

**Sept 23, 2020**

**Dear Bob,**

**I start each day thinking about the terrible burden you bear. I don't know what I would actually do, if in your position, but I do know what I wish I would do.**

**The first thing would be to face the truth. You and I both know that:**

- 1. Despite the White House spin attempts, this will go down as a colossal failure of the public health system of this country. The biggest challenge in a century and we let the country down. The public health texts of the future will use this as a lesson on how not to handle an infectious disease pandemic.**
- 2. The cause will be the incompetence and illogic of the White House program.**
- 3. The White House has had no hesitation to blame and disgrace CDC, you and State Governors. They will blame you for the disaster. In 6 months, they have caused CDC to go from gold to tarnished brass.**

**Why and how has that happened? The failure of the White House to put CDC in charge, has resulted in the violation of every lesson learned in the last 75 years that made CDC the gold standard for public health in the world.**

For example, the prime lesson of “Know the Truth,” has been so obscured by the White House that people and the media go to the academic community for truth, rather than to CDC.

Second, the need for a coherent federal plan, the backbone of every former response, has been ignored, resulting in 50 states developing their own plans, often in competition.

Third, the absolute need to form and guide coalitions has been ignored as the President thrives instead on causing divisions.

Fourth, the need for global cooperation, which you clearly understand from your work in Africa, has been squandered by an “America First,” policy that mocks what we learned in Sunday School, and leaves us on the outside of the global public health community.

Fifth, we have learned the best decisions are based on the best science while the best results are based on the best management. The White House has rejected both science and good management. To depend on someone like Dr. Atlas, who doesn't understand herd immunity, is simply one of multiple examples. It was our ability to refocus India from herd immunity to attacking the virus that allowed smallpox eradication to succeed.

I won't continue with the lessons learned, but I continued to live with the hope that the White House Task Force would forge a consensus. When Debbie Birx said she wouldn't believe anything coming out of the CDC, I realized how dysfunctional the group had become but I still thought the White House would see how disastrous their approach was and finally turn the job over to professionals. Now I know that won't happen.

You have shown great resilience in being willing to take their abuse. Now that the truth has been revealed in how they manipulated the valuable reputation of CDC by changing items on the website and changing recommendations for workers in slaughter houses etc., you have a short window to change things.

As I have indicated to you before, resigning is a one-day story and you will be replaced. But you could send a letter to all CDC employees (a letter leaves a record and avoids the chance of making a mistake with a speech) laying out the facts. At the moment, they feel you accepted the White House orders without sufficient resistance. I am on several round robin email chains with ex-CDC employees and they feel the same.

**You could upfront, acknowledge the tragedy of responding poorly, apologize for what has happened and your role in acquiescing, set a course for how CDC would now lead the country if there was no political interference, give them the ability to report such interference to a neutral ombudsman, and assure them that you will defend their attempts to save this country. Don't shy away from the fact this has been an unacceptable toll on our country. It is a slaughter and not just a political dispute.**

**You don't want to be seen, in the future, as forsaking your role as servant to the public in order to become a servant to a corrupt president.**

**The White House will, of course, respond with fury. But you will have right on your side. Like Martin Luther, you can say, "Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise." When they fire you, this will be a multi-week story and you can hold your head high. That will take exceptional courage on your part. I can't tell you what to do except to revisit your religious beliefs and ask yourself what is right.**

**I don't for one-minute relish your position but FDA or NIH cannot make a statement that changes the course of this epidemic. You and CDC could.**

**I wish you the very best, Bill**