

U.S. Sen. Baldwin: Baldwin and Merkley push to bring HEROES Act to floor for debate and vote

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – After more than a month of inaction since the U.S. House of Representatives passed major legislation to address the ongoing health and economic crisis caused by the coronavirus, U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin today joined her colleagues led by Senator Jeff Merkley (D-OR) in urging Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell to bring the *Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solution (HEROES) Act* to the Senate floor for a debate and vote.

Nearly 30,000 additional Americans have lost their lives to the coronavirus since the U.S. House of Representatives passed the *HEROES Act* on May 15th, and millions more have filed for unemployment insurance. Yet as this crisis continues, the Senate's Republican leadership has not taken any action to schedule a debate or vote for the bill, which would provide Americans with much needed support and relief during this challenging time.

"It is unacceptable that the Senate has taken zero action to debate or pass the HEROES Act for this entire month, and it is critical that the provisions in *HEROES* be debated and considered on the floor before the July 4 recess," **the senators wrote**. "Waiting until the end of July when we are right up against the expiration of key response measures represents inexcusable delay and dereliction of duty that would put families, workers and businesses across our country in an even more precarious position by preventing an economic recovery."

"It would be an abdication of our most basic responsibilities for us to leave for the 4th of July holiday without bringing the *HEROES Act* to the floor for a vote and to consider amendments to this bill that could make it even better. Inaction is not an

option," **the senators concluded.**

In their letter, the senators emphasized the disproportionate impacts of the coronavirus on Black and Brown communities, and called for the passage of the *HEROES Act* in order to secure critical investments in and protections for the health and economic well-being of minority communities throughout the country.

Other important provisions including in the *HEROES Act* urgently underscored by the senators are protections for essential workers; financial assistance to states, tribes, and local communities to support the reopening of schools; provisions to ensure safe and accessible voting for all eligible voters in November; support for Americans who have lost their jobs during the coronavirus crisis including enhanced Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits and rental assistance; vital funding to ensure the U.S. Postal Service can continue to deliver mail; and a national testing and contact tracing strategy.

In addition to Baldwin and Merkley, the letter was also signed by U.S. Senators Ron Wyden (D-OR), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Patrick Leahy (D-VT), Ben Cardin (D-MD), Cory Booker (D-NJ), Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), Kamala Harris (D-CA), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Richard Durbin (D-IL), Mazie Hirono (D-HI), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) and Edward J. Markey (D-MA).

The full text of the letter is available [here](#) and below.

Dear Leader McConnell:

One month ago this week, the House of Representatives passed the 'Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions Act' or the "HEROES Act" to provide relief for the American people from the acute public health and economic crisis brought about by COVID-19.

It is unacceptable that the Senate has taken zero action to debate or pass the HEROES Act for this entire month, and it is critical that the provisions in HEROES be debated and considered on the floor before the July 4 recess. Waiting until the end of July when we are right up against the expiration of key response measures represents inexcusable delay and dereliction of duty that would put families, workers and businesses across our country in an even more precarious position by preventing an economic recovery.

Our nation has now suffered more than 115,000 deaths and more than 2 million confirmed cases, with tens of thousands of additional cases being confirmed each day there is little sign of abating in the United States. Some states that have reopened, including Arizona, Texas, Florida, are now seeing alarming upticks in cases and hospitalizations. Dr. Anthony Fauci said as recently as June 9 that “we’re still at the beginning” of the crisis. Fed Chair Jerome Powell said on June 10th that unemployment remains historically high and has been the most severe for lower wage workers, women, Black and Hispanic populations, and that the economy will need aid from Congress for a long time to come. In short, inaction is having a calamitous cost to the health and economic crisis that will be with us for the remainder of 2020, if not longer.

As we write, our nation is also being transformed by a wave of activism in response to police brutality and the recent killings of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd. These protests have called on each of us to combat deep, systemic racial injustice. The COVID-19 crisis has only underscored many of the longstanding structural inequities and disinvestments that have resulted in crises that disproportionately harm people of color, especially Black and Brown Americans.

If we fail to act and meet this moment with the urgency it requires, then some of the key immediate relief from our previous bipartisan relief act will expire on July 31st and send the frail economy into a deepening spiral that will hurt millions of Americans. As you well know, over 40 million Americans have lost their jobs. Millions more are living on the brink. Essential workers continue to lack PPE and basic protections. Cities, towns and rural communities are poised to lose teachers, firefighters and their most essential services if we don’t act now.

Recent developments and data only underscore the importance of a number of the provisions in the HEROES Act, including:

- Protections for essential workers;
- Financial assistance to states, tribes, and local communities so that schools can reopen and parents can return to work and they can continue providing critical services like health and housing assistance;
- Provisions to ensure safe and accessible voting for all eligible voters in November;
- Help for all people who have lost income to make ends meet, including by boosting SNAP, providing rental assistance, cash payments, and extending enhanced unemployment insurance benefits;

- A national strategy to increase testing and contact tracing to avoid a catastrophic second wave of infections;
- Vital funding to ensure the U.S. Postal Service can continue to deliver mail to people across the country; and
- In recognition that the virus and its impacts are hitting communities of color the hardest, policies to ensure explicitly that the bill invests in and protects the health and economic well-being of all Black and Brown people living in America.

It would be an abdication of our most basic responsibilities for us to leave for the 4th of July holiday without bringing the HEROES Act to the floor for a vote and to consider amendments to this bill that could make it even better. Inaction is not an option.

Sincerely,