



Messaging & Framing Guidance: The American Rescue Plan & the Continued Need for State Investments

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Questions? Ideas? Feedback? Email us at commhelp@cbpp.org

Context: The American Rescue Plan will provide much-needed relief to those hit hardest by this crisis and jumpstart states' recoveries. Below are proactive and reactive messages and frames to help ensure states make the most of this historic legislation and act boldly to create a more just recovery. *Note: Be sure to tailor the examples to fit your state's context and add supporting data where possible.*

Topline Messages:

- The American Rescue Plan is a historic opportunity for states to invest in a just economic recovery that could leave our communities better off than they were before.
- To ensure the recovery leaves us all with a better economy and stronger communities, [State] lawmakers should spend the federal relief where it is needed most, to create opportunities and improve life for [Staters] of color and with low incomes, who have been hit hard by the pandemic and face long-term inequities due to racism and discrimination.
- State lawmakers must also make forward-thinking budget decisions, including raising the additional revenues required to make transformative investments of their own that can build on the foundation laid by this one-time federal stimulus.
- This moment requires bold action. Returning to a status quo that was failing too many of our communities is not an option.

Proactive Messages:

Implementing federal relief

Lawmakers must spend relief where it's most needed

The American Rescue Plan is providing [State] with a historic opportunity: State and local lawmakers can use this substantial federal aid to help communities hit hardest by the pandemic and address the long-term inequities that have kept too many people of color, women, and those paid the lowest wages from reaching their potential. To ensure these federal dollars strengthen [State]'s families and its economy, lawmakers should:

1. Target aid to the essential workers, communities of color, households with low incomes, and others most affected by this crisis through investments in [insert programs and/or services e.g. Medicaid expansion, cash assistance, etc.]
2. Advance long-term equitable policies, like [e.g. state Earned Income Tax Credits that offset pay and tax inequities, state-funded rental assistance, etc.]
3. Protect state finances for long-term economic growth and opportunity by [e.g. raising revenue via wealth taxes, closing corporate tax loopholes, etc.]

Robust state investments must be sustained to mitigate the crisis and foster an inclusive recovery

It remains critical for [State] lawmakers to enact an equitable budget that strengthens programs that help families make ends meet, businesses reopen, and students return to classrooms. That means [State]'s current budget must include investments in [XYZ]. When coupled with the incoming federal stimulus dollars, these investments are essential for states to respond to the current crisis and set the stage for a more inclusive recovery.

Note: For information on the timing of federal relief, refer to the Center's [Implementation Grid on the America Rescue Plan](#).

Building the will to raise state revenue

It will take all of us to rebuild

A just recovery requires *everyone* to invest in our shared future. Federal lawmakers have already committed to historic investments in our recovery – now it is up to their state counterparts to enact their own investments in a better future. Similarly, essential workers and local businesses have made significant contributions throughout this crisis – now wealthy households and profitable corporations need to pay their fair share.

- The American Rescue Plan is a significant step in the right direction, but because its provisions are temporary, state lawmakers still have essential roles to play today and in the years ahead. Now more than ever, [State] must make investments that strengthen schools in communities of color, repair often-neglected infrastructure, boost opportunity for those struggling to make ends meet, and build an economy that works for everyone.
- To make transformative, forward-thinking investments, [State] lawmakers must ensure that wealthy households and profitable corporations – many of whom gained financially during the COVID-19 recession – pay their fair share. Raising taxes on high incomes, wealth, and highly profitable corporations will allow [Statens] to come together to help the hardest hit communities, especially communities of color. It would also mean we'd have enough revenue to [X policy goal] and [Y policy goal] instead of cutting services and laying off workers, which would help rev up the state's economic engine.

The status quo won't cut it – we must rebuild an inclusive economy that benefits all of us

The American Rescue Plan will allow us to address the state's most pressing needs, but it will *not* undo the systemic issues and racist policies that made this crisis so much worse for [Staters] of color and [Staters] with low incomes. Barriers to economic stability and health existed before COVID-19 for Black, Brown, Indigenous, and immigrant communities. [State] lawmakers cannot rely on the federal government to make up for years of state cuts to [programs] and the state's failure to invest in too many communities. Nor can these temporary federal dollars make up for all the resources drained from our communities to hand out tax cuts and tax breaks to the wealthiest households and most profitable corporations.

We can't afford to make the same mistakes again

[State] [only recently recovered/ still has not recovered] from the Great Recession of more than a decade ago. From that slow and difficult recovery, we learned that the best way to get the economy moving again is *not* through tax cuts for the wealthy or budget cuts to critical public services – it is through strong public investments in the services communities rely on and the people who are struggling to make ends meet. Raising revenues for investments that keep families in their homes, workers employed, students enrolled in college, and businesses open is like giving gas to the economy's engine. [State] can speed up this recovery and build for our future by investing in [XYZ] and expanding programs that will help families achieve security, [value], and [value].

Federal relief is already helping. When will [Staters] see their state lawmakers' impact?

Just [X weeks/months] after its passage, the new federal relief package is already showing [Staters] what it looks like when government invests in everyday people and their communities. Many [Staters] have already received their much-needed stimulus checks, and in the months ahead, more parents will see their children return to affordable child care and better-funded schools; more small business owners will receive the relief needed to reopen; and more people with low incomes will continue to receive assistance with rent and groceries. But because the federal relief provides only a short-term stimulus, [State] and local lawmakers must make and sustain their own investments – both as a response to COVID-19 and for the state's long-term economic health.

Reactive Messages:

Opposing flat state budgets

This could look like someone saying, "State revenues are stronger than expected and we may receive more federal aid than we are even able to use. There is no need for us to raise new revenues right now. We need to focus on how we can spend what we already have."

Our Response 1: The American Rescue Plan is a historic and much-needed response to a global pandemic and economic downturn that will shape America's future for years to come. In the short term, the federal relief will help many [State] families recover from months of lost wages and overdue rent. It will help [State] students catch up and then gain new ground in their classrooms. And it will help [State] businesses reopen to their returning and new customers.

But this stimulus will run out, leaving the effects of the tax and budget choices that we make today in full view. [State] lawmakers cannot rely on federal relief alone to respond to this crisis. They must make their own long-term investments in our communities and infrastructure to ensure everyone – Black, Brown, and Indigenous people; immigrants; and others – recovers from this crisis together. What's

more, federal aid will help us out of the crisis, but it can't reverse the harm done to our families and communities from decades of [\[budget cuts to/underinvestment in\]](#) critical public services like schools, health care, and higher education.

Opposing tax cut proposals

This could look like someone saying, "The federal relief prohibits states from cutting taxes, regardless of whether it makes sense for a state to do so to stimulate spending and create new jobs. The federal plan is an intrusion into state policy, and we will not allow Washington, D.C. to dictate whether our residents, businesses, and economy would benefit from tax cuts or where we should spend our stimulus dollars."

Our Response: The American Rescue Plan was designed with guardrails that ensure states are investing the federal dollars in the families, businesses, communities, and infrastructure most impacted by the COVID-19 crisis. The federal law does *not* prevent [\[State\]](#) lawmakers from using our state dollars to pay for tax cuts; they'd merely have to return the equivalent amount of federal aid. Regardless, lawmakers who choose to cut taxes for the wealthy instead of making investments in our hardest-hit communities are not prioritizing our state's recovery. Tax cuts for the few will require everyone else to pay more – especially those with the lowest incomes – and take away funding from critical public services like education and public health, despite their importance to [\[State\]](#)'s health and the economic recovery.

Messaging from the State Priorities Partnership

DC Fiscal Policy Institute

- [Revenue Talking Points](#)
- [Revenue Responses to Critics](#)

Policy Matters Ohio

- [Blog on ARP: Recovery from the Ground Up](#)

Other CBPP Resources on the American Rescue Plan

- [Implementation grid](#) laying out major provisions in the American Rescue Plan, state implementation considerations (if any), information on timing, and links to resources to learn more.
- CBPP's paper summarizing the [American Rescue Plan Act](#), which includes state data on how many people will benefit from certain provisions.
- CBPP's blog on the American Rescue Plan's [important protection against state tax cuts](#), and why such policy would be a mistake.
- David Super, formerly at CBPP and now a Georgetown University Law professor, wrote in a [Washington Post op-ed about the poor legal case](#) 21 state attorneys general have presented against American Rescue Plan's tax cut provision.
- CBPP webinar on implementation of the American Rescue Plan: You can access the Zoom recording [here](#) and the slides [here](#). (The passcode for the recording is: ARP2021!) Please do not share the recording or slides beyond your organization or trusted partners.
- Housing policy resources mentioned on the webinar, including the [U.S. Department of the Treasury FAQ](#) on the Emergency Rental Assistance Program; [Urban Institute Emergency Rental Assistance Priority Index](#) that emphasizes an equitable approach; a report by the [National Low Income Housing Coalition](#) on rental assistance for rural communities; and the [Housing Equity Framework](#) that

provides guidance on how to use federal funding sources to increase housing stability and prevent increases in homelessness.

- Health policy resources mentioned on the webinar, including this [chart on health provisions](#) in the American Rescue Plan by the National Academy for State Health Policy. Be sure to also check out CBPP's latest paper on how the American Rescue Plan [strengthens Medicaid to help states weather the COVID-19 public health and economic crises](#).