

# Protect Our Care: Worsening Covid emergency demands congress pass american rescue plan

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WISCONSIN — Coronavirus cases and hospitalizations are persisting in numbers that dwarf the heights of the spring and summer surges, while experts are warning that a more contagious, possibly more deadly variant of the virus could become dominant in the United States by March. The US' death toll is skyrocketing as thousands of Americans lose their lives daily. The economic recovery is sputtering, more people filing initial claims than during even the worst weeks of the great recession. And though President Biden is taking decisive action to scale up the nation's federal response, more support is needed.

Congress must pass the American Rescue Plan to protect the health and economic wellness of Americans during this worsening crisis. Not only does the plan provide \$2,000 stimulus checks and extended unemployment benefits to support those who have experienced the economic fall out of the pandemic; it also provides \$400 billion to improve the nation's response, including by ramping up testing, vaccines, protective supplies, and even it to invest in sequencing and analytics so that the United States can identify and respond to dangerous new variants. The plan is the minimum required to get this crisis under control, and Congress must pass it to save lives.

- **Though New Cases And Hospitalizations Are Declining, They Far Outpace The Worst Peaks During The Spring And Summer.** Daily new infections in the United States persist in the hundreds of thousands — the nation [reporting](#) more than 130,000 new infections on January 24. Meanwhile, more than 110,000 people across the country were hospitalized as of the same day, 21,000 of them [requiring](#) critical care in ICUs. In comparison, daily new

cases [peaked](#) in the spring at [roughly](#) 35,000 new infections, and during the summer surge at roughly 76,000 new infections. Similarly, hospitalizations [peaked](#) in the both spring and summer at around 59,000 patients — nearly half what frontline workers are fighting today.

- **The United States' COVID-19 Death Toll Is Accelerating.** The United States has reported [almost](#) 420,000 fatalities to COVID-19, far more deaths than any other country in the world as nearly one in every 800 Americans [has lost](#) their lives. Incoming CDC Director Rochelle Walensky is [projecting](#) that the death toll could surge to 500,000 by mid-February, while President Biden [forecasts](#) that the nation's overall death count could be well above 600,000. Daily fatalities to COVID-19 regularly number in the thousands, the United States reporting more than 4,000 deaths on both [Wednesday](#) and [Thursday](#) of last week.
- **Data Suggests That A More Contagious Variant Of The Virus, Already Identified In 22 States, Could Also Be More Deadly.** Data from the United Kingdom suggests that the B.1.1.7 variant of coronavirus, [suspected to be](#) 30-50% more contagious than other forms, [could also](#) be associated with a higher degree of mortality. The variant has already been identified in 22 US states, and CDC modeling suggests that it [could become](#) the dominant form of the virus in the United States by March. The CDC is urging doctors to check how patients with the B.1.1.7 variant fare compared to patients with other forms of the virus, but [according to](#) Dr. William Schaffner from Vanderbilt University Medical Center, the United States' "ability to determine whether your particular patient has this new strain is very limited." Still, some experts like epidemiologist and Biden transition team member Dr. Michael Osterholm, [are](#) "convinced" that the variant is in fact more fatal than other forms.
- **The Economic Recovery Continues To Sputter.** The United States is still reporting initial unemployment claims that dwarf [even the worst](#) weeks of the Great Recession. During the last full week of Donald Trump's presidency, 900,000 Americans [filed](#) new unemployment claims. Meanwhile, while [roughly](#) 16 million people are unemployed, a number that is [expected](#) to increase. Economist Daniel Zhao attributes the heightened claims to the prevalence of COVID-19, [saying](#): "Unemployment claims continue to show a job market unable to progress further as long as COVID-19 remains in the driver's seat... We're still far away from a complete reopening of the economy that could drive rehiring and stem further layoffs." The United States is [still down](#) almost 10 million jobs from the beginning of last year.
- **Though Vaccine Distribution Is Improving, Officials Are Concerned**

**About A Short-Term Supply Crunch.** The Trump Administration left in its wake a slew of vaccine distribution challenges for the Biden team. The Trump team failed to provide states with guidance or resources to get shots in arms, leaving chaos and confusion as the virus continued to spread. Donald Trump also [passed on](#) the opportunity to secure between 100 million and 500 million additional doses for the United States. States and hospitals are now feeling a crunch [as supplies dwindle](#), and the Biden Administration is [expressing concern](#) over the short-term availability of vaccine supplies. The Trump Administration also built little infrastructure for distribution beyond nursing homes and hospitals, so the Biden team is working on ramping up access for communities, [according to](#) White House chief of staff Ron Klain. The Biden Administration is confident it will meet its goal of 100 million doses in 100 days, but cites shortages and problems left by the Trump Administration [as an obstacle](#) to vaccinating more Americans in the same time frame.