



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 30, 2020

**Remarks as Prepared for Delivery by Vice President Joe Biden in Wilmington,
Delaware**

For weeks, we've seen the warning signs — the numbers don't lie.

Infection rates are now going up in more states than they are going down. More than 125,000 people in the United States have lost their lives, and those numbers and new infections continue to grow at an alarming rate. And once again it's confirming the simple fact that we won't be able to solve the economic crisis without a rigorous public health approach.

Despite the Administration's propaganda that their response should be "a cause for celebration," despite President Trump's request that we should slow down testing, because he thinks it makes him look bad, COVID-19 is still here. A daily threat to American health and prosperity.

It did not have to be this way.

Month after month, as other leaders in other countries took the necessary steps to get the virus under control, Donald Trump failed us. Month after month, as many of us urged him to step up and do his job, he failed us.

Just look at the record.

In January, I sounded the alarm over the coronavirus outbreak. Trump told the country that he had COVID-19 "totally under control" and that everything would all "work out well."

In February, I warned about our failure to get information we needed from the Chinese

government. I said if I were President, I would demand it.

Trump said we were in "great shape" and reported that China's president said it was "doing very well."

In March, I set forth a detailed plan for 500 federally-funded testing sites across the country as well as guaranteed emergency paid leave. And later that month, I called for the full and immediate use of the Defense Production Act to deliver critical supplies.

Trump accused health care workers of stealing masks.

In April, I released plans to secure the supply chain for personal protective equipment, surge nationwide testing through a Pandemic Testing Board, and launch a nationwide health corps to focus on contact tracing.

Trump's suggestion?

Americans should inject disinfectants into their bodies.

In May, I condemned the false choice between preserving our public health and our economy. I urged the Administration to focus on the basic public health measures like testing that would enable us to sustain our economic recovery.

Trump's response?

He pushed for reopening without regard for safety and called testing "frankly overrated."

This month, I outlined a path to reopen our country safely and sustainably. It provided workers, small businesses, schools, and state and local governments the tools, resources, and guidance they would need.

Trump's proposal?

He set a cutoff date for federal funding for testing sites in several states, and actually went to court to take health care away from millions.

And now, Donald Trump is in retreat.

Remember back in March when he called himself a wartime president? Remember when he exhorted the nation to "sacrifice together" to face an "invisible enemy"? What

happened?

Now it's almost July and it seems the wartime president has surrendered — has waved the white flag and left the field of battle. Today we're facing a serious threat, and we must meet it — as one country. But this President gives us no direction. He pits us against one another.

We can't continue on like this — half recovering and half getting worse.

We can't continue — half wearing masks and half rejecting science

We can't continue — half with a plan and half just hoping for the best.

We won't defeat this virus with a piecemeal approach — lifting restrictions prematurely, increasing the volatility of the crisis, and raising the likelihood of needing to re-impose restrictions.

Until our science catches up to our reality — until we have better treatments for those who become infected and ultimately a safe, proven, widely available vaccine — we have to continue to do all we can as a people and as a government to keep our fellow Americans safe and healthy.

Today, I am releasing a plan with the steps Donald Trump should undertake immediately. It builds on the roadmap I released back in March that would have saved lives if it had been adopted. It is a plan to save lives in the months ahead.

Once again — I encourage him to adopt this plan in its entirety. This is too important for politics.

First, testing, testing, testing.

More testing is not only how you find more cases of coronavirus, Mr. President, it's how you stop more cases. Testing — followed by rigorous contact tracing and quarantine and isolation protocols for those who have been exposed.

People aren't waiting in miles-long lines in baking hot cars for a drive-through nasal swab for the fun of it. They're doing it so they can protect themselves and their families.

We know we're not where we need to be on testing. There are still hospitals and nursing homes that don't have access to the tests they need. Testing is how we see what's

happening in communities all across the country. It's our eyes on the ground. Without it, we're flying blind. That's why it's so important to have reliable access to testing everywhere.

We need to increase federal support for testing — that includes doubling the number of drive-through testing sites. And keep increasing them until there are no lines.

We should create a Pandemic Testing Board to spearhead a nationwide campaign so every worker who is called back to their job can have the confidence that they and their co-workers are not infected.

Experts agree that we need more contact tracers to track the path of this virus. Individual states like New York and California are already hiring and training thousands of tracers.

But we need more, including hiring at least 100,000 federally funded workers to perform contact tracing and other public health tasks.

Second, every single front line worker should have the personal protective equipment they need to be safe.

Five months into this crisis, and our health care workers are still forced to scramble for their own supplies and must reuse masks — shift after shift.

Hundreds of health care workers have died from COVID-19, and tens of thousands have been infected. It should be zero on both counts.

How are we this many months in and we still — still — don't have what we need?

This is why we have a Defense Production Act.

Use your authority this week, Mr. President, to scale up the production of N-95 masks. The steps you've taken so far haven't gotten the job done. Fix the shortage of PPE for our health care workers before you tee off for yet another round of golf. We can't just look at where we are today — we're going to need masks and gloves and face shields for the foreseeable future. We need to be ready.

Third, there should be a laser-focus on treatments and vaccines.

We should be leading a coordinated, global approach on the science — not disregarding the experts while pushing dangerous and disproven drugs as a treatment.

There has been some progress towards treatments and vaccines. But the administration hasn't been transparent about how they plan to manufacture enough doses, and make sure they are equitably distributed at scale.

Every person in the United States must be able to get the vaccine when available.

The White House should report weekly on this progress. We can't end up with the same scarcity and distribution problems we did with testing. And we need to make sure that consumers aren't being gouged as new drugs and therapies are developed.

We must immediately restore our relationship with the World Health Organization. For all its shortcomings and missteps around COVID-19, this is why the WHO was created. It is essential to coordinating a global response during a pandemic. And the United States should be leading the way.

COVID-19 will likely worsen at the onset of flu season this year. So we need to put in place measures now to ensure the seasonal flu vaccine can be readily available and administered safely to those who need it under social distancing guidelines — especially for seniors.

Fourth, we need real plans, real guidelines with uniform, nation-wide standards to help chart our economic reopening.

Whatever it is that we're doing now — it's not working. A state-by-state approach will only produce confusion and slow any progress.

The CDC tried to develop clear guidelines about what the stages of re-opening should look like — the Administration delayed and scaled them back.

We need clear, evidence-based steps that states can adopt — both the standards that must be met in order to safely proceed with further opening, and the re-imposition of social distancing rules when cases begin to rise.

We need to support schools and child care programs so parents can return to work, confident that their kids will be safe and cared for.

We should be providing "Safer for Shoppers" certifications to stores that prove they are minimizing their customers' risk of exposure.

And we absolutely need a clear message from the very top of our federal government — that everyone needs to wear a mask in public. Period.

It's not just about you – it's about your family, your neighbors, your colleagues. It's about keeping other people safe. It's a simple measure that is also one of the most effective things we can do right now. It may be inconvenient – but it's the right thing to do as an American.

Finally, we need to protect the populations most at risk from this virus.

Our Seniors. Our Black and Brown and Native communities that are being hit the hardest. Vulnerable populations with pre-existing conditions.

I know that this continued growth in case numbers is causing fear. People – especially older Americans and those with loved ones in nursing homes – are scared. This isn't just taking a toll on their physical health, there's an emotional cost as well. We can't expect vulnerable populations to quarantine indefinitely without support. And I want them to know that their health and safety will be my responsibility as president.

I will not abandon you.

Those are five simple, straightforward steps that will help us defeat this pandemic.

And if you suspect that a lot of these steps are the same sorts of things I was talking about in March when I released my first COVID-19 Response Plan – you're right.

If it feels like you've been hearing the experts talk about these same issues for months – you're right.

These have always been the steps the government needed to put in place to meet this threat.

The state-wide lockdowns that so many Americans lived under for months were intended to buy us the time to get our act together. But instead of using that time to prepare ourselves – Donald Trump squandered it.

Now here we are, more than three months later, and we're hardly better prepared than we were in March.

Infections on the rise. The threat of massive spikes that overwhelm the capacity of our health care system. Americans anxious and out of work, fearful for their lives and their loved ones.

And Donald Trump is doing next-to-nothing about it.

Mr. President – the crisis is real – and it's surging. Promises and predictions and wishful thinking pulled out of thin air are not only doing this country no good, it's making them lose more faith in their government

America knows this crisis isn't behind us. Even if you don't.

They see what is happening. Even if you refuse to.

They know a coordinated national plan is needed now. Even though you won't do it.

You've called yourself a "cheerleader" for the nation. We don't need a cheerleader. We need a President.

A president who will level with the American people.

A president who will tell us the unvarnished truth.

A president who will take responsibility instead of always blaming others.

A president who will listen to the experts and follow the science.

A president who will lead and be an example for the nation:

Wear a mask, keep your distance, limit the size of any crowd.

It's not about you, Mr. President – it's about the health and well-being of the American public.

The American people didn't make enormous sacrifices over the past four months so you could waste your time with late night rantings and tweets.

They didn't make these sacrifices so you could ignore the science and turn responsible steps like wearing a mask into a political statement.

And they certainly didn't do it so you could wash your hands and walk away.

Maybe there are times this nation needs a cheerleader. Now isn't one of them. We need a president.

Whatever Trump does – or does not do – we cannot know today what the state of the COVID-19 pandemic will be next January. But it almost certainly won't be over.

If I should have the honor of being elected President, on the day I'm sworn in I'll get right to work implementing all aspects of the response that remain undone.

I'll have more to say about my Day One COVID-19 agenda in the weeks to come. But my response will begin well before I take the oath of office. It will start as soon as the election is decided.

I will be a president who respects scientists, and who won't censor their ability to speak directly to the American people.

I'll immediately reach out to Dr. Anthony Fauci to ask him to continue his incredible service to our country.

I'll have from day one – ready to go – the best medical experts and scientists to advise on our response.

And I'll listen to them.

I will work with governors and mayors of both parties, and from every state, territory, and tribe.

We are all in this together. We will fight this together. And we will emerge from this stronger, because we did it together.

And now, I'm happy to take a few of your questions.
