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4-19-2020

April 19, 2020: Our Hyper Partisanship is Showing

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Repository Citation

Ledewitz, B. (2020). April 19, 2020: Our Hyper Partisanship is Showing. Retrieved from <https://dsc.duq.edu/ledewitz-hallowedsecularism/1300>

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Title: Our Hyper Partisanship is Showing

Date: 2020-04-19T06:47:00.003-04:00

4/19/2020—There was a moment, symbolized by President Trump's statement that we were in for a hell of a bad couple of weeks on Tuesday, 3/31. At that point, everybody was pulling in the same direction. Actually he said, maybe three weeks. We made it two weeks. The demonstrations to reopen started right after that. It's not as if the statement of hell turned out to be an exaggeration, or at least not much. During this period we averaged over 27,000 new cases a day and we went from 1000 deaths a day to around 2000 deaths a day. But as Ross Douthat predicted in a column some time ago, weariness with the restrictions sets in. The economic pain becomes much worse, becomes a catastrophe in fact, and people want it to end. I know more people who have been harmed by the shutdown than people who contracted the virus. Couple that weariness with the Tea Party sensibility that anything Democrats, and some Republicans do, is bad and you get these demonstrations. Then the President encourages them. He tweets, liberate Michigan, Minnesota and Virginia. They have strict regimes all right, but not the strictest. And lots of Republican Governors have issued stay at home orders and closed essential businesses. I read at one point that 90% of Americans were under such orders. So why blame these Democratic Governors? (The movement plans demonstrations across the country, so maybe it will become less strictly partisan.) For that matter, why not blame the President? The guidelines his Administration released outlined metrics for relaxing the restrictions that the three States he listed don't meet. But why expect consistency or logic from President Trump? Or his supporters? Will all this help Trump's reelection? I don't know. His idea is to say, vote for me if you felt the restrictions were too much, without taking any responsibility for deaths that result from relaxation because that decision was left to Governors. In other words, it's like he was not President. It might not work. The American people might ask why the US had by far more cases than any other country? Why so many more deaths? They might ask why the President played down the threat rather than try to meet it. But it was crazy to elect him before. We might do so again. The real problem is that these demonstrations show that many Americans are still living in an ideological dream world. I thought wrongly that the virus would cause us to get real.