

United States Senate

January 20, 2023

Dear Governors and Mayors:

I write to inform you that Congress has passed, and the President has signed into law, a pathway for state and local governments to return unused state and local bailout funds to reduce the federal debt. Congress went on a spending spree on state and local government bailouts, under the guise of responding to COVID-19, and now finally state and local governments can take the fiscally prudent steps toward reducing America's \$31.5 TRILLION national debt.

Despite mountains of data showing state and local governments did not need a wasteful \$350 billion bailout from the federal government, Democrats did what they always do: recklessly threw billions of taxpayer dollars into the air with no accountability. These funds were not targeted nor did they help families in need. Instead, many state and local governments are now swimming in extra cash, with some using funding intended for "COVID relief" as a slush fund for their completely unrelated pet projects, like new prisons, airport gate expansions, and golf courses. This is unacceptable, particularly at a time when families and small businesses are struggling to keep up amid a raging inflation crisis and stretching budgets to keep their businesses open.

For over a year, I have been calling on governors and mayors across the United States to reject and return any unused federal funding from these massive and wasteful multi-trillion dollar "COVID" spending packages. I last wrote to you on March 10, 2021, with a simple and common sense request: each state and local government should commit to reject and return any federal funding in excess of your reimbursable COVID-19 related expenses.¹ Today, I am writing to inform you that Congress has finally passed into law legislation that allows for the return of COVID-19 stimulus dollars to help pay down the federal debt.

¹ <https://www.rickscott.senate.gov/services/files/A89D7AC1-5B71-4715-A031-BD00337A75BB>

On December 29, 2022, the *State, Local, Tribal, and Territorial Fiscal Recovery, Infrastructure, and Disaster Relief Flexibility Act*, included within, the – *2023 Consolidated Appropriations Act* (Public Law 117-328) was signed into law². This Act includes language that I secured, creating a process for state and local officials to decline and return to the United States Treasury any unneeded and unused COVID-19 stimulus funds for the sole purpose of deficit reduction³, an option not previously available to you. In order to take advantage of this process, state and local governments must be in touch with Treasury directly.

I once again urge you to make a commitment to returning unused and unneeded COVID stimulus dollars, which will serve the best interests of hard-working American taxpayers and send a clear message to Washington: politicians in Congress should quit recklessly spending taxpayer money.

As mayors and governors, you understand the importance of living within your means and budgeting responsibly so that you are delivering the best possible service to your communities, ensuring maximum return on any government spending and eliminating debt wherever possible. By rejecting and returning unneeded Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund dollars, you would be taking responsible action to avoid wasting scarce tax dollars. After all, every dollar in these packages has been borrowed and will be owed by your constituents. I will continue to do all I can to support federal efforts for the things that are most important to keeping our communities, families, and small businesses strong. I look forward to continuing to working with you on these issues and ensuring that we have a sustainable and responsible path forward.

Sincerely,



Rick Scott
United States Senator

² H.R. 2617 - Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 (117th).

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/2617/>

³ Public Law No: 117-328.