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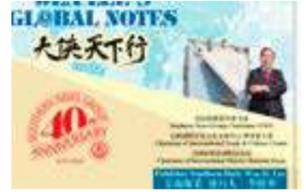
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Inside C2

# Southern DAILY

Make Today Different

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## Thousands of Texas ballots rejected as new voter ID law causes confusion

Feb 18 (Reuters) - Thousands of Texas voters' mail-in ballots for midterm primary elections have been rejected for failing to comply with new Republican-backed identification requirements passed in the wake of former President Donald Trump's false claims of widespread fraud, county officials said.

Election officials in six of the state's largest counties, which are collectively home to about a third of Texas' population, are reporting unprecedented rates of invalid ballots, almost entirely because voters are neglecting to include an ID number on the envelope as the new law demands.

That has officials scrambling to try to help voters correct the errors, less than two weeks before the state holds the nation's first primary election in which the Democratic and Republican voters will choose their candidates for the Nov. 8 midterm elections that will determine control of the U.S. Congress for the next two years.

In Harris County, home to Houston and 4.7 million people, 3,475 ballots representing about 35% of those received by Tuesday could not be accepted because voters did not fill in the correct number. In past years, the overall rejection rate was between 5% and 10%.

The vast majority of ballots appeared to have been cast by registered voters who simply made an honest mistake, officials said.

"These layers don't provide more security, but they are providing more rejection," said Isabel Longoria, the top election official in Harris, the state's most populous county. "Election administrators are in this very bizarre situation where it's our job to help voters vote ... and we're having to reject ballots at a rate we've never seen before."

The number of rejected votes is certain to rise, given that the majority of mail-in ballots have not yet arrived at clerks' offices ahead of the March 1 primary.

Officials in Dallas County, the state's second-most populous with 2.6 million residents, said they were sending back 26% of mail-in ballots, much higher than in previous elections.

In Collin County, a district just north of Dallas with roughly 1 million people, 25% of mail-in ballots are being rejected,



according to Bruce Sherbet, the county's election administrator.

Among other large Texas counties, Hidalgo election officials reported sending back 189 ballots of the 3,189 they had received, while at this time in the 2018 elections they had returned none.

In El Paso County, 270 of the 581 ballots - 46% - received on Tuesday were missing an ID number, said Lisa Wise, the elections administrator.

In Williamson County, north of Austin, about a quarter of ballots have arrived with no ID number, Christopher Davis, the election administrator, said.

Reuters reached out to officials in Texas' 12 most populous counties. The others either did not respond to requests for comment or said they did not yet have data to share.

The findings present an early look at how a wave of new restrictions on voting over the past year, largely passed by Republican-held legislatures, could affect turnout in the Nov. 8 elections.

"We've never heard of anything near as high as this," said James Slattery, an attorney with the Texas Civil Rights Project.

Texas lawmakers approved the voting restrictions last September after a months-long effort by Democrats to block it that included lawmakers fleeing the state. It was one of many efforts in Republican-controlled states to pass new limits after Trump falsely claimed he lost the 2020 election because of widespread fraud.

When asked about the higher than usual rejection rates, Texas Secretary of State John Scott's office referred Reuters to a statement it issued on Wednesday that laid out voters' options for correcting rejected ballots.

Some county election officials said they thought the early problems would prove short-lived as voters get accustomed to the new requirements.

"I think it's gonna improve," said Sherbet, of Collin County, noting that

the law does give voters who failed to fill out the number an opportunity to. "It was just a rough start."

### REMEMBERING DECADES-OLD APPLICATIONS

The increased rejection rate follows a similar rise in the number of rejected mail-in ballot applications, which also carried a new ID requirement this year. Under the law, known as SB 1, absentee voters must include either a driver's license number or a partial Social Security number on both the application and the ballot itself.

If the number doesn't match what is in a voter's record, the paperwork must be fixed. Voting rights advocates have cited cases in which older voters may not recall which number they used at the time they first registered, perhaps decades ago.



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# WEA LEE'S GLOBAL NOTES

02/19/2022

## Texas Is Trump's Land



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One hundred and forty-three Republicans will participate in the House Of Representatives Texas primary election in the coming weeks. According to a survey, only thirteen of them think that the

2020 presidential election was legal. In other words, the majority of them think Biden's presidency is illegal.

In the last several years, Republicans have held the political power in Texas.

Democrats only hold the mayor positions in three big cities. When you travel to the rural areas of the state, there are still many Trump flags and stickers all over the cities. Most of them don't believe in wearing masks. They

seem to live in another world.

To be honest, Texas has been very active in attracting investments under Republican Governor Gregg Abbott. Due to lower taxes and the advantages of being the land of big energy as well as its geographical location with a readily available labor force,

many large and world-renowned companies are moving to Texas. Many of them believe that business has more and better opportunities in Texas.

We hear a lot of "jokes" about many people who really want Texas to be an independent nation.



**Southern DAILY** Make Today Different

## Editor's Choice



Rain clouds are seen over Poolbeg chimney stacks during Storm Eunice, in Dublin, Ireland, February 18. REUTERS/Clodagh Kilcoyne



The white-domed roof of the O2 arena is seen damaged by the wind, as a red weather warning was issued due to Storm Eunice, in London.



Women walk at lunch time along Kings Road in Chelsea during Storm Eunice, in London, February 18. REUTERS/Kevin Coombs



Waves crash against the breakwater during Storm Eunice in Wimereux, France, February 18. REUTERS/Pascal Rossignol



People take pictures as waves break on the beach in the wake of Storm Eunice in Blankenberge, Belgium, February 18. REUTERS/Yves Herman



A woman walks past a fallen tree on a side street in Fulham during Storm Eunice, in London, February 18. REUTERS/Kevin Coombs

Southern DAILY Make Today Different

BUSINESS

We'll Be Dealing With Covid-Related Fallout As Long As There Is The Possibility Of New Variants

The 'New World' After The Pandemic - What's In Store?



Covid-19 Testing Site On The Streets Of New York City, January 2022. Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

As a virus-weary world limps through the third year of the outbreak, experts are sending out a warning signal: Don't expect omicron to be the last variant we have to contend with...

previous strains, but it is wildly infectious, pushing new case counts to once unimaginable records. Meanwhile, evidence is emerging that the variant may not be as innocuous as early data suggest.

Nevertheless, scientists agree it's too soon to assume the situation is under control. The virus keeps raising that bar for us every few months...

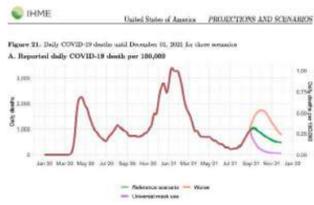


Figure 21: Daily COVID-19 deaths in the United States, 2021. As shown in previous articles, the reported daily COVID-19 death toll has been rising...



A medical worker waits for antigen test results at the Erez Crossing on the Israel-Gaza border in December. (Photo/ Kobi Wolf/Bloomberg)

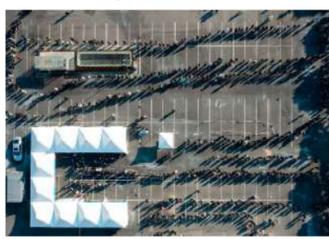
In six months' time, many richer countries will have made the transition from pandemic to endemic. But that doesn't mean masks will be a thing of the past.

Is Covid-19 Here to Stay? "There is a lot of happy talk that goes along the lines that omicron is a mild virus and it's effectively functioning as an attenuated live vaccine...

The sheer size of the current outbreak means more hospitalizations, deaths and virus mutations are all but inevitable. Many people who are infected aren't making it into the official statistics...

With daily cases peaking at an average of more than 800,000 in mid-January, the number of underlying infections may have exceeded 3 million a day...

of more than 800,000 in mid-January, the number of underlying infections may have exceeded 3 million a day — or nearly 1% of the U.S. population, Bedford estimates.



Long lines Queues at a testing station in Seoul on Feb. 6. (Photo/SeongJoon Cho/Bloomberg)

He's not alone in projecting astronomical numbers. At the current infection rate, computer modelling indicates more than half of Europe will have contracted omicron by mid-March...

And just because you've already had the virus doesn't mean you won't get re-infected since Covid doesn't confer lasting immunity.

vaccinated people. That would explain why places like the U.K. and South Africa experienced such significant outbreaks even after being decimated by delta.

"With omicron, because it has more of an upper respiratory component, it's even less likely to result in durable immunity" than previous variants, Hotez said.

Preparing for the next Covid strains is critical.

"As long as there are areas of the world where the virus could be evolving, and new mutants arriving, we all will be susceptible to these new variants," said Glenda Gray, chief executive officer of the South African Medical Research Council.



A child receives a vaccine shot in San Francisco on Jan. 10. (Photo/ David Paul Morris/Bloomberg)

Lockdowns and travel curbs aren't going away, even if they are becoming less restrictive on the whole.

"The things that will matter there are whether we are able to respond when there is a local surge," said Mark McClellan, former director of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration...

(Article Continues Below)

Southern DAILY Make Today Different

COMMUNITY

(Article Continues From Above)

The 'New World' After The Pandemic - What's In Store?

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

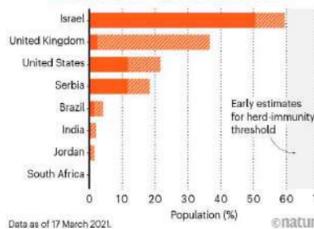


Results of trials on a daily pill to treat COVID-19 could be available within months. (Image/Unsplash/Halacious)

Uneven Access to Vaccines

DISPARITIES IN DISTRIBUTION

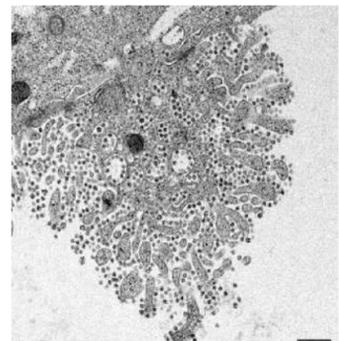
The worldwide roll-out of COVID-19 vaccinations is uneven, as shown by this selection of countries. Even as some nations approach a theoretical threshold for herd immunity...



How We'll Know When the Covid-19 Crisis Is Over

While the virus won't be overwhelming hospitals and triggering restrictions forever, it's still unclear when — or how — it will become safe to leave on the back burner.

Experts Bloomberg News spoke to agree that in developed countries including the U.S. and much of Europe, the virus could be well in hand by mid-2022.



Transmission electron micrograph of a green monkey kidney cells 24 hours after infection by the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

But studies show one or two injections don't ward off the pathogen. The best bet at this point is a booster shot, which triggers the production of neutralizing antibodies and a deeper immune response.

after infection by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. (Source/The University of Hong Kong)

Robert Wachter, chair of medicine at the University of California, San Francisco, puts the odds at 10-to-one that by the end of February, most parts of the U.S. and the developed world will no longer be struggling with severe outbreaks.

"That is a world that feels fundamentally different from the world of the last two years," he said. "We get to come back to something resembling normal."

When Will the Pandemic End? Elsewhere in the world, the pandemic will be far from over.

The threat of new variants is highest in less wealthy countries, particularly those where immune conditions are more common. The delta mutation was first identified in India while omicron emerged in southern Africa...

"As long as we refuse to vaccinate the world, we will continue to see new waves," Hotez said. "We are going to continue to have pretty dangerous variants coming out of low- and middle-income countries. That's where the battleground is."



A "door-to-door" vaccination team inoculates residents at a village in the Budgam district of Jammu and Kashmir, India, in August 2021. (Photo/Smit Dayal/Bloomberg)

Amesh Adalja, senior scholar at the Johns Hopkins University Center for Health Security in Baltimore, sees the pandemic continuing into 2023 for parts of the developing world.

to endemic is when you're not worried about hospitals getting crushed," he said. "That will happen in most Western countries in 2022, and it will take a little bit longer for the rest of the world."

In parts of Asia, public health officials aren't even willing to consider calling the end of the pandemic.

While most of the world now seeks to live alongside Covid, China and Hong Kong are still trying to eliminate it. After spending much of 2021 virtually virus-free, both places are currently dealing with outbreaks.

"We do not possess the prerequisites for living with the virus because the vaccination rate is not good, especially amongst the elderly," said Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam.

Harsh virus restrictions including border closures and quarantines may well be in place until the end of 2022, though the higher contagiousness of the new variants is making that harder to maintain, as Hong Kong's current challenges show.

With so much of the world still mired in the pandemic, virus-related dislocations will continue everywhere.



Covid-19 testing outside a building placed under lockdown at the City Garden housing estate in Hong Kong, in Jan. 2022. (Photo/Louise Delmotte/Bloomberg)

The immense strain on global supply chains is only worsened by workers sickened or forced to quarantine as a result of omicron. The problem is especially acute in Asia, where much of the world's manufacturing takes place, and means global concerns about soaring consumer prices are unlikely to disappear any time soon.

systems around the world face a long, slow recovery after two years of monumental pressure.

And for some individuals, the virus may be a life sentence. Long Covid sufferers have now been experiencing severe fatigue, muscle aches and even brain, heart and organ damage for months.

How long will we be dealing with the long-term ramifications of the virus? "That's the million-dollar question," South Africa's Gray said.



A temporary Covid treatment facility at the Commonwealth Games Village Sports Complex in New Delhi on Jan. 5. (Photo/T. Narayan/Bloomberg)

Life After the Pandemic Over the coming months, a sense of what living permanently with Covid really looks like should take shape. Some places may forget about the virus almost entirely, until a flareup means classes are cancelled for a day or companies struggle with workers calling in sick.

To persist, the virus will need to evolve to evade the immunity that's hitting high levels in many parts of the world. "There could be many scenarios," Yale's Iwasaki said.

"I just hope we don't have to keep making new boosters every so often," she added. "We can't just vaccinate everyone around the world four times a year."

(Courtesy Bloomberg.com)