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Friends:

I hope this finds you and your families healthy and mentally well.

In the following pages, I’d like to outline for you some potential second and third order effects - the “downstream” effects of upstream activities - over the next 12 months of:

* The pandemic
* Other problems originating independently of the pandemic, but having its second and third order effects altered by it

Experts in law, medicine, public policy, construction, information technology, law enforcement, self defense and hospital administration provided much of the feedback that follows. I have done my best to amalgamate their comments into a coherent discussion. You may notice some messaging which contradicts itself in places; such contradictions are inherent in this type of analysis.

I should stress to you – what follows are not predictions. ***These are possibilities***, formulated by people who have spent years in their respective fields who are more sensitive to being prepared for future uncertainties than the average citizen. No one is saying “this is what is going to happen.” They are saying “these things could happen, given the current circumstances and historical data.”

Our job is to process this information and apply it to our lives in a way that is best suited for each person. Let me stipulate now: in the interest of time, I have not covered every conceivable second and third order effect in the coming pages.

I am fond of saying “be prepared for one thing, as it will help you be prepared for all things.” If you were preparing for storm damage, a financial collapse or even large scale civil unrest over the last several months, odds are you were well prepared for the pandemic upon us. Using this pandemic as a real life scenario, citizens can greatly improve their preparedness in the weeks and months ahead by doing this second and third order analysis in their lives and careers to determine what their future steps should be. I encourage you to make the effort.

And as one contributor shared, it is impossible to complete this analysis without discussing politics. I do so not to sway you to one particular political ideology; I do it to help you understand what may be coming so it won’t take you by surprise.

Some of you may find these conclusions disturbing to think about. My friend, fellow prepper, and University of Miami Law alum [Richard Duarte has done a similar analysis](http://www.quickstartsurvival.com/coronavirus-aftermath-health-economic-crisis-ten-things-know/) of the second and third order effects that are rather sobering as well. To give his thoughts the full attention they deserve, I’m not including them below because it’s better if you read them in their entirety, on their own. I highly recommend you do, especially the conclusions at the end of his article, to wit:

***Preparedness is all about replacing confusion and fear, with clarity and purpose.***

We seek clarity and purpose when we do this sort of analysis – not to be fearful, but rather to help us develop both a plan of action and to inoculate our minds from angst over what might happen next.

At the end, I share some food for thought to help calibrate your mind as you move forward in the weeks and months ahead.

**Second and Third Order Effects from the Pandemic**

*With a deteriorating economy, sales and property tax revenues will be hit hard.*

* City, county and state budgets will all experience significant shortfalls leading to:  
  + [Reduced first responder staffing](https://www.dispatch.com/news/20200416/coronavirus-ohio-mayors-say-theyrsquoll-have-to-cut-police-fire-if-they-donrsquot-get-federal-help?fbclid=IwAR0lwbE1saAeuebTsTetQ8nQiVRkQOzj3Ral16gRhsHNlFTWJeeGPZ3sD6Q)
    - “It is suicide for all of us to have to deal with $100 million cut out of a $400 million budget,” Cincinnati Mayor John Cranley said. “It will set cities back for a generation.”
    - Increased response times from first responders
      * Citizens will be “on their own” due to increased response times
  + Reduced salaries for first responders
    - Decreased quality of talent in the first responder labor pool
      * Hiring of lesser quality first responders
      * Decreased quality of first responder services
  + Reduced salaries for government employees
    - Fewer workers willing to take government jobs
    - Current job vacancies not being filled
      * However, this could be offset by the newly unemployed applying for now vacant government jobs created when government employees were not willing to work for lower salaries
  + Closings of city/county summer youth programs, such as camps and swimming pools
    - More youth with free time and fewer activities to keep them occupied
  + Delayed or deferred public works maintenance
    - Water treatment plants may not get upgrades as timely as they did
      * Increased risk of failure of water utility systems, much like we saw October 2018 in Austin, requiring boil water orders
    - Electric grid repairs may not be completed during a time where more people are at home
    - Road repair/improvements may get delayed
  + Reduced services for vulnerable populations
    - Programs for the disabled or low income citizens may see reduced funding
    - Medicaid funding could be reduced
  + School funding reductions
    - School system employees may see salaries and reductions in force (RIFs)
    - Fewer school programs for education and enrichment
  + Efforts to keep jail populations below average
    - [More violent offenders allowed on the street to not take up beds in jail](https://abcnews.go.com/US/alleged-violent-offenders-poised-release-rikers-island-due/story?id=69863436)
  + Public pensions, many of which are already underfunded, [will experience further pain](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/02/business/dealbook/coronavirus-public-pension.html) as fewer tax dollars are available to fund them.
    - Those relying on a public pension – now or in the future – need to be educating themselves on the funding adequacy of their pension. While Texas is in better shape than many states, [many Texas state pensions are still underfunded.](https://comptroller.texas.gov/economy/fiscal-notes/2019/feb/liabilities.php)

*Coronavirus oil shocks – reduced demand for oil because of the economic impacts of the virus - will have significant impacts across the globe, potentially creating shifts in geopolitical power balances.*

* [Oil producing nations](https://www.investopedia.com/investing/worlds-top-oil-producers/) – the U.S., Saudi Arabia, Russia, Canada and China are the top producers – generate significant economic benefits and tax revenues from the energy sector. The crash of oil prices affects poorer producing nations, such as Venezuela and South Sudan, has an amplified effect on their economies.
  + These poorer nations may struggle long term if global planners continue to shift emphasis and resources away from fossil fuels to renewables.
* Developing nations who import oil will benefit from lower prices.
* [From Foreign Policy magazine](https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/04/23/the-coronavirus-oil-shock-is-just-getting-started/):  
  “It is therefore not surprising that counter-shocks to oil prices often trigger political upheaval. The sudden shift in the terms of trade undercuts export revenues, budget stability, and growth prospects. Fiscal crises caused by falling prices limit governments’ room for domestic maneuver and force painful political choices. The dilemma of defaulting on debt owed to foreign creditors and imposing austerity on populations has been the cause of grave political crises, some with serious geopolitical consequences.”
* [Some speculate US banks with large exposure to loans to oil and gas companies](https://www.marketwatch.com/story/you-should-avoid-shares-of-these-banks-with-too-much-oil-and-gas-exposure-2020-03-09) may face trouble if those borrowers “begin to default en masse, because then the banks need to immediately add to loan-loss reserves, which would wipe out profits and lower equity. It could lead banks to suspend share buybacks, stop increasing dividends and even lower dividend payouts.”
* [In states deriving much of their tax revenue from the energy sector](https://www.investopedia.com/financial-edge/0511/top-6-oil-producing-states.aspx), meeting state budget requirements will be challenging.
  + Energy producing states who have not diversified their economies will be harder hit by falling energy prices.
  + These lack of tax revenues will affect funding of roads, schools and essential services in those states

*Access to capital – mortgage loans, vehicle loans, credit cards – may become more challenging, even in low rate environments, creating a cascading effect on auto and home sales.*

* The number of unemployment claims hit nearly 17 million over the last few weeks. The number of Americans applying for the government’s mortgage forbearance program under the COVID-19 relief plan spiked 73% for the week ending April 5 vs. the previous week – jumping from 2.73% to 3.74%, according to data from the Mortgage Bankers Association. For context, the total number of loans in forbearance was just 0.25% for the week of March 2 – an increase of 1,496% in just six weeks, with the number of borrowers in forbearance now topping 2 million.
* Realizing that we are on the verge of another massive wave of mortgage defaults, mortgage lenders all over the nation are rapidly tightening standards. JPMorgan, the country’s largest lender by assets, [raised borrowing standards](https://www.cnbc.com/2020/04/11/jpmorgan-chase-to-raise-mortgage-borrowing-standards-as-economic-outlook-darkens.html) for most new home loans as the bank “moves to mitigate lending risk stemming from the novel coronavirus disruption.” Customers applying for a new mortgage will need a credit score of at least 700, and will be required to make a down payment equal to 20% of the home’s value.
  + Americans may start having trouble getting loans to buy homes, vehicles or anything else.
  + Asset prices for those things purchased on credit are a second order function of the availability of credit. The more affordable and available loans are, the higher asset prices (like homes and cars) go up. Conversely, when loans are not affordable or available, the things purchased using borrowed money goes down in price.
    - As a result, global auto production and used car markets could potentially see significant disruptions as credit dries up and unemployment increases.
    - Plant closures may make spare parts for vehicles harder to come by.

*The increasing willingness of governments at all levels to use emergency powers creates more dissatisfaction with political leaders and law enforcement.*

* Various state and local governments have imposed significant restrictions on the day to day activities of citizens, imposing criminal and financial penalties for non-compliance.
  + From [The Hill](https://thehill.com/homenews/administration/486929-response-to-coronavirus-could-test-limits-of-government-powers):  
      
    But as an increasing number of American jurisdictions declare a state of emergency, and officials consider more serious responses, legal experts note that tighter restrictions will face even higher constitutional hurdles.

“In times of emergency — including public health emergency — the temptation to violate individual rights is at its greatest, and the courts have often been called on to defend the rights of the vulnerable,” said Harvard Law professor Glenn Cohen.

* The duty of enforcement of these perceived overreaches will largely fall on law enforcement officers, who will feel the public’s backlash during a time where other first responder agencies (Fire and EMS) are seen as heroes.
* If Americans decide the ongoing restrictions have lasted too long, civil disobedience will continue to grow as more people ignore the emergency orders.
  + Perhaps one of the biggest impacts from all of this will be further skepticism of future government emergency actions.
    - Will Americans be as willing to “lock down” for a future pandemic as they were in 2020?
    - Will Americans be as willing to support efforts to address climate change, health care policy, the national debt and other popular political issues based upon models and predictions, seeing how the models and predictions of this pandemic thus far have not been reliable?

*Changes in food demand, farm and food processing plant staffing, and availability of food packaging will lead to potential disruptions in the food supply.*

* Restaurant closures and more people eating at home changes the dynamic of how people acquire food.
  + People buying more food at the grocery store for immediate consumption as well as for deferred consumption based upon fears of supply chain issues
    - Grocery stores may struggle to quickly meet changes in shifting demand trends
* Changing demand trends already causing [oversupply of certain farm products such as milk, eggs and vegetables](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/11/business/coronavirus-destroying-food.html)
  + Farmers unable to sell their products will be further financially stressed to remain in business
  + Unable to sell milk and eggs, farmers may send their animals to slaughterhouses to avoid having to pay for feed for them, further depressing the prices of beef and chicken for a time
    - As demand for such products returns to normal, prices will be higher, as there would be fewer milk cows and egg laying chickens
* Perceived or actual disruptions to the food supply could lead to further runs on grocery stores and potentially civil unrest if such disruptions are large scale.
  + Grocers would likely have more staffing challenges in the event consumers overwhelm stores with surge demand, bad behavior and [increased risk of coronavirus infection](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/20/business/coronavirus-grocery-stores-workers.html?searchResultPosition=11)
  + Grocers would likely increase their security guard staffing in response to this potential situation
* [Increased interest in home food production](https://www.startribune.com/more-minnesotans-determined-to-grow-some-of-their-own-food/569726252/)
  + Increased demands for seeds and gardening supplies already noticeable
* [Increased demands in “survival” and long term storable food](https://www.nbcnews.com/business/consumer/disaster-bunkers-dried-food-survival-supply-sales-are-spiking-n1156921)
  + Prices for long term foods will remain strong and supply will remain tight as the long term food vendors catch up
* Shifts in American dietary preferences and food acquisition may follow any disruption in the food supply. [From Reason magazine](https://reason.com/2020/04/18/covid-19-could-fundamentally-change-americas-food-supply-in-the-short-term/):  
    
  If meat supply-chain issues do turn into widespread shortages, and if those shortages last more than several months or so, changes to the American diet could be swift and dramatic. I expect frozen beef and pork and other protein sources—from seafood to legumes—will pick up a good deal of the slack. Poultry and bulk meat sales from small farmers and ranchers whose animals aren't processed in large facilities—already strong today—will also grow. Other niche foods, including plant-based meat substitutes, lab-cultured meats, and insect-based protein powders will likely gain in popularity, too. Home gardens and chicken coops, already popular to varying degrees, will become even more common. Fishing will, too. Hunting may reverse years of declining popularity.
* [Demand for freezers will likely remain strong](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/21/business/coronavirus-freezers-sold-out.html) as people increase their stored food supplies in anticipation of future lockdowns and potential food supply disruptions.
  + Financing options for such items may become more challenging as noted above in the discussion above about access to capital.

*The use of cash and demand for physical bills, generally a staple disaster supply, faces growing headwinds.*

* Conventional wisdom from preparedness advocates is to have extra cash on hand in the event the ATMs or credit/debit card systems stop functioning. However, cash is now seen as a virus transmission device.
  + More businesses are moving to a cashless model
  + Reduction in cash transactions means more transactions are now traceable, creating potential civil liberty issues
  + Migrating away from cash transactions will have a disproportionate impact on the “unbanked” – those citizens who, for whatever reason, do not use banks for financial transactions.

*Emphasis on public health practices and demand for medical services will dramatically impact how we interact with one other for several months and how we consume healthcare.*

* More people will wear masks – commercial and homemade
  + [Criminals will take advantage of this](https://www.shootingillustrated.com/articles/2020/4/10/why-you-need-to-stay-alert-in-a-crisis-situation/) as people become more accustomed to seeing people in public wearing masks.
  + More research will be done on how to effectively sanitize commercial masks (N95 and N100s) for re-use, despite the fact they are only single use devices
* Social distancing and restrictions on gatherings will impact countless events and the economy
  + Sporting events, church services, schools, theaters, concerts – society is not set up for social distancing.
  + Social distancing will affect [how single people date and meet others](https://www.forbes.com/sites/frankicookney/2020/03/19/social-distancing-is-changing-the-way-people-use-dating-apps/#7f785eda2096)
  + Businesses able to innovate to deliver goods and services in a socially distant environment will fare better – perhaps thrive – in this new social and economic arrangement
* Policy makers and public health experts will have to decide how best to improve their readiness for the next wave…and the next epidemic/pandemic
  + Likely more demand for governments, hospitals and EMS agencies to stockpile personal protection equipment (PPE)
    - This would keep demand for masks and gloves strong and in short supply for the foreseeable future
  + Hospitals will need to develop ways to create surge capacity for extended periods of time if predictions of a possible second or third wave are accurate
    - Such demands would necessarily affect their profitability and staffing models
  + Rural hospitals will develop new mutual aid protocols to route personnel and supplies between themselves to manage surges in patient numbers
    - Rural hospitals, already challenged financially to stay afloat, will be further stressed to deal with this new role at the end of the public health funnel
* The role of hospitals in times of disaster will continue to evolve
  + Traditional role of hospital as community kitchen, electrical provider and safe haven during times of disaster being challenged by the peril of pandemic
    - Due to increased number of potentially infected people, hospitals are not the optimal place to seek refuge or assistance during times of crisis
  + In the era of pandemic, hospitals are now creating make shift morgues with freezer trucks and triage areas in hospital parking garages
* Deferral of elective surgeries will cause further health issues for those waiting to have procedures done.
  + Non-life threatening medical issues requiring surgical care continue to be delayed.
    - Patients with these issues continue to take medications to treat these problems until they can have surgery, which artificially increases the demand for the medications and causes the patients to potentially suffer long term side effects if medications are taken longer than recommended
* Loss of jobs lead to a loss of health insurance benefits, further compounding any medical issues people had before the pandemic

*More time spent at home will result in an increase in various injuries from home hazards*

* [U.S. lockdowns coincide with rise in poisonings from cleaners](https://www.pbs.org/newshour/health/u-s-lockdowns-coincide-with-rise-in-poisonings-from-cleaners?fbclid=IwAR09iqr91mSlND237NQNG-O37JOSOzcX3y-R1tG0c4QqTJRyg6xtr1e7E8Y)
  + More child injuries will increase demands on hospitals already dealing with coronavirus infections
* More people doing yard work and home maintenance around the house, [causing an increase in DIY injuries in the UK.](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2020/04/01/self-isolators-warned-against-unnecessary-diy-spike-traumatic/) Injuries from recreational activities – bicycling, motorcycles, ATVs – may likely increase as well as more people are stuck at home.

*More time at home increases the frequency of domestic abuse*

* [Injuries from abuse will likely increase](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/17/nyregion/new-york-city-domestic-violence-coronavirus.html)
  + Such injuries could add to the workload of medical providers
* [Demand for shelters for battered women and children increasing in some areas](https://www.heraldbulletin.com/news/domestic-violence-calls-increase-organizations-still-open-for-help/article_15599614-7e7c-11ea-a777-5b7f9a4b00c2.html)
  + Such demands place resource and funding strains on organizations reliant on donations from the public and government grants, both of which may be reduced as the economy struggles
  + Potential for people who do not own firearms to acquire one to better protect themselves during these times of increased abuse
    - Potential for accidental and negligent injuries caused by people inexperienced with firearms
    - Such injuries would add to the increased demands for hospital services

*Massive demand on food bank resources will tax their efforts; their donors will also feel the effect of less spare income to donate*

* [Pandemic creating a “perfect storm of problem” for food banks](https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2020/03/16/food-banks-are-seeing-volunteers-disappear-food-supply-evaporate-coronavirus-fears-mount/):
  + Fewer volunteers, as food banks traditionally rely on retirees who may not feel comfortable getting out during “lockdown” conditions
  + Fewer donations of food and cash from individuals, as economy deteriorates
  + Fewer donations of food from grocery stores due to massive consumer demand
  + “No playbook” for pandemics – food banks creating new algorithms and business models to deal with this situation
  + Staggering increase in demand for food bank services
    - Food bank operations are at a critical stage. Reductions in services/benefits offered by them increases the risk of hunger and problems which stem from that, including stress in the home, increased health problems, and [measures taken by desperate people to feed themselves and families in the forms of criminal activities, including violence](https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3571&context=all_theses)
* Mental health issues may arise as people not accustomed to seeking charity from food banks struggle with having to do so
* Safety issues during food bank and food pantry distribution point operations will increase given the larger number of recipients, frayed nerves and stigma associated with seeking charity

*Voting ramifications caused by fear of virus could affect election turnout and election results*

* People may not feel comfortable standing in lines and touching screens or voting devices that have been touched by hundreds or thousands of others.
* Counties may have a harder time recruiting election workers (often vulnerable retirees) to work in polling locations.
* In Texas, we’ve already seen the Primary Runoff election pushed from late May to mid July, and some are arguing that fear of contracting the virus is reason enough to allow for more mail-in voting.
* Some campaigns are already planning to rely heavily on mail-in voting for the July elections, anticipating minuscule turnout in the middle of the summer.
  + Campaign experts will have to radically modify their strategies for their candidates – in both parties – in order to maximize the “get out the vote” (GOTV) efforts in this new environment.
* Some have called for remote, online voting, opening a whole new debate and questions about the potential for fraud, security breaches and tampering.  
  + These points will likely exacerbate the tensions between conservatives and liberals not only on the access to voting debate but a host of other issues over which both groups have become increasing polarized over the last few years.
  + If certain voting blocks are dissuaded from going to the polls out of fear of infection, long lines caused by the lack of volunteers, election results may vary dramatically than what we are traditionally accustomed to observing.
  + Similarly, if “vote by mail” initiatives become successful, more people who normally would stay at home during a pandemic would be inclined to vote, perhaps creating a disproportionate effect in vote tallies.
  + As a result, candidates and political parties are re-writing their playbooks in an effort to increase their vote totals given these extraordinary circumstances.

*Delays to Census counting caused by COVID-19 will impact redistricting and potentially a state’s access to federal funding.*

* Census results have been delayed until the fall of 2020.
* Such results are used to determine political districts for state and Congressional races.
  + Demographic shifts may not be accurately accounted for in election maps in those states whose legislatures don’t convene every year.
* Census results are also used to calculate the amount of federal aid a state receives for disaster and non-disaster uses.
  + As Congress continues to come up with spending plans to address the ongoing pandemic and future disasters, those states which have experienced significant growth may end up receiving less than they are entitled due to the lack of up to date Census numbers.

*Impacts on primary, secondary and higher education will linger as school administrators have to make tough decisions about opening and resource allocation.*

* All schools (public, private, trade schools, colleges and universities) have now been ordered closed for the remainder of the 2019-20 school year. If the virus lingers through the summer, or if we have a resurgence in the virus in the fall/winter like some are predicting, parents may not feel comfortable sending their children back to school in person.
* Students may be made to wear gloves and face masks as part of the school uniform.
* For higher education, we had already begun seeing more scrutiny about relevance. From an article in The Economist entitled [The Coming ‘Relevance Renaissance’ in Higher Education:](https://eiuperspectives.economist.com/talent-education/coming-relevance-renaissance-higher-education)
  + “A complex set of issues ranging from rising tuition fees and growing student debt to dwindling public perceptions of educational institutions and doubts about the work-readiness of graduates have left many education leaders concerned about the future.”
  + Students and their families may begin to closely scrutinize the risks and return on investment of obtaining their degrees or certifications or credentials.
  + Institutions of higher education may be forced turn a critical eye towards themselves to examine their courses, curriculum, degree plans, and outcomes to better serve their customers, both students and employers.
* Some schools are using the pandemic as an opportunity to improve their resilience for various perils, not just pandemics. The current remote learning environment hastily created by schools in March may become a useful tool for schools impacted by other disasters in the future.

*Impacts to the workforce will leave an imprint on workforce development efforts long term.*

* Before the pandemic, the U.S. had an unemployment rate of under 4%, which is "full employment” but a lingering skills gap: employers routinely struggled to find employees, especially in the skilled trades and middle skill jobs (those requiring some post-secondary training or a certification, but not necessarily a four-year college degree).
* Many employers hired for attitude and taught aptitude, spending their own dollars on private, specialized training programs. A recent Lumina Foundation study/poll asked: "Are graduates career ready?" 96% of educators said “yes”, but only 33% of employers agreed.
* Over the past month, thousands of businesses have laid off hundreds of thousands of workers, causing the highest spike of unemployment claims in history. The recovery will be focused on getting those businesses reopened and folks back to work.
* Policymakers may turn their attention and budgets to skills alignment, closing the skills gap, and better serving the business community.

*Telemedicine and teletherapy enjoy growing popularity.*

* More medicine and therapy is being delivered using technology rather than in-person meeting and office visits.
* The utility of such technology allows greater access to more people to more specialized help.
* Such technology may be of great assistance to rural and less affluent parts of the country.
* Medical and therapy providers may not be inclined to continue with tele-delivery of services post-pandemic.
* Such tele-delivery services often come at lower reimbursement rates from insurers, calling into question the viability of the technology long term absent a recalibration of service delivery away from a traditional, high overhead brick and mortar model to a more virtual one.
  + If this shift takes place, it will put additional downward pressure on prices of commercial real estate traditionally used by health care providers and therapists.
  + It could also lower the price of such services, making them more affordable.

*“Made in America” sentiment will grow to the detriment of Chinese manufacturing. Or will it?*

* Many commentators believe Made in America will have a resurgence as Americans place varying degrees of blame on the Chinese government.
* Yet if unemployment remains high and wages are stagnant, will the lure of cheaper Chinese-made products be too much for those who are more cost sensitive in a post-pandemic economy?

**Second and Third Order Effects of Other Events Compounded By The Pandemic**

In addition to the things taking place directly downstream of the pandemic, there are also things taking place during the pandemic that have nothing to do with it. Yet the second and third order effects of these outside events are affected by the second and third order events of the pandemic. We should strive to understand those as well.

*Managing a natural disaster evacuation, response and recovery during a pandemic would be an incredible challenge to even experienced emergency managers.*

* We are expecting an above average hurricane season and are approaching wildfire season.
  + How would we evacuate and shelter evacuees during pandemic conditions?
  + How would relief workers manage the pandemic risk in austere environments without adequate PPE?

*November will offer Americans an opportunity for political change at all levels of government.*

* Political tensions among Americans remain high, exacerbated by the effects of the lockdowns.
* [Some speculate these tensions may result to unrest in the United States](https://theintercept.com/2020/04/12/coronavirus-response-geopolitics/) centered around election results.
  + Speculation among the pundit class regarding [the prospects of civil unrest or even a civil war remain unabated](https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2020-03-29/coronavirus-makes-america-seem-like-a-civilization-in-decline) during the current crisis.
    - [Boston Globe](https://www.bostonglobe.com/2020/04/10/opinion/if-battle-against-coronavirus-is-war-its-civil-war/): Trump is pitting Washington against the states, competing with them for medical supplies and demanding public tribute from governors as a condition of federal aid. Some governors are fighting with mayors in their own states, attempting to nullify local steps to control the disease. In Florida, Governor Ron DeSantis moved to overrule stay-at-home guidance issued by the mayor of Tampa because the city’s plan didn’t include an exemption for religious services. In Arizona, the mayor of Phoenix is feuding with Governor Doug Ducey, who has declared that beauty salons and golf courses are “essential” businesses allowed to remain open.

*Lingering concerns about the health of the electric grid would complicate a recovery.*

* As one of the contributors to this letter – a retired physician and hospital administrator – put it:  
    
  “My biggest fear short term for the larger population is the electric grid. Hospitals require a large amount of energy 24/7 to operate. The ICU never closes, and ventilators require uninterrupted juice. It is springtime. When summer hits and AC units churn, do we have the grid to support a heavily loaded healthcare system? Can overpacked hospitals with a greater number of patients requiring more electricity curb their consumption and still provide the same level of care? I doubt it. Short term, the peak of the pandemic must come before summer or rolling blackouts would kill thousands in a matter of hours.”

**Discussion**

In drafting this letter over the last three weeks, I came up with a rather long list of suggested action items that I cataloged while writing.

On Tuesday, I re-read and promptly deleted them from the letter.

There was nothing wrong with the suggestions I had; I still believe the guidance I came up with remains correct. However, it’s the same advice I have been sharing with so many people for almost twenty years now. I don’t necessarily have anything new to add to my suggested to do list, although if you are truly longing for guidance, I suggest you check out the [Ready Citizen manual](https://paultmartin.com/the-ready-citizen-manual) I created last year.

Instead, I’d like to share some food for thought with you as you come up with whatever plan of action – if you elect to even have a plan of action – in the coming weeks and months. Spoiler alert: none of what follows on this list is cheerful.

* **If we later learn the length and scope of the lockdown was excessive, there will be seismic changes in the way Americans view their government moving forward.** This cannot be understated. The second and third order implications of this lack of trust will be far reaching. If distrust were to grow, Americans would be less inclined to:
  + Follow guidance for future emergencies – natural and man made
    - When the “big one” comes, will people heed the warnings of government experts?
  + Tolerate government overreach in curtailing civil liberties
  + Believe the narrative put out by government agencies about <<insert social or scientific issue of your choice here>>
* **The inability of large companies to manage this emergency even in the shortest of durations should alarm all of us.**
  + [The Cheesecake Factory told its landlords it could not pay its rent in April](https://www.cnn.com/2020/03/26/business/cheesecake-factory-april-rent-coronavirus/index.html).
  + Large companies – ones traded on Wall Street – had to avail themselves of financial aid meant for small companies
  + A number of bankruptcies for big name companies are in the works

Never mind the millions of Americans who have no savings – if large companies cannot weather even a short term crisis, what does that tell you about the true state of the economy and the strength of American business?

* **We are again reminded that the disaster you’re planning for may not be the disaster you face.** I may very well be the only person in the preparedness movement saying this right now. Anyone who tells you they had “economic crisis stemming from a pandemic about which people incessantly argue over how serious it is” on their 2020 prediction card back in December is likely lying to you. I personally consume a lot of data about things that could go wrong in society for which we should be prepared…and as I was planning the 2020 Preparedness Conference in early January, the two topics that kept coming up were a) a growing homeless population in Austin and b) increased chatter from the cognoscenti about the prospects of a Second American Civil War. No one was talking about a significant pandemic risk for the U.S. in December.  
    
  And yet here we are, playing the hand dealt us. A hand no one predicted for this time frame and with any semblance of accuracy.
* **Your government’s inability to execute even the most rudimentary preparedness tasks should really anger you.** Some of you will no doubt complain what I am about to say is a political criticism of President Obama, but [two mainstream news outlets](https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/factcheck/2020/04/03/fact-check-did-obama-administration-deplete-n-95-mask-stockpile/5114319002/) have confirmed this:   
    
  “There is no indication that the Obama administration took significant steps to replenish the supply of N95 masks in the Strategic National Stockpile after it was depleted from repeated crises [during his administration]. Calls for action came from experts at the time concerned for the country’s ability to respond to future serious pandemics. Such recommendations were, for whatever reason, not heeded.”  
    
  I know, I know: “But Trump said this” or “Trump did or didn’t do that.” I’ve made it clear to many of you over the last 3 years I am not a fan of President Trump. But let’s be intellectually honest here: *neither political party has done a good job of making our nation more resilient for emergencies.* If the federal government, with its massive taxing authority and money printing press, cannot do something as basic as restock the national stockpile of N95 masks or get out of the way of states wanting to do COVID-19 testing, why are you relying on it to take care of you and your community when things get bad?  
    
  As some leaders in the preparedness and firearms training community are fond of saying: “No one is coming to save you. You are on your own.”   
    
  To which I add, “plan accordingly.”
* **Many are doing significant damage to their relationships and reputations with their social media posts shaming those who don’t agree with them on the correct level of social distancing, mask usage and reopening timelines.** I don’t get it. Why many feel the need to have an opinion on such things and then entrench themselves into that opinion, criticizing anyone and everyone with whom they disagree is beyond me. My social media feed is toxic right now. I don’t enjoy perusing it. I’ve created a fake account on Facebook under a pseudonym for the sole purpose of perusing various news sites without having posts of any friends pop up in my feed. I find myself using that account more often than the one attached to my name.

So is there anything cheerful or positive about all of this?

First, we’re getting some significant crisis response and readiness training under our belts. Over the last 20 years, we’ve endured a major terrorist attack (9/11), major hurricanes (Katrina and Harvey), two financial crises (2008-2009 and then the one we’re in now), and a global pandemic. We are tougher than we think.

We’re learning to unplug from so many things that take up our time and stress us out.

We’re seeing what we could have done better, so we can be ready for the next disaster.

We’re experiencing how we can really help others rather than incessantly posting stuff on social media – helping charities that are helping others, donating blood, making masks, spending more time checking on our neighbors.

This is not the last disaster we will face. But it is the one teaching us much now. Learn those lessons. Apply them to your situation. Help others.

