

Reduction or elimination of FDA regulations on non-invasive medical devices: This reform should already be implemented for smart devices (such as Fitbits), glucose kits, and other comparable items. It could be expanded to include DIY COVID test kits.

Clarification and codification of Trump administration efforts to ease telehealth restrictions: President Trump has already begun to lift restrictions for Medicare patients, but not for other populations.

Waiving out-of-state medical licensing requirements: This reform is already happening slowly on a state-by-state level, but could be more aggressively championed—or mandated—at the federal level.

THANK YOU TO WASHINGTON
STATE'S EDUCATORS

HON. RICK LARSEN

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 7, 2020

Mr. LARSEN of Washington. Madam Speaker, I rise today to sincerely thank the teachers, paraeducators, food service workers, bus drivers, custodial staff and others keeping the education of kids on track in Washington state during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Schools are always adapting to suit the needs of their students. When Washington state closed schools to prevent the spread of COVID-19, education professionals rapidly adjusted to on line education, ensuring students would not fall behind.

Distance learning has forced schools to tackle serious student equity issues, including access to technology and broadband, and making sure thousands of students who rely on school meals do not go hungry. These educators need Congress to step up to help address these issues.

Madam Speaker, I rise to recognize the sacrifices teachers and school employees of all kinds across Washington state are making to provide for their students amid this public health crisis. And I call on Congress to provide necessary tools for school districts to ensure equitable online learning and sufficient resources for students during this pandemic and beyond.

MIDDLE CLASS HEALTH BENEFITS
TAX REPEAL ACT OF 2019

SPEECH OF

HON. MARCY KAPTUR

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 27, 2020

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, H.R. 748 contains a critical provision that will be used to assist state and local governments in their response to the crisis engulfing our nation. Indeed, local governments are bearing the heavy burden of response with dwindling resources while helping terrified Americans manage as best they can. As the entities closest to the ground, these local governments are on the front line of the fight, and we must ensure they have adequate funding.

This provision, Section 5001 of the CARES Act, provides that Treasury will provide assistance directly, and not through the State intermediary to units of local government with

more than 500,000 people. The provision, allows for a significantly broad definition of local governments and specifies that “[t]he term ‘unit of local government’ [includes] . . . other unit of general government below the State level with a population that exceeds 500,000.” Section 5001 explicitly allows any government that represents more than 500,000 and includes regional councils of government which are chartered under state law.

In Ohio, Chapter 167 of the revised code provides broad authority for a regional council of government to act as a local unit of government, to plan, enter cooperative agreements related “to matters affecting health, safety, welfare, education, economic conditions, and regional development.” See Ohio Revised Code, Sec. 167.03.

In drafting and approving H.R. 748, the House and Senate intended section 5001 to be administered liberally, and for Treasury and the Courts to construe the statute broadly so as to encompass all local government entities with more than 500,000 citizens to act directly, and not through the intermediary of a state government. In fact, the State of Ohio has specifically devolved local authority to the regional council of governments to act in the general welfare interests of their citizens as a unit of general government.

As Treasury promulgates regulations to implement this statute, the law intends for these regional councils of government to act as a general unit of local government, and envisions them to be eligible to certify and receive the state stabilization dollars.

MIDDLE CLASS HEALTH BENEFITS
TAX REPEAL ACT OF 2019

SPEECH OF

HON. BRAD SHERMAN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 27, 2020

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, over 122,000 cases of coronavirus, otherwise referred to as COVID-19, have been confirmed in the United States since the inception of the outbreak, including more than 5,000 confirmed cases in my home state of California alone. More than two thousand Americans have died as a result of the virus, and many more stand to do so if we do not act quickly to mitigate its spread and address the myriad of medical challenges.

While Congress has passed several measures to provide significant amounts of money for research activities at federal agencies, this is not enough. I am disappointed that H.R. 748 does not adequately fund nor provide incentives for, research and development into treatments and vaccines that leverage the expertise of the public and private sectors. Chiefly, the CARES Act fails to adequately support research on the National Institutes of Health (NIH) campus and at clinical research institutions across the country to pursue all reasonable avenues to develop treatments for the coronavirus, including diagnostic tests, therapies and vaccines. The NIH should have significantly more than \$945 million to carry out COVID-19 related research and should also be directed to focus primarily on those possible treatments that are not subject to a patent and thus are not the focus of U.S. pharmaceutical companies.

Finally, the Trump administration uses this must-pass relief bill to advance their anti-reproduction rights agenda. The bill gives the Small Business Administration broad discretion to exclude Planned Parenthood affiliates and other non-profits serving people with low incomes and deny them benefits under the new small business loan program. Additionally, the bill attaches a harmful Hyde Amendment provision to a state stabilization fund for state, local, and tribal governments providing coronavirus relief. Reproductive health care is essential health care, and Planned Parenthood health centers are a critical component of the health care system. Attempting to limit access to reproductive health care services during a pandemic will only worsen the public health care crisis.

MIDDLE CLASS HEALTH BENEFITS
TAX REPEAL ACT OF 2019

SPEECH OF

HON. NEAL P. DUNN

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 27, 2020

Mr. DUNN. Mr. Speaker, oftentimes, when both sides of the aisle acknowledge that a bill is not perfect, it ultimately means it is actually quite good. With that said, I do want to highlight some specific concerns that I have with provisions in this bill, both in their direct effects, and also the future precedent that they may set.

Historically there is little evidence that direct to consumers stimulus checks have a significant impact on the economy or that they lead to the kind of spending necessary to counteract an economic downturn. The Economic Stimulus Act of 2008 (signed February 13, 2008) provided \$600 checks to individuals and cost \$168 Billion. A study by the Bureau of Labor statistics later showed that, ultimately, nearly 70 percent of recipients either used the money to pay off existing debt, or simply put it into savings. Those are not activities that stimulate the economy, and unsurprisingly that effort failed to stop a four percent contraction in GDP, the loss of over eight million jobs, and the worst overall economic disaster since the great depression. Overall, I believe that this bill will help us to avoid the same fate, but that will be due to other more robust provisions that acknowledge the importance of our small businesses and job creators in the private sector.

The incentive and ability for anyone, regardless of their circumstances, to work hard and improve their life is a fundamental tenet of the American dream. It is essential that we do not allow this stimulus payment to serve as a pilot program for a Universal Basic Income, as some have suggested. Furthermore, it is true that this bill will at times create a situation where some people could actually earn more money by filing for unemployment if furloughed than they would by staying in the workforce. We must acknowledge the potential for this to set a damaging precedent.

This bill provides robust funding for our nation's hospitals and some needed flexibility in the telehealth space to ensure Americans, particularly seniors, are able to visit with their doctors in the lowest risk setting possible. I was disappointed however in the lack of a

specific carve out that acknowledges the unique challenges faced by our rural hospitals, like the many that serve Florida's second district. I was also disappointed that the bill does not provide statutory relief for those who may not have video phone capabilities required to meet reimbursement criteria for telehealth visits. It is my understanding and hope however, that the Center for Medicare and Medicaid services will be able to provide adequate guidance to allow for "audio only" visits.

I believe that the \$9.7 Billion provided to Secretary Sonny Perdue to aid our agriculture industry is a good first start, but ultimately more resources will need to be made available in the near future. Recent volatility in the global trade markets and natural disasters, combined with an already weakened Agriculture economy mean our producers need help now more than ever. It is my hope that we can provide additional relief to our farmers, ranchers, and foresters suffering from this crisis soon.

Finally, in an effort to protect the safety of this legislative body, this bill was largely negotiated by a few individuals within our leadership and the Administration. Their work, especially given the fact that they willingly put their own health at risk, is commendable. However, this came at the cost of a lack of input from the vast majority of our constituents and led to the inclusion of funding priorities that should have been debated over the course of the regular appropriations process. Programs like the National Endowment for the Arts, Corporation for Public Broadcasting, Institute of Museum and Library Services, and the Kennedy Center total hundreds of millions of dollars in this bill. We must ensure that any future relief package is entirely focused on the Coronavirus relief, and that vital resources are directed in the most effective way possible.

MIDDLE CLASS HEALTH BENEFITS
TAX REPEAL ACT OF 2019

SPEECH OF

HON. BRADLEY BYRNE

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 27, 2020

Mr. BYRNE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak in support of the CARES Act. The situation on the ground demands action, which we must provide today.

Last week, 3.3 million Americans filed for unemployment. Small businesses around this country are shuttering. Millions of Americans and their children are at home practicing social distancing, a term that few knew 2 weeks ago. Countless others are on the front lines in our hospitals, doctors' offices, and pharmacies or simply checking us out at the grocery store. The American people need our help.

No region or section of the economy has been spared by this pandemic but South Alabama, which I represent, has been particularly hit hard. Millions of Americans come here every year to enjoy the weather, the beaches, and our southern way of life during the March and April Spring Break seasons. This all changed overnight. Countless small business owners have lost one of their busiest times of the year, and thousands of hard-working Alabamians have been let go from their job through no fault of their own.

The Constitution states that private property shall not be taken for public use without just

compensation. This principle guides my support of this bill today. In essence, the government has asked our nation's businesses and workers to shoulder the burden of economic shutdown, during good times, for the wellbeing of the country. For that reason, it is fair and just that we provide them a lifeline to help them weather this storm.

The situation is truly dire. Many small businesses are weeks or days away from depleting their cash reserves. When these small businesses close, rarely do they reopen. Thus, if we do not act, the economic devastation caused by extreme social distancing could plague communities for years.

Yesterday, I spoke to many small businesses in my district on a call. I was struck when one asked me to give them hope. To the American people who are watching, there is hope, and the help you need is on the way.

To small business owners, I say there is no more important provision in this bill than the Paycheck Protection Program. Through this program or nation's small businesses and 501(c)(3) nonprofits will be able to obtain a new 100 percent federally backed loan at an attractive interest rate. These loans will feature an automatic deferral for 6 months.

Most importantly, if the small business or non-profit uses their Paycheck Protection Program loan to cover their payroll, rent, mortgage interest, or utilities during an eight-week period, the loan will be forgiven. The only requirement for this forgiveness is for employers to maintain their payroll or hire their workers back. Thus, we have effectively said to these hurting small businesses, don't close your doors and keep your employees. And, if you do those things, which are necessary for us to exit the crisis quickly and effectively, we will give you a grant.

Congress specifically wrote this program to utilize the existing SBA 7(a) loan program. Unlike SBA disaster loans, these loans are generated by private banks, credit unions, and other lending institutions. We did this purposefully. We don't want bureaucrats at the SBA holding things up. We want the banks and credit unions you trust to get the money out to you as quickly as possible.

For our nation's workers who are struggling, we have provided enhanced unemployment benefits for those who have lost their job because of the coronavirus through no fault of their own. I strongly support this aid to help the millions who have been laid off and furloughed get through this difficult time.

Unfortunately, it is my fear that in our haste to help, we may have done real economic harm. Almost everyone supports enhanced unemployment benefits for those who have lost their job due to COVID-19, but by having a flat \$600 benefit for many workers on top of their normal state benefit, we will put some workers in a better position to not work than they would have been had they not been laid off due to the pandemic. This could lead to employers increasing layoffs and could cause employees to fail to seek to work once the crisis is abated. Not only is this a recipe for a government financed work disincentive, but the loss of these workers from the economy could strain our recovery. Basic economics should dictate to all of us that we should never make the cost of not working better than the cost of working. For that reason, I am deeply disappointed that the Democrats in the House and the Senate refused to provide for a simple fix to cure this issue.

I am also disappointed that other special interest and pork provisions crept into this bill at the last minute. The essential pieces of this legislation were ironed out almost a week ago, yet Democrats held up this important bill with a list of demands. Fortunately, most were rejected by negotiators from the Trump Administration but some were included in the bill.

At the request of House and Senate Democrats, a number of pet projects received pork funding in this legislation. The American people should know that Republicans fought these provisions. Yet, despite our best efforts to keep them out, funding for the Kennedy Center, Corporation for Public Broadcasting, Amtrak, and the Postal Service was included, among others. Additionally, at a time when employers are cutting back, new funds for Congressional staff and expenses were also added. This is disgraceful. Had the Speaker allowed an up or down vote on including these funds, they would have been stripped from the bill with bipartisan support. Yet, Washington as usual has resulted in their inclusion. The American people have a right to be angry about this pork. I hope there is bipartisan support to rescind it in the coming days.

The provision of the bill designed to help mid-sized companies also contains several lines that—while they may seem innocuous—are special interest gifts to big labor. Specifically, the bill requires that employers maintain existing collective bargaining agreements already in place and requires neutrality in any attempt to unionize. Changing times call for changing agreements between management and labor. By locking existing collective bargaining agreements in place, we put the thumb on the scale of labor to the detriment of the health of the business. More fundamentally, "neutrality" in organizing means allowing the union to talk to a business's employees without the employer being able to present the other side of what unionization could mean to the employer. This is fundamentally unfair to employers and employees.

These provisions will undoubtedly make certain industries and certain companies less likely to apply for the assistance they need to maintain their workforce. It will also provide an unfair advantage to companies already unionized over those who are not and to areas of the country that have a heavy union presence. Union membership is declining nationwide. We don't need a union bailout in a bill to help with the coronavirus recovery.

Finally, I note the enormous price tag of this bill. We should all pause to think about over \$2 trillion—the largest appropriations bill in the history of the Congress—being rung up on our nation's credit card with little warning. I do not question the need for such a major economic rescue package but we cannot continue to borrow in good times with the idea that we will simply borrow even more in the bad. America must have a serious conversation about how much government we are willing to pay for. This crisis should show us that the international order for things that we have depended on for decades is not more than a crisis away from a collapse. Today it is a medical supply collapse. Tomorrow it may be our debt. No party is without blame for our debt situation. Many things must change in the aftermath of this crisis, and we must ensure that our lack of fiscal responsibility is one of them.

Mr. Speaker, the bottom line is there are many things in this bill I do not like. There are