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OPINION | BEST OF THE WEB

Minnesota Not Nice

Could a state design a more destructive policy to address coronavirus?



By

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Gov. Tim Walz (D., Minn.) at an April press conference in St. Paul.

PHOTO: EVAN FROST/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Thank goodness Covid-19 isn't as deadly as many media pundits feared. Given the incomprehensible policy blunders of Minnesota's state government, its health system might have been completely overwhelmed by now.

The sad news from the Land of 10,000 Lakes (and nearly 50,000 state employees) is that Minnesota has been implementing the disastrous Covid-19 strategy made famous by New York's Gov. Andrew Cuomo. The essence of the plan is to forcefully reduce the income of

people at low risk, while simultaneously increasing the chances of virus exposure for those at high risk.

Chris Serres reports in the Minneapolis Star Tribune:

Early in the pandemic, the Minnesota Department of Health turned to nursing homes and other long-term care facilities to relieve the burden on hospitals that were at risk of being overwhelmed by COVID-19 patients. Minnesota hospitals have since discharged dozens of infected patients to nursing homes, including facilities that have undergone large and deadly outbreaks of the disease, state records show...

One such facility, North Ridge Health and Rehab in New Hope, has accepted 42 patients from hospitals and other long-term care facilities since mid-April even as the coronavirus has raged through its 320-bed nursing home, killing 48 of its patients and infecting scores more.

It's almost beyond belief that governors like Minnesota's Tim Walz and New York's Mr. Cuomo would impose impoverishing lockdowns that restrict so much of everyday life—while systematically endangering the elderly who bear by far the greatest risk.

The results in Minnesota are hardly surprising. On Tuesday the Star Tribune's Jeremy Olson reported:

Deaths from COVID-19 continue to be concentrated among the elderly and residents of long-term care facilities, with 13 of 17 newly reported fatalities on Tuesday involving residents of these facilities.

The pandemic has now been associated with 748 deaths in Minnesota, including 608 long-term care residents, according to the latest COVID-19 figures provided Tuesday by the Minnesota Department of Health. Total infections have reached 17,029, and the number of hospitalized patients stands at 545 — with 229 of those patients in intensive care.

“State health officials on Monday said they were making strides in their latest strategies to protect residents and workers at long-term care facilities,” adds Mr. Olson.

Apparently Minnesota's governor is really impressed with the progress being made by his entire team. Over at the St. Paul Pioneer Press, Christopher Magan reports:

The administration of Democratic Gov. Tim Walz will go ahead and implement pay raises in July for thousands of state workers over the objections of Republicans who control the

state Senate...

Senate Majority Leader Paul Gazelka, R-Nisswa, said Tuesday implementing the raises would be “tone deaf” because “there are 12 unemployed Minnesotans for every state employee who would receive a raise this July.”

A new Journal editorial notes another appalling element of the Walz agenda as he ever so slowly allows Minnesotans to resume their lives:

Minnesota churchgoers were hoping for a reprieve Wednesday when Gov. Tim Walz, as expected, announced steps for easing restrictions on bars, restaurants, hair salons and barbershops starting June 1. But churches didn't make the cut.

In response, an interfaith group including the Minnesota Catholic Conference, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod and the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty immediately put the Governor on notice. In accordance with their First Amendment right to the free exercise of religion, they sent letters to their congregations and Gov. Walz announcing their intention to reopen their churches next week—without his blessing.

As far as the plans blessed by governors like Messrs. Walz and Cuomo, it's getting harder to tell what they have to do with countering the virus. Meanwhile in New Jersey another Democrat, Gov. Phil Murphy, has been blaming nursing-home operators for the relatively high death toll in such facilities. But Susan Livio and Ted Sherman at NJ.com say their reporting “points to major missteps and negligence by the state.” They note:

Despite the governor's criticism of nursing home operators, the long-term care facility in New Jersey with the most deaths is the state-run Veterans Memorial Home in Paramus, which as of Monday reported 79 dead and 283 residents testing positive for COVID-19.

Governors should immediately liberate private citizens to exercise their beliefs, restore their livelihoods and protect their elderly neighbors.

At Last, Some Good News

Marc Malkin reports in Variety:

The 93rd Oscars aren't until February, but the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences is considering postponing the big night, according to multiple sources.

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(Lisa Rossi helps compile Best of the Web. Thanks to Tony Lima and Ethel Fenig.)

Mr. Freeman is the co-author of "[Borrowed Time](#)," now available from HarperBusiness.

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