

Rolling Stone

Tim Dickinson

In the middle of a crisis, it can be difficult to comprehend the full scope of the failures that brought the nation to its knees. To reframe the [coronavirus](#) pandemic, and the Trump administration's catastrophic response, *Rolling Stone* presents here a timeline.

It shows that the pandemic was not a "black swan" event — some unforeseeable tragedy. Rather, a global pandemic of this sort has been predicted for decades, and indeed previous administrations, both Republican and Democrat, had sought to prepare the country for just such an outbreak. Yet upon taking office, the Trump administration consistently sought to defund and disarm America's preparedness against a mass outbreak of a viral respiratory illness.

When the outbreak hit, the administration dithered. Our once storied public health agencies fumbled the rollout of COVID-19 testing — causing bottlenecks and weeks of delay, as powerful resources sat idle. "We didn't unleash our biomedical establishment to create tests," Donald Milton, who runs the Public Health Aerobiology, Virology, and Exhaled Biomarker Laboratory at the University of Maryland told *Rolling Stone*. He points to the alternate path of South Korea, which controlled its outbreak through mass testing, and has suffered fewer than 300 deaths. "We have that capability," Milton says, "[We could have done that.](#)"

As weeks slipped by, and the CDC lost vision on the spread of the disease, its leaders arrogantly insisted to Americans the virus was under control. That was the favored message of president Trump, who from the get-go treated the outbreak as a public relations crisis, in which admitting danger to the general public was seen as akin to admitting defeat.

When the administration's dangerous denialism crashed into reality, the scope of the fallout was almost inconceivable. The virus was spreading exponentially, as markets crashed and millions were put out of work — forcing Congress to pass the largest rescue package in the history of the country. Worse, the administration's months of inaction had compounded the crisis by leaving frontline healthcare workers without proper equipment, battling the pandemic in stadium ponchos and homemade masks.

The coronavirus outbreak demanded a whole-of-government response, with a competent executive branch coordinating the deployment of resources, public and private, to prevent the deadly disease from wreaking havoc on American lives and our economy. What followed instead was a whole-of-government failure:

2005

President George W. Bush delivers a speech to the National Institutes of Health: "A pandemic is a lot like a forest fire. If caught early, it might be extinguished with limited damage. If allowed to smolder, undetected, it can grow to an inferno that can spread quickly beyond our ability to control it.... If we wait for a pandemic to appear, it will be too late to prepare. And one day [many lives could be needlessly lost](#) because we failed to act today."

2007

Bush-era Centers for Disease Control publishes [pandemic response plan](#).


 NA/STIMULUS VOTE: WASHINGTON, DC:
Melina Mara CAPTION: The Senate approved the \$838 billion economic stimulus bill with a 61 to 37 vote, which now sends the bill to conference (where both the House and Senate will alter the bill to both there liking), on Capitol Hill Tuesday January 10, 2009. The two moderate republican Maine Senators Susan Collins (R-ME), and Olympia Snowe (R-ME) voted for the bill. Sen. Collins speaks to reporters after the vote.

Photo credit: Melina Mara/The Washington Post/Getty Images

Melina Mara/The Washington Post/Getty Images

2009

Republican Sen. Susan Collins of Maine reportedly blocks [\\$870 million in flu pandemic preparedness funding](#) from Recovery Act stimulus.

2011


National Institutes of Health sponsors [study](#) that warns: "In a severe influenza pandemic, hospitals will likely experience serious and widespread shortages of patient pulmonary ventilators."

2015

Centers for Disease Control (CDC) sponsors [study](#) warning of a deficit of up to 60,500 ventilators in a severe influenza pandemic.

Department of Homeland Security [study](#) predicts a severe flu epidemic could result in 6.5 million hospitalizations and 2.3 million ICU admissions and "could overwhelm the Healthcare and Public Health Sector in as little as 3-6 weeks." Warns of "significant shortages in... personal protective equipment (PPE), and medical equipment, including ventilators" as well as of "supply chain disruptions" that could "significantly hamper the effectiveness" of frontline workers.


Document outlines strategy now known a "flattening the curve":

 pandemic curve

Obama HHS solicits plans for a machine that can produce up to [2 million N95 respirators a day](#). “Respirator manufacturing capacity remains a critical gap” in pandemic preparedness says a top federal official in charge of project.

2016

Obama administration prepares a 69-page [Pandemic Playbook](#) to coordinate an early, all of government response to an outbreak. Trump officials will leave it on the shelf.

 pandemic playbook

Jan 2017


Outgoing Obama officials conduct a disaster response exercise described as “[the worst influenza pandemic since 1918](#)” with incoming Trump officials.

Later 2017

Trump administration — focusing DHS on immigration — shuts down department’s [modeling of flu pandemics](#).

Jan 2018

Former Eli Lilly executive Alex Azar confirmed to be HHS secretary, replacing scandal-plagued Tom Price at helm of vast U.S. health bureaucracy.

 President Donald Trump speaks to media as he meets with crew and passengers of Southwest Airlines Flight 1380 in the Oval Office of the White House in WashingtonTrump, Washington, USA - 01 May 2018

Carolyn Kaster/AP/Shutterstock

March

Dr. Robert Redfield tapped by Trump administration to lead Centers for Disease Control. An experienced virologist who worked on HIV/AIDS in the military, Redfield has no experience leading an agency. Redfield's nomination opposed Sen. Patty Murray, (D-Washington) in a [letter](#) citing a "pattern of ethically and morally questionable behavior." Murray urged administration to "reconsider" the nomination because of "Dr. Redfield's lack of public health expertise and his failure to embrace the science underscoring critical public health work."

May

Trump administration disbands pandemic response team in White House — "no senior administration official is now focused solely on global health security," *Washington Post* [reports](#).

September

Trump administration [presented with the Obama-ordered plans for machine able to make 1.5 million N95 respirator masks a day](#) during a pandemic. Machine never funded or built.

January-August 2019

Trump administration runs a pandemic wargame called "Crimson Contagion" — modeling the outbreak of an uncontrolled flu pandemic, originating in China.

July

CDC epidemiologist position embedded in the Chinese health authority quits, as Trump administration announces it will [eliminate](#) the post amid trade war. Move comes as part of a hollowing out of the CDC's China presence — from 47 staffers at end of Obama era to [barely a dozen](#).

FEMA's [National Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment](#) for 2019 warns of pandemic risk, modeling an influenza outbreak that leads to "a shortage of medical supplies, equipment, beds, and healthcare workers as hospitals are quickly overwhelmed."

Late August

Contract dispute leaves federal stockpile of ventilators without maintenance, starting in [late August](#) through January. When this equipment is later distributed, many ventilators are broken.

September 30


Trump administration [ends funding](#) for PREDICT — a U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) initiative to support laboratories abroad, including one in Wuhan, China, to be vigilant for viruses with pandemic potential.

October

Confidential HHS [draft report](#) on Crimson Contagion documents failure: "Currently, there are insufficient funding sources designated for the federal Government to use in response to a severe influenza pandemic." It warns the U.S. "lacks domestic manufacturing capacity for the production of sufficient quantities of personal protective equipment" and that "domestic supplies of on-hand stock of... N95 respirators, ventilators, and other ancillary medical supplies are limited and difficult to restock, because they are often manufactured overseas."

November

[Secret briefing](#) by U.S. military's National Center for Medical Intelligence reportedly warns of a new contagion ripping through the Wuhan area of China.

 Security guards patrol a road next to closed Huanan Seafood Market, in Wuhan, China, 30 March 2020. Wuhan, the epicenter of the coronavirus outbreak, partly lifted the lockdown allowing people to enter the city after more than two months. Chinese authorities eased the quarantine measures as cases of Covid-19 across China have plummeted, according to Chinese government figures. Coronavirus quarantine eased in Wuhan, China - 30 Mar 2020

Security guards patrol a road next to closed Huanan Seafood Market, in Wuhan, China. Photo credit: Roman Pilipey/EPA-EFE/Shutterstock

Roman Pilipey/EPA-EFE/Shutterstock

December 10

In first publicly known case of what will be known as COVID-19, a market vendor [falls ill](#) in Wuhan.

December 18

Vendor hospitalized.

Trump impeached.

December 30

Chinese announce investigation of [dozens of viral pneumonia cases](#).

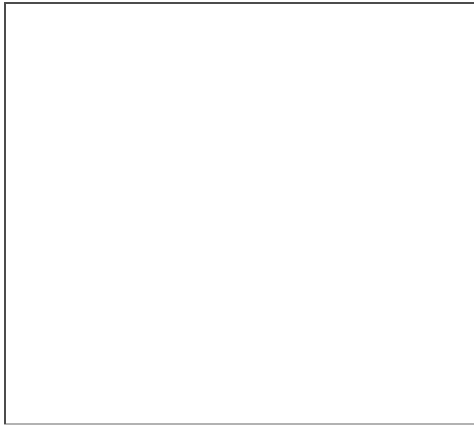
January 3

CDC and Chinese CDC [begin talks](#) about potential crisis.

Iranian general Soleimani killed by U.S. attack.

January 6

Iran strikes back with missile strikes on Iraqi bases housing U.S. troops.



January 7

Chinese scientists [identify novel coronavirus](#), 2019-nCoV.

January 8

CDC [alerts](#) doctors to be vigilant for patients with respiratory symptoms who have traveled in Wuhan.

January 13

[Chicago woman](#) in her 60s arrives back in U.S. from Wuhan; will soon become ill (and become second U.S. patient identified).

January 15

Washington state man, 35, returns from travel in Wuhan infected with the coronavirus. This patient appears set off community spread — that went undetected in the Seattle area for weeks — in the short period before he was isolated and treated, according to [researchers](#) who study gene mutations in the virus.

January 16

German scientists [produce a test for coronavirus](#) that will become the World Health Organization's (WHO) test, used across much of the world, but not in the United States.

January 17

CDC launches “public health entry screening” at San Francisco, New York, and Los Angeles international airports, soon extending to Atlanta and Chicago. CDC offers the public [reassurance](#): “The risk from 2019-nCoV to the American public is currently deemed to be low.”


Dr. Nancy Messonnier, director of CDC's National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases tells public: “For a family sitting around the dinner table tonight, this is [not something that they generally need to worry about](#).”

January 18

HHS Secretary Azar, who had been alerted to the outbreak at the beginning of January, finally reaches Trump to talk about coronavirus. The president wants to talk about political fallout from administration's [flavored vape ban](#).

January 20

South Korea announces first case of COVID-19.

 Washington Gov. Jay Inslee, center, speaks, at a news conference in Shoreline, Wash., following the announcement that a man in Washington state is the first known person in the United States to catch a new type of coronavirus that officials believe originated in China. The man who caught the virus is a Washington state resident who returned last week from China and is currently hospitalized near Seattle. China Outbreak, Shoreline, USA - 21 Jan 2020

Washington Gov. Jay Inslee. Photo credit: Carla K Johnson/AP/Shutterstock

Carla K Johnson/AP/Shutterstock

January 21

CDC [confirms](#) first U.S. patient — the [Seattle area man](#).

January 22

Asked if administration has “a plan to contain the coronavirus in the U.S.,” Trump replies: “We do have a plan, and we think it’s going to be handled very well. We’ve already handled it very well. CDC has been terrific. Very great professionals. And [we’re in very good shape](#).”

CDC announces its own coronavirus test. Informs the public: “Currently, [testing must take place at CDC](#).”

Trump praises Chinese response to the coronavirus:

China has been working very hard to contain the Coronavirus. The United States greatly appreciates their efforts and transparency. It will all work out well. In particular, on behalf of the American People, I want to thank President Xi!

— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) [January 24, 2020](#)

January 22

In [interview](#) from Davos, Trump asked: “Are there worries about a pandemic at this point?” Trump replies: “No, not it all. We have it totally under control. It’s one person coming in from China, and we have it under control. It’s going to be just fine.”

January 23

Wuhan and other cities [placed under lockdown](#) by Chinese government — many residents have already dispersed across China for lunar new year celebrations.

January 26

CDC [announces](#) more travel-related cases of coronavirus, bringing total to five.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer calls for [emergency](#) declaration in the U.S.

January 27

White House Domestic Policy Council chief Joe Grogan reportedly [warns](#) chief of staff Mick Mulvaney that failing to get a handle on coronavirus could cost Trump reelection.

Trump continues fulsome praise of Chinese response.

We are in very close communication with China concerning the virus. Very few cases reported in USA, but strongly on watch. We have offered China and President Xi any help that is necessary. Our experts are extraordinary!

— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) [January 27, 2020](#)

January 28

CDC advises against [nonessential](#) travel to China.

In [letter](#) to CDC staff, Redfield calls coronavirus “a very serious public health threat” but claims “virus is not spreading in the U.S. at this time” and that risk to general public is “low.” Foresees “it’s likely there will be some person-to-person spread with this virus.”

January 29

[Memo](#) from trade adviser Peter Navarro to National Security Council warns America would be “defenseless in the case of a full-blown coronavirus outbreak on U.S. soil” raising alarm about “a full-blown pandemic, imperiling the lives of millions of Americans.”

Nearly 200 Americans [repatriated](#) from Wuhan to California air base.

Trump [creates](#) Coronavirus Task Force, headed by Azar.

January 30

WHO declares world [health emergency](#).

CDC [confirms](#) a case of person-to-person spread of coronavirus, starting from the Washington state patient: “This latest 2019-nCoV patient has no history of travel to Wuhan, but shared a household with the patient diagnosed with 2019-nCoV infection on January 21, 2020.”

Redfield [says](#): “We still believe the immediate risk to the American public is low.”

Trump [tells America](#): “We think we have it very well under control. We have very little problem in this country at this moment.”

Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross says coronavirus outbreak in China could be an [economic boon](#): “I think it will help to accelerate the return of jobs to North America.”

Azar [reportedly](#) calls Trump to warn him of a possible pandemic. Trump downplays the threat, responding that “Azar was being alarmist,” according to the *New York Times*.

January 31

[Redfield](#): “The risk at this time to the American public is low.”

In move he will trumpet long afterward, Trump [shuts down travel](#) of foreign nationals who’ve been in China. The restriction comes two weeks after travelers stricken with the virus appear to have spread it in the U.S. An estimated [300,000 people](#) have arrived from China in the previous month.

Azar declares [public health emergency](#).

National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases director Dr. Anthony Fauci [warns](#) of asymptomatic spread: “In the beginning...it was not clear whether an asymptomatic person could transmit it to someone while they were asymptomatic. Now we know... that that is absolutely the case.”

February 1

Surgeon General [minimizes the threat](#) in a tweeted poem:

Roses are red
Violets are blue
Risk is low for #coronavirus
But high for the #flu

February 3

U.S. Army estimates coronavirus could kill as many as [150,000 Americans](#) in a worst-case scenario.


 FILE - This undated file photo provided by U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shows CDC's laboratory test kit for the new coronavirus. (CDC via AP, File)

Photo credit: CDC/AP

CDC/AP

February 4

Food and Drug Administration [approves](#) CDC coronavirus test, but only CDC is authorized to run tests, creating rationing and delays.

In [State of the Union address](#), Trump says: “My Administration will take all necessary steps to safeguard our citizens from this threat.”

February 5

Trump acquitted in Senate impeachment trial.

[Flights](#) of other American Wuhan travelers land at air bases in Sacramento, San Diego, San Antonio and Nebraska.

Diamond Princess cruise ship [quarantined](#) off the coast of Japan after coronavirus outbreak on ship.

Azar asks Office of Management and Budget for [\\$2 billion](#) to replenish national stockpile with respirator masks and other supplies. White House will cut the request to \$500 million.

Senators emerge from administration briefing on the coronavirus discouraged. “Bottom line,” tweets Sen. Chris Murphy (D-Connecticut) “they aren’t taking this seriously enough.”

Just left the Administration briefing on Coronavirus. Bottom line: they aren't taking this seriously enough.

Notably, no request for ANY emergency funding, which is a big mistake. Local health systems need supplies, training, screening staff etc. And they need it now.

— Chris Murphy (@ChrisMurphyCT) [February 5, 2020](#)

February 6

WHO sends [250,000 tests](#) to 159 labs across the world.

CDC starts [shipping coronavirus test kits](#) to “select” laboratories. “Our goal is early detection of new cases and to prevent further spread of the coronavirus,” says Redfield.

February 7

Trump continues to praise Chinese response, claims higher temperatures should minimize the threat.

....he will be successful, especially as the weather starts to warm & the virus hopefully becomes weaker, and then gone. Great discipline is taking place in China, as President Xi strongly leads what will be a very successful operation. We are working closely with China to help!

— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) [February 7, 2020](#)

February 10

Trump downplays threat to U.S.: “The virus that we’re talking about having to do — you know, a lot of people think that [goes away in April](#) with the heat — as the heat comes in.”

Trump White House unveils 2021 budget request, including an [\\$85 million cut](#) (13 percent) for the CDC’s Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases program, and a \$25 million cut (3 percent) to its Public Health Preparedness and Response.

Seattle Flu Study appeals to CDC for permission to test existing flu swabs for coronavirus. Request [gets tangled in CDC and FDA red tape](#).

February 11

WHO [names](#) illness COVID-19, short for “coronavirus disease 2019.”

February 12

Dow peaks at record 29,551

CDC announces [problems](#) with coronavirus test: Messonnier tells press: “some of the states identified some inconclusive laboratory results. We are working closely with them to correct the issues and as we’ve said all along, speed is important, but equally or more important in this situation is making sure that the laboratory results are correct.”

February 13

Sen. Richard Burr (R-NC), after attending a classified briefing on coronavirus impacts, sells up to [\\$1.7 million](#) in stock.

February 14

Trump touts poll numbers: “And 61 percent of the voters approve of Trump’s handling of the coronavirus... Now everyone is saying we did a good job.”

CDC [announces](#) it will use flu surveillance network to keep an eye out for coronavirus spread; the project will be “[delayed for weeks](#).”

National Security Council memo, “U.S. Government Response to the 2019 Novel Coronavirus,” [reportedly](#) outlines a potential, federal social distancing response, including “limiting public gatherings and cancellation of almost all sporting events, performances, and public and private meetings that cannot be convened by phone.” The memo also contemplates school closures and “widespread ‘stay at home’ directives from public and private organizations with nearly 100% telework for some.”

February 17

China extends travel restrictions of [780 million people](#).

February 19

Diamond Princess quarantine ends, passengers disembark in Japan.

Iran announces [first cases](#) of coronavirus.

February 21

Coronavirus Task Force reportedly [reviews](#) a proposal by Dr. Robert Kadlec, a top HHS doctor who had overseen the Crimson Contagion exercise, for social distancing to lock down of the U.S. economy. Attended by Redfield, Azar and Fauci, the group “concluded they would soon need to move toward aggressive social distancing, even at the risk of severe disruption to the nation’s economy,” according to the *New York Times*.

Messonnier insists centralized CDC testing is adequate: “We’re fully stood up at CDC. [There is no lag time for testing at this point](#). That is the focus of testing in the United States, the testing here at CDC.” Calls state testing snafus “a normal part, unfortunately, of these processes.” Paints false positives as the true threat: “We obviously would not want to use anything but the most perfect possible kits, since we’re making determinations about whether people have COVID-19 or not.”

February 23

Small towns in Italy [placed under quarantine](#) as that nation’s outbreak becomes clear.

Second Navarro [memo](#) to the NSC flags “increasing probability of a full-blown COVID-19 pandemic that could infect as many as 100 million Americans, with a loss of life

of as many as 1.2 million souls.”

February 24

Trump insists virus “very much under control,” touts stocks.

The Coronavirus is very much under control in the USA. We are in contact with everyone and all relevant countries. CDC & World Health have been working hard and very smart. Stock Market starting to look very good to me!

— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) [February 24, 2020](#)

Trump seeks [\\$1.25 billion](#) in coronavirus response funding.

February 24

Association of Public Health Laboratories [warns FDA](#) that the U.S. is “now many weeks into the response with still no diagnostic or surveillance test available outside of C.D.C. for the vast majority of our member laboratories.”

In [letter to Congress](#), Redfield brags: “CDC’s aggressive response enables us to identify potential cases early and make sure that they are properly handled.”

Coronavirus Task Force [reportedly agrees to present](#) Trump a social-distancing mitigation strategy. Trump is traveling in India, delaying plan.

February 25

Trump’s Director of the National Economic Council Larry Kudlow: “We have contained this. I won’t say ‘airtight,’ but [pretty close to airtight](#).”

Trump campaign spokesperson Kayleigh McEnany [tells FoxNews](#): “We will not see diseases like the coronavirus come here... and isn’t it refreshing when contrasting it with the awful presidency of President Obama.” (McEnany will soon be hired as White House spokesperson.)

Trump trolls Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer for calling for more coronavirus funding.

Cryin’ Chuck Schumer is complaining, for publicity purposes only, that I should be asking for more money than \$2.5 Billion to prepare for Coronavirus. If I asked for more he would say it is too much. He didn’t like my early travel closings. I was right. He is incompetent!

— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) [February 25, 2020](#)

Dr. Helen Chu of the Seattle Flu Study reportedly begins [testing collected flu samples](#) for COVID-19, despite lack of federal authorization.

CDC’s Messonnier, out of step with current White House messaging, attempts to level with public: “We expect we will see community spread in this country. It’s not so much a question of if this will happen anymore but rather more a question of exactly when this will happen and how many people in this country will have [severe illness](#).” Warns of school closures, “missed work and loss of income” and that “disruption to everyday life may be severe.”

February 26

Trump reportedly calls Azar, enraged, complaining Messonnier was unnecessarily [scaring the markets](#). Plans to brief Trump on need for social distancing measures scrapped. More than two weeks will be lost before federal government recommends distancing measures.

At press conference, Trump announces he’s ousted Azar as head of Coronavirus Task Force: “I’m going to be putting our Vice President, Mike Pence, in charge.” Trump downplays seriousness of COVID-19, “[This is a flu. This is like a flu](#).” Adds: “We have a total of 15 [diagnosed] people, and they’re in a process of recovering... In a couple of days we’re going to be down to close to zero. We’re going down, not up. We’re going substantially down.”

President defends cuts to public health bureaucracy: “Some of the people we cut, they haven’t been used for many, many years. And if — if we have a need, we can get them very quickly. And rather than spending the money — and I’m a business person — I don’t like having thousands of people around when you don’t need them. When we need them, we can get them back very quickly.”

CDC [email](#) to state and local officials: “Testing capacity is more than adequate to meet current testing demands.”

First [confirmed case](#) of community spread as a Californian with no travel history or known contact with other patients becomes ill.

February 27

Seemingly in reaction to Messonnier’s truth telling, all coronavirus messaging now steered [through Pence’s office](#).

Republican Senator Richard Burr [tells a private audience](#) in Washington: “There’s one thing that I can tell you about this: It is much more aggressive in its transmission than anything that we have seen in recent history. It is probably more akin to the 1918 pandemic.”

Trump: “It’s going to disappear. One day it’s like a miracle, [it will disappear](#).”


Redfield [walks back](#) Messonnier comments in House testimony: “I think what Dr. Messonnier was trying to say — I think it maybe could have been done much more articulately from what the American public heard — was she was trying to say it’s also a good time for us to prepare, if we have to go to more mitigation. We’re still committed to get aggressive containment, and I want the American public to know at this point that the risk is low.... We have an aggressive containment strategy that really has [worked up to this time](#).” Redfield says government will roll out coronavirus surveillance, like flu surveillance, over the next six to eight weeks.

Senior FDA official reportedly snaps at CDC for testing failures that include not keeping labs sterile, saying that if the agency were a private facility, “[I would shut you down](#).”

February 28

White House chief of staff Mulvaney tells [attendees of CPAC](#) — the conservative conference — where the coronavirus was spreading: “The reason you’re seeing so much attention to it today is that they think *this* is what’s going to bring down the president. That’s what this is all about.” Mulvaney insists U.S. is on top of outbreak. “This is something we know how to deal with. We are the best country in the world prepared to do this. We have been preparing for this for years. We know how to handle this.... We’re ahead of the curve already.”

Azar: “Thanks to [the President’s historically aggressive containment efforts](#)... everyday Americans don’t need to be worried.”

 Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., left, stands onstage with President Donald Trump during a campaign rally, in North Charleston, S.C. The filing period for South Carolina's 2020 primaries and November general election closed Monday, March 30 although the coronavirus outbreak has left in flux how exactly the elections will be carried out. Perhaps the most highly anticipated election contest coming up in South Carolina is Graham's pursuit of a fourth term in office. A general election matchup with Democrat Jaime Harrison all but certain, Graham has also drawn a handful of Republican challengers, as well as Constitution and Libertarian party opponentsCandidate Filing-South Carolina, North Charleston, United States - 28 Feb 2020

Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., left, stands onstage with President [Donald Trump](#) during a campaign rally, in North Charleston, SC. Photo credit: Patrick Semansky/AP/Shutterstock

Patrick Semansky/AP/Shutterstock

Trump: "We've done a great job. The press won't give us credit for it."

Community spread [discovered](#) in Washington, Oregon, as well as a second case in California. At rally Trump claims criticism of his coronavirus response is nonsense, using language he used to describe Mueller investigation and impeachment: "[This is their new hoax.](#)"

February 29 *U.S. Recorded Death Toll: 1*

First confirmed COVID-19 [death](#), from a nursing home in Washington state.

Redfield: "The risk at this time is low. [The American public needs to go on with their normal lives](#)....I encourage Americans to go about their life. That includes travel to California, Oregon, and the state of Washington."

In [reversal](#), FDA allows academic and hospital labs begin testing.

March 2 *Death Toll: 6*

Mayor [Bill de Blasio](#) tweets encouragement to New Yorkers to "get out on the town."

Since I'm encouraging New Yorkers to go on with your lives + get out on the town despite Coronavirus, I thought I would offer some suggestions. Here's the first: thru Thurs 3/5 go see "The Traitor" [@FilmLinc](#). If "The Wire" was a true story + set in Italy, it would be this film.

— Bill de Blasio (@BilldeBlasio) [March 3, 2020](#)

March 3 *Death Toll: 9*

Washington state teenager with no risk factors test positive in Seattle Flu Study testing. Dr. Chu will say it's then she realized: "[It's just everywhere already.](#)"

Trump is asked if "it's inevitable that the coronavirus will spread across the country?" Trump responds: "I don't think that's inevitable at all."

Azar: "For the average American, in your daily life, the risk of getting coronavirus — the novel coronavirus — is [very low](#)."

Redfield: "We're going to continue to see new cases diagnosed in the community across this country. But... I want these new cases to be viewed as a success, in one sense, of our effective public health community, and [not a failure](#)."

Pence claims [no CDC limits](#) on testing other than a doctor's order.

March 4 *Death Toll: 11*

Trump in appearance on Hannity: "We have hundreds of thousands of people who get better just by sitting around and even going to work. Some of them go to work, but they get better." Muses on death rate: "I think the 3.4 percent number is really a false number. Now this is just my hunch, but based on a lot of conversations ... personally, I'd say the number is way under 1 percent."

Pence makes wild claim of testing availability: "We'll have [over a million tests in the field today](#)." One million tests will not be completed until the end of the month.

Redfield: "Although we're continuing to see new community cases in this nation, the overall risk to the American public at this time still [remains low](#)."

March 5 Death Toll: 12

I NEVER said people that are feeling sick should go to work. This is just more Fake News and disinformation put out by the Democrats, in particular MSDNC. Comcast covers the CoronaVirus situation horribly, only looking to do harm to the incredible & successful effort being made!

— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) [March 5, 2020](#)

Redfield: "I want people to realize that when new cases are identified, that's actually a success, not a failure. It shows that your public health community is out there doing their job with isolation and contact tracing.... the overall risk of coronavirus to the American public at this point is low."

Fauci laments closure of pandemic response team in White House: "We worked very well with that office. [It would be nice if the office were still there](#)."

Congress passes [\\$8.3 billion coronavirus spending package](#).


March 6 Death Toll: 15

[South by Southwest](#) cancelled.

Trump [visits CDC in Atlanta](#), where Redfield heaps praise on Trump: "I want to thank you for your decisive leadership in helping us put public health first." Tells people: "The overall risk to the American public does remain low.... I think we have isolated a number of clusters. But it's not as if we have multiple, multiple — hundreds and hundreds of clusters around the United States.... I mean, we're not blind where this virus is right now in the United States."

CDC official admits the agency adopted strict testing limits because: "We didn't want just a lot of people with compatible symptoms who had no history of exposure to be tested."

Trump lies: "As of right now anybody who needs a test [can get one] and the tests are all perfect. Like the letter was perfect." Trump admits he wants to keep infection numbers low, advises against unloading a cruise ship with sick passengers off the coast of California: "I like the numbers being where they are. I don't need to have the numbers double because of one ship. [That wasn't our fault](#)." Trump praises his own understanding of the science: "I really get it. People here are surprised that I understand it.... Maybe I have natural ability."



The Grand Princess cruise ship is shown docked at the Port of Oakland, in Oakland, Calif. All American citizens have disembarked from the ship. Virus Outbreak California, Oakland, United States - 14 Mar 2020

Photo credit: Ben Margot/AP/Shutterstock

Ben Margot/AP/Shutterstock

March 7 Death Toll: 19

Pence appears in Florida with cruise industry executives. "We want to be clear that it is safe for healthy Americans to travel." Other than seniors with serious underlying health conditions, Pence said: "[Americans can confidently travel in this country](#). Confidently enjoy the benefits of this country.... The American people can continue to go about their business."

Redfield: "At this time the risk to the American people is low in most areas of the United States.... One thing that we can all take pride in is that this country has the best public health infrastructure.... Florida is no exception in being prepared. I would encourage people to go after their regular daily lives.... I would not encourage anyone to change their plans.... They should enjoy Disneyland they should enjoy the rest of Florida."

At Mar-a-Lago, Trump practices social distancing with Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro, whose press secretary will soon test positive for COVID-19:

March 8 Death Toll: 22

South Korea and the United States each identified their first coronavirus case on the same day; South Korea has tested 189,236, the [United States 1,707](#).

March 9 Death Toll: 26

[Oil prices crash](#) as Saudi and Russia engage in price war.

Redfield: "At the present time, the risk to the American public does [remain low](#)."

So last year 37,000 Americans died from the common Flu. It averages between 27,000 and 70,000 per year. Nothing is shut down, life & the economy go on. At this moment there are 546 confirmed cases of CoronaVirus, with 22 deaths. Think about that!

— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) [March 9, 2020](#)

All of Italy placed on [lockdown](#).

March 10 Death Toll: 30

Coachella [cancelled](#).

Redfield [admits](#) to Congress: "The truth is we've underinvested in the public health labs."

March 11 Death Toll: 38

WHO declares a global "[pandemic](#)."

In primetime address, Trump [announces travel shutdown between](#) U.S. and Europe. Mispeaks while reading the teleprompter suggesting cargo and trade are also

affected. Markets tank.

March 12 *Death Toll: 41*

NBA [suspends season](#) after center Rudy Gobert of the Utah Jazz tests positive.

Actor Tom Hanks and wife [test positive](#) in Australia.

HHS makes modest [\\$4.8 million order](#) for N95 masks from 3M — its first purchase to protect frontline workers.

Fauci testifies to Congress about testing: “The system is not really geared to what we need right now. [That is a failing](#). It is a failing, let’s admit it.... the idea of anybody getting it, easily, the way people in other countries are doing it — we’re not set up for that. Do I think we should be? Yes. But we are not.”

March 13 *Death Toll: 48*

Six days after the CDC director encouraged Americans to visit, Disneyland and Disneyworld [close](#).

Trump declares [national emergency](#).

In [Rose Garden ceremony](#) with executives from drug companies, Target, Walgreens and Walmart, Trump makes empty promises Google will launch nationwide website to direct Americans to widely available drive-through testing. These will not materialize at scale.

Asked about Fauci’s ‘failure’ remark on testing and whether the buck stops with him, Trump says: “I don’t take responsibility at all.”

Trump sends around autograph of brief Dow surge:

The White House sent an autographed print out of today’s stock market chart to Lou Dobbs [pic.twitter.com/bjCV26urUT](#)

— Andrew Lawrence (@ndrew_lawrence) [March 13, 2020](#)

March 14 *Death Toll: 58*

Seven days after Pence and Redfield stood shoulder to shoulder with the cruise industry, CDC issues a [no-sail order](#) for cruise ships from U.S. ports.

Spain on [lockdown](#).

Ten-day CDC “sentinel” testing program in Northern California ends; discovers [8 percent](#) of people reporting respiratory symptoms at local urgent care facilities have COVID-19, indicating widespread community transmission.

March 15 *Death Toll: 73*

CDC [recommends against gatherings of more than 50 people](#).

New York City announces school, restaurant, bar gym [closures](#).

March 16 *Death Toll: 95*

Alarmed by CDC sentinel study, six Bay Area counties in Northern California order residents to [shelter in place](#).

France on [lockdown](#).

Asked to evaluate his response on a 10-point scale Trump says: “[I’d rate it a 10](#).”

Trump starts calling coronavirus the “Chinese virus”:

The United States will be powerfully supporting those industries, like Airlines and others, that are particularly affected by the Chinese Virus. We will be stronger than ever before!

— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) [March 16, 2020](#)

New York City mayor de Blasio [visits gym one last time](#).

Imperial College (UK) [study](#) warns 2.2 million could die in U.S. with uncontrolled outbreak.

White House recommends against gatherings of more than [10 people](#), encourages work and school from home. Trump: “We’d much rather be ahead of the curve than behind it, and [that’s what we are](#).” White House launches [15 Days to Slow the Spread](#).

March 17 *Death Toll: 121*

March Madness NCAA tournament [cancelled](#).

Trump: “[I’ve always known this is a real...pandemic](#)”

Testing [lags persist](#): South Korea Testing: 274,000; U.S. testing: 25,000

March 18 *Death Toll: 171*

Trump: “[It snuck up on us](#).” Calls himself, “in a sense, a wartime president”

March 19 *Death Toll: 239*

China announces [zero new cases](#), a potential turning point in that country’s outbreak.

Gov. Gavin Newsom issues [shelter in place](#) order statewide in California.

March 20 *Death Toll: 309*

Gov. Andrew Cuomo puts New York on “[pause](#)” with similar restrictions to California.

Trump era stock market gains [wiped out](#).

March 21 *Death Toll: 374*

HHS finally makes a large investment in protective equipment, with [\\$173 million order for N95 masks](#).

March 22 *Death Toll: 509*

Trump starts railing about the costs of social distancing.

WE CANNOT LET THE CURE BE WORSE THAN THE PROBLEM ITSELF. AT THE END OF THE 15 DAY PERIOD, WE WILL MAKE A DECISION AS TO WHICH WAY WE WANT TO GO!

— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) [March 23, 2020](#)

Trump muses to reporters: “How life can change. [20 to 22 days ago, everything's perfect](#). We're looking forward...more jobs & more everything. And then one day we get hit with this thing that nobody ever heard of before. Nobody ever even heard of before.”

March 23 *Death Toll: 689*

Great Britain on [lockdown](#).

March 24 *Death Toll: 957*

Trump again rages about shutdown:

Our people want to return to work. They will practice Social Distancing and all else, and Seniors will be watched over protectively & lovingly. We can do two things together. THE CURE CANNOT BE WORSE (by far) THAN THE PROBLEM! Congress MUST ACT NOW. We will come back strong!

— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) [March 24, 2020](#)

Trump says he wants to open the country by Easter. Reveals he set the target independent of health advice. “[I just thought it was a beautiful time](#). It would be a beautiful time, a beautiful timeline. It's a great day.”

[1 in 1,000 New York metro residents infected](#). Coronavirus task force member Dr. Deborah Birx: “Everybody who was in New York should be [self-quarantining for the next 14 days](#) to ensure that the virus doesn't spread to others.”

Fauci admits the U.S. is still [held back by lack of testing](#): “Particularly those areas that are not hotspots, we need to know what the penetrance of infection is there. So we need to put a light on those dark spots that we don't know. We have to act, policywise, on data. And we're going to be getting more data — a lot more data.”

March 25 *Death Toll: 1,260*

Trump blames media for social distancing, suggesting a conspiracy to lower his approval rating:

The LameStream Media is the dominant force in trying to get me to keep our Country closed as long as possible in the hope that it will be detrimental to my election success. The real people want to get back to work ASAP. We will be stronger than ever before!

— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) [March 25, 2020](#)

G7 nations unable to agree to a joint statement on COVID-19 after Mike Pompeo and the State Department insists on calling it the “[Wuhan Virus](#)”

Trump: “It's [hard not to be happy](#) with the job we're doing.”

Pence touts 432,000 tests completed.

Senate passes [\\$2.2 trillion bailout package](#).

March 26 *Death Toll: 1,614*

3.3 million Americans [file unemployment claims](#).

[160 million Americans under lockdown](#).

One month to the day after Trump predicted the U.S. would be “down to close to zero” cases, U.S. passes China in disclosed cases, to become world leader in COVID-19 with more than 80,000 positive tests. Trump touts [testing](#): “It's a tribute to the testing. We're testing tremendous numbers of people.” Insists of the pandemic: “This was something that nobody has ever thought could happen to this country.”

Trump tells Hannity: “[I don't believe you need 40,000 or 30,000 ventilators](#).”

JAMA [paper](#) by MIT scientist warns coronavirus can be spread much farther than six feet by a sneeze: “The gas cloud and its payload of pathogen-bearing droplets of all sizes can travel 23 to 27 feet.” Author calls on CDC to urgently [revise](#) guidelines.

March 27 *Death Toll: 2,110*

Trump [signs](#) \$2.2 trillion rescue package.

Trump on Democratic governors he's feuded with in Washington state and Michigan: “[I want them to be appreciative](#).” Says he told Pence: “Don't call the woman in Michigan. If they don't treat you right, [I don't call](#).”

March 29 *Death Toll: 3,251*

Trump touts his TV ratings:

Because the “Ratings” of my News Conferences etc. are so high, “Bachelor finale, Monday Night Football type numbers” according to the [@nytimes](#), the Lamestream Media is going CRAZY. “Trump is reaching too many people, we must stop him.” said one lunatic. See you at 5:00 P.M.!

— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) [March 29, 2020](#)

Trump extends social distancing to end of April. Claims he [just heard for the first time that 2.2 million Americans could die](#) without social distancing.

Trump suggests nurses are [stealing](#) respirator masks. “Something's going on. Where are the masks going? Are they going out the back door?”

March 30 *Death Toll: 4,066*

Trump touts completion of [1 million tests](#) — 26 days after Pence insisted there were that many distributed.

Trump invites [My Pillow executive](#) to speak in Rose Garden press conference on the coronavirus.

Birx [warns of mass death](#): “If we do things together well, almost perfectly, we could get in the range of 100,000 to 200,000 fatalities”

Captain of carrier Theodore Roosevelt writes [letter](#) asking Navy to dock, unload, and quarantine 4,000 crew members to end outbreak of COVID-19 on ship. “We are not at war. Sailors do not need to die. If we do not act now, we are failing to properly take care of our most trusted asset — our Sailors.”

March 31 *Death Toll: 5,151*

Trump: “[The surge is coming, and it’s coming strong](#)... We are going to go through a very tough two weeks. This is going to be a very, very painful two weeks.” Blames Obama for “[obsolete tests](#).” Asked whether impeachment took his eye off the ball, Trump responds, “I guess it probably did.”

April 1 *Death Toll: 6,394*

Trump touts his social media clout. “[Did you know I was number one on Facebook?](#) I just found out I’m number one on Facebook.”

April 2 *Death Toll: 7,576*

[Additional 6.6 million jobless claims](#).

Jared Kushner claims [nation’s medical stockpile is not for the states](#): “The notion of the federal stockpile was it’s supposed to be our stockpile. It’s not supposed to be states stockpiles that they then use.”

DOD seeks to acquire [100,000 body bags](#).

Captain Brett Crozier of the Theodore Roosevelt [relieved of duty](#).

Fauci on the lack of stay-at-home orders nationwide: “[I don’t understand why that’s not happening](#).”


 People wear masks as they wait in line at Costco, in Salt Lake City. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is now advising Americans to voluntarily wear a basic cloth or fabric face mask to help curb the spread of the new coronavirus. Virus Outbreak Utah, Salt Lake City, United States - 04 Apr 2020

Photo credit: Rick Bowmer/AP/Shutterstock

Rick Bowmer/AP/Shutterstock

April 3 *Death Toll: 8,839*

CDC advises cloth masks for the public. Trump says he won’t. “[I just don’t want to wear one myself](#).” Touts response: “We have done a job like nobody’s every done a job.” Blames states: “Many of the states were totally unprepared for this.... They should have had more ventilators.”

Ignoring new science, Redfield insists virus can’t travel more than six feet: “This virus has a great weakness: It can’t jump from one person to another if it’s got to swim [more than six feet](#).”

April 4 *Death Toll: 10,384*

155 members of Roosevelt carrier [test positive](#) for coronavirus.

April 6 *Death Toll: 13,398*

Kudlow: “[I don’t believe anybody could have predicted the exponential rise of this](#).”

April 7 Death Toll: 15,526

With more than 1,900 fatalities, COVID-19 becomes nation's [leading cause of daily deaths](#).

April 8 Death Toll: 17,691

Trump administration announces it will [end FEMA funding for coronavirus testing sites](#), claiming it's on states to pick up tab. (Amid outcry, the government will [reverse this decision](#).)

April 9 Death Toll: 19,802

Jobless claims surge to [17 million](#) since crisis began.

Roosevelt positive tests reach [416](#).

The Wall Street Journal always "forgets" to mention that the ratings for the White House Press Briefings are "through the roof" (Monday Night Football, Bachelor Finale, according to [@nytimes](#)) & is only way for me to escape the Fake News & get my views across. WSJ is Fake News!

— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) [April 9, 2020](#)

April 10 Death Toll: 22,038

CDC publishes research warning that those infected with the virus may spread it more than double the distance of 6 feet: "The transmission distance of SARS-CoV-2 [might be 4 m](#)." (Four meters is just over 13 feet.)

April 12 Death Toll: 25,789

Fauci on CNN: "If...you started mitigation earlier, [you could have saved lives](#). Obviously, no one is going to deny that."

April 13 Death Toll: 27,515

Trump insists at White House press conference: "Everything we did was right."

April 14 Death Toll: 30,081

Trump [delays stimulus checks](#) to struggling Americans so that they can include his signature.

Trump announces United States will freeze funding to WHO, scapegoating the U.N. agency for "[severely mismanaging and covering up the spread of the coronavirus](#)."

April 15 Death Toll: 32,712

Trump warns of deaths from *not* reopening the country from suicide and mental health problems: "There is also death in keeping it closed... There is death in having a strongly closed country."

April 16 Death Toll: 34,905

Trump "Now that we have passed the peak in new cases, we are starting our life again. We are starting rejuvenation of our economy again."

April 17 Death Toll: 37,448

Trump sides with protesters defying stay at home orders in blue states.

LIBERATE MICHIGAN!

— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) [April 17, 2020](#)

April 19 Death Toll: 40,901

Trump predicts a final death toll from the coronavirus: "It looks like we'll be about a [60,000 mark](#)."

April 20 Death Toll: 42,853

Amid White House boasts of testing availability, Maryland's Republican Governor scores [500,000 tests from South Korea](#) in an end-around the Trump administration. To prevent their confiscation by the federal government, Larry Hogan will put the stockpile of tests under the watch of the National Guard.

April 23 Death Toll: 50,234

Trump muses that a disinfectant injection might cure COVID-19 patients.

Yesterday: Trump suggests [#injectingdisinfectant](#) could be a way to treat [#Covid_19 pic.twitter.com/wnyPqC6VI6](#)

— Richard Hine (@richardhine) [April 24, 2020](#)

April 24 Death Toll: 52,191

Georgia reopens gyms, nail salons and tattoo parlors.

Trump signs a new [\\$484 billion relief package](#) for hospitals and small businesses.

April 27 Death Toll: 56,795

As COVID deaths rival those America suffered in Vietnam, Trump bumps his death toll projection to 70,000, insisting, "we've made [a lot of good decisions](#)."

April 28 Death Toll: 59,265

Trump returns to predicting virus will resolve on its own without a vaccine: "I think what happens is it's going to go away."

April 29 Death Toll: 61,655

Jared Kushner tells Fox & Friends: "The federal government rose to the challenge and this is a [great success story](#)."

Trump repeats vanishing virus claim: "It's gonna go. It's gonna leave. It's gonna be gone. It's gonna be eradicated."

April 30 *Death Toll: 63,859*

New jobless claims hit 30 million since start of pandemic.

May 3 *Death Toll: 68,697*

Trump ups death projection again, “Let’s say it’s 100,000, or 90 or 95.”

May 5 *Death Toll: 72,271*

Trump dismisses concerns of rising death as state economies reopen suggesting people will [die either way](#): “We’re letting people go to their jobs — they have to do it,” he says. “Between drug abuse, suicide — there’s no great win one way or the other.”

May 6 *Death Toll: 74,799*

Trump continues to highlight the negative PR effects of effective testing: “In a way, by doing all of this testing, we [make ourselves look bad](#).”

May 7 *Death Toll: 76,928*

After 20,000 nursing home deaths, the administration delivers its [first PPE shipment to a nursing home](#).