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The American Rescue Plan Act Will Leave a Positive and Lasting Impact in our Communities

By Rep. Katrina Shankland (D-Stevens Point)

On March 11, President Biden signed the \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA) into law. This new law will have a significant and lasting impact on our community, state, and country by delivering critical funding to provide much-needed relief and support those who have been most impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. This is a pivotal moment. As vaccination rates climb and Covid-19 hospitalizations and deaths decline, we aren't out of the woods yet, but a sense of normalcy is within reach. This legislation provides a boost of momentum, setting the tone for a strong and healthy national and local recovery.

I'm thrilled that Portage County will receive approximately \$13.7 million to help mitigate the effects of the pandemic. The city of Stevens Point will receive about \$2.5 million, and Plover will receive approximately \$1.3 million, more than triple what either received through the CARES Act last year. Our local towns and villages will also receive a combined total of over \$3 million to ensure residents continue to receive critical government services. This will have an immense impact on our area if these funds are used thoughtfully and strategically.

Nationwide, over \$90 billion will be invested in a strong public health response, including vaccine distribution, testing, and contact tracing, a vital resource to help us get through the pandemic. Health insurance premiums for millions of American families will be significantly reduced – a family of four making \$90,000 could see their monthly premium reduced by \$200 per month. Renters and homeowners in need will receive over \$30 billion in assistance, and unemployed workers will receive an additional \$300 in weekly benefits through September 6, 2021. Small businesses will have new opportunities to access \$50 billion in grants and loans, including the Paycheck Protection Program, Economic Injury Disaster Loan and EIDL grants, Shuttered Venue Operators Grant Program, and the Restaurant Revitalization Grant Program. These investments will help those most affected by the pandemic.

The overall impact of ARPA will be monumental. Its policies will cut child poverty in half nationwide, and it makes the most significant investment in American child care since World War II. Millions of Wisconsinites will receive up to \$1400 in economic impact payments, and additional support is available to many families through the Child Tax Credit (\$3000 for ages 6-17 and \$3600 for children under 6), an expanded Earned Income Tax Credit for workers without children, and the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit. Our K-12 schools in Wisconsin will receive approximately \$1.5 billion in relief, and our colleges and universities will receive \$560 million through the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund.

The state of Wisconsin will receive over \$3 billion in aid. Governor Evers recently released his plan for these funds, including strong support for broadband, small businesses, and pandemic relief. While Republican legislators introduced and fast-tracked competing bills to redirect ARPA funding, it is important to note that the nonpartisan Legislative Fiscal Bureau has stated that at least \$2 billion of the Republican spending plan may not even be legally allowable.

As elected officials, it is urgent that we work together to strengthen healthcare, food security, and economic security for the people of Wisconsin. The additional funding offered under ARPA for healthcare, FoodShare, and unemployment insurance will have an enormous impact if we act immediately in the State Legislature. If we accept the federal Medicaid money, we can expand BadgerCare to 90,000 more adults and save the state \$1.6 billion in taxpayer dollars. If we waive the one-week waiting period for unemployment insurance, we can receive an additional \$2.6 million a week to support unemployed workers. If we reauthorize the state's public health emergency, we will leverage an additional \$69 million per month for food assistance for families. I call on my legislative colleagues to work together to make these changes *now*. There is no time to waste.

I sincerely thank President Biden for his leadership, and Sen. Baldwin, Rep. Kind, Rep. Moore, and Rep. Pocan for voting for this welcome relief package. There is much work to be done to guide us along the path to a full recovery from the past year's many challenges, and I remain committed to doing everything I can to support and advocate for our community's needs. In the meantime, ARPA sends a clear message: help is on the way.

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