

President-elect Biden's American Rescue Plan will Provide Necessary Relief to Rural Communities

The COVID-19 pandemic and the corresponding economic crisis are devastating rural communities across the country. We have seen a [rise in COVID-19 infections and deaths](#) in rural communities, [rural hospitals](#) stretched thin, damaging impacts to our food supply chain, and families struggling to make ends meet and [put food on the table](#). While Congress's bipartisan action in December was a step in the right direction, it was only a down payment. We are in a race against time, and without additional government assistance, the economic and public health crises could worsen in the months ahead, and distribution of vaccinations to rural communities will remain far too slow.

President-elect Biden has announced a historic emergency legislative package to change the course of the pandemic, deliver immediate relief for hard-hit families, build a bridge towards economic recovery in rural communities, and cut child poverty in half.

Mount a national vaccination program, contain COVID-19, and safely reopen schools.

President-elect Biden will put forward a comprehensive plan to deal with this crisis and launch a whole-of-government COVID-19 response plan that will change the course of the pandemic in rural communities. President-elect Biden's plan will:

- Invest \$160 billion to provide the supplies, emergency response, testing, and public health workforce that rural communities need to stop the spread of COVID-19 while distributing vaccines as quickly as possible. President-elect Biden will deploy mobile vaccination clinics in the most hard-to-reach communities and to support those who face challenges accessing vaccination sites, including individuals who live in underserved urban and rural areas.
- The federal government will launch targeted programs to engage community health centers, rural health clinics, critical access hospitals, and tribal health services to ensure that we can meet the needs of all communities.
- Provide \$130 billion -- supplemented by additional state and local relief -- to help schools serve all students, no matter where they are learning, and help achieve President-elect Biden's goal to open the majority of K-8 schools within the first 100 days of his Administration.
- Provide up to 106 million more Americans with over 14 weeks of emergency paid family and medical leave until the end September. This leave has helped decrease the daily infection rate and it has allowed families to take needed time to heal and provide care. President-elect Biden will reinstate the requirement that employers provide this critical emergency paid leave and will eliminate the exemptions and loopholes that prevented millions of people from accessing the program. The President-elect's proposal will also have the federal government reimburse state and local governments for the cost of providing this leave to their workforce.

Deliver immediate relief to working families bearing the brunt of this crisis. Unemployment for workers making less than \$40,000 per year is at depression levels, and historic numbers of Americans are food and housing insecure. President-elect Biden will devote about \$1 trillion towards building a bridge to economic recovery for working families and will:

- Give working families a \$1,400 per-person check, bringing their total relief payment from this and the December down payment to the \$2,000 it should've been from the start. He proposes expanding eligibility to adult dependents and all mixed status households.
- Extend current unemployment insurance benefits and eligibility and provide a \$400 supplement until the end of September. His plan also extends financial assistance for unemployed workers who do not typically qualify for unemployment compensation benefits, such as self-employed workers.
- Fully fund states' short-time compensation programs and additional weeks of benefits. This will ensure many small businesses, especially in rural states, can stay afloat and avoid layoffs.
- Provide an additional \$35 billion in rental, homelessness, and utility assistance.
- Extend the 15 percent Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefit increase, while temporarily cutting the state match; invest \$3 billion to help women, infants and children get the food they need; partner with restaurants to feed American families and keep restaurant workers on the job at the same time.
- Raise the federal minimum wage to \$15 per hour, and end the tipped minimum wage and sub-minimum wage for people with disabilities.
- Call on employers to meet their obligations to frontline essential workers and provide back hazard pay, including farm and food workers.
- Expand child care assistance to help millions of families to return to work, including providing an additional \$15 billion in funding for the Child Care and Development Block Grant program, help hard-hit child care providers cover their costs, and increase tax credits to help cover the cost of childcare.
- Increase the Child Tax Credit to \$3,000 per child (\$3,600 for a child under age 6) and make 17 year-olds qualifying children for the year. This expansion will disproportionately benefit rural families - helping 45% of rural children.
- Raise the maximum Earned Income Tax Credit for childless adults from roughly \$530 to close to \$1,500, raise the income limit for the credit from about \$16,000 to about \$21,000, and expand program eligibility to both younger and older workers. This too has an outsized impact on rural families helping 23% of rural families, compared with 18% of urban families.
- Provide an additional \$1 billion for states to cover the additional cash assistance that Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) recipients needed as a result of the crisis.
- Ensure access to health coverage by subsidizing continuation health coverage (COBRA) and lower or eliminate health insurance premiums.
- Invest \$4 billion to expand access to behavioral health services.
- Request an additional \$20 billion to ensure adequate funding for veterans' health.
- Allocates \$800 million for federal programs that protect survivors of gender-based violence.

Support rural communities that are struggling in the wake of COVID-19. President-elect Biden will invest \$440 billion to provide critical support to communities struggling in the wake of COVID-19.

- Small businesses are the backbone of rural communities. President-Elect Biden will

provide grants to more than 1 million of the hardest hit small businesses and leverage \$175 billion in additional small business lending and investment to save our Main Street communities.

- In addition, the president-elect wants to work with Congress to make sure that restaurants, bars, and other businesses that have suffered disproportionately have sufficient support to bridge to the recovery, including through the Commodity Credit Corporation at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).
- Distribute \$350 billion in emergency funding for state, local, and territorial governments to ensure that they are in a position to keep front line public workers on the job and paid, while also effectively distributing the vaccine, scaling testing, reopening schools, and maintaining other vital services.
- Give Tribes \$20 billion to obtain sufficient personal protective equipment, increase access to clean water and electricity, and expand internet access so that children can learn remotely and more families can obtain basic health care through telemedicine.

This legislative package is needed now to address the immediate crises. In the coming weeks, President-elect Biden will lay out his economic recovery plan to invest in rural America, create millions of additional good-paying jobs, and build back better than before.