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Elizabeth Weise:

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Taylor Wilson:

Good morning. I'm Taylor Wilson, and this is Five Things You Need to Know Wednesday, the 10th of March, 2021. Today pandemic relief legislation could be passed within hours. Plus is the U.S. about to have a vaccine surplus? And more.

Taylor Wilson:

Here are some of the top headlines. The first state to remove all eligibility requirements for the COVID 19 vaccine, Alaska. Anyone aged 16 and up who lives or works in the state can now get vaccinated.

Taylor Wilson:

The NBA is investigating a video of Miami Heat player Meyers Leonard using an anti-Semitic slur while streaming himself playing a video game on Tuesday. He'll remain away from the team indefinitely.

Taylor Wilson:

And a television station in Bangladesh has hired the country's first transgender news anchor. Tashnuva Anan Shishir previously worked as an activist and actress.

Taylor Wilson:

President Joe Biden's \$1.9 trillion pandemic relief package is about to pass. The Democratic-controlled house passed a key procedural measure on Tuesday night, and the chamber is now expected to pass the bill on Wednesday. House speaker Nancy Pelosi.

Nancy Pelosi:

It's a remarkable, historic, transformative piece of legislation which goes a very long way to crushing the virus and solving our economic crisis.

Taylor Wilson:

The bill was expected to pass thanks to Democrats' majorities in both chambers, though Republicans are overwhelmingly against the legislation for a variety of reasons. Finance reporter Jessica Menton tells us more about the bill, including its headline item \$1,400 relief payments for many Americans.

Jessica Menton:

Under the plan, many Americans would receive up to \$1,400 stimulus checks and the relief package would extend badly-needed jobless aid to September 6th and continue to offer

recipients an extra \$300 per week. When it comes to the timing of the checks, Americans should see them land in their bank accounts in a matter of a few weeks for those who filed via direct deposit. If the bill is signed into law by March 14th, the first direct deposits may start hitting bank accounts the week of March 22nd, and paper checks may be sent out the week of March 29th based on the timeline for prior relief plans.

Jessica Menton:

But not everyone who got our check time will be eligible this time around. The payments would start to phase out for individuals earning 75,000 and cut off completely for anyone who makes more than 80,000. When it comes to couples filing jointly, the phase-out would start for those making 150,000 and then cut off at 160,000. So that may exclude as many as 8 million people who had received checks in the prior rounds. If a taxpayer doesn't file their 2020 tax returns before Congress passes the relief bill, experts say the IRS will likely rely on their 2019 tax returns to calculate their payment.

Jessica Menton:

If you're in that threshold where you're in between 75,000 and 80,000, you wouldn't get the full \$1,400 amount. If you had filed as a single person, it would be a little bit under \$1,400. So you wouldn't get quite as much as the full amount, but you would still get something. For a lot of people who, depending on if they had already filed their 2020 returns, some people, maybe they made less in 2020 than they did in 2019. So now they may qualify, whereas other people, it might be the reverse to where now their income might be above that if they already did their 2020 return and they might not be able to qualify now.

Taylor Wilson:

Once the House passes the legislation, it'll go to President Joe Biden for his signature. As he said, Monday, he'll sign it as soon as he gets it. Throughout the day, you can stick with our live stimulus updates page on [usatoday.com](https://www.usatoday.com).

Taylor Wilson:

The United States might be just a couple months away from swimming in COVID-19 vaccine. That's especially important news as vaccine hesitancy continues to drop around the country, though there could be new challenges. Health reporter Elizabeth Weise explains.

Elizabeth Weise:

Right now at this exact moment in time, it is kind of hard to imagine that there will come a time where there's going to be enough vaccine to go around. Various people say that could even happen as early as late April.

Elizabeth Weise:

Right now in the United States, people are clamoring to get vaccine. The folks who want vaccine are clicking refresh, refresh, refresh, staying on hold for hours, standing in line because they want to get vaccinated.

Elizabeth Weise:

As we shift to vaccine abundance, we're going to start to see the groups of people in the areas of the country where there is less interest in getting vaccinated, and start focusing information efforts on those people because the key is getting lots of people vaccinated so we get to a level of herd immunity high enough that there isn't just free-floating COVID everywhere.

Elizabeth Weise:

And when you talk to doctors and especially virologists... Virologists live in a scary world of mutations, and the virologists, they all say, "Listen, we are in a race because the longer the virus is spreading willy-nilly in the country, the more time it has to mutate into new and more interesting and more powerful versions."

Elizabeth Weise:

So we want to tamp that down. We want to vaccinate everybody so there are very few ways for this virus to be in the community. So it's just got... The fewer people it's in, the fewer chances it has to mutate.

Elizabeth Weise:

The number of Americans who say they will not get vaccinated has been falling steadily. As you start to know your grandparents have been vaccinated, your parents, your next-door neighbor, and you see that they're fine, some of those concerns go away.

Elizabeth Weise:

Over time, I think we will see a relatively high percentage of Americans getting vaccinated.

Taylor Wilson:

More than 18% of Americans have received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine. As for the virus itself, there's increasingly promising news. Deaths from the Corona virus are still happening in considerable numbers, but the U.S. this week saw back-to-back days with fewer than 100 deaths on Sunday and Monday, the first time that's happened in 2021.

Taylor Wilson:

And while health officials continue to stress caution on new variants, most Americans are already relaxing their own habits in regards to COVID. According to an Axios-Ipsos poll out on Tuesday, 13% of those polled reported self-quarantining down from 19% last month and 55% last April. More Americans are also going out to eat, visiting friends or relatives, and visiting stores for things other than just groceries.

Taylor Wilson:

But the economic impact of the pandemic is still hitting people hard. A new poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research found that 4 in 10 Americans are still feeling the financial impact from a lost job or income in their household.

Taylor Wilson:

Jury selection will continue Wednesday in the trial of Derek Chauvin. The court heard from 10 possible jurors on Tuesday and selected three of them. Judge Peter Cahill.

Peter Cahill:

You have been summoned, as you know, as potential jurors in this case of State of Minnesota vs. Derrick Chauvin, which is a criminal case related to the death of George Floyd on May 25th, 2020.

Taylor Wilson:

Chauvin, a former police officer in Minneapolis, faces several charges related to the death of George Floyd there last May. Video showed Chauvin on Floyd's neck for more than nine minutes.

Taylor Wilson:

Like Tuesday, lawyers will continue to question potential jurors about their knowledge of the case, the protests related to it last year, and Floyd's death. Some prospective jurors have already expressed safety concerns about serving on such a high-profile and divisive case. Three weeks have been set aside to choose the jury.

Taylor Wilson:

The final Senate confirmation of Merrick Garland for attorney general is set for Wednesday. Garland is a long-time federal judge and former federal prosecutor, and he's expected to win bipartisan support.

Taylor Wilson:

President Joe Biden has laid out a number of priorities for the department of justice over the next few years. They include addressing racial inequities in the justice system, fighting domestic extremism, and reasserting the independence of federal law enforcement.

Taylor Wilson:

Also on Wednesday, Marcia Fudge is expected to be confirmed as secretary of housing and urban development.

Taylor Wilson:

Piers Morgan will be leaving the popular British morning TV show, ITV's Good Morning Britain. The move comes amid an investigation following his comments on Duchess Meghan and Prince Harry. The UK's office of communications said it received more than 40,000 complaints from the public surrounding his comments. A communications spokesperson told USA TODAY that they've launched an investigation under harm and offense rules.

Taylor Wilson:

Morgan said Monday that he "Didn't believe a word she says," talking after Meghan Markle's bombshell interview with Oprah that aired Sunday night. Meghan spoke of a number of struggles in the royal family, including thoughts of suicide. Piers Morgan ended his time on the

show when he stormed off on Tuesday following a heated discussion with another host about Meghan's allegations of racism in the royal family. For its part, Buckingham Palace issued a short statement on Tuesday in response to the Oprah interview, saying that the couple's accusations of racism and lack of support are taken seriously and will be addressed privately.

Taylor Wilson:

Thanks for listening to Five Things. You can also drop us five stars if you get a sec on Apple Podcasts, and you can listen wherever you like to find your podcasts, including Stitcher and Spotify. Thanks as always to Claire Thornton and Shannon Green for their work on the show. Five Things is part of the USA TODAY Network.