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# United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON  
HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6250

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March 9, 2021

The Honorable Antony J. Blinken  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary:

The Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs is investigating the federal government's response to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Senator Peters previously notified this Department on November 18, 2020 to preserve all documents and communications, including regarding the government's COVID-19 response. In addition, Senator Peters sent this Department a request for documents and information on December 21, 2020 related to its response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This letter reasserts that request.

The United States remains in the midst of a national and public health security crisis. More than a half million Americans have died from COVID-19 since the first cases were detected in the United States.<sup>1</sup> In addition, the nonpartisan Government Accountability Office found that “[a]s of December 2020, there were more than 10.7 million unemployed individuals, compared to nearly 5.8 million individuals at the beginning of the calendar year,” and further warned the “pandemic will likely remain a significant obstacle to more robust economic activity.”<sup>2</sup> The federal government's response has a decisive impact on efforts to save lives, restore the economy, and overcome the pandemic.

These deaths are unacceptable. The economic fallout must also be remedied. As such, we must examine and understand the federal government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and any needed reforms to combat this and future pandemics. This includes understanding decisions regarding testing, distribution of medical supplies, and communications with the public, as well as answering questions surrounding public health, military, and intelligence warnings about the pandemic and potential political interference with scientific guidance. The Committee is authorized by Rule XXV of the Standing Rules of the Senate to investigate “the efficiency and economy of operations of all branches of the Government.” To that end, please provide the following documents and communications as soon as possible, but no later than March 29, 2021:

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<sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *United States COVID-19 Cases and Deaths by State* ([https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#cases\\_casesper100klast7days](https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#cases_casesper100klast7days)).

<sup>2</sup> Government Accountability Office, *COVID-19: Critical Vaccine Distribution, Supply Chain, Program Integrity, and Other Challenges Require Focused Federal Attention* (GAO-21-265) (January 28, 2021).

The Honorable Antony J. Blinken

March 9, 2021

Page 2

*Executive Branch Actions and Guidance to the Public*

1. All organizational charts at the State Department, including USAID, referring or relating to the COVID-19 response.
2. All documents and communications referring or relating to the World Health Organization's (WHO) COVID-19 response, initial investigation of the pandemic's origin, funding for projects affiliated with the WHO, and the decision to withdraw from the WHO.
3. All senior official communications with the Department of Homeland Security or the White House Coronavirus Task Force or the White House COVID-19 Response Team regarding the repatriation of Americans, including but not limited to the Diamond Princess and Grand Princess Cruise ships.
4. All documents and communications referring or relating to COVID-19 response strategies and guidance, January 2020 through present.
5. All documents and communications referring or relating to COVID-19 requested by or provided to transition teams.

*Personal Protective Equipment, Medical Equipment*

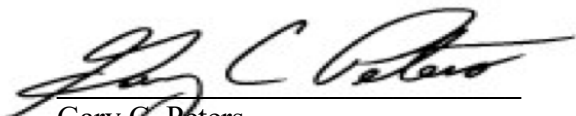
6. All documents and communications, including those from USAID, referring or relating to the shipment of personal protective equipment or ventilators by the federal government to other countries, including the decision to have the U.S. donate critical medical supplies to China in January and February 2020.

Additionally, we ask that you make any officials with relevant information available for interviews to provide information and testimony regarding the issues identified herein.

Please refer to the attached Schedule A for information on how to respond to this request and for the types of documents and communications to be provided. Unless otherwise indicated, all documents and communications responsive to these requests should be provided from January 2019 to present.

Thank you for your prompt attention and cooperation in this matter.

Sincerely,



Gary C. Peters  
Chairman



Rob Portman  
Ranking Member