



3/16 Telephone Town Hall Transcript

Lauren Bloom:

Good evening and welcome to Congresswoman Porter's telephone town hall, which will provide information on the novel Coronavirus or COVID-19. My name is Lauren Bloom and I'm Congresswoman Porter's district director. I will be your host for tonight's event. Before we get started, please write down the following number in case you are disconnected from the call and want to rejoin. It is 855-962-1016. If you would like to ask a question this evening, it's very easy. Just press star three on your phone and one of our staff will ask your name, zip code, and question.

Lauren Bloom:

If you're connected through the [inaudible 00:00:52] online streaming format, you may also ask a question directly through that link. Please note we are expecting a high volume of calls and we would like to get through as many of our questions as possible. While we welcome everyone's participation, we will prioritize questions from our residents of California's 45th district. If your question is chosen, please ask your question as briefly as possible when you're live on the line. A chime will sound when you must finish your question.

Lauren Bloom:

It is now my great pleasure to introduce Congresswoman Porter who recently secured a commitment from CDC director Robert Redfield guaranteeing that costs would no longer be a barrier for those who need to be tested for COVID-19. She continues to lead the charge in holding this administration accountable and keeping our Orange County families safe. Please welcome Congresswoman Porter.

Congresswoman Porter:

Thank you to everyone who has joined us tonight for this town hall. I appreciate your understanding that we just cannot gather physically right now. We all need to follow public health guidance today, tomorrow, and in the upcoming weeks. I wanted to talk and listen to you tonight because I know there's a lot of fear and worry. I want to give you accurate information, answer your questions, and build a sense of community at this time. So I'm here today to listen to you, to learn more about how I can support you in Orange County, and to help you find the answers that you need. Please know I am monitoring every aspect of this situation. I've been fighting to get the administration to use its existing legal authority to make healthcare more affordable and accessible. I'm working to support our teachers and our students and to help small businesses who are struggling.

Congresswoman Porter:

Two weeks ago, January 28th, I wrote a letter to the director of the CDC, Dr. Robert Redfield, demanding that he cover the cost of diagnostic testing for Americans who needed to be tested and last week in a committee on oversight and reform hearing, Dr. Redfield finally agreed to cover this care. I'm following up with him to make sure that he keeps that promise that he made under oath to the American people. I also recently wrote to the FDA asking that they make it easier for labs in academic medical centers, places like the University of California Irvine and other UC schools to get clinical certification to run tests. I joined my colleagues in a congressional Asian Pacific Islander Caucus to oppose xenophobic behaviors based on the origin of the disease. And most recently, I voted for funding for small business, research and development, and vaccines.

Congresswoman Porter:



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Then on Saturday, very, very early in the morning, about 1:00 AM, I voted for the Families First Act, which expanded paid sick leave and provided one billion dollars in food assistance and expanded unemployment. It also provides for free testing for those who need it regardless of insurance coverage. I'm looking forward to hearing your suggestions and to continuing to do what we can to slow and stop the spread of Coronavirus. Your ideas, the letters you send, the calls you make, they really inform my work and the ideas that I take with me to Washington, and right now more than ever, I need to hear from you.

Congresswoman Porter:

I'm delighted tonight to be joined by Dr. Andrew Noymer from the University of California Irvine. He is an expert in disease prevention. I want to thank Dr. Noymer for joining us to provide public health expertise and to help answer your questions. Thank you, everyone, for joining me tonight. Please know that my office is always here to assist you with any questions you might have. With that, I'm going to turn it over to Professor Noymer to give us some more information and background on public health measures and this virus.

Dr. Andrew Noymer:

Thank you very much, Congresswoman Porter. It's a pleasure to speak to you all. Let me just give you a brief introduction of myself. My name's Andrew Noymer. I'm an associate professor of public health at UC Irvine. I'm an expert on pandemics. I've studied pandemics my entire academic career. I am a tenured faculty member at UC Irvine. I am not here representing the university as a spokesperson of the university, but I am studying disease in my job at UC Irvine. I have no financial or other conflicts of interest and I am a nonpartisan expert.

Dr. Andrew Noymer:

This is a fast moving situation. We are recording this and going out live on Monday the 16th of March 2020. If you are listening to this on a tape or on a retrieval system in the future, please know that everything we say is accurate as of our best knowledge on the 16th of March 2020 and it is a very fluid, fast moving situation. What we say may be out of date in the future.

Dr. Andrew Noymer:

I'd just like to say a few words about social distancing and then I'm looking forward to answering your questions on the call in. There's a metaphor I've been using to describe what we need to be doing, and that is a glass of milk represents all of society. If you add some drops of food coloring to that milk, they'll eventually mix through the milk and turn the milk let's say pink if they were red food coloring. We want to slow down that process as much as possible, because we don't want everyone who will eventually get this to be going to the hospital all at the same time. That's called flattening the curve. My metaphor is a glass of milk. Glass of milk is society. The Coronavirus is the food coloring. And the things we do in our everyday life is like a stick stirring the milk.

Dr. Andrew Noymer:

Going to a concert, going to a movie, going to a play, going to the supermarket to get fresh groceries every afternoon, going to school, going to work. All of these things that we normally take for granted are stirring the milk. And we want to stop stirring as much as possible, because doing that will change the rules of the game for the virus and make the milk just a white glass of milk with some red streaks in it, and that's what we want instead of a milk glass that's turned all pink. We need to make some temporary doable sacrifices in order to not stir the milk. And I'm sure we're going to be talking



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in more specificity about what those are, but social distancing, I'm sure everyone's heard about it at least a little bit by now.

Dr. Andrew Noymer:

Social distancing means not stirring the milk. It's something that we really have to do. This is our generation's moment to come together and do what's right by society. This is going to be weeks and potentially longer, so this is not a several day thing. It's going to take discipline on everyone's part. That's all I have to say by introduction.

Lauren Bloom:

Thank you, Professor Noymer. I would like to introduce myself again. My name is Lauren Bloom. I'm Congresswoman Porter's district director. For those of us just joining the call, I would like to remind people if you have a question to just press star three on your phone and one of our staff will ask your name, zip code, and question. I would like to take the first question, which is from our portal on [inaudible 00:08:55] online. This question is from Jessica. "What is the current count in Irvine? Has it been growing?"

Congresswoman Porter:

We don't have a specific count for Irvine, but we do have a county wide count and that's probably more helpful actually given that people do interact across city boundaries. As of today, there are 22 total cases. That number did increase by eight additional people within the last two days, so we are seeing a small uptick, but we probably will see that number continue to grow, although the more that we heed what Professor Noymer told us about social distancing, the more we can control and flatten that number.

Congresswoman Porter:

I would let people know that if you want to keep up to date specifically on Orange County, you can go to their website for Orange County Health Authority. They also host a call. They have a health referral number. It's 1-800-564-8448. And if you visit the website for the Orange County Health Authority, you will be able to keep track of that number. We do know that there were some more cases that were diagnosed today or identified today. As a result of that, South Coast Plaza Mall has shut down and will be shut for the next 14 days. At this point, we don't believe that there's any necessary particular risks from those people. I want to emphasize that shutting the mall down is simply consistent with good social distancing practices. There aren't things at South Coast Plaza that we need for the next week or two. It's not like a grocery store or a pharmacy. So there's no particular risk related to that, it's just part of good social distancing to shut the mall down. So I encourage everyone to monitor Orange County Health Authority. It's the OCHCA webpage. And again, that phone number, that community referral line, 1-800-564-8448.

Lauren Bloom:

I would like to next answer the questions from Melissa. "How long should we have to wait until we have widespread testing available?"

Congresswoman Porter:

We don't have, this is Congresswoman Porter. This was the most commonly asked question on today's house democrat conference call. This is the number one question that we know is on everyone's minds. We do know that the number of tests that are available are expanding and those



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tests are being distributed into additional communities and additional laboratories. So it's ramping up and I'll ask Dr. Noymer to say more about that. But I do want to emphasize something about testing.

Congresswoman Porter:

While nobody who is symptomatic should hesitate in calling their healthcare provider and following the instructions of that provider about whether to come in or not and when and if they need testing, no one should hesitate because of concerns about cost or insurance. Widespread testing of everybody in the population right now is not feasible and we are not going to get there in time to control the disease in that way. That's why social distancing, this physical distancing really matters. If you have symptoms, number one, isolate. Number two, take your temperature. Take ibuprofen if you have one. Do the normal things you would do. Pick up the phone. Call your healthcare provider and follow very carefully their instructions on whether to come in. And if you do go into the hospital, what protocols you need to follow in order to do that. Dr. Noymer?

Dr. Andrew Noymer:

I just wanted to echo that if you're well, if you don't have a fever and you don't have a respiratory illness, then you don't need to be tested. We do need to do a better job on getting tests out in large numbers and the Congresswoman said that she and her colleagues are pushing for that, but right now if you feel fine, I understand that we're all a little anxious, but if we feel fine and we don't have a fever and we don't have a respiratory, a runny nose, sore throat, body aches, we don't need to be tested. Testing is in no way a treatment, it's simply a diagnostic tool. If you're feeling fine-

Congresswoman Porter:

Count your blessings.

Dr. Andrew Noymer:

Exactly. Count your blessings.

Congresswoman Porter:

And this is Congresswoman Porter. I just want to follow up on that a little bit to say that I've been in, I think nine congressional Coronavirus briefings. I went to the very first one back at the end of January. We pushed the CDC to brief us because Orange County had, I believe it was the second case in the state of California was here in Orange County. At each one of those briefings, the science on this virus has been very consistent. What we're hearing from Dr. Fauci, what we're hearing from public health officials, what we're hearing from physicians and immunologists is consistent.

Congresswoman Porter:

What's changing rapidly is our social and community response to this. We still believe and the science has been consistent this entire time that across a community, about 80% of these cases will be very mild and will require no medical treatment at all. Maybe you'll take an ibuprofen. Maybe you'll drink some extra fluids. Maybe you'll stay in bed. But the majority of people who get this will not get seriously ill. The problem is some people who do get it will get very ill and those very ill patients will strain the resources on our medical system. That's why it's important if you feel sick that you isolate, that you call your doctor, and that you follow their instructions about testing.

Lauren Bloom:



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I would then like to ask Vivian's question from the online portal. "If someone living in district 45 is showing symptoms of COVID-19, where can they go locally to be tested?"

Congresswoman Porter:

Okay. Again, this is another question about testing, so I'm going to repeat what I said because the most important messages I have for you tonight are stay home, if you wash your hands and practice good hygiene and follow your healthcare provider's directions if you become sick. All of our medical facilities here in Orange County have access to laboratories, whether that's through the centralized laboratory at the CDC, there are state public health laboratories. And we're working and we already have testing available at some other hospitals. The issue isn't that your particular doctor or hospital may not have the test. It's that if a bunch of basically healthy people who maybe are suffering a little sniffle because of an allergy all flood in to one of our local hospitals and ask to be tested, we will spread this disease because there probably will be one or more people in that waiting room who actually do have COVID-19.

Congresswoman Porter:

So the most important thing to do is any doctor, whether it's your family practice physician, telemedicine, whoever you would normally call when you get sick, that's who you want to call if you're experiencing symptoms. I'm also encouraging people to take some notes. Write down your temperature. That's always a good practice when you're sick. Take your temperature every couple hours. Write it down. Because when you call in, one of the things we're seeing doctors say is, "Okay, you have a slight temperature. Stay home. Keep track of it. If it gets worse, stay back in touch." That's the most important way to think about it. There's no particular medical facility that is better or worse at treating this. The truth is we have excellent, excellent clinical medical care available here in Orange County.

Congresswoman Porter:

I held a conference call a week ago with our hospital administrators, including places like Chalk which is trying to expand capacity to help with adults if necessary. All of our hospitals and doctors' offices are doing excellent planning. But they need our cooperation in following their instructions at this time.

Lauren Bloom:

I would like to now take our call from Assemblywoman Cottie Petrie-Norris.

Cottie Petrie-Norris:

Thank you so much. Thank you so much and thank you, Congresswoman. I also want to say a huge thank you to our doctors, nurses, and first responders who are on the front lines each and every day to help us all stay safe and healthy throughout this crisis. I wanted to first provide just a quick update on what we are doing at the state level to address the COVID-19 crisis. Just today the California legislature passed a one billion dollar package in critical funding to fight COVID-19 all across the state. The funding's going to be used to support more hospitals, more testing, and more medical equipment. And we are also working with urgency on a comprehensive economic stimulus package to compliment the federal package, Congresswoman, that I know that you're working on.

Cottie Petrie-Norris:



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I think that we all know that we need to urgently help the kids who are out of school and missing meals, all the people across our state who are missing work and their paychecks, and the small businesses who are hurting and struggling to survive. Congresswoman, I would love and I know many of my constituents have been asking, I'd love an update if you haven't already provided one on the Families First Act and where that stands in terms of getting passed and implemented.

Congresswoman Porter:

Thank you so much Assembly Member Petrie-Norris. This is a really important example of federal, state, county, and local cooperation, so I really appreciate your being on with us tonight. The house of representatives voted to pass the Families First Act very early in the morning on Saturday morning and I want to walk through just a few key provisions of that bill and then give you an update on its status. The first thing to remember is that the house actually passed an eight billion dollar Coronavirus preparedness appropriations bill two weeks ago. So that was the critical step. That \$8.3 billion passed by the house, passed by the senate, signed by President Trump on March 6th, now 10 days ago. And that was really critical to getting those resources flowing to public health providers, to doctors, to hospitals, all of those resources. That happened 10 days ago and that's already helping us to flatten this curve.

Congresswoman Porter:

This most recent bill, the Families First Act, has a couple of key provisions. I just want to touch on them quickly. One is that it expands paid sick leave. It does not, unfortunately, and I'm very frustrated about this, provide universal paid sick leave. Right now, that bill contains an exemption for employers above \$500. I believe that exemption is wrong and unfair, but that is the only thing that we could get Secretary Mnuchin who negotiated on behalf of President Trump to agree to. So right now this expands paid sick leave. We're very fortunate here in California to already have excellent paid sick leave coverage.

Congresswoman Porter:

The second thing the Families First Act does that I want to touch on is it provides one billion dollars in what we call nutrition assistance. This is going to things like Meals on Wheels for seniors, especially important since the governor has asked that those who are 65 years and older practice home isolation. It also provides additional funding for food assistance for our public schools. For those of you who are in Irvine Unified District, they already rolled out this morning breakfast and lunch available to any students who needs it. There are eight locations. You can learn more at the IUSD website for Irvine, but it's drive up. You can pick up a meal to practice, there's no ... There's social distancing there and very strong hygiene protocols in the preparation of those meals. So we're already seeing that nutrition assistance make a difference.

Congresswoman Porter:

The Families First Act also provides an expansion of unemployment protection, which is going to be more important. We know in the house that we are not done. We did that \$8.3 billion Coronavirus preparedness appropriation. Now we're doing the Families First Act to try to make sure that workers, children, families have that unemployment assistance, that food assistance, and that free testing. That is in the Families First Act. That bill has passed the house a second time this evening because we wanted to make technical corrections.

Congresswoman Porter:



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To be clear, we have been waiting, waiting for the Senate to come back from its weekend recess so that the senate can pass that bill and then the president will sign it into law. I expect that to happen within the next 24 hours if not sooner, but we know in the house that we have more work to do in partnership with our states, our counties, and our localities. So we're continuing to talk about what kinds of assistance would be helpful. We're talking through all kinds of different programs and needs, and your conversations and your comments online are very helpful in my identifying those. So that's a little update on the Families First Act. Should become law hopefully within the next 24 hours, but there's more to come from the house of representatives.

Lauren Bloom:

Thank you, Congresswoman. I would now like to take Timothy Johnson's question. I'm going to ask Timothy to ask the congresswoman his question. Timothy Johnson?

Timothy Johnson:

Yes, I'm on the line. Thank you. Is there a vaccine being tested? And if so, is there a [inaudible 00:23:52]?

Lauren Bloom:

Great, thank you so much for your question.

Dr. Andrew Noymer:

The question is is there a vaccine being tested. There are, so in the long run, a vaccine against this COVID-SARS type two is going to be our best defense against it, the virus. There are some candidate vaccines already being developed and being rushed to test, but I've got a reality check for everyone listening. The vaccine in overwhelmingly likelihood is not going to be the cavalry that comes to save the day. We need to practice social distancing now to flatten the curve. The vaccine could take 12 months. It could take four months before we have a vaccine that you can literally just go to the pharmacy and roll up your sleeve and get.

Dr. Andrew Noymer:

We have a candidate vaccine, but it needs to be tested. There's safety, immunogenicity, and effectiveness testing that needs to be done. It's way too early to predict that these candidate vaccines are going to work. The reality is we cannot depend on the vaccine. If a vaccine becomes available that is safe and effective, you will know about it, believe me. It will be all that you hear about for days and weeks in the news. Until that day comes, we need to practice social distancing. We cannot wait for a vaccine to save the day. It's very unlikely to happen and it will be an incredible blunder if we don't social distance now.

Lauren Bloom:

Thank you, Dr. Noymer. I'm going to ask on that note, Colleen Moynihan, to ask her question. Colleen, you are live.

Colleen Moynihan:

Thank you. My question is realistically, how much longer do you anticipate we'll need to practice social isolation? Or social distancing.



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Dr. Andrew Noymer:

People have been talking about weeks and the answer is we don't know for sure. I realize the uncertainty is maddening, but we don't know for sure. My guess is it's going to be like a second flu season in terms of its duration. The flu season is typically December, January, February, so three months. This is going to be March, April, May. And these infectious diseases tend to work their way through a population in waves. So my best guess at this point is by June 1st we can really start to relax, but before then, I'm really wary to say it's going to be shorter than that. The CDC will offer continuing guidance as we go along. I know people are talking about weeks, but the reality is we really could be looking at March, April, May. So we have to be prepared for the long haul.

Dr. Andrew Noymer:

And again, if the CDC says in the middle of April we can stop this, then you'll certainly hear about it through all the usual channels through which you get your news. But until then, we have to be prepared to really make months long changes potentially.

Congresswoman Porter:

This is Congresswoman Porter. I just want to reiterate what Dr. Noymer said. The most important thing we can do is follow the protocols that we're being given right now. The more that we can flatten the curve now, the shorter this window will have to be. So countries and places that have delayed putting in practices have had a harder time. The more that you can follow protocols now, the better off we're going to be in reducing the rate of transmission and ultimately getting this illness contained. And I just want to emphasize that's what we're going for right now is containment. We're trying to prevent the transmission. Everything we've heard from at the federal level about vaccines is completely consistent with what Dr. Noymer said.

Congresswoman Porter:

Dr. Anthony Fauci, who is a wonderful public health official, he has made very clear that by the time a vaccine is fully developed and tested and distributed, even in the fastest circumstances, a lot of us will already have been either exposed to COVID-19 and have recovered or the disease will be contained. We're going to take care. We're going to handle this another way besides vaccines. The more you listen to what the public health guidance is, the quicker we'll be able to slowly, in using the existing science, be able to slowly relax those social distancing guidelines.

Lauren Bloom:

Great. Thank you so much, Congresswoman. I'm going to now take Mr. David Key's question. David, you should be live.

David Key:

Yes. I have a 95 year old mother in a board and care facility, and I know particularly in Washington state, that's where the majority of the deaths have occurred. What is being done to protect the elderly in these facilities and what are your recommendations?

Lauren Bloom:

Thank you so much, David.

Congresswoman Porter:



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This illness is a challenge in nursing homes, so we have to be extra vigilant about infection prevention and social distancing with regard to nursing homes. Here is just a summary of some of the updated guidance. Nursing homes are to restrict all visitation except for very limited compassionate care situations like end of life. They've restricted all volunteers and non-essential healthcare personnel. So for example, if a nursing home used to have a barbershop, that's been restricted. They've canceled a lot of their group and communal activities. They've moved dining, for instance from communal settings into dining rooms. And they're doing active monitoring of residents for fever and for respiratory symptoms.

Congresswoman Porter:

The centers for Medicare and Medicaid services, they are implementing these new protocols, but as hard as it is, one of the best things you can do right now is do not visit your family at a nursing home. It is really, this disease has a higher fatality rate and a higher rate of severe complications for the elderly. So the best thing we can do is think about nursing homes as kind of a closed community. And it's easier to practice social distancing actually within a nursing home. If it never gets in the door, it won't spread. And so seniors, they're not as mobile, they don't go out as much. If we restrict the visitors, we can actually protect our seniors in this situation.

Lauren Bloom:

Thank you so much, Congresswoman. The next question we will be taking a call from is Ms. Susan Tustin.

Susan:

Hi. This is Susan. I live in Tustin.

Lauren Bloom:

Oh, I apologize.

Susan:

My question is what are the extra services for the elderly, the homeless, those with chronic illnesses at this time?

Congresswoman Porter:

Thank you for your question. A couple of things to know. Most important, those with chronic illnesses, the elderly, extra important for them to practice social distancing. And extra important for those who are in households with those people to practice social distancing and strong hygiene. That's really the first line of defense here. Medicare and the VA for instance, VA also has a very large elderly population. They are implementing stronger use of telehealth. One of the challenges during a crisis like this is how do we continue to provide needed non COVID-19 medical care to this senior population without increasing the risk of transmission.

Congresswoman Porter:

So you're seeing healthcare facilities really begin to separate out wards. They're doing screening. Right now, for instance, if you want to go to the VA, they're going to have you call. They're going to see if they can take care of it by tele health. They're going to triage. Wait a month or two, they're going to ask you to make your appointment then so that when we have people who do have chronic



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illnesses, for example, who do need ongoing care, anything from cancer care to an asthma attack, that they're able to get that acute care or that ongoing chronic care with the lower rate of infection.

Congresswoman Porter:

So there's a number of different things happening there, but we did provide in the Families First Act for an increase in funding to Medicare and so we recognize that Medicare, Medicare services in the states are having to do more, but we're hopeful that there's some potential here to make use of telehealth and to make use of smart health policy to try to get people the healthcare that they continue to need for their everyday conditions without exposing them to the risk of contracting this illness.

Lauren Bloom:

Thank you so much, Congresswoman. I'm going to be taking the next call from Margaret. Margaret, you should be live.

Margaret:

Yes, hello. Given the fact that most of us or many of us may have already been exposed to COVID-19, what is the timing between exposure and first seeing some symptoms?

Lauren Bloom:

Thank you so much.

Dr. Andrew Noymer:

This is Andrew Noymer answering your question. It's thought to be highly variable, but typically five to seven days is what, epidemiologists call that the serial interval. It can be as short as two, we believe, and as long as 14. But five to seven days is the typical serial interval. It's what you asked, the duration between exposure and illness. 14 days, you've heard a lot about 14 day isolation and 14 day quarantine. That's because it doesn't really go beyond 14 days. That's why we want to have people either observed or self-isolate for that long, because that way you can be sure. But if your exposure was 10 or more days ago and you're still not showing any symptoms, it's highly unlikely that you will be getting sick from COVID and it's not shorter than two days.

Dr. Andrew Noymer:

If you think you may have been exposed and you wake up the next morning with a runny nose, it's not COVID. Because it takes at least two days. We think five to seven is more the typical thing. But it's nothing overnight.

Congresswoman Porter:

And I just want to remind everyone, this is a virus. We know that viral illnesses are different. We all know a lot on some basic level about the science of viruses, which is your body's immune system kicks in to battling it. So things like getting enough sleep, good nutrition, good hygiene, resting if you don't feel good. These are all things that are going to help you if you do contract the illness and will help protect you from getting the illness. Many of the cases, like I said, will be and are fairly mild. And that's one of the reasons why the testing for this at least to date has been a two part test. A confirmation of Coronavirus requires two positive tests between that 24 to 48 hour interval.



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Congresswoman Porter:

Some people will get it, will initially fight it off, and then a day later it'll spike back up. That's why we're making sure that they, for confirmed cases, that we're testing in those two windows. So when we talk about test kits, each test kit actually contains what's needed to perform two tests, because it takes two tests to confirm a case of Coronavirus, because again the viral load in your body will ... In the early stages of the disease, your body will battle it off. Your body is producing antibodies to the virus. That's what we want to have happen is we want people to rest and be able to have mild cases, but we need to be trying to, because the illness can be so severe. Some times in young people even. Not so much in children, but people in their 30s and 40s can get serious illness from this.

Congresswoman Porter:

There's no person who is immune from getting this Coronavirus. The only way you're immune from it is if you've already had it. And that's not a good situation to be in. So it's really, again, important to listen to your schools, your public health officials, the governor of California. Governor Newsom is continuing to implement some of the strongest public health measures in the country. And I just want to say one of the hardest things about public health prevention, and maybe Dr. Noymer can comment on this from a historical perspective, but one of the hardest things about public health prevention is if we're successful, in retrospect it will seem like we overreacted. But boy, friends, neighbors in the 45th congressional district, that's the situation we want to be in.

Congresswoman Porter:

We want to be able to look back and think we're so glad that this did not become widespread in our community. So success here is taking these very strong measures and getting ahead of this as much as possible. Professor Noymer, did you want to comment?

Dr. Andrew Noymer:

Well, yes. Absolutely. What we want this to be is Sherlock Holmes's the dog that did not bark. And I know that people will say, "Oh, the public health people, they overreacted." I will gladly be criticized for overreacting if we beat this thing, because the alternative is really something I don't want to think about. We really have no choice other than to socially distance.

Dr. Andrew Noymer:

The reason we have a flu season every winter is because we don't socially distance and we do everything that we normally do, and regular as rain the flu comes in December, January, February. What we need to do is throw the virus a curve ball and become like a society where we just interact with each other less. And then all of a sudden, it's just going to spread less and then we can get on top of the situation. The hospitals can stay open the hospitals can give the high quality of care that every patient needs who has severe symptoms. God forbid you get an appendicitis or break your leg during this time period. You're going to want to have care as well. So we just need to socially distance and I'd rather overreact than under react, but the downside risk is too high to not overreact right now.

Congresswoman Porter:

And this is Congresswoman Porter. I just want to offer a few practical tips for social distancing. I think that's one of the things that for me as a parent of three kids, as somebody who's having to figure out how to translate this concept of social distancing into my everyday life, I'll share just a couple ideas that we're using in our house and Dr. Noymer may have more. But one of them, for example, is we've



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activated the e-book service at the Newport Beach Public Library, which is open to people in California so that we're not going to the library. We're going to see places like libraries move to delivery systems and things like that.

Congresswoman Porter:

We formed a grocery group. Three or four families together, each day someone checks in if we need stuff, and then one of us, or sometimes we skip a day or two, goes to the grocery store, picks up everything, and then we leave it on the front porch for the person and then just Venmo or pay each other. So again, it may not seem like a big thing, but if you go back to that analogy that Dr. Noymer started with that drop, that red drop of food coloring in the milk, it's a big difference if you put in one drop than if you put in four drops. And that's the effect of one person going to the grocery store rather than four people going to the grocery store.

Congresswoman Porter:

We're also doing Face Time play dates with my kids friends. So those are working very well so far in providing a community for my kids with their friends right now during this time.

Dr. Andrew Noymer:

That's a great answer, Congresswoman. All I would add is that social distancing does not mean ... It means physical distancing. So you can call your loved ones and video chat with them if you have that. You can talk to people. And people probably need a lot of talking to, even more than usual. It doesn't mean that we don't have to reach out to our friends and loved ones. It just means we can't always be with them in person when we want to.

Lauren Bloom:

Thank you, Dr. Noymer. And this will be the last question that we're taking for this evening and it's from our portal. Bethany's question is, "What can be done about price gouging happening constantly, especially on Amazon's independent sellers? Is it really legal for them to charge whatever they want taking advantage of vulnerability and staying healthy doesn't seem ethical either way."

Congresswoman Porter:

This is Congresswoman Porter. This is a real concern and a lot of our states' attorney generals are helping us to take action in this regard. We are drafting a letter to Jeff Bezos at Amazon addressing some of these concerns. As you mentioned, it's mostly with regard to third party sellers. The big corporations, what we're seeing in grocery stores has been very consistent pricing and I want to commend all of our retail stores and people like that for doing the right thing in this time. So we're writing a letter to Jeff Bezos. We're pressing on this. We'd like to see the key supplies that hospitals need be provided to hospitals and not be sold on Amazon randomly. That doesn't actually help us get a handle on this to have people in private homes hoarding masks or other things.

Congresswoman Porter:

States are taking action on price gouging and we're pressing at the federal level, we're writing to Jeff Bezos. We're working on this, too. I also want to take a moment to mention, really sadly for me as a consumer protection advocate, today I got my first Coronavirus scam. It came into me by text. It said if I clicked here, I could get a free iPhone 11 to help me stay in touch with my loved ones during this time. Do not click on those things. Be very wary about those scams. Go ahead and report them using the online portal at the Federal Trade Commission or at the state attorney general's office. But we are



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unfortunately seeing some people engage in exploitative conduct during this time both in terms of scamming and price gouging.

Congresswoman Porter:

But if there are critical things that you need that you are unable to afford, please do let our office know so we can specifically follow up on that particular supply or issue or thing that we need. But in general, I would just say retail stores seem to be doing pretty well with this. The key here is going to be diverting supplies of high level personal protective equipment. We call that PPE. We need the really high quality PPE things, like the highest quality masks, the highest quality of antiseptics, those need to be going to populations at risk like nursing homes. They need to be going to hospitals and to doctors' offices. We're asking Amazon to make sure that that's where those things are being directed to rather than third party sellers selling them to individuals who are looking to profiteer at this time.

Congresswoman Porter:

So I want to wrap it up here now and say thank you very much for joining us. This is the first telephone town hall that I've ever done. Those of you who know me know that I really enjoy in person town halls. I've conducted 14 of them. So this is a change for me. This is an example of practicing social distancing right here as a congressperson. And you should know that even in this telephone town hall, we have spaced each other out several feet. We're not clustered around a microphone. This is about changing your everyday habits to protect and prevent getting this illness and others in our community getting this illness. I want to say thank you very much for everyone's thoughtful questions and just as a professor, a real shout out to everyone for keeping their questions brief and so topical so that we were able to get through so many of them.

Congresswoman Porter:

If you would like an answer to your question and we didn't get to you, please call my office after this event. I'm going to give the number a couple of times, but we are there. Please leave a voicemail if we're not able to pick up. That number is 949-668-6600. And when you call, please leave a voicemail with your name, your email address, your zip code, and your question. And if you ever have questions or need assistance with a federal agency, please continue to contact our office. If you're having problems with the VA, social security administration. We're creating here just in our office so you know, we've begun doing a rotating plan scheduling of tele work. So we're limiting the number of people in office at any time. But we're still here to help you.

Congresswoman Porter:

I also just want to provide the two websites that are reliable trustworthy information that you can get. The Center for Disease Control website on this is [Coronavirus.gov](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus). That redirects you to the Centers for Disease Control. And then there's a second website and we'll be publishing these on our social media pages as well. The second website is www.usa.gov/coronavirus. And that site has information about all of the different federal agencies as well as state by state information. So in closing I want to thank Professor Noymer for taking the time to join us tonight and to provide resources. I hope we appreciate the incredible importance of the work that our public health officials, our doctors, our nurses, our frontline providers are doing, and sharing your expertise with us tonight is really appreciated.

Congresswoman Porter:



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I just want to again urge everybody, it's really important to just calmly make changes in how you go about your everyday life to create that social distancing, that physical distance. That's the number one thing we can do is just be reflective. Do I need to leave the house? And this doesn't mean, by the way, you can't sit in your backyard and get some sunshine. I encourage you guys to do that. It's helpful to get a little fresh air. But try to limit the trips to the grocery store to when you really need something. Try to use the phone if you can do that that way. If it's something like a haircut, just grow it out for another week, get a barrette on those bangs. All of those small, they may seem trivial, but those are actually the kinds of changes that are going to really, really flatten this curve and prevent widespread community transmission here in Orange County.

Congresswoman Porter:

So please share if you have more questions or ideas, and please do let us know. We plan to hold these telephone town halls on a very regular basis, probably for the next month at least. And it very well could be for the next couple months depending on how this develops. So thank you everyone for being with me tonight. Very grateful. And again, want to say thank you to our local partners, our school districts, our cities, our county supervisors, our county officials, our state officials, our governor. All of us are in this together and that's how we're going to be able to make a difference. Thank you everyone. Be safe. Wash your hands. And I'll see you in person when we've beaten this pandemic. Have a wonderful evening.