



TOM O'HALLERAN
1ST DISTRICT, ARIZONA

March 29, 2020

Vice President Mike Pence
Office of the Vice President
Room S-212, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Vice President Pence,

I understand the White House Coronavirus Task Force (“Task Force”) has been working diligently to ensure that our nation’s health care system, workers, and families have the resources they need to combat the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) and to mitigate the effects of the ongoing economic fallout we are experiencing as a result of this public health emergency.

However, I remain increasingly concerned with the lack of attention the Navajo Nation has received from federal agencies responsible for COVID-19 preparedness and response efforts. Within the last 24 hours, the number of confirmed cases on the Navajo Nation increased to 115, and there have been two confirmed COVID-19-related deaths to date. The Navajo Nation is working tirelessly to obtain the resources and supplies it needs to combat this widespread outbreak, but it needs assistance from the federal government to effectively mitigate the rapid increase in transmission.

As you will recall, I last wrote to you on March 20 to outline the severity of this problem, and I am disappointed that I have not received a response. Since that letter, the number of confirmed cases has increased by 101. And, since that time, Navajo Nation has not received sufficient guidance from the Administration on how to best procure new supplies and resources, and how to coordinate effectively with federal officials to do so. As such, I am requesting immediate answers to the following questions:

1. Does the Task Force have a plan to communicate and coordinate with Tribal governments as to how and when federal funding authorized by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (“CARES Act”) will be allocated and distributed to Tribes?
2. Has the Task Force been working with the Indian Health Service (IHS) to prioritize the distribution of resources and supplies to Tribal governments with the highest number of cases, including the Navajo Nation?
3. How has the Task Force been working in conjunction with IHS to provide direct service hospitals and health care clinics with necessary resources? Public Law 93-638 health care providers are essential to the health of many Native Americans, including Navajos. What is the Task Force doing to ensure they are getting the resources and supplies they need?

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter. The long-standing Treaty and Trust obligations of the federal government to provide health care to Native Americans, including the Navajo Nation, cannot be ignored. I await your responses to these questions, in addition to my previous questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tom O'Halleran". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "T".

Tom O'Halleran
Member of Congress