

# Rescue plan's impact in county

The Democrats' American Rescue Plan, signed into law by President Biden on March 11 (the first anniversary of the World Health Organization declaring COVID-19 a pandemic), provides \$1.9 trillion in funding to individuals, state and local governments, schools, businesses and other entities to mitigate the continuing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to figures compiled by the National Conference of State Legislatures, the city of Boerne will receive \$3.98 million, the city of Fair Oaks Ranch will receive \$2.19 million and Kendall County will receive \$9.2 million. On March 29, thanks to the broader vaccine access, the American Rescue Plan has ensured all Texans ages 16 and older became eligible to get the vaccine. The Texas Department of State Health Services (TDSHS) asked providers to continue to prioritize people who are the most at risk of severe disease, hospitalization and death, such as older adults. As of April 17, about 22.1 percent of Texas' 29 million people have been fully vaccinated, according to the TDSHS.

Texas Democratic Party Chair Gilberto Hinojosa said, "Because of our Democratic champions, this money will help Texans get back on their feet after an incredibly tough year, help support small businesses and get our economy



back on track."

According to Abby Livingston of the Texas Tribune, the bill "will distribute stimulus checks as large as \$1,400 to millions of Americans, another \$350 billion to cities and states that experienced declines in tax revenue and increases in expenses and \$130 billion toward education. The bill also funds an additional \$300 in unemployment payments per week until early September."

According to New York Times columnist Ezra Klein, "This still looks like the most ambitious and progressive economic package Congress has passed in my lifetime. It will do more to cut poverty, and push full employment, than anything else I've covered."

These funds will provide financial support to offset the repercussions of the pandemic. The plan also expands the child income tax credit, starting this summer, which will allow distribution of checks to parents of up to \$250 per month for school-age children and \$300 per month for children under 5, lifting a significant percentage of those children out of poverty.

The plan includes specific provisions to benefit farmers, restaurants and small businesses, as well as vaccine distribution, COVID-19 testing and contact tracing, medical supplies and the healthcare workforce.

We all agree that it's vital for schools to get back to normal. The plan includes funding to help public elementary and secondary schools open and operate safely and to provide special educational services to students who have experienced a lag in learning over the past year.

Other highlights of the plan include:

- An increase in food stamp benefits.
- Increased funding for rural health.
- Grants to small businesses, including restaurants and bars.
- Increased funding to K-12 schools, with the goal of reopening those schools within 100 days.
- Funding for housing, including rental assistance programs and a Homeowner Assistance Fund.
- Provisions to assist agriculture, transportation, healthcare services and cybersecurity.
- Alleviates homelessness by helping about 80,000 households get permanent housing.

The bill passed the Democratic-controlled House by a vote of 219-212 and the Dem-

ocratic-controlled Senate by a vote of 50-49. Our two U.S. senators, John Cornyn and Ted Cruz, and our representative in the U.S. House, Chip Roy, all voted against the plan as did all of their Republican colleagues.

We can debate all day long about the appropriate role of government in our lives. Most of us would agree that funding public schools, roads and highways and law enforcement and the military are appropriate. At the Kendall County Democratic Party, we believe it is an appropriate role for government to provide financial supports in a time of crisis.

Our friends and family members have lost their jobs (and therefore, their health insurance) and faced hunger and possibly even eviction. We're proud and gratified that this administration is helping local businesses and our neighbors.

The American Rescue Plan is a huge accomplishment, but we still have so much work to do to help our country recover from this pandemic. One thing is clear: we have to keep electing Democrats up and down the ballot to get critical, progressive legislation like the American Rescue Plan across the finish line.

For more information on how you can get involved, visit [www.kcdems.us](http://www.kcdems.us)

*Laura Bray is the Chair of the Kendall County Democratic Party.*