

## Preparing for the Next Crisis

In the midst of one crisis it is difficult to think about, much less plan for, the next one, but since it seems unlikely that this will be the world's last pandemic, our policy makers should be thinking about how to mitigate the damage the next time around. We now know the dangers: much of the world's population lives in crowded conditions alongside animal life, either because of food production or human encroachment on habitat.

Opportunities abound for viral outbreaks, and everyone lives within a day's plane ride from everyone else. So we should all be asking, "What can we do to avoid future disaster?"

1. Fix our broken health care system. Surely one of the reasons the U.S. has suffered a higher death rate than other countries is that so many of our people can't afford medical care, especially in Texas. This is simply wrong in the best of times, but it's downright dangerous in a pandemic. Even if you have excellent health care, you may die because your neighbor (or your fast food server) doesn't have it.
2. Assure that all of our workers, especially those whom we now know are "essential" to our lives, have sick leave. The last thing we need in a pandemic is for a worker to choose between going to work sick or being evicted. Again, think not only of the wellbeing of your fast food server but also of their potential impact on your own life.
3. Expand and improve the infrastructure of the 21st century—internet and cell phone service. In a crisis, livelihoods and even lives depend on connectivity. The economy can better survive and recover if our infrastructure is affordable and accessible, and that benefits all of us.
4. Prepare our public education system to meet the needs of our children, even in the midst of a crisis. That means hiring and rewarding the best possible teachers and compensating them equal to their actual value. The quality of your life depends on them.
5. Ensure that college and technical training are affordable and accessible. Skills have to be adapted quickly to face any crisis, so education is not just for the young anymore. We know many of the jobs lost in this crisis won't be coming back, and the same will be true of the next crisis. Fortunately, Texas has a network of community colleges ready to help people make necessary transitions, but they must be well funded and supported.

Before any of these preparations can be made, however, we must repair our broken political system. I don't want to fight over who's to blame for the current dysfunction of our governments—Democrats, Republicans, Donald Trump, Nancy Pelosi, the media, social media, foreign interference, or nefarious conspiracies. The one thing we can all agree on is that the system

is broken and fixing it is more urgent than assigning blame. I have some ideas (I think good ones) about how to prepare for the next crisis, but I fully understand that people on the other side of the political divide also have much to add to the discussion.

If I am elected to the Texas legislature, I pledge to listen, not just hear but listen, to as many perspectives as possible and to serve only the best interests of my fellow Texans. I will never use hateful or mean-spirited language to condemn someone just because they don't agree with me. I will do everything in my power to tone down the angry rhetoric and get on with doing what free governments are supposed to do: enable men and women to come together to solve problems that no one can fix by themselves.