

POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

Gates warned of pandemic

In April 2015, Microsoft co-founder and billionaire philanthropist Bill Gates gave a TED (Technology, Entertainment and Design) talk at its annual conference about the dangers of a worldwide pandemic. Excerpts follow:

“When I was a kid, the disaster we worried about most was a nuclear war. ...

“Today, if anything kills over 10 million people in the next few decades, it’s most likely to be a highly infectious virus rather than a war. Not missiles, but microbes. Now, part of the reason for this is that we’ve invested a huge amount in nuclear deterrents. But we’ve actually invested very little in a

system to stop an epidemic. We’re not ready for the next epidemic.

“Let’s look at Ebola. I’m sure all of you read about it in the newspaper, lots of tough challenges. ...

“There’s three reasons why it didn’t spread more. The first is that there was a lot of heroic work by the health workers. They found the people and they prevented more infections. The second is the nature of the virus. Ebola does not spread through the air. And by the time you’re contagious, most people are so sick that they’re bedridden. Third, it didn’t get into many urban areas. And that was just luck. ...

“Next time, we might not be so lucky. You can have a virus where people feel well enough while they’re infectious that they get on a plane or they go to a market. The source of the virus could be a natural epidemic like Ebola, or it could be bioterrorism. So there are things that would literally make things a thousand times worse.

“In fact, let’s look at a model of a

virus spread through the air, like the Spanish Flu back in 1918. So here’s what would happen: It would spread throughout the world very, very quickly. And you can see over 30 million people died from that epidemic. So this is a serious problem. We should be concerned.

“But in fact, we can build a really good response system. ...

“The best lessons, I think, on how to get prepared are again, what we do for war. For soldiers, we have full-time, waiting to go. We have reserves that can scale us up to large numbers. NATO has a mobile unit that can deploy very rapidly. NATO does a lot of war games to check, are people well trained? Do

they understand about fuel and logistics and the same radio frequencies? So they are absolutely ready to go. So those are the kinds of things we need to deal with an epidemic. ...

“We need a medical reserve corps: lots of people who’ve got the training and background who are ready to go, with the expertise. And then we need to pair those medical people with the military, taking advantage of the military’s ability to move fast, do logistics and secure areas. We need to do simulations, germ games, not war games, so that we see where the holes are.

“Now I don’t have an exact budget for what this would cost, but I’m quite sure it’s very modest compared to the potential harm. ...

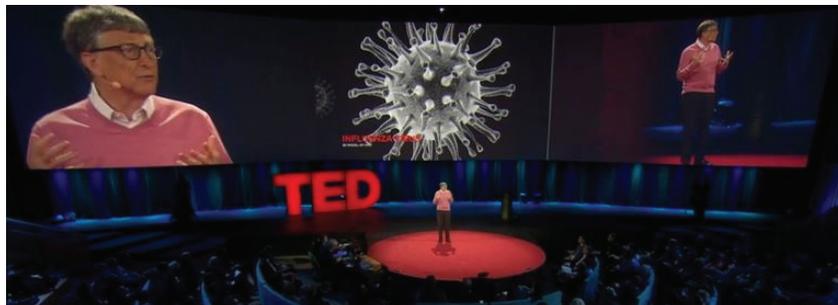
“If we start now, we can be ready for the next epidemic.”

Of course, we didn’t start preparing, even as recently as two months ago, when it was clear the coronavirus would spread worldwide, the federal government did nothing.

Thursday: the Big One.



Commentary by
Tom Hylton



PANDEMIC WARNING — Bill Gates warned of a viral pandemic in an April 2015 TED talk. Unfortunately, the right people weren’t paying attention.