



Duckworth Discusses COVID-19 Pandemic Response with Metro East Leaders

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) spoke with several Metro East officials in recent days about the federal assistance needed and efforts already underway in the region to address the COVID-19 pandemic. During these discussions, Duckworth spoke about how the bipartisan *CARES Act* stimulus law may help the Metro East, checked in about each stakeholder's response to and issues stemming from the pandemic and asked what additional federal resources might be needed in the months ahead so they can continue supporting their community throughout this public health crisis.

Senator Duckworth spoke with the following Metro East officials:

- Mark Kern (St. Clair County Chairman): Duckworth and Kern discussed the needs of the St. Clair County health department and how the federal and local governments can work together in the COVID-19 response.
- Colonel Joseph Meyer (Vice Command Scott, Air Force Base): Duckworth and Meyer spoke about the base's preparation during the ongoing public health crisis.
- Colonel Bryan Sizemore (United States Army Corps of Engineers, St. Louis District): Duckworth and Sizemore discussed Spring flooding and COVID-19 preparedness in the Metro East region.
- Larry McCulley (President and CEO, Southern Illinois Healthcare Foundation): Duckworth and McCulley discussed the difficulties around procuring personal protective equipment (PPE) as well as capacity concerns for local hospitals.
- Tim Cantwell (Mid America Airport): Duckworth and Cantwell spoke about funding updates through the CARES Act and the airport's role in continuing to support Scott Air Force Base.

Since the COVID-19 public health crisis began, Senator Duckworth has led with a wide range of actions to support middle-class working Americans and help our nation better respond to the pandemic, [including supporting the *Families First Coronavirus Response Act*](#) that's now law, refocusing the Trump Administration's efforts on testing and access to tests. She also [voted for the *Coronavirus Aid Relief and Economic Security \(CARES\) Act*](#), which makes important progress to help Americans address and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. While not perfect, the bipartisan compromise does put workers and their families—not corporations—first by putting cash directly in the pockets of consumers, greatly expanding emergency unemployment insurance and providing immediate relief for small businesses. The *CARES Act* also includes transparent oversight of bailed-out corporations and additional resources for state and local governments—as well as our hospitals and health centers—that are all on the front lines of this crisis.

Duckworth was one of the first Senators to [urge](#) the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to immediately establish clear diagnostic testing procedures, capabilities and production capacity to better mitigate the spread of COVID-19. After [calling on the President to swiftly take action under the *Defense Production Act \(DPA\)* to boost production of live-saving ventilators](#) and other equipment needed to limit the spread of COVID-19, Duckworth helped [introduce new legislation](#) to require him to do so to help save lives. [She also introduced](#) the *COVID-19 Health Care Worker Protection Act* to help keep frontline healthcare workers safe, cosponsored the *Free COVID-19 Testing Act* to expand access to free tests, [helped introduce](#) the comprehensive *COVID-19 RELIEF for Small Businesses Act of 2020* to support small businesses across the country and give them the resources they need to weather this crisis and she helped introduce legislation that [was signed into law](#) to make sure student Veterans and their loved ones receiving benefits through the GI Bill don't lose them as universities move online. Duckworth also [joined her colleagues](#) on the *PAID (Providing Americans Insured Days) Leave Act* to ensure workers can take time off when ill and [helped introduce](#) the *Small Business Debt Relief Act of 2020* to support small businesses affected by the pandemic by relieving certain federal loan payments.

After hundreds of passengers were forced into close quarters for hours to clear federal medical screenings at customs at O'Hare International Airport, Duckworth [joined U.S. Senator Dick Durbin \(D-IL\) in demanding](#) additional federal resources. She [called on Donald Trump to do more to bring back Illinoisans](#) and other Americans stranded abroad as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. She [also called](#) on the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to work together to ensure civilian healthcare workers are trained to use military-issued respirator masks and other personal protective equipment that DOD has made available to civilian healthcare providers. [Duckworth spoke out](#) about Republican attempts to deny funding to healthcare providers that receive Medicaid, thereby making it harder for

vulnerable groups—including people with disabilities, older Americans and survivors of rape and abuse—to access critical services they rely on, like home care assistance or meal delivery programs. Along with Senator Durbin, [she sent a letter](#) to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) calling on the agency to grant the State of Illinois flexibility to expand access to health services and have the flexibility to deliver quality care amid this public health crisis, [which CMS ultimately granted](#). Duckworth [joined a bipartisan group](#) of Senators urging the Trump Administration expand access to telehealth services to rural communities and she [pressed](#) the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for information on a potential shortage of enzymes needed for CDC coronavirus test kits. The Senator is [also seeking information](#) from Secretary of Defense Mark Esper about any proactive steps the Department of Defense is taking to ensure the readiness of National Guard and Reserve units to support local civilian authorities as the pandemic spreads.