

As Trump demands full reopening of schools

US coronavirus case count soars past 3 million

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There have been more than 1 million new confirmed coronavirus cases in the US in the past month, bringing the total to just under 3.1 million. A further 20,000 human lives were lost during that time, bringing the official death toll to more than 133,000, more than the total number of US soldiers killed in World War I and nearly three times the number of lives lost to the flu each year.

Including the fatalities in the United States, there have been 544,000 deaths worldwide and more than 11.8 million cases. Next to the US, Brazil, India and Russia have the most cases, while Brazil, the United Kingdom, Italy and Mexico have the most deaths from the disease. Every day that the pandemic is not brought under control leaves at least another 4,000 people dead.

"The outbreak is accelerating," said World Health Organization (WHO) Director-General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus at yesterday's press briefing, "and we have clearly not reached the peak of the pandemic." He continued, "I will say it again. National unity and global solidarity are more important than ever to defeat a common enemy, a virus that has taken the world hostage. This is our only road out of this pandemic."

The WHO leader's remarks contrasted sharply to the nationalist action by President Donald Trump, who yesterday formally issued notice to Congress that the United States is withdrawing from the World Health Organization. According to a State Department official who spoke to CNN, the letter is addressed to António Guterres, UN secretary-general, and notes that the withdrawal will be effective on July 6, 2021. When Trump first announced this move, it was decried by Richard Horton, the editor-in-chief of the *Lancet* medical journal, as a "crime against humanity."

Trump is also pushing for a full reopening of in-

person classes this fall. He tweeted Monday that "SCHOOLS MUST OPEN IN THE FALL!!!" His hysterical comment was followed by Education Secretary Betsy DeVos, who stated, "American education must be fully open and fully operational this fall!" The Trump administration views sending students back to school as a necessary precondition for the next stage of the back-to-work campaign. Forcing workers back on the job despite the acute risk of infection and even death is essential for the extraction of surplus value and profit from the labor of workers to back up the trillions in debt piled up to bail out Wall Street.

Trump's policy would entail all 60 million K-12 students returning to enclosed spaces for several hours each school day as the pandemic gains strength across the country—a recipe for giving the virus to every young person in the country. In that scenario, according to the existing data, some 0.06 percent of students would die—a total of 36,000 children. The rest would bring the disease back home, further spreading the contagion to untold millions of their older and more vulnerable parents and grandparents.

The record number of cases and deaths being reported by various states underscores these mortal dangers. Arizona counted 117 deaths yesterday, 33 percent higher than the previous record set a week earlier. The state has had an average of more than 3,000 cases per day since June 28, and the overwhelmed health system has forced the state's Department of Health Services to draw up a "crisis of standards care" plan. Patients in Tucson are already being moved to Phoenix because of a lack of available beds. It is expected that Arizona's medical facilities are only days away from being forced to determine who lives and who dies because of a lack of medical personnel and equipment.

One of the reasons for the pandemic spiraling out of

control in the state is the lack of testing. Phoenix Mayor Kate Gallego has repeatedly asked for federal aid, including a FEMA mass-testing site, and has been told that the county's case numbers, which are over 67,000, are not high enough for that level of support. As a result, there are many testing sites in the city and around the country, such as the one at South Mountain Community College, where people are forced to wait in their cars for hours to get tested. Currently, a quarter of those who do eventually get tested are being told they have COVID-19, indicating essentially uncontrolled spread in the region.

Arizona's situation reaffirms the recent warning by the country's top infectious disease expert, Anthony Fauci, who stated, "We are still knee deep in the first wave" of the pandemic. Fauci, who stressed that he was extremely concerned and that the situation was getting worse, was referring both to the record number of coronavirus cases and to the low rates of testing and high rates of hospitalization.

The United States is currently testing about 500,000 people a day, about half of the 900,000 tests per day at minimum recommended by Ashish Jha, the director of Harvard's Global Health Institute. This is the lowest number, Jha's team estimated, required to find everyone who contracts the virus each day and confirm whether or not their contacts also caught the infection. Other public health experts have said that the US needs to do up to 30 million tests per day in order to truly know the full extent of the pandemic.

The situation as known is already dire. Nine states—New York, California, Florida, Texas, New Jersey, Illinois, Massachusetts, Arizona and Georgia—report more than 100,000 total cases. Nine are currently reporting more than 1,000 new cases each day—Florida, Arizona, Georgia, Texas, Louisiana, California, North Carolina, Tennessee and Missouri. Only 10 states are reporting fewer than 100 daily cases. Twenty-two states have seen an increase in hospitalizations over the past 14 days, including Arizona, California, Georgia, Florida and Texas.

Despite such perils, states are continuing with their reopening plans or at most putting them on hold. One of the most significant reopenings will be the Walt Disney World theme parks in Orlando, Florida, and Anaheim, California, starting this weekend. While company and park officials insist that safety measures

will be put in place, multiple petitions with tens of thousands of signatures, including those of theme park workers, have been circulated demanding that the parks remain closed to keep workers and guests safe.

No section of the US political or media establishment is calling for the shutdown of non-essential production and business to halt the explosive spread of the disease. The policy of "reopening" without adequate testing, contact tracing and quarantining—that is, the policy of "herd immunity"—is supported by both big business parties, the Democrats no less than the Republicans.



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