



Summer 2020

## Message from David Ridenour

Former Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel once said, “You never want a serious crisis to go to waste.”

What he meant is that progressives should exploit crises to institute revolutionary change impossible under ordinary circumstances.

We’ve faced an extraordinary number of crises in the past few months. First we faced the COVID-19 pandemic, then the economic crisis caused by the COVID-19 lockdowns and later, the burning and looting of cities as a consequence of a police officer killing George Floyd in Minneapolis.

The left hasn’t let any one of those crises go to waste.

Liberal-controlled state and local governments used the pandemic as an excuse to close gun shops, close churches, crash the red-hot economy and suppress free speech—but only conservative free speech.

Liberals used the resulting economic collapse to push through trillions in spending, including a huge boost in unemployment compensation that incentivizes millions of Americans to stay at home rather than work.

And they exploited the death of George Floyd to press for defunding police departments and divide Americans along racial lines.

In response to the violence sweeping the nation, our black leadership network Project 21 took to the airwaves to fight Black Lives Matter, Antifa and race-baiters like Al Sharpton who fanned the flames of racial division. Project 21 members appeared on radio and cable television news programs nearly every day.

Vice President Mike Pence liked what he heard so much that he invited Project 21 Co-Chairman Horace Cooper to join him for lunch and advise him on what should be done.

In response to COVID-19, I spearheaded a National Center plan for restoring liberty and the economy while protecting public health. This culminated in a blueprint, *Beyond COVID-19*, that included 54 recommendations. Three of these have already been adopted.

And we also remained on the offense against corporations undermining freedom and free enterprise. Our Free Enterprise Project released the Investor Value Voter Guide and launched a grassroots campaign to fight Amazon’s conservative censorship.

**It is during times of crisis that our liberty is at greatest risk. It is during times of crisis that your support for your National Center is MOST important.**

Words cannot adequately express my appreciation for your support during this critical time.

God bless you.

David A. Ridenour, President



David A. Ridenour



## Vice President Pence Seeks Project 21's Counsel

When you're summoned to the White House to have lunch with the Vice President of the United States, you know you're having real impact.

Project 21 Co-Chairman Horace Cooper was one of just five black leaders asked to join Vice President Mike Pence for lunch to provide advice on how to heal the nation and move forward together in the aftermath of the police slaying of George Floyd.

Cooper was the only leader who brought a comprehensive, written plan to the meeting: Project 21's 20-page *Blueprint for a Better Deal for Black America*, which offers 57 specific, free market-based recommendations for helping the black community and healing the racial divide. Vice President Pence eagerly accepted a copy of the *Blueprint*.

Several of the *Blueprint's* recommendations – including one calling for a work requirement for Food Stamp eligibility – have already been adopted, and the city of Ferguson, Missouri has adopted the *Blueprint* as a starting point for reform.

The Vice President's invitation came on the heels of an aggressive media campaign by Project 21 that condemned both the killing of Floyd and the violence, looting and arson that ensued.

Within days of the start of violent protests, co-chairmen Horace Cooper, Stacy Washington and Council Nedd appeared on cable television programs nearly a dozen times: Four times on the Fox News Channel's "The Ingraham Angle," twice on Fox's "Tucker Carlson Tonight," once on Fox's "The Story with Martha McCallum" and four times on Newsmax, including on "Spicer & Co.," hosted by former White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer.



*Project 21 Co-Chairman Stacy Washington (right) and member Deneen Borelli (left) seated next to President Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner during a White House meeting. President Trump singled out Deneen and Stacy for special praise during the event.*



*Co-Chairman Horace Cooper calls demands that whites prostrate themselves to Black Live Matter "evil" in an interview on "Tucker Carlson Tonight."*

Project 21 spokesmen also appeared on dozens upon dozens of talk radio shows, including KABC Radio (Los Angeles), WBZ Radio (Boston), the Wilkow Majority and nationally-syndicated Joe Messina Show.

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*In the News* is published by the National Center for Public Policy Research. The National Center is a non-profit educational foundation dedicated to freedom and free markets.

David A. Ridenour, President

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*Project 21 Co-Chairman Horace Cooper meets with Vice President Mike Pence, one of five black leaders invited to lunch with the Vice President and advise him on how to help the black community.*

Appearing on “Tucker Carlson Tonight,” Horace Cooper said the attempt by Black Lives Matter and the liberal news media to “group shame” people for Floyd’s death based on the color of their skin isn’t just wrong, it is evil.

“This is an example of an evil that persists through all of recorded history. There has always been a group of people who want to claim they’re better than other people. You see, all they’ve done is just... substituted who is supposed to ingratiate themselves,” Horace said. “But the concept is the same – an evil one. Our American system is an entirely different one – where all Americans are equal under the law.”

Responding to the violent protests is just one of many challenges Project 21 has been tackling.

It’s black leader-spokesmen also questioned COVID-19 policies that are placing lives and freedom at risk.

Co-Chairman Stacy Washington, for example, penned a commentary calling the compassionate release of prisoners in response to COVID-19 “lunacy.” The daughter of a law enforcement officer, Washington wrote, “Cutting criminals loose stands in stark [contrast]... to the despotic treatment” of those failing to adhere to social distancing requirements. Her piece was picked up by dozens of newspapers nationwide, including Inside Sources, the *Duluth News Tribune* (Duluth, MN), the *Sun Journal* (Lewiston, ME), the *Frederick News Post*

(Frederick, MD), the *Northwest Indiana Times* (Munster, IN), the *Tyler Morning Telegraph* (Tyler, TX), the *Bluefield Daily Telegraph* (Bluefield, WV) and the *Shelby Star* (Shelby, NC).

Member Christopher Arps chastised *New York Times* publisher A.G. Sulzberger during his company’s annual shareholder for distorting the history of America’s fight for independence through its “1619 Project.” It had claimed – without any historical foundation – that independence was sought in response to growing abolitionist sentiment in Britain. Sulzberger essentially conceded the point, saying in his response to Arps that the program was designed “simply to encourage dialogue between those with different perspectives.” Well, that it did... even if one of those perspectives was a lie.

And Project 21 continued its robust *amici curiae*, “friend of the court” legal brief program to promote sensible government policies that help minority communities while promoting unity. It joined, for example, in an *amici curiae* in *June Medical Services v. Gee*, which was argued before the U.S. Supreme Court in March. Project 21 asked the high court to uphold Louisiana’s Act 620, which requires physicians who perform abortions to have active admitting privileges at hospitals no further than 30 miles away. Because more 61% of women seeking abortion in Louisiana black, blacks stand to benefit most from Act 620.

Dollar-for-dollar, Project 21 is the conservative movement’s most effective black leadership group... bar none.

Its work is only possible thanks to your generous support.



*Project 21 leaders Derrick Hollie and Kevin Martin and Co-Chairmen Horace Cooper and Council Nedd II (left to right) brief Housing and Urban Development Secretary Ben Carson on Project 21’s Blueprint for a Better Deal for Black America.*

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## Free Enterprise Project Fights Amazon Over Censorship

“Amazon... brags about its commitment to ‘diversity and inclusion,’ but I don’t think its board of directors knows what that means,” Free Enterprise Project (FEP) Director Justin Danhof said of his encounter with Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos during Amazon’s recent shareholder meeting.

Danhof chided Bezos for discriminating against certain Christian groups through his company’s AmazonSmile program.

Amazon claims that any customer may designate charities of their choice to receive donations equal to .5% of their qualified purchases through its AmazonSmile program, but that really isn’t true. The Family Research Council and the Alliance Defending Freedom — both non-profits in good standing with the Internal Revenue Service — have been excluded from the program for years. The reason? The Southern Policy Law Center (SPLC) has designated these Christian organizations “hate groups” because it is itself bigoted against Christians.

Amazon’s decision to give SPLC veto power over AmazonSmile is perplexing given that the group had to pay a \$3.4 million defamation settlement to a Muslim activist for falsely labeling him “anti-Muslim.” And last year, the SPLC was forced to undergo a staff shake-up after multiple allegations surfaced of sexual harassment, racism and gender



Vice President David W. Almasi explains to Fox 5 television (Washington, DC) why D.C.’s new tax on sugary beverages will fall most heavily on the poor.



Free Enterprise Project Director Justin Danhof criticizes BlackRock, the world’s largest asset manager, for backing liberal shareholder proposals in an interview with Fox Business’ Maria Bartiromo.

discrimination at SPLC’s headquarters.

FEP filed a shareholder resolution to pressure the company to end its unusual relationship with SPLC. Amazon’s management recommended that shareholders vote against the proposal in light of the company’s “demonstrated commitment to our core values of diversity and inclusion... and robust risk management process.”

It isn’t clear how contracting out its giving decisions to a serial defamer constitutes a “robust risk management process.” Nonetheless, a majority of Amazon’s shareholders supported the company management and rejected FEP’s resolution.

Our resolution was just one of a number of volleys FEP lobbied at Amazon as part of a coordinated campaign to force the internet giant to end its discriminatory practices.

Working with Citizens for Corporate Accountability, FEP also promoted a petition demanding an end to AmazonSmile censorship of conservative opinion. As of this writing, the petition has nearly 30,000 signatures.

Amazon is beginning to feel the heat. Already, FEP’s efforts have generated significant media coverage, including from Fox Business, the *Washington Times*, Breitbart, One America News Network, PJ Media and the Daily Signal, to name only a few.

FEP also spearheaded a conservative movement-wide campaign against BlackRock for promoting liberal activism against the interests of shareholders. In a letter to corporate CEOs earlier this year, BlackRock CEO Larry Fink said the company would alter its asset allocation to promote climate change action, sustainability, diversity and a panoply of

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# Coronavirus Exposes Dangers of Environmentalism

By DAVID W. ALMASI,  
VICE PRESIDENT

Responses to the coronavirus pandemic have exposed the folly of the environmental movement's favorite causes.

Amidst the panic, most people probably forgot to acknowledge "Earth Hour" in late March. People are traditionally urged to turn off their lights for an hour that day to "spark global conversations on protecting nature." But realizing the "exceptional challenge" of the coronavirus, organizers this year decided to "realign" Earth Hour "appropriately."

Organizers urged participants to turn off their lights while turning on their computers so they could observe Earth Hour "digitally" by signing online petitions and streaming videos about the evils of power consumption. Too bad laptops use about the same amount of power as a light bulbs. Plugging in would seem inconsistent with Earth Hour's goal, but it was necessary if you wanted to hear Greta Thunberg talk about the "need to stop burning fossil fuels" to avoid "massive extinction."

Fossil fuels are vital – especially now. Not only are they powering the hospitals treating coronavirus patients, but

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***"Fossil fuels... are helping us defeat this invisible enemy in countless ways."***

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they are helping us defeat this invisible enemy in countless ways. N95 respirators, for example, often depend upon polypropylene fibers derived from fossil fuels. Many plastics used



David W. Almasi

today are made with oil, natural gas and coal. Aspirin and penicillin are also made with petrochemicals, as are the coatings and capsules for many other drugs. MRI scanners are cooled by natural gas by-products.

The much-maligned plastic, disposable shopping bag is also made with fossil fuels. In recent years, local and state governments have acceded to environmentalists' "Ban the Bag!" campaigns, but fears that reusable bags could spread coronavirus have led some jurisdictions to ban those, too.

San Francisco was the first municipality to ban "single-use" plastic grocery bags in 2007, but it passed an emergency ordinance banning people from bringing reusable bags and mugs to combat the coronavirus.

Environmental zealots have also lobbied to ban plastic straws. San Francisco passed a ban last year that included a medical-use exemption. With so many hospitalized by COVID-19, the exemption is sure to be widely utilized.

In hospitals, you'll find paper towels – another environmentalist target. While green scolds tut-tut America's

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***"Green mandates may be rooted in good intentions, but many of them are downright dangerous during a pandemic."***

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alleged obsession with them, don't expect health care professionals to switch to hot-air hand dryers like you find in so many public bathrooms. A study by researchers at the University of Connecticut and Quinnipiac University found that these dryers blast fecal and other unhealthy bacteria circulating in a bathroom. A petri dish left standing in a bathroom for two minutes might grow one colony of bacteria, but researchers found one under a dryer for just 30 seconds grew over 250!

Green mandates may be rooted in good intentions, but many of them are downright dangerous during a pandemic. Emotionalism typically trumps logic when discussing these issues. It's time for that to change.

When Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau promoted Earth Hour, he got a Twitter feed full of newfound logic from his followers. More than a few people mocked his appeal, assuring him they were "[t]urning off the ventilators to save the planet."

It's time for environmentalists to embrace science over fear, and for lawmakers to call their bluffs. As we now know, our health depends on it.

*A version of this column appeared in the Federalist.*

## Must Read... *Profiles in Corruption* New Book by Board Member Peter Schweizer Throws Left into Panic

BY DAVID RIDENOUR, PRESIDENT

Even before its release in January, Peter Schweizer's book, *Profiles in Corruption: Abuse of Power by America's Progressive Elite*, had liberals quaking in their boots.

Angel Ureña, a former press secretary to J. Edgar Hoover, tweeted 11 days before its release, "... Trump's DOJ has exonerated the [Clinton Foundation]... Reminder that said investigation was based at least partly on allegations in [Schweizer's previous book] Clinton Cash. Schweizer is fixing to lie again... [W]ill we – again – aid him in doing so?"

The Department of Justice never “exonerates,” but decides whether or not to prosecute. Since a federal judge just ordered Hillary Clinton to be deposed in connection with her private email account, that decision is still very much in the air. The fact that the foundation’s revenues plummeted immediately after she left the Obama Administration speaks volumes.

Peter, in addition to serving as member of the National Center's board of directors, is a five-time *New York Times* best-selling author. He's also president of the Tallahassee, Florida-based Government Accountability Institute, through which he conducts most of his investigative research.

Peter's previous book, *Clinton Cash*, showed how Hillary Clinton used her position as Secretary of State to enrich her Clinton Foundation. The book was extremely well-researched and documented, and it received an enormous amount of media attention.

The left fears that *Profiles in Corruption* could damage its brand by exposing some of the more unsavory business dealings of eight leading progressives.

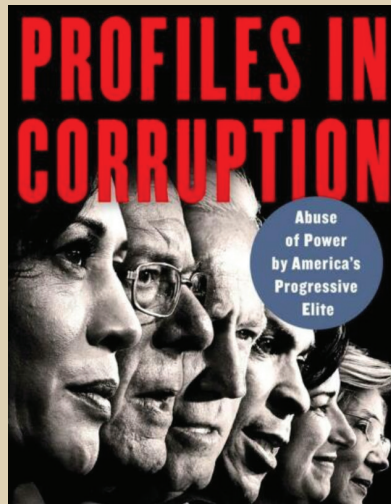
It provides some insight, for example, into how Bernie Sanders – a self-avowed socialist who never held a steady job until he was elected mayor of Burlington, Vermont at the age of 40 – became a multi-millionaire.

Shortly after becoming mayor, Sanders appointed his wife Jane – then his girlfriend – to lead his Youth Office. Initially a volunteer position, it quickly became a full-time salaried job. After Jane married Bernie, she received a substantial pay raise.

The Sanderses also benefitted financially from a decades-long relationship with a wealthy developer, Antonio Pomerleau, who Bernie once demonized. During his 1981 campaign for mayor, Sanders made opposition to Pomerleau's proposed plan for redeveloping Burlington's waterfront a centerpiece of his campaign. Once elected, he softened his rhetoric and ultimately backed a Pomerleau plan very similar to the original.

The developer rewarded Bernie Sanders by donating to his wife's Youth Office and later donated \$10 million to help Jane Sanders purchase a new campus when she

was president of Burlington College.



*Profiles in Corruption* is an important book, and not merely because it exposes how rising progressive stars have used their positions to enrich themselves. It is important because it exposes the real danger of progressive government.

“This book focuses on progressive politicians... Because they are unique in one respect... they all favor the rapid and radical expansion of federal political power,” Peter wrote. “[P]rogressives are asking us to give them more leverage over our lives... How have they individually exercised whatever public power they have held so far?”

Thanks to Peter's research, we know the answer. Expanding government will only serve to increase public corruption.

*Profiles in Corruption* is a must-read book.

## National Center to Launch Tribute to Founder Amy M. Ridenour

It's been three years since Amy M. Ridenour, founding CEO of the National Center, passed away. Now the National Center is establishing a program to honor her: the "Amy M. Ridenour Social Media Fellowship."

The fellowship will be used to identify and train young conservatives who aspire to become social media influencers. Fellows will be chosen by a selection committee composed of the National Center President David Ridenour and already-successful journalists and influencers.

"I can think of no more appropriate way to honor Amy than through this fellowship. She loved taking on the left in real-time through her blog and social media posts," said David Ridenour, Amy's husband and president of the National Center for Public Policy Research. "She read peer-reviewed climate research studies for fun and used the incredible knowledge of climate change science she accumulated to completely dismantle climate alarmists arguments." Fellows will focus mainly on environmental policy, but will address other critically-important issues as well.

"The fellowship will help create the new generation of Amy Ridenours," David said.

Amy passed away on March 31, 2017 after a long battle with stage 4 cancer. David and two of her three children – Christopher and Katherine – were at her bedside.

She founded the National Center for Public Policy Research in 1982, and she served as its chairman until her passing.



Amy wanted the National Center to be a different kind of think tank: More nimble than others, and focused on giving the conservative movement capabilities it lacked. She wanted it to be a "do tank" not just an ordinary "think tank."

Her vision led the National Center to initiate Project 21, a black conservative leadership network that's created over 40,000 media opportunities for black conservatives and the Free Enterprise Project, the freedom movement's only full-service shareholder activism and education program.

We hope you'll consider a donation in support of this important new program.

To do so, please include "Amy M. Ridenour Fellowship" in the memo section of your check or in the space provided for your on-line donation ([nationalcenter.org/donate](http://nationalcenter.org/donate)).

## Give the Gift of Liberty to the Next Generation Through Your Estate Plan

Please consider including your National Center for Public Policy Research in your estate plans to ensure its effective programs are fully-funded for decades to come.

Although there are many ways to structure a planned gift – including through insurance policies, charitable gift annuities, charitable remainder trusts and simple bequests – the easiest way is with a bequest through a will or a trust.

You can bequeath a specific item, a set percentage of your

estate or a specific dollar amount to the charity of your choice. If you wish to include your National Center in your estate plans in this way, you could use language along these lines: **"I give and bequeath to The National Center for Public Policy Research of Washington, D.C. <\$X or Y% of my estate> to be used for its educational purposes."** If you're uncertain about how much you can give while paying estate expenses and providing for loved ones, you may wish to consider making a residuary bequest. This is a gift of whatever is left over. You could use language similar to this: **"I give and bequeath to the National Center for Public Policy Research of Washington, D.C. the remainder of my estate for its educational purposes."**

If you'd like to discuss including the National Center in your estate plans, please call David Ridenour at (202)507-6398, or email him at [dridenour@nationalcenter.org](mailto:dridenour@nationalcenter.org).

*Continued from page 4...*

other progressive initiatives.

The decision could have an enormous impact on corporate policies and dramatically shift corporations to the left as BlackRock has an incredible leverage as the world's largest asset manager with over \$7.4 trillion in assets under management.

In response, FEP's Danhof led a coalition effort to pressure Fink to reverse the decision. In mid-April, the coalition sent a letter to Fink signed by 75 conservative business and investment leaders making the case that his priority during the pandemic must be economic growth and shareholder return rather than political activism. Two weeks later, the coalition sent another letter to Fink signed by 31 CEOs including Atlas Corporation Chairman David Sokol and Apex Oil CEO Tony Novelli, reminding him that publicly-traded companies must be responsible to investors.



*Project 21 Co-Chairman Stacy Washington explains why President Trump is right to call Antifa a terrorist organization in an interview with former White House press secretary Sean Spicer of Newsmax.*

The campaign generated significant media coverage, including an interview of Danhof on Fox Business's "Mornings with Maria" hosted by Maria Bartiromo.

"At this time, should Marriott... be putting solar panels on the roofs of their hotels that are empty?" Danhof asked during the interview. "We think they should be paying their employees' health care and when it is safe, bringing as any of the back as possible."

FEP also launched the freedom movement's very first investor tool, the Investor Value Voter Guide (IVVG), to help conservative and Christian investors vote their shareholder proxies in a manner consistent with their values. Meticulously researched, the IVVG analyzed dozens of resolutions shareholders were asked to consider in 2020. It



*President David Ridenour discusses Beyond COVID-19, the National Center's 54-point plan for restoring liberty and the economy, in an interview with One America News Network.*

recommended conservative and religious investors vote in favor of 14 resolutions and against nearly three dozen others.

FEP filed 25 resolutions during the 2020 season and participated in 28 shareholder meetings.

FEP's 2020 resolutions have already achieved a stunning success rate of 52%. Seven of its resolutions cleared the SEC to appear in shareholder proxy materials; one cleared the SEC and blocked two liberal shareholder proposals from even being considered; and five forced corporations to alter their policies.

Walgreens, Wells Fargo, Prudential, J.P. Morgan and Facebook committed to "True Diversity," formally agreeing to seek ideological diversity by adding conservatives to their boards, in exchange for FEP withdrawing shareholder proposals.

FEP blocked two shareholder resolutions at Chevron that

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*Free Enterprise Project Director Justin Danhof accepts an "Impact Award" for "excellence and broad impact... tenacity, courage and perseverance" from Ginni Thomas, wife of Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas.*

were designed to force the company to terminate funding to the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC).

And FEP resolutions were voted on by shareholders of Chevron, Costco, John Deere, Starbucks, Boeing, Eli Lilly, Twitter and Amazon.

The Free Enterprise Project is the conservative movement's ONLY full-service shareholder activism and education program.

Its work is only possible thanks to your generous support.

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## Trump Administration Implements Three National Center COVID-19 Recommendations



*Project 21 Co-Chairman Stacy Washington calls proposals to defund police departments “lunacy” on the Fox News Channel’s “The Story with Martha McCallum.”*

The Trump Administration has already implemented three recommendations from the National Center’s *Beyond COVID-19: Blueprint for Restoring Liberty, Rebuilding the Economy, Safeguarding Public Health and Responding to Crisis* that was released in May.

*Beyond COVID-19*, spearheaded by National Center President David Ridenour and co-authored by Project 21 Co-Chairman Horace Cooper, Senior Fellow Bonner Cohen and Senior Fellow Drew Johnson, offers 54 specific, liberty-focused recommendations for addressing the pandemic while preserving freedom and jobs.

On May 29, President Trump announced that he planned to withdraw United States from the World Health Organization (WHO). The President initially temporarily withheld U.S. funding from WHO, but decided to sever ties completed after the organization “failed to make the



*Project 21 Co-Chairman Horace Cooper urges greater scrutiny of Chinese investments in the U.S. in an interview with Salem Radio’s Sebastian Gorka, former deputy assistant to President Trump.*

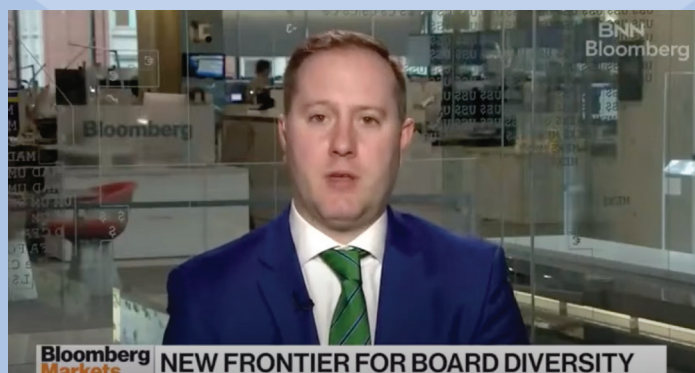
requested greatly needed reform.”

This is exactly what we recommended. “In the absence of a thorough housecleaning at the WHO,” the blueprint stated, “the United States should withdraw from the organization altogether.”

Withdrawal from WHO was the third recommendation the administration adopted consistent with the *Beyond COVID-19*’s recommendations. President Trump also issued an executive order rolling back federal regulations to speed the rate of economic recovery and changed the lineup of his regular COVID-19 briefings to emphasize economic recovery.

The blueprint had called for “putting the pandemic experts in the back seat” during the White House Coronavirus Task Force briefings. Just two days after we sent the Task Force an advance copy of the blueprint, it resumed daily briefings after a multi-day hiatus — but with Drs. Deborah Birx and Anthony Fauci playing less prominent roles.

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*Free Enterprise Project Director Justin Danhof discusses his shareholder resolution urging liberal corporations to embrace ideological diversity in an interview with Bloomberg.*

Among the blueprint's other recommendations, it calls for...

- ✓ Withholding federal aid from state and local governments that unduly infringe upon fundamental rights;
- ✓ Creating a special federal court to address COVID-19-related takings cases to provide small businesses an inexpensive and expeditious means of receiving compensation from local governments that destroyed their businesses;
- ✓ Rescinding climate change regulations that raise energy costs;
- ✓ Expanding Committee on Foreign Investments in the United States (CFIUS) scrutiny of Chinese investments in the U.S.;
- ✓ Amending the Foreign Sovereign Immunities Act to permit Americans to sue China;
- ✓ Repealing Certificate of Need laws that restrict the number of beds and other equipment at hospitals.

Your National Center was one of the few voices of reason, standing for individual liberty and limited government even while many of our allies were jumping on the lockdown bandwagon.

When Congress began debating the \$2.2 trillion Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES)



*Free Enterprise Project Program Coordinator Scott Shepard criticizes Goldman Sach's new IPO policy requiring companies to bow to its board quota system in an interview with One America News Network.*

Act in March, Ridenour wrote a commentary pointing out that much of the proposed spending had little to do with addressing the crisis and what little did would further exacerbate it. The commentary was picked up by Inside Sources, News Break, the *Waco Tribune Herald* and the *Duluth News Tribune*.

A few days later, he wrote a second commentary carried by Issues & Insights that warned of long-term damage to fundamental liberty and our economic vitality if we did not restrain the totalitarian impulses of state and local politicians. David also urged government to rely more heavily on the carrot than the stick, writing, "Incentivizing [the at-risk] population to stay home through a variety of means... would certainly be less restrictive than across the board stay-at-home orders... [and] it would... be less expensive and more sustainable over a longer period of time."

Beyond COVID-19 and the National Center's other coronavirus-related work received an enormous amount of media attention, including dozens of published commentaries and dozens of television and radio interviews.

Among the media interviewing National Center personnel or citing its materials on the coronavirus were One America News Network, "America First with Sebastian Gorka," the *Orlando Sentinel*, the "Wilkow Majority" and the nationally-syndicated Bill Martinez Show.

These successes were only possible thanks to your generous support.



*Project 21 Co-Chairman Horace Cooper explains how liberals are seeking to set blacks in the name of saving black lives in an interview with the Fox News Channel's "The Ingraham Angle."*

# *Response to COVID-19 was Madness*

By DAVID A. RIDENOUR,  
PRESIDENT



David A. Ridenour

We may not have had the college basketball tournament, but we had madness in March anyway. Everyone seemingly lost their minds due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

State and local governments trampled on our rights in the name of controlling the spread of the virus, and most Americans – including supposed civil libertarians – didn't just fail to object, but applauded.

At the peak of the government response, 42 states and the District of Columbia imposed quasi-martial law, ordering residents to shelter at home except for "essential" purposes such as grocery shopping and to keep medical appointments.

Over 300 million people were impacted by such orders. Law-abiding citizens were arrested for violating these legally dubious restrictions while convicted criminals were released into the streets. A man in Charles County, Maryland was arrested for disobeying Governor Larry Hogan's order that people not congregate in groups of more than 10. Hogan said the arrest "sends a great message to folks out there that we aren't playing around."

Governing by fear... I think we've read that book before.

Some communities went further: Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot threatened individuals with arrest for running or jogging alone to far from their homes, while Rhode Island Governor Gina Raimondo sent the National Guard door-to-door to find fleeing New Yorkers and place them under two-week house arrest.

Churches across America were shuttered. New York Mayor Bill de Blasio even threatened to permanently close any church or synagogue holding services.

Surprisingly, most church leaders didn't push back against unambiguous First Amendment violations. Maryland allowed churches to conduct drive-in services, but prohibited them from accepting offerings while allowing McDonald's drive throughs to accept payments. No churches objected.

The house of the Lord – a place of worship, fellowship, comfort and refuge that has been open to all through two world wars, communist persecution and even past pandemics – wasn't there for millions of Americans. If church membership declines following the pandemic, you can blame church subservience to government.

Gun stores were ordered closed in more than a dozen states.

All these restrictions violate constitutional rights.

Government may restrict fundamental rights to advance "compelling state interests," but such infringements must generally be narrowly tailored to achieve their objectives by the least restrictive means. Regulations must

also be applied neutrally.

But may state and local governments took a meat cleaver to civil rights and the economy when a scalpel was needed.

The elderly and those with preexisting medical conditions were at greatest risk, and incentivizing this group to self-isolate would have certainly been less restrictive, less expensive and more sustainable than across the board stay-at-home orders.

Instead, states such as New York, Connecticut and Rhode Island locked their states down while inexplicably sending infected patients into retirement communities and long-term care facilities. That's where the lion's share of the fatalities in these states occurred.

At the same time, the loss of jobs created spikes in heart attacks, strokes,

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***"[G]overnments took a meat cleaver to civil rights and the economy when a scalpel was needed."***

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drug overdoses and suicides.

The widespread violation of rights and the public's enthusiastic embrace of it is alarming because, if it can so easily be implemented during a real crisis, it can be implemented during a manufactured one.

Benjamin Franklin once said, "Those who would give up essential liberty to purchase a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety."

It's time Americans show they are deserving of both.

*A version of this column appeared in Issues & Insights.*



“This is the most important interview we’ve done since George Floyd died.”  
– Sebastian Gorka on Project 21 Co-Chairman Horace Cooper’s interview about nationwide protests on his “America First” podcast.



“[T]he National Center for Public Policy Research... [has] helped turn the traditionally drama-free annual meetings into headline-grabbing affairs.”  
– Joe Williams, Fox Business.



“[N]early 75 percent of childless, able-bodied adults receiving SNAP benefits are not working at all. These are the very men and women who should be invited to join... [the] economy.”  
– Project 21 Co-Chairman Horace Cooper and U.S. Representative Mike Conaway supporting a work requirement for Food Stamps.



“Have an extra \$2,000 to spend? That’s how much the Green New Deal could raise the average household’s annual electric bill.”  
– National Center Senior Fellow Drew Johnson