The Daily Dish

H.R. 6201

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Eakinomics: H.R. 6201

By now most people know that the House passed a bill responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. But what is *in* the bill is a bit more complicated. There are some fairly straightforward enhancements to Medicaid, food programs, and unemployment insurance. But there were also *two* leave programs and, as it turned out, *two* different versions of the bill.

Last Friday, the House passed a version of H.R. 6201 ("Families First") that had an emergency paid sick-leave program and a 1-year modification of the existing Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). In each case, individuals were eligible if they worked in a firm of under 500 employees and were either sick with the coronavirus, quarantined, taking care of someone sick with the coronavirus, or taking care of a child whose school had closed.

At that point, AAF's crack team of Isabel Soto and Tara O'Neill Hayes got busy sorting out the implications of the bill. Just as they arrived at the bottom line, Monday the House passed a "technical corrections" amendment to Families First. As it turned out, it was far more than that. Indeed, it entirely eliminated eligibility for those taking care of someone infected by the coronavirus. The upshot was to lower dramatically the coverage and cost of the leave programs.

According to the analysis of the final version, there are four major implications:

- Emergency paid sick leave and childcare leave could cost between $41 billion and $118 billion, and this sum could rise to over $280 billion if restrictions on firm size were eliminated;
- The expanded unemployment insurance benefits add $1 billion;
- Increased Medicaid funding, free testing for everyone, and additional funding for other

Federal health care programs cost $56 billion, $1 billion, and $300 million, respectively; and

- Additional nutritional assistance for a variety of low-income assistance programs costs $1.25 billion, and additional Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits cost $6.8 billion.

That's good news for families *if* they are covered. Now the action is in the Senate, which can simply pass the House version or modify it to provide greater coverage and greater stimulus. Stay tuned.