

United Mine Workers of America



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The President
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

March 22, 2020

Dear President Trump and Leader McConnell:

As the administration and Congress work to pass legislation that will provide vitally needed economic stimulus across the American economy in this time of great national peril, I strongly urge you to include language that will protect the pensions of millions of hard-working Americans and senior citizens.

The impact of this crisis is far reaching and not yet fully understood, but we know it will have devastating consequences for the multiemployer pension (and health plans) working and retired Americans rely on.

Prior to the current crisis, we were rapidly approaching a PBGC cliff. Since the crisis, investment losses have been severe. S&P returns are down some 25 percent, with an average investment portfolio losing in the neighborhood of 15 percent. Further, it is unclear how long this crisis will last, what employment levels will be once this is over, or even how many employers will survive the shutdowns.

Entire industries are seeing massive unemployment and underemployment, particularly in the construction, transportation, airline, manufacturing, service, and entertainment industries. Construction jobs are completely closed down in California, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Boston, and Cambridge,

Massachusetts. In the entertainment industry, multiemployer pension funds are estimating a near total loss of contribution income for March. We are even experiencing the closure and idling of coal mines during this crisis.

The COVID-19 crisis will severely impact the funding of most healthy multiemployer plans and it will be devastating for the pension funds that were already deeply troubled and nearing insolvency. Pension funds depend on contributions under collective bargaining agreements that cover working men and women. As work dries up as a result of efforts to stop the spread of the coronavirus, many currently healthy pension funds that provide billions of dollars in benefits to America's working men and women will fall into trouble through no fault of their own.

I urge you to include the language of the Emergency Multiemployer Pension Plan Relief Act of 2020 in the stimulus legislation. This legislation will provide the means for working Americans to have some measure of economic security in these difficult times.

With Senator McConnell's leadership, Congress has already passed legislation that protects coal miners' pensions, and President Trump signed the legislation that contained that language into law. Our members are grateful for that, because they have the comfort of knowing their pensions are secure. But they believe, as I do, that all workers – many of whom are the most vulnerable to the COVID-19 virus – need to be able to have that same comfort.

Thank you for your consideration of this.

Sincerely,



Cecil E. Roberts
International President

cc: UMWA Secretary-Treasurer Levi Allen
AFL-CIO Retirement Security Working Group