

# Biden signs virus relief package

Aims for virus milestone by the Fourth of July

By **ZEKE MILLER** and **JONATHAN LEMIRE**  
*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — One year after the nation was brought to a near-standstill by the coronavirus, President Joe Biden pledged in his first prime-time address to make all adults eligible for vaccines by May 1 and raised the possibility of beginning to “mark our independence from this virus” by the Fourth of July. He offered Americans fresh hope and appealed anew for their help.

The speech came just hours after Biden signed into law a \$1.9 trillion relief package that he said will help defeat the virus, nurse the economy back to health and deliver direct aid to Americans struggling to make ends meet.

Speaking in the White House East Room Thursday night, Biden honored the “collective suffering” of Americans over the past year in his 24-minute address and then offered them a vision for a return to a modicum of normalcy this summer.

“We are bound together by the loss and the pain of the days that have gone by,” he said. “We are also bound together by the hope and the possibilities in the days in front of us.”

He predicted Americans could safely gather at least in small groups for the Fourth of July to “make this Independence Day truly special.”

But he also cautioned that this was a goal and attaining it depends on people’s cooperation in following public health guidelines and rolling up their sleeves to get vaccinated as soon as eligible. Only that, he said, can bring about an end to a pandemic that has killed more than 530,000 Americans and disrupted the lives of countless more.

“While it was different for everyone, we all lost something,” Biden said of the sacrifices of the year-long-and-counting pandemic.

Some cash distributions through the relief package could begin arriving in the bank accounts of Americans this weekend.

“This historic legislation is about rebuilding the backbone of this country,” Biden said as he signed the bill in the Oval Office.

Most noticeable to many Americans are provisions providing up to \$1,400 in direct payments and extending \$300 weekly emergency unemployment benefits into early September. Also included are expanded tax credits over the next year for children, child care and family leave — some of them credits that Democrats have signaled they’d like to make permanent — plus spending for rent-



Andrew Harnik/AP Photo

**President Joe Biden speaks about the COVID-19 pandemic during a prime-time address at the White House on Thursday.**

ers, food programs and people’s utility bills.

The House gave final congressional approval to the sweeping package by a near party line 220-211 vote on Wednesday, seven weeks after Biden entered the White House and four days after the Senate passed the bill. Republicans in both chambers opposed the legislation unanimously, characterizing it as bloated, crammed with liberal policies and heedless of signs the crises are easing.

U.S. Rep. Suzanne Bonamici, an Oregon Democrat who represents the North Coast, was outspoken in her support of the money the bill sets aside for child care subsidies to families and support to providers.

“The American Rescue Plan will help the people of northwest Oregon, including many who have reached out to me during this past year,” Bonamici said. “It will help the senior citizen in Seaside who needs a vaccine but doesn’t have access to the internet. It will help the new mom and her husband, both paramedics, who don’t have access to paid family leave and can’t afford child care. It will help restaurants like a beloved Portland eatery that has been shut down for months but could finally reopen thanks to the Restaurant Revitalization Fund.

“It will help school leaders in districts big and small who want to bring students back to classrooms but don’t have the funding to do so safely. It will help the arts industry worker in Portland who has relied on unemployment benefits since last June and can’t afford to lose them now. I’ve fought hard for this aid based on these and so many other compelling stories, and am grateful the American Rescue Plan will now become law.”

In his Thursday night address, Biden said that as vaccine supplies continue to increase, he will direct states and territories to make all adults eligible for vaccination by

May 1. The U.S. is expecting to have enough doses for those 255 million adults by the end of that month, but Biden warned the process of actually administering those doses would take time, even as his administration looks to instill confidence in the safety of the vaccines to overcome hesitance.

“Let me be clear, that doesn’t mean everyone’s going to have that shot immediately, but it means you’ll be able to get in line beginning May 1,” he said.

Biden announced an expansion of other efforts to speed vaccinations, including deploying an additional 4,000 active-duty troops to support vaccination efforts and allowing more people — such as medical students, veterinarians and dentists — to deliver shots. He is also directing more doses toward some 950 community health centers and up to 20,000 retail pharmacies, to make it easier for people to get vaccinated closer to their homes.

Biden added that his administration is planning to launch a nationwide website to help people find doses, saying it would address frustrations so that there would be “no more searching day and night for an appointment.”

Even as he offered optimism, Biden made clear that the July 4 timetable applied only to smaller gatherings, not larger ones, and requires cooperation from Americans to continue to wear face coverings, maintain social distancing and follow federal guidelines meant to slow the spread of the virus in the near term. He also called on them to roll up their sleeves to get vaccinated as soon as they’re eligible.

This is “not the time to not stick with the rules,” Biden said, warning of the potential for backsliding just as the nation is on the cusp of defeating the virus. “I need you, the American people,” he added. “I need you. I need every American to do their part.”

## WHAT’S INSIDE THE CORONAVIRUS RELIEF PACKAGE

By **KEVIN FREKING**  
*Associated Press*

- **UNEMPLOYMENT AID:** \$300 a week in unemployment checks through Sept. 6.
- **MORE CHECKS:** Direct payment of \$1,400 for a single taxpayer, or \$2,800 for a married couple that files jointly, plus \$1,400 per dependent. Individuals earning up to \$75,000 would get the full amount, as would married couples with incomes up to \$150,000.
- **STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:** \$350 billion to state and local governments and tribal governments for costs incurred up until the end of 2024.
- **SCHOOLS:** About \$130 billion to be used to reduce class sizes and modify classrooms to enhance social distancing, install ventilation systems and purchase personal protective equipment. The money could also be used to hire more nurses, counselors and janitors, and to provide summer school. Spending for colleges and universities would be boosted by about \$40 billion.
- **CHILD CARE:** About \$39 billion for child care through an emergency fund to help child care providers pay for staffing, rent and supplies, and through a block grant program that subsidizes the cost of child care for low-income families.
- **BUSINESSES:** A new program for restaurants and bars hurt by the pandemic would receive \$28.6 billion. The grants provide up to \$10 million per company with a limit of \$5 million per physical location. The grants can be used to cover payroll, rent, utilities and other operational expenses.
- **PAYCHECK PROTECTION PROGRAM:** \$7.25 billion. The bill also allows more nonprofits to apply for loans that are designed to help borrowers meet their payroll and operating costs and can potentially be forgiven.
- **TESTING AND VACCINES:** About \$50 billion to expand testing for COVID-19 and to enhance contract tracing capabilities with new investments to expand laboratory capacity and set up mobile testing units. More than \$15 billion to speed up the distribution and administration of COVID-19 vaccines. Another \$1 billion would go to boost vaccine confidence. And \$10 billion would be used to boost the supply of medical devices and equipment to combat the virus under the Defense Production Act.
- **HEALTH CARE:** Increasing coverage under the Obama-era Affordable Care Act. Financial assistance for ACA premiums would become considerably more generous and a greater number of solid middle-class households would qualify. Though the sweetened subsidies last only through the end of 2022, they will lower the cost of coverage and are expected to boost the number of people enrolled. The measure also dangles more money in front of a dozen states, mainly in the South, that have not yet taken up the Medicaid expansion that is available under the ACA to cover more low-income adults.
- **MENTAL HEALTH:** About \$3 billion for states to help address mental health and substance abuse disorders, which have been exacerbated by the pandemic. More than \$14 billion is directed toward increased support for the Department of Veterans Affairs.
- **TAXBREAKS FOR HOUSEHOLDS WITHOUT KIDS:** Increase the tax break to \$3,000 for every child age 6 to 17 and \$3,600 for every child under the age of 6. The legislation also calls for the payments to be delivered monthly instead of in a lump sum. If the secretary of the treasury determines that isn’t feasible, then the payments are to be made as frequently as possible. The bill also significantly expands the Earned Income Tax Credit for 2021 by making it available to people without children. The credit for low and moderate-income adults would be worth \$543 to \$1,502, depending on income and filing status.
- **RENTAL AND HOMEOWNER ASSISTANCE:** More than \$30 billion to help low-income households pay their rent and to assist the homeless. States and tribes would receive an additional \$10 billion for homeowners who are struggling with mortgage payments and other housing costs because of the pandemic.

## SPORTS

## Mitchell leads Oregon State to fourth place Pac-12 finish

By **NEIL BRANSON**  
*For the Astorian*

Former Astoria runner Kaylee Mitchell had a grand day at the 2021 Pac-12 cross-country championships last Friday, as the red-shirt sophomore led the Oregon State University women’s team to a fourth place team finish, qualifying for the NCAA Championships on Saturday in Stillwater, Oklahoma.

Before transferring to Sprague High School, Mitchell was a middle distance runner for the Fishermen track team. She holds Astoria records in both the 800 and 1,500 meters (2:16.51 and 4:41.47) and contributed big points to the Astoria state championships in 2015 and 2016.

After her sophomore year, the family moved to Salem.

Mitchell ran cross-country at Seattle Pacific University in 2017 and 2018, then transferred to Oregon State.

After last week’s race, Mitchell said, “I didn’t know where I was,” in reference to the other runners. “I just ran as I normally do and got a big PR,” finishing seventh in the a personal best 19 minutes, 39.4 seconds, dropping over 50 seconds from her previous best over 6 kilometers.

It was a hair-raising finish, as Mitchell and two others crossed the line separated by 2.5 seconds.

“I didn’t feel that fast, I was so tired and giving it my all,” said Mitchell, whose future looks bright, with two years of eligibility left.

“I have so much to learn about overcoming mental barriers, com-



Oregon State University

**Kaylee Mitchell had one of the best races of her career last week, helping the Oregon State women’s cross-country team to its best conference finish ever.**

partmentalizing a race, finding a mantra and learning to hurt,” she said.

Bradley Rzewnicki, a former Seaside High School runner, also competed at the Pac-12 cross-country championships, running for the University of Arizona and finishing 66th in 26:06.

Meanwhile, Oregon State’s fourth-place team finish marks the highest finish in program history at the Pac-12 Championships, topping a sixth-place finish in 2018.

“Today was the best cross-country race in school history,” said Oregon State coach Louie Quintana. “We scored 100 points and finished fourth, both school records. It was a great day in very difficult conditions. Our team was amazing. Kaylee Mitchell, wow! What a day for her. Today was huge for us.”

## PREP ROUNDUP

### Astoria girls soccer win the Clatsop Clash, 2-0

The Astoria girls soccer team posted the first Clatsop Clash win of the year Thursday night at CMH Field, where the Lady Fishermen shot their way past Seaside, 2-0.

Astoria improves to 3-1 on the season, while the Gulls fall to 1-2-1.

The Fishermen had a big advantage in possession time in Thursday’s Clash, and scored early in the match when Elle Espelien converted off a free kick by Pele Starr-Hollow from 50 yards out. Espelien gathered in the ball in front of the goal and made a move to get past Seaside goalkeeper Abygale Brien.

Astoria took target practice on the Seaside goal for the remainder of the half, but the Gulls withstood the challenge with several defensive stops and a few big saves by Brien.

Brien stopped a fast break run by Astoria’s Karen Jimenez, made saves on shots by Haley Kelley and Espelien, and collided with Espelien to make another save in the 33rd minute.

Seaside remained within striking distance, but Astoria played their “Scandinavian Court Connection,” when Espelien (Miss Norway) made it 2-0 in the 48th minute, scoring off a pass down the middle of the field from Miss Finland, Emma Biederman.

Brien made several more saves in the second half, while Shelby Rasmussen got the shut-out in goal for Astoria. On Tuesday, the Astoria girls cruised to their second win of the season with a 6-0 victory over the

combined team of Clatskanie/Rainier. Astoria hosts Banks Monday.

### Knappa rally beats Nestucca volleyball

Knappa rallied from a two games-to-none deficit to defeat Nestucca in five sets Tuesday night, 23-25, 20-25, 26-24, 27-25, 15-10.

“What a match that was,” said Knappa coach Jeff Kaul. “The Lady Loggers dug deep and decided that they weren’t quite ready to call it a night, and fought back in one of the best come-from-behind wins I have seen in a long time. I was super proud of these ladies tonight. It was just a great effort by everyone.”

Knappa came back behind the serving rally of Hannah Dietrichs, and with Victoria Ramvick posting “what is most likely a career high in kills (13),” Kaul said.

Dietrichs was 24-of-29 from the service line, with nine aces to go with 21 digs and 13 kills. Ramvick also had 13 kills, while Ashley Feldscher and Ava Skipper were a combined 41-for-45 serving, with eight aces. Skipper also had 29 assists, and Feldscher added 14 digs.

### Valley sweeps Astoria

If there is a battle for the Cowapa League volleyball title this season, it will be between Astoria and Valley Catholic.

The first of two meetings between the two teams took place Tuesday night in Beaverton, where the Valiants scored a sweep over the visiting Fishermen, 25-14, 25-14, 25-18.

### Tigers top Warriors

Clatskanie and Warrenton could not have been much closer in points scored Tuesday night, as the Tigers posted a big upset on the Warriors’ home floor in a Coastal Range League volleyball match.

The Tigers won in five, 25-23, 25-23, 27-29, 23-25, 15-13. Total points scored for the match: Clatskanie 115, Warrenton 113.

### Warrenton volleyball sweeps past Willamina

Warrenton volleyball jumped back on the winning track Thursday night, with a three-set sweep at Willamina, 25-22, 25-22, 31-29.

The Warriors had to rally from a 20-19 in the first set, snapped a 21-21 tie to win the second, and came back from a 28-27 deficit in the third and final set against the upset-minded Bulldogs.

Willamina — with just three home matches this season — was celebrating Senior Night, while the Warriors were coming off a rare league loss to Clatskanie two nights earlier.

Mia McFadden led Warrenton with a big night from the service line, while the Bulldogs missed five crucial serves in the second set.

A big serving run by Avyree Miethe was capped by a stuff block from Ann Heyen, giving the Warriors an 18-13 lead in Game 2, in which Warrenton closed out the set with a 4-1 run.

Willamina fought off an 18-12 deficit in the third set, which had ties at 25, 26, 27, 28 and 29, before the Warriors reeled off the final two points to end the match.

Warrenton plays a nonleague match Saturday at Knappa.

— *The Astorian*