

It's Time for the President to Address Our Economic Relaunch

If the president acts carefully and puts the issues squarely, he will succeed, the economy will recover quickly, and he will be invincible in November.

by Conrad Black



It is clear that the time is approaching that will be absolutely decisive for this presidency and for the country's near-term future. The president will have to decide on an economic relaunch plan, and this will make or break him and his opponents.

The vast amount of posturing and accusatory liberties that already surpass what is normal in even the most contentious of election years will be of no account, depending on the outcome of the president's decision of when and how to conduct the United States back to normal life. The Democrats have

advocated a lengthy shutdown, leaving plenty of room to impute to them political as well as public health motives.

Obviously, if the country strangles itself into a profound and lengthy recession, the Democrats' electoral chances improve. The longer such a state of affairs continues, the harder and less relevant it will be to recall President Trump's achievement in generating an immense economic boom and one that profoundly bettered the lot of the lower half of American income-earners, whose real income had stalled for over 15 years.

Dr. Ezekiel Emanuel (brother of Rahm), one of the senior medical advisers of apparent Democratic nominee Joe Biden, has advised an 18-month shutdown to await a vaccine. Of course, this is nonsense. But Biden is calling for mass-testing and intensive and time-consuming research and consultation, obviously stretching for months, before even a very partial reopening of normal activity. And he has joined the inevitable Democratic chorus that this further extension of the present shutdown is necessitated by the administration's complete failure to prepare for such a crisis.

This is a bit rich, even by pre-electoral standards, given that the previous administration had done absolutely nothing to develop a quick test or decentralize the evaluation of test results, and that Biden and almost all senior Democrats blasted the president's suspension of direct flights from China on January 31 and from western Europe on March 11.

The president will announce this week the composition of a task force to recommend and monitor a reactivation strategy. It is clear that the official Democratic position, that the president's negligence is the chief source of the problem and that he has blundered into a public health crisis that can only be successfully addressed by a more severe economic collapse than the country has ever had, is nonsense.

From the start, the Democrats have pounced like fire-breathing rabbits upon any suggestion of calculating when it would be possible to reopen the country as a cynical and dehumanized monetization of the value of life. The implication all along has been that any amount of economic hardship was bearable to spare even a single life. This is such an explosive issue that the administration and the Republican leadership in Congress have been very cautious about when the country could start going back to work and school and normal activity.

The United States has approximately a thousand newly unemployed people for every fatality from the coronavirus. The average age of the deceased is in the upper 70s. All lives are of equal moral value, but the demise at a fairly full age of a retired person is not economically or strategically equivalent to the ruination of the careers and lives of a thousand people in their prime, and everyone knows it. This is the case the president is going to have to make.

The waters are muddied because there will never be the time necessary to develop testing to a point of precision about how many people died *from* the coronavirus as opposed to dying *with* it, and with clarity about the principal cause of death. Nor will it be possible to discover on any practical basis how many people have had the coronavirus but survived it without it being identified as having afflicted them.

There may possibly be time in the balance of April to get some idea of the efficacy of hydroxychloroquine, which the president has emphasized and the Democratic media have ignored, except when they were able to disseminate the myth that someone had died from using it. (It turned out the man had actually self-administered [a very different chemical](#) that is used to clean aquarium fish-tanks). We may also be a little further ahead in being able to deliver a therapy of injected antibodies developed by the 97 percent of people who have successfully fought off the coronavirus.

The president has already slipped about three points in the polls, not a drastic fall, but it indicates that the country wants an economic relaunch plan and may be tiring of the president's rambling and often self-serving performance in his daily press briefings (though they have become a good deal tighter in the last week).

President Trump has accepted that he must decide—Harry Truman's famous assertion that the "buck stops here" with the president. President Trump said he would consult the senior experts in every relevant field, including governors of both parties, but that the decision would be his, and he volunteered that it would be "the most important decision of my life." That is what presidents are elected and paid to do—make the most important decisions that vitally affect the national interest and the lives of everyone in the country.

He acted wisely in bringing in public health experts, to squash the Democratic argument that he was anti-science, and to gain public support for "flattening the curve." He has rightly received credit for the coronavirus fatality estimates having been scaled down by over 95 percent from the original dire predictions. He handled the financial assistance issues well, and now comes the biggest decision of all.

There is not the slightest chance to conduct testing on the scale Biden is calling for in an acceptable time before reopening the economy, even with the Abbott Laboratories' simple test, and Biden and his advisors know that testing on the scale he is calling for is impractical. As we have known all along, we are going to have to live with this disease until the vaccine is developed and distributed. In the meantime, we must reinforce the segregation of immunocompromised people and continue some restrictions on crowds and the proximity of strangers to each other. The therapies, if they really are helpful, as seems likely, must be generously distributed.

The president must remind the country that though it is often a very nasty affliction, something like 99 percent of people with ordinarily robust immune systems survive the coronavirus. The anti-Trump media cannot be allowed to get away with headlining every single future fatality as tantamount to an act of manslaughter by the president. And he should take a leaf from President Nixon's "Silent Majority" address of November 3, 1969, when, after outlining his plan to withdraw American forces while maintaining a non-communist government in Saigon and saying that he believed it would succeed, he added: "If it does succeed, what the critics say now won't matter. If it does not succeed, what I say then won't matter."

The country will hope for President Trump's success—the Democratic leaders may want the pandemic to flare up again, but can't say so, and the people don't. If necessary, tighter controls may be reimposed locally from time to time, but the country must get over the cold terror that has been instilled in it.

If the president acts carefully and puts the issues squarely, he will succeed, the economy will recover quickly, and he will be invincible in November. He knows the gravity of what he must do. If he does it right, the exaggerated fears of disaster that will be expressed by his opponents, one more time and for the greatest stakes of all, will not occur.

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