

Publications

Overview of Federal Coronavirus (COVID-19) Relief Bills

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Since the first known case of COVID-19 in the United States was discovered in late January, the federal government has taken several steps (with more planned) to both fight the spread of the disease and blunt its economic impact on the American economy. Two “phases”—the Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations Act and the Families First Coronavirus Response Act—are already law, and Congress and the Executive Branch are currently negotiating a third.

The first phase of the federal government’s relief efforts was the March 6th [Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations Act](#). This law provided \$8.3 billion in supplemental funding for public health measures. The law provided over \$4 billion in funding to various agencies for diagnostic and vaccine research and development and over \$2 billion to the CDC for local, state, and national response efforts. The law also waived [restrictions on Medicare](#) providers’ ability to provide telehealth services, as well as providing \$20 million to the Small Business Administration for disaster loan programs.

Almost immediately after passing the phase I legislation, Congress started negotiating and drafting its phase II response. This became the [Families First Coronavirus Response Act](#) (FFCRA), passed on March 18th. The FFCRA expanded FMLA leave for employers with fewer than 500 employees, giving those employees up to 12 weeks of FMLA leave to care for minor children whose school or care has been interrupted by COVID-19’s effects. It also required private employers with fewer than 500 employees (and public agencies and other non-private employers with any number of employees) to provide two weeks of paid sick leave for those affected by or caring for an individual affected by COVID-19. The FFCRA granted a payroll tax credit to most employers impacted by the above requirements (as well as to certain self-employed individuals who would be entitled to receive expanded FMLA leave or paid sick leave benefits if the individual were an employee of an employer subject to these requirements). Finally, FFCRA required health plans to cover 100% of COVID-19 testing costs. For more information, Vorys’ has published two alerts on the FFCRA. One on the employment provisions, [available here](#). and one on the health care provisions, [available here](#).

Similar to the transition between phase I and phase II legislation, immediately after passing the FFCRA, Congress turned to negotiating its phase III relief. Negotiations between Congressional Republicans, Democrats, and the Administration are ongoing, but the legislation is expected to focus on supporting individuals, small businesses, and essential industries that are being severely impacted by the economic downturn caused by COVID-19 and the public health measures being implemented to slow or stop its spread. An early summary of the proposed phase III relief prepared by Senator Rubio (R-FL) and Chairman of the Senate Small Business Committee is available [here](#).

Vorys is actively monitoring these developments and has put a team in place to assist you in navigating the myriad issues related to these stimulus measures. To see the full team, [click here](#).

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Vorys COVID-19 Task Force

Outside of this new law, employers continue to face myriad issues as COVID-19 continues to spread and impact communities and workplaces (some of these issues are addressed in our prior alerts [located here](#)). We will continue to keep you posted on any important developments. In the meantime, if you have any questions regarding this new law or any other aspect of COVID-19, please contact your Vorys lawyer.

Vorys attorneys and professionals are counseling our clients in the myriad issues related to the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. We are taking significant steps to ensure we remain proactive during this extremely fluid environment. The business and legal challenges our clients are facing are changing each day.

We have also established a comprehensive Coronavirus Task Force, which includes attorneys with deep experience in the niche disciplines that we have been and expect to continue receiving questions regarding coronavirus. Learn more and see the latest updates from the task force at vorys.com/coronavirus.