

COVID-19 Policy Action Plan Recommendations

Across America, manufacturers are stepping up to help keep our communities and employees safe and healthy. As NAM Board Chair Mike Lamach, Chairman and CEO of Trane Technologies plc, has stated, “Manufacturers have a greater purpose than profits. We are also about protecting our people and our communities.” To help contain the spread of COVID-19, manufacturers are calling on Congress and federal agencies to adopt numerous legislative and regulatory changes. These commonsense measures will be effective not only during this potential health crisis, but also in any future emergencies. Manufacturers are committed to being part of the solution, and these government actions will enable the industry to respond the most effectively.

KEEPING OUR WORKFORCE SAFE AND HEALTHY

- Provide a tax credit for employers who continue to pay workers who are quarantined.
- Provide a tax credit for employers who continue to pay workers during periods that a business is forced to close temporarily.
- Enhance tax deductions for employers who invest in safety equipment, including handwashing stations, respiratory equipment and cleaning products.
- Provide protections to employers under medical privacy laws, the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Equal Opportunity Employment Act to allow businesses to inquire about employee health information relating to COVID-19 to ensure a safe workplace.
- Enact liability protection legislation that will allow businesses to require employees to engage in proper hygiene procedures.
- Enact legislation to ensure employers who implement practices to reduce the risk of COVID-19 in the workplace are protected against frivolous litigation.
- Require the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to maintain a rotating stockpile of up-to-date personal protection equipment, including, but not limited to, respirators.
- Grant the CDC and Food and Drug Administration primary authority to regulate chemicals used to disinfect and sanitize medical and industrial equipment.
- Release CDC guidance related to cleaning processes, plant closures and community quarantines so that businesses can act confidently according to clear rules.
- Provide protections for workers who have exhausted their allotted leave time but who are required (either by government decree or company policy) to comply with CDC recommendations for themselves or their families.

PROTECTING OUR COMMUNITIES

- Purchase and distribute to first responders up-to-date safety gear, including respirators and other protective equipment.
- Implement a protocol for mass distribution of home testing kits for this and future dangerous contagions.
- Appropriate funds to ensure individuals supporting the operation and maintenance of critical infrastructure are treated as first responders with priority for protective equipment.
- Reauthorize the Chemical Facility Anti-Terrorism Standards program to ensure security of biomedical labs, research facilities and high-risk facilities.

PROVIDING ECONOMIC STABILITY

- Encourage banking regulators, such as the Federal Reserve and the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency, to support leniency from financial institutions regarding the credit conditions of small and medium-sized businesses facing short-term challenges, including offering extended grace periods and short-term loans.
- Reject legislation and regulatory actions that would impose price controls on vaccines, which will disrupt research and development of vaccines.
- Enact liability protection to manufacturers of respirators recommended by the CDC to keep health workers safe.
- Convene an interagency task force (including the Departments of Commerce, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security and others as needed) to provide a clear administration policy and procedure to ensure the safety of cargo imported from coronavirus-affected areas into the United States.
- Convene an interagency task force (including the Departments of Commerce, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security and others as needed) to provide a clear administration policy and procedure to ensure the safety of cargo exported from the United States to coronavirus-affected areas.
- Halt sales of crude oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve to ensure that Americans have sufficient resources in the event of a supply disruption.

ENCOURAGING RESILIENT GROWTH IN THE UNITED STATES

- Establish a government fund to promote geographic diversity and resiliency in the manufacturing supply chain.
- Create a new tax credit to support the onshoring of manufacturing activities.
- Enact legislation to allow struggling companies to use tax losses related to health emergencies to offset prior year income.
- Direct the General Services Administration to open the federal government's portfolio of surplus and underutilized real property to companies that onshore.
- Pass legislation to prevent scheduled tax law changes from going into effect that would increase the cost of performing R&D.
- Pass legislation to prevent scheduled tax law changes from going into effect that would increase the cost of obtaining a business loan.

ENCOURAGING LONG-TERM JOB GROWTH

- Accelerate negotiations on a binding “phase two” China trade agreement to improve trade certainty.
- Develop a targeted list of products for which Section 301 tariffs and retaliatory tariffs can be suspended or removed to spur economic growth and job creation.
- Create a White House–led interagency initiative to identify and reduce trade and regulatory barriers to U.S. exports of products used in a pandemic response.
- Work with foreign governments to open procurement opportunities related to critical health care products to U.S. companies.
- Implement temporary duty waivers and expedited entry procedures to facilitate cross-border trade in health care items.
- Extend critical tariff relief programs, such as the Miscellaneous Tariff Bill and the Generalized System of Preferences, to allow import of components used in U.S. manufacturing of coronavirus-needed products.
- Negotiate with other countries to reduce tariffs on products needed for a pandemic response.