

## FACT SHEET:

### **President Biden's New Executive Actions Deliver Economic Relief for American Families and Businesses Amid the COVID-19 Crises**

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced the United States economy into an economic crisis. Across the country, more than [10 million Americans](#) are unemployed, [14 million renters](#) are behind on payments, and 29 million adults – and at least 8 million children – are struggling with food insecurity. Because of pervasive systemic racism and inequality in our economy, the burdens of this economic crisis are hitting communities of color and other underserved families hardest. One in ten [Black workers](#) and one in eleven Latino workers are unemployed. Navigating through the current crisis and emerging stronger requires immediate action to provide equitable economic relief to working families everywhere.

Last week, President Biden unveiled a historic legislative package designed to change the course of the pandemic, get students back to school, give families and businesses a bridge to an economic recovery, and invest in advancing racial equity. His plan came on the heels of December's bipartisan deal to provide a down payment on long-term economic relief for working families. Congress should finish the job by expeditiously passing the American Rescue Plan into law. But the American people cannot afford to wait for Congress to act – they need help and they need it now.

Today, the President is issuing an Executive Order that will launch an all-of-government effort to provide equitable emergency economic relief to working families, communities, and small businesses across the nation. The actions taken as part of this effort will provide relief to millions of American workers who have lost their jobs and had their hours or wages slashed through no fault of their own. They will help working families feed their children and keep a roof over their head. They will help ensure that unemployed Americans no longer have to choose between paying their bills and keeping themselves and their families safe from COVID-19 by clarifying that workers who refuse unsafe working conditions can still receive unemployment insurance. And, they will help more unemployed workers pay for training and college so they can find better jobs and succeed in an increasingly competitive job market.

That all-of-government effort will:

- **Address the growing hunger crisis facing 29 million Americans -- and as many as 12 million children** – by asking the U.S. Department of

Agriculture to consider expanding and extending federal nutrition assistance programs.

- **Ensure equitable and effective delivery of direct payments -- by asking the Treasury Department to consider changing its delivery structure** and focus on getting relief to the 8 million Americans who still have not received the financial assistance to which they are entitled.
- **Help approximately 2 million veterans maintain their financial footing** by asking the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to consider pausing federal collections on overpayments and debts.
- **Help ensure that unemployed Americans no longer have to choose between paying their bills and keeping themselves and their families safe from COVID-19** by asking the U.S. Department of Labor to consider clarifying that workers who refuse unsafe working conditions can still receive unemployment insurance.
- **Enable effective and equitable distribution of government assistance** by establishing an interagency benefit coordination structure.

While additional congressional action is urgently needed to help working families through the remainder of the crisis, these emergency measures are important steps to give millions of Americans real relief during the pandemic. This executive order, combined with the President's historic relief package and forthcoming jobs package will help Americans persevere through the pandemic and lay the foundation for a strong and equitable recovery. The President is also recommending immediate action to improve the wages, benefits, and bargaining rights of federal workers and contractors.

## **COVID ECONOMIC RELIEF EXECUTIVE ORDER**

**Address the Growing Hunger Crisis Facing 29 Million Adults -- And As Many As 12 Million Children.** Across the country [1 in 7 households](#), and more than 1 in 5 Black and Latino households, report that their household is struggling to secure the food they need. In December, Congress bolstered food assistance programs and provided new funding for food banks and school and child care meals. But these measures alone will not solve the growing hunger crisis in America. As part of his American Rescue Plan proposal, President Biden is calling on Congress to provide additional support to ensure that all Americans, regardless of background, have access to healthy, affordable groceries by extending the 15% Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefit increase, investing \$3 billion to help women, infants and children get the food they need, and other key steps. The President is also asking the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to consider taking the following steps to provide nutrition assistance to working families, including to:

- **Increase access to nutritious food for millions of children missing meals due to school closures.** Established under Families First Coronavirus Response Act, the Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer (P-EBT) connects low-income families with kids with food dollars equivalent to the value of the school meals missed due to COVID-related school closures. To date, the program has only allowed P-EBT benefit amounts up to \$5.70 per child per school day and many households have had trouble claiming benefits. To address these concerns and expand needed relief, the President is asking USDA to consider issuing new guidance increasing P-EBT benefits by approximately 15% to accurately reflect the costs of missing meals and make it easier for households to claim benefits. For instance, this action could provide a family with three children more than \$100 of additional support every two months.
- **Allow larger emergency Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program allotments for the lowest-income households.** Congress authorized emergency increases to SNAP benefits to help address food insecurity during the pandemic. So far, those benefit increases have not been made available to all of the lowest income households. USDA will consider issuing new guidance that would allow states to increase SNAP emergency allotments for those who need it most. This would be the first step to ensuring that an additional [12 million people](#) get enhanced SNAP benefits to keep nutritious food on the table.
- **Update food assistance benefits to reflect the true cost of a basic healthy diet.** More than [40 million Americans](#) count on SNAP to help put food on the table. Currently, however, USDA's Thrifty Food Plan, the basis for determining SNAP benefits, is out of date with the economic realities most struggling households face when trying to buy and prepare healthy food. As a result, the benefits fall short of what a healthy, adequate diet costs for many households. Therefore, as directed by the 2018 Farm Bill, the President will ask USDA to consider beginning the process of revising the Thrifty Food Plan to better reflect the modern cost of a healthy basic diet.

**Ensure Equitable and Effective Delivery of Direct Payments.** As the President fights to get Americans the full \$2,000 in direct payments they deserve, his administration is also working to ensure that all those who are eligible receive their full payments. Many Americans faced challenges receiving the first round of direct payments and as many as eight million eligible households did not receive the payments issued in March. In December, Congress passed legislation that would provide Americans with \$600 in stimulus. The President's American Rescue Plan proposes an additional \$1,400 per-person payments to ensure that households get the support they need to help pay bills, put food on the table, and support small businesses and their communities. While Treasury and career staff at the IRS have worked tirelessly to deliver two rounds of payments in the midst of a pandemic, the work is far from over. To

ensure equitable and effective delivery of direct payments and focus on getting relief to eligible individuals who have not received the financial assistance to which they are entitled, the President is asking the Department of Treasury to consider taking a series of actions to expand and improve delivery of Economic Impact Payments including establishing online tools for claiming their payments, working to make sure that those who have not yet accessed their funds get the relief they deserve, and analyzing unserved households to inform additional outreach efforts.

**Guarantee that No American Has to Choose Between Paying Their Bills and Keeping Themselves and Their Families Safe from COVID-19.** In 2019, [43% of American households](#) reported having at least one member with pre-existing conditions, many of whom may have a heightened risk of serious illness or death if they contract COVID. President Biden believes that workers should have the right to safe work environments and that no one should have to choose between their livelihoods and their own or their families' health. As one of many measures to help keep workers and their families' safe throughout the pandemic, the President is asking the Department of Labor to consider clarifying that workers have a federally guaranteed right to refuse employment that will jeopardize their health and if they do so, they will still qualify for unemployment insurance.

**Help Families, Workers and Small Businesses Access Relief Resources Quickly, Easily and Equitably through Coordinated Benefit Delivery Teams.** During the pandemic government programs have provided much needed support to help tens of millions of Americans pay rent, mortgages and other bills, get the food they need, and access healthcare. However, critical support does not always reach the people who need it: families struggle to navigate complicated eligibility rules while [over 20%](#) of Earned Income Tax Credits go unclaimed; [many small businesses in communities of color](#) cannot easily access loans; and according to one survey [less than 40%](#) of service workers who were laid off or furloughed at the height of pandemic closures actually received timely unemployment benefits due to system failures as applications surged. At the same time, an estimated [47% of children](#) live in households that have trouble covering usual expenses such as food, housing, and medical care. The stakes are too high and too many families are in need for people not to get the relief that they are entitled to. The Biden-Harris Administration is establishing a network of benefit delivery teams and a coordination structure across federal and state administered programs to reduce the time and burden to access urgent support that provides greater stability and builds towards an equitable recovery.

## **PROTECTING AND EMPOWERING FEDERAL WORKERS AND CONTRACTORS**

The federal government should only award contracts to employers who give their workers the pay and benefits they have earned; President Biden is today directing his administration to start the work that would allow him to issue an Executive Order within the first 100 days that requires federal contractors to pay a \$15 minimum wage and provides emergency paid leave to workers.

He is also taking critical steps to protect and empower federal employees, who dedicate their careers to serving the American people. They keep us healthy, safe, and informed, and their work transcends partisan politics. They are health care workers who care for veterans, the elderly, and the disabled. They are expert scientists, medical doctors, and technicians who maintain world-class standards, prevent and combat the spread of infectious diseases, and save countless lives. They deliver our mail, run our national parks, keep our federal buildings up and running, help protect us against climate change and environmental poisoning, and ensure that the law is applied faithfully and fairly. They are talented, hard-working, and inspiring Americans, worthy of the utmost dignity and respect. But, over the last four years, they've been undermined and demoralized. The President will sign an executive order taking steps to protect and empower federal employees who are so essential to this country. It:

- **Restores collective bargaining power and worker protections** by revoking Trump Executive Orders 13836, 13837, and 13839. It goes further to direct agencies to bargain over permissible, non-mandatory subjects of bargaining when contracts are up for negotiation so that workers have a greater voice in their working conditions.
- **Eliminates Schedule F, which undermines the foundations of the civil service.** Its existence threatens the critical protections of career employees and provides a pathway to burrow political appointees into the civil service.
- **Promotes a \$15 minimum wage.** The Executive Order directs agencies to review which federal workers earn less than \$15 per hour and develops recommendations to promote a \$15 per hour minimum wage for them.

These steps will help ensure the federal government is a model employer and restore protections to career civil servants who are so essential to this country.

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