



ALERTS

5 Things To Watch In Washington Right Now

December 23, 2020

Highlights

Late on Dec. 21, lawmakers passed an appropriations package that included \$900 billion in additional aid for coronavirus relief, which is awaiting the president's signature

This aid will provide critical relief to individuals and businesses, and the package extends authorization for many of the programs created under previous relief bills

More opportunities may still be available as President-elect Joe Biden called the legislation a "down-payment" for more relief when he enters office in January 2021

As we complete legislative efforts for the 116th Congress and prepare for a new presidential administration and a new Congress, Washington, D.C., is very busy. This is the first in our series of five things to watch in Washington, D.C., which will highlight recent important legislative updates and administrative announcements.

Below are five things you should know about the omnibus appropriations bill that includes \$900 billion for coronavirus aid. The bill is currently awaiting the president's signature.

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1. **INDIVIDUAL RELIEF:** The package contains a number of provisions that will assist individuals impacted by the pandemic. These include another round of Economic Impact Payments of \$600 for individuals making up to \$75,000 annually, an extension of the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program, and rental assistance with an eviction moratorium. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), rural and tribal broadband, and education funding – including childcare facilities – also receive additional support.
2. **BUSINESS RELIEF:** The vital Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) is reauthorized in the legislation. The new bill contains language to clarify funds from forgiven PPP loans are not taxable income and codifies guidance that makes faith-based organizations, including churches, and 501(c)(6) organizations eligible for the loans.

The new reauthorization allows options for businesses who have been particularly impacted by the pandemic to receive a second loan. The PPP program received an additional \$15 billion for venues such as independent music venues, movie theatres, and museums, which were previously ineligible for these funds. It also provides specific allocations that give aid for very small businesses, support for critical access hospitals, and additional funds for restaurants.

3. **RELIEF FUND EXTENSION:** Because many states and local government are facing how to spend CARES Act funds that are quickly expiring despite the ongoing pandemic, the legislation critically allows states and local government another year to use those funds. It will extend the expiration date for use of Coronavirus Relief Fund to Dec. 31, 2021.
4. **VACCINE:** Critical funds for distribution of the COVID-19 vaccines and implementation of Operation Warp Speed are allocated in the package. Funds include \$20 billion for purchasing the vaccine and \$20 billion for state testing. The Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA) is tasked with procuring the vaccine. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) will also receive an additional \$9 billion to assist states with distribution.
5. **UP NEXT:** On Dec. 21, President-elect Joe Biden and Dr. Jill Biden received their first doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech coronavirus vaccine in Newark, Delaware. While the President-elect acknowledges that Operation Warp Speed moved quickly to get the vaccine prepared, he has indicated that he intends to take further steps after his inauguration. Citing the need to have a thorough method to distribute the vaccine, he was quick to caution that the recovery process is not over. The President-elect also indicated that his administration would prioritize negotiations on another relief package when he takes office in January, referring to the \$900 billion package as a “down payment.”

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