

Reginald Rogers

From: Gregory Bledsoe <ghbledsoe@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, September 29, 2020 1:00 PM
To: Reginald Rogers
Subject: Fwd: Peggy Noonan_ Scenes from the Class Struggle in Lockdown.pdf

For the FOIA request.

Gregory H. Bledsoe, MD, MPH
Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: Gregory Bledsoe <ghbledsoe@gmail.com>
Date: May 17, 2020 at 10:40:24 AM CDT
To: Nate Smith <nsmith.2009@gmail.com>
Subject: Re: Peggy Noonan_ Scenes from the Class Struggle in Lockdown.pdf

Thanks, Nate.

Appreciate your feedback.

Best to you.

Greg

Gregory H. Bledsoe, MD, MPH
Sent from my iPhone

On May 17, 2020, at 10:33 AM, Nate Smith <nsmith.2009@gmail.com> wrote:

Thanks, Greg. This is a thoughtful article that may have relevance to the national debate on COVID-19. Pennsylvania and Michigan have been impacted much worse than Arkansas, and the politics in those states are much different, so I am not in a position to second guess the choices leaders have made there.

I have a few observations from a purely Arkansas perspective:

1) In Arkansas we never "shut down." By tomorrow the only businesses that will not yet have opened are bars not associated with restaurants, overnight summer camps, and youth sports. We have provided clear timelines for overnight summer camps and youth sports so that those involved in those activities can plan for reopening in the next couple of weeks. For bars not associated with restaurants, the reopening date has not yet been set but will likely be before the end of the month. The ongoing economic impact of the

COVID-19 pandemic in Arkansas is primarily via low consumer confidence, supply chain issues, and the national and international economic downturn.

2) It is somewhat ironic that an article in the WSJ claims to understand and advocate for the lower classes, since very few of the individuals in those groups read or write articles for WSJ. Noonan's perspective is very distant from the people she is writing about and has collapsed everyone who is not an elite (read WSJ reader) into one homogeneous group with a supposedly similar viewpoint on COVID-19 policy. This could not be further from the truth in Arkansas. Although we certainly have elite-minded individuals in our state, most of the rest of us are either owners or employees. The owners I have heard from (because they flood my email inbox) want to open up quickly because their businesses are suffering. These are restaurant owners and beauty shop owners, but also dentists and surgeons. Many of the workers, however, are desperately afraid. These include frontline workers in grocery and retail stores, beauty shop employees, dental hygienists, and hospital workers. Their emails are less frequent, less strident and often anonymous. Since they have considerably less economic and political power than the owners, their voices are more difficult to hear, but there are a lot more of them, they are generally at higher risk than the owners of contracting COVID-19 through their work, they have fewer options if they or their family members become sick, and they have to go back to work once their employers reopen. In Arkansas, this is the real battle line in the class struggle.

I have heard some people say that the employees don't want to go back to work because the unemployment benefits are better than their usual wages. That may be true in some cases. They realize that those benefits will not go on indefinitely, and most are willing to go back to work when they feel safe, but their fears are real. I just got a call this morning about a poultry company here in Arkansas where 27 of 30 workers tested yesterday have come back positive. The risk of infection is disproportionately high among those who gain the least economic benefit from this business activity. These are also the people to whom decision-makers are often least sensitive. I had one state legislator ream me out for including dental hygienists on the COVID-19 Dental Advisory Group because they are not the business owners and don't bear the financial risk or legal liability. The disproportionate risk to their own health and the health of their families (which, of course, can be devastating to their individual finances) didn't even register to this elected leader. Although I shouldn't have, I did point out that dental hygienists vote too and that there are more of them than there are dentists.

Thanks for continuing to think through these difficult issues, Greg, and to share thoughts and perspectives. I hope you have also heard my perspective and can better understand the advice I am giving to the Governor. I won't be in this job forever, but as long as I am, I want to honor the Lord in all that I do and say.

Blessings and peace, my friend.

Nate

Sent from my iPad

On May 16, 2020, at 10:22 PM, Gregory Bledsoe
<ghbledsoe@gmail.com> wrote:

Gregory H. Bledsoe, MD, MPH
Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: Greg Bledsoe
<Greg.Bledsoe@governor.arkansas.gov>
Date: May 16, 2020 at 10:20:36 PM CDT
To: Gregory Bledsoe <ghbledsoe@gmail.com>
Subject: Peggy Noonan_ Scenes from the Class Struggle
in Lockdown.pdf

<Peggy Noonan_ Scenes from the Class Struggle in Lockdown.pdf>

Gregory H. Bledsoe, MD, MPH
Sent from my iPhone