

# U.S. Sen. Baldwin: Supports bipartisan legislation to help struggling restaurants in Wisconsin

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) cosponsored the bipartisan Real Economic Support That Acknowledges Unique Restaurant Assistance Needed to Survive (RESTAURANTS) Act to establish a \$120 billion revitalization fund to help independent restaurants deal with the long-term structural challenges facing the industry because of COVID-19 and support the reemployment of 11 million workers.

“Local restaurants and workers across Wisconsin need our support now to survive this economic crisis,” said Senator Baldwin. “Many small and independent restaurants are operating at reduced capacity and may be forced to close their doors for good if we don’t act now. Our legislation will create the Restaurant Revitalization Fund that will help folks in Wisconsin and across the country get through this pandemic and keep our Made in Wisconsin economy moving forward.”

Restaurants have been uniquely affected by COVID-19. In April alone, 5.5 million restaurant workers lost their jobs, accounting for 27 percent of total job losses in the month. Without further action from Congress, over 11 million independent restaurant workers are at risk of permanently losing their jobs. Restaurants are facing months of massive revenue losses because of government mandated social distancing, rising costs of supplies, new expenses for personal protective equipment, and a decrease in the public’s willingness to dine out.

There are over one million restaurant locations in the United States, including bars, independent restaurants, chain restaurants, and social caterers. The Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that the restaurant industry has lost over 6.1 million jobs

- the most of any industry and double the figure from the next most affected industry.

A recent study found that 85 percent of independent restaurants are likely to close by the end of the year if direct aid like the revitalization fund is not provided to the industry. Small independent and franchise restaurants are more at risk of permanently going out of business because of the pandemic because consumer spending at these establishments has been disproportionately affected and they lack the same access to capital markets. In whole, the recovery fund would generate at least \$183 billion in primary benefits and \$65 billion in secondary benefits - more than double the amount of the proposed grants.

The Senate bill was led by Senators Roger Wicker (R-MS) and Kyrsten Sinema (D-AZ). The bill was also cosponsored by Senators Lindsey Graham (R-SC), Chris Coons (D-DE), Doug Jones (D-AL), Cory Gardner (R-CO), Thom Tillis (R-NC), Robert Casey (D-PA), Charles Schumer (D-NY), Kamala Harris (D-CA), Mark Warner (D-VA), Catherine Cortez Masto (D-NV), Ron Wyden (D-OR), Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), John Cornyn (R-TX), Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-MS), Dick Durbin (D-IL), Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Bill Cassidy (R-LA), Gary Peters (D-MI), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Edward Markey (D-MA), Tim Kaine (D-VA) and Mazie Hirono (D-HI). The legislation is supported by the Independent Restaurant Coalition (IRC).