

JIMMY PANETTA
20TH DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

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March 17, 2020

Governor Gavin Newsom
1303 10th Street, Suite 1173
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Newsom,

I commend the diligence of your Administration in working to stem the spread of the novel coronavirus. As you continue your efforts to mitigate the adverse impacts of this public health emergency, I urge you to activate National Guard personnel to help respond to and alleviate food insecurity across the state.

I am deeply concerned that, as a result of necessary statewide social distancing policies, the incidence of hunger will increase, particularly in low-income and minority communities. Under normal circumstances, local food banks are able to organize volunteers to provide critical food packaging and delivery services. Unfortunately, while food banks are taking every measure possible to provide consistent services through the duration of this emergency, they simply do not have enough volunteers to serve the population at need. Many regular food bank volunteers are older than 65 years and therefore unable to provide services as they stay safe in their homes. At the same time, the need for food assistance is rising each day.

The National Guard can provide necessary relief to address both food packing and food distribution needs in the coming days and weeks. The governors of Florida, Iowa, Louisiana, New York, Rhode Island, and Washington have all activated components of their Army and Air National Guard. In this time of emergency, the National Guard Bureau could serve as a critical tool to help mitigate the public health emergency in California as well.

In my district on central coast of California, the Second Harvest Food Bank Santa Cruz County successfully partnered with the National Guard following the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake. While the novel coronavirus emergency presents different challenges compared to an earthquake or other natural disaster, it nevertheless requires the immediate activation of local, state, and federal resources to serve the most vulnerable populations.

As you work to dedicate resources to address the novel coronavirus emergency, I request that you immediately utilize the National Guard and any other entities that could help provide food and nutrition to vulnerable populations across the state. I look forward to working together to mitigate the impacts of this public health crisis.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'J. Panetta', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Jimmy Panetta
Member of Congress