

Biden launches campaign to “sell” \$1.9 trillion stimulus bill

Patrick Martin
15 March 2021

At a brief White House ceremony Monday afternoon, President Joe Biden kicked off two weeks of campaign-style rallies at which Democratic Party leaders will seek to promote the \$1.9 trillion coronavirus relief bill he signed into law last Thursday.

Biden spoke for only five minutes in defense of the bill, which included the announcement that he was appointing Gene Sperling, a former economic adviser to the Clinton and Obama administrations, to oversee the implementation of the American Recovery Act.

Biden will travel to Delaware County, Pennsylvania, in the Philadelphia suburbs, for a Tuesday rally with small business owners, including “minority entrepreneurs,” to celebrate the portion of the new law that benefits small businessmen. Vice President Kamala Harris will appear at a similar event in Denver, Colorado.

This will begin a series of “themed” rallies throughout the week, including an appearance by Jill Biden, the president’s wife, at a reopened school in New Hampshire Wednesday.

Biden and Harris will both appear at a rally Friday in Georgia to mark the distribution of \$1,400 checks to most Americans. The checks are scheduled to be deposited electronically in the bank accounts of tens of millions of people this week, reaching sizable amounts for large families because the \$1,400 will be paid out for every child or other dependent.

It was in Georgia that the Democrats captured two Senate seats in a special election in January, after Biden promised immediate \$2,000 checks if the Democrats won and gave his party control of the Senate. After the victory, Biden revised his promise, claiming that he was proposing to add \$1,400 to the \$600 already provided under the economic stimulus package passed in December and signed into law by then-President

Trump.

The passage and signing of the American Recovery Act have been accompanied by an onslaught of populist demagoguery of staggering proportions. Democratic Party spokesmen have proclaimed it the second coming of the New Deal, and vied with each other for superlatives. White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki won that contest at a press briefing last week, when she called the new law “the most progressive bill in American history.”

So much for the Social Security Act, the Voting Rights Act or the establishment of Medicare and Medicaid, to say nothing of constitutional amendments that abolished slavery and gave women the right to vote.

The rhetorical overkill is only an indication of the scale of the political fraud that is being unleashed on the American people. What the Democratic Party characterizes as a history-making achievement is actually a one-time expenditure that, while providing a welcome cash infusion to the budgets of working class families, will be quickly absorbed in the payment of urgent bills, to be followed up by ... nothing.

The new law does not establish a single lasting social reform or program. Every addition to workers’ incomes, from the \$1,400 checks to the child tax credit to the federal supplemental unemployment benefits, will expire before the end of 2021.

While Democratic Party apologists like Senator Bernie Sanders hail the legislation for supposedly “cutting child poverty in half,” they might just as well say, this legislation will lift half of America’s poor children above the absurdly low official poverty level for one year—and then plunge them down into poverty again in 2022.

Biden embraced this demagogic presentation in

statements issued over the weekend, in which he claimed the administration would achieve two milestones next week: 100 million vaccination shots in people's arms, and 100 million stimulus checks in people's pockets.

Besides the orchestrated rallies before handpicked audiences, Biden will give his first lengthy media interview since becoming president, with George Stephanopoulos of ABC News on Wednesday. Stephanopoulos, a former aide in the Clinton White House, is a perfectly safe venue for a president who has still not held a news conference since taking office.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, in an interview Sunday with Stephanopoulos on ABC's "This Week" program, repeated the claim, "50 percent of children in poverty will be taken off of poverty." Stephanopoulos did not ask, and Pelosi did not volunteer, what happens to those poverty-stricken children in 2022, when the bill's provisions expire.

The selection of Gene Sperling as Biden's overseer for the American Recovery Act is a signal of the real function of the legislation. Far from being an advocate for the poor, let alone of significant social reform, Sperling was tasked with looking out for the interests of big business, as director of the National Economic Council under both Bill Clinton and Barack Obama.

For Obama, as the New York Times pointed out, "Sperling helped to coordinate a bailout of Detroit automakers and other parts of the administration's response to the 2008 financial crisis." In other words, Sperling was instrumental in cutting the wages of newly hired autoworkers by 50 percent, as well as slashing the pension benefits of workers who retired.

Given the undeniable short-term character of the recovery bill, Biden has been compelled to promise that he will seek to extend such measures as the expansion of the child tax credit into 2022 and beyond, although how that would be accomplished given the opposition of most Republicans in Congress and a significant section of Democrats was not explained.

Another top Democrat, Senator Chris Murphy of Connecticut, downplayed the historic character of the bill during an appearance on Fox News Sunday. Speaking to the right-wing audience of this network, Murphy said, "I love this argument from Republicans that this is some progressive wish list. Almost everything in this bill is simply an extension of the

programs that Republicans were wildly enthusiastic about back when they were in charge of the White House and the Senate. In fact, they were cheering some of these programs at the end of last year like the \$1,400 stimulus payments."

Perhaps the clearest exposure of the Democrats' two-faced approach to the bill was the comment by former Clinton Treasury Secretary Larry Summers, who has criticized the bill for spending too much. Appearing on CNN Sunday, Summers said, "On the one hand, when a concern about inflation is raised, they explained that it's mostly temporary and transient and just a relief program, and really just a special one-year thing. On the other hand, most of the time they're explaining how it's the most fundamental revolution in American policy since the New Deal. And you can't really have it both ways."



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)