

Durbin Votes For Bipartisan COVID-19 Emergency Relief Legislation

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WASHINGTON – U.S. Senate Democratic Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL) today released the following statement after voting for the \$900 billion, bipartisan COVID-19 emergency relief legislation that includes funding for unemployment insurance, small businesses, vaccine distribution and COVID-19 testing, health care providers, housing and education assistance, direct checks for American families, and more:

“Last week, a group of Democrats and Republicans—including myself—came together and introduced compromise emergency relief legislation in the areas where we could agree. This package did not include everything I think we needed. But after eight months of inaction, it served as the catalyst to move much-needed bipartisan COVID-19 relief forward to help American families and small businesses.

“Like all compromises, this bill is not perfect. I’m disappointed that we weren’t able to agree on including much-needed funding for states and localities in this package. I want to be clear: I’m not giving up on funding for states and localities. This funding is essential in our fight against the pandemic and for our economic recovery.

“However, this legislation includes many important provisions including extending crucial unemployment benefits for hundreds of thousands of Illinoisans; offering a lifeline to struggling small businesses and nonprofits; providing direct checks to millions of American families; and providing funding for vaccine distribution, nutrition assistance, rental assistance, our hospitals and health care clinics, schools and universities, transit systems, and more.

“As we continue to face this unprecedented public health crisis, I believe that more funding will be needed. But this emergency relief will help us weather a tough winter ahead and should be signed by President Trump without delay.”

This bipartisan COVID-19 emergency relief legislation includes the following priorities for Illinois:

Working Families

- Provides enhanced unemployment benefits at \$300 per week and extends unemployment programs, including for about 160,000 Illinoisans claiming Pandemic Unemployment Assistance and 248,000 Illinoisans claiming Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation;
- Provides direct payments up to \$600 per adult and child;
- Extends the federal eviction moratorium through January 31, 2021, and provides \$25 billion in emergency rental assistance to help keep families in their homes, at a time when nearly one in four Illinois renters report being behind on rent payments;
- Allows states to waive Pandemic Unemployment Assistance overpayments for individuals who acted in good faith, similar to the *Relief for Working Families Act* introduced by Durbin and Duckworth;
- Addresses hunger by increasing SNAP benefits by 15 percent for nearly two million individuals in Illinois, provides \$5 million to implement provisions from Durbin’s *Expanding SNAP Options Act* to increase retailer choices for online SNAP purchasing, and by provides \$575 million in nationwide funding for food banks and senior nutrition programs, which serve more than 1.5 million people in Illinois;
- Provides \$7 billion nationwide to support broadband connectivity, including a \$3.2 billion benefit to keep low-income households and the recently unemployed connected;

Small Businesses

- Provides much-needed assistance for small businesses, including minority-owned businesses and nonprofits, including \$284 billion for first and second round forgivable Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans, key policy modifications to better assist struggling small businesses and nonprofits, and dedicated set-asides for the smallest businesses and community-based lenders;
- Provides \$15 billion nationwide in dedicated funding for live venues, independent movie theaters, and cultural institutions;
- Provides \$20 billion nationwide for the Small Business Administration's EIDL Grant Program to assist small businesses in low-income communities;

Health Care

- Provides \$55.5 billion in funding for vaccine development and distribution as well as COVID-19 testing and public health efforts, including approximately \$1 billion to Illinois health departments for efforts to expand testing capacity and swiftly and equitably distribute vaccines;
- Provides \$9 billion in funding and fiscal relief from looming Medicare payment cuts to hospitals and health care providers, including more than \$350 million in expected financial assistance for health care heroes in Illinois;
- Provides \$4.5 billion in mental health and addiction treatment funding to address the surge in drug overdoses, suicides, trauma, and stress from the pandemic, including an estimated \$140 million for Illinois;

Education

- Provides \$82 billion nationwide for education, including \$54 billion for K-12 and \$20 billion for higher education;
- Provides \$10 billion nationwide in much needed support to the struggling child care sector and \$250 million for Head Start;

State and Local Governments

- Extends the deadline for CARES Act state and local funding;

Transportation

- Provides \$14 billion in transit funding, including more than \$500 million in funding for Illinois transit agencies;
- Provides \$2 billion in airport funding, including more than \$88 million for Illinois airports and airport concessionaires;

- Provides \$1 billion in funding for Amtrak to prevent further furloughs and service reductions in Illinois;
- Provides \$10 billion in highway funding, including more than \$350 million for Illinois to support infrastructure projects and jobs created through Illinois' Capital Program;
- Provides \$15 billion in payroll support for airlines workers and \$1 billion for airline contractors, which will help to protect the jobs of thousands of Illinois airline workers;
- Provides \$2 billion in funding to help struggling Illinois bus companies keep their workers on the job;

Agriculture

- Provides \$13 billion nationwide for agriculture, including row crops, \$225 million for specialty crops, \$400 million for dairy donations, \$100 million for local producers that serve farmers markets, and \$28 million for farmer mental health;
- Authorizes hog and poultry pandemic depopulation reimbursements;
- Authorizes USDA to make payments to ethanol and biofuels producers for unexpected market losses due to COVID;
- Provides up to \$1.5 billion nationwide for food purchase and redistribution, and requires USDA to pursue improvements to assist local growers and ensure rural "last mile" deliveries; and,
- Provides \$60 million nationwide for Durbin's Food Supply Protection Act to help small meat and poultry processors with expansions and equipment.