



COVID-19 UPDATE

February 1, 2021

Global

Total cases- 103,673,925

Total deaths- 2,241,052

United States

Total cases- 26,777,855

Total deaths- 452,366

Global COVID cases have broken the 100 million mark as the U.S. nears 30 million cases. Worldwide, more than 100 million vaccine doses have been administered, and in the United States over 25 million people have received at least one dose of the COVID vaccine, with nearly 6 million people fully vaccinated. Travel bans have been implemented in many countries to combat the spread of new COVID variants, even as certain states are easing restrictions. President Biden will soon be meeting with 10 GOP Senators to discuss a COVID relief proposal.

Biden Administration

- **The Biden administration** said it intends to order 100 million more doses each of **Pfizer Inc.** and **Moderna Inc.**'s coronavirus vaccines, and at least temporarily speed up shipments to states to about 10 million doses a week.
 - The new purchases would increase total U.S. orders for the two approved vaccines by 50%, to about 600 million shots. Delivering 10 million doses to states would represent about a 16% increase from the current weekly pace, though the higher pace may only last three weeks.
- **The Biden administration** suspended payments from a \$2.28 billion farm-relief program for a review after officials under former President Donald Trump authorized the aid on their last full day in office.
 - **U.S. Agriculture Department** spokesman Matt Herrick said Thursday that the agency would continue to accept applications for the aid while assessing the program as part of a wide review by the Biden administration of last-minute regulatory actions by Trump.
 - **Debbie Stabenow, the incoming Democratic Senate Agriculture Committee chairwoman**, lauded the review of aid, saying the Trump administration plan didn't address provisions in the final legislation calling for assistance for farmworkers, smaller food processors and others involved in the supply chain.
- **President Joe Biden** moved to make it easier for Americans to buy health insurance during the pandemic, reopening the **federal Obamacare marketplace** with an order Thursday.

- The Obamacare executive order creates a special enrollment period for plans sold in the federal Healthcare.gov market from Feb. 15 to May 15, offering a path to health care for people who've found themselves without insurance coverage after losing their jobs.
- The **Biden administration** has increased monitoring for new variants of the coronavirus that spread more easily, including one that could become the dominant strain in the U.S. by March.
 - The U.S. is asking each state to send at least 750 samples a week to be sequenced to determine what mutations are spreading, **CDC Director Rochelle Walensky** said in a briefing with reporters Friday.
- The **Department of Homeland Security** issued a [National Emergency Determination](#) enabling the Transportation Security Administration to implement Biden's executive order on promoting Covid-19 safety in domestic and international travel. **TSA** will require individuals to wear a mask at TSA screening checkpoints and throughout the commercial and public transportation system. The **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** [also issued](#) a mask-wearing requirement that goes into effect tomorrow for all travelers into, within, or out of the United States, including on airplanes, ships, ferries, trains, subways, buses, taxis, and ride-shares

Congress

- **Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer** and **House Speaker Nancy Pelosi** introduced a fiscal 2021 budget resolution, which is the first step toward producing a reconciliation bill embodying President Biden's stimulus plan.
 - The resolution will give Democrats another legislative tool to use to pass Covid relief.
- **Democratic aides on the House Ways and Means and Senate Finance Committees** are preparing dual-track Covid-19 relief plans. One option presumes moving ahead with bipartisan votes and the other relies just on Democrats, amid continuing discussions between the Biden administration and lawmakers on the president's \$1.9 trillion proposal.
 - Richard Shelby, the top Republican on the Senate Appropriations Cmte, told reporters he's open to a coronavirus relief bill targeting vaccines if the funds are needed.
- **A group of 10 Republican senators** wrote to President Joe Biden on Sunday offering an alternative proposal for Covid-19 economic stimulus they say would gain bipartisan support. It's expected to be in the \$500 billion to \$600 billion range, versus Biden's plan for a \$1.9 trillion stimulus that GOP lawmakers have rejected, an aide said.
 - The senators will head to the White House on Monday to discuss their proposal.
 - While the proposal includes similar amounts for national vaccine and testing programs, as well as other direct virus response measures, it omits several key items sought by the president and congressional Democrats, notably aid for state and local governments and expanded funding for schools to reopen.
 - The Republicans' offer also doesn't include White House proposals such as an increase in the minimum wage and expanded tax credits for child care. It also would provide smaller direct payments and pandemic unemployment benefits.
- **House Democrats** are eager to advance permanent paid leave legislation in tandem with temporary protections the Biden administration is expected to try to push through Congress in coming weeks.
 - Two pieces of legislation aimed at guaranteeing national leave—the Family and Medical Insurance Leave Act (or FAMILY Act) and the Healthy Families Act —were reintroduced by **Rep. Rosa DeLauro** (D-Conn.) last session. **Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand** (D-N.Y.) sponsored the FAMILY Act and **Sen. Patty Murray** (D-Wash.) sponsored the Healthy Families Act in

the Senate. **DeLauro** said in a statement that she intends to reintroduce both bills during the 117th Congress.

- Members of the **House Energy and Commerce Committee** are working with Biden administration officials to assemble many of the health-related aspects of a Covid-19 relief plan that could reach the floor next month, **Rep. Anna Eshoo (D-Calif.)** said.
 - Her panel [scheduled a Feb. 3 hearing](#) on accelerating the delivery of the Covid-19 vaccine, expanding testing for the virus, and addressing shortages in supply of medical supplies.
- **House Democrats** are pushing for legislation to fund **upgraded school facilities**, save teachers' jobs, and extend the school year to offset learning shortfalls after classrooms shut down during the Covid-19 pandemic.
 - Taken together, the package of bills unveiled Thursday would authorize an additional roughly \$466 billion in federal support for education over the next decade.
- **Sens. Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.) and Mark Warner (D-Va.), and Reps. Anna Eshoo (D-Calif.), Jan Schakowsky (D-Ill.), and Suzan DelBene (D-Wash.)** will reintroduce **their Public Health Emergency Privacy Act**. The [text](#) is the same as the version from the 116th Congress.
 - The bill seeks to protect the privacy of public health data by prohibiting against its use for discriminatory, unrelated or intrusive purposes and by requiring public opt-in consent to share their data. The bill is endorsed by numerous privacy advocacy groups including Access Now, the Electronic Privacy and Information Center and Public Knowledge.
- **Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.)** told reporters the House will vote next week on a budget resolution, the first step in setting up a fast-track plan to push through President Joe Biden's \$1.9 trillion stimulus bill without Republican support. "We have to act," Pelosi said, adding that Democrats won't "surrender" if Republicans opt to not cooperate on stimulus aid.
 - **Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.)** on the Senate floor this morning reiterated calls for a "bold and robust" coronavirus relief package and said the chamber would act next week. "The Senate as early as next week will begin the process of considering a very strong Covid relief bill," Schumer said. Democrats' preference is to have a bipartisan bill, Schumer also said, but if Republicans oppose the legislation "we will have to move forward without them."
 - **House Budget Chairman John Yarmuth (D-Ky.)** said the plan at this point is to go directly to the floor with the budget, bypassing any lengthy markup procedure with his panel. The budget resolution will contain instructions to other committees to craft their portions of the stimulus measure.
- **Democrats in Congress** say the **Centers for Disease Control and Food and Drug Administration** should provide the public updated information on the effectiveness of different kinds of masks worn to prevent the spread of Covid-19.
 - "Wearing a cloth face mask is still the official recommendation of the CDC, but there has been little education or outreach about what kind of masks are most effective," **Independent Senator Bernie Sanders, and Democratic Reps. Adam Schiff, Ro Khanna and Senator Brian Schatz** say Monday in letter to Biden
 - "The White House has recognized this fact by requiring staff to wear N95 masks on the premises"
 - Lawmakers ask Biden to immediately direct the CDC and FDA to provide the public with "clear, actionable and specific information" on mask effectiveness and availability

- The **House Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis** launched an investigation Monday into Covid outbreaks at meatpacking plants targeting industry giants and a federal agency for inadequately protecting workers.
 - Tyson Foods Inc., Smithfield Foods Inc., and JBS USA Holdings Inc., received requests from **House Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis Chair Jim Clyburn** (D-S.C.) to provide information on infections and deaths at plants, along with worker safeguards.
 - The Occupational Safety and Health Administration was also directed to submit coronavirus-related complaints, on-site inspections, enforcement actions, and other documents for the investigation.

Vaccines

- **Pfizer** will be able to supply the U.S. with 200 million Covid-19 vaccine doses two months sooner than previously expected, according to its top executive.
 - **CEO Albert Bourla** said Tuesday that the drugmaker and its partner, **BioNTech SE**, will be able to deliver more doses to the U.S. and European Union before the end of the second quarter due to a change in the vaccine's label that allows health-care providers to extract an additional dose from each vial.
- A new Covid-19 vaccine from **Novavax** Inc. was effective in big trials in both the U.K. and South Africa, but the effectiveness appeared to be reduced in South Africa where a worrisome mutation is prevalent.
 - The results indicated that another highly potent vaccine could soon be available to help ameliorate the pandemic, in addition to existing vaccines from Pfizer Inc., Moderna Inc., and AstraZeneca Plc that are authorized in various countries. But the South Africa results also suggested that the virus is starting to mutate in ways that could make vaccines less effective over time.
- **Pfizer** and **BioNTech** said results of studies indicate their vaccine is effective against both the U.K. and South Africa variants.
 - Research found that neutralization against the virus with key mutations present in the South African variant was slightly lower compared to neutralization of virus containing other mutations. But the companies believe the small difference is unlikely to lead to a significant reduction in the effectiveness of the vaccine.
- The **European Union's drug regulator** cleared a Covid-19 vaccine from **AstraZeneca** and the **University of Oxford** for all adults as a shortfall in expected deliveries raises tensions between the company and the bloc.
 - The go-ahead Friday clears the way for the **European Commission** to issue a conditional marketing authorization. The decision to include older adults in the approval comes after Germany's immunization commission issued a preliminary recommendation Thursday that the inoculation be authorized only for people between the ages of 18 and 64 due to a lack of trial data in older groups.
 - AstraZeneca Plc will deliver 9 million additional vaccine doses to the European Union in the first quarter of this year, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said Sunday.
- In a more than 44,000-person study, **J&J's** vaccine prevented 66% of moderate to severe cases of Covid-19, according to a company statement. It was particularly effective at stopping severe disease, preventing 85% of severe infections and 100% of hospitalizations and deaths.

- Based on the result, J&J plans to file for an emergency-use authorization in the U.S. in early February. The company didn't specify how much of the vaccine would be available immediately, though it reaffirmed that the U.S. would receive 100 million doses by the end of June.
- **New York City** broke down its Covid-19 vaccination data by ethnicity for the first time, with the mayor underscoring a "profound problem" with racial inequality.
 - White residents made up nearly half of the people who have received at least one dose, despite consisting of only a third of the population. Latinos, 29% of the city, only accounted for 15% of those vaccinated. The lowest ratio was among Blacks -- even though they make up almost a quarter of the city's population, they only accounted for 11% of those vaccinated.

Other

- **European Union governments** plan to remove **Japan** from their list of countries whose residents should be allowed to visit the bloc during the current phase of the coronavirus pandemic, according to an EU official familiar with the matter.
 - An update to the EU's recommended travel "white list" continues to exclude the U.S. and all but seven other nations, the official said Tuesday, asking not to be identified because the deliberations were confidential.
- **Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau** unveiled measures to tighten travel restrictions on international travel. The country's largest airlines have agreed to suspend flights to the Caribbean and Mexico for three months, Trudeau said at a press conference in Ottawa.
 - Passengers will be tested on arrival for Covid-19 and will have to quarantine in an approved hotel for three days at their own expense until they receive test results. People with a negative test can finish quarantine at home.
- **New York City indoor dining** can reopen at 25% capacity on Feb. 14, or Valentine's Day, Governor Andrew Cuomo said.
- **Mayor Bill de Blasio** outlined a recovery plan for New York City that focuses on getting workers back into office buildings, students in classrooms and 5 million people vaccinated by the end of June.
 - During his final State of the City address, de Blasio said the city's employees would return in person in May. He also pledged to fully reopen public school buildings in September, allowing all grades to go back to school to make it easier for parents to return to work.
- **Sweden's Public Health Agency** has asked the government to require a negative Covid-19 test for entry into the country, according to a statement. The goal is designed to lower the risk of transmission of new virus variants.
 - Under the proposal, non-Swedish citizens who want to enter the country would have to show a negative test that is no more than 48 hours, while Swedish citizens would be tested on the day of arrival.
- **The Chicago Teachers Union** and **Chicago Public Schools** remained in talks Saturday about a proposed in-person reopening on Monday for kindergarten through eighth grade that the union opposes.
 - Some of the sticking points included which public health metrics should guide a safe reopening, and giving teachers a chance to be vaccinated before getting back into the classroom with kids. A teachers' strike remains possible. The union said tentative

agreements were reached Saturday in four areas: health and safety protocols; ventilation; contact tracing; and safety committees. Chicago is the third-largest U.S. school district.

- Current science suggests many schools are safe to reopen if the level of virus circulating in their communities is not “overwhelming,” said Dr. Tom Inglesby of the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.
- **Maryland** has found a case of the coronavirus variant first discovered in South Africa, Governor Larry Hogan said in a statement. He said the case involves a resident living in the Baltimore area with no history of international travel.
 - The first two U.S. cases of the South African variant were found in South Carolina on Jan. 28. Hogan’s statement said the variant is “believed to be more transmissible” but hasn’t been shown to cause more serious illness or risk of death compared with other variants.

