

JON TESTER
MONTANA

COMMITTEES:
APPROPRIATIONS
BANKING
COMMERCE
INDIAN AFFAIRS
VETERANS' AFFAIRS

SENATE HART BUILDING
SUITE 311
WASHINGTON, DC 20510
202-224-2644

tester.senate.gov/contact

United States Senate

April 9, 2020

The Honorable Mike Pence
Vice President of the United States of America
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington DC 20500

Dear Vice President Pence:

I write today regarding concerns about the shortage of N95 respirator masks (masks) for Montanans as they combat the COVID-19 outbreak and keep our communities safe. I am in regular contact with Administration officials at FEMA, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and the Department of Veterans Affairs in hopes of addressing the urgent needs of my state. To date, Governor Bullock has informed me the state has received insufficient support from the Administration's Strategic National Stockpile and I am coming to you in hopes of solving this issue.

Health care officials across Montana notified the Governor's Coronavirus Task Force that we collectively need approximately 460,000 N95 respirator masks. On March 30th, I was assured that 79,486 masks were on their way to Montana via three separate shipments. While far short of our needs, it represented a starting point that would hopefully get the state through initial waves of the COVID-19 outbreak. But upon delivery of these shipments, Montana discovered it only received 10,870 masks. The discrepancy here is staggering and the lack of coordination and communication meant the state had an unanticipated 60,000 mask shortfall that that needed immediate attention. Fortunately, Governor Bullock successfully secured 60,000 masks through other means, but this situation highlights the inadequate planning and coordination of the federal government's vast resources, including the Strategic National Stockpile. I respectfully request that you ensure we receive an expeditious answer as to what date Montana can expect to receive the outstanding N95 respirator masks.

Relatedly, I believe there are a number of common-sense steps the Administration could take to address the shortfall in medical supplies Montana and many other states are facing. I respectfully urge you to implore President Trump to make full use of the Defense Production Act. This basic step is long overdue and would provide great relief nationwide. Additionally, I continue my call for the Administration to further activate the VA's Fourth Mission to serve as the backup health care provider for the nation in times of national emergency. We have met that threshold and we should be making full use of the nation's largest-integrated health care system.

BILLINGS
(406) 252-0550

BOZEMAN
(406) 586-4450

BUTTE
(406) 723-3277

MISSOULA
(406) 728-3003

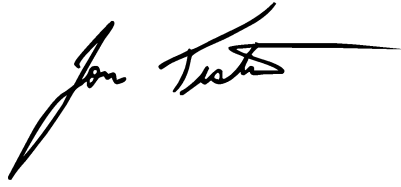
GREAT FALLS
(406) 452-9585

HELENA
(406) 449-5401

KALISPELL
(406) 257-3360

I appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to a response on when Montana can expect to receive the N95 respirator masks we have been promised. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of any assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jon Tester". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Jon Tester