

Gallagher campaign: Politicians, fight coronavirus in these two ways — stop fundraising and donate campaign funds to charity

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Right now, politicians of both parties are scrambling to spend as much as \$2 trillion in taxpayer dollars to fight the coronavirus and mitigate its negative economic effects. It is all part of a well-intentioned effort to do whatever is necessary to defeat the disease and help those most vulnerable.

The process has been messy, and this will not be the last bill needed to deal with the crisis. The leadership of both parties needs to get these and future negotiations right.

As we work to get aid to those fighting on the front lines of this battle, I'm struck by another obvious and immediate way politicians can help:

Put a moratorium on all political fundraising while this pandemic is ravaging our communities.

And to go one step further, take existing campaign funds and donate them to charitable organizations helping with the response efforts.

We are in the midst of an election year where billions of dollars and countless hours will be spent on things like attack ads, targeted digital ads, consultants, polls, robocalls, yard signs and bumper stickers. This may not sound like much compared with \$2 trillion, but it just seems bizarre, if not altogether wrong, for candidates to be fundraising at all right now.

Most members have been working day and night coordinating with state, local and national officials as well as hospitals and private sector companies. We are working to ensure that critical care, testing and equipment are available, that constituents stranded abroad find ways home, that the vulnerable in our community are protected, and that we are fulfilling all of our regular duties as a congressional office.

Shouldn't we be doing the same thing with our campaign offices? At a time such as this, shouldn't politicians of both parties hit pause on political fundraising and focus our energies on helping those in need?

A dollar donated to a political campaign is a dollar that is not going to first responders, to local organizations aiding our neighbors, or to those battling this pandemic daily.

Every marginal minute we have, particularly those of us in public office, should be spent on some aspect of the crisis. When our future as a country is on the line, we should set aside politics as usual, even at the expense of our own political future.

A dollar donated to a political campaign is a dollar that is not going to first responders, to local organizations aiding our neighbors, or to those battling this pandemic daily. Politicians have the power to direct resources where they can do the most good, so that is what I will be focusing on.

Beginning immediately, I am putting this into effect. I don't know how much my campaign will donate, but my initial goal is \$200,000 and I hope to go beyond that amount. I also struggled with whether to make this public, since it will seem self-righteous, but the truth is I hope to encourage my colleagues to do the same if they can.

This doesn't mean that those who contribute to campaigns should not be hearing from us — we should use our networks to encourage supporters to give to local charities that are fighting this disease and helping the most vulnerable. Those on our staffs who spend time fundraising should redirect their energy toward the crisis we are confronting and identify charitable organizations that could use financial resources to assist citizens in need.

Some will say it's easy for me to do this because I'm an incumbent and currently have funds on hand in my campaign. Fair enough. I understand that many of my

colleagues are in different situations and will make different choices with how to conduct their campaigns during this crisis. I also understand the need for fundraising and the importance of getting good people (re)elected.

But as the Bible suggests, there are times for turning swords into plowshares. I believe this is a time to turn our political swords into plowshares, for turning the means by which we ideologically confront each other into the means by which we build up our communities.