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Healthcare is Trump's Achilles heel. Republicans don't get it

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Like Moloch, the ancient pagan god, Donald Trump is ever ready to demand that Americans sacrifice themselves for his greater good. He commanded that states open up early, and then this happened: Arizona, Florida, and Texas are looking like Wuhan redux. Come this fall, the president also expects that parents will put their children in harm's way for the sake of his re-election bid. In response, teachers have taken to drafting their wills, just in case.

Supreme court upholds Trump rules letting more employers deny contraceptive coverage

But other moments, Trump acts like a man with a political death wish of his own. His justice department is urging the US supreme court to strike down the Affordable Care Act as unconstitutional. The fact that 5.4 million people have already lost their health insurance amid the pandemic does not even register as a blip on the administration's radar.

Instead, last month the government filed its brief with the high court in its endless endeavor to erase Barack Obama's legacy. Just think of Wile E Coyote chasing Road Runner and you get the picture.

What the president could not accomplish when the Republicans controlled both houses of Congress, he now hopes to achieve in the courts. Regardless, his timing couldn't be worse.

A legal gambit hatched when the world looked well and the economy was thriving has morphed into another reminder that this administration functions as an incompetent Death Star divorced from reality. A response to the administration's filing is due at the court late this month. By the time the Republicans convene for their convention in Florida, briefing will have just been completed.

Unfortunately, don't expect Covid-19 to be done with America by then. Already, more than 135,000 of its victims lie dead; the total could reach 200,000 by election day. Once upon a time, the president predicted that this plague would be quickly gone and Jared Kushner told the world that everything would be awesome come July.

Instead, Americans are prisoners within their own borders. Large swaths of Europe, Asia and Canada are denying entry to US citizens. Passport privilege is gone.

The amicus briefs filed in opposition to the government's position are bad news for the president. Portions of Trump's base are actively aligned against him. In simplest terms, older voters and Catholic Americans don't necessarily like what they are seeing.

AARP and the Catholic Health Association have come out swinging to defend Obamacare. AARP speaks for America's seniors, and older voters are walking away from Trump.

Looking at the map, Joe Biden leads in Florida. Grandma and grandpa have no intention of going gently into that not so good night, not if they have a say about things.

As for the Catholic Health Association, it is one more reminder that organized Catholic interests go beyond contraception. Rather, the Catholic health ministry is the largest group of nonprofit healthcare providers in the US. Indeed, Biden's call for an updated New Deal is reminiscent of the "small-c" Catholic ethos that marked FDR's years. Rugged individualism has limited appeal when death looms and collapse is all around.

From that vantage point, Trump's stance appears to be more about keeping the Republican donor-base happy than winning votes. When rocked-ribbed Oklahomans recently backed Medicaid expansion, it is time for Trump and his minions to rethink things.

In other words, conservative America is not exactly craving Republican economic orthodoxy. But the Republican party's big-ticket contributors still do.

For example, the Cato Institute is siding with the administration in this scrum. The Koch brothers were early funders of Cato, and Nancy Pfotenhauer of the Koch-affiliated Americans for Prosperity sits on Cato's board. The message is clear.

Against this backdrop, Trump's veneration of all things Confederate appears to be misplaced recompense for his sticking it to his own working-class core. Yet the wisdom of this strategy is doubtful. Some of the economically hardest hit states may be ready to desert the president.

The latest weekly initial unemployment statistics show the largest number of first-time unemployment claims originating in places like Michigan and Texas. Biden's lead in Michigan is no longer a surprise but polls also show him ahead in Texas, a state that last voted Democratic in 1976.

Texas' hospitals are now being overwhelmed by Covid-19 yet the Lone Star State is the lead respondent in the fight before the supreme court. In the words of Kyle Hawkins, Texas' solicitor general, "petitioners defend the ACA as good policy, citing the current pandemic. Not only are those policy arguments incorrect, but they miss the point."

That is the sole mention of the disease in 49 pages of argument. Arizona and Florida, among other states, are also on board with the brief. Talk about a convergence of bad timing and worse luck.

In Too Much and Never Enough, Mary Trump, the president's niece, writes that if the president "can in any way profit from your death, he'll facilitate it, and then ignore the fact that you died". As her book dropped on Tuesday, the Grim Reaper's scythe is again unsheathed. Covid is going full-bore. The prospects of Trump as a one-term president grow.