

Despite Political Games in Congress, South Carolina Continues on a Path of Pro-Business Recovery from COVID-19

By: Congressman Tom Rice

COVID-19 has wreaked havoc on our lives. One year later, we are collectively attempting to grasp how to come to terms with the changes it demands in how we interact with others, go to work and school, and keep ourselves healthy.

Congress has now allocated nearly \$6 trillion in federal funding towards COVID-19 relief efforts. Unfortunately, South Carolina missed out on a portion of this funding from the most recent round of legislation. In a misguided provision that I spoke against on the House Floor, a formula was changed regarding how \$350 billion in state and local funding would be dispersed. The new formula overwhelmingly favored blue states. California, New York and New Jersey increased their funding allocations from previous packages by nearly \$9 billion collectively. Meanwhile, South Carolina was the ‘fourth biggest loser’ in the game – we lost out on over \$1 billion. This formula punished states who kept their doors open amid the pandemic and rewarded states with poor leadership who hurt workers, students, and businesses. This provision, among others, was forced into the package with no bipartisan support. It’s unacceptable to see this latest round of COVID-19 relief reflect only political games that hurt South Carolina, whereas the last five rounds were all bipartisan. I’ll continue to be a voice for commonsense, conservative solutions that will target future funding in a strategic way, absent of political games.

To aid in our efforts of returning to normalcy, I recently introduced the *Healthy Workplaces Tax Credit*. This legislation is a new way to help businesses safely and responsibly reopen our economy and protect the health and well-being of workers. It’s no surprise that our small businesses are footing enormous bills to comply with the unexpected safety protocols that come with operating a business in this new era. From cafes to hair salons, businesses are working hard to adapt their method of delivering services. Keeping Americans safe while they return to work is a top priority. This tax credit, if passed into law, will encourage businesses to take recommended steps to prevent the spread of COVID-19. It provides a refundable payroll tax credit for costs incurred including disinfecting, providing PPE, COVID-19 testing expenses, and reconfiguring workspaces. It’s of the utmost importance that we reconnect workers to jobs and prevent more business closures. The Healthy Workplaces Tax Credit will provide much needed support to businesses as they reopen by incentivizing them to take extra precautions to protect the health of patrons and employees.

As we continue to recover from the pandemic, I’m especially proud of the work South Carolina has done to give us a national spotlight for our vaccine distribution efforts. In mid-January, the CDC had publicly indicated that we were among the slowest states for vaccine distribution. After all the reporting was in, South Carolina rose to the top of the charts and was recognized as 5th in the Nation for two weeks in a row. It is my hope that South Carolinians continue to utilize our robust vaccine distribution effort. I continue to voice my appreciation to our healthcare workers, vaccine distributors, and state leadership for the roles they play in saving lives daily amid this pandemic. Without them, our state’s recovery effort wouldn’t be possible.

Together, I hope we can stay on a positive pathway towards full recovery in our state. The last year has been a trial for all of us as a Nation. We are a resilient people and we will bounce back to decreased unemployment, high GDP, and an economy we can thrive in once again.

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