

The Path to the Covid Relief Package

How the Reconciliation process will get much-needed aid to millions of Americans.

Congress is using a relatively unique tool to pass the next COVID-19 Relief legislation called reconciliation. Created by the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, reconciliation allows for expedited consideration of particular tax, spending, and debt-limit legislation. In the Senate, reconciliation bills aren't subject to a filibuster, which requires 60 votes to overcome, and the scope of amendments is limited. The reconciliation process only requires a simple majority or 51 votes.

When has it been used in the past?

Reconciliation has been used 21 times since 1980. President Reagan used this process to enact significant spending cuts. Clinton used the process to enact welfare reform, and both Presidents Bush and Trump used it to pass tax bills.

How does it work?

- Under the Congressional Budget Act, the House and Senate are supposed to adopt a budget resolution to set guidelines for action on spending and revenue each year. The House approved the Senate's 2021 budget resolution ([S.Con.Res.5](#)) (usw.to/3o1) on Feb. 5, 2021, laying the groundwork for the budget reconciliation process.
- Next, House committees take action. The various aspects of Covid relief are dealt with in the committees that have jurisdiction over those issues. These committees will send their recommendations along to the House Budget Committee when they finish.
- The Budget Committee then takes those recommendations and bundles them together for a floor vote in the House. If it passes, the bill goes to the Senate.
- Suppose the Senate adopts a different bill than the House. In that case, they will work out the differences between the two by using a "conference committee" made up of members from both the Senate and House.
- Both chambers will then take an up-or-down vote on the final, compromise version.
- If they approve it, the bill goes to the President for signature, and it will become law.

What's next?

The House is expected to vote on their bill soon. Please keep your eyes out in the coming days for more information on what is in that bill and why it matters to our members and our communities.

To learn more about the reconciliation process,
[check out this report](#) (usw.to/3o2) from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.