

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 3, 2014

The Honorable Barack H. Obama
President of the United States of America
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Obama:

We write to express our concern for the increasingly severe outbreak of Ebola in West Africa and its implications for public health in the U.S. While we commend your recent decision to send logistical and medical support to the region, this week's diagnosis of a patient sick with the virus in Texas—a frequent destination for traveling Arkansans—is evidence that further steps are needed to protect Arkansans and all Americans.

While it's important to establish appropriate protocols to treat, contain, and defeat the virus in this country, those protocols and the admirable efforts of health officials and workers at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) are, unfortunately, subject to human error. Plus which, ease of movement in today's global economy means that individuals in affected countries could—possibly knowingly—be infected but not yet symptomatic and travel to the U.S., as was the case with the patient now in a Dallas hospital.

We urge you to consider and implement travel restrictions, up to and including a ban on flights from the affected countries. Several African countries and many airlines have already taken such prudent measures. In addition, it may be warranted for the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) to implement additional travel screenings for individuals who have been in the relevant countries within a certain window of time. Further, we urge you to enforce immigration policies under current law to protect our borders and the American people from the threat posed by this virulent disease.

Specifically, section 212(a)(1) of the Immigration and Nationality Act sets forth health-related grounds on which aliens should be considered ineligible for visas or admission to the U.S. The current Ebola epidemic in West Africa would seem to be an appropriate justification to apply such restrictions. Therefore, at a minimum, we request you direct the Department of State to temporarily suspend the thousands of Nonimmigrant Visas already issued to persons from African countries dealing with Ebola.

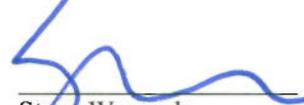
The quality of our hospitals, as well as our talented doctors, is undoubtedly a draw for people with the means and will to come to the U.S.—sometimes because of exposure to Ebola in their own country and in spite of the risk to the health of Americans. But we should not let such risk go unaccounted for and the federal government must make every effort to combat this virus. We look forward to your willingness to work in a bipartisan manner to do so.

Sincerely,


Tom Cotton
Member of Congress


Tim Griffin
Member of Congress


Rick Crawford
Member of Congress


Steve Womack
Member of Congress