



## House impeaches President for second time; Senate will not act before inauguration

[The House impeached President Trump](#) for a second time on Wednesday. [Ten House Republicans](#) broke ranks with their party and joined House Democrats in charging the President with “incitement of insurrection” for his role in last week’s violence at the Capitol. The final House vote was 232 to 197. Most House Republicans defended the President and blamed the chaos on Democrats, while [calling for a peaceful transfer of power](#). The sole article of impeachment, which includes a reference to the 14th Amendment barring the President from holding office again, has now moved to the Senate. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell has said that a trial will not begin until after President-elect Biden is sworn in next week, at which time Democrats will regain control of the Senate. As a result, the President will not be removed from office, but Democrats in the House and Senate, and a growing number of Senate Republicans, [including McConnell](#), believe he must be held accountable for his involvement in the insurrection and are open to convicting him. Seventeen Senate Republicans would have to join all Senate Democrats to convict the President. [Senate leadership is negotiating how to conduct a trial while simultaneously working on the priorities of President-elect Biden](#). Following the vote, the White House released [a video message in which the President condemned the violent attack](#) on the Capitol, but made no mention of the House vote to impeach him. He also lashed out at social media companies that have banned him for infringing on free speech rights.

+Jim [said](#), “The President played a direct role in the insurrection at our U.S. Capitol building one week ago today. The majority of the House voted to impeach him again today but he should resign immediately. He is a threat to America & cannot be allowed to continue to assault our democracy.”



## Hundreds are being investigated; riot was possibly coordinated effort with help from Republican House members

[Federal prosecutors are investigating hundreds of suspects involved in the siege and are planning charges of sedition and conspiracy](#). Officials have opened more than 200 subject files and charged over 70 cases in their investigation into the Capitol riot. [Many of those involved are ex-military and police officers](#). Other officials described rioters [engaging in combat with police officers](#). Evidence uncovered so far, including weapons and tactics seen on surveillance video, suggests the insurrection may have been planned. [The Inspectors General of Justice, Defense, Interior, and Homeland Security have launched massive investigations](#) into

the security failure that led to the insurrection and the possibility that the riot was a coordinated effort with the goal of [capturing and assassinating members of the House and Senate](#). Questions also have been raised about whether [rioters had help from some House Republicans who gave tours of the Capitol to the insurrectionists in the weeks prior to the attack](#). At least one protest organizer said he coordinated with three House Republicans. [House Democrats have demanded an investigation into the claim](#).



### **Biden releases \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan**

[President-elect Biden unveiled a \\$1.9 trillion proposal](#) to boost the U.S. economy and provide additional relief to those struggling in the pandemic. [The American Rescue Plan](#) includes a \$1,400 individual stimulus payment (on top of the \$600 payment just approved by Congress), an additional weekly \$400 in federal unemployment benefits, \$130 billion to reopen schools, \$160 billion for vaccines and testing, expanded paid leave, an eviction moratorium, increased food stamp benefits, and \$440 billion in assistance for small businesses and state and local governments. It also calls for increasing the minimum wage to \$15 per hour. The plan is likely to face opposition from Republicans who will object to the price tag.



### **Supreme Court upholds in-person visit requirements for abortion pill**

[The Supreme Court has reinstated a Trump administration rule that women must visit a doctor's office or clinic in person to obtain the medication abortion pill during the COVID-19 pandemic](#), though similar rules for other drugs have been suspended during the pandemic. The court split 6-3, with the liberal Justices in dissent. The Court granted the Trump Administration's appeal of a district court order to enforce a longstanding rule on getting the abortion pill, mifepristone. FDA restrictions require an in-person visit with a medical professional to receive the medication, a measure federal courts previously blocked, citing pandemic concerns.



### **General Assembly approves Medicaid block grant**

[The Tennessee General Assembly has rushed to approve the state's request for a Medicaid block grant.](#) This completely overhauls the state's Medicaid program, TennCare, which provides health care coverage for roughly 1.4 million Tennesseans. Members of the Legislature only had a week to review the 228-page waiver and did not hear from any outside witnesses besides TennCare. Last session, the Legislature passed a law directing the Governor to request the block grant waiver from the federal government and, [against overwhelming opposition from Tennesseans at public hearings](#), it was sent to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) in 2019. [After 18 months of negotiations, the Trump Administration approved a modified version of the waiver in the final days before the Biden administration will take office.](#) The State Senate voted yesterday and the House voted today to accept the TennCare waiver from CMS.

This modified block grant waiver means Tennessee would get a lump sum of federal funds to run the program and could keep what it does not spend below the cap for "non-Medicaid" expenditures. The waiver is in place for the next ten years and gives the state unprecedented flexibility, including limiting what drugs are covered. Medicaid block grant efforts have failed in Congress and are strongly opposed by patient advocacy groups because they incentivize states to create savings by restricting care for enrollees. Many are also concerned that the waiver does not expand coverage to any of the thousands of uninsured and is going into effect regardless of the COVID-19 pandemic. No other state has ever requested, let alone been approved for a Medicaid block grant. Even though passage makes it more difficult, the Biden Administration could still rescind the approval.

+Jim [said](#), "Tennessee is not getting any favors from the Trump Administration when they delay the waiver for 18 months, then give us leeway in the final week knowing that it will be reversed by the Biden Administration. Everyone in our state needs affordable health care. The Trump Administration's last ditch effort to make it look like it actually helped Tennesseans is a failure. The block grant is a dangerous experiment in the middle of a pandemic. Today I sent a letter to President-elect Joe Biden asking him to rescind the approval."

### **CDC warns COVID-19 variant likely to be dominant strain by spring**

[The CDC is warning the highly transmissible COVID-19 variant that first appeared in the U.K. is likely to be the dominant strain of the virus in the U.S.](#) within the next few months. Based on CDC models, forecasts show the [variant B.1.1.7](#) rapidly spreading and will represent the majority of COVID-19 cases within the next few months. Estimates show the variant is 50 percent more transmissible than the common strain of virus that has been present in the country since the pandemic began nearly a year ago. The major concern is that the rapid spread of the variant will lead to increased strain on the health system and more deaths.

### **Confirmed COVID-19 cases, deaths, vaccinations in Tennessee**

Yesterday, the [Tennessee Department of Health](#) reported 5,557 new cases, bringing the total to 676,039 confirmed COVID-19 cases statewide. There have been 8,311 deaths, an increase of 79 since yesterday. There are 2,857 people currently hospitalized with the virus. There have been 5,972,373 tests statewide, more than 32,918 since yesterday, with a 14.97% positivity rate. As of today in [Davidson County](#), there have been 78,270 confirmed cases, 475 new today, and 530 total deaths.

As of Monday, [271,575 vaccinations have been administered in Tennessee.](#) Of all people vaccinated in the state, 24,994 have received a second dose. Tennessee, including Metro

Nashville, has started general population vaccinations for people 75 years of age and older. To find out what phase your county is in and how to book your appointment visit [covid19.tn.gov](https://covid19.tn.gov). In Nashville, appointments for people 75+ are full for the month of January but people are encouraged to join the waiting list by registering [here](#) or call 615-862-7777.

### **WHO team arrives in China to investigate origin of COVID-19 outbreak**

After repeated delays, [a global team of researchers from the World Health Organization arrived in Wuhan, China this week to investigate the origins of COVID-19](#). The group was approved by President Xi after months of diplomatic setbacks that prompted a public complaint by the head of the WHO. Scientists suspect the virus jumped to humans from bats or other animals, most likely in Wuhan in late 2019. The Communist Party of China has repeatedly suggested, falsely, that the virus came from abroad. China rejected demands for an international investigation after the Trump administration blamed Beijing for the virus' spread. Australia called for an independent inquiry in April and Beijing retaliated by blocking imports of Australian beef and wine. Some members of the WHO's team were en route last week but had to turn back after China announced they hadn't received valid visas.