

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

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Every day, reporting sheds new light on President Trump's disastrous mishandling of the COVID-19 pandemic, the consequent economic crisis, and the impact on the everyday lives of North Carolinians. 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.

North Carolinians know that Trump cares only about himself. What many don't know is why they should care. Democrats must tell them, with clear and simple examples like these:

The Pandemic

THE PANDEMIC

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.*

North Carolina saw a new high for the number of patients hospitalized for coronavirus and set new daily case records in July. 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, including in North Carolina. 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. North Carolina saw its largest single-day case count (2,437) on July 18. As of early August, COVID-19 had killed more than 160,000 Americans across the country and sickened 5 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, even going as far as pushing to block billions of dollars in the new relief bill that would go to testing and tracing. He believes (bizarrely) that more testing means more cases, and more cases are bad for him politically.

YOU: *Instead of providing desperately needed leadership and assistance, he concerns himself with other matters and watches North Carolinians suffer the consequences.*

Having 33 localities listed in the White House’s own red zone, North Carolina is still in need of increased testing and PPE. Trump’s lack of urgency and compassion for the many who were suffering are a major indication that Trump is prioritizing his own ego over the lives of millions of Americans.

Masks

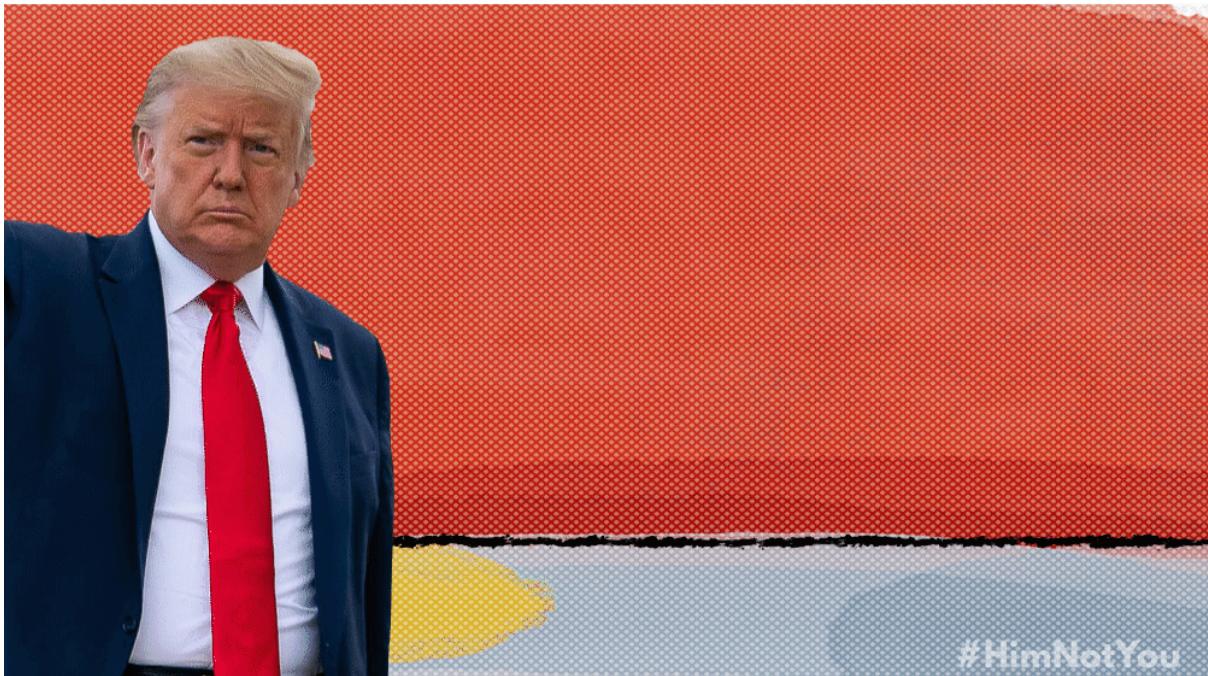
HIM: *Until he realized it was politically damaging for him, Trump supported those who refused to wear masks.*

Trump has politicized mask-wearing. Even though he brewed animosity towards masks for almost half of the year, the president said in July that he had never been against them to begin with. Yet in May, he insisted that the RNC convention be devoid of masks entirely.

YOU: *The politicization of masks is making the pandemic more dangerous and putting North*

YOU: The politicization of masks is making the pandemic more dangerous and putting North Carolinians 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 governors like Roy Cooper to issue state-wide mask mandates where there needs to be coordinated federal strategy.



Public Events

HIM: Trump still wanted to carry on with his ego-stroking rallies in North Carolina and across the country but bowed to reality when local authorities began to balk.

Trump has already held a series of large public events, ordered up a rally and fireworks display at Mt. Rushmore, removed public safety measures at his Tulsa rally, and insisted on a large crowd for his convention until he received public pushback from Florida authorities. Initially the RNC convention was set to be held in North Carolina, but Trump pulled out in May, when he refused to compromise with state officials on safety measures.

YOU: Holding these rallies in future hotspots like North Carolina puts everyone at risk and promotes the dangerous idea that the virus can be ignored.

These events, before mostly un-masked audiences, have endangered not only the attendees but everyone in their communities.

Schools

HIM: Trump is demanding that North Carolina schools reopen with few safety protocols, because he

~~Trump is demanding that North Carolina schools reopen with new safety protocols, because he believes that will help him politically.~~

Trump has threatened to withhold federal aid from schools that do not reopen while also pressuring the CDC to loosen guidelines for school reopening. In July, Trump and congressional Republicans conditioned aid to desperate state and local governments just as child care centers in and around Mecklenburg County showed increased COVID-19 outbreaks among children. But one thing is clear: the majority of NC residents want either full time remote learning or part time in person learning with enhanced safety measures.

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

While Trump argues with the CDC and ignores the objections of public health professionals to give himself a political boost, North Carolinians are facing the consequences. Students and teachers at a Wake Forest school were forced to quarantine when a student contracted coronavirus just days after Pence visited one of their local locations to applaud the school for being at the “forefront” of reopening.

Voting

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

While the NC Republican Party encouraged residents to vote by mail to ensure their safety, Trump was spouting inaccurate statistics about the amount of fraudulent ballots associated with mail-ins. The rate of fraud in the 2016 and 2018 elections was just 0.0025 percent and the President and many of his staffers vote-by-mail.

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, causing more in-person voting, where 60% of poll workers are seniors, including in North Carolina. There is absolutely no evidence of systemic bias toward one party in mail-in voting, and the rate of fraud is incredibly low.

Conclusion

It is incumbent upon everyone working to defeat Trump, especially in the battleground state of North Carolina, 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.~~

time, they must understand that this sickness in the face of a pandemic matters enormously: it is dangerous to them, their families, and their communities.