



TOM O'HALLERAN
1ST DISTRICT, ARIZONA

April 12, 2020

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

Dear Vice President Pence:

I am writing to share my concern with you and the White House Coronavirus Task Force regarding the shortage of testing kits nationwide and the current federal approach that requires that states bid for testing kits against each other, as well as against the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

In particular, I am concerned that this approach is driving up the prices of these much-needed testing kits and that states, localities, and Tribal governments that are in dire need of these resources are not able to secure them in a timely manner; thus, costing more lives.

I am further concerned that this process is creating confusion among our states and local constituencies that are not receiving the information they need from the federal agencies with jurisdiction over coordinating the procurement and delivery of these testing kits. In Arizona's First Congressional District, we have seen the number of positive COVID-19 cases increase and, in some areas, increase more rapidly than others. For instance, on Saturday evening, the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases on Navajo Nation was 698 – an increase of 101 cases within 24 hours. These communities that are in the direst need of testing kits should receive due consideration as a priority area. I fear that the current approach does not take these realities into account.

As such, I urge the Administration and Task Force to promptly reconsider this competitive bidding approach and instead exercise its long-standing authority to produce additional supplies and kits and to ensure that our most vulnerable populations with the most prevalent cases receive the amount necessary to treat infected patients and protect their communities. During this unprecedented global pandemic, the federal government should function as a central chain of command, providing more certainty and stability in the supply chains.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tom O'Halleran". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Tom" being particularly prominent.

Tom O'Halleran
Member of Congress