

Eagle Forum Report

successor to The Phyllis Schlafly Report

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May 2020

Volume 4/Number 5

Created Chaos Destroyed Our Economy

D.C. JUST STOLE YOUR LIBERTIES

by Adam Andrzejewski is the CEO/founder of OpenTheBooks.com, the largest private-sector database of U.S. public-sector expenditures. A version of this article appeared at *Forbes*.

“We need a war on the virus, not a war on the taxpayer.”

— Rep. Thomas Massie (R-KY)

In March, the U.S. Senate unanimously passed a \$2 trillion “Phase III” emergency aid package to help America recover from the coronavirus lockdown. Previous phases provided funds for testing and paid family leave.

Not one U.S. Senator voted against the legislation: 96-0. Twice during the first hour of Senate debate, two “final” versions were distributed. No one had time to even read the final language.

Then, the legislation passed the

U.S. House by a unanimous voice vote. Only Thomas Massie, a courageous representative from Kentucky, tried to force a roll call vote. He couldn’t get a second on his motion.

Our organization at OpenTheBooks.com posted an official summary of the legislation’s supplemental \$340 billion surge to emergency funding. It’s loaded with pet projects, not coronavirus aid.

Here’s a quick timeline of how the legislation came together:

First, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) introduced his 250-page version of this coronavirus aid relief and economic security act the previous week. Eventually it became the \$2 trillion, 883 page “CARES Act — Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act” (H.R.748).

Second, in the ramp up to negotiations, House Democrats and Speaker Nancy Pelosi introduced the “Take Responsibility for Workers and Families

Act” (H.R.6379) — a \$2.5 trillion, 1,404 page coronavirus response.

“The crisis is a tremendous opportunity to restructure things to fit our vision.” — House Majority Whip Rep. James Clyburn (D-SC)

Our auditors dug deeply into McConnell’s Senate bill and compared it to Pelosi’s House bill. While half the nation was “sheltered in place,” here’s what lawmakers — in both parties — considered “essential spending” for coronavirus recovery:

- \$25 million in the Senate bill went to the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. During the past ten years, the center received \$68.3 million in federal grants (2010-2019). The Kennedy Center has total assets of \$557 million. The Pelosi bill earmarked \$35 million. After the bill passed and funding was secured, the Center fired all of their musicians.
- \$75 million in the Senate bill funded the Corporation For Public Broadcasting. Why do National Public Radio and Big Bird get a coronavirus subsidy? The Pelosi

5 EXAMPLES

OF “ESSENTIAL SPENDING” FOR CORONAVIRUS RECOVERY, ACCORDING TO HOUSE DEMOCRATS:

\$35 Million

to the John F. Kennedy Center For The Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. (pg. 76)

\$90 Million

to the Peace Corp (pgs. 148-149). They just fired all of their 7,300 volunteers working in 61 countries on March 15.

\$1.2 Billion

to require airlines to purchase expensive “renewable” jet fuel. (pgs. 969)

\$3 Billion

to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) for “the provision of Wi-Fi hotspots and connected devices to schools and libraries” (\$2 billion) and “emergency broadband connectivity fund” (\$1 billion). (pgs. 44-46)

\$4 Billion

from the federal Election Assistance Commission to assist the states with “contingency planning, preparation, and resilience of elections” (pg. 43).

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bill allocated \$300 million.

- \$1.2 billion in the Pelosi bill to require airlines to purchase expensive “renewable” jet fuel. It was \$200 million per year in grants (2021-2026) to “develop, transport, and store sustainable aviation fuels that would reduce U.S. greenhouse gas emissions.” The Senate bill eliminated this provision.

People of goodwill can debate each of these goals, but is it truly emergency spending? For example, what is the public purpose for the Smithsonian Institution receiving an additional \$7.5 million in this time of crisis? Both bills provided these funds.

While governors begged for vital medical supplies, the spending packages each contained massive increases even in obscure, small agencies.

- \$1.1 billion in the Pelosi bill would have *more than doubled* the budgets of The Institute of Museum and Library Services and the National Endowment of the Arts and the Humanities. The Senate bill provided funding of \$200 million.
- \$500 million in the Pelosi bill to The Institute of Museum and Library Services (FY2019 budget: \$230 million). This agency is so small that it doesn’t even employ an inspector general. The Senate bill provided \$50 million.
- \$600 million in the Pelosi bill to National Endowment of the Arts and the Humanities (FY2019 budget: \$253 million) — In 2017, our study showed eighty-percent of all non-profit grant-making flowed to well-heeled organizations with over \$1 million in assets. The Senate bill provided \$150 million.

The Senate stripped many projects from Pelosi’s bill: the requirement that federal agencies use minority banks; expanded collective

bargaining rights for federal employees; and a \$25 billion bailout of the Post Office became a \$10 billion loan.

However, even the Senate bill significantly strengthened private-sector unionizing. If a business takes a coronavirus stabilization loan, then it must “remain neutral in any union organizing effort for the term of the loan.”

A quick spotlight on agencies receiving coronavirus recovery in the Senate bill includes:

- \$88 million to the Peace Corps for “evacuating volunteers and U.S. direct hires from overseas.” The agency just fired all of their 7,300 volunteers working in 61 countries on March 15. The Pelosi bill allocated \$90 million.
- \$250 million to the Internal Revenue Service. The subsidy would cover “taxpayer services,” “enforcement,” and “operations support.” The Pelosi bill provided \$602 million.
- \$350 million to the State Department for “migration and Refugee Assistance.” This funding would help minimize the virus spread among vulnerable populations. The Pelosi bill earmarked \$300 million.
- \$400 million to the federal Election Assistance Commission to assist the states with “election security grants.” The Pelosi bill provided \$4 billion.
- \$30.8 billion to the Department of Education for “state Fiscal Stabilization Fund” that provides grants to support elementary and secondary education (\$13.5 billion), Higher Ed (\$14.25 billion), and state flexibility grants (\$3 billion). The Pelosi bill asked for \$50 billion.

The Senate bill added provisions to coronavirus relief such as a \$170 billion tax break for wealthy real estate investors; and \$1 billion bailout

of Amtrak.

Kimberley Strassel at *The Wall Street Journal* called the bill a “Big-Government Contagion” and the “biggest one-day expansion of government power ever.” Strassel identified lots of spending not related to the virus.

Here are some examples:

NASA gets \$60 million. Has the virus infected the sun’s corona? The National Archives gets \$8 million. Will it put the virus on display? Many departments get cash for research, regardless of their relevance to today’s medical crisis. Perhaps the Energy Department will use its additional \$99 million in “science” to gauge how the virus responds in a nuclear reactor.

We reached out to Speaker Pelosi for comment.

“The coronavirus epidemic endangers every aspect of American life, and Democrats believe that this historic emergency requires a full-spectrum response to protect our economy and our democracy.”

— *Spokesperson Henry Connelly on behalf of Speaker Nancy Pelosi*

During the past three years, Republicans and Democrats have helped drain the U.S. Treasury from Left and Right. Our national debt increased from \$10 trillion (2008) to \$19.6 trillion (2016) to \$23.6 trillion (2020).

Coronavirus responses will drive the national debt much higher.

Now, leaders in both parties must honor the sacrifices of American workers and families in a lockdown and safeguard the fiscal health of the country.

In the future, Congress must do a better job to provide relief that’s transparent, publicly debated, and truly targeted to those who have real needs.

In the meantime, voters and taxpayers should remain ever vigilant. 

FREEDOM IS THE CURE TO COVID-19

by Michael Quinn Sullivan is CEO of Empower Texans

Psalms 121 says, “I lift my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.”

Easy for him to say. He didn’t have CNN, Fox News, Drudge Report, and every other media outlet screaming that civilization is about to end! Between the Chinese coronavirus being likened to a combination of the Black Plague and Spanish Flu, and the price of oil plummeting as a result of an economic Battle Royale between Russia and Saudi Arabia, human misery is knocking at our door.

Jobless claims in America last week totaled 3.28 million, a level four times higher than the previous record. In Texas, unemployment doubled, and is headed towards 9 percent, and beyond. Texas’s previous peak was 9.2 percent in 1986. People are suffering.

Yet the Psalmist did, in fact, know precisely of which he wrote. For him it was fairly recent world history. His entire people had been rescued from slavery, given the opportunity to establish a self-governing land — which they repeatedly squandered for 400 years — and then were finally and ultimately given over to their sinful desire for a strongman-king to replace the High King of heaven.

The Old Testament’s Book of Judges gets overlooked by most Christians today. The stories are hard, the names complex, and their relationships messy. Few of the stories make for the safe, positive Sunday School songs we have come to expect. It is a shame, because it has so much to teach us about how our hearts respond to troubled times.

During that period, the people

of Israel would lose faith, stumbling from the path given to them directly by God through Moses. Then, after a righteous leader rose up among the people and offered vision and a way back, they would temporarily return. The story of redemption is told using a cast of characters we would easily recognize from the evening news.

That happened again and again, right up until the time of Samuel.

The people looked around at other nations and saw they were unique without an earthly king, and they didn’t trust Samuel’s sons as their judges, so they asked Samuel to appoint for them a king.

Samuel was aghast; God was their King! Samuel took their demand as a personal slight, but God told him: “Obey the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them.”

Through Samuel, God told the people all the bad things a king would do... yet they still went with it.

In times of trouble, it is natural that we would look for help. It is our sin that makes us seek help from man; from kings and politicians. In His perfect love, God has ordained a better way.

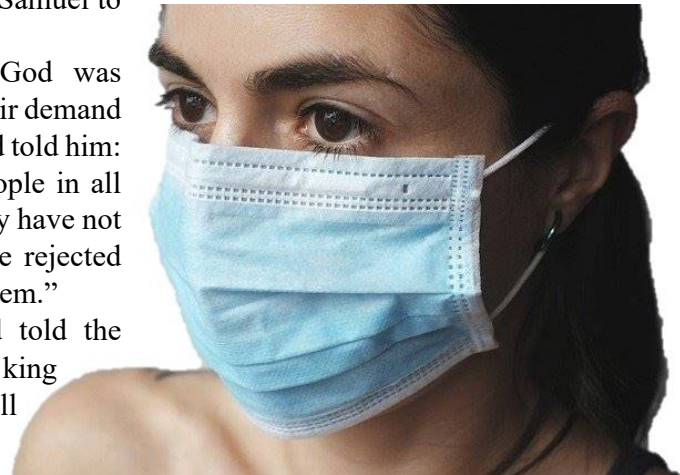
In our national situation today, the politicians want us groveling for low-interest loans — of our own money. The politicians want us thanking them for sending us checks... that will be paid for by us. The politicians want us to shelter in place, shuttering our business and disassociating from our churches, so that we will have no choice but to set our eyes on them.

The Lone Star State offers contrasting examples of the right and

wrong path.

Dallas County and Collin County represent the east side of the DFW metroplex. Dallas, which has shifted a California-like blue politically, is bordered to the north by the historically Republican Collin. Dallas is home to, well, Dallas. While Collin’s cities — Plano, McKinney, among others — aren’t as well known, they are home to some of the nation’s leading corporations.

Dallas County’s chief administrator — we call them “judges,” despite their lack of judicial activity — issued a draconian order closing “non-essential” businesses, restricting



gatherings, and threatening people with fines or jail should he be ignored. Collin County’s judge, on the other hand, issued a more thoughtful request that the people should follow commonsense protocols from health experts, work at home if they could, but encouraged businesses to stay open if they could do so safely.

Dallas offered threats, Collin offered sympathy. My email box was filled with reports of people in Dallas County who were either scared... or looking for opportunities to ignore the order. Step across the county line

————— *(Continued on page 4)*

— which is invisible thanks to the region’s rapid urbanization — and life wasn’t normal, but it also wasn’t fearful.

President Trump has taken in recent days to saying the “cure” to the coronavirus cannot be worse than the disease itself. He’s right.

The governing side effects from the treatment we allow politicians to take in “curing” this sudden malaise of physical and economic health will linger. We must not allow “cower in place” orders to become the new normal. We must reject the notion that government can bully our churches into silence. We must not accept the growth of a “benevolent” government.

Gerald Ford, of all people, once said, “A government big enough to give you everything you want is a government big enough to take from you everything you have.” He was certainly right about that.

Even in super-Republican Texas, we hear grumblings that the looming state budget problems this present crisis will inevitably cause must be addressed with more money. Let us not forget too quickly that just 12 months ago, Texas was suffering from an embarrassment of riches — literally.

Our thriving economy meant the state’s coffers were filled to the brim, overflowing with a record \$10.5 billion state surplus. This happy problem was solved, of course, by Republican and Democrat lawmakers spending every penny *and* dipping into the state’s reserves.

A modest tax relief package — which no everyday Texan saw or felt, except in the most abstract way — was dwarfed by legislators’ new spending. When one expects the good times to last, maxing out the credit card isn’t a bad way to live, but for mere mortals in state government

lacking a Federal Reserve printing them new currency, the bills will soon come due.

And that is the situation in which we find ourselves.

There are already subtle calls to raid the state’s “rainy day” fund — that, after all, would be to avoid cutting the newly bloated programs. Worse, there are soft whispers to increase those bloated and inefficient programs with new revenues.

New revenues, of course, is polite code for “raising taxes and hiking fees.” It should not escape notice that locales at home and abroad with the worst coronavirus problems are also those with the highest levels of socialism.

Big government, it turns out, is the worst pre-existing condition imaginable when confronted with a pandemic.

In his seminal work *The Tragedy of American Compassion*, written nearly 30 years ago, Marvin Olasky traced how the modern approach to serving the afflicted and needy through government programs has failed. It’s failed not because it spends too much or too little, but because it is a failed philosophy. It is what he calls “pseudo-compassion.”

Fortunately, we have a better way. The French economist Frederick Bastiat once wrote, “And now that the legislators and do-gooders have futilely inflicted so many systems upon society, may they finally end where they should have begun: May they reject all systems, and try liberty.”

Elected officials must resist the urge to “do something,” because inevitably it will be misused. Some things, undoubtedly, need to be done. But carefully.

Citizens, likewise, must resist the urge to ask for so-called “protection,” lest they find their cherished rights removed and their pockets emptied.

The marketplace of ideas and products provides a far better field from which to solve whatever ills might befall than a conference room of self-proclaimed experts.

A free people tend to give more freely, of themselves and their money, and then hold each other accountable. Personal responsibility must be lovingly tied to a sense of obligation to our neighbors.

This is precisely what God intended for His people. It is what our republic’s Founding Fathers sought to emulate by restricting the power of government. They intended the power of government only to secure our rights, while harnessing the unique talents and skills of the people to solve their own problems and care for each other most appropriately.

A self-governing people — who rely on their neighbors and fellow parishioners, and are themselves relied upon — cast their eyes to heaven and are, as a result, able to provide real compassion and real solutions. 



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