

United States: Trump in Trouble, Suffers from Foot-in-Mouth Disease

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Ultra-violet light into the body and household disinfectants useful in killing the coronavirus ? School children know more about science than Trump does. Parents keep household disinfectants away from their children. Meanwhile, only one third of workers who applied for unemployment benefits in March received any. Big companies collect loans instead of small business. A failure of the government to deal with the real victims of the economic fallout as well as of the virus itself.

Contents

- [Trump's "Opening Up" the \(...\)](#)
- [Helping Small Businesses \(...\)](#)

Trump has made many stupid remarks in his daily campaign events on TV mischaracterized as informational sessions on the COVID-19 pandemic.

One particularly ignorant and dangerous one from last week has gotten a lot of attention.

He was speaking to scientists and doctors, and said that he had heard that ultra-violet light and household disinfectants were useful in killing the virus. He then said that it might be possible to get that light into the body of infected patients. He also suggested that injecting or ingesting disinfectants could be used to combat the virus.

No one knew what he was talking about in getting light into the body, but his comments on disinfectants drew immediate warnings from doctors and scientists that the suggestion was very dangerous as these are poisons.

The next day, his press secretary said that his comments were "taken out of context" by the media.

The day after that, Trump said that he was just being "sarcastic" to a nasty reporter. His initial remarks were re-broadcasted many times, and his demeanor was clearly of someone making what he thought were important remarks, without a hint of sarcasm, and weren't aimed at any reporter (some in the media say there were no reporters present).

Then, Dr. Deborah Birx, the beleaguered White House's coordinator for its response to the pandemic, said that the president was just "musing" with the doctors and scientists present. This explanation only made Trump look even more foolish.

In spite of the loud warnings against ingesting or injecting disinfectants, many took his suggestions to heart. Some thought that since alcohol is a common disinfectant in hand sanitizers, drinking a lot of whiskey, wine, etc. was a cure, that this would disinfect the body. But the alcohol in such beverages is ethanol. The alcohol in hand sanitizers is isopropyl alcohol, and ingesting it causes

severe gastric distress in small amounts and painful death in larger.

Injecting disinfectants is certain to be fatal.

Right after Trump's remarks, poison control centers reported a spike in calls reporting poisonings from hand sanitizers, bleach, etc. Trump said he had no responsibility if someone died.

Even before these remarks, polls showed Trump's daily shows on TV were hurting him politically. On these shows doctors and scientists were often present, and they had to walk on eggshells not to anger him while distancing themselves from his flat-out wrong comments.

He dominated these shows, and even at times blocked the experts present from answering a reporter's questions. He spent a lot of time attacking reporters who asked questions he didn't want to answer, dogging his responsibility for making the pandemic much worse, blaming others (Democrats, China, the media, immigrants, etc., etc.)

A long article in the New York Times was titled "Some Republicans See Trump Sinking, and Taking Senate With Him. After quoting some party leaders with mild criticisms, the article says, "Privately, other party leaders are less restrained about the political damage they believe Mr. Trump is doing to himself and Republican candidates. One prominent G.O.P. [Republican Party] senator said the nightly sessions were so painful he could not bear watching any longer."

After the comments about the positive effects of putting disinfectants in your body, Trump was pressured into canceling his daily show. He still calls press conferences featuring just himself.

Following those comments, a columnist in the NYT wrote: "President Trump's self assessment has been consistent. 'I'm, like, a very smart person,' he assured voters in 2016.

" 'A very stable genius', he ruled two years later. 'I'm not a doctor' he allowed [when making his disinfection comments], pointing to his skull inside the White House briefing room, 'but I'm like, a person who has a good you-know what.'"

We have become used to Trump dismissing science when it conflicts with his political or economic interests, but now it is clear that he is a complete ignoramus concerning science. School children know more about science than he does. Parents keep household disinfectants away from their children.

Trump's "Opening Up" the Economy

He is pressuring the governors of the states to quickly reopen shut-down sectors of the economy. There are some states that are moving to do that. Others are much more cautious. But states that are trying to do this prematurely are gambling with the risk of once again spreading contagion not only within their territory but to other states.

Scientists say that in order to safely open up businesses, it is necessary to know the extent of the spread of the virus, and who is or has been infected. This requires testing on a mass scale. Once people are found to test positive (and many may show no or mild symptoms) it is necessary to have enough personnel to track others who had close contact with the infected person, and test them also.

Testing is nowhere adequate in the U.S. to do this. Less than one percent of the population has been tested, and there is not yet enough equipment to do the testing at the scale required.

Nowhere are there anything like enough personnel to check those who had close contact with infected persons.

The Trump administration says that it is up to the states to find and buy the equipment necessary to do the testing on the scale required, and that the federal government will not do this.

State governors point out that they don't have the funds, and ask for help from the administration, which has adamantly refused to help fund the states with any of the trillions supposedly to be used to counter the effects of the pandemic. Heads I win, tails you lose.

Mitch McConnell, Trump's leader of the Senate, makes the idiotic proposal that the states should declare bankruptcy to cover their expenses. Presumably, the states could then end funding for education, fire fighters, street repairs, and the other social services necessary if the economy is to get back on its feet, and use the money saved for testing instead.

Another very smart person and genius.

Helping Small Businesses and the Unemployed?

Part of the trillions the federal government has allotted were to go to loans to small businesses. This was sold to the public by the Democrats as a way to help these firms keep paying laid-off workers. That's why it was called the "Paycheck Protection Program". Within days of its start, the money allotted was spent.

Where did it go? Most often not to "paychecks". Another article in the New York Times was titled "Large Companies Take Bailout Aid in Dubious Gains". "Countless small businesses were shut out," the article says, "even as a number of large companies received millions of dollars in aid."

Some of these large companies are chain restaurants. Each restaurant is small, but they are owned by giants like McDonalds, Burger King, etc. Some agreed to return the dough after a public outcry. "But dozens of large but lower-profile companies with financial or legal problems have also received large payouts under the program, according to an analysis of the more than 200 publicly traded companies that have disclosed receiving a total of more than \$750 million in bailout loans," the article says.

"Another dozen or so collected money even though they have recently reported being able to raise large sums through private means. Several others have recently showered top executives with seven-figure pay packages.

"The government isn't disclosing who received aid, leaving it up to individual companies to decide whether to disclose that they obtained loans. That makes a full accounting of the loan program impossible....

"Applicants for loans do not need to provide evidence that they have been harmed by the pandemic. They simply need to certify that 'current economic uncertainty makes this loan request necessary' to support their operations.

"Instead of having the Small Business Administration, which is guaranteeing the loans, decide which companies get funding, the process was essentially outsourced to banks. The banks collect fees for each loan they make but don't have to monitor whether the recipients use the money appropriately [*like guaranteeing "paychecks" for workers*].

“For small business owners shut out of the program, watching big companies collect loans while their applications languish has been infuriating.”

Since the first funds allotted to the “Paycheck Protection Program” quickly ran out, they were augmented in a subsequent bill. Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez was the only Democrat to vote against, citing how the first funds went to companies like the restaurant chains, “and not to mom and pop” enterprises.

Meanwhile, only one third of workers who applied for unemployment benefits in March received any. Since the big upsurge in unemployment applications came in April, we can assume that many millions more have not received any checks. This doesn’t even count the millions who were unable to even file for unemployment do to the system being swamped.

Just one more example of the failure of the government to deal with the real victims of the economic fallout as well as of the virus itself.

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