

CYNTHIA AXNE  
3RD DISTRICT, IOWA

COMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL SERVICES  
INVESTOR PROTECTION, ENTREPRENEURSHIP,  
AND CAPITAL MARKETS  
HOUSING, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT  
AND INSURANCE

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE  
COMMODITY EXCHANGES, ENERGY, AND CREDIT  
CONSERVATION AND FORESTRY

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2020

WASHINGTON, DC OFFICE  
330 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515  
(202) 225-5476

DES MOINES OFFICE  
400 EAST COURT AVE., SUITE 346  
DES MOINES, IA 50309  
(515) 400-8180

COUNCIL BLUFFS OFFICE  
501 5TH AVE.  
COUNCIL BLUFFS, IA 51503  
(712) 890-3117

CRESTON OFFICE  
208 WEST TAYLOR  
CRESTON, IA 50801  
(515) 400-8180

The Honorable Robert Wilkie  
Secretary  
Department of Veterans Affairs  
810 Vermont Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20420

Dear Secretary Wilkie:

I am grateful for the efforts that the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has already taken in combatting the spread of the Novel Coronavirus, known as COVID-19. Your Department has provided helpful information on how the VA has been addressing the health care challenges for our veterans across the nation.

COVID-19 continues to rapidly spread across the country, including within our VA systems here in Iowa. Veterans across this nation, many of who meet the definition of high-risk, are not only faced with concern for their health and safety, but also with incredible amounts of uncertainty of their benefits during this time. Additionally, VA staff continue to serve our veterans and need proper protections in place to ensure they can continue to work without undue risk. In light of this, I am requesting additional information to better understand how the VA is both preparing for and mitigating this health crisis. I am offering my assistance in Congress to ensure the VA is able to respond to the needs of our veterans. I know we must work together to provide clarity and certainty to our veterans.

As this global health emergency develops, we must ensure that the VA has the appropriate resources including: supplies, personnel, equipment, and appropriate infrastructure. With multiple states now under emergency declarations, the VA and Congress need to work together to ensure the safety and well-being of veterans and VA staff across the country.

In order to best help you serve our veterans and health care workers, I am seeking the following information that will help our veterans know they are being cared for, as well as highlight any challenges the VA is facing day-to-day in fighting this global pandemic.

I am requesting the following information from the VA:

1. How many COVID-19 tests are available to the VA?
2. What are the barriers preventing you from acquiring more tests, if needed?
3. What are the current supply levels for all VA sites, not just those with current cases, for critical equipment, and including?
  - Beds

- Ventilators
  - Personal Protective Equipment
4. What is the VA's projections on bed-to-person availability?
  5. Does the VA have a contingency plan should state VA's require more hospital beds but are full within their local VA and are unable to transfer patients to local hospitals?

Furthermore, to help combat the uncertainty for veterans, I am requesting information pertaining to aspects of the VA outside of healthcare.

6. Does the VA have telework procedures and guidance in place?
  - a. Are you experiencing any difficulties in helping transition eligible staff to remote work?
  - b. Is any infrastructure or equipment needed to assist workers?
  - c. Will all hotlines and 24/7 care lines be available for use during this time?
7. Are you anticipating any disruption of benefits or services, including:
  - a. Veterans benefits and direct payments
  - b. Non-emergency medical services
  - c. Mental health services
  - d. Decisions on service disability ratings and other personal casework issues

Our Veterans deserve clarity and certainly in this time, and I am ready to assist the Department of Veterans' Affairs with any legislative support you may need to better care for our veterans across this country.

Sincerely,



Cindy Axne  
Member of Congress