

# Warren calls for investigation of Trump administration's COVID-19 response

United States Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) and nine of her Senate colleagues today called for investigations into the Trump Administration's coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) response, including whether political expediency rather than the country's urgent public health needs has driven the Trump Administration's distribution of life-saving medical supplies and equipment and other key public health and economic decisions. Senators Tom Udall (D-N.M.), Edward J. Markey (D-Mass.), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.), Jeff Merkley (D-Ore.), Ron Wyden (D-Ore.), Kamala Harris (D-Calif.), Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-R.I.), and Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.) joined Senator Warren in her letter to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)'s Offices of the Inspector General. Senators Warren, Blumenthal and Markey also called for the Pandemic Response Accountability Committee (PRAC), the new entity established by the CARES Act and given broad authority to oversee the COVID-19 response, to investigate the partisan and political nature of the White House's actions.

The Trump administration has been unable to deliver urgently-needed medical supplies, including personal protective equipment (PPE) and ventilators, and has created confusion and distress among states by seizing equipment orders and providing little transparency about decision-making. The Trump Administration appears to have made decisions about distributing life-saving supplies based on the electoral concerns of President Trump and his political allies rather than the most urgent public health needs. The senators also

raised concerns about Jared Kushner's involvement in Project Airbridge and evidence he may have fast-tracked shipments at the requests of donors and other friends.

"This confusion has been exacerbated by President Trump's public statements suggesting that governors' political support for his administration could influence how much support they receive from the federal government," wrote the lawmakers in their letter to HHS and FEMA Inspectors General. "This obfuscation underscores the need for clarity as to how decisions regarding the seizure and redistribution of supplies are being made, and whether or not they are tainted with political interference."

In their letter to the PRAC, Senators Warren, Blumenthal, and Markey also raised additional concerns regarding reports that (1) the Trump Administration may have delayed payments to American taxpayers in order to attach President Trump's name to their checks, solely for either vanity or political benefit; and (2) President Trump inserted crass political propaganda into his public briefings, which, if created during employee work hours, could be in violation of campaign laws, like the Hatch Act.

"(T)hese incidents appear to indicate that the Trump Administration has infused political and partisan interests into its response to both the public health and economic crises," Senators Warren, Blumenthal, and Markey wrote in their letter to PRAC. "Americans should not have to wonder whether their lives are being put at risk by the President's concern for his political prospects amidst a public health and economic calamity."

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Since the beginning of the coronavirus outbreak, Senator Warren has pressed the Trump Administration to respond

effectively to deliver the robust set of resources needed to address this public health emergency. Senator Warren's calls for the PRAC and HHS and FEMA Inspectors General investigations today follow numerous letters urging the Trump Administration to establish a clear chain of command following the Trump administration's handling of the Diamond Princess cruise ship evacuation; a March 9th letter raising concerns President Trump has used his press conferences to spread misinformation; and her March 11th letter urging Vice President Pence to protect the coronavirus response from political interference.

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