



Durbin Statement On Introduction Of Democratic Coronavirus Economic Stimulus Package

May 13 2020 10:08 AM

WASHINGTON – U.S. Senate Democratic Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL) today released the following statement regarding introduction of the *Heroes Act* in the U.S. House of Representatives, Congressional Democrats’ legislation for the next coronavirus economic stimulus package:

“Tragically, more than 80,000 Americans have lost their lives to COVID-19, and more than 30 million Americans have lost their jobs in the economic fallout. Working families are struggling to put food on the table and keep a roof over their heads. The *CARES Act* was a significant investment in our health care system, working families, small businesses, and state and local governments, but we can’t stop there. That is why Democrats have introduced legislation that offers additional support to our communities during this unprecedented time.

“I know that Senate Majority Leader McConnell has stated that Senate Republicans have ‘yet to feel the urgency of acting immediately’ to address this unprecedented public health and economic crises. However, Democrats are ready to roll up our sleeves and get to work.”

The *Heroes Act* includes \$100 billion for the Department of Health and Human Services Health Provider Relief Fund for hospitals and other providers, adding to the \$175 billion already appropriated. The bill also includes \$7.6 billion in dedicated funding for Community Health Centers, and \$75 billion for a new testing and contact tracing initiative.

The bill authorizes a second round of Economic Impact Payments (EIP), while expanding eligibility and strengthening protections from garnishment. Taxpayers with Individual Taxpayer Identification Numbers would be eligible to receive EIPs, making mixed-status families eligible to receive relief. This bill would also lift the age cap on qualifying dependents and extends the weekly \$600 federal unemployment payments through January 2021.

The bill authorizes \$875 billion in fiscal relief funding for states and localities with increased flexibility for the use of these funds to replace lost revenues. The bill also establishes a \$200 billion Heroes' fund to ensure that essential workers receive hazard pay.

The bill requires OSHA to issue a strong, enforceable standard within seven days to require all workplaces to develop and implement infection control plans based on CDC expertise, and prevents employers from retaliating against workers who report infection control problems.

Durbin helped secure the following provisions in the *Heroes Act*:

- COBRA: Provides 100 percent federal assistance for individuals' health insurance premiums for employer health plans for nine months for those who have lost their jobs (or gone below number of hours to be eligible).
- DACA / TPS Work Authorization Automatic Extension: Includes Durbin's proposal to automatically extend immigration status and employment authorization for DACA and TPS recipients and other impacted immigrants.
- Emergency Borrower Defense: Provision would provide automatic statutory relief to borrowers covered by Education Department findings.
- Authorize Additional Green Cards for Healthcare Workers. Adds 12,000 additional green cards (plus family members) over three years for doctors, medical researchers, or other health care providers already in the U.S. who are directly involved in fighting COVID-19. Also provides flexibility for doctors to switch jobs and immigration protections for their families.
- State/Local Paid Leave Tax Credits: Includes language allowing state and local governments to access payroll tax credits to cover the cost of paid leave.
- Price-Gouging: Includes a new federal anti-price-gouging law making it unlawful for a person to sell a good or service related to the COVID-19 emergency at an unconscionably excessive price.

- Elderly Offenders: Includes Durbin's bill to expand home confinement for elderly nonviolent offenders who are at least 50 years old and have served at least 50 percent of their sentence, along with a number of other reforms to encourage the release of vulnerable federal, state, and local inmates and detainees during the national emergency.
- Bureau of Prisons: Includes \$200 million for BOP salaries and expenses related to CV.
- Broadband Expansions: Authorizes \$5 billion for the FCC's E-Rate program to provide WiFi hotspots and connected devices for schools and libraries.