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Southern DAILY

Make Today Different

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Heeding complaints, Biden lifts refugee cap to 62,500

U.S. President Joe Biden said on Monday he has resurrected a plan to raise refugee admissions this year to 62,500 after drawing a wave of criticism from supporters for initially keeping the refugee cap at a historically low level.

A Democrat, Biden formally reversed himself just two weeks after his administration announced it would keep the cap at the 15,000 level set by his Republican predecessor, Donald Trump, an immigration hawk.

In a statement, Biden said his action “erases the historically low number set by the previous administration of 15,000, which did not reflect America’s values as a nation that welcomes and supports refugees.”

“It is important to take this action today to remove any lingering doubt in the minds of refugees around the world who have suffered so much, and who are anxiously waiting for their new lives to begin,” he said.

Soon after taking office in January, Biden pledged to ramp up the program but then surprised allies when he opted to stick with the lower cap out of concern over bad optics, given the rising number of migrants crossing the U.S. southern border with Mexico, U.S. officials have said.

Biden’s flip-flopping drew the ire of refugee advocates and some Democratic lawmakers.

Trump steadily slashed the size of the refugee program during his term in office, and Biden officials say the cuts have made quickly raising admissions more difficult.

But the refugee program is distinct from the asylum system for migrants. Refugees come from all over the world, many fleeing conflict. They undergo extensive vetting while still overseas to be cleared for entry to the United States, unlike migrants who arrive at a U.S. border and then request asylum.

The allocations for the increased cap matched an earlier plan Biden sent to Congress, according to a memo signed by Biden. The memo said there would be 22,000 spots for refugees from Africa, 6,000 from East Asia, 4,000 from Europe and Central Asia, 5,000 from Latin America and



the Caribbean, and 13,000 from South Asia. Another 12,500 unallocated spots will also be available.

Biden said it was doubtful the United States would be able to welcome a total of 62,500 refugees by the end of the current fiscal year on Sept. 30, or reach a goal of 125,000 admissions next year.

“The sad truth is that we will not achieve 62,500 admissions this year. We are working quickly to undo the damage of the last four years. It will take some time, but that work is already under way,” he said.

A White House official said Biden now wanted to raise the cap regardless of capacity limitations to “send a very clear message that refugee processing is a critical part of America’s place in the world,” acknowledging the initial lower announcement “did not send the right message.”

Delays in Biden’s decisionmaking on the issue led to hundreds of canceled flights for refugees already cleared to travel to the United States, often after years of waiting, refugee groups said.

Krish O’Mara Vignarajah, president of the resettlement organization Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, said in a statement that advocacy groups were breathing a “sigh of relief” following the announcement on Monday, even though meeting the high target would be “daunting.”

Bill and Melinda Gates to divorce, shaking philanthropic world

Bill Gates and Melinda Gates said on Monday that they have decided to divorce, unnerving the philanthropic world.

“After a great deal of thought and a lot of work on our relationship, we have made the decision to end our marriage,” the two said in a statement posted on the Twitter account of Bill Gates, who cofounded Microsoft Corp (MSFT.O).

“We no longer believe we can grow together as a couple in the next phase of our lives. We ask for space and privacy for our family as we begin to navigate this new life,” their statement said.

The financial details of the decision were not immediately clear.

The two were co-chairs and trustees of their nonprofit Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, which launched in 2000. The foundation currently has over \$51 billion in assets, according to a tax filing cited by CNBC.

The development comes two years after Amazon.com Inc (AMZN.O) founder Jeff Bezos said that he and his then wife, MacKenzie, were getting divorced.

Gates dropped out of Harvard to co-found Microsoft with school-friend Paul Allen in 1975. Gates owned 49% of Microsoft at its initial public offering in 1986, which made him an instant multi-millionaire. With Microsoft’s explosive growth, he soon became the world’s richest person.

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WEA LEE'S GLOBAL NOTES

CORONAVIRUS DIARY

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The Time Of Big Government Is Coming



long-standing inequalities and fragility of our economy.

In the last several months we have really seen how the government has helped people including vaccine deployment, money for rent, food, and healthcare. This is making all the difference in the world.

When we look back at history we can see that the wealth of this country has been controlled by only a few people, or about one percent of the richest people in the country. They should pay more taxes as well as the big corporations.

For America's future in this competitive world, we really have no way out other than to accept big government.

We are so glad that with more Americans now vaccinated and the economy being reopened, we feel that a very optimistic recovery is on the way.

President Biden's total six trillion dollar budget might have seemed unthinkable following the last recession. The pandemic has reminded most Americans to think that big government can deliver money or help and speed efforts to end the crisis faster.

The government is promising that in years to come it will improve our daily lives with smoother roads, cheaper child care, free schooling, cleaner energy, paid leave for workers and faster internet service. The president wants to pay for improvements by raising taxes on high earners and corporations.

The pandemic crisis has showed the



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Editor's Choice



The body of a person, who died from the coronavirus, lies on a funeral pyre during a mass cremation, at a crematorium in New Delhi, May 1. REUTERS/Adnan Abidi



An Orthodox priest sprays holy water on believers after a service that marks the Orthodox feast of Palm Sunday outside the Volodymyrsky Cathedral in Kyiv, Ukraine April 25, 2021. REUTERS/Valentyn Ogirenko



Italians enjoy aperitivo evening drinks sitting down at a bar as much of the country becomes a 'yellow zone', easing coronavirus restrictions allowing bars and restaurants to serve clients at outdoor tables, in Venice, Italy. REUTERS/Manuel Silvestri



Emergency workers hug as they react at the stampede site at Mount Meron, Israel May 2, 2021. REUTERS/Amir Cohen



Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson eats an ice-cream as he visits Llandudno, Wales. REUTERS/Phil Noble/Pool



Tyres burn on a road as dockworkers protest against Chile's government seeking to block an approval made by lawmakers that would allow citizens to make another withdrawal from their privately-held pension savings to combat economic hardship generated by the coronavirus pandemic, in Valparaiso, Chile. REUTERS/Rodrigo Garrido

Southern DAILY Make Today Different

BUSINESS

Lockdown Protests Held Worldwide



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

The anti-lockdown protests that have garnered so much attention in the United States in recent weeks may seem like a uniquely American phenomenon. Writer Emma Grey Ellis called them an "American mess," describing them as "a modern permutation of an identity crisis with roots very deep in America's individualist history."



Anti-lockdown protests took place this past weekend in over a dozen European countries in response to strict government restrictions to control a third wave of COVID-19 infections. The sentiment swept across the continent with demonstrations in Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Romania, Serbia, Sweden, the United Kingdom and others.

ing walking a pet. The United Kingdom continues to prohibit gatherings of more than two people outside the home, including for peaceful protests. Germany banned residents from traveling more than 15 kilometers (9.3 miles) from their homes if they lived in high-risk areas and the European Union adopted travel restrictions throughout the 27-member bloc.



Swedish authorities dispersed hundreds of protesters in Stockholm who gathered in violation of the government's restrictions on large gatherings. Video showed protesters being arrested and holding signs that read, "Freedom for security," "Stop dictatorship," and "They inject us with poison."

police, trying to break up the crowds. Close to three dozen people were arrested Saturday during the clashes.



It was a dramatic reaction to what activists see as an undemocratic law masked in public health authorities. The U.K. law strictly limits the reasons a person can leave their home and imposes fines of up to 10,000 (\$13,864) for anyone charged with holding a gathering or more than 30 people.



Paris hospitals reached capacity last week and began transferring patients to other regions. Poland hospitals are under pressure as the number of new cases exceeds the height of the November surge. "No government wants to do this," Conley said of the third lockdown.



However, out of a population of 447 million people, recent data show only 70 million vaccines have been delivered and 51 million shots have been administered. By comparison, Great Britain, now separated from the EU, has administered more than 28 million shots and currently has the second-highest rate of any nation for vaccine doses per 100 people.

Southern DAILY Make Today Different

COMMUNITY

For Some, Getting Vaccinated Will Literally Pay Off

New Vaccine Perks: Halftime Shots, Donuts And Savings Bonds



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

If you're one of the few thousand people heading to see the Milwaukee Bucks play the Brooklyn Nets on Sunday, May 2nd, you have a chance to get a very special souvenir during the game — your first dose of a Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine. The unusual vaccination drive is part of a host of new efforts across the US to get people their shots, whether that's by bribing them with savings bonds in West Virginia or hosting vaccine clinics at professional basketball games in Wisconsin.



West Virginia isn't alone in considering financial benefits to improve vaccination rates. Grocery chain Kroeger is offering its employees \$100 to get vaccinated. Several colleges and universities are offering gift cards, or other financial incentives to their students if they get vaccinated.

Enticements are still outliers in the vaccine drive, and many more groups are taking approaches similar to the Milwaukee Health Department and their partnership with the Bucks. They're more focused on making vaccines as accessible as possible by meeting people where they are; setting up mobile vaccine drives to take the vaccines into people's homes, their neighbor-



hoods, or even to a basketball game. As of this week, 100 million people in the US are fully vaccinated, and more than 1.13 billion shots have been given around the world. That's pretty incredible for just five months since the first public rollout. But there are still billions more people to vaccinate. It will take everything we've got — more supplies, more money, and more creativity — to give everyone at least a chance at vaccination.



Still, rising hospitalizations and caseloads in the Pacific Northwest prompted Oregon's governor to impose restrictions in several counties, and her Washington counterpart was expected to follow suit. Demand for vaccines has started to fall around the country, something health officials expected would happen once the most vulnerable and most eager to get the shot had the opportunity to do so.



On Wednesday, only 35 people in all three counties

booked a first dose through the health agency, down from a peak of 500 daily appointments a few weeks ago. Schanz ticks off the efforts so far in the three counties where he is the health agency's administrator: Newspaper ads, signs and mailers sent with utility bills. Drive-thru vaccination sites at fairgrounds and fire stations. A call center and online scheduling. Outreach to pastors, Republican elected leaders, employers in the lumber industry and an aluminum boat manufacturer. TV and radio interviews.



Other companies are getting into the spirit with marketing pitches. Krispy Kreme began offering a free doughnut a day to anyone showing proof of having been vaccinated. In Cleveland, a movie theater is supplying free popcorn through the end of this month. Several marijuana dispensaries around the country are giving out cannabis treats or free rolled joints.