

# Congress of the United States

## Washington, DC 20515

March 31, 2020

President Donald J. Trump  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Now that the United States has the most detected cases of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in the world, it is increasingly clear that severe medical supply shortages are hindering the necessary and comprehensive public health response we need to control this unprecedented crisis. The complexities of our medical supply chain and our national public health system involves a broad spectrum of stakeholders including the federal, state, and local governments, medical device and supply manufacturers, hospitals and health centers, and various social safety net providers. While these groups are doing what they can to help address these shortages, there remains serious command and control gaps that keep the response to emergent supply chain issues piecemeal and unevenly distributed.

Fortunately, we believe that the United States Armed Forces can provide some of the resources, expertise, and organization-at-scale needed to provide the requested relief to states and municipalities across the country. We applaud your administration's efforts to coordinate national efforts to combat the crisis, but we need the United States federal government to do more than advise from the background; we need the United States federal government to be the tip of the spear in the fight against COVID-19.

Consequently, we urge you to direct the Department of Defense to become the backbone of federal logistical efforts by taking the following actions:

- **Implement a Coronavirus Airlift:** The U.S. military has a history of providing rapid air cargo operations during times of great need, from the vaunted Berlin Airlift to combating the 2014 Ebola outbreak. Many manufacturers of critical medical supplies, such as personal protective equipment (PPE) and ventilators, are experiencing issues due to the global nature of their supply chains. With the grounding of civilian cargo air fleets, sea-based freight cannot provide the rapid delivery of needed supplies across their global supply chain. The U.S. military has significant airlift capacity, especially with the C-5s and C-17s operated by the Department of the Air Force. Additionally, the military should use its experience and authority to contract and coordinate charter air traffic on a global scale to supplement its own airlift capacity, as evidenced by on-going repatriation efforts undertaken in coordination with the State Department.
- **Deploy the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA):** The DLA is primarily responsible for mobilizing the U.S. military in times of war or national security crisis. This mission means DLA is uniquely organized to effectively and efficiently handle logistical missions on a national and global scale. The scope of the COVID-19 pandemic requires the expertise of such an organization and there is precedent for deploying DLA in support of significant public health emergencies. Most recently, DLA supported U.S. efforts to

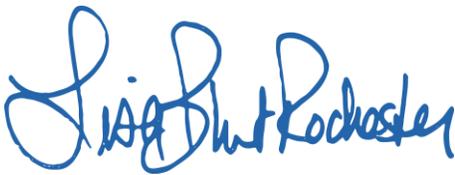
combat the 2014 Ebola outbreak by managing the global packaging and movement of critical supplies to Africa. During the Ebola outbreak, DLA leveraged the distribution centers it operates around the world, as well as the regional relationships it has developed, to bring supplies into areas of high need. This kind of coordination is in dire need here at home.

- **Mobilize Military Health Care Personnel:** Every branch of the U.S. military has emergency medical personnel that could be supplementing national testing efforts to determine the extent of the spread of this contagion. Without testing to provide the information needed for the effective national COVID-19 pandemic response, even the best coordinating strategy will fail. The manpower and equipment that the military could deploy in support of this effort can bring needed relief to state public health agencies struggling to stay in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

The U.S. military is renowned for its unparalleled global war-fighting and humanitarian capability. But such a capacity is impossible without an incredible and sophisticated logistical organization that can transport and coordinate on a global scale and across private and public organizations. I urge you to exercise your authority as commander-in-chief to leverage the military's unique capabilities to help our communities here at home.

Thank you for the consideration of our request in this time of urgent need.

Sincerely,



LISA BLUNT ROCHESTER  
Member of Congress



GUS M. BILIRAKIS  
Member of Congress

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