure a supply of raw materials for the vaccine, personal protective equipment, and materials for testing.

### Congress

- The **House** is set to vote today (Monday, Dec. 28<sup>th</sup>) on President Trump's \$2,000 stimulus check proposal, with the expectation that House Democrats will vote in favor of these increased payments. The bill needs two-thirds support from the House under the current procedure measure being used, and even if it passes the House it is not expected to pass a Republican-led Senate.
  - In a statement, **President Trump** said the Senate had agreed to begin the process of voting on the \$2,000 checks along with a measure to end liability protections for social media and an investigation into alleged voter fraud.
- The bill coming to the House floor vote around 5 p.m. Monday has some added provisions, besides adding \$1,400 to the direct payments.
  - The House bill would expand the eligibility of household members who can get the money, allowing adult dependents, as well as child dependents, to receive the payments. Currently, just children of adults under the income caps qualify for the payments.

### Vaccines and Treatment

- **Pfizer** and **BioNTech** agreed to supply the U.S. government with an additional 100 million doses of the companies' COVID-19 vaccine from production facilities in the U.S., doubling the expected delivery.
  - This agreement brings the total to 200 million doses, which the companies expect to deliver to Operation Warp Speed by July 31, 2021.
  - The U.S. government will pay \$1.95 billion for the additional 100 million doses.
- The U.S. needs to invest more in getting COVID vaccines out into the community once the first tranche, designated mostly for health care professionals and workers and residents in nursing homes, is finished, said **former FDA Commissioner Scott Gottlieb**.
  - So far almost 2 million doses have been administered in the U.S., according to a state-by-state tally compiled by Bloomberg News. **Gottlieb** said some states have struggled to absorb the doses they've been allocated, and that the effort will move into "hard to vaccinate populations" in January.
- **Dr. Anthony Fauci** said experts are studying whether vaccines will work against the new strain of the coronavirus beginning to spread from the U.K. He said on CNN's State of the Union that viruses mutate "all the time" and that most mutations don't have much significance. But, he added: "You take something like this very seriously."
  - **Fauci** also warned that the worst is yet to come for the pandemic and said there still is a chance for a "surge upon a surge" with people traveling for the holidays. He said the U.S. is at a "very critical point" in combating the pandemic.
- The **U.K.** is poised to approve the vaccine produced by **AstraZeneca Plc and the University of Oxford**, giving the country another powerful tool to fight the pandemic as concern mounts over rising infections.
  - Britain's drug regulator could clear the shot for use as early as this week. AstraZeneca Chief Executive Officer Pascal Soriot and U.K. health officials had previously said they hoped for approval by the end of the year.
- The **Novovax** coronavirus vaccine has begun late-stage trials in the U.S, becoming the 5<sup>th</sup> vaccine to begin Phase 3 trials.

## MONUMENT ADVOCACY

- A Covid-19 vaccine developed by Chinese pharmaceutical firm **Sinovac Biotech Ltd.** was found to be more than 50% effective in a Brazilian clinical trial, though researchers delayed releasing more information at the request of the company.
  - A 50% efficacy rate is a minimum standard set by U.S. regulators for emergency authorization of Covid vaccines. mRNA vaccines from Moderna Inc. and Pfizer Inc. have produced far better results, reducing symptomatic Covid cases by well over 90% in giant trials.

### Other

- **New York Governor** Andrew Cuomo said he will extend the state's moratorium on evictions, which is set to expire Jan. 1.
- **New York Mayor** Bill de Blasio said the city will strictly enforce quarantine rules for all travelers arriving in the city during the holidays, particularly those from the U.K., where a highly contagious new Covid-19 strain has been detected.
  - All visitors arriving at New York City's airports will fill out forms that will be forwarded to the state. Every traveler also will receive a city health department order to quarantine via certified mail to their home or hotel. All travelers from the U.K. will have sheriff deputies visiting their homes and hotels, he said. Visitors may avoid extended quarantine by getting tested before they travel and after they arrive, he said.
  - Travelers ordered to quarantine will be offered support services including free hotel stays and food delivery, if necessary. Violators will be subject to \$1,000 fines per day, the mayor said. Motorists coming into the city will also be checked. About 10,000 car-stops have already been made in recent weeks. Those checks will be conducted more intensively over the holidays, the mayor said.

