

# *U.S. unemployment rate worsens amid pandemic*

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Washington, May 11 (RHC)-- The U.S. Treasury secretary says the unemployment rate reported by the government is likely to get worse amid lockdown measures put in place due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Steven Mnuchin made the comments on Sunday after the U.S. Labor Department announced last week that the unemployment rate had surged to nearly 18 percent in April, shattering the post-World War II record of 10.8 percent in November 1982.

The Department also said it had received 33 million filings for first-time unemployment benefits by Americans over the past seven weeks, indicating more job losses to come. "The reported numbers are probably going to get worse before they get better," Mnuchin told the Fox News.

Mnuchin said the White House was considering taking more fiscal measures to ease the economic pain in the aftermath of the pandemic, and also pushing for a payroll tax cut. The unemployment crisis has sparked protests against lockdowns imposed to curb the spread of the novel coronavirus. So far, more than 1,300,000 people have been diagnosed with the disease in the United States.

Right-wing protesters across the U.S. called on governors to rethink the restrictions as sweeping stay-at-home orders in 42 states have shuttered businesses, disrupted lives and destroyed the economy.

The novel coronavirus, which causes a respiratory disease known as COVID-19, first erupted in the Chinese city of Wuhan late last year before growing into a global pandemic, which has so far infected more than 4.1 million people and killed over 281,000 throughout the world.

U.S. President Donald Trump continues to refer to the novel coronavirus as the Chinese virus and Beijing has hit back by claiming that the US military brought the virus to Wuhan and initiated the outbreak. Trump has described the coronavirus pandemic as the worst attack ever on his country while pointing the finger at China, saying the outbreak has hit the United States harder than the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor during World War II or the 9/11 attacks two decades ago, which triggered two deadly wars against Iraq and Afghanistan.

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