



# WTH is going on with the coronavirus relief package? Will the \$2 trillion bill save us from economic collapse?

Episode #38 | March 26, 2020 | Danielle Pletka, Marc Thiessen, and Michael Strain

Danielle Pletka: Hi, I'm Danielle Pletka.

Marc Thiessen: I'm Marc Thiessen.

Danielle Pletka: Welcome to our podcast, What the Hell Is Going On? Nowadays, of course, you don't need to ask, but I'll try anyway. Marc, what's going on?

Marc Thiessen: Well, we're talking today about the economic response to the coronavirus crisis. After a week of delay, Congress is finally getting its act together and passing a major emergency economic relief bill. The bill, it's got four basic components. It's going to expand unemployment assistance for Americans who've lost their jobs, it's going to give direct cash payments to people who have no income, and it's going to create a fund that is proposed by Marco Rubio, Susan Collins, and Ben Cardin, a bipartisan plan, basically \$350 billion to replace the revenue of small and medium sized businesses, so they can keep people on their payroll so that they're ready, so they survive the recession and are ready to go when economic activity resumes, and then there's a \$500 billion economic stabilization fund to bail out larger industries, most of which will be run by the Fed, and they say they'll be able to leverage \$4 trillion.

Marc Thiessen: So this is a pretty robust bill, and the goal is to see if we can get... We've now got the first government mandated recession in American history. We had Derek Scissors on the podcast a few weeks ago talking about China and the economy, but he was saying the goal is to have a V-shaped recession, where rapid decline followed by rapid increase, once, the danger has passed, but if we're going to have that rapid increase, we can't have people looking for work, and businesses...

Danielle Pletka: Collapsing.

Marc Thiessen: Collapsing.

Danielle Pletka: Right.

Marc Thiessen: They have to be intact. So what do you think about that?

Danielle Pletka: Well, I mean, I'm really torn on the one hand, because obviously, it is the job of government to help people in need, it is the job of government to be there in a crisis, it is the job of government to stabilize the economy at a time of a global pandemic. On the other hand, to misquote Everett Dirksen, who apparently never

said this in the first place, "A trillion here, a trillion there, it soon adds up to real money." Just a month and a half ago, two months ago, you and I were lambasting Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren for wanting to spend \$1 trillion on bailing out student loans, and Medicare for All, and our government is about to pass a \$2 trillion bailout package. The one thing I worry about-

Marc Thiessen: We're not close to Bernie yet. Bernie has proposed \$97.5 trillion in spending, so this is just a fraction of Bernie Sanders.

Danielle Pletka: Yeah, and I'm relieved that Bernie Sanders isn't the president at this moment, but I ask myself, where this money is going to come from? There are genuine consequences to the Fed just printing money.

Marc Thiessen: Well, here's thing. As a conservative, I am generally opposed to government intervention into the economy, but the fact is, government is already intervening in the economy, because we've mandated the recession, right? This is a government-mandated recession. We've already intervened. Most economic recessions, the 2008 crisis was created by problems in the economy. This is a crisis that's being created because the government has said, "You small business have to shut your doors. This restaurant, you cannot have customers in your shop anymore. These workers have to stay home, rather than productive," and so we're already intervening in the economy, so if the government is mandating a recession, then the government has a responsibility to help people get through the government mandated recession.

Marc Thiessen: That's not a violation of free market principles.

Danielle Pletka: No, no, you're totally right about that. On the other hand, just because the government mandated the recession and the government is now trying to provide a financial roadmap out of that recession ahead, and give more confidence back to people to actually continue doing commerce, the money is still coming from somewhere. It's not magic money, and when you print money, it's inflationary. When the Fed has an unlimited bond buying exercise, you worry. I guess what I ask myself is, six months from now, when we look at the death rates, if we see that the death rates are lower than they are by substantial numbers than an average year of the flu in every one of these countries, are we going to ask ourselves if we did the right thing, and if the unbelievable financial pain that we are causing to our country was worth it?

Marc Thiessen: But we won't know the answer to that, because it may be because of the unbelievable financial pain that the death rates are so low. It may be because of the mitigation factor, the measures we've taken. I think the answer to your question is unknowable.

Danielle Pletka: It could be, I'll tell you, but when I look at, for example, a country like Italy that's in the throes of this disaster, I actually went back and looked at numbers on what they call excessive morbidity among certain populations due to flu. So I went and looked back at the numbers from 2013, 14, 15 and 16. I think the number, and I may be getting this wrong by a couple thousand, but I think that 28,000 people, more or less, died in the flu season of 2016-17 in Italy. We are nowhere near that morbidity in Italy, even with the coronavirus running rampant. And when we start to look back, all I'm saying is I have a little bit of uncertainty about this, because there is that balance that you and I have talked about previously. There is the balance between the harm

that is being done by the virus, and the harm that is being done by the response to the virus.

Marc Thiessen: Yeah. There's economic risk and there's health risk, and we have to balance them as a country, and I think that's-

Danielle Pletka: And it's really hard.

Marc Thiessen: And I think it's very hard, especially because so many of these things are unknown. And so this is where, and I want to get into this with our guest, Michael Strain, in a moment, but balancing that risk is what President Trump is talking about now, when he's saying that he wants... he said the other day he wanted to get the economy going and people raring to go buy Easter Sunday. That may be optimistic, but what he's trying to do is trying to get people to factor in that economic risk, because right now, we're hedging on health risk, we're hedging on the virus, and trying to stop the spread of this thing, and telling people to stop economic activity. We can only do that for so long.

Marc Thiessen: At some point, people are going to start rebelling against that. The package that Congress is moving now will buy us a little bit of time, because you're making up revenue and you're making up income.

Danielle Pletka: Sure hope \$2 trillion buys us a little bit of time.

Marc Thiessen: But at some point, we have to start coming out of this and we have to see the light at the end of the tunnel-

Danielle Pletka: And we've got to stop spending.

Marc Thiessen: And we also, it may be New York is going to be on lockdown and under these measures for months, and months, and months. That doesn't mean that South Dakota has to.

Danielle Pletka: That doesn't mean that Missouri, right. Exactly.

Marc Thiessen: It doesn't mean that at some point we'll... and we've got a whole other podcast on the testing debacle, which I recommend to all of our listeners, but once we get the testing up, then we can figure out where is it safe to open up, and where do we have to shut down?

Danielle Pletka: No, that's absolutely right. To discuss the emergency bill, we are really lucky to have Mike Strain join us today. Mike is the director of economic studies at the American Enterprise Institute, so he's family to us. He is the author of a recent book called *The American Dream Is Not Dead: (But Populism Could Kill It)*. Terrific book, and everybody should buy it. It's really a great piece of work. He's a columnist for Bloomberg, and those of you who have a TV, I'm sure have been seeing him in his pajamas appearing regularly on CNBC, talking about economic issues. It's great to have him with us.

Marc Thiessen: Michael, welcome to the podcast.

- Michael Strain: Thanks so much for having me. It's great to be here.
- Marc Thiessen: So, you have a book out called *The American Dream Is Not Dead*. We are now in a situation where for the first time in American history, the federal government is intentionally creating a recession. We are telling businesses, stop working. We are telling workers, stop coming into work. This is a government-mandated recession. We're basically saying, let's kill the American Dream. Is the American Dream dead?
- Michael Strain: So we're saying, let's put the American Dream in a coma for a few months, and then hopefully, to revive the American Dream and have it be alive and well. What I do in the book, is I look over the last three decades at American workers and American households, and I look to see how they're doing over the long haul. During that three decade period, American workers and American households faced serious challenges. The most recent serious challenge was the financial crisis and great recession in 2008 and 2009.
- Michael Strain: But despite the challenges, the story over the long term, the trend that American workers and households have experienced over the past several decades, is one of upward mobility, wage growth, income growth, responding well to economic dynamism, broad improvements in quality of life, and leaving a better world for their kids than they themselves had. Right now, American workers and households are facing a serious challenge. There's no question about it. It shouldn't be sugar coated. We are in for a rough spring, but if the past is any predictor, and I think it will be, the American people will respond to this with resilience, and will continue their upward march, as soon as this is in the rear view mirror, which is hopefully sooner than later.
- Danielle Pletka: Yeah. So, I keep seeing pieces with the theme that life will never again be the same, which drives me absolutely crazy because I think life actually can be the same. One of the things that is an effort to kind of guide our recovery is this congressional bill that is almost \$2 trillion in various forms of assistance and stimulus. What's your take on the bill?
- Michael Strain: I think the bill is good. I mean, look, the bill's not perfect. It would be impossible to expect a perfect bill. The bill does some very smart things. The most important component in the bill is a program that offers loans to small businesses to help those businesses meet payroll expenses, to help those businesses keep the lights on, and to help make sure that the workers, the people who work for those businesses, stay employed by the business and keep getting paid by the business.
- Danielle Pletka: So let me interrupt you for a second. So one of the arguments that took place before the bill's passage was this question of whether businesses should be helped or whether money should go directly to individuals. Just explain, I mean, I think we all understand why it is that businesses need to continue to get assistance, but explain the difference.
- Michael Strain: So the difference is really just who do you target the assistance on? And I think the checks to households, which is a big component of what the Senate passed, really is a solution to the problem of two weeks ago. If you go back two weeks ago, mayors and governors had not started to shut down their economies. And economists were expecting a slowdown in the economy for sure, but they were expecting people to still go to restaurants sometimes, they'll go shopping sometimes. And so the expectation was, rather than growing at a rate of 2% in the second quarter, which is

April, May, and June, we might grow closer to 0%. But that we wouldn't have an economic calamity.

Michael Strain: Then the governors and mayors started shutting down their services' economies. And as of yesterday morning, at least 163 million people in 17 states and eight cities were being told to shelter in place. That's roughly half of the US population. This creates a very different problem. If you are telling people to stay in their homes and you're ordering businesses to shut down, you're placing those businesses in a precarious position. They can maybe survive off savings for a week or two. But a lot of these small businesses are low margin businesses that just don't have a cushion. And so then you're faced with a choice.

Michael Strain: You can continue focusing assistance on households, but if all these businesses engage in mass layoffs, and if a bunch of these businesses have to go out of business because they can't pay their rent and they can't pay their workers, then you're in a much, much, much more serious economic situation than people thought that we were in two weeks ago. So the Senate responded to that reality by creating this program that offer small businesses forgivable loans for payroll expenses and other expenses. My concern is that the Senate did not allocate nearly enough money to that program, but hopefully, if the need arises, it can be reupped in a few weeks.

Marc Thiessen: So there are three elements to the bill. Walk us through them. There's the direct cash payments to Americans. There's expanded unemployment insurance for people who've lost their jobs. There's the program you're describing, which you and Glenn Hubbard have been really doing yeoman work explaining and promoting. And then there's this economic stabilization fund, which is \$500 billion, \$425 of which is distributed by treasury, and they think they can leverage about \$4 trillion in liquidity into the economy from that. Is that about right in describing what the bill does?

Michael Strain: Yeah, that's about right. And so the small business component is currently slotted for about \$350 billion and has that kind of forgivable loan character to it, where if the business spends the money on payroll then they don't have to pay back the loan. The \$500 billion component, Marc, that you just referenced, is for large businesses and industries. And that is more of a traditional lending program. In addition to those components that you laid out, there's money for hospitals in this bill, and there's money for state and local governments in this bill too, though quite a bit less than the other components.

Danielle Pletka: There's been some complaining about the bill. Before we get to why \$35 million needed to go to the Kennedy Center and \$7 million needed to go to Gallaudet University, a very estimable school for the deaf, and other various things. Where is this money coming from, Mike?

Michael Strain: Well, we're going to borrow it.

Danielle Pletka: Who from?

Michael Strain: Well, we're going to borrow it.

Marc Thiessen: Ourselves, our children.

Danielle Pletka: We're borrowing this from our children, aren't we?

- Michael Strain: And foreigners.
- Danielle Pletka: And foreigners, thank you.
- Marc Thiessen: China.
- Michael Strain: We'll borrow a lot of it from abroad. But yes, look, it's a serious issue. And we walked into this situation with a deficit of around a trillion dollars. And projections over the next few years for the deficit to increase even above that. This is a good example of why you want the government running a healthy balance sheet in a healthy economy, because emergency situations come up. And I feel a lot more comfortable about a \$3 trillion deficit for the year 2020, than I would about a \$4 trillion deficit. And the difference there is the trillion dollars that we were planning on borrowing before the coronavirus came up.
- Michael Strain: So I think it's premature at this stage to be making plans about how to get the deficit under control. I mean, right now Congress' attention really should be on putting the fire out. But this just reinforces the need to get serious about our longer term structural debt and deficit. And this might be the shock that wakes Republicans and Democrats up to that. Nothing's really worked so far, but maybe this amount of borrowing is eye-popping enough that it will do that.
- Marc Thiessen: Look, as we discussed at the beginning, this is the first time that the government has mandated a recession. And the goal is to create a V-shaped recession, right? Where we have a rapid decline for public health reasons, but then a rapid increase in economic activity as soon as we start taking off the constraints on the economy, and we've got the danger mitigated. What are our hopes of having that kind of a rapid recovery? Because it seems like the fundamentals of the economy going in, it's not like the 2008 financial crisis where we had structural problems with the economy.
- Marc Thiessen: The fundamentals were good, unemployment was low, and all the rest of it. The virus is a natural disaster but not like an earthquake or a tsunami where you have buildings and critical infrastructure destroyed. And because of the mitigation efforts, we hopefully will not have mass deaths, so we'll have a population that's ready to go to work. Should we be hopeful that with these economic measures, that we could get this economy back on track in relatively short time once we're ready to lift the constraints?
- Michael Strain: Yeah, I think we should be hopeful about that. That will depend on two things. The first thing it will depend on is the damage that this virus does to people's health. And there, we're just flying blind. I mean we don't have an adequate testing regime up and running. We don't know how many people have had the virus and thus are not at risk of being re-infected in the short term. We don't know how many people currently have the virus. We don't know the extent to which our hospital system is going to be taxed by this. We don't know what the mortality rate for this is in the US population. We don't know whether or not it's going to respond to warmer weather in April, and more humid weather in the way that some, but not all viruses do.
- Michael Strain: So we really have no idea what the human toll of this is going to be. The public health people say the steps we're taking now, Marc, as you said, will help reduce that human toll. But we still didn't know what the toll is. So that will be really a key factor in how quickly the economy can recover. And there's just a big question mark about that. And that just underscores the need for the public health community to



get tests out the door and to start testing people in a much more widespread and systematic fashion. The second factor that will determine how quickly we can bounce back is the policy response.

- Michael Strain: If we end up with millions and millions of people losing their jobs every week, and if we end up with hundreds of thousands of businesses going out of business every week, which is a real possibility, then it's going to take a long time for those workers to find new jobs. It's going to take a long time for businesses to start, the appetite for starting a business among the American people will likely be less than it otherwise would be, and it could take a while to get the economy back to health. On the other hand, if we can keep the basic infrastructure of the US economy in place, if we can keep businesses open, if we can keep workers attached to those businesses, if those workers can continue to be paid by their employers and people really are ready to go back to work when it's safe to do so, then we can snap right back in a very quick fashion. And we may even be able to have a larger, more productive economy at the end of 2020 than we had at the end of 2019. I mean, that's still a possibility.
- Danielle Pletka: Let's hope you're right. So here's, I mean, I think what you're really talking about is a question of how long we can sustain sort of a hold. Sort of a shelter in place for the economy. Will employers for the most part be able to take a step back rather than simply liquidating? And unfortunately, I think we're seeing a lot of them start to reckon with that liquidation, which is why Trump, perhaps a little bit over ambitiously, but why I think he was right to talk about the need to see that light at the end of the tunnel.
- Michael Strain: Absolutely. Absolutely. There should be public messaging from the President to say, "Hey businesses, this program is available. Don't lay off your workers. Hang on. We're going to keep you solvent. We're going to keep you afloat. We're going to keep you able to pay your workers and pay your bills and to come back from this when it's safe to do so, from a public health perspective." It's been hard for the President to say that up until this point because we didn't have the legislation passed. But, that sort of messaging I think could be enormously helpful from the White House.
- Michael Strain: The problem with identifying a light at the end of the tunnel with a date is that we don't know what that date is. And that just underscores the need to be testing. I mean, ideally what we would be doing is randomly selecting people in all 50 states, or maybe you start with the States that are the hardest hit, and just testing them. And seeing how prevalent is this virus in the general population. There are tests you can do to detect whether people have antibodies in their system that can tell you whether or not people have had the virus.
- Danielle Pletka: Right. So much of this does hinge on the capacity of our medical response. And Marc and I have had some very fascinating conversations on another podcast about just that issue. I want to ask you about another thing that we're not talking about. We're talking rightly about the health and welfare of the American people with you. You're an economist, you study this and you wrote a book called *Is The American Dream Dead*, but of course, we're also dependent upon exports, imports, and commerce and trade with other countries. How bad do you think the impact is going to be of the coronavirus outside the United States? And how is that going to impact our economy as well?
- Michael Strain: Well, it's going to impact it tremendously. I mean we've already seen significant

disruptions in international supply chains. We've seen US ports receiving three quarters, two-thirds of the cargo from other countries they normally receive. That has significant downstream consequences for domestic businesses. So, that's going to be another kind of critical component of the response is on the supply side of the economy, figuring out what the government can do to grease the wheels of international commerce. Now, that is very much against this administration's instincts about international commerce.

Michael Strain: This administration has erected barriers to international commerce. You can make an argument that that's reasonable to do with China, but tariffs on Europe, tariffs on Canada, these sorts of things, I think it's much harder to argue that those are reasonable measures. And they work against a kind of seamless, frictionless global trading system. And so, that's going to be more important than ever as well.

Marc Thiessen: Absolutely. I mean, look, once this crisis is over, there's going to be a reckoning with China because, and we've discussed this on a different podcast, but China, this is basically a biological attack on America. China's mishandling of this crisis, the lies that they told their own people, the way they suppressed information. The reason we're in a lockdown right now is because of Beijing and its mishandling of this. And I think there's going to be a push at some point after this, I'm going to encourage it, that we should make China pay for this. We just passed a \$2 trillion, we're just about to borrow \$2 trillion to put our economy on life support during this crisis. Why should the American tax payers have to pay that?

Marc Thiessen: Businesses that have gone out of business, they should have a right of action against China to sue them for the economic damages. And we quite frankly ought to, President Trump, as part of the negotiations ought to make China pay for some of this.

Danielle Pletka: What do you think about that, Mike? I'm not sure I agree with Marc, even though I agree about blaming China, I'm not sure that we can get the money out of them.

Marc Thiessen: You want to blame them. You just don't want to make them pay.

Danielle Pletka: What do you think, Mike?

Michael Strain: Look, I agree that China lies to its people and didn't handle this well. I don't know about blaming China for the virus. I mean the virus is an act of God in some sense.

Marc Thiessen: But, there was a study, Mike, that showed that if China had acted just three weeks earlier, 95% of the cases would have not happened.

Michael Strain: Yeah. I think that would have been true of wherever the virus originated. And those initial weeks I think are just kind of a fog of war situation where even the best functioning government wouldn't really know what was going on or how to handle it super well. I mean, I think what we will need to do is look at the damage internationally and this could be a situation where Europe is in really bad shape. The Eurozone, as an institution, suffers from a lot of internal stress. Italy is just being decimated by this. The southern European countries have always been kind of a challenge from an economic and political perspective.

Michael Strain: Within the EU, this will put further tension and stress on those relationships. Will



there need to be some sort of an international effort that's coordinated to rebuild the Italian economy? And if this spreads to other European nations, will that be required as well? What about Asian economies? South Korea seems to be doing a lot better, but who knows what's going to happen in the next two months. I mean, we keep coming back to that. So I think certainly kind of international engagement right now and that sort of economic diplomacy is more important than ever.

Marc Thiessen: Well, we'll have you back on to discuss your plan for the 21st Century Marshall Plan for Europe.

Marc Thiessen: Yeah. But, exit question coming back here, back to America-

Michael Strain: My favorite country.

Marc Thiessen: It is mine too. Look, this stimulus package or rescue package, whatever you want to call it, that Congress is passing, is going to buy us time. Because, as you say, we're going to be able to make up the revenues of a lot of these businesses, hopefully keep them alive so that they're ready to start churning. But, looking at the light at the end of the tunnel, right now we have to balance the risk to health with the risk to the economy, the risk of the virus with the risk of businesses that can't afford to continue functioning.

Marc Thiessen: And initially at the start of the crisis, it makes sense to put most of our bet on the risk to health and shut down the economy. But at some point, don't we have to start balancing back and factoring in the ... because I think that's what President Trump is trying to do. Rather than saying, Easter where the economy's going to be completely open. He's trying to push the bureaucracy to start factoring in the risk to the economy and have more of a balanced approach. And don't you think that's the right thing to do?

Michael Strain: I think it absolutely is the right thing to do. And I think in order to figure out how to do that best, we just need more information. I worry about two things. The first thing I worry about is the scenario where the virus really is devastating in the way that many people are worried about. You get a situation where 100 million people in the United States end up getting infected. You have a mortality rate of 1%, which is a number that's often discussed by public health officials, and all of a sudden you have a million people who die from this virus. I think that that is in the realm of possibility, particularly if people are out there, engaging in commerce and engaging in normal life and spreading it.

Michael Strain: So we have to keep the worst case scenario in mind for sure. And we don't know how likely the worst case scenario is. It could be very likely it could be extremely unlikely we just don't know at this point.

Michael Strain: The second point I would make is that the President has a very limited ability to actually engage in the kind of balancing, Marc, that you're talking about until there's more information.

Marc Thiessen: Yeah.

Michael Strain: The President could say, "Hey, there are no coronavirus cases, or there are 10 coronavirus cases in the state of Missouri." And I don't know if that's true or not, but

let's just say it is. "And we've identified all 10 people and they're locked in their houses. So people of Missouri, go back to work." The people in Missouri, or at least a whole lot of them are going to say, "Thanks for the advice Mr. President, but we don't have a testing regime up and you've identified 10 people who've tested positive, but how do I know that there aren't 30,000 people who are walking around there with this disease who haven't been tested positive, and I'm going to knock into one of them at the store today?"

- Michael Strain: So we do need those kinds of balancing measures. You're absolutely right, but both from a public health perspective and from just a kind of practical, "How do you implement that balance perspective?" we are frozen until we have more and better information, because people just won't respond the way the President might want them to until that information is out there. But once we have that information, once we are testing people and we know more about this and that needs to happen like immediately-
- Danielle Pletka: We need to be more like South Korea, and when we are more in the position where we're like South Korea, where we have a much more perfect set of information, we really can move pretty quickly to try to regularize people's lives.
- Michael Strain: Yeah, I think that's right. And one more point, I would caution the President to have patience because-
- Danielle Pletka: You're cute.
- Michael Strain: Have you met the president of the United States?
- Danielle Pletka: Marc knows the answer to this, yes.
- Michael Strain: Or just, lock him in the residence or something, take away his phone. I mean, if we do try to start implementing those sorts of half measures, which could be very reasonable under the right set of circumstances, before we know whether we do have the right set of circumstances and then the virus gets worse, because we acted too quickly without having the appropriate information. All of a sudden the American people no longer trust anything the President says or anything the government says.
- Michael Strain: And if a month later the evidence does say it's time to implement some half measures, it's time to go back to normal and the government tells people that, they'll be like, "Oh yeah, well that's what you told me, four weeks ago, and look, all of a sudden my brother in law died."
- Marc Thiessen: Yeah.
- Michael Strain: So, we really need to-
- Danielle Pletka: Right. We need to be cautious. It is a wise message and the credibility of the government is extraordinarily important as shot as it is with the way that the FDA and the CDC have managed things. Mike, you are awesome to take the time to come on with us. We are super grateful and wish you were here in the studio with us, but hey, hope you're comfy at home with the pajamas and that scotch in your hand.
- Michael Strain: Scotch hour is 9:00 AM here.

- Marc Thiessen: Now that the Taco Bell Cantina is closed.
- Michael Strain: I know I was sad, I had to go before it closed.
- Danielle Pletka: Oh my God, you guys are so gross. Thanks again Mike.
- Marc Thiessen: Thanks Mike.
- Danielle Pletka: See you soon.
- Michael Strain: Thank you.
- Danielle Pletka: Bye.
- Marc Thiessen: So, look Dany, I share your concern about the massive spending that's involved here. This is one of those... There are lots of times where I would be opposed to government spending, but this is not one of them. Because we want to create this V-shaped recession, and for that to work, Mike points out, I think correctly, that we have to help small businesses survive and workers survive during the V, right? I was very hopeful what he said at the end, that we can actually be better off at the end of 2020 than we were at the end of 2019. That's the most hopeful thing I've seen yet.
- Danielle Pletka: And bearing that burden is going to be a significant problem maybe not for you and me, but for our kids and for our grandkids.
- Marc Thiessen: I don't disagree.
- Danielle Pletka: And that's why, again, I don't want anybody to die of coronavirus, but I do recognize that people actually are going to die. Just like 60,000 people died of the flu a couple of years ago, in the United States by the way. We're not even close to those numbers on coronavirus. I worry about perspective. I worry about mass-hysteria. I worry about the kind of thing that, where you see people on the New York subway screaming at Asians, "Get away from me, you're going to make me sick." Because that is an encapsulation of the loss of perspective. That-
- Marc Thiessen: There's no vaccine for stupidity.
- Danielle Pletka: Yeah, well said. No, no, listen, that's absolutely true. And again, all I'm saying is, we may have done everything right in this regard. We may be taking the right precautions, doing the right draconian things, doing the right things with the bailout. I just worry about perspective and I worry even more that when Congress passes a bill for a \$2 trillion stimulus, that some sort of barrier has been breached and that they would actually consider doing such a thing again, having done so already.
- Marc Thiessen: One thing I will say is thank God that we are the strongest, most powerful economy in the world and that we were doing so well going in that we can do that in an emergency. I hope it was the right decision and I share your concerns about it, but the other thing is I think we need to... All these people are running around complaining, just complaining about anything Donald Trump says, anything he does.

- Danielle Pletka: He is often giving them good reason, in this instance he's right.
- Marc Thiessen: But he is absolutely right to say that we've got to see the light at the end of the tunnel here. We've got to give people hope that there's a day coming... That we're not going to be on lockdown like this for nine months, it's just not happening.
- Danielle Pletka: Right. No, it's unsustainable.
- Marc Thiessen: It's unsustainable. And he's trying to force the bureaucracy, the same bureaucracy that wouldn't allow private labs and other people to do testing, because they wanted to do it themselves, made those wise decisions. To push them, say, "You have to factor in not just the health risks, but the economic risk to the country as well." This is a massive, massive price that we're putting for paying for this virus and for all these mitigation efforts where we're literally replacing the revenue of every small and medium sized business in America for months.
- Marc Thiessen: I mean taxpayers are doing that, our children are doing that through debt. It better be worth it, and we better factor those risks into the decisions as to what we do in containing the virus.
- Danielle Pletka: Two big takeaways from Mike. Number one, optimism about our prospects for recovery, which I agree with you is one of the best things we've heard in a long time. Second of all, we can't begin unless we are more efficient with testing. So folks, if you want to understand where that went wrong, we've got another great podcast on that with Alex Stapp, interesting conversation about just how screwed up that whole thing was, but hopefully we can get our house in order and begin to actually see that light and pray all together that it's not an oncoming train.
- Marc Thiessen: On that optimistic note.
- Danielle Pletka: Thanks for listening, guys. Stay safe. Wash your hands, distance yourself from your beloved friends and family. God knows I'm ready to kill mine.
- Marc Thiessen: And I'm ready to distance myself from Dany right now.
- Danielle Pletka: As he always says. Thanks for listening. Bye.