Coronavirus - congressional action

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

Last Updated: March 26, 2020
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

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
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**

Responding to the coronavirus crisis will limit negotiating time for other legislative priorities

### Upcoming legislative deadlines

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<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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<tr>
<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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- 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

Sources: Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget; Politico
Age breakdown of the 116th Congress

**House**
- Under 40: 33
- 40s: 74
- 50s: 126
- 60s: 123
- 70s: 68
- 80s: 12

**Senate**
- Under 40: 14
- 40s: 20
- 50s: 39
- 60s: 21
- 70s: 6
- 80s: 12

- Under 65: 66%
- 65 or older: 34%

- Under 65: 51%
- 65 or older: 49%

- Under 65: 37%
- 65 or older: 63%

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

**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

Sources: National Journal Research; Congressional Research Service