

## **Illinois' D.C. delegation unifies around call for federal government to pick up National Guard Costs**

In a rare show of unity, Illinois' two U.S. senators and its 18-member U.S. House delegation on Tuesday called on the White House to provide upfront funding for the state's National Guard members activated to help in the fight against the coronavirus pandemic.

In a letter spearheaded by Democratic Rep. Cheri Bustos of Moline, the delegation asked Defense Secretary Mark Esper to issue more authorizations of National Guard under what's known as Title 32, which provides for upfront federal funding for the Guard's work. Guard units activated in New York, California and Washington have received the Title 32 funding designation.

"Governors, along with their adjutants general, need more of these men and women now, and we must not let accounting gimmicks get in the way," the letter said.

Through Title 32, the letter said, the "activations are federally funded, which would save these states from acute financial burden, standardize the (federal) benefits and entitlements across all those who become activated, and would most importantly keep those soldiers and airmen under their governors' oversight."

Gov. J.B. Pritzker has requested the additional support from the federal government as some members of the state's National Guard have been mobilized to assist with testing and to distribute supplies and deliver food. Guard medical experts are conducting drive-thru coronavirus testing of first responders and medical personnel at a former vehicle emission testing site on the city's Northwest Side.

Bustos said if the Title 32 designation is authorized, it would allow Pritzker to further utilize the "unique capabilities" offered by the National Guard and alleviate financial consequences placed on the state.

Pritzker activated National Guard personnel under the role of "state active duty." But doing so, the letter said, "requires states to stretch their own funds while waiting months for reimbursement."

“The men and women who serve in the National Guard are ready. The governors are ready. We must not let them down,” the letter said.

The letter was signed by the entire Illinois congressional delegation: Democratic Sens. Dick Durbin and Tammy Duckworth as well as Chicago Democratic Reps. Bobby Rush, Jesus “Chuy” Garcia, Danny Davis and Mike Quigley.

Other Democrats on the letter included Reps. Bustos, Dan Lipinski of Western Springs, Robin Kelly of Matteson, Sean Casten of Downers Grove, Raja Krishnamoorthi of Schaumburg, Jan Schakowsky of Evanston, Brad Schneider of Deerfield and Bill Foster and Lauren Underwood of Naperville.

The Republicans signing the letter were Adam Kinzinger of Channahon, Rodney Davis of Taylorville, Mike Bost of Murphysboro, Darin LaHood of Peoria and John Shimkus of Collinsville..