

HR 311: Emergency Coronavirus Relief Act

On Monday, December 21, Congress passed a nearly \$900 billion bill to provide additional help to people, communities, and organizations affected by the coronavirus pandemic. The President signed the bill into law on Sunday, December 27. The many types of assistance provided to neighbors in need, as well as potential help to the business operations of Conferences and Councils, are summarized below. This summary does **not** include information related to the annual federal spending bills, which were included as part of the legislation and contain many provisions that will provide assistance to Vincentian programs and neighbors in need as well.

This summary focuses on issues most important to the Society and provides access to further information and resources. Final details of some provisions are subject to regulation and can change, so this summary should not be construed as legal or financial advice. It is highly encouraged to follow links when available for further information, and consult auditors, tax professionals, or legal counsel with technical questions about your specific circumstance.

Additional information and resources will be posted as they become available on our [COVID-19 response page](#). This summary will be updated.

Aid to Individuals, Families, and Communities

Economic Impact Payments (Cash Assistance)

All adults with adjusted gross incomes (AGI) of up to \$75,000 (\$150,000 for married couples filing jointly) will receive one-time direct payments (technically tax rebates) of up to \$600, as well as \$600 for dependent children. These benefits will be distributed just as the cash assistance from the CARES Act earlier this year.

Mixed Status Households

Households in which one parent and a child have Social Security Numbers, although the other parent may not, are eligible for the new payments. This is a significant change from the CARES Act, which barred these households from receiving the benefit. Additionally, these households can retroactively claim the previous CARES Act payments of up to \$1,200 (\$500 for children).

Unemployment Insurance

Most of the additional pandemic-related unemployment assistance enacted earlier in the year was reimplemented or continued through March 14, 2021, with some modifications:

- Lowered the supplement that is provided in addition to regular unemployment benefits to \$300/week (from \$600/week);
- Increased the length of Pandemic Unemployment Assistance to 50 weeks (from 39 weeks). PUA covers 'gig' workers, the self-employed, and others not covered by traditional unemployment programs;
- Extended Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation to 24 weeks (from 13). PEUC provides additional weeks of assistance to workers who have exhausted their regular benefits; and
- Provided an additional \$100/week for workers whose unemployment benefits are very low due the way their eligibility is affected by self-employment income.

More information on unemployment support is available from the [National Employment Law Project](#).

Find information for your [state unemployment program here](#).

Earned Income and Child Tax Credits

Many low-income working families that rely on the Earned Income Tax Credit and the refundable Child Tax Credit lost a substantial amount of income due to the pandemic. A temporary special rule will allow these families to use their earned income from 2019 for the purpose of determining the total value of these tax credits in tax year 2020. More information is forthcoming from the [Internal Revenue Service](#).

Housing and Homelessness

The bill includes \$25 billion in assistance with rent, utility and home energy bills, and other housing expenses. Assistance will be available to households meeting certain income requirements, at risk of homelessness, or with at least one member on unemployment, and could be for up to 12 months of rent (including future payments as well as arrears). Funds will be [allocated to states by formula](#).

Eviction Moratorium

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention eviction moratorium is extended to January 31, 2021.

See the National Low Income Housing Coalition [summary of the housing-related provisions](#) for more information.

Coronavirus Relief Fund

The CARES Act provided billions in flexible assistance to states and localities but required that it be spent by the end of the 2020 calendar year. This bill extends the deadline by one year, to December 31, 2021, but it does not provide any additional funding.

Emergency Shelter

The Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) recently announced that its Public Assistance program will continue providing reimbursement for non-congregate sheltering for the duration of the pandemic. More information on this is available from the FEMA [internal memo](#) as well as the [Disaster Housing Recovery Coalition](#). (*This is not a provision of the recently-passed bill; however, it is included here because it is relevant and announced contemporaneously.*)

Nutrition Assistance

The bill increases the value of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly food stamps) benefit per household by 15 percent through June 30, 2021. Although the bill does not broadly expand eligibility criteria, it clarified that unemployment benefits will not be treated as income and it suspended work requirements for college students who cannot participate in work-study.

The bill provides \$400 million to The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) for food banks and pantries, as well as \$614 million for in additional emergency assistance for Puerto Rico and other US territories.

Further information on the nutrition-related provisions of the bill is available from the [United States Department of Agriculture](#) and the [Food Research & Action Center](#).

Child Care

The bill creates a Child Care Stabilization Fund to provide grants to childcare providers for help with costs incurred as a result of the pandemic and allocates \$10 billion. It also includes an additional \$10.25 billion for Head Start as well as the Child Care and Development Block Grant.

Broadband

The bill invests \$3.2 billion in broadband internet access for underserved communities:

- \$50 benefit for low-income households
- \$75 benefit for tribal lands households
- \$250 million for pandemic-related telehealth
- \$65 million to complete national broadband mapping that would identify high-need areas
- \$65 million grant program for rural areas

Substance Abuse & Mental Health

The bill provides an additional \$4.25 billion for substance abuse prevention and treatment, mental health services, and suicide prevention.

Nonprofit Business Operations

Paycheck Protection Program

To date, the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) has authorized over \$650 billion in forgivable loans to small businesses and most nonprofit organizations for payroll, rent, and utility expenses. The bill extends the PPP through March 31, 2021 and allocates \$284.5 billion in additional funding.

Organizations that previously received a PPP loan can apply for a second loan equal to 2.5 times their average monthly payroll cost in 2019 (up to \$2 million), however eligibility is stricter: only organizations that have used the full amount of the original loan and have sustained a 25 percent loss in revenue for any quarter of 2020 (relative to the corresponding quarter in 2019) can apply.

The bill also expands the types of incurred costs permitted under the loan terms that are eligible for forgiveness to property damage not covered by insurance that occurred in 2020, employee protection measures such as masks and physical barriers, and operational costs such as human resources.

More information will be available from the [Small Business Administration](#) as well as your local financial institution (SBA has 10 days from enactment to finalize regulations).

Charitable Giving

The bill extends the \$300 above-the-line deduction for charitable contributions and increased the amount for married couples filing jointly to \$600 (from \$300), through 2021.

Employee Retention Tax Credit

The CARES Act established a tax credit against employer-paid Social Security payroll taxes for retaining employees. The new bill extends the credit to July 1, 2021, expands the credit rate to 70 percent (from 50 percent) of qualified wages, reduces the required year-over year decline in gross receipts to 20 percent (from 50 percent), and increases the per-employee limit to \$10,000/quarter (from \$10,000/year). More information on employer tax credits is available from the [Internal Revenue Service](#).

Unemployment Insurance Reimbursement

The CARES Act provided 50 percent of federal coverage for the cost of unemployment benefits for “reimbursable” organizations (self-insured). The bill extends the federal support through March 14, 2021; however, it did not increase the percentage.

Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL)

The bill extends the EIDL program through the end of 2021 and allocated \$20 billion for grants of up to \$10,000 to small businesses and nonprofits in low-income communities (more information is available from the [Small Business Administration](#)).

Paid Sick & Family Leave

The bill extends refundable payroll tax credits for pandemic-related paid leave through March 31, 2021; however, it did not extend the requirement that employers provide such leave.

More information on the provisions related to nonprofit business operations is available from the [National Council of Nonprofits](#).

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