

Adviser’s Quest To Tie Diseases To Immigrants

Pushing Obscure Law Long Before Crisis

By CAITLIN DICKERSON and MICHAEL D. SHEAR

From the early days of the Trump administration, Stephen Miller, the president’s chief adviser on immigration, has repeatedly tried to use an obscure law designed to protect the nation from diseases overseas as a way to tighten the borders.

The question was, which disease?

Mr. Miller pushed for invoking the president’s broad public health powers in 2019, when an outbreak of mumps spread through immigration detention facilities in six states. He tried again that year when Border Patrol stations were hit with the flu.

When vast caravans of migrants surged toward the border in 2018, Mr. Miller looked for evidence that they carried illnesses. He asked for updates on American communities that received migrants to see if new disease was spreading there.

In 2018, dozens of migrants became seriously ill in federal custody, and two under the age of 10 died within three weeks of each other. While many viewed the episodes as resulting from negligence on the part of the border authorities, Mr. Miller instead argued that they supported his argument that President Trump should use his public health powers to justify sealing the borders.

On some occasions, Mr. Miller and the president, who also embraced these ideas, were talked down by cabinet secretaries and lawyers who argued that the public health situation at the time did not provide sufficient legal basis for such a proclamation.

That changed with the arrival of the coronavirus pandemic.

Within days of the confirmation of the first case in the United States, the White House shut American land borders to non-essential travel, closing the door to almost all migrants, including children and teenagers who arrived at the border with no parent or other adult guardian. Other international travel restrictions

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Burden Heavy As Biden Seeks Running Mate

By JONATHAN MARTIN and ALEXANDER BURNS

WASHINGTON — For decades the vice-presidential selection process has had an air of cloak-and-dagger to it. The party’s nominees would say little about their thinking, the would-be running mates would reveal even less, and an elaborate game of subterfuge would unfold that mostly captivated political insiders and usually had little bearing on the election.

But a convergence of forces has transformed Joseph R. Biden Jr.’s search for a running mate on the Democratic ticket. His pledge to pick a woman immediately limited the pool of potential candidates and intensified the competition; that decision, coupled with Mr. Biden’s garrulous tendency to think aloud about his options, has remade the tryout period into an unusually public audition, and the coronavirus outbreak ensured that it is taking place entirely online and on TV.

And Mr. Biden himself has increasingly pushed into the political foreground the overwhelming reason that his choice may be the most consequential in decades: the expectation, downplayed but not exactly denied by the Biden

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THAILAND Bangkok, which has avoided the worst of the outbreak so far, began easing restrictions.



BRAZIL A cemetery in the hard-hit Amazonas region added a new area for victims of Covid-19.

Office Tools: Computer. Stapler. Sneeze Guard?

By MATT RICHTER

SAN FRANCISCO — The modern corporate office is renowned for open, collaborative work spaces, in-house coffee bars and standing desks with room for two giant computer monitors.

Soon, there may be a new must-have perk: the sneeze guard.

This plexiglass barrier that can be mounted on a desk is one of many ideas being mulled by employers as they contemplate a return to the workplace after coronavirus lockdowns. Their post-

Modifying Workplaces
for a New World

pandemic makeovers may include hand sanitizers built into desks that are positioned at 90-degree angles or that are enclosed by translucent plastic partitions; air filters that push air down and not up; outdoor gathering space to allow collaboration without viral transmission; and windows that actually open, for freer air

flow.

The conversation about how to reconfigure the American workplace is taking place throughout the business world, from small start-ups to giant Wall Street firms. The design and furniture companies that have been hired for the makeovers say the virus may even be tilting workplaces back toward a concept they had been moving away from since the Mad Men era: privacy.

The question is whether any of the changes being contemplated will actually result in safer work

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Workers at a University of California, Irvine, office have new barriers between their cubicles.

Virus Batters Some Areas. Why Does It Spare Others?

Researchers Hunting for Patterns to Explain Wide Variation in Infection Rates

This article is by Hannah Beech, Alissa J. Rubin, Anatoly Kurmanaev and Ruth Maclean.

The coronavirus has killed so many people in Iran that the country has resorted to mass burials, but in neighboring Iraq, the body count is fewer than 100.

The Dominican Republic has reported nearly 7,600 cases of the virus. Just across the border, Haiti has recorded about 85.

In Indonesia, thousands are believed to have died of the coronavirus. In nearby Malaysia, a strict lockdown has kept fatalities to about 100.

The coronavirus has touched almost every country on earth, but its impact has seemed capricious. Global metropolises like New York, Paris and London have been devastated, while teeming cities like Bangkok, Baghdad, New Delhi and Lagos have, so far, largely been spared.

The question of why the virus has overwhelmed some places and left others relatively untouched is a puzzle that has spawned numerous theories and speculations but no definitive answers. That knowledge could have profound implications for how countries respond to the virus, for determining who is at risk and for knowing when it’s safe to go out again.

There are already hundreds of studies underway around the world looking into how demographics, pre-existing conditions and genetics might affect the wide variation in impact.

Doctors in Saudi Arabia are

studying whether genetic differences may help explain varying levels of severity in Covid-19 cases among Saudi Arabs, while scientists in Brazil are looking into the relationship between genetics and Covid-19 complications. Teams in multiple countries are studying if common hypertension medications might worsen the disease’s severity and whether a particular tuberculosis vaccine might do the opposite.

Many developing nations with hot climates and young populations have escaped the worst, suggesting that temperature and demographics could be factors. But countries like Peru, Indonesia and Brazil, tropical countries in the throes of growing epidemics, throw cold water on that idea.

Social-distancing and early lockdown measures have clearly been effective, but Myanmar and Cambodia did neither and have reported few cases.

One theory that is unproven but impossible to refute: maybe the virus just hasn’t gotten to those countries yet. Russia and Turkey appeared to be fine until, suddenly, they were not.

Time may still prove the greatest equalizer: The Spanish flu that broke out in the United States in 1918 seemed to die down during the summer only to come roaring back with a deadlier strain in the fall, and a third wave the following year. It eventually reached far-flung places like islands in Alaska and the South Pacific and infected a third of the world’s population.

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3 Helped Make Hospital Safer, And All 3 Died

By NICOLE HONG

They did not treat patients, but Wayne Edwards, Derik Braswell and Priscilla Carrow held some of the most vital jobs at Elmhurst Hospital Center in Queens.

As the coronavirus tore through the surrounding neighborhood, their department managed the masks, gloves and other protective gear inside Elmhurst, a public hospital at the center of the city’s outbreak. They ordered the inventory, replenished the stockroom and handed out supplies, keeping a close count as the number of available masks began to dwindle.

By April 12, they were all dead.

The pandemic has taken an undisputed toll on doctors, nurses and other front-line health care workers. But it has also ravaged the often-invisible army of non-medical workers in hospitals, many of whom have fallen ill or died with little public recognition of their roles.

The victims included the security guards watching over emergency rooms. They were the chefs who cooked food for patients and other hospital workers. They assigned hospital beds and checked patients’ medical records. They greeted visitors and answered phones. They mopped the hallways and took out the garbage.

“You know how people clap for health workers at 7 o’clock? It’s mainly for the nurses and doctors. I get it. But people are not seeing the other parts of the hospital,” said Eneida Becote, whose husband died last month after working for two decades as a patient transporter. “I feel like those other employees are not focused upon as much.”

Her husband, Edward Becote, made about \$45,000 a year moving patients around the Brooklyn Hospital Center on stretchers and wheelchairs. He was among at

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Arguments will be heard remotely beginning this week.

Supreme Court To Hear Cases By Telephone

By ADAM LIPTAK

WASHINGTON — A few months ago, a coalition of news organizations asked the Supreme Court to allow live audio coverage of major arguments on gay rights and immigration. Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr. rejected the request within hours, in keeping with longstanding practice at an institution that almost never departs from tradition.

But on Monday, the court will break with history twice: hearing the first of 10 cases that will be argued in a telephone conference call, and letting the public listen in. It is a momentous step for a cautious and secretive institution and yet another way in which the coronavirus pandemic has forced American society to adjust to a new reality.

“It’s a remarkable development and completely unexpected,” said Bruce Collins, the general counsel of C-SPAN, which will offer live coverage of the arguments.

Among the cases the justices will hear by phone over the next two weeks are three on May 12 about subpoenas from prosecutors and Congress seeking Presi-

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Scoffing at a Predecessor
President Trump did not welcome a video by former President George W. Bush appealing for solidarity. PAGE A9

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After 18 of our writers shared a silver lining during the pandemic, over 300 people sent in submissions. PAGE A12



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In Lebanon’s capital, it’s a point of pride that the party never stopped, despite war and protests. But will the frivolity return after the lockdown? PAGE A15

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Andrew Cuomo. The C.E.O. of Marriott. Anderson Cooper. The old rules of who can cry in public are changing. PAGE A17

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One hundred years ago, while a pandemic raged, the 19th Amendment hung by a thread in Congress. PAGE A20

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“Just about everyone knows someone who has died,” one maker said about why the cards are hard to find. PAGE B1

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Zev Buffman brought both Elizabeth Taylor and Muhammad Ali to the Broadway stage. He was 89. PAGE A21

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