



A Union of Professionals

Higher Education: Biden's American Rescue Plan and Investments in Infrastructure and Jobs

President Joe Biden signed the American Rescue Plan into law on March 11, 2021. One year later, we are continuing to see and feel the results across our communities.

Biden's American Rescue Plan has delivered relief to our nurses and healthcare professionals, provided funding for new healthcare and health access initiatives, and lowered health insurance premiums for millions. The package included funding to help our early childhood, K-12 and higher education institutions address learning, implement COVID-19 safety measures, and otherwise work to support students and staff by making education safe. It allowed all students to have access to school meals, regardless of whether they were attending in person or remotely. Biden's plan invested in COVID-19 testing, tracing, research, and vaccine deployment. The vast majority of Americans received stimulus checks to help ease the pandemic's economic burden. And it doesn't stop there: Biden's American Rescue Plan also provided billions of dollars in child care relief for families, housing assistance, broadband, workforce development and more.

It is clear that elections matter; we know that when we show up and vote, our elected leaders will have our backs. On Nov. 15, 2021, President Biden signed the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act to create jobs and rebuild our infrastructure. We have seen how Biden's American Rescue Plan and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act have helped ensure an equitable recovery over the last year, but we know we must keep showing up and push Congress to continue these programs that are a lifeline for millions of Americans.

Under the American Rescue Plan:

Help for public schools—and the people who work and study in them. The plan included an unprecedented level of funding to help our early childhood, K-12 and higher education institutions address learning, implement COVID-19 safety measures, and otherwise work to support students and staff by making education safe, including

- \$40 billion to **support colleges and universities** in making higher education safe and accessible during the pandemic.
 - \$36 billion for public and private nonprofit institutions.
 - \$3 billion for historically Black colleges and universities, tribal colleges and minority-serving institutions.
 - \$200 million for institutions with the greatest unmet need related to the pandemic or those not served by the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund formula.
 - \$850 million in targeted aid for Bureau of Indian Education schools and tribal colleges or universities.

The **American Federation of Teachers** is a union of professionals that champions fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, healthcare and public services for our students, their families and our communities. We are committed to advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism, and especially through the work our members do.

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- Requires institutions to spend at least 50 percent on **emergency financial aid grants** that are provided directly to students and allows them to use the remaining funds to replace lost revenue, reimburse for emergency expenses and more.
- Maintenance of effort: Requires states to **maintain spending** on both K-12 and higher education in FY 2022 and FY 2023 at least at proportional levels relative to a state's overall spending, averaged over FYs 2017 to 2019. This can be waived by the education secretary.

State and local governments **received \$350 billion** in flexible grants to respond to COVID-19.

Immediate needs from the pandemic and an impending economic recession were addressed by **investments, and expanding social infrastructure** kept Americans from poverty in 2021, showcasing the power of equitable public investment, which included:

- Child tax credits;
- Unemployment insurance; and
- Food assistance.

164 million people received direct stimulus payments of up to **\$1,400**.

The child tax credits provided a tax cut to **more than 36 million households** with nearly 90 percent of children in the United States, cutting the child poverty rate in half.

According to Moody's Analytics, the American Rescue Plan was responsible for:

- **4 million** additional jobs;
- **A 2 percent lower** unemployment rate;
- **A 5.7 percent increase** in economic growth; and
- **Preventing a double-dip recession** in the spring of 2021.

Families across America have saved **40 percent** off their monthly health premiums.

Costs for Affordable Care Act health insurance were lowered, **4.5 million more** people got healthcare, and states received **more money for Medicaid** to reduce waiting lists.

Under Biden's Infrastructure Plan:

Higher education & job training:

- \$550 million was provided to support the creation and expansion of industrial research and assessment centers at higher education institutions, trade schools, community colleges and union training programs.
- \$95 million was provided to train workers in specific industries, including retraining school bus drivers to operate zero- and low-emission buses and training the emerging workforce in numerous green-collar jobs. States will likely partner with their community and technical colleges for much of that instruction.

Clean water:

- \$55 billion was provided for **water infrastructure**, including funds for removing lead from the nation's drinking water systems and targeted funds for lead remediation for disadvantaged communities.
- \$200 million, over five years, was provided to test for and remove lead contamination in **drinking water at schools** and child care programs.

High-speed internet: \$65 billion was provided for broadband investment to help families access the internet and afford devices. In addition, the law provides \$1.5 billion in state grants and \$1.25 billion in competitive grants to support digital equity.

Retrofit schools: \$500 million, over five years, was provided to support energy-efficiency improvements and renewable energy improvements at public school facilities.