

Trump's Coronavirus Crisis in Florida: It's About Him, Not You



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Floridians are impacted every day by the Trump Administration's gross mishandling of the COVID-19 pandemic. These failures, born of Trump's incompetence and bottomless narcissism, are no longer surprising to anyone. What is less obvious for many voters, however, is the direct harm that his selfish mismanagement has caused *to them*.

If you follow politics closely, this inability by voters to connect the dots may strike you as surprising. But Third Way's research shows that while Trump's selfishness is obvious to everyone, the impact on voters' lives is not.

Floridians are starting to realize Trump only cares about himself. What many still don't know is why they should care. Democrats must tell them, with clear and simple examples like these:

The Pandemic

HTM: Trump is selling the fantasy that COVID-19 will 'magically disappear' because he thinks it will

HIM: Trump is selling the fantasy that COVID-19 will magically disappear because he thinks it will boost his poll numbers and the stock market.

Florida has been the coronavirus epicenter of the world for weeks, reporting a rise in infections at a rate unparalleled by other states. The state has now surpassed New York in total number positive cases, with as many as 55 hospitals reporting 0% availability for ICU beds. Despite these alarming trends, Trump has insisted since early February that the virus is a “Democratic hoax” that will just go away on its own. He thinks that by disregarding safety measures, he has a better story to tell voters and that it will reassure investors.

YOU: The virus is out of control everywhere, especially in Florida. Because of Trump’s self-serving fiction about it going away on its own, his Administration has no plan to stop it, putting every American in physical danger.

Trump’s response has been the worst in the world, with the US seeing the most cases and most deaths overall of any nation on earth. Governor DeSantis seems to be taking a page from Trump’s playbook by ignoring and exacerbating the crisis: Florida broke records recently as the state saw its largest single-day case increase on July 12 (15,300 cases) and saw a record number of deaths on July 31 (257 deaths). Now, the state has surpassed the half-million mark of coronavirus infections. As of early August, COVID-19 had killed more than 158,000 Americans across the country and sickened 4.8 million.

Testing

HIM: Trump wants to slow down testing to make it seem as if case numbers are lower.

President Trump has ordered coronavirus testing be slowed down because he thinks this will result in lower case numbers. He believes (bizarrely) that more testing means more cases, and more cases are bad for him politically. DeSantis is following suit by barring scientists from his briefings and blaming the “testing industrial complex” for inflating positive cases in FL.

YOU: Instead of providing desperately needed leadership and assistance, Trump praised Florida for reopening early and only ramped up testing in FL when he planned to host the convention in Jacksonville.

Two months ago, Governor DeSantis stood outside the White House and bragged that Florida had conquered the coronavirus: “We succeeded and people just don't want to recognize it,” he said, standing by Trump’s side. In actuality the response in Florida has been nothing short of a disaster.





Masks

HIM: *Until he realized it was politically damaging for him, Trump supported those who refused to wear masks, and refused to wear one himself in public, even when he visited Miami, a coronavirus hotspot.*

Trump has politicized mask-wearing. Even when visiting Miami Dade, one of the worst-hit counties of Florida, Trump and his entire entourage were maskless, rebuking the order set by Mayor Carlos Gimenez.

YOU: *The politicization of masks is making the pandemic more dangerous and putting Floridians at risk.*

For roughly five months, the president rejected science and ignored pleas from the CDC Director who said that the virus would be under control in 4-8 weeks if everyone wore a mask. This has forced Florida House Democrats to issue mask orders in a patchwork of safety measures that the state is struggling to enforce.

Public Events

HIM: *Trump has urged states to rush their reopenings—Florida's especially—in hopes of hosting the Republican National Convention in Jacksonville.*

Though the president abruptly canceled the RNC in July, his concern over ego-boosting rallies has clearly been a higher priority to him than testing and controlling the virus.

YOU: *Holding rallies in COVID hotspots like FL puts everyone at risk and promotes the dangerous idea that the virus can be ignored.*

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These events, before mostly un-masked audiences, have endangered not only the attendees but everyone in their communities. DeSantis pushed for a speedy reopening even when Florida was at its worst in COVID-19 cases, hoping to secure Trump's bid to host the convention in Jacksonville, which ultimately failed.

Schools

HIM: *Trump is demanding that Florida schools reopen with few safety protocols, because he believes that will help him politically.*

Trump has threatened to withhold federal aid from schools that do not reopen, and he pressured the CDC to loosen guidelines for school reopening. Now, Trump and congressional Republicans are conditioning aid to desperate state and local governments – including in Florida, where child hospitalizations surged to 31,150 cases, a 23% increase in mere days – on their agreement to open schools, regardless of the risk to children, staff, and their communities.

YOU: *While Trump plays political games with your health, Floridians are concerned about the health of their children, parents and caregivers, school employees, and entire communities.*

Trump argues with the CDC and ignores the objections of public health professionals. Sen. Rick Scott pushes for schools to reopen while his own grandchildren stay home. And Floridians are starting to push back: Pediatricians announced some schools in FL are deemed too high-risk to have students return, and teachers unions are suing the state over reopening efforts.

Voting

HIM: *Trump thinks that discrediting mail-in-voting will help his election prospects, so he's trying to turn public opinion against it.*

In May, the president was so desperate to ensure his reelection that he threatened to withhold federal funds from states if they moved forward with their mail-in voting plans, even though the rate of fraud in the 2016 and 2018 elections was just 0.0025 percent. Contrary to their baseless claims of voters fraud, both President Trump and White House press secretary Kayleigh McEnany voted by mail in Florida in recent elections.

YOU: *The reality is that creating distrust for mail-in-voting will harm the demographic that is simultaneously the most at-risk for COVID-19 and the most present at polls: seniors.*

Trump's claims will discourage many from voting absentee and spur more in-person voting. This could be extremely dangerous for Floridians, as voters over the age of 60 make up 37% of the electorate and are the majority of the state's poll workers. Elderly communities like The Villages in Central Florida—where residents suffer a coronavirus death every eight minutes—

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ely on mail-in ballots to vote safely and accessibly. There is absolutely no evidence of systemic bias toward one party in mail-in voting, and the rate of fraud is incredibly low.

Conclusion

No Republican has won the presidency without winning Florida in nearly 100 years. Trump's team knows this, and they're doing everything to aid and abet their political agenda at the cost of Floridian's health and safety. It is incumbent upon everyone working to defeat Trump that we make clear the connection between Trump's selfishness and their own lives. As we discovered in 2016, voters can conclude that his conduct (like on the "Access Hollywood" tape) might be abhorrent, but it remains irrelevant to their everyday lives. This time, they must understand that his selfishness in the face of a pandemic matters enormously: it is dangerous to them, their families, and their communities.