

LEGAL UPDATES

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# Nebraska's Coronavirus Relief Funds "Get Nebraska Growing"

On May 27, 2020, Nebraska Governor Pete Ricketts unveiled how the state will use the \$1.25 billion in federal coronavirus relief funds just provided to it under the terms of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act to “get Nebraska growing.” The governor’s plan highlights four main priorities for these funds going forward:

First, stabilizing businesses and livestock producers across the state;

Second, supporting community institutions to meet needs such as food security, shelter and mental health care;

Third, reimbursing state and local governments for coronavirus-related expenses; and

Finally, shoring up Nebraska’s Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund and the flexibility in the state’s General Fund budget.

Additional information will likely be available as it comes out on the Get Nebraska Growing Website.

Including the \$1.25 billion just provided under the CARES Act and the \$1.6 billion Nebraskans have received in economic impact payments from the federal government, Nebraska has received nearly \$10.8 billion in federal coronavirus assistance as of May 27, 2020. Part of such funds has already been deployed in the state and put towards public health initiatives, providing health care to Nebraskans, small-business paycheck protection efforts and providing additional unemployment benefits. The biggest source of federal funding by far has been the Paycheck Protection Program which brought a whopping \$6.4 billion to Nebraskans and their businesses. For a state with an

annual gross domestic product of around \$114 billion, these federal relief funds have, and will continue to have, a significant and lasting impact.

## **Coronavirus Relief Fund spending in Nebraska: The “Get Nebraska Growing” Campaign**

As part of the Coronavirus Relief Fund in the CARES Act, every state government in the United States received at least \$1.25 billion in federal funds to assist with pandemic response and recovery efforts. These funds are to be used to cover costs incurred related to COVID-19 between March 1, 2020, and December 30, 2020. Metro areas with a population of 500,000 or more receive direct aid. In Nebraska, Douglas County—where the City of Omaha sits—was eligible for direct federal assistance, and it directly received \$166 million of the state’s \$1.25 billion allotment. Importantly, this money goes to Douglas County—not the City of Omaha. The City of Omaha, like all other political subdivisions in the State of Nebraska, will need to seek funds directly from the state itself if it needs them for reimbursements and other costs.

The remaining \$1.084 billion in federal funds will go directly to the state and be distributed in line with Governor Ricketts’s plan to “get Nebraska growing.” This plan intends to portion out the money along the following lines:

\$392 million to stabilize agriculture, livestock production and other businesses in Nebraska. Details on these programs, related applications and timing thereof are forthcoming, and Husch Blackwell is actively monitoring updates and new information to best serve our clients. The anticipated breakdown of the \$392 million is as follows:

Small business stabilization: \$230 million

- These funds will take the form of \$12,000 grants allocated to small businesses with between 5 and 49 employees in industries hit hardest by COVID-19. Additional information on the program and eligibility can be found [here](#).

Livestock producer stabilization: \$100 million

- These funds will be allocated to livestock producers with between 1 and 10 employees who produce certain farm products, such as beef cattle, dairy cattle and milk, hogs and pigs, poultry and eggs, and sheep/goats. Additional information on the program and eligibility can be found [here](#).

Rural broadband remote access grant program: \$40 million

- These funds will be allocated to rural communities of between 1,000 and 5,000 in population to provide broadband internet access to the homes of individuals in

these communities. Additional information on the program and eligibility can be found [here](#).

### Workforce retraining initiative: \$16 million

- These funds will be used to help unemployed and underemployed Nebraskans acquire new or improved skillsets to transition to new employment opportunities. Nebraska community colleges will receive the funds; develop new training programs that support upskilling and/or retraining; offer scholarships to applicants seeking such programs; and hire faculty, staff and career coaches to facilitate the process.
- 12,000 students can receive a grant of \$1,100.00.
- \$2.4 million of these funds will be for career coaches/navigators, administrators, faculty and distribution systems.
- Additional information on the program and eligibility can be found [here](#).

### Gallup business stabilization and growth training: \$1 million

- This program will allow Nebraska business leaders and management teams to participate in an online course to learn techniques to lead teams through unprecedented challenges. Additional information on the program and eligibility can be found [here](#).

### Administrative support to all aforementioned business programs: \$5 million

\$85 million to establish the Community CARES program to provide food security, housing and behavioral healthcare across the state.

This program would provide qualifying organizations awards or reimbursements of \$25,000 or more to support existing services and programs strained during the COVID-19 emergency, with preference given to those organizations and programs that (a) work in underserved and/or low income communities, (b) provide critical services during health, economic and environmental emergencies, or (c) have difficulty accessing other funding.

\$180 million to the state and local governments in Nebraska for reimbursements of coronavirus-related expenses.

This would include things like reimbursement of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) purchases, setting up telework capabilities and purchasing testing equipment and ventilators, among other things.

As a note, to be eligible to receive reimbursement for coronavirus expenses from the state, counties must have their courthouses and other offices open to the public—on a non-appointment basis—by June 15, 2020.

\$427 million to shore up Nebraska's Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund and the flexibility in the state's General Fund budget.

More information on Governor Ricketts's plan can be found [here](#).

### **Contact us**

If you have any further questions or require more information regarding this update, please contact Todd Richardson, Dave Lopez, Amanda Wall, Brandon Warrington or your Husch Blackwell attorney.

### **COVID-19 Return-to-Work Resource**

For the many businesses that partially or completely shuttered their on-site operations due to government-mandated COVID-19 orders, transitioning employees back to the workplace is an unprecedented and complex endeavor. Husch Blackwell's Return-to-Work Resource Center provides best practices, answers to common questions and potential issues to consider.