



A hospital-bed shortage looms amid coronavirus and other commentary

Editorial Board

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America doesn't have enough hospital beds to handle COVID-19 patients, warns Eric Boehm at Reason. And it's thanks to needless red tape: state "certificate of need" laws that force hospitals to get government's OK before adding services, beds and even "long-term acute-care services" — just what coronavirus patients may need to recover. No wonder America has fewer beds per capita than other developed nations. The regs "help politically powerful hospital chains limit regional competition," but the shortages they create could "prove disastrous." Cato Institute senior fellow Jeffrey Singer, a medical doctor, urges lawmakers to suspend these laws during the COVID-19 outbreak. But removing them permanently, says Boehm, should be a "no-brainer," so that the market can "adequately prepare for future pandemics."

Culture beat: COVID-19 Will Reshape Our Psyche

The coronavirus has been a "total game-changer," writes Melissa Chen at the Spectator USA. As it has spread "perniciously, causing 4,716 deaths worldwide and radically transforming life," it has also begun to change behavior. Humans' "Behavioral Immune System," which guides "disease-avoidance" tendencies, act as our "first line of defense against potentially devastating pathogens." The system influences how we "approach the world and each other, our dating habits" and even political attitudes. "Pathogen cues" can increase xenophobia and ethnocentrism. "Coupled with the economic recession, the complete retooling of working life and the impending

referendum on our health-care system and gig economy, the effect of the novel coronavirus on shaping our cultural psychology and politics shouldn't be ignored.”

Foreign Desk: China's Failed Warning System

In response to the 2002 SARS outbreak, China spent 730 million yuan (\$104 million) on a “state-of-the-art early-warning system” for disease epidemics — which, [South China Morning Post's Guo Rui laments](#), completely missed the coronavirus. Why? The government knew about the outbreak “as early as Jan. 7” but forbade doctors from “disclosing any information to the public without permission,” and Chinese experts falsely “reported no evidence of human transmission of the virus” — exactly “what the leaders wanted to hear.” Meanwhile, China's Center for Disease Control and Prevention, which is supposed to regulate the system, doesn't “report to the central government directly” or “issue public warnings.” As one expert puts it, the system's failure “exemplifies” a lot of what's wrong with China today.

Economic beat: No, Fed's Not Bailing Out Banks

After the Federal Reserve on Thursday “announced a \$1.5 trillion liquidity provision to the interbank lending market,” [sighs National Review's Daniel Tenreiro](#), “observers on the left,” including Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, “immediately balked at what they saw as the government giving handouts to banks instead of hard-working Americans.” Actually, the Fed is doing what it usually does when “markets are volatile”: “lending banks cash overnight in order to ensure that the financial system remains healthy.” The money is generally repaid quickly. Yet when AOC claimed the funds could've gone to cover “all student loan debt,” she apparently thought the agency is “cutting a check to financial institutions.” Sorry, Congresswoman: The Fed's intervention is “a boon to the US financial system” — and “far from a handout.”

Free-speech watch: Money Can't Buy Elections

Michael Bloomberg and Tom Steyer “rediscovered an age-old truth” this year, [snarks Bradley A. Smith at City Journal](#): “Money can't buy love.” Nor did it help Hillary Clinton in 2016 or other wannabes, like Jeb Bush, Linda McMahon and Steve Forbes. “Money can help a campaign's message get heard, but it doesn't mean” listeners will “like what they hear.” Still, fears of candidates “buying” elections “continue to drive” campaign-finance laws. Just last year, the House passed “a variety of restrictions on paid political speech.” Sure, “ ‘getting money out of politics’ makes for a good bumper sticker, but the policies it leads to actually give more power

and influence to the wealthy, not less.” Policymakers should just “get out of the way and let voters speak.”

— *Compiled by The Post Editorial Board*