



WEEKLY NEWSLETTER

March 31, 2020

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Washington Update

Fourth Relief Bill

On Monday, March 30, Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (CA) indicated that Democrats are in the beginning stages of drafting a fourth coronavirus relief package, which could be ready for a vote in the coming weeks. She said the legislation would shore up health systems and protect frontline health care workers as well as include substantial infrastructure investments - specifically for priorities like water systems, the energy grid, and broadband. Many Democrats are also eager to fight for more robust family and medical leave programs, stronger worker protections for first responders, as well as more money for state and local governments.

On Friday, March 27, President Trump signed the third stimulus package legislation, which was mostly negotiated by Senate leaders, leaving many House Democrats frustrated that their priorities were ignored. A fourth package is not likely to move as quickly through Congress. Senior Republicans have indicated they are in 'wait-and-see mode' when it comes to another multi trillion-dollar stimulus package, even though economists have said much more government assistance is likely needed - and fast. The House and Senate are scheduled to be

out of session until Monday, April 20, and lawmakers do not want to return to the Capitol until absolutely necessary.

Unemployment Insurance Claims

On Thursday, March 26, the Department of Labor (DOL) Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) reported a record number of unemployment claims as businesses closed their doors to help slow the spread of coronavirus. Unemployment claims rose to 3,283,000, showing how devastating the pandemic is to the U.S. job market and economy. It was the largest increase, by far, of unemployment claims ever recorded for a single week - the previous high being 695,000 in the week of October 2, 1982. Prior to the pandemic, initial claims had been in the low 200,000s each week, reflecting a strong job market. Economists anticipate millions of job losses in the coming weeks.

[Click here](#) to read the DOL BLS report.

Department of Labor

On Wednesday, March 18, President Trump signed into law the First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA), requiring certain employers to provide employees with expanded family and medical leave and paid sick leave for specified reasons related to COVID-19. The Department of Labor's (DOL) Wage and Hour Division (WHD) will administer and enforce these provisions, which will apply from their effective date through December 31, 2020. There are multiple opportunities to take part in the Department's national effort to gather stakeholder input around compliance assistance strategies and materials related to FFCRA. The Department will use ideas and comments gathered from a national online dialogue to develop compliance assistance guidance, resources, and tools, and outreach approaches that assist employers and employees in understanding their responsibilities and rights, respectively, under the FFCRA.

[Click here](#) to submit ideas, comments, and votes.

DOL/ETA

U.S. Department of Labor Announces Additional Guidance Explaining Paid Sick Leave and Expanded Family and Medical Leave Under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act

On Thursday, March 26, the U.S. Department of Labor's Wage and Hour Division (WHD) announced more guidance to provide information to workers and employers about how each will be able to take advantage of the protections and relief offered by the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) when it takes effect on April 1, 2020. The new guidance includes two new posters, one for federal workers and one for

all other employees, that will fulfill notice requirements for employers obligated to inform employees about their rights under this new law. It also includes questions and answers about posting requirements, and a Field Assistance Bulletin describing WHD's 30-day non-enforcement policy. The new guidance addresses critical issues such as whether employers may post required notice electronically, whether employers must provide notice of this law to recently laid-off individuals, when FFCRA applies to federal workers and when enforcement of the new rules will begin.

[Click here](#) to read the full article and access more information.

U.S. Department of Labor Announces \$22 Million in Grants to Help Homeless Veterans Reenter the Workforce

On Friday, March 27, the U.S. Department of Labor announced the availability of approximately \$22 million in Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program (HVRP) grants to provide services to reintegrate homeless veterans into meaningful employment and work to stimulate the development of effective service delivery systems that address the complex problems facing homeless veterans. The department's Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) administers the program.

[Click here](#) to read the full press release and learn more.

U.S. Department of Treasury, IRS and the U.S. Department of Labor Announce Plan to Implement Coronavirus-Related Paid Leave for Workers and Tax Credits for Small and Midsize Businesses to Swiftly Recover the Cost of Providing Coronavirus-Related Leave

On Friday, March 20, the U.S. Treasury Department, Internal Revenue Service and the U.S. Department of Labor announced that small and midsize employers can begin taking advantage of two new refundable payroll tax credits, designed to immediately and fully reimburse them, dollar-for-dollar, for the cost of providing Coronavirus-related leave to their employees. This relief to employees and small and midsize businesses is provided under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, signed by President Trump on March 18, 2020.

The act will help the United States combat and defeat COVID-19 by giving all American businesses with fewer than 500 employees funds to provide employees with paid leave, either for the employee's own health needs or to care for family members. The legislation will enable employers to keep their workers on their payrolls, while at the same time ensuring that workers are not forced to choose between their paychecks and the public health measures needed to combat the virus.

[Click here](#) to read the full press release.

WDC in the News

On the Frontlines of a Pandemic, America's Workforce Needs a Lifeline Now

Policymakers deserve credit for coming together in a bipartisan way on three stimulus packages that help workers access paid sick leave, expand unemployment insurance, suspend work requirements for safety net programs, make very small investments in workforce training to dislocated workers, and take a first step towards helping businesses avert layoffs. What's missing is a robust, comprehensive workforce strategy to address the immediate shortages in industries that are needed to respond to this crisis, while at the same time preparing for our economic recovery afterwards.

The coronavirus pandemic has made one thing crystal clear: the unsung heroes in our society are the men and women at the frontlines, risking their health and safety to keep our country moving. They're the health care professionals working around the clock to keep us healthy. The grocery store clerks working day and night to stock the shelves. The electricians, mechanics and HVAC technicians who keep our utilities up and running. They're the janitors working tirelessly to clean and sterilize our buildings. The first responders who keep us safe. The truck drivers and delivery workers who drive long hours to deliver our food, medical supplies, and other essential goods. These men and women in skilled positions – many of which don't require a four-year degree – have always been the backbone of our economy.

The Importance of the 2020 Census, Explained in Dollars and Cents

The 2020 census is upon us. During this stressful time, the census may seem like a meaningless bureaucratic paperwork exercise, but counting everyone in the country is actually an essential government function and will have lasting impacts for the rest of the decade. While the main political purpose of the census has been to determine the number of representatives each state gets in Congress, census data is also used to help guide federal funds. The Project On Government Oversight (POGO) collaborated with the George Washington Institute of Public Policy on research for the Counting For Dollars series that investigates the importance of the decennial census for the distribution of federal funds.

[Click here](#) to read the full article.

Reports & Articles

New from Brookings

COVID-19 and the U.S. Economy

An aggressive response aimed at improving the availability of testing, equipment, emergency supplies, hospital capacity, and treatment is paramount for public health and the well-being of Americans. In addition, as long as there is a widespread outbreak and rapid transmission, economic activity will be curtailed. Therefore, the crucial actions taken to limit the spread of the pandemic will have the greatest impact for both the broader welfare and the economy. This document offers answers to frequently asked questions about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the U.S. economy and the implementation of various fiscal and monetary policy tools used in response to the crisis. While the document focuses on the economic policy tools used to respond, it is important to remember that the most crucial steps both for overall welfare and for the economy will be those taken to limit the spread of the pandemic itself. As long as there is a widespread outbreak and rapid transmission, economic activity will be curtailed.

[Click here](#) to read the full article.

How Long Can We Expect Temporary Layoffs to Remain Temporary

Policymakers, businesses, and institutional leaders have deliberately shut down economic activity as a necessary public health measure to save lives and reduce long-run economic costs. One consequence has been a sizable spike in job losses. Today, unemployment insurance (UI) claims for the week ending March 21, 2020 totaled a record-breaking 3,283,000 - almost 5 times the highest previous weekly total. However, the shutdown that led to many of these layoffs will be temporary, and our economic policy response seeks to make the economic disruption just as temporary. This analysis shows that unemployment duration is substantially shorter for workers who are temporarily laid off and provides hope that employment relationships can be maintained - at least for a certain length of time - after a temporary shutdown of the economy.

[Click here](#) to read the full article.

The Robots are Ready as the COVID-19 Recession Spreads

As if American workers don't have enough to worry about right now, the COVID-19 pandemic is resurfacing concerns about technology's impact on the future of work. Put simply, any coronavirus-related recession is likely to bring about a spike in labor-replacing automation.

[Click here](#) to read the full article.

Careful or Careless? Perspectives on the CARES Act

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, passed by the Senate on March 25 and expected to be rapidly approved by the House and President, is the largest aid package in history. The bipartisan deal allocates \$2 trillion in an effort to mitigate the mounting fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic, including \$1.5 trillion in spending and tax cuts and \$500 billion in loans - \$454 billion of which was allocated to the Federal Reserve as the basis for additional lending.

[Click here](#) to read the full article.

New from National Skills Coalition

The Stimulus Package Leaves Workforce Behind

This week, the House and Senate passed a third stimulus package to address the CoVid-19 pandemic and its economic impact. The bill included some important provisions for workers who have lost their jobs such as expanded unemployment insurance and national grants to serve dislocated workers, but it lacked a comprehensive national strategy to support workers' ability to reenter the workforce after job loss. Right now, the workforce needs skilled workers in healthcare, manufacturing, transportation, distribution, and logistics industries to respond to the pandemic, but the bill does not enable businesses to rapidly upskill and reskill workers to address these needs.

[Click here](#) to access the full analysis of the stimulus package.

New from Aspen Institute

Job Quality in the Age of COVID-19

Global pandemic has us all living in a time of unprecedented uncertainty with respect to our work and well-being. For frontline workers these uncertainties are particularly acute. Organizations that have worked with these vulnerable workers are facing new needs and challenges among both the workers and the companies that they serve. Join us for a conversation with leaders from two organizations that have extensive experience in understanding and meeting the needs of frontline workers while also working with companies on strategies to better support these workers. In this conversation we will discuss strategies for strengthening supervision of frontline workers, a key aspect of job quality and the planned focus of this discussion. But we will put that discussion into the context of how that experience, and other experience supporting low-wage workers and their employers, can be leveraged to respond to the current moment. This webinar will be held on Tuesday, March 31, 2:00 - 3:00 p.m. ET.

[Click here](#) to register for the webinar.

Fast Fact

According to a Pew Research Center analysis, nearly one-in-four U.S. workers - 38.1 million out of 157.5 million - are employed in the industries most likely to feel an immediate impact from the COVID-19 outbreak.
