ND Emergency Commission approves additional $406M in federal funds for COVID-19 response and recovery

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BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Emergency Commission today voted unanimously to direct over $406 million in federal funding to the state's COVID-19 response and recovery efforts, with the majority of the money again going to support economic recovery.

North Dakota received $1.25 billion from the Coronavirus Relief Fund as part of the $2.2 trillion Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act passed. The $406.1 million approved today follows the commission's vote in May to use $524.2 million in Coronavirus Relief Fund dollars, bringing the total used to roughly $930 million and leaving $320 million available.

The six-member Emergency Commission consists of four legislative leaders – House Majority Leader Chet Pollert of Carrington, Senate Majority Leader Rich Wardner of Dickinson, House Appropriations Chairman Jeff Delzer of Underwood and Senate Appropriations Chairman Ray Holmberg of Grand Forks – along with Secretary of State Al Jaeger and Burgum as chairman.

Burgum thanked legislators for their strong collaboration and input and also expressed his appreciation for North Dakota citizens who, by practicing individual responsibility and social distancing to slow the spread of coronavirus and reduce health care impacts, allowed the commission to direct 75 percent of the federal monies toward economic support.

"This federal funding is being distributed in a way that provides the greatest positive impact to North Dakota citizens, businesses and all levels of state and local government," Burgum said. "We're grateful to the legislators, agency leaders and citizens who have worked hard to ensure that these funds can be used to minimize the negative impact of COVID-19 and facilitate economic recovery, saving both lives and livelihoods."

The $406.1 million includes $200 million to support the state's Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund, on top of the $110 million allocated last month to keep the fund solvent.

Nearly $113 million will be used to provide economic support for businesses, including $69 million for the new North Dakota Economic Resiliency Grant Program. The program will provide grants of up to $50,000 per business for investments in protective equipment, supplies and other improvements to reduce contact and attract customers and employees, promoting a safe return to the marketplace and improving consumer confidence. The Department of Commerce will be releasing more details about the program, pending Budget Section approval.

Commissioners also approved $33 million for an orphan well plugging and site reclamation program that is projected to maintain 300 to 550 oil and gas service sector jobs as the industry continues to recover.

More than $61 million will go toward continuation of government services, including telework, cybersecurity, transition to digital services and personal protective equipment. The remaining $32 million of the $406.1 million will support public health and safety efforts. The funding includes a total of nearly $4 million for cities, counties and park districts.

In other action, commission members approved $2.1 million in federal Community Development Block Grant funding through the CARES Act to support the North Dakota Department of Human Services' COVID Emergency Rent Bridge program, which provides temporary rental assistance to eligible renters who are experiencing a loss of household income due to COVID-19. The state Department of Health also was authorized to receive $17.7 million from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to support epidemiology and lab functions to help contain and mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

In total, North Dakota has received $4.7 billion in COVID-19-related federal funding, including the $1.25 billion in Coronavirus Relief Funds, $1.9 billion in Small Business Administration funding to support businesses, $946 million from the Federal Reserve for direct assistance to individuals and families, and about $600 million from other federal programs.

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