March 22, 2020

The Honorable Greg Abbott  
Governor of Texas  
State Capitol  
P.O. Box 12428  
Austin, TX  78711  
(via e-mail)  

RE: COVID-19 and Essential Services  

Dear Governor Abbott:  

On behalf of almost 500 Texas engineering firms and the nearly 25,000 Texans they employ, the American Council of Engineering Companies of Texas ("ACEC Texas") appreciates your bold leadership during this public health crisis. Your recent executive orders and the proactive steps taken by you, your staff, and your administration have and will continue to help keep us safe.

If you are compelled to issue a statewide order closing all non-essential businesses, as some other states have done, ACEC Texas asks that you designate engineering as an essential service.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security as well as other federal agencies have designated public works, water, wastewater, transportation, energy, communications, and information technology as "critical infrastructure." Engineering firms, in particular, play an essential role in inspecting and improving this critical infrastructure and other areas of the built environment so important to our daily lives.

Furthermore, recent "shelter in place" orders in California, Illinois, and New York, have included exemptions for engineering and construction related personnel, and public construction activities have been deemed "essential."

Our industry joined many organizations that also play an important role in maintaining and protecting the nation’s critical infrastructure in urging the White House to support this principle – that letter is attached.

Again, we thank you for your leadership during this challenging time and urge you to recognize engineering as a critical service.

Sincerely,

Peyton McKnight  
President  

American Council of Engineering Companies  
DESIGNING THE FUTURE OF TEXAS  
1001 Congress Ave., Suite 200 • Austin, Texas 78701 • (512) 474-1474 • Fax (512) 474-1490 • www.acectx.org
March 20, 2020

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW

Dear Mr. President:

As the Administration, Congress and state and local governments continue their tireless work to limit the threat and spread of COVID-19, it is imperative that the industries that build, design and maintain our nation’s critical infrastructure and those that provide the essential labor, materials, and support for the construction industry through roadway safety devices and equipment distribution and maintenance are able to perform the necessary work. We are mindful and appreciate the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency’s Guidance on Essential Critical Infrastructure Workforce and we are seeking further guidance for the infrastructure construction industry.

As such, we join the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in recommending that your administration issue guidance on these orders to clarify “essential infrastructure” and “essential businesses and services.” As the Chamber suggested, we encourage the federal government recommend exemptions for “essential infrastructure” that allows individuals to leave their residence to provide any services or perform any work necessary to the operations and maintenance of “essential infrastructure,” including, but not limited to, public works construction, airport operations, roads and highways, and public transportation.

Public works construction, roads and highways, transportation infrastructure, and the materials used for these projects are critical to our nation’s ability to deliver medical supplies and services, food and goods, and clean water and energy to the American people, especially as we address this pandemic. Our collective members are already going to great lengths and following the recommended public health guidelines to ensure the infrastructure needs of our country continue to be met. Shutting down the ability of our industries to serve our nation and maintain our physical infrastructure will impact the economic viability of the entire nation, not to mention numerous businesses.

Our industries have long been critical to the vitality of our nation and the backbone of our economy. During this critical time in our nation’s history, it is imperative that the construction industry is characterized as an “essential industry” exempted from any current or future mandatory shelter in place orders or quarantines. For our members and the men and women in construction, worker safety and health has always been a top priority. Rest assured it will remain that way as we continue to operate during these trying times.

Sincerely,

American Coal Ash Association
American Concrete Pavement Association
American Concrete Pipe Association
American Concrete Pressure Pipe Association
American Concrete Pumping Association
American Council of Engineering Companies
American Road and Transportation Builders Association
American Traffic Safety Services Association
Associated Builders and Contractors
Associated General Contractors of America
Associated Equipment Distributors
Association of Equipment Manufacturers
Concrete Foundations Association
Concrete Reinforcing Steel Institute
National Asphalt Pavement Association
National Concrete Masonry Association
National Electrical Contractors Association
National Precast Concrete Association
National Ready Mixed Concrete Association
National Stone Sand and Gravel Association
Precast/Prestressed Concrete Institute
Portland Cement Association
Tilt-Up Concrete Association

CC:  The Honorable Steven Mnuchin
     Secretary
     Department of the Treasury

CC:  The Honorable Kevin McAleenan
     Acting Secretary
     Department of Homeland Security

CC:  All Governors