

March 23, 2020

TO: USTOA Members
FR: Terry Dale

Updated at 2:30pm

The Senate this afternoon was once again unable to reach the 60-vote threshold necessary to advance a procedural motion to allow the third COVID-19 relief package to progress as negotiations continue. The final tally was 49-46 and fell largely along party lines. One Democratic Senator voted yes, Senator Doug Jones (D-AL). Without Unanimous Consent of the Senate, a vote cannot again occur until Friday or Saturday. However, if an agreement is reached, the vote can occur at any time by Unanimous Consent.

The House today released its legislation, but it is largely understood that it will serve as a marker of House Democrats' position.

Administration

Updates at 8:00pm ET

- President Trump hinted at possibly loosening some restrictions currently in place around the COVID-19 outbreak sooner than originally expected.
- FEMA is distributing 8 million N-95 masks, seen as important personal protective equipment (PPE) during the COVID-19 outbreak.
- Attorney General William Barr discussed the authorities the President invoked under the Defense Production Act to prohibit hoarding of critical medical equipment including PPE.
- President Trump announced that 10,000 units of medication aimed at possibly combatting COVID-19 will be distributed in New York tomorrow to evaluate its effectiveness.
- President Trump announced plans to postpone the Department of Homeland Security's REAL ID deadline, with a new deadline to be announced at a later time.
- The Administration also announced tonight that Facebook has donated 720,000 masks that had previously been purchased for the wildfires.
- Vice President Pence announced that over 300,000 COVID-19 tests have now been completed throughout the United States.
 - He also announced that self-swabbing tests will become available this week, which will allow there to be less strain on PPE.

Updates at 9:00am ET

- A Coronavirus Task Force Briefing is expected today at 5:30pm.

- The Trump administration plans to send \$80 million in aid to Native American tribes and organizations to help combat the coronavirus.
- The State Department continues to face increased pressure to bring home Americans who are stuck abroad following border closures and flight cancellations due to COVID-19.
 - The State Department will be starting flights out of Guatemala today with two charters scheduled. Flights out of Morocco started leaving on Friday and efforts to bring Americans home from Peru continue. Reports indicate that two flights are scheduled for today out of Lima, Peru.
 - Congressional Democrats introduced a bill this morning that would eliminate fees for Americans to board repatriation flights. Congressional Democrats continue to urge the State Department to take further steps to help bring Americans home, including activating the Civil Reserve Air Fleet.
- President Trump continues to indicate his support for the cruise lines, saying yesterday during a press conference that the federal government can't let the cruise industry fail due to the coronavirus pandemic.
 - It is important to note that the current version of the Senate Republican legislation does not mention them specifically.
 - The President stated "We can't let the cruise lines go out of business. That would be massive amounts of jobs for our country."
- Presidential Executive Order 13909 was published this morning, entitled "Prioritizing and Allocating Health and Medical Resources to Respond to the Spread of COVID-19." That Executive Order can be found [here](#).
- The Federal Reserve said this morning that the purchases of Treasury and mortgage securities approved last week are essentially unlimited and that it would buy \$375 billion in Treasury securities and \$250 billion in mortgage securities this week. US market futures were up in response as of this sending.

Congress

Updates at 8:00pm ET

- Negotiations continue on the third COVID-19 package after a procedural vote failed to reach the 60-vote threshold in the early afternoon. Reports confirm that Treasury Secretary Mnuchin, Majority Leader McConnell, and Minority Leader Schumer continue to speak frequently in an effort to reach agreement.
 - We are hearing that a deal could be coming within the next few hours.
 - Further votes in the Senate are expected tomorrow.
- Unofficial draft legislative text has been circulating of the House Democratic COVID-19 relief package, although there is a delay on the official release of the text.

- The House is unlikely to take any action on their package as negotiations on the Senate bill continue.
- Logistics for the drafting, negotiation, and passage of a fourth COVID-19 relief package will be increasingly difficult in the near term as more members and congressional staff may test positive for COVID-19.

Updates at 9:00am ET

- Talks went late into the night last night with Secretary Mnuchin shuttling back and forth between the Democratic and Republican Leaders. The Republicans attempted to schedule a vote at 9:15 today that was objected to by the Democrats last evening. The Senate is expected to be back in session at noon today. Once they reconvene, votes are expected to occur at noon to move forward on a COVID-19 phase 3 package. They will need bipartisan support to succeed.
 - Areas of disagreement still remain, including provisions for corporations getting federal assistance, policies on stock buybacks and executive pay, and unemployment insurance and worker protections.
 - It is important to note that five Republican Senators are quarantined due to COVID-19 (Senator Rand Paul has actually tested positive), meaning the Republicans currently only have a 48-47 voting majority in the Senate. The vote yesterday was 47-47.
 - Negotiations continue this morning to try and get an agreement that would reach the 60 vote threshold.
- The goal is still to come to an agreement and hold a vote on final passage in the Senate today. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and her Democratic colleagues still assert that they will be introducing their own bill today.
- Airlines continue to push for substantial economic relief due to the impacts of COVID-19. Grants for airlines are still being discussed in negotiations.
- In addition to the \$58 billion in loans for airlines in the Senate's bill text that was released yesterday, \$1 billion in emergency grants for Amtrak was included. Also included, as previously reported, was \$10 billion for airports and \$20 billion for transit grants.
- The latest draft would also provide \$3 billion for purchases for the Strategic Petroleum Reserve.
- The tech industry is pushing Congress to include aid specifically for online travel platforms, e-commerce entrepreneurs, and the gig workforce.
- The FCC and the telecom industry also have major stakes in the yet-to-be-determined economic stimulus plan, including in the debate over how much money should go toward addressing students' digital "homework gap."
- The Travel Technology Association continues to assert to Congress that relief for the travel industry should include online booking websites, short-term rental platforms and travel agencies.

Other News

Updates at 8:00pm ET

- Currently, the following states have issued stay at home orders: California, Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Indiana, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Oregon, West Virginia.
- Maryland, Virginia, and Kentucky meanwhile have ordered all nonessential businesses to close, but stopped short of issuing official stay-at-home orders.
- Virginia Governor Ralph Northam has closed Virginia schools for the rest of the academic year.

Updates at 9:00am ET

- A lawsuit was filed yesterday calling for the Trump Administration to release immigrant families in detention due to risk of contracting COVID-19.
- As previously reported, General Motors (GM) will partner with Ventec Life Systems and a “private sector Coronavirus initiative” to manufacture ventilators, although it is unclear whether GM factories or employees will work on the ventilator production.
- Corporate bailouts remain an issue, with some companies being targeted as requesting to create specific programs.
- Almost a dozen Air Traffic Control facilities across the nation have been affected by personnel testing positive for COVID-19.
- Emirates has stopped nearly all passenger flights and continues to cut employee wages by as much as half due to COVID-19.
- Hawaii has decided to quarantine all arrivals to the state for 14 days.