

To: Groundwork Collaborative, The Roosevelt Institute

From: GBAO

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## Americans Seeking Further Economic Relief Amidst COVID-19 Pandemic

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As millions of Americans struggle during an acute and severe economic and public health crisis, we see a pervasive, bipartisan demand for Congress to take more, sweeping, and long-term action on economic relief. Action taken so far is viewed as an effective beginning, not the end, and most across party lines welcome an array of new policy ideas for future phases. From a long list of effective policies, voters prioritize health care, aid to essential frontline workers, and aid to Americans struggling under economic pressure. The bipartisan agreement is striking; on a list of 17 policies, majorities of Democrats, independents, and Republicans find all but one – tax cuts for corporations – likely to be effective. Taken altogether, our data clearly suggests a preference for a worker-centric approach, not one focused on large corporations. *This memo reflects the findings of 1,000 online interviews of registered voters conducted by GBAO from April 13-16, 2020.*

### Key Findings

- Americans are struggling economically and find Trump's and Republicans' pandemic response so far mostly lackluster.
- Remedies so far are a good start, but a clear majority believe the government has not gone far enough to address the crisis given the pervasive need. Voters want "all of the above" and are less concerned about federal debt.
- That said, there is a clear preference of immediate health care and frontline worker needs, worker relief through investment, programs or cash payments, with corporations in a bottom tier.
- The policy specifics are consistent with voters' articulated approach – focus on workers, ensure accountability, be comprehensive, fast, and also address the long-term problems in our economy such as poverty and inequality.
- The public rejects the false trade-off between addressing immediate needs and fixing the longer-term underlying economic problems that have exacerbated this crisis.

### Many Are Struggling, And See Trump's Response As Weak

- **Voters are dissatisfied with Trump and the Congressional GOP's handling of the coronavirus pandemic, favoring leaders closer to home.** Consistent with recent polling by Navigator Research and others, voters give Donald Trump a net -8 approval on how he has addressed the pandemic (46% approve, 54% disapprove), a far cry from the appreciation given state governments, who they give a net +42 approval. Congress also fares better than Trump. More approve of their own members of Congress (+22), although less so the two parties; Republicans in Congress see a net -7 approval, while Democrats rate slightly higher (-1).



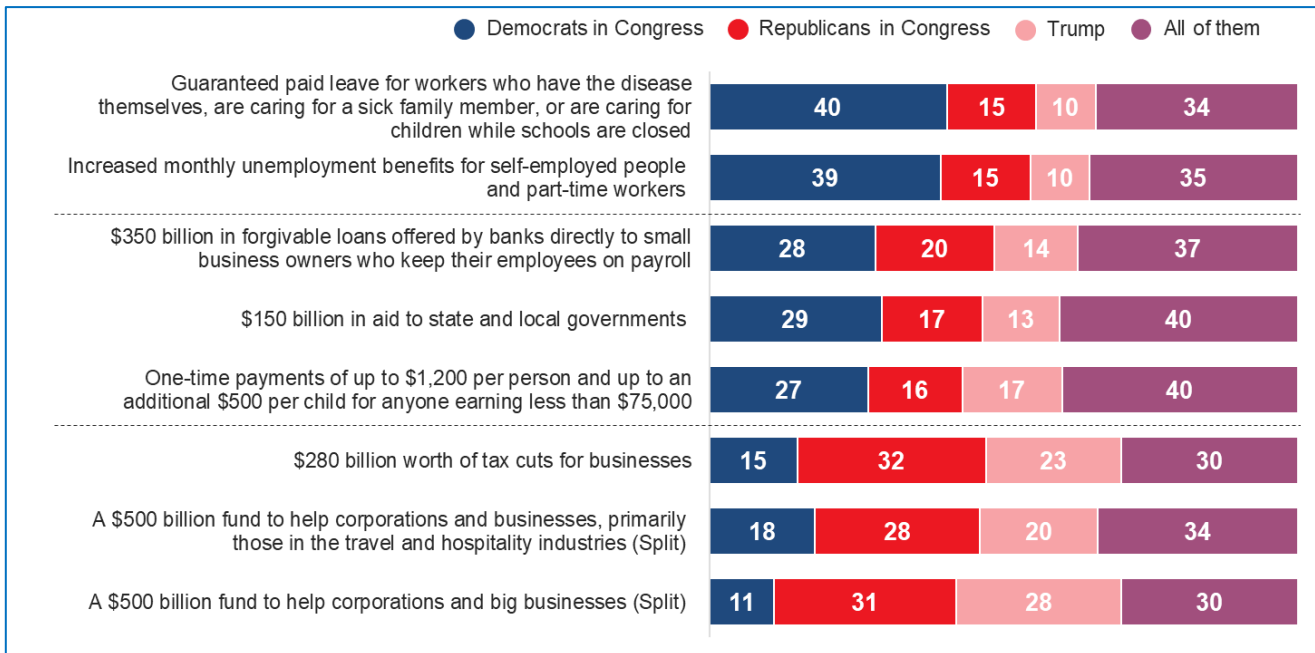
- **Americans are struggling financially, with many worried about their ability to pay for basic needs and services.** More are pessimistic about the direction of the economy – 56% believe it will either get worse or stay stuck where it is now (46% and 10% respectively). This pessimism pervades among Latinx voters (58% worse), women (52%), and young women in particular (56%).
- **Over a third are experiencing employment upheaval.** Overall, 39% report they or someone in their household has lost a job, experienced a cut in work hours or pay, or been furloughed. This impact is notably higher among African American voters (51%), Latinx voters (54%), and voters under 40 years old (60%). Three-fourths (75%) of those facing these setbacks say they are very or somewhat worried about affording things like health care, education, housing, and other bills in the next year. But even of the 61% whose job status is unchanged, many (44%) are also very or somewhat worried about affording expenses.

## Congressional Action Taken So Far Seen As An Effective Start—But With Much More Action Needed

- **Voters are aware of Congress’ relief efforts and want it to do even more.** Americans are tuned in and watching Congress keenly – 42% say they are following their relief efforts very closely and another 42% are following it somewhat closely. A majority (56%) believes Congress has not gone far enough to address the economic situation, compared to a third (33%) saying Congress has provided the right amount. Only 11% think Congress has gone too far, a minority opinion even among Republicans (13% gone too far, 44% not far enough, 43% right amount).
- **Majorities support a future approach doing “whatever it takes” to provide needed assistance, and do not want Congress to focus on debt.** Support for making big investments is confirmed later in the survey in a series of forced-choice questions about preferred approach. Seven in ten (70%) agree “*We should do whatever it takes to provide Americans the economic support they need during this very difficult time. Providing Americans with more money means they will spend more money in their communities buying goods and services*” over more of a concern about adding “*to the federal debt by spending money on a laundry list of government programs.*” Support for “whatever it takes” transcends party lines, with 82% of Democrats, 67% of independents, and 59% of Republicans in agreement.
- **Every CARES proposal tested is viewed as “effective.”** Democrats, Republicans, and independents agree on which items are most effective – guaranteed paid sick leave or caregiver leave (88% total very and somewhat effective), increased monthly unemployment benefits (87%), forgivable loans for small businesses (85%), and \$150 billion in aid to state and local governments (83% total).

- The most effective policies are most likely to be considered “Democratic,” but not by large margins.** Democratic and Republican respondents both credit their own parties (for Republicans, this means either Republicans in Congress or Trump) for the measures they find most effective. Yet many – particularly independents – assume there was consensus. For example, nearly half (47%) of independents say all three – Democrats, Republicans, and Trump – supported providing one-time payments of up to \$1,200 per person and up to an additional \$500 per child for anyone earning less than \$75,000 annually.
- Republicans are more likely to be credited for helping supporting measures related to corporations and business.** More than half (54%) believe Republicans or Trump were the biggest backers of a \$500 billion fund to help corporations and businesses, and 55% believe Republicans or Trump were most supportive of corporate tax cuts. Nearly two-thirds of Republicans believe Republicans and Trump supported these two measures most (60% and 64% Republicans + Trump respectively), compared to lower numbers of Democrats (50% and 49% respectively) and independents (52% and 54% respectively). Majorities consider these two proposals effective, but with less intensity than the rest of the list (fund: 24% very effective, tax cuts: 27% very effective).

As far as you know for each one, please indicate who you think supported that issue more.



## Broad Agreement That Next Steps Should Focus On Health Care, Frontline Workers, And Workers In Need

- For next steps, voters indicate policies prioritizing health care and frontline workers are top-tier.** Voters find every potential policy of the 17 tested to be more effective than not. Yet even in this “all of the above” climate, there are some very clear areas of consensus, where majorities even find them *very* effective, mostly across party lines. This top tier focuses on the disease’s treatment, vaccines, and caregiving, such as free treatment and testing, hospital assistance, an available vaccine, and hazard pay for frontline workers. To be sure, there are some party differences in the top tier, no measures are politically polarizing, and these same policies are top-tier for both Democrats and Republicans.
- Most want more corporate accountability and want corporations to do more to support public health efforts.** Whether it’s accountability to prevent international fraud or demanding more of American companies, voters across party lines want to see more asked of the corporate sector. Requiring companies to “quickly scale up” the production of equipment is considered likely to be effective, whether or not we include the phrase “using the federal government’s power” (the table below combines a split-sampled test of this language).
- Many effective proposals also focus on relief for workers and hard-hit Americans.** Americans also find effective proposals centering on worker assistance and help with everyday expenses. Effective policies here include paid leave for all workers, preventing foreclosures and evictions, expanding SNAP and food stamps, and requiring negotiations between industry and workers. Other ways of funding support, such as direct cash payments, funding for state and local governments, and investment in infrastructure jobs, are all also considered effective.

Proposals (% total very or somewhat effective at “addressing economic problems caused by the pandemic”)	Total	Dem	Ind	Rep
Providing free health care coverage for treatment and testing for coronavirus	89	93	86	87
Providing more assistance to hospitals and investing in community health centers	89	95	85	85
Making sure any coronavirus vaccine or treatment created with government funds is owned by the government and available to anyone who needs it, at little or no cost	88	88	86	90
Preventing foreclosures for homeowners with loans and evictions for people in rental properties	87	89	87	85
Creating “hazard pay” for front-line health care workers, first responders, and other essential workers	85	92	83	80
Requiring companies (using the federal government’s power) to quickly scale up the production of medical equipment and supplies (Combined split)	85	87	83	86
Creating strong accountability measures to prevent fraud and international companies from benefiting from American relief	84	84	82	85
Guaranteeing paid leave, including sick leave and family leave, for all employees, including self-employed people and part-time workers	83	90	81	76

Giving more direct aid to state and local governments to prevent cuts to public schools or health care	82	91	78	77
Expanding food assistance through SNAP or food stamps	80	88	80	70
Requiring industry leaders and labor unions (representatives of workers) to come together to reach agreements about how businesses should change to meet workers' needs during the crisis (Combined Split)	80	85	77	76
Giving workers deemed "essential" a way to bargain with their employers for more safety equipment, sick leave, and hazard pay	79	86	77	74
Providing a monthly cash payment of about \$1,000 to every individual earning under \$75,000, plus \$500 per child for as long as the crisis lasts	79	86	76	73
Creating a new federal infrastructure plan to create thousands of jobs (thousands of jobs including green energy jobs) (Combined split)	77	86	73	72
Expanding Medicare to include all Americans, including those who have been laid off	70	85	70	50
Establishing vote by mail in every state for the 2020 presidential election	69	85	68	51
Providing additional tax cuts for corporations	54	46	53	64

## Voters Want Direct Support for Workers And Real Accountability Prioritized Over Corporations

- Corporations indeed receive voter support.** Over half approve of how corporations are handling the pandemic (56% approve, 44% disapprove), meaning corporations receive better numbers than Trump or each party in Congress. Although, it is worth noting, the numbers are reversed among Democrats (44% approve, 56% disapprove).
- Aid to corporations is considered effective, but less so than other options.** Recall the two CARES measures designed to help businesses – a tax cut and a fund for support – are viewed as more effective than not, but with less intensity than every other item tested (27% and 24% very effective, respectively). For future phases, a majority view “providing additional tax cuts for corporations” as effective, yet is bottom-tier compared to the rest of the list.
- When asked to choose, voters want Congress to put people first.** In addition to specific policies, voters articulate a preference for a worker-centric approach. In a series of forced-choice questions, far more agree on helping people and workers directly over helping large businesses (74% to 26%). There is clear agreement across party lines (81% Democrats, 76% independents, 64% Republicans).

**74%:** “In the next economic relief package, Congress should prioritize helping people and workers directly, especially those who have been hurt the most”

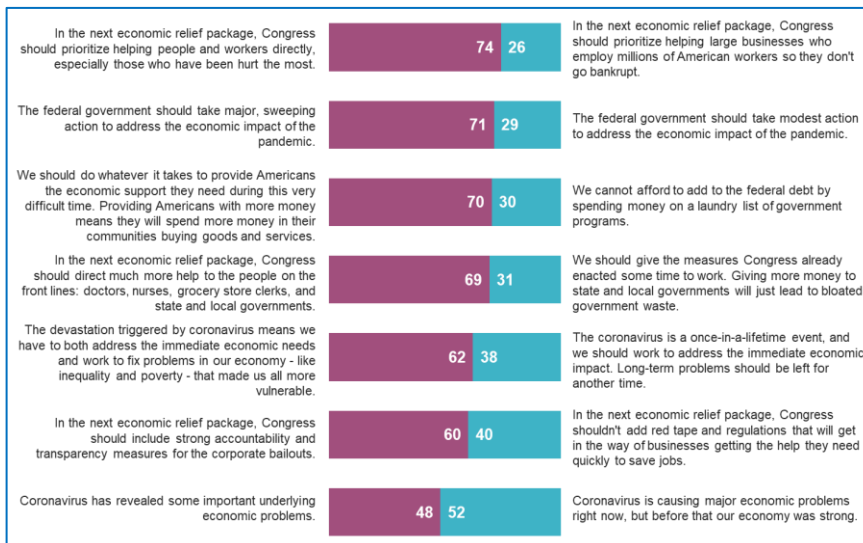
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**26%:** “In the next economic relief package, Congress should prioritize helping large businesses who employ millions of American workers so they don’t go bankrupt.”

- Accountability measures and regulation surpass help for corporations.** Accountability is a consistent, bipartisan priority. More (60%) agree “*Congress should include strong accountability and transparency measures for the corporate bailouts*” than “*Congress shouldn’t add red tape and regulations that will get in the way of businesses getting the help they need quickly to save jobs*” (40%). The parties are nearly all in agreement (68% Democrats, 58% independents, 53% Republicans). And many consider a specific accountability measure likely to be effective (84%), one of the highest-scoring policies tested.

## Voters Want Congress To Adopt A Forward-Looking, Long-Term, Sweeping Approach

- Voters say action should be sweeping, not modest.** Americans clearly choose a comprehensive and long-term response to the economic crisis. Over two-thirds (71%) agree “*The federal government should take major, sweeping action to address the economic impact of the pandemic,*” over more modest action, with little partisan divide (79% Democrats, 68% independents, 63% Republicans).



- More want both long-term and immediate economic problems tackled.** More see a need to go beyond immediate economic challenges to address the problems making so many financially vulnerable. Over six in ten (62%) agree “*The devastation triggered by coronavirus means we have to both address the immediate economic needs and work to fix problems in*

*our economy – like inequality and poverty – that made us all more vulnerable*” over “*The coronavirus is a once-in-a-lifetime event, and we should work to address the immediate economic impact. Long-term problems should be left for another time*” (38%). Democrats and independents agree on this long-term approach (78% Democrats, 60% independents), while Republicans are nearly divided (46% vs. 54%).

- Yet a backward-looking glance at the pre-coronavirus economy is more divisive.** Fewer see the current economic climate through the lens of a fragile pre-virus economy. More feel “*before...our economy was strong*” (52%) than agree “*Coronavirus has revealed some important underlying economic problems*” (48%). This has one of the largest partisan divides of our forced-choice questions, with 64% of Democrats and only 26% of Republicans finding structural problems with the economy before the virus.