Vern Buchanan said he would help the economy, but while small businesses at home struggled to receive coronavirus relief funding, Buchanan’s businesses took up to $7 million of government relief. Buchanan protected himself while voting no against paid sick days for all employees and continuing enhanced unemployment benefits during the pandemic.

2006: During His First Run For Congress, Buchanan Promised An Economic Approach That Would Bring “Prosperity.” Buchanan said during his first run for Congress, “She said she’s against it, less taxes, less government. You can have it. If you want to look at the example, look at what Jeb Bush has done the last eight years. He’s had less taxes, less government, and I think more freedom and more prosperity. We’ve been the most prosperous state out of 50. The problem is they just don’t seem to get it – Democrats or Republicans in Washington. I want to bring about that change.” [METV, 13th Congressional District Debate, 10/4/06] (VIDEO)

Buchanan Touted His Work On The Coronavirus Stimulus, Including The Paycheck Protection Program, Which He Argued Would Help The Economy. Buchanan said, “I’ve been pretty lucky with getting bills passed from a bipartisan standpoint. But this is going to help individuals. A family of four is going to get about $3,000 into their checking account. A lot of people live paycheck to paycheck. It will make a big difference. The unemployment, people have different feelings about it but that was a compromise deal in terms of that so, that’s say the state they get $250 a week but they get another $600 over a period of four months and then that sunsets. Some may argue that that’s too much, but I think we need to be oversensitive, because we’ve never had anything like this before. […] The other thing tomorrow with the SBA, that’s a very big deal for a lot of people if they can encourage keeping their employees at their place they can get a loan, and then at the end of a period of time, if they do that, they can basically the government picks that up. You might say, well why would they do something like that? But they’re challenging employers and small businesses, and this is mainly for small businesses 500 employees or less, if you keep your employees in place, they don’t have to go get unemployment, it’s just kind of an offset. […] So we’ve got to do everything we can to encourage employment, keep people working, but at the same time, keep everybody safe. And that’s the number one priority. I tell everybody. We’ve got to keep people healthy and safe so we can get to the other side and get people back to work.” [WWSB, 4/2/20] (VIDEO)

Buchanan Touted His Vote For The CARES Act, Arguing It Would Help Families And Businesses Economically. “With the support of Congressman Vern Buchanan, the U.S. House today passed a $2 trillion emergency relief bill addressing the coronavirus pandemic. The bill is on its way to President Trump for his signature. The Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act includes financial assistance for individuals, families, small and medium-sized businesses, hospitals, medical facilities and state and local governments. The bill also includes funding to support front-line health care workers, and supplemental funding for expanded unemployment benefits. ‘This relief package will help Americans through an unprecedented period of health and economic challenges,’ Buchanan said. ‘The scope of the aid is expansive, from direct payments to Americans to assistance for businesses, hospitals, and state and local governments.’” [Congressman Vern Buchanan, Press Release, 3/27/20]

Buchanan Touted His Support For The Coronavirus Relief Package, Arguing It Was “Helping The Economy Get Going Again.” “Buchanan’s support for this stimulus package contrasts with 2009, when he voted against an $800 billion stimulus pushed by then-President Barack Obama that was aimed at lifting the economy during the Great Recession. […] The current stimulus bill also will grow the national debt, but Buchanan said the circumstances are much different than 2009. ‘This is different ... with a virus it’s completely different,’ Buchanan said. ‘We had a pretty good economy with the stock market and employment very low and this came out of left field.’ […] The most important pieces of the current bill are the aid for health care providers, workers and small businesses, Buchanan said. ‘Saving lives is the priority but also helping the economy get going again,’ he said.” [Panama City News Herald, 3/28/20]

Bradenton Accountant Robert Shindler Claimed That His Clients In Sarasota And Bradenton Struggled To Get Paycheck Protection Program Loans. “Robert Shindler is a CPA in Bradenton who said he’s filed nearly 80 PPP and EIDL loan applications for his clients and has more to do. So far, he said none of them have seen a penny — and in most cases, they don’t even know if they’re approved. ‘Nobody has money in the bank,’ said Shindler,
whose clients are mostly in Sarasota/Bradenton but has several more in about a dozen states. ‘At best, they have a month or two before they have no money for food or mortgage. Banks are not offering any help at all.’” [WFLA, 4/10/20]

Dr. Jacqueline Royce Struggled To Get A Paycheck Protection Program Loan For Her Surgical Practice In Sarasota. “It’s the continued uncertainty that keeps Dr. Jacqueline Royce up at night. She runs a small practice in Sarasota, where she performs reconstructive surgery. Last Friday, she applied for the government’s Paycheck Protection Plan through Wells Fargo, her bank for the last 20 years. ‘It’s been absolutely horrible,’ she said. ‘That Friday afternoon, my bank canceled the appointment and said, ‘Everything has to be online, but we’re not online yet.’ They told her to reach back out Monday. […] Royce is not alone. Employers are applying for loans to keep their employees on the payroll through this crisis. The program allows businesses to get loans of 2.5 times their average annual payroll costs.” [Fox 13 Tampa Bay, 4/8/20]

Car Dealerships Owned By Buchanan Received Between $2.7 Million And $7 Million In Paycheck Protection Program Loans. “Three car dealerships owned by U.S. Rep. Vern Buchanan received as much as $7 million from a federal program intended to help small businesses keep people on their payroll during the coronavirus pandemic. The disclosures about Buchanan’s businesses came Monday from the Small Business Administration, which for the first time released detailed information about the $521 billion loaned out under the Paycheck Protection Program. […] It was under these circumstances that Sarasota 500 LLC, which operates Sarasota Ford, applied for a loan from the federal government. Its application was approved on April 8 and it was awarded between $2 million and $5 million. […] Another of Buchanan’s companies, a Honda dealership on the Space Coast, said it would be able to keep 81 people employed if it received between $350,000 and $1 million. A third dealership in North Carolina owned by Buchanan also asked for up to $1 million and promised to retain 35 people. Combined, Buchanan’s stakes in those businesses are worth as much as $75 million.” [Tampa Bay Times, 7/6/20]

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[Small Business Administration, Paycheck Protection Program Data, released 7/6/20; Clerk of the House of Representatives, Personal Financial Disclosure, 5/15/19]

May 28, 2020: Buchanan Was Absent For The Vote On The TRUTH Act, Which Would Require The Small Business Administration To Make Public Which Companies Got Loans Of More Than $2 Million. Buchanan was absent for the vote on the “Velasquez, D-N.Y., motion to suspend the rules and pass the bill that would require the Small Business Administration, within 30 days of enactment, to make certain information related to the Paycheck Protection Program and Economic Injury Disaster Loan Program publicly available and searchable online. Specifically, it would require information on any program disbursements of over $2 million, including to identify recipients and lenders or intermediaries and to describe the decision-making process for such disbursements. It would also require information on the amount of assistance provided to small businesses owned by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals, women, and veterans. The bill would also effectively separate the authorization cap for the Paycheck Protection Program from other SBA 7(a) small business loan guarantee programs.” The motion was rejected 269-147. [H.R. 6782, Vote #113, 5/28/20; CQ, 5/28/20]

Buchanan Voted Against Creating A Select Subcommittee To Oversee The Federal Response To The Coronavirus, Including The Use Of Taxpayer Funds. Buchanan voted against “Adoption of the rule (H Res 938) that would provide for automatic agreement to a resolution (H Res 935) that would establish the Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis as a part of the House Oversight and Reform Committee, to be composed
of no more than 12 representatives, with no more than five appointed by the minority leader. H Res 935 would authorize and direct the subcommittee to conduct a ‘full and complete investigation’ into the coronavirus crisis and federal response to the crisis, including on the use of taxpayer funds by federal, state and private entities; reports of waste, fraud or other abusive practices; implementation and effectiveness of federal law; economic impacts; executive branch policies, actions and cooperation with Congress and others; and preparedness for response to the crisis. It would also provide the subcommittee chair with subpoena and deposition authorities, and it would provide $2 million from House accounts to the Oversight and Reform Committee for expenses in the 116th Congress. The subcommittee would cease to exist 30 days after issuing a final report to Congress.” The rule was adopted 212-182: Democrats 212-0, Republicans 0-181, Independents 0-1. [H.Res 938, Vote #103, 4/23/20; CQ, 4/23/20]

Buchanan Voted Against The HEROES Act Coronavirus Relief Bill, Which Would Extend Expanded Unemployment Compensation And Expand Paid Leave Requirements To All Employers. Hudson voted against the HEROES Act, “Passage of the bill, as amended, that would provide roughly $3 trillion in funding to further address the health and economic effects of COVID-19, including almost $1 trillion for direct aid to state and local governments; $200 billion for a fund to provide hazard pay for essential workers; $75 billion for a national testing program; and funding for state and federal response related to health care, education, housing, and food supply. It would extend federal funding of expanded unemployment compensation benefits through January 2021 and provide an additional round of tax rebates of $1,200 for individuals with incomes of $75,000 or less. […] It would extend through January 2021 federal unemployment compensation benefits of up to $600 per week under previous coronavirus response legislation. It would extend through 2021 requirements for employers to provide additional sick and family leave, and expand the requirements to apply to all private employers.” The bill passed 208-199. [H R 6800, Vote #109, 5/15/20; CQ, 5/15/20]

The HEROES Act Would Extend Emergency Family And Medical Leave To Employees Of Firms With 500 Employees Or More And Would Extend Expanded Unemployment Benefits Until 2021. “The Democrat-backed HEROES Act, H.R. 6800, includes a number of provisions that would impact the workplace. […] The act would extend eligibility for paid sick leave and paid family and medical leave under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) to workers at companies with 500 or more employees. More workers would be eligible to take Emergency Family and Medical Leave Act (EFMLA) leave, and the leave would be available for more reasons than just coronavirus-related childcare needs. Under the HEROES Act, employers could be reimbursed by the federal government for offering hazard and incentive pay to certain essential workers, and the federal government's $600 weekly supplement to state unemployment benefits would continue until Jan. 31, 2021. The extra unemployment payments are currently set to expire on July 31.” [Society for Human Resource Management, 5/15/20]

While The Families First Coronavirus Response Act Did Not Guarantee Sick Leave To Employees Of Firms With 500 Employers Or More, The HEROES Act Gave Paid Sick Leave Benefits To All Workers. “On May 12, 2020, the U.S. House of Representatives introduced the Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions Act (“HEROES Act”), which, among other things, would significantly expand coverage and benefits available under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (‘FFCRA’). As we have discussed at length in numerous prior posts, the FFCRA provides for paid sick leave for certain coronavirus-related reasons, as well as leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act (“FMLA”) to care for a child whose school or care provider is closed or unavailable due to COVID-19 (‘emergency FMLA’ or ‘EFMLA’). Under the current proposed bill, the HEROES Act would expand FFCRA coverage to employers of all sizes and across all industries without exemption. Presently, only employers with fewer than 500 employees are covered by the FFCRA paid leave requirements. The law also currently provides for exemptions for healthcare workers and first responders, as well as certain exceptions for employers with fewer than 50 employees.” [National Law Review, 5/14/20]

The HEROES Act Would Provide Paid Leave Through 2021, While The Families First Coronavirus Response Act Provided It Only Through The End Of 2020. “Some other key highlights of the proposed HEROES Act as they relate to FFCRA include: Expanding FFCRA eligibility through December 31, 2021. Presently, FFCRA leave is only available through December 31, 2020. Requiring employers to allow
employees to take both emergency paid sick leave and emergency FMLA intermittently or on a reduced schedule if requested. Presently, intermittent and reduced schedule leave is only available if the employer permits an employee to take leave intermittently. Providing that emergency paid sick time for any of the above covered reasons be subject to a maximum rate of $511/day and $5,110 in the aggregate. Presently, leave to care for an ill family member or a child whose school or place of care is closed is subject to a lower maximum rate of $200/day and $2,110 in the aggregate.” [National Law Review, 5/14/20]