



OREGON'S SENATOR JEFF MERKLEY

Coronavirus Resources: Rural Economies

Sen. Merkley, using his leadership position on the Senate Appropriations Committee, fought hard to make sure the \$2.2 trillion coronavirus relief funding stabilizes families, workers, small businesses, housing, education, agriculture, and health care. As these resources are distributed, Sen. Merkley's office will keep Oregonians up to date on what in the bill helps individuals and communities, and how to access the resources. He will continue to fight to make sure much-needed aid gets to the people who need it most.

Coronavirus relief to help rural and coastal communities:

Oregon's rural communities, coastal communities, and producers—ranchers, farmers and fishermen—are all feeling the reverberating impacts of the state's coronavirus response, from inadequate internet services that are suddenly required for working and learning from home, to producers' markets drying up as restaurants close. As the top Democrat on the Agriculture and Rural Development Subcommittee, Sen. Merkley worked to get resources to rural Oregon. The coronavirus emergency relief resources include:

Rural Development

- \$100 million for the ReConnect program to help ensure rural Americans have [access to broadband](#)—the need for which is increasingly apparent as millions of Americans work from home across the country.
- \$20.5 million for the Business and Industry Loans Guarantee program through the U.S. Department of Agriculture, which will be leveraged into \$1 billion in low-interest loans. For-profit business, nonprofits, cooperatives, individuals, public bodies, and tribal nations are all eligible to apply.

Additional Assistance to Producers

- \$9.5 billion to assist specialty crop producers; producers who support local food systems such as farmers markets, schools, and restaurants; and livestock producers, including dairy.
 - Details on applications for this funding will be shared as they become available.
- \$310 billion in additional funding to replenish the newly created Paycheck Protection Program (PPP). Farmers and ranchers can receive fully forgivable loans to address important payroll and operational costs. The federal government has guaranteed these loans, so no personal guarantee or collateral will be required.
- \$50 billion in additional funding to replenish economic injury disaster loans (EIDL), plus an additional \$10 billion for the Economic Emergency Injury Grant (EEIG) program. The bill makes agricultural businesses with fewer than 500 employees now eligible for this assistance—a key change that Sen. Merkley fought for.
 - [See this FAQ](#) on Sen. Merkley's [Operation: Main Street](#) website for details on how to apply to all of these programs.

Assistance for Fishermen

- \$300 million in disaster assistance to help tribal, subsistence, commercial, and charter fishermen, as well as aquaculture farmers.
 - Funding will be available for disbursement during fishing seasons until September 30, 2021.
 - To be eligible, recipients must have experienced a reduction in revenue greater than 35 percent, compared to their prior 5-year average. [Find more details here](#), and check back for information on accessing this funding as it becomes available.

For additional resources, visit the USDA COVID-19 Federal Rural Resource Guide, available here: https://www.rd.usda.gov/sites/default/files/USDA_COVID-19_Fed_Rural_Resource_Guide.pdf

For updates: Visit merkle.senate.gov/coronavirus for updates on these and other resources as the relief bills are implemented.