



### **3/21/20 OFW Law Daily COVID-19 News Conference Summary**

President Donald Trump and Vice President Mike Pence held an approximately 90-minute press conference beginning at 1:00 this afternoon. They were joined by Assistant Secretary of Health Admiral Brett Giroir, MD, National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases Director Dr. Anthony Fauci, Federal Emergency Management (FEMA) Agency Administrator Peter Gaynor, and Secretary of House and Urban Development Ben Carson.

#### **Summary of the President's remarks and questions:**

1. The President reviewed the current situation saying that governors, mayors and citizens are all working with urgency. There is national action and solidarity.
2. Coronavirus is now in 148 countries.
3. He has approved a disaster declaration for New York. It is the first time the [Stafford Act](#) has been used in a public health crisis.
4. The President said he is working with California Governor Newsom and may do more.
5. The President said he spoke last night with Canadian Prime Minister Trudeau, and today with Mexican President Lopez Obrador with respect to the agreements on travel restrictions.
6. The President reviewed multiple actions during his past week including calls with businesses, medical providers, governors, G7 leaders, religious leaders; signing legislation; action with respect to suspending standardized testing and student loan interest; FDA actions; telehealth activities; and suspension of HUD foreclosures.
7. The President spoke other companies responding to medical product production needs, including Hanes retrofitting portions of its plants to produce masks, and Pernod-Ricard moving from alcohol product production to making hand sanitizers.
8. The President was asked what should people do if they have already lost their jobs or may lose them tomorrow. He said that he expects the economy and these jobs to bounce back when the problem is solved. Unemployment assistance is available. He referred to the response package currently being developed as one like nothing anyone has ever done before.
9. The President was asked why he has not used the authority of the Defense Production Act given that governors are saying that they cannot find needed products, and that prices have gone up. The President said that there is no need to use the authority since so many companies are stepping up to take action on their own. As he said yesterday, he wants the states to go first in procuring product and that the federal government will drop its bid when notified that a state is submitting its own bid.

10. The proposed legislative package at this time looks to be at \$2 trillion, 10% of the Gross Domestic Product. What does the President say to those who are concerned about the size of the package? He replied that the development of the package is going very well, and he expects a special package. It is the first time ever that we want people to not work. Other nations are doing similar things. He wants to keep companies together. He again said he is opposed to funds being used for stock buybacks, and he recommends excluding them as an allowable use.
11. With respect to masks, the President asked why couldn't they be sanitized so they could be reused.
12. The President was pressed with quotes from doctors who claim they cannot get masks. Shouldn't this situation have been resolved before? The President replied that this is an unprecedented situation. No one had done more before. He is currently doing a tremendous amount with tens of millions of masks being made.
13. The President was asked if the issues with the "malaria drug" (chloroquine) have been resolved with FDA. The President said he could not say if they have been resolved, but New York will be getting 10,000 units. He personally feels very good about the promise of the drug. He understands that Dr. Fauci would like to have testing, but there isn't time. We should know some results very shortly.
14. The President was asked about a [Washington Post story](#) saying that intelligence agencies reported about the pandemic in January and February, and that action could have been taken sooner. The President claimed that he took action as soon as he knew, including imposing travel restrictions for which he was both criticized and not given credit. He said the Post's coverage is inaccurate.
15. The President was asked if he wants all states to do the same thing. The President said he does not, and that they should do what they individually need to do.

#### **Summary of the Vice President's remarks and questions:**

1. The Vice President said that the American people are coming together, responding with common sense, compassion, and generosity.
2. We are officially 6 days into the 15-day effort.
3. The Administration is "almost overwhelmed" at the outpouring of support.
4. Testing is expanding rapidly with more than 195,000 symptomatic tests, not including those being done by county hospitals and health centers, with as of yesterday only 19,343 testing positive.
5. The Vice President urged county and state authorities to contact FEMA for needed assistance.
6. He urged Americans who do not have symptoms to not get tests.
7. On Monday they will detail the strategy for getting supplies and allocating them through FEMA. HHS has placed orders for hundreds of millions of N95 masks.
8. He renewed the call for postponing elective medical procedures, including dental.
9. The Vice President said progress is being made on a bipartisan response bill. They are working to pass the bill in the Senate and House on Monday.
10. The person on the Vice President's staff who tested positive for coronavirus is doing well. There had not been direct contact between this person and either the President or Vice President.

11. The Vice President and his wife will be tested later this afternoon.
12. The Vice President was asked about the size of the HHS N95 mask order. He said that a half billion masks are being ordered, and the distribution will be coordinated through FEMA. They will respond to state requests. The supply of N95 masks has vastly increased because of the President's order to include industrial masks. The liability protection afforded by the legislation signed this past week extends through 2024.
13. With respect to masks, the Vice President renewed the call that the President has made for companies to go to their storerooms to see what N95 masks they have and then in turn donate them to local hospitals. He urged dentists to do the same.
14. When the President was asked for current numbers regarding the availability of needed equipment, the Vice President said there will be detailed news on Monday. There are more than 13,000 ventilators in stockpiles, which does not include 100,000 in hospitals today. There is also the additional amount being produced and the potential conversion of other ventilators.
15. The Vice President at the end of the briefing again urged Americans to heed their state and local authorities, follow the guidance, and recognize that there is a low incidence of actual cases.

**Summary of by Assistant Secretary of Health Admiral Brett Giroir's remarks and questions:**

1. Admiral Giroir said we are moving to more testing with 91 public health centers in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Guam, and Puerto Rico. This does not account for the other 10-15,000 hospitals doing testing.
2. There are priorities for testing: those who are hospitalized, health care workers, symptomatic people in long term care facilities, those over 65, those with underlying conditions, and patients in public health facilities.
3. There are now Community Based Testing Sites, which are state managed and locally executed. They are all throughout the country, with some being drive-through or walk-up.
4. With respect to masks and other supply issues, Admiral Giroir said there is a need to preserve Personal Protective Equipment as much as possible. Product is being produced, and the response is through FEMA. Shortages need to be clearly indicated to local emergency management. Mass supplies are going out on a daily basis.

**Summary of National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases Director Dr. Anthony Fauci's remarks and questions:**

1. Dr. Fauci said he continues to follow the natural course of the outbreak and the mitigation strategy. He knows that the strategy is having an effect but cannot yet quantify what it is.
2. The guidelines are the baseline for everyone ([https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/03.16.20\\_coronavirus-guidance\\_8.5x11\\_315PM.pdf](https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/03.16.20_coronavirus-guidance_8.5x11_315PM.pdf)).
3. There are different situations in different states explain the differing responses.
4. Dr. Fauci emphasized again that not everyone needs to take a test. Preserve tests and the Personal Protective Equipment those conducting the tests need to wear so that they will be available for symptomatic tests.

5. With respect to the reuse of masks, Dr. Fauci said [CDC has issued guidance](#). Efforts are being made to move towards testing methods that do not require the use of Personal Protective Equipment.
6. Dr. Fauci does not take lightly the claims being made by some doctors as he hears them as well. They are working to resolve the situation, but it will be days doing as best as they can.
7. Dr. Fauci responded to a question about why not let everyone get temperature tests if they cannot get a full test. He said temperature tests have a place, but are not infallible. He does not see the massive distribution of temperature tests having an effect.

**Summary of FEMA Agency Administrator Peter Gaynor's remarks and questions:**

1. FEMA is responsible for the whole-of-nation response.
2. FEMA has already allocated \$100 million to states, territories, and tribal nations.
3. "Buy American" requirements do not apply to the Stafford Act.
4. If a state cannot buy needed items they should contact FEMA.
5. FEMA is in lock step with HHS to get access to needed items.
6. FEMA Regional Administrative Centers are expected to coordinate with the various governors.
7. Administrator Gaynor was asked when the masks can be expected. He said that there is a supply chain task force within the National Response Coordination Center that will prioritize resources. They will examine the entire supply chain, noting that masks are already out. There is a range of requests from throughout the country.

**Summary of Secretary of House and Urban Development Ben Carson's remarks and questions:**

1. Having a safe house has everything to do with health.
2. The President has ordered the immediate cessation of foreclosures.
3. HUD has asked mortgage servicers to exercise forbearance.
4. HUD is in contact with Public Housing Authorities across the country asking them to do the same since HUD does not currently have authority to order them to do so. HUD is looking for authority from Congress, but believe the PHAs are responding on their own.
5. April Section 8 vouchers are to be sent out next week. May is being worked upon.
6. They are extending until the end of April the deadline for health care and multifamily financial reporting requirements involving over 20,000 borrowers.