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America's Anti-Poverty Voice

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"THE CURSE OF POVERTY HAS NO JUSTIFICATION IN OUR AGE"

-MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.



**\$500 BILLION TO
CORPORATIONS IN
VIRUS "RESCUE,"
CRUMBS FOR SNAP**

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I AM POVEF



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📅 April 2, 2020 👤 thepulseinstitute
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By Robert S. Weiner and Zach Filtz

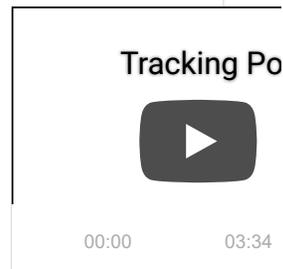
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House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) and President Donald Trump have called for a next “phase four” coronavirus rescue bill to follow on the just passed legislation, which leaves many in the lurch. The Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY), who is in a tight reelection bid, calls more legislation “too expensive,” and is asking Pelosi to “stand down.” Assuming Pelosi, who just appointed a Select Coronavirus Committee, stands her ground instead of “down” and again works with Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and President Trump to get something done, she may have to not only provide benefits to vulnerable people missed in the last bill, but agree to a Trump “infrastructure” package she wanted anyway and had called for– which McConnell and House Republicans never wanted to pay for.

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Robert Weiner

South Carolina Congressman James E. Clyburn, the new chair of the bipartisan committee on the coronavirus, told us three years ago that Congressional Republicans simply didn't want to pay for infrastructure– the jobs building roads, bridges, tunnels and grids desperately needed. Yet now it may happen.

But there is another desperately needed area which also must be in the rescue and infrastructure bill. In the United States today, more than 30 million American children rely on schools providing the National School Lunch Program. While the nation is effectively on lockdown, the number of children's and families' stomachs has not been reduced.

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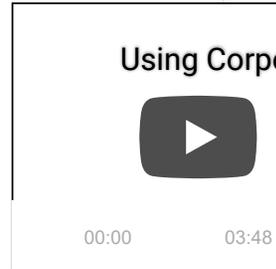


Zachary Filtz

With most states' schools being closed and students not getting their daytime meal due to coronavirus precautions, the time is now for the White House and Congress to increase benefits to food stamps (SNAP) as well as eligibility for it. This would alleviate financial stresses placed on working-class and lower-working-class Americans already burdened by layoffs caused by the coronavirus impact on the economy.

For example, 109,000 Detroit households are now on food stamps

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according to *Statistical Atlas*. More economic troubles are in store as the jobless crisis mounts — 10 million new unemployment claims nationwide this week.



Carol Olander

Carol Olander, Ph.D., who is the former national head of Food Stamp and SNAP Research at the Department of Agriculture and liaison to the Senate Agriculture Committee, agrees with a recent Center on Budget and Policy Priorities assessment. Olander told us in an interview for this article that SNAP “funding in the stimulus package only temporarily meets the shortfall expected given the increased number of people eligible under current rules.”

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She added, “The legislation does not address the fact that without changes in eligibility rules or an increase in maximum benefit, many who until recently were employed will be put in an untenable situation of using limited savings and high cost credit or tapping modest home and vehicle assets just to eat. Such an outcome will only delay the ultimate recovery of the economy and increase the divide between those who have and those who do not.”

The \$2.2 trillion stimulus signed by President Trump on Friday will provide \$450 million for The Emergency Food Assistance Program, which supplies food banks. Media showed mile-long lines. There are and will continue to be more “clients” as job losses mount– and horribly, more deaths– Dr. Anthony Fauci says 100,000 to 200,000 deaths projected coming. Those will mostly be adult bread earners. What remains unstated in this dilemma is the fact that children will be left in the lurch. Some \$350 million would buy additional food, and \$100

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million would be used for distribution.

The state of Michigan has already seen close to 11,000 coronavirus confirmed cases. Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer (D) said it's "dire straits." The Craig Melvin show on MSNBC stated that globally, 300 million children have already missed meals as a result of the virus outbreak.

While it appears that the bill provides billions in additional funding for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (food stamps) and Child Nutrition Program (\$9 billion), it would not expand eligibility or benefits. SNAP itself will get just \$25 billion. However, American corporations will get a whopping \$500 billion. For a widely discussed next, additional stimulus bill to help the most vulnerable Americans, it makes sense to get more cash straight to the working class.

In effect, there's \$500 billion for corporations in the Congress and

A nation's greatness is measured by how it treats its weakest members.

-Mahatma Gandhi

Like slavery and apartheid, poverty is not natural. It is man-made.

-Nelson Mandela

White House virus “rescue,” but just crumbs for SNAP.

Bipartisan effort from the Trump administration, House, and Senate would lead the way forward and would most effectively help the states, cities, and areas with the most food-insecure households in the U.S.

Quick fast facts about the National School Lunch program include: it operates in 100,000 public and private schools, and it offers free lunches to students of households who are at or below 130 percent of the federal poverty level. It also offers reduced prices to students between 130 and 185 percent of the poverty level. The current poverty level for a family of four in the U.S. is \$25,900 according to data at the Census Bureau.

Speaker Pelosi has shown strong support for expansion now because “when working families thrive, our economy grows,” according to her House website.

One way to help families would certainly be to give them enough food to survive.

Another important aspect– ALL in Detroit, Michigan and around the country should respond immediately to the Census– whether by phone (allowed), online, by mail, or in person. Stacey Abrams, former Georgia House Minority Leader, now leads Fair Count, a major Census-supporting organization. She just this Wednesday told the National Press Club that the Food Stamps (SNAP) number of people who can receive benefits is also determined by responses to the Census. So ALL have a roll in the benefits count.

Robert Weiner, a member of The PuLSE Institute National Advisory Panel, was a Clinton and Bush White House spokesman, spokesman for the House Government Operations Committee and senior staff for Congressmen John Conyers, Charles Rangel, Claude Pepper, Ed Koch and Sen. Edward Kennedy. Zachary Filtz is Senior Policy Analyst for Robert Weiner Associates and Solutions for Change.