



## COVID-19 LEGISLATIVE UPDATE 03/19/2020

### White House Coronavirus Task Force Briefing Report

President Donald Trump announced he signed into law critical support for American workers, families, and small businesses, with sick leave and family medical leave available for those affected and more help to come soon. He said Secretary Mnuchin is currently working on more assistance with lawmakers. Trump stated if people had known about the virus sooner, it could have been stopped in China rather than inflicting the whole world. He said before the virus the American economy was the best it has ever been and that it will bounce back stronger than ever. He explained he invoked the Defense Production Act and is working with Congress to provide additional relief to workers, small businesses, and industries that have been hit the hardest in order to assist in recovery. He added that he expects rapid economic improvement after the worst of the virus has passed. Trump applauded the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA's) work alongside the private sector to develop vaccines and therapies in record time. He said the first clinical trial of a vaccine candidate began earlier this week and that it previously would have taken years to reach this phase. He explained that antiviral therapies take time to test in order to guarantee the ingredients are not destructive to the human body. Trump said the FDA is working around the clock and has eliminated outdated rules and bureaucracy to allow for faster deployment of safe and effective treatments. He stated clinical trials are underway for many new therapies and the FDA is collecting good data on safety and effectiveness of medications. He explained that the FDA has also approved "compassionate use" and is reviewing drugs approved abroad as well as drugs approved in the U.S. for other uses. He affirmed that nothing will stand in the way of taking any avenue available to find solutions for the American people. Trump referenced existing drugs like hydroxychloroquine, which is currently used for malaria and arthritis, as well as Gilead's Remdesivir, which are possible options for treatment. He said hydroxychloroquine will be available almost immediately and Remdesivir is close to FDA approval. Trump also mentioned Regeneron, an Ebola treatment, as a potential therapy for COVID-19. He expressed appreciation for the American public's willingness to stay home. He added that both sides are coming together to work toward solutions. Trump explained that this is a unique situation and said the government is paying a lot of money to halt operations whereas the government usually pays money to get operations moving again. He said this is a medical war, not a financial war.

FDA Commissioner Stephen Hahn expressed the need for hope during this time but clarified that there should not be false hope. He said the American people have great resiliency and are responding well to calls for mitigation. He emphasized the FDA is committed to regulatory flexibility and guidance while still ensuring products are safe and effective. Hahn said the FDA began working with the Center for Disease Control (CDC) in early January before the first case of COVID-19 was detected in the U.S. He stated the U.S. has incredible medical innovators in academia and the private sector who are working to expand potential therapeutic options. He added the FDA is considering option with over 17,000 employees reviewing new treatments. Hahn explained that the right drug might not be available in the appropriate dosage, so it is important to assess these drugs. He said the FDA is working through mechanisms to get appropriate drugs in the hands of providers and patients. He stated compassionate use allows for experimental drugs to be used for treatment and allows for the FDA to collect information about results and use case data for decision making. Hahn confirmed the FDA is currently working with drugs like hydroxychloroquine that are already approved for other indications. He said a clinical trial is necessary to understand if it will work. He mentioned the possibility convalescent plasma, which involves collecting blood from recovered patients, concentrating the blood, and giving the immunoglobulins to patients for treatment. Hahn explained the timeline for production for treatments is being compressed to produce a solution quickly. He praised public-private partnerships for working to create solutions in record time. He said the FDA is all-hands-on-deck and is committed to fostering the development of safe and effective therapies.

Vice President Mike Pence said the Coronavirus Task Force met this morning and yesterday President Trump spoke with top physicians and nurses to learn how best to serve those who are serving. He stated the Families First Coronavirus Response Act provides free testing, paid sick leave, family care, food assistance, and more, and the Senate will begin work on an economic relief package today. He said the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) will take the



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lead in a response that will be locally executed, state managed, and federally supported. Pence explained testing is available in all 50 states and tens of thousands of tests are being performed every day. He said state and private labs are required by law to report all testing to the CDC, which provides important and timely information for the public and for researchers. He stressed that Americans who do not have symptoms should not be tested for the virus. Pence said health care providers, businesses, and state leadership are working to identify available supplies of necessary equipment. He stated companies like Honeywell and 3M are increasing production of N95 masks and are now able to sell directly to hospitals. He added that all masks are now covered by liability protection so companies can sell, and under the protection construction companies are donating supplies to local hospitals. Pence said health care providers and suppliers have identified tens of thousands of ventilators that can be converted to treat patients. He emphasized the need to follow guidelines to less the spread of the virus and to protect the most vulnerable and encouraged social distancing, using drive-through windows at restaurants, and limiting gatherings to no more than 10 people.

Deborah Birx explained that the number of cases is increasing as testing is increasing and assured that this spike is normal. She said testing backlogs are clearing and results will be known faster. She assured that the increase in positive results indicates that people are doing their jobs and testing the appropriate individuals. Birx said only 10 to 11 percent of tests have come back positive and that 3 states are leading in cases, with 50 percent of cases in the U.S. occurring in the same 10 counties. She stated those counties are the priority right now. She praised the reduction in elective surgeries as a way to increase available ventilators and the construction industry for donating supplies. She added that new legislation has made existing materials available for immediate use.

Jerome Davis said healthy people should consider donating blood. He stated blood centers are open and in need and explained donation is safe and centers are taking extra precautions based on CDC recommendations.

A reporter requested a guarantee that money going to suffering industries will not go to executive bonuses or stock buybacks. Trump said he was not happy with stock buybacks. He said it is hard to tell companies not to do that, but he would tell them anyways. The reporter suggested including it as a condition of the bill. Trump responded he would be ok with that solution.

A reporter asked why Trump enabled the Defense Production Act but did not pull the trigger. Trump explained that state Governors should be doing most of the response work. He said the federal government should not be buying and shipping items and that it would help where it can but state and local officials should do most of the work. The reporter asked what conditions would need to be met to put the Act through. Trump responded the Act would be put through if there were desperate need. He said he would know soon if there is need.

A reporter asked when Remdesivir will be available and if any other drugs are in the pipeline. Hahn answered that by law this information cannot be shared but assured the FDA is working closely with the company. He said there are many drugs in the pipeline and the FDA is considering every option.

A reporter stated that the CDC put out guidelines for hospitals to use masks beyond their shelf life, reuse them, or use a bandana in worst cases and asked how this is acceptable. Pence responded that the passage of legislation will provide a solution by extending liability protections. He explained this allows industrial masks to be available to hospitals. He added that Honeywell and 3M increasing output and construction donation will also help meet the need. He said it is also important to make sure providers are purchasing from the new supply and the federal government will also use it to increase its stockpile.

A reporter asked when masks will be ready. Pence said the masks are available now. He explained 3M scaled up to full production in January and the new legislation allows all those masks to be sold to hospitals. Trump added that the legislation has also resolved liability issues.



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A reporter said the American Hospital Association claims to need \$100 billion to address shortages in infrastructure but aid packages don't directly provide assistance. Trump responded that it is a separate issue that is being addressed directly.

A reporter asked when Americans can expect their lives to go back to normal. Trump said he hoped it would be soon and said there will be a better idea as the situation progresses. He added that this is uncharted territory and it could have been stopped if the U.S. had known sooner.

A reporter asked why the U.S. was not prepared for the pandemic. Trump responded that the only thing the U.S. was not prepared for was the media. He said he called for a ban on people coming to the U.S. from China before anybody knew how bad the virus was and the media called him racist because of it. He stated the situation would be much worse if people had been allowed to come in and the media knows it is true but will not write about it.

A reporter said doctors also need gloves, respirators, and other equipment in addition to masks. Trump said that governors and states are in charge of securing supplies and the federal government is assisting. He added that Carnival Cruise line is making ships available if necessary.

A reporter asked about the Defense Production Act. Trump said if the U.S. needs something, he will invoke it. He said there is a lot of information that the media does not have.

A reporter referenced backlash among Republicans about corporate bailouts. Trump said he does not want there to be winners and losers and that everyone should benefit, especially workers. He explained that sometimes money has to go through the companies in order to serve the workers.

A reporter asked if there will be an overseas travel ban. Trump said he is speaking to the State Department about possibilities.

A reporter asked if Remdesivir is currently approved. Hahn explained it is in clinical trials in the U.S. and is also available through compassionate use. The reporter asked how to make sure it is safe without following the normal FDA process. Hahn clarified that the drug is going through the normal process and that the FDA is approaching extraordinary times with extraordinary measures.

A reporter asked if it is likely that Trump's 15-day guidance will be extended. Trump said he would know on the 14th day. The reporter asked if areas that are highly affected should shelter in place. Trump responded that affected areas are already taking appropriate measures. The reporter asked if there is a plan for government workers. Trump explained that there is a shift to teleworking. He said telemedicine has been successful for response measures.

A reporter said China reported no new cases over a 24-hour period and asked if that data is questionable. He said the National Security Council put out a tweet yesterday that was critical of China. Trump responded that the virus could have been contained to Wuhan if people had known about the virus sooner.

A reporter asked if Trump is considering repercussions for China and if he is rethinking supply lines. Trump declined to comment.

A reporter asked if the government is prepared to see a spike in unemployment. Trump said an unemployment spike would only happen in the worst case and resolving issues earlier will help. He said the economy will recover and the ultimate worst outcome might not happen.



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A reporter asked if Trump had any guidance for members of Congress as some have tested positive and some have quarantined themselves. Trump responded that the reporters in the audience were sitting too close together. He said members of Congress have behaved well.

A reporter asked if the provided stimulus is still enough. Trump said the amount of stimulus needed will depend on the virus being stopped. He said the government will support some companies as some people will need money at no fault of their own. He stated the government will be helping airlines, cruise ship companies, hotels, and other industries where jobs are created. He emphasized that the government will also support small businesses.

A reporter asked how long business owners and temporarily unemployed people should expect things to stay as they are. Trump responded that he will have an answer soon.

A reporter asked when schools will reopen. Birx said decisions on school openings will be made on a state and local level and that Presidential guidance for the next two weeks should be followed. She explained that modelers of data are part of the decision-making process. She added that if 10-15 percent of the population does not follow guidance, the virus will spread strongly. Trump said if hydroxychloroquine and other therapeutics prove to be effective, the numbers will come down rapidly.

A reporter asked if Trump had a message for leaders in Latin America who have encouraged large crowds at political rallies. Trump responded that the President of Brazil tested negative and said he had no message for him. He stated the President of Brazil is doing a good job.

A reporter said Americans abroad are stuck and asking for help from countries like Morocco where all flights were cancelled, and hotels are shutting down. Trump assured that the Administration is aware of these cases and are working on addressing it with the military.

A reporter asked if the 2020 Olympics would be postponed. Trump replied that it has been discussed and that Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has a big decision to make.

A reporter asked if Trump has spoken to Saudi Arabia and Russia about oil. Trump answered that the consumer benefits in some ways, but the industry is hurt. He said the U.S. has power over the situation and is working to find meeting ground. He added that low prices are devastating to Russia and Saudi Arabia and explained he would get involved "at the appropriate time."

A reporter asked how the Carnival cruise ships will be used. Trump explained they can be used as places to stay if it is needed.

A reporter asked when any American will be allowed to be tested for the virus. Trump stressed that people who do not show symptoms should not be tested if their doctors do not think it is necessary.

A reporter asked if Trump considers it racist to call Chinese food "Chinese." Trump said he did think that was racist. The reporter said the media says it is racist to call the virus the "Chinese Virus" and asked if it is alarming that the media sides with foreign state propaganda. Trump responded that he is amazed to read negative New York Times and Wall Street Journal articles. He said the news is corrupt and fake. He stated the Administration has done a great job and the media is dishonest and is siding with China. He added that an honest media would make American a greater place.

A reporter requested more information about the process to use medicines that need approval. Hahn said the President asked the FDA to expedite this process and asserted it would be done well and done right for the American people. He



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said using medications off the shelf can help with understanding side effects. He mentioned the vaccine candidate that is in phase 1 of trials. The reporter asked if phase 2 and phase 3 can be fast-tracked. Hahn explained the FDA is working to partner with great companies to fast-track production as much as is safely possible. Trump added there are already experiments for therapies and people will be trying them soon.