

Talking Points: Evaluating the Lockdown

1. If we want to make good public policy, we must identify our standard of value, consider the full context, and identify alternatives (as well as their pros and cons). The standard of value provides the purpose for which public policy is formulated. The full context includes all of the relevant facts about an issue, as well as what we don't know. On any issue, there are alternative policies. Identifying those alternatives, as well as their pros and cons, will enable us to select the policy that best serves our standard of value.
2. The proper standard of value for public policy is individual liberty—the freedom of each individual to choose what he wants to attain in life and the means for attaining it (so long as he respects the freedom of others to do the same). Any other standard of value means imposing the goals and desires of some onto others.
3. In evaluating public policy, the full context includes both ends and means. And it includes measuring a policy against the standard of value. Noble ends cannot be achieved by ignoble means. No matter how desirable a goal may be, a policy that requires the sacrifice of individual liberty is improper.
4. In any situation, alternatives exist. Ignoring alternatives, and the pros and cons of each, will ultimately lead to bad decisions. Again, each alternative must be measured against the standard of value.
5. In the case of the COVID-19 pandemic, the alternatives were not a lockdown or 2.2 million dead Americans. We were given the alternative of the sacrifice of our liberty or an unprecedented death toll. As is often the case, these are false alternatives.
6. The lockdown treats the uninfected—who pose no risk to anyone—the same as those who are infected. The “innocent” are treated the same as the “guilty.”
7. The proper alternative should have focused on testing, isolating those who were infected, and tracing their contacts. This would have dramatically contained the spread of the virus without sacrificing individual liberty.
8. Taiwan, a nation of 24 million people, implemented a policy of testing, isolating, and tracing on January 1. The nation has had only 7 deaths from COVID-19.

Talking Points: Government's Role in a Pandemic

1. As stated in the Declaration of Independence, government's proper purpose is the protection of individual rights (including property rights). This means protecting the freedom of individuals to choose their values and the means for attaining them, so long as they respect the freedom of others to do the same.
2. Those who are infected with a contagious, deadly disease pose an objective threat to others, even if unintentionally. Government has a responsibility to protect the uninfected from the carriers of such diseases.
3. Government has a crucial role to play during a pandemic. That role centers on identifying infected individuals through testing, isolating those who are infected, and tracing their contacts.
4. We can combat pandemics without destroying the economy. Taiwan, a nation of 24 million people, has had only 7 deaths from COVID-19. In early January they implemented a policy of testing, isolating, and tracing.
5. In addition to testing, isolating, and tracing, government must provide the public with information regarding the pandemic and the steps that individuals should take to protect themselves. Rather than issue mandates and prohibitions, government should inform and advise.
6. Government's powers are delimited in "normal" times. Those powers should also be delimited during a pandemic. New laws are needed to define government's powers in a pandemic, and the criteria for exercising those powers.
7. New laws are also needed to define the planning and preparation required of government regarding pandemics. Government must be proactive in the face of new threats, and it must be prepared to identify and respond to those threats.

Talking Points: Government's Stranglehold on Health Care

1. Government has a stranglehold on America's health care system. From medicines to equipment, from hospitals to insurance, every aspect of health care is heavily controlled and regulated by federal, state, and local governments.
2. At the start of the pandemic, only the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention was allowed to develop a test kit for the coronavirus. That test kit proved to be flawed. At the end of February, two months after the potential pandemic was identified, other labs were finally allowed to develop test kits. In the meantime, infected individuals spread the virus across the country.
3. No drug, personal protective equipment, treatment, or medical device can be legally sold in the United States without the approval of the Food and Drug Administration. That approval process delayed the production of desperately needed medical equipment and drugs.
4. State and local laws also hinder the provision of health care services. Occupational licensing prohibits individuals from offering services without the government's approval. "Certificate of Need" laws prohibit hospitals from expanding their facilities without the government's approval.
5. Government regulations and controls on businesses and individuals prevented the rapid scaling up of test kits, personal protective equipment, vaccines, and other resources needed to combat the coronavirus. "Flattening the curve" was the "solution" to an anticipated shortage of medical equipment and supplies. The true solution to a production shortage is to free the producers—repeal the regulations and controls that stifle production.
6. When the Food and Drug Administration relaxed its regulations, production of equipment, test kits, and other medical resources soared. By then, the virus had spread to nearly every state.
7. Had the government's stranglehold on health care not existed, individuals, laboratories, and businesses would have been free to respond quickly. The nation would have been better prepared and better able to cope with the pandemic.

Talking Points: Life Requires Production

1. The values that we want and need in order to live are not laying around for us to pick up. Every value that sustains human life—from food to flat screen televisions, from clothing to cars—must be produced. Life requires the production of values.
2. Without the freedom to produce and trade the values that life requires, we cannot sustain our lives. This is true during “normal” times as well as during pandemics.
3. The lockdown prohibited those in “non-essential” jobs from working. They were denied a livelihood. They were denied the freedom to support themselves and their families.
4. The lockdown demonstrated the importance of production in stark terms. Deprived of the freedom to produce and trade, tens of millions were forced to consume their savings, depend on government assistance, or both.
5. The right to property means the freedom to create, use, keep, trade, and dispose of material values. Without property rights, no other rights are possible. Property rights protect our freedom to produce the values that we want and need.
6. Property is life. To deprive an individual of his property is to deprive him of the means to sustain his life.

Talking Points: Lockdowns vs. the Pursuit of Happiness

1. The Declaration of Independence states that all individuals have a right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Government's purpose is the protection of our rights.
2. The pursuit of happiness means the freedom to choose one's values and the means for attaining them, so long as one respects the freedom of others to do the same. If we want the freedom to pursue our values, we must respect and defend the freedom of others to pursue theirs.
3. Individuals have a wide range of values. Some like baseball, and others like the ballet. Some like Mozart. Others like Jay Z. Some like malls, while others prefer parks.
4. In a pandemic, individuals will choose different courses of action. Some may isolate themselves and have little or no contact with others. Some may choose to continue working because of their financial situation. Some may choose to spend time with their grandchildren, despite the risks, because of the value they receive. That is their moral right.
5. Production and the pursuit of happiness are both a part of living a successful life. Production is the means by which we produce the material values required to live. Happiness is the psychological state of living one's life well.
6. The lockdown has prohibited individuals from acting on their own judgment in the pursuit of their values—their happiness. It has restricted our freedom to produce and trade. It has restricted our freedom to associate with others. It has restricted our freedom to create and enjoy values. It has restricted our freedom to pursue happiness.
7. The lockdown, we are told, will save lives. But life isn't about avoiding suffering, misery, and death. Life is about achieving and enjoying values. Life is about pursuing happiness.