Coronavirus - congressional action

Information on Congress’ response to the coronavirus crisis, including bill summaries, proposed changes to voting procedure, and age breakdown of the 116th Congress

March 26, 2020

Producer
Presentation Center
Congress’s three-phase response to the coronavirus crisis

**Phase 1**
- Initial support and vaccine development
- **H.R. 6074 — Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations Act**
  - $8.3 billion in COVID-19 response funding for developing a vaccine and preventing further spread of the virus
  - Became law on 3/6/20

**Phase 2**
- Paid leave, unemployment and food assistance
- **H.R. 6201 — Families First Coronavirus Response Act**
  - $100 billion in worker assistance, including emergency paid sick leave, food assistance, and unemployment payments
  - Became law on 3/18/20

**Phase 3**
- Major economic stimulus package
- **H.R. 748 Stimulus package**
  - Major stimulus package ($2 trillion)
  - Loans and support to major industries, including airlines and small businesses
  - Direct payments to individuals and families
  - Senate passed on 3/25/20

Phase 1 (H.R. 6074): Coronavirus Preparedness & Response Supplemental Appropriations Act

Introduced: 3/4/20
Passed House: 3/4/20
Passed Senate: 3/5/20
To president: 3/5/20
Signed into law: 3/6/20

Bill overview
- Provides $8.3 billion in emergency funding in response to the coronavirus outbreak for:
  - The development and manufacturing of vaccines and other supplies
  - State, local and tribal public health agencies
  - Loans for affected small businesses
  - Evacuations and emergency preparedness activities
  - Humanitarian assistance for affected countries
- The supplemental appropriations will be provided to the FDA, CDC, NIH, Public Health and Social Services Emergency Fund, Small Business Administration, Department of State, and USAID
- Designates the supplemental appropriations as emergency spending, which is exempt from discretionary spending limits

Votes in Congress
- **House**: Passed with a vote of 415-2
- **Senate**: Passed with a vote of 96-1

Sources: Congress.gov.

Slide last updated on: March 6, 2020
Phase 2 (H.R. 6201): Families First Coronavirus Response Act

Bill overview

- Creates a **federal emergency paid leave program** administered by SSA
- Provides funds for nutrition assistance, including $500 million for WIC and $400 million for TEFAP
- Includes $5 million for the Department of Labor to administer an emergency paid sick days program and $250 for the Senior Nutrition Program in the Administration for Community Living
- Offers provisions to ensure children’s access to school lunches
- Suspends SNAP work requirements
- Requires OSHA to issue an ETS requiring employers in the health care sector to develop a comprehensive exposure control plan to protect workers from COVID-19
- Offers states $1 billion for emergency grants and interest-free loans to support processing and paying unemployment insurance
- Requires private insurers to expand coverage of certain COVID-19 related expenses

Votes in Congress

- **House**: Passed with a vote of 363-40
- **Senate**: Passed with a vote of 90-8

Rep. Nita Lowey (D-NY-17)  
*Bill sponsor*

Co-sponsors: 6

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Sources: Congress.gov; House Appropriations Committee, NPR, Wall Street Journal

Slide last updated on: March 19, 2020
Phase 3 (H.R. 748): Middle Class Health Benefits Tax Repeal Act (Vehicle for third coronavirus package)

- **Direct payments to individuals:**
  - $1,200 per adult, with an additional $500 per child
  - The full amount will go to individuals who earn >$75,000/year or $150,000 for married couples; the payments scale down for higher-earning individuals, phasing out completely at $99,000 for individuals, $146,500 for heads of households with one child, and $198,000 for joint filers without children

- **$500 billion lending funds for industries, states, and localities**
  - Loans for companies with more than 500 employees
  - $25 billion in loans to airlines; $4 billion to cargo carriers
  - Bans loans to businesses owned by the president, vice president, heads of executive departments, or members of Congress

- **Hospital investments**
  - $100 billion for hospitals
  - $1 billion to Indian Health Service
  - $16 billion for building a stockpile of medical equipment
  - Increases reimbursements by 20% for treating Medicare patients with coronavirus

- **$350 billion in loans for small businesses**
  - Loans to small businesses would be forgiven if payrolls are maintained
  - **Unemployment benefits increased $600/week for four months**
  - New Treasury IG and Congressional Oversight Board
  - **State and Local Funds**
    - $150 billion for state and local funds, including $8 billion for tribal governments

**Total cost: $2 trillion**


Slide last updated on: March 26, 2022
Responding to the coronavirus crisis will limit negotiating time for other legislative priorities

Upcoming legislative deadlines

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Expiration date</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FISA Reauthorization</td>
<td>March 15, 2020</td>
<td>• Four FISA provisions—the “roving wiretap” provision, “lone wolf” provision, “business records” provision, and “call detail records” program—were temporarily extended in the 2019 Continuing Resolution</td>
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<td>TANF &amp; CCES Reauthorization</td>
<td>May 22, 2020</td>
<td>• Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) programs and the Child Care Entitlement to States (CCES) provide child care assistance for low-income families</td>
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<td>Health Extenders</td>
<td>May 22, 2020</td>
<td>• Various Medicare and Medicaid policies are set to expire, including the community mental health services demonstration program</td>
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<td>Appropriations</td>
<td>Sept. 30, 2020</td>
<td>• The House and Senate began hearings from Fiscal Year 2021 appropriations, although work on coronavirus could delay some negotiations</td>
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Sources: Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget; Politico

• The Senate passed a 77 day extension of 3 out of 4 provisions (excluded call detail records)
• The new deadline would be May 30th
• S.3501 passed the Senate on March 16th and would be retroactive to March 14th
Age breakdown of the 116th Congress

*Includes the non-voting representative from D.C.
Sources: National Journal Almanac

Under 40: House 33, Senate 14
40s: House 74, Senate 126
50s: House 126, Senate 123
60s: House 21, Senate 39
70s: House 68, Senate 20
80s: House 6, Senate 12

Under 65: House 34%, Senate 49%
65 or older: House 66%, Senate 51%
Both chambers: 37% Under 65, 63% 65 or older
Congress is contemplating new voting procedures during the COVID-19 outbreak

**Current procedures**

**Unanimous consent**
- All members agree to a motion without voting
- One member can block the motion

**Roll call voting**
- Each member must enter the chamber and verbally or physically announce their vote
- All Senate votes take place this way

**Vote by electronic device - only in House**
- Members insert a card into devices located throughout the chamber and then press a button to vote

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**Changes proposed**

**Vote by proxy**
- A member of Congress allows another member to vote for them in their absence
- Currently allowed in Senate committee votes

**Remote voting**
- Voting online or by phone from any location

**Extended voting periods**
- Elongating the time allowed for voting to reduce crowding in the chambers

**Raising unanimous consent threshold**
- Requiring more than one member to object for a UC motion to be blocked