

Now we know: The conservative devotion to life ends at birth

[Max Boot](#)



Fox News host Laura Ingraham during her Wednesday show. (Screen grab via Fox News)

The Republican reaction initially was to write off concern about the virus as a “[hoax](#)” designed to embarrass President Trump. There was a brief turn in mid-March, when both Trump and his media boosters began to take the virus a bit more seriously. But now Trump and the right-wing media are coalescing around the theme that “the cure is worse than the disease” — meaning that, after trying social distancing for a week or two, we should all get back to normal and pretend people aren’t dying around us.

[Full coverage of the coronavirus pandemic](#)

Their justification for this dangerous move is based on pure ignorance. To cite but one example, Ann Coulter [tweeted](#) that “For people under 60, [coronavirus](#)

is LESS dangerous than the seasonal flu." In support of this view she included a chart that shows the coronavirus death rate for those aged 30 to 39 is 0.12 percent compared with a death rate for the flu of 0.02 percent for those aged 18 to 49 — meaning coronavirus is at least six times deadlier. But how many of her fans bothered to read the fine print?

Fox News host Laura Ingraham, for her part, touted Trump's miracle cure, [claiming](#): "Lenox Hill in New York among many hospitals already using hydroxychloroquine with very promising results." As a HuffPost reporter [noted](#), this was based on false information from a man who doesn't actually work at Lenox Hill Hospital. In fact, a small Chinese study [just concluded](#) that hydroxychloroquine is no more effective than standard treatment for the coronavirus. More research needs to be done, but it is highly irresponsible to tout this anti-malaria drug as a "gift from God," as Trump has done. An Arizona man [even died](#) from ingesting fish tank [cleaner containing](#) chloroquine phosphate in hopes of preventing covid-19.

Vastly more irresponsible — in fact, downright terrifying — is the willingness of some right-wingers to argue that we should sacrifice the lives of seniors to restart the economy. This notion was put forward [most explicitly](#) by Texas Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick (R) on Fox News and amplified by other right-wing commentators. "You know, we don't shut down the economy to save every single life that's threatened by a widespread disease," [said](#) Fox News senior political analyst Brit Hume. "We just don't." A [Daily Wire host](#) said we should accept "way over 35,000" deaths to "preserve our economy."

I thought I was hardened to the depravity of the Trumpified right, but even I am astonished by the callous willingness to risk large numbers of innocent casualties — as if the economy can function while the medical system is overwhelmed and people are (rightly) terrified of being infected.

Radio host Dennis Prager [bemoaned](#) our unwillingness to sacrifice lives as we did during World War II, saying "that attitude leads to appeasement" and

"cowardice." The United States lost [418,500 people](#) in World War II — and they were almost entirely military personnel. That's bad enough, but it would be far worse to lose 2.2 million civilians — the [worst-case estimate](#) of the U.S. death toll if we let the novel coronavirus spread unimpeded.

Many on the right sound like characters from "[Dr. Strangelove](#)." ("Mr. President, I'm not saying we wouldn't get our hair mussed. But I do say no more than ten to twenty million killed, tops. Uh, depending on the breaks.") R.R. Reno, the editor of the "theocon" publication First Things, [writes](#) that "there are many things more precious than life" and laments that "fear of death and causing death is pervasive."

It's easy to volunteer others to die — but not so easy to risk death yourself. Glenn Beck of the Blaze [says](#), "I would rather die than kill the country. 'Cause it's not the economy that's dying, it's the country." He is saying this while sitting by himself in what looks to be a home studio. When I see Beck volunteering to work a supermarket register, I will take his bravado a bit more seriously.

But for a truly "sick" response it's hard to top the Federalist. This right-wing website [published a piece](#) urging a "somewhat unconventional approach to COVID-19," namely infecting volunteers to boost their immunity. In a similar vein, the Wall Street Journal editorial page ran [an article](#) urging the "deliberate infection" of first responders. I wonder what Christell Cadet would think of that. At last report, this [34-year-old paramedic](#) in New York City was hooked up to a ventilator, fighting for her life, after contracting covid-19.

[*The Opinions section is looking for stories of how the coronavirus has affected people of all walks of life. Write to us.*](#)

I wish I could dismiss these commentators as an inconsequential, lunatic fringe. But they have the ear of a president who wants "[packed churches](#)" on Easter. If churches really are packed on Easter, those same houses of worship

should be prepared to hold a lot of funerals by Memorial Day — if, that is, funerals are even permitted during a pandemic.

[Robert Kagan: We have a health crisis and an economic crisis. The only thing missing is a foreign policy crisis.](#)

[The Post's View: Trump is spreading false hope for a virus cure — and that's not the only damage](#)

[The Post's View: Trump's goal of sending people back to work early is reckless](#)

[Fareed Zakaria: To solve the economic crisis, we will have to solve the health-care crisis](#)

[Tim Searchinger, Anthony LaMantia and Gordon Douglas: Mass testing is the only sustainable solution](#)