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## COVID-19 Response – Weekly Wrap-up

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APRIL 17, 2020 – 12:00 PM

### CONGRESS: Negotiations Stall on Next Response Bill

The federal response to the COVID-19 pandemic slowed considerably this week as lawmakers struggled to reach agreement on new legislation to bolster key provisions in the [Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security \(CARES\) Act](#). Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) and House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) continue to support a targeted bill to provide an additional \$251 billion for the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), while Congressional Democrats are calling for broadening the legislation to include funding for community financial institutions serving certain groups, \$150 billion for state and local aid, \$100 billion for hospitals and community health centers, and a 15% increase in the maximum Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefit. With the \$349 billion originally allocated for the PPP now depleted, pressure intensifies to provide financial support for small businesses across the country hoping to avoid furloughs, layoffs, and closures.

Congress announced this week that it formally delayed its official return to Washington until the week of May 4 at the earliest, with a handful of pro-forma sessions scheduled in the Senate through the remainder of April. If an agreement on the next response bill is reached before lawmakers are slated to return, each chamber can seek to approve the legislation quickly by voice vote. However Rep. Thomas Massie (R-KY) has stated repeatedly he will demand an in-person vote. In the longer term, previously scheduled recesses throughout the summer have been shortened or cancelled. The schedule will continue to evolve as lawmakers look to make up for time lost in recent weeks. A revised Congressional calendar for 2020 may be accessed [here](#).

Additional information on known and anticipated Congressional action, as well as what to watch as the virus compresses the Congressional calendar, may be found in a [downloadable presentation](#) in VNF's COVID-19 Resource Center.

### ADMINISTRATION: President Seeks to Reopen U.S. Economy

After a third straight week of substantial job losses, the Trump Administration continues to focus on measures to reopen parts of the U.S. economy by May 1.

On Tuesday, the President announced the selection of industry leaders across the country to serve on ["Great American Economic Revival Industry Groups."](#) These leaders would work in concert with the Administration to identify industry-specific needs across a wide swath of the American economy. Additionally, the President selected 31 Members of the House of Representatives (9 Democratic, 22 Republican) and 65 Senators (12 Democratic, 52 Republican, 1 Independent) to serve on the ["Opening Up America Again Congressional Group"](#) to advise the White House on reopening the economy.

Yesterday, the Administration released its ["Guidelines for Opening Up America Again,"](#) which establishes a roadmap for states and regions to reopen their economies in a "phased" approach, so long as they meet certain criteria related to symptomatic individuals, reported COVID-19 cases, and hospital conditions. The Guidelines include recommendations in each of the three phases for individuals, employers, and employers of "specific types." The third category refers to industries where large gatherings occur (including large venues, gyms, bars, and restaurants) as well as senior living facilities, hospitals, and organized youth activities.

Ultimately, state and local governments retain the authority to lift stay-at-home orders and allow businesses to reopen, though the Trump Administration indicated during its daily press briefing on Thursday that there are several states that meet the criteria to begin reopening their economies.

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