



# OREGON'S SENATOR JEFF MERKLEY

## *Coronavirus Resources: Unemployment Insurance*

Sen. Merkley, using his leadership position on the Senate Appropriations Committee, fought hard to make sure the \$2.2 trillion coronavirus relief funding stabilizes families, workers, small businesses, housing, education, agriculture, and health care. As these resources are distributed, Sen. Merkley's office will keep Oregonians up to date on what in the bill helps individuals and communities, and how to access the resources. He will continue to fight to make sure much-needed aid gets to the people who need it most.

### *Coronavirus relief to help those who have been laid off:*

The bill expands unemployment insurance eligibility and benefits to serve more Oregon workers affected by the coronavirus pandemic, in order to quickly bolster the state's existing system between now and the end of the year.

- **Replacing Full Paychecks:** The bill provides a \$600 per week increase to unemployment insurance payments for every unemployed American, which amounts to 100 percent of lost wages for the average worker.
  - This provision adds an additional \$600 to every weekly unemployment benefit, effective from now until July 31, 2020.
  - Just like regular unemployment benefits, the additional amount will be taxable. However, the additional payment will be disregarded in determining Medicaid or CHIP eligibility.
- **Extending Benefits:** The bill allows for an additional 13 weeks of federally funded unemployment benefits for individuals who have exhausted their 26 weeks of state unemployment benefits.
- **Expanding Eligibility:** The bill allows part-time, self-employed, independent contractors and gig economy workers to access unemployment benefits—including the \$600 increase in payment and the 13-week benefit extension.
- **Building Capacity:** The bill includes \$1 billion for emergency grants to states for processing unemployment insurance benefits. To apply for unemployment insurance benefits, visit [https://govstatus.egov.com/ORUnemployment\\_COVID19](https://govstatus.egov.com/ORUnemployment_COVID19).
  - Half, \$500 million, will provide immediate additional funding to all states for staffing, technology, systems, and other administrative costs.
  - The other half, \$500 million, is reserved for emergency grants to states that experienced a minimum 10 percent increase in unemployment.
- **Avoiding Layoffs:** The bill provides 100 percent federal funding for Oregon's Work Share Program. Through the program, instead of laying off staff, an employer can reduce employee hours and have unemployment benefits supplement workers' wages—allowing employees to earn their full paycheck even on reduced hours.

*For updates:* Visit [merkley.senate.gov/coronavirus](http://merkley.senate.gov/coronavirus) for updates on these and other resources as the relief bills are implemented.