

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 21, 2020

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

The Honorable Mark Esper
Secretary
Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

The Honorable Peter T. Gaynor
Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C Street SW
Washington, DC 20024-2523

Dear Mr. President, Secretary Esper, and Administrator Gaynor:

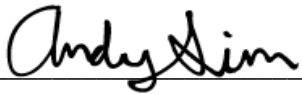
As members of New Jersey's Congressional delegation, we write with firm support of the New Jersey National Guard members and their tireless efforts during the COVID-19 crisis. Since the pandemic began, more than a thousand of these professionals have put their lives on the line in our state, working every day to help New Jerseyans fight back against this virus. New Jersey still needs their help, and we ask that you grant Governor Murphy's May 18th request for this vital extension.

We also ask you to consider the national impact if the appropriate Title 32 status is not extended beyond June 24th for many of these critically needed National Guard professionals. As many states are beginning the early phases of re-opening over the next several weeks, many Guard members would have to self-quarantine for two weeks in advance of their June 24th deadline. Due to this necessary safety measure, states would likely lose this vital National Guard workforce that is critical to supporting services needed to help prevent a second wave of COVID-19: additional testing and rapid expansion of contact tracing.

Across the country, more than 46,000 Air and Army National Guard professionals have been on the front lines of this COVID-19 pandemic, fighting against an invisible enemy. This has been the largest long-term domestic deployment of our National Guard since Hurricane Katrina. Many of them have been on the front lines since early March and are currently serving in all 50 states, three territories and the District of Columbia. Their service has come with increased personal risk with more than 1,000 Guardsmen and women being diagnosed with COVID-19. Thus, we write to also raise our concerns over a recent report indicating that thousands of Guard members may not receive their hard-earned retirement or education benefits if their deployments fall even one day short of the 90-day service requirement. In recognition of their service during these difficult times, we urge you to take steps to ensure that a bureaucratic loophole does not prevent our Guard members from receiving their early retirement credit and education benefits under the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

We stand ready to work with you and your team to ensure that our National Guard professionals are fully supported during and after this pandemic and receive the benefits they have earned.

Sincerely,



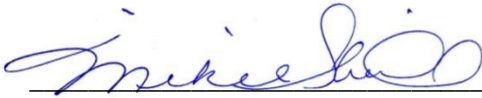
Andy Kim
Member of Congress



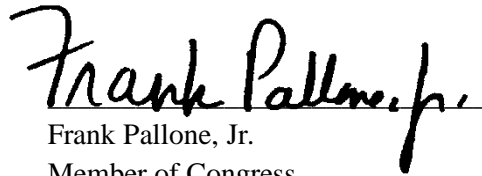
Robert Menendez
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Mikie Sherrill
Member of Congress



Frank Pallone, Jr.
Member of Congress



Bonnie Watson Coleman
Member of Congress



Bill Pascrell, Jr.
Member of Congress



Donald Norcross
Member of Congress



Albio Sires
Member of Congress



Josh Gottheimer
Member of Congress



Donald M. Payne, Jr.
Member of Congress



Tom Malinowski
Member of Congress



Christopher H. Smith
Member of Congress

/s/

Jefferson Van Drew
Member of Congress