



FROM:	Bose Public Affairs Group
DATE:	June 05, 2020
RE:	Weekly COVID-19 Update

BIG PICTURE

The number of confirmed coronavirus infections continued to increase worldwide with nearly 7 million confirmed cases. The case load in the United States far surpasses that of any other country, with more than 1.88 million. Over the last two weeks, the global death toll increased by 60,000 bringing the total to more than 393,200. The U.S. death toll is at 108,670 deaths.

[Here is where all 50 states stand on reopening](#)

[CDC COVID-19 Forecasts](#)

[List of federal agency resources in response to COVID-19](#)

[Institutional and Agency Guidance Specific to Federal Award Impact on COVID-19](#)

[COVID-19 School Closure Map](#)

ADMINISTRATION

President Issues Executive Order to Waive Environment Laws and Speed Infrastructure Permits

On Thursday, President Donald Trump issued an executive order to waive environmental regulations and speed permitting of highways and infrastructure projects designed to stimulate the economy impacted by the pandemic. Citing emergency powers, the order instructs the "Interior, Agriculture, and Defense Departments to use emergency and other authorities to accelerate projects on Federal lands to "expedite construction of highways and other projects designed for environmental, energy, transportation, natural resource, and other uses." The order is one of the few recent actions by the administration to support the energy sector, which has been hit significantly by low oil prices, a plunge in demand, and



construction delays due to the pandemic. The move is expected to be met with legal challenges from environmental groups, claiming that the president's use of emergency powers related to a public health crisis has nothing to do with waiving environmental regulations that the administration has been wanting to eliminate since 2017. More information [here](#).

CONGRESS

Small Business Relief Program Changes

On Wednesday, the Senate unanimously approved a bipartisan measure to ease requirements of the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) aimed at providing small businesses and nonprofits financial relief from the economic impacts caused by the pandemic. The legislation, the [Paycheck Protection Program Flexibility Act of 2020](#), extends the amount of time program recipients have to spend the loan money from 8 to 24 weeks, preventing funds from lapsing in a matter of days for many recipients. The bill also provides greater flexibility on the uses funds, allowing businesses to include costs such as utilities and rent in their use, and lowers the amount required to be used on maintaining payroll from 75% to 60%.

Established in the CARES Act, PPP has been a popular avenue for businesses to access capital for financial relief, so much so that Congress in April had to inject an additional \$320 billion into the program to allow more businesses to participate. But participants of the program expressed concerns over rules dictating when and for what purposes the money had to be spent as much of the economy remains locked down for longer than lawmakers originally anticipated. These concerns sparked bipartisan support for this most recent bill, which overwhelmingly passed the House last week (417-1) before the Senate's passage on Wednesday. The measure was signed into law by President Trump earlier this afternoon.

While lawmakers overwhelmingly agreed to the new flexibilities, concern remains over the program's process for converting loans into grants, which is likely to be an issue and part of discussions surrounding a larger "phase 4" relief package Congress is expected to consider in the coming weeks.

More analysis from the Bose team on the PPP changes is available [here](#).

HELP Committee Examines Reopening Colleges

On Thursday, the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee held a hearing titled, "COVID-19: Going Back to College Safely." The panel invited several university presidents and a public health official to discuss how and when the country's colleges and universities might open in the fall of 2020 in a safe and responsible manner. The HELP Committee is planning to hold a similar hearing on June 10, 2020, on issues related to the



opening of K-12 schools nationwide. A full hearing summary from the Bose team can be found [here](#).

Hearing to Examines CARES Act Stabilization Funding

On Tuesday, the Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs held [a hearing](#) to consider implementation of the Treasury Department's Exchange Stabilization Fund established by the CARES Act, which provided \$500 billion to expand access to financial relief to businesses and state and local governments during the pandemic through the Federal Reserve's emergency lending facilities. Overall, senators and witnesses agreed that the Main Street Lending Program should become operational as soon as possible so that mid-sized businesses have greater access to loans. Senators also discussed how to better support state and local governments, whether that be through adjusting the term sheet for the Municipal Liquidity Facility (MLF) or through a proposal such as the bipartisan [SMART Act](#), a bill that provides \$500 billion in direct flexible funding to states, localities, and tribes to help cover rising costs to combat COVID-19 and lost revenues due to the economic fallout.

BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY

As we have seen for the last two months, the American economy continues to struggle as unemployment grows. On Thursday, the Department of Labor released its weekly jobs report, revealing an additional 1.88 million Americans filing unemployment insurance claims, bringing the new unemployment total from the last 11 weeks to more than 42 million. While the unemployment data remain grim, the number of new filings each week has steadily declined over the last few weeks, offering some hopeful news.

On Wall Street, the stock market soared upon news of a possible "v shaped" rebound with investors pointing to unemployment data and continued Federal Reserve actions to stimulate the economy. The Dow Jones rose nearly 7% this week. The S&P 500 and NASDAQ both gained at least 3.5% in value.

Federal Reserve Expands Municipal Liquidity Facility Eligibility

On Wednesday, the Federal Reserve Board announced updates to its Municipal Liquidity Facility (MLF), expanding the type and amount of entities that are eligible to participate. At least two cities or counties, regardless of population, will now be eligible to issue notes to the MLF in every state. Entities that typically collect revenues by operating government activities, such as transit agencies and utility providers, will be able to use the MLF directly, if they are designated by their governors to be one of two issuers in their respective state.



Update on Economic Impact Payments

After a rocky roll-out, 159 million Economic Impact Payments have now been distributed, according to an announcement from the U.S. Department of the Treasury and the IRS. These payments have totaled more than \$267 billion and have been delivered to all eligible Americans for whom the IRS had necessary information. Additionally, more than \$2.5 billion has been delivered to U.S. territories for distribution among territory residents.

HEALTH CARE

HHS Expands Efforts on Testing Data

In response to expanding evidence that the COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately harmed communities of color in the United States, the Department of Health and Human Services announced that labs will be required to report detailed testing data beginning August 1st, including patient ethnicity data. Democratic lawmakers and public health officials have criticized the lack of racial data transparency, arguing that data is a necessary component of an effective public health response. In a House Appropriations subcommittee hearing on Thursday, CDC Director Robert Redfield shared that he wanted “to apologize for the inadequacy of [the CDC’s] response” and stated that chronic underfunding of public health infrastructures can be blamed for data collection issues.

CONCLUSION

The Bose Public Affairs Group team will continue to monitor all relevant developments over the coming week and will be providing ongoing updates as they develop.

