

POLICY WATCH – April 2020

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April – the time of Renewal, Rebirth, and now Reset? As we work our way through the shutdown, we have time to reflect and use the pause to imagine a better world when we are on the other side of this awful pandemic. I encourage you to seek out pause-itivity (positivity) while you are home and hope this edition of Policy Watch gives you some ideas on how we can reset our lives and our work to make the next normal one that has many improvements. While we save lives and livelihoods now by staying home, we can also lay the groundwork for fixing inequities and solving problems that seemed intractable a month ago.

I am excited about that opportunity and encouraged that we can do so much when we work collectively. This pause can be a great time of creativity and innovation if we follow historic patterns of disruption. It can also be another community builder where we learn that we can depend on each other and that others are willing to sacrifice so much for their community. We have new heroes now: all of the health care professionals on the frontlines; the essential workers who stock the shelves and ring up our groceries; the delivery people who bring what we need so we can stay safe at home; the childcare workers who take care of the essential workers' children so they can take care of us. And The public safety workers, the government officials, the farm workers, the restaurant cooks -- the long list of so many people who have been underappreciated and underpaid who are now our saviors.

Thank you for all the people who we are counting on to get us through the shutdown. You can count on us to follow the guidelines to stop the spread. We may not be able to touch hands, but we are touching hearts every day. We are stronger together!

Best,

Cynthia

Hopeful Outcomes – Making the Next Normal Better

We don't know when the shutdown will end or the vaccine will be found. What we have is the virus dictating the timeline for when we will resume going back to work and out to eat as our health officials deem it safe. But this pause is a good time to look at what the next normal could look like and what silver linings there may be in what we are currently enduring. One optimistic thinker is Timothy Egan, who in [After the Pandemic, the Big Reset](#), New York Times, [Link](#), shares his hope for a better tomorrow. He says, "Every crisis opens a course to the unknown. In an eye-blink, the impossible becomes possible. History in

a sprint can mean a dark, lasting turn for the worse, or a new day of enlightened public policy. Be still, my heart, but I see the latter. Some of the greatest advances in American history — liberation of slaves, Social Security, robust clean air and water mandates — were birthed by disaster.”

Egan says, “For now, the coronavirus pandemic is an epic of sorrow, and has many mortal months still to run. But in the midst of our suffering, our grief for loved ones lost, our loneliness in social isolation, we have a chance to re-engineer our world.”

Egan’s ideas for better outcomes may not be achievable because of political will or financial wherewithal. Nor may they be desirable to the majority of Americans. But his ideas are a good starting point for a discussion of what might be, lessons learned and how to make the reset improve upon our current institutions and infrastructure. Here’s what Egan thinks may follow as the pandemic starts to settle:

Health Care. “Universal medical coverage,” he says, “whether expanding Obamacare with a public option or some form of Medicare for all, is going to happen. It’s had majority support for some time. The pandemic has just sped up the timetable. One poll found that 41 percent of adults are now more likely than they were before the pandemic to support a government-run care system covering all Americans.” “Since the outbreak,” Egan says, “one in four Republicans have suddenly come around to some version of what most nations already have. Now, try running for office on a platform of *taking away* people’s health care. Or tolerating the condition that leaves nearly 28 million Americans with no health care at all.”

Work. Egan notes, “Paid family leave. Working at home. Universal sick leave. Subsidized day care. A livable minimum wage. Until about an hour ago, all of the above were considered progressive pipe dreams. But just as World War II brought millions of women into factories, millions of people may settle into another workplace following the world war on coronavirus — their homes.”

He says, “Up to half the jobs in the United States could be done, at least partially, from home, by one estimate. Currently, fewer than 4 percent of jobs allow this. The benefits of telecommuting — in terms of personal time, on the environment, on the psyche and on production — could be enormous.”

And he is quick to add, “To those who can’t work at home, for one bright and shining moment we all appreciate grocery clerks, truck drivers, nurses, home health care workers and others as heroes. But we’ve never treated them that way with the range of benefits available to those who wear a different collar.”

Food. Egan says, “With seven in 10 adults overweight or obese, the poor health and nutrition of most Americans is a horrid and accepted fact. But with the disproportionate number of Covid-19 deaths attributed to diet-related conditions, we are seeing, more rapidly, just how much this societal problem can kill. This doesn’t mean we should turn to fat shaming. But it does mean that, while looking at obesity as a public health problem as deadly as smoking, we can make some big structural changes in the food system.”

Egan champions, “For starters, there should be universal free school meals. Kids who take advantage of this are more likely to eat fruits and vegetables. But under the present system, many poor students feel so stigmatized that they go hungry instead. For adults, the paradox of living in a nation where 40 million people face food insecurity while 40 percent of our food is wasted, makes no sense.”

He offers, “One quick solution is to allow all 42 million Americans who receive food stamps to shop online and get their groceries delivered like everyone else. One lasting solution is to standardize date labeling, so that food that may not be perfect quality is still safe to eat and can be used by food banks.”

And as we know in the North Bay, Egan agrees, “And it’s time to recognize the vital value of people who harvest our fruits and vegetables. Up to half of farmworkers are undocumented, and the Trump administration has been harassing and demeaning them. But lo: The Department of Homeland Security has just classified farmworkers as “essential critical infrastructure workers.” Let’s make that permanent through the big immigration fix that awaits a new president.”

Climate. Egan joins others who hope that the reset can fix our climate change problems, too. He says, “One byproduct of so many people working at home is clean air. With the global economy in a coma, emissions could fall by the largest amount since World War II. But this could have little impact on the trajectory of climate change if we don’t make larger structural changes. China is already firing up its coal-powered factories. We have only a few years to save ourselves from ourselves. Our trashed and overheated world is a slower pandemic. The good news is that, even with the crash in oil prices, renewable energy use is on an upward course. Coal is yesterday, no matter how much Trump tries to promote it and China drags its heels.”

Egan ends with encouraging, “More than anything, the pandemic has shown how quickly things can change if they must. Carpe diem.”

Carpe diem, indeed! More hopeful looks ahead include ideas from big thinkers collected by Politico Magazine in Coronavirus Will Change the World Permanently. Here’s How. (Link). Here are some of their ideas:

A new kind of patriotism.

Mark Lawrence Schrad is an associate professor of political science and author of the forthcoming *Smashing the Liquor Machine: A Global History of Prohibition*.

America has long equated patriotism with the armed forces. But you can’t shoot a virus. Those on the frontlines against coronavirus aren’t conscripts, mercenaries or enlisted men; they are our doctors, nurses, pharmacists, teachers, caregivers, store clerks, utility workers, small-business owners and employees. Like Li Wenliang and the doctors of Wuhan, many are suddenly saddled with unfathomable tasks, compounded by an increased risk of contamination and death they never signed up for.

When all is said and done, perhaps we will recognize their sacrifice as true patriotism, saluting our doctors and nurses, genuflecting and saying, “Thank you for your service,” as we now do for military veterans. We will give them guaranteed health benefits and corporate discounts, and build statues and have holidays for this new class of people who sacrifice their health and their lives for ours. Perhaps, too, we will finally start to understand patriotism more as cultivating the health and life of your community, rather than blowing up someone else’s community. Maybe the de-militarization of American patriotism and love of community will be one of the benefits to come out of this whole awful mess.

A decline in polarization.

Peter T. Coleman is a professor of psychology at Columbia University who studies intractable conflict. His next book, *The Way Out: How to Overcome Toxic Polarization*, will be released in 2021.

The extraordinary shock(s) to our system that the coronavirus pandemic is bringing has the potential to break America out of the 50-plus year pattern of escalating political and cultural polarization we have been trapped in, and help us to change course toward greater national solidarity and functionality. It might sound idealistic, but there are two reasons to think it can happen.

The first is the “common enemy” scenario, in which people begin to look past their differences when faced with a shared external threat. COVID-19 is presenting us with a formidable enemy that will not distinguish between reds and blues, and might provide us with fusion-like energy and a singularity of purpose to help us reset and regroup. During the Blitz, the 56-day Nazi bombing campaign against Britain, Winston Churchill’s cabinet was amazed and heartened to witness the ascendance of human goodness—altruism, compassion and generosity of spirit and action.

The second reason is the “political shock wave” scenario. Studies have shown that strong, enduring relational patterns often become more susceptible to change after some type of major shock destabilizes them. This doesn’t necessarily happen right away, but a study of 850 enduring inter-state conflicts that occurred between 1816 to 1992 found that more than 75 percent of them ended within 10 years of a major destabilizing shock. Societal shocks can break different ways, making things better or worse. But given our current levels of tension, this scenario suggests that now is the time to begin to promote more constructive patterns in our cultural and political discourse. The time for change is clearly ripening.

The rise of telemedicine.

Ezekiel J. Emanuel is chair of the department of medical ethics and health policy at the University of Pennsylvania.

The pandemic will shift the paradigm of where our healthcare delivery takes place. For years, telemedicine has lingered on the sidelines as a cost-controlling, high convenience system. Out of necessity, remote office visits could skyrocket in popularity as traditional-care settings are overwhelmed by the pandemic. There would also be containment-related benefits to this shift; staying home for a video call keeps you out of the transit system, out of the waiting room and, most importantly, away from patients who need critical care.

An opening for stronger family care.

Ai-Jen Poo is director of the National Domestic Workers Alliance and Caring Across Generations.

The coronavirus pandemic has revealed gaping holes in our care infrastructure, as millions of American families have been forced to navigate this crisis without a safety net. With loved ones sick and children suddenly home from school indefinitely, they’ve been forced to make impossible choices among their families, their health and financial ruin. After all, meaningful child care assistance is extremely limited, access to long-term care is piecemeal at best, and too few workers have access to paid family and medical leave, which means that missed work means missed pay.

This crisis should unleash widespread political support for Universal Family Care—a single public federal fund that we all contribute to, that we all benefit from, that helps us take care of our families while we work, from child care and elder care to support for people with disabilities and paid family leave. Coronavirus has put a particular national spotlight on unmet needs of the growing older population in our country, and the tens of millions of overstretched family and professional caregivers they rely on. Care is and always has been a shared responsibility. Yet, our policy has never fully supported it. This moment, challenging as it is, should jolt us into changing that.

Big government makes a comeback.

Margaret O'Mara is a professor of history at University of Washington and author of *The Code: Silicon Valley and the Remaking of America*.

The battle against the coronavirus already has made government—federal, state and local—far more visible to Americans than it normally has been. As we tune in to daily briefings from public health officials, listen for guidance from our governors, and seek help and hope from our national leaders, we are seeing the critical role that “big government” plays in our lives and our health. We also see the deadly consequences of four decades of disinvestment in public infrastructure and dismissal of public expertise. Not only will America need a massive dose of big government to get out of this crisis—as Washington’s swift passage of a giant economic bailout package reflects—but we will need big, and wise, government more than ever in its aftermath.

A return to faith in serious experts.

Tom Nichols is a professor at the U.S. Naval War College and author of *The Death of Expertise*.

America for several years has become a fundamentally unserious country. This is the luxury afforded us by peace, affluence and high levels of consumer technology. We didn’t have to think about the things that once focused our minds—nuclear war, oil shortages, high unemployment, skyrocketing interest rates. Terrorism has receded back to being a kind of notional threat for which we dispatch volunteers in our military to the far corners of the desert as the advance guard of the homeland. We even elevated a reality TV star to the presidency as a populist attack on the bureaucracy and expertise that makes most of the government function on a day to day basis.

The COVID-19 crisis could change this in two ways. First, it has already forced people back to accepting that expertise matters. It was easy to sneer at experts until a pandemic arrived, and then people wanted to hear from medical professionals like Anthony Fauci. Second, it may—one might hope—return Americans to a new seriousness, or at least move them back toward the idea that government is a matter for serious people. The colossal failure of the Trump administration both to keep Americans healthy and to slow the pandemic-driven implosion of the economy might shock the public enough back to insisting on something from government other than emotional satisfaction.

The Twenty Interventions Needed to Beat COVID-19

In [How We Will Beat COVID-19](https://www.covidexitstrategy.org/), <https://www.covidexitstrategy.org/>, scientists call for twenty interventions, which are based on the tactics successfully deployed in other countries to curtail COVID-19, and best practices from American healthcare experts and leaders: [AEI](#), [CAP](#), [USoC](#), [Gates](#), and the [White House](#). Each intervention reduces the chance the virus spreads from person to person.

Education	Accurate information about the virus is being shared
Distancing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enforce "Stay at Home" Enforce physical distancing when in public Ban large group gatherings Close non-essential businesses Adjust how businesses operate Close schools and daycares; where possible shift curriculum online
Quarantine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restrict or quarantine travelers from locations with community transmission Provide safe spaces for quarantining and recovery
Testing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide testing for COVID-19 Conduct antibody tests for COVID-19 Conduct temperature screenings at essential businesses
Masks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wear masks in public at all times Wear masks when symptomatic
Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide tools and telehealth options for symptom triage and remote care Provide treatment for COVID-19
Financial	Provide financial protection for COVID-19
Tracing	Notify individuals in contact with people who test COVID+
Therapies	Develop an effective therapy
Vaccines	Develop an effective vaccine

To see how California is doing on implementing these interventions go to this link <https://www.covidexitstrategy.org/> which is continually being updated. At time of publication, the site says California needs to: "Improve daily COVID case information on state's website. Restrict or quarantine travelers from locations with community transmission. Increase your state's testing throughput. Require masks to be worn by employees and patrons at essential businesses. Require masks to be worn when symptomatic. Provide insurance coverage for COVID-19 treatment."

Spreading Kindness – This is a Curve that Doesn't Need Flattening

One way we can get through this shutdown is to follow the guidance on physical distancing but amp up our socially connecting. In Calmatters' [Acts of grace from everyday Californians are getting us through](#) by Jocelyn Wiener, [Link](#), we learn of the wonderful ways people are supporting each other in these trying

times. Wiener says, “From inside our homes, this might seem the loneliest moment in modern history. Slowing coronavirus has meant many of us are physically cut off from friends and family, schools and workplaces, senior centers, book clubs and Little League teams. Yet woven throughout the horror of the present, evidence of grace abounds. Some manifests in grand gestures, some in small details.”

Wiener says, “Christine Carter, a senior fellow at the Greater Good Science Center at the University of California, Berkeley, and author of several books about happiness, said efforts to connect and support each other are a very human response to crisis. ‘Is this exceptional? I don’t actually think it is, she said. I think humans are hardwired to help each other.’”

“In stressful situations,” Carter said, “people can have two different instincts. Some go into a fear-based response, worrying primarily about their own survival. They hoard toilet paper and Tylenol. Others are more focused on species survival and, thus, the needs of others. While fear-based responses tend to create more stress and raise people’s blood pressure, community-mindedness has the opposite effect: lowering blood pressure and fostering positive emotions, ‘even a sense of awe.’ Ironically, it helps us more as individuals,” she said.

“Even the smallest details matter,” Carter said, “noting that she recently burst into tears watching a video of people standing on their balconies, cheering for health workers. The beauty in such a small act, it’s more than a silver lining, it’s everything,” she said. “In her own neighborhood in San Rafael, people have begun stepping outside their homes every night at 8 p.m. to howl to one another, like wolves in the forest. It’s just connecting into the larger neighborhood in a way that, frankly, we never have before,” she said. “Such grassroots efforts can have real impact on emotional well-being,” said Merritt Schreiber, a professor of clinical pediatrics at the Lundquist Institute at Harbor-UCLA Medical Center and UCLA’S David Geffen School of Medicine. “Social support has been shown to be one of the strongest predictors of coping with disasters and adverse experiences,” he said.

Wiener says, “While much discussion surrounding coronavirus has focused on flattening the infection curve, Schreiber believes there’s a psychological curve too. Enhancing social support, he believes, is one way to protect more people from mental health problems.”

This support from the public is not lost on Dr. Peter Yellowlees, a professor of psychiatry and Chief Wellness Officer at UC Davis Health. “People have written the medical staff thank-you notes in chalk at the entries to the hospital,” he said. “When you walk in in the morning and you read a note before you even get into the door that says ‘thank you for what you’re doing,’ that means a great deal to a lot of people,” he said.

Yellowlees objects to the term “social distancing,” saying what we’re actually doing right now is physical distancing, but social connecting. He thinks this experience — and our efforts to support each other and grieve together — will ultimately leave us more connected as a society. “I think we will value our neighbors, our communities more and I think we will interact with them differently,” he said.

Whether it is helping a neighbor get their groceries, sharing toilet paper, having block parties where people can sing and share stories from appropriate distances, setting up means to provide more protective gear for the healthcare workers, or supporting your local restaurants by getting take-out, we can all stay connected and support our family, friends and local businesses to get through these tough times. We are stronger together!

Members in the News

Comcast Webinar Series: Keeping Business Moving Amid Disruption

Comcast Business is committed to keeping you and your business connected to the technology and information you need to respond in times of rapid change. Join Comcast Business leaders and industry experts in a series of 30-minute webinars that explore how businesses are rethinking business continuity, branding and cybersecurity strategies, and reconsidering the future of remote learning.

Comcast CEO Donates Full Salary To Charity, Company Sets Up \$500M Employee Fund

Chairman-CEO Brian Roberts and other top executives at Comcast will donate 100% of their salaries to charities supporting COVID-19 relief efforts as the media giant commits \$500 million to support employees with continued pay and benefits, according to a memo Roberts sent to staff on Wednesday.

The Buck Institute For Research On Aging Hosts The COVID-19 Pandemic And The Science Aimed At Bringing It To An End Live Session

Join live online sessions with leaders in health care, epidemiology, and molecular biology as they bring an array of perspectives to our ongoing global health crisis.

Sonoma State University Selected to Provide at Least 580 Beds for Coronavirus Surge

Sonoma State University will provide at least 580 patient beds at its recreation center and in student housing on its Rohnert Park campus to help Sonoma County hospitals handle a projected surge of coronavirus cases in the weeks ahead, according to a new deal reached with the county.

Press Democrat Wins 25 Awards in California Journalism Awards

The Press Democrat was honored Tuesday with six first-place awards from the California News Publishers Association, which praised the newspaper for its coverage of disasters, homelessness, business and education.

North Bay Children's Center Aides in Sonoma County Expansion of Emergency Child Care Program to Support Health Care Workers Treating Coronavirus Patients

Sonoma County has launched three emergency child care centers for children of critical health care workers, who are bracing to treat a surge of coronavirus patients in coming weeks as the local outbreak is expected to approach its peak.

Redwood Credit Union Gives \$800,000 to Support Immediate Coronavirus Relief Efforts

In response to the unprecedented economic, health, and community wellness impacts of the Coronavirus outbreak and related shelter-in-place directives, Redwood Credit Union (RCU) is distributing grants to more than 45 nonprofit organizations across Lake, Marin, Mendocino, Napa, San Francisco, and Sonoma Counties.

Bank of America Supports Khan Academy's Efforts to Keep Everyone Learning

Among the many unprecedented issues the world is facing because of COVID-19, one of the most pressing is how to ensure that hundreds of millions of students can continue to learn over the weeks and months ahead amid widespread elementary and secondary school closures.

Bank of America Announces Additional Support for Consumer and Small Business Clients Experiencing Hardship From the Impact of the Coronavirus

Bank of America today announced additional support for its 66 million Consumer and Small Business clients in response to the unprecedented challenges of the coronavirus.

Catholic Charities and Burbank Housing Project Approved by Santa Rosa City Council

The Santa Rosa City Council unanimously voted to approve Caritas Village.



Who We Are

Over twenty five years ago, business leaders founded the North Bay Leadership Council on a simple premise: We can accomplish more by working together. Today, the Council includes 54 leading employers in the North Bay. Our members represent a wide variety of businesses, non-profits and educational institutions, with a workforce in excess of 25,000. As business and civic leaders, our goal is to promote sound public policy, innovation and sustainability to make our region a better place to live and work. For more information: Call

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