

# LIUNA!

May 6, 2020

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The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
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The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
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Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer  
Minority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

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

On behalf of the 500,000 strong, proud, and united members of the Laborers' International Union of North America (LIUNA), I want to thank you for your leadership during this difficult time for our country. As you work together to develop another stimulus bill, I wanted to let you know where LIUNA stands on the following issues of importance to our members, their families, and millions of other working people as it relates to job safety, health care, pension security, and job creation and infrastructure.

### **Job Safety**

The health and safety of our members is and always has been our **number one** priority. Critical to our ability as a country to move forward as we deal with this pandemic will be how we protect the lives and livelihoods of our members in the workplace all across our country. LIUNA supports aggressive OSHA safety standards, including strong emergency protocols to protect working people from occupational exposure to COVID-19. We also urge the federal government to lead the way in ensuring that there is an adequate supply of personal protective equipment (PPE) available to all workers during this pandemic. LIUNA members are concerned, not only about their own safety, but about the safety of their families and their communities. Our members want to return to work, and in many cases have continued to work, but it is absolutely imperative that they have the appropriate safety protocols and PPE to minimize their risk of contracting and/or transmitting the virus.

### **Health Care**

As you know, more than 22 million Americans have filed unemployment claims over the last four weeks, with a large percentage of them receiving their health insurance through their multi-employer health and welfare funds. With high unemployment come millions of people who are unable to maintain their existing health care coverage. LIUNA supports federal assistance to cover the full cost of workers'

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health insurance premiums or COBRA payments. In the midst of the worst public health crisis we have faced in more than a century, it is critical that workers and their families maintain access to health care, regardless of their employment status. Such assistance also would help stabilize multi-employer health insurance funds that provide coverage to workers who earn these benefits while working for multiple employers in any given year. Helping workers and their families maintain their existing coverage would protect them from being forced to change plans, leave their provider networks, restart annual deductibles or face a catastrophic coverage gap.

### **Pension Security**

The COVID-19 crisis will severely affect the funding of the vast majority of multi-employer defined benefit pension funds that are healthy, and will devastate the pension funds that are already deeply troubled and nearing insolvency. These pension funds depend on collectively bargained employer contributions generated by hours worked by our members. In some instances, the funds depend on investment income to pay billions of dollars in monthly benefits throughout our nation. As work opportunities cease and the investment markets' decline slashes asset values, healthy pension funds will face financial difficulties through no fault of their own. We urge you to address this problem. Failure to do so threatens the more than 200,000 employers in these pension plans, their 3.8 million active workers, and the retirement income of 10.4 million participants.

During the CARES Act negotiations, a proposal was put forward to create a special partition program at the PBGC that would move liabilities from failing plans to the PBGC, ensuring that participants receive full benefits while providing these plans with a path to long-term solvency which we fully supported. Annual funding of the PBGC by the U.S government would be necessary to ensure that the PBGC can carry out its mission.

It is also necessary to allow plans to freeze their zone status for the current year and to allow multi-employer pension funds to actuarially smooth investment losses attributable to the COVID-19 crisis so that the pension funds have a fair opportunity to recover in the future.

### **State and Local Assistance/Public and Federal Employees**

U.S. state and local governments are in desperate need of aid in order to cope with the current and aftermath effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is of great importance that Congress provides the desperately needed funds to state and local governments so that they can continue to provide essential resources and services.

LIUNA's state and local employees serve the American people every day in the areas of health care, transportation, public works, parks and recreation, and much more. Like their private sector counterparts, public employees need health and safety and paid leave protections during this crisis, hazard pay, access to unemployment assistance, and health benefit assistance in the form of

COBRA. State and local governments need Federal funds to deal with the Covid-19 crisis to ensure continuity of these vital public services and to prevent layoffs and bring workers back to work. LIUNA also represents Federal workers at the Indian Health Service (IHS), Department of Defense (DOD), Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), and the Veterans Administration (VA), among others. LIUNA asks Congress to let Federal workers use telework to the maximum extent possible, provide frontline assistance for Federal workers in health care settings (including health and safety protections and standards, hazard pay, and proper CDC guidance), and allow Federal workers to bargain to the extent possible regarding changes in working conditions during this pandemic.

### **Postal Service**

LIUNA is proud to have a historic partnership with the Mail Handlers and to be part of the same organization. The USPS is the backbone of a \$1.6 trillion mailing industry, which employs more than 7.3 million people. In order for it to continue to meet its mission and goals, it is necessary for USPS to obtain a direct public service appropriation of at least \$25 billion to help it weather the pandemic and the deep recession it is causing. Additionally, the Postal Service needs an emergency appropriation for the duration of the crisis, distributed quarterly, starting in Fiscal Year 2021 (which begins in just six months) to cover the difference between postage revenues and total USPS expenses. This would signal to the American people and the business community that the Postal Service will be there to: battle the pandemic (with the delivery of tests and public health information, etc.); deliver online purchases and prescription drugs; support the economic recovery; and facilitate absentee voting as well as other vital civic functions.

As postal employees are considered essential personnel and continue to do their jobs despite the risk of exposure to Covid-19, there should be equal treatment for postal employees in any legislation that authorizes and funds hazard pay for other front-line workers exposed to health risks related to the Covid-19 virus. Understanding the increased health risks Postal Service employees are taking during the pandemic, the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (P.L. 116-127) applied sick leave and family medical leave to the Postal Service, however, it failed to apply the employer reimbursement provisions to USPS. This needs to be remedied. Finally, it is necessary to remove the Federal Finance Bank's discretion to impose operational changes and policy conditions on any of the Postal Service's existing borrowing authorities – changes and policies that should properly be set by the Postal Service Board of Governors and the Congress, not the Treasury Department – and eliminate any annual limit on these authorities.

### **Job Creation and Infrastructure**

LIUNA believes that the best course of action to stimulate the economy is through robust public investment in infrastructure. There are a number of ways to do this. One way to do this quickly is to aggressively fund existing infrastructure programs. Existing programs already have the processes in place to distribute federal funds

without delays. With additional infrastructure resources for the Highway Trust Fund, State Revolving Funds for water infrastructure, Corps of Engineers projects, and other existing programs, we can jump start the economy and build the 21st Century infrastructure our country so desperately needs. With the proper amount of funding, this would be the largest job creator our nation has ever seen.

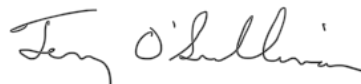
I would also like to express LIUNA's support for the approximately \$50 billion in emergency relief for State Departments of Transportation that has been identified as desperately needed by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO). State budgets are being decimated by the decline in revenue as a result of the pandemic, and Departments of Transportation, who are funded in part through state fuels taxes and user fees, face cutting support for projects whose jobs are more important than ever. This relief is not enough to rebuild shattered lives and restore our economy, but it will help continue work that has already begun as we move into the spring and summer construction season.

If we do not move quickly on robust infrastructure spending, more of the construction season will be lost. This will mean no jobs, no pay, and no benefits for millions of construction workers. That is why we firmly believe that we must also extend unemployment insurance beyond July 31 and through December 31, 2020.

I appreciate your time and consideration as you work together to provide the assistance desperately needed by working families across the country.

With kind regards, I am

Sincerely yours,



TERRY O'SULLIVAN  
General President

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