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OPINION

Ebola: A Crisis
In Our Response

America's handling of the Ebola crisis seems to be a crisis in its own right. It stumbled slowly out of the gate and has not gotten much better as the situation has progressed.

It has now become a stage for political hysteria, with at least two governors discarding medical advice to impose their own quarantine rules that, ironically, may make things worse.

That's how our country handles a crisis, it appears: Reaching for short-term, popular fixes that disregard the big picture.

There was a lot of criticism two weeks ago when President Barack Obama named an "Ebola czar," Ron Klain, who had no medical background but had experience in government management. On the face of it, that's actually not an unreasonable skill to have in a situation like this: While he may not have a medical background, he would be able to implement and coordinate an emergency response protocol that would include tapping the best medical minds available.

But just how much Klain is currently doing in that regard is hard to detect, given what we're seeing in New Jersey and New York. That's where Govs. Chris Christie and Andrew Cuomo, respectively, have unilaterally taken their own initiatives by declaring mandatory 21-day quarantines on aid workers returning from the so-called "Ebola zone" of West Africa.

In this instance, we have two individuals without medical backgrounds who are calling their own shots — "to err on the side of caution," Cuomo said — while discarding medical opinion on the matter.

This leads us to the ordeal of Kaci Hickox, a nurse and epidemiologist for Doctors Without Borders, who landed in Newark, New Jersey, from Sierra Leone on Friday and was promptly stuffed in quarantine, which turned out to be an unheated tent outside of a local hospital. She exhibited no symptoms of an Ebola infection — it's not infectious unless symptoms are present — and said she felt fine. This flatly contradicts Christie's ascertain that she had a fever and was "obviously not well."

Ultimately, Hickox was allowed to return to her home in Maine Monday, but only after the American Civil Liberties Union got into the act. A lawsuit may well be looming.

So, where was the Ebola czar here when coordination between state and federal officials was desperately needed?

And where was the cool-headedness and medical rationale of these governors when they imposed what Hickox described as "knee-jerk" quarantines?

The great fear expressed by many medical experts is that such measures will discourage workers from going to West Africa to combat this disease. As many of these medical people have said, fighting Ebola in West Africa, at its epicenter, is the best way to protect Americans here.

Similarly, some lawmakers have called for travel bans imposed on West Africa, a move that also worries medical experts. On the surface, it may seem logical and simple, but such a ban might reduce the number of workers going to the afflicted region, which could make the Ebola outbreak worse and subsequently an even greater threat. It would also compel people in West Africa wishing to come to the U.S. to go to other countries to find connections. Would we place bans on those countries, too?

We seem to be battling the Ebola outbreak by leading with our jittery emotions, and with politicians playing upon public fears. That might score some points in the polls, but does it really address the core issues of fighting this disease? And does it ultimately keep us safer?

kmh

ON THIS DATE

By The Associated Press

Today is Wednesday, Oct. 29, the 302nd day of 2014. There are 63 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History: On Oct. 29, 1964, thieves made off with the Star of India and other gems from the American Museum of Natural History in New York. (The Star and most of the other gems were recovered; three men were convicted of stealing them.)

On this date: In 1618, Sir Walter Raleigh, the English courtier, military adventurer and poet, was executed in London.

In 1787, the opera "Don Giovanni" by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart had its world premiere in Prague.

In 1901, President William McKinley's assassin, Leon Czolgosz, was electrocuted.

In 1929, Wall Street crashed on "Black Tuesday," heralding the start of America's Great Depression.

In 1940, Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson drew the first number — 158 — in America's first peacetime military draft.

In 1956, during the Suez Canal crisis, Israel invaded Egypt's Sinai Peninsula. "The Huntley-Brinkley Report" premiered as NBC's nightly television newscast.

In 1966, the National Organization for Women was formally organized during a conference in Washington, D.C.

In 1979, on the 50th anniversary of the great stock market crash, anti-nuclear protesters tried but failed to shut down the New York Stock Exchange.

In 1987, following the confirmation defeat of Robert H. Bork to serve on the U.S. Supreme Court, President Ronald Reagan announced his choice of Douglas H. Ginsburg, a nomination that fell apart over revelations of Ginsburg's previous marijuana use. Jazz great Woody Herman died in Los Angeles at age 74.

In 1994, Francisco Martin Duran fired more than two dozen shots from a semiautomatic rifle at the White House. (Duran was later convicted of trying to assassinate President Bill Clinton and was sentenced to 40 years in prison.)

In 1998, Sen. John Glenn, at age 77, roared back into space aboard the shuttle Discovery, retracing the trail he'd blazed for America's astronauts 36 years earlier.

In 2012, Superstorm Sandy came ashore in New Jersey and slowly marched inland, devastating coastal communities and causing widespread power outages; the storm and its aftermath are blamed for at least 182 deaths in the U.S.

Ten years ago: Four days before Election Day in the U.S., Osama bin Laden, in a videotaped statement, directly admitted for the first time that he'd ordered the September 11 attacks and told Americans "the best

way to avoid another Manhattan" was to stop threatening Muslims' security. A seriously ill Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat was flown from the West Bank to Paris for medical treatment (he died less than two weeks later). European Union leaders signed the EU's first constitution. Comedian Vaughn Meader, who'd gained fame doing satirical impressions of President John F. Kennedy, died in Auburn, Maine, at age 68.

Five years ago: President Barack Obama paid a post-midnight visit to Dover Air Force Base in Delaware to honor the return of 18 soldiers killed in Afghanistan. A Coast Guard C-130 plane and a Marine Cobra helicopter collided off the Southern California coast, killing seven Coast Guard members and two Marines. Deposed President Manuel Zelaya and his opponents agreed to a U.S.-brokered deal to end the power crisis that had paralyzed Honduras following a coup.

One year ago: Medicare chief Marilyn Tavenner, whose agency oversaw the "Obamacare" enrollment website, apologized to Congress for the severe technical problems that marred the online rollout of President Barack Obama's health care overhaul. The U.N. confirmed an outbreak of polio in Syria for the first time in over a decade, warning the disease threatened to spread among an estimated half a million children who had never been immunized because of the civil war.

Today's Birthdays: Bluegrass singer-musician Sonny Osborne (The Osborne Brothers) is 77. Country singer Lee Clayton is 72. Rock musician Denny Laine is 70. Singer Melba Moore is 69. Musician Peter Green is 68. Actor Richard Dreyfuss is 67. Actress Kate Jackson is 66. The former president of Turkey, Abdullah Gul, is 64. Actor Dan Castellana (TV: "The Simpsons") is 57. Country musician Steve Kellough (Wild Horses) is 57. Comic strip artist Tom Wilson ("Ziggy") is 57. Actress Finola Hughes is 55. Singer Randy Jackson is 53. Rock musician Peter Timmins (Cowboy Junkies) is 49. Actress Joely Fisher is 47. Rapper Paris is 47. Actor Rufus Sewell is 47. Actor Grayson McCouch is 46. Rock singer SA Martinez (311) is 45. Musician Toby Smith is 44. Actress Winona Ryder is 43. Actress Tracee Ellis Ross is 42. Actor Trevor Lissauer is 41. Actress Gabrielle Union is 41. Olympic gold medal bobsledder Vonneta Flowers is 41. Actress Milena Govich is 38. Actor Jon Abrahams is 37. Actor Brendan Fehr is 37. Actor Ben Foster is 34. Rock musician Chris Baio (Vampire Weekend) is 30. Actress India Eiseley is 21.

Thought for Today: "Numerous politicians have seized absolute power and muzzled the press. Never in history has the press seized absolute power and muzzled the politicians." — David Brinkley, American broadcast journalist (1920-2003).

FROM THE BIBLE

Elijah said to Elisha, "Ask what I shall do for you, before I am taken from you." And Elisha said, "Please let there be a double portion of your spirit on me." 2 Kings 2:9. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis



NEW JERSEY GOVERNOR CHRIS CHRISTIE MAKES HIS EBOLA QUARANTINE DECISIONS WHILE WATCHING EXCITING, ALL-NEW EPISODES OF "THE WALKING DEAD."

Politicians Plagued With
Empathy Deficit Disorder

BY ROBERT B. REICH

Tribune Content Agency

Commenting on a recent student suicide at an Alaska high school, Alaska's Republican congressman, Don Young, said suicide didn't exist in Alaska before "government largesse" gave residents an entitlement mentality.

"When people had to work and had to provide and had to keep warm by putting participation in cutting wood and catching the fish and killing the animals, we didn't have the suicide problem," he said. Government handouts tell people "you are not worth anything but you are going to get something for nothing."

Alaska has the highest rate of suicide per capita in America — almost twice the national average, and a leading cause of death in Alaska for young people ages 15 to 24 — but I doubt it's because Alaskans lead excessively easy lives.

Every time I visit Alaska, I'm struck by how hard people there have to work to make ends meet. The state is the last American frontier, where people seem more self-reliant than anywhere in the lower 48.

It's true that every Alaskan receives an annual dividend from a portion of state oil revenues (this year it will be almost \$2,000 per person), but research shows no correlation between the amount of the dividend from year to year and the suicide rate.

Suicide is a terrible tragedy for those driven to it and for their loved ones. What possessed Rep. Young to turn it into a political football?

Young has since apologized for his remark. Or, more accurately, his office has apologized. "Congressman Young did not mean to upset anyone with his well-intentioned message," says a news release from his congressional office. "and in light of the tragic events affecting the Wasilla High School community, he should have taken a much more sensitive approach."

Well-intentioned? More sensitive approach? Young's comment would be offensive regardless of who uttered it. That he's a member of the United States Congress — Alaska's sole representative in the House — makes it downright alarming.

You might expect someone who's in the business of representing others to have a bit more empathy. In fact, you'd think empathy would be the minimum qualification to hold public office in a democracy.

Sadly, Young is hardly alone. A remarkable number of people who are supposed to be devoting their lives to representing others seem clueless about how their constituents actually live and what they need.

Last week, New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie groused to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce,

"I'm tired of hearing about the minimum wage."

No doubt some in the audience shared Christie's view. It was the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, after all.

But many of the governor's constituents are not tired of hearing about the minimum wage. They depend on it.

New Jersey has among the largest number of working poor in America. Some 50,000 people work for the state's minimum wage of \$8.25 an hour.

This is not nearly enough to lift them out of poverty. The state's cost of living is one of the five highest of all states.

In any event, doesn't hearing from constituents about what they need go with the job of representing them?

Christie went on to tell his audience, "I don't think there's a mother or a father sitting around the kitchen table tonight in America saying, 'You know, honey, if our son or daughter could just make a higher minimum wage, my God, all of our dreams would be realized.' Is that what parents aspire to?"

A minimum-wage job is no one's version of the American dream. But Christie is wrong to suppose most minimum-wage workers are teenagers. Most are adults who are major breadwinners for their families.

Christie seems to suffer the same ailment that afflicts Alaska's Don Young.

Call it Empathy Deficit Disorder. Some Democrats have it, but the disorder seems especially widespread among Republicans.

These politicians have no idea what people who are hard up in America are going through.

Most Americans aren't suicidal, and most don't work at the minimum wage. But many are deeply anxious about their jobs and panicked about how they're going to pay next month's bills.

Almost two-thirds of working Americans are living paycheck to paycheck. And they're worried sick about whether their kids will ever make it.

They need leaders who understand their plight instead of denying it.

They deserve politicians who want to fix it rather than blame it on those who have to depend on public assistance, or who need a higher minimum wage, in order to get by.

At the very least, they need leaders who empathize with what they're going through, not those with Empathy Deficit Disorder.

Robert Reich is Chancellor's Professor of Public Policy at the University of California at Berkeley and Senior Fellow at the Blum Center for Developing Economies. His new film, "Inequality for All," is now out on iTunes, DVD and On Demand.

YOUR LETTERS

Moving Patriotism

Chris Tudor, Yankton

Last Thursday I was greatly anticipating the YHS annual Band-Aid Indoor Marching Show. My grandson is in the band and the show is fantastic.

But Thursday, I witnessed the most moving show of patriotism. My heart swelled and my eyes filled with tears.

Corey and Jenny Briest were sitting just down from my family. When the marching band filled the gym floor and the flags were presented, we all stood. I saw Jenny help Corey to stand and kept her arms around him to steady him.

The band began to play "The Star Spangled Banner" and Corey placed his hand over his heart and I could see him singing the words to the song. As I watched him, feeling so moved, I reflected on the monument outside of our

ELECTION LETTERS

■ With the election season here, the PRESS & DAKOTAN has decided that all political letters received as of Sept. 9 will only run for a fee. All letters will be referred to the advertising department, and author will be given the option of paying to have the letter printed in its entirety elsewhere in the newspaper. Send your letters or questions to: Letters, 319 Walnut, Yankton, SD 57078, drop off at 319 Walnut in Yankton, fax to 665-1721 or email us at views@yankton.net/.

courthouse, "Some gave all and all gave some." Here is this young family whose lives were changed forever, showing such patriotism.

God bless our soldiers and God bless America.

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