

U.S. Sen. Baldwin: Pushes SBA to speed up relief to struggling live event venues

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Senator Baldwin Pushes SBA to Speed Up Relief to Struggling Live Event Venues

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) signed on to a letter to Small Business Administrator Isabella Casillas Guzman urging her to disburse Shuttered Venue Operator Grant funding to struggling live entertainment venues as soon as possible. The legislation that created this program, the *Save Our Stages Act*, was signed into law more than six months ago, and event venues are going out of business while waiting for these grants.

In the bipartisan letter, led by Senators Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) and John Cornyn (R-TX), the Senators wrote, “The Save Our Stages Act, now the Shuttered Venue Operators Grant (SVOG) program, was created to prevent widespread closures of venues that have been devastated by the loss of revenue due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As supporters of the SVOG program, we urge you to

take immediate action to ensure that the relief reaches eligible applicants without further delay.”

“It has been nearly six months since Congress passed the Save our Stages Act, nearly two months since the second launch of the program, and 51 days since the Small Business Administration (SBA) began receiving applications.”

“Bureaucratic process cannot stand in the way of getting these desperately needed funds out the door.”

They were joined on the letter by Senators Bill Cassidy (R-LA), Bob Menendez (D-NJ), James Risch (R-ID), Angus King (I-ME), Patty Murray (D-WA), Deb Fischer (R-NE), John Hickenlooper (D-CO), Bill Haggerty (R-TN), Mike Crapo (R-ID), Dick Durbin (D-IL), Jack Reed (D-RI), Rob Portman (R-OH), Ben Ray Lujan (D-NM), John Thune (R-SD), Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Roger Marshall (R-KS), Maggie Hassan (D-NH), Chuck Schumer (D-NY), Marsha Blackburn (R-TN), Patrick Leahy (D-VT), Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH), Thom Tillis (R-NC), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Steve Daines (R-MT), Ed Markey (D-MA), Tina Smith (D-MN), Mark Kelly (D-AZ), John Boozman (R-AR), Ron Wyden (D-OR), Mitt Romney (R-UT), Chuck Grassley (R-IA), Brian Schatz (D-HI), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Jon Tester (D-MT), Mike Braun (R-IN), Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), Gary Peters (D-MI), Jacky Rosen (D-NV), Ted Cruz (R-TX), Marco Rubio (R-FL), Bob Casey (D-PA), Maria Cantwell (D-WA), Mark Warner (D-VA), Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV), Kyrsten Sinema (D-AZ), Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), Martin Heinrich (D-NM), Jeff Merkley (D-OR), Joe Manchin (D-WV), Alex Padilla (D-CA) and Chris Coons (D-DE).

The full text of the letter is [here](#) and below. An online version of this release is available [here](#).

June 15, 2021

*The Honorable Isabella Casillas Guzman
Administrator, Small Business Administration
409 3rd Street, SW
Washington, DC 20416*

Dear Administrator Guzman:

The Save Our Stages Act, now the Shuttered Venue Operators Grant (SVOG) program, was created to prevent widespread closures of venues that have been devastated by the loss of revenue due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As supporters of the SVOG program, we urge you to take immediate action to ensure that the relief reaches eligible applicants without further delay.

With each passing day, more independent businesses are forced to shutter permanently or file for bankruptcy. Landlords and banks are no longer permitting deferrals and are pressing for immediate payment of past due accounts; businesses are receiving eviction notices; mom-and-pop businesses are being forced to sell.

It has been nearly six months since Congress passed the Save our Stages Act, nearly two months since the second launch of the program, and 51 days since the Small Business Administration (SBA) began receiving applications. We urge you to immediately take steps to ensure the funds are distributed to qualified applicants.

The SVOG program is unique, with necessary restrictions built in to ensure taxpayer funding goes only to eligible applicants in need. Under the terms of the law, the SVOG program requires the award of funding to eligible applicants who meet the simple requirements of the program. In this context, the insistence on strict

compliance with competitive grant rules has created unnecessary delays in funding. Similarly, restrictions that SBA has placed on communication with grant applicants are unnecessary and have prevented the agency from providing administrative support to individual applicants that could have streamlined the application review process. Bureaucratic process cannot stand in the way of getting these desperately needed funds out the door.

Further delays are unacceptable and would have irreversible consequences for these industries. In an effort to keep our constituents informed and ensure our small businesses receive the support they were promised, we respectfully request you provide us with the following information:

- 1. The number SVOG awards that have been approved;*
- 2. The number of SVOG grants that have been disbursed to recipients;*
- 3. The amount of SVOG funding that has been disbursed;*
- 4. The number of applications with holds;*
- 5. The number of first-priority applicants that have received an award notice;*
- 6. What SBA is doing to update small business owners on the status of their applications;*
- 7. What SBA is doing to ensure applicants are not incorrectly associated with similar-named individuals and entities on the List of Excluded Individuals/Entities (LEIE);*
- 8. What SBA is doing to correct false DNP designation notices sent to thousands of applicants;*
- 9. SBA's justification for breaking grant awards, regardless of size, into multiple disbursements; and*
- 10. SBA's timeline for subsequent disbursements and what grantees need to do to receive them.*

Sincerely,

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