

Biden likely to arrive at his own Covid-19 summit empty-handed, as he struggles to secure funding at home and abroad

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(CNN) — President Joe Biden is co-hosting the second [global Covid-19 summit](#) on Thursday, where he will ask wealthy countries to ramp up their financial contributions to vaccinations, testing and treatments -- even as he is [struggling to secure funding](#) to fight the virus at home and abroad.

The Biden administration asked Congress in March to authorize \$22.5 billion in additional Covid-19 assistance, including \$5 billion for the global pandemic, but the package has been repeatedly waylaid. The [Senate reached a bipartisan deal](#) in April to approve \$10 billion in aid, but it stripped out global Covid-19 financing entirely.

This has put the President in an awkward position: He will probably show up to his own summit empty-handed.

Biden acknowledged on Monday that "much needed funding" for Covid-19 relief was not forthcoming. In a [statement released by the White House](#), the President said congressional leaders had informed him that including the funding as part of a new aid bundle for Ukraine risked delaying the war effort, so he agreed to let them proceed as separate bills.

"However, let me be clear: as vital as it is to help Ukraine combat Russian

aggression, it is equally vital to help Americans combat Covid. Without timely Covid funding, more Americans will die needlessly," he wrote, adding that failing to approve the funding also risked stalling the global pandemic response.

As Biden prepares to address the world, cases are rising in the US and the nation's death toll is edging closer to a grim milestone: 1 million.



President Joe Biden gave a speech at a metal manufacturer in Cincinnati, Ohio on May 6, about ramping up domestic production in an effort to reduce inflation and shortages caused in part by the pandemic.

The summit, a virtual gathering being co-hosted by Belize, Germany, Indonesia and Senegal, is aimed at reinvigorating vaccination efforts and ending what the White House has called [the "acute phase" of the pandemic](#). It comes at a critical moment, as vaccination efforts around the world are languishing, and testing and tracing of cases has dropped off a cliff.

A group of former heads of government are calling on the US to commit \$5 billion to the global pandemic response and urging Biden to take on a more robust role at the summit. Experts have repeatedly warned that the entire world needs access to vaccines in order to contain the virus and stop more lethal strains from surfacing. "I want America to recognize that the disease is not over anywhere until it's over everywhere," former UK Prime Minister [Gordon Brown](#) told the [New York Times](#), which reported the story. "We must not sleepwalk into the next variant."

World Health Organization (WHO) Director-General [Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus](#) said on Tuesday that rising cases in more than 50 countries highlighted the volatility of the pandemic, which is now being fueled by subvariants. Though high population immunity from vaccination and previous infection is keeping hospitalization and death rates down, the same is not guaranteed for places where vaccine coverage is low. The worst-case scenario is that a variant evades current immunity, transmits more easily or causes greater mortality, Tedros said. In [South Africa](#), where cases are surging due to subvariants BA.4 and BA.5, scientists have urged further vaccination to mitigate another wave.

WHO has been calling on world leaders to commit to vaccinating 70% of the global population within a year -- a goal that Biden echoed at the first Covid-19 summit last September. "Yes, it's hard. Yes, some countries won't manage it by mid-2022. But if we deprioritize based on these factors we'd be risking waves of death that can knock out health systems and cause further backsliding on all other health issues," Tedros said.

[At least 218 countries and territories](#) have administered more than 11 billion doses of a Covid-19 vaccine since the first Covid case was reported in China in late 2019. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in February that the world wasn't on pace to meet the 70% goal.

YOU ASKED. WE ANSWERED.

Q: Why does the US need more Covid-19 funding?

A: The Biden administration has issued a new warning that the US could potentially see 100 million Covid-19 infections this fall and winter, as [officials publicly stress the need for more funding](#) from Congress to prepare the nation.

The projection -- derived from a range of outside models -- is based on an underlying assumption of no additional resources or extra mitigation measures being taken, including new Covid-19 funding from Congress, and no dramatic new variants arising, administration officials said.

The Biden administration has been sounding the alarm for weeks that additional funding is needed to continue the federal Covid-19 response, even as it seeks a return to "normal" with many pandemic-era restrictions lifting. The 100 million estimate was first reported by the [Washington Post](#).

READS OF THE WEEK

Nearly 1 million Americans have been killed by Covid-19. These are some of the things they left behind

An engraved money clip. A pulse oximeter. A child's drawing.

These items are personal reminders of the pandemic's terrible toll. Some bring comfort; others elicit heartache.

As the US approaches 1 million Covid-19 deaths, [Christina Zdanowicz and Austin Steele](#) asked CNN readers to remember their loved ones through the items they left behind. From 10-year-old Teresa Sperry's doodles to math

teacher John A. Richardson's aftershave, these are some of the mementos that their relatives cling to — difficult reminders of those they lost.

WHO chief censored in China as zero-Covid policy intensifies

Tedros was censored after questioning China's zero-Covid policy during a media briefing Tuesday. A day after the briefing, posts on the UN's official press account on Chinese social platform Weibo became unviewable, with hashtags containing the WHO chief's name also being censored, [Nectar Gan and CNN's Beijing Bureau](#) report.

The crackdown came a week after [China's top leader, Xi Jinping](#), issued the strongest warning yet against questioning the country's hardline policy — which has left millions confined to their homes with no end in sight. At a meeting chaired by Xi, the ruling Communist Party's supreme Politburo Standing Committee vowed to "unswervingly adhere to the general policy of 'dynamic zero-Covid,' and resolutely fight against any words and acts that distort, doubt or deny our country's epidemic prevention policies."

The starkest example of this is [the country's biggest city, Shanghai](#), where officials have continued to intensify lockdown measures despite falling cases.

[Groups representing Western businesses](#) in China are urging Beijing to relax its approach to Covid, saying harsh lockdowns are damaging earnings and investment, and forcing a growing number of companies to consider shifting operations out of the world's second-biggest economy, Laura He writes.

CDC investigating Covid-19 outbreak on board a Carnival cruise ship

The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC) is investigating a recent Covid-19 outbreak on a Carnival cruise ship that docked in Seattle after a two-week voyage. The Carnival Spirit departed Miami on April 17 and arrived in Seattle on May 3, according to a statement from the cruise line,

and holds 2,124 guests and 930 crew members.

The CDC says it isn't permitted to share the numbers of quarantined or infected passengers and crew, but the ship is labeled as orange status, indicating that 0.3% or more have tested positive, according to CDC guidelines.

When the pandemic started in spring 2020, cruise ships became coronavirus epicenters, and were turned away from ports as Covid cases rose on board and escalated on land.

"Our health and safety protocols exceed CDC guidelines and were closely followed including vaccination requirements and pre-cruise testing of all guests. Our crew are also vaccinated and wear masks," Carnival said in a statement to CNN.

TOP TIP

Take extra caution when traveling

As summer holidays draw nearer, more of us are looking to set off to exotic destinations. But before you book your flights, check what the infection rate is like in your intended vacation spot, and how your own country currently categorizes it.

On Monday, the CDC added the British Virgin Islands -- a relaxed Caribbean playground -- to its "high" category for Covid-19 risk.

The Level 3 "high" risk category is now the top rung in terms of risk level in the US. Level 2 is considered "moderate" risk, and Level 1 is "low" risk. Level 4, previously the highest risk category, is now reserved only for special circumstances, such as extremely high case counts, emergence of a new

variant of concern or health care infrastructure collapse. Under the new system, no destinations have been placed at Level 4 so far. [Read more here.](#)