



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Daphne Jordan

Senator Daphne Jordan urges Governor Cuomo to provide immediate COVID-19 testing for military members upon their arrival to New York from a state subject to Governor's quarantine mandate to ensure a safe, prompt return to their families

Senator Daphne Jordan

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Halfmoon, NY – In response to Governor Andrew Cuomo’s recent directive requiring mandatory quarantines for individuals returning from 19 states, New York State Senator Daphne Jordan (R,C,I-Halfmoon) called on Governor Cuomo to provide expedited COVID-19 testing for returning military members upon their immediate arrival in New York to help ensure a safe, prompt return to their families.

On June 24, 2020, Governor Cuomo issued Executive Order 205 mandating quarantine restrictions on travelers arriving in New York from certain states. The Governor’s order required that all travelers entering New York from a state with a positive test rate higher than 10 per 100,000 residents, or higher than a 10 percent test positivity rate, over a seven day rolling average, be required to quarantine for 14 days consistent with State Department of Health regulations for quarantine.

Under the Governor’s order (and updated travel advisory issued Tuesday, July 7, 2020, which added three more states to the originally designated 16) travelers from 19 states – Alabama; Arkansas; Arizona; California; Delaware; Florida; Georgia; Idaho; Iowa; Kansas; Louisiana; Mississippi; North Carolina; Nevada; Oklahoma; South Carolina; Tennessee; Texas, and Utah – must quarantine for 14 days upon their return to New York State.

Mere days after issuance of the Governor's Executive Order, Senator Jordan's office was contacted by Gary Flaherty, Director of Veteran's Services for Columbia County and a highly decorated Vietnam War Veteran. Director Flaherty sought Senator Jordan's assistance in helping secure a waiver from the Executive Order for an Airman stationed in Texas seeking to return to New York State to attend the funeral of his beloved grandfather. The request was ultimately denied by the Cuomo Administration.

To avoid a recurrence of the situation, Senator Jordan wrote the Governor requesting expedited COVID-19 testing for returning military members once their plane arrives in New York State to facilitate the safe, prompt return to their families. Senator Jordan also advocated for the state to assume testing costs.

"The men and women of our military are true heroes who make incredible sacrifices to protect our liberty and defend our nation. Upon their return from training or deployment in another state, New York State must take every possible step to ensure that our military members can return to their families as expeditiously and safely as possible. One way we can facilitate this is by the state providing immediate COVID-19 testing upon their return so they can have reasonable assurance of their safety. This is a common-sense step our state can and should take to ensure that members of our military are reunited with their families as quickly and safely as possible upon their return home," Senator Jordan said.

Many of Senator Jordan's Senate Republican colleagues representing communities and regions across the state co-signed her letter to the Governor, including Senate Republican Leader Rob Ortt; Senator Pam Helming; Senator Patty Ritchie; Senator Michael Ranzenhofer; Senator George Borrello; Senator George Amedore; Senator Betty Little; Senator Rich Funke; Senator Chris Jacobs; Senator Kenneth LaValle and Senator Jim Tedisco, respectively.

The recent quarantine mandate marks the 50th Executive Order that Governor Cuomo has issued since the declaration of New York's COVID-19 state of emergency in early March. Senator Jordan and her Senate Republican colleagues have advanced legislation and advocated for rescinding the Governor's expanded emergency disaster powers to ensure greater checks and balances in New York State government and prevent one-man rule which is antithetical to democracy.

Text of the correspondence from Senator Jordan and her Senate Republican colleagues to the Governor is pasted below, and a pdf copy of the letter is attached with this news release.

July 7, 2020

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo

Governor of New York State

State Capitol Building

Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo:

We write concerning your recently issued Executive Order No. 205: "Quarantine Restrictions on Travelers Arriving in New York" and call attention to your mandate's real-world impact on the courageous men and women of our military returning home from training or the performance of their official duties.

Your Executive Order No. 205 mandates that anyone entering New York from one of 16 designated states (Alabama; Arkansas; Arizona; California; Florida; Georgia; Iowa;

Idaho; Louisiana; Mississippi; North Carolina; Nevada; South Carolina; Tennessee; Texas and Utah, respectively) to quarantine for 14 days unless taking part or engaging in responsibilities as a first responder/essential worker upon their entry or return to New York (or meet some other exemption, i.e., if the individual were in one of those states for less than 24 hours).

Thus, as mandated by your Executive Order, National Guard troops from New York State taking part in military training in South Carolina that return home must quarantine unless they are continuing National Guard duties while in New York or are in some other way an “essential worker” in their regular jobs.

The reality of your quarantine requirement is causing undue hardship for members of our military and their families. Case in point, an Airman hailing from the 43rd Senate District and stationed in Texas was recently denied an opportunity by your administration to return to New York for his beloved grandfather’s funeral in Upstate due to your Executive Order.

After long, grueling training periods away from their families, New York’s patriots deserve to be welcomed back to civilian and professional life, not sequestered into a mandatory 14-day quarantine because they trained in a certain state. As you will recall, at the height of New York’s COVID crisis, which our National Guard so bravely and effectively responded to, our state had three times the rate of Coronavirus cases as the threshold set for your recent travel quarantine. Without question, the men and women of our military deserve the same freedoms as all New Yorkers and the state should take every appropriate step to ensure their safe, timely re-entry.

Accordingly, we call upon your administration to immediately begin COVID-19 testing for every military troop transport plane when it lands in New York State and provide for expedited results.

As you have often alluded to during your press conferences, New York has emerged as a leader in testing capacity, so the State Department of Health should already have the necessary supplies ready to test returning military members immediately upon their arrival. As your quarantine mandate was a state order, New York State should, of course, pick up all costs associated with testing or any lost work.

Thank you in advance for your attention to our request made on behalf of the courageous men and women of America's armed forces who are returning home to New York State.

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