

Emily Murphy  
Administrator  
U.S. General Services Administration  
1800 F Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20405

Dear Administrator Murphy,

We are former public health officials, public health and medical school deans, and public health and medical experts and researchers. At a moment when the COVID-19 pandemic is rapidly worsening across the country, every additional day that the presidential transition is delayed compromises the incoming administration's ability to respond, and thereby places American lives at risk.

The Presidential Transition Act ensures that the President-elect and Vice President-elect have the resources they need to establish a new government. Most importantly, it guarantees the transition team access to government officials so that it may coordinate with them for the seamless transition of power. The access and resources guaranteed under the Presidential Transition Act only become available once the Administrator of the General Services Administration (GSA) "ascertain[s]" the identity of the "apparent successful candidates" of a presidential election.

In light of the public health crisis facing the nation, it is imperative that you ascertain Joe Biden as President-elect immediately under the Presidential Transition Act. Doing so will enable the incoming Biden team to liaise with key health officials in the Trump Administration and prepare a robust, coordinated response to the pandemic. That coordination is critical to the Biden team's ability to evaluate vaccine development and prepare plans for vaccine distribution and deployment; fully understand state and local capacity to test for, trace and treat COVID-19; develop specific mitigation strategies for businesses, schools, and other gathering spots; assess the national production capacity and supply chains for essential medications, personal protective equipment, and other needed medical supplies and equipment; gauge hospital bed and intensive care unit capacity and staffing; and much more.

Past presidential transitions that have intersected with moments of national adversity, like that during the 2008 financial crisis, have been characterized by order and cooperation between the incoming and outgoing administrations. The GSA admirably played its role in facilitating the transition then. It can and should do so once again.

With the pandemic worsening nationwide and only two months until the transition of power, every day the transition is delayed is a day the country cannot afford. Ensuring a rapid and smooth transition will save American lives. We urge the GSA to make an ascertainment immediately and permit the formal transition process to begin.

Sincerely,

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