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Advocates See Window of Opportunity Through Reconciliation for Congress to Expand Supplemental Security Income to Territories

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US Congress dome closeup with background of water fountain splashing. By. GETTY IMAGES

Congressional delays in passing the FY2022 Budget Reconciliation bill have created a new window of opportunity for those hoping to see Congress act on President Biden's promise to extend Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits to hundreds of thousands of the most vulnerable residents of U.S. territories, said Equally American in a release Tuesday.

Equally American advocates for equality for the 3.5 million citizens in U.S. territories. The nonprofit wrote House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer earlier

Tuesday to request that they do not miss the opportunity to deliver on Mr. Biden's promise.

"If Congress does not to include SSI in the upcoming Reconciliation bill, the political path forward will only become more difficult, likely closing altogether with the upcoming mid-term elections," said Equally American President Neil Weare. "That's why it's important we call on our elected officials to continue pressing Congress to take action now while this political window is still open. Once the window closes, it may be decades before we see an opportunity like this again."

According to the release, Equally American's letter emphasizes that national polling shows broad bi-partisan support for extending SSI to citizens in the territories through Reconciliation. Further, it highlights that more than 2 million members of the territorial diaspora who can vote live in important swing states like Florida and Pennsylvania that will have competitive U.S. Senate races in 2022.

Representatives from the territories have introduced several pieces of legislation that would provide full parity in SSI to residents of the territories.

- Territorial Equity Act of 2021 (S. 1228): Sen. Bernie Sanders (D-VT). Cosponsors: Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) and Sen. Ed Markey (D-MA).
- Territorial Equity Act of 2021 (HR. 2713): Rep. Nydia Velazquez (D-NY). Cosponsors: Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY), Grijalva (D-AZ) and Torres (D-NY).
- SSI Equality Act (HR 537): Rep. Gonzalez Colon. Cosponsors: Torres (D-NY), Plaskett (D-USVI), Radewagen (R-AS), Sablan (D-MP) and San Nicolas (D-GU).
- Guam SSI Equality Act (HR 157): Rep. San Nicolas (D-GU). Cosponsors: 28 Members, as listed [here](#).

But if this legislation is not included as part of the Budget Reconciliation bill, it is unlikely to pass on its own, according to the release.

The specific timeline for passage of the Reconciliation Bill is uncertain as Democratic leaders negotiate both the overall amount of the package and the specifics to be included. While these details remain in flux, there is an opportunity to have SSI included in the bill.

Residents of the territories should contact their elected officials to call on them to continue pushing for SSI to be included in the Reconciliation Bill. Those living stateside who care about the territories should call both their Representative and Senators to ask them to support including SSI in the Reconciliation Bill.

Equally American's full letter is [here](#).