

CONGRESSMAN

# Jimmy Panetta

PROUDLY REPRESENTING THE 20TH DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

Dear Community Member,

As we continue to fight the COVID-19 pandemic, it remains a serious health crisis that is having a significant impact on our communities, economy, and country. In response, our government is taking decisive steps with a decentralized strategy that is locally executed, state mandated, and federally funded. As a member of the United States Congress, I am fighting to secure federal resources to bolster effective public health responses and protect our community members' health, economic security, and well-being on the central coast of California.

## **Fighting for Federal Funding:**

Today, I voted for and Congress passed the third bipartisan bill in as many weeks to provide extensive federal funding to fight the COVID-19 pandemic. The [Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security \(CARES\) Act](#) includes expanded unemployment insurance, direct payments to workers, and payroll and rent assistance to small businesses. The bill provides funding for small businesses and for large industries with many employees to stay afloat, but mandates strict oversight procedures to protect those workers. The legislation further funds resources for those on the frontlines of this pandemic by ensuring that our health care workers have the equipment required to execute their jobs safely and effectively. The President then immediately signed the bill into law late this afternoon. Read more about the bill [here](#).



*Congressman Panetta [speaking](#) during debate before the House vote on the CARES Act*

The first bill we passed was the bipartisan [Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations Act](#), an emergency response funding package totaling \$8.3 billion. The legislation commits more than \$3 billion to the development of treatments and a vaccine for COVID-19, that will be available to all and prevent price gouging. The bill also provides \$2.2 billion in prevention, preparedness, and response measures, including nearly \$1 billion to help state and local health systems. It helps families by extending telemedicine services regardless of where they live and supports small businesses with billions in low-interest Small Business Administration (SBA) loans to those affected.

The second bill we passed was the [Families First Coronavirus Response Act](#). This legislation ensures free coronavirus testing for everyone in need of a test, including the uninsured. Our legislation also increases funding for Medicaid to support local and state health systems to provide them with the resources needed to combat this public health emergency. The bill also bolsters families' economic security by providing two weeks of paid sick leave and up to three months of family and medical leave for eligible workers and it enhances Unemployment Insurance. The legislation also supports small businesses by fully reimbursing them for providing leave. For families' food security, our legislation strengthens critical nutrition initiatives including SNAP, student meals, seniors' meals and food banks.

I recently wrote an op-ed about the federal government response to the COVID-19 pandemic for the Monterey Herald. [Please click here to read.](#)

The American people need and deserve a whole-of-government response to keep them and their loved ones safe from the coronavirus epidemic. We in Congress will continue to work relentlessly and in a bipartisan way to respond to this pandemic and ensure that we put families and workers first.

### **Fighting For Our Communities:**

I continue to advocate for our local agriculture industry's needs. I led a [bipartisan letter](#) sent to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo expressing strong concern with the State Department's abrupt decision to suspend visa processing at the U.S. Embassy and consulates in Mexico. My letter urges the State Department to provide guidance on how it will process visas for returning H-2A agriculture workers who are eligible for waivers of the in-person visa interview, extend the availability of such waivers for returning H-2A workers who have been interviewed in the previous 2 to 3 years, and allow new H-2A workers who are ineligible for waivers to request a visa interview under the emergency travel exception only during the duration of this crisis. I will continue to pressure the State Department to reverse its recent decision and instead work to protect our local agriculture industry and our nation's food supply.

I am fighting to expand access to federal food security programs during these trying times. I voted to expand food security in the Families First Coronavirus Response Act. This legislation would suspend CalFresh work requirements during the duration of the public

health crisis, increase funding for The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), and improve child nutrition programs to allow schools and nonprofits to serve children during closures. The bill also includes important provisions for families that cannot physically pick up meals from schools or other food distribution sites. Specifically, the bill establishes a new Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer for families with children who normally rely on school meals so they can purchase food instead. The bill also provides for alternative meal distribution methods, such as mobile delivery, and increases funding for food banks and community organizations tasked with distributing meals.

[I also urged California's Governor, Gavin Newsom,](#) to activate the National Guard to assist our local food banks. I am grateful that he heeded my call and activated these service members to our communities. As our counties shelter in place, food banks are seeing a drastic decrease in volunteers. The National Guard will provide a critical backbone for food banks at this time and help alleviate food insecurity across our state. I saw this firsthand when I participated in the National Guard's visits to the Second Harvest Food Bank in Watsonville and the Food Bank for Monterey County in Salinas, all while maintaining necessary social distance. I am so grateful for their work packaging and delivering food to our community members.



*Congressman Panetta thanks National Guard members activated to the Food Bank of Monterey County in Salinas as they package food for delivery to our vulnerable community members.*

### **Assisting Central Coast Residents Overseas:**

My office is assisting community members and families currently stuck abroad due to the coronavirus. If you or a loved one are struggling to make it home, please take the following steps:

- Register under the U.S. Department of State Smart Traveler Enrollment Program: <https://step.state.gov/step/>
- Contact the State Department to inform them of your situation via the 24-hour hotline:
  - Callers located in the United States and Canada: 1-888-407-4747
  - Callers located overseas: 1-202-501-4444
- Contact my office [here](#).

### **Holding Telephone Town Halls:**

In the past 10 days, I held four town halls on the local and federal response to COVID-19. During these town halls, I, along with medical professionals from Santa Cruz, Monterey, San Benito, and Santa Clara Counties, county officials, and SBA professionals, provided updates about what we are doing to protect and take care of our communities and answered your questions. If you missed them, you can listen to them at the links below.

- March 19, 2020: [Telephone Town Hall Audio](#)
- March 20, 2020: [Telephone Town Hall Audio](#)
- March 24, 2020: [Telephone Town Hall Audio](#)
- March 25, 2020: [Telephone Town Hall Audio](#)





*Congressman Panetta speaking with community members about federal and local resources and response to the COVID-19 pandemic*

### **Abiding by Shelter-In-Place Orders and Staying Safe:**

It is important that we adhere to the Shelter in Place orders made by our counties' health officers and the statewide Stay Home Order. You are allowed to go outside to take care of pets, let the kids run around, go on a walk, and just get outside as long as you do not congregate in a group and maintain at least six feet of distance between you and other people.

For more information, click here:

- Monterey County: [Frequently Asked Questions about Shelter in Place Order](#)
  - [En Español](#)
- San Benito County: [Stay At Home Frequently Asked Questions](#)
  - [En Español](#)
- Santa Clara County: [Frequently Asked Questions Regarding New Order Directing Individuals to Shelter at Home](#)
  - [En Español](#)
- Santa Cruz County: [What Does it Mean to Shelter in Place](#)
  - [En Español](#)

If you are experiencing symptoms of coronavirus, you should contact your doctor immediately. Be sure to call ahead so your health care provider can take steps to reduce your risk of infecting others. If you do not have a primary care physician, [you should contact your county health department](#).

I want to stress the importance of social distancing during this crisis. Many people, particularly young people, do not exhibit symptoms of coronavirus but can still spread the virus. I urge everyone to be responsible and limit physical interactions in order to slow the rate of infection and help us all stay safe.

**Continuing to Fight for You:**

Please do not hesitate to [reach out](#) to my office for any federal assistance, our staff is available and ready to help you. You can also find information about [federal and local resources](#) on my [website](#).

We in the U.S. Congress acted quickly and decisively, in a bipartisan manner, for the health, safety, and financial security of our constituents all across this nation. However, I understand that the work is far from done in this battle against this bruising pandemic. As your federal representative, I will continue to fight to ensure that Congress lives up to its responsibilities during this tough time. Together as a Congress and as a nation, we will overcome this outbreak, protect the health of our people, and do what is necessary to safeguard the future of our communities, economy, and country.

Please know that I continue to closely monitor this public health crisis and will keep our community apprised of any necessary information. For frequent updates, please follow me on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#). If you have any immediate questions or concerns that I or my staff can help you with, please feel free to call my Congressional offices in Salinas, Santa Cruz, or Washington, D.C. or contact me through my [website](#). Please do not hesitate to reach out and let me know how I can continue to best serve you.

Sincerely,

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

JIMMY PANETTA  
Member of Congress