

Enact Policies to Protect Workers as U.S. Faces Coronavirus

Current state and federal policies often leave underpaid workers without the resources and protections they need. As we collectively fight the coronavirus, the exclusionary policy choices legislators have made are even more apparent. Black, indigenous, and people of color including immigrants in tenuous job situations are at increased risk and among them: “gig,” temp, workers wrongly classified as independent contractors, workers in low-wage jobs, service workers, airport workers, maintenance workers, homecare workers, and health care providers are all at even more risk. Racial health disparities will exacerbate the situation.

Now is the time for us to come together and address these inequities, the following policies would save lives and ensure that all people have dignity and the economic security to guarantee their health and safety. These policies must be enacted to respond to this crisis and preserved to reflect our values.

Federal Policies

We will continue to update this as soon as possible. To stay in the loop with updates and resources, visit our website, follow us on Instagram, friend us on Facebook, or follow us on Twitter (@NELPnews).

Families First Coronavirus Response Act

- We must continue to fight for policies that meet all workers’ and their families’ needs. While the original version of the *Families First Coronavirus Response Act* (H.R. 6201), included important measures, many have been taken from the bill as opponents and industry lobbyists sought to weaken it.
- We must pass laws that mirror the original *Families First Coronavirus Response Act* (H.R. 6201), which included:
 - provide 14 days of emergency paid sick leave to all employees who need to miss work during a public health emergency, including the current crisis. It further authorizes temporary longer-term paid leave for all workers who need an extended period away from work because of contracting COVID-19, being quarantined, or caring for someone who is ill or quarantined.
 - enact a sensible permanent paid sick days requirement that long should have been part of the workplace protections in this country.
 - provide much-needed funding to state unemployment insurance agencies to deal with a new influx of claims, and provides added incentive to states to engage in the practices we recommend, such as waiving work-search and waiting-week

requirements, and making it clear that employers are not charged for virus-related claims.

- help states set up much-needed work-sharing programs for worksites that are not quarantined but need to reduce hours available to workers

Occupational and Safety and Health Administration Emergency Temporary Standard

- A vitally important provision to protect front line health care and other at-risk workers from COVID-19 by requiring the Occupational and Safety and Health Administration to issue right away an Emergency Standard. Currently, there are little or no enforceable protections to protect workers on the front line.
- We are outraged that the House bill excluded the health care worker protection requirements, and we must support the same bill in Senate: [*COVID-19 Health Care Worker Protection Act of 2020 \(S.3475\)*](#)
- The Federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) must enact an Emergency Temporary Standard to ensure steps are taken to protect all workers who perform essential functions and are at an elevated risk of occupational exposure to the coronavirus. The ETS must ensure employers are providing the necessary protective equipment and training to protect all workers, including healthcare workers, emergency responders, and other health care employees in traditional health care settings, as well as home health care workers, school nurses, prison nurses, and more.

Unemployment Insurance (UI)

- Current legislation fails to address long-term UI reforms. We must continue to shore up our nation's [*unemployment programs*](#), many of which are dreadfully underfunded and suffer from historically low reciprocity rates due to cuts states have made in the past ten years. Congress and state legislators must act swiftly to improve [*unemployment insurance programs*](#) as well as to enact much-needed reforms to the federal [*Disaster Unemployment Assistance*](#) program. Reforming our Unemployment Insurance program is critical because disaster benefits are based on state UI programs that are uneven from state to state.

State and Local Policies

- States should ensure their [*Unemployment Insurance \(UI\)*](#) policies are meeting the needs of all workers.
- Pass Paid Sick Leave legislation and remind residents of existing policies, if there are any.
- Pass Paid Family and Medical Leave policies and remind residents of existing policies, if there are any.
- Support policies that ensure all people have access to quality health care, including testing for COVID-19 ☺