



CALIFORNIA CORONAVIRUS WEEKLY RECAP

A weekly digest to keep you up to speed on the California coronavirus outbreak.

March 17, 2021

Welcome to the 53rd issue of the California Coronavirus Weekly Recap newsletter. Before we get started with this week's news, we want to remind you that we have updated our FAQs on [Pandemic Unemployment Assistance \(PUA\)](#) and [Direct Payments and Other Relief](#).

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The Economy & Your Finances: President Biden signs \$1.9 trillion stimulus package

Last Thursday, President Biden signed the [\\$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan Act](#) into law. As a part of this stimulus package, individuals with adjusted gross incomes of up to \$75,000 and married couples making up to \$150,000 will receive stimulus checks of \$1,400 per person — payments began landing in accounts [over the weekend](#). Payments will be reduced for people

with higher adjusted gross incomes and will be phased out entirely for individuals making \$80,000 and for married couples making \$160,000.

The bill also extends the \$300-per-week [federal unemployment supplement](#) through early September for those receiving PUA benefits or traditional unemployment benefits. California's EDD has announced that the extended weeks of benefits will be automatically added to claims so long as recipients continue to meet eligibility requirements. And the bill makes the first \$10,200 of unemployment benefits [tax-free](#) if your income is less than \$150,000 (for 2020 only). Stimulus payments will not be taxed. **Members having issues with the EDD can continue to contact C.A.R.'s COVID Relief Hotline at (213) 351-8450 for answers to questions or assistance.**

[Other benefits](#) include an expanded child tax credit, new funds for the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), grants for state educational agencies, support for low-income families, funds for tracking and administering vaccinations and funds for mortgage and rental assistance.

From March 25 to March 31, there will be another application round for the [California Small Business Relief Grant Program](#) where businesses that have not yet applied for a grant will be permitted to apply. If you have already applied, you should not apply during subsequent application rounds because your prior application will automatically be moved to the next round if you didn't receive funding during a previous round.

Initial unemployment claims in California [surged](#) last week to 105,900, up 16,900 from the week prior. California continues to account for more than its share of unemployed Americans, representing 15 percent of all jobless claims nationwide last week despite only having 11.8 percent of the nation's workers. [Nationwide claims](#) also rose last week, though by less than was expected.

A [new forecast](#) from UCLA Anderson predicts the California and U.S. economies will experience near-record growth in 2021 as vaccinations continue and federal relief is disseminated.

Sources: Politico, The New York Times, CNBC, NPR, The Mercury News, Los Angeles Times

The Market & Industry: California opens state portal for rental assistance

California's Business, Consumer Services and Housing Agency (BCSH) has created a [state portal](#) for landlords and renters to apply for rental assistance. CA COVID-19 Rent Relief will help income-eligible households pay rent and utilities, both for past due and future payments. Landlords can choose to accept 80 percent of any unpaid rent owed from April 1, 2020, through March 31, 2021.

If a landlord accepts this funding, the landlord agrees to forgive the remaining unpaid rent for that covered period. If a landlord chooses not to participate, the tenant can still apply for relief valued at 25 percent of unpaid back rent they owe for the covered period. To determine if you are eligible, see [this checklist](#). For more information, see our [Legal Q&A covering rental assistance here](#).

With the economy expected to recover at a faster pace, mortgage rates have been [trending up](#). The average 30-year mortgage rate recorded by Freddie Mac in the second week of March inched up to [3.05%](#) from 3.02% in the prior week. Despite the increase, the latest rate was still 30 basis point below the level recorded in the same week a year ago.

As mortgage rates rose, [California home sales moderated in February](#). Tight housing supply

continued to constrain demand, especially in more affordable markets. California's median home price of \$699,000 was essentially unchanged from January but up 20.6 percent from a year ago.

Sources: California Business, Consumer Services and Housing Agency, REALTOR® Magazine, C.A.R. Research & Economics

Around the State: Vaccine eligibility expanded to include high-risk Californians

As of Monday, [vaccine eligibility massively expanded](#) to include an additional 4.4 million people with serious underlying health conditions. [This group includes](#) people with cancer; chronic kidney disease of Stage 4 or above; chronic pulmonary disease; Down syndrome; compromised immune system from solid organ transplant; pregnancy; sickle cell disease; heart conditions such as heart failure, coronary artery disease and cardiomyopathies (excluding hypertension); severe obesity; and Type 2 diabetes mellitus.

California is also making it easier for people to get vaccinated by [volunteering at a vaccine clinic](#). Volunteers who complete a shift of four or more hours can become eligible.

[Hospitalizations](#) in California have fallen below 4,000 for the first time since November, and the 14-day total of new cases is down 89.6 percent from January 1. As of 9:54 p.m. last night, the statewide average for ICU bed availability is 28.7 percent, and the state is averaging a 2.3 percent positivity rate for tests. Cases in California numbered 3,605,694, deaths had reached 56,097, and 12,637,197 people have received vaccinations.

California has now vaccinated [over 2 million people in the hardest-hit areas](#), a milestone that allowed state officials to loosen the criteria necessary for counties to move less restrictive tiers on the [Blueprint for a Safer Economy](#). More than half of the counties in the state have moved

from the most restrictive purple tier to the [red tier](#). And the state is working on adding a [green tier](#) in anticipation of light at the end of the tunnel.

Sources: ABC 7 News, KTLA, Los Angeles Times, The Mercury News, The San Diego Union-Tribune, California COVID-19 Website

Health Check-Up: All U.S. adults could be vaccine eligible by May 1

The United States has now administered [over 100 million doses](#) of COVID-19 vaccines. That equates to more than 35 million Americans who are now fully vaccinated, approximately 10.5 percent of the population. In a speech last Thursday, President Biden announced he would direct states to make all U.S. adults eligible for vaccination by [May 1](#).

Federal and state scientists have been touting the benefits of the [Johnson & Johnson vaccine](#), a single-dose shot that has provided nearly 100 percent protection against life-threatening COVID-19. Authorities warn against individuals declining the Johnson & Johnson vaccine to wait for the Moderna or Pfizer variants, as such a delay could increase the risk of a fourth wave.

[This piece from NPR](#) answers some of the most frequently asked vaccination questions, like can you drink between your first and second vaccine dose and what does vaccine efficacy mean.

Sources: CBS News, The Mercury News, The San Diego Union-Tribune



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