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Memorandum to All Interested Parties

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Subject: CAP Urges Congressional Leaders to Call for Guidance on a National Stay-at-Home Order.

As the country continues to confront the COVID-19 crisis, the nation is reaching a critical decision point that could mean returning to normalcy in the 2nd half of this year or facing rolling community quarantines and further economic hardship. It is imperative for congressional leaders to demand clear federal guidance on a [national stay-at-home order](#). The Center for American Progress urges Congress to call on administration officials to explain why such an order has not yet been issued.

Congress has the oversight authority to probe the administration's handling of the crisis. As such, CAP applauds Speaker Nancy Pelosi's decision to begin this process by creating the Select Committee for the Coronavirus Pandemic to oversee the aid provided by the CARES Act. This is a good first step. Next, it is critically important for congressional committees to demand a review from administration officials as well as tie additional funding to incentivize state behavior. For example:

- The Senate and House Appropriations Committee could require additional aid funding be tied to state's actions to close non-essential business and mandate stay-at-home orders.
- The House Energy and Commerce Committee could call the CDC, FDA, and HHS to provide details around agency decision-making that led to the patchwork of state responses and if there was any internal deliberation for a federal stay-at-home order.
- The Senate Intelligence Committee could demand additional information on how the intelligence assessment of COVID-19 was communicated to White House officials and how those details were further communicated to the president.

These are only examples and while Congress remains in recess for safety concerns certain steps can and must be taken. Just yesterday Dr. Tony Fauci publicly stated that [he couldn't understand why the country had not](#). It is incumbent on Congress to follow through.

For even the unaware observer, the lack of leadership from the White House and the Trump Administration has been profound. From waffling on the [seriousness of the crisis](#), to dragging their feet on the response both in [marshalling the necessary resources](#). Their abdication of responsibility has made the country and American's lives worse off. President Trump's dithering has forced state governments led by state governors to fill the most critical roles during

this national emergency. There have been prominent [success stories](#) from both sides of the aisle. In each instance, local leaders quickly instituting state-wide stay-at-home orders and restricting travel for their citizens while closing non-essential business. However, there are many other states which have been woefully slow in responding.

Florida and Georgia are two [prime examples](#) of what happens when officials wait too long or sit idly by while the number of infections skyrocketed. This is another area where congress should ask questions. While some governors have punted on taking serious action pending specific orders from the White House, the Trump Administration has pointed the other way [insisting it will not give state-specific guidance](#). This is unacceptable and must be explained to congressional committees. The Trump administration has created a devastating leadership void and Congress must step in to fill it immediately for the good of every state, and the entire country in which our fates are intertwined.

It is critical for congressional leaders to call for national guidance on a national stay-at-home order and how states, localities, and other community leaders can best protect themselves and the public. Doing so is both beneficial to our economy in the long term and necessary for our nation's public health.

United States Surgeon General Jerome Adams has [said](#) that the current CDC guidelines are “a national stay at home order”

- While the White House has extended social distancing guidance through April, failure to recommend a more formal order needlessly delays recovery.
- The centerpiece of the public health response to COVID-19 is social distancing whose primary goal is to reduce asymptomatic transmission.

Social Distancing Preserves the Economy and Saves Lives

- Evidence overwhelmingly suggests that our economy would be much better off if we take strong measures to limit spread of the virus.
- Evidence from the 1918-1920 influenza pandemic in the United States shows that those cities that put social distancing measures in place more swiftly and for longer periods both lowered mortality and did better economically in the intermediate term.
- A University of Chicago [survey](#) of a panel of economists found that a majority of the panel strongly agreed with the following statement: “[a]bandoning severe lockdowns at a time when the likelihood of a resurgence in infections remains high will lead to greater total economic damage than sustaining the lockdowns to eliminate the resurgence risk,” 57 percent of the panel strongly agreed, 32 percent agreed, 11 percent were uncertain, and none disagreed.

Nine states still have not closed essential businesses or issued stay-at-home orders. The New York Times recent illustrated the [uneven travel behavior of Americans](#) in different counties. This begs the point that the actions of a few states' officials will have a resounding effect on the nation as a whole since state borders remain open and crossable. While one state may successfully shut down citizen contact, another continues to allow the public free roam on

beaches, highways, and in other public spaces. This could have dire circumstances as individuals from one state spread the virus in a state that may have only just lifted stay-at-home orders early this summer. The uncertainty this will cause to markets, the inability of business to successfully hire back up, if at all, and the toll on morale for American workers and consumers alike.

Congress has the solemn responsibility as America's representatives to know why this administration refuses this action.

As part of this guidance CAP recommends the following:

- Call for the Trump administration to provide a guidance on a national stay-at-home order for at least 45 days starting April 5th;
- Robust ramping up of testing, monitoring, and virus surveillance;
- Congress also has a role in not only urging the White House/CDC/states to take action but to provide additional direct relief to families, communities/states, and small businesses to cushion the economic impact of this necessary public health step. As such, additional Congressional action beyond the CARES Act should include:
 - Extension of unemployment insurance, direct payments to families, paid leave, and other measures to provide an economic cushion – with gaps in previous programs filled;
 - Hazard pay and worker protections for “essential” workers during this stay-at-home order;
 - Increased assistance for small business to handle a longer than anticipated quarantine;
 - Increased assistance to states and communities to prevent revenue shortfalls from impeding the public health response or requiring cutbacks on key public services.

While the House and Senate have continued to take their role and responsibility seriously by passing the CARES Act and earlier COVID-19 related legislation, it is now also time for them to help fill the gap created by President Trump and his administration. Americans lives depend on it.