

April 2, 2020

Governor Larry Hogan  
Chair  
National Governors Association  
444 North Capitol Street, NW  
Suite 267  
Washington, DC 20001

Governor Andrew Cuomo  
Vice Chair  
National Governors Association  
444 North Capitol Street, NW  
Suite 267  
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Governor Hogan and Governor Cuomo:

The 150,000 members of the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE), applaud the leadership that the nation's governors have displayed during the COVID-19 outbreak, as well as the actions taken by each of you to keep Americans safe. As governors consider the most recent guidance from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), ASCE asks that governors adopt the guidance of March 28, 2020 and **designate engineering as an essential service in not only operating and maintaining critical infrastructure, but also for planned public works projects and the nation's energy grid.**

The moral obligation of licensed engineers is to hold paramount the safety, health and welfare of all individuals as they design and build our nation's infrastructure. However, the nation's infrastructure is at risk if engineers are unable to continue the planning, design, and construction oversight work that is essential for public safety. Critical ongoing construction projects and repairs require inspections and design that engineers must certify and are liable for.

Most recently, ASCE's *2017 Infrastructure Report Card* rated the overall condition of the nation's infrastructure a cumulative grade of "D+." As this current crisis has shown, well-functioning infrastructure provides access to clean water, energy and a free-flowing supply chain, all essential to limit the spread and impact of the pandemic and to mitigate damage and restore functions following other types of disasters. Postponing essential infrastructure investments will only allow infrastructure to further degrade, hindering our ability to recover from this crisis and prevent the next, as well as and ultimately increasing the costs of repair.

Therefore, while ASCE was pleased to see that the updated guidance from CISA regarding essential critical infrastructure workers now includes "*workers who conduct a range of operations and services that are typically essential to continued critical infrastructure viability, including staffing operations centers, maintaining and repairing critical infrastructure, operation call centers, working construction, and performing operational functions, among others,*" we would recommend that governors would expand this list to directly include engineering. Some states, such as California, Illinois, and New York have included exemptions for engineering and construction related personnel, and public construction

activities have been deemed “essential,” and ASCE strongly recommends that other states follow this example.

Engineering work related to buildings that promote public health and safety, or repair and replacement work on our nation’s roads, bridges, transit, and water infrastructure, cannot be postponed without jeopardizing the public. The industry is well-positioned to continue this work while taking steps to protect the workforce and to limit spread of the virus. A survey of civil engineers conducted on March 16 found that more than half of engineering firms and agencies had already implemented work-from-home policies in response to COVID-19. While engineers can perform much of their work remotely, site inspections, permitting and other aspects of their work require physical presence. Fortunately, much of this onsite engineering work can follow strict social distancing rules, in order to ensure the safety of the engineering and construction community and prevent additional spread of COVID-19. Notably, engineers in those municipalities that have moved to online processes for permitting have reported significant benefits in safely allowing essential work to continue.

Civil engineers and the public and private organizations that employ them will continue to play an essential role in inspecting and improving critical infrastructure and other areas of the built environment so important to our daily lives. Again, we thank you for your leadership during this challenging time and urge you to recognize civil engineers as essential, in order to ensure our nation’s infrastructure does not deteriorate further during this difficult time.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "K.N. Gunalan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

K.N. Gunalan, Ph.D, P.E., D.GE, F.ASCE

ASCE President 2020