



3/22/20 OFW Law Daily COVID-19 News Conference Summary

President Donald Trump and Vice President Mike Pence held a 90-minute press conference beginning at 5:56 this afternoon. They were joined by Federal Emergency Management (FEMA) Agency Administrator Peter Gaynor, White House Coronavirus Task Force Member Peter Navarro, Centers for Disease Control Director Robert R. Redfield, MD, and Surgeon General Vice Admiral Jerome Adams, MD. Not all of these individuals offered remarks, but may have responded to questions.

Summary of the President's remarks and questions:

1. The President said it is vital that Americans follow the guidelines for dealing with coronavirus.
2. He said they are working on legislation to get relief as quickly as possible, and his belief that the economy will skyrocket once it is over.
3. Action has been taken to help New York, California, and Washington. The National Guard has been put on full alert to help in these states. FEMA will fund 100% of the National Guard's missions, with the governors in command.
4. The President reviewed the disaster declarations approved for [New York](#), and one today for [Washington](#). A request for declaration was received from California today and they are working to complete it, perhaps tonight.
5. The President said that four large medical stations with 1,000 beds will be provided for New York. Eight large medical stations with 2,000 beds will be provided for California. Three large and four small stations with 1,000 beds are being provided for Washington.
6. The President said additional supplies will be delivered within 48 hours, and went on to detail the volumes of various supplies sent thus far to New York and Washington, but did not provide details for Washington.
7. The President said that Honeywell is expanding production of Personal Protection Equipment in Rhode Island, suggesting that millions of N95 masks will be produced for the strategic national stockpile.
8. He spoke about a public-private consortium involving supercomputer work with the Department of Energy and IBM to fight the virus. Work also involves NIH, Amazon, Google, Microsoft, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, and NASA.
9. The President said veterans will receive support through veterans' hospitals. He signed S. 3503 which provides for distance learning for veterans. Access to veterans' living facilities has been restricted to reduce the risk of contamination. The VA has cancelled elective procedures and has been a leader in telehealth.

10. The Hospital Ship Comfort is being refurbished and expected to be in New York in 3 to 4 weeks.
11. When asked if Congress should consider changing its rules to allow for remove voting, particularly in light of the positive testing of some members, the President said he would be in favor of it on a temporary basis. In response to related question the President said he doesn't see the current situation with some members being absent as a threat to the package.
12. With respect to the status of the stimulus bill, the President said he wants to help workers and their companies so that the workers can go back to the companies. He repeated his opposition to the use of funds for any stock buybacks.
13. The President was asked again why he is not fully utilizing the authorities of the Defense Production Act. The President said that he believes he is using it sufficiently now since the threat of using it has been enough. Nationalizing businesses is not good.
14. He confirmed that he is considering an Executive Order to free elderly totally non-violent prisoners.
15. When asked if the President plans to extend the current 15-day period, he said that he hopes he does not have to extend it.
16. When asked if he would reach out to past Presidents, he said we have the best people working on the problem now, he does not want to bother the past Presidents, and he does not believe he would learn much.
17. When asked about statements from New York Mayor De Blasio regarding this concern that New York hospitals could run out of space by the end of April, the President said it is a unique situation and that he is helping New York. He again referenced sending the hospital ship and said that cruise liners may also be sent.
18. With respect to new drugs for the treatment of coronavirus, the President said the testing of one (chloroquine) will begin Tuesday in New York. New vaccines have to be tested over a long period of time to be sure that they are effective and do not have bad effects.
19. The President was asked if he will support other countries' efforts to deal with the virus. He said he is, and has let it be known, including North Korea and Iran. He then said the United States spends a lot on aid programs with other countries, with much of the money going to deal with matters such as AIDS and Malaria.
20. He was again asked what he thought about different states having different stay at home orders. The President said he is ok with it because states are different and have to respond to their own needs.
21. The President was asked if given the current situation he would withdraw the Affordable Care Act lawsuit. The President said that Republicans will protect care for preexisting conditions and just want to get rid of bad health care.

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

1. Administrator Gaynor repeated many of the points the President made with respect to the status of assistance to New York, California, and Washington, including the activation of the National Guard and medical supplies being en route to these states.
2. The US Hospital Ship Mercy will go to Los Angeles within a week or less.
3. California needs five times the number of beds as does Washington.
4. FEMA is responding to hundreds of requests from governors.

5. When asked where the additional medical facilities will be built in New York, California, and Washington, Administrator Gaynor said the location is at the discretion of each governor.

Summary of the White House Coronavirus Task Force Member Peter Navarro:

1. Mr. Navarro said the Defense Production Act is intended for the mobilization of the industrial base and to provide for the allocation of resources. So far the response to the implementation of the Act has been purely voluntary with no mandatory action yet needed.
2. Mr. Navarro said that Pernod-Ricard needed to clear three hurdles involving the Departments of Treasury, HHS, and the FDA to convert its production to sanitizer. It was done the same day through Mr. Navarro's office, with a truck carrying 1,000 gallons of sanitizer now expected in New York on Tuesday. A contract was also quickly cleared for Honeywell for production Rhode Island, with masks expected to be produced within 30 days.
3. It may be the case down the road that the White House may have to break through problems should they arise.
4. He offered a message to "hoarders" – get the product to us or we will come to you.

Summary of the Vice President's remarks and questions:

1. We are officially 7 days into the 15-day effort.
2. Bipartisan efforts are being made on legislation.
3. Testing has become more available, and further details will be announced tomorrow.
4. Thus far there have been 254,000 tests with more than 30,000 positives. These numbers do not include what testing is being done by local hospitals.
5. Work is being done to get tests done more quickly, and the backlog should be cleared up by the middle of the week.
6. HHS guidance is expected tomorrow regarding the prioritization of inpatient testing.
7. [FDA yesterday approved](#) a new testing method that will be in production by the end of the month.
8. Dr. Redfield will be unveiling new CDC guidance tomorrow regarding first responders, including their ability to return to work more quickly.
9. Work continues through the State and Defense Departments to help Americans get back home. People are urged to call 1-888-407-4747 or go to <https://step.state.gov/> for assistance.

Summary of Centers for Disease Control Director Robert R. Redfield, MD's questions:

1. When the President was asked about a CDC medical epidemiologist position in China having been eliminated last July, Dr. Redfield said that the presence in China is being augmented, with the office having become known as the Chinese CDC. We have had a presence in China for over 30 years.

Summary of Surgeon General Vice Admiral Jerome Adams, MD's questions:

1. Surgeon General Adams was asked if undocumented people can come to testing sites without fear for their immigration status. He responded that those who need to be tested should be tested. Vice President Pence added that the Department of Homeland Security has said that Customs and Border Protection does not target emergency rooms or clinics. The President went on to say that if it is not already the policy to allow them to come for testing without fear of their immigration status he will make it the policy.