



A Union of Professionals

Paraprofessionals and School-Related Personnel: 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, 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:

Historic investments were made in preK-12 schools, which—along with the administration's use of its full force to get **educators, staff and students vaccinated**—enabled 95 percent of public elementary and middle schools to be open in person, full time, in early January 2022, compared with just 46 percent in January 2021.

An unprecedented \$122 billion was distributed to **help schools reopen safely and support students**, and the administration developed guidance to help schools use these funds for their most pressing needs, including addressing students' mental health, students' learning needs and school staffing shortages.

\$120 billion was provided to **help schools in all 50 states stay open** for in-person learning and improve school infrastructure and ventilation systems.

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.

Randi Weingarten
PRESIDENT

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SECRETARY-TREASURER

Evelyn DeJesus
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT



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.

Costs for Affordable Care Act health insurance **were lowered**, and 4.5 million more people got healthcare. Families across America have **saved 40 percent** off their monthly health premiums.

AFT Affiliate American Rescue Plan Success Story

New Mexico

American Rescue Plan funds were used for:

- Better ventilation and higher cleaning standards for safer schools.
- One-time stipends for those working in person during COVID-19 to provide lunches, transportation of food and other school supplies.
- Additional COVID-19 leave to care for family members if they contracted COVID-19, or to stay home if the worker was exposed to or contracted COVID-19 (after having used the federal 10 days of sick leave).
- Hiring additional staff to meet students' needs due to learning loss and/or to support their social and emotional needs due to the pandemic.

Under Biden's Infrastructure Plan:

Electric school buses:

- \$5 billion was provided to transition the diesel school bus fleet to zero- and low-emission school buses so our bus drivers and students can breathe cleaner air.
- \$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.

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.