

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 3054

To establish a grant program in the Department of Labor to assist unemployed and under employed workers following the COVID–19 pandemic.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MAY 7, 2021

Mr. LIEU (for himself and Ms. LEGER FERNANDEZ) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Education and Labor, and in addition to the Committee on House Administration, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

A BILL

To establish a grant program in the Department of Labor to assist unemployed and under employed workers following the COVID–19 pandemic.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “21st Century Federal
5 Writers’ Project Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

1 (1) In 1935, during the Great Depression,
2 President Franklin Delano Roosevelt established
3 The Federal Writers’ Project of the New Deal Era.
4 This program was organized to employ writers, edi-
5 tors, historians, researchers, journalists, librarians,
6 broadcasters, photographers, and others to document
7 American society.

8 (2) The Federal Writers Project employed up to
9 10,000 people between its founding in 1935 during
10 the Great Depression and the publication of its first
11 guides in 1943.

12 (3) The original Federal Writers’ Project had
13 many successes, such as—

14 (A) the American Guide Series, which cov-
15 ered 48 States, 40 cities, 18 regions and terri-
16 tories and countless counties, with John
17 Steinbeck calling the Series, “the most com-
18 prehensive account of the United States ever
19 got together, and nothing since has even ap-
20 proached it. It was compiled during the depres-
21 sion by the best writers in America”;

22 (B) creating opportunities for writers who
23 went on to become some of America’s greatest
24 authors, including Ralph Ellison, Richard
25 Wright, Saul Bellow, and Zora Neale Hurston;

1 (C) developing the Slave Narrative Project,
2 the largest project to document the experience
3 of formerly enslaved people, which included oral
4 histories and photography telling the story of
5 10,000 Americans in 17 States;

6 (D) creating over 1,000 books and pam-
7 phlets covering local and regional histories, folk-
8 lore collections, humor, ethnic studies, and na-
9 ture studies.

10 (4) The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the
11 decline of local newspapers and other local news out-
12 lets, with more than 60 local newsrooms closing over
13 the course of 2020 and other newsrooms enduring
14 cutbacks. More than 200 counties have no daily or
15 weekly newspaper and 68 percent of these counties
16 are nonmetro areas, home to small towns and rural
17 communities.

18 (5) Following the death of more than 550,000
19 people due to COVID-19 and more than a year of
20 physical restrictions, the United States has experi-
21 enced a historic period with a profound and lasting
22 impact on society.

23 (6) The original Federal Writers' Project pro-
24 vided the opportunity to observe and document the
25 Great Depression. Further, the impact of COVID-

1 19, including the lives lost, should be documented by
2 a renewed Federal Writers' Project.

3 **SEC. 3. DOL GRANT PROGRAM.**

4 (a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 90 days after the
5 date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Labor,
6 working through the Employment Training Administra-
7 tion, shall establish a grant program to provide eligible
8 entities with funds to assist individuals who are unem-
9 ployed or under employed in order to document in writing
10 and images American society and the broad impacts and
11 effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in the United States.

12 (b) GRANT FEATURES.—In administering the grant
13 program under subsection (a), the Secretary shall deter-
14 mine the parameters of the grant program, the amount
15 and duration of grant awards, with an individual grant
16 award not to exceed 7.5 percent of the total amounts of
17 available grant funds, and the eligibility of individuals to
18 receive funds from a grant recipient (using the Standard
19 Occupational Classification for categories 25-000 and 27-
20 000).

21 (c) ELIGIBLE ENTITIES.—To be eligible to receive a
22 grant under this section, an entity shall submit an applica-
23 tion to the Secretary of Labor at such time and in such
24 manner as the Secretary may require and be—

1 (1) a nonprofit institution of higher education
2 or a nonprofit organization each of which has experi-
3 ence in writing, researching, collecting, curating, and
4 disseminating educational information;

5 (2) a newsroom that may be a nonprofit or for
6 profit entity;

7 (3) a public or nonprofit library; or

8 (4) a communications union or guild.

9 (d) GEOGRAPHIC DIVERSITY.—In selecting the re-
10 cipients for a grant under this section the Secretary shall,
11 to the extent practicable, ensure equitable geographic dis-
12 tribution, including urban and rural areas.

13 (e) REPOSITORY.—The Secretary shall establish a re-
14 pository of works developed through the grant program
15 in which grantees submit completed works from sub-
16 grantees, including giving credit to each writer or artist.
17 and make such works available to the public. Not later
18 than 90 days after receipt of a completed work, the Sec-
19 retary shall forward such work to the Librarian of Con-
20 gress to archive such material in accordance with sub-
21 section (f).

22 (f) ARCHIVE.—The Librarian of Congress shall es-
23 tablish an archive program in the American Folklife Cen-
24 ter at the Library of Congress to collect and make publicly
25 available in a digital format, including giving credit to

1 each writer or artist, written and visual works collected
2 by the Secretary under subsection (e).

3 (g) REPORTING REQUIREMENTS.—

4 (1) GRANTEE REPORTING.—The Secretary shall
5 develop reporting guidelines for grant recipients to
6 include, at a minimum, information regarding—

7 (A) the amount of funds received by each
8 grantee, the amount provided to subgrantees,
9 the number of projects completed;

10 (B) the race, ethnicity, age, location in
11 terms of local or rural, and regional diversity of
12 subgrantees;

13 (C) the number of requests made to review
14 the completed projects (when available); and

15 (D) such other data the Secretary con-
16 siders important.

17 (2) REPORTING TO CONGRESS.—Not less than
18 once each year while the program is in operation,
19 the Secretary shall submit a report summarizing the
20 data collected under paragraph (1) to the Commit-
21 tees on Appropriations and Education and Labor of
22 the House of Representatives and the Committees
23 on Appropriations and Health, Education, Labor
24 and Pensions of the Senate.

1 (h) ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS.—The Secretary may
2 withhold 5 percent of funds made available to carry out
3 this program for administrative costs. An eligible entity
4 that receives a grant under this section may reserve not
5 more than 10 percent of funds received to administer its
6 program.

7 (i) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is
8 authorized to be appropriated \$60,000,000 for fiscal year
9 2022.

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