

The Virgin Islands Consortium

SSI and Medicaid Expansion for U.S. Territories Included in President Biden's Latest \$1.85 Trillion Framework

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President Joe Biden By. WSJ

The Democratic-controlled House Rules Committee in the U.S. Congress on Thursday released the draft text of President Joe Biden's latest \$1.85 trillion social spending and climate bill, including what would be historic expansions of the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program and Medicaid to residents of U.S. territories. If Congress acts based on this draft language, it could mean monthly SSI checks of up to \$794 directly to more than 300,000 of the most vulnerable residents of U.S. territories.

The proposed Medicaid expansion would bring these programs much closer to full parity, greatly expanding healthcare availability for low-income territorial residents, said Equally American, which has long advocated for expanding SSI and Medicaid in the territories.

“If the proposed expansions to SSI and Medicaid are enacted into law, this would represent a truly historic step towards equality for the 3.5 million U.S. citizens who call the territories home,” said Neil Weare, president and founder of Equally American. “We still need to keep pushing though to make sure these proposals are actually enacted into law.”

The 1,684 page text of H.R. 5376, the Build Back Better Act is available [here](#). Pages 551-556 detail the proposed expansions to Medicaid, and pages 182-1684 detail the proposed changes to SSI.

“Over the last few weeks I’ve corresponded with hundreds of residents of Guam, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and American Samoa whose lives have been severely impacted by the denial of SSI benefits to residents of the territories,” Weare added. “I’m hopeful that Congress may finally provide them the relief they’ve been seeking for so many years. But we can’t rest until this becomes law.”

Residents of U.S. territories who may benefit from SSI are encouraged to continue sharing their stories by completing Equally American’s SSI Survey, available in English at <https://www.equalrightsnow.org/ssisurvey>, or in Spanish at <https://www.equalrightsnow.org/ssisurveyespanol>. Or they may contact Equally American directly at nweare@equallyamerican.org or 202-304-1202.

As Congress and the Supreme Court both continue to consider the expansion of SSI benefits to residents of U.S. territories, Equally American said it continue elevating the voices of people whose lives have been impacted by the denial of these federal benefits.