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Major Economic Relief Package Passes Senate

Direct Help for American Families and Businesses to Stabilize Our Economy and Fight COVID-19

WASHINGTON, DC – The U.S. Senate tonight passed *the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act*, a bill to provide major relief to families, small businesses and their employees, as well as to stabilize our economy and protect jobs. The bill also provides a surge of support for bolstering the healthcare response during this COVID-19 pandemic. As the third legislative package included in the broader Congressional emergency response effort, this bill will provide Americans with direct financial assistance, help ensure the survival of small businesses, help stabilize our economy by supporting critical U.S. industries, and for additional COVID-19 testing, development of vaccines, and recourse for our medical professionals on the front lines.

“As the number of confirmed cases continue to grow across the U.S., and here at home, so does the concern over the long-term ramifications of this pandemic. We’ve been working hard to address this evolving crisis, to meet the health and economic needs of our nation—both immediate and long-term. This legislation sends a strong signal that Congress sees and hears the needs of the American people and that we are working aggressively to provide the resources and support they need to stay safe and recover,” **said Senator Murkowski**. “I’ve heard from Alaskans all across the state on how this disaster is impacting them and their families—the restaurant owner who had to close up shop, the hotel owner who had to let most of their employees go, and the guides who fear they are losing out on an entire tourist season, and many more just wondering what the future holds for them, their families and their businesses. This disaster is impacting Alaskans on every level. Through this bill we are providing significant relief at a time when Americans need it most.”

“As our state and nation face the unprecedented challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, the federal government has an essential role to play in helping hard-working families, keeping Alaskans employed, delivering rapid relief to small businesses, helping critical sectors of the economy avoid massive layoffs, and sending a surge of resources to medical professionals on the front lines—all of which the CARES Act does,” **said Senator Sullivan**. “Our next crucial task will be ensuring this legislation is implemented correctly and that the massive federal resources provided in the CARES Act, actually reach Alaskans who are struggling to make

ends meet. My team and I stand ready to continue to work with state and community leaders to ensure that happens. I want to commend all Alaskans for the way they have handled this disruption of our everyday lives. Every Alaskan has a role to play in helping to stop the spread of this pandemic and lessening the impacts on our communities. And every Alaskan *is* playing a role. We've seen neighbors helping neighbors, workers ensuring everybody has access to supplies and groceries, health care professionals working all hours, and volunteers serving the most vulnerable in our communities. Together we will get through this crisis stronger and more resilient."

KEY PROVISIONS:

Getting Cash Directly Into the Hands of Alaskan Families: Provides recovery checks to taxpayers who need it most by providing \$1,200 for individuals (\$2,400 for couples filing jointly) plus \$500 for each child. *[The payments begin phasing out as income exceeds \$75,000 for an individual filer, \$112,500 for head of household, and \$150,000 in the case of a joint return.]*

Rapid Relief to our Small Businesses and Their Employees: Fee-free loans of up to \$10 million are made available for businesses and many non-profits, which can be used to help pay employee salaries, the company's rent or mortgages, and utilities. In addition, federally guaranteed loans to employers who maintain their payroll during the emergency may be forgiven up to 8 weeks of payroll, rent, utilities and mortgage interest payments. The bill provides \$350 billion to support loans through this new Paycheck Protection Program. Tribal governments and their businesses will be eligible for these loans. The program would be available to self-employed individuals and "gig economy" workers.

Funds for State and Local Governments: State and local governments will receive \$150 billion. States will receive a minimum award of \$1.25 billion.

Tribal Assistance: \$8 billion for tribal governments. Includes \$1.032 billion for the Indian Health Service to address critical response needs. The bill includes \$453 million for the Bureau of Indian Affairs for coronavirus containment, providing aid to tribal governments, welfare assistance, teleworking, and increased staffing. The Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations will receive \$100 million. HUD Native programs will receive \$300 million, with \$200 million for the Indian Housing Block Grant and \$100 million for the Indian Community Development Block Grant. Combined with the \$8 billion tribal set-aside from the Coronavirus Relief Fund, tribes and tribal programs will receive \$10 billion directly.

Surge of Investment for Healthcare and Medical Professionals: \$150 billion to ensure healthcare providers and hospitals continue to receive the support they need for COVID-19 related expenses and lost revenue, as well as \$1.32 billion in additional funding for community health centers. The bill expands access to telehealth services provided by community health centers, and makes changes to Medicare to bolster our health system. Additionally, it addresses liability issues to assist with supply shortages for critical equipment such as medical masks and encourages the development and testing of new vaccines and treatments. The legislation extends

funding for programs originally slated to expire, including Community Health Centers, the National Health Service Corp, and the Special Diabetes program, until November 30 2020.

Surge of Investments for Vaccines: \$11 billion for vaccines, therapeutics, diagnostics, and other medical needs.

Support for Public and Tribal Health Entities: \$4.3 billion is allocated for resources for public health preparedness and response. An additional \$1.5 billion is designated for the CDC's state and local preparedness and response grants, which includes a provision that allocates no less than \$125 million of these funds to tribes, tribal organizations, urban Indian Health organizations, or health services provided to tribes.

Stabilizing Key Industries to Avoid Massive Layoffs: To support U.S. industries severely impacted by the COVID-19 outbreak, the bill provides loans and loan guarantees, including for cargo carriers and passenger carriers. Additionally, the bill provides payroll assistance for cargo carriers, passenger carriers, and for contractors to air carriers. Tax relief is provided for businesses affected by the emergency, such as the hospitality industry, by allowing deferred payments on estimated taxes and some payroll taxes.

Support for Fishermen: Provides \$300 million to make direct assistance available to subsistence, commercial, and charter fishery participants, fishery-related businesses and fishery-dependent communities that have been negatively affected by the market and other impacts of COVID-19.

Support for Farmers: \$9.5 billion to support agricultural producers (farmers and livestock producers) and suppliers to local food systems, including farmers' markets, restaurants, and schools.

Support for Firefighters: \$100 million will be made available for assistance to Firefighter Grants for the purchase of personal protective equipment and related supplies, including reimbursements. The Alaska Professional Fire Fighters Association worked with the Congressional Delegation on advocating their concerns and helping them understand how to best support Alaska firefighters and volunteers.

Unemployment Benefits: Provides an additional 13 weeks of unemployment benefits above what is available under state law and adds \$600 to the weekly compensation benefits that states provide for up to 4 months. Provides 39 weeks of unemployment assistance to those who are not eligible for unemployment benefits under state law, including the self-employed, independent contractors, those with limited work history, those who are sick with or caring for a family member with coronavirus, those who are caring for a child or other individual whose school or place of care is closed, who are under a community quarantine, self-quarantine, and those who cannot reach their job, had to quit their job, or their employer is closed. Reimburses states who have, or want to develop, unemployment benefits for those who are working but on reduced hours. Allows states to reimburse nonprofit, government agency, and tribes for half the costs of unemployment benefits they provide to their employees. Reimburses states for the cost of

providing unemployment benefits as soon as someone becomes unemployed, instead of waiting one week.

Support for College Students and Federal Student Loan Borrowers: Defers the payment of student loans (including principal and interest) for 6 months without penalty. All involuntary collections of loans, such as through wage garnishment, reduction of tax refunds or Social Security benefits, will be suspended. For borrowers working to earn Public Service Loan Forgiveness, months in which their payments are deferred will be counted as if they were paid. Allows colleges to pay Work Study participants even if they cannot complete their work requirements due to coronavirus. If a student has to drop out due to the coronavirus emergency, they will still be eligible for a Pell Grant and federal student loans in the future, and the semester(s) in which they dropped out will not count toward the number of semesters of aid for which they are eligible.

Support for Schools and Colleges: \$30.750 billion for the Education Stabilization Fund, of which \$3 billion will go to the Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund to provide emergency support to school districts meet a variety of needs for their students and \$14.237 billion to the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund to help colleges and universities continue to provide educational services. Schools and colleges that receive these funds will be required to continue to pay their employees and contractors such as school bus drivers.

Help for Families: \$750 million in additional funding for Head Start and \$3.5 billion for the Child Care and Development Block Grant, which helps low-income parents afford child care. These funds will help child care providers stay open or stay solvent and pay their employees during this emergency so that parents will be able to find affordable, high-quality child care and early childhood education options. The Administration of Community Living will receive an additional \$955 million for Older American programing and disability services.

Support for the Most Vulnerable: Through the Administration for Children and Families, \$900 million is appropriated to support the Low Income Home Energy Assistance (LIHEAP) program, which will assist low-income households pay their energy bills. There is \$45 million to assist family violence and domestic violence shelters and an additional \$2 million to support the National Domestic Violence Hotline. To help homeless and runaway youth, there is \$25 directed to the ACF runaway and homeless youth program.

USDA Funds for Broadband: \$100 million for the Rural Utilities Service-Distance Learning, Telemedicine, and Broadband Program, 90 percent of which must serve households in rural areas that lack sufficient access to broadband.

Nutritional Support for the Needy:

- \$8.8 billion for child nutrition programs, including school meals, Child and Adult Care Food Program, and Summer Food Service Program
- \$15.8 billion for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
- \$100 million for the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations program, which provides food boxes to low-income people living in Native communities in Alaska and on Indian reservations in the Lower 48, including \$50 million for facility improvements and equipment upgrades and \$50 million for additional food purchases

- \$450 million for the Emergency Food Assistance Program, which provides food to food banks

National Guard: Over \$1.2 billion will be made available for our National Guard who are assisting with the COVID-19 response. If and when the Alaska National Guard is activated, they will be resourced appropriately. The Alaska Congressional Delegation sent a letter to President Trump supporting Governor Dunleavy's and Major General Saxe's request to activate the National Guard on Title 32 orders (federally funded) to respond to COVID-19.

U.S. Coast Guard: \$140.8 million will be made available until September 30, 2021 to mobilize reservists, and increase the capacity of Coast Guard information sharing technology systems and infrastructure.

Veterans: Provides \$14 billion for medical services to prevent, prepare for, and respond to coronavirus, including healthcare delivery and for support to veterans who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. This will ensure Alaska veterans are cared for, should they need services.

Transportation: Changes the October 1, 2020 deadline for when Americans will be required to have the new REAL ID to September 30, 2021. \$100 million will be made available for TSA, to be spent on cleaning and sanitation for work stations and common space in airports, and for overtime and travel costs, and explosive detection materials. \$56 million is included for Essential Air Service to continue supporting payments to rural air carriers, including those that serve 60 rural Alaskan communities. The bill also provides \$100 million for general aviation airports, including Alaska's rural general aviation airports. Additionally, the Maritime Administration is provided \$3.134 million for prevention, preparations and response efforts.

Justice and Law Enforcement: The bill aims to provide assistance for state and local law enforcement by making \$850 million available until expended, and awarded to state and local law enforcement using the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant formula. \$2 million is provided to support the Justice Information Sharing System. \$20 million is included to help the FBI with coronavirus response efforts.

Background:

- On March 5, [Senators Murkowski and Sullivan voted in favor of an emergency supplemental funding package, the *Coronavirus Preparedness & Response Supplemental Appropriations Act*](#), which includes a total of \$8.3 billion to help better prevent, prepare for, and respond to COVID-19. The bill aims to strengthen the federal response to the coronavirus outbreak and allow for necessary precautions, prevention, and treatment at the local, state, national, and international levels.
- On March 18, [Senators Murkowski and Sullivan voted in favor of the *Families First Coronavirus Response Act*](#), a bill aimed at bolstering the federal government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic to help mitigate the health and economic impacts of the outbreak by ensuring testing is free for Americans, securing paid sick leave as well as family and medical leave, enhancing unemployment insurance to help workers, and ensuring that students, seniors, and low-income households can continue to access nutrition assistance.

- On March 21, the [Alaska Congressional Delegation announced Small Business Administration economic injury disaster loans](#) are now available for Alaska small businesses impacted by the COVID-19 outbreak.