



An Immediate Action Plan to Confront the COVID-19 Public Health and Economic Crisis and Ensure Equity and Social Justice Throughout the Crisis

COVID-19 has swept across the world with alarming speed, and the U.S. is experiencing a public health crisis of potentially unprecedented proportions. At the same time, we are experiencing a significant economic downturn that also requires immediate action. However, despite the severity of the situation, our readiness for what is about to come is dangerously low. Despite actions like the declaration of a national emergency on March 13th and numerous schools, businesses, and other enterprises curtailing in-person operations, much more needs to be done to avert the potentially calamitous consequences of a continued unchecked spread of the virus. Consider the following:

- The U.S. had only administered 23 tests per million people as of March 11th. South Korea had 3,692 tests per million people by that point, 160 times the rate of testing in the US. The UK, Netherlands, and Israel all had administered tests at over ten times the rate of the U.S.^[1] While many preventative measures depend on understanding precisely who the virus has infected, a lack of testing severely hampers this.
- The NY Times's model predicts that, at its current pace, the virus could spread to infect approximately a third of the U.S. population, rapidly overwhelming our treatment capacity and resulting in over 1 million deaths over the next year. Aggressive intervention measures instituted early on could mitigate this, dramatically reducing the total number of people infected and slowing down the spread of the virus to ensure that medical resources are not overwhelmed.^[2]
- Measures designed to contain the spread of the virus will have an enormous impact on economic consumption, threatening businesses, workers, and economic health broadly. A successful public health response could still leave the country in a state of economic disaster if smart policies are not enacted.



What We Must Do

Our government must act quickly, decisively and comprehensively to minimize the spread of COVID-19, prepare for a wider outbreak and caring for acute patients, and make government investments to ensure that the American families and small businesses affected can weather the economic downturn. We need the same spirit of immediate action, innovation and mobilization we had during the Depression, New Deal and World War II. Below are policies that Alan recommends we pursue immediately, informed by Vice President Biden's excellent recent [COVID-19 plan](#) as well as other well-developed perspectives and his own experience and ideas. These represent an extensive series of steps to begin tackling the massive challenge we as a people face. However, just as the crisis will take on new dimensions as it unfolds, so too will any plan to address it. This is a starting point, but more will have to be done.

We need to take decisive action immediately:

First, Dr. Anthony Fauci, the nation's leading public health expert and a trusted leader, should be designated the National Spokesperson on the virus. He should conduct a daily televised press conference. Every state, Washington, DC, and US Territory should name a spokesperson who will coordinate with Dr. Fauci and establish COVID-19 Action Councils led by Governors and made up of leaders from each sector.

Second, we need to accelerate the availability of free testing, including drive-by testing, so that anyone who wants to be tested can be within 24 hours. Americans have a right to know if they are infected with the virus. Once we know the extent of the virus' spread, we will be in a much better position to confront it.

Third, we should immediately determine how many ventilators we will need at the worst case scenario and direct our best, advanced manufacturing facilities and get them built immediately. Just as during WWII we converted our car manufacturers into tank and plane producers, we need to do the same to build as many ventilators as needed.

Fourth, we should immediately tap our military and the Army Corps of Engineers to set up field hospitals in high-need parts of the country. The time to do that is now. We should not wait until our hospitals and health care systems are overwhelmed.

Fifth, federally require businesses to provide 12 weeks of paid sick leave for every working American and allow small businesses to apply for grants to cover this leave. It is



essential that people who are sick do not feel that it is an economic necessity to go to work, where they would endanger their own health and that of co-workers and customers.

Sixth, we should establish a Civilian Reserve Corps registry where anyone who is a health professional or has other needed skills during this crisis, can voluntarily sign up to be deployed to areas of high-need. If deployed, these skilled workers should be compensated by the federal government. Knowing the character of the American people and of health professionals (which both my Mom and Dad were) that registry will get plenty of volunteers.

Seventh, we need an immediate, large-scale economic stimulus bill of \$800 billion to support the American people, small businesses and industries that are most affected by the crisis.

We should ensure this stimulus gets to main street and the working and low income people who need support the most at this critical time. It should not be tax cuts, but rather direct outlays to have the impact felt immediately.

Elements of this stimulus should include at least the following:

- Direct immediate payments of \$1500 to each middle and lower income household. If the crisis continues, these payments could be continued on a month-to-month basis.
- Establish a “wage insurance” program that will ensure that people who lose income due to the crisis, can maintain at least 75% of their income. The grants of \$1500 per household will be factored into the wage insurance program in terms of getting each person to at least 75%.
- Provide grants and no interest loans for small businesses, especially in the service industry, to ensure that they can stay in business during this crisis. The size of the grant will be based on how much revenue the business has lost compared to the same time last year.
- Establish tax credits and incentives for employers who voluntarily choose to pay employees impacted by this public health crisis.
- Provide expedited and expanded access to Medicaid for individuals who lose their health insurance during this crisis.



- Fund expanded unemployment insurance.
- Fund expanded Food Stamps, WIC and other safety net programs that support the most vulnerable in our society.
- Defer student loans for recent graduates and increase Pell Grants for students who now face additional expenses due to closing schools.
- Increase funding for the Corporation for National and Community Service so they can mobilize volunteers across the country both for “virtual” volunteering and direct service and immediately establish the Civilian Reserve Corps Registry.
- Provide grants to nonprofits that are on the front lines of meeting community needs to keep them operating and serving the people who need it most.
- Provide government loans and loan guarantees for the industries affected by the crisis such as the tourism and hospitality industry, airline industry, service industries, and others. Once the industries recover, the loans can be paid back. The Obama Administration’s rescuing of the automobile industry provides a good model for this kind of program.

We face an imminent and profound public health and economic crisis. The steps Alan is proposing are designed to deal with both. Our government leaders must move with immediate and bold action to preserve the health and financial security of the American people. In everything we do, we must confront the scale of the crisis and keep the American people and their needs front and center.

In addition to these seven immediate action steps, Alan proposes a number of other actions we can take in more detail below.

I. Public Health Response

The primary goal at this stage must be to check the further spread of the virus and get anyone infected the treatment they need, before the number of infections overwhelm our hospital treatment capacity.

We must improve coordination and communication



- The Federal Government and each state should set up Covid-19 Action Councils made up of leaders from each sector, who can advise and take action on the highest priority areas to confront this pandemic
- Make Dr. Anthony Fauci a national spokesperson on the crisis and ask him to do daily televised briefings to keep the public well-informed
- Improve mechanisms by which up-to-date information and medical guidance is disseminated to the public, and ensure that this can reach all parts of our society, regardless of language or cultural background

We must be more vigilant in tracking the spread of the virus

- Rapidly increase the availability of testing, and make tests free for everyone who needs one
- Provide drive-through testing facilities in every community throughout America
- Mandate daily reporting on the number of tests done nationwide
- Expand CDC tracking and information gathering capabilities to ensure that we can locate individuals who require testing even if they themselves do not know to ask for it

We must increase our ability to treat those affected by the virus

- Ensure that no American will have to pay a dollar out of pocket for COVID-19 treatment
- Encourage Massachusetts to keep enrollment in the Massachusetts Health Connector open, as employer based coverage may be lost by those who lose their jobs throughout the crisis
- Enable the National Institutes for Health and the Food and Drug Administration to prioritize the development of rapid diagnostic tests, therapeutics and medicines, and vaccines for COVID-19
- Dictate that Federal agencies take emergency measures and activate reserve personnel in order to expand our prevention, response, and treatment capabilities nationwide; mobilizing military units to set up nationwide field hospitals would be one such action
- Establish a civilian reserve corps registry where anyone who is a health professional, or has other needed skills during this crisis, can voluntarily sign up to be deployed to areas of high need
- Support the supply chains for protective medical equipment that may be interfered with due to the global response to the crisis, and use federal resources to expedite the supply of key treatment items like ventilators; immediately determine how many ventilators we need and utilize our best, most advanced manufacturing facilities to get them built right away; develop a plan for public management of supply chains for essential medical supplies and machines necessary to defeat and treat the virus. Just as during WWII we converted our car manufacturers into tank and plane builders, we need to identify the best industries and



factories to make ventilators and begin producing them immediately so that we do not face any shortages and unnecessarily lose lives of our loved ones.

- Oversee and support the supply chains for essential medicines throughout the crisis, from basic medicines like acetaminophen to life-saving medicines like insulin
- Ensure that vulnerable and underserved populations have access to adequate medical care. Special attention is needed for some populations in particular, such as rural communities, undocumented individuals, low income families, veterans, and the incarcerated. We must work with them to address their barriers to care and the unique treatment concerns that they face
- Provide financial support for hospitals and community health centers for uncompensated care and for necessary expansions of their workforces and facility capacities
- Increase federal resources given to federal, state, and municipal entities to achieve these outcomes, and specifically to ensure that medical facilities for every community have the capacity to handle this crisis' effects and that municipal health and inspectional services are able to vigilantly ensure that food preparation is done safely throughout the crisis

We must prevent further spread of the virus as much as possible

- Prohibit gatherings of people over a certain size
- Take emergency measures to reduce the use of public transportation, and encourage people to work from home wherever feasible
- Incentivize medical personnel to vigorously adopt telemedicine technology, allowing them to treat a broader population while minimizing physical exposure and saving hospital beds for the most critical cases, and ensure that insurance covers telehealth services, including mental health, moving forward
- Ensure frontline health workers have adequate resources to protect themselves from infection
- Close schools in affected areas, moving to a system of remote internet-facilitated instruction; ensure that all have children access to computers and internet in order to participate in this new means of instruction
- Massachusetts specifically should eliminate requirements for MCAS testing this year and hold districts harmless on accountability measures
- In counties comprising the 4th district, the number of school children relying upon free or reduced-cost school lunches ranges from 20% to 49%. We must ensure that school closures associated with the crisis do not deprive a significant number of the district's children of their meals by increasing the public provision of meals and doing this through an efficient, accessible delivery system. In some places this role has been assumed by school bus drivers who deliver school breakfasts and lunches to families at bus stops



- Expand screening capacity at airports to ensure that people utilizing air transportation are not exacerbating the spread of the virus
- Impose limits on the ability of suppliers to price gauge for emergency supplies necessary for individual hygiene
- Ensure that undocumented individuals can access testing and treatment without fear of being reported to federal immigration authorities
- 17% of the 4th district's population is 65 or older. This population is particularly vulnerable to both the virus itself, as well as the effects of measures designed to contain the virus. We must ensure that essential home- and community-based services for the elderly continue, that these individuals can continue to have a sufficient supply of medication throughout the crisis, that special measures are taken to protect this especially-vulnerable population from exposure, and that despite the physical separation we maintain social engagement with this population through technology

II. Economic Response

While aggressive and comprehensive measures are necessary to curtail the spread of the virus, we also need to take action to mitigate the economic impact to protect our workers and businesses.

- Pass a substantial economic stimulus in the range of \$800 billion as outlined above to keep the country from going into a great recession or depression
- Institute an emergency paid leave program that will guarantee that the following populations can afford to take leave in order to manage the effects of the COVID-crisis:
 - Sick workers;
 - Workers ordered to self-quarantine;
 - Workers caring for loved ones;
 - People unable to continue work because they are at increased risk of health complications due to COVID-19;
 - Parents/guardians dealing with increased child care responsibilities due to school closings; and
 - Domestic workers, caregivers, gig economy workers, and independent contractors.
- Ensure that workers can take leave without imposing any additional burden on their employers by providing reimbursement to employers or, when necessary, direct payment to workers for up to an initial 14 days of paid sick leave or for the duration of mandatory quarantine or isolation.



- Broaden who is covered under unemployment insurance, providing support to all workers who lose employment due to the crisis
- Pass a “wage insurance” program for people who cannot telecommute to work from home, such as those in the service industry and others who are seeing major reductions in their incomes due to “social distancing” from COVID-19
- Establish a federal small-business no interest loan program to help businesses that might otherwise have to close due to decreased cash flow, to weather the crisis
- Provide for forbearance or relief for student loans and federally backed mortgages, including a deferral of interest on federal student loans until the national state of emergency subsides
- Suspend all evictions due to lack of ability to pay rent
- Protect union health funds
- Allocate money for local emergency funds to give local leaders the ability to take action to protect workers and small businesses that need assistance

III. Create a More Equitable Society to be Better-Prepared for Such Crises in the Future and emerge from this crisis with a more fair and Just America

Even at its early stages, this crisis has already laid bare many of the fundamental ways that so many Americans are left vulnerable by inadequate government and societal protections. In addition to the immediate steps described above to mitigate the danger and damage from this crisis, we must also recognize this crisis as an urgent call to create a more just and fair society of mutuality. We need to do this so we are better prepared in the future and more importantly so that we emerge from this crisis as a more united and just country.

- Ensure that everyone in our country has access to affordable and comprehensive health care services
- Commit to ensuring that everyone, especially those in rural and inner city low- income areas, have access to affordable high speed broadband
- Establish paid family and medical leave of at least 12 weeks for all workers. The [FAMILY Act](#) provides a viable vehicle for instituting such a regime
- Implement a new social contract for “gig economy” workers so that they have health insurance, paid sick and vacation days, workers compensation insurance, access to life-long learning and an ability to save for retirement.
- Create a new Civilian Reserve corps where anyone who is a health professional or has other needed skills during this crisis, can voluntarily sign up to be deployed to areas of high need. This registry should be a national registry but with people listed state by state so Governors can



tap volunteers needed in their states. If deployed, volunteers should be fully compensated by the federal government, so they don't lose any income by joining this reserve. Knowing the character of the American people and of health professionals (which both Alan's Mom and Dad were) this registry will get plenty of volunteers.

- Create a program of universal, voluntary national service for all young people ages 18 to 28. This would give every young person a chance to discover their talents, make a difference, and solve big problems in education, health care, the environment, poverty and disaster relief, all while working with others from different backgrounds in common purpose. Imagine an America, where the first question you ask someone you meet is "where did you serve?"

IV. Big Citizenship

Finally, no amount of government resources or smart policies can manage this crisis alone. Every citizen must individually do their part to minimize further spreading of the virus and to help their neighbors navigate the extraordinary circumstances that will follow. Alan has long extolled the virtue of "Big Citizenship" – the choice by each individual American to do what they can to improve our society. It is now more important than ever that we nurture commitment to this idea. Leaders like Alan who understand both the importance of Big Citizenship and how to instill it broadly throughout our society are essential at this challenging time.

The following examples of Big Citizenship in action could have an enormous impact on the well-being of our society if undertaken by enough individuals:

- Become virtual friends with older Americans who don't have as many social connections, check in on them regularly, and arrange for them to get food and medicine delivery at regular intervals. The district's 22% of people under the age of 18 could do much to help improve the lives of the district's 17% of people 65 or over at this difficult time
- Maintain generosity in volunteering and donating to key services, such as local food banks
- Host college and graduate students who have been displaced from their university housing by the crisis
- Organize within one's community to meet the basic needs of those vulnerable to food security
- Work through local religious institutions to address gaps in social support for our most vulnerable neighbors
- Donate extra computers to school districts so that students who don't personally own computers can continue to receive instruction remotely



- Give support and thanks to healthcare professionals and emergency responders who bear a particularly heavy burden in responding to this crisis, who make up a significant number of our district's workers. If you know someone, offer to help with their basic needs such as grocery shopping.
- Maintain civic engagement virtually, including registering to vote, voting, and participating in government discourse and processes
- Have the discipline to vigilantly practice sound hygiene and distancing practices at an individual level

[1] <https://www.vox.com/science-and-health/2020/3/12/21175034/coronavirus-covid-19-testing-usa>

[2] https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/03/13/opinion/coronavirus-trump-response.html?utm_source=digg