

**U.S. Senator Tom Udall (D-N.M.)**  
**Floor Speech**  
**COVID-19: Third Legislative Relief Package**  
**March 25, 2020**

“Today, New Mexico and the nation face a pandemic the likes of which we have not seen in over 100 years,” **Udall began.** “And today, the Senate is acting to pass the largest relief package for the American people in our history.

“In New Mexico, we have 100 diagnosed cases,” **Udall continued.** “And today, the first death in our state is reported—a senior citizen from Eddy County, in the Southeast part of our state, passed away Sunday.

“With that in mind, I am rising today to tell New Mexicans: Relief is on its way.

“After days of furious negotiations, I’m pleased, and relieved, that Democrats and Republicans were able to reach agreement on what will be the largest federal relief effort in history,” **Udall observed.** “But the times demand a response of this magnitude.

“We face a national crisis of monumental proportions,” **Udall said.** “And I’m heartened that Republicans and Democrats in this body joined together over the last several days to face this crisis together as a nation. This is what we do as Americans.”

**Udall moved on to highlight provisions of the funding bill:**

**On relief for American small businesses:** “We here in the Senate need to make absolutely sure that everyone—not just those at the top—but everyone is taken care of and can weather this crisis,” **Udall said.** “I am strongly supportive of the small business relief in this bill, which includes loans of up to \$10 million that can be forgiven and turned into grants if employees are kept on the payroll. This relief will go through the Small Business Administration and be available to any business or non-profit under 500 employees.”

**On expanded protections for American workers and their families:** “With Democrats at the negotiating table... American workers will receive four months more of unemployment insurance, instead of just three,” **Udall highlighted.** “This plan extends unemployment to the self-employed, for the first time. It increases the maximum benefit by \$600 per week. Many workers will receive their full pay under this expansion. Just to give an idea of the magnitude of this problem in my home state of New Mexico: During the week of March 9<sup>th</sup>, we had fewer than 800 claims for unemployment insurance. This last week – we had 11,000. And now, we are receiving 7,000 every day.”

**On the new “Marshall Fund” for America’s healthcare system:** “Because Democrats stood firm, our healthcare system will see an infusion of \$55 billion more into the ‘Marshall Fund’ for healthcare,” **Udall said.** “The total public health care investment in this bill is now \$150 billion. We will establish a \$150 billion relief fund for state, local, and Tribal governments to help cover costs of fighting this virus. New Mexico is eligible for up to \$1.25 billion from this fund.

**On industry accountability for taxpayer bailouts:** “We will bring accountability and transparency to the relief fund for industry and large corporations,” **Udall said.** “This relief bill puts in transparency and independent oversight. And also makes sure that elected politicians, including the president, are not the beneficiaries of this fund.”

**On the critical needs of Tribal governments and economies:** “As vice chairman of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, I’ve been particularly focused on making sure that Indian

Country is not left out, and that Tribes – that on the frontlines of this public health and economic crisis – have the resources they need and deserve,” **Udall continued.** “Together with my Democratic colleagues, I fought for and secured \$8 billion set-aside for Tribal governments and their enterprises. This Tribal relief fund will provide the 574 federally-recognized Indian Tribes with flexible resources – resources they need during the COVID-19 response. I am glad we found bipartisan agreement on this.”

**On vital health and education funding for Indian Country:** “We also secured over \$2 billion in emergency funding for Tribal needs that includes over \$1 billion for the Indian Health Service that will be used for everything from expanding medical services, to purchasing equipment, to promoting public health education to expanding tele-health services and increasing disease surveillance,” **Udall said.**

“And over \$700 million that will go to the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Bureau of Indian Education, and the HUD Office of Native American Programs. These funds will Tribal governments as they make their way through this crisis and support their members support BIE schools and tribal colleges and universities so that students continue with their education and provide housing for those most in need who are impacted by this terrible virus.”

“These are key victories. But we’re not done. We must uphold our trust and treaty responsibilities to all American Indians and Alaska Natives,” **Udall continued.** “And so Congress must do more to respond to the unique COVID-19-related public health and economic crises in Indian Country. Tribes are some of the most vulnerable populations, with the least robust health care systems. We have a very scary outbreak in part of the Navajo Nation...For our next response package – we must make sure Indian Country has equal access to federal coronavirus resources.”

**On New Mexico priorities in the funding package:** “Senator Heinrich and I found hard for New Mexico priorities. We are working hard on issues that have to do with our national labs, who are some of our top employers. I think, in fact, that they are the biggest.” **Udall said.**

“New Mexico’s creative economy can’t be left behind. Sitting as lead Democrat on the Appropriations Subcommittee that funds the national endowments, I pushed for an additional \$75 million for both the National Endowment for the Arts and National Endowment for the Humanities. These funds will support local artists and arts programs through this tough economic time—when arts and cultural venues are shuttered and artists and others are out of work.”

**Udall then called on all New Mexicans to follow public health guidelines:** “I would like to remind everyone to conscientiously follow the public health measures recommended by the experts. Staying at home is the best thing we can do to stem the course of this virus,” **Udall urged.** “It’s a ‘firebreak’ that cuts off the fuel for this virus and prevents a catastrophe that overruns our hospitals. Social distance. Wash your hands for 20 seconds. We all have an important part to play in containing COVID-19, and keeping ourselves, our neighbors and our communities safe.

“The state of New Mexico is under a stay-at-home order. I commend Governor Lujan Grisham for taking quick and decisive action,” **Udall said.** “I know these measures are difficult and a hardship for many. But we will only be able to revive our economy once this public health crisis is abated. If we just let the virus run its course, we could lose over one million lives in this country –and some of these estimates are two million. That would be totally unacceptable and devastating.”

**Udall concluded by expressing his gratitude to frontline healthcare workers and service providers saving lives every day:** “Because of the frontline healthcare workers – the doctors, nurses, technicians – and all those who support that work – janitors, cafeteria workers – this public health crisis will see an end. Thank you to everyone who is risking their own safety to help others,” **Udall concluded.** “In the days, and weeks, and months ahead – we must continue to

closely monitor all aspects of the impact of coronavirus on our nation's health and economy, and continue to decisively and aggressively respond to the needs of the American people. I am confident that, working together as one nation and one people, we will meet and beat this crisis and come out on the other end stronger."

**A copy of Udall's remarks as delivered can be found [here](#).**