

ONE HUNDRED ONE NORTH CARSON STREET
CARSON CITY, NEVADA 89701
OFFICE: (775) 684-5670
FAX NO.: (775) 684-5683



555 EAST WASHINGTON AVENUE, SUITE 5100
LAS VEGAS, NEVADA 89101
OFFICE: (702) 486-2500
FAX NO.: (702) 486-2505

Office of Governor Steve Sisolak

September 16, 2020

Vice President Mike Pence
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. Vice President:

I write to you with concern for the health and well-being of Nevadans following the President's campaign events in Nevada over this past weekend wherein he addressed thousands of Nevadans at two rallies that defied both state emergency directives and Federal public health guidelines. Despite recommendations from the President's Administration, and despite local officials in Southern and Northern Nevada reiterating the existing restrictions in the State's emergency directives, the President's campaign knowingly packed thousands of people into two venues to hold public gatherings that are categorized as "high risk" according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). I am respectfully requesting some clarity and explanation from the Task Force for myself and the millions of Nevadans I represent.

Over the past months, I have participated in multiple telephone calls with you and the other leaders of the White House Coronavirus Task Force that are copied on this letter. These calls have provided me and my administration with valuable medical and response advice, as well as insight into the Administration's recommended best practices for confronting the COVID-19 global pandemic. I share the same goal as the President's Administration - to ultimately stop the spread of this deadly virus and to lead this country toward a prosperous recovery. I have listened to and trusted the Task Force throughout this effort, and I have implemented many of the Administration's recommendations.

As you are aware from the weekly Nevada State Profile Reports distributed by the White House, the Administration has made the following recommendations on how to address the COVID-19 spread in Nevada – which has been identified as an elevated risk state in the "red zone" from early July until just last week:

- In red zones, limit the size of social gatherings to 10 or fewer people; in yellow zones, limit social gatherings to 25 or fewer people.

- Always wear a mask outside the home and maintain physical distance.
- Ensure that all business retailers and personal services require masks and can safely socially distance.
- Work with local communities and retailers to deliver effective messages to ensure high usage rates [re: face coverings].
- Encourage individuals that have participated in large social gatherings, birthday parties, and family gatherings to get tested and isolate themselves from older family members and those with comorbidities.

In fact, the August 30th State Report acknowledged encouraging signs of case decline in Nevada from mask requirements and other mitigation efforts, and the White House report recommended to keep these “requirements in place until safely in the green zone.” By any measure, Nevada is not in the “green zone,” despite the recent progress we have made.

Based on this, you can imagine my confusion and utter disbelief over the contradictory and dismissive behavior demonstrated by the President this past weekend when he held two mass gathering events that were not setup to accommodate social distancing and were in direct violation of our State’s emergency directives. This has led to confusion and frustration by not only me but also the millions of Nevadans who have made sacrifices over the previous six months. These Nevadans have personally sacrificed by not having graduation ceremonies, weddings, funerals and other personal and milestone life events while following our state directives – all of which have been supported by the White House and Coronavirus Task Force recommendations - and it was an insult to those Nevadans who sacrificed in the name of public health to have seen these unsafe events unfold in their communities.

The hallmark of Nevada’s response plan is utilizing targeted strategic mitigation measures at the county level using state and local data and assessments to best help slow the spread of COVID-19 within those specific communities. I agree with the CDC recommendations that event planners and officials should collaborate with state and local governments to make adjustments to meet the unique needs and circumstances of the local communities who have done all they could to ensure businesses and visitors follow the state directives. Recommendations that the President does not support or feels entitled to ignore.

At a time when Nevada is focused on mitigating the spread so we can reopen more of our economy, the President’s actions put those plans at risk. Due to our state economy relying so heavily on tourism, we have suffered tremendously as a result of this pandemic. Any setbacks are devastating to our recovery efforts. I respectfully request that the White House Coronavirus Task Force explain to myself and the residents of the State of Nevada how we reconcile the recommendations from this group of the President’s public health experts and his own contradictory actions here in our State.

I am beyond frustrated at the lack of clear, concise, and consistent messaging from the President on how to behave during this public health crisis – particularly in light of the aforementioned

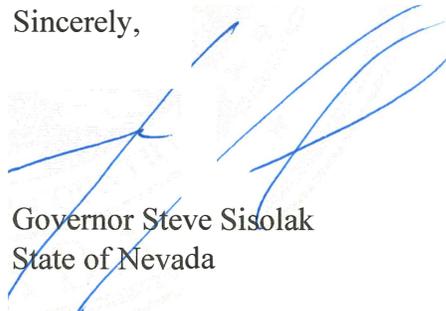
recommendations coming from the White House. The inconsistent policy positions and contradictory actions from the President is confounding my administration, elected local leaders, medical professionals, first responders, National Guardsmen and women, and all others responsible for executing Nevada's response to COVID-19. These Nevadans have been working tirelessly around the clock for six months to slow the spread of this deadly virus and now face a probable increase in contagious spread over the coming weeks due to the President's callous disregard for our emergency directives and mitigation measures. They deserve an explanation as to the President's actions in Nevada and whether the Task Force finds them acceptable.

The State of Nevada and the rest of the nation are fighting to control the spread of COVID-19 through every means at our disposal. Shutting down social and economic activity throughout the State is not sustainable, and ignoring the State's science-based, targeted mitigation strategies by holding indoor and outdoor political rallies with thousands of attendees – mostly unmasked and not socially distanced - is a direct threat to the progress we have made.

Nevadans deserve much better from the Trump administration and with the President's blatant disregard and lack of accountability for his own administration's professional medical advice, I would ask what additional support Nevada can expect to receive from the Federal government to ensure it can effectively combat this deadly virus now that the President has undoubtedly risked an increased spread in two of our communities? I urge the administration to consider both the health and economic consequences of this type of unsanctioned mass gatherings and would appreciate better collaboration in the future.

I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Governor Steve Sisolak
State of Nevada

Cc: Deborah L. Birx, M.D.
Robert R. Redfield, M.D.
Anthony S. Fauci, M.D.