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## **TOM O'HALLERAN**

1ST DISTRICT, ARIZONA  
March 20, 2020

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

Dear Vice President Pence,

I am deeply concerned that Tribal Nations are not receiving adequate access to resources and information to effectively respond to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic in their communities. As you know, an effective response to a pandemic of such severe proportions requires effective communication and sufficient resources to enable communities to treat individuals without causing further exposure.

I am deeply troubled by the Administration's failure to communicate with Tribal Leaders and deploy resources to Indian Country. Since my last correspondence with your office, there have been 14 confirmed cases of COVID-19 among members of the Navajo Nation, which may have been prevented by swift federal actions. It appears a teacher with the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) initially brought the virus to the Navajo Nation. Accordingly, it is essential the Administration work to ensure the BIE isolates all staff that may have been exposed. The Administration must also provide guidance and resources to all Tribes to prevent and slow the spread of COVID-19.

Tribal leaders must be given the resources they need to educate their people, while the Indian Health Service (IHS) provides care to those in need. Both direct service and P.L. 93-638 providers must have access to the necessary information and resources. Providing Tribes and IHS providers access to rapid testing is essential and must be done quickly.

Ensuring Tribes have rapid testing, personal protective equipment (PPE), and treatment resources can be achieved by providing parity with state and local governments, as well as ensuring Tribes can access supplies from the Strategic National Reserve.

The United States has treaty and trust obligations to care for the health and welfare of Tribes across the country. To live up to this obligation, the United States must provide the necessary information and resources to allow Tribes and the IHS to effectively respond to the COVID-19 pandemic in their communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tom O'Halleran".

Tom O'Halleran  
Member of Congress