

Congress Reaches Agreement on New Federal COVID-19 Stimulus Funding

Last night, a new bipartisan agreement was reached on a COVID-19 stimulus package. We would like to thank Michael Gamel-McCormick, Disability Policy Director for Senator Casey's office, for offering much of the information and background. The following will be included in the new stimulus package:

- Money Follows the Person (MFP) has been funded for three years; states that have slowed or shut down their programs will be able to restart or bring them up to speed; the number of days that a person must be in a nursing home or institutional setting before using MFP funds will be 60 instead of 90 days;
- The funding for the Spousal Impoverishment rule has also been extended for three years;
- \$4.5 billion for mental health resources;
- Renewal of a state provider fund for \$22.4 billion that can be applied for through the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS); this is the same as the earlier provider funds in CARES;
- Almost \$9 billion to states for vaccine distribution; and
- Over \$230 billion for the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), which is available to those who are first or second-time applicants.

The stimulus package does **not** include:

- Dedicated long-term services and supports funding, including funding set aside for home and community-based services funding
- Dedicated nursing home funding

It appears that the bill text will be available soon. Additionally, below is the Democrat Joint Statement regarding the new stimulus package:

Pelosi, Schumer Joint Statement on Coronavirus Relief and Omnibus Agreement

Washington, D.C. – House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) and Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) issued the following statement after reaching an agreement on a coronavirus relief and omnibus package:

“Today we have reached agreement with Republicans and the White House on an emergency coronavirus relief and omnibus package that delivers urgently needed funds to save the lives and livelihoods of the American people as the virus accelerates.

“We are going to crush the virus and put money in the pockets of the American people. As part of the agreement, Democrats have secured provisions that include:

- **Accelerating Vaccine Distribution and Crushing the Coronavirus:** The bipartisan COVID relief package finally recognizes that we cannot get our economy working unless we can get the coronavirus under control. The package provides billions in urgently needed funds to accelerate the free and equitable distribution of safe vaccines to as many Americans as possible as soon as possible, to implement a strong national testing and tracing strategy with billions reserved specifically for combating the disparities facing communities of color, and to support our heroic health-care workers and providers.
- **Ends Surprise Billing:** The package includes bipartisan, bicameral legislation that will end surprise billing for emergency and scheduled care.
- **Strong Support for Small Business:** Democrats secured critical funding and policy changes to help small businesses, including minority-owned businesses and nonprofits, recover from the pandemic. The agreement includes over \$284 billion for first and second forgivable PPP loans; expanded PPP eligibility for nonprofits and local newspapers, TV, and radio broadcasters; key modifications to PPP to serve the smallest businesses and struggling nonprofits and better assist independent restaurants; and \$15 billion in dedicated funding for live venues, independent movie theaters, and cultural institutions. The agreement also includes \$20 billion for targeted Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) grants, which are critical to many smaller businesses on Main Street.
- **Community Development Financial Institutions and Minority Depository Institutions:** The agreement includes dedicated PPP set-asides for very small businesses and lending through community-based lenders like Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) and Minority Depository Institutions (MDIs); \$9 billion in emergency US Treasury capital investments in CDFIs and MDIs to support lending in low-income and underserved communities, including persistent poverty counties, that may be disproportionately impacted by the economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic; and \$3 billion in emergency support for CDFIs through the CDFI Fund to respond to the economic impact of the pandemic on underserved low-income and minority communities.
- **Rental Assistance:** Democrats secured \$25 billion in critically needed rental assistance for families who are struggling to stay in their homes and an extension of the eviction moratorium.
- **Strengthens the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC):** The package enhances the LIHTC to help increase affordable housing construction and provide greater certainty to new and ongoing affordable housing projects.
- **Direct Payment Checks:** Democrats secured a new round of direct payments worth up to \$600 per adult and child, also ensuring that mixed-status families receive payments.
- **Strengthened Earned Income Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit:** The agreement helps ensure that families who have faced unemployment or reduced wages during the pandemic are able to receive a strong tax credit based on their 2019 income, preserving these vital income supports for vulnerable families.
- **Supports Paid Sick Leave:** The agreement provides a tax credit to support employers who are offering paid sick leave based on the Families First framework.
- **Employee Retention Tax Credit:** The agreement extends and improves the Employee Retention Tax Credit to help keep workers in their jobs during coronavirus closures or reduced revenue.
- **Enhanced Unemployment Insurance Benefits:** Democrats averted the sudden expiration of unemployment insurance (UI) benefits for millions and added a \$300 per week UI enhancement for Americans who are out of work.
- **Nutrition Assistance for Hungry Families:** Democrats secured \$13 billion in increased Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and child nutrition benefits to help relieve the historic hunger crisis that has left up to 17 million children food insecure.
- **Education and Child Care:** The agreement provides \$82 billion in funding for colleges and schools, including support for HVAC repair and replacement to mitigate virus

transmission and reopen classrooms, and \$10 billion for child-care assistance to help get parents back to work and keep child-care providers open.

- **Historic Expansion of Pell Grants:** The package includes the largest expansion of Pell Grant recipients in over a decade, reaching 500,000 new recipients and ensuring that more than 1.5 million students will now receive the maximum benefit.
- **Broadband Access:** The agreement invests \$7 billion to increase access to broadband, including a new Emergency Broadband Benefit that will help millions of students, families, and unemployed workers afford the broadband that they need during the pandemic.
- **Fights the Climate Crisis:** The agreement includes sweeping clean energy reforms, research and development (R&D) enhancements, efficiency incentives, and extends clean energy tax credits to create hundreds of thousands of jobs across the clean economy. The package also phases out super pollutant hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), positioning the US to lead the world in avoiding an up to 0.5 degree Celsius increase in global warming.
- **WRDA:** The agreement includes the bipartisan Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2020, creating good-paying jobs and strengthening and improving the vital water infrastructure that Americans rely on while unlocking the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund.
- **Global Health:** Democrats secured an additional \$3.36 billion for a total of \$4 billion for GAVI, the international vaccine alliance, recognizing that we are not truly safe until the whole world is safe from the coronavirus.

“Importantly, the final agreement does not include several dangerous Republican proposals, including a long-demanded GOP provision that could unjustly put the health of workers at risk and take away their legal recourse as well as an eleventh-hour attempt to sabotage the incoming administration’s ability to stabilize the economy and save jobs.

“State and local governments will certainly need additional funding to prevent the senseless layoffs of heroic essential workers and critical service cuts. The agreement provides some important new targeted funds for state and local government functions that will help alleviate their overall budget burdens. These targeted funds include the emergency resources for schools; \$27 billion for state highways, struggling transit agencies, Amtrak, and airports; \$22 billion for the health-related expenses of state, local, tribal, and territorial governments; and an additional year of eligibility for expenses under the CARES Coronavirus Relief Fund.

“The emergency relief in this agreement, the second largest in history only to the CARES Act, is an important first step that Democrats look forward to building on under the new Biden-Harris Administration to meet the remaining needs of the American people during this historic health and economic crisis.

“The House will move swiftly to pass this legislation immediately so that it can quickly be sent to the Senate and then to the President’s desk for his signature. With the horrifying acceleration of daily infections and deaths, there is no time to waste.”