

Dear Senator,

The covid-19 pandemic has once again vividly demonstrated how events on the other side of the world can bring suffering and death to Americans. Now it is time to show how hope and healing on the other side of the world can make Americans more secure – as well as express the enduring values of our country.

The wave of infection that broke on America and Europe a few months ago is now beginning to break on the developing world. Many nations have responded effectively with techniques of contact tracing and isolation they employed during the Ebola outbreak of 2015. But the lack of testing may well be hiding a problem far larger than the one being measured. And even modest outbreaks would overwhelm relatively weak health systems, which have few ventilators and limited protective equipment.

The developing world may well be on a precipice of infection, suffering and death. And such a horrible human outcome would also directly endanger America. Epidemiologists fear the large reservoirs of covid-19 in the global South could bounce back to our country in new waves. And this could indefinitely extend our current crisis, at least until an effective vaccine is found and distributed. There is simply no way to defeat this pandemic until it is effectively confronted in developing nations. The world has a single immune system, which is only as strong as its weakest elements.

Two other factors are worth considering. First, many of us have been involved over the years in supporting dramatically successful American efforts to fight global AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis, polio and other diseases. The collapse of health systems, particularly in Africa, could quickly undo many of these gains – squandering the resources and hard work of decades. Anyone who supports PEPFAR, PMI, the Global Fund, or other disease-specific programs also needs to oppose a pandemic that could destroy all the health infrastructure in its path.

Second, in helping developing nations oppose covid-19, the smart thing to do is the right thing to do. Dedicating even a small percentage of the next supplemental to the global fight against this disease would save countless lives. In the religious creeds we represent – and in the shared creed of our country – all human beings are created equal and endowed with certain rights. Even at a time of crisis for our country, this belief in universal human rights and dignity remains an imperative. And from the Marshall Plan to the Peace Corps to PEPFAR, America has never had reason to regret the ambitious application of its defining ideals.

So we, as religious leaders from all 50 states, ask you to support the provision of a robust multi-billion dollar global pandemic response package in the next supplemental to help developing nations fight the advance of covid-19. This funding would have direct and

immediate benefit for the American people, while honoring the belief that all men and women are created in God's image.

Sincerely,

Michael W. Smith & Friends

Pastor Bob Flayhart, Birmingham, AL
Pastor Criss Mitchell, Anchorage, AK
Directional Leader Mark DeYmaz, Little Rock AR
Pastor Paul Artino, Gilbert, AZ
Pastor Mike Contantz, Dana Point, CA
Pastor Jason Janz, Denver, CO
Rabbi Daniel Moss, Norwalk, CT
Pastor Jonathan Mills, Newark, DE
Reverend Dr. Jim Merritt, Orlando, FL
Pastor Dave Allgire, Savannah, GA
Pastor Rick Bundschuh, Koloa, HI
Eric Hanson, Preston IA
Pastor Mark Post, Eagle, ID
Pastor Antonio Rodriguez Penn, Carbondale, IL
Pastor Jim Littlejohn, Carmel, IN
Professor Rick Bartlett, Wichita, KS
Pastor Griff Ray, Georgetown, KY
Pastor Josiah Carey, New Orleans, LA
Rabbi Jen Gubitz, Boston MA
Pastor Scott Valesquez, Germantown, MD
Reverend Jane Field, Portland, ME
Reverend Bradley Vander Waal, Midland MI
Professor Jacqueline Bussie, Moorhead, MN
Rev. Dick Hardy, Springfield, MO
Rev. G. Lance Presley, Jackson, MS
Reverend Marc Stewart, Billings, MT
Pastor Tony & Kimberly Merida, Raleigh, NC
Kathy Schwinden, Fargo, ND
Professor Andrew Wood, Papillion, NE
Pastor Jonathan K. Hopkins, Concord, NH
Pastor Ayn Masker, Woodstown, NJ
Very Reverend Jack Clark Robinson, Albuquerque, NM
Bishop Pat Bumgardner, New York, NY
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Pastor Jon Middendorf, Oklahoma City, OK

Pastor Neil Johnston, Eugene, OR
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Pastor Jeff Backer, Sioux Falls, SD
Pastor Joshua Scott, Nashville, TN
Pastor William Schiel, Tomball, TX
Reverend Monica Hall, Ogden, UT
Reverend Dr. Nancy Wright, South Burlington, VT
Director of Youth and Missions Shawn Kiger, Ruther Glen, VA
Pastor Robert Weyrick, Tacoma, WA
Pastor Robert Griffith, Kenosha, WI
Pastor Billy Williams, Morgantown, WV
Pastor Jeff Maness, Cheyenne WY