
UPDATED: Bipartisan deal reached on small business coronavirus relief

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Tue, Apr 21, 2020 at 12:35 PM

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UPDATED: Bipartisan deal reached on small business coronavirus relief

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04/21/2020 03:22 PM EDT

WASHINGTON — Congress and the Trump administration have reached a deal on a new round of coronavirus aid that could be approved by the Senate on Tuesday afternoon if all 100 senators agree.

Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) announced the accord just an hour before the Senate will try to pass the agreement and rapped Democrats for blocking a previous proposal to give money to small businesses.

"I am just sorry that it took my colleagues in Democratic leadership 12 days to accept the inevitable," McConnell said. "The American people are counting on Congress to put aside reflexive partisanship and work across the aisle to help our nation through this pandemic."

The legislation totals \$484 billion and delivers funding to small businesses, hospitals and for testing. The Senate is scheduled to come in for a 4 p.m. session on Tuesday. Leaders are seeking to have the legislation approved unanimously.

"We have a deal, and I believe we will pass it today," Senate Minority Leader [Chuck Schumer](#) said on CNN. Despite optimism over the weekend, Democrats and the Trump administration struggled to clinch the agreement and failed to deliver it during Monday's Senate session.

"I think it will happen at 4 o'clock today," Senate Finance Chairman [Chuck Grassley](#) (R-Iowa) said on C-SPAN. "I think it will go a long way for small businesses."

Aides in both parties said they were still finalizing the legislation throughout the day and making sure it could pass unanimously. President Donald Trump also signaled he'd sign the legislation into law, tweeting Tuesday that he's urging lawmaker to pass the bill "with additional funding for [the Paycheck Protection Program], Hospitals, and Testing."

According to a summary of the deal obtained by POLITICO, the legislation includes \$321 billion for the depleted Paycheck Protection Program, of which \$60 billion is set aside for underbanked businesses, a priority for Democrats.

The deal also includes \$60 billion in loans and grants for economic disaster assistance, \$75 billion for hospitals and \$25 billion for coronavirus testing. Of that testing money, \$11 billion will go to states and some will also go to the federal government.

Two weeks ago, Senate Democrats blocked the Senate GOP's initial offer of \$250 billion for small businesses, demanding a broader package of aid that included millions of dollars for hospitals and states. That conflict has resulted in a standoff between Democrats and Republicans, with Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin moving to arbitrate the impasse.

The Paycheck Protection Program ran out of its initial \$349 billion round of funding last week. Republicans have hammered Democrats for blocking efforts to replenish the small business fund.

"Democratic leaders blocked the money and spent days trying to negotiate extraneous issues that were never on the table. I am grateful our colleagues have walked away from those demands and will finally let Congress act," McConnell said.

But Democrats counter that the bill expected to pass Congress this week contains much of what they demanded two weeks ago, pinning the delay on Republicans.

"When you look at the package that's going to be passed, it's almost exactly like the one we asked for two weeks ago," House Majority Leader [Steny Hoyer](#) told reporters on a press call Tuesday. "We're ending up with a bill we could've passed 12 days ago."

Yet Republicans fended off money for state and local governments that Democrats wanted and also got more for small businesses than previously requested. Democrats, meanwhile, were able to deliver on more money for hospitals and testing that they'd requested.

Schumer played up the testing language as a major breakthrough for federalization of the program.

"You need a national strategy, and the president and Mnuchin and [White House chief of staff Mark] Meadows agreed to that to their credit. And that will be in the proposal," Schumer said.

Democrats admitted defeat on their demands for \$150 billion for states and local governments after McConnell and Mnuchin took a hard line against including that money. Instead, the legislation will grant flexibility for unspent money from previous relief bills to be used for revenue shortfalls. Democrats will seek more money in the next round, Schumer said.

The Senate minority leader, along with House Speaker [Nancy Pelosi](#), continued negotiating with Meadows and Mnuchin until early Tuesday.

The House, which is set to vote Thursday on the relief measure, will not be able to pass the legislation unanimously and lawmakers have been instructed to prepare to return to the Capitol this week.

Hoyer said members were not being forced to come back, but he expected more than enough lawmakers to establish a quorum — 216 members — and clear the package via a roll call vote.

"We are asking every member to return who can return," Hoyer told reporters during his weekly press call on Tuesday. "There are some members who are particularly vulnerable to either themselves because of some preexisting condition or they are caring for relatives ... so we're not ordering members to come back."

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