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OFFICE OF CHAIRMAN BERNIE SANDERS

THE AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT:

*The Senate's Opportunity to Help End the Pandemic, Aid Struggling Americans,
and Create a Better Economy*

Our country is currently experiencing the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression and the worst public health emergency in over 100 years.

In just over a year, the COVID-19 has killed [more than 515,000](#) Americans. Nearly 30 million people have been infected. And in the midst of a global pandemic, more than 90 million Americans are uninsured or underinsured and can't afford to go to a doctor when they get sick. The isolation and anxiety caused by the pandemic has resulted in a [huge increase](#) in mental illness and substance use disorders.

[Nearly two-thirds](#) of Americans say they have been living paycheck to paycheck since the pandemic began, including millions of essential workers who put their lives on the line every day. There are [10 million fewer jobs](#) now than when the pandemic hit and [almost 20 million](#) Americans are collecting unemployment benefits, while hunger in this country is at the highest level in decades.

Because of lack of income, [up to 40 million](#) Americans face the threat of eviction, and many owe thousands in back rent. This is on top of the [550,000](#) who are already homeless.

The number of active business owners in the United States plummeted by [3.3 million](#) or 22 percent over just two months last year – the largest decline on record. This includes an astonishing 41 percent decline in the number of Black business owners.

Meanwhile, the wealthiest people in this country are becoming much richer, and income and wealth inequality is soaring. Incredibly, during the pandemic, 660 billionaires in America have increased their wealth by [\\$1.1 trillion](#).

As a result of the pandemic education in this country – from early childhood through graduate school is in chaos. The majority of young people in this country have seen their education disrupted and it is likely that [hundreds of colleges](#) will soon cease to exist. In this moment of unprecedented crises, the Senate must respond through unprecedented action.

This week, the Senate will consider a \$1.9 trillion rescue plan that will accelerate America’s vaccination effort, cut child poverty in half, extend a lifeline to the unemployed, provide aid to working families, ensure that state and local governments can keep providing needed services, and provide resources to allow schools to reopen safely.

The American Rescue Plan Act is a [historically popular](#) for such an ambitious piece of legislation. It is not difficult to see why: This bill will enable us to crush the virus and provide a bridge for struggling Americans to a fairer, more equitable, and more just post-pandemic economy.

Here are just a few of the specific provisions of the American Rescue Plan Act the Senate will debate this week:

- **\$2,000 Direct Payments:** The American Rescue Plan Act keeps the promise President Biden and Congressional Democrats made to boost the \$600 direct payments passed in December to \$2,000 for every working-class American in the country.
- **\$400 Weekly Supplemental Unemployment Benefits:** The American Rescue Plan Act provides the funding necessary to increase the supplemental unemployment benefits that 18 million Americans currently rely on to \$400 from \$300 a week through August.
- **\$3,000/\$3,600 Child Tax Credit:** The American Rescue Plan Act expands the Child Tax Credit to \$3,000 from \$2,000 – and to \$3,600 for children under the age of six. Even more importantly, the Child Tax Credit will be made “fully refundable,” meaning that the poorest families – those that need this help the most – will get the full amount. The American Rescue Plan Act envisions this aid to be provided on a monthly basis instead of just once a year at tax time. This provision alone will cut America’s shamefully high childhood poverty rate [in half](#).
- **Earned Income Tax Credit:** The American Rescue Plan Act nearly triples the Earned Income Tax Credit for some workers and, for the first time, extends its benefits to more than [17 million](#) low-income workers under 25 without children – many of whom are on the frontlines of the pandemic. At times during this pandemic-driven recession, younger workers have experienced an unemployment rate [double that](#) of the national rate.
- **\$4,000 Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit:** The American Rescue Plan Act expands the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit so that working families can receive up to \$4,000 for the child care expenses of one kid and up to \$8,000 for two or more kids.
- **\$350 billion to prevent mass layoffs of public sector workers in state and local governments:** The American Rescue Plan Act provides \$350 billion in financial assistance to state and local governments to prevent the mass layoff of public sector workers. State and local governments now have 1.3 million fewer workers than before the pandemic. The Congressional Budget Office has found that the best “bang for the buck” of all the money Congress has passed so far is aid to state and local governments.

- **Vaccine Distribution:** The American Rescue Plan Act provides \$14 billion for vaccine distribution to get vaccines in the arms of the American people, to defeat the coronavirus and to reopen the economy.
- **Health Care:** The American Rescue Plan Act provides \$49 billion for COVID-19 testing, tracing, and genomic sequencing; \$8 billion to strengthen the public health workforce; \$11 billion for public health investments, including expansions of community health centers and the National Health Service Corps; \$6 billion for the Indian Health Service; and \$35 billion to make the Affordable Care Act's exchanges more affordable for working- and middle-class Americans. The American Rescue Plan Act also increases Medicaid's federal match to states and expands the program for pregnant and postpartum women.
- **FEMA Disaster Relief Fund:** The American Rescue Plan Act provides injects \$50 billion into the Disaster Relief Fund to ramp up the President's national vaccination program and provide flexible, targeted assistance to state, local, Tribal, territorial and the District of Columbia governments, as well as those individuals hit hardest by the pandemic.
- **Defense Production Act:** The American Rescue Plan Act provides \$10 billion to enable the President to use the authorities of the Defense Production Act to purchase, manufacture, and distribute critically-needed medical supplies and equipment.
- **Child Care:** The American Rescue Plan Act provides \$40 billion to support child care, including \$25 to create an emergency stabilization fund for child care providers, \$15 billion for the Child Care and Development Block Grant program, and \$1 billion for Head Start. The COVID-19 pandemic has ravaged child care providers – causing large enrollment drops, extra costs, staffing shortages, and even closures.
- **K-12 Schools:** The American Rescue Plan Act provides \$130 billion to help schools safely reopen. This funding would allow for social distancing by reducing class sizes and modifying spaces, improve ventilation, hire more janitors, provide PPE, and provide access to school nurses. Additionally, funding can be used to prevent cuts to state pre-K programs.
- **Higher Education:** The American Rescue Plan Act provides \$40 billion in needed funds to cover many of the COVID-related costs and address major revenue losses at America's colleges and universities. Institutions of higher learning [shed 650,000 jobs](#) in 2020 the fastest in recorded history. These funds will help colleges and universities keep their staff and faculty on their payroll and provide students with financial aid to address their housing and education expenses.

- **Pensions:** The American Rescue Plan Act protects the retirement benefits of millions of workers and retirees in troubled multi-employer pension plans. As a result of the greed on Wall Street, workers and retirees in multi-employer pension plans are in danger of seeing their retirement benefits cut by as much as 65 percent. That is unacceptable. When a worker is promised a pension benefit after a lifetime of work that promise must be kept. By shoring up the multiemployer pension system and the Pension Benefit Guarantee Corporation, the American Rescue Plan Act will benefit 185 pension plans, including the 360,000-member Teamsters Central States plan, ensuring millions of Americans' benefits will be paid in full for decades to come.
- **Nutrition:** The American Rescue Plan Act provides \$12 billion to hungry families in need through important nutrition programs like SNAP, WIC, and Pandemic EBT. The American Rescue Plan Act extends the 15 percent SNAP increase through September 2021, funds fruits and vegetable outreach and innovation in WIC, and ensures the Pandemic-EBT program will be available for the duration of the pandemic, including over the summer while children are out of school.
- **Housing:** The American Rescue Plan Act provides \$45 billion in rental and utility assistance and mortgage relief to millions of tenants and homeowners who are in danger of being thrown out of their homes and onto the street. In America today, [nearly 12 million Americans](#) owe an average of \$5,800 in back rent and utilities. The American Rescue Plan Act provides these struggling Americans with the relief they need to stay in their homes.
- **Homeless Assistance:** During the midst of winter, there are hundreds of thousands of people experiencing homelessness, many with underlying health challenges. The American Rescue Plan Act provides investments in appropriate housing that will protect their health and help decrease COVID-19 transmissions with safe and socially-distant housing.
- **Public Transit:** The American Rescue Plan Act provides \$30 billion for transit agencies who have been deeply impacted by the pandemic and forced to cut service and jobs in 2020. Public transportation agencies estimate they face more than \$39 billion of additional costs and revenue losses related to the COVID-19 crisis that could result in cuts to essential services and worker layoffs. They need our help.
- **Amtrak:** The American Rescue Plan Act provides the funding necessary to allow Amtrak to rehire 1,500 workers who were involuntarily furloughed last year, and to restore regular service to more remote communities that rely on Amtrak as a link to economic centers.
- **Broadband:** The American Rescue Plan Act invests \$7 billion in broadband so that millions of public school students will receive the high-speed internet services they need for their education. In America today, at least 15 million public school students in rural areas and inner-cities live in homes without an internet connection. That has got to change.

- **Small Business Support:** The American Rescue Plan Act provides \$15 billion in additional relief for our nation’s small businesses and hard-hit industries through increased funding for Targeted EIDL grants; \$25 billion in funding for a new dedicated grant relief program for restaurants; \$7 billion for expanded PPP assistance for nonprofits and digital news services; and \$1 billion in Save Our Stages grants for independent live venues, independent movie theaters, and cultural institutions.
- **Veterans’ Health:** The American Rescue Plan Act provides \$17 billion for health care and other support to meet the needs of veterans during the coronavirus pandemic. These funds will support vaccine distribution, expanded mental health care, enhanced telehealth capabilities, extended support for veterans who are homeless or in danger of becoming homeless, PPE and supplies for clinical employees, and improved supply chain management.
- **Assistance to Tribes:** The American Rescue Plan Act provides \$9 billion for essential Tribal and federal safety-net programs that serve Native communities, which were historically underfunded prior to the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, and have experienced significant strain as they attempt to respond to and mitigate the impacts of the pandemic on Native communities. The American Rescue Plan Act includes funding for the Indian Health Service, the Bureau of Indian Education, housing assistance, and more.

The American Rescue Plan Act, and the individual provisions within it, enjoys the support of the [overwhelming majority](#) of the American people – [almost unheard of](#) for such an ambitious piece of legislation.

- [76 percent](#) of voters supported President Biden’s \$1.9 trillion COVID-19 plan.
- [83 percent](#) of the American people support boosting direct payments from \$600 to \$2,000.
- [62 percent](#) of voters support additional unemployment benefits.

While Republicans steadfastly refuse to engage in helping to pass this enormously popular, economically necessary bill, the American people want us to act boldly and they want us to act now. Instead of listening to wealthy campaign contributors, it is time for the Senate to listen to the needs of working families, the elderly, the sick, the disabled and the poor. And that is exactly what the American Rescue Plan Act will accomplish.