



Legislative Update
Unemployment Update

Back to Business
Developing a Return to Business Action Plan

September 29, 2020

Legislative Update

Stimulus Bill

- Monday evening, the House Democrats unveiled a new \$2.2T stimulus package.
- Reduced by about \$1.2T from earlier “Heroes Act” passed in May.
- Still about \$700B larger than earlier bill from the Problem Solvers Caucus.



Stimulus Bill

- Key Provisions:
 - Reinstating the Payroll Protection Program.
 - Requires employers to develop and implement infectious disease exposure control plans.
 - \$600 weekly federal unemployment benefits until January 31, 2021, retroactive to September 6, 2020.
 - Second round of \$1,200 direct payments to tax payers, plus \$500 per dependent.
 - \$436B to state and local governments.
 - \$225B to help schools reopen.
 - \$75B for COVID-19 testing and contact tracing.
 - \$50B in emergency rental assistance.



Stimulus Bill

- Chance of passing?
 - Electoral politics coupled with a fight over the Supreme Court makes path to passing difficult.
 - Unemployment benefits and direct aid to states remain key areas of fierce disagreement between Republicans and Democrats.
 - A vote in the house is unlikely before October 2nd at the earliest, but could come anytime between now and the December 7th recess.



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Unemployment Update

Unemployment Benefits in Virginia

- Unemployed workers in Virginia will have to wait until October 15th to begin receiving \$300 extra in weekly unemployment benefits.
 - Claimants must be eligible for at least \$100/week in state unemployment benefits to receive the extra money.
 - Federal aid will be paid to unemployed workers retroactively.
 - Qualified claimants will receive benefits covering the period August 1st through September 5th in one lump sum payment.



Transitioning Back to the Office

COVID – 19 Team Assessment

If your business has not already created a COVID-19 team, you should do so immediately.

This group should be comprised of key members needed to make decisions to ensure concerns from every angle are considered.

These key members should serve as the spokesperson/messenger for the company/office.

This team would notify vendors, develop a plan for postal services, and document COVID-19 related messages from employees.



Some items the COVID-19 taskforce should review before allowing employees to return include:

Risk: Engage with risk management personnel to gauge the company's readiness to return to the office.

Insurance: Work with insurers to identify potential risks for returning to work.

Legal: Work with legal counsel to ensure that the actions that are being taken by the COVID-19 return-to-work team are sound and do not violate any employee rights.

Employee Guide: Develop an overview of what to expect when returning employees arrive back in the office. This guide should include:

- New entrance protocols for employees and visitors,
- A list of supplies that will and will not be available/provided (i.e., food, drinks, utensils, glassware, cups, etc.),
- Instructions on bringing equipment (laptops, chairs, etc.) back into the workplace and sanitization requirements,
- Changes to the work environment including room availability, relocation of desks, etc.,
- Modifications to internal and external meeting protocols, hosting of client events, and visitor access.



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Prepare Your Office

OBTAIN A DETAILED FLOOR PLAN/LAYOUT OF YOUR OFFICE

Highlight high traffic areas & exits.

Designate traffic directions to ensure low interaction between staff.

Map out desk/cubes, offices, conference rooms, etc. that adhere to the social distancing guidelines (6 feet apart).



DESIGN A PHASED EMPLOYEE RETURN PLAN

Based on the different regulations for each state, and due to the universal social distancing regulations, not all employees will be able to return to the office at the same time.

- It is recommended that you use a phased approach – taking into account the employee's desire to return to the office as well as the ability (physically) to bring employees back into the office.
- It is recommended that at least a three–phase plan is used. The time between phases will depend on the success of the previous phase and adjusting/correcting for any unforeseen problems.
- Phases could be spaced out with 2-4 weeks in between.

Work with your HR team to determine who will return in which phase.

- Each company will need to determine the best way to coordinate who/how many people can come back in each phase.
- Coordinate with your IT department to get returners set back up in the office so the process goes as smooth as possible.
- Know that there may be some people who will be more comfortable and productive working remotely going forward.
- Plan to have shared office space for those who will not need to return full-time.



ENFORCE DISTANCING RULES, LIMIT CONTACT, AND INCREASE SANITARY MEASURES

The current regulations to reduce the risk of spread for COVID-19 is geared heavily toward distancing, cleanliness, and reduced personal contact. To continue these practices in a professional office environment, the following measures should be applied:

- Continue to use virtual forms of communication when possible such as Skype, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Slack, etc. If employees do need to meet, and their desktop does not have video or sound capabilities, have them try downloading one of the mentioned apps to their phone and use that to communicate. (NOTE: any of these suggestions should be cleared with the Risk and IT department to ensure they are secure and safe tools to use.)

During the 1st and 2nd phase consider disallowing non-employees or clients in the office.

- Limit access to restrooms, kitchens, and copy rooms to a new socially distant norm.
- Temporarily close areas where employees congregate (lounges, break rooms) if possible.
- Limit the elevator usage.
- Increase nightly/weekend cleaning routines.
- Make sure cleaners are properly trained on the disinfecting guidelines.
- Determine areas that require thorough cleaning due to heavy usage, such as training rooms, conference rooms, break areas and restrooms.
- Have hand sanitizers all throughout the building(s).
- Provide sterile wipes for people to wipe down their own surfaces.
- Place signage around the office to encourage and promote clean habits.



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Prepare Your Employees

It is now time to prepare your employees for their return to work. Some will be eager and others potentially nervous, so remember to give clear and nonnegotiable direction to help ease any tensions or stress that the transition may cause.

COMMUNICATE TIMELINESS AND EXPECTATIONS

It's important to keep your employees updated. Here are a few items that should be conveyed to your staff:

- Provide an estimated timeline on the phased approach back into the office, and detail as best as possible what that process will look like.
- We suggest that the COVID team, in conjunction with the HR team, prepare a confidential questionnaire for each employee to complete for the sole purpose of ensuring that the employee is ready to return to work, identifying the appropriate phase the employee should return, and to address any individual concerns an employee might have about returning to work. Questions you could ask include:
 1. To the best of your knowledge, have you been exposed and/or been around another person who has tested positive for COVID-19 in the last month?
 2. Are you experiencing any symptoms associated with COVID – 19? If yes, please describe.
 3. Have you recently traveled outside the State of ____? If yes, describe.
 4. Are there any unique circumstances the COVID Team needs to be aware of related to you returning to work in the office? If yes, please describe.
 5. Is it your desire to return to working at the office building as soon as possible versus continuing to temporarily work remotely? If so, why?
 6. Please list any company equipment you took home with you to work remotely.



CHANGE

While the workplace design, policies, and safety protocols are critical pieces of the puzzle, they do not touch on perhaps the most important aspect of the return to work—the readiness of the workforce physically, emotionally, and psychologically. Developing a plan to mitigate employee fears and concerns should be a top priority.

To help employees, organizations must work to ensure their employees understand what to expect upon their return. Some employees may expect nothing to change, while others will assume everything will be different. Preparing employees and reminding them that these changes are designed to help keep them safe will ease their anxiety.



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Create A Plan to Transition Technology

TAKE INVENTORY: Buy more laptops. Budget for extra hardware that was originally needed when this happened, i.e., webcams, monitors, power strips, etc. that were all depleted during this time. It might seem expensive, but having equipment on the shelf, ready for IT or your Managed Service Provider to remotely manage, is a good thing. It will also save your staff hours in lost productivity.

ANALYZE SOFTWARE: Inspect your firewall's overall performance with your Managed Service Provider or IT staff. Did it suit your needs? Do you need more VPN licenses? Is the firewall licensing, as well as the firmware, up to date?

REINFORCE SAFE ONLINE PRACTICES: Now is a great time to give your staff a reminder on the cybersecurity landscape, i.e., phishing attacks, malicious threats, malware, and online best practices. Do you have a plan in place should your business ever be comprised? It is more important than ever, as hackers recognize the vulnerability with the current state of business.

FULLY TRANSITION TO THE CLOUD: If your business has not already fully transitioned over to the cloud, it may be time to do so. Cloud-based communication and file-sharing applications are making it easier than ever to stay connected. While the recent pandemic forced many small businesses to shift to some cloud-based applications, we have seen a lot of companies fully integrating cloud services going forward.



Navigating through these uncertain times will be challenging for everyone, as there are many moving parts. So, it's important to be patient and proactive to ease the transition back into the office.



We are answering your questions live on the air right now.

Please submit questions through the **Q&A function**,
not the chat option at the bottom of your screen.



Questions?

For legislative and regulatory questions, please email:

questions@dominionpayroll.com





*Don't forget to wash your
hands!*

