

House COVID-19 Stimulus Bill Funds Billions for IT

The bill supports IT modernization, telehealth, telework and security as the country combats the coronavirus pandemic.

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The U.S. House of Representative's [third supplement](#) in its proposed \$2.5 trillion coronavirus response package includes billions of dollars of aid toward several technological areas, including telehealth, telework solutions, the Technology Modernization Fund and cybersecurity.

The budget proposal, known as the "Take Responsibility for Workers and Families Act," intends to fund various technological areas to help with both the medical response to COVID-19 and to support various infrastructural and economic areas of the country and government as the U.S. (and world) faces historical challenges from the virus outbreak.

One of the more significant items backing tech in the budget proposal is for the Technology Modernization Fund (TMF). More specifically, the House aims to provide "\$3 billion for technology-related modernization projects designed to cut costs and drive efficiencies across the federal government," the bill says.

While the additional TMF funding aims to broadly bolster and drive efficiencies across federal IT throughout the outbreak, the bill also contains other specific areas of funding to support technology and IT at agencies and states.

The Department of Homeland Security can expect to see various IT and cybersecurity areas of funding if the House bill is enacted. More specifically, DHS will receive:

- \$141 million for the Coast Guard "to prevent, prepare for and respond to coronavirus through the activation of Coast Guard Reserve personnel and for building capacity and capability for information technology systems and infrastructure to support telework and remote access."
- \$14.4 million for the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency "to assist interagency critical infrastructure coordination, enhance analytic capabilities supporting coronavirus response and related activities."
- \$25 million to the Federal Emergency Management Agency for facilities and IT support.

Other agencies can expect to see big-dollar packages to support their IT systems as well, such as a \$3 billion IT system package for the Department of Veterans Affairs to procure equipment, expand bandwidth and other supports for telework, telemedicine, call center volume and other areas where IT services are seeing increased demand.

The bill emphasizes other significant levels of funding for telehealth and telework as governmental leadership at both federal and state levels continue to enforce social distancing and shelter-at-home policies.

For telemedicine funding, House representatives carved out:

- “\$200 million for the Federal Communications Commission to provide health care providers with connected devices to facilitate telemedicine services and free up hospital beds.”
- \$258 million for the U.S. Agriculture Department’s ReConnect program and \$25 million for Distant Learning and Telemedicine to “expand investments in telemedicine and broadband to assist in managing the coronavirus pandemic.”
- \$1.03 billion to the Indian Health Service for various Indian and tribally operated health facilities, including in providing telehealth capabilities and \$125 million for electronic health record system support.
- \$330 million for the Health Resources and Services Administration to develop a telephonic and virtual care platform that aggregates various providers to facilitate telehealth services.
- \$15 million for HRSA to provide technical assistance to rural medical facilities and to support existing telehealth projects to link COVID-19 patients with infectious disease specialists.
- \$80 million to support the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality’s evaluations and research related to the health care system’s response to COVID-10 and new telehealth investments.

On top of these telehealth-specific areas, the House bill proposes significant blanket funding for civilian and veteran health care as well. More specifically, the budget calls for \$100 billion for hospitals to reimburse health care-related expenses or lost revenue from the coronavirus pandemic and \$17.2 billion to the VA for support in the surge of demand for VA medical facility health care services.

In addition to the VA facility support, the bill would give an extra \$4.5 billion to the VA to reimburse expenses incurred to provide medical care to civilians, and the budget further includes \$6 billion for other broad medical response efforts and \$5.5 billion to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to support federal, state and local public health agencies in COVID-19 response and prevention.

As American businesses, agencies and educational institutions have also moved to remote work, the House bill provides significant funding to support telework too. This includes \$158 million to the Department of the Interior for various IT and telework capabilities, \$510 million to support telework at the Social Security Administration, \$300 million to support public telecommunication entities, \$10 million to support Department of Education telework and \$30.3 million for Transportation Department telework.

Part of the \$59.8 billion Education support fund will also go toward aiding states in purchasing educational technology to continue academic interactions between teachers and students remotely.

The House supports its own move to telework in the bill too, providing \$25 million to support the House's ramp up to telework through the purchase of laptops and remote IT devices.

Finally, as America continues holding primary elections and gears up for the 2020 general election in November, the House's proposed budget includes funding for election preparation and security. The budget allocates "\$4 billion for Election Administration Grants to states for contingency planning, preparation and resilience of elections for federal office."

The funding for technological solutions are just some of many areas that the [more than 1,400-page House bill](#) addresses. The House Appropriations Committee released the Take Responsibility for Workers and Families Act Monday in response to the Senate's version, which has been stymied this week due to partisan disagreements over its proposed measures.

Although the House bill includes many stipulations already covered in the Senate stimulus proposal, it also expands support for workers, small businesses, families, students and health care workers and facilities. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said in a [news release](#) that she encourages the Senate to consider the House bill.

"I am grateful to our Committee Chairs and members for their extraordinary work for America's workers and families," Pelosi said. "We urge the Senate to move closer to the values in the Take Responsibility for Workers and Families Act."

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