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United States Senate

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

DAVID M. WEINBERG, STAFF DIRECTOR
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LAURA W. KILBRIDE, CHIEF CLERK

March 9, 2021

The Honorable Jeffrey Zients
White House Coronavirus Response Coordinator
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. Zients:

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 federal departments and agencies on November 18, 2020 to preserve all documents and communications, including regarding the government's COVID-19 response.

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.¹ 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.”² 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.

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *United States COVID-19 Cases and Deaths by State* (https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#cases_casesper100klast7days).

² 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).

Executive Branch Actions and Guidance to the Public

1. All documents and communications referring or relating to the evolution of the roles of each department and agency in relation to the White House Coronavirus Task Force, the White House COVID-19 Response Team, and overall federal COVID-19 response, and coordination between the departments and agencies, including but not limited to interagency agreements and memoranda of understandings.
2. All documents and communications referring or relating to social distancing and other containment measures with respect to federal response planning starting in February 2020.
3. All White House Coronavirus Task Force and White House COVID-19 Response Team organizational charts referring or relating to the COVID-19 response, including any lists of current or former members.
4. All documents and communications referring or relating to intelligence briefings, National Security Council intelligence reports, or proposed recommendations relating to the federal government's COVID-19 response.
5. All documents and communications referring or relating to ongoing or planned tabletop exercises relating to federal government pandemic response.
6. All communications between the White House Coronavirus Task Force or the White House COVID-19 Response Team and officials at agencies or the World Health Organization referring or relating to the COVID-19 response, January 2020 through current.
7. All weekly White House Coronavirus Task Force or White House COVID-19 Response Team reports for Governors, January 2020 through current.
8. All documents and communications referring or relating to COVID-19 requested by or provided to transition teams, including but not limited to, COVID-19 testing and vaccine strategies, and personal protective equipment (PPE) and medical supply logistics.
9. All documents and communications referring or relating to the administration's February 24, 2021 decision to continue the March 13, 2020 national emergency proclamation concerning the COVID-19 pandemic.
10. All documents and communications referring or relating to the administration's decision to rejoin the World Health Organization.

Strategic National Stockpile and Personal Protective Equipment

11. All documents and communications referring or relating to decisions to invoke authorities under the Defense Production Act to mobilize and increase PPE production.
12. All documents and communications referring or relating to Supply Chain Stabilization Task Force determination of PPE distribution to states.
13. All contracts or agreements entered into or directing the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Department of Defense (DOD), or any other federal government agency, to purchase or otherwise procure medical supplies, PPE, and ventilators.
14. All documents and communications regarding White House reports and guidance relating to COVID-19, January 2020 through present, including but not limited to the Coronavirus Task Force, the White House COVID-19 Response Team, the Office of Science and Technology, and “Coronavirus Guidelines for America – 15 Days to Slow the Spread.”

COVID-19 Testing

15. A list of all Community Based Testing Sites for COVID-19 and whether each site is currently in operation, and documents sufficient to show FEMA’s and HHS’s respective roles and responsibilities, how testing site locations were decided, and the funding structure for testing sites and any changes.
16. All documents and communications referring or relating to national testing and contact tracing strategies, January 2020 through present, including but not limited to how the White House Coronavirus Task Force made the decision to let states handle COVID-19 testing.
17. All documents and communications referring or relating to the planning and implementation of National Testing Centers.

Vaccines

18. All documents and communications referring or relating to vaccine rollout strategies in response to a national pandemic, including COVID-19.

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 the below requests should be provided from January 2019 to present.

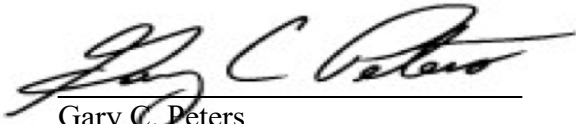
The Honorable Jeffrey Zients

March 9, 2021

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

Sincerely,



Gary C. Peters
Chairman



Rob Portman
Ranking Member