

Common Cause Urges Congress to Prioritize 6 Key Democracy Issues in “CARES 2.0” COVID-19 Supplemental

May 12, 2020

Dear Member of Congress:

The health of our democracy is interrelated with the health of our economy and public health. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Americans should not have to decide between risking their lives and having their voices heard in elections. On behalf of Common Cause’s 1.2 million members, Congress must ensure that we can vote, be counted, and be connected throughout this crisis and beyond. As Congress prepares to introduce the next COVID-19 emergency supplemental package (“CARES 2.0”), we urge you to include six key priorities to protect our democracy:

- Invest at least \$4 billion in our elections to ensure no Americans have to decide between their health and their right to vote and ensure that the 20% state match requirement is removed;
- Guarantee at least \$2-3 billion a month for the duration of the pandemic for broadband to ensure communities have access to robust and affordable connectivity;
- Provide at least \$5 billion to support local journalism so all Americans can continue to receive reliable news throughout this pandemic;
- Provide: 1) increased funding for the Census to ensure all residents are counted; and require the Census Bureau to spend the \$1 billion it currently has in reserve; 2) paid sick leave for temporary census workers; and 3) income exclusions for census workers receiving SNAP, Medicaid/CHIP, and TANF benefits;
- Ensure sufficient funding for the United States Postal Service so all Americans can continue to be connected; and
- Appoint a chair for the CARES Act Congressional Oversight Commission to ensure that taxpayers' hard-earned money is appropriately allocated and used to promote permissible purposes, as well as protect inspectors general by ensuring that they can only be fired for cause.

The COVID-19 pandemic presents an unprecedented challenge to our democracy, and Congress must rise to meet this challenge. Congress must also provide robust oversight of existing and future COVID-19 supplemental packages to ensure that public money is being appropriately used. Nearly seven weeks after the CARES Act was signed into law, no chair has been appointed by Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi. Congressional leaders must immediately appoint a chair of the commission and ensure it has staff and office space. Congress must prioritize this commission to prevent this Administration from further ignoring the law.

Congress must continue to invest in our democracy this year or else we’ll face potentially catastrophic consequences--millions of disenfranchised voters, millions who can’t complete the Census, and millions who are cut off from others. Common Cause’s 1.2 million members will continue to call, email, and write

your offices to ask you to support these critical priorities. Thank you for protecting the health of our democracy, while simultaneously ensuring public health and strengthening our economy.

Sincerely,



Karen Hobert Flynn
President
Common Cause