

SENATOR *for* VERMONT

Bernie Sanders



Dear Fellow Vermonter,

This past year has likely been the most challenging of our lifetimes – one of enormous loss, isolation and struggle – for our families, our communities, our state and our country. In an unprecedented moment in our history it prompted the federal government to act in an unprecedented way.

The good news is that the American Rescue Plan Act, passed by one vote in the Senate in March, has been extremely effective in addressing many of the immediate crises facing working families, senior citizens and our children.

That emergency legislation, which took effect in the midst of the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression, provided a \$1,400 direct payment to every working class adult and child in the country, protected the unemployed, fed the hungry, prevented evictions and allowed small businesses to survive. While helping to jump start the economy, it also reduced childhood poverty by more than 50 percent – an enormous accomplishment. And, perhaps most importantly, it provided funding to expand the vaccine program and save many thousands of lives.

The bad news is that the American Rescue Plan didn't address the long-neglected structural crises facing working families in Vermont and the nation. That's why, as Chairman of the Senate Budget Committee, I am fighting hard for a \$3.5 trillion reconciliation budget bill that would, if passed, be the most consequential piece of legislation for working people, the elderly, the children, the sick and the poor since FDR and the New Deal of the 1930s. This legislation is designed to lower the cost of prescription drugs, expand Medicare to cover dental, eyeglasses and hearing aids, substantially lower the cost of childcare, make Pre-K education universal and free, provide two years of tuition free education at community colleges, invest heavily in home health care and affordable housing, and finally establish a paid family and medical leave program.

This legislation will create millions of good-paying jobs as we rebuild our country. Importantly, all of this \$3.5 trillion investment will be paid for by demanding that the wealthiest people in our country, and large profitable corporations, start paying their fair share of taxes.

Further, at a time of unprecedented forest fires, heatwaves, drought, flooding and extreme weather disturbances, the time is long overdue for the U.S. government to make certain that the planet we leave our children and future generations is healthy and habitable. That is why this legislation makes the largest investment, by far, in transforming our energy system away from fossil fuels and into energy efficiency and sustainable energy. The future of the planet is at stake. And we must act.

Let's go forward together.

Bernie

Bernie Sanders
United States Senator

P.S. I recognize that many Vermonters need help in addressing problems with Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, veterans' benefits, housing and more. If you or friends or family are having problems in any of these areas please do not hesitate to contact my office at (800) 339-9834 .

We Tripled Funding for Summer and After School Programs, Vermont Saw Huge Gains for Our Kids



After this very difficult year that students, caregivers and families lived through, it was absolutely critical that the federal government step in to give our young people the support and educational opportunities they needed. During the debate over the American Rescue Plan, I successfully fought to triple funding for free or low-cost summer and after school programming for young people in Vermont and across the nation.

The result: In Vermont, we were able to create 31,650 new summer program slots, 238 new weeks of summer programming, and decreased the average weekly cost for families by \$162.

This summer, I was able to visit seven of these programs across four counties, and it was clear to me that the kids were having a wonderful time. I appreciate the great cooperation between state government and Vermont Afterschool in acting swiftly and efficiently to give our young people the kind of summer they deserve.

The young Vermonters I met this summer gave me great hope for the future of our state and nation.

As the school year begins, I look forward to seeing the most expansive and innovative after school programs that we've ever had.

LISTENING TO VERMONTERS.

SENATOR SANDERS' YEAR IN REVIEW

14 VIRTUAL AND IN-PERSON TOWN MEETINGS WITH **5,350** VERMONTERS IN ATTENDANCE

37 VISITS ACROSS THE STATE TO FARMS, SUMMER PROGRAMS, COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS, SCHOOLS, SENIOR CENTERS, AND MORE

56,000 LEGISLATIVE RESPONSES SENT TO VERMONTERS

6,072 CALLS ANSWERED FROM VERMONTERS

2,961 VERMONTERS ASSISTED WITH FEDERAL PROGRAMS

243 BILLS AND **48** RESOLUTIONS INTRODUCED OR COSPONSORED

Lifting Millions of American Children Out of Poverty

It is no secret that too many working families in Vermont and across our country are struggling to raise their children due to rising costs and stagnant incomes. Shamefully, despite being the richest nation in the world, the United States has had one of the highest rates of childhood poverty of any major country on Earth. I am happy to tell you that the American Rescue Plan, passed by Congress earlier this year and signed into law by President Biden, greatly expanded the Child Tax Credit by providing a direct monthly payment to working class parents all across the country.

Throughout July 2021 to December 2021, 39 million households, including 88% of children in the United States, will receive automatic Advanced Child Tax Credit payments monthly. Married couples making

under \$150,000 and single parents making less than \$112,5000 are receiving monthly payments of \$300 per child under 6 years old and \$250 per child between the ages of 6 and 17, with the rest of the benefit to be received as part of next year's tax return.

These payments are already having a huge impact in improving the lives of working families. Since July, the expansion of this program has cut our nation's childhood poverty rate in half. This is an extraordinary accomplishment that we should all be proud of. And let me be clear. Congress must now either make the Advanced Child Tax Credit permanent, or at the very least, extend it for a number of years. The time is now to protect working families in Vermont and the nation, and to eradicate childhood poverty.

**If you are having difficulty in receiving the Advanced Child Tax Credit visit:
[IRS.gov/childtaxcredit2021](https://www.irs.gov/childtaxcredit2021)**

This website also has tools to check your eligibility, check or change the status of your current payments, and a sign-up tool for non-tax filers.

Addressing the Pandemic Crisis

As we continue to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, here are some resources that are available to Vermonters.

- **COVID Vaccinations & Testing:** Visit www.healthvermont.gov/covid-19 for information on how you can receive a free vaccine and testing, or call toll-free at (833) 722-0860.
- **Homeowner Relief:** The Vermont Homeowner Assistance Program at (800) 339-5866, can help Vermonters avoid mortgage delinquencies and defaults, foreclosures, loss of utilities or home energy services, and displacement.
- **Renter Relief:** The Vermont Emergency Rental Assistance Program at (833) 488-3727, provides relief to landlords on behalf of renters and tenants experiencing financial difficulties due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Broadband Subsidies:** The Vermont Temporary Broadband Subsidy Program at (800) 622-4496, provides eligible Vermont households with up to a \$40 monthly credit from March through December 2021 to assist with Internet service.
- **Mental Health and Wellness:** COVID Support VT helps people cope with the pandemic through free and confidential mental health counseling and connections to community services. Call 2-1-1 (Option #2) to talk to a counselor Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
- **Student Loan Relief:** The pause on qualifying student loan payments, interest, and collections has been extended until January 31, 2022.
- **Assistance for Seniors:** For general assistance with resources for Seniors, call the Vermont Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living at (802) 241-2401 or visit dail.vermont.gov.

Have You Received Your Direct Payments?

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic I have been a strong supporter of working families receiving direct payments. In these very difficult times I believe it is appropriate that Vermonters receive the help they need to allow them to get through this pandemic with security and dignity.

In this unprecedented public health and economic crisis, we fought and secured three rounds of direct payments for working families through legislation passed in the last year:

Payment 1: \$1,200 per qualifying individual, \$500 per qualifying dependent

Payment 2: \$600 per qualifying individual, \$600 per qualifying dependent

Payment 3: \$1,400 per qualifying individual, \$1,400 per qualifying dependent

89% of Vermont households qualified for direct payments. If you did not receive your first or second payment and have not yet filed your 2020 taxes, you can still file and claim a Recovery Rebate Credit for the missing amount you are entitled to. If you do not receive your third payment you can claim the amount on your 2021 taxes.

**Go to the Get My Payment Tool to check the status of your payment:
www.irs.gov/coronavirus/get-my-payment**

2020 Tax Returns & Delays

My office has heard from many Vermonters who have not yet received their 2020 federal tax refunds. Due to significant COVID-19 pandemic related delays and a historic underfunding crisis, it is taking the IRS longer than in previous years to send out tax refunds, even to taxpayers who filed electronically. In some instances, these tax processing delays have also caused delays in individuals receiving their stimulus checks and Advanced Child Tax Credit payments.

Let me be clear: these delays are absolutely unacceptable and must be rectified. My staff and I are working hard to have the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) address both individual and systemic issues that have caused delays for some. I will continue fighting for adequate funding for the IRS so that they can respond to the needs of the American people in a timely way.

STAY IN TOUCH WITH BERNIE:

**SIGN UP FOR MY ONLINE NEWSLETTER,
"THE BERNIE BUZZ" AT**

**[WWW.SANDERS.SENATE.GOV/
CONTACT/NEWSLETTER-SIGNUP/](http://WWW.SANDERS.SENATE.GOV/CONTACT/NEWSLETTER-SIGNUP/)**

**FOLLOW ME ON SOCIAL MEDIA AT
FACEBOOK.COM/SENATORSANDERS
AND**

TWITTER.COM/SENSANDERS

**CONTACT ME TO SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS,
OR REQUEST HELP WITH A FEDERAL AGENCY
BY CALLING 1 (800) 339-9834 OR VISITING
WWW.SANDERS.SENATE.GOV/CONTACT/**