



# OPERATIVE PLASTERERS' & CEMENT MASONS'

## INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES & CANADA

opcmiintl@opcma.org

*Daniel E. Stepano*  
GENERAL PRESIDENT

*America's Oldest Building and Construction Trades  
International Union, Established 1864*

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March 23, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker of the House  
1236 Longworth House Office Bldg.  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Senator Majority Leader  
317 Russell Senate Office Bldg.  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
House Minority Leader  
2468 Rayburn House Office Bldg.  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer  
Senate Minority Leader  
322 Hart Senate Office Bldg.  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McCarthy, Leader McConnell and Leader Schumer:

I am writing on behalf of the 50,000 proud members of the Operative Plasterers and Cement Masons International Association (OPCMIA) to urge you to protect their health and financial security in the economic stimulus package and all other legislation related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our members are pillars of their communities and linchpins in their local economy, working to build roads, bridges, hospitals, buildings and innumerable other projects that are critical to our nation's prosperity. America cannot afford to let their needs be overlooked or unaddressed in federal actions.

We thank you for your bold, swift action to address this crisis, and we want to ensure that the legislation you pass will be beneficial to our members and to all Americans. Specifically, we urge you to:

- **Enact a workplace contagious disease standard** so that every employer knows exactly what to do to prevent the spread of Coronavirus on work projects conducted from this point forward — and ensure that the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has the inspectors to enforce it.
- **Ensure that all workers have proper personal protective equipment**, especially in hazardous industries like construction. Like so many of our brothers and sisters in North

Affiliated with American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations ♦ North America's Building Trades Unions  
Maritime Trades Department ♦ Metal Trades Department ♦ Union Label and Service Trades Department

- America's Building Trade Unions, OPCMIA members have donated their N95 masks to frontline health care workers because this is an all-hands-on-deck moment — but they need replacements delivered as soon as possible so they do not have to work at risk of exposure to occupational hazards, much less Coronavirus.
- **Guarantee 14 days of paid sick leave to all workers, no exceptions.** Due to our industry's unique multi-employer structure, most of our members do not have paid sick leave nor are they covered by the Family and Medical Leave Act. Please close the loopholes in the legislation passed earlier this month, because no worker anywhere should have to choose between a day's pay and preventing the spread of Coronavirus.
- **Expand unemployment insurance to replace the missed paychecks of all workers.** This is especially important for construction workers, who might be forced to miss an entire construction season.
- **Protect our members' health care coverage.** Our members' health insurance is provided by multi-employer health and welfare funds. Their eligibility for coverage is based on hours worked. If they are unemployed for an extended period of time due to COVID-19, they will lose coverage unless they self-pay their own premiums, something financially impossible for many. They cannot be allowed to be left uninsured, especially during a global pandemic. That is why federal financial assistance to maintain their health care coverage is absolutely critical.
- **Protect our members' retirement security.** The COVID-19 pandemic is dealing a double-blow to the multi-employer pension plans our members depend on — first, because contributions are not made on behalf of laid off workers and second, because the stock market crash is crushing funds' balance sheets. That is why Congress must provide \$8 to \$10 billion in annual funding for the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation and instruct it to take steps to ensure that participants receive the full amount of benefits they have earned. Please also authorize multi-employer pension plans to actuarially smooth investment losses from the COVID-19 pandemic over 10 years or more, so they have an opportunity to recover.
- **Invest in our infrastructure.** There is no better, swifter, more powerful way to kick-start the U.S. economy in the wake of the devastation caused by the COVID-19 crisis than by finally making the full investments needed to revitalize our infrastructure. This should start immediately with the rapid construction of new hospitals and health care facilities to handle the rush of people with COVID-19 who will need treatment. With the cost of borrowing at all-time lows, and with the need for repairs to roads, bridges, dams, schools, and so many other vital facilities more urgent than ever, now is the time to make these investments, which will generate dividends in economic activity many times more than the original federal outlay. Needless to say, all infrastructure projects financed by the

federal government should include the full array of federal protections, including the prevailing wage law.

Please make sure than in taking bold, swift action to address the COVID-19 crisis, you leave no workers behind. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Daniel E. Stepano". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and "S".

Daniel E. Stepano  
General President

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