

The Washington Post

Democracy Dies in Darkness

We need to replenish our stockpile of PPE immediately

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Regarding the July 9 news article “As cases spike, health-care workers again short on protective equipment”:

Not having been prepared in March and April for problems posed by inadequate quantities and excessive costs of vitally needed masks, gowns, gloves and other personal protective equipment, by now the federal government should have solved the problem. Instead, there is again a shortage of such supplies, not only for hospitals but also for workplaces, prisons, schools and care facilities. This shortage should not be occurring.

The Cares Act passed in March provided \$16 billion for the Strategic National Stockpile. As of June, only \$6.8 billion had been spent to replenish the stockpile. The Defense Production Act has been invoked for ventilators and N95 masks but not for increasing the supply of personal protective equipment to the needed level. It is urgent that the nation acquire the supplies needed for immediate use and rebuild the stockpile.

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A recent report by nine members of Barack Obama's President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology who worked on pandemic issues described how to do so. In the next stimulus bill, Congress should appropriate \$30 billion for federal and state stockpile replenishment and preparedness. Within 30 days of its passage, the Department of Health and Human Services, with input from other federal agencies, governors, mayors and an independent bipartisan advisory group, should submit a detailed spending plan to Congress.

It is past time to start taking the stockpile problem seriously.

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The writers are former members of Barack Obama's President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology and members of the National Academy of Engineering.

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