



December 15, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
U.S. Capitol Building, H-204
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
U.S. Capitol Building, H-204
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
U.S. Capitol Building, S-230
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
313 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McConnell, Leader McCarthy, and Leader Schumer:

On behalf of the National Taxpayers Union (NTU), we urge you to enact fiscally restrained legislation to help our nation persevere during the ongoing pandemic. While we do not expect such legislation to be without flaws, we are hopeful that a moderate, prompt, and targeted approach will provide relief to the individuals and businesses most in need, enable rapid, wide-scale distribution of vaccines, and be mindful of the long-term impact that could be caused by massive debt.

To those ends, we have been encouraged by the work of the Problem Solvers Caucus (PSC). On December 4th, our organization sent a [letter](#) to the PSC regarding their proposed framework for a bipartisan COVID-19 relief package. In that letter, we noted their foundation for compromise was a good faith effort that “would substantially address the challenges Americans will face in the difficult months ahead.” Now that the PSC has unveiled its legislation with actual details on where \$748 billion in taxpayer funds would be spent, NTU still believes this bipartisan proposal would provide many important benefits for the American people, with less fiscal risk than many other, costlier schemes that have been offered since the CARES Act. While we view many portions of the “Emergency Coronavirus Relief Act of 2020” as problematic, NTU remains encouraged that this legislation is a more prudent step toward helping those affected by this public health and economic emergency. We hope this will help break the impasse as Congress works on COVID-19 bill.

Millions of Americans are slated to receive a vaccine for the coronavirus by the end of the year -- a tremendous development due to collaboration between private enterprise and the federal government. With this hope comes the reality that the next several weeks are going to be severely challenging -- rising cases, hospitalizations and deaths, and renewed lockdowns that will harm many businesses. Faced with this precarious situation, the need for Congress to come together and pass another relief package is paramount.

Nearly 11 million Americans are still jobless and tens of thousands of business owners are in distress. As the PSC rightly recognizes, their bill is not a stimulus measure but one providing immediate relief

from this crisis. The goal of any aid package should be supporting vulnerable families and businesses through what are hopefully the final months of this crisis.

We are pleased to see that the bipartisan proposal mirrors the PSC framework from earlier this month, as well as closely follows the guidance NTU released earlier this year to help businesses and individual Americans. Importantly, the proposal provides relief in a taxpayer-friendly way that repurposes billions in already appropriated CARES Act funding to reduce the bill's deficit impact. NTU is encouraged to see funding for the Paycheck Protection Program, targeted and temporary relief for unemployed Americans, and means-tested housing relief for renters and homeowners. Perhaps most pertinent to the present crisis is the inclusion of funding to distribute vaccines and conduct contact tracing and testing -- both of which will, in the longer term, not only save lives but conserve fiscal resources that might otherwise have to be spent on more reactive public health measures.

While this legislation is mostly free of controversial riders and unrelated pork barrel spending, there are provisions of this legislation that should be removed or modified. We are, for example, concerned about aid for specific industries such as agriculture and fisheries, loan forgiveness for the U.S. Postal Service, and other items that are not essential to the recovery. In our view, this legislation would be stronger if these items were removed or revised to be more sector-neutral. Every dollar spent must count, and therefore must be prioritized to its highest possible use.

Despite our concerns, we recognize the need to deliver relief to struggling families and business owners in the most responsible manner possible, which is why we applaud your current efforts to enact a new legislative response. No significant bipartisan legislation is perfect, and this certainly will be no exception. Nevertheless, it is critically important to pass a bill that would represent a net positive for the United States and its people, with less strain on current and future taxpayers.

We thank you for your work on this critical matter and hope we can serve as a resource during ongoing negotiations.

Sincerely,

Brandon Arnold
Executive Vice President