House Democrats on Tuesday introduced H.R. 6800, The Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions (HEROES) Act, a proposal for the next federal coronavirus relief package. The full House of Representatives is scheduled to return on Friday to consider and likely vote on the bill.

The HEROES Act is not expected to pass both chambers of Congress in its current form, but the bill identifies Democrats’ priorities for the next relief package in an attempt to pressure the White House and Senate Republicans to commence bipartisan negotiations on subsequent COVID-19 relief legislation.

The HEROES Act establishes that House Democrats have largely heard the voices of our members and the labor movement by addressing many IATSE legislative priorities. Among its provisions, the bill:

- Requires the Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) to issue an emergency temporary standard to protect workers from occupational exposure to infectious diseases, including COVID-19;
- Extends eligibility for the Paycheck Protection Program to all nonprofits, including labor unions;
- Extends the CARES Act’s unemployment insurance provisions, including the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance, Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation ($600 weekly supplement), and Pandemic Extended Unemployment Compensation (13 additional weeks) through January 2021;
- Provides multiemployer pension relief by allowing plans to freeze their zone status for up to two years and smooth investment losses over 30 years, and institutes a special partition program to deal with critically endangered plans without increasing burdens on healthy plans;
- Provides 100% COBRA premium subsidies through January 2021, to allow workers to maintain their employer-sponsored coverage;
- Appropriates $10 million each in federal arts funding to the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities;

The IATSE applauds House Democrats for the inclusion of these provisions which would undoubtedly help entertainment workers and their families endure the ongoing pandemic.

Unfortunately, the bill also includes the “GROW” Act. The IATSE opposes this pension composite plan legislation because it would weaken the multiemployer pension system and the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation. We are urging House Leadership to remove this provision before the final vote.

The HEROES Act also does not update the Qualified Performing Artist tax deduction, which would allow creative professionals to keep more of their hard-earned money during this crisis by deducting necessary business expenses from their taxes.

Finally, much more economic support will need to be appropriated for organizations in the arts, entertainment, and media industries – with appropriate workforce restoration requirements – to get people back to work when it is safe to do so.

The entertainment industry will continue to be disproportionately impacted by this health crisis and we need to ensure that that subsequent COVID-19 legislation puts workers first, as the HEROES Act does.

We urge all IATSE members to contact their Members of Congress and assert the priorities of entertainment workers in much-needed subsequent COVID-19 legislation. Congress must act now to ensure entertainment workers are sustained until they can safely return to work.