Creative Professionals' Priorities and the House FY 2021 Budget Reconciliation Package
Current as of February 10, 2021

Relief

Extend and expand COVID-19 economic support programs

- Extend Federal Pandemic Unemployment Assistance, Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation, Pandemic Unemployment Assistance, and Mixed Earner Unemployment Compensation through December 31, 2021. Unemployment programs extended through August 29, 2021, FPUC increased to $400 per week, additional $1,400 one-time payment (and $1,400 per dependent) with phaseout starting at $75,000 for individual filer/$150,000 for joint filer (Ways and Means)
- Extend the Families First Coronavirus Response Act's paid leave provisions through December 31, 2021 and expand its coverage to professionals working for companies with 500 or more employees. Provisions extended through September 30, 2021 (Ways and Means)

Preserve access to affordable, quality healthcare

- Subsidize 100 percent of a person's COBRA costs for one year. 85 percent subsidy for 6 months (Ed and Labor/Ways and Means)
- Extend COBRA eligibility to 36 months. Not included
- Provide economic support for multiemployer health plans that are waiving cost-sharing or keeping ineligible members on their plans for reasons related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Funds paid subsidy through advance payment of refundable credits against Medicare payroll taxes (Ed and Labor/Ways and Means)

Protect the pension funds of creative professionals

- Allow multiemployer pension plans to:
    - Freeze zone status for at least one year, based on provisions similar to the Worker, Retiree, and Employer Recovery Act of 2008. Included (Ways and Means)
    - Smooth investment and contribution base unit ("CBU") losses in the funding standard account, and investment losses in the development of the actuarial value of assets, following provisions similar to the Pension Relief Act of 2010. Included (Ways and Means)
- Institute a special partition program at the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation (PBGC) to deal with critically endangered multiemployer plans without increasing burdens on healthy pension plans. Included (Ways and Means)

- Shore up the PBGC through government funding, rather than by depriving healthy plans of funds needed to cover plan obligations. Not included

Protect the collection and dissemination of news and information

- Expand Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) access already provided for print, radio, and television news organizations to digital-native news organizations to keep news professionals on the job at a time when news is essential. Included (Small Business)

Provide fair access to government economic support for all nonprofits

- Extend PPP access to 501(c)5 organizations in line with local chambers of commerce, trade associations, and other 501(c)6 organizations' existing PPP access. Included (Small Business)

Ensure tax fairness for middle-class creative professionals

- Allow middle-class creative professionals to deduct necessary business expenses by including the Performing Artist Tax Parity Act of 2019, bipartisan legislation that would update the Qualified Performing Artist tax deduction. Not included

Sector Recovery

General

- Establish a federal insurance program for pandemic-related losses to encourage the resumption of productions and performances that will put creative professionals back to work. Not included
- Create a nonrefundable tax credit for businesses to cover the costs of COVID-19 workplace safety compliance, including expenses for sanitation, personal protective equipment ("PPE"), and testing. Not included

Live Theater and Performances

- Appropriate $9 billion dollars for the National Endowment for the Arts to help jump start productions and put people back to work across the nonprofit arts sector. $135 million in emergency supplemental funding for NEA (Ed and Labor); additional $1.25 billion for Shuttered Venue Operators Grant Program/"Save Our Stages" (Small Business)
    - Dedicate 75 percent of the $9 billion for the NEA to expand grant capacity to ensure arts organizations can continue operations, keep arts professionals employed, and immediately resume productions when it is safe to do so.

Traditional 60/40 direct/indirect funding scheme (Ed and Labor), NEA funding can be used to continue operations (Ed and Labor)

    - Authorize the NEA to distribute the remaining money to temporary programs that put arts professionals to work on projects that can lift the spirits of Americans as the country emerges from the pandemic. Such projects could include:
        - "Reopening America" performing arts tours that bring music, theater, dance, opera, and variety performances to big cities and small towns across the country at minimal cost to Americans, particularly areas that do not often see touring performances.
        - Increased USO performances for the military and their families at military bases here in the United States and abroad.
        - Free matinee performances of nearby musical, theatrical, dance, opera, and variety productions for K-12 school children and the residents of retirement homes and assisted-living centers who were particularly isolated during the pandemic. Not included

- Encourage employers to put creative professionals back to work quickly.
    - Provide a temporary, two-year partial employer tax credit for each person employed in the cast or crew of musical, theatrical, dance, opera, or variety performance. Not included

- Incentivize private support for the arts.
    - Permanently reinstate the business entertainment tax deduction. Not included
    - Provide a temporary, two-year individual entertainment tax deduction for the purchase of tickets to live arts and entertainment performances up to $400 per individual/$800 per joint filer. Not included

Film and Television

- Pass a National Broadband Program to allow more households access to high-speed Internet and the ability to stream content, which in turn will increase residual income for union creative professionals and their health and retirement funds. Such a broadband program should provide federal funds to companies to provide high-speed Internet to unserved areas of the country. Companies receiving such funds must honor any existing collective bargaining agreements they have, be prohibited from outsourcing of U.S. jobs, and must remain neutral during any union organizing drive. Not included

Public Radio and Television

- Commit to a two-year temporary funding infusion for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting to help stations that are affected by reduced charitable giving as a result of COVID-19's economic impact. Funding should support: Not included
    - Continued operations at public radio and broadcasting stations.

        - Maintaining employment at public radio and broadcast stations, including the rehiring of employees laid-off or furloughed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
        - Grants to seed American-based productions of new content for public television and radio.
- Triple the grant capacity of the National Endowment for the Humanity's Media Projects program, which supports the development, production, and distribution of radio, podcast, television, and long-form documentary film projects that engage general audiences with humanities ideas in creative and appealing ways. $135 million in emergency supplemental funding for NEH (Ed and Labor)

News and Information

- Pass a two-year temporary tax credit to maintain journalists and other media workers on payroll across all formats - print, radio, TV, and digital - to ensure continued information at a time when it is needed most and as industry recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic's shock to advertising revenue. Not included
- Appropriate and direct federal advertising dollars for programs where community outreach is needed for spending on local media. Not included