

# Pandemic and Disaster Response Task Force

## Holding the Biden Administration Accountable

Pandemic and Disaster Response Task Force Co-Chairs, Tennessee Governor Bill Lee and Connecticut Governor Ned Lamont, held calls with members of the Biden Administration to discuss the COVID-19 response and issues affecting states. A few of the issues raised included improving transparency, testing strategies, data tracking, federal vaccination programs and state vaccination efforts.

In addition, the Task Force provides weekly written feedback, questions and/or concerns to the Administration on issues around the pandemic response. These are shared ahead of the weekly calls that NGA hosts, with the White House and Governors.

## Conversations with COVID-19 Vaccine Developers

Pandemic and Disaster Response Task Force Co-Chairs, Tennessee Governor Bill Lee and Connecticut Governor Ned Lamont, and Task Force members, held calls with the CEOs of Moderna, Pfizer, and Johnson & Johnson. They discussed updates on the vaccines, distribution issues and additional state-specific concerns.

## Briefings for States and Territories

The National Governors Association has hosted dozens of calls in response to state and territorial concerns on a number of COVID-19 related issues. We have worked to partner with external experts from the public and private sectors to provide accurate and timely information to states and territories on vaccines, testing, and a number of other key issues.

## Border Restrictions Due to COVID-19

The National Governors Association worked to ensure Governors' voices were heard when it comes to travel restrictions along the U.S. borders. Governors noted specifically the economic impacts of the pandemic on northern border communities and states, impacting many constituents who are employees of small, family businesses desperate to resume operations – to ask us how and when cross-border economic activity would resume in a safe and sustainable manner. [NGA Letter on Border Restrictions](#) & [NGA Statement Welcoming Easing of Border Restrictions](#)

## Maintaining Funding for the National Guard and Public Assistance

The Pandemic and Disaster Response Task Force [continued to advocate](#) for the use of Title 32 in response to COVID-19 as well as the full funding for the National Guard and the FEMA Public Assistance Program. The current authority exists until April 1, 2022. [NGA Statement Commending Extension of Title 32 and 100 Percent Cost Share](#).

## Public Assistance Concerns

The Pandemic and Disaster Response Task Force wrote to the FEMA Administrator in May to relay significant concerns with varying eligibility criteria under FEMA's COVID-19 Public Assistance Guidance. The National Governors Association provided several recommendations to FEMA to help improve COVID-19 response and recovery efforts. [NGA Letter on FEMA Public Assistance Eligibility](#)



Co-Chair  
Governor Ned Lamont  
Connecticut



Co-Chair  
Governor Bill Lee  
Tennessee

## ISSUE AREAS

- COVID-19
- Cybersecurity
- FEMA
- Health care
- National Guard

## MEMBERS

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Governor Gavin Newsom  
California  
Governor David Ige  
Hawai'i  
Governor Eric Holcomb  
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### Public Assistance Concerns

The Pandemic and Disaster Response Task Force led a coalition effort of state and local associations to slow changes to the FEMA Public Assistance program via a proposed rule. The coalition noted to FEMA that the proposed rule would unduly burden state, territorial and local governments as they continue to recover from all disasters, and proposed several recommendations to help achieve the intent of the proposed rule. To date, the rule has not been formalized by FEMA. [Coalition Letter on FEMA Public Assistance Proposed Rule](#)

### Testifying on Preparedness Efforts

Hawai'i Governor David Ige testified on behalf of the National Governors Association in April before the House Homeland Security Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response and Recovery. During the hearing – titled State and Local Perspectives on the Department of Homeland Security's Preparedness Grant Programs – Gov. Ige discussed key priority areas for Governors such as cybersecurity, FEMA grant programs, the impact and challenges of COVID-19, and preventing targeted violence. [NGA Testimony on Preparedness](#)

### Establishing a Dedicated Cybersecurity Grant for States and Territories

On Nov. 15, 2021, President Biden signed into law the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. The measure includes a critical priority for states and territories: a \$1 billion, four-year cybersecurity grant program designed to help state, local, tribal and territorial entities improve their cyber posture. This grant has been a multi-year effort for the National Governors Association, and the Task Force will continue to work with the Administration on implementation of guidance. [Coalition Letter on Cybersecurity Funding](#)

In order to effectively inform the guidance development process at the federal level, NGA led a coalition of state associations to provide both questions and recommendations for implementing the grant program that was provided to the Cybersecurity and Infrastructures Security Agency (CISA) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

### Defense Appropriations

The Pandemic and Disaster Response Task Force wrote to congressional appropriators requesting several of Governors' top priorities in the Fiscal Year 2022 Defense Appropriations bill. This request included reimbursing the National Guard for COVID-19 and the U.S. Capitol missions; funding the modernization and recapitalization of National Guard equipment; increased investment in PFOS and PFOA remediation efforts; promoting investment in National Guard Full-Time Support and the Counterdrug program. [NGA Letter of Defense Appropriations Priorities](#) & [NGA Statement on Reimbursing the National Guard for the D.C. Capitol Mission](#).

### Defense Authorization

The Pandemic and Disaster Response Task Force wrote to Congressional authorizers requesting several of Governors' top priorities in the Fiscal Year 2022 National Defense Authorization Act. This request included improving the National Guard's response to pandemics and catastrophic disasters; maintaining airlift (C-130) capability and capacity; and increasing National Guard full-time support. [NGA Letter on National Defense Authorization Act Priorities](#). Many of these priorities were included in the final bill and the President signed the measure into law on December 27, 2021.