

OPINION THE INDEPENDENT VOICE OF VOLUSIA & FLAGLER COUNTIES

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THE DAYTONA BEACH
NEWS-JOURNAL

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"Give me the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue freely according to conscience, above all liberties."
— Milton

OUR VIEW/QUICK TAKES

Celebrating what's good in our community

Daytona Beach steps up

The coronavirus crisis has forced government at all levels to adapt quickly and take steps that wouldn't have been thinkable only two weeks ago.

The city of Daytona Beach deserves credit for acting fast — over a much wider swath of the population than most cities — to provide help and economic stimulus in a town that is particularly hard-hit because of the sudden body blow the tourism industry has taken.

The City Commission voted Tuesday to give residents a break on next month's utilities -- water, sewer, recycling and the public service tax all will be free, paid for by the city's reserve fund to the tune of \$4 million. Nity utility customers still will get a bill with charges for stormwater, solid waste and landfill fees, but they'll get relief for a big chunk of the usual bill during what for many families will be a hard month.

During this crisis, the city also has announced a moratorium on water cut-offs — a measure many other cities, including Port Orange, DeLand and Palm Coast have adopted as well. But Daytona Beach is also taking a lead over other cities by granting automatic rent adjustments to some of its public-housing tenants who are known to work in hospitality venues such as bars, restaurants or attractions. (Workers in other industries who have lost their jobs or seen their hours cut should contact the housing authority by phone or email.)

Help is also going out to businesses. For the next 90 days, Daytona Beach will suspend building permit fees and will temporarily waive commercial tenants' rents at city-owned facilities such as the Daytona Beach Pier, the city golf course restaurant and Tuscaawilla Park.

These are necessary measures. And by taking them in a timely manner, the city can prevent even worse damage to the area economy and individual families. Other cities should take note.

Reaching out to help each other

Across Volusia, St. Johns and Flagler counties, governmental agencies and businesses are clearly doing their part to address an economic and health-related crisis. But coronavirus relief is also a person-to-person event. Local residents are coping with the stress and restrictions brought about by COVID-19 by looking for ways to ease others' distress — whether it's delivering meals to homebound seniors, providing online services from church services to story hours, or just offering to go shopping or provide other help for neighbors who are too vulnerable to the coronavirus to safely leave their homes.

It's a pattern we've seen before, during hurricanes and other stressful times. Some people cope best by helping others to cope. Faith-based groups — most of which will not be holding regular services while the ban on large gatherings is in place — have switched gears to collecting food. Nonprofits such as the YMCA, the Jerry Doliner Food Bank and Food Brings Hope are scrambling to meet an increased demand for food, as well services such as child care — and they're being backed by a second line of community support from local businesses.

This is going to be a long haul, and if predictions are correct, things will get a lot worse before they get better. Remembering that we are all in this together is the best way for the entire community to pull through.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Keep them open

This is the most ridiculous thing I ever heard: Close the beaches? For what purpose?

Do the powers that be realize the beach is the only respite we get from all this silliness? That families can spend quality time together and not worry about other things? That fresh air and sunshine are healthy and may help to combat the spread of the virus and muddled thinking? And I'm wondering, when was the last time our elected officials had a beach day? Might be a good time for them to visit and clear their heads.

Are they that draconian in their thinking that they feel this is the only answer to this situation? Please. I urge them not to fall into this pseudo-trap. Everything else has been taken away from us; jobs, restaurants, entertainment. Now they want to take this, too?

Please. Keep the beaches open! Pay the lifeguards and give people hope that things will get better. Is that too much to ask from our local government?

This too shall pass and we will get through it. Then, we will remember in November.

Valerie Favereaux, Ormond-By-The-Sea

Guns are essential

If the state of Florida or local government determines that a stay-at-home (or lockdown) policy is necessary in order to minimize the spread of COVID-19, we recommend that firearms

stores be classified as an "essential" category of business. And, as such, that they be allowed to remain open. Many anxious Floridians who did not previously own a firearm are deciding that they need one now.

According to news reports, The Florida Department of Law Enforcement's firearm eligibility system experienced an approximate 500% increase, year-over-year, in the number of firearms purchase background checks they conducted last week. That is clear evidence that many Floridians currently consider firearms and ammunition to be an essential COVID-19 preparation and/or survival acquisition. In addition, the Second Amendment guarantees the right of our citizens to bear arms. An order that includes the closing of gun stores would deny those who currently do not own a gun, their constitutional right to acquire one. Which, in turn, would limit their ability to protect their homes, families or businesses. Having that ability provides many of our neighbors a greater sense of security and peace of mind. Regardless of how people feel about firearms personally, in emergency situations they serve the same general purpose as fire extinguishers, generators and bottled water. It is better to have them and not need them, than to need them and not have them.

Richard Paiva, DeLand
Paiva's son Charles owns Gold Medal Guns and Ammo in DeLand.

Be gun-wary

We've all taken notice of the panic buying of toilet paper and hand sanitizer, but there is a much more alarming and dangerous trend. As reported in national news, major gun stores across the U.S. are experiencing people stocking up in enormous numbers and online ammunition site Ammo.com reported a 70 percent increase in sales. "AR15s are flying off shelves" as panic stricken shoppers seek self-protection.

Parents and schools are seeking to protect children from the Covid-19 virus, but are similar precautions taking place in the home? An estimated 4.6 million children in this country live in a home with an unlocked and loaded gun. We've seen local tragedies where curious children take the lives of their playmates due to unprotected firearms access.

Don't wait for another preventable tragedy by an unintentional shooting or a teen dying by gun suicide. If you own a gun, be responsible. Take steps now to secure all firearms. Keep ammunition locked away, ask about firearms access prior to letting your children visit others' homes. In a time when we feel insecure about the virus threat, this is one area where we can take control. Gun sense is literally a matter of life and death!

Rosemary Walker, New Smyrna Beach

TO SUBMIT LETTERS

We welcome letters from readers on matters of public interest. Letters should be no more than 250 words. They must be original and written exclusively for The News-Journal. They can be edited for length and clarity. Anonymous letters and pseudonyms cannot be printed. Letters are printed with the writer's full name and hometown. Those that do not include a home address and daytime phone number will not be considered for publication. Only one letter per writer can be published every 30 days.

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Well done, Congress. But it's time to go to Phase 4



Hugh Hewitt

Hold on, America. "Phase four" is coming.

After the searing partisanship which briefly engulfed the \$2 trillion, "phase three" rescue package, Congress will need a bill on which almost all Republicans and Democrats can agree. The extremes need not be courted; the center must be rebuilt. Phase one was a mere \$8.3

billion measure on vaccine research and development.

Phase two, the House Democrats' bill, was deeply disliked by Republicans but the Senate GOP passed it anyway.

Phase three — Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell's, R-Ky., rescue package still wending through Congress — blew the doors off the normally staid Senate.

But the country still needs a phase four because it needs to respond to the purveyor of the plague: The Chinese Communist Party, or the CCP.

Nature produced COVID-19, just as it had in 1918 with the flu pandemic, and subsequently with H1N1, Ebola,

SARS and MERS. We all know that the novel coronavirus began in China's Wuhan province. Did Chinese authorities alert the world to the nature of the problem? No. The CCP covered up, kept experts away and tossed out journalists. And the world is now paying a catastrophic price.

"This strange new reality has forced our nation into something like a wartime footing," said McConnell. "A fight has arrived on our shores. We did not seek it. We did not want it. But now, we are going to win it."

The immediate fight is the virus. The larger, long-term

battle is with a regime that allowed the virus to leave its shores.

This does not mean war. It means vigilance and deterrence. Phase four must begin with strong civil rights protections for Asian Americans. Even one act of bigotry against a fellow citizen is unacceptable and punishments must be harsh.

Second, Congress must fund the strategic weapons acquisitions that will deter Beijing on every front and in every theater. Deterrence is expensive. Chinese President Xi Jinping must be amazed that, in a vast \$2 trillion expenditure, the United States spent

nothing in its defense against the CCP's malevolence.

Third, pharmaceutical manufacturing now depends on Chinese factories. That must change quickly. Sen. Tom Cotton, R-Ark., and Rep. Mike Gallagher, R-Wis., have offered a bill outlining the steps needed to bring pharmaceutical manufacturing back within the United States, ending the dependency on the Chinese supply chain.

Phase four should be about the common defense against the culprit behind this catastrophe.

Hewitt writes for the Washington Post.