

Durbin Highlights Bipartisan, Bicameral COVID-19 Emergency Relief Framework, Criticizes Inclusion of Corporate Liability Immunity

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WASHINGTON – In a speech on the Senate floor, U.S. Senate Democratic Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL) today highlighted his colleagues' work in drafting a bipartisan, bicameral COVID-19 emergency relief framework, which totals \$908 billion and includes funding for state and local governments, unemployment insurance, small businesses, health care providers, housing and education assistance, and more. However, Durbin emphasized the need for additional funding in key areas and criticized the inclusion of a proposal to grant corporations federal liability immunity from lawsuits related to the pandemic, noting that immunity shields corporations from accountability for failing to follow a reasonable public health standard when it comes to protecting workers and customers.

“We have a group of nine Senators—five Democrats and four Republicans—on this side of the Rotunda and a similar group on the other side, of House members, who have been trying to find a bipartisan path out of this current situation. I want to salute them... they have tried to find a middle ground and I believe they have with the \$908 billion ,” Durbin said. “I’m not happy with a lot of these figures, but that’s what it’s all about in this world of the United States Congress. You come together willing to sit down, listen to the other side, and if necessary, compromise so that at the end of the day you have something to show for it.”

Durbin continued, “...an issue came up which I believe is really so important... we shouldn’t be delayed or diverted from this effort by a debate over liability immunity. For those Republicans who believe liability is an essential part of this package: do not deny unemployment insurance and help to small businesses across America to fight out this battle.”

Durbin also spoke about the importance of helping unemployed and uninsured Americans, hospitals and health clinics, state and local governments, schools and students, and small businesses as COVID-19 cases continue to spike across Illinois and the country. And Durbin once again slammed Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell’s (R-KY) boycott of negotiations and delay in passing meaningful, bipartisan COVID-19 relief legislation.

“We must take action to protect our state and local government workers, the firefighters, the teachers, the first responders. In the coming weeks, as many as 30 million Americans are facing the risk of eviction without additional help,” Durbin said. “News of the COVID vaccine development is promising, but we are many months from building up the immunity that we need. In the meantime, we must confront the virus with investments in testing, tracing, and health care... for the United States Senate to finish this month without dealing with this very basic COVID-19 relief package is fundamentally wrong. It is the highest priority for families and businesses across America, and we owe them nothing less.”