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Southern DAILY

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Inside C2

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Millions of Americans risk losing jobless benefits as Trump refuses to sign aid bill



PALM BEACH, Fla./WASHINGTON (Reuters) - Millions of Americans are about to see their jobless benefits expire on Saturday as U.S. President Donald Trump has so far refused to sign into law a \$2.3 trillion pandemic aid and spending package, insisting that it did not do enough to help everyday people.

Trump stunned Republicans and Democrats alike when he said this week he was unhappy with the massive bill, which provides \$892 billion in badly needed coronavirus relief, including extending special unemployment benefits expiring on Dec. 26, and \$1.4 trillion for normal government spending.

Without Trump's signature, about 14 million people could lose those extra benefits, according to Labor Department data. A partial government shutdown will begin on Tuesday unless Congress can agree a stop-gap government funding bill before then.

After months of wrangling, Republicans and Democrats agreed to the package last weekend, with the support of the White House. Trump,

who hands over power to Democratic President-elect Joe Biden on Jan. 20, did not object to terms of the deal before Congress voted it through on Monday night.

But since then he has complained that the bill gives too much money to special interests, cultural projects and foreign aid, while its one-time \$600 stimulus checks to millions of struggling Americans were too small. He has demanded that be raised to \$2,000. "I simply want to get our great people \$2000, rather than the measly \$600 that is now in the bill," the president tweeted on Saturday.

His refusal to sign prompted sharp rebuke from Biden, who called on the outgoing Republican president to act immediately.

"This abdication of responsibility has devastating consequences...This bill is critical. It needs to be signed into law now," Biden said in a statement.

Americans face an unprecedented holiday season amid a pandemic that has killed nearly 330,000 people in the United States, with a daily death toll now

repeatedly well over 3,000 people, the highest since the pandemic began.

Many economists agree the bill's aid is too low but say the immediate support is still welcome and necessary.

CONGRESS TO RETURN NEXT WEEK
A source familiar with the situation said Trump's objection to the bill caught many White House officials by surprise. While the outgoing president's strategy for the bill remains unclear, his repeated expression of discontent over it dashed hopes that he would sign.

Trump spent much of Thursday and the Christmas Day golfing at his club in West Palm Beach, Florida. The bill has been sent to Mar-a-Lago, his Florida residence, where he is spending Saturday.

On Friday, Trump said he has held many calls and meetings from his golf club, but neither him nor the White House provided details. He has been sending tweets repeating his baseless claims about election fraud and accusing his fellow Republicans of abandoning him in his bid to overturn the election result,

Residents of Meridian Heights apartments in Northwest Washington display a painted bedsheet protesting for the cancellation of rent due to the loss of jobs during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic in Washington, D.C., U.S., August 20, 2020. REUTERS/Sarah Silbiger

already shot down multiple times by U.S. courts.

Biden, whose Nov. 3 electoral victory Trump refuses to acknowledge, is spending the holiday in his home state of Delaware.

Democratic U.S. Representative Don Beyer told CNN that Trump can still save the day if he signed the bill Saturday. "That means that the people on pandemic unemployment insurance, which runs out today, get to keep it...And the way forward if he signs this, on Monday the House will take up his \$2,000 check – direct check stuff – which we've been for all along."

The U.S. Congress, which normally is adjourned the last week of December, will be preparing to return to work. The Democratic-controlled House plans to vote on legislation providing one-time, \$2,000 checks to individuals.

Trump has also repeated his discontent over a \$740 billion bill authorizing the nation's defense programs, a legislation he vetoed last week. On Monday, the House is scheduled to vote on overriding Trump's veto. If the House vote succeeds, the Senate could hold its vote as early as Tuesday.



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WEA LEE'S GLOBAL NOTES

12/26/2020

CORONAVIRUS DIARY

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Nashville Explosion On Christmas Day

The explosion came after several warnings from inside a parked RV, then the blast shattered the Christmas morning silence in the heart of Nashville, Tennessee.

Just before dawn, police received a call of gunfire in downtown Nashville and the caller said that a bomb would be detonated in the next fifteen minutes. When the RV exploded it blew out windows in shops and offices for several blocks, leaving three people hospitalized.

The police released a photo of the RV on Friday afternoon and said the vehicle arrived at the location at 1:22 AM and parked in front of the AT&T building. It is unclear if anyone was inside the RV

when it exploded.

Nashville Mayor John Cooper said that at least 41 businesses were damaged by the explosion. One building located directly across from the explosion totally collapsed.

With the nation still facing the pandemic, this tragedy will only add to the people's sadness. Many families have lost their loved ones to the pandemic this year and there were many empty seats at Christmas dinner tables in many cities.

Before President Trump left the White House, he met in the Oval Office with Vice President Pence. Trump wants Pence to stop the ratification of the Elec-



toral College votes and to support his bid to overturn the election. Until now, Trump has refused to admit his loss.

ness in this season, but he knows that for so many of us in the country this has been a very difficult year.



President-elect Biden and his wife Jill issued a Christmas message to wish all the people peace, joy, health and happi-

We all hope the year of 2020 will be over soon.



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Publisher Southern Daily Wea H. Lee

Stay Home!

BUSINESS

Wear Mask!

U.S. COVID-19 Lockdown Talk Growing

Biden Covid Advisor Says U.S. 4- To 6-Week Lockdown Could Control COVID-19, Revive Economy

Shutting down businesses and paying people for lost wages for four to six weeks could help keep the coronavirus pandemic in check and get the economy on track until a vaccine is approved and distributed, said Dr. Michael Osterholm, a coronavirus advisor to President-elect Joe Biden. Osterholm, who serves as director of the Center of Infectious Disease Research and Policy at the University of Minnesota, said earlier this week that the country is headed toward "Covid hell." Cases are rising as more people grow tired of wearing masks and social distancing, suffering from so-called "pandemic fatigue," he said Wednesday. Colder weather is also driving people indoors, where the virus can spread more easily. A nationwide lockdown would drive the number of new cases and hospitalizations down to manageable levels while the world awaits a vaccine, he told Yahoo Finance on Wednesday. "We could pay for a package right now to cover all of the wages, lost wages for individual workers, for losses to small companies, to medium-sized companies or city, state, county governments. We could do all of that," he said. "If we did that, then we could lock down for four to six weeks." In an interview with NBC News on Thursday, Osterholm clarified his comments, saying "it was not a recommendation. I have never made this recommendation to Biden's group. We've never talked about it."



Dr. Michael Osterholm, Regents Professor, McKnight Presidential Endowed Chair in Public Health, and director of the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy at the University of Minnesota, announced advances for

COVID-19 testing in Minnesota, Wednesday, April 22, 2020 in St. Paul, MN. (Photo / Glenn Stubbe | Star Tribune | Getty Images) "My only point was if we are going to keep making restrictions state-by-state, there is no compensation for the businesses that are being impacted," he added. "What we're doing right now is not working." A Biden transition official told NBC News that a shutdown "is not in line with the president-elect's thinking." Osterholm was appointed to Biden's 12-member Covid "advisory board" on Monday. The panel of advisors is co-chaired by former Surgeon General Vivek Murthy, former Food and Drug Administration Commissioner David Kessler and Dr. Marcella Nunez-Smith of Yale University. Other task force members include Dr. Atul Gawande, a professor of surgery and health policy at Harvard, and Dr. Rick Bright, the vaccine expert and whistleblower who resigned his post with the Trump administration last month. A representative for Biden did not respond to CNBC's request for comment. Osterholm on Wednesday referenced an August op-ed he wrote with Minneapolis Federal Reserve President Neel Kashkari in which the two argued for more restrictive and uniform lock-



(Illustration: Sarah Grillo/Axios)

KEY POINTS

Dr. Michael Osterholm, a coronavirus advisor to President-elect Joe Biden, said that a nationwide lockdown would help bring the virus under control in the U.S.

He said the government could borrow enough money to pay for a package that would cover lost income for individuals and governments during a shutdown.

"We could really watch ourselves cruising into the vaccine availability in the first and second quarter of next year while bringing back the economy long before that," he said.

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

downs across the nation. The problem with the March-to-May lockdown was that it was not uniformly stringent across the country. For example, Minnesota deemed 78 percent of its workers essential," they wrote in The New York Times. "To be effective, the lockdown has to be as comprehensive and strict as possible."



Dr. Michael Osterholm, Regents Professor, McKnight Presidential Endowed Chair in Public Health, and

director of the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy at the University of Minnesota, speaking in an interview with CNBC.

On Wednesday, Osterholm said such a lockdown would help the country bring the virus under control, "like they did in New Zealand and Australia." Epidemiologists have repeatedly pointed to New Zealand, Australia and parts of Asia that have brought the number of daily new cases to under 10 as an example of how to contain the virus. "We could really watch ourselves

cruising into the vaccine availability in the first and second quarter of next year while bringing back the economy long before that," he said Wednesday.

On the current trajectory, Osterholm said the U.S. is headed for dark days before a vaccine becomes available. He said health-care systems across the country are already overwhelmed in places such as El Paso, Texas, where local officials have already closed businesses and the federal government is sending resources to handle a surge in deaths caused by Covid-19.

Osterholm said the country needs leadership. The president-elect is up to the task of providing that leadership, Osterholm said, adding that it could also come from local and state officials or those in the medical community. He referenced

the fireside chats broadcast over radio during former President Franklin D. Roosevelt's terms, through which Roosevelt addressed the country on issues ranging from the Great Depression to World War II.



Anthony Fauci, Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, said last week that the U.S. could avoid a new round of lockdowns if we'd adopt other public health measures this winter.

"People don't want to hear that El Paso isn't an isolated event. El Paso, in many instances, will become the norm," he said. "I think that the message is: How do we get through this? We need FDR moments right now. We need fireside chats. We need somebody to tell America, 'This is what in the hell is going to happen.'"

Right now, cases are absolutely out of control — the U.S. racked up another 151,000 infections just yesterday — and that's got some experts and local leaders talking about a new round of lockdowns.

Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot is imposing a new stay-at-home advisory, beginning next week.

Local restrictions can help prevent local hospitals from becoming overwhelmed, but we may not need to spend much energy debating the hypothetical merits of another national lockdown. (Courtesy axios.com and www.cnn.com)

Editor's Choice



A woman stands in flooded St. Mark's Square during high tide as the flood barriers known as Mose are not raised, in Venice, Italy. REUTERS/Manuel Silvestri



A humpback whale surfaces near the Statue of Liberty in this photo taken from a boat on New York Harbor in New York City. REUTERS/Bjoern Kils/New York Media Boat



A pedestrian walks through falling snow in Boston, Massachusetts, December 17, 2020. REUTERS/Brian Snyder



Family members and loved ones of Jose Garcia cry as he is laid to rest at the San Jose Cemetery in La Mesa, New Mexico, December 22, 2020. Garcia, a 68-year-old farmworker and father to nine children, died of COVID-19 after being admitted to the Las Cruces hospital where his daughter Carolina works as a nurse. Justin Hamel/Handout via REUTERS



Azeri service members guard the area, which came under the control of Azerbaijan's troops following a military conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh against ethnic Armenian forces and a further signing of a ceasefire deal, on the border with Iran in Jabrayil District. REUTERS/



The Lai family look out over the Hong Kong skyline on an outing to Tsim Sha Tsui in Hong Kong, China, December 14, 2020. The family has made a wrenching decision to emigrate to Scotland, disillusioned with the hometown they love. They're among hundreds of thousands of Hong Kongers who could emigrate after the imposition of a



The headquarters of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (PKK) is seen after it was burnt during anti-government protests on the outskirts of Sulaimaniyah, Iraq. REUTERS/Ako Rasheed



Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro uses a disinfectant spray after a press conference following the ruling Socialist Party's victory in legislative elections that were boycotted by the opposition in Caracas, Venezuela. REUTERS/Manauere Quintero

