



First Selectman's COVID-19 Update

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

As we put a close on this challenging year, I want to thank the residents of Essex for their ongoing support and patience throughout the pandemic. The numbers are high and we have seen many hospitalizations and lives lost. Phase 1a of the vaccination distribution is underway with first responders, healthcare personnel, and long term facility residents receiving their initial shots.

Continued pandemic management, public safety, and required resources has kept our first responders, fire and police departments, health director, re-open advisory committee and staff working judiciously throughout the crisis. This will remain the focus until we are on the other side of this pandemic. Vaccination sites and related information will be disseminated to residents so everyone can receive the vaccination as soon as possible. In the meantime, it is important that we continue to follow safety guidelines, wear a mask, wash your hands, and keep a social distance.

I encourage you to bring in the new year safely and at home. Local restaurants are offering takeout and delivery so please support them if you can. If you think a resident might need help contact our Social Services Department at 860-767-4340 x 201.

[Click Here](#) for updates on the state's vaccine distribution plan.

Happy New Year!

Stay safe,
Norm

LABOR UPDATES - UNEMPLOYMENT AND SHARED WORK PROGRAMS

Governor Ned Lamont and Connecticut Department of Labor Commissioner Kurt Westby today provided an update on the Emergency Coronavirus Recovery Act of 2020, known as the CARES Act extension. The law protects

Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) and Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC) programs; allocates an additional \$300 per week benefit for all claimants for up to 11 weeks; extends the interest waiver for Trust Fund borrowing; and continues 100 percent federal funding for the Shared Work program.

Key components include:

- For all claimants: A new Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) allocation of \$300 per week for up to 11 weeks. Claimants can expect benefits by mid-January.
- For around 35,000 PUA participants: An 11-week program extension for a total of 50 weeks. Program eligibility ends March 13, 2021, and last week of benefits is paid by week ending April 10, 2021, for those who have remaining weeks as of March 13, 2021. State labor agencies are waiting for official U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) guidance on details, however, USDOL has signaled these are expected to be continuous benefits for eligible claimants beginning on the day the CARES Act expired.
- For around 29,000 PEUC customers: An 11-week extension to a total of 24 weeks with the last week paid by week ending April 10, 2021, for those who have remaining weeks as of March 13, 2021. Program eligibility ends March 13, 2021. Claimants who are currently receiving Extended Benefits (EB) will stay on that program until it is exhausted before potentially becoming eligible for the additional weeks of PEUC.
- Trust Fund interest waiver extension until March 14, 2021. This reduces the financial liability for Connecticut companies that pay a special assessment to repay interest on Trust Fund borrowing. Currently, the state has borrowed \$485 million for the Trust Fund. The agency has requested \$400 million for the first quarter of 2021. This request may not reflect actual spending – weekly spending is currently above \$20 million and expected to experience a seasonal increase.
- Extends the 50 percent reimbursement provision for local and state government and nonprofit organizations.

Extends the 100 percent federal funding for [Shared Work](#). Shared Work helps employers avoid layoffs by allowing them to use unemployment benefits to cover a reduction in hours. During economic downturns, employers can reduce costs but avoid layoffs. Employees stay attached to jobs and benefits even with reduced hours.

State labor agencies must wait for guidance from the U.S. Department of Labor before implementing many new unemployment provisions. Guidance is released in the form of Unemployment Insurance Program Letters that

generally come out within several weeks of changes to the law. Since these are extensions of existing programs with operational funding structures, the Connecticut Department of Labor does not expect significant delays on the state side but cannot operationalize the provisions in the absence of federal guidance. Updates on implementation timing and program details will be released and posted to www.FileCTUI.com as they become available.

COVID-19 RELIEF SUMMARY

- **Unemployment insurance** (\$120 billion). Revives supplemental federal pandemic unemployment benefits but at \$300 per week - through March 14 - instead of the \$600 per week benefit that expired in July. Extends special pandemic benefits for "gig" workers and extends the maximum period for state-paid jobless benefits to 50 weeks.
- **Stimulus checks** (\$166 billion). Provides \$600 direct payments to individuals making up to \$75,000 per year and couples making up to \$150,000 per year - with payments phased out for higher incomes -- with \$600 additional payments per dependent child.
- **Paycheck Protection Program** (\$284 billion). Revives the Paycheck Protection Program, which provides forgivable loans to qualified businesses. Especially hard-hit businesses that received PPP grants would be eligible for a second round. Ensures that PPP subsidies are not taxed.
- **Vaccines, testing, health providers** (\$69 billion). Delivers more than \$30 billion for procurement of vaccines and treatments, distribution funds for states, and a strategic stockpile. Adds \$22 billion for testing, tracing and mitigation, \$9 billion for health care providers, and \$4.5 billion for mental health.
- **Schools and universities** (\$82 billion). Delivers \$54 billion to public K-12 schools affected by the pandemic and \$23 billion for colleges and universities; \$4 billion would be awarded to a Governors Emergency Education Relief Fund; nearly \$1 billion for Native American schools.
- **Rental assistance** (\$25 billion). Provides money for a first-ever federal rental assistance program; funds to be distributed by state and local governments to help people who have fallen behind on their rent and may be facing eviction.
- **Food/farm aid** (\$26 billion). Increases stamp benefits by 15% for six months and provides funding to food banks, Meals on Wheels and other food aid. Provides an equal amount (\$13 billion) to farmers and ranchers.
- **Child Care** (\$10 billion). Provides \$10 billion to the Child Care

Development Block Grant to help families with child care costs and help providers cover increased operating costs.

- **Postal Service** (\$10 billion). Forgives a \$10 billion loan to the Postal Service provided in earlier relief legislation.
- **Theaters/Museums** (\$15 billion) Creates a \$15 billion grant program for live venues, theaters and museum operators that have lost at least 25% of their revenues. The money will be for specified expenses such as payroll costs, rent, utilities and personal protective equipment. During the first 14 days of the program's implementation, grants will be awarded to those who have faced 90% revenue losses. Then, those who have experienced at least 70% revenue losses will be eligible during the next two weeks. After the first month of the program, any other eligible businesses can receive grants.

All Town of Essex Board and Commission Meetings are available to attend virtually via Zoom online conferencing. Please check the calendar on the homepage essexct.gov for details. Virtual meetings are open to the public and you are invited and encouraged to attend.

TAX TIME



A Message from the Tax Collector

Please mail your tax payment or pay online.

Community transmission of COVID-19 continues to rise sharply in Essex and across Connecticut. Now, more than ever, we all must be more diligent. With taxes due in January 2021 we strongly encourage mailing in your tax payment. If you want us to send you a receipt, please enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope along with your payment. You can also pay your taxes online: [Pay Taxes Online](#)

[CT Covid-19 Cases by Town](#)

[COVID-19 Testing Sites](#)

[Connecticut Travel Advisory](#)

[Connecticut COVID-19 Data Tracker](#)

[EES - Frequently Asked Questions pdf](#) ([google docs direct link](#))

For info on COVID-19 call 2-1-1

Please continue to wear your mask, keep a minimum of 6ft social distance, wash your hands, and stay home if you feel unwell. We will get through this together.

Sign up for Essex News

Encourage your friends and neighbors to receive this newsletter.

[Click Here](#) to subscribe.

Sign up for Safer Essex Emergency Alerts

Receive alerts about critical community information directly to your cell phone or email. Go to www.essexct.gov and search "Safer Essex" or call 860-760-4340 x112.

Sign up for Weekly Check-In Call

Residents age 62+ are encouraged to sign up for a weekly check-in call from a volunteer. Please call Essex Social Services Department at 860-767-4340 x 201.

Have Questions?

Give us a call.
860-767-4340 x145

