

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW: THE BIDEN ADMINISTRATION'S "NATIONAL STRATEGY" AND "AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN"

In January 2021, the Biden administration released two major proposals for tackling COVID-19 across America. On January 14, President Biden presented his American Rescue Plan and, on January 21, he published the National Strategy for the COVID-19 Response and Pandemic Preparedness. The administration's rescue plan is a \$1.9 trillion bill that must wind its way through Congress, while the national strategy is a 200-page treatise emphasizing the role of science, openness and equity. The proposals provide both funding to restart the economy and a data-driven blueprint for reopening businesses and workplaces.

AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN OVERVIEW:

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- \$350 billion in state and local government aid to ensure the continuation of vital services, which reduces the potential for increases in property, lease and transfer taxes that typically target commercial real estate when states need to boost revenue.
- Fully funded state "short-time" compensation programs to help small businesses make up paycheck differences when they need to cut hours in order to keep employees working. This could be essential for retail tenants who are most affected by the lack of foot traffic during the pandemic.
- \$20 billion in relief to public transit. Getting tenants and guests to buildings is a fundamental concern, and the public will need a safe and effective infrastructure to do so.
- \$15 billion in small business grants, which is in addition to any previous small business grant and loan programs previously enacted (such as the Paycheck Protection Program, Economic Injury Disaster Loan grants, etc.).
- An increase from \$300 to \$400 per week in additional unemployment benefits and an extension of the federal contribution through September 2021.

NATIONAL STRATEGY OVERVIEW:

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- Establishes a COVID-19 Response Office responsible for coordinating the pandemic response across all federal departments and agencies. (page 29)
- Communicates public health guidance on COVID-19 containment and mitigation, as well as metrics for reporting progress to state and local leaders to drive informed reopening decisions. (page 63)
- Provides \$10 billion and invokes the Defense Production Act to increase the production and distribution of vaccines and alleviate shortages of syringes, N95 masks, gloves and other supplies needed for virus testing and vaccine administration. (page 38)
- Infuses \$20 billion and partners with states to create more vaccine centers at stadiums, convention centers and pharmacies. (page 41)

SUPPORT FOR BUSINESSES

- Directs a national pledge from businesses to ensure their employees and contractors can take paid time off to get vaccinated. (page 89)
- Coordinates with large employers to establish on-site vaccination centers, prioritizing industries and occupations that face a heightened risk of COVID-19. (page 89)
- Provides technical support from the Small Business Administration (SBA) for businesses to implement effective infection control practices, including administrative controls, engineering controls and personal protective equipment (PPE). (page 57)
- Develops incentives through the SBA to encourage small businesses to adopt adequate infection control practices such as masking and social distancing. (page 57)
- Prioritizes the additional \$285 billion for the Paycheck Protection Program appropriated by the year-end stimulus package for businesses hardest hit by the pandemic by covering the costs of operating safely, including physical changes to the workplace, sanitizing supplies and PPE. (page 91)
- Asks Congress to provide \$25 billion to stabilize child care centers at risk of closing and \$15 billion in child-care aid for struggling families, allowing more workers to return to work. (page 85)
- Requests that Congress reinstate and expand the CARES Act requirement for employers to provide paid family and sick leave due to COVID-19 and eliminate exemptions so more workers are covered for up to 14 weeks. This previous mandate was offset by tax credits in the 2020 CARES Act and expired at the end of 2020. (page 89)

WORKER SAFETY

- Issues an Executive Order on Protecting Worker Health and Safety, which directs the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to issue updated guidance on COVID-19 worker protections, and to consider if emergency temporary standards are necessary. If issued, these standards would direct employers to adopt plans to keep workers safe and detail enforcement actions by OSHA. (page 88)
- Works with OSHA to develop a safe standards certification program for businesses, allowing them to self-certify that they are adhering to important public health standards and providing them with a placard to show their commitment to their communities. (page 91)

MASK MANDATE

- Requests all individuals living in the United States to wear masks for 100 days. (page 55)
- Requires mask-wearing and other CDC-recommended public health practices in federal buildings and "office space within buildings, owned, rented, or leased by the executive branch of which a substantial portion of occupants are Federal employees or contractors," via the Executive Order on Protecting the Federal Workforce and Requiring Mask-Wearing. (page 130)
- Issues a federal mask mandate for transportation. All passengers, except those with certain medical conditions and children under two years old, will be required to wear masks on buses, ferries, planes, ride-share vehicles, subways and trains, as well as at transportation hubs. (page 55)
- Provides technical assistance to states who adopt model policies and provides federal research grants to identify best practices and barriers to implementing effective masking and physical distancing policies. (page 57)
- Publishes detailed infection control guidance and guidance from the CDC regarding mask-wearing and other PPE in the workplace that is specific to different industry sectors. (page 57)