

Fauci: Variants threaten U.S. pandemic progress



Fauci

Dangerous coronavirus variants continue to threaten progress the U.S. has made in reducing COVID-19 cases and immunizing the population, according to the nation's top infectious disease doctor. "While we are cautiously optimistic about the future, we know that many challenges remain," Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, said before a congressional hearing Wednesday. Fauci's agency is racing to understand how emerging mutations of the coronavirus interact with vaccines and therapies. It's also working with manufacturers to test existing vaccines, as well as new, tailored formulations, against the mutated versions.

Data published Tuesday in the New England Journal of Medicine indicated that AstraZeneca Plc's vaccine offers little defense against the B.1.351 variant first detected in South Africa. Moderna Inc. said last month it planned to test a new recipe of its shot against that mutant. The B.1.1.7 variant that first emerged in the U.K. may now account for as much as 30% of U.S. cases, and the proportion is expected to rise. The South Africa variant has been detected in 81 U.S. cases, and another version called P.1 that surfaced in Brazil has appeared in 15 U.S. cases.

— Bloomberg News

Vaccines: Gov. Brown had previously split with Biden on eligibility phases

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"If we do this together, by July the 4th, there is a good chance you, your family and friends can get together in your backyard or in your neighborhood and have a cookout or a barbecue and celebrate Independence Day," he said.

Biden said Americans could "not only mark our independence as a nation but we begin to mark our independence from this virus."

Shortly after Biden's announcement, Gov. Kate Brown said the state would stick with its long-planned phased eligibility that would not match Biden's plan until July 1.

While praising the president's "audacious" timetable, Brown and Oregon health officials said the state couldn't commit to dismantling its priority system until there were guarantees additional vaccine would be sent to the states.

"We know the previous administration made previous announcements it was unable to fill," Allen said.

Both Brown and Allen had praised Biden as a more trustworthy supplier than under the administration of President Donald Trump. Brown in January had briefly opened up eligibility after a promise from Trump health officials that a new surge of supply was on the way. Two days later, she had to reverse her decision and put limits back in place.

Allen said after Biden's announcement that the state would need as much as double the 200,000 doses it was receiving per week in order to meet the May 1 goal without making the already difficult availability of shots even tougher on residents. He revised his estimate and said that it could perhaps be done with 300,000 doses per week.



Ryan Brennecke/The Bulletin file

A physician assistant with Mosaic Medical fills syringes with the Moderna vaccine during a COVID-19 vaccination clinic at Bethlehem Inn in Bend in February.

On Wednesday, Allen told the COVID-19 subcommittee that the state was told its federal allotment of vaccine could be impacted if it did not follow Biden's mandate.

"It's a binding order," Allen said.

The directive was contained in a Department of Health and Human Services letter to states issued Wednesday.

Acting HHS Secretary Norris Cochran told states that the prioritization some had instituted in the early months after the vaccine became first available in December were no longer necessary.

"Given substantial increases in the supply of vaccines, it is appropriate to transition beyond priority groups," Cochran said.

Brown did not comment on the policy change, despite requests from the media.

Allen said health officials are optimistic that there would be a large increase in shipments of the three vaccines: the two-

shot versions by Pfizer and Moderna, and the recently introduced one-shot Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

Allen did not supply any specific numbers as to what the state might receive. He said that while eligibility would be open, the state would still try to control availability to reach the most vulnerable left on the priority list.

One option is to move up the dates of the next two priority groups.

Oregon is currently limiting shots to health workers, residents of nursing homes, educators and day care workers, and most recently, all residents age 65 and older as of March 1.

The next eligible group can seek shots March 29. The group of about 530,000 people includes adults age 45, and older with specific medical issues, pregnant women age 16 and older, agricultural and other food processing workers, homeless people, residents of low-income housing, those displaced by last year's wildfires and wildland firefighters.

Under its phased priority plan, another group of about 550,000 people would be eligible on May 1, the day Biden set for lifting all eligibility requirements for adults.

Brown on that date planned to extend the vaccine sign-ups to front-line workers (those who deal daily with the public), those living in multigenerational households, and those age 16-44 with certain medical conditions.

On June 1, everyone age 45 and older would have been eligible. On July 1, all adults would have been able to seek shots. There is currently no vaccine approved for children under 16.

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Domestic terrorism poses an 'elevated' threat in 2021, intelligence report warns

BY DEL QUENTIN WILBER

Los Angeles Times

WASHINGTON — The U.S. intelligence community has assessed that domestic violent extremists this year will pose an "elevated" threat to the country, according to a report released Wednesday.

The brief, unclassified summary also concluded "the emboldening impact" of the Jan. 6 siege of the U.S. Capitol by a pro-Donald Trump mob will "almost certainly spur some (extremists) to try to engage in violence this year."

The report, released by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, comes as the Justice Department and Congress have launched investigations into the violent breach of the Capitol that left five dead, including a police officer. Authorities have said right-wing extremists and militia groups played key roles in instigating and organizing the attack.

Alarms raised

The intelligence community's report did not reveal much new about domestic extremists, but it represents the government's most authoritative assessment of the threat to help guide policy decisions. It defined domestic violent extremists as people operating in the U.S. without direction or inspiration from foreign terrorist networks.

The report said the main threat was posed by domestic extremists motivated by enduring "biases against minority populations and perceived government overreach," echoing alarms raised by federal law enforcement officials in recent months.

In October, the Department of Homeland Security raised a similar alarm, saying domestic extremists posed "the most persistent and lethal threat in the homeland."

FBI Director Christopher Wray testified early this month that battling domestic terrorism was a top bureau priority.



Saul Loeb/AFP via Getty Images/TNS

A supporter of President Donald Trump holds a Confederate flag outside the Senate Chamber during the rampage through the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6.

The number of the FBI's domestic terrorism investigations has doubled to 2,000 since September. Arrests on charges related to domestic terrorism have also jumped by nearly 70% to 180 in the most recent fiscal year.

"The problem of domestic terrorism has been metastasizing across the country for a long time now," Wray told the Senate Judiciary Committee on March 2, "and it's not going away anytime soon."

The intelligence community report cited danger posed by people spurred to act by more recent narratives, including the assault on the Capitol and former President Donald Trump's months-long falsehood-filled campaign to overturn an election that he lost. The report said domestic extremists were almost certainly also being motivated by "conspiracy theories promoting violence" and "conditions related to the COVID-19 pandemic."

Lone wolves

The assessment also raised concerns about the threat posed by "lone offenders" and "small cells" of extrem-

ists, which might be difficult for law enforcement to detect. Such individuals and small groups are more likely to carry out attacks than organizations that advocate anti-government or discriminatory views, the report said.

"Such lone extremists pose 'significant detection and disruption challenges because of their capacity for independent radicalization to violence, ability to mobilize discretely, and access to firearms.'"

Wray testified that lone wolves were difficult to catch and detect because "it seems like people are coming up with their own sort of customized belief systems, a little bit of this, a little bit of that, and they put it together, maybe combined with some personal grievance of something that's happened in their lives, and that drives them."

The report concluded that racially and ethnically motivated extremists pose the "most lethal" threats. They are also the most likely to conduct "mass-casualty attacks against civilians," it said.

The report was issued the same day police arrested a 21-year-old man on suspicion

that he killed eight people, including six Asian women, at three Atlanta-area spas during a two-hour rampage Tuesday. Though a law enforcement official said the attacks did not appear to be racially motivated, another said it was too early in the investigation to rule out race as a factor. Seven of the dead were women.

Authorities and advocates across the country say they are battling a rise of hate crimes targeting Asians and Asian Americans amid false perceptions that they are responsible for the pandemic.

President Joe Biden, who has spoken forcefully against such hate crimes as recently as Wednesday, had ordered the intelligence report on extremism soon after his inauguration. The full, classified report was sent to the White House and Congress. On Wednesday, Rep. Adam Schiff, D-Calif., chair of the House Intelligence Committee, said the intelligence "underscores how we face the greatest threat from racially or ethnically motivated violent extremists, especially white supremacists, and militia violent extremists."

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NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the undersigned has been appointed Personal Representative of the Estate of Lawrence J. O'Neill, Deceased, by the Deschutes County Circuit Court of the State of Oregon, probate number 21PB00671. All persons having claims against the Estate are required to present them, with proper vouchers, within four (4) months after the date of first publication of this notice to the undersigned or the attorneys for the undersigned.

LEGAL NOTICE TO INTERESTED PERSONS
Donna M. Hines has been appointed Administrator of the Estate of Marilyn Kay Lane, Deceased, by the Deschutes County Circuit Court, State of Oregon, Case No. 21PB01410. All persons having claims against the estate must present the claims to the Administrator at C/O McCord & Hemphill, LLC, 65 NW Greeley Ave., Bend, OR 97703, within four months after March 4, 2021 which is the date of first publication of this notice, or the claims may be barred. Additional information may be obtained from the Court, the Administrator, or the attorney for the Administrator: Brian T. Hemphill.

Legal Notice
NOTICE TO INTERESTED PERSONS
Kelsey D. Chamberlin has been appointed Administrator of the estate of Larkin D. Schollmeyer, deceased, by the Circuit Court, State of Oregon, Deschutes County, Case No. 21PB01540. All persons having claims against the estate are required to present them, with vouchers attached, to the Administrator at 204 SE Miller Ave, Bend, OR 97702, within four months after the date of March 11, 2021, the first publication of this notice, or the claim may be barred. Additional information may be obtained from the records of the court, the Administrator, or the lawyer for the Administrator, Patricia Nelson.

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