

# Biden Administration Unveils \$1.9 Trillion Relief Package



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On the evening of Thursday, January 14, 2021, officials from President Joe Biden's Administration unveiled the details of their touted \$1.9 trillion rescue package that they are asking Congress to enact within the next several weeks.

Billed the "[American Rescue Plan](#)," the relief package would provide an additional \$170 billion for education, which would be allocated in the following way:

- \$130 billion to support K–12 schools in safely reopening. This proposed funding is flexible and could be used for reducing class sizes, modifying classrooms for social distancing, improving ventilation, providing personal protective equipment, implementing mitigation and cleaning measures, hiring of nurses and counselors, expanding community schools, providing summer school, and closing the digital divide. A portion of this funding would be reserved for a COVID-19 Educational Equity Challenge Grant, which would support state and local governments in partnerships with teachers, parents, and other stakeholders to respond to educational challenges under COVID-19.
- \$35 billion for the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund. This funding could be used to implement public health protocols, execute distance learning plans, and provide emergency grants to students in need.
- \$5 billion for the Hardest Hit Education Fund. Governors could use this funding to support educational programs and the learning needs of students significantly impacted by COVID-19. Governors would have discretion to use this funding for early childhood education, K–12 schools, or higher education.

The rescue package calls for a \$20 billion investment to mount a national vaccination program whereby the federal government would partner with state and local governments to launch community vaccination centers and deploy mobile vaccination units to rural communities. Additionally, the plan proposes \$50 billion to expand testing capacity and support schools and local governments in implementing regular testing protocols to ensure a safe reopening of schools and businesses.

The relief package also asks Congress to provide \$350 billion in emergency funding for state and local governments to ensure that they can keep front line public workers employed, assist with vaccine distribution, expand testing capacity, help with reopening schools, and maintain other essential services. Republicans opposed providing aid to state and local governments in the \$900 billion relief package that was approved in December and likely will not support this proposed investment in the plan. Another proposal that Republicans are likely to oppose is President Biden asking Congress to raise the minimum wage to \$15 per hour, which would more than double the current federal rate of \$7.25 per hour.

The "American Rescue Plan" will be the Biden Administration's first real test of the narrow Democratic control of Congress (see "[Georgia Senate Runoff Hands Democrats a Government Trifecta](#)" in the January 2021 *Community College Update*). While the plan likely won't face many roadblocks in clearing the House of Representatives, the Senate is a different story as there are more procedural hurdles to overcome in approving legislation. Additionally, Democrats will not be able to afford any defecting votes from their party in the Senate unless they can get a Republican vote in return, and some fiscally conservative Democrats may have reservations about the plan's price tag and its more progressive proposals such as more than doubling the current federal minimum wage and providing \$1,400 stimulus checks to Americans.

We will continue to monitor and provide our analysis on the \$1.9 trillion rescue plan and its effect on California education as it is debated and makes its way through Congress.