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WPP SUSPENDS \$1.2B STOCK BUYBACK

CEO Mark Read has suspended WPP's \$1.2B stock buyback program and the payment of the final 2019 dividend as part of its battle plan to survive the COVID-19 pandemic, according to a trading update released March 31.



Mark Read

Since December, WPP has purchased \$410M in stock from proceeds of the Kantar sale.

Read anticipates the firm will save \$1.4B from suspending the stock buyback and dividend.

WPP has also pulled 2020 financial guidance.

In the update, the firm said the year started "well with strong business momentum" as January and February results were in line with expectations.

Like-for-like revenues rose 0.4 percent, excluding the 16.1 percent revenue plunge in Greater China due to COVID-19.

Business slowed in March as COVID-19 spread beyond China. There was "an increasing volume of cancellations" and the beginning of a decline in project and retained work.

WPP also outlined a series of cost reductions that could result in a savings of \$1B this year. Read, executive committee and board members will take a 20 percent cut in salary and fees for a period of at least three months.

Read noted that the sale of \$4B in assets during the past 18 months has put WPP in a strong financial position.

WPP owns Finsbury, Ogilvy, Hill+Knowlton Strategies, GCI Group, Glover Park Group and BCW.

LDWW HELPS CARNIVAL STAY AFLOAT

Ken Luce's LDWW represents Carnival Corp. as the world's No. 1 cruise ship operator announced plans to raise \$6B via the sale of bonds and stock to help stave off Chapter XI,



Carnival has docked its fleet until May 15 in the aftermath of COVID-19 quarantines and death of passengers who had booked trips on its Grand Princess and Diamond Princess ships.

The company posted a \$781M loss for the quarter ended February compared to a year ago \$336M profit. Carnival's stock trades at \$13.31. 52-week range is \$7.90 and \$56.04.

Luce launched Dallas-based LDWW in 2012 after serving as global COO at Hill+Knowlton Strategies, president client management at Weber Shandwick and aide to Texas governor Rick Perry.

LDWW partner Mike Flanagan handles the Carnival business, working in conjunction with the company's senior VP/CCO Roger Frizzell.

COLORCOMM CONDEMNS ANTI-ASIAN RACISM

ColorComm, which represents women of color in PR, advertising and media, today condemned anti-Asian racism triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic. There were more than 650 incidents of verbal harassment, physical assault and shunning during the first week of tracking by the Stop APPI Hate research center that launched March 19.

"Our battle against the coronavirus pandemic requires our full attention, as it already disproportionately impacts women and people of color, small businesses and members of the gig economy, and the industries we serve. It is no time for hate," wrote ColorComm's Soon Mee Kim, executive VP & global diversity & inclusion leader at Porter Novelli.



Soon Mee Kim

ColorComm's PR firm board members are Melissa Waggener Zorkin, CEO of WE Communications; Judith Harrison, senior VP at Weber Shandwick; Trisch Smith, global chief diversity & inclusion officer at Edelman; and PN's Kim.

OSMOND NAMED RACEPOINT PRESIDENT

Racepoint CEO Larry Weber has hired Bob Osmond to serve as president of the independent tech-oriented shop.

Osmond joins from Access Brand Communications, where he was general manager of the New York office and senior VP-client services. Earlier, he was at DiGennaro Communications (executive VP), Ketchum (senior VP) and Cohn & Wolfe (executive VP).

Racepoint founder Weber returned to the helm in July 2018 after the resignation of CEO Peter Prodromou. He praised Osmond's extensive PR experience, entrepreneurial spirit and energy.

BGR REPRESENTS EX-CARLOS GHOSN AIDE

BGR Government Affairs is repping Greg Kelly, who was arrested in Japan in November for allegedly helping former Nissan CEO Carlos Ghosn hide compensation. Ghosn, who was charged with corruption, escaped to Lebanon in January.

Kelly, who was Ghosn's chief of staff and head of internal auditing, has been locked up in Japan as he awaits trial. He maintains his innocence.

BGR founding chairman Haley Barbour, former Republican National Committee chair and Mississippi governor, and chairman Lanny Griffith, lead the justice for Kelly effort.

Republican Senators Lamar Alexander (TN), Marsha Blackburn (TN) and Roger Wicker (MS) penned an op-ed piece in Real Clear Politics in which they said Kelly is "a victim of Japanese hostage justice."

AMAZON USES PR TO SMEAR FIRED WORKER

A leaked memo shows Amazon resorting to brass-knuckle tactics against a former employee who claimed he was fired for organizing a strike at the e-commerce giant's Staten Island fulfillment center.



The memo, [which was obtained and first reported on](#) by Vice, was taken from an internal meeting of Amazon leadership after warehouse worker Christian Smalls helped organize a walkout involving more than 100 staffers at the Stat-

en Island facility on March 30.

The strike was in response to Amazon's alleged lack of coronavirus safety protections. The media [reported on March 24](#) that one worker at the Staten Island warehouse had tested positive for COVID-19. As part of the walk-out, Smalls had demanded that the facility be closed and sanitized in light of the infected employee. He was fired that day.

Smalls told [the press](#) that his firing "was a targeted retaliation." Amazon, for its part, claims it fired Smalls because he violated the company's social distancing guidelines.

Smalls has since [told media outlets](#) that "10 cases" of COVID-19 have been confirmed at the warehouse.

The leaked internal memo details Amazon's strategy to tackle employee efforts to unionize by characterizing Smalls as "not smart or articulate" in an effort to "make him the face of the entire union/organizing movement."

"He's not smart, or articulate, and to the extent, the press wants to focus on us versus him, we will be in a much stronger PR position than simply explaining for the umpteenth time how we're trying to protect workers," wrote Amazon general counsel David Zapolsky.

"We should spend the first part of our response strongly laying out the case for why the organizer's conduct was immoral, unacceptable, and arguably illegal, in detail, and only then follow with our usual talking points about worker safety," Zapolsky wrote. "Make him the most interesting part of the story, and if possible make him the face of the entire union/organizing movement."

Amazon's top spokesman Jay Carney told CNN host Brian Stelter [on March 29](#) that the company's employees are its "first and primary concern," and that Amazon has enacted "extraordinary measures" regarding safety and social distancing protocols to make sure its frontline workers are "as protected as they can be as they go about doing this heroic work for their fellow citizens" during the COVID-19 pandemic. Carney also said that Amazon has raised staff pay during this period and extended benefits, and allows "unlimited unpaid time off" through the end of April "with no repercussions" if employees feel unsafe coming into work.

Former White House spokesman Carney joined Amazon to head its then-newly-formed global corporate affairs department in early 2015.

New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio this week ordered the City's Commission on Human Rights to investigate Amazon's firing of Smalls. de Blasio [said](#) that if Amazon had retaliated against Smalls for organizing a strike, "that would be a violation of our city's human rights law and we would act on it immediately."

MEDIA MANEUVERS

WarnerMedia has named Hulu co-founder **Jason Kilar** CEO, effective May 1. Kilar succeeds John Stankey, who was promoted to AT&T president and chief operating officer in September. (Warner Media became part of AT&T in June 2018.) In addition to serving as CEO of Hulu from 2007 to 2013, Kilar was co-founder and CEO of video streaming service Vessel, and senior vice president of worldwide application software at Amazon. His appointment comes ahead of AT&T's May launch of streaming service HBO Max.

Bustle Digital Group, which includes such properties as Nylon and Elite Daily, has laid off 24 staffers, according to a report on website TechCrunch. In addition, the company has shut down The Outline, a culture site that it acquired in 2019 and its seven staffers are all among those who have been axed. A BCG spokesperson said that it will still host The Outline's archives online. "The unprecedented impact of COVID-19" was cited as a major factor behind the decision.

The **News Media Alliance**, a nonprofit organization that represents nearly 2,000 news organizations across the US, is part of group of industry leaders that has asked the United States Postal Service to institute a five-cent-per-piece rate reduction for the next 90 days—or until the end of the COVID-19 crisis, according to a report on MediaPost. The move follows a request in March from a coalition including the Association of Magazine Media that the USPS reconsider proposed rate hikes that "would authorize a cumulative 41 percent rate increase on magazines and periodicals over five years that will cost mailers about \$8 billion per year."

The **National Geographic Society** has launched an emergency fund to support journalists around the world who are working to provide COVID-19 coverage in their communities. The organization says that the primary focus of the initiative is to deliver evidence-based information to "underserved populations" (including children, the elderly and immigrant or refugee communities) on a local or hyper-local basis. Those eligible include writers, photographers, audio journalists, filmmakers and data visualization experts.

Gannett is instituting pay cuts and furloughs throughout the company as it contends with the current crisis, according to a report in the *New York Post*. The furloughs will apply on a rolling basis to staffers who make over \$38,000 a year through June. The company also says that future layoffs are possible. In addition, company executives will take a 25 percent pay cut and CEO Paul Bascobert said in a memo that he will forgo his salary entirely until the pay reductions and furloughs end. He added that the increase in digital traffic and online subscriptions from readers seeking information about the coronavirus was not enough to offset ad losses.

Slate is joining the ranks of digital news outlets that are asking readers to assume a greater role in funding the company. Joining the site's Slate Plus membership program (\$35 for the first year) will now be necessary to read much of its content. The number of articles that can be read for free before the paywall kicks in is to be determined. (Slate stresses that its content about the coronavirus crisis will remain free.)



HOW PR CAN FIGHT FAKE NEWS ON COVID-19

If there's anything that spreads faster than the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, it's the pariah of fake news.

A cursory glance online reveals an endless gallery of rumors, conflicting information and conspiracy theories regarding the pandemic's origins as well as baseless claims that seek to undercut health authorities' outreach efforts pertaining to how widespread or deadly the outbreak is.



David Kyne

Dubious health sites [recommend](#) drinking hot water with lemon to kill the virus, or suggest that [a cattle vaccine](#) could be effective in treating coronavirus patients. Conspiracy sites claim COVID-19 was intentionally created in a lab, or that research groups funded by Bill Gates patented the virus' genome so they could profit from future vaccines. Government-linked social media accounts [in China and Russia](#)

have for months waged coronavirus-related misinformation campaigns in an attempt to spread propaganda and sow political discord. Fake news surrounding the outbreak has been so prevalent that fact-checking site Snopes has witnessed a 50 percent increase in traffic as viewers flock to the site to verify claims surrounding the virus, according to [a Business Insider report](#).

It seems, in addition to the pandemic, that we're simultaneously experiencing an information crisis surrounding COVID-19, a phenomenon the World Health Organization in February [labeled](#) an "infodemic."

People are desperate for information about the virus, but complicating the challenge of treating and educating the public about COVID-19 is the notion that fake news surrounding the pandemic is disseminating faster than our collective ability to stamp it out. Like the virus itself, there are no borders when it comes to how misinformation is spread over social media.

A [recent report by Edelman](#) found that the private sector is regarded as one of the most trusted sources in informing the public on the facts surrounding the coronavirus pandemic. One could make the case that PR professionals, in particular, can play a vital role in working with health experts for the purpose of disseminating accurate information that combats misinformation surrounding the outbreak, without further contributing to our current climate of hysteria.

David Kyne, CEO of healthcare, medical marketing and communications agency [Evoke KYNE](#), told *O'Dwyer's* that communicators should provide a united pushback against this "infodemic," and the industry can do this, in part, by lending best practices advice while reaching key audiences that matter most.

Kyne suggested three areas where the PR sector is uniquely poised to provide impact in the information battle around COVID-19.

The first involves the work agencies do for their clients, which, in his agency's case, includes companies working on COVID-19-related vaccines and diagnostics as well as healthcare clients with patients who are at increased risk for contracting the virus. COVID-19 has effectively created a new reality, and brands need to adjust their messages accordingly. Agencies should tailor COVID-19 messages on a case-by-case basis, keeping in mind how stakeholders are being

specifically adversely affected by the virus. A one-size-fits-all approach doesn't work.

Then there's what agencies can do for their employees. Agency leaders have a responsibility, Kyne said, to communicate to their teams who are looking for guidance amid the COVID-19 crisis and to support them by providing emotional and mental support in addition to actual health support.

"People want to hear from their corporate leaders, which goes to the fact that this is an economic issue as well as a health issue," Kyne said. "Leadership of any organization is really important, and I see a big responsibility to be on top of what my team is saying."

Finally, Kyne advised remaining close to what governments and world health authorities are saying and to support and amplify what those messages are. This is a challenge, given the outbreak's situation remains different in every country, and is constantly changing.

Arguably, it's somewhat confusing that health leaders have been inconsistent in their guidance on several key issues surrounding the virus. For instance, the WHO has said it isn't necessary for the public to wear masks when leaving home. Now, the CDC is weighing a potential shift in its stance on that issue, possibly recommending the use of masks to reduce community transmission. And now, the Trump administration is revising its guidance on that directive as well.

Kyne said these sharp pivots are expected in a crisis that's evolving so rapidly. Ultimately, it means that, as an industry, communicators bear a responsibility to have an ear to the ground and remain in-tune with how this virus is changing day by day.

"I think if there's a gap we're looking to bridge here, it's the difference between these big, broad messages and getting behaviors to change," Kyne said. "As communicators, we can provide the bridge between health information and behavior change. The specific messages about washing your hands for 20 seconds or wearing a mask are examples of behavior-change messaging, and a big part of behavior change is understanding who you're speaking to. The message has to come from the right person."

BIG APPLE AWARDS POSTPONED TO SEPT. 30

PRSA-NY has postponed the 2020 Big Apple Awards, originally scheduled for June 16, to Sept. 30. The awards will be presented at the Edison Ballroom in New York City.

The award entry deadline has been pushed back to Friday, June 5. Award nominees will be notified in mid-July.

"Our focus right now is on the health and well-being of our colleagues and community," said PRSA-NY president Kellie Jelencovich. "This Fall, the PRSA-NY Big Apple Awards will be a wonderful opportunity for us to come together and recognize the incredible talent and creativity of our industry."

Awards will be given in more than 100 categories, including reputation and brand management, events and observances and public service campaigns.

PRSA-NY membership is not a requirement to submit an entry. To find out more about the Big Apple Awards, or to place an entry, click [here](#).



TENEO REPS BLOOM IN VENTILATOR EFFORT

Teneo represents Bloom Energy, which is teaming with Almo Corp, to refurbish and distribute unused and out-of-warranty ventilators to help states and hospitals fight the COVID-19 pandemic.

California Governor Gavin Newsom pitched the idea to Bloom founder/CEO KR Sridhar and then shipped the San Jose-based Bloom 24 unused ventilators. Engineers at Bloom, which designs energy systems for utilities, manufacturing plants and data centers, refurbished the lot in a day.

The company, which believes it could refurbish 1,000 ventilators a week, plans to work on the machines at its plants in California and Delaware and ship them via Almo's national logistics network. Philadelphia-based Almo runs eight warehouses across the US that handle appliances, furniture, AV equipment and housewares.

Teneo's Ann Sommerlath represents Bloom, while Almo relies on Traci Schaefer, who runs TLS Communications.

WARREN CAMPAIGN AIDE JOINS BLUE STATE

Camonghne Felix, who was national director of surrogates communications, black media & strategic communications for Elizabeth Warren's presidential run, has joined Blue State in Washington.



Camonghne Felix

She will lead strategic communications for the WPP unit that has worked for Ford Motor, UNICEF, Google and Planned Parent Federation of America.

Before joining the Warren campaign, Felix was communications director for Amara Envia's run for mayor of Chicago, senior communications manager at MS Foundation for Women, senior account executive/strategist at BerlinRosen and speechwriter for New

York governor Andrew Cuomo.

Blue State CEO/co-founder Joe Rospars said Felix's "campaign experience, passion for cause-based communications, and unique writing abilities," make her a perfect fit for the firm. He was chief strategist for Warren's campaign and new media director for Barack Obama's presidential campaigns.

FENTON URGES MOTORISTS TO STAY HOME

Fenton Consulting has launched a billboard PSA campaign, urging motorists to get off the road and stay home in the national effort to stop the spread of COVID-19.

The messages include: "Hey you, behind the wheel"... COVID-19 does not discriminate. Be safe. Get home!" and "Forget toilet paper. You're not socializing anyway."



Fenton founder and creative director David Fenton, a one-time New York stand-up comedian, said he wants to leverage the power of billboards to add a little levity to the fear factor of this new normal.

"If we are not afforded leadership out of Washington, we must keep calm and provide one another with hope in this time of crisis," he said. "I realized that we could I mean, people are in their cars. They're going to see these, no matter what. So, why not bring some humor and hope."

NEWS OF FIRMS

PAN Communications has put together a reference guide with advice on how marketing and PR professionals can navigate the hurdles of the COVID-19 world. "[Crisis Communications: How to Prepare and Execute a Sound Communications Plan When Dealing With a Crisis](#)" discusses internal and external communications strategies that can aid in adjusting and reacting to the situation. The topics covered include: ways to identify the start of a crisis, how to establish your chain of command, what preparations are needed for each stage of the crisis, which tools are effective for developing messaging documents and best practices for partner, customer, media and social media communication.

Ben Long, founder and CEO of **Travaille Executive Search**, has died. Long had a stroke in December 2018. Founded in 1984 in New York, Travaille subsequently moved to Washington, DC, placing PR and communications executives in the DC area as well as throughout the U.S. and in international markets. Firm clients included Microsoft, Boeing, AstraZeneca and ExxonMobil.

The Zimmerman Agency has started "[Hunger to Help.](#)" a campaign urging local businesses and consumers to purchase gift cards, for use now or later, in support of the restaurant industry, which has been hit hard by the COVID-19 crisis. Restaurants interested in participating in the campaign will be featured, at no cost, on the campaign's landing page, with a direct link to their respective pages to drive sales and offset lost income.



William Mills Agency commissioned a survey by the Harris Poll to find out what effect social distancing was having on consumers' use of digital banking and digital payments. The study, which polled 1,043 adults age 18 and older from March 23 to 24, asked, "During social distancing, how much more or less likely are you to leverage digital banking and digital payments?" Nearly three-quarters (73 percent) of respondents said they would be more likely to use digital banking and digital payments during social distancing.

Matter Communications has launched an internal communications offering. Matter CEO Scott Signore says the offering is intended to help companies "ensure the happiness, engagement and productivity of their teams while we all navigate this expanded work-from-home world." It consists of three-tiered offerings: the Company Culture Plan, which includes strategic counsel and basic communication tools; the Business Continuity Plan, which offers such customized content as FAQ sheets and HR training videos; and Bringing It All Together, which leverages strategies including webinars, training videos, social posts and team-building exercises.

Goodnewsforpets, the digital publishing arm of **Ger-minder & Associates**, is extending its COVID-19 content and 20th-anniversary program with the opening of its VMX Virtual booth. The booth is an immersive and interactive platform that was launched in January by the North American Veterinary Community. Developed by Simulocity, a simulation technology, gamification and immersive tech company, it incorporates those techniques into the virtual trade show industry. It is an offshoot of the NAVC's VMX, a veterinary conference that includes more than 700 exhibiting companies. The VMX Virtual booth is meant to serve as a supplement to the live conference.

EX-ENERGY SEC. SHILLS FOR SHALE OIL

Former Energy Secretary Rick Perry is lobbying on behalf of the US shale oil industry, which faces “an existential threat” due to the collapse of crude oil prices, according to the *Financial Times*.



Rick Perry

Appearing on Fox’s “Tucker Carlson Tonight” on March 31, Perry warned the oil industry is “on the verge of massive collapse” because Saudi Arabia is flooding the world with cheap oil.

Perry has been talking up president Trump’s bid to cut a deal with Saudi Arabia and Russia to curb production, a rumored deal that led to a spike in oil prices.

Following Trump’s tweet about a potential Saudi/Russia production cut, crude oil registered its biggest single-day price jump, 25 percent to \$25.32 on April 2.

Most shale producers need oil to be priced at \$50 per-barrel to turn a profit.

The FT reports that Perry, who was governor of Texas, has “deep ties to the Midland crowd,” referring to the town that is the epicenter of the Lone Star State’s shale region.

HRC’S HALLORAN JOINS CORNERSTONE

Liz Halloran, deputy communications director at the Human Rights Campaign, has joined Cornerstone Public Affairs.

During her more than five-year stint at the biggest LGBTQ advocacy group, Halloran handled communications management and outreach.



Liz Halloran

Earlier, Halloran spent six-plus years at National Public Radio, where she was its first online Washington national correspondent; served as a senior writer at *US News & World Report*, covering politics, media and the Supreme Court; and worked as a reporter for the *Hartford Courant*.

Halloran said she looks forward to helping Cornerstone clients “move the needle in terms of the perception of the public, the media, and legislative and regulatory bodies.”

DC-based Cornerstone has more than 90 staffers.

EX-UBS ART CHIEF MOVES TO BRUNSWICK

Peter Dillon, who was executive director & head of global art at banking giant UBS, has joined Brunswick Group as managing partner. He will lead New York-based Brunswick Arts group.



Peter Dillon

During a 10-year run at UBS, Dillon handled sponsorship programs with the Guggenheim Museum and Art Basel in Hong Kong/Miami Beach and Basel.

Earlier, he worked at commercial real estate firm Tishman Speyer and served as senior director of marketing for Rockefeller Center.

Dillon has been running Dillon Global Consulting, counseling corporate brands and media companies to engage arts & culture communications programs and helping museums, art fairs and foundations to develop strategic marketing channels and maximize revenue.

GCI HEALTH HIRES EDELMAN’S KURESMAN

GCI Health has named Ryan Kuresman group senior VP, based in its Washington, DC office. Kuresman joins GCI Health from Edelman, where he was senior VP, health policy.



Ryan Kuresman

He previously served as senior VP, public affairs & corporate communications at Porter Novelli and VP, issues management & corporate communications at APCO Worldwide. He has counseled biopharmaceutical companies, patient advocacy coalitions and biomedical research institutes to help them manage their policy, issues and reputational profiles.

In his new position, Kuresman will be tasked with increasing GCI Health’s ability to engage with and communicate to policymakers, influencers and health advocacy stakeholders.

NUFFER SMITH TUCKER GETS NEW OWNERS

Nuffer Smith Tucker president Teresa Siles and executive VPs Mary Correia-Moreno and Price Adams have purchased the San Diego-based shop.

The 45-year-old NST is the city’s oldest PR firm, according to the *Times of San Diego*.

The trio purchased the firm from Nola Trumpfheller, widow of Bill Trumpfheller, who died Dec. 29 2016. “Teresa, Mary and Price have been at the helm of NST for several years during a time of transition for the firm—and they didn’t skip a beat,” said Nola Trumpfheller in a statement. “They have not only maintained strong relationships with their clients and team, and brought on new client partners, but have also served as good stewards of the Nuffer Smith Tucker brand in the San Diego region.”

Due to the “air of fear, uncertainty and somberness” surrounding the COVID-19 crisis, the new owners had considered delaying news of their purchase. “We decided now is not the time to hold back. Rather, it’s a time to come together with transparency, candor and a spirit of perseverance,” they said in a joint statement.

NST, which has 20 staffers, has worked for California State Lottery, Port of San Diego, McDonald’s, Sunkist Growers, San Diego Tourism Authority, Scripps Health, WD-40 Company and the San Diego Zoo.

CASSIDY & ASSOCS. ADDS DEARBORN

Jed Dearborn, who was senior counsel on the Senate’s energy and natural resources committee, is now at Cassidy & Associates, the DC-based public affairs powerhouse.

While serving on the committee, Dearborn handled carbon capture, utilization, energy storage, and electric grid cybersecurity issues.

Earlier, he served as aide to Sen. John Barrasso (R-WY), working on key energy issues including innovation, electricity, oil and gas, and mining.

Kai Anderson, Cassidy CEO, said the addition of Dearborn “will strengthen our ability to deliver victories for our clients across the federal landscape.”

Cassidy bought itself back from Interpublic in 2017.



Jed Dearborn

COMMENTARY

The Who's "Won't Get Fooled Again" was one of the many highlights of the "Concert for New York" held Oct. 21, 2001 at Madison Square Garden in the aftermath of the destruction of the World Trade Center on 9/11.

Let's not get fooled again as president Trump attempts to re-write history to avoid responsibility for the woeful federal response to the coronavirus crisis.

The man who on Feb. 26 compared COVID-19 to the flu is now trying to cast himself as the very stable genius that knew all along that coronavirus posed a mortal threat to the US. He spins about saving thousands of lives, which is pure bunk.

Trump had the audacity on March 31 to say during his rambling and unhinged press conference:

"I mean, I've had many friends—businesspeople—people with great, actually, common sense, they said, 'Why don't we ride it out?' A lot of people have said—a lot of people have thought about it. 'Ride it out. Don't do anything, just ride it out and think of it as the flu.' But it's not the flu. It's vicious."

Presidential errand boy Mike Pence followed up. He criticized the Centers for Disease Control and Protection for missing the early warning signs of one of America's worst public health crises.

Shifting blame to the CDC is quite a stretch, considering Team Trump doesn't care one bit about the views of America's scientific community. For instance, Trump dismisses global warming as a hoax cooked up by China, though 98 percent of the scientific community say the threat is real.

Sadly, Pence heads Trump's COVID-19 task force. A leader is supposed to lead, not dodge truth and blame others for his or her mistakes.



Winston Churchill

The self-proclaimed wartime president is following in the steps of a real wartime leader, Winston Churchill, who famously said, "Never let a crisis go to waste."

As the nation's reels from Trump's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the White House is rolling back the vehicle fuel efficiency standards put into place by Barack Obama as his signature effort to fight global warming.

If that rollback survives legal challenges, vehicles would spew more than a billion more tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, the equivalent of 20 percent of US emissions.

Scientists say weakening the standards will result in more than 2,000 deaths per year and tens of thousands more cases of respiratory illnesses.

Speaking of signature Obama achievements, Trump has decided against reopening Obamacare enrollment to uninsured Americans. That cold-blooded decision was made against the backdrop of the specter of massive unemployment due to COVID-19 and projections of 100,000 to 240,000 Americans dead from the virus in the "best-case scenario."

To Trump, it appears that wiping the slate clean of the Obama presidency is more important than insuring Americas

who pray that they or their family won't get COVID-19.

Churchill also said: "You can always count on Americans to do the right thing—after they've tried everything else."

The British Bulldog though never met Donald Trump and his band of sycophants.

Trump says he will have done a "very good job" if less than 200,000 Americans die from coronavirus, a disease he claimed was "unforeseen" and "came out of nowhere."

The Pentagon, though, warned the incompetents of Team Trump about the pandemic threat and even predicted a scarcity of ventilators and hospital beds, according to [an exclusive report in *The Nation*](#), which obtained a copy of the Defense Dept.'s plan dated Jan. 6, 2017.

"The most likely and significant threat (enemy) is a novel respiratory disease, particularly a novel influenza disease," says the 103-page report. "Even the most industrialized countries will have insufficient hospital beds, specialized equipment, such as mechanical ventilators, and pharmaceuticals readily available to adequately treat their populations during a clinically severe pandemic."

The Pentagon was on the mark.

What was Trump's response? True to form: he closed the White House's National Security Council Directorate for Global Health Security and Biodefense, which was charged with handling the next disease outbreak to prevent it from becoming a pandemic.

We are all paying for the price of Trump failing to deal with a reality that he didn't want to hear about.

Big technology and pharmaceutical companies will emerge from the chaos of the COVID-19 crisis even more powerful than they are today, according to [The Economist](#), which dubs them the "top dogs."

Those sectors took 72 of the top 100 spots in the magazine's analysis of 800 U.S. and European companies that measured cost of debt against default, operating margins, cash buffers and leverage.

The resilience of companies such as Johnson & Johnson, Apple and Roche "should eventually translate into an enduring advantage, allowing them to win market share over time," reports the magazine.

The publication, though, warns that the top dogs may face a backlash once COVID-19 fades away. There will be calls for a new social contract with the companies pressed to "offer vital products for lower prices and to workers more security."

Capitalism may become less Darwinian as bailout and subsidized loans bolster the "small dogs."

Some industries may become officially sanctioned cartels and allow colluding to stabilize prices and productions, making it harder for the top dogs to dominate.

"COVID-19 won't only have lasting effects on society and people's behavior. It will also alter the structure of global business," predicts The Economist.

PR will surely play a major role in reshaping the new business structure.

—Kevin McCauley