




BILL ANALYSIS » ECONOMIC JUSTICE

The Heroes Act (H.R. 6800)




The House of Representatives recently passed the Heroes Act (H.R. 6800), a comprehensive bill to further address the COVID-19 pandemic and economic fallout FCNL has been lobbying for Congress to include many policy provisions in the next COVID-19 bill. Below is an analysis of which of FCNL's asks were included and which were left out. FCNL strongly supports the HEROES Act and urges all members of the Senate to vote in favor of it – and to vote quickly.

Promote Economic Security for All Families and Individuals

Principle	Description	In Heroes Act?
Increase Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits	SNAP is America's most effective anti-hunger program can be one of the best ways to stimulate the economy. Every \$1 in SNAP generates \$1.50 in economic activity, as people spend their benefits quickly and in their local communities. We are calling on Congress to increase SNAP benefits by 15 percent, increase the minimum monthly SNAP benefit from \$16 to \$30, and suspend all administrative SNAP rule changes indefinitely, during this time of economic distress and long-term recovery.	
Provide aid for states	States must balance their budgets every year. Without federal aid, they will be forced to lay off teachers, first responders, and other workers. States could also be forced to cut health care, education, and other key services, exacerbating the economic downturn. Medicaid costs make up a significant percentage of states' budgets. In the wake of the Great Recession, the federal government picked up all of states' Medicaid costs . Doing so again would enable frontline states and local governments to provide the services needed to handle this pandemic. In 2009, Congress also established an emergency fund for states to provide additional assistance to low-income families. Enacting a similar fund would provide fast relief to struggling families through cash assistance and other types of emergency aid. The Emergency Fund from 2009 also created nearly 250,000 subsidized jobs.	
<i>The Heroes Act provides significant state aid, although in a slightly different form and amount than described in our ask.</i>		
Extend unemployment assistance	More than 30 million people have claimed unemployment assistance. Congress increased benefits and expanded unemployment assistance to cover more people. However, these expanded benefits are set to expire well before the recession ends. We call on Congress to extend the Pandemic Unemployment Compensation Program (PUC), which provides an additional \$600 per week in unemployment benefits, beyond July 31; extend the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance Program (PUA) beyond December 31; and extend the additional 13 weeks of state unemployment benefits that are available after someone has exhausted their regular state unemployment benefits. These benefits should be tied to economic indicators instead of arbitrary dates.	




The extensions run through January 31, 2021 in The Heroes Act.

Promote Economic Security for All Families and Individuals (*cont.*)




Principle	Description	In Heroes Act?
Improve the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and the Child Tax Credit (CTC)	Currently, the parents of 26 million children can't claim the full value of the CTC because their incomes are too low. Adults not raising children in the home only get a very small EITC. The EITC and CTC are two of America's most effective anti-poverty programs and serve as effective economic stimuli.	
Homelessness, USDA, and Rent Assistance	Provide additional support for homelessness assistance programs, USDA rural low-income housing development programs, and emergency rental assistance for those in the greatest need.	
Provide recurring stimulus checks	Direct cash payments are essential to help individuals and households weather job losses and reduced income. They also effectively boost economic activity and help counteract the recession. These payments should be available and easily accessible to families with very low- or no-income, mixed status families and individuals who use an Individual Taxpayer Identification Numbers (ITINs). Approximately 7.5 million low-income households missed the last stimulus check because of these exclusions in the CARES Act.	

The Heroes Act includes another round of stimulus checks. They are larger and available to ITIN filers, but they are not recurring.




Support Immigrants

Ensure access to testing and treatment for all individuals, regardless of status	Immigrant communities are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 because they often work in jobs that require public contact and have less access to the healthcare system. The first three COVID-19 response bills excluded many immigrants from being eligible for COVID-19-related care provided through Medicaid. Ensuring that all immigrants can access testing and treatment is essential from a moral and public health perspective.	
Allow taxpayers using an ITIN to claim stimulus checks	The rebate checks enacted in the CARES Act can enable sick and at-risk individuals stay home rather than interacting with the public. However, many immigrant families, including many with U.S. citizen children and spouses, cannot claim these cash payments.	
Halt the implementation of the new public charge rules	The administration's public charge rule took effect on Feb. 24. It is causing immigrants and their U.S. citizen family members to forego critical benefits and services to which they're entitled, including health care, nutrition assistance, and other essential services.	


Support Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Individuals

Principle	Description	In Heroes Act?
Access to Medicaid	Ensure incarcerated individuals can access Medicaid immediately upon release by allowing them to apply for Medicaid 30 days prior to their release.	
Access to SBA, SNAP, and TANF relief programs	Eliminate the ban on the Small Business Administration loan application that excludes formerly incarcerated individuals from accessing the Payment Protection Program. Returning citizens already face substantial barriers to reentry. Federal assistance, such as from the SBA, is crucial for successful reentry and reduced recidivism. Formerly incarcerated individuals should not be excluded from SBA loans and grants. Similarly, we call on Congress to lift the bans on housing assistance, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) for formerly incarcerated individuals.	
Increased use of release and home confinement	Encourage increased release of incarcerated people over the age of 50, those within 18 months of their scheduled release, those with compromised immune systems, and those with respiratory conditions that make them vulnerable to COVID-19. We also urge Congress to call for the expanded use of home confinement and compassionate release. This will help the limited resources of the prison healthcare system go further and save lives. Releasing vulnerable populations will also help to limit the number of people who become critically ill, saving more lives.	




Support Tribes and Native Americans

Flexibility for disbursement	Ensure maximum flexibility for disbursement and implementation of Indian Country funds for addressing COVID-19.	<i>Unknown until tribal consultations take place</i>
Fund Victim Services in Indian Country	Rates of domestic and sexual violence are expected to spike in Indian Country. Victims lack proper access to resources and shelters and are often forced to remain in unsafe conditions due to stay-at-home orders in place right now. We urge Congress to:	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include supplemental funding for specific programs implemented by the Department of Justice (DOJ), many of which are authorized in the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), including a set-aside for tribal governments 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide an additional \$100 million Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA) set-aside for tribal governments; 	
	<i>The Heroes Act provides a 10 percent tribal set-aside, resulting in \$5 million for tribal nations.</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide \$1 million to be split evenly between the National Indigenous Women’s Resource Center and the Alaska Native Women’s Resource Center. 		


Ensure Free and Fair Elections

Principle	Description	In Heroes Act?
Conduct safe elections	<p>Provide \$4 billion for the Election Assistance Commission to support states and localities to conduct safe elections. This funding should go towards:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Universal no-excuse absentee voting with prepaid postage; 2. Extended Voter Registration Period with at least 15 days of early voting along with same day registration; 3. Election contingency plans to protect the health and safety of poll workers and voters for those who can't vote absentee; and 4. Online voter registration. 	

Promote a Robust Global Response

International aid and diplomacy	<p>Provide no less than \$12 billion for international aid and diplomacy, including for emergency global health and health security activities; humanitarian assistance to reach displaced populations and people in conflict-affected and fragile states; and conflict prevention and peacebuilding programs. These funds should also be made available for the World Health Organization, World Food Program, United Nations peacekeeping, and other multilateral organizations.</p>	
Remove impediments for relief	<p>Remove impediments to the flow of food, medicine and lifesaving equipment by urging the administration to release previously appropriated funds for Yemen, West Bank and Gaza; to ease sanctions that are exacerbating suffering in Iran, North Korea, Cuba, Venezuela, and Syria; and to issue an emergency universal general license that would allow humanitarian agencies to respond to the crisis more effectively in sanctioned countries.</p>	
Debt relief and lending	<p>Authorize debt relief and multilateral lending measures for developing countries in order to bolster health services and mitigate the economic impacts of the coronavirus. This includes supporting the issuance of Special Drawing Rights through the IMF so developing countries can import essential supplies and avert financial collapse, as well as the cancellation of poor-country debt held by the World Bank and IMF.</p>	

Reject Additional Pentagon Funding

No subsidies for military contractors	<p>Do not use the crisis as an excuse to give more subsidies to military contractors. The exorbitant amounts currently spent on engaging in and preparing for war are an immoral and irresponsible use of public resources. There are enough funds in the current military budget to cover any new expenses that arise from the pandemic response.</p>	
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