



Funds From Economic Recovery Plan Come To West Virginia

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Senator Rockefeller Speaks out on stimulus bill

WASHINGTON, DC -- Senator Jay Rockefeller today applauded President Obama for signing the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act into law and highlighted significant wins for West Virginia

Rockefeller successfully fought to include in the final plan assistance for families and the unemployed, funding for school construction, investments in advanced coal technologies, and grants for high-speed internet deployment and community health centers.

"I supported the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act because I believe it will create badly-needed jobs for West Virginians, help rebuild our state's infrastructure, and give aid to West Virginia families during this incredibly tough time," Rockefeller said. "We simply couldn't wait for the economy to fix itself – there is far too much at stake, far too many jobs already lost in our state, and far too many families struggling right now.

"I applaud President Obama for signing this important bill into law today – this plan will help put us back on the right track. I fought to include tax relief for families, strengthened unemployment benefits, protection of health care coverage, and funding for job placement in the reinvestment plan.

"The economic recovery legislation also includes vital funding to modernize our state's schools, move forward with the research and development of advanced coal technologies, and extend high-speed Internet access to more rural parts of West Virginia. All of these areas are critical to reinvesting in our people and our economy – and making sure our families and communities stand strong well into the future."

Please refer to the fact sheet below for a comprehensive list of West Virginia highlights in the economic recovery plan.

ECONOMIC RECOVERY BILL --WEST VIRGINIA HIGHLIGHTS

(estimated White House funding figures as of February 13, 2009)

Job-Creating Investments -- \$351.3 Million

An estimated 20,000 new jobs will be created in West Virginia from the economic recovery bill -- through rebuilding roads, replacing sewers, improving clean water, and rehabilitating public housing. Highlights include:

- \$19.7 million through the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund to get at the backlog of West Virginia's drinking water infrastructure needs, such as new pipelines and sewer systems; and \$62 million through The Clean Water State Revolving Fund to help deliver clean water to communities.
- \$210.9 million in Highway Funding to repair or construct roads, bridges and highways throughout the state.
- \$16.5 million in HOME Funding to enable state and local government, in partnership with community-based organizations, to acquire, construct, and rehabilitate affordable housing and provide rental assistance.

Education and Training -- \$551.8 Million

The economic recovery bill provides funding to modernize hundreds of West Virginia schools, improve education, and help displaced workers learn new skills. West Virginia would receive:

- \$156 million over two years in School Construction Bonds to help repair, renovate and construct West Virginia public schools in ways that raise energy efficiency and improve technology. The bill also expands the popular Qualified Zone Academy Bonds.
- \$219.1 million through the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund to help West Virginia school districts and public colleges and universities with budget shortfalls.
- \$76 million for Special Education programs in West Virginia.
- \$4.5 million in Education Technology funds for schools to purchase up-to-date computers and software.
- \$91.8 million for Title I Education for the Disadvantaged to help all students reach their full potential.
- \$4.4 million for Vocational Rehabilitation to help West Virginians with disabilities prepare for the workforce.
- Increases the Pell Grant by \$500 per student to help more West Virginians pursue postsecondary education.

Tax Relief

To help West Virginia families keep more of their hard-earned money, the bill:

- Provides a “making work pay” Tax Cut of up to \$400 for individuals earning below \$75,000 per year and up to \$800 for couples earning below \$150,000.
- Increases eligibility for the refundable Child Tax Credit by lowering the income threshold to \$3000 (from \$12,000), so that over 200,000 West Virginia families can benefit from the credit.
- Expands the Earned Income Tax Credit to families with three or more children, helping an estimated 50,000 West Virginia families.
- Gives tax relief to 86,000 West Virginians by preventing them from paying the Alternative Minimum Tax.

Clean Coal and Energy Efficiency -- \$70.8 Million

The economic recovery bill includes \$3.4 billion to jump-start research and development for advanced coal technologies across the nation. To help West Virginia make our schools, workplaces and homes more energy efficient, the economic recovery bill includes over \$70 million.

Help for the Unemployed

To help West Virginians facing a recent job loss, the economic recovery bill:

- Lowers COBRA health care premiums by 65% for unemployed West Virginians for up to nine months. COBRA recipients will be responsible for only 35% of COBRA premium costs.
- \$3.2 million in State Employment Service Grants to match unemployed individuals to job openings through state employment service agencies and provide customized reemployment services.
- \$3.6 million in Dislocated Workers State Grants to meet the needs of skilled workers.

- Extends Emergency Unemployment Compensation for West Virginians by providing up to 20 weeks of extended unemployment benefits through the end of this year.
- Raises the weekly unemployment compensation benefit by \$25, and temporarily suspends federal income taxes on the first \$2,400 of unemployment assistance.
- Creates a Temporary Assistance for Needy Families contingency fund to provide West Virginia with additional help to meet the needs of families.
- Temporarily reauthorizes and significantly expands Trade Adjustment Assistance programs for West Virginians who lose their jobs because of foreign trade.

Essential Services and Health Care for Vulnerable Families -- \$644.8 Million

For families struggling in this economy, the economic recovery bill provides help to keep food on the table or the roof over their head. Highlights include:

- \$450 million for a temporary increase in federal Medicaid funding to protect health care coverage for vulnerable populations in West Virginia.
- \$585,327 for the West Virginia School Lunch Program.
- \$163.6 million in additional Food Stamp assistance for West Virginia families.
- \$13 million in Child Care and Development Block Grants to help our families with the high cost of day care.
- \$5 million for West Virginia's Head Start program to enroll more children to help prepare them for school and meet their developmental, educational, health, and nutritional needs.
- \$11.2 million in Community Services Block Grants to local West Virginia community action agencies to offer housing and mortgage counseling, jobs skills training, food pantry assistance.
- \$289,365 for West Virginia's Senior Meals on Wheels Program.
- \$10.2 million through The Homelessness Prevention Fund to help West Virginians with short or medium-term rental assistance, first and last month's rental payment, or utility payments.

Competitive Grant Programs Accessible to West Virginia

The economic recovery bill contains funding for nationwide competitive-grant programs that our state, local governments, and community-based organizations in West Virginia can apply for. These include:

- \$7.2 billion in Broadband Grant Funding to expand high-speed internet in rural areas.
- \$1.5 billion in Community Health Center Capital Funding to construct, renovate and equip community health centers.
- \$19.2 billion in Medicare/Medicaid bonus payments to physicians and hospitals that adopt Electronic Health Record Technologies to reduce medical errors and drive costs down.
- \$1.6 billion to improve the health coverage tax credit under for Trade-Displaced Workers under Trade Adjustment Assistance.