



Biden ends emergency order to construct border wall

[President Biden formally ended a two-year-old emergency order issued by the previous Administration that will eliminate funding for the construction of a wall at the Mexican border.](#)

The President called the construction of the wall is unwarranted. However, approximately 3,600 troops will remain at the border to continue surveillance and logistics. The move follows [the Administration's request to the Supreme Court to cancel an upcoming hearing on the legality of the border wall.](#) The Court granted the request.

Administration ends Trump's Asylees "Remain in Mexico" policy

The Biden Administration announced today that [it will slowly begin allowing asylum seekers forced to wait at the Mexican under the former Administration's "Remain in Mexico" policy to enter the U.S.](#) Under the previous policy, also known as the Migrant Protection Protocols, tens of thousands of migrants including refugees and asylees seeking to enter the country were forced to live in dangerous and squalid conditions in Mexico as they awaited court proceedings. The Department of Homeland Security estimates that there are about 25,000 migrants with active immigration court cases. Beginning February 19, the Administration will begin work with the Mexican government and international organizations to identify migrants with active cases and help them virtually register for processing their cases. Approximately 300 people per day will be allowed to "trickle in" and will be reunited with family members already in the country.



Confirmation of Biden's cabinet nominee continues

The Senate continues the confirmation process for President Biden's cabinet nominees. So far, the Senate has confirmed seven of the President's nominees, while fifteen nominees await hearing and confirmation votes. Upcoming hearings include those for Merrick Garland, the nominee for Attorney General, Representative Deb Haaland as Secretary of the Interior, and Neera Tanden as the Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

[The hearing for Merrick Garland is scheduled for February 22.](#) Garland is a federal judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the DC Circuit, appointed by President Bill Clinton in 1997. President Barack Obama nominated Garland to the Supreme Court after a vacancy was created by the death of Justice Antonin Scalia in 2016. However, Senate Republicans refused for months to hold confirmation hearings or the required vote in the chamber.

The confirmations of Haaland and Tanden face stiff opposition from Senate Republicans.

- Montana Republican Senator Steve Daines [has blocked the confirmation of Haaland, describing her as a radical](#) for her involvement in protests over the proposed construction of an oil pipeline across the Standing Rock Reservation. [Haaland would be the first Native American Cabinet secretary if confirmed](#). She made history in 2018 when she was elected as one of the two first female Native Americans in Congress.
- Tanden is also facing opposition from Republicans over [social media posts she made that were critical of Senate Republicans](#). [She has apologized for the comments](#). She would be the first woman of color and first South Asian American to become director of the Office of Management and Budget if confirmed by the Senate. Tanden is the CEO and President of the Center for American Progress, and served in the Obama and Clinton administrations.

The list of President Biden's cabinet nominees and those who have been confirmed is [here](#).



Georgia prosecutors open investigation into election interference

The Fulton County District Attorney has [opened a criminal investigation into former President Trump's efforts to overturn Georgia's election results](#). The investigation stems from the call Trump made to Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger when he attempted to pressure him to reverse the certification of the state's results declaring President Biden as the winner of the state's electoral votes. During the call, the former President threatened Raffensperger. [Georgia officials, including Governor Brian Kemp and Raffensperger, have been instructed to preserve documents related to attempts to influence an election official](#). The tape of that conversation was released to the media.



Biden signs Executive Order for special enrollment period for the ACA

[President Biden signed an Executive Order to re-open the ACA Marketplace for a Special Enrollment Period](#) to allow additional access to get people health insurance coverage during the pandemic. The special enrollment period starts next Monday, February 15 and runs through May 15, which is more than double the length of normal open enrollment period. In Tennessee, there are an estimated 147,651 people who are currently uninsured but would qualify for a free bronze plan after tax credits in 2021. There are even more who are currently uninsured or underinsured that could qualify for subsidies to reduce premiums. People are encouraged to shop available plans and ask questions by visiting [HealthCare.Gov](#) or calling 1-800-318-2596.

A copy of the Executive Order is [here](#).

Hildreth and Watt named to COVID-19 Health Equity Task Force

Dr. James Hildreth, President and CEO of Meharry Medical College, and Bobby Watts, CEO of the National Health Care for the Homeless Council, [have been named by President Biden to the twelve-member COVID-19 Health Equity Task Force](#). The task force will be responsible for addressing outreach and equitable distribution for vaccines, COVID-19 relief funds, and other pandemic resources. There will be particular [focus on eliminating disparities in vaccine allocation for minority populations](#). The first meeting of the task force will be on February 26 and more information is available at [MinorityHealth.hhs.gov](#).

+Jim [said](#), "Congratulations [@JamesEKHildreth](#) & [@BobbyWatts6](#)! I am confident Hildreth and Watts will do an awesome job for America.

Administration secures 200 million doses of COVID-19 vaccine

Yesterday, President Biden said [the Administration has contracted for 200 million additional doses of the COVID-19 vaccine](#). That will have enough supply of the vaccine to inoculate 300 million Americans by the end of the summer. The President said the Administration has reached a deal with [Moderna and Pfizer to deliver the 600 million doses of vaccine by the end of July](#), a month earlier than initially anticipated.

CDC releases guidelines for reopening of schools

Earlier today, [the CDC presented new guidelines for safely reopening schools](#) across the country. The guidelines stress the continued adherence to a range of precautions, including the mandated use of masks, proper distancing between students, and keeping students in cohorts to limit the possible transmission of the COVID-19 virus. Under the guidelines, the CDC says that teachers do not have to be vaccinated in order for in-person education to resume. The document recommends that schools in communities with high infection rates provide a combination of remote and in school instruction, and that fully remote education should take place in communities with very high rates of infection.

CDC urges double masking to prevent COVID-19 infection

Newly updated guidance from the [CDC says that tight fitting masks and wearing a cloth mask over a surgical mask offers more protection against COVID-19](#). For the best possible protection, the CDC says your mask should fit snugly against your face and around your nose and that masks should have at least two layers. [Labs tests have shown that properly fitting masks can reduce the risk of exposure to the virus by 95%](#). They continue to urge social distancing, avoiding crowded and poorly ventilated indoor spaces, and frequent hand-washing. While infection rates and deaths are on the decline, the CDC is re-emphasizing these measures in order to prevent surges as COVID-19 variants from the U.K., South Africa, and Brazil rapidly spread.

The details of the new CDC guidance are [here](#).

Wearing a mask that fits tightly to your face can help limit spread of the virus that causes COVID-19

In lab tests with dummies, exposure to potentially infectious aerosols decreased by **about 95%** when they both wore tightly fitted masks



Cloth mask over medical procedure mask



Medical procedure mask with knotted ear loops and tucked-in sides

Other effective options to improve fit include:



Mask fitter



Nylon covering over mask

CDC.GOV

bit.ly/MMWR21021

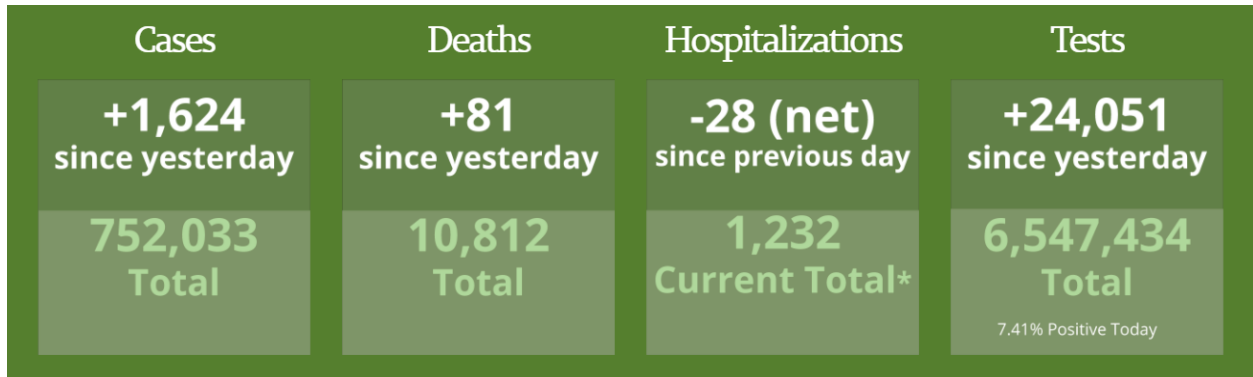
MMWR

Davidson County to begin vaccinating teachers, people 70+

The Nashville COVID-19 Task Force has announced that Davidson County will be moving to the Phase 1B of the state's vaccination plan. [Starting today, the Metro Public Health Department will begin scheduling vaccine appointments for those who are 70 years and older](#), while Vanderbilt University Medical Center and HCA TriStar Health will assist to [vaccinate teachers and staff of Metro K-12 public schools, daycares and preschools](#). Those vaccines will begin on [February 20](#) and the County estimates there are about 48,000 teachers/childcare workers and residents included in this next phase. With the help of these local hospital providers, the County expects to administer 7,000 doses a week. Metro public schools began staggering reopening last week.

Confirmed COVID-19 cases, deaths, vaccinations in Tennessee

Yesterday, the [Tennessee Department of Health](#) reported 1,624 new cases, bringing the total to 752,033 confirmed cases. More than 10,812 people have died and there are approximately 1,232 people currently hospitalized with the virus statewide. There have been 6,547,434 tests statewide, more than 24,051 since Wednesday, with a 7.41% positivity rate. As of today in [Davidson County](#), there have been 87,472 confirmed cases, and 611 total deaths.



As of yesterday, [940,403 vaccinations have been administered in Tennessee](#). Of the state's population, 641,938 people or 9.37% have received at least one dose. Of all people vaccinated in the state, approximately one third have received a second dose and are fully vaccinated. To find out your phase and book your appointment for a vaccine visit covid19.tn.gov or covid19.nashville.gov or call 615-862-7777.



Biden calls Chinese President Xi

[President Biden had his first phone call with Chinese President Xi Jinping](#) on Wednesday. During the two hour call, the leaders discussed concerns about China's economic practices, the crackdown in Hong Kong, aggressive actions toward Taiwan, and human rights abuses in the country. They also talked about global health challenges, climate change and the need to limit the proliferation of weapons. The Biden administration plans to be a more active partner with allies in the Asian and Pacific region to limit Chinese aggression.