

 DATA FOR *PROGRESS*

A CLEAN JUMPSTART TO REBUILD STATE ECONOMIES

Voters Support Flexible Aid
for Cities and States

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- ▶ Voters support the federal government providing roughly \$1 trillion in aid to states by a 55 percentage point margin.
- ▶ Voters want federal aid to states to be flexible and not just limited to coronavirus-related expenses by a 43 percentage point margin.

The coronavirus crisis has taken a sledgehammer to state budgets. Business closures have plummeted tax revenue at the exact same moment that expenditures are spiking. This is important because, as Mary Williams Walsh notes in the *New York Times*, in the United States' federal system, "States provide most of America's public health, education and policing services, and a lot of its highways, mass transit systems and waterworks." Already, some states are considering painful spending cuts. Republican Governor Mike DeWine in Ohio, for example, announced \$775m in state budget cuts to education, Medicaid, and more this May. With the hurricane and wildfire season looming, this crisis could easily slip into disaster.

States urgently need aid from the federal government so that they can, among several things, keep essential services running in the midst of this pandemic and continue to invest in long-term goals like fighting climate change.

As part of a May survey, Data for Progress sought to test support for federal aid to states.

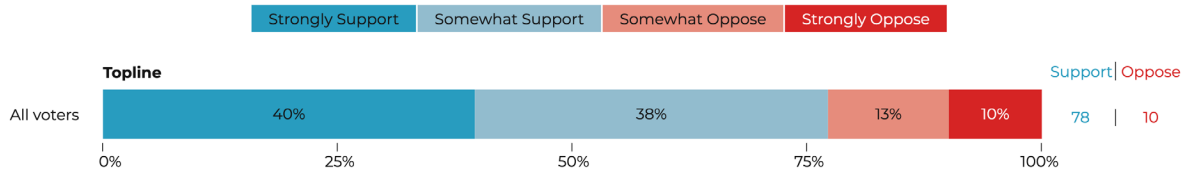
Congress is currently considering spending roughly \$1 trillion in federal aid to the states. To test support for this, we asked voters:

States are facing budget deficits due to expenses related to the coronavirus and decreased revenues from the economic fallout of the pandemic. Congress is considering providing \$1 trillion in federal aid to states and local governments to protect them from bankruptcy and avoid making deep cuts to government programs and services. Some members of Congress say that the federal government has a responsibility to support state and local governments during this crisis. Others say that states are responsible for balancing their budgets and should not rely on the federal government for aid. Would you support or oppose federal aid to state and local governments?

We found overwhelming support for this proposal with voters backing it by a 55 percentage point margin (78 percent support, 23 percent oppose).

Voters Support Aid To States

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While some are calling for restricting how this money can be spent, limiting its use to exclusively coronavirus-related expenses, others are arguing that the aid should be flexible so that all critical services can be supported. To gauge attitudes for this, we asked voters:

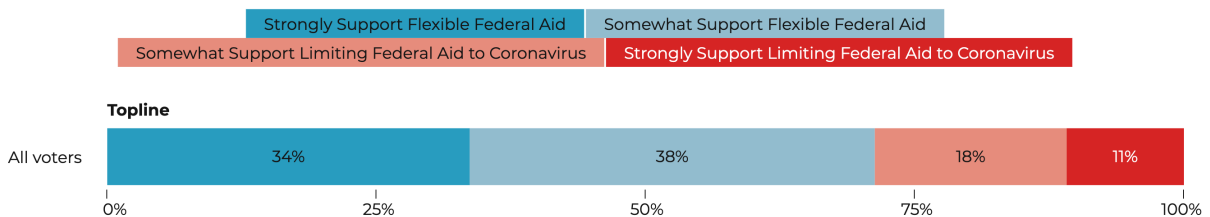
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We found that voters by a robust margin prefer granting the states flexibility in their funding, with 72 percent backing flexibility and 29 percent preferring limiting the aid.

Voters Support Flexible Aid To States

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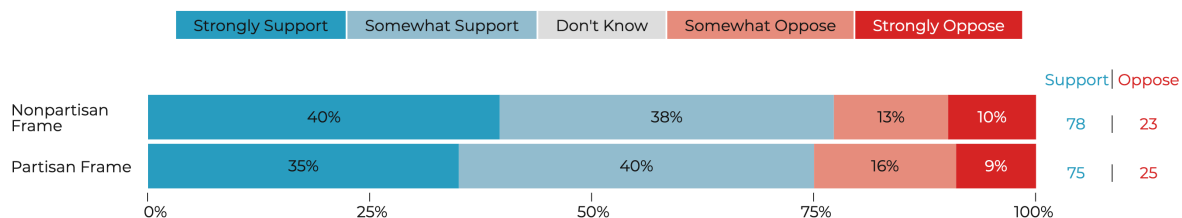
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We also polled a series of proposals for how this federal aid to states could be spent. All of them, including aid for programs that might appear more partisan to respondents like protecting the environment and fighting climate change, were above water and we found high levels of support for many of them.

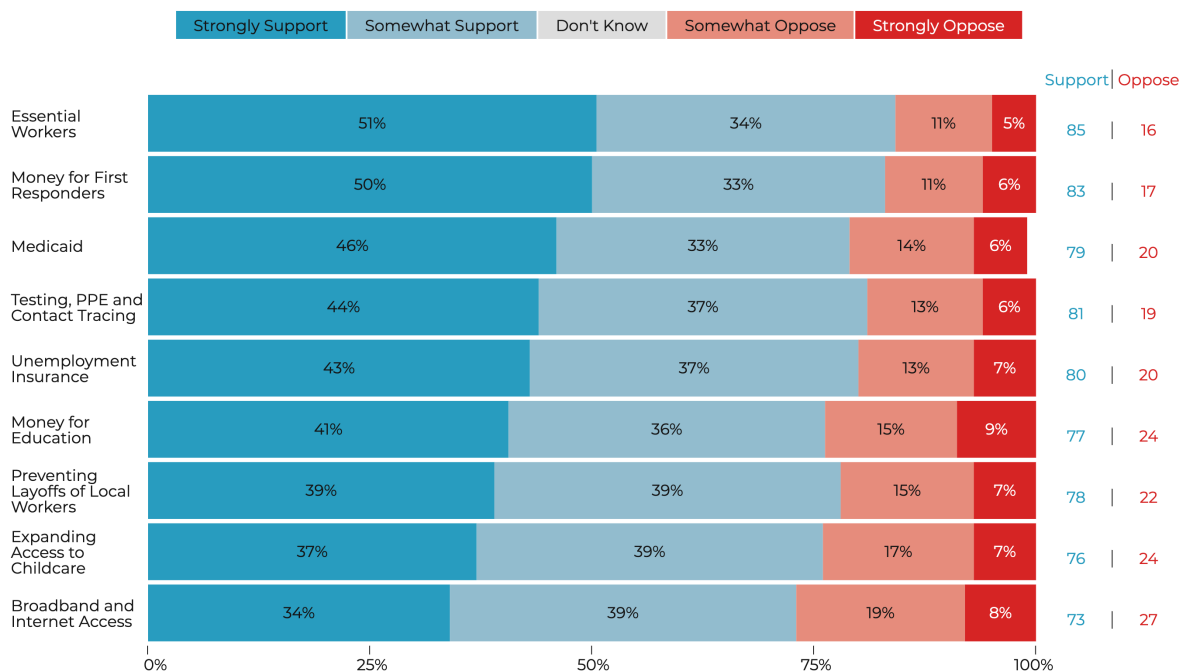
Municipalities have also been hard hit by the crisis, suffering a loss in revenue. We find that voters support a series of grants to hard hit local governments to support a variety of programs and populations, including essential workers and shoring up Medicaid.

Voters Support Aid to States With and Without Partisan Framing



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Voters Support Grants for a Wide Variety of Government Actions



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CONCLUSION

State and local governments have been hit hard by the pandemic and economic downturn. While Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) has gone on record saying he'd prefer states go bankrupt, most voters strongly prefer that the federal government offer flexible aid to states. In so doing, the federal government can help stave off severe cuts to essential programs and empower states to continue to make progress on some of the greatest challenges our country faces, like climate change.

METHODOLOGY

Due to rounding, some values sum to 99 or 101 percent.

From 5/11 to 5/12 Data for Progress conducted a survey of 1200 likely voters nationally using web panel respondents. The sample was weighted to be representative of likely voters by age, gender, education, urbanicity, race, and voting history. The survey was conducted in English. The margin of error is ± 2.8 percent