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Inside C2

Southern DAILY

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World Insights: White House, GOP reach deal on infrastructure, final passage uncertain

WASHINGTON, June 24 (Xinhua) -- After much wrangling with Republicans, U.S. President Joe Biden announced Thursday that a deal has been reached on a nationwide, once-in-a-lifetime U.S. infrastructure plan.

“We have a deal,” Biden said after emerging from a meeting with a bipartisan group of senators.

“They have my word. I’ll stick with what we’ve proposed, and they’ve given me their word as well,” the president said.

“None of us got all that we wanted. I didn’t get all that I wanted. But this reminds me of the days we used to get an awful lot done up in the United States Congress,” he said.

Indeed, the bill, if signed into law, could be a big win for a president who campaigned on bringing the nation together, at a time of bitter partisanship in Washington and political divisions nationwide.

While the price tag is far less than the 2-trillion-U.S.-dollar package he initially wanted, the bill, if passed, could open the door for Biden’s more ambitious proposals that total around 4 trillion dollars.

Thursday’s agreed-upon framework comprises 579 billion dollars in new spending, according to NBC News, a U.S. broadcaster.

Around 300 billion dollars will be spent on transportation, with around 100 billion for roads and bridges and 66 billion for railways, reported CNBC, a U.S. business news outlet.

Despite Thursday’s handshake deal, it remains unknown whether the bill will get enough votes in Congress to become law.

Some progressive Democrats slammed the legislation on Thursday as not being anywhere near the size and scope of the plan they had hoped for. That would include investments in climate change, human resources and elsewhere.

“We have to have the whole thing, not just cleave off a little piece of it,” Democratic Senator Elizabeth Warren was as quoted as saying Thursday by CNBC.

The clock is ticking, and Biden wants to get a deal completed soon, as a president’s ability to keep the momentum going can quickly diminish, experts said.

At the same time, Democrats have their eye on the calendar, knowing their slim majority could be overturned after next year’s Midterm elections.



“Some version of the infrastructure bill will pass because America’s highways and bridges are crumbling, and both Republicans and Democrats like to bring federal money back to their states,” Brookings Institution Senior Fellow Darrell West told Xinhua.

“This bill is a high priority for President Biden, so he will do what it takes to pass it,” West said.

While both parties agree that the nation is badly in need of a major infrastructure upgrade, the two sides have had many disagreements on what should be included in the bill, as well as how to pay for it.

Republicans define infrastructure the traditional way, sticking to roads and bridges, while Democrats maintain a broader definition of the term, to include investments in climate change and a laundry list of other concerns.

Republicans have blasted much of this as a progressive wish list that has nothing to do with infrastructure, while Democrats contend that investments in climate change and human resources are needed to make the nation competitive in the 21st century.

Still unresolved is how to pay for the plan, which has been a serious source of contention between the two parties since the previous administration, and Republicans will not permit any new tax



increases.

Under discussion is the possibility of boosting the budget of the Internal Revenue Service, in a bid to clamp down on tax cheats and force them to pay up.

According to the Congressional Budget Office, this could raise around 60 billion dollars in tax

revenue, while the White House contends such a move could raise ten times that amount.

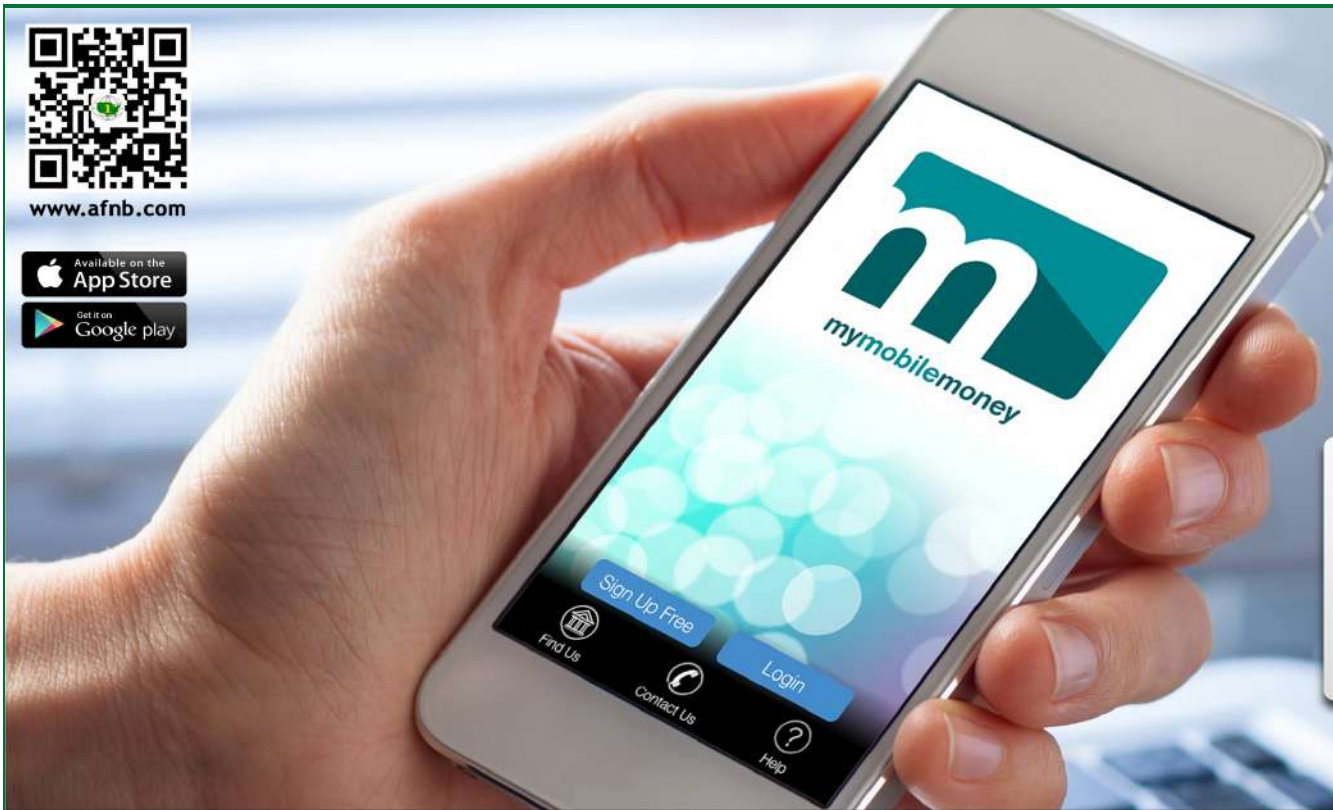
Shirley Garnet, a 64-year-old retiree in the U.S. state of New Jersey, told Xinhua that if the

money pays for infrastructure with no pork, “that’s fine,” but he added that when “(former U.S. President) Obama rammed through his stimulus package,”

it didn’t make much impact in terms of new jobs



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WEA LEE'S GLOBAL NOTES

CORONAVIRUS DIARY

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We Are Ready To Move Again



After the coronavirus pandemic attacked our nation more than six hundred thousand of our people have lost their lives. We are so sad that this virus has brought such a horrible effect on our lives.

Today we are so glad the Southern News Group Media Center has been repainted. All our buildings have

bright new colors and we want to start our journey again.

For more than one and one-half years our grounds have been empty without any outdoor activities at all. Many festivals and events have just gone away.

I am so glad that many of our community

media leaders came together last week in our TV studio to organize the Texas Minority Media Alliance. My dear friends including Art Lopez, Steve Levine, Bhangra Sauza, Dorris Ellis, Julia Nader, Monica Riley, Rob Baker and Kay Vu from Latino, Africa, Asian and Arabia media leaders were in

attendance to support

us. We all wanted to sent out a very clear message to our community that we must all work together.

When I passed by the repainted building, our international flags were flying in the blue sky again. My eyes again filled with tears knowing that many people will be expecting to meet here again on this ground.



Southern DAILY Make Today Different

Editor's Choice



A man is detained after a fight broke out during a Loudoun County School Board meeting which included a discussion of Critical Race Theory and transgender students, in Ashburn, Virginia. REUTERS/Evelyn Hockstein



Pope Francis greets a person dressed as Spider-Man after the general audience at the Vatican. REUTERS/Remo Casilli



A person celebrates the summer solstice at the Kokino megalithic observatory, near the city of Kumanovo, North Macedonia. REUTERS/Ognen Teofilovski



People carry candles past the "The Motherland Calls" monument illuminated in red during a ceremony to mark the 80th anniversary of German invasion into Soviet Union at the Mamayev Kurgan World War Two memorial complex in Volgograd, Russia. REUTERS/Kirill Braga



People sunbathe on the beach on the Sicilian island of Lampedusa, as a flow of migrants arriving continuous on the Mediterranean island, in Lampedusa, Italy. REUTERS/Guglielmo Mangiapane



Police officers salute the casket of K-9 Kitt in Gillette Stadium during a memorial service held in honor of the police dog, who was killed during a domestic violence call, in Boston, Massachusetts. Jessica Rinaldi/Pool

Fauci Says Current Vaccines Will Stand Up To The Delta Variant



Dr. Anthony Fauci attends a Senate Appropriations Subcommittee hearing in May on Capitol Hill. Fauci says he rarely wears a mask anymore since his environment is usually restricted to vaccinated people. (Stefani Reynolds/Pool/Getty Images)

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

Coronavirus cases and deaths in the U.S. are down dramatically from last winter’s peaks, but the road ahead could still be a long one, with the rapid spread of the delta variant — now the dominant strain of the virus in the U.S. — and mounting questions over how effective current vaccines are against it.

Addressing those concerns in an interview Thursday with NPR’s All Things Considered, Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Disease, said studies continue to show that vaccines are not only effective against the virus, they’re also highly effective at preventing serious disease or hospitalization. “No matter what study you look at, the protection against severe disease leading to hospitalization is always well within the 90%, regardless of the study, regardless of the country,” Fauci said.

That’s just part of the reason why, he said, it’s so crucially important to get vaccinated.



“It’s so easy to get vaccinated. Viruses don’t mutate if they can’t replicate, and you can prevent them from replicating by vaccinating enough people so that the virus has nowhere to go,” said Fauci, who is also chief medical adviser to President Biden.

Below are excerpts of the conversation, edited in parts for clarity and length:

Highlights Of Interview With Dr. Fauci

Q. New data out of Israel suggests the protection provided by the Pfizer vaccine may be waning, that its efficacy at preventing infection or symptomatic disease has dropped to 64%. A key caveat: They do still think the shot is highly effective at preventing serious disease or preventing death. But what is your read on this and these questions? Do the vaccines still work against this new variant?

A. The answer is yes, it does. If you look at the vaccines that we’ve been using here, and multiple studies from multiple countries show a high degree of efficacy, as you mentioned correctly, especially against severe disease leading to hospitalization. If you look at the effect against just infection itself or mildly symptomatic infection, the levels that we are getting in other studies seem to be substantially higher than the Israeli level of 64%. So what we really need to do before we can really make any determination, is to get a bit more information from our Israeli colleagues, which we’re trying to do.



So are you skeptical of the data out of Israel?

No, no, I have a great deal of confidence in them. But before we try to extrapolate for the situation here, I would want to see a little bit more details of the data.

I saw some of the news out of the White House COVID-19 briefing today that here in the U.S., 99.5% of deaths from COVID-19 are in unvaccinated people. It does suggest strongly that the vaccinations are working at preventing death.

Yes, very much so. The data are so clear. And if you look in our own country, where the level of vaccination is low,

the level of infection is increasing. And with that, you’ll have hospitalizations and hopefully not but likely you would see increase in deaths — an overwhelming reason why we’ve got to get as many people vaccinated as we possibly can. **Are we also seeing more evidence that you really need to get both doses — if what you’re getting is a two-dose vaccine like Pfizer or Moderna?**

Overwhelmingly, yes, we are seeing that in any study you look at, the level of protection when you follow one dose versus the level of protection following two doses, is dramatically lower. People who feel, “Well, I have had one dose, do I really need a second dose?” — if you have a two-dose regimen, it is absolutely essential that you get your second dose.



How worried are you that the Delta variant could mutate into something more aggressive, more worrisome, particularly with so many unvaccinated people still out and about?

Well, that is a concern, and that’s the reason why we keep pushing, saying, please, people, if you’re not vaccinated, seriously, consider it. It’s so easy to get vaccinated. Viruses don’t mutate if they can’t replicate, and you can prevent them from replicating by vaccinating enough people so that the virus has nowhere to go.

If you give the virus free reign to circulate in the community, sooner or later it’s going to mutate. And one of those mutations may be a mutation that makes it a more dangerous virus.

And in this case, like with the Delta variant, that’s now the dominant one here, we’ve established it’s more contagious. Do we know it actually causes more severe illness if you do catch it?



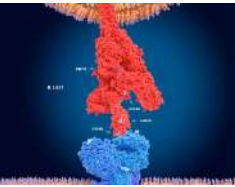
The data on the degree of transmissibility is very clear. There’s no doubt it’s more transmissible. It is likely when you get more data, that it is likely that it also can give you more serious disease.

Related

The Delta Variant Isn’t Just Hyper-Contagious. It Also Grows More Rapidly Inside You

After months of data collection, scientists agree: The delta variant is the most contagious version of the coronavirus worldwide. It spreads about 225% faster than the original version of the virus, and it’s currently dominating the outbreak in the United States.

A new study, published online Wednesday, sheds light on why. It finds that the variant grows more rapidly inside people’s respiratory tracts and to much higher levels, researchers at the Guangdong Provincial Center for Disease Control and Prevention reported.



The numericals in this illustration show the main mutation

sites of the delta variant of the coronavirus, which is likely the most contagious version. Here, the virus’s spike protein (red) binds to a receptor on a human cell (blue).

Juan Gaertner/Science Source

On average, people infected with the delta variant had about 1,000 times more copies of the virus in their respiratory tracts than those infected with the original strain of the coronavirus, the study reported.

In addition, after someone catches the delta variant, the person likely becomes infectious sooner. On average, it took about four days for the delta variant to reach detectable levels inside a person, compared with six days for the original coronavirus variant. (Courtesy npr.org)

The U.S. State With The Brightest Long-Term Economic Future Is Texas

Can Texas Can Be The Future Of America?

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor



Texas is a more affordable place to live than much of the Northeast or West Coast and still has powerful ways to draw new residents, including a thriving cultural scene, a diverse population and top research universities. Its elementary schools and middle schools perform well above average in reading and math (and notably ahead of California’s), according to the Urban Institute.

These strengths have helped the population of Texas to surge by more than 15 percent, or about four million people, over the past decade. In the past few months, two high-profile technology companies — Oracle and Hewlett-Packard Enterprise — have announced they are moving their headquarters to the state, and Tesla may soon follow. As California was in the 20th century, Texas today looks like a state that can embody and shape the country’s future.

But Texas also has a big problem, as the world has just witnessed. A useful way to think of it is the fossil fuel problem.

‘This’ll happen again’

Even with its growing tech and health care industries, the Texas economy revolves around oil and gas. And those fossil fuels have created two threats to the state’s economic future.

The first is climate change, which is making Texas as a less pleasant place to live. The number of 95-degree days has spiked, and severe hurricanes

have become more common, including Harvey, which brutalized Houston and the Gulf Coast in 2017. Paradoxically, climate change may also be weakening the jet stream, making bouts of frigid weather more common.

On the national level, Texas politicians have played a central role in preventing action to slow climate change. On the local level, leaders have failed to prepare for the new era of extreme weather — including leaving the electricity grid vulnerable to last week’s cold spell, which in turn left millions of Texans without power and water.

Many residents feel abandoned. In Copperas Cove, a city in central Texas, Daniel Peterson told the media last Saturday that he was utterly exasperated with the officials who had failed to restore power six days after it went out. He is planning to install a wood-burning stove, because, as he said, “This’ll happen again.” In Dallas, Tumaini Criss spent the weekend worried that she would not be able to afford a new home for her and her three sons after a leaky pipe caved in her ceiling and destroyed appliances and furniture. “I don’t know where that leaves me,” she said.

In San Antonio, told my colleague Giulia McDonnell Nieto del Rio that he was frustrated by the lack of communication from local officials. When Giulia interviewed Flores, he had not showered in days (and graciously warned her to stand back while interviewing him, saying, “I stink”). To get enough water to flush his toilet, he had walked to a bar. To heat his apartment, he was boiling water on his stove.

The next energy industry

The second threat is related to climate change but different. It comes from the possibility that alternative energy sources like wind and solar power are becoming cheap enough to shrink Texas’ oil and gas industry.

“The cost advantage of solar and wind has become decisive, and promises to become vaster still,” Noah Smith, an economist and

COMMUNITY

Texas native, wrote in his Substack newsletter. “I don’t want to see my home state become an economic backwater, shackled to the corpse of a dying fossil fuel age.”

Instead of investing adequately in new energy forms, though, many Texas politicians have tried to protect fossil fuels. Last week, Gov. Greg Abbott went so far as to blame wind and solar energy — falsely — for causing the blackouts. The main culprit was the failure of natural gas, as these charts by my colleague Veronica Penney show

As Smith explains, the best hope for Texas’ energy industry is probably to embrace wind and solar power, not to scapegoat them. The state, after all, gets plenty of wind and sun. “Texas can be the future, instead of fighting the future,” Smith wrote.

The future isn’t the past

The larger economic story here is a common one. Companies — and places — that have succeeded for decades with one technology rarely welcome change. Kodak didn’t encourage digital photography, and neither The New York Times nor The Wall Street Journal created Craigslist.

Texas’ political and business leaders have made a lot of successful moves in recent decades. They have avoided some of the political sclerosis that has held back parts of the Northeast and California, like zoning restrictions that benefit aging homeowners at the expense of young families.

But Texas’ leaders are sacrificing the future for the present in a different way. They have helped their fossil fuel companies maximize short-term profits at the expense of the state’s long-term well-being. They have resisted regulation and investments that could have made their power grid more resilient to severe weather (as this Times story documents), and have tried to wish away climate change even as it forces Texans to endure more miserable weather.

In those ways, Texas is offering a different — and more worrisome — glimpse into the future. (Courtesy newyorktimes.com)

Related

The U.S. Census Confirms Texas And Florida Are America’s Future



If it seems like people have been moving by the thousands to Texas

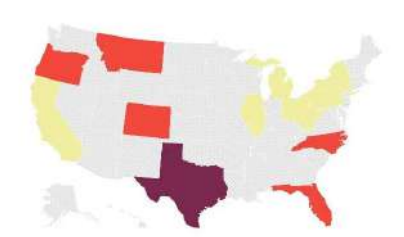
and Florida, well now, Washington has proof. The recent census results added two congressional seats to Texas and bolstered Florida’s representation by one seat, while California and New York each lost a seat. American politics and culture are changing, and ground zero of that change is these two Southern states. Their trajectory will come to define the future of America.

No longer are Texas and Florida only for escaping high taxes, onerous regulation and frigid weather. These states are the foundation of America’s future. They may be raising the future presidents of this country, and they’re housing both white- and blue-collar workers. Florida is on the map, and Texas — despite the problem it’s had keeping the lights on — is quickly becoming the nexus of industry and innovation.

We’ve already begun to notice Texas and Florida aggregating America’s largest corporations over the past year. Everything associated with the future of America can be found in these states.

Wall Street’s Goldman Sachs is expanding to sunny Miami, and technology giant Oracle moved to Austin, Texas. Even Silicon Valley has started getting a little thin.

Ron Conway, founder of SV Angel, told Business Insider, “Candidly, some of those leaving have already found great wealth here in the Bay Area ecosystem, and so they have the privilege of leaving and declaring some other city ‘the next big thing.’”



Elon Musk’s transition to Austin could make this Southern city “the next big thing.” He made a new home for his rockets in Texas to escape California regulations — with the “final straw” being disrespect from California Assemblywoman Lorena Gonzalez (D).

If the only new additions to Florida and Texas were corporations, the movement wouldn’t be so monumental. But the traffic is not solely from big business; grandparents, parents, children and siblings are escaping the tradition-

al coastal hubs. A Redfin report revealed that nearly 45 percent of its January Austin home searches came from users in other metro areas. The Orlando, Fla., region alone is projected to add 1,500 people per week to reach 5.2 million by 2030. Where the people are is the hub of culture.

Engineers and information systems experts will settle in Texas; the same cycle will occur in Florida with bankers and day traders. They’ll have children, and their children will have children. Along with this current migration will come consequential changes in the fabric of American society for generations.

But we still live very much in a world where the left and right coasts dictate the narrative in the U.S. The mainstream media decides which issues, battles and events are noteworthy and get the limelight. It directly influences trends in the digital sphere. Now this narrative’s trajectory of influence is trending down, not up. They won’t be able to maintain a tight grip on information. They will no longer be the genesis and judge of all thought. Environment directly affects how people think. So, instead of information being concentrated in two prominent states, it will become more decentralized. Perspectives will shift.



Let’s face it: Florida and Texas are not frontier states anymore; they’re the future of mainstream America. While people can thumb their noses at the South and cast it aside as uncivilized, they’re mistaken. Right before our eyes, we’ve transitioned to a world where places such as San Francisco and New York will continue to lose out to places such as Austin and Miami. And Americans will continue voting with their feet long after the pandemic crisis has abated. Finally, this news isn’t breaking: One of us wrote an op-ed about this phenomenon back in 2016. The pandemic and significant shifts in 2020 have only accelerated the process. So, the 2020 census isn’t a passing trend ignited by the pandemic that will slowly wane. This demographic shift is the beginning of a permanent change. (Courtesy thehill.com)