

# Timeline: The more than 60 times Trump has downplayed the coronavirus threat

[washingtonpost.com/politics/2020/03/12/trump-coronavirus-timeline](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2020/03/12/trump-coronavirus-timeline)

By Aaron Blake and JM Rieger

*This post will be continually updated.*

President Trump gambled very early and very often on the idea that the coronavirus outbreak wouldn't turn out to be nearly as severe as some health officials warned it could get.

The thrust of Trump's statements about the virus has been almost relentlessly optimistic, which is a marked contrast to those of some health officials who prefer that people be overly prepared rather than underestimate the threat. Trump has frequently suggested that the United States is winning the battle against the virus, and he has regularly promoted the idea that it could suddenly disappear.

Even as Trump has occasionally adopted health officials' more cautious tone about what lie ahead, though, the optimism that dominated his early response hasn't completely disappeared.

Below is a timeline of Trump's commentary downplaying the threat.

**Jan. 22:** On whether he was worried about a pandemic: "No, we're not at all. And we have it totally under control. It's one person coming in from China."

**Jan. 24:** "It will all work out well."

China has been working very hard to contain the Coronavirus. The United States greatly appreciates their efforts and transparency. It will all work out well. In particular, on behalf of the American People, I want to thank President Xi!

— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) January 24, 2020

**Jan. 29:** "Just received a briefing on the Coronavirus in China from all of our GREAT agencies, who are also working closely with China. We will continue to monitor the ongoing developments. We have the best experts anywhere in the world, and they are on top of it 24/7!"

**Jan. 30:** "We think we have it very well under control. We have very little problem in this country at this moment — five. And those people are all recuperating successfully. But we're working very closely with China and other countries, and we think it's going to have a very good ending for it. So that I can assure you."

**Feb. 2:** “Well, we pretty much shut it down coming in from China. ... We can’t have thousands of people coming in who may have this problem, the coronavirus. So we’re gonna see what happens, but we did shut it down, yes.”

**Feb. 7:** “Nothing is easy, but [Chinese President Xi Jinping] ... will be successful, especially as the weather starts to warm & the virus hopefully becomes weaker, and then gone.”

...he will be successful, especially as the weather starts to warm & the virus hopefully becomes weaker, and then gone. Great discipline is taking place in China, as President Xi strongly leads what will be a very successful operation. We are working closely with China to help!

— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) February 7, 2020

**Feb. 10:** “I think the virus is going to be — it’s going to be fine.”

**Feb. 14:** “We have a very small number of people in the country, right now, with it. It’s like around 12. Many of them are getting better. Some are fully recovered already. So we’re in very good shape.”

**Feb. 19:** “I think it’s going to work out fine. I think when we get into April, in the warmer weather, that has a very negative effect on that and that type of a virus. So let’s see what happens, but I think it’s going to work out fine.”

**Feb. 24:** “The Coronavirus is very much under control in the USA. ... Stock Market starting to look very good to me!”

The Coronavirus is very much under control in the USA. We are in contact with everyone and all relevant countries. CDC & World Health have been working hard and very smart. Stock Market starting to look very good to me!

— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) February 24, 2020

**Feb. 25:** “You may ask about the coronavirus, which is very well under control in our country. We have very few people with it, and the people that have it are ... getting better. They’re all getting better. ... As far as what we’re doing with the new virus, I think that we’re doing a great job.”

**Feb. 25:** “CDC and my Administration are doing a GREAT job of handling Coronavirus, including the very early closing of our borders to certain areas of the world.”

**Feb. 25:** “I think that’s a problem that’s going to go away.”

**Feb. 26:** “Because of all we’ve done, the risk to the American people remains very low. ... When you have 15 people, and the 15 within a couple of days is going to be down to close to zero. That’s a pretty good job we’ve done.”

**Feb. 26:**

Q: This is spreading — or is going to spread, maybe, within communities. That’s the expectation.

A: It may. It may.

Q: Does that worry you?

A: No. ... No, because we’re ready for it. It is what it is. We’re ready for it. We’re really prepared. ... We hope it doesn’t spread. There’s a chance that it won’t spread too, and there’s a chance that it will, and then it’s a question of at what level.

**Feb. 27:** “Only a very small number in U.S., & China numbers look to be going down. All countries working well together!”

**Feb. 27:** “It’s going to disappear. One day, it’s like a miracle, it will disappear.”

**Feb. 28:** “We are working on cures and we’re getting some very good results.”

**Feb. 28:** “I think it’s really going well. We did something very fortunate: we closed up to certain areas of the world very, very early — far earlier than we were supposed to. I took a lot of heat for doing it. It turned out to be the right move, and we only have 15 people and they are getting better, and hopefully they’re all better. There’s one who is quite sick, but maybe he’s gonna be fine. ... We’re prepared for the worst, but we think we’re going to be very fortunate.”

**Feb. 28:** “Now the Democrats are politicizing the coronavirus. ... And this is their new hoax.”

**Feb. 29:** “We’re the number one travel destination anywhere in the world, yet we have far fewer cases of the disease than even countries with much less travel or a much smaller population.”

**March 2:** “On average, you lose from 26,000-70,000 or so and even some cases more from the flu. ... So far, we have six [coronavirus deaths] here.”

**March 4:** “Some people will have this at a very light level and won’t even go to a doctor or hospital, and they’ll get better. There are many people like that.”

**March 5:** “With approximately 100,000 CoronaVirus cases worldwide, and 3,280 deaths, the United States, because of quick action on closing our borders, has, as of now, only 129 cases (40 Americans brought in) and 11 deaths.”

With approximately 100,000 CoronaVirus cases worldwide, and 3,280 deaths, the United States, because of quick action on closing our borders, has, as of now, only 129 cases (40 Americans brought in) and 11 deaths. We are working very hard to keep these numbers as low as possible!

— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) [March 5, 2020](#)

**March 6:** “We did an interview on Fox last night, a town hall. I think it was very good. And I said: ‘Calm. You have to be calm. It’ll go away.’ ”

**March 7:** “It came out of China, and we heard about it. And made a good move: We closed it down; we stopped it. Otherwise — the head of CDC said last night that you would have thousands of more problems if we didn’t shut it down very early. That was a very early shutdown, which is something we got right.”

**March 7:** “We’re doing very well and we’ve done a fantastic job.”

**March 8:** Retweets a story about Surgeon General Jerome Adams playing down the risk of coronavirus for Trump personally.

Surgeon General Jerome Adams used his comments to downplay the risk of coronavirus to the president <https://t.co/PA6a3Dv7gz>

— The Daily Beast (@thedailybeast) [March 8, 2020](#)

**March 9:** “The Fake News Media and their partner, the Democrat Party, is doing everything within its semi-considerable power (it used to be greater!) to inflame the CoronaVirus situation, far beyond what the facts would warrant. Surgeon General, ‘The risk is low to the average American.’ ”

**March 9:** “So last year 37,000 Americans died from the common Flu. It averages between 27,000 and 70,000 per year. Nothing is shut down, life & the economy go on. At this moment there are 546 confirmed cases of CoronaVirus, with 22 deaths. Think about that!”

So last year 37,000 Americans died from the common Flu. It averages between 27,000 and 70,000 per year. Nothing is shut down, life & the economy go on. At this moment there are 546 confirmed cases of CoronaVirus, with 22 deaths. Think about that!

— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) [March 9, 2020](#)

**March 10:** “As you know, it’s about 600 cases, it’s about 26 deaths, within our country. And had we not acted quickly, that number would have been substantially more.”

**March 10:** “And it hit the world. And we’re prepared, and we’re doing a great job with it. And it will go away. Just stay calm. It will go away.”

**March 11:** “I think we’re going to get through it very well.”

**March 12:** “It’s going to go away. ... The United States, because of what I did and what the administration did with China, we have 32 deaths at this point ... when you look at the kind of numbers that you’re seeing coming out of other countries, it’s pretty amazing when you think of it.”

**March 13:** Says the Food and Drug Administration “will bring, additionally, 1.4 million tests on board next week and 5 million within a month. I doubt we’ll need anywhere near that.”

**March 14:** “We’re using the full power of the federal government to defeat the virus, and that’s what we’ve been doing.” Also retweeted supporter Candace Owens, who cited “good news” on the coronavirus, including that “Italy is hit hard, experts say, because they have the oldest population in Europe (average age of those that have died is 81).”

**March 15:** “This is a very contagious virus. It’s incredible. But it’s something that we have tremendous control over.”

**March 16:** “If you’re talking about the virus, no, that’s not under control for any place in the world. ... I was talking about what we’re doing is under control, but I’m not talking about the virus.”

**March 17:** “We’re going to win. And I think we’re going to win faster than people think — I hope.”

**March 23:** “America will again and soon be open for business. ... Parts of our country are very lightly affected.”

**March 24:** “You’re going to lose a number of people to the flu. But you’re going to lose more people by putting a country into a massive recession or depression.”

On seeking to reopen portions of the American economy by April 12: “It’s such an important day for other reasons, but I’ll make it an important day for this, too. ... I would love to have the country opened up and just raring to go by Easter.”

**March 25:** “There are large sections of our country — probably can go back to work much sooner than other sections. ... It’s hard not to be happy with the job we’re doing, that I can tell you.”

**March 26:** “They have to go back to work; our country has to go back. Our country is based on that, and I think it’s going to happen pretty quickly.”

“I have a feeling that a lot of numbers that are being said in some areas are just bigger than they’re going to be. I don’t believe you need 40,000 or 30,000 ventilators.”

**March 29:** “So you’re talking about [worst-case scenarios of] 2.2 million deaths, 2.2 million people from this. And so if we could hold that down, as we’re saying, to 100,000 — it’s a horrible number, maybe even less — but to 100,000. So we have between 100 and 200,000, and we altogether have done a very good job.”

**March 30:** “New York is really in trouble, but I think it’s going to end up being fine. We’re loading it up, we’re stocking it up. ... And then by a little short of June, maybe June 1, we think the — you know, it’s a terrible thing to say, but — we think the deaths will be at a very low number. It’ll be brought down to a very low number from right now, from where it’s getting to reach its peak.”

**March 30:** "Stay calm, it will go away. You know it is going away."

**March 31:** "It's going to go away, hopefully at the end of the month and if not, it hopefully will be soon after that."

**April 2:** "Our states, generally speaking, it's like lots of different countries all over. We have -- many of those countries are doing a phenomenal job. They're really flat."

**April 3:** "The CDC is advising the use of non-medical cloth face covering as an additional voluntary public health measure. So it's voluntary; you don't have to do it."

**April 7:** "It did -- it will go away."

**April 9:** "There are certain sections in the country that are in phenomenal shape already. Other sections are coming online; other sections are going down."

**April 10:** “Hard to believe that if you had 60,000 [deaths] -- you could never be happy, but that’s a lot fewer than we were originally told and thinking.”

**April 22:** “It may not come back at all [in the fall/winter].”

**April 28:** "This is going to go away. And whether it comes back in a modified form in the fall, we'll be able to handle it."

**April 29:** "It's going to go. It's going to leave. It's going to be gone. It's going to be eradicated."

**May 5:** “Will some people be affected? Yes. Will some people be affected badly? Yes. But we have to get our country open.”

**May 5:** “With or without a vaccine, it’s going to pass.”

**May 6:** “This virus is going to disappear. It’s a question of when.”

**May 8:** “This is going to go away without a vaccine.”

**May 11:** “We have met the moment, and we have prevailed. ... We’ve prevailed on testing, is what I’m referring to.”

**May 14:** “If we didn’t do any testing, we would have very few cases.”

**May 15:** “It’ll go away — at some point, it’ll go away.”

**May 19:** “Many of these people aren’t very sick, but they still go down as a case.”

**June 15:** “If we stopped testing right now, we’d have very few cases, if any.”

**June 16:** “I always say, even without it [a vaccine], it goes away.”

**June 17:** “The numbers are very minuscule compared to what it was. It’s dying out.”

**June 17:** “It’s going to fade away. But having a vaccine would be really nice. And that’s going to happen.”

**June 20:** “Many call it a virus, which it is. Many call it a flu, what difference?”

**June 23:** “You know, people get sick from the other also. It’s not just from the virus. They get sick from all of the other things that happen. You know what I mean.”