

DATE: March 6, 2020

Congressional Response to the Coronavirus

This memo provides a general update on the congressional response to the coronavirus. On December 31, 2019, the coronavirus was first detected in Wuhan, China. The first case was reported in the U.S. on January 30, 2020, and, as of March 5, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has [reported](#) 99 cases across 18 states.

President Donald Trump [appointed](#) Vice President Mike Pence to head the White House Coronavirus Task Force on February 26. Vice President Pence held a [press briefing](#) with the Task Force on March 4, and emphasized the importance of a unified federal response to the outbreak between federal agencies, and state and local health officials.

Coronavirus Emergency Supplemental Package

Within days, Congress moved to draft, and ultimately pass, an \$8.3 billion emergency funding package to combat the coronavirus ([H.R. 6074](#)). On March 5, the Senate passed the bill with overwhelming support ([96-1](#)) one day after the House introduced and passed the bill with near unanimity ([415-2](#)). President Trump signed the package into law on March 6.

The funding package includes a significantly higher level of funding than the \$2.5 billion [President Trump requested](#) after the initial outbreak on January 29.

Highlights of the bill include (courtesy of the House Appropriations Committee):

- Authorization to reimburse state and local costs incurred for coronavirus preparedness and response activities between January 20, 2020, and the date of the bill's enactment (March 6).
- More than \$3 billion for research and development of vaccines, therapeutics, and diagnostics.
- \$2.2 billion to the CDC to support federal, state, and local public health agencies to prevent, prepare for, and response to the coronavirus, including \$950 million—of which \$475 million must be allocated within 30 days of enactment—to help states and local governments conduct public health activities such as:
 - surveillance for coronavirus;
 - laboratory testing to detect positive cases;
 - contact tracing to identify additional positive cases;
 - infection control at the local level to prevent additional cases;
 - migration in areas with person-to-person transmission to prevent additional cases; and
 - other public health preparedness and response activities.

- Approximately \$500 million for procurement of pharmaceuticals, masks, personal protective equipment, and other medical supplies, which can be distributed to state and local health agencies in areas with a shortage of medical supplies.
- \$100 million for health services through Community Health Centers.
- \$435 million to support health systems overseas to prevent, prepare, and respond to the coronavirus.
- \$300 million to respond to humanitarian needs.
- \$61 million to facilitate the development and review of medical countermeasures, devices, therapies, and vaccines, and to help mitigate potential supply chain interruptions.
- \$7 million in low-interest loans to affected small businesses, small agricultural cooperatives, small aquaculture producers, and non-profit organizations.
- Requires a reimbursement of the \$136 million to important health accounts, including mental health and substance abuse treatment and prevention and heating and cooling assistance for low-income families, that was transferred by the Trump Administration to support the coronavirus response.
- Allows funds to be used for construction or renovation of facilities to improve preparedness and response capabilities at the state and local level.

The funding package also requires that vaccines developed using taxpayer funds must be available for purchase by the federal government and the commercial market at an affordable and fair price—a contentious portion of the bill that acquired debate in both the House and Senate.

A full summary of H.R. 6074, provided by the House Appropriations Committee, can be found [here](#).

Travel Impacts

According to a Congressional Research Service (CRS) February 27 [Report](#), President Trump has suspended entry into the U.S. from any foreign national who has been to mainland China or Iran within the prior 14 days beginning January 31. On February 2, the Department of Homeland Security issued instructions subjecting returning U.S. citizens with recent travel to China's Hubei Province to mandatory quarantine of up to 14 days. The State Department has also issued a Level 4 "Do Not Travel" advisory for China and evacuated U.S. citizens from the area of Wuhan, China.

Next Steps

The [Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee](#) and the [House Science, Space and Technology Committee](#) held hearings on the coronavirus on March 5. More hearings and legislation regarding the coronavirus are likely to arise as Congress rolls out the provisions of the emergency supplemental. TFG will continue to keep you updated on the congressional response to the coronavirus, and keep you apprised of additional bills or regulations that are published in response to the emergency funding package.