

**There's no way around it:
Time to postpone Olympics**

No one wants this, but it's for the good of everyone, Nancy Armour writes. **In Sports**

**Get a grip on this one:
Pro wrestling without fans**

My beloved TV spectacle going audience-free hits like a body slam, Brian Truitt writes. **In Life**



LUCA BRUNO/AP

Italy's hospitals paint a bleak picture

Overwhelmed doctors are being forced to make unthinkable choices, a scenario that could arise in the United States. **Nation's Health**

USA TODAY

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CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC THE ECONOMIC STIMULUS

Senate approves emergency relief

Bill provides paid leave, free testing, food aid

Ledyard King, Nicholas Wu and Christal Hayes
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON – A measure to ensure paid sick leave for workers and increase testing for coronavirus was headed to President Donald Trump's desk Wednesday after it passed the Senate. Now, Congress is crafting its next emergency relief package: one that would provide direct payments to Americans as well as a financial lifeline

Third package would send cash to Americans

to businesses socked by the coronavirus pandemic that is decimating the economy and upending daily life. Senators overwhelmingly supported a House bill that covers the cost of all coronavirus testing, expands federal food programs serving low-income seniors and needy families, and provides paid sick leave for workers forced to stay at home. The legislation passed 90-8. **See RELIEF, Page 4A**

How bad could a recession be?

There's little doubt the coronavirus has tipped the U.S. into recession. Most economists predict the downturn will last about six months, with a gradual recovery beginning in the second half of the year. **3A**

Help for big and small businesses also on way

Highlights of the bill

- Two weeks of paid sick and family leave to many American workers who are in quarantine, helping a family member with COVID-19 or who have children whose schools have closed.
- 12 weeks of paid leave to many of those who have children whose schools have closed.
- Increased unemployment insurance.
- Free testing for the coronavirus for those who need it.

The global picture: What it tells the US

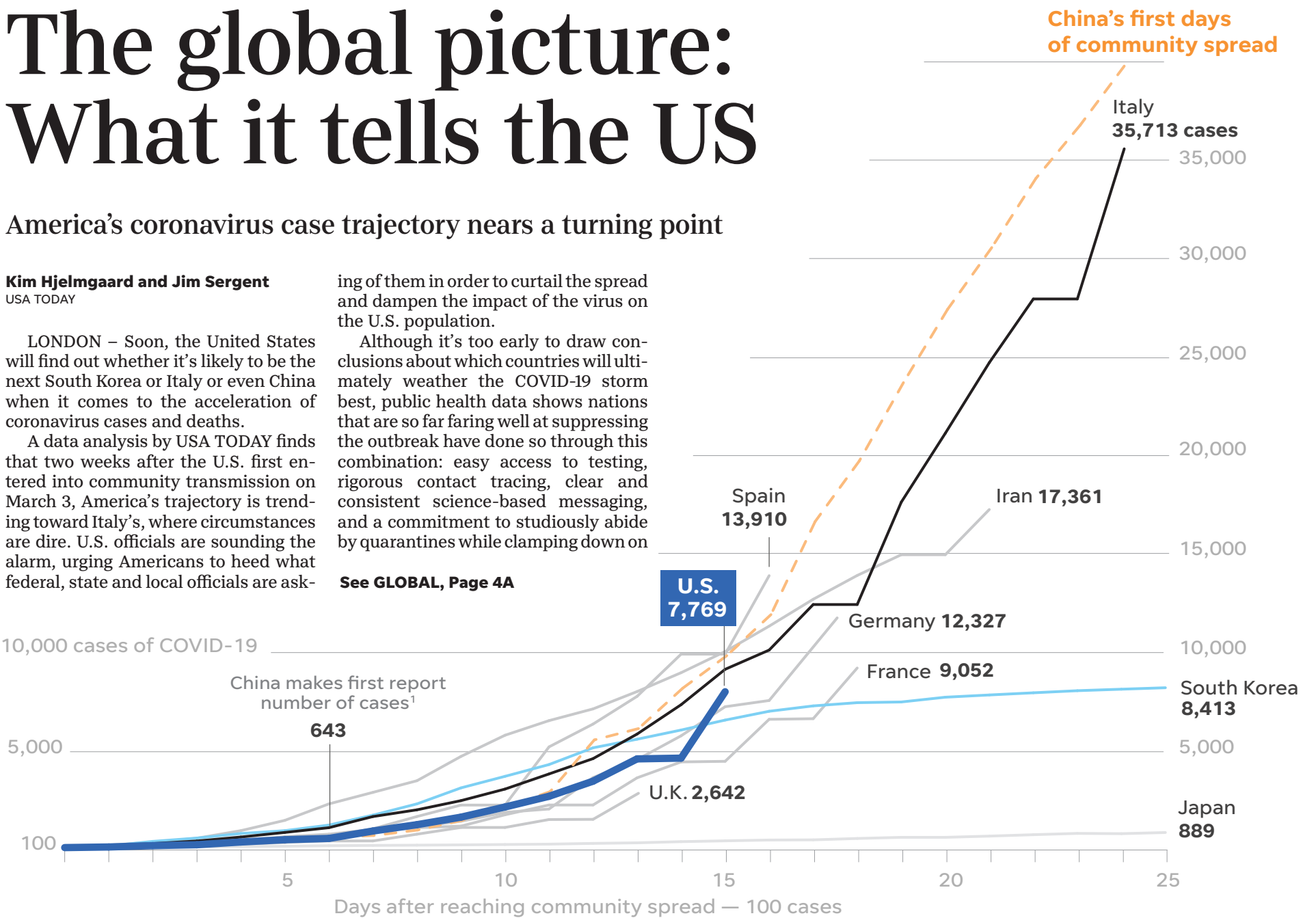
America's coronavirus case trajectory nears a turning point

Kim Hjelmgaard and Jim Sargent
USA TODAY

LONDON – Soon, the United States will find out whether it's likely to be the next South Korea or Italy or even China when it comes to the acceleration of coronavirus cases and deaths. A data analysis by USA TODAY finds that two weeks after the U.S. first entered into community transmission on March 3, America's trajectory is trending toward Italy's, where circumstances are dire. U.S. officials are sounding the alarm, urging Americans to heed what federal, state and local officials are asking of them in order to curtail the spread and dampen the impact of the virus on the U.S. population. Although it's too early to draw conclusions about which countries will ultimately weather the COVID-19 storm best, public health data shows nations that are so far doing well at suppressing the outbreak have done so through this combination: easy access to testing, rigorous contact tracing, clear and consistent science-based messaging, and a commitment to studiously abide by quarantines while clamping down on

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See GLOBAL, Page 4A



1 — Beginning of China's trend line based on average cases of other countries on day 6. SOURCE Johns Hopkins University of 5 p.m. ET March 18 JIM SERGENT AND GEORGE PETRAS/USA TODAY

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USA TODAY Snapshots
Vitamin C no panacea for COVID-19
 While supplements such as **vitamin C** and **zinc** are generally beneficial to the immune system, claims that the former will prevent or cure the new coronavirus aren't backed up by science. Thorough hand-washing and social distancing remain critical.

SOURCE FactCheck.org AMY BARNETTE, DAVID ANESTA/USA TODAY

Trump invokes wartime powers in fight

Courtney Subramanian and David Jackson
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON – President Donald Trump said Wednesday that he was invoking a 1950 law known as the Defense Production Act to speed the production of masks, ventilators and other equipment vital to helping doctors treat coronavirus patients. He also said the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development would suspend foreclosures and evictions as families grapple with income losses stemming from shutdowns of workplaces such as department stores, restaurants and bars. Trump told reporters at a White House news conference he planned to sign the Korean War-era Defense Production Act to allow him to address a shortage of medical supplies by directing private companies to expedite the production of medical equipment. "There's never been an instance like this where no matter what you have it's not enough," he said. "If we need to use it,



President Donald Trump said he will sign the Korean War-era Defense Production Act to allow him to address a shortage of medical supplies. AP

we will be using it at full speed ahead." The announcement came as the administration scrambles to negotiate a roughly trillion dollar deal with Congress to provide cash relief for Americans and possible bailouts for major industries affected by the outbreak.

See TRUMP, Page 4A

What is the Defense Production Act?

The act was established in 1950 during the Korean War following war powers legislation used during World War II to direct private industry to produce weapons, vehicles and other materiel for war. At that time, automakers in Detroit, for instance, shifted production from automobiles to tanks. The act gives the president a broad set of authorities to influence private companies for national defense, according to the Congressional Research Service. In 2009, Congress amended the act to include domestic preparedness and national emergency response efforts. — Tom Vanden Brook

CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

Relief

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The bill, Families First Coronavirus Response Act, would:

- Offer two weeks of paid sick and family leave to many workers who have been forced to stay home because of COVID-19 or who have children whose schools have closed. Workers will get 100% of their normal salary.

- Provide up to 12 weeks of paid leave to many of those who have children whose schools have closed. Workers would get about 67% of their normal salary for this period.

- Bolster unemployment insurance protections.

- Provide free testing for the coronavirus for those who need it.

- Boost food assistance (SNAP) for needy families and federal funding for Medicaid.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell reluctantly voted for the bill the House passed Saturday, saying that despite burdens the sick leave provisions place on small businesses, it was “a very important step” to help families confront the pandemic.

But the Kentucky Republican also said work has already begun with the Trump administration on another emergency package, whose more prominent feature is likely to be direct payments to Americans that Trump has promoted as a way to get money into the hands of consumers quickly and rescue a free-falling economy.

“We’re looking at sending checks to Americans immediately,” Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin said Tuesday, although he did not say how big those checks might be. It’s unclear what senators would support exactly, but Utah Republican Mitt Romney has suggested a one-time payment of \$1,000.

The upcoming bill also is expected to help major industries besieged by a widespread shutdown of the economy, such as the airlines, and help small businesses including restaurants who are being forced to close around the country but find themselves having to provide mandated paid leave under the Families First bill.

Democrats said federal aid included in the Families First bill will alleviate the sting to those businesses.

McConnell said Wednesday that while he was eager to help small businesses face the new “burden” of sick leave, he wasn’t sure how long it would take to iron out the next relief package.

“Just how long it will take to get through these steps is unclear,” McConnell said on the floor after the vote. “But as everyone knows, we are moving rapidly because the situation demands it.”

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said negotiations on the next phase of relief are gearing up.

“The House and Senate are already hard at work on the third bill in the House’s Families First agenda, which will take bold, historic action on behalf of America’s workers and families,” she said in a statement after the Senate’s vote. “This bill will be crafted in consultation with the public health, labor, nonprofit and business communities, so that we can deliver the most effective, evidence-based response.”

The crisis has already tanked the stock market, forced business to close and led to the layoff of thousands of workers across the country.

Airlines, which Trump and other lawmakers have touted as an industry vital to America’s recovery, would likely get a lifeline as well, though it’s not clear whether that help would come in the form of loans or grants.

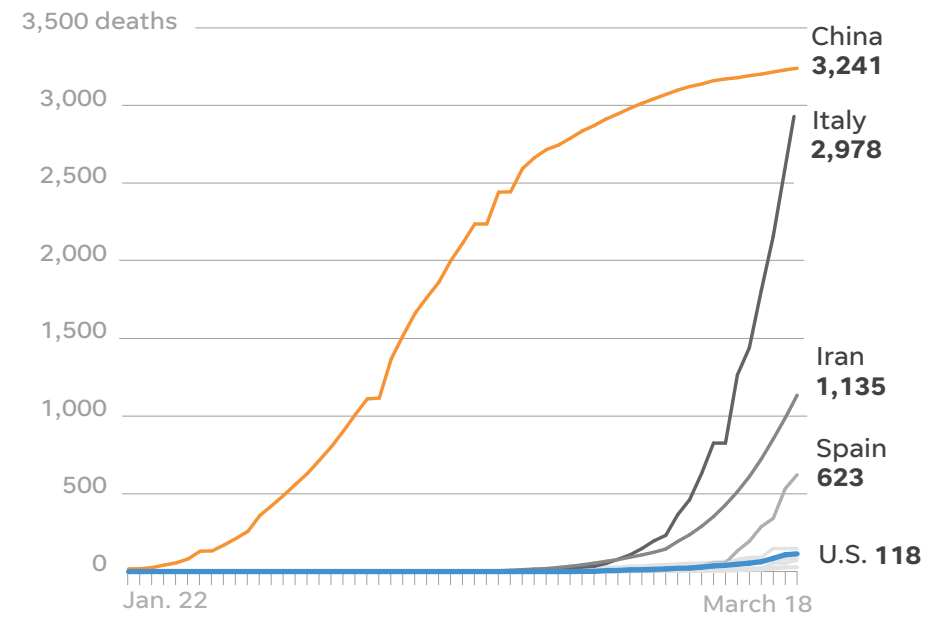
GOP senators Marco Rubio of Florida and Susan Collins of Maine also have introduced a \$300 billion small-business emergency economic relief plan that will help businesses make payroll and cover expenses.

And McConnell said small businesses that have just been saddled with new sick leave mandates under the Families First bill will need some help as a result.

“Everyone agrees that workers need relief ... but small businesses need relief as well,” he said on the Senate floor Wednesday morning before the vote. “This is literally the worst time in living memory to pile even more burdens and costs on to small business which are themselves fighting to stay alive unless we back it up with major assistance.”

Democrats have already signaled they’ll be looking to expand sick leave for workers in the next bill as well. That’s likely to be a stumbling block for Republicans who control the Senate.

COVID-19 deaths in countries with the largest outbreaks



SOURCE Johns Hopkins University as of 5 p.m. ET March 18
JIM SERGENT AND GEORGE PETRAS/USA TODAY

Global

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socializing no matter how tempting it may be to stray.

“When you’re on an exponential curve, every moment is dangerous,” said Francis Collins, director of the National Institutes of Health, in an interview. “This is a particularly critical moment for us to try to bring all the resources and determination of government and the American people to try to get off of it.”

Outside of China, territories, city-states and countries in Asia such as Taiwan, Singapore, Hong Kong and Japan appear to be making the most progress. But experts say U.S. comparisons to the experiences of other countries are not clear-cut for a variety of reasons, including population size, different medical systems, America’s geographic expanse, and cultural reasons that are difficult to account for.

U.S. officials are monitoring what is playing out in other countries, particularly Italy, where rates of transmission and deaths in its northern regions have been so catastrophic that the Italian College of Anesthesia, Analgesia, Resuscitation and Intensive Care recently drew up guidelines for doctors about how to manage the crisis if the outbreak intensifies.

“We’re following every single country’s curve,” said Dr. Deborah Birx, the White House coronavirus task force response coordinator, in a briefing Wednesday.

For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. But for older adults, especially those with pre-existing health conditions, it can cause much more severe illness, including pneumonia.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s worst-case-scenario is that about 160 million to 210 million Americans will be infected by December. Under this forecast, 21 million people would need hospitalization, and 200,000 to 1.7 million could die by the end of the year.

“The extent to which we can prevent direct and excess deaths depends on how quickly we can flatten the outbreak, mobilize health services, and for how long we can prevent a relapse,” said Robert Muggah, founder and director of the Brazil-based security think tank Igarape Institute and a leading expert on pandemics.

Estimates vary, but most public health experts believe that the U.S. is one to two weeks behind what has befallen Italy, where a near-total lockdown has been imposed on 60 million citizens, with only supermarkets and

drug stores open to the public.

Italian authorities began enforcing their lockdown on March 12, 18 days after the point where community transmission, defined as more than 100 cases, had taken hold, according to World Health Organization data analyzed by USA TODAY.

It’s too early to say whether restrictions in Italy, and similar ones in Spain, are working.

Collins said that if the U.S. takes measures that many Americans might find overly drastic “we should certainly be able to blunt” the U.S. curve. “But let’s be clear: There’s going to be a very rough road ahead of us over the next weeks and months.”

In the U.S., 115 people have died amid more than 7,300 confirmed cases as of Wednesday, according to Johns Hopkins University’s data dashboard.

There has been no federally ordered lockdown in the U.S., and access to testing has been sporadic, although President Donald Trump has urged Americans to refrain from gathering in groups of more than 10 people. San Francisco on Monday became the first U.S. city to order its residents to stay home over the coronavirus outbreak.

In China, where COVID-19 originated, the outbreak followed a pattern similar to Italy’s.

The country initially saw an exponential rise in infections.

Beijing ordered a complete lockdown in Wuhan and other cities in Hubei province on Jan. 23, about halfway into the first 25 days of reported community transmission.

Yet after authorities embarked on one of the largest mass mobilization efforts in history, closing all schools, forcing millions of people inside, quickly building more than a dozen vast, temporary hospitals and meticulously testing and tracing anyone who may have encountered the virus, Beijing has appeared to all but eradicate new cases.

Michael Merson, director of the National University of Singapore Global Health Institute and the Wolfgang Joklik Professor of Global Health at Duke University, said places in Asia such as South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Japan and Singapore, enjoy public health factors that are difficult for countries like the U.S., with its fractured system, to replicate.

In Singapore, “there’s strong government leadership, but also trust in the government,” Merson said. “Every time a case is identified, there is a very strong action plan to identify contacts. It’s also very good at promoting hand-washing and keeping people at a safe distance from one another.”

“They take prudent steps at prevention, but they haven’t entirely shut the country down.”

Trump

Continued from Page 1A

Health care workers across the country have expressed concern about hospital shortages of protective equipment including masks and gloves that are critical to the doctors and nurses who are on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as ventilators to help treat the influx of patients who have tested positive for the virus.

“The Defense Production Act permits the president to push national security items to the front of the line,” said Loren Thompson, a defense industry consultant and military expert at the Lexington Institute. “It exists to speed up urgently needed items.”

The president also announced that HUD would provide “immediate relief to renters and homeowners by suspending all foreclosures and evictions” through the end of April.

The suspension applies only to homeowners with mortgages insured by the Federal Housing Administration, a HUD agency that offers affordable loans to homeowners through private firms. HUD Secretary Ben Carson said the move will provide homeowners with “some peace of mind during these trying times.”

The White House also took action on those entering the U.S. In a joint decision with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, the two countries are shuttering nonessential travel between the two countries to help limit contact with those who may be sick. Trump said trade would not be affected by the move.

Trump said the U.S. would not close the border with Mexico, but would invoke a provision giving the U.S. ‘great latitude.’

Trump also said he plans to invoke a provision that would allow him to prohibit certain people from entering the country, including asylum seekers and those entering the country illegally at the southern border.

When asked again whether he was closing the U.S.-Mexico border, Trump said, “No we’re not going to close it.”

“But we’re invoking a certain provision that will allow us great latitude,” he added.

On Wednesday, the Senate approved a multibillion-dollar emergency aid package that provides paid sick and family leave for many Americans, bolsters unemployment insurance and provides free coronavirus testing.

Despite Washington’s promise of economic aid, U.S. stocks fell sharply Wednesday. The Dow Jones industrial average fell almost 8%, and Standard & Poor’s 500 also sank. The U.S. death toll hit 115 with over 7,300 confirmed cases across the country as of Wednesday afternoon, according to a Johns Hopkins University coronavirus data dashboard.

Contributing: Tom Vanden Brook, Jessica Menton

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Medical staff members arrive for a duty shift Wednesday at Dongsan Hospital in Daegu, South Korea. South Korea has managed to control its outbreak with the help of a robust screening program, with more than 200,000 people tested, or about 1 in every 250. LEE MOO-RYUL/AP