



New Coalition Formed to Support Struggling Small Businesses Left Out of Pandemic Aid

For Immediate Release

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Washington, DC – Congress has passed almost \$4 trillion in emergency spending to help Americans weather the harsh conditions of the pandemic economy, but help has eluded key industries made up mainly of small businesses that have already suffered severe damage. **Without fast action, businesses that have hung on through more than a year of unprecedented revenue loss will soon close, eliminating tens of thousands of jobs in every state.**

Associations representing many of those businesses have formed the Economic Bridge Coalition to ask Congress and the Biden Administration to help them recover and re-hire so they can again play important roles in the economy and serve their many customers. Some hard-hit sectors, like airlines, restaurants, and theater venues, have received targeted federal aid, but others, also drastically impacted by government mandated lockdowns and the lingering reluctance of many people to attend large gatherings, have been left out. The Economic Bridge Coalition is educating policy makers on the facts so they can enact additional relief before it's too late to save thousands of businesses and jobs dependent on in-person activities.

The founding members of the Coalition include the American Rental Association, representing the equipment and event rental industry; the Live Event Coalition, representing businesses that produce and service live events; the American Society of Travel Advisors, representing travel agencies and advisors; IAAPA, representing theme parks, family entertainment centers, museums, water parks, aquariums, and other attractions; the International Council of Airshows; the Outdoor Amusement Business Association; the International Association of Fairs and Expositions; the Professional Photographers Association; the American Horse Council, representing the \$122 billion U.S. horse industry; the Specialty Equipment Market Association; the Performance Racing Industry; and the National Ski Areas Association.

The members of the Coalition's associations have already lost over a year's worth of revenue that can't be recovered. Although the economy is slowly, unevenly reopening, the damage was already done and remains ongoing. A trade show, horse show, state fair, wedding or annual vacation with visits to entertainment sites that didn't happen in 2020 or 2021 can't be magically re-created in the future. Importantly, although the country is re-opening, many events planned for 2021 have already had to be cancelled.

The small- and medium-sized businesses that behind the scenes make events happen or operate their venues are trying to stay alive, but they are running out of time. Unlike other sectors of the economy, simply reopening does not offer an immediate cure for these key industries. Therefore, Congress and the Biden Administration must act to broaden the coverage of pandemic aid programs beyond some targeted industries to include all those severely damaged by the pandemic and its related lockdowns. They must act now.

“Our members are mostly family owned and bring jobs and economic activity to every part of the country. They have borrowed, used up savings, even mortgaged their homes to stay afloat, but many are about to lose everything. The hard-working members of our Coalition partners are facing the same bleak fates. That’s why we’ve joined together to ask for expansion of pandemic relief programs to those who have been left out,” said John McClelland, vice president government affairs and chief economist of the American Rental Association.

“Live Events have struggled throughout the pandemic, as partial re-openings have seldom helped our various market sectors, and more than a million small businesses and 12 million workers continue to be 60 to 100% down in revenues,” said Live Events Coalition Chairperson for Government Affairs Dwayne Thomas. “We’ve taken on mountains of debt and emptied any cash reserves we had in order to wait out this storm, but we are running out of options. It takes many months to plan a typical live event, and organizers can’t even start that process in earnest until their states open fully. Without additional aid, many of our members won’t make it past the summer.”

“We believe the government has a responsibility to provide meaningful support to those businesses harmed by its response to COVID-19. Support provided to the travel industry, however, has been uneven at best, especially with regard to less visible sectors of the industry like travel agencies,” said Eben Peck, Executive Vice President for Advocacy at the American Society of Travel Advisors. “Without additional federal relief our industry faces the prospect of continued agency closures and mass layoffs. We look forward to working with the Economic Bridge Coalition to bring that message to Capitol Hill and tell policymakers that the job of COVID relief is not done.”

“Losses for attractions businesses have been among the highest in the travel and tourism industry. Meaningful assistance for these hardest hit businesses, will accelerate recovery for the industry and the communities around the country in which they are located” said John Hallenbeck, Vice President and Executive Director, IAAPA.

The Economic Bridge Coalition is working with Members of Congress on legislative proposals. Additional associations of affected industries are welcome to join this initiative. For more information, please contact one or more of the Coalition representatives listed below.

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