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From: Jim Parker <trapperastoria13@gmail.com>
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To: Ravalli County Commissioners Office
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Corvid Response Actions

To: Ravalli County Commissioners

Unfortunately, Montana and Ravalli County are facing a potentially calamitous tussle with the virus that will not somehow "magically disappear someday." Micheal Vanatta, Deputy Director of Stargate at the Montana Department of Military affairs predicted this probability just over a week ago with this admonition:

MONTANA WE NEED TO TALK.

I will preface this by saying i am coming from my scientist identity here. This isn't a political post. You can assign Trump 100% blame or 0% blame...it isn't relevant here. This post is about data...data is data and isn't political. It's just large amounts of information. We are indeed in the year 2020 and technology and instant communication enables us to gather large amounts of data almost instantly. Plus, we constantly update it with new information hourly. We have been doing this for 9 months straight now.

This is currently the story of the state of Montana and Covid-19 and i need you to hear me.

You can measure a pandemic well by bringing together 5 different database sets. Three of the datasets represent the extent of the virus spread in our country. One dataset represents our ability to fight the virus. Think of this as like Marines of the fight. Literal soldiers on the ground battling the spread. The last dataset represents our capacity to take damage. How many casualties are we losing? What are our resources to battle this?

The first dataset is the number of infections per day. We normalize this by plotting the data per 100,000 people. Think of this as a per capita measurement. Montana is currently 3rd in the country now...at 54.7 cases per 100K people everyday. 1st is North Dakota at 76.7 and South Dakota is second at 69.1. The best in the country is Vermont at 1.4. It is obvious the virus is accelerating through a geographical area right now. It is widespread.

The second dataset measures how fast is the infection spreading. We normalize this to 1.0 meaning one infected person is infecting someone else. Montana is at 1.22 again third in the country. The top spot is held by New Mexico at 1.25. New Hampshire is second with 1.23. The best in the country is Hawaii at 0.94. It is spreading fast in Montana communities and is severe meaning people are getting infected by strangers.

The third dataset represents how deeply embedded it is in your community. We demonstrate this by compiling what percentage of positive tests you have within all tests performed? Higher positive tests illustrate density of infection. Montana is currently top in the country with this one at 16% meaning nearly 1 in 5 people are testing positive and definitely includes a lot of asymptomatic cases. Idaho and Nebraska are 2nd and 3rd at 14.9% and 14.3% respectively. The best in the country is Vermont at just 0.3% (meaning less than 1 person in 100 is infected).

The fourth dataset tells the story of our soldiers on the ground. Remember the Marines...yeah theses guys. In a pandemic war your soldiers are contact tracers. They are the ones responsible for mapping exactly what individuals have been exposed to someone who tested positive. The less people you are able to identify the more asymptomatic carriers will unknowingly spread the virus. Montana is 5th in the country at 7% of contact tracing ability. 100% (New York and Vermont) means you are able to trace each infection as it occurs. Montana is only able to trace 7 out of 100 cases right now. Missouri is worst at 1%.

The last dataset i want to address is our ability to sustain casualties. Unfortunately we have to look at it from a war point of view because people are dying everyday from this virus. It is an enemy it just doesn't fire bullets. The most seriously infected people end up in the ICU. The intensive care unit has the most technology attached to the beds. They are specifically designed to help dying people not die. Montana is 1st in the country with 83% of ICU beds full. This is our last line of defense against the virus. When we are out of ICU beds that means

some sick people who would recover with ICU help won't have access to it. Deaths will increase. This is what happened to NYC in the spring...their ICUs were at max. Triage programs had to be set up to make decisions on which patients will get access to ICU beds as they become available. This is the same thing they do in wars with bullets. They decide who has the best chance of recovery and treat them. The ones who are very dire are just flat out refused resources and they die. It sucks but there is a finite amount of medical resources we have available to fight this.

So to summarize, here is Montana ranks in these datasets:

Cases per day: 3rd

Infection rate: 3rd

% positive test: 1st

Tracing ability: 5th

ICU space used: 1st

Montana and South Dakota are easily the biggest hotspots in the country right now. We are near the metrics of NYC in spring. The virus is part of the community now. Higher death rates are imminent.

I often see a response to the data being "see...the masks aren't working" but i assure you they are. Masks have been deployed to fight pandemics for over a century. If we had no masks it would be remarkably worse but people are forgetting the most important weapon when you fight this kind of war...DISTANCE. If you don't come in contact with an infected person you won't get it...and you won't spread it. Social distancing isn't being practiced like it was in the spring. People are so tired of missing out on their lives...i get it. I do. It's just many people are no longer doing that and it is the gasoline on the fire...the less distance there is between individuals the more the fire burns. We can help fight this thing but we have to distance.

I didn't write this novel of a post to make you scared. That isn't the point...but i want you to be informed of the data. The data always tells the story in science and the chapter on Montana right now is alarming.

The more you distance the more you are thinking of your community. I don't distance for me...i do it for the community. Our causality capacity is nearly 100%. Our soliders on the ground are outnumbered. If you want to help slow the infection your choices are wearing a mask around anyone not in your immediate family and limiting your number of contacts.

In light of this information you have options. You can call for a universal mask requirement. You can call for group gatherings to be limited in size (Some jurisdictions are setting the ceiling at 5.) You can take a stronger role in encouraging Bitterrooters to do the right thing by modeling behavior that protects our youth and elderly and provides the possibility for businesses to re open on a safer footing in the near future.

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