



March 31, 2020

Sean McGarvey
President

Brent Booker
Secretary-Treasurer

Newton B. Jones
Boilermakers

Kinsey M. Robinson
Roofers

James P. Hoffa
Teamsters

Terry O'Sullivan
LIUNA

Frank J. Christensen
Elevator Constructors

Kenneth E. Rigmaiden
Painters and Allied Trades

James T. Callahan
Operating Engineers

Joseph Sellers, Jr.
SMART

Lonnie R. Stephenson
IBEW

Eric M. Dean
Ironworkers

James P. McCourt
Insulators

Daniel E. Stepano
*Plasterers' and
Cement Masons'*

Mark McManus
UA

Timothy J. Driscoll
BAC

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader United States House of
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McConnell, Leader McCarthy, and Leader Schumer:

I first want to thank you for your collective efforts to stimulate the economy as our nation continues to grapple with the COVID-19 pandemic. While the two stimulus bills signed by President Trump represent important and needed relief for American families and businesses, we must continue to ensure that as the pandemic develops, every effort to help construction workers is made now, and in the future.

As such, North America's Building Trades Unions (NABTU), representing 3 million skilled craft professionals across fourteen affiliated unions in the building and construction trades, requests the following policy proposals be included in the next stimulus package being crafted by the House and Senate:

Pension Security: Over 10.4 million Americans rely on multiemployer pension and annuity plans for their retirement benefits. Protecting these plans from this pandemic means protecting working families from economic dependence and financial instability. The next COVID-19 legislation that is signed by the president must include relief for these families. To that end, NABTU respectfully requests the inclusion of language that has the bipartisan support of President Trump and Democratic Leadership that was proposed for the CARES Act. This bipartisan effort would create a special partition program, allow for smoothing of investment losses and include targeted financial relief for pension funds.

Healthcare Security: For the week ending March 21, initial unemployment claims skyrocketed to approximately 3,300,000 – the single highest level ever recorded. That number is only going to grow in the coming days, weeks and months. Growing in tandem will be millions of people who are unable to maintain their existing health coverage. Despite the CARES Act increasing unemployment insurance, it will not be enough for many families to cover normal expenses and pick up the full cost of their existing healthcare plan. Unfortunately, this issue may grow exponentially with new and existing stay-at-home and lockdown orders instituted at the state and local level.

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However, previous efforts undertaken to stimulate the economy in a period of severe economic downturn provide a roadmap on how to best deal with this crisis. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 required the federal government to subsidize 65 percent of an individual's COBRA payment over the course of fifteen months. This helped workers, particularly in the construction industry, tremendously. Given the everchanging dynamics of this current crisis, NABTU proposes the next COVID-19 legislation include a 100% subsidy for fifteen months.

Furthermore, legislation must address the current financial crisis facing multi-employer Taft-Hartley health and welfare funds. These plans survive on the hourly contributions made by working men and women participating in the plans. When participants are not working, contributions cease. It is imperative for their continued operation that financial support be afforded to multi-employer health and welfare funds. To that end, NABTU proposes that the federal government makes available direct financial assistance to cover the depleted contributions to the funds due to COVID-19 related unemployment.

Economic Security: The most significant way to stimulate the economy, in the near term and well into the future, is through massive public investment in infrastructure. In the current pandemic, federal, state and local governments have recognized that construction work is essential to maintain our critical infrastructure. Immediate investments are needed in the sixteen critical physical and virtual infrastructure sectors identified by the Department of Homeland Security as well as projects of regional and national significance. An infrastructure failure in these areas will have disastrous impacts as we look to quickly and effectively move much needed medical supplies and equipment across the nation. NABTU also supports immediate increases in the Corps of Engineers budget to build hospital capacity swiftly and safely in areas hardest hit by COVID-19. Congress must also think ahead and prioritize job creation for construction workers in preparation for America's necessary economic recovery from the pandemic. NABTU proposes massive cash infusions into traditional core programs, dispersed as grants, across several modes of infrastructure, including surface transportation, water, sewer and water resources, energy, housing and telecommunications, and schools.

As some construction workers remain on critical infrastructure job sites, working under strict safety protocols, the resulting tax revenue and economic activity will help to alleviate part of the burden on state and local governments resulting from massive revenue loss due to drastic unemployment in other sectors. Congress must recognize that the financial shortfalls facing state and local governments will have a direct impact on their ability to effectively manage and rebuild from this pandemic. As such, the federal government must increase direct support for cities and states.

American manufacturing has been in decline for decades for a variety of reasons. While federal legislation and trade agreements have sought to "bring the jobs back", COVID-19 has spotlighted the need for hastening the rebirth of a robust domestic manufacturing sector. This is no longer only about job creation and economic revitalization in the rust belt. From the lack of personal protective equipment to ventilators, lives will continue to be lost in part because America lacks an adequate manufacturing sector to provide the tools and resources to swiftly defeat this pandemic. This long-time problem is now a public health and national security issue. It is imperative that future COVID-19 legislation address it.

Future COVID-19 legislation must also fix an egregious mistake in the CARES Act. Specifically, the new law disqualifies non-profits, other than 501(c)(3)s, from receiving certain loans that will help stem COVID-19's severe economic impact on them and their employees. Bottom line: all non-profits, regardless of their tax designation, should be afforded the same relief as 501(c)(3)s. They all have the same business expenses and concern for the hundreds of thousands of employees that make their organizations run.

Finally, and as always, labor standards must be a priority. Any future COVID-19 legislation that allows federal funding for construction, alteration, or renovation must include prevailing wage coverage. Furthermore, neutrality agreements must continue to be a requirement, as they were included in the CARES Act, for businesses that receive federal financing, whether through grants, loans or tax credits.

In closing, I'd like to make clear that the three million highly skilled craft professionals of the building trades are willing to do whatever it takes to ensure that our nation fully recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic. We stand ready and willing to work with you to ensure that the economic recovery is enjoyed by all Americans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Sean McGarvey".

Sean McGarvey
President

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