

# Brad DeLong: Grasping Reality with Both Hands Since 1999

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## Crampton: The United States Needs a New Works Progress Administration to Overcome the Coronavirus Recession—Noted

Back at the end of 2008 I lobbied the Obama people: put the unemployed at work going door-to-door treating the chronic diseases of the uninsured. Win-win.

Now the same logic applies, both at the federal and at the state level: put the unemployed at work in public health. Win-win.

The states may say they have no money. But states that suppress the coronavirus will end up having much more money, even in the short run, than states that do not:

**Delaney Crampton:** *The United States Needs a New Works Progress Administration to Overcome the Coronavirus Recession*  
<https://equitablegrowth.org/the-united-states-needs-a-new-works-progress-administration-to-overcome-the-coronavirus-recession/>: ‘Our nation needs more tracking and tracing of cases so that people can be notified and help limit the contagion of others. Unfortunately, the implementation of contact tracing programs has been uneven...

...At the same time, more than 44 million Americans have filed for unemployment benefits in less than 4 months. These two dire and worrisome trends—one related to public health and the other economic—also create a singular opportunity. Policymakers could place millions of people searching for work into contact tracing jobs through a modern-day Works Progress Administration....

South Korea has become a model country in implementing strong policies around contact tracing, and has been able to successfully lift stay-at-home orders as most business have reopened. The country has relied heavily on high-tech solutions that include contact tracers who monitor all new arrivals to the country and using CCTV footage and credit card transaction data to monitor location data of patients.

Or consider a state-level track-and-trace program already underway here in the United States. In Massachusetts, the nonprofit global health organization Partners in Health has been tapped to spearhead the state's new contact-tracing program. Already, it has hired and trained close to 1,000 contact tracers. They are paying workers \$27 an hour for their time and providing all contact tracers with health insurance. Massachusetts is taking a step in the right direction, but there are estimates that the United States will need to hire as many as 300,000 contact tracers to track and prevent the spread of COVID-19...

.#noted #2020-07-16

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