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Texas AFL-CIO News Release

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Texas AFL-CIO to U.S Senators: Renew the \$600 - Pass the Heroes Act Now

Texas AFL-CIO President Rick Levy, joined by a group of unemployed Texans on the eve of the cancellation of the \$600 per week in unemployment coronavirus federal aid, pushed for the US Senate to pass the HEROES Act now: "The bill to help unemployed workers, local governments and schools has been on Mitch McConnell's desk for 68 days. He has been blocking the renewal of the \$600 per week in unemployment compensation that Texas families rely on for basic survival, and Texas senators Cornyn and Cruz have been his trusted helpers. Texans deserve better. "

Labor unions across the nation have condemned the U.S. Senate and, specifically, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell for his body's failure to pass the HEROES Act, which would renew the additional \$600 in unemployment insurance benefits expiring tomorrow.

The HEROES Act also includes debt collection relief, stimulus payments to families, and aid to state and local governments, in addition to the extension of the additional \$600 unemployment insurance payments. The U.S House of Representatives passed the legislation on May 15th.

Texas AFL-CIO Secretary/Treasurer, Montserrat Garibay, said, "For two months, the Senate sat on H.R. 6800, causing millions of Texans to experience stress and uncertainty. That's shameful."

"Countless Texas families stand to lose federal unemployment benefits and therefore, their means to survive in this pandemic. Inaction is not an option." Levy added.

Joe Martin, Vice-President of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE), whose members lost their job upon the cancellation of South by Southwest earlier this year, urged senators to move quickly on the renewed aid. He said, "Without the passing of the HEROES Act, hard-working families affected by the coronavirus will lose the ability to maintain their housing, food, and medical expenditures. The Senate's refusal to act will cause untold damage to American families and the economy that sustains them."

The Coronavirus State Fiscal Relief Fund in the HEROES Act provides billions in needed grants to state and local governments. Yvonne Cortez Flores, President of AFSCME Local 1624, explained the value of the aid to Texas workers, "Without these funds, mass layoffs and extended furloughs in the public-sector will follow. Texas businesses will feel the secondary but immediate impact of that lost revenue."

Zeph Capo, President of the Texas/American Federation of Teachers, said:

"While we are not at a time where it's safe to reopen our schools, that decision point on when to go back and how to safely do it will arrive. A foundation of that decision will be the funding from the HEROES Act that our schools need to ensure all the protocols are met for keeping our students and teachers as safe as possible.

He added, "Our schools already have been strapped with enormous expenses related to COVID-19. The HEROES Act will ensure our schools get the funding they need for both safety and the continuing investment in our students' education."

The Texas AFL-CIO is a state labor federation consisting of 240,000 affiliated union members who advocate for working families in Texas.

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