

Communications  
Workers of America  
AFL-CIO, DISTRICT 1

80 Pine Street, 37th Floor  
New York, New York 10005  
212-344-2515  
Fax: 212-425-2947

Christopher Shelton  
President

Dennis G. Trainor  
Vice President  
District 1

**OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT**

**To: All NYS CWA Local Presidents**

**From: Dennis G. Trainor, Vice President**

**Date: March 21, 2020**

**Subject: COVID-19 – Employment Related Emergency Corona Virus Bills**

In the past days, the US Congress and the NYS legislature passed a flurry of emergency relief packages trying to address urgent needs due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

In this email, we're providing some fact sheets on the laws that passed.

**On the federal level**, the Families First Coronavirus Response Act which was signed into law on Wednesday, March 19<sup>th</sup>, gives many American workers short term (2 weeks) and long term (12 weeks) paid leave if they need to take time off work because of the virus, But the measure excludes nearly half of private-sector workers, because employers with over 500 employees are excluded from coverage. Congressional Republicans and Trump argued that those employers should be responsible for paying sick leave for their workers, even many low wage workers at employers like McDonald's do not have any such coverage. The law will go into effect on April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2020.

**On the state level**, Governor Cuomo signed a similar law on Wednesday which also provides 2 weeks of paid leave and other benefits to employees who are subject to a mandatory or precautionary order or quarantine or isolation due to COVID-19. The law immediately went into effect.

The federal bill is meant to be a floor and not a ceiling (as Paul Simon once sang, "one man's ceiling is another man's floor) meaning if the state bill is stronger, than the stronger language shall apply. Where there are collective bargaining agreements, the paid sick time applies **in addition** to whatever employer-provided paid sick time exists.

The state has also waived the seven-day waiting period for unemployment insurance benefits for people who are out of work due to closures or quarantines related to the Coronavirus, according to the State Department of Labor.