

May 8, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leader McCarthy:

We write as Members who have introduced legislation to establish an independent bipartisan commission to examine the response to the novel coronavirus pandemic to request that you include language establishing such a commission in upcoming relief legislation. As we continue to grapple with the health and economic ramifications of this virus, it is vital that we begin laying the groundwork for an extensive and authoritative study, just as we did in the wake of Pearl Harbor and the September 11th terrorist attacks.

To date, over 70,000 Americans have died as a result of the virus. Even under optimistic projections, many more are likely to die before the virus is contained. We owe it to those who we have lost their lives and their loved ones to provide a full accounting of the national response to the virus--where we succeeded, where we failed, and how we can be better prepared for future pandemics.

There are currently at least four proposals introduced in the House to establish bipartisan commissions.¹ Collectively, they have been cosponsored by 54 Members of Congress, 40 Democrats and 14 Republicans.

While there are important differences in what has been proposed, there are far more commonalities. All propose the establishment of a bipartisan commission with appointments from both parties. All would seek qualified, experienced experts in fields related to the coronavirus response to serve on the commission. All envision a similar scope of study related to the government's preparation and response, at all levels of government, to the pandemic. All would require the issuance of a public report after a term of study of a year or more.

Should the House Leadership determine that inclusion of language establishing an independent bipartisan commission is warranted, we are confident we could work quickly with Members of both parties to reach an agreement. We strongly believe that the establishment of an independent and bipartisan commission comprised of outside experts would complement other oversight efforts by Congress, Inspectors General, and others. Though such a commission, like the 9/11 Commission, will take years to complete its work, a bipartisan and comprehensive review will provide the best chance to give the American people the answers they deserve, and to provide Congress and the Executive Branch with recommendations.

We urge you to start that process now, and stand ready to assist in any way that we can.

¹ H.R. 6548, The National Commission on the COVID-19 Pandemic in the United States Act; H.R. 6455, The COVID-19 Commission Act; H.R. 6440, The Pandemic Rapid Response Act; and H.R. 6429, The National Commission on COVID-19 Act.

Sincerely,



Adam B. Schiff
Member of Congress



Bennie G. Thompson
Member of Congress



Stephanie Murphy
Member of Congress