



**GREAT LAKES AND
ST. LAWRENCE**
CITIES INITIATIVE

MRCTI

Mississippi River Cities and
Towns Initiative



September 21, 2020

Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
S-230, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
S-221, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
H-222, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
H-204, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Leader McConnell, Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi and Leader McCarthy:

We are writing on behalf of nearly **150 mayors from across America's heartland** to implore you to reach a compromise on a new COVID-19 package that provides urgently needed financial relief to cities and towns that have borne the brunt of the impact from the pandemic. Our citizens are looking for action from Washington and we urge you to come through in this time of need.

We represent small towns and large cities across the political spectrum stretching from the East Coast across the industrial Midwest down to the mouth of the Mississippi River in the Gulf of Mexico. Our cities are on the front lines confronting the pandemic and suffering from the damage it has caused to our local economies and the revenue shortfalls that threaten our ability to maintain vital services for our constituents.

Local governments are projected to experience budget shortfalls of over \$360 billion in the coming three years. The Great Lakes and Mississippi River states are among the hardest hit, with local governments projecting revenue losses up to 80 percent. As a result, nearly one-third of cities report plans to furlough or lay off employees, compounding the 1.5 million public sector jobs lost since March. And nearly two-thirds of cities may delay or cancel capital expenditures and infrastructure projects, which will further stifle job growth and slow local recovery. Unfortunately, nearly 70% of cities have not received funding through the CARES Act, underscoring the need for Congress to provide direct aid to local governments.

Our national economic recovery is jeopardized by ongoing economic damage to local communities. Without federal assistance, struggling local economies in both rural and dense urban areas will be a significant obstacle to long-term stabilization and economic recovery.

We are encouraged by signs of compromise and bipartisan support in Congress for a new COVID relief package. Public support is also strong, with 86 percent of Americans supporting federal relief for cities, towns, and villages.

Our message is simple: pass a COVID relief package that provides meaningful support for communities struggling through this extraordinary time of fiscal distress. Our constituents expect you to set aside partisan political considerations and help our cities maintain essential public services, keep workers on the job, and continue investments in roads, water systems and other critical infrastructure.

Some of our cities have been hit by overlapping crises, including hurricanes (Louisiana, Mississippi, Arkansas), powerful convective storms (Iowa, Illinois, Missouri, Wisconsin) and tornadoes (Arkansas, Mississippi). Our residents appreciate your support for our efforts to maintain public health and safety and keep us on path to economic recovery.


Sincerely,



Mayor Mike Vandersteen
Sheboygan, Wisconsin
Chair, Great Lakes and
St. Lawrence Cities Initiative



Mayor Sharon Weston Broome
Baton Rouge, Louisiana
Co-Chair, Mississippi River
Cities and Towns Initiative



Mayor Bob Gallagher
Bettendorf, Iowa
Co-Chair, Mississippi River
Cities and Towns Initiative