

Public Health and Disaster Response Task Force



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OUR JURISDICTION

The Public Health and Disaster Response Task Force has organizational jurisdiction over a broad range of issues including Disaster and Emergency Public Health Response, Homeland Security, Cybersecurity, Healthcare, Human Services, Nutrition, and Immigration.

OUR PRIORITIES

Ensure the National Guard has the resources and authorities necessary to serve as an operational force to respond to domestic emergencies;

Secure appropriate resources for states and territories to prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters;

Strengthen federal, state, territorial, local and private sector partnerships to enhance cybersecurity;

Advocate on behalf of states and territories for adequate resources and guidance during the unwinding of the COVID-19 emergency declarations;

Support PREVENT Pandemics Act implementation and Bipartisan Safer Communities Act implementation;

Improve supply chain infrastructure; and

Work with the U.S. Congress and the Administration on addressing telehealth, mental health, substance use, health care workforce, health care infrastructure, equity, human services issues, and nutrition.

OUR WORK

Preparing for Potential Energy Disruptions

In February 2023, the Task Force [hosted a policy discussion](#) on how Governors can prepare their states and territories for potential largescale, sustained energy disruptions, through leveraging federal resources available to build resiliency, establish best practices and strengthen response efforts.

The session featured conversations with: Jason Bordoff, Founding Director, Center for Global Energy Policy, Columbia University; Allison Clements, Commissioner, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission; and Puesh Kumar, Director, Office of Cybersecurity, U.S. Department of Energy.

Preparing for and Responding to Concurrent Crises

In July 2023, the Task Force [hosted a policy discussion](#) on how Governors can prepare for and respond to concurrent crises. The session featured a conversation with Juliette Kayyem, Belfer Senior Lecturer in International Security at the Harvard Kennedy School, and author of *The Devil Never Sleeps: How We Live in an Age of Disasters*. Kayem offered six tips for how Governors can play a significant role in effectively managing a crises:

- Maintain situational awareness;
- Maintain strong communication;
- Remain strategically oriented;
- Implement a state disaster recovery office;
- Conduct an after-action review; and
- Incentivize resilience and mitigation planning

During a question-and-answer session, Governors shared some of the challenges facing their states and territories and discussed potential solutions with Kayyem.

Funding Critical Needs

In May 2023, the Task Force [wrote to House and Senate Appropriators](#) requesting the inclusion of Governors' top priorities in the Fiscal Year 2024 appropriations bills. These requests included robust funding for the Child Care and Development Block Grant, Maternal and Child Health Services Block Grant, grants to support state strategic stockpiles, and more; increased National Guard personnel; continued support for preparedness grants; and robust funding to further cyber resilience and response capabilities.

The Task Force also previously advocated 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 Task Force [successfully advocated for a 3-month extension](#) of the authority to July 1, 2022, that provided states and territories additional time to prepare.

Improving the Nation's Response for Future Public Health Emergencies

In April 2022, the Task Force sent a letter to the Senate HELP Committee Chair Murray and Ranking Member Burr, [providing feedback on the bipartisan PREVENT Pandemics Act \(S.3799\)](#). This bill is in response to COVID-19 and tries to address some of the lessons learned from the response and seeks to improve the nation's preparedness for future public health emergencies. The letter highlights five top issues:

- Federal-State Roles and Responsibilities
- Improve Communication and Messaging
- Modernize and Standardize Public Health Data Systems
- Strengthen Public Health Infrastructure and Workforce
- Sustainable Availability and Reliable Access to Health Care Supply Chain

The bill was included in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023.