

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Virgin Islanders Will Most Likely Get Second Stimulus Check, \$300 in Enhanced Unemployment Insurance By Year's End as Part of Congress's \$900 Billion Coronavirus Package

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Virgin Islanders will join other territories and mainland Americans in receiving a second coronavirus-induced direct stimulus payment by year's end as part of a \$900 billion coronavirus relief package hastily making its way through Congress with consensus on both sides of the aisle. The measure is expected to pass both the House and Senate as part of a government spending bill; the U.S. government's current funding expires on Saturday at 12:01 a.m., and lawmakers are racing to beat the deadline.

The progress comes after months of stalemate between Republicans and Democrats over spending priorities. Two problematic issues kept the parties from reaching common ground in the past: Republicans wanted liability protections for businesses, the reach of which Democrats opposed, and Democrats wanted funding for state and local governments, which Republicans contended not all states needed.

To make progress, both parties have agreed to leave these items out of the current package while focusing on other important areas. The \$900 billion deal is expected to include \$300 a week for about 10 weeks in enhanced unemployment insurance, funding for small businesses, schools, health care providers, among other relief measures. The latest measure will also include rental assistance funding and vaccine distribution funding.

Relative to the direct payments to Americans (including Virgin Islanders), the amount is expected to be between \$600 and \$700 — roughly half the amount received earlier in the year, when individuals received \$1,200 and dependents under 17, \$500.

Both parties have said negotiations were ongoing and that a final agreement had not been reached.

The compromise between Republicans and Democrats takes into consideration the continued surge in virus cases and deaths, which has caused additional business closures and unemployment to increase. "We're not leaving here without a Covid package," said U.S. Senator Mitch McConnell Tuesday, the powerful Senate Majority leader. "No matter how long it takes, we'll be here."

The latest agreement is up from the \$500 billion Republicans had originally envisioned, and down from the \$2.4 trillion Democrats had lobbied for, resulting in a classic case of compromise on Capitol Hill.

If the deal goes through and the direct stimulus payments for individuals is settled at \$600 for individuals and \$250 for dependents, the territory stands to receive roughly \$37.5 million or half of the \$75 million provided to the USVI [from the onset of the pandemic](#).

The funds would be distributed locally by the Bureau of Internal Revenue. B.I.R. [had faced criticism](#) after it took several months for Virgin Islanders to receive the payments.