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John Robbins 281-965-6390

Jun Gai 281-498-4310

Publisher: Wea H. Lee
President: Catherine Lee
Editor: John Robbins

Address: 11122 Bellaire Blvd.,
Houston, TX 77072
E-mail: News@scdaily.com



Inside C2

Southern DAILY

Make Today Different

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Biden agenda at risk as Democrats squabble ahead of shutdown deadline

WASHINGTON, Sept 29 (Reuters) - President Joe Biden's agenda was at risk of being derailed by divisions among his own Democrats, as moderates voiced anger on Wednesday at the idea of delaying a \$1 trillion infrastructure bill ahead of a critical vote to avert a government shutdown.

The White House said talks over twin bills that would revitalize the nation's roads and airports and fund social programs and climate change measures, were at a "precarious" point as moderates and progressives disagreed over the scope of some \$4 trillion in spending.

Congress, which Democrats control by a razor-thin margin, is due to vote on a bipartisan resolution to fund federal operations through early December before funding expires at midnight on Thursday. The House of Representatives is currently expected to vote Thursday on a \$1 trillion infrastructure bill already passed by the Senate, a vote that has been delayed once.

Report ad Representative Stephanie Murphy, a moderate Democrat who backs the infrastructure bill, warned against defeat or delay of the legislation.

"If the vote were to fail tomorrow or be delayed, there would be a significant breach of trust that would slow the momentum in moving forward in delivering the Biden agenda," she told reporters on Wednesday.

But with House progressives warning they will vote against the bill until a deal is reached on a separate sweeping, multitrillion-dollar plan to boost social spending and address climate change, the vote was not guaranteed.

"The only way the vote happens (Thursday) is if we have the votes to pass the bill," Representative Dan Kildee, House Democrats' chief deputy whip, told reporters.

WHITE HOUSE HUDDLE

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer were at the White House on Wednesday afternoon after Biden, a former senator himself, canceled a trip to Chicago to lead negotiations



with Congress.

"We're obviously at a precarious and important time," White House press secretary Jen Psaki said on Wednesday.

A White House staffer met at the Capitol with moderate Democratic Senator Kyrsten Sinema, who has expressed deep concern over the size of Biden's plans and has the power to block them due to the Democrats' narrow control of the Senate.

If the resolution to fund the government passes the Senate, the House could vote quickly to send the measure to Biden to sign into law, averting a partial government shutdown in the midst of a national health crisis. Biden's Democrats campaigned on a platform of responsible government after Republican Donald Trump's turbulent four years in office.

Republican Senator John Cornyn expressed optimism on Wednesday.

"Democrats don't want to shut down the government. Republicans don't want to shut down the government. That will supply the result that we all expect, which is to keep the lights on," he told a news conference.

Senate Democrats tried to both fund the government and head off a potentially catastrophic federal government default next month but were thwarted by Repub-

licans who twice blocked attempts to raise the nation's \$28.4 trillion debt ceiling.

The House and Senate may vote on a separate bill that temporarily lifts the debt limit, but that too is the subject of a bitter partisan fight.

Senate Republicans refuse to vote for it, telling Democrats to act alone, while Schumer has demanded bipartisan cooperation on a measure to address debts racked up during both Democratic and Republican administrations.

The government will hit the ceiling around Oct. 18, an event that could cause a historic default with long-lasting economic fallout and implications for financial markets.

Investment bank Goldman Sachs this month described the standoff as "the riskiest debt-limit deadline in a decade."

DIVISIONS

Biden also must negotiate a \$3.5 trillion bill that aims to expand social programs and address climate change. Several senior Democrats have said that the "reconciliation" bill - so called because it is being drawn up under a budgetary procedure to avoid Senate rules requiring

U.S. Senator John Barrasso (R-WY) speaks as Senators John Thune (R-SD), Rick Scott (R-FL), Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-MS), Tim Scott (R-SC), John Cornyn (R-TX), Steve Daines (R-MT) and Pat Toomey (R-PA) listen during a news conference criticizing Democrats at the U.S. 60 votes out of 100 members for passage - will need to be scaled back to pass.

Moderate Democratic Senator Joe Manchin said he believed it would take weeks to reach agreement.

The "reconciliation (bill) is going to take a while; it's not going to be a week or two or three weeks. There's a lot," Manchin said.

Other Senate Democrats avoided criticizing Manchin and Sinema but showed no sign of relenting on their own demands.

House Democrats urged the two to say publicly what they want.

"They need to come up with their counteroffer and then we sit down and negotiate from there," said Representative Pramila Jayapal, chair of the House Progressive Caucus.



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WEA LEE'S GLOBAL NOTES

CORONAVIRUS DIARY

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Wea H. Lee
Wealee@scdaily.com

Chairman of International District Houston Texas
Publisher Southern Daily Wea H. Lee

Southern News Group Chairman / CEO
Chairman of International Trade & Culture Center
Republic of Guiana Honorary consul at Houston Texas



The Largest Solar Farm In America



One of Houston's oldest Black Southside neighborhoods – Sunnyside will become home to the nation's largest urban solar farm.

Last December the Houston City Council and Mayor Turner approved a \$1 dollar lease with Wolfe Energy who

will convert the dump into the largest solar installation in the nation on an astounding 240 acres.

The project will cost about \$70 million and generate enough energy to power roughly 5,000 homes, roughly the size of 200 football fields.

It was from 1937 to 1970 that Sunnyside was where the City of Houston chose to dump its garbage. As the developer Dori Wolfe said, "There's no better use for a former landfill than putting solar on it."

As the energy capital of the world, this new solar project represents a new milestone

for Houston and for our state.

It's a great project that will begin at the end of 2022 which will not just create new jobs, but also will change the whole area and give it a new face.



Southern DAILY Make Today Different

Editor's Choice



Cast member Daniel Craig arrives at the world premiere of the new James Bond film "No Time To Die" at the Royal Albert Hall in London. REUTERS/ Henry Nicholls



Pigeons fly at dawn in front of the lava and smoke, following the eruption of a volcano on the Canary Island of La Palma, in El Paso, Spain. REUTERS/Jon Nazca



The British Royal Air Force Red Arrows flying display team fly over Episkopi British military base, Cyprus. REUTERS/Yiannis Kourtoglou



Former U.S. president Barack Obama embraces Former First Lady Michelle Obama during the groundbreaking ceremony for the Obama presidential center in Jackson Park, in Chicago. REUTERS/Sebastian Hidalgo



A demonstrator takes part in a rally in support of legal and safe abortion during a march to mark the International Safe Abortion Day in Bogota, Colombia. The letters painted on her face read "Abortion". REUTERS/Nathalia Angarita



A soldier salutes as he rides with a dog in a pickup during a parade marking the Independence Day of Turkmenistan in Ashgabat. REUTERS/Vyacheslav Sarkisyan

BUSINESS



UN Chief: World Is At ‘Pivotal Moment’ And Must Avert Crises



United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres addresses journalists during an EU summit at the European Council building in Brussels. Guterres has issued a dire warning, Saturday, Sept. 11, that the world is moving in the wrong direction and faces “a pivotal moment.” (John Thys, Pool Photo via AP, File)

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

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres issued a dire warning that the world is moving in the wrong direction and faces “a pivotal moment” where continuing business as usual could lead to a breakdown of global order and a future of perpetual crisis. Changing course could signal a breakthrough to a greener and safer future, he said. The U.N. chief said the world’s nations and people must reverse today’s dangerous trends and choose “the breakthrough scenario.” The world is under “enormous stress” on almost every front, he said, and the COVID-19 pandemic was a wake-up call demonstrating the failure of nations to

come together and take joint decisions to help all people in the face of a global life-threatening emergency. Guterres said this “paralysis” extends far beyond COVID-19 to the failures to tackle the climate crisis and “our suicidal war on nature and the collapse of biodiversity,” the “unchecked inequality” undermining the cohesion of societies, and technology’s advances “without guard rails to protect us from its unforeseen consequences.” In other signs of a more chaotic and insecure world, he pointed to rising poverty, hunger and gender inequality after decades of decline, the extreme risk to human life and the planet from nuclear

war and a climate breakdown, and the inequality, discrimination and injustice bringing people into the streets to protest “while conspiracy theories and lies fuel deep divisions within societies.”



In a horizon-scanning report presented to the General Assembly and at a press conference Friday, Guterres said his vision for the “breakthrough scenario” to a greener and safer world is driven by “the principle of working together, recognizing that we are bound to each other and that no community or country, however powerful, can solve its challenges alone.” The report -- “Our Common Agenda” -- is a response to last year’s declaration by world leaders on the 75th anniversary of the United Nations and the request from the assembly’s 193 member nations for the U.N. chief to make recommendations to address the challenges for global governance. In today’s world, Guterres said, “Global decision-making is fixed on immediate gain, ignoring the long-term consequences of decisions -- or indecision.” He said multilateral institutions have proven to be “too weak and fragmented for today’s global challenges and risks.” What’s needed, Guterres said, is not new multilateral bureaucracies but more effective multilateral institutions including a United Nations “2.0” more relevant to the 21st century. “And we need multilateralism with teeth,” he said. In the report outlining his vision “to fix” the world, Guterres said immediate action is needed to protect the planet’s “most precious” assets from oceans to outer space, to ensure it is livable, and to deliver on the aspirations of people everywhere for peace and good health. He called for an immediate global vaccination plan implemented by an emergency task force, saying “investing \$50 billion in vaccinations now could add an estimated \$9 trillion to the global economy in the next four years.”

The report proposes that a global Summit of the Future take place in 2023 that would not only look at all these issues but go beyond traditional security threats “to strengthen global governance of digital

technology and outer space, and to manage future risks and crises,” he said.



It would also consider a New Agenda for Peace including measures to reduce strategic risks from nuclear weapons, cyber warfare and lethal autonomous weapons, which Guterres called one of humanity’s most destabilizing inventions. The secretary-general said a new United Nations Futures Lab will publish regular reports “on megatrends and risks.” He said the COVID-19 pandemic also exposed deficiencies in the global financial system. To tackle these weaknesses and integrate the global financial system with other global priorities, Guterres proposed holding summits every two years of the 20 leading economies in the G20, the U.N.’s Economic and Social Council, the heads of international financial institutions including the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, and the U.N. secretary-general. He also called for the correction of “a major blind spot in how we measure progress and prosperity,” saying Gross Domestic Product or GDP fails to account for “the incalculable social and environmental damage that may be caused by the pursuit of profit.” “My report calls for new metrics that value the life and well-being of the many over short-term profit for the few,” Guterres said.

It also calls for a new Emergency Platform that would be triggered automatically in large-scale crises comprising governments, the U.N. system, international financial institutions, civil society, the private sector and others, he said.



Guterres also proposed “repurposing” the U.N. Trusteeship Council, whose work is largely completed, “to create an intergovernmental body for intergenerational issues” that would be a platform to consider the interests of the entire human family, present and future. As part of a new focus on the world’s young people and future generations, Guterres said he intends to appoint a special envoy for future generations to ensure the interests of those born in the 21st century and establish a new United Nations Youth Office.

Saying much of the world’s unease is rooted in poverty and growing inequality, Guterres noted that the 10 richest men saw their combined wealth increase by half a trillion dollars since the COVID-19 pandemic began while 55% of the world’s population, or 4 billion people, “are one step away from destitution, with no social protection whatsoever.” To address the threats to social stability, the U.N. chief recommended a series of measures “to provide universal health coverage, education, housing, decent work and income protection for everyone, everywhere.” Guterres proposed holding a World Social Summit in 2025 on global efforts to address these issues and repair the social fabric.



The secretary-general also proposed global action to tackle disinformation and conspiracy theories and promote facts, science and “integrity” in public discourse. “We must make lying wrong again,” Guterres said. (Courtesy apnews.com)

COMMUNITY

Health Officials Advise White House to Scale Back Booster Plan for Now

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



WASHINGTON — Top federal health officials have told the White House to scale back a plan to offer coronavirus booster shots to the general public this month, saying that regulators need more time to collect and review all the necessary data, according to people familiar with the discussion. Dr. Janet Woodcock, the acting commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration, and Dr. Rochelle P. Walensky, who heads the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, warned the White House on Thursday that their agencies may be able to determine in the coming weeks whether to recommend boosters only for recipients of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine — and possibly just some of them to start. The two health leaders made their argument in a meeting with Jeffrey D. Zients, the White House pandemic coordinator. Several people who heard about the session said it was unclear how Mr. Zients responded. But he has insisted for months that the White House will always follow the advice of government scientists, wherever it leads. Asked about the meeting, a White House spokesman said on Friday, “We always said we would follow the science, and this is all part of a process that is now underway,” adding that the administration was awaiting a “full review and approval” of booster shots by the F.D.A. as well as a recommendation from the C.D.C. “When that approval and recommendation are made,” the spokesman, Chris Meagher, said, “we will be ready to implement the plan our nation’s top doctors developed so that we are staying ahead of this virus.” Less than three weeks ago, Mr. Biden said that contingent on F.D.A. approval, the government planned to start offering boosters the week of Sept. 20 to adults who had received their second shot of the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccine at least eight months ago. That would include many health care workers and nursing home residents, as well as some people older than 65, who were generally the first to be vaccinated. Administration officials have said that recipients of the single-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine would probably be offered an additional shot soon as well.

Mr. Biden cast the strategy as another tool that the nation needed to battle the highly contagious Delta variant, which has driven up infection rates, swamped hospitals with Covid-19 patients and led to an average of more than 1,500 deaths a day for the past week, according to a New York Times database. “The plan is for every adult to get a booster shot eight months after you got your second shot,” he said on Aug. 18, adding: “It will make you safer, and for longer. And it will help us end the pandemic faster.”



But the announcement of a late September target date for starting the booster campaign set off alarm bells inside the F.D.A. — apparently playing a role in decisions by two of its top vaccine regulators, announced this week, to leave the agency this fall. Both Dr. Woodcock and Dr. Walensky helped draft the plan and publicly endorsed it. Some public health experts have said that by doing so, they increased pressure on scientists weighing the evidence for boosters in their respective agencies to go along with the administration’s strategy. “Now those agencies are in a box,” said Dr. Steven Joffe, a professor of medical ethics and health policy at the University of Pennsylvania. “We want doctors and scientists and the public to trust in the recommendations and decisions that are made, to be able to point to the F.D.A. and C.D.C. doing their due diligence.” Privately, Dr. Woodcock had argued that it was risky to set a firm date for a booster rollout before regulators had a chance to thoroughly review the data, some of which had yet to be submitted by the vaccine manufacturers, and decide whether shots were safe and necessary, according to several people familiar with the discussions. And since the White House announced the booster plan in mid-August, they said, new hurdles appeared. Among the reasons for delaying is that regulators need more time to decide the proper dosage for a possible third Moderna shot. The company’s application asking the F.D.A. to authorize a booster shot contains insufficient data, one federal official familiar with the process said. Other data expected from Johnson & Johnson has not been delivered. Nor has the raw data that the F.D.A. has been

seeking from Israel, which is already giving boosters to everyone 12 and older. Israeli officials say their data shows that the potency of Pfizer’s vaccine wanes over time against severe disease and hospitalization, but that a third shot significantly bolsters protection. The F.D.A. wants to see the underlying data, to make sure it backs up summaries that the Israeli government has provided. Narrowing the booster plan could confuse the public and create a perception that federal vaccine policy is in some degree of disarray. But some public health experts will most likely welcome it.



They have been arguing strenuously that the administration lacks the data to justify a broad rollout of extra shots and should instead concentrate on vaccinating the roughly 25 percent of Americans who are eligible for shots but remain unprotected. And some have said that senior Biden officials, including the leaders of health agencies, wrongly cornered regulators by announcing a strategy before they could conduct a full review. Regulators are only beginning to review critical data that will help them determine if and how boosters should be given. Pfizer completed its booster application to the F.D.A. last week, and Moderna said on Friday that it had just completed its own. The two vaccine regulators who announced that they would be leaving the agency this fall — Dr. Marion Gruber, who directs the agency’s vaccines office, and her deputy, Dr. Philip Krause — have told people there was not nearly enough data to justify offering extra shots to the general population starting in just weeks. Dr. Gruber is set to depart in October, and Dr. Krause in November. More friction may lie ahead. On Sept. 17, the F.D.A.’s outside advisory committee is scheduled to publicly review Pfizer’s data supporting a booster shot. Even though Pfizer has asked the F.D.A. to approve booster doses for people 16 and up, the agency could decide to restrict who gets a booster. The C.D.C. and its outside advisory panel would also have to weigh in. One key member of the F.D.A.’s advisory panel, Dr. Paul A. Offit, the director of the Vaccine Education Center at Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia, argues boosters are premature. “There is no compelling reason to get a third dose” now, he said in an interview on Thursday. He said the administration had appeared to expect that the F.D.A. and the C.D.C. would rubber-stamp its booster timeline. “Bypassing and marginalizing those agencies led veterans who you need in this pandemic to leave the F.D.A.,” he said, referring to the departures of Dr. Gruber and Dr. Krause.

Various studies have shown that the potency of the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines ebbs against infection over time, but suggest that the vaccines continue to offer robust protection against severe illness and hospitalization.



But Dr. Vivek Murthy, the surgeon general, said in an interview on Thursday that a few studies have suggested a dip in protection against severe disease over time. “Our feeling was that if we waited several more months, we would see protection against hospitalizations and deaths break down,” he said. In an interview published Thursday on WebMD.com, Dr. Woodcock echoed that view, saying that the trend of breakthrough infections had led health officials to believe at some point, “we are going to see hospitalizations and more serious disease” among fully vaccinated people. When that happens, she said, “we want to be ready” with the booster plan. Some Americans are already getting booster shots before F.D.A. approval: More than a million fully vaccinated people have received an additional dose since mid-August. The agency authorized vaccines for some people with weakened immune systems on Aug. 12; it is unknown how many of the people who have gotten extra doses are in that group. (Courtesy <https://dnyuz.com/2>)

International Group Advises Against Boosters

An international group of vaccine experts, including officials from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and World Health Organization (WHO), said that there is no evidence to suggest that the general population needs COVID-19 vaccine booster shots. The authors warned that if booster shots are introduced too soon, they may cause more side effects in the general population, including myocarditis or Guillain-Barre syndrome. Should that occur, the researchers said, it would create even more problems with vaccine acceptance in the general population. The paper was published Monday in The Lancet medical journal and was co-authored by Marion Gruber and Phil Krause, two top FDA officials in charge of regulating and approving vaccines. Both Gruber and Krause are slated to depart the FDA in the coming weeks, the agency confirmed about two weeks ago. The Lancet paper’s authors said that available COVID-19 vaccines are able to offer strong protection against severe COVID-19 cases and symptoms. They noted that protection against symptomatic infection from the Delta variant has dropped.



But, they added that “current evidence does not ... appear to show a need for boosting in the general population, in which efficacy against severe disease remains high.” “Even if boosting were eventually shown to decrease the medium-term risk of serious disease, current vaccine supplies could save more lives if used in previously unvaccinated populations,” the authors added. Booster shots could lead to more harmful side effects in the general population, which is a poorly understood phenomenon, they cautioned. “There could be risks if boosters are widely introduced too soon, or too frequently, especially with vaccines that can have immune-mediated side-effects (such as myocarditis, which is more common after the second dose of some mRNA vaccines, or Guillain-Barre syndrome, which has been associated with adenovirus-vectored COVID-19 vaccines),” the study said. If “unnecessary boosting causes significant adverse reactions,” such as the aforementioned side-effects, the authors said, “there could be implications for vaccine acceptance that go beyond COVID-19 vaccines.” In recent days, the WHO has urged wealthier nations not to embark on producing, distributing, or mandating booster doses of COVID-19 vaccines. WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus last week urged these countries, including the United States, to halt developing booster shots until the end of 2021.



WHO chief, General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus: no boosters. “I will not stay silent when companies and countries that control the global supply of vaccines think the world’s poor should be satisfied with leftovers,” he told a news conference on Sept. 8. “Because manufacturers have prioritized or been legally obliged to fulfill bilateral deals with rich countries willing to pay top dollar, low-income countries have been deprived of the tools to protect their people.” Meanwhile, both Gruber, the head of the Office of Vaccines Research and Review, and Krause have not issued statements why they are departing the FDA. According to a memo that was sent by FDA Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research head Peter Marks in August, Gruber is leaving on Oct. 31. Krause is leaving sometime in November, the memo said. In the meantime, Marks will serve as the head of the Office of Vaccines Research and Review. (Courtesy epochtimes.com)