

March 20, 2020

**Summary**

Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell announced Friday that he aims to reach a bipartisan agreement in principle by the end of the day on a sweeping \$1 trillion economic stabilization plan to respond to the coronavirus pandemic. Meanwhile, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin announced that the income tax filing deadline has been pushed back from April 15 to July 15, giving Americans an additional three months to file their income tax returns. WHO reports that the number of confirmed coronavirus cases worldwide has exceeded 200,000. While it took over three months to reach the first 100,000 confirmed cases, it only took 12 days to reach the next 100,000.

Within the United States, a little over 50 percent of COVID-19 cases come from three states: California, Washington, and New York, and over 50 percent of the cases are in just 10 counties. New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio recently confirmed that New York constitutes 30 percent of the coronavirus cases in the United States. Governor Cuomo issued an order calling for New Yorkers to stay home until further notice— except for essential things like food, health care, and commuting to jobs considered crucial. In New York State, 100% of the non-essential workforce is now expected to work from home. The order will go into effect on Sunday evening, March 22. This order follows new restrictions across New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, and Pennsylvania, closing all barbershops, hair salons, nail salons, and related personal care services.

**General/Employer Guidance****Presidential updates**

- [\*Remarks by President Trump and Vice President Pence in a Video Teleconference with Governors on COVID-19\*](#), March 19
  - President Trump held a teleconference with U.S. governors to discuss measures to ensure state access to the necessary resources to fight against COVID-19.
  - Several governors had specific recommendations for the administration, including encouraging passage of a flexible block grant from Congress to help states fill revenue shortfalls. The President said he would strongly consider this proposal. Other leaders expressed concern that states will exceed their capacity to deliver health care within several days and asked for direct assistance in surging medical capacity. Finally, some governors highlighted the need for alternative day care arrangements – especially for first responders, public health officials, and those involved in public safety.
  - Vice President Pence also addressed the governors, asking for states to make citizens aware of the Family First Coronavirus Response Act and its provision of free testing, paid sick leave,

food assistance for those in need. Pence also encouraged all hospitals and every American to postpone elective surgery.

- Dr. Deborah Birx, the White House’s coronavirus response coordinator, noted that a little over 50 percent of COVID-19 cases come from three California, Washington, and New York, and that over 50 percent of the cases are have been reported in just 10 counties.

### **World Health Organization (WHO)**

- [\*Coronavirus disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) Situation Report – 59\*](#), March 19
  - WHO reports that seven new territories have confirmed cases of COVID-19, including three across Africa and one in the European region. The report also notes that the number of confirmed cases worldwide has exceeded 200,000; it took over three months to reach the first 100,000 confirmed cases, and only 12 days to reach the next 100,000.
  - The WHO report also highlights the development of a new protocol to investigate the extent of COVID-19 infection in the population, as determined by positive antibody tests in the general population. The protocol was adapted from early epidemiological investigations protocols from pandemic influenza and from MERS-CoV.
  - Five core protocols and data collection forms are available on the WHO COVID-19 technical guidance site. The newest protocol is the [population-based age-stratified sero-epidemiological investigation protocol for COVID-19 virus infection](#). Specifically, data from this protocol will provide critical information about the extent of infection in the general population, age-specific infection cumulative incidence, and the fraction of people with asymptomatic or subclinical infection.

### **U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)**

- [\*CDC Encourages Donating Blood If You Are Well\*](#), March 19
  - CDC encouraged people who are well to continue to donate blood if they are able, even if they are practicing social distancing because of COVID-19. CDC is supporting blood centers by providing recommendations that will keep donors and staff safe. Examples of these recommendations include spacing donor chairs six feet apart, thoroughly adhering to environmental cleaning practices, and encouraging donors to make donation appointments ahead of time.
  - FDA also issued a [statement](#), noting that the number of blood donations has been dramatically reduced due to the implementation of social distancing and the cancellation of blood drives. FDA noted that in order to ensure that blood is available to those who need it most, it is important for healthy individuals who are able to donate to take the time to do so.

### **New York State**

- [\*Stay-At-Home Coronavirus Order Issued For New York State\*](#), March 20
  - In a Friday morning press conference, Governor Andrew Cuomo announced a state-wide “stay at home” order for all New York residents, effective on Sunday evening. All non-essential businesses must close and 100 percent of their employees must work from home. According to the impending order, essential businesses can still allow workers to commute, including health care workers, food suppliers, pharmacies, and utility companies.
  - According to Governor Cuomo, people should stay at least six feet away from others when in public. Outdoor recreation is permitted but must be a solitary recreational exercise. The order will not affect public transport. New York State is also implementing a 90-day moratorium on evictions for residential and commercial tenants.
  - New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio recently confirmed that New York constitutes 30 percent of the coronavirus cases in the United States and 70 percent of the cases in the state of New York State. There are at least 4,000 confirmed cases of coronavirus in New York City and 26 deaths.

- [Temporary Closure of Barber Shops, Nail and Hair Salons and Related Personal Care Services](#), March 20
  - The governors of New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, and Pennsylvania announced new density reduction restrictions to help slow the spread of COVID-19. This announcement is part of their uniform, multi-state approach to combating the virus.
  - All barbershops, hair salons, tattoo or piercing parlors, nail salons, and related personal care services will be closed to members of the public effective Saturday, March 21 at 8PM, as these services cannot be provided while maintaining social distance.
  - These measures follow previous decisions to close indoor portions of retail shopping malls, amusement parks, and bowling alleys across the four states. While Governor Cuomo acknowledged that these temporary closures are “not going to be easy,” he stressed the need to make “data-driven decisions” to slow the spread of the virus.
  
- [AG James: We Must Preserve New Yorkers’ Right to Seek Justice](#), March 19
  - New York Attorney General Letitia James called for the tolling, or pausing and extending for a certain amount of time, of statute of limitations in New York as the state and residents take significant action to respond to COVID-19.
  - James highlighted the predicament faced by many, “either they ignore calls for social distancing in order to submit documents to a court by a fixed deadline, or they abandon their right to seek justice through the judiciary all together.”
  - Henry Greenberg, president of the New York State Bar Association, also issued a statement to “strongly support” the State Senate proposal “to stop the clock on time limitations for filings or section of legal actions relating to statutes, local laws, ordinances, orders, and rules and regulations.” The Governor has yet to rule on this proposal.

### **New York City**

- [Mayor de Blasio Demands Help from Federal Government](#), March 19
  - Mayor de Blasio held a recent press conference, updating New Yorkers on the City’s response efforts to COVID-19.
  - de Blasio demanded federal government assistance to replenish the City’s critical medical supplies and personal protective equipment. He sent two formal requests to HHS Secretary Alex Azar. The first calls for a full activation of the US Department of Veterans Affairs to provide available beds, staffing support, and medical supplies. The second asks for a replenished stock of the following medical supplies by April: 3 million N95 masks; 50 million surgical masks; 15 thousand ventilators; and 45 million of each of the following: surgical gowns, coveralls, gloves, and face shields. The letters may be viewed [here](#).
  - In partnership with the NYPD and the Mayor’s Office of Criminal Justice, Mayor de Blasio compiled a list of 40 detainees for release who are high risk for COVID-19 related complications and low risk for re-offending.

### **Other Related Updates**

- [Income tax filing deadline moved to July 15 from April 15](#), March 20
  - Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin announced that the income tax filing deadline has been pushed back from April 15 to July 15, giving Americans an additional three months to file their income tax returns.

- The Treasury Department had already allowed individuals and companies to defer tax payments to July 15, but previously had said that they were required to file their returns on April 15 as usual.
- At a White House briefing, President Trump said that if people are expecting refunds, they should go ahead and file now so that they can get their refunds from the IRS more quickly. Secretary Mnuchin echoed these sentiments, encouraging anyone expecting a refund to file sooner rather than later.
- [\*The Senate majority leader is seeking a deal on Friday for a \\$1 trillion rescue plan\*](#), March 20
  - Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell announced Friday that he aims to reach a bipartisan agreement in principle by the end of the day on a sweeping \$1 trillion economic stabilization plan to respond to the coronavirus pandemic.
  - There is broad agreement on the need for the rescue package, which would be the third round of emergency aid Congress has considered this month to confront the crisis. Republicans and Democrats are deeply divided over the details, including which Americans should receive direct payments from the government, how much paid leave employers should have to cover for workers, and what form of assistance to provide to small and large businesses.
  - Details about the proposed bill will be available on our [Coronavirus Resource Page](#) later today.
- [\*FDA provides guidance on production of alcohol-based hand sanitizer to help boost supply, protect public health\*](#), March 20
  - FDA released two guidance documents to communicate its policy for the temporary manufacture of certain alcohol-based hand sanitizer products.
    - The [first document](#) outlines that FDA does not intend to take action against manufacturing firms that prepare alcohol-based hand sanitizers for consumer use and for use as health care personnel hand rubs during the ongoing public health emergency, subject to specified terms.
    - The [second document](#) discusses the temporary compounding of certain alcohol-based hand sanitizers by pharmacists in state-licensed pharmacies or federal facilities. Compounding is generally a practice in which a licensed pharmacist combines, mixes, or alters ingredients of a drug to create a tailor-made medication. The temporary policy outlined by the agency does not require compounders to obtain a patient-specific prescription.
  - Because of an increased demand for alcohol-based hand sanitizers during the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been reports of some consumers attempting to make hand sanitizers for personal use. FDA stated that it lacks information on the methods being used to prepare such products and whether they are safe for use on human skin.
- [\*FDA advises patients on use of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs \(NSAIDs\) for COVID-19\*](#), March 19
  - FDA is aware of news reports stating the use of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), such as ibuprofen, could worsen coronavirus disease (COVID-19). These news reports followed a March 11, 2020 letter in The Lancet medical journal, which hypothesized that a certain enzyme is increased by NSAIDs and could aggravate COVID-19 symptoms.
  - At this time, FDA is not aware of scientific evidence connecting the use of NSAIDs with worsening COVID-19 symptoms. The agency is investigating this issue further and will communicate publicly when more information is available.
  - All prescription NSAID labels warn that “the pharmacological activity of NSAIDs in reducing inflammation, and possibly fever, may diminish the utility of diagnostic signs in detecting infections.” For those who wish to use treatment options other than NSAIDs, there are multiple

over-the-counter (OTC) and prescription medications approved for pain relief and fever reduction.

- [\*FDA Continues to Facilitate Development of Treatments\*](#), March 19
  - FDA issued a statement detailing its work with partners across the U.S. government and regulated industry to expedite the development and availability of critical medical products to prevent and treat COVID-19.
  - FDA has been working closely with other government agencies and academic centers that are investigating the use of the drug chloroquine, which is already approved for treating malaria, lupus and rheumatoid arthritis, to determine whether it can be used to treat patients with mild-to-moderate COVID-19.
  - FDA is also interested in evaluating whether therapies, such as convalescent plasma and hyperimmune globulin, antibody-rich blood products that are taken from blood donated by people who have recovered from the virus, could shorten the length, or lessen the severity, of the illness.
  
- [\*Eligible Emergency Protective Measures\*](#), March 19
  - FEMA recently issued a statement on the types of emergency protective measures available under FEMA’s Public Assistance Program in accordance with the President Trump’s COVID-19 Emergency Declaration.
  - FEMA may provide assistance for measures including, but not limited to, the following: emergency operation center costs; disinfection of eligible public facilities; non-deferrable medical treatment of infected persons in a temporary medical facility; emergency medical transport; and the purchase and distribution of food, water, ice, medicine, and personal protective equipment. Further information about eligible emergency protective measures is available in the [Public Assistance Program and Policy Guide](#).
  
- [\*People With Mild Symptoms Can Spread Coronavirus, European Researchers Warn\*](#), March 19
  - According to virologists watching the pandemic unfold in Europe, people infected with coronavirus can spread it easily, even if they are not yet experiencing severe symptoms of the disease.
  - The head of the department of virus science at the Erasmus Medical Center in Rotterdam, Netherlands noted that there are very high levels of the virus found in the upper airway, nose, and throat. These high levels of the virus mean that the coronavirus can infect others “the moment you start to sneeze... or cough,” she says.
  - Research from China shows it can take five or even 10 days for the first symptoms to emerge. Those in the very early stages of the disease continue to move through public places, unaware of the potential risk they pose. Other studies from China show that some may never experience symptoms at all.
  - This characteristic, while not uncommon among viruses, makes this disease extremely hard to contain. According to a virologist affiliated with the University of Padua in Italy, “many diseases have a window period in which you don't have symptoms but you are still able to transmit.... but this one is particularly serious.” The evolving view helps explain why countries may need to resort to extreme social distancing measures to contain the spread of the disease.

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