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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

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,"



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

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



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# China's first self-operated 1,500m deep-water gas field starts production

BEIJING, June 25 (Xinhua) -- Deep Sea No.1, China's first self-operated 1,500-meter deep-water gas field, started production on Friday, according to the China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC).

The operation of the gas field, 150 km off the city of Sanya in south China's island province of Hainan, marks the country's capability of ultra deep-water drilling for oil and gas, compared with the 300-meter depth previously, said the CNOOC.

Production at the gas field, detected in 2014, is of great significance to ensuring national energy security, optimizing the country's energy structure and promoting regional economic development, said the CNOOC.

Deep Sea No.1 marks important progress in the country's deep-water exploration and development of oil and gas, which indicates China's great potential and broad prospects in the area, according to an official with the National Energy Administration.

The gas field is expected to provide a total of 3 billion cubic meters of natural gas per year.

The exploration, development, construction and operation of the Deep Sea No.1 gas field has driven the development of shipbuilding, steel, electromechanical and other industries.



HOUSTON, June 25 (Xinhua) -- The number of active drilling rigs in the United States was unchanged at 470 rigs this week, up by 205 year on year, according to the weekly data released Friday by Houston-based oilfield services company Baker Hughes. These active drilling rigs included 372 oil rigs operating in the U.S. oil fields, down by one from the previous week; 98 gas drilling rigs, up by one from the previous week. There was no miscellaneous rig, down by one from last week. The 470 rigs included 454 land drilling rigs,

down by two from the previous week. There were two inland water rigs and 14 offshore drilling rigs, both up by one from last week. Of them, 30 are directional drilling rigs, 421 are horizontal drilling rigs and 19 are vertical drilling rigs. During the week, Alaska was the only state that gained a rig, reaching four in total. The Permian Basin in western Texas and eastern New Mexico has been the largest source of shale oil production growth in the United States, acting as an engine of supply growth outside the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries in the past years.

## Number of active U.S. drilling rigs unchanged this week

## Editor's Choice



An Iranian woman is seen through a plastic sheet as she waits to vote at a polling station during presidential elections in Tehran, Iran June 18, 2021. Majid Asgaripour/WANA (West Asia News Agency) via REUTERS



Cadets of a military academy hold flowers during a graduation ceremony in the rebel-controlled city of Donetsk, Ukraine June 17, 2021. REUTERS/Alexander Ermochenko



Israeli security force members detain a Palestinian protester during clashes near Damascus Gate just outside Jerusalem's Old City June 17, 2021. REUTERS/Ammar Awad



An aerial view shows houseboats anchored in low water levels at Lake Oroville, which is the second-largest reservoir in California and according to daily reports of the state's Department of Water Resources is near 35% capacity, near Oroville, California, June 16, 2021. REUTERS/Aude Guerrucci



A demonstrator carries a rainbow flag during a protest against an attack on a local office of the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) and the killing of a woman working in the office, in Istanbul, Turkey June 17, 2021. REUTERS/Dilara Senkaya



A cicada sits on the neck of President Joe Biden as he and first lady Jill Biden depart for England from Joint Base Andrews in Maryland, June 9, 2021. REUTERS/Kevin Lamarque

## Biden Urges Shots For Young Adults As Variant Concern Grows



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

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. government is stepping up efforts to get younger Americans vaccinated for COVID-19 as concerns grow about the spread of a new variant that threatens to set the country back in the months ahead.

The push is underway as the delta variant, first identified in India, has come to represent more than 20% of coronavirus infections in the U.S. in the last two weeks, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported Tuesday. That's double what it was when the CDC last reported on the variant's prevalence.

"The delta variant is currently the greatest threat in the U.S. to our attempt to eliminate COVID-19," Dr. Anthony Fauci, the nation's top infectious disease expert, said at a White House briefing on the virus. "Good news: Our vaccines are effective against the delta variant."

He added: "We have the tools. So let's use them, and crush the outbreak."

The White House acknowledged Tuesday that President Joe Biden will fall short of reaching his goal of vaccinating 70% of all American adults with at least one shot by Independence Day. But it said he had reached that threshold for those aged 30 and older and expects to

meet it for those age 27 or older by the July 4 holiday.



Biden is also on track to miss a second goal — fully vaccinating 165 million adult Americans by July 4. White House COVID-19 coordinator Jeff Zients projected it will take several more weeks to hit that number. On Monday, the U.S. crossed 150 million fully vaccinated.

"We don't see it exactly like something went wrong," press secretary Jen Psaki said Tuesday.

Still, administration officials said they were redoubling their focus on vaccinating younger Americans age 18-26, who have proved to be least likely to get a vaccine when it's available for them.

The nationwide rate of new vaccinations has dropped off precipitously over the past month even as shots have become more available, with fewer than 300,000 Americans now getting their first dose per day on average — a pace that, if sustained, will have the U.S. not reaching Biden's 70% goal until late July at the earliest.

Officials are also increasingly concerned about regional variations in the vaccination program. More than 16 states and the District of Columbia have

vaccinated 70% of their adult population. But others — particularly in the South and Midwest — are lagging substantially behind, with four not having yet reached 50% vaccination rates.



The White House said meeting Biden's vaccination goals is less important than the pace of the nation's reopening, which is exceeding even its own internal projections as the overwhelming majority of the nation's most vulnerable people are fully vaccinated and cases and deaths are at their lowest rates since the earliest days of the pandemic, averaging about 11,000 new infections and fewer than 300 deaths per day. More states are opening back up, with Michigan on Tuesday becoming the latest to do away with a mask mandate and virus restrictions. The state had the nation's worst outbreak this spring.

"We have succeeded beyond our highest expectations," Zients said.

Americans at highest risk for complications from COVID-19 are overwhelmingly vaccinated, according to CDC data, but only 53% aged 25-39 have received one dose. Among those 18-24, it's 47%.

"Where the country has more work to do is particularly with 18 to 26 year olds," Zients said. Zients and government experts said the rise of the delta variant should motivate younger Americans to get vaccinated.

"The reality is many younger Americans have felt like COVID-19 is not something that impacts them, and they've been less eager to get the shot," Zients said. "However, with the delta variant now spreading across the country, and infecting younger people worldwide, it's more important than ever that they get vaccinated."



The variant is taking root as there are warning

signals about a possible surge in cases in unvaccinated corners of America. Rural sections of Missouri, including Springfield and Branson, have seen a dramatic spike in COVID-19 hospitalizations in recent weeks that health officials attribute in part to the delta variant spreading among younger, unvaccinated residents.

"There is a danger, a real danger that if there is a persistence of a recalcitrance to getting vaccinated that you could see localized surges," said Fauci.

Mississippi, Louisiana, Wyoming, Alabama and Idaho are all below 40% of their population with at least one dose of vaccine.

The White House planned to focus on increasingly local vaccination pushes, with first lady Jill Biden traveling Tuesday to Mississippi and Tennessee to promote vaccinations and Biden himself set to visit North Carolina on Thursday.

The variant is accounting for half of new infections in the regions that include Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah and Wyoming. (Courtesy <https://www.modernhealthcare.com/>)

**Related**  
[Experts Believe That COVID-19 Has Fueled The Fire Of Underage Drinking](#)

### Teenagers Drank Over \$17 Billion Worth Of Alcohol In 2016, A New Study Has Found



Experts fear that the COVID-19 pandemic has fanned the flames of underage alcohol consumption. (Photo/Vincent Besnault)

**Key Points**  
*A study found that young people in the US consumed more than \$17 billion worth of alcohol in 2016.*

- One co-author of the study named hard seltzers as a driver of underage alcohol consumption.
- A psychiatrist told Insider that the pandemic has exacerbated alcohol consumption among youth.

Underage youths consumed nearly one-tenth of all

the alcoholic drinks sold in the US in 2016, according to a new study, and experts are concerned the trend might have worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The study by researchers at the University of North Carolina specifically reviewed alcohol consumption among youths ages 12-20.

It found that people in that age group had imbibed \$17.5 billion worth of alcoholic beverages sold that year, or about 8.6% of the 2016 total. The findings were published this month in the Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs.

Beverages produced by three manufacturers — AB Inbev, MillerCoors, and Diageo — represented almost half of all of the alcohol consumed by the underaged demographic, the study found.



Pamela Trangenstein, a co-lead author of the study, told Insider in an interview that marketing plays a significant role in driving the consumption of alcohol among young people.

"The research shows time and time again that young people, if they haven't started to drink or if they're exposed to alcohol advertising over time — they're more likely to start drinking. If they've already started drinking, they're more likely to progress to heavier drinking," said Trangenstein, who is an assistant professor of health behavior at the University of North Carolina Gillings School of Global Public Health.

One major factor that has driven recent trends in alcohol consumption among those under the legal age of 21 has been the rise of carbonated beverages which contain alcohol, Trangenstein said.

The class of drinks, which are called hard seltzers or ready-to-drink beverages, skyrocketed in popularity last year, Insider previously reported. Big-name brands in the category include labels like Four Loko and White Claw, which entered the market in 2016. (Courtesy <https://www.businessinsider.com/>)

### Changes In Public Health Policy May Be Needed For Best Vaccine Usage And To Avoid Unnecessary Side Effects

## COVID-19 Antibodies Wear Off Fast – Booster Shots Needed Per Study



Curative nurse Armida B. Azurin, RN, prepares Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccines for some of the about 2,000 local residents to be vaccinated at Riverside County vaccination site in Riverside, California. (Photo/Terry Pierson, The Press-Enterprise/SCNG)

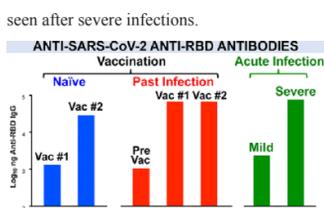
Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

The good news: If you've had COVID-19, you may need only one Pfizer or Moderna shot to get the formidable protection "COVID-naïve" people get with two.

The possibly not-so-good news: It took just three months for antibodies to the virus' spike protein to wane by some 90 percent — meaning booster shots are likely on the horizon.

In a peer-reviewed study published June 23 in the journal ACS Nano, UCLA researchers compared the immune responses of people who recovered from COVID-19 infections and then got the two-shot series, with those who never had COVID-19 and got the two-shot series.

There were 28 people in the never-had-COVID group. A single dose of either vaccine triggered antibody levels similar to what's seen after mild COVID-19 infections. After two doses, these folks had antibody levels approaching what's



seen after severe infections.

There were 36 people in the recovered-from-COVID group. The first shot produced a vigorous antibody response in them, similar to what's seen with severe natural infection — but the second shot didn't do much of anything.

"It is worth considering changing public health policy to take this into account both to maximize vaccine usage and avoid unnecessary side effects," said senior author Dr. Otto

Yang, professor of medicine, division of infectious diseases, and of microbiology, immunology and molecular genetics at the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA, in a statement. The quality of antibodies produced by both groups was similar, the researchers found. After the second vaccine, antibody levels waned in both groups comparably to natural infection, resulting in an average loss of 90% within 85 days, they found.

"While the lessening effect of antibodies elicited by COVID-19 infection remains controversial, we and others have observed a rapid decay rate in the first few months after infection," the paper said.

This doesn't necessarily mean that protection disappears after a few months, though. Antibodies play an important role in immunity, but so do many other cells. The contribution of the immune system's "killer T cells," for example, remains a bit of a mystery and needs more study, the researchers said, and the durability of immunity after vaccination is still to be determined.



A large-scale study by UC Irvine researchers in the spring found that mRNA vaccines like Pfizer and Moderna provided much greater protection against COVID-19 than did natural infection alone.

"We agree that many people who had a prior natural SARS-CoV-2 asymptomatic exposure or a PCR confirmed infection respond with a higher (antibody) response than people who are completely naïve," said Dr. Philip Felgner, the lead researcher at UCI.

"But since natural exposure induces a wide range of serological response, I would stop short of recommending that everyone who had a prior exposure should only get one shot." (Courtesy Ocrregister.com)

**Related**  
[Nasal Spray Could Potentially Treat COVID-19, NIH Says](#)

BETHESDA, Md. - The director for the National Institutes of Health announced this week the progress of a nasal spray being developed to

treat COVID-19.

"I'm pleased to share progress in the development of a specially engineered therapeutic antibody that could be delivered through a nasal spray. Preclinical studies also suggest it may work even better than existing antibody treatments to fight COVID-19, especially now that new SARS-CoV-2 "variants of concern" have become increasingly prevalent," said NIH director Dr. Francis Collins.



**Potential COVID-19 antiviral drug proving effective in hamster study, according to NIH. An experimental drug to treat COVID-19, which can be taken orally, is now being tested in humans after showing early promise and effectiveness in hamsters.**

Collins' announcement was posted in a blog on the NIH website and follows the release of findings from Chinese researchers and The University of Texas which is supported by the NIH. The nasal spray contains COVID-19 antibodies that enter through primary sites of infection like the nasal cavities, making it harder for the virus to enter these areas and infect the rest of the body.

Collins says while researchers have licensed this new antibody treatment, further testing is needed in a clinical trial.

"If all goes well, the hope is that we'll have a safe and effective nasal spray to serve as an extra line of defense in the fight against COVID-19," Collins wrote.

The NIH has been testing a variety of potential treatments to fight the novel coronavirus. Earlier this month, NIH researchers say they identified a drug, TEMPOL, as a promising oral antiviral drug that can potentially limit SARS-CoV-2, the disease that causes COVID-19, by impairing the disease's viral enzyme otherwise known as the RNA replicate.



The RNA replicate is the enzyme that allows the virus to replicate its genetic material and make copies of itself once it has infected a host cell.

"We urgently need additional effective, accessible treatments for COVID-19," said Diana W. Bianchi, M.D., Director of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD). "An oral drug that prevents SARS-CoV-2 from replicating would be an important tool for reducing the severity of the disease."

Several drugs are already recommended to treat people hospitalized with COVID-19, according to the NIH. These include the antiviral drug remdesivir. In October, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved remdesivir, an antiviral medication developed by Gilead Sciences, as a treatment for COVID-19 patients requiring hospitalization.

The drug was the first fully approved treatment in the United States for COVID-19.

In March, Pfizer began studying an oral antiviral drug with the hopes of treating COVID-19. The company said the drug in the trial, which is currently being conducted in the U.S., has already shown promising potential in treating people infected with the novel coronavirus as well as other coronaviruses.



On March 7, FOX News medical contributor Dr. Marc Siegel revealed on "FOX & Friends Weekend" that another new possible medication to treat coronavirus-positive patients could be enough to turn the pandemic on its head. First-stage testing of the experimental COVID-19 pill called Molnupiravir, by Merck and Ridgeback Biotherapeutics, showed promising signs of effectiveness in reducing the virus in patients.

The drug would function as an at-home, five-day treatment, similar to Tamiflu, to stop the virus from reproducing before causing major damage. Siegel said the therapeutic could come to market in as little as four to five months.

The NIH also recommends other treatments for COVID-19 on their website. (Courtesy <https://www.fox32chicago.co>)