



Hope in the time of coronavirus

By Orrin G. Hatch | Friday, April 10, 2020

This week marks the celebration of Passover, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday — holidays that, for millions of people, symbolize the promise of rebirth, redemption, and renewal after a period of significant testing and adversity. These tangible symbols of hope are needed today more than ever.

As a nation, we are reeling from the effects of the coronavirus pandemic. Already, thousands of people have succumbed to this illness, with many more expected to die in the coming days. Meanwhile, stocks continue to plunge as families across the country brace for a historic economic downturn and unemployment levels that could reach 30%.

Times such as these can tempt us to lose hope — but we shouldn't. If history has taught us anything, it's that we will not only emerge from this crisis but will do so even stronger than we were before.

In the coronavirus outbreak, our nation faces an unprecedented challenge. Yet we've faced unprecedented challenges throughout our history, and we've overcome them every time.

Take just a few examples from my lifetime:

During the Great Depression, with the economy in tatters, the public rallied around society's most vulnerable — and as a people, we came together to rebuild. From the ashes was born the strongest, most prosperous economy in the history of the world.

During World War II, with the future of Western civilization hanging in the balance, we marshaled the indomitable will of the American public and the vast resources of this country to defeat fascism on both sides of the globe. And almost overnight, we became a world superpower.

In the surreal days following Sept. 11, the country's confidence and its economy were shaken to the core as we grappled with the devastating impacts of the worst terrorist attack in our history. Inevitably, however, we came back by coming together, answering fear and uncertainty with unity and resolve.

Today, we face an invisible threat in the form of a global pandemic. But we are uniting once again to meet the challenge in front of us.

In recent weeks, we've seen collective action on a scale that rivals the national mobilization of World War II. Businesses, restaurants, churches, and schools are all working together to contain the spread of the coronavirus. The financial sector is holding strong as banks offer fee waivers, zero-rate loans, and other accommodations to families and small businesses to help keep them afloat. Healthcare professionals are heroically putting their lives on the line to care for sick patients. Individuals are doing their part by practicing social distancing. And government officials in Washington and across the country are setting partisanship aside to move quickly on policies that will strengthen the public health response to this virus and help shore up the economy.

All the while, industry is stepping up like never before to combat the coronavirus pandemic. In the 1940s, manufacturers repurposed their factories to build the tanks, planes, cars, and ammunition that helped us defeat the Axis Powers. And they are doing it again in the fight against COVID-19.

Companies such as Ford and GM are overhauling their production lines to build the ventilators and other critical medical equipment that will save lives. Legacy retailers such as Nordstrom, Brooks Brothers, and Tommy Hilfiger have set clothes-making aside to sew hundreds of thousands of medical masks and gowns for healthcare workers across the country. Even distillers are getting in on the action, with businesses including Anheuser-Busch and Coors producing thousands of bottles of hand sanitizer each day.

From auto manufacturing and agriculture to tech and telecom, companies across all sectors are lining up in an all-hands-on-deck effort to stop the spread of the coronavirus. This is the beauty of American enterprise: Our businesses don't need central government planners to tell them what to do in moments of crisis. They take action of their own accord — and they do it better than anyone else.

As we speak, the nation's top pharmaceutical researchers, drawing on the latest innovations in medical science and artificial intelligence, are advancing drug treatments and potential vaccines at breakneck speeds. Already, Boston-based biotech firm Moderna has produced a vaccine that shows great promise, with human trials expected to begin in the next few weeks. This vaccine could be ready in limited volumes for healthcare workers as soon as this fall.

Herein lies one of the great ironies of this moment: Our free enterprise system, for so long the punching bag of pundits and politicians alike, will save not only our nation but also the entire world from the worst of this scourge. That's why this Easter weekend, even in the midst of what is likely to be the deadliest month of this pandemic, we have cause for optimism.

Adversity has a way of awakening the strength and potential of Americans. We have an alchemical ability to turn our darkest moments into our finest hours. This ability has sustained us through our greatest trials as a nation, from Valley Forge to COVID-19. The worst of times somehow bring out the best in us — our businesses, military, government, and civil society. They will do so again.

So although the immediate future is unclear, one thing is certain: We will defeat this virus. We will restore our economy. And in time, we will come back from this crisis even stronger than we were before.

Hope: During this Passover and Easter, there's every reason to have it. So let's hold fast to hope, and to each other, during these difficult times.

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