

Federal American Rescue Plan is the relief New Mexicans need

Written by Sharon Kayne Communications Director New Mexico Voices for Children
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ALBUQUERQUE—Several advocacy organizations issued the following statement regarding passage March 10 of the American Rescue Plan:

“We applaud the passage of the American Rescue Plan. This legislation is the kind of action we need now, when unemployed workers are still struggling to pay their bills, millions of families are falling further behind on rent and [are] at risk of facing homelessness, and parents are worrying about how they will feed their children,” James Jimenez, executive director of New Mexico Voices for Children, said.

“We want to thank those members of our congressional delegation who worked hard to pass the American Rescue Plan and deliver the relief our state needs: Senators Martin Heinrich, D-N.M. and Ben Ray Lujan, D-N.M. and Representatives Deb Haaland, D-N.M.-District 1 and Teresa Leger Fernandez, D-N.M.-District 3,” he added.

Key elements of the COVID relief package that will help families in New Mexico include: (1) increased housing assistance and an extension of increased SNAP food benefits to help people keep their homes and feed their families; (2) an extension of unemployment assistance; (3) tax credits and stimulus payments to help people meet urgent expenses, such as rent, groceries, utility bills, and car payments; and (4) improved access to affordable health coverage for people earning low incomes and middle-class families.

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“Two of the provisions that we are the most excited about are the monthly child allowances, which are expected to cut child poverty in half, and the \$39 billion investment in the nation’s child care infrastructure, which will help our small businesses, so parents can begin heading back to work,” Jimenez said.

“The package also includes \$31.2 billion in aid for our nation’s Native American communities and Tribes, making it the largest investment the federal government has ever made in the country’s Native people,” he added.

“We are thankful that Senators Heinrich and Lujan and Congresswomen Haaland and Leger Fernandez heeded the call from New Mexicans to advocate for more inclusive relief for all our families,” Marian Mendez Cera with El CENTRO de Igualdad y Derechos said. “More-mixed status immigrant families are included in this relief package and much-needed funding for our state and municipal governments to help New Mexicans weather the pandemic and revitalize our economy.

“That said, many essential workers and families were still excluded and so we will continue to work with our state and local governments to ensure that money is set aside for those essential workers who are on the frontlines of the pandemic yet continue to fall through the cracks,” she pointed out.

The state and local governments will also see fiscal relief that will help restore jobs for teachers, firefighters, and other critical public employees, prevent further layoffs and cuts to core services like education and health care, and provide assistance to people who have been hit hardest by the pandemic and recession.

“Our faith traditions remind us that people, no matter their gender, income, race, or immigration status, have inherent dignity,” Abraham Sanchez with NM CAFé said. “This relief package ensures that our government not only addresses but begins to restore our public health system and provides robust relief to those suffering the most.

“We are grateful for the leadership of our Senators Martin Heinrich and Ben Ray Lujan for lifting

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up all New Mexicans. We look forward to continuing to work with them as well as our state and local elected officials to ensure those families who were still excluded are part of local recovery efforts. We must not leave anyone behind,” he concluded.

“This plan, combined with the tax bill making its way through the state legislature and the state-level relief packages that have already been passed, it’s (sic) clear that lawmakers are not just putting families and small businesses first, they’re also centering [on] racial justice and equity in many of their policies,” Jimenez said

“But, while the American Rescue Plan provides much-needed relief, it’s also temporary. As we approach the one-year mark of the COVID-19 public health and economic crisis, it has become increasingly clear that economic recovery isn’t going to happen overnight, particularly for people of color, who have been hit the hardest by both the pandemic and the recession,” Jimenez said.

“We have more work to do to build a more equitable economy that works for everyone. We look forward to working with our congressional delegation to enact permanent policies that will reduce the longstanding inequities that were exacerbated by the COVID-19 public health and economic crises,” he concluded.

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