May 18, 2020

TO: USTOA Members  
FR: Terry Dale  
  
Below is our COVID-19 Update for May 18, 2020:

**Congress**

**Updates at 8:00pm ET**

* Leadership is still asserting that the Capitol complex will remain closed to the public at least through June 8, which aligns with the extension of the District of Columbia’s stay at home order. There is no timeline for a re-opening to the public, but discussions have begun as to how and when that might happen.
* The House has already left for Memorial Day recess and is expected back May 27-28 for several votes. The Senate begins the Memorial Day break this coming Friday.
* Senate Environment and Public Works Committee Ranking Member Tom Carper (D-DE) and Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee Chairman Lamar Alexander (R-TN) are set to introduce the [Securing America’s Clean Fuels Infrastructure Act](https://www.epw.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/d/9/d9c0441e-3da9-45f7-82a5-cca383679288/BAD06EE66924ECC39ED1D15F7C619B4E.gai20343.pdf" \t "_blank), which would improve and expand the existing Alternative Fuel Vehicle Refueling Property Investment Tax Credit (ITC), which is known as “30C.” The press release can be found [here](https://www.epw.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/press-releases-democratic?ID=ACD00AB9-8653-4644-A31A-1A79EEA8513E" \t "_blank).
  + The legislation increases the cap on business investments, expands the use case of the credit to each item of refueling property instead of per location, and extends the tax credit for eight more years.
* Sen. Bob Menendez (D-NJ) and Sen. Bill Cassidy (R-LA) plan to introduce a [revised version](https://www.cassidy.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/LYN20401.pdf" \t "_blank) of the State and Municipal Assistance for Recovery and Transition (SMART) Act. The bill will provide $500B in additional aid to state and local governments as they work to address budget shortfalls due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Sens. Cory Booker (D-NJ), Susan Collins (R-ME), Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-MS) and Joe Manchin (D-WV) were added as new co-sponsors. A press release on the updated legislation can be found [here](https://www.menendez.senate.gov/news-and-events/press/menendez-cassidy-introduce-bipartisan-smart-fund-to-help-frontline-states-communities-in-covid-19-fight" \t "_blank).
  + One of the major changes to the bill is the removal of a population requirement to receive aid. Originally, the policy was eligible for populations exceeding 500,000 people, but was lowered to 50,000, and now has been completely removed.
  + Senate Democrats will highlight cuts to state and local services tomorrow in their effort to push for more funding for state and local governments.
* Sen. Maria Cantwell (D-WA), the Ranking Member of the Senate Commerce Committee, sent a [letter](https://www.cantwell.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/FINAL%20Sec.%20Chao%20Letter_Social%20Distancing_.pdf" \t "_blank) to Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao asking her to issue guidance for airlines to ensure they are following social distancing procedures. Specifically, Sen. Cantwell asks that airlines either leave middle or adjacent seats open and to limit capacity on flights, so customers feel safe.
  + This letter follows a [previous letter](https://www.cantwell.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Cantwell%20to%20Pence%20Fauci%20Redfield%20re%20National%20Standards%205.11.20%20_%20Final%20CLEAN1%202%20DM%20(1)%20with%20signature.pdf" \t "_blank) Sen. Cantwell sent last Friday to Vice President Mike Pence, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Director Robert Redfield and National Institute of Allergies and Infectious Diseases Director Dr. Anthony Fauci on creating clear guidelines on social distancing, contact tracing, and the use of masks.
* Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) selected Sen. Marco Rubio (R-FL) to serve as the acting Chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee. Sen. Rubio will be filling the post temporarily, replacing Sen. Richard Burr (R-NC) who stepped down amid an investigation into stock trading.
* The Congressional Oversight Commission, which is tasked with overseeing emergency spending by the Treasury and Federal Reserve, released its first [report](https://www.toomey.senate.gov/files/documents/COC%201st%20Report_05.18.2020.pdf" \t "_blank) today. The report presented a plan for how the Federal Reserve and Treasury Department can measure the success of CARES Act programs. The commission is due to report on the progress of these programs every 30 days.
  + The report describes the lending facilities the Treasury Department has created to operate through the Federal Reserve and outlines that only the Secondary Market Corporate Credit Facility, set up to purchase corporate debt, has received funding thus far totaling $37.5B.
  + The $500B Economic Stabilization Fund in the CARES Act also set aside $46B to make loans and loan guarantees to aviation companies important to national security. None of that money has been disbursed, according to the report.
  + The commission currently includes Sen. Pat Toomey (R-PA), Rep. Donna Shalala (D-FL) and Rep. French Hill (D-AR), along with Bharat Ramamurti, a former aide to Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-MA). Speaker Pelosi and Leader McConnell have yet to agree on a chairperson for the commission.
* Sarah Feinberg, interim President of the New York City Transit Authority, and Chris Koos, Mayor of Normal, IL have been nominated to the Amtrak Board of Directors.
  + The Senate Commerce Committee is holding a markup this week and is expected to favorably vote on both nominations.
* As Elevate has reported, there is a House proposal to expand the employee retention tax credit included in the CARES Act. That proposal, entitled the Jumpstarting Our Businesses’ Success (JOBS) Credit Act of 2020, was introduced by Reps. Stephanie Murphy (D-FL), John Katko (R-NY), Suzan DelBene (D-WA), Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA), and Chris Pappas (D-NH) and would increase the availability, scope and amount of the credits (the JOBS Credit Act would also permit an employer that receives a Paycheck Protection Program loan to receive the employee retention tax credit as well). Reports indicate that expanding this tax credit to prevent layoffs and pay businesses to retain workers continues to be a potential area of agreement between Republicans and Democrats.
  + House Ways and Means Committee Ranking Member Kevin Brady (R-TX) when asked about expanding the tax credit indicated he would be open to it.
* Originally scheduled for Tuesday, May 19, the House Appropriations Military Construction-VA Subcommittee hearing on the Department of Veteran’s Affairs response to COVID-19 has been postponed to a later date.

**Updates at 12:00pm ET**

* Friday evening, the House passed the $3T Democratic HEROES Act by a 208 to 199 vote. The bill will largely serve as the Democratic marker for further negotiations. At this point, Senate Majority Leader McConnell has said he will not consider the bill at this time – he referred to it as a “totally unserious effort.”
  + 14 Democrats voted against the HEROES Act, including Reps. Cindy Axne (IA), Joe Cunningham (SC), Sharice Davids (KS), Abby Finkenauer (IA), Jared Golden (ME), Kendra Horn (OK), Pramila Jayapal (WA), Conor Lamb (PA), Elaine Luria (VA), Ben McAdams (UT), Kurt Schrader (OR), Abigail Spanberger (VA), Xochitl Torres Small (NM), and Susan Wild (PA). Many of these Democrats represent districts President Trump won in 2016.
  + Rep. Peter King (R-NY) was the sole Republican to vote for the HEROES Act, for which his support was driven by the funding included for state and local governments.
* There are currently no high-level bipartisan negotiations occurring among Congressional leaders on additional COVID-19 relief. Majority Leader McConnell continues to assert that another bill is not immediately needed. McConnell has, however, indicated that another bill is likely at some point. While the exhaustion of the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) funds served as the impetus for a bill last time around, it is unclear if that would be enough impetus for Republicans to re-engage as abuses to the program have gotten significant airplay. Elevate currently anticipates the Senate will begin to re-engage on the next COVID package in June. Legislation could move before July and most likely before August.
  + Majority Whip John Thune (R-SD) shared over the weekend that he doesn’t anticipate anything to happen on additional relief until “sometime after Memorial Day.”
* The House also passed on Friday a rules change that will allow members to vote and convene committee hearings remotely.
  + The new rules immediately allow for any member to vote remotely by giving precise, binding instructions to a proxy who is able to be present on the House floor. The rules also provide, pending certification, for a process in which lawmakers will eventually be able to cast their votes technologically from home, either via a secure online portal or a video conferencing system**.**
* No votes are expected in the House this week. The next votes are expected May 27 and 28. The Senate this week is expected to consider judicial appointments ahead of the Memorial Day recess.
* Speaker Pelosi this weekend was asked by reporters whether she could accept liability limits for employers in the post-lockdown work environment. Pelosi shared that she has “no red lines” on the matter but asserted that the best protection for our workers and their employers is to follow the mandatory Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) guidelines that were included in the HEROES Act.
  + Majority Leader McConnell and Sen. Cornyn (R-TX) continue work on a bill that would exempt some businesses and employees from liability during the pandemic, but Senator Cornyn has shared that it could still be several weeks before the proposal is completed.
* Elevate has been told that Senators Robert Menendez (D-NJ) and Bill Cassidy (R-LA) are expected to introduce a bill today to provide additional funding to states and local governments. Separately, Senator John Kennedy (R-LA) is working on legislation that would give states more flexibility to spend the money that has already been doled out by Congress, but that effort is facing Republican opposition from Senator Rick Scott (R-FL).
* Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), the top Democrat on the Senate Judiciary’s Antitrust Subcommittee, continues to push back on allowing mergers during the COVID-19 pandemic, and recently leveled concerns regarding Uber’s potential acquisition of GrubHub. She also is pushing back on a transaction involving Facebook and Giphy.
  + A coalition of free market groups are urging Congressional leadership to reject legislation to disallow mergers during the pandemic. The full letter, led by the National Taxpayers Union, can be found [here](https://linkprotect.cudasvc.com/url?a=https%3a%2f%2fwww.ntu.org%2flibrary%2fdoclib%2f2020%2f05%2fmerger-letter.pdf&c=E,1,-WD5cWw7Tedf1sw3e5vGcNxon1B8bA-RncXDOmT5JQDtgySRgPJu99xRi601oybo9x8mquYQKOPor-mmKZgM2wRZInHyXsLvOAJuwTHx94tzRLPqW8hH&typo=1" \t "_blank).
* Senate Commerce Committee Ranking Member Maria Cantwell (D-WA) joined 30 other Senators on a letter this past Friday that was released by Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Jim Inhofe (R-OK) urging the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to reconsider its April vote favoring Ligado Networks’ 5G services. The full letter can be found [here](https://www.inhofe.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/20200515%20-%20Senate%20Letter%20to%20FCC%20Commissioners%20re%20Ligado%20Order%20-%20Final.pdf" \t "_blank).
* House Natural Resources Committee Chairman Raul Grijalva (D-AZ) sent a letter to Interior Secretary David Bernhardt Friday requesting documents on the reopening of National Parks. Specifically, Grijalva criticized the Administration’s plan to reopen Grand Canyon National Park as premature citing, among other reasons, opposition from leaders of the Navajo Nation whose tribe has more COVID-19 cases per capita than any state. The full letter can be found [here](https://naturalresources.house.gov/imo/media/doc/Grijalva%20Letter%20to%20Bernhardt%20and%20Vela%20on%20Phased%20Reopening%20of%20National%20Parks%20May%2015%202020.pdf" \t "_blank).
* The Senate Commerce Committee is set to hold a wide-ranging markup this coming Wednesday that includes a vote on Finch Fulton’s nomination to be the Department of Transportation (DOT) Assistant Secretary for Transportation Policy and Diana Furchgott-Roth's nomination to be Assistant Secretary for Research and Technology.
  + The Committee will also consider a bill on the Transportation Security Administration’s (TSA) registered traveler program. The legislation would “define the TSA’s role in approving and supervising” registered traveler programs at airports and give service providers “access to technology and information to improve security and traveler experience” at checkpoints.
* As we reported Friday, Elevate believes that Sens. Todd Young (R-IN) and Michael Bennet (D-CO) will introduce the Reviving the Economy Sustainably Towards A Recovery in Twenty-twenty (RESTART) Act this week. As a reminder the legislation would expand the covered period for PPP loan forgiveness and create a new loan program for businesses up to 5,000 employees.
  + Nonprofits, including 501(c)(6) organizations, would be eligible under the new loan program but, in its current form, would not be eligible for loan forgiveness under the program.

**Administration**

**Updates at 8:00pm ET**

* To attempt to remedy food supply issues, the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) began the $3B “Famers to Families Food Box” program to buy excess farm goods on Friday, which was created under the [USDA’s Coronavirus Farm Assistance program](https://www.ams.usda.gov/content/usda-purchase-3-billion-agricultural-commodities-issue-solicitations-interested-participants" \t "_blank). Ivanka Trump, Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue and Maryland Governor Larry Hogan appeared together at a produce distributor in Maryland to announce the launch of the program.
  + The program aims to alleviate supply chain disruptions by buying up excess produce and delivering it to food banks and nonprofits.
  + The program includes over 200 companies providing products from around the country.
* United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) may run out of operating funds before the end of the summer. With in-person offices closed, USCIS has struggled to process applications. To bolster funds, USCIS plans to increase application fees on citizenship applications and request $1.2B more from Congress.
* President Trump has announced that he is taking hydroxychloroquine, the anti-malaria drug he’s touted as a potential treatment for COVID-19.
* As we have shared, Secretary Steven Mnuchin and Jerome Powell, Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, are testifying before the Senate Banking Committee on Tuesday at 10:00am on the aforementioned CARES Act report. Both of their written testimonies are publicly available [here](https://www.banking.senate.gov/hearings/the-quarterly-cares-act-report-to-congress" \t "_blank).
* The Federal Reserve purchased nearly $180B in mortgage-backed securities during the week of May 6. According to the [Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget](https://linkprotect.cudasvc.com/url?a=http%3a%2f%2fwww.crfb.org%2fblogs%2ffed-mortgage-backed-security-purchases-reached-new-record&c=E,1,QRWN3Y0QXE_uC9lMY-0O16fBmMnNqqNsWMW67wCyMYVbO6SPoNHuMc-rXb1nOFB_T-h3wYWID4cS5Pv8yEX3xI12hS7IAA3OTbpaOrAmt44lze0,&typo=1" \t "_blank), this is more than any other week in history, including during the housing crisis.
* Over the weekend, the Navy confirmed that 13 sailors aboard the USS Theodore Roosevelt, the aircraft carrier that saw a large number of COVID-19 cases in April, had retested positive for COVID-19. Navy spokesperson Commander Myers Vasquez commented that “a small number of TR Sailors who previously tested COVID positive and met rigorous recovery criteria have retested positive.”
* The FBI announced today that Mohammed Alshamrani, the Saudi Air Force trainee who killed three US sailors and wounded several others in an attack at Naval Air Station Pensacola in December 2019, was working together with Al-Qaeda operatives as far back as 2015.
  + Attorney General William Barr commented that the link was detected after the Justice Department was able to break the encryption on Alshamrani's iPhones. As a reminder, Apple denied the government’s request to unlock the phones which Barr argues delayed the investigation by months.

**Updates at 12:00pm ET**

* Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) numbers from over the weekend indicate that the United States will likely exceed over 100,000 COVID-19 deaths by June 1. CDC Director Robert Redfield stated this assessment cited 12 different models that are being tracked by his agency.
  + Texas has seen a surge in COVID-19 cases since reopening. This past Saturday, Texas reported 1,801 new COVID-19 cases, the biggest single-day jump since the pandemic began. More than 700 new cases were reported in the region around Amarillo, TX.
* The Department of the Treasury and Small Business Administration released the [application](https://www.sba.gov/document/sba-form--paycheck-protection-program-loan-forgiveness-application" \t "_blank) for PPP loan forgiveness late Friday. The two agencies also plan to issue new guidelines on loan forgiveness in the coming days that may also include some technical changes to the PPP.
  + However, there is also a push for more general fixes to the PPP that could increase flexibility for how the loan can be used. As a reminder, borrowers currently must use 75% of the loan on payroll to be eligible for loan forgiveness. The discussion of changes to the PPP comes amid a decreasing demand for the loans.
* President Trump spent the weekend at Camp David with House Republican allies. Reports indicate that while he had been preparing to announce a partial restoration of funding for the World Health Organizations, conversation this weekend pushed him closer to preserving the cut in funding.
  + House Democrats have argued that the President does not have the authority to unilaterally halt the funding and likely would challenge a more permanent decision by President Trump in court.
* While intelligences and various news threads have suggested the White House Coronavirus Task Force may be disbanded, there are reports that the Task Force may pivot to focusing on reopening efforts. The Task Force on Friday added Labor Secretary Eugene Scalia, Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue, and National Institutes of Health (NIH) director Francis Collins to reflect the shift in focus.
* The President continues to push for a payroll tax cut that lawmakers on both sides of the aisle oppose.
  + White House Economic Adviser Larry Kudlow said Friday that the Trump Administration and Congress should consider drastically cutting the corporate tax rate to encourage companies to move jobs back into the United States.
  + Kudlow also stated that the U.S.-China trade deal was still on track, citing numerous, positive calls that have occurred between US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer, Treasury Secretary Mnuchin and the Chinese Vice Premier.
* President Trump on Friday removed State Department Inspector General Steve Linick. Linick will be replaced by Ambassador Stephen J. Akard, the diplomat who directs the Office of Foreign Missions. The President wrote Congressional leadership informing them of the move. The full letter can be found [here](https://linkprotect.cudasvc.com/url?a=https%3a%2f%2fthehill.com%2fhomenews%2fadministration%2f498115-read-trump-letter-on-removing-state-dept-inspector-general&c=E,1,LVlMC_C3lMKq1vH79nq9d2QSKTAbQNDgcYcSvgE2PHn9O1TAE63uoNWuWGO8lgX_JlTnY9RTS-DTw5dsPgOeefEoapEKYsNyTVJnx3mrUN-2aZ_Hz5Yy927p1w,,&typo=1" \t "_blank).
  + House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Eliot Engel (D-NY) and Senate Foreign Relations Committee Ranking Member Robert Menendez (D-NJ) jointly launched an investigation Saturday into Linick’s firing. Menendez and Engel wrote a [letter](https://foreignaffairs.house.gov/_cache/files/8/d/8da0aa4f-a15c-4e06-95fd-fec3354349f6/405342547241548579C8FD9CE08E609F.5-16-2020.-ele-menendez-letter-to-wh-preservation-order.pdf" \t "_blank) to the White House directing that all records related to Linick’s firing be preserved and turned over to their committees.
* The White House also on Friday named Howard ‘Skip’ Elliot, the current Administrator of the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA), to serve as the DOT acting Inspector General. He will continue to serve as PHMSA Administrator. In addition, the White House announced Friday plans to nominate Eric J. Soskin, a Justice Department attorney, to serve as DOT’s permanent Inspector General.
* As we have reported, the Administration continues to prepare to check passenger temperatures at airports due to COVID-19 concerns.
  + Reports indicate that details of the plan are under review by the White House and that the TSA will start checking temperatures at 12 airports as early as this week, though it remains unclear which airports will see testing.
  + House Homeland Security Committee Chairman Bennie Thompson (D-MS) continues to push back on TSA’s authority to carry out the screenings.
* The President will participate in a roundtable today with restaurant executives and other industry leaders. He is also expected to hold a teleconference with multiple Governors.
* Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Alex Azar indicated over the weekend that HHS has narrowed the number of candidates working on a COVID-19 vaccine to 14 and that they will keep narrowing that number down. Secretary Azar also shared that there may eventually be multiple vaccines available to help combat COVID-19.
* Federal Register Notices
  + The Commerce Department on Friday announced a long-awaited rule to tighten export controls on Chinese telecommunications company Huawei after it was accused of circumventing existing restrictions. More information and the Federal Register notice can be found [here](https://linkprotect.cudasvc.com/url?a=https%3a%2f%2fwww.commerce.gov%2fnews%2fpress-releases%2f2020%2f05%2fcommerce-addresses-huaweis-efforts-undermine-entity-list-restricts&c=E,1,esaLmm2D9iXAPKlZakw0_PymBTl2AYdNkJcYLvfVhbpWRrArA6knh28xaN3lqPNG7YaLoQvmwH6-i_Bwt74UYA2YbxiEtO6f1HRwxYzZSOQsNI-PFF6JIg0FdIFwiw,,&typo=1" \t "_blank).
  + The Department of Health and Human Services this morning announced that the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) will not impose penalties for noncompliance with the regulatory requirements under the HIPAA Rules against covered health care providers or their business associates in connection with the good faith participation in the operation of a COVID-19 Community-Based Testing Site (CBTS) during the COVID-19 nationwide public health emergency. More information can be found [here](https://linkprotect.cudasvc.com/url?a=https%3a%2f%2fwww.federalregister.gov%2fdocuments%2f2020%2f05%2f18%2f2020-09099%2fenforcement-discretion-regarding-covid-19-community-based-testing-sites-cbts-during-the-covid-19&c=E,1,LzJXtzIrlvJGkye0ung8jyq9awRbTuz1crOY7M2tDBHB3c6P5lhcmOZoSgwY-Vd7_M0J9zHSyyRxXNBGM9wyFA8imFjh3EYlB6JSJvI9B7s,&typo=1" \t "_blank).

**Other News**

**Updates at 8:00pm ET**

* The Supreme Court has rejected a lawsuit claiming Facebook provided “material support” to terrorists by hosting their content by declining to hear Force v. Facebook, a case brought by the families of five Americans who were hurt or killed by Palestinian attacks in Israel. The 2016 Force v. Facebook lawsuit argued that Facebook knowingly hosted accounts belonging to Hamas, which the US classifies as a terrorist organization.
  + Websites generally cannot be sued for user-created content under Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act, but the complaint contended Facebook’s algorithm promoted terrorist content to people who liked similar pages or posts, saying that should reduce its immunity. The case was one of the first instances for the court to rule on the breadth of Section 230 immunity for tech platforms.
* The California Air Resources Board (CARB) filed a lawsuit under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) against Trump Administration agencies that sought to revoke the state’s special waiver to set and enforce vehicle emissions standards. The CARB lawsuit, filed in US District Court for the District of Columbia this past Friday May 15, is requesting that a judge order the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) to turn over documents related to the state’s Clean Air Act waiver.
  + CARB had filed a FOIA request in December but neither agency has released any documents to date, prompting the lawsuit.
* International Monetary Fund (IMF) Chairwoman Kristalina Georgieva predicted that it will take until 2023 for the economy to return to pre COVID-19 levels.
  + The IMF Chairwoman is urging countries to spend as much money as they can on their citizens and medical professionals and for governments to utilize funding to keep jobs in place.
* Auto manufacturers across the United States began to resume production on Monday. However, it is unclear if consumer demand can keep the industry afloat, or whether the industry will need a bailout. So far, the auto industry has not asked the government for any COVID-19 relief.
  + A bipartisan group of lawmakers, led by Rep. Debbie Dingell (D-MI) and Rep. Fred Upton (R-MI), warned Congress in a [letter](https://debbiedingell.house.gov/uploadedfiles/200512_house_leadership_auto_priorities_final.pdf" \t "_blank), which we have reported on, that the auto industry will need to be included in the next stimulus package.
  + The letter notes the nearly 10M jobs, representing five percent of private American employment, that are driven by the automotive sector and that the vast automotive network in our country has been hit hard and will need upcoming relief.
* New York Governor Andrew Cuomo announced that the state would support any professional sports teams wanting to reopen without fans. As a reminder, we reported this morning that a proposal for National Football League (NFL) teams to reopen facilities starting Tuesday included a provision that the teams would need sign off from state and local jurisdictions. California Governor Gavin Newsome indicated professional sports without fans might be able to resume in June.
* As the US continues its piecemeal reopening, Apple has announced plans to reopen dozens of stores across the country, with plans in place for spacing. Additionally, Disney World is having a phased reopening this week.
* Pharmaceutical company Moderna announced that their first phase of trials for a COVID-19 vaccine showed encouraging results. In the eight patients they followed who had the vaccine, all of them showed virus-fighting antibodies similar to those who have recovered from the virus.
  + This announcement comes on the heels of one of Moderna’s directors leaving the company to become the Chief Scientist for Operation Warp Speed, the White House’s operation to speed up the development of a vaccine.
* President Xi Jinping of China [announced](https://www.politico.com/news/2020/05/18/chinese-vaccine-would-be-global-public-good-xi-says-265039?nname=playbook-pm&nid=0000015a-dd3e-d536-a37b-dd7fd8af0000&nrid=0000016d-8809-d683-ab6f-cb9bb7770000&nlid=964328" \t "_blank) that a Chinese-made vaccine would be treated as a global public good. China has some of the leading contenders for a vaccine, with multiple already in human trials.

**Updates at 12:00pm ET**

* Today is the deadline for businesses to return PPP loans if there is any doubt whether they are truly needed. If businesses opt not to return the loans and raise flags, they could face audits.
* Europe continues to reopen and loosen internal travel restrictions. This may result in some increased intra-European tourism for summer holiday travel. Reports indicate that many countries are determined to save at least part of their summer tourism, though there is no indication that this will include allowing travelers from outside Europe, including the United States, to travel into Europe at this time.
  + Some countries, including Greece, have announced specific reopening dates while others, like Austria and Germany, are lifting internal borders. Other countries are working on bilateral agreements with neighboring countries for land borders to reopen this month and in June.
* The European Commission, under their recent plan to restart tourism, want countries with similar COVID-19 infection levels to relax common border closures and create tourist corridors between neighboring countries to allow free travel with strict safety measures in place. The full Tourism and Transport Package/Roadmap can be found [here](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/QANDA_20_870" \t "_blank). The roadmap includes:
  + A common approach to lifting restrictions of free movement at EU internal borders in a gradual and coordinated way, mirroring the progressive lifting of domestic restrictions;
  + A common framework to support the gradual re-establishment of transport whilst ensuring the safety of passengers and personnel;
  + A recommendation to make travel vouchers an attractive alternative to cash reimbursement; and
  + Common criteria and principles for gradually and safely restoring tourism activities, in particular for health protocols for hospitality (hotels, etc.).
* National Football League (NFL) teams are allowed to reopen facilities on Tuesday, but only with permission from state and local governments. Commissioner Roger Goodell sent a memo to all 32 NFL teams on Friday stressing that the clubs must “be in compliance with any additional public health requirements in their jurisdiction, and have implemented the protocols that were developed by (league medical officer) Dr. (Allen) Sills and distributed to all clubs on May 6.”
* Major League Baseball sent a proposal to the players’ union Friday that offered a detailed outline on how players, coaches and select staff members would be tested for COVID-19, but  also suggested significant changes to how players would interact if and when conditions are deemed safe enough for games. More information on the 67-page document, which is subject to approval by the Major League Baseball Players Association (MLBPA), can be found [here](https://www.espn.com/mlb/story/_/id/29183345/mlb-safety-proposal-includes-10000-tests-per-week-social-distancing" \t "_blank).
* J.C. Penney has filed for chapter 11 bankruptcy protection due to the COVID-19.
* Over 36M Americans are unemployed due to COVID-19 and nearly 90,000 have died from the virus. Unemployment continues to near 15%.
* A [Wall Street Journal](https://www.wsj.com/articles/auto-industrys-reopening-to-be-slow-and-arduous-executives-say-11589707802?mod=hp_lead_pos1" \t "_blank) article over the weekend noted that rebooting more than 40 U.S. automotive assembly plants, in addition to the thousands of component makers that supply them, will likely be a very slow and arduous process. Auto-parts suppliers still lack enough orders to recall the bulk of their staff. Factories in Mexico, which produce nearly 40% of all car parts imported to the U.S., are not yet permitted to reopen.
  + Elevate has been reporting that automakers and suppliers were set to resume production today in Mexico. However, Mexico announced a delay the restart of its “essential” manufacturing operations, including automotive, until June 1. The delay, according to federal documents, was to allow companies to implement health and safety protocols to reduce the spread of COVID-19. However, more recent reports indicate that Mexican government officials are now saying the country’s auto plants could open before the end of the month, as long as manufacturers have put adequate safety measures in place.
  + Ford and General Motors are resuming production in their North American factories today. Fiat Chrysler is expected to restart production this week as well.
* The number of people screened by TSA surpassed 250,000 for the first time since March 24 on Friday.