

COVID-19 Daily Update

May 27, 2020

Summary

The United States has 1,689,145 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 99,674 reported related deaths. Governor Cuomo met with President Trump at the White House. The leaders discussed major infrastructure projects that Cuomo views as critical to re-starting the region's economy. The House recently approved proxy voting to allow remote legislating during the pandemic and planned to use the new procedure for the first time on Wednesday, May 27. Republican lawmakers challenged the new rule in court, in an attempt to invalidate the practice. The suit alleges that proxy voting "subverts the structure of the United States Constitution" and dilutes the voting power of individual members of the House. The European Commission proposed an \$860 billion stimulus package to finance the European Union's economic recovery. France revoked a decree that allowed hospitals to prescribe hydroxychloroquine in some COVID-19 cases, stating there is no proof that it helps patients and citing data that the drug could cause heart problems and other health risks.

Several states continued to ease social distancing restrictions. Nevada announced plans to re-open casinos on June 4. Washington, D.C., plans to allow limited outdoor seating at restaurants and curbside pick-up at retail stores on Friday, May 29; gatherings of more than ten people remain prohibited. Los Angeles opened a COVID-19 testing site at Dodger's stadium, providing free testing for 6,000 people per day. Walt Disney World in Florida, one of the world's largest tourist sites, will re-open to the public on a limited basis in mid-July. Reservations and temperature checks will be required for all visitors. Parades, fireworks displays, and character meet and greets will be suspended due to crowd control concerns. A recent Associated Press survey found that 20% of respondents would refuse a COVID-19 vaccine, if developed, due to safety concerns.

New York reported 74 deaths on Wednesday, May 24. State lawmakers are expected to vote remotely on more than two dozen coronavirus-related bills this week. Long Island began phase one of the State's re-opening process on Wednesday, May 27, joining nine other recently re-opened regions. New York City has yet to meet the State's seven required re-opening benchmarks. The City enacted a COVID-19 relief package with protections for tenants, commercial establishments, and restaurants during the pandemic. New York City plans to reserve 3,000 hotel rooms to quarantine COVID-19 cases. As part of the City's contact tracing program, positive residents who are unable to separate themselves from family or roommates will be asked to quarantine in a hotel room for 14 days or until they test negative for the virus. Residents will receive daily medical and mental health check-ins, meals, and laundry service.

Presidential updates

- [*Governor Cuomo to Meet with President Trump at the White House*](#), May 27
 - Governor Cuomo met with President Trump at the White House on Wednesday, May 27. Cuomo last met with Trump in April to discuss federal assistance for the expanded rollout of testing in states.
 - The leaders discussed unfinished infrastructure projects in need of federal approval or funding, including an AirTrain to LaGuardia Airport and a new rail tunnel under the Hudson River. Cuomo recently stated that, “now is the time” to “take on this overdue need of major infrastructure construction” in order to “restart the economy and “create jobs.”
 - Cuomo described the meeting as a “good conversation.”

World Health Organization (WHO)

- [*COVID-19 Situation Report – 127*](#), May 26
 - WHO Regional Office for Europe will continue to [repurpose](#) its influenza surveillance system to detect COVID-19 cases. WHO encourages all countries to continue monitoring COVID-19 activity throughout the summer months.
 - WHO issued [guidance](#) assessing peer-reviewed literature on the association between smoking and COVID-19, including: (1) the risk of COVID-19 infection and hospitalization; and (2) the severity of COVID-19 outcomes in hospitalized patients, such as admission into intensive care units, ventilator use, and death.

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

- [*COVID-19 Considerations for Restaurants and Bars*](#), May 26
 - CDC updated [considerations](#) for restaurant and bar operation during the pandemic.
 - CDC highlighted that the risk of COVID-19 spread increases in each of the following stages of opening: (1) food service is limited to take-out or curbside pick-up; (2) on-site dining is allowed but limited to outdoor seating; (3) indoor and outdoor seating is allowed but seating capacity is reduced to space tables at least six feet apart; and (4) the restaurant resumes normal operations without social distancing considerations.
- [*Funeral Guidance for Individuals and Families*](#), May 26
 - CDC provided strategies for grieving families during the pandemic. CDC notes that “many people have become sick with COVID-19 after attending a funeral service.”
 - CDC encourages individuals to limit funeral attendance, use technology to virtually connect with family, and plan to hold larger memorial services when social distancing guidelines are less restrictive.
- [*Recommendations on Using Public Transportation*](#), May 26
 - CDC recommends practicing hand hygiene before and after any trip on public transportation, wearing a cloth face covering, and avoiding touching common surfaces such as kiosks, handrails, elevator buttons, and benches.
 - CDC recommends disinfecting frequently touched surfaces before using shared bikes or scooters, including handlebars, gears, braking handles or locks.

- [Guidance on Developing a COVID-19 Case Investigation & Contact Tracing Plan](#), May 26
 - CDC issued guidance for health departments to develop COVID-19 case investigation and contact tracing efforts.
 - Contact tracing should be implemented at two distinct points in an epidemic: (1) during the containment phase, to prevent a large outbreak; and (2) during the suppression phase, before mitigation measures are fully lifted, to reduce community transmission.
 - Tracers should collect information on individual’s symptom onset, activity history, source of illness, list of close contacts, and exposure locations – including gatherings with unknown contacts.
 - CDC notes that investigations should be carried out in a manner that preserves the confidentiality and privacy of all involved. All collected information must be stored using appropriate security protocols.
 - CDC highlights the advantages and disadvantages of using Bluetooth and GPS-enabled tools for case investigation and contact tracing.

- [CDC Clarifies Information about Types of COVID-19 Spread](#), May 22
 - CDC issued a [press release](#) updating an earlier release on the spread of COVID-19.
 - Consistent with the prior release, CDC stated that the “primary and most important mode of transmission for COVID-19 is through close contact from person-to-person.” However, CDC [removed](#) language from the release stating that “COVID-19 does not spread easily” by “touching surfaces or objects.”
 - CDC noted that “it may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this isn’t thought to be the main way the virus spreads.” CDC stated that it is “still learning more about how this virus spreads.”

New York State

- [Governor Cuomo Holds Press Conference on COVID-19](#), May 27
 - New York reported 74 deaths on Wednesday, May 24.
 - Long Island began phase one of the State’s re-opening process on Wednesday, May 27, joining nine other regions that have re-opened. Long Island has more than 79,000 confirmed COVID-19 cases and reported nearly 4,000 related deaths. New York City is now the only part of the State that has not yet met the State’s seven required re-opening benchmarks.
 - New York State lawmakers are expected to vote remotely on more than two dozen coronavirus-related bills this week, including a \$100 million program to subsidize rent and a plan to allow New York City to borrow up to \$7 billion to cover operating expenses.

New York City

- [Mayor De Blasio Holds Media Availability on COVID-19](#), May 27
 - New York City plans to reserve 3,000 hotel rooms by this summer to quarantine residents testing positive for COVID-19.
 - As part of the City’s contact tracing program, positive residents who are unable to separate themselves from family or roommates will be asked to quarantine in a hotel room for 14 days or until they test negative for the virus. Residents will receive daily

medical and mental health check-ins, meals, and laundry service. The City currently has 1,200 rooms.

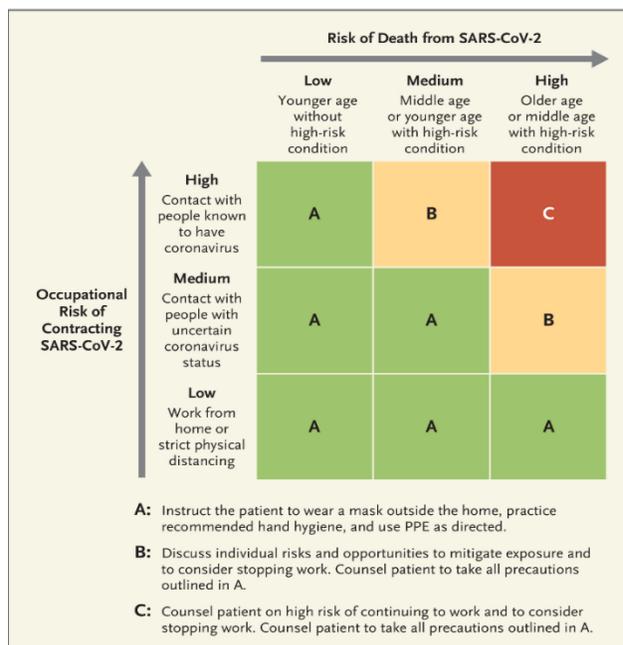
- [Mayor de Blasio Signs COVID-19 Relief Package Into Law](#), May 26
 - Mayor de Blasio signed a relief package into law to assist tenants, commercial establishments, and restaurants during the pandemic.
 - Tenant Protections: The package protect tenants from landlord threats based on the tenant’s status as an essential employee.
 - Commercial Establishment Protections: The package designates “threatening a commercial tenant based on its status as a COVID-19 impacted business” as a form of unlawful harassment. A “COVID-19 impacted business” includes businesses that were subject to capacity restrictions, forced to close, or had businesses owners who contracted the virus. The relief package temporarily prohibits the enforcement of certain personal liability provisions in commercial leases to protect the personal assets of commercial tenants that were affected by COVID-19.
 - Restaurant Protections: The package prohibits third-party food delivery services from charging restaurants a fee greater than 15% per order for delivery and 5% per order for any other charge. Third-party services currently charge fees for up to 30% of the total order. The law suspends the collection of sidewalk cafe fees from restaurants from March 1, 2020 to February 28, 2021.

Other Related Updates

- [Survey Estimates Expectations for a COVID-19 Vaccine](#), May 27
 - Associated Press and NORC Center for Public Affairs Research conducted a survey to gauge the public’s response
 - 20% of Americans expect a vaccine against COVID-19 will be available to the public before the end of the year, while 61% expect it during 2021.
 - If a viable vaccine is developed, 49% of Americans say they plan to get vaccinated, and 31% are not sure. 20% say they will not get the vaccine, citing concerns about potential side effects.
 - 79% of Americans say that a vaccine is an important criteria for re-opening activities and businesses in their area, including 46% who say it’s essential for re-opening and 33% who say it’s important but not essential.
- [Lawmakers Ask Trump Administration to Cancel Large Fourth of July Event](#), May 27
 - A group of lawmakers from the Washington D.C. area wrote a letter to the secretaries of defense and the interior, to express “serious concern” about President Trump’s plan to hold a “Salute to America” event celebrating the Fourth of July.
 - The letter asks for the event to be cancelled. The letter states that “such an event would needlessly risk the health and safety of thousands of Americans” and “would come at the cost of millions of taxpayer dollars while we are facing an unprecedented economic downturn due to the pandemic.”
- [House Republicans Initiate Lawsuit to Block Remote Voting](#), May 27
 - The House recently approved the use of proxy voting to allow for remote legislating during the pandemic. The new rule allows any absent lawmaker to designate another

member who is physically present to record a vote on their behalf, during periods when the House speaker, clerk, and sergeant-at-arms agree that there is a state of emergency because of COVID-19.

- The House planned to use the procedures for the first time on Wednesday, May 27. Representative Kevin McCarthy, the minority leader, and 20 other Republicans filed a lawsuit on Tuesday, May 26, to invalidate the practice.
 - The suit argues that voting by proxy “contravenes the founders’ design” that Congress must meet physically as a body, “subverts the structure of the United States Constitution” and dilutes the voting power of individual members of the House.
 - It further states that “over the course of 231 years, Congress has assembled at the seat of government while war raged in the surrounding environs and deadly contagion spread throughout the country,” citing the War of 1812 and the Spanish flu.
 - Democratic leaders insist the new rule is a good-faith attempt to put a vital branch of government back to work safely on an emergency basis. Speaker Pelosi issued a statement that the rule is “fully consistent with the Constitution and is supported by expert legal analyses,” and that the chamber had made “its will clear.”
- [Risk Stratification for Workers During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#), May 26
 - An article in the New England Journal of Medicine proposes a framework to help clinicians counsel patients on working during the pandemic, based on their occupational risk of contracting COVID-19 and their risk of death if infected.
 - Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) proposed a scheme for classifying the workplace risk of COVID-19 infection as high, medium, or low based on potential contact with persons who may or do have the virus. Low-, medium-, and high-risk categories of individual risk of death from COVID-19 are based on age and the presence of high-risk chronic conditions identified by CDC. Physicians should also inquire and counsel about risks to household or to other contacts who may be at high risk for poor outcomes.



- [CPB Extends Temporary Closure of Trusted Traveler Program Enrollment Centers](#), May 26
 - Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) extended its temporary closure of the Trusted Traveler Program enrollment centers until at least July 6 to minimize the public’s exposure to COVID-19. Enrollment centers were previously closed from March 19 until June 1.
 - The temporary closure includes all public access Global Entry enrollment centers, NEXUS enrollment centers, SENTRI enrollment centers, and FAST enrollment locations. CBP extended the period of time that Trusted Traveler Program applications remain active; all applicants now have 485 days from the date of their application to complete the enrollment process.

- [Loss of Smell and Taste in Patients With Mild to Moderate COVID-19](#), May 26
 - A study, published in the Annals of Internal Medicine, found that the loss of smell and taste in COVID-19 patients may be more common than previously reported.
 - 2,013 European patients with mild-to-moderate COVID-19 answered questionnaires about their symptoms on the day they were discharged from the hospital or, for ambulatory patients, after their symptoms resolved. Around 87% reported experiencing loss of smell; most said it developed at the same time as, or after, other COVID-19 symptoms.
 - Loss of smell was not associated with nasal obstruction, rhinorrhea, or postnasal drip. Approximately one third of patients recovered their sense of smell by the time of the questionnaire; loss of smell lasted, on average, 8 days. 56% of patients reported impaired taste.

- [Assessment of the Qualitative Fit Test and Quantitative Single-Pass Filtration Efficiency of Disposable N95 Masks Following Gamma Irradiation](#), May 26
 - A study, published in the Journal of the American Medical Association, found that irradiating N95 masks with gamma radiation reduces their ability to filter air particles, even when relatively low doses are used.
 - Researchers irradiated three different models of N95 masks. After irradiation, all masks passed a fit test; a fit test determines if a tight-fitting respirator can be worn without having any leaks.
 - The masks were then placed in an air duct, through which ambient particulate matter was passed. The filtration efficiency of the masks was significantly reduced by all radiation doses.
 - The researchers note that “these findings suggest that a qualitative fit test alone is unable to fully assess mask integrity and that at the doses required for sterilization, gamma radiation degrades the filtration efficiency of N95 masks.”

- [FDA COVID-19 Update: Daily Roundup](#), May 26
 - FDA issued an [emergency use authorization](#) (EUA) to increase the availability of gowns and other apparel, such as operating-room shoe covers, for use by health care personnel during the pandemic.

- FDA approved a [new drug application](#) for the production of generic succinylcholine chloride injection USP 200 mg/10 mL, to facilitate tracheal intubation and provide skeletal muscle relaxation during mechanical ventilation.

Other recent events covered in detail elsewhere:

- [European Data Protection Board \(EDBP\) Sheds Light on Use of Health Data to Aid Research Efforts](#), May 27
- [Administrative Responses to a Global Pandemic: Emergency Rulemaking and Other Mechanisms Agencies Are Employing to Respond to COVID-19](#), May 26
- [European Regulatory Update for Asset Managers](#), May 26

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