

# **Biden campaign: The Capital Times: Mike Holmgren's got it right, the pandemic didn't have to be this bad**

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Today in The Capital Times, the opinion editor wrote about Green Bay Packers Hall of Fame Coach Mike Holmgren's comments last week about President Donald Trump's failure to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the negative impact it's had on Wisconsin's economy. The column also outlines how Trump's economy wasn't working for the middle class even before the COVID-19 pandemic, citing the 2017 Republican tax bill that served as a massive tax giveaway to the wealthy and corporations. Read more below.

**The Capital Times: Jessie Opoien: ["Mike Holmgren's got it right — the pandemic didn't have to be this bad"](#)**

It's been more than two decades since he left Green Bay for Seattle, but for some Wisconsinites — myself included — Mike Holmgren's name remains synonymous with the Packers in some of their best years.

He coached the team for seven seasons, shaping Brett Favre's career and guiding the team to a Super Bowl victory over the New England Patriots in 1997. For a kid growing up an hour north of Green Bay, there were few voices that carried as much weight as Holmgren's did during those 1990s glory days.

So when Joe Biden's campaign announced that Holmgren would be speaking out, along with Green Bay Mayor Eric Genrich, about President Donald Trump's handling of the coronavirus pandemic and the resulting economic impact on Green Bay, I was interested.

Holmgren and Genrich spoke to journalists on a Zoom call the Saturday before the first Packers home game of the season — a game that would pack no fans into the stands, nor tailgaters into the parking lot. The team announced last month that [Lambeau Field would not be open to the public](#) for at least the two first home games, with the potential to allow a limited number of fans later in the season depending on the status of the pandemic.

That's a significant hit to the local economy, with each home game generating an estimated \$15 million. For the smallest NFL city in the country, it's a big deal.

"It didn't have to be this bad. It really didn't," Holmgren said. "And now we find out in the last couple months, he knew all along. The president knew how bad it was and he kept it from the American people. Not only did he keep it from us, but then he didn't take action. He knew, and he did not take action."

We know now that Trump [told veteran Washington Post journalist Bob Woodward](#) in February that he knew how deadly — and easily transmissible — COVID-19 is, while he continued to insist publicly that it was under control, that it would disappear soon and was no worse than the flu.

So while the virus has continued to spread for months, claiming more than 190,000 lives throughout the country — more than 1,200 in Wisconsin — it's hard not to wonder what would have happened if our federal government had responded to the pandemic swiftly and appropriately. One [model from Columbia University](#) estimates that 36,000 lives could have been saved had the U.S. started locking down cities one week earlier than it did in March.

If the country had gotten a better hold on the virus by now, our economy would, almost certainly, be much better prepared to handle the encroaching winter and the limitations it will bring.

Trump "wants the public to believe the shutdown orders that began in March caused the economy to tank in the first place, so reversing them will bring the economy back," [wrote former labor secretary Robert Reich for The Guardian last month](#). "Rubbish. It was the virus that caused the downturn, and its resurgence is taking the economy down again. The virus is surging back because governors reopened prematurely, before the virus was under control — at Trump's repeated insistence."

It's not just Trump's inadequate response to COVID-19 that has wounded our economy. Little by little, the president has taken an economic system that already benefited the wealthy at the expense of low- and middle-income earners, and skewed it even more dramatically toward those who are already perched comfortably at the top.

[...]

But Trump's 2017 tax bill [most benefited](#) real estate developers, large technology and pharmaceutical companies, multimillionaires and private equity managers — while leaving low-income families, the elderly and individual taxpayers in the lurch. The nonpartisan Tax Policy Center found that the top 20% of people on the income ladder received more than 60% of the bill's tax savings, [NPR reported last year](#).

So what would Biden do differently? Among other proposals, he would create a 10% "Made in America" tax credit for companies that bring back or expand manufacturing jobs and wages in the U.S., implement a 10% offshoring penalty for companies that move production or services overseas, invest \$300 billion in research and development aimed at creating jobs in innovative fields like 5G and electric vehicle technology, and raise the minimum wage to \$15 per hour.

But don't take my word for it. Trump's own alma mater, the [University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School, says](#) Biden's economic proposals would "create a faster growing economy, higher wages for American workers and reduce the debt compared to where the U.S. is headed under (Trump)."

It's not only about policies. It's also about attitude.

"President Trump has been pretty openly pitting governors against one another, forcing states to compete for (personal protective equipment) and other support," Green Bay's Genrich said. "If we had had a well-coordinated, honest response to this pandemic at the federal level — a president in the White House who is sincerely interested in working with governors of both parties to respond to this pandemic, things would have played out much differently."

And it's the culmination of all of this that prompted Holmgren — a former high school history teacher who kept his politics private until now — to speak out.

"I think this is the most important election of my lifetime, for not only me, but my

kids and my grandkids, because of what's gone on in the last three-and-a-half years. ... The untruths, the misleading and the dangerous things that have happened," Holmgren said. "And I thought — Kathy and I were talking about it one night — what can we do? What can we do to maybe help? And I know ... the state of Wisconsin, that I love, was very, very close in the last election. I said, 'You know what? Maybe I can get a couple guys to think my way on this. ... And that's why I'm here. I thought, if I'm ever going to do this — if I'm ever going to do this, this is the time to do it. Because it's that important.'"

I may have disagreed with Holmgren's decision to leave Tiletown for Seattle, but on this one, I have no objections.