

RON KIND
THIRD DISTRICT, WISCONSIN
SENIOR WHIP
WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

WASHINGTON D.C. OFFICE
1502 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON DC 20515
(202) 225-5506 FAX: (202) 225-5739

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

LA CROSSE OFFICE
205 5TH AVENUE SOUTH, SUITE 400
LA CROSSE, WI 54601
(608) 782-2558 FAX: (608) 782-4588
TTY: (608) 782-1173

EAU CLAIRE OFFICE
131 SOUTH BARSTOW STREET, SUITE 305
EAU CLAIRE, WI 54701
(715) 831-9214 FAX: (715) 831-9272

WEBSITE: KIND.HOUSE.GOV

August 5, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
S-230, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
S-221, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell & Minority Leader Schumer:

I write today to urge an extension of the federal supplementary unemployment benefits through the Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) created in the CARES Act. As the weekly federal unemployment benefits expired, hundreds of employees of the Verso paper mill in Wisconsin Rapids were unemployed following the plant's idling.¹ With economic conditions in central Wisconsin likely to be hampered greatly by COVID-19 over the next few months, these employees and the economic well-being of the entire town require additional assistance to weather the pandemic.

The Verso paper mill has been an economic hub for the central Wisconsin region for over a century. The mill has been producing paper since the early 1900s and operated the world's first electrically powered paper machines in 1904.² However, economic conditions for papermaking had been difficult in recent years, and they plummeted quickly as a result of COVID-19 lowering demand for the paper printed at the mill. By June, employees found out that the jobs that had supported their families, in some cases for decades, would be lost. Further, the mill also supported hundreds of jobs in Wisconsin's logging industry as it had been purchasing and processing 25 percent of the timber coming from the state.³

To make matters worse, these jobs were lost right as the supplemental federal unemployment benefits expired, despite there being no end in sight from the dire economic conditions stemming from COVID-19.⁴ Families previously relying on solid, well-paying jobs could soon see their weekly income drop to a maximum of Wisconsin's \$370 a week in unemployment benefits. Without necessary support to get these families through the worst economic conditions since the Great Depression, both their household and community's economic well-being could be irreparably harmed. I was proud to vote for extending the FPUC benefits in the House-passed HEROES Act and now urge you to provide for an extension of these benefits as well.

For many of the mill's employees, the mill was more than a job. It was an integral part of the community's identity and the economic livelihood of their town. Without assistance from the federal government as the virus continues to hamper an economic recovery, these families may

¹ <https://www.wsaw.com/2020/08/04/employees-react-to-closure-of-verso-mill/>

² https://madison.com/wsj/business/over-900-jobs-to-be-lost-as-verso-plans-to-shutter-paper-mill-in-wisconsin/article_16035596-b994-53bc-a2da-1dca716f40b2.html

³ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2020/07/30/wisconsin-paper-mill-shutdown-coronavirus/?arc404=true>

⁴ <https://www.wpr.org/another-body-blow-states-economy-extra-600-unemployment-benefits-end>

struggle just to get by. As Wisconsin Rapids and the region look to the future, I stand ready to work with you to provide the federal support that they require.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ron Kind". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "R" at the beginning.

Ron Kind
Member of Congress