



STEPHEN E. SANDHERR, Chief Executive Officer

October 15, 2020

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
Biden for President
1500 Market Street
Philadelphia, PA 19102

Re: Establishing an Effective National Vaccination Distribution Plan

Dear Mr. Vice President:

The commercial construction industry has been one of the relatively few industries to operate throughout much of the country since the onset of the pandemic. It has demonstrated an ability to protect not only construction workers, but also local communities from the coronavirus. However, the threat to both is an ongoing one, and, at any time, public perceptions of the pandemic and whether the country is making progress could lead the public to demand unwise interruptions of the essential work that the construction industry performs.

A thoughtful and comprehensive plan to rollout the ultimately approved vaccines for the coronavirus is necessary to lower that threat, and to ensure that the construction industry can continue to provide support for the other critical sectors of the economy. That is why the Associated General Contractors of America, on behalf of the commercial construction industry, respectfully puts forward the following recommendations for such a plan:

1. Establish and Implement a Nationwide Plan.

One of the clear lessons to come out of the early response to the coronavirus is that the distribution of essential medical supplies should not be completely delegated to the states. Many of our member firms struggled to locate essential personal protective equipment for workers as states competed against each other to stockpile items like masks, hand sanitizer and gloves. Delegating all responsibility for the distribution of vaccines to the states would create many similar problems and undermine efforts to prioritize and provide timely, effective, and consistent vaccinations to the American people.

Instead, the federal government should establish and implement a single federal plan for the nationwide distribution of vaccines, just as it has established and implemented a federal plan for their development. Such a plan would ensure that doses are rationally distributed in a way that maximizes public health and expedites economic recovery. In addition, it would limit the risk of voluminous and conflicting guidelines at the state and local levels of government.

2. Prioritize Distribution of Vaccines to Vulnerable Populations and Essential Workers.

The federal plan should prioritize the rational distribution of vaccinations, based on risk and need. In the process, it should ensure that vaccinations are distributed to the same groups, in the same order, throughout the country. It should also preclude a patchwork of conflicting, confusing and time-consuming priorities that vary from state to state.

The plan should begin with the vulnerable populations. Next, the essential workers at greatest risk of infection, such as health care workers and first responders and other essential workers who cannot work from home, such as construction workers, should quickly follow. While the construction industry has gone to great lengths to protect its workers from the coronavirus, and it has been very largely successful, its workers merit priority over other essential workers who have the option of working remotely.

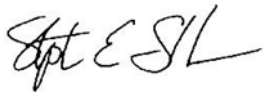
3. Ensure that Vaccination Distributions Do Not Lead to Needless Economic Disruptions.

AGC believes that both the public and public officials will require assurance that the distribution of vaccines will be rational, orderly and relatively quick. Otherwise, they may overreact to the news that vaccines are available. AGC perceives a risk that public officials may demand or require even essential businesses to shut down until the vaccines are widely distributed. Such shutdowns would inflict additional hardships on countless workers and their families. And they would be in complete disregard of the widespread safety protocols that have been put in place to allow essential economic activity to continue, safely, during the pandemic. A thoughtful and comprehensive plan for the nationwide distribution of vaccines would mitigate the risk of such disruptions and any need for federal preemption of state or local laws.

The federal government and the private sector have gone to great lengths to facilitate the development of multiple vaccine candidates that will, hopefully, soon be approved and made available. The tremendous potential for this hard work and innovation to turn the country around will not, however, be realized if the subsequent distribution of vaccines is wholly delegated to state and local governments. There is the real potential that conflicting and confusing priorities at the state and local level will undermine the distribution process. In addition, the advent of the new vaccines may, ironically, lead to more economic disruption if not handled in a manner that inspires confidence. AGC respectfully urges you to establish a nationwide vaccination distribution plan that includes our three recommendations.

Thank you in advance for your consideration. AGC is available to further discuss its suggestions, and the broader lessons the construction industry has learned since the onset of the pandemic, with you and your respective staff experts.

Sincerely,



Stephen E. Sandherr
Chief Executive Officer