



AMERICAN FLY FISHING TRADE ASSOCIATION

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March 19, 2020

The President
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Steven Mnuchin
U.S. Department of the Treasury
Washington, DC 20220

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. President, Secretary Mnuchin, Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi and Minority Leader McCarthy:

On behalf of the thousands of fly fishing businesses across this country whose livelihoods are in jeopardy due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the American Fly Fishing Trade Association (AFFTA) thanks you for the actions and efforts the Trump Administration and Congress have taken to quell the growing spread and impact of the coronavirus pandemic and its impact on our economy. AFFTA is the sole trade organization for the fly fishing industry in the United States. We are also the largest recreational angling trade association in the country, with over 1,300 current members contributing over \$1 billion to our nation's economy. We represent manufacturers, specialty retailers, sales reps, guides, outfitters, travel agencies, media professionals, and conservation partners from Main Streets in every state in the nation. The majority of our industry is seasonal and won't see lost income return until at least next year, if ever. To say our community is feeling the brunt of this crisis would be an understatement.

The bipartisan legislation passed thus far, signed into law by the President, has authorized vital emergency funding that can help small businesses in the fly fishing industry survive this devastating time. We are grateful for this. But more can and needs to be done. We implore Congress and the Administration to develop additional legislation and programs that activates further relief measures to help our working American families and small businesses in this critical time of need.

Specifically, please consider the following steps and programs that can further help both employers and employees of the fly fishing industry:

1. Eliminate Sec. 301 tariffs applied to fly fishing products/product codes
2. Eliminating payroll taxes paid by employers through July;
3. Streamlining and expediting loan program to provide zero-interest loans or grants for small- and medium-sized businesses with less than 250 employees.

Small- to mid-sized businesses – from mom-and-pop fly shops to individual guides to locally-owned companies with less than 50 employees producing fly rods, reels, packs, clothing and more – are the backbone of our industry and the nation's economy. They are already feeling the very real economic impacts of travel restrictions, social distancing and a free-fall in investments and discretionary spending. For instance:

- A father and son who each run their own fly-fishing guide business in the Florida Keys have had a combined 49 cancellations for March and April alone at a cost of \$45,010, after expenses. Their small businesses are on the brink of insolvency.
- The owner of a fishing company in Montana has had 26 guided trips cancelled at a cost of \$13,000, plus associated sales revenue lost in the fly shop.
- Industry-wide, businesses are reporting an average of a 35% loss of projected revenue for 2020 – in some cases as much as 47% and layoffs in the hundreds. This is significant and substantial for the small businesses that make up our industry.
- Guides throughout the Gulf region have lost every out-of-state booking through April, putting them at an 80% loss
- Manufacturers across the industry are already reporting a 25% loss with even deeper losses coming on a 4 – 6-week lag behind retailers.

These are just a few examples from over 1,300 of our member businesses. There are millions of dollars being lost and the impacts will reach well beyond these two months. With no end in sight, our industry, the people, their families and our communities in every corner of the U.S. are facing the potential collapse of their livelihoods.

Thank you all for your leadership to date. Combined with action take thus far, these additional recommendations can help stem the effects of this health and now economic crisis and stabilize a core industry of the American culture. It is said that a rising tide floats all boats. It's the businesses and proud, hard-working Americans like those in our industry that are the bulwark that will help ensure we all rise.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. Bulis', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Ben Bulis
President & CEO
American Fly Fishing Trade Association