

Breaking the Chain

Supply chain issues create problems for shoppers

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Supply chain issues have caused disruptions in many people's lives. With the holiday season approaching, people will not receive orders on time. For many, COVID has affected their jobs inevitably either because they cannot return to them or they are choosing not to.

With Thanksgiving and Christmas approaching, many customers will not receive the gifts they ordered on Amazon, Apple and from other mega-corporations. There are more people than ever ordering items off of these websites, however, there are not enough workers.

Ella Sevilla, junior and cashier at Kowalski's Markets, explained how it is hard for companies to get orders to people on time. There is what CEOs such as Tim Cook call overload; people are ordering a lot of products, yet companies are not able to get these products to people on time.

There are not enough workers because many have not returned to their jobs. In March of last year, increased unemployment money was given to people that economically qualified. In addition to the increased unemployment, a \$1,200 per person stimulus check was given during this timeframe. \$600 and \$1,400 stimulus checks were given last December and this past March respectively. According to Forbes, another stimulus check is unlikely and increased unemployment money was taken away in September. Many still do not feel comfortable trying out other job fields and some are still afraid because of Covid precautionary measures.

"With the self-employment stimulus checks, no one wants to work and lots of people are quitting their jobs," Sevilla said.

Not only have many truck drivers not returned to work, there are not enough trucks and ships. Many Apple products are manufactured in Asia in countries such as China, Thailand and

Vietnam. These products are not able to stretch across the Pacific, through the wilderness and across city skylines to Minn.

Sevilla explained how there are truck and shipping issues and companies "cannot get products from Asia to America." Sevilla added further explaining how many truck drivers have yet to return to work.

Locally, there has been a shortage of paper bags at many Kowalski's locations. There are not enough workers and truck drivers to manufacture the bags and bring them to various store locations.

Junior Anna Shore works at the Kowalski's in Oak Park Heights as a cashier. She explained how the paper bag shortage arose the week of Oct. 18. These bags are not as durable, and it is recommended that groceries are double-bagged.

Customers at various stores ranging from River Market Co-op to Kowalski's are reacting in a rude way. Some customers will throw fits if there are

not the right bags, grocery items or gifts. "Customers are getting really upset with the bags that we are using right now because they are a lot thinner," Shore said.

Furthermore, at River Market Co-op in downtown Stillwater, many shortages of Thanksgiving-related food items are apparent.

"The managers are really concerned about a cranberry shortage for Thanksgiving," Logan Onken, senior and manager-on-duty at River Market Co-op, said. "I know last year for Thanksgiving we were out of canned pumpkin a lot," Onken added.

There are many supply chain issues that will affect the holiday season. Time will tell how much these effects change business at stores that are local such as Kowalski's and mega-corporations like Apple.

"I feel like everything stopped-when Covid hit. We had to take a minute to step back in. Problems arise when people are not working," Sevilla explained.

The American Rescue plan provides additional funding due to COVID-19

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March 24, the American Rescue Plan was released by the Biden administration. \$122 billion were released to schools around the nation. Its job is to help fund schools and their reopening this fall. As schools reopen, there is a need for more funding because students are back into schools and using more resources. Stillwater schools have edited their funding plans since the American Rescue Plan took effect on not only the high school, but the entire district itself, for materials or programs for students.

This year, programs involving student health, mental or physical, are demanding more funding because these programs are more of a priority for the students this year. The American Rescue Plan is supposed to take effect to relieve some of those demands. However, Principal Rob Bach has not received

any information from the district about the American Rescue Plan funding.

"I haven't been informed from a district perspective, so let's put it that way. I'm not aware of whether the district has applied or received any of that kind of stuff. If we have needs here at the building, we communicate that to people at a district level. Whether it's for facilities, whether it's for supplies, whether it's for staffing, we communicate that to a district level," Bach said.

The American Rescue Plan increased funding for many schools. However, teachers feel that students should have more say in the decision of where funding is placed because students will be directly impacted. Therefore, students need to understand how their education can be affected by this decision and the American Rescue Plan.

Government teacher Mathew Bergquist explained that students are "the main group that should have a say" because the money is ultimately being

spent on them, or they are the results of specific spending.

Teachers also feel that they should have a say when it comes to financial aid from the government. Whether it's the American Rescue Plan or other government funding programs, they feel that they are also impacted. Teachers are involved in students and their daily lives. Teachers have the best understanding of students from an adult perspective regarding the specifics of their education, so they have the best knowledge of what they need when it comes to programs or supplies. Therefore there say is vital to the decision on the funding from the American Rescue Plan.

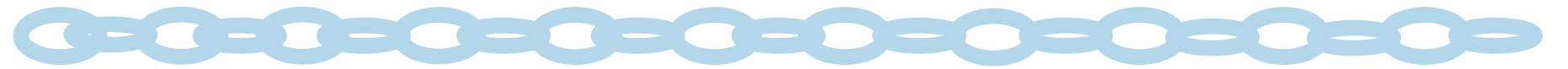
History teacher Ryan Miller said he believes that it comes down to an administrative decision, and at the building level, teachers should be given polls to gauge what items they believe are most important to students.

Congress is planning to add to the American Rescue program that is

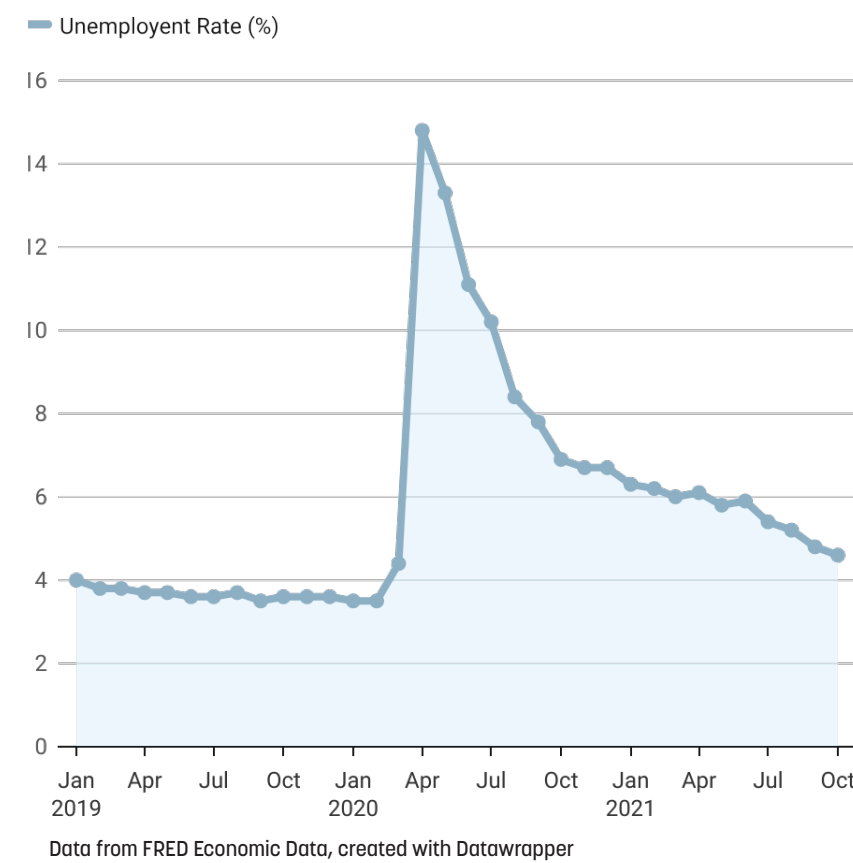
currently building back in legislative. This new finding is a chance to receive funding from the Biden administration. This gives school administration to take into consideration of students.

"Absolutely. I think, you know, it is one of those weird things where we say we learn for, you know, for life, but we don't give a lot of opportunities for students, I mean, city Student Council and things like that exist. But a, we don't have a lot of mechanisms, at least in our structure for students to active power," Bergquist explained.

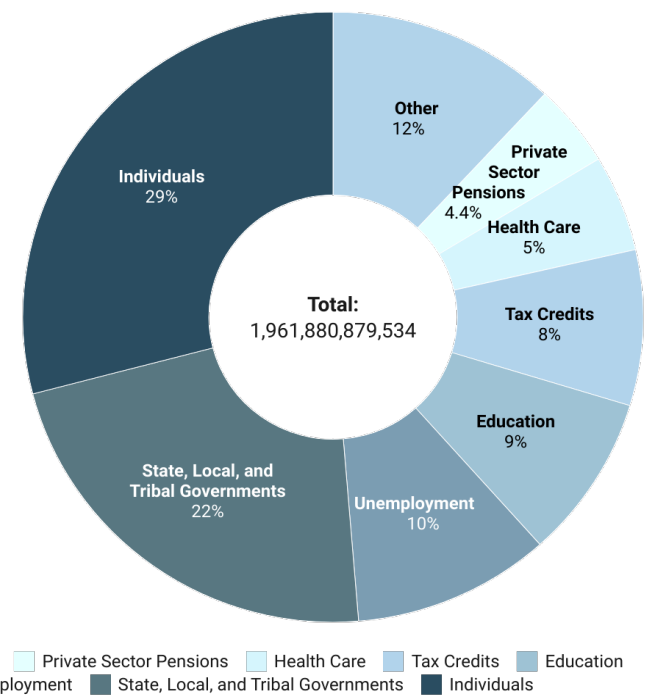
The American Rescue Plan plays a tremendous role on students, teachers, and the district. The decision on how that money is spent is complex because different perspectives collide, whether it is elected officials, teachers and students, and schools administration. The balance between these will result in an agreement. The plan has affected districts all over the country. Its goal is to improve school life and ultimately improve schools.



Rates of unemployment in the United States



American Rescue plan finances



"Other" is composed of broadband and technology, farming industry, federal program administration and oversight, global assistance, paycheck protection program, public services, small businesses, transportation and veterans.

Charts by Katie Kangas
Created with Datawrapper
Data from Pandemic Oversight



COVID-19 causes major labor shortages, strains businesses, overworked employees

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Minnesota has been experiencing a major labor worker shortage majority due to the COVID-19 pandemic and businesses are scrambling to keep up. During COVID-19 many employees left their jobs for safety reasons and got laid off due to lack of income for the businesses during quarantine.

Now, dealing with repercussions from COVID-19, businesses have been short-staffed and hiring, which is not just affecting the employees, but also the customers and store. Stores have had to reduce hours being opened because they have simply have not had enough employees work. They have had to cut back on certain amenities offered such as making everything to go and closing dining rooms.

Junior Kyle Och has had to step up and help out new workers train and also do his own job because they do not have enough people to train people and for people to do the job. They have had to train people on the fly while working.

"Something I have had to deal with was learning how to do things quickly, more quickly than others. So that I can learn before and help other people out when they need help and become a team leader. So just becoming a bigger someone to look up to at work to answer questions and everything," Och said.

Since 2005, the number of job vacancies have doubled in every region of the state. When college students left their summer jobs to go to college, most businesses were not prepared and experienced a scramble for new employees. Employees now

are having to work overtime and are being scheduled outside their availability. Senior Sam McClaine said with being scheduled so much with work and having to do school she is feeling stressed.

"During the summer I worked numerous hours, about 40, and continued during the start of school. I worked 11 a.m. - 2 p.m. after school then went to cross country and worked 6 p.m. to closing (around 10 p.m.). Now it is around 30-35 hours a week and not seven days a week anymore, but working six to closing some nights and long shifts on the weekend," Och said.

In the 1990s, the average amount of new workers was 41,000 in 2020 there are about 7,500 new workers per year. With so many job openings, people have been looking for jobs with better benefits and higher pay. People have been coming more selective and busi-

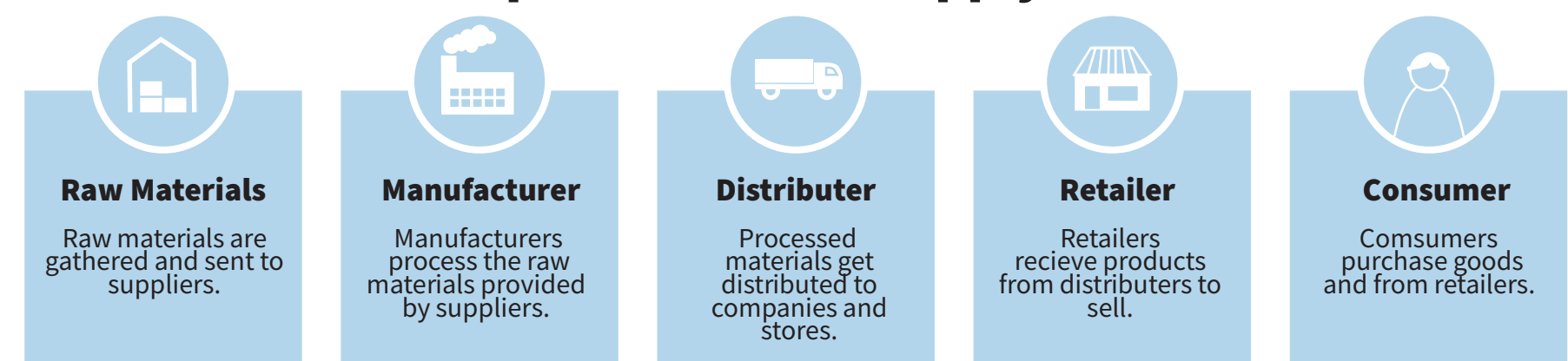
nesses are feeling the need to increase salaries and provide more benefits to compete with other businesses.

There have been "now hiring" signs stringing across stores across the state. An associate at Panera Bread, Tee said she sees about 20-30 probably on her way to work each morning and Och said he does not remember seeing a store without a "now hiring" sign.

Staffing agencies have been frantically trying to fill vacant positions. Agencies have noticed people quitting their jobs without having another job lined up, knowing that there will be no problem finding a new job.

Tee who has been working there for three years at Panera Bread said that he is aware that new employees are going to be asked to do a lot. It may seem like their not getting the appreciation they deserve, but down the road, they will be noticed.

Components of the supply chain



Graphic by Katie Kangas