



Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515

June 3, 2020

The Honorable Mark T. Esper
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Secretary Esper,

As our nation enters the sixth month of a global health pandemic that has burdened every segment of American society, the men and women of the armed services have not been spared by its life threatening, lethal reach. Examples abound of sailors, soldiers, reservists, and many others in uniform who have been infected in the course of duty that has inevitably put them and their families in high-risk environments for contraction of this infectious disease. With over 6,000 confirmed cases and over 150 hospitalizations of uniformed servicemembers, COVID-19 has indeed created a new definition of “in harm’s way.”

Due to the hazards associated with the duties that we expect our servicemembers to carry out, we strongly encourage you to use the authorities given to you under 36 U.S. Code § 351 and provide hazardous duty pay for our servicemembers at risk of being exposed to COVID-19. We ask you to make this designation for over 45,000 service members responding to the call to service to assist their state in the response to the declaration of a national emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We also encourage you to designate any duty related to the COVID-19 pandemic for those serving under Title 10 such as the sailors serving aboard the USS *Theodore Roosevelt* who have been put at risk without question. All service members responding to this call are risking direct exposure to this highly contagious and potentially deadly disease, clearly performing hazardous duty with the inherent danger of the risk of personal injury as described in the statute.

We look forward to working with you to continue to provide the most appropriate benefits to those who shoulder the common good day in and day out.

Sincerely,

JOE COURTNEY

Chairman

Seapower and Projection
Forces Subcommittee

JACKIE SPEIER

Chairwoman

Military Personnel
Subcommittee

JAMES R. LANGEVIN

Chairman

Intelligence and Emerging
Threats and Capabilities
Subcommittee

This letter to Secretary Esper is sent on behalf of the following members of the United States House of Representatives:

GILBERT R. CISNEROS, JR.
Member of Congress

JOE CUNNINGHAM
Member of Congress

VERONICA ESCOBAR
Member of Congress

TULSI GABBARD
Member of Congress

AUSTIN SCOTT
Member of Congress